

**Bacton  
Coastal Village  
Workshop**

**26 September 2007**



**Feedback  
Report**

**North Norfolk District Council  
Coastal Management Team**

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## Bacton Village Workshop – Feedback Summary

This report provides an outline of the workshop held at Bacton Village Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and summarises the contributions of participants. The report has been posted on the Council's website [www.northnorfolk.org/ldf](http://www.northnorfolk.org/ldf) under the 'latest news' heading and has been sent to interested parties. We are grateful to all those who attended.

### ***Outline of the workshop***

The overall aim of this event was to provide an opportunity for key members of the local community to highlight the specific issues that they felt should be addressed in planning the future of Bacton. This included discussion of matters relating to 'coastal change' (resulting from the Shoreline Management Plan and its consequences for the village), together with the identification of places where new development could be considered to meet the settlement's needs. The results of the workshop will be used to inform the Coastal Management Plan and the Site Specific Proposals Document (part of the Local Development Framework).



The Workshop was chaired by Cllr Wyndham Northam and participants included Members of Bacton Parish Council, representatives from local businesses, clubs and other organisations. Altogether there were thirty one people present.

The event included presentations on planning policy and coastal management, followed by sessions in which participants highlighted the important issues for the village and identified the possible development options for its future. Question and answer sessions were followed by general discussion, and feedback was gathered from participants about the event.

### ***What participants said***

#### **Summary**

Participants were asked about what they were proud of, sorry about, what they hoped and what they feared in order to understand the current issues facing Bacton and how they envisage Bacton in the future. This revealed some very positive thinking about the settlement and its community, in response to some very real concerns. Despite the obvious threat to the village in the medium-to-long-term, from coastal erosion, and the enormous impact of the Gas Site, participants saw that Bacton had a very important part to play in the future of this coastal area. It was felt in particular that Bacton had much to

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offer tourists and visitors and participants hoped that investment in attractions, facilities and accommodation would help to secure its long-term sustainability as a vibrant coastal village.

It was felt that there were many opportunities to develop the village in a way that would help address existing issues, such as housing affordability, lack of facilities and public access, whilst fostering resilience and adaptation to the changing profile of the coast.

A summary of the response is given below and the actual feedback is appended to this report.

### **What people were PROUD of**

Bacton was felt to have a good community with a wide variety of clubs and social events, active people, a low crime rate and an accessible parish council. There was pride in the facilities in and around the village, such as the shops, the school, the village hall, the sports field and bowling green and Bacton Woods. Also participants felt Bacton was a well kept village and were proud of the built heritage assets such as the Priory, the Church, and the many other attractive and historic buildings.

### **What people were SORRY about**

Participants felt that the detrimental impact of the Gas Terminal on the village (from environmental impact and light pollution to the threat of terrorist attack) was not balanced by any concern or support for the local community. In other words it was felt that the Terminal has a negative effect on the village but that the community derives little benefit from its presence.

Concern was expressed about village infrastructure and services, for example the lack of convenient bus services, poor drainage, poor support for local shops, no doctor's surgery and poorly maintained roads/ paths.

People also felt sorry about the apparent apathy within the village.

### **What people HOPED**

Participants hoped that the village would be able to build on its strengths in the future. This should involve attracting investment to improve facilities for local people, and improving the attractiveness of the village to visitors by:

- Resolving access issues, particularly public transport.
- Improving the condition of roads and street lighting.
- Providing new children's facilities.
- Bringing a surgery to the village.
- Building affordable houses and investing in the local economy to bring young families to the village.
- Improving way-marked walks to nature reserves, the Priory and the foreshore, ensuring that new development is well-designed.

(Continued overleaf)

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It was hoped that by working together and engaging young people a more mixed society will be created and Bacton will survive as an active and vibrant village.

In order for a positive vision for the village to be achieved participants hoped that the sea defences would be maintained for as long as possible. This would 'buy time' to enable adaptation to take place over a reasonable period of time *in advance* of 'coastal change' rather than as a reaction to it.

