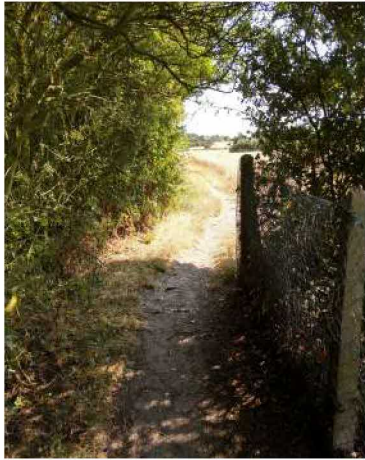




South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

Masterplan Framework
December 2025



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Version: J
 Comment: Final
 This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015

Executive Summary

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood represents an opportunity to create a new, integrated community for Saxmundham based on Garden Neighbourhood principles.

The Masterplan Framework Document (MFD) provides a comprehensive high-level assessment of how the Garden Neighbourhood can be successfully delivered and is intended to inform planning applications for the scheme.

As a Masterplan ‘framework’, the Masterplan is a simplified but accurate summation of the site considerations and the proposals, and incorporates workable, deliverable design, identifying and incorporating effective/ appropriate mitigation of identified impacts likely to result from developing the land.

This document identifies preferred locations for access, connectivity with Saxmundham and the Public Right of Way network that extends into the countryside, the location and type of community infrastructure and facilities, the structure and location of green infrastructure corridors that cross the Site, open space and green space (including

SANG), and the scale and location of built development parcels for different land uses.

The high-level masterplan establishes Framework Principles for development of the Garden Neighbourhood and seeks to identify specific components of the scheme which underpin this sustainable high-quality landscape and design led development which aims to make a lasting contribution to Saxmundham.

Site areas and quantities of the different elements of the scheme are shown in accordance with expected requirements from relevant national and local planning policies.

As with any masterplan, the MFD demonstrates how components of the scheme come together in response to the qualities of the Site and its context.

As a Masterplan ‘framework’, the Masterplan is an accurate summation of site considerations and the proposals, and incorporates workable, deliverable design, identifying and incorporating effective mitigation to mitigate the impacts from developing land.

This MFD presents background information pertinent to the Site, the proposals and arrangement for development that have been evolved through local engagement, arriving at a comprehensive Masterplan Framework which benefits from broad support.

The Masterplan rationale is explained and described, and indicative Principle Plans are included as a precursor to finalised parameters which will form the basis of planning applications for the scheme.

Technical input demonstrates how the design of the Site’s infrastructure has influenced the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. Similarly, extensive engagement has also influenced the scheme’s design.

The MFD has been produced through collaborative work with local representatives in Saxmundham, East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Saxmundham Town Council, Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council and other relevant stakeholders.

The MFD outlines the benefits that the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood can deliver:

- Around 800 New Homes.
- Affordable homes, in line with policy, to meet the needs of the local community.
- A variety of house types and tenures to suit a wide range of households looking to get on the housing ladder, buy a family home, or downsize.
- Excellence in design, energy efficiency and water management and appropriate renewable energy production and supply mechanisms.
- Housing that meets 'Future Homes Standard'.
- Infrastructure for walking, cycling and wheeling (public transport access has not been confirmed and discussions are ongoing).
- New primary and pre-school education facilities as well as business space.
- Contributions towards the delivery of an indoor sports facility for the town.
- Employment provision for the future prosperity of the town.
- Services to provide facilities for the users of the A12.
- Community facilities to serve the needs of the existing and future residents.
- A substantial new publicly accessible Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a variety of open space for formal and informal requirements.
- Opportunities for local landscape and heritage interpretation that draw upon influences from Saxmundham and Benhall's recent history.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the document

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood represents an opportunity to create a new, integrated community for Saxmundham based on Garden Neighbourhood principles.

This Masterplan Framework sets out a vision and a plan for the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood site. To show how this new neighbourhood and its components will integrate with the existing town while performing strongly in terms of social, economic and environmental benefits for the communities of Saxmundham and Benhall.

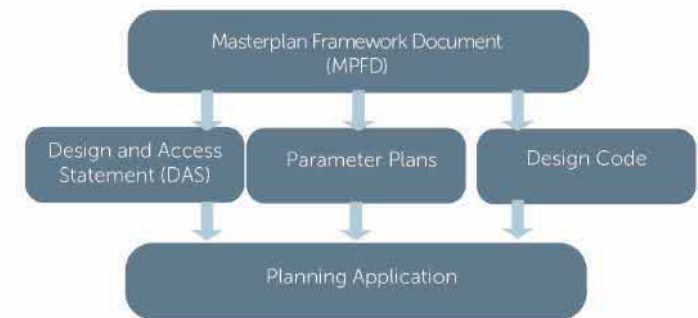
Continuity of dialogue with East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Saxmundham Town Council, Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council, the local community and relevant landowners has helped shape the proposals for the new neighbourhood.

This document sets out:

- A context for subsequent individual planning applications and identifies the principal elements to be delivered comprehensively across the new neighbourhood.
- The distribution and configuration of appropriate land uses across the development area of the new neighbourhood.
- How supporting infrastructure and new formal and informal open spaces (as per Policy SCLP12.29) will shape the neighbourhood.
- How the development will complement Saxmundham and other local communities in the local surroundings.
- Principles for safe and convenient access from South Saxmundham to the town centre, station, and existing and planned

community facilities in Saxmundham.

- The approach to movement, to achieve access off the A12 via a new roundabout to include safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists across the A12 between residential and commercial/ employment areas, and other pedestrian/ cycle crossings across the A12.



µ Fig. 1.1 Documents in Planning Process

1.2 Scope

The Masterplan Framework outlines vision and development principles for the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood.

It provides a guide for the comprehensive design, planning, and implementation of the forthcoming development, ensuring that it aligns with local and regional objectives, local aspirations and national planning policy.

This document sets out a vision for the new neighbourhood and its role alongside the market town of Saxmundham. It provides baseline analysis from strategic down to site-scale.

With a series of 'key moves' the design principles for development are set out, leading on to the Framework Plan which shows how the new neighbourhood will be configured. A series of masterplan 'layer' plans illustrate important aspects of the framework plan and providing topic-based information.

The high-level Development Principles in Section 2 are provided to help guide the creation of more detailed Parameter Plans to

be submitted with the planning application for the Site.

1.3 Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The development of the Masterplan Framework is a result of extensive engagement.

Engagement with Saxmundham Town Council and Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council began in November 2020 and was followed by a series of workshops with the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and local stakeholders from December 2023, with collaborative work ongoing.

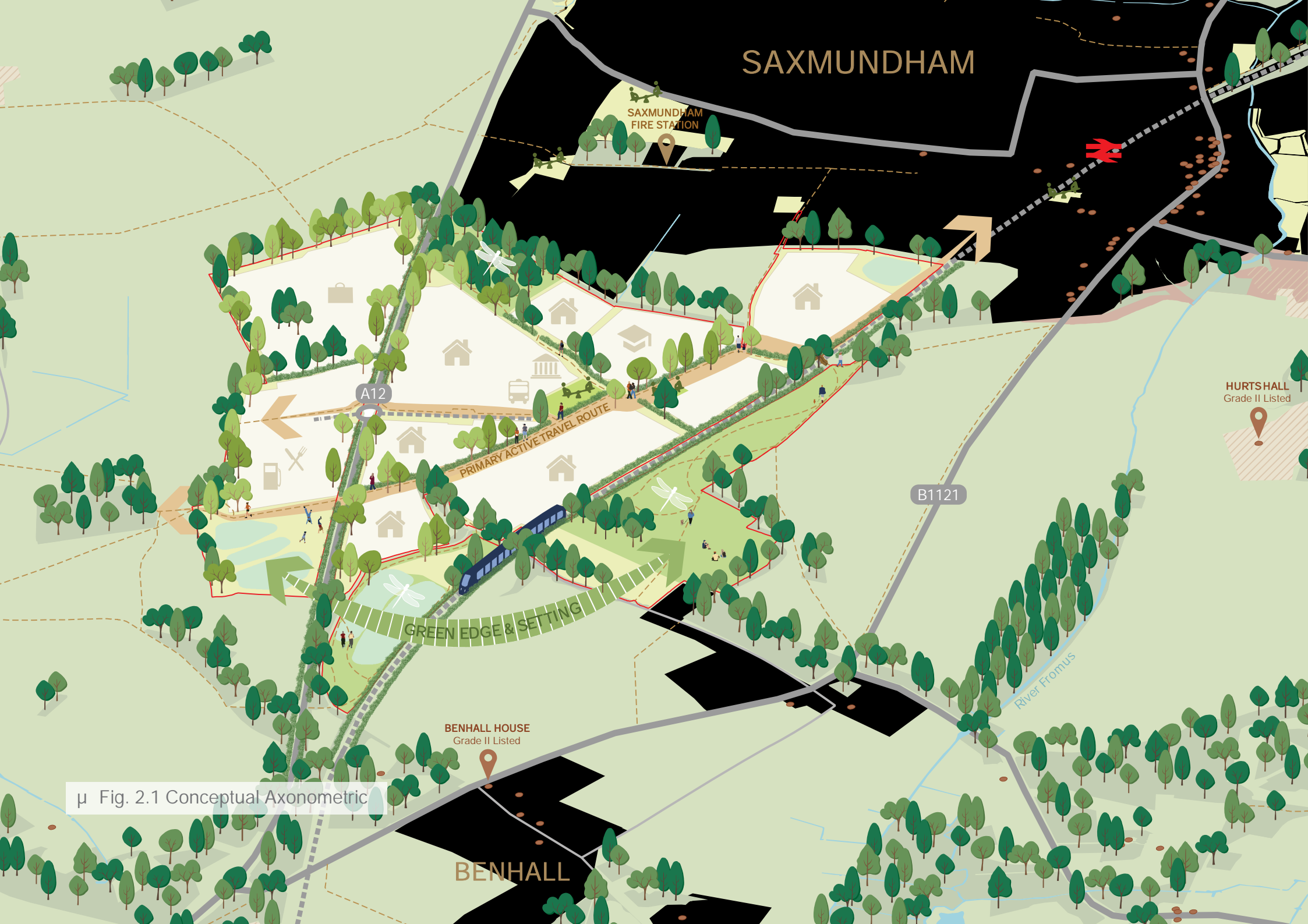
Throughout the development of the Masterplan Framework there has been ongoing engagement with Suffolk County Council, Network Rail, Natural England and Highways England.

