



# *Wickham Bishops*

PARISH PLAN 2011



LIVE, WORK & PLAY IN

# *Wickham Bishops*



PARISH PLAN 2011



*This Parish Plan  
is dedicated  
to the memory of  
Lin Ward*





Map 1 – Parish Boundary

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Planning the Future of Wickham Bishops Parish

In Feb 2008, Wickham Bishops Parish Council set up the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement Association which published a Village Design Statement (VDS) in the form of a 32 page colour booklet. This was mainly concerned with planning and property issues that residents consider important, as identified in a village-wide consultation via questionnaires. The VDS was submitted to Maldon District Council to be used, for example, as evidence following planning applications. On 12th April 2010 the VDS Association metamorphosed into the Parish Plan Committee with the same officers and members, plus some new volunteers. The questionnaires in 2009 had included questions relevant to the Parish Plan. So what is a Parish Plan?

### 1.2 The Wickham Bishops Parish Plan

A Parish Plan is more than a design statement or survey of housing needs. It should cover everything of relevance to the people who live in the parish, including social, economic and environmental issues. The Wickham Bishops Parish Plan:

- Identifies the issues that are important to our community;
- Highlights our needs and aspirations;
- Pinpoints the opportunities that exist for improvement;
- Allows every household and business in WB to be consulted, giving all the chance of being heard and not just those who speak at local meetings;
- Enables future projects to be planned in the knowledge that the community is likely to support them;
- Through working towards common goals, brings groups and individuals in the community together;
- Highlights health, youth, traffic, business and environmental issues.

In polling opinions in the community we have had feedback from some people who whilst not in the parish consider themselves part of Wickham Bishops because they live close to our parish boundary. In particular, the Beacon Hill Sports Association (BHSA), which covers 4 parishes, is based in our Village Hall, (Fig L) and Sports Field, (Fig B). Although not included in the statistics, helpful views have been noted.



Fig A Exhibition Day



Fig B Tennis Courts at Sports Field





Fig C Wickham Hall



Fig D Blackwater Rail Trail

### 1.3 Brief History of the Village

The first mention of the village comes in the Domesday Book of 1086 as one of 24 manors belonging to the Bishop of London. It was regularly visited by the Bishop in the middle ages who stayed at Wickham Hall (1514), rebuilt in 1710, (Fig C). Most of the moat, surrounding 3 acres, is still there. About 1 km up the River Blackwater valley, (Fig D, An area of The Blackwater Rail Trail), is the original St Peter's Church, (Fig E), which dates from the late 11th Century. It is now used as the studio of a stained-glass artist. Further up the Blackwater was a mill adjacent to Wickham Place where part of the old sluice gate can still be seen and further still was a Roman/Saxon mill at Blue Mills. This lower, older part of the village has several Grade II listed properties.

A railway branch line was opened in 1848 between Maldon and Witham. Wickham Bishops Station was located in the Blackwater Valley. The line operated for over a century before the Beeching closure in 1966, leaving a lasting legacy in the unique Timber Trestle Railway Viaduct, (Fig F), now a scheduled monument, (Fig G).

In 1850 the present St Bartholomew's Church (Fig M) was built on top of the hill, as was the Village School, now the library. An extension to the church was built in the mid 1990s and is the focus for many church and village events.

The first village hall opened in 1929 and when the BHSA was formed, it administered the hall and grounds for the residents of Wickham Bishops, Great Totham, Great and Little Braxted. The new Village Hall was opened in 2006, incorporating the Social Club and Nursery School, and offering spacious accommodation to the many local societies and associations that thrive in the village. The new sports ground was then also opened with facilities for tennis, football and cricket.

"The Street" is the main road through the village and connects with Maldon to the south and Witham to the north. At the south end of The Street, (Fig H), is "The Mitre" pub, "One Stop" store and post office, the Wickham Bishops Health Foods shop, Cinderella's Beauty Salon, the Top Signs signs/print shop, and the Beacon Hill Garage (Car Capital Ltd). At the northern end is "The Chequers" pub, Valerie Loveland Estate Agents and located by Snow's Corner crossroad in the Arthur Mackmurdo 1905 building is "Aquarius" the unisex hairdressers, (Fig I).

The main housing developments, built in the 1960s and 70s, lie on the western side of "The Street". This expansion has caused the population to rise from 911 in 1961 to about 2,055 at present. As the village has become more popular, the smaller older houses are being replaced with bigger properties.

