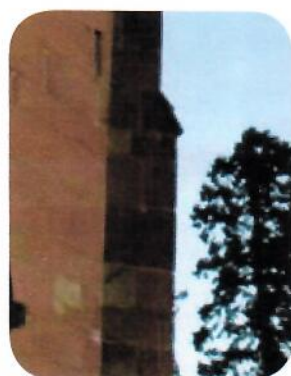


# Norton In Hales and Betton Parish Plan





This Parish Plan has been supported by the  
Shropshire Neighbourhood and Parish Partnership funding



# Norton in Hales and Betton Parish Plan

Welcome to the Norton in Hales and Betton Parish Plan! Whether you live in the Parish, work here or have some other interest, I hope that you find it interesting and informative. The plan follows a detailed consultation with parishioners and, probably for the first time in the history of the Parish, we have been able to establish the views of parishioners on a wide range of key topics. We have gathered a great deal of data in the process and hope to use that data to lobby the powers that be, whether in the form of Shropshire Council, the Police, the local bus companies or whoever, and, in some cases, to take direct action ourselves

## Background

Parish Plans were first announced in the Government's 2000 "Rural White Paper". They are part of the Countryside Agency's "Vital Villages" initiative. The Countryside Agency has since then actively encouraged rural communities to develop their own Parish Plan to ".....set out a vision of what is important, how new developments 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 the future". In the case of Norton in Hales and Betton, the possibility of preparing a Parish Plan was first discussed when the Parish council chairman and two newly elected councillors attended a Planning Assessment Training lecture at Wem in June 2007. This resulted in a public meeting taking place in the Jubilee Hall on 30 October 2007. This was very well attended. Everyone present was asked to identify key issues to be addressed in the Parish Plan by writing these down on "post it" stickers, which were then gathered together and divided into a number of categories, namely: services, community, housing, landscape and wildlife, community buildings, education, employment, transport and miscellaneous.

Following this meeting, individuals who had volunteered to play a part in the drawing up of the plan formed the Norton in Hales Parish Plan Committee. As volunteers, we have no powers. We are effectively an ad-hoc sub committee of the Parish Council. Since October 2007 we have carefully prepared a detailed questionnaire which we have distributed throughout the Parish. Having collected back the completed questionnaires, with an extraordinarily high response rate of over 60%, we have subsequently had the raw data processed by Community Council Shropshire to produce detailed statistics, a summary of which was presented to parishioners in the Jubilee Hall on 19 March 2009. Incidentally, for anyone interested, the original detailed statistical data on which that summary was based can be read on the village website at [www.nortoninhales.org](http://www.nortoninhales.org). As you would expect all of this data is completely anonymous.





## What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan sets out a vision for how a community wants to develop, and what it wants to preserve. It identifies the action needed to achieve these objectives. It can, and should, include everything that is relevant and important to the people who live and work in the community. It is up to the community to decide what issues are important. The plan is a statement of how a community sees itself developing over the next few years – and features that are to be preserved. It reflects the views of all sections of the community, identifies local problems and opportunities as well as features and local characteristics which people value. It spells out how residents want the community to develop in the future – and how they want it to stay the same. It is a plan of action to achieve this vision. The Parish Plan is not intended to reflect my views or the views of any other individual person – it reflects the views of the Parish as a whole.

## The Future

So much for the past and the present. We have ascertained parishioners' views and wishes. We now know what we want to change and what we want to preserve. This plan sets out a blue print for the future and the ways in which parishioners can try and shape that future.

It would be remiss of me not to thank not only my fellow committee members for all the hard work which they put into the preparation of the plan but, most importantly, all of you, the parishioners, who took the trouble to attend meetings, express your views and complete the questionnaires which we drew up – a truly fine effort and one which the whole Parish can be proud of.

Thanks go to Maxine Betts, Head of Rural Services and her team including Hayley Aston and Lorraine Smart for their support and steadfastness in nurturing the plan process.