The MFD was further refined through a series of workshops held with East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council

officers over the course of 2025.

A Design Review Panel was held in July 2025, which sought the views of the panel on key aspects of the scheme, such as:

- how the development would provide walking and cycling routes through to Saxmundham and the wider countryside,
- and
- how the services area west of the A12 would be integrated into the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood.



SAXMUNDHAM

SAXMUNDHAM
FIRE STATION

A12

PRIMARY ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTE

B1121

GREEN EDGE & SETTING

BENHALL HOUSE
Grade II Listed

HURTS HALL
Grade II Listed

River Fromus

BENHALL

μ Fig. 2.1 Conceptual Axonometric

2.0 Vision

A well-respected and beautiful Garden Neighbourhood, which will create an integrated community of around 800 new homes, accessible amenity, a community hub and employment opportunities, for the town of Saxmundham.

2.1 Mission

To achieve the Vision, Mission parameters have been developed in conjunction with Saxmundham Town Council and cover the following points:

- South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will make a positive contribution to the life of the town in terms of its economy, community activity, and overall quality of life.
- It will be a new part of the town, and will be physically, environmentally, and socially integrated with the rest of Saxmundham.
- Housing needs of local people, both from the town and the wider East Suffolk area will be met, including provision of good quality affordable homes.
- South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will be sustainable including construction, design, and services, based on the use of renewable energy sources, environmental and landscape excellence, measures to address and help tackle climate change, and a dedication to ecological diversity and nature recovery.
- A commitment to health and well-being will shape the neighbourhood, with walkable streets, green spaces that can accommodate healthy activities and social interaction across all age groups, and active travel routes promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- Design excellence will be fundamental, with innovative, sustainable architecture that reflects and reinterprets Saxmundham's character, and enhances the town's identity.
- Place-making principles will seek high-quality public realm and infrastructure, offering local employment opportunities and access to key services, within a well-connected, safe, convenient, and attractive environment.

2.2 The Opportunity

The aim of this Masterplan Framework is to set the principles to support the creation of a well-designed place, with an extension to Saxmundham which aspires to the high quality delivery of new homes and communities that are sought by the Garden City movement.

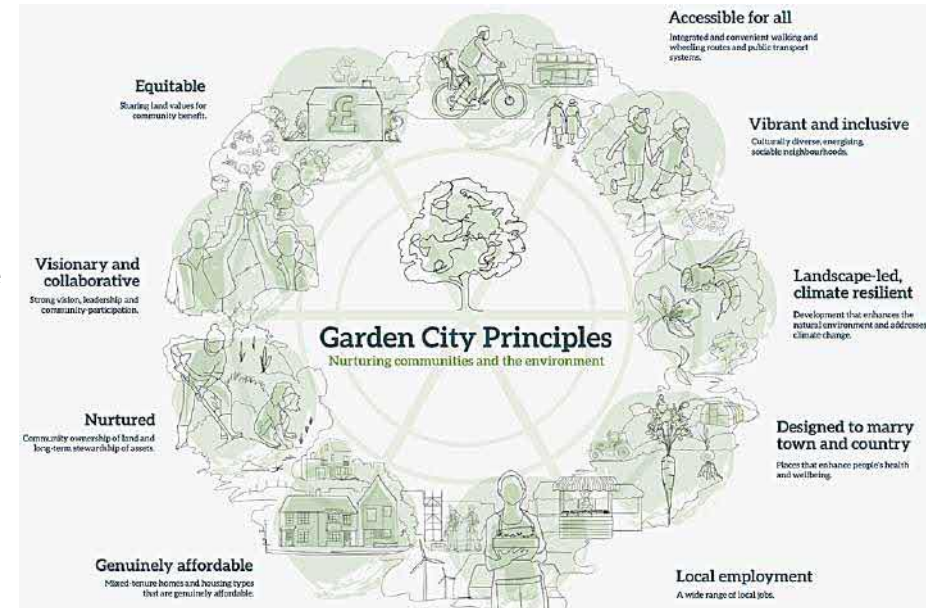
The National Planning Policy Framework acknowledges that large scale development can help to create new communities and that in order to deliver high quality development, clear expectations should be set from the outset and that the Garden City Principles are an example of high-quality expectations.

2.3 The Challenge: A 21st Century Garden Community

The 100-year old historic Garden City movement has led to comparatively successful places, many of which are attractive to live in today. While many of these principles remain relevant, placemaking for modern day living has changed since their formation and these principles need to be interpreted and amended to ensure they are clear and measurable principles for the scale and location of South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood.

The Town and County Planning Act (TCPA) Garden City Principles for the 21st Century are the starting point for the formation of South Saxmundham’s Garden Neighbourhood Principles. The TCPA Practical Guides for creating Successful New Communities have then been used to arrive at a set of Development Principles which provide a framework for working within the Garden City design ethic.

The table below shows which Practical Guides have been used to form the Development Principles for the Site:



µ Fig. 2.2 TCPA Garden City Principles

	Development Principles							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
TCPA Guide								
Guide 3 –Design and Masterplanning	X	X	X					
Guide 5 –Homes for all			X	X	X			
Guide 7 –Planning for Green and Prosperous Places	X	X			X			
Guide 9 –Long-Term Stewardship								X
Guide 11 –People, Planning and Power						X	X	
Guide 13 –Sustainable Transport		X						

µ Fig. 2.3 TCPA Guidance Matrix

2.4 Development Principles

Principle 1 –Connective green infrastructure consisting of a network of multifunctional, well managed, high- quality open spaces reflecting the new neighbourhood location, linking to the wider countryside and providing access to recreation, community food growing and new habitat areas.

Principle 2 –Mobility improvements which connect the Garden Neighbourhood with strategic movement corridors and public transport services so that Saxmundham and key facilities are accessible to all within the community hub area which in combination will meet most of residents’ day-to-day needs.

Principle 3 –Diverse local employment opportunities which cater for a range of employment uses and are connected to the Garden Neighbourhood via a walkable and cyclable network of green and blue infrastructure corridors to promote walking and cycling that provide safe access across the A12 and contribute to meeting the employment needs of Saxmundham.

Principle 4 – Vibrant community which is centred around a community hub which provides access to high-quality open space, flexible working spaces, mobility choices and education within walking distance of all residential areas ensuring that the heart of

the community is as inclusive as possible.

Principle 5 –Exemplary design that delivers the market and affordable homes that the community needs and builds for a post fossil fuel era geared to clean renewable energy, in anticipation that this can be a catalyst for Saxmundham’s lower carbon future.

Principle 6 – Strong corporate and political leadership by consistently engaging with East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Saxmundham Town Council and Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council throughout the development of the scheme.

Principle 7 –Empowered community through ongoing engagement with Saxmundham Town Council and Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council to deliver a development that caters for the needs of the community and seeks to facilitate the long-term stewardship of the Garden Neighbourhood.

Principle 8 –Innovative approaches to delivery that seek to ensure that the high-quality designs proposed are carried through to delivery of the Garden Neighbourhood through appropriate mechanisms in the planning process.

Interpreting the Development Principles, consideration is given to:

- Integration of the Garden Neighbourhood into the fabric of Saxmundham and its life.
- Quality and diversity in design of the built environment and landscape that relates positively to Saxmundham.
- Building for the future, for a post fossil fuel era geared to clean renewable energies, and sustainable waste solutions, in anticipation that this can be a catalyst for Saxmundham’s future.
- Priority in design and implementation of pedestrian and other non-motorised movement, within the Garden Neighbourhood and in its links to the town, to Benhall, and to the countryside.
- Creating and maintaining a high standard of natural environment, green infrastructure, maximising ecology and biodiversity, and conserving water resources, all interwoven into the development.

Many of these considerations are interconnected, and a successful development requires a Framework Masterplan that enables combined Outcomes to be efficient, enable appropriate development for the location, and create a successful and attractive addition to Saxmundham. These development Outcomes can be summarised under the six headings on the following pages.

2.5 Outcomes



An Accessible, Well Connected Neighbourhood

Saxmundham is connected through a series of green movement corridors and green open spaces that are a feature of the Garden Neighbourhood.

A green spine of the development that prioritises active travel provides easy and safe access to all the facilities the new neighbourhood and town centre have to offer. This has helped to foster a healthy and active community by encouraging walking and cycling and by providing a comfortable, stimulating and therapeutic natural environment that connects people to places within the existing town and new neighbourhood.

The active travel route connects residents to a range of exercise opportunities throughout the new neighbourhood. The green spine makes new community services and facilities well accessible and offers a direct link to the town centre encouraging new residents onto the High Street and the Garden Neighbourhood feels like a new, well integrated part of Saxmundham.



Access to Nature and Environmental Quality

The Garden Neighbourhood provides the opportunity to live close to nature, where open space and green and blue infrastructure contribute to the existing environmental features.

