

# Hitcham

## Neighbourhood Plan

2022-2037



Referendum version  
September 2025

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Hitcham Parish Council,  
clerk@hitcham-pc.gov.uk**







# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Development Plan will provide the first ever statutory planning policy document specifically for the parish of Hitcham. Neighbourhood Plans such as this were made possible by powers contained within the 2011 Localism Act which sought to decentralise policy making to the local level and give more powers to communities and the right to shape future development where they live.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led document for guiding the future development of the parish. It is about the use and development of land between 2022 and 2037. Once the Plan is made and adopted, Babergh District Council will use it to determine planning applications. Hitcham Parish Council will also use the Plan to respond to consultations on planning applications.
- 1.3 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan complements existing national and local planning policy by providing a specifically local level of detail attained through consultation with the local community and further research. Commissioned by Hitcham Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan has been developed by a Steering Group of local residents and Parish Councillors (see **Appendix A** for Steering Group members).
- 1.4 The purpose of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan is to:
  - Engage the whole community in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan
  - Enable Hitcham residents to influence and shape new development within the parish of Hitcham.
  - Allow the parish to develop sensitively and sustainably, in terms of size, identity, location, design, heritage, amenities, green spaces and the natural environment.
  - Identify other non-planning projects and community needs for the use of developer contributions and other possible funds.
- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The flow chart below (figure 1) outlines the stages the Steering Group have completed and outlines the future work programme.



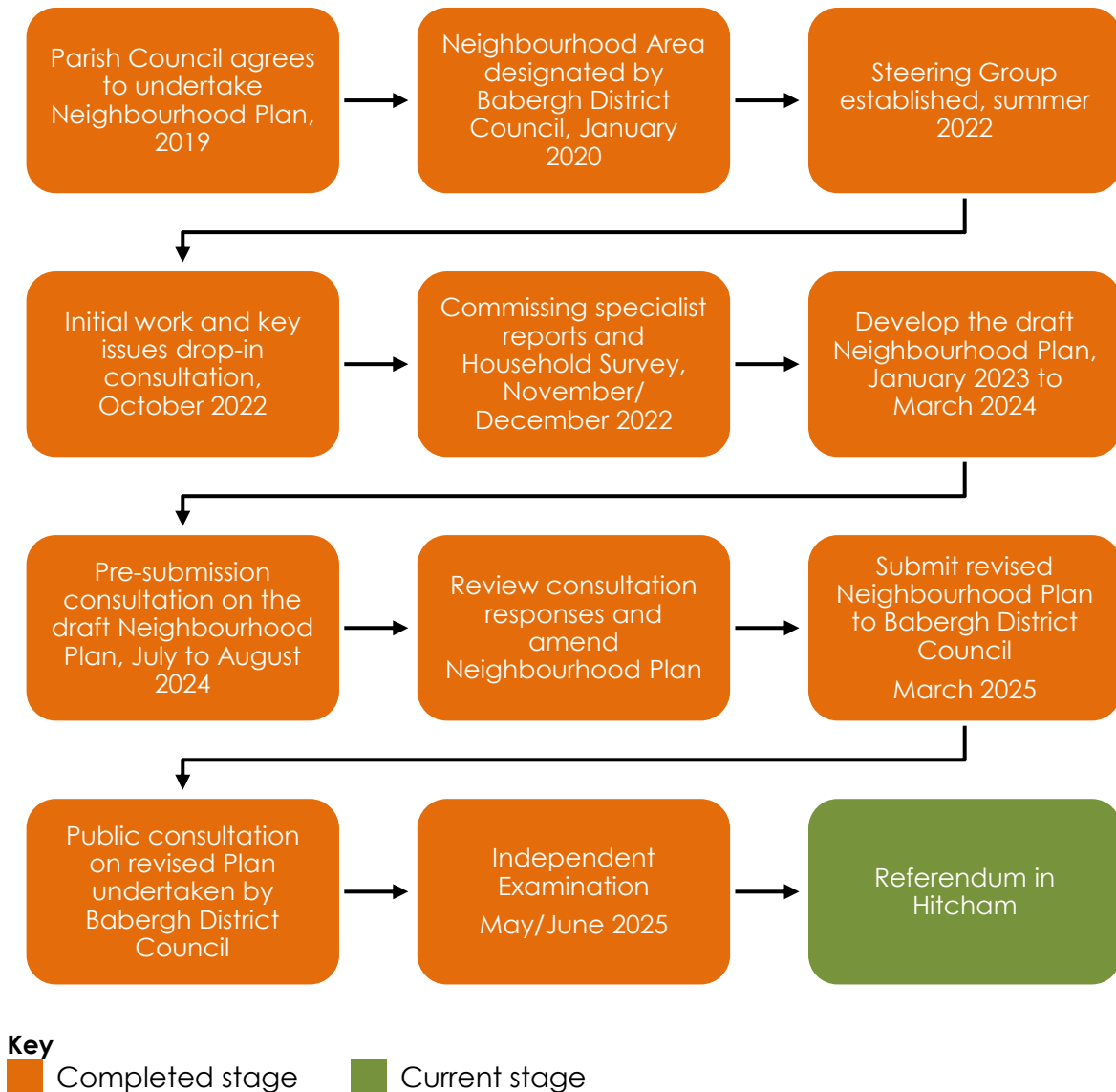


Figure 1: Neighbourhood Plan process and progress.

- 1.6 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan is not a mechanism for stopping development, it is there to ensure that development takes place in an appropriate way for the parish. It has been positively prepared, with the purpose of supporting and managing growth, not preventing it. In practice, higher level planning documents such as the Part 1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (BMSJLP) cannot feasibly deal with all of the issues particular to every parish and village across both districts, whereas the Neighbourhood Plan can by providing additional details which reflect specific local circumstances and conditions.
- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan provides clarity on what will be expected from development proposals, gives prospective investors confidence in how the area will change in the future, and ensures that the impact of development is anticipated and planned for in Hitcham. A Neighbourhood Plan is a significant document and will carry legal weight so that developers have to take note when considering future developments in the parish.



- 1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the entire Parish of Hitcham and was formally designated by Babergh District Council in January 2020.

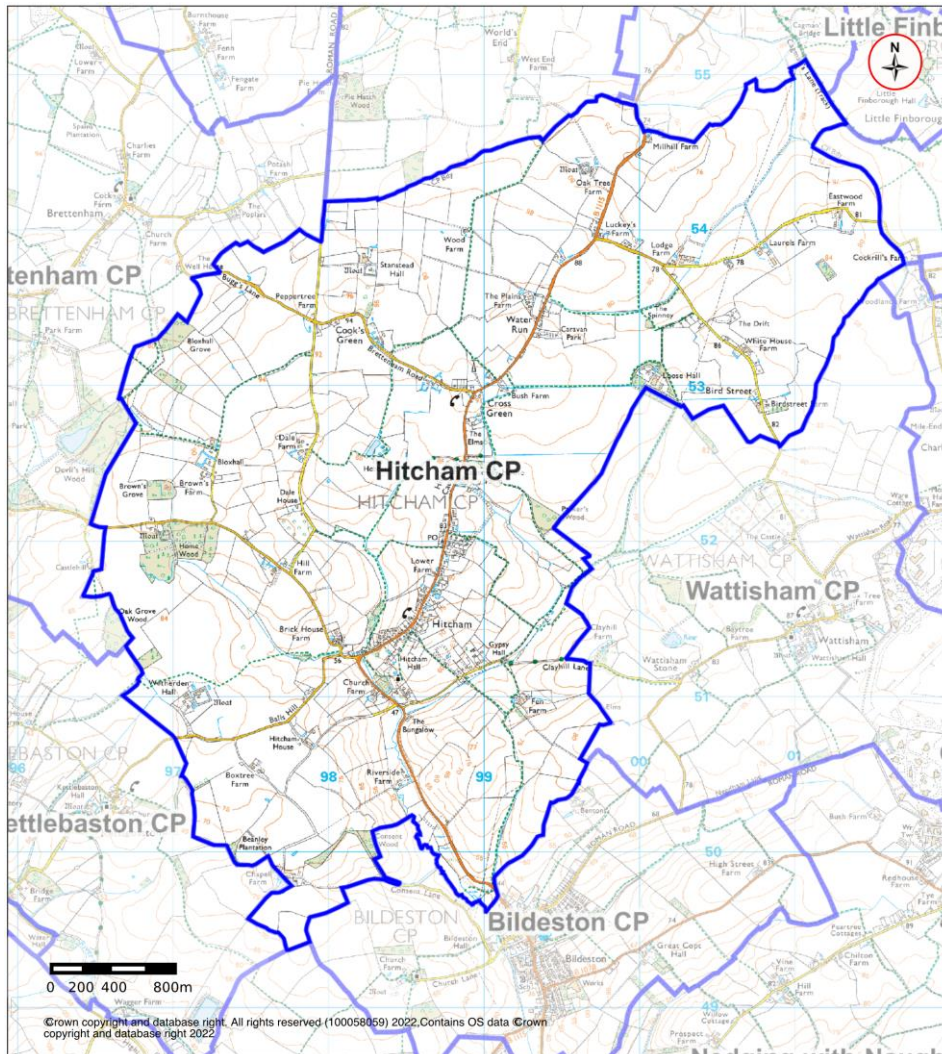


Figure 2: Hitcham parish, the Neighbourhood Plan area (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

## Accompanying supporting documents

- 1.9 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by the following documents:
- **Hitcham Housing Needs Assessment** - undertaken by consultants AECOM in January 2023.
  - **Hitcham Design Guidelines and Code** - undertaken by consultants AECOM in April 2023, updated in July 2025
  - **Hitcham Data Profile** – November 2022.

## Examination and referendum

- 1.10 The Neighbourhood Plan was independently examined between May and June 2025. The Examiner recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan, as modified by her should then proceed to referendum.



- 1.11 At referendum, every resident of Hitcham, who is entitled to vote in the Council elections will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they agree with the Neighbourhood Plan. At referendum, residents will be asked, ***'Do you want Babergh District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Hitcham to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood area?'***. If the Plan gets at least 50% support from those who vote in the referendum, Babergh will 'make' (adopt) the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan.
- 1.12 Once the Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made', the Parish Council will monitor its policies together with the national and local planning context. If changes to this context have significant implications for the robustness of the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies, the Parish Council will instigate a formal full or partial review of the Plan in order to ensure it remains relevant and up to date. The triggers for review and the timing of a review (which can be as short or long as is considered appropriate) will be at the Parish Council's discretion.





NO DOGS  
NO SMOKING  
NO MOTORISED VEHICLES



## 2. Hitcham parish

### A brief History of Hitcham<sup>12</sup>

- 2.1 Hitcham is one of the largest parishes (4,308 acres) in the claylands of Suffolk. It lies at the head of a south-flowing tributary of the River Brett in the undulating rural landscape of south Suffolk, about five miles to the west of the town of Stowmarket.
- 2.2 The high saddleback ridge in the centre the parish, called the Causeway because the land slopes away on either side of it, forms a watershed between the streams draining south to the Brett and those draining west to the River Gipping.
- 2.3 The name Hitcham is a combination of Old English hecc (a side-form of haec 'a hatch, grating, half-gate or wicket') and hām, perhaps denoting a farm or estate with a significant or distinctive hatch or gate; in some cases this term was used for a gate on the boundary of a forest, parish or hundred. It may be significant that Hitcham is on the northern boundary of the hundred of Cosford, where it borders the hundreds of Stow and Thedwastre.
- 2.4 Earliest records of settlement include a few Bronze Age artifacts have been picked up in the fields of Hitcham (an arrow head and an axe head) but the earliest archaeological sites that have been dutifully recorded are both Roman, at which coins, fragments of pottery, tiles and small ornaments have been found. These have been dated from the first to the fourth centuries. The settlement pattern, however, has evolved from the early Anglo-Saxon period. The parish church dates from the 14th century, but the Domesday record describes an earlier church.

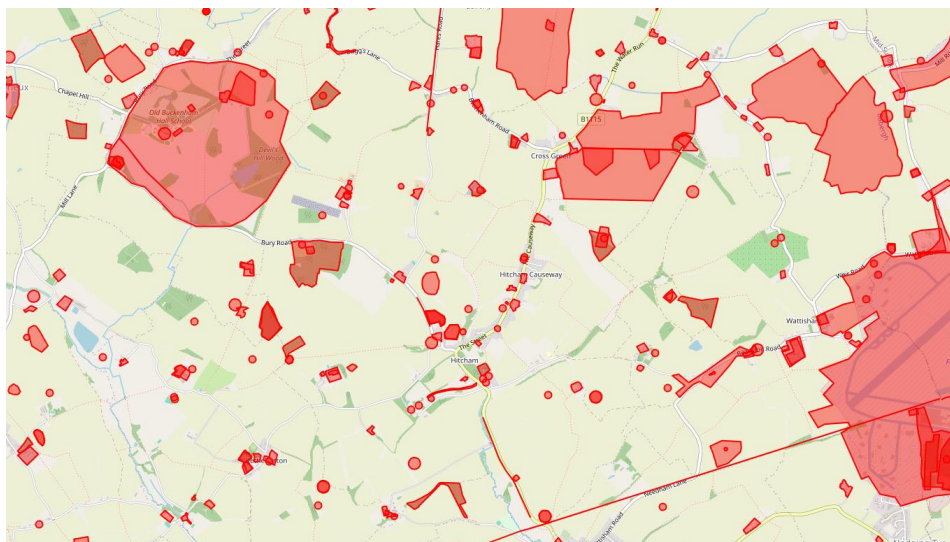


Figure 3: Extract from Suffolk Heritage Explorer showing location of historic records in Hitcham

<sup>1</sup> Information taken from The History of Hitcham is also outlined below from 'Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish' by Edward Martin. ISBN 978-1- 8381223-1-7

<sup>2</sup> Information taken from A Short history of Hitcham by David Turner.



- 2.5 By the end of the 13th century, farms and homesteads were in much the same positions as they are now, the prominent ones being Hitcham Hall, Wetherden Hall and Loose Hall. Thus the settlement pattern of Hitcham became one of scattered hamlets as it is mostly today – Bird Street, Cross Green, Cooks Green, the Water Run and so on – small clusters of houses around or near a farm.
- 2.6 During the medieval period, up until 1559, the Lords of the Manor of Hitcham were successive Bishops of Ely who extracted feudal dues from all who lived in the parish, whatever their status. The late Tudor and early Stuart periods seem to have been times of relative prosperity (for some anyway) in Hitcham, as many of the farmhouses were virtually rebuilt during that time.
- 2.7 However by the 1840s Hitcham was described as being one of the most poverty stricken parishes in pauperised Suffolk. This could have been largely due to the system of land ownership prevailing in Hitcham. Farms in the west of the parish were part of the estate of the Wenyeve family at Brettenham Park, noted for having no money, and most of the rest of Hitcham's farms were owned by absentee landlords who collected rents without carrying out improvements.
- 2.8 In the 1890s a scandal arose in Hitcham over water. A number of children died from infectious diseases and water was deemed to be a cause. The only supply of domestic water in the village was from ponds which in summer often became fouled. As a result of an enquiry carried out by the newly formed West Suffolk County Council, a water tower was constructed at Cross Green and the village was supplied with a number of pumps and stand-pipes from which clean water could be drawn.
- 2.9 After the World War II a further batch of council houses was built on the Causeway Estate.

## Historic Environment

- 2.10 Historic England lists 58 listed buildings in Hitcham parish and one Scheduled Monument. The Church of All Saints is a Grade I listed building and the other buildings are Grade II listed. The Scheduled Monument is a moated site and associated fishponds at Wetherden Hall. There is no Conservation Area in the parish.



Figure 4: All Saints Church, Hitcham.

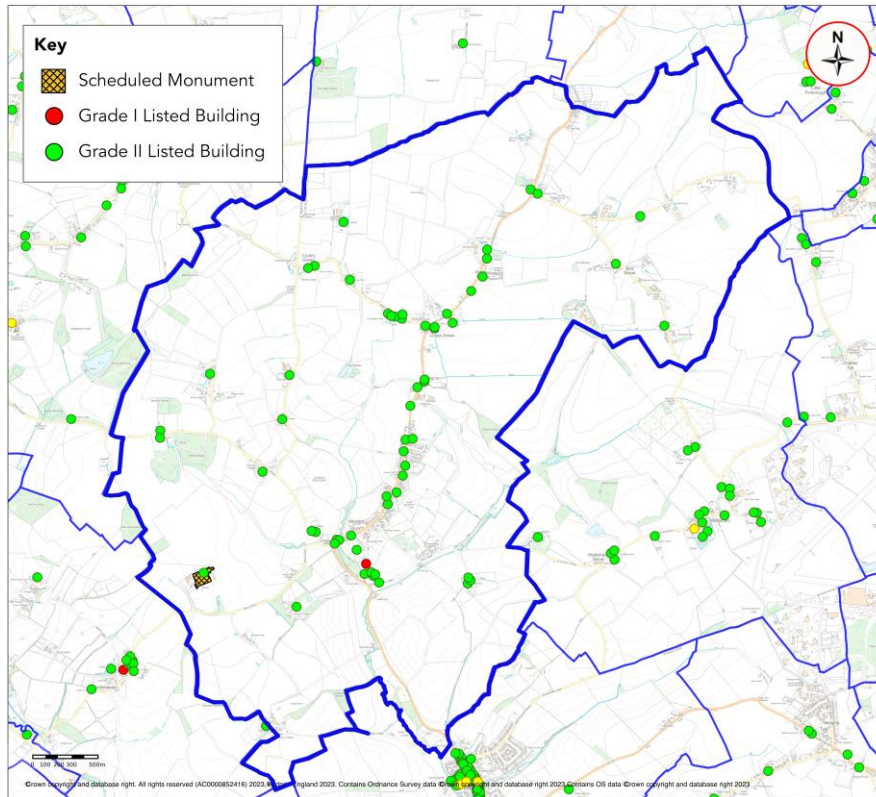


Figure 5: Scheduled Monument and listed buildings (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

## Population and housing

- 2.11 The usual resident population of Hitcham was 774 in the 2011 Census. The population was 50.8% male and 49.2% female. By 2021 the population had risen to 785 and the gender split was 50.6% male and 49.4% female.
- 2.12 The diagram below shows the age distribution of the population in 2021.

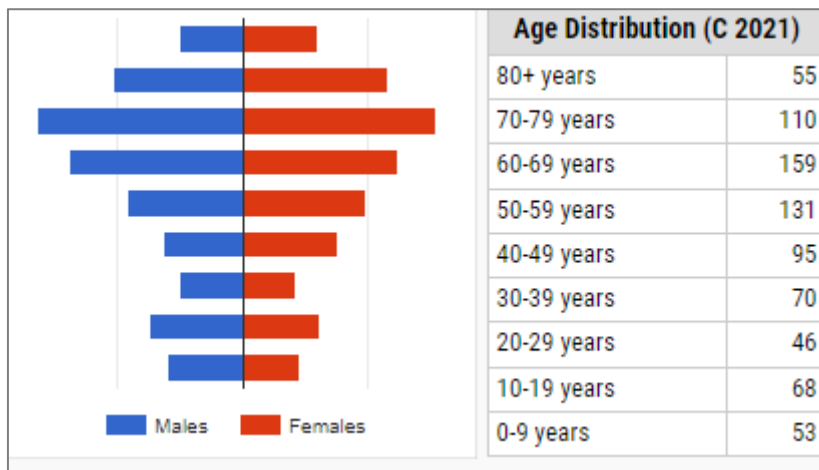


Figure 6: Age and population distribution

- 2.13 In the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, the super output area which includes Hitcham and parts of Wattisham, was ranked 17,579 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England, where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country for overall deprivation.
- 2.14 Data from the 2011 Census indicated that there were 366 dwellings



in Hitcham of which 39 dwellings were unoccupied. The parish is also home to The Ranch which is a fully residential park comprising of 30 Park Homes located at Water Run, Hitcham. The Ranch has 12 months permanent residential use with a minimum age restriction of 45 years. Planning permission for a further 37 new dwellings has been granted since 2017, the majority of these are either completed and occupied or under construction. Therefore the number of dwellings in the parish is estimated to be around 400.

- 2.15 Census 2011 data indicated that Hitcham has a higher percentage of property that was owned by residents compared to the percentages for Babergh and Suffolk.

### Community facilities

- 2.16 Hitcham parish has a **village hall** where many of Hitcham's key events take place, and many clubs and societies meet. Adjacent to the village hall is an area of green open space and a play area with a range of play equipment for different ages from toddlers to teenagers. Activities held at Hitcham village hall include carpet bowls, keep fit, After Sevens – evening speakers, Hatha Yoga, line dancing, crochet workshop, Hitcham Scribblers, Hitcham Hoes Garden Group, Rural Coffee Caravan, sewing workshop, pub night, coffee morning and bingo.
- 2.17 **All Saints Church** Hitcham is in the Rattlesden Benefice. The Friends of All Saints Church is a registered charity to raise funds and manage work on the church building and work with the Parochial Church Council. Hitcham Church Tower Project was launched in 2017 and received a £100,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and support from other charities and donors along with 2000 hours of work from volunteers.
- 2.18 **Hitcham Post Office and Stores** is located on The Causeway.
- 2.19 There is a **mobile library service** in Hitcham on the second Wednesday of each month, which stops at four points in the parish.
- 2.20 **The Roundabout** is the community magazine that serves Hitcham and the surrounding parishes.
- 2.21 **Honey Bees Nursery** is a pre-school Playgroup held at the village hall in Hitcham.
- 2.22 There are no health services within the parish – parishioners tend to use the health centre in Bildeston.

### Transport and access

- 2.23 There are limited bus services operating in Hitcham parish, intermittently. There are services operating between Hitcham – Bildeston – Somersham – Ipswich and Hitcham to Hadleigh High School and Bury St Edmunds. There is also a service between Stowmarket – Bildeston – Hadleigh operated by Hadleigh Community Transport.

- 2.24 The nearest railway station is at Stowmarket, five miles from Hitcham. Greater Anglia run services to Norwich and London. Services also run to Cambridge and Ely via Bury St. Edmunds.

## Walking and cycling

- 2.25 There are a number of footpaths and permissive paths in Hitcham parish.

