

**WITCHAM VILLAGE SURVEY**

**&**

**DRAFT PLAN 2007-2012**

**The Focus Group**  
[www.focus80.co.uk](http://www.focus80.co.uk)

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## **Section One – Study and Analysis**

## **WITCHAM VILLAGE SURVEY AND PLAN**

### **1. Background**

Witcham Parish Council has sought to update its village appraisal, last carried out in March 2001. To assist in this task it has engaged The Focus Group to collate and analyse data from a household and personal survey exercise, and to prepare a draft Village Plan.

### **2. The Aim of the Project**

The feedback gained from the survey will inform a 5 year plan (2007-2012). This plan will guide the Parish Council in prioritising the needs and aspirations of the village in a number of key respects, and enable them to provide evidence of resident's opinions to external parties - to inform local policy (including the Local Development Plan) and to support funding applications.

### **3. Methodology**

Questionnaires were hand delivered to households just prior to Christmas 2006 and collected in the same way over a period up to February 2007. Data collected from both household and personal questionnaire returns has been put in to data sets for quantitative and then qualitative analysis. The draft Plan has then be prepared using both sources.

### **4. Strategic Context**

#### The East Cambridgeshire Area

East Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district with a population of approximately 74,600. The population and services are centred on the three market towns of Ely, Soham and Littleport. Unemployment in the district is low (1.1 %) and the quality of life is good, with 84% of residents expressing satisfaction with the district as a place to live.

Although the district is prosperous, there are areas that suffer rural isolation, limited public transport and the decline of traditional rural industries. Approximately 24% of the population is aged 19 or under, 16% are over 65 and the non-white population is just over 2%. East Cambridgeshire is among the fastest growing districts in the country and there is great pressure on the housing market. Property prices have risen to an average of £184,000, compared to £138,000 and £171,000 in the neighbouring districts of Fenland and Forest Heath respectively.

The greatest challenge is to ensure that housing remains affordable for all parts of the population. A large proportion of residents commute out of the district to work, and this places great pressure on the main roads of the district – only 5% of the working population travel to work by public transport, while 67% drive a car or van.

Headline Health & Demographic Profile of the Area by PCT Area (2005) East Cambridgeshire and Fenland

- East Cambridgeshire has relatively low levels of deprivation.
- East Cambridgeshire has about the same proportions of people in the approximated social grades as England and Wales.
- In general crime rates in East Cambridgeshire are low.
- In general East Cambridgeshire has around the national level of people without qualifications, and those qualified to degree level or higher.
- Life expectancy in East Cambridgeshire is higher than the national average.
- Females in East Cambridgeshire can expect to live 5 years longer than males.
- East Cambridgeshire has approximately 70% more agricultural type businesses than could be expected if it simply had the same concentration of agriculture businesses as in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole. Across the county, agricultural businesses comprise around 9% of all VAT registered businesses. In East Cambridgeshire this rate is 16%.
- East Cambridgeshire had the lowest number of employees working within its boundaries at 19,870, representing around 5.9% of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's total.

Definition : The Indices of Deprivation 2004 include deprivation domains at super output area (SOA) for income, employment, health and disability, housing, geographical access to services and education, skills and training. An average score has been calculated for each local authority district based on SOA scores weighted according to their population. This measure takes into account the full range of scores across a district and averages the SOA scores in each district after they have been population weighted. A national rank is also provided where 1 is the most deprived Local Authority in England and 354 the least deprived

Local Authority	Average of SOA scores	Rank (England)
South Cambridgeshire	6.39	345
Huntingdonshire	10.18	291
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	<b>10.61</b>	<b>282</b>
Cambridge	14.58	218
Fenland	19.76	142
Peterborough	23.37	100

## **5. The Research**

This section provides what we see as the key findings, together with some corresponding comments/analysis – these have helped shape the strategic analysis and the Business Plan. There is further information, that we have considered to be of interest rather than of great significance, and this is available for the Council to view in the full data sheets at Appendix 1.

We confirm that the number of returns received, and therefore analysed was:

- 116 household survey returns (62% return)
- 234 personal survey returns (55% - from those over secondary school age)

This figures compare with a 77.5% return for a combined and slightly different questionnaire in 2001. We are not aware of any particular issues affecting the level of returns.

It should be noted that not all respondents answered all questions, and some questions were answered incorrectly. There were also a number of questions with multiple choice answers, which means that percentages shown against different answers in a particular section will not always add up to 100%.

From our experience of 20 years in the research business, the responses can easily be evidenced to show that opinion expressed has come from a wholly representative sample – i.e. additional returns had they been filled in and returned would not have altered the picture presented in the analysis.

The Council can base its plan on this data with confidence.

