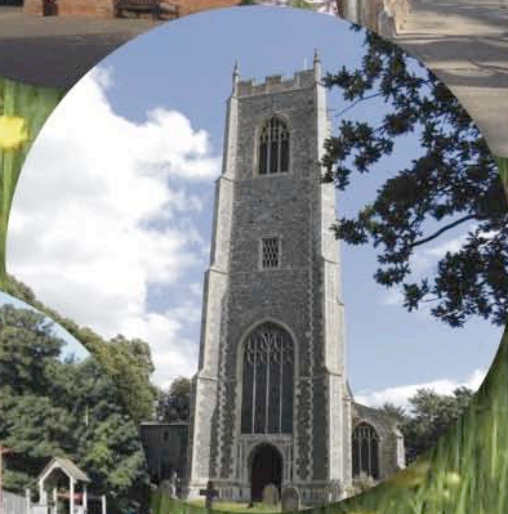


# Blofield parish NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



FINAL version for referendum  
July 2016

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**If you would like this document in large print, please contact Blofield Parish Council, [blofieldpc@gmail.com](mailto:blofieldpc@gmail.com)**

# 1. Introduction

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The Blofield parish Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led document for guiding the future development of the parish. It is the first of its kind for Blofield and a part of the Government's current approach to planning.

In 2011 the Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape future development at a local level. The Blofield parish Neighbourhood Plan complements existing local, national and strategic planning policy, providing valuable detail that has come directly from residents of Blofield parish.

The Neighbourhood Plan is about the use and development of land over the next twenty years. It sets out a number of policies, developed by the local community, to shape development for the period 2016 to 2036.

Commissioned by Blofield Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan has been developed by a Steering Group of local residents. The policies and projects in the Plan reflect the views of local people, gathered through a series of consultation events, detailed stakeholder sessions and desk research. The group is grateful to residents and organisations that have given their time to developing ideas for the Plan. More detail can be found in Section 3.

Early on in the process, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group established a set of aims for the Plan, as outlined below.

**By undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, the community of Blofield aims to:**

- a. Respond to the planned housing growth in the parish and ensure the provision of adequate community infrastructure, by**
  - i. Identifying need.**
  - ii. Protecting the existing rural and village environments.**
  - iii. Developing policies on the spending of developer contributions (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy) and other funds.**
- b. Influence any future development in the parish with evidence based on our understanding of the needs and aspirations of the local community.**
- c. Consider sustainable development within the development boundary.**

## Accompanying documents

The Blofield parish Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by the following documents:

- Basic Conditions Statement
- Consultation Statement
- Sustainability Scoping Report
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Habitat Regulation Screening Report

## Examination and referendum

Broadland District Council and Blofield Parish Council jointly appointed an independent planning examiner to examine the Neighbourhood Plan in May 2016. The Plan passed with minor amendments.

Through a referendum in July 2016, every resident of Blofield parish will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they agree with the Neighbourhood Plan. If the referendum indicates community support, Broadland District Council and Blofield Parish Council will adopt the Neighbourhood Plan.



Figure 1 above: Involving the community in policy ideas for the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2. Blofield parish

The parish of Blofield is located in the Broadland district of Norfolk. The parish includes the villages of Blofield and Blofield Heath, bisected by the A47 dual carriageway. The parish is 8km east of Norwich and 23km west of Great Yarmouth.

The Blofield Neighbourhood Plan area is contiguous with the civil Parish of Blofield. It is characterised by arable farmland and the two village settlements of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

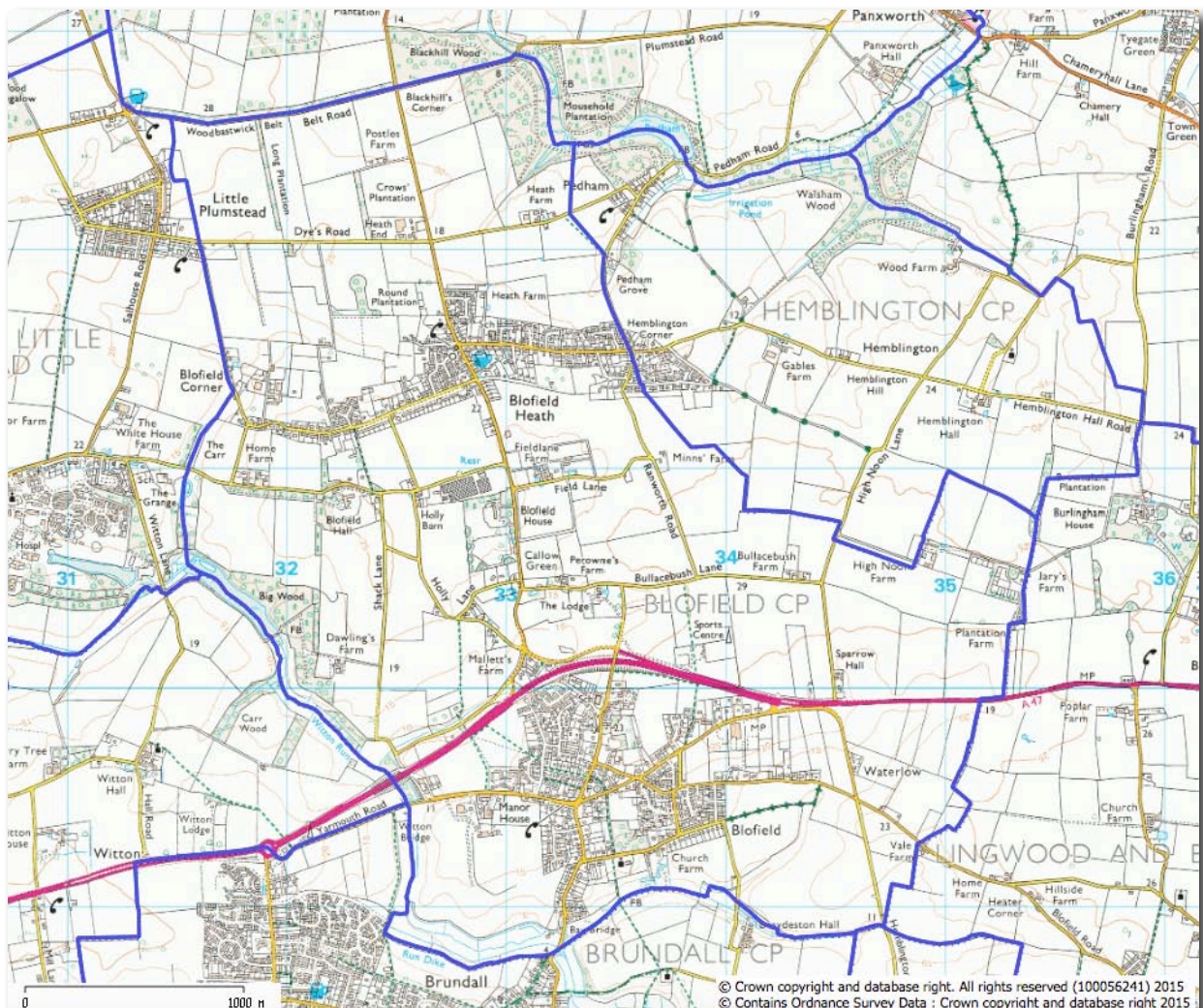


Figure 2 above: Administrative boundary of Blofield parish (source: Parish Online mapping). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

In 2011 the population of Blofield parish was 3300 people, an increase from 3200 in 2001. The mean age of Blofield is 46 years old, compared to the 43-year-old average across Norfolk.<sup>1</sup>

### Spatial and strategic policy context

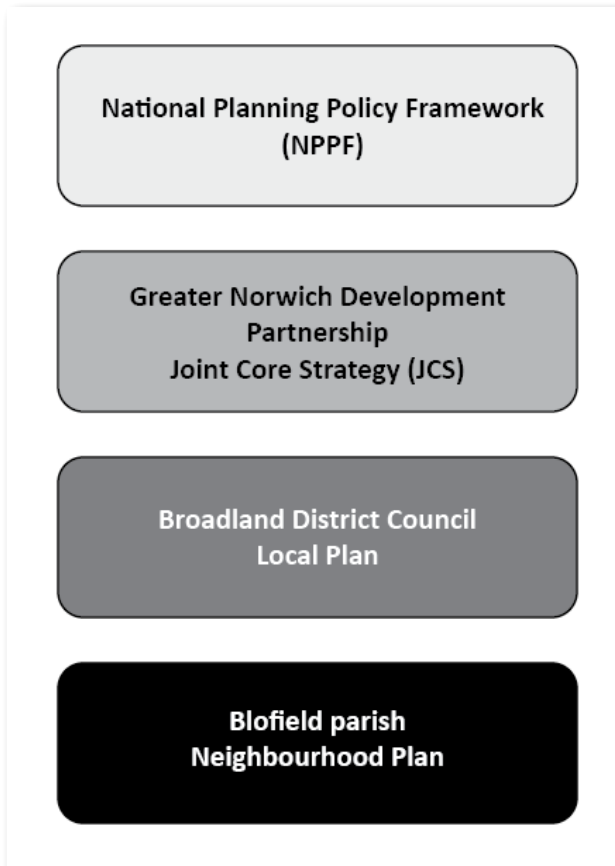


Figure 3 left: Planning policy hierarchy in relation to Blofield Neighbourhood Plan.

