

# **A PARISH PLAN FOR WESTBERE**

## **Contents:**

	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	
	<b>Foreword</b>	
<b>I.</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	page 1
<b>II.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	page 3
<b>III.</b>	<b>Westbere and What makes it Special</b>	page 3
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Westbere's Challenges</b>	page 5
<b>V.</b>	<b>Population</b>	page 8
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Archaeology and the Historic Environment</b>	page 8
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Biodiversity</b>	page 11
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Amenities</b>	page 12
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Communication</b>	page 13
<b>X.</b>	<b>Safety and Security</b>	page 14
<b>XI.</b>	<b>Spatial Planning and Design Proposals</b>	page 16
<b>XII.</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>	page 25
<b>XIII.</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>	page 26
<b>XIV.</b>	<b>Appendices (on disc)</b>	
<b>A.</b>	<b>Westbere People</b>	
<b>B.</b>	<b>Demographics</b>	
<b>C.</b>	<b>The Vision Paperwork (questionnaires and analysis)</b>	
<b>D.</b>	<b>The Archaeology Scoping Study (results)</b>	
<b>E.</b>	<b>The Westbere Ecological Survey 1995</b>	
<b>F.</b>	<b>Early Conceptual Sketches</b>	
<b>G.</b>	<b>Westbere Parish Council</b>	

**Acknowledgements:** This **Vision for Westbere** would not have been possible without the help and support of the people and organisations who believed in the project. Their experience and advice was vital at all stages. Unfortunately there are too many people to thank individually but we would like to single out a few. First, we must thank Canterbury City Council, in particular Amanda Sparkes without whom we would never have crossed the start line. Second, we must thank Action for Communities in Rural Kent who partially funded the project, in particular Victoria Lawson who helped prepare the original budget and, subsequently, Kathy Bugden. Special mentions should also go to Alan Marsh, Kent County Council, for his encouragement, the Directors of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust for map copyright permission, Sue Morton and Steve Ashton for information on and photographs of the local birdlife and insects, PC Andrew Taylor, Kent Police, for help with crime information and Brett Landscaping and Building Products, Sturry, for their advice. Last but not least, it is important to thank the villagers and children of Westbere for their co-operation and enthusiasm - especially Charlotte Morcom for her photograph of the village green.

**No part of this work may be reproduced without prior permission from Westbere Parish Council.**

**Foreword:** In November 2007 Canterbury City Council (CCC) recommended that Westbere Parish Council (WPC), with active participation from its residents and businesses, produce a Parish Plan (PP) as part of an initiative and in line with other parishes across England. When complete, it should identify a vision for the future of Westbere and address issues identified through an Action Plan (AP).

The launch of this important project took place at the Parish Council's Electors' Meeting in March 2008 with the formation of a Steering Group (SG) of nine volunteers, supported by a Peripheral Group (PG) of a further 12 volunteers. These two groups alone represented about 17% (based on 126) of the households of Westbere Parish, a proportion enhanced by periodic *ad hoc* support from other parishioners.

During the summer of 2008 the SG devised questionnaires, one for residents of the Parish and one for businesses, which the PG helped to distribute and collect after completion. Running concurrently with this activity were two separate competitions for the children of the Parish, one about their gardens and the wildlife identified therein (for which there were 16 entries) and a photography competition. This ensured that all generations participated in the Plan.

Over the next 18 months the results of the questionnaires were analysed, interpreted and, importantly, integrated with third-party material. Notable among the latter was a Scoping Study of historical archives, commissioned in advance of a proposed desktop study of the archaeological and historic environment of the Parish. This cumulative work was concurrent with an active engagement in creative and design processes and concluded with a draft Plan. The draft Plan was then submitted to an independent external editor, the incorporation of whose comments allowed a completed document to be prepared towards the end of January 2010.

The final document, inclusive of an AP, has now been approved. It is titled **A Vision for Westbere** and will be published in the Spring, 2011. I am sure you will enjoy reading it.

This positive outcome would have been impossible to achieve without the team of enthusiastic, energetic volunteers who gave a great deal of their precious time and commitment. The Parish of Westbere is extremely fortunate to have had such a team in the shape of the SG. It is always invidious to single out individuals when so many have contributed to a team effort but the Plan in its final form is largely down to Wayne Murray, Gerald Mason, Tim Mead and Norman Smith. Last but not least, the continuous support offered to the SG by Sylvia Harlow, as WPC representative, needs particular acknowledgement.

During Plan finalisation the government changed and new policies may impact upon it. However, while recognising socio-economic trends, it is based on local preferences and environmental and historic fundamentals rather than government policies and should survive any changes.

**For and on Behalf of Westbere Parish Council:**

Georgina Glover **Chairman.**



## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- I.1. In the Beginning:** In 2000 government initiatives to engage communities by encouraging parishes to prepare Parish Plans setting out the views and wishes of residents and businesses within a parish were announced. These initiatives led ultimately to a recommendation from Canterbury City Council (CCC) that local parishes prepare a Parish Plan (PP) and the PP for Westbere was launched at the Parish Council Electors' Meeting, March 2008.

**The Volunteers:** Following the launch meeting a Steering Group (SG) was established to manage the development of the document, supported by a Peripheral Group (PG) of residents. This Group soon recognised that the document which should emerge from the PP process must extend to identifying a Vision for the future of Westbere with a strategy and a plan to bring it about.

- I.2. The Consultation:** The intention was to consult widely throughout the Parish, including residents and businesses, using detailed questionnaires and interviews, to gather a wide range of data on the views of both Parishioners and Companies. The residential questionnaires were largely distributed and collected by the PG while the business questionnaires were distributed by the SG with support from CCC. Questionnaires were also available online via the Parish Council website. The data was collated and tabulated electronically and a copy of this information is contained in the Appendices.

Completed questionnaires were returned from 106 of the 126 residential properties in the Parish, an overall response rate of 84%. In the village core the response rate rose to an impressive 96% but this fell to a disappointing 48% in the peripheral areas clearly demonstrating the limited feeling of connection between this group and the village itself. The total number of questionnaires returned (including 6 online) was 141 representing nearly half of the electors in the Parish. This was because many households submitted two or three individual returns, helpfully allowing a greater range of views to be expressed, though it should be noted that most respondents left one or more questions unanswered. Unfortunately, despite a great deal of follow-up effort, very few completed business questionnaires were received.

In addition to the consultation exercise, the SG reviewed, and in some cases utilised, information from a wide range of other sources, as well as commissioning an archaeological scoping study. They also took into account the inherent characteristics of the Parish within its sub regional setting.

- I.3. The Principal Findings:** The results of the residential questionnaire identified the following important facts:

- 81.2% of the residents in the responding households are aged 45 and over and, of these 32.6% are aged 75 and over; 60.2% have lived in the Parish for >10 years (34.8% for >20 years) and 44% of these are retired with a strong sense of community spirit; they particularly enjoy the wildlife and the tranquillity.

- 97.7% want ‘no change’ to the village. 60.8% agree it would be beneficial to create a more sustainable community and 74.5% agree that the recycling initiative should be extended to items not currently included.
- 89.4% agree that the green spaces around the Parish should be retained.
- 91% are concerned about speeding both on the A28 and within the village, with 74% supporting a one-way system in the village.
- 92.5% would support re-establishing the footpath to Grove Ferry and 86.4% additional footpaths/ footbridges linking Westbere to Stodmarsh.
- 90.2% agree that archaeology should be used to learn more about Westbere’s past.
- 84.4% have confidence in the fire and ambulance services; 41.7% in the police service.

This data, along with other information, was then used by the SG in a series of detailed meetings and research exercises to develop the Vision as presented in this document, which was submitted to an independent editor for review and subsequently adopted by the Parish Council.

**I.4. Group Interpretations:** The principal recommendations are:

- To **improve** both the quality and sustainability of life in the Parish.
- To **adopt** the planning philosophy of preserving the village, consolidating the green belt around the village and siting new development mainly towards the perimeters of the Parish.
- To **introduce** a new appraisal for a coherent transport regime.
- To **initiate** a full desktop assessment of the archaeological and historical background and a further ecological survey of the Parish, with a view to their use as planning tools.
- To **encourage** the establishment of a Westbere Village Community Forum, as a means of increasing support for the village amenities.
- To **provide** more strategic car parking spaces in the Parish.
- To **initiate** green environmental proposals for the Parish.

