

THE HELMDON PARISH PLAN  
A FOOTPATH TO HELMDON'S FUTURE

## Report & Action Plan



## ⚙️ What is the Helmdon Parish Plan?

The Helmdon Parish Plan aims to identify the current and future needs of the village and is a summary of the thoughts, opinions and ideas of the people of the parish.

Working out how to meet these needs together means us having an action plan for the future.

The plan covers the Parish of Helmdon comprising of approximately 350 properties and 950 residents and includes the settlements of Astwell, Falcutt and all outlying farms and properties.

Parish Plans are part of the Countryside Agency's "Vital Villages" initiative and the purpose of a Parish Plan 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 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 works in conjunction with other bodies to implement the initiative at local level. For Helmdon that has meant close co-operation with Northamptonshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and SNC (South Northamptonshire Council).

## ⚙️ Why have a parish plan?

By giving everybody in the parish the opportunity to express opinions and ideas, people are better informed about local need.

The work and decisions of Helmdon Parish Council and other local organisations are supported by the outcomes of the plan.

Statistical evidence on specific issues backs up views and feelings. The voice of our community is strengthened.

People are more involved in what goes on around them, many of them for the first time. Our community spirit is enhanced.

Statutory authorities can be influenced by the united views and needs of our community.

Individuals and organisations are prepared for questions or issues that arise about changes or threats to local services and activities.

The Helmdon Parish Plan should not be an end in itself. It should represent an opportunity for the community to make realistic recommendations, take them forward and follow their progress.

A parish plan should be an action plan for the future.

## ⚙️ How was it done?

A working group was set up at a village meeting on 1st April 2003 comprised of 6 Topic Groups, each with a group leader. The 6 Topic Group leaders then formed the Steering Group along with the Steering Group leader and an administrator.

The following is a summary of what each Topic Group discussed. It was up to each Topic Group to decide what they needed to cover by consulting the village as a whole.

**Transport:** highways, footpaths, cycleways, buses, trains, potholes, bridges

**Youth:** 0 - 5, 5 - 11, 11 - 18, youth club, play facilities, events, groups, activities

**Housing & Development:** affordable housing, rental properties, employment opportunities, village design statement

**Amenities:** shop, pub, reading room, post office, internet, healthcare, school, other public places

**Culture:** arts, sports, heritage, history, education, social & leisure facilities, religion, other

**Environment:** recycling, conservation, green areas, community safety, crime, natural history

The key to putting the plan together was public consultation and the first step of the consultation was the holding of a Future Needs Day on 2nd August 2003 in the school hall. The event attracted more than 230 people and allowed members of the community to express their views and opinions on the current and future needs of the community. The Future Needs Day also helped raise awareness of the project among members of the community.

Based on the findings of the Future Needs Day, the Topic Groups put together questions to go in to a questionnaire that was circulated to every household in the parish. 266 households took part, which represents 76% of the parish. Individual questionnaires were collected from 500 residents over 11 years of age, with 70 collected from the under elevens.

## ⚙ **How much did it cost?**

In 2002 Helmdon Parish Council applied to the Countryside Agency for funding to carry out a parish plan during the course of 2003/4. A grant of £4,039.01 was awarded in June 2003 which was the full amount applied for. Helmdon Parish Council also allocated £269.27 towards the cost of the plan. The grants covered such things as production and analysis of the questionnaire, the holding of meetings and events and the production and distribution of the final plan.

The main "cost" however was volunteer time – given freely by members of the working group, many additional volunteers, and of course the people of Helmdon in attending parish plan events and taking part in the questionnaire.

## ⚙ **Who was involved?**

The driving force behind the parish plan was the working group, which was made up of approximately 30 volunteers from the parish of Helmdon. Co-ordinating this group was an 8-strong steering group, including 2 members of Helmdon Parish Council. Numerous volunteers joined in the process by, for example, serving teas at public events or delivering publicity leaflets and questionnaires.

The steering group received support throughout from Rachael Abbott of Northamptonshire ACRE, who also acted as the liaison between the steering group, the Countryside Agency and South Northamptonshire Council.

