





Little Horkesley Village Design Statement



A Village Design Statement (VDS) is an assessment of a village's character and qualities, prepared by the villagers and formally accepted by the Borough Council. It identifies what the villagers value about their area, and what they consider are the important character and features to be retained as part of any new development.

It is intended to provide local information about the village, its environs and the wishes of its population and should complement national and local planning policies when any development is planned in the village.

A VDS provides guidance and recommendations to property owners and developers on future changes - large and small - in the village. It also provides additional information and guidance to Borough Council officers and Members considering planning applications.

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT PROCESS

The production of a VDS for Little Horkesley was initiated by the Parish Council in 2009 when a team of volunteers was recruited to act as a VDS Steering Committee.

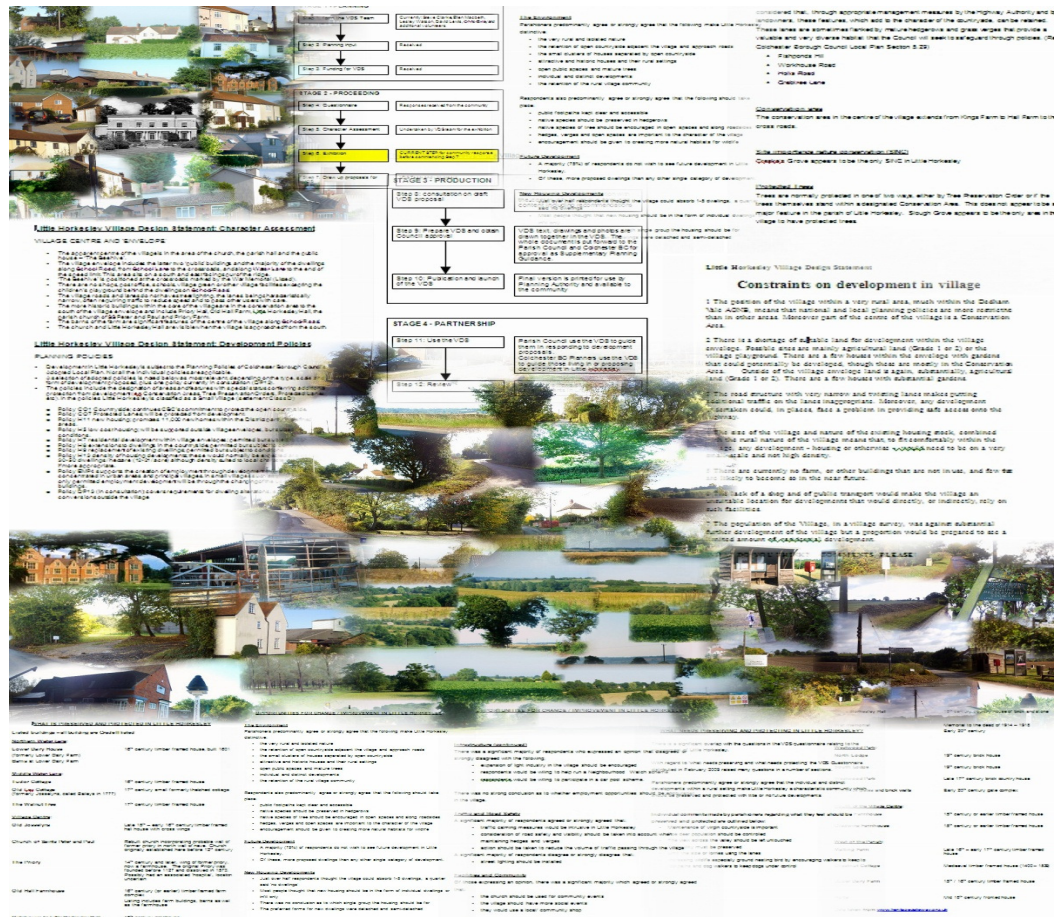
The first stage was the production of a questionnaire asking opinions about a wide range of matters affecting the character and qualities of the village. This was distributed to all adults in the village in the Spring of 2009 and 59 replies; representing 34% of the then adult population were received. Due to the very small population of the village and with no school in Little Horkesley the questionnaire did not include questions specifically for the children of the parish.

The results of this survey were presented to the village in a public exhibition and meeting in April 2009. Feedback and further comments were elicited and the VDS Steering Committee was endorsed and asked to continue work.

