

Ware Neighbourhood Plan Environment section

Revised version 2: 5 September 2020

The questionnaire sent to residents in March 2020 had 5 suggested sections in the Environment category. Feedback from residents supported these sections and did not propose any other categories.

- 1) Green spaces and community land
- 2) Renewable energy
- 3) Recycling
- 4) Waterways, footpaths and cycling (retitled)
- 5) Engaging the community

The text below is grouped into these categories. Some of the material will overlap with other areas such as transport, and it will need to be decided what is covered in each section and provide suitable cross-references. Some of the section titles have been changed slightly from the original headings and we need to consider whether to adopt the suggested changes.

Version 1 (June/July 2020) was an initial survey of these items, and this Version 2 (September 2020) additionally proposes potential policies that arise out of the survey.

1) Green spaces and community land

Description

Ware has a wealth of green open spaces throughout the town providing valuable areas for sport and outdoor recreation. They provide many cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits; and contribute positively to physical and mental health and a better quality of life. Everyone should have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational pursuits. Ware has good facilities for sports participation in the town, notably the Wodson Park sports centre, although access routes to this by non-car users needs improvement.

Existing green spaces should be retained and protected from infill. This also aligns with the East Herts District Plan and, outside the town, the Green Belt.

Currently designated green spaces are given in a list by Julian Bond – cross reference?

Ware also has access to green spaces just outside the town boundary, such as Post Wood and The Meads Nature Reserve. Most of these are again protected as green belt land. However, the area to the north and east of Ware has been removed from green belt status to accommodate the North and East Ware Development (WARE2 in the East Herts District Plan 2018). This area contains footpaths and green resources which are of great value to local residents, notably the Cowfields (Fireworks Field). The Masterplanning process for the development aims to ensure adequate green spaces, and the outline plans indicate that the whole of the Cowfields will be retained as a green space and that existing tree-lined footpaths will be retained as “green corridors” leading through the housing area to the countryside beyond, all of which we strongly endorse.

Biodiversity will be encouraged and wildlife-friendly guides can be provided where possible.

Proposed policies:

Green Spaces – general

All current designated green spaces within the Ware town boundary and especially within the Ware Conservation Area will be protected and maintained (link to list?)

All current designated green spaces outside the Ware town boundary but within the Green Belt will be protected and maintained (link to list?)

In the area designated for the North and East Ware development (WARE2 in the East Herts District Plan), green spaces and wooded areas currently used by residents will be retained wherever possible. This includes the Cowfields (Fireworks Field), Priors Wood and current tree-lined footpaths. All of these are retained in the 2019 Masterplanning documents and the footpaths will become “green corridors” through the development.

Biodiversity will be encouraged wherever possible, including areas of wildflowers and other special habitats. Ware Town Council already pursues a biodiversity policy in the Watton Road cemetery. Gilpin’s Field (see below) provides an opportunity for an additional managed biodiverse green space. Display boards will be considered for these and other appropriate locations.

Green Spaces – specific

Gilpin’s Field, i.e. the area at SG12 9DD between the New River/A119 and the London Road A1170, also known as the Thames Estate or AMWEE/ Amwell End PSTN, should become a properly managed green space with a meadow habitat encouraging biodiversity. This area is owned by Thames Water and a commitment and plan for long-term maintenance is needed. In the short term, scrub, giant hogweed and overgrowth by the A1170 should be controlled, natural plants should be encouraged, part of the site can become a wildflower meadow and leisure footpaths should be constructed through the site, preferably both circular and from west to east, from the pumping station bridge over the New River to the A119/A1170 junction. In the longer term (5 years), part of it could return to being a grazing meadow. This site is an important gateway to Ware from the south and its appearance should reflect this. It is within the Ware Conservation Area and is also Green Belt land.

The small grassed area between Crane Mead and the river, and the large grassed area to the east of Crane Mead between the river and the railway, should be retained as open grassed areas and not developed in any way, nor should they be used for vehicle parking, caravans or mobile homes.

The Cowfields or Fireworks Field, while lying just outside the current Ware town boundary, is extensively used by residents of North Ware for walking and recreation. This grassed area should be retained unchanged for the benefit of both existing residents and future residents of the North and East Ware development.

