



Drinkstone Parish Plan 2008



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Drinkstone Parish
Council



Foreword: from the Chairman of the Parish Plan Working Group

Dear Fellow Villagers

It gives me great satisfaction to be writing this foreword to the Drinkstone Parish Plan. When I started the process in 2005 the outlook for such a successful outcome looked very dismal. It goes to show that we should never assume the worst! What did in fact happen is that, supported by my fellow parish councillors, our district councillor (now district and county councillor) Penny Otton and our then county councillor Jane Storey, I obtained a budget that enabled me to approach interest groups in the village to seek personnel for a steering committee to produce a Parish Plan. The Church, the Village Hall Committee and parishioners generally came up trumps, we formed a committee and off we went.

The plan has done all the things the pundits said it would; it has brought the villagers closer together, there is a feeling of optimism. We can now see our way forward on issues important to the parish and speak to outside bodies with the authority of the village behind us. What emerges from the plan is that Drinkstone is a well balanced and lively place and we generally agree on which issues are important. I trust this process will lead to greater co-operation and greater social cohesion.

I thank all the committee members who have travelled through the process with me and made the enterprise work, they have all played vital roles; it is however necessary to mark out some individually: David and Lynne Woodward for their efforts in analysing the information and processing it and for arranging the delivery and collection of questionnaires so efficiently; Daphne Youngs for writing the power point presentation at the village meeting and for turning the statistics into a comprehensible narrative; Julie Beard for her hospitality to the committee and her endless supply of hot refreshments and Val Cundy for taking the minutes and keeping us all to order with her 'to do' memos. However the most important thank you is to you, the residents of Drinkstone, who answered the questionnaires in such numbers and brought our plan into being.

Moira Goldstaub

Chairman: Drinkstone Parish Plan Working Group

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Introduction to Drinkstone

Drinkstone is a popular and lively small village situated south of the A14 between the market towns of Bury St Edmunds (8 miles) and Stowmarket (7 miles). Its main centre of population is about 2.5 miles from the larger village of Woolpit, where shops and a health centre are located. Like many Suffolk villages Drinkstone started as two settlements, one around The Street and the other around The Green. The parish also includes a small settlement formerly known as Potash; the remaining dwellings on the site of Drinkstone Park, a country house demolished in the 1940s; and a number of outlying farms and cottages. Many of the farms date back to the 15th century and some of the cottages built to house farm workers are still standing and are as old as these farms.

The village is surrounded by arable farmland. In recent years much of the farmland closest to the village has been reclassified for equestrian use, and within the village boundary former farm buildings and yards have been redeveloped for housing. The village is a popular choice for people working in Bury and elsewhere in Suffolk. There are still strong traditional links with the local farming community though it is no longer a significant employer. There is little employment in Drinkstone itself, though there are over 40 small or micro businesses operating out of the village.

The main centre of population is at Drinkstone Green, with a range of modern family homes both small and large, a number of period properties, the Village Hall, a sports field, a playground for small children and some well tended allotments.

Drinkstone Street, 1.5 miles away and separated from the Green by farmland, consists mainly of a few large period properties, the Church, two windmills once used for grinding corn, one of which is Grade I listed, and an unlawful animal waste rendering plant.

The population of the village is growing slowly and currently stands at around 550. After a number of significant housing developments in the latter half of the 20th century, the pace of development has slowed, and is now limited to small scale infill development or the conversion or extension of existing buildings. As Drinkstone has been **classified as a “village in the countryside” in the Local Development Framework**, it can only be assumed that any further market led development is likely to be very limited.

Over the last 20 years or so the village school, shop, post office and pub have all closed. The Village Hall remains as the focal point for community life, and is home to a large number of educational, artistic, sporting, social and recreational activities. Plans to develop a new, larger hall are well advanced, and the new hall aims to open for business in 2009.



Drinkstone houses: ...the old



...and the new.

A Parish Plan for Drinkstone

Local and regional government are increasingly required to develop policies in consultation with local communities and these should be based on an understanding of local needs. The Parish Plan is a prime means of giving expression to these needs, and providing evidence to Parish, District and County Councils and other public bodies to inform their decision making and policy development.

“Local people are invariably the best source of wisdom and knowledge of their surroundings, resulting in better decisions being made.”

Our objectives

- To provide an authoritative statement of what the residents of Drinkstone feel about their village and how they want it to be in the future
- To identify the issues that are important to the village and establish priorities for action within the community
- To inform the Parish, District and County Councils, and other bodies providing important public services to the community of the opinions of residents on the issues that are important to them
- To stimulate discussion and action to address what can and should be done, and increase community involvement in solving problems and addressing opportunities

How did we go about it?

