

# Hartfield Parish Action Plan

Draft Version 1.0 – December 2008



## **HARTFIELD PARISH PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Chair: Dr Peter Furneaux  
Document Consolidated by: Kevin Hawes



# Hartfield Parish Plan

---

## Contents

BACKGROUND .....	1
HARTFIELD PARISH .....	1
HISTORY .....	2
THE PARISH TODAY .....	2
WHAT IS A PARISH PLAN?.....	4
STEERING GROUP .....	4
A PARISH PLAN – WHAT IS IT NOT? .....	4
THE QUESTIONNAIRE PROCESS .....	4
PROPOSED WORKSTREAMS .....	6
WORKSTREAM 1: HOUSING AND PLANNING .....	6
WORKSTREAM 2: RECREATION FACILITIES .....	8
WORKSTREAM 3: HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT .....	9
WORKSTREAM 4: ENVIRONMENT .....	11
WORKSTREAM 5: PROTECTING THE PLACE WE LIVE IN .....	12
WORKSTREAM 6: SERVICES IN THE PARISH .....	13
WORKSTREAM 7: THE CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY .....	15
NEXT STEPS .....	19
GAINING SUPPORT TO THE PLAN .....	19
IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN .....	19
EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS TO BE DEVELOPED / GROUPS TO BE LOBBIED .....	19
RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS .....	19
OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF THE PARISH PLAN .....	19

## Background

### Hartfield Parish

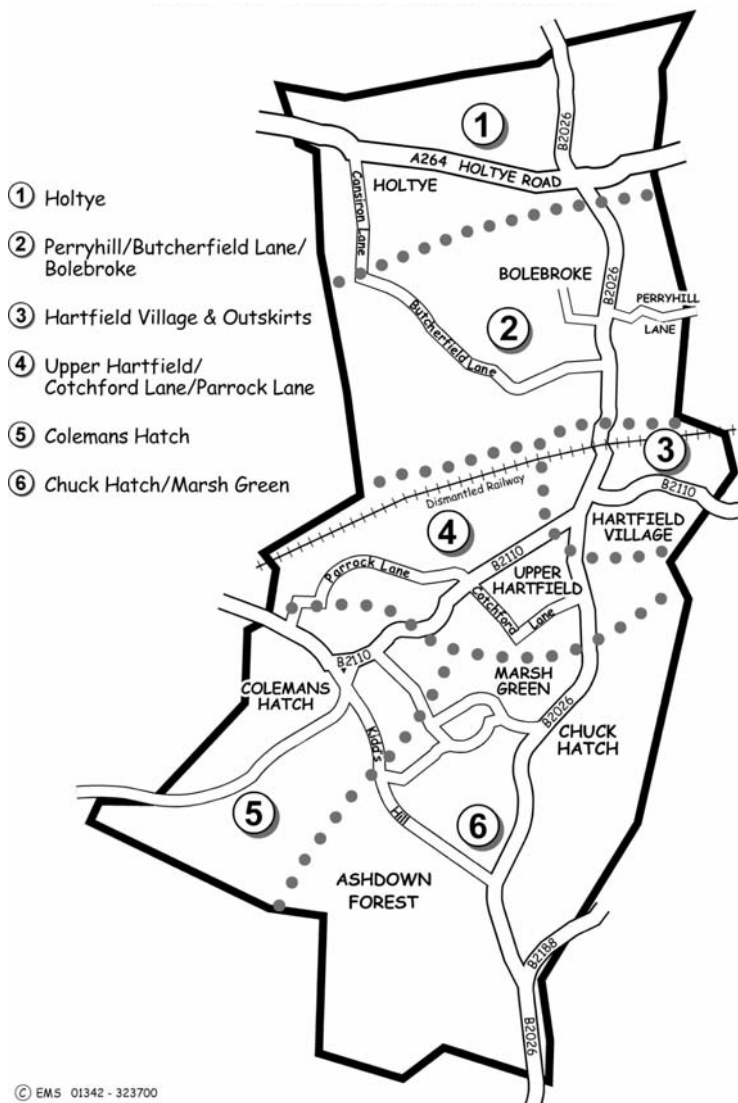
The Parish Plan is concerned with the Civil Parish of Hartfield, in the County of East Sussex, which embraces Coleman's Hatch, Holtye, Chuck Hatch and Hartfield.

The Parish of Hartfield forms a part of the High Weald area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated as such primarily to conserve its natural beauty whilst recognising the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and the economic and social needs of the local communities.

The Parish lies within a triangle of three main towns, East Grinstead (West Sussex) to the North West, Tunbridge Wells (Kent) to the North East and Crowborough (East Sussex) to the South East.

The Parish boundary covers an area of about 16 square miles (42sq.km) is linear in shape and extends to just beyond Holtye in the north, almost to Forest Row and including the Ashdown Forest Visitors Centre to the west. The most southerly point is just beyond Old Lodge and it stretches to the borders with Withyham Parish just beyond Forstal Farm to the East.

Hartfield Village is located in the centre of the Parish in the broad gentle valley of the upper reaches of the River Medway. The central core of the Village has been designated a Conservation Area of special architectural and historic interest.



