

Barnt Green Parish Plan 2006

Our Vision for the Future



Supported by



BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL
PARISH PLAN - 2006

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Barnt Green Parish Council decided in May 2003 to prepare a Parish Plan, bringing together the views and opinions of the local community. The objective was to establish the key facilities and services needed to improve local quality of life over the coming decade whilst at the same time retaining those features that have contributed to Barnt Green's well-being.
- 1.2 Following an extensive consultation process, a number of key issues have been identified that require addressing if the Parish is to maintain its semi-rural character, be seen by its residents as an attractive place in which to live and be capable of meeting their aspirations. The principal issues are:
- Limiting further development and ensuring that any changes are in keeping with the village's character
 - Ensuring that there is adequate parking space within the village
 - Limiting, for road safety reasons, the speed of traffic passing through the village and providing pedestrian crossings at critical locations
 - Improving the appearance and upkeep of the railway station
 - Obtaining additional police support to help allay residents' concerns about their safety
 - Providing additional club and sporting facilities for the younger residents
 - Establishing a Youth Council to liaise with the Parish Council regarding the opinions, needs and aspirations of younger residents
 - Improving public transport links with neighbouring areas, in particular Redditch and Worcester.
- 1.3 It is recognised as unlikely that funding will be available for all the initiatives proposed. The recommendations in the plan are split between those matters that need prompt attention and those that are less urgent. The recommendations are summarized in Section 5 of the Plan.
- 1.4 The consultation process undertaken has demonstrated that there is keen interest in our community in not only maintaining what are seen as the good features in the village but in offering support to ensure that people actually achieve their visions. It is vital to obtain Bromsgrove District Council's support for our recommendations and ensure that the Parish Plan is fully incorporated into the district's development plans for the coming decade.

2. OUR VILLAGE



Notes

1. Maps used are illustrative only. Their exact size, content etc can be determined when we prepare the published version of the plan.
2. The maps will include scales and indicate where the North point
3. The B4120 will be clearly labelled
4. All road names will be clear
5. The park and playing field will be specifically highlighted
6. The second map will highlight Barnt Green's position in the Midlands and the road network supporting it ie: the motorways, A441 etc

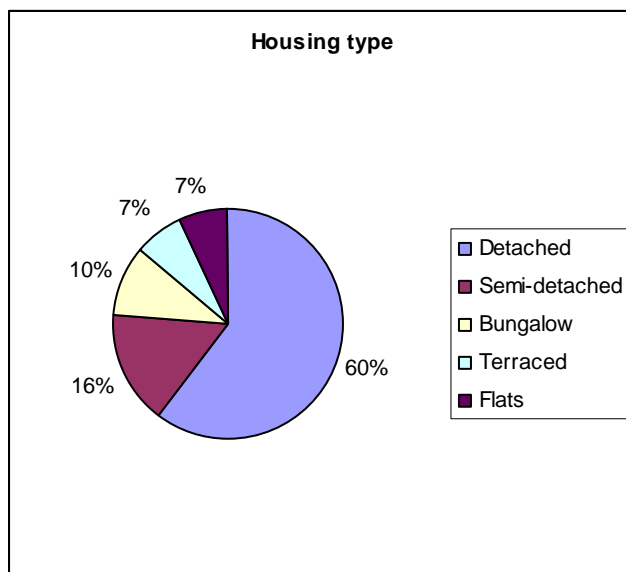
Factual digest

Barnt Green is a semi-rural village of some 728 households with approximately 1800 residents in the Bromsgrove District of Worcestershire.

The Parish is bounded on its north-west side by the wooded Lickey Hills and to the east by the Bittell Reservoirs. The main Birmingham to Bristol and Wales railway line, and the Cross City line from Lichfield to Redditch, runs through the centre of the village. Junction 2 of the M42 motorway is 3 miles to the east and Junction 4 of the M5 motorway is 4 miles to the west. To the south of the village is mixed-farm land.

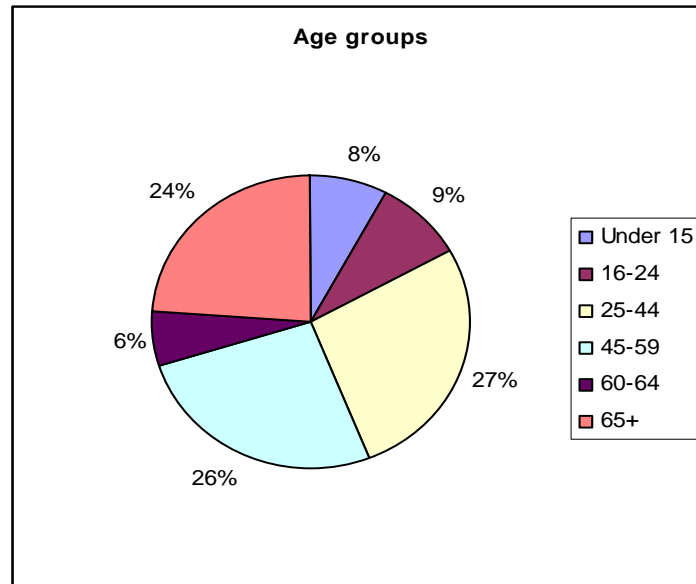
The railway station which is in the heart of the village provides the residents of the Parish with a frequent train service to Birmingham (12 miles) and Redditch (8 miles), but only a very limited service to Worcester (20 miles). There is a bus service to Birmingham and Bromsgrove, and a sporadic service to Alvechurch and Redditch.

Barnt Green's housing can be categorised as follows:



Around 90 per cent of the housing is owner occupied, with none supplied by the local housing authority or social providers.

