



## **Fletching Parish Action Plan**

*Determining the future of our community and how we can change it for the better*

### **Why a Parish Action Plan is important**

As a community led project, this plan reflects the local vision of how residents would like to see our area develop in coming years and what they want to see protected. It identifies key facilities and services, sets out the problems that need to be tackled and shows how distinctive character and features can be conserved. This Parish Action Plan gives you the opportunity to get involved in planning in your village and surrounding countryside.

### **Responding to your concerns**

The questionnaire sent to all residents last year has formed the basis for the creation of this Fletching Parish Action Plan. Over 30% of households responded to the questionnaire and this document sets out a vision for the future of the parish and how that can best be achieved.

### **Volunteers are needed**

Investigation of issues and implementation of initiatives contained within the plan will be undertaken by Focus Groups, working in conjunction with the Steering Group and Fletching Parish Council. Key to the success of this plan is the need for volunteers to join our Steering Group and Focus Groups. The more volunteers we have, the more we can achieve. If you are interested in helping shape some of our projects and move them forward, please contact Katherine Rumble on 01444 483080 or e-mail [clerk@fletching-pc.org](mailto:clerk@fletching-pc.org)



## About the Parish

Fletching is a rural parish comprising 2,562 hectares in East Sussex. There are 457 households in the parish and there are 839 electors. One of the most consistent themes coming from the questionnaire responses is the value placed on living in our rural environment.

The village of Fletching lies at the centre of the parish. However, a majority of households in the parish are outside the village. The dispersed hamlet of Piltdown lies in the south-east of the parish. In the west is Sheffield Park with its National Trust garden and Sheffield Green. In the east lies Down Street. To the north lies Splaynes Green and parts of Bell Lane to just beyond Searles. The parish lies to the east of the river Ouse, with the exception of Fletching Common.

Administratively the parish falls under Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council. Wealden District Council has designated a large part of Fletching village as a Conservation Area. The north-west half of the parish, including most of Fletching village, is in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The entire parish lies within the 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation. This is relevant when considering what development is permissible in the parish.



## History of the Parish

Throughout its long history our small rural parish has been linked to an impressive number of notable personages and events. The village of Fletching is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1085. Its spacious parish church of St. Andrew and St. Mary the Virgin dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, completed in 1230. It was here, in 1246, that Simon de Montfort with his barons held a vigil of prayer on the eve of the Battle of Lewes, while his men camped on Fletching Common. They defeated the all-powerful King, and it was their victory which bore the seeds of England's democracy.

It is said that a number of de Montfort's barons are buried beneath the church, in full armour. In the Middle Ages Fletching was noted for its production of arrowheads, which are believed to have been used in the battles of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt.

The south-west side of the parish lays within the ancient estate known as Sheffield Park, which is also mentioned in the Domesday Book. It has been in the ownership of, among others, the Dukes of Norfolk, the Lords De La Warr and the Earls of Sheffield. In 1538 Henry VIII was entertained there by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Norfolk.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the house (as we still see it today) was enlarged and remodelled in the newly fashionable gothic style (by James Wyatt); the garden was also extensively landscaped with the creation of the stepped lakes (by Capability Brown and Humphry Repton). At this time the first Lord Sheffield bought the estate. A regular guest was his friend the historian Edward Gibbon, famed for his book *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon was staying at Sheffield Park when he died, and is laid to rest in the mausoleum of the Earls of Sheffield, in the north transept of the parish church.

Nearly a hundred years later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl laid out a cricket pitch in the Park, famous in the annals of sporting history: the first ever match between England and Australia was played there on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1884, and the Sheffield Shield was inaugurated; it is still today Australia's main cricketing trophy. In recent years this historic cricket pitch has been restored, and commemorative matches held in Fletching in 1990 and 2009, when the Sheffield Shield itself travelled with the Australian team – the only times it has ever left Australia.



