



ASHFIELD PARISH PLAN

Ashfield Parish Plan Report

Produced by the Ashfield Parish Plan Committee
Issue 1

28th August 2008

Foreword

Letter from Paul Debenham, District Councillor

Ashfield cum Thorpe is a pretty village spread over a wide area with an active Parish Council which has supported the team, lead by Cllr Simon Garrett, who worked hard to produce this detailed Parish Plan.

This Plan will not only assist the Parish Council in decision making but will also be referred to by Mid Suffolk District Council to ascertain the wishes of the population of Ashfield cum Thorpe in the future.

Small villages all have difficulties in maintaining services but have the advantage of a close supportive community.

I am sure Ashfield cum Thorpe will continue to be a friendly caring village and a pleasant place to live.

Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings of the Parish Plan survey carried out in 2006-7, and meetings to identify actions that were held in 2008. It will be used by the village and village bodies in future development.

There have been various meetings including a public meeting at the Community Hall on 23rd July 2008 to discuss the findings and formulate recommendations.

Suggestions for actions have been drawn up on the basis of the survey results and the public meeting, and are presented here, but it will be for the villagers – collectively or individually – to decide on whether these actions are appropriate, and to make them happen.

This report can be downloaded from <http://www.simongarrett.co.uk/ashfieldparishplan/>, and paper copies are available on request from Simon Garrett, 01728 685 489 (email: simon.garrett@iee.org). It was agreed at the public meeting in July 2008 that printed copies will not be sent to each villager, both for environmental and cost reasons. The report will be publicised both by email and by the newsletter.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What this is...

The Parish Plan is an attempt to capture the views of the village, identify issues of concern, and to suggest ways they can be tackled. Although the survey was carried out last year, various pressures (including the theft of the PC that had all the data) have delayed the results.

1.2 Thanks to...

Ashfield Parish Council for supporting the Plan

Suffolk ACRE for continuous help, and in channelling money to us to cover costs

Ashfield residents for taking time to complete the survey forms.

Members of the committee for planning and carrying out the survey.

2 Aims

The Ashfield Parish Plan Project was established with these aims:

1. Collect and document information about the village, its residents, buildings, land use, businesses, employment, travel patterns, services, communication, demography, etc, mainly by means of a village-wide survey.
2. Identify the burning issues for the village, and recommend what to do about them
3. Involve all groups in the village in village life, including:
 - a. The young, and the not so young
 - b. Residents: long established village residents, newer residents, weekend owners
 - c. Local businesses (old and new): farmers, home workers, small businesses. If possible include visiting businesses (e.g. milkman, frozen food man...), perhaps businesses outside the village employing village residents
4. Identify means for better communication across village groups – Parish Council, Church, Community Council... including exploring better use of new technology
5. Increase the sense of involvement
 - a. Specifically, to increase involvement with local democracy
 - b. Social cohesion
 - c. Inclusion of all groups in the village
6. Identify village heritage (what is the village heritage?) and identify what we need to do to preserve it.
7. Identify local needs and concerns, such as:

- a. Transport issues (including public transport)
- b. Issues relating to child care and schools
- c. Issues of local support services (e.g. baby sitting, helping for the elderly, house-bound, those with special needs)
- d. Needs for other public services
- e. Identify needs for sport and recreation
- f. Environmental issues that concern the village

The project has the following specific objectives:

1. Consider what more can be done to reduce traffic speeds, and to reduce through-traffic of lorries (not travelling to very local destinations)
2. Consider what can be done to involve the village in planning issues
3. Identify specific new village activities to engender a strengthened village spirit
4. Identify any additional needs for community buildings, and prepare the way for fund-raising for this.

The project will deliver:

1. A report summarising the findings, and an analysis of the findings
2. An action plan, proposing what should be done to publicise and deal with issues, problems and needs identified in the report. This will include both short term and longer term actions
3. Deliver the plan to the Parish Council and other village organisations.

See Section 7 below for more information about the methodology used in the survey.

3 Ashfield – introduction to the village

3.1 Description

Ashfield-cum-Thorpe has a population of around 200 people in around 90 households. Ashfield has the main concentration of settlements clustered along and around The Street, just off the A1120, and down Grove Lane, off The Street. There is also an outlying scattering of houses in Thorpe, along the Low Road into Debenham, and various other single dwellings. It is not possible to drive from Ashfield to Thorpe without travelling along the A1120, so *there is little interaction between the two*.

The parish lies on the western edge of Mid Suffolk District Council¹, roughly in the geographical centre of Suffolk county. The village has a small church (sharing a part time vicar in a benefice with two other parishes: Earl Soham and Cretingham²) and a small, old, wooden community centre in need of repair. There are no shops, the post office closed in 1999, the school closed in the 1960s, and the pub in 1975.

¹ It is likely that District Councils and Suffolk County Council will be merged into one or more Unitary Authorities, but this is unlikely to happen before 2010 at the earliest.

² In 2007, this benefice was merged into a larger benefice now totalling 8 parishes, with parishes around Charsfield.

Earl Soham is 3km away with a pub, a shop, a butcher, a surgery and a primary school. Framlingham, famous for its castle, is slightly further (11km) with a small Tuesday and Saturday market. Debenham is 5kms in the opposite direction with a post office, the catchment primary and high schools, a leisure centre, a surgery, various pubs and a small supermarket. However, while there is a bus service to Framlingham, there is no bus service to Debenham, the nearest shopping centre.

District Council offices are in Needham Market some 23km away. The county town of Ipswich is 22km distant.

There bus service between Framlingham and Ipswich via Ashfield, running roughly every two hours. The nearest railway stations are Ipswich, Stowmarket and Diss. The bus service to Ipswich goes to the Bus Station, about 1km from the railway station.

3.2 Village services

Key service	In village? Y/N	If no, how close is the nearest in km? Please give the name of settlement and approximate distance by road. (1 mile = 1.6km)
Village Hall/Community centre	Y	
Public House	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Pre-School (playgroup)	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Public internet point	N	Framlingham, 11km
Police station	N	Debenham, 5km
Post Office	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Cashpoint	N	Debenham, 5km
Shop	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Primary School	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Secondary/Senior School	N	Debenham, 5km
Job centre	N	Ipswich, 22km
Petrol station/garages	N	Framlingham, 11km
Youth clubs	N	Earl Soham, 3km
Health centre/doctors surgery	N	Earl Soham, 3km

3.3 Demographics

The responses to the questionnaire (in 2006) represented 105 people from 42 households, just under 60% of the present population of Ashfield (187 at the 2001 census, now around 200) and about half the households. The following statistics reflect respondents to questionnaires only:

- There were 24 (25%) were aged 24 or below – 18 aged under 18 (17%), plus 8 (8%) aged 18-24.
- There were 43 (41%) in the age range 45-59.
- There were 23 (22%) aged 60 or over.
- 42 households, 36 owner-occupied

Note that this may not reflect the population as a whole.

3.4 Village organisations

Local organisations in the village include:

- The Parish Council
- The Community Council, and elected group that runs the Community Hall

- The Church, which is administered by elected Churchwardens and an elected Parochial Church Council
- Ashfield Ladies' Group, which holds monthly meetings on a range of topics for the ladies of the village (and beyond)
- Parish Footpaths Group, which maintains footpaths in the village
- Neighbourhood Watch

3.5 Changes to the village

Over the last 10 or 20 years there has been a change in the make-up of the village. The village has expanded a little, but fairly slowly. Those moving in are quite a mix: some moving from elsewhere in Suffolk, some from other parts of the country (or from abroad), some retiring, many working (a few working long distances away), a very few second homes.

