



Westerfield Station usage survey: Summary of the findings of the survey evidence collected in July 2023

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Summary

An impressive total of 71 responses were received from the 410 forms distributed to houses in Westerfield, Tuddenham, Henley Gate and North Ipswich. There is good evidence that the local community are keen to see improvements to the service in order to be able to make more use of the station, although the specific volume of latent demand could not be quantified in any detail. A key conclusion is that there is a significant unmet demand that all East Suffolk Line (ESL) trains should serve Westerfield. In addition, the survey has also revealed much useful information relating to accessibility, usability and safety concerns about the station.

In this report we shall briefly outline statistics relating to the survey; provide a detailed analysis of the information received; identify gaps where information may be missing; then give conclusions and identify next steps for 11 issues for East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) to follow up.

Two appendices are provided:

Appendix 1 identifies all departures from Westerfield Station: a copy of this was provided with each questionnaire and is displayed at Westerfield Station.

Appendix 2 is a copy of the questionnaire that was used.

Copies of this report can be downloaded from the ESTA website at: <http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk/page4.html>

Statistics

- Total number of responses returned = 71
- Blank returns = 3
- Returns that do not identify any changes that would motivate respondent to use more trains from Westerfield = 6
- Number of responses that showed an increased use of the service if improvements were made = 62
- Post code supplied = 64
- Email supplied = 50
- Responses from Westerfield Village = 43 (202 forms distributed)
- Responses from Henley Gate = zero (52 forms distributed)
- Comments about frequency of service = 46
- Comments about Reliability: 14 consider service unreliable but 6 consider this is good.
- Comments about parking: 32 want more parking, 4 are happy to walk from nearby properties.
- Comments about bus service: 6 want an improved service, 4 would not use the bus.
- Comments about Footpaths = 30
- Comments about access concerns = 9 relating to the need to cross between platforms when crossing barriers are closed – they can be closed for more than 15 minutes...
- Comments about replacement buses = 17
- “Other ideas” = 11 separate ideas were suggested under this heading.

Detail and analysis from responses

Where responses came from:

It is most encouraging that at least 43 people in Westerfield (out of 202 homes) responded to the survey. Most envisage that they could make greater use of the station, subject to improvements that they suggested.

However, it is worrying that nobody from the 52 homes in Henley Gate that were leafleted appears to have replied. This implies that the community moving into the Northern Fringe do not see the service at Westerfield as being relevant to them. This must be influenced by the fact that the developers have not provided any pedestrian or bike access from the development to Westerfield Station. Indeed, this is only planned to be implemented once phase 7 is complete (perhaps 15 years-time!).

The remaining responses were from people in North Ipswich and nearby villages like Tuddenham.

Frequency of trains calling at Westerfield.

46 out of 71 responses mentioned that improving the frequency of trains at Westerfield would likely enable respondents completing the survey to make more use of the station. People recalled the service when all East Suffolk Line (ESL) trains called at Westerfield, before the hourly service to Lowestoft was implemented.

The lack of a direct link to Woodbridge was mentioned several times, but access to other stations on the ESL was also wanted. The absence of any service on Saturdays was mentioned several times.

Trains departing on the hour from Liverpool St are scheduled to arrive just after the Felixstowe service leaves, and those departing on the half hour typically require a 20-minute wait. East Suffolk Line services could provide timetable infill to reach Westerfield.

Some Westerfield residents were explicit that they travel by car to Woodbridge, or to Ipswich Station, because the service from Westerfield is inadequate / unsuitable.

Reliability

Poor reliability of service was mentioned by fourteen people, but six people mentioned that the reliability of the service was generally good.

The concern about reliability may be related to the question about what happens when trains are not running – bus replacement service:

Bus Replacement Service

More people (seventeen) were concerned about the lack of any bus or taxi replacement service when the trains are not running. Westerfield is not served by rail replacement buses when there is a problem on either the Felixstowe or ESL service. This was seen as a barrier to use of the railway service, as passengers will not be supported when the service is not running correctly.

Car Parking

32 people mentioned lack of car parking and drop off points at the station as a barrier to more use of the rail services. 4 people who lived very close said that parking was not a problem. A comment was made about cars parked outside houses on Westerfield Rd, but it is not clear whether these were parked by people using the railway or local residents. There have been occasions when Northbound vehicles have stopped on the crossing when a bus or lorry cannot pass the parked car, with a line of vehicles queuing to cross towards Ipswich making the road narrow.



People have parked at the church and walked to the station, a distance of nearly half a mile. Some people use the Railway Inn car park (but please note that the Railway Inn management say that this is not allowed).

