

# WALKERN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2021 - 2033

PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

Summary & Response Form

January 2023





# Walkern Neighbourhood Plan Area and Policies Map

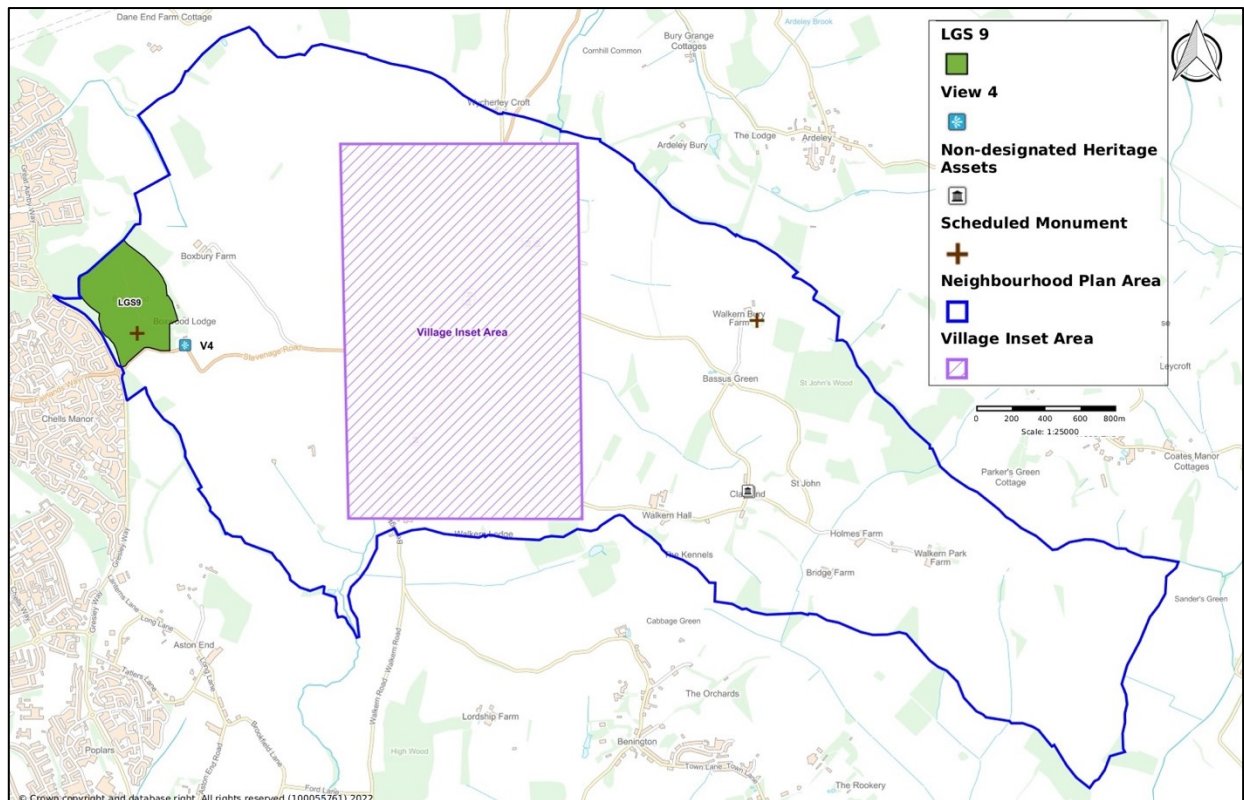


Figure 1 Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map - Neighbourhood Plan Area

