

PIRBRIGHT COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN - THE RESULTS AND YOUR COMMENTS



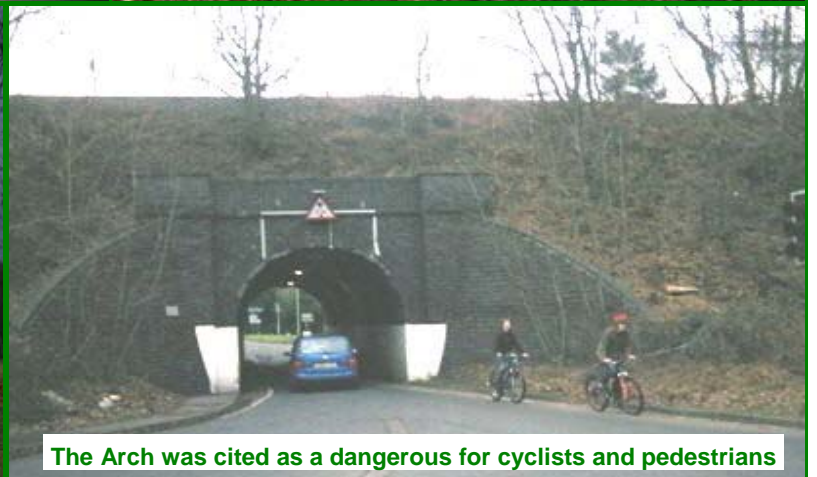
Approval was expressed for PPC grants to other parish organisations



Complaints were made about 4WDs churning up tracks



More activities are needed for 11-16 year olds



The Arch was cited as a dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians



LPH was described as a credit to the village



Flooding was identified as a major concern all over the parish

Pirbright Community Draft Action Plan – Your Parish, Your Say!

This document is based on the answers received from the questionnaire that was sent out to 694 households in Pirbright civilian parish for the purpose of formulating a Community Action Plan, as part of a government-sponsored initiative to encourage people across the country to contribute to the improvement and development of their own neighbourhoods.

Pirbright's residents had already been consulted in a variety of ways. At the Open Day in Lord Pirbright's Hall on 25th March 2006 they were asked to write post-it notes commenting on a variety of topics. These were considered by a Steering Committee of volunteers formed in September 2005, and focus groups then concentrated on particular areas. Pirbright's young people also had their own consultation at a special event held at the beginning of September. The questionnaire was thus devised to address in detail the main issues affecting our residents.

The most recent census (of 2001), compiled by the Office for National Statistics, showed that the total population of the parish was 4214, compared with 4711 at the previous count. Of the 1086 households, about one third are MoD married quarters, situated in Pirbright Camp. Many issues facing MoD families are very different from those in the civilian parish and, after some discussion with the committee's Camp representatives, it was decided not to include the community in this consultation exercise.

The 66 questions selected by the Steering Committee for the questionnaire were derived from a master list designed for Community Action Plans, commissioned by the Countryside Agency from the University of Cheltenham & Gloucester, with many customised for Pirbright. The completed questionnaires were collected during the autumn of 2006 and analysed locally using the software provided by the University of C & G. The data and accompanying residents' comments were then considered by the Steering Committee, which met 14 times over several months, with extra meetings by sub groups who worked on individual sections.

Affordable housing, traffic volume and overall road safety are problems concerning villages throughout the southeast of England today. Pirbright is fortunate in that 13 affordable houses were built in 2005-6 and phase I of a road safety programme in the village centre was completed during 2006 (phase II is still to come). Considerable consultation was undertaken for both schemes but some residents feel that more should be done. In the last few years Pirbright has lost its post office, the newsagent and two provision stores, and the responses to the questionnaire reflect this lack for many residents. In addition, there used to be a natural community in the village because some people had family members – parents, siblings, and cousins – living near by. This has gradually changed and, for some, the community feeling has declined, again reflected in the questionnaire responses. One major way of addressing this would be to form a Pirbright Community Association as the natural successor to the Community Action Plan Steering Committee. Other issues will be passed on for discussion and future action by the potential delivery partners, such as the Parish, Borough and County Councils.

Our Steering Committee was formed by residents from across the parish: Catherine Coble, Nigel Denison, Elaine Eason, Liz Funning, Carole Gailer, Tony Garland, Lindsay Graham, Rosie Hatton, John Hunter, Andrew Lang, Tony Michael, David Thomas and Joy Underwood with Lou Carter and Jacqui Pierce from Pirbright Camp. Pari Dhillon of Surrey Community Action attended many of our meetings and supplied experience and advice. Alex Stewart and Ben Major guided us through the use of the software and data analysis, and the questionnaires were delivered and collected by the committee plus Barry Barnes, Fred Cobbett, Lindsey Hobson, Sue Jackson, Sian Rowe and Linda Turner. Thanks are due to Pirbright's Young People, who took photographs and organised their own consultation event.

We are grateful for financial assistance from Defra*, Pirbright Parish Council and the Guildford Local Committee.

