

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

WELCOME

Introduction

This exhibition explains the progress being made with producing a Neighbourhood Plan for our area, and we seek your views before developing the plan further. The more feedback we receive the better the plan will be.

On the boards that follow you will find ideas or thoughts about every aspect of village and parish life from sport to transport.

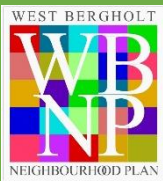


What this means for where we live and work

Our village and parish has changed greatly over the past 50 years and further changes can be expected. Changes will affect the countryside, housing levels, where people can work locally, the shops and amenities on offer and the quality of the environment. We could leave all change to chance or to local councils, or we could shape our destiny together as a community. Without a plan in place the shape and fabric of our built and natural environment is uncertain. What may be attractive today may be degraded in the future without a plan to help us.

What this means for our community

Our community consists of a mix of people of all ages. How do we ensure that we all have the opportunity to enjoy our environment, have access to services and have a say in the future? How do we try to enable a balanced mix of younger and older age groups, and that the amenities we enjoy are relevant to future generations? Decisions we make now directly affect our lives and those of our children and those who may live in the parish in the future.



West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

BACKGROUND

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Plans (hereinafter referred to as NPs) were introduced by Government in the Localism Act 2011. They allow for communities to shape development in their area.

Neighbourhood Plans will become part of the Borough, District or Unitary Local Development Plans and the policies contained within them will be used in the determination of planning applications and types of development. NPs are being produced all over the country with several elsewhere in Essex



Who is producing the plan?

The plan is community-led but affiliated to the Parish Council who acts as its sponsor. The NP area has been agreed by Colchester Borough Council following public consultation. A village workshop was held in November 2012 and interested residents in attendance met further and subsequently convened the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Members of the Steering Group are both residents and business owners within West Bergholt who value the opportunity to have a say in the future shape and development of their village.

The steering group is presently undertaking the following work:

- **Communications**, to ensure residents know about the process
- **Evidence gathering**, to make sure our plan is based on fact and logic
- **Project planning**, to ensure we meet all the statutory processes
- **Report drafting**, to enable the plan to be understood

At present there are around 20 members of the group roughly split into ten actively involved in preparing the plan with a further ten acting in a supporting role, reviewing ideas and acting as a sounding board.

A good deal of material is on www.westbergholt.net/neighbourhoodplan

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

WHAT WILL BE IN THE PLAN?

What do Neighbourhood Plans contain?

Neighbourhood Plans can take many forms but they must include the following:

- Proposals and policies covering land use
- Plans for development, be these for housing or employment or for sporting or recreational areas

Plans may also contain:

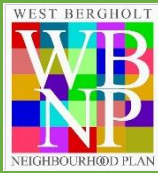
- Ideas for projects that a community may wish to see undertaken



What will ours look like?

We intend to follow our successful Parish Plan format tempered with the statutory needs of the NP to produce a short document with the following chapters:

- ***Introduction & Background (1 page).***
- ***Vision and Objectives (2 pages).***
- ***Sustainable Growth for the Whole Community (2 pages).***
- ***Strategy, including options (5 pages).***
- ***Housing and Planning (4 pages).***
- ***Employment (2 pages).***
- ***Amenities (2 pages).***
- ***Sport & Recreation (2 pages).***
- ***Environment (4 pages).***
- ***Social & Community (2 pages).***
- ***Community Safety (2 pages).***
- ***Transport and Highways (2 pages).***
- ***Communications (1 page).***
- ***Delivering the Plan (2 pages).***
- Our Evidence in appendix form.
- Policies will be interspersed throughout the document and repeated as an appendix.
- Evidence used as required in the plan.
- Each chapter will include a planning and a projects aspect.



West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

PARISH PORTRAIT

Introduction

This board looks at our parish and village and summarises what we know about the community and its setting in numbers. Looking at the past may not dictate the future but it aids an understanding of our present position.

