

Pertenhall & Swineshead Parish Plan 2007



Swineshead

JULY 2007

**WELCOME TO THE SWINESHEAD SECTION OF THE
PERTENHALL AND SWINESHEAD PARISH PLAN**

**As you will see later the Plan represents a considered
view of life in our village, now, and in the future, and has
taken more than two years to complete.
It should be relevant for many further years.**

**We hope that you enjoy reading it and that you will find
it both helpful and useful.**

The Swineshead Parish Plan Steering Group

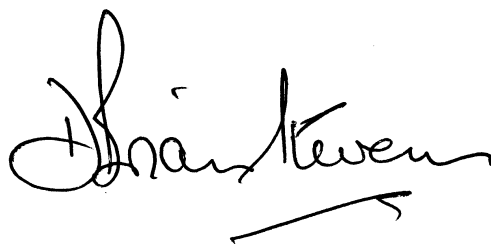
The Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Plan

It has been a great privilege to be involved with the preparation and publication of the Parish Plan for our two villages.

There are at least two features which, I believe, are particularly important. In the first instance, every effort has been made to involve the entire communities of our villages, in seeking information from questionnaires circulated to every person, in holding very well attended Open Meetings to publicise the findings, and in the number of volunteers who have come forward to process that information, to undertake research and actually write sections of the Plan.

In the second place, the Parish Council has, for the first time, an invaluable series of signposts to guide its future deliberations. In the past, decisions taken in good faith at Council meetings could not necessarily represent the considered views of the majority of residents, hard though councillors might have tried to reflect those views. Now, on many important issues there exist clear guidelines, carefully researched and followed through, to inform the Council in its decision making functions.

There can be few small villages in our countryside where so many of the residents have been involved in the preparation of such a carefully considered Parish Plan, and to each and every one who has played a part I offer the gratitude and congratulations of their community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. Brian Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

D. Brian Stevens
Chairman 2007-2008
Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Council



Alistair Burt

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The Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Plan

Thank you very much for involving me in your parish plan.

One of the great joys of being the Member of Parliament for this constituency lies in building an appreciation for the distinctive character of the villages which make up north Bedfordshire. This Parish Plan is no exception. The care and attention to detail contained within it displays not only an affection for what the villages have been throughout history, but a keen eye for the needs of today and tomorrow.

Some issues and comments are familiar, such as the worries over the speed of traffic and concern over how to provide activities for a small number of young people so far spread out. Difficult subjects are not ducked. Do we need or want new development and if so, how can we ensure that local, first time buyers have priority?

There are signs of change, and I note the number of those with new businesses run from home, which, with the growth of new technology, are likely to be quite different from the traditional village businesses of the past.

But that the people of Swineshead and Pertenhall love their villages is clear. There are welcome signs of volunteers coming forward to deliver activities and neighbourly services not currently provided. Those from an urban setting may find it difficult to appreciate that, when considering the advantages of, say lighting and pavements, such examples of urban life are not welcome...a comment from both villages being telling:- 'if we had wanted such things we would have lived in a town!'

There are a number of recommendations for action, and I would be keen to assist with any which would involve an MP, and the excellent Parish Council will no doubt keep me in touch. Those who have worked hard to compile this plan deserve great praise, and I hope many good things flow from such commitment to our own small but special patch of England.

Yours sincerely

Alistair Burt MP

'Serving the people of North East Bedfordshire'

The History of Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Plans

Parish plans were first mentioned in the year 2000 in the Government's Rural White Paper. This proposed inclusion and involvement for all those in a parish with regard to a vision for the future. At this stage the scheme was administered by the Countryside Agency.

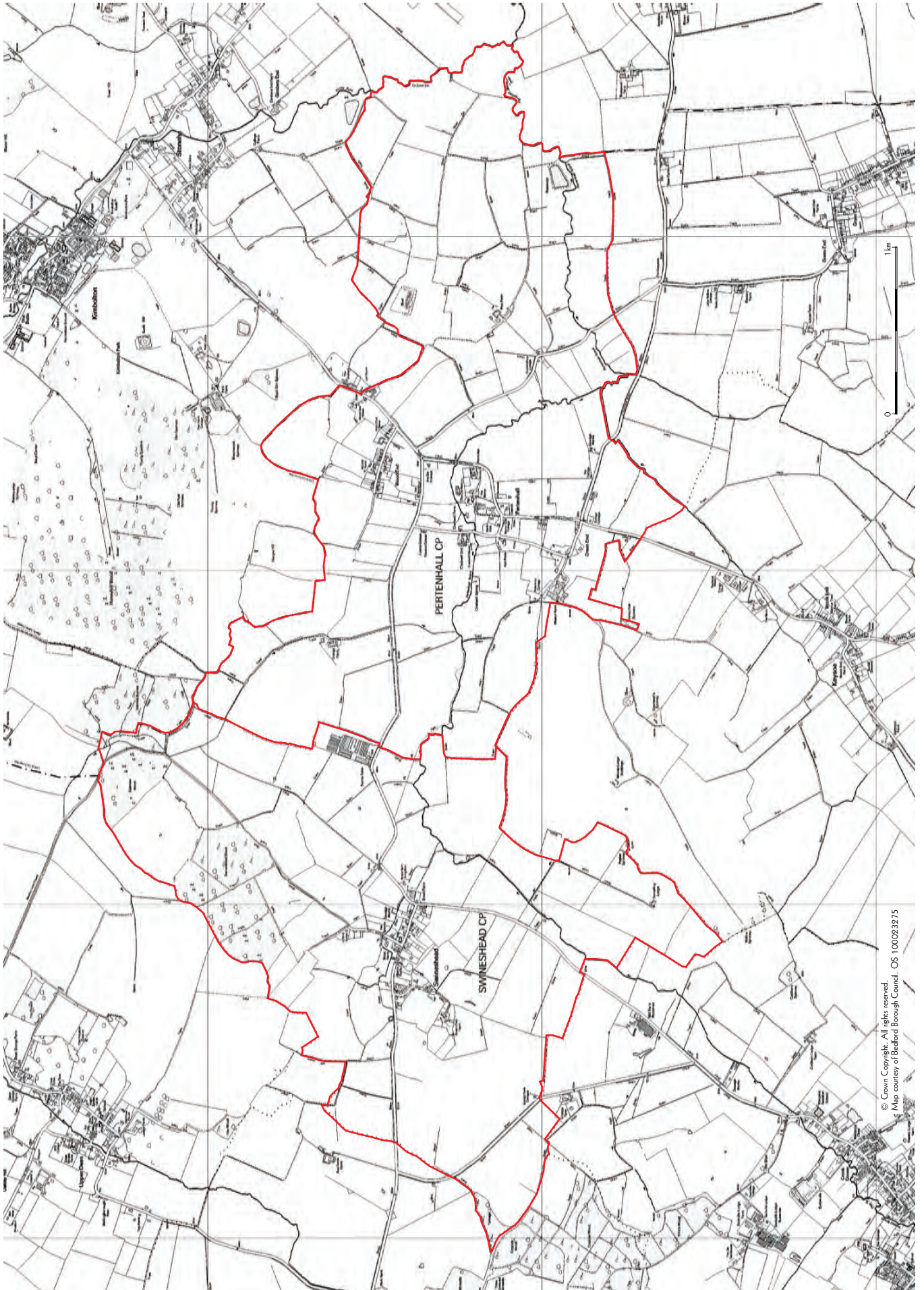
Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Council deferred making Parish Plans an agenda item for discussion until 2004. In January 2005 the Parish Council initiated the production of a questionnaire, which a group of volunteers in Pertenhall were keen to undertake, and they drew this up with advice and guidance from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity. The Parish Council agreed to finance the printing of the questionnaire. During this time Parish Plans became the administrative responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). When Pertenhall came to apply for a grant to continue their work it became apparent that they could not proceed without Swineshead. Parish Plans are closely linked to the Parish Council applying for the grant, in our case Pertenhall *and* Swineshead – the one village could not apply without the other so the grant had to be for both villages.

