

Strategy for a Sustainable Dedham

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Executive Summary

Dedham is situated in the Dedham Vale National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is well known for its linkages to Constable and for its very popular walk to Flatford Mill alongside the River Stour.

Unfortunately, its increased popularity with visitors has resulted in its usage more as a picnic or water play area rather than as a traditional tourist village.

A radical re-think of what sort of village Dedham needs to be considered in terms of tourism, visitors and ways people use the local environment.

To address this requires more than greater awareness of how to protect the local environment and the heritage nature of the village. It needs a major awareness raising campaign as to what a Sustainable Dedham could be. The village has many beautiful old buildings.

This means involving all aspects of the community and working with relevant public bodies and local authorities to develop a strategy that not only protects the local environment but is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and local and city council policies on sustainable development and the global climate crisis. Young people need to be consulted and involved in developing and implementing this strategy.

Sustainable Development for Dedham means maintaining and developing the resources of the village in a way that does not harm the environment and protects the lives of people today and for the future. It's about putting much more centre stage the well-being of residents and ensuring there is a good quality of life for everyone.

To take these ideas forward there is a need for a 3-year action plan focused on:

- Developing and producing an information awareness raising campaign for residents and visitors to the village and establishing mechanisms for ensuring all stakeholders feel engaged in the action plan delivery.
- Developing a strategy for addressing the overuse of the riverbank in summer by visitors through encouraging visitors to use other more appropriate facilities such as the Constable Park and discouraging short-term traders from using the area.
- Lobbying Essex County Council to introduce a 20 miles per hour speed limit throughout the village and to develop more sustainable forms of transport to and from the village.
- Encouraging, working with and supporting local community groups, the church, young people, the school and local businesses to develop sustainable practices.
- Ensure there is an appropriate strategy for planting of new trees in and around the village.
- Monitoring property development in the area with the aim of increasing more affordable properties.
- Supporting bodies and businesses that are promoting healthy living and well-being through appropriate promotional campaigns.
- Supporting campaigns to stop the Pylons programme that whilst skirting around Dedham Vale will have a major impact on the landscape of the area.

Specific actions that could help with this action plan include:

- Installation of electric car charging points in car park.
- Encouraging greater use of public transport into and out of the village.
- Investigating possibility of designed cycle routes including from Dedham to Manningtree railway station.
- Through appropriate social media and websites, encouraging all visitors to Dedham to note and put into practice sustainable forms of behaviour including their usage of the river and meadows, taking litter home and acting in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible way.
- Encouraging appropriate behaviours that respect people and the environment.
- Car sharing schemes and forms of community energy.

Preface

This report is the result of extensive consultation with a range of bodies in and around Dedham and by attending a series of meetings of the Dedham Parish Council. I am a concerned resident of Dedham who happens to have some knowledge of sustainable development and is an active educationalist, keen to raise awareness, understanding and engagement of people in the village and those who come to visit it, to live and work in a sustainable way.

I have had a cottage in the village for over 20 years and am now in a position to help in whatever way I can in promoting living in and visiting Dedham in a way that not only protects the local environment but encourages a quality of life for all and ensures that generations to come are able to enjoy the landscape and the lifestyle that many of us are able to enjoy today.

It is a living document and should be seen as one that is open to development and adaptation during the process of its implementation.

I am also happy to come and talk to any group or informally to individual residents about these ideas.

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1. Introduction

Dedham village is the centre of Constable Country that spans the Stour Valley. This report, following consultation with a range of community groups and other local bodies, aims to suggest some ways in which the village can promote and support a more sustainable approach in people's lifestyles, the operations of businesses and community groups and how visitors can act in a way that does not harm the environment and recognises the well-being of everyone.

2. Dedham

Dedham is a village by the river Stour in the county of Essex and within the Colchester City Council district. It is known for its historical buildings, outstanding church which can be seen in several John Constable paintings¹ and is situated within the Dedham Vale National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is a well-known tourist village and is served by an excellent Co-op shop, butchers, various tea rooms and tourist type shops. It has a Craft Centre and two highly regarded pubs. Dedham Hall offers both art courses and accommodation². It also has the Munnings Museum which houses some of Alfred Munnings finest paintings and where he lived for many years³. It has an active parish council with its website being probably the best source of information about village life⁴. The village has been mentioned in numerous reviews as one of the 'best places to live in England'.⁵

The village has many active community groups, a Therapy Farm⁶ and well used playing fields. It is well known as the starting point for walkers and visitors to Flatford Mill and Willy Lotts Cottage. The village has a car park and by the river it is possible to hire rowing boats to row up to Flatford and back.