The result has been that fewer residents look to the village as the centre of social life; in Ashfield as in many other villages local events tend to be less well supported. There have been no shops or pub in the village for many years, only a Post Office which itself closed more than five years ago. There was a bar (run by the Community Council) in the Community Hall, but support waned and this closed some 10 years ago. Although we all mourn the passing of local institutions like these, in practice villagers are generally willing to travel for shopping and entertainment, and prefer the convenience and choice offered by towns.

This leaves those without independent transport more isolated...

3.6 Development of the village – new housing

There have been a number of new buildings put up over the last two decades; these have been mostly individual buildings using in-fill locations. The village is regarded as a ribbon development for planning, so there have been significant new developments in new streets created off the main road³.

However, current development guidelines for the District and County are that all new houses should be in “sustainable developments” with facilities such as shops, schools etc within walking distance. This is partly for environmental reasons, to reduce the amount of car journeys created as a result of new housing. Ashfield does not meet these criteria, so there will be no new housing in Ashfield unless these guidelines change. Ashfield is deemed as a “village in the countryside”.

This is seen as beneficial, in that in-fill development has removed much of the open space and open views within the village, but could be detrimental if the lack of new blood in the village leads to stagnation in the village.

³ The one exception has been a development of four houses in “The Ashes”.

3.7 Photographs



Figure 1 - Ashfield Fete



Figure 2 - Ashfield village sign



Figure 3 - St Mary's Church



Figure 4 - Ashfield - from the North looking South

4 Summary of findings from consultation

4.1 Village Design Statement

It was originally decided to produce a design statement. However, in view of the latest Mid Suffolk planning policy proposals, it seems that no development is likely in Ashfield in the near future.

However, the questionnaire responses (questions 31-33) showed that 38% consider the amount of new houses build over the last 10 years to be “about right” and 20% consider there to have been too little and 5% say too much new housing. A significant number considered the new housing to be too big or too expensive. There was no consensus as to what sort of future development would be acceptable and appropriate, but only 4% considered developments of 10 houses or more appropriate. See responses to questions 31-33 below.

4.2 Community Hall

Most people regard the Community Hall as not adequate (47%, compared to 38% that considered it adequate). Over 58% considered the playground equipment “poor” (compared to 10% considering it “reasonable” and no one who thought it “good”). See questions 46 and 47.

It should be noted that the hall itself is owned and maintained by Ashfield Community Council. However, the land on which the hall is built is owned by Rupert Bouverie, a local farmer, who has provided the land rent-free for the current use of the hall.

There was also considerable support for using the church building for other activities (not church-related); see question 57.

4.3 Parish Council Communications

People generally don’t know what the Parish Council does. Some 47% do not know how the Parish Council spends its money (question 51) and 39% consider that it publicises its decisions and activities “badly” (question 52). Also, 55% consider insufficient publicity is given to planning applications (question 53).

4.4 Traffic considerations

Over 75% consider there are road traffic “danger spots” in the village, and would support measures to reduce traffic speeds (Questions 26 and 28). There was also strong support for more pavements or footpaths (Question 29, although the questions did not indicate where these should be). A concern was raised about HGV traffic at unsocial hours.

Top danger spots identified included:

- The bends near the Church and Community Hall
- The A1120 turning (where are hidden dips)
- The bends near Sunnyside/Leyspring

There were suggestions for double white lines on the A1120. The Parish Council has more than once requested this; Suffolk County Council Highways say, rather oddly, that the A1120 is too narrow for double white lines. Apparently double white lines are not allowed where the roads are narrow, even though overtaking in such places is especially dangerous.

4.5 Recycling

An overwhelming proportion (99%) would use a local bottle bank, and 70% or more would use recycling points for newspapers, clothing, cans and garden waste (question 37). Over 50% felt the present provision of litter bins in Ashfield (that is, none at all) to be “poor”.

4.6 Local utility services

Most services (water, electricity, refuse etc – see question 35) were felt “reasonable” or “good”. Those rated by more than 20% of respondents as “poor” were mobile phone reception (53%), winter weather service such as ice/snow clearance (32%), TV reception (24%) and radio reception (23%).

4.7 Facilities for pre-school and school-age children

There was a significant feeling of a need for after school clubs (38%) and playgroups (24%). See question 30. However the number of children aged under 11 is small, and it may be hard to run such activities at the moment⁴.

4.8 Education

Nearly half (48%) of respondents felt the need for adult education evening classes (question 30). There were no questions to identify what sort of education might be wanted.

4.9 Environment

Over 70% of the villages stressed that the environment or situation of the village are important to them (question 13). Most people thought “countryside” amenities such as woods, orchards, fields and hedges important to the environment. See questions 59 & 60. Most respondents wanted more publicity for local footpaths.

4.10 Transport

Public transport is considered a problem in Ashfield. 10% of respondents often have difficulty travelling to places outside Ashfield (question 19), and a further 24% have occasionally difficulty.

33% said lack of transport is an inhibitor to getting a job (question 15). Few people (less than 10%) often use the bus, but more (over 25% use it occasionally). Improvements wanted to the bus service included a better timetable with more buses (25%), more destinations (21%) and a night bus (29%). See question 23. Note: these latter percentages are of all respondents, not just bus users. The proportion of bus users who would like these improvements would be much higher.

Note: the bus services have improved significantly since the survey was carried out.

There was interest in car-sharing (question 21).

Nearly 10% have medical conditions affecting daily living.

4.11 Village activities

There was significant interest for a Gardening Club, a Rambling Club and an Art Club (>30% of replies for each of these, although few prepared to help!). See questions 44 and 45.

At the public meeting to discuss the results, there will be an opportunity to express interest in helping to make this happen.

⁴ Editor’s note: the numbers of children in various age groups varies from time-to-time, as families come and go, and children grow up. Around 15 or 20 years ago there were significantly more younger children and there was an active baby-sitting group covering Ashfield and neighbouring villages. The nature of the village has not greatly changed, and it may be that the current small number of under-11s is a temporary dip.

5 Recommendations for action

5.1 Forming recommendations

These recommendations have been drawn up on the basis of the public meeting, on the survey results and other consultation. *Findings and opinions mentioned below come from any or all of these sources, unless stated specifically.*

Comments and information reflect the position as at July 2008.

In the following section, highlighted “proposals” are recommendations to identified people or bodies, and “issues” are matters that the village may need to consider, but the matter is likely to be too big for any one individual or body to take on.

Note that these recommendations are just that: recommendations. The Parish Plan and the committee that prepared it are not empowered to take decisions on behalf of the village, nor are they able as a group to take on actions after this report is completed.

The Parish Plan committee will conclude following the preparation of the report, and it will be for the village – individuals and collectively – to use this plan to develop the village.

5.2 Planning, housing and development

The provision new housing and planning is a subject that attracts strong views. At the moment (2008), Mid Suffolk District Council is considering new guidelines that would severely limit if not stop altogether new development in villages like Ashfield. This is a matter that might, perhaps, be discussed in a wider forum than the Parish Council.

