

Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

2023 - 2036



Pre-Submission Draft Plan

WESTERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 2023

Neighbourhood planning in a nutshell

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans, which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. These Plans, when properly “made” become part of the legal planning framework for the designated area.

A neighbourhood plan is, therefore, a community-led plan for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It concentrates on the use and development of land and can contain planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, and the allocation of sites for specific kinds of development.

Parish councils are encouraged to produce their own neighbourhood plans, enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated neighbourhood area, which contains all or part of the administrative area of a parish council, that council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. Neighbourhood plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted Local Plan.

Before a neighbourhood plan can be brought into force it needs to complete the following stages:

1 “Pre-submission” consultation on the Draft Plan by Parish Council

This is the stage we have now reached. The plan has to be widely consulted on for a minimum of six weeks allowing residents, businesses, landowners and a range of government bodies and service providers to comment on the Draft Plan.

2 Submission of Draft Plan to East Suffolk Council

All comments received at the “pre-submission” consultation will be considered and reviewed and any necessary amendments to the Plan will be made. The Plan, together with supporting documents.

3 “Submission” consultation on draft Plan by East Suffolk Council

4 Independent examination of draft Plan

5 Parish Referendum

6 Adoption by East Suffolk Council

These remaining stages are likely to take around 6-9 months to complete.

Produced by Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
For Westerfield Parish Council
with support from



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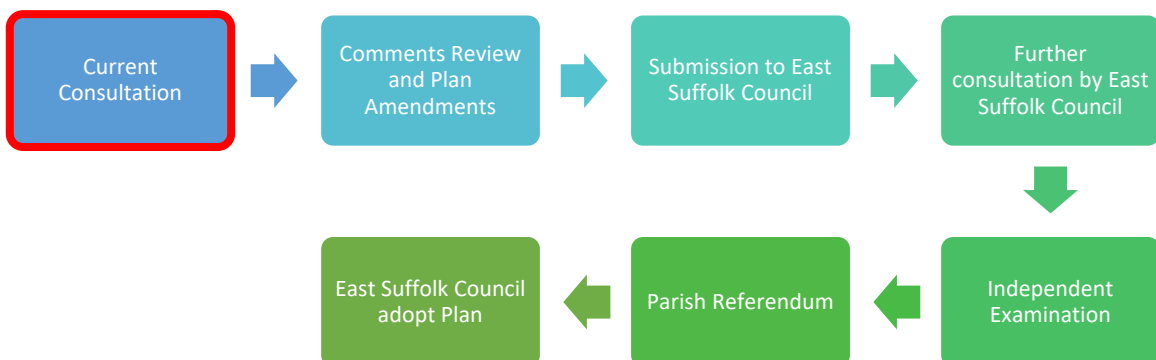
1. The Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 In 2021 Westerfield Parish Council resolved to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. It was agreed that work would initially be carried out by a group of volunteers and parish councillors. An application to East Suffolk Council to designate the whole of the Westerfield parish as the neighbourhood plan area was made in September 2021, and the District Council formally designated the area on 27 September 2021. Map 1 identifies the extent of the Neighbourhood Area.



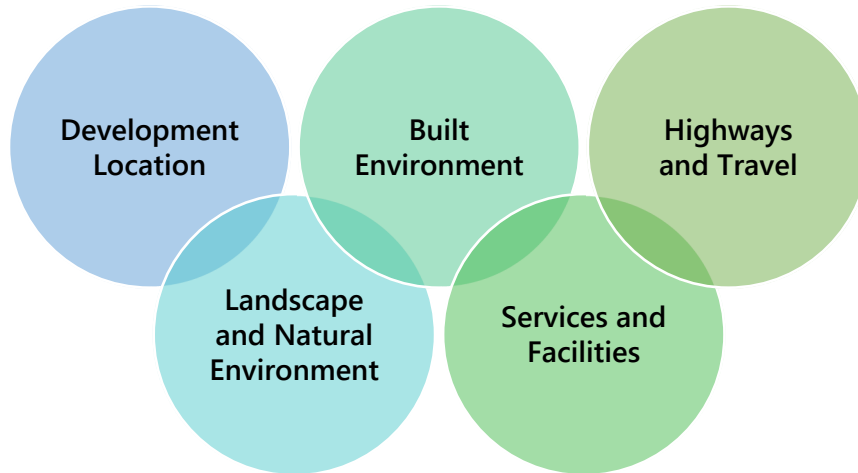
Map 1 – Westerfield Neighbourhood Area

1.2 We are now consulting on this first draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. Once the consultation is complete, the Plan will progress through the following stages:



1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan provides a framework of planning policies that will supplement, rather than repeat, the planning policies in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. This was adopted by East Suffolk Council in September 2020. The Neighbourhood Plan policies are distinctly identified in coloured boxes with a prefix of WFD. In addition to planning policies, the Neighbourhood Plan contains “community aspirations” that, although they do not form part of the development plan, identify local initiatives that address issues and concerns raised during community engagement. The community aspirations are identified differently from the planning policies to avoid confusion.

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan covers the themes illustrated below:



2. Westerfield Past and Present¹

- 2.1 Westerfield is a small village; nonetheless it has a recorded history many centuries old. In 1086 the village was called "Westrefelda", meaning a clearing or open space to the west. There were people in the area as far back as the Stone Age, Roman remains discovered here, including cinerary urns and Roman Coins are now on view at the Ipswich Museum. Centuries later, the influence of the Roman occupation was revealed when a number of Roman coins were found close to the Main Road and several burnt clay cinerary urns of the Roman-British period were unearthed near the railway crossing.

Westerfield in Norman Times

- 2.2 In 1086, the Domesday Book, (the survey of England ordered by William the Conqueror), lists details of 21 holdings of land in the parish. Included therein is reference to the Manor, held prior to the Conquest by a Saxon freeman. By 1086 it was held by Earl Alan of Brittany, who was married to the Conqueror's daughter Constance. The lands of the Manor covered an area of 120 acres. Earl Alan also held land in Westerfield whose valuation was included in Ipswich; perhaps early evidence of the divided allegiance of Westerfield inhabitants for many years, between those living in Ipswich Borough, and those in the county.

Westerfield Green & 'Inclosure' 1808

- 2.3 The nineteenth century brought changes in the character and buildings in the village in several ways. One of the most significant was the 'Inclosure' in 1808 of Westerfield Green. This is an area of approximately 50 acres of open land, stretching from Swan Lane in the north to Mill Farm in the south. The Green was split into allotments and the plots had to be fenced. The 'enclosure legislation' was intended to improve on the old wasteful methods of farming, though hardly surprisingly, the change was not universally welcomed. The Green had been the venue for 'cricket, football, donkey races and other rustic amusements', wrote G.R.Clarke, the Ipswich historian. He obviously knew the Green well, and deplored its loss. It was also used for military exercises, and on one occasion George III held a review here of 10,000 troops.



¹ We wish to acknowledge help from the historical research and papers written by the late Mr. S.F. Watson of Westerfield over 40 years ago, and also information found in the 'Westerfield 1087-1987' book, the joint authors of which were Mr. N.G.Perkins and the late Dr. A.J.C. Hyde, both of Westerfield.

Buildings

- 2.4 St Mary Magdalene Church: The oldest building standing in Westerfield is the church. There has been a church in Westerfield since 1086. The Grade 1 listed medieval church is dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. The stonework of the original doorway is Norman and most of the windows date from 1250-1300 although the glass is Victorian. The tower houses 3 bells: the treble and second dating back to about 1400, a tenor added in the 19th century. The wooden hammer beam roof, which was made in the 1400s is thought to be one of the finest in Suffolk. The hammer beams have carved Kings, Queens and Angels on their ends and these would have been richly decorated and gilded. These Angels have retained their heads despite the fact in most churches these were removed by the Puritans in the Civil Wars of the 1650s.
- 2.5 One consequence of the Enclosure was the demise of the original Swan Inn in 1829 (now a private house called The Slade). The present Swan, on the opposite side of the road, opened its doors to the public a year or two later. Further to the West, on the edge of the Green, the smock windmill (located by the footpath from Swan Lane to Lower Road), was dismantled in 1819. Either it was re-erected, or a new Mill built close to Mill Farm, and this remained in use until the 1860s, before finally being demolished in 1889.
- 2.6 The Village School, which replaced the brick vestry attached to the Church, was designed to accommodate 111 pupils, and opened in Lower Road in 1880. For a time, the school flourished, and during World War Two, local children shared the school with evacuees from London and elsewhere. Nevertheless, post-war plans by the Education Authorities favoured the better conditions and facilities obtainable in those schools with larger populations, and the authorities decided to close the school in 1968, with no prior consultation with either parents or teachers. Petitions to seek to reverse this decision were well supported locally, but were in vain. The buildings were later taken down and houses built on the site.
- 2.7 Only a distant memory, is the Westerfield Brewery once situated by the road to Witnesham. Owned by John Bird (of the Manor House), the Brewery supplied Westerfield Ales in cask and bottle to the locals and to nearby villages and communities. The Brewery had to close in World War One, due to the effect of cereal rationing, and never traded again. As the 19th Century drew to a close, a small plot of Glebe land was sold to the Trustees of a new charity, for the construction of what became the Parish Hall, which then was managed and operated under the terms of a Trust Deed dated 1894. The original building was extended in 1923, by the addition of a room on the east side and a kitchen. Four years later the Committee Room was built on the south side.



Other Trades

- 2.8 Local people were involved and employed in other trades required for life in the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, including blacksmiths, saddlers and wheelwrights, millers, shoemakers, joiners, carpenters, shop-keepers and carriers, as well as those working on the land.

Victorian Novelist

- 2.9 Matilda Barbara Bentham-Edwards, novelist, essayist, and poet, was born at Westerfield Hall on 3rd March 1836. She could claim an inheritance of literary tastes and genius from both sides of the family. Her first poetical efforts, "The Golden Bee", was accepted by Charles Dickens and presented to the public in his magazine, "All the Year Round" in 1860. She also wrote the book called "Reminiscences" (1898) and readers were greatly entertained by her descriptions of life and customs in Westerfield in the 1850's, and her frank appraisals of village personalities. Neither the Rector, nor the Schoolmistress, nor the frequenters of the Swan – were spared. When her mother and father died, she and her unmarried sister carried on the farm at Westerfield Hall.

Railways

- 2.10 The "Eastern Union Railway" sponsored a railway from Ipswich to Bury St. Edmunds in 1849 and a branch from Ipswich to Woodbridge in 1847. Twelve years were to pass, however, before the line was opened and a station sign displayed at Westerfield. In 1854 the Eastern Union, the East Suffolk and several other groups joined with Eastern Counties Railway under centralised management. In 1862 Eastern Counties and a number of smaller companies were amalgamated to form the "Great Eastern Railway Company".

