

NORTH LOPHAM PARISH PLAN

2020



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Front cover

The front cover shows the central panel of the Village Sign, which depicts the past glory of North Lopham, the then famous Lopham Linen.

It shows the weaver at his loom, flanked by hemp plants, the source of the fibre used, and horse chestnuts, which provided the starch. A spinning wheel features in the lower left corner, whilst on the right is another Lopham wonder, a chimney with a door in it.

The decorated letters at the top are from the base of the Church Tower; the ones along the bottom are from halfway up the Tower and are a prayer for the folk who paid for its construction.

1. Purpose of the North Lopham Parish Plan

1.1 The main purpose of the North Lopham Parish Plan is :

- To ensure that residents' views on any changes and development affecting the Parish are taken fully into account
- To provide the Governing Bodies with a document that clearly sets out the wishes and concerns of the residents, with suggestions for improvement; and also, to give a 'feel' of what the Village is about
- To ensure that any future development is in keeping with the values and criteria set out in this document

2. Introduction

2.1 The Parish of North Lopham lies in South-West Norfolk, within the Breckland District Council area and in the Parliamentary constituency of South-West Norfolk and Local Authority constituency of Guiltcross Hundred. It is at Latitude 52.7° and 1° Longitude.

2.2 The total area of the Parish covers 816ha (3.15 sq miles). At the time of writing the Parish comprises of 278 homes (this includes the planning applications approved at this point but not yet executed). The population was 623 in the 2011 census, to-date around 650.

2.3 The Village is just a couple of miles from the border with Suffolk, which follows the line of the Waveney river going east and the Little Ouse going west, both rising at Lopham Fen, a National Nature Reserve designated a Wetland of International Importance (RAMSAR) and a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).

2.4 The nearest town is Diss, a historic market town with an attractive centre along the 'Mere', a large lake which presents a pleasant backdrop to the main shopping area. It has a good number of independent shops and a weekly market. Further afield, to the south is the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds, to the north lies the city of Norwich, the County town and home to a splendid cathedral.

2.5 The Village has a generally linear pattern of development along the main road, but there are a few side roads and cul-de-sac developments. The Parish overall extends to quite a wide area with numerous outlying dwellings. The centre of the Village is a designated 'Conservation Area', lined by traditional cottages, several listed buildings, a number of non-listed but visually important properties and more modern and quite recently

built larger houses. The Conservation Area presents a rural character, verdant with many trees, a Pond and a Green.



3. History

3.1 North Lopham and its sister Parish of South Lopham, together 'The Lophams', have origins dating back as far as 6,000BC although the earliest known traces of man in the Lophams are between 2,500-1,500 BC *('A history of the Lophams'). There have been dwellings in North Lopham for over 2,000 years. Remains of a Roman villa with coins and pottery fragments have been found; there is evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlements, and continuous written records since the Domesday Book.

3.2 The Lophams were gifted to the Bigod family (Earls of Norfolk) by William I, noted as such in the Domesday Book of 1086. The Duke of Norfolk gifted land for a playing field in 1931, which houses the current Village Hall.

3.3 The oldest dwellings are the listed Church Farm House and Church Cottage based on a medieval Hall house. In all there are 18 listed buildings including the Grade I St Nicholas Church.

3.4 St Nicholas' Church remains in use with a weekly service. Dating from the

13th century and probably on an older foundation, it is built of flint and stone with some notable Aldryche flush flint work from the 15th and 16th centuries. It has a square tower, housing a fine ring of eight bells (still in use) and an impressive stained-glass East window.



- 3.5 The origin of the name 'Lopham' is uncertain, possibly Loppa's Ham (ie Loppa's 'home'). Its early settlement may well relate to the position across the fen lands where the rivers Ouse and Waveney both rise (Lopham Ford), and so may have been a frontier post between the 'North-folk' and 'South-folk' of East Anglia.
- 3.6 For centuries, linen was made in the Lophams. North Lopham achieved national fame in 1837, when T.W. & J Buckenham of North Lopham was awarded a Royal Warrant to provide linen to Queen Victoria's household.
- 3.7 Farming has long been important and there are several arable and pig farms based around the Village whilst smaller enterprises focus on Dexter cattle and alpacas.
- 3.8 The Village was self-sufficient until mid-20th century, with several pubs and shops. The Church provided basic education and in 1815 a schoolroom was added to the Methodist Chapel. North Lopham Primary School opened in 1899 and amalgamated with the church school at South Lopham in 1982, to become St Andrew's CEVA Primary School. The name was chosen to recognise the original dedication of the church at North Lopham and the present dedication of that at South Lopham. A mid-19th century clerk managed to record the dedications the wrong way around, and so they remain! The grade II listed Methodist Chapel dates from 1810, one of the earliest in Norfolk; it closed in 2015 and was subsequently converted into a private dwelling.