It is noted that some drivers stop at the entrance to Network Rail yard to provide drop-off and collection of passengers.

Bus Service

Six people were keen to have an improved bus service, but four people lived near the station and were not concerned. A plea was made that bus arrival and departure times were aligned with the train times. Although clearly buses would have to either arrive shortly before a train departure, or depart shortly after a train arrival. Access to the station from the bus stop is not ideal with many comments about pedestrian access to the station. See picture below. For intending bus users travelling northwards from Westerfield station towards the villages and Framlingham, it is not clear which side of the level crossing to wait for the bus as the location of the stop is not identified clearly.

Footpaths and pavements.

Thirty people were concerned about pavements and footpaths. There are problems walking from North Ipswich on a narrow, exposed, unlit pavement that is often flooded and with vegetation obstructing the path to the south of the station. Similar hazards exist for pedestrians walking along Westerfield Road on the north side of the railway, and for those continuing to Lower Road and Church Lane.

The new footpaths to be built on the Northern Fringe Development were mentioned as a potential enabler, but the developers say that these will not be constructed for a long time.

The photo below shows some flooding on the pavement and on Westerfield Rd just south of the Station, this was after relatively light rain.



Pavement to south of Westerfield Station



Lack of pavement from Bus Stop to Station

There is no pavement on the East side of Westerfield Rd between the station and the South-bound bus stop to the North of the Station.

Access

The lack of a designated drop-off point for people with heavy bags or some disability was mentioned in the feedback on car parking. This is linked to car parking.

However, the biggest concern was about the lack of a safe way to cross between the two platforms. Nine people mentioned the need for a footbridge between the platforms.

~95% of Westerfield Village houses are located to the North of the line, but most trains stop on platform 1, on the south side of the line. With close running of freight and passenger services the crossing gates often remain closed for more than 15 minutes, staying closed whilst two or more trains pass. This means that people need to get to the platform 20 minutes before the train is due, to make sure that they do not get stranded and miss the train. There was a report of some passengers missing trains and others illegally using the slope at the Eastern end of the platforms to get to the desired platform.



East end of the station platforms



West end of the platforms

The signage does make it very clear that the track must not be crossed at the ends of the platform. There is no facility to cross the track here. It is not safe to cross here.

Unfortunately, the new footbridge to accommodate the Fonnereau Way does not provide access to either platform: it is too far away with no direct access between the bridge and the station.



One person suggested moving the station to be adjacent to the new footbridge.

There does not appear to be an easy answer to this challenge. ESTA committee members have ideas that we need to discuss with Greater Anglia and Network Rail.

Other comments identified:

Thirteen respondents used “other ideas” to reinforce the message that having more trains stopping at Westerfield would boost their usage of the station. Two points were made by more than one person so 11 ideas are shown below.

1. Need an early service to connect with 6:45 from Ipswich to London
2. Ticket cost – too expensive.
3. Stadler trains are capable of faster acceleration, so that stopping at Westerfield should not add to Lowestoft to Ipswich time.
4. Need to accommodate people coming from the Northern Fringe development.
5. Advertise links between new Country Park and the station in Railway and Country Park leaflets.
6. Double the junction with the Felixstowe Line, thus allowing freight trains to travel faster and to pass each other through the station, giving a welcome reduction in road-closed time at the level crossing.
7. Ticket machine needed on platform 2 (with no reliable access from platform 1).
8. Move the station to the West of Westerfield Rd, adjacent to the new bridge, and turn the Network Rail yard into a car park and drop-off area.
9. Go back to two hourly service to Lowestoft and make them all stop at Westerfield!
10. Propose a frequent-rider rewards scheme.
11. The station garden is now a delight and people should be encouraged to visit Westerfield to see the garden!



Gaps in the Survey

Henley Gate

The lack of responses from any of the new residents of Henley Gate indicates that they do not see Westerfield Station as relevant to their travel needs. However, the expectation in the planning proposal was that the residents would make good use of public transport. The latest development plans show that the promised footpaths towards Westerfield Station will only be constructed as part of the final development phases. Even then the footpaths do not lead directly to the station, as shown in the map below (taken from planning documents). Westerfield station is at the centre of this map where two black dotted lines cross.



ESTA is concerned about the lack of pedestrian and cycle access between the Henley Gate development and Westerfield Station. We believe that there should be a demand, but currently there is no evidence that the people at Henley Gate are expecting to make any use of Westerfield Station. Developer Crest Nicholson published their interim travel plan in July 2017, assuring good links to Westerfield Station (clause 2.10) The committee would welcome contact from anyone that sees this lack of pedestrian and bike access as an issue where improvement is needed.

