



Combs Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP)

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Foreword

This document outlines the Plan for the investment in Infrastructure facilities in the Parish of Combs, Suffolk as of November 2022.

Initially drafted by former Councillor Ian Walker and subsequently developed and completed by the current Parish Council members, it covers audits of existing infrastructure and discusses the community engagement methods currently in place for the Parish.

It includes a list of projects which have been identified as potentially adding value to the community. It discusses an analytical process whereby these projects are assessed for delivery and sets out a delivery plan with outline financial provisions.

Note that the Outline Provisions are for financial planning purposes only. They are not to be read as budgets and should not be regarded as a ring-fenced commitment to funding. Priorities will change over time and the Plan will be updated annually to reflect those changes.



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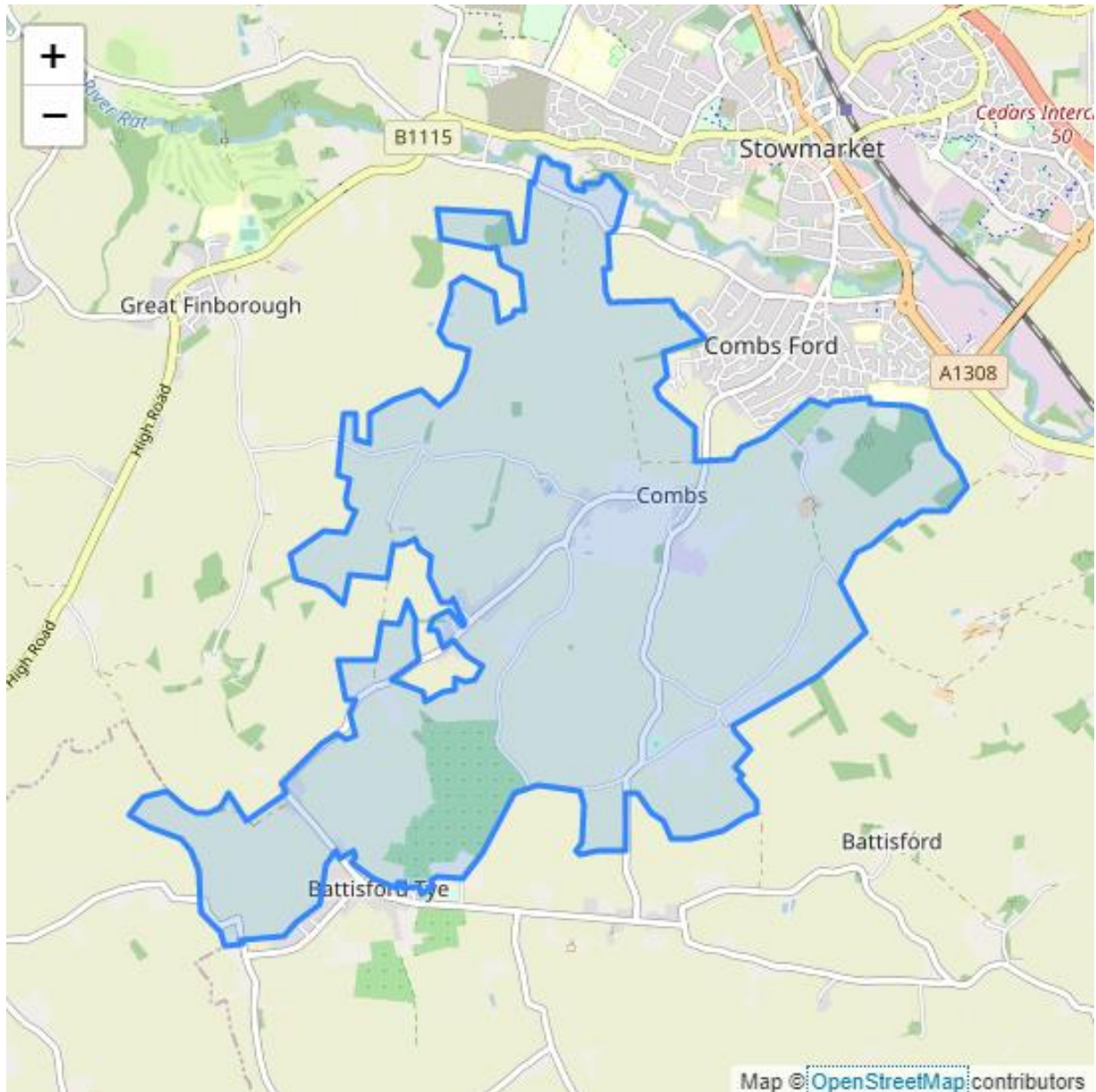
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1 Introduction

This document outlines the Plan for the investment in Infrastructure facilities in the Parish of Combs, Suffolk as of December 2022. It was approved by the Parish Council on 12th December 2022.