The Garden Neighbourhood has the potential to provide enhanced access to natural green spaces all with distinct habitats and recreational uses. The delivery of a network of SANG parcels protects the existing ecological features on the site such as Park Farm Covert and Catsnap Belt and opens up these areas for recreational use, providing residents of the new and existing community good access to nature and recreation spaces, encouraging physical activity.

The delivery of a new green infrastructure corridor enhances the existing landscape features and using them as the green spine for the development. The green spine provides an immersive primary active travel route that connects residential areas to the heart of the community, educational uses, employment opportunities, recreational areas and the town beyond.



High Quality Public Realm and Placemaking

The Garden Neighbourhood balances the needs of the new and existing community by delivering new services and facilities alongside high quality public spaces.

Building for a Healthy Life criteria is the basis for addressing a wide range of placemaking topics. The new development delivers places that have a specific identity influenced by local and historic context and the landscape features within them. Neighbourhood spaces, streets, and infrastructure have features that take reference from their location such as tree lined streets on the countryside edge with views of the countryside.

The heart of the community includes community spaces, play facilities, recreational space and education which encourages social interaction and supports the co-existence of different age groups in shared spaces, for a true sense of community that is respectful and mutually supportive.



Creating an Integrated Community

The Garden Neighbourhood is environmentally, socially and physically integrated with the existing town and creates spaces for all ages and abilities that are easily accessible.

A walkable neighbourhood has been delivered that connects the existing community to the Garden Neighbourhood and its new services, facilities and opportunities via sustainable modes of transport so that active travel is prioritised.

Existing residents of Saxmundham use the primary and secondary walking routes to walk their children to the new primary and pre-school, stopping off to play in the new Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) provided on the site.

New residents cycle along the green spine of the development to reach new employment opportunities west of the A12 and others cycle north to reach the train station in the town centre.

Dog walkers walk across the improved footpath that crosses The Layers to access new recreational areas east of the railway to experience the enhanced habitats delivered by the new neighbourhood that offer a semi-natural, immersive experience with views of the open countryside.



Delivering Homes that People Want

The Garden Neighbourhood delivers an appropriate mix of well designed homes that meet the needs of the local community and contribute to an attractive place that fulfils domestic life.

The Garden Neighbourhood delivers a diverse mix of housing types, size and tenure to meet the needs of the town now and into the future. An appropriate mix of affordable, market and custom build homes is delivered to cater for a wide range of demographics, from those looking to purchase their first home, to young families and those wishing to downsize.

The public spaces, streets, play spaces and recreation areas have been delivered with multiple generations in mind. The centre community area is a bustling hub of activity with community uses, a hub for sustainable modes of transport, recreation and play all in one place.

The diverse range of SANG and public open space delivered alongside the housing caters for a range of ages promoting a healthy and active community.



Excellence in Design and Energy Efficiency

The Garden Neighbourhood is planned to support a cleaner and greener Saxmundham and contributes to more sustainable living for the whole community.

The Garden Neighbourhood is designed to echo it's location at the centre of an area that has significant energy development. Several developments related to offshore wind, including Sealink and Lionlink, are planned east of the town between Saxmundham and Leiston. These energy projects in conjunction with Sizewell C will make the area a renewable energy hub for the East of England.

Development at the Garden Neighbourhood is delivered with sustainable construction methods and energy efficiency embedded, with high design standards to create a positive legacy for the development. A Design Code for the site sets out how sustainable, energy efficient development will be secured through the next stages of the development to ensure that high quality design and energy efficiency is delivered.

3.0 Planning Considerations

3.1 National Policy

The 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a mandatory requirement for local authorities to provide new homes in accordance with the standard method for calculating housing need. This is part of the Government's objective to deliver 1.5 million homes in the current Parliament. It is worth noting that under the new methodology, there is a 55% increase in annual provision requirements for East Suffolk.

The NPPF also provides support for new business development.

The new Garden Neighbourhood reflects the contemporary interpretation of major development to meet the needs of 21st Century life.

3.2 Local Planning Policy: The East Suffolk (Former Suffolk Coastal) Local Plan 2020

The overall strategy for Saxmundham is explained in Policy SCLP12.28: Saxmundham will be enhanced as a market town, employment, and service centre, serving a key role in meeting the needs of its residents, surrounding rural communities and visitors, recognising the opportunities related to the connections offered by the rail and A12 transport corridors.

To achieve this, the following is planned:

- Enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, including through protecting and enhancing the historic core of the town and the railway station.
- Utilise opportunities related to the presence of the railway and the proximity to the A12.
- Diversify and expand employment opportunities.

- Enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity around and beyond the town, particularly to the town centre and the railway station.
- Promote quality of life including through enhancements to networks of green infrastructure.
- Increase the provision of housing and affordable housing and providing greater choice in the mix of housing available.
- Provide for a safe and inclusive community; and
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.

The creation of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will provide new opportunities for housing, employment and community facilities, focused on the principles of an inclusive community and integration with Saxmundham and the surrounding countryside through enhancing green infrastructure networks.

The adopted Local Plan Policy SCLP 12.29 anticipates that the new South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will be delivered through a masterplan approach brought forward through landowner collaboration and community engagement and will include approximately 800 homes of a range of types sizes and tenures to meet the needs of all groups including the elderly, the young and the vulnerable.

Employment land to the west of the A12, will be delivered as part of the Garden Neighbourhood, along with open space and SANG to the east of the railway line as part of a comprehensive master plan.

Critical to the success of the Garden Neighbourhood will be its successful integration with the existing community of Saxmundham (and Benhall). In order to create a full sustainable Garden Neighbourhood consistent with the objectives of the NPPF, this integration needs to be:

- Physical –in terms of the relationship between the new development and the existing built-up area of the town, high quality connections –pedestrian and cycle –to promote easy, safe, and quick access between the town and the development and also the development and the facilities of the town e.g., the town centre and the railway station.
- Environmental –in terms of high-quality green infrastructure connections and links between the Garden Neighbourhood and the town; design and layout of the Garden Neighbourhood to reflect local character.
- Social –A strong connection and interaction between the Garden Neighbourhood and the rest of the town, services to meet the needs of local people, provision of primary school and early years facilities, housing that provides for a mixed and balanced community and ensures integration and cohesion between new and existing communities.

3.3 Services

The MFD includes a site to the west of the A12 for roadside services, which could include a hotel, refuelling station, and refreshments.

Paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should provide for any large scale transport facilities which includes roadside services whose primary function would be to support the safety and welfare of the road user.

At a strategic level the Suffolk County Council Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 and the Saxmundham and Leiston Area Transport Plan recognise the importance of delivering transport infrastructure, which includes roadside services.

At a local level there is somewhat of a policy vacuum as the East Suffolk Local Plan does not allocate, nor have policies that cover roadside services provision.

However, the delivery of a new roadside service area along the A12 at Saxmundham will also help to achieve the objectives of Local Plan Policy SCLP 6.5, to increase the provision of tourist accommodation across East Suffolk.

The main guidance document for roadside services is the Department for Transport Circular 01/22 states that *“roadside services perform an important safety function by providing opportunities for the travelling public to stop and take a break during their journey”*.

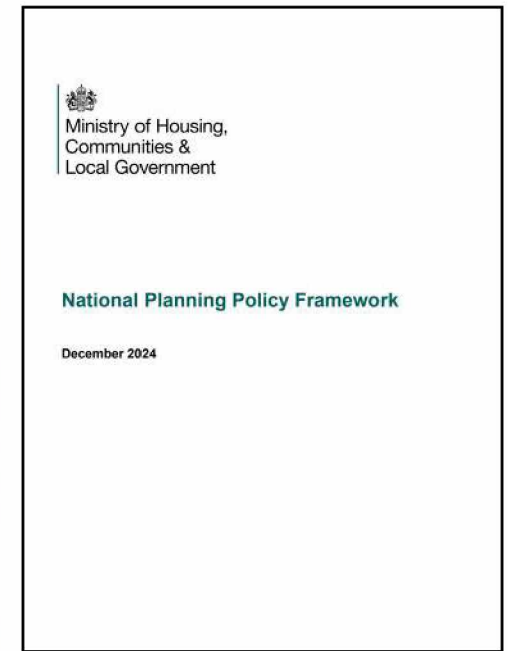
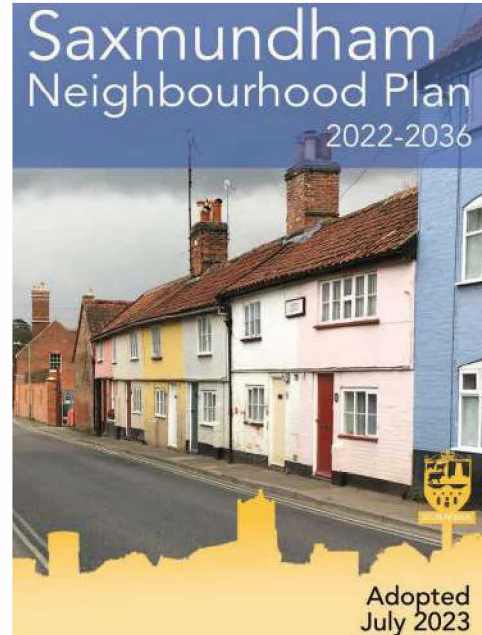
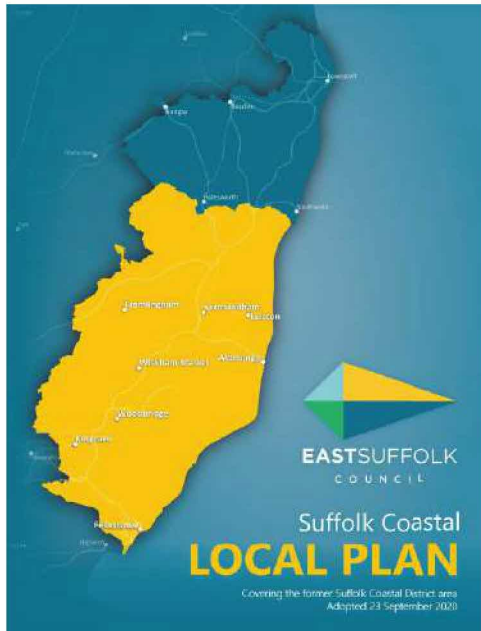
The roadside services will be integrated into the Garden Neighbourhood and be subject to the Framework Principles in this MFD.

