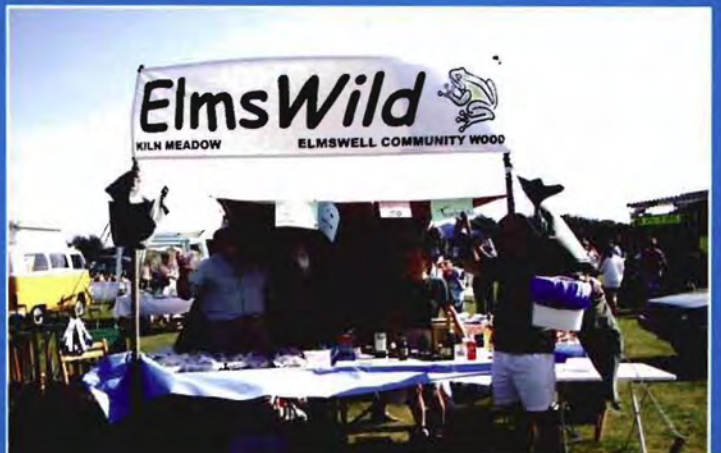




Elmswell Village Plan

supported by





Elmswell Village Plan

Contents

Why Produce a Village Plan?	2
What <i>is</i> a Village Plan?	2
Elmswell Village Plan: Introduction	3
Vision	3
Content	3
1. Activities for Children	4
2. Activities for Young Adults and Teenagers	6
3. Activities for Senior Citizens	7
4. Charities and the Voluntary Sector	9
5. Churches and Faiths	11
6. Community Facilities and Services	12
7. Community Information	14
8. Community Safety	15
9. Education and Training	16
10. Employment and the Local Economy	18
11. Environment: Built	20
12. Environment: Natural	24
13. Governance and Elmswell Parish Council	26
14. Health and Personal Care	28
15. Historic Sites and Heritage	30
16. Housing	32
17. Public Transport	34
18. Recycling and Energy Efficiency	36
19. Sport and Leisure	38
20. Tourism and Visitors	40
21. Traffic	42
What Next:	44
Acknowledgements	44

Elmswell Village Plan



Why Produce a Village Plan?

In November 2000 the Government's Rural White Paper *Our Countryside - the Future* launched the concept of the parish plan the purpose of which is to:

"...set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future."

Plans should "identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved."

The Government asked the Countryside Agency to take forward the concept of parish plans and made funding available to help parish councils prepare them. It was from this funding that Elmswell Parish Council secured a grant to enable this Plan to be compiled.

What *is* a Village Plan?

A parish plan sets out a broad vision for the future - showing how the community sees itself developing over the next few years. As such, it:

- identifies local problems and opportunities;
- lays out an achievable and long term vision for the future; and
- leads to a plan of action to achieve that vision.

The action to follow includes both that which the parish itself proposes to undertake; and policies, decisions and activities carried out by other bodies which can be influenced by the Plan.

Many organisations that offer grants to rural communities expect to see written evidence of need, community consultation and an 'action plan' for project implementation before they will consider offering funding. The Parish Plan can be used to provide this information and to accompany the funding bid.





Elmswell Village Plan

Introduction

The Elmswell Village Appraisal was carried out in 1999-2000. This involved a detailed survey of the community which identified local characteristics, problems, needs, threats, strengths and opportunities. It was a means of taking stock of the village, and of creating a sound foundation of awareness and understanding on which to base future community action.

The Appraisal represented the best-possible starting point for developing the Plan which builds upon the excellent work it achieved. It represents a logical progression in being both forward-thinking and action-focused. The Appraisal has informed the Plan which, it is hoped, will enable the village, through the Parish Council, to:

- ☞ have greater influence with its larger counterparts (Suffolk County and Mid Suffolk District Councils);
- ☞ help unlock grants for village projects;
- ☞ provide for a more influential say in planning and related matters; and
- ☞ form the basis for the future development of services and facilities in Elmswell.

Vision

As a product of the Plan, a 'mission statement' has been developed for Elmswell - to guide the way forward.

The vision for the future is one where the community works together - while still respecting the distinctiveness of both individuals and groups. Increased control and influence over land, housing and resources will have been the basis for:

- creating more affordable housing for local people;
- increasing leisure and recreational opportunities for people of all ages;
- boosting the local economy; and
- improving the natural and physical environment to make the village and its surrounding area more attractive.

Over the next few years on-going implementation of the Plan should, it is hoped, lead to the creation of an even more attractive, living, working community with an integrated mix of housing, employment, educational and social and community services.

Content

There are some 21 headings in the Plan and a significant number of issues and actions appear more than once. Overlap was inevitable. However, this is considered a strength rather than a weakness. It reinforces the importance of those matters that they have been identified by different sources, at different times and in, sometimes, different ways.

It is also inevitable that not everyone will agree with everything in the Plan. Opinions vary considerably. What *is* important is that as many views as possible have been canvassed and taken into account, and that they continue to be sought so that the resultant 'Action Plan' is dynamic, flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances.

Elmswell Village Plan



1. Activities for Children

Elmswell, currently, has a wide range of organised community activities catering for children and young people of all ages and interests. Led by experienced and committed leaders, all of them unpaid volunteers, these activities include:

- Elmswell Toddlers - a parent/carer and child group for the 0-3 age group which meets at the Wesley Hall on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- Little Elms Pre-School - providing daily pre-school sessions for ages 2-4, based at the Primary School site in Oxer Close.
- Uniformed groups - very active Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies and Guide groups, for 5-14 year olds, meeting at the Primary School and at The Blackbourne on various weekday evenings.
- Church youth groups - meeting at all three churches (Baptist, Methodist and St John the Divine) for ages up to 14, as well as the St John's Music Group for 8-16 year olds. The Elmswell Fellowship of Churches organised a holiday activity week for the first time in summer 2005.

The village has two main play facilities - at Crown Mill and at Thedwastre Close. Crown Mill is in need of refurbishment and has had problems due to use (and abuse) by age groups for whom it was never intended. The Thedwastre Close play area will need to be moved when a proposed affordable housing scheme goes ahead on the site. It will be replaced by new equipment and a recreation ground, with ideas needed for a multi-play area suitable for slightly older children.

The Parish Council has set up an inclusive and wide-ranging Children's and Youth Facilities Working Party for 2005-2006, to review provision for those up to 18 years old.

1.1 Key Issues

- ◆ The uniformed groups and church groups both sometimes struggle to find enough leaders.
- ◆ Little Elms is working hard to provide a new, permanent building to replace its ageing Portakabin, at a potential cost of several hundred thousand pounds. Plans have been drawn up, but there is massive fundraising still to do.
- ◆ All children's organisations need access to well-maintained, dog-free play areas.
- ◆ Lack of play facilities/open space provision in recent new housing developments.
- ◆ Open/recreation space has been lost, especially south of the railway line (e.g. Gardeners Walk).
- ◆ The existing shortfall in play facilities and open space will only increase if new developments, as seems likely, bring more young families to the village.
- ◆ Storage space at the School and issues over caretaking are on-going problems for the uniformed groups.
- ◆ Poor street lighting and lack of pavements in parts of the village make it dangerous to walk to and from activities in the winter.





Elmswell Village Plan

1.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Provide additional children's play areas in the village.
- ⇒ Develop the play area at Thedwastre Close, through a partnership between Elmswell Parish Council and Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC), and as a possible spin-off from the proposed affordable housing project.
- ⇒ Lobby MSDC to enforce its own policies in relation to play/open space provision, and make these a requirement of approving planning applications.
- ⇒ Move most uniformed group activities to the Blackbourne, as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Continue with and support plans and fundraising for the Little Elms new building.
- ⇒ Provide training, especially in child protection, for new volunteer leaders.
- ⇒ Push for play areas to cater for younger children to be included as part of new housing and community developments in the village.

1.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Little Elms parents and staff fundraising events.*
- ☞ *Grants and support from the Parish Council and Elmswell Amenities Association.*
- ☞ *External funding, i.e. by securing grant-aid.*
- ☞ *By securing money from housing developments for play and open space as part of 'planning gain'.*

Elmswell Village Plan



2. Activities for Young Adults and Teenagers

Unlike the breadth of organised activities for younger children, there is little going on in the village for older children and teenagers. Some do attend the church youth clubs, uniformed groups and football training in the summer, and there is the occasional disco for middle school age children (9-13).

The Parish Council established a Youth Facilities Working Group, set up to look at ways of meeting the needs of older children and teenagers (aged 9 to 18), which sent out questionnaires that were completed by most of the children in the village who go to Beyton Middle School, Stowupland High School and Thurston Community College. The results identified five main requirements that young people wanted to see put in place in Elmswell: a youth club/centre, sports hall, skateboard park, all-weather activity/sports area, and an activity/play area for older children. These five needs are now being looked at in relation to the wider plans for improving The Blackbourne.

The Parish Council has also set up a wide-ranging Children's and Youth Facilities Working Party for 2005-2006, to review provision for those up to 18 years old.