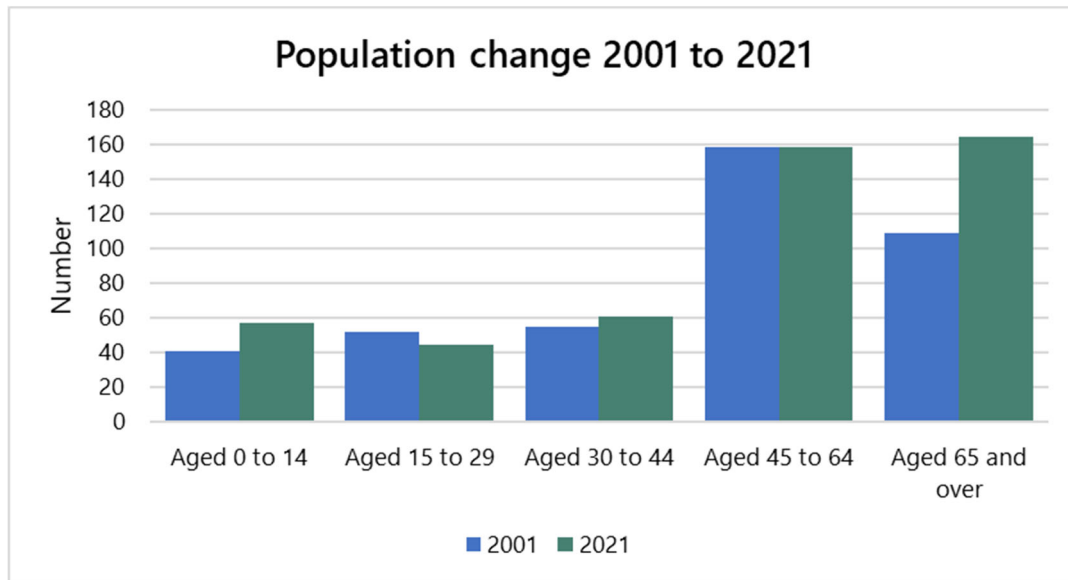


Boundaries

- 2.11 The illogicality of a boundary running through the middle of Westerfield – part within the Borough of Ipswich, and part in Suffolk Coastal, came up for renewed discussion as a result of concerns felt by both parts of the village about the possible route for an Ipswich Northern By-Pass in 1977. After much discussion and debate, the Boundary Commission recommended the boundary changes needed to bring unification of the village within Suffolk Coastal, this was finally implemented in 1985, leading to the first elections to the newly established Westerfield Parish Council in April 1986. Democracy had come home.

Westerfield Today

- 2.12 The parish today has a population of 483 (2021 Census), an increase of 17% over the 2001 Census figure. As illustrated in the chart, the biggest area of change in population is for those aged 65 and over.



- 2.12 The parish retains a railway station with services to Ipswich, Felixstowe and Lowestoft. According to government statistics published in November 2022, just under 13,000 trips were made from or to the station in the year April 2021 to March 2022. Freight traffic on the line however has increased dramatically over the years. There are currently around 35 freight trains passing through the station each way on the busiest days of the week.
- 2.13 The outward growth of Ipswich and the development of the Ipswich Garden Suburb results in the built-up area of the town creeping slowly towards Westerfield. The Garden Suburb development, as it is known, does include a new country park which extends into Westerfield parish and will provide a green buffer between the two settlements.
- 2.14 In terms of services, Westerfield today has relatively few, probably reflecting the proximity and ease of access to facilities in Ipswich. The Swan and The Railway Inn public houses/restaurants are destinations for customers from a wide area. The village hall, the adjoining paddock, the Bowls Club and the Church of St Mary Magdalene are the only other permanent facilities in the village. Westerfield Business Centre, just north of the railway line, does provide for local employment.



3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the content of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the relevant Local Plan documents that cover the parish. The Plan must have regard to the content of the NPPF and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. The paragraphs below identify how these are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework

3.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's high-level planning policies that must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. In September 2023 the Government published a Revised NPPF which sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states:

"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*

3.3 The NPPF requires that communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans should:

- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and
- plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

The Local Plan

3.4 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the strategic policies in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, which was adopted in September 2020. Some 121 policies in the Local Plan are noted by East Suffolk Council as meeting the NPPF definition of strategic. Throughout the topic sections that follow, reference is made to the Local Plan strategic policies, which are not repeated in the Neighbourhood Plan but which, as appropriate, should be taken into consideration when proposing development.

3.5 To complement the adopted Local Plan, a number of Supplementary Planning Documents have been, or are in the course of being prepared. Of particular relevance are:

- Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document – adopted November 2022
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document – adopted May 2022
- Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document – adopted April 2022
- Custom and Self-Build Housing Supplementary Planning Document – yet to be adopted
- Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document – Consultation November 2023 to January 2024

4. The Neighbourhood Plan Aims and Objectives

4.1 The overall aims of the Neighbourhood Plan are:

**To preserve the rural feel of Westerfield; and
To enhance the sense of community felt by residents**

4.2 To deliver these aims, the Plan has the following objectives:

1. **Maintain Westerfield as a 'small village' (in planning terms) by creating a "green ring" to protect it from creeping developments both from outside and within the village.**
2. **Allocate an area (ideally near the Village Hall and Church) as the focal point that supports the development of further services for village residents.**
3. **Specify design and development criteria for future developments which maintain the rural character and prevent the "suburbanisation" of the village.**
4. **Ensure residents can safely walk and cycle in and around Westerfield to enjoy the village and surrounding countryside, as well as providing access to nearby essential services such as schools.**
5. **Ensure Westerfield supports all our futures by reducing our environmental impact and improving the Village environment for local wildlife (e.g., rewilding and green corridors through the village).**



5. Village Development Locations

Local Plan Context

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP3.1 Strategy for Growth
Policy SCLP3.2 Settlement Hierarchy
Policy SCLP5.4: Housing in Clusters in the Countryside
Policy SCLP12.1: Neighbourhood Plans

- 5.1 The adopted Local Plan categorises Westerfield as a “small village” due to the level of services and facilities that it had when the Plan was prepared. For small villages, the type and scale of development that would be supported in such settlements is identified as:

Employment

Development within existing Employment Areas
Development of employment uses appropriate to the scale of the settlement

Retail

Protection of local shops

Housing

New housing allocations
Small groups of new housing and infill within Settlement Boundaries

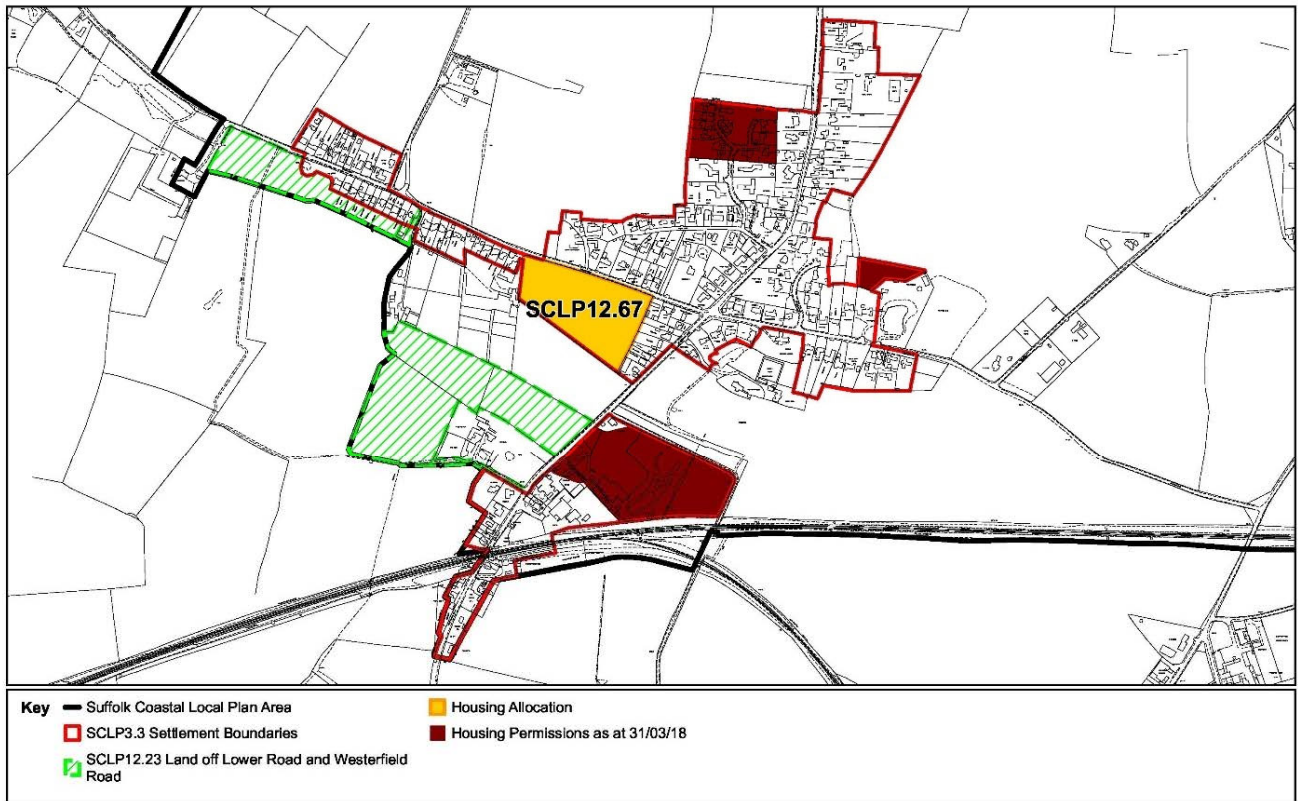
- 5.2 The Local Plan identifies a Settlement Boundary for Westerfield, as illustrated on Map 2. In terms of future development, Policy SCLP3.3 of the Local Plan states that:

“New development within defined settlement boundaries will be acceptable in principle, subject to consideration of other relevant policies of the development plan.

New residential, employment and town centre development will not be permitted in the Countryside except where specific policies in this Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans indicate otherwise.

Proposals for new residential development outside of the Settlement Boundaries and outside of land which is allocated for development will be carefully managed in accordance with national planning policy guidance and the strategy for the Countryside.”

- 5.3 Local Plan Policy SCLP12.1: “Neighbourhood Plans” identifies housing requirements in neighbourhood plan areas that were designated at the time the Local Plan was adopted. As the Westerfield Neighbourhood Area was designated after the Local Plan was adopted, there is no minimum requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan but proposals for new homes would have to be within the Settlement Boundary. The Local Plan does, however, allocate a site for approximately 20 dwellings and public open space on land south of Lower Road which is included in the Settlement Boundary. The Local Plan map for Westerfield is reproduced as Map 2.



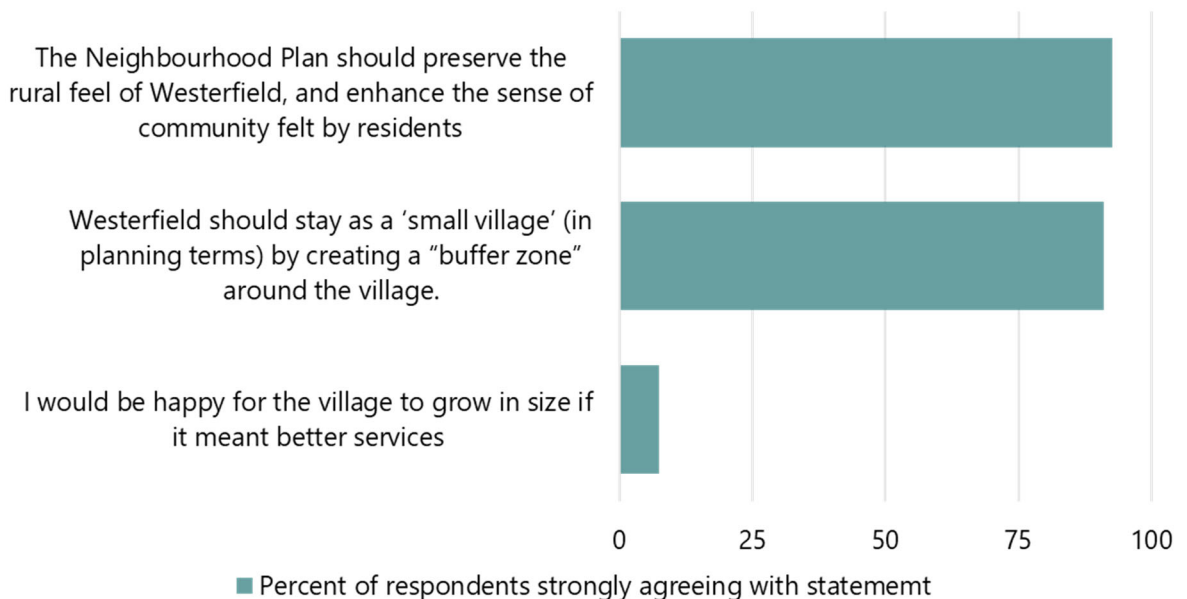
68 - Westerfield
East Suffolk Council

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www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/localplan 630

Map 2 – Local Plan Inset Map for Westerfield

Residents' Survey

5.4 The Neighbourhood Plan Residents' Survey asked for opinions on the future growth of Westerfield. As illustrated in the chart, there was strong support for preserving the rural feel of the village and it remaining a small village. Most respondents supported infill development of up to three dwellings, while there was no clear direction either way, in terms of small developments of up to 10 houses and almost no support for the development of larger sites of over 10 dwellings.