Edward, Prince of Wales was a contemporary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Sheffield and a frequent visitor to Sheffield Park. Upon the Earl's death in 1910, the estate was bought by his friend Arthur Soames, who planted hundreds of the trees and rhododendrons we see there today. The estate then passed to a nephew, whose son Christopher Soames was married to Sir Winston Churchill's daughter Mary: once again, Sheffield Park had the most illustrious of visitors.

A rival estate, Searles, comprising the north-east of the parish, had been owned since the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Maryon Wilson family, many of whom are commemorated in the south transept of the church with tablets and a fine stained glass window. The Maryon Wilsons and Lord Sheffield were well known for their long-running feud. During World War II, Canadian troops were billeted both at Sheffield Park and at Searles. The vast mansion at Searles was demolished in the 1950s, when both estates were broken up and sold in lots. At this time the National Trust acquired Sheffield Park Garden, which (after Stourhead) is Britain's most visited garden.

In 1912 skull fragments were supposedly discovered in Piltdown (by Charles Dawson and Arthur Woodward): *Piltdown Man* was solemnly hailed as the 'missing link' between man and the apes; in the 1950s however - much to the embarrassment of the scientific community - tests exposed *Piltdown Man* as an elaborate hoax.

For many years, until his death in 1988, the comic actor Jimmy Edwards and his brother Alan lived at Atheralls Farm in Fletching, where they enjoyed life as 'gentleman farmers'. The village became known as a hub of riotous conviviality, especially the Rose & Crown pub where the Edwards' and fellow legendary film and radio stars were frequently to be found - yet another colourful episode in Fletching's history.



## Parish Action Plan

We have taken the issues raised in the survey and have used them to create this action plan. We intend to tackle the areas in **green** in the immediate future and will look to develop our plans for the other areas over the next few months.

### Environment

A constant theme from the completed surveys was that respondents value the beautiful countryside and wanted to preserve the rural nature and peace & quiet of the parish. Preserving the village High Street in its present form was also seen as important.

There was some concern about the state of public footpaths, verges and hedgerows.

90% of respondents were clear there was no need for additional lighting in the village.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Ensure footpaths are maintained and/or improved and not allowed to become overgrown	53% found public footpaths were not clear and easy to use all year round	Review all public footpaths in the parish and report issues to Rights of Way team at East Sussex County Council  Advise people how to report issues with footpaths and provide contact details	FPAP Environment Focus Group
Ensure stiles are maintained and are dog friendly	Stiles in poor condition can be hazardous to walkers. Dog walkers are not always able to get their dogs through or over the stiles	Review condition and design of stiles in the parish and encourage landowners to improve/replace where appropriate	FPAP Environment Focus Group
Explore possibility of a public footpath between Sheffield Park and Fletching	This would help to reduce the number of vehicles parking in the High Street area of Fletching	Advise people of the discussion already held with the landowner and the outcome	Fletching Parish Council



What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Ensure parish is kept clean, tidy and litter free	<p>50% believe litter is a problem in the parish</p> <p>78% of households think the street cleaning in Fletching village is good or reasonable</p>	<p>Advise people how to report litter and fly tipping</p> <p>Continue regular street cleaning</p> <p>Explore opportunities for volunteers to help e.g. Village Spring Clean</p>	<p>Fletching Parish Council</p> <p>Wealden District Council</p> <p>FPAP Environment Focus Group</p>
Explain verge and hedge cutting policy and schedule	Overgrown hedges can cause visibility issues at junctions and if verges are overgrown pedestrians might not be able to use them in an emergency. People would like to know when they are due to be cut	<p>Advise people of the verge and hedge cutting policy and schedule, provide details of who is responsible for what and their relevant contact details</p> <p>Advise people how to report issues with verges and hedges</p>	Fletching Parish Council
Ensure road signs are not obscured by overgrown vegetation	Obscured road signs can cause confusion and inconvenience, drivers distracted by trying to read signs could cause an accident	Advise people how to report an obscured road sign to the Highways Steward. Conduct regular reviews of signage in the parish	Fletching Parish Council
Encourage dog owners to pick up dog waste in public areas e.g. burial ground, golf course	65% felt that public areas were generally clear of dog waste, but particular areas of concern were around the church, the recreation ground and areas where cattle/sheep graze. Dog waste can contain a harmful parasite which is dangerous to children and causes abortions in cows	Improve awareness of the risks associated with dog waste, consider additional dog bin provision	FPAP Environment Focus Group