The ‘National Planning Policy Framework’ was published in March 2012 and sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Giving more local detail, the ‘Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk’ is the key planning policy document for the Greater Norwich area. It forms part of the Local Plans for the districts of Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk setting out the broad vision for the growth of the area and containing strategic policies for the period 2008 to 2026. Blofield parish is featured in this plan.

The Broadland District Local Plan (Replacement) was adopted in May 2006. This is Broadland Council’s planning policy document. Since 2006 a series of development plan documents have been produced and consulted on which will guide future development of the district.

Blofield village is located within the Norwich Policy Area and is identified as a ‘Key Service Centre’ in the Joint Core Strategy (Policy 14). The Joint Core Strategy states that Blofield should accommodate 50 houses (as a minimum) and potentially a higher amount as part of the 2000 units on smaller sites designated in the Norwich Policy Area allowance.

Blofield Heath village is within the Norwich Policy Area and is identified as a ‘Service Village’ in the Joint Core Strategy (Policy 15). The Joint Core Strategy states that Service Villages should accommodate small-scale housing development subject to

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics census data 2011

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics census data 2011

<sup>3</sup> Tony Burton, Writing Planning Policies, Locality

form and character considerations. Settlements identified in this policy that are also within the Norwich Policy Area may be considered for additional development, if necessary, to help deliver the smaller sites in the Norwich Policy Area allowance (Policy 9).

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to provide a further level of detail specific to the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan policies are in conformity with national, sub-regional and district policy.

### **Proposed developments**

The 2011 census has the number of dwellings in the parish recorded as 1473. At the time of writing the Neighbourhood Plan, there are a number of proposed site allocations and current planning permissions equating to some 450 new houses, an approximate 31 per cent increase in housing.

- Plantation Road, up to 14 dwellings
- Wyngates, 64 dwellings
- Garden Farm, up to 105 dwellings
- Manor Park, up to 175 dwellings (lapsed application, December 2015)
- 20 Yarmouth Road, up to 30 dwellings
- Woodbastwick Road, up to 24 dwellings
- Blofield Corner Road, up to 36 dwellings

This equates to a population growth of 1035 new people living in the parish (based on average household size in the UK of 2.3)<sup>2</sup>. Over the twenty-year life of the Plan, there are likely to be further planning applications that come forward. The Plan seeks to respond appropriately to further housing growth, in a sustainable way.



Figure 4 left: New development discussed by residents at the 'Walkabout and Workshop' in February 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics census data 2011

# 3. How the plan was prepared

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The Neighbourhood Plan has been commissioned and part funded by Blofield Parish Council. Other funding came from a Locality grant from central government, and a grant from Broadland District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have prepared the Plan, supported by an independent consultant. A list of Steering Group members can be found in Appendix 1.

In order to inform and involve residents, the Blofield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group believed that effective communication and community engagement was essential from the beginning of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

For full detail on the communication and consultation, please see the Consultation Statement. The information below provides a summary of the document.

## Communication

Central to the Neighbourhood Plan process, was the project blog, **[www.blofieldplan.wordpress.com](http://www.blofieldplan.wordpress.com)**. The blog updated residents during each phase in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. It contained a news-feed, all Steering Group papers, notes of meetings, all Neighbourhood Plan documents and contact information.

The blog sat as the centre point for all information, linked to other websites and social media, as well as providing wording for printed materials, including the parish magazines – Focal Point, which went to 2200 households in the villages including and surrounding the parish, and Blofield News.

The Steering Group also used posters, fliers in magazines and school book bags, displays, written and verbal monthly updates at Parish Council meetings, an extensive email distribution list of groups, businesses and individuals, Facebook group postings, StreetLife links, and word of mouth to spread news of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

The Eastern Daily Press wrote two articles on the Neighbourhood Plan following the 'Walkabout and Workshop' in February and the 'Policy Workshop' in May/June 2015.



## Community engagement stages

There were four clear stages in which residents of Blofield parish were engaged.



Figure 5 above: Flyers for each of the community engagement stages. From left to right, flyer to recruit Steering Group (stage 1), flyer for walkabout and workshop (stage 2), flyer for policy workshop (stage 3) and flyer for the exhibition of the draft Plan (stage 4).

### Stage 1: The recruitment of a Steering Group

Blofield parish residents were asked to come forward if they were interested in being part of Steering Group to guide and produce a Neighbourhood Plan. The Group developed a Terms of Reference and a project plan in January 2015.

### Stage 2: Identifying key themes

Two 'Walkabouts and Workshops' in Blofield and Blofield Heath were delivered on 14 February at the Margaret Harker Hall (Blofield) and 21 February 2015 at Heathlands Community Centre (Blofield Heath). Key theme areas emerged: Housing and the Built Environment, Environment, Community, Economy, Services, Transport and Connectivity. From this the Steering Group formed a draft vision, aims for the Plan and a set of objectives.



Figure 6 above: Stage 2 community engagement (Walkabout and Workshop).

### Stage 3: Development of policy ideas

- a. 'Consultation conversations' – meetings were held with a range of interest groups to discuss the aims and objectives of the Plan, and to gather policy ideas. The following were involved: Blofield Primary School children; 1st Blofield and Brundall Sea Scouts; Blofield, Brundall and District Pensioners Association; Blofield and District Conservation Group; Blofield Allotment Association; Margaret Harker Hall Committee; Heathlands Community Centre Management Committee; Patient Participation Group; Blofield Doctors Surgery; Blofield Preschool Playgroup Committee; a combined sports groups; a combined business group; various land owners; Blofield Parish Council; St. Andrew and St. Peter's Church; developers; Courthouse Management Committee; a combined arts group, Blofield Primary School governors, Hemblington Primary School. Detailed notes were made of each meeting, analysed and put on the blog. Policy ideas were drafted using the qualitative data from the consultation conversations.
- b. 'Policy workshop' – open to the wider community on Saturday, 30 May at the Courthouse (Blofield) and Saturday, 6 June 2015 at Heathlands Community Centre (Blofield Heath). Residents were encouraged to drop in to feedback comments on a list of 48 policy ideas. From here, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group refined the ideas and began drafting policy.
- c. 'Village events' – a stand with display information at Blofield School Fete on 20 June and Blofield Heath Village Fete on 19 July 2015. Further information was also collected on policy ideas.



Figure 7 above: Stage 3 community engagement (Policy Ideas workshop).

### Stage 4: The draft plan

The final stage showed residents the draft Plan at the beginning of the formal six-week consultation. An exhibition of policies took place on 17 October at the Margaret Harker Hall (Blofield) and 18 October 2015 at Heathlands Community Centre (Blofield Heath). Hard copies of the plan were put in 24 community locations and an electronic copy on the blog. Consultation Response forms were sent to residents, parish councillors, district and county councillors, local organisations and business consultees, and stakeholder consultees. Amendments to the plan followed.



Figure 8 above: Stage 4 community engagement (Exhibition of Policies).

This version of the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared following independent examination by John Slater BA (Hons), DMS, MRTPI in May 2016, who recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan progressed to referendum.

In his summary, the independent examiner stated:

*Whilst much development for new homes in the Plan area has been approved outside the neighbourhood planning process, nevertheless the efforts of the Parish Council to seek to ensure that the new development which will take place in a manner that will benefit the existing residents as well as the occupiers of the new homes is to be applauded. I appreciate that there are only limited opportunities to address the issues when major decisions have already been made. However, the Plan does more than that in identifying what is important to the existing villages and provides a framework to protect them.*

*I would also commend the relative quick progress that has been made from the decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan with the initial setting up of the group through to its submission for examination in less than 18 months. Clearly the work involved has required effective team work but I think this is a good example of a clear focused document that can be the basis for decision making in the next 15 years, especially when the current surge in house building settles down.*

## 4. The Vision: 2036

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Quote from a Blofield Sea Scout:

**“if they take away all the fields, it will only be Blo”.**

The vision sets out what the people of Blofield wish their parish to be like in 2036. It shapes the objectives, policies and projects set out in the Neighbourhood Plan. This was confirmed by subsequent consultation sessions with residents. There was particular interest in responding to the proposed development in the parish whilst retaining the rural character of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

The Neighbourhood Plan vision is set out below.