Neighbourhood Plan approach to future growth

- 5.5 The Residents' Survey results illustrate there is little in the way of support for further growth of the village. Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan cannot revoke schemes that are already in the pipeline, either through being allocated in the Local Plan or that have a current valid permission.
- 5.6 As noted above, the Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 20 dwellings and public open space on land south of Lower Road. A planning application, for the development of the site, was submitted to East Suffolk Council in March 2022 for 23 dwellings together with a village green type facility but it was withdrawn the following October, before a decision could be made. As such, at the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, it is not certain when the site will be developed.
- 5.7 In addition to the site at Lower Road, planning permission has been granted for up to 75 dwellings and 16 business units at the Old Station Works. At the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan detailed planning permission for the development had yet to be granted.
- 5.8 Given the above, the Neighbourhood Plan does not make any changes to the defined Settlement Boundary and does not propose additional sites for development over and above those identified in the adopted Local Plan. Therefore, and in accordance with Policy SCLP3.3 of the Local Plan, new development will be focused within the Settlement Boundary and will only be allowed outside that area where particular circumstances set out in the NPPF or the Local Plan are met. This approach will ensure that the undeveloped rural countryside is preserved and remains largely undeveloped.



6. Landscape and Natural Environment

Context

- 6.1 Westerfield sits within the 'Ancient Rolling Farmlands' landscape as identified in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment. This is a rolling landscape of medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland. A more focused set of studies was carried out in 2018 by Alison Farmer Associates for the District Council. They assessed the landscape character of the area under the former Suffolk Coastal District. Westerfield parish was defined as being in an area named 'N2 - Culpho and Westerfield Rolling Farmland'. The Assessment set out the following objectives for the landscape area:

Protect

- protect the separation between the edge of Ipswich and the villages of Westerfield, Tuddenham and Rushmere.
- protect the network of hedges and trees within any future urban expansion proposals and seek opportunities to link and strengthen the network.
- protect the quiet, rural character of the lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, or lighting.
- protect the plateau landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.

Manage

- management of elm-dominated hedgerows through coppice rotations.

Plan

- plan future expansion of any villages carefully to retain character and settlement patterns.
- plan for the ongoing maintenance and careful management of the characteristic oak trees along hedges, verges and field boundaries.
- plan for enhancements to biodiversity in this highly agricultural landscape, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.

- 6.2 A further study by the same author, the Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for the Landscape Fringes of Ipswich (July 2018) undertook a more detailed assessment of Westerfield, breaking the parish down into three character areas. These are explored in more detail in the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal referred to below.

- 6.3 In terms of wildlife habitats, there are no nationally or locally designated sites in the parish and only a limited number of UK Priority Habitats. A limited number of trees in the village centre, primarily on the B1077 and some around the site on Lower Road allocated for housing, are protected by preservation orders.

Local Plan Context

- 6.4 The Local Plan notes that the area's high quality natural environment is important to many local communities as it positively contributes to quality of life, quality of place and mental health. Policy SCLP10.1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity seeks to protect and habitats and designated sites of national and local biodiversity and geodiversity importance.
- 6.5 Paragraph 10.42 of the Local Plan notes that "*Neighbourhood Plan groups may choose to produce local landscape character assessments to supplement the Local Plan landscape evidence at the Town or Parish level.*" To compliment this, Policy SCLP10.4: Landscape Character states that neighbourhood plans may include local policies related to protecting and enhancing landscape character and protecting and enhancing tranquillity and dark skies.

6.6 Specifically to Westerfield, Policy SCLP12.23 identifies two areas of land west of Westerfield Road and south of Lower Road for use as part of the larger country park proposed in conjunction with the Ipswich Garden Suburb development to the south of the village.

Residents' Survey

6.7 Of those that responded to the Residents' Survey, 86% strongly agreed that any development in Westerfield should minimise our environmental impact and improve the environment for local wildlife. A further 92% strongly agreed that open views around the village and the surrounding countryside are important to them and a similar proportion of respondents strongly agreed that open and greens spaces in the village are important.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The Landscape

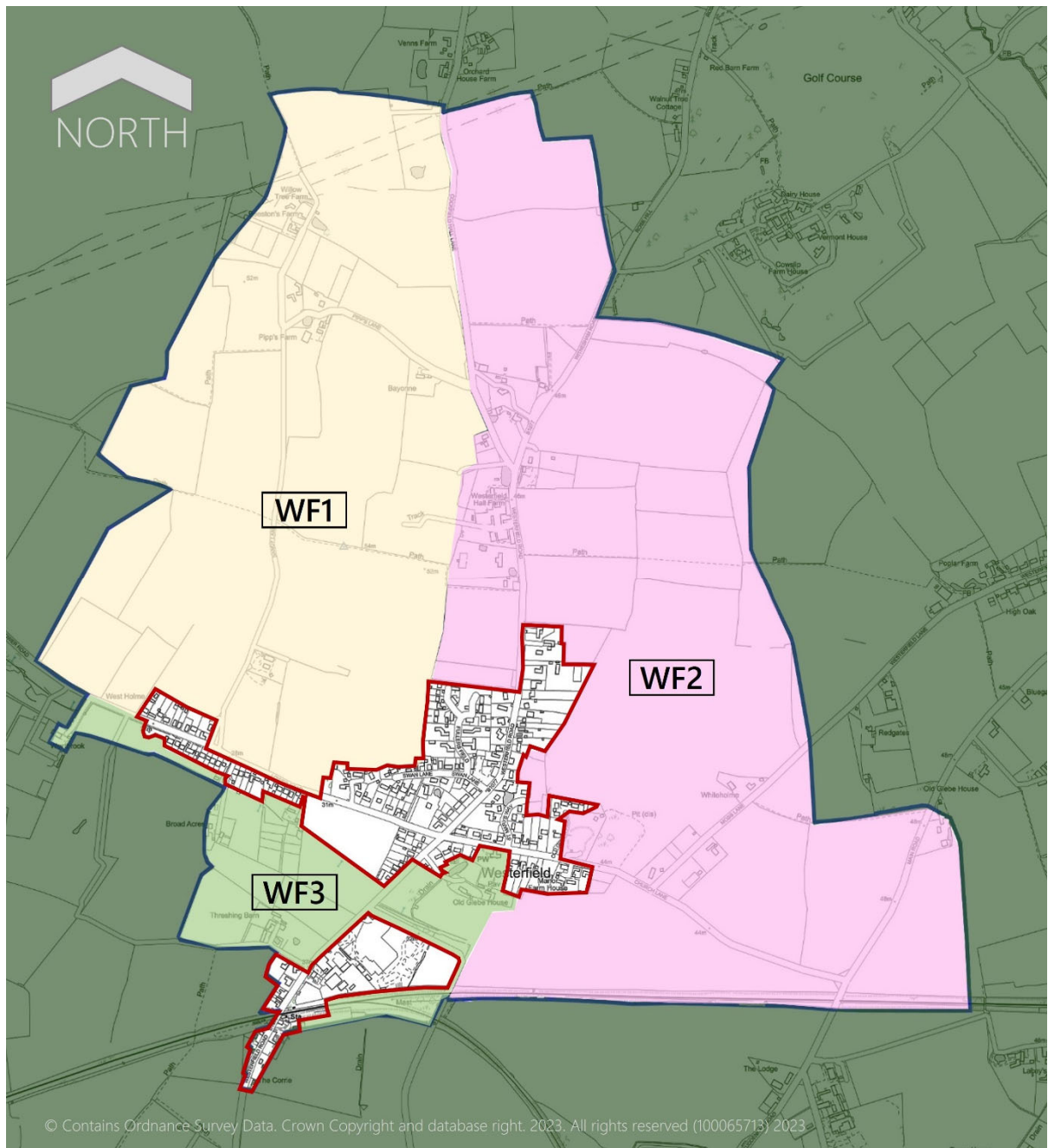
6.8 The Parish Council commissioned a parish wide Landscape Appraisal prepared by Landscape Architect, Lucy Batchelor-Wylam in 2022 as part of background work to inform the content of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Appraisal's objectives were:

- to provide an overview of the landscape character in the parish of Westerfield,
- to identify the functions of the landscape and to define and map its aspects of value,
- to identify the key sensitivities in the parish, to future development or change, focusing on the area fringing the settlement. These are separately considered in terms of sensitivities relating to landscape value, and visual sensitivities,
- to identify any area which might be considered 'valued' and worthy of additional policy protection,
- to guide future opportunities for landscape enhancement or enhanced green infrastructure provision.

The finished Appraisal is available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website.

6.9 The Appraisal provides a more detailed assessment of the landscape of the parish than that in the 2018 Ipswich Fringe study referred to above. It reviewed the landscape areas of the parish in that study and defines them as illustrated in Map 3.





Map 3 – Westerfield Landscape Character Areas

6.10 The Appraisal included a number of recommendations under the following headings:

1. conserve the historic meadow system in the heart of the village
2. protect the stock of oak trees
3. protect the setting of Westerfield Hall and Swan's Nest
4. integrate new development edges
5. improve pedestrian access / connections to the footpath network

The detail of these recommendations is included as Appendix 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.11 The lower meadows, identified on Map 3 as WF3, were found to “have an intact historic appearance, they are rarer and more distinctive, they provide important views, and offer natural features with greater wildlife value than the farmland in other parts of the parish.” The Appraisal was, however, inconclusive as to whether the area meets the criteria for designation as a ‘valued landscape’, as defined by the Landscape Institute, given that such landscapes normally cover larger areas of land. Much of this area will be part of the new country park referred to above, but that leaves sensitive landscape areas between the country park and settlement boundary to the west of Westerfield Road and between the settlement boundary and the Old Station Works to the east of Westerfield Road. Without careful consideration,

these areas could be susceptible to development pressures in future iterations of the local plan. The areas that are not part of the country park meet the NPPF criteria for designation as Local Green Spaces, where development proposals would be considered in accordance with the NPPF policy for green belts. As recommended in the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal, Policy WFD 5 therefore designates them as Local Green Spaces.

- 6.12 The Landscape Appraisal also identified a group of historic buildings beyond the northern edge of the settlement, with considerable heritage value (includes grade II* Westerfield Hall) that occupy a hilltop location and set apart from the rest of the village. Their separation, and outlook over open farmland, is an important part of their significance and they form an important component in views across the wider landscape. The Appraisal recommends that the gap between the Settlement Boundary and these historic buildings and the fields opposite the historic buildings should be protected from development, due to the potential to cause harm to the designated heritage assets.
- 6.13 Policy SCLP10.5 "Settlement Coalescence" sets a district wide policy to prevent development that would result in "the coalescence of settlements through a reduction in openness and space". It also states that neighbourhood plans "may include policies addressing local issues related to settlement coalescence" which Policy WFD 1 does for Westerfield. Within this area, proposals for development that satisfy the exceptional circumstances for development outside the Settlement Boundary, referred to in Policy SCLP3.3, will be further required to demonstrate through a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, how the proposal would not erode the visual and physical qualities of the gap.

