

The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

Main Report

Prepared by the Steering Group

January 2007

Supported by



Introduction

In February 2005, the Parish Council was asked by Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) if it would be interested in writing its own Parish Plan, offering an opportunity to discover how our village would like to develop. It seemed to be a plan worth pursuing. Parish plans look at social, economic and environmental issues and it was suggested that parishes carrying out such a project are then in a better position to access new services, resulting in improved facilities for all sections of the community.

As a parish councillor, I have long been aware of the frustrations of trying to carry out ideas and plans such as improving playground facilities, providing extra car parking space, tackling the problems of increased traffic flow, helping to provide affordable housing and so forth. The parish council has very limited powers and funds and new councillors realise very quickly how slowly the wheels can grind. Sometimes it can take years for good ideas to come to fruition.

A Parish Plan was an opportunity to give fresh energy, direction and purpose to the council, a chance to listen properly to everyone in the parish and to develop plans in a proactive and enthusiastic way.

A public meeting in June 2005 indicated enthusiasm for a Parish Plan. A steering group was formed, funding was acquired and in April 2006 a detailed questionnaire was delivered to every household. We were overwhelmed by the volume, detail, knowledge and involvement of the people of Long Melford as the completed questionnaires were returned.

The results from those questionnaires and similar ones from visitors, the business sector and our young people were then analysed, giving rise to this report.

No promises can be made, but I hope that what we have discovered can be used to improve the lives of all those who love living in this beautiful village. An action plan is being formed, priorities are being made and we are at the beginning of a great effort to work together to shape the future of our village.

Judi Walton
Chair - Long Melford Parish Council



*“A smashing village to live in, let’s
keep it a village.
I have enjoyed it for over 50 years.
I think that’s proof I like it.”*

Acknowledgements

Thanks

This parish plan would never have got off the ground without the initiative and financial support of the Long Melford Parish Council. Other contributors were :

- Suffolk County Council (locality budget)
- Long Melford Business Association
- Defra
- Babergh District Council

and The residents of the village through two successful fund-raising events.

Suffolk ACRE has been instrumental in presenting the concept of a parish plan at the initial public meeting, and in training and support while the project was in progress.

A special vote of thanks must go to the volunteers in the village who not only distributed the household questionnaires, but painstakingly collected them back again, sometimes visiting the same dwelling up to seven times or more. That extreme of diligence was the foundation for a very high rate of returns and corresponding confidence in the value of the collected answers.

Thanks too to those others who spent many hours keying the data from questionnaire forms into a PC database; an essential step which made detailed analysis possible.

The Steering Group are also grateful to many organisations in the village who have helped to make the project a success. Among them are: the Trustees of the Holy Trinity Hospital, The Long Melford Community Association and the Village Hall Committee. A lot of the day-to-day copying work was contributed free by the Parish Council office.

The Steering Group

The members of the Steering Group are : Don Watson (chair), Roy Adams, David Burch, Jane Burch, Andrea Coe, Keld Fenwick, Rob Guyton, Dudley Kemp, Roger Kistruck, Patrick Kohler, Paul Rylott and Judi Walton.

David Burch and Judi Walton are members of the Parish Council

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Overview

This plan is the outcome of a year and a half of voluntary effort in the parish of Long Melford in Suffolk. It has been conducted by a Steering Group with twelve members, and depended on work done by well over a hundred people in total.

The aim has been to discover what the people of the parish feel about its present state and future prospects, so that they can better influence decisions that affect them.

The most striking thing about the results is the deep affection for the village shown by most of the people who live in it. They value its friendliness, safety, beauty, peace and the countryside round about. They also see it threatened by excessive road traffic, by overdevelopment, by social changes and by encroachment from Sudbury. Eighty percent want the village to 'stay much as it is', though there is a long list of improvements that are wanted too.

The following sections describe how the study was done, the results of analysis and the issues and recom-

mended actions that grow out of them. There are nearly thirty 'actions' in this report, and almost all of them will depend on voluntary work by members of the Long Melford community as well as on official decisions by councils and other bodies. Although Long Melford has a strong tradition of self-help and many willing volunteers, there are limits on how much can be taken on at any one time. The actions outlined in this report may therefore take several years to bring to completion. We hope that the report will at least provide the core of a programme of improvements which the Parish Council, the Community Association and voluntary groups may pursue as fast as enthusiasm and resources allow.

We hope also that the clearly-expressed preferences of the residents and others involved in the life of Long Melford will be recognised and incorporated in the plans and decisions of the district and county councils and other government bodies.



The study

The Parish Plan project was set up at a public meeting at the Village Hall in June 2005 which elected ten members of the Steering Group. Two members of the Parish Council were then invited to join.

By its Terms of Reference, the Steering Group reports to the Parish Council, which has made an important financial contribution, holds the funds and pays the expenses. In other respects the Steering Group has acted as an independent body, raising its own finance through grants from the Department for Rural Affairs (Defra), Suffolk County Council, The Long Melford Business Association and local fund-raising events.

The way the study was carried out was guided very largely by Suffolk ACRE, which provided two training workshops and sample documentation. It also acted as distributor for the funds provided by Defra which were the largest single financial contribution.

Communities

The village consists of several overlapping communities: residents, businesses, young people and visitors. A very early decision was to treat each of these communities in its own right, aiming first to uncover the issues that matter to each of them and then to measure the strength of opinion on each of the major items.

The first stage involved open meetings to establish an early understanding of the main issues (at the Village Hall, with the Business Association, and in the schools). The second stage, to measure opinion, was dealt with by questionnaires. Separate questionnaires were developed for households, businesses, young people and visitors. Most were modest documents of a few pages, but the Household Questionnaire, driven by the large number of issues uncovered in the public meetings of the first stage, ran to thirty six pages, with ninety five questions.

Questionnaires

Distributing and collecting the questionnaires was a big task taking well over a month. When unoccupied premises and those in the course of moving were eliminated, there

“Ask young people what they want. Skateboard ramp. Somewhere to sit sheltered but close to home.”



were 1553 households to cover. A team of just over a hundred volunteers was recruited and trained to distribute both the Household Questionnaire (HQ) and the Young People's Questionnaire (YPQ), and to collect the completed forms afterwards.

This was an outstanding success, with 1207 forms eventually returned; a rate of over 77%, which we understand is exceptional for such a large village. There were additionally over a hundred Young People's Questionnaires returned (just over 50% of the relevant age group) and fifty six business questionnaires (roughly 50% of business premises in the village), together with eighty six questionnaires from visitors.

Database

The household questionnaires were numbered after collection (to preserve anonymity) and then entered into a database. A software package 'Village Appraisal for Windows' (VA) was purchased which provided a library of draft questions to help in designing questionnaires, together with a ready-made database structure and some basic tools for analysis.

The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

Data input and assembly for this large survey took eight weeks, with fourteen volunteer operators working in parallel for the input. The other questionnaires were an easier proposition, being much fewer in number, and with a fraction of the number of questions. The Business Questionnaire and the Young People's Questionnaire were input to simple custom databases using 'Filemaker', while the visitors' results were analysed in Excel.

Although the 'VA' package can (and did) generate some useful statistics, it was found helpful to translate the complete database into 'Filemaker' for the more detailed analyses. This has been very successful in providing a flexible enquiry system for investigation into the big questionnaire.

Analysis

Analysing the results took longer than expected, partly because of the richness and complexity of the data in the Household Questionnaire, and partly because it is a specialist job which fell to one person. Overall it took about 13 weeks, start to finish (including interruptions!).

The quality of the returned questionnaire forms was

generally excellent for all four surveys. The large numbers of Household, Business and Young People's forms, being a high proportion of the population, give confidence in the results. Although nearly a hundred Visitors Questionnaire forms were received, they are, of course, only a small sample of the visitors to the parish. The numbers are too small to be an accurate representation of visitors' opinions, but give some useful indications, and help to confirm some other findings.

Besides the surveys, a small number of 'reality checks' in the form of reported visits and observations were completed by members of the Steering Group to look at the condition of footpaths and litter bins and the shops in the village and in neighbouring villages. In addition the Steering Group has undertaken a good deal of factual checking where this is necessary to lend strength and accuracy to a survey of opinion.

Report

An editorial team from the Steering Group then drafted this report and prepared it for publication. In the effort to make the report succinct and readable a great deal of material contributed during the surveys has had to be left out, together with the details of the analysis. In case this is of interest, however, the analysis papers and tables of written comments are available on a CD.

It is worth stressing that all opinions and data have been retained and sorted, even if they do not appear in the main report or the shorter Summary Report. Many people put a great deal into their replies, coming up with original ideas, drawing diagrams and making important specific suggestions about village issues. These have not been ignored or lost. The complete archive of data and opinion is preserved on paper and is available electronically (including every single comment). The Steering Group will make all relevant material from this archive available to councils, decision makers and working groups as the Action Plan develops.

Background

Long Melford nestles in the rolling countryside of South West Suffolk three miles north of Sudbury, and about twelve miles south of Bury St Edmunds. The parish of Long Melford extends to take in part of Bridge Street to the north, as well as houses in the hamlets of Newmans Green, Cuckoo Tye and Cranmore Green.

To the east of the village (and on the 'wrong side' according to many residents) is the busy A134 by-pass, whilst on the western side the slow meanders of the River Stour mark the Suffolk-Essex border.

Complexity

Many residents pay tribute to a sense of community and warmth, and it is tempting to think of the village as an integrated whole. The inside view is much more complex.

In fact there are many interlocking village communities, and others existing beside each other, sometimes without a lot of mutual knowledge. The residents range from those who have lived and worked here for their whole lives, following generations before them, to those who are recent arrivals with very different expectations of the place where they live. The size of the village and the variety of its people makes for a wide range of interest groups and a fascinating mix of activities.

There has been a permanent settlement in Long Melford for over two thousand years. Two Roman roads crossed on the village Green with a third crossing the main road to the north of Bridge Street, leading us to believe that even then this was an important area. Roman pottery and other objects are dug up in many gardens all along the main street. Even before the Roman invasion there was an Iron Age settlement towards the south end of the village.

A working village

Long Melford is, and always has been, a working village with farm and factory, workshop and gallery, offices, agencies and builders' yards existing right in the middle. Starting in Tudor times, Long Melford grew rich on the quality of its woollen cloth and built the splendid array of



timber-framed houses and inns still visible along what is known as the longest village street in England. It is thought that the term 'Long' was added to Melford for this very reason in the early 15th century. The scale of wealth generated from the wool trade is amply portrayed by the grandeur of the village's two stately homes and perhaps the most imposing parish church in East Anglia.

