
Ashwell Parish Plan



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Preface

Open Letter from the Chairman of Ashwell Parish Council

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PREFACE

Open Letter from the Chairman of Ashwell Parish Council

Welcome to the Ashwell Parish Plan.

This document is the result of a process which began in September 2005. It is a statement of what our Parish is about and what we would like to see in the future.

The Parish Plan is not just aimed at our own community but is also a statement to policy-makers, so that our views can be heard. Promoting the Plan will be the role of the Parish Council but to succeed we will also need support from the community. We hope that you will keep an interest in the Plan and will take part in whichever way you can.

I hope that this Plan can help to preserve what is so good in Ashwell and to improve those facilities and amenities that need attention.



Mark White, Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

Acknowledgments

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

The Ashwell Parish Plan was commissioned by Ashwell Parish Council and was approved in May 2007. The plan contains a series of action points. It is intended to be valid for the next ten years and is due for review after five years. It also provides useful reference material on the Parish.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Ashwell Parish Plan are:

to gather information on conditions, views and lifestyles in the Parish,

to produce a statement of how the people of Ashwell see their community progressing over the next five to ten years, and

to influence those decision-making bodies with responsibility for community affairs so that the wishes of the people of Ashwell are given proper consideration.

1.3 Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself progressing over the next five to ten years. To be successful it must:

reflect, as far as possible, the views of all sections of the community,

identify which features and local characteristics people value,

identify local problems and opportunities,

spell out how residents want the community to develop in the future, and

prepare a plan of action to achieve this.

Why produce a Parish Plan?

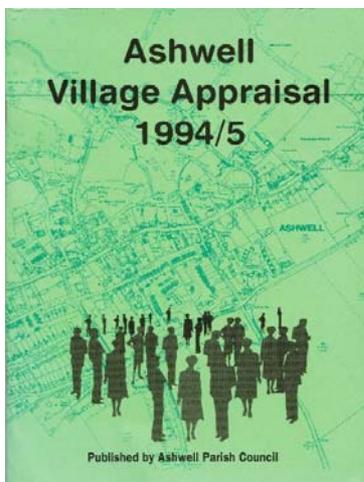
It is central Government policy to increase individual participation in public life and for public bodies to consult communities about the delivery of services. As part of this policy the Government wants to give more power to Parish Councils to decide what is best for their own communities.

A Parish Plan shows that we take our future seriously. It will improve our chances of winning local authority support and funding, thereby enhancing our economic, social and environmental well-being.

It gives us the evidence to help inform policy-making by a range of organisations, from the local planning authority to the police and health services. It also helps us to develop and maintain working relationships with all those outside bodies which provide services to our community.

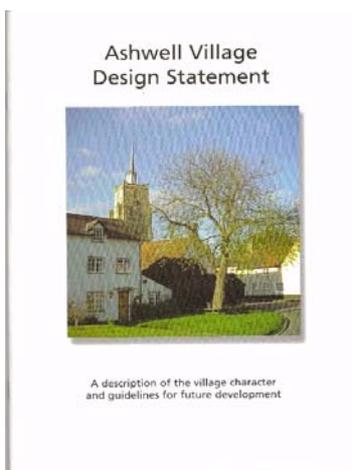
Rural communities will face tough challenges in the 21st century and we must do what we can to maintain and improve the quality of life in our area. The Parish Plan will ensure that decisions affecting our village will incorporate and reflect local opinions.

How does the Parish Plan differ from previous initiatives?



There have been three Village Appraisals in Ashwell (1976, 1994/5 and 2004). The Village Appraisal 1976 published statistics and views of the village but did not specify action plans. The 1994/5 Village Appraisal was followed by the setting up of a Parish Council Think Tank. This in turn led to the Village Design Statement, a comprehensive traffic survey and plan, and to the formation of a group seeking to provide a new Community Centre to replace the existing Village Hall. In 2002 the County Council undertook a survey of village opinion as part of its Travel Plan process. In 2004, the Parish Council carried out a restricted survey of recreational facilities in the village and their use. The Parish Plan is a comprehensive document based on up-to-date information on all aspects of village life. Unlike the previous documents it contains action plans against which progress can be measured.

How does it fit in with the Village Design Statement?



The Ashwell Village Design Statement (published in 2000) describes the important features of the village. It lists the factors that should influence building in the village. The Village Design Statement has been adopted by North Hertfordshire District Council as 'supplementary planning guidance' and must be taken into account when planning applications in the Parish are being decided.

What use is it?

It is expected to improve local decision-making. Our Parish Plan will help to set priorities and target limited resources. It will lead to actions that will improve the way our local area and services are managed. Benefits that have resulted from Parish Plans produced by other villages include: low cost housing schemes, transport schemes, highway safety improvements, village hall refurbishment and 'good neighbour' groups.

Will anybody listen?

The action plans will be the key to this. Their progress can be measured. They will help to guide the Parish Council, the District Council and the County Council in their decisions affecting Ashwell. It is intended that the Parish Plan will help us to gain greater access to funding for our local projects.

1.4 Financing the Plan

The production of Parish Plans was initially sponsored by central Government and funding was provided through a variety of organisations. Initial funding for the Ashwell Parish Plan came from savings on the production of the Ashwell Village Design Statement. Ashwell Parish Council helped to fund development and production costs. The District Council and the County Council also helped to fund production costs. The support of all these organisations is gratefully acknowledged.

1.5 Survey Results

Except where noted, the charts in the following sections and the text that accompanies them are based on the results of the village-wide survey conducted in April 2006. Copies of the survey results are available (both in electronic and paper formats) from the Parish Clerk.

2.0 THE PARISH OF ASHWELL

Summary

To a large extent, the character of the village of Ashwell is determined by its location and its history. This chapter provides information on:

- Location
- A summary of the History of Ashwell
- A summary of Previous Parish Initiatives

2.1 Location

The village of Ashwell lies at the centre of a large parish, extending to over 4,000 acres. The parish is the most northerly in Hertfordshire and borders both Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The early settlement developed to the north-east of a shallow chalk escarpment near springs surrounded by Ash trees, from which the village derives its name.

2.2 History of Ashwell

The present village of Ashwell was probably created in the early tenth century as a planned Anglo-Saxon market town. When first laid out, with regular plots, six perches (33 yards) wide on the High Street by a furlong (220 yards) running up to Ashwell Street. It is unlikely that Silver Street/Back Street, Kingsland Way, Bear Lane and Wilsons Lane existed at that time.



The main feature of the Anglo-Saxon town was the market place which filled the space bounded by High Street, on the south, Gardiners Lane on the west and Swan Street, Hodwell and the footpath from Hodwell to the Springs where it joins High Street, on the north. The market place would have been divided into two parts – that between High Street, Gardiners Lane, Swan Street and Church Lane for stalls and the rest, from Church Lane to the Springs, for animals. A church, probably of timber construction, would have been on the site of St Mary's. On the south side of High Street the plots would have been for farms although some commercial activity might also have taken place there.

The town and market must have grown because, by 1086, the Domesday Book refers to Ashwell as a borough – the only one between Hertford to the south and Cambridge and Bedford to the north. The Domesday Book records that there were 14 burgesses in Ashwell. Burgesses were citizens who controlled the market, paid dues to the Lord of the Manor, the Abbot of Westminster, and collected tolls and fines from the market. Any profit was theirs.

Domesday lists a total of 83 heads of households in Ashwell. This would have included the hamlet of Glytton, or, as we know it today, Ashwell End and at least two other sites, probably West End and Mobs Hole. The total population would have been between 330 and 580.

In the early Middle Ages the population of Ashwell, like that of England as a whole, would have grown steadily and by 1300 would have been between 740 and 820. There would also have been more houses built. Most of these would have been around the market place but some would have been down Mill Street. In this period the commercial activity of markets generally, and in Ashwell in particular, grew with a greater variety of goods being sold. This increase in activity probably encouraged sub-dividing of plots and led to some infilling between the houses on the south side of High Street. Some of these new lots would have been used for commercial purposes and not just for homes and farms. Buildings used commercially would have needed easier access to the rear of the properties than could be had from Ashwell Street. It is therefore likely that Silver Street and Back Street, Kingsland Way, Bear Lane and Wilsons Lane were cut through at this time.



After this date the population of England started to stagnate as the population outgrew the means of food production. In 1348/50 between a third and half of the population died because of the devastating effects of the Black Death. There is no reason to believe that Ashwell did not follow the national trend. Evidence of the effect of the Black Death and the anguish felt by the people of Ashwell can still be seen in the graffiti in the tower of St Mary's Church.



The effect of the reduction in the population resulting from the 1348/50 attack of Black Death was probably maintained for over a century since there were further outbreaks roughly every eleven years. This meant that there was little new housing until later in the fifteenth century. The market however continued but did not grow as much as it might have done if it had been on a major road. There was also competition from many new markets in the area. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries a number of houses were built, or rebuilt. Foresters in High Street, although initially built before 1450, was greatly extended in the period between 1450 and 1650. The Rose and Crown (originally called the George), Bear House, Dixies Farm House, Spring Hall, Ducklake, Ashwell Stores, the Star of India and some buildings in Mill Street were all either started or extended in this period. This was a period which has been called the Great Rebuilding and the above list shows that Ashwell was not left out.





From the mid-sixteenth century to the 1660s a number of other buildings were built: the Museum, 56 High Street, Springhead, 53 High Street, the Brotherhood House (Days is in part of it), Two Brewers, Kirby Manor, Crumps and more. Ashwell then went into a period of decline and between 1660 and 1820 only two notable new houses were built – the Merchant Taylors' School and the Rectory, the latter replacing an earlier timber-framed building.



In the Victorian era (1837–1902) the population of Ashwell doubled and then declined. The 1801 population of 715 rose to 1,576 in 1871 and then fell back to 1,282 in 1901. As the population rose people had to be housed and so a number of small houses for farm labourers were built in Kingsland Way, Back Street and Lucas Lane. Larger houses, such as London House, Little Garth, the Grange and Cambridge Villas, were also built. One other way to help the housing shortage was to convert larger timber-framed houses, which were not popular, to multi-occupancy. As a result Foresters Cottages in High Street became five dwellings, Bear House two and the two houses in Mill Street (north of Rolly's Lane) three each. The 1850 fire of Ashwell put further pressure on the need for houses. Some 200 people were made homeless when the fire destroyed all the buildings in Silver Street as well as a few in Back Street and High Street.



