

COMMUNITY PLAN FOR CHORLEYWOOD

CONSULTATION DRAFT

5th November 2015

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WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PLAN?

A Community Plan is a document setting out achievable aims and visions for the future of a community, based upon the views of its residents gathered through survey, research and community participation.

The Localism Act 2011 gave communities a greater say in the development of their area. In October 2013, the Parish Council decided to use the powers of the Localism Act along with wider-reaching aims and objectives covering other aspects of community life, to produce a Community Plan for Chorleywood.

A Steering Group, led by the Parish Council, was formed from a large number of community-interest groups. The Steering Group drew up a questionnaire based on matters of interest and concern to local people and this was distributed to every household within the Parish.

The results of this questionnaire have been analysed and used as the basis for the actions and policies contained within this Community Plan.

Whilst the Parish Council first promoted the idea of a Community Plan, it is the views of Chorleywood residents, under the independent Stewardship of the Steering Group, which have been used to compile this report.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHORLEYWOOD

The name Chorleywood is derived from two Saxon words, *Cerola Leah*, meaning a clearing or meadow in the forest, giving an indication perhaps of the existence of a Common even at that time. By 1278 the settlement had adopted a Norman name of *Bosco de Cherle* (Peasant's Wood), becoming *Charlewoode* by 1524. This evolved over time into *Charleywood* and then *Chorley Wood* which was used until the current spelling was adopted by the Urban District Council in 1913.

Suggestions of human occupation have been found in Chorleywood dating to Palaeolithic and Neolithic times, and there is definite evidence of Roman activity in the area. However, the first main settlers were Saxons, using the Chess Valley as the centre of their community. During the Saxon period Chorleywood formed part of the *Manor of Prichemareswarde* (an early form of Rickmansworth), which was given to the Monastery of St. Albans by Offa, King of Mercia, over the seal of Edward the Confessor.

The hedgerows still present in Shire Lane today marked the boundary between the ancient kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia.

Chorleywood remained small during medieval times and even as late as 1700 the population comprised only about 40 tenant farmers. The Manor remained in the hands of the Monastery of St. Albans until the Dissolution, when it passed to the Bishopric of London. Queen Elizabeth 1 subsequently reclaimed it for the Crown.

During the intervening years, Chorleywood remained a small settlement, with a population in the 1860s of about a thousand people spread across 200 households. After the Metropolitan Railway was extended to Chorleywood and beyond in the late 1890s, the village grew steadily into the thriving community it is today.

[INSERT PARISH MAP]

CHORLEYWOOD TODAY

With a population today of around 13,000¹ people in 4800 households, the Parish of Chorleywood covers 3.48 square miles in the south-west corner of Hertfordshire, bordering Buckinghamshire. It was administered as an Urban District Council until the end of March 1974 but, when Three Rivers District Council was formed, Chorleywood's direct administration passed to the newly-formed Parish Council operating within the same boundaries as before.

[INSERT POPULATION CHART]

[INSERT CHART OF COMMUNITY STRENGTH]

Chorleywood is generally considered to be a happy place to live and the majority of respondents feel that people of different backgrounds get on well together.

[INSERT POPULATION BY ETHNIC BREAKDOWN CHART]

The overall level of employment is nearly the same as the national average, but Chorleywood has almost double the number of self-employed people and double the number of people working from home than national equivalents.

The residents of Chorleywood are highly educated relative to the rest of the UK. The percentage of adults aged over 16 with no qualifications is approximately half that of the English average, and at the other end of the scale, there are almost double the numbers of residents educated to degree standard or above.

¹ UK Census 2011

VILLAGE LIFE

We wanted to know what features residents admired about Chorleywood village, and what could be done to improve the environment.

What you told us in the questionnaire

- Two thirds of respondents think the most positive enhancement to Chorleywood village would be flower troughs and beds, with half supporting the addition of street-side trees.
- Half wish to see less litter in the village and even more would like to see the removal of unnecessary signage and street furniture.
- Almost everyone considers the Library and the Post Office to be important to the community and more than two thirds consider a public toilet to be an important amenity.

