

# Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan

2019 – 2036

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## Statement of Consultation



Prepared on behalf of Long Melford Parish Council

# Statement of Consultation

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## 1 Introduction

To satisfy the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, this Statement of Consultation shows who has been consulted about the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and how they were consulted. The Statement also records what issues were raised by this process and how those issues have been considered or addressed. This is shown throughout the Statement under the headings:

Who was consulted?

How did the consultation take place?

What issues were raised?

How were the issues considered and addressed?

## 2 Stages of Consultation

Consultation occurred during three broad stages in the production of the Plan, the Inception stage, the Draft Plan stage and the Pre-Final Submission stage.

### 2.1 Consultation at Inception

### 2.2 Consultation in producing the Draft Plan

### 2.3 Consultation at the Pre-Final Submission Stage

#### 2.1 Consultation at Inception

Who was consulted?

The Parish Council wanted to discover the views of residents when deciding on whether to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. When it became evident that a Plan had widespread support, the Parish Council approached Babergh District Council with an Area Designation Application.

How did the consultation take place?

A public meeting about development in Long Melford took place at the Old School on 31st August 2016. As well as considering the development issues that were affecting the village at that time, the meeting included a detailed discussion about neighbourhood plans. This was led by a local planning professional, Ian McDonald of Strategic Planning Advice Ltd. A formal note of the number of attendees was not taken but in the minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016, the meeting was described by a resident, speaking in the public forum, as *“very well attended and very informative”*.

What issues were raised?

At the public meeting, concern was raised at the scale of development in Long Melford and the resultant impact on the village’s infrastructure. The meeting also highlighted that as things stood, the community had little influence over future development in the village. It was then explained by Mr McDonald that a neighbourhood plan, if properly arranged and constituted, could provide that influence. He recommended that the village commence the process to produce a neighbourhood plan. This was met with widespread approval.

## How were the issues considered and addressed?

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016, Mr McDonald presented a paper on neighbourhood plans to the full Parish Council Planning Committee. The Planning Committee then agreed to proceed with the preparation of a neighbourhood plan and accepted the recommendation from Mr McDonald that the area to be covered by the Plan should be the whole parish.

Final approval to proceed came from the Parish Council at a meeting on 3rd November 2016. It also decided to form a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) to oversee production of the Plan. On 16th December 2016, an Area Designation Application was submitted to Babergh District Council.

A statutory period of consultation on the Area Designation Application then followed, between 13<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This received nine responses but no material representations. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017, having completed the consultation period, Babergh District Council designated the application area of the parish of Long Melford as a Neighbourhood Area and facilitated preparation of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan). The NPSG began work on the production of a Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Long Melford in February 2017.

## 2.2 Consultation in producing the Draft Plan

### Who was consulted?

As with Stage 1, the main focus for consultation was towards residents of the village whom the NPSG determined should be kept informed and given every opportunity to make known what they wanted. The committee sought to achieve this by:

1. Inviting residents to join the Steering Group advising the Parish Council.
2. Promoting awareness of the project throughout the parish.
3. Encouraging residents to contribute to the development of the Plan.
4. Promoting consultation events.
5. Providing regular updates on the status of the Plan and its development.

Different means were used for keeping residents informed about the Plan and updating them on its progress. The main printed medium was the bi-monthly Melford Magazine, distributed free to 1,650 addresses in the parish, read by young and old alike. It has published regular articles on the Plan, as has the weekly Mercury which is also delivered free to most addresses in the village. The paid-for local and regional newspapers, the Suffolk Free Press and the East Anglian Daily Times respectively, have also included articles on the Plan.

The main form of electronic communication was originally the Parish Council website which has a Neighbourhood Plan section ([www.longmelford-pc.gov.uk](http://www.longmelford-pc.gov.uk)). This website has encouraged residents to become involved with the Plan. It has notified them of NPSG meetings (which are open to the public) and it has also published the minutes of those meetings and other items pertinent to the progress of the Plan. In January 2019 the NPSG set up a dedicated Plan website to facilitate a statutory public consultation on the Plan and to enable easy access to the Plan documents ([www.longmelfordnp.co.uk](http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk)).

Residents have also been engaged in the Plan process through a series of open events and public meetings, as well as a Residents Survey which was personally delivered by a Plan team of volunteers, to all houses in the parish.

As well as residents, consultation in moving towards the Draft Plan has involved local businesses, local services like the GP practice, village primary school and secondary schools in Sudbury, and a range of other local service providers, organisations, appropriate specialists and individuals.

The following four sections provide more information on the NPSG's consultation with all the above and their participation in helping it to produce the Draft Plan:

2.2.1. Consultation with Residents

2.2.2. Consultation with Businesses

2.2.3. Consultation with Schools

2.2.4. Consultation with Service Providers, Organisations, Specialists and Individuals

2.2.1 Consultation with Residents

### **Public Consultation, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

How did the consultation take place?

A Public Consultation was held at the village hall on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017. This attracted 155 residents many of whom noted their views on the future development of Long Melford and were able to sign up to be kept informed of progress or to assist as volunteers. Over 400 individual comments were collected and retained via a 'post-it' system.