The rapid decline of the population between 1891 and 1901 was caused by a lack of employment, so the pressure for more houses was eased for a while. In the 1920s the push for 'homes fit for heroes' led to the council houses in Station Road being built. After the Second World War more housing was needed and Dixies Close was built followed by the houses in Bear Lane and Ashwell Street.

By the 1960s many people who lived in towns and cities started to see the benefits of living in the country and commuting to work. So there was, and has been since, an influx of newcomers many of whom wanted larger houses. The result has been that house prices have risen and local, not so wealthy young people cannot afford to buy. Some of the houses that were in multiple occupations have been altered and the number of homes reduced. Foresters Cottages in High Street went from five to three, Bear house from two to one, the Brotherhood House from four homes and a shop to two homes and a shop. Some of the small Victorian terraced houses have been amalgamated with their neighbours, reducing the number further. This can be seen in Kingsland Way and Foresters Cottages in Back Street.

The market has long gone and most people drive out of the village to shop. No longer does Ashwell have two or three butchers, two bakers, two grocery shops, a greengrocer and other retail outlets. However it still has three pubs, a butcher, a baker, a pharmacy, a village store, a Post Office, an Indian take-away, a gift shop, a picture seller/framer, an Estate Agent and two hairdressers. For a village of some 1,700 people it still has more facilities than might be expected. This is probably a throwback to the late Anglo-Saxon time when Ashwell was a thriving market town.

2.3 Summary of Previous Parish Initiatives

The **Ashwell Village Appraisal 1976** was produced by a group of volunteers. It defined the elements – social, architectural, natural and historical – which combine to give Ashwell its own special value. The main purposes of the Appraisal were: to enable villagers to make quick and informed responses to proposals affecting them, and to assist planning and decision-making bodies in their consideration of the village.

The **Ashwell Village Appraisal 1994/5** recorded the changes that had taken place since the first appraisal. It was initiated and funded by the Parish Council and was carried out by a group of volunteers. The final report contained a wealth of information about the village and future needs. The report concluded with ‘Twenty Key Points’ for consideration. A copy of the report was delivered free to all households in the Parish.

The **‘Mini-appraisal’** of 2004 was aimed particularly at evaluating village sporting facilities and use of venues.

2.4 The Parish Council

Parish Councils are the local tier of Government. Ashwell Parish Council meets once a month. The 12 councillors and the part-time Clerk have a role in maintaining facilities within the village. Specific items include:

- The Burial Ground and the Chapel of Rest
- The Recreation Ground including the playground and the Pavilion
- Small Gains: the allotments and the sports ground
- The Springs basin
- Environmental cleaning outside the route of Highways sweepers
- The War Memorial
- The Lock-up
- Merchant Taylors’ Green
- Seats and waste bins
- Dog waste bins
- Notice boards

Lighting	The provision and maintenance of the 'footway lights' is currently under discussion but has traditionally been the responsibility of the Parish Council. Discussions are currently under way with Hertfordshire Highways to improve and upgrade these. Many of the columns and light brackets are coming to the end of their useful life.
Planning	The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications in the Parish. There are many other items that come to the Parish Council from central Government and other bodies for comment. There is a role in acting as a reporting agent to the District Council and County Council Highways departments regarding roads, pavements and footpaths in the parish.
Committees	The Parish Council has five committees: Finance, Planning, Recreation and Facilities, Streets and Environment, and Springs. The Planning Committee consists of the whole Council and meets on site as needed, usually twice monthly. The opinion of the Council is submitted to the Planning Department at NHDC. There are also working groups as required. At present these include: Energy, Parish Plan, Quality Status, the Yearbook, Valued Features and the Website.
Funding	The Parish Council raises funds on the Council Tax as a precept. The Council employs a part-time Clerk, an environmental cleaner and a Recreation Ground cleaner. The councillors work entirely voluntarily. The Parish Council's accounts are subject to review by the Audit Commission each year.
Elections	Elections to the Parish Council take place on a four-year cycle and are run by the District Council. The Chair and Vice-chair of the Parish Council are elected internally. In the event of a vacancy occurring during a council term, specific steps must be taken to fill the gap. This may involve a poll which has to be funded by the Parish Council.
Quality Council	Successive Governments have supported the role of Parish Councils and have suggested increased responsibilities. One step forward for Ashwell Parish Council would be the attainment of Quality Council status. This would give a higher profile in local government and allow better access to funding for community affairs and facilities. Functions such as street cleaning, street naming, lighting, tree preservation orders, recycling measures and some aspects of development control could be devolved from District to Parish level.

2.4.1 Recreation Ground and Pavilion

The Parish Council has responsibility for the maintenance of these for the village. The ground is used mainly for football and cricket. There is also a newly redeveloped playground for younger children, including a small skateboard ramp. The pavilion attracted some criticism in the survey responses. Improvements are needed.

2.4.2 Burials and Burial Ground



Ashwell is fortunate to have a burial ground that was donated to the Parish Council early in the last century. The donor, Phyllis Fordham, was sufficiently far-sighted to make only part of the ground available initially but with a promise of more when needed. For this reason the Chapel of Rest is built apparently to one side of the Burial Ground but is in fact sited in the centre of the ground. Over the last few years the previously consecrated land has been filled with burials and so a further portion of the plot was consecrated by the Bishop of Hertford in 2003.

Burial plots are sold by the council and are then used as required. Recent advice means that the plots are sold for a fixed term of 99 years. The Clerk has the job of liaising with undertakers to ensure that any burial takes place in the correct location. There is a chart of all the burials that have taken place in the past so that anyone can find where a relative is buried.

The Parish Council has a responsibility to ensure that the cemetery is maintained in good order. A set of regulations covers the types of memorial stone and surround that are permitted. A contractor cuts the grass regularly and also helps to keep the trees and shrubs trimmed. Relatives are expected to keep their grave sites tidy and the council employs someone to clear up neglected areas.

War Memorial

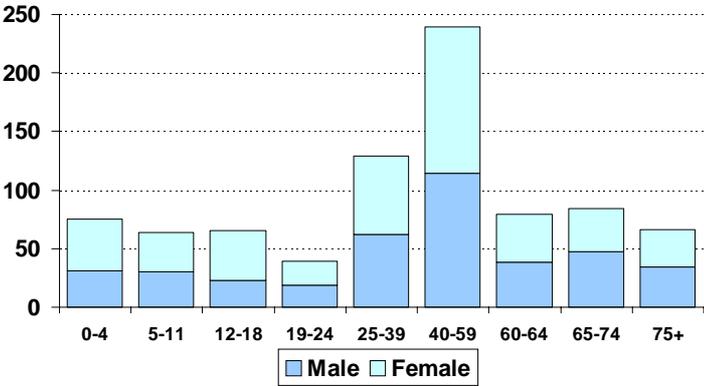


The Ashwell War Memorial is one of only two Parish war memorials in England designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The Parish Council has contributed to the maintenance of the memorial over the years.

2.5 Population

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the population of Ashwell in 2001 was 1,660 (31 more than in 1991). This is some 1.3% of the total population of North Hertfordshire. The population of North Hertfordshire is expected to grow by 8.4% in the decade to 2014, while the national growth rate over the same period is expected to be only 5.3%.

Population profile by Age and Sex



Base: 332 households

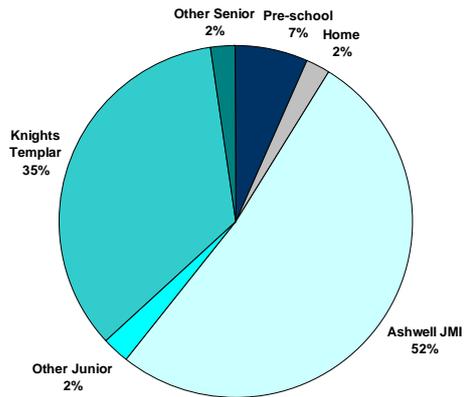
Some 53% of Ashwell residents are aged between 25 and 64. This is just below the average level for North Hertfordshire, but in line with the national figure. Almost 18% of residents are aged 65 or over, slightly more than the regional and national averages. Almost 9% of Ashwell residents are under five years of age. This compares with around 6% at the regional and national levels. Female residents outnumber males, by 56% to 44%.

2.6 Education



Ashwell Primary School was opened in 1878 and serves Ashwell and the surrounding villages. In 2006 the school had 241 pupils on the roll, aged 3 to 11, organised into eight classes. (In 1994 there were 187 pupils on the roll.) Ashwell School consistently exceeds national averages for its results at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Where do you go to school?

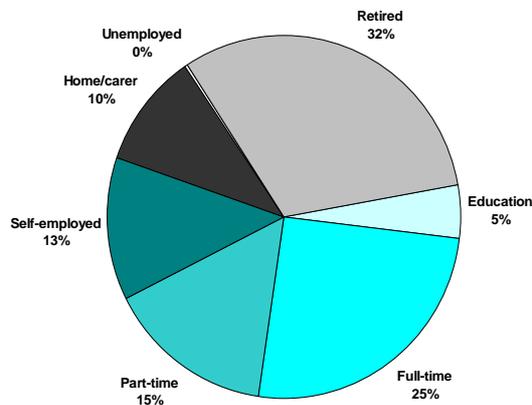


Base: 87 replies

A large majority of Ashwell children of primary school age attend the village JMI school. Knights Templar, in Baldock, is the school attended by most pupils at the secondary level. Small numbers of children attend other schools, mostly in the private sector, and a few are home-educated.