It has a highly rated primary school. The centre piece of the village is its church which has regular services and is visited by several thousand people every year. There are bus services from the village to Colchester and Manningtree and the village is a 10-minute drive from Manningtree railway station and from there only an hour into London. Colchester to Dedham is also on the National Cycle Route 1

Whilst the village has always welcomed and attracted visitors and is recognised as a tourist attraction, the nature of this changed dramatically in part due to the global pandemic when people found they could not travel overseas and were limited to exploring attractions nearer home. This 'staycation' phenomenon has led to Dedham and some of the other villages by the river Stour witnessing a major increase in visitors. In the summers of 2021 and 2022 this resulted in several thousand people visiting the village over some of the summer weekends putting major burdens on local infrastructure particularly car parking and use of the river and its banks. Entrepreneurial local businesses set up overflow car parks, hiring of kayaks, ice cream vans and impromptu barbecues. On several occasions there were major road blockages on the road by the river. The police were called in on several occasions to deal with disturbances. Consequently, the Parish Council and other local bodies have decided there is a need for action to ensure this is not repeated in the summer of 2023 and beyond.

3. AONB- National Landscape

¹ <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/john-constable>

² <https://dedhamhall.co.uk>

³ <https://www.munningsmuseum.org.uk>

⁴ <https://www.dedhamparishcouncil.co.uk>

⁵ <https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/19189322.sunday-times-best-places-live-dedham-vale-makes-list/>;
<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/23406647.dedham-felixstowe-named-best-places-live-east/>

⁶ <https://www.dedhamtherapyfarm.org>

Dedham is in the heart of the Dedham Vale National Landscape, an Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). There are only 34 National Landscapes (NL) in England. A National Landscape is regarded as an area of land that is special and that should be protected to preserve its nature, wildlife and local environment. The statutory purpose of AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. A small dedicated team funded by Defra and the local authorities seeks to coordinate an approach to conserve and enhance the areas natural beauty. This includes supporting local authorities to draft and review a statutory management plan for the area every five years, that forms the policy for the area:

The Dedham Vale AONB is a distinctive landscape with agriculture and wildlife at its core. Its natural beauty is conserved and enhanced through the efforts of everybody. The AONB is relevant to all members of society who engage in everything it has to offer. It is an area where residents feel a strong sense of belonging, visitors are welcomed to enjoy the AONB and respect it as a special place and the heritage is understood and appreciated by all.

Its Plan includes a framework for land use and development proposals, how to encourage visitors and residents to enjoy the local landscape. It is concerned with the climate emergency and its impact on the local environment. It seeks to work with all relevant local bodies to ensure that the Vale is managed in the best interests of the natural landscape and the local communities.

The location of Dedham within a National Landscape is suggested here to be of major importance in developing a strategy for Sustainable Dedham. The team and its links with a range of organisations and the role it plays can be central to raising awareness and understanding of how to live and work sustainably.

The team has a large area to cover and one action that will help to raise its profile and influence would be to extend the AONB/National Landscape area from the existing area around Dedham to include the area covered by the Stour Valley project.

4. What do we mean by Sustainable Development?

This strategy paper suggests that an important starting point is framing any plan for action within the context of sustainable development. The most common definition of sustainable development is that from the Bruntland Report of 1987 :

‘Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.⁷

It is often interpreted as ensuring the interconnections of the environment, economy and society. In 2015 the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals which are: no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice, and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals.⁸ Within these goals at both an international and national level, climate change has emerged as the main driver for securing progress with the annual UN Climate Change summit. A major driver within the UK government strategies on sustainable development is reducing carbon emissions as outlined in its Net Zero Strategy in 2021.⁹

⁷ United Nations General Assembly (1987) [Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future](#)

⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/>

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf

There are many ways a community like Dedham can support the Sustainable Development Goals. One obvious one is the planting of more trees in and around the village and ensuring that those that are planted are appropriate for the local environment and our future climatic needs.¹⁰ Another is to ensure that waste wherever possible is recycled and re-used for the benefit of all. Target 17.16 of the Goals refers to partnerships at all levels and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved in both their delivery and monitoring their effectiveness.¹¹

