



PARISH PLAN

March 2005

 The
Countryside
Agency



Hilton Parish Plan

“We welcome this opportunity to support the Hilton Parish Plan, taking it forward, through the Parish Council, into the years to come. It was good to see such a high response from Villagers for the Plan, showing what a social and vibrant place Hilton remains, and a happy Village in which to live. Congratulations to all those organisations and individuals who collected, collated and distributed the Plan which is laid out before us to-day.

We are confident that the Plan will form a vital and challenging agenda for local residents, working along with the Parish Council, to move forward over the years to come, ensuring the care and vibrancy continues in the village community.”

Jonathan Djanogly
Member of Parliament for Huntingdon

Ian Bates
County and District Councillor

Christopher Stephens
District Councillor

January 2005

FOREWORD

"**They** are digging up the road again".

"**They** have spent hundreds of pounds on traffic calming measures that clearly don't work".

"**They** don't realise that all the youngsters are leaving because there's nothing for them to do here in the evenings".

"Why can't **they** provide footpaths and cycle-ways to neighbouring villages?"

But ...

Who are '**they**'? The United Nations? The European Commission? The Government? The County, District or Parish Council?

Often we don't know. '**They**' seem to be remote people who evidently have the power to determine what happens to Hilton, while taking little account of the views of those who live in the village.

In reality, **they** are just you or I in a different job. **They** are *not* usually deaf to the local view. But **they** can only be expected to respond if that local view is made known to them.

That is what this 'Parish Plan' aims to do.



The Turf Maze and Sparrow's Monument

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The annexes below are held by the Clerk to the Parish Council and are available on request.

- A Action Plan (As in pages 24-27 above)
- B Survey findings on the community – statistical data
- C Planning and development
- D People issues (including transport and access)
- E Environmental issues
- F Local government issues
- G The 'Big Three Issues' – major concerns and recurring themes
- H The 11 to 17 year old view
- I Where should the money come from?
- J Steering committee membership and diary of events
- K Full statistic data from questionnaire answers



The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene

INTRODUCTION

Background

1 The way local government operates in the United Kingdom has evolved over a long period of time. Most recently there has been a move for greater delegation of decision making to the minor authorities, such as parish councils. This has happened at a time when the number of people putting themselves forward for council membership has actually declined. Parish councils and the communities they serve are, however, looked upon by central government as essential elements of the nation, since villages represent approximately ten percent of the UK population.

2 Recognising the importance of rural communities and in order to encourage greater participation in their development, the Government published a white paper in November 2000 entitled 'Our Countryside The Future'. This launched the concept of Parish and Town Plans and led the Secretary of State for the Environment to announce the 'Vital Villages Initiative' in July 2001.

3 The aim of the Vital Villages Initiative is to help rural communities:

- assess themselves;
- identify what is needed to revitalise/regenerate a community;
- identify where new projects need to be established;
- make their own decisions;
- implement improvements themselves and
- ensure local people have a voice in their future.

What is a Parish Plan?

4 A Parish Plan is significantly different from but complementary to a Village Design Statement (VDS). A VDS assesses the current fabric, the physical character, of the village and shows how the people of that village wish the built environment to evolve. By comparison a Parish Plan looks at the community and says how the residents of that community would like it to develop. It is therefore more wide-ranging than a VDS.

5 Hilton already has a Village Design Statement that was adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council as supplementary planning guidance in early 2000. The District Council has similarly been invited to consider adopting Hilton's Parish Plan as supplementary planning guidance.

WHY SHOULD HILTON BOTHER HAVING A PARISH PLAN?

6 Although central government is encouraging villages to establish a Parish Plan, Hilton does not have to have one. However, our village has a concerned and active community and the Parish Council feels that a Parish Plan is essential if the village is to develop as people want. The Council wanted to exploit the potential of a Parish Plan to influence the way Hilton develops in coming years.

7 Three other factors were also considered in deciding to write a Parish Plan:

- First, in recent years money has been made available for local projects from a variety of sources: eg district councils, county councils, the National Lottery and various trust funds. Increasingly, these organisations require communities to demonstrate that a clear need exists for a project before they will make a grant. A Parish Plan identifies such needs and justifies them.
- Second, in order to increase the quality of decision-making at local level, central government is asking parish councils to acquire 'Quality Parish' status. One of the requirements of Quality Parish status is that the council must show the existence of a Parish Plan. (The 'Quality Parish' scheme is sponsored by the Government. It encourages closer working between parish councils and imposes on them a more disciplined working regime than has traditionally been the case.)
- Third, and by no means least, the steering group saw a Parish Plan as a defence against inappropriate, centrally imposed change.

