
WISBECH

Inset Proposals Map No. 28

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This section contains the detailed planning background, policies and proposals for Wisbech. It should be read in conjunction with the general policies set out in part One of the District-wide Local Plan.
- 1.2. The Wisbech Local Plan 1986, being an existing statutory local plan, will also be of relevance, particularly to the town centre area until such time as the District-wide Local Plan is finally adopted.

2. LOCATION

- 2.1. Wisbech is located in the northern part of Fenland District adjacent to the A47 Trunk Road, linking Peterborough with Kings Lynn and beyond. It is the largest town in the District. The town is located on the River Nene and today still has port facilities on the river. The town retains a rail link with March but only for freight purposes although a rail link bus service links the town with both Peterborough and Kings Lynn.

3. HISTORY

- 3.1. Since mediaeval times the town has relied on its port functions, together with its role as a local trading centre for the surrounding agricultural area. The drainage of the Fens created conditions that made the town more prosperous. The port became a trading centre serving the continent as well as other east coast ports and the town flourished as a centre for local trade in agricultural produce. The magnificent Georgian buildings which still grace the town and the Brinks in particular, stem from this period of prosperity.
- 3.2. The town still retains much of its historical heritage ranging from the site of the former Norman Castle, now reflected in the 'oval' development of The Crescent, to areas such as North Brink described by Pevsner as 'one of the most perfect Georgian streets of England'. The most notable building in this area is Peckover House, built in 1722 now owned by the National Trust and open to the public.
- 3.3. The town originally possessed two market places. Old Market was the trading centre from 1221 for local farmers, with associated uses such as banks and seed shops. This area backed directly onto the river originally serving an array of warehouses. The second Market Place grew adjacent to the Castle across the river and during mediaeval times gradually became the major trading centre. Today it forms the major centre for retailing along with its traditional 'market' influence.
- 3.4. Although the town is still an important centre for locally grown produce, many national firms process a wide range of vegetables and fruit, the local economy is becoming more diverse.

4. POPULATION

- 4.1. The population of the town rose from 17,390 persons in 1981 to an estimated 18,080 in 1986. Over the following three year period to mid 1989 it rose to 18,620 persons.
- 4.2. In mid 1990 the housing stock numbered some 8270 dwellings. (This excludes the dwellings in the vicinity of Sutton Road in Leverington Parish).

5. SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Shopping

- 5.1. Wisbech is the third largest shopping centre in the County after Peterborough and Cambridge. The shopping catchment area of the town is quite extensive, serving an area south from the Wash to March and a rural hinterland which includes parts of Lincolnshire and Norfolk.
- 5.2. In the last twenty years or so the town has experienced a dramatic change in shopping. Many of the small retail outlets on the fringes of the town centre have been lost. An edge of town supermarket was built in the early seventies. Then, in 1988 the Horse Fair site, adjoining the Market Place, was redeveloped to provide a supermarket, 21 shop units, a two-storey car park and bus station. This was followed by a smaller but nonetheless important shopping and flat development known as Church Mews. In the last year a retail park has been built at Elm High Road on the southern fringes of the town, but in the County of Norfolk and work is currently proceeding on the construction of a further retail park to the east of Cromwell Road, south of Weasenham Lane.

Community Facilities

- 5.3. The town has a good range of facilities including a library, police station, health clinics, hospital, community centre, museum, indoor swimming pool/sports complex and sports stadium. Although the town has a fairly extensive range of sport and recreational facilities, there is a general short fall in open space provision, particularly in children's open space provision. Access to the countryside is also limited.

Education

- 5.4. There are eight primary and junior schools and two senior schools in the town, one of which is private, and a college of further Education. The capacity and rolls of these schools, in January 1990, was as follows:

School	Existing Roll (pupils)	Permanent Capacity	Temporary Capacity
Elm Road CP	240	210	60
Peckover CP	278	210	85
Clarkson Infants	216	210	30
St Peter's Junior	256	240	-
St Augustine's Infants	232	180	90
Gordon Fendick Junior	211	270	-
Nene Infants	233	180	30
Ramnoth Road CP	245	300	
Queens School (Senior)	1450	1626	80
Wisbech Grammar School (Independent)	599	620	

If all current housing commitments are implemented the County Council may have to increase provision at the Peckover CP and Nene Infant Schools.