During the course of the public consultation and the subsequent research and questionnaire analysis many outside bodies were consulted, for example; South Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire ACRE, South Northants Rural Transport Partnership, the Countryside Agency, and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

## ⚙ **Topic Group Conclusions**

### ⚙ **Transport**

The Transport section of the questionnaire received the highest response with over 252 people saying it was the most important issue. Of these 140 said that speeding traffic caused concern, 34 said that the state of the roads and pavements was the most important issue and 32 said improved footpaths and bridleways was their number one issue. 30 said that rural transport came top and for 16 it was the proposed reopening of the Central Railway.

Issues which came up quite a lot were poor street lighting, poor parking, the need to slow traffic through the village, the provision of a bus shelter, a bus stop at the top end of the village, more bridleways, support for a safe cycle track to Brackley and a new map of the public rights of way.

### ⚙ **Youth**

The Youth Topic Group considered the results of the Individual Survey (completed by those aged 11 years and over) and also the Under Elevens Survey.

When asked which facilities would be most important to provide the top three were: more play equipment in the school field (54%), an adventure playground (53%) and a park that can be used all the time (59%).

63% of respondents thought that a dedicated building for the use of the young people was needed and there was clear support for youth groups for various ages. Importantly there were good numbers of volunteers saying they were prepared to help out with these groups, perhaps supported by a part-time paid youth worker.

## ⚙️ Amenities

The results revealed a generally high awareness of the facilities on offer in Helmdon, but a generally low level of usage. Of the commercial facilities available in the village (Post Office, shop, pub, butcher, milkman and fish van) only the milk delivery service is used by more than 30% of respondents on a regular basis.

Q21 showed that the vast majority of respondents think it unreasonable to travel beyond Brackley/Banbury for health facilities such as accident & emergency (90%), maternity (81%), x-ray (84%), dentistry (93%) and nursing care (93%).

Q22 demonstrated that Helmdon has above average take up of home computing with 85% of respondents saying they have access to the Internet at home. 73% of homes in the parish have computers and will soon (August 2004) have access to broadband.

## ⚙️ Environment

There was an overwhelming response from the under 11s in reply to the question about what they most liked about Helmdon. A huge majority said it was the countryside, the ability to play in it and ride horses in it, and the fact that they felt safe because they knew everyone.

67 people chose some aspect of the environment as their most important issue in the questionnaire.

A whole series of environmental and conservation issues came up: 203 people thought it was a good idea to create a village pond; 217 would support improving the school conservation area, 176 wanted to plant more hedges and 327 thought cleaning the brook was a good idea. In addition, there was a low awareness of the fact that Helmdon has both a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and a County Wildlife Site. 74 people expressed an interest in setting up or joining a Wildlife and Conservation group. The Environment Topic Group thought that setting up such a group could deal with all the above issues.

A large number of people use Helmdon's recycling facilities, with 50% recycling paper and 62% recycling glass there. 48% would like to see the facility expanded to include garden waste; 38% to include clothing/shoe banks; 57% to include plastic bottles and 51% to include cardboard. 26% of respondents did not want kerbside recycling to be implemented in the village with the remainder being generally receptive to the idea.

Considering the low level of crime in Helmdon, a high number of people said they were concerned or very concerned about crime or anti-social behaviour in Helmdon. For example, 206 people were concerned about house burglary; 143 people about theft from a garden; 188 people about theft from an outbuilding; 202 people about vandalism. In contrast, only 34% thought there was a need for a greater police presence. The most popular measure (54%) for reducing crime was to provide more activities for younger people.

## ⚙️ Culture

Less than 50% of people participate in any sporting activity. Having better and closer sports facilities may lead to a healthier and fitter population. There was however a good proportion of people wanting to take part in tennis (146) with 189 feeling that Helmdon needed a tennis court.

There was a good response to Q29 providing an opinion on the state of the sports/play facilities in the village with 33% rating the sports pavilion as 'poor'. Coupling this section with Q34 (on whether Helmdon needs another venue) showed there were 194 people who felt that another venue was needed. There were 6½ pages of comments about existing facilities being too small and the need for space for youth, sport, parties, plays etc for 150 to 250 people. There is a groundswell of support for a new facility.