HOW WAS HILTON'S PARISH PLAN DRAWN UP?

8 In early 2003, a steering committee was formed to draw up a Parish Plan for Hilton. It numbered 13 people - two of them parish councillors. The group's full membership is listed in the acknowledgements.

9 We submitted an application for funding to the Countryside Agency and received a grant of just over £3,700. The Parish Council contributed a further £266.

10 We sought the views of over 25 village organisations, ranging from the Baby and Toddler Group to the Senior Citizens' Club. We also used Feast Week and a presentation in June 2004 to publicise the project and involve parishioners. However, the principal means through which we determined the collective village view was a questionnaire distributed in January 2004 to every household. A separate questionnaire was provided for younger Hilton residents aged between 11 and 17. There was an exceptionally high response rate. Over 75% of the adult questionnaires were returned and, gratifyingly, 63% of the youth questionnaires. Together, these provided the steering committee with a wealth of statistical data (Annex B), comment and opinion. Analysis of responses took several months.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER

11 No attempt to identify a village's future needs is likely to be wholly successful if it fails to take account of that community's physical characteristics and recent history. So we summarise those now as a backdrop to our findings.

Historical context

12 Since the war Hilton Village has changed irreversibly from a farming community, locally domiciled and employed, to a residential community that travels extensively for work, for shopping and services, school, sport and leisure. This change is shown in the 2 maps on pages 10 and 11.



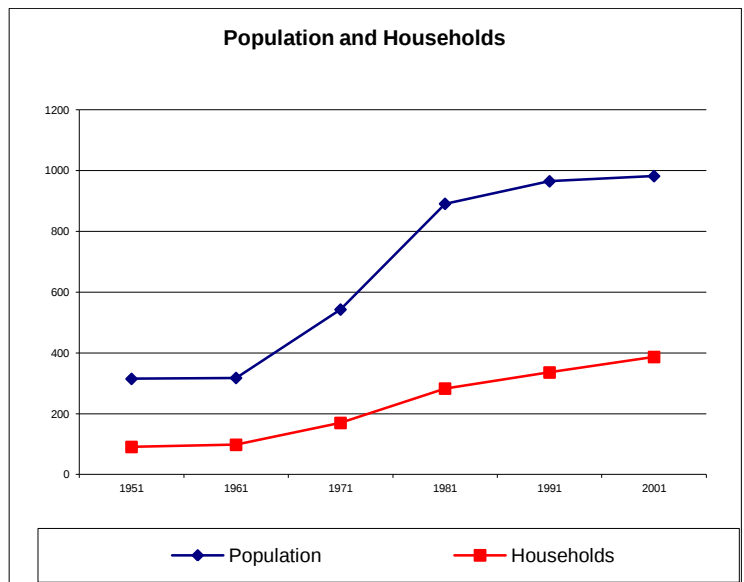
Harvesting in 2004 to the West of Hilton

13 The consequence has been that whereas up to the mid-1950's the principal activities of the village community were farming and activities connected with farming (e.g. blacksmith), and support of the agricultural community (baker, butcher, milk round, carpenter/undertaker, market gardener, corner shop, together with the school), in 2004 all of these have disappeared. The Post office remains together with the one Public House from five, and there is one 1970s established working farm in the village from the four (pre-war five) long established farms within the village. The farm buildings from College Farm, Cross Farm and Grange Farm have been redeveloped as houses, Manor Farm and Park Farm buildings remain. The largest area of agricultural land in the Parish is farmed from three farms outside the village although some farm staff live in the village.



The Post Office

14 At the 1961 National census there was a population of 318 in the village, living in 98 households. At the 2001 Census the population had increased (by 209%) to 982, whilst the number of persons per household had dropped (by 22%) from 3.24 to 2.54. The greatest change took place in the 1960s and 70s, but with some further development in 2001. Since the Huntingdonshire Local Plan of 1995, Hilton has been classed as a 'Group Village' with only very limited building allowed. However, scattered infilling and redevelopment continues, together with development of plots of land with historic building permission.



15 The sites of two work places in the village at the Whippet Garage (coaches and busses), and the Potton Road Service Station have both now been replaced by housing. The only work places (apart from home-based), remaining in the village are the Prince of Wales, the Post Office, Monach Farm & Riding Stables and the Sunshine Nursery located in the Sunday School building at the Methodist Chapel. No sites have been specifically identified for future work places



The Prince of Wales

WHAT DID WE DISCOVER?

16 The questionnaires included questions on a range of topics that nevertheless fell naturally into a few major categories:

- The community – statistical data
- Provision of information
- Planning and development
- People issues
- Transport and access
- Environmental issues
- Local government
- The 11 to 17 year old view.