Also just outside the town boundary to the east are a peripheral footpath and a path leading to Priorswood Nurseries, from which however there is no footpath leading back into Ware along the B1004 even though this passes a particularly attractive view over the Ash valley. The peripheral footpath will disappear due to the spine road being provided for the North and East Ware development. In compensation, a safe footpath should be provided on one or both sides of the B1004, giving a circular route and enabling safe access to the viewpoint, and funded if possible by a Section 106 grant.

2) Renewable energy and general carbon footprint reduction

Description

The County, District and Town Councils all support policies for climate change mitigation and reducing energy and carbon footprint of local households, businesses and the Councils. Many of the relevant policies are decided at County and District Level, but the Town Council can endorse or seek to influence these, and recommend specific actions for improving the environment of the town including air quality. Reducing domestic and industrial energy use will reduce both carbon footprint and depletion of non-renewable fossil fuels. Sustainable travel and transport policies link with these aspects; Ware lies on an electrified rail route. Nationally, the carbon footprint of Britain's power generation has more than halved in the last 10 years, so that electricity is now becoming a relatively low-carbon source of heating as well as power.

Proposed policies - Buildings

- We endorse East Herts District Council's current strategy in the District Plan that all new homes built should exceed Building Regulations by at least 10% on energy efficiency, and EHDC's desire to set further, more ambitious targets in a Supplementary Planning Document. New-build houses should also demonstrate conclusively that they at least meet Building Regulations, including monitoring if calculations cannot guarantee this.
- All new housing and commercial buildings should be constructed with a "fabric first" approach. Wherever possible it should include solar panels for heating and electricity generation, and low-carbon heating methods such as air-source heat pumps (given that the Government intends to phase out gas-fired boilers in new builds by 2025).
- The Priory and other Town Council buildings, though they are listed buildings to which only limited changes can be made, have been assessed by a consultant on energy in buildings, and new high-efficiency condensing boilers are proposed to replace the current elderly units. Potential for heat recovery from the solar gain in the conservatory is also being explored.
- The current housing stock should wherever possible have good loft and wall insulation and energy efficient heating systems, including solar panels where possible. Householders are encouraged to pursue these options and to make use of available Government grants.
- Water use should also be minimised, bearing in mind that East Anglia is a low-rainfall area. Opportunities for rainwater recovery, greywater use and other water reuse are encouraged wherever possible. New build houses should not exceed the commonly accepted good practice target of 110 litres per person per day.

Proposed policies - Transport

- Local transport planning should support modal shift from cars to buses, cycles and walking wherever possible, while recognising that a significant proportion of journeys must inevitably be made by private car where there is no sensible alternative.
- Rail travel is encouraged and the plans for new higher-capacity trains in 2020 are welcomed. A very high proportion of rail travellers from Ware already walk to the station (around 75% as shown by a recent survey), giving zero-carbon travel and also obtaining valuable exercise.
- Ware station is not necessarily the preferred starting point for people based in the town and surrounding villages. Passengers for North London may go to the Hertford North line; those for Liverpool Street may prefer to drive to Broxbourne where car parking is extensive, trains are more frequent and the journey time is shorter. Possibilities for commuter feeder buses, e.g. from Buntingford, Puckeridge and west Ware to Broxbourne, should be studied by EHDC.

- While use of local buses is encouraged, current buses use diesel engines and so make some contribution to carbon footprint and air quality problems. Emissions will be less than for multiple cars only if buses carry a good passenger load, and usage should be reviewed. Electric buses for round-town services should be considered.
- Journeys to school are a major cause of congestion and emissions and pupils and families should be strongly encouraged to avoid private cars for these and walk or cycle where possible. For longer distances, provision of school buses or use of public transport should be preferred.
- Air quality is a significant concern. EHDC currently only monitor this in two locations in Ware, near the viaduct by the station, with monitors that only give a cumulative value over a long period. The Town Council subsidised the purchase of a portable monitor which has indicated that air quality levels may be lower than expected and not just in peak traffic hours. However, the results need to be calibrated against a primary-source monitor.