Changes

Over the years the textiles changed, though their influence is still evident in the village. The flax and linen business is remembered by the *Scutchers Arms*, now a restaurant on Westgate Street, whilst *Cocoa Nut House* is a reminder that in the late 19th century, the new railway connection brought in raw fibre for processing and weaving into coconut matting at a factory on that site. There was also an iron foundry and even a gas works (now a factory making caravans).

Constant wealth generation, innovation and change allowed owners to 'modernise' their properties so that many of the village's early timber-framed buildings have a Georgian or Victorian façade hiding the original

"Long Melford is a unique historic village which must retain its character with a good balance of commercial and private dwellings. Artisans and crafts, restorers, repairers and small businesses must be encouraged so that Long Melford continues to be a real working village . . ."



Background



Development

In more modern times, in addition to the development along the main street, extensive building throughout the last fifty years has seen the population expand with a large residential base of individual homes, housing estates, owner occupied and local authority homes, sheltered and nursing homes, housing association homes and a range of small developments ingeniously filling available spaces. Many people live and work in Long Melford but even more travel to a wide range of destinations to work, so that the village forms a base during the evenings and weekends for those who live a large part of their lives outside it.

The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

Today, Long Melford's 3500 residents are well served by almost 150 businesses. This means that all essential services, including a good public transport system, are available and well within the levels recommended by the government guidelines. The village has a much more extensive range of shops than is usual for its size, including fashion, fine art, antiques, house furnishings, two butchers and a bookshop. The factories, workshops and builder's yards still exist among the shops and houses strung along the main street.

The village has three churches and a well established primary school and nursery which receive good reports from school inspectors. Most older students travel to well

respected middle and upper schools in Sudbury, Clare and Bury St Edmunds and some to the private sector schools that serve the district.

Variety

Besides a lively pub culture, Long Melford has a number of specialist restaurants and is increasingly associated with a good evening out or the opportunity for lunch. It has long-standing, successful cricket and football clubs as well as other clubs and societies that cater for a wide range of interests including music and local history. Events at the Village Hall, the Old School Community Centre, the Working Men's Club and the Royal British Legion are extensive, covering everything from ballet to farmers' markets. Classes for a range of activities are available and for those who prefer the outdoors, the network of footpaths and bridleways is well kept and well used.

The many tourists and visitors that come to Long Melford speak of an attractive, busy, prosperous village with a great range of services. The view of the residents is arguably more complex as we hope this parish plan will help to show. However one overwhelming fact stands out from all of our findings: people enjoy living and working in this most popular of Suffolk villages. They are proud of its beauty and its heritage and believe passionately in its future.

“Big enough to support a good range of amenities. Small enough to have a good community atmosphere. It is a beautiful place to live, but is a working village, not a tourist centre.”

Who we are

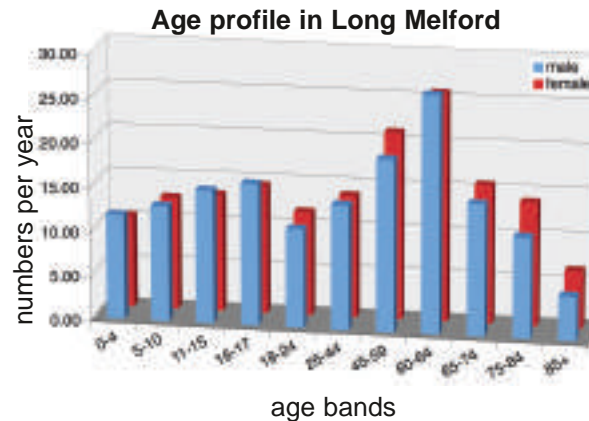
As described elsewhere, Long Melford is an old village with industrial as well as agricultural roots. It has grown considerably over the last 50 years, and now numbers around 3500 people.

Age distribution

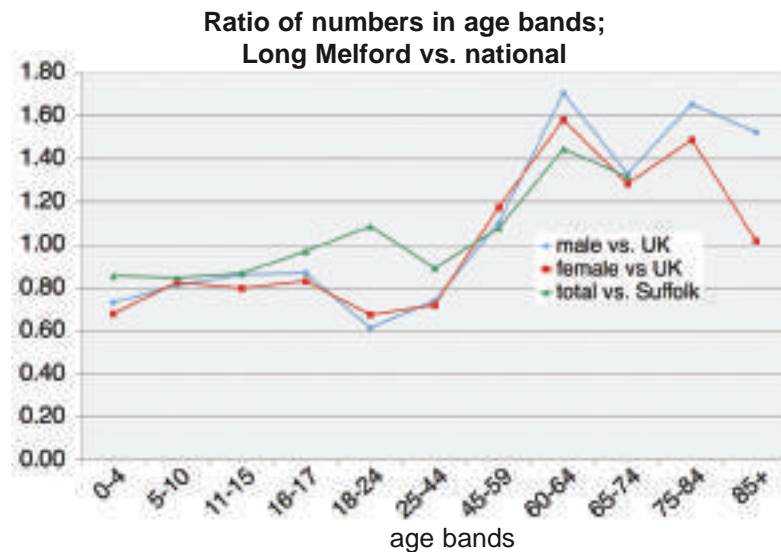
The age distribution is shown in the diagram below right. Since the age bands range in width from two years to twenty, the numbers in each band have been corrected for the width of that interval. The distribution is skewed somewhat to the older age ranges, as is true of most European populations with an increasing life expectancy and a declining birth rate.

Comparing the numbers of people in each age bracket with national statistics, there is a distinct trend, with Long Melford having fewer young people, and more older ones than the country as a whole. In addition there is a discernible 'bulge' around the age of 60-65 in Long Melford (possibly caused by people retiring into the village over the last few years). When compared with the figures for the county of Suffolk (dating from 2001), the effects are less pronounced, but still there.

Elderly people living alone form a significant part of the population. In the survey there are 229 households (out of 1207, or 19%) with only one occupant, aged 65 or over. Of these, 50 are male, 172 female, and there is no information about the other 7.



*[It is important that]
 “. . . it stays a friendly clean village.
 Need to increase facilities for
 young-parent/toddler group.
 Older children need something.
 Most importantly, a community
 village where local events are
 organised and we all support them.”*



Young people

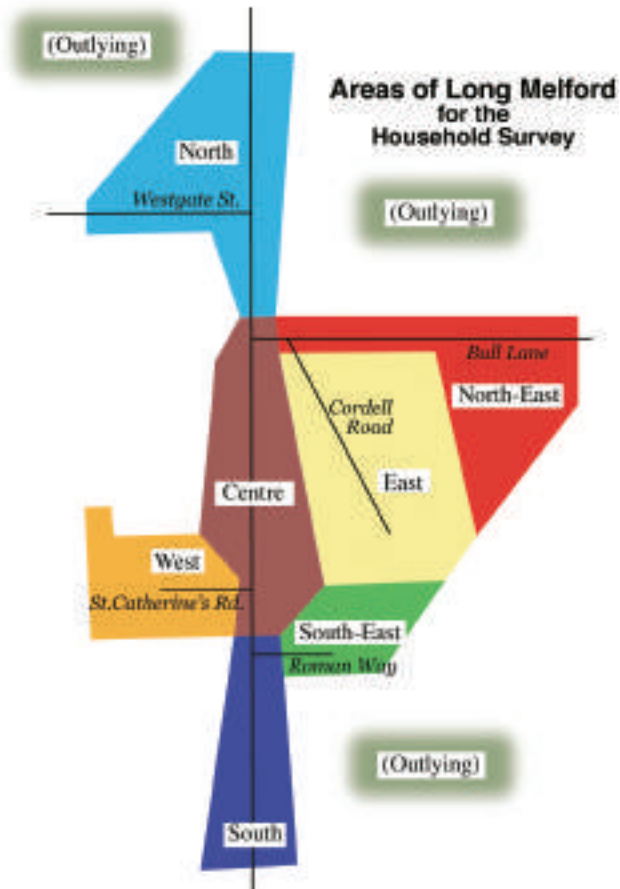
One hundred and six young people completed our Youth Questionnaire, evenly spread between girls and boys and with a fair spread across the age-range of 9 to 17.

Most of the young people had lived a good while in the village and nearly half had spent their whole life here (so far!). Most (82%) attend either Uplands Middle School or Sudbury Upper School with the rest scattered between ten other schools and colleges and two having left school.

“As a new resident I find the village a pleasant place to live. Tourism is important. The influx of visitors patronise local businesses which in turn benefits the whole community. A lot of large villages may have a small shop or a post office only!”

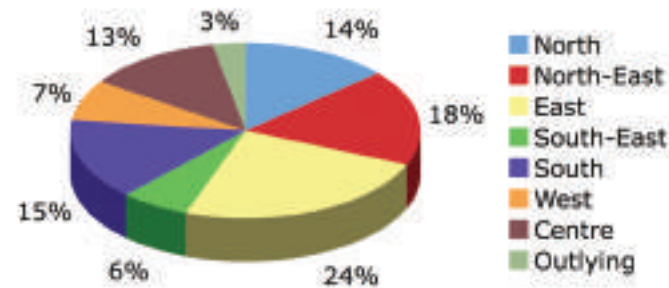
Areas of the village

Many of the issues raised in this study are related to the geography of the village, as well as to the numbers of people. For this reason, the Household survey recorded the 'Area' for each returned questionnaire form.

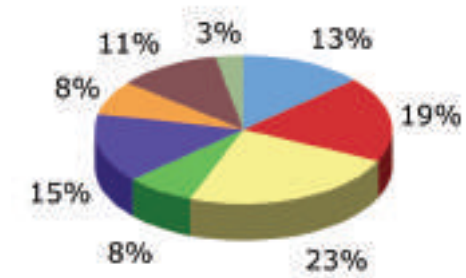


The numbers of households and numbers of people are shown below. It can be seen that the two most populous areas (East and North-East) together form more than 40% of the village. The three 'Eastern' areas are half of the total.

Households by area



People by area



Public services

The questionnaire contained a number of questions inviting comment about a wide range of public services: health, the emergency services, refuse collection, the main utilities like gas, electricity and water. Education was not covered because it did not emerge at all as an issue during the consultations which led up to the drafting of the questionnaire. The results reveal satisfaction with many of those services but there are one or two areas of serious concern and strong criticism.