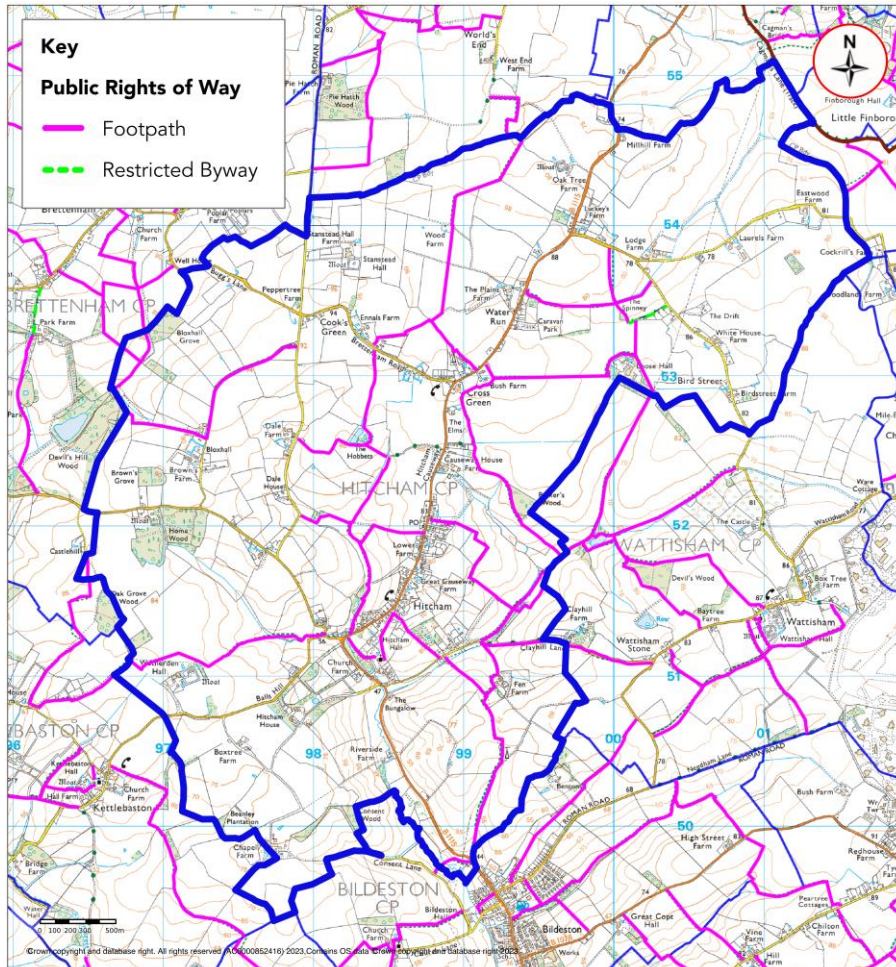


Figure 7: Public rights of way (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

## Landscape

- 2.26 According to the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance 2015, Hitcham falls within three Landscape Character Areas. These are 3: Ancient Plateau Claylands, 4: Ancient Rolling Farmlands and 18: Rolling Valley Farmlands.



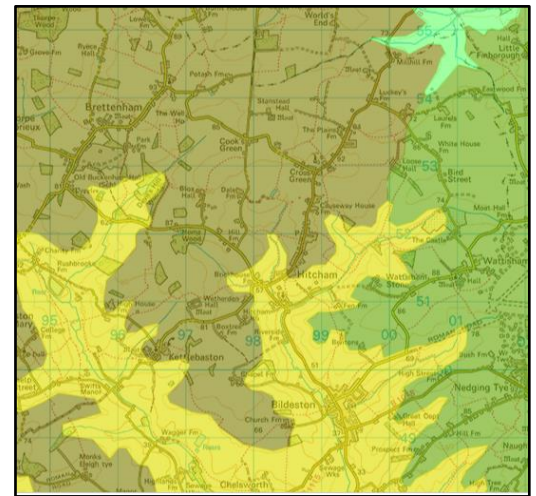
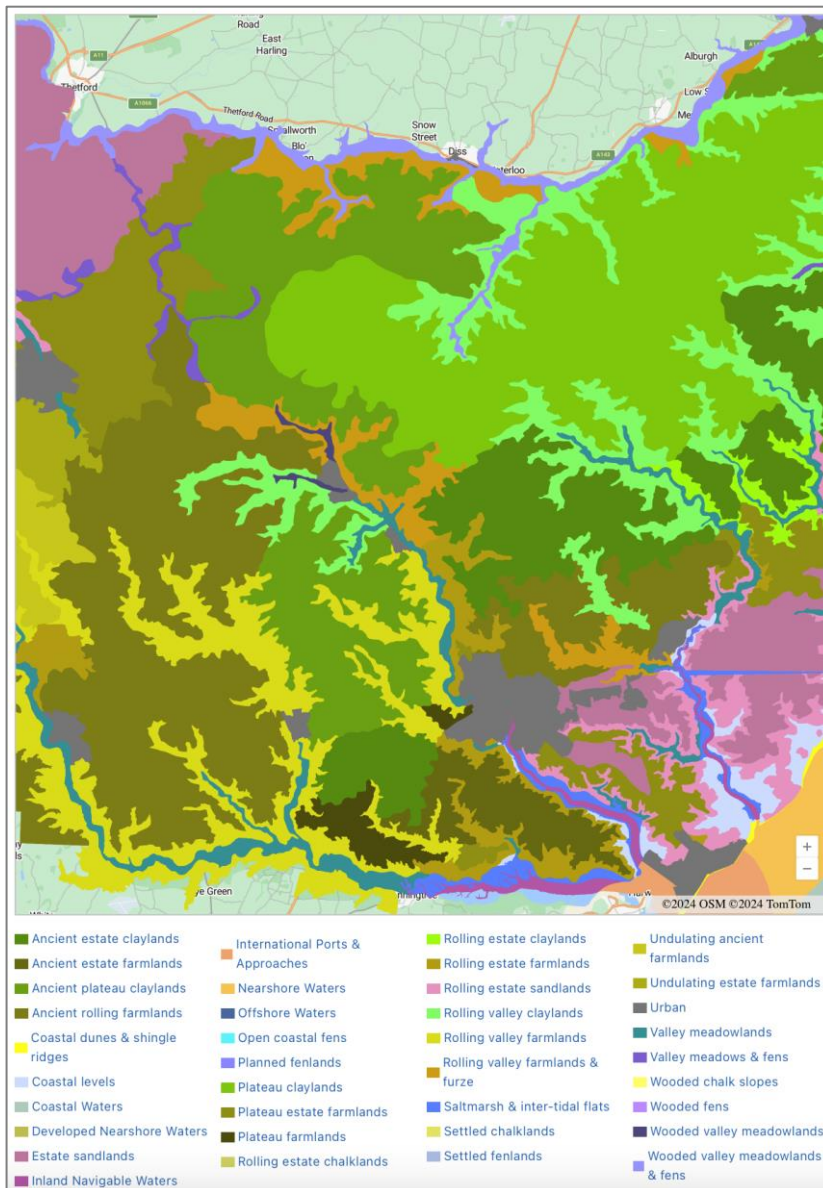


Figure 8: Suffolk Landscape Assessment (source: Suffolk County Council).<sup>3</sup>

## Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 2.27 There are no international or nationally designated sites within the parish. However, the majority of Hittham parish is covered by Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) Impact Risk Zones from SSSIs outside the parish at Brent Eleigh Woods, Barking Woods and Thorpe Morieux Woods. Therefore, planning applications need to be assessed for the likely impact on the SSSIs.
- 2.28 There are four County Wildlife Sites in Hittham parish. A County Wildlife Site designation is non-statutory, but it recognises the high value of a site for wildlife. Many sites are of county, and often regional or national importance and are often designated because they support characteristic or threatened species or habitats.
- 2.29 The Hittham County Wildlife Sites are:
- Babergh 148 - Hittham Hall Meadows

<sup>3</sup> <https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/map/>

- Babergh 162 – RNR 168. This site is also a Roadside Nature Reserve
- Babergh 68 – Home Wood
- Babergh 69 – Consent Wood

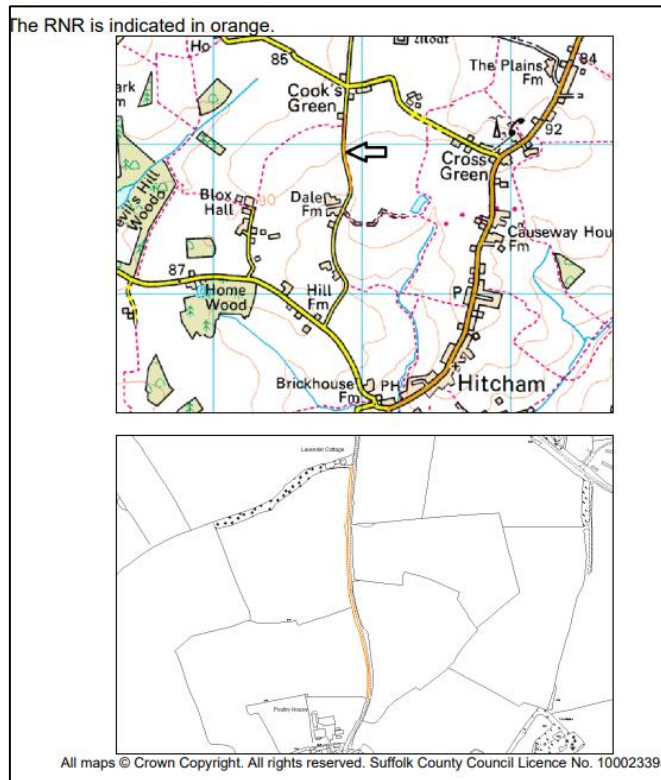


Figure 9: Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR).

- 2.30 In addition the Suffolk River Valleys Environmentally Sensitive Area extends into Hitcham parish.

### Rivers and flooding

- 2.31 Parts of the parish are located within areas at risk of flooding. These are shown in Figure 10 below. The majority of the parish is at very low risk of flooding from rivers. This means that each year, the area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1 per cent. A minority of land around the river is within Flood Zone 3 where land has a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding.



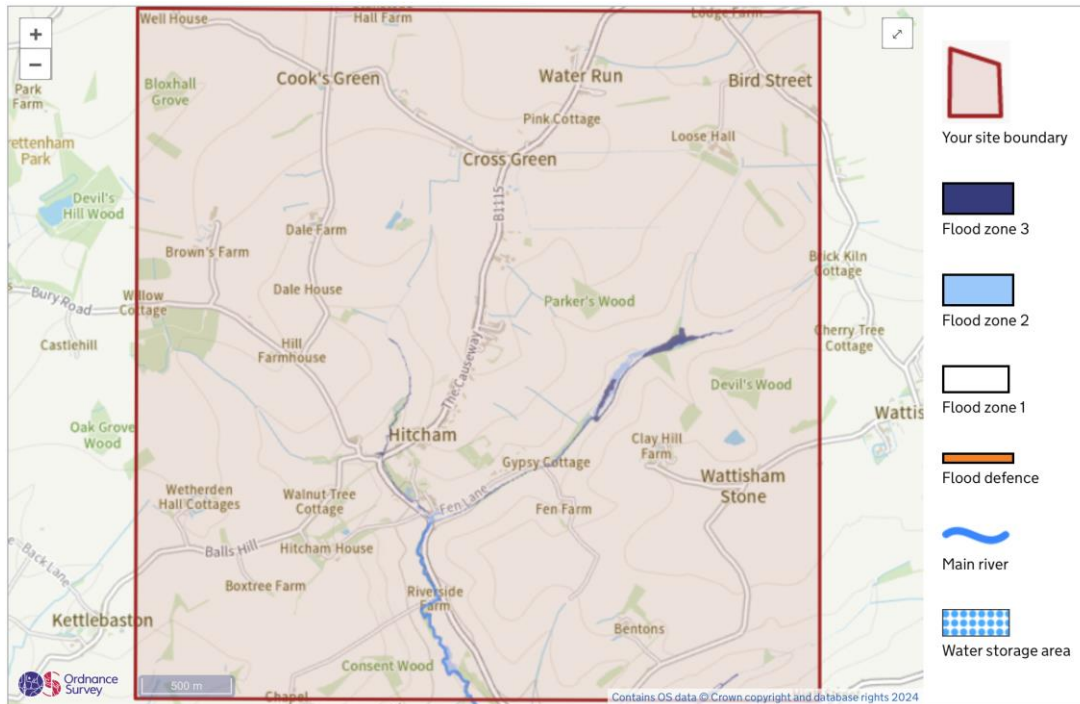


Figure 10: Flood map for Hitcham area (source: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk>). Information obtained on 14.02.24

### 2.32 Surface water flooding, sometimes known as flash flooding:

- happens when heavy rain cannot drain away.
- is difficult to predict as it depends on rainfall volume and location.
- can happen up hills and away from rivers and other bodies of water.
- is more widespread in areas with harder surfaces like concrete.

2.33 The majority of Hitcham parish has traditionally been at low risk of flooding from surface water. However, the high rainfall events in the Autumn of 2023 and into early 2024 have meant that some areas of the parish experienced severe flooding resulting in road closures. The parts of Hitcham parish which are at a higher risk of surface water flooding, are shown in Figure 11 below.

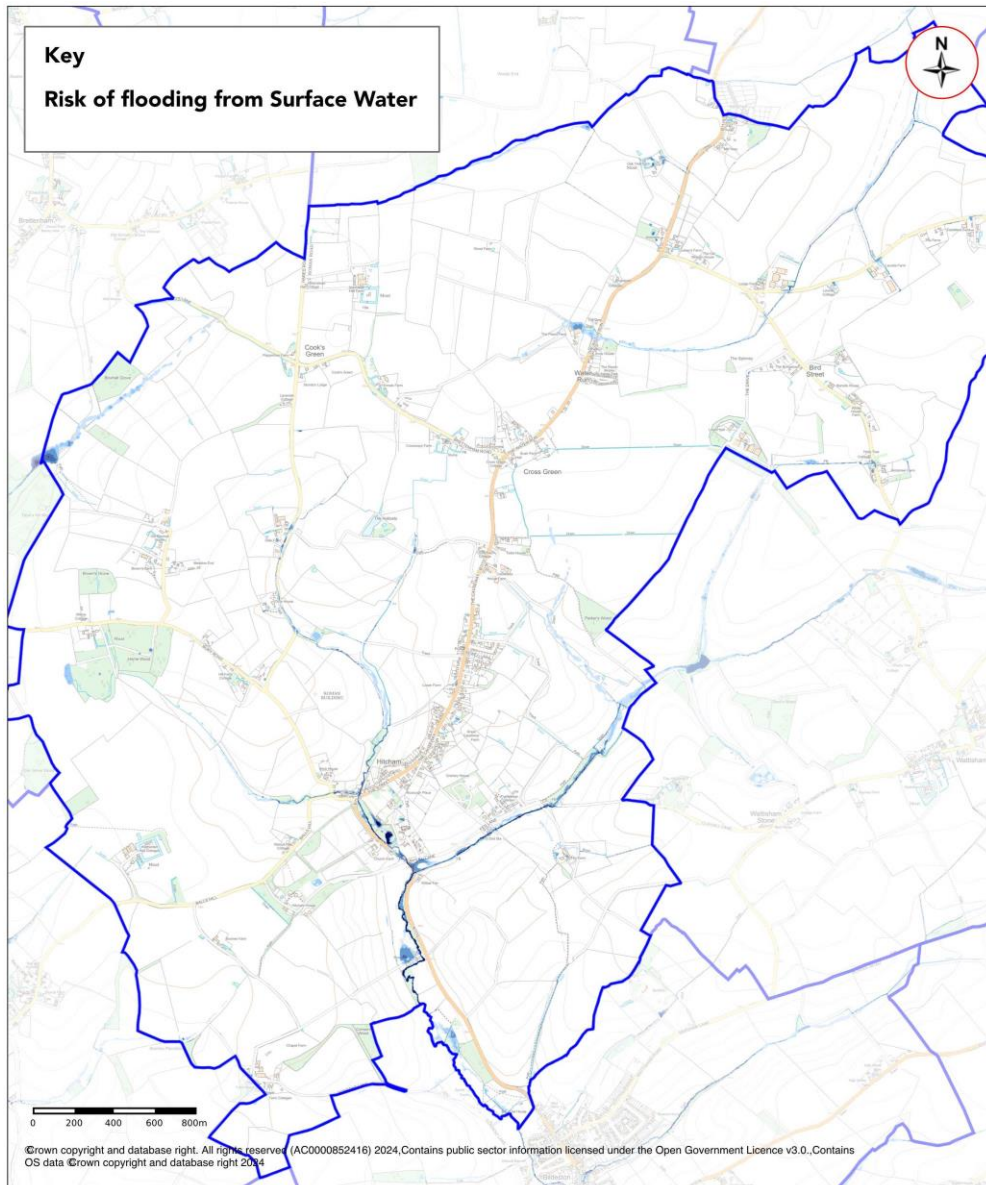


Figure 11: Risk of flooding from Surface Water (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

## Business and employment

- 2.34 There are a range of businesses in the parish; many are small and medium businesses and include those operated from domestic dwellings. Sectors represented by local businesses include agriculture, media, marketing, educational services, electrical and building contractors, painting and decorating, beauty services, handyman services, furniture manufacturing, engineering, garden design, plumbing and heating.
- 2.35 Data from the 2011 Census shows that 64.7% of the population of Hitcham aged 16 – 74 years are economically active. This compares to 70.3% for Babergh and 71% for Suffolk. 18.8% of the population of Hitcham aged 16 – 74 years are retired, compared to 18.2% for Babergh and 16.5% for Suffolk.



## **Safeguarding Zones**

- 2.36 It should be noted that much of Hitcham parish falls within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) 'safeguarding zone' which is designated to preserve the operation and capability of defence assets and sites (including Wattisham Station and the Eastern WAM Network). Certain planning applications submitted within such zones will trigger an automatic consultation with the MOD.

## **Gas pipelines**

- 2.37 The route of the Gas Transmission pipeline which runs from Stowmarket to Braintree runs through Hitcham parish. More details can be found at <https://www.nationalgas.com/land-and-assets/network-route-maps>.







## 3. National and local context

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### National Planning Policy

- 3.1 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in the context of and are required to be in general conformity with the existing national and local planning policy that is in force at the time that the Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared. National planning policy is found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the most recent version of which was published in December 2024. This sets out the government's broad intentions in terms of the purposes of the planning system and their expectations in terms of the delivery of sustainable development. This Neighbourhood Plan makes reference to the December 2004 version of the NPPF, but under transition arrangements it was examined against the December 2023 version. National Planning policy is not part of the 'development plan' that is used to determine planning applications but is a material consideration which is given due weight depending upon the age of the various components of the development plan in force for the area. Local planning policies are required to be in general conformity with national planning policies as set out in the NPPF.

### Local Planning Policy

- 3.2 Every local planning authority in England is required to prepare a Local Plan. Local Plans include all of the local planning policies for the district's area and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built and where. The 'development plan' for Babergh District currently comprises the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (BMSJLP) Part 1 (adopted November 2023) and the saved policies of the Babergh Core Strategy 2014 and the Babergh Local Plan Adopted in June 2006. These documents provide the basis for determining planning applications and future development in the local area.
- 3.3 Development is defined as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land'.<sup>4</sup> Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 emphasises that the planning system continues to be a 'plan-led' system and restates the requirement that 'determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise'.
- 3.4 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan once 'made' (adopted) will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and future planning applications for new development will be determined using its policies.
- 3.5 In addition to the current development plan for the area, Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils had begun work to produce Part 2 of the BMSJLP which was intended to cover site specific issues including settlement hierarchy, housing allocations and open spaces. Work began in early 2024, with a timetable for

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<sup>4</sup> Section 55 of the Parish and Country Planning Act 1990.

submission in summer 2025 and adoption in 2026. However, following the publication of the NPPF in December 2024, the decision was made to proceed with a full Joint Local Plan review . Until it is superseded, Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan remains in place. A new Joint Local Development Scheme, which sets out the timetable for the production of this new Joint Local Plan was published on 5 March 2025.

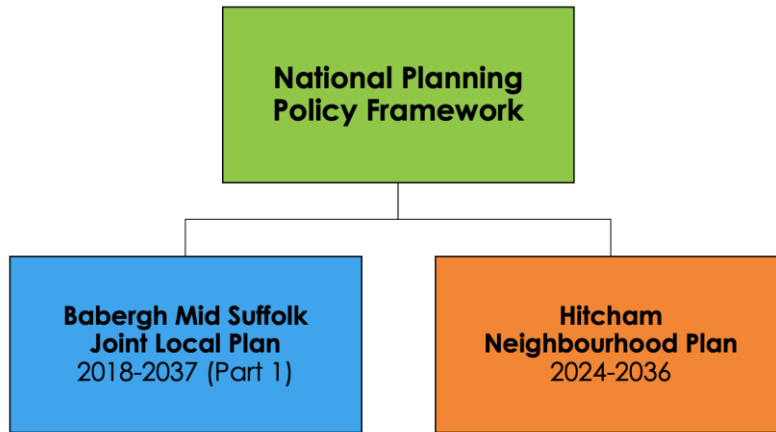


Figure 12: Spatial and strategic policy context: relationship between the NPPF, BMSJLP Part 1, and the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan. Own diagram.

Note: The Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (SWMLP) produced by Suffolk County Council also forms part of the development plan for the area.

### Policy framework for Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.6 Hitcham was identified as a 'hinterland village' in the settlement hierarchy of the adopted Babergh Core Strategy which looks to the period 2031. This indicated that hinterland villages would accommodate some development to help meet the needs within them. It was also originally intended that site allocations to meet housing and employment needs would be set out in the Site Allocations document where circumstances suggested this approach was necessary. However, that document was never progressed and was overtaken by work in the emerging BMSJLP. With regard to a built-up area boundary [the settlement boundary] the Core Strategy carried this over from the 2006 Babergh Local Plan (see figure 13).