It is hoped that, with the help of the Village Design Statement, the pleasant rural feel of Wickham Bishops Parish will be retained, (Fig J, The Station Road Bridge over the Blackwater River). As several of our young people have said: "Wickham Bishops is a very friendly village".

## 2. Parish Plan Action Plan

The comments below have been grouped under several headings and have been collated from the conversations with over 80 residents or families who attended the Open Gardens or Village Fete events in June 2010. These conversations were supplemented with the formal responses from 300 respondents to our May 2009 survey, 25 Business respondents and responses from over 50 young people. Some of the comments are verbatim, since they were written on cards posted in our suggestion box. Comments that related to issues more relevant to the Village Design Statement have been omitted. Other comments may relate to issues outside the remit of the Parish Plan but have been reproduced here since they reflect residents' genuine concerns and may have no other outlet for expression. Where the strength of feeling about a particular issue has been very high an introductory comment has been added below the topic heading. Suggested Actions for the Parish Council to investigate are below each list of comments. The conclusions from the Affordable Housing Survey, which was prompted by responses to the initial VDS questionnaire, and conducted by RCCE, have been included in the Action Plan. However, the Parish Council is already considering these.

### 2.1 General Comment

One theme that seems to recur under several headings is the need for improved communication and access to information about what is happening in the village. This includes a desire for more timely information from Neighbourhood Watch, better communication from the Community Police Officers and access to a diary of village events. In the survey of May 2009 only 4% of respondents disagreed that a village website would be useful – non-users of the internet perhaps? Over 50% of business respondents thought that a village website or village business club would be useful. Helpful views have been noted and included in the statistics.

### Action Plan

**The Parish Council should commission the development of a professional website that has the capacity to offer the following:**

**Information about Village Hall events with relevant pricing and booking information;**

**Communication from Neighbourhood Watch;**

**Communication from Community Police Officers;**

**Information about all societies and clubs in the village, with web links to those that have their own website;**

**Information about local church services and events;**

**Information about village sports clubs and matches;**

**Links with relevant businesses in the village;**

**A news page;**

**Information on Parish Council decisions, thus making local democracy more transparent. This could include photos of local councillors and their contact details.**



**This website should be maintained so that it is up-to-date and funds should either be made available to pay for maintenance or it should be designed using software that is easily understood by volunteers. Hosting rights may then be granted to local people who will undertake to maintain the website. It may be that advertising from local businesses and tradesmen could provide enough revenue to pay for annual maintenance.**



Fig E St Peter's Church



*The Viaduct in use May 31st, 1958  
Reproduced by permission of Colin Hogg, courtesy MIKE ESAU*

Fig F Timber Trestle Railway Viaduct

## 2.2 Safety of Pedestrians/Traffic Calming

The safety of pedestrians, particularly children, when crossing the main road or walking along roads with no pavements elicited the most frequent and passionate responses from residents, when asked about what could be improved in the village. This view is supported further by the survey, in 2009, in which 61% of all respondents agreed that there should be a pedestrian crossing on The Street. Of the respondents to the Youth Survey, 16 or 30% volunteered that they felt unsafe when crossing Witham Road or at the One Stop/Mitre junction. The individual comments below often represent proposed solutions to this issue but the fundamental problem is the same – cars and trucks drive too quickly through the village and residents are at risk, especially around awkward junctions and areas where visibility is poor.

### Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

**Zebra crossing at Snows Corner – cars too fast.**

**Crossing at Mitre for school children – there is no lollipop lady.**

**Slow down traffic in the village.**

**Provide tarmac pavement on Maypole Road from houses to One Stop.**

**Speed indicator device with a face. Smiles below max speed – works elsewhere – suggestion from village policeman.**

**Pathway from School Lane to Maltings Cottage.**

**Footpath on Witham Hill.**

**Cut back plants on Church Rd to allow High Hall residents to see traffic.**

**Signs – Caution Children.**

**Sensitive lights at Blue Mills to avoid waiting – as in Aldham.**

**New 30mph signs not effective.**

**Concern about speed of traffic - would support “twenty’s plenty”.**

**Support for white gates as at some village entrances.**

**Speeding is an issue in Kelvedon Rd although new pavement has made the road seem safer.**

### Action Plan

Undertake a comprehensive review of all aspects of traffic calming and pedestrian safety in the village in conjunction with the ECC Highways Department and other relevant bodies. The objective is to introduce additional measures that result in significantly slower traffic speeds and/or safer crossing areas on the main street. All conclusions and their justifications should be transparent and communicated to the village through public notices and parish magazine announcements.