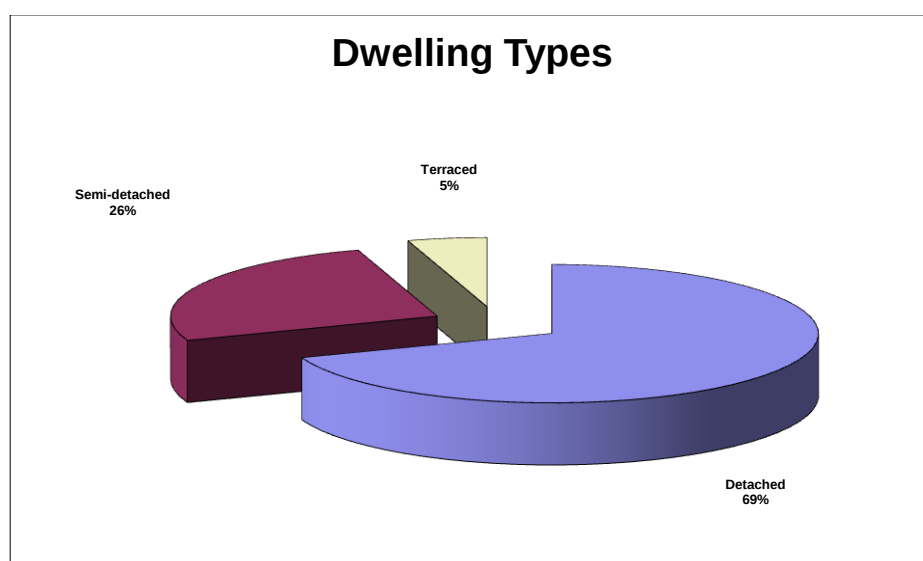
17 We also invited people to:

- say what they saw as their "Big Three Issues about living in Hilton" – their paramount concerns.
- tell us if they were prepared to help with any future projects.

18 The following paragraphs summarise our findings, which are presented in greater detail in the annexes.

THE COMMUNITY – STATISTICAL DATA

19 Responses to the questionnaire produced a mass of statistical data that is to be found at Annex B. The figures are often striking. For example: nearly 70% of Hilton's houses are 'detached' (national average 23%) and some 62% of households run at least 2 cars (national average 30%). 74% of residents want the village to stay as it is; but 25% would like it to develop as a working community. Some 92% of those answering the 11-17 questionnaires felt there should be youth representation on the Parish Council; so do 79% of their elders. And children under the age of 16 attend no less than 27 different educational establishments.



PROVISION OF INFORMATION

20 Hilton is a typical English village in that its residents rely on a variety of sources for information. These include notice boards, Spectrum parish magazine and free newspapers. Responses to the questionnaire also showed that for many people 'word of mouth' remains a key means of finding out what is going on, with clubs, the pub and the post office all acting as fora for the exchange of information.

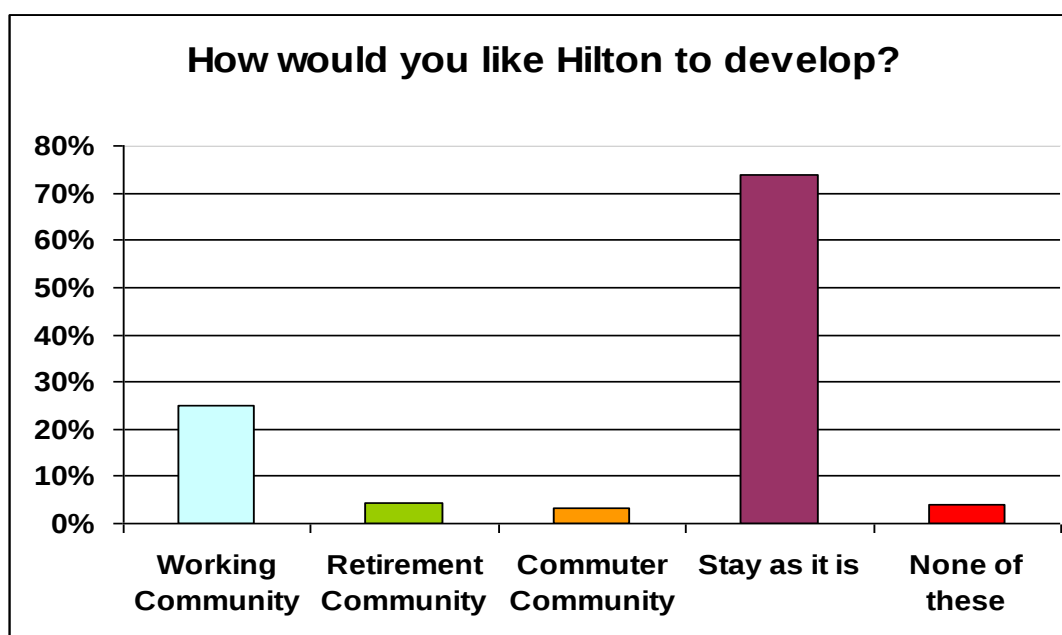
21 Overall, the survey showed that most residents are satisfied that they are kept adequately informed. Over half felt that the amount of information they received was 'good' and a further 41% considered it reasonable. Less than 6% rated it 'poor'.

