

Hatfield Heath Parish Plan



May 2005

Hatfield Heath Parish Plan

Summary

The objective of the village appraisal and plan is to determine what's good about the parish and worth retaining, what's missing and needs adding and what's not so good and needs changing.

The broad response shows that people like living in Hatfield Heath and the main reasons are the other people who live here and the rural setting.

Listed as the dislikes are speeding traffic, lack of street lighting, litter and airport expansion.

The key issues relate to personal safety, with lack of street lighting and speeding vehicles the main perceived risks, and the prospect of losing recreational facilities in the future.

The key recommendations are that the Parish Council continues its dialogue with the District Council to introduce low level street lighting to those areas of perceived vulnerability and that the Parish Council explores ways to expedite implementation of the proposals for the 30mph speed limit in the village.

Many of the other issues can either be addressed piecemeal and short term or could be combined and enduring solutions developed.

In 2001 a proposal was submitted to the District Council for comment, it was proposed to purchase farmland and provide football and cricket playing fields, changing rooms, adequate car parking space and eventually to accommodate the replacement for the village hall. The District Council planning officer indicated that there are formidable planning obstacles to such a plan and it was not pursued. It is recommended that the Parish Council facilitates the purchase of land and sets in motion a plan to address the obstacles with the long term goal of building a multi purpose community centre with shared indoor and outdoor facilities covering recreational, educational and community needs for the future.

Car parking is an issue for residents and visitors, business staff and clients, and for users of the village facilities. There is some scope to increase provision and make better utilisation of existing parking areas but a more comprehensive solution is required longer term. The Parish Council is recommended to sponsor a working group to prepare a detailed proposal.

The youngsters endorse many of the issues raised by adults in the community.

Of the 18 points they raised:

7 were related to expanding activities for all age groups

6 were related to health and safety

2 that were high on the list - No more new houses

- Keep it like it is, a normal village

another high on the list – Transport: Buses to Sawbridgeworth

The Village bakery is clearly missed.

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Acknowledgements

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The working group members are: Brian Galloway, Bob Jones, Margaret Lines, Bruno Scheggia, Kathy Smith and Mel Sullivan

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Parish Characteristics.

The parish is shown in detail on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.
National Grid reference TL523149 (using the War Memorial as a reference point).
Longitude 51°48'.7N, Latitude 0°11'.8E.

Hatfield Heath parish has an area of approximately 11.5km² (1150 hectares / 2840 acres) and is bounded by the parishes of Little Hallingbury and Hatfield Broad Oak to the north, White Roding to the east, Sheering to the west and Matching to the south.

The parish is generally between 70 metres and 85 metres above sea level dropping sharply to 60 metres in the vicinity of Pincey Brook, to the east and south of the village.

The parish is located in the district of Uttlesford, in north west Essex, at the crossroads of routes between the urban towns of Bishop's Stortford, Great Dunmow, Chelmsford and Harlow. It is surrounded by arable farmland with pockets of grazing land and paddocks.

Recent excavations by Transco revealed artefacts which show that there have been communities living in the area since the Bronze Age. Today there are over 700 dwellings, mainly located to the north of the village greens and along the approach roads. An in depth history of the village is contained in the book "A History of Hatfield Heath".

The village falls under the swathes of the noise preferential take off routes, Dover and Clacton, from Stansted Airport which is 5 miles (8 kilometres) to the north.

The M11 motorway passes over the Sawbridgeworth Road 600 metres to the west of the parish boundary and over the Stortford Road 750 metres to the north of the parish boundary.

The village is well served for amenities. It has two churches, a primary school, a GP surgery with pharmacy, a village hall, three public houses, two hotels, several restaurants and take-away food shops, a tea room, a post office, a small supermarket, several retail and service shops and many local tradesmen.

Based on the 2001 national census and extrapolating for the known increase to 720 dwellings, the population of Hatfield Heath is approximately 1810 of which 51% are female and 49% male. According to the 2001 national census, the distribution by age is:

under 16	20.6%
16 to 19	4.8%
20 to 29	7.5%
30 to 59	44.7%
60 to 74	13.4%
75 and over	8.9%

74% of households are owner occupied, 56% have two or more cars, 24% are one person households and 69% of the population are in employment.

The parish is characterised by its large, central village green surrounded by the many amenities, by the mature trees and large gardens of the houses along the approach roads and by the friendly nature of its residents.