Whilst many of the recommendations in the Action Plan (AP) (*ref.* section XIII) can be implemented at little or no cost, there are others where this clearly will not be the case. The SG is acutely aware that it would be unrealistic, particularly in the current economic climate, to expect residents, whether directly or indirectly (via WPC and/ or WVPS), to meet all the costs involved. It should be possible, however, to obtain grants towards some of the more expensive medium/ long term proposals and, to this end, the establishment of a Grants Working Party is recommended with the remit of examining the extent of, and feasibility of obtaining, grants for Plan projects.

The completed Document is intended to be a framework to identify actions for the Parish that can be taken forward. It considers both short and long term goals and will be lodged with CCC for formal adoption.

**For and on Behalf of the Steering Group:**  
Wayne Murray **Chairman.**

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

**II.1. A Vision for Westbere:** This Plan sets out a vision, with a strategy, and an action plan for the Civil Parish of Westbere. It recognises those things that make Westbere special, seeks to retain and enhance them and, in addition, offers ideas and opportunities for development that will increase the sustainability of Westbere as a community and, hopefully, secure its future. There is much in the Parish that is special: its location, its history, its environment, its people, its communications. These aspects have contributed greatly to making Westbere what it is today, a special place that its residents want to retain and its visitors want to experience. But they also make Westbere susceptible to damaging change as a “dormitory” for Canterbury and further afield, a Parish with an historic centre, an interesting past but, disappointingly, little prospect for the future. This Plan seeks to provide a framework within which that future can be secured and Westbere can continue to be not just a pretty place to live but a thriving, caring, supportive community. Edmund Burke, the 18<sup>th</sup> C philosopher and politician, said (admittedly of the French Revolution) that “a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation”. The challenges facing Westbere today may not be as severe as those in revolutionary France but if we are to overcome them and retain what makes Westbere a special place, we too must find ways to change.

## **III. WESTBERE AND WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL**

**III.1. Geographical Location:** Westbere sits just south of the A28, approximately four miles NNE of the centre of Canterbury. It is some mile and a half west to east and half a mile south to north at its maximum, sloping gently up the valley side from the River Stour. It is reputed to be the first place in England where hops were grown. Its commercial history is predominantly agricultural. Now the old village houses small businesses, largely based on home-working, and the main employment is located in the two recently developed industrial/ business parks on the north eastern boundary.

**III.2. Archaeology and the Historic Environment:** The River Stour, which marks the southern boundary of the Parish, was for centuries an important transport route from Sandwich to Canterbury. What is now the A28 was an important route from Thanet to Canterbury in Roman times. The present church building of All Saints dates from Norman times. The Olde Yew Tree Public House and the oldest houses in occupation are 15<sup>th</sup>/ 16<sup>th</sup> C. Much of the Parish was farmland and saw significant population growth and development from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> C. The opening of Chislet Colliery, immediately to the east of the Parish, prompted further development in the 20<sup>th</sup> C. Development continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> C with the expansion of the Industrial and Business Parks at the north east corner of the Parish. Westbere has thus been on important transport routes, and the subject of development, for at least two millennia. Though there have been chance discoveries from prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon times, these have been sparse given the long known history of settlement. Much remains to be discovered and a full archaeological assessment and history are still waiting to be written.

**III.3. Ecology and Environment:** The Parish of Westbere contains a wide range of habitat

types and offers residents, visitors and more serious students interesting examples of flora and fauna, both macro and micro. Within the Parish are found pockets of ancient woodland and hedgerows, rough pasture, grassland, wetlands and fully aquatic environments. The areas of developed and cultivated land are currently relatively small. All this adds significantly to the attraction of Westbere as a place to visit and in which to live, and to its importance scientifically and environmentally. The lakes and reed beds, relatively recent additions to the Stour Valley bottom, now represent mature systems; whilst proven to be reasonably robust against human traffic they could be easily damaged by pollution or further development. In ecological terms the Parish may be viewed as divided in two by the railway line. To the north is the valley side sloping up to the A28 and including the developed areas as well as the woodland, grassland and hedgerows. Much of this would benefit environmentally from improved management. To the south are the wetlands and aquatic environments much of which is SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and RAMSAR\* designated, as well as further woodland and grassland. The south is linked ecologically to the National Nature Reserve at Stodmarsh and includes extensions to those reed beds and the tidal River Stour as well as two substantial lakes. The Parish's geographical location on bird and insect migratory routes increases its interest and importance. Plentifully supplied with water and water-based environments, Westbere is, even for the south east of England, relatively warm and sunny, with low rainfall levels, providing micro-climates and micro-environments for drought tolerant species.

\*RAMSAR (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Ramsar, Iran, 1971 – an inter-governmental treaty which commits its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the sustainable use of all the wetlands in their territories).

Schedules of some of the more interesting and important species of flora and fauna, their recent sightings in the Parish, and a diagram showing the ecology are included in section VII. Although many individual aspects of the ecology and environment are documented, no comprehensive survey of either has yet been undertaken.

**III.4. Topography and Morphology:** Part of the attraction of Westbere lies in its physical format, with its main thoroughfares rising steeply from the foot of an old cliff line and bisecting large undeveloped green spaces as they do so. Such spaces extend to the heart of the village. Beneath the foot of the old cliff line, the land soon falls away to the village's 'wetlands'. Morphology and topography (and probably roads) have been further affected by sand and gravel workings, whose former sites have now weathered into landscape enhancing features.

**III.5. Community, Services and People:** The settlement of Westbere, with a resident population numbering less than 400 persons (see Appendices for more detailed demographics), has two main nodes: the old village, with modern additions, and new and old development along what is now the A28 running from Canterbury to Thanet. This road is still a major route but traffic to Thanet and east Kent from west of Canterbury is now routed along the A2 or more particularly the A299. Employment and economic activity are mainly clustered at the east end of the Parish, whereas community life has the Church, the Village Hall and the Olde Yew Tree Public House as its major amenities in the old village. Other services and amenities, notably schools, health and shops, are now outside the Parish in Sturry and Canterbury to the west, Thanet to the east, Herne Bay to the north or further afield. Buses run along the

A28 to Sturry, Canterbury and Thanet but provision for pedestrians and cycling is minimal. The current population is a mix of employed, self-employed and retired, school-aged to pensioners, largely professional and educated to tertiary and higher levels; the majority have lived in the Parish for more than 10 years, 35% for over 20. They have pride in their Parish and an eagerness to contribute and maintain its community.

Westbere Village is also home to two sheltered communities, both of which benefit from and contribute to its tranquillity. The older of these is St Anne's Convent and the Euphrasie Barbier Home. Founded in about 1881 and extended over time its buildings have served as a house of formation for young women interested in becoming sisters and a pre-preparatory school. Since the closure of the school the buildings have been further extended to serve as a Residential Care Home for retired and infirm sisters who have spent their working lives in Third World Missions or similar occupations. Although it arrived much more recently than St Anne's, the Newlands Home is now also an integral part of the local community. It provides residential care and other facilities for young adults with complex needs and physical disabilities, including those with profound disabilities.

Additionally, two groups of people, for the most part non-residents, are also highly appreciative of the tranquillity offered by Westbere's lakes and wetlands. One is the dingy sailing fraternity represented by the Westbere Frostbite Sailing Association and its 'guest', Westbere Sailing Opportunities, a well known charity whose sole purpose is to give disabled people of all ages an experience of sailing. The other is a community of dedicated coarse fishers with an obvious interest in conservation. Their fishing on Westbere Lake is managed by Mid-Kent Fisheries.

Westbere Lake and much of the surrounding land are owned and managed by Brett, to whom the use of these delightful and tranquil surroundings the Parish of Westbere is indebted.

#### **IV. WESTBERE'S CHALLENGES**

**IV.1. The Future:** The context of this Plan is more than simply seeking to protect the Parish of Westbere as it is. Unfortunately, change is inevitable and Westbere is now very different from 50 or more years ago. Employment is different both by nature and location. Traffic has increased and the A28 is one of the busiest roads in the county. The school and shops in the Parish have closed. Other facilities and amenities need a larger base than the resident population can provide if they are to be viable commercially. By and large, the residents no longer live and work in the Parish and most commute if they work, to Canterbury or further afield. The roads within the Parish were not designed or developed with modern traffic in mind, with potential consequences for damage to the environment and for personal safety. There are pressures for more housing. Some of the existing housing has happened piecemeal without regard for standards of design or for landscape. Westbere shares, with many places in Kent (and more widely), the need to find practical solutions to the green agenda.

Whilst, as we assert, Westbere is still a special place, it can be improved and its

community enhanced if it is to be more than a collection of interesting and attractive old houses occupied by people whose real interests and lives are centred on employment, schooling and amenities provided elsewhere.

**IV.2. Local Opinion:** In the preparation of the Plan, local opinion was sought through two questionnaires (separate versions for residents and businesses), copies of which are contained in the Appendices together with analyses of the results.