Predicted incremental travel demand once the service and access issues have been improved.

The survey has produced a very useful insight into views of people that use or could use Westerfield Station. More than 20% of the residents in Westerfield responding to the survey indicates the high relevance of the train service to the community. The most frequently required journey is simply to and from Woodbridge, on all days of the week, and all times. However, we have not been able to produce any detailed analysis of incremental travel demand to other ESL stations from the information collected on the survey forms.

Discussion with a sample of survey respondents indicates that people find it difficult to comment on how they might use a better service until they know what that service would look like.

Given the level of interest from the local community Suffolk County Council, Greater Anglia or Transport Focus may be willing to conduct a more formal survey.

Conclusions, Issues and Next Steps

The survey has produced a very useful insight into views of people that use or could use Westerfield Station. More than 20% of the residents in Westerfield responding to the survey which indicates the high relevance of the local railway service to the community.

The lack of feedback from residents at Henley Gate is evidence of a lost opportunity to enable and encourage residents in the new development to take advantage of Westerfield Station. The following specific issues and corresponding actions have been agreed.

	Next Steps	Liaison
1	Press Greater Anglia (GA) to provide a full service at Westerfield at the earliest possible date, so that all the East Suffolk Line trains stop at Westerfield". 46 responses stated that this would motivate them to use the station more.	GA
2	Ask GA to ensure that this is achieved without <u>any</u> increase in the travel time from Woodbridge to Ipswich, as is already delivered by those trains that currently stop at Westerfield.	GA
3	Reduce the risk of passengers being stranded on the wrong side of the barriers, unable to reach the required platform as their train approaches. Solutions include:	GA / NR
3a	- Immediately provide a notice at the entrance to platform 2, advising passengers to buy tickets on the train, to avoid being stranded at the ticket machine on platform 1	GA
3b	- Provide a ticket machine on Platform 2	GA
3c	- Provide a pedestrian bridge between the platforms, a full DDA compliant bridge may prove to be too large (and expensive) to be accommodated, so this would require a temporary dispensation to the DDA rules to allow erection of a more compact lower-cost scaffold-type bridge.	GA / NR
3d	- ensure the barriers are open immediately before a passenger train arrives, enabling passengers to get across to the right platform. Opening the barriers might be required after a preceding freight train has passed. For west-bound trains it may be necessary to only close the barrier once the train is ready to depart.	NR
3e	- instal a Scotrail style "request stop button" at the barrier so that stranded passengers can alert the driver to wait until they are able to cross to the platform after the barriers have opened. This would be beneficial in the East-bound direction.	NR
4	Provide support (taxi?) for passengers using Westerfield Station when train services are delayed or suspended. Bus replacement services do not currently serve Westerfield.	GA
5	Explore the possibility of using the Network Rail yard to the southwest of the crossing as a car park and/or with provision for a new footpath through the yard to the new footbridge and associated footpaths which would greatly increase accessibility from Henley Gate.	NR
6	Improve the signage, safety and access to the four bus stops by the station and include the missing bus stops on the map at the railway station, entrance to platform 2.	SCC, ESC, GA
7	Reduce the risk of vehicles stopping on the crossing, caused by cars parked in the road shortly beyond the crossing.	NR, SCC, ESC
8	Improve the pavements used to access the station, with improved road and pavement drains to prevent flooding and trimming bushes at the side of Westerfield Rd (N & S of the station). Lighting is a longer-term requirement so that people do not need to carry torches.	ESC, IBC, SCC
9	Motivate Henley Gate developers to provide the promised pedestrian and cycle paths to Westerfield Station as a matter of urgency	Developers, IBC, NR, ESC
10	Consider re-timing trains to Felixstowe that currently leave Ipswich as the hourly departure from Liverpool St arrives at Ipswich. Could this service depart a few minutes later?	GA, FTW
11	Make this report widely available – emailing copies to all the survey respondents that provided an email and publishing on the ESTA website. A press release should be drafted.	NR, GA, SCC, IBC, ESC, MPs

Key to Liaison points: GA- Greater Anglia; NR- Network Rail; SCC- Suffolk County Council; ESC- East Suffolk Council; IBC-Ipswich Borough Council; FTW- Felixstowe Travel Watch.

DEPARTURES FROM WESTERFIELD



This summary was produced by the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA), the independent voluntary body for local train and bus users. Membership available at £7 per year.
www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk, Correct at June 2023

Westerfield station is served by trains to and from Ipswich, Felixstowe, Saxmundham, Halesworth, Beccles, Lowestoft and the stations in between. Currently all Felixstowe line passenger trains stop at Westerfield, but very few East Suffolk Line services stop.

