

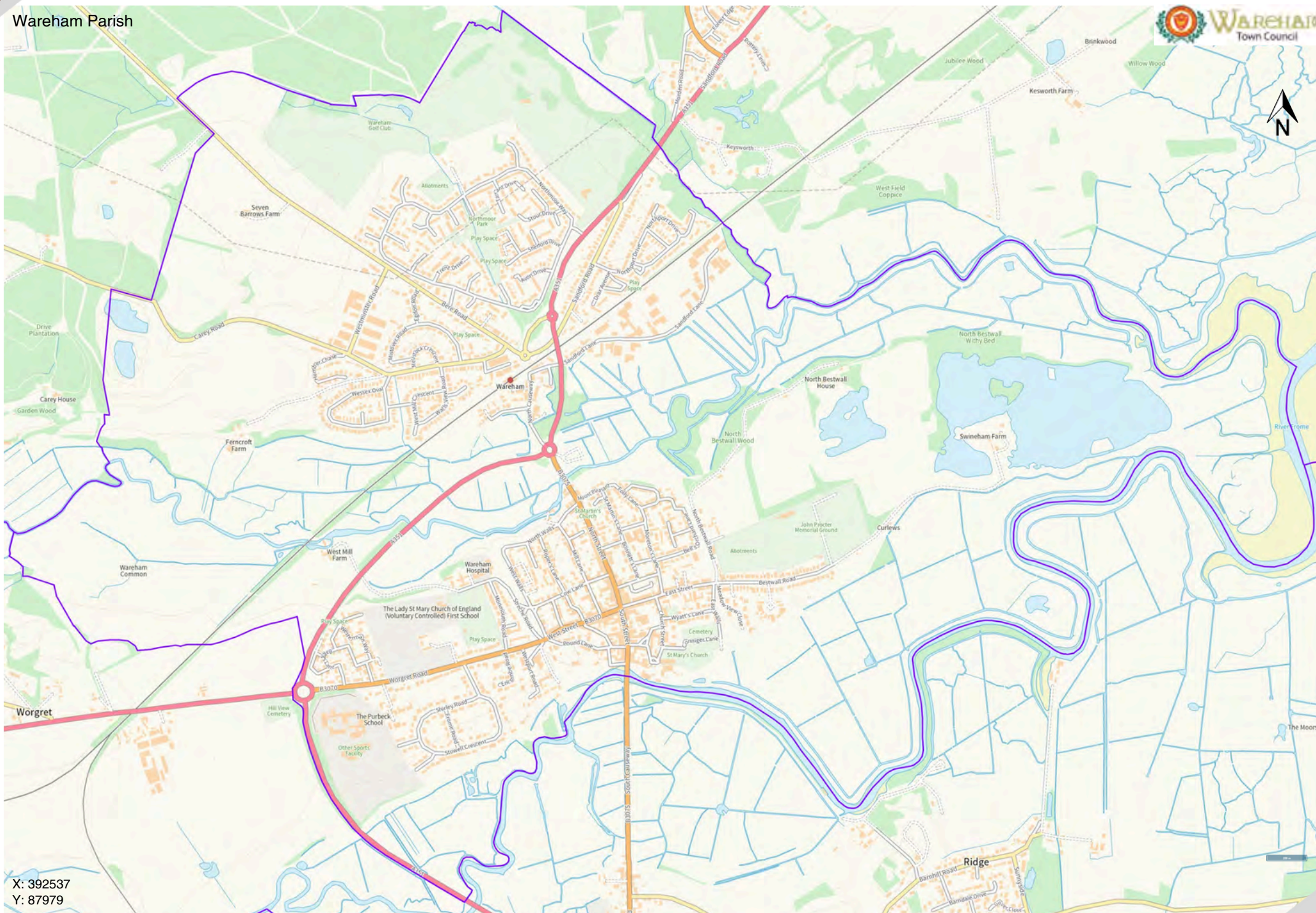


WAREHAM
Town Council

Strategic Plan

2025-2029





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Wareham Town Council: A Strategic Plan for Our Vibrant Future