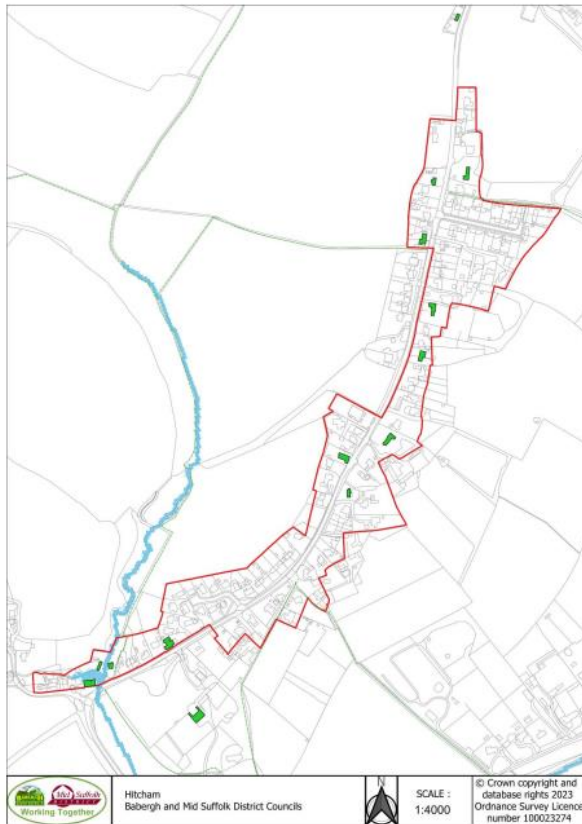


Figure 13: Adopted settlement boundary for Hitcham (Babergh Core Strategy). NOTE, See figure 23 for proposed new settlement boundary.

- 3.7 Due to the decision to undertake a full Joint Local Plan Review, it is not yet known whether further allocations in the parish will be proposed and/or whether the precise delineation of the 'settlement boundary' (which replaces the former BUAB) will change. The BMSJLP submitted for examination in March 2021 contained proposed settlement boundaries for Cross Green and Brettenham Road (The Water Run) and The Drive, identifying them as 'hamlets'. However these no longer have any status. Using evidence placed before the Part 1 BMSJLP examination it was expected that the housing requirement for the parish between 2018 and 2037 will be around 17 dwellings, all of which already have planning permission, have been or are being constructed. The reason for this is that the parish does not have a high level of local services, it is not on a main transport corridor, and it has experienced a high level of development (107 dwellings) between 2001 and 2020. However, this will not be confirmed until work on the BMSJLP Review is further progressed.
- 3.8 Furthermore, the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating further sites for development at this time due to the reasons outlined above. Instead, its proposed policies will focus on managing the impacts of any proposed growth and ensuring that the community benefits are realised. Should this position change significantly the Parish Council may choose to initiate a review of the Neighbourhood Plan.







## 4. How the Plan was prepared

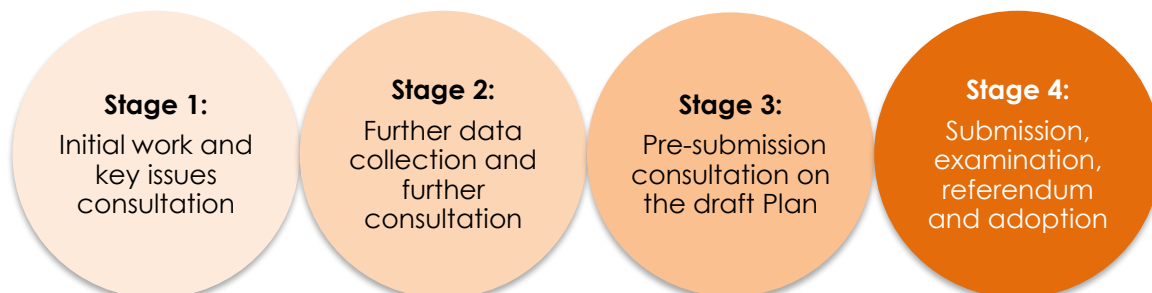
- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has prepared the Plan with support from a team of independent consultants. The process began in January 2020 when the Neighbourhood Area was designated.
- 4.2 The Plan has been commissioned by Hitcham Parish Council. The funding has come from a central government Locality grant and the Parish Council's own funds.



Figure 14: Initial Steering Group workshop, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

### Community engagement and consultation

- 4.3 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken with community engagement and consultation. The Steering Group have been innovative in their approach, using a range of engagement methods such as an online mapping application, in person stakeholder meetings, a household survey and a face-to-face drop-in exhibition. More details of all the consultation is outlined in the Consultation Statement, which accompanied the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to Babergh District Council in February 2025.
- 4.4 Below is a summary of each of the four 'community engagement' and consultation stages.



### Stage 1: Initial work and key issues consultation (September and October 2022).

- **Key issues drop-in consultation** (10am to 3pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022 at Hitcham Village Hall): The purpose of the consultation was to identify key issues and themes in the parish. 86 people attended and all comments left were written up and used to inform the objectives and policy writing.
- **Data profile for Hitcham** (November 2022): document containing key data for the parish, to inform policy writing.
- **Character appraisal** (September and October 2022): Steering Group split the built area of the parish into distinct character areas and described them in detail. The work fed into the Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes.



Figure 15: Photographs of drop-in consultation, October 2022.



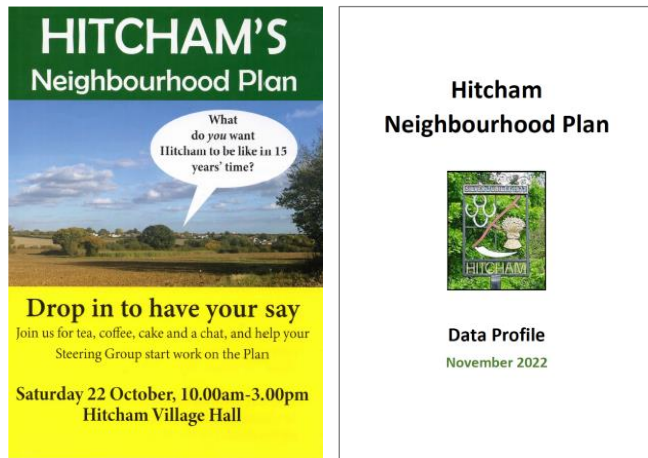


Figure 16 left: Flyer/poster for drop-in consultation, October 2022.  
Figure 17 right: Data profile.

## Stage 2: Commissioning specialist reports and household survey (November 2022 to April 2023).

- **Housing Needs Assessment** (January 2023): an independent assessment of housing needs for the parish, undertaken by AECOM. The report identifies suitable tenure, affordability and the need for Affordable Housing, type and size of housing need, and specialist housing for older people. Used to inform policy writing.
- **Household survey delivered** (November 2022): paper survey sent to households in the parish and available online through November into December 2022. 112 household responses were received out of a possible 399, a 33% response rate.
- **Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes** (April 2023): design codes for the five character areas covering the built up parts of Hitcham. Undertaken by AECOM, to support the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

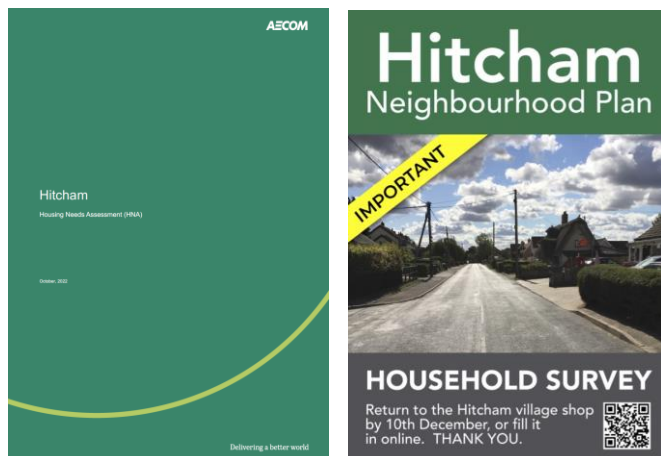


Figure 18 left: Hitcham Housing Needs Assessment.  
Figure 19 right: Poster for Household survey.

## Stage 3: Policy drafting and pre-submission consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan (regulation 14) (March 2023, then September 2023 to February 2024).

- Policy drafting began in March 2023, with the identification of objectives and key policy areas, although work stopped in April 2023 until the Locality Funding was secured in September 2023.

- Draft Neighbourhood Plan was out for pre-submission consultation (from 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024 until 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024). It was sent to statutory agencies and available for residents to comment.
- Consultation launched with an exhibition on 13<sup>th</sup> July at the Village Hall including consultation response forms. Subsequently the documents and response form were available at All Saints Church, the Village Shop and on the Parish Council website.
- Responses were received from statutory consultees and from over 40 local residents. In total almost 250 individual comments were made.

#### 4.5 Key Issues arising from Pre-Submission Consultation were as follows:

1. Map amendments, correction of errors, grammar and spelling.
2. Changes to policy wording to address issues of clarity.
3. Removal of two local green spaces as requested by the landowner.
4. References to other strategies and plans as requested by statutory consultees.
5. Preparation of map showing community facilities.
6. Amendments to Policy HIT10 to reflect the most up to date position with biodiversity net gain.
7. Updates to NPPF references to reflect NPPF 2024.
8. Updates to the settlement boundary to reflect completed development.



Figure 20: Flyer/poster for pre-submission consultation.

#### Stage 4: Submission, examination, referendum and adoption (February 2025 to June 2025).

- Modifications were made to the Neighbourhood Plan, following the pre-submission consultation.
- The submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to Babergh District Council with supporting documents took place in February 2025.
- The Examination took place between May and June 2025.
- Referendum and adoption in Autumn 2025



## Communication

- 4.6 Communicating with residents and businesses through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan was particularly important during the initial stages of forming an evidence base and establishing key issues and themes.
- 4.7 A dedicated Neighbourhood Plan page was added to the Parish Council website, [www.hitcham-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan](http://www.hitcham-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan). The page contains information about the developing Plan.
- 4.8 There is a combined parishes magazine that serves Hitcham which was used to encourage parishioners to participate in the Neighbourhood Plan process and was used to advertise the initial consultation drop-in event.
- 4.9 Facebook, posters, flyers and a banner were used to promote the work of the Neighbourhood Plan. An update for the Parish Council on the Neighbourhood Plan progress was presented at their bi-monthly meetings.
- 4.10 A summary of the results of the household survey were made available on the Neighbourhood Plan webpage.



Figure 21: Banner used for Neighbourhood Plan drop-in consultation.





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QUI EST IN ME  
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST



# 5. Vision and objectives

5.1 It is important that any Neighbourhood Plan contains a short and simple vision statement which sums up the community's aim for the future of the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan vision is an overarching statement describing what Hitcham should be like at the end of the Plan period i.e., 2037. It has been developed with local people and has been refined and adapted through consultation. The result is a vision statement which captures the overarching spirit and ambition of the local community and the Neighbourhood Plan.

VISION	<p><b>A vision for Hitcham</b></p> <p>The parish of Hitcham will have a range of housing types and tenures to suit all ages, including Affordable Housing, supported by good rural village amenities. Development will be well designed, environmentally sustainable and fit within the character of the parish. Green spaces, the natural environment and local heritage will be protected, including the distinctive character of the individual hamlets. Hitcham will continue to be an attractive village that meets the developing needs of a community where people choose to live, work and visit.</p>
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5.2 The vision underpins the objective and policies of the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan and is referred to throughout.

5.3 From the vision flows the different objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and from there, the policies. The diagram below outlines this relationship.

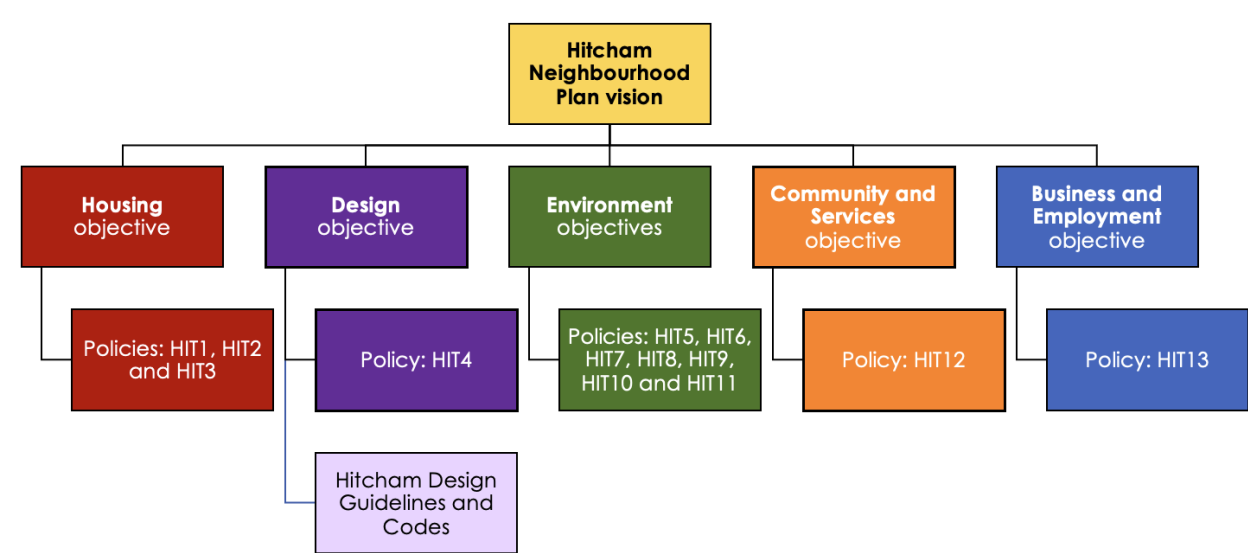


Figure 22: Structure of the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.4 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are broad statements of intent which are there to help deliver the vision and link to the issues that Hitcham is seeking to address. They have been drafted using themes picked up at an early stage and have been refined through the community consultation exercises.
- 5.5 The overarching aim of the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as outlined in the NPPF. Sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## Objectives

### Housing OBJECTIVE

**Objective 1: To ensure that new residential development meets the needs of the parish by delivering smaller, affordable, energy efficient homes suitable for all ages which enable a mixed and sustainable community.**

### Design OBJECTIVE

**Objective 2: To require new development within the parish to be sensitively designed and of high quality which respects the character of its immediate surroundings and reflects the distinctive character and identity of the village and the individual hamlets.**

### Environment OBJECTIVES

**Objective 3: To preserve the rural character and tranquillity of the parish by protecting and enhancing the existing green spaces, built heritage, landscape and providing a measurable net gain in biodiversity.**

**Objective 4: To improve the health and well-being of the community through promoting accessibility to and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.**

### Community and services OBJECTIVE

**Objective 5: To sustain and enhance the important existing village facilities and support the development of appropriate new facilities.**

### Business and employment OBJECTIVE

**Objective 6: To support small scale rural enterprise, agricultural diversification and opportunities for homeworking.**



## 6. Policies

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### Introduction to policies

- 6.1 The vision and objectives have provided the framework with which to develop the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Each policy relates to a particular objective under the following five themes: Housing, Design; Environment, Community and Services; Business and Employment.
- 6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is first and foremost a land-use document for planning purposes. All policies in the Plan have been derived from a series of consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and desk research, which provide the justification and evidence base for their selection.
- 6.3 The Neighbourhood Plan policies follow government guidance. They exist to:
- Set out locally led requirements in advance for new development in the parish.
  - Inform and guide decisions on planning applications.
  - Ensure that the multitude of individual decisions add up to something coherent for the area as a whole<sup>5</sup>.
- 6.4 The overarching aim of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as outlined in the NPPF. Achieving sustainable development through planning requires the balancing of three interdependent and overarching objectives as set out in the NPPF:
- a. An economic objective – to help build 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, innovation and improved productivity and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
  - b. A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - c. An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making efficient use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 6.5 To aid interpretation for decision makers and planning applicants, each policy is accompanied by supporting text, which includes context for the theme, the views of residents, guidelines and reference to strategic plans. This is set out before each of the policies.

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<sup>5</sup> Tony Burton, Writing Planning Policies, Locality.

## Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan policies

### Housing POLICIES

HIT1: New housing development  
HIT2: Housing Mix  
HIT3: Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

### Design POLICY

HIT4: Design

### Environment POLICIES

HIT5: Built and Historic Environment  
HIT6: Non-designated Heritage Assets  
HIT7: Local Green Spaces  
HIT8: Landscape and important views  
HIT9: Dark skies  
HIT10: Natural Assets  
HIT11: Accessibility and connectivity

### Community and Services POLICY

HIT12: Community facilities

### Business and Employment POLICY

HIT13: Business and rural diversification

## Potential community projects

- 6.6 The Neighbourhood Plan is principally concerned with land use planning matters. However, it is inevitable that through public consultation and discussion with local stakeholders, that issues will emerge that are not land use planning matters and therefore not within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan but are of legitimate concern to local people. These issues can be dealt with separately as 'projects' or community aspirations outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

### Projects

1. Investigate the potential for community energy generation projects.
2. Explore the potential for Quiet Lanes.



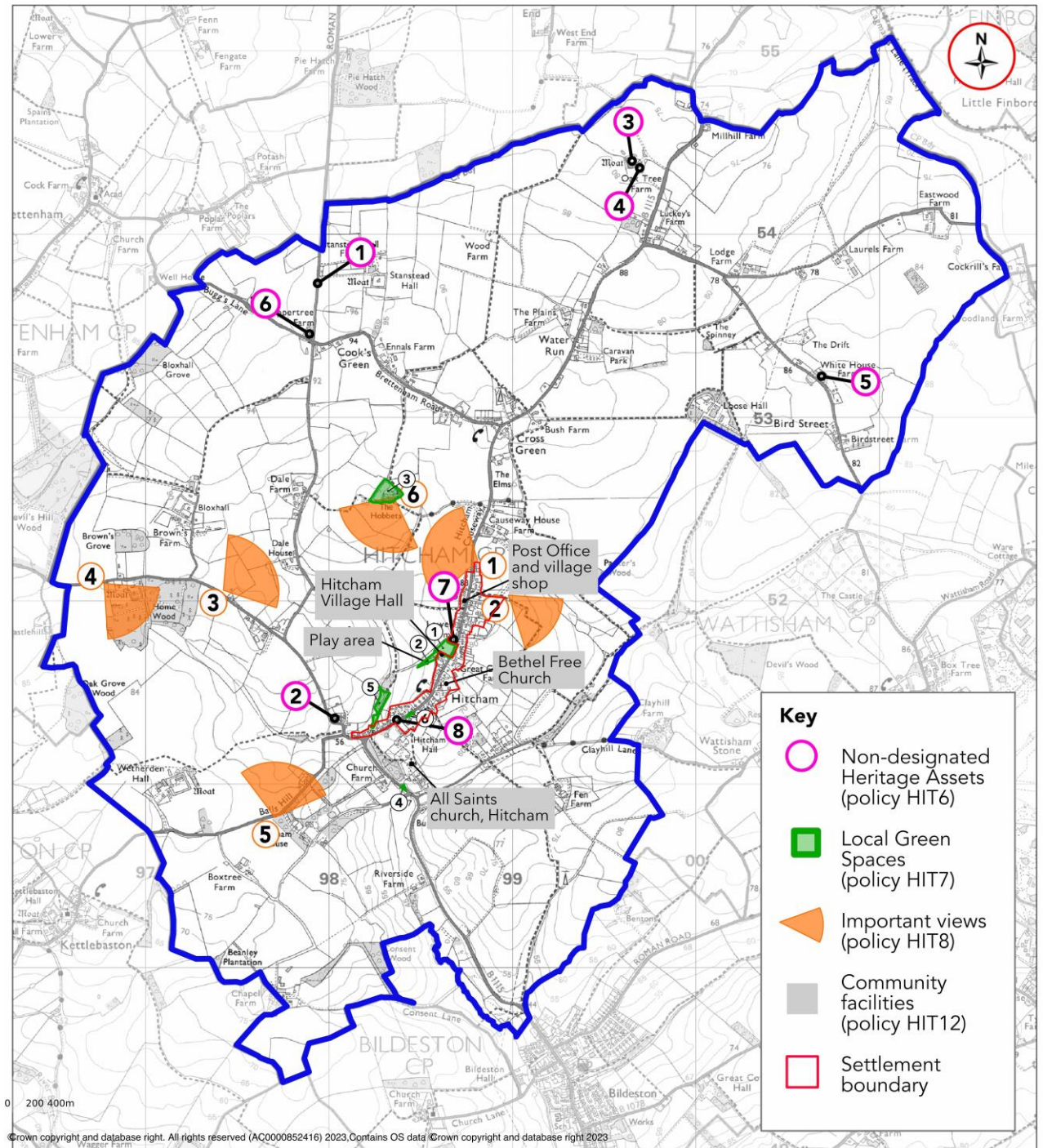


Figure 23: Policies map (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary



## 7. Housing

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**Objective 1: To ensure that new residential development meets the needs of the parish by delivering smaller, affordable, energy efficient homes suitable for all ages which enable a mixed and sustainable community.**

### Housing

- 7.1 This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that future development in Hitcham is sustainable and reflects the local character, circumstances, needs and opportunities of the parish.
- 7.2 The scale and location of future housing growth within a parish is often one of the key drivers for local communities deciding to embark upon the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan is no exception, and the issue is one of the most commonly raised through community consultation exercises.
- 7.3 Government guidance contained in the NPPF advises that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers the Neighbourhood Area.
- 7.4 As outlined earlier, the parish has seen a high level of new development since 2000 without any consequent or proportional increase in local services or facilities. The Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey results revealed limited support for new housing in the parish and consequently the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating further sites for development at this time. However, if new housing is to occur over the Plan period, residents indicated that this should be 'infill', small sites of up to six dwellings and take place in the main built-up part of the village around the Causeway, with a preference to use brown field sites. There was little support for further new housing development in the smaller hamlets and it was considered important to retain the rural character of the parish and ensure that each of the hamlets remain individual and distinct. Furthermore, it was considered important to avoid promoting development that may result in the coalescence or joining up of the individual hamlets or parts thereof.
- 7.5 For the purposes of the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan, it is proposed to use an amended settlement boundary which is focussed on the main built-up area of the village, which stretches along the length of The Causeway and is



largely based on the adopted settlement boundary updated to reflect recent completions as shown below.