## **Key/Headline Findings**

## 6. Key/Headline Findings

### a) Questionnaire

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Strategic Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a broad gender balance in Witcham</li> </ul>	Not significant.	Not overly significant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age profile is strong on 25s-60s</li> </ul>	Not significant.	Not significant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-thirds of those responding commute to work and one third commute to school</li> </ul>	<p>Not overly significant but supports the 'quality of village life' data emerging from this study – people enjoy living in a village but don't mind working elsewhere, the lack of reliance on public transport suggests that commuting is not a problem.</p> <p>The school commute figures are a consequence of catchment boundaries.</p>	Reinforces need to maintain high standard of village life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village life, availability of suitable housing, and work opportunities are factors in people moving to/staying in the village – a significant % were born in Witcham</li> <li>88% do not intend to move in near future.</li> </ul>	Positive support for sustainability.	Provides excellent platform on which to build.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of the small % who may move, drivers will be - whole family move (probably to do with bread winner's job) or son/daughter moving away (e.g. marriage, university or job)</li> </ul>	Nothing really significant – market forces/small numbers involved.	Promoting the qualities of the village.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of affordable or suitable housing are the main reasons for people saying that household members may not be able to move within the Village</li> </ul>	There is a mis-match between the strong role of suitable housing in attracting people to the village and the lack of it when people wish to move within the village.	There is an opportunity to seek further clarity over housing needs for the village going forward – unless this data is already available elsewhere.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost half of the current population have lived in Witcham for between 10-50 years</li> </ul>	Whilst the current age profile is quite balanced and not unusual for rural communities, a proportion of the population is clearly getting 'older in Witcham' – with possible implications for special housing and health support.	We believe the Council should consider developing a health and well-being strategy for the village – to pick up these issues and those raised elsewhere in respect of families, children and young people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response to questions about future expansion/development is fairly</li> </ul>	The village wishes things to stay roughly where they are at the moment but acknowledges the housing needs of certain	Confirmation of housing needs within an overall health and welfare strategy would be helpful.

predictable, with the large majority against large scale housing development but in favour of starter and sheltered accommodation	groups – this seems to be a broadly sustainable approach.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents currently have little difficulty accessing medical services (in the transportation sense)</li> </ul>	15% say that hospital is occasionally or often difficult to get to and it would be helpful to know how this breaks down in case there are issues for elderly, infirm or those who might be 'excluded' for other reasons.	The health of the district is good compared with other parts of the County but more data about hospital access will inform a health and well-being strategy. The appetite for good neighbour/volunteer programmes, as expressed in this study, is very positive and could be deployed to deal with access to health services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% of respondents say that they have a health problem that affects day to day living</li> </ul>	<p>This figure is probably slightly on the low side as 60% of adults in England report a chronic health problem and many in Britain may be living with a chronic disease – some don't know (i.e. Type 2 Diabetes). 80% of GP consultations relate to chronic conditions.</p> <p>This study has not explicitly included the role of carers, whose role may be increasingly important to the residents of Witcham.</p> <p>The additional help requested through this study flags up some serious needs.</p>	Health and well-being strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than half of respondents would support a 'good neighbour' type scheme</li> </ul>	Building such a scheme will support a number of the Village's plans.	Creating extra community capacity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is mixed opinion regarding the efficacy of a more formal neighbourhood watch scheme – 56% say it would be beneficial</li> </ul>	It is unclear what the message is here – is there a belief (by some) that crime levels do not warrant anything more formal, or that the police should provide the cover required, or it doesn't work, or I don't want to be involved?	There is sufficient belief in a scheme for the Council to support a formal scheme but it would be helpful to do more work to understand the crime issues in Witcham (actual, fear of, perception of, etc.) – this data should be available already and could be built into a health and well-being strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost four fifths of respondents feel safe from crime in Witcham</li> </ul>	This may be a part answer to the point above. The implication is that residents will expect such levels of 'safety' to be maintained.	Health and well-being strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vast majority of residents never use the public bus service - there is some use for shopping and leisure purposes but this is very small</li> </ul>	Use of services or lack of use is usually the determinant for developing or curtailing such provision.	This is really a market forces issue, although the issues of lack of access to medical services for 15% of residents brings this issue slightly more into focus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus service improvements - 86% of those who responded to this question would like to see an improvement to the bus</li> </ul>	The number of cars parked in the village and the answer to the above question suggest that demand for bus services is/will remain thin.	The Council needs a better understanding of the underlying messages about bus services and how these link into other issues raised in