### **What people FEARED**

Participants were concerned about the consequences of the changing shoreline, resulting from the future loss of defences, if this is unmanaged. There was a fear that facilities might decline and the physical environment might become degraded (whether because of coastal change or not) which would lead to the further loss of tourism and a spiral of decline.

There was a fear that the infrastructure and facilities in the village might decline: in particular pavements, street lighting, shops and flood sirens.

Concern was expressed at the prospect that the gas site might expand.

There was a worry that the village might become polarised and its population imbalanced, consisting of the very young and old, but few families.

### **Key issues**

There seemed to be a commonly held view that Bacton must strive for a positive future, not only by addressing existing issues but facing up to the challenges brought about by coastal change predictions. This means plans should be based on a *long-term* vision that includes exploring relocation options for areas at risk of erosion and flooding and exploiting the opportunities that arise through the predicted changes in climate and environment.

It was felt that tourism should continue to be a mainstay of the local economy and that this would help maintain the viability of local services and facilities. Future planning decisions should aim to improve the attractiveness of the village to visitors whilst safeguarding and enhancing its existing tourism assets.

Many participants felt that Bacton's east and west parts need to be brought together to provide a coherent 'village centre' unifying Bacton as a planned coastal village with the necessary infrastructure that is resilient to change. Planned development should ultimately include appropriate new housing development, recreational and leisure uses, car parking, shopping and commercial development and community facilities such as a doctor's surgery. It was felt that the opportunity should also be seized to improve and rationalise access to the beaches and the use of the foreshore.

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### Site-specific issues/ ideas comments and suggestions

The following summarises the site-specific issues identified by participants, i.e. places where issues arise or can be addressed; sites that have development potential; sites that are under threat; sites that should be protected etc. These suggestions were made in the expectation that Bacton would be selected as a 'Service Village' in the Core Strategy and that the coastal management policies will be as spelt out in the latest version of the Shoreline Management Plan.

- The location that represents the best opportunity for the development of a 'village centre' was identified as the field between Beach Road and Mill Lane, surrounding the Village Hall. This site is beyond the one hundred year expected erosion area, is central to the settlement and is large enough to accommodate a wide range of uses. It should be considered for a mixture of uses, to include informal open space and recreational areas, housing, commercial development, car parking and community uses. This site should also be the catalyst to opening up better pedestrian links to the foreshore to attract and cater for the needs of visitors.
- Sites were suggested to the south of the Coast Road (to the west of the village) for the relocation of caravan sites threatened by coastal erosion.
- It was suggested that several locations along the foreshore should be considered for the siting of beach huts, together with improvements to the beach access and the introduction of seating areas.
- The remains of St Andrew's Priory were considered potentially to be a major asset, but the site in which they lie is privately owned, somewhat hidden away and public access to it is poor. It was felt that with better networks of public paths, some interpretation and possibly parking, this could become an attraction to supplement what Bacton has to offer visitors.
- Many people felt that land in the vicinity of the school should be safeguarded for future expansion of the school and recreational uses.
- Several alternative sites were suggested for housing development – some, including higher land to the south west along North Walsham Road, for the longer-term.
- Suggestions were made for a route to replace the Coast Road in the future.
- It was felt important to protect views across from the Coast Road towards the Priory, also to retain the separation between the village and the gas site and to retain the allotments site to the east of the village.

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### **Questions and general discussion points**