3) Recycling

Description

Recycling and refuse collections are currently managed by East Herts District Council. EHDC already recycles a wide range of materials, around 50% of waste, more than a substantial proportion of other councils nationally, but not at the level of best performers locally and nationally that achieve 60% or better. The range of materials recycled from kerbside collections is generally good, and includes items such as aluminium foil and glass bottles which are not collected by some other councils. Nonrecyclable material goes to landfill. This is no longer being sent to the Westmill landfill site immediately west of Ware, which will be closed to new waste by the end of 2020, but will continue to have significance for the town as described below.

EHDC have a statutory duty to collect general waste and food waste, but not garden waste. However, garden waste is currently collected free of charge, and food waste, including compostable liners, can be mixed with this. Government policy indicates that separate food waste collections may be required in the near future, and this is already done by a number of other councils. EHDC would then consider charging for collection of garden green waste. This is common practice nationally and typical annual charges from other councils are around £50. This would of course be optional, and would mean that residents of flats and other properties without gardens would not need to pay the charge for a facility they do not use.

The Biffa landfill site at Westmill has been extant for over 30 years and has provided a repository for millions of tonnes of landfill, not only from Ware and Hertfordshire but for large areas of London and the Home Counties. The decomposition products include methane which if allowed to escape is a virulent greenhouse gas. It is therefore collected and burnt on site to produce power, generating approximately 4 MW, enough to supply a significant proportion of Ware with electricity. Associated with the site have been long-standing problems including periodic odour issues, particularly in west Ware on the Old Vicarage Estate and worst around Greyfriars, and mud deposition on the A602. Biffa have alleviated these as far as possible, but some nuisance inevitably remains.

The site will be closed to new waste at the end of 2020 after a transition from domestic to inert waste with lower odour, and work is largely complete to prepare the site for completion of long-term reclamation. In future years, gas emissions and odours will decrease as the material already in the landfill decomposes. The current height can be expected to diminish significantly. Landfill gas will continue to be extracted and used to generate power.

Proposed policies

- Recycling, reuse and avoidance of waste will be encouraged throughout Ware in accordance with the standard waste hierarchy. Waste and recycling collections will continue to be the responsibility of East Hertfordshire District Council or any successor, e.g. a unitary authority.
- Ware Town Council will practice good recycling policies and will encourage householders and businesses in the town to do likewise.
- All houses and flats should be provided with suitable recycling facilities, and non-landfill options for food waste disposal. All residents should be encouraged to segregate waste appropriately into recyclable, compostable and landfill fractions.
- Landfill waste, recyclables, green waste and food waste should each continue to be collected at least once a fortnight. Food waste should either be collected with green waste or as a separate item, preferably weekly, to allow composting rather than landfill. We encourage EHDC to seek ways to recycle additional materials, such as metallised crisp packets.
- Where persistent contamination of recycling bins is a problem and the people responsible cannot be identified, alternative methods should be sought. EHDC have already trialled, in one block of flats in Ware, recycling bins with narrow mouths and bristles, allowing flattened recyclable materials to be put in but not black bags of rubbish. This could be extended.
- The greatly upgraded EHDC recycling site, also at Westmill, is expected to be completed in 2020. Because of the emissions associated with driving to the site, its main use will preferably be for specialised and bulky items (e.g. electrical goods, timber, soil and rubble) that cannot be accommodated by the standard kerbside collections.
- The Town Council and the general community of Ware welcome the news of the impending closure of the Biffa landfill site to new waste and the long-term reclamation plans.

4) Waterways, footpaths and cycle routes

Description

Waterways and associated footpaths and towpaths:

The River Lee Navigation is an important and well used asset within the town. It passes through the heart of the Ware Conservation Area and the towpath provides ideal viewing of the riverside gazebos which are Ware's most distinctive architectural feature. However, the towpath is relatively narrow for the amount of pedestrian and cycle traffic using it, particularly in the key central section between the Burgage Lane bridge and Town Bridge, and conflict can occur between these two uses. The towpath is continuous along the south side of the river but is managed by different authorities; the Canal and River Trust to the west of the town towards Hertford, and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to the east of the town towards Stanstead Abbots. It is designated as a Sustrans cycleway although on much of it, cycling is actually technically illegal. Public access to the north side is intermittent through the town, but improves to the east of the town where there are attractive parallel walking routes with interconnections past Tumbling Bay weir and the lakes, leading to Easneye Lock and Amwell Nature Reserve. However, these paths are not designated public rights of way, and some key footbridges are in a poor state of repair.