<p>timetable and 59% would like to see/also like to see improvements to the routes. NB – only two thirds of respondents answered this question</p>	<p>However, new routes, timetabling and reliability (40% of replies) could see increased demand.</p> <p>As the Council knows, some village services or amenities are greatly valued but not greatly used (the same will be said later in relation to The White Horse).</p>	<p>this study.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is occasional use of taxis as a method of transport but awareness and use of dial-a-ride and hospital car service are very low</li> </ul>	<p>It will be important to tie these comments into the other data concerning transport.</p>	<p>More promotion of 'social' transport services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is strong support for flashing lights as a speed control measure in the Village (52%). 41% support a 20 mph limit and there is support for speed bumps and the usual selection of traffic management and calming measures</li> </ul>	<p>Residents are quite vocal on traffic management measures and this is likely to reflect a concern for both road safety and a desire for environmental enhancement.</p>	<p>These issues fall within the scope of a health and well-being strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than half of the respondents say they would use cycle path links with both Mepal and Wentworth</li> </ul>	<p>Only positive implications.</p>	<p>Environment strategy and health and well-being strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic public services/utilities are thought to be mostly reasonable or good, with refuse collection getting the highest 'score'. Winter gritting is thought to be poor and 39% say that mobile phone reception is also poor.</li> </ul>	<p>Winter gritting is an old chestnut with people in the south of England and Cambridgeshire in particular – with some justification. The County Council should be made aware of these findings.</p> <p>The extent of response concerning poor mobile phone reception should be brought to the attention of providers.</p>	<p>Good public services/utilities will support sustainability and other strategies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of respondents support the provision of bins for dog waste.</li> </ul>	<p>Loss of control over dog waste management has blighted many communities around the country and has an impact on other services (e.g. green spaces provision) – the level of support for bins should be accompanied by a high degree of compliance.</p>	<p>This is a potential 'quick win' for the Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than half of respondents support the introduction of wheelie bins for normal waste and recyclables</li> </ul>	<p>No adverse implication.</p>	<p>This is the direction of travel. Plays well to an environment strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four fifths are against the introduction of fortnightly household waste collections</li> </ul>	<p>Again this is the direction of travel and very much a discussion point nationally. The Parish and District Councils will need to work together if this plan is implemented.</p>	<p>There are no obvious opportunities.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recycling is strongly supported.</li> </ul>	Only positive implications.	Supports 'green' agenda.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a sustainable environment by planting and preserving trees is strongly supported</li> </ul>	Only positive implications.	Boost to 'green' agenda.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plants and wildlife are important or very important to the vast majority of people in Witcham and 57% of respondents would be willing to help with conservation work.</li> </ul>	Positive.	Conservation can be developed as an interest for individuals of all ages as well as a boost to the 'green' agenda and quality of life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>92% of respondents believe the streets in the Village are in good or reasonable condition. The Village Green achieved the same score. The condition of the verges and the bus shelter attracted some negative comment but most other areas appear to be satisfactory</li> </ul>	No major implications.	The development of an environment strategy will allow the Council to maintain and enhance its good record here.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>43% of respondents say that fly-tipping is a problem in and around Witcham</li> </ul>	This indicates a bit of a problem with fly-tipping.	This is not the kind of thing that can be directly discouraged by an environment strategy but the Council will be keen to explore how it might support measures/other agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is broad support for better maintenance of and access to footpaths, bridleways and droves and a reasonable measure of support for volunteer-led upkeep</li> </ul>	This chimes in with other quality of life and 'green' responses to this study.	Supports green and health agendas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three-quarters of respondents support the selective closure of droves during winter months</li> </ul>	Practical move.	This would be popular.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is very little use of mobile services provided to the village</li> </ul>	It will be important to link the use of these services with other data from this study as the minor use of services may still be a lifeline for some residents.	Consider how use of services can be boosted or supplemented/replaced with other forms of access (e.g. via the good neighbour scheme).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57% support the introduction of a shop facility at the Village Hall.</li> <li>Unsurprisingly, 40% would use a fast food van</li> <li>17% say they would use a hairdresser</li> </ul>	<p>A shop at the Village Hall appears to have strong support although surveys indicate support for facilities rather than guaranteed use. The viability of a service would need to be tested further.</p> <p>The fast food van would undoubtedly be popular with some but to large degree contradicts the arguments residents are supporting in relation to quality of life, the environment and health.</p> <p>17% patronage would not support a full time</p>	<p>The shop option merits further work, whilst the van seems less appealing – there is no obvious compromise.</p> <p>Hairdressing for those who want or need it could be provided within a good neighbour scheme or similar.</p>

	hairdresser.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarding use of post office facilities, 85% of respondents did not answer the question. About three-quarters of the remainder use it for postal services or for pensions/benefits</li> </ul>	On this evidence it is difficult not to be negative about this facility. There is bound to be some benefit around social interaction but even this appears very limited.	We assume that this service could be 'rolled into' the Village Shop discussion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is solid support for keep fit facilities as part of new activity provision, along with other new or extended opportunities. Sadly, 38% of respondents did not answer to this question</li> </ul>	This has broadly positive implications.	There is a good mix of sport, the arts and conservation amongst residents' desire for extra facilities. Some of these may well attract support funding or present partnering opportunities with adjacent villages to achieve critical mass.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are good levels of awareness concerning the cricket club, Witcham Wives, the bowls club and the mother and toddler group</li> </ul>	Nothing negative.	An action plan for further raising awareness of and participation in the less well known activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children's playground, cricket facilities and football facilities are all seen as adequate</li> </ul>	There do not appear to be any concerns here.	Positive exploitation of these facilities for expanded use to include other special interests.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just over two-thirds of residents use the Village Hall. Satisfaction levels with the condition of facilities are fairly good, with most rated as reasonable, good or very good - except for changing facilities and the external appearance of the Hall where a third of respondents felt that improvements were needed.</li> <li>Although all respondents answered the question about use of the Hall, 21% did not answer on the point about condition of facilities</li> </ul>	There is a need to respond to the points about the changing rooms and external appearance of the Hall – this is important for residents but also for visitors.	Facility improvements of this kind will cost money and there may be some grant available. Otherwise, the volunteer support offered in this study could be tapped?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most sources of village news/information are considered useful or very important. 'What On' is useful or very important for 85% of residents with the free paper scoring 77% on these criteria.</li> <li>The least used or least important medium is the website – 53% of respondents scored it not important or not used</li> </ul>	<p>Delivered newsletters and newspapers tend to be popular in village communities and there is little sign of this popularity waning.</p> <p>The score for the website could signal a number of factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the website is not good or user-friendly</li> <li>residents prefer hard copy media to find out about village news</li> <li>access to the internet/IT skills are a barrier</li> </ul>	Continue to improve 'What's On' and notice boards. Consider some further research on IT access as this may have benefits for issues highlighted elsewhere in this study.