Finally, our thanks go to the Parish Council and to the SNPP for their financial support, without which this Plan would not have happened.

**Richard Jones** Chairman, Norton in Hales and Betton Parish Plan Committee





## Summary of Findings

Having seen the response to the post-it exercise in 2007, we had a fairly good idea which issues and themes were likely to dominate the completed questionnaires – and we weren't surprised by the responses. The questionnaire asked households which single feature they most wanted to preserve or protect, and which single feature they would most like to see changed.

### What do we want to preserve?

Overwhelmingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the single feature that most people wanted to protect was the unspoiled character of the parish, which consists of a small picturesque village and a number of outlying hamlets, surrounded by attractive, unspoiled countryside.

### What do we want to change?

Two topics dominated the responses to this question. Parishioners wanted to see more and better community facilities. Concerns were also raised about the volume of traffic using the small roads which service the parish and speeding is a big issue for a significant number of people.

These two principal conclusions are actually closely related, inasmuch as they both demonstrate parishioners' pride in the place where they live and the strong desire that they have to maintain and preserve the character and tranquillity of the parish and to stop it being spoiled. At the same time, people are not averse to all change and would like to see an even better community spirit being engendered through the provision of better and more community facilities.



The main body of the plan consists of a summary of what parishioners thought were key issues concerning the parish and these are set out in a number of specific sections. There is also an action plan which will be updated as things move forward.

Before we get to that stage, however, it would be helpful to provide some background information:

- **Where do we live?** According to responses to questionnaires, unsurprisingly, 73% of parishioners live in Norton itself, the remainder living mostly in Betton, Ridgewardine and Tunstall.
- **How long have we lived here?** The evidence suggests that we have a relatively stable, static population in the parish. More than two thirds of respondents to the questionnaire have lived in the parish for more than ten years (and excluding Norton itself, this figure goes up to 83%). More than 80% of the population have lived in the parish for more than five years. These figures coupled with other evidence revealed by the responses suggest that the parish is a place where people are happy to stay, on a long term basis.
- **How old are we?** The responses indicate that a fraction over half of the population of the parish is between the ages of 18 and 60 with 20% of parishioners being under the age of 18 and 29% being over the age of 60.
- **Where do we work?** The largest single group of respondents work within the parish (30%), some at home and some elsewhere in the parish. Approximately 18% of respondents work in Market Drayton, 15% in the Potteries conurbation and 9% in Shrewsbury/Telford.

Approximately half of the respondents not in paid employment are retired and just over a quarter are in education. On the basis of the responses received, unemployment in the parish is negligible.
- **How do we travel around?** Approximately 90% of households responding have at least one vehicle which means that there is a small but statistically significant minority of householders who do not have access to a vehicle and who must, therefore, be reliant on public transport. Half of the households responding have two cars.
- **Response rates.** The response rate to the questionnaire, which was issued to every household in the parish, was over 60% i.e. almost two thirds of households completed and returned a questionnaire. Given that a 45% response rate is considered very good, we have truly excelled ourselves here - and it is clear that the parishioners care enough about the parish, particularly the preservation of everything which is good about it, to complete what was, in fact, a fairly detailed questionnaire.



# History of the Parish of Norton in Hales

The Parish of Norton in Hales encompasses Norton in Hales, Betton and Ridgewardine.

The earliest reference to Norton in Hales was in the Domesday Book, known at the time as 'Nortune'. The land had been gifted to Count Roger Montgomery by William the Conqueror and under him a certain Helgot held the area. Subsequently, around 1100 the manor of Norton was given to Shrewsbury Abbey and it became part of the Abbot's manor of Betton. At the time of the Domesday survey Betton comprised Tunstall, Ridgewardine and The Lees, which is now known as Adderley, and was larger than Norton. In the 13th Century Betton was the market centre and was apparently known as Great Betton in Hales.