In December 2005 a group of volunteers in Swineshead began preparing their questionnaire, based on that of Pertenhall, and in January 2006 the budget application was submitted to DEFRA, for both villages, with a successful outcome. At all stages, great emphasis has been placed on consulting and involving the community in both villages. Volunteers analysed the completed questionnaires (70% return in Pertenhall, 96.5% in Swineshead). Open Days were arranged at which the resulting data and comments were displayed. 50 people attended Pertenhall's first Open Day and over 70 attended in Swineshead. Suggestions were invited and these were incorporated in the writing of chapters by a different group of volunteers. A photographic competition involved the children whose photographs were used in both the Open Day and the final Plan. Swineshead held a second Open Day to view the draft Parish Plan. Over 20 people attended this.

As neighbouring villages, Pertenhall and Swineshead have had a close relationship for many years. When their own school closed, Swineshead children attended the one in Pertenhall. The villages shared a rector for decades and have had a joint Parish Council for more than 30 years. Although being administered by the same Parish Council, the two villages are different in many ways, hence the separate sections in the Parish Plan.

The Parish Plan is presented in sections reflecting the format of the questionnaire. The data retrieved has provided the basis for each section, resulting in a list of actions. The responsibility, cost and timescale for each of these can be found in the action grid at the end of the printed plan.

It is the responsibility of the Parish Council to review the Parish Plan at the end of years 1,3 and 5. Villagers will be kept informed of the progress of the actions through the Newsletter after six months and regularly thereafter.



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Map courtesy of Bedford Borough Council. OS 100023275

THE VILLAGE OF SWINESHEAD

Swineshead is a very small village of around 160 inhabitants in North Bedfordshire, close to the county boundary with Cambridgeshire, and, slightly more distantly, with Northamptonshire. It lies some 12 miles north of the county town of Bedford, 10 miles west of St. Neots (in Cambridgeshire), and 8 miles east of Rushden (in Northants).

Swineshead is a pretty, linear village, the axis lying along the High Street, little more than one third of a mile long. Dwellings seem to be placed spontaneously, intermingled with gardens and trees. Nothing is too large or dominant; there is no feeling of overcrowding, and the village blends gently with the surrounding countryside.

The village has a long historical background, being mentioned in the Domesday Book, with the Church of St Nicholas, a Grade 1 Listed Building, dating largely from the 13th century, and some of the dwellings going back to the 16th and 17th centuries. In the latter part of the 20th century the village was designated a Conservation Area under the Civic Amenities Act (1967).

There is no village shop and, within the last 20 years, both the last public house and the post office have closed. Apart from the Church, and the Village Hall (itself the village school until closure in the 1920s), there are no other community amenities. Nevertheless, there is a very lively community spirit in the village, with an active Parish Council (shared with Pertenhall), the Swineshead Village Society, a bell ringing team, and many social, cultural, and fund raising functions centred on the very well used and maintained Village Hall.

Swineshead was, until the end of the 19th century, a settlement based entirely on agriculture but now there is only one farm offering employment. The rest of the working inhabitants are professionals working away from the village or from home. There are families with young children as well as retired people. A number of villagers have lived here all their lives. Inevitably, the attraction of living in a relatively secluded rural Conservation Area results in high house prices which first time buyers cannot afford. It is hoped that the needs of all those living in our village are addressed by our Parish Plan.

ENVIRONMENT

The Current Situation

Within the village boundary is Swineshead Wood, which is owned by the Woodland Trust, and is currently undergoing preservation and conservation, acknowledging its importance both historically and as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are a number of footpaths and bridleways that take users around and beyond the village.

The true rural nature of the village is reflected in the number of sheep, cattle and horses grazing in the fields including several rare breeds. Many villagers keep poultry.

There is no street lighting in any area of the village.

Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project have offered their advice and assistance for any future environmental project the village considers undertaking.



Bluebells in Swineshead Wood

Analysis of questionnaire

Section 1 of the questionnaire had 5 questions relating to the environment of Swineshead and covered the following: -

- Why people choose to live in Swineshead.
- Length of time lived in the village.
- Ratings based on different aspects of the village.
- Forms of pollution.
- Use of footpaths, bridleways and roads.

Why do you choose to live in Swineshead?

86 respondents choose to live in Swineshead because it is 'a pleasant rural location'. 74 respondents left the box blank relating to commuting. Whilst 17 said it was not a convenient area to commute from, 21 people thought it was, though there was no indication of the distance/areas people commuted to. A small number of families moved to the village because of the catchment area for local schools. There was an equal yes/no response to the questions about staying in the village because of family ties.

Rating of the village

People generally appeared to be impressed with the village. 91 respondents rated the Village Hall as being good. 64 respondents generally rated the churchyard as good, whilst the churchyard retaining wall brought different responses. 41 felt that it could be improved. In late 2006 a grant was awarded by SitaTrust for the renovation, restoration and conservation of the wall. The state of hedgerows around the village was generally rated as being good (70). With regard to the verges 29 respondents felt that there was room for improvement. The landscape of the village was generally felt to be good as were village signs.

Pollution

The strongest response from respondents and those visiting the Open Day was the issue of flies, which some of the village has experienced during the last 2 summers. This matter is in hand and is being dealt with by the Environmental Health Department of Bedford Borough Council and the Parish Council. It was generally felt that there were no other major issues with pollution in the village.

Use of footpaths, bridleways and roads

46 respondents felt that public footpaths were good; likewise 36 responded that bridleways were good. A more mixed response was given to the state of roads for cycling, horse riding and walking. Again comments made on the questionnaire will be referred to later. 45 respondents stated that they would consider helping with maintenance of the village environment.



The BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic)

Commentary

The overall response is that Swineshead is generally a pleasant location that appeals to a range of age groups. *'The village is unique in being largely unspoilt'*. The majority of the respondents felt that many of the issues raised by the Parish Plan could be easily solved or had been solved by villagers.

It is felt that Swineshead is a good community with a well-maintained Village Hall and the opportunity for all to participate in events that are frequently held. Dog fouling is an issue but the introduction of dog bins was not considered appropriate within the rural setting; it was generally felt that dog owners should behave more responsibly. The twice-yearly litter pick was felt to be a rewarding and worthwhile experience that benefits the village.

