

Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

Since the Annual Parish Meeting of 2022, the working group and our consultant have been working quietly in the background to obtain and collate the evidence, required to support the policies.

Our consultant is now preparing the draft plan. This will contain the policies, as identified from the questionnaire, and also include evidence from:

- ❖ Design Guide: to support the character of future developments.
- ❖ Suffolk Wildlife Trust (Landscape and Biodiversity Evaluation 2023): an ecological evaluation of the parish, to identify environmental features and wildlife to encourage and protect.
- ❖ Landscape Appraisal (an overview of the landscape character and landscape sensitivity issues in the parish of Westerfield). The appraisal has identified any opportunity for the enhancement, protection, management or conservation of landscape features or areas

Community Aspirations are an opportunity to address concerns raised by residents, as part of the questionnaire. Many issues raised are non-planning related and would not normally be contained in a Neighbourhood Plan though their inclusion tends to make the plan more readily understandable.

Community Aspirations

1. Communication

The Parish Council should ensure delivery of communication within the village. Communication within a rural community, such as Westerfield, is key, to ensure a good sense of community and all villagers will be kept up to date of villages activities, services, etc.

- Creation of new village media group to work together, with villagers, to improve communications within Westerfield, about community services.
- A new and improved Welcome Pack will be being created. This will utilise the existing communication links and also introduce new links.
- The new village media group will review communications within the village and for more links between village groups.

2. Community Activities

Westerfield has a lovely community feel with friendly people and an atmosphere of togetherness in the village. To support and encourage this going forward, within a small rural village, there should be more opportunities to get to know everyone in the community. The NHS clapping provided a great opportunity for neighbours to meet. Similar events will be encouraged at the Village Hall, with the paddock, in and around the village. This will be a great opportunity for villagers to get to know new people to the village and vice versa.

- The village events group will work together, with villagers, to develop community activities.
- The village media and events groups will liaise on a regular basis, to identify a range of activities from young through to old and be relevant to age and interest of villagers.

Community Aspirations

3. Housing

Several issues were identified with regard to housing, given the number of developments in plan or being delivered in and around the village. Westerfield, being a small rural community, will be enriched by the services and amenities of the new developments, provided what is in plan is delivered.

- The parish council will work alongside the relevant authorities, to ensure new developments include services and amenities appropriate to the scale of the proposal and these are actually implemented.
- In addition, the parish council to improve community's awareness about new amenities and services of the new developments.

4. Young People

Several issues were identified, by children and young people living in the Village, in the responses to the questionnaire. For example, there is nothing in Westerfield for young people outside of Scouts, etc. They would like to see playing fields with goal posts, open spaces, and benches, to meet friends. By promoting green space and wildlife projects, especially to younger/ future generations, they would understand what work goes on and make it easier to get involved. A number of initiatives are in plan to be delivered as part of the Henley Gate, Fonnereau and Red House developments. The Parish Council will work alongside youth leaders, to ensure children and young people are kept informed.

- The Parish Council will work with relevant local groups and developers, to identify projects for the younger/ future generations, involving environment, provision of facilities and recreation.

Community Aspirations

5. Community, Services and Employment

The one key issue, about working from home or running a business was broadband speed and the lack of broadband fibre. Broadband speeds, within the village, are not optimal, with a high degree of variability. It will be important to ensure future broadband provision keeps pace with improvements to technology and improves for the village.

- The parish council will actively monitor, influence and lobby communication companies, to improve broadband speed.

6. Natural environment / landscape

The importance of the rural feel, to all ages of villagers, cannot be overstated. All villagers would like to preserve the rural character and feel of Westerfield, through the open / green fields around and in the village. The rural character will enable the dark skies to be preserved, as far as possible.

- Parish Council will work alongside the relevant authorities to develop countryside on doorstep, hedgerows and mature trees, wildlife habitats, particularly wildlife corridors and endeavour to provide information and funding for wildlife projects.
- They will advertise for a Tree / Hedge Warden for Westerfield.
- The parish council will aim to ensure, as far as possible, the dark skies, which are important to the village whilst balancing with sufficient lighting to keep the streets safe. A new environmental group will work alongside any new and existing environmental groups, such as the Westerfield station adopters, and the church, to develop countryside on doorstep.