[INSERT CHART OF Q5]

What we are planning

Chorleywood in Bloom

We will continue to improve and build upon the *Chorleywood in Bloom* (CiB) project which has been conceived and implemented by members of the Chorleywood Residents' Association (CRA), the Horticultural Society and the Parish Council.

This project has introduced planters and hanging baskets to the village centre and CiB has been working with volunteers in shops and businesses to maintain and water the flowers. The Parish Council, and Herts County Council (Herts CC) have committed to annual funding to support this successful project, as will CRA if funds are available. CiB volunteers will be encouraged to provide planters and baskets at additional sites in the Parish, and to plant for the Autumn and Spring seasons.

In response to the questionnaire results, CiB will assess whether street-side trees would enhance the village and lobby Herts CC to provide them if appropriate.

Litter

The Resident's Association will undertake an audit to see where litter occurs, and will lobby Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) for additional bins as required. The weekly *Barrow Beat* litter collection funded by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) must be retained.

Street signage

Chorleywood Residents' Association will carry out a survey of road signage, and TRDC will be lobbied for the removal of redundant signage or street furniture.

Communication

The new village noticeboard located in the Parade (funded jointly by the Parish Council and Chorleywood Residents' Association) will be used to advertise local and community events.

Library and Post Office

The community will be encouraged, through local media, to support the Chorleywood Library Volunteers initiative. In the event that the Post Office or Library is threatened with closure, the Parish Council, along with other interested parties, will take steps to ensure these assets are protected.

Public toilets

The availability of public toilet facilities in the Library and Budgens is not widely known and should be more actively promoted. Opening hours and directions will be publicised on the village noticeboard in The Parade.

OPEN SPACES

[INSERT MAP OF COMMON & GREEN SPACES]

For many, Chorleywood is characterised by its large and centrally located Common. Wholly owned by the Parish Council and occupying an area of approximately 80 hectares (200 acres), the Common is a County Heritage Site with Local Nature Reserve status.

Chorleywood Common is widely considered to be one of the most important wildlife sites in Hertfordshire, combining acid heathland, neutral grassland and chalk meadow on a single site, together with a series of ponds supporting rare plants and amphibians, and secondary woodland. Some 70 plant species, including orchids, 50 kinds of birds and almost 300 different fungi have been recorded on the Common, in addition to many types of mammals and amphibians.

Chorleywood Common is not just undeveloped land. It is a Registered Common and its use is regulated and controlled by legislation and bylaws for the benefit of present and future residents of Chorleywood. That said, many activities take place on the Common, including horse riding, conservation grazing, golf and cricket.

The Common is not the only open space within the Parish. Residents benefit from a number of woodlands, public footpaths across Green Belt and farmland, allotments, and a second Local Nature Reserve within the grounds of Chorleywood House Estate. Just outside the Parish there are riverbank walks in the Chess Valley, and in Homefield Road & Shire Lane there are a few remaining sections of ancient hedgerow, which are defined¹ as being in existence before the Enclosure Acts (1720-1840) in Britain.

The questionnaire asked residents which open spaces they visited the most, and why. It also sought opinions on the levels of satisfaction regarding the upkeep and maintenance of the open spaces, and which features should be protected for future generations.

What you told us in the questionnaire

¹ Source: the UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report 1995, Defra

[INSERT BAR GRAPH FREQUENCY OF VISITS ALL SITES MONTHLY – Q1]

- It is clear that residents place a high value on Chorleywood’s open spaces. The most popular location is the Common, with virtually all households visiting at least once a year and a large majority visiting at least monthly. More than half of respondents use public footpaths across Green Belt land and farmland, woodlands, and other open spaces including walks along the River Chess and past the Ancient Hedgerows.