Specific suggestions, such as cutting back plants and adding pavements should also be explored and acted upon accordingly.



## 2.3 Crime

These comments, while not isolated, do not reflect the survey results last year, when 92% of respondents said they felt safe and only half said they would like more police presence in the village. Furthermore over 60% thought that the Neighbourhood Watch was effective. Nevertheless, any crime is unacceptable and this must be kept under review. Better and more communications between residents and other organisations is a theme that recurs throughout this review of comments.

### Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

More communications between Police and Village Residents about crime in the village.

Concern about decreased PCSO presence in the area.

Neighbourhood watch announcements are not timely - one written announcement had been on the internet for 3 months.

Some concern about security - sheds being broken into.

Concern about groups of youths gathered on playing fields at rear of property using loud bad language.

### Action Plan

Engage with the local police and pass on residents' and businesses' specific and general concerns. Securing additional hours of PCSO patrolling would be a good result.

Engage with the Neighbourhood Watch and encourage a more timely dissemination of information. See General comment above.



Fig G Timber Trestle Viaduct Monument



Fig H The Street



Fig I Arthur Mackmurdo Building



Fig J Station Road Bridge over the Blackwater River

## 2.4 Environment

In the survey of May 2009 77% of respondents were satisfied with street cleaning but only 55% were satisfied with litter clearing. 65% were satisfied with street lighting but 20% were not satisfied. More than 50% of business respondents thought that recycling was poor or very poor.

### Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

Box for recycling plastic.

More street lighting.

Street Lighting at junctions.

Problems with litter.

Litter at property boundaries/no pavement sweeping.

Bury overhead cables.

Reduce size of Church Green so cars can park on the road not the grass.

Over-illumination of front gardens - security light issue?

### Action Plan

Investigate with MDC the reasons why plastic is not recycled. Other councils do recycle this non-biodegradable material. Can MDC introduce recycling and if so what would be its additional cost/benefit for the village and the MDC generally?

Investigate street lighting.

Discuss litter collection with local council.

Discuss burial of cables with relevant Utilities Companies.

Identify over-illuminated gardens and suggest lower watt bulbs.



## 2.5 Facilities

Some of the comments below are outside the remit of the Parish Plan and may be remarks by a single individual but are reproduced to reflect local opinion even if not widely shared. Requests for a better mobile signal, faster broadband and affordable housing are not isolated.

### Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

Demolish surgery and rebuild to include chiropody etc.

Strong support for retention of branch surgery. (Fig K)

Knock down Beacon Hill Garage and replace with something in keeping with the village e.g. Tea shop.

Faster broadband.

Better mobile reception although not at the expense of a mast in the village.

Village Hall (Fig L) seen as a closed shop- there should be more active encouragement for the residents to use it.

Also hire prices are prohibitively expensive.

Perhaps a village Christmas Party.

Support for affordable housing \*

Better communication of what is going on in the village.

Teashop/bakery would benefit the village.

A feeling that the shop area has lost its community feel.

A need for more reflective time with a local doctor.

Plans to help the elderly/disabled when conditions underfoot preclude walking outside e.g. when the pavements are icy.

\*The village questionnaire showed support for a small development of affordable housing, specifically designated for local people. A subsequent Housing Needs Survey conducted by the RCCE on behalf of the Parish Council also showed significant support for the building of such homes (64%), and the need identified in the returned forms led to the initial recommendation of 5 units, with a mixture of tenancy arrangements (rent, shared ownership, intermediate rent ). The Parish Council has agreed to take this forward, and will enter discussions with a number of Housing Associations.



Fig K Doctors' Surgery



Fig L Village Hall



*Fig M St Bartholomew's Church*



*Fig N The Library*

## Action Plan

Investigate alternatives for faster broadband throughout the village.

Investigate how better mobile signals can be achieved without the requirement for new antennas.

Report to village on the outcome of the Affordable Housing Survey.

Communicate with Witham Surgery (owners of GP branch surgery in Kelvedon Rd) the potential demand for additional services to be offered through their facility. Discuss with Primary Care Trust the opportunity to bring more healthcare services to the village.

## 2.6 Public Transport

In the May 2009 survey only 40% of respondents said the bus service was adequate for their needs and only 12% used the bus at least once a week. 37% said they would use a direct bus to Chelmsford and 29% that the bus should be rerouted through the centre of the village. 60% of business respondents state that more regular bus public transport would help their businesses to develop.

## Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

**Re-opening of the Maldon to Witham branch line.**

**Better public transport needed - perhaps direct bus to Chelmsford.**

**Support for extension of bus timetable later into the evening.**

**Re-route bus stop to help people living in Church Rd/Leigh Drive/Wellands - older people.**

## Action Plan

Discuss the feasibility of re-routing the bus through the centre of the village with the bus company and offering a direct bus to Chelmsford. We acknowledge that the no. 90 bus service has recently been improved.

Support any additional survey work needed to gather information.



Finally, despite the universal acknowledgement that young people are comfortable with modern technology and use it frequently only 11% of responses about the use of spare time mentioned Facebook/Twitter or emailing/texting and most heard about what was going on in the village by word of mouth or via an organisation, such as scouts or school. The absence of a website that explains what is happening in the village may explain some of this lack of communication but suggests that keeping local schools and organisations informed of village events may be a useful way forward.

## Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

**Dance club for young people one night a week - willing to pay £2.50.**



*Fig O Childrens Playground*



*Fig P Blackwater at Blue Mills*

## Action Plan

**Establish a Youth Council which could get involved in establishing the real demand for the items mentioned in the survey, including the sporting activities not already provided for, such as basketball.**

**Investigate the economics and feasibility of providing a regular after-school club with the opportunity for children to raise issues of importance to them. This would need CRB checked volunteers and access to some special counselling skills.**

**Investigate the economics and feasibility of establishing a youth club, with a variety of activities available, perhaps by rotation e.g. dancing, live music, drama, art. This could be organized on a sustainable basis using some paid tutors (e.g. dance, drama, art teachers) and charging a subscription or membership fee.**

## 2.8 Businesses

Around 90 questionnaires were distributed to businesses/organisations in the village and over 25 responses were received. Most of the responses have been incorporated under general headings above but issues of particular concern included the need for better parking facilities, a better mobile signal and faster broadband.

## Comments from Questionnaire, Interviews and Suggestions Box

**Could there be a Business Day to alert the village to local businesses?**

**There is a lack of communication in Wickham Bishops compared with other villages.**

**An all day childcare facility would be helpful.**

**A comprehensive list of businesses in the village would be helpful. Networking will benefit all.**

## Action Plan

**Create a strategy for better communication and awareness of what local businesses offer and what they need to prosper. This could include dedicated web-pages on the village website, links to local business websites and a Business Day.**

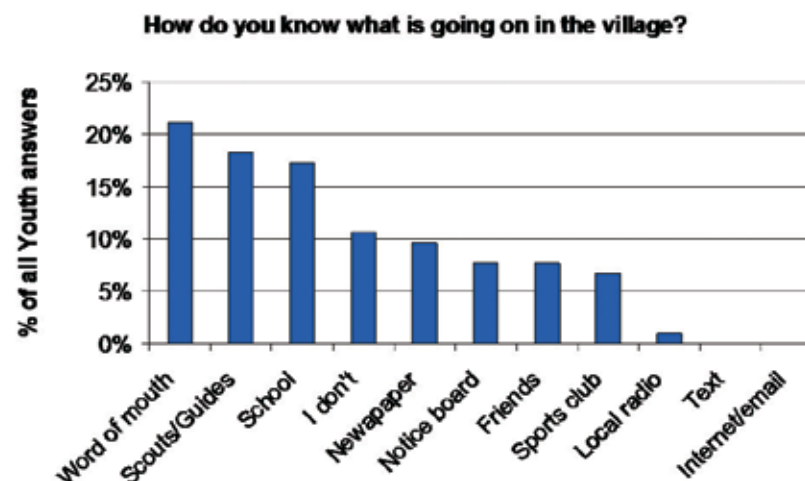
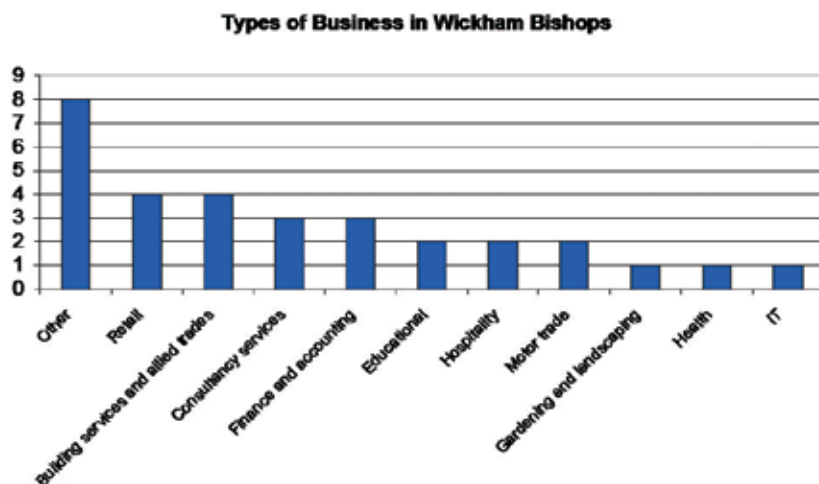
**Consider the implications for local businesses when implementing all Action Plans.**