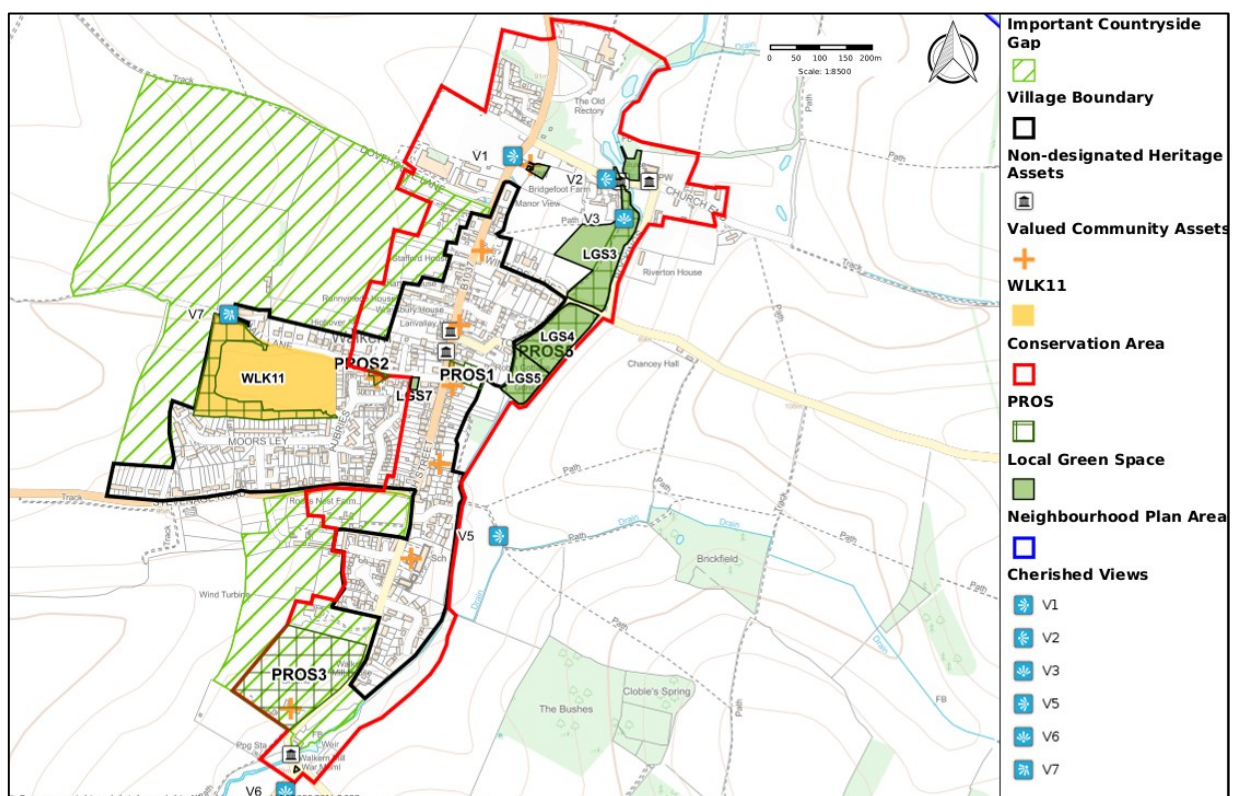


Figure 2 Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map Village Inset

The Policies Map should be read in conjunction with the policies as it shows where in the Neighbourhood Plan Area the policies apply.

## Background to Revision of Walkern Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan was first adopted in 2018. The Parish Council has monitored planning decisions to make sure that the Neighbourhood Plan is effective and have found permissions given for new developments which are not in keeping with the village. The Walkern Neighbourhood Plan First Revision 2021 - 2033 reflects changes in policy at national level and physical changes in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Changed local circumstances include the construction of the Froghall Lane development, threats to the Scheduled Monument and Ancient Woodland at Box Wood and the loss of the doctor's surgery. There is continued development pressure in the parish.

To ensure the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan remains effective and up to date a review of the Plan has been undertaken by Walkern Parish Council. This revised version of the Neighbourhood Plan will ensure the policies contained within it make it clear where development is acceptable, what it should look like and what should be protected.

This is a summary of the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. The full document, with maps, photographs, and more information, is available on [Walkern Parish Council website](#).

We are seeking your views on the Pre-Submission Draft revised Neighbourhood Plan.

The consultation is open from 3 January 2023 until midnight on 15 February 2023. Information on how to respond is given on page 15. The plan will be assessed by an independent examiner. If the Plan is adopted, it will have the same legal status as the East Herts District Plan and will influence planning decisions impacting the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan area between 2023 and 2033.

## Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

- A. Ensure the River Beane, a rare chalk stream that runs through Walkern Parish, is preserved, protected from over-abstraction and public access is maintained
- B. Enhance and improve the environment and environmental quality of the Parish, minimising noise, air and water pollution
- C. Ensure the mix, size and type of new housing meets local needs, including a sufficient supply of affordable housing for sale and rent and preferential access to some new homes for people with a strong local connection
- D. Require new development to be of high-quality design, built to a high sustainability standard and to be sympathetic to, and improve, the look and feel of the Parish
- E. Ensure that new development is phased and located to minimise the impact on the already limited road infrastructure in the village
- F. Ensure the design and location of new developments are resilient to the effects of climate change and flooding
- G. Support existing businesses, creative industries and home working, and encourage new local employment opportunities for residents
- H. Preserve and enhance public transport services to and from the village for residents who do not have use of a car, and encourage safe walking and cycling options
- I. Ensure that community facilities and services enhance the health and wellbeing of residents
- J. Ensure the village has recreational facilities that meet the needs of young children, teenagers and adults, and strengthen the sense of community
- K. Make the best possible use of funding through Section 106, a Community Infrastructure Levy or other funding related to development in the parish, to improve parish facilities.