3.4 Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ in July 2023 and recognises that the creation of the new South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will provide the majority of new development in the Parish.

The Plan notes that the success of the Garden Neighbourhood will be based on the community’s ability to access existing town- based services and facilities as well as those which will be created as part of the scheme.

Following parish boundary changes between Saxmundham and Benhall, the Neighbourhood Plan is being amended to include the majority of the new Garden Neighbourhood. The modified Neighbourhood Plan seeks to include policies covering the Garden Neighbourhood, in conformity with the Local Plan.





μ Fig. 4.1 Site Location

4.0 The Site as a Part of Saxmundham

4.1 Site Location and Context

Saxmundham is an East Suffolk market town that serves as a local hub for nearby villages and rural communities.

It is located close to coastal areas such as Aldeburgh, Leiston and Thorpeness, alongside the presence of nearby power stations at Sizewell.

The Site is strategically located near the A12 trunk road, which provides a direct link to Ipswich (approximately 20 miles to the south) and to Lowestoft to the north, key urban centres within East Suffolk.

Additionally, the town is on the East Suffolk train line, providing train connectivity to Ipswich, Lowestoft and beyond, offering regional mobility and making it a desirable location for commuting. Trains to London operate hourly and take under two hours.

4.2 Strategic Development Opportunity

With the Site gaining access onto the A12, being close Saxmundham Railway Station and having potential bus provision, it is well connected to the transport network, making it attractive for commuters who are travelling to locally or further afield to larger employment centres.

The A12 provides direct road access to larger towns and cities, to the Port of Felixstowe, a major UK logistics hub as well as links to London via the M25.

The amount of employment opportunities in Saxmundham is limited, and most working-age residents commute to outside of the town for work. A range of employment sites and economic opportunities exist in close proximity to Saxmundham but a significant proportion of residents travel for work to employment clusters like Sizewell, Leiston, and the growing clean energy sector in the region. While this strengthens Saxmundham position as a key node for expansion, it also presents an opportunity for levels of out commuting to be reduced through the delivery of new employment spaces within

the Garden Neighbourhood.

The town of Saxmundham itself serves as a local service centre with shops, healthcare facilities and primary schools, making it well-placed to accommodate new growth.

Development at Saxmundham will help to sustain the existing community and enhance the level of services and facilities found in this part of East Suffolk which will service the surrounding rural hinterland and villages such as Carlton, Kelsale, Benhall, Farnham, Rendham and Sweffling.

4.3 Heritage

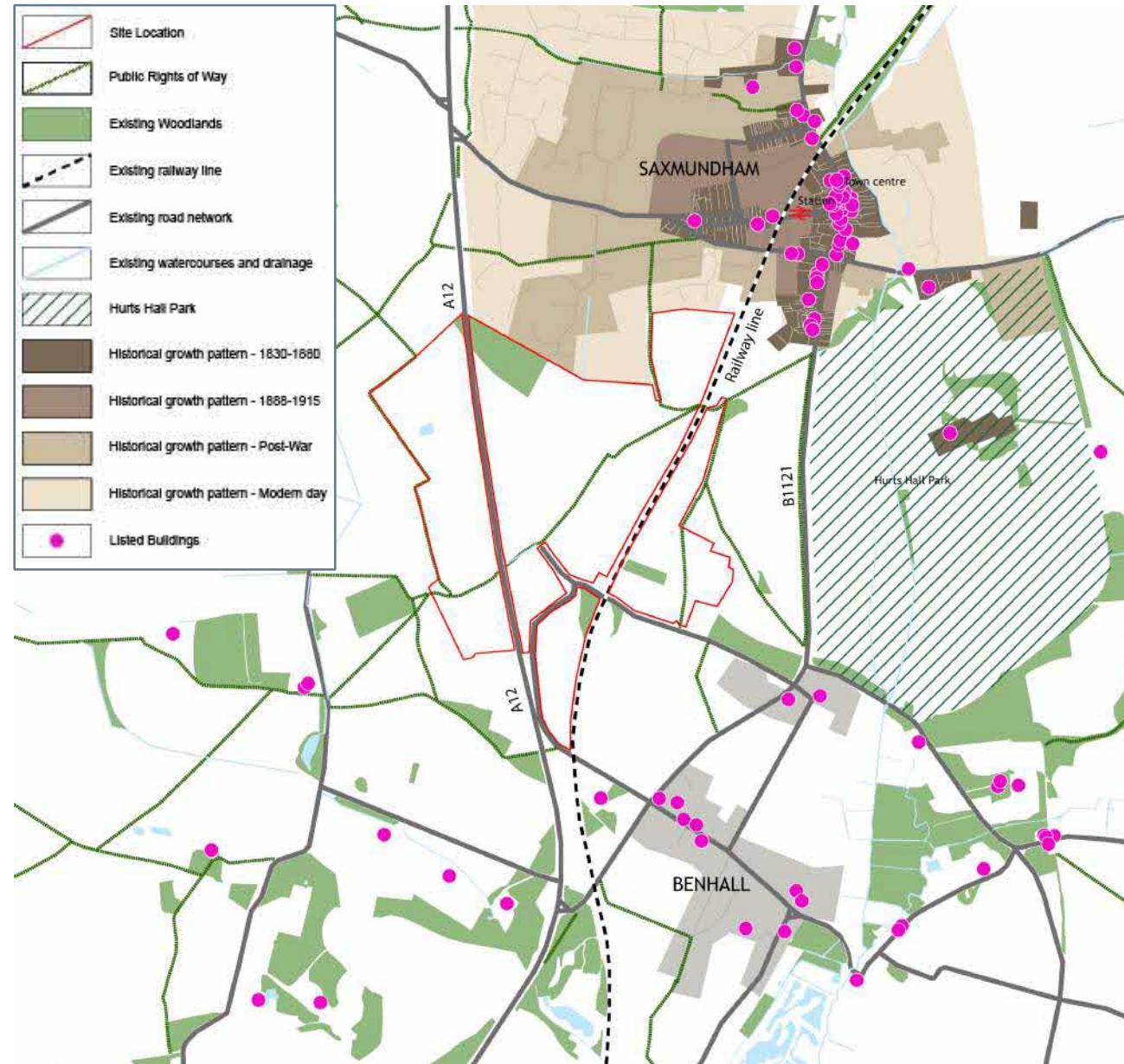
The market town of Saxmundham was established in the River Fromus valley and records show that people lived here as early as 500/ 600 AD. with some evidence of a Bronze Age settlement East of the river, dating back even further.

The town was built along the strategic road connection between Ipswich and Lowestoft, on the crossroads of High Street and Chapel Street. Market Place formed the focal point where all trade took place.

With the advent of the railway in 1859, Saxmundham’s role as a transport hub grew stronger. The town continued to develop mainly West of the railway with further post-war and more recent residential neighbourhoods. The latest developments took place East of the river close to St John’s Church.

South of Saxmundham is Hurts Hall, a country house that was originally established around 1650, and is situated within the large parklands of Hurts Hall Park.

Saxmundham has a number of Listed Buildings, particularly in the historic town centre and around Benhall. Of these listed buildings, there is only limited visual relationship between the site and St John’s Church and Hurts Hall, situated within the shallow river valley to the East.



