

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation1 - Spring 2014



Our Community - Our Plan

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Core Committee

9 June 2014



Executive Summary

Still to do

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1 Introduction

The designated area for the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan was approved by SODC at the end of October 2013, and coincides exactly with the parish boundary. This approval gave us the go-ahead to proceed with preparation of the plan, and a Core Committee was formed in January to manage and coordinate the work involved in developing the plan. Among the first actions of this Core committee was to organise an initial public consultation to take place as early as possible.

The aim of this consultation is to identify the issues and aims that the community see as important in planning the development of Watlington rather than to find specific solutions, although we will of course be interested to hear any ideas you might have. The information gathered will be used to decide the topics which we need to concentrate on as we look at options and collect evidence to support the choices that will need to be made in the final Neighbourhood Plan.

A secondary aim of the consultation was to make sure that the community was aware that a Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared for the town, and what the implications of this were. Implicit in this secondary aim was the need to enlist as much volunteer support for the project as could be obtained.

This document is a report on the consultation process and the response received, and includes a summary analysis of the results of the consultation.

2 Consultation process

The approach adopted for the consultation was aimed at maximising the public input by providing a range of venues, times and target groups. This was achieved through a series of Drop-in events supported by information made available to residents through leaflets and the internet.

The first step was a leaflet delivered to every home and most of the businesses in the parish in early March. This leaflet advertised the first Drop-in event and provided background information on what Neighbourhood Plan is, why the parish was preparing one and advice on how to get involved in the project. A copy of this leaflet is attached as Appendix A1.

The Drop-in events were based around a set of display panels providing the background information aimed at provoking consideration of the issues that might be relevant. These also included information about the SODC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and a map of the SHLAA areas for Watlington. The text from these display panels is attached as Appendix A2. Visitors to the Drop-in events were invited to provide comments on Post-it notes for a number of topics. In most cases this worked well with many of the comments directed at notes already posted by earlier visitors, but detailed analysis of these comments was not straightforward, especially once the context in which the comment had been made was lost. (A prime example was the comment "I agree with this" which once separated from the note to which it referred became meaningless.)

Simple questionnaires were given to all visitors aimed at establishing the relative importance assigned to various potential issues. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix B. The questionnaire was based on a simple "slider" approach where respondents were asked to mark on a four point scale how important that issue would be in the future expansion of the town. The aim was to avoid any suggestion of a quantitative measure of importance or significance, but to rely on use of four carefully chosen keywords to define the range of the slider. By using the same range of keywords for all issues it was hoped that direct comparison between issues would be possible.



Crucial to making this technique work was the need to express the issues in as neutral a way as possible. This at times made for some cumbersome questions, and in some cases it is possible that we left the question too open-ended so that some respondents misunderstood it. An example of this was the question “how important is it that new housing is spread throughout Watlington? ”, which we intended to distinguish between a single large development or a number of smaller developments. From questions asked at the events, it was clear that some people thought this referred to development throughout the parish including the more rural areas, or associated it with development of many more houses than the 79 given in the SODC Local Plan.

In general the slider approach seems to have worked with most people having no difficulty with it. We did receive a few comments that the slider did not provide sufficient scope for expressing particular viewpoints, but our aim was purely to assess how important people felt the issues to be rather than to identify possible means of dealing with the issues. Similarly, we did not wish to distinguish between those who were strongly for or against a particular approach to an issue, but aimed to identify those issues for which people held strong views of any type. An example here was “how important do you think a relief road is to the future of Watlington?” where those who were strongly opposed to a relief road found themselves giving the same slider value as those who were strongly in favour.

To accommodate the wish of respondents to provide more extensive comments on topics or issues, a space was provided for free comment. This extra space was well used with more than half of respondents adding some comment. Many of these comments were substantial with two running to an A4 page or more (submitted electronically). Some of these comments have been included in the results report, but at a later stage in the process when options for the future are considered, these comments need to be reviewed and where relevant used to augment or support the options being considered.

Initial drop-in aimed at the whole community – two days in Memorial Club, followed by number of smaller events targeted at specific groups. These included neighbouring parishes most likely to be affected by growth in Watlington. The full list of events and the numbers attending each are given in Table I below.