Public utilities

On the good side, the provision of gas, electricity and water supplies are highly rated with very few criticisms. The local council refuse collection service, concerns about which frequently appear in our local media, nonetheless gets the approval of most of the village with 87% of respondents calling the service either good or reasonable. Street cleaning and street lighting also gain a majority of approval but with less enthusiasm and there is criticism of snow clearance and the state of public toilets. All of these areas, especially the last two, are clearly services where the Parish Council will want to put pressure on the authorities to keep to their own published standards.

Issue: Concern about the standards of provision of some public services such as lighting, snow clearance and the maintenance of public toilets.

Action: Establish clear procedures for reporting to relevant authorities and invite the Parish Council to publish them.

As a village we feel less than satisfied about the reception of broadcast services. TV reception is felt to be fair but there were many criticisms of radio and especially of broadband and mobile phone reception. Our location in a valley clearly hinders these, as does the distance from the telephone exchange. However, there is sufficient feeling about these issues to merit a campaign for improvement.

Issue: Concern about the quality of reception for phones, radio and the Internet.

Action: Investigate the feasibility of an interest/action group involving residents and businesses to influence the service providers.

Emergency services

Our fire brigade and ambulance service are highly regarded and have excellent reputations.



The police, however, do not command the full confidence of the village and this gives rise to an important action plan issue. A quarter of the respondents felt that the standard of the police emergency service was 'poor' and well over half feel the same about the service of the local officer. Many have gone on to record comments about the need for a 'police presence' and these opinions come from established residents, not just newcomers. It is felt that the local officer is seldom if ever seen. This view is felt most strongly in the east of the village, from the Roman Way estate, through Swanfield, along Cordell and into the Shaw Road estate but it has to be said that in all areas more than half the population is dissatisfied with the

“Would like to see police on foot, walking around the village. Cannot remember the time I have seen them, it’s always in a car. Melford is a lovely village. Let’s keep it that way. We have families with kids. They would like their children to live in a safe area.”

service of the local police officer.

This concern about service is echoed in the question about police coverage which acts as a confirmation of the importance of this issue. Again those to the east of the main road feel particularly concerned about ‘coverage’ and they are joined by those who live in the centre. A closer look at the figures reveals, perhaps unsurprisingly, that concern rises with age. Those between 45 and 75 feel most strongly about this issue.

A good deal of this concern must be based on people’s direct experience of crime and anti-social behaviour although it is pleasing to note that of the people who completed the question about crime 55% had experienced no disturbance or problem at all.

Disturbances

Happily none of our respondents reported physical injury or mugging during the twelve months before the questionnaire but, although the percentages were not especially high, there were 155 references to theft and 350 reports of vandalism so there clearly is a problem underscoring the revealed unhappiness about police coverage.

The east of the village and the centre were the areas which experienced the most vandalism, the east and north east reporting the most acts of theft. Drunkenness and

noise were also most prevalent in those three areas. Fortunately, the number of references to drug-related disturbance was small. Concern about the various aspects of crime and anti-social behaviour came mostly from the middle age ranges of those questioned; those in their main working years between 18 and 60 most frequently reported instances of disturbance. Young people were more frequently concerned about drunkenness but the rate of disturbance of more elderly residents was thankfully rather less than the average.

On first reading, the number of disturbances (150 people suffered from theft and 350 from vandalism) seems rather high for a rural village but, when placed alongside other data such as that presented to the Parish Council by the police at the Annual Parish Meeting, it does not look out of keeping with official records. In fact it is surprising that we received no reports of violence as, in that respect, the police annual report reveals a rather worse picture than our survey.

Response

This comparison further underlines the need to place this issue high on our list of those requiring a specific action plan to improve the situation. Although the local officer does attend Parish Council meetings, and there have been constructive meetings between the council and the Police Inspector in Sudbury, existing arrangements are seen by most people in the parish as unsatisfactory. It must be possible to do better. Our plan needs to develop specific, workable suggestions to increase the police coverage of the village and the visibility of that coverage as well as opening up a dialogue with the decision makers in the police service to tackle the issues raised.

Issue: Wide-ranging dissatisfaction about the police ‘coverage’ of the village, especially in terms of the visible presence of our local officer.

Action: Establish a dedicated liaison group to

hold regular meetings with the local police to explore practical ways to raise the profile of the police in Long Melford.

This action is vital. Residents were asked what measures should be introduced to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. ‘A greater police presence’ was clearly top of the list.

Other well-supported suggestions included better police consultation, as noted in the action point above, and the provision of more activities for young people. This last point was supported by over 60% of people who responded to the question and 77% of the younger age range from 11 to 24.

Neighbourhood watch schemes, improved street lighting and more drink/drug education were among other ideas supported by many.

Licensing restrictions were supported by 27% of respondents and, although this suggestion did not receive a majority among any age group, there is a degree of local concern among residents, especially in the centre of the village, about the effects of recent licensing changes.

All of these measures - and others - should appear regularly on the agenda of the dedicated meetings which might result from this action point being pursued.

*[What is important is . . .]
“keeping on top of crime & anti-social behaviour.”*

but still

*[Long Melford is . . .]
“peaceful and relatively crime-free”*

Health

This is another public service important to everyone. Residents were asked to comment on a wide range of health-related services.

The Long Melford and Lavenham General Practice serves as many as twelve villages altogether. The GPs can be pleased with their reputation in Long Melford. Only 2% felt that the doctors' service was 'poor' and the nurses in the health centre had an outstanding vote of confidence, with less than 1% of 'poor' responses among those that answered for that item. Other medical and health services did not do so well, though none of them appears to be in serious trouble, since the positive opinions always outnumber the negatives.

Moving the surgery?

As a follow-up to concern expressed at the public meetings, one question (HQ47) probed the idea of expanding the surgery and moving to a different site. The response indicates that there is a very substantial preference for the surgery to stay where it is, or at least in a central location in the village. In addition, almost a thousand people feel it is important for them to be able to get to the surgery on foot rather than in a car.



Because of its importance, a good deal of work has been done in the analysis of this particular issue and although there is support for an improved surgery and a

desire for better access and parking, the idea of the surgery staying in the centre of the village polls seven and a half times as many first preferences as a possible move to High Street, together with more than twice the second preferences. As far as this village is concerned, the result could not be clearer.

Issue: Considerable disquiet about the future of the surgery.

Action: There is a need for transparent discussion and communication about future plans and the reasons behind them. It may be desirable to establish an interest group within the village to engage with the Suffolk Primary Care Trust in such discussions.

Access for the disabled

In addition to this burning question within the village, a marked number of respondents addressed issues to do with disability. There are a few buildings in the village that are perceived to be quite difficult for those with disabilities, though most are at least 'OK'. The more difficult facilities naturally had the largest number of comments. They ranged from 3 complaints about the Village Hall to 110 for the post office. There were also 42 for the Parish Council office, 33 for 'other shops' and 22 for the library. It appears that both the post office and the Parish Council office have problems of access which a lot of people find troublesome. 25 of the 110 complaints about access to the post office mentioned wheelchairs specifically.

Issue: Difficult access for disabled people to some buildings in the village.

Action: Parish Council to discuss with those responsible for the premises and to seek advice from the appropriate authorities about methods and funding possibilities for improvements.

Getting to and from medical services is difficult for a substantial number of people in the village. It seems surprising that as many as 149 people (6.8% of those in the village) 'often' experience difficulty in getting to hospital or the doctor or both, while no less than 544 (25%) have difficulty at least occasionally. The majority of people with



these problems are not disabled but the proportion of those who are and who do experience difficulty is inevitably higher.

Good neighbours

These figures indicate a problem that could perhaps be addressed by a 'Good Neighbour' scheme, a further village 'service' which received considerable support from respondents. Well over a thousand people felt that such a scheme would benefit the village and about 750 people said they would help as at least occasional and often as regular volunteers.

Issue: Need to provide organised help for a variety of individual needs such as transport to medical services, shopping, gardening etc.

Action: To investigate the legal, safety and organisational frameworks needed and then establish an effective Good Neighbour scheme in Long Melford.

Local government

Much of the responsibility for pursuing the matters raised in this report will fall to our councillors and one of the public services covered by our questionnaire was public representation.

Four out of five residents say they have never attended a Parish Council meeting. Less than one in ten has attended during the last four years. The balance of opinion is that the 'local council' does not publicise its decisions and activities very well. It is not clear whether this reaction is to the Parish Council specifically, or to the district and county councils as well. (The most probable answer is 'All of them'.)

Representation

When asked about how well their elected representatives in local government are aware of local concerns and feel-

ings it seems that whereas the Parish Council has a relatively positive image (i.e. it is seen to know what it is talking about), the same is not true of the district council, and still less of the county council.

The strange feature of this result is that the local county councillor is also a district councillor and a member of the Parish Council. Many who are reasonably happy about his knowledge of local issues in a district council setting apparently feel that he is 'not aware' of them in the same way in the county council!

This does not really make sense, so a more probable interpretation is that people have taken the question to be about each of the councils as a whole, rather than about their locally-elected councillors. It then makes obvious sense to believe (whether it is actually true or not) that the

county council is remote from the village, and indifferent to its concerns.

Whatever interpretation is taken, there is clearly room for greater communication of decisions and of information. The Parish Council is already addressing some of these points but more could be done to ensure that local residents develop greater confidence in those who represent them.

Issue: People don't feel in touch with what the councils are doing, nor do they feel that the councils are in touch with local concerns.

Action: The Parish Council and District and County Councillors to explore practical, immediate and easily accessed ways of informing the public and receiving input from them.

Communication

Councils looking at this issue may perhaps be interested in the methods that Long Melford residents employ to get information. Top of the list is the 'What's On' community magazine and developing a more proactive relationship with that already successful medium might be a good starting point. Attempting to get more regular features in other local papers would also seem to be a useful route and there is substantial support for more prominent display of information through parish and tourist notice boards and information points including local services and maps.

"It is important that Long Melford remains a viable place for local people to live and work. More affordable housing for people who already live in the area is vital"



The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

Public transport

Long Melford relies heavily upon the private car for transport. Of the 1655 vehicles in Long Melford, 1149 (69%) are used every week for transport to work or education outside Long Melford. This excludes shopping or leisure trips. Most car-owners use their cars/vans for getting to work, even if they live in the village. Less than 100 walk and only 24 cycle although there are 500 cycles in the village. With nearly 300 people working in Sudbury, only a few (33) go by bus.

Buses

This is in line with national trends* and it may be unrealistic to expect to solve all of Long Melford's traffic problems through improved services but there are areas where improvements could be made: the business questionnaire indicated that bus times need a better match with shift working. Also, coordinating bus and train times more effectively was suggested.

