

Direct Dialogue Progressive Research

19/01/2015

DD 2058

Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan:
qualitative research pilot study



Objectives and method



Discover and clarify what the are key themes the Stradbroke community wishes the plan to address

gauge which are most important, broadly-based

Identify the key questions, issues within each of these themes

what matters to people?

Input into the subsequent survey across the whole community

what should be addressed in quant survey



8 discussions were conducted; most had 5-6 participants

1 x teens - year 9 (14 year olds)

3 x mums and dads with kids under 18

2 x mums and dads with adult offspring

2 x retired

(We did not succeed in recruiting a discussion among young adults with no kids)



Things worth
keeping, protecting

want to keep
valued
core, central

Things to gain,
develop

yes please
want more of
opportunities

Things to drop,
lose, avoid

no thanks
minimise, reduce
dangers



Overview



Very high degree of continuity across lifestage segments:

High levels of pride, satisfaction in the village: it feels a good (special) place to live; it has a unique character; it benefits from outstanding amenities, services

Most common stance: *'we must take care not to lose, spoil what we have here'*

Most people feel protecting Stradbroke's current assets, character is a central job of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan

A very consistent, positive, optimistic story emerges



Some logical, expected differences in ***perspectives, priorities***. For example:

Teens	less interested in employment; more interested in a meeting place for young people
Parents with younger children	Higher focus on schools
Parents with older children	employment; affordable housing
Retired	clubs/societies; healthcare; sheltered/supported housing

But there are few differences in *content*: similar points were raised in all discussions, from teens to retired



**Content:
keep, protect**



"If I pass someone I don't know and they don't say hello, I think they can't be from around here"

"I wanted to retire to a proper village"

"A mud-on-the-road place"

"We have very few social problems, antisocial behaviour"

"There's always something going on"

"Safe for children"

Stradbroke community

"The sort of place where people look out for one another"

"It's a calm, peaceful place to live"

"It's just a lovely place to live and bring up a family"

"A great place to bring up children"

"It's so friendly"

"My two look forward to coming home after our holidays - I think that's lovely"

"Still a thriving, working village"

"It's genuine... authentic"



Important to all

A strong sense of community often the first thing to be mentioned

friendly, sociable, neighbourly, helpful

low crime, feelings of safety, security

a proper **working country village** - not a small town, nor a 'touristy', 'second-home', Retiree' or 'dormitory village'

not simply a feeder village for local town; has its own integrity

"Small enough for individuals to count"

people feel a significant part of the whole - the village is small enough for residents to feel they know others and are acknowledged, valued

Retains a genuine rural character

Open spaces, views, not hemmed in or completely in-filled; the look and feel of the place is valued

**All segments are open to Stradbroke evolving, developing...
but they hope for its essential character to be retained**



Has seen
major changes

Some long term residents can feel not always for the better
The village used to be more complete/self-contained
(more shops, bank etc)

A broad sense that the village is just emerging from a dip in
fortunes (with closure and re-opening of shops); general
optimism that Stradbroke is thriving, 'healthy' and 'on the up'.

Population profile

Has been a large influx of people coming to Stradbroke

Balanced population - young and old; new arrivals and 'lifers'.

Attracting and keeping families is seen to be a priority if
Stradbroke is to remain a thriving place

The schools are felt to be essential in this (and evidence that
they do indeed attract new families *"our kids can walk to school"*)

Also, consequences for the type of any future development -
consistent wishes for balanced housing, including reasonably-
priced, rentals and properties suitable for seniors

A dynamic, socially active place



Lots going on...

very active groups, clubs, associations, sports clubs, The Festifull, WI, Good Neighbours, various specific interest groups... all supported by excellent resources, amenities

Retail appears central to village's integrity, sociability

The shops are deemed to be a very important aspect, deserving of support, protection

"It's where people meet"

"It's where you chat to your neighbours"

"Keep the village alive - they're at the heart of the village"

Pubs also - especially as they are each different in character

The Churches

Seen as important on many levels - social, spiritual, cultural, visual

Residents feel Stradbroke offers extraordinarily rich social, cultural, opportunities; also an especially wide range of active options (sports, exercise) is available



Village amenities: important to all

Shops, retail: Spar, Bakery, Butchers, Hairdressers,
Post Office, Cafe (planned), specialist/craft retail

Health centre

Library

Community centre

Sports centre (pool, gym, pitches, courts, greens)