As previously mentioned completed questionnaires were returned from 106 of the 126 residential properties in the Parish representing an overall response rate of 84%. Unfortunately, however, the response to the questionnaire circulated to the businesses, in particular those in the Business Parks, was low. Whilst disappointing, this response was not entirely unexpected in the current uncertain economic environment as employers will, importantly, have been focusing on running their businesses.

What the detailed results show is considerable satisfaction with the Parish as a place to live and work. They also show a desire to retain the essential features of the Parish and to control further development in a way that adds to the facilities, amenities and sustainability of the Parish and, in addition, a recognition of what has happened through the ages.

Westbere must develop its special qualities, for the enjoyment of its residents and for those who visit. The results also reveal a capacity as yet, not properly or fully utilised, for both self-help and the promotion of new ideas and interests, for the benefit of individuals and of the wider community.

**IV.3. The Plan:** At the heart of any Plan of this type must be the framework for further physical development. But this in turn must rest on the needs of the immediate community and a recognition of their obligations, regionally and more widely, especially at a time in national life when there is an impetus for the expansion of housing and opportunities for education, employment and wealth generation.

**IV.4. Spatial Planning and Development:** It can be argued that, with the development of the two business parks, the Pennington Close housing development and significant infill housing within the village core, Westbere, given its small size, has absorbed more than its fair share of the region's growth over the last 30 or so years. Nevertheless, its location is such that continued development pressure will be experienced. To block development in its entirety is likely to prove impossible and an approach which seeks to steer it in directions which avoid Westbere's defining characteristics will prove to be more in the interests of the community.

The principal purpose underlying the proposals that are set out here is to encourage the development of the north east of the Parish as a local centre with additional services and amenities. In doing so some limited opportunities will be created for additional housing; and it would be possible to enhance current communication routes, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. The context for these proposals is to take advantage of the practical and visual line back to Canterbury created by the A28, properly to embrace the industrial parks and their immediate environs within the Parish, and to manage current traffic flow through the Parish more sympathetically

and with increased user safety. Plans and schematics (*ref.* section XI) are included showing: new housing at either the west end of the Parish (as part of a scheme to guarantee the future as open space of the Two Fields) and/ or between the two industrial parks at the north east; further zoning of land at Lakesview International Business Park for amenities such as a swimming pool, sports (indoors and outdoors) and community services (possibly a fire station) to provide greater access than presently possible on the north of the railway line as use of the latter is increased; further green gaps within the Parish; a railway station near Lakesview (not a new idea but a replacement of the former Chislet Halt) with footpaths, cycle routes and car parking; a cycle route/ pedestrian pathway from the A28/ new railway station through the Parish and the village to Sturry, using the existing footpath across the Two Fields but with improved surfaces and lighting; a new community building as part of the scheme for additional housing at either the west or the north east ends of the Parish; footpath access from Pennington Close to Church Lane; planting and/ or other streetscape improvements along the present ugly and poorly maintained edges of the A28 and at the three entrances to the village; new connections to the south across the river. Older residents in particular would appreciate a low frequency but reliable minibus link to Canterbury via Sturry. Further facilities and amenities are included in section XI with diagrams.

- IV.5. Sustainability:** The generation of carbon emissions is a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment, relating to the quantity of greenhouse gases produced daily by the way we live through the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation. Nationally, approximately 35% of carbon emissions are generated by domestic consumption (13% for heating, 12% electricity generation, 10% private transport), providing significant scope for reduction. There is undoubtedly a need in Westbere (and probably in most parishes) for more education on this point. In addition, Parish level action should be initiated on awareness raising, carbon monitoring, district heating and improved recycling as part of our overall stewardship of the environment.
- IV.6. Security:** Responses to the questionnaire indicated that the major concern of residents is over road safety, speed restrictions and road and footpath lighting. Measures to deal with these issues are included in the physical planning framework and development control (section XI). Residents also indicated a wish for better advice/ education on matters such as crime prevention, fire precautions, dealing with bogus callers and ‘scams’ and personal matters such as first aid. In this way, the existing high level of confidence in their personal security that residents enjoy might be further advanced.
- IV.7. Westbere Village Community Forum:** The questionnaire results indicate a strong desire to retain the existing village amenities. The three main ones however (the Church, the Pub and the Village Hall) are all known to be marginally viable at best, as evidenced by recent events. At the beginning of 2010 additional funds were sought from residents for essential maintenance and equipment for both the Church and the Hall and the Olde Yew Tree has experienced a high turnover of landlords as well as periods of closure over the last ten years. If, as the questionnaire results suggest, these amenities are valued, the Parish needs to address ways in which usage can be increased and costs shared across a wider base of activity. Much of that increased

activity could be in the form of groups/ classes/ local events, meeting the needs expressed by residents in their responses. To provide an umbrella under which such activity could be initiated and driven forward it is proposed that a Westbere Village Community Forum be established. The Village Hall itself is an excellent amenity, centrally located and convenient in many ways except that it is not well served with car parking. Neither is the Church. The spatial plan therefore provides for the possibility of providing additional car parking on the periphery of the village. There is also a wish to see the Church used more, as a venue for village activities and for it to be open during the week.

**IV.8. Communication:** Residents appear to feel well served by traditional means of communication (notice boards, newsletters) within the Parish especially within the village area. However, there is a view that the Parish website should be developed and enhanced, both to provide more information as well as better communication across the Parish. 82% of respondents to the residential questionnaire have internet access.

## **V. POPULATION**

**V.1. Demographics:** As already mentioned (section III.5), the Parish of Westbere has a residential population of less than 400. The vast majority of these (approximately 81%) are over the age of 45 and of these, 32.6% are aged 75 and over. At present (2010) there are three nonagenarians - Mrs Joan Tucker, Miss Joan Tait and Mr Charles Wright - resident within the village, eight octogenarians and many septuagenarians – this was reflected in the answers to the questionnaire. 11 of 96 respondents live alone. 52.5% of the parishioners are female and this mirrors the UK as a whole. On the other hand, in recent years there has been a welcome influx of younger generations into the community and the remaining 18.8% reflects this and, therefore, relates to younger families. Most of these figures are based on an analysis of 138 (of 141) respondents. Thus the population is a mix of school age to pensioners, of employed, self-employed and retired. It is largely professional and well educated.

**V.2. Employment:** Employment and economic activity (also discussed in section III.5) in Westbere are predominantly at the east end of the Parish on the Lakesview International and Canterbury Industrial Business Parks.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to identify from the answers to the questionnaires whether any of the 35.1% fully-employed responders worked within the Parish or further afield. It was established, however, that 18.7% work from home, and of these, 60% work part-time.

## **VI. ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

**VI.1. Archaeology Background:** Archaeology has a recognised status within the planning system. Under Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16) published in 1990 (replaced recently by Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5)), should a known or suspected archaeological site become subject to planning permission, archaeological investigative work may be required prior to planning permission being granted.

Planning permission may be also granted subject to an archaeological condition and, in rare cases, development might be refused. Development on a site already scheduled as an ancient monument is, of course, never permitted except under extreme circumstances.

When a significant but unexpected archaeological discovery is made during development, it is likely to stimulate a 'rescue' archaeology project, rarely a satisfactory outcome. This happened recently with the development of the Lakesview International Business Park. What was described initially as the development of an old colliery site largely took place on the unexcavated site of a major Romano-British settlement, which then had to be investigated under far from ideal circumstances.

Not only is it desirable to prevent a similar situation occurring in the future for its own sake, but having a more detailed knowledge of potential archaeological sites could help the village 'steer' future development. The combination of more detailed archaeological and ecological knowledge expressed in map form might enable parts of the Parish to be deemed as too sensitive for development or as requiring additional costs during development. The prospect of such additional costs may well divert opportunistic developers to other less sensitive areas.

**VI.2. Historic Background:** Westbere has been on important transport routes, and the subject of development, for at least two millennia. Given its historical position on these routes it is not surprising that Westbere has had significant archaeological discoveries recorded over the last couple of centuries, including prehistoric artefacts, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burials and a large Iron Age Romano-British settlement (now beneath Lakesview International Business Park). Almost all were discovered accidentally; it did not prove possible to assess their full significance properly and they have been sparse in number given the long known history of settlement. All relate to a relatively narrow time period, roughly 700 BC to 700 AD, after which there is a gap until the church appears sometime after the Norman conquest. Much probably remains to be discovered and a full archaeological assessment and history are still waiting to be written. This would be of interest to a large majority of residents as evidenced by the fact that over 90% of the 122 respondents to the residential questionnaire agreed "*we should use archaeology as a tool to learn more of Westbere's past and as a tool when assessing future development proposals.*"

**VI.3. Scoping Study:** Central to this issue are the potential locations of unknown but surviving archaeological sites within the Parish. An assessment of where these might be could probably, in large part, be carried out without extensive (or possibly any) excavations. It would commence with a desktop assessment aimed at interpreting existing knowledge, against, for example, a professional analysis of the numerous series of aerial and other photographs available, as well as old maps.

