

Kensworth Parish Plan 2006

# ***Kensworth Parish Plan 2006***

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Kensworth Parish Council aims to work towards achieving changes that are beneficial to the village while at the same time maintaining its character.

This Parish Plan was commissioned by the Council to gather the thoughts of the villagers who live here on their major concerns and suggestions they may have for resolving them. From the answers, a number of actions have been identified and are included in this Parish Plan. These actions will form part of the Council's objectives for the next few years.

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### **1 A Bit About Kensworth**

Kensworth is a South Bedfordshire village about 3 miles south-east of Dunstable with around 600 houses and about 1500 residents.

Kensworth does not have a central “village green” like many villages but is more of a “ribbon development”. It does, however, have a wealth of attractive houses, not always easily seen from the main road, and is located in an area designated as “Green Belt” and “An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.

The area around Kensworth has been inhabited for very many years. Further information about its history can be found on the village website, [www.kensworthparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.kensworthparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Within Kensworth Parish we have:

- three shops
  - one general store including a Post Office
  - one that is predominantly a newsagents with a lottery terminal but also sells some food and drink
  - florist
- 3 public houses
- filling station
- 2 churches
  - The Parish Church of St Mary dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and is beautifully situated in Church End
  - The Methodist Church is located in Common Road
- a village school established in 1853
- a substantial village hall
- a recreation ground catering for football teams (seniors and juniors)
- a hard sports surface
- a play area for young children
- a mobile fish & chip shop once per week
- a mobile library every other week that stops at two places in the village
- a mobile chiropodist once a month for those referred by the Doctor

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- a hairdressers that is open two days a week in one of the village houses
- allotments
- an additional open space owned by the Parish Council known as the Clayhall Road Field.

The local issues of Kensworth are managed by the Parish Council consisting of 9 Parish Councillors (see village noticeboards or the website above for details). In addition, it is represented at higher levels by 2 South Beds District Councillors (currently Cllrs Mrs Marion Mustoe and Barry Harris), one County Councillor (Cllr Richard Stay) and our Member of Parliament Mr Andrew Selous MP.

We also have two of Bedfordshire's best tourist attractions on our doorstep, Dunstable Downs and Whipsnade Wild Animal Park.

## 2 Obtaining Your Views

The Parish Plan Group was set up by the Parish Council to produce a Parish Plan.

To do this the Group had to find out what people living in Kensworth thought about a range of issues in the village. For the comments to be worthwhile and representative we needed a good response from the villagers.

It was decided that the best way to achieve this was by means of a survey form delivered to every house in the village and collected a couple of weeks or so later.

The survey asked questions relating to a number of issues about life in Kensworth:

Our General Environment	Traffic Issues	Law & Order
Local Facilities	Transport & Travel	School & Childcare
Village Hall	Clayhall Road Field	

About 1200 survey forms were delivered around the Parish and around half of them were completed and returned. A higher response rate would have been better, but we have enough for the results to be seen as valid and form a basis for subsequent action.

A public open day, attended by almost 100 people, was held to feedback and "test" the conclusions and proposed action points.

### **3 General Comments**

From the survey responses, a number of actions are suggested and these are covered in more detail in this report.

Some of the changes suggested can probably be made quite quickly. Others will require more detailed investigations before deciding what changes, if any, can be achieved. A good example of this relates to the possible future use of the Clayhall Road field site. Clearly, considerably more information and consultation on the possible alternatives are required before any decision can be made.

There are other factors that may prevent some changes/actions being made quickly:

- The Parish Council itself does not have the resources to carry out all the work in a short period.
- There will be budgetary issues for some changes that may result in a work plan spread over several years.
- The Parish Council does not have the authority to carry out some of the changes directly. It must negotiate for these with other bodies that will have other commitments and ideas about how their money should be spent.

Parish Councils operate on a 4 year election cycle. The next election is in April 2007, the Council elected then serving until April 2011. The recommendation is therefore that the work contained in the Parish Plan should be considered a “5 Year Plan”, with the aim of completing the work by the end of April 2011. As with any plan, this one is flexible and we would expect actions to be added or removed, in the light of developments.

The Parish Council will keep the Village up to date with progress on the Plan.

## 4 Summary of Actions

### *Clayhall Road Field*

The Clayhall Road field is an 8 acre field bordering the allotments and Clayhall Road. It slopes to the south which may preclude certain uses, unless major earthworks are undertaken. It is currently rough pasture, with the grass it produces used as animal feed. The Parish Council would like if possible to find other uses more beneficial to the village generally.