**The nature and character of our rural village will be preserved and retained, in order to meet the various needs of residents, contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice.**

**This will be achieved in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social inclusion and supports the local economy.**



Figure 9 above: Blofield fields.

# 5. Objectives of the Plan

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Responding to consultation a series of objectives were written which set out what the Neighbourhood Plan aimed to accomplish. The objectives provided a starting point for the development of policies. Wording was initially based on the definition of a sustainable community, developed by Sir John Egan, and previously used by the government to define what makes a good and functioning place.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not anti-development and the community understands the need to accommodate housing growth. However, there is great concern at the pace of growth planned for Blofield parish. New developments in Blofield parish could erode the very qualities that make the parish a community, if it is not carefully managed in terms of scale, design and impact. Blofield and Blofield Heath's growth must be more than about meeting housing numbers; new developments should contribute to the character of the parish and provide local benefits. Therefore the objectives set out to enhance the community as well as manage change.

To reflect the results of the community engagement during preparation of the Plan, the objectives are separated into six themes – Housing and the Built Environment, Environment, Community, Economy, Services, Transport and Connectivity.

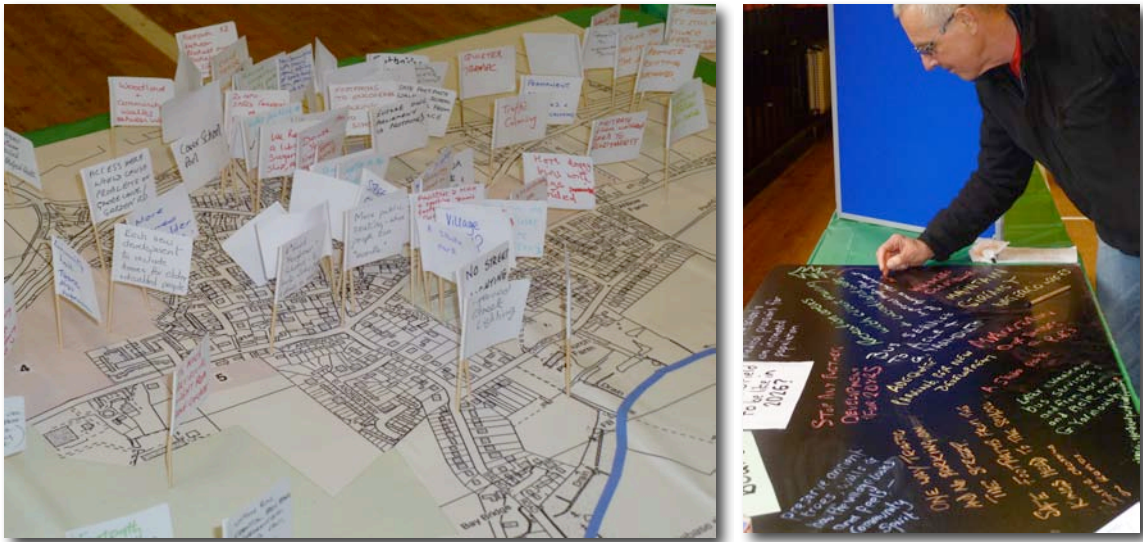


Figure 10 above: Views of the community used to form the objectives.

The objectives are set out below.

### **HOUSING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT objectives**

Objective 1: To provide sufficient and appropriate high quality housing, in small-scale developments, to meet local needs, within a balanced housing market.

Objective 2: To provide mixed-use development that complements the character and heritage of the rural villages of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

### **ENVIRONMENT objectives**

Objective 3: To protect and enhance the countryside, including wildlife habitats and open spaces.

Objective 4: To create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods and maintain pleasant public spaces.

### **COMMUNITY objective**

Objective 5: To provide opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, fostering social interaction and good life chances for all in Blofield parish.

### **ECONOMY objectives**

Objective 6: To encourage and support local businesses, in order to retain them within the parish.

Objective 7: To retain and enhance the village centres of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

### **SERVICES objectives**

Objective 8: To ensure sufficient school places and facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

Objective 9: To ensure sufficient primary health care provision to meet the needs of the community.

### **TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY objectives**

Objective 10: To achieve the best possible road infrastructure for the parish.

Objective 11: To improve car parking, public transport and traffic management, enabling better travel within Blofield and between communities.

Objective 12: To create facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling, between and within Blofield and Blofield Heath.

# 6. Policies and projects

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To meet the objectives (section 5), a set of policies and projects has been developed with the community, which are designed to ensure Blofield parish develops in a sustainable way.



Figure 11 left: Sorting through policy and project ideas for the Neighbourhood Plan, following consultation

## Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan is first and foremost a land-use document for planning purposes. Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are based on a series of consultation events, detailed stakeholder sessions and desk research. Policies seek to achieve the vision and objectives of the Plan and are separated into the same six themes – Housing and the Built Environment, Environment, Community, Economy, Services, Transport and Connectivity.

The Neighbourhood Plan policies follow the government’s guidance, they exist to:

- Set out requirements in advance for new development in an area.
- Inform and guide decisions on planning applications.
- Ensure that the multitude of individual decisions add up to something coherent for the area as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

To aid interpretation for decision makers and planning applicants, each policy area is accompanied by supporting text, which includes context for the theme, the views of residents, and reference to strategic plans.

## Projects

As expected, during consultation events, the local community identified a number of projects that fall outside the remit of the planning system. These appear in a white box below the policies and will be taken forward outside the Neighbourhood Plan process. These are included within each topic where relevant.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Burton, Writing Planning Policies, Locality

# 6.1 Housing and the built environment

## A quality built and natural environment

Agriculture remains the principal land use in Blofield parish. However, the built form defines the character of the villages. Blofield parish is commonly considered a dormitory settlement for Norwich, having experienced considerable amounts of estate development in the last 40 years.

There are currently 1473 houses across the parish.<sup>4</sup> The Blofield parish population is set to grow by some 1000 people within the next few years if all proposed development is built out. It is important that the area grows as a strong coherent and inclusive community that works for the people of Blofield parish as a whole. Policies have been written in response to a likely significant increase in population over the plan period.



Figure 12 above: Current building works in the parish.

The trend in the last few years has been for new developments to be built at high densities. There is concern within the community to retain the village feel. Blofield residents wish to see new development positively contribute through sympathetic and visually attractive design. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) objective to achieve excellence in design,

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics census data 2011



especially design that will help establish a 'strong sense of place' and 'create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit' (NPPF paragraph 58). While the main focus of this policy section is residential development, the policy is also intended to apply to commercial development.

Blofield parish residents are concerned about parking on new developments. As part of good design, car-parking provision needs careful consideration, incorporated into the overall design of the local environment. Given the rural nature of Blofield there is a high dependency on private cars. Only 10 per cent of households have no access to a car or a van. 42 per cent of households have one car, 34 per cent have two, 10 per cent have three, and 3 per cent of households have four or more. Therefore sufficient parking provision is required of new developments.

On street parking can cause problems on estate roads. It is therefore necessary to incorporate parking into the overall design of the local environment. Streets can be made to incorporate a certain level of unallocated on-street parking in the form of parallel or angled parking bays or parking squares. However, consideration must be given to location, proximity to accesses, sight lines and manoeuvring requirements so that indiscriminate parking and the obstruction of footways and carriageways is avoided. It is also important that the requirements of emergency and other service vehicles are catered for together with the needs of the disabled. Bus routes within residential developments will require a minimum clear passage of 6 metres (ideally 6.75 metres), which must be available where on-street parking is proposed.

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes is essential to support a sustainable, mixed and inclusive community. Evidence from the Broadland District Housing Market Needs Assessment indicates demand for a range of property sizes and types. A number of older residents in the community wish to carry on living in Blofield parish but have found it difficult to find suitable accommodation to meet their changing needs.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports an appropriate level of affordable housing. All future development must comply with national and district guidelines for affordable housing. At the time of writing, the Joint Core Strategy states that on sites for 5-9 dwellings there must be 20 per cent affordable housing, 10-15 dwellings must have 30 per cent affordable housing, and on sites of 16 dwellings or more 33 per cent must be affordable housing. Up to a third of the Affordable Rent tenure will be allocated with a local lettings policy. This gives households who currently live, work or need to move to the parish, priority for these properties.

The oldest building in the parish is the Parish Church of St. Andrew and St. Peter's, built between 1420 and 1444. This is the only Grade I listed building. There are thirteen Grade II listed buildings, all of which are in Blofield village. The Kings Head Public House has been listed as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act 2012.