## Neighbourhood Plan Vision

The Walkern Neighbourhood Plan will shape the evolution of Walkern over the next 11 years by meeting the aspirations and needs of the local community. We are committed to preserving Walkern's historic character and strong rural identity by ensuring that development in the Parish is sustainable, protects valued natural features, strengthens a sense of community and enhances wellbeing of new and existing residents. We want to make sure Walkern Parish remains a great place to live.

## Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The planning policies together with the reasoned justification in the full Neighbourhood Plan reflect the main issues raised through consultation and aim to achieve Objectives A-K above.

### Policy WLK1 Sustainable Development

- I. Support will be given to development proposals which accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and help to create sustainable communities which embrace the principles of sustainable development using a coordinated approach to the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure and development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

### Policy WLK2 Cherished Views, Vistas and Landscape Features

- I. Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that measures have been taken to contain and mitigate the visual impacts of development on the open character of the landscape setting of Walkern.
- II. Seven important views and vistas are identified on the Policies Map and detailed in Appendix B of the full Neighbourhood Plan document. These are:
  - View 1: West from opposite the United Reformed Church (High Street) through Manor Farm paddock
  - View 2: East along Church End over the ford
  - View 3: North from the meadows to St Mary the Virgin Church
  - View 4: East from Box Wood towards Walkern
  - View 5: East of the River Beane to Wrights Tower House above the Finches
  - View 6: North from the entrance to Walkern along Benington Road
  - View 7: South west from Froghall Lane towards Stevenage
- III. In addition, the River Beane Valley is the primary landscape feature in the Parish and provides an important gap between Walkern and Stevenage. Within the area defined as Important Countryside Gap on the Policies Map, new development will only be permitted if it does not result in the physical or visual coalescence of Stevenage and Walkern and would not undermine the separate character, appearance and identity of Walkern.
- IV. Any development proposals in the Important Countryside Gap or within the identified views should include a landscape and visual impact assessment of harm, using an appropriate methodology. Proposals where a harmful impact is identified will only be permitted where effective mitigation measures can be delivered.





View 4 East from Box Wood towards Walkern

Designated Heritage Assets are protected in East Herts District Plan. The three policies below specifically reference Walkern Conservation Area and its setting, identify Non-designated Heritage Assets for protection and highlight the importance of archaeology in Walkern.

#### **Policy WLK3 Walkern Conservation Area**

- I. Development within Walkern Conservation Area should enhance or better reveal its significance, if possible. The elements of the Conservation Area which make a positive contribution to its significance in accordance with Walkern Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal 2016 (or an updated version) should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- II. Development within the setting of Walkern Conservation Area should preserve those elements of its setting within the rural landscape of the Beane Valley, that make a positive contribution to the heritage asset.

#### **Policy WLK4 Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- I. The following non-designated heritage assets have been identified in this Neighbourhood Plan:
  - Queen Elizabeth II pole mounted post box, Clay End
  - Decorative cast iron lamp column, Clay End
  - Decorative cast iron lamp columns, High Street, Walkern
  - Decorative cast iron lamp column, Church End, Walkern
  - Bridge and ford, Church End, Walkern
  - Bridge and weir, High Street Walkern
- II. Development proposals which affect the non-designated heritage assets itemised above and other non-designated heritage assets identified on the Historic Environment Record will consider the significance of the asset, to enable a balanced judgement to be made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

#### **Policy WLK5 Archaeology**

- I. The identification and protection of local sites of archaeological interest and their enhancement is supported. Development proposals affecting a site with potential archaeological interest shall be accompanied by an archaeological desk-based survey and, where applicable, a field evaluation. Any reports should be made available for public viewing by deposition of reports with the Hertfordshire Historic Environmental Record.