Several suggestions have cropped up and the survey was used to see what support those ideas may have, and what other suggestions may be put forward. The possibilities with most support are covered by the summary of action points below. Other suggestions with less support have been put forward, eg building low cost housing, building expensive housing, selling the land and so on. These have not

been discounted at this stage but for now work will concentrate on the best supported suggestions. It is important to stress that NO decision has been made about the future of this field and that no decision will be made until detailed information on possible alternatives has been obtained and can be put before the village.

<b>Suggested Use and Action to be taken</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Football Club to investigate suitability of Clayhall Rd field for <b>football pitch</b> and identify related issues, eg requirements for <u>changing rooms/parking</u> facilities etc.	Football Club	Parish Council	Grants	Q2 2006
Cricket Club to identify best location for <b>cricket pitch</b> on Clayhall Rd site or recreation ground and assess associated requirements, eg pavilion, and <u>ongoing</u> maintenance costs.	Cricket Club	Parish Council	Grants	Q2 2006
Investigate costs/grants to convert field to <b>community woodland and flower meadow area</b> .	Parish Council	Village Volunteers. Specialist groups, eg Woodland Trust, North Chilterns Trust	Parish Council. Grants	Q2 2006

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Investigate feasibility of <b>wind turbine</b> to provide electricity for the village.	Parish Council	District Council. Energy providers	Power provider. Grants	Q2 2006
Identify suitable location for a <b>skateboard park</b> and whether there is genuine demand for the facility, funding sources and developers.	Parish Council		Grants	Q2 2006

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**Traffic**

The major road through Kensworth, the B4540, has been carrying an increasingly heavier burden of traffic and is seen by many drivers as preferable to trying to negotiate the problems of driving through Dunstable – we are effectively a Dunstable bypass by default. As a result traffic has become a big issue for many people in Kensworth. HGVs were frequently mentioned as being inappropriate for a B road through a small village.

The great majority of those who completed the questionnaire said that speeding traffic,

in the village, on its approaches and in the minor lanes is a significant problem and that more action was required to tackle it. The survey asked about potential danger spots and several were identified, the major ones being:

- At the top end of the village where the road divides into the Whipsnade Road and Upper Common Road (leading to Isle of Wight Lane).
- The Clayhall Road/Common Rd/Spratts Lane cross roads,

- The roundabout at the entrance to Ridgeway.

The action points below aim to tackle all these issues, but this is an area where the Parish Council has no direct powers of action. What it can and will do is negotiate with the County Council for improvements in our traffic situation and the results of the Survey will help with that.

What Action?	Who Leading?	Who Else Involved?	How Funded?	When?
Identify areas for possible relocation of speed limit signs and reduced speed limits both within the village and on its approaches.	Parish Council	None	None	Quarter 1 2006
Consider whether a “quiet lanes” initiative is suitable for Spratts Lane, Hollicks Lane and Dovehouse Lane.	Parish Council	County Council/Highways	None	Quarter 1 2006
Continue to press for closure of Isle of Wight Lane as per petition.	Parish Council	County Council/Highways	County Council	Ongoing
Press for weight limit on HGVs travelling through the village.	Parish Council	County Council/Highways	County Council	Ongoing

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Identify danger spots and potential remedial action, eg Spratts Lane/Clayhall Rd crossroads, Ridgeway roundabout, junction of Upper Common Rd with B4540.	Parish Council	None	None	Q1 2006
Consider what other traffic calming measures could be used to reduce speed of traffic through the village, eg “chicanes” at entrances to village.	Parish Council	None	None	Q 1 2006
Meet with County Council/Highways staff to discuss initiatives arising from the above investigations. Agree with them and publish schedule of changes to tackle the problems.	Parish Council	County Council/Highways	County Council	Q 1 2006
Investigate value of installing monitoring devices to remind motorists of the speed limit and provide traffic-related statistics.	Parish Council	None	Parish Council	Q 1 2006
Consider other methods available to the Parish Council to help control traffic speed, eg use of speed monitoring devices and wheelie bin stickers.	Parish Council	None	Parish Council	Q 1 2006
Identify areas for possible relocation of speed limit signs and reduced speed limits both within the village and on its approaches.	Parish Council	None	None	Q 1 2006

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**Environment**

Kensworth is situated in the “Green Belt” and is also within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Many people travel through Kensworth each year:

- to visit Whipsnade Zoo and Dunstable Downs visitor attractions
- on foot using some of the 16 miles of footpaths within the Parish
- passing through by car or other means of transport.