In addition to the Drop-in events, the questionnaire was made available on-line through the Parish Council website and through the Neighbourhood Plan website. A limited number of responses were received in this way.

The panels were on display in the Community Office at all times when not in use elsewhere and questionnaires and Post-it notes were available with them to allow visitors to the office to respond if they wished. A trickle of responses came in through this, but it was at its most successful when the Community Office was used as polling station for a County Council by-election and about 10 voters completed forms before or after voting.

3 Results

3.1 Attendance

The Drop-in events were held from mid-March through to late-May. This timescale was rather longer than had been planned and resulted from delays and difficulties confirming venues for the business community and Christmas Common Outreach events. The Drop-in events and the numbers attending each are listed in Table I below. The total attendance at these events represents more than 15% of the adult population of the parish when residents of neighbouring parishes are excluded.



Table I: Drop-in events

Drop-in event	Date	Visitor count
Watlington Primary School – Governors and Staff	17-Mar	18
Memorial Club	22-Mar	96
Memorial Club	23-Mar	124
Primary School Parents	28-Mar	10
Women's Institute	09-Apr	25
Cuxham	09-Apr	13
Pyrton	12-Apr	16
U3A	15-Apr	35
Britwell Salome	15-May	9
Business community	19-May	7
Christmas Common	22-May	16
TOTAL		369

No personal information was collected from visitors, but it was evident to those who manned the events that young adults (under 40 years old) were under-represented. A Drop-in event organised at the Primary School to try to correct opinions from parents of younger children collected many Post-it note responses from the school council which represents all age groups in the school but only a limited number of parents engaged with the consultation. This imbalance in response will need to be addressed in future consultations.

Engagement with the business community was particularly disappointing with only 7 people attending the lunchtime drop-in event organised in the Town Hall for them, despite two leaflet drops to most business premises and personal visits to many of businesses. The input from the business community and especially from the retail outlets is seen as being particularly important as retaining and supporting them is a key element in ensuring the sustainability of the town as a hub for the surrounding areas.

3.2 Response

The response from those who attended drop in events was good, with 259 questionnaires returned (over 70% return rate). Well over 500 Post-it comments were provided and half of the completed questionnaires including additional comments on the issues facing the community. Some of these comments were submitted using the on-line version of the questionnaire and ran to an A4 page in length.

Over half of the completed questionnaires included contact information for use in providing progress reports and invitations to future consultation events.



3.3 Analysis

The overall results of the consultation are presented pictorially in a separate Initial Consultation Analysis report, and the full results are available on request from the NPCC in the form of completed consultation forms, spreadsheet analyses of the responses and comments from the drop-in events.

The primary aim of this consultation was to provide feedback from the community on the issues that are seen as important in planning any future expansion of the town. It was not intended to provide a rigorous quantitative assessment of these issues, but instead provided a comparison between the relative importance of these issues. The questionnaire and display panels covered five topics:

- Housing
- Traffic and environment
- Shops and businesses
- Getting around
- Local services.

For each topic respondents were asked indicate how important they thought each of up to five issues were for future development of the town. The same four level classification {*Not, Quite, Very, Vitaly* important} was used for all issues to allow a qualitative comparison to be made of their relative importance.

The results are presented graphically as illustrated in Figure I. For each topic or question the responses are shown as a bar with a different coloured segment for each level of importance. The background to the graph shows in paler colours the equivalent importance analysis for all issues on the questionnaire to allow quick identification of the issues that have been given an importance that is very different from the average response. As an example, in Figure I it is very clear that Traffic and Environment has an above average number of *Vitaly* important responses, while Housing has relatively few *Vitaly* important responses.