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Parish Appraisal

In February 2003 a one day information session was held at the village hall to determine whether there were issues that required addressing in the parish. The session was run by the Parish Council and facilitated by representatives from the Rural Community Council of Essex. As a consequence of that session, the Parish Council successfully applied for a grant from the Countryside Agency; this was used to subsidise the village magazine for one year so that it could be delivered to every household in the parish and used to distribute the appraisal questionnaires and the responses.

A small working party of volunteer villagers was formed and an open meeting was held at the URC hall in November 2003 to determine the methodology for conducting the appraisal and the content of the initial questionnaire.

The initial questionnaire, delivered to every household, asked general questions to establish what the high priority issues are; the subsequent questionnaires, also delivered to every household, sought more detail on specific topics.

Separate questionnaires were hand delivered to the business community to establish what their needs are. Meetings with representatives of the local businesses were held in December 2004 and January 2005 to get their input to the appraisal.

Input was also obtained specifically from young people in the 11 to 18 age bracket. The working party was unsuccessful in finding a way to gather inputs from children aged 11 and younger.

Summaries of most of the inputs were published in the village magazine as the information became available.

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Housing

The response to the first questionnaire indicated that the majority of the community considered that the provision of affordable housing to be a high priority.

54% want to see homes for young people

50% want to see small family homes

32% want to see homes for single people

whereas,

8% want to see large family homes

3% want to see executive homes.

The response to the more detailed questionnaire indicates that the demand is quite modest and that current activities by the Rural Housing Trust, supported by the Parish Council, will satisfy demand if future developments include rented accommodation and a lower threshold for shared equity.

One and two bedroom apartments are under construction in Ardley Crescent and negotiations with owners of suitable land for further developments are under way.

About half the responses want to see rented accommodation available, a quarter of the responses want to see shared ownership available and a quarter want to see no additional accommodation made available. 60% want the accommodation to be low cost and just under half want to see the accommodation made available to local people only.

Respondents indicated no general preference for who should build although there is aversion to large private developers in favour of local authority, housing associations and self build.

The responses supporting development indicate a preference for the accommodation to be built as single dwellings or small groups of less than 10 rather than larger groups. There is also support for converting redundant buildings.

Health

96% of responses indicated satisfaction with the present health facilities at the time of the survey. However there were also many proposals for additional facilities; including a dental practice and chiropractist.

Employment

About half the responses, to the general question on employment opportunities, were in favour of more employment opportunities within the Parish and half were against.

The response to the questionnaire specifically on employment indicates that about a quarter of the population work within Hatfield Heath and a third work within 10 miles of Hatfield Heath. Less than 10% are seeking work (If you are not in waged employment, are you seeking work?) and all of those are seeking part time positions locally (If "yes" where would you prefer that work to be?). Feedback from the local business community indicates that they are satisfying that demand.

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Business

The responses to the “Business “ questionnaire indicate that just over half the businesses are located in business sites the remainder are based in domestic premises. About half the businesses want to expand and most of those indicate that it will be possible to do so. Of those that want to expand but cannot, the reasons appear to relate to planning and/or regulatory issues. A third of responses support a small unit business park.

Changes suggested for the benefit of the business community range from more support from the Parish Council, support for [roadside] advertising, reduction in rates and improved public transport.

None of the businesses are members of a local Chamber of Commerce.

Two meetings specifically to capture the concerns and aspirations of the business community were held. The Hatfield Heath Business Association has now been formed.

Education

The survey results indicated general satisfaction with the education services but some misgivings about secondary education. 93% of responses show satisfaction with the education services in the Parish. The Primary School governors, headmaster and staff are to be particularly commended.

There are misgivings (25%) about the secondary education. Several of the “local” secondary schools are in Hertfordshire and, despite the address given by the Post Office, Hatfield Heath is in Essex. Hertfordshire County Council is under no obligation to provide school places for children residing in Essex. If housing growth along the M11 corridor follows the plan from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the proposals for Harlow North (between Eastwick and High Wych), demand is likely to exceed supply and out of county applicants will almost certainly be low priority.

Street Lighting

The response to the question on street lighting (We want to know whether or not you support the cost of installation, maintenance and electricity for street lighting in Hatfield Heath) was:

Yes for the whole village	3.2%
yes but restricted to areas of perceived vulnerability	19.4%
yes to a) only if the costs are met by District or County Council	14.5%
yes to b) only if the costs are met by District or County Council	24.2%
no not at all	38.7%

Almost twice as many people support some level of lighting compared to those who want none. Of those who support lighting, almost three times as many want the lighting restricted to areas of vulnerability compared to those wanting the whole village lit.

