

West Auckland Parish Plan

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The Manor House

INTRODUCTION

1 Executive Summary

West Auckland has been an important village in County Durham for nearly nine hundred years, but it has only had its own voice, through a parish council, since 2003. At its first meeting the new West Auckland Parish Council agreed to undertake a Parish Plan to ask the village what were the priorities for improvements.

Through a village-wide questionnaire, public meetings and parish newsletters we have produced a document that we hope incorporates the concerns, hopes and aspirations of the village's residents. The responses were grouped under seven topic headings-employment, transport and highways, services, crime and security, environment, education, leisure and recreation, and community.

Under each topic we identified the issues raised and have responded to them by establishing a broad single objective and then a series of measures that the Parish Council will endeavour to carry out. Finally in the Action Plan at the end of the document, we set out how we will achieve those goals, which partners we will work with and where funding might come from to implement them.



The Eden Arms at the west end of the green makes a major contribution to the historic character of the village..

In many cases the Parish Council, as the smallest unit in the local government hierarchy, with only very limited financial resources, can do little more than lobby, encourage and support the implementation of much larger schemes by other partners, notably Wear Valley District Council and Durham County Council. However, we feel strongly that as the village questionnaire responses very often highlighted these larger issues, it was essential that our Parish Plan embraced all those concerns that local residents expressed and not just those

smaller issues that Parish Council finances might be able to resolve. The topics are summarised below with key issues and the parish council responses identified.

Employment and the local economy. There was a need to support existing jobs in the village and encourage new businesses. Maintaining the good appearance of the village was important to attract inward investment and encouraging the village's tourism potential, both within the village and as a gateway to the dales.

Transport and highways. Levels of traffic, noise, pollution, pedestrian safety and illegal parking were strongly felt concerns from many who responded to the questionnaire. There was almost unanimous support for the implementation of the full bypass, including the final Phase III to Spring Gardens. Measures to prevent speeding vehicles and unauthorised parking were supported.

Services. During the course of the Plan preparation the issue of the possible relocation of the St Helen's doctors' surgery and chemist alerted the community to the value of existing services. There was also considerable support for maintaining the post office and a wide range of local shops.

Crime and security. This topic produced the most deeply expressed concerns in the public consultation, fuelled by a sense that crime and anti-social behaviour, especially amongst young people, is increasing. Supporting existing neighbourhood watch initiatives are important as well as maintaining a good liaison with police and security wardens. Ensuring a wider range of youth activity in the village, to discourage boredom and misbehaviour, was also widely supported.

Environment. There is a strong local pride in the appearance of the village conservation area and a commitment to maintaining and promoting the history and heritage of West Auckland. There was support for landscape improvements especially those communal public spaces such as the village green, footpaths and river walks, recreation grounds and cemetery.

Education, leisure and recreation. The village is well blessed with community buildings that, to be sustainable, need to be well used and promoted. Adult education classes and the provision of Internet facilities were requested.

Community. Under this wide topic support will be given to those community activities that bring the village together, eg Christmas activities and village carnival. There is also a lack of information about village events that needs to be filled.

2 Introduction

West Auckland lies two miles to the south west of Bishop Auckland and 11 miles to the north east of Darlington. About 2700 people live there, centred on its large green, the ancient heart of the medieval village. It has a rich history and is a conservation area. It has large housing areas, divided by major roads. There is a strong commercial and industrial sector.

Until 2003 the village was, administratively speaking, part of Bishop Auckland urban area, but in that year the civil parish of West Auckland was created in response to a strong local campaign for the village to have its own voice. The administration of the parish is now carried out by the West Auckland Parish Council.

The Parish Council consists of 12 Parish Councillors and a Parish Clerk. Their job is to act as the focus for local opinion on a range of issues that affect the village, and to represent that opinion to the outside world. The Council also has a modest income or precept that it can spend within the parish.

