

# SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT AND FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY  
LAND TO THE EAST OF CHAPEL HILL, WOODTON







# Rural Solutions

The Nationwide Planning and Development Specialists

## SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

### LOCATION

LAND TO THE EAST OF CHAPEL HILL, WOODTON

### PROPOSAL

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

### APPLICANT

THE EUSTON ESTATE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural Solutions Ltd (RSL) has been commissioned by The Euston Estate to produce an assessment of the current sustainability of a 3.9-hectare (9.6 acres) site to the east of Chapel Hill, Woodton and to assess the potential impact of the proposed development of new homes on its future sustainability.

The purpose of the report is to support an assessment of the development proposal within the context and requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF/The Framework).

The report provides a review of the concept of sustainability as applied to rural settlements and the approach set out within the NPPF to spatial development strategy in rural areas.

The NPPF provides a positive context for housing development and identifies that new rural housing should be located where it can enhance or maintain the vitality of the community.

The report responds to this direction and provides a detailed assessment of the current social and economic sustainability of Woodton and the impacts that the proposed development will have on the future sustainability and vitality of the community. The assessment is based on the principles and objectives set out in the Framework, in national planning policy guidance and relevant government strategies. It is informed by wider research and policy papers.

The assessment shows that Woodton is a successful and sustainable settlement. It has an active community and access to a range of services and amenities. Economic activity rates are good and a range of employment hosting sites are available locally. Woodton is a settlement that is capable of hosting additional housing which will help to address potential changes emerging in the Woodton parish demographic profile.

## BENEFITS



### ECONOMIC

- A tangible number of construction and associated supply chain jobs;
- An increased population to support local facilities and services with increased spending power;
- New Homes Bonus funding for South Norfolk Council;
- Council Tax payments;
- Construction Value;
- Attract people of a working age and young working adults and those who are seeking to start a family; and
- Continue to attract higher earners, families and enhance economic performance overall.



### SOCIAL

- Provision of affordable housing which will help to address the significant needs of the district (this is a significant material consideration which should weigh heavily in the planning balance);
- A mix of house types and sizes including affordable housing to enable a balanced and mixed community which will contribute to the existing community and support local facilities;
- Providing a greater population base, increasing the number of residents available to use and support local services and amenities in Woodton and the surrounding settlements. It may also increase the demand for local services;
- A proportion of the site can be provided as open space and Green Infrastructure, bringing health, recreation and biodiversity benefits to the site;
- The provision of a new children's play area on site would be of benefit to existing and future residents of the area;
- Development on a site within walking distance of a number of existing the facilities in Woodton; and
- Providing an increased number of adults that will increase the available pool of volunteers to help run the various social clubs, sports clubs, and local groups.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

- I.1: RSL has been commissioned to carry out an assessment of the current social and economic sustainability of the site to the east of Chapel Hill, and the community of Woodton.
- I.2: This assessment considers the contribution of the site to the future sustainability of the parish of Woodton. The report is set out as follows:
- Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the concept of sustainability with reference to the NPPF, guidance and relevant studies and evidence. It explains why it is important to plan for new housing in all settlements;
  - Chapters 3 to 8 provide an assessment of the current sustainability of Woodton and the potential that new development has to enhance future sustainability;
  - Chapter 9 considers the changes that the proposed development will bring and an assessment of the impact that it will have on the community of Woodton and the wider district; and
  - Chapter 10 provides conclusions on the sustainability of the site and a closing statement.

### APPROACH

- I.3: The assessment in this report follows the principles and objectives relating to sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. It also draws on the NPPG, on relevant government strategies and policy statements, on commentary and statements from relevant stakeholders, including in section 78 planning appeals where appropriate.
- I.4: The assessment focuses on the social and economic elements of sustainability in so far as they apply to the settlement. It uses headings derived from a definition and criteria relating to sustainable communities set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (contained in Annex A of the UKSDS) as points of reference against which to make an assessment.
- I.5: Our analysis is based on an understanding of sustainability provided by policy, in evidence based studies<sup>1</sup>. It has been regularly tested by cross-examination at public inquiries and in examination in public of emerging Local Plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Living, Working Countryside, The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing, 2008; Toolkit for Sustainable Rural Communities, Devon County Council and others, 2007; Cornwall Small Settlement Strategy, Cornwall Council, 2009; Positive Planning for Rural Settlements, Shropshire Council 2010

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- 1.6: Data to support the assessment has been sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).
- 1.7: The assessment has also been informed by a review of the Local Development Plan, comprising of the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (adopted March 2011, amended 2014)<sup>2</sup> and the evidence base of the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/joint-core-strategy>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan-and-new-evidence>

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## 2. UNDERSTANDING AND PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

The *NPPF* provides a positive context to enable sustainable development in all settlements. The presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is at the heart of the *Framework*, applies to all areas. There is no cap on sustainable development, especially where there are clear benefits that will be delivered. The question that must always be addressed by decision makers is can a proposal be considered to be sustainable development when considered in the round – against the policies as set out in the *NPPF*?

### SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES

- 2.1: The concept of thriving rural communities and rural vitality is perhaps best understood against the wider concept of sustainable communities. Sustainable communities have been formally defined within the *UK Sustainable Development Strategy (UKSDS)*. Annex A of the *UKSDS* provides a set of criteria that defines a sustainable community. These criteria are centred on well-run communities that are inclusive and designed to a high standard and define sustainable communities as:
1. Active, inclusive and safe
  2. Well run
  3. Environmentally sensitive
  4. Well designed and built
  5. Well connected
  6. Thriving
  7. Well served
  8. Fair for everyone
- 2.2: These components have been considered in a rural context by a number of studies including the *Toolkit for Sustainable Rural Communities* produced by Devon County Council, *A Small Settlement Strategy for Cornwall* produced by Cornwall Council, the parameters set down for Eco Towns, and in various master plans for market town extensions. It has been adopted and used successfully by local authorities such as Shropshire in the production of local development plans and to inform the spatial distribution of development<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.3: This body of work concludes that sustainable rural communities are those which are successful places to live. They are balanced, in that they provide opportunities for people of all types and ages to live in suitable housing at a cost which meets the ability of individual households to pay. They provide access to

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/economicdevelopment.nsf/open/CCE4EDBAC964EFE5802577ED004A7BBA/>

enterprise and employment opportunities in the local area and allow their residents and those in the surrounding rural hinterland to benefit from services which enable people to shop, access education and engage in social and cultural activities whilst limiting their impact on the natural and historic environment. Sustainable communities enjoy good social capital and benefit from local governance which enables people to influence decisions made about the place where they live.

## AN UPDATED CONCEPT OF RURAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.4: The Framework seeks to create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities (paragraph 50).
- 2.5: Data from the 2011 Census shows that nationally the number of people aged over 65 has risen significantly. A lack of suitable and affordable alternatives means that many of these retirement age households remain in their homes, occupying housing that would otherwise be suitable for younger working people and families.
- 2.6: This perpetuates a demographic imbalance and directly contributes to a reduction in the settlement population that is of school age. An ageing population has a direct impact on social capacity and on the vitality of settlements and communities.
- 2.7: New housing can help to rebalance communities by attracting younger people and working families, and by providing a means for them to bring and use their skills and energy to revitalise communities.
- 2.8: Aside from the challenge posed by the ageing of the population, is the ongoing housing affordability crisis. In its 2014 report 'Broken Market, Broken Dreams'<sup>5</sup> the National Housing Federation set out details about the increased problems with affordability since the mid-1990s. The report states that today's (UK average) affordability ratio is about 20% higher than the long run average, indicating a growing gap between house prices and earnings, making home ownership hard to achieve for newly forming households.
- 2.9: The report considers the tenure of English households by age in 2013. It highlights that younger people tend to rent while older people tend to own. Following the trough in the housing market since the financial crash in 2008/9, there has been a distinct shift from owning a house with a mortgage toward private renting. Between 2008/9 and 2012/13, there was an increase of almost four percentage points of those renting privately and a decrease of around four percentage points in those owning a house with a mortgage. In the last few years, the proportion of people in each of the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups in the private rented sector has increased by more than ten percentage points. This sector has also seen a 6% rise in those aged 35-44. It is increasingly challenging

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<sup>5</sup> Broken Market Broken Dreams – Home Truths 2014 / 2015, National Housing Federation

for young people to join the housing ladder. The market is preventing people from achieving their aspiration to own a home, with more people forced to stay in the rented sector.

- 2.10: The provision of new affordable homes in settlements is of critical importance to addressing affordability issues. New affordable housing in settlements enables communities to meet a range of housing needs including those of young people with links to the community, key workers, economically active people working in the local economy and older people looking for lower cost housing.
- 2.11: Beyond meeting specific housing needs, the provision of new market and affordable housing helps to improve demographic balance and adds to social capital available locally. It supports and creates the opportunity for the delivery of vital local services.

### A CHANGING CONTEXT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.12: 'Connected' people now work remotely from home and all manner of internet access points, with 77% of adults using the internet every day. They shop online, carry out administrative and financial transactions online (banking, paying bills etc.), access entertainment, and interact socially online. School children and learners access their educational resources online, engage with teachers, tutors and mentors online and transfer their work over the internet.
- 2.13: The ability of people to use the internet to meet some of their social and economic needs does not, of course, mean that communities are richer and more successful places when they can provide shops, pubs, halls, sports grounds and schools to their residents. Instead, it underlines how a simplistic test, that is wholly reliant upon counting physical service points to determine whether a settlement should or should not host new housing, is no way to determine the future shape of a community.
- 2.14: Increase in homeworking is a national trend. TUC analysis in May 2016 of data from the Labour Force Survey<sup>6</sup> showed that 'just over 1.5 million employees regularly worked from home in 2015, a rise of 19% (241,000 people) over the period between 2005 and 2015'. Government research shows that 'another 4 million UK workers would like to work from home for at least some of their working week but are not given the chance'.
- 2.15: TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said:

Modern home-working is good for the economy, as it helps businesses hold on to talented staff and boosts productivity. And it allows those with caring responsibilities or a disability greater access to the jobs market.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/home-working-fifth-over-last-decade-tuc-analysis-reveals>

- 2.16: The report goes on to say that the 'rise in homeworking confirms that this new way of working has become an essential part of the UK labour market'.
- 2.17: The impact of the internet and the role that it can play in service accessibility is noted in the NPPF which states (at paragraph 42) that, 'the development of high-speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.'
- 2.18: People do not live as they used to. Just as people's lifestyles and the things that they need from their community changes, so must the communities in which they live. The application of outdated and irrelevant criteria as a test of sustainability undermines the ability of settlements and communities to change through development. This, as Taylor has found, will inevitably ensure that they become less sustainable.

### A NEW POLICY CONTEXT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.19: There has been a shift in the way that plan makers and decision makers should assess the sustainability of development in settlements that is evident in the NPPF.
- 2.20: The Framework is acknowledged by decision makers as 'the most authoritative policy statement concerning sustainable development nationally.'
- 2.21: The Ministerial foreword to the NPPF states that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. It describes sustainable development as being about 'change for the better'. It talks about the need to 'house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices'. It argues that the historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can be cherished more if their 'spirit of place thrives, rather than withers'.
- 2.22: The Framework identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (paragraph 7). These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles. These are, firstly, an economic role whereby it ensures the availability of land to support growth and innovation and contributes to a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The second role is a social one where it supports 'strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations'. This role is also concerned with 'creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.' The third role is an environmental one, where it contributes to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment and seeks to 'mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy'.

### ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.23: Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that the three roles 'should not be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent'. It goes on to say that, 'the

planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable locations’.

- 2.24: In order to assess sustainability, it is therefore, appropriate to follow the approach set out in paragraph 6 of the Framework which states that, ‘the policies in paragraphs 18 to 219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system’.
- 2.25: This approach to looking at sustainability ‘in the round’ is demonstrated in the decision letter relating to a scheme at Down Ampney (Gloucestershire)<sup>7</sup> where Inspector Major concluded his analysis on sustainable development by noting, ‘Sustainability must be seen as an overall concept. Whether a particular scheme is sustainable will depend on how well it addresses the three dimensions of sustainability when taken overall’.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.26: The inspector in the Leintwardine (Herefordshire) appeal<sup>9</sup> also helpfully states at his paragraph 54 that sustainability ‘should not be interpreted narrowly’, and that, ‘the three dimensions of sustainable development cannot be undertaken in isolation but should be sought jointly and simultaneously.’

## LOCATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.27: The NPPF specifically addresses locational sustainability relating to the provision of new rural housing in paragraph 55 that, ‘seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas by locating housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby’, which is set out above, is applicable in the context of this application given the proximity of the site to the neighbouring settlements of Bungay, Loddon, Hempnall and further north, Norwich.
- 2.28: Inspectors have noted in a number of recent decisions how new housing might contribute to maintaining and enhancing the vitality of the settlement, and sustainability in the round. Included below is a relevant extract from the decision letter issued in January 2016 for a development at Drakes Broughton in Wychavon District<sup>10</sup>: ‘The Framework indicates that there are three inter-related dimensions to sustainable development. In terms of the economic role, there would be jobs created both during the construction phase and thereafter. The new population would inject money into the local economy and support local shops and facilities, which would help maintain their viability’<sup>11</sup>.

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7 APP/F1610/W/15/3131716

8 IR reference – Paragraph 30

9 APP/W1850/W/15/3006428 IR54

10 APP/H1840/W/15/3008340

11 IR reference – Paragraph 38

- 2.29: It is evident from the content of policies within the Framework that sustainable locations for development can be found in all settlements.
- 2.30: Pursuing sustainable development is defined (in paragraph 9) to include 'widening the choice of high-quality homes' and 'making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages'. The Core Planning Principles set out in paragraph 17 state that 'planning should ... proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs'.
- 2.31: Paragraph 17 also includes a core principle to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are, or can be made, sustainable.
- 2.32: The last core principle set out in paragraph 17 is to deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.
- 2.33: Paragraph 50 links the provision of housing that can widen the choice of homes available to the creation of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. It identifies the need to plan for a mix of housing taking account of current and future demographic trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

#### LEVEL OF GROWTH

- 2.34: It is a well-established principle arising from the Framework that there should be no cap on sustainable development. This principle is helpfully captured in the extract from an appeal decision by Inspector Peerless at Bishop's Itchington<sup>12</sup> which notes, 'In any event, sustainable development should not, I consider, be restricted solely because a projected allocation has been met if otherwise found acceptable.'
- 2.35: The Drakes Broughton appeal decision as previously mentioned also states that, 'Many have noted that the District Council has worked hard to address past housing shortfalls and identify sufficient land to meet its FOAN. However, this does not mean that sustainable developments should be turned away. The presumption in its favour applies whether or not a five-year supply of housing land can be demonstrated'.
- 2.36: In an appeal for up to 15 dwellings in Honeybourne in Worcestershire<sup>13</sup> the planning inspector stated in allowing the appeal that, 'The fact that the Council do currently have a five-year supply is not in itself a reason to prevent other housing sites being approved, particularly in light of the Framework's attempt to boost significantly the supply of housing'.

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<sup>12</sup> APP/J3720/A/13/2202961 IR38

<sup>13</sup> APP/HI840/A/13/2205247 IR11

- 2.37: In relation to an appeal relating to a proposal for 100 dwellings in Launceston in Cornwall, dating from April 2014<sup>14</sup>, the inspector stated 'Irrespective of whether the five-year housing land supply figure is met or not, NPPF does not suggest that this has to be regarded as a ceiling or upper limit on permissions. On the basis that there would be no harm from a scheme, or that the benefits would demonstrably outweigh the harm, then the view that satisfying a five-year housing land supply figure should represent some kind of limit or bar to further permissions is considerably diminished, if not rendered irrelevant. An excess of permissions in a situation where supply may already meet the estimated level of need does not represent harm, having regard to the objectives of NPPF'.
- 2.38: This approach demonstrates that it is necessary to consider the merits of each proposal and its potential to be considered as sustainable development. It is not appropriate to find against a proposal purely on the basis that a target or allocation for housing associated with a particular settlement (or category of settlement) has been met.

### THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 2.39: The adopted South Norfolk Local Plan is made up of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) as well as various Area Action Plans, a Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document and the Development Management Policies Document.
- 2.40: The Greater Norwich local Plan is currently under preparation, being prepared by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) and comprises Broadland, Norwich & South Norfolk Councils. The GNDP is at an early stage of preparation; at the time of writing a Regulation 18 'options' consultation is underway<sup>15</sup>. Adoption of the plan is expected in December 2020, when it will replace/supplement the policies in the JCS.
- 2.41: The latest Annual Monitoring Report (2015-2016), published in January 2017, states that a five-year supply of housing land cannot be demonstrated by South Norfolk Council. At the time of writing the 2016 – 2017 AMR has not been published.
- 2.42: The AMR identifies the housing land supply for the Greater Norwich area, with a focus on the Norwich Policy Area (NPA), to meet Joint Core Strategy and national policy requirements. When measured against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for 5 years supply, plus 20% to facilitate choice and competition in the market for land, as at 1 April 2016 there was:
- 93.9% of the required supply in the Norwich Policy Area (NPA), 4.70 years of 5 year supply;

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<sup>14</sup> APP/ID0840141312209757 IR51

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/planning/greater-norwich-local-plan/> Accessed 26/1/2018



- 567.5% of the required supply in the Broadland Rural Area; and
- 792.1% of the required supply in the South Norfolk Rural Area.

2.43: The AMR goes on to state that “whilst a five-year supply cannot be demonstrated, each authority within the NPA will need to take a view on how to address the requirements of the NPPF when considering planning applications”.

2.44: National planning policy is clear that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. At paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government notes that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.

2.45: In this circumstance, where relevant planning policies are out of date, paragraph 17 of the NPPF makes clear that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the framework.

2.46: The JCS identifies the village of Woodton (including the part in Bedingham parish), at Policy 15 in the JCS, as being a ‘Service Village’. In each Service Village land will be allocated for small-scale housing development subject to form and character considerations.

2.47: Smallscale employment or service development appropriate to the scale and needs of the village and its immediate surroundings will also be encouraged. Existing local shops and services will be protected. Woodton has a single general store which caters for the everyday needs of the village as well as one public house. Both of these services are directly opposite the proposal site.

2.48: Policy 4 of the JCS relates to affordable housing. On sites of 16 dwellings or over a minimum of 33% of dwellings shall be affordable, with approximately 85% social rented and 15% intermediate tenure split. Policy 4 goes on to state that:

The proportion of affordable housing sought may be reduced and the balance of tenures amended where it can be demonstrated that site characteristics, including infrastructure provision, together with the requirement for affordable housing would render the site unviable in prevailing market conditions, taking account of the availability of public subsidy to support affordable housing.

2.49: The JCS, amended in 2014, proposes a housing requirement in South Norfolk (outside of the Norwich Policy Area) in smaller sustainable settlements of 2,368-2,908 dwellings to 2026 with a policy target of 33% affordable.

- 2.50: The JCS, at Spatial Planning Objective 2, seeks to allocate land for housing in the most sustainable locations; it identifies the Norwich Policy Area as the area where most new homes will be built but acknowledges that “smaller sustainable settlements will accommodate smaller scale growth”.
- 2.51: According to the latest Annual Monitoring Report for 2015 – 2016 (published in January 2017) the overall level of delivery of new housing across the district remains considerably below target. Although 2015/16 saw the highest level of housing completion across the Greater Norwich Area since 2009, it remains a long way below the annual delivery target. Rates of delivery in rural areas remain above target levels which means that development in Service Villages like Woodton can positively contribute to the targets of the district as a whole.
- 2.52: Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council are working together with Norfolk County Council to prepare the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).
- 2.53: The Greater Norwich Local Plan will build on the joint working arrangements for Greater Norwich, which have delivered the current JCS for the area. The JCS plans for development in the area to 2026 and the GNLP will extend the life of the Development Plan and cover the period up to 2036.
- 2.54: GNLP will include strategic policies to guide future development and plans to protect the environment. It will look to ensure that delivery of development is done in a way which promotes sustainability and the effective functioning of the whole area.
- 2.55: In addition to strategic planning policy, the GNLP will also allocate land for development. At the time of writing the Council are currently consulting on the updated GNLP under Regulation 18 and consultation lasts between 8th January and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 (period of time extended). During this period the LPA are receiving applications through the call for sites process; the application site has previously been put forward through an initial call for sites process (although these sites have not been subject to any analysis and no decisions have been made on their suitability<sup>16</sup>).
- 2.56: Woodton has relatively good transport links being served by three main roads; the B1527 leading west towards Tasburgh and linking with the A140 which runs north/south connecting Norwich and Ipswich; the B1332 which runs south east to Ditchingham and Bungay but also connecting with the A143 which connects Great Yarmouth, Beccles and Scole; and the B1332 Norwich Road which runs through Poringland en-route to Norwich.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/planning/greater-norwich-local-plan/call-for-sites/>

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- 2.57: Norwich is a city with a population over 213,000<sup>17</sup> and is well served in terms of employment opportunities, services, amenities and public transport links with a major train station linking nationally to London, Birmingham and beyond, and Great Yarmouth etc.
- 2.58: It is noted that Woodton does not have a Neighbourhood Plan and the Parish Council have not taken steps to prepare one.
- 2.59: As set out above, the NPPF establishes that there should be no cap on sustainable development and, as this assessment goes on to demonstrate, the village of Woodton has vitality that would support further growth.
- 2.60: This point is made clearly by Inspector Peerless at paragraph 38 of her appeal decision at Bishop's Itchington<sup>18</sup>, which states that housing can, and will provide additional enhancement which (provided that there are no dis-benefits or harm arising which outweigh this enhancement) should be brought forward, as it will make a positive contribution to future vitality and to improve sustainability overall.
- 2.61: Inspector Christina Downes in her decision allowing the appeal at Worcester Road, Drakes Broughton<sup>19</sup> noted the positive effect that new inhabitants have in terms of maintaining and enhancing the vitality of the local community, and the positive economic, social and environmental benefits that new housing provides.
- 2.62: This decision is a useful reference as it clearly demonstrates that a new population can have a positive impact on the local economy, supporting local services and facilities, providing affordable housing (noted as a significant positive benefit) and positive environmental benefits such as increasing biodiversity.

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<sup>17</sup> Census 2011

<sup>18</sup> APP/C1625/A/12/2207324

<sup>19</sup> APP/H1840/W/15/3008340: IR 24,38,39,40

### 3. SITE LOCATION AND SETTLEMENT HISTORY

- 3.1: The application site is located to the south east of the village of Woodton, to the east of Chapel Hill and the south of Hempnall Road. The entire site is broadly rectangular parcel of land, wider at its southern boundary, which extends to 3.9 ha (9.6 acres) in size.
- 3.2: The site is not covered by any landscape designations, and there are no Tree Preservation Orders or Ancient Woodland on site. The site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1 (although it is directly adjacent to areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3) which is recognised as the lowest risk area of flooding. The site is not in a Conservation Area and there are no Listed Buildings on or adjacent the site, the nearest being Grade II Woodton Lodge, over 200 metres to the east.
- 3.3: The village of Woodton is located 5.9km (3.7miles) northwest of the market town of Bungay and 12.9km (8 miles) south east of the city of Norwich.
- 3.4: It is recorded that the parish of Woodton contained 478 residents in 2001. In the next 10 years, there has been only a slight growth in the population. In 2011, the population of the parish was 482.
- 3.5: The settlement of Woodton benefits from its core services that are readily accessible and within walking distance of the application site. These include a public house, village store, village hall, nursery and primary school and playing fields.