Drainage

- 5.5. The sewage treatment works is located at West Walton in Norfolk, which not only serves the town but a number of villages in North Cambridgeshire and West Norfolk. There is no current problem with capacity. However, the existence of a high degree of industrial food processing firms will need to be taken into account as they can produce high levels of polluted water. There are varying degrees of sewer capacity throughout the town with most areas (except to the west of the river) near to full capacity. Specific areas where there is an immediate capacity problem in relation to sewer and pumping stations are:

- i) Sandall Road/Weasenham Lane/Elm Road - any proposed industrial development would necessitate upgrading works to the sewer infrastructure.
 - ii) Money Bank area - the sewers industrial pumping station is up to capacity, therefore any additional development eastwards to the County boundary would create the need for sewer upgrading.
 - iii) Black Bear Lane area - not as serious as (i) and (ii) but similar.
- 5.6. Effluent from the outlying villages, which are on mains drainage, drain into the town system before being pumped to the treatment works. Any further development in these settlements will reduce any spare capacity in the town system.
- 5.7. There are many areas of the town served by separate public surface water sewers, these are largely located in the southern, eastern and north-eastern areas together with small catchments adjacent to the River Nene.
- 5.8. The northern area of the town discharges to the river via a surface water pumping station located at Edinburgh Drive. This is at capacity and further development would necessitate upgrading works.
- 5.9. The central core of the town contains combined sewers which are close to capacity. The outlying areas of the town drain via surface water sewers to watercourses and dykes. The latter are the responsibility of various local internal drainage boards with varying degrees of capacity.

Water supply

- 5.10. There are no current problems, but the long term needs of the town will require further investigations. High level users of water should contact Anglian Water at an early stage to discuss their proposals.

6. KEY FEATURES OF FORM AND CHARACTER

- 6.1. For many centuries the town has been established as a market town and port. This is reflected in the town today and is the main factor in giving the town its own special character.
- 6.2. The town centre still retains much of its traditional form and character. The North Brink, the Old Market and the Crescent areas bear testimony to the past history and importance of the town as a trading centre for the Fens and are of high and townscape quality.
- 6.3. The major part of the town centre was designated as a Conservation Area in February 1972 and extended in February 1979. In April 1984 a Town Scheme under which grants for structural repairs to listed and other important buildings can be made, was introduced which has helped to retain and enhance its historic architecture. A further area incorporating the former 'Bowthorpe Estate' is currently being proposed for designation as a Conservation Area. The Council for British Archaeology identified Wisbech as one of 51 towns in Britain whose conservation should be of national concern.
- 6.4. The River Nene flowing through the town, the only tidal river in the District, is still a major townscape feature though not as important commercially as it once was.
- 6.5. The town was compact in form until the last century when development extended northwards and eastwards. Only limited development has taken place to the west of the river, despite the Old Market being the original trading centre of the town. One of the main reasons is the large land holding owned by the National Trust which the Trust intend be retained as open space.
- 6.6. The northern part of the town still contains port related uses along with a high proportion of Council housing. The eastern side of the town has a mixture of private sector housing and the town has now merged with the village of Walsoken, part of which lies within Norfolk. To the south lie mainly the industrial areas together with the food processing industries. To the west, only very limited development has taken place, most of this being within Leverington Parish.

- 6.7. Improvements to the road system have also improved the environmental quality of the town. The A47 Trunk Road, which once bisected the town, now bypasses the town to the south and east and the construction of Churchill Road along the site of the former canal has improved access to the town centre.

7. DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

- 7.1. The major factors which influence the development strategy for Wisbech are the location and physical constraints outlined above, the Structure Plan policy guidelines for future residential growth as outlined in Part One, together with existing planning permissions and allocations.