Helmdon appears to have a desire for cultural activities. Over 75% of respondents say they would attend exhibitions, concerts and drama on some occasion in the village. 348 think the church is a good venue for concerts and 278 think it could be a good venue for exhibitions. Good numbers also responded to the other suggestions with cinema being the least liked activity for the church.

The village shows support for a variety of additional clubs and customs. Clubs that would be best supported are Gardening (117), Film (92) and Wine (90).

## ⚙ **Housing & Development**

The results showed that, of those that responded, approximately 70% did not feel there should be more building in Helmdon and the village framework should not be enlarged.

63% of respondents thought there was no need for more rented accommodation.

The results showed that there is overall support for the current planning control measures as used by the parish council and the local planning authorities.

## ⚙ **What happens now?**

The action points as defined by the individual topic groups are summarised on the following pages.

The action plan is not an end in itself. To implement any of the ideas in the plan will require time, money and effort. Some action points can be achieved with very little resources, others may take thousands of pounds and many years to realise.

The parish plan steering group, which will cease to exist when the plan is published, intends to reinvent itself, probably with new membership, as the "Parish Plan Monitoring Group" (PPMG). The PPMG will monitor progress and report to the village on a regular basis as to what's happening. Where the parish council needs to be involved, the PPMG will formulate proposals for consideration at parish council meetings. The PPMG will help ensure that the plan is implemented and that there is accountability to the residents of the parish.

One thing is certain - nothing can be achieved without people. Luckily, the plan suggests that the people of Helmdon are one of its greatest strengths. If everyone works together, the parish council, the village groups and organisations, businesses and individual volunteers, then nothing is impossible.

## **Imagine what you would try if you knew you couldn't fail!**

### **Further information is available from:**

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tel: 01295 768090 e-mail: [parishplan@helmdon.com](mailto:parishplan@helmdon.com) web site: [www.helmdon.com/parishpla](http://www.helmdon.com/parishpla)

# Helmdon Parish Plan – Action List

Transport 252 people listed transport as their most important issue (Q67)				
				Lead Responsibility
110 people said they use the bus service. However, of these, 55 said this was rarely. Many people made adverse comments concerning the new bus service and many wanted a new bus stop at The Square.	Publicise bus services & timetables.	Parish Council to ensure services are advertised on notice boards, in Talkabout and on web site.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.	Parish Council.
110 people said they use the bus service. However, of these, 55 said this was rarely. Many people made adverse comments concerning the new bus service and many wanted a new bus stop at The Square.	Inform Bus Service Providers & NCC of results.	Parish Council to send results to relevant people and ask for comments.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.	Parish Council.
253 people wanted more buses on more routes. 166 wanted a bus shelter. 30 people listed rural transport as their most important issue.	Form a Rural Transport Group.	Form a group to work with stakeholders to establish criteria for new bus services, investigate possibility of additional bus stop at top end of village and the provision of bus shelters at all bus stops.	Medium effort - would take at least a year to see any results.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
170 people would make use of a community minibus. 51 people volunteered to drive it. 30 people listed rural transport as their most important issue.	Provide a community minibus.	Form a group to carry out study of feasibility of purchasing a suitable vehicle and the ongoing costs of running and maintaining the vehicle as well as the management of the scheme.	High effort level - would probably take more than a year to see any results.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
55 people would be willing to car share.	Set up Car Share Scheme.	Form a group to produce a register of interest and details of scheme to include ideas for publication and how people can get involved.	Medium effort - could achieve a visible result of publication in 6 months - perhaps a year to see end result.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.