What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Explain management of and restrictions on Fletching Common	Visitors and residents of Fletching Common may be unaware of the restrictions and how the land is managed and maintained	Advise people how the commons are managed and what the restrictions are	Fletching Parish Council
Further enhancement to environment	63% would like to see the parish enhanced by the planting of trees, bulbs and planters	Confirm recent enhancements and consider if further enhancements are required	Fletching Parish Council





## Community Safety

98% of households feel safe in the parish. Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are low and the majority feel that the parish is adequately policed.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Explore ways in which policing in and around the parish can be improved, addressing perceptions of burglary	<p>31% had been a victim of crime in the parish</p> <p>22% had been a victim of anti-social behaviour in the parish</p>	<p>Promote Community Messaging</p> <p>Publicise local surgery held by Police Community Support Officer</p> <p>Represent the parish at Local Action Team Meetings / Sussex Police meetings</p>	FPAP Community Safety Focus Group
Explain role of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and how to contact them	<p>98% feel safe in the parish</p> <p>67% feel that the parish is adequately policed</p>	Advise people who their Police Community Support Officer is, what they do and how to contact them	FPAP Community Safety Focus Group
Explore ways of promoting Neighbourhood Watch & Farm Watch Schemes	<p>People may be unaware of schemes in their area or want to set up new schemes</p> <p>25% were members of a scheme already</p> <p>57% felt there was a need to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in their area</p>	Advise people of current schemes in their area, how to set up new schemes and provide support or funding if appropriate	FPAP Community Safety Focus Group





## Highways

Throughout the survey, it was clear that speeding throughout the parish is as a major concern. This is not just as issue through Fletching, but also along the A275, A272, and Piltdown and along the country lanes as a whole.

Also raised as issues were inconsiderate parking in Fletching village and elsewhere in the parish; poor maintenance of the roads (pot holes and icy roads in the winter); and dangers caused by groups of cyclists and drivers of large tractors.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Review parking policy in Fletching High Street	<p>47% noticed bad parking or experience difficulty finding a place to park</p> <p>58% believe parking should be restricted to one side of the road only but 22% believe this would cause a speeding problem</p>	<p>Discussions with local business owners, church, police, Highways and school and residents to identify a possible solution</p> <p>Promote importance of accessibility for emergency services vehicles such as ambulances and fire engines</p>	<p>FPAP Highways Focus Group</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>
Review parking policy by Recreation Ground	Inconsiderate parking causes inconvenience to local residents and can be hazardous to road users and pedestrians	Discussions with Recreation Ground Committee and users, local residents, police, Highways and school to identify issues and possible solutions	<p>FPAP Highways Focus Group</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>
Explore ways of resolving obstruction of driveways	Inconsiderate parking causes inconvenience to local residents and can be hazardous to road users and pedestrians	Discussions with local residents, police and Highways to identify a possible solution	<p>FPAP Highways Focus Group</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>



