Suffolk's Coastal Communities

EVIDENCE REPORT 2: In-depth research in four communities

June 2025

EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL

Public Health & Communities

SOCIAL LIFE

About this report

This report describes the findings of research exploring wellbeing and resilience in Suffolk's coastal communities. It is based on in-depth qualitative interviews in four coastal communities between August 2024 and January 2025.

SQW has carried out parallel analysis of official data looking at factors underpinning wellbeing and resilience in coastal Suffolk.

The research was commissioned by Suffolk County Council's Public Health and Communities Directorate.

The report was written by Nicola Bacon, Jessica Cargill-Thompson and Fiona Smith. Research and fieldwork were carried out by Nicola Bacon, Imogen Bullen-Smith, Jessica Cargill-Thompson, Natasha Shah and Fiona Smith.

Foreword

Suffolk's coastal communities are rich in beauty and heritage - but, in common with coastal communities across Britain, people living within them can also face persistent barriers to wellbeing and opportunity. This research, undertaken by SQW and Social Life, offers a timely and in-depth exploration of the lived experiences, strengths and complexities of our coastal communities.

Commissioned by the Public Health and Communities team using post Covid-19 Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) resources, the research combines a broad quantitative analysis of all Suffolk coastal communities with a more focused qualitative deep dive into four areas: Aldeburgh, Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon. This dual approach allows us to understand both the wider patterns and the specific lived realities that shape community wellbeing and resilience.

While the quantitative report highlights key data trends, the qualitative research brings those numbers to life. It offers depth, context and humanity—real people, real voices, and real experiences. Some of the views shared may include language or perspectives that are challenging to hear—but they are no less important. In fact, they are vital. These are the local voices that are often underrepresented in traditional engagement processes, and it is only by listening to them fully and respectfully that we can begin to understand the true complexity of community life and respond in ways that are meaningful and inclusive.

This work is not just a reflection of the current state of our coastal communities—it is a springboard for action. The findings will inform the work of public sector partners—from district and borough councils to town and parish councils—by providing a clearer picture of local needs and aspirations.

The findings should also support organisations in the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector in making stronger, evidence-based funding bids. The research will also contribute to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), ensuring that coastal voices are heard in Suffolk's strategic and operational planning.

Importantly, this report is not the end of the conversation. Its insights will be taken to each of the relevant Community Partnerships—Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold; Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham; and Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula—as well as to the overarching Community Partnership Board, whose focus on tackling inequalities aligns closely with the themes raised here. The findings will also be shared with the local Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) and the Collaborative Communities Board, and will help shape the Marmot Places programme launching in East Suffolk in 2025.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this work—residents, community leaders, researchers and colleagues across the system. Your voices and insights have helped create a report that is not only informative, but actionable. We look forward to continuing this work together to ensure Suffolk's coastal communities not only thrive—but are heard, supported and celebrated.

Cllr Steve Wiles
Cabinet Member and Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board Chairman, Suffolk County Council

Stuart Keeble
Director of Public Health, Public Health and Communities, Suffolk County Council

Summary

This qualitative research set out to explore the health, wellbeing, resilience and aspirations of Suffolk's coastal communities.
The research complements analysis of official data looking at factors underpinning wellbeing and resilience in coastal Suffolk, carried out by SQW.

Overall findings across all coastal communities

We found that the four communities we chose as our focus – Aldeburgh, Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon - have more similarities than differences. Where there are contrasting perceptions among residents, these are related to a number of factors: geographic location; extent of geographical isolation; size of visitor economy and second-home ownership; planned and actual new housing development and large-scale infrastructure; and proximity to large towns.

How people feel about their area

- Across all the coastal communities, eight out of ten people interviewed were positive about their area. These positive feelings were evident across responses to multiple questions. Nearly a third said they have "no dislikes".

- When asked to give three words to describe their community, people most frequently used words describing the outdoors and natural beauty. People also spoke positively about the local community and its friendliness.

- One in ten people used words that reflected tensions between second-home owners and visitors and local, permanent communities. These tensions were prevalent across responses, a number of people described a lack of affordable activities, shops and services serving the full-time community.

- A small number used words that describe the more challenging aspects of rural living: remoteness and lack of public transport can compound a sense of isolation and make access to shops and services expensive. A small number of people expressed anxiety about their community changing. The same proportion of people described a lack of age and ethnic diversity.

- The most disliked feature across all four communities was the lack of activities, amenities and services. This includes specific concerns about a lack of activities for young people. Traffic and roads were often mentioned. This includes problems caused by agricultural vehicles and construction traffic, poor footpaths, issues with parking and road closures.

Feelings about the community

- Around a third of people felt that they can have influence over what happens in the area. This was associated with being involved in a community group or engaging with the parish council. Half of those who felt they did not have influence said they were not interested, had no time or did not know how to get involved. One in five had negative views of the parish council.

Feelings about COVID-19 and the rising cost-of-living

- Around half of the people interviewed feel that there is no lasting ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One in five people reported positive experiences of the pandemic. This included spending time at home and an appreciation of the countryside and natural environment.

- Ongoing negative impacts of the pandemic included social isolation - across age groups, but particularly among older people - and impacts on physical and mental health. The ongoing impact on children and young people's wellbeing and social development was mentioned by some parents and grandparents; these effects were described as severe.

- Local business owners described the challenges of survival under lockdown restrictions, when tourism and footfall reduced.

- Half of those interviewed were concerned about costs rising overall, and specifically mentioned housing, petrol, and utilities or energy bills. One in five described acute impacts. A similar proportion identified problems paying for food or highlighted the need for food support in the community. There were descriptions of how localised issues - including work, housing costs and available shops - intensifies the crisis.

Hopes and fears for the future

- Over half of people surveyed said they hope that their community stays the same. This included the area retaining its quiet character and staying a good place for children and families.

- Almost one third wanted improvements to amenities including health care, childcare and activities for young people, shops and affordable housing. A similar proportion wanted to keep and build the community by engaging with social activities. A smaller proportion hoped there would be no increase in tourism and that their area would not become overdeveloped. One in ten want to see improved transport and reduced traffic.

- Concerns about housing, livelihood and affordability alongside worry over the impacts of new development and blight were the most frequently mentioned fears for the future. Housing concerns were the largest area of worry, particularly the ability to stay in the area, about young people having to leave the place where they grew up due to high house prices or about pressures on existing infrastructure and supports.

- A quarter of people said they were concerned about the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, flooding and coastal erosion.

Support and facilities

- Almost seven in ten people surveyed felt there are things missing in their coastal community. Limited access to healthcare and a lack of public transport were the most frequently mentioned as well as a need for childcare, parental support or activities for young people.

- Around a quarter of people felt nothing was missing and that the services are sufficient.

Key themes for each coastal community

Aldeburgh

- Aldeburgh's success as a holiday town and cultural centre brings money to the local economy and means the town is lively most of the year round. However, this is also blamed for inflating house prices beyond the reach of local people and turning the high street into somewhere that caters for wealthy visitors rather than locals. Increasing house prices make it difficult for younger people to stay in the town when they leave home.

- Residents describe a strong sense of community, in that people know each other and come together to socialise. However, there are fears that the growing visitor population is eroding this. The rural location and being right by the sea are associated with good quality of life, providing places to walk, find peace and enjoy nature. The coastal location restricts new development.

- When asked to describe Aldeburgh in three words, most people used words describing the coast and Aldeburgh's natural beauty, such as "picturesque", "beautiful" and "bucolic".

- Development of Sizewell C and Energy Coast infrastructure are seen as bringing positives and negatives. Sizewell is a key employer, offering high wages for the area. However, there are concerns that construction will cause traffic congestion on already overloaded roads. There are fears that other Energy Coast infrastructure will compromise the natural landscape, which is loved by local people and considered a draw for the visitor economy.

Hollesley

- Hollesley is the most geographically isolated of the places we visited. It is the largest village on the Deben Peninsular and there is poor public transport and limited road access. This shapes the character of the village and how people feel about living there, many describing it as peaceful and remote. People love the beauty of the heathland setting, the nearby forest and the vast shingle beach at Shingle Street, which is considered part of the village.

- There is a sense that the community is welcoming, supportive and friendly, and there are strong social networks. The church, village hall and pub, the café at the prison and Suffolk Punch Trust are popular social hubs. There are complaints about traffic and roads, exacerbated by slow-moving agricultural vehicles and regular surface flooding cutting off routes into the village and occasionally preventing children from getting to school. For some people the rising cost of living is a concern but others are less affected by this.

- When asked to describe Hollesley in three words, most people used words describing the countryside, coast and natural beauty, such as "quiet", "scenic" and "friendly".

- There are concerns about visitor numbers rising, particularly given the increased popularity of Shingle Steet. There are relatively few second homes. Residents say that they do not want this to change and they do not want to see the type of tourist development that has affected other villages. However, most people who have moved to the village to become permanent residents report that they have been made to feel welcome.

Kessingland

- People in Kessingland value its close, supportive community and its rural location by the sea. It attracts holidaymakers to static caravan parks and a few Airbnb properties. Kessingland is an affordable option for people wishing to retire to the coast and as a result has an older population.

- Geographically it is a town of two halves: Kessingland Beach, which is popular with dog walkers, and the upper part of the town where key social infrastructure such as the primary school, sports

centre, library, parish council and high street are located. There is also a large Traveller community on its outskirts.

- When asked to describe Kessingland in three words, most people used words describing the countryside, coast and natural beauty, such as "idyllic" and "seaside".

- There are several places and groups offering spaces and activities to support wellbeing and socialising, including some popular pubs and a sports centre offering a busy programme. There is pressure on healthcare, with many complaints about the difficulty of getting a GP appointment, lack of dentist, and difficulty getting to local hospitals if you don't drive.

- New development is a cause of concern, as is access to health care and poor provision of public transport.

Reydon

- Reydon abuts the popular seaside town of Southwold. It is set slightly inland and does not experience the same visitor numbers and second-home ownership as Southwold, but residents still have access to the amenities of the larger town. Some holiday home ownership has begun to spill over into Reydon, putting pressure on housing.

- People value proximity to the countryside and are keen to protect the village from electricity cabling coming ashore here. They enjoy being able to reach the sea quickly.

- When asked to describe Reydon in three words, most people offered words describing the sense of community and friendliness such as "friendly", "safe" and "community-spirited".

- Residents consider it a safe, friendly place, with a strong community, and a good place to raise a family – although more support for families is needed. The village hall and the sports centre both offer regular community events and activities.

- There is poor public transport and concerns about road congestion and flooding. The village has been expanding over the past few decades, with more development planned. There are worries that this will change the character of the village and put pressure on roads and healthcare.

Wellbeing and resilience

Wellbeing is defined as how people living in Suffolk's coastal communities are doing individually and collectively, focusing on how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether their lives have meaning and purpose. The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as "a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose."[1]

Across the four coastal communities, **wellbeing** is supported by:

- the existence of strong community networks and strong local relationships
- relatively strong social infrastructure, particularly facilities and activities run by parishes and voluntary and community sector groups, together with informal social supports from cafes, pubs and shops

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[1] https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-well-being

● access to sea, beach, nature and landscape, and good potential for exercise.

Across the four coastal communities, **wellbeing** can be undermined by:

● increased social isolation across age groups in the aftermath of COVID-19
● the consequences of COVID-19 on children's development, affecting families as well as children
● some weaknesses in social infrastructure provided by statutory bodies: access to healthcare and public transport were identified as weaker than in previous years
● the impact of the cost of living on people who are financially vulnerable
● the impact of limited affordable housing options for people without secure housing options or the resources to secure this
● anxieties caused by change, particularly housing growth or new infrastructure
● a sense of loss of identity and rising costs caused by large second-home ownership and tourism.

Resilience is defined as the ability of a community to adapt, function and thrive in the face of change (both rapid and gradual). Resilience is strongly related to wellbeing, and many of the factors that become protective factors or risk factors mirror the factors that either support or undermine wellbeing. Protective factors and risks are not evenly distributed and relate to personal circumstances - particularly income, health and housing situation – as well as geographical location and wider societal issues.

Across the four coastal communities, protective factors for **resilience** are:

● the existence of strong community networks and strong local relationships
● relatively strong social infrastructure, particularly facilities and activities run by parishes and voluntary and community sector groups, together with informal social supports from cafes, pubs and shops
● access to sea, beach, nature and landscape, giving good potential for exercise
● relative affluence and access to resources among much of the population
● housing security and stability for much of the population
● good mental health among the majority of the population.

Across the four coastal communities, risks for **resilience** are:

● increased social isolation across age groups in the aftermath of COVID-19
● the consequences of COVID-19 on children's development, affecting families as well as children
● some weaknesses in social infrastructure provided by statutory bodies, access to healthcare was identified as weak, public transport is now weaker than in previous years
● financial vulnerability and precarity among a sizeable minority
● increasing house prices in some areas and housing precarity, quality and access among a sizeable minority
● access to work for those who are not in stable jobs or work that can be done from home
● seasonal employment limiting winter earnings
● a sense of loss of identity and rising costs caused by large second-home ownership and tourism.

1 Our approach

In 2024 Social Life was commissioned by Suffolk County Council's Public Health and Communities Directorate to carry out qualitative research exploring the health, wellbeing, resilience and aspirations of Suffolk's coastal communities.

Suffolk's coastal communities are a diverse set of villages and towns, stretching between Lowestoft to the north and Felixstowe in the south. The Chief Medical Officer's Report for England in 2021 highlighted the poorer health outcomes faced by many English coastal communities compared to the national average, calling for a national strategy to improve health equity in seaside communities. The 2022 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for Suffolk also recommended that coastal communities in Suffolk should be given specific consideration when developing policies and initiatives to tackle health inequalities.

This research has focused on capturing perceptions and understanding of the key issues linked to wellbeing and resilience. It set out to explore and capture the protective factors that can support wellbeing and future resilience in the four communities; and to prioritise capturing the views of all groups living in the four communities including those that agencies can find more difficult to reach. This research aims to help Suffolk County Council and its partners understand those local conditions in Suffolk; to understand the needs of residents and communities and to inform the work of partners across the Suffolk County Council system so they can better tailor their offer to meet community needs and demands.

In-depth qualitative research enables researchers to explore local conditions through the perspectives of people who are familiar with the place, asking open questions which allow people being interviewed to choose which subjects to explore in depth. It allowed the research team to capture the nuance and detail of different communities, identifying cross-cutting themes and patterns.

Qualitative research focuses on people's experiences and reactions to events or their surroundings, allowing them freedom to express their priorities, meanings and insights without being constrained by pre-set questions or response options. UKRI – the national research and innovation agency – provides this description of qualitative research: "Social scientists often want to understand how individuals think, feel or behave in particular situations, or in relations with others that develop over time. They use in-depth interviews, participant observation and other qualitative methods to gather data. Qualitative methods are scientific, but are focused more on the meaning of different aspects of people's lives, and on their accounts of how they understand their own and others' behaviour and beliefs."[2]

Some of the limitations of qualitative research are that the relatively low numbers of individuals involved may leave out important perspectives and it can be difficult to reach a sample that reflects the target population. The particular approach we used to speak to residents – street interviews – can also leave out people who are unwilling or unable to leave their home. We tried to address these and reach a range of experiences through the selection of people we approached to speak to and through the choice of locations for interviews. In this research we captured the views of a larger proportion of older people than are in the local population overall – discussion groups targeted younger people to attempt to balance this. Another set of limitations of all qualitative research is that is difficult to completely eliminate researcher bias, analysis may oversimplify complexity and mask the experience of individuals and it can be difficult to establish causality.

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[2] https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/esrc/what-is-social-science/qualitative-research/

The overarching research questions that guided our approach were:

1. **How are Suffolk's coastal communities doing at present?** Linking to perspectives on wellbeing both individually and collectively
2. **How might Suffolk's coastal communities navigate the future?** Linking to perspectives on resilience in the context of economic, social and environmental change

Selecting four coastal communities

Four communities were chosen to give a range of experience within the Suffolk coastal area. The starting point for the choice of area was to explore levels of deprivation across different coastal communities, the size of different settlements and their geographical location within the county.

It was agreed that the bigger urban centres in Lowestoft and Felixstowe and the very small villages would not be included. More is known about the larger centres than the smaller settlements, and the numbers of days allocated to the in-depth fine-grained approach in each village would not be sufficient to build a robust portrait of a larger town, or even of particular neighbourhoods within the town. In the very small villages it could have been difficult to speak to enough residents or local stakeholders to get good insight.

		Less deprived (majority of LSOAs in 50% least deprived nationally)	**More deprived** (majority of LSOAs in 50% most deprived nationally)
Town hierarchy in Local Plan documents	**Major centre**	• Felixstowe	• Lowestoft
	Market town	• Southwold • **Aldeburgh** • **Reydon**	• Leiston
	Large village	• **Hollesley** • Corton • Orford	• **Kessingland** • Wrentham
	Small village	• Westleton • Bawdsey • Sudbourne	• Walberswick • Alderton

Suffolk's coastal communities by deprivation and size

The four communities that were chosen represented different circumstances.

● **Aldeburgh** is a medium-sized town, and relatively affluent. It is not far from Hollesley but with a very different tourist economy.
● **Hollesley** is a relatively affluent medium-sized village in the south of the Suffolk coastal area. It is geographically isolated by its location in the middle of the Deben Peninsula.
● **Kessingland** is further north. It is more deprived than the other four areas and is close to Lowestoft.
● **Reydon** is further north in the Suffolk coastal area. It is also relatively affluent and is very closely connected with neighbouring Southwold.

Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon were in the first phase of the research in October 2024; Aldeburgh was added in January 2025 in order to capture the experiences of people living in a coastal community with significant second-home ownership and a big tourist presence.

The research

Research strategy

Our research had three phases: initial visits to each community, online scoping and three stakeholder interviews; intensive fieldwork in each area carrying out "street interviews"; two or three discussion groups in each community targeting residents who had not been engaged in the earlier work.

152 street interviews

50 online survey responses

Qualitative research in four villages

12 stakeholder interviews

9 discussion groups, involving c.50 people

Our initial visits and conversations with a small number of local stakeholders established that there were several barriers to primary research. Few people are out and about in the day and there are high levels of car dependency, making it more difficult to stop and chat; there is local suspicion of research and agencies asking questions; the timetable gave little scope to establish local relations and as in all rural areas, there are hidden needs and populations.

However we also identified assets that could be leveraged to support the work. These included visible civil society organisations such as parishes and community organisations; the existence of meeting places and venues with visible organised activities (social groups, exercise groups and youth groups for example); and several community and social hubs (informally provided through cafes and pubs and formally provided through parishes and community organisations, for example).

The bulk of research time was carrying out "street interviews" which took place outside shops or school gates, in community venues and on high streets. This is a valuable way of starting conversations with people in places that they go to in their everyday lives where they feel comfortable. It is a method that can be adapted for people's particular circumstances. Interviews can take place standing or sitting, researchers can pause to let people deal with other issues in their lives. The questions asked were all open, which allows the people being interviewed to set their own priorities. Researchers asked neutral follow up questions and prompts to encourage fuller answers, and care was taken to avoid leading questions.