The next step was the production by the Steering Committee and other volunteers of an assessment of the buildings, landscape, roads and constraints on development in the village, taking into account the results of the survey and subsequent feedback. This material, along with the history of the village, was presented to the village in a public exhibition held over a weekend in October 2009.

Again feedback was encouraged. The amended assessment was then used as the basis for a first draft VDS, circulated to the entire village in May 2010 for additional comments.

A final draft was submitted to Colchester Borough Council in July 2010.



Examples of the displays at the public exhibition

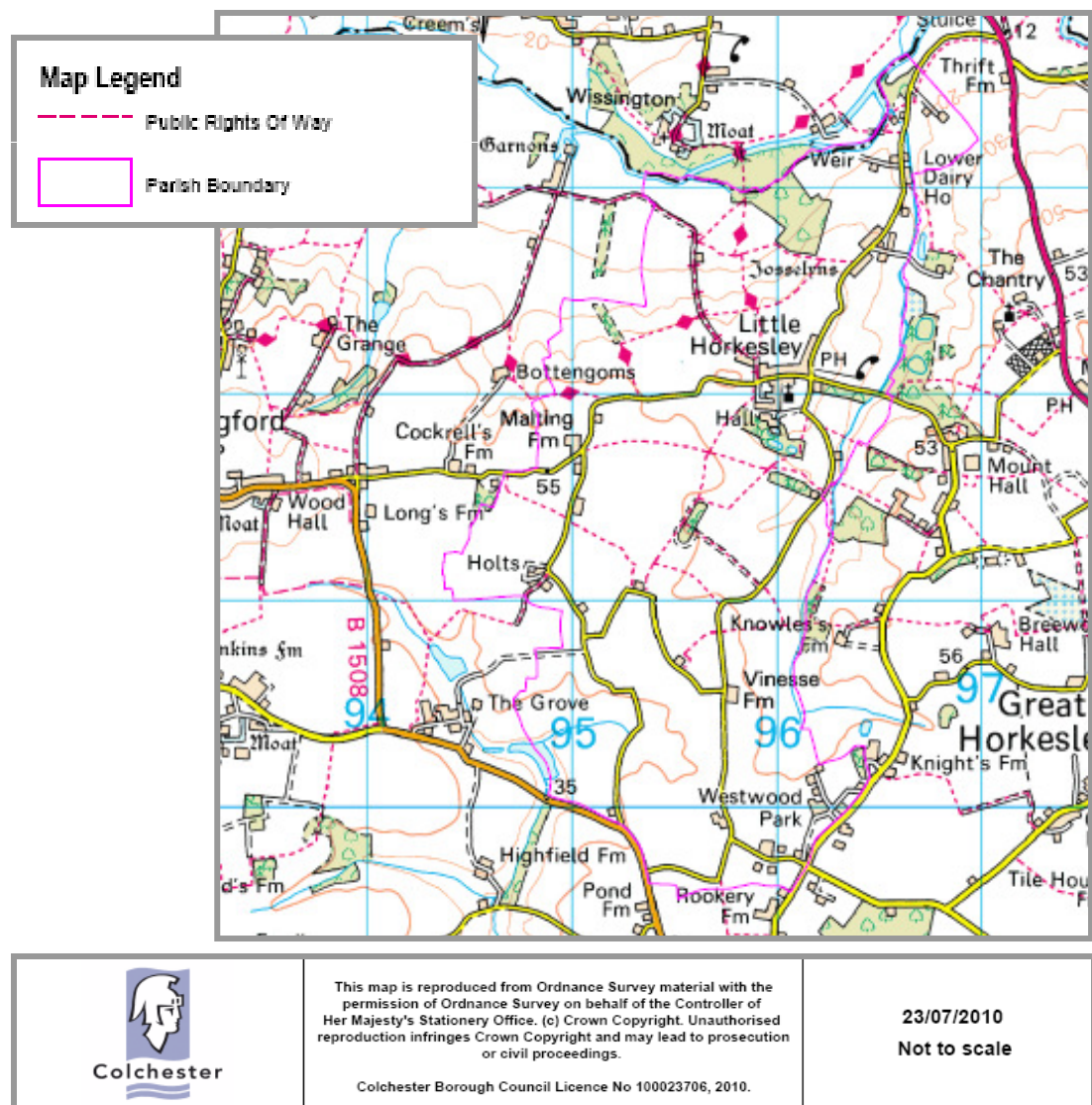
Once formally adopted as guidance the VDS will be provided to all households and businesses in the village. It will also be available on Colchester Borough's website (www.colchester.gov.uk)

The VDS is not intended as a static document; it will be reviewed by the Parish Council at three year intervals or earlier in the event of changes to national planning guidance and relevant local planning policies for Colchester Borough.