	Given the age and other demographic profile of the Village we think the latter is unlikely but some further data would be helpful.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those wanting more and no more information about the activities of the Parish Council are fairly evenly divided</li> </ul>	Do you please half of the people by giving them more and at the same time annoy people who don't want more? An interesting conundrum.	The secret may be in presentation and potentially further use of the website for additional or more detailed information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>97% of resident are not interested in being involved in the Parish Council</li> </ul>	This does not augur well for succession planning but they may think you are doing a splendid job!	Encourage further interest in the Parish Council by e.g. public involvement in action planning following this study – focus groups, project groups etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St Martin's Church is important for worship for 24% of respondents, whereas it was important for historical reasons for 87% and as a focal point for 54%. 50% say it is important for weddings and funerals – 18% did not answer this question</li> </ul>	The historical and focal point support for the church is important – this and the existing worshippers give the church authorities a platform to build support if they wish to.	There may be some innovative uses for the church not yet tried but which may tie in with other parts of a village action plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three-quarters of residents say the presence of a pub in the village is important to them. However, 44% rarely visit and 19% never visit. 18% visit only once a month</li> <li>The majority who use/would use the pub would use it for eating and drinking, although an interesting 40% do/would use it for meetings</li> </ul>	<p>This is the classic village facility argument and, whilst the pub must do its own marketing, the Council will be mindful of the thin end of the sustainability wedge.</p> <p>17% did not answer the question about using or possibly using the pub and, given the numbers currently not using the pub, we are not persuaded by some of the indications of possible use</p>	There are likely to be further opportunities for community use of the pub if the landlord is amenable and these could support other parts of the action plan – especially when smoking is banned.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question that allowed people a 'free hit' and an opportunity to give their three top priorities resulted in speed restrictions topping the bill, with new cycle paths, additional recycling and access to droves coming second, third and fourth but quite close together. Youth facilities, maintenance of the Village, public transport and lighting featured reasonably strongly</li> </ul>	To use the Desert Island Discs analogy, if Witcham was asked to choose one record, it would clearly be speed reduction measures.	The priorities, as expressed, give the Council a mixture of challenge and opportunity



## b) Verbatim Comments

This was another opportunity for people to voice opinions. We have highlighted the significant comments that are not addressed directly elsewhere in the findings/analysis.

Question 49 comments:

- Activities that 40+ can get involved in that do not require for you to have a small child or that you are retired.
- Street/road cleaning of winter debris e.g. leaves out. Also drainage of the drive beside our house - water pours down into our garage when rains happen.
- Resurface car park at village hall and mark out parking bays
- There should a hairdresser or a shop where young children can work between the ages of 13-16yrs and get paid.
- More use of the village hall as a bar and social meeting place in the evenings and weekends
- What happened to the Woodland burial ground?
- Street lighting is too bright, we need to be able to see the night sky and stars – please use the correct lighting!

Comments related to other questions

- Q.21 - easier access to A142 at Witcham Toll.
- Q.33 - No point, farm vehicles are worst for rutting droves.
- Q.34 - I do not use the village chiropodist as there are no facilities to sterilise instruments and no water supply in the room for washing his hands between patients
- Q.39 - Cricket stops everyone else's use of the village green.
- 42 - it would be nice if we got Ely Standard free, like most other villages.
- Q.45 - I think it is important for at least one denomination to maintain a presence within each village community. If I could not easily attend Methodist Church in Ely I would be happy to share fellowship with the Anglicans in Witcham.

Facilities/Village Hall comments

- The play area is only suitable for very small children. Children from 10 years to teenager in age are bored with what is there as there is nothing exciting for them to do
- The children's play area is rubbish and there is nothing for teenagers to do in the village. We did petition for a skate park and said we would get a response but we didn't, not everybody likes football or cricket. If it had a mini ramp it would be good.
- We need more things to do on the green. A youth club only for Witcham. I would like a shop in the village and more things to do around the village.
- On the village green we need to put some 7-12 year old children things to play on because there is nothing to play on or do up there. More things to do around the village.
- The goals are potentially dangerous and could cause a potential head injury to a child.
- Stop exclusive use of green by cricket all summer weekends.