[INSERT PIE CHART SHOWING REASONS VISITING THE COMMON – Q2]

- The Common is visited almost equally across genders, ages and those with and without children. The principal reasons for visiting are walking and exercise, dog walking, nature and conservation.
- The questionnaire results indicate a high level of dissatisfaction at the level of upkeep and maintenance of the Parish’s open spaces, particularly the Lawn Cemetery.

[INSERT GRAPH SHOWING FEATURES TO BE PROTECTED – Q4]

- By far and away the most requested site to be protected for future generations is the Common, with nearly all households answering positively. The River Chess walks and other woodlands and open spaces are also valued highly.

What we are planning

Protecting open spaces

There is a clear desire within the Community for the continued protection of not only the Common but all open spaces within Chorleywood. Volunteers will be sought by the Parish Council to undertake an audit of Chorleywood’s open spaces and to gauge their threat levels in terms of future development.

Where appropriate, protection will be sought, through formal designation of an individual location as a “Local Green Space” in accordance with paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Parish Council will continue to protect the Common in accordance with the existing Common Management Plan to prevent encroachment and misuse.

Friends of Chorleywood Common, together with the Parish Council, Cricket and Golf Clubs, will work together to enhance residents' understanding of the permitted use of the Common through articles and features in local magazines. Information on the flora and fauna of the Common and its history will be provided through information boards and articles in local publications.

Dissatisfaction with maintenance of open spaces

The high level of dissatisfaction with the maintenance of open spaces is extremely surprising as the apparent poor upkeep is not readily visible *in situ*, nor is it evident in previous communications with residents. Further research will be conducted by the Parish Council to ascertain what is behind this result. If appropriate, action will be taken to improve maintenance or to inform residents about acceptable levels of maintenance activity.

PLANNING

What you told us in the questionnaire

- The majority of respondents agree that the Green Belt should be strictly maintained and enforced.

[INSERT MAP OF GREEN BELT BOUNDARY & CONSERVATION AREAS]

- If development is to take place there is a near-unanimous wish to see brownfield and previously developed sites reused.
- Three quarters of respondents want no further residential development within Chorleywood, although this is less pronounced in the 18 – 24 age group.
- If new homes were to be built, just over half of respondents would prefer smaller or more affordable properties. Unsurprisingly, those aged 25-44 tended to favour family homes, whilst those over-65 want age-restricted properties. Flats were the least popular at just 11%.

[INSERT PROPERTY TYPE GRAPH – Q7]

- Nearly half the respondents did not have an opinion on the provision of accommodation for the elderly. Of those expressing an opinion, two thirds feel there is currently sufficient provision.
- Many people expressed a wish to see a greater variety of shops within the village; two thirds of the younger respondents requested more restaurants and pubs. A quarter of households do not wish to see any further commercial development.

[INSERT GRAPH OF Q11]

- A third would like greater mobile phone coverage and WiFi in the Village. This percentage rose as the respondents' age decreased.
- Half of those aged 45-64 have concerns about the risk of burglary.

What we are planning

Planning applications

Development on Green Belt land should be strongly resisted.

Support should be given to planning applications on brownfield land¹, with priority given to smaller properties and designs for older residents. Development within the Conservation Areas must continue to be sympathetic to the environment.

Planning applications for the construction of units suitable for elderly and disabled persons are to be welcomed, either for individual purchase, or as 'assisted living' accommodation within larger residential commercial care home sites.

TRDC will be lobbied to amend and alter its Core Strategy Housing Policies to enable the retention of a number of bungalows as single storey units. The Parish Council will favourably consider planning applications for the construction of bungalows

The Parish Council will be asked to consider applications for the change of use of retail units judiciously, in order to encourage a broader mix of uses.

Neighbourhood Watch will lobby TRDC Planners to adopt the UK Police initiative "*Secured by Design*" which aims to reduce burglary and crime at the property design stage by using 'Police Preferred Specifications' and certain design features when considering applications for new properties.