2.7 Employment

Employment profile

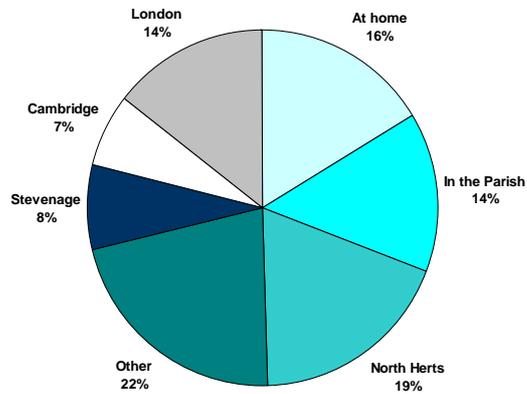


Base: 471 replies

The employment profile shows some significant changes since the Village Appraisal 1994/5. The proportion of people employed full-time has dropped from 37% to 25%. The number of retired people has risen, from just over one-fifth of the population to almost one-third. The proportion of people who are self-employed is almost unchanged. One in ten residents are home-makers or carers.

There is a very low level of unemployment in Ashwell. Only one respondent to the survey was recorded as unemployed. In 2001, the level of unemployment in Ashwell was under 2% (ONS). This is well below both local and national averages.

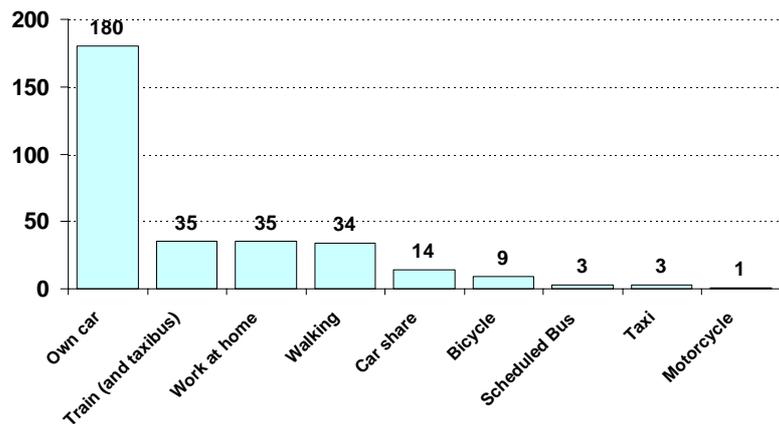
If you are employed, where do you work?



Base: 269 replies

Some 30% of employed residents work within the Parish. A further 19% work elsewhere in North Hertfordshire. The three main daily commuting destinations are London, Stevenage and Cambridge. More than one-fifth of employed people travel to other locations.

What is your main form of transport to and from work?

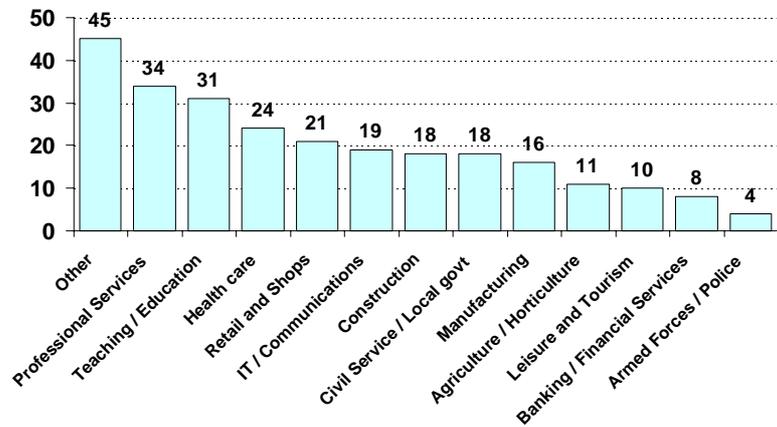


Base: 314 replies

Residents use a variety of types of transport to travel to work. Cars are by far the most common means of transport, with nearly 60% of survey respondents driving to work. More than one in ten residents uses the train (including the Ashwell taxibus service). Around 20% of

residents either work from home or walk to work. Fewer than 1% of Ashwell residents surveyed rely on local buses for daily travel.

What type of industry do you work in?

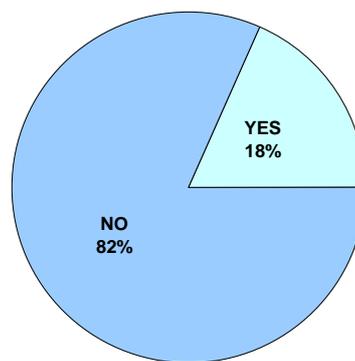


Base: 259 replies

Ashwell residents work in a wide variety of employment sectors, including large proportions in professional services and the public sector.

2.8 Crime and Policing

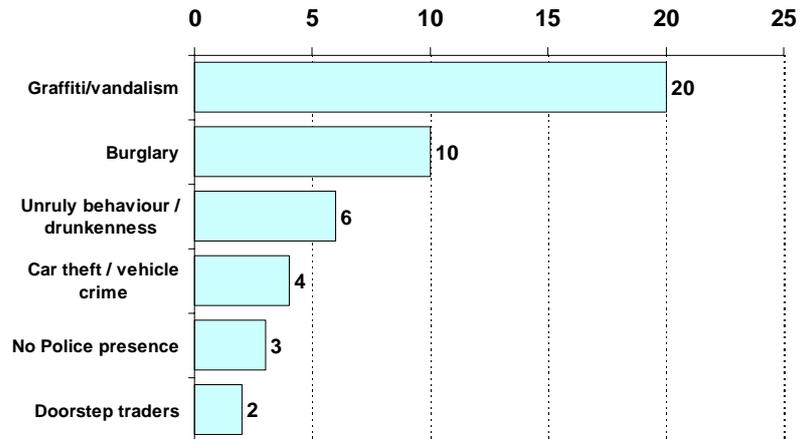
Have you been the victim of crime in the Parish in the last five years?



Base: 373 replies

Crime is an important concern for some local people, with nearly one in five residents having been the victim of some form of crime in the past five years. It should be noted that these are largely crimes against property, including theft of vehicles and from vehicles, and vandalism. Only 2% of crimes reported were against the person.

Please indicate any crime or security issues that are of particular concern to you?



The key concerns of residents include problems with graffiti and vandalism, as well as home burglaries.

Action Point 1
Parish Council
May 2008

A framework will be developed to allow the continued support of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in the village, in order to maintain frequent contact with local Police Officers and to encourage technical solutions to specific issues, as appropriate.

3.0 SERVICES AND FACILITIES

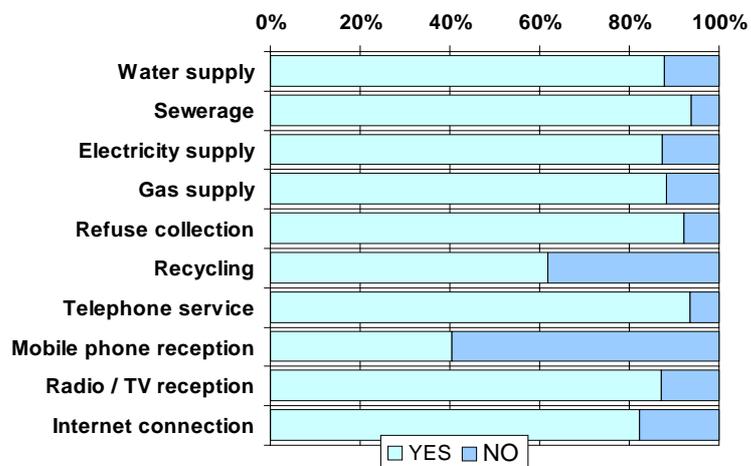
Summary

- Residents are generally satisfied with the quality of service provision to the village. Recycling facilities and mobile telephone coverage are notable exceptions which should be addressed.
- Local shops and services are highly prized. Almost 99% of residents use the Post Office and Chemist at least once a month.
- The four public halls in the village have steady use. All four are used, at one time or another, by more than half the population.
- Some 40% of respondents attend one or other of the places of worship. The three public houses in the village are visited, at least monthly by more than 60% of residents.
- Residents gather information about local events and issues from a variety of sources.

3.1 Provision of Local Services

The survey recorded a strong positive response to the provision of local services. Most scored a satisfaction level of 80% or more.

Are you satisfied with the following services to your dwelling?



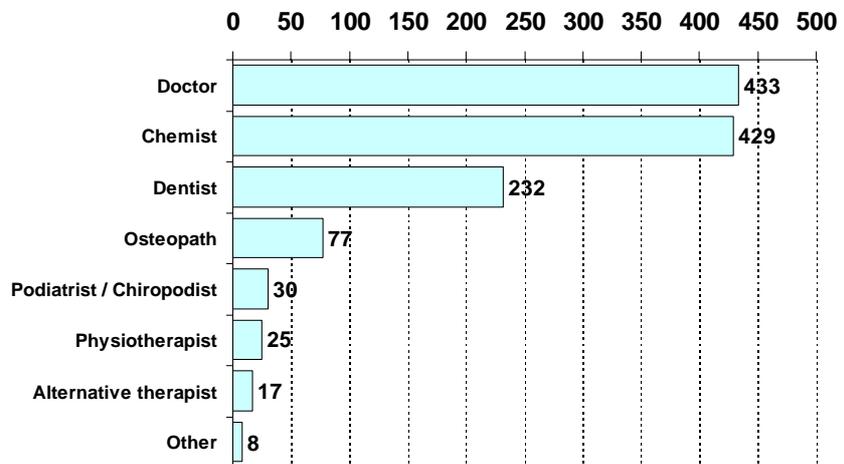
While the collection of local household waste received a good score, just 60% of residents felt the quality of local recycling services was adequate. The standard telephone service was generally considered very good, with over 90% of respondents satisfied. However, the satisfaction level for the mobile service was only 40%.