Part of the information incorporated in the assessment would be derived from documentary sources, mainly old archives. In order to assess whether there was much unpublished written material about the history of the village and whether any of it might assist with a full desktop assessment a professional medieval archivist was commissioned to advise on these issues. The resultant Scoping Study, largely

consisting of references to documents about Westbere (identified but not examined) located in Canterbury (Cathedral Archives and Library), Whitfield (East Kent Archives), Maidstone (Centre for Kentish Studies), Lambeth Palace, the British Library, the National Archives and even further afield ran to 16 A4 pages (*ref. Appendices*). Although extensive, it is not necessarily totally exhaustive, partly because there may be other material under the names of localities within the Parish such as Hersden or Hopland not keyed to Westbere.

**VI.4. Early Results:** The Scoping Study shows that although very early records are lacking, from the time of Westbere's first appearance in the written record in the late 13<sup>th</sup> C, the number of surviving documents soon becomes impressively large. Some of this material, including a few old maps, would contribute directly to a full desktop assessment and, on examination, some of the other documents may also yield useful background information. Additionally, the Scoping Study results will greatly facilitate detailed studies of the social and economic history of medieval and early modern Westbere, whether carried out on a voluntary basis (as through the Westbere Village Preservation Society's Educational Projects) or by academics. It is therefore recommended that, subject to the availability of funding, a full desktop assessment should be commissioned from a professional archaeological organisation, with the aim of producing a map or maps 'zoning' the Parish into areas of high, medium and low archaeological potential. This could offer two additional by-products. The first would be an improved knowledge of Westbere prior to the written record. The second might be identification of sites where archaeological investigation could be initiated, perhaps with local residents involved under supervision. It is worth recalling that in the residential questionnaire nearly 90% of the 125 respondents expressed a willingness to have archaeological surveys, not involving excavations, made of their grounds. This could involve various non-invasive survey techniques such as field (garden)-walking, metal detecting and geophysics.

**Recommendations:**

- To **commission** a full desktop assessment from a professional archaeological organisation for use as a planning assessment tool.
- Using the results of the desktop assessment, to **identify** sites within the Parish for the initiation of archaeological investigation as community projects.

**VI.5. The Maps:** The three accompanying maps deserve some comment.

Map 1 (after p.138 of English Heritage's 1997 *St. Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*) illustrates the position of Westbere within the medieval Chislet Estate of St Augustine's Abbey. It shows that Westbere Village emerged as the centre of a number of scattered hamlets in a landscape combining arable areas with woodland and marsh, a pattern still recognisable today.

Map 2 (reproduced from the 1872 Ordnance Survey map) shows the village prior to the extensive modern growth of the built-up area, largely since the Second World War, but after the arrival of the railway. The marshes remain free from gravel working and the associated flooding, although sand and gravel quarrying is evident on higher ground. Among the losses since this map was prepared are areas of woodland,

the ancient Hoplands Farmhouse and the standing remains of the medieval Westbere Deanery, adjacent to the hamlet of Hersden, which was then immediately north of the railway. However, the village structure shown is one of three lanes leading up to the Roman Road (A28), each backed by undeveloped land. This distinctive morphology, evidently already established by 1872, has been maintained and still gives Westbere Village much of its character today, including its sense of peace and security.

Map 3 (prepared during the Plan process) is an attempt to grade areas of the Parish in terms of archaeological potential based on our present understanding. Some of the high potential sites have already been excavated (or destroyed) and others may have been damaged by mineral working, development or ploughing and may perhaps require future protection.

## **VII. BIODIVERSITY**

**VII.1. Ecology:** As outlined in section III.3, the Parish of Westbere contains a wide range of habitat types and offers sightings of interesting examples of flora and fauna, both macro and micro. In ecological terms (ecology: the study of the relationships between plants and animals and the environment in which they live) the Parish is divided by the railway line into two ecosystems. Much of the area to the south of the railway line (the wetlands) is SSSI and RAMSAR designated. RAMSAR designation is internationally significant but does not of itself carry any statutory protection. The SSSI designated sites were assessed (2009) as being in “unfavourable” condition and are subject to improvement strategies and action. In addition, Westbere contains two locally designated sites, one a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) and the other a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

**VII.2. Biodiversity Action Plan:** The LWS/ SSSI/ RAMSAR designations demonstrate the importance of Westbere’s flora and fauna at all levels, from the local to the international, and their important role in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Kent Wildlife Trust is involved in the BAP and closer contact with this organisation is important in order to maintain and improve Westbere’s natural environment.

**Recommendation:** To **establish** and maintain Parish contact with Kent Wildlife Trust.

**VII.3. Environmental Relationships:** The links between the north and the south ecosystems need further study. Whilst the railway line is an obvious boundary, there are streams that run underneath it as well as human and other (bird, animal, insect, plant (seed)) traffic across it, all of which establish ecological connections and relationships not yet fully studied. As previously noted, Westbere is, currently, plentifully supplied with water and aquatic environments and it is, even for the south east of England, warm and sunny, with low rainfall levels providing micro-climates and micro-environments for drought tolerant species.

Westbere’s geographical location, on bird and insect migratory routes in the south east of England, increases its interest and importance. To see hedgerow and garden flowers and shrubs providing food for Red Admiral and (in particular in 2009)

Painted Lady butterflies on their early summer migration from north Africa and southern Europe to East Anglia and further north, is to get a glimpse of the beauty, complexity and fragility of environmental relationships.

**Recommendation:** To **initiate** an analysis of the links between the north and south ecosystems of the Parish.

**VII.4. Further Study:** The species presence and distribution of flora and fauna have been selectively studied (see the diagram for distribution plots of the more important/interesting species). The most recent summary is to be found in the Westbere Heritage Trail (published by the Westbere Village Preservation Society (WVPS), 2006). Of particular importance and/ or interest are: Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Cetti's Warbler, Marbled White Butterfly, Scarce Chaser Dragonfly, Southern Marsh and Bee Orchids. A further study is needed (much of which could be undertaken by coordinated action with local natural historians) of species presence and distribution. Allied to this a literature review could establish Westbere's importance, if any, on migratory routes. Only through these studies and reviews can we seek to ensure that further development as proposed in this Plan, or otherwise (*eg.* of the recreational use and bridging of the River Stour), does not damage those parts of the environment which make Westbere special and call to be preserved. The spatial plan provides for "Green Gap Zones" to complement the existing green spaces and, thereby, to offer the Parish protection from development to the north and the west of the village. Equally, these proposed measures, *eg.* afforestation (*ref.* section XI.12a), would indeed improve biodiversity and eventually optimise biocapacity.

**Recommendations:**

- To **initiate** a literature review to establish Westbere's importance, if any, on insect and bird migratory routes for use as a planning assessment tool.
- To **implement** 'Green Gap Zones'.

## VIII. AMENITIES

**VIII.1. Community Life:** As discussed in section III.5, community life within the Parish is, mainly, centred in the old village and is based around the Church, the Village Hall and the Olde Yew Tree Public House. Interestingly, the responses from the residential questionnaire regarding the village amenities indicated a strong desire to retain them (approximately 70%). If, as the results suggest, these are valued by the residents, the Parish needs to address ways in which their usage can be increased and costs spread across a wider base of activity. Much of that increased activity could be in the form of groups/ classes/ local events, meeting the needs expressed by residents in the questionnaire responses.

**VIII.2. Westbere Village Community Forum:** The formation of a Westbere Village Community Forum to provide an umbrella under which such activity could be initiated and driven forward is proposed. The Olde Yew Tree apart, the major drawback for these amenities is lack of sufficient parking. The Plan therefore provides for the possibility of additional parking on the periphery of the village.

**VIII.3.The Church:** There is a wish to see the Church used more as a venue for village activities, and for it to be open during the week (62.1%). Among the possible new activities suggested are the following: concerts, lectures/ discussions on religion, ethics and philosophy, readings (poetry or prose), recitals, flower festival. The Church has recently launched a fund-raising appeal seeking some £60,000 from the Parish for essential building work without which the future of the building as an active venue will be in doubt after 2010.