Policy WFD 1 – Landscape Buffer

A Landscape Buffer is identified on Map 4. The open and undeveloped nature of these areas will be protected from development to prevent settlement coalescence and, as appropriate, minimise potential harm to designated heritage assets.

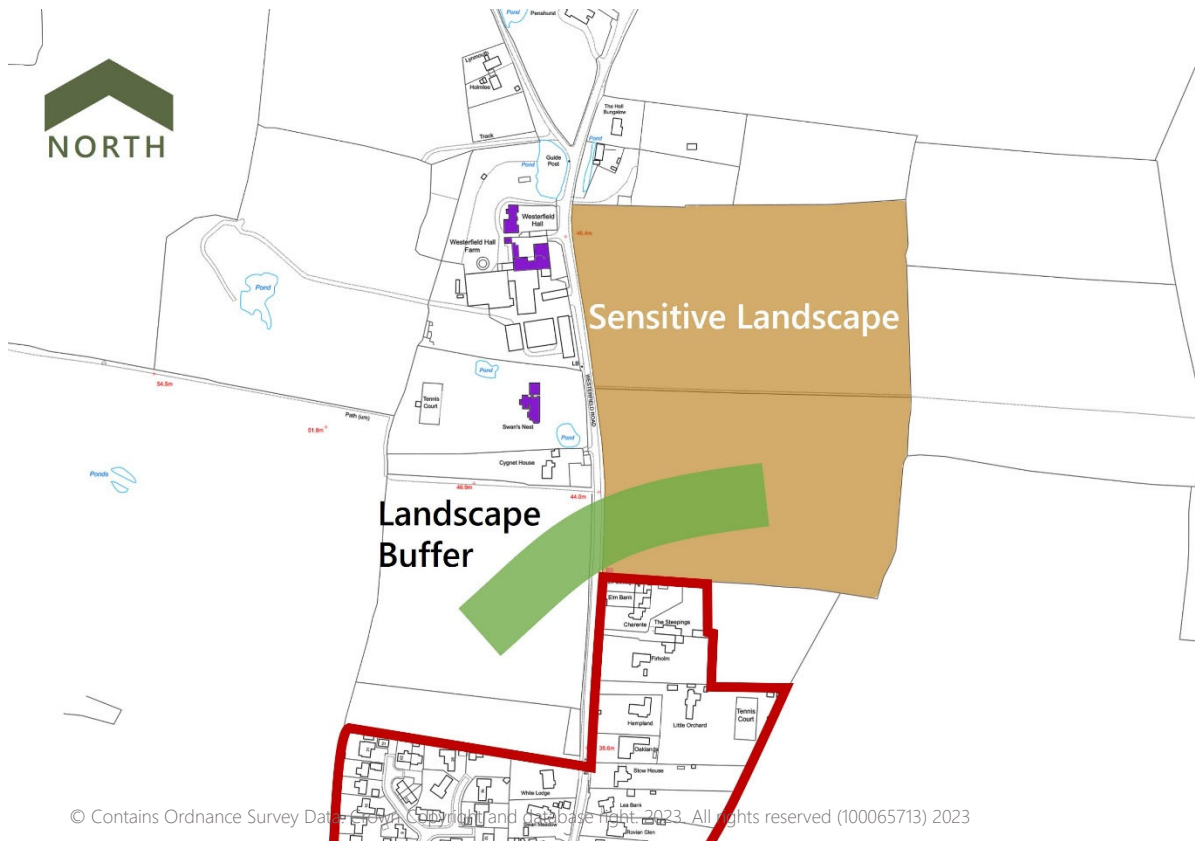
Development which is otherwise in conformity with Policy SCLP3.3 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan will only be permitted where:

- i. through the submission of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, it can demonstrate that it would not undermine the physical and visual separation provided by the landscape buffer; and
- ii. it would not compromise the integrity of the landscape buffer, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy:

Policy SCLP3.3: Settlement Boundaries

Policy SCLP10.5: Settlement Coalescence



Map 4 – Landscape Buffer and Sensitive Landscape

Policy WFD 2 – Sensitive Landscape

A sensitive landscape area is identified on Map 4 east of Westerfield Road and opposite the designated heritage assets at Swan’s Nest and Westerfield Hall.

The open and undeveloped nature of this area will be protected in order to safeguard the setting of the designated heritage assets. Proposals located in this area, which are otherwise in conformity with Policy SCLP3.3 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, will only be permitted where, through a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and a Heritage Impact Assessment, it can be demonstrated that it would not cause significant harm to the landscape and setting of the heritage assets.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy:

Policy SCLP3.3: Settlement Boundaries

Policy SCLP10.5: Settlement Coalescence

Green Spaces

6.14 There are important open areas within the parish that make important contributions to the character and setting of the built environment or provide open space and recreation locations for residents. The NPPF enables the designation and protection of land of particular importance to local communities as Local Green Spaces ('LGS') in neighbourhood plans. Such designations rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

It is recognised that the designation of Local Green Spaces should not be used simply to block development.

6.15 A separate Local Green Space Appraisal is set out in Appendix 2, which demonstrates how certain local spaces meet the criteria in paragraph 102 of the NPPF. The spaces that meet the criteria are identified in Policy WFD 3 and are illustrated on Map 5.

Policy WFD 3 – Local Green Spaces

The following Local Green Spaces are designated in this Plan and identified on Map 5:

1. The Paddock
2. The Bowls Club
3. Open area west of B1077 and south-west of Fairlands
4. Open area east of B1077 between Ash House and The Lodge

Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

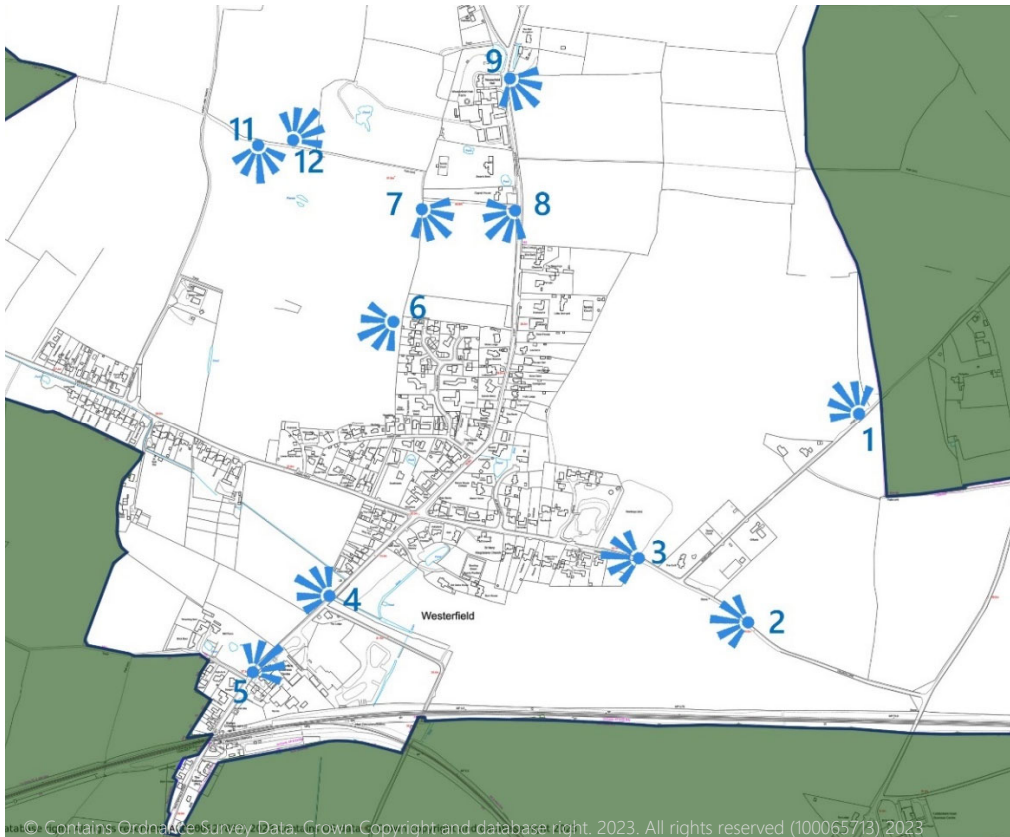
Policy SCLP8.2: Open Space



Map 5 – Local Green Spaces

Important Views

- 6.16 The nature of the landscape is such that there are opportunities for extensive views into and out of the built-up area of the village from publicly accessible points. The most significant are identified on Map 6 and described in the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal. There could be circumstances where a development proposal would have a significant detrimental impact on that view.



Map 6 – Important Views

- 6.17 When proposals for development in the parish are being prepared, it will be necessary to take account of the impact on views and demonstrate how the development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) are a recognised tool that specifically aims to ensure that all possible effects of change and development both on the landscape itself and on views and visual amenity are considered in decision-making.

Policy WFD 4 - Protection of Important Views

Important views from public vantage points, either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside, are identified on Map 6. Any proposed development should not have a detrimental visual impact on the key landscape and built development features of those views as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP10.4: Landscape Character

Wildlife Habitats

- 6.18 The loss of natural habitats as part of a development can have a significant detrimental impact on the wider landscape and opportunities for maintaining and improving the biodiversity of the area. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2023) notes that decisions should *“contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by.....minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”*. The National Planning Practice Guidance notes that: *“Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures.”*
- 6.19 In conjunction with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, Suffolk Wildlife Trust were commissioned to prepare a Landscape and Biodiversity Evaluation of the parish. The report is available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website. In brief, the report identified:

“a range of protected and Priority species have been recorded including otter, hazel dormouse, hedgehog, great crested newt and several Priority bird species including skylark and yellowhammer. There is also a significant number of stag beetle records, which are a Priority invertebrate species.

Species-rich hedgerows in the south and north of the parish form the backbone of the ecological network of the parish.”

Existing ecological networks within Westerfield were identified in the report and are identified on Map 7.





Map 7 – Westerfield's Ecological Networks

- 6.18 The Evaluation report recommended that any initiatives for habitat creation and enhancement within the parish “should look to find opportunities to link the Ipswich Garden Suburb Country Park, with habitats which already exist within the parish such as the wildlife friendly planting at Westerfield train station.”
- 6.19 Development proposals that deliver biodiversity improvements will be particularly supported. The National Guidance states that examples might include creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats, providing green roofs, green walls, street trees or sustainable drainage systems. Relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, such as incorporating ‘swift bricks’ and bat boxes in developments and providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different areas of habitat, specifically hedgehog tunnels in any new development.
- 6.20 In November 2021 the Environment Act received Royal Assent and will, when fully enacted, require new developments to deliver a minimum 10 per cent biodiversity net gain. In August 2021 a British Standard for Biodiversity Net Gain was published (BS8683) to provide a standard for designing and implementing such requirements. The requirements to deliver net gain will come into force in January 2024 for large sites (including sites of 10 or more homes or of 0.5 hectares in area) and for small sites in April 2024.

Policy WFD 5 – Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and other Natural Features

Development proposals should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, distinctive trees, hedgerows and other natural features such as ponds and watercourses and shall not result in harm to the identified wildlife corridors. Where such losses or harm are unavoidable:

- i. the benefits of the development proposal must be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any impacts; and
- ii. suitable mitigation measures, that provide better replacement of the lost features will be required to achieve measurable biodiversity net gain.

Any such mitigation measures should form an integral part of the design concept. In addition, the layout and design of the development proposal concerned should be landscape-led and appropriate in relation to its setting and context and have regard to its ongoing management.