## 4. ACTIVE, WELL RUN & WELL SERVED

- 4.1: The site is located within the parish of Woodton which has an active community, and a variety of ways for residents of different age groups to get involved in community life.
- 4.2: Woodton has an active Parish Council that consists of seven councillors<sup>20</sup>. Parish Council meetings are held bi-monthly (dates published on the website) at Woodton Village Hall, which is located on Hempnall Road in the village. The Parish Council has a website that provides minutes and agendas for Parish Council Meetings as well as a forum for the exchange of information including parish news and details of social activities for the community.
- 4.3: Woodton Village Hall also provides a community facility for the parish. Woodton Village Hall holds various weekly events and during elections, it is used as a Polling Station. Woodton Village Hall is available to hire for parties, wedding receptions and private events, as well as recurring classes and club meetings.
- 4.4: The Hall has comfortable seating and tables for up to 100 guests, stage, dance floor, fully equipped kitchen, disabled toilet and large car park. The Hall is licensed for entertainment, with the relevant licences. In addition, a newly refurbished meeting room is available for separate hire.
- 4.5: The village plays host to a variety of clubs and societies for use by residents including Pilates, Aerobics, Bell Ringing, Whist, Carpet Bowls, Pool, Badminton, Bowls Club, Dance and various seasonal outdoor sports on the playing fields including Woodton United Football Club. A list of all clubs and societies available to the residents of Woodton are provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.6: The community benefits from key services and facilities that are provided within the settlement and provide for a range of the day to day needs of the local community. An overview of these services is set out Appendix 2.
- 4.7: Facilities include a local convenience store. This store offers residents of the community the goods required for their basic day-to-day needs. The General Store<sup>21</sup> is open seven days a week between 07:00 and 19:00, Monday to Saturday and from 07:00 to 16:00 on a Sunday.
- 4.8: The nearest supermarket to the site is the CoOp located in Bungay approximately 5.9km (3.7miles) from the site.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://woodton.wordpress.com/parish-council/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://woodton.wordpress.com/village-amenities/woodton-village-shop/>

- 4.9: The CoOp store is open seven days a week (08:00-22:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00-20:00 on Saturday and 10:00-16:00 on Sunday)<sup>22</sup>.

## EDUCATION

- 4.10: The community benefits from a nursery and primary school. Stepping Stones Nursery School is run from the Woodton Primary School site. Woodton sits well within the catchment area for several excellent Secondary Schools, all of which are attended by children in the village from the age of 11 upwards according to the school website. They are Hobart High School in Loddon, Long Stratton High School in Long Stratton, Framingham Earl High School in Framingham Earl and Bungay High School.
- 4.11: Stepping Stones Nursery School provides care and education for children from two to five years old and Woodton Primary School is a village school, founded in 1877, which caters for children from the age of four to eleven and primarily serves the villages of Woodton and Bedingham, though some of the children come from villages and towns further afield such as Hales and Bungay; according to the School website.
- 4.12: Woodton Primary School is located on Norwich Road to the north of the village approximately 500 meters from the proposed development site. The school offers education for pupils aged 5-11 years and has a capacity of 49 pupils with 39 in attendance as of January 2017<sup>23</sup>. The school was inspected by Ofsted in May 2016 and the overall effectiveness of the school was judged as 'good'<sup>24</sup>.
- 4.13: The school operates out of school provision three out of five weekdays as well as lunchtime clubs during the day, four days per week.
- 4.14: Stepping Stones Nursery also offers an After School Club<sup>25</sup> open to children attending Stepping Stones, Woodton Primary School and Ellingham Primary School between the ages of 3 and 12.
- 4.15: Bungay High School is a secondary school and sixth form located in Bungay 6km from Woodton. The school offers education for pupils aged 11-18 years and has a capacity of 1,050 pupils with 1,034 pupils in attendance as of January 2017<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.centralengland.coop/stores/information/bungay-food>

<sup>23</sup> <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Establishment/Details/120866?searchQueryString=SelectedTab%3DEstablishments%26SearchType%3DLocation%26SearchType%3DLocation%26LocationSearchModel.Text%3DWoodton%252c%2BBungay%252c%2BUN%26LocationSearchModel.AutoSuggestValue%3D52.495373%252c1.372859000000622%26OpenOnly%3Dtrue%26b%3D1%26b%3D4>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ellinghamandwoodton.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Woodton-Primary-School-10011839-PDF-Final-.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://steppingstoneswoodton.co.uk/after-school-club>

<sup>26</sup> <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Downloads/Download/Establishment/136998?state=W3siUm9ldGVOYWVIlIjoR3JvdXBZEXRhaWxzliwiUm9ldGVWYXZlZXMiOnsiaWQiOjI0ODI9LCJMYWVJbCl6lkjIbmdheSBlaWdolFNjaG9vbCJ9LHsiUm9ldGVOYWVIlIjoRXN0YWJlZXRhaWxzliwiUm9ldGVWYXZlZXMiOnsiaWQiOjEzNjk5OH0slkxhYmVsljoiQnVuZ2F5IEhpZ2ggU2Nob29slnd0&downloadtype=csv>

The school was inspected by Ofsted in September 2016 and the overall effectiveness of the school was judged as 'good'<sup>27</sup>.

- 4.16: Hobart High School is a secondary school located 7km from Woodton in the small market town of Loddon. The school offers education for pupils aged 11-16 years. The school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2017 and the overall effectiveness of the school was judged as 'good'<sup>28</sup>.
- 4.17: Long Stratton High School is a secondary school located 8km from Woodton in the parish of Long Stratton. The school offers education for pupils aged 11-16 years. The school is an ieTrust academy and has no Ofsted or inspection information published at the time of writing<sup>29</sup>.
- 4.18: Framingham Earl High School is a secondary school located in Framlingham 9km from Woodton. The school offers education for pupils aged 11-16 years. The school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2014 and the overall effectiveness of the school was judged as 'good'<sup>30</sup>.

## HEALTHCARE

- 4.19: The nearest GP surgery to the site is Bungay medical practice located on St Johns Road, Bungay. At the time of writing the surgery was accepting new patients and provides an online appointment booking service<sup>31</sup>. The surgery is accessible by public transport.
- 4.20: An additional surgery, Heathgate medical practice, is located on The Street, Poringland, approximately 8km from Woodton. This surgery is also currently accepting new patients and provides an online appointment booking service<sup>32</sup>. Poringland can be accessed from Woodton via public transport.
- 4.21: The nearest NHS dentist currently accepting new patients is Daniel Evans and Associates Dental in Bungay<sup>33</sup> and is accessible by public transport.

## BROADBAND

- 4.22: Broadband provision is available in Woodton. A recent online enquiry with BT using the site's postcode shows that it is currently able to access both fibre broadband and standard broadband operating speeds of up to 80Mb<sup>34</sup>. The proposed internet speeds that the fibre broadband is able to offer is sufficient for those who work from home with small home-based businesses and it is

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27 <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/136998>

28 <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/139311>

29 <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Groups/Group/Details/16408>

30 <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/121163>

31 <http://www.bungaymedical.co.uk/>

32 <http://www.heathgatemedicalpractice.co.uk/page1.aspx?p=2&t=1>

33 <http://suffolkteeth.co.uk/>

34 <https://www.productsandservices.bt.com/products/speed-checker>

sufficient for personal residential use. Residents may also benefit from the grocery delivery service provided to internet shoppers by nearby supermarkets.

### SUMMARY

- 4.23: The site is well served with a good range of core services available to the community including a convenience shop, infant and junior schools, churches and a public house.
- 4.24: Other services and facilities are available in nearby settlements, such as Bungay, Loddon and Portingland, including GP surgeries, dentists and secondary schools which are accessible by public and private transport.
- 4.25: New housing in the settlement will increase the size of the resident population and will reinforce and support existing community facilities helping to support the continued vitality of Woodton. Attracting more families with children into the community would help in supporting the economic contribution made by working age residents and in supporting local services and amenities within community and nearby settlements.



## 5. WELL DESIGNED AND BUILT

5.1: Analysis of Mosaic data on housing stock indicates a concentration of detached houses in the parish when compared to the South Norfolk District. Detached houses make up the largest share of the housing stock in the parish (52.7%) which represent a higher proportion than the district average (35.3%).

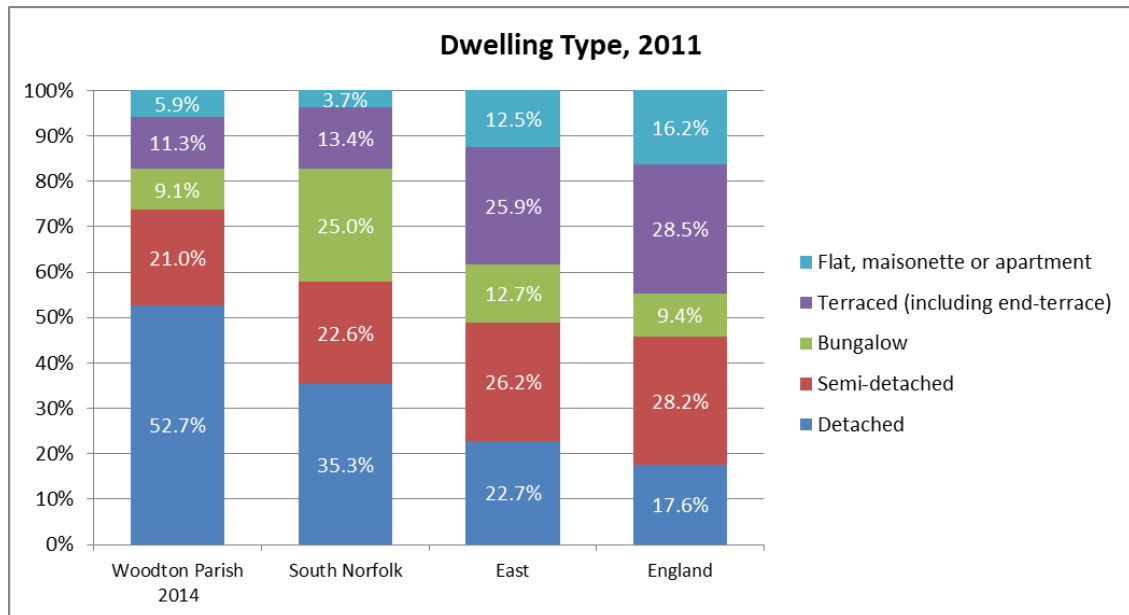


FIGURE 5-1: DWELLING TYPES (Source: Mosaic data)

5.2: Despite this, figure 5-2 below demonstrates that the parish benefits from a wide range of choices of dwelling size within the existing housing stock which is broadly comparable to the South Norfolk District.

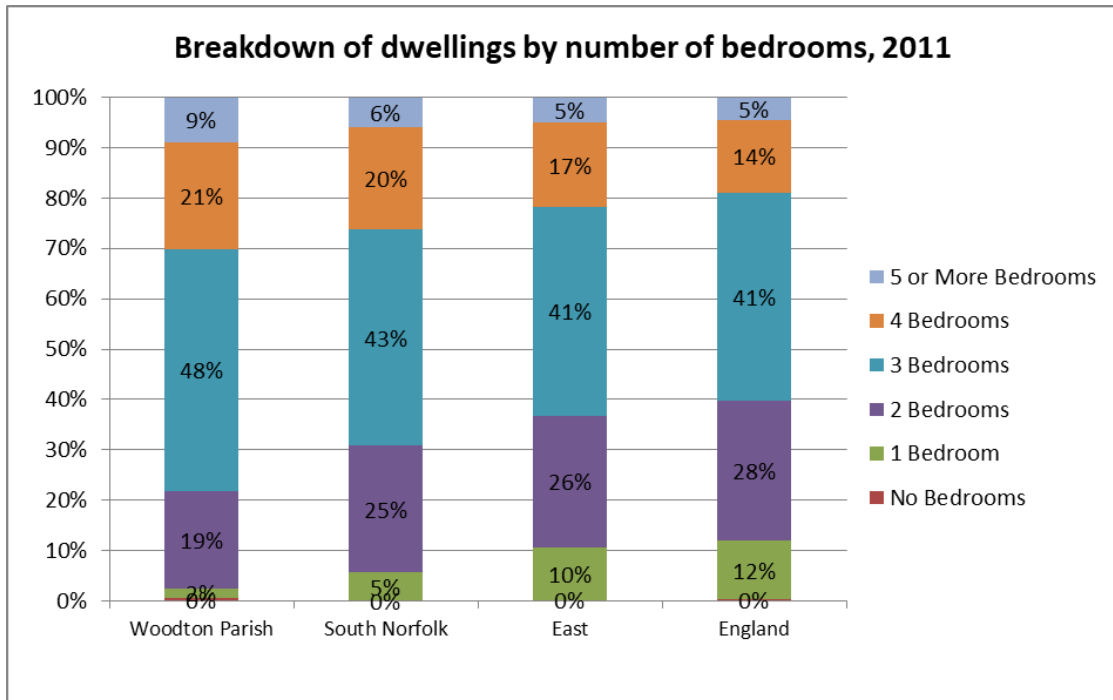


FIGURE 5-2: BREAKDOWN OF DWELLINGS BY BEDROOMS (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

5.3: The delivery of new well-designed housing ranging in size will further increase the choice of housing available and provide a mixture of market and affordable housing of different sizes and tenures, attracting a variety of new people and families to the parish and the village of Woodton which in turn will enhance the vitality of the area. The addition of some smaller properties within the development helps to cater for a range of potential occupiers, securing levels of affordability and retaining the balance of housing provision within the settlement.