**Recommendation:** To **negotiate** with the Church authorities regarding easier access to the Church.

**VIII.4.The Village Hall:** The Village Hall is an excellent and recently upgraded amenity, centrally located and convenient in many ways, but it should be used more. It has an active Village Hall Management Committee with representatives from WPC, WVPS, the church and the playgroup. Among new activities suggested are ballroom dancing, craft classes, sessions on fire prevention, first aid, home security, ‘e-scam’ and doorstep caller control, U3A and evening classes, keep-fit classes, fashion shows, local produce and other specialist sales, classic film nights, cookery demonstrations, lectures on local history, landscape and flora/ fauna, youth club, book exchange, whist and beetle drives. The Village Hall Committee has recently sought voluntary contributions from Parish residents towards the cost of providing new chairs, further to enhance the Hall.

**VIII.5.The Olde Yew Tree:** The Public House has adequate parking but operates within an economic and social framework which makes commercial viability in such a small community a daunting task. Among the possible new activities suggested are the following: sale of stamps, maps, guides and postcards, provision of a cash dispenser, theme nights, wine tastings, light entertainment and a dining club. Residents support the renewed efforts made by the new landlords and their staff to create a welcoming environment and wish to see the Olde Yew Tree become a central part of the village community.

**Recommendation:** To **establish** a Westbere Village Community Forum with the aim of helping to preserve the Parish’s three amenities (the Church, the Village Hall and the Olde Yew Tree Public House).

**VIII.6.Future Possible Amenities:** These will be discussed in section XI.

## **IX. COMMUNICATION**

**IX.1. Newsletters and Notice Boards:** The residents and businesses of the Parish of Westbere are well served with newsletters and notice boards – an established and efficient means of communication. WPC issues a four-monthly newsletter which may become electronic in 2010, and maintains four notice boards. The WVPS also circulates a newsletter to its members three times a year and maintains four notice boards. Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) circulates regular emails. CCC produces *District Life* and Kent County Council (KCC) produces *Around Kent*. Last but not least, for an annual subscription, the local churches issue *Link-Up Magazine*.

The communication section of the residential questionnaire set out to identify how many people use the notice boards and newsletters as their main source of communication and if the content was useful. Respondents confirmed that newsletters and notice boards form the backbone of communication within the Parish and are regarded as important (approximately 90% of responders read the WPC newsletters and notice boards and subscribe to the WVPS). The majority of respondents, therefore, are happy with these traditional methods and feel that they provide sufficient notice and information about Parish events.

- IX.2. Parish Welcome Pack:** The suggestion of the development of a Parish Welcome Pack was well received and should be developed. This could contain maps, reference materials about amenities and services, material provided by any of the groups and societies in the Parish, website addresses and other resources and, possibly, advertising material (which might help to pay for the production of the Packs).

**Recommendation:** To **develop** a Parish Welcome Pack.

- IX.3. Parish Website:** Another key aim of the residential questionnaire was to find out how many people would use an enhanced Westbere Village website as an additional resource and if so, what people would like to see on it.

The Model Publication Scheme is a formal obligation which WPC have adopted (*ref. Appendices*), updating their website - [www.westberepc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.westberepc.kentparishes.gov.uk) – with the appropriate required information. At present this website is not used regularly by parishioners even though just over 80% of respondents have internet access and are in favour of further development (of the website) to complement their traditional methods of communication. From the suggestions put forward in the questionnaire for inclusion on the website, a clubs and activities section gained the highest number of responses, closely followed by Parish Council meeting minutes, reports and the history of the Parish, and local bus and train timetables. Other suggestions put forward included information relating to Canterbury and other local events, a local business directory, information about the lakes, community forum, car share, walks and cycle routes, village directory, notification of road works and planning applications, wildlife information, pub news, WVPS activities and church service times.

**Recommendation:** To **investigate** what information and links can be added to the current WPC website and expand accordingly.

There was a lukewarm response to wider promotion of the Parish outside its boundaries. Respondents felt it would be more beneficial to develop links with other parishes and the businesses within the Parish.

## **X. SAFETY AND SECURITY**

- X.1. Streetlights:** WPC considers the safety of its parishioners to be a major priority. It does this by ensuring that the roads are well lit and free of potholes as far as possible, even so 51.6% of questionnaire respondents feel that the condition of the roads within

the village is unacceptable and 60.4% consider the street lighting is adequate (just).

To improve this situation three streetlights in the village have recently been replaced, using a design that is in character with and complements those that remain, and others will be replaced when necessary. One of the concerns highlighted in the questionnaire was road and footpath lighting.

- X.2. Road Safety:** Other concerns highlighted were road safety and speed restriction measures. These issues will be discussed in detail under Spatial Planning and Design Implementation (section XI).
- X.3. Crime:** The Canterbury district is generally a low crime area. Recently there has been little reported crime in Westbere's residential area, usually in unprotected outhouses if at all. In part this can be put down to the morphology of Westbere, the passive policing achieved through individual vigilance and the support of our NHW Scheme.
- X.4. Anti-Social Behaviour:** Isolated instances of anti-social behaviour (*eg.* random dropping of litter and the use of mobile handsets by drivers) occur at many different locations. However, a more acute problem is 'fly-tipping', particularly in Westbere Lane at its western end. 65% of responders to the questionnaire consider this serious enough to warrant action. An area of concern for approximately half the respondents is that of falling victim to social crime, a term embracing identity fraud, 'phishing' and other online fraud. There is widespread support for active preventative measures, taking the form of advice on crime prevention, fire precaution and social crime which could be extended to include personal matters.
- X.5. Emergency Services:** Of the respondents that had called the emergency services in the last five years, just under 70% regarded the response as having been prompt. On confidence levels in the response times of emergency services however, the police service lagged behind with only 42% of respondents confident of a prompt response as opposed to 84% for the other services.

The Ambulance Service's volunteer First Responder scheme is extending its coverage from local towns into rural areas. Training and equipment, which includes a defibrillator and oxygen, are provided to volunteers. The presence of volunteers within the Parish would be of significant benefit to the community.

**Recommendation:** To **support** the First Responder scheme and to encourage residents to volunteer.

- X.6. Professional Advice Sought:** Respondents favoured becoming acquainted with the police officers responsible for the Parish, would welcome conventional crime prevention advice, would appreciate fire prevention advice and would like advice on dealing with bogus callers and email 'scams'. It was felt that this advice might be further enhanced by including additional personal security matters. In this way, the existing high level of confidence in their personal security that residents currently enjoy might be further enhanced.

## **Recommendations:**

- To **offer** ‘get to know you’ sessions with local police officers.
- To **initiate** an educational programme, taking the form of advice on crime prevention, fire precaution and electronic crime, which could be extended to include personal matters such as first aid.

**X.7. ‘No Cold Calling’ Zones:** Although cold callers were not identified as a specific problem (apart from one respondent), the recent introduction of ‘No Cold Calling’ Zones by several City Councils to help combat the increasing problem of doorstep crime seems to be effective. This idea could offer additional security for the residents of Westbere in the future. It has been suggested that Westbere Village would be suitable for a ‘No Cold Calling’ Zone pilot study.

**Recommendation:** To **initiate** a ‘No Cold Calling’ Zone pilot study.

**X.8. Cycling Proficiency Courses:** A question aimed at parents of under 15-year-olds revealed that 93% of the respondents favoured the provision of road safety and cycling proficiency courses for children.

**Recommendation:** To **offer** road safety and cycling proficiency courses for under 15s.

## **XI. SPATIAL PLANNING AND DESIGN PROPOSALS**

**XI.1. Background:** These ideas are consistent with information generated from the background position of the residents of Westbere Village. They are largely based on the answers to the residential questionnaire (*ref.* section I.2 and Appendices). As previously noted, the results were analysed and interpreted by the SG in 2009; they are here placed in a broader context.

This **Vision for Westbere** presents both a comprehensive spatial planning and land use designation scheme, and a range of conceptual and physical design proposals, placed in the context of the Parish and its surrounding region. Enhancements to the infrastructure and landscape are also discussed. The physical planning ideas contained in the proposals could possibly offer achievable standards for future developments as they consider architecture alongside construction quality, scale and sustainability. They are structured to be consistent with the socio-economic trends which drive national policies.

In order to improve comprehension, and to support these ideas, the following notes should be read in conjunction with the diagrams included.

**XI.2. Transport Routes:** *Diagram 1* identifies the main transport links and places the Parish in context.

**XI.2a. Road:** The main transport routes in and around Westbere – the A28 and the A299 – are well established and, whilst the answers to the residential questionnaire support a bypass around both Westbere and Sturry, it is unlikely that there will be any major

enhancements to these routes for the foreseeable future. Therefore, changes in their use should be considered which could decrease traffic congestion at peak times and relieve the currently increasing traffic pressure associated with the Business Parks.