Our first phase of research in Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon took place before the clocks changed at the end of October and while the weather was still good. The final research, in Aldeburgh, was more challenging given the dark evenings and colder temperatures; however visiting in January meant that we were able to focus on year-round residents as there is less tourism over the winter. Our visits to each area and time spent staying overnight enabled us to observe daily life and how people were using public spaces and facilities.

REYDON VILLAGE HALL

HELLO
UK

NEW POTS LOCAL

LOCAL NEW POTS

50P EACH BOX

ONIONS

THAI BOXING
GET FIT, BUILD CONFIDENCE, LEARN TO FIGHT!

Good Morning Bill
by P. G. Wodehouse

Understanding George Orwell

NOTICE!
Steaming of the EAST SUFFOLK LIGHT RAILWAYS
Saturday 31st August 2024

We created an online survey for the research, though this had a very patchy response rate. More people responded in Hollesley, where the survey was distributed through an active community network, than in Kessingland and Reydon. This made interpretation across the three communities difficult. We have included this data where appropriate, but did not replicate this approach in Aldeburgh.

A series of core questions were adapted for different research methods. These were:

- **Perceptions of local community**: strengths, weaknesses. Investigating sense of belonging, neighbourliness, relationships between different groups, safety, influence and agency.
- **Perceptions of places and supports to meet needs and socialise**: how places are used, by who? Including less formal venues and networks (such as pubs, cafes or informal online groups) as well as more formal provision including libraries, parish halls and formalised groups.
- **Perceptions of gaps in services and who is being missed by services and supports**
- **What has been the impact of COVID and the rising cost of living?** What vulnerabilities/strengths did this expose, what has changed as a result of these crises?

The questions drew on a broad notion what helps individuals thrive and manage difficulties – referred to as "supports". This acknowledges that support can come from agencies, from family, friends or social networks, or from the positive experiences of daily life such as being able to exercise or take part in hobbies, or being close to nature.

Who we spoke to

Between 37 and 39 individuals were interviewed in-depth in each area. Interviews took place in high streets, on the roadside or outside schools or community venues. The majority lived in the town or village, however some people were included who had a longstanding relationships with the community. They might have lived there for a number of years in the past, worked in the area for a substantial amount of time or spent a lot of time over the years visiting friends and family.
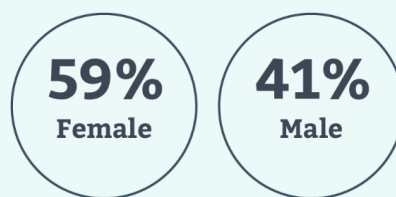
The majority of people engaged in street interviews had lived in the area over 10 years and were over 45 years old. Most were either employed or retired. A majority considered themselves to be white.
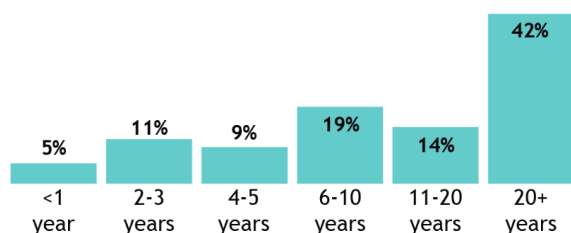
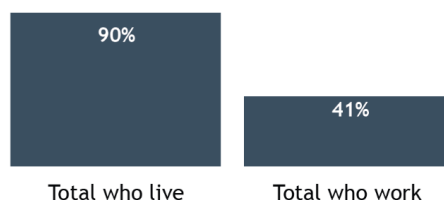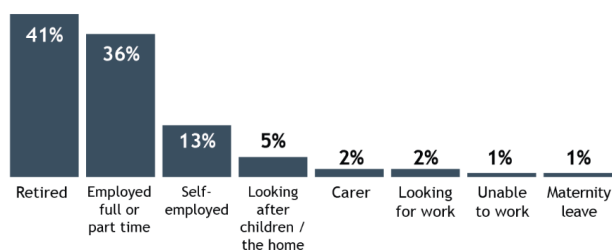**152 face-to-face interviews in total across the four villages**

37 Hollesley
39 Kessingland
39 Reydon
37 Aldeburgh

Gender

59% Female
41% Male

How long have you lived here? (n=148)

<1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
5%	11%	9%	19%	14%	42%

Do you live here? Do you work here? (n=152, multiple)

Total who live	Total who work
90%	41%

What is your employment status? (n=147)

Retired	Employed full or part time	Self-employed	Looking after children / the home	Carer	Looking for work	Unable to work	Maternity leave
41%	36%	13%	5%	2%	2%	1%	1%

What is your age? (n=148)

16-24	25-29	30-44	45-64	65+
6%	7%	20%	25%	42%
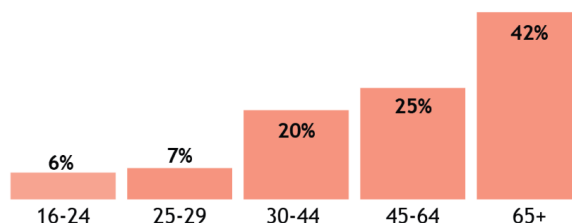
What is your housing tenure? (n=141)

Owner occupied	Private tenant	Housing association tenant	Shared ownership	Council tenant
65%	16%	11%	2%	3%
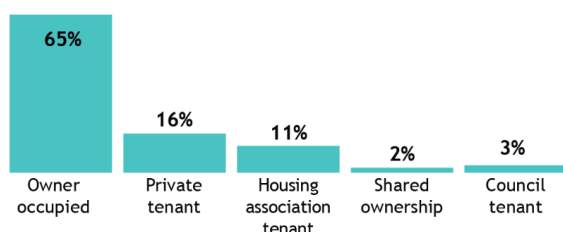
What is your ethnicity? (n=147)

WHITE: Eng/Welsh/Scot/N Irish/Brit	ASIAN/ASIAN BRITISH: Indian	WHITE: Other (German/British)	ASIAN/ASIAN BRITISH: Other (British Thai)	Latin American	Other: Indo-Caribbean
92%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<1%
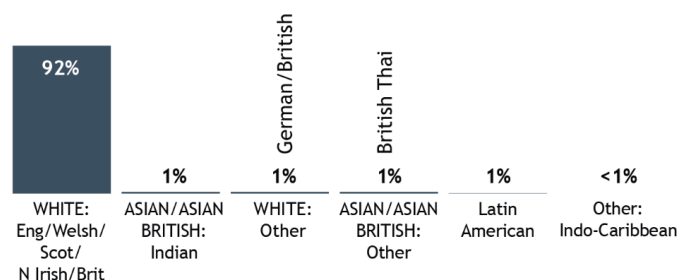
Discussions took place with different groups in each community, depending on what existed and was meeting at the time of the research, and to fill gaps in the demographics of the people we had spoken to.

- **Aldeburgh**: young male school leavers in community pub, baby & toddler group, speaking to mothers and fathers; a Knit & Natter, group bringing together women over 70 years.
- **Hollesley**: a youth group, mainly attended by younger teenagers; and the good neighbours group, where we spoke to residents over 80 years old.
- **Kessingland**: a youth group, speaking to 11 to 13 year olds and residents of the Gypsy & Traveller site.
- **Reydon**: an older people's lunch club speaking to people over 80 including care home residents and parents at a baby & toddler group.

Discussions ranged from half an hour to an hour and a half. The approach varied to suit the needs of the group: in some group discussions smaller groups of participants took turns to speak with the researcher, in others the researcher hosted a space where people at the group could drop in to share their views. A topic guide of core questions steered the discussion.

Interviews were also carried out with 12 stakeholders, including parish councillors and people active within the community. These focused on establishing an initial understanding of the community, its needs and aspirations, and to help the team.

Data analysis

Street survey data was analysed using **two-step thematic coding**. The coding was **inductive** – this is a process that involves reading and interpreting raw data to develop themes or concepts through interpretations based on data, rather than starting with a preconceived set of codes. Coding takes place in two steps. After thoroughly reviewing the data an initial list of codes is developed, capturing the issues raised in the research. A second review groups codes together in themes. The strength of this analysis is rooted in the data, it is open to different possibilities that may not initially be anticipated by researchers, therefore reducing bias. The iterative process of refining themes ensures robustness.

Initial thematic analysis was based on street interview data only as the online data was skewed towards one village, and towards particular groups within that community. The first set of codes and themes was taken from street interview data from Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon. Themes were reviewed and where necessary updated to incorporate the data from Aldeburgh later in the project. **Online interviews, discussion groups and initial stakeholder** interviews were coded using the themes derived from the street interviews.

This approach means that for the face-to-face survey we can report **frequencies of responses** against themes for the entire dataset of over 150 surveys. However, because of the lower numbers, we cannot split this into sub-groups, including each area, with any confidence. For each area we have drawn out themes and patterns within the data, highlighting where we are seeing noticeable differences.

Social Life has been asked by Suffolk County Council's Public Health & Communities team to carry out research into health and wellbeing in Suffolk's coastal towns and villages.

We are starting our work in Hollesley, Kessingland and Reydon.

Understanding Suffolk's coastal communities

We'll be visiting your community this autumn.

Please stop and chat to us, or fill in the survey online. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/
SuffolkCoastalCommunities

REYDON VILLAGE HALL

This project uses national funds available to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public Health & Communities

SOCIAL LIFE

Please get in touch if you have any questions!
Email: hello@social-life.co
Phone: 0207 703 9630

For more information on Social Life and our work visit: www.social-life.co/

Aldeburgh

2 What we found

Findings 1: the experience of the four coastal communities

In this section, the in-depth qualitative research findings from each area are described in order to paint four contrasting portraits of place. In Findings 2, the data is analysed across the four coastal communities.

1 Aldeburgh

Aldeburgh is a picturesque seaside town on the River Alde, renowned for its cultural heritage and events. It is popular with holidaymakers and second-home owners, attracting a relatively wealthy population. It is characterised by colourful renovated Victorian houses and fishermen's cottages by the seafront. These are now largely used as second homes and holiday lets, the majority of local people live "above the roundabout" in modern, low-rise housing, including social housing. It lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is just south of the Sizewell nuclear power station, which can be seen from the beach. Infrastructure work for expansion of the power station has begun, and there are separate plans for SeaLink power cables, part of the National Grid, to come ashore on land to the north between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness.

We visited in January, when the town was very much out of season and devoid of holiday makers, conducting the majority of our 'street-surveys' in indoor public places.

- we spoke to 37 people through our street survey. Of those who gave their postcode, almost all were Aldeburgh residents, with six from nearby towns and villages who are part of the community through their work or regular activities
- we spoke to three stakeholders involved in the parish or local groups
- we held three group discussions: with a group of male school leavers who were watching football in the community centre; with parents at the library's weekly toddler group; and with women in their 70s and 80s at the weekly "Knit and Natter" session at the Fairfield Centre
- we did not carry out an online survey here

We were told that the town is now busy most of the year, not just in the summer. However, in cold temperatures in January we found the high street quiet and empty, and there were very few houses with lights on along the seafront. We found groups of local people of different backgrounds and generations coming together in cosy pubs and cafes around the high street and at the Old Generator Station community centre.

Aldeburgh: How people feel about the area

When asked for three words that describe Aldeburgh, countryside, coast and natural beauty were the main themes, with people describing the town as "picturesque", "beautiful", and "bucolic". There were also many references to the local community spirit. However, Aldeburgh's status as a popular up-market holiday destination drew less favourable comments, with people using words such as "pretentious", "posh" and "exclusive".

Several themes emerged when people were asked what they liked most about living in Aldeburgh. These were: community, the sea, the countryside and culture. Most people we spoke to reported that the supportive community was a reason they liked living in the town.

Many people we spoke to had lived here for generations, or moved away for work then come back to retire, so have a strong sense of Aldeburgh as "home". People said "everyone knows each other and gets along well", "people look out for each other", and that they feel safe in the town.

We also heard about different cliques and communities within the town: local people (who live "above the roundabout" furthest from the sea in newer properties and council homes); second-home owners (referred to by some as "blow-ins", who tend to have refurbished the older properties close to the seafront); and holiday makers (often relatively well off).

Issues with visitors was one of the main dislikes of people surveyed. Permanent residents said visitors display "a sense of entitlement", and complain that the high street is orientated towards holidaymakers rather than the practical everyday needs of local people. They also associate visitors with rising rents and house prices, which are pushing out local people, especially younger generations.

"It's the friendliest place I've lived since I left the North" – street survey

"It's a town of two halves – there are lots of second-home owners, but also deprivation in some areas. People talk about living the wrong side of the roundabout." – street survey

Being directly by **the sea** was the second-most mentioned reason people gave in the survey for liking Aldeburgh. Health benefits enjoyed included walking by the sea, "negative ions", and swimming; in January we saw small groups of women dipping in the sea each morning.

Historically Aldeburgh was a fishing town; this has largely died out save for a few fish sheds on the beach; some people linked to the fishing community still talked of the sea being "in my blood". There are currently two sailing clubs, which some people described as elitist.

The **countryside** setting is also much enjoyed – for its beauty and peacefulness, but also for the outdoor activities it offers. These include golf, walking, swimming, and sailing. Many people fear that the marshland and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty could be diminished by Energy Coast infrastructure works.

Aldeburgh's international reputation as a **cultural destination**, along with nearby Snape, is unique in the Suffolk coastal area. Survey respondents, stakeholders and discussion groups mentioned the broad range of cultural activities they enjoy – including music, literature and drama festivals, art, and an independent cinema. The annual summer Carnival is popular with all generations.

Although activity in Aldeburgh is seasonal – with it being almost empty in January and packed in the summer holidays – several long-term residents spoke of Aldeburgh now being active most of the year, with cultural events and other attractions.

However, Aldeburgh's success as a holiday town and cultural centre is a double-edged sword: on one hand it brings in money and means the town is lively most of the year round (some say too lively in summer); on the other it is attributed to having pushed up house prices beyond the reach of local people and turning the high street into somewhere that caters for wealthy visitors and has hardly any practical shops.

"There's nothing I dislike but I do feel sorry for the youngsters. They have no chance of getting houses because it's become too expensive" – Knit and Natter group

Aldeburgh: Feelings about the community

Most people feel like they belong in Aldeburgh. This is often because they have lived here a long time, work here, were born here, or their family has been here for generations. Those who have retired to Aldeburgh, including some of the stakeholders interviewed, tend to have made themselves an integral part of the community through active participation in community groups and societies.

Some long-term residents, however, feel that they or their children are being pushed out by high prices and because the high street caters for visitors rather than local people.

While less than half of residents surveyed felt they had any direct influence themselves, this was often due to lack of time or inclination. Some felt they had influence only within a particular sphere of town life due to their job or involvement with local groups such as the art scene or church. Some people said that they felt influence gravitated towards "the sort of people who are members of the yacht and golf club".

"I'm a stick of rock with Aldeburgh written through me." – street survey

"Yes. I'm Aldeburgh born and bred. Locals live at the roundabout end of town as feel pushed out of the high street part of town. They'll never make me feel like I don't belong cos I was born here." – street survey

"I'm part of a big fishing community. I used to be part of the Lifeboats until they stopped." – street survey

"I have influence within my own artist community but perhaps not outside of that." – street survey

Knit and Natter group, Fairfield Centre, Aldeburgh

This weekly Wednesday-afternoon group is aimed at retirees and attended by women mainly over 75, several of them widowed, many who have lived in Aldeburgh their whole lives. A few come to knit, but mainly it's a weekly social check-in; three use the session to play Scrabble. They value being able to get out: **"Living on my own, you have to get out and see people for your own mental health."**

While they talk of how safe and friendly the town is, with plenty going on, they feel they are losing their sense of community. They also feel a sense of division between uptown and downtown, with above the roundabout seen as working class. **"You don't hardly know anyone down the town these days, there's so much holiday letting going on. It's them and us."**

Much of the conversation was also around the lack of practical shops. **"We haven't got any facilities or shops for anything we need. The hardware shop is closed and you have to go to Leiston for fuel." "We don't have a bank. It's going to be a nightmare when they shut the one in Leiston. I don't think we should be forced to do internet banking."**

Getting around is a major issue. Some have stopped driving due to health and don't feel confident travelling on public transport on their own. **"You're a bit stuck here if you don't drive. The older I get, the more I hate travelling. I was over 30 before I'd been further than Ipswich on my own."**

A couple of women who use buggies or walking sticks complained that the uneven state and narrowness of the pavements made getting around difficult. **"The pavements are terrible. Narrow and bumpy. I didn't realise until I got a buggy."** The group also expressed worries about the younger generations, with not enough for them to do and not enough affordable housing.

Aldeburgh: Feelings about COVID-19 and the cost-of-living

On the surface, Aldeburgh is a relatively affluent town with pockets of less well-off residents and social housing tenants. However, most people were feeling some impact from rising costs, including food, housing and fuel; we heard reports of people who worried about putting the central heating on.

There were complaints about "London prices" and a lack of affordable groceries in the area; Leiston and Saxmundham are seen as having better offers, but require transport to reach. Those feeling little or no impact from the rising cost of living tended to be retirees with pensions large enough to support their lifestyle; they often acknowledged they were lucky.

COVID-19 did not have much lasting impact for a lot of people interviewed. Some people reported that the town was busy at that time because second-home owners came, and that it encouraged some lasting positive behaviours.

Long-term negative effects of COVID-19 included increasing social isolation of specific groups such as the elderly, with some still reluctant to go out; the mental health of people all ages, including young adults who lived alone; and the social and educational development of children.

Several people expressed particular concern for younger people, saying they need additional support in their social skills for the two years missed during lockdown.

"I see people not wanting to put the central heating on because of the increasing cost." – street survey

"Because there was a culture of helping [during COVID-19], I now feel that I can ask for help if I need it." – Knit and Natter group

"I missed two years of school. It was online and I don't do online. But I've caught up as I had a one-to-one tutor." – street survey

"We have been slow to recover. People's confidence has been knocked back and it takes a while to get back and mixing. People retreat into their comfort zone and are comfortable on their own." – street survey

"I lived on my own and as a very sociable person I found it very difficult. It took me a long time to get over it." – street survey

Stay & Play parent & toddler group, Aldeburgh Library

This weekly Monday-morning group contains parents from Snape and Leiston as well as Aldeburgh, and includes two fathers, who share the childcare with their partners. This is one of their main channels of support as parents – one mother who relocated two years ago said it's **"a lifeline"**. Leiston's children's centre is also **"an amazing resource"** as it offers drop-in sessions.

While there are a lot of toddler groups in the wider area, networks tend to be aimed at mothers, not fathers, and **"finding nurseries that take under twos is difficult"**. They also think affordable after-school activities for older children are missing. They flagged a lack of local support for everyday and round-the-clock health needs, having had to go to Ipswich for relatively minor injuries or childhood illnesses. They also said that drop-in mental health or pregnancy advice are needed. With no NHS dentists in the area, two have remained registered at practices in cities.

"If you've got a concern and just want to see a midwife in Aldeburgh, there's no one to call. You have to call Ipswich and be triaged – it's the same number for if you were in labour."

"My son is being assessed for ADHD and autism. I get some support via the school but I don't know where to turn, really."