The recommendations in the following sections should be read in the context of Colchester Borough Council planning policies.

INTRODUCTION

Little Horkesley is one of the smallest villages in north Essex, some 6 miles north west of Colchester, bordering on Suffolk to the north.

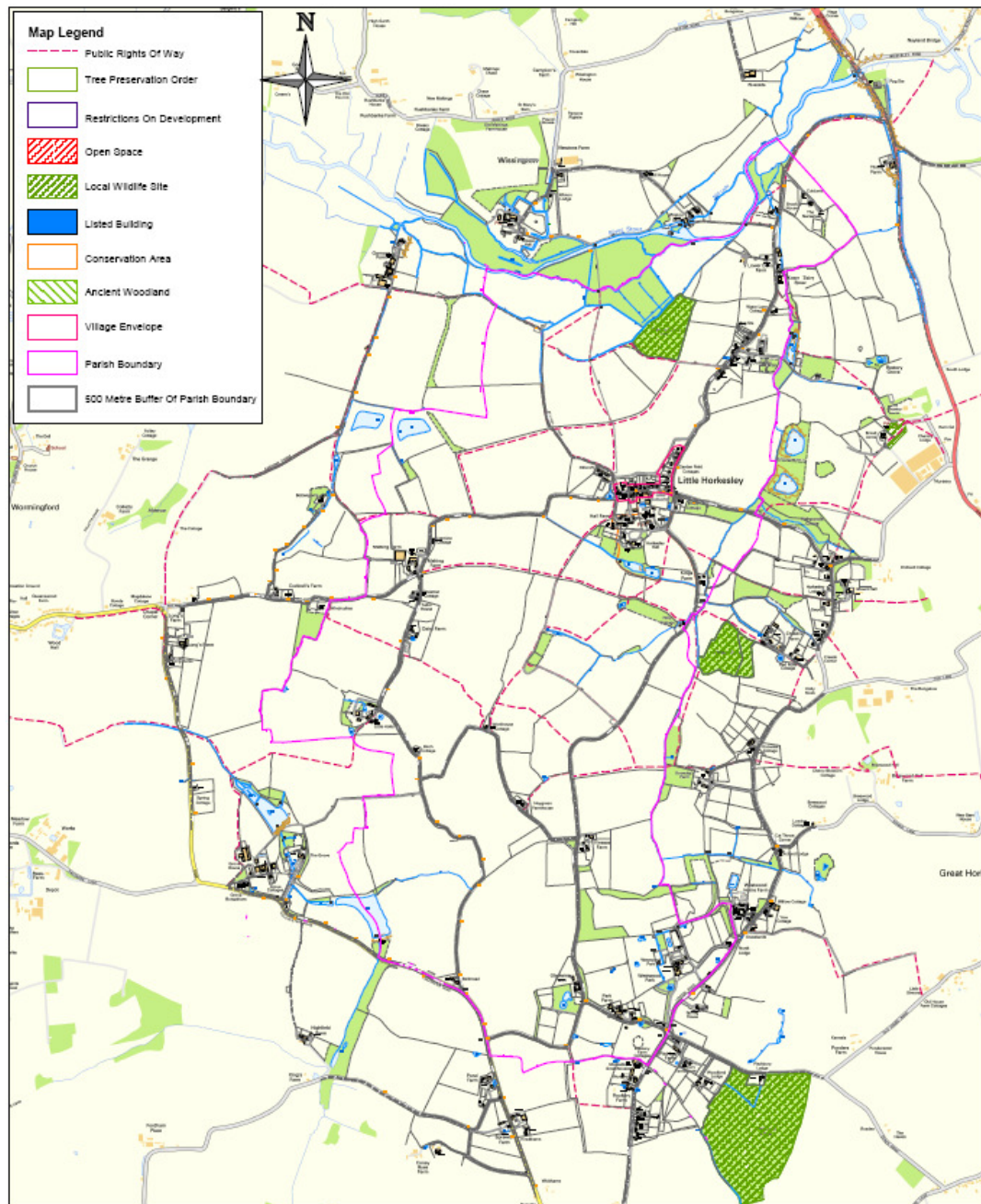


The majority of the parish is on the higher ground to the south of the River Stour and stretches down the slopes to this river plain and to subsidiary valleys. Partly within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the countryside of the parish is characterised by the broad, open river valley of the Stour to the north, the narrower valleys of its tributaries to east and south west and the relatively flat hill tops matching those of the upper ground

The rolling nature of the land provides views to and from the village across these valleys. There are small woods and many of the country lanes retain their hedgerows on one or both sides, although removal of hedgerows has increased the openness of the views in the east to and from the village. The land use is of mixed agriculture with a proportion of the pastoral land used for paddocks and stabling as well as for cattle grazing. The countryside has a relatively high density of footpaths compared to adjacent areas. These paths connect between outlying former agricultural dwellings and the winding country lanes and include parts of the Stour Valley Path.



Little Horkesley Parish Map



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Colchester Borough Council Licence No 100023706, 2010.

23/07/2010
Not to scale

The apparent centre of the village is in the area of the Church, the Village Hall and the public house – ‘The Beehive’. Other village community facilities include the playground and the mobile police unit which visits the village on a fortnightly basis. There is insufficient capacity to support any other permanent community facilities.

The defined ‘village envelope’ is very small and includes the latter two ‘public’ buildings and the majority of the dwellings along School Road, from School Lane to the crossroads, and along Water Lane to the end of the speed limit. This core area sits on a south and east facing spur of land to the south of the Stour Valley. The Beehive is positioned at the crossroads marked by the War Memorial (Listed). An area of Little Horkesley village is designated as a Conservation Area where building renovations or alterations are governed by tight planning control. Outside the designated Conservation Area are buildings with similarly interesting or important architectural features: the VDS recommendations regarding development proposals shall also be applied to these buildings.

Plan of the Centre of the Village