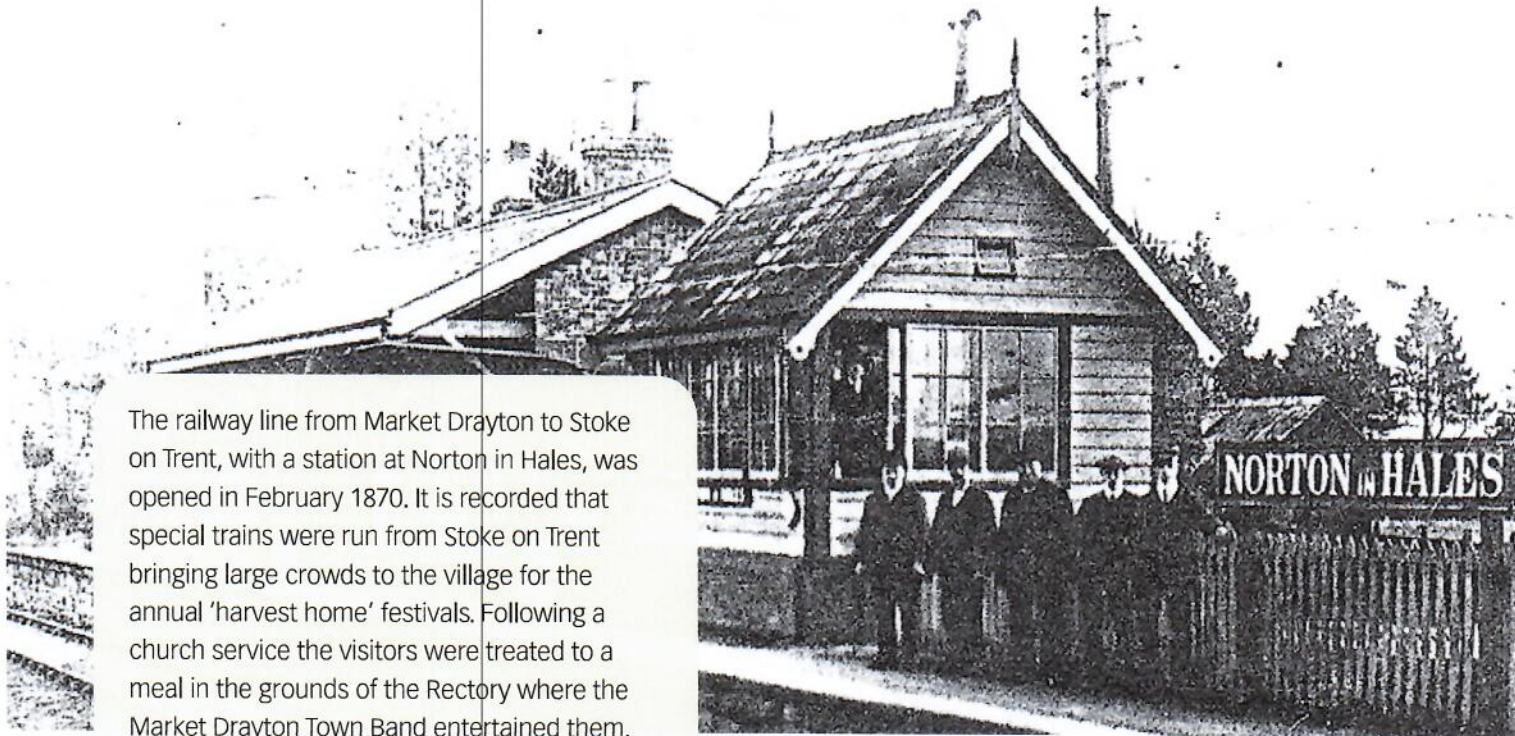


For most of its past the parish has been an agricultural society. However, in the 17th and 18th Century there was a local iron industry at Norton Forge. A number of these forges existed along the River Tern using the power of the river to drive water wheels. The forges were heated by charcoal from local woods and this resulted in the destruction of significant tree cover in the area. Interestingly, near the Tern was a water mill which was used to grind corn and a dam by Betton Farm which is likely to have held a monastic fish pond.