5.2.1 Village housing development

The question has been raised: could new development be built at “right angles” to The Street, rather than in-fill? However, Ashfield is a “ribbon development”, so this wouldn’t happen in Ashfield. In any case, under current plans for the District, Ashfield is deemed to be a “village in the countryside”, so no significant development will be allowed until the rules change. The only development likely in the next few years is extension to existing buildings and possibly outbuildings.

5.2.2 Publicity for planning applications

There is a feeling that the planning system is opaque, and that the Parish Council does not do enough to publicise planning matters. In the survey, there were some requests for planning applications to be publicised better. The local planning authority (Mid Suffolk District Council) notify those they believe affected, and the Parish Council makes sure this has happened. The Parish Council has only an advisory role in planning – no power or authority. The “yellow notices” placed on and near the site of planning applications are the best means of communication. Given the short period for responses, the newsletter would not be effective in notifying people.

Planning matters in Ashfield are likely to be less contentious in future, as no significant development will take place in Ashfield under the new planning guidelines.

5.3 Improve communications

5.3.1 General village communications

There is a strong feeling that communications within the village could be improved.

There used to be a monthly newsletter, but this has now been replaced by a quarterly newsletter. In addition, there used to be a monthly church magazine that contained extensive general village news. This magazine used to cover three villages, but two magazines were merged, and the magazine now (2008) covers eight villages, and there is not as much room for village news. In addition, when the church magazine covered just three villages, the editor was in the village (so it was easier to get information to her), and the editor's husband ran a corresponding web site that could be updated on a daily basis if necessary. This web site is not maintained by the new church magazine editor.

Ashfield Neighbourhood Watch have run an email system for cascading urgent news to Neighbourhood Watch members, and it has been suggested that this email news system could be extended to the whole village, in conjunction with the Parish Council. This is to be discussed at the August Parish Council. This will provide communication between the quarterly printed newsletter.

1. ***Proposal: for the Parish Council / Neighbourhood Watch to set up an email communication system for news/information that can't wait for the next quarterly printed newsletter. This system will aim to have nominated helpers to print the email for nearby neighbours without email.***

An email system is not only faster, but allows people to be given reminders of information. Once is never enough!

In addition, Simon Garrett, who used to edit the church web site, is prepared to manage one for the village, if this is useful.

2. ***Proposal: a web site should also be considered when an email cascade is discussed by the Parish Council.***

5.3.2 Publicising the Parish Council

Various issues raised: people don't know how the money is spent and would like to see the accounts. The Chairman of the Parish Council explained at the public meeting that there are constraints on publicising minutes until they are approved (at the next meeting) but members of the public can attend meetings. An open forum is arranged at any meeting where members of the public are present, for them to express their views to the council. At the July 2008 public meeting, Councillor Sue Henney offered to draft one for the newsletter.

3. ***Proposal: produce a brief information sheet on how the PC works, and what it does?***

Parish Council notices appear on the notice board on the Community Hall. A suggestion was made to move the notice board to by the road, which would be seen more by dog-walkers and passers-by. This would be the responsibility of the Community Council, and members present at the public meeting thought this would be rather expensive, and would need planning permission. It was felt that the Community Council would not be able to do this.

A programme of Parish Council meetings is published: this appears in the Newsletter each quarter.

5.3.3 Village Information

Results from the survey suggest that not everyone knows all the facilities available even in our small villages. For example, some people are unaware of the various mobile services that call in the village. A local group maintains foot paths and has produced maps, but some survey responses suggested that the respondents did not know where to get information on foot paths. The communication issues mentioned above also suggest that there is a desire for more information.

- 4. Proposal: the Parish Council should consider a brief information pack or village directory.**

5.3.4 Mobile phone reception and telecommunications

Mobile reception on most networks is poor in the village. Broadband access is often limited in speed. Could the Parish Council take this up, at least to identify service providers, perhaps for an information pack?

- 5. Proposal: this might be included in a Parish Council information pack**

5.4 Village Buildings

The only “village buildings” – community buildings in the village – are the Community Hall and the church.

Both buildings are expensive to run; it was felt that a long term plan is needed – perhaps co-ordinated between the two buildings. Can we sustain both? We need to get people to come in and support events; the pattern over the last few years has been declining support for all events. There was comment that some events have been poorly advertised, however this alone cannot explain the trend. Why can't we have joint events, Church and Community Council? The Community Council is always willing to co-ordinate events, and act as a driver.

- 6. Proposal: the Church PCC and the Community Council should be asked to consider joint activities.**

A huge improvement has been made to the condition of the Community Hall by the recent working party (summer 2008), arranged by Barbara Wilton and Myles Hansen, with help from many villagers. Ann Langley, chairman of the Community Council expressed her special thanks at the July 2008 public meeting.

There was some suggestion that we don't need both buildings, and that the Church might be extended or converted for more general use. There was some feeling that a church, however modified, would not “feel” right for some events.

In the longer term, the Community Hall is likely to need replacing, and it does not currently have the financial resources to contemplate that, nor the considerable people resources that would be needed to undertake the fund-raising to replace it.

- 7. Issue: the village needs to consider whether to take on the task of replacing the Community Hall.**

The church will also need significant repair work over the next few years, and this is also beyond the resources of the small church-going community.

- 8. Issue: the village needs to consider whether the maintenance of the church building is a village issue, as opposed to purely a church issue.**

Should there be a “Friends of St Mary's”, for example, to support maintenance of the building?

5.5 Village volunteers

There is felt to be a new “village spirit” that would welcome combined events. How to achieve them?

- 9. Proposal: village bodies (Community Council, Parish Council, Church PCC, Ladies Group etc) should note recent events, and the mood of the meeting, suggesting a new desire in the village to “do things”. There is a new latent pool of potential “doers” that can be tapped for village activities.**

The survey also suggested an enthusiasm for a periodic community “spring clean” of the village. This enthusiasm was also found in the recent spring clean activity for the Community Hall.

5.6 Village activities

There are fewer and fewer village activities. Is this because no one wants them, because no one wants to organise them, or because the wrong sorts of activities are run? Is this of concern to the village? Responses to several questions in the survey suggested that this *is* a matter of concern, but there was no clear view (from the survey) of how to tackle it. In a separate questionnaire concerning the Hall carried out earlier there were several comments that the activities that currently take place were not the ‘right sort’. However, the authors of these comments did not indicate the sort of activities they would attend.

At the public meeting in July 2008, Richard Ellis suggested a Wine and Real Ale club – he volunteered to run one. Well done Richard!

- 10. Proposal: Richard Ellis to run a Wine and Real Ale Club.**

Flower Festival and Open Gardens: there was strong support for these (as separate or combined events).

- 11. Proposal: Church and Community Council be asked to consider this – possibly as a joint event.**

5.7 Playground

In the survey, there was comment that the playground behind the Community Hall is rather limited and old fashioned.

The equipment is maintained to a safe standard, but replacing the existing swing and climbing frame with modern equipment would cost well over £10,000. “Health and Safety” places onerous requirements on play equipment.

- 12. Proposal: this finding from the Parish Plan survey should be brought to the attention of the Community Council.**

However, the Community Council are well aware both of the state of the equipment, and the prohibitive cost of replacement.