The use of paths, bridleways and roads brought different responses by the different users; cycling was considered difficult for some due to the condition of the roads, whilst bridleways have been damaged by 4x4 vehicles and off road bikers.

Concerns were raised about the state of a derelict cottage within the conservation area, and it was generally felt that action should be taken immediately.

A few respondents felt there should be opportunities to create wildlife areas within the village or combine this with a picnic/community area for villagers to enjoy.

Actions

- 1 Restoration of church boundary wall**
- 2 Improve paths, bridleways and roads**
- 3 Community Garden**
- 4 Contact Ivel & Ouse Countryside Project**
- 5 Continue to monitor fly problem**

HOUSING

The Current Situation

Housing is confined to the main spine of the High Street, and the virtual cul-de-sacs of Green Lane and Sandye Lane, with just 7 dwellings along the Pertenhall to Riseley Road, and 2 along the Melchbourne to Riseley Road.

There are 54 domestic dwellings within the Swineshead ward, of which 65% are within the designated Conservation Area. Some dwellings date back to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and of these there are 13 Grade 2 listed buildings scattered through the village.

A small amount of development took place in the 1970s/1980s, (11 dwellings) comprising new build, renovation, farm building, pub or chapel conversion, together with 2 small bungalows intended for older residents with Swineshead connections. When mains drainage was installed in the 1980s, the capacity of the sewage works was given as c. 160 persons and the population is almost at that number.

Beds Borough Council's current planning policy is only to allow new development within village "envelopes" (This equates to a maximum of two or three single sites in Swineshead).

Swineshead High Street



Looking West



Looking East

The Questionnaire

Section 2 of the questionnaire devoted 4 questions to the subject of housing, covering:-

- Household members who had moved away from the village, with reasons.
- Residents who might be looking for alternative village accommodation.
- The need for additional housing (and population) in the village.
- The type of housing that might be needed.

Answers provided no clear consensus.

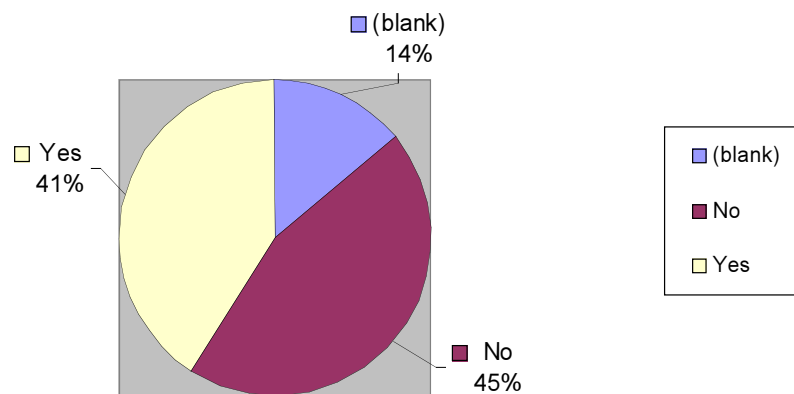
50 people were against new housing, with 46 people in favour (41%)

Of those in favour of new housing there was no agreement on the type of housing needed, with equal numbers (21/46 in each case) supporting low cost housing, and mixed development.

Of the 112 respondents, 38 (34%) were in favour of some development for first time buyers.

Many written comments, often reflecting the lack of consensus, were made in the appropriate spaces on the questionnaire, and at the Open Meeting, and are referred to later.

Would you welcome new housing?



“The village should not be spoiled by a large number of new houses, but there should not be a stop to all development. A few houses should be allowed without spoiling village character.”

Commentary

As figures show, no clear picture has emerged, either from the questionnaire, or from comments made at the Open Meeting. It can be inferred (although not specifically asked) that there is absolutely no wish for any large-scale development, although it seems likely that some small scale development or infilling (especially if it could include an element for first time buyers) would not meet with major opposition – although location would be critical. The overall impression given was that small is (fairly) beautiful, and that housing should reflect the rural nature of the Conservation Area.

Restrictions imposed by sewage capacity, and the Borough Council's planning policy, are relevant to any future development.

Low cost housing was attractive to some, but others were quick to point out that those on a low budget do not usually have access to transport, and realistically would wish to live in a village with easier access to shops, schooling and social activities. Without restrictive covenants to nullify house price inflation, such development would soon price itself beyond the reach of those it was intended to serve. Having said that, there were comments expressing a wish to attract younger couples/families to the village.

The condition of at least one unoccupied village cottage was of some concern, and comments indicated the need to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Actions

- 1 Consult the Bedfordshire Borough Council Planning Authority regarding potential development sites, within, and outside the village envelope, and establish its current policy towards them**
- 2 Report to meeting of electors on any proposals to emerge from the consultations in 1**
- 3 Monitor the structure, condition, and appearance of the Conservation Area to ensure that it maintains (and improves) its character, and take actions as appropriate**
- 4 Approach, tactfully, individual owners of property within the Conservation Area where major remedial/cosmetic work appears necessary**
- 5 Monitor future changes in national planning requirements/guidelines (e.g. Govt. White Papers, legislation etc.)**
- 6 To carry out a more detailed housing needs survey to determine whether there is a requirement for a particular type of housing for people with Swineshead connections**

There are no direct costs involved, as the Parish Council is involved in all actions and is accountable at its regular meetings, as well as at the Annual Meeting for Electors in March each year. It is not necessary, therefore, to indicate a group, or person, to judge the progress and/or success of each action.

TRAFFIC, TRANSPORT and ROADS

The Current Situation

Roads

The main road in Swineshead is the High Street, which runs through the spine of the village and joins the Pertenhall to Riseley Road at a T -Junction. There are two cul-de-sacs, Green Lane and Sandye Lane both of which are spurs off the High Street. All roads have a 30 mph speed limit. The High Street is often used, morning and evening, as a short cut East – West, by commuter traffic apparently seeking to avoid the B645 at Kimbolton.

There is a footway along the length of High Street, on one side only, from near the T-junction to a position opposite Green Lane. There are no footways on Sandye Lane or Green Lane.

Public Transport

The following companies operate limited services that run through the village, and approximate timings are given.

Cedar Coaches: Bedford/Kimbolton/St Neots - early and mid morning, early and late afternoon.

The Villager: Felmersham/Huntingdon/St Ives, Felmersham/Rushden and Sharnbrook /Peterborough – occasionally, on demand.

The Questionnaire and Open Meeting

Responses showed a high level of satisfaction with most basic highway/traffic matters eg traffic noise, winter salting policy, off street parking etc.

However a significant majority (64%) was concerned that the 30mph speed limit within the village was constantly broken, and many, too, expressed concern that the advisory weight limit for lorries was often ignored. (Note that the Vehicle Activated Sign –VAS - was installed after the Plan materials had been processed.)

Answers to the questionnaire showed that public transport was rarely used (78% never used it), the majority preferring private cars. In this connection a large number of households have the use of 2 or 3 cars. BUT it is important to record that a small number did express experiencing difficulties arranging transport to doctors' surgeries, shops and local functions and rely on an inadequate public transport service as far as possible.