What issues were raised?

The 400+ comments can be broadly classified under the headings of Housing, Traffic & Parking, Village Services, Sports & Leisure Facilities and Business & Tourism.

Housing: There were 137 comments recorded under this heading. These included 33 which advocated the use of brownfield sites or which supported development on one specific brownfield site. A further 48 concerned the type of housing needed in the village. The majority highlighted the demand for smaller and/or affordable houses or homes for local people. Then 39 comments questioned the need for additional housing in the village at all, or, if there were new houses, where they should be positioned. The remaining 17 comments were from residents who were worried about the impact of development on services like the GP practice and primary school, or on parking in the village centre.

The following link provides a full record of the comments on housing matters:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Housing-comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017-.pdf>

Traffic and parking: Under this heading, 113 comments were recorded. Approaching half of these were from residents worried about vehicle speed and pedestrian safety, or who wished to debate the merits and demerits of traffic calming. The remaining comments were mainly from people who wanted more organised parking in the village centre (e.g. parking with time limits, marked bays or improved off-street parking facilities).

The following links provide a full record of the comments on traffic and parking matters:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Traffic-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Parking-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

Village services: There were 65 comments on village services. The great majority of these were split between those concerned at the impact of development on the standard of service at the GP practice, or on facilities at the primary school.

The following links provide a full record of the comments on the village GP practice and primary school:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Surgery-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/School-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

Sport and leisure facilities: In this area 87 comments were recorded. These were quite fragmented with residents advocating support for activities where they had a personal preference. However, a theme emerged from these comments that there was the need in the village for sport and leisure facilities that focus on younger residents.

The following links provide a full record of the comments on sport and leisure matters:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Sports-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Leisure-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017-1.pdf>

Business and tourism: There were 37 comments on matters to do with local business and tourism. Many concerned the village commercial centre which is in and around Hall Street. These comments ranged from specific requests for public toilet facilities to comments on local attractions and visitor services e.g. a number of requests for a Tourist Information Office. There were also several references made to the level of business rates.

The following link provides a full record of the comments on business and tourism matters:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Business-Comments-Public-Mtg-May-2017.pdf>

How were the issues considered and addressed?

The NPSG reviewed the comments received at the Public Consultation very carefully and arrived at a number of outcomes. Firstly, it was clear that the Plan should have its central focus on housing and development, where neighbourhood plans, by design, have their most significant impact. However, it was also evident that the capacity of the village in terms of key areas of infrastructure, such as the GP practice and the primary school, should be scrutinised. Furthermore, it was decided to extend this emphasis on services and facilities to sport and leisure provision in the village.

It was accepted that control of traffic flows was outside the remit of the Plan, nevertheless an understanding of the effect of population growth on traffic in the village was needed. This would include a review of means by which pedestrian safety could be improved. It was also felt that parking provision, especially in the village centre, was overdue for review.

Long Melford has a vibrant village centre which is the focus for its extensive business community. The village also has an array of tourist attractions including some of national importance, so provision in the Plan to look at the needs of local businesses and tourism facilities was also considered to be important.

These deliberations led the NPSG to split its responsibilities into four sub-groups comprising Housing, Traffic & Parking, Village Services & Facilities and Business & Tourism. These four areas went on to form the core chapters within the Plan document itself.

### **Long Melford Street Fair and Survey Monkey, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

#### **How did the consultation take place?**

The NPSG wanted to achieve a more widespread consultation with residents than was attained by the May 2017 Public Consultation.

It therefore set up a consultation and display stand on the Plan at the annual summer Long Melford Street Fair. This event typically attracts some 10,000 people to the village centre, many of whom are local residents.

The Street Fair was also an opportunity to promote an online residents' survey (not to be confused with the later paper-based Residents Survey) which was set up online via Survey Monkey. It was intended that this approach would provide better access to the opinions of younger residents.

#### **What issues were raised?**

Most of the comments from the many people who visited the stand were conversational as this was an informal event, but they encompassed the subjects which were aired at the May 2017 Public Consultation.

This conclusion was supported by the results of the Survey Monkey, albeit responses from that medium were fewer than envisaged. However, the results of the Survey Monkey made a case for visits to local secondary schools to obtain input directly from younger residents. Therefore, the NPSG set up a small group to arrange those visits and to seek assistance from volunteers. (See Section 2.2.3. on the Schools Project).

#### **How were the issues considered and addressed?**

The NPSG was satisfied that the Street Fair stand spread knowledge of the Plan more widely among residents. Similar themes to those raised at the May event under-pinned the resultant focus of the Plan on the four main sub-groups of Housing, Traffic & Parking, Village Services & Facilities and Business & Tourism.

## Open Day, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### How did the consultation take place?

An Open Day with two Q&A sessions was held at the village hall on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018, to expand on three of the four sub-groups mentioned above; Housing, Traffic & Parking and Village Services & Facilities (infrastructure). The aim was also to enrol volunteers to help with projects in these sub-groups

A Saturday was chosen because it is the day when more people are in the village centre and the meeting was attended by a great many residents. The NPSG put together display boards for each sub-group and then manned those tables to promote dialogue.

