

Halesworth's Town Council's Response to Waveney District Council's Local Plan

Halesworth Town Council Statement

In principal, Halesworth Town Council (HTC) is not against the proposed developments listed in the new Local Plan, (LP), but is very concerned about the consequences of these developments on Halesworth's current physical infrastructure and the provision of educational, medical, leisure and recreational facilities and services.

Summary Comments

1. If the **main objective** of the LP for Halesworth is to "help attract younger, working age, people to the town and provide more balance to the demography of the population" then there should be a lot more emphasis on creating the conditions to attract them. This aspect is missing from the plan.
2. Only a **limited expansion of the industrial zone** is planned. Job opportunities in Halesworth are very limited so that the vast majority of residents in employment have to drive outside the town for their jobs. The proposed provision of new industrial sites in Halesworth is a lot less than what is proposed in neighbouring market towns. More land and resources need to be allocated to significantly improve employment possibilities in Halesworth and so attract younger persons to the town
3. There are **no plans for a secondary school**. Without a secondary school in the town, why should young families with teenage children choose Halesworth over other market towns with one? Why should parents subject their children to being bussed to school when expansion in other towns means that there are more attractive alternatives to which to relocate?
4. Waveney District Council's (WDC) LP strategy has designated Halesworth as the **second biggest market town in Waveney**. The planned expansion in housing will increase the population by between 25 -30% increases in population in the neighbouring towns with secondary schools will put serious pressures on their secondary schools which are already at or close to full capacity. Since the LP strategy is to "provide more balance to the demography of the population", the provision of a secondary school is essential to meet this objective.
5. The **house building trajectory** for the sites allocated in the LP will result in a peak of 661 houses being built between 2020 and 2025. This intense building activity will put heavy pressures on Halesworth's infrastructure and resources. Delays in construction will inevitably occur due to the planning process but building should be phased over a longer period to enable the infrastructure, medical, educational, sport and leisure providers to adapt to the expected big increase in demand for their services.

6. Although developments over 10 dwellings should have 35% “affordable housing”, these house prices and rents will still be beyond the reach of most local young residents and anyway, it is far too easy for a determined developer to avoid this responsibility. **Other forms of housing supply** such as that provided by Housing Associations or Council Led Housing must be included in the plan for Halesworth, if the demographic imbalance is to be corrected.
7. Currently, Halesworth does not have a **Community Centre**. The provision of a Community Centre is of high priority and must be included in the LP. It needs to be centrally located in the town so as to be easily accessible and it can provide a convenient modern efficient building housing the Town Council, voluntary bodies, meeting and function rooms.
8. The objective of Policy WLP4.1 **Halesworth/Holton Healthy Neighbourhood** is to build 215 new homes plus a retirement village and a privately owned care home. What is the rationale behind the latter two, in relation to the objective of providing “more balance to the demography of the population”?

There is concern that the provision of outdoor sports facilities as part of this development has not been considered in the context of existing provision. The current sport facilities provider in Halesworth, Halesworth Playing Fields Association (HPFA), has not been consulted, yet reference to this organisation’s “vision” is referred to in the context of Halesworth Campus Limited (HCL) and Halesworth Health’s (HH) plans. This issue needs to be reconsidered so as to make the best use of available resources and to ensure a balance in the type and level of provision in the town. HPFA must be a party to any discussions concerning policy WLP4.1 if its objectives are to be achieved.

9. Item removed.
10. The **Strategic Gap** between Halesworth and Holton was incorporated in the previous LP. It maintained a separation of the two settlements enabling both to develop their separate identities. Outline planning permission has been granted to Hopkins Homes to build in the Strategic Gap without any consultation process with the residents of the two parishes. The rationale for this change in strategy by WDC needs to be explained.
11. HTC has serious concerns about the impact of what will be **hundreds of additional cars** on Halesworth’s roads and the surrounding areas. It believes there will be significant traffic management and environmental impacts although it has been reported that SCC does not consider this increase to be a problem. Local experience would confirm that this is not the case.

In addition, **parking facilities** will be stretched beyond existing capacity, exacerbated by the lack of on-road parking in the town. Many of the road junctions giving access to these new developments and junctions with the

nearby main roads must be adapted to take this significant increase in traffic so as to ensure the safety of road users and pedestrians.