- Q. *The Core Strategy will include crucial policies concerning the future planning of Bacton. Is the Inspector's decision on this final following the public examination?*
- A. *Yes it is. The Inspector will determine whether or not the Strategy is 'sound' and therefore whether it will be used in determining planning applications and future allocations of land for new development.*
- Q. *What is meant by 'housing exceptions' policy and how does it work?*
- A. *This is a means of providing 'affordable housing' to meet local needs. It takes place on sites that are not identified for housing development (e.g. farmland) and therefore the price of the land is less. The housing must be either rented housing (from a 'social landlord') or 'shared ownership' (whereby the occupant can own a share of the property but not own it outright). Occupants on these sites are initially drawn from those in need (i.e. on the in the housing waiting list or needs register) within the parish and adjoining parishes, whereas affordable housing developed on 'allocation' sites will be for those in need within the District as a whole.*
- Q. *Bacton's future depends on the life of the sea wall – who decides on the future maintenance/replacement of that?*
- A. *The Shoreline Management Plan sets the policy for coast protection measures. This therefore determines the degree to which existing defences will be maintained or renewed. The Council has resolved to maintain the defences for as long as possible, unless suitable measures are in place to address the consequences of not doing so. This is, however, dependent upon the availability of funding, which is ultimately drawn from a central government budget, and the SMP will be the reference point for funding decisions.*
- Q. *When does the 20 year/ 50 year expected 'managed realignment' begin?*
- A. *This is shown in the SMP, but the longer we are able to maintain the life of the defences the longer it will be delayed; however, weather and sea conditions obviously have a huge bearing on this.*
- Q. *How can we plan for a community that is going to be so drastically affected by coastal change, i.e. a big part of it will be lost?*
- A. *In order to ensure that Bacton has a viable future as a community and as a settlement we need to ensure that it can adapt in advance of the inevitable changes that will occur along its coastline. We should not only attempt to mitigate the adverse consequences of this change but plan in a positive way by exploiting the opportunities that arise.*
- Q. *Are there proposals for a bypass to the gas terminal site and what is the reason behind this?*
- A. *Although this has been reported in the press there appear to be no plans available and there is little evidence of an actual proposal being discussed. Certainly no formal proposal has been submitted to the Council.*

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Q. How will coastal change affect the gas site and what measures will be taken for its protection?

A. The whole coast is susceptible to change, however, the defence of the Terminal is likely to be justified in the short-to-medium-term, based on the assumption that it will still be operational for up to fifty years, and its operators are likely to be in a position to fund defences independently.