At the 2001 census, the population was 1,733, split broadly as follows:



The majority of employed people work outside the Parish, and over 40 per cent of the adult population is either retired or not in paid employment.

There are 3 churches in the village. St Andrew's parish church has a thriving youth club complemented by guide, scout, brownie, and cub troops. The Baptist Church, The Friends Meeting House and the Parish Church have large meeting halls which are well used by all the village organizations. There are nurseries and play groups for the younger children, and a very good first school.

The Parish has two public houses, a sports club with tennis, squash and badminton facilities and a social club. There is a thriving cricket club with 2 pitches, a sailing club and a fishing club. A park (Millennium Park), which includes a children's play area, is situated in the centre of the village and a large playing field for the older children is situated to the north, off Bittell Road.

There is a thriving commercial centre in Hewell Road which contains many good shops, doctors, dentists, a post office, a bank, solicitors, three fast-food outlets, two restaurants and several small businesses

3. BACKGROUND TO THE PARISH PLAN AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Background

In November 2000 the Government's Rural White Paper on *Our Countryside – The Future* launched the concept of Parish and Town Plans whose purpose is to:

“... set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future.”

Plans should “identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved.”

The **Countryside Agency** has been instrumental as part of its Vital Village initiative in persuading local parishes to develop their Parish Plans which would cover social, economic, recreational and environmental issues. Since April 2005 DEFRA has assumed responsibility for the funding and delivery of Parish Plans, as part of its Rural Social and Community programme.

Barnt Green Parish Council

The Council has, from the outset, taken a number of preparatory steps in developing a Parish Plan. These have included the following:

- Obtaining accredited **Quality Parish Status** in October 2004. This is a national standard which demonstrates that the Parish Council's systems, procedures, links with the community and financial management comply with standards set by the Government. Barnt Green was one of the first parish councils in Worcestershire to be awarded this status.
- Drafting **Planning for Character** (see Appendix 1) which sets out guidelines for future development in the village and forms an integral part of the Parish Plan.
- Implementing the **Village Appraisal Scheme's** main recommendations (a document prepared in 1998), namely the introduction of traffic calming measures and the improved pedestrian safety measures in the village centre.

It is hoped that, through the Parish Plan, the local community will be better able to influence those agencies that have the responsibility to provide various services to the residents of the Parish on issues that are of concern to them and where they feel action is required.

The vision is that the Parish Plan should link into the work of Bromsgrove District Council, Worcestershire County Council and Local Strategic Partnerships – informing both Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks. It is hoped that the various authorities will, as a result, be better placed to

- use the information strategically when drawing up the planning policies contained in the Local Development Documents that form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), and
- adopt *Planning for Character* as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and thereby add local detail to county and district planning policies

The development of Barnt Green's Plan

In June 2003, in order to facilitate the process of preparing the Parish Plan, the Parish Council submitted an application to the Countryside Agency for a grant towards the Plan's production. In May 2004 the Countryside Agency informed the Parish Council that it would provide £4000 for this purpose. The grant was used to fund a wide-ranging questionnaire which was distributed to all 728 households in the Parish.

The Parish Council appointed a leading Midlands-based market research consultancy (Jill Gramann Market Research) to assist it with preparing the questionnaire and also evaluating the responses.

In January 2005 a number of interested parishioners were co-opted onto a new sub-committee (Steering Committee) of the Parish Council whose principal role would be to formulate the Parish Plan. This Steering Committee held its inaugural meeting in March that year. Each member was asked to take responsibility for a particular aspect of the questionnaire (e.g. environment, highways, community safety etc).

The questionnaire (distributed in May 2005) raised questions on a wide range of issues that either presently or potentially affected all residents. It covered such matters as the environment, housing development, recreation, community safety, education and healthcare. 550 questionnaires (75% of the total distributed) were completed.

This provided the basis for a comprehensive report by the market research consultancy on what the residents of Barnt Green favoured over the next decade. This report, together with data derived from a survey of the children in Years 3 and 4 at St Andrew's First School and surgeries with certain other interested parties in the village, has given the parish's elected representatives a strong indication and mandate for any future actions it might consider taking.

To test the findings of the household survey, an Open Day was held in September 2005 at which the survey's findings were displayed. Both residents and non-residents were asked for their opinions. This enabled the Steering Committee to identify the key issues for inclusion in the Parish Plan. The draft Parish Plan was then made available for comment by residents between May – June 2006.

4. MATTERS FOR ACTION

4.1 Introduction

Throughout the process of seeking people's views it was clear that a large majority of the residents of Barnt Green wish the village to retain its semi-rural environment and do not want to see any significant alterations that could jeopardize this. The findings below and the recommendations proposed have been evaluated with that in mind.

The findings can be divided into 3 broad categories:

- Infrastructure
- Community safety
- Other aspects

4.2 Infrastructure

Barnt Green is a vibrant village with a thriving village centre. However, this has led to pressures particularly in the village centre arising from the number of car users who use the parish facilities and roads. A number of key issues have been identified that require addressing if the village is to maintain its present character. These are as follows:

- A. Planning and development
- B. Availability of parking space
- C. Speed of traffic
- D. Pedestrian crossings
- E. Footway lighting
- F. Village signs
- G. Traffic noise and fumes
- H. Public transport facilities
- I. Barnt Green railway station
- J. Proposed Longbridge link road
- K. Hopwood rendering plant

A. Planning and development

The identity of a place is a product of extended historical development, involving generations of people living and working there. Any proposals that could affect the village's future character need to be considered in this context.