12. Due to its topography, Halesworth already runs the **risk of flooding** after heavy rainfall and due to the effects of climate change; these risks seem to be increasing. Therefore the disposal of surface water runoff must be taken very seriously when assessing planning applications for any of the allocated sites, all of which have their own surface water run-off and drainage problems.
13. Halesworth has benefited hugely from the activities of the volunteer group **Halesworth in Bloom**. Their activities have greatly improved the appearance and visual attractiveness of the town. Every effort should be made to encourage developers to creatively plan soft and hard landscaping to enhance the visual appearance of their developments.
14. The proposed development of the **Dairy Farm** site has been omitted from the LP.

Employment

- Policy WLP4.5 the proposed access improvement to Broadway Farm only permits a **limited development** of this site. If the demographic imbalance is to be corrected, then a major development of the Sparrowhawk Road roundabout is required so as to enable a significant increase in the size of the planned industrial site.

Retail, Leisure and the Town Centre

- Halesworth is a market town which provides **shopping, social, leisure and sporting facilities**, not only for its residents, but also for the residents of the many small villages surrounding the town. Its very commercial viability depends on being able to supply the needs of the residents of these villages since the town's population is insufficient to support the range of shops and businesses that the town enjoys.

As a consequence, it is essential for the town's future that sufficient affordable parking spaces are provided for shoppers from the surrounding villages and for Halesworth residents from the outlying suburbs. The development of approximately 700 new dwellings, all on the outskirts of Halesworth, will only exacerbate the parking situation. Please note that there is virtually no on-street parking.

- The main shopping street in Halesworth, **The Thoroughfare**, is partially pedestrianised. It would benefit greatly from being completely pedestrianised giving Halesworth a unique centre, safe and attractive to visitors.

Sustainable Transportation

- The commercial bus company services for Halesworth are very limited with none servicing the surrounding villages. The volunteer run **Halesworth Area Community Transport, (HACT)**, provides an essential service mainly within the town boundaries. Its activities are restricted due to funding limitations and its dependence on volunteers. The same applies to the activities of the Halesworth Volunteer Centre with its team of volunteer car drivers. The new housing developments on the outskirts of the town would benefit from being included in the HACT routes by an injection of funds from the developers of these housing developments. Such a service would add to the appeal of that development.
- Although improvement to the **cycle network** is listed as the first priority, and is a laudable aim, provision of affordable parking should be the top priority for Halesworth's long term economic viability.

However, significant improvements can be made. For example, a new cycleway linking the proposed development at Hill Farm Road with the cycle track across the Millennium Green and Town Park would enable cyclists to avoid the dangerous Holton Road into Halesworth. Similarly, a new cycle track from the proposed Chediston Street development into Halesworth would avoid cyclist from this development cycling the wrong way down Chediston Street.

- **Provision for pedestrians** has largely been ignored. Many of the pavements in Halesworth are narrow and do not meet modern requirements. New pathways into Halesworth from the new housing developments can be combined with the proposed new cycleways.

Community Services and Facilities

Education

- See paragraphs 3 and 4 in Summary Comment. The lack of a secondary school in Halesworth will seriously hamper attempts to correct the demographic imbalance.

Health Care

- Provision of health care is **currently a major concern** to Halesworth residents. A major investment in capacity at the Cutlers Hill Surgery is needed now to meet current demands of Halesworth's aging population. Consequently, an even bigger investment will be required to satisfy the demand which will be created by an additional 1,500 residents.
- As yet, it is unclear what the proposed new medical facility in the **Halesworth/Holton Healthy Neighbourhood** will be but it is understood that it is to be a privately owned care home. Currently, the Council notes there is

no guarantee that the National Health Service will fund any resources in this private facility. Consequently, it cannot be considered to be a replacement for the recently closed Patrick Stead Hospital, let alone develop the capacity to meet the needs of a larger population

Community Centre

- See paragraph 7 in Summary Comment. Halesworth must be the only market town in East Anglia without a **Community Centre**. With the planned population increase of 25-30% to around 6,500, it is an essential facility around which the town can develop a coherent community. This Community Centre needs to be easily accessible for residents and so must be sited in the centre of the town. It would house HTC, community and volunteer organisations as well as providing space for events; etc.
- Halesworth has a relatively **new library** and although any library will benefit from additional investment, (the library is supported by and active Trust), Halesworth has more pressing problems to be resolved.