Where buses are used (by 793 people), shopping (46%) is the main purpose with social and leisure use the second largest at 30%. There is an obvious and very marked relationship between car ownership and the use of the buses with residents who have no car or only one car in a household being far more likely to travel by bus. There are no surprises in this, except perhaps the very low overall use of what must be considered a largely excellent bus service for any village.

Improvements

Quite a large number (1752) replied to the question about improving bus services, though only 862 had definite suggestions. Many of those with definite views are in favour of extended evening services (53%) and improved Sunday services, too (40%). These are the most popular improvements proposed, but others, such as changed routes, improved timetables and better shelters were voted for by 527 people in all, 61% of those interested in improvements.

* DfT Public Transport Statistics Bulletin 2006

Young people

Many of the activities of young people involve travel and over half make a bus journey at least once a week to go outside the village (in addition to school journeys). The youth of the village is also well supported by families giving lifts. 83% get some kind of lift every week with nearly a third having 5 or more lifts per week. 32% said that lack of transport was a hindrance in their lives and 69% had suggestions to improve the bus timetables that operate from the village.

Most of these suggestions ask for more buses on Saturdays throughout the day, additional evening services on all days and more buses on Sundays, both during the



day and in the evenings. Those in the older age range make more journeys in the week and are keener for there to be improvements - a natural result of increased independence.

Trains

Trains are used by a minority of Long Melford residents. Only 164 people (14% of those in work) use the train

even occasionally for work purposes, with 52 of them (32%) using it 'often'. Train use is much more likely for shopping or leisure purposes but even then few people rate their use as 'often'.

The questions about improving train services had a similar, though slightly smaller response to those about buses, with 699 looking for definite changes. Those who use the service often are the main contributors. The most important change asked for is later evening connections (449 people). This is because the last train arrives in Sudbury before 22:00 which means, for example, leaving Liverpool Street Station in London at 20:38. There are no bus connections from Sudbury to Long Melford between 1810 and 2220, and none later, so passengers on the last four trains into Sudbury have to wait till then or find another way.

Issues: a) Awareness of the under-use of existing public transport services.

b) Concern at the frequency of bus and train services, particularly at weekends and evenings.

Action: Form an interest group of councillors and others to approach local service operators for discussion about the rationale behind current services, to explore ideas for improvement to the schedules and to provide a process for reporting other public concerns.

"It's most important to look after the younger generation, with more affordable housing for first-time buyers, more activities etc. The future of the village depends on keeping the young people here . . ."

Housing and development

Long Melford is primarily a community of home owners with 73% of homes owner-occupied. Of the rest just over 15% are either local authority or housing association properties and 8% private rented houses.

Alternative accommodation

The number of households where people are seeking alternative accommodation is 54, which might seem very low in terms of the overall population but is nevertheless significant in terms of the number of properties required to meet their needs.

The barriers to moving were cited as being house prices within the village and the lack of suitable council or private rented accommodation available. In terms of the actual accommodation the highest percentage being sought were houses/council houses. In view of the restrictions placed upon the development of new local authority housing this potentially poses serious problems for the future.

Issue: A significant number of people in Long Melford expressed a need for alternative accommodation.

Action: To ensure that these needs are reflected in Babergh District Council's Local Development Framework.

Development directions

With increasing emphasis upon developing sustainable communities, it is interesting to note that the majority of Long Melford businesses reported in the Business Questionnaire (BQ4) that most of their employees did not actually live within the village. However, roughly 300 villagers do work in Long Melford according to their replies to the Household Questionnaire (HQ18).

Another significant issue related to planning policies is the fact that the survey revealed an average of 1.4 vehicles per household whereas current planning policies allow for parking for only 1 vehicle per dwelling in new

developments. This is also an important factor in the congestion and parking problems discussed later ('Roads and their Problems', below).

In terms of development, a third of respondents thought that there had been the right amount of development in Long Melford over the last ten years. (The percentages for 'too much', 'about right', 'too little' were 18%, 31% and 7%) However, it was generally felt that the properties built had been too expensive and that there had been too much in-filling.

Small houses

Of those who expressed an opinion on the housing needed in the village, the majority wanted to see homes for young people, small family homes and low-cost properties for sale. A quarter expressed a desire to see more rented accommodation available either in the public (21%) or private (5%) sectors, including Housing Associations. Small groups of houses and craft workshops were the preferred types of development with very few respondents favouring large estates.



Where?

Villagers were also asked where future development should take place - if at all. The only location with a positive response was the former Bush Boake Allen site at Liston. This is largely outside the parish boundary, the remainder falling within Braintree District Council's responsibility in Essex. As a result, the opportunity for influencing any future development proposals on this site may be limited.

The least unpopular of the other potential development sites is between Rodbridge and the roundabout at Melford Road, Sudbury. However, this is in conflict with the opinions of that group of more than half of villagers who want to preserve the green belt between Long Melford and Sudbury (HQ95). Not far behind this location in terms of (un)popularity for development was land off Bull Lane and on the Long Melford side of the A134 by-pass. Interestingly, although there are sites at High Street, these were not generally favoured for future development.

Issue: Perceived need for homes for young people and low-cost housing, combined with an almost complete lack of acceptable sites and the imperative to protect a green belt between Long Melford and Sudbury.
Action: To ensure that these views are reflected in Babergh District Council's Local Development Framework.

“Need to help young people stay & live in the village & keep it alive”

Shopping

For a village, Long Melford has an exceptionally large array of shops. They range from a newsagent, a Spar grocer, a Co-op Foodstore and two butchers through hairdressers and women's fashion clothes, to house furnishings, picture galleries and antiques. There is no bank, no ironmonger nor anywhere with electrical goods, but otherwise it is possible to do most day-to-day shopping (and much else besides) within the boundaries of the main street.

A recent comparison with other villages nearby indicates the strength of choice. We are better served than Lavenham, which itself has a good range of shops, and much better than Acton, the Waldingfields and Cavendish. In particular, Long Melford's shopping possibilities far outstrip those at Glemsford which is the closest village in terms of population, having only a few hundred less residents. Only Clare has a bank and an ironmonger, possibly because it is placed further from a sizeable town like Bury or Sudbury.

Choice

When asked about the range of shops in the village, 32% of those who replied felt it was good, 52% said it was reasonable and 14% felt the range was poor, the remainder expressing no opinion. If the people who answered were really answering about the range of shops and not their quality, this result would be surprising, as by village standards the range in Long Melford is exceptional. It seems more likely that people were



recording their frustration at having to go elsewhere for banking services, ironmongery or electrical goods (all of which used to be available here less than 20 years ago but are no longer).

Nearly half (44%) of visitors surveyed came to the village for its shopping and several commented on the excellent range of shops available.

The range of shopping opportunities in the village is, however, an area of particular concern to our young people. They feel that the shops in Long Melford are just not youth-orientated. There is little that this report can suggest here except that improvements in transport may go some way to helping to get young people to the places where there are the shops they want - fashion, electronic gaming, music, etc.

Loyalty

The questionnaire asked about reasons for shopping in the village and reasons for going further afield. It is very clear from the responses that village people are generally loyal to their local shops, as well as using them to save time (particularly for 'last minute' items). The social contact is important to some, but 'good value' is rather rare as a reason for shopping here.

Conversely, the range of choice, easy parking and lower prices are strong reasons drawing most householders out of Long Melford to shop at least for some of the time.





Nearly all (88%) of the respondents gave at least one of those three reasons in their answers (including 58 of those who 'Shop mainly in Long Melford').

It is striking that, with almost everyone answering this question, almost two thirds of them are frequent shoppers in the village. Put another way, three quarters of people who live in the village visit at least one of the main village shops once a week or more. Of those few that don't shop in the village at all, three quarters are male.

Access problems

A number of respondents felt that Long Melford has a number of problems making shopping difficult. For many people, the problem is getting to the Long Melford shops at all, rather than what happens inside them. Parking difficulties are quite severe, with 1108 people complaining about either not enough spaces, or poor parking and obstructions on the pavements. This does contrast with the visitors who filled in the questionnaire, over 90% of whom reported no difficulty in parking, and who commended the lack of parking charges in the village.

For wheelchair or pushchair users, the situation is less straightforward, and the level of complaints is large compared with the number of people. We do not know exactly how many of the 300 disabled residents are wheelchair users, but there were 71 complaints from that group about poor access for wheelchairs.

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Post office

The post office is one of the key facilities in the village, used by 93% of the residents. People use it mainly for postal services and vehicle tax, with a significant but smaller number using it for pensions, allowances or benefits. The main issue about shopping is the need to keep a post office in the village.



Issue: There are a large number of people who use the post office and many are concerned about possible closure.

Action: To ensure that all concerned have details of the data we have gathered on the post office and support all moves to ensure a future for the post office in this village.

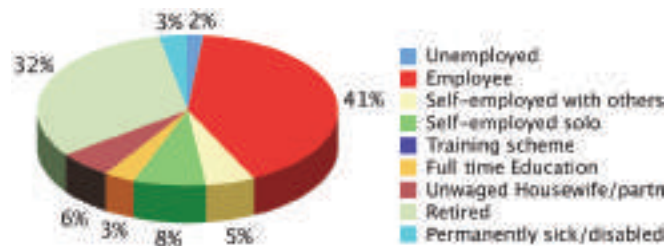
There were a number of written comments relating to the post office: some were concerned with access and are reported in the section on health while others mentioned the services used, such as laundry, cash by debit card, photocopying and benefit collection. One states that the post office is essential and 'must not go'. Three were complaints about the quality of service offered.

"The Post Office must NOT go!"

Employment

Over half of Long Melford residents are employed in one way or another outside the home. 41% are employed with a further 13% self employed, totalling 54%. Comparing those employed with the number of working age; Long Melford's employment ratio is 76%, much the same as the East of England average.

Employment (respondents only)



Long Melford is not a retirement village, though it has a large elderly population. There are six people 'retired' for every ten in work. The majority of employees are full time. Women are more likely than men to be in part time employment.

There are some 59 people seeking employment: 28 cite disability and health issues as barriers to finding work. The remainder have a range of problems, including lack of experience or training. Most employers within the village seem to have little difficulty in recruiting staff but those that do have problems cite a lack of suitable skills as being the main difficulty.

“Lack of suitable skills within commute distance.”
[Office employer of 10-25 people in computer-related industry]

Of those in employment, roughly 25% of residents describe Long Melford as their main place of work. Another quarter work in Sudbury, and a similar number in the rest of the county of Suffolk. The final quarter commute out of Suffolk - including 4% who work in London. Thus more than half the working population of Long Melford work within five miles of their home.