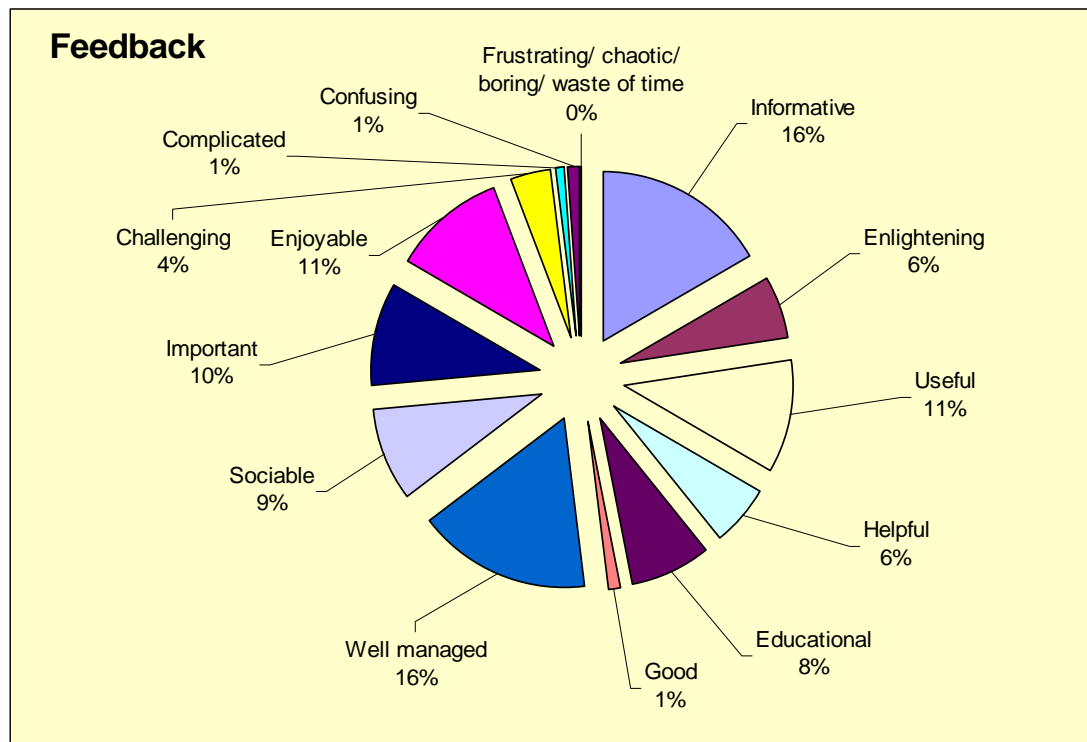
### Conclusion

Many issues came to light at the workshop and a wide range of views and aspirations were gathered about Bacton's future. In preparing a coherent strategy for the future it was clear that plans have both to address existing issues and to react to the forecast long-term changes. New development proposals should be considered in the context of the future role of the village as a whole and foster its long-term sustainability.

### What participants thought about the workshop

Participants were asked to give feedback on their impressions of the workshop and to provide further comments on the matters covered.

There was full agreement that the purpose of the event had been made clear, that there was adequate opportunity to participate and that this was an appropriate means of involving people in the planning process. Ninety-five percent of participants felt that the workshop was the right length.



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### Comments from the feedback forms

“Large maps were an excellent visual aid.”

“Thank you for being so positive about a future for Bacton. Excellent communication all day!”

“A light was shone on a couple of dark corners.”

“Need to encourage large investment especially for development of coastal and marine usage e.g. energy generation, shellfish, water sports, hotels, holiday complexes etc.”

“It is complicated. Please ensure that you & associated bodies do confer and ally with similar bodies in other sea-threatened areas of the UK and abroad (e.g. Holland).“

“Press for all the money you'll need!”

“It would have been appropriate to invite local people and could have attracted more participants if more widely advertised and held in the evening.”

“Thank you for an enjoyable day - very useful, worthwhile and, I hope, productive.”

“Some good ideas presented and it has given us some hope for the future, as well as some exciting propositions.”

“I hope this will take Bacton out of the deprived area and into an area of importance.”

“I think it is important to be informed and have good communication channels with all bodies.”

“The gas site (so important) seems to be rather left out?”

“I hope that the Council takes notice of what the residents/businesses want.”

“Excellent exercise. Well run, informative and very useful.”

“The workshop was a valuable forum in which to share concerns and ideas, and to lay the foundations for taking them forward. Many ideas were generated, some quite radical in their approach, in response to projected future coastal erosion (in terms of 'roll-back' etc.) and with the maintenance of a viable village into the future in mind.”

“It was commented that it was a positive thing that participants were willing to generate positive, radical ideas (in terms of site allocation etc.) rather than being too constrained by narrow thinking. Whilst this may be true in some respects, I also feel it is important for the real extent and timing of projected coastal erosion land losses always to be borne in mind, and that there be a measured response to it. All developments have some negative impacts (as well as positive ones); indeed, planning might be defined as striking the right balance between the positive and the negative. A basic example would be an area of new housing, providing much needed homes on the one hand and changing the character of the village and surrounding countryside on the other.”

**(Continued overleaf)**

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“Tourism is important, as was recognised at the workshop, and the importance of the character of Bacton village and surrounding countryside, as well as the coast, to tourism must be recognised. Care should be taken, when making the new site allocations (in the forthcoming plan) to ensure that they are judicious and proportionate, and not based on a perception of threat of loss of coastal land that is exaggerated in its extent and/or imminence.”

“More thought should be given for cycle paths.”