The River Corridor is a great resource for recreation and wildlife and its use as an informal transport corridor for walking and cycling can be built on and developed further.

Other footpaths and pavements:

The town of Ware has a limited number of off-road footpaths, many of which are short links between residential roads. Some longer-distance paths are also usable as cycle routes and are covered in the following section.

Most pedestrian routes in Ware are therefore via the pavements. These are generally kept in a good state of repair. However, in many areas they are narrow, including key parts of the town centre. Widening of pavements is generally difficult because it reduces road width. The effects of the temporary widening of pavements for social distancing during the Covid-19 crisis should be carefully studied. This of course has to be done in conjunction with providing adequate routes for cross-town vehicular traffic.

In some parts of North Ware in particular, pavement parking is a problem. The housing is early 20th century and no provision was of course made for car ownership. This can obstruct access for wheelchairs, prams and buggies, or blind or partially sighted people. The worst single location is probably the southern part of High Oak Road, but other roads in the Musley Hill area also have problems. An investigation of possibilities for off-road parking (including reuse or replacement of garages currently with limited use) could be worthwhile.

Cycling:

Ware is not particularly well provided with off-road cycling routes for a town of its size. Ideally it would have good cycle routes for cross-town journeys, preferably dedicated off-road routes with adequate width for both pedestrians and cyclists and safe crossing points at road junctions. However, this is difficult to achieve in Ware because of the constraints of existing roads and buildings, especially the early twentieth century housing in North Ware, while later estates were provided with spine roads rather than parallel pedestrian/cycle paths. The town is also relatively hilly. There are cut-throughs between various individual estates and a fair number of quiet on-road routes. The biggest need is for a direct off-road route between north and central Ware, especially when North and East Ware is constructed, but this is difficult or impossible to achieve. It is particularly undesirable for cyclists to be forced on to narrow residential roads with pavement parking and significant traffic, notably the southern ends of High Oak Road and Musley Hill. The towpath provides a useful route for longer-distance cycle traffic to Hertford and elsewhere along the River Lea, but through the central part of town parallel to the High Street it is too narrow to accommodate both pedestrian and cycle traffic effectively. This section should be reserved for pedestrians and the alternative route via Broadmeads should be signposted for cycles instead.

Policies - Overall

- Publish a Ware Cycling Map (online and printed) showing suggested cycle routes, accompanied by signposting of all suggested routes. This would also help pedestrians. Footpaths are often not shown adequately on online mapping tools such as Google Maps.
- Specific signposting should be provided for pedestrian and cycle routes which use footpaths and cut through quiet cul-de-sacs rather than using busier roads. Example routes are given below under "Recommended cycling routes".
- The current Sustrans Cycle Route 61 should be diverted east of Ware Lock to run along Broadmeads to Amwell End. From there, it could proceed along Station Road and under the A1170 to rejoin the towpath. This would avoid the narrow section of towpath between Burgage Lane bridge and Ware Town bridge, including the width-restricted Victoria Cut footbridge; this section should be restricted to pedestrians, and cyclists should be required to dismount. It would also avoid the current need to cross the A1170 on the level at Ware Town Bridge. Hertfordshire County Council have expressed potential support for the diversion. Full signposting should be provided, particularly at the ends of the route where it leaves the towpath. The surface of the alternative route should be improved, and a proper gravel or tarmac surface should be laid for

the path on the west side of Sacred Heart School, which would now act as a cycle route from Burgage Lane to Broadmeads.