### 3. Charts supporting the Main Conclusions from the Three Questionnaires (All Households, Businesses and Young People)

The questionnaires and all the charts (including the non-contentious ones) which represent the evidence supporting the need to address the key points in the Action Plan are presented online at:

[www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](http://www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org)





## 4. Summary of Actions - to be reviewed and updated annually

ACTION	START	COST	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
<b>1 General Comment</b>			
Parish Council to establish and maintain village website	Dec 2010	£200 pa	Parish Council
<b>2 Safety of Pedestrians</b>			
Review of traffic calming measures	2011		Parish Council/ECC Highways
Safer pedestrian crossing areas	2011		Parish Council/ECC Highways
Maypole Road pavement	Dec 2010	ECC funds	ECC/Parish Council
Speed control	2011		Parish Council
<b>3 Crime</b>			
Improved communication with police. Police representative at Parish Council meetings	2011		Parish Council/ Police
Possibility of additional PCSO hours	2011	£2,000	Parish Council/Police
Higher profile of Neighbourhood Watch: Parish Council support for NW	2011	£400	Parish Council/NW coordinator
<b>4 Environment</b>			
Litter: ensure residents' concerns passed on to Maldon District Council	2011		Parish Council
Review recycling facilities	2011		Parish Council/Maldon DC
Review street lighting	2011		Parish Council
Cable burial: review feasibility	2011		Parish Council/Utilities

<b>5 Facilities</b>			
Broadband: investigate high speed options	2011		Parish Council
Mobile signal: review alternatives	2011		Parish council
Plan affordable housing development	2010		Parish Council/RCCE
Local health services: discuss possibilities of additional services at GP surgery	2011		Parish Council/GP's
Local health services: discuss with PCT/GP's opportunities to bring more healthcare services to village	2011		Parish Council/GP's/PCT
<b>6 Public Transport</b>			
Discuss with bus company extension of service through village	2011		Parish Council/Stephensons
Discuss possibility of bus service to Chelmsford	2011		Parish Council/Stephensons
<b>7 Young People</b>			
Establish Youth Council	2011		Parish Council
Look at feasibility of after school club/ youth activities club	2011		Parish Council/BHSA
<b>8 Business</b>			
Look at communications with, and better awareness of, local businesses and their needs	2011		Parish Council
Look at feasibility of organizing a Business Day	2011		Parish Council

## 5 Acknowledgements

The development and production of the Wickham Bishops Parish Plan is the result of a magnificent effort by a great many people who care deeply about the future of our village.

We must thank more than 300 people. These include the local Brownies and their leaders, representatives from local businesses and many young people who filled in the questionnaire, some of whom gave their time to voice their concerns, likes and dislikes directly to our committee members at the Village Fete and the Open Gardens event.

Funds to support this project were received from Wickham Bishops Parish Council and the Community Planning Fund (managed by Rural Community Council of Essex on behalf of the Essex Rural Partnership and Defra) – we thank them both.

We are appreciative also of St Bartholomew's Church PCC for allowing us to advertise in the Parish Magazine and to present our case at various public events in the Church and Church Hall. We also thank the Beacon Hill Sports Association for the opportunity to present our exhibition at several high profile events in the Village Hall.

A special mention must go to Kevin Topple of KAT Graphics for his time and expertise in designing and formatting the published Parish Plan.

Finally, special thanks to the Parish Plan Steering Committee who for nearly twelve months have devoted an enormous amount of time, effort and enthusiasm to the development, management and production of the finished document. They are Stewart Adkins, Henry Bass, Jill Gooding, Mike Gwinn, Jane Hall, Penelope Johnson, Mandy Mickelsen, Pam and Colin Perkins, Barry Sayers, Barrie Stead, Tony and Joan Walkden, Stewart Wallace and Lin Ward. For more details please see [www.wickhambishops.info](http://www.wickhambishops.info)