Combs Parish is geographically situated on a rise to the south west of Stowmarket from which it is separated by a dip in the terrain known locally as 'The Slough'. The Parish covers a relatively large area extending to parts of Combs Lane in the north and borders Battisford Parish in the south. As well as containing the 'ribbon' village of Combs itself it contains the hamlets of Moats Tye and Little London.



The Parish is home to an ancient woodland called Combs Wood in the east which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The landscape within the Parish footprint can be characterised by its field patterns and hedgerows and has itself been designated a Special Landscape Area.



The Parish contains several significant landmarks including St. Mary's Parish Church, Model Farm and The Tannery.

Historically the Parish used to encompass Combs Ford but the latter has been a suburb of Stowmarket for some 60 years. Boundary changes in 2011 further 'tidied up' the area moving a few roads out of Combs Parish. Some residents of Combs Ford still retain an associative identity with our Parish however and St Mary's Church is regarded by many in Combs Ford to be *their* Parish Church.

There are some 300 dwellings in the Parish with around 650 residents able to vote.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Identify the infrastructure and investment needs within the Parish
- Provide an evidence base for spending decisions on locally identified priorities
- Identify sources of funding and opportunities for matching funding streams to make the most efficient use of income
- Assist with external funding bids - providing evidence of local investment needs and priorities
- Provide transparency to local communities - explain where local investment is being targeted
- Encourage engagement by members of the community who use and/or will use the facilities and services being delivered
- Provide a local perspective to help the district councils gain a better understanding of the Parish community's priorities

3 Audit of Existing Infrastructure

The following is a list of existing infrastructure facilities:

St. Mary's Church and Churchyard

- St Marys is our well supported Parish church. It currently has a Bell Restoration project which is near to phase one completion, allowing the sound of the original set of medieval and later bells to ring across the parish for the first time in over fifty years, alongside others the parish council has supported this project that will require further funding in phase two.

Parish Cemetery

- Cemetery gates and cemetery seats x 2 (The gates and seats will all require maintenance funding at some stage)
- One solid fuel Beacon lit on special occasions, most recently to mark HRH Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations
- Approximately 1.63 acres of land was purchased for the parish cemetery in 1998
- The Parish Council is currently developing a cemetery infrastructure strategy within the P.I.I.P. to identify the changing requirements and investment needed for the coming years



Public Transport

- 462 Bus service to Stowmarket twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays with return to Combs
- Bus shelter with bench, noticeboard and wastebin. The bus shelter roof was replaced in 2021

Schools/Education

- None

Library

- None

Childcare/Creche: None

- None

Sporting/Leisure facilities

- The sole sporting facility in our Parish is Battsford & District Cricket Club, a members' facility well supported locally by all age groups. The ground is situated entirely within the Parish of Combs

Shopping /Retail

- None

Licensed Public Houses

- There are no longer any Pubs within the Combs Parish boundary
- The Battsford & District Cricket Club has a licenced bar for use of Members

Health Services

- There are no health centres or clinics
- Defibrillators are positioned at:
 - Fenn's Farm House, Bildeston Road
 - The Clockhouse, Combs Tannery, Tannery Road
 - The Cricket Club, Moats Tye
- The Parish Council replaces the batteries every two years

Footpath Lighting

- Multiple lamp fixtures to a current standard, all kept maintained by the Parish council requiring ongoing maintenance investment. The Parish Council also pays for the power supply
- Some lamp fixtures (e.g. those in Webb's Close) are maintained by the County Council

Seats/Benches

- Currently there are five benches at various locations around the village which all require some form of ongoing maintenance budget
- The Parish council is developing a footpath walks project, part of which will be installing information boards. These will require a funding (capital) and ongoing maintenance (revenue) budget.

Village Sign



- The village sign is situated adjacent to the crossroads of Mill Lane and Bildeston/Park Road. It has recently been refurbished.
- The Parish Council is also looking to tidy up/landscape the area it sits in

Community/Leisure Facilities

- Oaks Meadow is an ongoing ecological and sustainable project which will give the Parish the community and some of the leisure facilities that are currently missing and needed. Along with other public and private bodies, Combs Parish Council has supported this project which will require further funding for future phases.

Environmental Infrastructure

- The Parish council currently have nine dog waste bins spread throughout the Parish, these are emptied under contract by the District Council. All bins are at various stages of life and will require replacement budgets
- We have two litter bins and several grit bins that are maintained by the District Council.