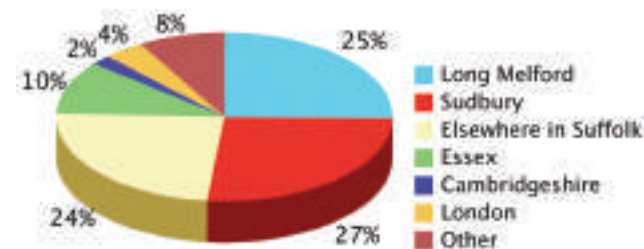
It is interesting to see the spread of industries that provide employment in different locations for Long Melford residents. In Long Melford itself, 'retail/services' is the largest single group, but is only a fifth of the total. 'Tourism-related', 'public sector', 'manufacturing' and 'building and allied trades' are all significant too, with at least 7% of the total each.

An equally wide, but slightly different spread is seen for Long Melford people working in Sudbury. Here, although a similar proportion go to 'retail', manufacturing is even more important at nearly a third of the total. It is clear from these numbers that employees in Long Melford are not strongly dependent on the tourist trade, nor are they dependent on any one employer or industry.

The overall pattern for all Long Melford residents is shown in the diagram below:



Places of work



Business

There are nearly 150 distinct businesses in Long Melford. Many of them are small, but there is a good handful with ten or more employees. Over half those responding to the Business Survey draw their employees mainly from Long Melford itself or within five miles. The rest come from within a 25 mile radius.

Reflecting national economic trends, the retail and service industries are the foundation of the economy in the village, though there are also important elements of manufacturing and healthcare, with 'building and allied trades' as another significant sector. Shops, restaurants and public houses form a conspicuous fraction of the businesses, and cater for numerous visitors and tourists as well as the local population. One third of visitors to the village said they came for the purpose of luxury or clothes shopping, with a further 10% for 'everyday' shopping.

Tourism

As noted above, tourism is surprisingly small in terms of direct employment (less than 5%) yet attracted 25% of the respondents to the visitor questionnaire. (At least half of the retail trade in the village comes from outsiders: either tourists or shoppers from a wider catchment area.) Agriculture now accounts for less than 2% of workers, in line with national trends.

Not having a single major employer, and with three quarters of those in work commuting elsewhere, Long Melford is clearly not dependent on one particular type of industry.



The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

New businesses

It appears that around twenty people are seriously considering starting their own new business. Equally encouraging is the fact that many existing businesses expressed an intention to invest in new machinery, improve sales and marketing, expand the range of product or services offered and increase the number of staff employed. On the other hand, and less encouraging, one in six of the businesses who responded indicated that they intend either to sell, close down or retire from their business.

From the Household survey we know that there is a strong desire to see more jobs created within the village with 64% of respondents being either in favour or strongly in favour of this. Small businesses generally were the most preferred, followed by tourism-related developments

or attractions. The most unpopular idea was camping/caravan sites, but guest houses and bed & breakfast establishments had some support.

Promotion

Respondents to the Business Questionnaire feel that Long Melford is adequately promoted as a tourist destination, yet only 10% of those responding to the visitor questionnaire found out about the village through a tourist information office. Most visitors either lived locally or heard about the village through friends. Less than 10% of visitors come from overseas.

Businesses generally



believe that there is a need to promote the village more widely through means such as advertising, themed events, a promotional website and mailshots. Businesses were also asked if they would be prepared to contribute financially to such activities and about half were prepared to consider doing so. Several of these approaches have in fact been employed over the last ten years or more, financed mainly by the members of the Long Melford Business Association.

Issue: Maintaining the commercial momentum of the village economy.

Actions:

- 1 Consider wider promotion of Long Melford through tourism outlets.*
- 2 Investigate options for business contributions toward promoting the village and its businesses, including designation as a 'Business Improvement District' through Babergh District Council.*

Visitors were largely complimentary about the village, suggesting it should remain much as it is, though a number did comment about the lack of shops open on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Roads and their problems

Traffic

The answers to questions on traffic in the questionnaires revealed quite clearly that Long Melford residents are concerned about the amount of traffic in the village and want something to be done about it. Their main concerns are speeding, dangerous road features, congestion and inadequate parking facilities.

It is clear that traffic management and related issues in Long Melford would benefit from an integrated approach to embrace all the elements such as congestion, parking, pedestrian safety, traffic calming, cycle paths, etc. To address this, it is suggested that there be an initial general Issue/Action point, with more specific action points being added as indicated later in this section.

Issue: Concern over a wide range of traffic/congestion problems throughout the village

Action: Establish a regular 'Traffic Working Party' (taking in members from the Parish Council and other interested individuals) to consider all matters related to highways, traffic, etc. and to inform and put pressure upon the relevant statutory bodies responsible as appropriate and report to the village on a regular basis.

In the Public Transport section of this report, details are given about our dependence on the car and the reluctance of residents to use either buses or bicycles for journeys to work both within and outside the village. Cars are also heavily used for schools and shopping. An Issue/Action point on this matter is included in that section.

"The worst aspect of the village is the constant traffic from Hall Street into Bull Lane and in reverse. Surely traffic lights and a one-way flow of traffic would benefit all?"



Congestion

All of the traffic referred to above inevitably contributes to the concern over congestion and this is made worse by continued through-traffic and the fact that Long Melford is a popular village to visit. The weight restriction preventing heavy goods vehicles from using Hall Street is a useful measure for most of the village. However, it places additional burdens on residents in High Street and is seen as a tiresome diversion by lorry drivers.

Out of nine possible congestion areas identified, Cordell Road gave rise to the greatest number of complaints (699) with Hall Street second (546) and St Catherine's Road third (376). Cars blocking entrances cause a major problem only in the 'centre' area.

Most problem spots are reported by people living throughout the village although there is a natural tendency to be most concerned about one's own immediate area. For example, Church Walk, although a serious problem for local residents and those attending large church functions, is not rated as a serious trouble spot by people from the south.

Hall Street and Cordell Road are recognised as problems by people living in all areas, with the former registering 15% or more complaints and the latter 10% or more. However Cordell Road scores so highly with

respondents living in south-east, north-east, east and north, that almost exactly half the village, both in terms of households and people, rate it as the top traffic congestion area.

Options

Ten specific options were offered for measures to alleviate the problems in Cordell Road. The response was strong with 2030 people answering (93%), of whom most (79%) made definite suggestions. Very few people want the primary school to move and not many more want the surgery to move either. The most popular idea was to encourage parents to walk their children to school. Very nearly two thirds of positive respondents voted for this, including 50% or more in every area, demonstrating that distance is not a serious issue. The second most popular and more structural idea is to widen Cordell Road and provide parking bays. Overall 57% of respondents voted for this with an impressive 74% and 69% from the east and south-east areas respectively.

Issue: Continued concern about congestion in Cordell Road.

Action: The Traffic Working Party to meet with interested parties and authorities to re-examine all possible solutions and improvements, particularly looking at widening the road to include parking bays. Also to approach the Primary School to look at ways to reduce parent traffic.

[Other actions to reduce the impact of traffic will be found in the following section on parking.]

"Reducing the volume of through traffic. Not enough cars use the bypass. Even the ambulances come through the village to save time."

Parking

The need to reduce traffic was the most frequently registered response (51%) when people were asked about what should be done to protect and enhance the environment of Long Melford. Increased vehicle ownership not only affects traffic moving in the parish, but also increases problems of parking, which is considered to be the main reason for congestion. Nearly 400 residents' cars are normally parked on the road or in bays beside it, taking up about an acre of space, and occupying more or less a mile of kerb side; quite a load for one village - and that is before the shopping starts!

Another car park?

About 75% of respondents who had an opinion about parking, said that Long Melford needs another car park. When responding to the question about shopping problems, the greatest number of people cited 'not enough parking spaces.' Obstruction of the pavements particularly by poorly parked cars and to some extent by street furniture, is one of the more serious problems encountered by pedestrians and was high on the list of complaints. There is also a general feeling that there is not enough parking for disabled people in the village. Interestingly, parking was not identified as such a problem by those visitors who found a space and later filled in the Visitors Questionnaire: the principal concern is felt by residents.

The locations suggested in written comments are listed in the box to the right. Clearly, a number of these suggestions concern land that is not readily available and people may be unaware of the cost of making a car

park. There is sufficient strength of feeling on the issue, however, that means it should be investigated further, even though current government policy is unpromising. It should be said that the provision of further parking is an issue where there is no shortage of opinions but it is not one where we have much confidence yet about solutions.

Benefits

Off-street parking (particularly as in Suggestion 3) could reduce congestion in Hall Street, which has seen numerous accidents over the years. It would also enable the staff of businesses along the commercial centre of Long Melford to park near their work-places yet allow customers to park in front of the premises. It could also allow space for pedestrian-friendly features such as wider pavements, bench seating, flower/shrub beds, litter bins and other facilities found in well-designed pedestrian areas. Again, funding and support for such measures may be difficult to obtain from the district and county councils,

especially as Long Melford rejected such radical proposals for a re-design of the street some years ago.

Besides the responses to direct questions about parking, the topic comes up again in responses to the environmental policy question HQ83. The Upper Green is used as a car park for functions at the church. Access via Church Walk is obstructed by residents' cars and there are problems of congestion, safety and damage to the surface of the green. The second most popular suggestion here (after the general 'reduce traffic') was to 'sort out access to parking on the Upper Green'.

Favoured locations

for another car park include
(in order of preference):

- 1 by the Old School (including enlarging the existing one),
- 2 the derelict filling station in Southgate Street,
- 3 along the Chad Brook from the Village Hall to Cock & Bell Lane,
- 4 behind the Cock & Bell or beside the old fire station,
- 5 the Fleetwood Caravan factory site,
- 6 improved parking on the Upper Green for church and other events,
- 7 the meadow beside Liston Lane,
- 8 a works site in Cordell Road.

Some respondents added riders to their suggestions, including 'tidy up the access at the top of Church Walk', 'alter the access to come off the Upper Green road instead of Church Walk' and 'preserve the Green by refusing any access to it for parking vehicles'. A variety of written suggestions have been recorded which aim to alleviate the compounded problems of access, parking, congestion and damage to the Green which centre on and around the difficult five-road junction at the Black Lion.

Issue: The need for more and better parking provision

Action: The Traffic Working Party to provide a detailed response to the concerns raised in this report and to ensure that Babergh District Council is aware of these needs and that they are reflected in the Local Development Framework.