In November 2006 a Parish Plan working group was formed. Its role was to carry out a village survey, raise funds to cover the costs and produce this Parish Plan. We are indebted to Drinkstone Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council for their encouragement as well as their generous donations. We would also like to thank all the volunteers who gave their time and expertise and of course the people of Drinkstone who spent time responding to the questionnaire.

The timescale

- April 2005 - First public meeting
- September 2006 – second public meeting
- November 2006 – work begins on devising the questionnaire
- August 2007 – Mid Suffolk District Council grants funding
- September 2007 – questionnaire finalised and printed
- October 2007 – questionnaire distributed and collected data analysed
- October – November 2007 – data entry and analysis of results
- December 2007 – public meeting to present results, attended by 74 people
- December 2007 – February 2008 – writing, printing and publishing the plan
- March 2008 – copy of plan delivered to every household

Methodology

Responses, interpretation and action ...

After collecting a number of example questionnaires, and speaking to other parish councils, we decided to produce two questionnaires. One for young people aged between eight and 16 to be completed by each individual young person, and an adult questionnaire for those aged 17 and upwards, where the majority of questions would be answered on a household basis, with only limited demographic data being supplied on individual household members.

The data was analysed using MS Excel, a readily available and well understood piece of software, powerful and flexible enough to give us the required level of correlation and analysis of the responses.

The adult questionnaire contained 62 questions. The questionnaires were taken to 228 households, of which eight were unoccupied and three refused to participate. 217 were delivered, 184 were returned completed, a superb response rate of 85%. The 184 households who responded represent 473 residents – 86% of the population of the village. The young people's questionnaire contained 20 questions. Of the 48 delivered there were 37 completed responses with one returned uncompleted. This is a return rate of 75%. Well done to all.

Highlights of the questionnaire results were presented at a well attended public meeting in December 2007, where 74 residents got first sight of the issues and opportunities which the people of Drinkstone had identified.



Inevitably village life will evolve in various ways during the coming years: some of the changes will be as a result of initiatives already in hand; some the natural movement of residents in and out of the village and some will be as a direct result of the Parish Plan project. Because of this the Parish Plan can only be considered representative of village views for three to five years.

The Questionnaire responses, the interpretation of them and the resulting action plan form the contents of this report. All issues raised by more than 15% of the respondents are listed within the action plan and are ranked 'high' 'medium' and 'low'

according to the weight of responses given in the questionnaire. As the Parish Plan is valid for a limited length of time, it is unlikely that all issues will be

resolved within its 'lifespan', particularly those with low priority.

Samples of some of the comments the residents made are scattered throughout the text, presented in quotation marks. The statistical data, **respondents' comments, the presentation given at the public meeting and this report are all available on the village website www.drinkstonevillage.co.uk.** Copies of this plan will be made available to all Drinkstone households and to other groups and organisations whom we hope to influence or who have expressed an interest in learning from the results.

Significant milestones reached on the Action Plan will be reported on the website and parish magazine.

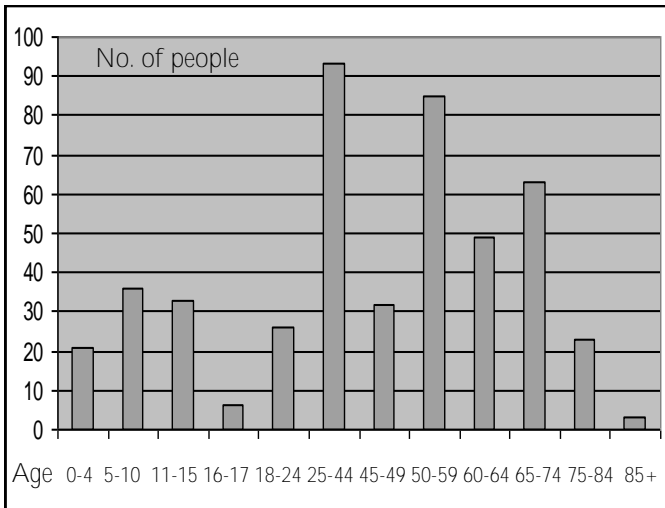
...a superb response rate of 85%...

Village snapshot

Population profile

There were 473 people including children living in the 184 households who completed the questionnaire.