© EMS 01342 - 323700



The Parish falls naturally into two distinct topographical areas with the Medway Valley in the North and the Ashdown Forest in the South. The River Medway is narrow, winding and tree lined, flanked by rolling country with rich and varied woodlands merging southwards with the broad open ridges of heathland and pine clumps which typifies Ashdown Forest and similarly fringed with fine woods of beech, oak and chestnut. The many vantage points on Ashdown Forest provide outstanding views over East Sussex and neighbouring counties.

The Ashdown Forest is owned by The Ashdown Forest Trust and managed by a Board of Conservators, with members appointed by East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council, with five elected by local Commoners. It is not farmed, although Commoners have the right, not widely utilised, to graze animals. In 2007 the Conservators introduced some sheep grazing with a roving shepherded flock of Hebridean sheep.

The High Weald (characterised by its rolling hills, small, irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes) is a product of many centuries of livestock farming. The last dairy farm in Hartfield at Hodore Farm closed in 2004 and whilst a few working farms remain, much of the mainly poor quality agricultural land (Grade 3) is hired out and used for rough grazing or haymaking. The Single Farm Payment and Stewardship schemes have also helped to ensure the continued viability of the remaining working farms. Many redundant farm buildings have been put to a commercial use to support the local economy with small but bustling “business parks” situated in Parrock Lane and Butcherfield Lane. Some have been converted as holiday lets and a few converted to residential use such as Stairs Farm and its buildings in Hartfield High Street and the six buildings grouped together forming part of the original farmyard at the former model farm estate at Hartwell.

## History

Traces of civilisation have been found in an area of Ashdown Forest dating back at least 5,000 years and it is believed that this is where the first population of

Hartfield was located. In the first century A.D. the Romans built a road from Lewes to London, which passed straight through the Parish as we know it today and the effect at that time must have been traumatic on the sparse local population.

Hartfield is well documented in the Domesday Book and it must be assumed that some formal administration was active at that time, based on the ability of the local population to grow its own food and sell its surplus out of the area. With the development of Christianity and the manorial system, based on the payment of tithes and taxes, the influence of the Sackville Family and tenant farming became all important. The poor quality of the farm land inevitably meant that farming, particularly on the Ashdown Forest areas, was hard and unrewarding but could just support the Parish. There were many ironworks around Hartfield, particularly from the 15th to 18th centuries, using charcoal from the Wealden forests for smelting.

Records indicate that 150 years ago there were approximately 85 separate farms, some as small as two acres, putting some 8,400 acres of land under cultivation of which nearly half was owned by Lord De La Warr; now only three tenant farms remain.

A century ago the population of the Parish was 1553 whereas by the 1981 census it has reached 2100, not too dramatic an increase. At the 2001 census there were 822 houses in Hartfield and a population of 2105, 1020 male and 1085 female.

In 1894 an Act of Parliament set up Parish Councils and, broadly, the Hartfield Parish Council had jurisdiction over what had previously been the old Ecclesiastical boundaries. This remains so today. The formation of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Coleman’s Hatch in 1913, taking a portion of the Hartfield Ecclesiastical Parish, did not affect the Civil Administration of the Parish.

## The Parish Today

An understanding of the housing configuration in a rural Parish is important in assessing the essential features, strengths and weaknesses of the local environment. Hartfield Parish has some 900 dwellings varying from

very large traditional 'land-owner' houses, many in multiple ownership or occupation and set in extensive grounds, through a variety of farmhouses (some no longer connected with agricultural activities) a wide range of medium size country houses, a local authority housing estate, to a number of scattered smaller properties, some originally designed for farm workers or estate employees.

Most dwellings are owner occupied and with a population of some 2400 the housing density is low. Hartfield Village has the highest density of dwellings including the Local Authority Housing (about 45 years old) and a small privately owned estate at Rectory Field.



Although there are other hamlets within the Parish, much of the housing is distributed along roads and lanes. Many of the larger houses, particularly those that look onto the northern slopes of Ashdown Forest, are serviced by long un-metalled driveways.

Because the Parish lies in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the Planning Regulations place strict controls on new buildings, except through 'infilling' where permitted. Therefore the extension of existing dwellings has become a strong feature and counters the problem of escalating land prices so prevalent in the South East. As a result there is an ever decreasing number of smaller properties and the inevitable increased cost of those that remain. As already mentioned there has also been some conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to dwelling houses but these are all high value properties of four/five bedrooms out of the reach of most local people.

As in all rural parishes, the focus of most of its community activity is at the centre of the village itself. Hartfield village has a fine array of rural houses (including some 30 listed buildings); the ancient Anglican Church of St. Mary the Virgin built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a thriving Primary School, and a well established and popular Playschool which has operated out of the old Railway Station since the 1970's. Our post office closed in 1999 and was retained as a private dwelling. Since our GP retired in 2002 the practice has been run jointly with The Nook Surgery in Groombridge. The Parish Council lobbied the relevant authorities to retain medical provision in Hartfield, resulting in the provision of a temporary surgery at Old Crown Farm, with work starting on a permanent Health Centre in 2009. The Parish boasts two popular public houses right in the centre of the village- the Anchor and the Haywaggon - with the Gallipot in Upper Hartfield and The Hatch at Colemans Hatch. The prestigious Ashdown Park Hotel is located at Wych Cross.

