

Hartley

Longfield Kent

Parish Plan



2009

One hundred years of change in Hartley



Hartley Parish Plan

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1. Introduction

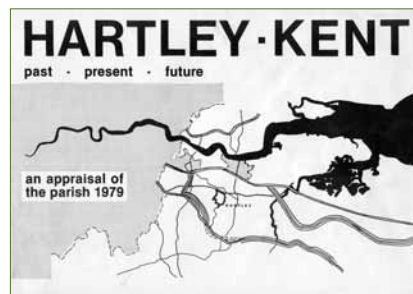
Parish Plans are action-based plans on a range of issues developed by the local community and were first launched by the Government in November 2000. The action plans must be based on information provided by the local community through survey, research and consultation.

1.1 Why does Hartley need a Parish Plan?

Hartley needs a Parish Plan

- To be better informed about the views of residents
- To encourage community spirit
- To collect evidence on the pressures affecting the village
- To take stock on the community needs
- To prepare for the significant changes that will affect the village

It is 30 years since a detailed survey of Hartley was undertaken and published by its residents. Although there have been many changes since then some concerns remain the same.



The development of the Parish Plan began in October 2004 when Hartley Parish Council convened a public meeting at Hartley Primary School at which several residents volunteered to serve on a committee. The committee chaired by Gerald Cramp includes two parish councillors, who do not hold any specific role on the committee.

In May 2005, the steering committee carried out a village wide survey to identify residents' views on a wide range of subjects. In all 756 questionnaires out of the 2150 distributed were returned by the final closing date and the responses given are incorporated as far as possible in this Plan. The committee has publicised progress

and invited comment at every stage through open days, press releases, a web site and reports to the annual parish meeting. This booklet is a summary of the results of survey and consultations and a fuller document will be lodged with the Parish Council.

Funding has been provided by the National Lottery (Awards for All), Action with Communities in Rural Kent, Kent County Council Member's Scheme, Hartley Parish Council and the Friends of Hartley Countryside. Also we are grateful for the assistance of many volunteers including Caroline Porter who designed the database for analysing the replies to questionnaires.

1.2 Living in Hartley

In our survey, we asked the residents of the village their views on various aspects of living in Hartley. Many commented that it was a "safe place to live". One of the good things highlighted by many residents were the green spaces both within the village envelope and outside. There were some complaints about living in Hartley mainly centred on the lack of services, both from an infrastructure point of view and to a lack of amenities. These are examined in the relevant sections below. Overall, the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that although Hartley is a pleasant place to live and over half of the respondents have lived here for over 20 years, there is room for improvement.

2. History and the Community of Hartley

The village of Hartley is situated in North West Kent about 20 miles south east of London within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The centre of Hartley is 1 mile south of Longfield Station on the main London to Dover railway. Hartley is 4 miles south of the Ebbsfleet domestic and international station. Buses from Hartley go to Dartford, Bluewater, Swanley and Gravesend.

Hartley lies on the dip slope of the North Downs, sloping gently northwards towards the River Thames. To the west, north and east of Hartley are dry valleys, where rivers once flowed. They are thought to have been formed in the last ice age.

2.1 History of Hartley

The first written mention of Hartley is in the Domesday Book compiled in 1086. It can be inferred that Hartley was a small village with around 60 inhabitants with some woods and arable land. The name of Hartley means “a clearing in the wood where the deer are”. Much wooded area remains in the Parish.



The oldest building in Hartley is All Saints' Church which dates from at least 1100. Throughout history, the parish church of All Saints' and its rectors has been a



continuous thread uniting one generation with the next. Hartley remained a small scattered farming community throughout medieval and early modern times.

The 19th century saw new houses built at Castle Hill, near the Black Lion and at Fairby and New House Farms. A school was built at Hartley Green in 1841 and the railway was opened in 1861, although we had to wait another ten years for the station at Longfield. The railway and the arrival of mains water in 1901 made development possible.

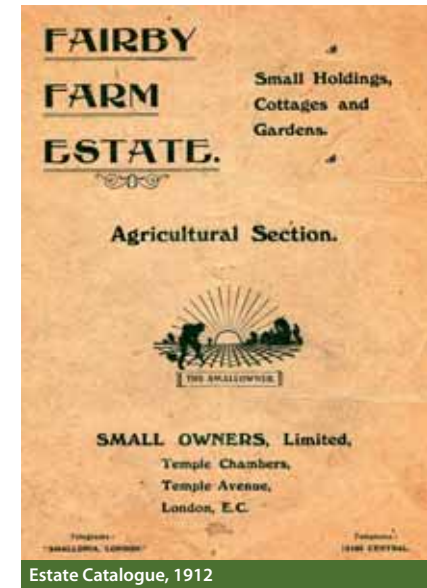
Hartley at the start of the 20th century was still an agricultural community. In 1912, Hartley Court Estate and Fairby Farm were bought by a firm called “Small Owners Limited”. They parcelled up the land into 3 to 6 acre plots and encouraged new comers to settle, build their own houses, run their own small holding and travel to London to work. Several houses date from this period. The inter war period saw considerable infilling with bungalows and houses. Mains electricity arrived in 1932.

After the Second World War, development resumed with more infilling and new roads beginning with Green Way and Springcroft. Mains drainage was installed, roads widened and surfaced with tarmac, electricity and water supplies enhanced. Hartley School was rebuilt in the 1960's on a new site. Mains gas supplies started in the 1960s.

The restructuring of the railway bridge at Longfield in 1967 opened up this area for further development. The first residents arrived at New Ash Green shortly after. Land in the north of Hartley was acquired by the local housing authority, and construction of a major housing estate at Wellfield began in 1975. Also a private development, at Bramblefield, was constructed in the 1980s and 1990s which is aimed at the over 50s.