### What issues were raised?

In the two Q&A sessions, a total of 27 questions were asked with approximately half of them on housing or development issues, including the need for affordable housing in the village and housing for local people.

The NPSG stressed the importance of future evidence gathering as key to a successful Neighbourhood Plan. This would require volunteers to help with tasks such as a hand delivered Residents Survey, a Parking Survey in the village centre and a programme of consultation with local service providers and organisations. A total of 108 volunteers enrolled for the sub-groups.

The following links provide a record of the questions submitted at this event and also include the poster which promoted the event around the village:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/NHP-Poster-Feb-18-2.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Summary-of-Questions-Feb-2018-Open-Day.pdf>

### How were the issues considered and addressed?

The focus of the two Q&A sessions, the informal discussions held with residents by the display boards and the good mix of volunteers signing up for all three sub-groups, provided additional evidence to support the decision made by the NPSG to focus the Plan on those three subject areas (plus Business & Tourism – see Section 2.2.2. below).

The volunteers from this event had provided contact details mainly in the form of e-mail addresses. A contacts database was put together and administered by two NPSG members. This allowed group e-mails to be sent to the volunteers for each working sub-group, seeking their support with individual projects under the jurisdiction of each group.

With 'GDPR' in mind, a system of blind copying was used and the e-mail addresses were primarily used to contact volunteers in relation to their confirmed interest areas.

The contacts database also formed a very useful means whereby future Plan open events could be publicised and interested individuals kept up to date with the progress of their sub-group and the wider Plan itself.



## **Open Meeting with Local MP, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018**

### **How did the consultation take place?**

An open Q&A session with James Cartlidge, MP for South Suffolk, was held at the Old School on 2nd March 2018. Snow affected the attendance at this meeting but some 30 local residents were present.

### **What issues were raised?**

The discussion concentrated on neighbourhood plans and on housing matters in general. Mr Cartlidge explained things from the perspective of national government and also made a very strong case in favour of neighbourhood plans and specifically, the allocation, within plans, of development sites. He explained that plans with allocated sites had a much better chance of exerting some influence over future development applications within the communities concerned. He cited examples of local plans which had not allocated sites and whose influence had duly been compromised.

### **How were the issues considered and addressed?**

The NPSG wanted the residents of the village to consider the potential benefits from a Plan with allocated sites, so a summary of Mr Cartlidge's case in their favour was included in the April/May 2018 edition of the Melford Magazine. A specific question on this subject was then included in the Residents Survey which was distributed to all residents of the village in May 2018.

## **Residents Survey, May 2018**

### **How did the consultation take place?**

Whilst the various open events had been well attended and valued by those who came, the NPSG wanted to ensure that input to the Plan came from as wide a pool of residents as possible. Mindful of the success of the household survey which was part of the 2006 Parish Plan, it was decided to repeat the exercise in 2018.

A 12-page questionnaire was printed. Different sections covered the core Plan sections of Housing, Traffic and Parking, and Village Services and Facilities (such as the GP practice, primary school and village hall). Demographic questions such as the sex and age of the respondent were also included. It was decided to defer questions on business and tourism to separate forums to be held directly with local business people. (See Section 2.2.2 on Business & Tourism below).

This link will take you to a copy of the Residents Survey questionnaire:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/LMNPQuestionnaire.pdf>

It was emphasised that all responses were confidential and answers could not be traced back to specific individuals or households.

In May 2018, every home in the village was visited by one of 100 volunteers to personally hand out a questionnaire for everyone aged 15 or over who lived in the dwelling. The volunteer arranged to return to collect the completed questionnaires on an agreed date.

If there was no response on an initial visit, the volunteer revisited. If after two or three visits, there was still no-one in, the volunteer left a form explaining what had happened, leaving a questionnaire and asking the occupant to phone to arrange collection or to return completed questionnaires to the Parish Council office.

In total 2,655 questionnaires were distributed and 1,995 completed copies were returned – an excellent response rate of 75%. The data from each questionnaire was then recorded by a dedicated data processing team. Each one of these volunteers had received careful guidance in order that consistency of data entry and high levels of accuracy would be achieved. The database to which the data was applied was created by the local resident who master-minded the previous survey project in 2006.

#### What issues were raised?

The Housing responses demonstrated that there was overwhelming support for the allocation of sites (90% in favour, only 6% against).

There was also very strong support for:

1. Developments of no more than 20 or 40 homes (with very little support for larger developments).
2. Affordable housing and housing reserved for local people.
3. New developments to be 'not so visible' compared with 'on the main roads into the village'.

The Traffic responses revealed that calming measures in key places received greater support than a 20mph speed limit in the village centre or dedicated cycle lanes.

On pedestrian safety the results showed very strong support for:

1. Pedestrian safety measures in key places – e.g. an island in the middle of a busy road.
2. Pavements free of parked cars, leaving space for children's and disabled people's wheeled vehicles.
3. Traffic-light controlled crossings in key places.

