

**WALSHAM LE WILLOWS  
SPORTS CLUB CIO  
SUMMER ROAD,  
SUFFOLK, IP31 3AH  
01359 307 900  
Reg. Charity No. 1178033**



## **PROPOSAL**

# **WALSHAM LE WILLOWS NEW PERMISSIVE PATH**

## **OVERVIEW**

Walsham Le Willows Sports Club is a highly successful sports club providing extensive facilities for football and cricket and more recently for a range of other sporting activities including a community gym. Sports facilities are provided for men and women and the club works strongly with developing young people. The club is also an important social centre. In 2025 the club was proud to host the award of Suffolk's Most Active Village 2024. An aerial view of the Sports Club's two primary sites, with Summer Road between them, is show below.



## **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

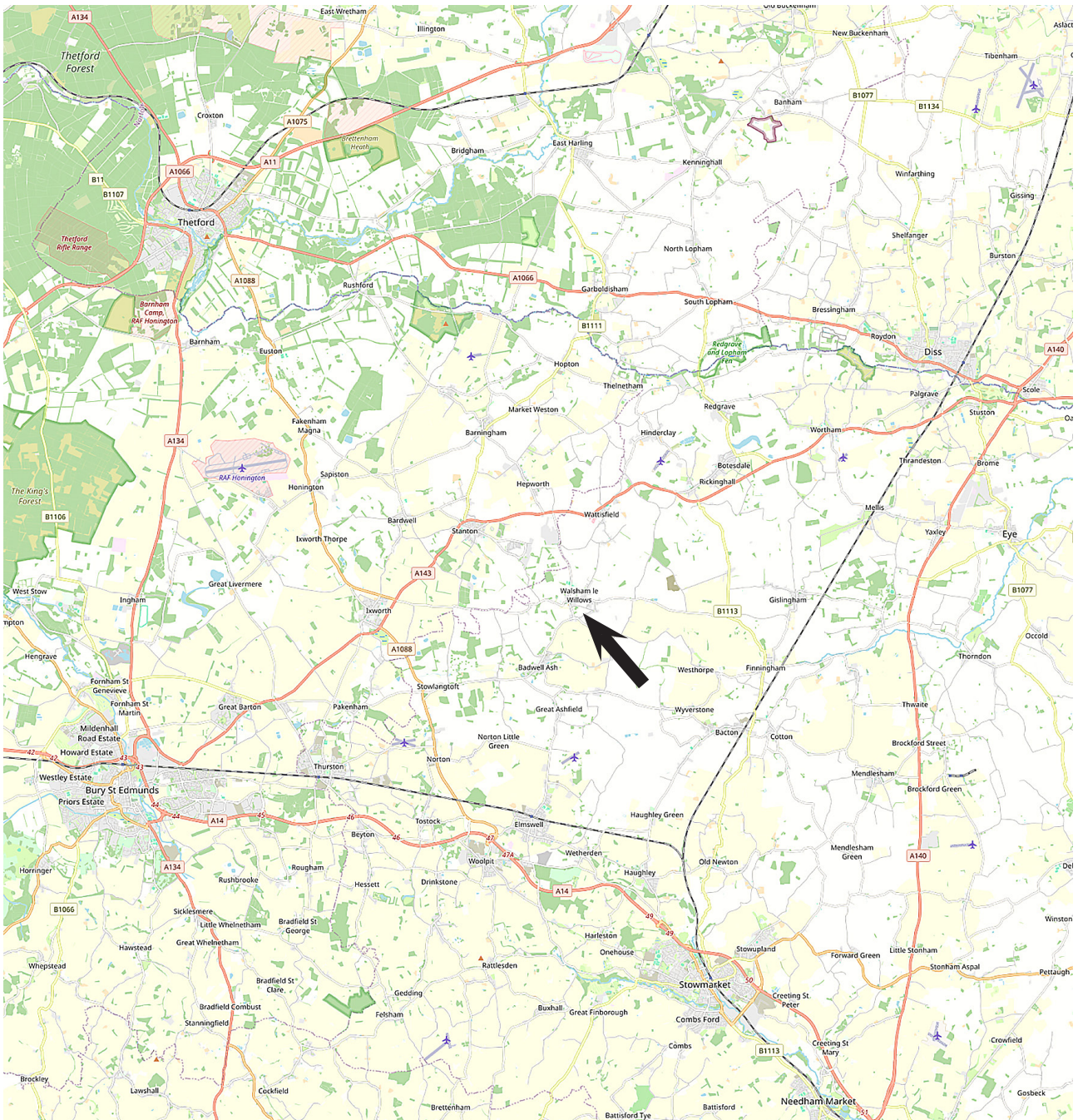
The history of Walsham Sports Club illustrates a track record of successfully managed expansion and provision of sports activities in the wider community within a significant radius of Walsham Le Willows. Sport in the shape of cricket and football for Walsham residents has a long history of also benefiting surrounding villages; the cricket minute book in 1897 even refers to the club as Walsham and District Cricket Club. Most competitive sport within Suffolk was largely played between local villages in the last century until league fixtures grew in importance and villages began to lose their teams. Cricket pitch quality particularly became important, requiring a more professional approach and costing money making sustainability more difficult for the smaller villages. The local Bowls Club's wish in 1988 to construct a pavilion by their green in the village High Street led to them also coming under the Sports Club's umbrella.