Otherwise acceptable development proposals will be supported where they provide a net gain in biodiversity through, for example:

- a. the creation of new natural habitats including ponds;
- b. the planting of additional native trees and hedgerows of local provenance (reflecting the character of Westerfield’s traditional woodland and hedgerows), and;
- c. restoring and repairing fragmented biodiversity networks through, for example, including swift-boxes, bat boxes and holes in fences which allow access for hedgehogs.

Where new access is created, or an existing access is widened, through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP10.1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 6.21 From the responses to the Residents’ Survey, 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.

Community Action 1 – Countryside Initiatives

The 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. The Parish Council will seek to appoint a Tree / Hedge Warden for Westerfield.

Community Action 2 – Environmental Group

Villagers will work to establish a new environmental group to work alongside any new and existing environmental groups, such as the Westerfield station adopters, and the church, to develop countryside on doorstep.



7. Built Environment

Context

- 7.1 Although Westerfield does not have a designated conservation area, the parish has a rich fabric of historic buildings and features (collectively known as heritage assets). The Church of St Mary Magdalene is listed Grade I, the highest level of listing, and has elements dating back to the 12th century. Elsewhere in the parish there are a further seven listed buildings. Details are provided in Appendix 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.2 In addition, the parish is known to be rich in archaeological finds and records. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service's Historic Environment Record provides details of finds and the Service should be consulted at the earliest possible stages of preparing a planning application.
- 7.3 Westerfield is a small village with a distinctive rural feel despite its close proximity to Ipswich. The village is set along two roads (Lower Road/Church Lane and Westerfield Road), off which a number of developments have been added over time. Buildings in the village are typically detached and well set back from the road creating an increased sense of privacy as well as front gardens which adds to the rural feel of the area.
- 7.4 The design and construction of any new development can, if not considered carefully, have a significant detrimental impact on the environment, the amenity of existing residents and the local infrastructure. Although planning policies do not support the construction of significant additional development in Westerfield, even one new dwelling or the inconsiderate design of an extension needs to be afforded careful consideration in terms of location and design.
- 7.5 The NPPF makes it clear, in paragraph 124, that 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.' In January 2021 the Government published the National Design Guide to illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It 'provides a structure that can be used for the content of local design policies, guides and codes, and addresses issues that are important for design codes where these are applied to large scale development on single or multiple sites.' This was followed up in July 2021 by the more detailed National Model Design Code which sets out guidance for what could be included in a Design Code for sites and places.

Local Plan Context

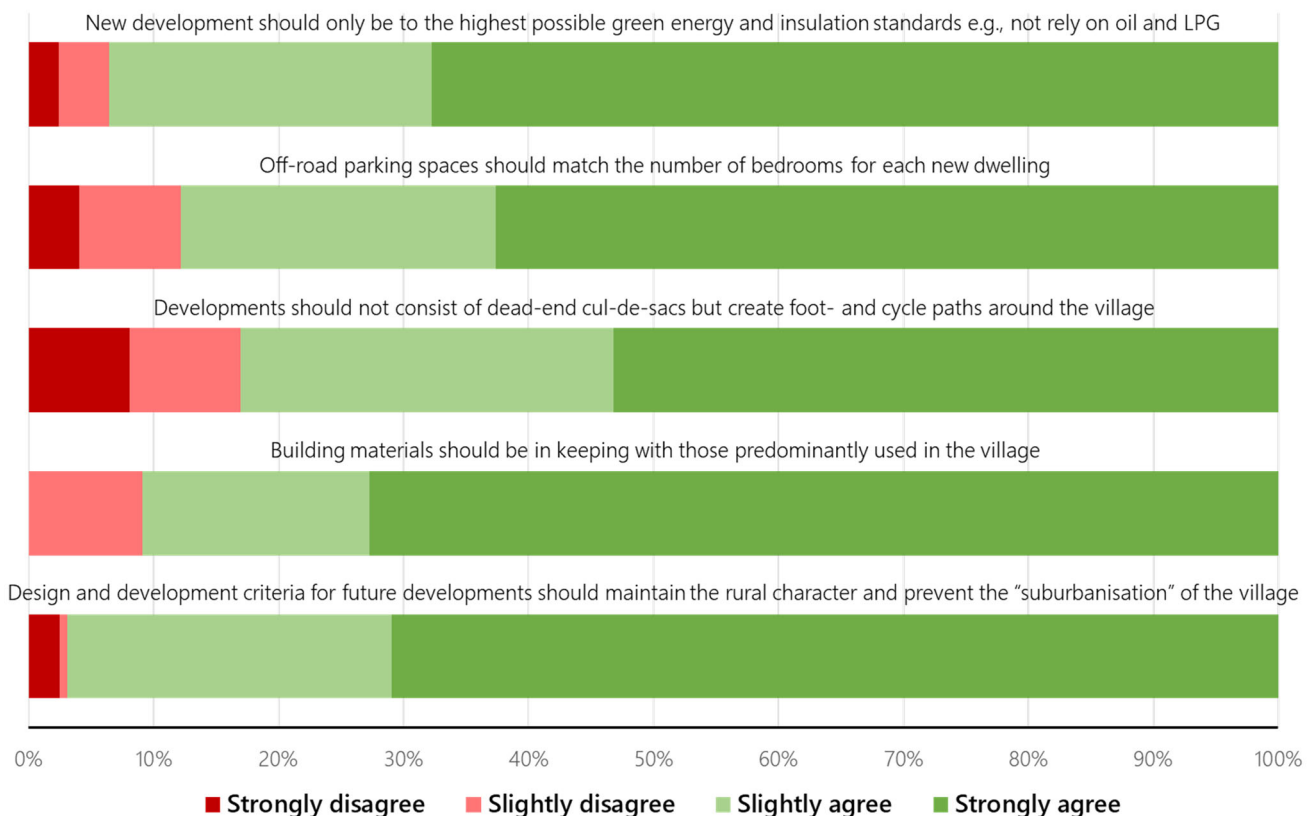
- 7.6 The Local Plan contains up-to-date policies covering the protection and management of heritage assets. It notes that "Heritage gives places their character and individuality. It creates a focus for community pride, a sense of shared history, and a sense of belonging. Historic buildings and the historic parts of towns and villages provide a focus for social and economic activity." Where development is proposed that would impact on a heritage asset or its setting, applicants should refer to the Historic Environment of the Local Plan and seek advice from East Suffolk Council's Heritage Team.
- 7.7 In terms of the design of new development, the Local Plan supports proposals that create a sense of place and acknowledges local form and character. It also encourages neighbourhood plans to include "design policies which respond to their own local circumstances." This is specifically referred to in Policy SCLP11.1: Design Quality. The Local Plan also notes that new development needs to be designed and located in order to minimise harm on existing and future residents. It identifies that harmful effects "can include those arising from overlooking, loss of privacy, noise, odour and light pollution and overbearing development."
- 7.8 In April 2022 East Suffolk Council adopted a "Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document" which focuses on delivering new developments that:

- reduce demand and use of finite resources and which result in lower carbon emissions or are 'zero carbon'.
- avoid or reduce unnecessary harm to the natural environment and wildlife and which support people's good health and wellbeing; and
- adapt the built environment to the impact of climate change through design.

Residents' Survey

7.9 Of those that responded to the Residents' Survey, almost 93% strongly agreed that "Design and development criteria for future developments should maintain the rural character and prevent the 'suburbanisation' of the village."

Residents level of agreement with following statements



Planning Policies

7.10 New development in Westerfield should achieve a high-quality design that enhances the unique characteristics of the village and ensures a better quality of life for residents. While it would not be appropriate to rigidly copy the architectural styles and designs of the village, the Plan does seek to ensure that new development is of high quality and has regard to its surroundings.

7.11 As part of the government-funded Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support package, Design Guidelines and Codes have been prepared for the parish by AECOM Consultants. The document is published as supporting evidence to the Neighbourhood Plan and seeks to inform the design that any future development should follow. The Design Guidance and Codes provides general design guidelines for new development, reproduced below, and a development design checklist which development proposals should seek to respond to.

General design guidelines for new development:

- respect the existing pattern of the village and the surrounding hamlets to preserve the local character;
- respect the heritage, landscape and key views, if any, identified in the Parish;
- aim for high quality design that reflects and respects the local vernacular;
- integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and reinforce or enhance the established character of streets, greens and other spaces;
- harmonise and enhance existing village and hamlets in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- incorporate necessary services and enhance infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features; and
- aim for innovative design and eco-friendly buildings while respecting the architectural heritage and tradition of the area.

7.12 The adopted Local Plan includes policies to address climate change, albeit that it does not specify standards for energy consumption in new homes. Relevant policies are:

- Policy SCLP9.2: Sustainable Construction
- Policy SCLP9.7: Holistic Water Management

A Written Ministerial Statement (WMS)⁵³ made in 2015 explains that neighbourhood plans should not set out any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore has to rely on local and national planning policies and the Building Regulations to set and implement such requirements.

7.13 Policy WFD 6 sets out a number of requirements which, subject to the nature and scale of the proposal, will apply to all development. The policy is informed by the Design Guidelines and also reacts to the requirements of modern day living. In particular, it sets higher standards for electric vehicle charging points in new dwellings to reflect the government's intent to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030. With over 1.2 million total electric or plug-in hybrid cars in the UK in May 2023, the demand for electric vehicle charging points and it is expected that new homes should make increased provision now for such circumstances.



Policy WFD 6 -Design Considerations

Proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan Area as identified in the Westerfield Design Guidelines and Codes, and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

In addition to having regard to the National Model Design Code, all planning applications should demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the Development Design Checklist of the Design Guidelines and Codes, as appropriate to the proposal.

In addition, and as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals will be supported where:

- a. the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area are maintained and enhanced;
- b. they do not involve the loss of gardens, important open, green or landscaped areas, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of that part of the village;
- c. designs respect the character, scale and density of the locality;
- d. development faces on to existing roads wherever possible;
- e. developments are not situated in areas of any form of flooding and should not result in water run-off add-to or create surface water flooding, through the incorporation of above ground open Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) that are multifunctional and provide amenity and biodiversity, in accordance with the Suffolk Flood Risk SuDS Local Design Guide 2023 and the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy SCLP9.6 Sustainable Drainage Systems.”;
- f. adequate provision for the covered or screened storage of all wheelie bins and cycle storage is made, as appropriate and in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards and in a way which does not detract from the appearance of the development;
- g. suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband is included; and
- h. one electric vehicle charging point per new off-street residential parking place created is provided.

- 7.14 In response to the Residents’ Survey, 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.

Community Action 3 – Broadband Speed

The Parish Council will actively monitor, influence and lobby communication companies, to improve broadband speed.

Flooding

- 7.15 Only a very small area to the south of Lower Road is within a flood zone and this will be incorporated into the new country park when complete. In terms of surface water flooding, there are additional areas that are prone to flooding as a result of heavy rain. Sustainable Drainage Systems can help manage the impact of development on flooding by providing an alternative to the direct discharge of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses. They are designed to store and/or re-use surface water at the source;

decrease flows to watercourses until such a time as there is capacity in the system; and improve water quality.

- 7.16 Adopted Local Plan Policy SCLP9.6: Sustainable Drainage Systems, provides a comprehensive framework for the implementation of measures to manage surface water run-off including requirements for Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Light Pollution

- 7.17 Paragraph 180 (c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should “limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation”. Artificial lighting of development, while increasing a sense of security, can also impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area (particularly rural locations) and the environment. Aspects such as poor design, location or the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can also have a harmful impact.