3.9 The War Memorial bears the names of those from the Parish who gave their lives in the two world wars.

In 2003 a marble plaque was added in memory of 18 US airmen who perished when two planes collided in January 1945, just after taking off from their base at Snetterton airfield.

Annually in November school children join veterans, residents and US representatives for the Remembrance ceremony held at the Memorial.



Much has changed in modern times, particularly following the advent of the motor car in the 1960's; for more information on that see Section 5 'North Lopham today'.

4. Infrastructure

4.1 North Lopham is served from the south from South Lopham by a minor road, identified by Norfolk Highways as the C870, connecting to Kenninghall to the north, plus a 'quiet' road that leads to East Harling. There is a 7.5 tonne restriction throughout, except for loading.

4.2 The road through the Village supports a mains sewer, water, electricity and BT Lines. There is no mains gas. The completion of 'a trod' in 2016 ensures a footpath that extends the length of the Village.

4.3 The Water Tower and Parish Church have a number of mobile phone

masts and broadband discs. The fastest broadband has an average speed of 67Mbps, although coverage varies according to where in the Village you live. There are five exchanges in a 5-mile radius of North Lopham, all fibre enabled, owned and maintained by Openreach.
(www.broadbandexposed.co.uk/broadband/in/north-lopham/).

4.4 Google 'footpaths in North Lopham' for various websites detailing footpaths, bridleways, cycle tracks and rights of way that allow you to explore the area.

4.5 The red telephone box gained listed status in 2014 and is used to hold a defibrillator and a Village history display and map. The Village benefits from a mobile library service and the same local authority mows the green verges and sweeps the gutters.

4.6 It



is a rural village with several farms

surrounding it, but it is also home to a surprising number and type of businesses and organisations, e.g. the charity 'AMIS' (The Association for Music in International Schools); a specialist Defense Manufacturer with an international customer base and employing local people; various tradesmen to include builders, plumbers etc. North Lopham Charities, Reg No 214897 concentrates on various local needs and has been in existence for many years.

4.7 The Village has a pub, church and primary school. It shares the Village Hall with South Lopham which offers a large public space that includes an outside exercise and play area. It is used by several clubs offering activities such as: Art, Keep Fit, Dog Training, Archery, Judo and a Gardening Club. A 'farmers market' is held there every fourth Saturday. There are also various activities held at Redgrave & Lopham Fen. All of these being prime examples of the alive community spirit.

4.8 A private B&B and several rented properties add to three rooms offered by the pub and ensure we look after the numerous guests that visit the Village each year.



4.9 There is a Saturday-only bus service but a pre-ordered 'bus hoppa' offers a service to Diss, supporting residents who have no alternative transport mode. An intercity main line railway station at Diss connects to Norwich and London (Liverpool Street Station). A railway station at Thetford has connections to London's Kings Cross Station and to Ely and Cambridge (with onward connection to Stansted Airport) and cross country to

Liverpool.

5. North Lopham today and its evolvement in the last fifty years.

5.1 To the casual visitor North Lopham does not appear much changed since 1970 but look more closely and it is significantly different today.

5.2 Fifty years ago the Village was quite self-sufficient, with three pubs and a number of 'shops' – general stores, butcher, confectioner, electrical goods, a small antique shop and market gardens – a resident milkman and policeman, in addition to a filling station, the church, school and chapel. Fish from Lowestoft and a well-stocked baker's van came weekly. Residents could buy almost everything they needed without leaving the village. Farms and various tradesmen offered local employment.

5.3 Today there is just one pub, the church and the school. The other businesses, and even the Chapel, have been converted into residences. Farming activity has reduced and some farm buildings have been replaced by new housing and Lanes, most recently beside the War memorial. Many of the front gardens now have neat picket fences or hedging and there is continuous paving along one side or the other from one end of the Village to the other.

5.4 A fair number of new properties occupy parts of the original large gardens and there is considerable infill between the 1970 properties. Some traditional Norfolk cottages have been replaced by groups of modern houses.

