

Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Aims and Objectives

Major areas of concern were identified in the **Community Consultation Summary Report** (February 2017) compiled from the result of exploratory contacts with various stakeholder groups over a period of eight months.

Traffic in and through the village came out as by far the most important concern for most Woolpit residents. **Road safety, Parking, and Congestion in the village centre** were identified as the most important of the traffic issues. There is a clearly perceived lack of parking in Woolpit, particularly in the village centre, but also at the school and health centre. At the same time, people feel that the centre of the village is badly congested, especially at certain times of day.

The second area of concern was **Housing** and the three main issues in this category were the shortage of affordable/social housing, the need for retirement housing and the perceived threat or scale of housing development.

Under **Footpaths and cycleways** there was a clear demand for better footpath provision, including concerns about the lack of a footpath to Elmswell. Comments indicated that the village needed to create a better network of cycleways particularly as the National Cycle Route 51 passes right through the village centre and from west to east through the parish.

Many of the comments about **Facilities and services** highlight the need to provide more and better play facilities for young children, and appropriately-equipped recreational space for older children and teenagers. Although Woolpit's shops may be considered adequate for the present population, several comments identify a potential future need for a supermarket with better access, especially in terms of parking.

Other issues mentioned were **Wild life and green spaces** and **Heritage and community**.

The **SWOT Analysis** (August 2016) carried out by the Steering Group focused on the six main issues which emerged from the Community Consultation Report.

Our **Vision Statement** (July 2016) 'Woolpit in 2036' sets out our vision '.... of a modern village with a traditional feel where people want to live and work.'

The **Report on Woolpit Businesses** (March 2017) identifies the location (proximity to home, market and customers), access to the A14 and the wider road network, and the availability of premises as the main reasons for businesses to be established here. Although the majority have 25 or fewer employees, the largest employer has over 400 staff and expects to expand. Lack of availability of space for expansion is seen as the most likely barrier to growth, while improvements to roads, transport links and car parking come high on the list of desirable improvements. These include bus services and a cycle route to Elmswell station, while there is a concern about the capacity of the roads in the parish to absorb higher levels of traffic. Remarks about housing show a real need for expansion in order to allow staff to live nearby, but also recognise the importance of careful planning and ensuring commensurate growth of infrastructure, services and amenities.

The **Parish Profile document** (February 2017) identifies what 'thriving, vibrant, sustainable communities' need.

The **Social and cultural** theme's key words are: *active, inclusive* and *safe*, and it lays stress upon *identity, respect* and *cooperation*. Leisure opportunities for children and young people are especially important. The report highlights the low percentage of young families in Woolpit, which may be 'due to lack of affordable housing, or not having suitable employment and training opportunities.' Woolpit probably mirrors Mid Suffolk's population growth (2-3%) in every age category except 15-24 year-olds, where it is shrinking at the same rate. The district scores highly on the key words and values, the exception being adult participation in sport.

Equity and prosperity examines levels of deprivation, locally very low. The proportion of working age benefits claimants in Woolpit is well below county and national levels, but although household earnings and net income after housing costs are comfortably higher than county and national averages, at least 1 in 8 Woolpit households were 'living in poverty' in 2010. The same proportion were in receipt of some form of benefit; this included 45 children. Health: one of the least deprived areas in the country. Social care needs remain low, affecting just over 1 in 10 of older people. But, 'many deprived *people* do not live in deprived *areas*.'

The report promotes a thriving, diverse **Economy**, measuring economic activity, levels of employment, occupations and qualifications. Employment levels in Woolpit are almost identical to national levels, as is the split between public and private sector jobs. Fewer people have full-time jobs, but more are self-employed than nationally. Unemployment has had a lower impact on Woolpit (mostly below 2.5%) than in Suffolk or England, but there is no clear trend in the ratio of jobseekers to vacancies. Most people are well qualified, although 1 in 5 adults have no qualifications. The largest employment sectors in the parish are retail, health and social work, and construction, together accounting for 2 in 5 of all employees.

A good mix of *affordable high quality housing*, is key in the **Housing & built environment** section. Woolpit has a very high proportion of detached houses, and a correspondingly low percentage of terraced houses and flats. Owner-occupation is very high, and the rented sector small. There are many fewer houses in the lower council tax bands than in the county or nationally; the result of this is that the overall ratio of median house price to income remains high, although in every category the median house price is well below the national figure.

Transport and connectivity focuses on *public transport, safe walking and cycling*, and *telecommunications*. In Woolpit, car ownership is high. Fewer people travel less than 2 kilometres to work than in the county or nationally, although the proportion working from home is higher; this places reliance on the internet / telecommunications. Thanks to local services, it takes no longer to reach a doctor, the primary school or a supermarket than anywhere else in the country. But travel times to secondary school, college, a town centre or a hospital are significantly longer. Only 3.2% use public transport to go to work; the national figure is 11%.

Woolpit is fortunate in having *accessible, high-quality Services* that meet community *needs*, unlike many rural communities. For travel to secondary school or a job centre, distance and inadequacy of public transport may present difficulties.

Environment provides data for Mid Suffolk, on *climate change* emissions, *recycling* and *waste*; it shows CO² emissions higher than the national average, but a better performance regarding recycling and waste.

The report concludes with **Governance**, stressing *engagement* with the community and *partnership*. In Mid Suffolk 1 in 3 people feel that they can influence local decisions; almost 1 in 5 have been involved in decision-making. This compares favourably with national figures.

Using the sources listed above we can organise the issues raised into more specific objectives under 3 headings:

- Social;
- Business and economic;
- Environmental.

1. Social Objectives.

SO1 To improve the parking especially near the school and health centre.

SO2 To maintain easy access to the village centre by resolving traffic congestion and the shortage of parking.

SO3 To enable the population to grow and become more balanced in terms of age profile.

SO4 To embrace the development of new homes but at steady rate so integration can keep pace for the benefit of the whole village.

SO5 To regulate housing development so that it responds to housing needs and provides a high quality built environment.

SO6 To encourage investment in infrastructure and services in line with housing growth.

SO7 To adopt a criteria based approach for evaluating proposed or potential sites for new housing.

2. Business and Economic Objectives.

BO1 To maintain and encourage the expansion of our existing services, particularly the health centre and school.

BO2 To ensure land is made available for businesses start-up or expansion outside the historic centre while creating easy access to the village centre.

BO3 To encourage the maintenance of a responsive and competitive business community.

BO4 To become a sustainable, cohesive and thriving community supporting a high standard of living for its residents.

3. Environmental Objectives.

EO1 To maintain and enhance access to open countryside and ensure sustainable access to new housing developments by the creation of safe paths and cycle ways.

EO2 To mitigate the impact of new development on climate change and encourage a low carbon economy.

EO3 To maintain existing 'important' views.

EO4 To keep as much of our agricultural land as possible for agriculture, while encouraging biodiversity.

EO5 To maintain our green places and provide additional green spaces.

EO6 To support new development which contributes positively to Woolpit's existing historic buildings, its rural village character and not becoming a town.