The A299 is clearly identified as the preferred route for all heavy goods vehicles and should be made the principal link to the east end of the Parish – the location of the industrial areas. This would release some of the traffic pressure on the A28 to the west of the Business Parks and could be achieved by lobbying the Highway Authority for signage and guidance together with adjusted satellite navigation directions. Initially this will alter the balance of traffic on either side of the Business Parks along the A28 but the end result could be beneficial as traffic flow would be improved through the Sturry crossing. The new high-speed rail service to Ebbsfleet and St Pancras has a negative effect on the Sturry crossing which is closed more frequently than previously with the consequent backup of traffic on either side.

**XI.2b. Rail:** At present the nearest railway station is Sturry. In order to encourage the use of trains a Halt is recommended at Lakesview to replicate the old Chislet Halt. This will be discussed with *diagram 4b*.

**XI.2c. Air:** In recent years there have been moves to increase the use of Manston International Airport; the introduction of new scheduled services was announced whilst this Plan was in preparation. An increase in use will, obviously, generate more traffic and, if it is linked to the high-speed rail system there will be major implications with noise and air quality for the Parish. Whilst it is unlikely that Manston will become a major hub in the near future, the businesses in the Parish could possibly benefit from increased services as well as the residents if demand is identified and accepted by the communities concerned.

**XI.2d. Cycle:** Unfortunately the district cycle route stops at Sturry. Additional proposals on the cycle route will also be considered with *diagram 4b*.

**XI.2e. Water:** In the past the main transport link from the sea to Canterbury would have been the River Stour. Because of this important link it has been suggested that the Environment Agency be approached to explore a greater use of the river. In addition, the identification of opportunities for improvement in access and use of the river, *eg.* boat moorings on the Stour at Fordwich with owners' accommodation above, see *diagram 5*, would encourage the use of boats, improve the aesthetics and complement previous developments in the area. The re-establishment of the footpath link to Grove Ferry along the Stour would also be beneficial.

Westbere is connected to two coastlines – to the north and the east. This close proximity to the sea has an effect on the climate both in and around the Parish and could be used to advantage. Certainly better communication between the Parish and the coastal communities would be beneficial to all concerned. This idea could be explored with CCC, creating a greater awareness of the Parish location and encouraging what would have been a key historic relationship in the past.

Improvement in these transport routes should be a priority for the Parish assisting Westbere to develop a closer relationship with CCC.

**Recommendation:** To **introduce** a new appraisal for a coherent transport regime.

**XI.3. The Sub Region:** *Diagram 2* identifies the Parish in the context of east Kent and shows that it sits within an area that has been described as ‘Marshland’, its predominant characteristic, although it is more diverse than that in reality. As such it affords unique habitats and landscapes that should be capitalised upon as sustainable environments.

**XI.3a. Leisure:** At present communal facilities and services in the sub region (identified on the diagram) are poorly distributed and inadequate. Residents travel to Canterbury, Margate, Ramsgate, Dover, Ashford or even further afield dependant on their requirements. If communication links were improved the Business Parks could be promoted to provide some of these services and amenities and marketed. The benefits from this would be improved services and business opportunities, a reduction in intra-regional travel and better integration of the Parish as a whole.

Also, given the increased awareness of health and lifestyle today, the natural benefits of the lakes and waterways at Westbere and the potential for walks within the Parish would combine well with the possible provision of a Leisure centre at Lakesview International Business Park. This would then become a focus for recreation and leisure – a ‘Rural Centre’. These facilities, together with community and cultural facilities, could also benefit the sub region but, inevitably, would slightly increase traffic flow, particularly from the east.

Geographically then, the east end of the Parish is well placed to become a significant service centre for the sub region in the future. The transport links discussed under *diagram 1* could therefore be considered in the context of the sub region releasing pressure for these links to be expanded and improved for the benefit of the sub region as a whole.

**Recommendation:** To **implement** policies that will improve quality of life and social cohesion within the Parish and integrate the sub region as a whole.

**XI.4. Links with Canterbury:** *Diagram 3.* Canterbury is the cultural and historic centre of Kent, and the close proximity of the Parish to Canterbury ensures strong links between the two. Today Westbere is a satellite of Canterbury with historical, cultural and educational connections in addition to its transport links. The parishes that surround Canterbury rely on the City as a focus for entertainment, shopping, culture and knowledge.

These links expose Westbere to forces released by the rapid expansion of Canterbury, mainly due to the universities, in recent years. This rapid urbanisation has changed the demographics of the population of the City from a family-led to a student-led culture and a tremendous change in facilities has resulted.

Importantly too, the links between the Parish and the City extend beyond history and knowledge. They are likely to figure in proposed archaeological work and include administrative, social and physical links. It is vital that future developments in and around the City respect these links and, if possible, enhance them.

At the same time the connection for the Parish with the rest of Kent, London and the remainder of the UK is mainly via Canterbury. It is unfortunate that the existing bus and train schedules do not offer the range and convenience of services that will be necessary in the future.

#### **XI.5. Proposed Transport Enhancements:** *Diagram 4a.*

**XI.5a. Speed:** It is recommended that the speed limit on the A28 between Staines Hill and Bushy Hill Road is reduced to 30mph as this short section of road is currently dangerous. There are two main reasons for this – first, the presence of the children from Spires Academy and second, visibility for motorists leaving the village to join the A28. Visibility is poor on sections where the A28 is curvilinear and where this occurs 40mph becomes incompatible with safety. Unfortunately, the combination of a busy restaurant and the winding nature of the A28 near the junction of Church Lane compound this problem. Poor visibility and increased traffic due to heavy vehicles – a direct result of the development of the Business Parks – are a dangerous combination.

Bearing in mind the presence of elderly and disabled residents within the village, a reduction of the speed limit to 15mph would be helpful and improve safety for pedestrians, horses and motorists. Although the optimum speed limit in the village is 12mph, the limit would then be in line with the urban speed limits of 20kph that are more typical in north west Europe.

Narrow lanes with passing places and a lack of footpaths within the village are also problematic. As these lanes are used frequently by both residents and horses, bollard zones and verge enhancements for pedestrians could be considered. Additional speed restriction measures such as pictorial, *eg.* equestrian triangles, and speed warning signs would be beneficial. These improvements would increase safety for lane users.

**Recommendation:** To **introduce** a new vehicular speeding regime.

**XI.5b. Axle Weight:** As a general rule delivery lorries are becoming larger and heavier. This places the narrow lanes of Westbere Village under increasing pressure. In order to restrict the access of very large vehicles to the village, an axle weight of 12 tons with additional signage should be considered.

**Recommendation:** To **introduce** a new vehicular weight control system.

**XI.5c. Pedestrians:** Crossing the A28 can present pedestrians with a major hazard because of speeding traffic. This problem could be rectified by additional pedestrian crossings along the A28 – one at the end of Church Lane, the other at the end of Westbere Lane.

**XI.6. Footbridges:** In order to improve access to the areas of outstanding natural beauty consideration should be given to the construction of two pedestrian footbridges – the first over the River Stour as indicated on *diagram 4b*. This footbridge would assist walkers with access to Marshland and provide a valuable link with Stodmarsh and beyond. Designed to be a creative structure yet harmonious with the river setting it could be the subject of an open competition. The second footbridge, over the railway

at the end of Walnut Tree Lane in Westbere Village, connecting the village with the lakes, would improve safety following the introduction of the new high-speed trains. This second footbridge should also be subject to a design consultation.

**XI.7. Footpaths:** Currently, residents in Pennington Close cannot access the village centre without venturing onto the A28. Because of this, an additional footpath connecting Pennington Close to Church Lane is strongly recommended (see *diagram 5*). This footpath would improve safety and encourage community cohesion. A footpath across the Two Fields to the A28 will also be necessary in the event of the Green Gap realisation discussed under *diagram 5*, together with a few pedestrian rest islands on the A28 to encourage walking to Sturry railway station. Positions for these are clearly identified on the diagram.

**Recommendation:** To **consider** new pedestrian routes and links to existing network.

**XI.8. Parking:** The new Church Lane pedestrian crossing could link to the possible provision of car parking at the present Spice Master for the village. This facility could then serve the Village Hall and the Church. Additional potential car parking zones are also identified near the Spice Master, the Olde Yew Tree Public House and Lakesview International Business Park. These are marked blue on *diagram 4b*. Another possibility would be to negotiate parking rights at the Anglers' Car Park at the end of Walnut Tree Lane.