2.2 The Community of Hartley

The current Church of England Parish of Fawkham and Hartley was created in 1983 from the amalgamation of the two ancient parishes. Services take place at least once a week in both churches and in All Saints Church Centre, Ash Road. The centre, which was built in 1963, is used by many local organisations for meetings and exhibitions.





St Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church

St Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church was established in 1913. Its parish is a much larger area than Hartley. The United Reformed Church was formed in 1927 and from 1934 to 2006 parishioners worshipped at the church in Ash Road. Since the founding of the Hartley Churches Association in 1963

and more recently with the local covenant, they have worked together to promote Christian worship in the district. Since then, the churches have published "The Hart" as an ecumenical parish magazine.

The Hartley Women's Institute was formed in 1921. The present building was completed in 1974 and in recent years, both the Hartley Players and the Hartley Gilbert and Sullivan Society have put on their major productions in the WI Hall.



Hartley Women's Institute Hall

Since 1928, the Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies have been and continue to be a major feature of village life for youngsters. The scout headquarters is in Larkwell Lane. Other local societies include the Hartley Horticultural Society, the various Hartley Active Retirement Associations, the Hartley Art Group, the Hartley and District Flower Group, the Fawkham and District Historical Society and the Fawkham and Ash Archaeological Group which has conducted archaeological investigations in the area since 1965. Both the Horticultural Society and the Art Group hold exhibitions each year.

Established in 1934, the Hartley Country Club occupies a 10 acre site west of Ash Road and offers a combination of sporting and social attractions. Activities include cricket, badminton, snooker, tennis, cribbage, petanque, squash, table tennis, hockey and bridge.



Hartley Country Club



Hartley Social Club

Also founded in 1934, the Hartley Social Club, situated next to the post office, continues to offer a relaxed atmosphere where members can meet in social surroundings. The club arranges various functions including keep fit classes and musical entertainment.

2.3 Hartley and its Local Authority

Hartley is a large settlement of about 5,500. Does this make Hartley a village or a town? Many of the people who returned our questionnaire are in no doubt that they live in a village. The Countryside Agency classes this area as non-rural and the Office of National Statistics classes Hartley, Longfield and New Ash Green as a continuous urban settlement with a population of over 17,000.

Geographically and economically, there is little doubt that Hartley is part of North Kent, and looks towards Gravesend and Dartford. However, Hartley always seems to be on the edge of every area. From 1888 to 1974, Hartley and the surrounding villages were part of the area administered by Dartford Rural District Council. It is now part of the area administered by Sevenoaks District Council. Hartley is part of the

Dartford Constituency for electing an MP and is within the Gravesend telephone area and Dartford postal area. South East Water supply water and Thames Water are responsible for sewerage disposal.

Our survey found that there is limited desire to initiate a change from Sevenoaks to Dartford. It found very strong links between Hartley and Longfield, which is not surprising as they comprise an almost continuous, built up area. Indeed 73% of the households who responded to the survey in the Bramblefield Estate in the very north of Hartley identified with Longfield more than Hartley. Having the two villages in two different district authority areas causes problems on many fronts. A review of the boundary between Hartley and Longfield will involve the Boundary Committee of England and that body has no current plans to review this area, but a local authority can request one.

Action Plan – to lobby so that on any future reorganisation Hartley, Longfield and New Ash Green should be in the same local authority area, whichever that may be

Action Plan – to lobby for a survey to be undertaken to identify whether the Bramblefield Estate should transfer to Longfield parish

According to Government Statistics, Hartley, in general, is comfortably well off with the exception of the Wellfield area where, for example, unemployment in 2008 was 13% as compared with 3% for the rest of Hartley. The area had the lowest number of replies in our survey, and is believed to have a low turnout in elections. Something clearly needs to be done to integrate the Wellfield residents more into the community of Hartley.

Action Plan – to encourage Hartley and Sevenoaks Councils to prepare impact assessments of relevant policy proposals that will affect the Wellfield area

Action Plan – to implement measures to encourage greater involvement in community issues by the residents of the Wellfield area

2.4 Development of the Community of Hartley within the 21st Century

Development pressure will continue. Houses and bungalows are being demolished to be replaced by several “executive type” properties. Also, gardens are in filled with “executive type” housing. This has resulted in some of Hartley’s historic buildings, such as Fairby Grange and Woodins, being hemmed in and thus detracting from their setting.

Development creates pressure on infrastructure. Problems with the roads, sewerage system, policing and flooding are all exacerbated by new development. Locally, Sevenoaks District Council has been reluctant to enter into a planning obligation with developers to require them to contribute to improvements in the infrastructure of the village.

As part of producing this Parish Plan, a Village Design Statement has also been produced by this committee and was adopted by Sevenoaks District Council on 15th April 2008. It will be used as informal planning guidance within the Local Development Framework. This document is available on the internet and printed copies are available at the office of Hartley Parish Council.



Action Plan – to promote the use of the Village Design Statement by developers and decision makers

Action Plan – to encourage Sevenoaks District Council to impose a planning obligation on developers to require them to contribute to improvements of the infrastructure within Hartley

Action Plan – to lobby our politicians so that no development should be permitted in Hartley without the necessary infrastructure being in place first

3. Transport and Communications

3.1 Roads

Within Hartley, the road system has evolved around two principal roads, Ash Road and Church Road. A bypass, planned when New Ash Green was built, was never forthcoming and 69% in our survey still want it built. Together with traffic starting in Hartley, the present traffic flow on Ash Road is considerable.



Traffic on Ash Road as seen by a pupil at Hartley Primary School

A traffic survey in Ash

Road showed that there were on average over 8000 vehicular movements each way each day in a week during October 2004. Although it is a class 'C' road (C252) its traffic is more consistent with some 'A' roads. With the number of homes in Hartley increasing, it can be expected that car ownership will increase consequently.