Mobile Phone companies will be lobbied by the Parish Council and asked to share masts so as to minimise the impact on surroundings, whilst maximising mobile phone and WiFi reception.

¹ Brownfield defined here as *land which has previously been developed*

LEISURE

The questionnaire asked residents how they spent their free time, which leisure facilities they valued, and what additional facilities, if any, would improve Chorleywood.

What you told us in the questionnaire

[INSERT PIE CHART SHOWING USAGE ACROSS FACILITIES - Q15]

- The venues used most often were the Parish Council and Church halls
- The community is fortunate to have a wide range of clubs, including the Children's Centre, Youth Club, Scouts & Guides, Cricket and Youth Football Clubs.
- Just under half of respondents asked for recreational cycle paths, stating that a lack of suitable facilities discourages them from cycling more often.
- Others requested facilities included a Community Centre, Gym and a Swimming Pool
- The questionnaire asked if households agreed that there are sufficient play facilities in Chorleywood. Of those who offered an opinion, results are split almost equally for and against. 1-in-4 households declined to offer an opinion.

[INSERT PLAYGROUND BAR CHART WITH OVERALL, AGE & GENDER BREAKDOWN]

What we are planning

Facilities

It is surprising that despite the Parish and Church halls having a high level of usage, separate results indicate a desire for a Community Centre. The Parish Council and other community groups will canvas their users to see why they feel a Community Centre is required and why their needs are not being met through the existing venues.

All local sports and leisure clubs will be encouraged by the Parish Council and CRA to use the village noticeboard to promote their activities.

The Parish Council will set up a working group to gauge the feasibility of introducing new cycle paths within Chorleywood.

The Parish Council will be asked to support any planning application to open a Gym in the village.

Chorleywood is unlikely to attract commercial investment for a swimming pool. Therefore, publicising swimming venues within TRDC will be promoted through local media – for example, there is free swimming for children during the school holidays at TRDC's swimming pools and William Penn also offers residents over 60 free access on Wednesdays.

With regard to the provision of additional play facilities within Chorleywood, it is clear that opinions are hugely polarised. At the time of writing, an Advisory Committee (made up of District and Parish Councillors alongside representatives of local community interest groups) is appraising the feasibility of additional facilities, and will present its findings early in 2016.

HEALTH

Central Government and Census data indicate that Chorleywood is blessed with a broadly healthy population.

The questionnaire asked for residents' levels of satisfaction with the provision, quality and accessibility of medical facilities within Chorleywood and beyond. (Responses concerning public transport to, and parking at, medical facilities are found under Traffic & Transport.)

What you told us in the questionnaire

- Three quarters of households are satisfied with their GP services, with the over-65s the most satisfied. The 25-44 age group displays lower levels of satisfaction. Households with children were more dissatisfied than those without.
- Of the remaining types of medical facilities, nearly 1-in-4 households expressed dissatisfaction at the poor provision of NHS dentists.
- Households are generally satisfied with the provision of other medical services, such as chiropodists, osteopaths, counsellors, physiotherapists and opticians.

[INSERT CHART OF LEVELS OF SATISFACTION ACROSS MEDICAL SERVICES]

- Of those respondents who offered an opinion, there was agreement that Chorleywood has sufficient dropped kerbs for disabled and pushchair access.

What we are planning

Medical facilities

Chorleywood Parish Council and the Resident's Association will support any *change of use* planning applications for a NHS dental practice.

The levels of dissatisfaction with GP services felt by those with children and in the 25-34 age group will be investigated by a working party led by Chorleywood Residents' Association with local interest groups, with the aim of finding out why this is the case and, where appropriate, liaising with the local medical practices to find solutions.

Parking facilities

Chorleywood Care, the Parish Council, and Chorleywood Residents' Association will together lobby Herts Highways to seek an increase in the number of parking spaces near medical facilities if there is insufficient on-site patient parking.