Welcome to Wareham: Our Heart, Our Home

Wareham is an ancient market town, strategically positioned between the River Piddle and the River Frome, and serving as the gateway to the stunning Isle of Purbeck. Its history is etched into the landscape, most notably through the enduring ancient earth walls. These ramparts, likely built by Alfred the Great in the 9th century, served as a defence against Viking invasions, making Wareham one of only two Saxon walled towns in England. Despite a devastating fire in 1762, the town was rebuilt with charming Georgian architecture, seamlessly blending old and new while retaining its historic street pattern.

Today, Wareham is a bustling market town. Its vibrant centre offers a diverse array of independent shops, traditional pubs, and restaurants. Notable landmarks include the Priory Church of Lady St. Mary and St. Martin-on-the-Walls, which features Saxon and Norman elements and houses an effigy of T.E. Lawrence. The historic Priory now operates as a hotel, adding to the town's character. Cultural attractions include the Wareham Town Museum in the Town Hall and our local cinema.

Community life is active and thriving with regular markets held on Saturdays at The Quay. We celebrate our heritage with events like the annual July carnival, featuring parades, stalls and music on the Recreation Ground, alongside weekly summer music festivals (Wareham Wednesday's) on the Quay. For nature enthusiasts, numerous footpaths along the riverbanks offer opportunities to observe diverse wildlife, including recently returned otters.

Wareham is well-connected. The A351 and A352 roads bypass the town centre, and Wareham railway station provides access to the Southwest Main Line. Additionally, the preserved Swanage Railway aims to extend its services to Wareham, further enhancing connectivity and visitor access.

Wareham Town Council: Leading Our Community Forward

Wareham Town Council serves as the beating heart of local governance for our historic market town. Established in 1974, we proudly carry forward a long tradition of local leadership, including a mayoral lineage stretching all the way back to 1336.

Our Role and Structure

Our Council is comprised of 16 dedicated Councillors. These Councillors, elected for the 2024-2029 term, are your direct voice in shaping our town's future. We believe in open governance; our Full Council meetings and committee meetings – covering Amenities, Personnel, Policy, Resources and Finance, and Planning and Transport – are always open to the public at the Town Hall, inviting you to witness and engage in the decisions that matter most.

Our Mission, Our Promise

Mission Statement

Wareham Town Council will lead and support a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable community by delivering high-quality services, protecting the town's heritage and environment, and empowering residents to shape its future.

Our Commitment to Wareham

At Wareham Town Council, our commitment to the well-being and prosperity of our unique town is unwavering. We are guided by core principles that define who we are and what we stand for:

- **Community Empowerment:** We actively listen to and engage with **all residents**, ensuring your voices are not just heard, but truly valued in every decision that shapes your lives and Wareham's future.
- **Stewardship of Heritage and Environment:** We are dedicated custodians, protecting and celebrating Wareham's profound **historical significance** and its breathtaking **natural surroundings**. These invaluable assets are our legacy, to be preserved for every generation to come.
- **Service Excellence:** We deliver nothing less than **efficient, effective, and responsive services** designed to genuinely enhance the quality of life for everyone in Wareham.
- **Inclusivity and Equality:** We foster a warm, welcoming, and supportive environment where every individual feels a strong sense of **belonging** and has **equal opportunities** to thrive.
- **Sustainable Development:** We champion **responsible growth and practices** that secure a healthy and prosperous future for Wareham, carefully balancing development with environmental protection.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** We operate with complete **openness and integrity**. Our actions are clear, and our decisions are always made with the community's best interests at heart.

Key Initiatives and Our Community Focus

The Council is passionately dedicated to maintaining and enhancing Wareham's distinctive character and facilities. This includes our unwavering support for the Wareham Town Museum, nestled in the Town Hall, which wonderfully showcases our town's rich history – from its ancient Saxon walls to its thriving present. We enthusiastically support cherished local events, like the lively annual July carnival, and continuously work to improve our shared public spaces, including expansive open areas and modern play facilities.