Although they love Aldeburgh's coastal setting, they find the shops expensive and are frustrated by not being able to buy everyday items such as children's shoes, hardware, or formula milk. **"I don't go down the high street because I can't afford a single thing,"** says one.

Sizewell C is seen as bringing 'massive' changes: putting extra pressure on roads and social infrastructure, but also potentially bringing extra shops and facilities to cater to the shift-worker population. One remembers problems and fighting when Sizewell B was built.

Aldeburgh: Hopes and fears

People's hopes and concerns for the future centred around a few key themes: housing, the diminishing high street, loss of community and the construction of Sizewell C.

Affordability of housing is the chief concern for people in Aldeburgh of all ages. People whose families have lived in the town for generations fear their children will not be able to stay here. A group of young men we spoke to all currently live with their families but say they will have to move away from Aldeburgh if they want to leave home.

A major topic of conversation in the parent & baby and Knit and Natter groups was the ongoing loss of **practical, affordable shops on the high street**. This was also a concern for some survey respondents. In particular people mentioned the hardware shop and the banks. This is seen as being exacerbated by rising business unit rents.

Tied in with the growing visitor population are fears of **loss of community**. One woman in her 80s told us: "I can walk down the high street now and not see anyone I know. There used to be a strong community – that's changed."

Attitudes towards **Sizewell C** are both positive and negative. Sizewell has been a local presence for decades, and a key employer, offering significantly higher wages to local businesses, which struggle to compete for staff. The group of young men we spoke to said it was their ambition to get a job there.

Some people fear the impact of the construction **traffic** on already over-stretched local roads, and that increased worker numbers will put pressure on social infrastructure such as schools and healthcare. Stakeholders said there are also concerns that visitor accommodation being used by Sizewell workers would mean less visitor spending coming into the town because, as one stakeholder said. "people who work in Sizewell don't spend money the way tourists do". Historically, some people recalled the construction of Sizewell B and said it caused tensions and drug problems in Leiston.

Both Sizewell and the Energy Coast plans, which involve cabling coming ashore here, are seen as destroying the local countryside, which is not only something residents treasure but seen as important for attracting visitors to support the local economy.

Two stakeholders spoke at length about fears of **flooding and coastal erosion** – Aldeburgh is between the River Alde and the sea. There are active local environment groups such as the Alde & Ore Association.

"The gap between saltwater and freshwater is probably 50 feet – one big tide and the ecology will be transformed forever." – stakeholder

"If an elderly person dies, their house would probably go to a second-home owner. If there's no more social housing available, children will have to move away. Even shared ownership is beyond reach." – street survey

"I hope that the high street remains in operation. Five shops have already shut or will shut. People need to have a job but the businesses are in competition to sell." – street survey

Aldeburgh: Support and facilities

Community is strong and people support each other. As a town rather than a village, there is a comparatively large number of places to go and activities happening year round, with people often meeting in pubs and cafes.

The community-run Old Generator Station and the church-run Fairfield Centre were mentioned consistently for their range of activities that bring people together. The former attracts all generations of local people via sports screenings and events; the latter hosts a youth club, as well as lunch and social sessions for the over 70s. The library was also mentioned for its adult learning and toddler group; it also serves as a warm hub. These are all located in the upper part of town, near the roundabout, where more permanent residents live. Many people, especially older people, also welcomed the service provided by the district nurse, who attends several of these places.

Private clubs such as the golf club and yacht club are seen by some interviewees as elitist, but enjoyed by others.

Several services in Leiston are also well-used by Aldeburgh residents, including the leisure centre (plus swimming pool) and children's centre, as well as cultural and kids' activities in Snape.

Healthcare access was the primary concern for Aldeburgh residents. Street surveys, stakeholders and group discussions highlighted the lack of NHS dentist (two parents said they and their partners keep their dentist from former addresses out of the county), and the distance and lack of transport to the nearest hospital (in Ipswich). The need for more mental health support locally, including autism and ADHD, was raised by survey respondents and groups, and stakeholders mentioned a large number of isolated residents.

Survey respondents, parents and knit and natter groups also said they thought the local cottage hospital, pharmacy or GP should be able to offer basic services such as injections, midwifery advice and treating minor wounds, instead of having to travel much further afield.

Lack of **nursery provision** for under twos was highlighted by parents, and the lack of direct support or social spaces for parents other than via toddler groups.

Although it was recognised that there is a lot going on in Aldeburgh, people identified a gap in provision for teenagers and young people as well as free places to socialise.

Poor public transport is an issue, with buses starting late, stopping at 6pm, and not running on Sundays or Bank Holidays. For the young men "It's hard to go out in the evening to meet your friends", for the Knit and Natter group, several had stopped driving due to age; stakeholders talked of parents having to drive their children to secondary school.

Shops and services in Aldeburgh are seen by local people as not catering to their everyday needs. Banks, a hardware shop, affordable supermarkets, baby supplies, and affordable takeaways, all being mentioned. One person described the "emptying of the high street" and closure of the "traditional shops". Nearby Leiston and Saxmundham are seen as having wider variety and cheaper prices.

"The youngsters (teens and young adults) could do with more support. Especially now because there's not enough emphasis on keeping the youngsters in town." – street survey

"We need practical shops for local people. The shops are aimed at visitors. We've got fancy shops but no fruit and veg or shoe shop anymore. All the shops are very expensive - it's getting close to being priced out of your own town." – street survey

Group of male school leavers, Old Generator Station, Aldeburgh

This group of older teenagers were watching football on the big screen and drinking together on a Sunday evening. Most of them live in Aldeburgh, and two in Leiston. They still enjoy having the beach and the River Alde, the walk to Thorpeness and playing football on the playing fields. The annual Carnival is a social highlight of the summer.

However, they don't think there's much for them in Aldeburgh – **"It's a tourist town"** with **"arty farty people"** – and find visitors **"really snotty'**. For them, there's a lack of affordable shops and takeaways, and their lives are restricted by lack of public transport in the evening. **"You can't go out places cos you'll get stuck in Sax."**

Most of the group now have trades and all still live with their parents. Their long-term ambition is to get jobs at Sizewell, which pays much better than other jobs.

They think they'll have to move away from Aldeburgh due to housing being unaffordable for them. **"Either you're on social credit and can get a council house or you've got a lot of money."**

Hollesley

2 Hollesley

Hollesley is the biggest village in the Deben Peninsular, in the south of the Suffolk coastal area. Its geographical isolation is important in shaping local identity, the dynamics of the village and the attitudes of those who live there. There is low second-home ownership and a small tourist economy, although the remarkable beach at Shingle Street has become better known since interest in domestic tourism increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The village is agricultural, it sits near three prisons and a large Ministry of Defence site.

We visited **Hollesley** three times: in high summer in August, in a fine spell of weather in October and after a particularly rainy spell in November.

- we spoke to 37 people through our street survey. All these people lived in the village or the immediate area, 13 also worked in the area. 12 represented or belonged to a community organisation
- we spoke to three stakeholders involved in the parish or local groups
- we held two group discussions, with younger teenagers at the weekly youth group and people aged 80 and over at the regular "Meet up Mondays" at the village pub
- the online survey was filled in by significantly more people in Hollesley than in other villages – 35 people completed it. The survey was distributed through a well-established community network, and responses were dominated by people who were older and more affluent (24 of those completing it were over 75, 30 owned their home outright).

We were given a friendly reception by most people we spoke to, who shared their thoughts about their own experience and about village life. We found it difficult to reach the agricultural community. We saw how the landscape of the Suffolk Heaths shapes the village's identity and how important this is to residents experience; we also witnessed first-hand the extent of surface flooding and how vulnerable the reclaimed land around the village is to climate change.

"It is quite a vibrant village, in terms of people being sociable. A lot of people walk about the village, which is something I previously hadn't experienced. Most people will walk to and from the school. There are lots of footpaths around the village, and lots of circular routes. It has a really nice village vibe." – stakeholder

Hollesley: How people feel about the area
People who took part in street interviews were asked to describe the village in three words – the majority of people interviewed in Hollesley used words linked to the countryside, coast and natural beauty, followed by the friendliness of its residents and the supportive community. A number of people used words relating to Hollesley's physical remoteness on the Deben Peninsular, others surveyed used words describing Hollesley's smallness and its "quiet" and "scenic" setting. People completing the online survey reinforced this, frequently mentioning the natural environment, the sea and the beach and the remoteness.

When asked what they liked, people interviewed felt most strongly about the **surrounding countryside** including the diversity of the natural environment, the beach, fresh air, the forest and the heathland, particularly linking this to a liking of the peaceful character of this environment. The community was

mentioned by a noticeable proportion of people, this was particularly associated with a perception that "everyone is one big community" and that "everyone looks out for each other".

Liking living in the village and **wishing it to not change too much** was expressed across age groups. Not wanting change was associated with not wanting the impact of more second-home ownership and more visible tourism, and valuing the strengths of local life, rather than a wider nostalgia for the past. This view was shared by young adults and most teenagers engaged in the research.

"There are not too many people, it is quiet. The school is good and there are good community facilities (village hall, pub, shop). It is also close to Woodbridge but remains rural." – street survey

"[I like the] fact you can lose yourself in the forest, the beach is nearby, great for animals - we have cats, and children feel safe." – street survey

"It's a working village. It is quiet. Close community. If need to know something will quickly find someone who knows the information." – street survey

Many people in Hollesley mentioned issues with **traffic and roads** as a reason for disliking the area, describing the challenges with agricultural vehicles and crashes in the village. This is worsened by poor pavements, which "do not serve the whole village", most importantly the lack of a pedestrian connection from Hollesley to Oak Hill. Poor public transport and isolation (both geographic and social) were also frequently mentioned as negatives.

"Tractors are a nightmare because they think that they own the road. No bus routes and stuff. We will have to move because there is no public transport. My missus doesn't drive, so I have to take the kids to school etc. There is a coach but it is expensive, called Country Connection." – street survey

"The roads at the moment are an issue. There are closures that make it difficult. There is a closure on the Alderton road, which impacts access to the GP ... Most roads are single track and are too narrow. The school bus window was broken recently due to narrow roads, and the children were on board." – street survey

"Being in the back end of beyond and disjointed from other areas. The serving infrastructure is poor. Transport is terrible. The pedestrian pavements are poor and are not served throughout the whole village." – street survey

Hollesley Youth Group, Hollesley Village Hall

Hollesley Youth Group takes place at the Village Hall on Wednesday evenings. It is run by Just42 who have youth groups in several villages near Ipswich. The drop-in discussion took place alongside other activities taking place that night. Young people had the option of taking part in the conversation or not. Altogether around eight young people took part. At points, the conversation was with one or two; at times up to six young people took part. The group is aimed at 11 to 16 year olds, but the majority of young people who spoke to us were 11 to 13. Two older year nine girls also took part. After the group ended, older teenagers were hanging out outside the Village Hall.

Young people spoke of liking the sea, the park and how close they are to their friends. **"I like how it's close to everything, loads of fields. Not tight and confined, no dislikes"**. Another girl who had moved a lot during her life spoke of how she liked **"the people, the pupils … I've lived in different places and I like the quiet here, it's a community. People join up and do stuff like the fete in the summer"**.

Dislikes were few, apart from the lack of lighting, which can make parts of the village feel unsafe, limiting teenagers' ability to go out independently.

Generally the young people enjoyed the experience of living through the COVID pandemic, **"we loved COVID"**. One boy spoke of Shingle Street (a very small community) being too quiet and another remembered disliking being one of the very few children at the primary school, because of their parents' job.

Young people go to the park, the youth group and their friends' houses. Two described how one of their parents dropped them off in Woodbridge to look round the shops on Saturday. They described how being dependent on the school bus could be limiting – there are no other transport options to school apart from getting a lift from an adult. **"We all get the bus. It can be eventful. Once a car drove into the side of the bus and the windows smashed. It's difficult in winter because we have to go straight home. In summer we can go to the park. We don't have to go home."**

The younger teenagers generally liked the idea of staying in the area **"I like the idea of staying in Shingle Street"**. One older teenager spoke of wanting to go travelling but then to leave and live elsewhere.

Several young people spoke of wanting more shops, more streetlights, more things to do and more buses. A couple wanted a cinema but others said that they enjoyed going to Felixstowe or Lowestoft to go out. Others had particular ideas of what was missing, including food delivery (**"no one delivers takeaway"**), a local football league, a swimming pool, more routes to the village, **"when the road was shut it was difficult to leave"**.

Hollesley: Feelings about the community

Most people in Hollesley report that they feel like they belong in the village. This was often linked to a sense that the community is **welcoming, supportive and friendly.** Living in the area for some time and having strong local relationships was also associated with a positive sense of belonging. A connection between belonging and valuing the outdoors was important for Hollesley residents.

Of the small number of people who felt that they did not belong, all explained that they moved from elsewhere and felt out of place or "not local". There was a sense that more people had moved to Hollesley during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, and that although there was no hostility to these new permanent residents, there was a sense that they were keeping house prices high and indirectly excluding longstanding younger residents.

The village sits near two institutional sites – three prisons to the north of the village and a Ministry of Defence site to the east. The prison was mentioned by people as: a source of employment, particularly for admin and support staff; a factor that keeps house prices down; and as a potential source of difficulty if prisoners escape. HMP Hollesley is an open prison and its café is an important social support for the village. Ministry of Defence Woodbridge was not mentioned, although it is in close proximity.

"I've been here 20 years now. Know most of the main characters, the lead characters - WI group, gardening club, been on the parish council and church goers' club, mainly through going to those. Perhaps not to the locally born, they are more insular, it takes a while to be accepted... sometimes never, because they don't have a shared history with you." – street survey

"[I feel like I belong] just because of the community. It is so friendly. I have been here over 20 years it is lovely. My husband went to the primary school, the dinner lady now is there for my daughter and some of the teachers are the same. All of the children at the school have parents in who were in the same year, it is generational." – street survey

"Yes, I have lived here for 64 years and love the wildlife and the environment. The long-term community has doubled in size since I have been here. It used to be one long street. Now, lots of people stay in the caravan park, like it, and choose to move here when retired." – street survey

People interviewed in Hollesley felt more positively about their ability to influence the area than people interviewed from other communities. They described their **involvement in community groups** and many reported positive views of the parish council. Some individuals were very active across different groups. However **the parish council polarised views**: while many were positive and praised the parish council for its responsiveness and effectiveness, others criticised its "politics with a small p". This could play out in debates about change, for example proposals to build a Men's Shed. This concern was not raised in the other villages. Several people described their concerns about opaque decision-making and perceived ineffectiveness, and mentioned decision making about a possible zebra crossing as an example of inaction.

WhatsApp, community Facebook, and "the grapevine" (an informal email group) were mentioned as an effective tool for receiving local information. There was a sense among stakeholders that it has become more difficult to find volunteers for community organisations.

"People can attend PCC meetings but they may not know they can. They can exercise their rights and that is available to them." – street survey

"There are lots of new people, lots of retired people who wholeheartedly want to help, but they forget about the locals and long-standing families. I do think we are heard as a little coastal village. However, I love it here but we are forgotten about in the bigger picture." – street survey

"With rural questions, it's difficult to isolate one service and it has to be a holistic approach. In my view the only people who engage in a meaningful way are those people who use the village hall regularly." – stakeholder

Hollesley: Feelings about COVID-19 and the cost-of-living

When asked about the lasting impacts of COVID-19, Hollesley residents were more likely to mention an **increased feelings of isolation** and **reluctance to go out** than people in the three other villages. This was sometimes linked to concerns about the viability of the Hollesley pub – the Shepherd and Dog – which reduced opening hours in 2023. Running the pub early in the week on nights when few people visited had become unviable, partly because of high energy costs. People responding to the online survey also mentioned these themes. There was a bigger emphasis on the social connections forged during the pandemic by taking part in new activities such as the Women's Institute walking group.

A noticeable proportion of people surveyed felt the pandemic had no impact or that they found the experience positive. This was often linked to being able to be out in the countryside or by the sea.

Some residents spoke vividly of the significant impact of lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions on their **children's social and emotional wellbeing** and manage challenging situations today. This included people speaking of children who were very young during the pandemic and are now in middle childhood, and people whose children are now teenagers. However young people tended to speak of the pandemic positively.

There were some concerns about **increasing visitor numbers.** Shingle Street became better known and during the time when people could not travel abroad, it became a more popular place to visit. People described increased visitor parking; one person described how it had become difficult exercising their horses in the summer.

"Concern that it [COVID-19] has impacted his grandchildren, and other young people." – street survey

"During COVID it was alright round here, because of the countryside. It was luxury compared to most places. Could go for a walk. Woodbridge was weirder, COVID affected more popular places." – street survey

"[The impact of COVID-19 …] Only the pub. It was faring well before COVID. But since then lots of people haven't gone back, isn't open as much." – street survey

People voiced many concerns about **overall costs rising** in recent years and for some the impact had been acute. Others reported living frugally and within their means but doing less socialising and spending less

than in the past. There is a place where people can drop off food or other goods for people in need at the bus stop which was discussed as being much needed and well used.

Local issues were felt to have intensified cost of living pressures particularly the distance from cheaper supermarkets, petrol stations and poor public transport.

Some people living on low incomes who were struggling with costs were interviewed, mainly outside the school. Mentions were made of agricultural workers and farmers who were struggling, stakeholders mentioned that this group was difficult to involve in local activities.

"[Cost of living] impacts some people, lots of people have moved into the area from other areas because it is cheaper here. There is a foodbank by the bus stop, and when food gets put in there, it is taken quickly, [this] suggests that there is a need." – street survey

"Feels it [cost of living] acutely, and I definitely feel it financially. I was recently made redundant. We travel far to find somewhere that is cheaper as the shop in the village is too expensive to do weekly food shops." – street survey

"[There are] strata in the village: there is some social housing, some owner occupiers; I do know there are pockets of poverty but I'm not sure where they are." – stakeholder

Hollesley: Hopes and fears
Overall fewer fears and more hopes were articulated by people interviewed in Hollesley than in the three other villages.

Variations of the wish that the village stays the same ("remains quaint and quiet") and does not lose its current facilities were mentioned often; hopes for no change tended to be linked to valuing what exists now rather than looking back with nostalgia to a better past. Concern about change tended to be associated with **fears about future over development**, or **inappropriate development** although fewer fears were voiced around planned new development than in the other villages - this reflects the lower level of new planned housebuilding in Hollesley than in the other villages. For many people "remoteness" was something that was more often valued than seen as a difficulty, although it was sometimes linked to problems with service access or selling property.

Coastal flooding was mentioned as a major fear. This reflects the reality of flooding and the "failure of sea defences"; flooding and surface water already affect everyday life. Children sometimes cannot get to school. Older people reported that this is now much more frequent than in the past.

Fears associated with **poor public transport** were common, and a hope for a better bus service was often articulated. Some people spoke of the fear of losing young people, sometimes linked to a lack of affordable housing options.