µ Fig. 4.2 Heritage

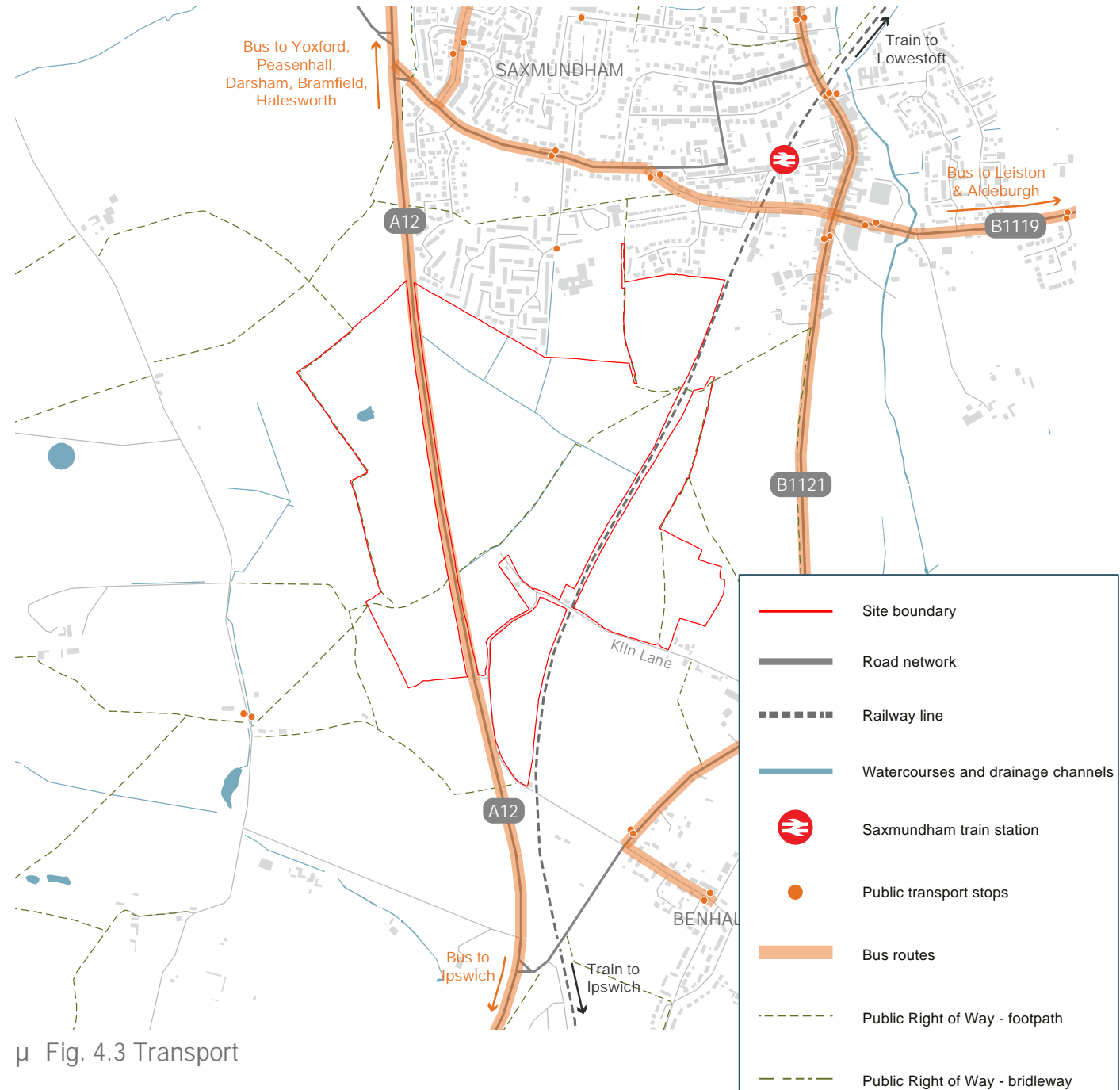
4.4 Transport

Strategically positioned within the A12 growth corridor, Saxmundham is located on the connection between key economic centres including Ipswich to the south and Lowestoft to the north. This enhances its role as a sustainable well connected market town, providing an opportunity to tap into the sustainable transport network, making it attractive for commuters.

Its proximity to rail, road, and employment hubs including a railway station in Saxmundham, Sizewell, Leiston, the emerging clean energy cluster and the Port of Felixstowe, a major UK logistics hub that brings economic benefits to the region, places Saxmundham on a major economic route.

Saxmundham is an important centre for the community of Saxmundham as well as nearby rural communities such as Kelsale, Benhall and Carlton. Saxmundham's success and growth as a settlement has been dependent on its location on key transport routes.

The A12 Saxmundham bypass was constructed in 1987-8, which had an effect on the shape of the fields either side of it, but otherwise had little effect on the landscape of the wider study area.



µ Fig. 4.3 Transport

4.5 Local Facilities

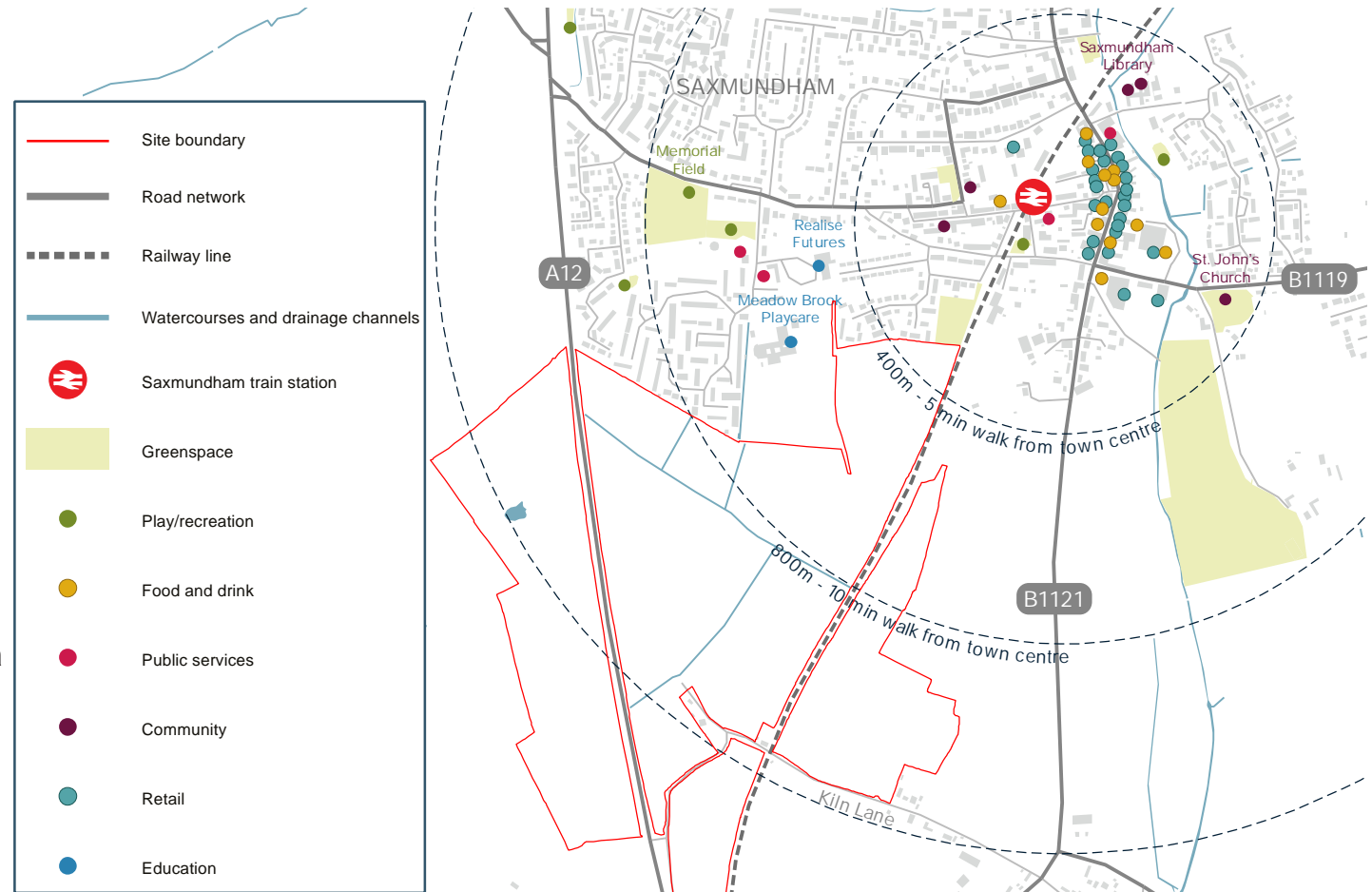
Saxmundham benefits from good facilities for a town of its size.

The majority of facilities are concentrated around the town centre and station area, with good retail and gastronomic segments.

There are a number of public services in the town centre, including the Saxmundham Museum, Saxmundham Library, St John's Church, Saxmundham United Reformed Church, Saxmundham Ex-Service and Social Club, Fromus Community Centre, Saxmundham Health Centre and a post office. Saxmundham's success and growth being strategically located on key routes has led to its role as a service centre and market town.

Saxmundham Primary School is located in the north of the town, close to a series of open spaces that connects a number of neighbourhoods. Meadow Brook Playcare and Realising Futures are located in the south of the town.

The majority of greenspaces follow the river and local streams and provide opportunities for connection as well as leisure. Other major greenspaces are located in the Southwest of Saxmundham with the Memorial Field and the play space on Seaman Avenue.



μ Fig. 4.4 Distribution of Local Facilities

- Retail and gastronomy offer, mostly in the town centre and station area
- Limited amount of greenspaces, particularly in central areas; limited access to green space associated with the River Fromus
- Limited play areas across the town with most located in later developments in the west

4.6 Townscape

The structure of the historic town centre has a very homogenous and organic morphology that developed steadily over centuries.

It is characterised by buildings on burgage plots, tightly lining High Street and Market Place. Narrow alleys are fronted directly by small dwellings and shops, and spaces are strongly defined by the buildings that front them.

Towards the edges of the town centre the urban structure becomes somewhat more varied with buildings occasionally set back from the street, and buildings forming small clusters.

West of the railway dwellings have more generous front gardens and streets feel more suburban.

- Precedents of tight urban morphology with lanes and town houses
- Lower density dwellings on the edges of the centre with a more varied streetscape
- Organic block structure in the core, more rectilinear from 1900s

4.7 Built Form/Appearance

The majority of buildings in Saxmundham are two storeys in height, however there are some exceptions to this such as former coach houses and corner buildings. Buildings are oriented so that their eaves line the streets with many buildings featuring dormer windows.

Yellow and red brick, painted brick or render are the predominant buildings materials in Saxmundham. Roofs are mostly pitched or tent shaped and are covered in red clay tiles with some covered in grey slate.