[Amended Text

- **Youth is poorly served** in Halesworth. Apart from the Scouts and Guides, the only other organisation catering for youth is the **Apollo Centre** on the old Middle School site. The Youth Club's lease on the building it uses is due to expire in March 2018. However, Phase 1 of the development will not affect the current youth club building and Halesworth Campus Ltd. has confirmed that the lease will be extended over this period

The Apollo Youth Club is a much appreciated and successful youth club, providing a much needed opportunity for Halesworth youth to meet, socialise and enjoy a range of activities.

End of Amended text]

Green Infrastructure

- The Halesworth Playing field Association's **Dairy Hill site** is identified as being part of Halesworth/Holton Healthy Neighbourhood although it is understood that to date, it has not been party to any of the discussions for Policy WLP4.1. In the absence of consultation, how can WDC know what HPFA's "vision" is for its planned development of its Dairy Hill site? HTC would like WDC to revisit this issue and, in doing so, include the HPFA in future consultations. This will enable the development of a policy which takes a wider perspective, providing a balanced approach to sports provision in the town. HTC wants people to have access to as wide a range of sport and leisure facilities as possible and to make the best use of existing facilities
- **Play areas** in the new developments must be specifically planned so that they can be readily overseen, they should be interestingly landscaped and provide

facilities for all age groups. They must not be the odd corners and plots of land where the developer cannot fit a dwelling.

- The planting of **trees and shrubs** should be used creatively to enhance the appearance of the new developments. It would build on the work carried out by Halesworth in Bloom to make Halesworth an attractive and colourful place to live and to visit.

Utilities

- Considerably more than “localised improvements to the **sewage network**” is required. Heavy rainfall already results in the overflow of the sewerage system in several places within the town boundary.
- **High-speed broadband** should be provided as standard at all developments.

Design

- Most houses in the new developments will have **two cars** but to ensure an uncluttered frontage and open vistas, parking for two vehicles should be designed to be behind the building line. Similarly additional parking should be provided away from the main sightlines.
- **Refuse bin storage** needs to be designed to be inconspicuous and should not obstructing house frontages.

Natural Environment

- **Flooding**, after heavy rainfall, is becoming an increasing problem in Halesworth, particularly at the northern end of the shopping street, The Thoroughfare. Natural control measures to slow the flow of flood waters in streams to the west of Halesworth need to be constructed.

Policy WLP4.1 Halesworth/Holton Healthy Neighbourhood

- Provision of a single access off Harrison's Lane for the 215 dwellings will need major civil engineering work due to the narrowness of the lane and the steep bank which will have to be breached to gain access. This number of dwellings will result in at least 350 cars using the narrow Harrison's Lane to access the Norwich Road or pass through Holton village, past the primary school, to reach the A 12. Harrison's Lane is already used as a rat run and the increase in traffic from this new development will exacerbate the situation.
- Loam Pit Lane is already a pinch point for residents of the lane. It opens, after a tight bend, straight onto Holton Road where visibility is severely restricted by the railway bridge in one direction and residents parked cars in the other. This is not a safe exit for cyclists.

WLP4.2 Chediston Street

- This development is upstream of the narrow bridge in The Thoroughfare. Heavy rainfall results in **flood water backing-up** and flooding the lower levels of the town. The surface water run-off from the hard surfaces of this development needs to be disposed of before any surface water reaches the river up-stream of the bridge. It would be beneficial if the developer provided indemnity against flooding which is bound to happen if significant measures are not taken at the start of construction.
- The positioning of the **main site access** at the NE corner of the site will encourage car drivers to use Chediston Street as their return route. Chediston Street is a narrow street within the Conservation Area. Resident's cars are parked along the street narrowing the road space further (few houses have off-street parking). It would be beneficial if the main access was moved up towards the SE corner of the site to encourage drivers to use the wider main road off London Road.

WLP4.5 Broadway Farm Industrial Site

- A lane separate from motorised traffic from the centre of Halesworth to this proposed industrial site is essential to provide a safe passage for cyclists and pedestrians. It will also improve the accessibility of the town centre for those residents from the Fairview and Harrisons Lane developments wishing to walk or cycle rather than drive into town.