"Fears? That it will become too large. That there is expansion. Would need better infrastructure. We would need means of getting from A to B."
– *street survey*

"Hopes - no more housing estates and put another road in. Or just a road that is suitable." – *street survey*

"Concerns - climate change, flooding, more extreme weather. It is a village of farms, not so pretty, and a prison, so we are spared from a second-home invasion – [I am] very worried that will change." – *street survey*

"I hope that it continues to be a beautiful village, that all of the good things remain and that the village continues to be a positive place."
– *street survey*

Hollesley: Support and facilities

A significant number of people in Hollesley **value socialising, eating and drinking;** the Shepherd and Dog pub is a valued venue. Several people mentioned the importance of Meet Up Mondays (now moved to Wednesdays since the pub started closing on Mondays). One person mentioned feeling excluded from going to the pub because "the cost of drinks has gone up". A description was given about the way the pub is used on a Friday night, by different groups at different times, with older people arriving earlier in the evening and younger people arriving later.

A range of activities were described to be taking place at the village hall, including yoga, Pilates, several classes of Tai Chi, line dancing, short mat bowls and the youth group. The Parish council looks after two recreation grounds as well as the village hall. Local shops and services, the primary school and youth group were more important to Hollesley residents than to people in other villages. One person described the shop as a "godsend".

The church is also an important social hub (and also involved in the informal foodbank at the bus stop); the shop, a care home, the caravan site, the Suffolk Punch Trust and the garage are all well used and also employ local people. The café within the open prison is valued and hosts community events.

Some people reported a **scarcity of places across Hollesley;** whilst others emphasised they **felt well served for a village of its size.** Older residents remembered a time where there were four shops and two pubs. People mentioned shopping in supermarkets, for example the Tesco in Martlesham, very few people mentioned going to Woodbridge for activities or to socialise in spite of its proximity. Ipswich is important for some people for social activities and for work.

"I go to the park – take the grandchildren, go to the beach, walk on the heath. I go to the pub, to the village shop, to the post office." – *street survey*

"[I like the] bowls club, pub, shop, and generally walking around the village. I can go on a five-minute trip to the shop but it will take 30 minutes because I bump into people." – street survey

"The precious few: the pub, shop, children's play area, the recreation ground and the school." – street survey

When asked what is missing, the most common mention was the **lack of public transport**, particularly buses. This makes it difficult for children to socialise or go to activities outside the village, unless they are driven by an adult, and makes them very dependent on the school bus. People remembered a better bus service in the recent past and wondered why other local bus services did not run to Hollesley, given that it is the biggest village in the Peninsular. The fear of stopping being able to drive was mentioned by older people with some saying that they would need to move in the future because of this. People of all ages noted how non-drivers became isolated in spite of a group of active volunteers in the Good Neighbour Network who drive people to appointments.

Access to healthcare was a major concern for the residents – this was often linked to the poor public transport as one person described: "If I didn't have a car, I wouldn't be able to access health care." The closure of the satellite branch of the Peninsular Practice was mentioned.

The need for more **activities for teens** and **childcare** were mentioned by a few residents. Younger teenagers valued the activities and facilities that exist – particularly the park and Shingle Street - and had some wishes for more shops and activities.

The particular issues for service providers of working in an isolated area were raised, including the cost. More issues were raised about the need for more services and supports than in other villages, however a group of residents were positive about service provision, expressing that the services are sufficient for a village of this size, and would not expect Hollesley to have more. A few people mentioned that more services could threaten the character of the village and attract more villages and people moving in.

"Lack of transport, particularly buses … the main thing that worries me is health. If I didn't have a car, I wouldn't be able to access healthcare … Dial-up bus is available but it is expensive, as are taxis. I am aware of the Good Neighbour Network and how they fill that gap." – street survey

"No, because if there was anything more it wouldn't be a village anymore." – street survey

"For me, no. It is pretty perfect. It would be nice to have a GP surgery in the village but it is not miles away." – street survey

Meet up Mondays, Shepherd & Dog

Meet up Mondays take place across Suffolk, hosted by different pubs and cafes. In Hollesley these take place on Wednesdays at the Shepherd and Dog pub, from 2 to 4 pm. A regular group of older people use the group, together with the people who support them. Many people attending are over 80. Five older people took part in this discussion, mainly through a series of one to one conversations.

People spoke of how they enjoyed living in the village. **"I like the friendliness, the closeness to the sea".** Shingle Street and the sea were valued local assets. **"Shingle Street is really lovely, we go to Orford to get fresh fish from the fisherman's huts."**

Change and the arrival of new people were described as integrating into the positives of the village. **"The sense of community has stayed, the new people are friendly."** Newer housing at Oak Hill was seen as providing new housing options for younger people and families.

People who had moved as adults (but now considered themselves longstanding residents) described becoming part of the community. **"I've moved to the area but I've never ever felt unwelcome."** People moving to live permanently are welcomed, but the lack of tourism and low numbers of second owners were seen as a positive

People who had lived in the village for many decades described the changes in their lifetime. **"The biggest change is the growth of the village. It was a small village but it used to have two pubs and four shops – including two bakers and a butchers. Farmers grew sugar beet and there was an orchard growing soft fruit."**

Negative aspects of change were the reduction in bus services and increase in flooding. **"When it floods some lanes are like canals. Didn't used to be like this."** The change in employment was also mentioned, fewer people work locally on the land than in the past.

This group of older people were still actively involved in community life, some still playing active parts in local groups and campaigning for change. The Women's Institute was cited as a valuable support offering outings and activities. People used Good Neighbour Network volunteers to be driven to important appointments. The Bowls Club and the Church are important.

There were hopes that the village continues to cater for the younger generation, and some fears about new housing development that is perceived as inappropriate.

Kessingland

3 Kessingland

Kessingland is a large village, four miles south of Lowestoft and by-passed by the A12. Its coastal location attracts holidaymakers to static caravan parks and a few Airbnb properties, although the stony beach is not as well-known as beaches in Southwold or Aldeburgh. It is a relatively affordable option for people wishing to retire to the coast.

It is historically a town of two halves: Kessingland Beach, where the fishing community lived, and the upper part of the town where key social infrastructure such as the primary school, sports centre, library, parish council and high street are located. In between are more modern housing estates. There is a large Traveller site on its outskirts.

We visited Kessingland three times – in late August during the school summer holidays, in fine weather in late October, and just after the clocks had changed in early November when the nights had drawn in. We also spoke to some key stakeholders over the phone.

- We spoke to 39 people through our street survey.

- We spoke to three stakeholders involved with the parish or local groups.

- We held two group discussions: with pre-teens at the youth club, and a smaller group at the Traveller community on the Romany Road site.

- There were 12 replies to the online survey.

We found everyone to be friendly and welcoming, people said hello to people they pass in the street. We also noticed how the streets emptied at sunset, and how dark and silent they seemed – something that became more marked on our November visit.

Kessingland: How people feel about the area

We asked people we spoke to in street interviews to suggest three words that would describe Kessingland. The most frequently used words related to the countryside, coast and natural beauty, with people describing the place as "idyllic" and linked to "seaside".

The **beach** and **sea** were mentioned by many people as something they value, and their sense of peace; the beach is particularly popular for dog walking, though a few people point out that it is not as picturesque as other beaches in Suffolk. One woman talked about it being somewhere easy to have a free family day out and see other people; youth club members talked of it as somewhere they could feel independent and go exploring with friends.

The surrounding countryside was also mentioned as somewhere beautiful and peaceful, as well as providing opportunities for walking and outdoor activities. **Friendliness** and sense of community were the main thing people described as their likes about Kessingland. Words associated with community were also a key theme: "friendly", "community" and "close-knit". However, the Traveller community reported that they had experienced some prejudice.

Almost half of respondents used words such as "quiet", "peaceful", and "small", overall conveying the sense of a calm seaside village community. In general people feel safe here.

Although many people find little they dislike in Kessingland, the lack of activities, amenities and services is a regular complaint. This includes difficulty in getting a doctor's appointment, and lack of provision for young people.

"I like the community aspect. We are just far away enough but we are not out in the sticks. Everyone here is really friendly and we all help each other out." – street survey

"Although it's peaceful and quiet, it can be boring for younger people with nothing going on. People can get stuck here, almost like a trap. Born here, and die here. It is to do with finances, it's not a very rich place. If you're born here and live here and work here, and most likely will not have the finances to leave, that's the trap." – street survey

"It's a bit quiet. There's nothing much to do after 5pm." – street survey

Kessingland Youth Group

We visited on a Wednesday evening in November, just after the school half term. At the time the group was held fortnightly but due to popularity had just received the go ahead to open weekly. Although the youth group is for ages 10-16, it tends to be under 14s who come. Young people who have gone off to different secondary schools come back together here, reconnect with primary school friends, and exchange gossip. In between, they talk via computer games and on WhatsApp.

On the whole they are all very positive about Kessingland. **"There's nothing I dislike about the village,"** says one boy aged 13. **"The best thing is knowing a lot of people. A lot of my friends live here."**

Being in the countryside gives them access to lots of outdoor activities, such as horse riding and cycling, and although the beach here is a bit stony for some, others think it's great for exploring and it gives them a sense of independence.

While there's plenty to do in the summer, as it gets darker there are fewer options. Although the skate park and MUGA next to the sports centre are very popular, the young people say they can't use them in winter because it's not lit after school.

A couple of the young people have moved here from larger towns and welcome the relative quiet and lack of crime. One boy said: **"It's a much better life for me here. It's calm and peaceful. In Essex my mum's car got stolen."**

The youth club runs a tuck shop and serves free hot food, mindful that some of the young people might not be eating properly at home. At the end of 2024 it received backing to go from fortnightly to weekly in 2025. **"If the kids weren't here, they'd be at home watching video games,"** said one of the organisers.

Kessingland: feelings about community

The sense of **belonging** was lower in Kessingland than the other communities, with people who had come from larger towns taking longer to truly feel at home, but not regretting the move. Historically there have been divisions between different communities: born and bred versus incomers; or beach community versus town and agricultural communities.

The church, school, Parish council, Working Men's Club and local Facebook groups help keep people connected and informed of what's going on locally.

A woman from the **Traveller site** talked of the strong bonds within the Traveller community, but a reluctance of Travellers to integrate with the wider town, and time needed for Travellers to build trust with outsiders. We also heard reports of some prejudice towards Travellers over the planning application in 2024 to expand a Traveller site.

Compared to the other towns and villages visited, Kessingland residents felt relatively neutral about their **influence** on their village. Several said they did not have the time or inclination to get involved, but felt they could if they wanted to. There were complaints from some that they "feel powerless" over new development. But there was more approval of the Parish council in Kessingland than elsewhere.

"Forty years ago, when I moved to Kessingland, it was very much "them and us", but the fact that the town has grown so much means it's not so obvious anymore." – stakeholder

"Everyone is so friendly, if I've got troubles I can ask a neighbour and they will do anything to help me." – street survey

"No, I don't feel I have any influence. The whole village came together to oppose changes to the bus service and we weren't really listened to. They are planning new houses – we said no. The community is not big enough to handle new development, as they are not planning any additional infrastructure." – street survey

Kessingland: Feelings about COVID-19 and the cost-of-living

There are memories of the COVID-19 lockdown as a positive time that saw a **strong community spirit:** They also acknowledge that having plenty of natural open space made lockdown easier.

However, there are worries about lasting **social isolation**, mental health and depression, as well as impacts on children and teenagers. One stakeholder reported that a high number of reception age children are not toilet trained.

Concerns about the **cost-of-living crisis were marked**, with food and fuel costs mentioned by many. Pensioners and families were described as struggling the most. Organised groups within the village try to support those struggling where they can: the youth club serves free hot food; the school runs the Kessingland Help in Need Trust to buy white goods for families; and church operates a foodbank. One stakeholder talked at length of the precarity of work for many people in this seasonal economy.

"[During COVID-19] I had to move out of my house and into mum's house. But living here was different from other places cos we had the beach and could get out – it's given me an appreciation of where I am." – street survey

"[COVID-19] did not have impact on myself, but locally felt the restrictions to local working businesses; they were having to operate/working under the radar. It had an impact on people's livelihoods." – street survey

"COVID-19 really brought us together. Personally, it had no major impact but my grandson and granddaughter withdrew socially." – street survey

"It feels like if you had a million pound it wouldn't go nowhere. By the time you've bought the necessities, you've got nothing at all left." – group discussion

Kessingland: Hopes and fears

People want the village to remain the same, with their children being able to live here in the future; they fear growth from planned development projects. They worry "we'll lose our identity as a nice friendly village", or growth will detract from its unspoilt nature.

Some fear that an **expanded population** will put even more pressure on roads, water supply, the school, and the doctors surgery – saying it is already very difficult to get a GP appointment.

Conversely, there is **hope** that development could bring more shops, cafes and places to go, as well as affordable housing.

There are some concerns about the **Energy Coast** developments (LionLink) and flooding is a worry.

"I would like to see more small little shops, more amenities: retail, local shops, butchers, things like that. Holiday makers come here and say, 'there's nothing here'." – street survey

"Major development of around 140 houses near our house. That's 1/3 of the population of Kessingland being added to the village … The sewerage, gas, and electric won't be able to cope. We already have power cuts. It will also affect the traffic and the price of our house. and we'll lose the beautiful views." – street survey

"If inflation goes up further, more businesses will shut, like the Working Men's Club – no darts team, no social life, no more locally run businesses, shops and stuff. We don't have much at the moment but I worry about what we have being reduced even further." – street survey

Kessingland Gypsy and Travellers site, Romany Lane

The site itself has 24 plots housing around 200 people of all generations, tucked off the roundabout on the bypass on the edge of the village. It's a tight community that in general prefers to keep itself to itself. **"Everybody supports each other, one million per cent. We keep an eye on each other's children, borrow things from each other…"**

"I'm busy but I've got a net of support under me – mum, dad, brother… there's always someone here who can help me."

Families are integrated into local life via the primary school – which they say offers a lot of support – the doctor's surgery, and boxing (in Lowestoft). As it takes time to build trust with strangers, there is a reluctance to get involved in group activities in the village, although some mums are beginning to reach out to the toddlers' group and arrange playdates.

Recently [2024] an unsuccessful planning application by Travellers to extend their existing site onto a neighbouring plot drew what the Travellers saw as **"racist and prejudiced"** comments from villagers. **"The crime rate will go up', 'Lock your doors', terrible things… I thought 'I've lived here for eight years, everyone's really nice and friendly but behind closed doors, is this what they think of us?' It was a bit unsettling."**

The beach is valued by families: **"It's so nice to just pop to the beach… It's fun. It's free. The children love it. In the summer, everyone's down at the beach."** However, the high street is **"really bad"**, there's no NHS dentist and there is a lack of indoor space for children; **"otherwise we've got everything we need"**.

COVID-19 is not felt to have had any lasting negative impact; at the time, the whole Travellers site locked down together. However the cost of living is biting. **"It's unbelievable. It feels like if you had a million pound, it would go nowhere. By the time you've bought the necessities, you've got nothing left. A bottle of gas is £75, and we go through one a week."**

There are a high number of health issues on the site – documented in a report from Suffolk County Council from 2023[3]. Management of the site has changed recently, giving the Travellers more influence, and a refurbishment of the plots is planned for 2025. **"I'm looking forward to the site getting done up. It will be lovely to take pride in where we live. We don't like living [in a mess] but we don't have the money to do it ourselves."**

Kessingland: Support and facilities
Most people said they had friends, neighbours or family locally who they could turn to for support.

Community groups and activities are important for bringing people together, as well as local pubs. The library at Marram Green (which offers a parent and baby group) and sports centre (which hosts the youth club) are the main places people said they went. However, it was pointed out that these are on one side of the village so can be hard to get to for residents further away, especially if they do not drive.

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[3] https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/gypsy-roma-and-Traveller-health-needs-assessment.pdf

The Working Men's Club and the Sailors Home pub are popular social hubs. The young people at the youth club like the skate park (by the sports centre) but say it needs to be lit for them to use after dark. The beach was also mentioned as a social space; one young man talked about how important the sea was to his personal mental health.

The Men's Shed, initiated to combat loneliness, is well attended and one stakeholder suggested a dementia café (such as at Wangford) would be good for Kessingland's elderly population. The school and church are also seen as organisations that support the community and bring people together, the Traveller community in particular valuing the school as a gateway into village life.

Although some people find what is on offer in Kessingland limited, proximity to Lowestoft offers some larger facilities and services, particularly for younger people. **The beach and countryside** offer potential for outdoor activities such as bike riding and horse riding, but people feel there is little to do indoors in poor weather or on short winter days.

Poor public transport service was a regular complaint, with people feeling they could not get in and out of the village after 6pm without a car. This becomes particularly difficult when needing to access healthcare, the main hospital being the Norfolk & Norwich. Healthcare is seen as being stretched, which not enough GPs and no dentist, and a few people mentioned lack of childcare.

Facebook and WhatsApp groups were also talked about as places to go for support, however a lot of people do not use the internet or email and can therefore be excluded from knowing what is going on, this can lead to or compound isolation.

"I moved to this area because there are a lot of things in the area – baby and toddler groups, keep fit, The Kissy Crew on Facebook, bowling nights, meet up at the café, in the parish there is lots on offer. I was impressed with the area and what is offered to the community." – street survey

"There's a silent population who stay behind closed doors. There's a lot of mental health stuff. Depression. All the things." – stakeholder

"There could be more groups of children. My daughter is nine and wants to go out to play but is not quite old enough. It would be good if she had a safe place for 9 to 11 year olds to go, then I would feel safe." – street survey

"We need a dentist, larger surgery, opticians. We have a car but a lot of people have to get the bus or have to find another way to get to Lowestoft." – street survey

Reydon

4 Reydon

Reydon lies in the central area of the Suffolk coastline, off the A12 between Southwold to the south and Lowestoft to the north. It is a large leafy village with a number of amenities, including two key shops, a health centre, community buildings and a primary school. Reydon has an estimated population of 2,700 people, although with planned housing development in the village this number is set to rise.

Reydon is joined to Southwold via Halesworth Road and the Mights Bridge, which cross over Buss Creek. Southwold is a quintessential seaside town with a major tourist economy. Reydon is largely residential and is surrounded by agricultural land, as well as an Adnams distribution centre and a small industrial estate to the north.

We visited **Reydon** three times: in high summer in late August 2024 for a scoping visit, in late October during a period of unseasonably warm temperatures and during a cooler spell in November.

- We spoke to 39 people through our street survey. All these people either lived in the village or the immediate area; 20 also worked in the area. **11** people represented a community group or an organisation.
- We held two discussion groups, one with people aged 80+ at a lunch club and a second with parents from Reydon and nearby communities at a baby & toddler group.
- Very few people from Reydon filled out the online survey.

People in Reydon were welcoming and open to talking candidly about their experiences of living in Reydon and the current state of their health and wellbeing. We heard about how great the village is to raise a family, but also the very real struggles some of the community face seeking childcare and activities for young people. We observed a tension between Reydon and Southwold through housing development pressures and attitudes towards tourists and second-home owners.