Barnt Green's identity arises as a result of:

- Its rural framework of lanes, fields, woodlands and farmsteads
- The presence of the Lickey Hills to the immediate west
- The railway, especially the commuter link it provides to Birmingham
- The suburban development aspirations of landowners
- The development of Hewell Road as a shopping and service centre for Barnt Green and its surrounding area
- The presence of the First School
- The embedment of Barnt Green in the West Midlands Green Belt

Planning for Character (see Appendix I) details the different types of areas in various parts of the village. Each has a degree of unity, though most of them have their own distinct sub-areas. Character areas have been classified according to four principal criteria:

- ground plan (including site)
- building form
- land use
- vegetation.

Any further development within the village, whether new building or extensions to existing buildings, should be in keeping with the existing character of the village. When changes to the character of the area are being contemplated, especially changes to the appearance of buildings and frontages to public roads and other public spaces, the guidance in this section of the Plan should be referred to and applicants for planning permission (including Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent) must demonstrate that they have followed this guidance.

[Quote 1]

Recommendation 1

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise closely with the District Council to ensure that the principles of *Planning for Character* are incorporated in the Local Development Framework and period features characteristic of particular areas are retained.

Our consultation showed that there is little desire for further development in the parish and that there is strong support for retaining existing green and open spaces including Millenium Park, the Bittell Road playing field and Barnt Green Cricket Club. The need for smaller dwellings in the village centre, to allow older residents to downsize and young people to make their first purchase, has been met by the construction of many small dwellings in Hewell Road. However, there is an evident demand for larger houses, and many occupiers of small and medium-sized houses have enlarged their houses in recent years. It is necessary to ensure therefore that a satisfactory balance is retained in the housing stock between small, medium-sized and large dwellings.

Recommendation 2

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise closely with the District Council to ensure that the Local Development Framework maintains a housing provision that caters for the needs of all sections of the community.

B. Availability of parking space

Limited parking exists to the front and rear of the shops on Hewell Road, including restricted on-street parking. There is a pay and display car park at Barnt Green railway station. There are two further car parks at the Victoria Pub and Barnt Green Social Club where the owners have kindly given permission for members of the public using village facilities and staff employed in village businesses and services to park free of charge.

The perceived shortage of parking spaces around the village centre has been identified as a significant issue. The shopkeepers, in particular, have stressed that adequate parking is essential to their businesses. Furthermore, double parking and, more particularly, parking on the pavement causes not just significant traffic congestion but also increases the likelihood of injuries and accidents.

If the number and variety of shops and services in the village is to be maintained, it is vital that the parking facilities are enhanced and not encroached upon by any future development.

Recommendation 3

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise with the District Council's Local Development Framework officers to ensure that the present car parking sites are earmarked for parking use only.

Although all of the existing car parks are within 250 metres of the shops, a significant number of car users park inappropriately in the immediate vicinity of the shops - for example on the pavement - rather than using the designated spaces or car parks and walking the short distance to the village centre. **[Quote 2]**

Village residents have suggested three principal ways of remedying this problem:

- Enforcing the current parking restrictions
- Providing free parking at Barnt Green railway station
- Encouraging residents to walk or cycle into the village centre rather than use their cars

Enforcing the current parking restrictions

44% of the respondents to the household survey suggested better enforcement of existing waiting restrictions. At present there is sporadic, occasional enforcement by either police officers or traffic wardens but this is inadequate.

Worcestershire County Council has stated that it will:

“...[work] with the District Council to ensure that decriminalised parking enforcement is rolled out across the County, thereby increasing resources available for the enforcement of parking restrictions.”

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

Decriminalization would enable personnel engaged by or on behalf of the District Council to enforce waiting restrictions. Bromsgrove District Council has recently indicated, however, that such a move is not financially viable and would not support this.

Recommendation 4

The Parish’s elected representatives should lobby the District Council to implement Worcestershire County Council’s policy at the earliest opportunity and to increase the range of options for better enforcement of parking restrictions including the possible use of Community Wardens in the village.

Recommendation 5

The Parish’s elected representatives should liaise with West Mercia police to secure additional and regular enforcement of the parking restrictions, for instance by using Police Community Support Officers.

Providing free parking at Barnt Green railway station

The station is used not only by residents of Barnt Green but also by residents of neighbouring areas. However, only 11% of those who come to the station by car actually park in the station car park.

Until recently parking was free. However, approximately two years ago Central Railways imposed a £2 daily charge for all rail users and a 50p charge for shoppers staying no more than 2 hours. The car park is now managed by NCP.

The £2 daily charge has encouraged many rail-users to park on adjacent residential roads, in particular Fiery Hill Road. Apart from aggravating the present parking problems, the presence of so many parked cars on Fiery Hill Road throughout the day poses a significant risk to road safety.

The car park charges at Barnt Green railway station are unusual in not being subsidized by Centro. Although Barnt Green is not within Centro’s area, the potential value of providing free parking facilities for rail users is demonstrated by the proposed Park-and-Ride scheme which is in the course of being planned at Longbridge railway station.

Recommendation 6

The Parish's elected representatives should as a matter of urgency negotiate for the removal of the charges for parking at the station.

Encouraging residents to walk or cycle into the village centre

Although it has been suggested that shoppers should be discouraged from bringing their cars into the village centre this poses a number of potentially practical issues, not least the need for them to use their cars to carry their purchases home. Furthermore residents have indicated that they would not favour walking into the village centre as a result of

- the fouling of footways by dogs and litter (40% of respondents commented on this)
- the poor condition of the footways which are often overgrown and too narrow (in some cases resulting from encroachment by vegetation from adjoining residential properties)
- poorly lit footways
- the speed of passing traffic

It has been suggested that if the village shops were encouraged to provide home delivery services this would help alleviate the problem.