"As a scooter-bound elderly person; the footpaths are inadequate, a maze of rough spots to negotiate. There are kerbs a scooter cannot climb and motor cars that encroach on pedestrian territory to the danger of all concerned."

Roads and their problems

Cycle routes

The third-ranking environmental policy, favoured by 721 responses, suggested getting cycle tracks working. Increased cycle use would improve the environment, not only visually by reducing traffic but would also improve air quality by reducing pollution. Cycle tracks would also improve parents' confidence in allowing children to use their machines unsupervised. Cycle use can never be a complete answer to traffic problems but it would help.

Issue: The need for greater and safer cycle use.

Action: Interested members of the Traffic Working Party to work with Suffolk County Council and cycling promotion organisations to draw up a plan for dedicated cycle paths serving the main areas of the village and its approaches.



Road safety

Respondents identified a number of locations where they felt endangered by traffic, particularly speeding vehicles. The question (HQ36) listed Bull Lane, Hall Street, High Street, Station Road/Southgate Street, St Catherine's Road, Westgate Street (and asked for other sites to be specified) and 1998 people responded. Of those, 71% said they feel in danger in at least one place. Many feel in danger in several places and the average works out at close to two places per person.

Bull Lane and the bypass

People living in the north-east area (homes accessed via Bull Lane but not through Cordell Road) feel most threatened by traffic, with five out of six feeling themselves to be in danger. There is obviously correlation between where people live and where they feel threatened because they tend to be on the streets more in their own neighbourhood. However, even allowing for this, Bull Lane still tops the list of places where people feel threatened (76% of local respondents). At the eastern end of Bull Lane, the junction with the by-pass is seen as extremely dangerous at busy times while the outlet by the Bull is heavily congested.

Other danger points

Hall Street/Little St Mary's comes next (56%), then Station Road/Southgate Street (56%) followed by High Street (44%) and St Catherine's Road (39%). The question also asked respondents to name other places in which they felt in danger. One of the more prominent of these was the five-road junction on the Green by the Black Lion at the bottom of Church Walk.

About 10% of forms had extra written comments: 34 talked of the dangers of speeding traffic in Cordell Road (which was not one of those listed), 13 noted the problems at Rodbridge, four at Windmill Hill and two at Bridge Street.

Speed controls

The top preference for speed control is placing a limit on the by-pass at the Bull Lane junction (1154 in favour), nearly 60% of those who expressed a preference. The second preference is for electronic speed indicators (42%). These patterns are more

or less consistent across different areas of the village. Some respondents suggested a roundabout or traffic lights on the by-pass junction with Bull Lane. Other suggestions cover the whole village, with strong interest in the five-way junction at the bottom of Church Walk, speed control in Westgate and High Streets and even a speed camera on the Clare Road where there have been many accidents.

Issue: Many concerns about the dangers of speeding traffic.

Action: The Traffic Working Party to meet regularly with representatives from Suffolk County Council Highways Dept and the Police to explore a range of safety measures to reduce speeding, including (among others) speed restrictions on the bypass and the provision of efficient electronic speed indicators.

In addition to asking about speeding traffic, the questionnaire prompted responses about other safety measures and among the 90% who answered the question the most popular idea was the provision of another pelican crossing. Most people want it to be located near the fire station. The second and third most popular ideas are new cycle paths and more traffic islands. There is a wide scatter of suggestions, including mini roundabouts, at a variety of locations in Hall Street, Little St Mary's, Southgate Street/Station Road, Westgate Street, the Black Lion and High Street.

Issue: The dangers of crossing the main road.

Action: The Parish Council to press the Highways Dept of Suffolk County Council over various sites for crossing safety features, initially island refuges in Little St Mary's and Hall Street, but also further measures to improve other areas highlighted by the survey.

Long Melford and its environment

The great majority of respondents praised Long Melford as a highly desirable place to live and work. This is a testament to people's pride in the village, backed up by the number of people who volunteered to be involved in helping with maintaining footpaths and other environmental projects.

Almost everybody (94%) had an opinion on the importance of the countryside around Long Melford and of these 84% said that it was 'very important'. Policies to protect and enhance the local environment attracted multiple suggestions from respondents (an average of 3.4 per person).

The built environment

The three top-ranking ideas (traffic reduction, Upper Green parking and cycle tracks) all concern traffic and are covered elsewhere in this report.

The fourth most popular environmental policy favoured more recycling (697 votes), followed by a moratorium on building (653) and more local employment (559). The remaining six are 'improved public transport' (547), 'reduce overhead cabling' (510), 'energy saving' (476), 'reduce the clutter of street signs' (452).

Issue/Action points covering future building, employment and public transport appear in the relevant sections of this report.

Even the smaller numbers of supporters for these ideas indicate a considerable level of interest. There was also a



The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

variety of miscellaneous ideas (114) such as a volunteer project team for the environment (not just fundraising) and support for flower baskets as is seen in other villages.

With the idea of making the village friendlier to visitors and newcomers, one question (HQ77) showed that there is a 20% interest in the recurring issue of street name signs but less enthusiasm for more signposts or for brown tourist signs.

The natural environment

People were asked to consider ways to improve the natural environment of the village. Top of the list of suggestions came 'keep footpaths clear of nettles, etc' with a popularity score* of 65*. This and many other suggestions indicated that most people who responded felt that the natural environment should be looked after in an orderly, tidy manner with strong support for ideas like: 'look after woodlands' 58*, 'preserve single trees in special places' 48*, 'clean out ponds and waterways' 45*, 'repair walls' 44*, 'keep mown areas neater' 36*, 'keep hedges short and tidy' 32*.

There was less support for new projects such as to 'plant more trees' 27*, 'nature reserves in odd corners of land' 15*, or 'appoint an environmental ranger' 1*.

The appearance of the main green spaces in the village was rated between 'good', 'reasonable' or 'poor'. The Village Green topped the list with over 56% of respondents describing it as good. Other areas gaining general approval - either good or reasonable - were the churchyard and the green areas and verges alongside roads. The cricket ground was seen as fairly good, as was the state of the green behind Old Court, the Rodbridge picnic area and the recreation area in Cordell Place. The car park and the area around the Old School and the Railway Walk attracted the most criticism.

It is difficult to know how people interpret 'appearance'. If they think it means tidiness, lack of litter and

* 'Popularity score' is calculated as the **difference** between the numbers for 'important' and 'unnecessary' **divided** by the **total** for 'important' plus 'worth while' plus 'unnecessary' with the result expressed as a percentage.

general upkeep, their opinions can only be snapshots of when they visited the area last. The organisers of the questionnaire carried out a series of village walks to check whether the survey's findings were borne out by an inspection but the main problem was that areas varied between visits and could be very neat and tidy one day and untidy a week later. The general drift from these additional inspections was that the alleyways between areas provided the most litter problems and the need to check on the frequency of clearing was indicated here. If people think of appearance as incorporating design, the matter is more serious and might imply problems with the original concept, purpose and layout of the space. Since the two longest-established spaces, the Village Green and the churchyard, score highest, it would seem that people are most comfortable with traditional features to which they have become accustomed.

Issue: Harnessing the support shown for the protection and enhancement of Long Melford's environment.

Action: Form a group of residents to discuss the 'state' of the village in terms of the built and natural environment, and to present practical priorities to the Parish Council so that it can harness the interest and participation of people of the parish.

Issue: A lot of people want to see the woodlands preserved and sustained, together with other countryside features.

Action: An 'Environmental Action Group' (see below, 'Footpaths and Bridleways') to make contact with local bodies concerned with biodiversity projects as part of an investigation of the possibility of increasing wooded areas in the parish and restoring ponds.

Long Melford and its environment

Litter and dog waste

Most of those responding felt that the provision of litter bins is reasonable or better and just over a quarter feel that it is poor. A question (HQ86) asked people to describe where in the village litter is a problem: 467 people (21%) responded, which is rather a slender number as a basis for firm conclusions. This is especially so as every response depends on when the respondent noted the problem; if the note was taken the day before the bins were emptied, the likelihood of litter was greater than if taken the day after.

However, having said this, the Old School and the car park topped the list of where litter is found to be a problem, followed by the Railway Walk, Hall Street, Cordell Place and playground, the Green, George Lane, the cricket ground and playground and Woollards Gardens.

There were a number of suggestions for additional litter bins (118) and dog waste bins (124). Hall Street topped the list of litter bin suggestions (20) followed by the Railway Walk (19) and the Green (14). Other locations scored fewer than ten. Suggestions for dog waste bins were aimed most frequently, and sometimes very firmly in extra comments, at the Railway Walk (31). This was followed by The Green (16) and Bull Lane (13).

Visibility

Litter bins can be unsightly features and a balance has to be struck between installing enough of them so that they are used but not so many that they become eyesores. There is a scatter of different designs and colours in the village, including some of a particularly noticeable green. A more tasteful dark green would be less obtrusive. Many are too small, so towards the end of the collection period they are



invariably overflowing. The two on the Upper Green were given as examples of both of these faults.

Issue: Concern over littering and dog fouling.

Action: Parish Council to re-examine the current provision of bins, their type, size and the frequency of clearing and sweeping and upgrade this with help from Babergh District Council.



Noise

Nearly half of all respondents complained about excessive noise of one kind or another, or of light pollution. There was also a substantial number (25%) who had no problems with noise or light. The area in which each respondent lives obviously has a major bearing on how much noise and of what kind is heard. The centre has the highest number (59%) of people troubled while the north-east has the lowest (40%). 'Other traffic noise' was the main problem in the centre and the south whereas 'motorbike noise' is the most obtrusive in the south-east, east and north-east.

Issue: Concern over excessive noise, particularly at night.

Action: Parish Council to publish the procedures for reporting complaints about excessive noise.

Footpaths and bridleways

A majority of all respondents claimed to know where the footpaths are; 46% said they can use them without difficulty and in general they are thought to be well signposted. However, the largest number of complainants (54%) said that bushes/ nettles were a problem. Other complaints were: mud/water 44%, motorcycles 35%, crops across the path or ploughed over 32%, no signposts 29%, high stiles 11%, barbed wire 7%, locked gates 6%, farm animals 6%.

Some 112 people are willing to help maintain the paths. The biggest complaint in the household survey (bushes/nettles) corresponds to an earlier question where 'keeping footpaths free of bushes and nettles' was the highest priority among suggested environmental actions. Day to day complaints to the parish clerk about paths are most frequently about motorcycles using them illegally, which is dangerous for walkers. These incidents are reported to the police.