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Road Safety

The response to the question on speed policy (We want to know whether, or not, you support the Parish Council Speed Policy) was:

Yes	88.5%
No	11.5%

The ECC support for the 30 mph speed limit may be restricted to the road immediately in front of the school.

The Parish Council Policy is to extend this to beyond the edges of the Heath to cover vulnerable junctions and roads without pedestrian pavements.

Almost 9 out of 10 people support the Parish Council's speed policy.

There is also the problem of large vehicles using the narrow slip roads in front of the pubs and shops for turning thus endangering pedestrians.

Car Parking

A meeting convened by Canon Tim Potter highlighted the complex inter-relationship between car parking convenience and perceived safety hazards to other road users.

There are short term daily parking issues for users of the GPs' surgery and for the parents delivering and collecting children at each end of the school day; these issues are exacerbated by the Village Hall car park being restricted to users of the Hall and the Institute.

Paradoxically there are two existing car parks under utilised (The Chestnuts (behind the Fish & Chip shop) – with a footpath to the school – and Pond Lane.)

Many older cottages have no provision for parking and residents are resorting to parking on the pavements often forcing pedestrians to walk in the road.

The service roads in front of the shops and pubs are frequently filled with the cars of residents and staff, leaving nowhere for passing trade to stop.

Conservation

Three out of every four responses support conservation.

Most responses related to maintenance of the Heath and footpaths and the preservation of wildlife; others relate to traffic calming, protests against airport expansion, building upkeep and litter picking. Litter picking, maintenance of the Heath and footpaths are generally managed by the Parish Council. Traffic calming is the responsibility of Essex County Council Highways Department.

Note that there is a map of the footpaths in the parish available from the village Post Office. Those who wish to protest against the growth of Stansted Airport are encouraged to support the "Stop Stansted Expansion" campaign.

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Community activities

The Parish appears to be well provided for amenities supporting community activities through the Village Hall, Institute, URC halls, the village green and land made available by local benefactors. However, there is no long term security of tenure; the lease on part of the Village Hall land expires in approximately 20 years, there are rumours of the Churches sharing one building and vacating the other and the football pitch is on land subject to a lease renewable every 5 years.

62.5% of responses support the proposal for a new combined sports and community centre in Hatfield Heath. Most indicated that such a facility should be close (walking distance) to the village centre either to the south or to the north.

Public transport

Two thirds of respondents indicated satisfaction with the present public transport service; many also indicated that improved frequency, improved reliability and an evening service would encourage more to use it.

Communications

The Village Magazine has proven invaluable as the communication tool for the Village Appraisal but only provides such a facility if delivered to every household. The recent question on Village Magazine subsidies (Should the Parish Council subsidise the magazine?) resulted in 86% saying yes.

Community Wellbeing

The responses to the questionnaire exploring the non-material aspects of the community reinforce the findings elsewhere that people value friends, family and the natural environment as a balance to the other aspects of life.

Neither the Churches nor the pubs are perceived to be significant contributors.

The Churches are known to provide the “glue” for things to happen by identifying and combining the wealth of talent available within the community and the perception of the Churches may change if they raised awareness of their activities particularly to new residents. Village events are perceived as a benefit to the community.

The footpaths need to be maintained and improved (e.g. wheelchair access, circular walks etc.)

The social clubs need to be maintained and new residents in the Parish made aware of their existence.

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Space for centrefold A3 map

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Space for centrefold A3 map

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Youth Group Views

The views of the youth group were requested and these were the responses, in order of priority, to the question “What would you like to see in our Village in the future?”

- Bakery
- No more new houses
- Street lights
- More youth activities
- Expand on the park – helter skelter
- Youth football team
- Keep it like it is, a normal village
- Buses to Sawbridgeworth
- Better mobile phone signal
- Police station that is actually open
- Internet café
- Basket ball court
- Children’s activity area
- Divert the roads around the Heath
- Pubs without smoke
- Day-care centre
- [To keep us safe from drug-users...]Area where drug-users can go to keep them away from the village
- Hospital

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Village Design Statement

A village design statement is a document describing the qualities and characteristics local people value in their village and its surroundings. It sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in the village.

A Village Design Statement cannot be used to stop new development, but it can be used to influence developers and local planning authorities, and to ensure new buildings respect and reflect local character.

A major attraction of Hatfield Heath is the diversity of styles of the architecture from manor houses, farm house and cottages built in the 19th century and earlier, to the modern energy efficient homes of the 21st century with traditional pitched roofs and brick, pargetted or timber cladding.