"We are on the way into Southwold, now I would imagine the village is mainly spread out. We are rural with fields, marshes. Physically, people drive through Reydon to get to Southwold. Other than the signs, they aren't aware Reydon exists. We get overshadowed by Southwold." – stakeholder

Reydon: How people feel about the area
When asked to describe Reydon in three words, people interviewed were most likely to offer words describing **the sense of community**. The second most common theme was related to Reydon being friendly and social with a slightly smaller number of people commenting on its convivial character. Residents described Reydon as "friendly", "safe" and "community-spirited". The countryside, coast and natural beauty was the mentioned less than in the three other villages.

The community was also the most popular theme mentioned by people interviewed when articulating what they like about the village. For some surveyed this was linked to a recognition of Reydon as **a good place to raise children**: having a good school, being safe for children to play outdoors independently, having access to family-orientated activities and having "lots of other families' around".

Feeling safe was strongly valued by people interviewed in the street survey. Safety was often discussed as a reason why the area is a great place to raise children, and there was also an appreciation of safety for the wider population, "especially as you get older". Some people explained how the village's **streets and buildings are well kept**, there are low incidences of graffiti and no vacancies in local shops. These environmental cues for safety are supported by a **feeling of low crime rates** in Reydon.

One person surveyed was keen to contrast their fondness for the community in Reydon to their perceptions of a lack of community in Southwold. This comparative commentary between Reydon and Southwold was a key theme in several street interviews, with people making a distinction that what they liked about Reydon was that "it's not Southwold". **Tensions with holiday makers and second-home owners** were visible here. There is a shared understanding among some that defines Southwold as an area aimed at tourism and holiday homes, rather than the full-time residents of Reydon and surrounding areas.

This association was also apparent when people described Reydon's **proximity to the sea and beach**, which was the second most mentioned reason for liking the area. Being able to walk to the beach and enjoy the sea whilst maintaining some distance from Southwold, particularly in the summer months when it is peak tourism season, was important for people.

"I like that the kids are able to play out and not be too worried. Don't get hassles or crime. I am local and have a lot of family here. Right by the seaside and friendly community. I work with people in the area. When I pass people I know they say hi, I just bump into people walking around." – street survey

"I like the community here. There isn't a community in Southwold. I've been here 52 years, I can't really move. I live on the edge of the village. I used to live in Southwold, now it is a conglomerate of holiday homes. Real people live here in Reydon." – street survey

"It doesn't have any graffiti, most of the shops are open. Closed shops elsewhere caused anti-social behaviour and looks run down." – street survey

Many people mentioned **a lack of activities, amenities and services** as a reason for disliking the area. In particular, despite a recognition that Reydon is a good location for families, the **lack of childcare facilities** (including nurseries) and **indoor after school activities for young children** was marked. This problem extends to teenagers as despite the skatepark in Southwold, people felt there is an absence of teenage-focused activities after dark or in the winter.

This issue of **public transport** was a significant concern, specifically the lack of frequent bus service or links to railway lines. One person interviewed observed "the car rules here" with another sharing how "transport links are abysmal" – a sentiment reflected in many people's understandings of how Reydon's geographic isolation and public transport deepens local car dependency.

For disabled people, teenagers and adults who cannot drive, or who may not be able to drive as they age, there is an anxiety over **the challenges limited public transport causes to everyday life** such as accessing hospitals, work, education and other towns or cities, as well as reinforcing social isolation. Poor driving and parking issues were also linked to the local holiday home and visitor population, particularly in the summer.

The transport issue was related to **dislike toward new development** in Reydon. There is a worry around the scale of "excessive development" and the impact a larger population will have on existing roads, parking availability, services and amenities. Further concerns around new development were voiced throughout the street interviews including when describing missing services and fears for the future. For a noticeable proportion of people in Reydon, however, there was nothing to dislike about the village.

"[I don't like] The geographic isolation, how reliant I am on a car. They are building too many houses and this is going to have a big impact on the roads and the town." – street survey

"There is very little for late teens to do without needing transport, which is a very real problem with all communities like us. Being where we are on the way to the sea but nowhere beyond, it means that bus companies can't afford to do the buses. It's a vicious circle, we are not big enough to sustain them on our own." – stakeholder

"Zero childcare provisions for under twos. The cost of it. Poor internet and poor signal. There is a lack of jobs outside seasonal work. It is impossible to get an NHS dentist, you have to be sick two months in advance to see a doctor." – street survey

Reydon: Feelings about the community

Most people surveyed in Reydon felt like they belonged in the area. People in Reydon were the most positive about their sense of belonging compared to the other coastal communities. Reydon residents were more likely to feel this way because they had lived in the area for a long time and built up strong relationships with local friends and neighbours. Some of the people we had spoken to had themselves grown up in the area. The friendly, welcoming and supportive nature of the wider community also contributed to a sense of belonging for people who have recently moved into the area.

For a smaller group, **participating in various community groups** was important in sustaining a sense of belonging. Several people described how working locally or being involved with the school has helped to make them feel that they belong. Several people mentioned how having children attend the local school helps establish social connections to local people and places.

A small number of people described how they lack a sense of belonging. This was associated with a feeling that it is **difficult to fully assimilate into coastal communities as a newcomer.** This sentiment was shared by two contrasting individuals: one who had recently moved to the area and another who has lived in Reydon for "only a decade". This illustrated that for some, living somewhere for a long time does not guarantee a sense of belonging.

"Yes, one hundred percent. My son's got all his friends. You walk around town and people say hi. There are a lot of community groups. The food pantry

"and foodbank are there if people need it. There are a huge amount of baby groups, run voluntarily for older and small kids." – street survey

"Yes, I've been here a long time. The people here are new and older. They have offered to help me, but I like to keep my independence. It wasn't that friendly here at first when we came. We had children, this was more of a retiree place." – street survey

"I've only been here 10 years. I need others to feel like we do. I have made some friends and have family nearby. I had plans for joining groups but COVID got in the way. Not being from Suffolk, not really [feel like I belong]. – street survey

Most people in Reydon felt that they **are not able to influence** Reydon. This was voiced more than in the three other villages. The majority of people cited a lack of time, lack of will to step out of personal comfort zones, or limited know-how on how to get involved with local decision making.

The **issue of development** was apparent in affecting some residents' sense of influence, with some people in interviewed describing a feeling of powerlessness. Several mentioned how "we are not listened to" by developers and councils during the local housing development process. Two people highlighted how "young people just aren't listened to".

For some, this general feeling of powerlessness is grounded in a **strong suspicion of decision making**, particularly at regional levels of government: "decisions about development and facilities are made at another level which is inaccessible, behind closed doors". Some residents also felt the parish council does not have enough power or the "last word" on strategic planning issues, particularly concerning LionLink. Some people in share a sense of insignificance as a "tiny dot on the coast" compared to a national infrastructure project. However, despite this feeling of powerlessness, one stakeholder interviewed described how the issue of LionLink has mobilised the community to attend and actively engage with community consultations run by the developer.

A noticeable proportion of people surveyed felt positively about their ability to influence the village. Similarly to the other coastal communities, this feeling was supported by **personal involvement with community organisations**, the local school or work. There was also evidence of how "the community pulls together over issues" to positively influence the village in times of crisis, such as an incident of flooding at Potter's Bridge.

"No, not particularly. I don't do anything about it. I don't go to council meetings. I am slightly suspicious of the town council. We have a village council in Reydon. In Southwold, there are very few full-time residents, there are lots of holiday homes. In Reydon we have a bigger community of full-time residents but less power. I am surprised they are not combined. Might be a positive, Reydon can do their own thing." – street survey

*"I have no say over what happens in the area. We are not listened to …
I think there should be more things for younger people, younger people just
aren't listened to."* – street survey

*"I stand up, I donate to the community, and I support the church and the
Parish Council. 100%. I have been here all my life, moved away for work and
come back again. I feel I have a big influence of what goes on here, but not
involved with the Parish Council."* – street survey

Reydon: Feelings about COVID-19 and the cost-of-living
A smaller proportion of people in Reydon reported they felt **little or no impact** of the COVID-19 pandemic on their life today compared to the three other villages. A few people recognised how at the time, COVID-19 had a massive impact on their lives but now felt that life was back to normal.

For some, COVID-19 has had a **positive impact on their lives today.** Many people described how working from home, "a slower pace of life" and improved business opportunities had emerged through the pandemic. The benefit of accessing the outdoors during COVID for the community was observed by a stakeholder, who described how people managed during the pandemic by taking walks on the beaches and fields. One person surveyed outlined how the decline in second-home owners and visitors meant that Reydon became a place for permanent residents.

A range of negative impacts of COVID-19 were described in the street survey. One of the key concerns held was the **severe and sustained impact on young people** in terms of their social development, altered life experiences and the impact on their education. Some people said, "kids have a more sheltered life since COVID". **Social isolation** was felt by the community, particularly older people. There were descriptions of older people continuing to wear masks and being apprehensive about talking to new people. Others mentioned how COVID-19 has altered the way they socialise, preferring to visit their friends' homes rather than the local pub which had shut during the pandemic.

*"A massive impact at the time, but none now. I think it's made a lot of people
more reclusive."* – street survey

*"COVID had a good impact for us, it became a local spot for locals again… no
one was in their holiday homes. The children suffered, though."*
– street survey

*"It's gone back to how it was. I enjoyed the slower pace, and it made me want
to slow down in life."* – street survey

The cost-of-living crisis has far-reaching effects on people in Reydon. Amongst people surveyed there was a recognition of the **rising expense of most vital goods** including food, utilities and energy and utilities costs. A consequence of these rising costs is seen in people living more frugally and reducing non-essential spending such as eating out, changing supermarkets, and several people referencing how "I don't have the heating on as much as I used to".

Fewer people described an acute impact of the cost-of-living crisis compared to the three other villages, however there were descriptions of severe impacts and several mentions of how families rely on foodbanks or the community fridge to survive. One stakeholder observed there are many families in the poverty trap and local charities and community groups, such as the community fridge, have grown in response to local hardship. The impact on specific groups, particularly children, single parents and elderly people (whose pensions do not cover rising costs) was marked.

The impact of local factors on the cost of living did not seem to be a significant issue in Reydon. A smaller but noticeable proportion of people felt that they are not very affected by the crisis.

"Everything has gone up more than my pension. How are we supposed to manage? I know people who won't put the heating on. My friend from church is struggling and uses the Lowestoft foodbank. Every week the cost of shopping is going up and it hurts people's sense of pride. I don't want to go cap in hand, but it feels like our money is disappearing." – street survey

"It's definitely made me think about what I'm buying. I used to shop at Tesco, but have switched to Aldi. The community pantry really helps us because anyone can use it." – street survey

"As a single parent with three children, it's stupidly crazy at the moment. There's not enough support for parents on low incomes. A lot of children are having to go without. In this day and age, there shouldn't be poverty in this country." – street survey

Sandcastles baby & toddler group, Reydon Sports Centre

On the day we visited, this drop-in Thursday morning group was attended by mothers and grandmothers – but no fathers.

In their opinion, Reydon and the surrounding area is a great place to bring up children. It feels safe, it's close to the sea and the woods, it's beautiful, it's peaceful, it's easy to get out into nature, and **"everyone knows each other"**.

The mothers at the group are generally well networked, meeting up at each other's houses, and find support at the toddler group and at Southwold Library. Where they feel there is support missing is for parents themselves, places they can come together. **"I wish there was an exercise class with a creche where you could take your kids while you do the exercise."**

There is also pressure on nursery places, especially for under twos, with Southwold and Reydon nurseries closing recently, and private nurseries expensive. **"If you want to go back to work after your maternity, you'd struggle to get a place. I use a private nursery but it costs £35 a place, so I can only afford one day a week; what I earn I pay out in childcare."**

For older children, although they have the countryside and sea in the summer, often making friends with visiting kids, in winter **"there's nothing indoors for children to do. It's dark so early you can't let them out after school"**.

One woman, who also has a 16 year old daughter, says there's nothing for teens and no support for how to parent teens, and flags a lack of mental health support in schools. Public transport is **"a nightmare"** and there is no direct bus for her daughter to get to college (in Great Yarmouth). She also thinks COVID-19 has set teenagers back at school and may have led to them spending more time online.

The rising cost of living is being felt by many; they have adjusted by taking their kids out less and say Southwold's shops aren't for locals (too expensive, nothing practical). One with a family of six said she was struggling to feed her kids.

Rented housing is felt to be precarious. One mum who rents privately says she was evicted when the landlord wanted to sell, and that private rent has gone up again. Another, a council tenant, says her position is more stable and rent cheaper.

The nearest hospital is far to travel to (in Great Yarmouth) and getting routine advice requires an appointment. **"If someone is struggling, they don't want to wait till a Wednesday term time for help, they want to be able to drop in and informally mention a problem without making it a big deal."**

A woman at the session raised concerns about the large housing developments planned for Reydon, as well as LionLink, and the impact she thinks this will have on traffic, parking, jobs, the landscape and the character of the village. **"I just feel life is never going to be the same again."**

Reydon: Hopes and fears

Many people surveyed voiced hopes about **maintaining and boosting the community in Reydon,** which was primarily attributed to personal aspirations to either stay or become more involved with the community. This was linked to hopes that the village stays the same, "doesn't get too big", and does not get engulfed by Southwold.

An **apprehension toward planned development** was well articulated as part of the desire for the village to stay the same. Fears about new development and the failure of current and planned infrastructure to cope was the most prevalent issue, as well as about the loss of current assets. In particular, people voiced concerns about the local school being full and that demand for the village shops, doctors and dentists and sewage system will outstrip existing capacity. This was sometimes linked to a concern about "creep of impact" of high house prices from Southwold as well as a concern that the new homes being built will be for second-home owners, rather than local council housing.

People also expressed concerns that the development would transform the village into a town and in doing so would compromise the "villagey feel" of the community. People also described a **desire to see no increase in tourism**, reiterating the tension between permanent local residents and second-home owner and visitor populations which can leave behind unoccupied homes during the off seasons.

Issues around the "energy coast" were marked. The landfall of LionLink was a major concern regarding its impact to the local biodiversity, the countryside and local's access to outdoor activities such as walking. Flooding was a key fear for many. Several people in the street survey named specific incidents of flooding around Knight's Bridge Road, Copperwheat Avenue, Quay Lane, Wrentham Road and Potter's Bridge.

These illustrate the extent of flooding issues in the surrounding area of Reydon which worsen existing traffic congestion.

"I'm alarmed by the proposed building of goodness knows how many houses off Wangford Road. The infrastructure here won't be able to cope ... Offshore electricity is a huge concern as well. I don't really understand it, but it will change the area so much." – street survey

"I hope that there are changes for more support for young people, and better infrastructure for young and old ... the removal of holiday homes would be good as they are causing a great negative impact" – street survey

"I hope Reydon stays as a place people LIVE, not a place of second homes." – street survey

Reydon: Supports and facilities

Despite a prevailing dislike toward Southwold held by some people surveyed, there was a recognition that Southwold does offer many **valued places for support and socialising** that Reydon may lack.

Community/social groups were the most mentioned places that people go for support and socialising. People mentioned several specific venues including the village hall, the library, bowls club and sports centre as well as groups such as the community pantry, and certain venues in Southwold including St Edmunds Hall, the library.

Places for **eating and drinking** were also important for people surveyed. The Randolph Hotel was named as a popular spot where local people of different generations join to meet and mingle. A number of cafes in Southwold were mentioned by people surveyed, as well as the Old Hall cafe in Reydon as a spot where "real locals" go to socialise. Despite the wealth of places to go for support and socialising, there was a recognition by one stakeholder that the costs involved to access cafes and restaurants can be exclusionary.

For older people, another stakeholder interviewed described how a **reduction in practical services has impacted the community,** particularly the lack of a bank and limited opening hours of the Post Office. The impact of these reduced services on social isolation and reduced independence of elderly populations was voiced.

People surveyed in Reydon were almost the only group of people across the coastal communities who mentioned **visiting a health centre/GP for support**. Reydon has a large health centre which is a valuable resource for the community, despite certain issues in accessing appointments.

A noticeable proportion of people mentioned that they did not feel there were any places to go to for their local support network with one person mentioning "there is no community heart, there is no village high street".

"The library, community walks. I have been working, seasonal work, but I should use the facilities more. I have done Pilates and yoga before. Sometimes hang out at the boating lake, walking, café. Just walking around you get to know people, and the dog stops and says hello to everyone as well." – street survey

"GP and chemist and little local shops. You don't have to go into Southwold, you can get it here. Shame we only have one pub. I used to do Pilates but now work clashes. I go to Southwold arts festival with friends." – street survey

"There are art groups, exercise groups, book groups. My husband plays bridge. The walking groups. Southwold Arts Centre. The museum society has lectures, and the Arts Centre has community quizzes for fundraising. The library also does a great deal for the community." – street survey

Three key services were missing for people in Reydon. The lack of childcare, parental support and activities for young people were well articulated and mentioned more in Reydon than the other coastal communities. It was felt that **"a lot more must be done for young people"** and that the existing provision of after school activities, youth clubs and indoor activities for teenagers is not good enough for the community. It is felt that the younger generations are being "let down", particularly when viewed within the broader context of COVID-19 impacting their lives. The scarcity of nurseries was also emphasised, with some relying on family to travel to the next town over to access childcare.

Access to health care was also a prevalent issue for the community. People described in detail the difficulty faced when trying to gain an appointment at the GP or dentist, despite having access to a large new health centre. One stakeholder explained how there are empty treatment rooms in the health centre because rents are too high, reducing what services are provided to the community. There were also shared fears in the community about access to major hospitals and the damaging impact this has on the elderly population in Reydon due to a lack of public transport. The impact of planned development on local service provision was again raised by the community.

Lack of public transport was a prevalent issue in Reydon, but it was less marked than the other coastal communities. Public transport was frequently discussed as compounding other issues including accessing childcare in nearby villages/towns as well as hospitals. The lack of independent mobility of teenagers and elderly prevails despite community efforts to fill in service provision gaps through community transport. The impact on young people's social life and employment opportunities was a key concern mentioned by several people.

"Play areas. There is a lack of things to do with small children when the weather is bad. There is a lack of things to do with children inside… there isn't much to do. Another nursery. The old nursery went into administration. Only one in Southwold and St Felix, which is a public school. It's expensive." – street survey

"Young people rely on parents or taxis; there are no late buses. Community buses can operate every hour but not late at night, and they tend to serve older people. There is community transport, which has been a lifeline."– stakeholder

"There is a lack of shops, which will be made worse by the new development. They are planning 600 new homes. It's good the development will change the make-up of Reydon but in terms of infrastructure, we will reach a tipping point. There will be fewer services for people. There is a bit of NIMBY-ism[4] in the community but it is more around infrastructure than anything else, including drainage, water, the GP surgery." – street survey

Over 70s Volunteer Centre Lunch, Stella Peskett Millennium Hall

This fortnightly subsidised lunch brings in older people in volunteer-driven minibuses, including many in their 80s and 90s from care homes in Reydon. They welcome the opportunity to get out, especially those who are widows, and say they need more activities to go to. **"The important thing growing older is getting out and meeting people."** Other places they find support include church and the Margaritte Club (whist and bingo in the Village Hall). There is some consternation at the council for closing two popular regular sessions: Active Communities, which offered bowls, and social group Chinwag.

