

LITTLEBURY an introduction

The rural parish of Littlebury lies two miles north west of Saffron Walden, and about twelve miles south of Cambridge. The River Cam (or Granta) roughly describes the eastern boundary, running northward from Audley End to Great Chesterford, the village of Littlebury lying centrally between the two and adjacent to it. To the east of the river is North End; once part of Saffron Walden, it has fallen within our boundary since 1889. In addition, the two hamlets of Littlebury Green and Catmere End are situated on higher land to the west, one house remaining at Chapel Green, while homes in parts of Audley End, Chestnut Avenue and to the northeast of North End are also enclosed within the Littlebury boundary. Each village has its own special character and identity.



Littlebury is dissected to the north and south both by the railway and the M11 running between Cambridge and London. Fifty-two listed buildings make the parish very special, the centre of Littlebury village being a conservation area. There are three parish churches: Holy Trinity at Littlebury and St Peter's at Littlebury Green – also designated as a community centre. St Mary's, Stretthall, serves Catmere End, which is part of the ecclesiastical parish of Stretthall.



Eight farms in Littlebury, four in Catmere End and five in Littlebury Green can be seen on the OS map for the turn of the 20th century. In Littlebury alone 36 men were farmers or agricultural labourers; there were several railway workers for the siding at Littlebury, as well as smiths, bakers, a shepherd and a police constable at this time, and up until the mid 1950s many farm workers and their families lived in the parish, since when there has been a marked demographic change as new farming practices reduced the need for labour. Now farming at Audley End Estate requires few men and farmhouses have been sold for private homes.



As the farming communities declined new workers, encouraged by the ease of commuting after the opening of the M11 in 1979, and improvements at Liverpool St. Station moved to Littlebury. Undeterred by septic tanks, many people, including stockbrokers, teachers, musicians, lawyers, artists, electricians and garden designers came to enjoy the amenity of northwest Essex and the relatively inexpensive housing stock. Good telecommunications, fax, and then the Internet meant that liaison with clients for home-workers was assured.



Council housing at Catmere End, Merton Place and Church Walk and Rural Housing Trust housing at Nettleditch have increased the social housing stock of the parish, although council houses are privately purchased from time to time in accordance with the 1980 'Right to Buy' scheme. In the 1950s tiny older cottages were joined together to make better homes and gradually mains drainage came to Littlebury village. Some housing owned by Audley End estate was either sold or continued to be available for rent.

While most housing is privately owned (much of it belonged to the estate at one time or another), privately rented property is also available. In the 1960s and '70s, while 'The Nest' in Catmere End still had dirt floors, modern homes were being built in Peggy's Walk and in the 1980s and '90s several barn conversions and large new houses indicated the relative prosperity of Littlebury's new inhabitants.

20th century Littlebury had its own vicar, a regular and frequent bus service, a junior school, police house, various shops, post office, pubs, butcher, and many allotments. In the 1990s there was a shop with a post office in the centre of Littlebury village, but by 2000, the loss of the resident vicar meant also that the part-time post office run by his wife went too. The Queen's Head has had a series of managers, Stalleys Barn supplies pet foods and gardening supplies, and PG Wing of Peggy's Walk sells army surplus to the trade. There are no shops in the hamlets, and allotments are no longer worked. As elsewhere our amenities have disappeared in the wake of supermarkets, private car ownership and inevitable changes. These losses are deeply regretted, though the sense of community is vibrant and ongoing. Our Parish Plan is a mirror of how we are now, how we think and feel and what we desire and intend – for our village and hamlets here in Littlebury.



RATIONALE

Our aim was to consult as many Littlebury residents as possible to discover how they see life in the parish, how they would like to see it, and identify what action, if any, should be taken. After an initial survey to find out what issues residents would like addressed, the steering group divided into seven topic groups and prepared a questionnaire for distribution to every household. When the questionnaire was printed responsibility for an average of fifteen households was given to each steering group member, to deliver, collect, and collate the responses so that the plan could be prepared.