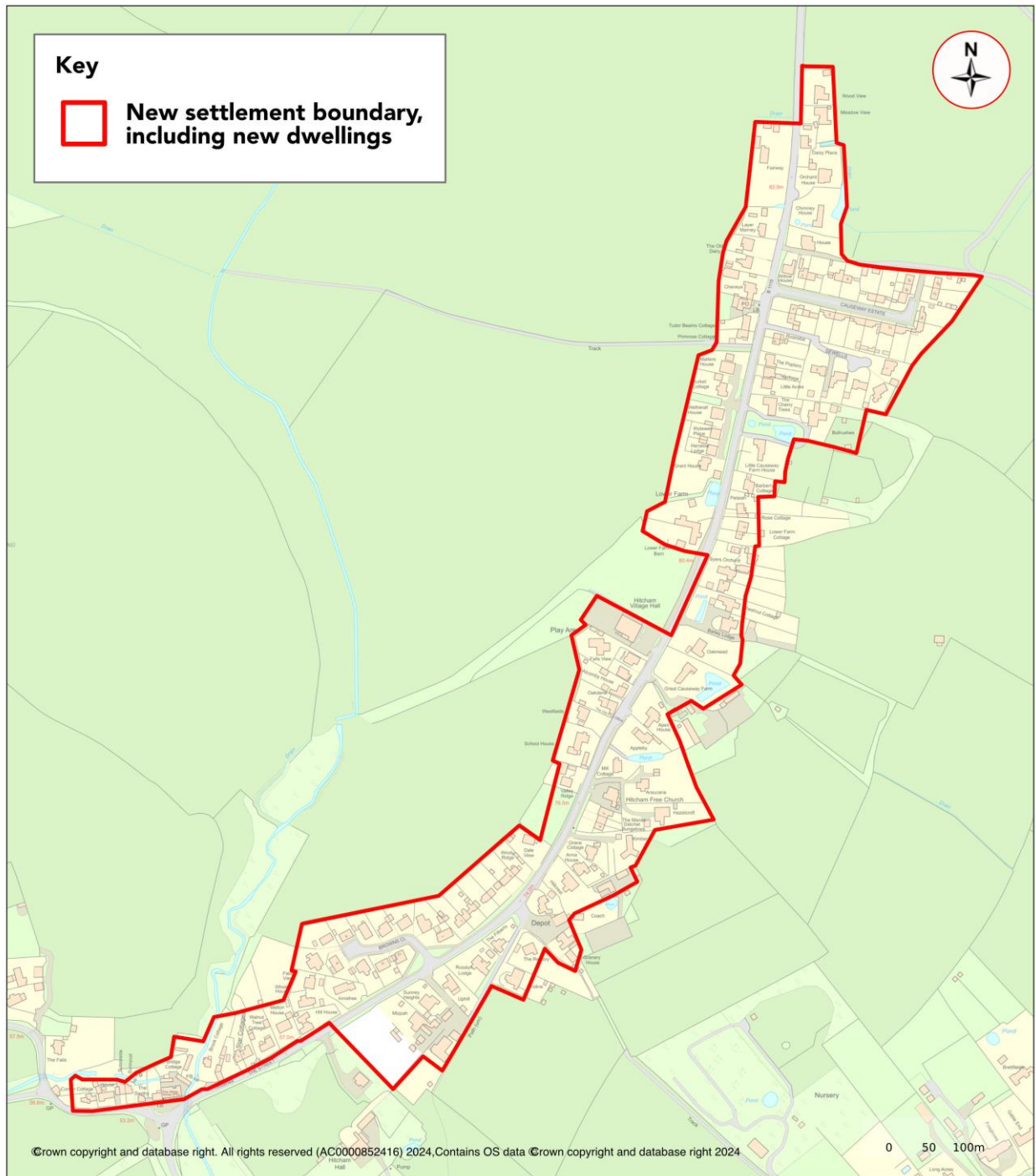


Figure 24: Proposed new settlement boundary, including new dwellings (source: Parish Online, with own annotations).

<b>POLICY</b>	<p><b>HIT1: New housing development</b></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with the designation of Hitcham in the relevant adopted settlement hierarchy, taking into account the rural character of the parish.</p> <p>The focus for new development will be within the adopted settlement boundary, (as defined on Figure 24 and the Policies Map), where it can best integrate with existing development and benefit from proximity to the existing community infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Infill development</b></p> <p>Within the defined settlement boundary, proposals for small windfall sites consisting of individual dwellings or small groups of up to six dwellings will only be supported where they are physically connected to the existing built-up area and would enhance its form, character and setting.</p> <p>Proposals for new infill development should carefully consider and seek to limit obstruction of any Important Views. Tandem<sup>6</sup> development should not disrupt the settlement pattern and must have sufficient off-road parking<sup>7</sup> and garden space for the new development. Infill development should not overwhelm neighbouring dwellings and should be of a similar scale and height to adjoining properties.</p> <p>Outside the defined settlement boundary, proposals for new housing development including the conversion of existing buildings, such as barns and farm buildings<sup>8</sup>, self-build properties, and replacement dwellings will only be permitted where they are in accordance with national and district level<sup>9</sup> policies.</p> <p>Proposals for new development outside the distinct hamlets within the parish, as identified in the Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes (July 2025) should preserve the individual identity and separation of the distinct hamlets within the parish and should avoid their coalescence.</p>
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## Housing mix

- 7.6 In addition to the issues identified above, the size, type and tenure of any new housing is also a key issue for local communities. The specific mix of housing will clearly have an impact on the make-up of the future community and therefore careful thought needs to be applied to determining that mix.

<sup>6</sup> Tandem Development is a form of infill where a new dwelling is placed immediately behind an existing dwelling and is serviced by the same vehicular access.

<sup>7</sup> See Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2023 <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/FINAL-VERSION-Suffolk-Guidance-for-Parking-v5-October-2023.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Proposals for the conversion of historic agricultural buildings should be accompanied by a heritage statement including internal and external photographs.

<sup>9</sup> Adopted Local Plan



- 7.7 Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes is essential to support a sustainable, vibrant, and mixed community. Where housing is to take place in the parish it should be of an appropriate size and type which meets the current needs of all sectors of the community as well as those in the future. Community consultation revealed that 78% said that they would not be looking to move within the next five years. Those who were looking to move were seeking a smaller property with a particular interest in two and three bedroom houses or bungalows. However, most were anticipating buying a house on the open market with only 21% interested in affordable or social rented housing. There was interest in having a range of types of accommodation within the parish to meet changing needs and to cater for any needs that are currently not being met.

### **Affordable Housing**

- 7.8 Affordable Housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market, which includes housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership. Annex 2 of the NPPF (2023) sets out the definition of affordable housing and is split into the following four main categories:
- Affordable Housing for rent,
  - Starter Homes,
  - Discounted market housing for sale, and
  - Other affordable routes to home ownership (includes shared ownership).
- 7.9 Affordable housing is generally delivered through the planning system, in two ways either as a proportion of the total number of dwellings coming forward on a major housing development site (See glossary for definition) or via the rural exception site route. The first mechanism is generally used to provide housing for those in most need from across the district whilst the second option can be more tailored to meeting a more localised housing need including those with a local connection to the parish. Exception sites can be delivered by a Registered Housing Provider or by a Community-led Housing Trust
- 7.10 The Steering Group commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for Hittham to explore issues of housing need in more detail. The work was undertaken by consultants AECOM and the final report completed in January 2023 provides supporting evidence for this Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Key findings from the AECOM Housing Needs Assessment**

#### **Tenure**

- 7.11 Census data suggests that Hittham has a tenure profile which is generally similar to the trend found in the district as a whole with a high proportion of the parish population owning their own homes (76 per cent). However, Hittham does have a smaller socially rented stock than the district average. Both the parish and the district have a higher proportion of the population who own their own homes than the national average. Between 2001 and 2011, the private rental sector in Hittham grew by 43 per cent, which is slower

than the growth of 101% seen in the district over the same time period, and the 82% growth rate nationally.

### **Affordability**

- 7.12 At the time of writing, (March 2023) the median house price in Hitcham was £409,500, having grown by 17% since 2012. Lower quartile prices grew at a slightly faster rate of 20% over the last decade and are currently in the region of £263,125.
- 7.13 Average household incomes in Hitcham are estimated to be around £44,000, though many households have substantially lower incomes. The lower quartile individual income (that of the lowest earning 25% of people) is £17,534 in 2020, so a household with two lower earners could be expected to earn around £35,068.
- 7.14 There are particularly acute issues of affordability in Hitcham, with the median house price requiring an income of £105,300, which is 139% above the average income. Moreover, purchasing an entry level new build home in Hitcham would still require an income 64% above that of the average earner. Issues of affordability would be felt even more severely by those on lower incomes.
- 7.15 Affordability is improved in the rental market and would be accessible to those households on average incomes. However, it would still present issues of affordability to households on lower incomes. It should be noted that at the time of the study (October 2022) there was a scarcity of private rental accommodation on offer in Hitcham, which means the figures presented in this report may not fully reflect the lived experiences of private renters in Hitcham.
- 7.16 Given the large gap between affordability of renting and ownership, affordable home ownership products offer good potential to extend home ownership in the parish. To be considered affordable to average earners, First Homes would need to be offered at a minimum discount of 40 per cent, and shared ownerships at an equity share of 25% would be comfortably affordable for households on average incomes. To be accessible to households with two lower earners, both First Homes at a 50% discount and shared ownerships at a 25% equity share would be marginally affordable.
- 7.17 Finally, for those still unable to afford subsidised routes to home ownership or to rent from a private landlord, affordable and social rented housing performs a vital function.

### **Quantity of affordable housing to plan for**

- 7.18 A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was completed for the Ipswich and Waveney area in 2017 which considered the housing needs of the district and can be used to give an indication of the unmet need for affordable housing in Hitcham. When the figures for the full HMA area are prorated to the Neighbourhood Area population (based on Hitcham representing 0.14% of the full HMA population), it would be expected that an addition of two new



affordable homes per annum are required to meet the needs of the population.

- 7.19 Given the date of the relevant SHMA, and the fact that it is conducted on a much larger scale than the Neighbourhood Area it is worthwhile using AECOM's own modelling to establish a more localised picture of the unmet need in the parish. AECOM's model suggests a need for two units for affordable rented and 44 units for affordable ownership over the plan period, representing an annualised total need for three new affordable units per annum.
- 7.20 This larger estimate reflects the substantial potential demand from households in the private rented sector who would prefer to buy. In practice, many of these households have other options in the market and may not take up affordable home ownership if it were available in Hitcham. This estimate is likely to represent the upper end of potential demand for these products. Given that Hitcham is unlikely to see a significant amount of housing development until provided with an updated housing requirement figure, the Neighbourhood Plan may wish to focus on delivering affordable rental units which respond to the most acute need in the parish.
- 7.21 This HNA would suggest a tenure mix in Hitcham of 50% affordable rented and 50% affordable ownership accommodation. This is due to the particularly acute levels of unaffordability in the parish. Whilst the modelling does suggest an increased demand for ownership products, it is likely that those seeking this option are already adequately housed, the most stress is likely to be felt by those earning the least, who would benefit from an increase in the provision of socially rented housing.

### ***Delivery expectations and recommended tenure split***

- 7.22 On the basis that Hitcham has already experienced relatively high levels of new development for a parish of its size and level of services, it is difficult to establish the number of affordable homes that might be delivered over the Neighbourhood Plan period. Moreover, without the allocation of new sites it is likely that any new housing that comes forward in the parish does so in small and infill sites which may not trigger the threshold for affordable housing.
- 7.23 Affordable housing is typically provided and made financially viable by its inclusion as a proportion of larger market developments, as guided by Local Plan policy. However, if the community wishes to boost the supply of affordable housing, there are other, more proactive routes available for its provision. For example, identifying exception sites, or developing community land trusts to deliver community led housing are all ways of boosting the supply of affordable housing. To deliver Affordable Housing in Hitcham which provides for both rented and home ownership needs, it is likely that an Affordable Housing- led scheme would be needed.

## **Type and size**

- 7.24 The HNA provides an indication of the likely need for different types and sizes of homes based on demographic change. It is important to remember that other factors should be considered in determining the dwelling mix that is desirable in the parish or on any particular site. These include the specific characteristics of the nearby stock of housing (such as its condition and design), the role of the Neighbourhood Area within the wider housing market area (linked to any Local Authority strategies or plans) and site-specific factors which may justify a particular dwelling mix.

## **Current housing stock and demographic change**

- 7.25 Currently, there are an estimated 374 dwellings in Hitcham (based on the number of dwellings completed since the 2011 Census). There is a limited diversity in the Hitcham housing mix, with a majority of homes being either detached or semi-detached (cumulatively 93 per cent), with very few terraced dwellings or flats on offer in the Parish (cumulatively 7 per cent). This is a significant variation with patterns observed across Babergh and England in terms of a higher-than-average proportion of detached and semi-detached dwellings on offer in the Parish.
- 7.26 In terms of dwelling size, Hitcham has a high proportion of mid-larger sized homes of three or more bedrooms, which represent an estimated 70% of the housing stock. This is slightly higher than the average in Babergh and nationally, but not a significant deviation. There is a lack of smaller one bed dwellings in both the Neighbourhood Area and the District in comparison to the national averages. Generally, the data does suggest a housing profile that is biased towards family sized accommodation, albeit increasingly occupied by older households.
- 7.27 Hitcham has a population that is dominated by older people and families, with 2021 census figures indicating a population of 785. Those aged 45+ account for approximately 67% of the overall population in the parish. When compared to Babergh and England, Hitcham has a population profile with an older bias, with there being a decrease in the proportion of those aged 16-44 when compared to district and national trends.
- 7.28 Household projections suggest this trend is likely to continue into the future, and Hitcham could see a percentage increase of 73% in its older population over the Neighbourhood Plan period. This is in contrast to younger age groups which are either projected to stagnate or decline in number.

## **The future housing mix**

- 7.29 The HNA provides an insight into the likely need for different sizes of homes based on projected demographic change and gaps within the existing housing stock. To accommodate the future population of Hitcham and diversify the housing mix, AECOM's modelling suggests prioritising the provision of homes with two or three bedrooms.



- 7.30 It should be noted that this model is a fairly blunt indicator of future needs. It does not reflect the preferences of individuals or their potential desire to live in larger dwellings than they 'need'. For this reason, it may not be advisable to restrict future housing delivery too strictly to smaller dwelling sizes as the model suggests. An additional factor is the existing historic character and density of the built environment, which may not be well-suited to flats – which is the form that one/two -bedroom dwellings typically tend to take. In summary, there are good reasons to depart from the results of the HNA model to allow for more balance – retaining the emphasis on smaller homes but to a lower degree – if this aligns with the objectives of the community.
- 7.31 It is also important to remember that other factors should be considered in determining the overall dwelling mix that is desirable in the parish or on any particular site. These include the specific characteristics of the nearby stock of housing (such as its condition and design), the role of the parish or site within the wider housing market area (linked to any Local Authority strategies or plans) and site-specific factors which may justify a particular dwelling mix.

### ***Specialist Housing for Older People***

- 7.32 The population profile suggests that there are currently around 97 individuals aged 75 or over living in Hitcham. This has grown from 76 in 2011 and is projected to increase to 153 by the end of the Neighbourhood Plan period in 2037. This projection would suggest that people aged 75+ represent 17% of the total population of Hitcham by 2017. The older population is projected to almost double between the 2011 Census and the end of the Neighbourhood Plan period.
- 7.33 At present there is no form of specialist care housing facilities on offer in the parish. The potential need for specialist housing with some form of additional care for older people can be estimated by bringing together data on population projections, rates of disability, and what tenure of housing the current 55-75 cohort occupy in the Neighbourhood Area. This can be sense-checked using a toolkit based on national research and assumptions.
- 7.34 These two methods of estimating the future need in Hitcham produce a range of 19 to 22 specialist accommodation units that might be required during the Plan period. These estimates are based on the projected growth of the older population from the Census figures – with the additional 77 people equating to approximately 55 households. In turn, it is assumed that a majority of the older population accounted for in the 2011 Census are already well accommodated in the existing housing stock.
- 7.35 Given that Hitcham is a small village and has exceeded its indicative 2023, housing requirement figure it is unlikely that any substantive specialist accommodation scheme is likely to come forward during the plan period. However, some of this may be able to be addressed if new housing does come forward through the standards of accessibility and adaptability in new development to be met in the Local Plan.
- 7.36 Alongside the need for specialist housing to be provided in accessible locations, a further important requirement is for cost effectiveness and

economies of scale. This can be achieved by serving the specialist housing needs arising from a number of different locations and/or Neighbourhood Areas from a single, centralised point (i.e., what is sometimes referred to as a 'hub-and-spoke' model). It is considered that Hitcham's expected position in the settlement hierarchy makes it a relatively less suitable location for specialist accommodation on the basis of the accessibility criteria and the considerations of cost-effectiveness above. As such, noting that there is no specific requirement or obligation to provide the specialist accommodation need arising from Hitcham entirely within the Neighbourhood Area boundaries, it is recommended it could be provided in a 'hub and spoke' model. In the case of Hitcham, either Hadleigh or Stowmarket are considered to have potential to accommodate the specialist housing need arising from the Neighbourhood Area (i.e., to be the hub in the hub-and-spoke model). If this were to take place, then the number of specialist dwellings to be provided and the overall dwellings target for the Neighbourhood Area itself would not overlap.

- 7.37 Wherever specialist housing is to be accommodated, partnership working with specialist developers is recommended, so as to introduce a greater degree of choice into the housing options for older people who wish to move in later life.
- 7.38 **Policy HIT2** below has been devised on the basis of both the results of the Housing Needs Assessment and the results of community consultation undertaken to date.

POLICY	<p><b>HIT2: Housing mix</b></p> <p>Proposals for new housing should provide for and contribute to a mix of housing that meets local needs (both now and in the future) and enables the creation of a mixed and balanced community.</p> <p>In line with the latest evidence of need<sup>10</sup>, proposals should in particular include elements of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small and medium sized, two bed and three bed homes suitable for families.</li> <li>• Housing, such as bungalows, which is capable of being adapted to meet changing needs or downsizing such as the lifetime homes standard.<sup>11</sup></li> </ul> <p>Where Affordable Housing is proposed, it should include both affordable routes to home ownership and housing for rent, including social and affordable rents. Where 'First Homes' are to be provided this should be at a 40% discount<sup>12</sup>.</p>
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<sup>10</sup> AECOM Hitcham HNA or successor document

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes-html-version>

<sup>12</sup> This 40% discount level also applies on First Homes exception sites



## Rural exception sites and community-led housing

- 7.39 As mentioned above, a common mechanism for delivering Affordable Housing is through the use of 'Rural Exception Sites' or community-led development sites. Depending on the delivery mechanism, these are sites outside of but otherwise well related to the settlement boundary or are sites immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary. In other words, they are sites that would not otherwise be policy compliant. The former usually require the involvement of either the District Council or a Housing Association or other form of Registered Social Landlord and the latter by 'not for profit' organisations set up primarily for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of the local community e.g. a Community Land Trust (CLT). Such developments also tend to be small scale.
- 7.40 Paragraph 76b of the NPPF 2024, restricts Community Led Developments to one hectare in size or a maximum of 5% of the size of the existing settlement but does indicate that they should be supported on sites that would not otherwise be suitable as rural exception sites. These sites should be on land which is not already allocated for housing and should be adjacent to existing settlements and proportionate in size to them.<sup>13</sup>
- 7.41 The result of the delineation of the settlement boundary in Hitcham is that there is limited space for development within it and that development outside of it is also controlled (see **Policy HIT1**). By limiting development beyond settlement boundaries, landowner expectations of open market housing development (hope value) is lower, and this in turn lowers land values. This allows for the development of 'exception site' style policies which allow for certain types of development such as 100% affordable housing schemes which wouldn't otherwise be viable if they were competing for land with open market housing. This approach is supported by national planning policy and reinforced by the most recent NPPF.
- 7.42 To be acceptable, the housing proposed on exception sites should relate to an identified local need. The need may be identified through, for example, a community planning exercise or a local housing needs survey. Community-led development can be particularly effective where it can be demonstrated that it is fulfilling a genuine identified housing need and where there is evidence of community support and participation in the proposal. Developments of this kind are often best placed to accommodate specifically identified local needs where the future occupants have a 'local connection' to the parish.
- 7.43 It is important that housing delivered in this way remains available to meet identified housing need in perpetuity. The policy is exceptional in that it allows residential development in areas that would not otherwise be policy compliant, however all other usual planning criteria e.g. layout, design etc are still applicable.

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<sup>13</sup> Community-led exception sites should not be larger than one hectare or exceed five % of the size of the settlement.

- 7.44 Given the results of the Housing Needs Assessment and the fact that there is likely to be limited scope for the delivery of affordable housing as part of a larger development scheme, this Neighbourhood Plan offers support for the principle of the delivery of Affordable Housing through exception sites, including community-led schemes in the form of **Policy HIT3 below**.

<p><b>POLICY</b></p>	<p><b>HIT3: Affordable Housing on rural exception sites and community-led housing sites</b></p> <p>Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on sites outside of but immediately adjacent to, or otherwise well related to the settlement boundary will be supported where:</p> <p><b>Principle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A proven need for such housing can be demonstrated and that the type of accommodation proposed will contribute to meeting this proven need.</li> <li>b. The housing is offered in the first instance to people with a demonstrable local connection to Hitcham as set out in the 'Gateway to Homechoice (Choice Based Letting Scheme) Allocations Policy 2022' (or successor document).</li> <li>c. The housing remains affordable and available in perpetuity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Location</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. The site is self-contained, has logical natural boundaries, and can be easily connected to community facilities such as the shop and the village hall e.g. the area around The Causeway.</li> <li>e. The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact upon the historic or natural assets of the parish.</li> <li>f. The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact upon highway safety.</li> <li>g. The proposal is well designed and landscaped and is appropriate in size/scale, layout, and character to its setting and to the rest of the village.</li> <li>h. Effective pedestrian and cycle connections between the site and the village services and facilities i.e the shop and the village hall can be provided.</li> </ul> <p>The development of such housing should be consistent with other policies in this plan governing design, appearance, layout, amenity, highway safety, impacts on historic and natural environment and flood risk.</p> <p>The occupation of this housing should be secured through a legal agreement attached to the planning consent for the housing.</p>
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# Design

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**Objective 2: To require new development within the parish to be sensitively designed and of high quality which respects the character of its immediate surroundings and reflects the distinctive character and identity of the village and the individual hamlets.**

## Good design

- 8.1 One of the determinants of whether any new development is successful or not will be dependent upon how well it is considered to integrate with its surroundings. Matters such as design, impact on local character, layout and scale are the most common issues that will cause the local community concerns about any proposed new development. If a community believes that it has been involved in and been able to influence the design of a development at an early stage, the higher the likelihood that the development will be considered to be acceptable.
- 8.2 Whilst to an extent design and impact on local character are subjective judgments, these can be influenced by breaking design elements down into component parts and attempting to address them. Whether a proposed new development relates well to and enhances the existing character and context, is one of the most common judgments to be made, yet there is often very little evidence or guidance to assist local people in making that judgement.
- 8.3 A key purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is not only to help influence the designers and proposers of development at an early stage of formulating their proposals, but also to help promote an understanding of what elements make up the character of the area and what constitutes good design that respects local character.
- 8.4 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF describes it as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development proposals acceptable to communities. Effective engagement between applicants, communities and local planning authorities is essential.

