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Combs Parish Plan

Report and Action Plan 2011

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Foreword

To Everybody Living and Working in Combs

It is my privilege and pleasure to present this, the first Combs Parish Plan. It is the result of over two year's work by a small team of dedicated volunteers. However, none of this would have been possible without your contributions. You turned out to the various venues around the village to tell us what the issues were, you posted your ideas in the special post boxes and you took the time to fill in our questionnaires. Our thanks to all of you for doing so, because without your input there would be no Parish Plan.

We have already published the information from the questionnaires, so that you can all see the information we have collected. In producing this Parish Plan document, we have gone one stage further, by interpreting that information to help us understand your priorities and aspirations for the village. We have also produced an Action Summary of what we believe to be the most important issues as well as identifying some potential partners to help deliver them. In doing all of this we have tried our best to interpret the data without bias.

As always we invite and encourage your feedback. This can be done by contacting a member of the Parish Plan Committee or by leaving a message on our website. Over the next few months we will be refining and updating the Action Summary and deciding how best to take forward the priority actions. The real work to deliver the Parish Plan has only just begun.

I would like to say a huge thank you to my colleagues on the Committee for all the time and effort that they have put into the process. The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the support of Suffolk ACRE, for helping us through the exercise. Also, we are extremely grateful to Mid Suffolk District Council, the ITV Community Planning grant and the Big Lottery Fund for providing the funding that made this all possible, including the publication of the Parish Plan and the supporting documents.

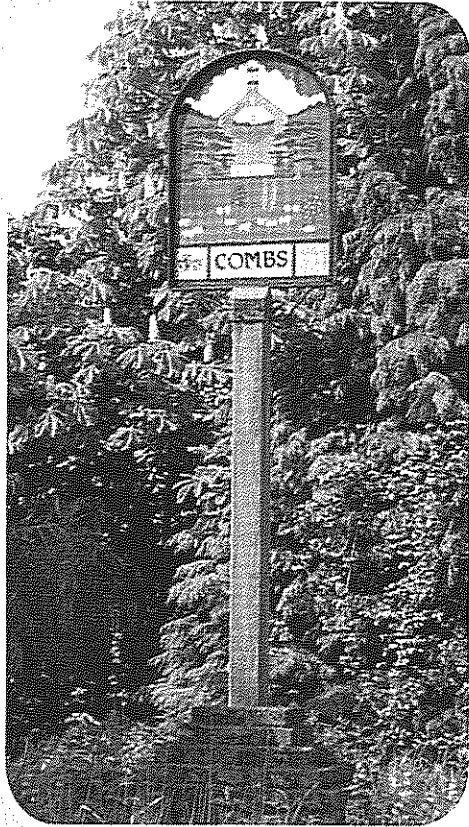
We look forward to continuing our work and to playing our part in delivering a better Combs for all who live and work here. We hope you will join us in this exciting endeavour.

James Portway,
Chairman



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1. An Introduction to Combs

Combs is a quiet and peaceful village in the county of Suffolk. It is located on a low rise directly to the south of the market town of Stowmarket, with a valley known locally as the 'slough' separating it from the town.

Combs Wood in the north east of the parish is an ancient woodland and is safeguarded as a Site of Special Scientific interest. The land leading west and north from the wood is designated as a Special Landscape Area and is characterised by its field patterns and hedgerows.

There are a number of significant local landmarks within the Parish, including Model Farm, the Tannery and St Mary's Church.

In the past, the village included Combs Ford, which nowadays is regarded as being a suburb of Stowmarket. The Parish of Combs still includes some houses in the Combs Ford area, but boundary changes mean that these will transfer to Stowmarket on 1st April 2011. At that point there will be 298 dwellings in Combs, with a population of approximately 575 people. At the time of the survey 24 properties were empty (second houses, those in the process of being sold and derelict) and we had returned to us 219 questionnaires.

Combs is a ribbon development, stretched out along two major roads through the village to the south and to the south west, as well as a number of minor roads. The main centre of population stretches from the area around Combs Tannery, past Model Farm to Fenns Farm and beyond. There is a second concentration of dwellings on the south eastern edge of the village, taking in the hamlets of Little London and Moats Tye.

In years past, many of those living in

Combs would have worked locally. The village is surrounded by arable farmland, and before mechanisation many of the men and women in the village were employed in farming. For many years the Tannery was also a major employer, employing over 150 people at its peak.

There are now over 27 businesses run in or from Combs but the absence of any one large employer in the village means that most people now travel out of Combs to work.

Some of the surrounding farms date back to the 15th century and many of the houses and cottages built to house the farming community still survive. There is still a wealth of older properties in the village, many of them thatched – and this historic nature of the parish leads to 51 listed properties throughout Combs – one is graded 2* and within the rest, we

have 8 barns, one church, one Gospel Hall and 2 sets of gates!

Combs has been classified as a Secondary Village in the emerging Local Development Framework which is the planning and development control document currently under consultation. This is prepared and administered by the District Council. This proposed classification means that any further development is likely to be limited and subject to strict controls.

Combs has few facilities of its own, making it reliant on the services in Combs Ford, Stowmarket and Great Finborough.



2. The Parish Plan

2.1 Why Have a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing, and should;

- reflect the views of all sections of the community;
- identify which features and local characteristics people value;
- identify local problems and opportunities;
- describe how residents want the community to develop in the future;
- provide a plan of action to address the identified issues and aspirations.

By demonstrating that the members of a local community have thought seriously about their future needs and priorities through a Parish Plan, the chances of getting support from central and local government to improve the community's economic, social and environmental well-being can be increased.

A Parish Plan provides the evidence to help inform policy-making by a range of organisations, from the local planning authority to police and health services. It can also help to develop and maintain effective working relationships with all those outside bodies that provide services to the community.

In mid 2008, Combs Parish Council decided that it needed a Parish Plan to help it better understand the needs and priorities of the local community. A public meeting was arranged and a notice was delivered to every household in the Parish. On 29th September 2008, the meeting held in Battsford Village Hall provided the mandate to proceed with a Parish Plan and volunteers were invited to come forward to be part of a Parish Plan Committee and it is this Committee that has produced this Parish Plan. In line with the national guidelines, this committee has included two members of the Parish Council, but the majority of its members are from the wider community.

2.2 Producing the Plan

The first step in the process was to get a broad view of the issues that were of concern to local residents. Public forums were arranged at different venues around the village and residents were invited to come along and indicate what was important to them.



Stakeholders were also consulted. These are individuals and organisations, such as the District and County Councils and the Health Service, who have an interest in the welfare of people living in Combs.

Using the input from this process, the Parish Plan Committee was able to identify a range of issues of concern to the community and to group these under a series of headings. The Committee then drafted questionnaires, which were distributed to every household in the village in May 2010, to determine the level of interest and support for the various issues across the wider community. Three questionnaires were produced; the main questionnaire, and separate questionnaires for Youth and the Business Community.

The results of the questionnaires were published in full in February 2011, enabling everybody in the community to see the data collected.

These results have now been analysed by the Parish Plan Committee and their conclusions and recommendations form the basis of this Parish Plan.

2.3 The Next Steps

This Parish Plan includes an Action Summary, which gathers together the main recommendations arising from the various sections of this report. The Plan summary lists potential partners who might be able to help in delivering these recommendations.

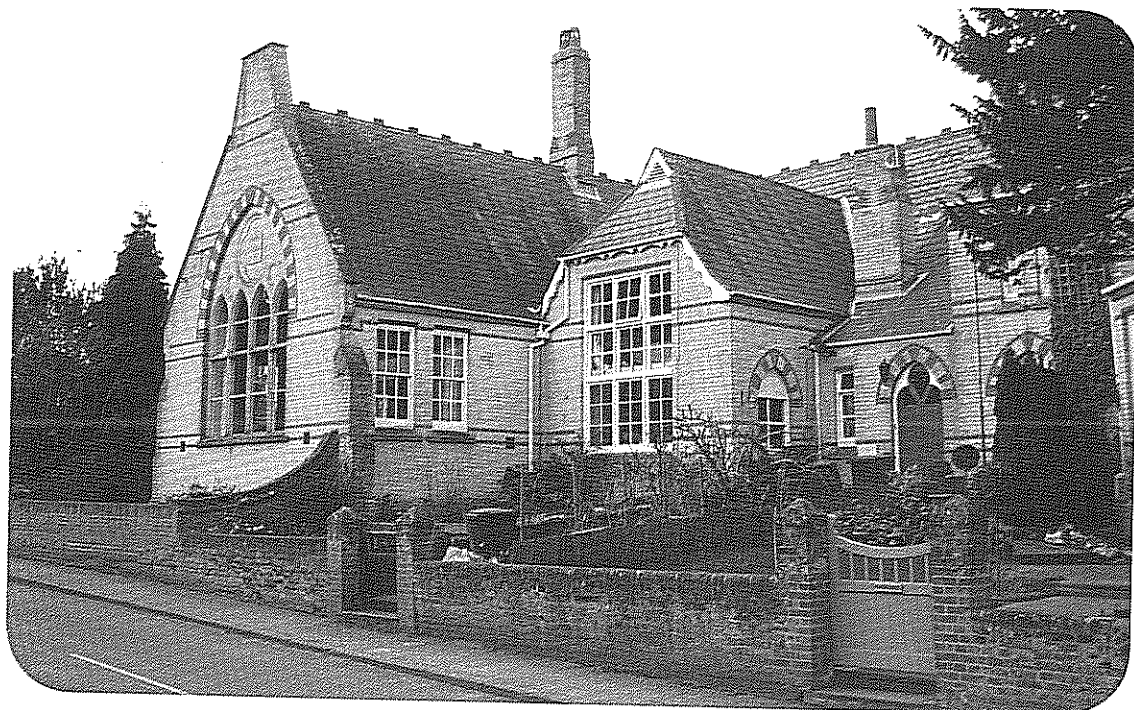
In developing a plan it is just as important to recognise the wish of the village to avoid certain changes, as it is to seek to implement the changes they desire.

Some of the actions proposed will benefit most through the involvement of the Parish Council and will be referred back to them. In other cases it will be the District Council or the County Council who will be best placed to respond to move forward.

Many of the suggestions though, Combs will be able to deliver by itself. There are many ways in which these can be carried forward. Some may be by groups of volunteers who will offer to take forward ideas from the plan which they support.

From the questionnaires a network of volunteers came forward and we wish to enlist their help in moving forward with some of the actions form the Plan.

The Parish Plan is just the start and the real work and the real opportunities to improve our community lie ahead.

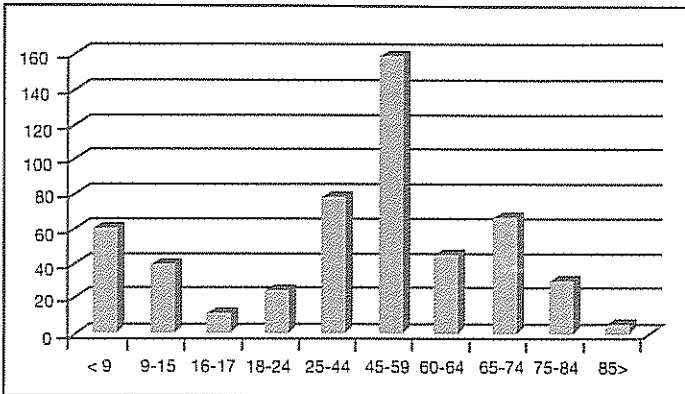
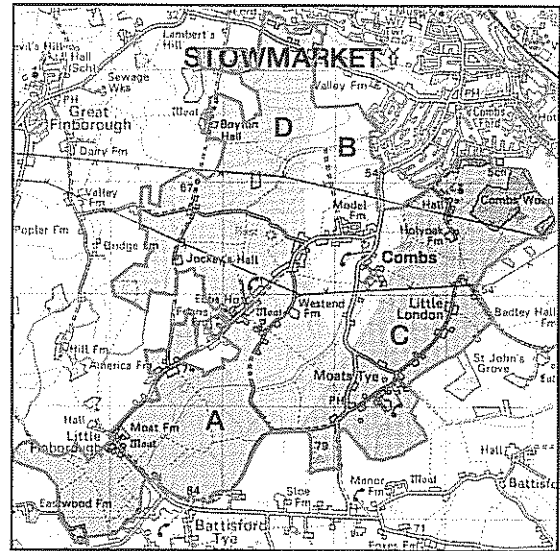
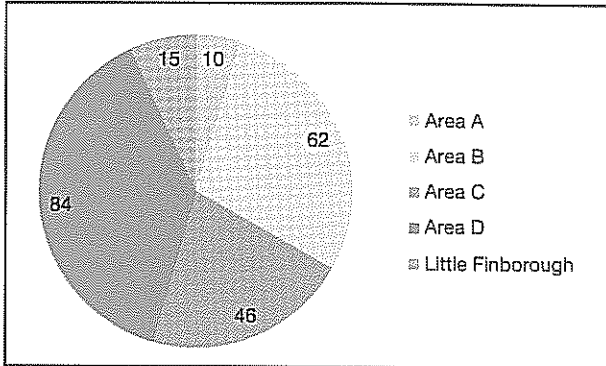


3. A Profile of Combs

These few Graphs give a brief profile of the population of Combs

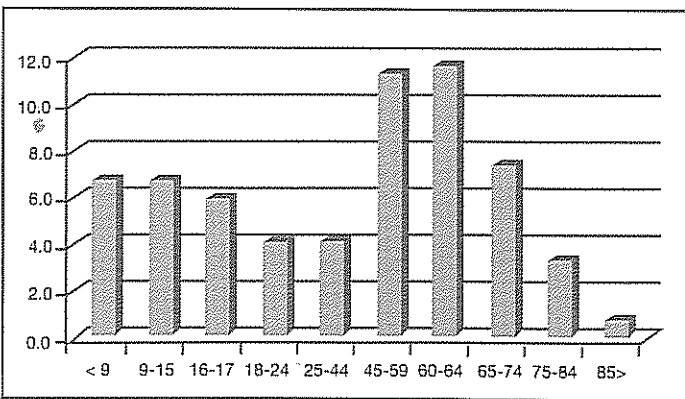
The Parish was split into four main areas, as displayed on the map. Included in the survey were a small number of houses from Little Finborough as, although they are not officially in our parish, the boundary is such that their houses are in amongst Combs' houses.

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS BY AREA



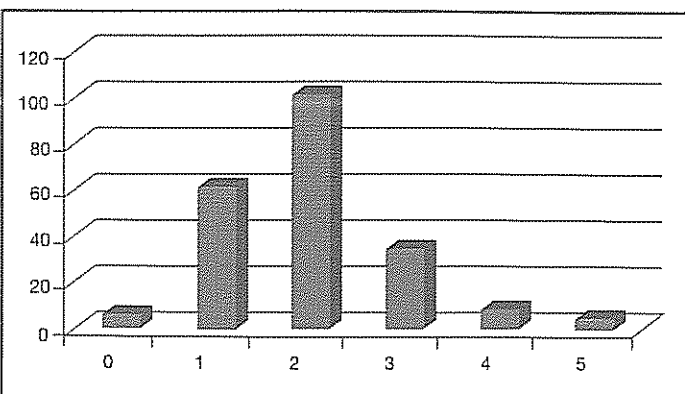
NO OF RESIDENTS BY AGE GROUP

As these age groups differ in range, the next graph reflects the average number of residents for each age.



AVERAGE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER AGE

This indicates relatively high numbers of children, a drop in residency between the ages of 18 -44 and then an increase to the main age group in the village of the 45-65 group. This is followed by a gradual decline in numbers to the most elderly residents.



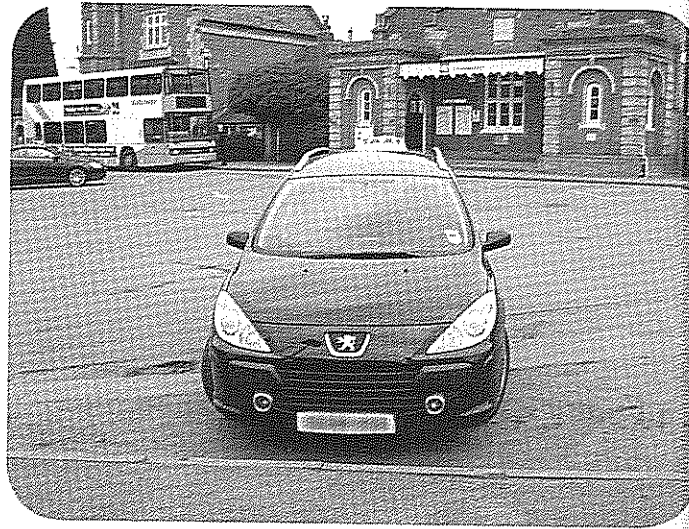
FROM THE RESULTS 97% OF RESIDENCES HAD ONE OR MORE MOTOR VEHICLES!

4. Travelling

We asked people to tell us how they got about both in and outside the village.

4.1 Public Transport:

- We found that very few people travel by bus: in fact 95% never use the bus.
- Nearly a third of people (31%) occasionally have to use taxis.
- Of those using taxis, 97% (232 out of 239) have found the service to be satisfactory or better.
- The small number of people travelling by bus, do so mainly for essential purposes (shopping, medical appointments) as well as for social and leisure purposes. For them, the bus service is a lifeline.
- Interestingly, while only 5% of the village rely on buses, 28% of the village had an opinion on how the service should be improved, suggesting that more would use buses under the right circumstances.
- The responses from those who already use the buses, as well as from those who don't, suggest that there would need to be improvements to most aspects of the service (routes, timetable, reliability) before people would be prepared to rely on the buses more and use other forms of transport less.



4.2 Private Transport:

Although Combs is situated close to the major town of Stowmarket, only some 1½ miles away at its closest point, the absence of a regular bus service means that most people are reliant on their own transport or have to use taxis.

- 94% travel by car on a regular basis (daily or weekly).
- Not surprisingly, 97% of households have at least one car with 69% having two cars or more.

As a result, most people reported no difficulty in travelling to where they need to be. However, there were a small number who reported difficulties with essential travel, in particular for shopping or for medical appointments.

There is some evidence that people are prepared to share their travel arrangements, most commonly for social and leisure purposes, but also for more essential needs. Understandably, sharing travel to work is less common (approximately 6% of those for whom the question was relevant) as the opportunities are less.

4.3 Summary

There are two points that stand out:

It is evident that there is a small but significant minority of people (5%) who rely on public transport, or on the goodwill of others, for essential travel such as shopping, medical appointments, as well as for social and leisure purposes.

1. There may, therefore, be an opportunity for the majority who have their own cars to do more for the small minority who do not. For example, Dial-A-Ride, where volunteers are prepared to ferry people to doctors' surgeries or to local shops.

2. For the majority who are dependent on their own cars, there is the problem of escalating fuel costs. This might be the time to consider setting up car sharing schemes within the village, for example to go shopping locally or further afield.

Issues and Opportunities

Dependence on inadequate public transport

Rising fuel costs impacting on rural communities

Possible Action

Consider how to help those in the village with transport difficulties

Consider setting up formal car sharing schemes



5. Roads

Combs is a ribbon development, stretched out along two major roads Tannery Road and Park Road/Bildeston Road, through the village to the south and to the south west as well as a number of minor roads. The major routes carry significant amounts of traffic, both private and commercial. The amount of heavy traffic on these roads has increased recently due to new traffic restrictions in Needham Market, that have diverted more heavy traffic through Combs.

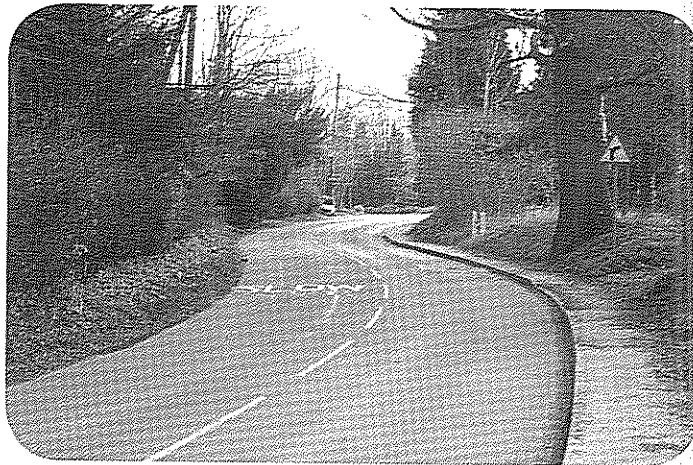
In the Questionnaire we looked at road safety and signage and at non-car use (cycling, walking and wheelchair / pushchair use)

5.1 Safety and Signage:

The majority of people (66%) thought that the signposting for Combs was satisfactory, with only 19% disagreeing.

We asked you to comment on perceived danger spots on the roads in Combs:

- A minority (24%) thought that there were none.
- Between 30% and 40% agreed that there were problems on each of the main roads specifically mentioned in the questionnaire (Park Road, Tannery Road, Bildeston Road and Jacks Lane).
- Two areas in particular were highlighted, namely the junction between Park Road and Tannery Road (Scotches Corner) and the corner where Mill Lane meets Bildeston Road and Park Road.
- Most people (76%) agreed that traffic speeding through the village was a problem, or even a danger, in Combs.



5.2 Pedestrians & Cyclists:

There were also comments about the danger to pedestrians in the village where there are no pavements. Most of the major bends and junctions in the village received comment, including Little London, the corner by Little Finborough Church, the Burnt House Lane / Deadmans Lane junction, and the corner by the Gardeners Arms.

- The majority of respondents considered that street lighting in Combs was important for pedestrians, with only 26% considering it unnecessary.
- Cyclists were asked if they would be encouraged to cycle around the village if any of a number of improvements could be made. There was quite a lot of support for greater speed control (49% very / fairly important) and for cycle paths away from the road (57%).

- When walkers were asked the same question, they came out in favour of the same points, with 44% asking for greater speed control and 54% supporting the idea of more paths away from the road.
- Not surprisingly, when a similar question was put to users of wheel chairs and pushchairs there was a lot of support for improved kerbs, with 58% rating this as very / fairly important.

47% of those responding regarding wheelchairs and pushchairs supported the idea of paths away from the road which may be worth exploring further. Whilst this is clearly sensible there could be physical restrictions which may prevent this being considered throughout the village.

Issues and Opportunities

Speeding through the village is a problem / danger

There is a lot of support for footpaths and cycle paths away from the busy roads

Possible Action

Consult further on ways to address the problem of speeding

Investigate the options for establishing safer routes for walkers and cyclists



6. Environment

Despite being so close to Stowmarket, much of Combs is open countryside and unspoiled views. The village is served by a network of footpaths and bridleways. These are used by the local community for recreation and exercise, as well as serving the traditional role of providing direct routes between the dispersed parts of the village

6.1 ISSUES

In this section the results indicated that respondents felt that the following were important issues.

(Very / Fairly Important)

- energy saving 70%
- local employment 68%
- re-cycling 82%
- 80% of people indicated that there were other ideas to do with the environment that were not probed by the questionnaire and this may be worth further exploration in e.g. an open meeting.



6.2 Enhancement

In relation to the **enhancement** of the environment:

- While a third of people wanted the hedges left natural a third wanted them kept short.
- Over 50% wanted the **woodlands** looked after.
- More hedges and trees and the preservation of single species trees was important.
- People felt that **power lines** should be restricted.

Street Lighting was felt to be important for most people for a variety of reasons.

6.3 Green Energy

In relation to the generation of Green power:

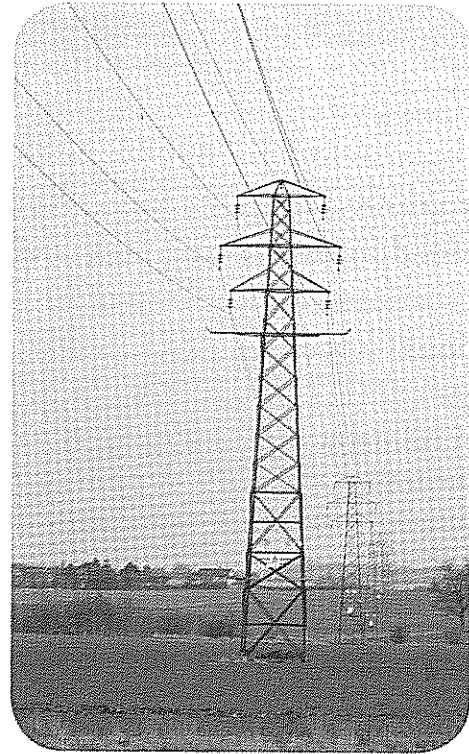
- Only the use of solar energy collection was supported by over 50% of respondents while the village expressed mixed and balanced views for and against all other green power options.

6.4 Footpaths, Roads, Lanes & Bridle paths etc

- In general people seemed to value and were satisfied with the footpaths, pavements and bridle ways in the village and with the current means of looking after them.

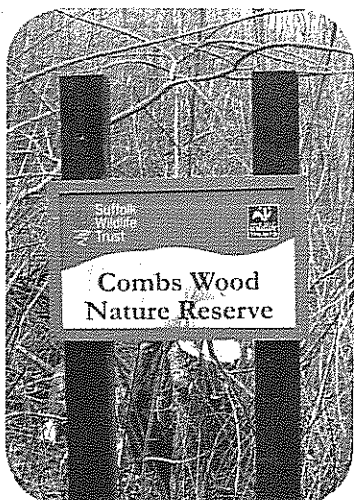
Views were sought in relation to making the roads, lanes and paths of the village more attractive.

- Views on mown or natural verges, the level of traffic and the amount of signage were fairly balanced
- However well over half respondents were concerned with the damage to the verges
- 75%+ of people were concerned about litter, repair to gates, stiles and bridges and the signposting of paths and bridleways. The issue of signposts was further highlighted by the number of people who would like to see maps on local footpaths and leaflets available showing their routes
- Increased accessibility in relation to paths was supported by over 70% of respondents.



Given a number of options for publicising footpaths and bridleways, the majority (60%) were in favour of signboard mounted maps.

Issues and Opportunities	Possible Action
Conserving the environment	Encourage more local employment
Enhance the environment	Encourage the planting of hedges and trees
Generation of green power	Consider the options for solar and ground source power generation
Maintaining footpaths and bridleways	Consider the options for improving the maintenance of footpaths and bridleways



F. Recreation

It is easy to forget sometimes what it is to live in Combs. We can sometimes take for granted the fact that we have the countryside on our doorstep, and we are surrounded by nature and open fields. However, as well as offering a host of leisure and recreational opportunities, our rural setting can also limit our options for recreational opportunities.

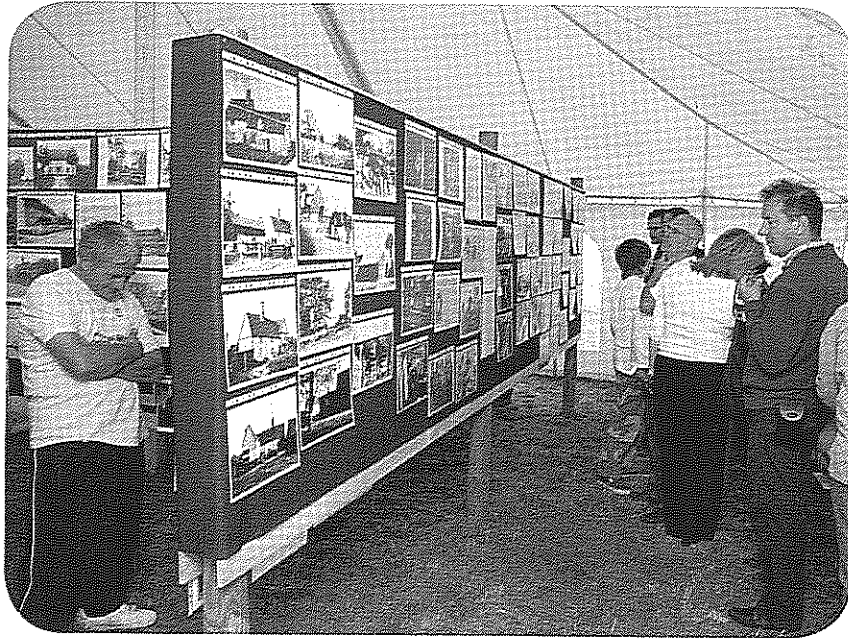
- A common sight in Combs is the walker with their dog. It is, therefore, no surprise to find that a dog is a common companion for people wandering around Combs, with 41% of respondents saying that they walk a dog at some time.
- Less obvious perhaps is the fact that many walkers have with them at times a pushchair (14%) and/or a toddler (17%).
- As we saw in the village profile, 11% of households have children under 9.
- When asked if Combs should have children's outdoor play area, 59% were in favour with only 6% against. The most favoured options were a Play park (70% of respondents) or an Open space (70%).

Residents were asked about their participation in a wide range of outdoor activities. In many cases the numbers were quite small (less than 10% of respondents) but popular activities included Walking (86% Often / Occasionally), Cycling (55%), Swimming (41%), Running (22%), and Golf (13%). Gardening was not on the list but was often mentioned.



Residents were then asked if they would attend a range of sports clubs/activities offered, including some that were already available. Nothing on the list attracted a majority interest, with a significant majority saying that they would not attend most of the activities. This is perhaps not as disappointing as might first appear as the list is a long one (15 items) and reflects the fact that people's interests are many and varied.

- Attracting the most votes were Nature study, farm visits, trails (47% would attend / already attend), Rambling (40%), Keep Fit (32%), the Gardening Club (31%) and the History Club (31%).
- Interesting, perhaps to note that the Battsford & District Gardening Club and the Combs History Club are already established.
- When asked where they got their information concerning events in Combs, the main responses were Word of Mouth (78%), Barclif News (68%), Notice Board (50%) and Local Paper (23%)



Issues and Opportunities

Popularity of dog walking / dog ownership

Children's play areas

Development of Interest / Activity Groups

Community News and Information sharing

Possible Action

Consider club events / walks for dog owners

Consider the options for a children's play area

Consider options for supporting setting up of interest / activity groups

Consider options for information sharing e.g. village website, newsletter for Combs

8. Facilities and Services

This section of the questionnaire sought to gain an understanding of shopping habits and preferences, transport choices and the potential support and use of new and existing services in the village.

Combs is small and relies on services sourced or located outside of the village particularly in Combs Ford, Stowmarket and Great Finborough.

The responses show that most people shop on a weekly basis and do so within 10 minutes drive time. Choice and value for money are the most important factors that influence shopping destinations.

Within a 30 minute drive time most people could find all they require, The exceptions being clothes shopping and access to the dentist with over a quarter travelling more than 30 minutes for these services.

Ease of parking and affordable parking is also very important in determining the shopping destination. Living in Combs requires a reliance on car transport and this is borne out by the results in the Transport section. Where we drive to shop is clearly influenced by convenience and price.

The support for local markets is low as is the use of the library, and it may be that this is a reflection in part of the views expressed over choice, value for money and accessibility.

The increasing popularity of Internet shopping is reflected in the fact that 89% of respondents had bought online. Two of the main factors discouraging people from using the internet were Broadband speed (34%) and Prefer proper shops (36%).



8.1 Public House

Over half of the respondents consider a Public House an essential part of village life and a further 23% consider it to be quite important. However, 51% visit the pub less than once a month and 26% never do.

There is also positive support for the pub to provide other services including local produce sales, postal and parcel services.

8.2 Local Shop

Over 44% of the respondents support the idea of a local shop and 29 people would be willing to help. The results also show that 47% use shops weekly and within a 10 minute drive.

However the factors which influence shoppers' decisions on destination are choice and value for money and it is always difficult for community based shops to provide choice and competitive prices. Care will be needed to determine viability if this is pursued.

8.3 Other facilities

Moving outdoors, residents were asked what new facilities they would like to see. Top of the list was a Children's play area (46%), closely followed by a Sports field (31%) and Allotments (26%).

8.4 Community Centre

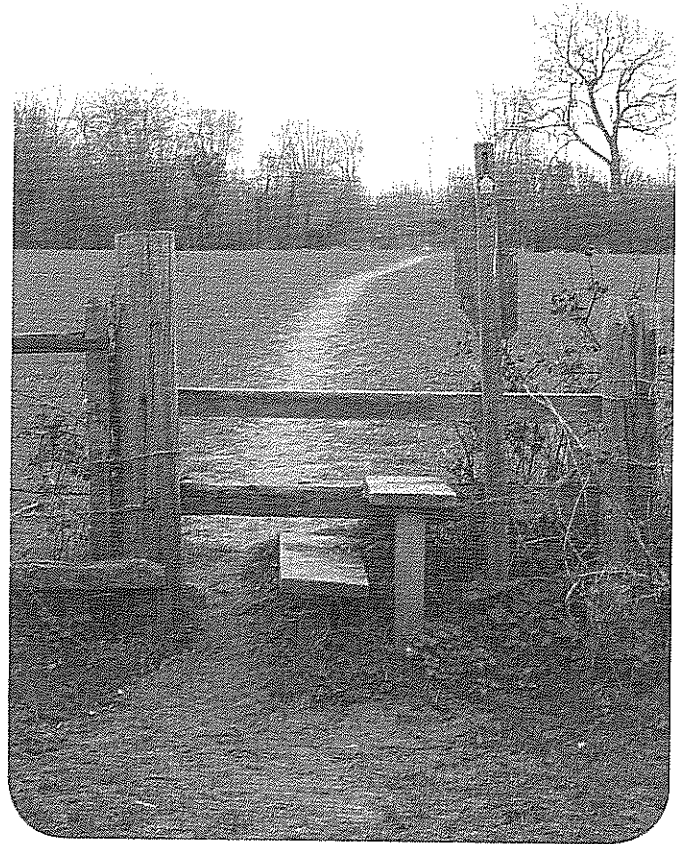
There was limited interest in having a community centre in Combs, with only 17% considering it *Very Important* and a further 34% *Quite Important*. A place to meet and venue for clubs were the most important uses.

8.5 Services

When asked if the village needed a recycling point, 60% were in favour.

Residents were also polled on the importance of a range of other services, some of which were currently available. At the top of the list were Letter collection / delivery (82% Very / Fairly Important) and Parcel collection / delivery (77%). Better Broadband also featured highly. Garden waste collection also featured.

There was only very limited support for a range of mobile services, from food shops to mobile library.



Issues and Opportunities

Possible Action

Parking and access

Consider representations to ensure affordable and convenient parking is provided in Stowmarket

Broadband speed

Press service providers for faster Broadband

Support for local community shop

Consider setting up a local community shop

Public House

Consider dialogue with the pub to explore the provision of additional services

Recycling Point

There is support for this but there are other local facilities. Garden waste collection could be an option as this figured in the services requirements

9. Living and Working in Combs

In this section we asked questions which explore the values placed by residents on living in Combs and also the nature of business and the impact of business and work in Combs. There is a separate section in the Plan which looks more closely at the Businesses which are in Combs.

- Some 60% of the people living in Combs are in paid employment and 74% of these do not work from home.
- We asked about the numbers of people employed by businesses in Combs. 95 people run businesses and of these 82 do not employ anyone. 12 employ up to 5 people and only one employs over 11 people.
- A majority of people (54%) think that more business development in Combs would spoil the village. Should business development be proposed then there is some support for a small shop (35%), but the most telling figure is the strong opinion against a large shop, construction businesses and commercial vehicle servicing.
- It is clear that the quality of the reception for communications services in Combs is variable. A majority have good TV reception with a further 30% having reasonable reception.

The remaining part of this section explores the attraction of Combs and general views on more homes and increased employment activity.

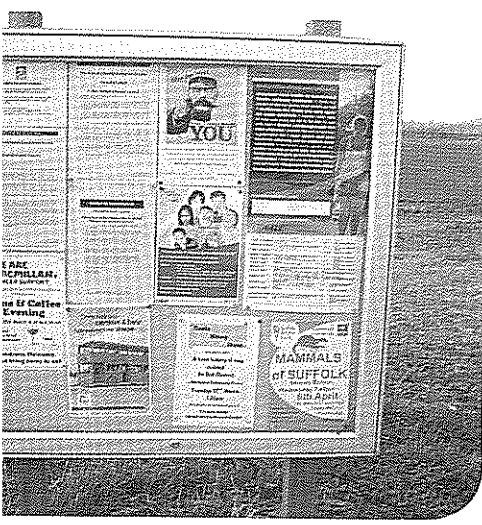
- The main attraction to people coming to Combs was the right house at the right time but there is also strong support for the setting including scenery, peace and quiet and village life.
- Access to the road network and rail network were viewed as not particularly important.
- A significant majority of people (71%) think that more housing in Combs would spoil the village. If housing were to be proposed then there is some support for affordable homes for families and young people .
- Mobile phone reception is only good for 33% with a further 36% having reasonable reception.
- Internet is worse with only 16% reporting good connections, 46% reporting reasonable connections and 24% poor connections.

It seems that there is a case to support improvements in all services, though it is not possible to tell whether the issues are service provider related or resident's facilities. Also the expressed opinions are subjective.

Issues and Opportunities	Possible Action
Lack of support for new housing	Inform LDF process
Lack of support for new businesses	Inform LDF process
Evidence of improvements required to all communications services	Consider collective representation to service providers

10. Local Voices & Information

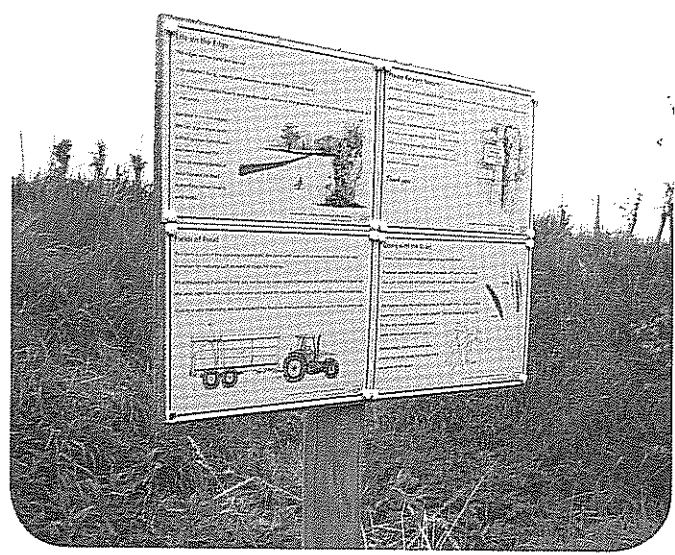
nts were asked if they knew how to contact their representatives in a range of organisations. Apart from the Parish Council (60% answering Yes) and Police y services (57%), the majority of people did not know how to contact their tives.



comes to hearing about important people do so by a variety of means. e expected, TV (68%), Newspapers & radio (50%) all scored highly, as did outh (60%). The Internet currently as a source of information.

ked how Village information should ailable, the clear preference (50%) ombs village newsletter. Although inority (27%) were in favour of a site, only 15% opted for a Combs etter.

ing the information to be provided, clear majorities for Local events/ , Contact details for village (77%) usinesses and services (74%).



Identified Opportunities

awareness of how to contact organisations

Possible Action

Publicise how to contact key organisations and what they offer

11. Events

There is no central meeting place in Combs, and the pub that used to be central to the village closed many years ago. The remaining pub is towards the outskirts of Combs, and has limited opening hours. It is no surprise, therefore, that there are many people who have little contact with others living in the village beyond their immediate neighbours.

In an effort to bring people together and to rebuild a sense of community spirit, the Combs Village Fête was re-launched in 2008 (having been a regular event in the village many years ago). The Fête has generally been welcomed. It has been well attended and has already gone a long way towards achieving its objective of bringing together people from all corners of the village.

11.1 Village Fête

Support for the Village Fête has been confirmed by the responses to the questionnaire, with 69.7% in favour of continuing the Fête. Of these, 60.0% were in favour of it continuing as an annual event. It is also encouraging to see that more than 11% of those responding would be prepared to help at the Fête.

11.2 Other Events

The questionnaire also sought to determine what support there might be for a range of other specified events. Given that one of the main objectives would be to bring people in the village together, there was an encouraging level

of interest in all of the events listed. Taking together the numbers who 'would support and attend' and those who 'might attend', the results are as follows (in order of popularity).

- Local produce market 89.7%
- Open gardens 70.1%
- Pub style event nights 65.5%
- Bring & Buy 63.9%
- Car Boot / Sunday Market 57.8%
- Outdoor cinema 55.9%
- May Ball 49.6%

The questionnaire also asked people what other events, not listed, they would like to see in the village. Ideas put forward included (in no particular order):

- Concerts in the church
- Music in the park / outdoor theatre / picnic events
- Barn Dance
- Funfair
- Gymkhana
- Bonfire night / firework display
- Family walk / picnic
- Events for dog owners
- Treasure Hunt (by car or on foot)
- Village yard sale
- Pig Race (the fluffy kind!)





Issues and Opportunities

Widespread support for the Village Fête

Widespread support for a range of other events

Possible Action

Continue to develop the Village Fête

Establish an Entertainments Committee to encourage new events in the village





12. Youth

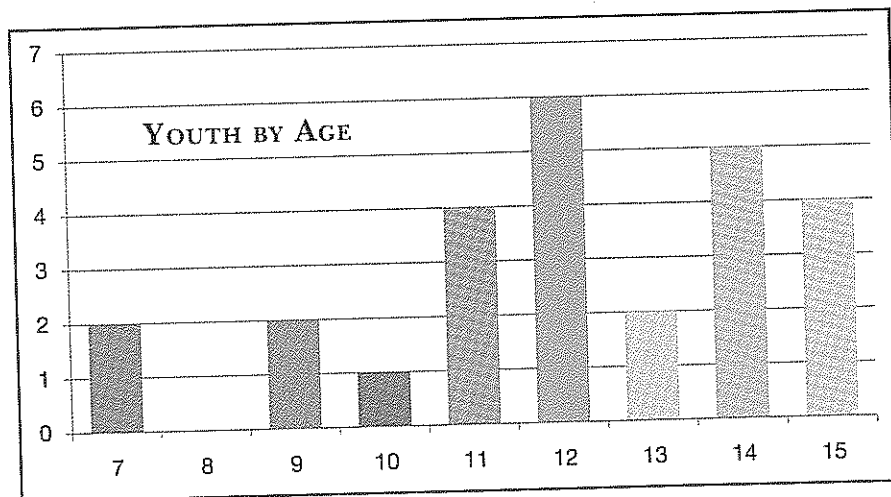
The young have a major stake in the future of the village. Some of them will choose to stay in the village if they are able, but others will be forced to move elsewhere if they are unable to find jobs, houses and the other facilities that they need. For the present, they are part of the local community with their own needs and aspirations and even though they will grow up and move on their opinions are important in shaping things for the generations that follow.

For the purposes of the questionnaire, youth was defined as young people up to the age of 15. The age profile of those answering the questionnaire was as follows. There were slightly more boys (56%) than girls.

12.1 Travelling / Transport

Travelling to and from school from a rural location can be a significant challenge for young people and their parents. The majority of those who answered the questionnaire do by car (64%) or school bus (43%). As the responses added up to more than 100% on this question, it can be assumed that some use more than one means of transport.

The young people of Combs travel far and wide to get to school. Between them they attend 14 different schools, with a wide geographical spread from Bury St Edmunds and beyond to Ipswich.



Although the majority (64%) do take part in after school activities, the distances being travelled might explain why some young people are discouraged from doing so.

The majority of the young people polled (82%) are intending to stay on in further education, at sixth form, college or university.

Not surprisingly for children in this age group, 89% said that most of their friends lived outside of Combs. Typically, many of these will be school friends, which explains

why 68% said that, out of school hours, they had problems meeting friends who don't live in Combs. Again, the distances to be travelled and the lack of transport were the main reasons given. When travelling out of the village other than to school, 89% had to rely on parents and friends.

12.2 Part Time Work

Only 3 of the respondents (11%) had jobs, in part a reflection of the age profile but also influenced undoubtedly by the transport restrictions. Those who did have jobs were doing 7 or 8 hours per week in term time, and between 7 and 10 hours per week during school holidays.

12.3 Spare Time / Activities

When young people were asked how they spent their spare time, there was a wide variety of answers. The main spare time filler was playing with friends, closely followed by computer games, football and going to town (Bury, Stowmarket and Ipswich). Other time fillers were mostly sporting (cricket, fishing, volleyball, trampoline, cycling etc.).

Regarding clubs / groups / activities in Combs, the two main responses were the Scouts and Guides in all their various formats (Explorers, Guides, Beavers etc) (7) and Battsford Cricket Club (2). After that



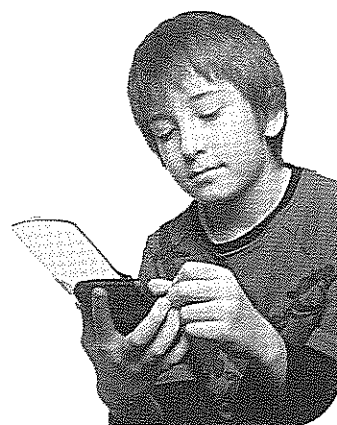
the other activities were all home based such as 'Seeing Friends', 'Video Games' and 'Reading'.

When it came to activities outside of Combs the range of activities was extensive and impressive. There were 24 different activities listed, the most popular being Cricket (4), Football (9), Hockey (4), Tennis (4) and Swimming (5).

12.4 Summary

Asked what they liked about living in Combs, most enjoyed living in the countryside because of the fields and footpaths (9) the peace and quiet (14) and the wide open spaces. Feeling safe (4) and the fun of having a large garden (5) were also mentioned.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of living in Combs included having to travel to meet up with friends, the absence of a regular bus service, and a general lack of things to do. But the biggest complaint by far was the lack of a local park or playing field (10). It was no surprise, therefore, that when asked 'What ONE thing would improve your life as a young person living in Combs' there was a clear request for a park or playground (11 out of 22 respondents).



Encouragingly, the young people of the village don't expect to have it all done for them, as 85% said that they would be prepared to help to make Combs a better place to live.

Issues and Opportunities

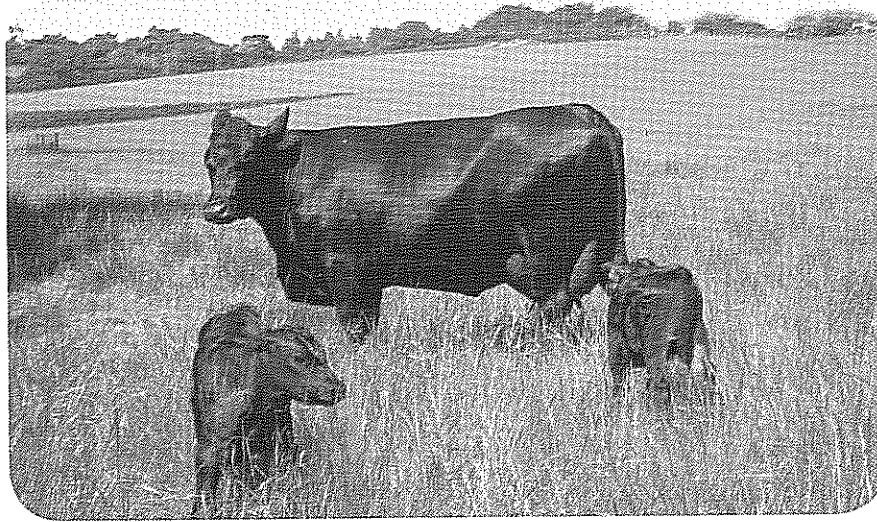
Transport restrictions for young people

Absence of a local park or playing field

Possible Action

Look at ways of improving transport options for young people

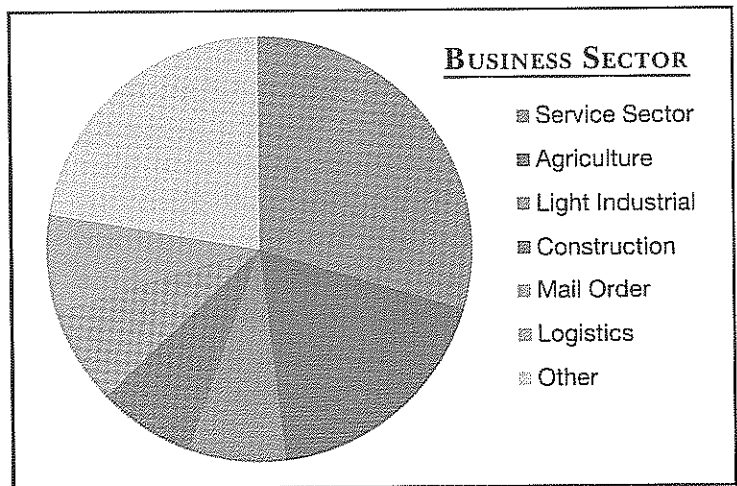
Consider options for establishing a local park or playing field



13. Local Business

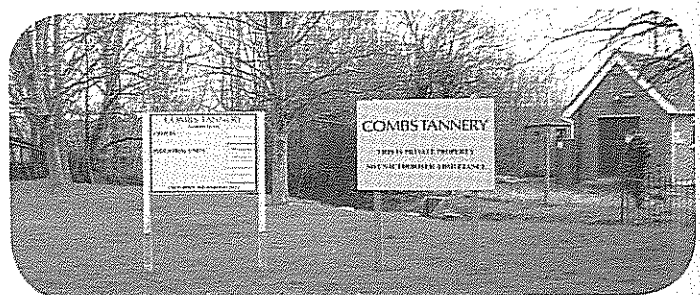
The survey revealed that there are 27 businesses located in Combs which completed the Questionnaire,

- 24 of these are small businesses employing up to 5 people,
- There are 3 larger companies 1 employing 6-20 people and 2 employing over 20 people.
- Virtually all of these employees actually worked in Combs with only 1 company employing people who worked outside of the village. This suggests that there are approx up to 200 people employed within the parish. Not all of these will be residents.
- When it came to the nature of the businesses, there is a wide spread of sectors. Foremost amongst these was the Service Sector (30%) and Agriculture (17%).



Businesses in Combs sell their goods and services to a wide geographical market, as can be seen in the table, and they have predominately been here for a long time with 70% in Combs for over 10 years.

- Locally (46%),
- Regionally (46%),
- Nationally (65%),
- Internationally (42%),
- By Internet (42%).





- and of the 20 business that were concerned about signage 80% thought that it was good or fair.

Looking ahead to the next five years, the majority of the businesses are planning to stay the same size (48%) or grow (44%).

Better broadband is considered to be the main driver to help local businesses and this is backed up by the statistic that only 4 businesses exclusively work locally. Better postal services also feature prominently as a critical business service by 50% of the respondents.

Many businesses had used the services provided by local government - Suffolk County Council (21%), Mid-Suffolk District Council (29%), East of England Development Agency (13%) and Business Link (40%) but the majority considered the services offered by each of these organisations to be poor or only fair. Business Link fared better with 80% considering their service good or fair.

Regarding security 81% of respondents considered the general level of security for their business in Combs provided by the police, neighbourhood watch etc. to be good. or fair.

The questionnaire ended by asking respondents if they had any other views or observations about Combs and their business. There were concerns about broadband and crime.

There are a surprising number of businesses in Combs and comments show that businesses did not always know who the other businesses were in the village. Others commented that they would work from home wherever it was, but they liked being in Combs.

The decision to be based here was influenced by a number of factors. Foremost amongst these was Available premises (41%), followed by Quality of Life (30%), continuing a family business, and living / working from home in Combs were also major factors.

- 95% of businesses believe that the skills of the available workforce are adequate, with 45% saying that they were very good.
- Most people travel to work by car (64%) or by bicycle (24%).
- Support facilities (suppliers, maintenance, services) for these businesses sourced in the local area were mainly considered to be Adequate and Good (84%) and the majority (96%) found their premises to be highly suitable or suitable.
- The road system and access for the business was considered by the majority (81%) to be Good or Adequate.

Issues and Opportunities

Create an environment to encourage business retention, growth and relocation into Combs

Local business not aware of each other

Broadband is a significant driver for local businesses

Possible Action

Business Forum and possible intranet

Set up forum for local businesses

Lobby for better Broadband connections



Action Plan

Actions	Lead Responsibility	Potential Partners
Look at ways to help those in the village with transport difficulties	Residents	Potential transport providers
Consider setting up formal car sharing schemes	Residents	Communication networks
Look at ways of improving transport options for young people	Residents	Communication networks
Consult further on ways to address the problem of speeding	Parish Council Mid Suffolk District Council	
Investigate the options for establishing safer routes for walkers and cyclists	Residents	Local Authority (Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council) 3rd Sector e.g. Ramblers Association
Consider the options for improving the maintenance of footpaths and bridleways	Residents	Local Authority (Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council) 3rd Sector e.g. Ramblers Association
Encourage more local employment	Local Authorities	Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council Social Enterprise Companies
Encourage the planing of hedges and trees	Residents Highway Agency	Local Authority (Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council) 3rd Sector e.g. CPRE
Consider the options for solar and ground source power generation	Residents Private Enterprise	Government schemes for Green Energy plus 3rd Sector Green Energy Organisations
Consider club events / walks for dog walkers	Residents	Dog Owners Clubs

Action Plan

Actions	Lead Responsibility	Potential Partners
Consider the options for a children's play area	Parish Council	Local landowners, Local Authorities
Consider options for supporting interest / activity groups	Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council Other local groups	Parish Council, Suffolk ACRE
Consider options for information sharing e.g. village website, newsletter	Residents	Parish Council, Suffolk ACRE
Publicise how to contact key organisations and what they offer	Residents	Parish Council, Suffolk ACRE
Consider representations to ensure affordable and convenient parking in Stowmarket	Parish Council	Local Authority (Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council)
Consider collective representation to service providers re communications services	Residents	Broadband providers
* Consider setting up a local community shop	Residents	
Consider dialogue with the pub to explore the provision of additional services	Parish Council	
Look at ways of providing allotments	Parish Council	
Look at ways of helping young people starting out on the housing ladder	Local Authority (Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council)	

Action Plan

Actions	Lead Responsibility	Potential Partners
Inform LDF of lack of support for new housing	Parish Council	
Inform LDF of lack of support for new housing	Parish Council	
Continue and develop the Village Fête	Village Fête Committee	
Establish an Entertainments Committee to encourage new events in the village	Residents	Parish Council
Set up a forum for local businesses	Parish Council Local Businesses	EEDA



Glossary of Terms

CPRE	<p>Campaign to Protect Rural England CPRE campaigns for a sustainable future for the English countryside, a vital but undervalued environmental, economic and social asset to the nation. www.cpre.org.uk</p>																		
EEDA	<p>East of England Development Agency EEDA is a Government body whose mission is to improve the economy of the East of England. This includes, helping businesses through the recession, supporting people to be the best they can or breathing new life into places. EEDA works across the six counties including Suffolk. www.eeda.org.uk</p>																		
3rd Sector Green Energy Organisations	<p>These are Charities, Social Enterprises and Voluntary organisations involved in advising and producing Green Energy</p>																		
LDF	<p>Local Development Framework The Local Development Framework is the strategy document which is being compiled by Mid Suffolk District Council, in full consultation, to set out the way development will be delivered across the District. This is a statutory requirement and is based on National Planning Legislation. LDFs need to have a sound evidence base and the Parish Plan will form part of this evidence. www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/PlanningAndBuilding/PlanningPolicy/LocalDevelopmentFramework/LocalDevelopmentDocuments/</p>																		
Listed Properties	<p>These are buildings which are protected by law under the Town and Country Planning Acts and have a feature or features which are outstanding and worthy of protection</p>																		
Social Enterprise Companies	<p>A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives. Their surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose back into the business or into the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. These businesses can take a number of forms including companies, trusts and associations.</p>																		
Special Landscape Area	<p>A Special Landscape Area is a non-statutory conservation designation used by local government in some parts of the United Kingdom to categorise sensitive landscapes which are, either legally or as a matter of policy, protected from development or other man-made influences</p>																		
Stakeholders	<p>These are organisations that have an interest in or duty to manage or provide services. The ones we contacted were:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Suffolk Fire and Rescue</td> <td>The Boy Scouts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ambulance Services</td> <td>The Parochial Church Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Badley Parish Council</td> <td>Stowmarket Striders</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Battisford Parish Council</td> <td>Mid Suffolk County Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gt. Finborough Parish Council</td> <td>Mid Suffolk Safer Neighbourhood</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ringshall Parish Council</td> <td>Suffolk Association of Local Councils</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stowmarket Town Council</td> <td>Suffolk Preservation Society</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Suffolk County Council</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Girl Guides</td> <td>Wattisham Airbase</td> </tr> </table>	Suffolk Fire and Rescue	The Boy Scouts	Ambulance Services	The Parochial Church Council	Badley Parish Council	Stowmarket Striders	Battisford Parish Council	Mid Suffolk County Council	Gt. Finborough Parish Council	Mid Suffolk Safer Neighbourhood	Ringshall Parish Council	Suffolk Association of Local Councils	Stowmarket Town Council	Suffolk Preservation Society	Suffolk County Council		The Girl Guides	Wattisham Airbase
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The Girl Guides	Wattisham Airbase																		

Acknowledgements

Parish Plan Steering Committee

James Portway	Chairman
Tony Bamber	Vice Chairman
Adela Bamber	Secretary
Jill Scarff	Treasurer

Stuart Scarff
Anna James
Toby Points
Roger Walker
Linda Clark

Former members who provided valuable help and support along the way

Cherie Southgate
David Thorpe
Jan Pearl
Elaine Tomlinson

Ian Clark for expertise, and advice and help in compiling the Final Report

Our main benefactor and without whom the whole project would not have got off the ground –
The National Lottery Grant – Awards for All



* Thank you also for funding from the ITV Community Planning Grant,
Mid-Suffolk County Council and Combs Parish Council

All Volunteers for distribution and collection of forms

The advice and courses from Suffolk ACRE

The Questionnaire, Report Summary and the Parish Plan
were designed and set by Julia Gladwell and printed by Gipping Press Ltd.

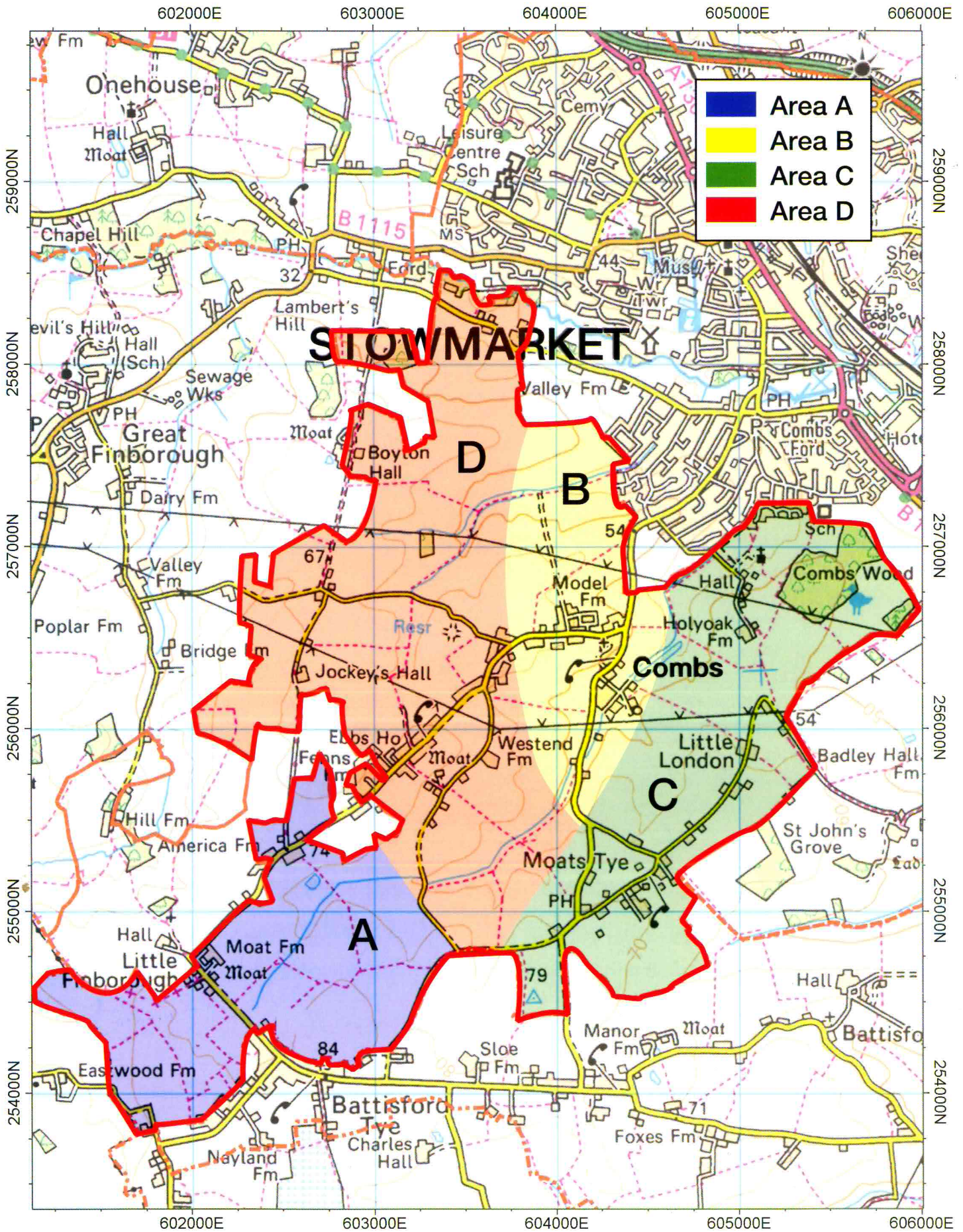
Webb & Son (Combs) Ltd, The Bamber's, Scarff's and James's for accommodating our meetings.

Barry at the Gardeners Arms for putting up with us in the bar –
it was great that we often found it too loud – quite right – it is a pub after all!

Last but not least the Steering Committee are grateful to all those residents
who contributed their opinions, views and ideas as well as their support for this Parish Plan.

We could not have done this without you. *Thank you all.*

Mid Suffolk District Council



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