Action Plan – to lobby our politicians so that the local planning authority and the developer are compelled to consider the impact of development (both individually and collectively) on the existing road network

On a number of occasions, Hoselands Hill has been completely closed for a variety of reasons resulting in traffic chaos. With no clearly defined alternative route, local people use the narrow route down Castle Hill which is unsuitable for heavy or two way traffic. 83% of our survey's respondents agreed something must be done.

Action Plan – to lobby for the provision of a suitable alternative route from Hartley

Many respondents complained about the condition of the pavements and also of some road surfaces. Many local roads in Hartley are country lanes that are badly potholed. There was also much concern over the use of pavements to park vehicles, restricting the passage of pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Action Plan – to improve the condition of the pavements and road surfaces in Hartley

Action Plan – to ensure that the parking regulations are more strictly enforced specifically as regards pavement parking

The provision of street lighting has always been a contentious issue. Many residents see it as "un-rural". In the survey, 60% were against street lighting and 40% for. It would appear that, whilst not supporting street lighting throughout the village, many would like to see lighting extended further along Ash Road and Church Road for safety reasons. Some roads were in favour of street lighting as were households with less than 1 car per adult.

Action Plan – to investigate whether street lighting should be installed in those areas of the Parish where the survey indicated a preference and such investigations should have regard to the views of the whole village



Longfield Station Footbridge

A total of 53% living on the Bramblefield Estate said they were dissatisfied with the roads on their estate with over a quarter of residents saying that street lighting should be improved. There is some street lighting in certain parts of the estate, but some could be installed in the area near the

entrance on Ash Road. There were also comments on the state of the footbridge, including the lighting, over the railway from the estate to the shops at Longfield.

Action Plan – to lobby for an investigation into whether the lighting within the Bramblefield Estate and over the footbridge to Longfield could be improved and also whether the maintenance of the footbridge could be improved

Traffic volume and speeding is a major issue for residents in the village which will increase with further development. Frequent examples of speeding were given by our respondents, especially along Ash Road. Traffic along Wellfield has also been identified as a problem. Recently an interactive speed sign has been installed outside Fairby Grange in Ash Road.



Traffic in Ash Road

Action Plan – to lobby for appropriate further action to improve traffic calming measures throughout the village and speed control particularly on Ash Road



Longfield Railway Station

3.2 Trains

Train services from Longfield station are reasonably well used by villagers, about 40% of residents use the train at least monthly, many of whom work in London and Bromley. Whilst many respondents were happy with the general level of service, there are some particular areas of concern. These were expressed about the frequency of services during the evening and on

Sundays where over 90% of the regular users want a half hourly rail service restored. There were also requests for an increase in the number of trains stopping at Longfield

during the rush hour. From December 2009, there will be 3 trains an hour off peak but still only one train an hour on Sundays.

Action Plan – to lobby for an increase in the number of trains stopping at Longfield Station during the rush hours and to restore a half hourly service during evenings and on Sundays

Many respondents called for an entrance on the south side of Longfield Station to allow disabled access to London trains. Recently this has been installed but a ticket machine is still required on the south side.

Action Plan – to lobby for an entrance to Longfield Station on the south side with a ticket machine

3.3 Buses

Only 17% of respondents use the bus at least monthly which probably reflects the high level of car ownership in Hartley. Residents were dissatisfied with the current service, which is considered to be unreliable and expensive.

It is mainly used by those who have no private transport, for example the elderly, disabled and the young. Youngsters, who wish to work at Bluewater are unable to do so as there is no direct service arriving before 9.48 am. Residents suggested that some buses which terminate at Longfield Station could also call at Bramblefield.

The fact that bus services do not align with train services has been a long standing problem. Many respondents to the survey said they would use the service more if it was improved. Free travel has recently been introduced for the over 60s and for some



Bus at Longfield Railway Station

young people with the introduction of the Kent Freedom Pass. Cheaper and concessionary fares for other residents was clearly identified in the survey

Action Plan – to lobby to improve the bus services to and from Hartley as indicated in our survey and to provide further subsidised travel for the young and disabled, as in Dartford and London. The required improvements in services are:-

- 1. Buses and trains to be co-ordinated**
- 2. Buses to arrive at Bluewater in time for workers starting in the morning**
- 3. Some buses which terminate at Longfield to call additionally at Bramblefield**
- 4. Cheaper and better timed service to Darent Valley Hospital**

3.4 Community Buses

Sevenoaks District Council in co-operation with Age Concern run four community buses, which are used to service the residential homes in the area and to take people to the Cottage Day Centre in Fawkham. These usually provide, for a small charge, a service to the supermarkets. However, this service is only available for the elderly/disabled who cannot use the standard bus services. Our survey suggested that this service should be extended to all elderly and disabled residents as some 70% of respondents felt the provision of a community bus was needed.

Action Plan – to look into the feasibility of providing a local and more widely available, community bus to assist elderly and disabled residents

3.5 Telecommunication and Television Services

These have and will continue to revolutionise our lives. These technological changes will continue to have an impact on our village and these must be embraced whilst at the same time not being too intrusive on the environment.

Nearly all private residences in Hartley have the availability of a fixed land line telephone. Whilst most of Hartley is connected to the Longfield exchange, south Hartley is connected to the Ash Green exchange. A broadband connection is available from both exchanges. Figures of the percentage take up of the broadband

facility is not available but in our survey the fixed line service was rated as satisfactory by over 50% of the respondents. Some 4.5% of the responses considered the fixed line facility as poor which could be explained by a single cable problem affecting a particular area.

Mobile telephone reception appears to be patchy, which could be due to the local terrain or the presence of large trees. From the survey it would appear that the reception appears to be satisfactory in the North and (much of) the West of Hartley, but not in the eastern part of the Parish. However no one said it was a priority. Over 70% considered reception to be either satisfactory or good.