The well loved recreation space known as the Town Croft with its children's playground, sports and recreation facilities was given a boost with the building of a new Sussex style Croft Barn for the use of the sports clubs, and other groups storing equipment etc. for the popular village fetes that take place in the summer. Plans are in hand to refurbish the pavilion opened in 1979. The Croft is the gateway to footpaths on both sides leading to the open countryside and these amenities all blend with the natural beauty of the locality enabling Parishioners to live and enjoy a traditional village lifestyle to a greater or lesser degree.

Successive generations seem willing to accept the challenge of maintaining annual Parish events and activities which have become a part of the Parish life, such as the Horticultural Shows, the Village Fete, the Cricket Tournament, Remembrance Sunday and the celebration of the great Religious Festivals. Throughout the year Councils, Associations, Institutes, Societies, Groups and Clubs of every description meet and provide opportunities for individuals to pursue their various interests and for general social intercourse.



## What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next five to ten years, to inform decision making at parish, district and county level.

The first stage was to find out through a questionnaire what the people of Hartfield thought about a range of issues that affect our lives. The responses have been analysed and this document aims to translate the findings into an action plan for the future.



## Steering Group

The development of the questionnaire and the preparation of this document has been managed by the Hartfield Parish Plan Steering Group:

- Peter Furneaux – Steering Group Chairman
- Louise Kleinschmidt – Clerk
- John Chalke – Chairman, Hartfield Parish Council, 2006-
- Nancy Holmes – Vice Chair, Hartfield Parish Council
- Kevin Hawes – Chairman, Hartfield Parish Council, 2000-2006
- Tony Ellis
- James Murray Willis
- Jenny Robinson
- Tom Willoughby

## A parish plan – What is it not?

The Parish Plan identifies a series of initiatives to be undertaken by various individuals, parish organisations and different levels of local government, i.e. Hartfield

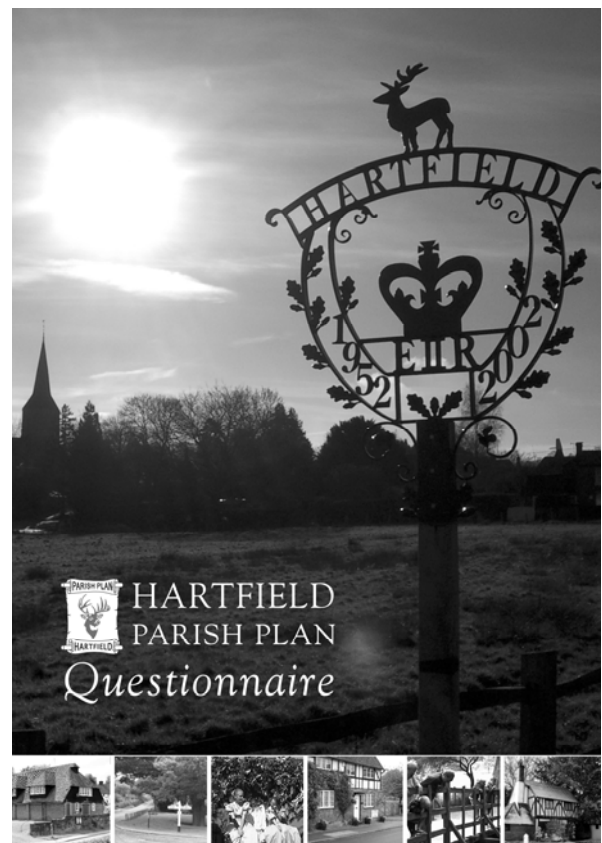
Parish Council, Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council. While the Parish Plan Steering Group can liaise with those involved and monitor progress, it has no direct control over the performance of the different bodies.

## The Questionnaire Process

An initial public meeting in March 2004 identified a level of support in the parish for the development of a Parish Plan.

Working parties were established to discuss different topic areas, with the elected chair of each working party forming the overall steering group.

These working parties developed their suggested lists of questions to be included in a public questionnaire. These were consolidated into a single document by the Steering Group.



In 2006 the questionnaire was delivered to each household in the parish. Out of approximately 900 households, 164 completed the questionnaire. Collating

the huge volume of data in the responses was a challenging task. Volunteers keyed information into spreadsheets, which were consolidated, but it was not until March 2007 that the data was able to be properly analysed, using the professional services of Transportation Planning International Limited (TPI).

TPI calculated that with multiple occupancy households these responses represented the views of 333 individuals.

The Steering Committee was reconvened to translate the priorities identified in TPI's report into a series of specific initiatives that, taken as a whole, represent an Action Plan for the parish of Hartfield.

This document seeks to summarise the findings and the proposed initiatives.





## Proposed Workstreams

### Workstream 1: Housing and Planning

#### *Findings from Questionnaire*

Asked which statement best described their view of development in the Parish half said “sympathetic and sustainable development should be allowed, to maintain the vitality of the parish” and nearly half that “the parish should remain as it is, with as little new development as possible”.

65% wanted to keep commercial developments in check. If there was to be development, extensions to existing houses were most favoured, followed by small family housing and affordable housing.

A desire was expressed to focus on improving the rural / social characteristics of the village rather than commerce, and to direct tourists away from the village to the Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre.

Where new development is necessary a preference was expressed for conversion of redundant buildings, new build small 2/3 bedroom houses in small groups (less than 10) of affordable housing on brown field sites (housing association) restricted for local use, and some small 2/3 bedroom open market housing on brown field sites.