- It would make sense for Witcham to join with Mepal, say for their football and perhaps arrange some co-operative car share system to get people to their ground and facilities and contribute to it.
- I would benefit in having some youth clubs e.g. Girls football
- I greatly regret the changes to the play area. They look nicer now but before they had MUCH better play equipment that appealed to younger and older children. The trim trail and TWO swings replaced by a super slide, seesaw, four swings and a climbing frame. The new fenced under 5's play area is lovely but what about the older children?!
- We need some nets for the cricket
- The play equipment on the village green is basic and only of interest to very young children. It would be nice to see larger climbing equipment for older children.
- What Daytime pensioner events and trips out.

#### Speeding/road/traffic comments

- Signs at the top of Hive Road are confusing for those who drive from Witcham Toll
- Despite the recent speed modifying measures, Witcham Toll is still a very dangerous junction. The 50mph limit is frequently disregarded. At peak times, people attempting to leave the village cannot get into the traffic stream on the A142. The number of vehicles coming from the direction of March and wishing to turn right towards Haddenham can mount up and cause a major hazard to vehicles travelling towards Ely.

#### Other comments

- How about a welcome pack for new residents giving details of village and local activities and associations.
- Perhaps the village should consider creating more wildlife areas - a meadow or woodland area, as achieved in Haddenham by the Conservation Society.
- The village of Witcham at this moment in time is the worst it has been in my lifetime with little hope of improvement
- Can we, as a village, continue to lobby for a roundabout at Witcham toll. The alternative at Mepal isn't that much safer either.
- We need more support for the Post Office, if we don't get it we will lose it. The 106 bus service is good for shopping etc but not for the Sutton Doctors - if you haven't got a car
- This questionnaire is too long!
- Just because you buy a horse doesn't mean you own the countryside.
- We have recently moved to the village from Haddenham and found people to be very friendly and helpful and hope Witcham stays quiet and unspoilt

- I trust that the results of the previous village questionnaire are also taken into account when drawing up the five year plan.
- As we are both retired, active and are able to drive, many of the questions hardly apply. However, it is vital for a small community to have access to shopping, public transport and a safe, clean and pleasant environment
- Although "Old fashioned and a stick in the mud", I believe change for the sake of change is not necessary. You only have to look at Ely whose special charm was being a very small, compact Cathedral City; housing expansion is rife, the shops in the centre are in massive decline and a lot of people who use the cities facilities now avoid it. And, please, NO SPEED BUMPS!

## 7. Strategic Analysis

### a) Overview

People like living in Witcham; they live there a long time, value most of what is available, and wish to see further improvements and enhancements. Results from this study suggest satisfaction and contentment with amenities and with public services; there are few grumbles and (from the data we have analysed) very few people with major health, access or disadvantage issues.

The data gathered clearly sends a message about quality of life being highly important – the reason for moving to Witcham and the reason for staying. These, and the requested improvements, all add up to 'it's a nice place and we want to preserve and improve it'.

### b) Key Issues

Most of the key issues emerging are underpinned by a quality of life indicator/theme that runs through most of the responses, although that is not to say that they are not issues in themselves.

- Housing

Respondents say that availability of suitable housing is a reason for moving to Witcham and yet, it is a barrier to those who may wish to move **within** the Village. 88% of respondents do not intend to move in the near future and those who may move will move outside the Village (whole families or sons/daughters). The planning issue for the Council is to look at the current and emerging housing mix as this may currently be having an impact on those who wish to move within Witcham (**choice**) and those, in other parts of this study, who may need supported or adapted housing (**need**).

A number of people in the Village have long term health conditions (LTC) and, both numbers of people with LTC and the extent of their conditions, are likely to worsen over time - the housing needs of this (growing) group should be fully understood.

- Future Expansion/Development

There is no appetite (not surprisingly) for major housing or business development in the area. The extent to which Witcham will benefit (better public services and transport links) or be disadvantaged (more traffic, more strain on public services) by major developments going on elsewhere is unclear.

The issue of the Elean Business Park being developed at some stage in the future is also unclear at this time, although it is one of the District's key strategic employment sites. Otherwise developments of this nature are unlikely.

There are no major implications for the Village Plan in this context as far as we can see, although the action plan should consider how it monitors the impact on the Village of housing, roads infrastructure, retail and other business developments elsewhere in the 'vicinity'.

- Health and Access to Health

Whilst most residents say they have no difficulty accessing medical services, there is a proportion of the population who do find access difficult, or difficult some of the time. It is not clear from the study if this group is elderly, suffering from chronic health problems, or socially disadvantaged in some way. The number of people who say they have a chronic and/or limiting health condition is 10% of respondents, although we suspect this is on the low side. The impact of such conditions on families and carers is, similarly, unclear but there will be an impact.

The type of assistance that some of this group feel they need (from the study) is significant for the individuals concerned, and potentially for their carers.