22 Several people saw a need for a village website.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Hilton's character

23 Most people (74%), when asked 'How would you like Hilton to develop?' said they wanted the village to 'stay as it is'. On the other hand, 25% would like it to develop as 'a working community'. Some 7% of respondents supported the encouragement of light industry and 34% would like to see the development of small workshops. There were also comments about the lack of workplaces in the village now, and the need for it to develop as an integrated community of homes and work places. The steering committee recognised that answers to this question were polarised. To a degree, they constitute a conflict of views that cannot readily be reconciled. We judged that for the village literally to 'stay as it is' is not an option; communities have always evolved and will continue to. Our Action Plan therefore seeks to identify ways in which Hilton might develop that accord with people's wishes, while acknowledging the importance they attach to safeguarding the village's most valued features and characteristics.



Housing and other building

24 There is a widely expressed opinion that the village community is unbalanced as a consequence of the biased development of expensive housing. There is a call for a more balanced community, which will be dependent on a planned mix of any future building. There were also comments about an apparent lack of attention to the VDS when planning applications are considered and the absence of a 'strategic plan' for Hilton's development.

25 The future should be for a more mixed community, with special emphasis now on the young and the old. There should be opportunities for the sons and daughters of the village to continue to live in the village when they leave the parental home and they should have better access to a property ladder in the village. In this way there would be the possibility of village families once more being established.



26 Low cost housing is needed for first-time buyers, retired people and those on low incomes, together with housing for the elderly and the disabled.

27 62 (16%) of the 387 dwellings in Hilton were built as Affordable (Local Authority or Housing Association) Housing, of which approximately half have subsequently been bought privately. Consequently the stock of Affordable Housing (strict sense) in the village is about 8% in total, compared with the 29% target set out in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration "Affordable Housing" chapter 3, Policy AH4.

28 Some 60% of respondents supported the provision of 'affordable housing' within the village, but it is not certain that many people are aware of the strict definition of 'affordable housing' – which is: 'housing affordable to those householders who cannot either rent or purchase housing on the open market'. It seems likely that most people took this question to mean low cost, affordable housing for those groups described in Para 26. The Group considered that a balance of both Affordable Housing (strict sense) and low cost housing is needed, and should be given priority, even on small plots (as one or the other), over the expensive housing now being allowed.

29 Any significant increase in Affordable or inexpensive housing would have implications for the provision of services and workplaces.

30 There were comments about community buildings, which were generally considered to be adequate now, but about which there were concerns for the future. Extreme views were expressed for and against further development of the community buildings, but it was evident

either way that decisions should be made now for the next ten years and any potential locations identified.

31 As a result of all these concerns, it is suggested that the Parish Council, in consultation with the District Council, should draw up a Strategic Plan for the future development of the village, incorporating a map showing areas for different kinds of development, including services and workplaces, together with areas that should be retained as open space. The Parish and District Councils are urged to attach continuing importance to the Village Design Statement.



The Village Hall

Shops and services

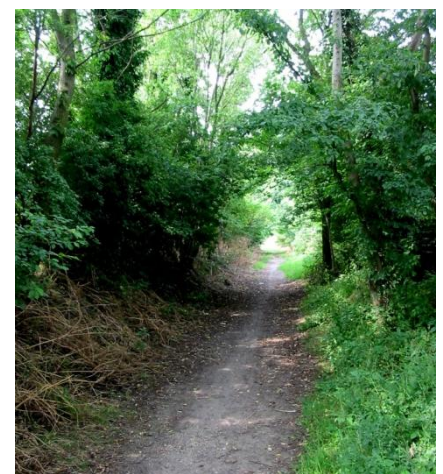
32 Many people would like to see more shops and services, including a school and a medical centre. Whilst these are not an immediate prospect, it is not too soon for planners to consider now for (say) 2015 where they might be built. Unfortunately, several of the more obvious locations for them have recently been built on.