Parish Council Noticeboards

- The Parish Council have five noticeboards. These are currently being reviewed with a plan to overhaul or replace them over the next couple of years as they are fast becoming end of life items. Two have recently been replaced.

Open Spaces/Footpaths

- Open spaces are covered above in the community/leisure facilities section
- Footpaths are a current project being undertaken by the Parish Council by identifying these and building them into published walks to encourage all to enjoy these and develop greater wellbeing, part of the investment required will be for information noticeboards.

Miscellaneous

- The Parish Council own two Speed Indicator Devices. Both are young in life but as in all technical items they require new batteries every four years and may require other upgrades in the future
- Electric vehicle charging points in the Tannery car park (for use of visitors on business)
- Two modern generation electric vehicle charging points are currently being installed in the Combs Vineyard development

4 External Infrastructure used by Combs Residents

The following is a list of nearby infrastructure facilities found outside of the Parish:

Churches

- As well as St Mary's, Combs has multiple churches of various denominations adjacent to it in other local villages or towns. Stowmarket and Needham Market, being the larger centres, cater for alternative faiths not found within the Parish, many of these include cemeteries with Ipswich providing crematorium services.

Public Transport



- The nearest regular and frequent bus services for Combs residents is at Combs Ford, these interlink with local train stations, the combination of the two allowing local journeys into various villages, towns such as Stowmarket, Needham Market, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds and further afield into East Anglia, the Midlands and London.

Schools/Education

- Facilities for this again starts at Combs Ford with a primary School, one of several in the Stowmarket area, senior schools are to be found in the Stowmarket area with pupil buses providing pick up and drop off to Combs, further education/colleges are catered for further afield at Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich.

Library

- The nearest library is situated in Stowmarket.

Childcare/Creche

- There are various facilities available to Combs residents ranging from Battsford with most others starting from Combs Ford and throughout Stowmarket.

Sporting/Leisure Facilities

- A wide ranging selection of facilities, private sector and municipal are available throughout the Stowmarket area and beyond i.e. Play areas, football, rugby, tennis, swimming pool, cycling, bowls etc
- This is a non exhaustive list and requires all Combs residents to travel to use, the sole sporting facility within the Parish is Battsford Cricket Club which is very well supported by local members.

Shopping /Retail

- Combs residents nearest limited port of call is Combs Ford but is better supported in Stowmarket or out of town retail centres and supermarkets before travelling further to Bury St Edmunds or Ipswich.

Licensed Public Houses, Restaurants and Bars

- Combs lost its last public house in recent years and now finds residents having to travel to villages such as Battsford or towns such as Stowmarket and beyond to find anything, members of Battsford Cricket Club do have a licensed members bar.

Health Services

- Combs has none and residents have to travel to their nearest Doctors, clinics, dentists and chemists at Combs Ford and the Stowmarket area and to Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich for Hospitals and specialist services.

Community/Leisure Facilities

- Stowmarket Cinema is used regularly by Combs residents as is the swimming pool and various surrounding area play grounds.

Environmental Infrastructure

- While Combs maintains and sources investment for its existing minimal environmental infrastructure villagers still need to travel to recycle centres which in these greener and more sustainable times will always require investment and improvement especially as resident headcount increases



Open Spaces/Footpaths & Cycle paths

- While Combs enjoys a multitude of footpaths interlinking with local areas villagers find themselves having to travel to experience larger leisure type open spaces, Needham Lakes would be one typical local example amongst many others.
- Cycling is a popular local interest and finds Combs residents having to use public roads for several miles till they can join up safely with the local cycle path network which extends through parts of Mid Suffolk.

In summary, with Combs being a widespread rural Parish mainstream services and facilities of modern-day life are not plentiful. Combs residents will find themselves more having to travel out to surrounding towns or even further afield to Bury St Edmunds or Ipswich to service their requirements.

5 Community Engagement

Combs Parish Council operates and encourages an ongoing dialogue with its residents via the following channels:

- Notice boards
- Parish Council Meetings
- The Parish Council Newsletter
- Items in the Barclif Newsletter
- Village website
- Village surveys
- One-to-one conversations between councillors and residents.

All of the above methods have been used to capture the local needs and aspirations and is reflected within this plan.

6 Community Infrastructure Needs/Aspirations

6.1 Initiatives

Through the engagement channels outlined above, the Parish Council has collected together a list of initiatives. Some of which these are already active and some prospective.