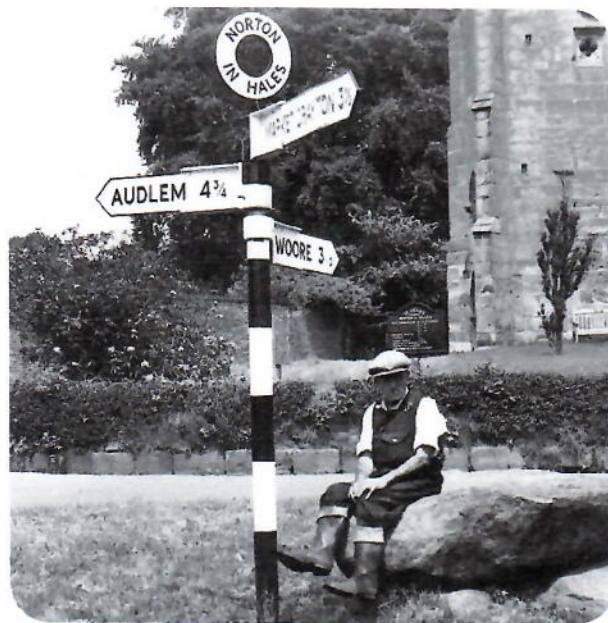
By early Victorian times the social conditions in the parish were not good and a new Rector referred to them as 'deplorable'. He set about restoration with rebuilding the school; presented local farmers with a new steam threshing machine; established an Agricultural Society; provided a surgery and local doctor; levelled the churchyard; and established the Remote Graveyard and chapel. However, it was not until 1935 that mains water and sewerage arrived in the Parish with electricity arriving in 1939.





The railway line from Market Drayton to Stoke on Trent, with a station at Norton in Hales, was opened in February 1870. It is recorded that special trains were run from Stoke on Trent bringing large crowds to the village for the annual 'harvest home' festivals. Following a church service the visitors were treated to a meal in the grounds of the Rectory where the Market Drayton Town Band entertained them. Before the Second World War the increased use of bus services and the use of lorries for freight transport began to compete with the railway. The line and station closed on 7th May 1956.

On the village green at Norton in Hales is the 'Bradling Stone' said to have come down from Scotland during the Ice Age. Rumour has it that any person found working on Shrove Tuesday was 'bumped' on it. There is also a 'Murrain Stone' which was placed in a field at Norton Farm as a monument to the Great Cattle Plague of 1866. On the edge of the village is a new Stone Age monument known as the 'Devils Ring and Finger'. According to legend, villagers cured ill babies by passing them through the hole called the 'Devils Ring'. There is also the base of an ancient cross some six feet high, in the grounds of Betton Hall.



More modern times have seen a move to a more mixed community in the parish which is less reliant on its historic roots of agriculture. Competing demands and more mobility have seen many changes such as, the closure of the Post Office and store; a significant reduction in the bus services to local centres; and the conversion of many fine agricultural buildings into residences. The former 'tin' chapel at Betton is now modernised as a house as well.



## Services

This section of the questionnaire posed questions regarding a variety of local services, including public transport, roads and footpaths, litter and parking as well as street lighting, signage, overhead services and policing.

There were four main issues which stood out as being important to parishioners.



### Public transport

Public transport in the parish is extremely limited. This did not concern two thirds of respondents, undoubtedly because many parishioners simply never need to use public transport. In this sense, it is not a major issue. However, for the significant minority of parishioners who do sometimes need to rely on public transport, it is clearly a very real issue. Almost a third of responders said that public transport was inadequate and if you look at the responses of those who are directly affected, nearly 90% said that public transport in the village was inadequate.