Age Distribution chart



The age profile shows a fairly balanced population, with 19% under 18, and 20% over 65. This gives the lie to the perception that Drinkstone is a retirement village. People in employment and all our school children travel out of the village each day – they are just less visible for much of the time.

When asked **“How long have you lived in the village?”** the results showed that 41% have lived here for less than 10 years, 20% between 11 and 20 years and 39% over 20 years. The Parish Magazine has recorded the arrival of 40 new households since January 2004. The results present a picture of a village that is renewing itself, and with a population that is stable rather than static.



Why do people leave? 21 households indicated that someone had moved away from home in the last year. The main reasons given were: to take up a new job (5 respondents), to go on to further or higher

education (7) or to set up a household with a new partner (6). Five respondents cited lack of suitable accommodation to rent or buy as the reason for leaving.

People came to live in Drinkstone mainly because of their work or the love of village and country life. Only 10% retired here.

Housing profile

Drinkstone is a village of owner occupiers.



The majority of houses are heated by oil – although the main North Sea gas pipeline runs through the parish, Drinkstone is not connected to it.

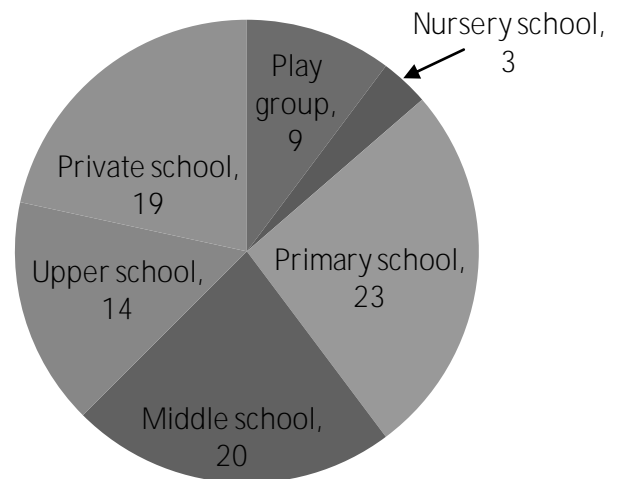
There was interest expressed by 130 households in being connected to mains gas, while 97 were interested in an oil co-operative. Four households have installed solar power for water heating and 60 more are interested in knowing more about alternative energy sources.

When asked if their houses were affected by problems of noise, flooding, smells, low flying aircraft or anything else, 86 households answered. 92% of respondents to this question cited the smell – known locally as the **“Woolpit Whiff”** - emanating from the unlawful rendering plant at Rookery Farm. This is a severe but localised problem, affecting 43% of households in the village as a whole, as well as neighbouring parishes.

Education

The responses cover 88 children and young people. Most are at primary or middle school, and 22% of young people go to private schools. The pie chart shows numbers of children in each category.

When asked what other educational facilities were needed, childcare needs predominated, with 12 children needing a childminder, 21 a nursery or playgroup place and 20 who would benefit from a holiday play scheme.



The Opportunities & Issues:

- 60 households are interested in alternative sources of energy
- 97 households expressed interest in an oil co-operative
- 80 households expressed interest in mains gas
- How to mitigate or eliminate the smell from Rookery Farm
- How to provide childcare in the village

Action Plan:

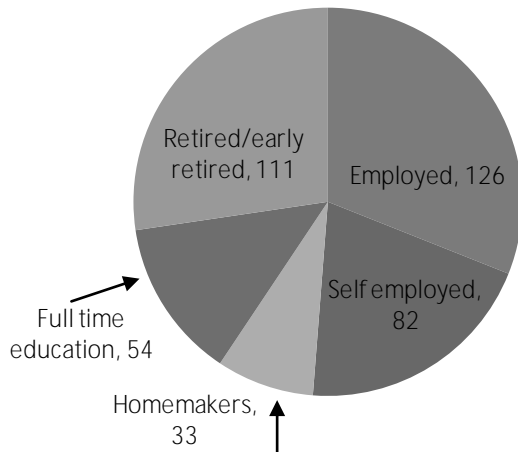
- ⇒ Build on the interest in alternative sources of energy for heating and water
- ⇒ Investigate the feasibility of an oil cooperative
- ⇒ Investigate feasibility of obtaining mains gas supply to village
- ⇒ Continue to work with other affected parishes and MSDC to address the issue of smells from Rookery Farm
- ⇒ Investigate options for childcare provision in the village

...130 households interested in being connected to mains gas, while 97 were interested in an oil co-operative..