114 people would be willing to take people for medical appointments. 30 people listed rural transport as their most important issue.	Set up Volunteer Lift Service.	Form a group to organise a scheme for volunteers to give lifts to people for doctor's/hospital appointments etc and provide information on how people can book a lift.	Medium effort - could achieve a result within 6 months.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
140 people listed speeding traffic as their most important issue. 258 people said the bridge by Jeff's was dangerous. 275 people listed other danger spots. 200 people said pavements were difficult to use. 363 people said parking outside the school was a problem.	Form a Road Safety Group.	Form a group to analyse the results of the parish plan and make recommendations to the parish council for improving road safety, possibly coordinated by Parish Highways Representative. Group to also work with school governors on specific issue relating to safety of school children.	Medium effort - would probably take more than a year to see visible results.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting, School Governors.
34 people listed the state of roads and pavements as their most important concern. 270 people said that the state of the roads in Helmdon were either poor or very poor. 222 said that this was also their opinion of the pavements.	Push for general highway improvements.	Lobby NCC, County Councillor, Highways Agency, Atkins etc to provide an action plan of improvements.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Parish Council, Road Safety Group.
257 people said that a roundabout at the Welsh Lane crossroad would make the road safer, whilst 152 thought it would not. There were also a number of other suggestions of how the B4525 could be made safer.	Welsh Lane improvements.	Contact County Highways Officer to ascertain plans for B4525 and highlight support for roundabout at crossroads.	Medium effort - could take more than a year to achieve a result.	Parish Council, Road Safety Group.
341 people use the footpaths and bridleways. 296 found them difficult to use. 385 people wanted more paths. 349 wanted a guide or map. 32 people listed this as their most important issue.	Form a Parish Paths Group.	Form a group to analyse the results of the parish plan and investigate the improvements suggested (e.g. improved access and production of a new paths map). Forward results to Rights of Way team at NCC and Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.	Medium effort - could be achieved quickly and visible results could be seen within one year.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
293 people said they would use a new off-road path to Brackley.	Create cycleway to Brackley.	Form a group to conduct feasibility study into provision of a cycle way to Brackley using the route of the disused Central Railway.	High effort level - would probably take several years to see any results.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.

57 people listed youth issues as their most important issue (Q67)					
Youth					Lead Responsibility
280 people said Helmdon needed a dedicated venue for young people. 255 wanted more activities for young people. 18 people listed a new venue as their most important issue.	Provide new venue for youth and youth activities.	Determine exact requirements in consultation with user groups and stakeholders. Look for possible sites, seek funding etc. Combine with new facility proposed by Culture Topic Group (see below).	High effort level - would take several years to see any results.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	
225 people wanted better play equipment. 258 wanted a park that could be used all the time. This was the under-11s' most popular issue.	Develop playing field facilities.	Investigate possibilities of providing access to play equipment on school field all day and increase range of equipment and facilities.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	PPMG, School, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	
132 people wanted better access to the football pitch.	Develop junior football team.	To include better access to football pitches and provide volunteer coaching.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	
134 people wanted a junior cricket team.	Develop junior cricket team.	Set up team using volunteer coaching.	Medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	
112 people wanted a junior rugby team.	Develop junior rugby team.	Set up team using volunteer coaching.	Medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	
284 wanted an 11-15 years club; 198 wanted a 6-10 years club; 183 a 16-18 years club. Almost equal numbers wanted after-school and holiday clubs for each age group.	Set up youth clubs.	Provide youth clubs for 6 - 10s, 11 - 15s, and 16 - 18s. Club may take the form of a holiday club or after-school club. A part-time paid youth worker may support clubs.	Medium to high effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.	

<b>Amenities</b>				<b>22 people listed amenities as their most important issue (Q67)</b>			
							Lead Responsibility
212 people said they would pay for broadband access. Another 127 said they might pay. 10 people listed broadband as their most important issue.	Campaign for broadband Internet access.	Already achieved (begins August 4th).	None.	None.			
Of the commercial facilities available in the village (Post Office, shop, pub, butcher, milkman and fish van) only milk deliveries are used by more than 30% of respondents on a regular basis.	Communicate results of parish plan to businesses and providers of services in Helmdon.	Results to be copied to relevant people so they can see how well their business/service is being used in the parish.	PPMG.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.			
427 people said A&E should be in Brackley or Banbury. 337 said maternity should be in Banbury or Brackley. Strong support for Horton's facilities.	Highlight results of health provision questions to relevant authorities.	Results to be copied to local healthcare providers, Primary Care Trusts etc.	PPMG.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.			
<b>Environment</b>				<b>67 people chose some aspect of the environment as their most important issue (Q67)</b>			
							Lead Responsibility
17 people listed dog fouling as their most important issue. 246 people wanted dog waste bins. 161 people wanted notices. 160 people wanted better enforcement. 178 better education of dog owners.	Review of dog fouling issues in the parish.	Survey current level of dog fouling to determine level of problem. Investigate provision of additional bins, clarify law and local regulations and publicise same by way of education.	PPMG.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.			
343 people wanted litter removed. 161 people said they litter picking day.	Annual Litter Picking Day.	Reinstate an annual litter-picking day - perhaps to coincide with VoY judging.	PPMG.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.			