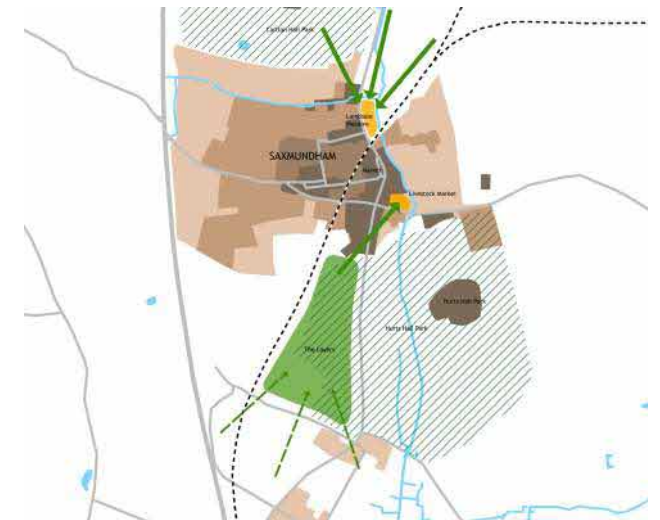
Many of the dwellings feature tall and impressive brick chimney stacks, often with simple brick ornaments.

Where buildings do not directly front the kerb, properties often have high walls with vegetation overhanging.

- 2 - 3 storeys as predominant building height
- Materials vary, creating diverse streets
- Private and public spaces are clearly delineated



µ Fig. 4.5 Saxmundham Growth and Connections



µ Fig. 4.6 Saxmundham Historic Development

4.8 Local Demographic

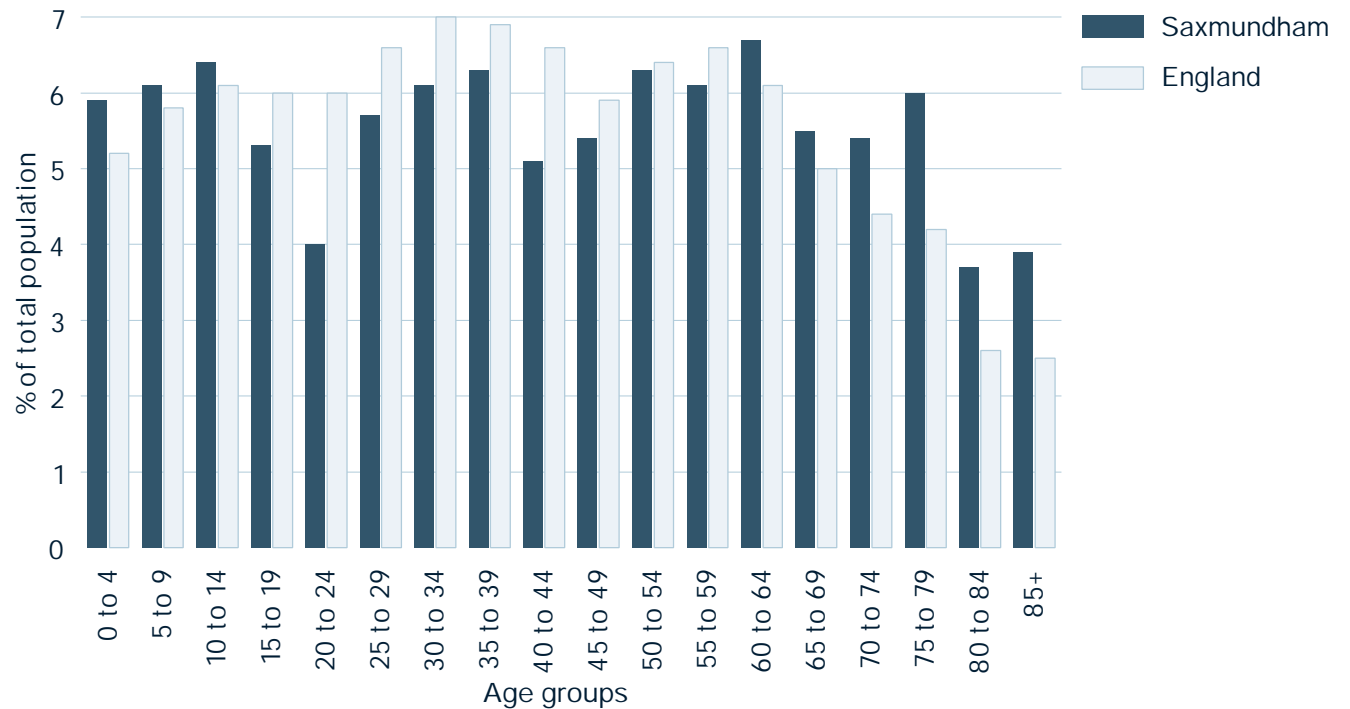
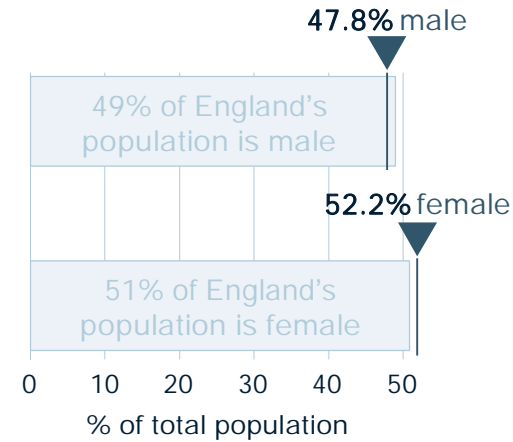
Saxmundham has a population of 4,921 people and over the past 10 years has seen a 2.8% increase in its population.

According to ONS 2021 Census data the population consists of a higher proportion of female residents than the national average, with 52.2% female and 47.8% male.

The demographic make up of Saxmundham does not align with the national average, with higher proportions of the population between the ages of 0 - 14 years old, and 60 to 85+. This means that there are more children and over 65s to cater for in the town so ensuring there are sufficient play spaces, community facilities and care facilities are important for the new neighbourhood.

There is also a lower proportion of residents of working age than the national average, with significantly lower numbers of young adults between the ages of 20-24. It will be important for the Garden Neighbourhood to respond to these demographic statistics, by offering employment opportunities and good connectivity to public transport to encourage more young adults and people of working age into the development to make good use of the transport connections that Saxmundham offers.

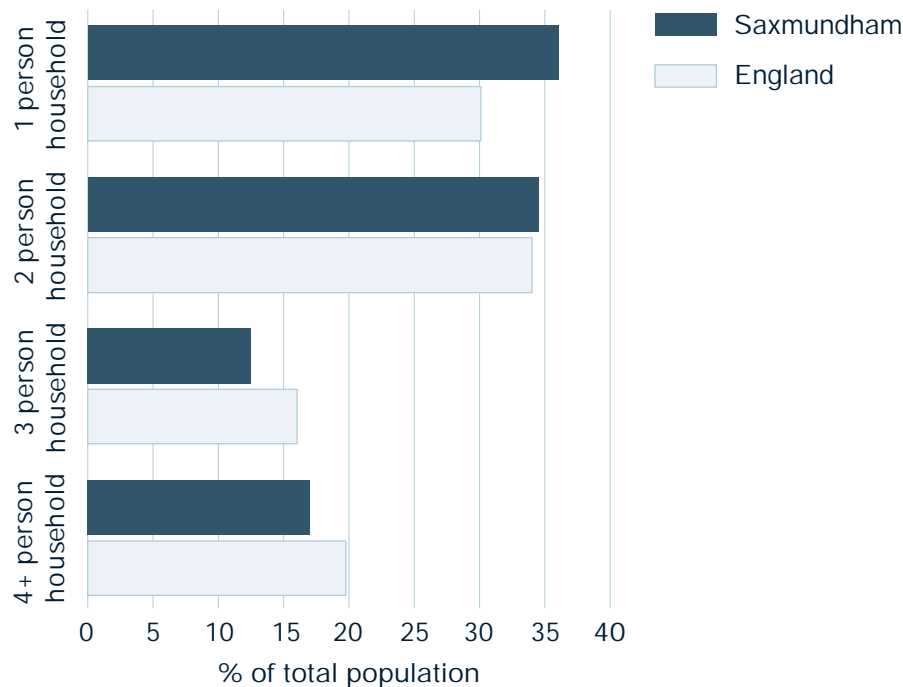
4921
people in
Saxmundham
58,620,101
in England



2173
households in
Saxmundham
23,436,085
in England

There are 2,173 households in Saxmundham and it is important to recognise that the Garden Neighbourhood will increase the number of homes in the town by 37%. The make up of existing households shows that 37% are 1 person households, which is approximately 6% higher than the national average. There are also lower numbers of 3 and 4 person households than the national average in the town. This aligns with the population statistics which show that there are a great proportion of residents over the age of 65.

The Garden Neighbourhood will need to ensure that an appropriate mix of houses are proposed to increase the supply of large homes, to encourage more families and residents of working age into the town, while also providing homes to meet the needs of the local community. This aligns with the Plan area wide housing need set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Part 2 (update 2019) which shows a greater need for 2-bed, 3-bed and 4+ bed properties across Suffolk.



- The housing mix should reflect the greater demand for 1 and 2 bed households within Saxmundham.
- The scheme should be attractive to the young working population by providing key infrastructure connections to employment and commercial opportunities within both the local area and further afield.
- The masterplan should be designed to include young women and girls, as explored in the Make Space for Girls campaign, by creating appropriate social and play spaces, as well as safe pedestrian connections.
- Saxmundham’s high population of 0-14 and 60-85+ year olds (compared to the average across England) should influence the scheme’s design to ensure that all ages are included in the placemaking.

4.9 Landscape

The Site is located within the Landscape Character Areas L1 “Heveningham and Knodishall Estates Claylands” and O1 “Benhall Estate Sandlands”, as identified in the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment. Character Area L1 (Western part of the Site) is a broad area of linked interfluvial plateaux in a broadly V-shaped form, characterised by quiet, lightly-settled farmland, mainly arable with some pastures. The majority of the Site (middle and Eastern part) is located in Character Area O1. This comprises a small area of rolling farmland, formed by shallow valley slopes of the rivers Fromus and Alde:

“The character has a strong Sandlings feel and away from the major transport corridors that pass through, it feels quiet and empty [...]