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- The provision of affordable housing, at the Old Coalyard site (1.1) and at Old Crown Farm (1.2)
- Influencing Wealden District Council’s strategy for future development in Hartfield (1.3)
- Ensuring design guidance is available to householders, architects, builders and developers to make them aware of the design characteristics of housing in the Wealden area. (1.4)

#### *Initiative 1.1: Affordable Housing at Old Coalyard*

**Current position:** Old Coalyard site purchased by Hartfield Parish Council. Discussions taking place with Town & County Housing (a Housing Association and Social Landlord) and Wealden District Council Housing and Planning departments.

**Proposed position:** Rear of old Coalyard sold to Housing Association and developed for affordable housing, with constraints on occupancy giving preference to people with a local connection.

**Work required:** Planning application to be submitted. Land to be transferred to Housing Association.

**Who is involved?:** Parish Council, Wealden District Council, Town & Country Housing Group

#### **Target completion dates:**

Submit planning application in Spring 2009  
Sale of land to Housing Association and commencement of construction during 2009.  
Affordable housing available for occupation 2010.

**Dependencies:** Granting of planning consent by Wealden District Council. Funding available.



**Initiative 1.2: Affordable Housing at Old Crown Farm**

**Current position:** Redundant farm buildings at Old Crown Farm vacated by tenant. Planning application approved for affordable housing scheme as well as offices and a farm shop on the site.

**Proposed position:** Housing scheme implemented.

**Work required:** Development to take place.

**Who is involved?** This initiative is managed by the Buckhurst Estate and their agents, Complete Land Management. Also involves Ashley House (developers), Parish Council, Wealden District Council, Town & Country Housing Group

**Target completion dates:** 2009

**Dependencies:** Detailed agreement between Buckhurst Estate and parties involved.

**Initiative 1.4: Design of New Development**

**Current position:** Wealden Design Guide published as part of the LDF consultation.

**Proposed position:** Final Design Guide published, well publicised and made available to homeowners, architects and developers. Design Guide referred to by Planning Committees of Hartfield Parish Council and Wealden District Council.

**Work required:** Monitor progress of Wealden's LDF process. Ensure resulting Design Guide is well publicised.

**Who is involved?** Wealden District Council. Parish Council providing local publicity.

**Target completion dates:** 2009

**Dependencies:** None

**Initiative 1.3: Strategy for future development in Hartfield**

**Current position:** Wealden's Local Development Framework Core Strategy defines Hartfield as a settlement with limited development potential.

The response from the questionnaires indicated that parishioners want affordable, low cost housing/ starter homes and housing for rent by local people.

**Proposed position:** We will lobby the District Council to ensure local people are heard and their issues are addressed, and try to ensure that (apart from exception sites for affordable housing) any Housing developments are kept within the development boundary.

**Work required:** Review draft LDF documents supplied by Wealden and provide feedback. Lobby when necessary.

**Who is involved?:** Parish Council, individual parishioners

**Target completion dates:** 2009

**Dependencies:**



## Workstream 2: Recreation Facilities

### Findings from Questionnaire

The majority opinion was that the Pavilion should be refurbished and that a covered seating area be included.

90% thought that the existing play equipment in the childrens' play area was adequate, however 2 or 3 more different types of equipment could be installed.

96% think it is important to have somewhere for older children/ teenagers to meet

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- The provision of a new equipment and sports store on the Town Croft (2.1)
- The refurbishment of the Sports Pavilion (2.2)
- The provision of improved youth facilities (2.3)
- Additional sports facilities (2.4)



### Initiative 2.1: New equipment and sports store on the Town Croft

**Current position:** Building of Croft Barn completed.

**Proposed position:** Building fully occupied and in use. Any associated work completed.

**Work required:**

**Who is involved?** Parish Council. Contractors. Sports Clubs and Societies.

**Target completion dates:** Completed.

**Dependencies:** None

### Initiative 2.2: Refurbishment of Sports Pavilion on Town Croft Recreation Ground

**Current position:** Existing pavilion is well maintained but outdated. The parish council, with support of the local sports clubs has drawn up a plan of action to meet the need for refurbishment of the pavilion and the youth hut. A fund raising campaign has been started.

**Proposed position:** Existing pavilion refurbished and upgraded.

**Work required:** Design, develop specification(s), seek quotations, select contractor, obtain consents, carry out development, handover to users. Raise funds.

**Who is involved?** Parish Council Town Croft Committee, Sports Clubs, Fund Raising Committee, Parish Organisations, volunteers, professional assistance.

**Target completion date:** 2009/10

**Dependencies:** Funding

### Initiative 2.3: Youth facilities

**Current position:** 96% of respondents said that it is important to have somewhere for children / older teenagers to meet. We have a youth club building on the Town Croft but it has not been in use for several years due to lack of volunteers willing to take on leadership.

**Proposed position:** Youth Club building updated.

**Work required:** Reappraise during pavilion assessment.

What activities are available for young people? Can the youth club be re-opened? Can we find people to volunteer? Previous advertising did not bring forward local people. When refurbished try again to interest those willing to work with young people.

Develop specific proposals for youth – those of secondary school age.

**Who is involved:** All parishioners /parish council

**Target completion dates:** Proposals for youth to be developed in 2009

**Dependencies?** Local volunteers coming forward

#### **Initiative 2.4: Sports facilities**

**Current position:** Cricket, football, tennis and stoolball clubs operate on the Town Croft.

**Proposed position:** Additional sports and leisure activities / facilities for children, youth, older people and the wider community.