There are no longer any shops, post office, schools, village green or other village facilities excepting the children's playground behind the dwellings on School Road. There are few other open spaces available to the public: the graveyard to the Church is officially counted as open space and there is a small green sward/ parking area adjacent the Village Hall.

The village roads and lanes do not have street lighting, the lanes being characteristically narrow, often requiring traffic to reduce speed and to pass other users with care, even within the core of the village.

There are fewer than 75 dwellings, some in small clusters in and around the centre of the village, the rest spread through out the area. The population is stable with around 150-160 adults plus a variable number of children. The vast bulk of the parish is fields.

HISTORY OF LITTLE HORKESLEY

The name Horkesley was first recorded in 1130. It combines 'ley' meaning a woodland clearance with a word meaning either dirty or a temporary shelter.

At the time of the Domesday Book, Little Horkesley was a sub manor of Nayland. In 1129 the Cluniac priory was founded and although it was small (only 2-4 monks) it must have been an important part of the community up to Dissolution in 1586. The parish has always been dominated by agriculture. It had been well wooded but the woods were consistently being cleared from Saxon times onward. In 1086 there were 4 ploughs in the parish, and by 1266 the arable area had increased at the expense of woodland. In the seventeenth century new field names such as Upper, Middle, and Nether Stubbs (referring to the felled stumps) indicate continued clearance. Little Horkesley today is left with one old wood, Creeks Grove, of under 20 acres in total.

Settlement was dictated by the agricultural necessity of the time. In 1377, 78 people paid Poll tax to Richard II – to qualify you had to be over 16 years old. Most of the settlement we know of at this time was around the church, which had been built in 12th century on the hilltop close to the Priory, and the medieval manor was most probably on the site of the current Old Hall Farm.

In later periods settlement spread out over the parish. It took the form of dispersed farms, many of which are still in existence, and small green side settlements. In Little Horkesley we had the small settlement of Hay Green, first noted in 1329. It was still in existence at the beginning of the twentieth century and said to be able to produce two cricket teams, though now only Workhouse Cottage is still standing, and otherwise just the remains of the

tofts in the adjoining fields and some old plum trees in the wood indicate past habitation. Westwood Tye, another green settlement right on the border with Great Horkesley, gave its name to Westwood Park.