### Footpaths

Unpaved footpaths and bridleways in the parish are very popular and responses to the questionnaire revealed a wish for additional paths to be made available - almost certainly for recreational use.

The (relatively) new permissive paths seem to have been well received and there may be scope for persuading landowners to open up more permissive paths.

*"It may not be possible to resurrect the 'old times'. Village life can be isolating so community spirit, support and adequate transport are important"*





## Fly tipping

Generally speaking, litter does not appear to be seen as a significant problem in the parish - but there are highly localised problems with persistent fly tipping in the areas of Betton and Tunstall.

*"Fly tipping will always be a problem if we are restricted to one bin collection"*

## Parking

Finally, within the village of Norton itself, there is clearly concern over car parking associated with Norton in Hales school. Although this does not affect many parishioners, those who are affected (both those who live nearby and those who need to park near the school) see it as problematic. Of the 86 written comments on the parking issue, the vast majority referred to parking problems associated with the school.

*"Parking outside the school is a problem"*



## Community and Community Buildings

*"Bring back the footie team!!"*

As anticipated, nearly everyone thought that sports facilities were important and there were a number of suggestions with regard to additional facilities required to supplement the existing cricket, tennis and bowls facilities, all of which are widely used by parishioners with teams competing in local leagues. The most popular suggestion by far was the resurrection of a football pitch and it was mooted that we should search for a volunteer to run a football club within the village, on the assumption that the field previously used was still available.



The vast majority of residents answering the Questionnaire thought that the Parish Church played an important part in the community and a similar high percentage also thought that the Britain in Bloom entry and the efforts leading up to it were also good for the village and for community spirit.

A further question asked whether vandalism/anti-social behaviour was generally a problem in the Parish and whilst less than 20% thought that vandalism was a problem, there was a feeling that it may be increasing. It is difficult to think of solutions to this problem.

However, trying to get the young people more involved in the day to day activities of the Parish would be beneficial and, again, if someone could be found willing to run a Youth Club, then this would be most helpful.

One of the pleasing aspects of the responses to the Questionnaire were the number of people who offered their time and skills for the benefit of the Parish and, hopefully, these people will be in touch once this Report has been circulated.

*"The damage to the bus shelter is getting me down"*





Three specific buildings were mentioned in the Questionnaire. The Jubilee Hall, the Hinds Head and a potential village shop.

Most of the residents felt that the Jubilee Hall was fit for its purpose, although a number pointed out that the location was not particularly good and perhaps it could be bigger. However, the general feeling was that it was under-used. There were various suggestions made - computer classes, language classes etc. and it is proposed that these suggestions are passed to the Jubilee Hall Committee, although it was pointed out that their remit was to maintain the Jubilee Hall and not necessarily promote events.

A large majority of the parishioners considered the Hinds Head to be an important part of the community although it was felt that this was not reflected in the trade. The only way to make sure that the village retains its only pub is for it to be used, and it is hoped that parishioners would support the existing Landlady.



There was also significant support for a village shop, although whether the actual support would be sufficient to make a separate shop viable is doubtful. However, it may be that a shop could be incorporated in the Hinds Head and it was hoped that the Licensee would consider this suggestion



## Housing



*"The latest lot of starter homes took ages to fill. I don't think we need any more"*

This section of the questionnaire covered the provision of housing in the parish and focussed particularly on the parishioners' views on whether further housing development should be permitted

There is a wide range of housing styles within the Parish. The traditional 'four gables' farm houses still remain, along with former farm workers cottages. However, newer post-war housing has followed 'architectural fashion'. The agricultural cottages and some social housing tend to be smaller, with the more recent housing, in general, providing four or more bedrooms and a wider range of accommodation

The survey revealed that parishioners have very strong views on the provision of new housing and wish to preserve the character of the villages which make up the Parish. Most are against any further residential development in the Parish.