In thinking about what a sustainable community should be like it means using renewable resources that benefit everyone. A sustainable community should also be about enabling the well-being and quality of life for all its residents, through providing access to resources and services that meet their diverse needs, linking the social and economic needs to the environment.¹²

An example of a proactive approach to having sustainable programmes in a community is the Transition Towns movement. The movement began in Totnes in Devon 2006 and today there are several hundred such transition town initiatives around the UK. A focus of many of these transition towns is to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and emphasising local production of goods.¹³ Near to Dedham there are transition groups in Bures, Lavenham, Sudbury and Wivenhoe¹⁴.

One consideration could be for interested people in the village to get together to form a Transition Dedham group.

5. Existing Initiatives and Policies on Sustainable Development that Impact Upon Dedham

Both Essex County Council and Colchester City Council have well developed strategies and programmes for sustainable development. One County example is the Essex Climate Action Commission. This Commission was launched in 2020 by the County Council and has over 30 members. They include local councillors, academics, businesspeople and 2 members of the Young Essex Assembly. The initial purpose of the Essex Climate Action Commission was to set out recommendations on tackling the climate crisis. This included devising a roadmap to get Essex to net zero by 2050.

These recommendations were set out in the commission's report Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral report, published in July 2021. The report put forward a comprehensive plan to:

- reduce the county's greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, in line with UK statutory commitments;
- make Essex more resilient to climate impacts such as flooding, water shortages and overheating.

The recommendations of the commission were accepted in full by Essex County Council. They form the basis of our Climate Action Plan, produced in November 2021.¹⁵ The Commission is potentially an important body that could inform and influence the development of a strategy for Dedham. Colchester City Council has a well-developed environment and climate change strategy with a major focus on net zero emissions. It also works with local community groups to promote sustainable ways of living and support the development of local biodiversity plans. The Council has also instituted a range of

¹⁰ <https://onetreepanted.org/blogs/stories/reforestation-sustainable-development-goals#:~:text=Planting%20trees%20can%20increase%20the,and%20improve%20human%20well%2Dbeing.>

¹¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

¹² https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/sowhat-exactly-do-we-mean-by-sustainable-communities/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI3sXOmbif_gIVUOztCh0x1wy7EAAYASAAEgKRgPD_BwE

¹³ <https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/what-is-transition/>

¹⁴ <https://transitionnetwork.org/transition-near-me/>

¹⁵ <https://www.essex.gov.uk/climate-action>

initiatives to encourage less usage of private cars including car sharing¹⁶ and greater use of bikes including eCargo bike library¹⁷.

Whilst these policies sound laudable, the extent to which they are known by the residents of Dedham is perhaps open to debate. Both Councils appear to have excellent environmental policies but the extent to which they are implemented with resourced programmes of action is less clear. What is also noticeable that when residents and the Parish Council have raised issues regarding improving environmental policies for the village such as speed limits, electric car charging points¹⁸ and improving cycle routes, achieving progress seems to have been more difficult.

There needs to be much more evidence of engagement by both councils in the environmental and sustainable concerns of the Dedham community.

6. Dedham Parish Plan

In 2010 the Dedham Parish Council facilitated a widespread consultation with the residents of the village as to their views on the future of the village. The outcomes were produced in 2011 with a follow up action plan in 2012¹⁹. Main highlights of the plan were:

- residents were overall happy with most aspects of life in Dedham.
- areas that however did require attention were planning, speeding, parking, too many HGV vehicles through the village, and public transport.

Areas of concern were the need for affordable homes for younger people as well as suitable properties people could downsize to in later life. There was also concern over the inadequate control of the conversion of smaller properties into larger ones.

Many of the issues raised in that report are still relevant and revisiting some of the themes it identified could be worthwhile. It could however be argued that several of the issues raised have got much worse since 2011. For example, the public transport system no longer includes the Dedham Hopper service. The parking situation in the village has got much worse partially because of the increased popularity of the village. Speeding through the village is also much worse as has been shown by recent monitoring by a speed watch group. There are now fewer shops in the village than there were a decade ago. There is also no evidence of attempts to listen to the concerns of young people, which was another of the recommendations. What has happened has been increased communication within the village due to the creation and regular updating of the Parish Council website and the expansion of the content of the parish magazine.