### ***What happens next?***

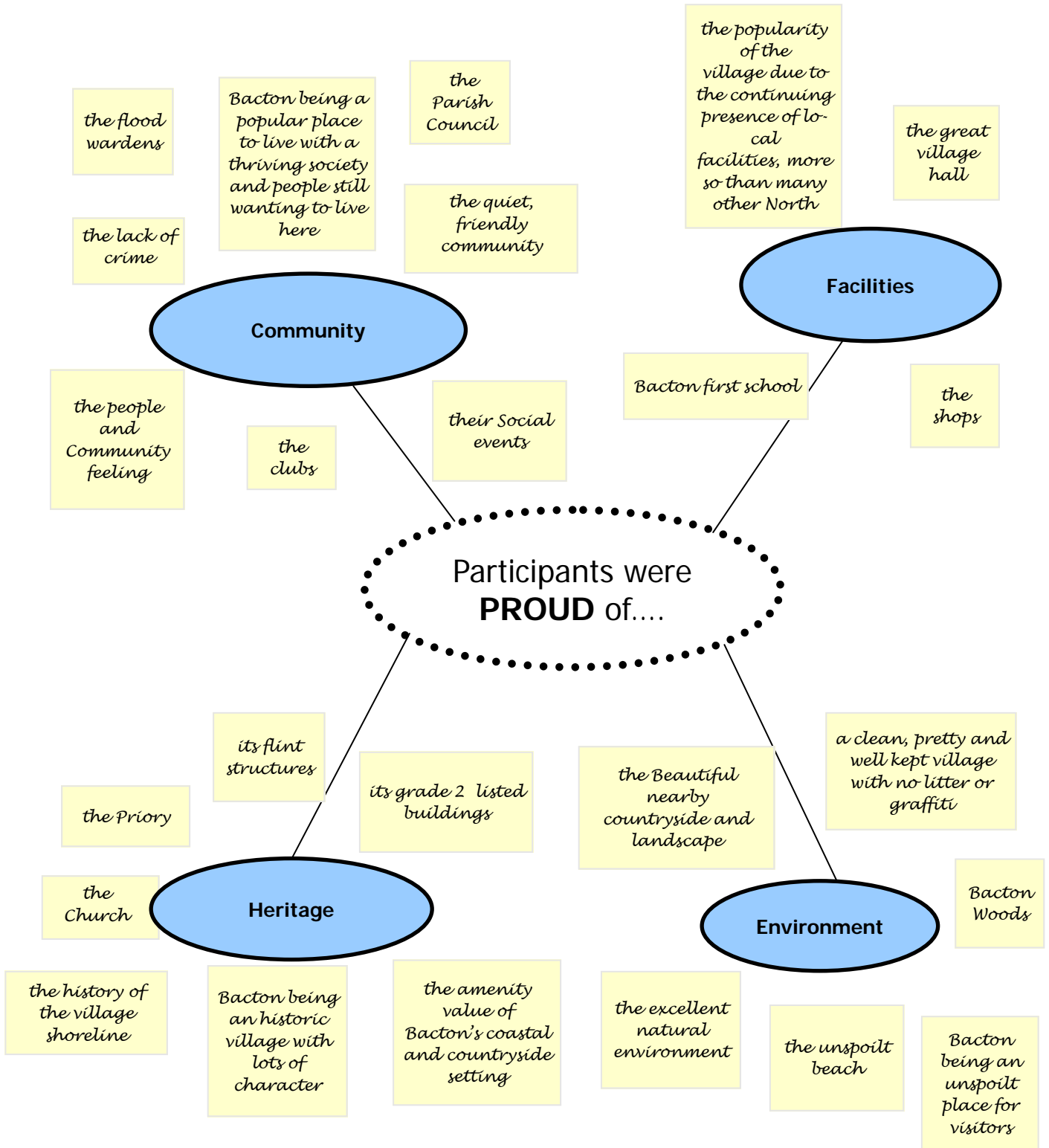
The feedback generated at the workshop has been recorded, it will now be analysed and fed into the preparation of the Site Specific Proposals (SSP) document and the Coastal Management Plan (CMP) as appropriate.

Publication of the preferred SSP options will await the outcome of the examination into the Core Strategy, which will set the context and determine, for example, the extent of the Coastal Erosion Risk Area and also confirm whether or not Bacton is to be identified as a location for further development. It is hoped that this will be decided by June 2008. The SSP document will then be submitted for examination in summer 2009.