- 8.5 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states 'Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.' Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of an area and how they should be reflected in development.
- 8.6 In addition, the NPPF makes clear that local planning authorities should ensure that visual tools such as design codes and guides are used to inform development proposals to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage and reflect local character and preferences. They should provide a framework for creating high-quality places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design to inform development proposals. It also makes clear that the level of detail and degree of prescription within design codes and guides should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.
- 8.7 Design coding is one tool available to local planning authorities, communities, and developers to define and deliver design quality, in addition to design guides, planning briefs, heritage characterisation studies, standards and masterplans as set out in the NPPF and planning practice guidance. A design code is a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that are visual and numerical wherever possible to provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.
- 8.8 In Autumn 2022, the Steering Group commissioned consultants AECOM to undertake Design Guidelines and Codes for the Parish. The AECOM work was completed in January 2025 and updated in July 2025. It is a supporting document to the Neighbourhood Plan. The work has been used to inform **Policy HIT4** below.
- 8.9 The Design Guidelines and Codes built on the Character Appraisal work of the Steering Group which identified five geographical areas in the parish with distinctive characteristics. Key issues identified by early consultation with the community recognised that the village currently follows a linear pattern of development. It was felt that the Neighbourhood Plan should protect Hitcham's variety of architectural styles and reinforce Suffolk vernacular details such as vibrant colours and architectural features important to Hitcham's identity. The result of the early community drop-in session indicated that residents felt that 'taller' development (i.e. that over 3 storeys) should be discouraged, adaptable lifetime homes should be supported, landscape views and visual amenity should be protected, green networks and green edges should be enhanced, and the rural and agricultural environment should be protected. The Design Code work involved a detailed analysis of the local character of the parish, developed some strategic design guidelines and identified a palette of materials which should influence the design of future development. In addition, the report provides specific guidance to be used by the Parish Council when assessing and responding to consultation in future planning applications for new development.



- 8.10 The Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey carried out in November and December 2022, asked residents for their views on design. This sparked the receipt of a wide range of views on a number of issues. The survey results revealed particular support for homes no higher than two storeys (90.9 per cent), trees, hedges and planting (86.4 per cent), off street parking (82.7 per cent), low carbon/energy efficient design (65.5 per cent) and gardens (60 per cent). Low levels of support were identified for uniform housing (1.8 per cent), homes no higher than three storeys (1.8 per cent), modern design (2.7 per cent) and on street parking (3.6 per cent). It has therefore been important to ensure that the Design Code work undertaken by AECOM reflects the key issues and **Policy HIT4** below has been developed accordingly. The policy is applicable to all new housing developments of any scale, although some criteria may not be appropriate for individual dwellings and the policy should therefore be applied proportionately.

#### **HIT4: Design**

All new development in Hitcham should reflect the local distinctiveness and rural character of the parish and seek to raise the overall quality and design of new buildings.

Proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes (July 2025) for the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Proposals for all new development, including new houses, extensions and other non-residential uses should accord with the following criteria, which should be applied, appropriately and on a proportional basis:

##### **Layout and rural character**

- a. Proposals for new development should be based on an understanding of the relevant geographical area within which the proposal falls and should demonstrate how this has influenced the development of the proposal.
- b. New developments should reflect the informal style of the village by providing subtle variety in form and roofline.
- c. Boundary treatments should be delineated by natural features such as hedgerows, shrubs and trees.
- d. Existing mature hedgerows and trees should be retained where possible.
- e. Boundaries which give an urban appearance such as fencing and high walls should be avoided.
- f. New developments should be oriented so that they do not negatively impact on important views.

##### **Style and materials**

- g. Proposals should seek to complement existing development across Hitcham, having regard to the palette of materials identified in the Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes (July 2025). This includes colours such as terracotta, pink, ochre and grey/brown and materials such as coloured render, red brick, red pantiles and weatherboarding.
- h. Windows in new development should take their reference from the predominantly asymmetrical treatment of surrounding dwellings.
- i. Rooflines in new developments should be compatible with the surrounding roof angles and ensure that development is not overbearing nor overshadows surrounding development.
- j. Where developments of more than one dwelling are proposed, the dwelling designs should seek to provide architectural variety to the streetscape.

##### **Village setting and landscaping**

- k. New residential development should not be higher than two storeys without justification.
- l. New development must be positioned in a way to retain and enhance valuable sight lines to important views and should be generously spaced to create views in-between dwellings.



- m. New development should integrate into its surroundings through the use of planting and soft landscaping. Innovative use of hedges and flower beds used to mark the boundaries between public and private spaces is encouraged.
- n. New developments should include provision for front and back gardens and provide additional space for adequate storage for recycling and refuse.
- o. All new development should include tree-lined streets unless in specific cases there are clear justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.

#### **Drainage**

- p. Areas of hard paving should be avoided with a preference for permeable surfaces to be used for parking and amenity areas to avoid run-off and localised flooding.
- q. The incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems is encouraged to protect against pollution, provide drainage and wider amenity, biodiversity and recreational benefits.

#### **Connections and parking<sup>14</sup>**

- r. Where appropriate, new developments should seek to provide direct connections to community facilities, community buildings, bus stops, or Public Rights of Way.
- s. New routes should create multiple connections and a choice of routes where possible.
- t. New routes should include connections outwards into the surrounding landscape.
- u. New developments should provide adequate car parking spaces to prevent on-street parking and facilitate visitor parking.

#### **Environmental design**

- v. Proposals that combine energy efficient construction, and lighting with renewable energy systems, such as solar water heating and solar electricity are encouraged.
- w. Proposals for residential and non-residential developments should consider resilience to climate change, for example flood and heat resistance, and, where feasible, include water capture, grey water recycling and water saving measures. Measures such as appropriately designed and located roof top solar panels, ground and air source heating pumps are encouraged.

#### **Extensions**

- x. Extensions and other external additions e.g. porches, should be subordinate in scale to the original building
- y. Extension materials should be designed to complement the existing facade material of the structure.
- z. Extensions should retain capacity for on-plot parking as well as viable garden space.

<sup>14</sup> See Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2023 <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/parking-guidance>



## 9. Environment and landscape

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**Objective 3: To preserve the rural character and tranquillity of the parish by protecting and enhancing the existing green spaces, built heritage, landscape, and providing a measurable net gain in biodiversity.**

### Historic environment

- 9.1 Any visitor to Hitcham will immediately be struck by the quality and richness of its built heritage. Despite there being no designated Conservation Area, the number, variety and distribution of the Listed Building stock, the abundance of archaeological remains and the quality of other traditional buildings in the parish create an attractive historic environment.
- 9.2 Hitcham's rural character is one of its most distinctive and valuable features. The village is sited within an agricultural landscape. The open and linear nature of the village affords views outward to the surrounding undulating countryside. The informal feel of the village's architecture is created by variety in form and setback, as well as generous green verges, low density development, and lush fauna. This enforces the sense of rural informality.
- 9.3 Hitcham has a strong sense of the wider Suffolk vernacular architecture. There are a great variety of architectural features and finishes to be found within the village. Brick, coloured render, and some weatherboard facades can be found across the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Many of the historic dwellings range from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and some from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. These structures are timber framed, with pantile or thatched roofs, timber casement windows, and render finishes. Dwellings tend to have gable rooflines, often with dormer windows, and brick chimney stacks.
- 9.4 Thatch is a well used material in Hitcham and it is anecdotally believed that Hitcham has one of the highest concentrations of thatched properties in Suffolk.





Figure 25: thatched roofs in Hitcham.

- 9.5 Responses to the household survey also revealed that the rural village feel, the quality of the historic environment and the maintenance of traditional buildings were important to local residents. **Policy HIT5** below has been devised taking this into account.

<b>POLICY</b>	<p><b>HIT5: Built and Historic Environment</b></p> <p>Planning proposals that may affect the character, significance and setting of the parish's designated heritage assets, including archaeological assets will only be supported where they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the village, including the contribution made to their setting and the wider built environment, including views into, within and out of the setting of the asset.</li> <li>2. improve or bring a redundant heritage asset, e.g., a barn, back into use provided that the proposal also satisfies other relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.</li> <li>3. demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and of the wider context in which the heritage asset sits, and provide clear justification, in a heritage statement, for any harm to the significance of the heritage asset.</li> </ol> <p>See also policy <b>HIT4</b>.</p>
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Note: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) advise that there should be early consultations of the Historic Environment Record (HER) and assessment of the archaeological potential of any potential development site at an appropriate stage in the design stage, in order that the requirements of NPPF and Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan are met. SCCAS as advisors to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils would be happy to advise on the level of archaeological assessment and appropriate stages to be undertaken.

### Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 9.6 The Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG23) recognises that there are buildings, monuments, sites and places and areas of landscapes identified as having a degree of local significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets e.g. Listed buildings. In some areas, local authorities identify some Non-designated Heritage Assets as 'locally listed'. The NPPG goes on to

explain that these can be identified through Neighbourhood Plans (and Local Plans) and can be a positive way for the local authorities and the community to identify Non-designated Heritage Assets against consistent criteria to improve the predictability of the potential for sustainable development.

- 9.7 The NPPF indicates that the effects of an application on the significance of a Non- Designated Heritage Asset should be taken into account in determining applications.
- 9.8 The preliminary survey work undertaken as part of the Character Appraisal and other work carried out by the Steering Group has identified a number of potential Non-designated Heritage Assets. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan Survey sought nominations for further suitable candidates that would be worthy of a form of local protection due to their contribution to the character of the parish. The list was revised, and those candidates have been assessed against the criteria shown in **Appendix B. Policy HIT6** below identifies eight Non-designated Heritage Assets across the parish that have been deemed worthy of protection through this plan.'

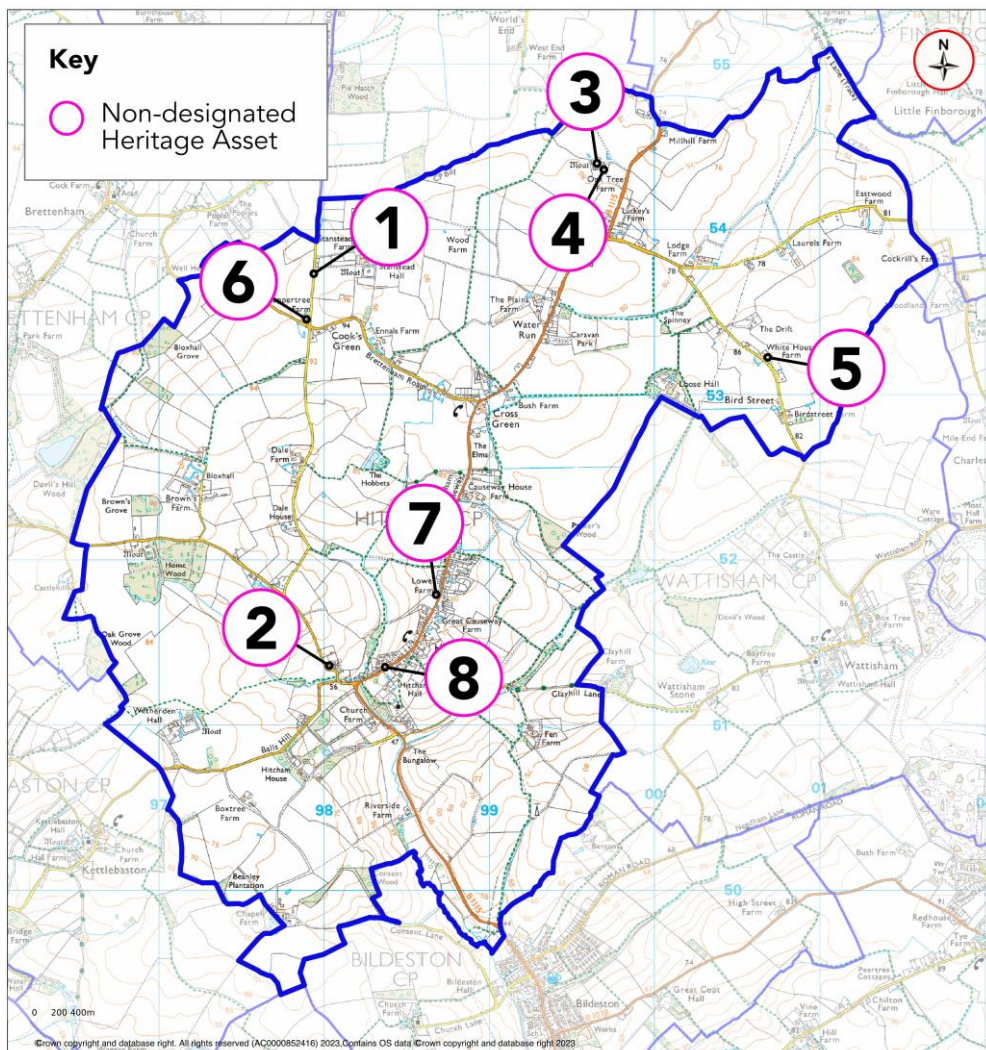


Figure 26: Non-designated Heritage Assets (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.



<b>POLICY</b>	<p><b>HIT6: Non-designated Heritage Assets</b></p> <p>The following (as shown on figure 26 and in Appendix B) are heritage assets that are considered to be locally important to Hitcham in terms of their architectural, historical, or cultural significance and these will be treated as Non-designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roman Road</li> <li>2. Ancient Burial land opposite Brick House Farm</li> <li>3. Oak Tree Farm Moat</li> <li>4. Oak Tree Farmhouse</li> <li>5. Whitehouse Farm on Bird Street</li> <li>6. Peppertree Farm</li> <li>7. School House, The Causeway</li> <li>8. Karnser Raised Pavement</li> </ol>
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## Local Green Spaces

- 9.9 The National Planning Policy Framework 2024, at paragraphs 106-108, introduces the concept of Local Green Spaces which can be identified through Neighbourhood Plans by local communities and allows green areas identified as being of particular importance to be protected. Paragraph 107, sets out three broad criteria for identifying and designating such spaces as follows:

The Local Green Space designation should only be used when the green space is:

- a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
  - b. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field) tranquility and richness of its wildlife, and
  - c. local in character and not an extensive 'tract of land'.
- 9.10 The NPPF at paragraph 108 goes on to state that 'policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for green belts' and therefore affords them a very high level of protection. The NPPF at paragraph 143 outlines the importance that the Government attaches to Green Belts, the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of green belts are their openness and their permanence. It is also clear that the designation of Local Green Spaces should not be used as a mechanism to try to block or resist development on agricultural land immediately adjacent to village development boundaries and that a successful designation must meet the criteria outlined above. Furthermore, Government Guidance contained in the Planning Practice Guidance Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented.

- 9.11 Such spaces can be viewed locally as equally as important as the landscape setting of an area. Such spaces are green spaces found within the built-up area that contribute to the character of a settlement. These can vary in size, shape, location, ownership and use but such spaces will have some form of value to the community particularly for benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing giving opportunities for social interaction, space for recreation, habitat for wildlife and help define what makes that specific settlement what it is.
- 9.12 Areas of open space in the parish include the land around the church, the community play area and some smaller amenity green areas within existing residential areas.
- 9.13 The Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey, included a question on the Local Green Spaces. It sought support for their designation in principle as well as suggestions for potential candidates. There was overwhelming support for the designation in principle and a number of suggestions for potential identification as Local Green Spaces. These included:
- Footpaths
  - Land around the church
  - Meadow next to village hall and play area
  - Woodland
  - Hobbets
- 9.14 All of the suggested spaces have been assessed against the NPPF criteria together with other spaces identified by the Steering Group whilst undertaking the Character Appraisal Survey Work. Each space that meets the criteria should be protected because of its value to the local community. The result is the eight spaces shown in figure 27 below and listed within **Policy HIT7**. Assessments for each one against the criteria set out in the NPPF have been carried out and these are shown in **Appendix C**.

Note: Anglian Water has assets forming part of its water and water recycling network (e.g., rising mains and sewers) located in or in the vicinity of LGS 6. The designation of these sites as Local Green Spaces does not interfere or preclude the maintenance of these assets.

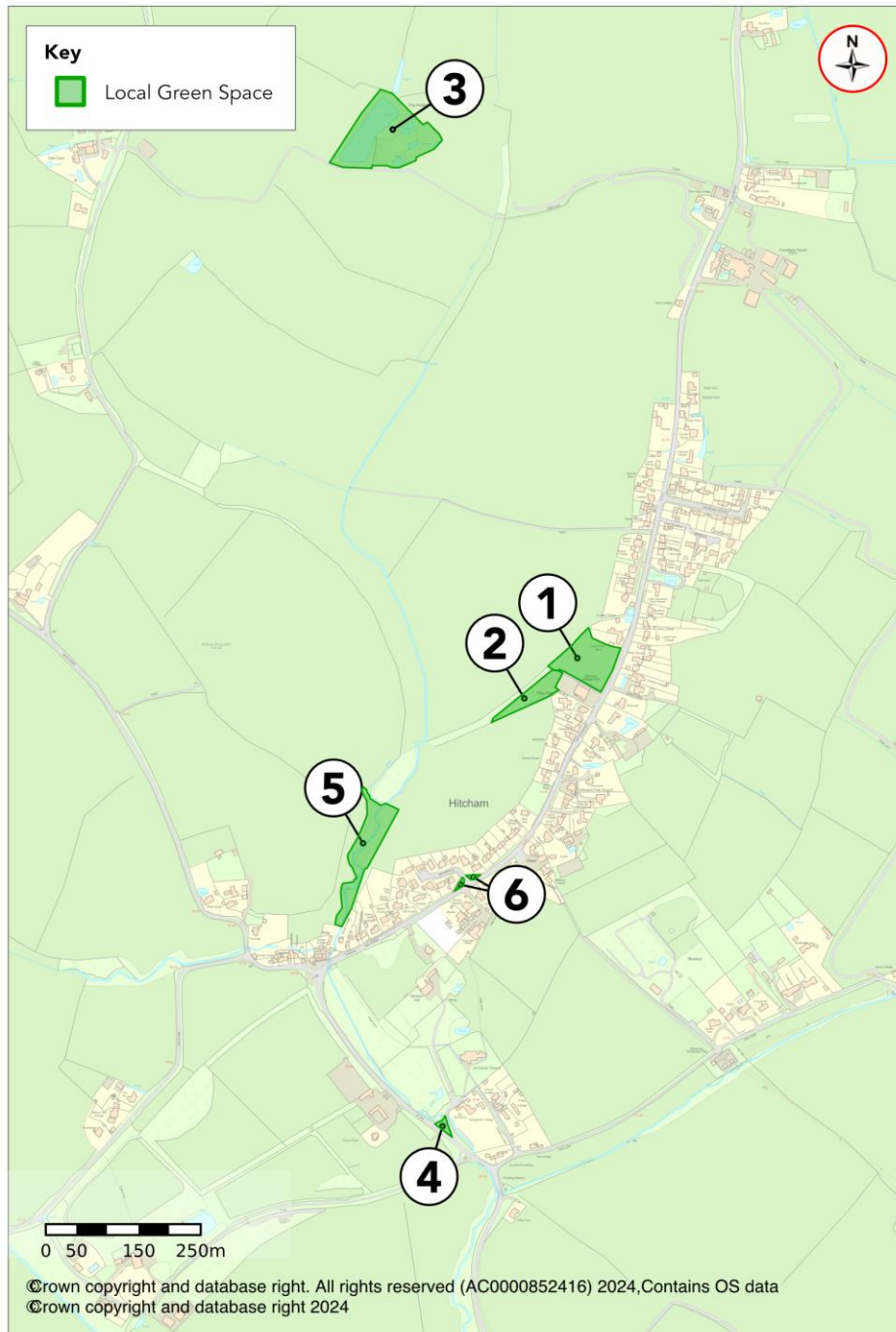


Figure 27: Local Green Spaces (source: Parish Online, with own annotations).

**POLICY**

**HIT7: Local Green Spaces**

The following are identified as Local Green Spaces and are identified on the map as shown in figure 27 and Appendix C:

1. Meadow adjacent to the village hall
2. Community play area
3. Hobbets
4. Church Green
5. Falls footpath wooded area
6. Browns Close bellmouth – 2 parcels



## Landscape Character

- 9.15 In the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance 2015, Hitcham is within three Landscape Character Areas:
- 3: Ancient Plateau Claylands
  - 4: Ancient Rolling Farmlands
  - 18: Rolling Valley Farmlands
- 9.16 The key characteristics of the Ancient Plateau Claylands landscape are gently rolling heavy clay plateaux with ancient woodlands – in Babergh district. This landscape type occurs south of the Gipping Valley but straddles the border extending northwards to Mid Suffolk.
- 9.17 The Aim in the Landscape Guidance for Ancient Plateau Claylands is to retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character. In particular strengthening the woodland, parkland and prairie landscape with appropriate planting and safeguarding the dispersed settlement pattern.
- 9.18 The Objectives in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Plateau Claylands are:
- To maintain and enhance the landscape areas and settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained where appropriate.
  - To reinforce and enhance the existing field boundaries.
  - To safeguard the plantation and ancient woodland areas.
  - To safeguard the parkland area.
- 9.19 The Key Design Principles in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Plateau Claylands are:
- a. This is quite open landscape with the potential of any form of development to be visibly intrusive if it has been designed without sufficient screening or an appropriate landscape design plan.
  - b. Reinforce, enhance, restore or where locally appropriate create the estate and parkland characteristics in new developments.
  - c. Any development that impacts upon the historic parkland will be accompanied by a management plan or other detailed evidence, including a detailed scheme of mitigation and enhancement, to support the proposals.
  - d. Whenever possible incorporate existing landscape features such as tree belts, woodland or hedge lines into the design and layout of development proposals such that the locally characteristic patterns can be retained within new land uses.
  - e. Ancient woodlands and old existing hedge lines are to be protected and maintained within this landscape character.
  - f. To maintain the character and condition of the landscape any major developments will enter into a Section 106 Legal Agreement for landscaping.
- 9.20 The key characteristics of the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape are medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland. The settlement

pattern mainly consists of dispersed farmsteads<sup>15</sup> of mediaeval origin with some larger hamlets and smaller villages that complement the rural landform and landscape.