## 6. WELL CONNECTED

- 6.1: The NPPF defines the role of the planning system in supporting the social role of sustainable development as creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being (paragraph 7).
- 6.2: It seeks to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling (paragraph 17), maximise the use of sustainable transport modes (paragraph 34) and give people a real choice about how they travel (paragraph 29).
- 6.3: The NPPF recognises that the context of place influences opportunities to maximise the use of sustainable transport solutions, that different policies and measures will be required in different communities (urban and rural) (paragraph 29) and that when considering the objectives to minimise the need to travel and maximise the use of public transport (in relation to developments that generate significant movement), decision makers need to take account of policies set out elsewhere in the Framework, particularly in rural areas (paragraph 34).
- 6.4: In terms of the connectivity of the site, the nearest bus stops to the site are located on the boundary of the site to the north on Hempnall Road and 500m to the north of the site opposite the primary school on Norwich Road. Additional services are also available from the existing stop to the west of the village on Hesnall Road approximately 270m west of the site.
- 6.5: The local services<sup>35</sup> from these stops are summarised in Figure 6-1 below.

Service No.	Nearest Stop	Route	Frequency
87	Hempnall Road	Halesworth - Bungay Bungay – Poringland – Framlingham Earl - Norwich	Monday to Friday - every 15 mins Saturdays - every 15 mins Sundays & Bank Holidays - up to every 60 mins
88	Hempnall Road	Southwold - Halesworth - Bungay - Norwich	Monday to Friday - up to every 30 mins Saturday - up to every 30 mins Sundays & Bank Holidays - up to every 1 hour
X88	Norwich Road	Southwold - Halesworth - Bungay - Norwich	Monday to Friday - up to every 30 mins

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.konectbus.co.uk/timetables-fares/search?q=87#results>

			Saturday - up to every 30 mins Sundays & Bank Holidays - up to every 1 hour
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- 6.6: The 87, 88 and X88 services offer a regular service between Halesworth and Norwich via Bungay and Poringland. The first service from the site towards Norwich is 06:32 respectively with buses running in the opposite directions until 22:41<sup>36</sup>. The existing bus service, therefore, provides good links to education and employment opportunities in Poringland, Framlingham Earl and Norwich and will be a realistic travel option for residents and students.
- 6.7: The nearest railway station to the site is Norwich Railway Station approximately 12.9 km (8 miles) north west.
- 6.8: Greater Anglia provide services<sup>37</sup> from the station between Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Cambridge, Stanstead Airport, Birmingham and London. These services also provide links to stations on the mainline and beyond.
- 6.9: Trains towards London operate approximately every 30 minutes during the day, with the first train of the day departing Norwich at 05:00 arriving into London Liverpool Street at 06:54. The final train of the day to London departs Norwich at 22:00 and arrives into London Liverpool Street at 00:03.
- 6.10: In the opposite direction, the first train to Norwich from London departs London Liverpool Street at 06:00 arriving into Norwich at 07:55. The final train of the day to Norwich departs London Liverpool Street at 23:30 arriving into Norwich at 01:36.
- 6.11: The station is equipped with storage space for up to 442 cycles as well as a pay and display car park which can cater for up to 67 vehicles.
- 6.12: The station is considered to be within comfortable cycling distance from the site. Ten 'Bike & Go' bicycles available for hire<sup>38</sup> from within the station. Station Approach, from which the station is accessed, is traffic calmed which helps to maintain slow speeds making it suitable for cyclists.
- 6.13: Furthermore, the bus service from Woodton provides a direct link from the site to Norwich bus station with a 30-minute frequency. The bus station is located a 15 minute walk from the train station therefore, there are realistic opportunities for residents to travel to a station by sustainable means and then continue their onward journey by rail for both commuting and off-peak trips.

<sup>36</sup> [https://assets.goaheadbus.com/media/timetable\\_pdf/konectbus\\_87\\_17092017\\_vi.pdf](https://assets.goaheadbus.com/media/timetable_pdf/konectbus_87_17092017_vi.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> <http://ojp.nationalrail.co.uk/service/ldbboard/dep/NRW/LST/To>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.bikeandgo.co.uk/>

- 6.14: Woodton benefits from a network of footpaths, minor roads and other public rights of way that connect the village to surrounding countryside and to other nearby villages and small market towns.
- 6.15: A Public Right of Way (PROW) runs along the southern boundary of the site but there are no PROWs that bisect the site. The entirety of Woodton including all local amenities and bus services are considered to be within a reasonable walking distance of the site.

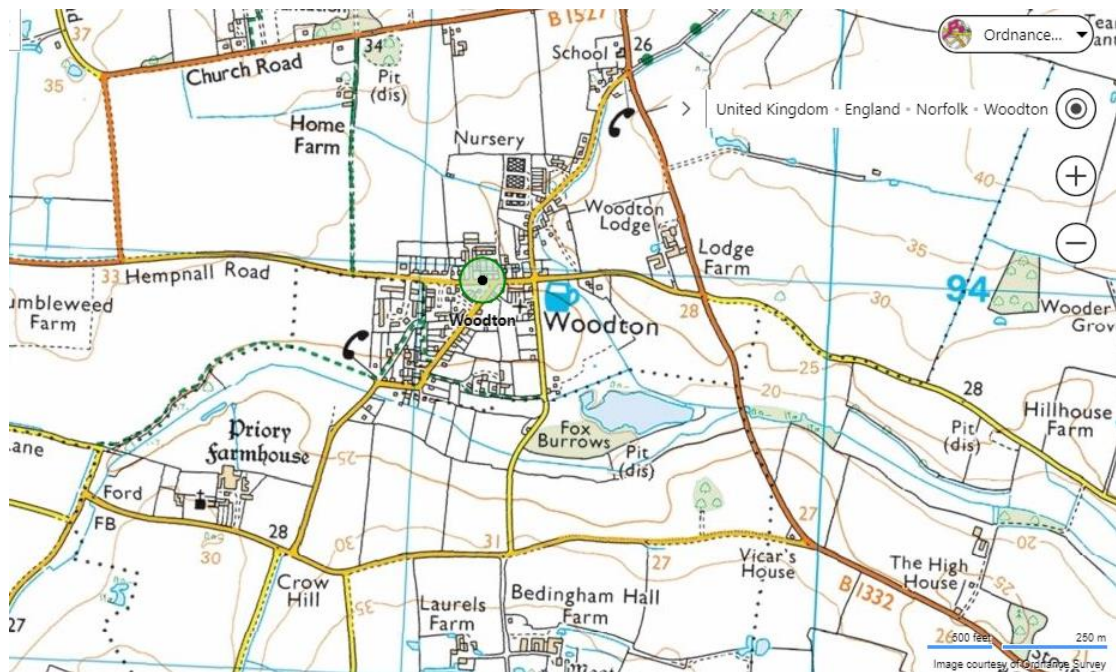


FIGURE 6-1: PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AROUND WOODTON  
 (Source: Ordnance Survey)

- 6.16: The latest Department for Transport (DfT) document Cycle Infrastructure Design: Guidelines (2008)<sup>39</sup> cites guidance from the 'Cycle Friendly Infrastructure' document (IHT, 1996) regarding cycle distances associated with cyclists of varying confidence and ability. It is generally considered that most cycle journeys for non-work purposes are between 0.5 miles (0.8km) and 2 miles (3.2km), but many cyclists are willing to cycle much further. For commuting, a distance of 5 miles (8km) can be assumed.
- 6.17: Based on these distances, the services and amenities found in the neighbouring settlements of Beddingham, Topcroft, Hempnall, Long Stratton, Bungay, poringland, Framington Earl, Stoke Holy Cross, Bergh Apron, Mundham etc. all fall within a convenient cycling distance of the site.

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/329150/Itn-2-08\\_Cycle\\_infrastructure\\_design.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329150/Itn-2-08_Cycle_infrastructure_design.pdf)

- 6.18: The site is in a sustainable location where a number of local amenities including the local schools and local convenience shop are within nationally recognised acceptable walking and cycling distances. The local bus services also provide a connection to some of the main urban centres making bus travel a viable option for potential residents of the site.
- 6.19: Section 7 also qualifies that there are a number of employment centres in the surrounding area that would be accessible to residents of Woodton by a short car journey.
- 6.20: In this instance, the opportunity for many journeys to be short, and for longer journeys to include multi-modal methods of transport, also counts in favour of the development.
- 6.21: Woodton is well connected with the surrounding settlements via the local highway and Public Rights of Way network. This variety of connections provides options for residents to use sustainable transport modes and to combine short car-based journeys with public transport or cycling for both employment and leisure trips.

## 7. THRIVING: ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

- 7.1: The NPPF promotes an integrated approach to the provision of housing and economic uses (paragraph 70).
- 7.2: Woodton is well placed to access a variety of employment hosting sites in the local area. Employment is hosted in the village and in neighbouring villages and towns, some of which are accessible by public transport.

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

- 7.3: The parish has a slightly higher, but comparable level of economic activity to that of the district (72.3% compared to 70.7%). The parish has a lower proportion of employees in its workforce compared to the South Norfolk District (48.6% compared to 53.3%). A higher proportion of its workforce are self-employed compared to the district (17.6% compared to 12.2%). A higher proportion of its workforce are self-employed compared to the district (17.6% compared to 12.2%).

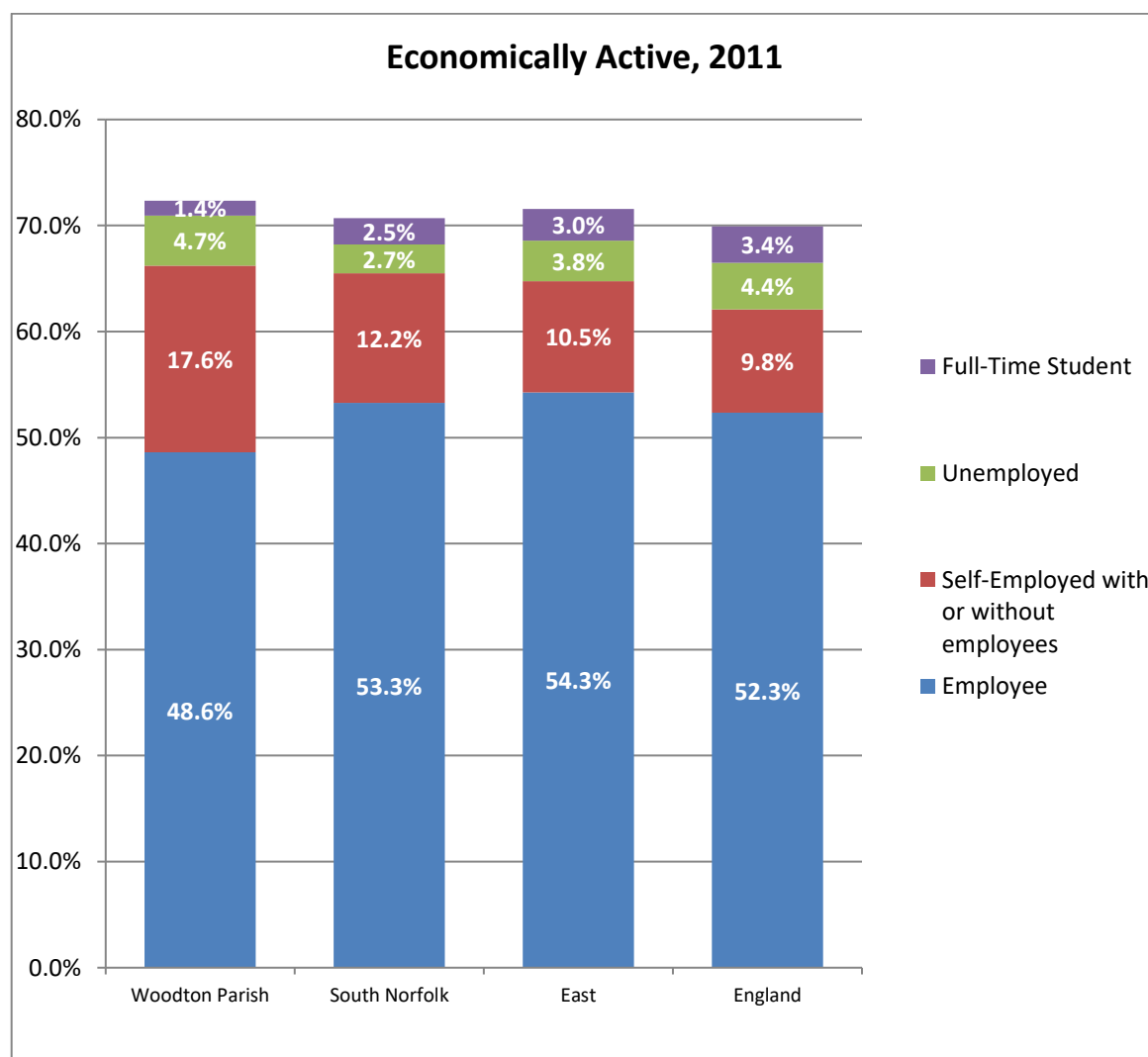


FIGURE 7-1: ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE RESIDENTS (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

7.4: Occupational classifications of the resident population in the parish are broadly similar to those across the district. The parish mirrors the district in that it has a skilled and educated workforce. Higher Managerial, Professional and Intermediate Occupations make up 46.3% of the workforce compared to 47.8% in the district. The most prevalent is those in Lower Management and Professional Occupations which account for 22.9% of the workforce in the parish; which matches the district.