Recommendation 7

The Parish's elected representatives should discuss with the village's Chamber of Trade the setting up of home delivery services. A range of options for delivery of this service should be explored, including the use of local volunteers or voluntary groups.

Action should be taken against those who allow their dogs to foul the footways and who drop litter. **[Quote 3]**

Recommendation 8

The Parish's elected representatives should discuss with the District Council action against those who drop litter or allow their dogs to foul footways by, for example, arranging for Community Support Officers or Community Wardens to periodically operate in the village.

Many of the village roads including the footways, etc. are in poor condition owing to inadequate maintenance

“Virtually all journeys involve an element of walking at some stage, and therefore it is crucial that good facilities are provided that permit people to use the routes most convenient to them in safety. Good footways and footpaths that are well lit, wide and linked to safe crossing points of the road network are essential to encourage people to make local trips predominantly on foot.”

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

Recommendation 9

The Parish’s elected representatives should liaise with the Highway Authority to arrange a programme of improvements to the village road surfaces and footways.

Some villagers have suggested that more radical solutions should be considered, for example pedestrianising Hewell Road, introducing a one way road system around the village and the use of residents’ car parking permits. However, as there appears to be relatively limited support for such measures, such approaches have not been considered further at this time although could be the subject of a future review

C. Speed of traffic

Excessive speed of traffic, particularly on Bittell Road, Fiery Hill Road and Sandhills Green, has been identified as a significant issue. It has been highlighted in particular by a number of school children and young people at the Open Day who expressed their fear of being run over by speeding traffic.

The household survey indicated that there was considerable support for traffic calming measures on Bittell Road (33% of respondents) and Fiery Hill Road (19% of respondents). However, there has been considerable criticism regarding the quality of the speed cushions built in Hewell Road and, as a consequence of their height, the potential damage they can cause to certain cars and heavier vehicles

A number of residents at the Open Day expressed the need for the police to enforce speed restrictions better, in particular on Bittell Road.

Worcestershire County Council has stated that it

“..... will continue to be an active member of the West Mercia Safety Camera Partnership, to promote road safety through better compliance with speed limits.”

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

Recommendation 10

The Parish’s elected representatives should press the Highway Authority for the need for further but better quality traffic calming measures, specifically on Bittell Road and Fiery Hill Road.

Recommendation 11

The Parish's elected representatives should work closely with the Highway Authority and West Mercia Safety Camera Partnership to promote safety through better compliance with speed limits, with Bittell Road as a very high priority and Fiery Hill Road and Sandhills Green as a medium priority.

Recommendation 12

The Parish's elected representatives should urgently discuss with West Mercia Safety Camera Partnership and the police authorities the installation of speed warning devices along Bittell Road.

D. Pedestrian crossings

The lack of pedestrian crossings in the village has been identified as a road safety issue, in particular in light of the speeding traffic. This was emphasized by children attending St Andrew's First School and the young people attending the Open Day.

The consultation process has identified a strong desire for two crossing points, one on Bittell Road near to the Baptist Church and a second on Hewell Road close to St Andrew's First School.

Worcestershire County Council's policy needs reiterating:

"Virtually all journeys involve an element of walking at some stage, and therefore it is crucial that good facilities are provided that permit people to use the routes most convenient to them in safety. Good footways and footpaths that are well lit, wide and linked to safe crossing points of the road network are essential to encourage people to make local trips predominantly on foot."

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

The County Council has recently carried out a survey on *Safer Routes to School*. However, at the date of publication of this report its findings and recommendations are not known. It may recommend the installation of one or more crossing points in the village and therefore be a possible source of funding.

Recommendation 13

The Parish's elected representatives should seek advice from the Highway Authority on the most appropriate siting and type of crossings for both Bittell Road and Hewell Road and vigorously pursue funding for these schemes.

E. Footway lighting

A number of residents expressed the view that much of the lighting could be improved to provide not just better lighting but also to minimize light pollution.

Recommendation 14

Given the County Council's commitment to ensure that all footways are well lit, it is recommended that a review of all footway lighting in the Parish be undertaken within the medium term by the Parish Council in conjunction with the Highway Authority.

F. Village signs

A majority of the residents in Barnt Green wish the village to retain its semi-rural environment and do not favour any significant alterations that could jeopardize this. There is a general desire that signs, road markings and street furniture should not be allowed to proliferate and should be sympathetic to their surroundings. However, when residents were asked how to deal with certain specific issues, they often requested additional street furniture, footway lighting, etc! Any such additions need to be carefully selected so that they are not obtrusive.

Recommendation 15

The Parish's elected representatives should coordinate with the different authorities a review of the street signs in the village with the objective of recommending how it could be standardized in a manner that reflects the village's character.

G. Traffic noise and fumes

Over 40% of the respondents to the household survey indicated that they were concerned about traffic noise and fumes. Traffic noise emanating from the M42 can, at certain times of the day and depending on prevailing wind conditions, be very noticeable. Given the plans to further widen parts of the M42 it is likely that this problem will become worse over time.

A variety of measures could be considered including for instance the use of quieter motorway road surfaces and the installation of earth mounds, acoustic fencing or similar noise barriers.

[Quote 4]

Recommendation 16

The Parish's elected representatives should request the Highways Authority to conduct a noise assessment in the village with the objective of determining what additional measures can be taken to reduce the impact of motorway noise on the village and its surroundings.

In addition, a number of residents have complained that the introduction of the speed humps on Hewell Road has resulted in increased noise levels, specifically from heavy goods vehicles using the road.

Recommendation 17

The Parish's elected representatives should request the Highways Authority to conduct further research as to what changes could be made to the speed humps on Hewell Road to reduce the noise levels suffered by residents on that road.