For more information, contact the Steering Committee at: **The Parish Shop, The Green, Pirbright, Woking, GU24 0JT**
Tel: 01483 476432, by email: pirbrightparishcouncil@yahoo.co.uk or on the website: www.parish-council.com/pirbright

Abbreviations: PPC = Pirbright Parish Council; GBC = Guildford Borough Council; SCC = Surrey County Council; SCA = Surrey Community Action

*Dept. Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Our cover photographs were taken by Pirbright Young People as part of the consultation.

SECTION 1 – YOUR HOUSEHOLD

The results belie a common perception that the civilian part of Pirbright has an ageing demographic. In fact the majority of those responding are in the 25 to 59 year old age group with a normal distribution of younger and older residents on either side. Most residents live in detached or semi-detached houses that are owner occupied. Very few people are seeking to move. The apparent discrepancy between the 727 residents shown in Q1 and the figures in Section 2 is because the youngest age group (0-10) is excluded from Qs 8 and 9. The number of respondents aged from 18-85+ represents 42.7% of the civilian electorate and also corresponds with the overall response rate of 42% to the questionnaire. Of the 294 questionnaires returned, only 285 could be processed because the remaining 9 did not supply enough information in this section for complete analysis. Some respondents left later questions unanswered, presumably because they were considered irrelevant to their own circumstances.

SECTION 2 – HOUSING IN PIRBRIGHT

There are roughly equal numbers of men and women represented in the survey. As in Section 1, the age range is predominantly in the middle years (25-59 age group) with an approximately equal number of younger and older residents on either side.

In the majority of cases the house is the main residence. Most people thought that the number of new houses built in the last decade was “about right” but significant minorities either had no opinion, or thought that there had been too few small and too many large, expensive houses built. Seventy one percent supported the need for more housing for young people but the housing needs of single persons and elderly people were also recognised (Lifetime Homes are included as policy in the core strategy of the new Guildford Development Framework).

Some thought that there should be no more new houses built in Pirbright. Emphasis was placed on the conversion of existing larger houses into smaller accommodation and the limiting of development to brown field sites.

N.B. Pirbright is surrounded by Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and is thus affected by the Government's Special Protection Area (SPA) policy, implemented by Natural England, which prohibits all residential development within 400m of SPA land, and restricts it within 5km, unless appropriate avoidance for its impact is included. It is anticipated that GBC's interim policy to enable compliance will be reviewed in the next few months. Other planning policies, such as the settlement boundary and conservation area, remain in place and are expected to be retained in the core strategy of the new Guildford Development Framework, currently under preparation.

SECTION 3 –PUBLIC SERVICES & TRANSPORT

Most people travel by car and although the majority cited no or rare difficulties in leaving Pirbright, those that did were mainly concerned about rush hour traffic and the bottleneck of the Pirbright Railway Arch. The inconvenience of not being able to turn right at the junction of Cemetery Pales and the A322 also featured. Many danger spots were pinpointed for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists with the railway arch again topping the list.

Although only a small minority of all respondents said that they would use a voluntary car or a “Good Neighbour” scheme, the numbers expressing an interest represent a high proportion of respondents who say they have difficulties in visiting medical and other facilities, or need help in the home or with shopping. Both these schemes therefore merit further investigation.

The local bus services were criticised for being infrequent, unreliable, restricted in routes and costly. Few people responded to the Peribus question and some were unaware of the service. However, it was much appreciated by those who did respond and well supported for financial assistance from the PPC. With some exceptions the majority were satisfied with the community awareness of the PPC but somewhat less so with that of the GBC and the SCC and there was a similar feeling about the efficiency with which the councils publicise activities and decisions.

SECTION 4 – PARISH SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The high number of responses to questions in this section suggests, not surprisingly, that there is a strong interest in preserving and developing parish services and facilities. The clear pride taken in Lord Pirbright's Hall and approval of the way it is managed are accompanied by suggestions for further improvement. There are also significant expressions of concern about: the lack of activities for young people; how information is communicated to the parish and way this could be made more effective and more inclusive; and how to restore some form of village shop. These are concerns reflected in other sections of the questionnaire and in the “round up” questions at the end. The formation of a Community Association, open to all parish residents, would act as a channel for these concerns and aid the process of follow-up action as a delivery partner.

SECTION 5– NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Problem areas were identified with flooding, exacerbated by the 2006 cloudbursts, as a major concern and with Mill Lane and Pirbright Arch topping the listings. Specific locations were also identified in respect of fly tipping, litter, dog fouling and graffiti. The favoured solutions included the organisation of volunteer Clean-Up days, entering a Best Kept Village competition and introducing new fixed penalties for offenders. The installation of hanging baskets was suggested, as was a limit on the feeding of ducks on the village pond to discourage rats.

Some thought that a project to record special features of the village would be worthwhile, while it was pointed out that some documentation already existed in this area.