Housing

- 7.2. The following table sets out the current position (as at 1st July 1990).

		Dwellings
a)	Dwellings built from mid 1986-mid 1990	
	large sites	553 *
	small sites	233 *
	Total	786 *
b)	Average building rate over the above 196 (205) per year period	
c)	Planning permissions (See Appendix 4)	
	large sites	1576 *(includes 555 flats)
	small sites	252
	Total	1828 say 1830

(* excludes part of Leverington Parish lying adjacent to Wisbech. In this area there were a further 35 dwelling completions mid 1986-mid 1990, 24 on large sites and 11 on small sites).

* Includes 130 on Leverington Road, which is unlikely to come forward in the Local Plan period.

- 7.3. The Structure Plan requirement for housing on large sites in Wisbech for the period 1986 - 2001 is for 1500 dwellings. Taking the number of dwellings already built in the first four years of this period, (553+24) and current planning permissions (1576) on large sites, there is already an over-provision of dwellings in terms of the Structure Plan requirement. This scale of development, however, more accurately reflects recent building rates and aspirations of the District and accords with the flexibility included in the Structure Plan policies for the Fens, and the dispersal strategy for the Cambridge sub-region.
- 7.4. Based upon average building rates over the last four years, current permissions could provide a supply of housing land for some 9 years.
- 7.5. The village of Walsoken abuts Wisbech but largely lies within Norfolk. Currently there remains planning permission for 62 dwellings which are not included in the above figures.
- 7.6. A planning application for the housing development of some 14.5ha (35 acres) of land located between Elm High Road and Meadowgate Lane has been submitted. This site lies outside the area administered by Fenland District Council but the implications of such development would have a direct affect on the town particularly traffic, infrastructure and service provision, in particular Education.

Industry

7.7. The main industrial areas lie to the south of the town in the vicinity of Weasenham lane and Cromwell Road and adjacent to the Port area. Land to the south of Weasenham Lane and Algores Way is currently being developed by Fenland District Council with roads and service provision.

7.8. On the 1st July 1990 land was available with planning permission:

	Hectares	(Acres)
South of Weasenham Lane	16.5	(40.7)
East of Cromwell Road	27.3	(67.5)
West of Cromwell Road	1.7	(4.2)
Total	45.5	(112.4)

Shopping

7.9. With the recent developments of Horse Fair and Church Mews shopping schemes, and existing commitments elsewhere, it is considered that shopping provision is adequate. Consideration, however, needs to be given to enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Recreation

7.10. Overall there is a shortfall in open space provision and in particular in children's play space there is a deficiency of some 8.7ha (21 acres) and currently there is also a locational imbalance. The eastern and south eastern sectors of the town have little provision while the western side has more than adequate provision. Current planning permissions and allocations for housing will create a need for about another 6ha (15 acres) of open space which will largely be provided by developers in accordance with Policy R4.

7.11. There is a general lack of public open space on the fringes of the town together with a lack of access to the countryside. Although the River Nene runs through the town it has little recreational potential due to its tidal nature. A number of golf course developments are currently being proposed by the private sector in the vicinity of Wisbech. These schemes will be assessed in accordance with the strategy for golf course provision set out in Part One of the Local Plan. (Paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 refer).

Transportation

7.12. The town has, over the years, developed around a series of roads radiating out from the town centre. The A47 Trunk Road has recently been diverted out of the town in the form of an eastern bypass and a recent announcement has been made that the A47 is to be upgraded to dual carriageway status. This is likely to increase Wisbech's attraction as a location for development. The former canal has been developed into a highway providing a major access route to and from the south east. Although much of the through traffic has now been removed from the town there are increasing traffic movements being generated within the town and particularly to the north west (A1101 Sutton Road).