Policy WFD 7 – Artificial Lighting

While ensuring that new developments are secure in terms of occupier and vehicle safety, dark skies are to be preferred over streetlights. Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment by being downward focussed and motion sensitive, not extend past the property boundary, and minimise light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife and subject to:

- i. highway safety,
- ii. the needs of particular individuals and groups, or
- iii. security

Schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP10.4: Landscape Character

Community Action 4 – Reducing Light Pollution

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.



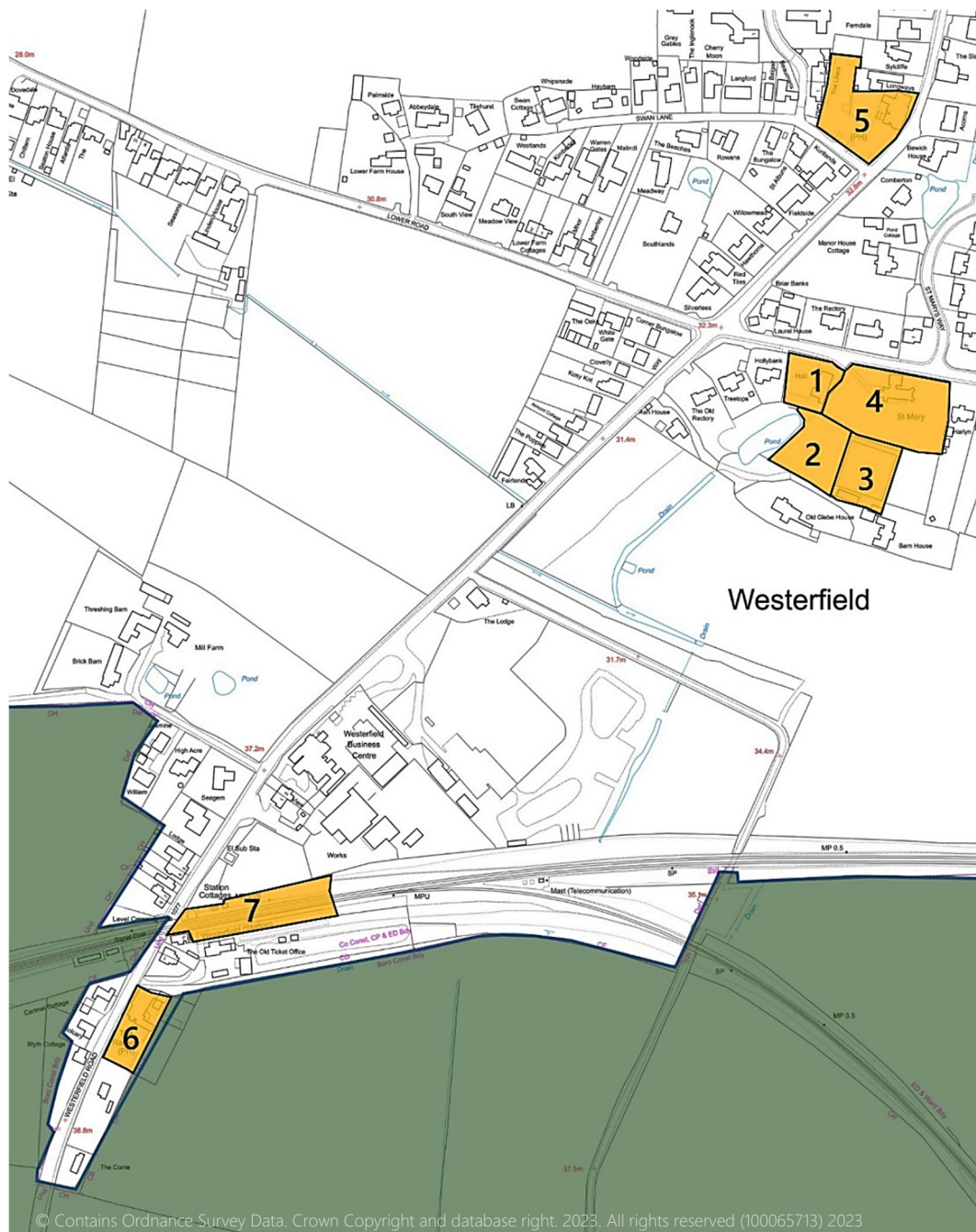
8. Services and Facilities

Context

8.1 As noted earlier in the Plan, the village currently has very little in the way of services and facilities that meet the day-to-day needs of residents, reflecting its close proximity to Ipswich. At the time of preparing the Plan the following were available:

1. Village Hall
2. The paddock and pond rear of the Village Hall
3. Bowling Green
4. Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene
5. The Swan public house and restaurant
6. The Railway Inn public house and restaurant
7. Westerfield Railway Station

The location of these is illustrated on Map 8.



Map 8 – Village Facilities

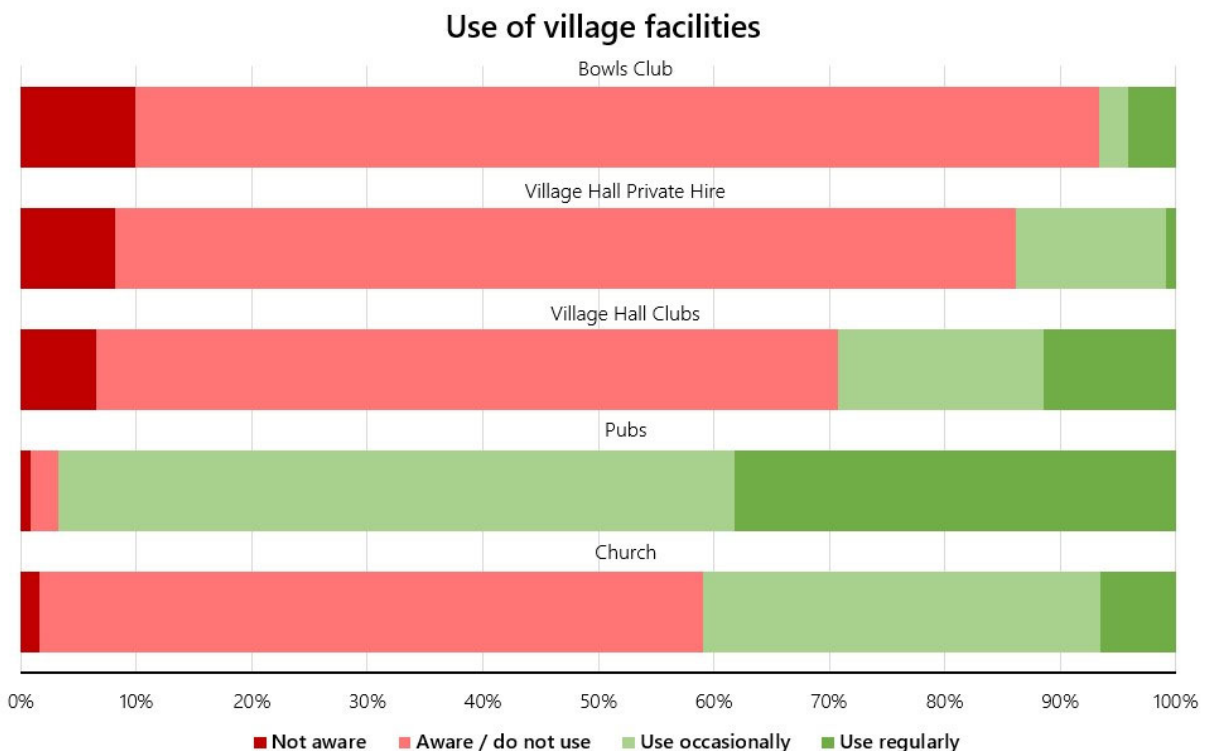
Local Plan Context

8.2 Adopted Local Plan Policy SCLP8.1: Community Facilities and Assets provides an up-to-date policy framework for the consideration of planning applications that impact on existing facilities. The policy generally supports the provision of new community facilities if the proposal meets the needs of the local community. It also states that proposals which would result in the loss of a facility will only be permitted if:

- a) *It can be demonstrated that there is no community need for the facility and the building or the site is not needed for an alternative community use;*
- b) *It can be demonstrated that the current, or alternative community uses are not viable and marketing evidence is provided which demonstrates the premises have been marketed for a sustained period of 12 months in accordance with the Commercial Property Marketing Guidance; or*
- c) *Development would involve the provision of an equivalent or better replacement community facility either on site or in an alternative location in the vicinity that is well integrated into the community and has equal or better accessibility than the existing facility which meets the needs of the local population."*

Residents' Survey

8.3 The Residents' Survey asked how often people used village facilities, as illustrated in the chart.



8.4 The results indicate that the Village Hall is used on a regular basis by around 12% of respondents, whereas the pubs are visited regularly by 38%.

Planning Policy

8.5 It is vital that existing services and facilities are protected and enhanced for the use of current and future residents. It is recognised that demands change over time, however, and it would be unreasonable to require the retention of facilities if there is no longer a proven need or demand for them.

Policy WFD 8 – Parish Services and Facilities

Proposals that would result in the loss of the following facilities, as identified on Map 9, will be determined in accordance with Policy SCLP8.1 and, as appropriate, Policy SCLP8.1 of the Local Plan:

1. The Village Hall
2. The paddock and pond rear of the Village Hall
3. The Bowls Club
4. The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene
5. The Swan Public House
6. The Railway Inn Public House
7. Westerfield Railway Station

Proposals for the enhancement of the existing services and facilities will generally be supported subject to there being no unacceptable impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP8.1: Community Facilities and Assets

Policy SCLP8.2: Open Space



- 8.6 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.

Community Action 5 – Community Activities

The villagers will work together to develop community activities, for example, fish & chip night, films in the village hall, book club, summer fete, coffee / drop-in, etc, creation of a Wednesday market, including local resident sales and ensure apposite publicising to Westerfield.

A new media group and a new events group 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.

- 8.7 It was recognised, from the Residents' Survey, that the Parish Council should ensure delivery of communication within the village, as there was a noticeable lack of knowledge regarding existing facilities and services. 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.

Community Action 6 – Village Communication

The new village media group will work together, with villagers, to improve communications within Westerfield, about community services, for example, state of litter and dog poo bins, and amenities, for example, bottle bank, library, both existing and new from developments. This will utilise the existing communication links and also introduce new links. The new village media group will review communications within the village and form more links between village groups.