**Work required:** Invite all interested parties to put forward their ideas/ suggestions and draw up a guide, and support volunteers to take this forward to fruition.

e.g. Coaching - very successful professional cricket coaching took place in April 2008

Publicise what is available

**Who is involved?** Whole community

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing

**Dependencies:** Sufficient interest to keep up the momentum

### **Workstream 3: Highways and Traffic Management**

#### **Findings from Questionnaire**

Responses showed us that people mostly (90%) travel by car but would use train, bus, cycle and walking if there were an improvement to services and facilities.

People had contradictory feelings about providing more parking. They disliked the impact on the environment but agreed that more parking might relieve seasonal congestion.

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- Improved car parking (3.1)
- Road safety measures (3.2)
- HGV traffic management (3.3)
- Better facilities for cyclists (3.4)



#### **Initiative 3.1: Car Parking**

**Current position:** Parking on High Street and Church Street is scarcely sufficient for residents. Parish Council owns the Old Coalyard and part of the “school” car park.

**Proposed position:** Opening up the coalyard land at the North end of the village has eased congestion for visitors to the Forest Way. Ease car parking in the village by seeking the opening of the school car park outside school hours for public parking. This site is seen as the best solution to ease parking in the village, with the least disruption to the environment.

**Work required:** Reopen negotiations to facilitate formal permission to use the current school car park



as additional public Car Parking, at weekends and Bank Holidays.

**Who is involved?:** Parish Council, school, Buckhurst Estate

**Target completion dates:** 2010

**Dependencies:** Would need the support of the Buckhurst Estate and the school.

### ***Initiative 3.2: Road Safety***

**Current position:** Present road calming arrangements are in place but speeding continues.

**Proposed position:** 20 mph speed limit from playschool to primary school, including Old Crown Farm development and road junction, road crossing at Castlefields.

Safe road crossings – at Castlefields and village – particularly for young, old, disabled.

**Work required:** Parish council to consult ESCC and invite the council to review our current traffic problems and provide agreed solutions.

**Who is involved?:** Parish Council, school, playschool, ESCC

**Target completion date:** 2010

**Dependencies:** ESCC approval. Funding.



### ***Initiative 3.3: Traffic management***

**Current position:** Nearly half of respondents considered lorry traffic worsens traffic problems in Hartfield.

**Proposed position:** Review of HGV routing (e.g. impact of sat nav systems, weight / size restrictions)

Advise drivers of large vehicles to take a different route e.g. A22, A264, and A26.

Consider potential impact of an East Grinstead bypass – will it route traffic south to Forest Row and then east through Hartfield, rather than east along the A264?

**Work required:** Discuss with ESCC. Feedback opposing East Grinstead bypass given by Parish Council in March 2008. Liaise with Forest Row Parish Council and other interested parties.

**Who is involved?:** Parish Council and committee of interested parishioners.

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing

**Dependencies:** ESCC Highways. Mid Sussex.



### ***Initiative 3.4: Routes and facilities for cyclists***

**Current position:** There are no cycle lanes except for the Forest Way. Hartfield Primary School has built a new cycle shed and is allowing older children to cycle to School.

**Proposed position:** Increased safety of cyclists within and around Hartfield.

**Work required:** Conduct a survey about the experience of cyclists when navigating the village. Identify specific improvements that can be made.

**Who is involved?** Interested parishioners, school, parents, children, parish council, Sustrans.

**Target completion date:** TBA

**Dependencies:** May involve investment (e.g. by ESCC Highways)

## Workstream 4: Environment

### Findings from Questionnaire

The Environment was seen by many as either Important or Very Important. Ashdown Forest was valued highest by most, followed by part of the parish area being an AONB, its tranquillity and surrounding woodland. Many people value the local footpaths and bridleways, over half using them regularly. A problem has been identified that very few would be willing to maintain them. East Sussex County Council have formal responsibility for maintenance, however the Rights of Way Committee of the Parish Council have regular working parties involving many parishioners who do great work on a voluntary basis.

With regard to “pollution” over a third of respondents suffer from the impact of traffic, less than a third from litter and slightly less from noise (no specific measures are proposed with litter and noise – 63% of respondents felt that the provision of litter bins in Hartfield was “reasonable”).

94% of the population suggested they would be prepared to separate their refuse if doorstep collection was made. A large percentage said they would use a bottle bank, news paper bank, Can bank, plastics bank clothing bank and waste recycling bank.

A strong message has gone out for a positive, workable recycling scheme that could help to protect and enhance the environment.

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- Recycling (4.1)
- Reducing our carbon footprint (4.2)

### Initiative 4.1: Recycling

**Current position:** Since the Questionnaire was issued, Wealden’s CROWN doorstep recycling scheme, piloted in Holtys and Butcherfield Lane, has been seen as successful. The demand for local recycling depots is currently met by facilities in Forest Row, Groombridge and local towns. No suitable site has been identified in Hartfield.

**Proposed position:** CROWN recycling scheme rolled out to all parishioners. Consideration given to any potential sites in Hartfield – several small facilities (such as wheelie bins for glass recycling) serving different areas of the parish may be preferable to a centralised facility.

**Work required:** Wealden to assess success and economics of pilot, and then roll out to rest of Hartfield. All parties, including the Parish Council, should lobby Wealden.