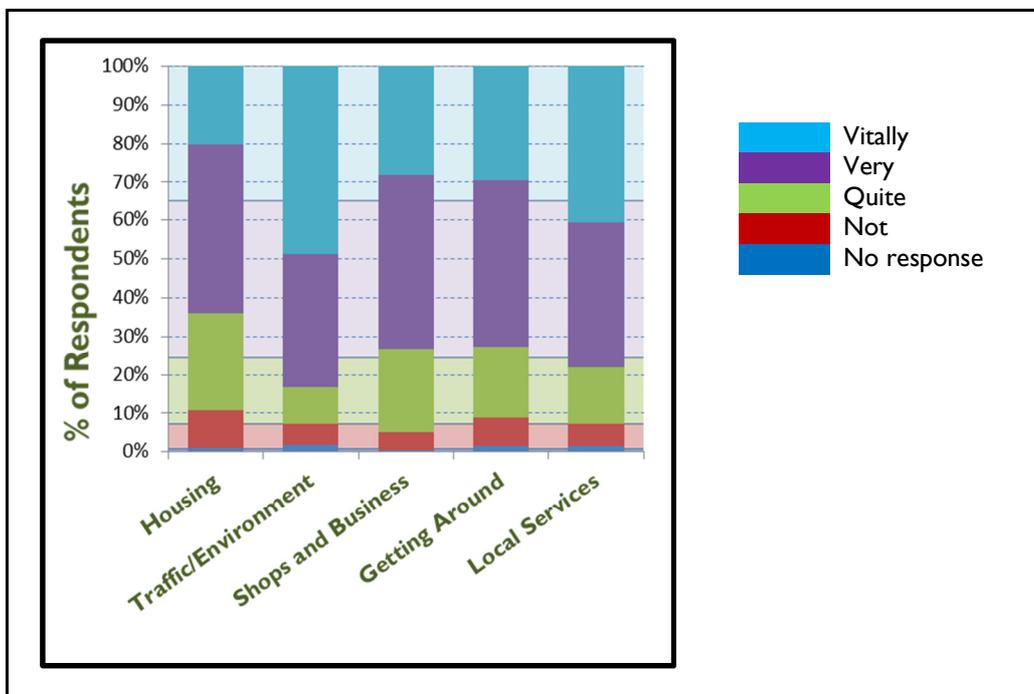


Figure I: Illustrative presentation of questionnaire analysis



In addition to this graphical interpretation of the responses, the results include counts of the number of Post-it notes covering specific issues, and the graphs are annotated with comments from questionnaires selected to give an idea of the spread of opinions. The detail of the comments whether on the questionnaire or Post-it notes will be taken into account when we get round to looking at possible options for policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

4 Summary Findings

The analysis of results from the consultation are presented in the Initial Consultation Analysis report, which is also available as a Powerpoint presentation. The key points arising from the consultation are summarised below.

4.1 Housing

Number of houses: The questionnaire gave the options 0, 10, 100 or 250 houses in excess of the 79 allocated under the SODC Local Plan. This question had more *no responses* than any other question by a factor more than 4, indicating either that the question was not understood, or a high degree of uncertainty on the issue. None of the *no responses* included comments that gave any idea of their thoughts on this issue.

For those who gave a response 78% favoured either zero or 10 additional houses indicating a clear preference for as few new homes as possible.

Affordable housing: Over 40% of respondents thought the mix of affordable houses in any new development was *Not* important or *Quite* important, however there were many comments both in post-it notes and in additional comments that emphasised the need for affordable properties.

Size of houses: This question had the highest number of *Very* or *Vitally* important response for housing with comments indicating that both smaller homes for single or older people as well as larger family homes were wanted.

Single or multiple development sites: This was seen as of low importance with the third largest *Not* important response of all questions, and relatively few comments showing a strong preference for either option.

4.2 Traffic

Traffic issues in general: All indications were that traffic was the issue of most concern to respondents, with the fourth highest number of *Very* and *Vitally* responses from the questionnaire, more than twice as many post-it comments as any other topic and a large fractions of the additional comments on the questionnaire responses mentioning traffic related issues.

Relief road: Perhaps surprisingly the question about a relief road attracted the least *Very* or *Vitally* important responses for traffic and environment issues, with comments indicating an almost equal split for and against a relief road.

Air quality: Air pollution from traffic had a fairly high *Very* and *Vitally* importance, but with only a small number of post-it or questionnaire comments mentioning it.



Countryside: The local countryside was clearly seen as having a high importance, with the largest number of *Very* and *Vitally* important responses of any issue. Most of the comments on this topic concerned preserving the green spaces in and around town and promoting the special environments and local nature reserves.

Historic heritage: This was of lower importance than the countryside, and had a similar level of response to the issue of air quality. There were few comments on this issue with most of these being concerned with ensuring that new housing was supportive of the older buildings in town.