The Village Design Statement is considered to be vital in its own right and should be developed as a separate, supplementary document to the Parish Plan.

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Recommendations

Many of the issues raised are already being addressed by community groups or local authorities; where this is the case these recommendations should be seen as reinforcing the need for the activity to continue. These recommendations will form the basis for the Action Plan.

Recommendation 1: that the Parish Council continues its current activities with the Rural Housing Trust to meet the demand, particularly from young people of the Parish, for an increased stock of affordable housing in the Parish. It is further recommended that the Parish Council works with other authorities to ensure that the stock of houses are affordable to rent or purchase by parish people and families on low income and are not depleted by the proposals from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to allow tenants to buy these houses outright.

Recommendation 2: that the Parish Council should establish a working group to review parking in the whole village taking into consideration the following suggestions.

2a Take immediate steps to improve signposting to the existing car parks and to improve pedestrian access across the Heath to the one in Pond Lane.

2b Increase the length and depth of the existing parking area opposite the Thatchers to allow parking at 90° to the road and encourage drivers to not park on the pavement.

2c Formalise the parking arrangement for residents to park immediately in front of Brown's Cottages, leaving half the double width pavement for pedestrians and allowing clear visibility for drivers exiting Broomfields.

2d Install permeable hard standing in grassed areas in front of the surgery. And consider installing in other grassed areas around Broomfields where car parking is practical.

2e Introduce waiting restrictions in the slip roads to prevent all day parking

2f Work with the Highways Department to change the roads around the Heath to a gyratory system, freeing half the carriageway for car parking.

2g Persuade UDC to release land to access rear gardens of dwellings to facilitate off road parking

Recommendation 3: that the local businesses should develop the recently held forum into a local Chamber of Commerce, or equivalent, which could rationalise the sometimes conflicting requirements and present agreed and well researched proposals to the appropriate Parish, District or County Council; and conversely provide a point of contact with whom those councils may communicate on generic issues.

Recommendation 4: within six months the Parish Council should contact the Essex County Council education department requesting that they give consideration to planning a future secondary school in the vicinity of Hatfield Heath to serve the west Essex villages.

Recommendation 5: that the Parish Council and District Councillor should continue their negotiations with the District Council for provision of low level lighting in the vicinity of The Close within the current fiscal year (2005/06).

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Recommendation 6: that the Parish Council should expedite the implementation of the 30mph proposal submitted to the Highways Department in January 2004, with a target of implementing in the current financial year (2005/06).

Recommendation 7: that the Parish Council should take steps to identify suitable land, either directly or through a community body such as the Village Hall Trust, to accommodate the future recreational needs of the community. Those steps may include authorising a project team to prepare a programme for scoping the project – costs, funding sources, outline planning approvals, land purchase, architectural design, detailed planning approvals, development and *modus operandi* for the facility...

Recommendation 8: that the Parish Council considers building an all weather sports court (e.g. basketball, 5-a-side football etc) within the existing play area.

Recommendation 9.

9a: that within three years the Village Magazine committee secure sufficient advertising revenue and sponsorship to make the magazine available free to every household.

9b that the Parish Council underwrite any shortfall between advertising revenue and the costs of publishing the magazine.

9c that the magazine should be supplemented with a village website providing local information and links to other key web sites.

Recommendation 10: that the Parish Council sponsor the resurrection of the Conservation Society within the next 12 months.

Recommendation 11: that the Churches review and improve their process for identifying new residents and include the Village “Who’s Who” guide with their welcome pack.

Recommendation 12: that the Parish Council arranges for the Information Bus to visit Hatfield Heath to provide education on the perils of drug abuse. Further that the Parish Council requests the Police Community Officer to review the drug related situation in Hatfield Heath.

Recommendation 13: that the local bus operatives trial evening services to local towns and a daytime service to Sawbridgeworth.

Recommendation 14: that the Parish Council continues to sponsor the Parish Plan Committee with the objective of producing a Design Statement to supplement the Parish Plan.