Objective 1: To provide sufficient and appropriate high quality housing, in small-scale developments, to meet local needs, within a balanced housing market.

Objective 2: To provide mixed-use development that complements the character and heritage of the rural villages of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

**POLICY**

**HOU1: Local housing needs**

New housing development should include properties that will address the specific needs of the population of the parish, which include:

- Housing for older people and the disabled, suitable for independent living, in accordance with Lifetime Home Standards.
- Smaller homes, including bungalows, for parishioners to downsize to so that they may retain their ability to live in the parish.
- Two bedroom and larger starter homes on planned mixed development for first time buyers.
- Social housing as part of mixed developments.

**POLICY**

**HOU2: Supported housing**

The Neighbourhood Plan supports planning applications for the provision of a supported housing development (a range of housing types for people with support needs).

**POLICY**

**HOU3: Valued community assets**

Proposals that seek to retain or enhance the community use of the following valued community assets will be supported: the Library; the Courthouse; Heathlands Community Centre; the Margaret Harker Hall; St. Andrew and St. Peter's Church.

Proposals affecting listed buildings, conservation areas or their settings, must conserve and wherever possible, seek to enhance their significance, quality and character.

**POLICY**

**HOU4: Rural image, heights and massing**

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maintain and enhance the rural image of the villages. Proposals that fit within the settlement limits of Blofield and Blofield Heath, as set out in the Broadland District Council Site Allocations DPD<sup>5</sup>, must plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design and should enhance the quality of the environment whilst retaining the prevailing character.

New development, except the sites identified in the Site Allocations DPD, should be small-scale, and should respect the character, height and massing of surrounding properties. Regard should be given to the density, footprint and separation of buildings in the locality.

Wherever possible, development should deliver enhancements to the landscape character. Throughout the parish, development proposals should be of high quality design and should seek to demonstrate how they will enhance the character of the local area.

**POLICY**

**HOU5: Parking for new developments**

Where feasible and practical, car parking should be provided for each new dwelling based on the standards in the table below:

Bedrooms	Minimum number of car parking to be provided
1	2
2	2
3	3
4 (and more)	4

Additionally, in recognition that on-street parking could occur, streets should be designed to safely accommodate unallocated on-street parking. The level of provision should be such that indiscriminate parking and the obstruction of footways and carriageways is avoided and this should be determined on a site-by-site basis.

**PROJECTS**

- Blofield Parish Council will work towards having all new roads and rights of way adopted by Norfolk County Council.

<sup>5</sup> Broadland Council, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) 2016. This forms part of the Broadland Development Plan and sets out those sites across the district that are suitable for certain forms of development such as housing, employment, community facilities etc.

## 6.2 Environment

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### Providing places for people to live in Blofield parish that are considerate of the environment

Blofield is a rural parish, predominantly made up of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land. High quality agricultural land is of particular importance locally, in terms of its contribution to the economy and rural character. Whilst the villages have seen significant development during the second half of the twentieth century, there remain significant green spaces that contribute to the rural character and provide opportunities for informal and formal recreation. In accordance with national planning guidance the community wishes to see these spaces maintained for future generations.

There are no international or national nature designations falling within Blofield parish. The Rivers Bure and Yare, flowing to the north and south of the villages respectively, are an arterial link to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.<sup>6</sup>

Blofield and District Conservation Group (BADCOG) maintain a number of sites in Blofield Parish, which are of local importance:

- The churchyard of St. Andrew and St. Peter's in Blofield – lowland grassland, scrub, hedgerows (conservation status: included in the Norfolk Wildlife Trust Churchyard Conservation Scheme)
- Holly Lane Pond – aquatic animal and plant communities (conservation status: none)
- Howes Meadow – fen-meadow, marshy grassland, tall herb-fen, stream, scrub and hedgerow (conservation status: County Wildlife Site 2071).<sup>7</sup>

There is also a locally significant geomorphological feature (a periglacial urstromtal), which is worthy of note and preservation. This is now the course of the Witton Run/Lackford Run. This means the parish has a genuine fossil landscape feature, which in part, is the physical divide between Blofield and Brundall.<sup>8</sup> Further work is required to investigate this.

Blofield village has an Allotment Association that runs a site at the east end of the village for residents. Blofield Parish Council leases the site from a local landowner. There are no allotments in Blofield Heath.

The large majority of streets in the parish are not lit. With the exception of floodlights lit for short periods at Norwich United Football ground and early evening floodlights at the golf driving range, the only significant source of light pollution

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<sup>6</sup> Blofield Library Parish Profile 2014

<sup>7</sup> BADCOG website: [www.badcog.co.uk](http://www.badcog.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> MM Green FRGS

within the parish is the stretch of the former A47, the Yarmouth Road, which has street lighting. However, the villages experience increasingly intrusive nighttime light glow from Norwich and its suburbs. There are still parts of the parish in which the Milky Way and many constellations of stars can be seen. It is intended that the Neighbourhood Plan will help sustain and preserve this experience by ensuring that light pollution and intrusion are properly considered in all future development. The Parish Council currently has a policy of no new street lighting.

Objective 3: To protect and enhance the countryside, including wildlife habitats and open spaces.

Objective 4: To create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods and maintain pleasant public spaces.

POLICY

**ENV1: Allotment, orchard and green space**

The following areas are designated as Local Green Space for special protection (shown in figures 14 and 15):

- Heathlands playing fields
- Town Pit
- War Memorial Recreation Ground (Margaret Harker Playing Fields)
- Millennium orchard
- Blofield allotments

Areas of particular local ecological importance include Howes Meadow, Plantation Wood, Holly Lane Pond and the churchyard of St. Andrew and St. Peter's in Blofield (in accordance with paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

In addition the area of the Witton Run/Lackford Run is a green corridor that separates the settlements of Blofield and Brundall and which connects to the internationally designated sites of The Broads to the south. Any development should not impact on these areas.

Development proposals should seek to maintain and enhance the connectivity of all green corridors wherever possible.

POLICY

**ENV2: Soft site boundaries and trees**

New development site boundary edges should be soft, using trees and native hedgerows where adjacent to the countryside, giving a rural edge.

Development proposals should seek to retain mature or significant trees, groups of trees or woodland on site. Where removal of a tree(s) of recognised importance is proposed, a replacement of similar amenity value should be provided on site.

POLICY

**ENV3: Drainage**

Reflecting the Local Plan, all developments should take advantage of modern drainage methods to prevent and where necessary alleviate localised flooding. Future development should not cause or contribute to the problem of flooding or drainage issues, or pollution.

Identified localised flooding areas (shown in figure 14) include, but are not limited to:

- a. The junction of Woodbastwick Road with Mill Road and Francis Lane, Blofield Heath.
- b. Borton Road, Blofield Heath.
- c. Yarmouth Road, by the King’s Head Public House, Blofield.
- d. The Chase, Blofield.
- e. The junction of Hall Road with Woodbastwick Road.
- f. Waterlow, Blofield.

Surface water drainage ponds associated with any planned development should appear natural and be able to be colonised by the local fauna and flora whilst still maintaining their design purpose.

Permeable materials should be used on freestanding areas, such as parking bays, vehicle laybys, and where appropriate, new play areas.

POLICY

**ENV4: Agricultural land**

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 112), where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be used before the best and most versatile land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification). Grade 1 agricultural land should be avoided for any further development where possible.

POLICY

**ENV5: Dark skies**

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 125) any new developments should limit impact on dark skies. This includes restricting streetlights and lighting of commercial structures.

POLICY

**ENV6: Distinct villages**

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to retain a physical separation between the settlements of Blofield, Blofield Heath and Brundall. Developments that reduce the separation of the settlements should not be permitted.

POLICY

**ENV7: Approaches to Blofield and Blofield Heath**

New developments located at the village entrances will be encouraged to enhance the approaches to Blofield and Blofield Heath, for example through the provision of signage, tree, shrub and flower planting. Village approaches are shown in figure 14.

POLICY

**ENV8: Important views and vistas**

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect views across the parish that are of particular community importance. Development within these views that are overly intrusive, unsightly or prominent, to the detriment of the view and vistas as a whole, will not be permitted.

The following views and vistas are considered particularly important (as shown in figure 16):

- Approaching Blofield from the west, view towards the east looking at the church tower.
- Approaching Blofield from the east on Lingwood Road.
- Views to Braydeston generally from the north.
- View from Woodbastwick Road, north of Blofield Heath, looking west.