Improved maintenance was mainly advocated for ditches, roadside hedges, footpaths and bridleways. Although specific problem areas were identified on footpaths, others felt that mud, water, bushes and nettles were only to be expected in the countryside while the organisation of volunteer footpath wardens was also suggested. Many were unaware that a series of local walking routes are available in a booklet from the Parish Shop (and now on the parish website).

All the main routes through Pirbright suffered from traffic including excessive volume, speed and noise.

There was also concern about examples of light pollution with one suggestion to “ Remove Woking”!

There was support for a volunteer Community Speed Watch Scheme, which has since been inaugurated.

Conclusion

Of the 694 questionnaires delivered (one to each household in the civilian part of Pirbright) 294 were returned, an overall response rate of 42%. While this response may seem low, it is apparently fairly typical of returns experienced with other such exercises in Surrey and elsewhere nationally. Nevertheless, the results have to be evaluated in the knowledge that they cannot be taken as reflecting the views of the majority (i.e. 58%) of the village population. On the other hand, the views do represent the opinion of those residents who took the trouble to respond and to show an interest in influencing the future well being of the community. The results provide information relevant to a particular place at a particular time and the report may therefore be regarded as a snapshot but should be followed up with our potential delivery partners as a living document and a basis for future surveys.

The concerns of Pirbright reflect the common concerns of the nation and perhaps particularly those of the south east of England: increasing numbers of cars and lorries; excessive traffic noise and speed; racing motor bikes; dangerous road crossings; the closure and loss of the post office and local shops; the desire to maintain the peaceful rural character of the village and to preserve and improve its amenities. Flooding has become a major preoccupation, exacerbated by recent unusually heavy rain in August 2006 just before the questionnaire was distributed –this is now being addressed. Some areas feel that they are not recognised as part of the village – these include Fox Corner, Gole Road, and the Cowshot part of Queens Road, and many would like to see the return of a community feeling in Pirbright – this could be helped by the creation of a Community Association, as described earlier.

Communication is clearly an issue – some activities and facilities already exist but not everyone is aware of them: the youth club in Pirbright Camp, the swimming pool in Alexander Barracks that may be used by a civilian group in the evenings – are just two examples. Hopefully regular publication of the Clubs & Societies leaflet, the Young People’s newsletter and the new websites, in addition to the Parish Newsletter, will help to address this problem. Many of our clubs and societies are attended and strengthened by members from outside the village (Rawlins, Bowls, Tennis, Pirbright Players all have members from Brookwood and elsewhere) and we could do likewise and join one of Brookwood’s clubs. We already use their shops, thus providing them with sustainability in an era when small businesses are fighting to survive.

Some suggestions lend themselves to “self-help” solutions e.g. need for a book club, cleaning up of litter. Perhaps predictably, a number of suggestions are in direct opposition to each other, e.g. More street lighting/Decrease light pollution; Increase notice boards/No more signs; Provide WC/ Do not provide WC; Wheelie bins/No wheelie bins etc. More research will be necessary before decisions can be made on any of these.

PIRBRIGHT'S COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

ACHIEVED SO FAR

- The Parish Council has introduced a system to inform neighbours about planning applications
- Information about pending planning applications is shown on the PPC website
- SCC Highways has agreed improvements for pedestrians at Pirbright Arch
- Community Speed Watch has begun
- A newsletter is now sent to young people with information about activities during holidays
- A junior badminton club now plays at LPH on Monday evenings
- Action has begun on clearing watercourses throughout the Parish
- Walking routes are available in a leaflet from the Parish Shop and also on the Parish website
- Plastics are now part of the road side collection scheme for recycling
- The Tennis Club has been given a grant to improve the surface of the car park
- 111 people volunteered to help with various projects
- Local people – especially children – are already allowed to fish on the Village Pond
- Two new websites have been set up – one for PPC information and one for the community:
www.parish-council.com/pirbright
www.surreycommunity-info/pirbrightparish

TO BE ACHIEVED SOON

- Formation of a Community Association
- Discussions and review of the newsletter and other channels to improve communications
- Organisation of village “clear up” days
- Expansion of the Community Speed Watch Scheme
- Relaunch of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
- More organised activities for children and young people
- Activities at different times to suit those at work/school during the day
- Repainting of playground equipment
- Refurbishment of the cricket pavilion
- Speed reductions for Ash Road and Aldershot Road are being assessed by SCC Highways
- Organisation of volunteer footpath wardens
- Refurbishment of the men's cloakroom in Lord Pirbright's Hall

TO BE ACHIEVED IN THE FUTURE

- Some kind of mobile or village shop
- Creation of a Good Neighbour Scheme, perhaps incorporating a voluntary car scheme
- Enhancement of the facilities at Lord Pirbright's Hall
- Upgrading of the children's playground
- Phase II of the Road Safety Scheme
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Pirbright's draft Community Action Plan was completed in March 2007, for presentation to Pirbright Parish Council at its monthly meeting and then to the Parish at the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2007. This is an extract from the results. You can view the longer version, which contains the numerical results, analysis and comments, on the Parish Council website (shown above).