The Setting

- The parish is 1,034 hectares in size
- It has 1,364 dwellings
- It contains one large village and small clusters of other houses, farms and commercial premises
- It is bordered by similar parishes to the north, east and west and by Colchester town to the south
- The village has a large primary school (over 400 pupil placements) catering for students both inside and outside the parish
- It has one B class road leading to Colchester and Sudbury and the remaining roads are unclassified



The Community and its characteristics

- 3,344 people live in the parish, 687 are aged 16 or less; 747 are aged 65 or over.
- 2,845 people live in owner occupied properties with the remainder in a variety of private or social rented properties
- 1,668 people are in employment
- Of those in employment 70% drive to work or are passengers in a car
- 15% of people class themselves as in poor or very poor health
- There are 2,000 cars registered to households in the parish

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US SO FAR

Introduction

Building on an adopted Parish Plan and Village Design Statement, further open meetings, exhibitions and questionnaires have been undertaken across the community including household, business and young peoples' surveys.



Household Survey Findings, based on 470 household returns

The main aspects, achieving near unanimity, are:

- Nearly all respondents wanted to protect open spaces in the village.
- 95% want to maintain the identity of the village and not become a “suburb” of Colchester.
- 90% of respondents generally feel safe from crime or anti-social behaviour.
- 95.9% of respondents agree that residents must be able to influence the quality, pace and location of development.

Young People's thoughts, based on 133 responses

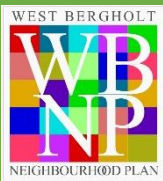
- Strong participation in sports and Bergholt Youth Group (BYG).
- Strong support for improving:
 - Places, sources of advice on wellbeing and health.
 - Meeting places and opportunities.
 - Sports facilities and more clubs.

Business findings, based on 28 responses

- Wide variety of small and medium sized enterprises, great potential exists.
- Lack of space to expand.
- Lack of space for offices, parking.
- Slower than standard broadband.

The effect on future proposals

- Near unanimity on specific aspects will have a strong impact on the direction of future proposals. From the above, it can be deduced:
- Options relating to future land use will attract great interest and involvement.
- Significant resistance will be generated should changes be proposed that are considered likely to adversely affect the current feeling of community safety.



West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan OUR VISION & ASPIRATIONS?

A vision for our Parish and Village

“By 2025 West Bergholt will be a prosperous community which has taken control of its destiny through local decision-making, which has achieved a sustainable mix of development, and where the combination of the built and natural environment provides an attractive location for residents, businesses and visitors alike.”



Our Aspirations

We have grouped these under the headings of our plan:

We wish to achieve the following objectives

- **Social and Community:** To improve and extend opportunities for all age groups to take part in a wide range of activities both recreational and as volunteers. Promote and raise awareness of these to increase participation and to maintain a thriving community support network.
- **Environment:** Maintain the distinctiveness of the parish and its identity by protecting the natural and built environment for the enjoyment of future generations and to explore opportunities to create new areas of recreational open space.
- **Community Safety:** Maintain the feeling of a safe community where crime and perception of crime is low and where the chance of being the victim of a traffic related accident is minimised.
- **Community Amenities:** Provide improved community facilities which support local groups especially in the areas of community buildings, telecommunications and meeting areas .
- **Business & Commerce:** Seek to examine controlled expansion of existing employment opportunities or new opportunities if scope exists; maintain and where practical enhance the existing offer of retail and eating and drinking facilities.
- **Sport & Recreation:** Provide new areas of open space for formal and informal sport and recreation to promote healthy living and lifestyles.
- **Communications:** To improve communications through a range of activities with our website and social media at its core to provide residents with a means to be consulted on village affairs.
- **Housing & Planning:** Support limited expansion in the parish and involve the local community in all aspects of development through consultation and active involvement to determine new housing needs.
- **Transport & Highways:** Maintain and improve existing accessibility by bus, walking and cycling. Introduce 20mph zones or streets. Improve maintenance of our highways, pathways and verges.

Introduction

This slide looks at the existing community ties, whether clubs and societies or volunteering. It considers how these can be maintained, enhanced or strengthened.