It is a mainly rural environment with some business premises located in the industrial park in the village or by the A5 on the edge of the Parish. A good number of people run businesses from their own homes. The responses to the survey indicate there is a desire to maintain the beauty and rural character of the area as much as possible and present the village as a clean and tidy place where people like to live.

Unsurprisingly, issues relating to road and air traffic dominated the responses. Road traffic is covered elsewhere, and the Parish Council will continue to represent us with the airport authorities.

This is an area where some of the actions are in our own hands and getting help from villagers, eg for flower planting, can really make a difference. Volunteers will be called for in due course!

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Aircraft noise – monitor Luton Airport development plans and be actively involved in meetings/groups relating to them. Keep residents informed of developments.	Parish Council	Airport Management. Other local PCs. Local pressure groups	N/A	Ongoing
Provide rubbish bins at appropriate locations, for example bus stops. Encourage tidiness in the village.	Parish Council	South Beds District Council	Parish Council	Q2 2006
Plant more flowers, eg small flowers in verges, shrubs (such as roses) in the larger grassy areas near some road junctions, eg Common Rd/Poplar Road, Common Rd/Ridgeway.	Parish Council	Volunteers from village. North Chilterns Trust?? Beds Rural Communities Charity	Parish Council	Q2 2006
Enter an event such as Britain in Bloom or Beds Village of the Year.	Parish Council	Village Volunteers	Parish Council	TBA

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Introduce a local competition, eg best front garden.	Parish Council	Village Volunteers	Parish Council	Q2 2006
Improve programme of verge maintenance including the entrances to the village.	Parish Council	SBDC. Village Volunteers	SBDC	Q2 2006
Repair or replace noticeboard near village hall.	Parish Council	N/A	Parish Council	Q1 2006
Regularly remove graffiti. Consider a special "graffiti wall".	Parish Council	Village Hall Management Committee	Parish Council	Q3 2006
Investigate possibilities for better development of the industrial estate.	Parish Council	SBDC		Q4 2006
Identify worst pavement problems, negotiate a long-term plan of repair with SBDC.	Parish Council	SBDC	SBDC	Q4 2006
a) Review street lighting and agree the areas where improvement is desirable. b) Negotiate timetable with SBDC for carrying out improvements.	Parish Council	SBDC	SBDC	a) Q3 2006 b) Q4 2006

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***Village Facilities***

As with most rural villages these days shopping facilities are limited, the majority of people have a car and they generally shop out of town at large supermarkets, eg Asda and Sainsbury's in Dunstable. The bus service is not very frequent or convenient for those who need to use it as their main, or only, form of transport. There is, however, a small but important minority for whom getting about is difficult and they have to shop in Kensworth on a regular basis.

There are no medical facilities, eg doctor, dentist, pharmacy in the village. For these services people have to travel to Markyate (nearer but no direct bus service) or

Dunstable (further to go but direct bus service). In Dunstable, newcomers to Kensworth can have trouble getting onto the registers. Many people have indicated that they would like medical/dental/pharmacy facilities in the village. While enquiries will be made regarding provision of these facilities in some form or another, it does appear doubtful that it would be possible to attract them to the village.

The Kensworth Community Scheme provides help for people especially those needing transport to medical appointments, hospital and so on. This is partly funded by the Parish Council with significant

additional voluntary donations from the Over 60s Club.

There are few facilities for young people, which, coupled with the poor transport facilities, is sometimes perceived to be the cause of occasional outbreaks of petty vandalism.

There were lots of suggestions for possible additional facilities in Kensworth. Those receiving most support are covered by the action points below. Some suggestions relate to less practical features that won't be pursued, at least for now, but are all on record to be picked up on later if appropriate.