## PROJECTS

- Investigate the potential to create new community green areas, similar to Burlingham Woods or Buckenham Woods, and a new community garden.
- Seek to secure the allotment site for the long term.
- Space should be set aside for the provision of allotments to meet any future demand. The Parish Council will monitor the need for further provision of allotments and community orchards.
- Improve the attractiveness of the gateways to Blofield and Blofield Heath.



Figure 13 left:  
Localised  
flooding,  
Yarmouth  
Road, by the  
King's Head  
Public House.



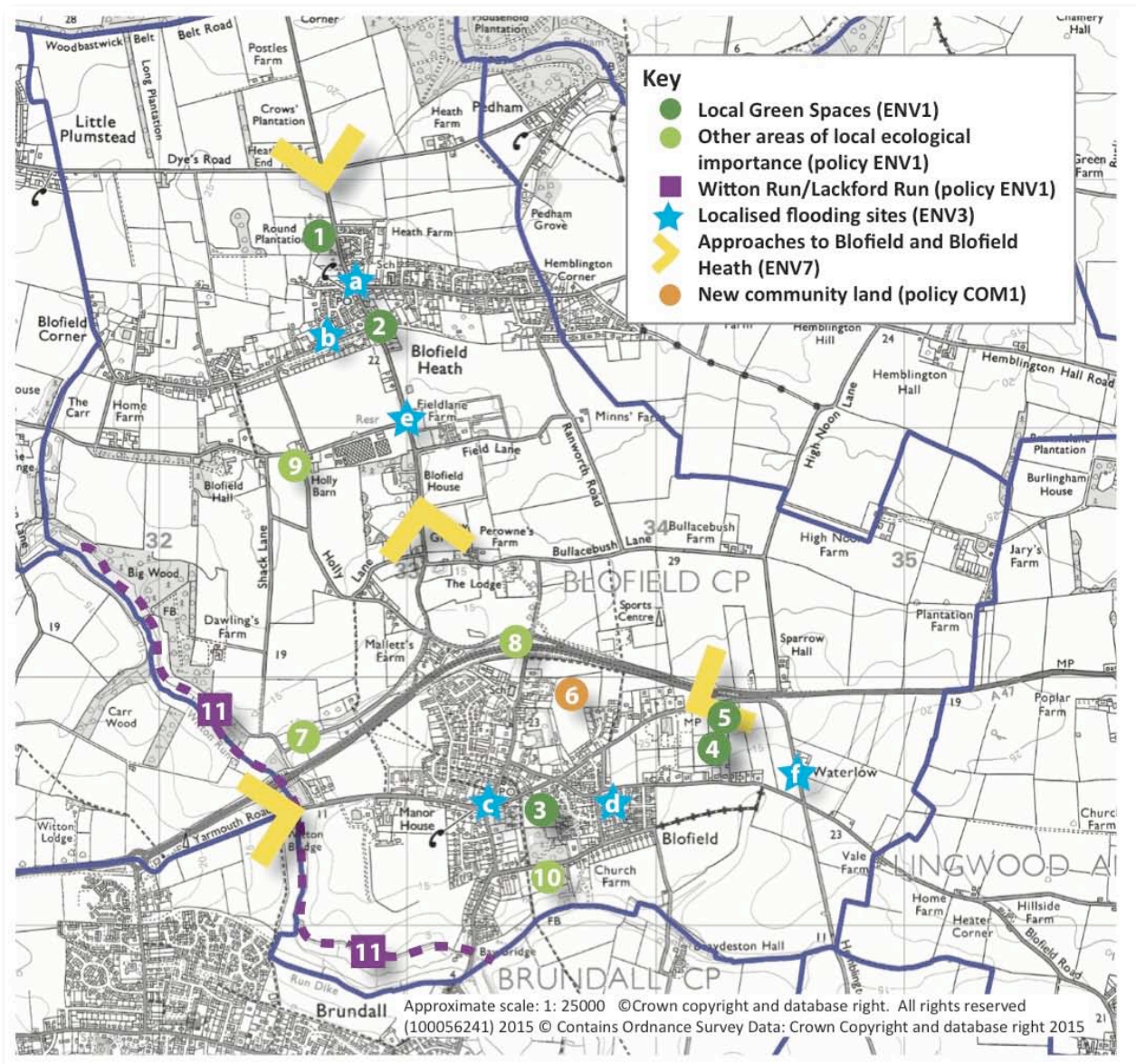


Figure 14 above: Environmental features – Local Green Spaces, other areas of local ecological importance, Witton Run/Lackford Run, localised flooding sites, approaches to Blofield and Blofield Heath, new community land (source: Parish Online mapping with own annotations). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Heathlands playing fields</li> <li>2. Town Pit</li> <li>3. War Memorial Recreation Ground (Margaret Harker Playing Fields)</li> <li>4. Millennium orchard</li> <li>5. Blofield allotments</li> <li>6. New community land</li> <li>7. Howes Meadow</li> <li>8. Plantation Wood</li> <li>9. Holly Lane Pond</li> <li>10. The churchyard of St. Andrew and St. Peter's in Blofield</li> <li>11. Witton Run/Lackford Run</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The junction of Woodbastwick Road with Mill Road and Francis Lane</li> <li>b. Barton Road, Blofield Heath</li> <li>c. Yarmouth Road, by the King's Head Public House</li> <li>d. The Chase, Blofield</li> <li>e. The junction of Hall Road with Woodbastwick Road</li> <li>f. Waterlow, Blofield</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

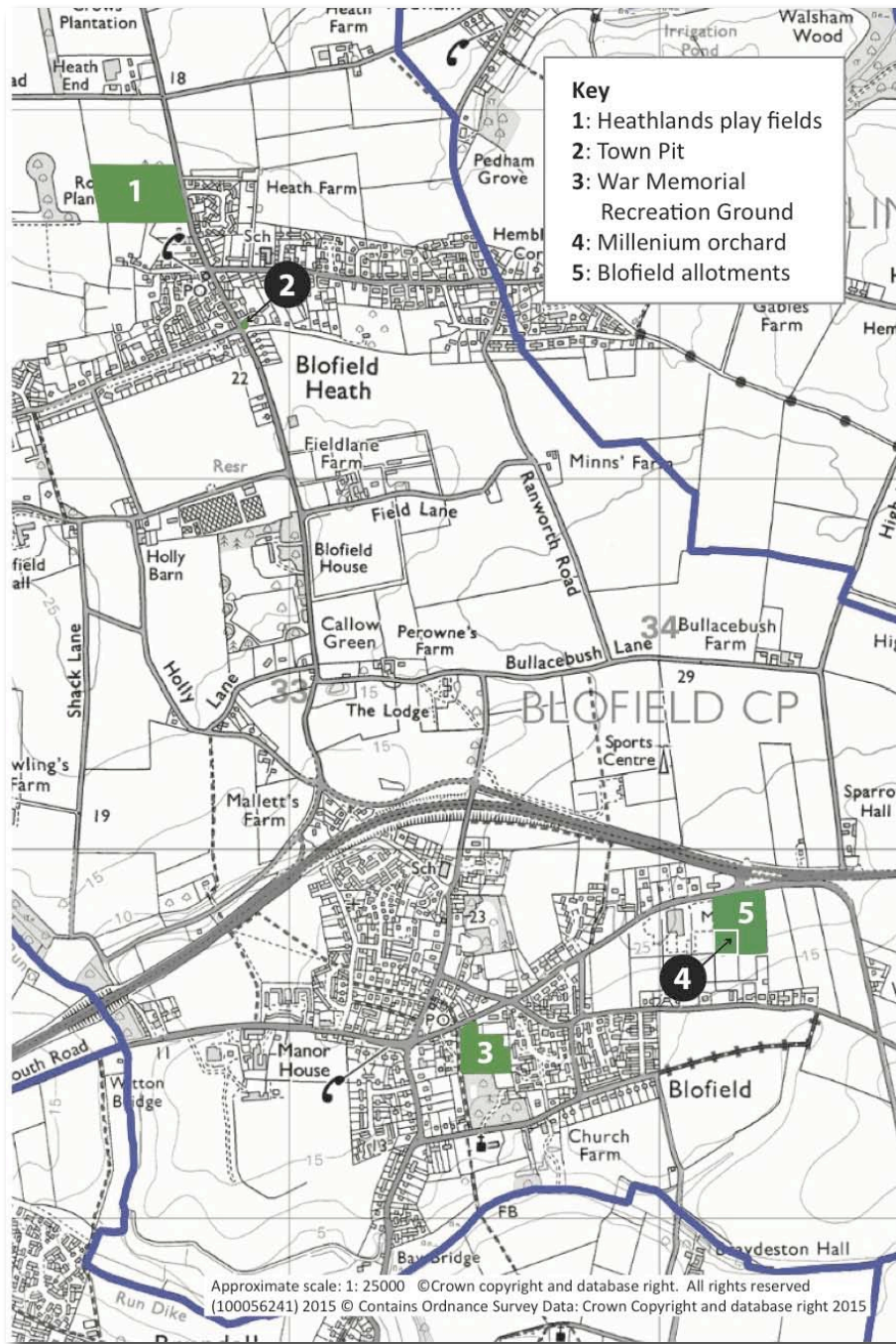


Figure 15 left: Local Green Spaces, as outlined in policy ENV1 (source: Parish Online mapping with own annotations). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