H. Public transport facilities

We did not consult in detail on local transport as Bromsgrove District Council had promised a detailed survey would be carried out. However, disappointingly, the District Council appears to have made no progress with this at the date of publication of this plan.

During the Parish consultation process, it became clear that many people, in particular the younger residents in the village, felt that, whereas there is a reasonably good rail service to Birmingham and Redditch, the public transport links with Bromsgrove and Worcester could be significantly improved. In addition, there is virtually no public transport available to enable people to travel either from the boundaries of the parish to the village centre or to neighbouring parishes.

Worcestershire County Council has recognized in their Local Transport Plan the need for better public transport schemes. Specifically:

“.....a major challenge is to reverse the decline in bus travel within Worcestershire and this will require investment in better buses, bus priority measures and improved bus stops There will still be a requirement to promote the use of Community Transport schemes, taxis and demand responsive bus services. The County will seek to ensure that the various transport schemes in existence are integrated to provide a common standard of service, and will work with District Councils towards the establishment of a County-wide concessionary travel scheme.”

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

Recommendation 18

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise closely with the County Council, District Council and Central Trains (and their successors) to ensure that bus/ rail services, community transport schemes or demand responsive travel appropriate to the needs of the parish and the neighbouring areas are either introduced or improved.

I. Barnt Green railway station

The station has played a key part in the origins of the village and it is recommended that it be the focus of a programme of conservation. **[Quote 5]**

Many residents have commented, both in the household survey and at the Open Day, on the station's poor appearance as a result of

- the accumulation of litter around the platforms
- the deposit of piles of hardcore and miscellaneous materials in the areas adjoining the track, the car park and Rose Bank
- the insensitive felling of young trees and removal of bushes adjoining the railway
- the modifications over the years to the historic footbridge
- the construction of platform shelters and fences in a style that is ill-suited to the station's history and environment

In addition, there are no facilities at the station for disabled people who wish to reach the central platforms

Recommendation 19

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise with Central Trains (and their successors) to:

- **persuade them to improve the station's appearance and to arrange for regular cleaning of the platforms and surrounding areas.**
- **investigate whether there is a low cost solution whereby disabled persons could be given access to the central platforms.**

J. Proposed Longbridge link road

Whilst the proposals for this new link road were not specifically referred to in the household survey or part of our consultation process, we are nevertheless aware of the plans to redevelop the former Longbridge works following the closure of MG Rover. It is recognised that this will:

"...result in transportation pressures in the northern part of the District [of Bromsgrove] particularly revolving around the need to improve accessibility between the Longbridge site and the M42 east to ensure the site is an attractive location for new employers".

Worcestershire County Council Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/11

The B4120 which passes through the Parish has for a number of years been used as a route from the M42 to the MG Rover works. Whilst we tentatively welcome the proposals for a new link road, we are nevertheless concerned about the potential impact that it could have on the surrounding area. It is imperative therefore that measures are introduced that will discourage through-traffic from using the B4120 through the Parish.

Recommendation 20

The Parish's elected representatives should consult closely with Birmingham City Council and other interested agencies to ensure that the new link road incorporates traffic management measures to avoid the undesirable effect of increasing through-traffic in Barnt Green, whilst ensuring that the village centre remains accessible.

In particular, consideration should be given to measures to ensure that heavy goods vehicles are prohibited from using the B4120 unless their purpose is to deliver goods to the village.

K. Hopwood rendering plant

Plans for a rendering plant at Mayfield Farm, Hopwood moved a step closer when, despite written objections from around 1000 people and protests by a number of local bodies, the Government inspector reversed the local planning authority's original decision and approved a 17 metre chimney on this site to serve a thermal oxidizer which would reduce odour and other emissions from the rendering plant.

The main public concerns about this proposal for a new chimney related to past experience of alleged pollution from Mayfield Farm and the fears that it will worsen. None of these were sufficient however, in the inspector's opinion, to constitute an overriding material planning consideration.

The Government inspector also decided that noise and traffic projections did not provide grounds for refusing permission. The diversification of Mayfield Farm would, he felt, support the rural economy and provide a number of extra jobs.

The owners are now in the process of requesting from Bromsgrove District Council a pollution prevention and control licence to allow the proposed plant to process around 85 tons per day of animal waste.

It is imperative that the rendering plant fully complies with the terms of its licence.

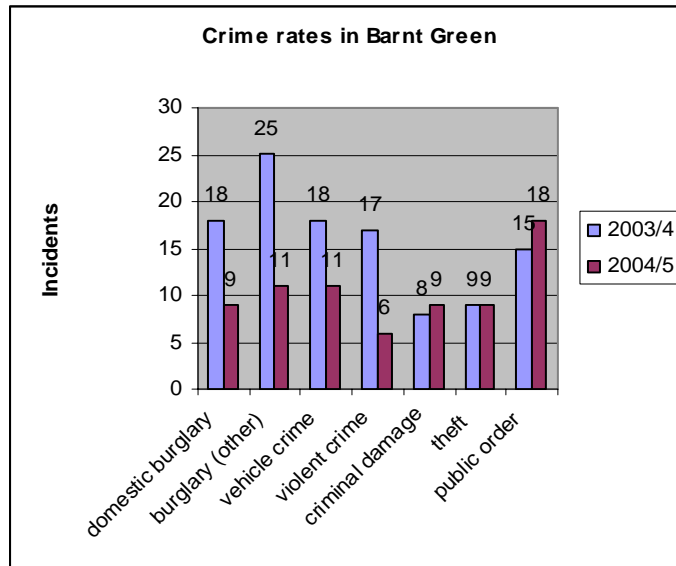
Recommendation 21

The Parish's elected representatives should work closely with Bromsgrove District Council regarding the terms of the licence given to the rendering plant at Mayfield Farm and to ensure that they are properly enforced, and to see whether heavy vehicle access can be restricted to the A441 only.