Many have stopped driving due to age. This has taken away a sense of independence making several of them reliant on neighbours, the community bus, and volunteers to drive them around. **"I don't drive any more. I have to ask for lifts. But you feel like you're imposing on people. I try and repay it by doing jobs in return."**

Some feel unsafe going out after dark. The lighting is poor, and the trees mean lots of shadow. The poor state of the pavements was raised by a few diners, particularly those who use buggies to get around – who fear tipping over. One man, who lives in the Oaklands care home in Reydon, said the traffic on the Lowestoft Road is too fast for him to get across in his buggy.

Being right next to Southwold, Reydon residents use many of the facilities in the larger town, particularly Southwold Library. However, the lack of useful shops, an NHS dentist, a garage, or a bank is a talking point: **"In Southwold, if you want a cup of coffee or a dress, then you're fine. But there's nothing else. It's just become FatFaces and Seasalts. For a supermarket, you have to go to Lowestoft."**

Forthcoming big development is a worry. **"It's a nice little area, but what's it going to be like with all this building work and the big cables? The roads can't take it. They're already flooded most of the year."**

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[4] "Nimby-ism" is an acronym for "Not In My Back Yard". It is a term used to describe a person's or group of peoples' opposition to proposed housing, infrastructure or other types of development that is perceived to be undesirable in their local area.

Pineapples - £1.50 each
Melons - £3.50 each
Mangoes - £2.15 each
Kiwis - 50p each
Peaches - 80p each
Nectarines - 80p each
Apricots - £5.50/KG
Plums - £4.75/KG

Bell Peppers - £4.50/KG
Chillies - £1.20/100g
Garlic - 45p each
Ginger - £4.50/KG
Cherry Vine Tomatoes - £5.50/KG
Loose Tomatoes - £2.80/KG
Large Vine Tomatoes - £4.50/KG

Beetroot bunch £2.25

Findings 2: overall themes across the four coastal communities

This section draws together the findings from the coastal communities and explores how often particular themes were raised across all the street interview data. It then describes where there were notable differences between the four communities to help differentiate between factors common to all four areas, and factors particular to each.

How people feel about their community

Across all the coastal communities, eight out of ten people surveyed were positive about their area. These positive feelings were evident in multiple questions across the survey, with many people eager to share their positive associations with their local community and the sea and beach.

When asked to give three words to describe their community, words describing the outdoors and natural beauty were the most frequently used, with six out of ten people mentioning this theme. People also spoke positively about the local community and its friendliness. Words describing the small size, character and quiet environment were used by around one third of all those interviewed.

Not everyone felt positively about their community. One in ten people used words that reflected tensions between second-home owners and visitors and local, permanent communities. A small but noticeable proportion of people used words that describe the more challenging aspects of rural living, primarily remoteness and lack of public transport compounding their sense of isolation. A small number of people expressed anxiety about their village changing and the same proportion of people described a lack of age and ethnic diversity in their area.

When asked to talk about what they liked in their village or town, over half of people surveyed mentioned positive associations with a sense of community. People also expressed an appreciation of the local natural environment, with nearly half mentioning the sea or beach and a quarter the countryside.

The most disliked feature across all four communities was the lack of activities, amenities and services. This includes specific concerns about a lack of activities for young people and places for socialising indoors and after dark. Issues with traffic and roads were mentioned by a noticeable proportion. This theme captures problems caused by agricultural vehicles and construction traffic, poor footpaths, issues with parking and road closures.

Nearly a third of people surveyed said they have "no dislikes".

Figure 1: If you were to describe your village/town to someone unfamiliar with it, what three words would you use? n=148
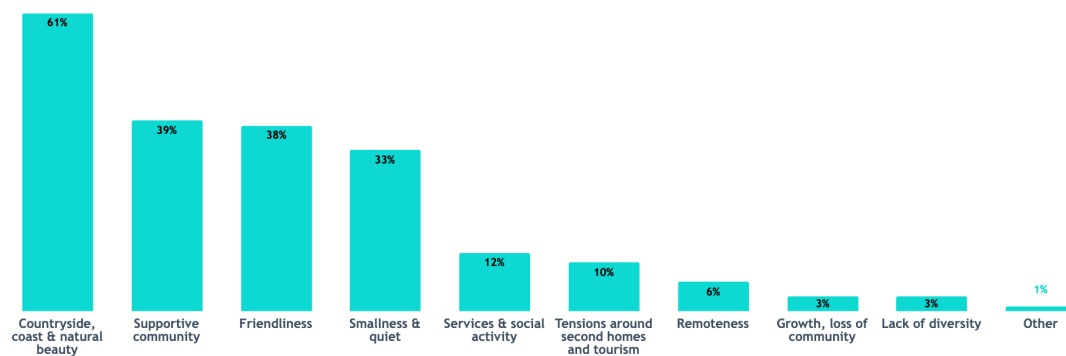

Countryside, coast & natural beauty 61%
Supportive community 39%
Friendliness 38%
Smallness & quiet 33%
Services & social activity 12%
Tensions around second homes and tourism 10%
Remoteness 6%
Growth, loss of community 3%
Lack of diversity 3%
Other 1%

Figure 2: What do you like most about living here? n=152

Community 55%
Sea/beach 40%
Peaceful 32%
Countryside 24%
Convenience 22%
Safe 17%
Outdoor activities 15%
Good for families 13%
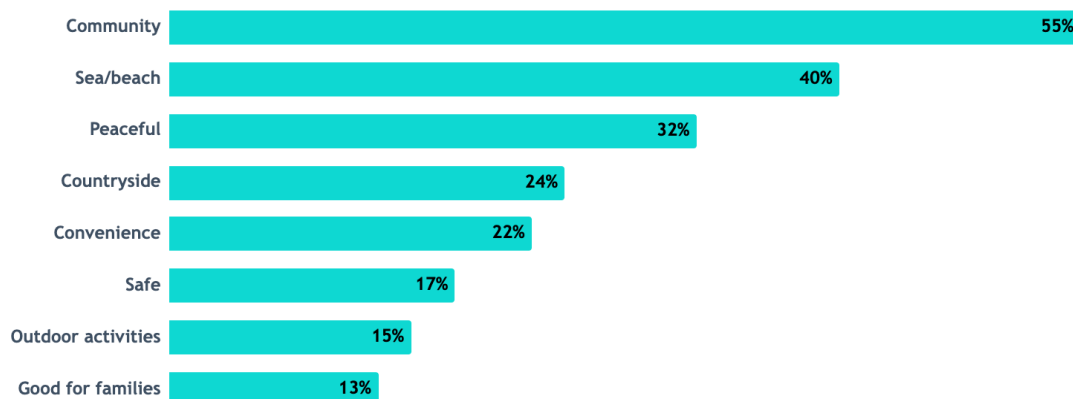
Figure 3: Is there anything you dislike about living here? n=151

Activities, amenities and services not enough 29%
No dislikes 28%
Traffic & roads 26%
Poor public transport 19%
Isolation 13%
Holiday homes and issues with visitors 12%
Housing issues 9%
New development 3%
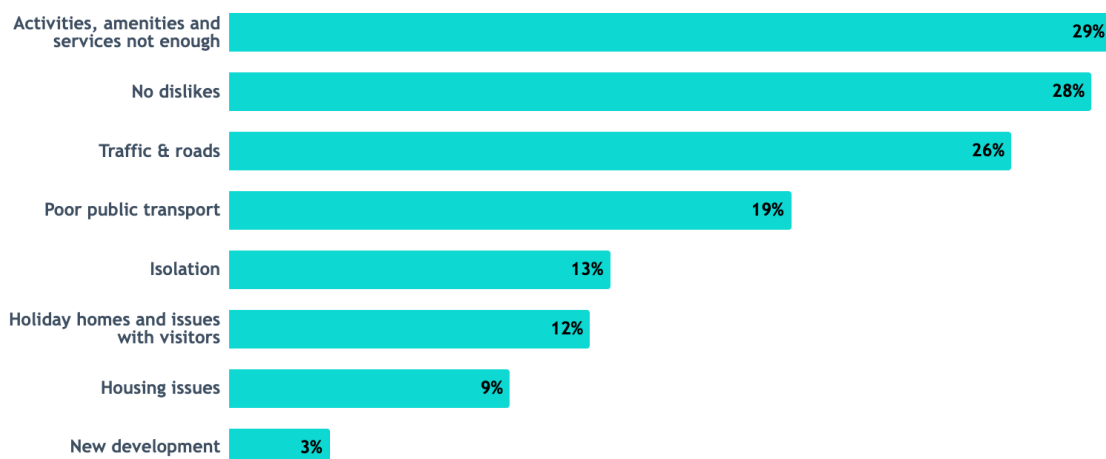
Key differences between the four communities

What do people like about their area?

The close proximity to the sea and beach was mentioned most in Aldeburgh, which is a seaside town. The coastal community furthest from the coastline, Hollesley, mentioned the sea or beach the least of the villages as a reason for liking the area. The countryside was mentioned by a significant number of people in Hollesley. The countryside was less important in other coastal communities, with only a few people mentioning this in Kessingland.

Peacefulness was mentioned by more people in Hollesley than any of the villages. It was important in Kessingland but had few mentions in Reydon and Aldeburgh. The recognition of Reydon as a good place for families was an important reason for liking the area – more so than any other village. This theme was not mentioned by anyone surveyed in Aldeburgh. In Hollesley the small number of second homes and low numbers of tourists was cited as a positive.

What do people dislike about their area?

Issues around second-home owners and visitors were felt most strongly in Aldeburgh, a town with a large number of both. This theme was mentioned by a small group of people in Reydon, hardly at all in Hollesley, and by no one surveyed in Kessingland. Dislike of housing development was only mentioned in Reydon and Kessingland, although this was by a relatively small number of people. In Hollesley there is a small number of second homes and the focus was on fears that this could change.

Issues around housing were more important in Aldeburgh than any of the other coastal communities. In the street surveys and group discussions this was connected to tensions around holiday homes impacting the local house prices.

Issues with traffic and roads, poor public transport and geographic isolation were mentioned significantly more in Hollesley than the other communities.

How people feel about their community

More than eight out of ten people surveyed across the four coastal communities felt that they belong in their area. Around one in ten felt that they did not. The positive sense of belonging was linked by half of those interviewed to having lived in the area for some time and the relationships they had developed. This sentiment was shared across each community, with many saying that they simply felt at home. Over one third linked their sense of belonging to the community being welcoming, supportive and friendly.

Of the people surveyed who did not feel a sense of belonging, almost all said this was because they had not lived in the area long enough, felt like a newcomer or felt out of place. A third of people who felt they did not belong referred to divisions within the coastal communities, including difficulty in assimilating into communities where some residents had been there for generations. Amenities primarily catering for incomers made some full-time residents feel disconnected from where they live.

Around one third of people felt that they could have influence over what happens in the area, half felt that they do not. Those who felt they have influence associated this with being involved in a community

group or engaging with the parish council, and tended to feel that the parish council was effective in listening to and solving local concerns. Half of those who felt they did not have influence said they were not interested, had no time or did not know how to get involved. One in five felt local decision making happens behind closed doors, and had negative views of the parish council.

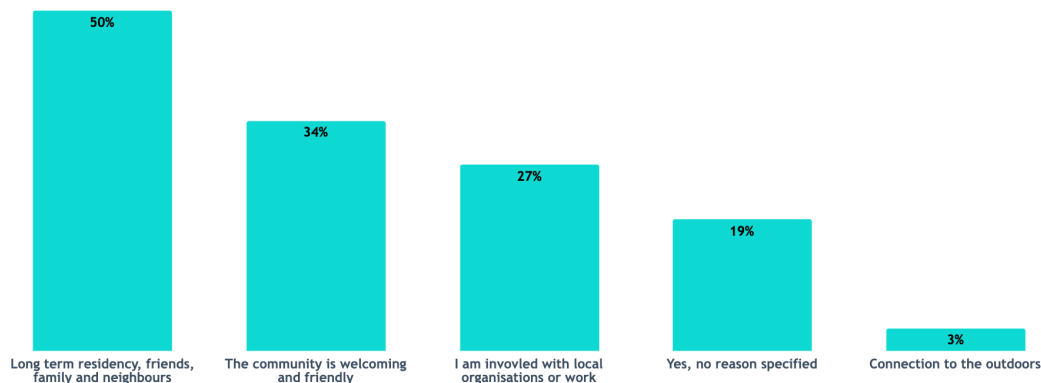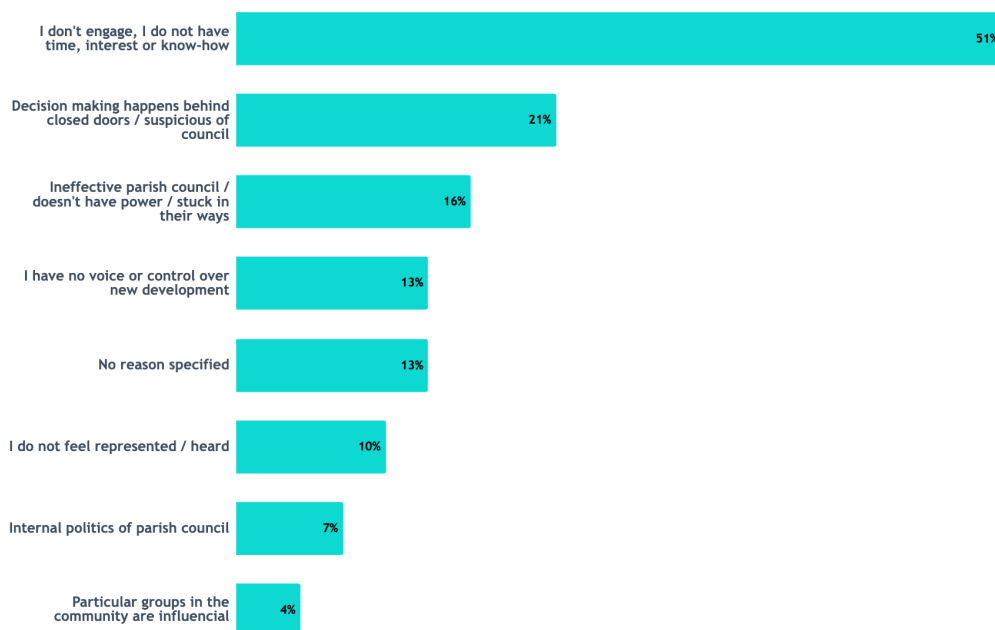**Figure 4: Do you feel like you belong in your local area? responses n=124**

Figure 5: Do you feel like you have influence over what happens here? Positive responses n=124

Key differences between the four communities

How people feel about their community

People surveyed in Kessingland felt most negatively about their sense of belonging, usually because they had moved recently, felt like a newcomer or felt out of place. Although overall sense of belonging was highest in Aldeburgh, the reasons for feeling negatively were slightly different. The tension between second-home owners and visitors was mentioned by several people as a reason they feel like they do not belong in the community. In Hollesley, moving to the area was not associated with problems either by longstanding residents or by those moving in.

People surveyed in Hollesley felt the most positively about their sense of influence, although a significant number did feel negatively. People in Aldeburgh and Kessingland felt most negatively.

Scepticism toward the local councils was a reason people in Hollesley and Reydon felt they lacked influence. In Reydon this was linked to local conditions, particularly new housing development and LionLink. In Hollesley, this view was sometimes connected to a particular observation of the internal politics of the parish council and community. A similar sentiment about the balance of power being held by specific people in the community was described in Aldeburgh. People in Kessingland shared the most positive views of engaging or being involved with the parish council.

Feelings about COVID-19 and the cost-of-living

When asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, two in five people felt that there is no lasting ongoing impact. Several people expressed a sense of distance between the pandemic and life today.

One in five people reported positive impacts of the pandemic. This included enjoying spending time at home, the opportunity to focus on their lifestyle, family and home, and an appreciation of the countryside and natural environment. Some people said an initial reduction in visitors and activity during lockdowns improved the air quality and enhanced the overall tranquillity of the coastal environment.

Ongoing negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic included social isolation, particularly among elderly people who are anxious about crowds; and impacts on their own physical and mental health. This included symptoms of long COVID, complications with other illnesses brought on by COVID, and general anxiety.

Local business owners described the challenges of survival under lockdown restrictions, when tourism and local footfall reduced. Although the impact on young people was mentioned by fewer people, the effects were described as severe. The disruption to education and the development of social skills of younger generations was a marked concern.

People surveyed were asked to talk about how the cost of living crisis impacts their lives. Half of people were concerned about costs rising overall, and specifically mentioned housing, petrol, and utilities or energy bills. One in five described acute impacts, and a similar proportion identified problems paying for food or highlighted the need for food support in the community.

Slightly fewer people reported impacts on single parents, young people, older people and people living off of the land. One in eight described how the crisis has caused them to be frugal and live within their means. A similar proportion thought localised issues - including available work, housing costs and available shops - intensifies the crisis.