Green spaces - cemetery, playing fields/playgrounds;
allotments; nature reserve; footpaths

Fire station

Parish newsletter, Radio Stradbroke (teens), websites

Vernacular architecture

Conservation area around village centre, esp. All Saints Church

Fine old/traditional buildings

Courthouse

*"The **look** of the village"*



Schools:
regarded as core
feature of the village

Seen as important element to maintain a balanced population
of young and old
A reason for families to choose to live in Stradbroke

Concerns over falling rolls

Employers: vital, to
be encouraged

Agricultural/farming community
Skinners
BQP
the wide range of small businesses, services, self-employed

Other ‘Keep, protect’ points (community)



Trevor

“the village helper”

A loved village character

Helpful, adds to sense of safety, community

Good Neighbours

Valued, appreciated



Gain, develop



A broad welcoming
of development in
principle...

"If we want to keep the amenities we'll have to attract the population to support them - if the population drops, we'll lose them"

"Village life has to continue to develop, evolve"

"We don't want a static, 'museum' village"

... but people are keen
to ensure the right
kind of development

"Sustainable" "Controlled" "Steady"

"A mix of housing, for young and old"

"Evolved, cohesive growth"

"Reasonably-priced housing, so young people are not forced to leave"

"Balanced growth - not just houses but infrastructure, services, jobs to go with them... managed growth"

"Affordable houses, for the range of ages, circumstances"

"Care Home or sheltered housing as part of the development"

"Rentals as well as sales"



.. and sensitive to
Stradbroke's character

"... don't want the village to be overwhelmed"

"I'd prefer steady growth"

"Smaller blocks of development that can be integrated more easily"

Most were concerned that larger developments (like the Grove Farm proposals) may be more difficult to integrate and put pressure on existing resources.

A minority view: *"it would get the development issues sorted out in one go and that would be it for a while"*

... of a scale and
locations to not
exacerbate existing
traffic problems

Most points made re Co-Op proposals centred on the problems of traffic in Queens St, safety (esp. re proximity of primary school, bend in road at this specific location)



An opportunity for planning gain?

Developers could make provision to benefit the community as part of the negotiation for planning approval

"Extend the health centre? Add a GP? Add a dentist?"

"Do something for the village in return"

"Improved medical facilities? A&E is a long way away... A walk-in clinic?"

A major concern,
for all adult groups

Widespread anxiety re heavy traffic (commercial, retail, agricultural) passing through the village.
Sheer volume of heavy traffic
Speed of heavy vehicles
'Lorry route' passes through the village
Has the problem intensified since changes to junctions in Eye? Funnelled more heavy traffic through Stradbroke?

Some specific pressure points (Queens St frequently mentioned)

Traffic problems amplified
by on-street, and school-
run parking

Again Queens St mentioned, especially at 'school run times'
Parked cars effectively obstruct one lane; a safety hazard and causes delays



A clear desire for traffic and parking to be more actively managed:

Limit volume of heavy traffic through the village?

Manage it by time of day? (avoid the worst problems of school-run congestion)?

Residents' parking zones?

Retail parking management?

More parking areas to be made available

The answers aren't clear but the need for more active management of traffic and parking is keenly felt



Exasperation at v.
poor bus services

Effectively maroons anyone without access to a car
Limits ability to travel to from Stradbroke for work, unless a car-owner - impacts most strongly on young adults, the less well-off.
Restricts movement for shopping, leisure
"The bus to Diss gives you 90 minutes before you have to come back - it's just not enough time to get all your shopping done"

Frequent requests for a better service - to Diss especially (nearest major town, rail links) but also Bury, Ipswich, Norwich, Framlingham, Laxfield

Is there anything that can be done to encourage a better bus service?



Limited job opportunities
in the area

Especially outside established sectors (agriculture)

Can anything be done to encourage businesses into area?

Especially:

"Smaller businesses"

"More innovative businesses"

"Craft or creative businesses"

"Non-corporate homeworkers are a good demographic"

A new business centre?



Important to all; raised in every discussion

Broadband speeds are very slow; mobile signal very poor

A severe disincentive to businesses

Limits ability to home-work, access cloud-based servers

Limits access to information, services

Prevents streaming, access to online content

Creates a image of Stradbroke as a rural backwater, end-of-the line, out-of touch place

"I can drive nearly to Ipswich before I get a decent signal"

Can anything be done to get 3G/4G, respectable broadband speeds?