5.5 A Village Sign was erected in 1985 - located on the Green by the Pond. Most of the materials were donated and the sign was made by residents. It depicts the most significant elements of the North Lopham heritage (*see also front cover image and description*).

5.6 Electrification of the rail line from Diss to London brought North Lopham into the commuter belt, with a resultant increase in house prices. Young people tend to move away when they set up home, so, while there were at least two families with four generations resident in the community in 1970 and many with family nearby, this is no longer the case. It is therefore important to record the history of the Village while those with the memories are still alive.

6. Characteristics

Environmental Character

6.1 The Parish has a bedrock geology of a sedimentary Newhaven Chalk Formation, overlaid with a superficial geology of Lowestoft Formation Diamicton comprising sand and gravel with pockets of clayⁱ. This has provided relatively easy access to flint, clay and other materials, which are evident in the appearance of the vernacular buildings.

6.2 The Parish sits near the south western boundary of the South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands, Character Area 83 in the National Character Area profilesⁱⁱ. This area is described as 'ancient countryside', although the removal of hedgerows and the amalgamation of fields has changed its visual characteristics. The Village lies approximately two miles north of the Redgrave and Lopham Fen, a 129-ha RAMSAR site and associated

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Special
Scientific
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landscape character to the south as the land drops to the Fen.

6.3 To the north west the Parish borders The Brecks, designated a specific area within Breckland with a distinct flora and fauna associated with chalk beds and notable for the occurrence and mining of flint. The Brecks spans an area of 393 sq. miles from Breckland in Norfolk into Suffolk. This special area contributes to the distinctive material character of many of the traditional buildings. Areas of previously common land lie to the south west along High Common Road and to the east of the Village. There is historical evidence of woodland to the north east of the Parish.

6.4 The area of the Parish is 817 hectares, comprising predominantly Grade 2 & 3 farmland, mainly arable with some livestock. The land is generally free draining but with isolated pockets of clay which have traditionally supported 'meres' or ponds. Historic land use included hemplands, well into the late 19th century.

6.5 The Parish has no street lighting and is designated as a Rural Dark Landscape. ⁱⁱⁱ

6.6 The Village is at an elevation of approximately 50 metres above sea level. Historically there was a readily accessible water table for the provision of potable water, confirmed by the number of wells referenced on the OS map. There was previously a notable stream to the east of the Parish, which ran down to the upper reaches of the Waveney river.

Development & Settlement pattern

6.7 The wider Parish is characterised by dispersed farmsteads, with associated agricultural buildings, and small clusters of cottages and isolated detached houses. The Village area itself is designated a 'Rural Settlement with a Settlement Boundary' in the Breckland Local Development Plan. The area of the Village within the settlement boundary is 22.7 hectares and contains 245 dwellings ^{iv}.

6.8 Up until the late 18th century the Village centre was set around The Green, a strip of common land starting from Harling Road junction in the north, straddling the main road on the west side to a small lane on the east side (running south to join Tanns Lane) and down to the Leech Mere. The larger timber framed farmhouses were set either side of this Green, along with their associated farmyards and buildings. After The Enclosures Acts, from the beginning of the 19th century, The Green was divided up into private land, and, gradually, mainly on the eastern side of the main road, smaller properties including residences and retail premises were built closer to the roadway, creating an unusual parallel pattern of development which still remains evident.

6.9 Before the 18th century, the south of the Village, between the cluster of early dwellings around the Church and up to Tanns Lane to the north,

was more sparsely developed. Relatively little was developed to the east of the roadway (The Street), with slightly more on the west side. These gaps were infilled in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and include the notable former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel constructed in 1810, a simple symmetrical two storey red brick façade with flint side walls under a shallow slate roof.

- 6.10 The Village is within a 'Conservation Area' and there are currently 18 listed buildings / structures recorded by Historic England.