Community Aspirations

7. Speeding

Every villager knows of the speeding traffic, within Westerfield and the use of Lower Road / Church Lane as a rat-run. Every villager knows of the speeding traffic along Westerfield Road, especially as it enters the village. This generates several issues for users of the roads, including walkers, cyclists and agricultural machinery. The Parish Council will manage the speeding traffic, to protect the rural nature of Westerfield.

- The Parish Council will work with all relevant agencies to address the issue of speeding vehicles, approaching and within the village. Community Speed-watch will continue to be supported, and the use of Police resources will be requested as appropriate.

8. Maintenance of roads, footpaths, and pavements

Several issues were identified in the responses to the village questionnaire with regard to the maintenance of the roads, footpaths and pavements. The villagers highlighted the state of the pavements in that they need cleaning and the hedges cut back on a regular basis. Road maintenance is a constant problem, with Church Lane being especially dangerous.

- The parish council will communicate with and encourage villagers to report to Suffolk Highways the repairs and maintenance required on the roads and pavements within the village, especially the state of roads, particularly about repainting of white lines and clearer road signs
- The parish council will work aside local landowners to ensure footpaths and bridal paths are properly maintained and villagers are aware of the procedure for reporting such.

Community Aspirations

9. Traffic Calming

Traffic is one of the most contentious of issues for a rural village, as it can denigrate from the rural character and feel of Westerfield. The Parish Council will work alongside Suffolk Highways and other relevant authorities, to explore traffic calming measures and other initiatives.

- The Parish Council will work with all relevant agencies to achieve traffic calming along lower road and church lane and to improve the road junction.

10. Footpaths development

It was recognised, from responses, that villages should feel able to walk or cycle safely in and around Westerfield, to enjoy the village and surrounding countryside. In addition, the villagers will be able to walk from Westerfield along the footpaths utilising a foot path map, as any new development will link existing footpaths.

- The parish council and the relevant authorities will work together to improve existing public rights of way, bridleways, footpaths etc.
 - i. Identification and recognition of new public rights of way & bridleways to create and extend the links throughout the parish to the wider networks.
 - ii. Community involvement in the recognition and development of i)
 - iii. Create walking routes away from main roads - north fields to County Park, as well as ensuring proposed links to Henley Gate and Tuddenham Road are delivered
 - iv. Provide a map for villagers, as new footpaths and pavements are created

Community Aspirations

11. Railway

Westerfield has three population areas: the main being located along the crossroads in the centre of the village, one around the Station and Level Crossing on the B1077 with other properties being scattered among the rural fringes of the village. Several issues were identified, relating to the station and level crossing, in the responses to the questionnaire and by being constantly discussed within the village. These issues relate to barrier delayed, parking, lighting, etc

- The parish council and the relevant authorities will work together to investigate opportunities for the improvement of Westerfield railway station and its immediate surroundings:
 - i. The length of time the level crossing barriers are closed
 - ii. Parking restrictions leading up to the railway crossing to improve traffic flow
 - iii. Reduce the intensity of the lighting at the railway station and rail crossing
 - iv. All trains on Ipswich to Lowestoft line should stop at Westerfield

Communication to Westerfield from East Suffolk Line user group, for example, about trains on the Lowestoft line.

Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

Within the next three months, the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan within the village will take place. This involves:

- ❖ What Next? A summary of the Plan will be published and delivered to each household within Westerfield. The full Plan will be made available, around the village, for villagers to read. Both will provide an opportunity to read the Plan and make comments on it.
- ❖ Submission of the Plan: After consultation on the Plan, the necessary amendments will be completed and the Plan submitted to the East Suffolk Council. They will carry out a further six weeks consultation.
- ❖ Examination of the Plan: The Plan will then be examined by an Independent Neighbourhood Plan Examiner to assess whether it meets the Government's requirements.
- ❖ Referendum: Following the Examination, the Plan will be amended to address any requirements of the Examiner and a Parish Referendum will be held. It will be open for everyone on the Electoral Register.

A simple majority voting in favour of the Plan will mean that it will be adopted by East Suffolk Council.