- Improvement of the towpath from Ware to Hertford should be investigated further with the owner (Canal and River Trust). Ideally, the route should be firmly surfaced throughout and wide enough to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians on designated sections. In some cases the best cycle route may be away from the towpath, e.g. Ware Broadmeads (see above) and west of Hertford Lock where cyclists can use the wider paths through Hartham Common.
- The useful network of paths along the north side of the river in the Tumbling Bay area should be maintained and the footbridges at Tumbling Bay and Crane Mead should be fully repaired.
- Additional footpaths should be provided along part of the B1004 to the east of the town towards Priorswood Nursey (see Green Spaces) and along the A602 between the A10 and Westmill passing the recycling site and Westmill Fram / Three Lakes; the latter could be delivered in conjunction with reclamation of the Cemex site at Westmill which is intended to become a small nature reserve.
- Create a safer cycling environment along Park Road by banning parking on the north side of the GSK manufacturing site during morning and afternoon peak hours for school traffic. This currently creates a severe bottleneck with discourages cycling to Chauncy School because of the associated risks.
- Consider limited one-way schemes in Ware which may allow more space for cycles. In particular, one-way northbound on Musley Hill between Collett Road and Homefield Road, southbound on Trinity Road and southbound on Bowling Road between Vicarage Road and Kibes Lane could both reduce traffic conflicts and provide more space for cyclists.
- Encourage employers and schools to provide secure cycle storage, and work with schools to encourage children to cycle to school
- Incorporate secure cycle storage into new housing projects, including provision for e-bikes with charging points (one recent small housing scheme has proposed providing free e-bikes and a shared electric car to residents to reduce the need for parking provision).
- Encourage responsible cycling with awareness of road hazards and proper consideration for pedestrian safety. Involvement of police or groups helping to develop cycling proficiency could be beneficial.

Recommended cycling routes

Key cycle routes to be developed as far as possible:

- A new cycle path from Fanhams Hall Road across the east of the Cowfields to the Wodson Park area, providing safe all-weather sustainable access from the whole of North Ware to Wodson Park and linking to pavement/road route to Thundridge and Wadesmill; this can be delivered in conjunction with the North and East Ware development Masterplanning process. There should also be a link along the south side of Cowfields to Kingsway.
- Existing off-road cycle path from Kingsway/Cowfields area along stream via Upper Bourne and Wooden Park to Milton Road / Horse Lane
- Continuation via The Bourne, Crib Street and Church Street to Ware High Street, and via Hartfield Court and Deerfield Close to New Road and the Tesco car park
- Poles Lane from junction with Wadesmill Road to Quincy Road, and onwards to bridge under A10 and towards Hanbury Manor, Thundridge and Westmill as a longer-distance cycling and walking route. The surface westward from Quincy Road needs improvement, and this section can experience flooding particularly at the A10 underbridge. Short link paths could be provided to Wheatsheaf Drive and Dovedale.

- Fanhams Hall Road/Lady Margaret Gardens and Ware Youth FC to Evergreen Road, Tower Road and north-east Ware
- The Hyde to Trapstyle Road and Chauncy School.
- Wengeo Lane could be considered for upgrading, particularly as a route to Chauncy School, but alternative routes exist via Fanshawe Crescent and The Hyde / Trapstyles Road.
- Towpath from Hertford to Ware and Stanstead Abbots, with improvements and diversions (see above)

5) Engaging the community

Proposed policies - Community engagement

Residents will be engaged as much as possible on significant projects that affect Ware. The Masterplanning process for the North and East Ware development was a good example of successful community engagement, with two rounds of major consultation sessions held at Ware Priory which were each attended by about 800 people.

The Town Council will continue to encourage and support the following initiatives, and in several cases a designated Town Councillor acts as liaison:

- Involvement with local primary and secondary schools, including visits and development of links wherever possible
- Volunteer groups throughout the town
- Ware Society
- Scott's Grotto
- Ware Museum
- Southern Maltings
- Major community events for the whole town, such as the Ware Festival/Carnival and Dickensian Evening
- Love Ware, Live Ware campaigns including church involvement
- Twinning events with our twin towns, Wülfrath (Germany) and Cormeilles-en-Parisis (France).

Proposed policies - Communications

The Town Council will aim to communicate effectively with as many Ware residents as possible through various channels including:

- Neighbourhood Watch and OWL
- Ware Town Council website and regular online Newsletter distributed by email.

All residents should be made aware of these initiatives and encouraged to sign up to them. Other routes include:

- Town noticeboards, which will also be maintained and renewed as required
- The Town Council produced Youtube videos for the Shop Local campaign and Armed Forces Day which generated significant interest. Meet the Mayor sessions by webcast were also tried experimentally during the Covid-19 crisis; these were less successful and were discontinued, but could be considered again in future.
- Individuals may be involved with Facebook groups and other social media on a personal basis.