PEOPLE ISSUES

Local facilities

33 Many people would like to see more in the way of local facilities. There is substantial support for the establishment of new sports clubs, notably badminton, tennis and pilates. Also, nearly half the respondents would welcome a gardening club and a village-based ramblers club, while many see a need to provide better facilities for young people.

34 There was substantial support for the concept of linking Hilton to neighbouring villages via foot and cycle paths. Many also saw these as a means of reducing reliance on public transport, especially to Papworth Everard. Further, people would like to see more and better pathways and pavements within and around the village.

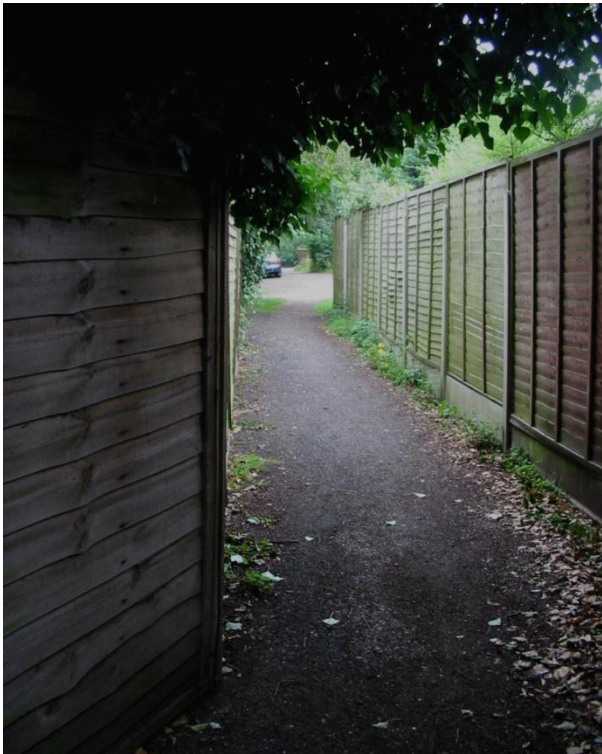


Tithe Lane

Safety, security and law and order

35 Only a minority of people had personal experience of the emergency services. Those that had used them seemed generally content.

36 On the other hand, many people expressed some degree of concern for their personal safety. Asked if there were any areas in the village where they felt unsafe, the responses were divided roughly 50:50 between those who felt unsafe due to traffic and those who felt unsafe due to inadequate lighting. In this respect traffic, notably heavy goods vehicles, was seen as a major problem on both Potton Road and Graveley Way, - many people specifically mentioning the crossroads.



37 Poor lighting was seen as a safety issue in several locations but particularly the alley-ways that link Scott's Close to Church Lane and Kidman's Close to Potton Road as well as The Grove, Graveley Way and Tithe Close. In the dark hours, some residents consciously avoid areas of the village that are not well lit. Accordingly, over half of those who completed the questionnaire wanted better street lighting. Of course, there are also those who oppose more lighting, seeing it as polluting.

Scott's Close to Church Lane

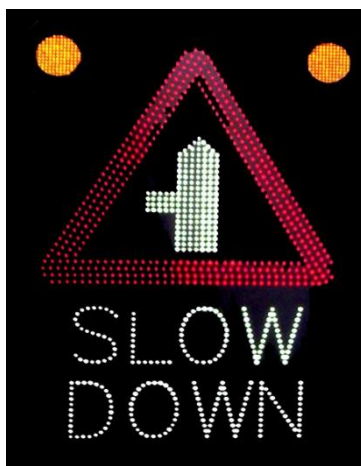
38 There were doubts about the effectiveness of both the village 'bobby' and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. More than half the respondents would welcome a more active Neighbourhood Watch and a higher profile from the community police officer.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