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
With local prescription chemists investigate the possibilities of a better collection/delivery service.	Parish Council	Local Chemists	N/A	ASAP
Investigate possibility of visiting doctor facility, eg one day a week surgery.	Parish Council	Local Doctors	N/A	Q2 2006 initial investigation
Investigate possibility of visiting dentist.	Parish Council	Local Dentists	N/A	Q2 2006 initial investigation

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Approach larger supermarket chains to find out a) if they would be interested in principle in having a “Tesco Metro” type premises in Kensworth and b) what the implications may be for other village businesses.	Parish Council	Local Supermarkets	N/A	Q3 2006 initial investigation
Approach the village pubs to see if they could offer any form of takeaway food service.	Parish Council	Red Lion. Farmer’s Boy. Packhorse	N/A	Q2 2006
Provide improved facilities for young people, eg consider youth club for older age groups, youth drop-in, play equipment, skateboard park, tennis court.	Parish Council	SBDC	Grants	Q2 2006 Initial investigation

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**Law & Order**

Until some years ago, Kensworth had a resident policeman based in the old police house next to the village hall. The nearest police station now is in Dunstable but that is not open 24 hours. Reported crimes are now logged at a central call centre. Kensworth is in the area of responsibility of the local "Beat Officer" who in theory is supported by a Community Support Officer, although following a resignation

we were without the latter for some time, but a replacement has now been appointed.

Crime is certainly not rife in Kensworth although as with most areas we have our share, as we also have our share of generally minor acts of vandalism. Fear of crime seems, however, to be a fairly major issue. The general reaction to the questions relating to the service provided by the police was one of dissatisfaction. Most

people rarely, if ever, see a policeman and half of those who had occasion to dial 999 during the last 3 years were dissatisfied with the police response.

The survey results will be fed back to the Police. The aim is to get a better relationship with them and attempt to get a better police service, thus hopefully alleviating some of the fear of crime.

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Arrange feedback of information to the police and initial police response.	Parish Council	Police	N/A	Q2 2006
Investigate village/police liaison group.	Parish Council	Police	N/A	Q2 2006
Investigate setting up more neighbourhood watch groups.	Parish Council	Police	N/A	Q2 2006

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***The School***

The Village School has been the first school for generations of Kensworth children and celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003 with a variety of events including a party for past and present pupils. It is a small, rural, voluntary controlled school right on the border of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. It is fortunate in having extensively used, large, safe grounds, both hard and grass surfaced, on the edge of some beautiful countryside. It caters for the first years of a child's education from age 4 to 9 and currently has 51 children on the roll. The school has a wonderful family atmosphere and receives tremendous support from parents and the village community. This is evidenced by the many extra-curricular activities run by the

school, and the facilities that the children enjoy. The school has strong links to the local community, taking part in events like the village carnival.

The survey confirmed that the school is seen as a major asset to the village. Local education has many benefits, socially and environmentally:

- Pupils do not have to travel far from home for their first school.
- In many cases they can walk to school and not have to use a car.
- They will meet more children from their own village.
- Mothers can meet at the school gates – a good form of socializing.
- Helps with community spirit.

A "Walking Bus" is being considered to encourage walking to and from school.

The closeness of the road to the path near the recreation ground and the high volumes of traffic however make this less attractive than it might be. A footpath through the recreation ground would be a much better alternative.

The survey sought information on the demand for other facilities at the school, eg nursery education, before and after school clubs, that may encourage early registration of younger children, but the results were not sufficiently conclusive. Additionally, the future structure of the education system is uncertain at present. The school will therefore be seeking further information before making decisions about new facilities.

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Further more detailed investigation required into the demand in the village for wraparound care.	School	Parish Council	TBA	Q3 2006
Seek out funding for early years provision.	School		TBA	Q3 2006

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Investigate provision of a footpath along the bottom of the recreation ground to take children away from the busy road and encourage walking.	Parish Council	SBDC School	TBA	Q2 2006
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**Village Hall**

The Village Hall is a major village asset “owned” by the Parish Council, but managed on a day to day basis by the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) that includes representatives from the various organisations that use the hall. The hall can be hired for private functions, fund raising events and so on. It contains a main hall with a stage area, store room for tables/chairs etc, kitchen, toilets and small committee room. The kitchen was recently refurbished. There is also a surfaced car park. One end of the building is the changing room for sports teams.

General running costs, maintenance and wear and tear have traditionally been funded by the fees paid to hire the hall and by special events organized by the VHMC.

For larger items of expenditure, eg kitchen refurbishment or building work, funds are obtained from other sources, eg grants from various bodies and contributions from the Parish Council.

Ever-rising maintenance, cleaning and especially heating costs make it increasingly difficult to cover running costs from hire/fundraising income. Survey responses indicate that there is support for the idea that some funding to help with these items may be provided from the village precept paid via council tax. Apart from fund raising, difficulties have arisen with damage caused by vandalism and the occasional attempt to break into the hall, although nothing of value is kept on the premises.