**Who is involved?** Wealden District Council, householders and the Parish Council.

**Target completion date:** 2009

**Dependencies:** Financial implications accepted by Wealden.

### Initiative 4.2: Reducing our carbon footprint

**Current position:** The questionnaire responses demonstrated a concern for the environment and reducing our impact on it.

**Proposed position:** Specific environmental policies for Hartfield defined and adopted.

#### Work required:

Encourage and support education on carbon footprint, encourage, interested parties to set up an environmental group to support local initiatives.

Alternatives to car transport – walking buses, public transport, and community transport schemes.

**Who is involved?** Parish Council environment committee. Other parish groups, church, and individuals.



**Target completion dates:** To be agreed.

**Dependencies:** To be identified.

## Workstream 5: Protecting the place we live in

### Findings from Questionnaire

The majority of parishioners who responded said that they were either born in the Village or moved here because of the beauty of Hartfield and that the quality of the countryside around Hartfield is very important and attractive and safe area to live in.

When asked what the most important thing was about living in Hartfield, the response was the surrounding countryside, peace and seclusion, Village life with a caring and friendly community.

When asked which elements of the countryside were valued, the responses were, The Ashdown Forest, Tranquility, Being An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Woodland, Farmland, Openness and a sense of local identity.

When asked what concerned them or suffer from, the main items were Traffic Congestion, HGVs, Litter, Noise pollution, Dog fouling, Overgrown hedges, Poor roads and verges, roadside drainage (prevent flooding), lack of public toilets.

Many support the idea of managed recreational tourism.

Local authorities are seen as the 'driver' behind local services such as public toilets and maintenance/management of hedgerows and public rights of way. Ashdown Forest, Forest Way and Bridleways are the most frequently used informal recreation facilities.

A major concern that life in Hartfield would worsen if there was an increase in commercial activities that would create increased traffic causing parking problems, suggestions that tourists should be directed to the Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre

When asked in their view, which of the sustainable tourist activities suited Hartfield, the majority

responded in order, Walking Nature study, horse riding, photography, farm visits off road cycling and sight seeing. The use of Rights of Way represents an important aspect of informal recreation.

Majority responded that in their opinion that if tourism is increased there would be increased long term problems.

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- Rights of way improvements (5.1)
- Taking control of maintenance in the parish (5.2)
- Influence the sustainable management of the Ashdown Forest (5.3)

### Initiative 5.1: Rights of Way

**Current position:** Historic network of Rights of Way recorded on the Definitive Map. Where rights of way do not appear on the Definitive Map, Parish Council can request that they be added, subject to provision of appropriate evidence.

Working parties organised between the Parish Council and the Ramblers Association to maintain local routes. East Sussex County Council kept informed of any obstructions to Rights of Way.

**Proposed position:** Continued care of rights of way network for both walkers (including those with dogs) and horse riders. Consider where it is possible to better cater for the needs of those who are disabled, those who are active but unable to climb stiles, and those with pushchairs.

**Work required:** Care for current rights of way. Identify new routes to be added to the definitive map. Identify paths for upgrading for wheelchairs etc.

**Who is involved?** Parish Council, ESCC, walkers, volunteers.

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing.

**Dependencies:** Funding.

**Initiative 5.2: Parish Maintenance**

**Current position:** General problems identified – grass not cut enough. Specific problems – pavements – in village, alongside roads – overgrown hedgerows - litter / dog fouling. Need for control of fly posting / signage

Hartfield is regularly a prize winner in South East in Bloom – working parties organised to better care for the Memorial Garden and other parts of the village all year round.

**Proposed position:** Review carried out on which maintenance services could be delegated by ESCC and Wealden to Hartfield Parish Council and / or volunteers – e.g. verge cutting, hedge cutting etc.

**Work required:** Discuss with all interested parties ways of protecting our environment and local heritage. Assess a series of house keeping tasks around the village and request the funding from Wealden, so that the parish council can directly use these funds to employ people as they need to. We could also encourage a local volunteer group to look at ongoing environmental issues and education of parishioners.

**Who is involved?** Individuals. Parish Council.

**Target completion dates:** 2009

**Dependencies:** To be identified.

**Initiative 5.3: Ashdown Forest**

**Current position:** 77% identified the Ashdown Forest as the most valued element of the countryside around the Parish. A Management Plan is being developed by the Conservators, which includes an objective to restore the balance between heathland and encroaching woodland, but this has generated some conflict with residents, including the impact of tree cutting, fencing associated with grazing of livestock and its impact on access and dog walking.

**Proposed position:** The Forest protected as a place for informal recreation, with growth in tourism constrained. Better communication between parishioners and the Conservators. The Ashdown Forest Centre seen as the starting point for visitors, rather than the Pooh Shop / Hartfield village.

**Work required:** Involvement in consultation and development of the Management Plan.

**Who is involved?** Individuals. Parish Council.

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing

**Dependencies:** To be identified.

**Workstream 6: Services in the Parish****Findings from Questionnaire**

Hartfield is a thriving and progressive village, although largely rural with many farms and smallholdings, There is a very active community, with many parishioners being self employed, or running small businesses within the parish boundary. Despite the closure of several local shops in preceding years, Hartfield Store is the most frequently used local service and a vital resource for the community with 65% of respondents using it on a regular basis or for last minute essential shopping. 98 respondents said that the local store was good value for money, other comments said it saved petrol and time, and was crucial for older people who cannot drive.