Commentary

- Although most people are happy with the actual speed limits, a large number consider there to be a problem with those limits being broken.
- 49 residents also believe inconsiderate driving to be a problem.
- The majority are happy with footways, kerbing and road salting.
- Most people support the advisory weight limit restriction.
- 50 comments were made about the condition of the road (work has been carried out on the roads since the questionnaires were completed).

An overwhelming number of people (88%) regularly use private transport and 78% never use public transport.

Actions

From the statistics and comments gathered, the main areas of concern appear to be enforcement of speed limits and concerns over the number and size of HGV's passing through the village.

- 1 Approach the Traffic Police department for more regular checks on speeding at peak times**
- 2 Seek a mandatory weight limit for the High Street (except for access)**
- 3 Investigate the need to institute a “good neighbour” car policy for those without their own transport**
- 4 Improve visibility of current Bus Timetable**

EDUCATION

Current Situation

The village consists of 54 households totalling 107 adults and 26 children under 18. In addition there are 11 dependent over 16s still in education.

There is no village school and children attend 9 different schools in a variety of locations.

Catchment area schools include; Riseley Lower (2.3 miles), Eileen Wade Lower (2.7 miles), Margaret Beaufort Middle (2.2 miles) and Sharnbrook Upper (6.0 miles).

Independent Schools include: Kimbolton School (3.5 miles) Bedford Harpur Trust Schools (plus feeder schools) (12.1 miles).

The nearest College of Further Education is Bedford College (12.1 miles).

Pupils travel to school by; school, private and public transport, the former being provided by Bedfordshire County Council.

There are no preschool or out of school facilities in the village, the nearest of which are located in Upper Dean, Riseley and Kimbolton.

There is an eBus, visiting periodically, which is funded by the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, and provides various levels of computer training.

First aid courses have also been organised by the Village Hall Committee,

There are also a wide variety of subjects offered for evening study at Sharnbrook Upper School and Community College.

Questionnaire

Children of the village represent 20% of the whole village. For the purposes of the Questionnaire, only those aged 12 and over were eligible to partake, which represents 13% of the returns.

Of the 26 children under 18 there is 1 pre-school child, 6 aged between 4 and 9, 5 aged between 9 and 13, and 14 aged between 13 and 18.

Of these, 13 travel by school transport provided by Bedfordshire County Council.

Commentary

24% of households have children and the majority of these would like a common playground or play area, ideally suitable for ball games. Most parents would also like some forms of organised, structured, supervised activities to occupy children after school and during holidays.

It was acknowledged by some however that the village was not large enough to support some desired activities, but joint activities with neighbouring villages was suggested. Villagers are keen on further education with 30% using or wishing to use the eBus. Moreover computer training was a popular request, together with an even larger number who wanted leisure classes or sessions, perhaps reflecting the demographics of the village.



The E-bus

The number of requests for a children's play area/playing field suggests that a suitable piece of land, perhaps one acre, should be sought and this could also be used by adults. Play equipment is not requested at this stage. Once acquired, there would be minimal ongoing upkeep.

A youth club meeting periodically in, say, the village hall could be viable but would depend on being able to recruit appropriate volunteers.

The numbers requesting Rainbows/Brownies/Guides/Beaver/Cubs/Scouts are not large enough to warrant running for Swineshead children only. Children can at present join groups outside the village but there are waiting lists owing to a shortage of leaders. Leaders could be sought who could set up groups in the village also drawing on children from surrounding villages.

The small numbers requesting a holiday club and before/after school club mean these are unlikely to succeed. Holiday clubs are already run in the surrounding area. Riseley Lower School operates a before and after school club during term time only.

Actions

- 1 Contact local schools assuring them of our support and encouragement and our willingness to take an active interest, which is in response to the letters of support received from our local schools to the construction of Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Plan**
- 2 Investigate and research a grass playing field.**
- 3 Investigate a youth club based in the Village Hall.**
- 4 Investigate with the area Guiding/Scouting Movement whether there are sufficient leaders and children to support any groups being set up in the village (including children from outside).**
- 5 Canvass opinions amongst the villagers on details of education training courses and when required contact relevant providers, including eBus, and organise courses.**

SWINESHEAD CHURCH

The Current Situation

St. Nicholas Church, Swineshead, is one of six parish churches within the Stodden group of churches in the Church of England Diocese of St. Albans. The Swineshead Parochial Church Council, under the supervision of the diocesan authorities, administers the Church. The surrounding churchyard remains in use and provides a charming setting for the Grade 1 Listed building, which is located at the junction of the High Street and Sandye Lane, and is the natural centre and focal point of the village.



Analysis of Responses to Questionnaire

Valuing the Church.

The leading fact about the Church is that a large majority of villagers value their Church as an historic building, a focal point in the built environment or for worship. Significant numbers of villagers also recognise the importance of the Church for baptisms and weddings, while over a third express a wish to be buried in the churchyard.

Comments

Although the statistics do reveal a small group of dissenting or non-responding villagers, positive feelings about the Church are reflected in several comments by individuals:

(I value the church) as a symbol of God's presence.

Although I worship in another church, I recognise the Christian presence in the village, which is valuable in my assessment of the sort of village in which I wish to live.

(The Church is a) valuable asset to the village.

Delightful church...

I would be very sad if the Church was not used. Perhaps it could be used for other social purposes.

Using the Church.

There is a service in the Church on three Sundays out of six in a rotation with the other five churches of the Stodden group. The Church is also used for funerals, weddings and major festivals. About one in ten villagers attend one or more services per month and about an additional half of all villagers have attended during a major festival. Currently, the bell ringers meet weekly. In recent years, the Church has hosted fund raising concerts and a village exhibition. There is fairly strong support for such use.

Only one person would welcome more frequent services. Over half the village are content with the *status quo* and a good majority feel that they have enough contact with the church. A minority of individuals used their response to suggest change and were a regular 10.30 a.m. family-oriented service possible each Sunday, this would meet all suggestions. (However, the current 10.30 a.m. family and youth services are not well attended by Swineshead villagers.) It is, of course, for the Rector and Stodden Churches Joint Parochial Church Council together with Swineshead PCC to decide such matters, but even a small number of comments on family provision etc. is significant in relation to the small number of families with children in the village.



Supporting the Church.

Two major fund raising events are held annually for the benefit of both Church and Village Hall funds. The Harvest Supper, at which the harvest gifts are auctioned, is well-attended, and the Ten-Mile Run receives strong support from within the village and the wider community. Profits from other events organised by the Village Hall committee are shared equally with the Church. Volunteers mow the churchyard regularly. One-off schemes to maintain and enhance the churchyard attract significant human and financial support. A large sum to pay for new churchyard gates to mark the Millennium was raised by a combination of donations and fund-raising events. The Swineshead Village Society committee has devoted many hours to preparing applications to grant awarding bodies and has recently been successful in raising the funds to cover the cost of repairing the churchyard wall.

Commentary

A large majority of villagers value the church, wish to see it properly conserved and maintained, and are prepared to support fund raising.