<p>Action Point 2 Parish Council May 2008</p>	<p>The Parish Council will establish a framework for the improvement of recycling facilities in the village.</p>
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<p>Action Point 3 Parish Council Ongoing</p>	<p>The Parish Council will encourage the provision of a better mobile phone service, within the framework of the Ashwell Village Design Statement.</p>
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3.2 Health services

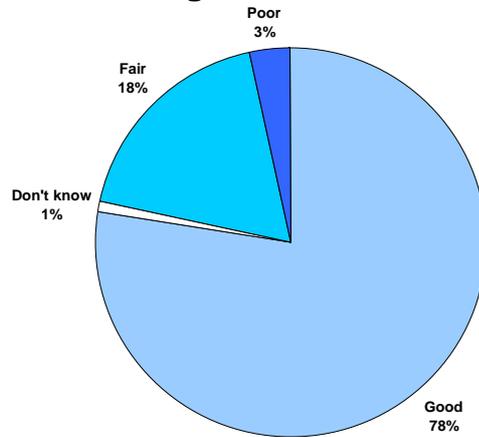
Have you used any of the following services in the last five years?



Local health services, in particular the Doctors' Surgery and the Chemist, are used by the vast majority of residents. Alongside these services and the Dental Surgery, there are other locally-based health professionals. As a result, 95% of residents have no difficulty in accessing health services in Ashwell.

3.3 Retail Services and Businesses

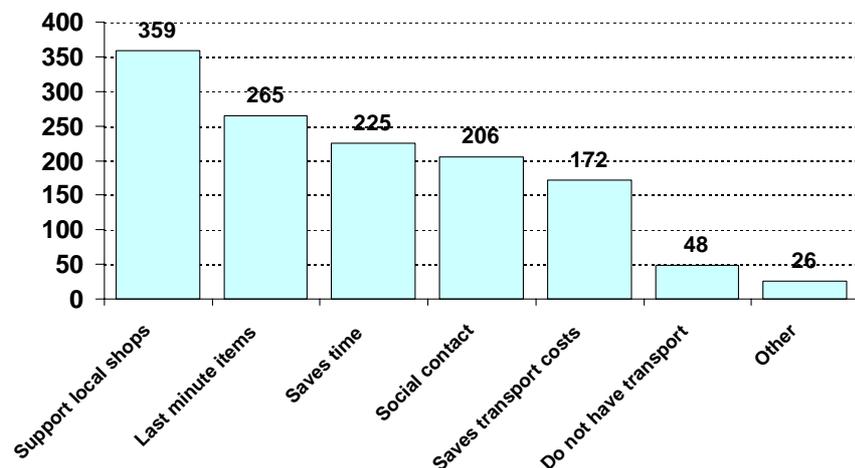
How do you rate the quality of shopping facilities in the village?



Base: 416 replies

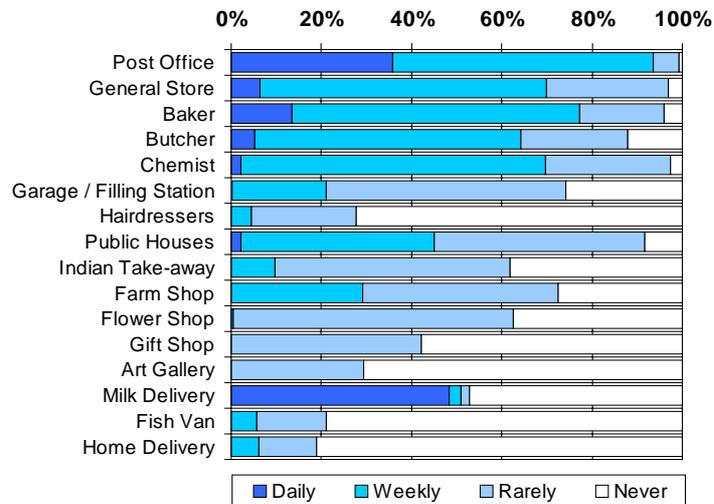
Nearly four-fifths of residents are satisfied with the current shopping facilities in the village. Comments made during the survey show that local shops and services are considered to be very important assets by the residents of Ashwell.

Reasons for shopping in the village



The most frequently cited reason for shopping locally is to support local shops and services. This demonstrates a strong local desire to ensure their long-term future. Additional reasons for shopping locally include: convenience, social contact and the savings associated with reduced transport costs.

How often do you use the local shops and retail services?



The Post Office and the local Chemist are used, at least monthly, by 99% of survey respondents. The Post Office is used daily by one-third of residents. Other frequently used local shops and services include: Baker, Butcher, Public Houses and the Petrol Station, each used monthly by over 80% of respondents.

In response to the question: *What other types of shops or retail services would you like to see in the village?* Greengrocer came out far ahead of any other suggestion. (Since the survey was conducted the Flower Shop has started to sell a variety of vegetables and fruit.) There was also some support for a Coffee Shop/Tea Room, a Hardware Store and a Fish and Chip Shop.

The business section of the Parish Plan survey did not receive a strong response. More work will be needed in order to establish the needs and hopes of this disparate but important group.

Action Point 4
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council will actively campaign for the retention of Post Office services in the village.

Action Point 5
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will develop a detailed plan to encourage the use of local retail outlets.

Action Point 6
Parish Council
May 2008

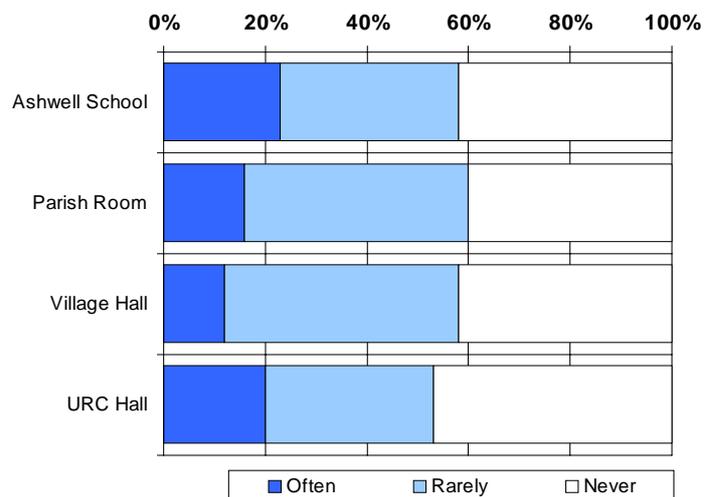
The Parish Council will organise a detailed survey of business needs to facilitate the creation of a village business plan.

Action Point 7
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will establish a detailed plan to encourage visitors to the village.

3.4 Use of Public Buildings

How often do you use the following venues?



Base: 421 replies

Ashwell School is used outside school time for a wide range of activities. The large hall is the only place, other than St Mary's Church, where a meeting of more than 90 people can be held.

The **Parish Room** has recently been refurbished and is used for smaller meetings, including the monthly Parish Council meeting. Coffee mornings, Church teas, soup lunches and the annual Book Fair are also held here.

The **Village Hall** had a major upgrade during 2006, which has answered a number of the criticisms raised in survey answers. The Parish Council made a significant contribution towards the renovation project. The Village Hall is used mainly by younger people.

The **URC Hall** has many regular users, ranging from the Toddlers Group to the Over 60s Club.

3.4.1 Places of Worship



United Reformed Chapel



Ashwell Parish Church



Zoar Baptist Chapel

Ashwell has a Parish Church, a United Reformed Chapel and a Zoar Baptist Chapel. There is also a Quaker Meeting. Almost 40% of respondents attend one of these. A further 9% of respondents choose to attend a place of worship outside the Village.

3.4.2 Public Houses



Rose & Crown



Bushel and Strike

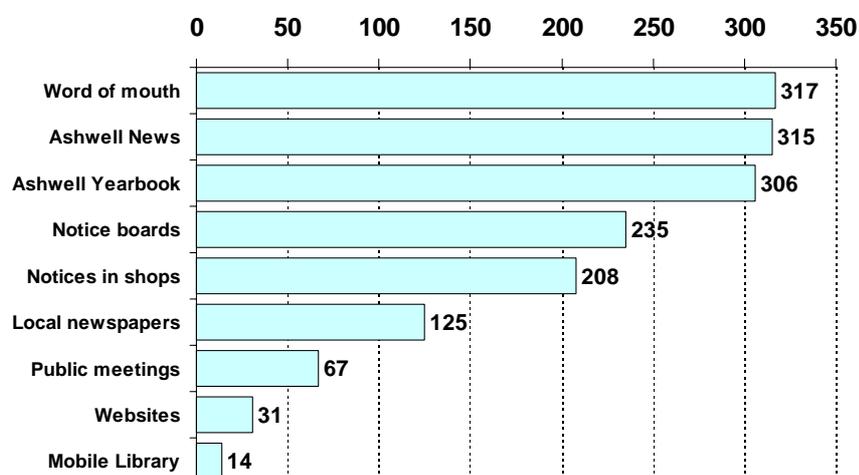


The Three Tuns

There are three public houses in the Village: the Three Tuns, which also has accommodation, the Rose & Crown and the Bushel and Strike. All three provide a full meal service.

3.5 Provision of Information

How do you find out what is happening in the Parish?



Residents of Ashwell obtain their information from a variety of sources.

The Parish Council publishes the **Ashwell Yearbook** in March each year. It is distributed free to all houses and businesses in the village. The Yearbook was first published in 1988 and has grown from a small beginning into some 80 plus pages of information about the village. The costs are covered mainly by advertising. All village groups, societies, clubs and sports teams are invited to submit annual reports. Photographs of events during the year are included. The 2004 edition gained a national award for local government publications.

St Mary's Church publishes the **Ashwell News** each month which is available, for a small sum, from the Church and shops in the village. Anyone can submit articles and the Parish Council has a page each month on Parish Council matters. Other regular contributors include the United Reformed Church, the local police and a variety of advertisers.

Other sources of information include the local press, notice boards around the village, Websites, notices in shops, word of mouth and the Mobile Library. There are also public meetings from time to time.

Action Point 8
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should promote the spread of information by as many means as possible.