266 people asked for a larger litter bin in school playing field. 315 people wanted more litter bins in the village.	Provide more/larger litter bins.	Investigate possibility of providing more litter bins at strategic locations around the village, and a larger litter bin on the playing field.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	PPMG.
203 people wanted a pond. 217 wanted to improve the school conservation area. 327 wanted to clean the brook. 74 people wanted to join a wildlife group.	Set up a Wildlife & Conservation Group.	Form a group to tackle a whole series of environmental and conservation issues arising from the parish plan.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
299 people use Helmdon's recycling facility; 185 use Tesco's recycling. High support for an increase in recycling facilities.	Promote recycling in parish.	Forward results of parish plan to SNC recycling officer to show support for expanded recycling services.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.	PPMG.
Considering the low level of crime in the village, there was a very high level of concern about crime.	Publicise crime figures.	Crime figures to be widely publicised to emphasise low levels in parish by way of reassurance. Use of leaflets, Talkabout and web site to publicise figures. Also clarify role of CBOs & PCSOs and their contact details.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.	Parish Council.
<b>Culture</b>				
<b>40 people choose cultural or sporting issues as their most important issue (Q67)</b>				
<b>Lead Responsibility</b>				
194 people said a new venue was needed. 6.5 pages of comments were written about the inadequacy of current venues (see youth above).	Provide new venue for village groups and activities.	Determine exact requirements in consultation with user groups and stakeholders. Look for possible sites, seek funding etc. Combine with new facility proposed by Youth Topic Group (see above).	High effort - would take several years to achieve a result.	PPMG, Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
348 people said the Church is a good venue or concerts. 278 thought is a good venue for exhibitions. The church was clearly seen as a suitable venue for a range of community activities.	Upgrade heating system in church.	Parish Council to endorse the initiative to help the church upgrade its heating system.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	PPMG, Parish Church.

Around 80% of people would attend art and history exhibitions, musical concerts and drama productions.	Form a Culture Group.	Form a group to book suitable events in co-ordination and co-operation with various village groups.	Low to medium effort - could achieve visible results in less than one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
117 people said they would join a gardening club.	Form a gardening club.	To be set up by volunteers to promote gardening interests.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
92 people said they would join a film club.	Form a film club.	To be set up by volunteers to promote films. Would need to decide upon a venue.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
90 people said they would join a wine club.	Form a wine club.	To be set up by volunteers to promote wine interests.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
282 people wanted a bonfire/fireworks.	Establish bonfire/fireworks display tradition.	Volunteer group or existing village organisation to look at possibilities.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
184 people wanted an Easter egg hunt.	Establish Easter Egg Hunt tradition.	Volunteer group or existing village organisation to look at possibilities.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
169 people wanted a pancake race.	Establish Pancake Race tradition.	Volunteer group or existing village organisation to look at possibilities.	Medium - could be achieved within one year.	Community Volunteers to be identified at public meeting.
<b>Housing &amp; Development 37 people listed housing as their most important issue (Q67)</b>				
<b>Lead Responsibility</b>				
334 (70%) people said no to more housing. 138 said yes to more housing. 336 people did not want the village framework to be enlarged.	The Parish Council's current policy on housing is clearly supported by the villagers. This needs to be communicated to relevant planning authorities.	Forward results of parish plan to SNC & N.C.C to show support for current planning practice and policy.	Low effort - could be achieved quickly.	Parish Council.