A Vision for Tomorrow: Igniting Town Centre Revitalisation

Looking ahead, the Town Council is embarking on truly transformative projects aimed at revitalising our town centre. Imagine a future where the former NatWest Bank building is reborn as a state-of-the-art cultural hub, boasting an expanded museum, cutting-edge educational facilities, a welcoming tourist information centre, and versatile exhibition spaces. This isn't just a building; it's a cornerstone for our cultural and economic future.

Additionally, our current museum premises at 3 East Street will be thoughtfully refurbished to create a dynamic, hireable community space with modern Council offices above. These exciting initiatives underscore our commitment to attracting more visitors, significantly boosting the local economy, and creating fresh opportunities for residents, ensuring Wareham remains a truly vibrant and cherished place to live, work, and visit.

Building on Success: A Review of Our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

We're incredibly proud to look back at the significant improvements and positive changes achieved under our previous Strategic Plan:

- **Achieving Quality Council Status:** We actively pursued and successfully attained **Quality Council Status**, a clear testament to our unwavering dedication to meeting the highest standards of compliance and transparency.
- **Pioneering Green Transport:** Our commitment to sustainability saw the installation of **two electric vehicle charging points** in Howards Lane Car Park in 2022. These have been exceptionally well-utilised, marking a proactive step in supporting green transport and welcoming visitors.
- **Creating a Grand Welcome:** The initiative to craft attractive gateway features was a resounding success! The long-awaited donated **"Welcome to Wareham Purbeck Stones"** were finally brought out of storage and installed. You can now see them proudly enhancing the town's welcoming appearance, one

opposite the Purbeck School in Worgret Road and the other opposite the Golf Course in Sandford Road.

- **Transforming Open Spaces & Play Areas:** A successful Public Works Loan application enabled the complete **refurbishment of all four play areas** in town in early 2023. This represents a significant investment in upgrading and enhancing our public open spaces and recreational facilities. What's more, new **self-watering planters** have replaced less environmentally friendly ones throughout town, with more planned. This innovative approach has dramatically cut down water wastage and earned high praise from the "In Bloom" judges.
- **Empowering the Community with the Neighbourhood Plan:** A major triumph was the formal adoption of the **Wareham Neighbourhood Plan** by Dorset Council on 8th November 2021. This crucial plan now provides a robust, community-informed framework for future planning consultations and development management.
- **Fostering Closer Community Working:** Following the appointment of our new Town Clerk in 2022, we've actively forged closer working relationships with an ever-increasing number of community groups and organisations. Groups like the Wareham Community Growers, Carnival Committee, and Father Christmas Committee have all experienced the benefits of improved collaborative working. We also successfully resolved a long-standing issue with the Rugby Club, granting them a new 99-year lease with a fair annual rent, strengthening our community ties.

Our Strategic Priorities: Charting the Next Four Years

Building on our solid foundation and the momentum of ongoing projects, the following key priorities have been identified for specific focus over the next four years:

Regenerating Our Town Centre & Preserving Wareham's Rich Heritage and Culture

A Vision for 2 North Street: We've secured an option-to-purchase agreement for 2 North Street, expiring in March 2026. The Town Council will vigorously pursue funding to acquire this property, enabling the Museum to be relocated and significantly upgraded. This will include modern temporary exhibition space, invaluable educational facilities, and a brand-new Tourist Information Centre. This project promises a visually transformed town centre with superb facilities, drawing in both residents and visitors, benefiting local businesses, boosting the town's economy, and elevating Wareham's currently "undersold" cultural importance.



Modernising Howards Lane Toilets: We will redevelop the Howards Lane Public Toilets into new, modern, and accessible facilities for everyone.