7. Dedham Vale Society

The Dedham Vale Society is the most long standing and probably most influential voluntary body that is concerned with the environment in the area. It has been in existence since 1938 and works tirelessly to monitor planning applications and to oppose inappropriate development that can harm the landscape of the area. It has been particularly effective in continuing to ensure that the AONB area is a designated 'dark skies' area. Members of the Society have been active on other issues such as the unsightly wall around the extension to the Manningtree Railway station car park and joining others regarding the Pylons expansion plans²⁰.

A potentially important role for the Society going forward is to encourage the proposal that the National Landscapes/AONB status is enhanced with the River Stour Project, to have a larger area covering the Stour, from Manningtree right through to Sudbury.

8. Tourist Village

¹⁶ <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/loveurcarcolchester/carsharingscheme/>

¹⁷ <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/ecargobikelibrary/>

¹⁸ There is a community energy group in Colchester who have been working on a model of securing EV charge points in Parish Council car parks with no upfront investment required (i.e. recoup the upfront cost/maintenance costs from sale of the electricity to the residents using the charge points) colchestercommunityenergy.com.

¹⁹ <https://www.dedhamparishcouncil.co.uk/assets/Parish-Council-Documents/Local-Plan-/ParishpLAN-UPDATE.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk>

Dedham has always been a popular tourist attraction and has featured in numerous reviews of good places to visit and live. But what sort of tourist village is it and do we want it to be? Websites such as Visit Essex and Time Out give a rather patronising and partial view of the Village by making reference to 'Its quaint High Street' and 'abundance of independent shops, cosy pubs and quintessential tearooms, including the famous Wilkin and Sons tearoom, the Essex Rose'. What this picture of Dedham ignores is that in summer and other holiday times, the village high street is so full of cars that it is difficult to see the shops. Also, in the past 5 years a number of shops have closed. Promoting the concept of 'quaint' is problematic.²¹ By far the best introduction to Dedham can be found on the parish council website which is informative and presents a less 'quaint' image of the village²².

Secondly with the changing nature of the High Street and the large increase in tourists in the summer season, is there a need to re-think the facilities and the local infrastructure such as more car parking space, toilet facilities closer to the river and greater management of car flow through the village. There is however the danger that this could lead to even more visitors. From discussions with residents and local groups, there is a generally held view that not only is there not appropriate infrastructure to cope with such an increase of visitors, one of the attractions of Dedham is that it is part of an AONB and there is a need to preserve the natural beauty of the village, its historical buildings and the surrounding countryside.

There is a need for a new approach and one that is based on sustainable development principles including informing and educating residents and visitors about the need for everyone to behave and act in environmentally responsible manner. A central feature of this approach should be a major awareness raising campaign for everyone who comes into the village through QR signage in every shop and in the car parks that leads to the Dedham Parish Council website that has Sustainable principles on its front page.

The use of the riverbank needs to be carefully monitored. There need is a need for a major awareness raising programme for people who use the river area about the extent to which it is safe to use. There is a wealth of excellent guidance material on safety on rivers and inland waters and all uses of the river area need to be made aware of this guidance²³.

In addition, this new approach means working with local businesses, the AONB team, local councils and landowners to implement the following:

- Work with local tourist bodies to ensure the promotion of Dedham is done in a way that recognises the environment and social challenges visitors create.
- Develop a plan for the riverbank with local landowners that minimises the use of the field by the river as a site for car parks. Creation of a distinct fence separating the footpath from the river and installing electric fencing along parts of the riverbank to protect bird and wildlife.
- Ban mobile stall sellers from near the river.
- Operate a community environment protection policy which is monitored by local wardens.
- Install CCTV cameras by the bridge and car parks.
- Install appropriate notices in the village and by the river which states that it is a not a country park and asks everyone to protect the Country Code.
- Restrict number of watercrafts using the river at any point and remind all river users that they need to have licences.
- Enforce swimming ban in the river.

²¹ <https://www.visitessex.com/towns-and-villages/dedham-p1356101>;
<https://www.timeout.com/dedham/things-to-do/best-things-to-do-in-dedham>

²² <https://www.dedhamparishcouncil.co.uk/dedham/>

²³ <https://www.flipsnack.com/rospacatalogue/rospa-managing-safety-at-inland-waters.html>;
<https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy>

- Regular police patrols along the river in summer.