Employment, training and business

Employment

Employment levels in Drinkstone are high. The pie chart shows numbers of people by type.



Most people (68%) are in full time work with another 22% working between 15 and 29 hours per week. 31% of those over 60 are also still in some form of employment. Of the respondents, none is registered unemployed, and three are permanently sick or disabled.

Most people travel out of Drinkstone to work, with Bury as the main centre of employment (105 respondents) and another 34 working elsewhere in Suffolk. There are relatively few people who commute farther afield, with 25 respondents working in either Cambridge or London and another 15 working elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

Despite this predominantly local pattern of work and the presence of a daily bus service to Bury, 218 respondents (82%) travel to work by car, with only 12 using the public bus.

Business development and job opportunities

The people who responded to the question were overwhelmingly against any form of small business (62%) or small scale industrial (95%) development in Drinkstone. Respondents also did not see the need for developments to create more jobs in the village (70% against). Comments suggest that there is available business space in nearby villages, especially on the Woolpit business park, and that Drinkstone does not have any suitable locations for new business premises.

An exception to this was support for businesses to serve purely local needs – principally a shop and a pub - 84% of residents said they would use a village shop.

“Business from home should be encouraged and rural/farm industries, but nothing on a large scale”

“Convert redundant agricultural buildings”

“Re-open the pub”

The Issue:

- Should retail services be developed? Are they viable?

Action Plan:

- ⇒ Investigate feasibility of a village shop.

Transport and highways

Drinkstone is a village without streetlights and with only about 200 metres of pavement. The car is the most important means of transport for most residents, with low levels of use of both bus and train for either work or leisure travel. Drinkstone is also subject to increasing amounts of through traffic, particularly as a result of housing developments in neighbouring Rattlesden.

Speeding

Speeding – cited by 67% of households - is the most serious issue residents have identified in this survey. Not only do many drivers break the speed limits everywhere in the village and drive inappropriately for the road conditions, but there seems to be no effective means of enforcing speed limits in a rural community.

“People speed through the village”
 “Enforce speed restrictions”

“Policeman with speed gun in village last week at 1.45pm. Wrong time of day...only stayed 10 minutes”

Lorry Traffic

The volume and speed of lorries using the village roads was cited as a traffic concern by 23% of households, with particular reference to those visiting the rendering plant. A major side effect was the resulting verge and road edge erosion, mentioned by 22% as an environmental concern.

“Buses, lorries too large for village roads”

Road safety

Our narrow, winding roads were never designed to handle the volume of traffic and size of vehicles now using them. The problem is made worse by hedgerows and trees reducing visibility particularly at junctions, and junction layout is often poor.

“Cut hedges at junctions for better visibility”
 “Many lanes need maintenance – potholes, crumbling edges”

104 households identified specific danger spots in the village. The junction of Chapel Lane and Gedding Road, with its blind bend and parked cars, and the junction of Beyton Road and The Street, again with a blind bend and parked cars close to the junction are most problematical.



Blind bend in Gedding Road

Pedestrian and cyclist safety

35% of households never or only occasionally walk or cycle through the village. When asked what improvements would benefit cyclists or pedestrians, many residents called for streetlights (23%), more footpaths (23%), more pavements (20%) especially in the main built up area, and more cycle paths. 36% felt that no improvements were needed.

“there are no paths from my house to ...the playground...traffic bombs along country lanes and around blind bends - walking there with a pushchair is too dangerous”

“Slow traffic down”

“Safer roadside footpaths”

The network of foot paths around the village is heavily used and much appreciated. Keeping them clear of undergrowth and dog mess has been identified as an issue by 23%, with the cutting regime having proved inadequate.



‘The network of foot paths around the village is heavily used and much appreciated.’

“Regular cutting of footpaths for year round access”

“Unmaintained footpaths are difficult...impossible to walk”

“Greatly appreciate the footpaths”

In recent years much of the farmland nearest the village has been turned over to equestrian use, and more is planned. Horse riders (15%) are also concerned over traffic and road safety, and, unlike pedestrians, have no off road riding routes.

Public transport

When asked how many people use the bus and how often, 399 people responded. 79% never use the bus with only 18 people using it more than once a week or occasionally. When asked what would make them use the bus more often, of the 153 households who replied, 44% said they would never use it, even if the service were improved. The main concern with the bus service is frequency and reliability. Train usage is higher, with 47% taking the train more than once a week or occasionally. Cost is the main constraint for most households.