Nearly 60% of all people completing the questionnaire were in favour of improvements. More than 1000 people would like to see a map of local footpaths and about three-quarters of them would also like to be able to buy leaflets about walks around Long Melford. There is substantial support for links between existing footpaths (473) and for guided walks in the area (336).

Issue: Maintaining the footpath network with help from residents.

Actions: Approach those who offered to help maintain footpaths to form an 'Environmental Action Group'. With the help of the appropriate department of Suffolk County Council, this group would carry out what work it can, including publication of maps and leaflets, liaising with landowners, organising guided walks, etc.

Leisure and entertainment

Social activities

Questions regarding social activities, classes and sports provision drew less interest than all other aspects of the questionnaire, so percentages do not necessarily indicate a large response in terms of numbers interested or volunteering to help. Perhaps most people feel that they are able to organise their social lives without outside authority getting involved!

However there is an imbalance in how people feel about social facilities for different age groups. Overall there is felt to be much poorer provision for young people than older ones. A sizeable majority think that provision for both the under 16s and the 17-to-25s is 'poor'.

The feeling reverses for those over 25, so that by far the majority thinks that provision is either good or at least reasonable when residents are 26 or over.

Facilities for the young

In terms of facilities for younger children, there was strong support for the continuation of the playgroup, for after-school clubs, a parent and toddler club and a holiday play scheme, with all of these ideas attracting over half of those expressing a view and with 80% support for the playgroup.

Issue: Concern over the availability of facilities for young children and their parents.

Action: The Parish Council (and other appropriate groups and individuals) to support existing facilities and encourage self-help groups through contacts, information, starter funds and advice.

There is a very wide range of interests and activities described when the young people between 9 and 17 were asked in the Youth Questionnaire about how they spend their spare time within the village. The most popular are television, hanging out with friends, the internet, the Playstation and going out on the bike or skateboard.

Smaller numbers are involved with a range of sports such as football and cricket. There is a pleasing number of readers, users of the play areas and attendance at Scouts and Guides, etc.

Many go out of the village for leisure and entertainment with shopping being the most popular activity, followed by the cinema, swimming, bowling and roller skating. There is a long list of hobbies mentioned by individuals ranging from salsa dancing to bird watching, from BMX biking to trampolining.

Youth clubs

The general adult concern about facilities for the young is echoed strongly by the findings reported in the Youth Questionnaire section. In the main survey, about two-thirds of those responding felt that youth clubs for Middle School and for Secondary School ages should be encouraged. The young people's own survey, though calling strongly for more action, shows some ambivalence towards youth clubs, which attracted interest from only about a third of the young respondents. Nonetheless the idea of better youth facilities is backed by a healthy number of adult volunteers, with over 60 names being prof-

ferred to help with a variety of youth activity.

When young people were asked to suggest other new facilities, a tennis court was most popular, with a cinema club and basketball facilities close behind. All of the possibilities outlined in the questionnaire had a fair degree of takers, including an improved shelter on the playground, a skateboard park, a facility to enable off-road biking, sport for girls and youth clubs.

Issue: Provision of activities for young people in the village.

Action: Furnish the existing Youth Committee of the Parish Council and the Community Association with all the ideas and data the questionnaire has yielded so that they can explore, with other interested parties and organisations, ways to initiate action on each item: youth club provision, tennis, off-road biking, skateboarding, sport for girls, netball, basketball, improving the playground shelter.



Leisure and entertainment

Sports

A relatively small number of people (250) responded when asked if they actually attended various leisure activities. The numbers varied from 104 for football and 75 for cricket, down to 17 for dance and 5 for karate. It is hard to see what to make of the figures, apart from the obvious comparison of popularity.

However, it is worth noticing that the small numbers who indicated support for new clubs such as tennis, bowls, netball, and judo could be enough to get things off the ground with appropriate encouragement. Tennis is particularly promising because a court already exists, although the organisation doesn't. The 88 'Other' suggestions for this question included badminton (28), gym (8), archery (5) keep fit (4) and a long string of others with less support.

Playgrounds

People with young children are the most critical of the present facilities. If we take the analysis a stage further and correlate each playground with the area of the village in which it is situated, significant differences appear. The newer of the two playgrounds, on the cricket field, is in the 'west' area whereas the older one in Cordell Place is in the middle of the 'east' area and has recently been refurbished by the Community Association, after a sustained fundraising campaign.

Those who live in the east area, with the new facilities, give a higher than average proportion of 'good' reports and lower than average 'poor' while those in the west area, with the older equipment, give a lower than average 'good' rating and a higher than average 'poor'. This matches expectations since the Cordell Place playground is in good order and heavily used whilst the one on the cricket ground suffers from lack of maintenance and vandalism by older children. Many written comments by parents (HQ74) say that broken glass and other litter make it too dangerous to use.



"To be fenced off, so children are secure. Someone to clean up glass, cigarettes & litter more often. My child was cut by a broken bottle last year."

*"Skateboard ramp -
Tennis -
Basketball Courts -
5-a-side football - ."*

*[Playgrounds should be . . .]
"policed to keep the vandals at bay!"*

There were 364 suggestions as to how the standards of the playgrounds should be improved. In the order of popularity they are: More or better equipment (87 suggestions), need for maintenance (41), tackle vandalism (30), clear up litter (28), clear up broken glass, bottles, etc (24), provide football facilities (23), provide skateboard facilities (21), institute warden, patrol or CCTV supervision (16), make provision for children 13+ years old (16), tackle dog fouling (15), provide a shelter (10), provide toilets (3).

Wider age range

A theme that emerged is the desirability of providing attractions to widen the age range of the children catered for, e.g. something for toddlers at the young end and something for teenagers at the older end. A few respondents thought that the age groups should be separated and that teenage drinking and drug-taking should be curbed on the cricket field in the evenings. Suggestions also included provision of extra playgrounds in the High Street and southern areas, fenced areas and adventure playgrounds for older children.

Many people in the village may be unaware of the considerable efforts of individuals and organisations who have worked over many years and continue to do so in order to improve the provision. It is hoped that the views expressed in the survey serve to provide recognition and further help for these efforts.

Issue: Need for better playground equipment, maintenance and security together with a wish to see more sites covered in the village.

Actions: Support from the Parish Council and others for the Community Association in order to continue and expand their work, taking advice and input from a variety of local and national funders and advisers.

“Ask local parents and children to send in photos of play areas they have visited that were rated highly by them to see where Melford could improve (involve the schools).”

Classes

Quite a large number (834 or 38%) gave specific answers when asked what classes they might attend if they were provided. The results are fairly evenly spread, across computing (433), crafts (343) and languages (327). There were also 111 others, with suggestions for dance, art, history and photography, cooking, music, gardening and 38 other subjects.

The Village Hall and the Old School were equally popular possible locations, with the Primary School and the URC following along behind. People unsurprisingly prefer a location not too far from where they live. Evening classes (769) are much more popular than either afternoon (317) or morning (267). Unfortunately current practice in the provision of adult education indicates a decrease in opportunities and the targeting of funds towards specific basic skills classes. This is not an area where there is a great deal of confidence in being able to influence the authorities to initiate new provision in our village. Self-help groups for some activities might be a more productive route forward.

Issue: A wish for further adult education classes to be provided in Long Melford.

Action: The Parish Council to organise a representative of adult education to address an interest meeting about how the village could achieve their wish for more activities or classes.

Other interests

A number of non-sports interests cropped up which could form the basis of a club but do not need to be classes or courses. These included gardening, rambling, drama, scrabble and a Long Melford residents' discussion group. In each case a healthy number of volunteers are available for these activities and each could be started with just a little encouragement and putting the individuals concerned in touch with each other. Not every village organisation needs to be 'officially' organised or run. Self interest groups will flourish with a little help for them to get started.

Issue: Need for new leisure activities to be developed in the village.

Action: The Community Association to be asked to act as the facilitator for making initial contact with the individuals concerned and to provide an early meeting venue.



Although it was stated above that this section of the questionnaire was not completed by as many households as were many other sections, it was very impressive to see the number of people prepared to put forward their names as volunteers for a whole range of village activities. Many of these fall within the area of clubs, sport, etc. as well as those interested in helping with a good neighbour scheme or with some aspect of the environment.

Well over a hundred village names and addresses were offered as volunteers, many of them for more than one activity. This resource has been maintained and will be released to the appropriate groups and organisations as efforts to start new activities emerge. This single factor is an immensely encouraging sign of the vitality and community spirit that exists in the parish.

“You don't need to go out of the village if you want an evening out, there are lots of pubs and hotels you can get a meal, yet it is still like living in the country and you feel safe walking about at night.”

“It's nice to be able to walk through Melford without fear of the youth culture we are supposed to have. Most kids are polite; there is still a sense of community among the adults making a good environment.”

Next steps

With the completion of this report and other documents, and their presentation to and adoption by the Parish Council and the whole village, the work of the Steering Group is drawing to a close. Finding what people want of Long Melford has been quite an adventure.

We believe that the conclusions of this study are a fair representation of opinion in the village, and provide a basis for a great many actions by the Parish Council, by other official bodies and by groups of individuals. The ultimate value of the whole exercise depends on those actions, of course, and it is necessary to think about how they can be facilitated.

The Action Plan

This report includes a summary of the action plan that has been generated through the project. It is divided into quite a large number of separate 'actions', each aimed at one of the issues identified in the investigation. Naturally, the actions fall into groups, more or less according to the chapter headings in the report.

We hope that new 'Action Groups' of volunteers will be formed, mostly in association with other bodies, to take the work forward and ensure that it gains momentum rather than losing it. Some of these groups will need to be related to the Parish Council, others to the Community Association. One or two may be independent. One such group is already in action working on the future of the tennis courts under the auspices of the Community Association.

Each action group needs to have a handful of committed volunteers to provide the drive and continuity. It also needs 'partnerships' with councils and council officials if those councils are involved in the decisions. Most actions need money and possibly other resources too, so we can't do everything at the same time. Priorities are important.

The Parish Council

In all future activities growing out of this plan, the Parish Council has a central role to play. It was the Parish Council that began the process in June 2005, and it is the Parish Council which is the elected body acting most directly on behalf of the whole village and all its communities. We hope that it will either provide or support a small central 'Action Programme Group' to act as a point of reference for everyone involved in the actions flowing from this plan. Such a group should also meet from time to time to review progress overall, and report to the village and to the Parish Council on what is achieved.

Issue: Maintaining progress on this parish plan
Action: Form an 'Action Programme Group', ideally with some representation from the Parish Council, the Community Association, the present Plan Steering Group and others, to review and encourage progress on the issues and actions recognised in this plan and report at least once a year to the parish and the Parish Council.