Walsham Le Willows geographically sits some 12 miles from the nearest town (see map opposite), with limited public transport. This rural situation has encouraged district councils in the past to help improve facilities at the club and the Football Foundation has been extremely responsive to the Club's ambitions to grow both senior and junior football at grassroot level. Similar funding for cricket has been much more limited as nationally the game does not generate anywhere near the same available income.

Changes in lifestyle have also impacted on the Club's customary income stream via the sale of liquor which has encouraged diversity in the provision of sporting and recreational facilities. The opportunity for Walsham Sports Club to make a big jump in what could be offered to the local community, came when next-door farmland became available in 2010 on a tenanted basis at a peppercorn rent. This enabled the construction of 3 more grass football pitches, an artificial grass court and tennis court plus car park. Youth football for girls and boys now operates from 5 -17 years of age when crossover to senior football teams takes place.

The twin ambitions to broaden income streams whilst at the same time improving what was on offer in terms of sport/recreation has seen walking sports added to the mix with 4 football sessions for senior and walking netball on the tennis court for the ladies. A pétanque court has been built and the Covid period enabled changes





*Map of the wider area showing the village of Walsham-le-Willows almost equidistant from four towns, Bury St Edmunds, Thetford, Diss and Stowmarket. Its rural location and wide catchment is one of the reasons for the Club's success.*

to be made to the clubhouse so it now hosts four yoga sessions, carpet bowls in the winter as well as a separate room for snooker/billiards.

Most recently, a highly successful Community Gym/Fitness Centre was opened on 1st July 2023.

## THE NEW SUMMER ROAD PATH

The community of Walsham Le Willows is now reviewing the potential of developing a number of additional footpaths and permissive paths around the village. The most important of these would be a permissive path along Summer Road from the crossroads in the village near the Church to the Sports Club. There is a growing volume of traffic and lorries along this route, indeed it is a designated lorry route, and it is becoming increasingly unsafe for sportspeople and spectators to walk along the road from the village to the Sports Club.

The Walsham le Willows Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in November 2023, has six stated objectives the forth of which is titled “Transport and Accessibility”.