Issues

- Excessive traffic speed on all through routes in the village, and especially Rattlesden Road and Gedding Road
- Safety of pedestrians and cyclists
- Volume and speed of lorry traffic, particularly that serving the unlawful rendering plant at Rookery Farm
- Verge and road edge erosion
- Poor visibility at junctions
- How to improve pedestrian safety
- Keeping footpaths clear and clean
- Lack of off-road horse riding routes

Action plan:

- ⇒ Work with others to reduce speeding in the village and enforce speed limits
- ⇒ Investigate again the possibility of lorry weight restrictions
- ⇒ Work with Highways to address verge and road edge erosion
- ⇒ Establish programmes for maintenance of hedges and trees in public areas to improve poor visibility at junctions
- ⇒ Assess feasibility of environmentally friendly street lighting and/or pavements where required, also cycle paths
- ⇒ Improve cutting regime to keep footpaths clear and clean at all times of year
- ⇒ Provide more dog bins
- ⇒ Investigate creating a network of bridleways

Housing and development

Drinkstone is a popular and pleasant place to live, with residents appreciating the open landscape and the quiet. There is no desire for any significant new housing development in the village, though numerous comments indicate concern about the lack of affordable housing for young people and families—and the number of large houses built in the village in recent years.

Scale of development

When asked what type of housing development would be beneficial to the village, there was most support for converting redundant buildings (57% in favour), and for limited small scale infill (41% in favour). Support for small groups of houses (less than nine) was more evenly split with 36% for and 23% against, and there was strong opposition to large groups of houses.

21% of households wanted no new development of any kind.

	For	Against
Convert redundant buildings	57%	2%
Infill development	41%	15%
Small groups houses <9	36%	23%
Large groups houses	2%	39%

Although there was support for limited infill development, many comments expressed concern about “garden grabbing” and the resulting increased housing density.

“Developing large houses in existing gardens...destroying the character of the village”

“Infrastructure not suited to large scale developments”

“Please – no big developments!”

What sort of houses?

Most felt that small family or starter homes should be prioritised. Most (28%) favoured owner occupied houses, though there is some support for shared ownership. In the comments the need for sheltered housing was also raised, to enable the elderly to stay in the village.

	For	Against
Owner occupied	28%	4%
Private rented	11%	14%
Local authority	20%	14%
Shared ownership	22%	6%
Provided with employment	4%	18%
Sheltered housing	16%	12%
Other	7%	

The numerous comments which accompanied this section of the questionnaire highlighted the basis for residents’ reservations about more development. What concerns people most is:

- the lack of facilities: there is no shop, school or pub in the village
- the effect on the infrastructure, particularly the sewers and water supply
- increased traffic

“...affordable housing may be better suited to villages with facilities”

“No facilities to attract starter home owners”

“The main thing Drinkstone needs is affordable housing”

“Affordable housing for local people”

The Issues:

- Lack of affordable housing for young people and families who wish to remain in the village
- Garden grabbing

Action plan:

- ⇒ Ensure parish plan is taken into account in planning decisions

Local services and amenities

Health

Drinkstone is a healthy village, 79% have no difficulty accessing health services, though there is a slight problem around finding an NHS dentist.

Police

Drinkstone is a village with low levels of crime, and little in the way of antisocial behaviour. 97% of residents feel safe in the village.

The second most critical issue to emerge from this survey however, is the lack of police presence in the village. Over half of households want the police to be more visible. The comments also highlighted a perceived lack of responsiveness on the part of the police when problems are reported to them.

People are willing to do their bit as well, with 28 households interested in joining Neighbourhood Watch.

“Never see a policeman around....or community support officers”

“Police availability more important than presence”

“Quicken response time”

Council services

21% of households are less than satisfied with the twin bin refuse collection. Most concerns centred on the black bins, both in terms of their capacity and the fortnightly collection causing odour problems, especially in the summer.

“Larger bins and especially a green bin for garden refuse”

“Fortnightly collection of refuse is not hygienic”

“Larger bins for bi-weekly collection”

The main improvements to council services suggested by respondents would be road gritting (17%), especially on the through routes, more dog bins (17%), and an extension of recycling to include garden waste.

“Road gritting doesn't happen, even on bus routes”

“More dog litter bins”

Village amenities



Most people felt that the children's play area, the allotments and the recreation field meet the needs of the village. Opinion was more divided about the village hall, which is acknowledged to be inadequate. A project to build a new village hall is well advanced.

Residents were asked to propose specific improvements which would make the village a

better place to live. Top of the list were a shop, pub and new village hall. Also suggested were more allotments – 8 more households would like to take one up – and the development of a community wood.