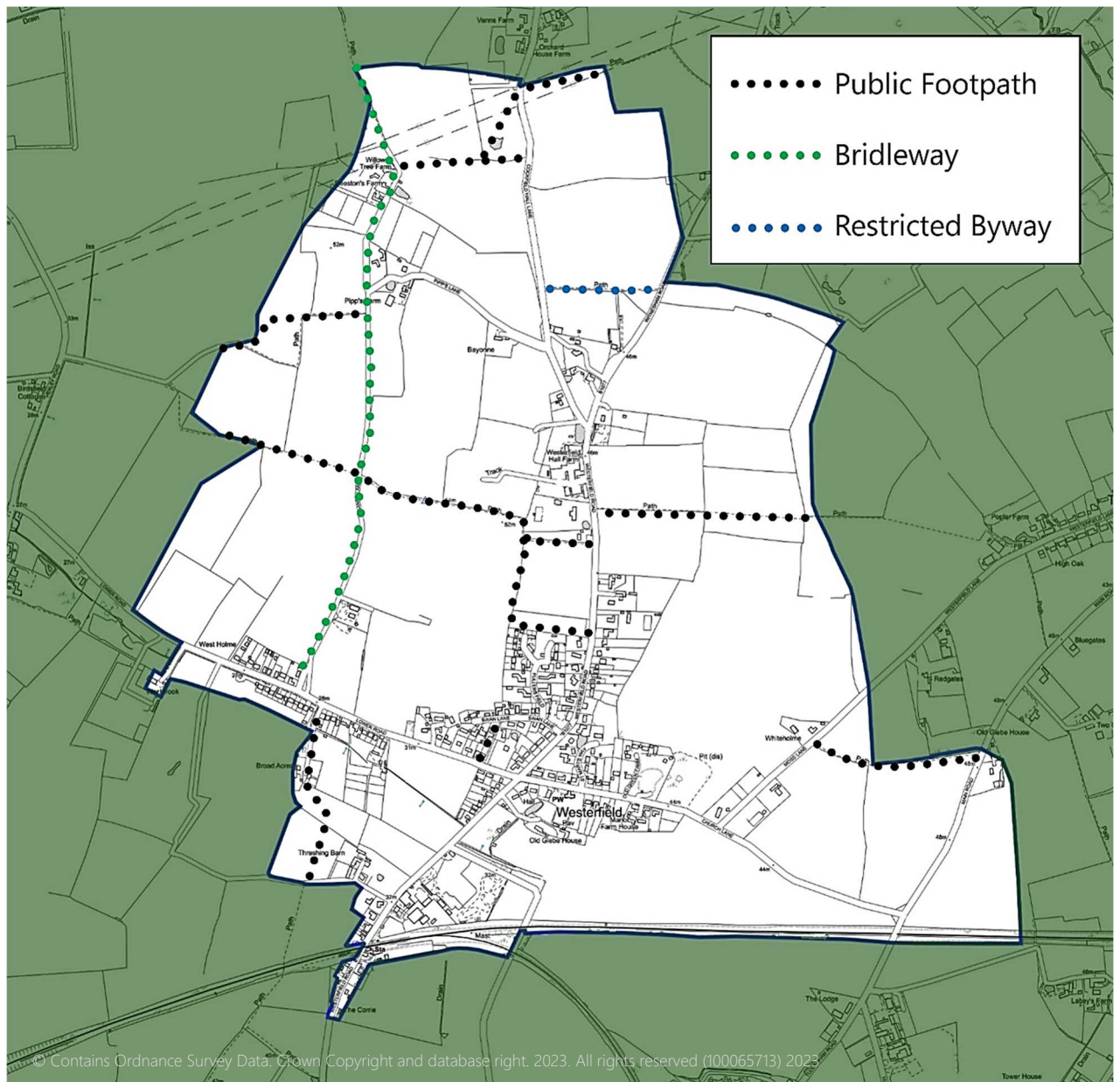


9. Highways and Travel

Context

- 9.1 The village is located just 2 miles to the north of Ipswich town centre on the B1077 and is also bisected by a road linking Tuddenham Road, to the east with Henley Road to the west. As such there are large volumes of traffic passing through the village often as an unofficial bypass to the north of the town. There are records of a number of road traffic collisions at the junction over the years.
- 9.2 The village is unusual in having a railway station serving it, although the associated level crossing does create tailbacks of traffic throughout the day and hold up pedestrians actually trying to cross the tracks to catch a train. Passenger services are hourly into Ipswich station for connections beyond and a regular service runs to Felixstowe. There only two services a day on weekdays to Lowestoft. There is a footway linking the village south to Ipswich, although this is narrow in places and there is no dedicated cycle lane. The construction of the new country park as part of the Ipswich Garden Suburb will provide paths through the park and a new footbridge over the railway.
- 9.3 At the time of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan, the village was served by the Ipswich Buses operated service that runs between the town and Framlingham. A school term service also runs to and from Debenham High School. Services pick-up and set down at the Railway Station and at the central crossroads. Buses run into the town centre roughly every two hours on weekdays and Saturday. There is no service on a Sunday.
- 9.4 There is a good and well used network of public rights of way in the parish, as illustrated on Map 9. Some link to paths along the Fynn Valley and are especially popular with walkers.





Map 9 – Parish Public Rights of Way network

- 9.5 Neighbourhood plans have little power to introduce highway improvements as most schemes will not require planning permission. Improvements are therefore reliant on the County Council’s Highways Department for investment in projects.

Local Plan Context

- 9.6 The adopted Local Plan seeks to promote sustainable modes of travel, working with the County Council’s Highways Department, to implement measures that will deliver a shift away from relying on the private car for journeys. At the same time, the Local Plan acknowledges that “many local roads are single track and unsuitable for conventional public transport such as buses.”
- 9.7 Policy SCLP7.1: Sustainable Transport seeks to ensure that development proposals are designed to incorporate measures that will encourage people to travel using non-car modes to access home, school, employment, services and facilities. It also supports opportunities to improve access to public transport in rural areas, such as Westerfield.

9.8 Of particular relevance to Westerfield, the policy states:

“Development will be supported where:

- a) Any significant impacts on the highways network are mitigated;*
- b) It is proportionate in scale to the existing transport network;*
- c) All available opportunities to enable and support travel on foot, by cycle or public transport have been considered and taken;*
- d) It is located close to, and provides safe pedestrian and cycle access to services and facilities;*
- e) It is well integrated into and enhances the existing cycle network including the safe design and layout of new cycle routes and provision of covered, secure cycle parking;*
- f) It is well integrated into, protects and enhances the existing pedestrian routes and the public rights of way network;*
- g) It reduces conflict between users of the transport network including pedestrians, cyclists, users of mobility vehicles and drivers and does not reduce road safety; and*
- h) The cumulative impact of new development will not create severe impacts on the existing transport network.”*

Residents’ Survey

9.9 In terms of highways and travel matters, residents were asked to comment on a number of statements. The results for those strongly agreeing with the statements are illustrated in the table.

Issue	Percentage strongly agreeing with the statement (rounded)
Residents should be able to walk and cycle safely in and around Westerfield to enjoy the village and surrounding countryside, as well as have access to nearby essential services such as schools and shops	89%
The footpath should be extended north to Cockfield Hall Lane	72%
There should be parking restrictions leading up to the railway crossing to improve traffic flow	69%
Network rail should develop the yard area as a car park to prevent future commuters from Ipswich Garden suburb parking on Westerfield Road	82%
There should be a foot/cycle path connecting Westerfield Road to the Red House development (creating a safe route to Tuddenham Road)	73%
There should be a foot/cycle path connecting Westerfield Road to Henley Gate facilities (i.e., school/shops)	73%

Planning Policies and Community Actions

9.10 Generally, the implementation of Policy SCLP7.1 will provide a sufficient policy framework for the determination of planning applications that have an impact on highways in the parish. Measures to improve and extend the existing network of public rights of way will be supported provided their value as biodiversity corridors is recognised and protected and efforts are made to enhance biodiversity as part of the proposal. Policy WFD 8 sets out the Plan’s approach to this matter. The policy needs to be read within the wider context set by the development plan. It does not offer opportunities for development which would otherwise enhance footpath links to come forward where such a proposal would be in conflict with the provisions of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and other policies in this Plan.’

Policy WFD 9 – Public Rights of Way

Development proposals which improve and extend the existing network of public rights of way will be supported. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, such development proposals should take account of the existing value of the right of way concerned as a biodiversity corridor and where practicable incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity as part of the proposal.

Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies:

Policy SCLP7.1: Sustainable Transport

- 9.11 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.
- 9.12 Several issues were identified in the responses to the Residents' Survey 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.

Community Action 7 – Walking and Cycling Safety and Public Rights of Way

The Parish Council, other relevant authorities and landowners will work together to provide safe walking and cycling routes in and around Westerfield, ideally away from main traffic routes:

Walking and Cycling:

1. enforce existing planning conditions which will provide a link between Fullers Field and the fields to the north of the village*, access to the Country Park from Lower Road and Westerfield Road, and a cycling link from Westerfield Road to Tuddenham Road via the Red House development.
2. seek opportunities in proposed new developments to create further safe walking routes. For example, extending the footpath along the old football field on Lower Road (ref SCLP12.67)*, access from the Old Station Works development to the Red House path, extending the street lights from the station to meet up with existing lights on Westerfield Road, and creating a link path from the old football field to the Country Park*.
3. seek to extend pavements within the village, and develop further safe routes, ideally connecting to the wider network of footpaths outside the immediate boundary of the village e.g. across to Tuddenham and the 'quiet lane' status of Westerfield Lane.
4. encourage residents to report overgrown hedgerows, damaged pavements or obstructive parking to ensure our routes remain free and easily accessible for all.

* Delivery of these three actions will create a safe route away from the main road through the village all the way from Ipswich to Witnesham.

Public Rights of Way:

5. create walking routes away from main roads - north fields to Country Park, as well as ensuring proposed links to Henley Gate and Tuddenham Road are delivered.

General:

6. provide a map for villagers, as new footpaths and pavements are created.

Addressing Traffic Impact

- 9.13 As noted above, the impact of traffic passing through the village has been raised by many residents as the biggest concern about living in Westerfield as it can denigrate from the rural character and feel of Westerfield. The Parish Council can only lobby for improvements on behalf of residents and it is believed that a suite of measures would address those concerns highlighted during the preparation of this Plan.
- 9.14 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.

Community Action 8 – Speeding and Traffic Calming

The Parish Council will work with relevant agencies to address the issue of traffic speed and volume through Westerfield, by:

1. supporting the "20's plenty" campaign to reduce speed limits where people and car interact to 20 mph. This was supported by 64% of Westerfield residents in the survey (71% of Lower Road/Church Lane residents).
2. continuing to support Community Speed-watch, and the use of Police resources will be requested as appropriate.
3. working with Suffolk Highways to develop appropriate traffic calming measures which may include remodelling of the crossroads junction.
4. ensuring roads, markings and signs are well maintained and encourage villagers to report issues.
5. seeking to lower the speed of traffic entering the village, especially entering from the north from Fynn Valley [Note the speed limit to the south from Ipswich will be reduce to 30 mph as part of the Northern Fringe development].
6. seeking to ensure we minimise the traffic impact on Westerfield from the northern fringe development.

[Note the Lower Road /Henley Road junction is outside of the Parish Council boundary]

Westerfield Station and Crossing

- 9.15 As highlighted elsewhere, the station does provide an important amenity for residents but the associated level crossing can cause significant traffic hold-ups, especially when slow moving and long freight trains are passing through. This situation may worsen as the Port of Felixstowe looks to put more containers on trains and if Sizewell C construction and operation increases use of rail to transport goods.
- 9.16 The Parish Council will continue to support the station adopters and their work. The development of the Ipswich Garden Suburb is likely to bring additional demand for trains and associated risks and opportunities. At this time the Parish Council will not seek to work with Network Rail to reduce the time that railway barriers are down. Whilst we appreciate this can be a source of frustration, the Parish Council believes the beneficial impact of discouraging traffic from the northern fringe development to come through Westerfield instead of using Valley Road is greater. This will be kept under review.

Community Action 9 – Westerfield Railway Station

The Parish Council will work with relevant authorities and the East Suffolk Travel Association to:

1. secure more stopping services at Westerfield, principally the Lowestoft line which has only two services a day stopping at Westerfield.
2. consider the parking impact of additional commuter traffic. We will encourage Network Rail to invest in secure bike storage capacity, and turn the existing works area into a car park. This will help avoid traffic parking along Westerfield Road and blocking pavement access, or using the new Country Park car park as a de facto commuter car park.
3. ensure the s106 funding available for the station from the northern fringe development is spent appropriately on resources which will benefit the community.
4. seek to develop a direct route between the Fonnereau Way bridge (on the southern side) and the station to ensure commuters have a direct route to the station away from main roads, and provide a route between the main Ipswich platform and the village when the barriers are down for extended periods.



Appendix 1 – Landscape Appraisal Recommendations

Source: Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal (2023). Areas WF1, WF2 and WF3 are illustrated on Map 3

1. Conserve the historic meadow system in the heart of the village The landscape in character area WF3 should be considered of greater value than that in WF1 or WF2. It meets several of the criteria that relate to valued landscapes, as set out in TGN 02/21. This could be reflected by a designation in the Neighbourhood Plan such as 'Area of Greater Landscape Value' or attribution of 'Local Green Space' to help protect the remaining meadows from development.