Our Community

West Bergholt has many groups which act as the hub of social and community interaction – Parish Council, School, Churches and a wide range of clubs and organisations. In addition, support is provided through specifically formed groups such as the Care Network, First Responders, BYG and the Snow Patrol.



Our Objectives

To improve, promote and extend opportunities for all age groups to take part in a wide range of social and recreational activities both as individuals and volunteers.

Emerging Issues

- With the increasing pace of life and pressure on our time, it becomes harder for existing volunteers to maintain their roles and to persuade others to take up duties providing services that are taken for granted by so many.
- Across the UK communities need to consider how to step in where traditional providers such as councils withdraw their support due to funding cuts.
- There is a need to enable all sections of the community to participate in activities that reduce social isolation, strengthen community life and create opportunities for interaction.

Proposals

- Create a means of identifying when an organisation is struggling for support.
- Create a database or contact list of people so that a growing pool of volunteers can be developed.
- Co-ordination of meeting venues to enable groups to meet easily.
- Further opportunities for older children and young adults.
- More publicity for existing groups.
- Examine funding opportunities.
- Maintain and enhance community centre(s) or similar.

Introduction

This slide considers both the rural and urban environments throughout the parish that are so valued by our

community Our Environment

The Parish has a wonderful mix of undulating farmland with a beautiful river valley accessed by a network of public footpaths including public access to ancient woodland. Within the village, there are numerous ponds, open spaces and vegetation that complement the built environment. Although a mix of eclectic housing styles, the village has nevertheless a good range of older buildings of architectural value.



Our objectives

To maintain the distinctiveness of the Parish and its identity by protecting the natural and built environment for the enjoyment of future generations and to explore opportunities to create new areas of recreational open space.

Emerging Issues

- It is essential that future development proposals do not adversely affect the positive aspects of the existing environment that we all enjoy. Instead, they should provide the opportunity of improving our environment.
- The quality of the built, man-made and natural landscape should not be taken for granted and our plan needs to provide a balance between preservation, functionality and enjoyment.

Proposals

- Policies to protect what we have (including existing areas of public open space, woodland in private ownership, special landscape areas to the south east of the village).
- Projects to improve what we have (e.g. additional footpaths or the need for further areas of open space?).
- Design guidance to ensure new developments enhance the environment
- A community register to protect important community buildings.

Incorporate environmental policies?

Introduction

If we are to have a Neighbourhood Plan it must include proposals for new housing, however modest these might be. This is the first time in our history that residents will have an opportunity to say how our village should be developed over the next 30 years. Currently we have little or no say and have to accept the number and type of houses that the Borough Council or developers come up with.



These 4 slides consider various aspects of planning.

Planning is an intrinsic part of any village growth. Do you ever ask why do we have the pattern of open spaces, including the allotments and playing fields or why certain streets are so very different from one another? The answer is complex but in recent times, much is due to the prevailing planning rules that exist at any one time. We have an opportunity to shape this including:

- How much housing we should cater for.
- What type of housing is suitable for our area.
- What it will physically look like.
- Where it should be located.

The Village Envelope

The amount of new housing in the parish is currently limited to the village envelope (shown on the map above as a red boundary line), and there is a presumption that development can take place in accordance with standard planning criteria. Under Colchester's existing Local Plan our village is restricted to around 50 new houses up to the period 2023. Much of this housing has already taken place through infill and from reducing garden sizes of larger properties. With the Borough Local Plan up for review, we need to determine our future requirements.

Development Needs & Preferences

It is difficult to estimate the number of houses we will need in the future. As the village area is already highly desirable, it is likely that several hundreds of houses could physically be built and sold.

However our challenge is to strike a balance between keeping the area vibrant and meeting our natural needs whilst retaining its character and avoiding further sprawl.

Based on historical population growth we appear to need up to 200 new homes over the next 30 years.

We already know from the previous surveys that people want as small an expansion as possible to avoid becoming a suburb of Colchester.