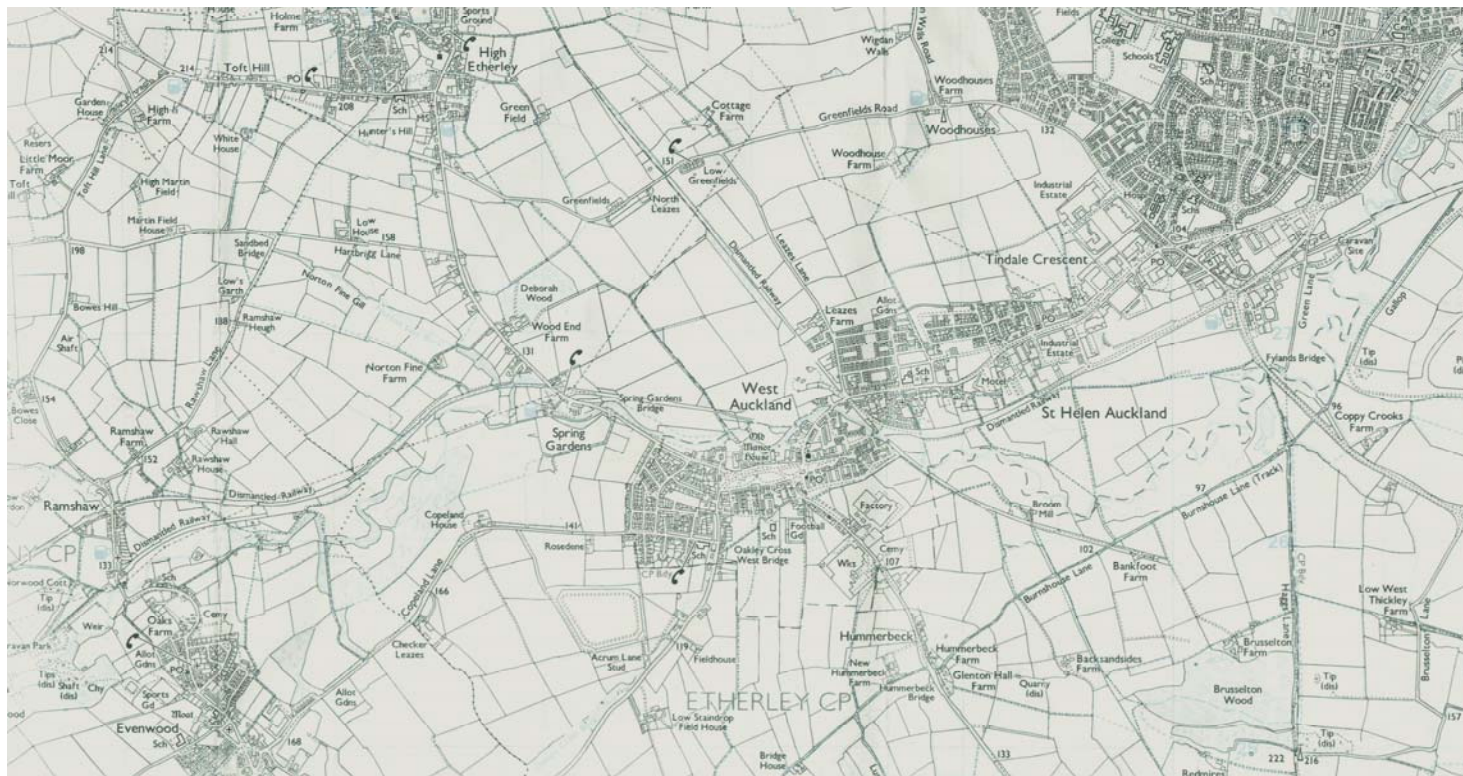
At its first meeting on 9 May 2003, the Parish Council decided that to fully represent the needs and wishes of West Auckland it needed to hear the detailed views of the village community. It decided to undertake a Parish Plan.

Parish Plans were launched by the Government in 2002 to enable rural communities to set out a vision of what they want