- 9.21 The Aim in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape is to retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character. In particular safeguarding the influences of the area.
- 9.22 The Objectives in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape are:
- To maintain and enhance the landscape and the settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
  - To reinforce hedgerows of locally native species and retain the existing field boundaries.
  - To safeguard the ancient hedgerow and woodland areas.
  - To safeguard the orchard areas.
- 9.23 The Key Design Principles in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands are:
- a. There are significant sized areas of open landscape providing wide panoramic views, with the potential of any form of development to be visibly intrusive if it has been designed without sufficient screening, appropriate landscape design plan or appropriate siting.
  - b. Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
  - c. Retain rural character of the small settlements, by avoiding the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials and features; conservation areas and areas that fall within the AONB are particularly sensitive in this respect.
  - d. Minimise the cumulative visual impact of equine development and ancillary equipment within this landscape character.
  - e. Restore, maintain and enhance Greens and Tyes, orchards and woodland areas.
  - f. Hedging for boundaries will be designed to reflect the local character of existing planting to minimise the landscape and visual impacts on the distinctive character of the area.
- 9.24 The key characteristics of the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape are valley sides with some complex and steep slopes in some places with deep well drained loamy soils and often sunken lanes – this type of valley is only found south of the River Gipping. This landscape makes a significant contribution to the specific local character of the district because it is the focus of historic settlement and wealth creation. It is found along the River Stour from the Cattawade and upstream (to Haverhill, across the district boundary) including tributary valleys of the Newmill Creek (to Little Wrenham), the Brett (to Hitcham and Thorpe Morieux), the Brad (to Lavenham), the Box (to Edwardstone), the Chad Brook and the Glem. The Landscape character also includes the valley of lower Gipping from Sproughton upstream and includes the western tributary of Belstead Brook.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/farmsteads>

- 9.25 The Aim in the Landscape Guidance for Rolling Valley Farmlands is to retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character. In particular strengthening the rolling valley landscape with appropriate planting and safeguarding the dispersed settlement pattern.
- 9.26 The objectives in the Landscape Guidance for Rolling Valley Farmlands are:
- To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and settlement pattern.
  - To safeguard the parkland areas, Village Greens and Tyes.
  - To safeguard and appropriately include the woodland cover.
- 9.27 The Key Design Principles are:
- a. Due to the rolling landscape development in this area is considered to have a wide zone visual impact. All development must take into consideration the cultural and historic importance of this area and the potential visual impact on AONB and Conservation Areas.
  - b. Reinforce the parkland and village green features in new developments.
  - c. Woodlands are to be protected and maintained within this landscape character.

### **Landscape setting of Hitcham**

- 9.28 Hitcham is enhanced by its relationship to the surrounding undulating landscape. Development is generously spaced allowing for outward views to the Suffolk landscape. Deep green verges and lush mature planting help to create a soft transition between the village and the open countryside. Green and natural features such as woodland, shrubs, and water courses, drainage ditches and farmland ponds serve to reinforce the village's connection to the landscape.

### **Important Views**

- 9.29 In addition to the issue of landscape character, a number of important views and vistas have been identified. These have arisen either as a result of the work undertaken by Steering Group members on the Character Appraisal and the Design Guidelines and Codes, or as a result of suggestions from the local community through the Household Survey.
- 9.30 The Steering Group was mindful that any policy which sought to protect these views should focus on those that are 'important' to the overall landscape character of the parish and which can be enjoyed from publicly accessible locations, e.g., footpath, public highway, an existing open space, or through a gap between buildings. The following six views have been identified:
1. Views from the Causeway across the Dale
  2. Behind the Causeway Estate looking towards Wattisham Road
  3. View from Bury Road across farmland to The Dale
  4. Views south towards Home Wood
  5. Views from Balls Hill Road towards the Dale
  6. Views from Hobbets across to Bildeston





View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



View 5



View 6

Figure 28: Important Views

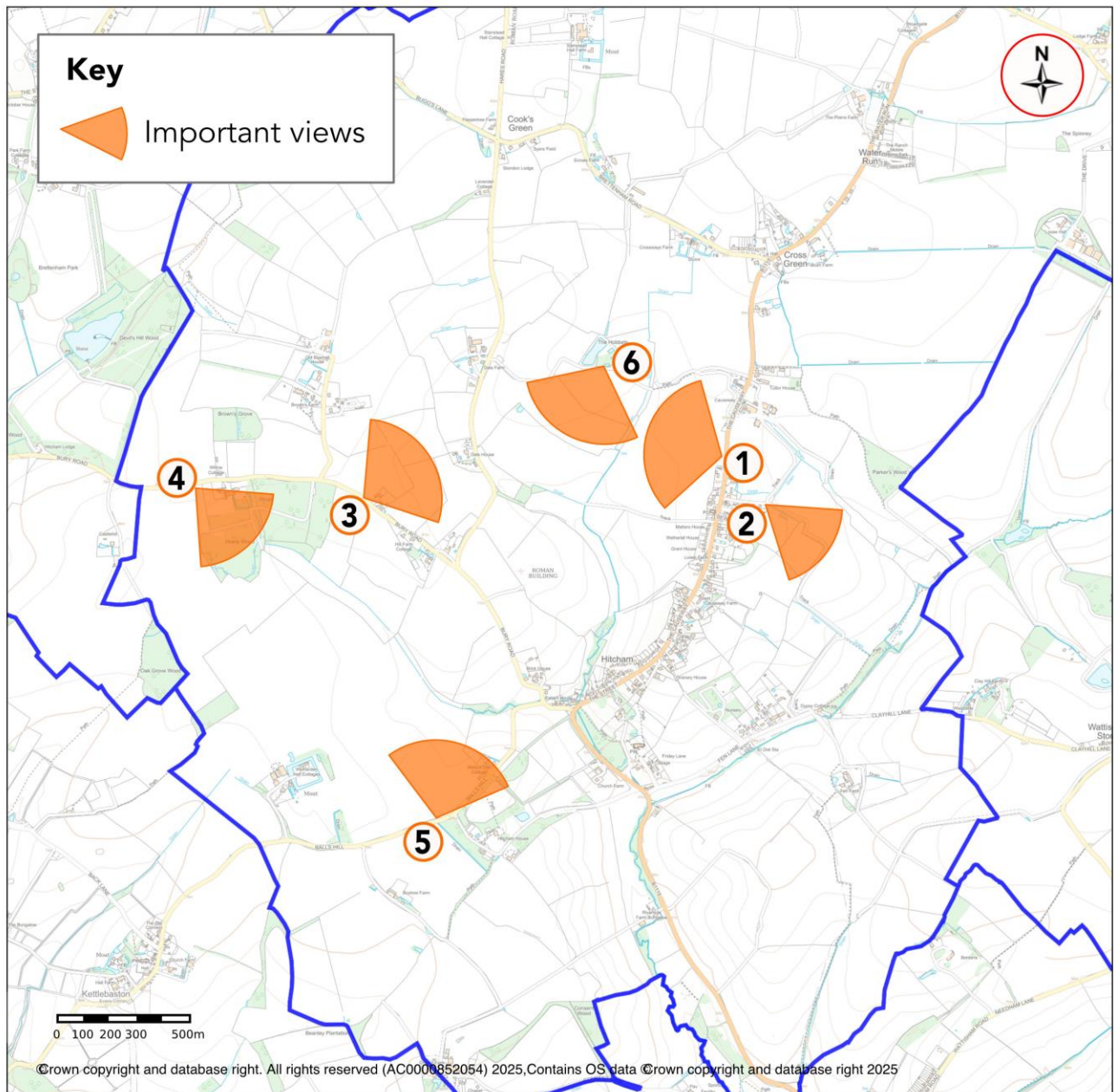


Figure 29: Important views (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

9.31 **Policy HIT8** below has been devised to address these issues.

POLICY	<p><b>HIT8: Landscape and important views</b></p> <p>The visual scenic value of the landscape and countryside within the parish outside of the defined settlement boundaries will be protected from development that may adversely affect this character.</p> <p>New development in the countryside, including non-residential development should be designed taking into account the characteristics, objectives and key design principles of the relevant landscape character area within which it is located.</p> <p>The different hamlets within the parish identified in the Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes (July 2025) shall maintain the existing clear landscape breaks between them in order to prevent coalescence and loss of individual settlement identity and distinctiveness.</p> <p><b>Important Local Views</b></p> <p>Important local views and the visual amenity of the parish should be respected. New developments should not be oriented so that they negatively impact on important local views.</p> <p>Development proposals within or that would affect an important local view should take account of the view concerned and developments which would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape or character of the view concerned will not be supported.</p> <p>The following views and vistas as shown on (figure 28 and 29) above are identified as important local views:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Views from the Causeway across the Dale.</li> <li>2. Behind the Causeway Estate looking towards Wattisham Road.</li> <li>3. View from Bury Road across farmland to The Dale.</li> <li>4. View south towards Home Wood.</li> <li>5. Views from Balls Hill Road towards the Dale.</li> <li>6. Views from Hobbets across to Bildeston.</li> </ol>
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### Dark skies

- 9.32 The NPPF indicates that development proposals should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation.
- 9.33 According to the CPRE light pollution maps (see figure 30 below), the majority of the parish of Hitcham falls within the darkest category of polluted skies.



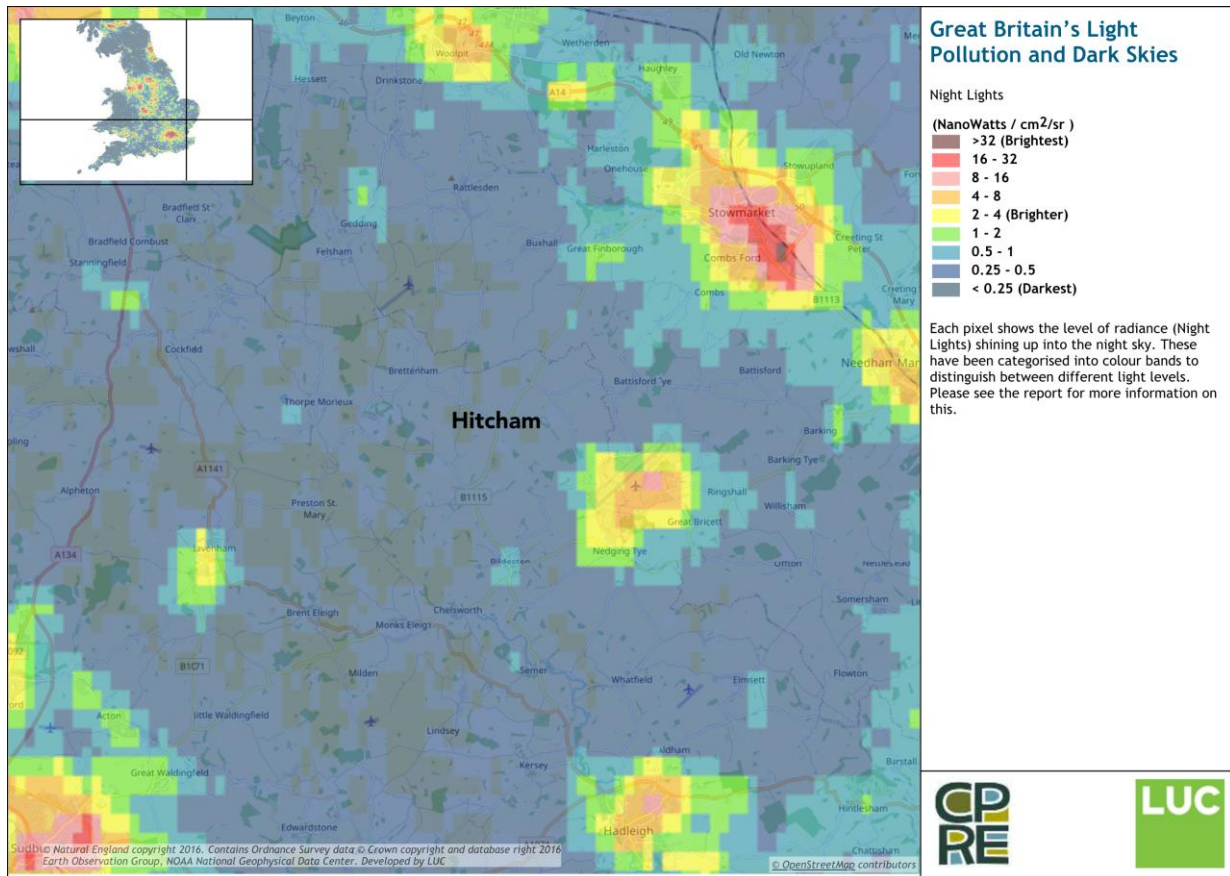


Figure 30: Light pollution and dark skies map (source: Commission for the Protection of Rural England).

- 9.34 High levels of lighting can affect the health, wellbeing and amenity of adjacent residents but also have impacts for natural habitats and species. Nil or low levels of light pollution are an important aspect of tranquillity. This is also an important characteristic of the parish that people value. Light pollution comes in many forms – sky glow as a consequence of water droplets in the air, illumination from artificial light and glare. Artificial light is not detrimental in all cases and the solution to light pollution is not turning off all lighting. Light pollution is where light is excessive or intrudes where it is not wanted or expected. Well-designed lighting sends light only where it is needed and without scattering it elsewhere.
- 9.35 Good practice advises that proposals should ensure that lighting schemes will not cause unacceptable levels of light pollution in the intrinsically dark countryside, or where/when sensitive wildlife receptors are present, and consideration should be given in new developments for lighting schemes that could be turned off when not needed – these are known as 'part night lighting'.
- 9.36 The NPPF advises that by encouraging good design in planning policies this should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation. It should be noted that not all lighting schemes require planning permission, however where they are part of a proposal it is reasonable to seek to control them – on residential or

commercial buildings. **Policy HIT9** below has been devised to provide guidance on this issue.

POLICY	<p><b>HIT9: Dark skies</b></p> <p>New development proposals should seek to minimise light pollution and the parish's dark skies should be retained.</p> <p>Where planning permission is required, all outdoor lighting schemes should be designed so that they minimise their overall impact on the environment, including through making use of energy efficient technologies and using technologies that minimise adverse impacts on wildlife.</p> <p>Where appropriate to the development proposal, planning applications should include a detailed lighting proposal that demonstrates how the scheme addresses both energy and environmental concerns without compromising safety.</p>
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### Natural assets and biodiversity

- 9.37 As mentioned in earlier chapters, there are no nationally designated wildlife sites in the parish although the majority of Hitcham parish is covered by Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) Impact Risk Zones from SSSIs outside the parish. There are four County Wildlife Sites in the Neighbourhood Area, and the Suffolk River Valleys Environmentally Sensitive Area extends into the parish. The parish is also home to several priority species protected for their biodiversity value under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 9.38 The NPPF, in paragraph 187, requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. This includes protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity. One of the principles to protect and enhance biodiversity in Paragraph 193 states: 'if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused'.
- 9.39 The Environment Act 2021 makes provision for achieving a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain to be a condition of receiving planning permission. BNG is an approach to development. It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development. Various parts of this Act, including this biodiversity net gain requirement came into force in April 2024. **Policy HIT10** seeks to protect, restore and enhance ecological assets and recognises the need for mitigation where losses or harm are unavoidable.
- 9.40 Where new habitat is to be created in the parish as a result of Biodiversity Net Gain, these should be directed towards areas identified in any emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy and seek to enhance existing priority habitats

in the parish such as traditional orchards, deciduous woodland, lowland meadow and improved grassland.

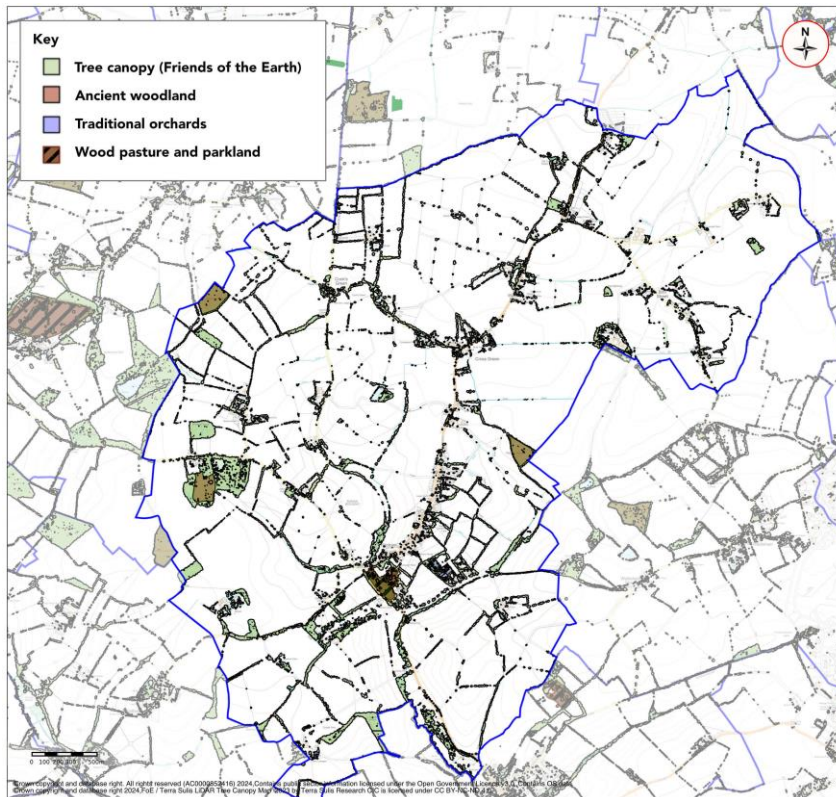


Figure 31: Habitats (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

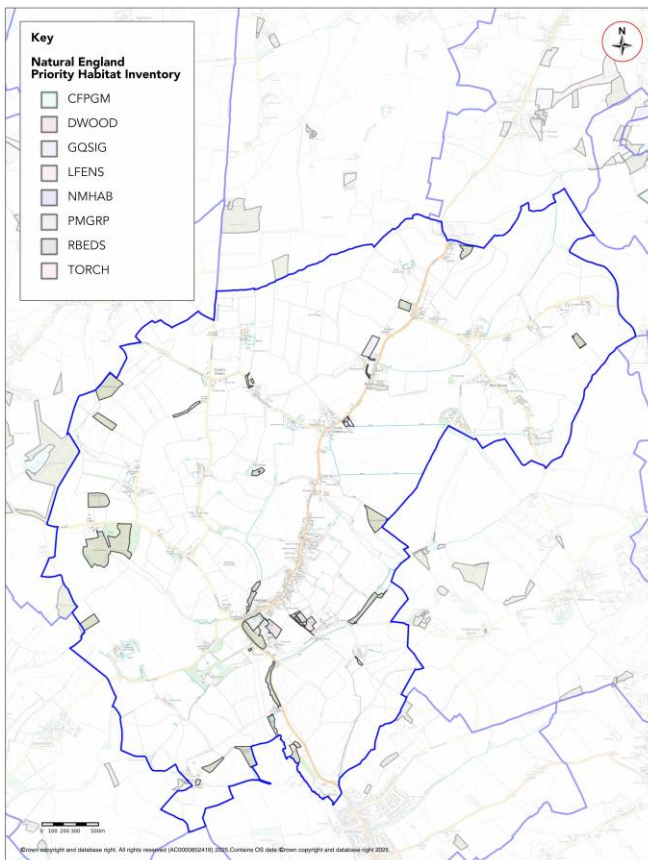


Figure 32: Habitats (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. CFPGM: Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh; DWOOD: Deciduous woodland; GQSIG: Good quality semi-improved grassland; LFENS: Lowland fens; NMHAB: No main habitat; PMGRP: Purple moor grass and rush pastures; RBEDS: Reedbeds; TORCH: Traditional orchards.



