



www.woolpit.org/WNP/

Initial phase nearing completion

A year after volunteers formed the Steering Group, the Neighbourhood Plan continues to make good progress. We are on track to complete the opening phase of community consultation and evidence gathering within the coming weeks. As reported in the last newsletter, a questionnaire is being prepared, and a working group has been formed to tackle this task, with the intention of conducting the survey in the early spring.

The working groups for landscape character appraisal and community consultation have each produced a report, which have been published on the website at

<http://www.woolpit.org/WNP/reports.html>

Additionally, a community profile based on statistical data has been commissioned from Community Action Suffolk. We hope to make this available to download from the website.

Lavenham model

The Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted by Babergh District Council in September, has been a very helpful model for our own plan.

Although Lavenham's historic centre is more extensive than Woolpit's, there are many other similarities that we share: population size, demographic profile, traffic problems, rural setting, and pressure from developers.

The Steering Group invited Carroll Reeve, from the Lavenham neighbourhood planning group, to a meeting which proved immensely helpful; it is clear that we can benefit by their experience and advice.

Passing the baton

Due to pressure of work, Trevor Howard has, with regret, stepped down from chairing the Steering Group. His leadership during this crucial first year of the Neighbourhood Plan is deeply appreciated.

The baton passes to Richard Mawhood, and Caroline Blomfield has stepped up to be the new vice-chair.

Drafting the plan

The report produced by the character appraisal group is important because, together with other inputs, it will enable us to define the objectives and draft the policies to make up our Neighbourhood Plan.

It identifies key assets and important features of the rural setting of our village, which are desirable to retain. Some examples:

The area is landscaped and maintained to an excellent standard with trees and shrubs and natural wildlife ponds.

... in most places the houses are ... well masked by trees and hedges ...

... characterised by more sinuous and older field boundaries ...

This is an attractive rural road with well maintained field hedgerow ... but it is potentially very dangerous with a blind corner immediately past the settlement area.

Woolpit has to experience some growth in order to thrive. Choices will have to be made, but with a proper understanding of the risks and opportunities.



Proposed housing developments

Green Road

Woolpit Parish Council called a special meeting on 19 December to discuss Artisan’s amended scheme for this site. About 80 members of the public were present, 20 of whom spoke — all objecting to the proposal. Most were concerned about the planned ‘informal priority’ traffic management system for the pinch point on Green Road between Mill Lane and Drinkstone Road, which would also affect the village centre. It was considered unworkable, would disfigure the Conservation Area, increase congestion, and harm businesses. The Parish Council rejected the amended plan unanimously; their objections can be read on Mid Suffolk’s planning pages.

Now yet another alteration to the layout of this scheme has recently appeared on those pages. This followed an objection by Suffolk Constabulary, on these grounds:

Children’s play area

- too near to an electricity sub-station
- too near to the vehicle access for the sub-station
- too near what could be a busy road
- has little natural or formal surveillance - this is because it is faced by the windowless gable ends of the adjacent houses

Footpath along eastern boundary

- will act as a crime generator unless widened and properly lit

There were other recommendations concerning surveillance, car parking, footpaths and lighting, and issues relating to security.

Artisan’s letter accompanying the new layout explains that the development will now be connected to a new electricity sub-station to be located in the south-east corner of the site. Three houses are to be reoriented so as to overlook the children’s play area.

Additionally, most of the affordable dwellings have been slightly enlarged, with larger plots.

It should be noted that none of the above addresses the objections raised by the Parish Council.



Artisan’s 4th design for the Green Road site

As a result of these alterations to the application Mid Suffolk District Council have reopened their online commenting facility. If you want to comment, you must do so before the deadline, which is 22 February.

BREAKING NEWS

The date has been fixed for the Planning Committee to reach a decision on this application - **Wednesday 22 February.**

These meetings are open to the public. When the committee debated the Old Stowmarket Road proposal, several Woolpit residents were able to attend. We will try to organise lift-sharing for those who would like to go this time, as we did before.