However, it is important that they are not just physically conserved, but their simple, intact, historical character must also be conserved. The meadows will function as a physical and visual buffer to the edge of the IGS but care should be taken they do not become an extension of the IGS suburban amenity space. The right management is critical, as transition into tidy, clipped amenity spaces could erode their traditional appearance and negatively impact the character of the village.

Any proposals affecting the meadows within the framework of the IGS or allocation in the Local Plan must be scrutinised to ensure they don't seek to erode or harm their character. Traditional management methods should continue (hay making, grazing by cows/sheep). Alternative activities, such as Equestrianism, with associated tape fencing, outbuildings, parked cars, and paraphernalia would be visually intrusive and for these reasons, should be avoided. All unnecessary tree and hedge removal must be avoided.

It is unfortunate that the 'Land south of Lower Road' allocation is in place as loss of the meadow will likely have an adverse effect on the character of Lower Road and the village centre. Any opportunities for alternative ways of meeting the housing need (such as on the business park site) that avoids development of the meadow would be welcomed.

If development is unavoidable, then any opportunities to shape the site design should be sought. Design Briefs are one way that the parameters for design can be set. A Design Brief as part of the Neighbourhood Plan could address dwelling numbers, locate access, identify features for protection, identify public access requirements and what form Public Open Space should take, for example. As the proposals include for provision of a village green, it would be very important to ensure the green is appropriately designed as usable greenspace and is not simply earmarked for flood water attenuation, for example.

The Parish Council should take advice from a landscape professional when responding to any development proposals on WF3 or neighbouring land to ensure this traditional, important landscape is conserved, so that Westerfield maintains its distinctiveness, its rural feel, and does not become gradually but surely subsumed into the garden suburb.

Policies SCLP12.23 and 12.67 both apply broad principles to land in this character area. But the delivery of the detail in these parcels is really important and the parish council should take all opportunities for early engagement with those delivering the schemes to ensure outcomes that do not harm village character.

2. Protect the stock of oak trees

The trees should be regularly surveyed (and managed) for health, especially where they overhanging the roads and footways. A programme for planting new oaks could be considered to ensure continuity of this highly characteristic feature.

With regard to Allocation Policy 'SCLP12.67: Land South of Lower Road', Westerfield' - the trees around the site have Tree Protection Orders (TPO) so their importance is already flagged. Nevertheless, a high level of vigilance should be extended to them - they need to be

integrated very sensitively into the site design so that their future retention is not compromised.

Other development plans that might encroach into the space and root zone of significant parish trees must be reviewed vigorously and challenged where risks are identified. Future proposals for the business park are a good example as this borders a significant belt of trees to the north.

Once a development is complete, boundary trees and hedges must be managed strategically to ensure they are not neglected or removed. For this reason ownership of mature features should not pass to the residents of newly built houses.

Applying for an expansion in the number of TPOs in the parish could be considered by the parish council, given the quality of some of trees that are not covered. Arboricultural advice is recommended in respect of any tree issues.

3. Protect the setting of Westerfield Hall and Swan's Nest

The openness of the farmland that provides setting to these assets must be protected. Future development should not be directed to this part of the village fringe and any land use change which reduces the undeveloped gap to the village edge should be resisted. In any case, extending the village up beyond the 42m contour is not characteristic of Westerfield and is not appropriate.

4. Integrate new development edges

New development edges must be well integrated with native boundary vegetation - this was a recommendation in the 2018 study by Alison Farmer Associates but recent development proposals have not adequately responded. This should be addressed through Neighbourhood Plan Policy and, additionally, a simple parish landscape design guide could be commissioned to help both applicant and consultees/planning authority understand what is required and why.

5. Improve pedestrian access / connections to the footpath network

The parish may wish to explore ways of providing permissive off road routes, for example, along field edges, to provide alternative routes to the footpath network.

The only mechanism normally available is negotiation with landowners, but any opportunities to provide better access through allocations/planning consents or the delivery of the IGS should be explored fully. Access to footpaths is vital for healthy lifestyles and for promoting good mental health and improving access across the village to the countryside footpaths would be a notable benefit.

A further project could be to improve pedestrian experience along existing minor roads. Cockfield Hall Road could be given Quiet Lane status, or similar. Whilst a recent round of funding for villages to designate Quiet Lanes in Suffolk is now complete and no longer available, there may be the opportunity to confer a designation of this type via the Neighbourhood Plan. A 'Quiet Lane' is a nationally recognised designation of single-track road (i.e. no line markings), typically with less than 1,000 vehicles using it per day. They are routes where people can enjoy the lane and its natural surroundings for activities such as cycling, horse-riding, jogging and walking. The idea is not to restrict motor vehicles on these rural routes, but to express a more equal sharing of the surface and encourage considerate behaviour between the different user groups.

Appendix 2 – Local Green Space Appraisal

Westerfield parish has several 'green spaces' that play a significant role in defining the character of the village and places for meeting and/or recreation. Paragraphs 101 and 102 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) identifies the possibility of identifying green spaces that meet certain characteristics as "Local Green Spaces". The paragraphs state:

101. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.
102. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

This appendix provides an assessment of the green spaces identified in Policy WGD 5 against the criteria in paragraph 102 in order to support the designation of local green spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Identified Green Spaces

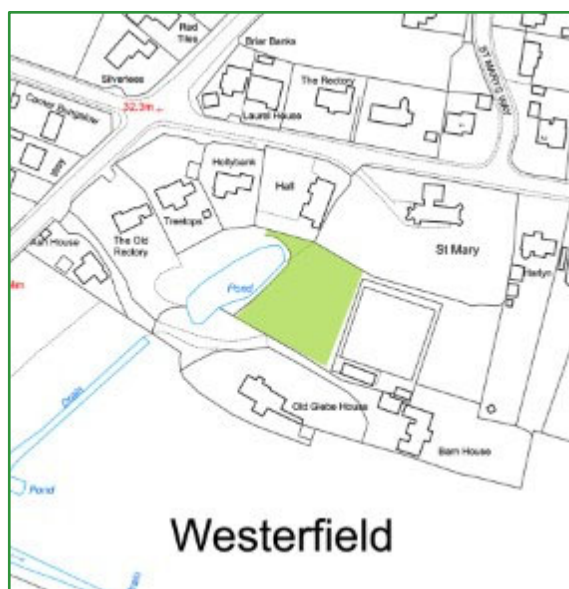
A list of the green spaces is detailed below. Some of the spaces are grouped together.

1. The Paddock
2. The Bowls Club
3. Open area west of B1077 and south-west of Fairlands
4. Open area east of B1077 between Ash House and The Lodge

Appraisal

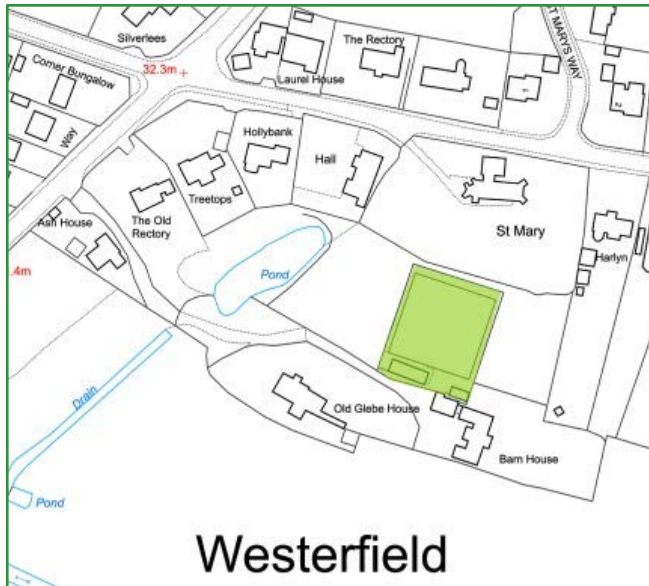
The following pages provide a detailed assessment of the identified spaces to ascertain whether they conform with the Local Green Space definition of the NPPF.

1. The Paddock



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Recreational open space.
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning consent
Area	0.18 Ha.
Ownership	Diocese
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to the community it services	In centre of village
Public access	Publicly accessible at all times
Ecologically significant	No records of significance but is bounded by a pond on the western edge and contains a number of mature trees
Historically significant	No records of significance but provides setting for Parish Church which is listed Grade I and Old Grange House which is listed Grade II.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Provides an important amenity and events open space for residents.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.	Small but distinct area of local importance.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space designation

2. Westerfield Bows Club



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Westerfield Bows Club
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning consent
Area	0.17 Ha.
Ownership	Westerfield Bows Club
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to the community it services	In centre of village
Public access	Only available to Bows Club members and guests
Ecologically significant	No records of significance but northern boundary contains a number of mature trees
Historically significant	No records of significance but provides setting for Parish Church which is listed Grade I and Old Grange House which is listed Grade II.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Provides an important recreational facility for residents.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.	Small but distinct area of local importance.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space designation

3. Open area west of B1077 and south-west of Fairlands



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Meadowland
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning consent
Area	2.07 Ha.
Ownership	Private ownership
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to the community it services	Forms important buffer between developed areas in the village
Public access	None
Ecologically significant	No records of significance but meadowland is likely to provide important habitats as will the established hedgerows that surround the site
Historically significant	Historical significance dating back to the Domesday Book
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Provides an important natural open space and buffer between Westerfield and Ipswich.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.	Distinct and contained area of local importance.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space designation

4. Open area east of B1077 between Ash House and The Lodge



Site Details	
Description and purpose	Largely overgrown area and woodland
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning consent
Area	1.45 Ha.
Ownership	Private ownership
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to the community it services	Forms important buffer between developed areas in the village
Public access	None
Ecologically significant	Woodland along southern edge is identified as Priority Habitat – Deciduous Woodland
Historically significant	No records of significance.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Provides an important natural open space and buffer between Westerfield and Ipswich
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.	Distinct and contained area of local importance.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space designation

Appendix 3 – Listed Buildings

The description of Listed Buildings is as described by Historic England on the official register. Where a property is known by a different name locally it is referenced in square brackets

Grade I

Church of St Mary Magdalene

Grade II*

Westerfield Hall

Grade II

The Slade, Westerfield Road

Barn and outbuildings to south east of Westerfield Hall

Swan's Nest

The Manor & The Green Farmhouse

Mill Farmhouse

Rectory [Old Glebe House]



Glossary

Archaeological Interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Biodiversity: Biodiversity is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up the natural world. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life.

Biodiversity Networks: Linking of sites of biodiversity importance through biodiversity corridors or a series of individual sites.

Community Facilities: Facilities and uses generally available to and used by the local community at large for the purposes of leisure, social interaction, health and well-being or learning. This will include, but not be confined to, community centres, public houses, sports venues, cultural buildings, places of worship, medical facilities, shops, post offices, libraries, schools and other training and educational facilities.

Designated Heritage Asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Plan: The Development Plan for an area is a suite of Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan documents for a local planning authority area, setting out the policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings. It includes Minerals and Waste Local Plan documents prepared by the County Council. It is the starting point for the determination of planning applications.

Geodiversity: Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, fossils, minerals, natural processes, landforms and soils that underlie and determine the character of the landscape and environment.

Green Infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

National Planning Policy: Most national planning policy is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. Some policy is also contained within ministerial statements. National planning policy is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance which gives further detail on how national policy should be implemented and interpreted.

Setting of a Heritage Asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

2023 - 2036



Pre-Submission Draft Plan

WESTERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 2023