In Littlebury village there are 240 houses, in Littlebury Green 53 and Catmere End 35, 328 in all. At the time of our survey, May-June 2008, 25 houses were either empty, between tenants or undergoing building works leaving 303 houses to survey.

We were able to deliver questionnaires to 218 of 240 (91%) houses in Littlebury village, 51 of 53 (96%) in Littlebury Green and 34 of 35 (97%) in Catmere End that were both occupied and where the residents were capable of completing the questionnaire, making a total of 303 of 328 (92%) houses for our survey.

Of those questionnaires we were unable to collect some householders refused to complete them and some couldn't find or had re-cycled them and declined to receive another. Although some houses were apparently occupied some residents were never available to ask. When able to speak to residents, and after three enquiries it became clear that the questionnaire would not be completed, the collector retired. Uncollected returns accounted for 21% in Littlebury village, 20% in Littlebury Green and 9% in Catmere End. In the parish we collected a total of 245 questionnaires out of 303 delivered; the total collected from the survey was 81% of those delivered, and from the total of houses whether surveyed or not, 75%. From these results it seemed appropriate to make a Parish Plan that we could be reasonably certain reflected the views of the people who live in Littlebury parish.



TRANSPORT

We sought to establish the current usage and perceived need, as well as seeking opinion on traffic management.

Work commuting

Half of parish commuters drive to work. From Catmere End 63% drive, from Littlebury Green 54% and from Littlebury 45%. 20% of parish commuters travel by train: from Littlebury 19%, from Littlebury Green 27%, and from Catmere End 8%. Only 5% of all respondents belong to a car-sharing scheme, with just 13% willing to partake in the future – this is highest in Catmere End at 17%. Significantly 50% of the parish said a categorical ‘No’ to the proposal; this may be due to complications of timing, especially at the end of the day.



School commuting

One third of parish children attend local schools with 3% commuting to Cambridge. In Littlebury Green 22% travel to Cambridge schools and others.

Buses

Overall, 18% would use a bus service, if provided, to commute to work; this is highest in Littlebury Green with 29%. Half of parish households would use the bus for shopping and over a third for social activities. 20% would use buses, if available, for transport to school.

Of desired destinations over 60% sought Saffron Walden, 52% Audley End Station, 43% Cambridge and 25% Stansted Airport. When asked for suggestions on

how to improve local bus routes and timetables, 50% of households had something to say! Comments included the desire for a service from Littlebury and the hamlets to Saffron Walden (32 households), to Audley End Station (12 households) and a school bus for the County High School. Since collation of the plan a new bus service, the 445, has been put into service for students from all parts of the parish attending this school. There is a general desire for frequent and regular bus services, making them an attractive alternative to driving.

ACTION Further information needed to establish suitable timing for bus routes to Audley End Station and primary schools in Saffron Walden, before approach to Essex County Council and Bus Operating companies. Lobby for improved service.

Cycling

72% of households believed cycling to be unsafe on parish roads, with only one fifth of households disagreeing. The outer villages (presumably with quieter roads) voted them safer than did Littlebury. 60% would welcome more cycle tracks whilst 20% thought current provision sufficient. Over half would cycle to Walden, if cycle tracks were established, 30% would link with the station, and 20% with schools and other villages. Over one third would cycle for leisure.

ACTION Liaise with Parish Council, Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and Audley End Estate to discuss the viability of introducing more cycle paths.



TRAFFIC

Traffic is a taxing subject for the parish. In Littlebury village the B1383 runs through the centre of its historically unique setting posing a unique set of modern highway risks. Residents of Littlebury Green also suffer from speeding cars perceiving it to be used as a ‘rat run’, as do those of Catmere End.

Speeding

The survey sought primarily to establish whether respondents thought current speed restrictions appropriate, and also invited ideas for traffic calming. Overall, 52% believe current speed constraints are adequate, whilst 41% do not. Littlebury (30mph limit) follows this precisely. In Catmere End (also 30mph) 75% are satisfied, whilst 61% of Littlebury Green (currently 40mph) wish to see greater restrictions. At the time of writing it is believed that these are imminent in Littlebury Green. A long history of action within the parish by residents concerned about the abuse of the speed restrictions includes a petition with over 300 signatories and well-attended public meetings. Speed strips laid in Littlebury by Essex County Council highlighted a blatant disregard for the speed limit yet police presence is sporadic. Voluntary ‘Speedwatch’ teams can verify the excessive speeds used by some motorists.