Scale of development

- 6.11 The largest non-commercial properties within the Village are St Nicholas' Church and the 19th century Board School now St Andrews Primary School. The largest dwellings are the early traditional farmhouses, the majority of which are pre-1750, and are characterised by two storeys and an attic under steeply pitched roofs with dominant brick chimney stacks. The majority of the remaining dwellings are either two storey or one-and-a-half with dormers. Earlier cottages with thatch have hooded dormers, whilst gabled or cat-slide dormers are common in clay tiled roofs. Examples are evident in the properties constructed from the 17th to the early 20th century of detached, semi-detached and small terraces of dwellings. There are also a small number of single storey detached properties that remain from this period.
- 6.12 There are few commercial properties within the Settlement Boundary. The largest of these is to the west of The Street and is a 20th century, relatively large linear building of two storeys, comprising office accommodation at the front, running initially at right angles to the road, and then the manufacturing area to the rear with distinctive north-light glazed roofing. The single remaining public house, the Kings Head, is a well-proportioned early 18th century property built in a similar form to the larger farmhouses, having a thatched roof and distinctive central brick chimney.
- 6.13 The largest structures (by floor area) within the Village are the farms and comprise livestock sheds and agricultural buildings. The largest of these is in the south-west of the Village extending from north of the churchyard up to southern boundary of the manufacturing site. A smaller grouping is behind the other working farm, to the north-east of The Green.
- 6.14 There are examples of former agricultural buildings having been converted into residential units. These retain some aspects of their original configuration but are generally much altered. The largest are a group of these on the east side of The Street, served by Meadow Lane.
- 6.15 The scale of development in the 20th and early 21st century has been related to available plot size rather than being sympathetic to the overall character of the Village. Several substantial detached houses, well set back behind landscaped front gardens, were constructed in the mid-20th

century. These are characteristic of the design preferences of the time in terms of form and materiality but are not generally characteristic of the area. A small group of two-storey local authority houses, formed in pairs and small terraces, was constructed in 1952 to the east of The Street. There was a similar group of houses in Kings Head Lane, but replaced in the 1980s and comprises three bays of dwellings: one of bungalows for the disabled, the others a mix of houses and bungalows. These are a good example of standard house forms of the period and, since coming into private ownership, have been modified to some extent.

6.16 Later private developments have reduced the rural and open character of the Village, with the introduction of fences, gates and boundary walls, together with areas of hard landscaping. More recent developments have been on infill sites, between, behind, or in front of existing properties. Whilst some have been successful in integrating with the grain of the Village, others have varied the previous homogeneity of the settlement pattern by denser development.

6.17 The most notable break from the historic linear settlement pattern has been the introduction of cul-de-sac developments. The most recent of these are the Planning Approval of two new estate developments. Both of these are outside but adjacent to the Settlement Boundary; one just beyond the current southern extent of the Village on the site of redundant agricultural buildings, the other on a prominent, and the last remaining undeveloped, green space in the middle of the Village.

Materials and Construction

6.18 The earliest remaining dwellings are fully rendered, timber framed farmhouses and cottages, with dominant red brick chimney stacks emerging through steeply pitched roofs and are usually set on a base plinth of locally sourced flint nodules or brick. These are characteristic of the area and are predominantly pre-1750. Originally thatched, the majority are now tiled with red or black glazed pantiles.

6.19 Later residential developments in 18th and 19th century are brick, timber frame, or clay lump construction, again set on plinths of flint or brick. Both the clay lump and the oak framed buildings are usually fully rendered and colour washed, but some have had brick façades added. The earlier brick buildings are generally constructed of soft red brick with simple detailing; slightly later properties are of Norfolk 'white' brick. Historic maps show that there was a brick works to the north of the Village.

6.20 Some of the 20th century render work has pargetting (decorative patterned plasterwork), although this is not characteristic of this area. The underlying local clay is a mixture of yellow and light red clay which may account for the range of colours evident. Pre-20th century properties are built in Flemish bond brickwork, producing a mottled surface colour and texture, common to stock bricks.

6.21 Mid-to-late 19th century properties such as the Board School are in red brick under a slate roof. Slate is not a common roofing material in the area; the most common roofing material is clay pantiles, either self-coloured or black glazed. Clay peg tiles are also used, often to substitute for thatch, and being suited to steeper pitches. In subsequent years concrete tiles of a variety of profiles have been used as properties have been re-roofed or as an initial material choice for mid-to-late 20th century houses. In subsequent years, machine-made concrete tiles and bricks have been used on some properties that have been repaired or altered. For the mid- to-late 20th century houses, the use of modern materials and of stretcher bond brickwork has produced harsher and less variegated surfaces in terms of both colour and texture.