By 1778 there were 30 houses recorded in the parish, including the new hall built in 1710 on the site of the current Horkesley Hall. In 1801 201 people lived in the parish. The population peaked in 1861 with 253. Six farms were recorded at that time with over 50 acres. It was still an agricultural parish with a dispersed settlement pattern.

At the end of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century the pattern changed. There was an obvious need for housing, and the Government built a large number of council houses in School Road and Water Lane. These concentrated the main settlement of Little Horkesley along these two lanes.

In 1870 the school house was built with accommodation for 72 children. The school continued until 1936 when there were only 12 children attending and it was closed. The Beehive pub was first recorded in 1859 and for a short time in the nineteenth century there was a beerhouse in the cellars of the old Horkesley Hall, and also there was a beerhouse in the Walnut Tree on Water Lane.

On the 21st September 1940 both the Beehive and the church were hit by bombs dropped by returning German aircraft. The pub was rebuilt in 1954 and the church in 1958.



The parish remains a small rural settlement and is lucky to still have 5 working farms.





BUILDING STYLES AND DESIGNS

Little Horkesley's history as an agricultural area, away from the main road to Colchester, is reflected in the Parish's limited range and scale of building development, even during the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century.



The older remaining properties typically reflect their relatively high status, from Little Horkesley Hall to King's Farmhouse, Old Hall Farm to Lower Dairy House, and Westwood Park to Old Josselyns. A later addition to this group

is the new country house, also called Josselyns, designed by architect Raymond Erith. There are 24 Listed Buildings (including the Church and the War Memorial) the majority of which are timber framed farm houses, cottages or agricultural barns; see Appendix 1. The earliest of these may have elements originating in the 15th century (Holts, King's Farmhouse, Gladwins) although most date from the 16th, 17th or 18th centuries. There are reputed to be 14th century elements of the former priory in the listed house – “The Priory” - next to the Church.

One of the finest examples of the higher status houses is “Old Josselyns” on Water Lane. The house has had many extensions added to its original hall house through the centuries, with much of the frame exposed, interesting projecting windows and the whole capped with plain clay tile roofs in gabled and hipped forms.





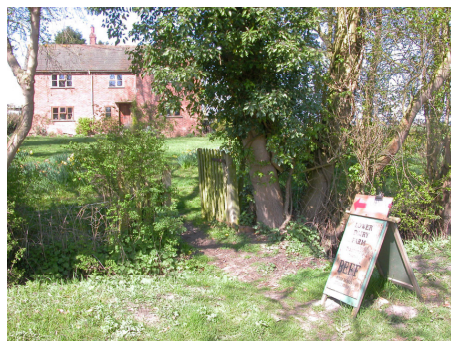
Other timber framed farm houses are also noteworthy, including the attractively fenestrated and sloping frame of King's Farmhouse on Vinesse Road. Upper Dairy Farm, Holts, Old Hall Farm and Lower Dairy House are also interesting timber framed buildings, the latter demonstrating its original status by its finely carved frame showing a local dragon and the date of the former farmhouse – 1601.

The grandest residences are Little Horkesley Hall – an 18th century classical house set in a landscaped valley including two lakes in the valley below – and Westwood Park, a brick country house originating in the late 17th century and with matching brick gatehouses. This is now the estate office for the Westwood Park Centre for Business



The later buildings in the Parish – nearly all dwellings – are usually of simple pitched roof form, predominantly two storey, although there is a group of single storey houses on School Road built in the mid-20th century. A few individual houses have been added to the Parish from time to time but there have been few periods of significant expansion of the village; there are no housing estates. A few small groups of houses – mainly by the Council - were

built during the 20th century; 'Baileys Cottages' mid way along Water Lane, the semi-detached houses on Water Lane in the core of the village and the School Road group noted above.



The 'public' buildings in the Parish are few; the former school (now the Village Hall) in School Lane, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in the centre of the village and the public house – "The Beehive" at the village crossroads. The two latter were re-built after their destruction by landmine during the Second World War. The church is of relatively simple architectural form on the plan of the medieval church. It has a rendered and crenellated

square tower, with stone dressings to openings and long-and-short work to corners. The nave, aisle and chancel have copper roofs and are rendered similarly to the tower, with simple fenestration of hooded stone lights plus stone-dressed piers.



