St James South Elmham Village Website

Some briefing notes

1. BACKGROUND

St James is an archetypal, relatively remote Suffolk village which, while not being cut off, is not on the way to or from any place of note. It sits in the centre of a triangle formed by the towns of Bungay, Halesworth and Harleston and is c. 7 miles from each. It has a population of c. 80 homes.

It is one of the few villages in Suffolk's Waveney Valley that does not have a village website. A successful website was developed for a notable initiative in the village – The Orchard – but neither Village Hall nor Church has a website.

Recently WhatsApp groups have been formed to provide means of communication for villagers to revive community spirit lost during Covid lock down when events could not take place. These have been successful. The next stage is to form a website for the various communities in the village. As part of due process to gain council funding, demonstrate villagers had been consulted and show money was being spent wisely on projects to benefit the village, development of a village website emerged as Number 1 on residents' wish list.

2. PURPOSE & AUDIENCES

The website has 4 main purposes:

1. To give St James **residents** a feeling of community, a sense of belonging to a thriving community and a desire to join in. **Implications** of this are that it should look attractive and feature strongly what's happening in St James South Elmham.

2. To give **residents and those living in the vicinity** of the village a **means to find out about, communicate and promote** what's happening in the village and amenities on offer to build community spirit. **Implications** of this are that events should be showcased with up-to-date information and contacts given for those wanting to share information

3. To give **potential visitors** information they need. **Implications** are that each amenity in the menu (Church, Village Hall, Orchard etc.) should have the right quality and quantity of up-to-date information and means to access further if needed. What to do in St James and maps of the village, footpaths and things of note would be an advantage.

4. .As a means of **collecting, collating and maintaining a store information** of all kinds relevant to the village - especially for historic interest and the benefit of the village and district as well as generally . . but without the site becoming crowded, text heavy or complex to navigate.

3. WEBSITE CHALLENGES

3.1 Domaine name: The village name 'St James' presents some issues as it is commonly used for villages, churches, hospitals, schools etc. We need to make sure that those wanting to access our St James village website can find it easily – even if 'St James South Elmham' is not used.

We also need to cater for use of St James, Saint James and whether South Elmham is used or not in searches.

So far we have stjamessouthelmham.uk and .org.uk

We should consider getting southelmhamstjames. as it is often referred to in official circles, and potentially stjamesse. We would ask MH to make sure that saint…works as well as st. (if we haven't already).

3.2 Existing Orchard site: stjamesvillageorchardis is relatively well known. We will need to connect use of this as a search into the orchard section.

3.3 Searches: Some website visitors will want to find specifics – the Church, Orchard etc. In search engines it would be helpful to show the 5-menu click through elements.

4. STYLE NOTES

Style will be informed by the nature of the village. St James is attractive but not 'chocolate box' pretty but there is more to the village than at first site in features and local businesses. As a village it is not well known or on tourist maps; It has features like a Grade 1 listed mediaeval church which is peaceful and atmospheric and the orchard; it has no visible landmarks as the village green is tucked away behind the Village Hall; there is no shop, pond or pub.

What distinguishes the village is **farming and agriculture** which creates a peaceful landscape where wildlife can thrive under big East Anglian skies.

Importantly, we want the website to look professional and not homespun – **a site which we can be proud of and engaged by.**

4.1 Colour: To capture the essential village character we suggest **green** as a principal colour. To build on the farming and agricultural theme, we could make use of a **palette of colours related to it** (crops, growth and harvest, seasons, leaf transition) colours. There may be an opportunity to vary the colours and pictures **according to the seasons**.

 An **accent colour** will be needed which may be blue, yellow, crimson etc.

4.2 Font: In village website searches those which look professional have a certain consistency – in colour palette, font size and type, photographic treatment and general layout. Although each of the 5 site elements will be developed and maintained by individual interests, having an **agreed style setter** will be essential and recommendations are asked for. We would like to avoid fonts like Comic Sans MS

4.3 Logo: Although we note some villages like Westleton have a village logo, the general view is that it is not right for St James. However we have the option of using one - or occasionally both - of our **two village signs** – one at the Metfield end which is a freshly painted attractive village sign and also the large metal shell at the other end of the village.

4.4 Pictures: Pictures will be important to communicate the village style and its attractive features. We have started to curate images. Ideally, they should feature strongly on the home page and individual click-through sections – ideally as a revolving carousel of 4-5 iconic images to cover Church, Village Hall/green, Orchard, Farming / village gardens of note / wildlife, the village in general and activities e.g. Village Christmas/Summer lunches, Harvest festival etc.