Comment was prolific, with many suggestions on how best to deal with speeding. 21 specifically asked for a reduction in the speed limit in Littlebury to 20mph. 26 households would like to see speed cameras, speed traps or more police presence, with 21 requests for more enforcement of the speed limit, and 15 for traffic calming measures that would force vehicles to reduce their speed as they enter the village.

At Littlebury Green 21 households asked for the speed limit to be reduced from 40mph; a number also believing that a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) or road width restrictions to be the answer. In Catmere End comments were focused on vehicles speeding at the Saffron Walden end of the hamlet.

ACTION Continue to lobby for more police presence to inhibit and penalize speeding.

Continue to put pressure on ECC to follow through new speed limit of 30mph approved for Littlebury Green and other measures currently listed for the parish.

Parking

Opinions differ significantly between Littlebury and the hamlets. In Littlebury Green and Catmere End, where there is more parking on and off the road, 70% of households believed it to be adequate. 60% took the opposite view though in Littlebury. Overall, 57% thought that too many vehicles parked in the road, but again with village differences, 28% in the hamlets and 69% in Littlebury.

ACTION Consult with Highways on what possibilities are available to help the situation.



PERSONAL & COMMUNITY SAFETY

Questions relating to how residents felt regarding their personal and community safety focused upon safety – how safe they felt; Neighbourhood Watch – their awareness of such a scheme in their village, and if so, did they know who the co-ordinator was? On policing we asked if there was sufficient visible policing and, from a designated list, where should the policing priorities lie? Also, if one were organised, would parishioners attend a meeting addressed by the Police Neighbourhood Specialist Officer? They were also asked if they would attend a meeting addressed by the Essex Fire and Rescue Service Home Safety Officer.

Safety

Reassuringly, and no doubt as a consequence of the general neighbourliness and willingness to look out for each other and their property within the communities, the overwhelming response across the parish was that there is a general feeling of safety with 100% of the respondents in each of Catmere End and Littlebury Green saying so, and only 3% not feeling safe in Littlebury. Only one comment on a lack of safety was received and this related to the lack of sufficient street lighting in Merton place, Littlebury.



Neighbourhood Watch

Awareness of the existence of Neighbourhood Watch schemes varied across the parish. This was particularly high in Catmere End (90%) and Littlebury Green (85%) whereas in Littlebury 48% of respondents were aware with a 45% majority of the remainder not knowing.

The responses for knowing who was the neighbourhood co-ordinator again differed between the villages. In Catmere End (57%) and Littlebury Green (67%), a fairly high percentage of respondents knew of the co-ordinator, perhaps reflecting the respective smaller sizes of those communities, compared with 23% in Littlebury although it's fair to note here that 'no-responses' recorded 35%.

ACTION Launch a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator awareness campaign in each of the villages.

Policing

A telling majority in each village – Littlebury (75%), Littlebury Green (64%) & Catmere End (68%) feel that a greater visible police presence is needed. The policing priorities listed below received the following points:

Priorities	Littlebury	Littlebury Green	Catmere End	Parish
Speeding/driving issues	124	22	16	162
Theft/burglary	83	30	18	131
Criminal Damage	49	16	8	73
Vehicle crime	32	5	2	39
Crime involving wildlife/pets	23	4	3	30
Drug & alcohol abuse	22	2	5	29
Youth nuisance	27	0	1	28

Littlebury comments referred mainly to the lack of visible policing (one noting the loss of the Police House), that all designated issues should be priorities and the police needed to respond to those that were current. Some Littlebury Green residents were concerned about fly tipping, hare coursing, dirt bikers, and speeding, though one respondent felt that although policing was not visible there were no crime issues. Two comments from Catmere End referred to problems with bogus callers.