“More allotment plots – half size possibly”

“...we are all looking forward to a new hall”

“..keep dogs off the play area”

“A social club where people can get together and socialise”

“A pub”

“A club for teenagers”

The Issues

- Lack of police presence
- Size of black bins is too small for some families
- Garden waste collection
- Dog fouling in public places
- Road gritting
- Inadequate village hall
- Insufficient allotment plots

Action plan:

- ⇒ Work closer with Suffolk police to achieve more visible police presence and quick response to incidents
- ⇒ Strengthen Neighbourhood Watch
- ⇒ Lobby MSDC for more recycling and larger black bins where needed
- ⇒ Provide more dog bins
- ⇒ Lobby Suffolk CC for gritting of main bus route through village
- ⇒ Develop new village hall and increase number of events
- ⇒ Increase number of allotment plots

Information, communication & local government

What's on?

The Parish Magazine is the main source of information in the village - read by 94% of residents - with leaflets, posters and word of mouth also having a high level of impact. There is much lower awareness of the village website – only 14% of residents are aware of it and only 9% use it as a source of information.

“Parish magazine should be free of charge”
“Did not know the village has a website”
“Very good magazine, important to the village”

TV, radio and phones

A third of residents have problems with mobile phone reception, and this does not appear to be network dependent. There are also areas of poor TV reception, with digital TV more problematical than analogue.

“Mobile can only get a signal in our garden”
“TV...poor reception even with a booster”

Local government

Drinkstone has a Parish Magazine, a website and a parish notice board in front of the Village Hall. 89% of households feel they are well enough informed about Parish Council activities, with a hint that more information is always welcome. 74% of

residents think the Parish Council is aware of local concerns.

As might be expected, the more distant the tier of government, the lower the satisfaction level and level of awareness. 45% read the MSDC newsletter, and there is no awareness of any regular communication from Suffolk County.

“More information should be documented/circulated”
“Big communication gap with Suffolk County”
“Don't know who District/County Councillors are”

Planning

82% of residents think MSDC planning department is effective or fairly effective in ensuring that new houses blend in with their surroundings. However there were numerous comments - 47% of residents had views about the way the planning system is implemented.

The main issues are:

- lack of transparency in decision making, with MSDC decisions appearing “random”, “inconsistent”, “haphazard”
- MSDC does not appear to take into account any local representations when making decisions – neither those of individuals nor the Parish Council
- planning enforcement is poor and inconsistent

“2 site meetings and architect's drawings demanded for hay shed but nothing done about illegal occupation of land zoned for agriculture”

“...no real notice taken of local views”

“Appalling...if one follows correct procedure it is difficult and frustrating, where as if one goes ahead regardless and applies retrospectively there are few obstacles”

“Seem to make up their own rules”

“take little or no notice of comments from parish”

“Incapable of taking enforcement action against Rookery Farm”

“Seems fair enough”

The Issues

- Poor awareness of website
- Some reception problems

- How to improve communication from Parish Council

- How Parish Council can present local views more effectively to the planners
- How MSDC can improve the way it justifies and communicates its decisions
- How planning law can be enforced fairly and effectively

Action plan:

- ⇒ Drive to promote village website
- ⇒ Lobby mobile phone and TV network providers to improve reception

- ⇒ Establish better communication between Parish Council and residents
- ⇒ Expand effective liaison between Parish Council and neighbouring Parish Councils

- ⇒ Present Parish Plan to planners to reinforce awareness of local views
- ⇒ Provide better information to residents about MSDC planning decisions

- ⇒ Lobby MSDC for better enforcement of planning decisions

Religion



The Parish Church is the single place of worship in Drinkstone, and aims to provide different styles of worship, from traditional to modern all-age services, with at least one service held every Sunday throughout the year including a variety of seasonal and commemorative services.



Baptism at All Saints

The majority of residents – 44% - attend a place of worship between one and 12 times a year. Where residents attend a place of worship other than the Church, it is principally because they are not Church of England; because they prefer a different style of worship; or because they have long standing ties with other churches mainly in neighbouring villages.

Although regular church worship is a minority activity in Drinkstone, a high proportion of residents value the building as a key feature in the village (64%), for its historical and architectural importance (51%) and for commemorating key life events (birth, marriage and death) (45%).

**‘A key
feature’**



All statistics and comments relevant to this section will be passed to the Rector and Parochial Church Council for review and possible action.