7.13. The Highway Authority has expressed concern regarding increasing traffic congestion around the town centre which is projected to increase. The highway network to the east of the town is rather tortuous and not of a sufficient standard to accommodate any appreciable growth in traffic. The A1101 Elm High Road serves as the main access to the town from the south east and is increasingly becoming busy particularly since the completion of the retail park near the junction of the bypass. An office complex has recently been constructed, in Norfolk, with access off the A1101 adjacent to the bypass roundabout.

- 7.14. The central shopping area is relatively free of any serious traffic problems. The Horse Fair and Church Mews, already provide a traffic free environment. The District Council is examining further possible pedestrianisation and traffic management schemes with the County Council in the Market Place area. On the edge of the town centre, at the roundabout to the east of Freedom Bridge, traffic congestion does occur at peak times. This is a focal point for traffic, but the County Council's view is that this peak hour problem would be costly to solve on this five legged roundabout and could introduce problems at other times.
- 7.15. Traffic to the industrial areas has reasonable access via Weasenham Lane to either Cromwell Road or Elm High Road, both of which have direct access to the A47 bypass. Access from the port area via Mount Pleasant Road has recently been improved with the implementation of traffic lights at the junction of Lynn Road with Mount Pleasant Road and other associated road works.
- 7.16. The British Rail link between Wisbech and March is now only used for freight purposes. It provides an important link for Spillers and to a lesser extent the CMB Food Cans and Components (UK). A rail link bus services operates between Kings Lynn and Peterborough with a pick up point in the town for passenger traffic.
- 7.17. The long established port still plays an important role in the economy of the town. Strategically placed close to the A47, it serves an area extending to Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the East Midlands. However, the recent development of new wharfage facilities at Sutton Bridge is bound to have some effect on trade at Wisbech and the general outlook is difficult to determine.

Drainage

- 7.18. The works and system should generally be able to cope with existing planning commitments, but the longer term needs arising from both residential and industrial growth along with developments outside the town but linked to the system, may require improvements both for foul and surface water drainage.

Town Centre

- 7.19. The town centre has seen many changes over the past few decades; the redevelopment of the Horse Fair area and Church Mews, the construction of Churchill Road, the loss of part of Norfolk street and the loss of warehousing along the riverside. Despite these changes the town centre still retains much of its former historical and architectural character. It still contains a pleasant shopping and working environment and offers potential for further improvement. Old Market and The Crescent areas have recently been improved as part of an on-going programme of environmental enhancement. A major scheme for the Market Place area is currently under consideration.
- 7.20. Parking provision is reasonably well related to the town centre with further provision planned on the former Queens School site. Currently there is no lorry park provision.

8. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 8.1. The Development Strategy for Wisbech provides for significant residential development on a large choice of sites within a defined Development Area Boundary. Much of this development is already committed and the strategy provides for a period of consolidation before releasing new allocations.
- 8.2. Land for commercial/industrial development will be concentrated to the south west of the town in the area between Weasenham Lane and the A47 bypass, north and west of New Drove.
- 8.3. The Plan provides for improvements in open space provision and for a further study of town centre problems including traffic, parking, shopping and townscape improvements.

- 8.4. The conservation and environmental enhancement of the town will be accorded a high priority.

9. PROPOSALS

Housing

WIS/H1 IT IS PROPOSED TO MAKE PROVISION FOR 1955 DWELLINGS IN WISBECH. THESE SITES WHICH COMPRISE EXISTING PERMISSIONS AND ALLOCATIONS ARE SHOWN ON THE INSET PROPOSALS MAP. THE PRINCIPAL ALLOCATIONS ARE:

	HECTARES	(ACRES)
BATH ROAD/TINDALL CLOSE*	2.4	(6.0)
QUAKER LANE	0.8	(2.0)
SUTTON ROAD	1.2	(3.0)
WALTON ROAD	0.57	(1.4)
HALFPENNY LANE	4.0	(10.0)
OSBORNE ROAD	1.2	(3.0)
TOTALS	10.17	(25.4)