The older buildings are roofed in plain clay tiles, clay pantiles or thatch. Later houses use slates, concrete tiles or artificial slates. The external walls of dwellings are usually finished externally in render without the timber frame exposed, in local orangey-red brick or are 'half-timbered' (the older properties).

The older agricultural buildings are clad in timber boarding and also have red plain clay tiles or more modern sheet cladding and roofing materials where re-roofed. Later farm buildings typically use profiled steel or asbestos cement sheet roofing and cladding. Some farms (e.g. Malting Farm) and larger houses (e.g. Hillcroft) have single storey outer ranges built with plain clay tiled pitched roofs, brick walls or timber boarded frames to match the main building. The local palette of external materials therefore reflects the vernacular architecture of the area.

There is a wide range of windows and doors used, from the classically proportioned sash windows of Little Horkesley Hall, to the mullioned oak windows fitting the timber frame of King's Farmhouse and the modern 'standard' timber casement windows and later PVCu replacements on many of the 20th century houses. Apart from the front entrance portico to the 18th century brick and stone Little Horkesley Hall and the brick detailing of Westwood Park, most buildings' front entrances are unremarkable.

There is a range of property frontages within the village including hedges fences and brick walls with no single form predominating





RECOMMENDATIONS

- new developments should only take place within the Village Envelope
- any development should reflect the characteristics of the village; its rural and isolated nature, open countryside adjacent the village, the open spaces and mature trees, small clusters of housing separated by countryside, the historic country houses and their rural settings.
- any development should be sympathetic - in style, scale, mass and design – with adjacent properties
- any development (including extensions) should generally be limited to 2 storeys, use matching materials, and respect the established building line
- new residential developments should be detached or semi-detached
- conversions of agricultural buildings are preferred to be to residential use. The conversions should retain the character of the original building.
- traditional roofing materials should be used (e.g. plain clay tiles, pantiles, slates, as appropriate) where these are the dominant materials used on existing buildings
- the playground should be retained as an area of Public Open Space and should not be built upon

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

The road users in the village are a mix of:

- private cars, both local and longer distance traffic using the lanes as a rat run to the A12 south of Colchester;

- farm equipment - from the farms in the village, but also from a major farm on the other side of the A134 farming land on the other side of the village;
- horse trailers, general delivery and other large vehicles;
- cyclists - from the village and also from further away;
- horse riders - including from the various commercial stables in the village;
- walkers - local and also from further away.

All the roads in the village are narrow country lanes, mostly single track.

There are some limited stretches where two cars may pass comfortably but only one very small stretch in the middle of the village where two larger vehicles can pass. Otherwise, informal passing places are used. There are three Protected Lanes - Workhouse Rd, Holts Rd and Crabtree Lane

There are no roadside footpaths and the verges, where they exist, are largely unsuitable for walking on. Pedestrians necessarily use the road.



The increase in traffic and particularly of larger vehicles in the village - farm vehicles and others - combined with an increase in drivers unused to the lanes mean that verges are constantly being eroded.



This brings additional problems - ruined drainage systems leading to flooding, mud on the road and potholes. Moreover the post and chain fences around two small greens are damaged frequently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- parking should always be off-road or where this cannot be accommodated comply with Essex County Council Parking Standards.
- development that would increase the traffic passing through the village should be resisted. There is a preference for measures which reduce traffic through the village.
- measures that urbanise the roads, such as road calming measures, street furniture, lighting, paving, etc, should be avoided.
- consideration should be given to extending the speed limits.
- consideration should be given to road safety when maintaining hedges and verges.
- the County Council should address the problem of deterioration of rural road surfaces caused by heavy traffic

FOOTPATHS

There are no roadside footpaths, but there is an extensive network of footpaths and bridle paths throughout the area of the village crossing fields

and into copses, both within and outside of the AONB.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- the Parish Council should actively encourage landowners to maintain footpaths in good order, liaising with Essex County Council where needed.

THE VILLAGERS' VIEWS

The following is based on the results of the survey of the village conducted in Spring 2009. As with many surveys, results can appear to be, and in some

cases are, contradictory. In 2007 there was also a survey of the needs of children in the parish;

It was very clear from the survey that the vast majority of adult residents of the village value highly its very rural, underdeveloped and quiet nature and nearly 80% said they did not want any future development in Little Horkesley.