With the Parking results, there was majority support for each of the measures suggested to improve parking. In order of popularity:

1. More posts in the village centre to prevent cars blocking the pavement.
2. New off-street car park nearer to the village centre than the Old School car park.
3. Residents' parking schemes for selected roads.
4. Clearly marked parking bays in the village centre.
5. Parking subject to time limits in the village centre (with a scheme for residents and businesses).

Turning to Village Services and Facilities, overwhelmingly the GP practice was rated as the facility that mattered most. If the capacity of the surgery were to be improved, extending the existing surgery was the most favoured option, rather than building a new surgery elsewhere in the village or a third surgery (in addition to Melford and Lavenham). The aspect of service that people said needed most improvement was the waiting time to get a routine appointment (almost half the registered patients in the survey commented on this).

Next came the primary school. Both the primary and the pre-school were seen as very important to the village. Comments made by parents with children at the school included the need for more funding for facilities, classrooms, changing rooms, teachers and renovations needed (especially to the toilets).

With the village hall, there was a roughly equal split of people saying the village needs / doesn't need a new village hall. Nothing stood out as essential. The most popular suggestions for services that might be linked to a new village hall were (in order of popularity): sports hall, meeting rooms, library, heritage centre, Parish Council offices.

The most popular 'leisure' aspects that people said should be improved if funds were available, were (in order of 'essential' rating): public seating and toilets in the village centre, activities for under 18s, play equipment in parks, outdoor activities - e.g. ball games, BMX track and activities for those 65 and over.

Of the suggestions for improving the village environment if funds are available, the most popular options were more widespread recycling facilities and public footpaths (and public green spaces) which all had a substantial majority saying improvement of these were 'essential'. Of the other suggestions, the order of preference was allotments, electric charging points in new housing developments and electric charging points in public places, with a community orchard and green burial site bringing up the rear.

There were almost 2,000 handwritten comments in the Village Services & Facilities section of the questionnaire. Those on the GP practice and primary school have been touched on above. Of the others, a number indicated the need for more facilities for children/teenagers and for different sports facilities, but the comments were very wide-ranging including car parking, public toilets, public transport and street cleaning/litter.

The full results of the Residents Survey are shown in Appendix 2, along with a detailed description of the methodology underlying the survey and the results.

#### [How were the issues considered and addressed?](#)

A huge effort went into the Residents Survey project and the result, 1,995 completed questionnaires, was viewed by the NPSG as very significant.

The project had the desired effect in terms of extending consultation as widely as possible and the results, whilst not the 'be all and end all' in terms of consultation and evidence gathering, have had a significant impact on the Policies and Community Actions which have emerged within the Plan.

The Housing evidence, summarised above, has therefore led to specific Policies on allocated sites, affordable housing, housing for local people, the ideal size of developments, their location and the type, tenure and design of housing favoured by the village.

The Traffic & Parking results, viewed with other evidence such as the results of the Parking Survey (Appendix 4), have influenced the Plan Policy on parking within new developments and have supported a key Community Action in the form of a proposed Public Realm Study. This will review matters such as pedestrian safety and improved village centre parking, all within the context of a village which is highly sensitive from a heritage perspective. (See Appendix 5 for the brief behind the Public Realm Study).

The evidence from the Residents Survey has also contributed to the Plan Policies on the GP practice, protecting and enhancing green spaces, the provision of amenities like play equipment or allotments and sustainable travel initiatives - especially well thought out pathways and cycleways.

The Plan and its Policies primarily concern land and development. However, it has also put forward additional Community Actions on matters the NPSG considered to be important enough for ongoing consideration by the Parish Council. Most of these had strong support from the Residents Survey.

Thus, there are Community Actions within the Plan on:

1. Support for the village primary school.
2. Better links between existing pathways and green spaces.
3. Improvements to existing play facilities.
4. Play equipment to be made available more widely in the village.
5. A new or refurbished village hall (and similarly, the Old School).
6. New sports facilities.
7. Public seating in the village centre.
8. A new and expanded youth group.
9. More widespread recycling facilities.

It is recognised that with a list of potential Community Actions like this, some prioritisation is required and that will be the responsibility of the Parish Council (with potential support from the NPSG and its group of volunteers).

The NPSG also recognised the importance of making the Survey results available to residents.

## **Open Day on Residents Survey results with Q&A, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

### **How did the consultation take place?**

A report on the results of the Residents Survey appeared in the Melford Magazine for August/September 2018. As usual, this was delivered to 1,650 residential addresses in the village. The results had also been previewed in July 2018, by e-mail, to the full contact list of Plan volunteers. However, it was felt that residents who wished to learn more from the survey might appreciate a more complete update on the results, via an Open Day.

This Open Day, similar in style to the successful Volunteer Open Day of February 2018, was held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at the village hall. The main purpose of the event was to present the results from the Residents Survey in detail. The format again included two Q&A sessions framed within a five-hour open event. A good number of residents visited on the day but not all stayed for the Q&A sessions.

The tried and tested display boards format was again used with each board dealing with a section of results from the Residents Survey (Housing, Traffic, Parking & Sustainable Movement and Village Services & Facilities). A board was also used to display work from the Schools Project (see Section 2.2.3. below). The two Q&A sessions then followed PowerPoint presentations which provided further analysis of the survey results.