Biodiversity, trees and hedges, and Green Infrastructure are very important to Walkern residents. Policies WLK6 to WLK10 aim to conserve and enhance these valued natural assets.

#### **Policy WLK6 Conserve and Enhance Biodiversity**

- I. Development should conserve and enhance biodiversity and deliver biodiversity net gains in accordance with national standards using the current biodiversity calculator. Wildlife and significant habitats including the River Beane will be protected from any harmful impacts of development, including pollution. The following designated local wildlife sites will be protected and managed for biodiversity:

Box Wood

The Warren

St John's Wood and Lords Wood

Baron's Grove

Coble's Spring and The Bushes

Bassus Green Road Verges

Walman's Wood

#### **Policy WLK7 Protection of Trees and Hedges**

- I. Trees and hedgerows are protected by Policies DES4, HOU2, NE3 and NE4, and individual site allocations in East Herts District Plan.
- II. Proposal should be designed to retain all ancient trees and those with recognisable amenity value.
- III. The planting of trees able to withstand climate change will be encouraged at every opportunity.
- IV. The Walkern Tree Charter provides information and guidance to assist developers to recognise the importance of trees in Walkern.



Veteran tree near Dovecot, High Street



### Policy WLK8 Protected Recreational Open Spaces

- I. The following sites, are allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space:  
PROS1: Playground, next to Walkern Stores, no 79 High Street  
PROS2: Play Area, Aubries  
PROS3: Sports field at Walkern Sports and Community Centre  
PROS4: Midsummer Meadows  
PROS5: River Beane Walk, north of Winters Lane  
PROS6: River Beane Walk, south of Winters Lane
- II. Development proposals that impact on PROSs should accord with District Plan Policy CFLR1 with the additional criterion, that the loss of all or part of these spaces will not be permitted unless they are replaced with better facilities which are as accessible to the local community as the current recreational open spaces.



PROS3 Sports Field at Walkern Sports and Community Centre

### Policy WLK9 Green Corridors

- I. In accordance with the East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan, the network of Green Corridors in the Parish will be protected from the impact of harmful development, managed and where possible enhanced. These include:
  - The local link extending to the north and west of the end of Froghall Lane
  - The network of small woodlands around Clay End
  - The River Beane Valley and in particularly the section through Walkern village which has been under pressure from development and requests for residential garden extensions which could introduce barriers to wildlife and reduce public access. The northern section of this corridor has been allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space in this Plan (see Policy WLK8).
- II. The River Beane is an endangered chalk stream, and the valley corridor has a strategic recreational value as well as being important for wildlife and a cherished landscape feature. Any development scheme adjacent to the River Beane should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone of at least 10m from the top of the bank to protect and enhance the conservation value of the watercourse and ensure access for flood defence maintenance.

## Policy WLK10 Local Green Space

- I. Nine areas of green space detailed in Appendix F in the full Neighbourhood Plan, shown on the Policies Map and the detailed Policies Map extracts below this policy, have been designated as Local Green Space. These are:

LGS 1: Land west of the River Beane at the Ford, Church End

LGS 2: Land east of the River Beane at the Ford, Church End

LGS 3: Land adjacent to River Beane between Church End and Winters Lane

LGS 4: Land adjacent to Allotments, Totts Lane

LGS 5: Allotments, Totts Lane

LGS 6: URC Graveyard, High Street

LGS 7: Graveyard, Froghall Lane

LGS 8: War Memorial, High Street/Benington Road

LGS 9: Box Wood, Stevenage Road

- II. New development will only be allowed in designated Local Green Spaces where it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CFLR2 of East Herts District Plan, considering the characteristics of the Local Green Space as set out in this Plan.



LGS7 Graveyard, Froghall Lane



Policies WLK11 to WLK15 below provide developers and planning officers with criteria on which to base and judge housing developments. WLK11 addresses the issues remaining on the Land South of Froghall Lane, whilst WLK12 considers development on housing infill sites. The provision of rural housing and affordable housing are dealt with in policies WLK13 and 14. Design of new development, including new homes is addressed in WLK15.