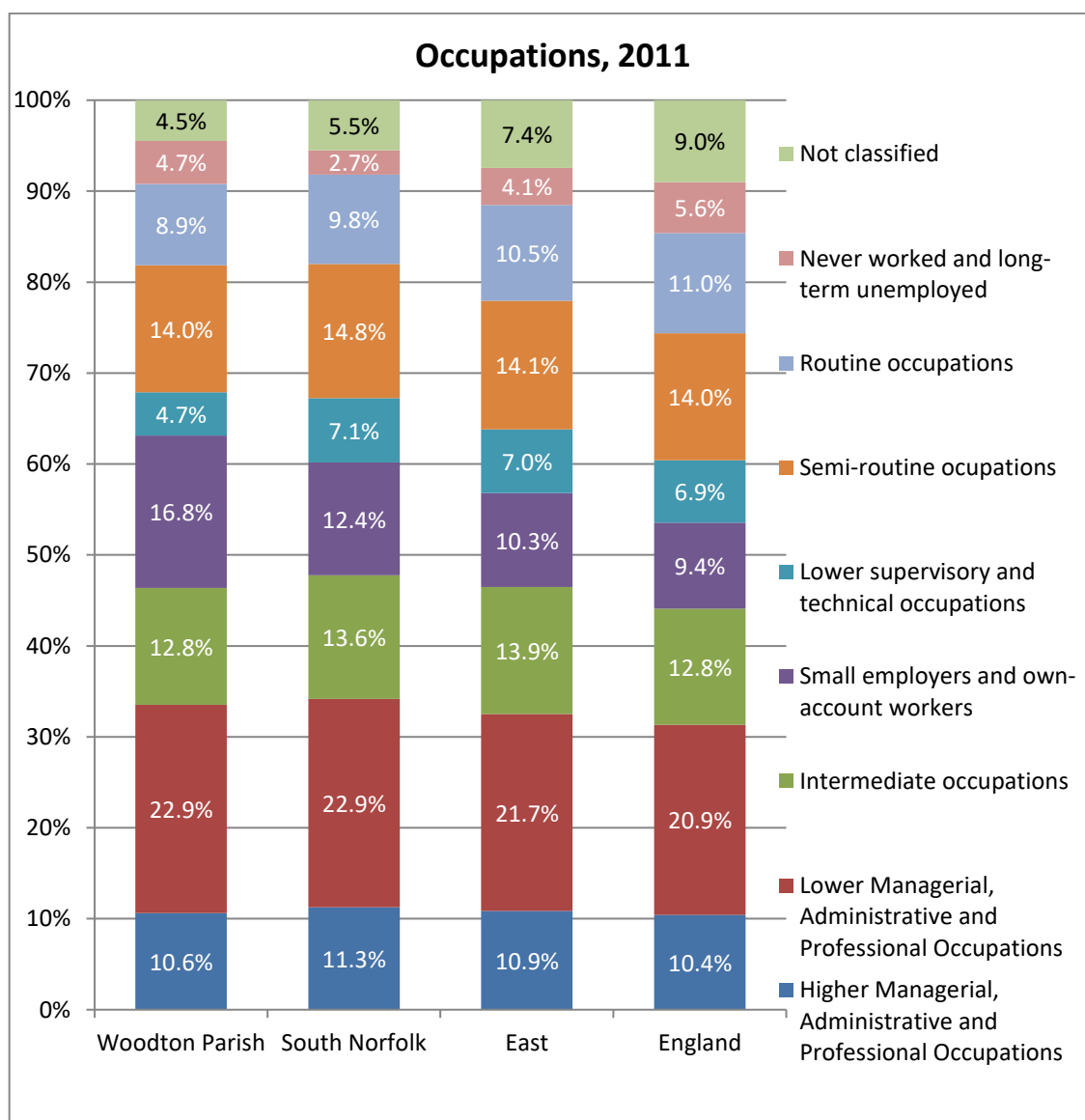


FIGURE 7-2: OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

### EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS ACTIVITY

7.5: Analysis of data from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) on listed business premises shows that there are a significant number of these within an indicative 20-minute (at peak hours) drive time of Woodton. Floor space is recorded for



some categories of business, with 515,305 sq. m. of floor space recorded overall and a total Rateable Value of £20,098,390<sup>40</sup>.

- 7.6: Analysis of the type of workspace using space standards suggests that, in the 20-minute peak hour drive time catchment of Woodton, there is floorspace capable of hosting approximately 2,283 office jobs (based upon recorded production space extending to 27,397 sq. m). Furthermore, there is floor space capable of hosting approximately 5,065 production jobs (based upon recorded office space of 202,617 sq. m) and 431 leisure jobs (based upon recorded leisure space of 30,194 square metres)<sup>41</sup>. Together the Rateable Values for production, office and production space equate to £7,669,610 and make up 38.1% of the total Rateable Values within this drive time area.
- 7.7: The location of non-domestic rated premises<sup>42</sup> within an approximate 20-minute peak journey time of Woodton is illustrated in the map overleaf. The colour of the circle relates to the type of workplace based on the VOA property code (as shown by the key incorporated into the map), and the size of the circle corresponds to the rateable value of the premises. The smallest of the five circles relates to a rateable value of up to £10,000, the medium size circle relates to a rateable value of between £10,000 and £1 million and the largest circle relates to a rateable value of more than £1 million.
- 7.8: Woodton and the immediate surrounding area is identified by the red square placed on the map. The local area around Woodton is shown in more detail in Figure 7-4.

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<sup>40</sup> VOA data which takes account of the business rates register and may include premises that are currently vacant.

<sup>41</sup> Based on ratios of 12 sq. m. per job for office space and 40 sq. m. per job for production space (HCA / OffPAT)

<sup>42</sup> Based on VOA data

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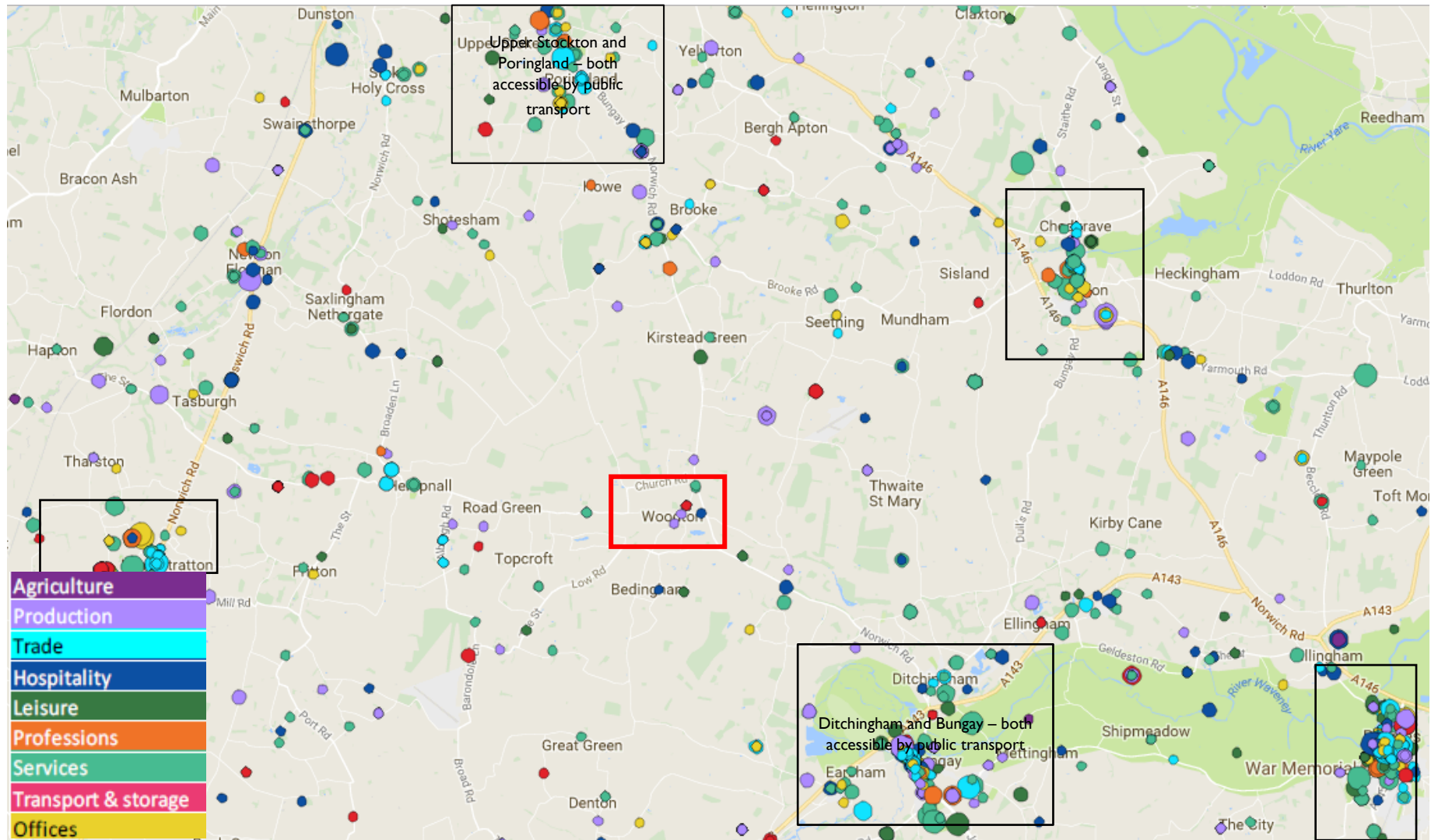


FIGURE 7-3: VOA MAP



FIGURE 7-4: VOA MAP (site outlined in red)

7.9: There are several employment hosting sites in the village of Woodton which include, but are not restricted to:

- H W Webb (Engineers)
- The Kings Head Public House
- Andrews Garage
- Maize Maze
- Willow farm Nursery School
- Fendercare Marine Services
- Sewage Treatment Works
- General Store

7.10: As previously discussed Woodton is well placed to access the neighbouring settlements of Bungay, Ditchingham, Long Stratton and Poringland all of which can be accessed by a comfortable cycle journey or within a short car journey from Woodton. Furthermore, there are a number of other settlements that are shown at Figure 7-3 which can be accessed from the site within a 20-minute peak journey time from Woodton; these include Long Stratton and Beccles.

#### TRAVEL TO WORK

7.11: Analysis of travel to work data from the 2011 Census shows that Woodton currently has a comparable level of employment activity compared to the district; 32.4% of the parish are not in employment or travelling to work each day

compared to the district average of 32.5%<sup>43</sup>. Of those travelling to work, 78.5% of those within the parish do so by car or van. This is slightly higher than the district average of 70.1% and is likely to be due to the geographical location of Woodton - given the rural location of the village, a higher than average proportion of workers who travel to work by car would typically be expected. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF acknowledges that transport solutions will vary between rural and urban environments and this should be factored into planning application and policies.