However the household survey also overwhelmingly confirmed that residents must be able to influence the quality, pace and location of development.



Our Objectives

To support limited expansion in the parish and involve the local community in all aspects of development through consultation and active involvement to determine new housing needs.

Further if development has to occur, the household neighbourhood plan survey indicated over 40% preference to the following types of development:

- Starter/low cost homes for first time occupiers/young families.
- Small, mixed group, developments.
- Warden assisted or sheltered housing
- “Downsizing” housing.

Amount of development?

Extent and Distribution of Development?

In this exhibition we are deliberately not suggesting where new housing could be built. We consider this is too soon in developing the plan. Instead we want your views on more general concepts such as the number and type of new homes; their appearance and their general distribution.

Whilst the latter consideration is often influenced by the location and area of available land it is important to establish what is acceptable to the community.

To help with this question and before our plan starts to specify on maps and plans where development could be considered a number of options have been devised to help us gauge the preferred approach:



Options

We would like you to consider the following approaches

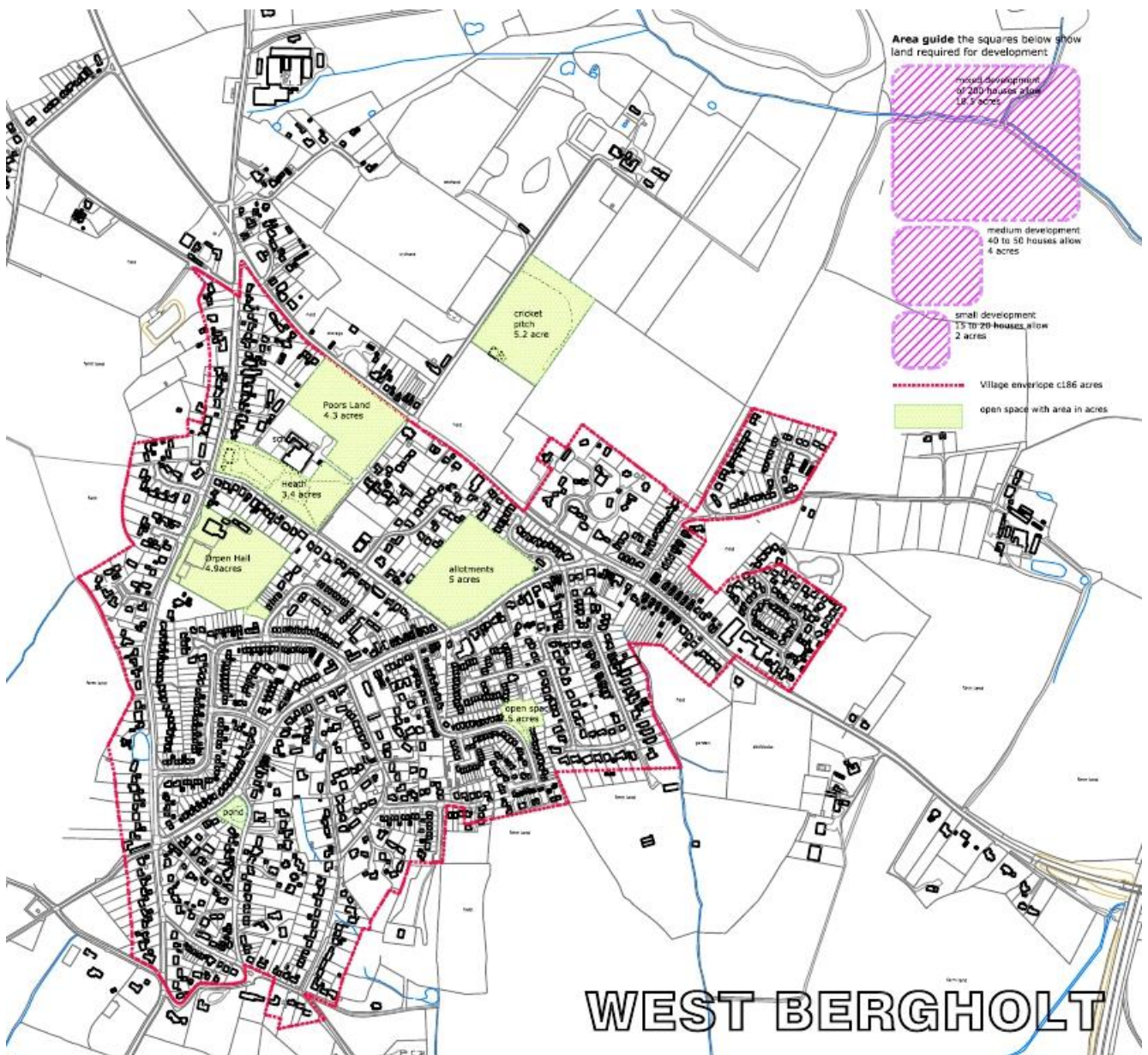
1. Maximising the control the community has over the type of development provided. Up to 25 new dwellings to be accommodated within the existing village envelope.
 - Additionally, outside the village envelope, up to 75 new dwellings of type, style and number deemed as necessary to meet the parish's needs.
2. Maximising the control the community has over the type of development, but allowing a greater number of dwellings. Up to 25 new dwellings to be accommodated within the existing village envelope.
 - Additionally up to 125 houses to be accommodated by extending the village envelope in several locations to accommodate small areas of new housing; dwellings of type, style and number deemed as necessary to meet the parish's needs.
3. Allowing developers to put forward their own plans for the type of dwellings they wish to provide.
 - Up to 200 houses to be accommodated by one or two larger extensions to the village envelope.