What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Aim to reduce speeding and improve road safety in the parish	<p>73% were concerned about speeding in some areas of the parish and inappropriate speeds down narrow, windy country lanes</p> <p>Cyclists may be unaware of the narrow lanes and dangerous bends and sometimes ride three or four abreast</p> <p>57% were not supportive of introducing a 20mph speed limit in the parish</p>	<p>Advise people of the various road safety initiatives already underway including Speed Watch</p> <p>Advise people that they can report anti-social driving (e.g. driving whilst using a mobile phone) and abandoned vehicles to the police via <a href="http://www.operationcrackdown.org">www.operationcrackdown.org</a></p> <p>Liaise regularly with East Sussex County Council / Highways / Sussex Police</p> <p>Liaise with local cycle clubs to improve safety for all road users</p>	<p>FPAP Highways Focus Group</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>
Liaise with owners of large vehicles that pass through the parish to drive safely and to avoid damaging the verges	<p>Large vehicles such as tractors can damage verges, rutting and mud can make it difficult for vehicles to pass</p> <p>There was also a concern about the speed at which some large tractors drive down the lanes</p>	Discussions with owners of large vehicles and companies that deliver regularly to the parish	FPAP Highways Focus Group
Consider additional provision of grit bins and/or gritting	Icy conditions can be hazardous to road users and pedestrians	Identify possible locations for additional grit bins	Fletching Parish Council



## Education & Leisure

Generally the playground and recreation ground were seen as good, with some interest in providing additional facilities for older children. There was also suggestions that we look to have some community events that would help to bring the community together.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Improve / maintain existing equipment in the playground	<p>Playground equipment should be maintained and improved on a regular basis to keep it safe</p> <p>63% of households rated the children's playground equipment as good</p>	Conduct regular reviews of the playground equipment and maintain or improve/replace as appropriate	<p>FPAP Education &amp; Leisure Focus Group</p> <p>Recreation Ground Committee</p>
Explore the provision of additional facilities for older children	<p>There may be a need for additional facilities for older children</p> <p>40% felt there were not enough activities for children in the parish.</p>	<p>Publicise youth club and new outdoor table tennis table</p> <p>Explore provision of other facilities e.g. basketball hoop</p>	<p>FPAP Education &amp; Leisure Focus Group</p> <p>Recreation Ground Committee</p>
Promote existing sports clubs	Sports club memberships are dwindling and could be at risk of closing down	Publicise existing sports clubs	<p>FPAP Education &amp; Leisure Focus Group</p> <p>Recreation Ground Committee</p>
Consider running community events e.g. village day, barbecue, ball, barn dance, film club, sports day, lectures, farmers' market	Community events would bring members of the community together and help raise much needed funds for local organisations	<p>Explore options for community events</p> <p>Identify volunteers to help run the events and form committees as appropriate</p>	<p>FPAP Education &amp; Leisure Focus Group</p> <p>Recreation Ground Committee</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>



## Transport

The lack of public transport was mentioned by many, and there seems to be some interest in having access to transport to Uckfield and Haywards Heath.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Explore provision of additional public transport services	<p>53% do not have a bus service in the area they live in</p> <p>98% do not use the free monthly taxi service to Uckfield and back</p>	<p>Identify specific demand for additional public transport services</p> <p>Liaise with local bus companies to explore possible solutions</p> <p>Advise people how to access the free taxi service</p>	FPAP Transport & Social Care Focus Group

## Housing & Development

Maintaining the rural nature of the parish is seen as very important, but there also seems to be a requirement for greater clarity on restrictions on developments in the area. There also appears to be some support for developing low cost housing so local people can remain in the parish.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Explain restrictions on development in parish i.e. 7km zone, AONB and Conservation Area	Residents wishing to make alterations to properties are subject to restrictions and might not understand why or what these are	Advise people of the restrictions on development in the area and where to get further information	FPAP Housing & Development Focus Group
Explore if it is possible to develop homes for single people, small family homes, low cost housing	Lack of smaller/affordable housing means that people cannot stay in the parish and are forced to move elsewhere	Discussion with planning department at Wealden District Council to identify possible solutions	<p>FPAP Housing &amp; Development Focus Group</p> <p>Fletching Parish Council</p>