### **What issues were raised?**

The two Q&A sessions were attended by 66 residents and a total of 13 questions/updates were asked/given. Eight were about housing or housing design matters, three on village centre parking issues and two on village services.

The following link provides a record of the questions/statements asked/given:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Open-Day-8th-September-2018-Questions.pdf>

### **How were the issues considered and addressed?**

The issues raised in the two Q&A sessions were familiar ones with the main emphasis towards housing. However, it was felt that attendance would have been better if specific details had been provided at the event (and promoted in advance) on the potential development sites for allocation in the Plan. Accordingly, it was agreed by the NPSG that a further open event would be held on that specific subject and also on the detail of the Draft Plan Policies.

## **Public Meeting on Draft Plan Policies and Allocated Sites, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### **How did the consultation take place?**

This Public Meeting was held at the village hall on the evening of Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October, shortly after the Draft Plan was ratified by the Parish Council. The meeting was an informal consultation exercise so that residents could review the Draft Plan Policies and Community Actions via display boards and through a PowerPoint presentation given by members of the NPSG. It was emphasised that the Plan and its Policies/Community Actions were still liable to change as the project moved through formal consultation.

### What issues were raised?

A noteworthy 157 residents attended the evening and whilst the main focus was on hearing what stage the Plan had reached with regard to the detail of Policies, Community Actions and allocated sites, there was time for a closing Q&A session when 12 questions were asked. Ten of these were on housing and development matters, particularly the Plan's approach to affordable housing and housing for local needs. There was also interest in the green area between the village and Sudbury and on environmental matters and pollution.

### How were the issues considered and addressed?

The NPSG was encouraged by the feedback received at this meeting. A substantial number attended and a vote of thanks was given on behalf of the audience for the work being done. The different themes of the Plan (especially the draft Policies on affordable housing, housing for local needs and the green area between the village and Sudbury) were well received. The proposed sites for allocation also received little dissent. Whilst the event was only for informal consultation the NPSG when reviewing the meeting was resolved to press ahead and move towards the first phase of formal consultation, namely the six-week Regulation 14 Public Consultation period.

The following links show the poster used to promote this event and a record of the questions that were asked in the Q&A session:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/LMNP-Open-Meeting-Poster-1.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SUMMARY-29-10-PUBLIC-MEETING.pdf>

### 2.2.2. Consultation with Businesses

#### How did the consultation take place?

The NPSG held two business forums, on 13th March 2018 and 15th May 2018. The second forum was convened at the request of the businesses who attended the first forum, as they wished more local businesses to have the opportunity to engage with the Plan process and to offer their opinions on measures which would benefit the village and businesses within it.

Eighteen business people attended the first forum and 22 attended the second forum, with the combined forums representing a good sample of local businesses. For notes from both forums, see Appendix 7.

Members of the NPSG also met with representatives of the Long Melford Business Association on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 and 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018. The aim was to update them on the progress of the Plan and to run through the Plan Policies and Community Actions which will have an impact on business and tourism in the village. These meetings were also an opportunity to review the Business Association's progress with its new website which provides those who view it with comprehensive details of the Long Melford business community and interactive links directly to the Association's member businesses.

Members of the NPSG have also held meetings with individual local businesses, including with directors of the Nethergate Brewery (in June 2018) and directors of the local building firm, Cubitt Theobald in October and November 2018. Both are significant employers in the village and their views are important in shaping the Plan Policies and Community Actions for business and tourism.

### What issues were raised?

The main issue raised by the businesses who attended the first business forum in March 2018 was the problem with parking in the village centre. At the forum, 12 separate questions or debate points focussed on this issue, with several advocating improved off-street parking either through improvements to the Old School car park or through an alternative arrangement for central off-street parking. A good case for marked bays along Hall Street was made whilst there was some opposition to time limits for parking. The assembled businesses accepted that the central shops and businesses, themselves, contribute to the problem, with staff parking adjacent to their work premises and thus taking up potential places for shoppers or visitors to the village centre.

There was also a plea for attention to problem parking (e.g. cars straddling the road and pavement or blocking entrances). It was also pointed out that with a number of sizeable businesses and tourist facilities outside the village centre, the adequacy of parking was not just an issue for the village centre.

Beyond parking matters, two local business owners made the case for doing what is possible to safeguard employment premises when applications are received to switch premises from business use to residential. This was linked to the long-term decline in the numbers of village centre shops and businesses. Several attendees also advocated Long Melford as a 'destination shopping village', with attractive and successful independent shops key to this. Initiatives to support independent businesses were thus important (e.g. an improved village website, better signage and a clear village identity) and this was a theme taken up at the second business forum in May 2018.

The second forum deliberately focused on non-parking matters to begin with and most of the debate concentrated on initiatives to help draw people into the village as a place to visit and a shopping destination. A street market was mooted, improved and more consistent signage (possibly linked to a consistent brand or identity for the village), a village management project to encourage a smarter village centre and an improved village website.