- 7.12: Of note is that only 0.4% of residents' travel to work by train. This is less than half the average for the district at 1.3% and the comparatively low levels of travel by train are most probably due to the rural location of Woodton and the district in general, and the availability of railway services. The nearest train station is located in Norwich some 12km from the proposed development site and is accessible by bus or private car. This variety of connections provides options for residents to use sustainable transport modes and to combine short car-based journeys with public transport for both employment and leisure trips.
- 7.13: Figure 7-5 overleaf illustrates travel to work patterns in the parish and district compared to regional and national averages. The chart also highlights that Woodton has a higher incidence of people working mainly from home when compared to the district and nationally (20% compared to 13% for the district and 10% nationally). This helps offset the number of car or van journeys that occur in association with travel to work in Woodton.
- 7.14: In the future, it is likely that travel to work patterns will increasingly be offset by a further increase in the level of homeworking and the shift to working at home during part of the week, as described in paragraphs 2.12 – 2.18 above.

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<sup>43</sup> ONS Census Data 2011

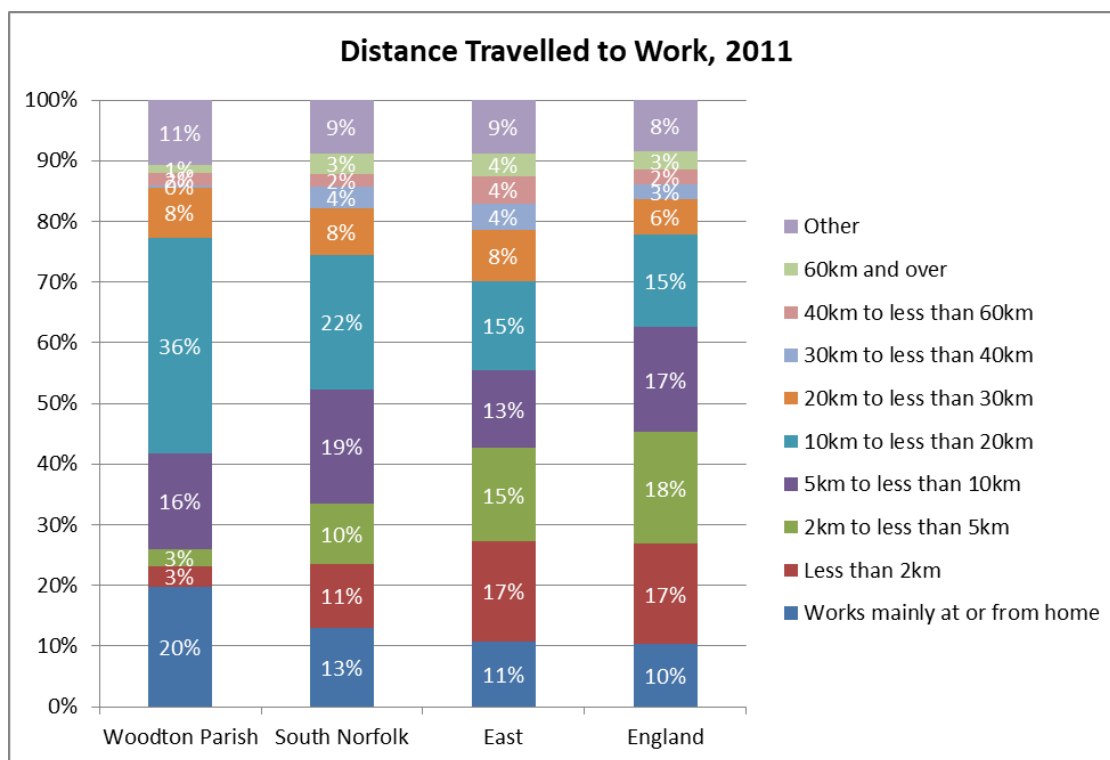


FIGURE 7-5: DISTANCE TRAVELLED TO WORK (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

7.15: The importance of rural areas is set to grow as increased connectivity enables more flexible working and further growth in knowledge-based industries in rural areas. A DEFRA policy brief<sup>44</sup> notes that continuation of this trend could lead to stronger productivity growth, job creation and higher output in rural areas. Over the next decade, productivity in rural areas could grow faster than in urban areas.

### SUMMARY

7.16: Woodton is an economic asset for the South Norfolk district and the levels of economic activity seen in the parish will have a direct economic benefit to the local area. A variety of employment hosting sites are located within a 20-minute travel time of Woodton and many are accessible either by a short walk, a cycle ride, public transport or a short car journey.

7.17: The data confirms that 26% of residents of Woodton either work from home or travel less than 2km to their place of work. It is clear that Woodton is an important economic asset to the local jobs market that accommodates a number of employment hosting sites.

7.18: Woodton is an attractive place to live and has potential to host more housing development and a larger labour supply. Further housing in the village will

<sup>44</sup> DEFRA Policy Brief – How Increased Connectivity is Boosting Economic Prospects of Rural Areas December 2014

support the ability of Woodton to increase its contribution towards the local economy and to realise South Norfolk District's economic potential.

## 8. FAIR FOR EVERYONE: BALANCED

8.1: As previously noted, the population of the Parish of Woodton in 2011 was 478. In the ten-year period from 2001, the population grew by 4 people to 482. This represents a 1% increase in the parish population which is significantly lower than the growth across the district, which over the same time period of time was 12%.

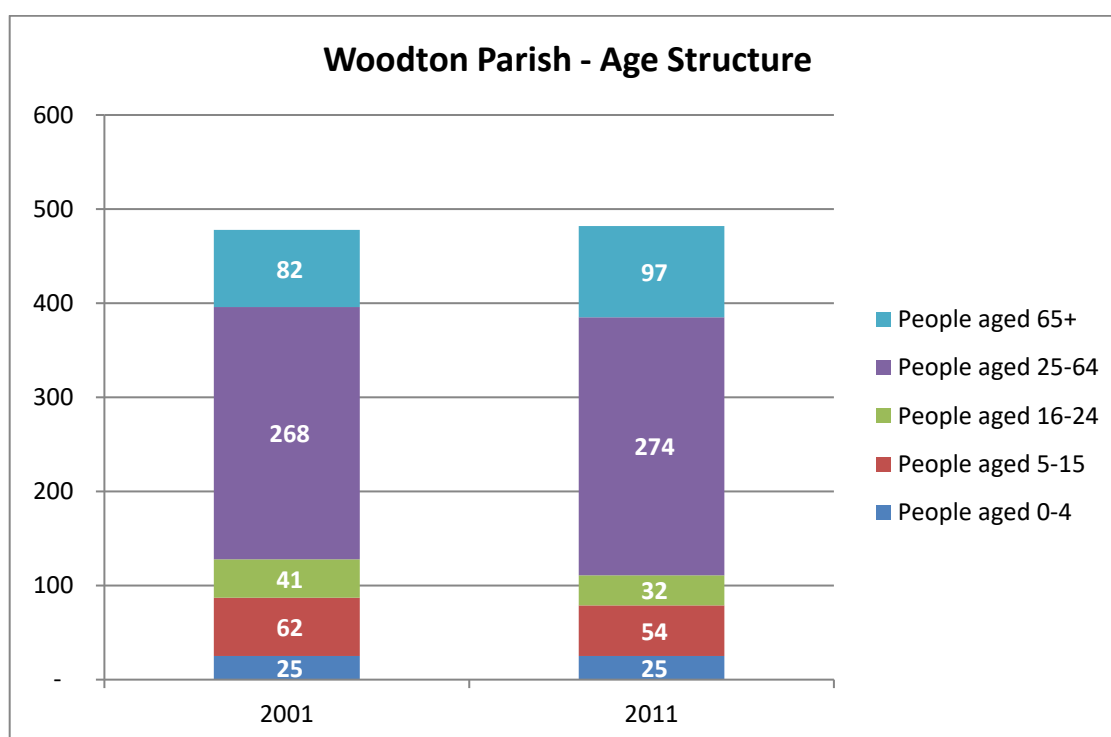


FIGURE 8-1: AGE STRUCTURE (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

8.2: Figure 8-1 shows the growth across different segments of the population in the parish during the intercensal period. The most notable change during the time period has been the decrease in the number of younger people aged between 5-24 and the increase in the population of those aged 65 and over.

8.3: Figure 8-2 below compares the growth rates of different segments of the population and demonstrates the contrasting picture within different cohorts of the Woodton population relative to the district. Overall population growth in Woodton between the 2001-2011 census periods has been significantly lower than to that of the district. The demographic profile of the parish during this time period is one that has shifted to see a reduction in the number of younger people (aged 5–24) and an increase in the number of working aged adults and those of 65. Generally speaking, the district has seen a slight growth overall cohorts with a notable increase in residents over 65+.

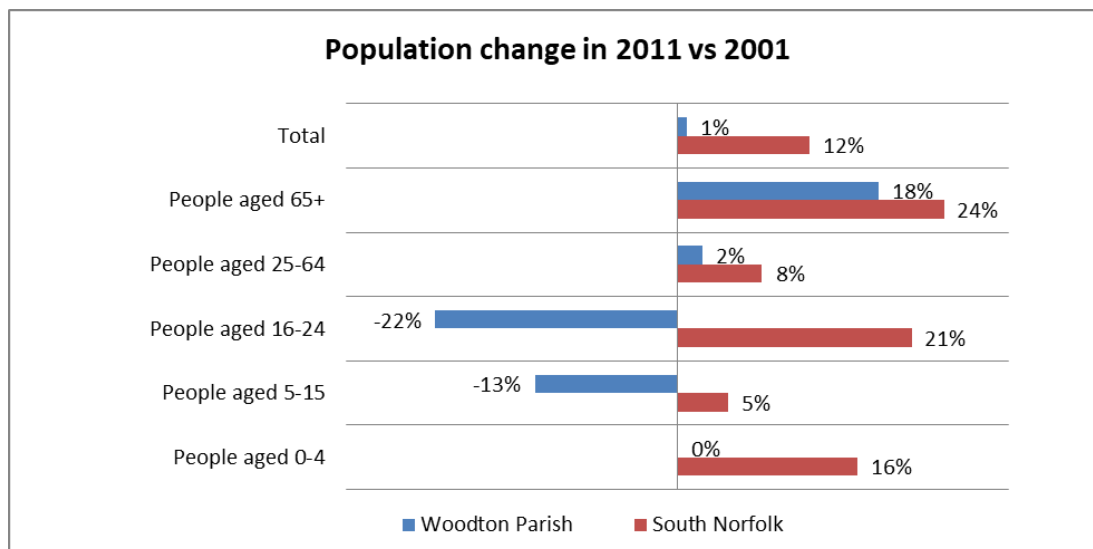


FIGURE 8-2: POPULATION CHANGE (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

8.4: This imbalance within the population profile presents a challenge to the sustainability and vitality of the parish, with a declining rate of people of younger people and those of a young working age and an increasing number of those at a retirement age. It is extremely important to recognise and address these emerging changes in population, and plan for growth and meeting the housing needs of the local population in order to maintain a sustainable community and economic prosperity.

### HOUSING NEED

8.5: The JCS, amended in 2014, proposes a housing requirement in South Norfolk (outside of the Norwich Policy Area) in smaller sustainable settlements of 2,368-2,908 dwellings to 2026 with a policy target of 33% being affordable housing.

8.6: The Greater Norwich Local plan (GNLP) final site proposal document (January 2018) states that:

Woodton is classified in the JCS as a Service Village. The village has a primary school, post office and shop and a village hall. The main constraints are surface water flood risk, a CWS (County Wildlife Site) to the south, and constricted road/footpath capacity. The nucleated nature of the existing settlement pattern has been expanded by the recent housing allocation for 20 dwellings (which has an application pending for 21 dwellings<sup>45</sup>).

8.7: The above mentioned outline planning application (2016/0466) for 21 new residential units was approved and is currently being marketed for sale.

<sup>45</sup> Outline planning application (2016/0466) for 21 new residential units was approved and is currently being marketed for sale at the time of writing.