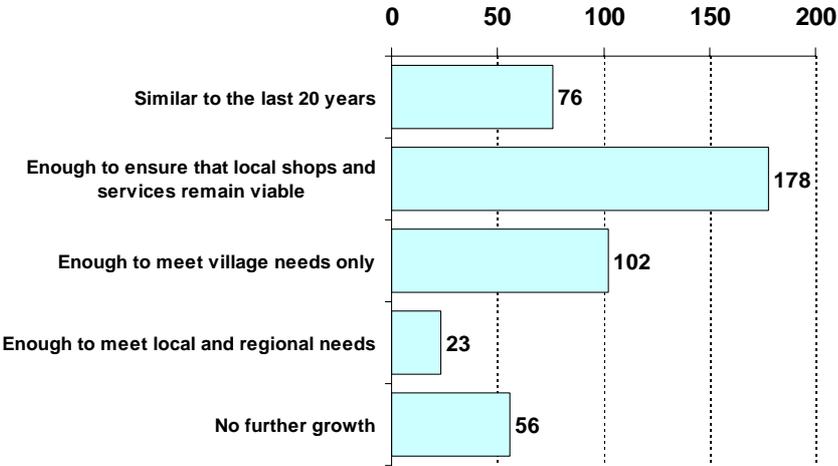
4.0 POPULATION CHANGE AND HOUSING

Summary

- Population growth at the local level is considered acceptable to Ashwell residents, but only so far as local needs are met and maintained.
- The survey identified a high level of owner-occupied housing in Ashwell.
- New housing schemes should be aimed at providing lower cost and small family homes in Ashwell.
- There was a strong preference for small-scale housing developments, single additional units and conversion of existing buildings.

4.1 Population Growth

What level of population growth, if any, do you think would be best for the Parish over the next 20 years?



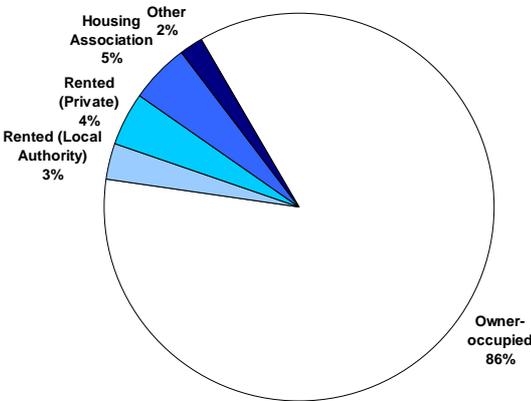
Base: 435 replies

From these figures the people of Ashwell favour some population growth, but not more than is needed to maintain the sustainability of the community. Only one person in eight would prefer no further growth.

Action Point 9 Parish Council Dec 2009	The Parish Council will develop a framework to determine how best to achieve sustainable population growth in the Parish.
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4.2 Housing

Household tenure

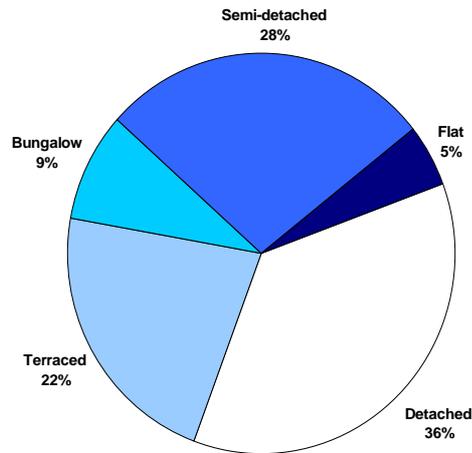


Base: 332 households

The level of owner-occupied housing in Ashwell, shown by the survey results, is well above the national average. In contrast, the levels of both private rented and local authority rented accommodation are well below the North Hertfordshire and national averages.

According to the Census data, owner occupation has risen from 44% in 1971 and 63% in 1991 to its present high level. In contrast, the stock of rented housing has fallen dramatically. In 1971, 25% of housing was rented from the local authority and a further 27% was rented privately. This dropped to 18% local authority and 14% private in 1991. Accommodation provided by housing associations has risen from none in 1971, through 3% in 1991, to its present level of 5%.

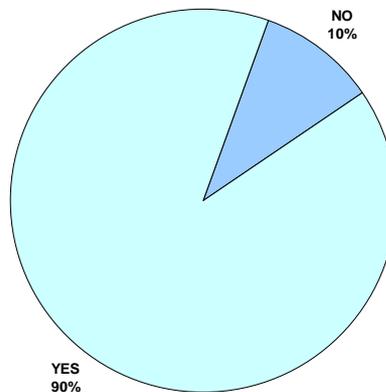
Housing type



Base: 332 households

The local housing stock reflects the rural environment that surrounds Ashwell. There is a high level of detached housing, at twice the national average. While flats, at 5%, are only a quarter the national average figure. The percentage of terraced and semi-detached houses is in line with local and national levels.

Does your housing meet your current needs?



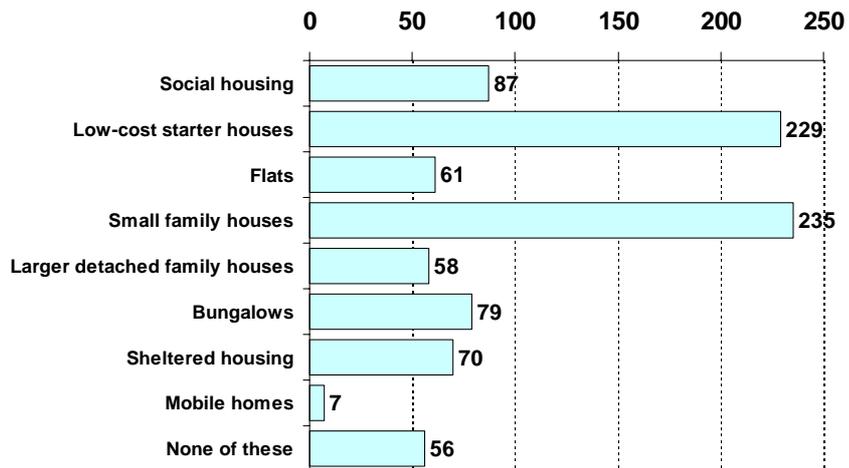
Base: 332 households

The survey showed that around 90% of respondents feel that their housing needs are currently being met. Of the remaining 10%, small dwelling size (including gardens) was the most commonly cited concern. A lack of available parking and affordability were also noted.

More than 10% of households reported that they had a family member wishing to live in Ashwell but who was unable to do so because of a lack of suitable housing.

Over 20% of households reported that a family member would need housing in Ashwell within the next ten years.

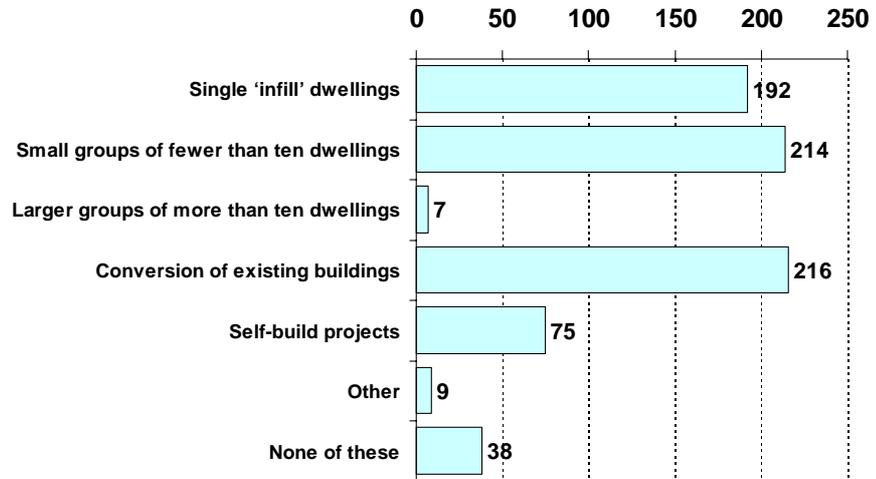
What type of new housing, if any, do you think the Parish needs?



A large majority of respondents were in favour of low-cost starter homes and small family units. There was some support for social housing, bungalows, sheltered housing, flats and detached houses. Few favoured mobile homes.

Action Point 10 The Parish Council will investigate opportunities for the provision of lower cost housing either for purchase or rent.
Parish Council
Dec 2009

What types of new housing development would be acceptable to you?



When it came to housing developments most wanted the conversion of existing buildings, small groups of less than ten units or single infill dwellings. Preservation of the unique local character of the village is clearly an important consideration for local residents. Self build projects won some support but very few wanted larger groups of more than ten dwellings.

Action Point 11 The Parish Council will ensure that the Village Design Statement is revised, to take into account changes in the Government's planning framework.
 Parish Council
 Dec 2010

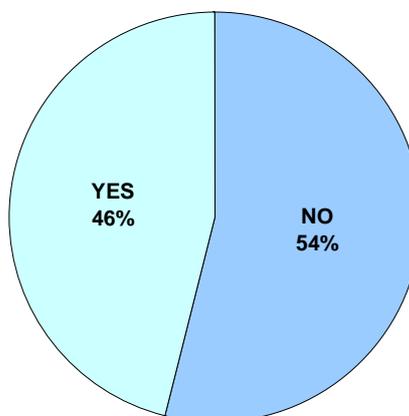
5.0 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Summary

- A majority of residents consider road maintenance to be inadequate.
- Speeding traffic was a concern to the majority of villagers.
- Many respondents travel regularly from the village to work.
- The rail service was mainly rated as satisfactory.
- Three-quarters of users rated the Taxibus service to the station as good.
- The local bus services were rated as poor by most people.

5.1 Road Maintenance

Are you satisfied with road maintenance in and around the village?



Base: 357 replies

More than half of survey respondents rated road maintenance as unsatisfactory.