Figure 6: What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on what your life is like now? n=147
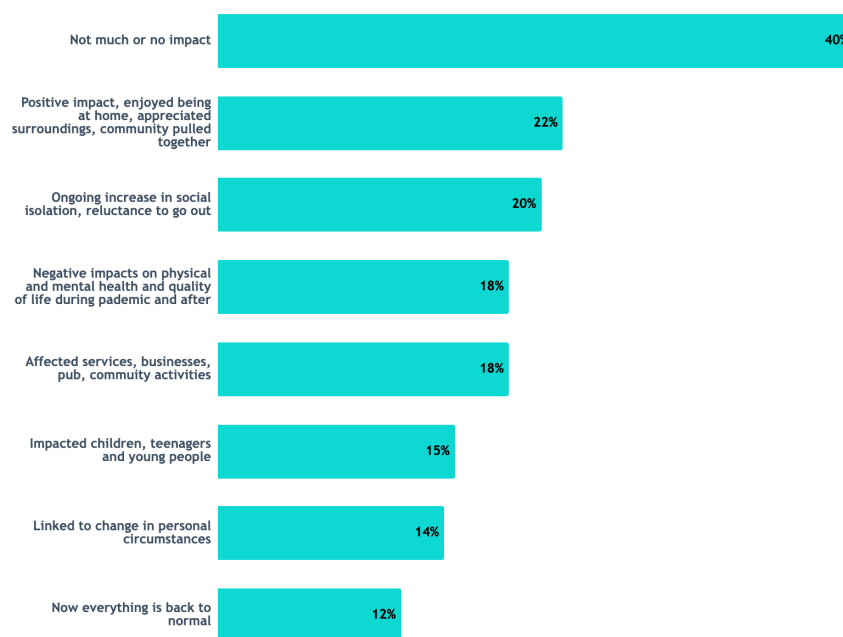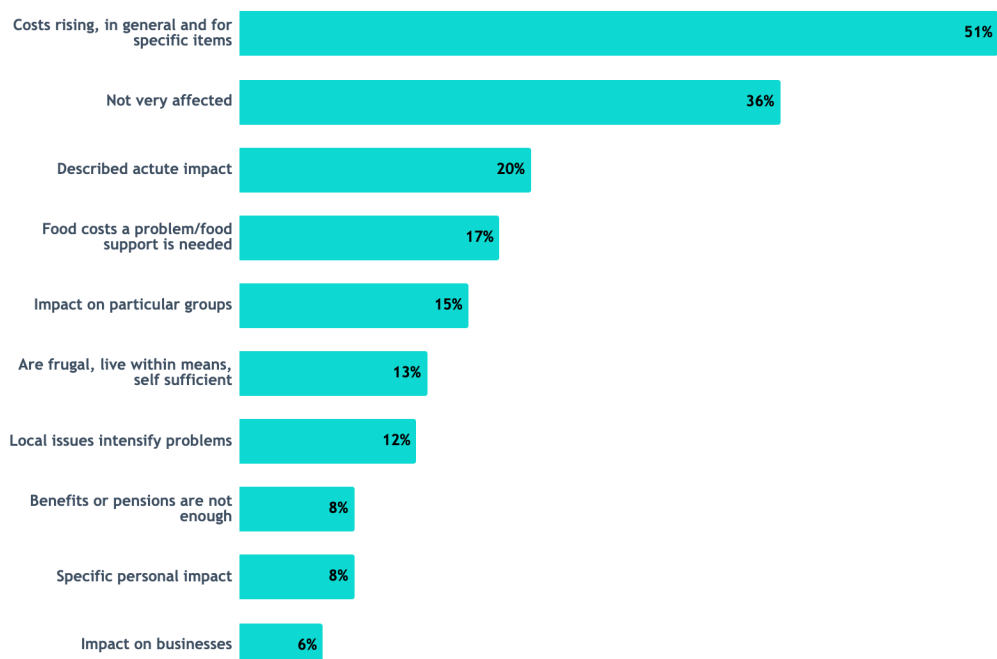
Category	Percentage
Not much or no impact	40%
Positive impact, enjoyed being at home, appreciated surroundings, community pulled together	22%
Ongoing increase in social isolation, reluctance to go out	20%
Negative impacts on physical and mental health and quality of life during pademic and after	18%
Affected services, businesses, pub, commuity activities	18%
Impacted children, teenagers and young people	15%
Linked to change in personal circumstances	14%
Now everything is back to normal	12%

Figure 7: What impact has the cost of living crisis had on what your life is like now? n=143

Category	Percentage
Costs rising, in general and for specific items	51%
Not very affected	36%
Described acute impact	20%
Food costs a problem/food support is needed	17%
Impact on particular groups	15%
Are frugal, live within means, self sufficient	13%
Local issues intensify problems	12%
Benefits or pensions are not enough	8%
Specific personal impact	8%
Impact on businesses	6%

Key differences between the four communities

How people feel about the COVID-19 pandemic

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on children, teenagers and young people was mentioned by three times more people in Hollesley than any other village. Ongoing social isolation was mentioned the most in Aldeburgh. Social isolation remained a pertinent issue in Hollesley and Reydon, however this was mentioned by very few people in Kessingland. People in Kessingland were more likely to mention how benefits or pensions were not rising fast enough to support people throughout the pandemic.

How people feel about the cost-of-living crisis

Local issues intensifying the cost-of-living crisis was mentioned most in Aldeburgh. This was related to both the cost of housing and of local shops and services, part of a theme in the town about how second-home owners and visitors shape the local economic landscape.

More people from Kessingland than any other coastal community voiced concerns about benefits and pensions not being enough. This was less of an issue in the other communities and was not mentioned by anyone surveyed in Aldeburgh. Impacts on other specific groups were raised in Hollesley, Reydon and Kessingland, but not Aldeburgh.

Hopes and fears for the future

Over half of people surveyed said they hope that their communities stays the same. This included their area retaining a quaint and quiet character and remaining a good place for children and families.

Almost one third of people surveyed wanted improvements to amenities (including healthcare, childcare and activities for young people), shops and affordable housing. A similar proportion wanted to keep and build the community by engaging with social activities, diversifying the cultural and demographic make-up of the community and building local skills and employment opportunities.

Around one in five people described personal aspirations such as setting up a business, getting a job or improving their housing. A smaller but noticeable proportion hoped there would be no increase in tourism and that their village would not become overdeveloped. One in ten want to see improved transport and reduced traffic.

Concerns about housing, livelihood and affordability alongside worry over new development and blight were the two most frequently mentioned fears for the future. Housing concerns were the largest area of worry, particularly the ability to stay in the area themselves, or young people having to leave the place they grew up due to high house prices.

A quarter of people said they were concerned about impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, flooding and coastal erosion. Infrastructure and services not being good enough, either now or in the future, was voiced by around one in five people. Individual fears, loss of current assets, the impact of new energy infrastructures and issues for young people were also mentioned by a similar proportion of people.

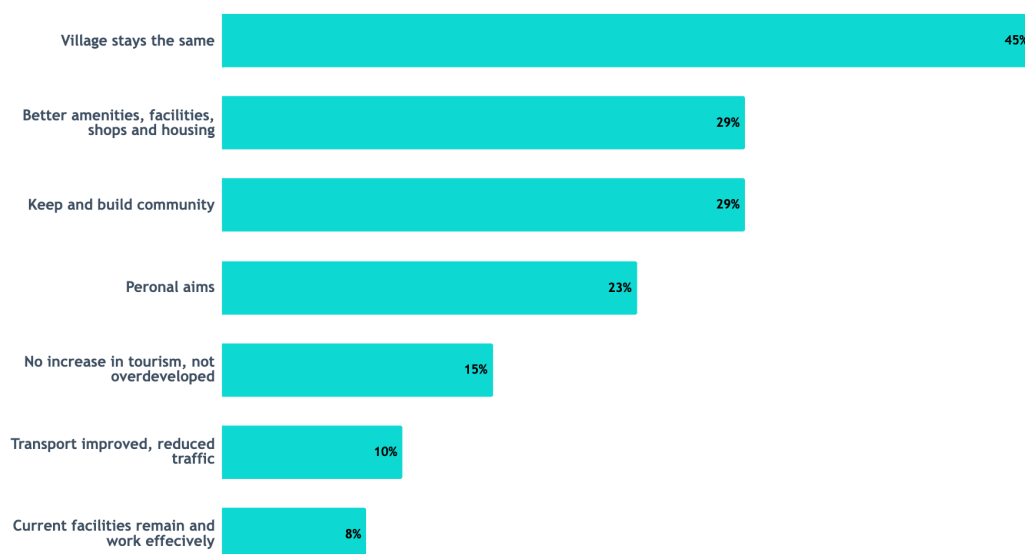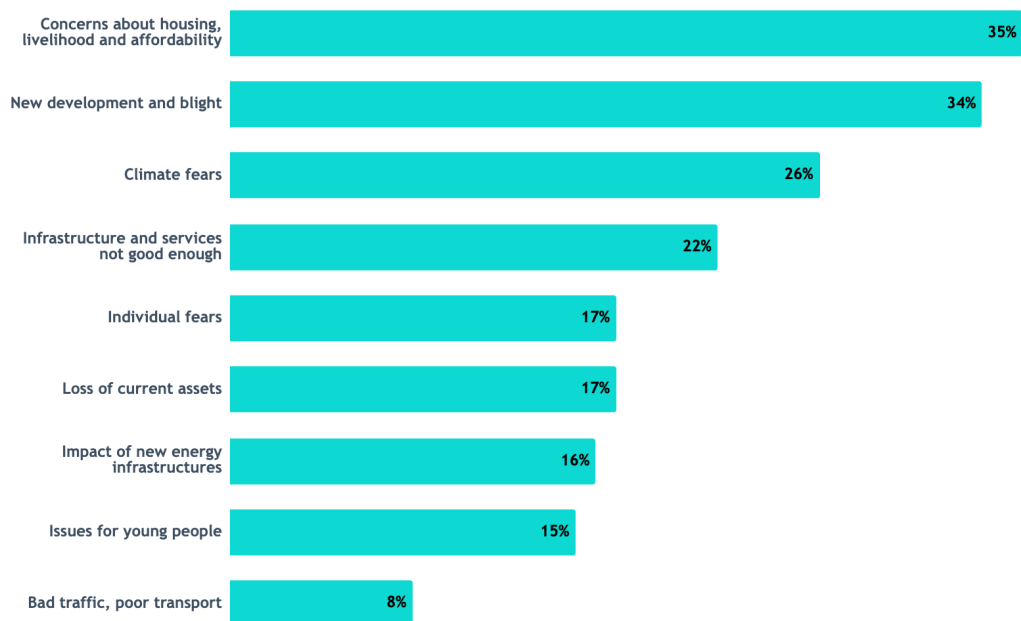**Figure 8: What are your hopes for life here in the future? n=97**

Category	Percentage
Village stays the same	45%
Better amenities, facilities, shops and housing	29%
Keep and build community	29%
Peronal aims	23%
No increase in tourism, not overdeveloped	15%
Transport improved, reduced traffic	10%
Current facilities remain and work effecively	8%

Figure 9: What are your concerns for life here in the future? n=110

Category	Percentage
Concerns about housing, livelihood and affordability	35%
New development and blight	34%
Climate fears	26%
Infrastructure and services not good enough	22%
Individual fears	17%
Loss of current assets	17%
Impact of new energy infrastructures	16%
Issues for young people	15%
Bad traffic, poor transport	8%

Where people go for support and what is missing

Over half of people surveyed go to community and social groups for support, including social clubs, sports groups, youth clubs and local charities. More than one third of people described the importance of local eating and drinking spots for maintaining their local networks, particularly cafes and pubs. Being outdoors - either in playgrounds, on the coastline or around the town or village - was mentioned by around one in five people.

Not everyone surveyed felt there were enough local places to go to for support and socialising. Almost a quarter of people said that they did not have anywhere to go locally, that they feel excluded from places that are available, or that they choose to go to nearby towns.

Almost seven in ten people surveyed felt there are things missing in their coastal community. Two things stood out: limited access to healthcare and a lack of public transport, both mentioned by around half of respondents. Childcare and support for children remains a pertinent issue, with one third describing the sometimes acute lack of childcare, parental support or activities for young people.

Housing issues, including a lack of affordable housing and a proliferation of unoccupied second homes, were mentioned by over one in ten people. The tensions between locals and second-home owners and visitors were again prevalent in responses, a similar proportion of people described a lack of affordable activities, shops and services serving the full-time community.

Around a quarter of people felt nothing was missing and that the services are sufficient for their community. However there are concerns that future housing development will not only threaten the area's character, but also place existing services under stress.

Figure 10: Which places are important to you for building local support networks? n=150
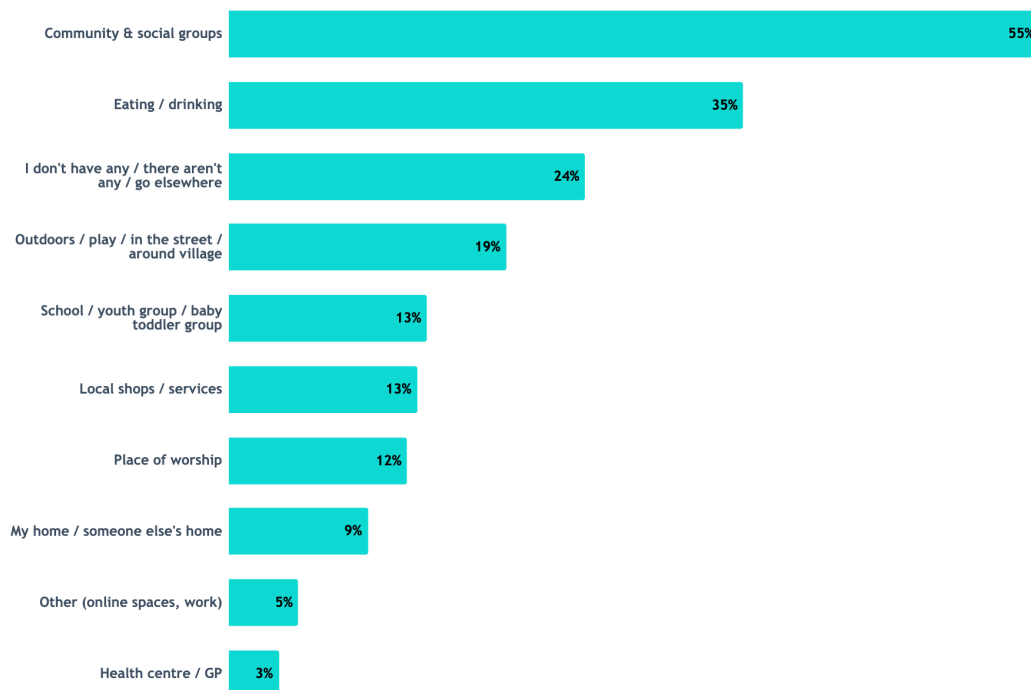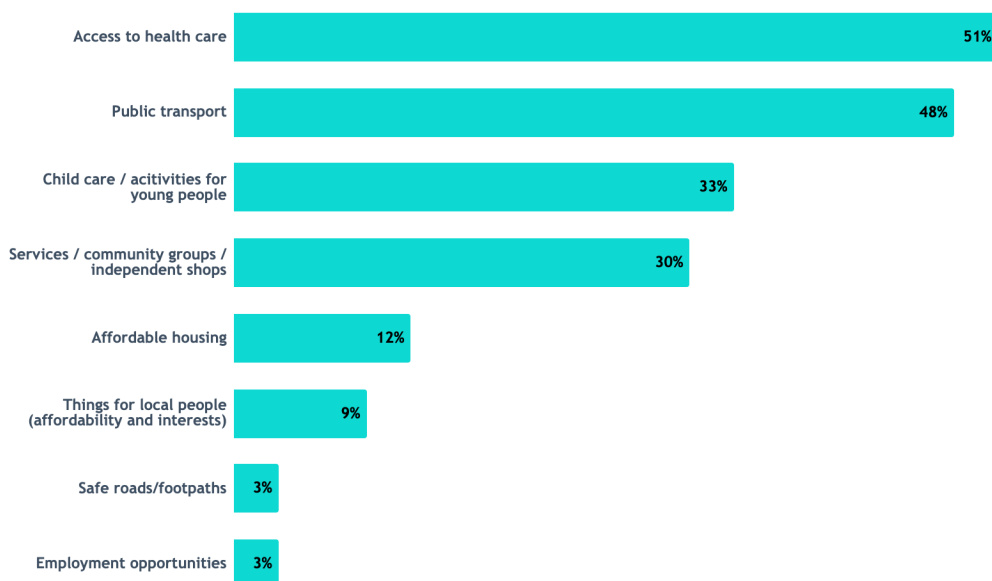
Category	Percentage
Community & social groups	55%
Eating / drinking	35%
I don't have any / there aren't any / go elsewhere	24%
Outdoors / play / in the street / around village	19%
School / youth group / baby toddler group	13%
Local shops / services	13%
Place of worship	12%
My home / someone else's home	9%
Other (online spaces, work)	5%
Health centre / GP	3%

Figure 11: Is there anything missing in terms of support, services or facilities for you in the community? n=102

Category	Percentage
Access to health care	51%
Public transport	48%
Child care / acitivities for young people	33%
Services / community groups / independent shops	30%
Affordable housing	12%
Things for local people (affordability and interests)	9%
Safe roads/footpaths	3%
Employment opportunities	3%

Key differences between the four communities

Where people go for support and what is missing

Pubs, cafes, and restaurants were mentioned by more people in Aldeburgh and Hollesley than the other communities as places to be with others. People in Kessingland were more likely to mention their own home or someone else's home as places for socialising.

A handful of people in Reydon mentioned visiting the health centre or GP. Only one other person mentioned a health centre in Hollesley, and it was not mentioned by anyone surveyed in Kessingland or Aldeburgh. Schools were mentioned by more people in Hollesley than the other communities.

A lack of public transport was mentioned by more people in Hollesley than the other communities.

A lack of activities for young people and childcare was mentioned by more people in Reydon than the other villages. Local issues around second homeowners and visitor populations were prevalent in Aldeburgh, with a significant number describing a lack of services and amenities that are suited to local needs and affordability.

Issues of affordable housing and unoccupied second homes were specific to Aldeburgh while concerns around safe roads and pedestrian network were described most by people in Hollesley.

Suffolk Coast Path

3 Findings in relation to wellbeing and resilience

How this project understood wellbeing and resilience

This research explored two overarching research questions:

- **How are Suffolk's coastal communities doing at present?**
- **How might Suffolk's coastal communities navigate the future?** linking to perspectives on resilience in the context of economic, social and environmental change

Looking at the present leads to a focus on wellbeing. At the start of the project, we defined wellbeing as how people living in Suffolk's coastal communities are doing individually and collectively, evaluating their own lives by asking them about how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether their lives have meaning and purpose, and about their emotions during a particular period.

Focusing on the future leads to a focus on resilience, sometime described as the future-facing aspect of wellbeing.[5] We defined resilience as the ability of a community to adapt, function and thrive in the face of change (both rapid and gradual).

Wellbeing and coastal communities

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has defined ten "domains" linked to wellbeing, each of which also has sub-domains.[6] All ten are potentially important – and can provide a lens on coastal communities in East Suffolk. These have been used to frame the analysis of official data and the qualitative research investigating the circumstances of Suffolk's coastal communities.

ONS wellbeing domains	Relevant sub-domains	Objective indicators	Subjective indicators	Qualitative research evidence
Personal wellbeing	Life satisfaction; worthwhile; happiness; anxiety; mental well-being		•ONS-4 personal wellbeing questions	✔ evidence on life satisfaction, anxiety, mental wellbeing
Our relationships	Social relationships within communities, families, friendship groups and workplaces; loneliness; trust; social integration; people to rely on		•Strength of local social relationships & social integration •Belonging •Relationships with neighbours	✔ evidence on local social integration, belonging, neighbourliness
Health	Life expectancy; health satisfaction; social determinants of health	•Life expectancy •Public health data	•Social networks	✔ evidence on social networks
Where we live	Crime; safety; access to key services; satisfaction with accommodation	•Crime statistics •Housing (incl. 2nd home ownership, house price data, HMOs)	•Feeling of safety locally •Social infrastructure provision	✔ evidence on perceptions of safety ✔ evidence on social infrastructure
What we do	Unemployment; job satisfaction; leisure satisfaction; volunteering; arts & culture participation; sports participation	•Unemployment •Employment data	•Participation in arts, cultural, sports, volunteering and leisure locally	✔ evidence on volunteering, leisure ✗ evidence on participation in arts, culture, sports

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[5] https://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/taking-the-temperature-of-local-communities-the-wellbeing-and-resilience-measure-warm/
[6] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/ukmeasuresofnationalwellbeing

Personal finance	Income	•Income (annual median income) •Deprivation		✔ evidence on deprivation and cost of living impact
Education and skills	Human capital; NEETs; qualifications; opportunities	•Qualifications •NEETs		✔ evidence on perceptions of schools ✗ evidence on qualifications, NEETS
Economy	Disposable income; public sector debt; inflation; strength of local economies		•Perception of local business strength	✔ evidence on business strengths
Governance	Voter turnout; trust in government; civic engagement; sense of agency	•Recent election turnout data	•Engagement with local community institutions	✔ evidence on engagement, local civic participation and perception of local government
Environment	Greenhouse gas emissions; renewable energy; recycling	•GHG data		✔ evidence on perceptions of climate risk, flooding

Resilience and coastal communities

The literature on resilience identifies the concept of "disturbance", which can be sudden or gradual. This is rooted in understanding of environmental resilience and the capacity of a system to change and recover in response to disturbance.[7] We have vividly seen examples of sudden disturbances in both the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent cost of living crisis. The research has then investigated what protective factors exist to support communities against future shocks.