Actions

- 1 To communicate more effectively the current regular 10.30a.m service, oriented towards family, young people and children**
- 2 Investigate non-worship based activities**
- 3 To continue to support the conservation, restoration, maintenance and upkeep of the church and churchyard through voluntary help, fundraising activities and by raising awareness**

EMPLOYMENT and BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Current Situation

There are only 2 businesses offering employment within the parish; Bird Brothers Egg Production Farm and B F Whitlock Farms on the Swineshead / Pertenhall Road.

There are also a number of villagers who are self-employed running small businesses from home.

The majority of villagers in employment commute to their place of work outside the parish, including several who commute to London.

The Questionnaire

Section 6 of the questionnaire devoted four questions to the subject of Employment and Business Development, covering:

- Employment status
- Attitude to future business development in the parish and surrounding area
- Usefulness of a directory of local businesses/tradesmen
- Use of businesses that advertise in the Honeycomb

Of the 112 respondents 60 (53%) are working. Of those working 44 are in paid employment and 16 are self-employed. Of those not working 27 (24%) are retired.

Commentary

Although the majority of respondents indicated that they would not be in favour of future business development there was still a significant number who would. Comments suggested that those respondents, who are not in favour, are concerned that this could change the character of the village, increase the amount of traffic and raise the ambient noise. In particular it was commented that there should be no future expansion of the egg farm.



Bird Brothers Egg Farm

Comments from those in favour suggested that small businesses should be encouraged provided that they are not noisy and would not lead to many extra vehicles travelling through the village. This encouragement may include finding ways to fund local business development. It was suggested that it should be acceptable for these businesses to utilise existing buildings including the conversion of barns for modern use.

One respondent expressed the belief that in the future people will not commute long distances to work but instead would be encouraged to work from an office at home.

The survey showed that a large majority of villagers refer to the advertisers in Honeycomb when seeking local businesses and a similar majority indicated that they would find a local business directory useful.

Actions

- 1 Careful consideration of future business planning applications and their impact on the village, conservation area, ambient noise, transport links and potential benefit**
- 2 Investigate the practicalities and possibility of producing a directory of local businesses to include Internet and Hardcopy options**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Current Situation

There are presently three tiers of local government in North Bedfordshire:

Bedfordshire County Council is broadly responsible for Social Services, Education, Highways and some Environmental matters, for which £989 (based on a village average band D property) was collected in 2006. Our local County Councillor is Tom Wootton.

Bedford Borough Council is broadly responsible for Housing, Planning, and Culture plus other Environmental matters including, refuse disposal, for which an average household paid £363 in 2006. Our Borough Councillor is Ian Clifton.

Pertenhall and Swineshead Parish Council is responsible for some village services such as grass cutting. It provides a largely advisory interface between village needs and the County and Borough Councils, on Planning and Highway matters for which £24.75 was collected per average household in 2006. At the time of writing our Parish Councillors are Jan Herdan, Brian Stevens and Michael Whitlock.

All three bodies, as well as the Police and Fire Authorities, are funded by the Council Tax, which in total received approximately £213,000 from Swineshead alone last year.

However, both the County Council and Bedford Borough Council have announced in February 2007 that they are applying to the Government for unitary status, whereby a single authority would run all the local services in North Bedfordshire, apart from those of the Parish Council. The Government's decision is expected within the year as to which authority, if either, wins for Bedfordshire. This may resolve some of the issues that arose from the Parish Plan Questionnaire, especially confusion between the designated responsibilities of the Councils.

The Questionnaire

There were some 19 separate questions in the section on Local Government, such as how well informed villagers are about the Parish Council, the services provided by the different Council bodies, how they obtain information about local affairs, and with whom they should raise any concerns. There were also questions about what it means to live in a Conservation Area. Villagers were also able to comment on whether the Parish Council should get more funds to spend locally and were also asked whether they would like to become more involved with the Parish Council. Consideration of the replies should take into account that about 15 children (over 12) replied to the questionnaire and they would not all be expected to be well informed on local government matters. On this basis, from the replies, nearly all adults (90) know a parish councillor, and about three-quarters look at the notice boards, but only about a third say they attend PC meetings (even this is very questionable based on the attendance records).

About two thirds of the adults believe they are aware of the different services provided by the different Councils, although the actual level of knowledge was untested. The fact that one third do not know which Council provides which service is of concern, when everybody has to pay for these services.

Of the ways people like to keep informed on local affairs, the Parish Magazine, Honeycomb was the firm leader with nearly 100 % of adults using this method. However, many also say they use the notice boards, Parish Council Newsletter and word of mouth. Concern about a local matter was most likely to be raised with a Parish Councillor or at a Parish Council meeting, with a few who would raise issues with the Borough Council or our MP, Alistair Burt, (there was no mention of the County Council in the question).

The majority of the village said they were aware of what it means to live in a Conservation Area, but a significant number (20) said they were not, despite the Conservation Area Document and Welcome Pack circulated at regular intervals and to all new families coming to live in the village, which could explain some past inappropriate actions. The village was equally divided as to whether the conditions of living in a Conservation Area should be more strictly enforced.

Finally, a clear majority said they would not be prepared to pay more through the Parish Precept to be spent on the village, but perhaps many of those were unaware of the possible services that could be provided.

Some interesting comments arose from the Open Day, mainly showing disquiet over the supply of local services (villages 'ignored, remote, invisible'), with villagers feeling they see little for the Council Tax they pay. However, there was a feeling that more spending by the Parish Council may be supported if the purpose was known in advance and the benefit to the village was made clear.

Actions

- 1 Put photos of Parish Councillors in the Newsletter to improve recognition**
- 2 Give more advance publicity about Parish Council meetings, eg in Honeycomb**
- 3 Reissue the updated Conservation Area booklet, particularly to newcomers to the village**
- 4 Continue to support Honeycomb with a grant towards production costs**
- 5 Put more details into the Newsletter of Parish Council spending and options for extra expenditures**
- 6 Encourage the use of e-mail for Parish Council communication to those who request this service and draw attention to the Parish Council web site**

FACILITIES and LEISURE

Current Situation

The village has relatively few amenities or formal leisure facilities, but there are organised events and also natural attractions for residents.

There is no doctor's surgery and there has been no shop, post office or public house for a number of years. However there is a church, village hall and a public telephone box. There is also a mobile library calling fortnightly, and mobile shops that visit on a regular basis, including Eismann, David Gregory's Greengrocery and Neptune's Table.

The Village Hall is the main meeting point and, being licensed, is used regularly for a monthly bar evening, fortnightly afternoon teas and other organised social events. It is also hired out for talks, various leisure activities and private functions.



Swineshead Village Hall

Footpaths, bridle paths and byways that are utilised by both residents and visitors surround the village.

Commentary

The majority of residents have access to a computer either at home or at work with Internet access. Of those without, some would use community access if available.

Most villagers are aware of the services available, such as food deliveries and library services. People shop in the surrounding villages and some have supermarket home deliveries although there are no statistics for this. There are a few requests for a pub, shop and post office.

A pharmacy delivery to the village would be very well used, as would some form of taxi service.

Most people were modest in their desire for extra facilities, but a play area/meeting place for children was a popular request.