Historically, television programmes have been received by an analogue signal. The analogue signal is planned to be switched off in this area in 2012 and be replaced by a digital signal. At present, the digital signal from Crystal Palace is underpowered which causes reception problems.

4. Hartley Library and Parish Council Services

4.1 Hartley Library

The first Library in Hartley was opened in the old W I Hall and moved into the present purpose built premises on 25 February 1969. It is open 28 hours a week. Computerisation allows internet access and enables readers to borrow books from most other libraries in Kent and return them to Hartley. Although the library is weak in local history resources, it is getting more and more requests on this subject which it is finding difficult to satisfy. Various activities involving young children and adult reading groups have increased use of the library.



Hartley Library

Despite all the external pressures and changes, the library service was rated as one of the top 5 in our survey. The increased use by residents confirms the view expressed in the survey. Residents look forward to the high standard of this service continuing.

Action Plan – to lobby so that there is a sufficient local history resource available for public use in the village

Action Plan – to lobby so that there is no further reduction in the opening hours of Hartley Library and that the present standard of service is maintained

4.2 Hartley Parish Council

Hartley Parish Council is responsible for Hartley's open spaces, playgrounds, allotments and Burial Ground and Gardens of Remembrance. The Council arranges the Remembrance Day Service each year and responds to and comments on



Hartley War Memorial

planning applications, structure plans and government discussion documents. The Parish Council has supported the production of the Hartley Village Design Statement. The Council is also involved in crime prevention measures and any initiatives that will improve the quality of life of its residents.

In the survey, the majority agreed that litter and general cleanliness of the village was a problem. The main area attracting criticism was the area surrounding the shops at Cherry Trees where 95% of respondents called for action. Issues on the Cherry Trees shops are considered in the section on Local Shops. The provision of dog bins at Cherry Trees was suggested.

Litter was also identified as a problem in Church Road, the Woodland Avenue play area and the underpass at Gorsewood Road. The problem of fly tipping in

Gorsewood and Grange Lane and in the woods near Downs Valley was also mentioned in the survey.

Action Plan – to highlight that litter and fly-tipping is a problem in the village and to encourage residents to combat it

Action Plan – to improve litter clearance in the village

5. Education of Children resident in Hartley

5.1 Nursery Schools

From our survey only 43 households had children attending nursery schools in the area, many of which are publicly funded. Those schools attended included Round Ash Pre-School and Molly's Pre School. About 75% of the respondents were satisfied with nursery provision.



Hartley County Primary School, 1970

5.2 Primary Schools

According to the 2007 schools census, 54% of Hartley pupils attended Hartley County Primary School. The old school, which was established in 1841, became

overcrowded and by 1970, had transferred to new and larger buildings. The school, which has a roll of over 400, educates pupils of both infant and junior ages.



Our Lady of Hartley Roman Catholic School

In 2007, 14% of Hartley pupils attended Our Lady of Hartley Roman

Catholic School. This school was founded in 1942 and in 1977 transferred to new buildings in Stack Lane. The school, which has a roll of over 210, educates pupils of both infant and junior ages.

Other schools attended by Hartley pupils include Langafel C E Primary School, Longfield (14%), New Ash Green Primary School (5%) and Fawkham C E Primary School (4%). 96% of respondents were satisfied with their child's primary education.

5.3 Secondary Schools

Most parents were satisfied with secondary education. In 2007, pupils travelled to Longfield Academy (26%), to grammar schools in Dartford (22%), Gravesend (20%) and Wilmington (8%), to Gravesend denominational schools (9%), to Meopham (5%) and to Sevenoaks (4%). Parents would like to see the restoration of subsidised bus fares which are not available to non denominational school pupils.

Action Plan – to lobby for the restoration of subsidised school buses

5.4 Special School

Milestone Special School in Hartley on the boundary with New Ash Green caters for pupils from a very wide catchment area.

6. The Police and Fire and Rescue Services

6.1 The Police Service

The Kent Police Authority has introduced neighbourhood policing within the Sevenoaks District area. Neighbourhood policing is about ensuring that every community has a named and accessible team. Hartley and New Ash Green have 1 police constable and 2 police community support officers (PCSO). PCSOs work with residents to tackle such problems as



Hartley and New Ash Green Police Team

anti-social behaviour and environmental nuisance. All three officers belong to the Swanley rural neighbourhood policing team based at Swanley. A police surgery is held monthly on a Saturday morning at Hartley Library. Hartley also has a Community Warden. The Neighbourhood Watch scheme has operated in Hartley but the present coverage is patchy.

Hartley is considered by 92% of its residents to be a relatively safe place to live. Crime levels are considerably lower than our neighbours. However, the village survey identified certain crime hotspots within the village, which need action. Respondents to the survey were asked if they had been the victim of a crime at or near Hartley in the last 5 years. (Our definition of crime was fairly wide and included anti-social behaviour.) Overall 27.7% households said they had been the victim of crime.

The distribution was uneven, with much higher rates in the Wellfield area and South Hartley, that is the part of Hartley between the main built up area and New Ash Green. The next highest rate was recorded in Bramblefield where many elderly people lived. The types of crime are also unevenly spread. As well as noting anti-social behaviour particularly in the Wellfield area, the survey indicated that priority should be to deal with burglary in South Hartley and vandalism in Bramblefield.