## Community Facilities

The local pubs, shop and church are seen as important community facilities within the parish. An improvement in internet connections was mentioned by many as being important as the poor connectivity is detrimental for local businesses.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Consider improvements to Fletching Village Hall	85% think the Village Hall is adequate for the needs of the parish  21% think the Village Hall should be renovated, redesigned or replaced	Explore options and costs for renovation or redesign of existing facilities  Explore the long term space requirements in the parish for meetings and activities and how they can best be delivered	FPAP Community Facilities Focus Group  Village Hall Management Committee
Communicate details of Superfast Broadband project	People are frustrated with poor internet connectivity and are unaware of the work being done to resolve this in East Sussex	Advise people about the Superfast Broadband project and how to find out more information	FPAP Community Facilities Focus Group
Consider improvement of mobile phone signal	Lack of or poor/unreliable mobile phone signal is inconvenient to residents and businesses and could also prevent emergency contact	Discussions with mobile network operators and consultation with local residents to identify a solution	FPAP Community Facilities Focus Group
Investigate potential supply of mains gas	Lack of mains gas supply forces residents to rely on other less reliable and less convenient heating methods	Discussions with gas suppliers and consultation with local residents	FPAP Community Facilities Focus Group
Consider provision of public toilets	There are currently no public toilet facilities in the parish, people use the toilets in the local shop and pubs	Review options for additional toilet facilities in the parish	FPAP Community Facilities Focus Group



## Business in the Community

There was support for business and the provision of jobs in the community, particularly in the agricultural and hospitality industries.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Look to establish a job vacancies notice board	People are unaware of local job vacancies  91% believe a job vacancy board would be useful	Obtain agreement from local businesses to advertise vacancies and install a notice board in a prominent location	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group
Work with the Fletching village shop owner to see if additional facilities can be offered e.g. Post Office	People currently have to travel to neighbouring villages or towns to access certain services and facilities	Discussions with the shop owner	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group
Encourage support for all local businesses/farms to ensure local trades remain available	Lack of support from the community could result in local businesses closing down, damaging the local economy  66% would like to see more jobs available in the parish	Raise awareness of the businesses in the local area and the goods and services they provide	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group
Review the impact the businesses in Fletching High Street have on parking and whether this can be improved	The local shop and pubs are important to the local community and economy but lack of sufficient parking in the village can cause problems	Discussions with business owners  Identify potential provision of additional parking in the village	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group
Promote Business Group	Business owners / managers in the parish may require support and might be unaware of the Business Group	Advise people what the Business Group is and encourage local businesses to join	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group



Promote tourism in the area and encourage people to visit <a href="http://www.visitfletching.com">www.visitfletching.com</a>	<p>Encouraging tourists and visitors to come to the parish is vital for the local economy</p> <p>90% think tourism does not have a negative impact on the parish</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to promote tourism including the use of social media</p> <p>Discussions with local businesses</p>	FPAP Business in the Community Focus Group
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## Communication with Parishioners

There is an appetite for receiving regular information about what is happening in the parish and developing alternative ways of communication will enable a speedier distribution of information.

What needs to be done?	Why is it an issue?	How will it be tackled?	Who by?
Consider establishing email sign up facility to provide news updates	Some people may prefer to receive news updates from the Parish Council via e-mail, this could save money on printing and postage costs	Identify costs involved in creating e-mail sign up facility, confirm Data Protection requirements and implement solution	Fletching Parish Council
Consider use of Twitter/Facebook	Some people may prefer to communicate with the Parish Council via social media	Identify the most appropriate solution, implement and promote its use	Fletching Parish Council
Continue to raise awareness of the Parish Council and its work on behalf of the parish	People might be unaware of the work the Parish Council does and who their councillors are	Encourage Parish Councillors to engage with the local community, advise people who they are and what the Parish Council does	Fletching Parish Council
Consider further promotion and improvement of the Parish Council website	The Parish Council website is not widely used and could benefit from some improvement	Make improvements to the website and consider ways to promote its use	Fletching Parish Council
Enable people to report issues more effectively i.e. broken stiles, potholes	People might be unaware of the responsibilities of the Parish Council / District Council / County Council and do not know how to report issues	Advise people what to report to who and provide the relevant contact details	Fletching Parish Council