The Village Hall activities, including the monthly bar night, are well supported, and the vast majority consider them to be about right. However a number felt that more use could also be made of the hall for additional activities, most of which are not presently undertaken elsewhere. There was also a request for disabled toilet facilities.

In general, respondents are realistic about the activities that can be viable in a small village. Nevertheless there are requests for more activities both for the young and retired, such as children's/youth club, bowls and outings.

There is a considerable number of people willing to help organise many additional varied activities.

Actions

- 1 Investigate if there is sufficient need for community Internet access**
- 2 Investigate the possibilities of mobile shop and mobile post office**
- 3 Set up a community transport system**
- 4 Investigate provision of a grass playing field**
- 5 Investigate organisation of various new activities**
- 6 Extend Village Hall to provide disabled toilet**

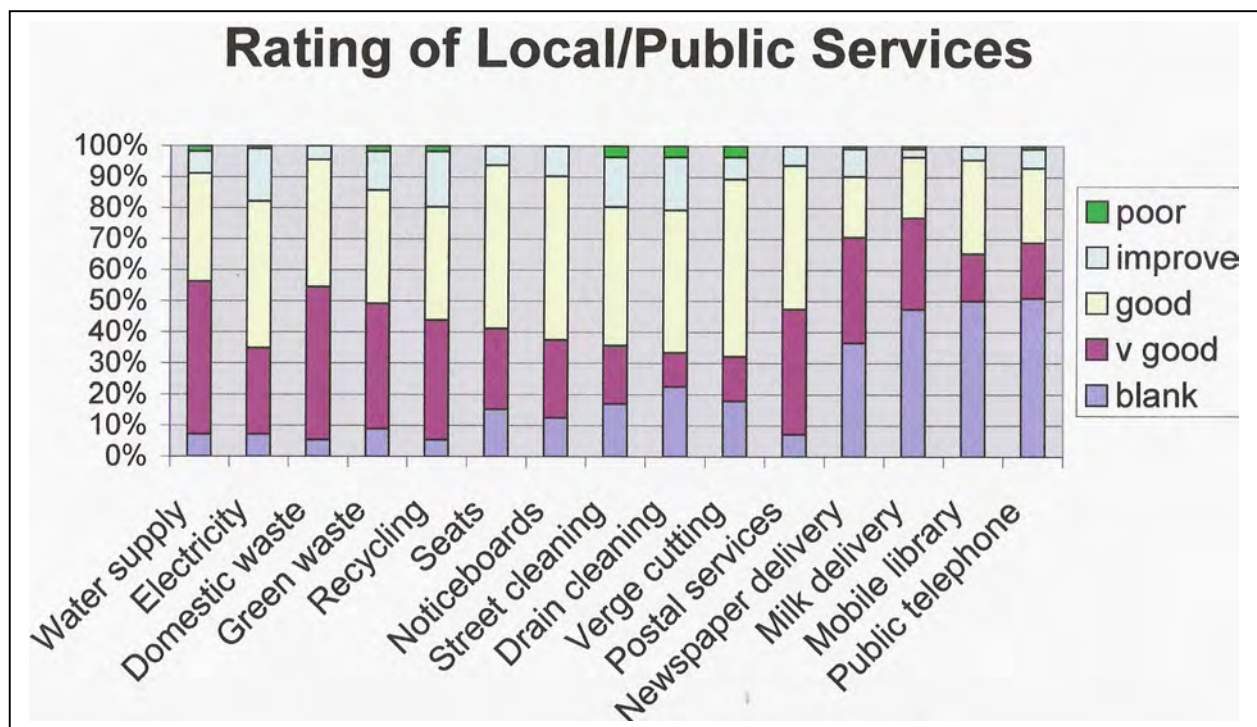
PUBLIC SERVICES

The Current Situation

- Swineshead is served with mains water, drainage and electricity. There is no mains gas supply.
- Domestic waste is collected weekly (Friday). Green waste and waste for recycling (not glass) are collected alternate weeks. Plastic bags or wheelie bins are provided for the recycle/green waste.
- A 'bulky waste' service is provided twice per year with the provision of a vehicle at two points in the village.
- There is no Post Office, shop or pub in Swineshead.
- Milk is delivered Mon, Wed, Fri.
- Post is delivered daily Mon-Sat. There is one Post Box at the bottom of the High St with two collections per day (Mon-Sat).
- There is one Public Telephone Box situated in the High St.
- There is a daily newspaper delivery service to those who subscribe. The free 'Bedfordshire on Sunday' paper is delivered to one collection point then distributed by a villager.
- Vegetables are available for purchase once per week from a mobile van.
- There are notice boards at the top and bottom of the High St plus one at the Village Hall.
- A mobile library visits twice per month stopping at two locations in the village.
- There is bench seating at the east end of the High St, outside the Village Hall and outside the church (Sandye Lane), and in the churchyard.
- The Borough Council provides drain and street cleaning, on an infrequent basis.
- Litter picking in the village and surrounding lanes is organized by the Parish Council but undertaken by villagers.
- There are no street lights in the village.
- Verges are generally maintained by the owner of the adjacent property or outside the village envelope by the Parish Council using grants from Bedford Borough Council.

The Questionnaire

Section 9 of the questionnaire devoted 15 questions to the subject of local and public services. 80% of the questions received a majority good or very good rating.



The services receiving the most significant poor/improve rating were

- Drain & Street cleaning
- Recycling / green waste
- Electricity (power cuts)
- Verge cutting

The services receiving most blanks (suggesting little used by the majority of Swineshead residents) were

- Milk Delivery
- Mobile Library
- Public Telephone
- Newspaper Delivery

It should be noted that these are vital services and should be preserved.

Commentary

The majority of comments were related to recycling, street & drain cleaning, electricity supply and verges.

Recycling:

The village is demanding more recycling. Eg glass, thick cardboard and separation of paper & cans. Orange sacks are inadequate for the job and bins are suggested as an alternative. Green waste received particular attention – discontinued too long over the winter and not frequent enough in the summer.

Street & Drain Cleaning:

Drains are frequently blocked, cleaning appears to be infrequent and they are unable to cope with heavy rain. 10 respondents complained that the road sweeper does not complete Sandye Lane but turns round at The Spinney.

Electricity:

13 respondents noted that the electricity supply had improved but still get power cuts in bad weather and electrical surges in thunderstorms.

Verges:

The irregular maintenance of verges attracted attention.

A few comments were made about Notice Boards. The village Hall board is difficult to read due to its position close to the boundary wall. All notice boards are reported to be unclear (inadequate cleaning?).

Seats:

These were noted to be in need of repair (specifically the one at end of High St).

Actions

1 Waste/recycling

Offer option for bins (as well as orange sacks) to collect paper/plastic/cans waste

Weekly collection of orange sacks all year and green waste in summer months

Glass recycling facility in the village

Quarterly bulky waste collection

2 Verge/hedgerow maintenance

Investigate the frequency of verge cutting.