- 8.8: The Emerging Local Plan is still in the initial stages and it has not yet formally been identified if Woodton is identified for future growth.
- 8.9: The JCS requires 33% affordable housing and this proposal will contribute towards the identified need and will provide an important delivery of affordable dwellings (the number of which will be determined at a later stage).
- 8.10: According to Mosaic in January 2018, the average value of properties in the Woodton Parish was £332,932<sup>46</sup>. This is 23.27% higher than the average value for the district which was £269,932.
- 8.11: The tenure mix of housing stock in the parish includes the comparative level of owner occupation compared to the district (72.8% compared to 74.9%). The parish has a lower proportion of private rented stock than the district (5.0% compared to 11.2%) although there is a higher number of social rented stock than the district (18.8% compared to 11.3%) although there is a higher number of social rented stock than the district (18.8% compared to 11.3%).

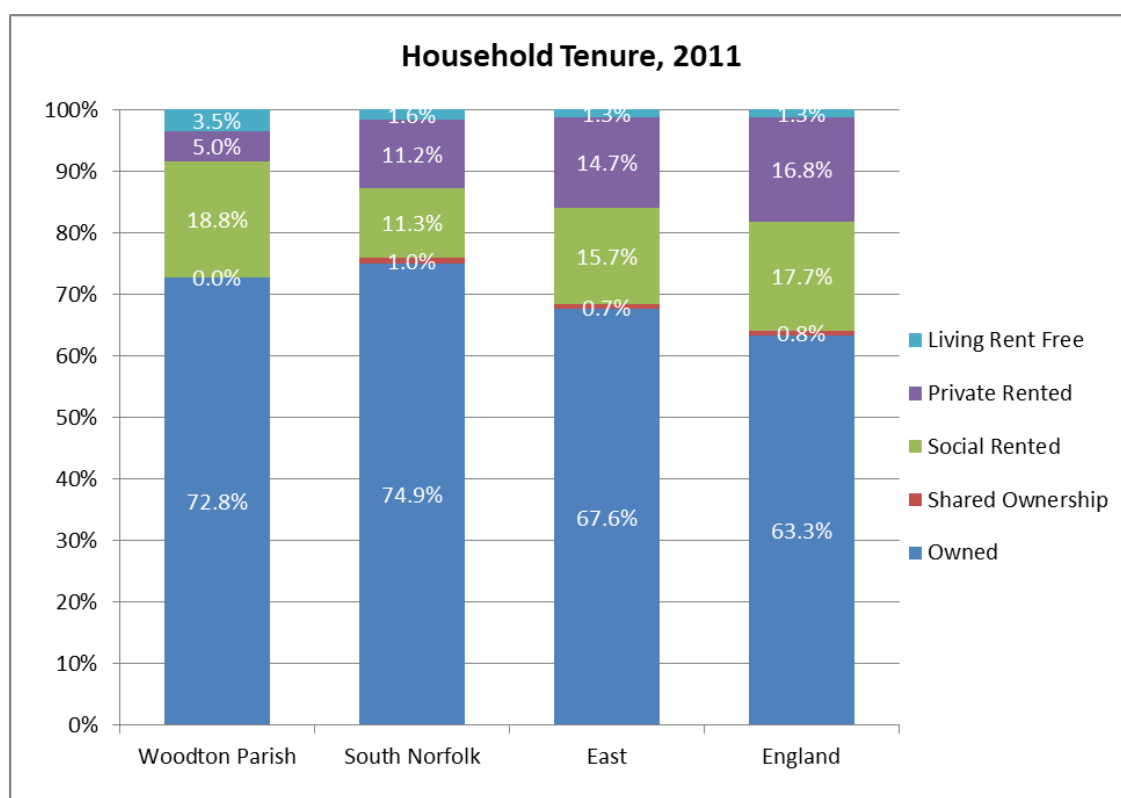


FIGURE 8-3: HOUSEHOLD TENURE (Source: ONS Census Data 2011)

### SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

- 8.12: The socio-economic profile of the population of Woodton can be seen with reference to Mosaic data as shown in Figure 8-4. The data illustrates the

<sup>46</sup> Woodton Property Development Pack, January 2018 - Source Land Registry, VOA and Experian 2011

demographic make-up of the resident population across all fifteen Mosaic groups<sup>47</sup>. In Woodton the majority of the population is made up entirely of two groups: 'C – Country Living (69.7%) and 'D – Rural Reality' (30.3%).

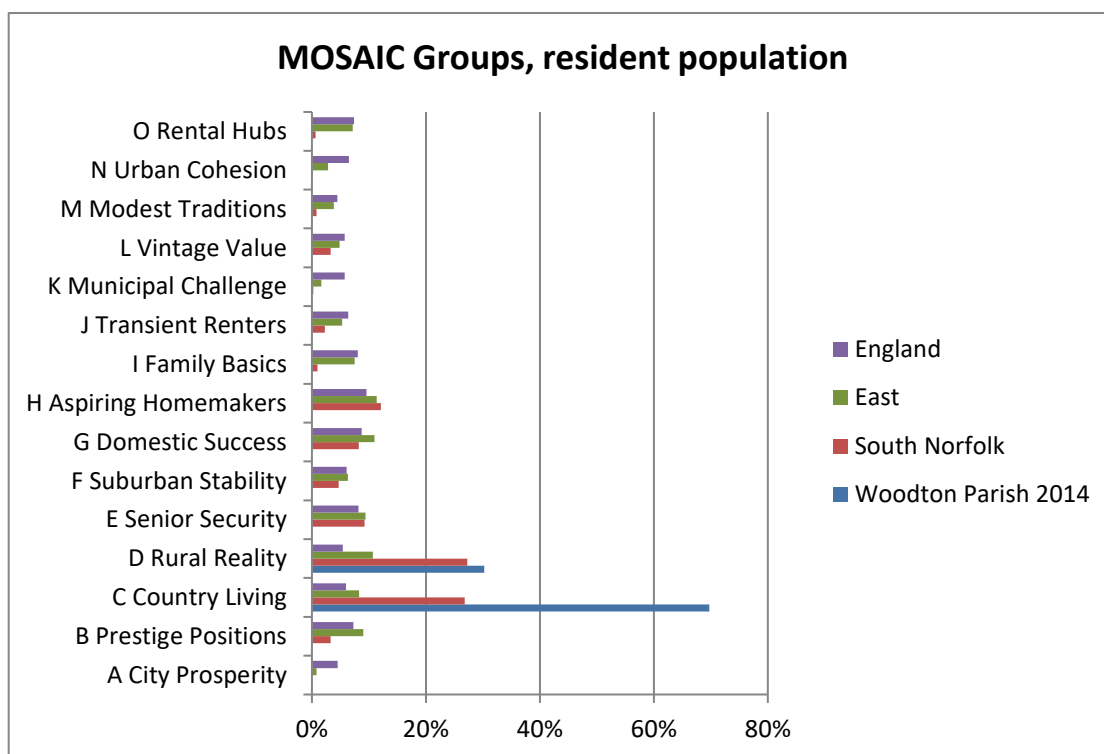


FIGURE 8-4: MOSAIC GROUPS, RESIDENT POPULATION (Source: Mosaic)

- 8.13: 'C – Country Living' is described as 'well-off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life'. This group are recognised as being well-off homeowners, living in attractive detached homes with a higher level of self-employment. This group makes up the vast majority of the parish with 69.7% of the total population.
- 8.14: 'D – Rural Reality' is described as 'householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities'. The group are recognised as typically being homeowners within agricultural employment living in affordable value homes. This group makes up 30.3% of the population of Woodton.
- 8.15: Analysis of Mosaic data shows that the average length of residency in the parish is 8.87 years<sup>48</sup>, which is marginally higher than the average of the district (8.03 years). 58.60% of the parish's population have lived in the village for more than 11 years, whilst 32.26% of residents have lived in the village for fewer than 7 years. This demonstrates that Woodton is a desirable place to live with a good

<sup>47</sup> Experian Mosaic UK Classifications (2014)

<sup>48</sup> Experian 2011

proportion of residents having lived in the parish for a good length of time. It is a community that has evolved and integrated new residents over time.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

8.16: The distribution of household income levels in Woodton is illustrated below in figure 8-5.

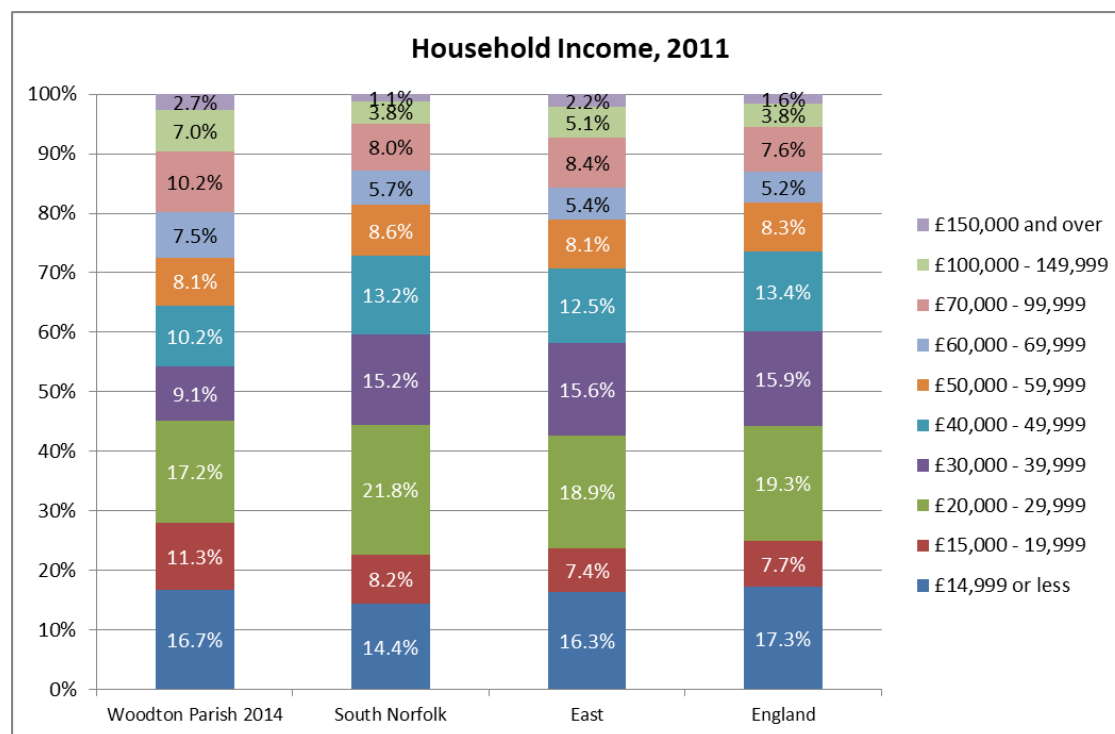


FIGURE 8-5: HOUSEHOLD INCOME (Source: Mosaic)

8.17: The overall parish has a higher number of the higher income households when compared to the district. 27.4% of households in Woodton have incomes of over £60,000 (or higher) compared to 18.6% for the district. The proportion of households earning between £15,000 and £59,999 is lower in the parish when compared to the district, and there is a higher proportion of households earning up to £14,999 (16.7% compared to 14.4% for the district), although the parish percentage is still below the national average of 17.3%.

8.18: New housing can play a role tailored to the needs of these, and other groups, in order to continue to attract higher earners into the parish whilst also accounting for the needs of lower income households. This would support further growth and potentially enhance the economic contribution made by Woodton to the South Norfolk District.