9. Traffic and Transport

Traffic into and through the village is a major concern for many residents. A constant problem is speeding through the village, which has been closely monitored by a grouping of volunteers. Another regular cause of concern is the school car run and parking on Crown Street. It is normal policy in most areas where there is a local school for there to be speeding restrictions. There is a need for action to address this matter. Clearly there should be a 20 mile per hour speed limit throughout the village. This is custom and practice in many villages and communities around the UK. The response to these issues by Essex County Council Highways Department, who do not see these matters as urgent, needs to be challenged by residents and all community groups.²⁴ Whilst the County continues to promote campaigns to reduce road deaths²⁵, they do not seem to be given sufficient attention to the concerns of residents of the village regarding speeding.

As noted earlier in this report, there are numerous car sharing schemes in Colchester and the wider county. Consideration needs to be given as to whether there are possibilities for installing such a scheme in the village.

Electric Cars will be becoming the norm in the UK in the next few years. Not only will communities have to respond to this change, it is also more sustainable than fossil fuel driven vehicles. Yet Dedham has no electric car charging points²⁶. The nearest ones are at Milsoms at Stratford St. Mary²⁷ and the Co-op in Manningtree and by the A12 at the Holiday Inn Express hotel. Installing them may well need agreement of local bodies but there are numerous national bodies who can help.

Whilst there is a bus service to and from Colchester and onto Manningtree it is not frequent enough during the week to deter car usage. Only on Sundays and public holidays is there a frequent service. A Dedham Shuttle bus service operated a decade ago but was deemed not viable on economic grounds. There is a need for greater consultation with the village community on public transport needs including buses to go to and from the railway station.

Cycling is an increasingly popular pastime and through the village there are often cyclists passing through and enjoying the local scenery. But cycling on some of the local roads is challenging because of the narrow roads and when there are no speeding restrictions. Consideration should be given to investigating the possibility of designated cycle routes into and around the village including using bridleways and footpaths to and from Manningtree station²⁸.

As walking is one of the most popular pastimes for both residents and visitors to the village, there is a need to ensure that any traffic in and through the village is conscious of pedestrians.

10. Land Use

Dedham is situated in an agricultural area with some rich farmland. Local landowners can play an important role in ensuring that an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/National Landscape is sustained. There have been several concerns about local farmers ignoring or ploughing areas that have been designated public footpaths. This issue needs constant monitoring, and it is recommended that relevant public bodies develop some form of regular forum and communication channel with local landowners to encourage them to abide by local by laws and policies regarding footpaths.

²⁴ <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/96e3372442.html>

²⁵ <https://saferessexroads.org/visionzero/>

²⁶ See earlier reference to Colchester community energy. There are charging points in Wivenhoe and Alresford installed by local town councils.

²⁷ <https://www.milsomhotels.com/recharge-while-you-recharge-in-dedham/>

²⁸ Essex County Council provide free bike training. <https://www.essexhighways.org/safer-greener-healthier/safer-greener-healthier-cycling>

A major impact on land use will be the proposed pylons development in East Anglia planned by National Grid which will border the village. The construction of the pylons will have a major impact on the local environment and the views across the Vale. The National Grid proposals 'East Anglia Green Energy Enablement' are far from being green in that they will have a major impact on the landscape of the region with pylons from Norfolk through to outskirts of London. Although within the Vale, the cables will be underground, it will affect the borders of the village where they will be above ground and the installation below ground will have a major impact on the local area. There is a very effective campaign against the pylons with a proposal that the cable development should be offshore. It is important everyone in the village is not only supportive of the campaign but signs relevant petitions and keeps abreast of ongoing developments.²⁹

11. Involving Young People

One of the concerns of residents regarding the problems by the river in the summers of 2021 and 2022 were the ways in which a small minority of young people behaved. Whilst there is evidence that this behaviour came from young people from outside of the village, there is a danger that all young people could be deemed to be a problem.

There has to date been little evidence of local representative bodies canvassing the opinions of young people on ways in which Dedham could be a more sustainable community. Yet it is widely known that it is young people who have been the most active in the UK and elsewhere in the world in raising concerns about the environment and the future of the planet.