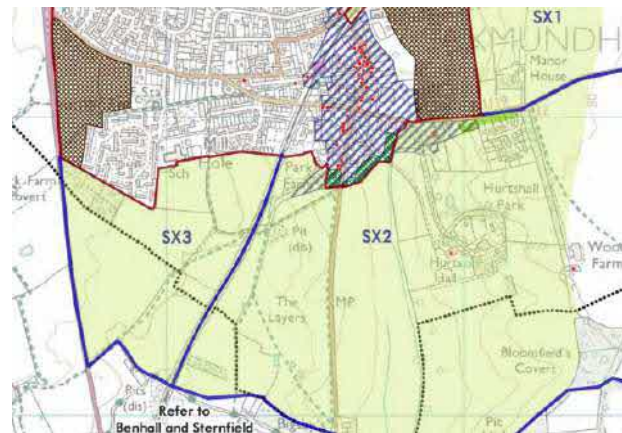
[...] woodland is found in irregular small plantation blocks and rectilinear strips where it has a strong visual impact and provides containment [...]

The visual experience is mixed. Where field boundaries are not hedged, extensive views are possible over consecutive large fields and stretch to distant wooded skylines, punctuated by pylons in the south of the area [...]

The Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Volume 2: Suffolk Coastal Settlements identifies the peripheral areas SX2 and SX3 South of Saxmundham.

Relating to the Site, SX2 refers to The Layers, stating *“This area is sensitive to change due to its rural character, valued views and historic associations.”* *“The sensitivity of this area lies in its pronounced valley slopes which define the setting and approach to Saxmundham from the south.”*

For SX3 it states that *“The sensitivity of this area lies in its elevated position on the upper valley slopes [...]”* It mentions the importance of hedgerows and woodlands, makes reference to the settlement edge of South Saxmundham to be of low quality and identifies views into Saxmundham.



µ Fig. 4.9 Extract from Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Vol 2: Suffolk Coastal (2018)



µ Fig. 4.10 View of Hurts Hall from SX2

- Where possible, retain and reinstate hedgerows, blocks of woodland and parkland trees, and integrate them into the masterplan
- Layout and design of open spaces to fit into the landscape pattern
- Structural planting that allows for glimpse views of the development
- Where possible, reinforce the wooded skyline and improve existing urban edge
- Integrate wider ecological connections
- Built development to avoid/ mitigate views of development from most sensitive areas (SX2)

4.10 Connections

The urban form of Saxmundham relies on the two strategic arterial routes (B1119 and B1121) and the A12 to accommodate strategic vehicle movements. The Site will have to be connected into the A12 on the Western side. Active travel routes will connect the Garden Neighbourhood with Saxmundham.

The primary walking, cycling and wheeling link between the scheme and the town will be formed by a new connection via the cemetery and Park End. Secondary routes will be provided utilising the existing public rights of way with surfaces of these routes these being upgraded to enhance movement and use.

The Site is linked into the Public Right of Way network, with a number of connections:

- FP12/ FP13/ F15 - Connecting southern residential parts to Mill Road and then on to High Street
- FP16/ FP17/ FP18/ FP21/ FP22 - Public Right of Way crossing the railway bridge in the East and extend to the B1121 Southern Entrance, which is the Southern approach into the town centre.
- The East Suffolk Line walking trail, connecting Darsham with Saxmundham.

The Site has two existing crossing points over the railway via the Kiln Lane crossing, and the overbridge towards the north of the Site.

An existing Public Right of Way passes alongside the eastern boundary of the former secondary school site.

There are two existing crossing points over the A12, pedestrian crossing which tracks the route of footpath 22, and a bridleway crossing which tracks along the footpath 25 to the south of the site.



↑ Fig. 4.11 View of FP15 - East of the former Saxmundham Free School



↑ Fig. 4.12 View south from the B1121 of South Entrance

- Routes and connections to be integrated into a green network of routes as part of the masterplan
- Active travel and access to the town centre as convenient and pleasurable as possible, to perpetuate appreciation of the site's rural characteristics on the edge of Saxmundham
- Promote the site's qualities as part of Garden Neighbourhood development.

5.0 Understanding the Site

5.1 Local Context

The Site, covering approximately 62.9 hectares, is located to the south of Saxmundham. It is both bordered and intersected by two main travel corridors - the A12 and railways line, shaping its context and connectivity.

The Site comprises a series of arable fields, bordered by mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees. In a number of locations these hedgerows connect to small geometrically shaped woodlands such as Park Farm Covert in the north and Catsnap Belt in the east.

An extensive Public Right of Way network surrounds the Site, with one main route (Saxmundham 18-21-22) running diagonally through the Site leading from Saxmundham Town Centre towards the open countryside west of the A12. therefore, the edges facing out are of great importance for any development proposals.

The existing public footpath (Saxmundham 19) between Benhall and Saxmundham is located just outside the Site and is a key active travel corridor between the two

settlements and beyond with the PRow that cuts through the Site directly coming off it.

The A12 and the railway line are primary traffic corridors, that run through the Site at a generally north-south axis. As major transport arteries, there are several crossing points over each which will form the basis of a connectivity strategy.

The two pieces of transport infrastructure have the potential to impacts the amenity of future residents as the result of the proximity of dwellings. Noise surveys have determined that noise impacts are only likely along the A12 corridor and a design response will be sufficient to mitigate any potential impacts.

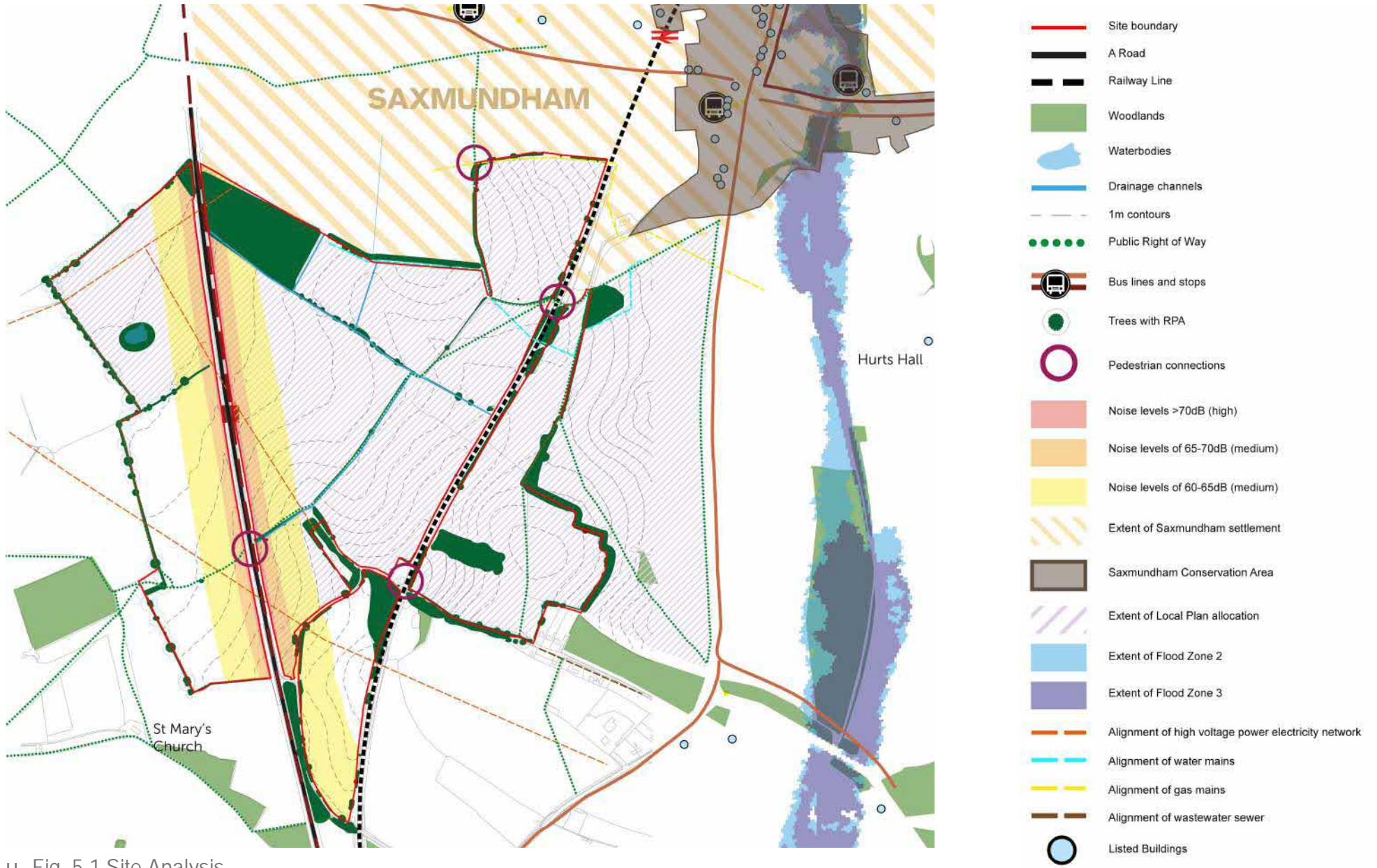
Saxmundham benefits from a combination of rail and bus services, both in close proximity to the Site, offering connectivity to nearby towns and regional hubs. The bus network includes the Border Bus route and the Ipswich Red service, which both play a significant role in providing public transport alternatives to private transport.

Saxmundham has a Conservation Area, spanning large areas of the historic town centre along High Street and streets leading to it, with the historic Market Place at its core. The Conservation Area spans as far as South Entrance, however the existing vegetation inhibits views of the Site.