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SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

Chorleywood has one secondary school and four primary schools to educate the 2,650 or so children who live within the Parish. In addition, Chorleywood also has 5 preschools offering funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

The questionnaire asked residents about the provision of education and their levels of satisfaction with the schools within the Parish.

What you told us in the questionnaire

[INSERT EDUCATION PROVISION BAR CHART - Q18]

- Unsurprisingly, the number of households expressing an opinion was much higher for those with families under 18 and reduced for older respondents. The results shown here are based upon those who did express an opinion.
- It is gratifying to see the high levels of satisfaction within the community for both the provision and the quality of education for the children of Chorleywood.
- Three quarters feel there is sufficient provision of secondary education, and nearly 90% are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality.
- There is a similar level of satisfaction with the provision and quality of primary schools. However, the level of satisfaction with the provision and quality of nurseries, playgroups, and all-day preschools was marginally lower.
- Two thirds of households are satisfied with the provision and quality of after-school and holiday clubs within Chorleywood.

[INSERT QUALITY OF EDUCATION BAR CHART - Q19]

What we are planning

St Clement Danes School

Chorleywood Mums will liaise with parents and local families to investigate areas of concern, and to approach School Governors to address issues such as the admission policy for St Clement Danes School, where particular concern has been raised over the degree of over-subscription to the school. Though the school offers places on the basis of proximity with priority given to WD3 postcodes, this allocation comes after a number of other criteria, which greatly reduce the number of places available to children based on distance alone.

Adult education

Chorleywood has a number of adult education groups, such as U3A, NADFAS and WEA¹. These bodies will be encouraged to use the Parish Council's and other websites, together with the village noticeboard, to promote their activities to Chorleywood's older residents.

¹ U3A – University of the Third Age

NADFAS – National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies

WEA – Workers' Education Association

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Chorleywood is blessed with excellent road and rail communications, enjoying easy access to the M25 and offering frequent train services from London Underground Metropolitan line and Chiltern Line National Rail. Many residents use the public transport network for travel to work and commuters come from areas beyond Chorleywood to access these services.

Chorleywood's reliance on cars is evident too, with household ownership of two or more cars almost double the national average¹

The questionnaire covered a wide range of topics, seeking residents' opinions on road safety, parking for residents and commuters, bus and rail services, and pedestrian safety.

WHAT YOU TOLD US IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Three quarters said that speed limits should be reduced to 20mph around schools and shopping areas.

[INSERT PIE CHART FOR SPEED REDUCTION QUESTION]

- Two thirds feel there is insufficient parking at Chorleywood's medical facilities and a small majority feel there is insufficient parking for commuters and shoppers.
- Over two thirds would like to see a pedestrian crossing at the traffic lights junction of Common Road and the A404, and half believe there should be provision for pedestrians on Shepherds Bridge.

[INSERT BAR GRAPH FOR PEDESTRIAN CROSSING & BRIDGE]

- Respondents generally feel that there is insufficient capacity for parking at Chorleywood Station and that it is too expensive. Half of respondents feel there are insufficient fast train services into London on the Metropolitan line.

¹ Census 2011

- Three quarters say they would use an *Amersham-Watford* branch of the new Croxley Rail Link to connect Chorleywood directly with Watford town centre and Watford Junction rail station.
- Three quarters of those over 65 would like to see the concessionary bus pass brought into the London Freedom Pass Scheme.
- Among those who expressed an opinion, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the provision of bus routes serving Chorleywood and areas beyond.

[INSERT GRAPH ILLUSTRATING BUS RESULTS]

What we are planning

Road safety

Neighbourhood Watch, Chorleywood Residents Association and others will work with the Parish Council to lobby Hertfordshire County Council to implement appropriate speed limits. Advisory signs will be considered to encourage users to moderate their speed.

Funds are now in place for a replacement traffic control system at the junction of the A404 with Common Road, which will include a pedestrian crossing. Work is due to commence shortly.