The train timetable below shows train departure times from Westerfield and their destination.

Platform 1 (on the south side of the track) is for trains to Ipswich and Felixstowe (F);

Platform 2 (on the North side) for East Suffolk Line stations to Lowestoft (L).

To IPSWICH (Platform 1, journey time approx. 8 minutes) for onward travel to Colchester, London, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Ely, and Peterborough

Monday to Friday departures at 05:52(F), 06:45 (L to HI), 06:54(F), 07:35 (L), 08:00 (L), 08:05(F), 08:48(L), 09:14(F), 09:46(F), 10:46(F), 11:46(F), 12:46(F), 13:46(F), 14:46(F), 15:46(F), 16:46(F), 17:46(F), 18:46(F), 19:46(F), 20:46(F), 21:46(F), 22:28(L) and 23:19(F).

Saturday departures at 06:46(F), 07:46(F), 08:46(F), 09:46(F), 10:46(F), 11:46(F), 12:46(F), 13:46(F), 14:46(F), 15:46(F), 16:46(F), 17:46(F), 18:46(F), 19:46(F), 20:46(F), 21:46(F), then 22:27(L) and 23:16(F)

Sunday departures at 09:23(L), 10:43(F), 11:23(L), 11:43(F), 12:43(F), 13:23(L), 13:43(F), 14:43(F), 15:23(L), 15:43(F), 16:43(F), 17:23(L), 17:43(F), 18:23(L), 18:43(F), 19:23(L), 19:43(F), 20:43(F) and 21:23(L)

(F) = from Felixstowe, (L) = from Lowestoft) (HI = through train to Harwich International)

To FELIXSTOWE Line Stations (Platform 1, overall journey time approx. 20 minutes)

Monday to Friday departures at 05:10, 06:10, 07:20, 08:31, 09:03, 10:04 then every hour at 4 minutes past the hour until 21:04, then 22:34

Saturday departures at 06:04 then every hour at 4 minutes past the hour until 21:04, then 22:34

Sunday departures at 10:01 then every hour at 1 minute past the hour until 20:01

To LOWESTOFT (East Suffolk Line) Stations (Platform 2)

overall journey time approx. 1 hour 25 minutes

Monday to Friday departures at 06:26 (terminates at Saxmundham), 07:41, 16:00 and 18:19

Saturday No service from Westerfield to Lowestoft, East Suffolk Line stations

Sunday departures at 10:14, 12:14, 14:14, 16:14, 18:14, 19:14, 21:14 then 22:08

Travel towards Lowestoft at other times is possible by travelling to Ipswich to catch the Lowestoft trains that do not stop at Westerfield, but the journey time is then about 2 hours. At times it may be quicker to travel to Lowestoft from Ipswich via Norwich!

	<p>Could your local Station at WESTERFIELD become the “most loved station on the East Suffolk Line”?</p>
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The East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) is the independent voluntary body that campaigns for improvement in bus and train services on behalf of local users. We hold regular meetings with Greater Anglia and Network Rail and discuss feedback obtained from rail users. Membership available at £7 per year: www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk,

The award-winning station garden is cared for by Volunteers, but do you want to use the station more?

To help us present the views of the widest possible section of the community, we are seeking the views of persons living in the area surrounding Westerfield railway station on their current and potential usage of the trains serving the station and what might encourage them to make more use of these train services. Greater Anglia claims that there are operational reasons why the service is currently limited for Lowestoft line (ESL) services. If there is strong evidence of demand for improvements ESTA will explore the possibilities of improving the service provided at Westerfield Station.

Destination	How often do you travel to:				Do you (or could you) use trains for any of these journeys?			
	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	All	Some	Never	Possible in future
To or via Ipswich								
Felixstowe								
London								
Woodbridge								
Lowestoft								
Norwich								
Another ESL station?								

What might persuade you to use the trains from Westerfield more often?

Theme	Your observation / suggestion
more frequent service: which days or time(s) of day?	
More reliable service?	
Car parking / drop-off point	
Better bus service to Westerfield Station	
Decent footpath / street lighting to reach the Station	
Other access issues	
Replacement bus service when trains not running	
Other ideas	
Your postcode, so we know your approximate location:	

Please return completed forms by 31st July 2023 to: the **Railway Inn at Westerfield** – a deposit box is located in the porch.

Or Scan & e-mail to chairman@eastsuffolktravel.org.uk Or Post to ESTA, 9 North Close, Ipswich, IP4 2TL

If you want us to contact you, or send the survey results, please provide your details. Anonymous responses are also welcome. No personal details will be published in our survey. (GDPR will be respected)

Your name Email.....