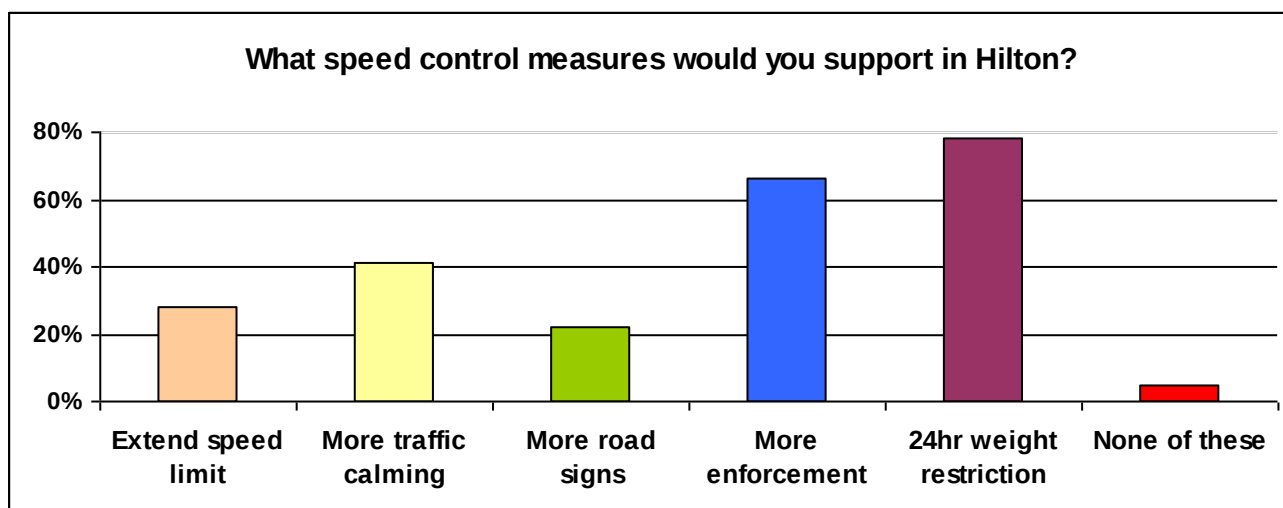
Public transport

39 A relatively small, but potentially significant number of villagers said they had some difficulty getting to local amenities, such as hospitals and doctors' surgeries. Many felt that public transport is inadequate and there is a correspondingly heavy reliance (over 90%) on cars.

Traffic



40 No topic in the questionnaire aroused more passion than traffic through Hilton. It cropped up throughout responses to the questionnaire, including the 'Big Three Issues', and is clearly villagers' paramount concern. Speeding, the impact of heavy commercial vehicles, the dangerous crossroads and 'rat-running' were just a few of the subjects that prompted vociferous comment. There is also a widespread belief that these problems are in part caused, and are certainly exacerbated, by the inadequacies of the A14 road between Huntingdon and Cambridge.



B1040 Potton Road at the Church Lane/Chapel Close junction

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

41 People enjoy living in Hilton - both socially and environmentally. They value the various environmental aspects such as the Green, the Maze, the small wooded areas, open spaces and water features that collectively, make it such a pleasant place to live in. But there is also widespread concern that these features are vulnerable. There is an overriding consensus that they must continue to be properly managed and protected.



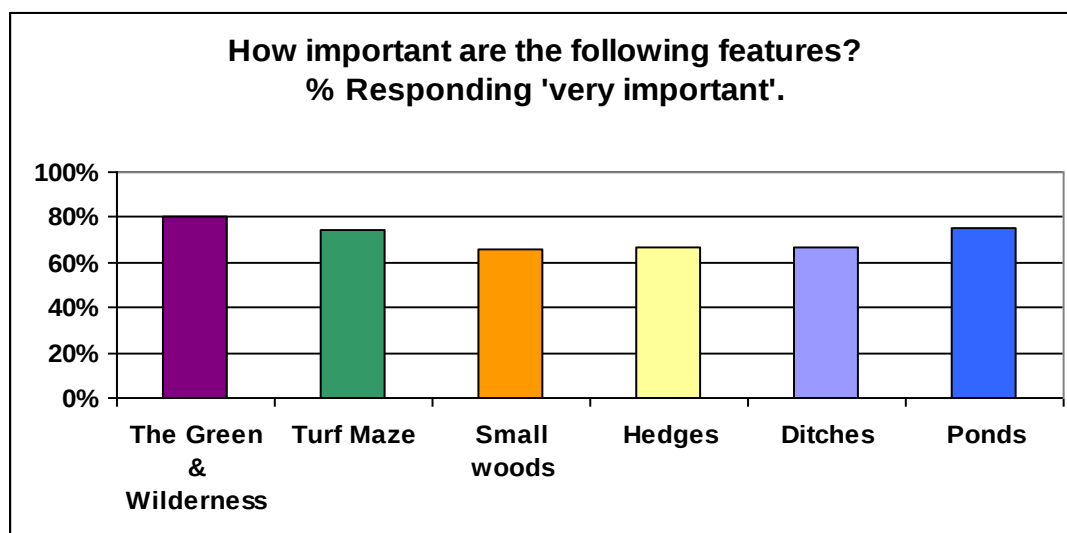
Reeve Ditch

Wildlife

42 People want to see positive action to sustain and encourage wildlife – for example by consciously leaving some areas of the village unmanaged or rarely managed and by providing 'corridors' for plants and animals. At the same time, many saw a need to control the population of semi-wild ducks.