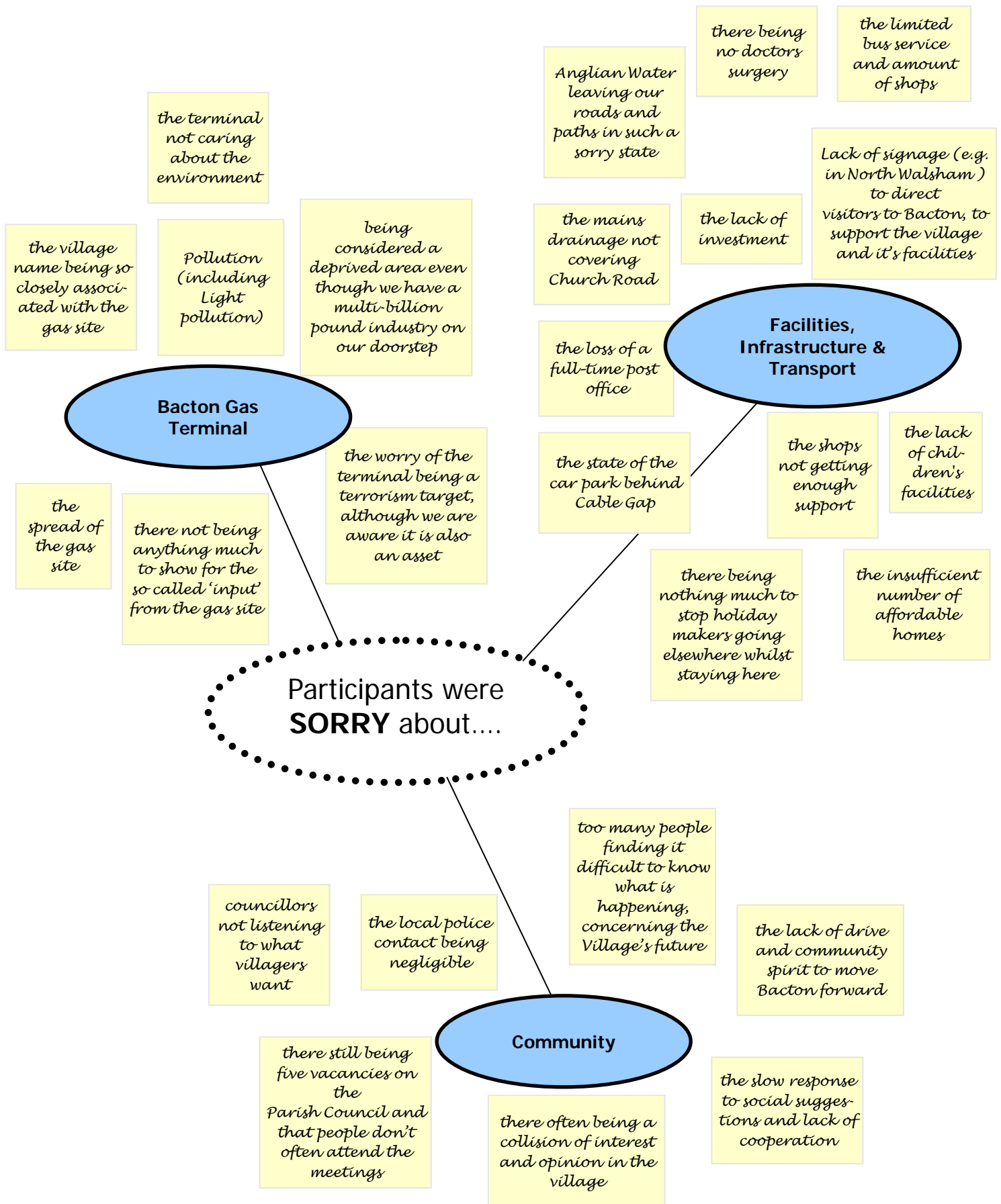
The Coastal Management Plan is not part of the LDF and will follow a separate process. This will involve developing issues, options and a vision for the whole North Norfolk coastline over the coming year. A detailed timetable for this will be published in due course.