**“Child friendly and welcoming”
“Important only
as a historic building”**

Environment

Drinkstone residents place a very high value on the physical environment in and around the village. Many residents chose to live here because of its rural setting, and because they love the rural way of life. Most valued are the farmland (90%), hedgerows (90%), existing open spaces (87%) and trees (84%). Historic buildings – houses, the windmills and farm buildings – also contribute to residents’ enjoyment of their surroundings.



Walkers on one of the footpaths

The footpaths are seen as vital to enable access to and enjoyment of our landscape. Extending the network of footpaths featured strongly among suggestions for improving the village.

“Footpaths between villages which don’t follow roads”

“More bridleways for increased number of riders”

As might be expected, these important landscape features do cause some concern, with 33% of residents feeling the need for better maintenance of both hedges and footpaths, both by landowners and

local authorities. 22% were also concerned about the condition of our roadside verges. A further 15% expressed concern regarding the lack of bridleways..

No concern was expressed about any aspect of the local environment by 35% of residents.

“Many of the footpaths become overgrown between spring and late summer”

“Verges driven over by lorries and other vehicles”

“Hedges – owners need to keep them trimmed”

“Lack of overall maintenance”

In the centre of Drinkstone Green lies the Cherry Tree site. Once the location of the village pub, for the last 10 years it has been derelict and overgrown, with the pub boarded up. When asked **“What initiatives would most improve the village”** over 60% of residents thought that to tidy up or develop this site would have the most beneficial impact on the village. Other initiatives mentioned were: more dog litter bins (34%), the need to tidy residents’ hedges (27%) and more litter bins (17%).



More bins please!



'A pleasant place to live...'

The Issues & Opportunities

- Maintenance of footpaths and hedgerows
- Erosion of verge and road edges
- Derelict Cherry Tree site

Action plan:

- ⇒ Ensure footpaths are kept clean and clear at all times of year
- ⇒ Work with Highways to address verge and road edge erosion
- ⇒ Press for speedy development of Cherry Tree site

Youth view

37 young people aged 8 to 16 completed the youth questionnaire, 14 boys and 23 girls. All travel out of the village to school.

Facilities

As with many adults, the young people, especially the older teenagers, felt the lack of somewhere to meet socially in an informal setting. There was also a high level of support for a shop.

There is also a need for more play equipment particularly for older children - bigger swings and slides, a zip wire and a skate park.

Clubs and activities

Young people would like to see more clubs and activities available in the village – mainly to overcome the problems of lack of transport, there being no buses after 6 pm and the fact that they are reliant on their parents to taxi them everywhere.

The cost of travelling to participate in clubs and sports outside the village is also an issue for some.

The main gap in provision is any sort of club or activity targeted at teenagers. The popular and successful youth group in the village is only for children up to 12 years old.

What's on?

46% young people rely on the Parish Magazine to find out what is going on. More (54%) would like a youth web. They would like to know what is coming up, announcements of new things, fun things to do and work offers.



What are the worst things about living here?

Although peace and quiet are valued, the flip side is that there is not a lot to do. Social isolation is also an issue, as is the distance to travel if your friends are outside the village. Having no meeting place also makes isolation worse.

What would you really like in the village?

Comments highlighted the need for somewhere to socialise, and more activities for all ages.

How can we improve the environment?

Our young people have focused on clearing up dog fouling as the main thing which would improve their environment and there are problems currently around the play equipment on the recreation ground. More recycling is also popular.

What are the best things about living here?

37% like the peace, quiet and space of the village, 29% like having friends in the village and being able to walk or cycle to meet them.

“A village shop would be awesome”

“A club for teenagers to hang out after school sometimes”

“A club with a café where I could meet up with my friends and chat”

“We always have to have lifts everywhere”

“Would prefer clubs in the village”

“Poor bus service”

The Issues

- Lack of a meeting place for young people
- Lack of a youth Club for 12-16's
- More activities needed
- Youth web needed to find out **what's on**

Action Plan:

- ⇒ Investigate and set up a Youth Club/drop in centre for young people
- ⇒ Invite them to develop their own web site

The Community

One of the objectives of the Parish Plan development and village appraisal is to “Stimulate discussion and action to address what can and should be done, and increase community involvement in solving problems and addressing opportunities”.

Most respondents (71%) appreciate Drinkstone’s balanced population and want the village to stay as it is “as a family community incorporating workers, the retired, commuters and families of all ages”

For this village to thrive and to counter rural isolation for people of all ages, we need a strong community spirit, brought about by active involvement in locally based social, educational and employment activities.