Parking

The Parish Council will view with caution planning applications from Transport for London (or any other body) for the reallocation of car parking spaces for other purposes (such as supermarket collection points). Opportunities to increase the car park capacity within Chorleywood will be investigated by the Business Association in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Rail services

- All local interest groups will be encouraged by the Residents' Association to support our MP's campaign to get fast Metropolitan Line trains to London reinstated.
- Chorleywood Residents' Association and others will lobby for the existing service line connecting Rickmansworth, Croxley and Watford town centre to be opened to passenger services.

Insert rail Map

- The Parish Council's participation in Hertfordshire County Council's bus services consultations, to try to protect bus services in and around Chorleywood, will be supported by all Community Groups.

Road repairs

Publicity will be given to the fact that any resident can report blocked drains, broken pavements, faulty streetlights, potholes and so forth directly to Highways by visiting the Herts Direct website.

<https://www.hertsdirect.org/faultreporting/>

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CRIME & SECURITY

Chorleywood residents are fortunate to live in an area with a very low crime rate compared to Hertfordshire and the national average.

[INSERT CRIME CHART]¹.

The questionnaire asked residents about their concerns with regard to crime and how the presence of the two local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), who are jointly funded by the Parish Council and TRDC, affected their sense of wellbeing.

It is not just recorded crime, but fear of crime, which affects how residents feel about their neighbourhood. It is important that both elements are tackled when considering the safety of an area. Chorleywood's PCSOs and Neighbourhood Watch play a significant part in achieving the low crime figures.

What you told us in the questionnaire

- Nearly all households agree that the presence of Police and PCSOs in Chorleywood is reassuring..

[INSERT PIE CHART OF TOP CRIME CONCERNS - Q.13]

- Half of households are concerned with speeding traffic. This is a concern across all ages but particularly so for older residents.
- Bogus callers and burglary are concerns, especially to those in the 45-64 age group, despite Chorleywood having one of the lowest crime rates in the UK.
- Half of those respondents aged 18-24 are concerned about the lack of street lighting after midnight.

What we are planning

¹ Source: *Indicies of Deprivation 2010* Dept for Communities & Local Government

Crime

Neighbourhood Watch and Chorleywood Residents' Association will provide regular feedback to the Parish Council about the benefits of continuing with the 50% funding of the PCSOs whom they provide.

Speeding

The Police and PCSOs will continue to carry out regular speed monitoring on critical roads in the village, including outside St Clement Danes School.

Neighbourhood Watch will carry out additional surveys in order to achieve a greater understanding as to why the 45-64 age group has a relatively high fear of burglary.

Take up of the Online Watch Link (OWL) system is variable across Chorleywood, so existing Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators, in conjunction with the Police and PCSOs, will develop an action plan to ensure that 75% of homes are signed up for OWL by December 2016.

The Parish Council will assist by publicising OWL update information on the Community page of the Parish website and on the village noticeboard. CRA's website will also carry details.

Street lighting

Chorleywood Residents' Association and Neighbourhood Watch will conduct an audit, in conjunction with the Parish Council, to lobby the Police and Hertfordshire Highways for street lighting beyond midnight at key points, such as Chorleywood station and on some footpaths, to help residents feel safer late at night.

THE STEERING GROUP

[INSERT GROUP PHOTO]

The following local residents have brought this Community Plan to you:

Chorleywood Parish Council – Jane White (Chair)

Chorleywood Residents' Association - Owen Edis (Secretary)

Chorleywood Care - Joyce Manktelow

Chorleywood Mums – Myfanwy Ronchetti

Chorleywood Parish Council - Steven Watkins

Chorleywood Parish Council – Jackie Worrall

Chorleywood Residents' Association - David Hiddleston

Friends of Chorleywood Common - Bob Sutherland

Friends of Chorleywood Common - Gareth Hunt

Loudwater Residents' Association - Heather Kenison

Neighbourhood Watch - Stuart Parish

Neighbourhood Watch - John Sheldon

Resident - Peter Fawcett

Resident - Vivien Lantree

RVS - Barbara Christie