#### **Policy WLK11 Land South of Froghall Lane (Midsummer Meadows)**

- I. The development principles for Land South of Froghall Lane as set out below should apply to the site in perpetuity, to ensure that the development continues to respect the environment of Walkern:**
- (a) No buildings or impermeable hard surfaces will be constructed in the south-west or north-west corners of the site, which are susceptible to surface water flooding.**
  - (b) A green corridor along the northern boundary of the site bounding, will be retained as a landscaped strip to preserve views into the village and maintain the rural character of Froghall lane.**
  - (c) A generous green landscaped area and wetland habitat will be retained and managed to deal with excess run-off and to soften the impact of development on the countryside. This is allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space.**
  - (d) Parking spaces should not be lost through development maintaining at least 2 parking spaces per dwelling unless there is a clear justification for a lower standard and to prevent overflow parking on surrounding streets.**
  - (e) No vehicular access will be permitted on to Froghall Lane.**
  - (f) All trees and hedges remaining on the site will be covered by the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan Tree Charter.**
  - (g) Any development proposal to raise the roof heights must not impinge on View 4 any more than they currently do.**



Fence and verge on Froghall Lane with no vehicular access

### Policy WLK12 Housing Infill Sites

- I. Within the village boundary on the Policies Map, small-scale infill developments will be supported subject to meeting the criteria below and Design should be in accordance with Policy WLK15:
  - (a) There is no unacceptable impact on the amenities of adjacent residential properties.
  - (b) Appropriate access, car parking provision and turning arrangements are provided.
  - (c) Important views and open spaces that contribute to the enjoyment of residents of the village and are important to the character or appearance of the conservation area are retained.
  - (d) Use of gardens should ensure private amenity space is in scale with the size of existing and new homes.
  - (e) Backland or tandem development should reflect existing village development patterns.
  - (f) Density should make the best and most efficient use of land whilst improving biodiversity.
- II. Brownfield sites are preferred to greenfield sites. Site redevelopment should respect existing building lines, scale and massing of surrounding buildings.
- III. Private gardens contribute to the character of the village and inappropriate development of garden land will be resisted.

### Policy WLK13 Rural Homes

- I. Outside the village boundary of Walkern, high quality conversions to residential use, of buildings of architectural merit will be welcomed.
- II. Rural Exception Affordable Housing schemes in the two small settlements of Clay End and Bassus Green will be supported, provided that they do not impinge on important views and do not conflict with other policies in this Plan or the District Plan.
- III. For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, Local Needs Affordable Housing on rural exception sites will be allocated to persons who:
  - (a) have been ordinarily resident in the Parish of Walkern for the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application for the affordable housing unit or who have at any time previously resided in the Parish for at least five years, or
  - (b) have a strong local connection with the Parish of Walkern through a close family connection or being employed within the Parish.

If no applicant qualifies under the first set of criteria, those who are resident in, or have a strong local connection with neighbouring parishes will be eligible. If there are no nominations from the rural parishes, then nominations from those in greatest need from within the district will be acceptable.
- IV. Other single rural homes will only be supported where there is a demonstrable need for them to be in the countryside.



## **Policy WLK14 Affordable Housing**

- I. In Walkern, there will be a mix of affordable housing types and tenures, which reflects current and future local housing needs and housing market assessments.

## **Policy WLK15: Design of New Development**

- I. The scale and design of all new development will reflect the character of Walkern, and its historic Conservation Area as detailed in the Walkern Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2016. In particular, the following guidelines will apply:
  - (a) Building materials and detailing should be aesthetically pleasing and characteristic of traditional village properties, particularly those that surround the build.
  - (b) New buildings should respect neighbouring roof profiles, heights and pitches, the characteristic spacing between buildings, historic building lines, density of development in the village and cherished views and vistas.
  - (c) Redevelopment, extensions, or alterations to historic farmsteads, agricultural buildings or residential properties should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials, and form.
  - (d) Site topography should be taken into account to ensure no loss of amenity to surrounding homes, including overlooking.
  - (e) Sufficient off-road parking should be provided in accordance with East Herts District Council parking standards.
  - (f) Hardstanding should be minimised and constructed of porous material assisting natural drainage and achieving zero run-off.
  - (g) Layout of new roads will include parking bays to accommodate delivery and utility vehicles without constricting traffic flow.
  - (h) Street lighting should be sensitively designed to reflect the rural nature of the parish and minimise impact on bats and other nocturnal wildlife.
  - (i) Bat boxes, swift bricks and planting to encourage biodiversity and provide wildlife corridors will be commended

### **Residential Properties**

- (j) Where possible, a minimum of 2 parking spaces should be provided for each home and garages should be designed for vehicle parking.
  - (k) Enclosures to accommodate storage of refuse bins should be provided within the curtilage of each new home.
  - (l) All homes should have their own modest garden space, characteristic of village living and easy access to public open space.
  - (m) Boundaries, particularly to front gardens, should preferably be marked with hedges of appropriate native species.
  - (n) Homes should be energy efficient and include the most up to date technology where appropriate and electric charging points should be included in any new build where possible.
- II. Modern, innovative design will be welcomed provided that the above criteria are met.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports sustainable economic growth. Residents support local businesses and improving the experience of working from home can reduce local traffic in the village. Support for the expansion of existing businesses is dependent upon suitable access.