5.8 Recycling

Although an overwhelming majority (99%) of responses the survey supported a bottle bank, there was little enthusiasm at the public meeting. The feeling was that bottles are so bulky that, except for two or three very close houses, bottles will be loaded in a car, so taking them to another village is no inconvenience. The disadvantage of a bottle bank is the mess, including broken glass, and noise for

neighbours. The only likely site for a bottle bank is the Community Hall, and a few committee members present at the public meeting expressed their view that this would not be welcomed.

Some thought a newspaper or textile bank might be more welcome. There was also a suggestion for a doggy-bin, and support (in the survey) for litter bins.

There was a comment that council-supplied bags for excess rubbish have to be obtained from Debenham Post Office, but most villagers rarely over-fill their bins, so don't need the bags.

13. Proposal: the suggestion to consider recycling banks should be passed to the Community Council for their further consideration.

5.9 Traffic calming

There was considerable discussion on SID and other speed measurements carried out in the village recently. Although SID (the temporary speed warning device placed to warn drivers if they are exceeding the 30mph speed limit) has been positioned at the South end of the village (S of High Row Farm), the speed surveys have been positioned in the centre of the village near the Community Hall. As this is on a bend, the relatively low speeds observed may not be typical of speeds on straighter sections of The Street. Nevertheless, the Parish Council Chairman advised at the July 2008 public meeting that as we have had a fairly recent speed survey (even if we think it might have been better positioned) we are unlikely to get another even if we ask, nor would we be likely to get any traffic calming measures (unless we pay – many thousands of pounds).

A further traffic hazard (by common agreement) is the speed of traffic along the A1120 by the junction at the bottom of the village. The junction is at the bottom of a hill (in both directions) and visibility is poor. Especially from the North, the junction is hidden by the brow of the hill and some cars are driven at reckless speed. However, the Parish Council has been told repeatedly by Suffolk County Council Highways Department that the road is “too narrow” for any overtaking restrictions. A real Catch22 here: presumably if the road were wider then it would be too safe to need restrictions.

14. Proposal: the Parish Council be asked to keep these matters under review, and press local authorities to ensure speeds are monitored in the village, and for safety measures on the junction of The Street and the A1120.

5.10 Transport Services

It is noted that bus services are much improved compared with five years ago. However, although there are buses both to Ipswich and Framlingham, a service to our nearest shops at Debenham would be appreciated.

15. Proposal: the Parish Council be recommended to consider what representation it can and should make to extend a bus service to Debenham.

6 Action Summary

See above for the context to each action.

Number	Recommendation
1.	The Parish Council / Neighbourhood Watch to set up an email communication system for news/information that can't wait for the next quarterly printed newsletter. This system will aim to have nominated helpers to print the email for nearby neighbours without email.
2.	A web site should also be discussed when an email cascade is discussed by the Parish Council.
3.	The Parish Council to produce a brief information sheet on how the PC works, and what it does.
4.	The Parish Council should consider a brief information pack or village directory
5.	Information on local communication services might be included in a Parish Council information pack.
6.	The Church PCC and the Community Council should be asked to consider joint activities, especially to make joint use of buildings.
7.	Issue: the village needs to consider whether to take on the task of replacing the Community Hall.
8.	Issue: the village needs to consider whether the maintenance of the church building is a village issue, as opposed to purely a church issue.
9.	Village bodies (Community Council, Parish Council, Church PCC, Ladies Group etc) should note recent events, and the mood of the meeting, suggesting a new desire in the village to "do things". There is a new latent pool of potential "doers" that can be tapped for village activities.
10.	Richard Ellis should be encouraged to take up his suggestion to run a Wine and Real Ale Club.
11.	Flower Festival and Open Gardens: Church and Community Council be asked to consider this – possibly as a joint event.
12.	Playground: survey respondents expressed a wish for better playground equipment. This finding from the Parish Plan survey should be brought to the attention of the Community Council.
13.	The suggestion to consider recycling banks should be passed to the Community Council for their further consideration.
14.	Traffic calming and hazards: the Parish Council be asked to keep these matters under review, and press local authorities to ensure speeds are monitored in the village, and for safety measures on the junction of The Street and the A1120.
15.	The Parish Council be recommended to consider what representation it can and should make to extend a bus service to Debenham.

7 Methodology

The Steering Group consulted through the village to canvas views on the major issues, major stakeholders and major groupings in Ashfield. This was to identify the nature of the village and its issues, and to scope the Parish Plan information gathering. The group initial came to these views:

- There is only one major geographical grouping of houses in the village, with a few outlying houses.
- There are no major employers, with a few farms employing small numbers.
- There is a spread of ages in the village, but the 45-59 year old group predominated the responses to the survey⁵. There were relatively few responses from young adults. The age range in Ashfield is believed to have varied quite a bit over the last few decades, but at the moment it appears the population distribution in Ashfield is moving towards an older population.
- There is both owner-occupied and rented accommodation; small, medium, and a few large houses.
- For most residents, their home in Ashfield is the principle or only home, but there are a few for whom Ashfield is a weekend home.

In short, Ashfield is a small village, mainly residential with a varied population.

These findings were used to scope and plan a questionnaire using the “University of Gloucestershire” package. A wide variety of questions were asked, which inevitably meant the group could not go into great depth in any area.

8 Information and statistics from the questionnaires

Where comments were added by respondents, they have been included with the relevant question.

8.1 Individual question counts - Household section

Question Number: 1, Number of households: 42

How many people including children normally live in your household?
Total number of all responses: 105

⁵ Note that this age range reflects the responses to the survey (see question 2 below) and is probably not representative of the population as a whole.

Question Number: 2, Number of households: 42

Please enter the number of people in your household in each age group:

Age	Male	Female	Total	%
0-4	2	1	3	2.9%
5-10	1	1	2	1.9%
11-15	5	5	10	9.5%
16-17	2	1	3	2.9%
18-24	5	3	8	7.6%
25-44	6	7	13	12.4%
45-59	21	22	43	41.0%
60-64	7	4	11	10.5%
65-74	4	4	8	7.6%
75-84	0	2	2	1.9%
85+	1	1	2	1.9%
Totals:	54	51	105	100.0%

Question Number: 3, Number of households: 42

Is this dwelling your household's main residence?

Yes 41 (97.6 %)
No 0 (0.0 %)

Question Number: 4, Number of households: 42

Is this dwelling?

Private rented 1 (2.4 %)
Local authority rented 2 (4.8 %)
Housing Association rented 0 (0.0 %)
Owner occupied 36 (85.7 %)
Shared ownership (part owned/part rented) 0 (0.0 %)
Provided as part of employment (e.g.) 1 (2.4 %)
Other 0 (0.0 %)

Question Number: 5, Number of households: 42

Which sewage disposal system do you use?

Mains drainage 31 (73.8 %)
Septic tank 8 (19.0 %)
Cess pit 0 (0.0 %)

Question Number: 6, Number of households: 42

Do you have flooding problems with surface water or storm drainage?

Many problems 2 (4.8 %)
Few problems 9 (21.4 %)
No problems 27 (64.3 %)
No opinion 1 (2.4 %)

Question Number: 7, Number of households: 42

Enter the number of children under 16 in your household who attend the following:

Play group	0
Nursery school	2
Primary school	2
Middle school	0
Secondary school	12
School for those with special needs	0
Other	0

Question Number: 8, Number of households: 42

Please enter the number of people in your household over 16 who attend the following:

Sixth form college	3
University	8
Training courses	3

8.2 Individual question counts - Personal Section**Question Number: 9, Number of respondents to question: 97**

Sex	
Male	50 (51.5%)
Female	47 (48.5%)

Question Number: 10, Number of respondents to question: 99

What age group do you belong to?