In partnership with local schools, some form of Forum for young people could be developed where their views can feed into both the Parish Council, the City and County Councils.

12. Role of the Village School

The village primary school regularly engages with a number of local environmental projects and it is recommended that discussion takes place with the school about how pupils can be actively engaged in promoting their views as to what a Sustainable Dedham could look like. Appropriate channels of communication, including possible exhibitions, could be established so that the wider village and visitors can be made aware of their views. Within the school's vision is a reference to promoting a sense of local and global responsibility by 'valuing the individual whilst recognising the importance of contributing as local and global citizens in the world.'³⁰ The school has regular visitors who talk to the children on environmental and sustainability matters, including the AONB. Involving the children and their parents into implementing this strategy for a Sustainable Dedham could be one of the most effective and long-lasting outcomes from the proposals in this plan.

13. Businesses

The nature of the local economy is changing. There are today fewer shops and now only 2 pubs in the village. Parking for people working in the local businesses or visiting local shops can sometimes be difficult. Dedham is in the heart of a rich agricultural area and there are several excellent farm shops within a few miles of the village. Yet more can be done to ensure the local economy is run in a more sustainable way. A valuable meeting of local businesses was held in the village in February 2023 and there was interest in encouraging greater co-operation amongst them to have more sustainable purchasing policies.

Several businesses have also raised issues concerning commercial waste and the need for more dedicated places for recycling commercial materials.

²⁹ <http://pylonseastanglia.co.uk>; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/718238339216424/>

³⁰ <https://www.dedham.essex.sch.uk>

Dedham is potentially an ideal place for a sustainable market with stalls say once a month.³¹ Peoples concern for their health and well-being has become increasingly important in many communities. An important part of a sustainability strategy is to ensure there are appropriate services and support networks to help with people's general well-being. The village still has a pharmacy, a therapy farm and several local businesses that provide services to help people with their general health and well-being. There could be greater recognition and development of these services which could become an important attraction to people either visiting or coming to live in the village.

14. Influence of the Church

The Church plays an important role in the life of the village. It has regular services and is one of the main attractions of the village. More could be done by the church to promote sustainable practices and encourage people to be environmentally friendly and socially responsible. This could include regular exhibitions within the church and production of appropriate leaflets for visitors.

The Church is working towards a Silver Eco-Church award. To achieve this, there are five areas that a church must demonstrate environmental engagement with to receive an award:

- Worship and teaching.
- Management of church buildings.
- Management of church land.
- Community and global engagement.
- Lifestyle.³²

There is commitment from within the Church to achieve this award with particular focus on usage of more appropriate and sustainable materials, wherever possible within the church, and to ensure that the churchyard protects its wildlife.

15. Community Groups

Within the village there are several very active community groups including those concerned with art, sports, horticulture, parents, and toddlers. These groups provide an important service to residents and could be encouraged to be more active in supporting and promoting the proposed strategy outlined in this report. These groups ensure there is a strong community spirit within the village. However more could be done to promote the development of these groups and to encourage closer linkage with promoting a more Sustainable Dedham.

16. Strategy for Action 2023-2026

i) Information and Promotion of Dedham

- Establish a Sustainable Dedham Forum which meets 3 times a year.
- Produce an annual report on progress against targets and goals.
- Install a series of Sustainable Dedham noticeboards in and around the village summarising the targets and goals for the strategy and for this to include QR code links to websites on how to act in a sustainable manner.
- Produce a Sustainable Dedham leaflet.
- Produce a Sustainable Dedham action pack for children.
- Engage young people in the village on the promotion of a Sustainable Dedham.
- Ensure that messaging of Dedham to appropriate tourist and media bodies includes reference to environmental and sustainability policies and aims.

³¹ An example is in Sudbury with their [Green Sundays | sudbury-council \(sudbury-tc.gov.uk\)](https://www.green-sundays.org/)

³² <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/eco-church>

- Develop existing volunteer litter pickup group in the village with an aim of involving more residents.
- Work with Visit Essex team from Essex County Council to present a more appropriate image of the village and which refers to sustainability.

ii) Usage of the Riverbank

The river including the views from the Bridge and the walks across to Flatford are the experiences that most attract people to Dedham. Yet since the summer of 2021 the iconic image from the Bridge looking over the meadows has been blighted by short-term car parks, installing of mobile food outlets, families coming with barbecues and inflatable craft to use on the river. This has culminated in several hundred people being there some summer days.