Action Plan – to lobby that Wellfield, Bramblefield and South Hartley should be designated policing priority areas, and that a stakeholder group is set up between relevant authorities and local residents to address the particular needs of these areas

The residents are grateful for the role the police play in making Hartley a safe place to live, and for the often difficult and dangerous job they do. However there was considerable dissatisfaction expressed about the standard of the police service in Hartley. Only 30 respondents rated the service as good, but 396 said it was poor giving it the lowest satisfaction rating of any public service in Hartley. The criticisms were particularly about a perceived lack of presence and unwillingness to deal with "minor" crime. The perception is that the police are not interested in such crimes as burglary of outbuildings, breaking into a car, theft of garden ornaments, theft of bicycle, attempted burglary, motorbikes on footpaths, theft from a vehicle, car registration cloning, yobbish and anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Although



SD 294 in Rectory Meadow



Kissing Gate on SD 230



Between Hartley Church and the Black Lion on SD 302

Hartley Footpaths



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Walkers on SD 299 at Hartley Bottom



Kissing Gate on SD 294



SD 215 in Hartley Wood



Looking Towards Hartley Wood on SD 296

Hartley is a relatively low crime area for which the police must take some credit, it is a matter of concern to note the levels of dissatisfaction by residents of the police response.

Action Plan – to request through the KCC that the Community Warden be tasked with visiting all victims of crimes where the police are unable to investigate

Action Plan – to liaise with the local PC and PCSOs to improve the police response to all crimes and to reassure the public that all crime is taken seriously

Youth initiatives and Policing

An analysis of crime in Sevenoaks District in 2004 identified that over 50% of crime is committed by people under 25 years of age.

Action Plan – to recommend that the relevant authorities should improve their support to youth initiatives, which should result in reductions in the levels of offending

6.2 The Fire and Rescue Service

Locally there are fulltime fire stations in Dartford and Thameside (Gravesend). Day crewed stations are at Sevenoaks and Larkfield, and retained stations in 6 local villages. It has been acknowledged in the past that there should be a fire station in the populous Longfield - Hartley - New Ash Green area of Kent with a population of over 17,000. Other areas with smaller populations have their own fire station.

The fire and rescue service only attended 15% of callouts to Hartley within 10 minutes when their target is 91.2%. In 2008, the average time to reach fires was 13 min. 14 sec. Fortunately, they only get called out on average about 40 times a year to Hartley and about 60% of the crews come from Dartford. They attended very few road traffic accidents in Hartley and generally they reach the incident within the target. Most people in the survey had, thankfully, not experienced the need for the fire and rescue service

Action Plan – to lobby for a review of fire station provision in this area and that a fire station be provided in the New Ash Green, Hartley and Longfield area

7. Health Services

Hartley is part of the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Primary Healthcare Trust. Residents usually go either to the Kent House General Practice surgery in Longfield or in New Ash Green. This



is a particular problem to those relying on an unsatisfactory bus service. Parking near the surgery in Longfield can be a problem. The general practice surgery service was rated only satisfactory by the respondents to the survey with a number of adverse comments received. These have led us to make the following recommendations.

Action Plan – to lobby the surgery to continue for improvements to their telephone booking system so that callers can get through to the receptionist especially early in the morning to make an appointment

Action Plan – to lobby the surgery to extend surgery opening hours so that appointments can be made further in advance

Action Plan – to investigate means (perhaps by a community bus or volunteer drivers) of helping those without their own transport to get to the surgeries especially for those living in Bramblefield or the Wellfield area

Hartley has no chemist, but a home delivery service is available for those patients who find getting their prescriptions a problem. Hartley is fairly well served with

private dentists but there is very limited access to NHS dentists. There are also private practices in Longfield and New Ash Green.

Action Plan – to lobby for improved NHS dentistry facilities

Hartley residents are seen mainly at either of Darent Valley or Gravesend hospitals. Travel to and parking at Darent Valley Hospital is difficult and expensive. Occasionally, Longfield Surgery has referred patients to the nearby private Fawkham Manor Hospital.

Action Plan – to lobby for cheaper parking charges at Darent Valley Hospital

Antenatal and Child Care Clinics are held at the Longfield and New Ash Green surgeries. Such clinics were held in the W I hall many years ago.

Action Plan – to investigate the possibility of running antenatal and childcare clinics in Hartley

8. Local Shops and Businesses

Although, many shopping trips are made to places outside Hartley, 90% of respondents used local shops, about half of them weekly. We noted that people tended to visit the convenience store closest to them. Outside Hartley, Longfield was visited by 99% of households at least monthly for any reason; Bluewater by 78%, New Ash Green by 72%, Gravesend by 71% and Dartford by 63%.

Action Plan – to encourage local authorities to recognise the importance of local shops and to promote their diversity within the current retail areas at Cherry Trees and in the Ash Road

Hartley Post Office in Ash Road was one of the most highly rated services. One comment was “a credit to the village”. In the same building is the Fairby convenience store but due to the age of the building there is no wheelchair access. Next door there is a flower shop.



Fairby Stores and Post Office

Almost opposite is a small group of industrial buildings, incorporating a garage selling second-hand cars and behind, workshops for the repairs of cars.

Action Plan – to lobby our politicians to ensure that Hartley Post Office is not closed

Action Plan – to lobby for improved access for the disabled, wheelchairs and pushchairs at Hartley Post Office and Fairby Stores

The parade of shops at the Ash Road / Church Road Junction was built in 1935



Parade of Shops at the Junction of Ash Road and Church Road

and several cars can be parked on the private road in front of the shops. The shops in Ash Road comprise a mini market, a planning and architectural consultant, and a letting and rental agency. In Church Road, there is an estate agent and an off-licence.

The Shops at Cherry Trees were built in 1968 but are the subject of many adverse comments due to their unsightly and unkempt condition and the poor parking facilities. However the services provided by the shops are well used and well regarded by the residents of Hartley. The shops comprise a do it yourself shop, motor spare shop, a beauty salon, a hairdresser, a shop specialising in financial services and a Budgens supermarket.



The Shops at Cherry Trees

Action Plan – to endeavour to find solutions to problems of litter and parking at the Cherry Trees Shops and to improve the condition of the building

The Black Lion Public House, which has been a village pub since 1731, is situated in the southern part of Ash Road. A few years ago, a restaurant was added at the rear of the original building. Almost opposite are two horse riding centres, a motor car repair business and a haulage business.