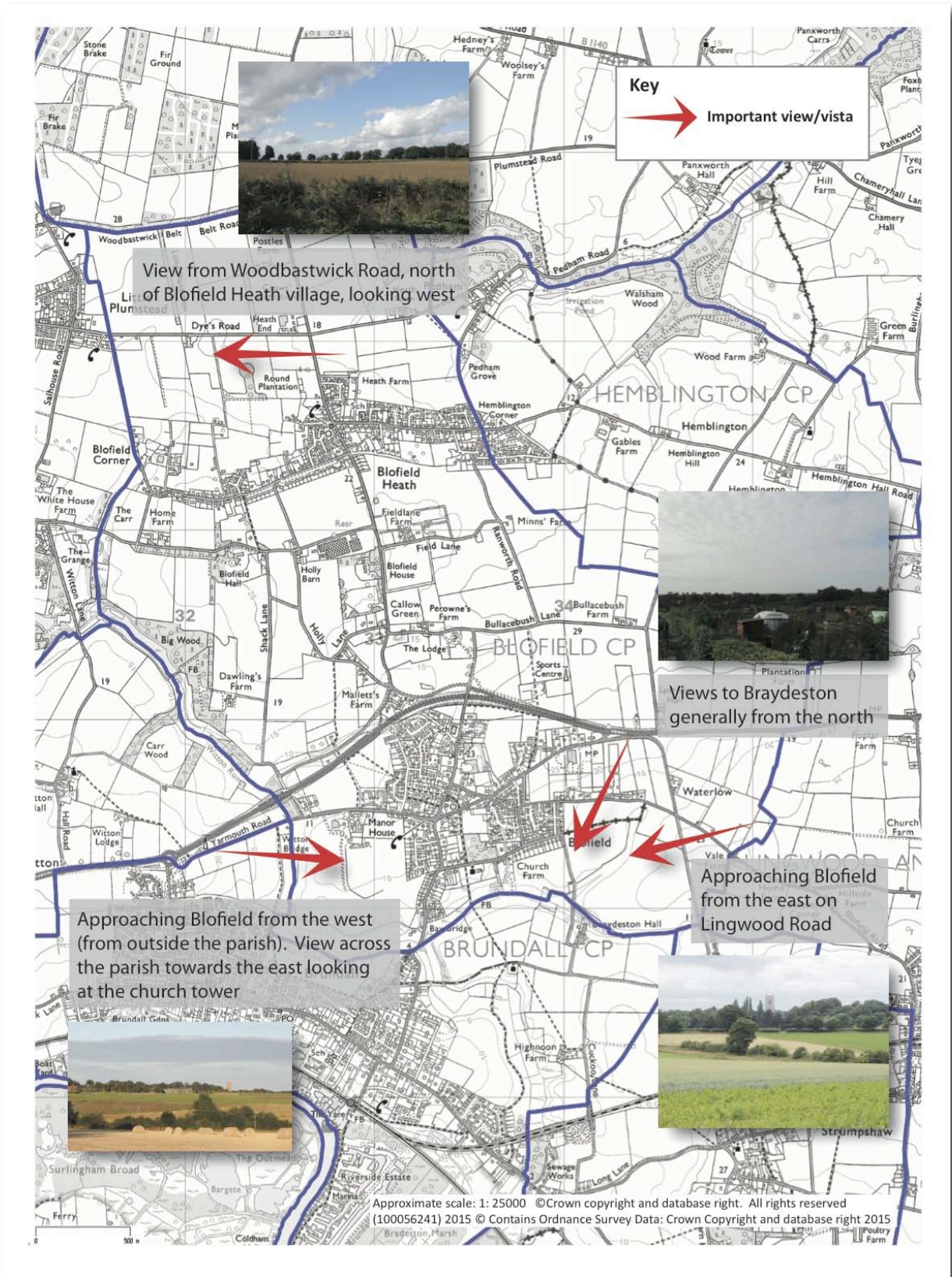


Figure 16: Important views and vistas (source: Parish Online mapping with own annotations). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

## 6.3 Community

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### An active, inclusive and safe Blofield parish

Blofield residents have the opportunity to enjoy a vibrant community life. Blofield parish is served by community buildings and space; in Blofield the Courthouse and the Margaret Harker Hall site (Margaret Harker Hall, playing fields, Football Club, Sea Scouts Hut, Tennis Club and children's play area), and in Blofield Heath, Heathlands Community Centre. There is small library in the middle of Blofield village. The parish church also has strong support.

However, there is pressure on existing services and facilities. Regular users book up most rooms in the community buildings through the week. With a growing population it is recognised that there is a need for improvements to existing facilities and the provision of further meeting space in the parish.

At the time of writing, the Parish Council was acquiring land available for community use. The location has been determined by the availability of land in a relatively central location. Funding will come through developer contributions (Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy).

Norfolk County Council has obtained planning permission for land 1 hectare (2.5 acres) to be used as 'community land', including, to allow in principle, an area of car-parking and the erection of a community building on land from Plantation Road. This site is located to the east of land with outline planning permission for housing that is directly accessed from Plantation Road. Access to the community land will be via the road serving the development and mains services will be run to the boundary. This land is marked in red on the map (figure 17).

The planning permission for the Norfolk County Council owned land with permission for community use is expected to be marketed shortly. This will offer the Parish Council the opportunity to acquire the land for community use. The Norfolk County Council land (marked in blue) adjoins the Norfolk Homes land (marked in green, figure 17). Together they would be about 3 hectares (7.5 acres) with planning permission for community uses, accessed from both Yarmouth Road (via Wyngates) and from Plantation Road.

Further community consultation will be undertaken in order to draw up a detailed planning application for the site.

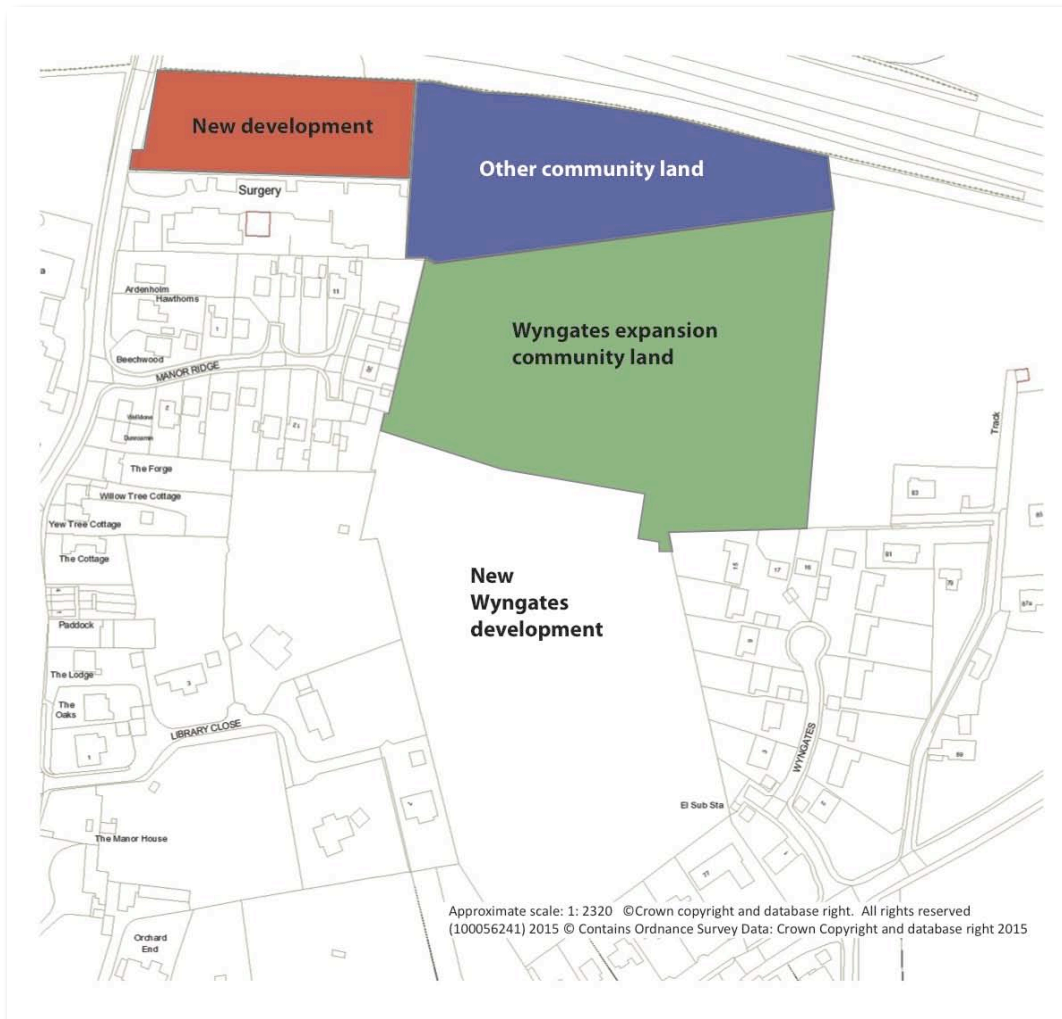


Figure 17 above: Community land (source: Parish Online mapping with own annotations).