A significant majority of parishioners stated that any future housing development should be limited to infill within the prescribed development limit. This factor was considered important in establishing future planning policy.

The Conservation Area status for the centre of Norton in Hales is supported by the majority of residents. However, there is no mandate for any extension of it.

The survey results show that there is a widely held view in the Parish that parishioners should be given priority in the allocation of 'social housing' - local housing for local people.





## Transport

*"Speeding on Main Road is a worry, especially when children are playing"*

There is a widespread perception that speeding is a problem in the Parish particularly in built up areas and between Market Drayton and Norton in Hales. Ignoring speed limits and lack of consideration for other road users and pedestrians are of particular concern



*"Hedge cuttings everywhere — punctures! Mud on the roads makes driving dangerous in wet"*

There is a significant perception that the number and size of large vehicles using the mostly very narrow lanes in the Parish has become a significant problem, on occasion, without concern for others.

Despite some ongoing patch repairs, there is widely held concern about the state of the road surfaces in the Parish. There is also significant concern about uncleared debris such as mud and hedge clippings, which residents feel are a danger to road users.







## Wildlife and Landscape

There was a strong theme running through the vast majority of responses to the questionnaire confirming the importance of preserving the attractive rural setting of the Parish.

There was much support for additional tree planning in the Parish – in carefully selected locations. The stand of Wellingtonia trees next to the bus shelter in Norton, which was probably planted over 100 years ago, and which can be seen from some distance away, symbolise the far sightedness of earlier parishioners who have left a wonderful legacy for us all to enjoy.

The large majority of parishioners responding to the Questionnaire thought the preservation of historical features to be important.

*"This is the most beautiful place I have ever lived — and I would like it to stay beautiful"*

*"The best thing about the Parish is the quiet, rural setting set in beautiful countryside with hedges, trees and fields"*

*"Norton is instantly recognisable from miles around, because of its landmark trees opposite the church – let's plant more trees, as a legacy for those who will live here when we are all gone."*

*"Trees — they don't grow overnight and they are beautiful!"*

*"Landmark trees should be planted on the Parish boundaries"*



## Education

Pupils attending Norton in Hales primary school live not only in the parish itself but also further afield, a good number coming from Market Drayton. The school could not survive were its intake to be limited to children living in the parish and indeed 83% of households responding to the questionnaire had no children attending the school at the time.

Nevertheless, and despite concerns expressed by a significant number of responders about parking associated with the school, responses to the questionnaire revealed an overwhelming support for the school, 91% of responders considering that it formed an important part of the local community. This is in sharp contrast to the number of households who actually have children attending the school. In other words, very many parishioners with no current, direct connection with the school are happy that it is there.

Special questionnaires were issued to children of primary school age and children aged 11-17. Of the primary school responders, the large majority attend Norton in Hales school and most of those walk to school. The large majority of primary school aged responders use the Jubilee Hall but mostly for school activities. A wide variety of clubs are attended but these are mostly in the Market Drayton area, Norton in Hales Tennis and Cricket Clubs being exceptions. Most of the primary school aged responders play outside, they all ride bikes and most of them feel safe on their bikes.

As for responders aged 11-17, less than two thirds attend school in Market Drayton (all of whom travel by school bus) and again, most organised activities attended by these responders are based in Market Drayton. The Jubilee Hall is used by less than 27% of responders in the 11-17 age group. Many have ideas regarding activities which they would like to see in the village but there was no obvious single, recurring theme in their responses.

In summary, children and young persons up to the age of 17 generally like where they live, and appreciate the peaceful rural setting - but some of them would prefer to see more organised activities within the parish itself, failing which the older ones at least need better public transport to give them easier access to Market Drayton.

In terms of adult education, a surprisingly high figure, in excess of 40% (107 responders), indicated that they would like to attend adult education classes if they were held in the parish. There was no clear consensus as to what topics these classes should cover but the most popular ones were foreign languages, keep fit and computing.