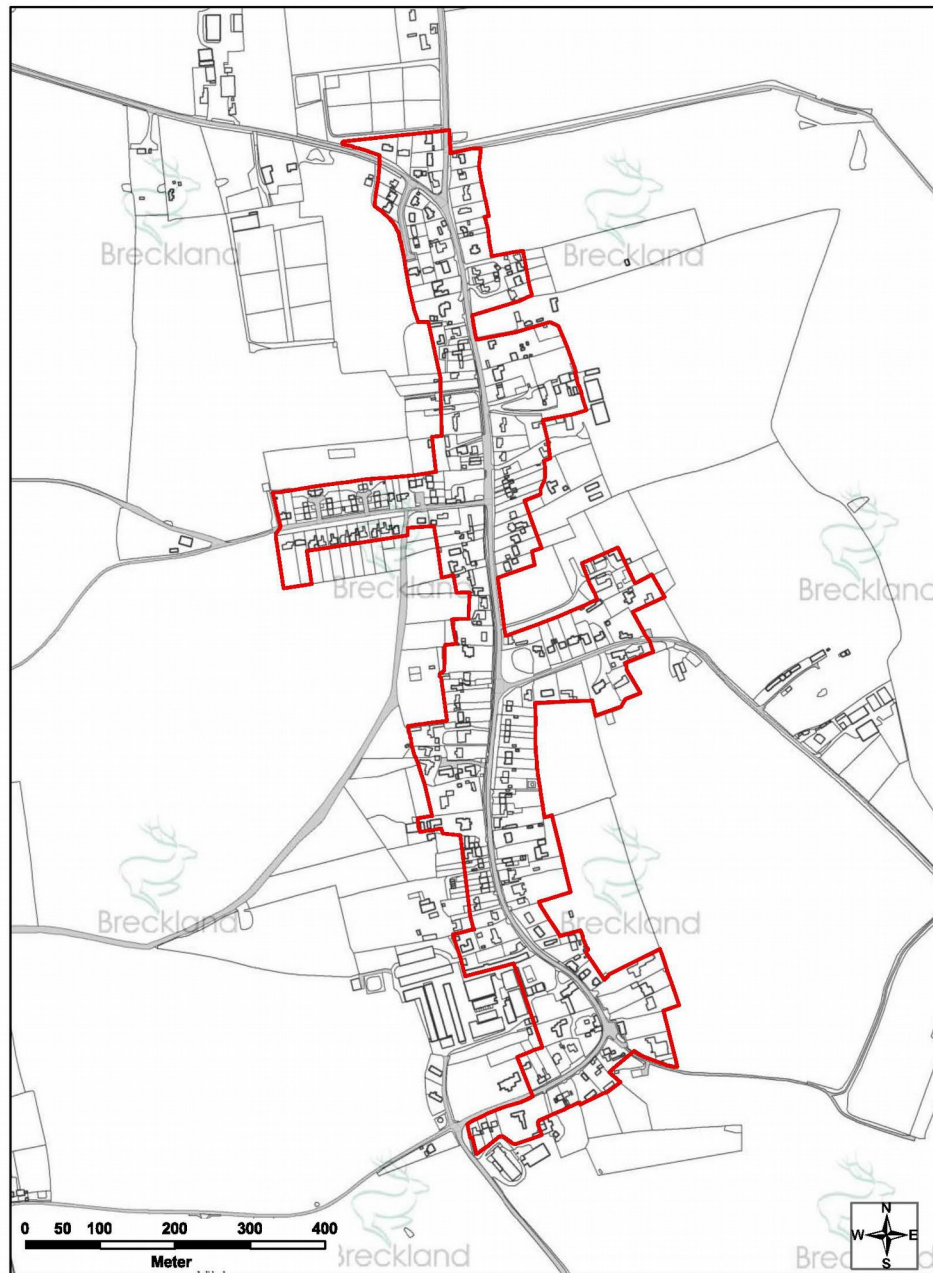
Summary Characteristics

The Parish and Village are still very much rural in character, with its church, school and pub. The Brecks to the north and Lopham Fen to the south are both important in terms of wildlife and biodiversity.

The built fabric is generally traditional in appearance, but with more modern additions to the housing stock. There are numerous notable properties throughout the Village including listed buildings.