According to the Sutton based GP practice – “With an ageing population access to and from the village is probably going to be the most important thing, e.g. public transport. On the subject of health issues for Witcham, we believe that these are in line with the priorities for the whole of Cambridgeshire. There are no health issues particular to Witcham.”

The overall health profile of the District is good but, in common with most relatively healthy areas, there are pockets of both deprivation and ill-health and these have a consequential knock-on effect for public health and access to medical services. Access to GP services (anecdotally) is good and available under patient choice at a variety of locations (Sutton, Haddenham and Chatteris).

The Council, as part of its plan, may wish to develop a health and well-being strategy, which could:

- Monitor, with local GPs, the key community health issues (including housing and social care)
- Make use of the support expressed in this study for a ‘Good Neighbour’ Scheme
- Working with the PCT, encourage and support the demand (as expressed in this study) for further exercise and fitness opportunities (keep fit, yoga, more cycleways etc.)

- Crime and Community Safety

The majority of Witcham residents feel safe (80%) and only just over half support the development of a formal neighbourhood watch scheme. The one may be a corollary of the other. There are clearly no major concerns over crime and safety and the District enjoys a low crime rate relative to some other parts of the County.

The Council will wish to ensure that a formal scheme has the support of more than the 56% who say it would be beneficial – if not it may not be effective and may fall well short of giving value for the time and monetary effort that it requires to set up and run.

Our own view is that community safety could be an integral part of a health and well-being strategy, rather than giving residents too many different initiatives and projects.

- Transport and Traffic Management

A large number of Witcham residents have and use their own transport, a large number commute. Use of the bus service is very low and this could be because of the high ownership and use of cars or, because the bus service is poorly routed and time-tabled. The challenge for the Council is to try and get the balance right – between arguing for extra provision that is then not used, and the needs of a proportion of the population who say they have difficulty accessing health services. Community transport (via a Good Neighbour Scheme) is clearly one approach but it may be that a minor change to both route and timings of bus services could affect take-up.

We expect demand for bus services to remain thin – increased wealth, car ownership, the internet and other factors are likely to obviate the need for significantly enhanced services in Witcham.

On the question of wider transport and road safety issues, residents continue to express their worries about the A142 and Witcham Toll in particular. Various, (fairly significant) suggested measures are included in respondents' views and it is possible that the Council will wish to:

- Work with the County Council to monitor the effect of improvements made two years ago
- Continue to lobby for further action

As for traffic management measures within Witcham, there is widespread support for additional traffic warning and calming measures, including flashing lights, speed bumps, chicanes and other popular (and non-intrusive) actions. The Council will wish to ensure that it responds to this demand (having asked the question!) but try, where possible, to manage expectations. Community safety programmes (mentioned earlier) will help to achieve this.

The other component is the apparent increased interest in and demand for cycle ways. Whilst we have painted this as a health and fitness boost, it may have other benefits relating to use of cars and better road safety factors. There is, however, a corresponding requirement to ensure that signage, education and maintenance regarding the use of cycle ways and cycles remain a top priority.

- Public Services and Utilities

There is a high level of satisfaction with public services and utilities. The adequacy of winter gritting comes in for criticism and respondents say that mobile phone reception is poor. The Council will wish to work with District and County Councillors to maintain the levels of both services and satisfaction with services. The issues relating to gritting and mobile phones could be legitimately pursued by the Council as an output from this study.

We have included the issue of dog waste in this section, as people will see this as a public service issue. There is massive support for bins for dog waste and early implementation of this measure could result in a quick win for the Council as another direct output of this study.

Another topical and increasingly contentious issue in terms of locally provided public services is the topic of household waste. There are number of issues here:

- The District Council's desire to meet Government recycling targets in a cost-effective way
- Council tax payers want to see a positive impact on the environment as a result of the Council's management of waste
- Public opinion is still largely against the move to fortnightly household waste collections (where this has not happened already)

There is a good level of support for the introduction of wheelie bins for normal waste and recyclables – with the general support for the environment expressed in this study and the growing use of wheelie bins elsewhere, it should not be too difficult to win over the doubters.

The move to fortnightly collections of household waste is a different issue, however. 80% are against such a move. Since fortnightly collections appear to be the direction of travel, the Council will need to work with the District if this is to be implemented but it will not wish to alienate those who are expressing strong support for other (strategic and sustainable) environmental measures (conservation etc.)

- The Environment and Sustainability

Issues relating to preserving and enhancing the environment have been mentioned elsewhere, i.e.

- Cycle ways
- Re-cycling
- Conservation
- Waste management
- Dog fouling

Additional issues include:

- General village maintenance – including verges and bus shelter
- Fly tipping – 43% of respondents believe there is a local problem
- Protection of droves during winter periods
- Better access to bridleways and footpaths

Many of these issues easily cross reference to other potential policy initiatives – e.g. health and community safety. All of this signals a clear opportunity for the Council to develop an Environment Strategy for Witcham.