- 9.1. The site for which a development brief will be required in accordance with Policy IMP3 is asterisked.
- 9.2. The housing land provision is made up of existing land with planning permission for some 1700 dwellings (both large and small sites) but excluding Leverington Road which is likely to remain in industrial use, and new allocations with an estimated capacity of 255 dwellings (10.17 hectares at 25 dwellings per hectare).
- 9.3. It is not considered necessary to allocate additional land for housing over and above those areas already having the benefit of planning permission, or already allocated. The location and mix of these existing commitments will provide the town with an adequate range and choice of sites within the Local Plan period. However, there could be additional areas within the Development Area Boundary brought forward for development. These sites, known as 'windfall' sites, may currently be in different land uses, or be unused. The development of such sites will be considered on their merits subject to compliance with other policies of the Plan.
- 9.4. Infilling will also normally be permitted within the Development Area Boundary shown on the Inset Proposals Map, subject to compliance with other policies of the Local Plan.
- 9.5. The Development Area Boundary has been drawn to reflect the existing built-up area of the town. Development will not normally be allowed, except in exceptional circumstances, outside the Development Area Boundary.

Employment and Industry

WIS/EMP1 IT IS PROPOSED TO ALLOCATE 72.5 HA (178.9 ACRES) OF LAND FOR BUSINESS, GENERAL INDUSTRY, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION PURPOSES. THE SITES WHICH COMPRISE EXISTING PERMISSIONS AND ALLOCATIONS ARE SHOWN ON THE INSET PROPOSALS MAP. THE PRINCIPAL ALLOCATIONS ARE:

	HECTARES	(ACRES)
SOUTH OF WEASENHAM LANE	16.0	(39.5)
EAST OF CROMWELL ROAD	2.25	(5.5)
WEST OF CROMWELL ROAD	8.7	(21.5)
TOTALS	27.0	(66.5)

- 9.6. The established location for industrial uses to the south of the town together with generally good access to the highway network, offers the most logical area for further industrial development. The allocations provide a range of sites adequate to meet most commercial needs. It is proposed that a development brief will be prepared for the areas abutting Cromwell Road.

Shopping

WIS/S1 THE CENTRAL COMMERCIAL AREA IS DEFINED ON THE INSET PROPOSALS MAP FOR WISBECH

- 9.7. Within the central commercial area as defined on the Inset Proposals Map shopping policies S1, S2, and S3 will apply. It is considered that no major proposals are necessary and that future strategy will be to consolidate existing shopping areas. The Town Centre Study will examine shopping issues in more detail.

WIS/S2 IT IS PROPOSED TO MAKE PROVISION FOR A RETAIL FOOD STORE, PETROL FILLING STATION, NON-FOOD RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARK, GARDEN CENTRE WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING, ON LAND ADJACENT TO CROMWELL ROAD.

- 9.8. This allocation reflects the two recent planning permissions given for these uses. The provision of these services will help to offset this type of shopping provision which in the past has been provided elsewhere but outside the District. This site along with the recent redevelopment of the Horse Fair in the town centre will, in the longer term, help to strengthen Wisbech as a shopping centre overall.

Recreation

WIS/R1 IT IS PROPOSED TO ALLOCATE 1.0HA (2.4 ACRES) OF LAND FOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE OFF BATH ROAD.

- 9.9. This proposal, when implemented, will improve facilities in this area of the town. Current negotiations are taking place to bring forward this facility.
- 9.10. There is an overall shortfall in open space provision, and work will continue to identify further sites to overcome this shortfall.

Transportation

- 9.11. The Dowgate Road/Sutton Road junction experiences traffic congestion at peak times of the day. It serves as the major access for traffic from Leverington and other villages to the west and north. A scheme to improve the junction with traffic lights and partly funded by the private sector, is being considered but it is not in the County Council's programme of works for 1991-92. The District Council will fully support the County Council for early implementation of traffic control measures at this junction.

Town Centre

- 9.12. A separate study of the town centre will be undertaken. The study will examine such issues as traffic management, car and lorry parking provisions, shopping and redevelopment potential, general landscaping improvements and other matters relevant to the town centre. A new set of policy guidelines will also be produced for the Conservation Area. Until this new study is approved, Policies CA/1-17 in the Development and Conservation section of the 1986 Wisbech Local Plan are particularly relevant, in addition to the policies set out in Part One of this Local Plan.