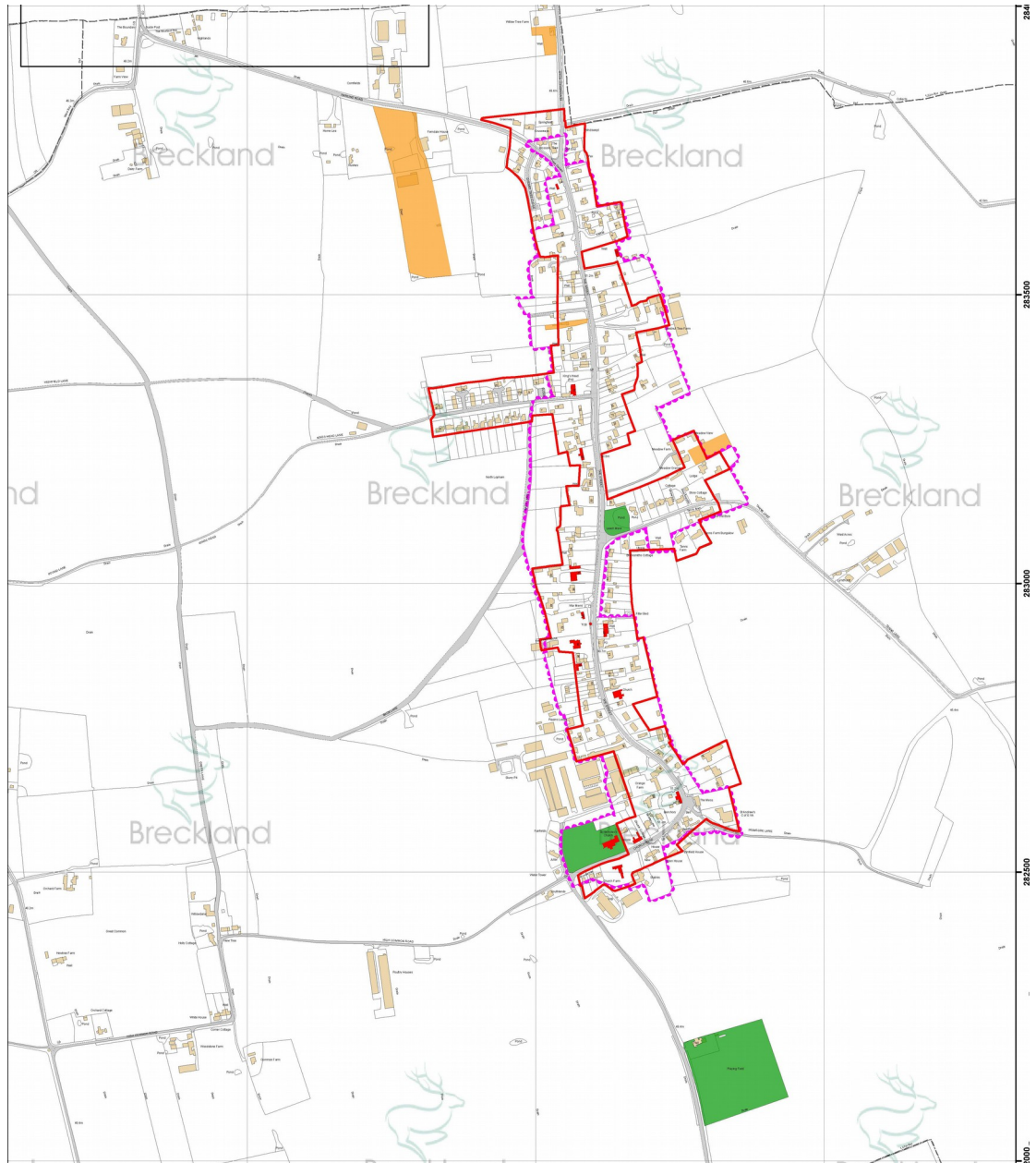
The Church with its square tower is a visual focus at the southern end of the Village, whilst midway along the main road is a pond with adjacent small green area. Towards the north end, in what was the original Village centre, lies the traditional pub, set back from the road and complementing the setting of this attractive rural settlement.

Settlement Boundary ^v



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Settlement Boundary & Conservation Area Boundary ^v



7. Past & Future Development

Planning Policy Residential Development

7.1 The Breckland Local Plan (draft, adopted 28 November 2019) contains measures to control the quantity of future residential development in Breckland. For rural settlements with Settlement Boundaries, (which applies to North Lopham), the Breckland Local Plan determines (Policy HOU 4 Villages with Boundaries) that future residential development, within and immediately adjacent to the Settlement Boundary, should not amount to significantly more than 5% of the number of existing dwellings within the Settlement Boundary. This would mean a possible increase of 12 new dwellings however, the Plan is being updated and this figure could well be changed.