A fairly positive response of 62% each was received across the parish for public meetings addressed by the Police Neighbourhood Specialist Officer and Essex Fire and Rescue Home Safety Officer.

ACTION Convene separate meetings with both these Officers at Littlebury Village Hall.

HOUSEHOLDS

Once here, people tend to stay in Littlebury parish. 77% of all households have lived here for over 10 years. Of those, over 35% had lived here for more than 20 years. 40% of households had just two people living in them and there are many families. Just over 60% of households in Catmere End are made up of between 3 and 6 people, in Littlebury Green just over 50% and in Littlebury 42%. People living on their own made up 13% of the population, with 6 or more people making up a household at 2%.



The pre-school population was 5%, primary 10%, and those in secondary education formed 12%, with 5% in further education. 7% described themselves as homemakers, the highest proportion being at Littlebury Green at 8%, then Littlebury at 7% and Catmere End the lowest at 4%.

Disability

In Littlebury 16% of the local population reported suffering from a disability; the figure was 15% in Littlebury Green and lowest in Catmere End at 13%. Only 2% of people describe themselves as carers though, none of whom were declared as living at Catmere End.

Working

Littlebury is a parish of workers; from 63% of households someone goes out to work, in Littlebury Green this percentage rose to 68%. 64% go from Littlebury and 55% from Catmere End where working from home was highest at 55%. 9% said they were self-employed though 33% of people worked from home implying that being employed doesn't necessarily mean always travelling to work. It must of course be remembered that in many households more than one person works. 3% declined to say whether they went out to work or not and 11% whether they worked from home or not.

Catmere End had the largest proportion of retired people at 21%, then Littlebury with 18% and Littlebury Green with 17%.



Affordable housing

In reply to the question, 'Will anyone in the household need local affordable housing in the next five years?' 20% of those living in Littlebury Green answered 'Yes', as did 14% of those in Littlebury and 13% at Catmere End. Interestingly, a respondent who thought, when asked earlier in the questionnaire, that there should be no more affordable housing schemes also replied 'Yes' to this question!



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

We aimed to find out what views residents have about new development in the parish to try to ensure that both their needs and the requirements of the parish are met in future years. We asked if more residential development should be permitted and if so, what type and where. As we live in a rural area, questions were asked about additional agricultural development as well as future commercial development. We sought views on tree preservation orders and the scope of the Littlebury Conservation Area. Finally, we offered a 'Wish List' asking questions relating to utilities and the landscape as it is affected by pylons, mobile-phone masts and signage. Broadly speaking, all three villages within the parish tended to answer in a similar vein.



Housing

There was a small majority of 54% against any further development within the parish. 26% residents would like to see starter homes and 21% thought new building should be on brown field sites while 20% thought conversions appropriate but there was no overwhelming majority of view. Neither family, nor infill, nor eco development raised more than 11% of enthusiasm, while green-field and flats scored extremely low. Given the pressure for housing, the response was inconclusive.

50% were against affordable housing, 40% were in favour and 10% did not respond. Some comments indicated that small villages are not suitable for such development, but that the larger village of Littlebury could accommodate some modest affordable homes development, so long as it was in scale and appropriate to the location. Of 40 comments relating to the subject of housing, 18 thought areas in the north and west of Littlebury village most appropriate, while a few commented there should be none built at all.

ACTION Any future residential development should include starter, family and retirement homes, and be limited to brown field sites, as long as such proposals are consistent with sustainable communities and that any change of use is not detrimental to the well being of the parish and local community.

Agricultural development

There was strong support for more agricultural development with 74% in favour. With a 72% response it is evident that residents would very much like to have a local farm shop. There was 31% support for barns, 30% for equestrian facilities and 26% for agricultural buildings.

ACTION Barn development should only be permitted where a clear need is established. Subsequent change of use to residential should not be allowed other than in exceptional circumstances.

Discussions should be held with the Audley End Estate and other local landowners as to possible options for a farm shop.



Commercial development

Well over 50% were against commercial development in the parish although 40% were in favour. 41% were in favour of a village shop.

Travellers

Just over 3% of all residents thought that sites should be found for 'Travellers', with most tolerance at Littlebury Green at 7%.