11-15	10 (10.1%)
16-17	3 (3.0%)
18-24	8 (8.1%)
25-44	12 (12.1%)
45-59	43 (43.4%)
60-64	11 (11.1%)
65-74	8 (8.1%)
75-84	2 (2.0%)
85+	2 (2.0%)

Question Number: 11, Number of respondents to question: 99

How long have you lived in your current home?

Less than a year	10 (10.1%)
1-5 years	16 (16.2%)
6-15 years	30 (30.3%)
16-25 years	23 (23.2%)
26-50 years	18 (18.2%)
51 + years	0 (0.0%)
Whole life	2 (2.0%)

Question Number: 12, Number of respondents to question: 95

Where did you live before?

In Ashfield	9 (9.5%)
Outside Ashfield but within 10 miles	23 (24.2%)
Within 11-30 miles	25 (26.3%)
Over 30 miles away in Britain	36 (37.9%)
Overseas	2 (2.1%)

Question Number: 13, Number of respondents to question: 89

What is most important to you about Ashfield?

The community	15 (16.9%)
The environment	36 (40.4%)
The situation	26 (29.2%)
Other	7 (7.9%)
Not sure	5 (5.6%)

Question Number: 14, Number of respondents to question: 52

Where is your main place of work?

Within	5 (9.6%)
Earl Soham	1 (1.9%)
Debenham	4 (7.7%)
Framlingham	2 (3.8%)
Ipswich	23 (44.2%)
London	0 (0.0%)
Other	17 (32.7%)

Question Number: 15, Number of respondents to question: 6

If you are actively seeking work, are there any barriers that are preventing you from taking up employment, training or study opportunities?

Lack of alternative care for adult dependent	0 (0.0%)
Lack of child care locally	0 (0.0%)
Cost of child care locally	0 (0.0%)
Lack of access to transport	2 (33.3%)
I don't have the right type of experience	0 (0.0%)
I don't have the right type of qualifications/training	0 (0.0%)
Disability or ill health of some kind	0 (0.0%)
Lack of information/advice	0 (0.0%)
None of these	4 (66.7%)

Question Number: 16, Number of respondents to question: 12

If you run a business, into which category does it fall?

Agriculture/Horticulture	2 (16.7%)
Food Processing	0 (0.0%)
Retail	0 (0.0%)
Construction	7 (58.3%)
Finance/Professional Services	2 (16.7%)
Manufacturing	0 (0.0%)
Transport	1 (8.3%)
Tourism e.g. hotels catering B & B	0 (0.0%)
Other Service e.g. hairdressing	0 (0.0%)

Question Number: 17, Number of respondents to question: 11

If you run a business, how many people do you employ?

0	7 (63.6%)
1-3	3 (27.3%)
4-5	0 (0.0%)
6-10	0 (0.0%)
11-25	0 (0.0%)
26-99	1 (9.1%)
100-199	0 (0.0%)
200+	0 (0.0%)

Question Number: 18, Number of respondents to question: 76

Should the following be encouraged in and around Ashfield?

	1 - strongly in favour	2 - in favour	3 - no strong opinion	4 - have reservation	5 - definitely not
Tourism development/attractions	1 (1.3%)	19 (25.0%)	27 (35.5%)	7 (9.2%)	16 (21.1%)
Small business development	6 (7.9%)	29 (38.2%)	19 (25.0%)	14 (18.4%)	6 (7.9%)
Small scale industrial workshops	0 (0.0%)	17 (22.4%)	15 (19.7%)	12 (15.8%)	23 (30.3%)
More jobs in Ashfield	2 (2.6%)	20 (26.3%)	28 (36.8%)	10 (13.2%)	2 (2.6%)

Question Number: 19, Number of respondents to question: 87

Do you experience transport difficulties in getting out of Ashfield to other places?

Often	9 (10.3%)
Occasionally	21 (24.1%)
Never	57 (65.5%)

Question Number: 20, Number of respondents to question: 88

Are you a driver who has daytime access to a vehicle?

Yes	74 (84.1%)
No	14 (15.9%)

Question Number: 21, Number of respondents to question: 62

Would you be prepared to take part in a scheme to share private vehicles for?

	often	occasionally	never
Shopping	6 (9.7%)	21 (33.9%)	26 (41.9%)
School	2 (3.2%)	13 (21.0%)	26 (41.9%)
Social or leisure	5 (8.1%)	22 (35.5%)	26 (41.9%)
Work	2 (3.2%)	15 (24.2%)	29 (46.8%)

Question Number: 22, Number of respondents to question: 66

If you use the bus, what do you use it for and how often?

	often	occasionally	never
Work	3 (4.5%)	5 (7.6%)	42 (63.6%)
Shopping	5 (7.6%)	18 (27.3%)	39 (59.1%)
Medical Visits	0 (0.0%)	3 (4.5%)	48 (72.7%)
Social or Leisure	5 (7.6%)	11 (16.7%)	40 (60.6%)
Other	0 (0.0%)	7 (10.6%)	33 (50.0%)

Comments

No bus to GP surgery in Debenham or to local hospitals

Question Number: 23, Number of respondents to question: 56

Would you like to see any improvements in the bus service with regard to?

Routes	12 (21.4%)
Timetable	14 (25.0%)
Cost	3 (5.4%)
Reliability	3 (5.4%)
Bus Stop location	9 (16.1%)
Access for those with disabilities	2 (3.6%)
No opinion	26 (46.4%)
Night Bus	16 (28.6%)
Dial-a-Ride	6 (10.7%)

Comments

A later evening bus would be welcome from the railway station. Published bus stops should be away from bends.

A later evening bus would be welcome from railway station. Published bus stop should be away from bends e.g. The Ashes and High Row Farm

Question Number: 24, Number of respondents to question: 92

Do you have problems in collecting medicine on prescription?

Yes	2 (2.2%)
No	78 (84.8%)
Not applicable	12 (13.0%)

Question Number: 25, Number of respondents to question: 95

Do you have a health problem/disability which affects your day-to-day living?

Yes	8 (8.4%)
No	87 (91.6%)

Question Number: 26, Number of respondents to question: 86

Do you think there are any major 'danger-spots' on the roads in Ashfield?

Yes	65 (75.6%)
No	17 (19.8%)
No opinion	4 (4.7%)

Comments

HGV espec at unsocial hours

Double white lines along A1120 along the dip⁶.

HGV traffic through the street. Lorry traffic through Grove Lane as unsocial hours.

Question Number: 27, Number of respondents to question: 86

If you answered "yes" to question 26, where do you think the danger spot is located?

Where	Number of respondents
Near Church & Village Hall	24
A1120 turning (cars overtake dangerously where there are hidden dips)	17
Bends near Leyspring/Sunnyside	15
Grove Lane turning	5
Throughout the village – no pavements and rather narrow without signing	5
Bend outside Pear Tree Farm (several near misses on this bend)	5
Edge of village (cars speed up)	4
Thorpe Lane	2
All bends, as there are no footpaths and cars go too fast	2
Cars/vans parked on bends	2
Bend by the Nook (hedges obscure traffic)	2
Lack of street lights	2

⁶ Editor's note: the Parish Council has more than once asked for double white lines along the A1120 both sides of the Ashfield turning, in view of the blind spots that encourage dangerous overtaking. The official response from the Suffolk County Council Highways Dept is that the road is "too narrow for double white lines".