4.3 Shops and businesses

Availability of shops: Support for and retention of the retail outlets in town was given a high importance, at nearly the same level as protection of the countryside. There were many comments, both on post notes and on the questionnaires that very strongly supportive of the existing shops. Several comments stressed the value of shops in supporting a Watlington's role as a hub for surrounding communities. This is clearly a priority that the Neighbourhood Plan must address.

Restaurants: The availability of restaurants was ranked in the lower half of the importance scale, and the few comments on the issue were mostly suggestions for new types of restaurant in town.

Other businesses: The availability of other businesses in town was at the lower end of the importance scale, with no real indication of respondents' views provided by comments.

Employment: This issue was also in the lower half of the importance ranking and only a few comments were made. These comments concerned the need for employment opportunities as well encouraging small businesses and home working.

4.4 Getting around

Pedestrian routes: The need for footpaths and pedestrian routes was given a very similar high ranking to general traffic issues, with a number of comments made. These tended to concentrate on the need for safe pedestrian routes into the centre of town, together with suggestions concerning country footpaths.

Cycle access: This question received the lowest importance ranking of all the issues on the questionnaire, but this low ranking was to some extent countered by the number of comments the need for additional or safer cycle routes, particularly to Junction 6 at Lewknor and to neighbouring villages such as Cuxham. It is possible that the low ranking is a reflection of low number of people in town who cycle regularly rather a reflection of general satisfaction with cycle routes.

Public transport: Availability of public transport services was given a low importance with comments concentrating on the need to improve the existing services, especially to make them useful for commuting to work. Again this low ranking may be a reflection of low number of people in town who use the bus services regularly rather a reflection of general satisfaction with public transport.

Parking: This was ranked in the upper half of issues of importance, but did not produce many post-it note comments (although it is possible that some of these might have included under general traffic issues). There were a large number of comments added to the questionnaires on this issues covering such items as the need to ensure new homes have adequate off-road parking, improved parking facilities for junction 6 at Lewknor, and resolution of the bottlenecks caused by parking in Shirburn Street and Couching Street.



Disabled access: Accessibility for the disabled was given a mid-range importance ranking with the only comments made referring to the difficulties arising from the very narrow pavements throughout town for both wheelchair users, elderly people with shopping trolleys and parents with young children in buggies.

4.5 Local services

Healthcare: Although ranked third of all issues in order of importance, healthcare had very few comments either on post-it notes or on the questionnaire. These comments were mainly very favourable comments about the healthcare facilities (surgery, dentist, care home, pharmacy) currently available, or were queries about the capability of these services to cater for a growth in the town's population.

Education: As for healthcare, the comments on education were very favourable comments about the education facilities, or were queries about the capability of these services to cater for a growth in the town's population or a need for further indoor clubs and evening classes. Education was ranked at about the middle of the importance range.

Library: The library was also ranked as of mid-range importance with very few comments made.

Sports and leisure: This again was ranked in the mid-range of importance, with the lowest level of importance for the local service issues. In contrast with this below average importance, sport provided over a third of the local services comments, mainly about expanding the sports facilities available.

Open spaces: The availability of public open spaces was regarded as moderately important, at the lower end of top third of issues. For comments it was difficult to separate comments about open spaces from those about sports fields, but many comments that could be clearly identified as open space were made and were mainly about ensuring that the current play areas are maintained or expanded.

4.6 Sustainability

Although not included on the questionnaire, visitors to the main drop-in event at the Memorial Club were asked to comment on sustainability issues. Given the weather and situation at the time of the consultation it is not surprising that by far the majority of these comments related to flooding or to the capacity of the current sewage plant. Other topics included reducing travel through increased local employment, community oriented green services for power, and air pollution.



Appendix A: Consultation material

A1 Leaflet distributed to all homes in Watlington parish.



DROP-IN EVENT

To find out more and to tell us your views come along to the Memorial Club main hall on

Friday 21st March from 9.30a.m. to 6.00p.m.
or
Saturday 22nd March from 9.00a.m. to noon.

If you cannot make those times, look out for other events in the following weeks when we will be visiting a number of other locations in the Parish that you might find more convenient.