Village Hall: Two thirds of the respondents said that the Village Hall meets its needs but that there was scope for improvement in various ways (Kitchen, heating, decorating and an induction loop). Fund raising and grant donations have resulted in money being made available for the kitchen which has now been upgraded.

Information: 55% of respondents get their local news from the parish magazine, followed by with word of mouth, local news paper column, local shop, and local notice boards. The Parish Council has now instigated the distribution of a regular Parish Newsletter to each household.
Proposed initiatives to address these findings are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing a permanent Health Centre for Hartfield (6.1)</li> <li>• Continuing a programme of improvements to the Village Hall (6.2)</li> <li>• Improving local policing (6.3)</li> <li>• Supporting local businesses (6.4)</li> </ul>

### ***Initiative 6.1: GP Health Centre***

**Current position:** Temporary Portacabin health centre at Old Crown Farm. Planning consent granted for a permanent Health Centre

**Proposed position:** Permanent health centre at Old Crown Farm

**Work required:** Finalise contracts, carry out construction and commissioning, hand over surgery to Doctors, and remove temporary surgery.

**Who is involved?** Doctors, Primary Care Trust, Buckhurst Estate, continued support of Parish Council

**Target completion date:** 2009

**Dependencies:** Detailed agreement between the Primary Care Trust, Buckhurst Estate and developers.

### ***Initiative 6.2: Village Hall Refurbishment***

**Current position:** Disabled toilet built. Hall completely rewired and redecorated. New kitchen appliances installed.

**Proposed position:** Continued improvements (e.g. new heating to be installed)

**Work required:** Support the trustees of the village

hall to continue their programme of refurbishment.

**Who is involved?** All parishioners and the Village Hall Management Committee

**Target completion dates:** 2009

**Dependencies:** Adequate funding / grants



### ***Initiative 6.3: Local policing***

**Current position:** The majority of respondents said they were fortunate in not having had to use the Fire Service (178) Police Service (118) Ambulance emergency service (152) However 147 parishioners said they felt there was a poor police presence in the parish.

**Proposed position:** Encourage more cooperation / communication with the police and/or community support officer (PCSO) e.g. via a designated volunteer interested in local security and policing / local neighbourhood watch spokesperson. Provide regular updates in parish magazine / parish newsletter.

**Work required:** Invite our local community officer to have a higher profile, by inviting her to attend local events, like the Fete and the village open evening when the draft action plan will be discussed etc.

**Who is involved?** Police, Parish Council, interested individuals.

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing

**Dependencies:** Support and funding from the police.

**Initiative 6.4: Protecting / supporting local businesses**

**Current position:** 48 respondents stated that they ran their own business, however in 2006 there were around 130 businesses registered on the parish council's website, and over 200 VAT registered businesses in Hartfield. The true number of local businesses is possibly far higher, with a wide range of professional services, tradesman and hospitality services within the parish.

While wishing to promote some of our vital existing local businesses over half of respondents felt commercial enterprises may encourage more tourists, and that it is important that concentration is on improving residential/rural and social character of the village.

**Proposed position:** Village shop protected. New retail outlets – e.g. bring back a post office to Hartfield? Produce a local business guide/directory.

**Work required:** Determine best ways of promoting our village store and local businesses. Campaign to keep down the shop council rates. Promote an annual Local business Fair / local produce fair etc. Discuss with local businesses to seek ideas.

Set up a designated web site with links to individual Business web addresses so each Business can advertise and update as required.

Print a local business directory with categories and phone numbers.

Invite local companies to speak at community meetings, or write a column about their business that can be included in the parish magazine or parish council newsletter.

**Who is involved?** Local businesses, local shopping "champion".

**Target completion dates:** To be agreed.

**Dependencies:** Needs someone identified to be willing to lead this initiative.

**Workstream 7: The Church in the Community**

The responses to this category were reviewed by the Church. The report is reproduced below.

**Findings from Questionnaire**

The questions about church in community were thought provoking rather than simply tick-boxes so there are no statistics to report but a range of comments. There were just over a hundred replies to the four questions about the church in the context of village life. The overriding response was very positive and encouraging. We do not know the views of those who did not respond. (It is fair to report now, that a number of these suggestions have since been acted upon.)

1. How do the churches currently fit into your idea of village life?

Overall, there is a very strong feeling that church plays a very significant role in village life and is valued by most people, whether or not they attend. The church is valued for its symbolism, as a pleasant historic feature that connects with the roots of our nation but also for its moral symbolism, representing Jesus' teaching and how we should live. This attitude was also reflected by non-Anglicans who found sharing in our activity was welcoming and positive and amongst people who don't attend but want it there. That does sound glowing but it has to be said that reading the replies was inspiring, though there were, obviously, one or

two replies with no interest in church.

- Draw the community together in worship & Christian activity; a meeting place and source of inspiration, consolation and peace
- part of belonging to community; for some, a social need; for others a refuge a place to reflect & be still
- Essential focal point for spiritual & moral needs
- I like the vision to be inclusive, family-friendly, and attracting younger people but the building needs to be more user-friendly and used more
- Spiritual focus in village, meeting need for Christian fellowship among like-minded people across the generations

2. How could the churches fit into your vision for the future of the village?

These replies repeated much of Q1 but with a strong extra theme of bringing people together, whether that be old and young, all the family or all the community. Many replies expressed the desire to see the types of activities widen and increase the church's value to the community in general.