*To promote the environmental wellbeing and health of the residents of Walsham le Willows by providing safe and convenient access, by foot, by bicycle and for disabled users ...*

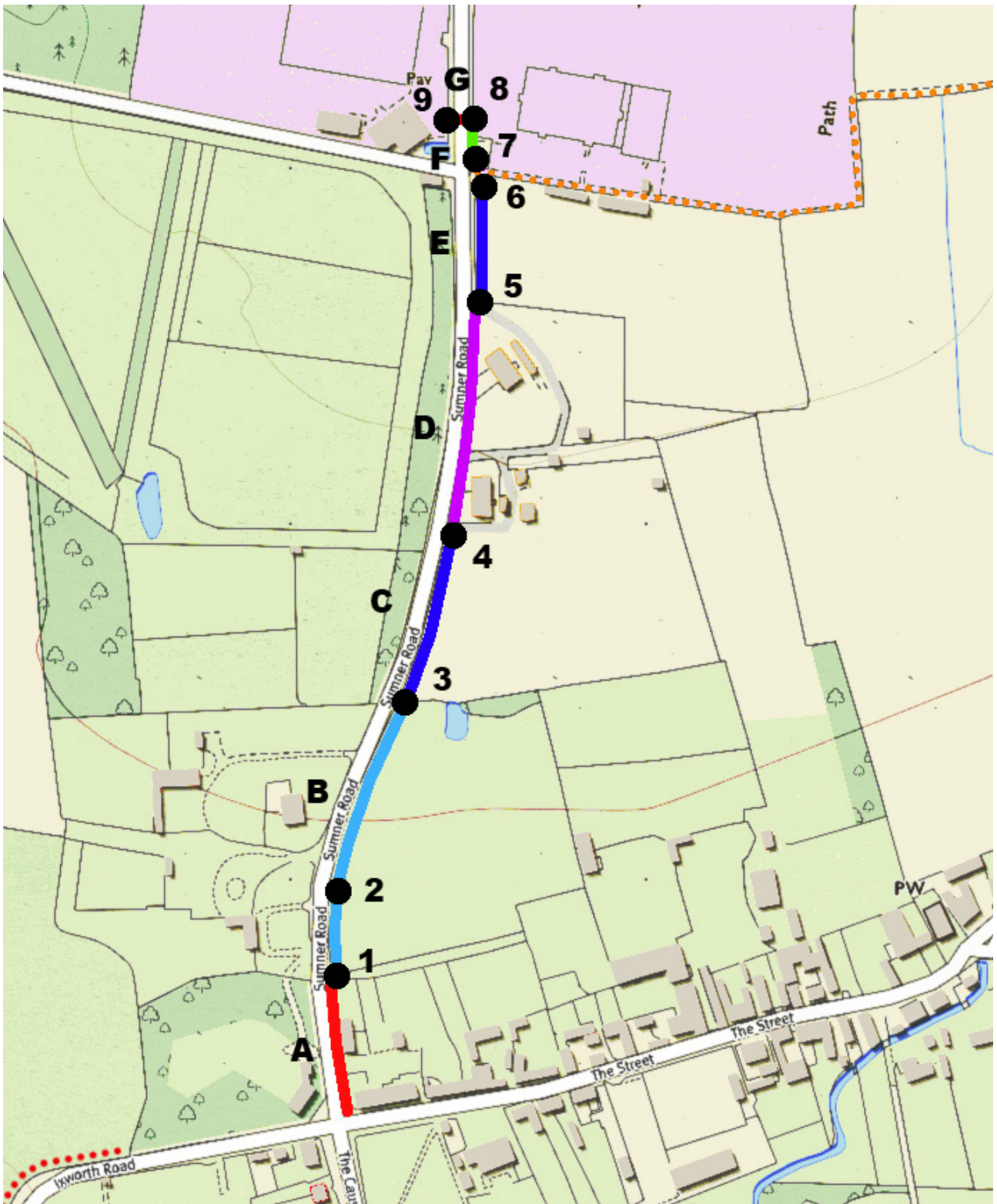
This objective is transcribed into policy WLW6 Pedestrian and Cycle connectivity and WLW7 Public rights of way and specifically:

- *New safer pedestrian and cycle route along Summer Road to link the Sports Club and the village centre.*
- *Safe crossing point on Summer Road between the Sports Club and the sports pitches.*

The proposed Summer Road Path is fully supported by the Neighbourhood plan, its sponsors the Parish Council, and both the County Council and District council members. The new path would be a significant step in establishing a safe circular walking route around the village. Connecting the village with its Sports Club would be a legacy project for future generations. There is bus access to this central focus of the village and this would enable onward safe access to the Sports Club. There would also be a road crossing at the Sports Club. We will establish a plaque at each end to acknowledge any contributions to this project and propose to name the route something like “Summer Way”. The line opposite indicates where the permissive path could run.