Where householders have placed rocks on the verges (several places in village)	1
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Comments

Several near misses on the bends

Question Number: 28, Number of respondents to question: 83

Would you support the following speed control measures in Ashfield?

Extension of the speed limit	16 (19.3%)
Introduce a speed limit	15 (18.1%)
Traffic calming	35 (42.2%)
Children at play signs	14 (16.9%)
More road warning signs	14 (16.9%)
None of the above	21 (25.3%)

Comments

We should have a 20mph speed limit with barriers, chicanes and dedicated space on each side in the road (see the road behind Tesco at Martlesham, so that traffic has to keep to the middle except when passing).

Enforcement of existing speed limit.

Enforcement

Bigger speed limit signs.

Question Number: 29, Number of respondents to question: 51

In relation to paths and street lights, would you like to see any of the following in Ashfield?

Cycle paths	15 (29.4%)
More footpaths	30 (58.8%)
More pavements	31 (60.8%)
Street lighting	17 (33.3%)

Comments

If the track from Grove Lane to Debenham were made an all-weather cycle path, it would be great. Parish Council to pay.

Question Number: 30, Number of respondents to question: 21

In relation to educational facilities, does Ashfield need any of the following?

Nursery School	1 (4.8%)
Playgroup	5 (23.8%)
After school clubs	8 (38.1%)
Holiday play scheme	4 (19.0%)
Adult education evening classes	10 (47.6%)
Other	1 (4.8%)

Question Number: 31, Number of respondents to question: 85

What do you think about the number of houses that have been built in Ashfield over the last 10 years?

About right	32 (37.6%)
Too much new housing	5 (5.9%)
Too little housing	17 (20.0%)
Too expensive	21 (24.7%)
Too big	15 (17.6%)
Too small	2 (2.4%)
No opinion	17 (20.0%)

Question Number: 32, Number of respondents to question: 79

What kind of accommodation do you think Ashfield needs?

Homes for young people	45 (57.0%)
Large family homes	9 (11.4%)
Small family homes	40 (50.6%)
Executive homes	4 (5.1%)
Homes for people with disabilities	7 (8.9%)
Homes for single people	15 (19.0%)
No further homes are needed	20 (25.3%)
Other	1 (1.3%)

Comments

Any housing provided facilities in place.

Question Number: 33, Number of respondents to question: 86

What type(s) of housing development would be acceptable in Ashfield?

None	20 (23.3%)
Single dwellings in controlled locations	36 (41.9%)
Small group(s) of less than 10	19 (22.1%)
Carefully designed larger group(s)	4 (4.7%)
Expansion of the edge of Ashfield	24 (27.9%)
Other	1 (1.2%)

Question Number: 34, Number of respondents to question: 79

Would you like to join the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme?

Yes	22 (27.8%)
No	20 (25.3%)
No opinion	37 (46.8%)

Question Number: 35, Number of respondents to question: 87

What are your views on the standard of the following environmental services in Ashfield?

	good	reasonable	poor	no opinion	not applicable
Mains water supply	71 (81.6%)	13 (14.9%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)
Mains electricity supply	69 (79.3%)	15 (17.2%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Refuse collection	48 (55.2%)	22 (25.3%)	16 (18.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)
Roadside care/street cleaning	15 (17.2%)	39 (44.8%)	12 (13.8%)	14 (16.1%)	3 (3.4%)
Winter weather service (snow clearance)	3 (3.4%)	39 (44.8%)	28 (32.2%)	11 (12.6%)	2 (2.3%)
T.V. reception	29 (33.3%)	33 (37.9%)	21 (24.1%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)
Radio reception	34 (39.1%)	31 (35.6%)	20 (23.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Mobile Reception	14 (16.1%)	21 (24.1%)	46 (52.9%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)

Question Number: 36, Number of respondents to question: 84

If mains gas were available, would you like to be connected?

Yes	36 (42.9%)
No	48 (57.1%)

Question Number: 37, Number of respondents to question: 73

Would you use the following?

Bottle bank	72 (98.6%)
Skip for garden waste	52 (71.2%)
Newspaper bank	54 (74.0%)
Clothing bank	50 (68.5%)
Can bank	55 (75.3%)

Comments

There are adequate arrangements nearby.

Many people probably already recycle in bins in other towns/villages.

Question Number: 38, Number of respondents to question: 83

Is the number and location of litter bins in Ashfield?

Good	0 (0.0%)
Reasonable	5 (6.0%)
Poor	43 (51.8%)
No Opinion	35 (42.2%)

Question Number: 39, Number of respondents to question: 60

Should facilities in Ashfield be improved for?

Pedestrians	56 (93.3%)
Cyclists	26 (43.3%)
Wheelchairs	21 (35.0%)
Pushchairs	32 (53.3%)
The partially sighted	9 (15.0%)
Other	1 (1.7%)

Question Number: 40, Number of respondents to question: 80

Where do you usually buy the following?

	own community	next town	nearest large cent	out of town facility	mail order
Groceries	0 (0.0%)	47 (58.8%)	16 (20.0%)	7 (8.8%)	2 (2.5%)
Fresh fruit and vegetables	0 (0.0%)	56 (70.0%)	13 (16.3%)	4 (5.0%)	1 (1.3%)
Meat and fish	1 (1.3%)	53 (66.3%)	17 (21.3%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.3%)
Clothes	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.8%)	53 (66.3%)	13 (16.3%)	0 (0.0%)
DIY supplies	0 (0.0%)	22 (27.5%)	33 (41.3%)	10 (12.5%)	2 (2.5%)
Electrical goods	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.5%)	41 (51.3%)	11 (13.8%)	13 (16.3%)
Books/tapes	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.8%)	45 (56.3%)	4 (5.0%)	18 (22.5%)
Furniture	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.8%)	30 (37.5%)	26 (32.5%)	4 (5.0%)

Comments

Fish from Ashfield. Meat from Earl Soham

Question Number: 41, Number of respondents to question: 81

Do you have transport difficulties in getting to the shops in the following locations?

	often	occasionally	never
Earl Soham	3 (3.7%)	5 (6.2%)	71 (87.7%)
Debenham	8 (9.9%)	3 (3.7%)	68 (84.0%)
Framlingham	3 (3.7%)	6 (7.4%)	68 (84.0%)
Ipswich	2 (2.5%)	6 (7.4%)	69 (85.2%)
Other	3 (3.7%)	1 (1.2%)	44 (54.3%)

Question Number: 42, Number of respondents to question: 82

If the following opened in Ashfield how often would you use them?

	weekly	monthly	occasionally	never	don't know
Bank	24 (29.3%)	13 (15.9%)	23 (28.0%)	9 (11.0%)	3 (3.7%)
Post Office	38 (46.3%)	12 (14.6%)	22 (26.8%)	4 (4.9%)	1 (1.2%)
Butcher	37 (45.1%)	4 (4.9%)	18 (22.0%)	11 (13.4%)	4 (4.9%)
Pubs	36 (43.9%)	7 (8.5%)	28 (34.1%)	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.2%)
Library	28 (34.1%)	9 (11.0%)	28 (34.1%)	7 (8.5%)	5 (6.1%)

Comments

It is not practicable for any of these to open in Ashfield with its present population

Question Number: 43, Number of respondents to question: 77

If the following mobile services were provided, how often would you use them?

	weekly	monthly	occasionally	never	don't know
Grocer	19 (24.7%)	1 (1.3%)	20 (26.0%)	23 (29.9%)	6 (7.8%)
Fast food	11 (14.3%)	5 (6.5%)	26 (33.8%)	26 (33.8%)	6 (7.8%)
Bank	11 (14.3%)	8 (10.4%)	18 (23.4%)	28 (36.4%)	5 (6.5%)
Post Office	23 (29.9%)	5 (6.5%)	20 (26.0%)	19 (24.7%)	7 (9.1%)

Question Number: 44, Number of respondents to question: 50

Which new clubs/activities would you attend in Ashfield if they were provided?