The geography of Drinkstone does not make this easy – it is a scattered parish, with no obvious centre, and there is also no informal social meeting place such as a shop or a pub. In the comments there is a sense of the community having been hollowed out with the loss of its pub in particular.

People work hard in the village to maintain and develop a sense of community. The high level of support and involvement in the fundraising activities for the Village Hall demonstrates this most clearly - 60% of residents have participated in fundraising events to date. There are also 10 thriving clubs and classes which currently use the village hall, as well as an annual village show, dog show, ceilidh, pensioners’ Christmas lunch, sale trail and quiz. 23% of residents would welcome more village events.



The consultation on the village hall in 2006 showed support for a wider range of activities and events in the village. In the tear off sheet that accompanied the parish plan questionnaire 58 individuals signed up to express interest in participating in community events with 12 interested in activities for children and young people.

We hope that these people, among others, will form a nucleus of volunteers to take forward activities which will make

Drinkstone an even livelier and more stimulating place to live.

“I would like the village to be a colourful mix of people”

“More community events outside”

“A community village shop”

“The village could really benefit from a shop and a pub...both a focus for village life. Otherwise

it's lovely as it is”



The present village hall

Action Plan

This Parish Plan reflects the views and aspirations of the residents of Drinkstone in 2008. Plans like this need to be kept up to date to stay useful. We will be updating this plan at 3 to 5 year intervals, so we can identify changes and new issues and track how far the actions arising from the 2008 plan have been carried out and **have succeeded in addressing today's issues.**

Key to table

CC: County Council, CPSO: Community Police Support Officer, MP: Member of Parliament, MSDC: Mid-Suffolk District Council, PC: Parish Council, PPWG: Parish Plan Working Group, VHC: Village Hall Committee

High priority actions

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
Continue to work to eliminate smell from Rookery Farm	MSDC	PC, Woolpit, Tostock, Beyton PCs
Work with others to reduce speeding in the village and enforce speed limits	PC	Other PCs, Police, Suffolk CC
Ensure parish plan is taken into account in planning decisions	PC	MSDC
Work closer with Suffolk police to achieve more visible police presence and quick response to incidents	PC	Community Police Officer, CPSO, Suffolk CC, Police Authority, MP
Develop new Village Hall	VHC	PC, funders, Clubs and Classes, Greene King
Lobby for better enforcement of planning decisions	PC	MSDC
Present Parish Plan to planners to reinforce awareness of local views	PC	MSDC
Press for speedy development of Cherry Tree site	VHC	PC, Greene King, MSDC
Investigate and set up a Youth club/drop in centre for young people	PPC	Clubs and Classes, VHC, MSDC, Suffolk CC
Set up a youth web	Young volunteers	

Medium priority actions

Investigate feasibility of an oil cooperative	PPWG	
Investigate options for childcare provision in the village	Clubs and Classes	VHC, Suffolk CC, providers
Investigate again the possibility of lorry weight restrictions (being addressed)	PC	Police, Highways
Ensure footpaths are kept clear and clean at all times of year	PC	Landowners, Suffolk CC
Provide more dog bins (addressed)	PC	
Strengthen Neighbourhood watch	Current Watch coordinator	Residents, PC, Suffolk Police Coordinator
Lobby Suffolk CC for gritting of main village bus route	PC	Suffolk CC

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
Increase usage of village website	Website manager	Content providers
Establish better communication between Parish Council and residents.	PC	Residents
Expand effective liaison between PC and neighbouring PCs	PC	Other PCs
Provide better information to residents about MSDC planning decisions	MSDC	PC, Councillor MSDC and CC

Low priority actions

Build on the interest in alternative sources of energy for heating and water	Conservation Group	PC
Investigate feasibility of obtaining mains gas supply to village	PPWG	Centrica
Contact Highways to address problems of verge and road edge erosion	PC	PC, Highways
Establish programmes for maintenance of hedges and trees in public areas	PC	Residents, Highway authority
Investigate creating a network of bridleways	Drinkstone Riding Club	PC, neighbouring PCs, Landowners
Assess feasibility of environmentally friendly street lighting and/or pavements where required, and cycle paths	PC	Suffolk CC
Lobby MSDC for more recycling and larger black bins where needed	PC	MSDC
Increase number of allotment plots	Allotment Trust	
Lobby mobile phone and TV networks to improve reception	PC	Network providers
Provide more litter bins	PC	

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Produced by
Drinkstone Parish Plan Working Group

