

STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION
SUBMISSION DRAFT
JULY 2021

LONG MELFORD

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Photographer: Steve Thomson

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PREPARED ON BEHALF OF LONG MELFORD PARISH COUNCIL

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All photos by Steve Thomson except:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG): p7

NPSG: p9

NPSG: p11

Julie Thomson: p15

NPSG: p16

Steve Dudden: p17

Julie Thomson: p19

NPSG: p21

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1

INTRODUCTION

1.1

This Statement of Consultation shows who has been consulted about the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and how they were consulted. The objective from an early stage has been for effective engagement between those responsible for the Plan and the Long Melford community, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and statutory consultees. 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 following headings which accord with Regulation 15(2) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012:

- Who was consulted?
- How did the consultation take place?
- What issues were raised?
- How were the issues considered and addressed?

1.2

Consultation occurred during three broad stages in the production of the Plan, namely the Inception stage, the Draft Plan stage in preparation for the first formal public consultation, then at the Pre-Final Submission stage.



2

CONSULTATION AT INCEPTION

WHO WAS CONSULTED?

2.1

The Parish Council wanted to determine the views of residents when deciding on whether to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. When it became evident following a public meeting in August 2016 that a Plan had widespread support, the Parish Council approached Babergh District Council (BDC) with an Area Designation Application.

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

1.3

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 1st 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?

2.3

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?

2.4

On 1st September 2016, Mr McDonald presented a paper on neighbourhood plans to the 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.

2.5

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 BDC.

2.6

A statutory period of consultation on the Area Designation Application then followed, between 13th January and 10th February 2017. This received nine responses but no material representations. On 22nd February 2017, having completed the consultation period, BDC 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.

3

CONSULTATION IN PREPARING THE DRAFT PLAN FOR FORMAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

WHO WAS CONSULTED?

3.1

As with the Inception Stage, the initial focus for the preparation of the Plan for a formal public consultation, known as Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, was towards residents of the village. However, the NPSG also determined to engage with local businesses, schools, service providers, organisations and specialists in specific fields. Starting with residents, the NPSG resolved to:

- Invite residents to join the Steering Group advising the Parish Council;
- Promote awareness of the project throughout the parish;
- Encourage residents to contribute to the development of the Plan;
- Promote consultation events;
- Provide regular updates on the status of the Plan and its development.

3.2

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 (re-titled more recently as 'Melford Matters'), distributed free to 1,650 addresses in the parish. It has published regular articles on the Plan. 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.

3.3

The main form of electronic communication was originally the Parish Council website which has a Neighbourhood Plan section (www.longmelford-pc.gov.uk). This website has encouraged residents to

become involved with the Plan and has published information on the various Plan consultations. In January 2019 the NPSG set up a dedicated Plan website to help promote the Regulation 14 formal Public Consultation and to enable easy access to that and ensuing Plan documents (www.longmelfordnp.co.uk). From an early stage, the NPSG has also operated its own Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LMNHP/>

3.4

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, in the spring of 2018, was personally delivered by a team of some 90 volunteers, to all houses in the parish.

3.5

As well as residents, consultation in moving towards the Regulation 14 Draft Plan involved local businesses, local services like the 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:

- 3.5.1 Consultation with Residents
- 3.5.2 Consultation with Businesses
- 3.5.3 Consultation with Schools
- 3.5.4 Consultation with Service Providers, Organisations, Specialists and Individuals

3.5.1

CONSULTATION WITH RESIDENTS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION. 9TH MAY 2017

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.1

A public consultation was held at the village hall on 9th 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?

3.5.1.2

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 especially in the light of an undercurrent of concern over turning from a village to a town, or seeing Long Melford absorbed within an expanding Sudbury. 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 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 & 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).



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The following links provide a 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 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 & 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 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 & 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 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?

3.5.1.3

The NPSG reviewed the comments received at the public consultation very carefully and arrived at a number of conclusions. Firstly, it was clear that the Plan should have its central focus on housing and development, where neighbourhood plans, in law, 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, recognising, also, the importance of the most valued open spaces in the village and the role they play in the health and wellbeing of residents and in attracting visitors.

3.5.1.4

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, with suggestions to be presented to the Parish Council. It was also felt that parking provision, especially in the village centre, was overdue for review and again, suggestions for improvements could be placed before the Parish Council.

3.5.1.5

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.

3.5.1.6

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, 9TH JULY 2017

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.7

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 summer 2017 Long Melford Street Fair. This event, an annual feature over several years, typically attracted

some 10,000 people to the village centre, many of whom are local residents.

3.5.1.8

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?

3.5.1.9

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

3.5.1.10

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 seek input directly from younger



CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

residents. Therefore, the NPSG set up a small group to arrange those visits and to seek assistance from volunteers. (See Section 3.5.3 on consultation with local schools).

HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

3.5.1.11

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, 10TH FEBRUARY 2018

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.12

An Open Day with two Q&A sessions was held at the village hall on 10th 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 separate business forum was planned to identify issues with the fourth sub-group, business and tourism. (See Section 3.5.2 on Consultations with Business below).

3.5.1.13

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?

3.5.1.14

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.

3.5.1.15

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.

3.5.1.16

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?

3.5.1.17

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 the four core subject areas shown above.

3.5.1.18

The volunteers from this event 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 and keeping them up to date with the progress of the Plan.

3.5.1.19

With 'General Data Protection Regulation' 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 and in relation to the Plan itself. The contacts database also formed a very useful means whereby future Plan open events could be publicised.



OPEN MEETING WITH LOCAL MP, 2ND MARCH 2018

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.20

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?

3.5.1.21

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 suggested that this had some impact on their influence.

HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

3.5.1.22

The NPSG wanted the residents of the village to consider the potential benefits from a Plan with allocated sites, that would focus on specific areas of local housing need, 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?

3.5.1.23

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.

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3.5.1.24

A 12-page questionnaire was printed. Different sections covered the core Plan sections of Housing, Traffic & Parking, and Village Services & 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 & Tourism to separate forums to be held directly with local business people. (See Section 3.5.2 on Consultations with Business below).

3.5.1.25

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>

3.5.1.26

In May 2018, every home in the village was visited by one of approximately 90 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.

3.5.1.27

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.

3.5.1.28

In total 2,655 questionnaires were distributed and 1,995 completed copies were returned – a 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?

3.5.1.29

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

3.5.1.30

There was also very strong support for:

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

3.5.1.31

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, albeit the latter two options were still well supported.

3.5.1.32

On pedestrian safety the results showed very strong support for:

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

3.5.1.33

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

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

3.5.1.34

Turning to Village Services & 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 Long 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).

3.5.1.35

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.

3.5.1.36

With the village hall, there was a roughly equal split of people saying the village needs / doesn't need a new village hall. However, given the anticipated scale of a project for a new village hall, near 50% support for it was viewed by the NPSG as a quite reasonable endorsement. Nothing stood out as essential in terms of what a new village hall might provide. The most popular suggestions for services that might be linked to it were (in order of popularity): sports hall, meeting rooms, library, heritage centre, Parish Council offices.

3.5.1.37

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.

3.5.1.38

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.

3.5.1.39

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.

3.5.1.40

The full results of the Residents Survey are shown in Appendix 2.

HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

3.5.1.41

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

3.5.1.42

The Plan and its Policies primarily concern land and development. However, as a result of the findings of the Residents Survey and the wider public consultation set out in this Statement, the Plan also includes Community Objectives (originally called Community Actions in the Regulation 14 Draft of the Plan), on matters the NPSG considered to be important enough for ongoing consideration by the Parish Council.

3.5.1.43

The Survey 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, were viewed by the NPSG as a key contributor to the Policies and Community Objectives which have emerged within the Plan.

3.5.1.44

The Housing evidence, summarised above, therefore led to specific Policies on allocated sites, affordable housing, housing for local people and the size and character of developments.

3.5.1.45

The Traffic & Parking results, viewed with other evidence such as the results of the 2018 Parking Survey (Appendix 4) influenced Plan Policies on parking within new developments and adhering

CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

to or improving on SCC parking guidelines. This consultation also contributed evidence in support of a key Community Objective to improve the village centre by reducing the impact from traffic, better parking arrangements, easier accessibility to public transport, safer movement by bicycle and on foot and improved signage.

3.5.1.46

The evidence from the Residents Survey also contributed to Policies within the Plan section on Village Services and Facilities; on protecting valued existing local green spaces, on the provision of new green space and more widespread play equipment, and on the protection and enhancement of the village's public rights of way.

3.5.1.47

The Plan and its Policies primarily concern land and development. However, as the Plan has been refined it has put forward a comprehensive list of Community Objectives on matters the NPSG considered to be sufficiently important for ongoing consideration by the Parish Council. Most of these had strong support from the Residents Survey. The full list of Community Objectives within the Plan is as follows:

- Traffic & Parking Initiatives (LMCO 1)
- Charging points in Public Places (LMCO 2)
- Healthcare Services (LMCO 3)
- Supporting the School (LMCO 4)
- Old School Car Park (LMCO 5)
- Promoting Biodiversity (LMCO 6)
- Reducing Carbon Emissions (LMCO 7)
- Adequacy of Outdoor Play Equipment (LMCO 8)
- Land for Allotments (LMCO 9)
- Promotion of Public Rights of Way and Tourism (LMCO 10)
- Cemetery Provision (LMCO 11)

3.5.1.48

It is recognised that with a list of potential Community Objectives 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).

3.5.1.49

The NPSG also recognised the importance of making the methodology behind the Survey and the Survey results available to residents and other interested parties, hence this information is recorded on the Neighbourhood Plan website in Appendix 2, under the Appendices tab.

OPEN DAY ON RESIDENTS

SURVEY RESULTS WITH Q&A,

8TH SEPTEMBER 2018

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.50

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.

3.5.1.51

This Open Day, similar in style to the successful Volunteer Open Day of February 2018, was held on Saturday 8th September 2018 at the village hall and was well attended. 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.

3.5.1.52

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 3.5.3 below). The two Q&A sessions then followed PowerPoint presentations which provided further analysis of the survey results.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED?

3.5.1.53

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.

3.5.1.54

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?

3.5.1.55

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, 29TH OCTOBER 2018

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.1.56

This Public Meeting was held at the village hall on the evening of Monday 29th 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 Objectives via display boards and through a PowerPoint presentation given by members of the NPSG. It was emphasised that the Plan and its Policies/Community Objectives were still liable to change as the project moved through formal consultation.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED?

3.5.1.57

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 Objectives 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?

3.5.1.58

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



CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

the work being done. The different themes of the Plan (especially the draft Policies on affordable housing, housing for local needs and avoiding coalescence 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 resolved to press ahead and move towards the first phase of formal consultation, namely the six-week Regulation 14 Public Consultation period.

3.5.1.59

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>

3.5.2

CONSULTATION WITH BUSINESSES

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.2.1

The NPSG held two business forums, on 13th March 2018 and 15th May 2018. The second forum convened at the request of the businesses which 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.

3.5.2.2

Eighteen local business people from 13 local businesses 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.

3.5.2.3

Members of the NPSG also met with representatives of the Long Melford Business Association on 3rd May 2018 and 26th October 2018. The aim was to update

them on the progress of the Plan and to run through the Plan Policies and Community Objectives which will have an impact on business and tourism in the village.

3.5.2.4

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 Objectives for business and tourism.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED?

3.5.2.5

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 focused 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.



3.5.2.6

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.



3.5.2.7

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. However other business owners noted the difficulty in maintaining successful retail premises in the village centre and felt that the potential for change of use from employment to residential use was important to them. This topic was linked to the long-term decline in the numbers of village centre shops and businesses.

3.5.2.8

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.

3.5.2.9

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.

3.5.2.10

Inevitably, the discussion above then led back 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. (Note: In 2019 the three parties collaborated and the village hall car park was re-surfaced and marked out for 32 places. On the numerous occasions when it is not needed for village hall events, it is now available for use by residents and visitors to the village centre).

3.5.2.11

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 key local employers 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 their 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?

3.5.2.12

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 that are focused on Business and Tourism (see LM 23, LM 24 and LM 25 within Chapter 7). Those

CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

Policies draw from the input of businesses at the two forums as well as the individual meetings that have been held with businesses. Similarly, the views of local organisations and specialists have been considered (see Section 3.5.4 below).

3.5.2.13

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, heritage and the environment, all important considerations. The Policies also show an inclination to support applications from businesses where existing employment land or premises can be used or re-used for small-scale commercial activities. The principles behind this then extend to applications for change of use from residential use to business use.

3.5.2.14

The NPSG also put in place a Policy (LM 25) which recognises the onus put on safeguarding employment land by the BDC emerging Joint Local Plan (JLP), but it accepted that there could be countervailing benefits to the village through a change of use from existing employment land/premises to residential (and such benefits will be considered), especially where the employment land/premises can be relocated favourably.

3.5.2.15

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 discussion 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 and Little St. Mary's.

3.5.3

CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

3.5.3.1

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.

3.5.3.2

A meeting was held with 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, its facilities and its early years provision.

3.5.3.3

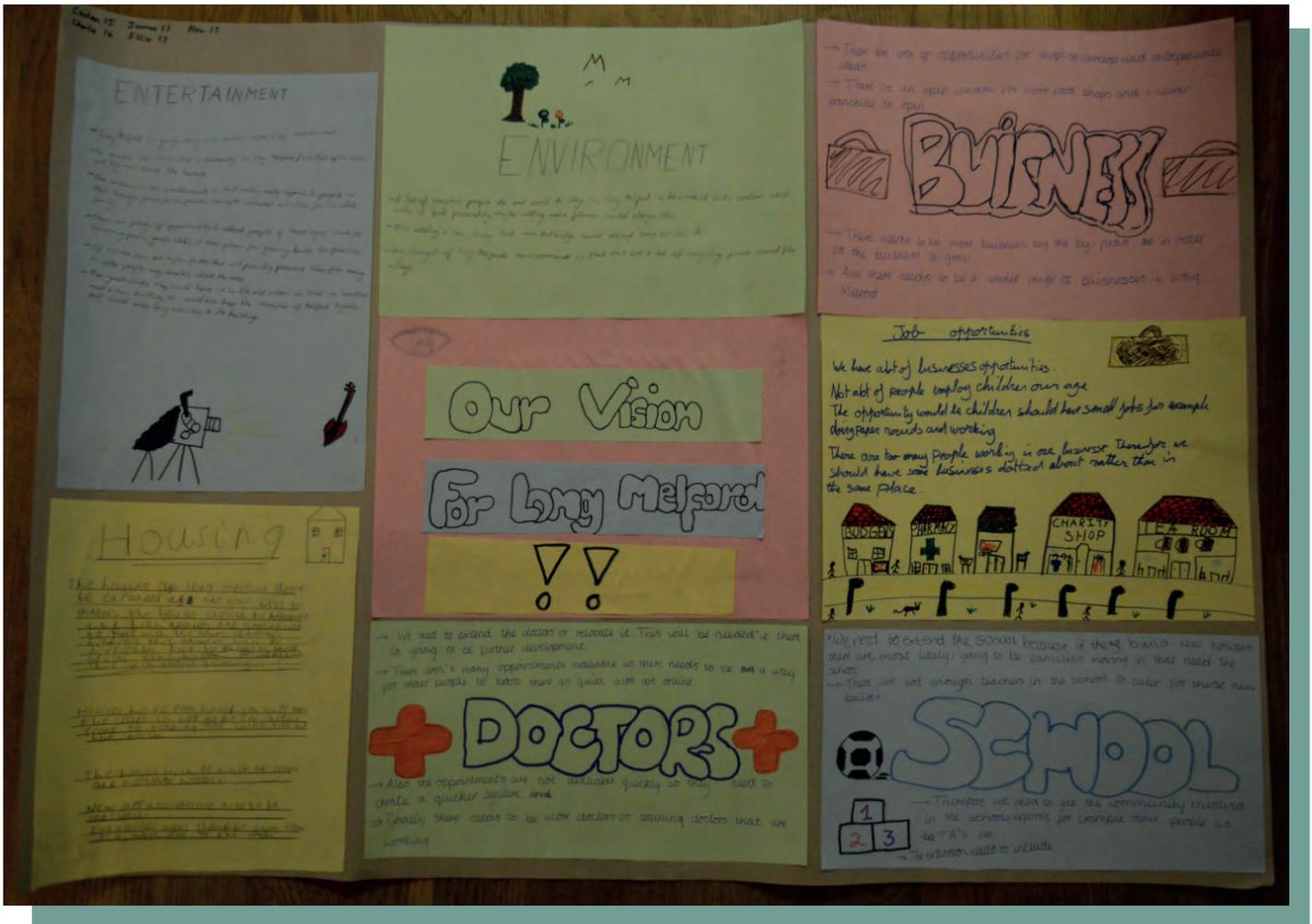
On 7 August 2018, representatives of the NPSG met with the Schools Planning Manager for Suffolk County Council (SCC). The ground covered included how the school was funded, its capacity and possible community use of facilities.

3.5.3.4

With regard to residents of secondary school age, during the earlier public consultation events set out above in Section 3.5.1, 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.

3.5.3.5

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 24th April 2018 and from Stour Valley Community School, Clare on 26th April 2018.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED?

3.5.3.6

During the meeting with the primary school Headmistress, she stated that the school was moving firmly in the right direction in relation to OFSTED assessments and it had appropriate plans for dealing with growth in the village. She also confirmed that at the time of the meeting, the school had available capacity in all but one-year group. The challenges it was facing related mainly to its facilities, some of which were fairly antiquated. For example, the school was in clear need of better toilet facilities and there was also the longer-term question of how to deal with an outdoor swimming pool which needed to be repaired or removed. That was viewed as a potential site for an extended pre-school facility.

3.5.3.7

During the meeting with the SCC Schools Planning Manager, the NPSG was advised that the school had 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.

3.5.3.8

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

CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

3.5.3.9

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

3.5.3.10

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?

3.5.3.11

Following the dialogue with the primary school and the education department at SCC, a Community Objective 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.

3.5.3.12

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 Objective to directly address that issue. (LM 21 and LMCO 8).

3.5.3.13

The Plan’s Policies also include the provision of sustainable travel initiatives within new developments, specifically safe and adequately lit footways and cycleways (LM 16). These initiatives should benefit families and younger residents in the parish. There is also a Community Objective to promote Long Melford as a destination for walkers and cyclists, again of potential benefit to families and to younger residents (LMCO 10).

3.5.4

CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS, ORGANISATIONS, SPECIALISTS AND INDIVIDUALS

3.5.4.1

This section deals with meetings and consultations that have not been covered in sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.3. The four sub-sets in this section 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

3.5.4.2

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

3.5.4.3

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.

3.5.4.4

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.

3.5.4.5

Whilst solving this issue is beyond the remit of the Plan, a Community Objective 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 seen.

3.5.4.6

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.

SUDBURY TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE, JULY 2018 – ENQUIRY

3.5.4.7

A representative of the NPSG contacted the Sudbury 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.

ORGANISATIONS

3.5.4.8

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

3.5.4.9

The aim of the first meeting (which was also attended by a representative from BDC) 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.

3.5.4.10

At the second meeting, the advice of the SCC Highways Department was sought regarding possible traffic and parking management measures and how these might fit within the Plan.



CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...

3.5.4.11

Both meetings were instrumental in the methodology behind the Parking Survey 2018. (Appendix 4).

LONG MELFORD FOOTBALL CLUB, APRIL AND NOVEMBER 2018 MEETINGS

3.5.4.12

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).

3.5.4.13

The meetings were by way of information gathering and no immediate issues emerged for further consideration at that point.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ECOLOGY DEPARTMENT, MAY 2018 – CONSULTATION

3.5.4.14

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 Objectives on protecting and enhancing green spaces in the parish.

SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST, JUNE 2018 – CONSULTATION

3.5.4.15

Representatives of the NPSG met with the Wildlife Trust to consult on current green spaces in the parish, particularly



the Country Park and the Melford Walk, 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 on the local environment from the increasing village population.

3.5.4.16

The consultation was also helpful to the NPSG in formulating its Policies and Community Objectives on protecting and enhancing open spaces in the parish.



drainage, to re-surface it and to provide lighting was essential for the ongoing success of the Old School facility, as well as for the ongoing encouragement of visitors to the village. Note: Work was completed in June 2021 on a contract to provide better drainage, new kerbing, a new surface, low level lighting and four electric charging points for vehicles at this site.

NATIONAL TRUST – LOCAL OFFICE, JULY 2018 – CONSULTATION

3.5.4.20

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, including the Old School car park area. The information gleaned was helpful in the assessment of potential sites for allocation within the Plan and for the project aimed at improving the Old School car park.

LONG MELFORD VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE, AUGUST 2018 – COMMITTEE MEETING

3.5.4.21

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. Following this discussion, separate grants were obtained for repairs to the fabric of the hall and for a car park improvement project. Note: During 2019 the fabric improvements were completed and the village hall car park was re-surfaced, and marked out for 32 places. It is now available for use by the public on all days when not required for hall events.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY TEAM, SEPTEMBER 2018 –CONSULTATION

3.5.4.22

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

3.5.4.23

There is strong evidence of support from the

LONG MELFORD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, JULY 2018 – MEETING

3.5.4.17

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.

3.5.4.18

The Old School is a Grade II listed building and it is likely to face ongoing refurbishment issues. The village hall also has ongoing refurbishment requirements so the NPSG proposed a review of both facilities to assess whether they should be refurbished or replaced. (See also 3.4.5.21 below). These discussions were a contributory factor to substantial improvements taking place at both facilities, organised and arranged by their respective management groups and involving external grant funding.

3.5.4.19

The Old School car park is an important facility for the venue itself and also for wider village off-street parking and it was recognised that a project to improve its

CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED...



community for improvements to footpaths and open spaces - See Appendix 2, Residents Survey and notes earlier in this Statement on the various public consultation meetings. Note: It was decided to put both a Policy and a Community Objective into the Plan on this subject (LM 22 and LMCO 10). Furthermore, in January 2020 a re-worked Policy on providing a Local Green Space designation for selected open spaces in the village was put into the Plan document (LM 19).

DEDHAM VALE & STOUR VALLEY AREA OF NATURAL BEAUTY PROJECT TEAM, SEPTEMBER 2018 – CONSULTATION

3.5.4.24

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 and are supportive of the prospect of extension to the AONB.

LONG MELFORD OPEN SPACES GROUP, SEPTEMBER 2018 – MEETING

3.5.4.25

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

3.5.4.26

The information gathered was helpful in relation to the Policy on protecting and enhancing green spaces. Note: The Railway Walk and Country Park sites have both been included in the Policy on the designation of Local Green Spaces (LM 19).

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL – ATTENDANCE AT REGULAR NPSG MEETINGS, VISIT OF THE NPSG TO BDC IN NOVEMBER 2018

3.5.4.27

Two officers of the Planning Department at BDC were assigned to help the NPSG in its preparation of the Draft Plan. As well as attending various meetings of the NPSG in the early stages of its inception and making themselves available throughout the Plan process to provide telephone and email assistance, they also invited three of the NPSG members to their offices in November 2018 for an informal review of the progress of the Plan and its readiness for the Regulation 14 Public Consultation.

3.5.4.28

This meeting was extremely helpful in relation to the emerging Housing Policies of the Plan, especially those to do with affordable housing and the aim of the NPSG to provide an appropriate proportion of affordable homes for people with a local connection to the village. The wider position in respect of housing need in Long Melford was also discussed, along with the potential supply of housing, via site allocations, by which this need would be met. As a result of the meeting the NPSG made a number of changes to the style and content of the Plan document, leaving it much better placed to go forward to public consultation. BDC then made significant and helpful representations in the Regulation 14 Public Consultation. (See Section 4.3.1).

SPECIALISTS

3.5.4.29

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

A LOCAL EXPERT ON CYCLING,

JUNE 2018 – CONSULTATION

(NAME AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, SUBJECT TO PERMISSION)

3.5.4.30

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

3.5.4.31

The information garnered was helpful in compiling the Traffic and Parking Policy on Sustainable Travel (LM 16), but the wider conclusion reached by the NPSG, partly from this consultation but also from further discussions on the subject, is that tangible progress with linked cycle routes will require wider support and input, particularly from SCC.

LOCAL ESTATE AGENTS, JUNE AND JULY 2018 – CONSULTATIONS

3.5.4.32

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

3.5.4.33

The information gathered 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, AUGUST 2018 AND OCTOBER 2019 – CONSULTATIONS

3.5.4.34

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 (Waltham Abbey). The aim of these consultations was to ascertain the developers' preferences in relation to

potential building projects in the parish and to obtain their views on the suitability and viability of certain sites for development.

3.5.4.35

The information gathered 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

HYDE PARKER FARMS:

ALLOTMENT REPRESENTATIVE,

JULY AND SEPTEMBER 2018 –

TWO CONVERSATIONS

3.5.4.36

These conversations were to assess local demand for allotments. The information obtained was helpful in compiling the Plan Community Objective to assess the demand for allotments and potential avenues for their supply.

LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS – VARIOUS MEETINGS

3.5.4.37

Site specific discussions were held over the several months in 2018 with various 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.

3.5.4.38

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.

4

CONSULTATION BETWEEN FORMAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND FORMAL SUBMISSION

4.1

The consultation outlined in this document thus far, enabled the NPSG to produce a Draft Plan which was made ready in January 2019 for statutory public consultation, in accordance with Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

4.2

This Statement now looks more closely at the Regulation 14 public consultation. It then sets out the ongoing work and further consultations which enabled the NPSG to make the Draft Plan and its related documents ready for formal submission to Babergh District Council (BDC), in accordance with Regulation 15 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

4.3

This section will be structured as follows:

- 4.3.1 Regulation 14 Public Consultation
- 4.3.2 Consultation following the Regulation 14 Public Consultation
- 4.3.3 Informal Consultations on the Designation of Local Green Spaces and on a Rural Gap
- 4.3.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment
- 4.3.5 Informal Pre-Submission Consultation with Babergh District Council

As has been the case thus far in this Statement of Consultation, the topics above will be framed on the following basis:

- Who was consulted?
- How did the consultation take place?
- What issues were raised?
- How were the issues considered and addressed?

4.3.1

REGULATION 14 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

WHO WAS CONSULTED?

4.3.1.1

Residents were notified of the forthcoming public consultation in December 2018 and January 2019, via the Melford Magazine and through posters in the village centre.

4.3.1.2

Approximately 100 local people who had volunteered to help with the Neighbourhood Plan and to receive updates on it were notified of the public consultation by e-mail. A similar number of local businesses were also notified, again by e-mail.

4.3.1.3

As well as the notification to residents, volunteers and local businesses, advice was taken from BDC and the formal public consultation was then brought to the direct attention of various individuals, parish, district and county councillors, council officers, statutory consultees, agencies, utilities, service providers and local organisations. In total, 87 direct e-mail recipients received notification of the Regulation 14 consultation and were 'sign-posted' to the Draft Plan documentation and appendices on the Neighbourhood Plan website:

- The MP for South Suffolk.
- Various councillors at SCC and BDC.
- Relevant officers of SCC, Norfolk County Council, Essex County Council and BDC (including but not limited to planning officers).
- All councillors of the Long Melford Parish Council.
- The Parish Clerks or relevant contacts of the following Parish Councils: Acton, Alpheton,

Foxearth & Liston, Glemsford, Lavenham, Shimpling and Stanstead. Likewise Sudbury Town Council.

- The following agencies and statutory consultees: NHS England, NHS Suffolk Primary Care Trust, Ipswich & East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, Suffolk Police, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service, The Homes & Communities Agency, Natural England, The Environment Agency, The RSPB, Historic England, The National Trust, Sport England, Highways England, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, The Suffolk Preservation Society, The Dedham Vale Society, The Marine Management Organisation and Suffolk Libraries.
- The following utilities and infrastructure companies: Anglian Water, Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Limited, EE, National Grid, Network Rail, Three, UK Power Networks and Wood PLC.
- Relevant service providers and organisations in the village: Long Melford Primary School, The Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford Business Association, Long Melford Good Neighbours, Long Melford Heritage Society, Melford Magazine and the Trustees of The Hamilton Charity.

HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

4.3.1.4

In January 2019 the NPSG opened a dedicated website for the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan (<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk>). This was considered to be the best medium by which members of the public, local businesses, statutory consultees and the various direct recipients noted above could view the Draft Plan and its related documentation and participate in the formal public consultation process.

4.3.1.5

As well as publishing details of how to participate in the public consultation through the website, paper copies of the Draft Plan and its related documentation were made available in the village library and at the Parish Office, thus meaning that residents without access to the internet could still participate.

4.3.1.6

The public consultation ran for six weeks, from 17th January 2019 to 28th February 2019. The posters and website clearly showed how respondents could comment on the Draft Plan and all comments that were received in the consultation period were listed in chronological order within a 'Submit and View Comments' tab of the website. That tab has since been adapted to contain a table showing all Regulation 14 representations and the responses made by the NPSG.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED AND HOW WERE THE ISSUES

CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

4.3.1.7

The public consultation produced 22 representations, some of which were very brief and others highly detailed. There were five representations from residents, 12 from statutory consultees, including BDC and SCC, with a further five from local land owners/developers. As they were received, they were passed by the Parish Clerk to members of the NPSG and a 'Regulation 14 Representations and Responses' spreadsheet was compiled, showing all the representations and the response in each case from the NPSG. It comprises a Table 1 which records the identity of each respondent (private individual names withheld and available on request, subject to permission), applies an identify code to each and classifies them as either resident, statutory consultee or landowner/developer. This was followed by a Table 2 which comprises:

- the section of the Draft Plan the representation referred to;
- an identity code for the respondent;
- a precis of the representation made; and
- the NPSG's response to the representation.

4.3.1.8

The spreadsheet, running to some 60 pages, is included within this Statement as Appendix A and it is also stored on the 'Regulation 14 Representations and Responses' tab of the website. It can be directly accessed here:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Statement-of-Consultation-Regulation-14-Representations-v1.pdf>

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED...

4.3.2

CONSULTATION FOLLOWING THE REGULATION 14 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

4.3.2.1

This section deals with meetings and consultation that took place during a period of a little over two years as the NPSG processed various amendments to the Draft Plan that emerged from the Regulation 14 public consultation, whilst also adapting the Plan to conform with the emerging Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Joint Local Plan (JLP) and the result of an appeal from Gladman Developments Ltd to build 150 houses on Station Road, Long Melford (APP/D3505/W/18/3214377).

4.3.2.2

As has been the case thus far in this Statement, the meetings and forms of consultation will be framed 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?

'SAVE OUR SKYLARKS FIELDS' GROUP – VARIOUS MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS, JANUARY – JUNE 2019

4.3.2.3

The 'SoS' group was a community-based protest group set up in 2018 to oppose the application from Gladman Developments Ltd for outline permission for up to 150 houses to be built on Station Road, Long Melford. The original application was refused by BDC but Gladman appealed and the appeal inquiry was set for 25th June 2019. In preparation for this, the 'SoS' group registered as a 'Rule 6 Party' in respect of the inquiry and requested assistance from the NPSG team as the development application was at odds with several aspects of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. This assistance involved discussion with a planning solicitor appointed by 'SoS' as to where the appeal was out of step with the Plan, whilst also assisting with submissions to the inquiry from landscape and heritage experts.

4.3.2.4

Regrettably the appeal by Gladman was successful, after responsibility for the decision was taken on by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government who ruled in favour of Gladman Developments Ltd in April 2020. In the weeks and months after the result the NPSG worked on appropriate adjustments to the Plan to allow for this outcome, seeking advice as necessary from BDC in relation to the impact of the decision on BDC's housing need data for Long Melford. The result also had to be factored in to the Strategic Environmental Assessment produced by AECOM in respect of the Plan – see 4.3.4.below.

THE HAMILTON CHARITY TRUSTEES AND THEIR SURVEYOR – JUNE 2019, OCTOBER 2019 AND JULY 2020

4.3.2.6

This charity owns one of the larger allocated sites in the Plan (K1 – Policy LM 6, for 30 dwellings) and as has been the case with the owners of allocated sites where plans are sufficiently advanced, we have kept in touch with progress towards a development application. These meetings, the later one of which included the project surveyor, were held to review the specific plans for a site which is relatively unique in being weighted substantially towards affordable housing for local people, to conform with the trust deed and the aims of the trust.

4.3.2.7

All three meetings were in person, albeit 'socially distanced' and outside in regard to the third meeting, due to the Covid pandemic. The trustees set out more detail, particularly at the later meeting, having determined a 66% affordable housing weighting, with 34% market housing to enable the application to be economic. At the middle meeting which included a medium sized local developer, the NPSG was advised that the heritage concerns applicable to Kentwell should be manageable, with sensible screening and imaginative use of a green area towards the rear of the site (and close to a local amenity, the St Edmund Walk).

4.3.2.8

As a result of these meetings the NPSG view this as a site that is deliverable and the trustees advised that they had significant developer interest in the project. It was agreed that they would keep in close contact with the NPSG and further meetings are planned.

LONG MELFORD GP PRACTICE AND WEST SUFFOLK CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP – SEPTEMBER 2019 AND JANUARY 2020

4.3.2.8

The NPSG also used the period between the Regulation 14 and 15 phases of the neighbourhood plan to focus on preferences outlined in the Residents Survey. Thus, in September 2019, members of the NPSG met with the Deputy Director of Primary Care of the WSCCG to review concerns raised in the Residents Survey at the performance of the village medical practice. The meeting was helpful in enabling the NPSG to understand the challenges faced by NHS primary care providers and to understand factors relevant to the West Suffolk area. As a result of this meeting, it was agreed that a further meeting would be arranged, to include representatives from the management of the Long Melford practice.

4.3.2.9

The follow up meeting was arranged for January 2020 and the NPSG and WSCCG Deputy Director of Primary Care were joined by the senior partner of the village medical practice (who is also Chair of the WSCCG) and the practice manager. This meeting led to greater clarity as to the issues faced by the practice when it comes to hiring medical professionals, with good recent progress having been made in that regard and also with better triage of appointments. As a result of this meeting the practice principals were able to confirm to the NPSG that they did not see a case for expanding their premises (or taking on additional premises), but it was agreed that efforts would be made to improve communication between the practice and village residents. These efforts could include the Melford Matters magazine and the recently created Patient Participation Group, whose Chair also attended the meeting.

HILL – NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2019

4.3.2.10

The independent construction company, Hill, was

introduced to the NPSG in the early days of preparing the Plan and it made a representation regarding the Draft Plan in the Regulation 14 Public Consultation. It also met with the NPSG in the period where the 'SoS' appeal result was pending and considered various matters in relation to potential development in Long Melford, including discussion on the ideal housing mix, the kind of facilities on a site that might fit with the village's requirements and site access arrangements. At this meeting two NPSG representatives were invited to view existing Hill developments in Saffron Walden and Cambridge. That visit took place the following month and it contributed to the NPSG's understanding of development considerations in places of heritage or other special merit.

CUBITT THEOBALD LTD – DECEMBER 2019

4.3.2.11

Members of the NPSG met with two directors of the Chartered building and joinery company, Cubitt Theobald in December 2019 to discuss possible ideas for its central Long Melford premises, with potential relocation of its business to more modern and spacious facilities elsewhere in the parish. Cubitt Theobald is an important local employer and it was central to these discussions that a move of this nature would preserve local employment, indeed potentially facilitating growth which is constrained at the moment by the company's existing premises. This discussion did not develop tangibly, partly due to the arrival in early 2020 of the Covid pandemic, but the 'lines of communication' remain open.

LONG MELFORD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION AND OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES – MEETINGS IN JANUARY 2020

4.3.2.12

In January 2020, a representative of the NPSG met with two officers of the LMBA to discuss the plans the Association has for promoting local business, as well as reviewing aspects of the Plan which could have an impact on the village centre and local businesses. No major issues arose from that discussion beyond the Parish Council continuing with initiatives that focus on better parking solutions and a smarter village centre, including progress towards the first year of 'Long Melford in Bloom'. Later that month two representatives of the NPSG met with five local business people to continue this discussion, to

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED...

encourage broader membership of the LMBA and to focus on longer term issues, such as developing a 'brand' for Long Melford and how to make the village even more attractive for visitors. Plans from these meetings were interrupted soon after by the pandemic, but further meetings and discussions are planned after restrictions ease.

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL – VISIT IN FEBRUARY 2020 AND VARIOUS TELEPHONE DISCUSSIONS IN RELATION TO THE EMERGING LMNP AND BMSDC JOINT LOCAL PLAN, FEBRUARY 2019 TO DATE

4.3.2.13

Since the conclusion of the Regulation 14 Public Consultation, members of the NPSG have been in fairly regular contact by telephone and email with officers from BDC's planning department, mainly for guidance on amendments to the Draft Plan following the public consultation representations. This guidance has also focused on the impact on the NP of the emerging JLP in matters such as housing need and the 'Built Up Area Boundary' around the village (now represented as a 'Settlement Boundary'). Also, the NPSG has sought assistance with how to adapt to the result of the Station Road development appeal.

4.3.2.14

In February 2020 the NPSG again visited the BDC offices to discuss the role played by heritage officers and their potential impact on planning applications in the village. This followed claims from property owners and prospective tenants that feasible and realistic applications in Long Melford were being undermined by heritage decisions. The resultant concern was that business owners were finding it difficult to invest in premises within the village centre and the NPSG wished to investigate whether this was causing premises to remain vacant longer than necessary. It was also felt that this was a contributory factor in rising numbers of change of use applications, from business to residential. The opportunity was taken for both parties to make their positions known and a number of specific examples were reviewed. Whilst the heritage team were at pains to emphasise that their processes were fair and robust, nevertheless a better understanding of those processes ensued and

the concerns of the NPSG were discussed and duly noted.

4.3.2.15

The Covid pandemic made meetings in person harder to arrange during the rest of 2020, but constructive consultation with BDC still continued, using email and telephone conferencing. A key example was in December 2020 when the planning officers with responsibility for the Long Melford NPSG were able to run through, by telephone conference, the revised housing need calculations for Long Melford, as set out in the Pre-submission Regulation 19 JLP. The chance was also taken to reaffirm that the Plan Period for the Plan should fit the Plan Period for the JLP, and to discuss a concern that the JLP settlement boundary for Long Melford made incomplete allowance for the NPSG's proposed site allocations. The outcome of these discussions was very helpful, enabling the NPSG to amend its Plan Period and to accurately represent its housing need requirement. There was also clarity as to how BDC would treat the NP site allocations in relation to Long Melford's JLP settlement boundary and the NPPF 2021 requirement that a housing supply requirement figure should be a minimum.

NPSG TRAFFIC & PARKING GROUP – MARCH 2020 TO DATE

4.3.2.16

The Draft Plan includes a number of Community Objectives to address particular issues facing the village. In March 2020, the NPSG requested a small Subgroup be formed to investigate and formulate proposals to address two of these Community Objectives:

- Community Objective LM-TCA1 (now LMCO 1): Initiatives to improve the Village Centre via a reduction in the impact of traffic in terms of speed, volume, congestion and pollution, improved village centre parking, easier accessibility to public transport, better and safer movement by bicycle and on foot, and better signage.
- Community Action LM-TCA2 (now LMCO 2): Developing electric vehicle charging points for public car parks and for dedicated on-street parking bays within the village.

4.3.2.17

The group comprised local people with experience of research of this nature, where compelling evidence had to be compiled to present to appropriate authorities such as SCC Highways, who they met and consulted with whilst working on the report. During the months when they were compiling the report and recommendations, the group kept the NPSG up to date at its bi-monthly meetings. In February 2021 the group presented its 'Traffic & Parking Group Report 2020' which now forms Appendix 5 of the Plan and which contributed substantially to a re-worked Plan chapter on Traffic & Parking (Chapter 5 of the main Plan document). It included 18 recommendations for the Parish Council to consider and take forward, in an order of its choosing, during the Plan Period.

NPSG BIODIVERSITY GROUP – NOVEMBER 2020 TO DATE

4.3.2.18

In November 2020, the NPSG set up a Biodiversity Group chaired by a resident who had recently retired from SCC's Environment department and who is a trustee of the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust. As well as the chair, it comprised a BDC Councillor and Portfolio Holder for the Environment, a local landowner, an ecologist, a parish councillor and other local residents with a passionate interest in biodiversity and the environment.

4.3.2.19

The work of the group will be central to the ability the Parish Council has to carry forward two new Community Objectives within the Draft Plan: LMCO 6, The Promotion of Biodiversity and LMCO 7, The Reduction of Carbon Emissions. More specifically, the group's work will involve the following:

- working with BDC and others to establish the opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and green corridors within the village and where necessary adding to the available data.
- Identifying ways to encourage greater biodiversity on public land within the village and working with the Parish Council to deliver them.
- Encouraging landowners and members of the public to participate in actions to encourage and diversify nature on their land.
- Seeking funding to deliver appropriate nature enhancement
- Learning from other villages and organisations that have successfully enhanced nature and biodiversity within their area.

- Considering ways to lessen carbon emissions and 'green' the village to reduce the impacts of climate change.

4.3.2.20

The group will also be responsible for consulting with residents on matters to do with the environment and biodiversity, and utilising resources such as the Melford Matters magazine and Facebook.

4.3.3

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES AND ON A RURAL GAP – FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2021.

4.3.3.1

In assessing amendments to the Plan document as a result of representations made at the Regulation 14 Public Consultation stage, the NPSG decided to change former Policy LM-H15, Local Green Space and revise it as a Rural Gap Policy (LM 14). At the same time, it was decided that former Policy LM-V2, Protection of Green Spaces should be revised to become a Designation of Local Green Space Policy (LM 19).

4.3.3.2

The former Policies had been consulted on at the Regulation 14 stage but it was decided that additional informal consultation exercises should be arranged for both the revised Policies. A Notice and Map was created for each consultation and it was posted on lamp posts and other visible street furniture in the vicinity of each Policy area. The Parish Clerk also directly notified known landowners (or leaseholders) within or adjacent to each Policy area, along with, for the Local Green Space consultation a selection of consultees that would be classified as 'statutory consultees' under a formal consultation exercise (BDC, Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England). The consultations were also published on the Parish Council noticeboard in the village centre and on the Parish Council website. The link to each Notice of consultation is below:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Consultation-Notice-re-Local-Green-Spaces-Feb-2021.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Consultation-Notice-re-Rural-Gap-Feb-2021.pdf>

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED...

4.3.3.3

The consultation period dates were as follows:

- Local Green Space Consultation: 5th February 2021 to 19th March 2021
- Rural Gap Consultation: 26th February 2021 to 9th April 2021

4.3.3.4

There were nine respondents to the Local Green Spaces consultation. Natural England and Historic England had no specific comment to make whilst two members of the public wrote broadly in support of the Policy and with helpful but peripheral points/queries. Three landowners wrote, one of whom wrote on behalf of the Community Sports Trust which co-owns part of the football ground. One agent who represents one of the landowners also made a representation and the ninth representation was from a representative of Long Melford Cricket Club, leaseholder to one of the proposed sites for designation.

4.3.3.5

There were six responses to the Rural Gap consultation. Two came directly from landowners with land within the proposed Rural Gap area. Two agents wrote on behalf of clients who are landowners and one firm of planning consultants, Turley, writing on behalf of a client, provided a detailed review of the Policy, with comments also on the wider Neighbourhood Plan. In response to the Turley representation, the NPSG's consultant for the SEA, at AECOM, made the sixth representation. This representation was the consultant's own thoughts on the representation from Turley and he was not writing on behalf of AECOM.

4.3.3.6

Details of the representations to both consultations, a precis of any issues identified and a summary of the action taken by the NPSG are included in a spreadsheet headed 'Representations on LMNP LGS & Rural Gap Consultations'.

4.3.3.7

The Link to that spreadsheet is here. There are separate sections (A and B) within the spreadsheet for each consultation:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Representations-to-LMNP-LGS-Rural-Gap-Working-Draft-v5.pdf>

4.3.3.8

The specific representations on the Rural Gap Policy, by Turley and Mr C McNulty (of AECOM), are available via the following links:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Turley-Consultants-Representation-to-LMNP-Rural-Gap-Consultation.pdf>

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/C-McNulty-AECOM-response-to-Turley-Rural-Gap-Representation.pdf>

4.3.4

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WHO WAS CONSULTED AND HOW DID THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?

4.3.4.1

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging neighbourhood plan, and looking at potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of an SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts. The SEA is then presented alongside the Plan document at the point of formal submission to BDC.

4.3.4.2

In February 2019 BDC advised that the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan should be screened for a possible SEA and also a possible Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

4.3.4.3

A Screening Report was requested from a specialist consultancy firm, Essex Place Services. This Screening Report, produced in March 2019, recommended 'screening in' the Plan for the SEA but 'screening out' the Plan for the HRA.

4.3.4.4

In April 2019, BDC followed this advice and published a determination that an SEA should be ‘screened in’ for the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan, but an HRA should be ‘screened out’. In arriving at these two outcomes, consultation took place with Historic England, Natural England and The Environment Agency. The BDC determination document can be viewed via this link:

http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Long_Melford_NP_SEA_Determination_Apr2019.pdf

4.3.4.5

As a result of the screening outcome, the NPSG arranged for another consultancy firm, AECOM to prepare a Scoping Report for the SEA and then to follow that with a full Environmental Report. The Scoping Report was completed in June 2019 and the full Environmental Report followed in April 2021.

LMNP STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT: SCREENING REPORT

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED AND HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

4.3.4.6

Starting from an awareness of the legislative background to SEAs and HRAs, the Screening Report considered the Vision and Objectives behind the Plan in the context of BDC’s Core Strategy 2014 and the emerging JLP. This approach led to acknowledgment that the Local Authority’s approach to growth was for new housing sites in the area to be identified from urban areas, market towns and core villages, with Long Melford classified as one of Babergh district’s core villages.

4.3.4.7

The report considered the Plan Policies and allocated sites in relation to potential environmental factors relevant to Long Melford. These included:

- the positioning of the Plan Area within a project area for potential extension of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

- its position adjacent to the River Stour and Chad Brook (i.e. Zones 2&3 classification in terms of potential flood risk);
- the numbers of Grade I and II listed buildings in the parish,
- its three Scheduled Monuments,
- its Country Park and Railway Walk Local Nature Reserves,
- its two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs),
- its scattered priority habitats and
- its mix of Grade 3 (good to moderate) and Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

4.3.4.8

The report then went on to review possible impacts of the Plan in relation to sustainability themes such as:

- Biodiversity
- Population
- Human health
- Fauna
- Flora
- Soil
- Water
- Air quality
- Climactic factors including flood risks
- Material assets including mineral deposits
- Cultural heritage
- Landscape

4.3.4.9

The report then assessed the potential cumulative effects of the above and concluded as follows:

‘It is possible that cumulative effects could be forthcoming that would warrant the full assessment of alternative approaches. As such, the cumulative impacts of the Plan’s allocations cannot be ruled out at this stage and should be identified through the application of the SEA Directive in the form of an SEA Environmental Report.’

4.3.4.10

Having determined potential effects whereby an SEA might be necessary, the report went on to consider the impact of the Plan in relation to an HRA, that review being in relation to habitat sites within 20km of the Plan Area that are central to the European Union’s nature and biodiversity policies. The habitat sites of relevance were the Stour and Orwell river estuaries. Neither of these habitat sites were considered likely to suffer any significant effects from the Plan, its Policies or its allocated sites.

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED...

4.3.4.11

The main conclusion of the Screening Report was that the Plan has allocated several sites for development and these could have certain significant effects on the environment, such that an SEA could be warranted. The Plan's site selection process was identified as 'a good first step in justifying the allocations in light of alternatives' but that this exercise had not met the requirements of the SEA Directive and, as such, an SEA was 'screened in'. At the same time, it was recognised that the Plan would be unlikely to have any significant impact on nearby European special habitat sites and an HRA was therefore 'screened out'.

4.3.4.12

The Screening Report can be viewed via this link:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMNP-SEA-HRA-Screening-Report-Feb-2019-Place-Services.pdf>

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) OF THE LONG MELFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - SCOPING REPORT

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED AND HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

4.3.4.13

An SEA Scoping Report is concerned with the scope and level of information which must be included in the Environmental Report of the SEA. It presents a suggested scope for the SEA and it is then referred to designated consultees for comment.

4.3.4.14

It defines the broader context for the Plan (and its associated SEA) in relation to the EU, national and local policy landscape and in relation to the background or 'baseline' for the SEA. The latter requires an assessment of the current and future situation for the Plan area in the event that there were no Plan, such that potential effects of the Plan can then be identified.

4.3.4.15

The outcomes of the 'scoping elements' identified through this process are then presented in the report

under nine key environmental themes (or issues) which have 'cross-over' with the sustainability themes of the Screening Report.

- Air Quality (subsequently 'scoped out' of the SEA process for Long Melford, by AECOM)
- Biodiversity
- Climate change (including flood risk)
- Historic environment
- Landscape
- Land, soil and water resources
- Population and community
- Health and wellbeing
- Transport

4.3.4.16

These themes have their roots in legislation via the 'SEA Directive' and are carried forward into the full SEA Environmental Report where they are considered in detail, with 'next steps' set out.

4.3.4.17

At the scoping stage, the SEA Regulations required consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public. The statutory consultation bodies to whom the Scoping Report was released for comment were the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. No major issues were identified by those bodies but Natural England raised the following point:

Glemsford Pits SSSI falls partly within the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan area. The SEA should be mindful of potential effects on this SSSI when appraising the policies and allocations of the Plan.

4.3.4.18

The response from AECOM was as follows:

The scope of the SEA will include the Glemsford Pits SSSI and the appraisal will take it into account along with all other SSSIs identified through the scoping process.

4.3.4.19

The Scoping Report can be viewed via this Link:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Long-Melford-SEA-Scoping-Report-20190617.pdf>

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) FOR THE LONG MELFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT – APRIL 2021

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED AND HOW WERE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ADDRESSED?

4.3.4.20

This Environmental Report is the third and final document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The consultees will be those arranged by BDC as part of the Regulation 16 publication of the Plan, where further representations are invited by BDC.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues for the area;
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan;
- The likely significant effects of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan; and
- The next steps for the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying SEA process.

4.3.4.21

The Report identified key issues based on eight of the nine sustainability themes set out in the Scoping Report, the theme of 'Air Quality' having previously been 'scoped out' of the SEA process for Long Melford,

by AECOM. The eight themes were then translated into a 'framework' of SEA themes and objectives. It then went on to consider the impacts of the Plan in relation to this framework, identifying whether the impacts of the Plan might be positive, negative or neutral.

4.3.4.22

The Environmental Report identified 'that the Plan as a whole is likely to lead to significant positive effects in relation to the population and communities SEA theme, whilst minor positive effects are anticipated in relation to the biodiversity, climate change and historic environment themes. Neutral effects are anticipated in relation to the transport theme, whilst minor negative effects are anticipated in relation to the land, soil and water resources theme. Uncertain effects are anticipated in relation to the landscape themes.'

4.3.4.23

The Report concluded that 'when read as a whole, the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan is anticipated to result in broadly positive effects in relation to the SEA framework.'

4.3.4.24

The Report then looked at the Plan's proposed site allocations and assessed them against three reasonable alternative options, described as a 'low housing growth option', a 'higher housing growth option' and an 'alternative higher housing growth option'. The four options were then ranked in accordance with the eight key themes from the SEA framework.

4.3.4.25

The conclusion drawn by the SEA from this assessment of reasonable alternatives, was that the option comprising the six site allocations within the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan 'stands out as the strongest performing option... (in that it)... meets and exceeds housing need, distributes growth throughout the village in sites in the north, south and centre of settlement and is likely to secure a significant delivery of affordable housing.' It described this approach chosen by the NPSG and presented in the Plan as the 'Preferred approach in the Neighbourhood Plan in light of the assessment findings' and that these 'preferred sites are considered to align best with the Plan's objectives and the combination of these six sites performs most strongly when tested against the reasonable alternatives.'

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED...

4.3.4.26

The SEA Environmental report will be passed to BDC along with the main Plan document and all supporting documents including this Statement and a Statement of Basic Conditions, at the Regulation 15 submission stage of the NP process. BDC will then arrange a further consultation period (Regulation 16) including the general public and various statutory consultees. That will be a further opportunity for consultation on the environmental factors surrounding the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and the conclusions drawn from the SEA process.

4.3.4.27

The SEA Environmental Report can be viewed as one of the Plan's Supporting Documents via the Plan website ([longmelfordnp.co.uk](http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk)) or through this link:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SEA-Environmental-Report-Long-Melford-Neighbourhood-Plan-April-2021-final-with-NTS.pdf>



4.3.5

INFORMAL PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION WITH BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

4.3.5.1

In preparing for the formal submission of the Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan to BDC (Regulation 15 submission), the NPSG elected to seek a further informal consultation on the Plan and its Policies. This took place in May and June 2021.

4.3.5.2

BDC duly provided advice on Policy titles and looked at a number of specific Policies quite closely, with guidance on conformity with the JLP and on avoiding inconsistencies. This led to a number of amendments, some minor (e.g. formatting changes) and some more substantial, in particular to Policies LM 3, LM 4, LM 6, LM 7, LM 8, LM 11, LM 13, LM 15, LM 17 and LM 19. Further discussion around the Rural Gap Policy (LM 14) was also undertaken directly with BDC.

4.3.5.3

The link to the spreadsheet of representations from BDC, with the NPSG responses is available via this link:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMNP-P22-Informal-feedback-from-BDC-17Jun21-PC-Response.pdf>

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APPENDIX A REPRESENTATIONS MADE WITHIN REGULATION 14 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Click this link for the full table of representations made within the Regulation 14 public consultation on Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan and the response to each from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:

<http://www.longmelfordnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Statement-of-Consultation-Regulation-14-Representations-v1.pdf>