Whist drive	2 (4.0%)
Senior Citizens Group	2 (4.0%)
U3A	7 (14.0%)
Gardening Club	21 (42.0%)
Rambling Club	15 (30.0%)
Art Club	16 (32.0%)
Drama	7 (14.0%)
Choir	7 (14.0%)
Music Society	7 (14.0%)
Band	8 (16.0%)
Young people's drama group	6 (12.0%)
Creative arts for children	3 (6.0%)

Comments

A book club would be interesting

Question Number: 45, Number of respondents to question: 11

Would you be prepared to help organise and run any of the following?

Whist drive	3 (27.3%)
Senior Citizens Group	2 (18.2%)
U3A	1 (9.1%)
Gardening Club	1 (9.1%)
Rambling Club	2 (18.2%)
Art Club	2 (18.2%)
Drama	2 (18.2%)
Choir	1 (9.1%)
Music Society	0 (0.0%)
Band	1 (9.1%)
Young people's drama group	1 (9.1%)
Creative arts for children	2 (18.2%)

Question Number: 46, Number of respondents to question: 89

Do you think the Village Hall is adequate for the needs of Ashfield?

Yes	34 (38.2%)
No	42 (47.2%)
No opinion	13 (14.6%)

Comments

Village hall – needs total overhaul. A wonderful asset for the village – this should be the parish Council's TOP concern to update it's heating, tables, chairs and cooking facilities. How about opening a bar a couple of nights? Like Creeting St Mary – they would be a good role model as to what can be done. Lose the village Hall and you will lose all social contact in the village.

The village hall is a complete dump.

Adequate at present (subject to regulatory requirements) but increased usage could demand more and better facilities.

Question Number: 47, Number of respondents to question: 89

Are the facilities provided in the children's playground?

Good	0 (0.0%)
Reasonable	9 (10.1%)
Poor	52 (58.4%)
No opinion	28 (31.5%)

Question Number: 48, Number of respondents to question: 86

Do you think the amount of information available about what's going on in Ashfield is?

Good	44 (51.2%)
Reasonable	30 (34.9%)
Poor	7 (8.1%)
No opinion	5 (5.8%)

Question Number: 49, Number of respondents to question: 87

Where do you usually get information about events taking place in Ashfield?

Notice Board	0 (0.0%)
Parish Magazine	59 (67.8%)
Newsletter	69 (79.3%)
Local paper	1 (1.1%)

Question Number: 50, Number of respondents to question: 34

Have you ever attended a meeting in the last 2 years of	
Parish Council	11 (32.4%)
Community Council	11 (32.4%)
Parochial Church Council	12 (35.3%)

Comments

The Community Council should lose its old rude, inflexible members and let some young blood in⁷.

I have not attended parish council meetings since I raised an issue, was not listened to, and was dismissed as having been dealt with.

Question Number: 51, Number of respondents to question: 83

The local council is empowered to raise money through the council tax. Are you satisfied with the way this money is spent?

Very satisfied	2 (2.4%)
Quite satisfied	20 (24.1%)
Quite dissatisfied	13 (15.7%)
Very dissatisfied	6 (7.2%)
Don't know how it is spent	39 (47.0%)
No opinion	3 (3.6%)

Comments

The parish rates should pay for work on the hall.

Question Number: 52, Number of respondents to question: 82

How well does the local council publicise its decisions and activities?

Very well	5 (6.1%)
Reasonably well	31 (37.8%)
Badly	32 (39.0%)
No opinion	14 (17.1%)

Comments

The Parish Council should tell people regularly what it does, and what it does not do.

Ashfield Parish Council should be forced to make it easy for members of their community to ascertain and comment on their valuable work, rather than shelter behind rules to avoid it. (Conclusion of letter sent to the Parish Council Chairman, and included in the answer to the questionnaire.)

Question Number: 53, Number of respondents to question: 77

Do you think sufficient publicity is given to planning applications which affect Ashfield?

Yes	29 (37.7%)
No	42 (54.5%)
No opinion	6 (7.8%)

⁷ Editor's note: the Community Council is elected, and at the time of writing does not have its normal full quota of members, so there is no barrier to "young blood".

Question Number: 54, Number of respondents to question: 82

What is your opinion of the appearance of new buildings in Ashfield?

Totally satisfied	11 (13.4%)
Quite satisfied	38 (46.3%)
Quite dissatisfied	5 (6.1%)
Totally dissatisfied	11 (13.4%)
No opinion	17 (20.7%)

Question Number: 55, Number of respondents to question: 76

Is the Church of St. Mary's important to you?

For Sunday worship	28 (36.8%)
For baptisms	28 (36.8%)
Weddings and funerals	37 (48.7%)
As a focal point for the community	47 (61.8%)
As an historic building	46 (60.5%)
Every place should have one	39 (51.3%)
Other	5 (6.6%)

Question Number: 56, Number of respondents to question: 88

Do you think the local religious groups contribute to community life?

Yes	42 (47.7%)
No	10 (11.4%)
No opinion	36 (40.9%)

Question Number: 57, Number of respondents to question: 77

Would you like to see the Church used for the following activities?

	Yes	No	No opinion
Concerts	58 (75.3%)	5 (6.5%)	12 (15.6%)
Meetings	36 (46.8%)	8 (10.4%)	14 (18.2%)
Playgroup	26 (33.8%)	9 (11.7%)	17 (22.1%)
Lunch Clubs	23 (29.9%)	11 (14.3%)	17 (22.1%)
Other	14 (18.2%)	3 (3.9%)	9 (11.7%)

Comments

Use Church as village hall, and release Village Hall land for low-cost housing⁸.

Church preservation (desirable) could be part funded by absorbing functions from village hall. We would prefer limited, occasional functions such as concerts only but finances may demand more.

⁸ Editor's note: the land on which the Community Hall is built is not owned by the village, but is loaned to the Community Council. If the Hall were removed, the land would revert to the owner, and not be available for affordable housing unless the land owner decided to use it in this way.

Question Number: 58, Number of respondents to question: 85

What do you think should be done to help protect and enhance the local environment of Ashfield?

Recycling	55 (64.7%)
Energy saving	29 (34.1%)
Improved public transport	32 (37.6%)
Community composting	34 (40.0%)
Car sharing	17 (20.0%)
More employment locally	25 (29.4%)
Improved rights of way	23 (27.1%)
Advice on healthier lifestyles	6 (7.1%)
Reduce traffic	54 (63.5%)
Other	3 (3.5%)
Nothing	1 (1.2%)
Don't know	6 (7.1%)

Comments

Lights on Mendlesham Mast are very intrusive

Enforce current speed limit. Encourage identification of vehicles from which litter is thrown

Under 1 I would suggest that the village appearance would be enhanced by placing existing overhead wires underground.