This land is allocated as community land because:

- In part, the parish will own it.
- The parish expects to be able to acquire more of it.
- Most of it has planning permission for community use.
- It is accessible.
- It is located on the northern edge of Blofield making access from Blofield Heath relatively easy.

Objective 5: to provide opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, fostering social interaction and good life chances for all in Blofield parish.

**POLICY**

**COM1: New land for community use**

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for community use (as shown in blue and green in figure 17). Over time this is likely to include a new multiuse community building, formal and informal recreation space suitable for all ages, a children's play area and car parking.

**PROJECTS**

- Create a community hub in each village centre, through (in no particular order):
  - (a) Improvements to the Courthouse
  - (b) Improvements to Heathlands Community Centre
  - (c) Improvements to the Margaret Harker Hall and War Memorial Recreation Ground (playing fields)
  - (d) Installation of a children's play area on the new community owned land
  - (e) Provision of public seating and picnic benches
  - (f) Further facilities for teenagers.
- Develop a newcomers information pack.

## 6.4 Economy

### A flourishing and diverse local economy

Of the Blofield parish population, two thirds are economically active, half of which are in full time employment. The remaining economically inactive third are mostly retired (23.5 per cent of the population). 2.8 per cent of the parish are full-time students.<sup>9</sup>

Historically farming has been the key driver behind the prosperity of the parish. Just a few landowners currently own the land, but they contribute significantly to the local and British economy.



Figure 18 above: Aerial map of the parish, showing the rural nature (source: Parish Online mapping). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

There are a number of other businesses in the area, including builders, garages, plumbing and heating engineers, funeral director, electronics shops, canoe tours, scaffolders, golf course, bed and breakfast, energy company, coach companies, taxi services, financial services, solicitor, nursery, beauty salon and spa. Norfolk Premier Golf, with driving range and nine hole course, is situated to the south of Yarmouth Road on the west side of Blofield village. There is a pub in Blofield and a restaurant in Blofield Heath.

The village shops in Blofield and Blofield Heath are conducive to its village identity as well as focal point for community interaction. They give a vibrancy that has been lost from many similar sized villages. Shops include newsagents/general stores with a post office in both villages, florist, and fish and chip shops. Norwich Camping and

<sup>9</sup> Census 2011, Rural Services online

Leisure has a large shop and garden centre at the east end of Blofield village and a farm shop/pick your own business run on the same premises.

The Neighbourhood Plan is positive about new business and employment development on an appropriate scale.

Objective 6: To encourage and support local businesses, in order to retain them within the parish.

Objective 7: To retain and enhance the village centres of Blofield and Blofield Heath.

**POLICY**

**ECO1: New businesses and employment**

The Neighbourhood Plan supports planning applications for new businesses and employment that fit within the rural surroundings and which are appropriate both in scale and environmental impact. It will also be necessary to provide adequate parking.

**POLICY**

**ECO2: Retention of retail or services in the village centres**

Proposals that seek to retain commercial premises in the village centres will be supported.

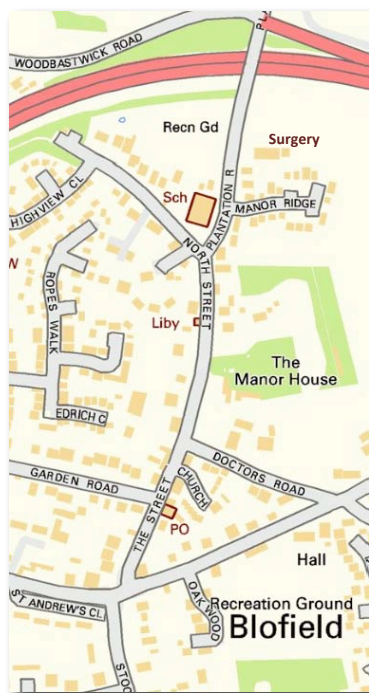


Figure 19 left: Maps showing the two village centres in the parish, Blofield (left) and Blofield Heath (right). (Source: Parish Online mapping).



## 6.5 Services

### **Public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all**

There are two primary schools in the parish, Blofield Primary School on North Street in Blofield, and Hemblington Primary School on Mill Road in Blofield Heath. Most secondary school children go to high school at Thorpe St Andrew School or Acle Academy. With a growing population, there is concern from residents and school children as to how the current primary schools in the parish will cope with growing numbers.

Early years facilities in Blofield parish are provided by 'Blofield Preschool Playgroup' at the Margaret Harker Hall, 'Play Church' at St. Andrew and St. Peter's Church, the 'Pink House Nursery' in Blofield, and 'Hemblington Preschool and Toddlers' at Heathlands Community Centre. Blofield Preschool Playgroup and Hemblington Preschool and Toddlers operate from facilities shared with many other groups.

Groups for older people include Blofield Heath Luncheon Club, Poppies Café at The Courthouse and the Blofield, Brundall and District Pensioners Association.

A growing population will also make increased demands on the Doctor's Surgery. This is of considerable concern to local residents.

The library is situated between the main shops and Blofield Primary School on The Street. It dates back to 1897, when as the Reading Room and Parish Room it was presented to the parish to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It is important that the much loved library service is kept vibrant and suitably located.

Blofield and Blofield Heath's housing growth must make a positive contribution to improving these services, not reacting at a later date, but planning now for change.



Figure 20: Left to right, Blofield Primary School, Hemblington Primary School, Blofield Doctors Surgery, Blofield Library.

Objective 8: To ensure sufficient school places and facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

Objective 9: To ensure sufficient primary health care provision to meet the needs of the community.

**POLICY**

**SER1: Primary school places**

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that provision is made for further primary school places, to ensure local children can attend their local school, and to meet the needs of a growing population. Should appropriate land be needed, or additional education facilities on existing school sites be required, these will be supported subject to compliance with other development plan policies.

**POLICY**

**SER2: Preschool provision**

Planning applications that seek to address a shortfall in preschool provision will be supported in order to meet the needs of a growing population.

**POLICY**

**SER3: Primary Health Care**

Planning applications that seek to expand primary health care provision will be supported.

**POLICY**

**SER4: Library service**

If a new site for a library is required then this will be supported.

**POLICY**

**SER5: Internet connection**

New developments should have fast internet connections to enable home/office working. Development of a new superfast broadband infrastructure that serves the parish will be supported.

## **PROJECTS**

- Work with the Local Education Authority, Blofield Primary School, Hemblington Primary School, and other interested parties to consider school expansion or other options.
- Work with the Clinical Commissioning Group and deliverers of Primary Health Care to consider provision of sufficient health care to meet the demands of Blofield surgery's catchment area. Identify land required for expansion of the current surgery and the opportunity to create additional car parking for the community.
- Support the ongoing provision of a dispensary service on-site at the Blofield Surgery.
- Work with the Norfolk County Council Library Service to maintain a sufficient library service for a growing population.
- Continue to pressure BT Openreach to improve the service to all of Blofield parish.

## 6.6 Transport and Connectivity

### Good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, health and other services

The parish of Blofield is bisected by the A47 trunk road, which severs Blofield Heath from Blofield (shown on figure 22). Safe access from and onto the A47 at the east end of Blofield is of concern to residents and businesses. Delays joining the A47 at the west end of Blofield (Brundall parish) getting onto the roundabout, are most likely to increase with a growing parish population.

The nearest railway station is in the village of Brundall. For Blofield parish there are two buses every hour into Norwich (run by Konnect and First Bus) but no service in the evenings or on a Sunday. There is a limited bus service from Blofield and Blofield Heath to Acle and Great Yarmouth that runs on weekdays only. There is also a Community Bus once a week to Wroxham. There are a number of local taxi services based in Blofield parish.