#### **Policy WLK16 New Businesses**

- I. New businesses and employment will be permitted, provided that new or expanded enterprises are of a scale and type appropriate to the rural setting of Walkern and its Conservation Area and comply with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Further development at Manor Farm would be supported provided that suitable and safe vehicular access is provided.

#### **Policy WLK17 Diversification of Farm Businesses**

- I. Proposals for the diversification of farm businesses will be supported provided:
  - (a) The development is ancillary to the agricultural business or
  - (b) The development supports the viability of the existing farm holding
  - (c) The development does not include domestic housing for sale.
- II. The potential impact on rural lanes must be assessed and measures put in place to mitigate the impact of increased traffic in the rural area such as England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) and Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).

#### **Policy WLK18 Home Businesses**

- I. Proposals for new homes should include space for homeworking.
- II. Support will be given to the installation of new infrastructure including high-speed broadband and mobile networks to facilitate home working where:
  - Infrastructure is fully integrated into the design of future development proposals
  - Where new masts or structures are required, they should be sympathetic to their surroundings
  - Infrastructure should consider safety precautions for wildlife.



Narrow lane to Manor Farm adjacent to walls which define the curtilage of a heritage asset



Improving sustainable transport options for the village will help to reduce traffic congestion and improve road safety.

#### **Policy WLK19 Sustainable Transport Provision**

- I. All proposals for development in the village must provide a traffic impact assessment, proportional to the scale of the development proposed, which assesses the potential impact of increased traffic on pedestrians, cyclists, road safety, parking and congestion and any measures designed to mitigate such impacts.
- II. Further expansion of the school should include mitigation for any impact of additional traffic congestion and school-related parking at peak times.
- III. Proposals to increase off-street car-parking provision and relieve traffic congestion in Walkern will be supported in principle if they comply with other policies in this Plan.
- IV. Development proposals should help to maintain or improve public transport provision to Stevenage and throughout the parish of Walkern. Other proposals to increase the use of sustainable transport such as off-street charging points for electric cars will be supported.

There are nine valued community assets, identified through consultation with residents. Four of these were listed on [East Herts Assets of Community Value Register](#). Listing only lasts for 5 years so new applications have been submitted.

#### **Policy WLK20 Valued Community Assets**

- I. All community assets listed below will be retained in accordance with District Plan Policy CFLR8. New community assets will be considered against District Plan Policy CFLR7:
  - Clarks Garage, High Street
  - Playground, High Street
  - Play Area, Aubries
  - Walkern Sports and Community Centre
  - Walkern and Sandon United Reformed Church, High Street
  - White Lion Public House, High Street
  - Yew Tree Public House, High Street
  - Budgens Village Store, High Street
  - Walkern Primary School
- II. The reprovision of health services in the village will be encouraged in accordance with District Plan Policy CFLR9.

#### **Policy WLK21 Funding Priorities**

- I. Walkern Parish Council will maintain and update the Action Plan as a schedule of priorities to receive the benefit of funding from S106 agreements and any other funding streams such as a Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Action Plan lists the issues, outcomes, measures sought and progress to date of the priorities in the Action Plan. These are itemised in the table below:

Issue	Outcome sought	Measures sought	Progress
Walkern Playground needs updated play equipment, planting and more seating.	To enable the area to be better used and encourage more wildlife.	Funding to be sought via Biffa and other possible grant schemes. S106 money also to be used.	Improvements made inc. tree surgery, bin and replacement w/chair accessible seat/table installed.
Height and weight restrictions to be enforced for through traffic.	To prevent heavy vehicles driving through the village unless for business.	Lobby HCC Highways. Further measures being sought as signage is not effective.	Pending
Congestion in the High Street and speed of traffic.	To install new traffic calming measures throughout village.	Lobby HCC and police and make them aware of the danger to residents	S106 for High Street parking Bays & yellow lines proposed.
Congestion from cars parked outside primary school and side roads.	To improve safety for residents, children and drivers negotiating parked cars.	Lobby for more enforcement by traffic wardens. Provide a drop-off area for school. Reduce time cars area wait outside school and in side roads with engine running.	None, and situation is worsening.
Lack of play/sporting facilities at WSCC.	To extend health and social activities for all ages	Direct S106 money and other grants towards achieving the outcome.	Fitness equipment installed. Grant secured for play equipment and picnic area.
Lack of crossing points and entrances to public areas (Equalities Act 20120)	To create a safer and more accessible village, where ever reasonably possible.	S106 money to install lines by WSCC to enable w/chair users to use dropped kerb. Marking designated parking bay at shop. WPC to ensure paths kept free from overgrowth.	Survey carried out and site plan drawn up showing areas of concern (see NP Consultation Statement).
Village signage dated and in poor condition.	To provide visual information and create safer driving conditions.	WPC to discuss how costs could be covered to ensure signs are visible; cleaned and overhanging trees and shrubbery cleared.	Sign renewed at Clay End. Village signs cleaned annually
Lack of seating in public places.	To enhance the life of residents, particularly the elderly & disabled.	Used S106 and WPC funding to install seating at The Playground and benches at Froghall Lane graveyard.	Seating installed at WSCC.
Vehicle speeds too high.	To reduce vehicle speeding/use of the village as a rat run.	Liaise with HCC Highways and polices for traffic calming measures to be installed.	Pending
Impact of aircraft noise/pollution.	To ensure aircraft fly at correct height and on flight paths.	Lobby London Luton Airport and gain support from LADCAN.	WPC has sent an objection to holding area over village. WPC has now subscribed to LADACAN.
Height and weight of vehicles using Totts Lane/Winters Lane	To eliminate oversized vehicles on narrow lanes.	Signage, weight restrictions and width restrictions needed.	HCC Highways to visit and assess to agree how to solve this issue. New signage installed.
Future lack of burial spaces in St Mary's churchyard.	To create further space for residents who wish to rest in the churchyard.	Extension of garden of remembrance. Permission to be sought from Diocese.	Vicar supports this and has given permission.
No electric vehicle charging points in the village.	To provide public charging facilities for hybrids and electric cars.	A suitable space would be on Clark's garage forecourt.	Owner agreed to consider installation, but costs would need to be investigated.





## Revised Walkern Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation Instructions and Response Form

This consultation is open from **3 January 2023 until midnight on 15 February 2023**.

You can respond in one of two ways:

1. Downloading the form [Walkern Parish Council's website](https://www.walkernparishcouncil.org/parish-council/consultation), completing it and emailing it to [heidi.broadly@walkernparishcouncil.org](mailto:heidi.broadly@walkernparishcouncil.org)
2. Completing this double-sided, removable response form and returning it:
  - by post to: Walkern Parish Clerk, 47 Pembridge Gardens, Bragbury End, Stevenage SG2 8BF or
  - dropping it into the box in the garage showroom, High Street, Walkern.

All responses received by **midnight on 15 February 2023** will be considered and may be used to amend the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan. If you require assistance with the response form, please contact the Walkern Parish Clerk at [heidi.broadly@walkernparishcouncil.org](mailto:heidi.broadly@walkernparishcouncil.org).

The full Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed and downloaded from [Walkern Parish Council's website](https://www.walkernparishcouncil.org/parish-council/consultation) <https://www.walkernparishcouncil.org/parish-council/neighbourhood-plan>. A hard copy will be available to view throughout the consultation at WSCC community café, the URC and in the garage showroom, during opening times.

If you have any questions about the Neighbourhood Plan, please attend a special event at Walkern Sports and Community Centre (WSCC) on Sunday 15 January between 11 am and 1 pm.

<b>This section must be completed in full for your response to be considered</b> <b>Responses will be available for public inspection</b> Please mark this box to show your continued interest and allow East Herts Council to contact you when the Neighbourhood Plan reaches the next stage of consultation. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Email address:	
Are you a resident of Walkern Parish?	
If you are not a resident, please state company, organisation, or client.	
If you are commenting on a policy, please quote the policy number and title, e.g., WLK5 Archaeology. If you are commenting on other aspects of the full Neighbourhood Plan, please quote paragraph, page number or appendix. You may use continuation sheets.	

Policy/Para/Page/Appendix	Comments