Your ideas are important



Come and help shape the future of Watlington

Preparation of the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan is being led by the members of the Neighbourhood Plan Core Committee. We are:

- Gill Bindoff
- Neil Boddington
- Ian Hill
- Andy Hocking
- Neil Mitchenall
- Rhian Woods



Please contact us by email: info@WatlingtonNP.org.uk

or by post:
NPCC
1 Old School Place
Gorwell
Watlington
OX49 5QH

or on-line at: www.WatlingtonNP.org.uk



**WATLINGTON
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN**

*Our Community
- Our Plan*



What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Localism Act of 2012 gives towns and villages such as ours the opportunity to have a greater say in the future development of their area. By working with the whole community we will produce planning policies which are specific to Watlington and will guide its growth. The policies have to comply with existing national and local policy guidelines but can be distinctive to our community. When the Plan is completed next year it will be put to a referendum in Watlington. If it is approved it will become part of South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan and will have legal status.

The Parish Council has taken the lead in initiating work on the Neighbourhood Plan and, in January this year, delegated responsibility for developing the plan to a committee comprising six people - three members of the parish council and three local residents. Contact details are on the back page.

New homes

At least 80 new homes will be built in Watlington over the next few years. The Neighbourhood Plan gives us a chance to say where these should be built and what type, size and design they should be.



We can develop policies for other issues which might be affected by the growth of the town. These could be:

- Traffic including transport and roads
- The local environment including open spaces and air quality
- The economy including local business and shops
- Facilities for leisure and recreation
- Sustainability issues including water management and energy conservation

Get Involved!

The Neighbourhood Plan will not be a success unless it is firmly based on local residents' views about how they want to shape the future of Watlington. It is a great opportunity to have your say.

Make sure that you come along to the events to find out the process works and to give your opinions.

If you want to keep in touch take a regular look at our website and post your comments. You can also sign up for updates by email.

If you have some spare time and energy please offer your skills - as the plan process progresses the committee will need plenty of local help.





A2 Text of display panels for Drop-in events.

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

The Localism Act of 2012 gives towns and villages like ours the opportunity to have a greater say in the future development of their area. By working with the whole community we will produce planning policies which are specific to Watlington and will guide its growth. The policies have to comply with existing national and local policy guidelines but can be distinctive to our community. When the plan is completed next year it will be put to a referendum in Watlington. If it is approved it will become part of South Oxfordshire development plan and will carry legal weight in our area.

and what does it have to do with me?

The Neighbourhood Plan will not be a success unless it is firmly based on the community's views about how they want to shape the future of Watlington. It is a great opportunity to have your say.

Today is just the first chance for you to contribute – see the Consultation Strategy panel for more information.

CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Our aim is to ensure all who live or work in the parish are able to contribute their views at all stages in developing the Neighbourhood Plan and as detailed policies are prepared.

The object of today's consultation is to get your views on the topics that should be included in the plan. These will be used to define its scope and to produce a vision for the future of Watlington that reflects your wishes.

In order to meet this aim the Neighbourhood Plan Core Committee will:

1. Publicise the consultation events and processes as widely as possible
2. Use questionnaires to collect your views on the scope of the plan systematically
3. Provide the means for you to give more detailed comments or suggestions
4. Invite you to remain involved through written replies or interactive media
5. Publicise the results of the consultation widely through local newspapers and through an active website.

Get involved now!



WHAT IS THE SHLAA

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was prepared by SODC in 2011 and updated last year, and identifies areas of land available for new housing around the towns and larger villages. It does not provide anything other than a basic assessment of these sites, and certainly does not indicate preferred sites.

The sites included have been proposed by their owners as land that they would be prepared to offer for development. Not all of them are suitable for development, as shown by the recent floods which inundated at least one of them. Others are in the Chiltern's Area of Natural Beauty and so are to some extent protected by the restrictions on development in AONBs.

See the display panels with the SHLAA map for Watlington.

and the SHMA?

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Oxfordshire was published a few weeks ago and increases the number of houses to be built in South Oxfordshire by about 4000, over a period that is four years longer than that for the SODC Core Strategy. What will its affect be? Nobody knows yet, but it is likely that there will be some increase over the 79 houses allocated to Watlington in the Core Strategy.

WHY BUILD ANY NEW HOMES IN WATLINGTON?