Inevitably, the discussion above then led to the need for better parking arrangements, as that was seen as central in enhancing the village as a place to visit and to shop. Broadly the discussion at this point was similar to that on this subject from the first forum, but a strong case was made for a project to seek better use from the village hall car park, possibly via a rental arrangement centred on businesses and their staff. It was appreciated that such an arrangement would require negotiation with interested parties such as the village hall committee, the Parish Council and the landowner.

The 2018 meetings with Nethergate Brewery and Cubitt Theobald were held primarily to encourage these businesses that an intention of the Plan was to support them and other businesses in continuing to grow in a sustainable fashion and thus to enhance employment in the village. However, it was understood that this support would be contingent on the NPSG being happy with the detail behind any plans or initiatives and that it must be clear that these would be of benefit to the village.

#### How were the issues considered and addressed?

The NPSG attaches considerable importance to its consultations with local businesses. A successful business community is essential for the continued attractiveness of Long Melford as a village in which to live and a place that people want to visit. The Plan document therefore contains a separate chapter of Policies and Community Actions that are focused on Business and Tourism (see Chapter 7). The Policies and Community Actions in that part of the Plan draw from the input of businesses at the two forums as well as the individual meetings that have been held with businesses (see above). Similarly, the views of local organisations and specialists have been considered (see Section 2.2.4. below).

Policies are therefore in place which offer support for business in the village and the wider parish, especially smaller or micro-businesses. Nevertheless, commercial planning applications will be looked at on their merits, with protection of amenities and the environment an important consideration. The Policies also show an inclination to support applications from businesses where existing employment land or premises can be used for small-scale commercial activities. The principles behind this then extend to applications for change of use from residential use to business use.

The NPSG also put in place a Policy which supports current BDC policies on safeguarding employment land but it accepted that there could be countervailing benefits to a change of use from existing employment land/premises to residential (and such benefits will be considered).

Having regard to business specific matters, the NPSG resolved to consider within the Plan, the initiatives that Nethergate Brewery has for increasing its site and its business, with anticipated employment benefits to the community.

The NPSG has also offered support and encouragement to the Long Melford Business Association with its project to provide a better village website and has been part of an idea that started with local businesses to set up a village centre action group. The first initiative of that group has been to produce village wide signs, with consistent branding, which encourage visitors to the village centre to park considerately. A number of those signs are now positioned in and around Hall Street.

Part of the brief for the Public Realm study (see Appendix 5) will require the consultant to focus on the importance of successful businesses to the long-term health of the village, with businesses an obvious beneficiary of improved parking arrangements, better signage etc. At the same time, an understanding of the heritage sensitivity of the village and parish is essential if that study is to be successful in meeting its brief.



### 2.2.3. Consultation with Schools

#### How did the consultation take place?

It became evident at an early stage in the Plan process that the local Church of England primary school was viewed by residents as a key part of Long Melford's infrastructure and one which needed to be considered carefully against a background of anticipated growth of the village population.

A meeting was held with Ms Amanda Woolmer, the school's headmistress, on 26 April 2018 to gather facts and assess the capacity of school and nursery to cope with increased numbers of children from new housing developments. This was not just to review teaching capacity but also the situation with the school's buildings and facilities. In August 2018, Ms Woolmer submitted a report on the school's progress and capacity.

On 7 August 2018, representatives of the NPSG met with Mr Pete Mumford, Schools Planning Manager for Suffolk County Council. The ground covered included how the school was funded, its capacity and possible community use of facilities.

Subsequently the NPSG has been in contact with Mr Daniel Jones, the Buildings Officer for the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese and this dialogue is ongoing.

With regard to residents of secondary school age, during the earlier public consultation events set out above in Section 2.2.1., the NPSG became aware that there was little representation of younger people at those meetings. At one event this was highlighted by a parent whose daughter was the only teenager present at what was otherwise a well-attended gathering.

As the Residents Survey was for completion by those aged 15+, the decision was taken to actively seek out the opinions of young people aged 11+ who attended nearby secondary schools and who lived in the village. The three local secondary schools were contacted and two agreed that their Long Melford resident students could take part in a consultation exercise on the village and its Neighbourhood Plan. This resulted in separate half-day visits, with lesson plans, to obtain the views of students from Ormiston Academy, Sudbury on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and from Stour Valley Community School, Clare on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

#### What issues were raised?

During the meeting with the primary school Headmistress, she stated that the school is moving firmly in the right direction and it has appropriate plans for dealing with growth in the village. Ms Woolmer also confirmed that at present, the school has available capacity in all but one-year group. The challenges it is currently facing relate mainly to its facilities, some of which are fairly antiquated. For example, the school is in clear need of better toilet facilities and there is also the longer-term question of how to deal with an outdoor swimming pool which needs to be repaired or removed.

During the meeting with Mr Mumford, the representative of the education department at Suffolk County Council, he explained that the school has the space and capacity to cope with the extra children expected from the current levels of development underway in Long Melford. However, substantial further development might necessitate a re-think.