3 Improve street/drain cleaning by County Council

4 Relocate Village Hall notice board for better access and visibility

5 Investigate possible repairs required to village seating

SECURITY

Current Situation

The village is in a low crime area. It has no police station and is patrolled from the Riseley Station, (a division of Greyfriars Station in Bedford), which is manned part-time. A mobile police station visits the village occasionally to facilitate communication and raise awareness of security issues.

The community is close-knit and villagers tend to watch out for each other on both a formal and informal basis.

There is a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme within the village, part of Bedford and District, consisting of an area coordinator and 5 street coordinators. The coordinators communicate to the households any security issues notified from the Police, Bedford and District Liaison or other villagers.

The Riseley Beat Manager (01234 275175) and the Crime Reduction Officer (01234 275273) occasionally attend parish council meetings.

Questionnaire

Virtually all residents said that they feel safe in Swineshead although a minority of people were concerned with petty crime, primarily litter and fly tipping.

Commentary

Whilst the village is in a low crime area and the vast majority feel safe, there are a significant number of perceptions, which may not represent the actual number of problems.

A large majority of respondents says they are aware that the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme exists but they need more information, particularly who is their respective coordinator.

Comments indicate that people wish to see more foot patrols although the low crime rate may not warrant a high police presence. However, people need to know how to contact the local police.

Actions

- 1 Organise a police awareness day**
- 2 Provide residents with details of Neighbourhood Watch**
- 3 Investigate unsolicited caller scheme**

HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE

The Current Situation

The scope of this section of the Parish Plan embraces Health Services, Social Services and also the Emergency Services. It also incorporates transport issues, picking up on some points made in response to the Transport element of the Questionnaire.

Given its small population and very rural location, Swineshead does not have any health, social care or emergency services based in the village.

This leads to issues of travel, accessibility and speed of response in an emergency. An additional complication is the village's proximity to various County boundaries, with the nearest service providers being in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire or, possibly, Northamptonshire.

The nearest General Practitioners (GPs) are in Kimbolton, (3.4 miles) and Great Staughton, (4.4 miles), both in Cambridgeshire. There is a surgery in Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire (6.6 miles) but this is no longer taking new patients from Swineshead. The nearest pharmacies are at the GP Surgeries in Kimbolton and Great Staughton, and Old Swan Pharmacy in Kimbolton. The nearest Out of Hours GP Service is now based at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Huntingdon (13.6 miles) and this services patients from both of the above GP Surgeries. The details of the nearest pharmacies providing 24hour cover on a rota basis can be accessed from the GPs telephone service.

The nearest dentists are in Kimbolton (3.4 miles), Higham Ferrers (7.6 miles), (Rushden (8.0 miles), St Neots (10.1 miles) and Bedford (12.1 miles). Not all of these accept NHS patients. There is also an NHS emergency dental service available for non-registered patients in Rushden, St Neots and Bedford.

There are two District General Hospitals at Bedford and Huntingdon (Hinchingsbrooke) with A&E, Outpatient Departments, supporting a range of general medical and surgical treatments and maternity services. More complex specialist treatments are available from Cambridge University Hospital Trust (Addenbrooke's – 32 miles). There are also several private hospitals or private wings within a 30 mile radius. A review of all the Acute Hospitals in the Eastern Region is currently being conducted and may lead to a reduction in the range of treatments on offer at each Hospital – hence requiring more people to travel greater distances or to receive treatment in more local primary care settings. The A&E facility at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital is currently under review.

The nearest Social Services are based in Bedford. Social workers, caring for the needs of children and adults (where care for the elderly is particularly relevant) will travel to Swineshead from their office base.

Other services available from nearby towns and villages within a 12-mile radius include chiropodists (at least one will make calls in the village), podiatrists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and opticians.

The nearest Police Station is in Riseley (2.5 miles) and is manned part-time.

The nearest Fire Station is in Kimbolton. This is a Retained Station relying on local retained officers to respond to incidents when required.

The nearest Ambulance stations are in Bedford and Huntingdon. Whilst Bedford technically covers Swineshead, in an emergency there is joint responsibility. In response to a 999 call an ambulance from either station can respond and this is governed by the address postcode.

Target response times for the Emergency Services to reach a rural location such as Swineshead are driven by government guidelines. These vary according to the type of call but currently an ambulance should reach an emergency life threatening call within 8 minutes. A non-life threatening call should take no more than 19 minutes. A Paramedic 4x4 vehicle roams the north of the county. There are also emergency care practitioners at a number of locations. First response schemes are being encouraged throughout the rural areas.

The Questionnaire

There were relatively few questions on Health and Social Care, mostly, in fact related to the Emergency Services. Some other relevant questions were in Section 3 Roads, Traffic and Transport. Out of a total of 112 respondents, the numbers who have indicated they had called for emergency help in the past year were respectively:

Police	15	(13%)
Ambulance	12	(11%)
Fire Service	5	(4%)
Out of Hours Doctor	14	(12%)

Of these respondents, 29 made comments on levels of satisfaction with the service provided:

3 raised concerns over long times for fire engines to arrive (30/35 minutes) and 4 complained Police were slow to respond and were disinterested.

4 were concerned about how long ambulances took to arrive.

In contrast there was a positive response concerning doctor out-of-hours services.

In Section 3 of the questionnaire a small number of people expressed experiencing difficulties to arrange transport to doctors` surgeries or pharmacies that are reliant on inadequate public transport or the goodwill of friends and neighbours.

At the Parish Plan Open Day, 17 comments or suggestions were received under the "Planning For Real" section and some of these will be picked up overleaf.

Commentary

Although data from the Questionnaire is sparse, there is a range of health and social care issues which may need to be addressed relating to the ease of access to services. Others may relate to the speed of response of the Emergency Services. Such arise from the rural situation of the village and will not, of course, be unique to Swineshead.

In the first instance more information needs to be collected on the current situation and how it is impacting Swineshead residents, especially those without their own transport. This may then lead to identification of some potential actions to be taken – for example – by healthcare providers and emergency services, which could assist, people in particular situations.

It is also probable that people could be assisted with clearer and more comprehensive information on what services are available from which providers and how these can be accessed both in normal hours and out-of-hours.

On this basis a number of actions have been identified below.