The Site is crossed by high voltage power cables, a water main and gas mains along the perimeter and a wastewater sewer. Where necessary these will be re-routed/ put underground to maximise scope for development with appropriate easements/ service corridors applied.

The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 with no risk from fluvial flooding. There are some areas of localised surface water flooding associated with the existing drainage ditch network but these areas have been incorporated into the surface water drainage strategy for the Site.

The majority of the Site is allocated as a strategic development site in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The central parcels are also included in the Saxmundham settlement boundary.



μ Fig. 5.1 Site Analysis

5.2 Site Considerations

The MFD has considered several aspects in order for the new neighbourhood to integrate and respond to the Site and its local context. The Site features a network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees which form the boundary to fields, and with the natural drainage network following the field edge hedgerow. These existing features will be retained and integrated wherever possible. Based on the location of existing vegetation, the Site will benefit from a network of green infrastructure, which will be multi-functional with uses such as drainage, ecological and accessibility.

A number of footpaths that currently cross the Site will form part of the new neighbourhood with any potential diversions kept to a minimum and retaining the current degree of accessibility.

Providing a positive frontage along the A12 and the railway line needs to be considered, with noise from the A12 requiring some mitigation. There are no noise or vibration issues in relation to the railway line at present but it is noted that there may be some overnight noise from freight trains related to construction of the Sizewell C power plant (expected to take place over the next 10-15 years), which will require mitigation.

The A12 frontage will be opened up to present the urban setting whilst retaining the green edge to the highway, creating an inviting and well-designed gateway to the Garden Neighbourhood.

The boundary to the railway line will be designed to ensure that it still functions as an ecological corridor while also providing an opportunity for active travel and recreation.

The primary active travel link via the cemetery between the scheme and town centre is located adjacent to the railway. This route will be enhanced to provide a green corridor.

There is a bus service running along the A12. Currently the closest bus stop is located in Saxmundham.

The Site played an important local agricultural and rural industrial role; the former brick works lies inside the site boundary. The railway made the brick industry profitable, and the heritage is remembered in the road name, Kiln Lane, and visible clues of sand and clay pits that surround the area.

Howard's Farm (latterly Park House Farm) has been removed. Footpaths that






















connected the brickworks and farmstead to Saxmundham are still in regular use. The connectivity of the brickworks to the farmstead and farmstead to the town and place of work can be emphasised by paths and cycle ways that link to Saxmundham.

The heritage and memory of the area should be maintained through new placenames, character areas and design responses, and by re-purposing connecting routes.

The Site falls within the setting of several key heritage assets, including the Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist and Hurts Hall. The Saxmundham Conservation Area is some distance from the site.

The Heritage Impact Assessment (2018) completed on The Site considered the harm to be less than substantial regarding heritage assets. It was recommended to exclude built development to the east of the railway, broadly limit the height of buildings to those typical in the town and enhance tree belts to mitigate visual impacts, where possible.



-  Site boundary
-  Train station
-  Negligible noise impact from railway
-  Noise and air quality from A12 to inform buffer to the edge of the site
-  A12 corridor - design treatment to be considered e.g. reduced speed, crossings
-  Landscape considerations
-  Landscape and heritage considerations
-  Vehicular access into the site
-  Potential primary walking, wheeling and cycling connections into Saxmundham
-  Potential secondary walking, wheeling and cycling connections into Saxmundham
-  Access points to Public Rights of Way network through and beyond the site
-  Connecting green infrastructure
-  Existing woodland
-  Biodiversity Net Gain / habitat / green space
-  Cemetery adjacent to the site
-  Opportunity to follow existing drainage features in green infrastructure network
-  Opportunity for road related development e.g. services
-  Existing level crossing
-  Existing bridge crossing the railway
-  Connections to existing footpath and cycle network through and beyond the site
-  Opportunity area for education and community uses that integrate with the existing settlement

µ Fig. 5.2 Site Considerations

5.3 Masterplan Concept

The Framework Masterplan site is located on the southern edge of Saxmundham with main vehicle access from the A12.

Saxmundham is set in rural landscape which gently slopes towards the River Fromus (to the east).

The development proposed is not sufficiently large to exist as a separate of satellite settlement to Saxmundham, and as such will need to become a new neighbourhood of the town. The close relationship between Saxmundham and the new Garden Neighbourhood will therefore be reinforced through good connectivity, and shared infrastructure.

The new neighbourhood introduces development into countryside south of the Saxmundham, that is broadly typical of the wider setting of the town. To the west, landscape and visual amenity of the adjacent countryside will need to be addressed with a well-designed landscaped boundary.

There are existing PRoW's in this area that can be enhanced and enable good connectivity to Benhall to the south east.

Ensuring the new green edge is accessible and performs well as the interface between countryside and the Garden

Neighbourhood will require it to deliver several important functions including SANG, passive recreation, visual amenity, habitat, and setting for development.

Access to the town is necessary for the new community to become integrated. New community facilities in the new neighbourhood need to be easily accessed by the existing community. Concentrating them centrally near the Site's main active travel links will enable good access for both new and existing communities.

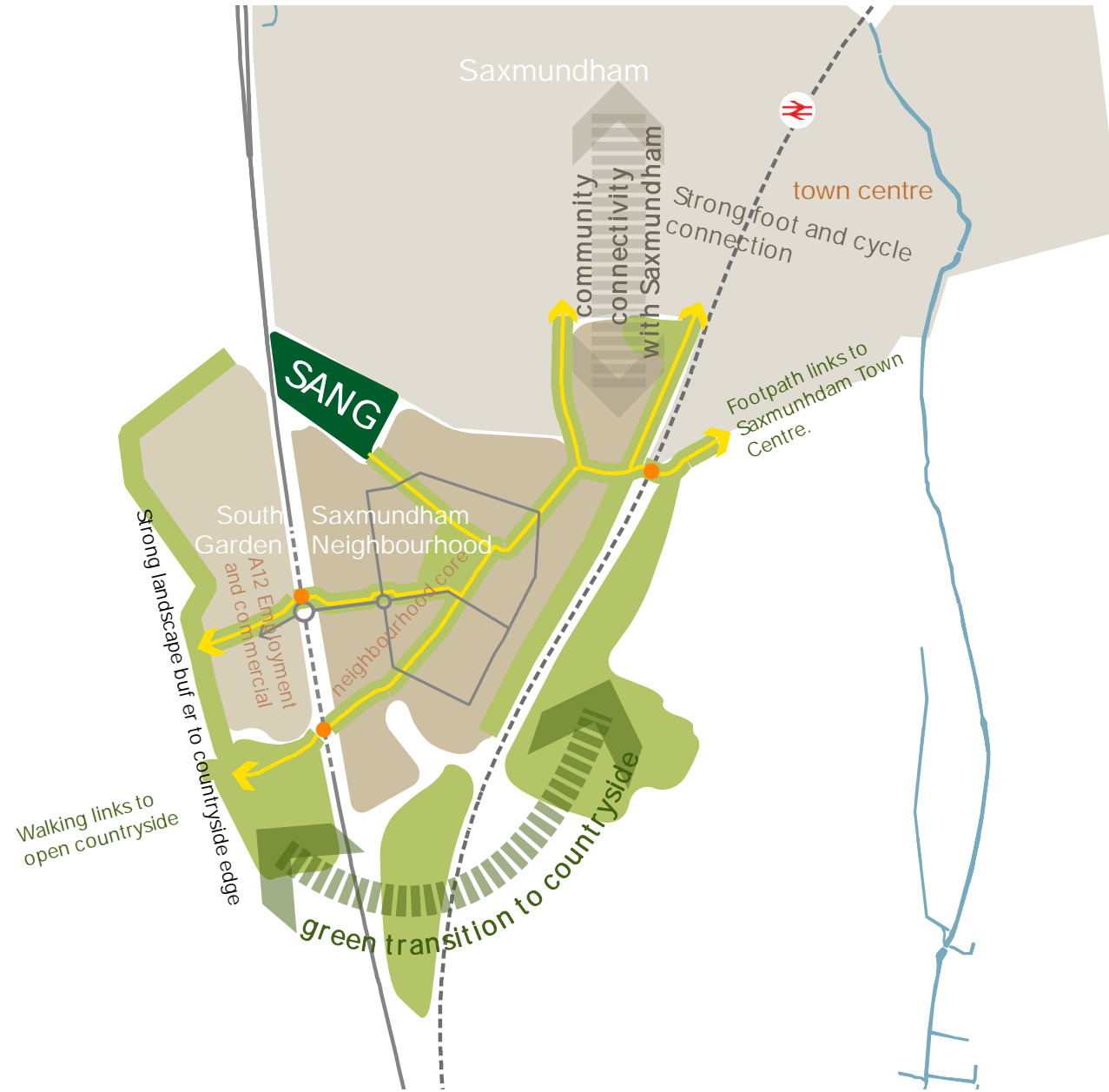
Connecting routes need to be focused centrally through the new neighbourhood for good accessibility for all residents.

The A12 is a significant transport route and separates the employment land to the west and the residential and community development land to the east. Ensuring the A12 can be crossed, and introduction of the main site access will bring changes to a section of the A12 to make it suitable for development to maximise the potential of being located on the key route giving good access to other areas locally and regionally.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Masterplan Concept was developed throughout extensive engagement with the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group from December 2023. Collaborative engagement is ongoing.

Engagement has focused on the vision, mission and key principles, strategic issues, the local economy, housing, services and facilities, leisure and recreation, sustainability, education, infrastructure and green infrastructure.



μ Fig. 5.3 Masterplan Concept