What our findings reveal about wellbeing and resilience

Wellbeing

Across the four coastal communities, **wellbeing** is supported by:

- the existence of strong community networks and strong local relationships
- relatively strong social infrastructure, particularly facilities and activities run by parishes and voluntary and community sector groups, together with informal social supports from cafes, pubs and shops
- access to sea, beach, nature and landscape, and good potential for exercise.

Across the four coastal communities, **wellbeing** can be undermined by:

- increased social isolation across age groups in the aftermath of COVID-19
- the consequences of COVID-19 on children's development, affecting families as well as children
- some weaknesses in social infrastructure provided by statutory bodies, access to healthcare was identified as weak, public transport is now weaker than in previous years
- the impact of the cost of living on people who are financially vulnerable
- the impact of limited affordable housing options for people without secure housing options or the resources to secure this
- anxieties caused by change, particularly housing growth or new infrastructure
- a sense of loss of identity and rising costs caused by high second-home ownership and tourism.

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[7] Forest Research, Resilience Implementation Framework see https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/resilience-implementation-framework/the-resilience-concept/#:~:text=Disturbance%20is%20the%20threat%2C%20shock,(e.g.%20threats%20to%20markets)

The breakdown of wellbeing findings is at the end of this section.

Resilience

Resilience is strongly related to wellbeing, and many of the factors that become protective factors, or risk factors, are mirrored. Protective factors and risks are not evenly distributed and relate to personal circumstances – particularly income, health and housing situation – as well as wider societal issues.

Particular disruptions that threaten resilience are **gradual**: climate change, coastal erosion, flooding, erosion of community supports and social capital through increasing second home ownership, weak statutory services; or s**udden**: weather, dramatic erosion, failure of agriculture, new pandemic, economic collapse.

Across the four coastal communities, **protective factors for resilience** are:

- the existence of strong community networks and strong local relationships
- relatively strong social infrastructure, particularly facilities and activities run by parishes and voluntary and community sector groups, together with informal social supports from cafes, pubs and shops
- access to sea, beach, nature and landscape, giving good potential for exercise
- relative affluence and access to resources among much of the population
- housing security and stability for much of the population
- good mental health among the majority of the population.

Across the four coastal communities, **risk factors for resilience** are:

- increased social isolation across age groups in the aftermath of COVID-19
- the consequences of COVID-19 on children's development, affecting families as well as children
- some weaknesses in social infrastructure provided by statutory bodies, access to healthcare was identified as weak, public transport is now weaker than in previous years
- financial vulnerability and precarity among a sizeable minority
- increasing house prices in some areas and housing precarity, quality and access issues among a sizeable minority
- access to work for those who are not in stable jobs or work that can be done from home
- seasonal employment limiting winter earnings
- a sense of loss of identity and rising costs caused by high second-home ownership and tourism.

Qualitative evidence on wellbeing indicators

ONS Wellbeing Domains	Relevant sub-domains	Qualitative research conclusions	Aldeburgh	Hollesley	Kessingland	Reydon
Personal wellbeing	Life satisfaction; worthwhile; happiness; anxiety; mental well-being	- people feel positive about their area and like living where they do. Many want to preserve the status quo because they value what exists - most people feel like they belong in their community - the natural beauty of the area (coast and countryside) contributes to people's wellbeing, through the pleasure of being outside, access to nature and potential to exercise outside - peace and quiet is valued, particularly by those who have relocated from larger towns - some people are concerned about change, particularly from major development, and the potential erosion of community - the COVID-19 pandemic caused some lasting social isolation, some groups like older people became more reluctant to go out and all age groups became less willing to go out and socialise. This was also linked to the cost-of-living crisis - while mental health has been affected by the pandemic and financial pressures, this is for a minority and most people have managed to maintain wellbeing during this time.	- tension in the community between the full-time residents and second homeowners and visitors, who are felt to have caused the local economy, services and shops to become more expensive and beyond the reach of local people - connected anxieties over younger generations being outpriced from their hometown in the future - access to the sea important for health	- particularly strong wish to keep the village as it is - importance of the heathlands, forest and countryside compared to other areas - fewer direct concerns about major development	- close and supportive community - lower sense of belonging in Kessingland with acknowledgement that feeling at home takes time as a newcomer - historic divisions in the community, but some suggest these divisions have lessened	- seen as a good place to raise children/have a family - people value their ability to access the coastline while maintaining distance from Southwold's tourist economy - particularly strong concern over the impact of new housing development on the size of population and ability of existing infrastructure to cope, linked to a desire for the village to stay the same - the primary school was a shared factor contributing to positive sense of belonging
Our relationships	Social relationships within in communities, families, friendship groups and workplaces; loneliness; trust; social integration; people to rely on	- communities are perceived to be supportive and often to be open to newcomers - communities are perceived as friendly - most people have friends, neighbours or family they can turn to for support - many people have lived in their communities for decades, sometimes their whole lives, several have moved away and come back - there are mixed views in different communities about whether there is hostility to people moving into the area from outside or whether newcomers are welcomed, this varies between communities - communities with strong visitor and second-home populations have divisions, with some resentment against visitors by permanent residents. This can be because of visitor behaviour, pressure on housing, or a perception of local needs being overshadowed - communities with smaller tourist economies value this and have concerns about this changing - isolated geographies are exacerbated by poor public transport - isolation and remoteness can also be valued as creating a sense of peace and boosting local identity	- community divided with residents expressing hostility towards visitors who are perceived to have a sense of entitlement and have altered the local economy - social divisions had spatial bounds, with locals living beyond the roundabout and visitors occupying the seafront - residents described strong sense of community collectively, and within smaller groups such as the fishing community	- fewer issues with people moving into the area than elsewhere - there is a fear of second home ownership and increase in tourist economy rather than actual resentment of second home ownership - the geography, poor public transport and limited routes into peninsular create problems but also a sense of peace that is valued	- particular social groups and organisations are the foundation of community support - people also turn to digital methods to forge connections in the community, such as Facebook and WhatsApp - fear that development will erode local identity - Traveller community reported experiencing prejudice and racism towards them, although the Traveller community itself was described to have very strong social bonds	- community ties are strong and sometimes seen to be shaped by the tension between Reydon's residents and Southwold's visitors - car dependency is a key issue, particularly relating to parking, which can disrupt daily life and services - varied experiences had by newcomers

ONS Wellbeing Domains	Relevant sub-domains	Qualitative research conclusions	Aldeburgh	Hollesley	Kessingland	Reydon
Health	Life expectancy; health satisfaction; social determinants of health	- strong community networks, sense of belonging and social capital are an important social determinant of health - good health is also underpinned by being relatively affluent, or getting by, and being in stable accommodation, many people surveyed fall into this category - for those who are more financially precarious and/or in unsuitable, unstable or unaffordable housing, health is undermined - the natural environment and sea give good opportunities for exercise for all ages, boosting health - post pandemic some people are facing mental health problems however the majority are thriving and for the majority, COVID-19 did not derail mental health and wellbeing - people complain of the lack of NHS dentists - GP appointments can be hard to get - Not everyone can drive, and volunteer networks have been set up to help people access hospitals and other health care - in some communities there is a lack of local healthcare for minor procedures, mental health and drop-in advice	- a town of two halves but strong social networks support the community - seafront position is important for residents' health through swimming and walking - specific reference to the private dentist on the high street being too expensive for local people	- natural environment and the sea are well used to support wellbeing and for exercise - some problems with access to health service because of geographical isolation, poor public transport and closure of GP surgery	- COVID-19 seen as a positive time for some that strengthened community spirit - people struggle getting a doctor's appointment - the outdoors (play and exploring) is important for young people's independence	- despite a large new health centre, issues with accessing care persist, primarily through getting appointments - high cost of rent at the health centre limits the care provision available to local people
Where we live	Crime; safety; access to key services; satisfaction with accommodation	- people generally feel safe - street lighting is poor in some areas, and this affects some people's confidence in going out after dark, particularly pre-teens/teens and older people. - people are unhappy with the poor condition of the roads and pavements, especially people with mobility challenges or using buggies - there are a large number of well used community groups and spaces - many of the groups serve older residents and retirees; more support and places to socialise are needed for teenagers /young adults and parents - nursery places for under twos are limited in some communities - there is a perception that there are a lack of activities, amenities and services although this is particular to each area. This is felt more acutely in winter months when outdoor activity is restricted and indoor alternatives are scarce	- lack of services, shops and activities that are geared towards local people a major concern - the closure of the last remaining practical shop is symbolic for the community and cause for worry - people forced to travel longer distances to access affordable food and other services such as banks	- generally, people feel the village is supported by shops and services - there is an appreciation the village has much more than villages of similar size - specific concern about the pedestrian pavements not reaching all areas of the village - the prison is often viewed positively in keeping house prices down	- young people described feeling safe in Kessingland compared to other towns, primarily due to a lack of crime	- residents feel the village is very safe, both for children to be independent outside and for older people - feeling of safety developed by social networks and the lack of vacant shops and graffiti - pressure of new development causes concern for capacity of roads and parking

ONS Wellbeing Domains	Relevant sub-domains	Qualitative research conclusions	Aldeburgh	Hollesley	Kessingland	Reydon
What we do	Unemployment; job satisfaction; leisure satisfaction; volunteering; arts & culture participation; sports participation	- teenagers and young people can lack support and places to go, this is particular to each area - Sizewell, the prison service and the hospitality industry are important employers. In holiday towns hospitality work is often seasonal and precarious; people may have more than one job. However, working in public facing roles such as cafes helps people feel part of the community - agriculture and local business are also important sources of work - large retirement populations provide a wide pool of skilled volunteers - traffic speeds on local roads deter cycling and active travel and can make people feel unsafe	- concern there are no 'career-based' opportunities for young people beyond low paying tourism industry roles - Sizewell C is controversial but seen as a lifeline to access higher paid employment - gap in provision for teenagers	- teenagers can be isolated and limited in options because of geography and lack of places to go - agriculture is a key employer - agricultural machinery on roads can cause problems but there is recognition this is an agricultural community	- most local employment opportunities are precarious and seasonal	- some provision of activities for teenagers in Southwold but less available locally in Reydon, very limited opportunities for activities after dark
Personal Finance	Income	- the cost-of-living crisis is causing concern; even those not experiencing direct effects often recognised that it could be a problem for a lot of people - rising food, fuel and housing costs are the main impact on local people's lives	- impact of more affluent visitors on the affordability of shops/services and homes exacerbates experience of cost-of-living crisis for some local people	- access to lower cost food is limited	- organisations such as charities and schools provide food and to purchase white goods where family income is not enough to get by - people living on pensions described as struggling the most	- concern that residents are falling into the poverty trap and are reliant on foodbanks or the community fridge to survive - particularly an issue for single parent families and elderly people - local conditions not seen to seriously compound the cost of living compared to other villages
Education and skills	Human capital; NEETs; qualifications; opportunities	- many children's development has been affected by the experience of living through the pandemic, this includes children who are now still at primary school who missed out on early socialising - in more rural and remote areas, the isolation of COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions may have been greater than in larger villages and towns - some people find primary schools as key sources of community support - some schools consciously try to help integrate children from different communities and support families that are struggling with the cost-of-living	- particular worry about young people and the long-term impacts of COVID on their social development and education - the town is viewed to have limited opportunities for careers - limited help for children with autism or ADHD raised as a concern	- concerns about lasting impact of COVID-19 on children and young people - primary school is valued	- concern about mental health and rising depression was marked - lack of life skill development in children such as toilet training reported by nurseries	- ongoing social isolation particularly for older people - concern of the impact of new development on the capacity of the school - acute shortage of affordable childcare, despite being recognised as a good place to raise a family

ONS Wellbeing Domains	Relevant sub-domains	Qualitative research conclusions	Aldeburgh	Hollesley	Kessingland	Reydon
Economy	Disposable income; public sector debt; inflation; strength of local economies	- in towns with a high number of visitors, people feel that independent businesses and those serving everyday local needs are losing out to chains and shops catering to the visitor economy - this can mean residents have to travel to buy everyday basics and affordable food - many are still dependent on traditional employment in farming, retail or commute to work in larger towns like Ipswich or Lowestoft - there are concerns about the potential impact of Sizewell construction work on the local economy, particularly the effects on roads and the landscape deterring visitors, and the temporary loss of holiday accommodation to house construction workers - many people talked of struggling with the cost of living, particularly the price of food and fuel - many of those not personally affected recognised that others were and were concerned about them	- largest visitor economy, tourism is valued by some for sustaining local employment and bringing culture - 'London prices' brought in by visitors can outprice locals - Sizewell C will provide higher income employment for local people although this view is not shared by all	- there is a small visitor economy	- the community values the outdoors (beach and countryside) as a leisure activity which is free of charge and a place where young people can go exploring independently - appreciation that new development could bring new shops, cafes and affordable housing	- visitor economy and choice of shops and cafes are accessible in Southwold but spatially separated from Reydon, which is valued by residents
Governance	Voter turnout; trust in government; civic engagement; sense of agency	- people felt they could get involved if they have the time and inclination - parishes and community groups offer many opportunities to become involved in change - people believe that they have less of a voice in decisions around large-scale development and Energy Coast plans - some people are deterred from civic involvement because of past poor experience of decision making - many community groups and services are run by retired people on a voluntary basis	- influence in the community is largely expressed through smaller social groups such as the art scene or church	- community activity and groups are strong - the parish plays an important role	- more approval of the Parish Council than elsewhere	- people feel helpless in the face of new housing development - people feel they are not listened to by developers, particular concern for young people's lack of voice - general suspicion of decision making, with the parish council not having power over strategic planning issues - community pulls together at times of local crisis
Environment	Greenhouse gas emissions; renewable energy; recycling	- people are reliant on cars - local roads are regularly flooded; this is more of a problem for some communities than others - there is some awareness of the climate emergency, however many did not mention this as a future threat despite the direct consequences for this area - many people are concerned about the destruction of natural landscape though Energy Coast infrastructure - some are concerned about the impact of housing development - in terms of the effects of climate change, people worry about rising sea levels, coastal flooding and coastal erosion - the condition of the roads – congestion exacerbated by visitor traffic and agricultural vehicles, as well as regular flooding - is a common complaint	- limited bus service impacts people of all ages: their social lives, access to employment, health, education - Energy coast plans viewed as a threat to the natural countryside and subsequently the visitor economy - some concern about climate change, particularly Aldeburgh's vulnerable location between the River Alde and the sea	- there is awareness of flood risk, part of the parish area is reclaimed land and the village is vulnerable to surface flooding - car reliance is high	- some concerns linked to the Energy Coast developments	- car dependency is a significant problem and impacts people of all ages - impact of surface flooding on closing key access roads and worsening traffic congestion was marked - specific concern of the landfall of LionLink on the impact of biodiversity and local's ability to access unspoilt natural beauty

4 Conclusion and implications for services

Our research paints a picture of four thriving local communities where wellbeing and resilience are supported by a set of factors rooted in the community, in the environment and in individual circumstances. Community assets include a strong civil society, social relationships and social infrastructure; environmental factors include the sea and the countryside as well as pleasant towns and villages; individual factors include relatively high wellbeing and for many, relative affluence and housing stability.

Across the four communities we found that wellbeing and resilience can be undermined by geographic location; geographical isolation; the size of visitor economy and second-home ownership; planned and actual new housing development and other large-scale infrastructure; and proximity to large towns. In practice the way that these play out is specific to individual places, geographic isolation for example can increase the sense of local identity and local pride as well as creating problems of access to services.

These issues have particular relevance for service delivery and the provision of support.

1. **Suffolk coastal villages have strong social assets:** these need to be protected and respected, particularly when new development or infrastructure construction threatens to disrupt local social capital and community relations. Supporting this could include providing small amounts of funding for local groups; respecting the voice of parishes and local groups; supporting existing social infrastructure and recognising the role that non-traditional social infrastructure including pubs and cafes plays in local social life; and supporting the efforts of individuals to create new supports and projects. There is a need to support people to start volunteering and to become active in their communities, this could be done through include creating local incentives and targeted support for volunteering in coastal villages.

2. **Across age groups social Isolation and unwillingness to leave home are high post-COVID and as a consequence of rising costs**. Isolation effects people in a range of different circumstances including parents and young people as well as older people. Small subsidies for community events could help people access entertainment and socialise; support services need to recognise the difficulties some people have in leaving their home environment. Policies and strategies to address social isolation need to include all age groups and recognise the role of cost in stopping people leaving their homes. There is a need to provide information through multiple channels about opportunities. People who are isolated may not visit community venues and miss out on the information they provide, others find over-reliance on digital channels to be a barrier.

3. **There are specific issues affecting children and young people in the aftermath of COVID-19:** some children have missed out on early socialisation and this is affecting their ongoing development and family life. It is possible that in more isolated communities the pandemic's well-document long term impacts on children and young people were exacerbated. However children and young people also benefit from access to nature and the sea, and teenagers' experiences of having few supports and services are common to rural communities. Children and young people need support to help them recover lost social skills, and to access activities.

4. **Some people are experiencing ongoing impacts on physical and mental health from the pandemic** however it is possible that this number is lower than in places with fewer natural and community protective factors. A good range of supports for wellbeing and mental health are needed that are easy to access and that take account of difficulties accessing services in rural locations.

5. **A minority of people are struggling financially and are in urgent need of support with food and basic needs.** Food banks and other subsidised access to food are essential, these are being provided mainly through voluntary efforts which need support.

6. **New housing development and big infrastructure development is often seen to threaten community cohesion and is associated with rising housing costs:** this can amplify a sense of precarity and undermine community strengths. Infrastructure development including LionLink and Sizewell C can be experienced as disruptive but is also seen to be bringing work to the area. New housing development needs to be matched with appropriate social infrastructure including health services, education, roads and public transport.

7. **Tourism and second homes are often associated with causing housing shortages**, displacing longstanding shops and supports, generative tensions between temporary and permanent residents and raising the costs of daily life. Not all coastal communities have significant second home ownership or tourism and in these places, there may be hostility to any future increase. Local businesses and community hubs that are valued by longstanding communities need help to thrive in a difficult economic environment.

8. **Poor public transport and car dependency** hamper residents ability to access services, to visit friends and family, to get to work or to school and to access cheaper food in bigger supermarkets. Without dramatic cost increases it may be possible to increase the reach of existing bus services or increase their frequency.

Many residents that participated in this research were positive about their local communities. However, some communities face particular challenges to health and wellbeing and to their longer-term resilience - from climate change and from changing patterns of agriculture and work (including the precarity of seasonal hospitality jobs). If they are to be supported to thrive and adapt in the face of future shocks and disturbances then their assets and protective factors need to be recognised and strengthened.