Conservation

Most households in the parish, 72%, approve of the current Development Limit in Littlebury and this was just 1% over Littlebury residents' own views. The Littlebury Conservation Area was held to be correct by 62% of the parish, with 58% of Littlebury villagers in agreement. Change was not hoped for in either of these limits by more than 19% of respondents.

45% of residents were concerned that not enough trees were protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Littlebury Green expressed most concern at 61%. Trees and hedges should be protected where they are either rare or especially fine examples and/or where their loss would be detrimental to the landscape and environment. A few residents were unsure of the criteria to implement a TPO.

ACTION The Parish Council should survey which trees' survival are considered doubtful and establish what remedies are available (especially for Chestnut trees which are suffering currently from an insect borne disease) and implement as necessary.



mobile-phone masts was split down the middle, as was the question of a reduction in road signage.

ACTION Look into providing gas and mains drainage to those households that are interested.

Representations should be made to the Government via the District Council to try and restrict utility companies' rights to install new pylons and cables above ground.

Wish List

Both Littlebury at 61% and Littlebury Green at 56%, showed a desire to have natural gas. At Catmere End only 35% were in favour. Littlebury and Littlebury Green were in favour of mains drainage at 46% and 49%, where there isn't any already provided. Catmere End was in favour at 58%. Some 63% of all parish residents would like the removal of the overhead pylons with power and phone cables put underground, and the same for telephone wires if this were ever an option. Of those who responded, reaction to the removal of

ENVIRONMENT

The Parish of Littlebury remains an essentially rural environment. We sought views on future energy supply, its implications and on the physical upkeep and perception of the environment.

Stansted Airport

Of the external pressures affecting the parish, this is likely to be the most significant. 63% of residents were concerned over the proposed second runway. 59% would give the Parish Council a mandate to lobby against it. This support was stronger in Catmere End and Littlebury Green (84% and 76%), than in Littlebury itself (50%). Similarly, an adverse effect on quality of life from the new flight path proposals was more strongly felt (70% and 65%) outside Littlebury (52%).

ACTION Ensure that the Parish Council sends letter of objection to second runway and keeps abreast of new NATS proposals.



Energy

Littlebury's first eco house is being built, but generally modern post-war houses co-exist with much older properties, some over 500 years old, which presents special problems for energy saving. Overall, 79% of houses have roof insulation, 64% double-glazing and 41% cavity wall insulation. Only 4% have solar water heating. All values are higher in Catmere End than in the rest of the parish (94%, 87%, 65% and 10%, respectively). Many respondents (44%) would support a local carbon neutral campaign. Over 50% would like information on renewable energy and even more (68%) on grants. Solar water heating, but also

ground heat pumps and wind turbines attracted interest. Expressed support for co-operative buying schemes was 73%, especially oil (67%) and a substantial minority for wood fuel, reaching 29% in Littlebury Green. One in five residents said they would be willing to help with this.

ACTION Ensure that local residents are aware of grants for installing/improving insulation; a Catmere End Wind Turbine Project has been set up already – ensure its findings can be generally accessed.

Investigate and initiate co-operative buying of oil.

Recycling

Two-thirds (64%) of all parish residents found the present collection arrangements for recycling adequate, but in Catmere End it was only half of respondents (48%). This, nevertheless, means that at least a third of residents were unhappy, with complaints concerning glass recycling especially, collection of garden waste and frequency of collection.

ACTION Investigate better options for disposal of glass and bulk garden waste with UDC, such as suitably placed bottle banks in the villages and garden waste collection outside Littlebury itself.

Use the Parish News and website to publicise improved facilities available at the tip.



Litter, fly tipping and dog fouling

In Littlebury Green and Catmere End, 53% said litter is a problem. In Littlebury, only 21% did so. Those who recognised litter as being a problem wanted more prosecution of offenders, though obtaining evidence of an offence being committed is difficult. Although dog fouling was not thought a major problem, the Recreation Ground could be a special case.