At the two secondary schools it was evident that in many respects the views of younger village residents echoed those of their older co-residents. For example:

*“We like how new houses are being built but we don’t want too many cos it would ruin the quiet character of Long Melford.”*

or

*“(To) attract younger adults into the village, flats should be built with communal gardens and accessible parking places. They should be built gradually over time so the village doesn’t get overwhelmed with too many people at one time.”*

and

*“Although we are having more built in our village, we want to restrict that so people who walk their dogs and stuff like that still have the enjoyment of enjoying the environment around them.”*

and

*“We would still like an area that separates Long Melford and Sudbury.”*

However, it was also made clear that the majority of younger residents (and many adult residents) believe that the village should invest in facilities that are attractive to the young. For example:

*“Long Melford is not as appealing to young people as the older generation.”*

and

*“The country park is mainly for dog walking. They could adapt this and put more play equipment there.”*

and

*“We thought the Old School, which isn’t used very often, to perhaps modernise it to have some sections for games, arcades, pool, which would appeal to teens and young people while still retaining the character of the village.”*

These quotes are a selection from the transcripts taken during the two secondary school visits. For more quotes and further background on the Schools Project, see Appendix 6.

#### [How were the issues considered and addressed?](#)

Following the dialogue with the primary school and the education department at Suffolk C.C., a Community Action was put into the Plan that support will be offered for improved and expanded primary and pre-school education in the village, when appropriate and needed.

Given the feedback from the younger residents of secondary school age, the issue of improved and/or expanded play area facilities has led to both a Policy and a Community Action to directly address that issue. A Community Action has also been added to the Plan which supports a joint initiative of the Parish Council and Holy Trinity church to employ a part-time youth worker. This should facilitate an expanded youth group for the parish.

Better sport and leisure facilities are also a consideration for a Community Action that proposes a review of the existing village hall and Old School, to assess whether they should be refurbished or replaced, with younger residents anticipated to benefit from any extension of such facilities.

The Plan's policies also include the provision of sustainable travel initiatives within new developments, specifically safe and adequately lit footways and cycleways. These initiatives should benefit families in the parish.

#### 2.2.4. Consultation with Service Providers, Organisations, Specialists and Individuals

This section deals with meetings and consultations that have not been covered in sections 2.2.1. to 2.2.3. The four consulting sub-sets will now be looked at on the following basis:

Who was consulted (and when), how did each consultation take place, did any issues arise and if so, how were those issues considered and addressed?

##### Service Providers

##### **Long Melford GP Practice, February and July 2018 – two meetings**

Representatives of the NPSG met with the practice manager, Mrs Nicola Whitehead, of the local GP practice in February 2018 and with the same person again in July 2018, when she was accompanied by two GP partners from the practice. Both meetings took place on the practice premises.

The meetings were to establish the future plans of the practice in light of the increasing village population and whether there was a case for expansion on-site or whether any separate site had been assessed, should expansion be deemed desirable.

The main issue that arose from these meetings was confirmation that the practice had no concrete plans for expansion even though the population it serves is rising, with service standards, especially concerning appointments, showing evidence of strain. It was explained that the inability to expand was mainly because the practice was finding it difficult to employ additional healthcare professionals. The GP partners advised that this is a nationwide problem faced by the NHS.

Whilst solving this issue is beyond the remit of the Plan, a Policy has been put in place so that efforts can be made to boost additional capacity for primary healthcare in the village, in the event that significant additional development is proposed.

As for service standards, the practice had put in place a new system to triage appointments and had also set up a Patient Participation Group so that feedback from patients could be collected.

## Organisations

Between October 2017 and November 2018, representatives of the NPSG met with the following local organisations:

### **Suffolk County Council Highways Department, October 2017 and Summer 2018 – consultations**

The aim of the first meeting (which was also attended by a representative from Babergh District Council) was to help define the scope of ‘traffic and parking’ issues, to ascertain which aspects should form part of the Plan and to put forward some initial ideas about possible actions/policies and the evidence needed to support them.

At the second meeting, the advice of the Suffolk C.C. Highways Department was sought regarding possible traffic and parking management measures and how these might fit within the proposed Public Realm Study for the village centre. (Appendix 5).

The first meeting was instrumental in the formulation of the Parking Survey. (Appendix 4). After the second meeting, it was resolved to include S.C.C. in the selection process for a consultant to complete the proposed Public Realm Study.

### **Long Melford Football Club, April and November 2018 meetings**

The first meeting was to discuss the club’s need for a new clubhouse and the financial implications of a re-build project. The November meeting was to discuss the future funding, needs and plans of the Club in light of the Parish Council having agreed to contribute £50,000 of S.106 money (from previous developments in the village) to a newly created Community Sports Trust (which would replace the existing football club limited company).

The meetings were by way of information gathering and no issues emerged for ongoing consideration.

### **Suffolk County Council Ecology Department, May 2018 – consultation**

Representatives of the NPSG met with the above to consult on designated sites of ecological significance in the parish. The consultation was helpful to the NPSG in formulating its Policies and Community Actions on protecting and enhancing green spaces in the parish.