"Without the traffic speeding through - even better!"



“I think that as people shop more and more in retail parks then overall rates should be reduced in Melford as smaller less established businesses come and go too quickly”



Priorities

The various questionnaires, particularly the household one, give some quite strong indications of the priorities that matter to the village. The final question (HQ95) in the household questionnaire presented twelve desirable outcomes, and asked for up to five of them to be ranked in priority order. People took the question very seriously, and 87% of the maximum possible number of people answered it.

The results do vary to a small extent from one area of the village to another. They also depend a little on how second, third and other priorities are rated compared with first choices.

Option	Weighted Score	Total no. of votes
Keep the surgery central to the village	1109	1411
Preserve the green belt between Long Melford and Sudbury	941	1245
Do something about traffic speeding through the village	645	946
Provide more car-parking spaces	559	849
Re-open the Cordell Road traffic question	503	770

The thing that is most striking about the results, though, is the way that the top few choices stay more or less the same across all parts of the parish, and regardless of how second choices etc. are weighted.

Without losing sight of the top priorities, it is worth remembering that each of the twelve listed outcomes polled at least 20% of the possible votes. For example the ‘Good neighbour scheme for needy groups’ only had a score of 240 in this question (HQ95) but over a hundred people have put their names forward to support it.

In addition to these priorities others have emerged unprompted and force themselves towards the head of any list of action points. Chief among these must be:

- 1 *the need to address the concerns about policing;*
- 2 *the question of extending the hours of public transport provision; and*
- 3 *the development of activities for the young.*

“The feeling that Long Melford is a real village, not just a tourist location. It’s very important to keep the present balance between numbers of households, and people, shops and services. . . . if it works don’t change it.”

Action plan

No.	Category	Issue	Action	Lead Organisation	Partners	Priority
1	Access to information	Concern about the standards of provision of some public services such as lighting, snow clearance and the maintenance of public toilets.	Establish clear procedures for reporting to the relevant authorities and invite the Parish council to publish them.	Action Programme Group	Parish Council	medium
2	Shopping and services	Concern about the quality of reception for phones, radio and the Internet.	Investigate the feasibility of an interest/action group involving residents and businesses to influence the service providers.	Radio Reception Interest Group	Service providers	medium
3	Community safety	Wide-ranging dissatisfaction about the police 'coverage' of the village, especially in terms of the visible presence of our local officer	Establish a dedicated liaison group to hold regular meetings with the local police to explore practical ways to raise the profile of the police in Long Melford.	Police Liaison Group	Police authority	high
4	Access to healthcare	Considerable disquiet about the future of the surgery. There is a need for transparent discussion and communication about future plans and the reasons behind them.	It may be desirable to establish an interest group within the village to engage with the Suffolk Primary Care Trust in such discussions	Health Liaison Group	General Practice, Primary Care Trust	high
5	Facilities for the disabled	Difficult access for disabled people to some buildings in the village.	Parish Council to discuss with those responsible for the premises and to seek advice from the appropriate authorities about methods and funding possibilities for improvements	Parish Council	Owners of shop and office premises	medium
6	Voluntary/ community self-help	To provide organised help for a variety of individual needs such as transport to medical services, shopping, gardening etc.	To investigate the legal, safety and organisational frameworks needed and then establish an effective Good Neighbour scheme in Long Melford	Good Neighbour Interest Group	Community Association	medium
7	Local democracy	People don't feel in touch with what the councils are doing, nor do they feel that the councils are in touch with local concerns.	The Parish Council and District and County Councillors to explore practical, immediate and easily accessed ways of informing the public and receiving input from them.	Action Programme Group	Parish Council, District councillors, County councillor	high

Action plan (2)

No.	Category	Issue	Action	Lead Organisation	Partners	Priority
8	Public transport	a) Awareness of the under-use of existing public transport services b) Concern at the frequency of bus and train services, particularly at weekends and evenings.	Form an interest group of councillors and others to approach local service operators for discussion about the rationale behind current services, to explore ideas for improvement to the schedules and to provide a process for reporting other public concerns	Public Transport Interest Group	Parish Council, District Council, County Council, Transport companies	medium
9	Affordable housing	A significant number of people in Long Melford expressed a need for alternative accommodation	To ensure that these needs are reflected in Babergh District Council's Local Development Framework	Parish Council	District Council	medium
10	Affordable housing	Perceived need for homes for young people and low-cost housing, combined with an almost complete lack of acceptable sites and the imperative to protect a green belt between Long Melford and Sudbury.	To ensure that these views are reflected in Babergh District Council's Local Development Framework	Parish Council	District Council	medium
11	Shopping and services	There are a large number of people who use the post office and many are concerned about possible closure	To ensure that all concerned have details of the data we have gathered on the post office and support all moves to ensure a future for the post office in this village.	Action Programme Group	Parish Council	high
12	Jobs and the local economy	Maintaining the commercial momentum of the village economy.	1 Consider wider promotion of Long Melford through tourism outlets. 2 Investigate options for business contributions toward promoting the village and its businesses, including designation as a 'Business Improvement District' through BDC	Long Melford Business Association	District Council	medium
13	Traffic management	Concern over a wide range of traffic/congestion problems throughout the village	Establish a regular 'Traffic Working Party' (taking in members from the Parish Council and other interested individuals) to consider all matters related to highways, traffic, etc. and to inform and put pressure upon the relevant statutory bodies responsible as appropriate and report to the village on a regular basis.	Traffic Working Party	Suffolk County Council	medium
14	Traffic management, Parking	Continued concern about congestion in Cordell Road	The Traffic Working Party to meet with interested parties and authorities to re-examine all possible solutions and improvements, particularly looking at widening the road to include parking bays. Also to approach the Primary School to look at ways to reduce parent traffic.	Traffic Working Party	Parish Council	medium

Action plan (3)

No.	Category	Issue	Action	Lead Organisation	Partners	Priority
15	Parking	The need for more and better parking provision	The Traffic Working Party to provide a detailed response to the concerns raised in this report and to ensure that Babergh District Council is aware of these needs and that they are reflected in the Local Development Framework.	Traffic Working Party	District Council Planning Dept.	medium
16	Road & foot-path maintenance	The need for greater and safer cycle use.	Interested members of the Traffic Working Party to work with Suffolk County Council and cycling promotion organisations to draw up a plan for dedicated cycle paths serving the main areas of the village and its approaches.	Traffic Working Party	Suffolk County Council, Cycling organisations	medium
17	Traffic management	Many concerns about the dangers of speeding traffic	The Traffic Working Party to meet regularly with representatives from Suffolk County Council Highways Dept and the Police to explore a range of safety measures to reduce speeding, including (among others) speed restrictions on the bypass and the provision of efficient electronic speed indicators.	Traffic Working Party	County Council	medium
18	Traffic management	The dangers of crossing the main road.	The Parish Council to press the Highways Dept of Suffolk County Council over various sites for crossing safety features, initially island refuges in Little St Mary's and Hall Street, but also further measures to improve other areas highlighted by the survey.	Parish Council	Traffic Working Party, County Council	high
19	Voluntary/ community self-help	Harness the support shown for the protection and enhancement of Long Melford's environment.	Form a group of residents to discuss the 'state' of the village in terms of the built and natural environment, and to present practical priorities to the Parish Council so that it can harness the interest and participation of people of the parish.	Village Environment Group	Parish Council	medium
20	Natural environment	A lot of people want to see the woodlands preserved and sustained, together with other countryside features.	An 'Environmental Action Group' (see below, 'Footpaths and Bridleways') to make contact with local bodies concerned with biodiversity projects as part of an investigation of the possibility of increasing wooded areas in the parish and restoring ponds.	Environmental Action Group		medium
21	Environmental health & pollution	Concern over littering and dog fouling.	Parish Council to re-examine the current provision of bins, their type, size and the frequency of clearing and sweeping and upgrade this with help from Babergh District Council.	Parish Council		medium

Action plan (4)

No.	Category	Issue	Action	Lead Organisation	Partners	Priority
22	Environmental health & polltn.	Concern over excessive noise, particularly at night.	Parish Council to publish the procedures for reporting complaints about excessive noise.	Parish Council		medium
23	Voluntary/ community self-help	Maintaining the footpath network with help from residents.	Approach those who offered to help maintain footpaths to form an 'Environmental Action Group'. With the help of the appropriate department of Suffolk County Council, this group would carry out what work it can, including publication of maps and leaflets, liaising with landowners, organising guided walks, etc.	Environmental Action Group	landowners, County Council	medium
24	Facilities for young children	Concern over the availability of facilities for young children and their parents	The Parish Council (and other appropriate groups and individuals) to support existing facilities and encourage self-help groups through contacts, information, starter funds and advice	Parish Council	voluntary groups	medium
25	Facilities for teenagers	Provision of activities for young people in the village.	Furnish the existing Parish Council Youth Committee and Community Association with all the ideas and data the questionnaire has yielded with a view to exploring, with other interested parties and organisations, ways to initiate action on each item: youth club, tennis, off-road biking, skateboarding, sport for girls, netball, basketball, the playground shelter.	Action Programme Group	Parish Council Youth Committee	medium
26	Facilities for young children, Community assets	Need for better playground equipment, maintenance and security together with a wish to see more sites covered in the village.	Support from the Parish Council and others for the Community Association in order to continue and expand their work, taking advice and input from a variety of local and national funders and advisers.	Community Association	Parish Council	medium
27	Cultural, sporting & recreational	A wish for further adult education classes to be provided in Long Melford.	The Parish Council to organise a representative of adult education to address an interest meeting about how the village could achieve their wish for more activities or classes.	Parish Council		medium
28	Cultural, sporting & recreational	Need for new leisure activities to be developed in the village.	The Community Association to be asked to act as the facilitator for making initial contact with the individuals concerned and to provide an early meeting venue.	Community Association	voluntary groups	medium
29	Local democracy	Maintaining progress on this parish plan	Form an 'Action Programme Group', ideally with some representation from the Parish Council, the Community Association, the present Plan Steering Group and others, to review and encourage progress on the issues and actions recognised in this plan and report at least once a year to the parish and the Parish Council.	Parish Council	Steering Group	high

The Long Melford Parish Plan 2006

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*“Long Melford is a lovely village, a working village and I feel that it is **my** village and I want it protected.
I love it for how it is now and would hate to see major changes. I do also, of course, understand the need to move on.
So the answer is **‘Long Melford is most important to me.’**”*