<p><b>POLICY</b></p>	<p><b>HIT10: Natural assets</b></p> <p>All development proposals should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to biodiversity habitats and species including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. important priority habitats in the parish, such as traditional orchards, deciduous woodland and wood pasture,</li> <li>b. important features such as trees, ponds, hedgerows, blocks of woodlands, meadows, and other semi natural habitats in the parish.</li> <li>c. important and priority species known to be present in the parish such as hares, kestrels, kites, buzzards, foxes, badgers, weasels, stoats, owls, woodpeckers, butterflies, roe deer, peacock, brimstone, red admirals.</li> </ul> <p>Where such losses or harm are unavoidable, adequate mitigation measures or, as a last resort, compensation measures will be sought. If suitable mitigation or compensation measures cannot be provided, then planning permission should be refused. Off-site mitigation should be prioritised to take place within the parish.</p> <p>Otherwise, acceptable development proposals that deliver biodiversity net gains will be supported. The extent of any net gain in biodiversity should be in accordance with national policy.</p> <p>Biodiversity net gains in new development may be delivered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the creation of new natural habitats, such as those mentioned above, which would be targeted towards any Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity <sup>16</sup> in the parish or sites identified in the relevant Nature Recovery Strategy<sup>17</sup></li> <li>ii. including the planting of additional native tree(s) and/or hedgerow(s) which reflect the character and landscape of the area,</li> <li>iii. the enhancement and restoration of existing habitats in the parish and the re-connection of existing fragmented habitats.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the incorporation of appropriate wildlife friendly measures in all new developments is encouraged. This will be applied on a proportionate basis such as the installation of swift and/or bat bricks or boxes; hedgehog friendly fencing to enable hedgehogs and other small mammals, amphibians etc. to move freely and where such measures are located for optimum effectiveness/success.</p>
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<sup>16</sup> <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c81d396175f64eda97de0693979f59fb>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lhrs>

## Accessibility

### **Objective 4: To improve the health and well-being of the community through promoting accessibility to and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.**

- 9.41 As a rural village with limited public transport and no railway station the opportunities for improving accessibility lie largely within the parish and relate to transport modes such as walking and cycling. The household survey revealed some concerns over traffic speeds in the main built up part of the village which could be exacerbated by a lack of accessible, viable and frequent public transport which could act as an alternative. However, this lies outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

### **Pedestrian and cycle connectivity**

- 9.42 The household survey results revealed support for new footpath and cycleway connections in new developments. Connecting new development to existing facilities and the centre of the village is an important way of ensuring that a development is fully integrated into the community both physically and socially. The ability to use the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside and the rural setting of the village was also much valued in the survey results (see Figure 7 in chapter 2).
- 9.43 National planning policy emphasises that opportunities to encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable transport in particular walking and cycling should be maximised. Government guidance encourages development proposals to provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking. Suffolk County Council has produced a Green Access Strategy (2020-2030) which sets out the Council's commitment to enhance Public Rights of Way, including new linkages and upgrading routes where there is a need. The strategy also seeks to improve access for all and to support healthy and sustainable access between communities and services through development funding and partnership working.
- 9.44 Such networks should be comprehensive and provide not only for recreational routes but also for meaningful routes that can realistically be used for school. In addition, new routes should connect to the existing network and be suitable for use by people with disabilities and reduced mobility. New cycling and pedestrian routes should be safe, secure, and attractive, maximise the scope for pedestrians and cyclists and respond to the character of the area and any relevant design standards. Such links will also serve to further other aims, including promoting health and wellbeing.
- 9.45 The health and wellbeing benefits to the individual of increasing levels of walking and cycling are well documented and getting active can improve positivity and is good for fighting depression. Getting out for a short walk or bike ride can boost mood and a key objective of this Neighbourhood Plan is to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community through promoting accessibility to and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

Hitcham is relatively well provided for in terms of both formal rights of way and permissive paths to enable residents to do this.

- 9.46 This Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of new walking and cycling routes where these provide not only for recreational routes but also for meaningful routes that can realistically be used for accessing local facilities such as the play area, village hall and the shop.
- 9.47 In addition, new routes should connect to the existing network and be suitable for use by people with disabilities and reduced mobility and where practical and feasible for use by horse-riders. New routes should be safe, secure, and attractive, maximise the scope for pedestrians and cyclists and respond to the character of the area and any relevant design standards.

### Public Rights of Way

- 9.48 The NPPF advises that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails. Opportunities to improve facilities for walkers and cyclists in the parish would be supported.
- 9.49 Where development proposals are likely to affect an existing Public Right of Way, these should take account of its route and incorporate it into the overall layout of the scheme. Where this is not considered possible, this will need to be justified. Where Public Rights of Way may be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes should be provided that are as safe, equally accessible, and convenient for users.
- 9.50 Existing Public Rights of Way which are incorporated into new developments, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between communities. Where enhancements take the form of improvements for cyclists, this should be provided consistent with LTN1/20 standards.<sup>18</sup>
- 9.51 **Policy HIT11** below has been devised to provide guidance on these issues.

NOTE: See also Suffolk County Council's Green Access Strategy (2020-2030).<sup>19</sup> Suffolk County Council's Public Rights of Way and Green Access team should be consulted at an early stage in relation to any development affecting Public Rights of Way.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/green-access-strategy>



**POLICY****HIT11: Accessibility and connectivity**

Opportunities will be sought to make the parish safer and more accessible, and to contribute to the health and well-being of residents. This will be achieved through the provision of new, safe and attractive pedestrian, bridle and cycle routes, Public Rights of Way and crossings, suitable for all users which link new development with the village centre and with community facilities.

Development that will improve or contribute to improved connectivity for pedestrians, horse-riders, cyclists, and users with a mobility impairment, both within Hitcham and in and out of Hitcham to neighbouring villages will be supported.

New routes, including new Public Rights of Way, should form a cohesive network for users and allow for access to the wider countryside, where opportunities should be taken to create connections with neighbouring villages.

Development which is likely to affect an existing Public Right of Way should take account of its route and incorporate it into the scheme, preferably in a wide and open green corridor. Where Public Rights of Way are impacted, appropriate diversions or new routes should be provided that are more or at least, equally safe, accessible, and convenient for users.



## 10. Community and services

**Objective 5: To sustain and enhance the important existing village facilities and support the development of appropriate new facilities.**

- 10.1 The NPPF encourages planning policies to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities that the community needs and to support the provision of shared spaces and community facilities (such as local shops, schools, meeting places, sports venues, open spaces, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship). In addition, the NPPF indicates that plans should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. Planning policies should not seek to protect unviable services in perpetuity but recognise that the lack of viability needs to be demonstrated, and for alternative configurations of provision to be investigated before proposals that would result in their loss are approved.
- 10.2 Policy LP28 of the Adopted BMSJLP Part 1 2023, seeks to protect existing community facilities from development (including change of use) that would adversely affect their community function or lead to their loss and includes criteria which govern the determination of such applications. The Neighbourhood Plan does not therefore need to specifically address the issue, however the Steering Group is mindful that the parish lost its public house in the not too distant past and therefore clarity is required over the protection of the remaining facilities. There is no medical practice or school in the parish and in the case of Hitcham the community facilities that would be covered by the Local Plan policy would include All Saints Church, the Village Hall, the Village Shop/Post Office, the play area and Hitcham Free Church (located on The Causeway). Public footpaths and open spaces are covered by earlier policies.

### **New community infrastructure**

- 10.3 Given the likely small scale of new development in the parish in the future, the likelihood of significant new community infrastructure is remote. However, the Neighbourhood Plan is able to a limited extent to influence new provision and there is community support from the Household Survey for a number of new or improved services. These include:
- Nature reserve
  - Community woodland/orchard

- Allotments
- New informal open space/amenity areas
- Facilities for teenagers
- Sports facilities

10.4 Where proposals for such facilities arise, these will be supported in principle subject to the other policies in this plan. Proposals which would enhance the community value and viability of existing identified community facilities such as parking provision, secure cycle storage, electric charging points, appropriate extensions or other alterations will also be supported in principle subject to compliance with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

- 10.5 It is acknowledged that achieving some new facilities may lie outside of the direct scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan can provide evidence of support for new facilities which may shape and direct the spending of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in the parish.
- 10.6 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, to help deliver the infrastructure required to support the development of an area. The CIL is levied on practically all new development within a given area. Babergh District Council has introduced CIL across its administrative area and has an adopted CIL Charging Schedule which sets out the charges levied on various forms of development. Babergh District Council is responsible for levying and collecting the CIL payable and administer the scheme.
- 10.7 **Neighbourhood CIL** is the percentage of the CIL that is payable to the parish or neighbourhood within which eligible development takes place. At present Hitcham Parish Council receives 15% of the CIL levied on development in its area but this will rise to 25% once the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made'.
- 10.8 **District CIL** is the remaining percentage of CIL that goes into the District Infrastructure fund which is pooled and allocated to infrastructure projects that make the development in the area sustainable, e.g. extensions to schools and health. This may be spent on infrastructure projects identified in the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plans, Neighbourhood Plans or through bids received.
- 10.9 Community consultation undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process can help to identify priorities for future CIL funding and Policy **HIT12** is based on the result of that consultation.



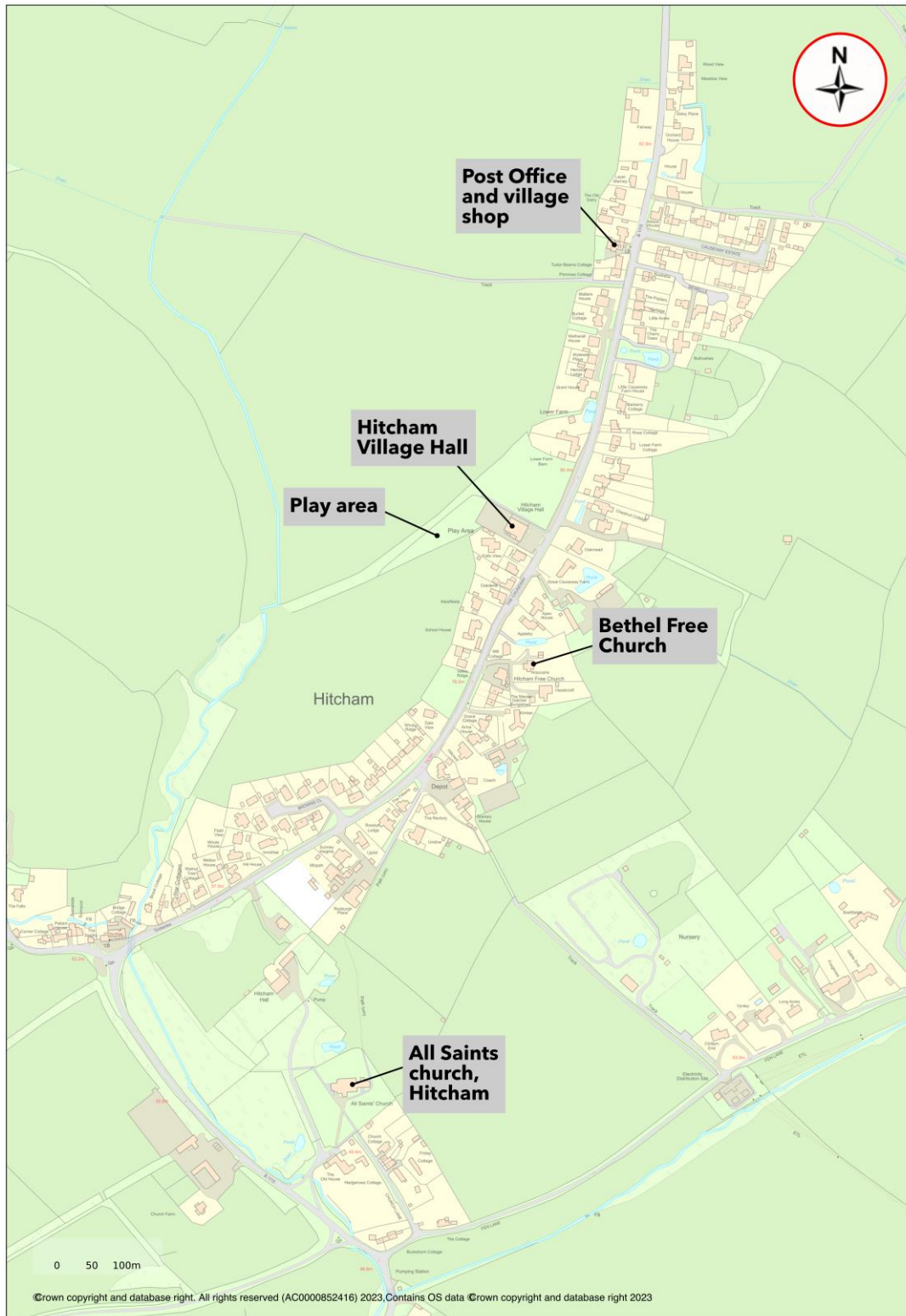


Figure 33: Current community facilities in Hitcham village (source: Parish Online, with own annotations).

**POLICY****HIT12: Community facilities**

Proposals including changes of use that would involve the potential loss or would be detrimental to the community value of an existing community facility in Hitcham will not be supported and would be subject to adopted Local Plan policy.

The existing community facilities in the parish (as shown in figure 33 and the policies map) to be protected under the relevant Local Plan policy include the Village shop/Post Office (an Asset of Community Value), All Saints Church, the Village Hall, Hitcham Free Church (located on the Causeway) and the play area, together with any new community facilities which may be delivered during the plan period. Where a site is designated as a Local Green Space, Policy HIT7 applies.

**New and enhanced community facilities**

Proposals which would enhance the environmental sustainability of the parish or would enhance the community value of existing community facilities e.g. through the provision of public electric charging points, secure cycle storage and/or would improve the environmental performance of existing community buildings will be supported.

Proposals for the following new community facilities will be supported in principle provided they are compliant with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan:

- Nature reserve
- Community woodland/orchard
- Allotments
- New informal open space/amenity areas
- Facilities for teenagers
- Sports facilities, including pitches



## 11. Business and employment

**Objective 6: To support small scale rural enterprise, agricultural diversification and opportunities for homeworking.**

- 11.1 In addition to environmental and community roles that deliver sustainable housing growth and protect important assets, the third key role of Neighbourhood Plans is to deliver the economic objectives related to sustainable development that are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 11.2 These are to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places to support growth, innovation, and improved productivity by identifying and coordinating the provision of physical infrastructure.
- 11.3 The Neighbourhood Plan also has a role in considering the future employment needs of the parish and the needs of existing businesses within the parish. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Hitcham supports a variety of businesses. Outside of agriculture these are predominantly small businesses covering a range of sectors including beauty, plumbing and heating, engineering, property maintenance and building etc. The Village Shop and Post Office is a key business within the parish.



Figure 34: Hitcham Village Shop and Post Office.



- 11.4 The results of the household survey revealed some support in principle for new offices, small business park, small business units and a café. However, the scale of any new employment or business uses was of local concern. Where there is not support it was because there were concerns over the potential impacts on the village in terms of amenity, changing the rural character and a feeling that there are employment opportunities elsewhere and that the village should remain predominantly residential.
- 11.5 The survey results recognised that in a predominantly rural area, farming enterprises and practices would be important contributors to the rural economy. Furthermore, it was recognised that farming was changing and would change further over the plan period. Therefore, there was some support for farm diversification and a recognition that new uses for existing farm buildings that were no longer required or suitable for modern farming would need to be found. Supported uses include tourism accommodation, small business units and shared offices. Uses that were not supported included industrial units, solar farms and retail units.
- 11.6 The survey results revealed some limited support for community energy generation. Ground source heating systems would be particularly encouraged with less support for solar and biomass and very little support for wind energy. The Steering Group are mindful that neighbouring parishes are currently exploring community energy/heating options and will monitor how that progresses.
- 11.7 **Policy HIT13** below has been devised to reflect the survey results and provide guidance for future business, employment and energy proposals that may occur within the parish.

POLICY	<p><b>HIT13: Business and rural diversification</b></p> <p>Proposals for the expansion of existing businesses in Hitcham including small scale extensions will be supported where they are compliant with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and do not have a significant adverse impact upon the character of the area, adjoining uses, or the amenity of local residents either through their built form, proposed use or traffic generated.</p> <p>New small-scale businesses appropriate to a rural area, particularly those that result in the reuse of redundant or unused historic or farm buildings, and new buildings to accommodate new business, low carbon or agricultural uses will be positively encouraged, provided that they do not have a significant adverse impact upon the character of the area, the amenity of residents or result in an unacceptable increase in traffic generation. There must be demonstrable evidence to justify the need for any proposals for new agricultural buildings outside the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Services and facilities which would support and add value to homeworkers e.g., facilities for shared printing and media services, meeting rooms and IT access will be supported.</p> <p>Proposals for community energy generating proposals including district heating projects are supported in principle provided they are consistent with other policies within this Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
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Footpath



# 12. Implementation and monitoring

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## Implementation

- 12.1 The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to assist with the planning of sustainable growth across the parish for a period up to 2037. The implementation of the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan will require the co-ordinated input and co-operation of relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies, private sector organisations and the local community.
- 12.2 The policies in this document shape the way in which development happens within the parish of Hitcham. Some policies included within the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan have a delivery element, often a requirement of development or 'planning obligation'. Planning obligations, (often referred to as Section 106 agreements) are legal agreements negotiated between the Council and a developer or landowner (usually in the context of a planning application). Planning obligations are typically used to ensure that new developments:
- comply with planning policy - for instance, by requiring affordable housing or public open space to be provided; and
  - do not impose undue burdens on existing facilities - for instance, by requiring financial contributions to increase/improve local services such as schools, libraries or transport.
- 12.3 In order to see delivery realised, it will require the Parish Council and partner organisations to be proactive in getting the best results for the parish of Hitcham. Working in partnership with Babergh District Council and Suffolk County Council will be particularly important regarding strategic matters such as addressing traffic, public transport and parking issues.
- 12.4 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the area. This revenue will be used to fund projects identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as well as other community priorities that may be identified during the plan period.

## Monitoring

- 12.5 There is no formal requirement or timetable for the review of Neighbourhood Plans. However, it is good practice to report on the use of the Neighbourhood Plan and monitor the use of its policies, ideally on an annual basis through a report to the Parish Council. This information would be used to identify the need for any formal reviews – either partial or in full. Any review process would need to be undertaken in consultation with the local community and Babergh District Council.

- 12.6 Any review should be undertaken by the Parish Council to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is still current and remains a positive planning tool to deliver sustainable growth. In order to determine when a review is necessary, the Parish Council will monitor development in the parish along with local and national planning policy and the appropriate legislative context. It is anticipated the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan will require review during its life and that it will be the role of the Parish Council to update the Neighbourhood Plan at the appropriate time.
- 12.7 Any review will provide an opportunity to reassess the parish's housing and economic markets and to resolve some of the bigger issues surrounding development in and around the parish.







# Appendices

## Appendix A: Steering Group members

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The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group included the following members:

- **Hilda Bull**, local resident and Parish Councillor
- **Malcolm Currie**, local resident and Chairman of the Parish Council
- **Ruth Crockett**, local resident and business owner
- **Jane Pickett** local resident (member of Steering Group until November 2023)
- **Deborah Saw**, local resident, District Councillor and Chair of Steering Group
- **Duncan Selby**, local resident (member of Steering Group until Summer 2023)
- **Allan Scott**, local resident, former Chairman of the Parish Council

This Neighbourhood Plan is dedicated to the memory of Allan Scott, former Parish Council Chairman and valued Steering Group member who sadly passed away in 2023.

Photos taken and supplied by Steering Group Members, with thanks.

Supported by:

- **Emma Harrison** – Independent consultant (data and environmental assessment) for the Neighbourhood Plan
- **Rachel Leggett** – Project Manager and independent consultant (consultation and layout) for the Neighbourhood Plan
- **Andrea Long** – Independent consultant (policy) for the Neighbourhood Plan

## Appendix B: Assessment of Non-designated Heritage Assets

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The table below outlined the justification for the inclusion of important character buildings and historic features. The criteria are based on the 'Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7', page 9.

- **Age:** The age of an asset may be an important criterion, and the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics or building traditions.
- **Rarity:** Appropriate for all assets, as judged against local characteristics.
- **Architectural and Artistic Interest:** The intrinsic design and aesthetic value of an asset relating to local and/or national styles, materials, construction and craft techniques, or any other distinctive characteristics.
- **Group Value:** Groupings of assets with a clear visual design or historic relationship.
- **Archaeological Interest:** The local heritage asset may provide evidence about past human activity in the locality, which may be in the form of buried remains, but may also be revealed in the structure of buildings or in a designed landscape, for instance. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are primary sources of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
- **Historic Interest:** A significant historical association of local or national notes, including links to important local figures, may enhance the significance of a heritage asset. Blue Plaque and similar schemes may be relevant. Social and communal interest may be regarded as a sub-set of historic interest but has special value in local listing. As noted in the PPG: 'Heritage assets ... can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity'. It therefore relates to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence, contributing to the 'collective memory' of a place.
- **Landmark Status:** An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially struck aesthetic value, may be singled out as a landmark within the local scene

<b>1. Roman Road – known as the Peddars Way or Pyes Street</b>	
<b>Age</b>	AD 43 (the Roman invasion) and AD 410 (the Roman withdrawal).
<b>Rarity</b>	One of about a dozen Roman roads known in Suffolk
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	The road meant that Roman homesteads were built near it, e.g., Plains Farm and Brickhouse Farm sites
<b>Group Value</b>	NA
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	<p>Suffolk Historic Environment Record nos. BUX 007, HTC 015 and 017.</p> <p>The road enters the parish near Stanstead Hall and continues past Peppertree Farm and through Cook's Green and then onto Dale Road. There is also a length of Roman Road on Bury Road near Homewood which is the extension of the road on Dale Road.</p> <p>Probably part of a longer route known as Peddars Way but may have been locally known as Stone Street or Pyes Street. Martin, E., 2021. <i>Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish</i>, pp. 5-</p> <p>It is one of Suffolk's straightest Roman roads linking the two settlements of Coddensham and Long Melford and then proceeding to the bigger settlement of Ixworth.</p>
<b>Historic Interest</b>	Authorities believe it was part of a Roman military road taking legions from Colchester to an embarkation point at Caister on the North Norfolk coast.
<b>Landmark status</b>	The straight road is a distinct and noticeable landscape feature.



Figure 35: Roman road running from Cooks Green



2. Brickhouse Farm area	
<b>Age</b>	Mid-9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> century cemetery associated with the Chapel of St Margaret (mentioned in the <i>Nonarum Inquisitiones</i> 'inquisition of the 9ths' of 1341/2).
<b>Rarity</b>	Highly unusual medieval chapel with burial rights close to a parish church.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	NA
<b>Group Value</b>	Shows continuous development from Roman period. Link to other buildings and structures include <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roman villa in field to north of farmhouse. 1-4<sup>th</sup> C- Suffolk Historic Environment Record no. HTC 002.</li> <li>2. Graveyard and Chapel Site to east of farm buildings with links to nearby parish church and Brickhouse Farm.</li> <li>3. The land across Bury Road immediately opposite the house has the remains of the larger house where there was once a Roman road.</li> </ol>
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	Suffolk Historic Environment Record no. HTC 007. Small scale excavations in the 1930s and in 1984 located burials and wall foundations. Bull, L.J., 2002, <i>Remembering Hobbets</i> , pp. 96-98. Martin, E., 2021. <i>Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish</i> , pp. 16-17.
<b>Historic Interest</b>	Significant site for church history because of the associated burials.
<b>Landmark status</b>	Exceedingly rare to find burials at a chapel. These were only ever at churches.