2.1 Key Issues

- ◆ The main problem is the lack of facilities for young people, to meet their full range of demands for leisure, sporting, and cultural needs and interests.
- ◆ The current church youth club is not enough for the large numbers of young people in the village in terms of premises and facilities.
- ◆ The ever-growing number of youngsters seeking facilities, activities and a place to 'hang out' is putting pressure on certain neighbourhood public spaces where anti-social behaviour is a problem.

2.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Through consultation and engagement with young people, agree what is needed for them in the village. Formulate appropriate strategies for achievement of those needs, including proactively seeking to secure funding.
- ⇒ Investigate ideas such as a Youth Parish Council and the employment of youth workers.
- ⇒ Encourage village organisations to open up more to young people wherever possible.
- ⇒ Develop the play area at Thedwastre Close.
- ⇒ Make sure that young people's needs are catered for as part of Phase II of the development of The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Provide a 'youth shelter' (or similar) at one or more locations in the village - subject to agreement on where they will be sited.

2.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *The Youth Facilities Working Group identified a wide range of potential funding organisations outside the village.*
- ☞ *Fundraising via grant-aid and Connexions (Suffolk County Council).*
- ☞ *Funding through money secured from housing developments for play and open space as part of 'planning gain.'*



Elmswell Village Plan

3. Activities for Senior Citizens

There are a number of different clubs and organisations catering mainly for older people in Elmswell. These include:

- Helping Hands Club - a large club meeting fortnightly at The Blackbourne, providing bingo, speakers, outings, Christmas party, etc.
- The Exchange Club - a small group which meets once a month in the old telephone Exchange at the Methodist Church.
- Luncheon Club - which meets once a week, on Mondays, at a pub in Woolpit and organises trips out.
- Women's Institute (though not exclusively for senior citizens) - two groups meet in the village. A very large group meets one evening per month at The Blackbourne, while a smaller afternoon group meets in the Exchange.
- The residents' clubs at the Hanover Court sheltered housing scheme.
- A day centre at Thurston, attended by some elderly residents from Elmswell.
- Meals on Wheels - provided by a team of eight local volunteer drivers who collect meals from Norton School and deliver them in Elmswell and Great Ashfield, organised by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) in Stowmarket.
- Volunteer scheme for collecting and delivering library books.
- "The Fox" public house has recently started providing special rates for lunch, on Wednesdays, for senior citizens - with a considerable take-up.

3.1 Key Issues

- ◆ The cost of transport is a big concern for almost all these groups. Several meet outside the village centre, requiring the hire of a suitably-equipped minibus to accommodate members without cars and people with disabilities.
- ◆ Several of the groups that use The Blackbourne have problems with the current arrangements there. They feel that the kitchen is cramped and inadequate, and are concerned that there is no secure cloakroom for coats etc.
- ◆ Until around five years ago, when Social Care Services removed their funding, the Luncheon Club met at The Blackbourne and employed a cook (and also received help from volunteers). It is generally accepted that this is no longer feasible.
- ◆ The numbers currently using the Meals on Wheels service are so small that it may be at risk. This is an important service for people that may be housebound, and perhaps have little other contact with the outside world.

Elmswell Village Plan



3.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Explore options for improving transport to clubs and activities - perhaps provided by a rota of volunteers.
- ⇒ Take the needs of older people's groups into account in the future development plans for The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Improve publicity for both Meals on Wheels and Age Concern - especially via local representatives.
- ⇒ Encourage one of the existing groups, with help from the Elmswell Amenities Association, to provide more activities for senior citizens at The Blackbourne via agencies working in the field.
- ⇒ Explore the provision of specific activities for senior citizens, e.g. learning opportunities and/or keep fit, via Thurston and West Suffolk Colleges.

3.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Most of these activities are self-funding from members' fees and fundraising.*
- ☞ *The WRVS pays volunteer Meals on Wheels drivers for their mileage.*
- ☞ *Grants and support come from the Parish Council and Elmswell Amenities Association.*
- ☞ *Seeking funding for transport to events and locations outside Elmswell, e.g. via Suffolk County Council and Suffolk ACRE.*



Elmswell Village Plan

4. Charities and the Voluntary Sector

While many village organisations and bodies are active in raising large amounts of money for the people of the village, Elmswell is actively supported and served by a significant and dedicated number of voluntary organisations and charities. Many are national organisations, but a small number are locally based or focused. These include:

- Elmswell Poor's Land Charity - this provides vouchers to around 120 senior citizens in the village each year at Christmas.
- Sir Robert Gardiner's Almshouse Trust - which lets the three almshouses next to St John the Divine Church to elderly female residents from Elmswell or Woolpit
- The Friends of St John's Church - which raises funds to maintain and repair the buildings and fixtures in the Church.
- Gatehouse - this operates a furniture recycling project, collecting regularly from Elmswell and providing items of furniture for people in need or on low incomes, as well as offering befriending and counselling services.
- Mid Suffolk Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) - provides free, confidential and independent advice on all aspects of law, debt, employment and poverty from its main base in Stowmarket and satellite office in Needham Market.
- Rethink Disability - offers direct community services, from their local base in Ipswich.
- Age Concern - delivers a wide range of services to pensioners, from 'home helps' to advice. There is a dedicated link volunteer for Age Concern in Elmswell.
- Friends of Woolpit Health Centre - which fundraises for and supports the medical centre.
- Elmswell Amenities Association - whose object is to promote the benefit of the people in the village by providing recreational and leisure facilities in the interests of social welfare with the aim of improving their conditions of life.

4.1 Key Issues

- ◆ The majority of charities are short of money, and many face closure or may have to cut services if funding does not continue.
- ◆ Volunteers, with the range of necessary skills, are not always available. New volunteers are needed.
- ◆ The Almshouse Trust has difficulty letting its properties when they fall vacant, despite the fact that they are very affordable and comfortable. However, the bedsits do need maintenance and modernisation, for which grants are not available.

Elmswell Village Plan



4.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Provide a focus for local charities to improve publicity for their activities, e.g. through "The Elmswell Newsletter" and Parish Council Web site.
- ⇒ Encourage volunteers to come forward, e.g. to train as CAB counsellors.
- ⇒ Explore the possibility of a CAB outreach service in the village.
- ⇒ Encourage co-operation and communication between local charities, for better coverage/effectiveness.
- ⇒ As appropriate, provide funding for charities and voluntary organisations either in or working for Elmswell; and opportunities for such agencies to develop and hold their own fundraising activities in the village.
- ⇒ Each charity has its own action plan - Elmswell should contribute to those and seek to ensure that the needs of local people are reflected in those plans.

4.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Individuals providing donations and volunteering their time to provide services.*
- ☞ *Grants and support from the Parish Council and Elmswell Amenities Association.*
- ☞ *The Blackbourne Management Association and other local agencies making facilities available to relevant bodies to promote and publicise their activities.*



Elmswell Village Plan

5. Churches and Faiths

There are three churches in Elmswell that provide public Christian worship: the Anglican (Church of England) Church of St John the Divine (known as St John's); the Methodist Church on School Road, and Baptist Chapel on Ashfield Road. These three churches work together in the village under the umbrella of the Elmswell Fellowship of Churches. In the summer of 2005 the Fellowship organised its first activity week, for children in the village. It also holds joint activities of worship, e.g. the annual open-air service at Crown Mill.

Roman Catholic services are held at Woolpit and the Salvation Army meets in Norton. Other faiths are catered for by churches and places of worship in Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich.

The various church buildings in Elmswell are well-used by the community. As well as marriages, christenings, funerals and services of thanksgiving, they play host to concerts, plays, family gatherings and a vast array of clubs. In particular, the Wesley Hall and Exchange Hall on the Methodist Church site, and the room at St John's are available for hire.



5.1 Key Issues

- ◆ A youth worker is needed, desperately, for the churches in the village.
- ◆ Parking for cars is a major problem at all three churches, especially at St John's and, further to a new residential development on the former Thurlow Nunn Standen site in Ashfield Road, for the Baptist Chapel.
- ◆ Accessibility for people with disabilities is also an issue, particularly but not exclusively related to the car parking problem.

5.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Establish a meeting place for young people, with a trained leader and lots of activities.
- ⇒ Tackle the car parking issues.

5.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Each church raises its own funds.*
- ☞ *Elmswell Parish Council and Mid Suffolk District Council can support fundraising, subject to specific bids for funding.*

Elmswell Village Plan



6. Community Facilities and Services

The main community facility in Elmswell is The Blackbourne, which provides:

- a community hall/centre with kitchen, bar area, storage facilities, sound system etc.; and
- changing rooms, showers and viewing area for sports teams and officials.

Recently, an extension has been brought into use to add to the internal space available while outside the site includes football and cricket pitches, plus a bowls green with a newly-opened, purpose-built pavilion. There is also ample provision for car parking.

The Blackbourne is owned by the Parish Council and managed by the Blackbourne Management Association (BMA), which draws its members from the Council and user groups. It is used by many local organisations, is available for private hire (parties, wedding receptions etc.), for sporting events and for larger activities such as the annual "Elmswell Autumn Fayre".

The Parish Council has started the process of planning the next stage of The Blackbourne on the basis of a "...a three badminton-court sized activity hall, a dedicated room to serve as a youth facilities centre, a room to be available for use by the village uniformed youth groups and as a temporary bar when needed, storage to serve the activities hall and user groups, externally accessed storage to serve grounds maintenance and sports groups together with toilets and other offices as required".

Other facilities in the village include:

- The Wesley Hall (next to the Methodist Church) - which has recently been partly refurbished and offers a low-cost, centrally located venue with the only permanent stage and lighting in the village; it includes the smaller Exchange Hall.

- The Baptist Chapel - also recently updated.
- The St John's Church room - this includes basic kitchen facilities.
- The Bowls Pavilion (at The Blackbourne) - which is available for small meetings and functions through the BMA.
- Elmswell Library - also suitable for small meetings (via the Elmswell Amenities Association).
- Elmswell Primary School - available via Suffolk County Council (Education).





Elmswell Village Plan

6.1 Key Issues

- ◆ There is no real provision for indoor sports or youth activities at The Blackbourne, as the existing hall was not designed for these purposes.
- ◆ Current facilities at The Blackbourne were planned originally as the first stage of a larger development, which would be capable of hosting a much wider range of indoor and outdoor activities.
- ◆ Land near to The Blackbourne may be developed for housing in the future. Should this happen, extra land might be offered to the community to allow the current facilities to be expanded (to include an all-weather pitch and other play spaces) with the potential to incorporate facilities currently sited at Grove Lane.
- ◆ The Wesley Hall still needs some redecoration.
- ◆ Parking is a problem at the Baptist Chapel.

6.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Offer the village the chance to firm up plans for the next stage of development at The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Review the needs of residents and hirers to make sure that facilities can match expectations, e.g. with regard to audio-visual requirements, health and safety, and access for all.
- ⇒ Consider further developing Elmswell Library, in conjunction with Suffolk County Council.
- ⇒ Encourage use of School facilities for the wider community, as part of the Government's 'Extended Schools initiative'.

6.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *The development at The Blackbourne would, in part, be paid for by the Elmswell Amenities Association from the money remaining from the sale of the former Memorial Hall site on Cooks Road. This may be augmented by a Section 106 Agreement ('planning gain') with the adjacent developer who would provide funding hypothecated to The Blackbourne Phase II project.*
- ☞ *The Parish Council to explore sources of funding, especially grant-aid.*
- ☞ *The Parish Council can also support the development of other existing facilities with the respective owners.*



Elmswell Village Plan



7. Community Information

The people of Elmswell get information about the village and community activities from a wide variety of sources including, in particular:

- Elmswell Memorial Library in Cooks Road - a recently-built facility, whose opening hours were recently extended not least to include Sundays.
- "The Elmswell Newsletter" - published by the Amenities Association, funded by advertising and distributed by volunteers.
- Six noticeboards around the village - maintained by the Parish Council and which include the dedicated Parish Council noticeboard outside the Co-op.
- Web sites - especially, the new Parish Council site but extending to the many sites put up by individual groups.
- The St John's Church newsletter.

7.1 Key Issues

- ♦ There is a general lack of co-ordination of the information provided by different village organisations.
- ♦ There is also a lack of any clear reference point where people can get information about local services such as transport, local council or health services.



7.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Develop the Parish Council Web site so that it becomes a more useful, up-to-date community resource.
- ⇒ Build on the popularity of the Library as a central point for accessing community information and provide a dedicated noticeboard in the Library for Parish Council documents.
- ⇒ Produce a new village directory, with regular updates.
- ⇒ Refurbish existing noticeboards and provide more round the village.
- ⇒ Bid for a Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) information point in the village, to provide a 'one-stop shop' for accessing local authorities' and agencies' services.
- ⇒ Establish an Elmswell 'portal' for local Web sites.

7.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *The Parish Council.*
- ☞ *MSDC.*





Elmswell Village Plan

8. Community Safety

Fortunately, Elmswell is already in a low crime area, although crime does happen and is a worry for many people in the village. With this in mind, the Parish Council is working on a community safety strategy in partnership with Suffolk Constabulary, local councils and all relevant agencies, aimed at preventing and reducing crime, raising awareness and stopping minor incidents getting out of hand and turning into major problems. The Elmswell Community Safety Group met for the first time in January 2004, bringing together representatives from the Parish Council, Suffolk Connexions (which advises young people who have left school), the Crime Reduction Officer for Mid Suffolk, the British Transport Police, Mid Suffolk District and Suffolk County Councillors, the local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, the Community Beat Officer and others.

As part of this partnership, there are regular reports to the Parish Council to make sure everything that can be done is being done. The aim is to focus on the issues of most importance to the people of Elmswell - particularly those identified through the 'Village Appraisal' of 2000, the annual parish meetings and the many other opportunities for public consultation.

Elmswell has its own Community Beat Officer, a police officer who concentrates on the village and who reports to Parish Council meetings, as well as attending school and community events.

8.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Ways need to be found to reduce anti-social behaviour and 'nuisance' crime, like vandalism, abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping.
- ◆ Activities and facilities for young people need to be improved.
- ◆ People in the village need to be encouraged to take measures that prevent crimes such as burglary and car theft.
- ◆ There needs to be some co-ordination in the support given to vulnerable sections of the community in the village.
- ◆ Housing policies and development plans should take account of the need to 'design out crime' and balance the needs of all sectors of society.

- ◆ Local road safety needs to be improved - for pedestrians, cyclists and traffic - and vehicle crime cut.

8.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Maintain and develop the Community Safety Group as a way to review issues, recommend actions and help local people feel safe. The Group produces and regularly updates a detailed action plan to tackle the main concerns in the village.
- ⇒ Publicise information about services that help reduce crime itself and the fear of crime, particularly on the Parish Council Web site and in "The Elmswell Newsletter".
- ⇒ Make sure people understand more about safety issues and can contribute to discussions and plans, e.g. through surveys and public meetings
- ⇒ Promote current Neighbourhood Watch schemes and encourage more to form.
- ⇒ Investigate the Suffolk ACRE 'Good Neighbour' and 'Nominate a Neighbour' schemes.

8.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Partnership of local authorities, charities and voluntary groups.*
- ☞ *External funding sources.*



Elmswell Village Plan



9. Education and Training

Elmswell is served by education and training providers from the pre-school and nursery stage through to adult education and lifelong learning. There is a very active, volunteer-run Toddler Group that meets twice a week all year round, and Little Elms Pre-School (run by a parent committee) sited in the Primary School grounds. There is also a privately-run day nursery (at Street Farm).

Most primary-age children go to the Community Primary School in the village, and go on to Beyton Middle School at age nine, followed by Stowupland High School, Thurston Community College or one of the high schools in Bury St Edmunds at age 13. A number of private schools, the nearest being Hillcroft Preparatory School in Haughley, also cater for Elmswell children. Children catch buses from the village to Beyton, Thurston and Stowupland.

Adult education classes are provided by the Thurston Learning Centre and the Community Education Centre in Stowmarket. Keep fit classes are held at The Blackbourne. Private individuals also teach a range of subjects to Elmswell people, from music and languages to dance and martial arts.



9.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Little Elms' Portakabin is nearing the end of its useful life and a new building is planned behind the School car park. An estimated £250,000 will need to be raised to build this.
- ◆ Given that both the Toddler Group and Little Elms are parent-managed, there is a constant problem of recruiting new people to join committees and run fundraising activities (long-term development of these groups is heavily dependent on fundraising).
- ◆ Numbers of children attending the Primary School are projected to fall, despite the fact that the village itself is expanding, creating a potential reduction in the School's budget. There are vacancies for around 30 children, with the Nursery Unit (for four-year-olds) currently running at only half capacity.
- ◆ The swimming pool at the Primary School has been heavily targeted by vandals, and now needs a full-scale revamp.
- ◆ Central Government's 'Extended Schools Initiative' offers funding for schools to develop community use of their facilities, and integrate education and other local authority services, such as childcare.
- ◆ The Thurston Learning Centre would like to offer more courses in Elmswell itself, but has had difficulty filling classes in the past.



Elmswell Village Plan

9.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Actively support Little Elms efforts to raise funds for and help build its new facility.
- ⇒ Publicise pupil vacancies at the Primary School.
- ⇒ Encourage better links and continued open communication between local schools and the Parish Council and community groups in the village.
- ⇒ Vandal-proof the swimming pool area at the School and update the pool itself.
- ⇒ Support and encourage 'walk-to-school' initiatives, and give high priority to the provision of a footbridge over the railway line between The Blackbourne and Crown Mill.
- ⇒ Continue to foster School-community links, such as the on-going involvement in the Elmswell Community Wood project.
- ⇒ Publicise the facilities available at local schools (for sports, meetings, activities etc.) and consult the community to find out what they might need or like to see, as part of the Government's 'Extended Schools Initiative'.
- ⇒ Publicise leisure learning opportunities more widely.

9.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Volunteer fundraising for the Toddler Group and Pre-School, and by the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) at all the local schools.*
- ☞ *State-sector schools are funded by Suffolk County Council (Education) or directly by Government.*

Elmswell Village Plan



10. Employment and the Local Economy

Elmswell is very much a 'working' village, with many businesses operating within the parish - from sole traders to branches of national companies. The largest employer in the village is Crampian Country Pork (the 'Bacon Factory'), with over 550 full-time, part-time and seasonal employees, and there are at least seven other companies employing more than 10 people.

However, some significant businesses have closed over recent years (e.g. Thurlow Nunn Standen) with these sites then being sold for residential development rather than new business premises. Further, as the village has expanded so shops and retail outlets have actually dwindled. The proposed expansion of the Co-op is the biggest retail development in Elmswell for some considerable time.

There are two main 'industrial' areas in the village. The Station Road Industrial Estate consists of mainly small units, while larger companies are sited on the trading estates off Grove Lane, outside the village centre. Types of businesses in the village are surprisingly varied and include transport and distribution, food manufacturing and catering, those related to agriculture, retailers and service providers (from hairdressers to a veterinary practice). There are also known to be further businesses run on a self-employed basis operating from individuals' own homes.

The Parish Council recently surveyed 70 businesses within the village to assess their needs and concerns. Over 64% of them replied to inform this Plan. Those businesses which replied evidenced no major issues affecting them although various matters were raised which are included below.

10.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Some businesses suffer from vandalism (especially during the school holidays) and anti-social behaviour.
- ◆ Certain companies have no space for expansion.
- ◆ Retailers, service providers and companies generally cite problems with parking, traffic congestion, on-road parking making it hard for larger vehicles to negotiate the centre of the village safely, poor roads/infrastructure and delays at the railway crossing.
- ◆ Late postal deliveries cause difficulties for some businesses.
- ◆ Lack of support from the Parish Council for the local economy.
- ◆ Difficulties recruiting seasonal staff.
- ◆ Insufficient number and range of shops for an expanding village the size of Elmswell.



Elmswell Village Plan

10.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Encourage greater communication between businesses in the village, the Parish Council and other bodies such as Suffolk Constabulary.
- ⇒ Aim to make sure that business needs and concerns are reflected in transport and other plans for the village, not least through working with Environment and Transport (Suffolk County Council).
- ⇒ Aim, wherever possible, to retain commercial premises for employment, or a suitable mix of commercial and residential use, so that employment opportunities are not lost to housing developments on brownfield sites.
- ⇒ Encourage more services and shops into the village to serve the varied needs of an increasing population; and support those already established.

- ⇒ Promote the economic development of Elmswell both independently and with the help of other councils and relevant agencies.
- ⇒ Ensure the employment and economic requirements of Elmswell are properly reflected in the appropriate planning and similar strategies of other councils and organisations.

10.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Most businesses will fund their own set-up and expansion plans.*
- ☞ *Support must be provided by the Parish Council and its larger counterparts.*



Elmswell Village Plan



11. Environment: Built

Elmswell is a fairly compact village but the fact that it has grown rapidly and in a largely unplanned way has resulted in some major infrastructural issues, relating particularly to inadequacies of the road system, lack of open space, play and sporting facilities, and problems for more vulnerable groups in accessing village facilities. These, combined with an influx of young families and young adults, are beginning to strain village resources and with them the social cohesion which plays a large part in the quality of life of what is still a rural setting.

The village is already home to a wide variety of sizes and styles of housing, and there are no design guidelines to encourage new developments to fit in with the existing streetscape. Most current new developments are of 'off-the-shelf' designs, completely unrelated to Elmswell's past or present character and often resulting in a bland 'could be anywhere' appearance which contributes little to or even detracts from the village's distinctiveness.

Recent changes in the planning system have been far-reaching and it is often difficult for the local community to understand, still less accept, the reality of the new planning climate. A prime example is the policy for the efficient use of land, resulting in densities of housing which, until recently, would have been judged unacceptably cramped (especially in a rural setting), and backland development, once frowned on but now welcomed by the authorities. Large-scale infill development, also favoured by the new decision-makers, has resulted in radical changes to the heart of the village, with the loss of familiar and historical landmarks along with open space, gardens, trees and hedges. Faced with such drastic development, which has already changed the look of the village forever, it is hard for local people not to feel that a similar number of new houses, built on a new estate on a greenfield site, would have been far less damaging.

Nevertheless, as a so-called CS3 village, it is only realistic to assume that Elmswell will have to absorb a share of the 7,700 new homes that the Government says need to be built in Mid Suffolk. At the same time, it is essential to address the infrastructural problems which already exist and which new developments will exacerbate. If the village is to grow in a sustainable way, then it is only fair to expect that a proportion of the cost for providing much-needed new facilities and rectifying existing inadequacies must come from these new developments.

The Parish Council Planning Committee is well aware of these issues and is actively working to make sure they are taken into account when any new development is discussed.

11.1 Key Issues

- ◆ The road infrastructure has not kept up with the development that has taken place. Large numbers of lorries are using the narrow roads through Elmswell to access poorly sited industrial facilities and there are increasing levels of car traffic.
- ◆ Heavy traffic congestion and insufficient pavements discourage cycling and walking, and represent particular difficulties for children and older people.
- ◆ A northern link road to the A14 could provide a solution, particularly for Grove Lane traffic, but would be very expensive.
- ◆ The railway crossing represents a major 'pinch point' often resulting in long traffic queues and difficulties for pedestrians trying to access facilities which lie either side.



Elmswell Village Plan

- ◆ Flexibility in the range and design of new buildings is essential - families need to have 'room to grow' without necessarily having to trade upwards; and affordability is key.
- ◆ There would be vocal public opposition to any further development, particularly against the background of recent developments which have yielded no 'planning gain', e.g. in terms of play space, affordable homes, pavements.
- ◆ Concerns that the Primary School and Health Centre may not have the capacity to cope with extra people have been discovered to be unfounded. However, other facilities, especially relating to activities for young people, are already strained.
- ◆ Much of the streetlighting in the village is old and inefficient.
- ◆ The village suffers from noise pollution from the A14, as well as traffic fumes, especially from engines running when waiting at the railway crossing.
- ◆ During bad weather, surface water collects at several dangerous and inconvenient points on roads in the village.



Elmswell Village Plan



11.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ The Parish Council needs to take a wide-ranging, strategic view on proposals for future development, informed by this Village Plan.
- ⇒ Ensure a reasoned input from the community into any development that does take place and that Elmswell benefits from future developments.
- ⇒ There is an existing infrastructural shortfall which must be addressed by developers, otherwise facilities will always lag behind and quality of life will suffer.
- ⇒ There must be an in-depth review of the impact of any future development on the road system with much more input from Environment and Transport (Suffolk County Council) in consultation with the Parish Council.
- ⇒ In conjunction with organisations such as the Suffolk Preservation Society, lobby for recognition and the preservation of the distinctiveness of rural communities and against 'one size fits all', urban inspired national planning policies.
- ⇒ Produce a separate 'Village Design Statement' - with wide input from the community, as well as from professional advisers - that guides developers on the design and type of buildings and landscaping appropriate to the village. This should encourage cutting-edge design as well as echoes of the village's historic character but avoid 'urbanisation'.
- ⇒ Save and preserve significant buildings where possible.
- ⇒ Ensure that trees and green spaces are integrated into larger developments, to provide visual amenity as well as to absorb pollution and reduce road noise.
- ⇒ Make sure that what is built relates to real housing needs, and provides employment along with residential accommodation to encourage local people to remain in the village and to cut down on commuting.
- ⇒ Carry out a lighting audit and install energy efficient technology, especially in new developments.
- ⇒ Encourage drivers to switch off their engines when they are waiting at the railway crossing gates.
- ⇒ Encourage energy efficient design and 'grey water' systems in all future developments ('grey water' is any water used in the home - except from toilets - which might be reused for other purposes, e.g. landscape irrigation).





Elmswell Village Plan

11.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Elmswell Parish Council providing input to the local authority planning process and highways.*
- ☞ *Effective application of Mid Suffolk District Council's own policies on 'planning gain' (contributions from developers to community facilities).*



Elmswell Village Plan



12. Environment: Natural

Although Elmswell does not have any special or rare habitats, many natural habitats are important - from traditional wildlife areas such as hedgerows, trees, ponds and meadows, to more unlikely places such as railway and roadside verges, and old buildings. The village is home to a huge range of plants and animals, some rare or even endangered. There is currently no major threat of pollution to the village, despite the many possible sources in and around Elmswell. The 'TwinBin' rubbish and recycling collection has successfully been introduced to most of the village, and a third bin for compostable waste is scheduled.

Footpaths criss-cross the village and, although some are overgrown, many are used on a regular basis. A monthly walk organised by the Parish Council Footpath Officer receives good support. The cemetery, churchyard and allotments on Church Hill are attractive and well used sites for both the community and wildlife. The Parish Council has also joined Suffolk County Council's Parish Paths Partnership (PPP) scheme.

There is a well-established community wildlife site at Kiln Meadow (owned by Anglian Water and managed by a group of volunteers from the village), as well as wildlife areas in the cemetery and churchyard. The Elmswell Community Wood group has set up tree nurseries at the School and Library, although they have yet to find a permanent site for the wood. The Parish Council has its own Tree Warden, who is organising a tree survey, and a hedgerow survey is being carried out across the county.

12.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Infill development and modern farming methods have meant that a lot of wildlife habitats - including old buildings, gardens and hedgerows - have already been destroyed or damaged. There are concerns that others will follow before they can be properly surveyed or monitored.
- ◆ Several remaining 'green spaces' within the village are under threat from development.
- ◆ Potential pollution from many sources, e.g. traffic noise and fumes, industrial smells, lights, agricultural contamination, even bonfires and phone masts, is a constant issue.
- ◆ Landowners are not keen to provide small areas of land for the proposed community woodland, especially when there is so much competition for land for new housing development and other uses.
- ◆ More land will eventually be needed for the cemetery, and both this and the allotments are hard to access, especially on foot.
- ◆ Attractive views and ancient features of the landscape are hard to protect. If Elmswell's settlement boundary is extended, the character of the landscape may change.
- ◆ Some issues around footpaths and rights of way need to be sorted out.
- ◆ Litter and dog mess remain a problem, although there are regular volunteer litter picks which have raised awareness.
- ◆ Not all the village is on the 'TwinBin' Scheme yet, and wheelie bins can be hard to accommodate in some places.
- ◆ Attracting and training volunteers to work on protecting and improving the natural environment in Elmswell is hard.
- ◆ Volunteer groups spend valuable time raising money, for example to pay for public liability insurance, rather than directly working to protect wildlife or improve sites.



Elmswell Village Plan

12.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Carry out a 'village environmental audit' and create a 'biodiversity action plan', possibly tying in with the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan.
- ⇒ Carry out a formal assessment of the landscape character in and around the village, so this can be included in a 'Village Design Statement' and perhaps protected.
- ⇒ Create more green space and play facilities in the village, especially within larger new developments.
- ⇒ Be creative about finding suitable land for community woodland.
- ⇒ Continue negotiations with Anglian Water to extend the Kiln Meadow site.
- ⇒ Encourage hedge and tree planting, and wildlife-friendly farming schemes.
- ⇒ Promote 'green initiatives' from energy-efficient building design and recycling, to cycle paths.
- ⇒ Identify and protect important trees with 'Tree Protection Orders', and keep or replant hedges and trees threatened by new building projects.
- ⇒ Resolve questions and issues around footpaths and rights of way, publish maps of walks, and extend the network if possible.
- ⇒ Install more litter bins and organise more, well-publicised litter picks.

- ⇒ Support moves to resurface the A14, to cut down on noise pollution.
- ⇒ Promote walking and cycling as healthy alternatives to taking the car.
- ⇒ Encourage more people to get involved in community projects.

12.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Village volunteers, groups and individuals.*
- ☞ *Continued support from the School, integrating particularly the tree nursery activities with the national curriculum, and the Parish Council.*
- ☞ *For footpaths, from Suffolk County Council and the PPP scheme.*
- ☞ *Outside organisations - from the Suffolk Wildlife and the Greenlight Trusts, to Anglian Water.*



Elmswell Village Plan



13. Governance and Elmswell Parish Council

The Parish Council is the first level of local government, responsible for dealing with local issues, setting and managing a budget to achieve this. The Council consists of eleven elected members, who meet monthly. A Planning Committee made up of members of the Council also meets, as necessary, to consider planning issues. Members of the public can attend these meetings and have the chance to speak, except when the Council is discussing issues of a personal or confidential nature. Three Advisory Committees, meeting informally, make recommendations to the full Council in their respective areas of Community Action, Environment and Finance & General Purposes.

Councillors are there to represent the interest of residents and groups in Elmswell, and to respond to enquires and representations fairly and impartially. In addition to determining policies for the village where empowered to do so, they act as a conduit to inform policy development as implemented further up the local government structure, and are responsible for actively encouraging community involvement in decision-making.

Elmswell Parish Council is governed by its Standing Orders - a statement of the arrangements and procedures for its operation which is available for public inspection at the Parish Council Office, the Library and on the Council's Web site.

The Council aims to constantly improve the way it operates, in line with best practice for local government, and to conduct its affairs with due regard to the overriding need for openness, integrity and accountability. The Council communicates with residents through the parish noticeboards, "The Elmswell Newsletter" and more recently its Web site.

13.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Communication is a challenge for the Parish Council. There is a greater need than ever to explain what the Council does and to help people engage with it.
- ◆ The Council recognises that it needs to do more work to refine its priorities and focus its resources in line with community concerns.

13.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Publish an annual report, summarising the Parish Council's activities and achievements, with a review of its financial position.
- ⇒ Publish this Plan, ensure its implementation, monitor and review.
- ⇒ Achieve 'Quality Parish Council' status - which involves meeting a series of nationally-set standards designed to help the Council provide a better deal on local services and achieve a stronger voice in decision-making.
- ⇒ Promote greater openness in decision-making - particularly locally, but also at County and District Council levels.
- ⇒ Encourage Elmswell residents to stand for election to the Parish Council.
- ⇒ Promote the Council's Web site and encourage people to use it.



Elmswell Village Plan

- ⇒ Carry out a survey to find out how far Elmswell people are satisfied with the performance of the Council and the services it provides.
- ⇒ Set performance measures for the Council.
- ⇒ Ensure that some powers are transferred from District to Parish Council

13.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ⇒ *Support from and close working alongside other local authorities in the area (Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council).*
- ⇒ *Advice, guidance and possible funding from those agencies working for parish councils and rural affairs in Suffolk, e.g. Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), and SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils).*
- ⇒ *Other public, private and voluntary sector organisations.*



Elmswell Village Plan



14. Health and Personal Care

Community healthcare for the people of Elmswell is provided by the Woolpit Health Centre, a seven-partner GP practice which also offers district nurse and health visiting services, specialist health practitioner clinics and a pharmacy. There is a subsidised daily minibus service to and from Elmswell. The Friends of Woolpit Health Centre help fund the purchase of extra equipment and act as a channel of communication between the Health Centre and the community.

Hospital services are provided by the West Suffolk Hospitals' NHS Trust based in Bury St Edmunds. Patients can also choose to be referred to Ipswich Hospital. The West Suffolk Hospital provides a full range of district general hospital facilities, including a 24-hour accident and emergency department. The hospital also hosts specialist clinics with consultants from regional centres such as Addenbrooke's and Papworth Hospitals in Cambridge. The St Nicholas Hospice in Bury St Edmunds cares for those with long-term incurable conditions. The village is served by emergency ambulances and paramedics from the local centre in Stowmarket, as well as transport to and from hospitals.

Many Elmswell people use the Abbey Dental Practice in Woolpit, which provides NHS care for children and the elderly, but not for adults. A small number of alternative private therapists practice locally, including a hypnotherapist/psychotherapist and a holistic healer.

Social Care Services (Suffolk County Council) provides home help services, as well as home delivery of aids and mobility equipment for people newly discharged from hospital. It also provides access to meals on wheels services for the elderly.

14.1 Key Issues

- ◆ There are currently no plans to provide community health services based in the village. A recent application to provide a pharmacy in Elmswell was approved, even though it was not actively supported by the Health Centre or Parish Council.
- ◆ The daily minibus service to Woolpit Health Centre is not convenient for a lot of patients. Getting to the Centre is not a problem for those with private transport, but there are access problems for some residents which need to be addressed.
- ◆ There are no local NHS community dental clinics. Patients have to travel to Bury St Edmunds to access a limited service.
- ◆ There is some concern that the out-of-hours service for the Health Centre is inadequate.





Elmswell Village Plan

14.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Look for grant-aided funding to extend the provision of transport to health facilities for people who cannot easily access these services.
- ⇒ Advertise the minibus service to the Woolpit Health Centre more widely.
- ⇒ Provide more information about both the traditional and complementary healthcare services available to Elmswell people, e.g. through "The Elmswell Newsletter" and the Parish Council Web site.
- ⇒ Work with the Health Centre to improve out-of-hours service.
- ⇒ Explore with the Health Centre the possibility of holding some clinics, e.g. chiropody, in the village - possibly at The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Continue and improve communication between the Health Centre and the community.

14.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ⇒ *Local health authorities.*

Elmswell Village Plan



15. Historic Sites and Heritage

Elmswell has a history dating back over a thousand years, with an atmosphere and buildings which the people who live here value and are generally keen to protect. As more of a working village than a beauty spot, there have not been any efforts to promote the village as a tourist attraction. The detailed 1904 Ordnance Survey map shows that many old buildings - listed and otherwise - remain in the village.

The Elmswell Millennium History Group meets monthly, with speakers on a wide range of subjects related to local history. The Group is involved in oral history recordings and has a rapidly-expanding Web site aimed at making its historical material more widely available. This features parish records, maps, a picture archive, memories of people who have lived in the village and a wealth of other information about Elmswell people, buildings and activities. The Group has also produced a 60-page booklet "Elmswell - a Marker for the Millennium", which summarises the history of the village.

Under the Suffolk County Council Village Recorder scheme, material relating to life in Elmswell is collected, much of it ephemeral and otherwise not recorded, for historical reference.

The key historic sites in the village are:

- St John's Church and the churchyard (c14th and c15th centuries, with c19th and c20th century additions).
- The village cemetery on Church Hill.
- The almshouses next to the Church (late c17th century).
- The Methodist Church
- The railway station.
- Old houses in private occupation, including a number of buildings listed as being of historic or architectural significance (there is a list of these on the Millennium History Group Web site).

15.1 Key Issues

- ♦ New developments, as well as heavy traffic in the village, may threaten some historic sites and buildings - although none of the major historic sites in the village is under immediate risk.
- ♦ Much of the 'working history' of the village has already disappeared, including railway buildings, mills and storage buildings. Some landmark old houses, such as those on the former Thurlow Nunn Standen and New Road Engineering sites, have been lost to new residential developments.
- ♦ Inscriptions on the gravestones around the church are being eroded.





Elmswell Village Plan

15.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Develop an oral and photographic history of Elmswell.
- ⇒ Continue recording churchyard inscriptions (this has been completed for the cemetery).
- ⇒ Save and preserve remaining significant buildings and landmarks, e.g. the old airfield.
- ⇒ Ensure that archaeological investigations are carried out before key village sites are developed.
- ⇒ Preserve village history in new street names.
- ⇒ Promote Elmswell's history and heritage as a 'working village'.
- ⇒ Investigate development of a village heritage trail.
- ⇒ Set up a 'village museum', possibly within and as part of The Blackbourne Phase II, where village photographs and artefacts can be properly managed and displayed to the public.
- ⇒ Pressure MSDC to have a proper regard for heritage-rich buildings in their planning policies, irrespective of whether or not they are listed.

15.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Elmswell Millennium History Group.*
- ☞ *Possibility of small grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund.*

Elmswell Village Plan



16. Housing

According to information available from the 2001 census and the Council Tax Register, there are approximately 3,400 people living in Elmswell, living in around 1,500 properties. Almost 46% of homes are in Council Tax bands A and B (the lowest), while 82% fall into the first four bands.

Nearly 89% of properties are owner-occupied or privately rented, while 11% are in the social rented sector. Local authority stock comprises 121 properties. Housing associations manage 38 properties, of which 30 are sheltered accommodation for older people. No new housing association homes have been built in the past five years.

In 2004 the Parish Council was approached by the Suffolk Preservation Society, Orwell Housing Association and Mid Suffolk District Council with the aim of building an affordable housing scheme of around 20 units on land at Thedwastre Close. The design of the scheme is the subject of an international competition overseen by RIBA.

A new development of 66 homes on the site of the former Thurlow Nunn Standen works will incorporate 13 (19%) houses and flats for rent and shared ownership through the Flagship Housing Association. These are the first, and so far only, affordable homes to be delivered through the planning process.

In 2004 an independent housing needs survey was completed in Elmswell to contribute to the Village Plan, and to support the Parish Council's claims for affordable housing provision as part of the planning process. Every household received a form. 29% returned their questionnaires and the results analysed by the Northern Housing Group, which had been commissioned to carry out the survey. The Parish Council later carried out further analysis of the results, incorporating data from MSDC's own Housing Needs Register. While this survey provides a snapshot of the situation that applied at the time, there are growing levels of unmet need each year and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

16.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Due to its size, Elmswell is not eligible to benefit from the Rural Exceptions Policy, so any affordable homes must come through either the planning process or the release of council-owned sites. For the same reason, any affordable homes that are built may still be lost from the overall affordable stock through people's 'Right to Acquire'.
- ◆ Most of the potential development sites within the village, which might have yielded affordable units, have already been bought up by developers before the new thresholds outlined in the emerging MSDC policy on affordable housing can come into force. Some sites have been developed in phases, so that they fall below the current thresholds which would trigger the requirement to provide affordable units.
- ◆ Agencies differ over the definition of affordable housing. The Parish Council supports the MSDC definition: "affordable housing is that provided with subsidy, both for rent and low-cost market housing for people who are unable to resolve their housing requirements in the local private sector housing market because of the relationships between housing costs and incomes".
- ◆ Low-cost market housing is also important to meet the needs of new forming households. Private developers may be reluctant to incorporate this type of housing in proposed schemes, adding to the shortfall.





Elmswell Village Plan

- ◆ The Parish Council has noted with concern the growing trend of householders to add large extensions to smaller properties, further reducing the stock of lower-cost homes.
- ◆ 72% of people who responded to the housing needs survey said they would support a small development for local people within Elmswell if there was a proven need, and a further 23% said they might support such a development.
- ◆ The housing needs survey identified 17 households needing some form of affordable housing (shared equity, social rental or self-build) who were not on the Housing Needs Register. Added to the 26 households wanting homes in Elmswell who are on the Register, this gives a total of 43 households in need of affordable housing. The survey also identified a further nine households who had moved from the village specifically because of being unable to find affordable accommodation - three of these now needed to move back.
- ◆ The Housing Needs Register also showed around 170 households with no local connection who had expressed a preference for homes in Elmswell.
- ◆ The housing needs survey showed strong interest in shared equity or self-build schemes.



- ◆ Some survey respondents indicated future need for affordable homes for their children or younger relatives.

16.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Make sure current policies on affordable housing are enforced and continue to lobby for lower thresholds.
- ⇒ Ensure there is an appropriate mix of house types and sizes in all planning proposals.
- ⇒ Safeguard the village's lower-cost housing stock to make sure there is a balance across the range of housing types and sizes.
- ⇒ Support an early start to the proposed affordable housing scheme at Thedwastre Close.
- ⇒ Make sure that people with a strong local connection have first choice of any affordable homes available.
- ⇒ Lobby for high quality of design and build in all affordable homes.
- ⇒ Continue to monitor local housing need.

16.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *MSDC policies and the emerging Local Development Framework.*
- ☞ *Housing associations and grants from the Housing Corporation.*
- ☞ *Central Government policies.*
- ☞ *Lobby groups, such as the Suffolk Preservation Society.*

Elmswell Village Plan



17. Public Transport

Compared to many rural communities, Elmswell is well served by public transport. The existence of these services, as well as the village's position close to the A14 trunk road, have encouraged the growth and development of the village.

The main public transport facilities in Elmswell are:

- Rail - Elmswell station is a minor stop on the Ipswich to Cambridge rural line. This connects to services to London and to Peterborough and the North.
- Bus services - these essentially run parallel to the railway routes (between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich), and fill some of the gaps in the rail timetable. There is also a free daily minibus service for patients going to Woolpit Health Centre.
- School transport - pupils walk or are driven to the Primary School in the village. 'Walking buses' have been trialled, although in the winter months few pupils use these. Buses are laid on to take the older children to Beyton Middle School and Stowupland High School (the local catchment schools), as well as Thurston Community College. These services must be paid for. A number of children are also driven by parents or collected by taxi to go to these and other schools outside the village.
- Taxis - there is at least one taxi service in the village, with others in easy calling distance.
- Cycles - although there are few local cycle routes, it is now possible to take bikes on the train once again. A small number of people cycle regularly in the village and the Primary School is providing some cycling proficiency training for its older pupils. A cycle route to Woolpit (and connecting beyond) is also planned by Sustrans.

17.1 Key Issues

- ◆ There has been little improvement in the level of public transport services over the past 20 years, despite the huge growth in Elmswell's population.
- ◆ Little or none of the money being made from building new houses in the village is being channelled back into improving the public transport infrastructure or services.
- ◆ Rail services are minimal, with inadequate connections and sparse services. Passengers wanting to travel to London or the North have to change trains and often face long waits.
- ◆ Signposting to the railway station is poor, making it hard to find for travellers unfamiliar with the village. Its location makes for potential dangers to pedestrians, especially at peak times; and there is virtually no car parking. Disabled passengers may also face problems with crossing the line.
- ◆ To an extent, the bus services through the village duplicate the rail services, with few connections to the wider rural area.
- ◆ Most of the bus stops in Elmswell are not signposted and (apart from the one in Wetherden Road) provide no shelter for waiting passengers. There are few timetables posted in the village. Anyone new to the village (or wanting to use a bus for the first time) faces great confusion!
- ◆ Despite encouragement, many children who live within easy walking (or cycling) distance of the school are still being driven, with the resulting environmental and health issues.



Elmswell Village Plan

- ◆ Lack of local cycle routes and the dangers of country roads discourage people from using this alternative. There is no secure facility in which to leave bikes, so few pupils cycle to School.
- ◆ Also no secure cycle storage facilities at The Blackbourne, Library or shops.

17.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Lobby for improved rail services and a more joined-up approach (for example, signposting bus services from the train station and vice versa).
- ⇒ Promote and support 'green travel'.
- ⇒ Promote walking to School for primary-age pupils.

- ⇒ Consider promoting car-sharing schemes, especially for school transport.
- ⇒ Support and encourage cycling initiatives.
- ⇒ Lobby Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council to ensure rural needs are included as a high priority in their new transport strategies.
- ⇒ Promote the availability of 'Traveline', which provides journey planning information.

17.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Local authorities in Suffolk - the County and Mid Suffolk District Councils.*
- ☞ *Transport companies and passenger groups.*
- ☞ *Elmswell Primary School.*
- ☞ *Lobbying groups.*



18. Recycling and Energy Efficiency

Although the village does not yet have a defined policy on energy efficiency, the Parish Council has set up an Environment Advisory Committee to focus on this and other relevant areas such as recycling.

In common with the rest of the country, many of the people and businesses of Elmswell are likely to be inefficient in the way they use energy. Even so, some solar panels (or photovoltaic systems, as they are more properly known) are appearing on rooftops, and people are trying to switch to more energy efficient appliances and/or use their cars less. People living in the village may be eligible for financial help with the cost of wall and loft insulation, although information about this is not widely available.

In terms of household waste collection and recycling, Mid Suffolk District Council's 'TwinBin' Scheme has been implemented in most of the village, and the recycling 'bring centre' next to the railway station is well used for items currently not accepted in the scheme, e.g. glass. Generally, the scheme has been well received in the village. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely that Elmswell would be able to set up any kind of community composting facility, because of the infrastructure needed to provide this.

The proposed affordable housing scheme at Thedwastre Close is intended to provide a model for sustainable housing and should include cutting-edge energy efficiency and water-saving designs.

18.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Energy is becoming more expensive and non-renewable sources, such as coal and oil, are running out.
- ◆ The recycling 'bring centre' is sometimes too successful for its own good, and is full to overflowing!
- ◆ Some streetlights in the village are not up to modern standards and cause light pollution, as well as using more energy than necessary. Others are so dim that while they do not cause pollution they are virtually useless in lighting the way for people!
- ◆ Some individual households are also contributing to light pollution with badly-positioned and inappropriately sized external lights.





Elmswell Village Plan

18.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Develop an 'energy efficiency' policy for the village, possibly using the Thedwastre Close development as a model.
- ⇒ Encourage people in the village to use less energy or switch to more sustainable sources, such as solar power.
- ⇒ Promote the availability of grants to help with the cost of insulating homes.
- ⇒ Promote 'greener' transport alternatives - such as walking, cycling, car-sharing or using public transport.
- ⇒ Lobby MSDC for the extension of the 'TwinBin' Scheme to include glass and/or waste that could be composted.
- ⇒ Investigate the possibility of extra recycling facilities in the village, especially for trade waste.
- ⇒ Audit the streetlights in the village and switch to more energy efficient types where possible, as part of a rolling programme of improvement.
- ⇒ Ensure that energy efficient lighting etc. is used in all Parish Council buildings, including The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Lobby for new developments to include streetlights that minimise light pollution.
- ⇒ Encourage householders to think about the potential pollution caused by their external lights.

18.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Elmswell Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI).*
- ☞ *Commercial companies offering alternative solutions, such as solar powered systems.*
- ☞ *Lobby groups, including the Suffolk Preservation Society.*
- ☞ *Housing associations.*



Elmswell Village Plan



19. Sport and Leisure

Elmswell has well-established Football, Cricket and Bowls Clubs, who work together to maintain grounds and raise funds. There is also a thriving Gardening Club and History Group.

The clubs are always keen to attract new members. The stream of people moving into the village ought to provide new blood for clubs and leisure groups. Should children and young people have a more permanent base at The Blackbourne then they might also have a much better chance to see what goes on there and to get involved in sporting and other leisure activities.

The existing sporting facilities at The Blackbourne are generally considered to be excellent: with two full-size football pitches and a three-quarters size youth pitch, a county-standard bowls green and recently-built pavilion, and a professionally-laid cricket square. There are also changing rooms in The Blackbourne, as there are at Grove Lane where there are two further football pitches.

Elmswell Amenities Association has offered some £80,000 towards a new multi-purpose indoor facility at The Blackbourne. The outline plans have been publicised in "The Elmswell Newsletter" and elsewhere, and the Parish Council is encouraging both individuals and organised groups to provide feedback and suggestions to ensure the proposed new element of the building suits the village's needs as far as possible.

19.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Lack of indoor, all-weather and floodlit sporting facilities in the village
- ◆ No tennis courts or swimming pool (except at the Primary School).
- ◆ Grove Lane football pitches are hard to access for some people (because they are on the edge of the village) and facilities are quite basic.
- ◆ The Football Club sometimes finds it hard to attract general support and people to serve on its Committee.
- ◆ Improving access to sporting and leisure clubs, and attracting new members, typically falls on the shoulders of a small band of dedicated and hard-working volunteers.
- ◆ Some people are unaware of the range of activities and organisations available in the village.





Elmswell Village Plan

19.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Consider putting The Blackbourne development plan into action, with wide involvement from and consultation with the community.
- ⇒ Build the new multi-purpose activity hall at The Blackbourne.
- ⇒ Widen the range of sports and leisure activities on offer in the village - using, assuming it materialises, the development at The Blackbourne to get more children and young people involved.
- ⇒ Ask sports clubs to implement schemes to engage more widely with the community - and especially young people - by, for example, running open or 'taster' sessions. Consider making this a requirement for continued Parish Council support.
- ⇒ Install a community display area at The Blackbourne where different groups can display photographs of recent activities, celebrate achievements and publicise forthcoming events - available for all to use and admire.

19.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Village clubs and societies themselves.*
- ☞ *Elmswell Amenities Association.*
- ☞ *Elmswell Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council*
- ☞ *Contributions from developers (for example, as part of the redevelopment of the former Thurlow Nunn Standen site next to The Blackbourne).*
- ☞ *Grant-aid sourced from various national, regional and county-wide bodies.*



Elmswell Village Plan



20. Tourism and Visitors

Although Elmswell is not a tourist attraction in itself, travellers and holidaymakers do use the village as a base for visiting Mid Suffolk and the county generally. There are three 'bed and breakfast' options in the village and several houses that provide self-catering accommodation. These are supported by a small range of services and shops, with ready-access via the A14, in particular, to larger centres. There is also a good network of footpaths for those seeking an active holiday in the countryside.

20.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Marketing Elmswell as a 'visitor destination' is the biggest challenge. Tourist information sources, such as Web sites and tourist offices, do not offer adequate coverage of what Elmswell has to offer in terms of accommodation.
- ◆ Traffic congestion in the village and on the A14 might be a negative factor for tourism even though the latter equally offers access possibilities.





Elmswell Village Plan

20.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Promote Elmswell as a good tourist base for visiting places of interest around Suffolk and in neighbouring counties, particularly Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.
- ⇒ Promote the village and its surrounding location via the Elmswell Parish Council Web site.
- ⇒ Produce an Elmswell village tourism leaflet, including all the village accommodation, amenities and services, as well as a map of the village. Distribute these leaflets widely within and outside the village.
- ⇒ Maintain a good standard of presentation around the village, e.g. with regular litter picks.

20.3 *Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?*

- ☞ *Engage with the business and economic development officers at MSDC regarding funding, support and guidance.*
- ☞ *Promote the options with tourist information centres and libraries in other authorities.*
- ☞ *Look to the Parish Council to use the Web effectively for promotion and information purposes.*



Elmswell Village Plan



21. Traffic

A local transport action plan for Elmswell was produced in 2003, as part of the "Suffolk County Council Local Transport Plan 2001-2006". This built, in particular, on actions and issues identified from the Village Appraisal in 2000 and from consultations carried out with parents as part of the 'Safely to School' initiative. While this section sets some of the key elements, reference to specific Plan itself is needed to gain an understanding of all the issues and actions that are being sought.

21.1 Key Issues

- ◆ Shop Corner - the exit from the Co-op/Post Office car park on to the main route through the centre of the village is very busy and considered dangerous for all users alike, i.e. pedestrians, motor vehicle drivers, cyclists and motorcyclists (the Parish Council recently opposed the intended extension to the Co-op on safety grounds; should it proceed then it is hoped that safety features will accrue at the site through 'planning gain').
- ◆ High volumes of HGV/lorry traffic in the village create danger and noise. It is accepted that they are needed to support local businesses but better traffic management could be achieved to the benefit of all.

- ◆ The increased frequency of trains and greater volumes of road traffic are tending to generate frequent heavy congestion at the railway crossing (often extending to and impacting on other key adjacent problem areas).
- ◆ There is little traffic-calming at key danger spots in the village and measures that do exist are not as effective as they might be.
- ◆ Crossing the railway line is potentially dangerous for pedestrians - a mix of solutions is needed.
- ◆ Cyclists face problems in many areas of the village, particularly with narrow roads and with visibility difficulties in some locations, e.g. Church Hill, as well as at several busy junctions.
- ◆ Heavy traffic, congestion and lack of pavements discourage greener forms of transport, such as walking and cycling.
- ◆ Children, older and disabled people, and carers with prams and buggies are often disadvantaged when trying to move about the village and to access facilities.
- ◆ Better and safer access is needed for the likes of pedestrians and cyclists between The Blackbourne and the other side of the railway line.

21.2 Key Actions

- ⇒ Radical and urgent Improvements needed to Shop Corner - in all respects.
- ⇒ Seek appropriate traffic-calming, especially around Bennett Avenue/Cooks Road (near the School entrances), School Road (near the exit from Elmswell Hall), at the railway crossing and in New Road/Cooks Road.
- ⇒ Lobby for a 40mph speed limit between Great Ashfield and Elmswell, and Wetherden and Elmswell.





Elmswell Village Plan

- ⇒ Investigate options for 20mph limits in certain areas, e.g. Shop Corner, near the School.
- ⇒ Improve pedestrian safety at the railway crossing and at other key locations identified.
- ⇒ Provide a footbridge over the railway line to link The Blackbourne to other areas such that there is a safer route to School.
- ⇒ Build the cycle route between Elmswell and Woolpit and consider including cycle paths in any new housing developments and in designs for traffic management systems in the village.
- ⇒ Investigate the possibility of linking the Elmswell Community Path with other local Sustrans routes, e.g. the Ipswich-Stowmarket-Bury St Edmunds route, to encourage commuting by bicycle.
- ⇒ Lobby for trains to stop more often at Elmswell, and for a bus service north of the railway line.
- ⇒ Implement the results of the HGV surveys completed in the village in the autumn of 2004, and the implementation of relevant actions as a result.
- ⇒ Lobby for increased HGV restrictions plus a footpath in Warren Lane.
- ⇒ Tackle the problems/dangers caused by on-street parking in some parts of the village, mainly through publicity.
- ⇒ Improve road surfaces, street lighting and road signs at various places in the village.
- ⇒ Improve existing pavements and seek more, e.g. in New Road and Church Hill.

- ⇒ Look at the possibility of providing pedestrian crossings in Oxer Close and Cooks Road (near the School and Library sites).
- ⇒ Seek the provision of bus shelters where none exist currently at stops in the village.
- ⇒ Look at providing a bike shed at the School.
- ⇒ Lobby for improved signalling at the railway line, to minimise waiting times at the railway crossing.

21.3 Where Will Money, Help and Support Come From?

- ☞ *Environment and Transport (Suffolk County Council).*
- ☞ *Mid Suffolk District Council.*
- ☞ *Elmswell Parish Council.*
- ☞ *Sustrans (environmental transport group, providing support for the new Elmswell-Woolpit cycle route).*
- ☞ *Transport providers and other related agencies.*



Elmswell Village Plan



What Next?

The Plan is just the beginning. Implementation comes next and that is, obviously, the most vital part of the process. The Parish Council's Community Action Advisory Committee (CAAC), which led the work on its compilation, has been charged with developing a prioritised 'Action Plan' to ensure that what is in the Plan is delivered. It will also monitor implementation and provide regular progress reports to residents and others via the Parish Council and the various methods of communication at its disposal.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the village the Council would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the production of this Plan which has been co-ordinated by its Community Action Advisory Committee:

Doug Reed (Chairman), Jane Heselden (Vice-Chairman), Marian Abbott, Pete Edmonds, Mary Feeney and Mike Schofield.

They received excellent support from an 'extended' group who, when called upon, volunteered their time, energy and skills to conduct consultations, provide advice and guidance, and collect essential information:

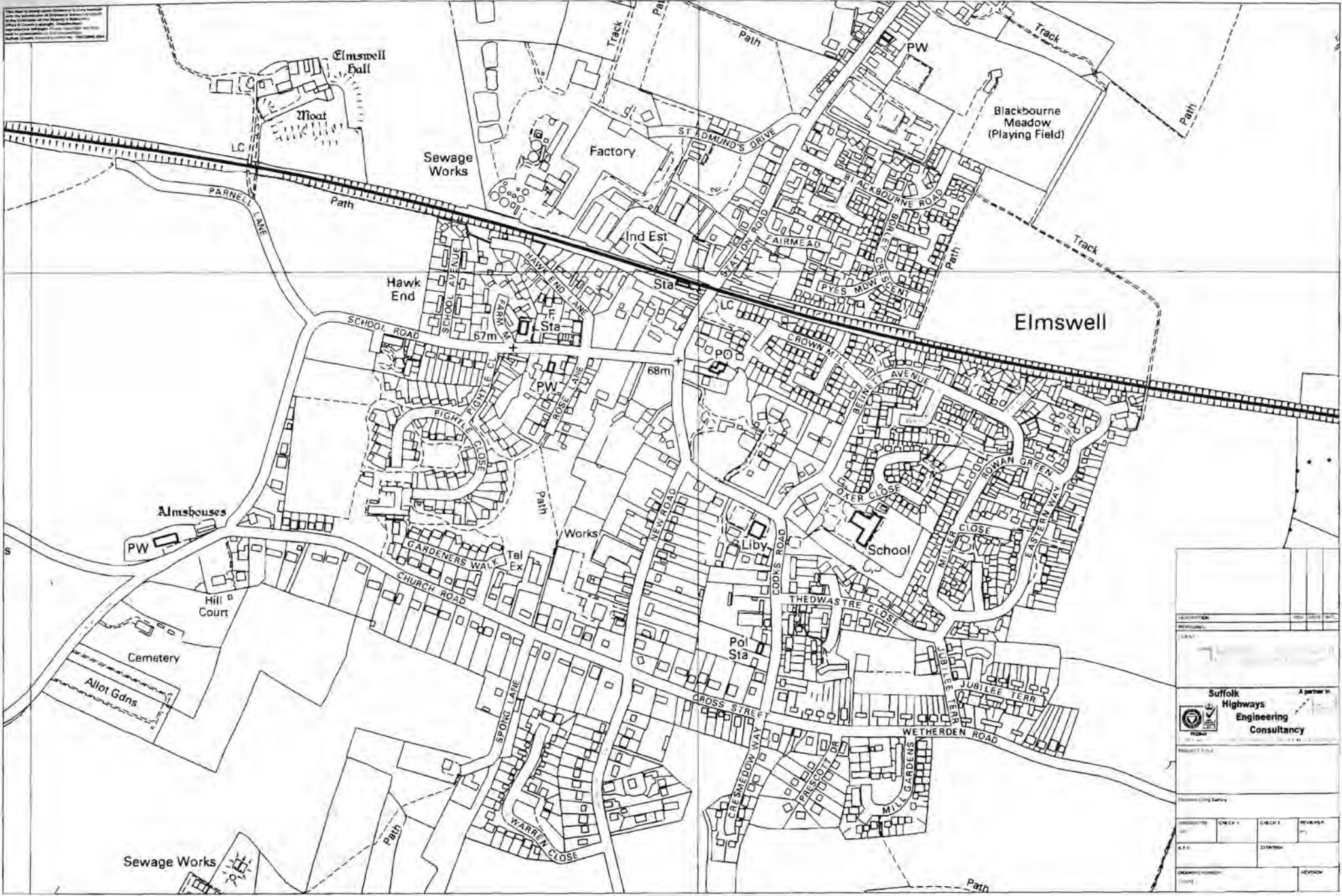
Jim Coole, Jeanne Crook, Peter Dow, Jean Folkard, John Ibbetson, Norman Kenyon, Rosemary Oliver, Ian Tullett, Anthony Wright, Bryan Wright and Sheila Wright.

Particular thanks go to Jane Marshall who, as an independent consultant, took the raw data produced and shaped it into the basis of the final document.

Thanks also to The Countryside Agency which provided the external funding to enable the Plan to be produced; and to Suffolk ACRE for support and guidance.

Last, but by no means least, special thanks to the very many others who have both influenced and shaped the Plan through essential feedback and comments throughout the period of its compilation - residents, organisations, businesses, authorities and agencies.

This map is a reproduction of the original map and is not to be used for any other purpose without the written consent of the author. The author is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this map.



Suffolk Highways Engineering Consultancy			
<small>Project Title</small>			
<small>Business Unit Name</small>			
<small>DATE</small>	<small>CHECK 1</small>	<small>CHECK 2</small>	<small>REVIEW</small>
<small>A.P. No.</small>	<small>23/06/94</small>		
<small>DRAWING NUMBER</small>			<small>REVISION</small>
<small>10002</small>			