There are related sustainability issues for the Council to factor in:

- Use of Village Green and Village Hall
- Retaining and developing village facilities
- Increasing the use of these facilities by residents
- Widening the roles of the pub and the church

- Conclusions

Of the key issues discussed above we believe that the Council should consider plans around those issues which can have direct influence on the quality of life and sustainability of the Village and we would capture these under the heading – Environment, Health and Well-being. Our proposal, which is confirmed in the Business Plan, calls for an integrated plan of this nature aimed at setting and achieving targets raised by the responses to this study.

There will need to be a balance here – between trying to meet needs and aspirations on the one hand, and managing expectations on the other – e.g. whilst there is significant general support for the church, the pub and the bus service, ‘core’ use of these facilities is not strong. The same could be said of the post office and other mobile services.

There is apparently no great interest in becoming involved in the Parish Council and only about half of residents wish to receive more information about the activities of the Council. This indicates to us that the preparation of a Draft Village Plan presents an ideal opportunity to involve the residents and seek some wider ownership of the Council’s priorities for the Village going forward. Although use of the website scores relatively unfavourably with residents in terms of accessing village news, we believe the Council should persist with this medium, develop the range of issues it deals with, make it more interactive and explicitly encourage its use. The implementation of its new plan gives the Council an opportunity to do these things.

We suggest that the Council:

- Publicises the preparation of the draft plan with a brief summary and allows a short period for comment (via the website and notice boards)
- Invites the involvement of residents in (say three or four) time-limited ‘task & finish’ groups (chaired by Parish Councillors) to help develop the action plan and key programmes
- Announces a couple of ‘quick win’ initiatives/projects to bolster confidence in the process of consultation – e.g. dog waste bins

## **Section Two – Draft Parish Plan**

## **8. Draft Parish Plan**

### a) Scope of the Plan

In view of the findings, detailed analysis and proposed direction set out in Section One; it is possible to move fairly easily to a set of objectives and action plan – we have concluded that a wordy document would not be helpful. The following is therefore a strategic framework.

### b) Role of the Plan

The role of the Parish Plan is to provide a cogent and comprehensive vision of how the community wants to develop and to identify actions that will help drive that vision. The process of gathering data and opinion is aimed at giving everyone in the Village a chance to have their say about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their lives and to look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

It should seek to support and help deliver local planning frameworks, although it should not seek to override planning policy. It can be most potent in its role as a key influence over priorities and timescales and, where appropriate, innovation in the delivery of services. It should aim to facilitate positive change, encourage a sense of community and argue strongly for those things that are in the best interests of the community and the individual.

It is not so much a blueprint as a set of values, aspirations and aims, all of which are supported by a clear action plan.

It is also the role of the plan to give minority views a voice, especially where these are uncovering or confirming areas of need.

### c) Key Issues

Section One has identified those issues that the community feels strongest about and has sought to give these some priority rating. Our over-arching analysis is that Witcham residents wish to preserve and enhance their quality of life and that the things that matter most are:

- Protecting existing benefits and facilities
- Environmental issues (in their broadest application)
- A basket of transport and road/traffic management measures

We have carried out a very general comparison of this year's data against that collected in 2001. Most but not all of the issues covered are common to both studies and there appears to be very little change to the majority views and concerns of residents, particularly in the areas of:

- Local area growth
- Transport and traffic
- Health and community
- Services

The exception is the Village Hall where comments appear to be more positive this time around, except that there is a clear demand for better changing facilities and a better external appearance.

Some issues emerge in this study regarding the dominance of some facilities by a small number of groups – i.e. the cricket club.

#### d) SWOT Analysis

Using the data and ‘mood’ arising from the study we have put together a ‘quick’ SWOT analysis, which may be helpful as a planning tool:

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large proportion of the population are comfortable with the quality of life available in Witcham</li> <li>• There is a good level of satisfaction with current services</li> <li>• There is widespread support for initiatives that would benefit the whole community</li> <li>• The survey indicates that voluntary effort will be forthcoming in respect of conservation and ‘good neighbour’ schemes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst there is support expressed for some key facilities and amenities this is not backed by regular patronage</li> <li>• Some actions and preferences expressed in the 2001 study do not appear to have been acted upon</li> <li>• High levels of ambivalence concerning involvement with the Parish Council – possible impact on the future capacity of the Council to deliver its plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging the community in the development and implementation of a new village plan</li> <li>• Boosting community capacity through the use of volunteers in key schemes (conservation, good neighbour, etc.)</li> <li>• Implementing ‘quick wins’ to demonstrate clear response to the study and to signal intent</li> <li>• Recognising what the Council can do well</li> <li>• Ongoing communications and involvement</li> <li>• Innovation via an ‘Environment, Health and Well-being Strategy’</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scepticism concerning the Council's appetite for action</li> <li>• The Council adopts too many priorities</li> <li>• Reduced Parish Council capacity</li> <li>• Adverse or unpopular changes to public services outside the control of the Council</li> <li>• Perception that the Council does not provide value for money</li> <li>• Lack of engagement with and ownership of the Council's future plans</li> <li>• Changing demographics put more strain on village and village life (more elderly, increased health need)</li> <li>• Wider economic factors</li> </ul>

Whilst weaknesses and threats are numerically greater than strengths and opportunities in this ‘quick’ exercise, the strengths and opportunities are more than enough, in our view, to provide a strategic platform for some imaginative planning and implementation of village improvements.