### **Suffolk Wildlife Trust, June 2018 – consultation**

Representatives of the NPSG met with the Wildlife Trust to consult on current green spaces in the parish and to assess additional needs to both protect the environment and to provide potential new areas of green space. This was against a background of pressure from the increasing village population.

The consultation was helpful to the NPSG in formulating its Policies and Community Actions on protecting and enhancing green spaces in the parish.

### **Long Melford Community Association, July 2018 – meeting**

The meeting was to discuss the refurbishment needs of the Old School, which, like the village hall, accommodates a wide range of meetings and activities.

The Old School is a listed building and it is likely to face ongoing refurbishment issues. The village hall also has ongoing refurbishment requirements so the NPSG has proposed a review of both facilities to assess whether they should be refurbished or replaced. This is a Community Action within the Plan.

### **National Trust – Local Office, July 2018 – consultation**

Representatives of the NPSG met with local representatives of the National Trust to discuss the Trust's interest in and covenants on certain sites in the parish. The information gleaned was helpful in the assessment of potential sites for allocation within the Plan.

### **Sudbury Tourist Information Office, July 2018 – enquiry**

A representative of the NPSG contacted the local tourist information office to establish numbers of enquiries regarding Long Melford accommodation, tourist attractions, events, etc. The enquiry was by way of information gathering for ongoing consideration.

### **Long Melford Village Hall Committee, August 2018 – committee meeting**

Representatives of the NPSG met with representatives of the village hall committee to ascertain the refurbishment needs of the village hall. The intention was also to discuss a possible arrangement whereby the village hall car park could be used more widely for public parking, or to help relieve pressure caused by staff parking adjacent to local businesses and shops. The outcome concerning parking was positive but, the village hall representatives wanted a financial contribution for the upkeep of the parking surface from the Parish Council.

The two subjects above have become separate Community Action proposals within the Plan. The discussions can therefore continue at the behest of the Parish Council.

### **Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Team, September 2018 – consultation**

There was a preliminary consultation on the potential for new links to existing rights of way, improved surfacing of pathways and better signage.

There is strong evidence of support from the community for improvements to footpaths and open spaces. It was therefore decided to put a Community Action into the Plan on this subject.

### **Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Area of Natural Beauty Project Team, September 2018 – consultation**

A consultation was held to assess the implications of Long Melford being part of this AONB project area study. The NPSG are continuing to monitor this study.

### **Long Melford Open Spaces group, September 2018 – meeting**

A discussion was held with the LMOS group regarding the Railway Walk and Country Park, both of which it has jurisdiction over. The discussion included ideas to enhance the natural environment at both sites and to improve their recreational value.

The information gathered was helpful in relation to the Plan Policy on protecting and enhancing green spaces. The Country Park site is also relevant in relation to the Plan Policy on protecting Local Green Spaces.

### **Specialists**

Between June 2018 and August 2018 representatives of the NPSG met with a number of specialists to consult on their particular areas of expertise:

#### **Tim Regester – Local expert on cycling, June 2018 – consultation**

This consultation concerned cycling needs within the village, the required improvements to surfaces, the potential for additional routes and improved signage.

The information garnered was helpful in compiling the Traffic, Parking and Sustainable Movement Policy on Sustainable Travel. Better cycleways will also be part of the brief for the proposed Public Realm Study of the village centre.

#### **Local Estate Agents, June and July 2018 – consultations**

Representatives of the NPSG held discussions with local estate agents to garner their advice on the housing market in Long Melford. The agents concerned were David Burr, Wm Brown and Fenn Wright.

The information garnered from these meetings was particularly helpful with the Call for Sites project and thus the work undertaken to select deliverable development sites for allocation in the Plan. It was also helpful in compiling the wider Housing Policies within the Plan.

#### **Local Developers, July and August 2018 – consultations**

Representatives of the NPSG held discussions with local and regional developers as part of the work on the Plan's Call for Sites project. The developers concerned were Hartog Hutton (Bury St. Edmunds), Vaughan and Blyth (Colchester), Rose Builders (Colchester) and Hill Housebuilding (Waltham Abbey). The aim of these consultations was to ascertain the developers' preferences in relation to potential building projects in the parish and to garner their views on the suitability and viability of certain sites for development.

The information garnered from these meetings was particularly helpful with the Call for Sites project and thus the work undertaken to select deliverable development sites for allocation in the Plan. It was also helpful in compiling the wider Housing Policies within the Plan.

## Individuals

### **Clive Arbon - HP Farms Allotment Rep, July and September 2018 – two conversations**

These conversations were to assess local demand for allotments. The information obtained was helpful in compiling the Plan Policy on the provision of allotments.

### **Landowners Summer 2018 – various meetings**

Site specific discussions were held over the summer months with several local land-owners of greenfield and brownfield sites. Developers were included in a number of cases so the viability of a site and its likely deliverability for development could be assessed.

These meetings were central to the process of selection for allocated sites in the Plan. The intention is that the NPSG will continue to work closely with landowners, to ensure that site specific conditions are met and that delivery of each anticipated development project remains realistic.

## 2.3 Consultation at the Pre-Final Submission Stage

(Text to follow from February 2019)