Contact Rob Young (01263 516162) for further information.  
[robert.young@north-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:robert.young@north-norfolk.gov.uk)

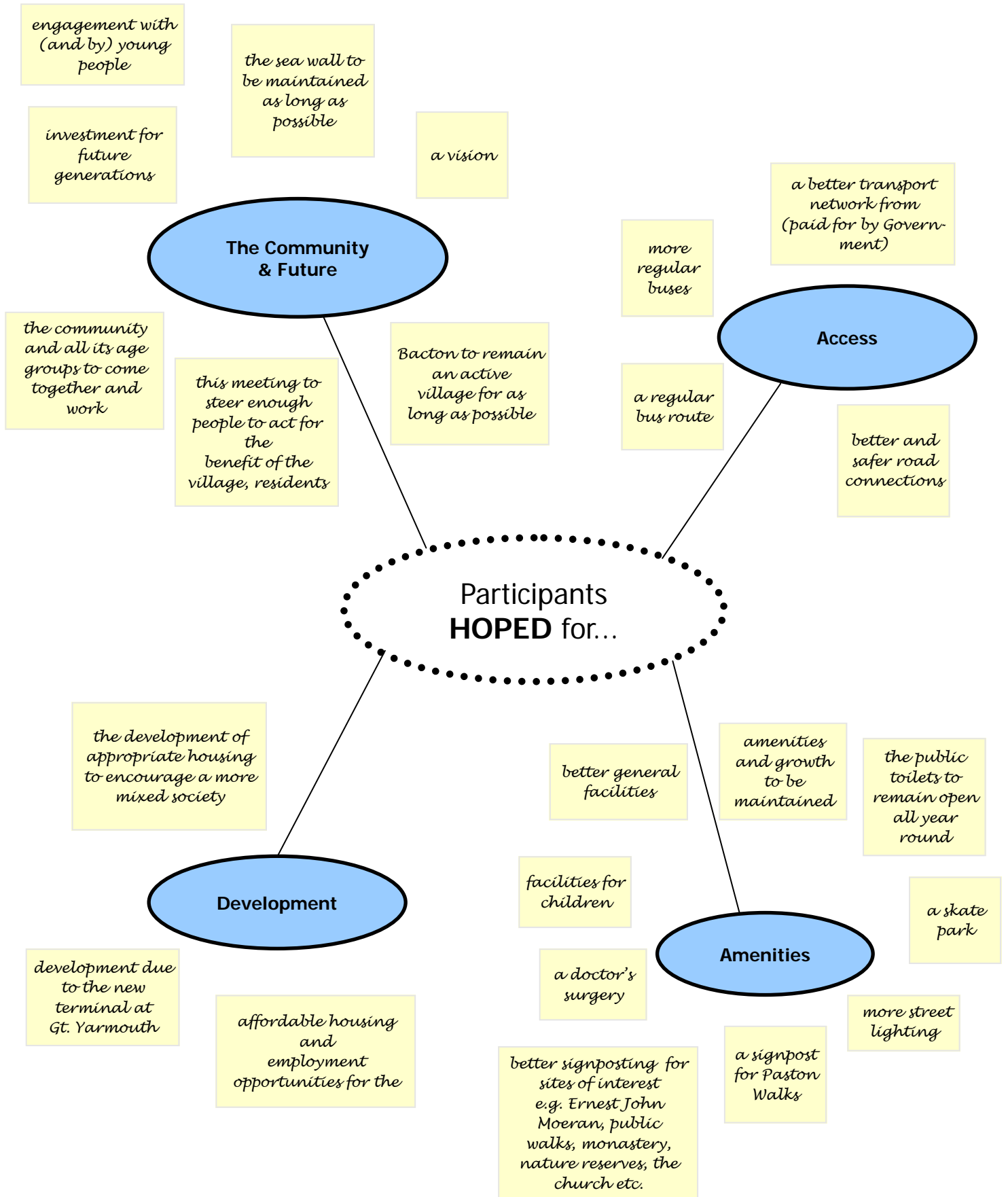
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