

## December update



**Dealing with Planning issues:** Well, we have done our bit – it is now out of our hands! The Regulation 15 draft of our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was submitted to Braintree District Council (BDC) in August. To get to this stage so quickly has been a monumental effort by everyone but now we have to wait. BDC now has to complete certain checks on the document and carry out a further public consultation before the Plan goes to an external examiner and then comes back to the community for a referendum some time in 2026. The latest NP draft along with our 'Valued Landscape' study and supporting evidence can be found on our website <https://www.fw-np.org/community>

The Neighbourhood Plan Team (NPT) have also helped Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish Councils submit detailed responses to BDC's Local Development Plan review for the period 2033-41. This includes a number of local proposed development sites (which were rejected in June) and the Airbase. BDC decided to put in place a high-level Airbase policy in their new Local Plan that in large part reflects the approach set out in our draft Neighbourhood Plan.

**Protecting our environment:** As part of our final Plan draft, we commissioned a specialist 'Valued Landscape' study and designated a significant area of our parishes as 'Valued Landscape' to give added protection (see report & supporting evidence here <https://www.fw-np.org/community>).

Our submission for the Airbase's inclusion in Essex County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was successful. The Airbase is now defined as a 'Strategic Opportunity' for nature recovery <https://essexnaturepartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/lnrs-june-2025.pdf>. This may be a 'material consideration' in the planning process; helps prioritise areas for nature recovery; and highlights areas development should avoid. It also reflects our comparative advantage as a Nature Innovation Zone that includes the North Essex farm cluster, Ground Control and Spains Hall estate.

**Protecting our heritage:** As well as putting in place policies to protect our existing heritage assets, the NPT has conducted research concerning the possible designation of the Airbase as a Conservation Area (Action 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan). A favourable stage 1 assessment has been completed by ECC (Place Services) on behalf of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee (representing a large group of local Parish Councils, not just Finchingfield and Wethersfield). Whilst we await a more detailed stage 2 appraisal and public consultation (and BDC's decision as to whether to designate the airbase as a conservation area), the NPT continues discussions with the Home Office regarding a Master Plan to guide the future use of the base (Action 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan).

**Implementing the rest of our Action Plan:** Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish councils are working hard to start the rest of the 14-point Action Plan in our Neighbourhood Plan that addresses some of the concerns you told us about last Autumn, such as protecting our community assets (including pubs), helping local businesses, and improving public transport, footways, and danger points.

If you have any questions, please email the NPT at [fwnpsteam@gmail.com](mailto:fwnpsteam@gmail.com), contact us via Facebook, check out our website <https://www.fw-np.org/> or go along to your next Parish Council meeting.