This approach could be carried through in the individual click through themes.

4.5 Text: In website reviews we note that some are very text heavy, particularly on the Home page. Our ideal is that lead text is short, interesting and relevant. For those wishing to delve further, we need an option to **click through to more detailed text or documents** of interest – particularly those of interest to researchers.

4.6 Attachments & Documents: For the general village section, Parish and Village Hall Minutes we will need to **attach minutes of meetings and similar official documents.**

4.7 Accessibility: Font should be **easy to read, avoiding anything too elaborate or homespun.** Text should be reasonably big. For reverse out text we should avoid white out of pastels.

4.8 Scroll down: Would be nice to **avoid scroll down but probably necessary**. If so, creative solutions like auto scroll would be good to consider.

5. NAVIGATION

5.1 Home page: This should be attractive, relatively light in text, heavy on pictures e.g. a rotating carousel and feature future events in the village – whether at the village hall, church, garden openings etc. **Content is likely to be:**

- **Picture carousel**
- **Menu** with drop down for each section
- **Saint James in brief.** General introduction to the village, locality and life & website purpose
- **What's on and what to do** including promotion of coming events
- **A big splash feature** when there is a notable event.

5.1 Site Architecture: We are planning for **5 key menu sections** with two potential additions. Ability to click through from a clear prominent menu on the Home page is important. These sub-sections may also need a big splash feature for notable events.

The Village	The Church
The Parish Meeting	The Orchard
The Village Hall	**+ Gallery** (photos of general interest) **& Who to contact** (potentially)

5.2 Click through sections: Drop down menus may include:

The Village	Parish Meeting	Village Hall	Church	Orchard	Other?
Layout & maps Places of interest History/chronology Village activities inc. farming, volunteer groups, arts & crafts etc. Local businesses	Committee Meeting dates Village projects Who to contact	Committee Facilities Events & activities How to book/T&C Volunteering History Who to contact	PCC Committee Services Description & history Churchyard Who to contact	Site & genesis Team & supporters Layout & trees interactive 'map' Gallery & plans	Gallery*? Key Contacts inc. Info@St James?
Documents e.g. Deer park, Mayflower links etc. Photographs of local interest	**Documents:** Minutes and historical records	**Documents:** Minutes & projects Photographs of events	**Documents:** History, minutes, who's who etc.	Documents: How to set up a similar project etc.	

NOTE:

*Photographs may be included in a **general Gallery.** We are currently curating photographs for each section so the best can be selected for the key home page **carousel.**

Each section will be led by a key person but use the website style setter for consistency.

6. RELEVANT WEBSITES

From a trawl of village websites we have selected a number that may be useful to access. They include those with features we like and those with elements that we are less keen on having for the Saint James South Elmham site.

Metfield Village Metfieldsuffolk.com (note village hall has its own website)	**Engaging and professional – white out of black captioning / menu look contemporary** • Home page focussed on what residents and visitors can do an enjoy • Local businesses and community run shop feature strongly • Not much history- more about health, local, where to stay etc. • Panoramic photography with white-out-of-black captioning impactful

Ilketshall St Margaret	**Very clear and a good model for St James** • Nice clear menu but ? brown • Only the colour palette of pale blue/brown is questionable • Need to be careful that people realise they need to scroll down for text • Drop down menus are clear but orange not particularly liked • Charming and informative • Carousel of pictures works well – both contemporary and old pics work • Consistent in style, colour and clean type face • Lovely section on Village Show • Village Hall hire section a bit garish
Westleton Village website (note separate village hall site)	**Similar in content to what St James needs but overall some issues** • Overshadowed by Village Hall in search engines • Pictures too small – lacking impact • Too much text on home page • Events poorly set out – nothing catches the eye • Nice picture gallery – could do with more diverse images
Wenhaston.net	**Example of basic homespun site which we don't want** • Recessive topic guide at base of page • Signposting not great • Long vertical menu • Millenium map nice idea but quite hard to use • Nice bit on the dawn chorus
Nantucket Massachusetts	**A variety of websites but worth looking at for** • Great photography • Use of photos to click through vs. usual menu • Promotional content • Lots of info but not heavy in text • Clean and impactful
Clovelly.co.uk	**Simple, great visuals and draws you in** • Video vs. statis picture on home page • Nice use of green • Minimal text but great pop ups • Nice menu at top of page • In History section lovely scrolling timeline • All copy nice bite size • Caption over pic encourages click through e.g. Things to do • Really great drop down menu from main menu on home page