If there is to be development, the consensus was that between one and five houses, preferably individual houses or in small clusters and/or as infill would be acceptable. Detached or semi-detached houses were preferred with families, followed by first time buyers and then accommodation for the elderly as the target occupants. People with local connections were considered desirable. New houses should be within the village envelope, sympathetic in scale, massing, character and design, and with provision for off-street parking. Any redundant farm buildings should be converted to residential use in preference to anything else, with a minority preferring light industrial use.

In principle, more local employment was welcomed by just over half the respondents. However, a similar proportion said they were not aware of employers/employment opportunities within the village despite 11 separate such opportunities being cited by others. Moreover there was little support for developing facilities to provide employment with light industry, office and non-residential institutions being the sectors that gained limited support.

RECOMMENDATION

- the village's rural character and quality should be maintained

The state of the roads and the volume of traffic in the village were significant concerns. The majority wished to see existing speed limits extended and action taken to reduce the volume of traffic passing through the village.



However, a large majority considered that traffic calming measures would be intrusive on the environment. Virtually no one wanted street lighting. Both of these views are consistent with the desire to maintain a rural feel to the village. It was thought important, however, that road safety and visibility be taken into account when maintaining hedges and verges.

A significant proportion cites walking as a village-based recreation. Indeed, everyone who stated an opinion feels that it is important for footpaths to be kept in good order. In addition, groups of ramblers are frequently to be seen. Horse riders, many from commercial stables in the village, use the bridle paths as well as the lanes.

Whilst a significant majority said a bus service should be considered, almost two thirds then went on to say that they would use it rarely or never and only a tiny proportion would expect to use a bus service more than weekly.

A significant majority claimed they would use a community shop if there were one, with a sizeable minority saying they would volunteer to run one.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of Little Horkesley village questionnaire (see “Villagers’ Views”) indicate that there are unlikely to be

any areas in the Parish where a significant scale of development is either suitable or desirable. There was a strong preference (75%) for no further development in the village.

Should development be proposed then just over half of the population thought it would be expected to be small scale (1-5 dwellings). Most people thought that new housing should be single dwellings or infill.

Any development, whether new building or extensions/ alterations to existing buildings, was strongly preferred to be sympathetic in scale, design and materials to the adjacent properties. Parking should be off-street. Where buildings are proposed to be extended the extensions should be in keeping with the scale, design and materials of the main building, and use traditional roofing materials. Any conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use should retain the character of the original buildings.

The population expressed a strong preference to safeguard the characteristics of the village. These characteristics include its rural and isolated nature, the open countryside adjacent the village and its approach roads, the open spaces and mature trees, the extensive footpath network, the small clusters of houses separated by open countryside, the attractive and historic houses and their rural settings.

APPENDIX 1: LISTED BUILDINGS IN LITTLE HORKESLEY

- The Priory
- Barn north of Priory House
- Little Horkesley Hall
- Gatehouse to Little Horkesley Hall
- Church of Saints Peter and Paul
- Old Hall Farmhouse
- Barn west of Old Hall Farmhouse
- Barn north of barn west of Old Hall Farmhouse
- War Memorial
- Old Josselyns, Water Lane
- Tudor Cottage, Water Lane
- Lower Dairy House, Water Lane
- Barns north of Lower Dairy House, Water Lane
- The Walnut Tree, Water Lane
- Kings Farmhouse, Vinesse Road
- Old Barn Cottage
- Gladwins Farmhouse, Vinesse Road
- Westwood Park
- North Lodge and South Lodge, Westwood Park
- Entrance Gates and brick walls, Westwood Park
- Malting Farm
- Chestnut Cottage, Holt's Road
- Upper Dairy Farm, Holt's Road
- Holts Farmhouse



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Little Horkesley Village Design Statement has been produced with the inputs of many individuals. The VDS Steering Committee is extremely grateful for the contributions of those individuals, including the following;

- Colchester Borough Council Planning Department staff and officers, including Beverley McClean
- Rural Community Council of Essex; Clare Nagle and Sarah Sapsford
- Little Horkesley Parish Council
- Local businesses
- The Parishioners of Little Horkesley

We would also like to thank ITV/ Rural Action East for providing/ arranging financial support