Action Point 12 The Parish Council will establish an acceptable standard of road maintenance and will seek a service agreement with the Highways Partnership to ensure that this is achieved.
Parish Council
May 2008

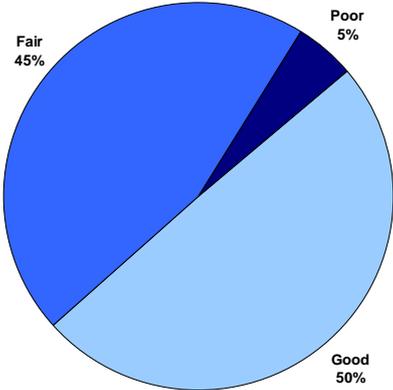
5.2 Public Transport

5.2.1 Rail Services

The rail service between London and Cambridge, via Ashwell & Morden, is operated by First Capital Connect (FCC). FCC reduced the number of fast and stopping trains at Ashwell & Morden station from December 2006, with further changes expected in December 2007. FCC has stated that these changes are designed to alleviate over-crowding and to increase direct services to and from Cambridge.

There has been considerable local opposition to the timetable changes made by FCC and to further proposed changes. It seems likely that satisfaction levels would have been much lower if they had been measured after the changes.

How do you rate the rail service (to and from Ashwell & Morden Station)?



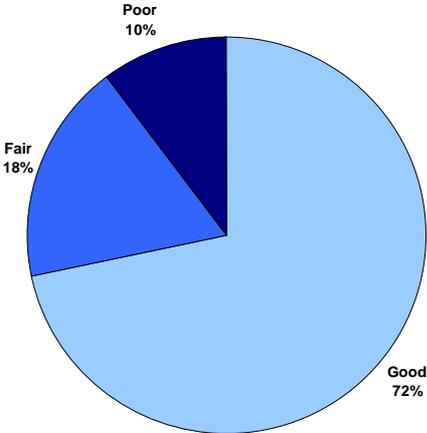
Base: 297 replies

Almost 95% of people who responded prior to these changes rated the service as either 'fair' or 'good'. Suggestions for improvements included: "more fast trains", "longer trains" and "improved parking at the station".

Action Point 13 Parish Council Ongoing	The Parish Council should continue to lobby for an improvement in the rail service to and from Ashwell & Morden station.
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5.2.2 Ashwell Station Link

How do you rate the Taxibus service to the railway station?



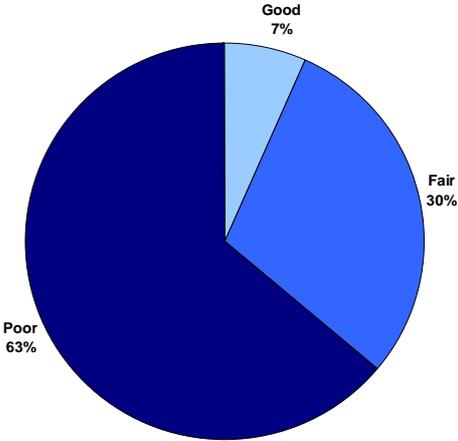
Base: 155 replies

The Ashwell Station Link is operated by Ashwell Taxis and is currently subsidised by the County Council. Four morning and four evening journeys are provided, from Monday to Friday. Almost 90% of people who responded rated the service as either 'good' or 'fair'. Suggestions for improvements to the service included: *"earlier and later service required"*, *"service during the day required"* and *"better advertising needed"*.

Action Point 14 Parish Council Dec 2007	The Parish Council will determine an appropriate level of service for the Taxibus and will seek to ensure that it is provided.
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5.2.3 Bus Services

How do you rate the bus service (not the Taxibus) to and from the village?



Base: 152 replies

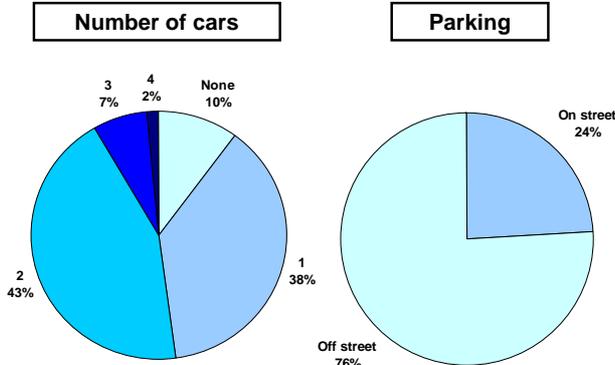
The main bus services through Ashwell to the Mordens, Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin are operated by Arriva. More than 60% of those who responded rated the service as 'poor' and only 7% rated the service as 'good'. Suggestions for improvements included: *"more frequent service"*, *"service past the railway station"* and *"better links to other services"*.

<p>Action Point 15 Parish Council Ongoing</p>	<p>The Parish Council should seek improvements to the bus service through the village.</p>
--	--

<p>Action Point 16 Parish Council Ongoing</p>	<p>The Parish Council should promote further advertising of bus services and their timetables within the village.</p> <p><i>(Since the survey was conducted a local initiative has led to the production of a leaflet advertising these timetables. The leaflet has been delivered to all households in the Parish.)</i></p>
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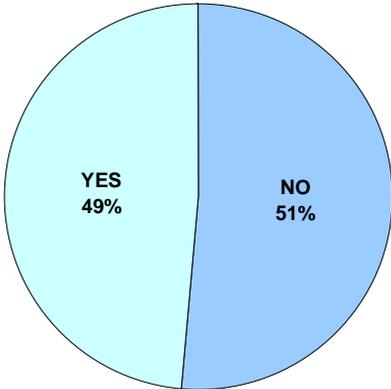
5.3 Parking

**How many cars are regularly used by your household?
Where are they usually parked overnight?**



Just over 50% of households own two or more cars. Three-quarters of households indicated that they have off-street parking.

Is parking control needed in Ashwell?

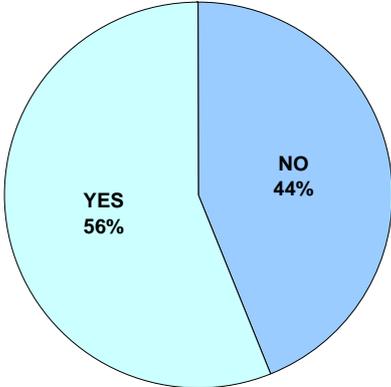


Base: 412 replies

There was a divided response on the question of whether parking control is needed. Suggestions offered for parking control included: "yellow lines", "central car park" and "controlled parking near corners".

5.4 Traffic Management

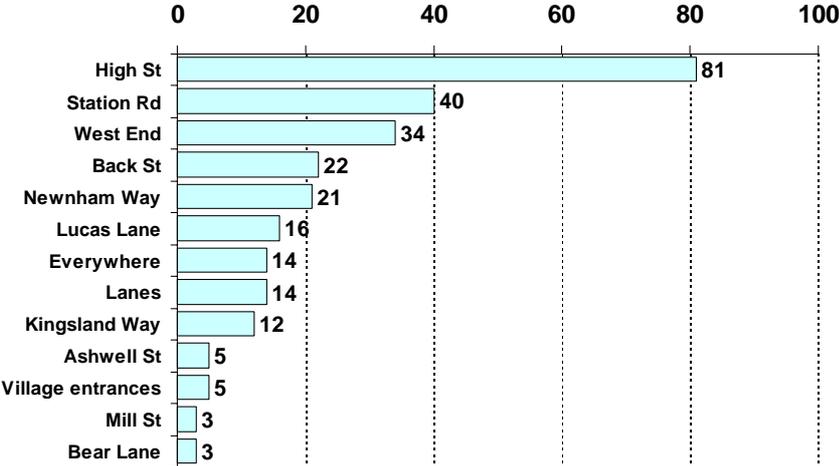
Is speeding a problem in Ashwell?



Base: 414 replies

A majority of respondents thought that speeding traffic within the village was a problem. The High Street, Station Road and West End were areas of particular concern. Suggestions for traffic management included: “speed humps”, “improve the War Memorial junction” and “a one-way system”.

Where is speeding a problem?



The Baldock bypass linking the A505 (near Ashwell & Morden railway station) to Junction 9 of the A1(M) south-west of Baldock opened in March 2006. There is some anecdotal evidence that the volume of traffic through Ashwell has decreased since then. No definitive figures are yet available regarding the speed of traffic through the village.

Action Point 17 Parish Council Ongoing	The Parish Council should continue to encourage the Police to monitor and control the speed of traffic through the village.
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5.5 Travel Plan

In 2005 Hertfordshire Highways made proposals for a Travel Plan for Ashwell. The introduction of the proposals was delayed, after initial consultation, to allow a review after the Baldock bypass was fully operational. Hertfordshire Highways have stated that the introduction of a revised plan will be undertaken only with support from the village.

Action Point 18 Parish Council Dec 2008	The Parish Council will ensure that the issues raised by the Travel Plan process will be revisited once the effect of the Baldock bypass has been assessed.
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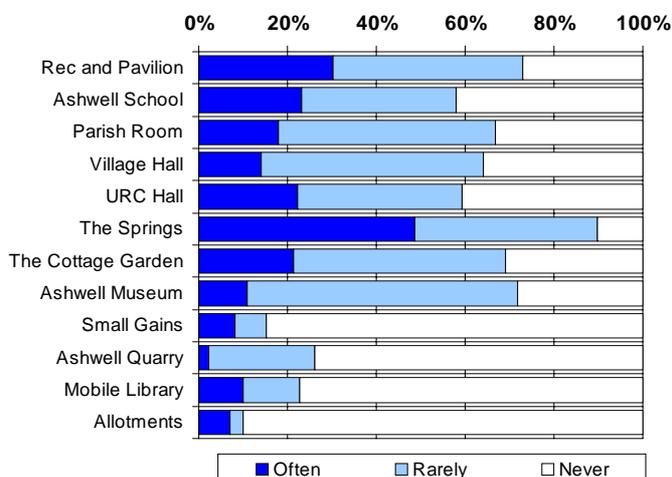
6.0 RECREATION, LEISURE AND FACILITIES

Summary

- The majority of existing facilities are well used by parishioners. Where it is possible to measure it, usage has increased in recent years.
- The loss of a fixed library is regretted by many but the mobile service is well used.
- The amenity at Ashwell Springs is clearly the one enjoyed by most parishioners.
- A number of the requests for improvements to facilities mentioned in survey responses have already been put in place, or are in hand.
- Exceptions to this are the need to modernise the Pavilion and to provide new tennis courts.

