

Woodbridge Men's Shed

Sharing an overview of the Woodbridge Men's Shed;

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A. Purpose

The UK Men's Shed Association <https://menssheds.org.uk> describes Men's Sheds as: 'They're community spaces for men to connect, converse and create. The activities are often similar to those of garden sheds, but for groups of men to enjoy together. They help reduce loneliness and isolation, but most importantly, they're fun'.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed has joined the UK Men's Shed Association, which already recognises 580 'Open Men's Sheds in the UK'. The Association is providing a helpful, tried and tested, toolkit for establishing a Men's Shed, including the template for the Woodbridge Men's Shed's Constitution.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed is for men of 18 years of age and over. If someone needs help from their Carer, they'll of course be welcome. The Woodbridge Men's Shed will have a membership, and very much a welcoming and 'open door' ethos for visitors.

B. Activities

The Woodbridge Men's Shed will provide a social space for men to chat, to be making and doing, together.

What may happen in the Woodbridge Men's Shed is largely the choice of the members. Activities could be, for example; carpentry, making and mending, playing board games, drinking a mug of tea whilst having a chat, growing vegetables or perhaps some tall sunflowers.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed will offer a place where men can find company whilst enjoying a hot drink. Rather than be on their own in a shed or garage at home (if they have a shed at home), they can be alongside others, sharing ideas, chatting and perhaps learning some new skills from each other along the way.

C. Location and Construction

The Woodbridge Men's Shed needs a place to be, at a location which men can readily get to. A preferred piece of land has been identified adjacent to the Deben Water Sports Centre, near the Boat Pond in Woodbridge. On the map (page 3), sourced from HM Land Registry in May 2022, this now abandoned area of land is shown with a blue boundary and containing a blue number 2.

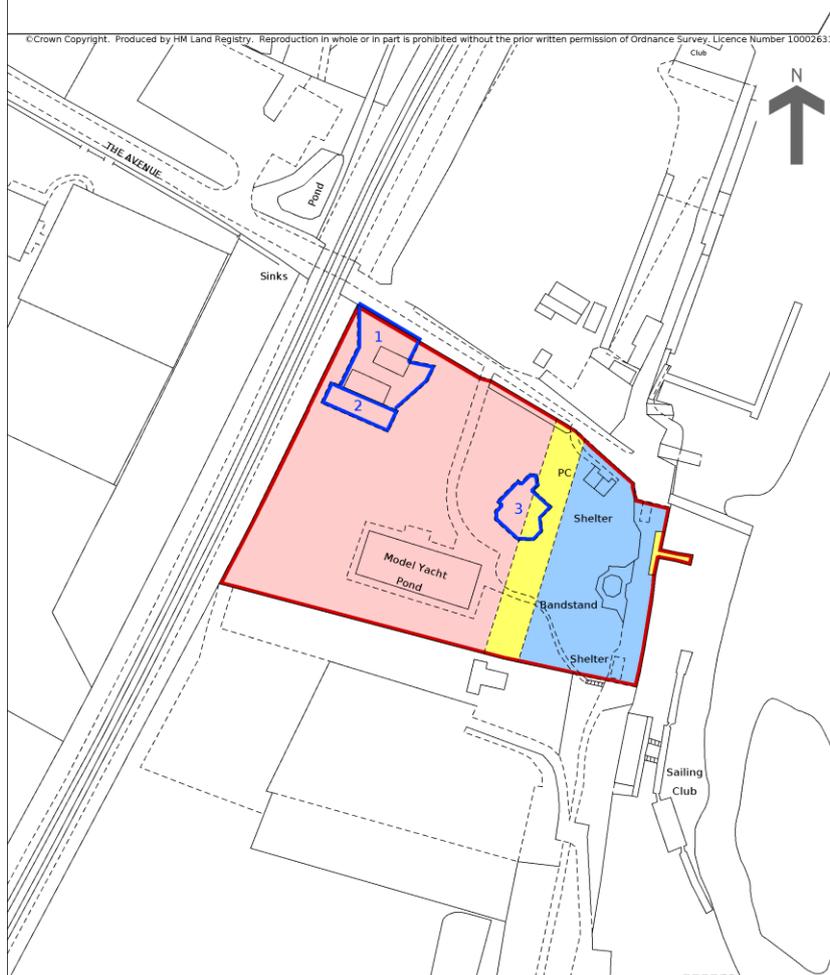
This land was leased out by East Suffolk Council (ESC) as recorded in the 'Charges Register' of the Title Register, on the 29.01.2015. The Lessee's Title is recorded as: SK358672.

We recognise the land in this area is known to be often very wet, hence the two large adjacent sheds used by the Deben Water Sports Centre are raised off the ground. Taking the same approach, the Woodbridge Men's Shed would be raised off the ground, with access by way of low steps, and with a wheelchair friendly ramp.

Our initial enquiries, including visits to the location by some folk with considerable experience in construction, suggest this site is viable. A Men's Shed could utilise the site and would improve its appearance.