The great majority of survey respondents thought that both the general appearance of the hall and its facilities were acceptable or good. There were, however, a number of comments relating to the standard of the toilets and the general décor in the hall. Responses also indicated a desire for some form of restricted smoking policy in the hall.

Many suggestions for events to be held in the hall were made. A good proportion of them favoured the type of events currently held, but there were plenty of fresh ideas too. All suggestions are with the VHMC for future reference. Some of the suggestions indicate that more publicity for the Village Hall and its activities may be worthwhile.

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Improve toilet facilities.	VHMC	Parish Council, District Council, Other potential funding bodies	Parish Council Grant. District Council Grant. Grant from other potential funding bodies	Q2 2006

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Review policy on smoking in the hall and publish decision.	VHMC	None	Not required	End 2005
Identify means to give better publicity to the VH and its activities.	VHMC	None	VHMC	Q1 2006
Negotiate with the Parish Council the feasibility of providing some financial support for the general maintenance of the Hall via the annual village precept.	VHMC	Parish Council	N/A	Q1 2006

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***Play Area & Recreation Ground***

The recreation ground provides some facilities for both younger children – a fenced-off play area with appropriate play equipment – and those who are older – a hard surfaced area with basketball hoop/court markings and a kicking wall. There are football pitches for junior and senior teams with changing rooms in the adjacent village hall. In addition, there are

metal tables used as a gathering place for young people and some benches. The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the recreation ground and the play area (annually inspected by RoSPA). Apart from the kicking wall and basketball hoop there are no specific play facilities for those aged 13+.

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour are ongoing problems and were commented on by survey respondents. Fencing and play equipment have been damaged a number of times and older youths tend to gather in the play area which is intimidating and off-putting. Broken glass is often left in the play area and was commented on in the survey responses.

<b>What Action?</b>	<b>Who Leading?</b>	<b>Who Else Involved?</b>	<b>How Funded?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Children's play area swept on a daily basis, broken glass and rubbish removed. Weeds kept in check more regularly.	Parish Council		Parish Council	asap
Institute a formal weekly equipment check and damage repair procedure. Display telephone number for damage reporting.	Parish Council		Parish Council	asap
Erect sign banning dogs from the area.	Parish Council		Parish Council	asap
Investigate introducing CCTV, possibly combined with village hall, and/or security lighting to combat vandalism.	Parish Council	Police. Security Experts	Parish Council fund initial investigation	Q3 2006 initial investigation
Introduce an age limit for use of junior play area equipment.	Parish Council		Parish Council	Q1 2006

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Investigate installing play equipment for 13+ youngsters to help combat vandalism.	Parish Council	Suppliers	Parish Council. District Council. Lottery funding. Other grants.	Q3 2006
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**Transport**

Our survey shows that the number of people who rely on the bus service is small, but for those who do it is very important. For example, those depending on a bus to get to work are seriously affected by an unreliable service. The service has deteriorated over time in terms of frequency and the destinations served direct. For example, there are few services that run directly to Luton, and there is no longer a service to St Albans.

The survey answers suggest that reliability is also a problem. The service is partly subsidized by the County Council which pays for some journeys that would not be economical to run on a purely commercial basis. It is those at opposite ends of the age spectrum, eg teenagers and older people, who are most likely to be affected by a poor bus service almost to the point of social exclusion.

Many services now take fairly tortuous routes through villages so what was originally quite a short journey can now take a considerable time. This is not suitable for those, usually elderly, people who cannot for various reasons stay on a bus for a long period of time. The lack of any bus shelters was a frequent comment in the survey responses.

What Action?	Who Leading?	Who Else Involved?	How Funded?	When?
Investigate provision of service to St Albans.	Parish Council	Beds CC. Herts CC. Bus Companies	TBA	Q3 2006
Provide some bus shelters for protection in poor weather.	Parish Council	Beds CC. SBDC. Centrebus	TBA	Q3 2006
Publicise reporting process for poor service.	Parish Council	N/A	N/A	Q1 2006
Monitor service levels and take up poor performance with County Council (who pay for some services) in support of users.	Parish Council	Beds CC	N/A	Q2 2006
Include timetable information in parish website.	Parish Council	N/A	Parish Council	Q1 2006
Seek other ways of publishing timetables in the village.	Parish Council	Centrebus. Arriva	N/A	Q2 2006

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