6.1 Use of Ashwell Amenities

How often do you use the following venues and facilities?



Almost half the respondents to the survey said they visit the **Springs** 'often' and only 10% replied that they never went there.



The Springs in winter



The Cottage Garden



The Village Hall

Many of the other village venues and facilities are used by 60% of residents at one time or another.

The most frequent calls for improvements to facilities related to the **Village Hall** and the **Pavilion** at the Recreation Ground. Since the survey was carried out a major refurbishment of the Village Hall has been completed. The project was partly funded by the Parish Council.

The **Mobile Library** service visits the village once a week and stops in the Wolverley House car park. Suggestions for improvements to the service included *“more stops needed”* and *“a more frequent service needed”*.

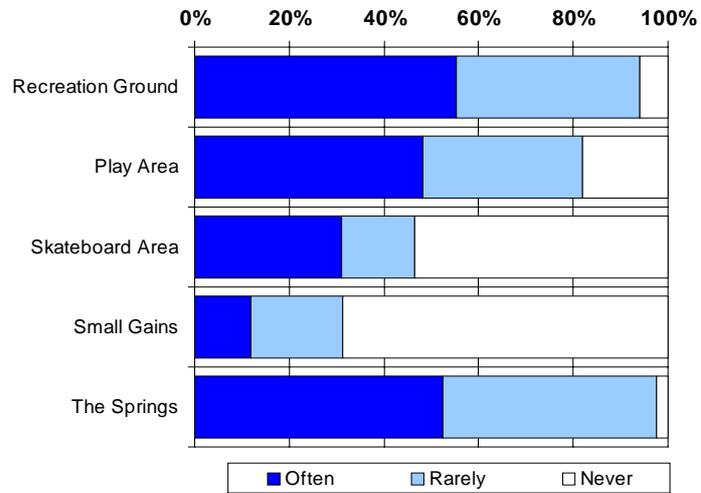
Action Point 19
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should continue to support the Springs financially and practically, in order to maintain them as a major asset to the Parish.

Action Point 20
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should lobby the County Council to provide at least three stops for the mobile library service.

Outdoor venues / facilities usage (Youth)



Almost all the youth of the village uses the **Recreation Ground** and the **Springs** at one time or another. Ashwell School Sports Day is held on the **Recreation Ground**. The **Play Area** is a big attraction for younger children and the **Skateboard Area** is used by older children. **Small Gains** is used mostly by the Ashwell Academicals Football Club.



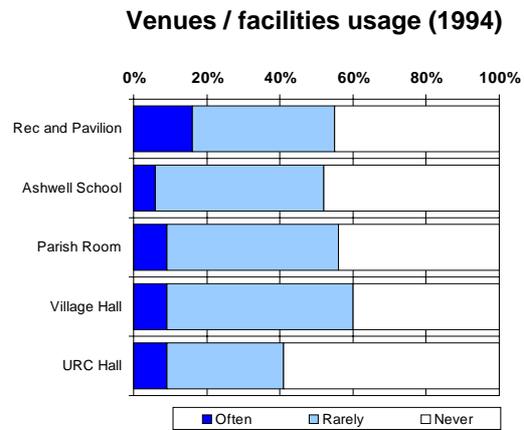
Cricket on the Rec



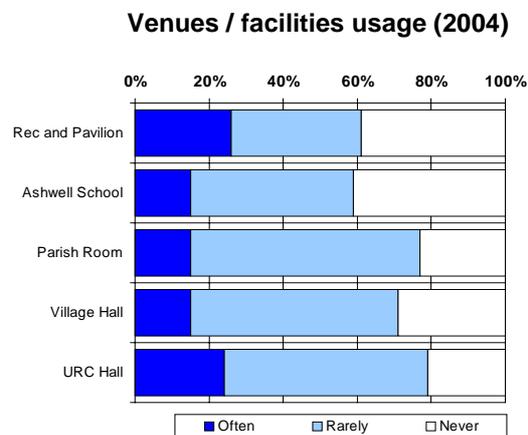
New play equipment

6.2 Use of Ashwell Amenities Over Time

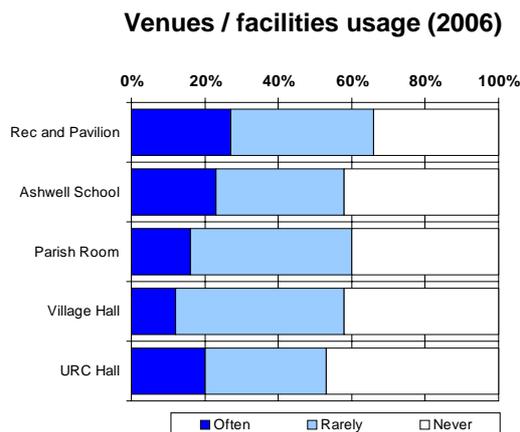
1994 numbers based on the 1994/5 Village Appraisal (508 responses)



2004 numbers based on the mini questionnaire (117 responses)



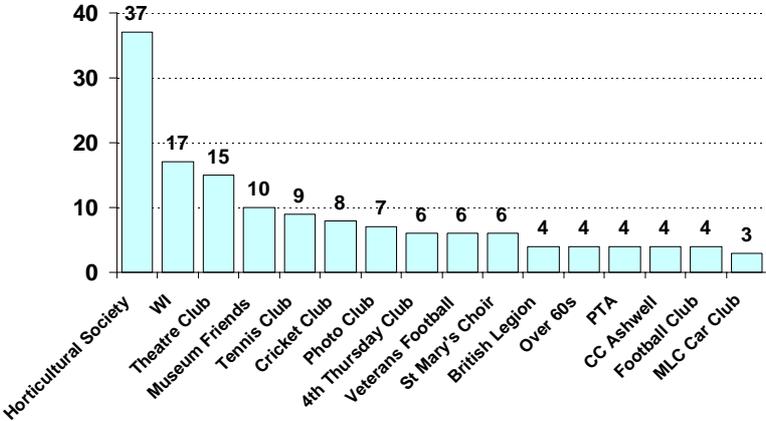
2006 numbers based on the Parish Plan questionnaire (464 responses)



The proportion of people who use the main Ashwell venues 'often' has risen since 1994. Frequent users of the School facilities have more than trebled to over 20%. All venues are used at some time by more than half the population.

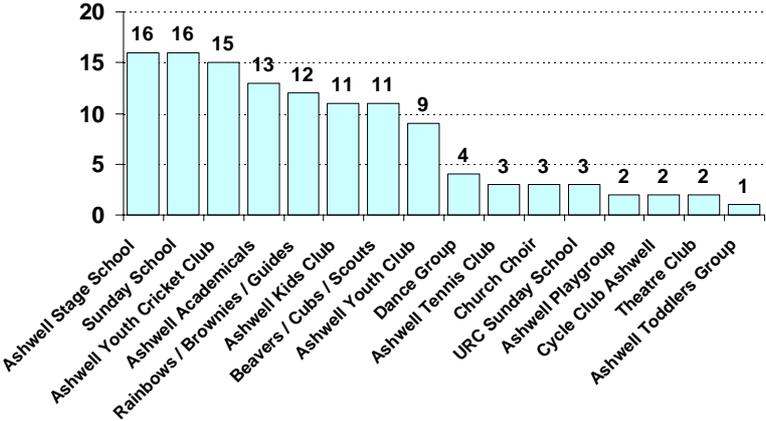
6.3 Clubs and Societies

Membership of Clubs and Societies (Adults)



The number of responses to the survey question on membership of clubs and societies was disappointingly low. The responses did not reflect the general vitality of village organisations. Many clubs and societies have much higher memberships but not all members responded to the survey questionnaire. The Ashwell Yearbook shows the strength of the various clubs and societies in the village and that the majority of members are broadly content with the facilities they enjoy. Many Ashwell clubs and societies attract members from outside the village, as well as from within.

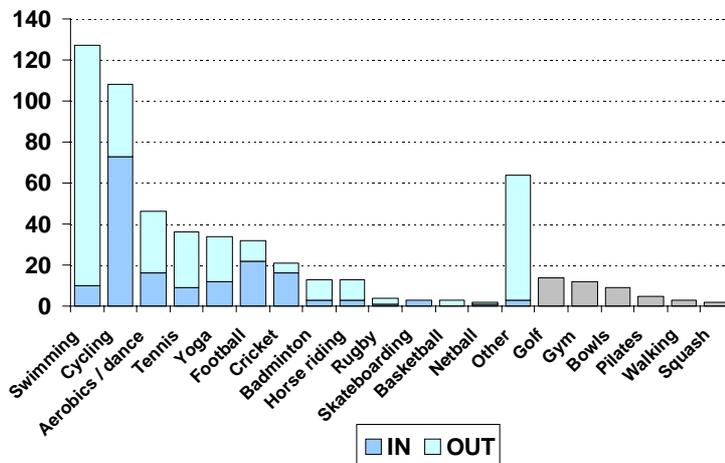
Membership of Clubs and Societies (Youth)



The survey showed a remarkable range of interest in, and support for, youth activities in the village. The responses showed that involvement in football, cricket and drama all run at around 20%. Membership of 'uniformed' groups (such as Guides, Scouts, Brownies and their junior versions) was at nearly 40%.

6.4 Sporting Activities

Sports Participation: within and outside of Ashwell (Adults)



Swimming is the main sporting activity to take place outside the village.

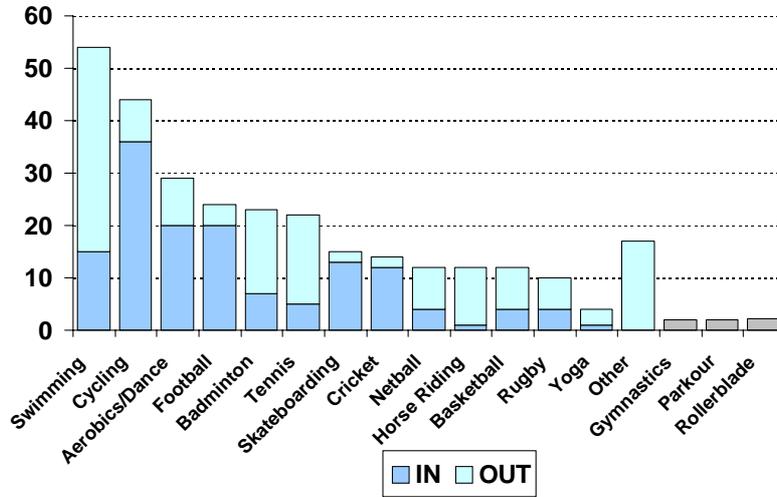
The Tennis Club has lost its main facility within the village and must now rely on the use of private courts. More tennis players have to use facilities outside the village.