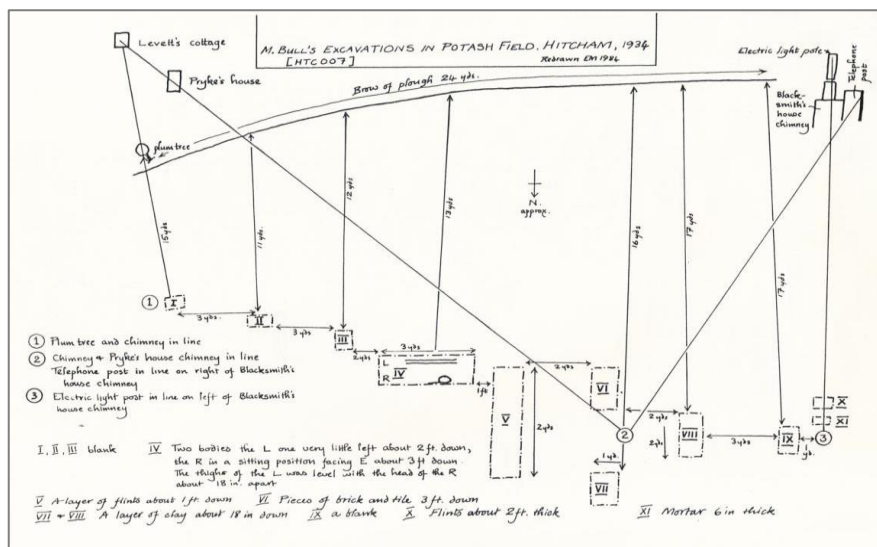


Figure 36: M Bull's excavations of Potash Field.

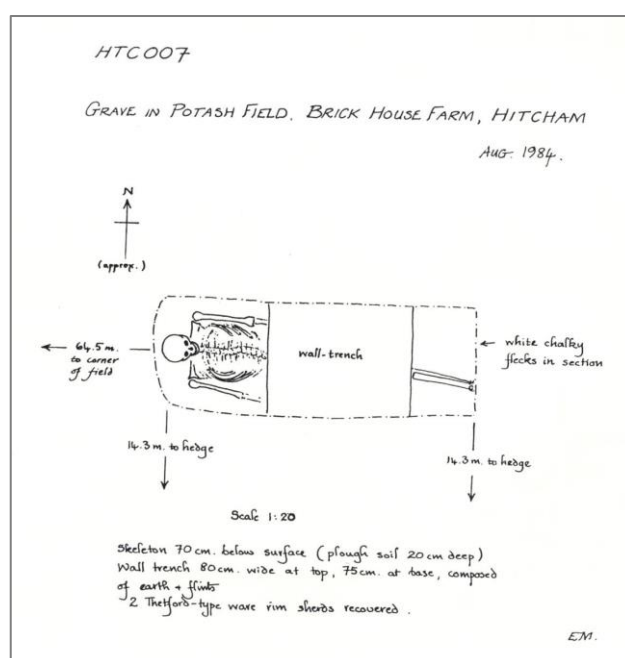
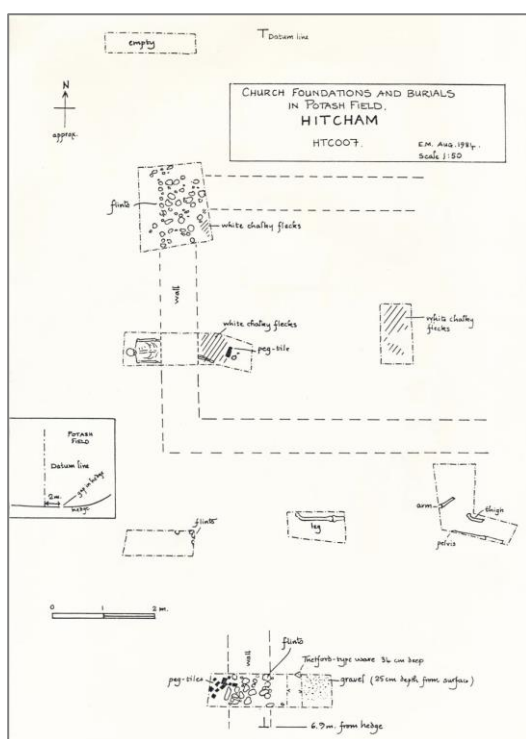


Figure 37 above left: Hitcham Potash Field Chapel Foundations Graveyard and burials.

Figure 38 above right: Grave in Potash Field, drawn August 1984.

Figure 39 below: Potash Field taken from The Falls, Bury.



3. Oak Tree Farm, Moat	
<b>Age</b>	C14-15th
<b>Rarity</b>	Only one of the moated sites in Hitcham is designated as scheduled monument Wetherden Hall, mon. no. 1019972T.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	Survives as a partly water-filled earthwork.
<b>Group Value</b>	Adjacent to Oak Tree Farm, a 19 <sup>th</sup> -century clay-lump structure.
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FSF11920: <a href="#">POTTERY (13th century to 16th century - 1201 AD to 1500 AD)</a></li> <li>FSF11921: <a href="#">BRICK (13th century to 16th century - 1201 AD to 1500 AD)</a></li> <li>FSF11922: <a href="#">ROOF TILE (13th century to 16th century - 1201 AD to 1500 AD)</a></li> <li>FSF11923: <a href="#">QUERN (13th century to 16th century - 1201 AD to 1500 AD)</a></li> </ul>
<b>Historic Interest</b>	<p>An example of a medieval moated freehold tenement of 60 acres (known as Nectons in 1609). Held in C14 and C15 by the Neketon family, who probably constructed the moat.</p> <p>Martin, E., 2021. <i>Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish</i>, pp. 67-70.</p>
<b>Landmark status</b>	Shows medieval land tenure as a freehold. Survives as an earthwork.



Figure 40 left: Moat at Oak Tree Farm.

Figure 41 right: 1904 Ordnance Survey map of the moat at Oak Tree Barn, called Old House Barn on map.



Figure 42: Lidar view of moat, 2020.



4. Oak Tree Farm, Victorian clay-lump farmhouse	
<b>Age</b>	1880.
<b>Rarity</b>	Unusually large residential structure built of unfired bricks (clay lump). Detailed building accounts survive.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	<p>Suffolk Historic Environment Record no. HTC 112.</p> <p>Example of a 'model' farmhouse built for the Ashburnham Estate to showcase clay lump as a building material.</p> <p><i>Martin, E., 2020. 'Oak Tree Farm, Hitcham – A Victorian eco- house?' Eavesdropper. The Newsletter of the Suffolk Historic Buildings Group no. 61, Spring, pp. 16-20.</i></p> <p><i>Martin, E., 2021. Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish, pp. 67-70.</i></p>
<b>Group Value</b>	Adjacent to medieval moated site, the location of the original farmhouse.
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	NA
<b>Historic Interest</b>	<p>Connected to a movement to improve housing for farmers and farmworkers.</p> <p><i>Hill, C., 1843. 'On the Construction of Cottages,' J. Royal Agricultural Society, vol. 4, pp.356-69.</i></p>
<b>Landmark status</b>	Can be seen from B1115, set back from the road.



Figure 43: Oak Tree Farm.

<b>5. White House Farm on Bird St.</b>	
<b>Age</b>	C17-19 <sup>th</sup> Century.
<b>Rarity</b>	Farm with historic collection of outbuildings.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	Listed in Suffolk Historic Environmental Record.
<b>Group Value</b>	<p>Timber-framed farmhouse built c.1600. The front of the house was encased in brick in the 19<sup>th</sup> C and the roof was tiled.</p> <p>In the grounds of this farmhouse is an early 17<sup>th</sup> C timber-framed and weatherboarded barn, which would have once had a thatched roof. Originally this structure was stable, converted, and extended c.1800 into a four -bay barn. A porch was added in the 19<sup>th</sup> C and the south gable opened in the 20<sup>th</sup> C and used as a machinery shed.</p> <p>Another timber-framed and weatherboarded barn at this site was converted c.1800 from c.1600 stables. The barn has six bays but would have originally extended further than this. At one end of this tiled building a granary with a store below were inserted during this conversion.</p> <p>Also present is a 19<sup>th</sup> C timber-framed and weatherboarded barn with four bays and a porch. This formerly thatched barn re-uses many medieval timbers which appear to have come from a 14<sup>th</sup> C barn which once stood at this site (S1).</p>
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	Shows layout of working farm and its outbuildings over the centuries.
<b>Historic Interest</b>	Historical farm and outbuildings.
<b>Landmark status</b>	Visible from the road.



Figure 44: (above left) Timber-clad and weatherboarded barn. Originally built as stables converted into barn in the 1800s and Granary added.

Figure 45: 16<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse encased in brick in the C19<sup>th</sup>, and roof tiled.

6. Peppertree Farm	
<b>Age</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> century farmhouse with a 15 <sup>th</sup> century freestanding kitchen or brewhouse, now a barn.
<b>Rarity</b>	The freestanding kitchen is unusual and only a few have been recorded nationally. Martin, D., and B., 2001. 'Detached Kitchens or Adjoining Houses?' <i>Vernacular Architecture</i> vol. 32, pp. 20-33.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	
<b>Group Value</b>	Farmhouse and Kitchen/barn.
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	Detached Kitchen.
<b>Historic Interest</b>	<p>A timber framed early C16<sup>th</sup> farmhouse, clad in red brick. The original thatched roof has now been replaced by slate. A chimneystack was added in the 17<sup>th</sup> C as well as a 19<sup>th</sup> C extension. The house also has a number of mullioned windows.</p> <p>A 15<sup>th</sup> C timber-framed and weatherboarded former kitchen is present at this site, which was a 2-bay open hall type kitchen with a storeyed service end under a hipped roof. The kitchen was converted into a barn in the 19<sup>th</sup> C, during which time the original thatched roof was replaced with tiles.</p> <p>Martin, E., 2021. <i>Hitcham: a landscape, social and ecclesiastical history of a Suffolk clayland parish</i>, pp. 55-56.</p>
<b>Landmark status</b>	Visible from road.



Figure 46 left: Peppertree Farm Cross Green.

Figure 47 right: C17-19th Century Barn at Peppertree Farm.



7. School House, The Causeway	
Age	Built 1872.
Rarity	Example of Victorian School House. Different entrances for boys and girls.
Architectural and artistic Interest	Red brick – In Suffolk brick from Woolpit.
Group Value	NA
Archaeological interest	NA
Historic Interest	Only school of this size in area. The <a href="#">1870 Elementary Education Act</a> (drafted by William Forster, a Liberal politician) divided England and Wales into about 2,500 school districts. They were run by School Boards elected by local ratepayers. These boards were to examine the provision of elementary education in their district. If there were not enough school places, they could build and maintain schools out of the rates. They could make their own by-laws allowing them to charge fees or, if they wanted, to let children in free. It was this legislation that enabled the building of the school in Hitcham.
Landmark status	NA



Figure 48: School House under renovation.



Figure 49: Old School House completed.

8. Karnser Raised Pavement	
<b>Age</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> Century in its current form
<b>Rarity</b>	Rare. Word first mentioned in 1440. East Anglian dialect word meaning a raised and paved way – causey. There are a few others in Suffolk such as the Karnser, a raised pavement in Station Road West, Stowmarket, next to St Peter's Church and others can be found in Ipswich, Mellis, Needham Market, and South Elmham St Michael.
<b>Architectural and artistic Interest</b>	A raised walkway beside the road – not named but shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey 25in-scale map, at which time it had buttresses on the roadside.
<b>Group Value</b>	This walkway is on a road that rises to become The Causeway – recorded as <i>Hitcham Causey</i> in 1754 (manorial records, Suffolk Archives). The 'causeway' here appears to be a natural, high, saddleback ridge, with land sloping away on either side of it, forming a watershed between the streams draining south to the Brett and those draining west to the River Gipping.
<b>Archaeological interest</b>	NA
<b>Historic Interest</b>	Further examples from East Anglian vocabulary collections are <i>cansey</i> 'causeway' (Marshall 1787: ii.377); <i>cansey</i> (Moor (1823: 67): "A causeway, or foot path a little raised. The first syllable is much lengthened, and nasally drawled and modulated); and <i>caunsey</i> 'a causey, a raised and paved way' (Forby 1830: i.58).
<b>Landmark status</b>	Important as it may relate to improvements made to the water supply in the 1890s.

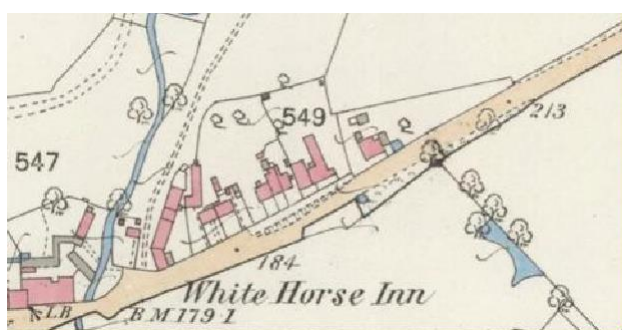


Figure 50: (above) 1885 Ordnance Survey map showing the Karnser in Hitcham.

Figure 51: (right) Karnser, raised pavement.



## Appendix C: Local Green Spaces justification

The table below outlines the justification for the inclusion of each Local Green Space identified. The criteria are based on the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraphs 106 to 108.

1. Meadow adjacent to Village Hall	
<b>In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	Yes.
<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife</b>	<p>This field, whilst owned and maintained by Squirrell Farms, is often used by the children at Honeybees Nursery as a play area.</p> <p>The field is also used by kind permission of the owners as a venue for village functions, such as the village fete. The field is laid to grass, has easy access and has high recreational value.</p>
<b>Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land</b>	0.5 ha



Figure 52 left: Meadow adjacent to Village Hall.

Figure 53 right: Map of meadow adjacent to Village Hall.



<b>2. Community play area</b>	
<b>In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	At the rear of the Village Hall and accessed via footpath alongside the Village Hall.
<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife</b>	<p>This area has been created to include children's play equipment with seating for parents/carers.</p> <p>The site is sloping down towards the 'Falls' and has stunning views across the 'Dale'. It is believed to be land owned by Squirrell Farms but leased to the Parish Council.</p> <p>This 'greenspace' might be better designated as a 'Community Asset'</p>
<b>Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land</b>	0.2ha



Figure 54 left: Community play area.

Figure 55 right: Map of community play area.

3. Hobbets	
<b>In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	Situated between the Causeway and Dale Road. Used by many as a footpath, gives good access.
<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife</b>	This tract of land includes a reservoir which used to feed a potato farm. It also has a piece of woodland which has been the subject of an historical dig. The views in all directions from Hobbets are excellent. Often there are geese, ducks and various other bird types. The Reservoir is stocked with fish and can be fished by agreement with the owner (R G Saunders). The area has archival and archeological value as captured in Bull, L.J., 2002, Remembering Hobbets, pp. 96-98.
<b>Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land</b>	1.4 ha

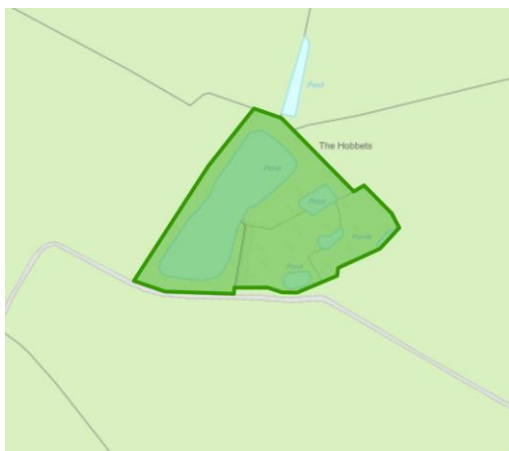
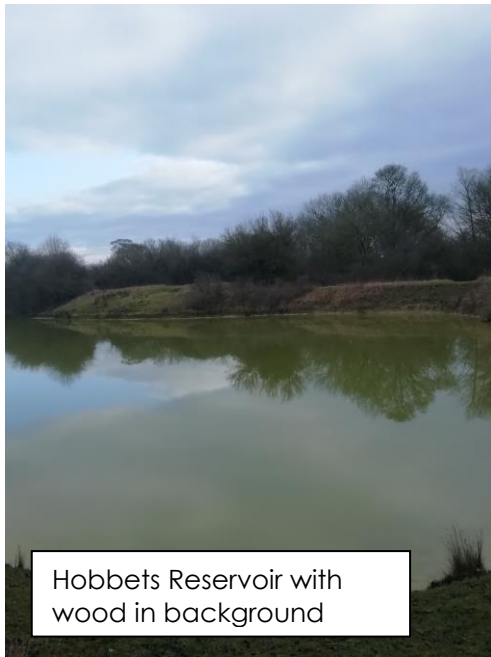


Figure 56 above: Views of Hobbets; Figure 57 bottom left: Map of Hobbets

4. Church Green	
<b>In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	Approach road to the Church.
<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife</b>	<p>Church Green is a small triangle of land effectively creating a 'bellmouth' entrance to the lane leading up to the Church. There is a large tree in the centre of the green encircled by a bench for weary walkers! The bench is maintained by the community.</p> <p>It is thought that this area already has some protection – this will need to be verified.</p>
<b>Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land</b>	0.3 ha



Figure 58 left: Church Green.

Figure 59 right: Map of Church Green.



5. Falls footpath wooded area	
<b>In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves</b>	Footpath leading from 'The Street' through gardens of Brook Cottage and Bridge Cottage to the rewilding area.
<b>Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife</b>	<p>This footpath passes alongside a piece of woodland and the falls gully (very deep at this point). The woodland is not large but home to a range of flora/ fauna and wildlife.</p> <p>This could be village asset in the form of 'community woodland'. However, because of its location away from centre of village, it is unlikely to qualify for protection.</p>
<b>Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land</b>	0.6ha



Figure 60 left: Falls footpath woodland.

Figure 61 right: Map of Falls footpath wooded area.

6. Browns Close bellmouth entrance	
In reasonably close proximity to the community, it serves	Yes.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife	<p>This small piece of green is home to Wild Orchids.</p> <p>It would be desirable for protection so that instructions could be given to avoid cutting the grass during the emergence and flowering periods.</p> <p>It is thought that in 2022 signs were erected by local homeowners to prevent grass cutting.</p>
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	2 parcels of land each 0.1ha



Figure 62 left: Brown's Close Grassed bellmouth.  
Figure 63 right: Browns Close bellmouth entrance.

## Appendix D: Glossary

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**Glossary of terms used and/or relevant to the Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan and supporting submission documents.** Definitions are taken directly from the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024, except where stated.

**Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions<sup>20</sup>:

a) Social Rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

b) Other affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

**Ancient or veteran tree:** A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient, but are old relative to

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<sup>20</sup> This definition should be read in conjunction with relevant policy contained in the Affordable Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement published on 24 May 2021. As noted in footnote 31, however, the 25% minimum delivery requirement for First Homes no longer applies.



other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.

**Ancient woodland:** An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

**Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

**Best and most versatile agricultural land:** Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

**Brownfield land:** See Previously developed land.

**Build to Rent:** Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control.

**Climate change adaptation:** Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

**Climate change mitigation:** Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Community-led development:** A development taken forward by, or with, a not-for-profit organisation, that is primarily for the purpose of meeting the needs of its members or the wider local community, rather than being a primarily commercial enterprise. The organisation should be created, managed and democratically controlled by its members, and membership of the organisation should be open to all beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of that organisation. It may take any one of various legal forms including a co-operative society, community benefit society and company limited by guarantee. The organisation should own, manage or steward the development in a manner consistent with its purpose, potentially through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider of Social Housing. The benefits of the development to the community should be clearly defined and consideration given to how those benefits can be protected over time, including in the event of the organisation being wound up.

**Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Decentralised energy:** Local renewable and local low carbon energy sources.

**Deliverable:** To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a

realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular:

sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans). Where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.

**Design code:** A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

**Design guide:** A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, often produced by a local authority.

**Designated heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

**Developable:** To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

**Development plan:** Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

**Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

**Habitats site:** Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.

**Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

**Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**Historic environment record:** Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.

**International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity:** All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

**Irreplaceable habitat:** Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen.

**Local housing need:** The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.

**Local Nature Partnership:** A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, established for the purpose of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it.

**Local planning authority:** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

**Local plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

**Major development:** For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

**Nature Recovery Network:** An expanding, increasingly connected, network of wildlife- rich habitats supporting species recovery, alongside wider benefits such as carbon capture, water quality improvements, natural flood risk management and recreation. It includes the existing network of protected sites and other wildlife rich habitats as well as and landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.



**Neighbourhood plan:** A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.

**Older people:** People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

**Open space:** All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

**People with disabilities:** People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

**Planning condition:** A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

**Planning obligation:** A legal agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

**Playing field:** The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

**Priority habitats and species:** Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

**Renewable and low carbon energy:** Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

**Rural exception sites:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning

authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

**Safeguarding zone:** An area defined in Circular 01/03: Safeguarding aerodromes, technical sites and military explosives storage areas, to which specific safeguarding provisions apply.

**Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Stepping stones:** Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.

**Strategic policies:** Policies and site allocations which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of Section 19 (1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Strategic policy-making authorities:** Those authorities responsible for producing strategic policies (local planning authorities, and elected Mayors or combined authorities, where this power has been conferred). This definition applies whether the authority is in the process of producing strategic policies or not.

**Supplementary planning documents:** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

**Sustainable Drainage System:** A sustainable drainage system controls surface water run off close to where it falls, combining a mixture of built and nature-based techniques to mimic natural drainage as closely as possible, and accounting for the predicted impacts of climate change. The type of system that would be appropriate will vary from small scale interventions such as permeable paving and soakaways that can be used in very small developments to larger integrated schemes in major developments.

**Sustainable transport modes:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, ultra low and zero emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

**Transport assessment:** A comprehensive and systematic process that considers and sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development, in the context of the vision for the scheme. It identifies measures required to support alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport, and to promote accessibility and safety, together with measures that will be needed deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

**Transport statement:** A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising from development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

**Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

**Windfall sites:** Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.

## **Appendix E: Hitcham Design Guidelines and Codes July 2025**

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Published as a separate but accompanying document





PUBLIC  
FOOTPATH

PUBLIC  
FOOTPATH

OFFICE  
PATH  
SUFFOLK  
CO