8. Key issues, concerns and wishes

8.1 The Survey* carried out by the Parish Plan Committee, along with surveys done in the past, e.g. 1996 Village Appraisal, public meetings of the Parish Council, have highlighted various concerns. The Survey extended to identify the benefits of living in the Parish and the wishes from residents as to how the quality of their lives might be improved.

Summary of issues, concerns and wishes

Concerns	Benefits	Wishes
Traffic State of road surface Housing development Noise Pollution	Village Hall Church Pub School Rural nature Convenient location Healthcare access Sense of community	Better broadband Better bus service Protection of open spaces Teenage facilities Village shop Improved road surface Traffic calming Noise reduction Reduced pollution

9. Wishes

- i. Open spaces (eg the Green with pond, the land around the Parish Church) must be maintained and any development must not encroach upon these.
- ii. Any new-builds must be of high quality and in harmony with the character of the Village.
- iii. The Parish 'assets' must be retained as a focal point for the community, eg Village Hall, Parish Church, School, Pub.
- iv. The listed red telephone box must be retained.
- v. Footpaths must be retained and maintained/improved where possible
- vi. Support the acquisition of faster broadband services.
- vii. Support for Post Office and a community shop
- viii. Better bus service
- ix. Improved teenage facilities

10. Possible solutions

It is the duty of Parish and District Councils to ensure that their statutory and voluntarily set objectives are met, the key one for the purposes of this document is the wellbeing of the people of North Lopham.

Below are a number of suggestions that can improve the quality of life, some are simple solutions at minimal cost, others may require significant funding.

Improved road surfaces

- Probably the most expensive option but potentially the most beneficial; a smooth road surface would do away with a lot of noise.

Bus services

- Whilst it is recognised that rural areas have their limitations for bus services, as a minimum it would be helpful to know what services are actually available, along with a ready available timetable, other than notification on the bus stops and an easy-to-use internet facility e.g. how to get from A to B by public transport.

Environment

- Encourage the retention and restoration of hedgerows
- Encourage the retention and creation of wildlife spaces
- Encourage the planting of trees (free trees/help from Woodland Trust)

I 11. Process

During 2017 the Parish Council investigated but ruled out the formation of a 'neighbourhood plan', then, following representations by some residents to look at the possibility of a 'parish plan', the Council acknowledged the benefit thereof, the more so as these can contain matters much wider than a neighbourhood plan. It was accordingly formally agreed that a 'Parish Plan' could be created provided it was led by volunteers from the Village.

Jan 2018 saw the formation of a Committee (the 'North Lopham Parish Plan Committee') under the Parish Council's auspices. The Committee's remit was formalised in a 'Letter of Appointment', signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Mar 2018: The Committee sought early engagement with Breckland District Council for guidance and advice.

Aug 2018 – The Committee carried out a formal Survey* over a period of six weeks, from 25 Aug to 5 Oct 2018. Extensive publicity was given through the Newsletter, leaflets and the Central Lopham website, enhanced with information available at three focal points: Church, Pub and Village Store. The Committee also manned a stand on two Market Days at the Village Hall.

Nov 2018: feedback to the Parish Council of the results of the Survey; drafting of the Parish Plan to commence.

2019 and into 2020 saw the Committee engaged in research and drafting of the various sections that would comprise the Plan, with regular Committee meetings to check direction, content and progress.

July 2020 – draft Plan submitted to Parish Council.

Anticipated timescale, tbc

September 2020 – submission of final plan to Parish Council.

Autumn 2020 – Publish Final Plan.

12. Acknowledgements

Appreciation for the production of this Parish Plan goes to the Members of the Committee:

Leo Verhaag (Chairman)
Laurie Bradley (Dep Chairman)
Jennie Vere
John Home
Tony Osler
Lee Norris

Thanks are also due to:

North Lopham Parish Council, for their support
Parishioners, for their input to the Survey
Breckland District Council, for their guidance and advice
Councillor William Nunn, for facilitating meetings
Resident Russ Golledge, for his work on the Survey.

References

- * SurveyMonkey, electronic and paper questionnaire to all residents over 6-week period from 25 August 2018
- i Reference awaited
- ii Natural England 2012
- iii Norfolk Transport Mgt Lighting Designations
- iv As of 31.03.18 Breckland Local Plan 2919
- v Maps: settlement boundary and settlement & conservation area combined