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan PLANNING & HOUSING

Where could new housing take place?

In considering which is the best option spatially, the expanded map below is a helpful starting point. The **pink** hatched areas show the land needed for different amounts of development.

What do you think, is it realistic to assume that the existing village envelope could accommodate further housing or should the envelope be enlarged, if so where and to accommodate what level of development?



West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

TRANSPORT: moving around in the parish

This board is concerned with moving around in the NP area. It explores the issues concerning travel, highways and the pedestrian and cycle environment. It seeks to establish what our priorities would be to bring to the attention of those who look after highways and provide travel services



Transport Services and Infrastructure

Our community is connected to Colchester and Suffolk by a “B” road and minor roads. We have regular bus services to Colchester and towards Bures. School transport is also provided. Footways and footpaths are available but in need of enhancement and repair. The village is on the fringe of the national cycle network and local cycle routes to the town. We may assume that the basic road layout is unlikely to change and traffic will increase with further development and increased car ownership.

Our Objectives:

To maintain and improve existing accessibility by bus, walking and cycling. Introduce 20mph zones or streets. Improve maintenance of our highways, pathways and verges.

Emerging Issues

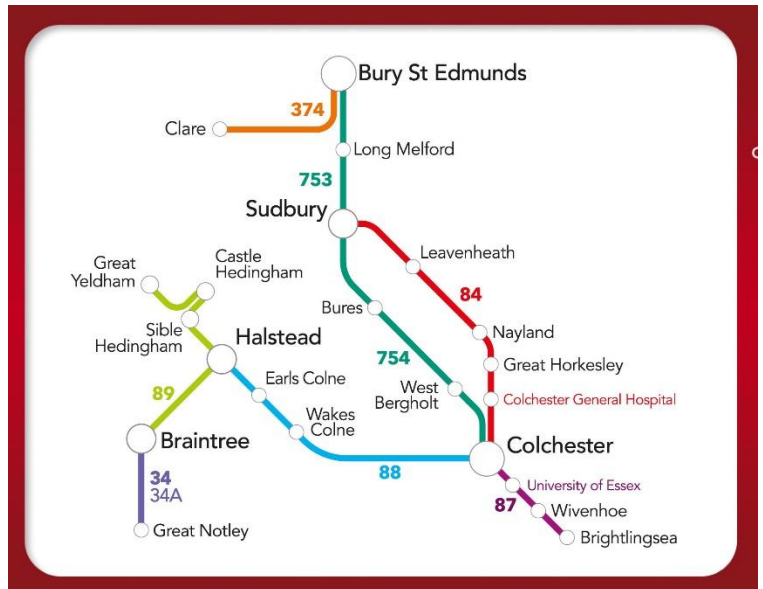
From local observation and from the surveys undertaken the issues are:

- Poor environment for cycling with lack of cycle ways.
- Car dominated environment with parking and safety issues.
- Basic but sometimes unreliable bus service.
- A poor standard of highway maintenance.
- Lack of safe pedestrian road crossing points.
- Missing lengths of footways and many in poor repair.
- Lack of information on the local public rights of way.

Our Proposals

Possible bus service proposal:

- Real time information on bus stops saying when the next bus will arrive.
- Some form of bus discount scheme linked to increased usage.



Possible motorised transport proposals:

- Parking restrictions at key road junctions and possibly one way streets.
- Progressively introduce 20mph streets or better still 20mph zoning.
- A parish register of road defects to discuss with the highway authority.

Possible cycling proposals:

- Links to cycle routes in the area towards the station and Eight Ash Green.
- A quiet circular cycle route for youngsters to safely learn cycle craft.

Possible walking proposals:

- New footways along Chapel Lane and New Church Road.
- New footway on Colchester Road adjacent to Poors Land and School.
- Promotional leaflet covering public rights of way and cycling.



West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

BUSINESS & COMMERCE

This board examines the commercial environment in the parish, whether shops, pubs or businesses. It seeks to establish what our priorities are for employment, retail opportunities or entertainment.



Existing Business and Commercial Areas

In most cases our commercial and employment areas have evolved over time. The retail shops and pubs are well known but did you know we have several business parks located in **Colchester Road, Nayland Road, Armoury Farm; Bourne Road; Fossets Lane**. In addition we have many small businesses which operate from people's homes or from farms or former farms. These provide local employment yet harmonise with village life. We benefit from local employment, retail outlets and entertainment areas being on our doorstep.

Our Objectives

Seek to examine controlled expansion of existing employment opportunities or new opportunities if scope exists; maintain and where practical enhance the existing offer of retail and eating and drinking facilities

Emerging Issues

- Some business park areas are at the limit of their existing footprints.
- No zoned areas for expanded employment opportunities exist in the parish.
- Pubs are at risk from closure without local support.
- There is no real plan for influencing retail areas in the village.

Proposals

- Identify the business parks in our plan with land zoned for expansion.
- Promote businesses on the website.
- Maintain a community building register which includes local pubs and churches.

This board looks at the community facilities and amenities we all use on a day to day basis. Are these sufficient going forward or do we need more or better facilities in the future?

Where we are today

Generally the village has good facilities including:

- Village Halls, Church and Chapel Halls, Scout Hut.
- School and Pre School.
- Community broadband service
- Allotments.

Proposals for the Future

- Remove the deadlock to expansion by moving and consolidating ball game and recreational sports areas.
- Larger village halls to meet future demand shortfall.
- Enhancements to the church & chapel halls and scout hut.
- A broadband service providing sufficient bandwidth for all.
- Weather proof “meet and greet” facilities at Bluebells and Heathlands .

What the Village Needs – Preparing for the future: new and/or expanded community building

Requires the relocation of existing football field for future village hall expansion and enhancement



Our Objectives

To provide improved community facilities which support local groups especially in the areas of community buildings, telecommunications and meeting areas

Emerging Issues

- Meeting areas for all uses are fragmented and there is no central co-ordination system.
- Village Halls are at near full capacity.
- Broadband service needs to be enhanced.

This board considers the sporting and recreational facilities that exist in the parish and examines whether they are sufficient for the community in future years.

Existing sporting and recreational facilities

- Three separate Children's play areas.
- Adequate variety in both sport and recreational facilities.
- Well used and popular with an ever growing demand.
- Helps maintain our village look and feel.