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The land, labelled 2 on the above map, was leased by ESC to the Deben Rowing Club (DRC) in 2015. This land is now overgrown in a perimeter of green fencing. The DRC have confirmed they chose to terminate that lease some time ago, which was handled by their solicitor. The DRC have also confirmed that they've no further interest in this land.





The adjacent shed, which is used as a classroom by the Deben Water Sports Centre, is approximately 20' wide and 30' deep. A similar size of Shed is envisaged for the new Woodbridge Men's Shed, likewise with an area of decking to the front aspect. This would provide space inside for a social area, a making and mending carpentry area, and for storage. Nearby there are public toilets, including an accessible toilet.

We envisage there would be some ground within the perimeter, at the front of the shed, for some light gardening. An activity many men enjoy, and rather than garden on their own at home, at the Shed they could enjoy this activity, which is helpful to both emotional and physical wellbeing, in the company of others.

D. Benefits for local men and for the wider community

The opportunity to have social contact, to be in the friendly company of others, can be a lifeline for men, especially at a time when they are feeling lonely, and this holds true for men across all ages.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed will be an asset to the community at grassroots, a place where men can share their laughter and to give and gain support from their fellows. To be sharing their skills and their stories.

“It is great to hear about the Men's Shed in Woodbridge and I wish you well with this venture, as they are an excellent initiative to support men. We are currently exploring offering Suicide First Aid (SFA) Training to Men's Shed Members in Suffolk and North East Essex.” Louise Biddiscombe
Suicide Prevention Project Officer, Public Health Suffolk

Other Men's Sheds often are found to be helping others, across the whole community, using their making and mending skills in helpful ways. Once established the Woodbridge Men's Shed would become a hub for men to socialise, and a friendly asset to the wider community.

The East Suffolk Community Partnership Annual Forum 2022 brought participants together from the eight locality Community Partnerships, including from the local Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership: <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/nalc-blog/>

The issues explored within the Forum included:

- Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Improving Mental health and Wellbeing
- Supporting our most vulnerable communities and people

The Woodbridge Men's Shed will help to tackle social isolation and loneliness, contributing to improving mental health and wellbeing, and offering a friendly, safe and social space, for men. The informality

and friendliness may appeal to many men. A place to be themselves and to have their individual character, experience and skills valued.

E. Coproduction and Leadership

The Woodbridge Men's Shed is being developed and run applying the ethos of co-production, encouraging local men to share in shaping together how the Shed develops, with views and ideas being valued.

A committee shall take care of the necessary roles and follow the constitution, ensuring there are the necessary Policies and practice to be offering a very accessible, fair and safe, meeting place.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed has the support of the Woodbridge Rotary Club, some of whose members took the initiative in the Spring of 2022 to reach out to the local community, offering an open invitation for other men to join them in forming a working group. This group, drawing also on the skills and experience of their friends and colleagues, are now taking the Woodbridge Men's Shed from being a wish to becoming a reality.

The Woodbridge Men's Shed shall be run on a not-for-profit basis, the day to day running will be looked after by volunteers.

F. Funding to establish and sustain

The Woodbridge Men's Shed will have initial start-up costs and then some modest running costs.

A community bank account will hold its funds, in keeping with its Constitution and with best practice. Accounts shall be maintained to clearly show all incoming and outgoing funds.

To help ensure the Woodbridge Men's Shed is accessible to as many people as possible, any membership fee shall be modest, and there

would be a method for seeking dispensation for anyone facing financial hardship, not least because anyone in that position may well be someone who needs companionship most of all.

It's envisaged that the skills within the Men's Shed group shall help to alleviate some of the costs that would arise if the labour for all tasks in fitting out a new Shed had otherwise to be purchased. Thankfully, within the local community we have kind and skilled people.

Funding from Charitable and Statutory sources shall need to be applied for. The clear intention is to make choices relating to construction of a strong Shed that's fit for purpose, on sound groundworks, that ensure the building and fitting out of the Shed is affordable, is doable.

G. Contacts

Primary contacts for the Woodbridge Men's Shed:

- Geoffrey Springett: Geoff.springett@gmail.com
- Robin Pivett: r.pivett128@btinternet.com
- Simon King: king-simon5@sky.com

The Woodbridge Men's Shed is liaising with:

- Douglas Mizon - UK Men's Shed Assn. Ambassador for East Suffolk & Halesworth Men's Shed: douglas.mizon@uwclub.net
- Deben Rowing Club: secretary@debenrowingclub.com
- Adrian Slim, Deben Water Sports Centre: enquiry@dwsc.org.uk
- Julia Catterwell - East Suffolk Council's Communities Officer for Woodbridge: Julia.Catterwell@eastssuffolk.gov.uk
- Jonny Wood - Community Action Suffolk, Officer for Men's Sheds: jonny.wood@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk
- Louise Biddiscombe - Public Health Suffolk, Suicide Prevention Project Officer: Louise.Biddiscombe@suffolk.gov.uk

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