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Cross reference

Recommendation	1	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e	2f	2g	3	4	5	6	7	8	9a	9b	9c	10	11	12	13	14	
Housing	◆																						◆
Health													◆	◆							◆		
Employment													❖									❖	
Business		◆							◆				❖		❖	❖	❖						❖
Education										◆			❖										
Street Lights											◆												❖
Road safety		◆	◆	◆								◆											❖
Car parking		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆					◆										❖
Conservation																		◆					◆
Community activities													◆	◆	❖	❖	❖						
Public transport																	❖					◆	
Sport & community centre													◆	◆									❖
Community wellbeing	◆									◆	❖		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖
Youth group													◆	◆			❖				◆	◆	
Communications															◆	◆	◆		◆				
Design statement																							◆

◆ = strong association

❖ = weak association

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The Parish Plan

The Hatfield Heath Parish Plan has evolved from the recommendations made in the Parish Appraisal after analysis of responses to the Parish Appraisal questionnaires distributed to every household and business throughout 2004. The plan is not prescriptive but seeks to propose ways forward for addressing the various issues and opportunities raised.

A successful outcome to the plan will be dependent upon members of the community making their skills and enthusiasm available to the various working groups required to determine and develop the solutions.

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Action	Lead responsibility	Partners	Priority	Timescale	Notes
1. Increase the stock of affordable housing for rent and purchase in Hatfield Heath	Parish Council	Rural Housing Trust Uttlesford District Council	Medium	Ongoing.	Suitable land to be identified. "Affordability" requires defining.
2. Establish a working group to prepare a detailed proposal for short term and long term solutions to the car parking problems	Parish Council	Community volunteers, Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council (Highways)	High	2005	The output from the working group will detail cost estimates and regulatory approvals required for each proposal. Should attempt to build on the group addressing the parking issue in front of Brown's Cottages.
3. Consolidate the local business forum	Parish Businesses (Chair: Brendan Carrig)	Business Link for Essex	Medium	Ongoing.	Forum has been established. Objectives, scope and procedures are to be developed.
4. Request Essex County Council to consider planning a secondary school in the vicinity of Hatfield Heath.	Parish Council	Essex County Council Head of School Services	Medium	Request should be made to ECC by year end 2005.	Justification requires preparing using data from the East of England Plan and the Stansted/M11 Corridor Options Study.
5. Provide low level lighting in the vicinity of The Close	Uttlesford District Council	Parish Council	High	Ongoing but should target completion in the fiscal year 2005/2006	

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6. Implement the proposal for the 30mph speed limit through the village	Parish Council	Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council	High	Target the fiscal year 2005/2006	In the locally determined budget, £10000 is currently allocated for traffic calming in Hatfield Heath for the year 2006/2007. The detailed implementation plan should be agreed before then.
7. Establish a working group to identify suitable land and funding sources for providing community recreational facilities	Parish Council	Community volunteers	High	The loss of existing facilities is not imminent but the scope of the task requires quantifying so that appropriate plans may be made at the optimum time.	The total cost is likely to be in seven figures so external funding sources will require identification. An immediate priority is identifying and securing a suitable plot of land together with liaison with District Planning.
8. Consider building an all weather sports court (eg basketball, 5-a-side football etc) within the existing play area.	Parish Council	Community volunteers	High	Review proposals in 2005	Costs to be established. This may form part of the plan activity 7.
9. Provision of the Village Magazine free to every household in Hatfield Heath	Village Magazine Committee	Parish Council	High	Ongoing	The target is for advertising revenue to finance the magazine but for ensured continuity there is a requirement for the Parish Council to underwrite any shortfall in revenue.
10. Resurrect the Conservation Society	Parish Council	Community Volunteers	Medium	2005/2006	There may be a requirement for the Parish Council to support the society by provision of some tools and materials.

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11. Improve perception of Churches' contribution to the Parish's wellbeing and increase "inclusion" in the Parish.	Holy Trinity Church, United Reformed Church	Parish Council, Parish social clubs, Village Magazine.	Medium	2005	The process for identifying and greeting new residents requires review and improvement. The welcome pack should include the comprehensive "Who's Who" guide. Fall back position would be to advertise the availability of the pack in the Village Magazine.
12. Assess whether there is drug abuse issue in the Parish and take steps to highlight the perils of drug abuse.	Parish Council	Community Police, Youth group leaders	High	2005	Invite the Community Police Officer to review the drug abuse related situation in Hatfield Heath Arrange for the Information Bus to visit Hatfield Heath to provide drug awareness information.
13. Request evening time bus services to Harlow and Bishop's Stortford and a daytime service to Sawbridgeworth	Parish Council	Transport for Essex, Local bus operators	Medium	2005	
14. Develop a Design Statement for Hatfield Heath to supplement the Parish Plan.	Parish Council	Community volunteers	High	2005	Cost of publication will need to be met by local funds as the Countryside Agency grant will have expired.