The SODC Core Strategy was adopted in December 2012 and sets out the vision for the development of SODC until 2027. Included in it is an allocation of 1,154 new homes in the 12 larger villages in the SODC area. Watlington's share of this total is 79 new homes, derived by a pro rata division based on the number of houses in each village in 2011. This allocation was accepted by Watlington Parish Council in May last year.

So the answer to the above question is that we are obliged to accept at least 79 new houses over the period till 2027, and our Neighbourhood Plan will start from this value in deciding preferred locations for development. There is of course nothing to stop us deciding that a larger number of houses might bring some advantages for the town that would not otherwise be achieved.



WHAT SHOULD OUR PLAN INCLUDE?

The following display panels ask for your comments and ideas on a number of topics that could be included. These are:

- Housing
- Traffic
- Environment
- Shops and businesses
- Getting around
- Local services, well-being and recreation

Please use the sticky notes to add your comments.

HOUSING

At least 80 new homes will be built in Watlington between now and 2027. What are the most important things to do to make this development good for Watlington? What are the most important things to avoid for this development to be good for Watlington?

TRAFFIC

This includes transport, roads new or old, and on-road parking. What is good for Watlington? What should be changed or avoided?

ENVIRONMENT

This includes open spaces, the countryside and air pollution. What is good for Watlington? What should be changed or avoided?

SHOPS AND BUSINESSES

This includes local businesses, shops and local employment. What is good for Watlington? What should be changed or avoided?



LOCAL SERVICES, WELL-BEING AND RECREATION

This includes schools, healthcare, sports and leisure. What is good for Watlington? What should be changed or avoided?

GETTING AROUND

This includes public transport, footpaths, parking and access for people with disabilities. What is good for Watlington? What should be changed or avoided?

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, we need to prepare a sustainability report to demonstrate that the policies included in the Plan will help to ensure a sustainable future for Watlington. This might be environmental issues such as flooding or waste disposal; economic issues such as employment or adequate shopping facilities; or social issues such as availability of care for the elderly or infirm.

What would you like to see covered in the sustainability study?



Appendix B: Questionnaire for Consultation 1

Neighbourhood Plan Scope

Our Community

– Our plan



Our first task is to gain an understanding of the issues that concern those who live and work in Watlington. Generating those opinions is the purpose of this questionnaire.

Below you will find 5 groups of questions, one each on:

- Housing
- Traffic and environment
- Shops and businesses
- Getting about
- Local Services, well-being and recreation

Please indicate how strongly you feel about each topic by circling your preferred response.

Housing

In addition to the 80 new homes that must be built in Watlington over the next 15 years, we could choose to provide more. How many more do you think is the right number?

0 +10 +100 +250

How important is the balance of private / "affordable" housing to you?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important is the mix of house sizes constructed to you?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important is it that new housing is spread throughout Watlington?

Not Quite Very Vitality

Traffic & Environment

How important do you think traffic issues are to the future of Watlington?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important do you think a relief road would be to the future of Watlington?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important to you is the air quality in Watlington?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important to you is the local countryside?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important to you is it that Watlington is a historic town?

Not Quite Very Vitality

Shops and Businesses

How important is the availability of shops to you?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important is the availability of pubs / restaurants to you?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important is the availability of the other businesses within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitality

How important is it to you that there are a range of local employment opportunities?

Not Quite Very Vitality



Getting Around in Watlington

How important is the availability of footpaths and pedestrian routes to you ?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of cycle routes, both on and off-road, to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of public transport provision between Watlington and neighbouring communities to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of parking for residents and visitors to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of access and facilities for people with disabilities in Watlington?

Not Quite Very Vitally



Finally, what have we missed?

Please write anything you think we've missed or that you feel particularly strongly about in this box:

Local Services, well-being and recreation

How important is the availability of Healthcare within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of Education within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of library resources within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of sports and leisure facilities within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



How important is the availability of public open spaces within the town to you?

Not Quite Very Vitally



Get Involved!

The Neighbourhood Plan will not be a success unless it is firmly based on local residents' views about how they want to shape the future of Watlington. It is a great opportunity to have your say.

If you have some spare time, useful skills and energy please tick the box to offer your help:

Contact

If you would like to be kept informed about the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan please provide your name, e-mail address and postcode.

Name:

e-mail:

Postcode: