

LAXFIELD VILLAGE APPRAISAL



**REPORT &
ACTION PLAN
2008**



INTRODUCTION

This Laxfield village appraisal and action plan is the result of around 1,000 hours of work. A public meeting was held in January 2006 and was well attended by villagers.

A member of Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) also attended the meeting and explained the importance of having a Village Appraisal pointing out that information and statistics about the village would be important in assessing any future needs and funding for village projects by appropriate authorities. A vote was taken by all those present in favour of going ahead with an Appraisal. The main funder for the project was Suffolk ACRE with some contribution from the Parish Council. Several people volunteered to be on the steering group but due to pressures of work and other commitments, this number dwindled to two people. It was therefore felt necessary to involve an outside agency in the analysis of the questionnaires. However, the main collation of the report was done with one Parish Councillor and the Parish Clerk, reporting back on a regular basis to the Parish Council

The main tasks of this questionnaire were to:

- Obtain views and opinions on important local social issues from the residents
 - To provide parish, district, and county council together with other service providers the information to enable them to incorporate local views in their future policy and plans
 - To seek the ideas from the youth of the village on their needs
- To find out what would keep the village alive and what the villagers feel is important to develop within the village
 - To formulate an action plan and identify lead organisations and partners to enable these actions to be taken forward.

To assist this process a software program was purchased and used to help formulate a questionnaire. A group of 10 volunteers were involved in sending out and collecting questionnaires. 402 questionnaires were sent out and 298 were returned completed. A very good response of 75%. A separate youth questionnaire was also handed out to households where there were children from the age of 8 to 16 of which 55 questionnaires were completed. Once the questionnaire had been collated a 'drop in' morning was arranged where residents could see the results and assist with the prioritisation of the action points. The final report and action plan will be presented to the village and made available to interested parties.

Following the main body of the report are the action plan pages. However, not all topics will have an action or require partners. Although of interest in the overall picture of the parish they have not been identified by residents as needing any change or improvement at this time. The issues are ordered in priority as determined by the drop in day already mentioned and the questionnaire results.



Inside the Museum

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LAXFIELD HISTORY

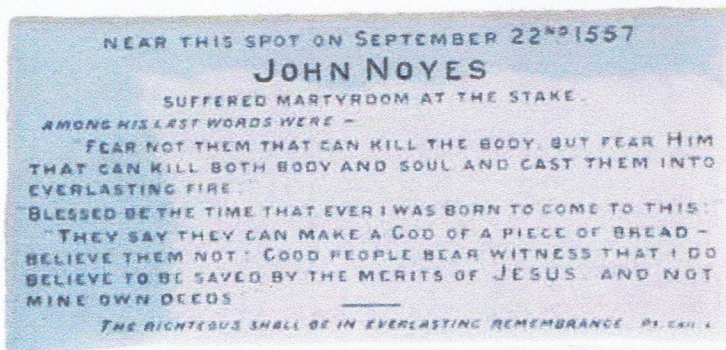
In common with most villages in this region of 'High Suffolk', Laxfield was established as a farming settlement in pre-Norman Conquest times on land cut back from wild forest. For most of its history since that time, it has been a village of free 'yeoman' farmers. Although there are now very few of these small freehold farms left, it may be that some of this spirit of independence and self-sufficiency still survives in the village. Well into the twentieth century Laxfield was an agricultural community – within living memory there were well over a hundred men living here who worked on farms. Working the local heavy soil required a lot of effort from men and horses, but the soil produced good crops. There were sheep and cattle too in the fields around Laxfield and in the village itself there were smiths, harness makers, wheelwrights, shoemakers and other trades to provide for local needs. In the middle of the nineteenth century the population was well over 1000 and there were shops, butchers, bakers, pubs and schools for the boys and girls. Two windmills ground the corn from the local farms. In some ways Laxfield was more like a small town in those days. From 1907 to 1952, Laxfield was even the terminus of a railway – The Mid Suffolk Light Railway.

In the last fifty or sixty years, mechanisation of agriculture and the general changes in working and living patterns have brought great changes in the village. Most fields are now huge and arable and can be farmed by very few workers and their machines. Most people who live here now have no links to agriculture and the land. Many commute to jobs many miles away from Laxfield. Others come from other parts of the country to buy houses and settle here for their retirement. In the historic Guildhall, the 'Laxfield Museum' can give visitors a taste of what life was like for people when the village was a self-sufficient agricultural community.



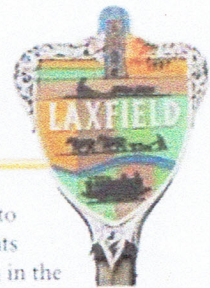
War Memorial, Laxfield

Many people in nearby towns and villages know Laxfield because of its famous old pub – the King's Head or 'Low House' – where beer is still drawn from barrels in the tap room. The most interesting historic building, as in most Suffolk villages, is the medieval church with its huge flint faced tower and seven- sacrament font. There would be much more to see here if it weren't for the infamous iconoclast William 'Smasher' Dowsing, who probably came from a Laxfield family – there's still a Dowsing's Farm in the village. On the front of the thriving Baptist Chapel there is a plaque commemorating Laxfield's most famous former resident, John Noyes. Noyes was a local shoemaker who was burnt at the stake here in the reign of Mary Tudor for refusing to accept the doctrine of transubstantiation.



John Noyes Inscription, Baptist Chapel

VILLAGE PROFILE



402 questionnaires were distributed and completed. 298 questionnaires were collected from 298 households. Of the 685 people in those households there are 123 under the age of 16, 58 aged between 16 and 24, 277 aged between 25 and 59 and 227 aged 60 or over. Replies were given on an individual and household basis and results show a population of 48.7% male and 51.3% female with the largest group in the 45-59 range 145 (21.2%).

AGE & SEX PROFILE

685 Respondents		
Age	Male	Female
0-4	14	13
5-10	29	22
11-15	24	21
16-17	11	7
18-24	23	17
25-44	62	70
45-59	74	71
60-64	30	32
65-74	44	42
75-84	26	32
85+	13	8

When asked what brought residents to live in Laxfield, of the 512 respondents other than the 15.8% who were born in the village, the highest proportion 20.3% (104) valued the areas attractive qualities. 12.8% (62) came with the family and 8.2% (42) had family connections, with 10.4% (53) arriving in the village through marriage. 10.5% (54) came because employment brought them here and 7.2% (37) came to retire. 5.5% (28) moved here for other reasons.

HOW LONG RESIDENTS HAVE LIVED IN LAXFIELD

512 Respondents		
	%	Number
Less than a year	5.2	27
1-5 years	18.2	95
6-15 years	27.9	146
16-25 years	16.8	88
26-50 years	17.0	89
51+ years	3.8	20
Whole life	11.1	58

HOUSING



Currently, the majority of Laxfield residents live in owner occupied accommodation which is their main residence. Only 2.7% (8) were not permanent residents.

CURRENT HOUSING PROFILE

298 Respondents		
	%	Number
Owner Occupied	71.8	214
Local Authority Rented	11.4	34
Private Rented	8.7	26
Housing Assoc. Rented	1.7	5
Shared Ownership	1.3	4
Provided as part of employment	1.3	4
Other	0.7	2

Asked what kind of accommodation Laxfield needed. Over half the respondents favoured more homes for young people and over a quarter small family homes. Significant needs are also perceived for homes for single people, and for some larger family homes. There is concern that young people may be forced out of the village due to lack of affordable housing.

CURRENT HOUSING NEEDS

472 Respondents		
	%	Number
Homes for Young People	61.9	292
Large Family Homes	11.9	56
Small Family Homes	41.9	198
Executive Homes	4.4	21
Homes for People with disabilities	10.6	50
Homes for single people	14.2	67
No further homes are needed	23.9	113
Other	3.2	15

75% of respondents 377 out of 503 have no objection in principle to a development which might meet the housing needs of local people. However questions are raised about the logistics of allocating such housing and its possible location. Over 40% of respondents 200 out of 494 were concerned that new housing would spoil the environment.



HOUSING *continued*

COMMENTS:

- "Affordable housing for young people so they stay in the village"
- "I am concerned that when they grow up my children will not be able to afford to live here"
- "New houses should be built in small developments of say 4 – 5 houses"
- "Already too much undistinguished new build, infill by outside speculators with no interest in the village"
- "It would be sensible to extend the village envelope to accommodate further housing. The current 'infill' policy is not good as it squashes too many houses into too small spaces. Affordable housing developments are fine but those needing 'affordable' properties often have children, so smaller 2 bed semis are not really appropriate"
- "New developments should respect nature and wildlife"
- "Development should be on the outskirts of the village. Preserve all old buildings in the village"
- "Could this involve affordable development using Housing Associations/Trusts e.g. part ownership schemes to give continuous affordable housing to avoid re-selling as second homes"



EMPLOYMENT

The number of people in work in the village is 55.2% (285) of which 33.3% (172) are employed, 16.1% are self-employed with another 30 (5.8%) also self employed but employing other people. There were only 7 (1.4%) unemployed. 29.3% (151) are retired in the village.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

516 Respondents	%	Number
Employed	33.3	172
Unemployed	1.4	7
Self-employed – employing other people	5.8	30
Self-employed – not employing anyone	16.1	83
Government Training Scheme	0.4	2
Full time education	5.8	30
Unwaged housewife/husband	6.2	32
Retired	29.3	151
Permanently disabled	1.7	9

Of those questioned as to the business of their employer 56 out of 204 (17.5%) were in local government or in the public sector, 40 (19.6%) in the retail and service industry, 32 (15.7%) in construction and 28 (13.7%) in agriculture/horticulture. Potential employers in the village itself, include the village shop, garage, two pubs, the pre-school, primary school, funeral directors, builders, painters and decorators and some work in the tourist industry. Given that 70.4% (299) out of 425 respondents used a car or van to get to work it would seem safe to assume that most of the work is outside the village.

FOR THOSE RUNNING A BUSINESS IN WHICH CATEGORY DOES IT FALL

204 Respondents	%	Number
Agriculture/Horticulture	13.7	28.0
Manufacturing engineering	3.4	7.0
Manufacturing other	7.4	15.0
Retail/Service Industry	19.6	40.0
Financial Services	2.0	4.0
Tourism – eg. Bed & Breakfast	3.9	8.0
Local Government/Public Sector	27.5	56.0
Construction	15.7	32.0
Transport/Communications	2.5	5.0
Food Processing	4.4	9.0

Over 62% were in favour of more jobs in Laxfield. When asked what further provision people would like to see in Laxfield, most favoured small business development – 267 out of 492 (62.2%) followed by tourism 175 (40.8%). Small scale industrial workshops 172 (40.1%) were also a popular option.

SHOULD THE FOLLOWING BE ENCOURAGED IN AND AROUND LAXFIELD

492 Respondents	In Favour	Reservations/No Opinion	Not in Favour
Tourism development/attractions	175	138	37
Small business development	267	92	15
Small scale industrial workshops	172	144	32
More jobs in Laxfield	268	101	8



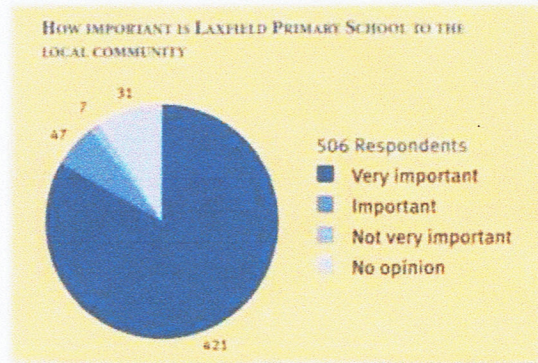
Laxfield is fortunate in having a thriving primary school. In 1962 the new school was built replacing the Old Boys School which is now being used as a pre-school for children from two years which is held four days a week. A lunch club is also available for the children. The Old Girls School is now a private house. The primary school provides for children up to the age of eleven and includes part-time nursery provision in the reception class. The primary school feeds into Framlingham and Stradbroke Secondary Schools. A Mother and Toddlers Group also operates in the village held in the village hall. Of the 685 people included in the survey 123 were children under the age of 16 (17.9%).

Of those over sixteen, 18 attended 6th Form College, 22 University and 27 were on training courses.

Below is the response to the question of how important is the Primary School to the local community.

EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS ATTENDED

128 Respondents	Number
Nursery/Pre-School	27
Primary School	56
Middle School	1
High School	34
School for those with special needs	2
Other	8



All Saints Primary School, Laxfield

When asked whether they would like the facilities of Laxfield school made available to the local community, out of the 480 respondents 51.3% (246) replied in the affirmative. Although the swimming pool is not available to the community for public sessions, it is available for private hire and is used for weekend swimming and holiday swimming for children. There is a computer available for community use during school hours as well as a photocopier and laminator. There are after school activities for children which include art, computer, cricket coaching and cookery clubs from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is a strong "Friends of the School" association, which organises such events as rounders, dances, Ladies Evenings and Christmas activities.



RETAIL & OTHER FACILITIES

Laxfield at the current time has a number of small businesses, which include property maintenance, builders, farmers and craftspeople. Although the garage no longer sells petrol, it does service lawnmowers and power tools and is also a hardware shop. There are two pubs in the village, the Low House (King's Head) and the Royal Oak.



The King's Head (Low House)



The Royal Oak, Laxfield

A travelling fish van visits once a week and likewise a Mobile Library and Fish and Chip van. A milk round also services the village. There is a thriving village shop and post office. Of those who used the village shop 331 out of 494 (67%) did so because they felt it was important to support the local shop. The majority of responders 75.1% (371) used it for "last minute" items. 156 (31.6%) felt that it saved on transport costs, while 33 (6.7%) had no transport to go anywhere else. 460 people out of 482 (95.2%) used the postal services, and 157 (32.5%) used the post office for other bills. (17%) 82 used it to collect Pensions or allowances. Laxfield is also fortunate in having several allotment sites which are well used.

WHERE DO YOU USUALLY BUY THE FOLLOWING

480 Respondents	Out of Town				Mail Order
	Laxfield	Next Town	Facility	Internet	
Groceries	86	142	177	17	
Fresh fruit & vegetables	127	142	136	7	
Meat and fish	60	177	154	8	
Clothes	6	33	310	64	
DIY supplies	55	94	215	9	
Electrical goods	12	89	240	46	
Books/CD's etc	5	39	207	115	
Furniture	6	15	286	28	

While one respondent felt there should be more choice and a greater variety of food, another commented "we are very lucky to have such a good shop in terms of opening times, goods for sale and a post office!"

Balfours (co-op) Store, Laxfield



ENVIRONMENT



Laxfield villagers were very strong on energy saving devices in their homes. Of the 298 responses, 80.5% (240) had lagged hot water tanks, 84.2% (251) had loft insulation and 74.8% (223) had double glazing. 68.1% (203) used low energy light bulbs, however, only 40% have cavity wall insulation. It is hoped that any future house building in Laxfield will be built to much higher eco-friendly specifications.

When asked about street lighting over half the people asked 56.3% (187) out of 332 respondents felt there should be more environmentally sensitive street lights. Several felt they should be switched off earlier, one suggesting midnight. Another respondent highlighted the fact that there were no street lights in Mill Road.

The most important attributes highlighted about living in Laxfield by the questionnaire were the situation and the environment.

One commented "Laxfield is a lovely village and we're lucky to live here it's a pity not everyone appreciates it". Whilst a new resident is impressed with the community spirit and felt it is a friendly place to live.

It is not surprising therefore when asked the question "How important is the quality of the countryside around you?", nearly 100% felt that it is important. Of the elements which the inhabitants found most important 83.9% (418) out of 498 respondents found the tranquility most important. 70.5% (351) valued the openness and 52.4% (261) the sense of local identity.

PUBLIC FOOTPATHS

Laxfield is fortunate in having a variety of public footpaths in and around the village. Having been asked if any difficulties were experienced using local footpaths, the results were as follows:

IF YOU EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES WHEN USING LOCAL FOOTPATHS, WHICH, IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DIFFICULTIES DID YOU FIND?

393 Respondents	Number	%
Farm animals	4	1.0
High stiles	9	2.3
Locked gates	6	1.5
Barbed wire	13	3.3
Mud/water	74	18.8
Crops across path	59	15.0
Other users	7	1.8
Bushes/nettles	95	24.2
No signposts	56	14.2
Other	41	10.4
No difficulty experienced	202	51.4

FLOODING

Although there is a river in Laxfield, apart from some incidences of flooding in the past at the Low House and the houses adjacent to it, the majority of the residents 83.9% (250) out of 298 respondents reported no problems with only 26 (8.7%) with few problems and these may have been related to the river area mentioned above.

RECYCLING & LITTER

A Bottle Bank, paper, clothes and shoe bank are located at the far side of the playing field and these in general are well used. Mid Suffolk District Council has recently provided every household with two bins, one for paper and one for other waste materials. These are collected on alternate weeks.

When asked whether there were any places where people felt there was a problem with litter in Laxfield, there were quite a number of respondents and the following areas were particularly highlighted – Church Plain and the playing field, with several people feeling that the bins were not big enough and often overflowing.

Dog fouling was felt to be a particular nuisance with many people commenting that there were not enough dog bins and that they were not emptied frequently enough. Some commented owners were not clearing up after their dogs and were concerned about dog fouling on footpaths.



Fishing at Town Pond



ENVIRONMENT *continued*

COMMENTS:

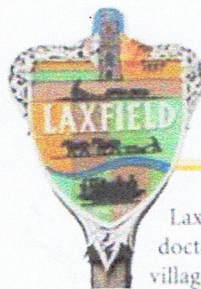
"Dog owners who do not clear up their mess are a problem"

"Dog bins, in need of more and need to be emptied"

"Dog bins are not emptied regularly at the end of Mill Road"



Recycling Centre, Playing Field, Laxfield



HEALTH SERVICES

Laxfield villagers in general use two doctors surgeries, one located in the nearby village of Fressingfield and one in Framlingham. The Framlingham practice sends a Doctor two afternoons a week to Laxfield, where a surgery is held in the Guildhall. There is also a First Responders Service in Laxfield.

When asked if residents had any difficulty in getting to the following services, the majority had no difficulty in accessing them.

Of those who replied, 29 (5.8%) out of 504 are registered disabled. 69 out of 497 (13.9%) had a health problem or disability which restricts their lifestyle.

440 respondents were asked if they were registered with a dentist. 432 (98.%) are registered. The villagers visited a wide area for dental treatment including Harleston, Eye, Halesworth, Ipswich, Norwich, Aldeburgh, Southwold, Wickham Market and Diss. Of those registered, there was a mix between National Health and Private service.

HAVE YOU USED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICES IN THE PAST YEAR

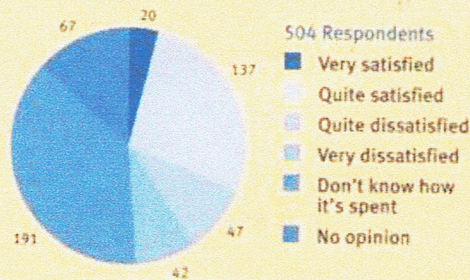
415 Respondents	Good	Reasonable	Poor	No Opinion
Doctor	299	64	9	33
District Nurse	46	8	3	61
Health Visitor	25	7	4	60
Home Help	12	3	0	68
Ambulance	39	5	8	54
Maternity Care	11	5	1	63
Chiropody	31	10	2	61
Loan of medical equipment	15	4	2	62
Meals on Wheels	3	3	5	66
Counselling services	4	2	5	65
Physiotherapy services	3	9	4	61

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



The Parish Council of Laxfield is made up of councillors who are either elected or co-opted if a vacancy occurs between elections. Parish Council meetings are held once a month in the Guildhall. The aim of the council is to help improve village life and assist parishioners with problems that may occur within local government such as planning issues, environmental issues, transport and highways. The Parish Council sets a precept annually which makes up an element of the council tax

ARE YOU SATISFIED HOW YOUR PARISH COUNCIL SHARE OF THE COUNCIL TAX IS SPENT?



Residents were asked if they had ever attended a Parish Council meeting. Out of 492 respondents, 355 (72.2%) had never attended. A slightly higher proportion of local people, 137 out of 504 respondents (32.3%) had attended an **Annual Parish meeting**. Of the 137 who had attended the **Annual Parish meeting**, 122 (48.2%) felt that the issues discussed reflected local concerns. Of the 469 respondents to the questions about the elected representatives of the Parish, District and County Council being aware of local concerns and feelings, 62.5% felt that the **Parish Councillors** were in general aware of their concerns. In contrast only 35.8% felt the

District Council and around 20% felt that the **County Council** were aware of local issues.

There were 491 respondents to the question about how well the local council publicises its decisions and activities and of these just over 50% felt information was well publicised, whilst 19.3% felt it was not.

These findings raise issues about the dissemination of information and will need to be addressed by the relevant authorities.

Parishioners were asked if issues highlighted for action required money for improvement, where should the money come from. The results were as follows:

Source	%	Number
Fundraising	54.4	237
Moderate Council Tax inc.	40.4	176
Sponsorship	40.1	175
Other	22.0	96
Private Contributions	63.0	63
Higher Council Tax inc	19.0	19

COMMENTS:

- "Would pay higher council tax if more information"
- "Village website rarely updated"
- "The parish newsletter should be available to all households"
- "Youth Parish Council should be considered for the 11-18 year olds"
- "More should be done for the children in the village - better youth club"
- "Promote Parish Council meetings"



The Guildhall Parish Room, Laxfield



SPORTS & LEISURE

There are some established activities and groups already in the village. The Bowls Club has a very high standard green which has been in place since the early 1980's.

There is also a Football Club, a large playing field with a recently updated play area for smaller children which is well used by the community. The playing field is used for football, bowls and cricket in the summer. The inter-village games and other social and sporting activities also take place on the playing field. The village hall has been used for the Horticultural Society Shows, for painting classes and for dances and other social events. The hall was refurbished in 2008 and extended and it is hoped to include more evening classes e.g. yoga and keep fit in the future. The Youth Club and art classes have already booked to hold their sessions in the new hall. As well as the village hall, the Chapel Hall, the School Hall, the Guildhall and Hartismere House (a sheltered housing scheme) have also been used for Bingo, Workers Education Association classes and fund raising events. Villagers were asked why they didn't take part in village sporting activities and were given a variety of options. (see table). Out of 452 respondents, the majority (89.2%) said it was because they didn't want too. This may be due to the lack of variety on offer and needs to be addressed.

IF YOU DO NOT TAKE PART IN ANY OF THE SPORTS ACTIVITIES, WHY BECAUSE

424 Respondents	%	Number
Do not want to	89.2	378
Unsuitable hours	4.0	17
Access problems (physical)	3.1	13
No transport	1.2	5
Too expensive	0.5	2
Poor publicity	6.4	27

COMMENTS:

- "More things to do for teenagers"
- "A village hall on the playing field with proper facilities"
- "Gym for personal fitness"
- "Better (advertising) would encourage more members"
- "Decent village hall for sports!"
- "Sports hall, tennis court, badminton Club"
- "Provide a tennis court and more encouragement for teenage children"
- "The playing field pavilion desperately needs updating and modernizing – new showers and kitchen"



Children's Play Area, Laxfield

VILLAGE HALL



The renovated Village Hall, May 2008

At the time of the survey, 50% of respondents (252) out of 504 who replied, did not think the Village Hall is adequate for the needs of Laxfield, although 33.7% (170) were quite happy with the existing hall. At the present time the Hall has undergone a substantial refurbishment and extension which includes a new bar area, toilets, kitchen, hearing loop and IT facilities.

Comments about the village hall included 'after many years of discussing the subject, new improvements were

long overdue'. Some respondents felt that repairing and refurbishing the existing village, did not fulfil the needs of the village.

However, by the time this survey is completed, the new refurbished hall will hopefully satisfy some of the 50% who were not satisfied with the existing hall.

The hall will be available for lettings from May 2008.

TRANSPORT



On the question of how many roadworthy vehicles were kept in the village, there were 246 respondents. Results showed 376 cars, 61 vans 25 motorbikes, 4 specially adapted vehicles and one lorry.

MAJOR MEANS OF TRANSPORT FOR RESIDENTS IN LAXFIELD

494 Respondents	Number	%
Car	428	86.6
Bicycle	20	4.0
Bus	24	4.9
Coach	6	1.2
Community Bus	11	2.2
Train	5	1.0

When asked, 85.4% (414) out of 485 respondents stated that they had daytime access to a vehicle.

IF YOU HAVE DAYTIME ACCESS TO A VEHICLE, WHAT DO YOU USE IT FOR?

449 Respondents	Number	%
Business journeys	141	31.4
Transport to work	223	49.7
Leisure	341	75.9
Shopping	335	74.6
Transporting children to school/college	73	16.3
Other	75	16.7
Not applicable	32	7.1

The majority did not have a problem with parking their cars or with cars blocking their entrance in Laxfield. However, a small number of people did have a problem with the latter.



TRANSPORT *continued*

When asked about speeding, 66.7% (326) out of 489 respondents felt this was a problem in Laxfield.

WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING SPEED CONTROL MEASURES IN LAXFIELD

370 Respondents	Number	%
Extension of speed limit	134	36.2
Introduce a speed limit	129	34.9
Traffic calming	184	49.7
Children at play signs	166	44.9
More road warning signs	164	44.3

In particular several comments were made about the area outside the village school and the pre-school, where it was felt traffic calming measures are needed. Speed bumps and traffic islands were two of the suggestions put forward to address this problem.

In addition the following areas were highlighted in relation to traffic problems including:

- Speeding on Bickers Hill and through the village street
- Cars parking on a junction
- Junction at White House corner is very dangerous.

From the many comments received, villagers feel strongly about traffic related issues, in particular speeding.

BUS SERVICES

Laxfield at the present time is quite well served by buses which run regularly to Halesworth and Beccles and twice a week to Lowestoft. A bus also goes to Ipswich via Stradbroke and Framlingham. There is a limited connecting service to Diss where there is a main line train to London. When this was recently threatened with being cut there was a meeting in the village, and over 30 people protested at the proposed closures. Representations to the County Councillor portfolio holder for transport resulted in the service being modified.

When asked if the villagers used the bus service and if so what for. Of the 304 respondents well over 50% never used the service for work, shopping, medical visits or social and leisure. However, given the fact of the strong response to the proposed closure of the Diss Service and the 21.7% who use the bus for shopping and the 31.4% for social and leisure, with 19 people (6.2%) using it often or occasionally for visits to the doctor, it would seem to be important to keep these services running especially in view of the present environmental concerns.

IF YOU USE THE BUS, WHAT DO YOU USE IT FOR AND HOW OFTEN?

304 Respondents	Often	Occasionally	Never
Work	4	4	219
Shopping	21	45	198
Medical Visits	7	12	203
Social & Leisure	18	47	189
Other	9	8	137

PEDESTRIANS

When asked about the state of the pavements in Laxfield, 70% (336) out of 480 thought they were reasonable or good for people with disabilities, pushchairs and wheelchairs, however, in a further question on this subject, 25.6% (85) out of 332 respondents would like to see more pavements and 31% (103) more dropped kerbs. This particular issue was raised in relation to the pre-school where it was felt there was a need for dropped kerbs to assist with crossing the road with small children and pushchairs.

Questions were raised as to when the Bickers Hill footpath would be completed. Also pedestrians felt that there is a problem of cyclists on pavements which posed a danger, especially when coming out of side entrances.

RELIGION



All Saints Church with its 15th Century tower stands at the heart of the village. A recent grant has been awarded to pay for the repair of the tower which is at present fenced off as being slightly dangerous. The bells are still rung occasionally for short periods, but the longer peals are no longer possible due to the state of the bell frame.

The Baptist Chapel holds regular services, as well as coffee mornings and a Womens Fellowship.

When asked for the reason the church or chapel were important to the villagers 96.6% (455) out of 471 respondents said it was for weddings and funerals. Over 50% cited them as focal points for the community and as historic buildings.

The churchyard at All Saints is 'closed' meaning there can be no more burials there. The village cemetery is now almost full and the parish council has purchased the adjacent allotment land to use as a new cemetery.

✓ HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PLACES OF WORSHIP IN LAXFIELD

494 Respondents	Within week	Within last Month	Within last year	Attend elsewhere	Do not Attend
All Saints Church	56	54	163	16	176
Baptist Chapel	29	8	39	12	175



All Saints Church, Laxfield



Baptist Chapel, Laxfield

LAW & ORDER



Although 46% of people (230) out of 500 respondents expressed no opinion, 29.2% (146) felt the community police officer provided poor service while 17.4% (84) felt it was reasonable. Laxfield has one of the lowest figures for crime and vandalism in Suffolk.

✓ WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING CRIMES AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CONCERNS YOU IN LAXFIELD

497 Respondents	Number	%
Theft	227	45.7
Vandalism	327	65.8
Drunkenness	124	24.9
Other	46	9.3
Not concerned	101	20.3

Of the 497 respondents to this question 65.8% (327) cited vandalism as their main concern followed by theft 45.7% (227). When asked about the general feeling of safety in the village out of 495 respondents 75.6% (374)

expressed no fear of going out after dark or staying away from certain areas. 70 people (14.1%) avoid going out after dark but this may be older or very young people. In a similar category 55 (11.1%) go out after dark with somebody else rather than go alone.

COMMENTS:

- "More police present to control speeding"
- "The policeman should live in Laxfield"
- "No idea of a community policeman's existence"
- "We have never met our community policeman ... have no idea as to his name or location"



YOUTH

There was a good response to the youth questionnaire. Of the households where there were young people aged between 8 and 16 years 78 responded and 55 questionnaires were collected. This response reflects a genuine interest in the community by the youth of the village.

GENDER

77 Respondents		
	Number	%
Male	42	54.5
Female	35	45.5

AGE GROUP

78 Respondents		
Age	Number	%
8	11	14.1
9	15	19.2
10	5	6.4
11	10	12.8
12	7	9.0
13	11	14.1
14	6	7.7
15	9	11.5
16	4	5.1

73% of those asked stated that they had no difficulty in meeting up with friends outside school. However, they thought it would be a good idea to have more regular buses to enable them to travel in and out of the village.

There were many suggestions for participation in indoor activities including a chess club, netball, indoor football, indoor hockey, dance classes, badminton, IT, computer classes and arts and crafts.

Future outdoor activities suggested included football, rugby, athletics, horse riding, rounders, cricket, girls' football, a skate park and bmx track.

In response to the question "what improvements (if any) would you like to see on the playing field, answers included having some public toilets, the use of a tennis court, more equipment for older children such as a zipwire and climbing equipment. The general feeling was that the goals and football pitch need to be upgraded in to a better condition.

The most popular reason for the youth who answered the question "What do you like about living in Laxfield" were the nature and wildlife and the fact that it was quiet and their friends were near.

The strongest reason expressed for not liking living in Laxfield was the lack of understanding of young peoples' concerns and the lack of club and sporting activities.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE IN LAXFIELD

68 Respondents		
	Number	%
Skateboard Park	25	36.8
BMX/Scrambling Track	30	44.1
Basketball Court	25	36.8
Discos in Village Hall	31	45.6
Better bus service to other villages	29	42.6
Other	2	2.9



Playing Field Activities

THE FUTURE



View of The Street, Laxfield

When asked how the inhabitants would like to see Laxfield develop as a village, of the 492 who responded to this question 264 (53.7%) wanted it to stay as it is. This was closely followed by 261 (53%) for it to stay as a working community with just over 8% wanted it as a tourist centre and just over 5% as a retirement community.

The challenge faced by the village is to embrace any changes without spoiling the status quo so valued by the Community.



View of All Saints Church from Vicarage Road



ACTION PLAN

CATEGORY	ISSUE	ACTION	LEAD ORGANISATIONS	PARTNERS	RESOURCES	PRIORITY	PROGRESS
Housing		Consult with residents regarding housing needs in village, followed by public meeting to discuss results.	Parish Council	Suffolk Acre		H	
Environment		Find ways to reduce the impact of street lights on environment. Consult re turning lights off at midnight.	Parish Council Council	Suffolk County		H	
Litter & Dog Bins		Provide more dog bins and rubbish bins. Find ways of highlighting the need in the village to clear up dog mess and litter.	Parish Council	Community		H	
Local Government		Explore possibility of new village noticeboard. Encourage all organisations to provide information on what is going on in the village.	Parish Council	Local Organisations		M	
Parish Share of Council Tax		Parish Council to give more information to residents how their share of council tax is spent.	Parish Council			M	
Annual Parish Meeting		Find ways of promoting meetings in Laxfield to encourage more and younger people to attend.	Parish Council			M	
Information on work of Parish Council		More detailed information about Parish Council meetings in Church magazine. Explore possibility of magazine being made freely available to all the community. Encourage villagers to attend parish council meetings.	Parish Council	PCC		H	
Village website		Investigate ways of keeping website up to date, possibly find a professional IT person to run it. Advertise website in community.	Parish Council	Suffolk Acre One Suffolk		M	
Sports & Leisure		Assess possibility of getting tennis court repaired.	Parish Council Youth Club		AAA Dist Cnct	M	
Use of School for community activities		Find ways of encouraging/informing people about use of school facilities eg netball, badminton.	Parish Council	Village school Residents Extended Schools		M	
Pavilion on playing field		Explore possibility of building new pavilion or refurbishing old one.	Parish Council Playing Field Committee	Football club Cricket club	Funding	M	
Village Hall		Advertise facilities, giving clear information relating to prices etc. on website.	Village Hall Committee	Parish Council		M	
Parking at Village Hall		Review parking facilities – see if there are any alternatives.	Parish Council	Residents		H	
Road Safety		Look at ways to reduce speeding in and around village, and possible introduction of traffic calming measures.	Parish Council	Highways Police		H	
Policing		Develop ways of giving out more information about local police in village. Mobile Police unit, once a quarter Organise public meeting with the community police officer. Should attend PC meeting and APM	Parish Council	Police		L	
Footpaths		Explore possibility of finishing Bickers Hill footpath and extending further. Improve footpath near playgroup.	Parish Council	Suffolk County Council Highways		M	
Parking		Reduce unauthorised and dangerous parking in village.	Police County Highways			H	
Youth Facilities		To consult with young people i.e. their needs and priorities in the village, e.g. skateboard park.	Parish Council	Youth Club Young Suffolk		M	

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