At Hartley Bottom, but just outside Hartley, is a farm butchers shop and another selling equestrian products and a car breakers yard.

Searches on the Internet, reveal a wide range of businesses operating from private addresses in Hartley. Companies House records nearly 100 businesses with a registered address in Hartley.

9. Public Utilities

No significant issues on water supply were raised by the respondents from our survey but this was conducted before the implications of the drought were appreciated widely. It is now recognised that Hartley is in an area with limited water supply.



Water Pumping Station, Hartley Bottom

Action Plan – to seek support from our Member of Parliament that further house building is unwise until adequate water supplies can be assured in this area

The survey showed that most people in Hartley were satisfied with the supply of electricity. However, recently there has been an increase in the number of power cuts affecting properties in Hartley. Electrical supply is still by overhead cables in some parts of the village and these can be unsightly. Mains gas supply has been available in Hartley since 1961 and the survey found overall satisfaction with this service. However the southern part of Church Road and Bramblefield do not yet have mains gas.



Overflowing Sewerage at Rectory Meadow, Hartley

In the early 1960's, main drainage replaced cess pools in most houses in Hartley. The main sewer from New Ash Green which travels along part of Church Road has overflowed on numerous occasions. Overflowing sewers have occurred in a number of places in Hartley including Church Road, Castle Hill, Cherry Trees and more recently in the middle of Rectory Meadow (see photograph). It appears this problem is getting worse as more houses are built in the area.

Action Plan – to lobby our Member of Parliament to investigate whether the present sewerage system is adequate for the present number of houses in the village and whether it would be adversely affected by any new residential development



Flooding at Springcroft

Springcroft is susceptible to regular flooding due to soil laden water runoff from Manor Drive blocking the drains. As it does not flood people's homes, it has a low priority by Kent County Council a point they made at a site meeting on 11th January 2008. The survey registered concerns in Hartley Bottom where some

parts are recognised as of high flood risk. Residents of Gorsewood Road notified Sevenoaks District Council in 2007 that there were also drainage problems there.

Action Plan – to exert pressure on Kent County Council to improve the drainage system at Springcroft in order to solve the drainage problem

Action Plan – to discourage any further development which is likely to cause an increase in the flooding at Springcroft

Our survey shows a high satisfaction with the disposal of refuse, recycling and street cleaning services. However, foxes can be a problem causing additional litter when plastic refuse bags are left out over night.



Sevenoaks Refuse Vehicle in Hartley

10. Services for the Elderly

Residents aged 65 and over account for nearly a quarter of Hartley's population, with 75% having lived in the area for over 20 years. Overall elderly people gave positive views about living in Hartley but like anywhere there is still room for improvement particularly for services and transport. Although the level of crime in the area is generally low, 18% of people in this age group had been a victim of crime and of this about half was for antisocial behaviour or vandalism.

Opinions by the over 60s about improvements to Hartley include access to the post office, reducing vehicle speeds particularly on the Ash Road, improving parking facilities at the shops, improving the bus services, particularly at Longfield Station and to Bluewater and Darent Valley Hospital and reducing litter and vandalism. These issues are considered elsewhere in this Plan as appropriate.

Overall, the elderly considered they were well catered for in Hartley. For example, there are two active retirement groups, which are affiliated to the wider Kent Association, with a total membership of over 300 people. They hold monthly meetings in the All Saints Church Centre as well as having other activities.

Rural Age Concern operates out of the Cottage Day Centre in Fawkham. It provides social activities and lunches, a chiropody and hearing clinic, and hairdressing amongst many other services. A small hall at Wellfield, situated close to sheltered housing, caters for the nearby elderly people. However, 67% of respondents felt there is a need for a new community centre in Hartley. The community centre would also benefit other sections of the community including young people and for healthcare purposes.

Action Plan – to lobby for a new Community Centre within Hartley suitable for and accessible to the elderly and others

There are four residential homes for the elderly in Hartley: namely Old Downs Residential Home for 41 older patients with dementia, Bramblings Residential Home

for 42 elderly frail persons, Russell Court Nursing Home for 40 frail elderly people with physical disability and Fairby Grange Residential Home for 30 elderly people. There is also Hazelwood in Longfield and Holywell Park in Hodsoll Street. All cater for residents of Hartley.



Fairby Grange Residential Home

11. Services for the Youth of Hartley

Young people make up 1 in 5 of the population within the village and have different needs from the rest of the community.

Hartley Parish Council in conjunction with youth groups, the District Council and other organisations have promoted youth days and summer play schemes. Unfortunately, these are generally poorly attended. Recently, they have built a youth shelter at the Woodland Avenue Park but proposals for a skateboard facility there have foundered due to local opposition.



Youth Shelter, Woodland Avenue Park

Hartley, Ash and West Kingsdown councils participate in the HAWK project. It employs a full time youth worker, who with the help of part time workers and volunteers organises a variety of activities including snow boarding and hip hop.

Action Plan – to promote the work of HAWK within the village

The local West Kent Housing Association runs West Kent Xtra for 8 to 12 year olds, but needs a suitable venue to develop further.

Action Plan – to identify a suitable venue for West Kent Xtra to meet

At their headquarters in Larkwell Lane, the local Scouts and Guides provide activities for 6 to 18 year olds. There are branches of the Boys and Girls Brigade in New Ash Green and Young Farmers in Meopham. There are also church youth clubs.

Action Plan – to promote within the village the work of the Scouts and Guide groups

In our survey, 90% of young people endorse findings that there are few facilities for young people in Hartley. One comment on Myspace said "I'm 20 (almost21!!!) and live in a rubbish little village where nothing ever happens. I sometimes expect a tumbleweed to roll by!" While a slim majority endorsed a youth centre, far more popular was a place where young people can meet their friends in an informal setting. The youth shelter was a step in the right direction but they would prefer this to be better lit and possibly even to have cameras erected. They would also like to see this recreation ground developed with a basketball court and/or five a side all weather pitch. Young people also asked for skateboarding and swimming facilities, adventure playground and BMX tracks.