Further Enhancing Our Environment

Expanding Sustainable Planters:

The success of our new self-watering planters in saving water and streamlining management has been remarkable. We aim to extend this efficient system to the remaining wrought-iron planters across town over the next 2-3 years, achieving further water-saving efficiencies and reducing volunteer resources needed for plant care.



Developing Hauses Field: The recreational space at Hauses Field will be developed to provide better and more engaging facilities for those living in the Northmoor area, creating a valuable community asset.



Pursuing the Old Middle School Playing Field Asset Transfer for Community Recreation: We will actively pursue the asset transfer of the old Middle School site playing field. Our clear objective is to protect this vital green space from development, retaining it as a cherished recreational area for our community, and to house a new skate park at the site, offering exciting new facilities for our residents.



Supporting Thriving Local Communities

Empowering Our Youth:

We are excited to establish a **Youth Council** to actively consider the views of Wareham's younger generation. This Youth Council will provide vital recommendations to the Council on all issues impacting the town's youth, ensuring their voices shape our future.



Fostering Collaboration:

We will actively encourage greater coordination and collaboration between community groups, creating a wider range of volunteer and engagement opportunities across the town, strengthening our collective spirit.

Continuing Our Organisational Development and Learning

Strategic Staffing Reviews:

We will periodically review our staffing needs to ensure we have the optimal team in place to effectively deliver our Strategic priorities.



Investing in Our People: We are committed to providing valuable training opportunities for both Councillors and Officers, fostering continuous growth and ensuring we remain at the forefront of local governance.

Maintaining Excellence: We will diligently work to maintain our prestigious Quality Council Accreditation, upholding our commitment to the highest standards of operation.



Aligning Finances with Priorities: We will meticulously align the Town Council's finances with our agreed Strategic priorities, ensuring transparent, responsible, and effective allocation of resources for the benefit of all Wareham.

Leading by Example: Our Commitment to Greener Operations

Beyond our community-focused environmental initiatives, Wareham Town Council is dedicated to embedding sustainability within our own operations. We believe in leading by example, continuously seeking ways to reduce our environmental footprint and operate more responsibly. This commitment guides our daily work, from how we manage our facilities to the choices we make in procurement and service delivery. We are actively exploring and implementing practices that:

Reduce our Carbon Footprint:

We are reviewing our energy consumption across Council buildings and facilities, exploring opportunities for greater energy efficiency, and investigating the feasibility of incorporating renewable energy sources where appropriate.



Embrace Sustainable Procurement:

When making purchasing decisions, we prioritise suppliers and products that demonstrate strong environmental credentials, opting for recycled materials, energy-efficient equipment, and locally sourced goods where possible.



Optimise Resource Use:

We are committed to minimising waste generation in our offices and public works, promoting recycling, and conserving water resources wherever we can. Our successful shift to self-watering planters is a prime example of this in action.



Seizing Opportunity: The Devolution Agenda

The landscape of local governance in England is continually evolving, and Wareham Town Council is keenly aware of the opportunities presented by the ongoing devolution agenda from the Unitary Authority. This national movement seeks to shift powers and responsibilities closer to the communities they serve, and we see this as a pivotal moment for Wareham.

We are actively engaged in discussions and exploring pathways to strategically embrace this devolution, identifying services and functions currently delivered at a broader level that could be more effectively managed and tailored by your Town Council. The potential benefits are significant:



Tailored Local Services: By taking on more responsibilities, we can design and deliver services that are precisely aligned with the unique needs and priorities of Wareham residents, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This means greater responsiveness and better outcomes for our community.

Enhanced Local Accountability: Devolution empowers your locally elected Councillors with greater direct control over services, fostering a clearer line of accountability to you, the residents. Decisions will be made closer to home, by those who truly understand Wareham.



Greater Efficiency and Value: Managing services at a town level can often lead to more agile and efficient delivery, potentially offering better value for money by cutting through larger bureaucratic structures.

Community-Led Solutions: Increased local control means more opportunities for community input and participation in the shaping and delivery of services, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and collective achievement.





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