Physical features

43 Hilton's residents value highly features such as the Green, the Maze and trees, as well as ponds, streams and ditches. They want to see them properly managed and protected, whilst not wanting such husbandry to result in what some regard as 'suburban tidiness'.



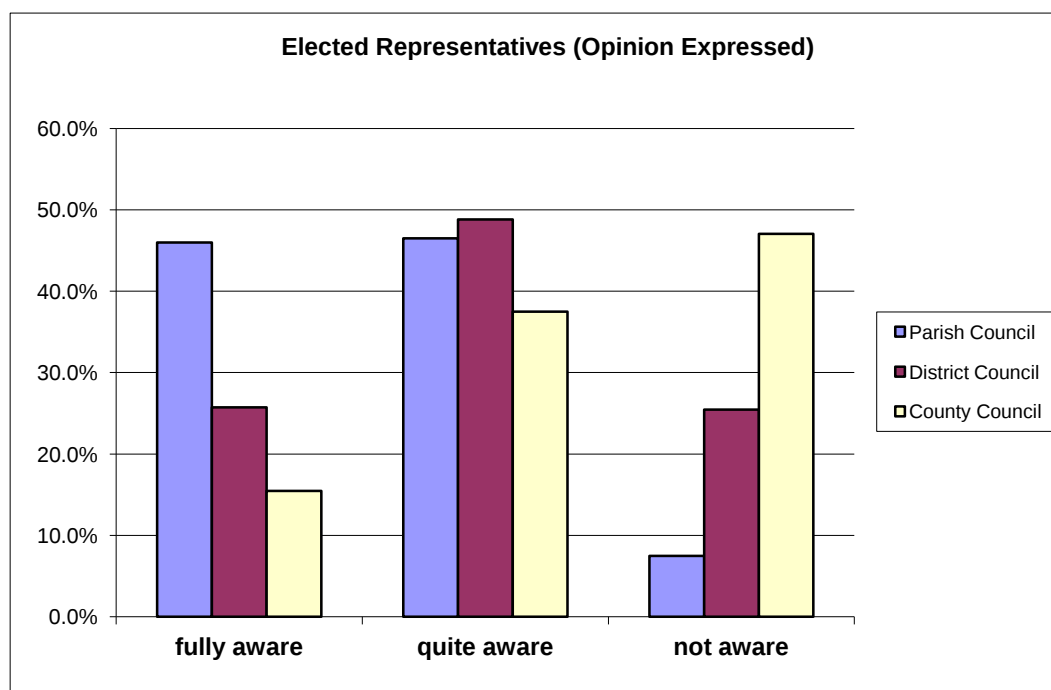
Recycling

44 Responses to the questionnaire reflected increasing national awareness of the need for recycling. Some 87% wanted the bottle bank reinstated. But others strongly opposed the idea.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The County, District and Parish Councils

45 Overall, people do not seem to think that their representatives in local government are aware of their concerns or in touch with local issues. This concern is muted where the Parish Council is concerned but is more pronounced at the district and county levels.



46 Only a minority of villagers have ever attended a Parish Council meeting and many were unaware that they could. There is also a feeling that the Parish Council needs to be more 'transparent' in its work.

Maintenance and local services

47 Most respondents felt that the village's fabric was at least reasonably looked after. The only noteworthy exception to this is local roads, which over 30% of people thought were poorly maintained. Few saw litter as a significant problem, although fly tipping on the road to Fenstanton (outside the Parish boundary) is a significant concern.

Funding for improvements

48 People were asked to say where they thought the money for improvements should come from. Of course, views on this were as varied as the potential sources. Insofar as we were able to identify any common ground on this, it was that funding should not be through increases in council tax. If there is a unanimous view on this vexed subject it is that any money residents provide must be demonstrably used to fund projects that directly benefit the community.

THE 11 TO 17 YEAR OLD VIEW

49 An overwhelming 49 of the 11 to 17 year olds in the survey wanted to see representation of their age group on the Parish Council; only 4 were against the idea.

50 We were in no doubt that we needed to listen to the young people of the village; hence the dedicated questionnaire for those between the ages of 11 and 17. We were pleased that such a high proportion of them responded.

51 Many among this age group clearly enjoy living in Hilton. They recognise that the village is an attractive place and one with a sense of community – as evidenced by events such as Feast Week. However, there is also a widespread feeling that the village offers few recreational options for youngsters. The lack of a youth club or youth centre was often highlighted and there were pleas for more in the way of sporting facilities. Among those particularly sought were: badminton, tennis and cookery classes, as well as a drama workshop and art and craft club.



Feast Week 2004

52 The inadequacy of public transport attracted much comment. Moreover, the service that does currently exist is seen as unreliable.