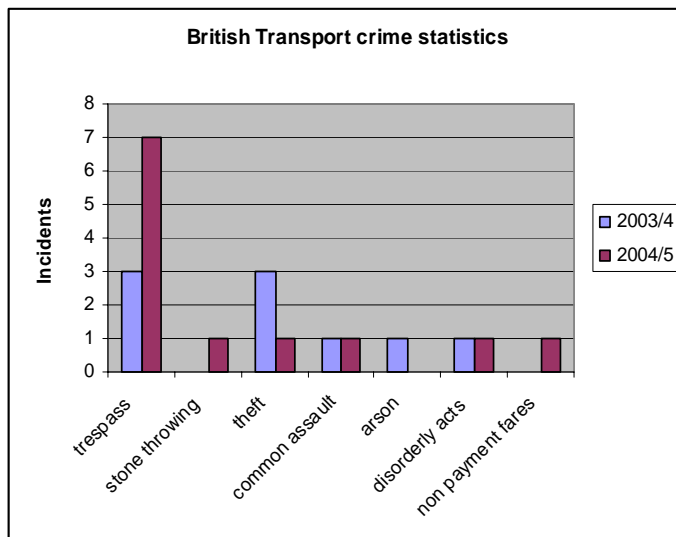
4.3 Community Safety

The most recent Home Office statistics indicate that crime rates in Barnt Green have significantly reduced for serious offences such as burglary, violent crime and car crime.

The West Mercia Constabulary statistics for Barnt Green record a total of 73 incidents for the year ended March 31, 2005, of which approximately 25% were successfully detected.



British Transport Police statistics for Barnt Green recorded a total of 12 incidents in the year ended March 31, 2005.



Despite residents generally feeling safe there is a major concern about community safety. Many residents expressed a fear of crime particularly burglary although very few respondents to the household survey had actually been a victim of crime

“In many instances, there is an obvious gap between the public perception of crime and the reality, but tackling the fear of crime can’t be done in isolation. In order for any approach to be successful, it needs to take in to account the many and varied social, environmental and personal factors that may be contributing to the fear of crime.”

Home Office Crime Reduction Toolkit

Many residents have voiced the view that they have occasionally felt unsafe as a result of the presence of young people loitering in groups around the village. However, there is little or no evidence that such groups have caused any major problems.

“Attempts to tackle the fear of crime can also have some unexpected outcomes. For example, lighting a dark area may reduce fear; it may also enable criminals to see their targets, leading to an increase in attacks. Similarly, encouraging people into the town centre at night may create more opportunities for crime, and telling people that their fear is irrational may create complacency. So partnerships are encouraged to tread carefully when considering what action to take to try and reduce the fear of crime.”

Home Office Crime Reduction Toolkit

It is important that residents and visitors to the village feel safe and secure in the community. Residents of all ages strongly believe that the presence of a “bobby on the beat” in the village would make them feel safer. Whilst we recognize that police resources are very stretched, it was nevertheless felt that the attachment of, for instance, a Police Community Support Officer to Barnt Green – as envisaged in the Chancellor’s recent Budget Speech in which he outlined plans for neighbourhood policing in every community in England and Wales – would be an important step in the right direction.

Recommendation 22

The Parish’s elected representatives should liaise with the West Mercia Constabulary, the District Council, the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership and other statutory authorities to determine what additional police resources can be allocated to Barnt Green that will help to allay residents’ concerns as regards their safety.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes

Such schemes aim to help people protect themselves and their property and to reduce the fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance, accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by creating and maintaining a caring community spirit.

33% of the respondents to the household survey indicated they were members of a scheme. However, the survey indicated a strong interest in additional schemes being established. The police have stated that they would be very supportive in helping to set these up.

Recommendation 23

The Parish Council should facilitate the setting up of additional Neighbourhood Watch groups throughout the Parish, providing such assistance and support as is required and monitor their effectiveness.

CCTV

For the past 4 - 5 years, there has been CCTV coverage of the village centre and the railway station. As part of our research, we visited the CCTV Control Room and noted that at night-time, there are a few blind spots within the village centre caused by inadequate illumination. The picture quality could perhaps be substantially improved if the cameras were adapted to incorporate high intensity lights that could be remotely operated. From both the household survey and comments at the Open Day, there was also strong support for extending the existing coverage and for it to cover some of the residential streets.

Recommendation 24

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise with the District Council, West Mercia Police and the Community Safety Partnership to ascertain whether the existing CCTV coverage can be improved and whether it can be extended to cover the main residential areas of the Parish.

Recommendation 25

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise with the District Council, West Mercia Police, the Community Safety Partnership and the county council's lighting authorities to ascertain if improvements or alterations to footway lighting, shop-front lighting or the cameras themselves would make the CCTV more effective at night-time.

4.4 Other aspects

Footpaths and bridleways

The consultation process revealed that the Parish's footpaths and bridleways are well-used by parishioners. However, there was support from all age groups for more prominent provision of improved information about the footpaths and bridleways and for more organized walks.

The Parish Council, which has recently undertaken responsibility for the footpaths in the Parish, has now appointed a Footpaths Officer who will, amongst other duties, organize walks for those who are interested.