ACTION Organising litter picking seems the best we can do to reduce countryside blight along with stepping up requests for people not to allow their dogs to foul recreation areas. Ask the Parish Council to look into ways of enforcing this. Report fly tipping promptly to UDC and consult on prevention with the police, Neighbourhood Watch, UDC and local landowners.



Common land

A majority of residents were satisfied with maintenance of roadside verges (68%) and common land (76%). Particular problems identified were visibility at road junctions and a feeling that the Bumpy in Littlebury Green needs clearing. Those prepared to volunteer help were 25% in Catmere End and Littlebury Green, but only 13% in Littlebury. Only in Catmere End (58% compared with 15% elsewhere) were residents prepared to pay more rates for improved services.

ACTION Try to mobilise volunteer help.



Flooding

The River Cam flows through Littlebury, but has presented few problems. Ironically these are mainly on higher ground, resulting from run-off from fields. With development, and as land use has changed from mixed farming to arable, a system of maintaining ponds and ditches has largely disappeared. There was much support for reversing this.

ACTION Identify specific problems and lobby on behalf of householders for preventative work to be carried out regularly.

LEISURE

We asked for views on a number of issues relating to leisure, including recreation grounds, opportunities for exercise and the village hall amongst others.

People are fairly content with the leisure facilities available to them; 76% agreeing that there were sufficient recreation areas and 71% registering satisfaction with the equipment. Notwithstanding, there was concern that there were no play areas at Nettleditch/ Merton Place and Catmere End. There were comments too relating to the lack of changing areas for teams partaking in sporting events at Littlebury.

ACTION Look into providing play areas in the places mentioned and changing rooms for team sports.

Footpaths

Almost 80% of households said they would use roadside footpaths if suitable and well maintained. At present one third uses existing footpaths and bridleways rarely, 13% monthly, 22% weekly and 17% daily.



Walking is very popular. Overall, 88% of people said they walked for pleasure or fitness (this percentage rose to over 93% in the hamlets), but just over 50% of people in the parish would like more footpaths as well as better signage (42%). This was noticeably significant in Littlebury village where only 38% of people thought that there were enough footpaths. The relatively low provision of paths, especially around the village of Littlebury, is a result of having so much estate land in the parish. Any development of additional paths or other forms of access would need to be investigated in co-operation with Audley End Estate. Signposting was considered to be satisfactory in the hamlets, but Littlebury villagers were not so happy, 50% considered it unsatisfactory. 60% of all respondents would like improved access to farmland and woodland. Clearly there is a desire for suitable footpaths. Lack of use at present may be due to heavy traffic and thus the perceived danger

ACTION Liaise with Audley End Estate for improved access to footpaths, especially near Littlebury village.

Village Hall

57% of the respondents in the parish use Littlebury village hall or St Peter's community centre at Littlebury Green, the majority coming from Littlebury at 62%. In Littlebury Green this figure was 49% and at Catmere End 35%, where no village hall exists. 27% are happy with their location and size, and while there was some enthusiasm (36%) in Littlebury, just 30% of the parish were keen on a new village hall and 42% were against the idea. There was one comment about parking availability for the hall in Littlebury where there is space for only four cars. 56% of households in Littlebury Green thought there was no parking outside St Peter's.



History Group

There is a great interest in local history (75%) and this is a testament to the recent initiatives in this area; many people take part in the activities organised by the History Group, such as 'Beating the Bounds', and just over 50% would welcome more if they were organized.



Evening Classes

There was little demand statistically for evening classes to be provided within the parish, reflecting that these are well catered for in Saffron Walden and other neighbouring towns. However, many ideas were offered. Language classes, yoga, practical skills, arts and crafts, gardening, dance, keep-fit, computer studies and singing were included in a long list of subjects. There was a divided response to questions about sport and leisure activities; written comments indicated that a multitude of differing activities would be welcome, though no more than 3 people asked for any particular one.

ACTION Call for volunteers to run projects/classes for various sports and leisure activities, advertising on the website and in the Parish News. Put a link on the website for information about sports/classes outside Littlebury.



Mobile Library

People found the Mobile Library service times inconvenient as they were at work when it called, otherwise they didn't realize what the times were. Some would prefer a greater choice of books.

