

Woolpit SWOT analysis emerging from the community engagement programme

Strengths

Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good wider transport links: bus service, close to A14, station 2 miles away• unrestricted parking in village centre slows traffic and improves pedestrian access
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good quality housing, especially since replacement of prefabs• good stock of family homes (3-5 bedrooms)
Facilities & services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good public facilities for a community this size: health centre; school; library 2 miles away• good community venues for events and regular meetings of clubs and societies• range and size of shops adequate for present needs
Community & heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• attractive well-preserved historic centre
Footpaths & cycleways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• narrow roads/lanes highly suitable for cyclists and pedestrians (there is virtually a NW-SE network via Broomhill Lane, Rags Lane, Masons Lane, Rectory Lane, Mill Lane)• NCR 51 passes through the village centre
Wildlife & green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• large attractive cricket field• some pleasant green spaces (Lady's Well, Village Hall, Meadowlands)• many old hedgerows, thickets and ancient woodland provide good habitats• several ponds and one small lake

Weaknesses

Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• narrow roads and lanes unsuitable for today's traffic flows and larger vehicles (in the past the Bury Road—The Street—Old Stowmarket Road axis was the only major route through Woolpit)• road safety increasingly at risk owing to: heavy lorries; speed of traffic; traffic excessive on some roads and at some junctions; narrow footpaths/pavements; lack of separated cycle paths/lanes; in some places, increased on-street parking• congested village centre now unsuitable as a through route at peak times
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recent slowdown in housebuilding• inadequate stock of smaller houses/flats suitable as starter homes or for older people to downsize• low turnover of housing due to shortages• shortage of sheltered accommodation for the elderly
Facilities & services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lack of pre-school capacity (Woolpit ARC already oversubscribed)• primary school nearing capacity• health centre at capacity; needs to expand• lack of amenities for children and teenagers
Community & heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poor arrangements for welcoming and integrating newcomers• historic centre in conservation area has limited possibilities for adapting to the demands of a larger community

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| Footpaths & cycleways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing paths/pavements often narrow (need to be wider for pushchairs, wheelchairs and dog walkers) • overgrown verges and hedges often obstruct paths • no safe walkway or cycle path to Elmswell (station) |
| Wildlife & green spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insufficient playing field space (football pitches) • poor play facilities and fewer sports pitches than other villages (in Mid Suffolk) of comparable size • inadequate green spaces (for play and informal recreation) created in recent developments • lack of off-leash areas for dog walkers |

Opportunities

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| Traffic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify parking shortfall, congestion points and road safety hazards • devise a coordinated policy to resolve all of these together, making allowance for future growth • mitigate or avoid aggravating traffic difficulties by appropriate allocation of sites for housing and business development |
| Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a whole-neighbourhood housing strategy addressing not only demand for housing but helping to resolve problems and needs regarding: traffic; facilities and services; pedestrian and cycle links; community coherence; recreation sport and play areas, while protecting and conserving: wildlife habitats; our historic village centre and listed buildings; the rural character and setting of Woolpit |
| Facilities & services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extend health centre • expand school premises (pre-school and primary) • improve play facilities for children • create attractive spaces for young people to socialise • create a new shopping focus outside the historic centre (where there is no room), well connected to the centre by good foot/cycle paths, with adequate parking for users who need cars • increase/improve stock of community venues to meet population growth |
| Community & heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • devise ongoing programme to welcome and integrate newcomers more effectively • protect central conservation area |
| Footpaths & cycleways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create pedestrian/cycle routes safe/separate from motor traffic (particularly where new developments may establish new routes accessing services and amenities) • improve lighting • create safe road crossings |
| Wildlife & green spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect existing key green spaces by protection orders • enhance recreation/play by provision of suitable green spaces in all new developments • protect wildlife habitats and transit routes by provision of green corridors in all new developments • prevent encroachment towards Woolpit Green and The Heath (by suitable site allocation policy) |

Threats

Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• endless shuffling of traffic problems through piecemeal response to individual issues• inadequate and unsustainable adjustments to roads and junctions serving new developments• slow response of SCC Highways to need for changes (signage, regulations regarding speed/parking/access/safety)
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inappropriate scale of development• unsuitable siting of new housing• unsuitable mix/style of housing• degradation of village character and setting• unsustainable development putting too great a strain on services, amenities and community coherence
Facilities & services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unplanned piecemeal bolt-ons (crisis management)• lack of upkeep and management plans for the long term• decay and abuse of amenities though lack of investment and management
Community & heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fragmentation of community through failing to integrate newcomers (the population may grow by 50% within 20 years)• decline to a dormitory village• decay to a museum village for tourist and a skeleton winter population
Footpaths & cycleways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• failure to connect up a pedestrian/cycle network throughout the village (disconnected paths deter use)• failure to invest enough to encourage use of footpaths and cycle paths (eg lighting, hedge maintenance, separation from traffic where adjacent)• failure to consider needs of all users (eg disabled, children, elderly)
Wildlife & green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ribbon development towards Woolpit Green and The Heath• decline of wildlife due to loss of habitats, transit corridors, feeding areas• loss of key green spaces to car parking, roads or other development• failure to ensure that new developments include adequate additional recreation/play space, including sports pitch(es) where appropriate

Richard Mawhood
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