Recommendation 26

The Footpath Officer should liaise with the Rights of Way Officers at the County Council to obtain:

- i. improved plans, maps, etc. which can be displayed both on the parish notice board and on the Parish Council website**
- ii. appropriate signs around the village.**

Village facilities for young residents

Although many of the village facilities are well-used by the residents, young people - particularly those of teenage years - feel that there was little provision for them and that there was a need for additional clubs and/or somewhere where they could meet together. There was no clear consensus on what such clubs should focus on.

The Steering Committee suggests that young residents, of up to say 18 years, be invited to help establish a Youth Council whose role would be to liaise with the Parish Council regarding their age group's opinions and needs. It is also suggested that the Parish Newsletter and the Parish's Website could include a section on news about things young people have been doing, events coming up, etc.

Recommendation 27

The Parish Council should establish a youth council.

Millenium Park and Bittell Road playing fields

These facilities are valued highly by most of the residents. A number of suggestions have been made as to how the play equipment in the Millennium Park and the Bittell Road playing fields could be improved and additional facilities provided for young people, especially over the age of 9.

The household survey and the young people who visited the Open Day expressed significant support for constructing an adventure playground on the Bittell Road playing fields but were not specific as to what it should comprise

Recommendation 28

The Parish's elected representatives in conjunction with the proposed Youth Council should investigate further the construction of an adventure playground on the Bittell Road playing fields, including the type of equipment that would be most attractive for the different age groups using it, and determine the costs of acquiring and maintaining it.

Shopping Facilities

The overwhelming majority of those who responded to the household survey valued highly the shopping facilities in the village and expressed the desire that the existing mix of retail, services and health provision should be preserved. There was no support, however, for extending the commercial centre.

Recommendation 29

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise closely with the District Council to ensure that the Local Development Framework incorporates this view and that consent for any further changes to the commercial centre is only given where it fits in with the village's character.

The household survey identified a concern amongst older residents, particularly those with mobility or sight impairment, about the difficulty of accessing certain commercial premises.

Recommendation 30

The Parish's elected representatives should liaise with the owners of certain commercial premises in the village centre to discuss ways to avoid problems of access.

Other facilities

The village has lost its **library**, although a mobile service visits once every 2 weeks. There is no evidence of any demand to reintroduce a library. However, 39% of the respondents to the household survey have suggested the Parish arrange adult IT classes in the village.

Over the past year it has become increasingly difficult for the parish's Executive Officer to operate from his home and the Council is searching for premises that might be suitable for this purpose. The proposed **parish office** could include IT facilities for those who do not have their own computer or access to the internet.

Village boundaries

Barnt Green Parish is surrounded by the parishes of Cofton Hackett and Lickey and Blackwell. Many of these parish's residents, in particular in Lickey and Blackwell, frequently use the commercial facilities in Barnt Green.

Given the commonality of issues facing each of these parishes, we believe it is desirable to consider, prior to the next re-alignment of parish boundaries, the merits of combining one or more of these parishes or, alternatively, finding ways of pooling resources and working together to deal with common issues

Recommendation 31

The Parish Council should meet with their counterparts at Cofton Hackett and Lickey and Blackwell to discuss the merits of pooling resources and working together on common issues, linked possibly to combining one or more of the parishes.

**5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR PARISH COUNCIL ACTION**

| MATTERS FOR ACTION | RECOMMENDATION | NUMBER IN PLAN | RESPONSIBLE BODY[IES] | WHEN | ESTIMATED COST |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Planning and development | 1. Incorporate the principles in <i>Planning for Character</i> in the District Council's LDF | 1 | Planning Committee, Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | Low |
| | 2. Retain existing provision of small dwellings suitable for elderly people / persons acquiring their first home | 2 | Planning Committee, Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | Low |
| | 3. Preserve the existing mix of retail, services and health provision in village | 29 | Planning Committee, Bromsgrove District Council Primary Care Trust | Short term | Low |
| Parking facilities | 1. Earmark the present car parking sites for parking use only | 3 | Planning Committee, Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | Low |
| | 2. Enforce existing parking restrictions | 4 & 5 | Police Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | Medium |
| | 3. Negotiate removal of parking charges at railway station | 6 | Central Railways NCP | Short term | Low |
| | 4. Discuss with the Chamber of Trade the introduction of home delivery services | 7 | BG Chamber of Trade | Short term | Low |

| MATTERS FOR ACTION | RECOMMENDATION | NUMBER IN PLAN | RESPONSIBLE BODY[IES] | WHEN | ESTIMATED COST |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Traffic speed | 1. Enforce speed restrictions | 11 | Highways Authority West Mercia Safety Camera Partnership | Short term | Low |
| | 2. Investigate the installation of speed warning devices along Bittell Road | 12 | Highways Authority West Mercia Safety Camera Partnership | Medium term | Medium |
| | 3. Discuss introduction of further traffic calming measures on Bittell Road and Fiery Hill Road | 10 | Highways Authority | Medium term | High |
| Footways | 1 Agree with Highways Authority a programme of improvements for village road surfaces and footways | 9 | Highways Authority | Medium term | High |
| | 2 Take action against those dropping litter and /or committing other similar offences | 8 | Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | Low |
| | 3 Review footway lighting in the village | 14 | Highways Authority | Medium term | High |
| Pedestrian crossings | Seek advice on the most appropriate siting for crossings on Hewell Road and Bittell Road and vigorously pursue funding | 13 | Highways Authority | Short term | Medium |