8.19: The socio-economic profile of the Woodton highlights the parish's important role as an economic asset for the district. It is an attractive place to a variety of people. The private provision of affordable homes may be the only means to deliver housing to address the affordability issues and deliver the scale of affordable housing required across the district.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY

- 8.20: We have carried out an assessment of the likely impacts (both positive and negative) of the proposed development using the evidence gathered on the current social and economic sustainability of Woodton parish in sections 3 to 9, with reference to evidence provided by other reports produced in support of the proposal, and against the policy context set by the Framework (NPPF).
- 8.21: The proposal seeks the development of new housing on a 3.9-hectare site which adjoins the village of Woodton. The site is located to the south east of existing residential development in the village.
- 8.22: The site is able to access a number of core services and facilities which are located in the village of Woodton including infant and junior schools, pre-schools, Village Hall, a public house, local convenience shop and post box, churches and recreational sports facilities. This is in addition to a wider range of services and facilities that are located in the neighbouring settlements.
- 8.23: The parish of Woodton is an economic asset to the district. The levels of economic activity are comparable to those found in the district, which clearly demonstrates that the settlement has an active and healthy economy. There are a variety of employment hosting sites available within Woodton, in addition to a wide range of other employment hosting sites within the neighbouring settlements and within a 20-minute journey time.
- 8.24: Residents of the site will be able to walk or cycle to access the variety of services and amenities that are located in the parish. Furthermore, access to the neighbouring settlements of Beddingham, Topcroft, Hempnall, Long Stratton, Bungay, Poringland, Framington Earl, Stoke Holy Cross, Bergh Apron and Mundham can be achieved by a cycle journey (which falls with a comfortable cycling distance as defined in the IHT and Department for Transport (DfT) document Cycle Friendly Infrastructure: Guidelines for Planning and Design (1996), or a short car journey. Railway journeys can also be accessed at Norwich railway station which operates regular services and provides onward connections to destinations including Birmingham and London and beyond.
- 8.25: Woodton is a sustainable community with vitality. However, this assessment does identify some challenges. The demographic profile of the parish during the intercensal period has experienced a significant growth in the population of those at retirement age (18%). Conversely, there has been a significant decrease (22%) in those aged 16-24 and a further decrease in people aged 5-15 (13%) during the intercensal period.
- 8.26: This imbalance within the population profile presents challenges to the sustainability of the parish. Recognising these emerging changes in population are important when planning for current and future housing needs, in order to continue to support sustainable communities and economic development.
-

- 8.27: The 2017 SHMA<sup>49</sup> There is a significant need for affordable housing across the district. The development of the application site will provide additional market and affordable housing, which will help to grow the population and address the demographic imbalance of the parish.
- 8.28: Woodton is well placed to support further growth in order to facilitate sustainable economic development. New housing will generate tangible social and economic benefits that will enhance future vitality and make a positive contribution to sustainable development in Woodton. These benefits are considered in the next section, alongside any dis-benefits identified as part of this assessment.

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Housing%20Market%20Assessment%20%282017%29.pdf>

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## 9. BENEFITS

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

9.1: There are a range of positive social and economic benefits that will arise from the development that will have an overall beneficial impact on the sustainability of the community.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

9.2: Paragraph 7 of the NPPF identifies the economic role of sustainable development as contributing to building 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 and innovation, and by identifying and coordinating development requirements including the provision of infrastructure. Paragraph 17 seeks to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver new homes and businesses and thriving places that the country needs.

9.3: The proposed residential development will work towards these aims and help to enhance the economic vitality of Woodton and so that South Norfolk Council can:

- Increased construction and associated supply chain jobs;
- An increased population to support local facilities and services;
- New Homes Bonus funding for South Norfolk Council;
- Increased Council Tax payments;
- Attract people of a working age and young working adults and those who are seeking to start a family; and
- Continue to attract higher earners, families and enhance economic performance overall.

9.4: The Secretary of State and the inspector in the appeal relating to Sty Lane and Micklethwaite Lane<sup>50</sup> agreed that such economic benefits should attract very significant weight in the planning balance.

9.5: These economic benefits will help Woodton to meet the objectives of paragraph 17 of the NPPF, by helping to support sustainable development by delivering the homes, business space and thriving local places that the country needs.

### SOCIAL BENEFITS

9.6: Paragraph 7 of the NPPF defines the social role of sustainable development in supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by

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<sup>50</sup> APP/W/4705/N/114/2228491 IR 22, 23

creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

9.7: The proposal will support this social role of sustainability and will help to create a mixed, sustainable and inclusive community (paragraph 50 of the NPPF) by:

- Assisting with focusing growth at one of the district's most sustainable settlements
- Provision affordable housing which will help to address the significant needs of the district (this is a significant material consideration which should weigh heavily in the planning balance).
- A mix of house types and sizes including affordable housing to enable a balanced and mixed community which will contribute to the existing community and support local facilities;
- Providing a greater population base, increasing the number of residents available to use and support local services and amenities in Woodton and the surrounding settlements. It may also increase the demand for local services.
- A proportion of the site could be provided as open space and Green Infrastructure, bringing health, recreation and biodiversity benefits to the site;
- Provision of a new children's play areas on site would benefit existing and future residents of the area;
- Development on a site within walking distance of a number of existing the facilities in Woodton;
- Providing an increased number of adults that will increase the available pool of volunteers to help run the various social clubs, sports clubs, and local groups.

9.8: Overall, the social benefits arising from the proposed development will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the community.

## CAPACITY OF SERVICES

9.9: The existing shops and services that are located in Woodton and the surrounding settlements will benefit from increased patronage.

9.10: There are a number of locally available services and facilities within the village of Woodton that accommodate a day to day existence. Essential services are provided within the village by the infant and junior schools (which are under capacity), pre-schools, village hall, the local shop and post box, churches and the public house.

9.11: An assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the future sustainability of the community shows that new housing which delivers affordable housing of different types and tenures will enable Woodton to respond positively

to growth which is in line with the growth levels of the district and it will help to support and positively shape demographic balance.

## GROWTH

- 9.12: As previously noted the population growth of Woodton parish has seen a less than 1% increase (a total of only four people) in the population during the intercensal period. Such a low level of growth is significantly less than the growth experienced in the district which equates to 12%. In addition, within the Woodton Parish, it is clear that the majority of growth has been seen in over 65s, a group that has increased by 18% in this time, demonstrating an ageing population. An ageing population generally leads to greater housing demands and the older population have less social capital for spending in the local economy. Analysis of Mosaic data shows that the average length of residency in the parish (8.87 years), is marginally higher than the average of the district (8.03 years). This demonstrates that Woodton is a desirable place to live with a community that has evolved and integrated new residents over time.
- 9.13: A review of the Council's website in January 2018 indicates that at the time of writing there have been a number of applications and consents for residential development in the Woodton Parish from 2011 onwards. Planning permission has been approved for approximately 26 dwellings in the parish. These applications are listed in Appendix 3.
- 9.14: Clearly, this will result in additional population growth which will work towards addressing some of the emerging demographic imbalances seen within Woodton's population over the intercensal period. However, it is important to consider the delivery of housing once commenced can also be phased over time. It is also a well-established concept that there should be no 'cap' on sustainable development, particularly in situations where there is a lack of housing in the district overall. The development of the application site will provide additional housing and population which will help to enhance the demographic profile of Woodton and in turn its future vitality.
- 9.15: An assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the future sustainability of the community shows that new housing which delivers affordable housing of different types and tenures will enable Woodton to respond positively to growth which is in line with the growth levels of the district and it will help to support and positively shape demographic balance.
- 9.16: In terms of how much growth is required, it is a well-established principle arising from the Framework that there should be no cap on sustainable development. This principle is helpfully captured in numerous appeal decisions.



## 10. CLOSING REMARKS AND SUMMARY

- 10.1: Rural Solutions have carried out an assessment of the likely impact (positive and negative) of the proposed development using the evidence gathered on the current social and economic sustainability of Woodton together with reference to evidence provided by other reports produced in support of the proposal, and against the policy context set by the Framework.
- 10.2: This report demonstrates that the development of this site for residential development does represent a sustainable form of development which would be located in a sustainable place.
- 10.3: The site is located on the edge of Woodton which is a successful community which demonstrates a good level of vitality that can be considered to be socially and economically sustainable when judged across the criteria set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (and considered within its spatial context).
- 10.4: Residential development would help to maintain a range of good quality housing which will be a significant contribution towards addressing the district's needs.
- 10.5: The application site is a demonstrably suitable and good place to host new housing development that will deliver a range of benefits including attracting new residents to, and making the economic contribution of Woodton and surrounding settlements to the South Norfolk District, underpinning social capacity, providing affordable housing and widening the housing mix overall.
- 10.6: Woodton is a sustainable community with considerable vitality. However, this assessment together with the evidence base documents prepared in support of this proposal does identify some challenges.
- 10.7: Population growth in Woodton parish is way below that of the district, and the demographic profile of the parish during the intercensal period has experienced a significant growth in the population of those at retirement age (18%). Conversely, there has been a significant decrease in all other cohorts between 5-24 years during the intercensal period and only marginal increase (2%) of people aged 25-64.
- 10.8: This imbalance within the population profile presents challenges to the sustainability of the parish. Recognising these emerging changes in population is extremely important when planning for current and future housing needs, in order to continue to support sustainable communities and economic development.
- 10.9: There is a significant need for both market and affordable housing across the district. The development of the application site will provide additional market and affordable housing, which will help to grow the population and address the demographic imbalance of Woodton and in turn enhance its future vitality. This

is a significant material consideration in the context of this proposal which should weigh heavily in the planning balance.

- 10.10: In terms of this balance, there are no adverse social or economic impacts relating to the development of housing on this site that cannot be mitigated or outweighed by the social and economic benefits associated with the development.
- 10.11: The assessment provided in this report shows that Woodton is a successful settlement which is accessible, well served and demonstrates vitality. It can be considered as sustainable in locational terms and is also socially and economically sustainable when judged across the criteria set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (and considered within its spatial context). It is a demonstrably suitable and good place to host new housing development that will deliver a range of social and economic benefits as set out above in Section 9. The proposed development would, therefore, maintain and enhance the vitality of Woodton in accordance with paragraph 55 of the Framework.

## APPENDIX I: CLUBS & SOCIETIES

- Bridge Club
- Badminton
- Bell Ringers
- Bowls Club (Short Mat)
- Bridge Club
- Cricket Club
- Dancing (various)
- Woodton Football Club
- Ladies together (Woodton and Bedingham)
- Methodist Fellowship
- Monday Club
- Pool Night
- Pilates
- Rotary
- Step Aerobics
- Table Tennis Club
- Yoga
- Walking group
- Whist
- Woodton & Bedingham Monday Club

## APPENDIX 2: SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN WOODTON

- Woodton Primary School
- Stepping Stones Nursery School
- Play facilities: Raven's Den and Woodton New Playing Field
- The Kings Head Public House
- Woodton Village Store
- Village Hall
- Church

## APPENDIX 3: PLANNING CONSENTS

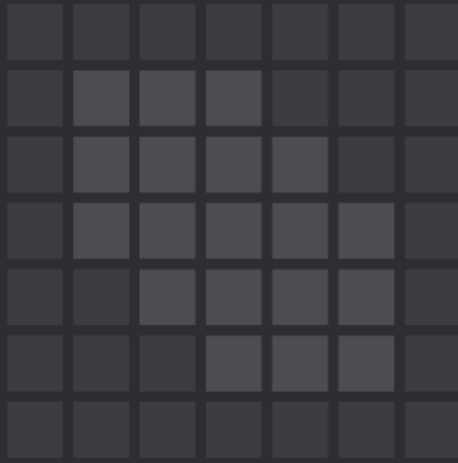
(RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN WOODTON SINCE 1 JANUARY 2011)

Application Ref.	Description	Address	Status	Net Dwellings
2016/2660	Residential Development for 3no dwellings with amenity space & overflow/allocated car parking.	Land Adj To 8 The Woodyard Square Woodton Norfolk	Approved	3
2016/1879	Erection of 3no. dwellings with associated access drive, turning facilities, car parking and amenity space.	Land Adj To 8 The Woodyard Square Woodton Norfolk	Approved	0 (Resubmission of application no. 2016/2660)
2016/0519	Replacement of derelict farmhouse to provide a three bedroom detached dwelling.	Frogs Farm Springwood Lane Woodton Norfolk NR35 2NF	Approved	0 (Replacement dwelling)
2016/0466	Outline planning application with some matters reserved for 21 new residential units (with secondary access from Suckling Place for emergency use and for pedestrian / cycle access)	Land North West Of The Street Woodton Norfolk	Approved Outline	21
2016/0333	Outline application for 3 dwellings. For the erection of two semi-detached dwellings and one detached dwelling.	Kings Head Hempnall Road Woodton Norfolk NR35 2LR	Withdrawn	0
2014/0202	Conversion of redundant barn into a 4 bedroom residential dwelling and new cartshed	Land West Of Woodton Grange Norwich Road Woodton Norfolk	Approved	1
2011/1407	Conversion of single storey barn to 2 bedroom dwelling	Barn At Roes Farm Norwich Road Woodton	Approved	1
<b>Total number of dwelling approved since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011</b>				<b>26</b>

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