As a rural parish there is a high dependency on the car. Public transport is not convenient enough to alleviate this. Car ownership is high with only 10 per cent of households having no access to a car or a van. An improved bus service would enable new residents to establish sustainable commuter patterns, as well as benefit existing residents.

Congestion on The Street in Blofield is of significant concern to residents and businesses, coming up at all consultation sessions held. It is congested particularly at school drop off times. There are few places to safely park and cross the road for children, parents and shoppers. With an increased population the problem is deemed to get worse. It is a priority of the Neighbourhood Plan to address this.



Figure 21 left and below: Congestion in The Street and on North Street at school drop off time, Blofield.



Blofield parish has a number of public rights of way. However, many are short and others are bisected by the A47 dual carriageway, with no safe way to cross. There is no continuous footpath linking Blofield and Blofield Heath, and no pavement or safe cycle route along significant sections of the road between the two villages. There are no designated cycle ways through the parish.

Objective 10: To achieve the best possible road infrastructure for the parish.  
Objective 11: To improve car parking, public transport and traffic management, enabling better travel within Blofield and between communities.  
Objective 12: To create facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling, between and within Blofield and Blofield Heath.

**POLICY**

**TRA1: Local traffic generation**

The assessment of traffic generation needs to be addressed in accordance with its potential impact. Major development of over 100 dwellings need to consider total travel demand, patterns of public transport in the area, how development impacts upon them, and if required, how infrastructure or services could be improved to mitigate such impacts.

Particular regard should be made to road safety, the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, parking provision and mitigating congestion.

**POLICY**

**TRA2: Off-road parking and safe drop-offs**

Measures to reduce congestion in the Street and at other locations, which may include improvements to off road parking and the provision of safe drop offs, will be supported. For each location and particularly at schools this should include an assessment of all modes of transport and travel planning to reduce the need to travel by car and/or more appropriate site management.

**TRA3: Walking and cycling**

Developments, where it is appropriate, should contribute to an enhanced and joined-up network of high quality footpaths/rights of way to improve access to village amenities and the countryside.

Walking and cycling will be encouraged. New developments will be expected to make adequate provision of crossing points, safe footpaths and cycle ways, in accordance with national planning guidance, and local connections to existing provision and desire lines<sup>10</sup>.

Developments should make provision for level pavements and appropriate drop-curbs for residents with mobility difficulties.

**PROJECTS**

- Further consultation and travel planning will take place to identify suitable drop-off points at Blofield Primary School and Hemblington School. Consideration will be given to expanding parking provision at the Doctors Surgery to enable some general community use. Also review the location of service and school bus stops.
- Insert new crossing points:
  - The Street, south of Doctors Road, opposite the shops.
  - Plantation Road, south of the turning into the surgery car park, next to the bus stop.
  - Woodbastwick Road, near to the junction with Mill Road.
- Investigate the potential for the construction of a footpath/cycle way between Blofield and Blofield Heath alongside Woodbastwick Road or Ranworth Road.
- Identify improvements to pavements and drop-curbs.
- Work with Norfolk Highways to mitigate issues of traffic flow in Blofield village centre.
- Investigate the potential for further road improvements on The Street in Blofield village.
- Continue to campaign for a better bus service and routes.
- Investigate the potential for safe pedestrian access to the countryside and a broader range of safety enhancements.

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<sup>10</sup> Desire line: a path that usually represents the shortest or most easily navigated route between an origin and destination.

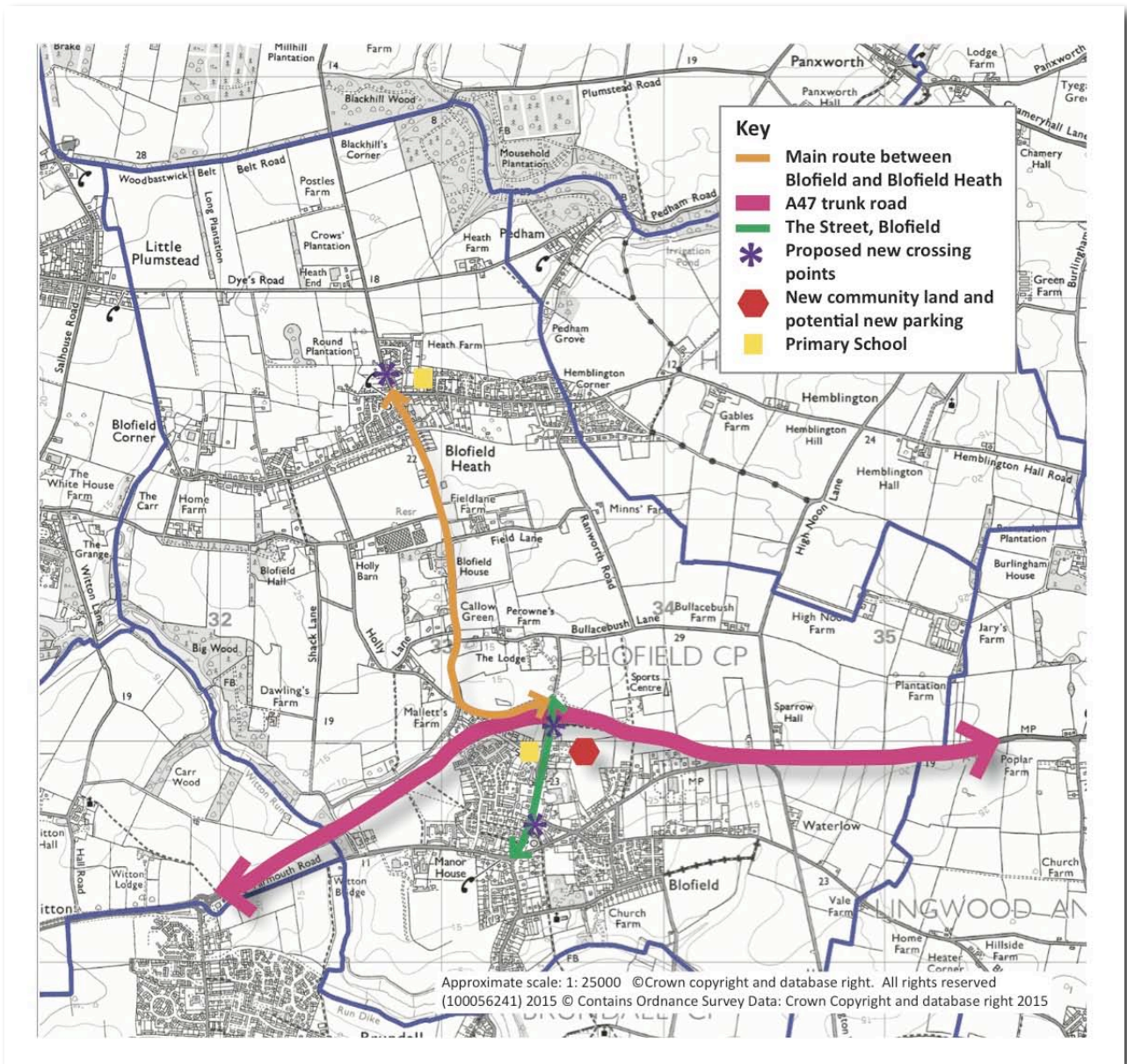


Figure 22 above: Key transport and connectivity features (source: Parish Online mapping with own annotations). Blue line denotes the parish boundary.

# 7. Implementation Plan

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The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2016 to 2036. Further development is highly likely to take place during this time. Each development will differ in size and detail. Each will need to consider the Neighbourhood Plan policies. It is important to ensure this is monitored and community projects are achieved.

As part of the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, an Implementation Plan has been developed. This will require the coordinated input of the community and statutory agencies. Funding is likely to come from developer contributions and grant making bodies.

Blofield Parish Council will lead on and monitor the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan with a series of working groups undertaking aspects of delivery.

Figure 23 right: Rural lane in Blofield parish





# Appendix

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## Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members

- Trish Brocklebank – Individual and Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- Rob Christie – Chair of Blofield Parish Council and Vice-chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- Pat Wilson – Blofield Parish Council and Blofield, Brundall and District Pensioners’ Association
- Yvonne Burton – Blofield Parish Council
- Steve Briggs - Individual
- Amy Smith – Individual and Blofield Playgroup
- Graham Cooper - Individual
- Miles Green - Individual
- George Pickersgill - Individual
- Jane Parry - Blofield Tennis Club
- Paul Culley-Barber - Blofield Parish Council and Parent Governor at Blofield Primary School
- Rachel Leggett – independent consultant for the Neighbourhood Plan