Teens: seeks somewhere to go - can feel marooned



Not just teens making this point but parents and older people too...

Teens need somewhere
to go, socialise

Too young for the pubs; sports centre isn't for socialising;
don't want to be in parents' houses
Plenty of scope for activities sports, but not for 'hanging
out'
High hopes of the Courthouse cafe, library
"Can it have free wifi?"
(No mention of youth club?)

**Sense that the amenities are more geared to needs
of adults, seniors than Stradbroke's teens?**

The vicious circle for young adults



A range of factors conspire to reduce the appeal of Stradbroke as a place for younger people to remain in, or come to

Broadband/mobile ✗

Limited employment opportunities ✗

Minimal public transport links ✗

Limited supply of rental/affordable housing ✗

It is difficult for young people to stay in village unless they have good job, and car(s)
It is harder for young families (single income/single car?)

Wide desire to break this vicious circle to prevent the drain of young people, the ageing of the population of the village, and the consequences for schools and other amenities, services

leadership in the community; connections with neighbouring communities



Some concerns,
requests regarding
leadership

Some disquiet at village politics being influenced by personal
clashes and infighting

*"It feels like there are personal power struggles that are driving
some decisions"*

Some feel the church used to provide a clear sense of
leadership in the village, now there is less clarity

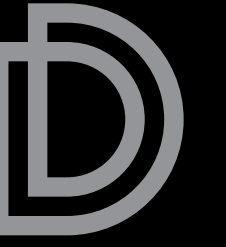
A small group seem to be the 'serial volunteerers'... while their
efforts are appreciated, could the Neighbourhood Plan be an
opportunity to draw in fresh blood, encourage a wider circle of
people taking an active role in community decisions?

Some think that Stradbroke may not be as assertive as other
parishes 'competing' for finite resources

"We probably don't shout as loud..."

*"We should have a **single** village website for the community"*

leadership in the community; connections with neighbouring



Some concerns,
requests regarding
leadership

Schools should guard against complacency, low expectations,
narrow horizons for Stradbroke's children (one discussion only)
"There's a big world out there..."

Some calls for a more integrated approach with neighbouring
towns, parishes, communities

Other, less universal 'gain' points



Extend health centre - wellness; longer hours GP surgery, chiropody, dentistry
(this is a more common theme as planning gain for new developments)

More shops, greater diversity of shops

"It would create more of a buzz"

"A hardware store"

Public toilets

Street lighting to be improved, extended

Primary school to be amalgamated with Wilby if falling numbers puts it at risk

Refurbishment of playground equipment



Lose, avoid, reduce



This was a much more limited section of the discussions

Generally, people had more to say on what they valued and wanted to keep, and on their hopes for the village into the future.

Most of these points are covered in the previous section; participants adopted a 'solution' mentality rather than 'complaint' mindset



✗ *"Parking in roads causing obstructions, safety issues"*

✗ *"Can we keep lorries away at school times?"*

✗ *"No big developments, no heavy industry"*

✗ *"No big estate, problem families"*

✗ *"Don't just add dormitories, commuters to the village"*

Lose, avoid, reduce

✗ *"We must avoid the drain of young people from the village"*

✗ *"Reduce the amount of heavy vehicles passing through the village"*

✗ *"Not just big new houses"*

✗ *"New developments putting too much pressure on existing facilities"*

✗ *"Skinners smell!"*

✗ *"Rubbish, litter"*

✗ *"We shouldn't grow so much we lose the sense of knowing others in this community. I don't want Stradbroke to become anonymous"*



Concluding summary

Keep, protect in short...



People think this is a strong, well-integrated community

It is a friendly, welcoming place with lots going on

They think of Stradbroke as a village... and they want to keep it as such

The area has excellent amenities, facilities that should be supported and protected in future planning

There is wide acceptance of the need for growth, development... but **how, where** and at **what pace** are the key issues

It is not perfect, but most people are very happy and proud to live here

They believe the village's current character should be protected

The key issues for Stradbroke into the future (questions, not answers...)



Housing, development

Traffic management (and within this, parking)

Improve physical and digital connectivity - public transport and broadband, mobile

Jobs, employment opportunities

Maintain a balanced community (ages/lifestages) and specifically avoid the drain of young adults

Keeping schools and other facilities, amenities viable

Clarify leadership and connect with neighbouring communities for greater influence

Engage more members of the community in planning decisions