- Cricket Club clubhouse extension
- Mill Lane/Park Road junction village sign area
- Speed Signs
- Cemetery Car Park re-organisation
- Grit Bins
- Litter bins/Dog bins
- Park Road sign and barrier improvement
- Benches replacement/refurbishment



- Walks - Rest Stations
- Notice Boards refurbishment
- Oaks Meadow development projects
- Cemetery infrastructure - standpipe/tap feasibility
- Jack's Lane/Park Road junction area
- Cemetery infrastructure - waste and compost bins
- Mill Lane/Park Road junction island
- St Mary's Bells restoration
- Village Signage on main highways inward
- Walks - Information Boards
- Heritage tree planting
- Cycleways
- Unidentified (as yet) Projects
- Village Sign restoration/maintenance
- Cemetery infrastructure - expansion of footprint

6.2 Prioritisation

Clearly it is neither possible nor desirable to embark on every suggested initiative:

- Some are more urgent than others
- Some are deemed more important than others
- Some bring benefits to a larger number of residents
- Some are more costly than others – some may even be unaffordable
- Some are more risky than others

We are conscious that there is likely to be a range of opinion amongst residents on the desirability of some initiatives over others. However, it is the Council's responsibility to balance the twin demands of providing community leadership and community support and so we have devised a prioritisation method in a bid to show transparency of thinking and to act as a starting point for debate, affirmation and challenge within our community.

Our prioritisation process is as follows:

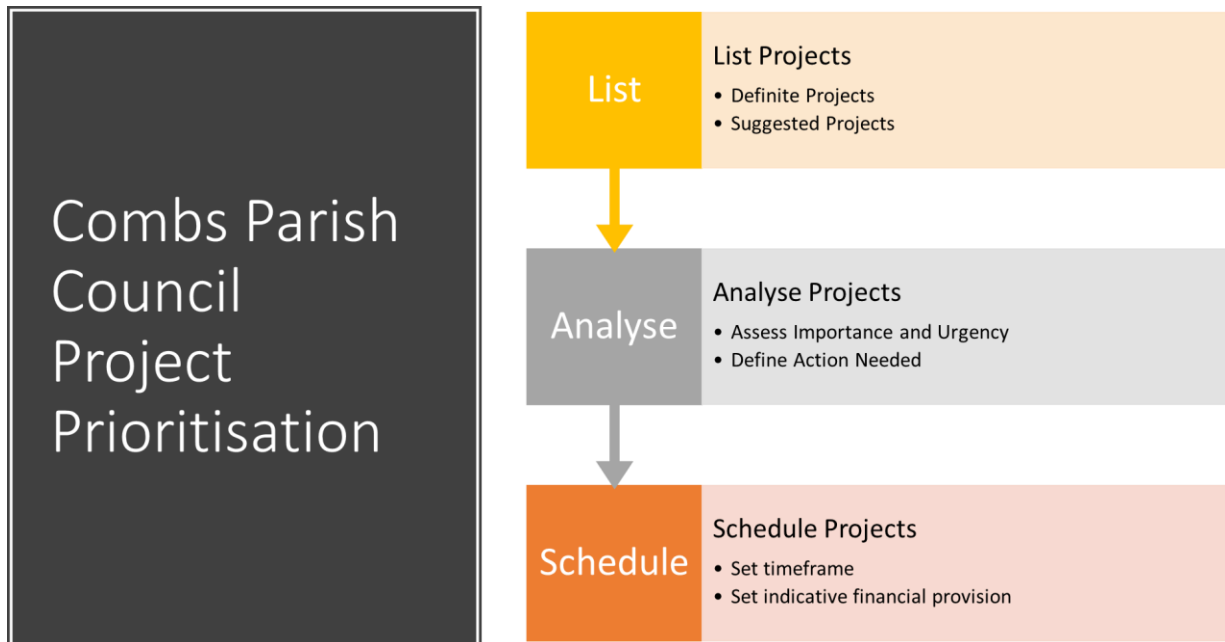


Figure 1: Prioritisation Process

6.3 Planning Protocols

Assessment and analysis of projects

- The project list will be reviewed annually at the time the budget for the following fiscal year is being set.
- The project list will be analysed through discussion by council members based on their understanding of local need as expressed to them by the community.
- These discussions will cover likely benefit to the community as a whole; potential cost; affordability; risk; and potential resistance.
- Timetabling and financial provision setting will be discussed and agreed according to the effort required, the likely cost and the available and expected funds.
- Financial provision setting is for planning purposes only. Provisions should be regarded as *prospective* expenditure, which is neither ring-fenced nor guaranteed.
- Each investment decision is subject to approval based on its own 'business case': the allocation of funds will be predicated on an ability to sufficient levels of benefit to the community and the provision of a demonstrable qualitative return on investment.
- The Investment plan will be published on the village website and highlights published in the Parish Newsletter.
- Where projects are likely to be contentious – in other words when individuals or groups of residents are likely to hold opposing views – the council will consult before starting work.