Our Objectives

Provide new areas of open space for formal and informal sport and recreation to promote healthy living and lifestyles

Emerging Issues

- Existing facilities adequate for today – but only just!
- Existing facilities inadequate for future needs or growth.
- Facilities established by chance of history not strategic planning.
- Football dominates the available recreation fields.
- Lorkin-Daniell playing field has limited free capability.
- Football is noisy and needs space – at odds with the current setting .
- Children's play areas - expansion & enhancement limited by space.
- No suitable space for new future facilities – skate park, rugby, teenage activities.
- Organised sport facilities use separate fields and club houses.

Our Proposals

What the Parish Needs – Preparing for the future: sport

- New consolidated and dedicated sports field – minimum of 10 acres, located close to the village.
- Dedicated sport and fitness pavilion and changing facilities.



What we need.
Expansion of pitches to allow for a number of clubs to utilise

What the Village Needs – Preparing for the future: children's outdoor activities

- Relocate existing football areas to make room for enhanced children's play activities.
- Introduce a skate park .

What our children deserve



What the Village Needs – wider recreational activities

- With so many footpaths on our doorstep we need to promote these through circular walk guides to enable improved access to Essex Way, Fordham Community Forest and neighbouring parish areas.
- Recreational cycling opportunities, perhaps converting some footpaths to bridleways to enable cycling as well as walking or introduce permissive paths with the agreement of like-minded landowners.

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Introduction

Feeling safe in our community is paramount, whether you are walking youngsters to school, protecting your home from possible burglary or concerned about anti-social behaviour – everyone wants to feel safe. Our plan aims to create an environment which gives you this feeling of safety whatever the circumstances.



Our Objectives

To maintain the feeling of a safe community where crime and perception of crime is low and where the chance of being the victim of a traffic related accident is minimised

Emerging Issues

From the previous and past surveys and from our own research we know:

- Crime levels are low & you generally feel safe in the village.
- Information about crime is important to you.
- Past incidents of anti-social behaviour have been a cause for concern.
- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has dwindled.
- You want to know that the police can respond quickly.
- You are concerned about road safety, crossing the roads, especially for children.

Proposals

- Seek to progressively introduce 20mph zones and streets.
- Liaise closely with the police on crime trends to inform our community about emerging threats.
- Inform Safer Colchester Partnerships of growing issues.
- Work with voluntary groups to identify vulnerable households.
- Revive interest in a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.



Introduction

This board explores how to best use the different types of communication and information available about organisations, businesses, clubs, the school and Associations. The emphasis is how do we make best use of these to improve knowledge of what is going on in the community.



Existing Situation

Existing communication methods used in the village:-

Notice boards, Lamp posts, Website, Facebook & Twitter, Village Bulletin, School News, Church news sheets, Word of mouth, Local newspapers, Local Authority reports.

Emerging Issues

From the surveys we have learned that:

- Over 50% of those participating considered that greater publicity is required on the range of village and parish activities and how to participate.
- Less than half of residents felt involved in decisions.

Proposals

For a vibrant community, it is vitally important for residents' views, news, achievements and aspirations to be heard, communicated and shared.

This may be enhanced through the following:

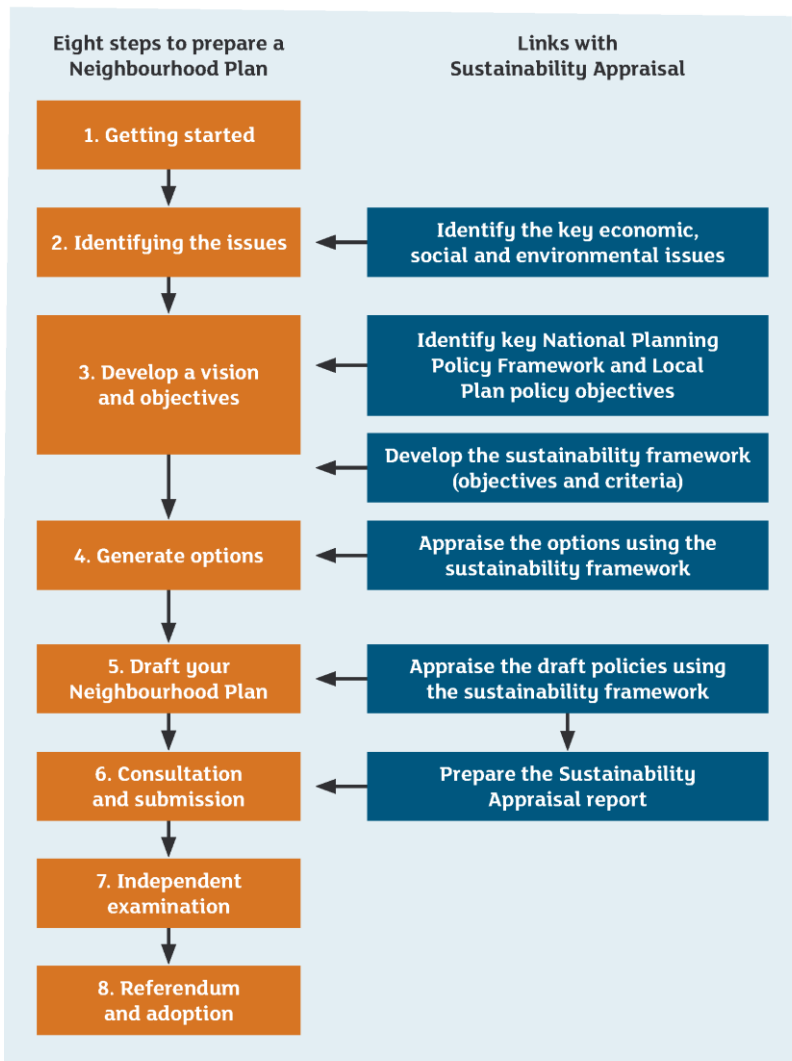
- Broadband delivery to the village and ideally to every home.
- Increased community volunteer participation.
- Explore the opportunities, and use existing outlets, that have modern electronic media displays i.e. chemist & doctors' surgery.
- Annual Community event that involves everyone!
- More volunteer affiliated groups to support the Parish Council.
- A notice board in Pocket Park on the Truman site.

Our Objectives

To improve communications through a range of activities with our website and social media at its core to provide residents with a means to be involved and consulted on village affairs

Introduction

This board explains the various stages involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. Although the content is a matter for us, those who will evaluate our plan do so within the framework of planning legislation and our ideas must pass muster at various formal stages before certain aspects of the plan can



Where we are currently

Although not everything is a sequential process, we are effectively at stages 3 and 4 having already undertaken the following stages:

- Getting started: 2011-13 (stage 1).
- Identifying issues: 2013 and 2014 (stage 2).

Next Steps

- 2015: Consultation on issues and options (stage 4)
- Summer 2015: consultation on a draft plan (stages 5 and 6).
- 2016: Formal submission and examination (stages 6, 7 and 8).

West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Getting Involved

Our plan needs many supporters if it is to become a reality. Here are some of the ways in which you can become involved:

- Join the main Steering Group.
- Join the wider group commenting on the plan as it evolves.
- Express an interest in a particular part of the plan, perhaps where you have a skill, some knowledge or an interest.

Let's Talk...



it makes a difference!



How are we organised?

We meet as follows:

- Steering Group meets every third Weds at 8pm in the John Lampon Hall
- Sub groups meet as required on specific topics such as:
 - Evidence gathering.
 - Communications.
 - Project planning.
 - Drafting material for inclusion in the plan.



Main Contacts

- Chairman: Chris Stevenson
- Secretary: Rachel Howard
- Evidence Gathering: Brian Butcher and Andrew Savage
- Future Development: John Gili-Ross
- Communications: Murray Harlow

Please see Village website for current contact information or email Chris Stevenson at cdstevenson@gmail.com or ring him on 01206 241708.