Environment

- 9.13. The current Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and extended in 1979. Consideration was given to the appropriateness of its existing boundary and revisions to the boundary are proposed for incorporation into the Plan. It is also proposed to designate a new Conservation Area covering the Bowthorpe Estate.

WIS/C1 IT IS PROPOSED TO AMEND THE EXISTING CONSERVATION AREA. THE PROPOSED NEW BOUNDARY IS SHOWN ON THE INSET PROPOSALS MAP.

- 9.14. The proposed amendments to the existing Conservation Area are:
- i) Reflect new development by excluding such areas.
 - ii) Include areas which display a similar character to the majority of the existing Conservation Area.
 - iii) Include prominent sites where control over future development should be exercised, where it would affect the special character of this outstanding Conservation Area.

WIS/C2 IT IS PROPOSED TO DESIGNATE THE BOWTHORPE ESTATE, WISBECH, AS A CONSERVATION AREA. THE AREA IS SHOWN ON THE INSET PROPOSALS MAP.

- 9.15. This proposal encompasses an area south of Lynn Road, from No 20 to No. 104 Lynn Road. Contained within this area are Park Avenue, Townshend Road and parts of St. Augustine's Road, Henry Street, Tavistock Road, Bowthorpe Road, York Road and Clarkson Avenue.
- 9.16. The principal reason for proposing Conservation Area designation for this part of Wisbech is the special character which this area displays. Although it does not have a wealth of listed buildings, it is an area exhibiting a built form which is important to the historical development of Wisbech. The built environment reflects an era of social and economic success once inhabited by the prosperous Victorian middle classes. The whole area owes its existence to the creation of the Park which, in effect, acted as a catalyst to other development.

Drainage

- 9.17. Policy PU1 will apply to all residential and industrial developments. Anglian Water Services Limited are responsible for sewage treatment, and consequently the impact of any development on the treatment plant, with regard to both volume and nature of proposed discharges would have to be assessed by them at the time with regard to the foul sewer system. There are several areas with immediate capacity problems in relation to sewers and pumping stations. These areas are identified previously in paragraph 5. 5. Major development in other areas may necessitate sewerage upgrading works.
- 9.18. Any type of industrial or commercial development that involves trade effluent discharge will require trade effluent consent from Anglian Water Services and will also require special consideration.
- 9.19. Separate surface water sewers exist throughout the town, please refer to paragraph 5. 7-5. 9 where problem areas are identified. The majority of new development will require either upgrading of the existing systems or the provision of a new system specific to the development discharging to a new consented outfall point, e. g. dyke, watercourse.

APPENDIX 4**LAND WITH PLANNING PERMISSION (AS AT 1st JULY 1990) ON LARGE SITES**

Location	Dwellings
Alexandra Road	18 (16 flats)
Barton Road	52
Barton Road	16
Bath Road	16 (flats)
Chase Street	170 (flats)
Chase Street	60 (flats)
Clarkson Avenue	34 (33 flats)
Cromwell Road	194 (75 flats)
De Havilland Road	48
Elm Road	35
Elm High Road	9
Elm Low Road	40 (flats)
Kinderley Road	24
Kinderley Road	15
Kirkgate Street	23
Leverington Road	22 (flats)
Leverington Road	134
Lynn Road	44
Lynn Road	80
Lynn Road	16
Lynn Road	98
New Drove	49
New Drove	19
Old Market	19 (flats)
Old Market	13 (flats)
Osborne Road	18
Osborne Road	10 (flats)
Ramnoth Road	59
Sandall Road	20 (flats)
Somers Road	39
Sutton Road	39 (38 flats)
Walton Road	10
Walton Road	23 (flats)
Waterlees Road	30
Weasenham Lane	16
Westmead Avenue	64
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Total	1,576 (including 555 flats).