ACTION Advertise times in Parish News and on website and consult Saffron Walden Library on book turnover.

Allotments

22% of responding households would like an allotment. Half of these came from Littlebury and the rest were divided equally from the hamlets. 12% of the parish and 14% from Littlebury village were prepared to give time to organizing an Allotment Society.

ACTION Call for several volunteers to ask the Parish Council simultaneously for allotment ground and to initiate an allotment society.

COMMUNITY

Community questions sought to confirm the widely held assumption that a good community spirit exists within the parish, and whether facilities are available for all ages or purely targeted at specific groups.

Community spirit and facilities

As anticipated, over 86% of responding households felt that village communities were important to them, (in Catmere End this response was 100%), although there were plenty of suggestions for further improvements. There is only one pub in the parish, and it is strongly felt that parishioners should continue to support the Queen's Head (78%), and an overwhelming number would like to see the return of a shop to the parish (87%). Encouragingly, a third of respondents would be prepared to volunteer to help provide this service.



ACTION The Parish Council and community groups should explore the viability of a community shop to sell local produce and groceries, and find out what financial support might be available. Ask those who suggested they would volunteer to come forward.



Churches

The churches of the parish remain a focal point for village worship and are considered an essential part of the village community by 71% of responding households. Interestingly the survey showed that almost as many (61%), feel that church buildings could be used for additional community activities. This would need the full support of the vicar and the Parochial Church Council. This figure was particularly high in Littlebury Green, where St Peter's is already designated to double as a community centre and 85% of responding households from this village believed that this should be the case. Suggestions for community use in churches included village society meetings, fêtes, flower shows, concerts and fundraising events.

ACTION Raise the issue of the use of Holy Trinity Church for other community events with the PCC.

Within the parish it is perceived that certain age groups lack facilities. Therefore the questionnaire specifically asked respondents to identify these. 60% overall believed that the 11–18 age group is poorly catered for. The over 60s were another area highlighted for improvement, with suggestions for an over 60s club or Christmas lunch.

Youth

16 households across the parish particularly requested a youth group to be formed, with many others suggesting other sports or recreational activities. The need for facilities for pre-teens was seen by 46% across the parish and by over 52% in Littlebury village; facilities for teenagers by 56%, and 65% in Littlebury village. Requests for pre-teens asked for Cubs, and Brownies (which do exist in Littlebury), and a youth club. For teenagers, a football team, tennis court, dance groups, amateur dramatics, Scouts and cycle tracks, were also suggested. The need for lift sharing and better transport for both groups into Saffron Walden was also highlighted.

ACTION: Ask for volunteers to set up and run a regular youth group after first gauging enthusiasm among the teenagers themselves, to ensure it is not just a need perceived by parents.

Ask for volunteers to revive the Over 60s club and/or Christmas lunch.



Despite these perceived needs there is a huge diversity of at least 33 successful and well-attended clubs/activities flourishing within the parish, ranging from bowls to bell ringing, to the annual children's Christmas party.



Parish Council and Information

The hard work and dedication of the parish councillors is recognized with over 76% of respondents understanding what their Parish Council does and who the councillors are; 79% of those responding believing that their views are represented fairly.

89% of all respondents read the Wendens Ambo and Littlebury Parish News and 69% regularly look at parish notice boards. As the Parish Council is re-launching an updated website, the survey sought to establish the number of households able to access the Internet. Encouragingly 81% do have this facility and

69% suggested that they would find a parish website useful. There is good support (66%) for an events diary to be linked and suggestions for features that could be added included bus routes, clubs and societies information, local events and adverts, professional tradesmen, church information, village hall bookings, recycling and green waste collection details. Lift sharing to station and schools, and a fuel buying co-operative were also suggested.

ACTION Continue to use the suggestions and data collected to inform the content of the new website and remind parish groups to submit material in order to keep it interesting and up-to-date.



In conclusion, we are fortunate to live in a parish with a strong community bond and level of involvement; this enthusiasm is vital to maintain and preserve our unique parish identity for future generations.