Actions

- 1 Undertake a comprehensive information collation activity to establish the specific primary healthcare services currently provided by each of the GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies and specialists such as physiotherapists and chiropodists, to include availability of out-of-hours service and willingness to make home visits/drugs/delivery etc., where relevant. Based on results consider whether to lobby for improvements**

- 2 Investigate the current situation on availability of hospital transport for people needing to make outpatient visits to Bedford/ Hinchingsbrooke/ Addenbrooke's Hospitals. Also find out whether this is likely to change in the future. Based on conclusions on adequacy of what is provided (frequency, journey time, cost) consider whether a roster of volunteers should be created so those without own transport can be taken to hospital appointments**

- 3 Investigate through a future village survey whether there would be enough interest to set up new initiatives aimed at improving the health and well-being of the residents including some ideas suggested at the Open Day, e.g. Keep Fit Classes, Dance Classes, regular visits by chiropodists, aromatherapy etc. Yoga and Pilates classes were also suggested**

- 4 Work with the Emergency Services to improve their response times. This should include ensuring they have a map of the village (including at Riseley Police Station), or effective SatNav solution, showing where each property is located. Consider with the Ambulance service whether there is a case for a locally based paramedic and people trained to use a defibrillator (and where this should be located)**

- 5 Establish the extent of problems caused by Swineshead's proximity to the Cambs/Beds border, which means people typically, attend a GP surgery in Cambs but are referred to hospital and/or social care or primary care in Beds. See whether actions are needed to improve cross boundary communication and cooperation, and intervene with the new East of England Strategic Health Authority (SHA) if necessary**

- 6 Compile a comprehensive guide to medical and social care services available within a 15-mile radius of Swineshead and how these can be accessed, incorporating the information in this section of the Plan and results of Actions under Points 1, 2 and possibly 3, 4 and 5. Prepare a hardcopy version for distribution to current and future residents and also post on village website**

Summary of Actions from all sections

(for much more detailed information about these summaries it is essential to read the appropriate sections in the body of the Plan)

*** denotes an action common to both villages**

Action	Action by	Time Scale	Cost
1.1 Restoration of Churchyard wall	<u>Swineshead Village Society (SVS)</u> Parish Council	As soon as possible	£17,000 grant + fundraising
1.2 Improve footpaths, bridleways, and roads *	<u>Parish Council</u> Parish Paths Partnership (P3) County Council(CC) Highways Dept. Rights of Way Dept.	Ongoing	Unknown
1.3 Provide a community garden	<u>Parish Council</u> , Village Hall Committee (VHC) Parochial Church Council (PCC) Bedford Borough Council (BBC) CC	As soon as possible	Land, Landscape Plants, Picnic facilities.
1.4 Contact Ivel and Ouse Countryside project - to seek support.	Parish Council	Sept 2007	Nil
1.5 Continue to monitor problem with flies	<u>Parish Council</u> BBC- Environmental Health Dept.	Ongoing	Nil
2.1 Contact Beds B.C. Planners re policy on development	Parish Council	Nov. 2007	Nil
2.2 Report to meeting of electors on results of 2.1	Parish Council	March 2008	Nil
2.3 Monitor appearance of Conservation Area to ensure quality.	<u>Parish Council</u> with the village community	Ongoing	Nil

Action	Action by	Time Scale	Cost
2.4 Approach owners where remedial action to property in Conservation Area needed.	Parish Council	Nov 2007	Nil
2.5 Monitor changes in planning requirements and guidelines	<u>Parish Council</u> BBC Planning Dept.	Ongoing	Nil
2.6 Carry out housing needs survey	Parish Council	Dec 2008	Nil
3.1 Seek more frequent speed checks at peak times	<u>Parish Council</u> Riseley Police Station	ASAP	Nil
3.2 Seek a mandatory weight limit for the High Street (except for access)*	Parish Council	Sept 2007	Nil
3.3 Investigate the need for a “good neighbour” car policy	<u>Parish Council</u> Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)	ASAP	Nil
3.4 Improve visibility of current bus timetable	Parish Council	ASAP	Nil
4.1 Contact local schools assuring them of support, interest, and encouragement.*	Parish Council	Dec. 2007	Nil
4.2 Investigate provision of grass playing field*	Parish Council	Dec.2008	t.b.a.
4.3 Investigate provision of Youth Club based in Village Hall	VHC	Dec 2007	£500 +
4.4 Investigate availability of personnel to create Guide/Scout groups in the Village	<u>Parish Council,</u> VHC	Dec 2007	Nil
4.5 Seek opinions on need for education/training courses; when appropriate contact relevant providers	VHC	Dec 2007	Admin costs from Parish Council

Action	Action by	Time Scale	Cost
5.1 Publicise 10.30a.m. Family Service more effectively	Rector PCC Joint PCC	Dec 2007	Nil
5.2 Investigate non-worship based activities	PCC, SVS	Ongoing	Nil
5.3 Support conservation, upkeep etc of Church and burial ground by voluntary effort	PCC SVS Parish Council	Ongoing	Nil
6.1 Carefully consider impact of any future business planning applications*	Parish Council	Ongoing	Nil
6.2 Investigate possibility of producing a directory of local trades and businesses*	Parish Council	Oct 2008	t.b.a. (funded by adverts?)
7.1 Put photos of Parish Councillors in Newsletter	Parish Council	Dec 2007	Nil
7.2 More advance publicity of meetings of the Parish Council	Parish Council	Ongoing	Nil
7.3 Re-issue Conservation Area booklet	Parish Council	Sept 2007, and ongoing	Nil
7.4 Financial support for Honeycomb	Parish Council	Ongoing	£100 pa
7.5 More financial detail re. spending and options in Parish Council Newsletter	Parish Council	ASAP, and ongoing	Nil
7.6 Encourage email communication, and promote the Council's web site.	Parish Council	Ongoing	Nil
8.1 Investigate need for community internet access	Parish Council	Dec 2007	Nil
8.2 Investigate mobile shop and post office*	Parish Council	Dec 2007	Nil
8.3 Set up community transport scheme	<u>Parish Council</u> BRCC	Dec 2007	Nil
8.4 Investigate provision of grass playing field	Parish Council	Dec 2008	t.b.a.
8.5 Investigate provision of new village activities	Volunteers via VHC	Ongoing	Nil
8.6 Extend Village Hall to provide disabled toilet	VHC BBC	ASAP	Grants

Action	Action by	Time Scale	Cost
9.1 Offer bins instead of sacks for recycling Weekly collection of recycled material Weekly collection of green waste in summer months Provide glass recycling facility in the village Provide bulky waste collection quarterly	<u>Parish Council</u> CC BBC	ASAP	Nil to village
9.2 Investigate the frequency of verge cutting*	Parish Council	Sept 2007	From Grant
9.3 Improve street/drain cleaning by County Council*	<u>Parish Council</u> CC Highways Dept.	Ongoing	Nil
9.4 Re-locate Village Hall noticeboard for better access	VHC	Sept 2007	VHC
9.5 Check village seats for possible repair	Parish Council	ASAP	t.b.a.
10.1 Organise a police awareness day.	<u>Parish Council</u> Riseley Police Station	Dec 2007	Nil
10.2 Provide residents with details of Neighbourhood Watch*	Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator (NWC)	ASAP	Nil
10.3 Investigate an unsolicited caller scheme	NWC Parish Council	ASAP	Nil
11.1 Survey primary health care services, and consider whether to lobby for improvements	Parish Council	June 2008	Nil
11.2 Survey availability of hospital transport; if relevant, create a roster of volunteers	Parish Council	June 2008	Nil
11.3 Investigate interest in new initiatives in health care and well-being.	Parish Council	June 2008	Nil
11.4 Work with Emergency Services to improve response times; consider need for local paramedic and defibrillator.	Parish Council	June 2008	Nil
11.5 Survey problems of Cambs/Beds county border & cross county communication*	Parish Council	June 2008	Nil
11.6 Compile guide of medical and social care services within 15 mile radius of Swineshead. Distribute to residents.	Parish Council	Within 9 months of completion of actions 1-5	£500

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Pride In Bedford