The Football Club has continued to improve its league status on a home ground which is technically too small by league rules.

Action Point 21 A major refurbishment of the Pavilion should be carried out.
Parish Council
Dec 2008

Action Point 22 The Parish Council will review, establish and set the priorities for developing and improving sports facilities within the Parish.
Parish Council
Dec 2008

Sports Participation: within and outside of Ashwell (Youth)



The evidence overall is that many young people are able to find a recreational activity within the village.

7.0 ASHWELL – OUR ENVIRONMENT

Summary

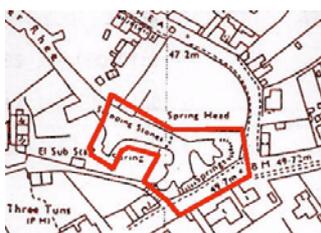
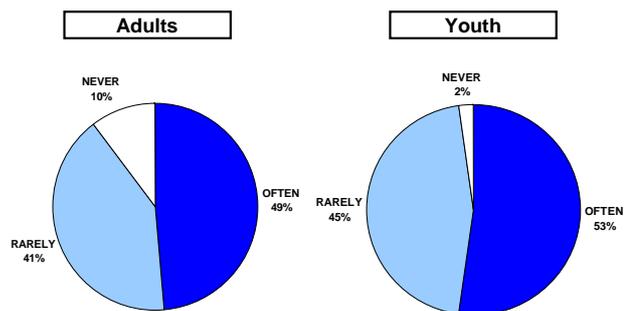
This section covers aspects of the village relating to the environment. It outlines the Parish Council's approach to environmental issues, the role of the conservation area, open spaces, the Springs, the Nature Reserve, footpaths and rights of way.

7.1 Conservation Area

Part of Ashwell is a Conservation Area. The original area, designated in 1976, has been enlarged and now extends from Bluegates Dairy to Ashwell Street, and from Station Road to West End. The Conservation Area includes Ashwell Springs (a Site of Special Scientific Interest), the Parish Church (which is both a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade 1 Listed Building), important open spaces and more than 70 other listed buildings.

7.2 Ashwell Springs

How often do you use the Springs?



The boundary of the SSSI

The 2006 Parish Plan survey identified that the Springs basin was the most visited of all parish amenities by both adults and children. Over 45% of adults visit the site often (more than any other amenity) and only 10% never visit. The results from the survey of young people were even more impressive. More than half of young people visit the Springs often and almost all the rest visit at least occasionally.



The Springs is not only a very important natural resource but also one of the most valued amenities for residents and visitors. It is important that the Parish Council manages the sometimes conflicting issues of public access and protection of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Parish Council has been given invaluable advice and practical help by the Countryside Management Service (CMS) to assist in keeping the Springs in good order.

Action Point 23

Parish Council

Dec 2007

Review the progress made in implementing the Springs Management Plan.

Action Point 24

PC/CMS

Dec 2008

Draw up a new 5-10 year Springs Management Plan in the light of progress, experience and changing circumstances.

7.3 Open Spaces



Part of the character of the village is defined by open spaces. The most well-known of these is the Springs, which is valued by local people and visitors alike. The Recreation Ground provides a play area for children, as well as football and cricket pitches. The Ashwell Cottage Garden in Swan Street offers a quieter area with seating. During the appraisal in 1994, some open spaces were included in the list of 'Village Character Areas'. They included the small area of home park associated with Ashwell Bury and farmland that comes into the village along Ashwell Street, Gardiner's Lane and Station Road.

Some open areas within the village provide vistas looking out to the surrounding area, providing a strong visual connection with the countryside. There are also points around the edge of the village which provide views into the centre.

Outside the conservation area, the gradual decrease in housing density and the increasingly open feel further define the nature of the village.

Action Point 25

Parish Council

Ongoing

Seek to protect the character of the village by retaining open spaces and character areas.

7.4 Rights of Way and Footpaths

Ashwell is a focal point for footpaths with well-known paths leading from the village to local beauty spots, and ancient ruins such as the Iron Age hill fort at Arbury Banks. There are many circular trails that lead to and from the village and Ashwell is a staging point along the long-range footpath known as the Icknield Way. There are also numerous small local pavements, paths, twitchells (the local name for small alleys) and tracks. Use of the footways reduces vehicle traffic within the village and they also provide informal meeting places. The village and its footpaths appear in both local and national trail guides as well as in books about the Icknield Way.

Good paths within the village are useful for pedestrians of all ages and for those pushing prams and buggies. Access to the countryside is also important for leisure activities. It also attracts visitors, which can have a beneficial effect on the local economy.

Action Point 26 Parish Council May 2008	Encourage access to the local countryside in various ways including publishing the routes of walks on the Parish Council's website.
--	--

Action Point 27 PC/NHDC/HCC Ongoing	Continue to press for footpath improvements and resurfacing.
--	---

Action Point 28 PC/NHDC/HCC Ongoing	Continue to improve footpath signs and way markers.
--	--

7.5 Nature Reserve



Ashwell Nature Reserve is a former chalk quarry located on the Hinxworth Road opposite the junction with Loves Lane. It is an important chalk grassland habitat. The reserve is not directly open to the public but permits to visit are free and can be obtained on request. Local volunteers manage the site on behalf of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT), through working parties and local action.

7.6 Environmental Awareness

In 2006 Ashwell Parish Council established an Energy Working Group, in response to increased awareness of environmental issues such as global climate change. In the 1994/5 Village Appraisal environmental issues were looked at on a local scale, in particular village open spaces, trees, hedges and footpaths. Now in 2007 the adopted motto of the Energy Working Group is *'think globally, act locally'*. The environment is not just about the local setting to the village but also about the role of the village in global environmental economics.

7.7 Green Parish

The first aims of the Energy Working Group are to review the energy policy of the Parish Council. This involves reviewing energy use directly controlled by the Parish Council in order to reduce the Parish Council's carbon footprint and to reduce the cost of energy to the Parish. The initiative will also raise awareness of these issues within the Parish.

The Energy Working Group's second aim is to look at the future provision of energy within and for the village. The Parish Council would like to aim for a carbon neutral operation. Education within the Parish may also be an important part of the future strategy.

APPENDIX – ACTION POINTS

Section 2

Action Point 1
Parish Council
May 2008

A framework will be developed to allow the continued support of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in the village, in order to maintain frequent contact with local Police Officers and to encourage technical solutions to specific issues, as appropriate.

Section 3

Action Point 2
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will establish a framework for the improvement of recycling facilities in the village.

Action Point 3
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council will encourage the provision of a better mobile phone service, within the framework of the Ashwell Village Design Statement.

Action Point 4
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council will actively campaign for the retention of Post Office services in the village.

Action Point 5
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will develop a detailed plan to encourage the use of local retail outlets.

Action Point 6
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will organise a detailed survey of business needs to facilitate the creation of a village business plan.

Action Point 7
Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will establish a detailed plan to encourage visitors to the village.

Action Point 8
Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should promote the spread of information by as many means as possible.

Section 4

Action Point 9
Parish Council
Dec 2009

The Parish Council will develop a framework to determine how best to achieve sustainable population growth in the Parish.

Action Point 10
Parish Council
Dec 2009

The Parish Council will investigate opportunities for the provision of lower cost housing either for purchase or rent.

Action Point 11
Parish Council
Dec 2010

The Parish Council will ensure that the Village Design Statement is revised, to take into account changes in the Government's planning framework.

Section 5

Action Point 12

Parish Council
May 2008

The Parish Council will establish an acceptable standard of road maintenance and will seek a service agreement with the Highways Partnership to ensure that this is achieved.

Action Point 13

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should continue to lobby for an improvement in the rail service to and from Ashwell & Morden station.

Action Point 14

Parish Council
Dec 2007

The Parish Council will determine an appropriate level of service for the Taxibus and will seek to ensure that it is provided.

Action Point 15

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should seek improvements to the bus service through the village.

Action Point 16

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should promote further advertising of bus services and their timetables within the village.

Action Point 17

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should continue to encourage the Police to monitor and control the speed of traffic through the village.

Action Point 18

Parish Council
Dec 2008

The Parish Council will ensure that the issues raised by the Travel Plan process will should be revisited once the effect of the Baldock bypass has been assessed.

Section 6

Action Point 19

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should continue to support the Springs financially and practically, in order to maintain them as a major asset to the Parish.

Action Point 20

Parish Council
Ongoing

The Parish Council should lobby the County Council to provide at least three stops for the mobile library service.

Action Point 21

Parish Council
Dec 2008

A major refurbishment of the Pavilion should be carried out.

Action Point 22

Parish Council
Dec 2008

The Parish Council will review, establish and set the priorities for developing and improving sports facilities within the Parish.

Section 7

Action Point 23
Parish Council
Dec 2007

Review the progress made in implementing the Springs Management Plan.

Action Point 24
PC/CMS
Dec 2008

Draw up a new 5-10 year Springs Management Plan in the light of progress, experience and changing circumstances.

Action Point 25
Parish Council
Ongoing

Seek to protect the character of the village by retaining open spaces and character areas

Action Point 26
Parish Council
May 2008

Encourage access to the local countryside in various ways including publishing the routes of walks on the Parish Council's website.

Action Point 27
PC/NHDC/HCC
Ongoing

Continue to press for footpath improvements and resurfacing.

Action Point 28
PC/NHDC/HCC
Ongoing

Continue to improve footpath signs and way markers.