All the relevant local bodies are aware of these issues but what is needed is a long-term plan to ensure that the riverside is protected and does not become overrun with short-term facilities. The riverbank is not a country park³³. There is one at Manningtree and one clear recommendation is to work with local organisations to encourage families to use that area, as it is more appropriate than Dedham riverbank for impromptu gatherings of large families and groups.

iii) Speeding and Traffic Flow Through the Village

There is a volunteer group of people regularly monitoring speeding through the village. Their findings need to be regularly reported to the relevant council bodies. Essex County Council need to be lobbied to change their current policy to 20 miles per hour throughout the village. Consideration needs also to be given to how to control the flow of heavy goods vehicles through the village. This has become increasingly a problem with the increased car traffic into and out of the village.

iv) Support for and work with the Local School and Local Community Groups

Dedham is a thriving community with active community groups and a highly rated primary school. Both the school and the community groups need to be encouraged to engage in more activities that directly address how Dedham can be more sustainable, to encourage greater walking and less use of cars and when necessary, suggest car sharing. For the school, propose re-introduction of the Walking Bus. A forum for young people to express their views and vision for the future of the village.

v) Develop a Housing Strategy

Dedham is a village where house prices are very high, reflecting its position in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Whilst recognising the opportunities and spaces for further housing development in the village are limited, there is a need for relevant local bodies to work together to develop a long-term plan for housing development that prioritises the needs of people with lower incomes, younger people, and families.

vi) Community Well-Being

Within the village there are several businesses that provide support for healthy living, lifestyle choices and well-being. It is recommended that this is an area where more could be done to promote these businesses, to discuss with them how their services can be made available at affordable prices for the local community and above all to work together to develop a strategy for community well-being.

17. Ten Point Charter for Action for 2023

- All relevant local bodies including police and environment agency work together to ensure the use of the river area is in keeping with protecting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, banning picnics and the use of unlicensed craft on the river.
- Encourage greater use of public transport to and from the village.

³³ <https://www.constablepark.co.uk>

- Investigate potential of appropriate cycle routes from the village to Manningtree.
- Install electric car charging points in car parks.
- Have a 20 mile an hour speed limit within village boundaries.
- Ensure all visitors to the village are aware of the aims of Sustainable Dedham through appropriate websites and social media and encourage them to act in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner.
- Oppose plans such as the installation of pylons in and around Dedham that may affect the landscape and the quality of life of people living in the village.
- Encourage appropriate bodies responsible for housing development in the area to focus on affordable housing for the village.
- Develop a network of interested bodies who can co-ordinate provision and promotion of healthy living and well-being for both residents and visitors to the village.
- Develop a community network to monitor of these actions.

18. Conclusion

Working towards a more sustainable world has been the goal of the United Nations and countries since 2016. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for action but there has been far too little promotion of the value and encouragement of engagement of people in its delivery. There are also ambitious plans and targets to address the climate crisis by both Essex County Council and Colchester City Council. Within Dedham both the Parish Council and the Dedham Vale Society provide proactive support for a more Sustainable Village and wider community. The problems by the river in the summers of 2021 and 2022 have raised the need for a proactive approach that encourages residents and visitors to act in a more sustainable way. This paper has suggested a strategy and plan for making progress that can involve the village community. Above all what is needed are some short-term targets that can act as an awareness raising tool for the village and for visitors and tourists for 2023 and beyond.

The residents of the village who have commented on this strategy have emphasised the pride people have for Dedham. This concern and commitment to enhancing its environment and well-being for all needs to be harnessed more so that everyone can feel involved in building a more Sustainable Dedham.

Appendix

Key links and organisations:

Dedham Parish Council: <https://www.dedhamparishcouncil.co.uk>

Dedham Vale AONB: <https://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org>

Dedham Vale Society: <https://www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk>

River Stour Trust: <https://www.riverstourtrust.org>

Colchester City Council: <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/environmental-protection/>

Essex County Council: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/protecting-environment>

Essex Highways: <https://www.essexhighways.org>

Anglian Water: <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk>

Visit Essex: <https://www.visitessex.com/towns-and-villages/dedham-p1356101>

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³⁴ <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=DBOUR93>