- Bridge gulf between young and old community For some, a sanctuary in distress
- Need a strong and active church that doesn't scare people away
- Doing a good job and hope it continues to do so
- A more supported church benefits everyone else

3. What would help achieve this?

In general, there was wide support for provision for the younger generation, plus a broader range of worship and activities, more Merry Month of May type activity and wider publicity.

- The building / facilities development – universal use of space

- A High Street notice board
- Variety of styles & variety of use
- More groups & childrens' activities
- Accessibility
- Better facilities and youth-centred, along current lines; modernisation
- Proactive in getting more people involved in community activities

4. What activities & facilities would you like to see in this church?

There was wide support for the proposed toilet, kitchen and sound-insulated room for concurrent activities and for that being an extension rather than a partition of the inside. Other comments included:

- As much as it can cope with without compromising what it believes in
- Concerts, exhibitions and appropriate theatrical performances
- Monthly Sunday school – much more likely we would go
- Kitchen & Toilet, etc is vital; more young people encouraged
- The facilities are definitely a good idea
- Adult education
- Improved PA

These plans will provide more opportunity to utilise the church

As in any such questionnaire, there were individual comments, not widely shared, including; don't change anything, why do we have two churches, silent bells, congregation being more friendly.

Proposed initiatives to address these findings are:

- Restoration and extension of the church (7.1)
- Churches in the community (7.2)



### **Initiative 7.1: Restoration of the church roof and provision of extension.**

**Current position:** Hartfield church is thriving but woefully lacking in basic amenities, notably for the elderly and young; access, toilet, kitchen and break-out room. In addition, the roof is in need of repair within the next three years.

**Proposed position:** Restoration and small extension, in keeping with ancient church.

**Work required:** Initial design and planning acceptable to a number of national preservation groups followed by fund-raising project to meet the costs.

**Who is involved?** Parochial Church Council, Architect and diocesan advisors and various external agencies (English Heritage, Council for the Care of Churches, Chichester Diocese, etc.)

**Target completion dates:** Dependent on agreement of a number of external agencies; so not possible to predict. 2012 might be feasible.

**Dependencies:** A design agreeable to local and national interest groups and fund-raising project.



The following analysis was written by the Parish Plan Steering Group. It has not yet been integrated with the Church Action Plan elements documented above.

### **Initiative 7.2: Churches in the Community**

**Current position:** Hartfield Parish is very fortunate in having two beautiful Churches within the parish boundary, St Mary the Virgin in the centre of the village, and Holy Trinity at Coleman's Hatch. One rector and a non-stipendiary curate, supported by the parochial council and volunteers of the Church community, serve both Churches. Each Church plays a vital role in the parish with a variety of services themes and religious celebrations taking place at both churches on a regular basis. Some services are more popular than others, but both Churches have significant congregations.

Questions—65 66 67 and 68 asked a variety of open ended questions to elicit how parishioners view the role of the Church and how well they integrate with the community. There was a considerable response to the questions, too numerous to categorize, how ever here are a selection of the responses.

Positive comments.

1/ The present Rector and his family are excellent at supporting and promoting community and family involvement.

2/ the church makes a vital contribution and is a vital resource.

3/ the Church is a refuge and a place for reflection and to be still.

4/ A very important point of contact for a number of people.

5/ the Church is the soul of the village.

6/ I don't attend Church but I would not want to be without it.

7/ the church is very important as it provides moral and spiritual guidance.

Negative Comments.

1/ It feels like a private club.

2/ Too stuffy.

3/ It appeals to a small minority.



4/If you don't attend every week, you can be made to feel an outsider.

5/Not enough visits when elderly people are sick and can't get to Church.

There were lots of comments about how the Church and community could improve communication and integration, which in many ways has now been addressed.

**Proposed position:** Since the questionnaire was first produced there has been significant initiatives and activity to address more involvement and participation, modernising some services with the introduction of Café Church, The Merry month of May and parish barbecue, Sunday school, Roots youth group, Toddler group, Instrumental music, of varying types., Various festivals and religious celebrations etc.

**Work required:** Our current Rector and Church Community are very proactive, and there is something to interest everyone, it is therefore up to individuals to take part and contribute ongoing ideas and participate in activities and services.

**Who is involved?** The parish, Churches and individuals.

**Target completion dates:** Ongoing

**Dependencies:** Individual's interest and goodwill.

## Next Steps

### Gaining support to the plan

This plan will be circulated in draft to seek feedback from parishioners.

### Implementing the plan

A leader will need to be identified for each workstream. Some fall within the remit of Hartfield Parish Council, but others will require volunteers to nominate themselves.

### External relationships to be developed / groups to be lobbied

It needs to be recognised that not all the activities identified are under the control of those living in the parish. In many cases work needs to be undertaken by other statutory bodies (e.g. Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council, the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest) or by specific commercial businesses. Under these circumstances those involved in each workstream may have to develop appropriate relationships and lobby accordingly.

### Recruiting volunteers

Individuals wishing to get involved in a particular workstream should put their names forward to the Parish Plan Steering Group.

### Overall management of the Parish Plan

A decision will need to be taken whether to continue with the management structure of a “Parish Plan Steering Group” or whether monitoring of progress should be passed to a body such as Hartfield Parish Council.