53 Responses to the youth questionnaire echoed adult concerns about the B1040, although they focussed more on the dangers of the road than on the environmental impact of its traffic.

THE 'BIG THREE' ISSUES

54 At the end of the questionnaire, people were invited to say what they saw as the three big issues where living in Hilton was concerned. The section was extensively used and a full analysis of the replies is at Annex G. The most prevalent themes were these.

Traffic

55 The most frequently mentioned issue was traffic. There is widespread concern about the volume of traffic passing through the village, the impact of heavy commercial vehicles and speeding.



B1040 Potton Road near the Methodist Chapel

The status quo

56 Many people are worried that continuing development will erode the features of the village that make it a pleasant place in which to live. For example, there is a feeling that 'in-filling' destroys the open spaces that the VDS identified as a particularly valued characteristic of Hilton. The overall theme was: 'keep it as it is'.

Public transport

57 Many residents would like to see better public transport, especially in the evenings.

The environment

58 Protection of the village environment is a priority in the minds of many. Their concerns took many forms, ranging from concerns about flooding and the conservation of wildlife, to the need for a bottle bank.

Facilities

59 A significant number of people would like to see better facilities. In particular, many responses highlighted the need to provide more for Hilton's younger population.



The Cricket Pavilion

Miscellany

60 People raised various other issues under the section titled the 'Big Three Issues'. They included:

- the adverse effects of travellers' encampments.
- parking problems in Church Lane.
- the possible need to replace the village hall at some time in the future.
- the lack of a water supply to the allotments.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT DO WE PROPOSE?

61 Summarised here are the actions we envisage to meet villagers' expectations. These measures are shown in more detail in the 'Action Plan' at Annex A, which identifies who is responsible for each action, in what timescales and at what cost.

The young person's view (11-17 year olds)	1	Give Young People a voice in the running of the village
	2	Set up a community bus scheme
	3	Form a Hilton Junior Cricket Club
Environmental issues	4	Maintain the Green as a valued amenity
	5	Conservation of trees; plant trees to ensure a succession of major specimens
	6	Conservation of wildlife and increase biodiversity within the village
	7	Conservation of the environment in non-public areas
	8	Re-establish a bottle bank in Hilton
	9	Arrange Collection of Garden Waste
Planning and development	10	Ensure that the Planning Authority, whether at Council or District level, pays due regard to the VDS
	11	Invite the Parish Council to draw up a strategic Development Plan for Hilton
	12	Restore the village to a more balanced community by the provision of inexpensive housing
	13	Ensure that developments make proper provision for adequate drainage
	14	Consider the feasibility of developing the cricket pavilion as a facility for young people
Information and communication	15	Set up a village website
Road safety	16	Improve pavements and footpaths in the village
	17	Develop cycle tracks and footpaths to local villages
	18	Reduce the dangers from traffic through the village
Village amenities	19	Sustain and develop the Village Hall
	20	Provide a water supply to the allotments
	21	Improve street lighting
	22	Improve street lighting, particularly in Tithe Close.
	23	Minimise crime and the fear of crime
	24	Make provision for a village school in the future
	25	Improve sports and leisure facilities in the village
	26	Establish a 'Good Neighbour' scheme
Local government	27	Increase awareness and participation in Parish Council business
	28	Improve the standard of local roads in the village

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

62 This Plan will be presented to everyone having responsibility for carrying forward the initiatives identified in the Action Plan. The Parish Council will be invited to review the Action Plan every six months, to gauge progress with each of the measures.

63 Many of the issues that villagers raised, and which are identified in the action plan (eg a request for a Hilton-based ramblers club) are not the responsibility of any particular authority or individual. In such situations it is probably best for interested residents to take the initiative and form such a club. Where appropriate, the Parish Council or Village Hall Committee could well be willing to give help to such individuals/organisations.



The Green

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Parish Council would like to thank the following who have contributed with either funding or time to the production of this Parish Plan:

Countryside Agency - Grant of £3,700

Cambridgeshire ACRE - Stan Rees

Steering Group - Ian Stott, Ken Harris, Julian Thomas, Julie Briggs, Liz Bush, Mike Phillips, Nigel Pratt, Margaret Shardlow, Brian Ward, Michael Way.

Other Volunteers - Dave Chambers, Sandy Monk, Bev Nicholaides, Lyn Norton, Malcolm Plows, Jane Shardlow, Derek Sheene, Beverley Tack, Jackie Tevlin, Alix Way.



The Wilderness

This Parish Plan is issued to every household in Hilton. Further copies are available from the Clerk to the Parish Council.

March 2005