**Recommendations:**

- To **initiate** discussion with the Anglers' Association regarding the possibility of sharing the car park at the end of Walnut Tree Lane.
- To **provide** more strategic parking spaces in the Parish.

**XI.9. Rail:** As the nearest railway station is Sturry, a Halt at Lakesview is recommended. This could replace the old Chislet Halt, and the above-mentioned car park could link in to this. Although this idea was not particularly welcomed by the residents of Westbere in the questionnaire, it would have indirect benefits, *viz.* improvements in both traffic flow and air quality. The same indirect benefits could be achieved in the short term, as an alternative solution, by lengthening both platforms at Sturry Station.

The new Halt would ease the pressure on Sturry Station and could be preferable to Sturry with superior opportunities and infrastructure. It could also benefit the sub region generally as the distance between Sturry and Minster is lengthy leading to increased reliance on the car and a reduction (in the use of the car) should result in a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The new car park identified at Lakesview International Business Park would also be a suitable position for a new Park and Ride for Canterbury.

**XI.10. Cycle:** At present the cycle route ends at Sturry. In order to be up-to-date with current thinking this could beneficially be extended through the Parish with one route following the A28 and another running parallel with the railway line and turning north at the sewage works to join the A28, as shown on *diagram 4b*. Cycle storage could then be provided at both Sturry Station and the proposed Halt at Lakesview in order to

promote cycling to the station.

**XI.11. Minibus:** The residents, particularly the elderly and disabled, would benefit from the provision of a minibus service, with established stops, linking the Parish from Lakesview, via Westbere Village, to Canterbury. A suggested route is marked on *diagram 4b*. This service could be used for residents wishing to leave Westbere in the morning and return in the afternoon, on certain days, and would improve access to Canterbury without the need for a car. For this route the use of a state-of-the-art minibus is recommended as this would enable its passengers to have a panoramic view and to enjoy the rural environment.

**Recommendation:** To **introduce** a new enhanced transport system with improved linkage to existing rail and road patterns.

**XI.12. Proposed Land Use Designation and Zoning:** *Diagram 5*.

**XI.12a.Green Gap Zones:** This diagram identifies the existing Green Gap Zones. These should offer the protection the Parish seeks from development to the north and west of the village. Some of the green spaces and most of the lake environment are already protected by legislation, the latter by RAMSAR (*ref.* section III.3). However, this plan hopes to re-enforce the protection of Westbere and its historic village and offers a scheme for this. The green areas could, ideally, be sub-divided into orchard plantations along the A28 and woodland and afforestation towards Sturry, retaining green fields elsewhere as indicated. This would re-establish the woodland that existed prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> C when trees were felled for farmland and development (*ref.* section VII (Ordnance Survey map, 1872)), help to improve the air quality within the village and act as a barrier to noise pollution.

These Green Gap Zones will, generally, form a protective green belt for the village, maintaining the existing morphology of three roads backed by open land. Towards the east end of the Parish a large village green is suggested. This will be discussed separately.

**XI.12b.Trees:** In order to enhance the appearance of the A28 it is recommended that each household and business in the Parish be asked to contribute to planting trees from Bushy Hill Road to the Business Parks. Lombardy poplar trees are suggested for this purpose. Apart from being visually more appealing this would increase the potential for CO<sub>2</sub> absorption and, also, re-enforce the connection between the village and its east end Business Parks.

**Recommendation:** To **initiate** green environmental proposals for the Parish.

**XI.13. Open Sculpture Park:** An open Sculpture Park is proposed to the south west of the Parish between the river and the railway line where local and regional artists could display their exhibits. This is identified on the diagram near the Brett stone working. The gate for this area closes at 18.00 hours and this offers ideal protection for the exhibits.

**Recommendation:** To **hold** discussions with Brett in order to establish their attitudes

to hosting a Sculpture Park on their site.

**XI.14. Housing:** National and Regional Policies can have an adverse effect on communities in the south east such as Westbere. Despite reservations regarding current policies, if the demand on housing quotas for east Kent is enforced it is still possible and desirable to avoid further loss of green spaces and landscape. The population centres of the Isle of Thanet, Herne Bay and central Canterbury could fulfil the necessary requirements if the density in these areas is increased to the levels of, for example, Brighton. This would avoid any further sporadic developments along the major routes and the resulting consequences. By concentrating on these population centres the present nature of east Kent could be retained. Furthermore, east Kent, because of its climate, geography and soil quality, is prime agricultural land and should be designated for food production for the UK.

**XI.14a.Suitable Sites:** However, within the Parish, two suitable sites for housing development have been considered – one at the boundary of the Two Fields and Sturry, the other around the terraced properties near the Business Parks. The larger site could be developed in two phases – one over the next 25 years, the second over the next 50 years. These developments would avoid any undesirable consequences and could, in turn, benefit the Parish and the sub region.

**XI.14b.The Two Fields:** The Two Fields is an important site. In the unwelcome scenario of development a very narrow strip of housing, built adjacent to the rear of properties in Fairview Gardens, could be proposed, on the strict understanding that the remainder of the Two Fields would be pledged in perpetuity for landscape and such non-developmental uses as the Parish decides. The typology will be discussed under XI.14c. This development should be limited to 14 individual properties, designed to achieve Level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and should explore the use of quality materials and innovation in architectural design. Additionally, the developer must, in return, give the Parish a substantial communal building for the village in its own setting and location, to be decided by the Parish, together with an endowment fund for future maintenance. The community building would preferably be sited at the east end of the Parish.

**XI.14c.Restricted Development:** Also, at the east end of the Parish, restricted development is designated as indicated. This would bring the two Business Parks together harmoniously and could include some experimental housing – Kentish eco neo-vernacular cottages (KENC)<sup>(c)\*</sup> - and possible communal and retail facilities. A prototype design setting standards and general aesthetics, will be introduced in due course. One such prototype could be built, in association with appropriate architects and engineers, as a model for future completion and expansion of the scheme. This site could be developed facing the second village green, identified on *diagram 6b*, with consideration being given to application for the green to be recognised as such. This would restrict any further future development. It is envisaged that a detailed Development Brief would be prepared, in consultation with the Parish, to define closely the extent, scale and design of any proposals in this area. As with the previous site near Sturry (see section XI.14b), special conditions would be necessary. The developer should provide the total funds for the construction of the swimming pool

and spa centre at the proposed Leisure and Community Complex discussed under XI.14d.

\*KENC<sup>(c)</sup> donated, with drawings deposited with WPC, by Dr Gerald Mason, 2009.

**XI.14d. Leisure and Community Complex:** There are potential areas within Lakesview International Business Park that could be developed too. The current Lakesview layout does not appear to have been master-planned but has simply been allowed to develop following market pressures. A retail square backing onto the A28 and a leisure and community centre could be considered in the zones indicated.

The new leisure and community complex could include a gym, squash courts, tennis, a swimming pool, a spa, and a café and health facilities, together with any cultural amenities. As a new facility, it should be to a high, innovative yet friendly, architectural design standard with the sensitive use of materials, and could be the subject of an open architectural competition. It would provide the much needed local and sub regional resource referred to in previous sections and, in the long term, could, beneficially, create employment.

**Recommendation:** To **provide** new communal facilities utilising eco friendly and aesthetically pleasing structures.

**XI.14e. Infill Opportunities:** It is possible that infill or replacement dwelling opportunities may arise within Westbere Village. Whilst consideration may be given to supporting the development of such sites, any proposal would need, as discussed under section XI.14b, to achieve Level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, relate to the scale and proportion of neighbouring properties and be original and contemporary in design, not a predictable pastiche that results in indifferent development. Most importantly, it must exclude the creation of new access roads.

**Recommendations:**

- To **monitor** change of use applications relating to properties with extensive grounds, *eg.* St Anne's Convent, which are within the protected green zones.
- To **maintain** a register of vacant buildings within the Parish and to encourage their use.

**XI.15. Fire Station:** A new, small fire station at Lakesview International Business Park could serve the sub region, as shown on the diagram. This new fire station is proposed because the level crossing at Sturry is now closed more frequently for the new high-speed trains. The number and size of the units at Lakesview dictate this alone, for safety and speed of access.

**XI.16. Eco Water Tower System<sup>(c)\*</sup>:** In anticipation of diminishing water supplies and prolonged dry spells in east Kent a water tower/ reservoir is also designated. This facility could not only serve the Business Parks but also provide water for the afforestation (*ref.* section XI.12a). The water for the tower could be collected by harvesting rain from the large roofs of buildings within the Business Parks, with extra roof surface being provided by the swimming pool and spa centre. It would not be for drinking purposes but, additionally, for industrial use as well as providing water for

the swimming pool and fire station. The pumps and lights within the system could be powered by solar panels on the same roofs rendering the water tower and water distribution self-sufficient and sustainable. It might be possible, in the future, to link the water in Westbere lakes to the water tower in order to improve water preservation and availability, subject to environmental approval.