#### e) How Should Witcham Develop into the Future

For us (from this study) the over-arching direction of travel is to maintain quality of life for residents and secure the same for those who become part of the Witcham community in the years ahead. Village development might, therefore, be considered at two levels:

- The built environment and service infrastructure
- The strengthening of the community through:
  - Increased awareness of special needs
  - Involvement in and ownership of future plans
  - Building community capacity

f) What Actions will Drive this Development

Whilst we believe there is a need for a reasonably high level strategy its role should be simply to set goals for the medium and longer term and determine measurable objectives and key performance indicators. This will give residents a clear view of what the Council is trying to achieve and an equally good feel for how successful it is being. From the Council's point of view having this 'performance management' tool means that it can remain focused on what matters and ensure that resources – human and other – follow priorities.

We have set out below what the strategy might look like, bearing mind the need to make objectives achievable within reasonable timeframes.

g) Environment, Health and Well-being Strategy

**Goals**

To deliver a medium term plan that will:

Improve the quality of life for all residents of Witcham

Support those members of the population who have particular needs

Continue to Improve Communications and Engagement with the Population

**Objectives**

(A number of these are cross-cutting)

Environment	Health	Well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the local environment by:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing re-cycling facilities</li> <li>Encouraging managed conservation</li> <li>Managing the implications of dog fouling</li> <li>Supporting better village maintenance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve a good understanding of the health and social care needs of residents</li> <li>Draw up related programmes that will:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the benefits of better health &amp; healthy living</li> <li>Develop partnerships with health and other agencies to meet strategic health and social care aims</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain good levels of crime surveillance &amp; prevention</li> <li>Improve access to and use of cycle ways</li> <li>Seek to extend both the range of and access to village facilities and support</li> <li>Introduce ways of increasing social capital</li> <li>Support the introduction and enforcement of additional road safety and associated traffic management measures</li> </ul>

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Measures/Evidence**

Environment		Health		Well-being	
Key Performance Indicator	Measure/Evidence	Key Performance Indicator	Measure/Evidence	Key Performance Indicator	Measure/Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install Dog Waste Bins</li> <li>Establish Conservation Task Group</li> <li>Draft conservation action plan</li> <li>Audit of maintenance issues and draft programme</li> <li>Agree plans with the District Council for additional recycling measures/facilities</li> <li>Website supports plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bins in place within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Agree membership and hold first meeting within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Report to Parish Council in agreed timeframe</li> <li>Report to Parish Council in agreed timeframe</li> <li>Plans endorsed by both councils within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Web pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint needs audit working with health, housing and social care</li> <li>Joint programme to identify priorities and feed into policy planning</li> <li>Establish Health Task Group</li> <li>Prepare Witcham 'Healthy Village' plan</li> <li>Roll out of plan</li> <li>Website supports plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit available to Parish Council within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Priorities agreed and submitted to relevant policy making bodies</li> <li>Agree membership and hold first meeting within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Plan agreed and publicised within agreed timeframe</li> <li>Implement and monitor plan</li> <li>Web pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen tools for crime surveillance/prevention</li> <li>Promote access to and use of cycle ways</li> <li>Develop a mini model for the development of village facilities</li> <li>Introduce a good neighbour scheme</li> <li>Identify key priorities in respect of road safety and traffic management</li> <li>Website supports plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community safety plan in place</li> <li>Signage in place and information distributed</li> <li>Key objectives identified</li> <li>Volunteers in place and 'pilot' prepared</li> <li>Community safety plan in place (as above)</li> <li>Web pages</li> </ul>

The strategy combines inputs, outputs and outcomes – i.e. some of the KPIs are designed to develop policy and agree priorities, whereas some are about changing things fairly quickly.

With regard to action planning and performance monitoring we recommend the following:

a) Action planning

It is important that the Council does not bite off more than it can chew – this will lead to unrealistic expectations and make life difficult for the Council. If the above (or the Council's version of it) is seen, initially as a three year plan (within the overall five year window) the Council can 'pick off' annual actions at two levels, i.e. those that:

- Provide quick wins and boost confidence in the Council's ability to deliver

And those that:

- Prepare the ground for longer term objectives

b) Performance Monitoring

The Council should devise a simple process for monitoring the implementation of its plan, in particular, its KPIs, and it is suggested that this be done quarterly.

h) Costs

We have not commented on the costs of implementing this plan as this will properly be the responsibility of the elected Parish Councillors – they may, of course, decide not to adopt this model at all. However, the plan allows them to cherry-pick to some degree and roll out actions, and therefore costs, over a three year period, or longer.

i) Conclusion

The overriding aim of this plan is to build something comprehensive and integrated from the results of the study and to help drive improvements through a mix of initiatives and measures that can benefit the Village in the short term, whilst contributing to, and, underpinning its longer term sustainability.

## **Appendix 1 – Data Sets**