| MATTERS FOR ACTION | RECOMMENDATION | NUMBER IN PLAN | RESPONSIBLE BODY[IES] | WHEN | ESTIMATED COST |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Village signs | 1 Review village signs to standardize and better reflect village's character | 15 | Highways Authority | Medium term | Medium |
| | 2 Liaise with Rights of Ways Officers to obtain improved maps and signs | 26 | Worcestershire County Council | Medium term | Low |
| Playing fields | Investigate additional equipment required for an adventure playground suitable for different age groups and obtain funding | 28 | Parish Council Youth Council | Short term | Medium |
| Community safety | 1 Seek additional police patrolling of village | 22 | Police Bromsgrove District Council Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership | Short term | Medium |
| | 2 Facilitate the setting up of additional Neighbourhood Watch schemes | 23 | W Mercia Police | Short term | Low |
| | 3 Extend the existing CCTV to cover more residential areas | 24 | Police Bromsgrove District Council Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership | Medium term | High |

| MATTERS FOR ACTION | RECOMMENDATION | NUMBER IN PLAN | RESPONSIBLE BODY[IES] | WHEN | ESTIMATED COST |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Community safety cont: | 4. Consider improvements to footway lighting, shop-front lighting or the cameras themselves to improve the effectiveness of CCTV at night | 25 | Bromsgrove District Council Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership Highways Authority | Medium term | Medium |
| Railway station | 1. Improve the appearance of the station and surrounding areas | 19 | Central Trains | Short term | Low |
| | 2. Investigate whether there is a low cost solution for giving disabled persons access to the central platforms | | Central Trains | Medium term | Low |
| Public transport facilities | Ensure that there are adequate bus services, community transport schemes and demand responsive travel | 18 | Bromsgrove District Council Worcestershire County Council Central Trains | Short term | Medium |
| Longbridge link road | Ensure that the new link road incorporates traffic management measures to avoid the undesirable effects of increasing through-traffic in Barnt Green | 20 | Birmingham City Council / other agencies | Medium term | Low |
| Hopwood rendering plant | Ensure that the terms of the pollution licence are effectively monitored / enforced and access for heavy traffic from A441 only | 21 | Bromsgrove District Council | Short term | High [potentially] |

| MATTERS FOR ACTION | RECOMMENDATION | NUMBER IN PLAN | RESPONSIBLE BODY[IES] | WHEN | ESTIMATED COST |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | | |
| Traffic noise | Request a noise assessment survey in the village | 16 | Highways Authority | Medium term | Medium |
| | Investigate what measures might be taken to reduce the noise of vehicles crossing the speed cushions in Hewell Road | 17 | Highways Authority | Short term | Medium |
| | | | | | |
| Provision for disabled persons | Discuss with the owners of certain commercial premises in the village centre ways to improve access to their premises | 30 | Parish Council Owners of commercial premises | Short term | Low |
| | | | | | |
| Governance | 1. Establish a youth council | 27 | Parish Council Resident Youth | Short term | Low |
| | 2. Meet with the Parish Council's counterparts at Cofton Hackett and Lickey and Blackwell to discuss the merits of pooling resources and working together on common issues | 31 | Cofton Hackett / Lickey and Blackwell / Barnt Green Parish Councils | Short term | Low |

6. THE NEXT STEPS

The Parish Plan as drafted was approved by the Parish Council at their meeting on July 24, 2006. The Parish Council now wishes to obtain Bromsgrove District Council's comments and agreement to the approach taken in the plan and their commitment to work with the Parish Council in addressing the issues raised.

The Plan is an Action Plan that needs to be used by the Parish Council and community in their aims to fulfil the vision they have for their parish. It does not guarantee that all the issues raised will be resolved immediately as some may require lobbying for change and some inevitably will take longer to achieve than others. Nevertheless, it is a tool for bringing about change.

It is recommended that the Steering Committee should be disbanded, at least until such time as the plan is formally adopted or any further work, updates, etc. are required. Following formal adoption of the Plan by Bromsgrove District Council, the Parish Council will restructure its workings and reporting mechanisms so as to better align these to the parish's objectives. The present Steering Committee' members and others would then be invited to join various working parties whose objective would be to assist the Parish Council in implementing the various recommendations set out in Section 5.

A copy of the Plan will then be distributed to each household in the village plus copies will be sent to a wide range of authorities and interested parties. It is hoped that by involving these bodies it will be possible to identify funding that would support the various recommended initiatives and actions.

The Parish Council will periodically inform the residents - via the quarterly newsletter, web-site and parish meetings - on the progress in implementing these recommendations.

July 24, 2006

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this Parish Plan, including the household survey, school survey, surgeries and the Open Day, has been a collaborative effort involving a great number of people. Particular thanks are due to the following individuals.

Parish Plan Steering Committee

Andrew Gardner, David Gilburn, Paul Hawkley, John Jagger,
Rosalyn Jones, Angela Kukula, Rick Maine, Julia Tozer, Richard Wallace.

Parish Councillors

Elaine Buckett (Chairman), Diane Carr, Peter Cliff, Judith Jagger, Susan Whitehand

Roger Westbury, Parish Council Executive Officer

Debbie Warren, previous Clerk of Parish Council

Karen Humphries, Community First

Paul Crysell, Head of Local Plans – Bromsgrove District Council

Mike Dunphy, Strategic and Local Plans Officer – Bromsgrove District Council

Kay Wilson, Warwickshire Rural Community Council

Jayne Willetts, West Mercia Police

Mel Clarke, West Mercia Police – Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Scouts, guides and brownies for their assistance with the refreshments at the Open Day

Staff and the children at St Andrew's First School

The village groups who attended the first information gathering session

The 550 residents who completed the Household Survey questionnaire and 200+ individuals who visited the Open Day and gave their comments

8. CONTACTS

For further information about the Parish Plan, the following persons can be contacted:

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The draft Parish Plan is available to view on the parish website at:

www.barntgreen.org.uk

For larger print or audio version, please contact the Executive Officer