\*Eco Water Tower System<sup>(c)</sup> donated, with drawings deposited with WPC, by Dr Gerald Mason, 2009.

A square with two bowling greens and parking facilities is envisaged near the water tower. These could be viewed from the canopied terraces of the café and restaurant on the southern side.

**XI.17. Boat Houses:** A limited number of boat houses have been suggested in the plan and are discussed with the section on the River Stour, under *diagram 1*.

**XI.18. Proposals for the Historic Village:** Pedestrian safety measures have already been discussed under section XI.5c.

*Diagram 6a.* Proposals to improve the surfacing of the historic village centre, sensitive lighting and protection for pedestrians incorporating further street furniture are set out below.

**XI.18a. Lighting and Paving:** In order to improve the historic centre of Westbere Village several proposals have been suggested. These include upgrading the lighting for important buildings, *eg.* the Church, and appropriate paving for certain areas, to be designed in detail and implemented at a later stage.

**Recommendation:** To **ascertain** areas in need of improvement and enhance with sensitive detailed design.

**XI.18b. Pro-Active and Inter-Active Information Boards:** Ideas for the future include the provision of three pro-active and inter-active Information Boards – one to be positioned on the village green and two or three more at strategic positions near Westbere lakes. These will include maps, updated weather forecasts and climatic information, access to a centre and SOS facilities at the touch of a button.

**XI.18c. Non-Porous Surfaces:** Recent observations, and discussions with WVPS, have identified the significance of the over-use of non-porous surfaces and their contribution towards flooding, damage and erosion to the roads. In order to avoid these problems a survey will be initiated to identify all the gardens and forecourts in the village with porous surfaces. This will ensure that the conversion of porous to non-porous surfaces, *eg.* tarmac or stone, will definitely go through the planning approval process in the future and, therefore, offers protection for the village by preventing any unwarranted changes.

**Recommendation:** To **undertake** a survey of the Parish to identify areas of porous and non-porous surfaces.

A mechanism, to be established, will ensure that this programme is properly executed and monitored.

## **XII. SUSTAINABILITY**

**XII.1. Carbon Awareness:** Carbon awareness, recycling, design for energy and resource and conservation are all matters to which, it will be increasingly necessary for communities and individuals to give attention over the lifetime of this Plan. In contributing up to 35% of carbon emissions our homes provide significant scope for reducing carbon output. It is therefore perhaps surprising that just over 51% of the respondents to the residential questionnaire did not think that greater carbon awareness should be promoted. However, 49% did and, therefore, we propose a parish-wide energy efficiency survey and, in addition, a collective approach to a green supplier of electricity. These actions could persuade the whole Parish to both improve the energy efficiency of their homes and to switch their power supplier. Whilst such unanimity is certainly not guaranteed, the exposure to the green electricity supply might at the very least be expected to persuade some parishioners to switch.

### **Recommendations:**

- To **create** a greater carbon awareness within the Parish.
- To **organise** a parish-wide energy efficiency survey.
- To **initiate** a collective approach to a green supplier of electricity.

**XII.1a. Carbon Monitoring:** Similarly, we propose that a Parish-wide carbon monitoring plan be considered, notwithstanding that a small majority of respondents were opposed to the idea. In doing so we observe that 64% of respondents supported increasing awareness of systems to reduce energy consumption, with 79% favouring the development of guidance on design and materials to be used when refurbishing, extending or building properties within the Parish, and 64% expressing support for some sort of district or community systems to harness energy produced by sustainable systems.

These measures, along with those proposed in the spatial plan, *eg.* the Eco Water Tower System<sup>©\*</sup>, would increase sustainability in the long term. There is much that a small, relatively coherent Parish like Westbere could do, starting with a programme of education about the issues and possible solutions.

\* Eco Water Tower System<sup>©</sup> donated, with drawings deposited with WPC, by Dr Gerald Mason, 2009.

**XII.2. Recycling:** Recycling is an important part of our individual and community stewardship. CCC provides an effective but specific service and this Plan proposes discussions with the Council regarding the extension of recycling collections to materials that are not currently collected and, additionally, providing further recycling points within the Parish, in association with (and in anticipation of) the development of additional housing and community facilities. A recycling station at Lakesview Industrial Business Park was relatively well supported by respondents to the questionnaire.

**Recommendation:** To **initiate** discussions with CCC with a view to extending and improving recycling within the Parish.

### XIII. ACTION PLAN

The recommendations identified in the detailed sections of the **Vision for Westbere**, together with the suggested programme and cost parameters established by the SG, are here presented as an Action Plan (AP) and prioritised.

Key to Abbreviations: LC=Low Cost; HC=High Cost.

<b>Immediate Action</b>	<b>Budget</b>
To support the First Responder scheme and to encourage residents to volunteer. ( <i>ref. section X</i> )	LC
To establish and maintain Parish contact with Kent Wildlife Trust. ( <i>ref. section VII</i> )	LC
To undertake a survey of the Parish to identify areas of porous and non-porous surfaces. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To offer ‘get to know you’ sessions with local police officers. ( <i>ref. section X</i> )	LC
To initiate an educational programme giving advice on crime prevention, fire precaution etc. ( <i>ref. section X</i> )	LC
To monitor change of use applications relating to properties with extensive grounds, <i>eg.</i> St Anne’s Convent, which are within the protected green zones. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To hold discussions with Brett in order to establish their attitudes to hosting a Sculpture Park on their site. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To maintain a register of vacant buildings within the Parish and to encourage their use. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To establish a Westbere Village Community Forum. ( <i>ref. section VIII</i> )	LC
To establish a Grants Working Party with the remit of examining the extent of, and the feasibility of obtaining, grants for Plan projects. ( <i>ref. section I</i> )	LC

<b>Short Term Action</b>	<b>Budget</b>
To develop a Parish Welcome Pack. ( <i>ref. section IX</i> )	LC
To investigate a ‘No Cold Calling’ Zone pilot study. ( <i>ref. section X</i> )	LC
To provide more strategic car parking spaces in the Parish. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To offer road safety and cycling proficiency courses for under 15s. ( <i>ref. section X</i> )	LC
To initiate a literature review to establish Westbere’s importance, if any, on insect and bird migratory routes. ( <i>ref. section VII</i> )	LC
To initiate an analysis of the links between the north and south ecosystems of the Parish. ( <i>ref. section VII</i> )	LC
To identify areas in need of improvement and enhance these areas with sensitive detailed design. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To develop and expand the Parish website. ( <i>ref. section IX</i> )	LC
To initiate discussions with Stagecoach or an alternative operator regarding the provision of a minibus service for Westbere. ( <i>ref. section XI</i> )	LC
To commission a full desktop assessment from a professional archaeological organisation. ( <i>ref. section VI</i> )	HC

<b>Medium Term Action</b>	<b>Budget</b>
To create a greater carbon awareness within the Parish. ( <i>ref.</i> section XII)	LC
To organise a parish-wide energy efficiency survey. ( <i>ref.</i> section XII)	LC
To initiate a collective approach to a green supplier of electricity. ( <i>ref.</i> section XII)	LC
To initiate green environmental proposals for the Parish. ( <i>ref.</i> sections VII and XI)	LC
To initiate discussions with CCC regarding the expansion of recycling issues. ( <i>ref.</i> section XII)	LC
To introduce a new vehicular weight control system. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	LC
To identify sites within the Parish for the initiation of archaeological assessment. ( <i>ref.</i> section VI)	LC
To implement measures to reduce speeding within the Parish. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC
To introduce an appraisal for an integrated transport regime. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC
To develop proposals for new pedestrian and cycle routes and links to existing network. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC

<b>Long Term Action</b>	<b>Budget</b>
To introduce a new enhanced transport system with improved linkage to existing road and rail patterns. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC
To promote new communal facilities utilising eco friendly and aesthetically pleasing structures. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC
To implement policies that will improve quality of life and social cohesion within the Parish and integrate the sub region as a whole. ( <i>ref.</i> section XI)	HC

It is envisaged that Immediate actions will be completed within 12 Months from the publication of the Vision, Short Term actions should be completed within three years, Medium Term actions between three and five years and Long Term actions will take longer than five years to complete. The Action Plan should be a rolling document where Short Term actions move to Immediate and first Medium Term actions and then Long Term actions are brought within the three year time frame as the programme progresses.

“This project is partly funded by DEFRA’s Parish Plan Grant Scheme”