Action Plan – to explore the possibility to improve lighting and to install cameras at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground

Action Plan – to promote more youth uses at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground

Action Plan – to explore the possibility for a skateboard park, an adventure playground and a BMX track within the neighbourhood

Getting to facilities and job opportunities is a serious problem for young people. Public transport is seen as too infrequent and too expensive. The request for concessionary bus fares was highlighted in the survey and further details of the limitations of bus services is given in that section above. These concerns were partly met by the introduction of the Kent Freedom Pass in June 2009 whereby students aged 11 to 16 can pay £50 for a year's unlimited travel in Kent. Assistance should also be given, wherever possible with train and bus fares. The use of the Sevenoaks Community bus at concessionary rates should be continued.

Action Plan – to lobby for further concessionary fares for all young people on all public transport

Communications with young people seems to be a problem in Hartley which may be a reason for the lack of facilities for them. 140 young people (between the ages of 12 and 20) responded to the questionnaire. Of those, 69 confirmed they were not part of any youth organisation and 67 had not seen the Hartley Parish Council Youth Committee survey distributed in 2005.

Learning to drive is another aspiration of young people. Public transport is poor and expensive, and does not meet their needs. Therefore, they will turn to their own private means. It is important to provide facilities where they can learn to drive safely and responsibly.

Action Plan – to improve communication between young people of the village and the existing youth organisations and with the Parish Council

The other particular request was for a youth centre and Internet café within the village. The Scout Headquarters in Larkfield Lane can only be used for activities associated with scouting. This arises from conditions in the planning permission and their lease and every attempt to have this changed has met with fierce opposition from local residents. Other possible venues in Hartley should therefore be pursued to

assist the young people's aspirations. Both New Ash Green and West Kingsdown have premises where youngsters can meet.

Action plan – to identify a suitable building in Hartley for a Youth Centre and Internet café

12. Housing Services

At the last census in 2001 there were 2167 dwellings in Hartley of which 2145 were occupied. There were 1188 detached properties, 748 semi-detached and 231 flats. Of the occupied dwellings, 1820 were owner occupied, 229 rented in the social sector and 96 rented in the private sector. Since 2001, there has been a net increase of about 60 properties; mainly within the village envelope but much concern has been expressed in the survey of the type of new housing being constructed in Hartley. There was little support in the survey for any incursions into the Green Belt.



New Houses, Caxton Close

In Hartley, the largest public sector social housing is the Wellfield Estate. It lies at the northern edge of Hartley on a north facing slope adjacent to the railway. Building started in 1970. This estate is managed by the West Kent Housing Association and comprises about 400 properties mainly modern terraced houses,

maisonettes and sheltered housing. The houses at Caxton Close are a recent addition. About 50% of the properties are now in private ownership.

The viability of local communities relies on maintaining a balanced community that supports everyone in that community - children, old, young and families alike. High property prices and the loss of rented accommodation through the “right to buy” legislation has meant many local people are living in unsuitable accommodation or have been forced to leave the area. Both starter homes and retirement homes are in short supply in Hartley as indicated by our survey. If more housing was to be built then about 25% of the respondents in our survey favoured more social housing.

In 2005, West Kent Housing Association conducted a neighbourhood action study to identify issues of concern to residents here. The study noted that the estate had a higher proportion of persons under 16 (26%) as compared with the whole of Hartley (18%) and that there were 57 single parents living in Wellfield. Also, 66% were unemployed and 23% were without their own transport. The study identified a number of perceptions from the sample of residents in its survey. The “good aspects” of living in Wellfield included friends and family, peace and quiet and good neighbours. The “areas for improvement” included the lack of facilities for children, anti social behaviour, litter and dumped rubbish.



Bramblefield

The Bramblefield Estate of about 150 maisonettes lies in the north-west corner of Hartley adjacent to Longfield Station. The estate which is aimed at the over 50s has a number of open spaces which should be retained.

The properties on this estate are popular with many local residents of larger properties who

want to down size or to free up capital. They pay a low purchase price but are required to sell it back at the same price. There is a waiting list to purchase properties on this estate.

Both starter homes and retirement homes are in short supply in Hartley as indicated by our survey.

Action Plan – to promote more affordable housing for the young and the elderly within the village

Action Plan – to ensure that consideration be given to the provision of more starter homes and homes suitable for the elderly in Hartley

13. The Countryside

Although the centre of Hartley is becoming increasingly urbanised, Hartley is still set in a “sea of green”. About 60% of the Parish is green space with a good mixture of farmland, meadowland, woods and parkland, most with some form of public access. The survey confirmed that green space is highly prized particularly by those living nearby.

13.1 Woodland

In medieval times Hartley Wood was probably on the edge of the cultivated area and in this ancient wood there are the remains of ancient earthworks. It is also home to important flora and fungi. The ownership of the Wood is divided and that part east of the main north-south footpath has been designated a Village Green.

Action Plan – to encourage the Parish Council and others to preserve the species diversity in any scheme of management for Hartley Wood

Foxborough Wood is an ancient wood of 25 acres with one public footpath and permissive access to most of the remainder. In the bluebell season the wood is outstandingly beautiful. The farm owners ensure the wood is under a proper scheme of coppice management. Old features include a dew pond and remains of dene holes and chalk wells.

Gorsewood was saved from development by local people in the 1970s and by its location has enormous amenity value. However the survey confirms that there is a litter problem including fly tipping, which is costing the community thousands of pounds to clear. The footpath through the wood is heavily used by pedestrians as a thoroughfare from Wellfield to Langafel School.