It is proposed that all ground and construction work relating to the establishment of the path (2 gates, 2 bridges, rolling, hedge planting, etc) be paid for by Walsham Le Willows Sports Club.





**SUMMER WAY:** ■ Sections in red are Suffolk Highways verge. ■ The section in light blue is owned by the Cayzer Trust who have expressed an interest in assisting with this project. ■ Sections marked in dark blue are owned by the Martineau family who will designate a permissive path on the edge of their land, by filing a section 31(6) Highways Act deposit with Mid Suffolk District Council. ■ The section in purple is owned by the Suffolk Community Foundation who may trim or move hedges in front of their properties to allow safe passage of walkers along the Highways verge. ■ The section in green is owned by the Sports Club.

## WALKING FROM THE VILLAGE

### SECTION A

*From the the crossroads to the Cayzer Meadow.*

This section is Suffolk Highways verge. The initial stretch, beside the Six Bells pub has a narrow pavement, which could be widened with some hedge cutting. The northern section runs along a picket fence, which could also be trimmed back to allow safer passage of walkers. At (1), there is a driveway.





## SECTION B

### *The Cayzer Meadow.*

The path along the Cayzer Meadow will be behind the hedge and trees. It will need to be fenced at a distance of 4-6 feet from the existing fence, due to the presence of livestock in the field. The fenced path will proceed north through the meadow until it reaches the Pen (2), *lower image*, which will need two isolating gates (that can be closed when the farmer is moving stock), before proceeding north as before.





## SECTION C

### *Martineau Field South*

The path along Martineau Field South will be behind the existing oak trees, along a 6 foot strip of fallow land which will be fenced from arable field, and will need to be rolled to form a suitable surface. A bridge will be needed at the south end (shown in the picture below), to cross a ditch in the field.





## SECTION D

### *The Martineau Cottages*

The section of the path in front of the Martineau Cottages along the verge of the road has some particular considerations. The verge is the responsibility of Suffolk Highways. In conversations with them, they have said that we could optimise the verge for pedestrians, without it being made a formal path.

The Summer Road Martineau Cottages are in two blocks, and the verge in front of the southern block is particularly narrow. The hedge here will have to be moved back from the road, to widen the verge (*below left, looking south*), before rolling to form a walkable surface.

The verge alongside the northern block is wider, and could be rolled in the autumn to form a useable path. Two sets of railings (*visible in the photograph below right*), would need to be brought back so as not to obstruct the path. Hedges to the north would also need to be trimmed to allow passage.





## SECTION E

### *Martineau Field North*

The path along Martineau Field North is already being used by walkers. The southern entrance is via an existing gap in the hedge (5). The path is set behind the hedge at a safe distance from the road. No changes are proposed. A safe northern entrance will need to be created at (6), by constructing a bridge over a ditch, which will then give access to the Sports Club car park





## SECTION F

### *The Sports Club East*

A pedestrian crossing across the road entrance to the Sports Club East Car Park will be established to permit safe passage across this sometimes busy surface. This will link the public footpath to an exit pedestrian gate to the north of the main gates.

The path will then descend to the verge before heading north for a short distance. This section of verge currently has a ditch running along it. The ditch will be piped and covered over to form a good pedestrian surface.





## SECTION G

### *The Road Crossing*

Following advice from Suffolk Highways a pedestrian crossing point away from vehicle exits will be established to connect Sports Club East and Sports Club West, crossing just in front of the telegraph pole, on the left at (9) in the image below. The image below also shows the ditch which will be piped and covered up to the crossing.

Two Suffolk Highways surveys of traffic along this section of road are currently underway to establish traffic levels and speeds, and traffic calming measures, including pillars and village gates are expected to follow.