Enforce current speed limit. Encourage identification of vehicles from which litter is thrown.

Question Number: 59, Number of respondents to question: 83

How important are the following features of the surrounding countryside to you?

	very important	important	not very special	no opinion on them
Small woods	64 (77.1%)	13 (15.7%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2%)
Orchards	37 (44.6%)	24 (28.9%)	10 (12.0%)	6 (7.2%)
Hedges	62 (74.7%)	20 (24.1%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Ditches	49 (59.0%)	20 (24.1%)	2 (2.4%)	6 (7.2%)
Meadows and green fields	65 (78.3%)	11 (13.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)
Modern farm buildings	3 (3.6%)	11 (13.3%)	37 (44.6%)	15 (18.1%)
Traditional farm buildings	32 (38.6%)	36 (43.4%)	5 (6.0%)	5 (6.0%)
Farm woods	42 (50.6%)	25 (30.1%)	5 (6.0%)	5 (6.0%)

Question Number: 60, Number of respondents to question: 84

What do you think could be done to improve the environment of Ashfield?

	very important	worth doing	not necessary	don't know
Plant more trees	48 (57.1%)	28 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)
Cut down some trees	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	45 (53.6%)	5 (6.0%)
Look after woodlands	60 (71.4%)	13 (15.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)
Preserve single trees in special places	41 (48.8%)	20 (23.8%)	8 (9.5%)	2 (2.4%)
Preserve old orchards	35 (41.7%)	22 (26.2%)	8 (9.5%)	6 (7.1%)
Plant new orchards	32 (38.1%)	16 (19.0%)	13 (15.5%)	7 (8.3%)
Keep hedges short and tidy	22 (26.2%)	21 (25.0%)	23 (27.4%)	7 (8.3%)
Let hedges grow naturally	23 (27.4%)	21 (25.0%)	19 (22.6%)	2 (2.4%)
Plant more hedges and trees	43 (51.2%)	27 (32.1%)	3 (3.6%)	2 (2.4%)
Don't know	2 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)

Comments

Cut back hedges that abut on to the roadway and make walking dangerous

(especially on bends)

Some hedges need to be kept short for safety (e.g. roadside, front of properties) but management of other hedges should encourage wildlife with more growth.

Question Number: 61, Number of respondents to question: 80

Do you think there is a need to carry out a project to record the special features of Ashfield?

Yes	23 (28.8%)
No	24 (30.0%)
No Opinion	33 (41.3%)

Question Number: 62, Number of respondents to question: 77

Which of the following areas of Ashfield could be improved visually?

Village approaches	20 (26.0%)
Village Hall	64 (83.1%)
Church Yard	12 (15.6%)
Verges	30 (39.0%)
A1120	15 (19.5%)
Thorpe Lane	11 (14.3%)
Road to Cretingham	10 (13.0%)

Comments

It would be great to have an avenue of trees to drive through from the A1120 into the village

We need a village green but not behind the hall where it is. Instead a new hall built further back.

The money raised for the hall should be spent on it and not saved.

Question Number: 63, Number of respondents to question: 73

Do you think Ashfield should be kept clean and tidy by?

Paying for a litter warden	6 (8.2%)
Paying for a road sweeper	7 (9.6%)
Putting up notices	6 (8.2%)
Entering a 'Best Kept Village Competition'	11 (15.1%)
Having a 'Spring Clean Day' annually	17 (23.3%)
Having a 'Spring Clean Day' twice a year	12 (16.4%)
None of these	13 (17.8%)
No opinion	17 (23.3%)

Comments

Encourage continual litter collection. Stronger promotion of John Garrard's attempt to organise volunteers to keep a nominated part of village clear of litter.

Question Number: 64, Number of respondents to question: 75

In relation to footpaths and bridleways - would you like to see any of the following?

Maps of local footpaths	54 (72.0%)
Leaflets of walks available to buy	38 (50.7%)
Guided walks of the area	18 (24.0%)
No opinion	18 (24.0%)

Comments

Publicise maps of footpaths

Question Number: 65, Number of respondents to question: 87

If a wind farm were to be built would you be concerned about.

Increased construction traffic	36 (41.4%)
Visual Impact	38 (43.7%)
Noise Pollution	31 (35.6%)
Reflected light flicker	25 (28.7%)
Environmental impact	24 (27.6%)
Whilst I may have some concerns I would still support a wind farm	52 (59.8%)
No opinion	5 (5.7%)

Question Number: 66, Number of respondents to question: 84

How should the results of this survey be made known?

By a public report	17 (20.2%)
By a public meeting	17 (20.2%)
By an information sheet through every door	71 (84.5%)

Question Number: 67, Number of respondents to question: 79

If suggestions raised by the questionnaire require money for implementation, where should that money come from?

Private contributions	16 (20.3%)
Moderate council tax increases	32 (40.5%)
Higher council tax increases	3 (3.8%)
Fundraising	51 (64.6%)
Sponsorship	39 (49.4%)
Other	10 (12.7%)

Comments

Grant making bodies

9 Funding

Source of funding	Amount	Secured (<i>tick and attach details</i>)
Revenue		
Parish council contribution	£75	Yes (motion passed at Parish Council)
Local authority		
District council		
Other contributions (<i>please specify</i>)		
Funds raised specifically for the Parish Plan		
Sub total	£75	
In kind contribution (<i>please specify</i>)	£795	Volunteer time - offers made to meet planned commitments
Sub total	£870	
Requested from the Countryside Agency (<i>Grants are discretionary and rates are variable</i>)	£563.19	
Sub-total		
Total funding	£1,433.19 (ex VAT)	

10 Steering Group members

Simon Garrett

Alison Garrett

Ann Bailey (planning stages – until she left the village – representing an older viewpoint)

Myles Hansen

Lindsay Pearson

Neville Jephcote

Martin Lippiatt (planning stages, representing a youth viewpoint)

Report editor: Simon Garrett

Appendix – public meeting

A public meeting was held on 23rd July 2008 to consider actions as a result of the Parish Plan.

Around 20 households were represented at the meeting, and representatives from all village organisations.

A number of proposals for action were made, and these are included in Section 5 above.

National Air Traffic Services

It was noted that there are proposals for new controlled airspace over East Anglia, including new aircraft holds southwest of Stowmarket. This has caused some concern locally. However, the proposed changes will have little impact on Ashfield. At present, aircraft in controlled airspace heading to the London airports are at least 11,000 feet high, and this will not change if the proposals come into effect. This is not thought to be an issue requiring action in the village, so no recommendation is made about this. Aircraft noise is not really an issue in Ashfield, although increasing volumes of air traffic, even at 11,000 feet or more, is clearly audible in the village.

Parish Plan – final version

After the meeting, the plan, which has been distributed in draft form, was updated and reviewed by the Parish Plan Committee and the Parish Council, then issued.

The plan is available on a website, and paper copies will be available on request. At the meeting it was agreed, that both to save on cost and on environmental reasons, paper copies will not be distributed to each house.

The plan can be downloaded from <http://www.simongarrett.co.uk/ashfieldparishplan>.