Action Plan – to encourage Hartley Parish Council to continue to engage all stakeholders to combat the litter and fly tipping problem in Gorsewood

Rectory Meadow (formerly called Bancks's Meadow) is another green space saved from development. Rectory Meadow is now a local nature reserve, an example of fast declining chalk grassland. Volunteers, most of whom don't live in Hartley, are working with the North West Kent Countryside Project to stop scrub encroachment and to cut hay. Nutrients in the soil are thereby reduced to encourage the growth of wild flowers including orchids. The owners, Hartley Parish Council, have published an information leaflet and erected information boards. The Parish Council has been offered, on several occasions, part of Hoselands Wood adjacent to Rectory Meadow free of charge. The owner had to fence off the land because of public liability problems. A gift of woodland actually incurs costs, but would certainly be a welcome addition especially for the residents of north Hartley.

Action Plan – to encourage Hartley Parish Council to consider with a view to accepting the offer, if reiterated, of part of Hoselands Wood for the benefit of the community

13.2 Farming

There are just two working farms and the amount of farmland has fallen as Hartley has become more urbanised. Some houses have fruit trees in their gardens surviving from former smallholdings. The largest farm is Hartley Bottom Farm which extends to over 500 acres and into Meopham Parish. Its wide range of meat products are sold locally in its own shop and other outlets including some local restaurants. Two years ago it was the first farm in the south-east to win accreditation under the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme. Thamesview Farm is a sheep farm of the

modern age. Centred on the smallholding in Church Road, it also farms various parcels of land in other parishes, where the owner welcomes the land management that farming brings. Some local produce is already available in Hartley shops.

Action Plan – to encourage local authorities to reduce the carbon footprint and encourage local enterprises, by ensuring produce is locally sourced whenever possible

As well as traditional agriculture, there are several equine businesses including paddocks and stables. There are two in the southern part of Ash Road and an equine shop just outside Hartley in Hartley Bottom Farm. There is also a riding school nearby at West Yoke in Ash. Some of these are isolated and therefore vulnerable to crime.

13.3 Footpaths

Hartley is endowed with more than 6 miles of public footpaths which criss-cross within the Parish boundary. These give the opportunity for the residents of Hartley to enjoy the surrounding countryside. Due to the compact area of the village envelope the network of footpaths soon filter into surrounding areas of green spaces. These lead into much longer walks for ramblers to reach neighbouring villages. Generally footpaths are level and suitable for family groups and casual walkers. Dog owners regularly use some paths. Most of the footpaths are well marked but there is a need to provide better markers to give more detailed directional information. There is a Hartley Footpaths Group whose aim is to walk all the footpaths in Hartley on a regular basis.

Action Plan – to ensure that the public footpaths are well maintained and to provide better directional information on the signposts

Action Plan – to encourage Hartley Parish Council to publish a leaflet showing the public footpaths in Hartley

13.4 Open Spaces



Recreation Ground at Chantry Avenue

Hartley Parish Council maintains various open spaces within the village. These open spaces include Hartley Green, Hartley Court Green, Rectory Meadow, Hoselands Green, Gorsewood, and small parts of other woods. The Council also maintains recreation grounds at Woodland Avenue,

Chantry Avenue, Billings Hill Shaw and at Longfield Hill which is used mainly by residents of Longfield Hill. Unfortunately, playground equipment is subject to vandalism.

Action Plan – to lobby our politicians so that the cost of maintenance of Longfield Hill Recreation Ground be a charge on Longfield residents or transferred to Longfield parish

During 2007, the Village Pond at the entrance to Manor Field was refurbished by the Community Warden Response Team aided by several local residents. The work involved tidying, removing rubbish, laying a new pond liner, relocating and refurbishing the duck house and landscaping the surrounding area.



Village Pond at Entrance to Manor Field

Northfield (formerly called Black Lion Field and Pitfield), extending to 65 acres, is the last green remnant between Hartley and New Ash Green. It is managed jointly by Ash cum Ridley and Hartley Parish Councils as a public open space. It borders a strip of ancient woodland called New House Shaw. There are a number of collapsed dene holes in this area.

Northfield demonstrates the competing pressures on the countryside from different leisure pursuits. For example, local horse riders have shown a need for off road riding, otherwise unavailable in Hartley and New Ash Green. It is possible a jogging trail will be added in the not too distant future. The Village Association are again pressing for football pitches. There was little support for more formalised uses of the land with the exception of a children's playground.

Action Plan – to identify if any formalised sports uses are suitable in Northfield and have public support

The fields by Downs Valley and Parkfield are owned by the developer of these roads, but are in the Green Belt. They offer a vista stretching across the Fawkham Valley to the Thames, which was highly appreciated in the Survey. Chapel Wood gets its name from the Chapel which survived from a village lost in the Black Death of 1348. The site was partially excavated by a local archaeological group in the 1970s.

13.5 Allotments

Parish Councils are required to have allotments if there is a demand for them. The Woodland Avenue allotments are managed by the Council and are a well used facility. Every effort should be made to preserve them.



Woodland Avenue Allotments

Action Plan – to lobby so that the present allotment land is maintained as allotments

14. A Vision for the Future of Hartley

The aim of the Parish Plan is to ensure that both the physical development of Hartley and the provision of services enables Hartley's community spirit to develop and flourish. This can only be achieved if any new residential development is pleasing and consistent with the existing village landscape and does not put overwhelming pressure on the existing infrastructure.

This Plan is mindful of the likely pressures from the strategic nearby developments including those surrounding the Ebbsfleet International Railway Station which became operational in 2007 only four miles north of the village and those in Kent Thameside generally. The present residents of Hartley wish to maintain a pleasant environment in which to live.

The expectation of the residents of Hartley is that the planning environment as portrayed in the Sevenoaks Local Development Framework and the Government's South East Regional Plan will meet these aspirations.

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Eighty years of change in Hartley