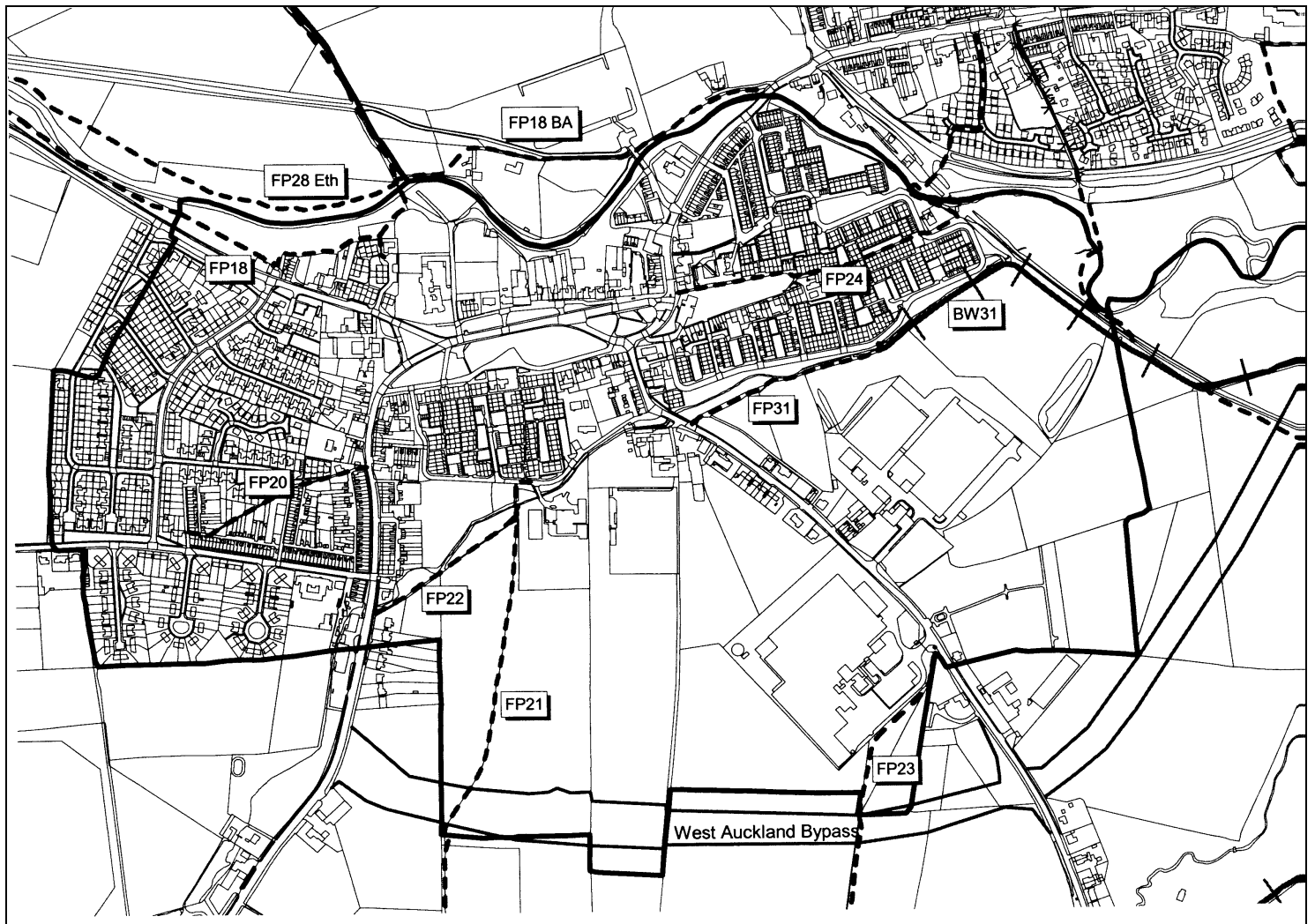
for their villages – what is good that should be protected, what is bad that need improving and what is needed that should be provided. For West Auckland with a challenging mix of traditional rural and modern urban problems, the Parish Plan was the ideal way to identify those problems and set out a programme to solve them.

The Parish Council was successful in its bid for funding from the Countryside Agency and in October 2003 a Parish Plan Working Party was established, drawn mainly from the wider village community but with representatives from the Parish Council too. To produce a plan, the opinions in the village had to be heard and this was achieved by a series of public meetings and a questionnaire that was delivered to every household. A public exhibition, highlighting the issues in the village, was also held.

From the results of all this consultation, a draft report was produced which described the ranges of issues identified in the village questionnaire and set out an action plan for tackling them. The report was considered by the Parish Council in due course and again at a wider public meeting. Arising from this last consultation process, and incorporating any aspects arising from these meetings, the final report was adopted and published as the West Auckland Parish Plan in March 2006. It will hopefully become the foundation for all the work the Parish Council will undertake in the future.



West Auckland and its surroundings (reproduced with kind permission of Ordnance Survey, OS Licence No 100042860)



West Auckland parish boundary showing rights of way (reproduced with the kind permission of Durham County Council).



The public footpath west of Staindrop Road is one of the most well used in the village.



The public footpath along the green lane near Lutterington is one of the village's most attractive rural walks.

3 Parish history

Origins and growth

The history of West Auckland probably dates from the twelfth century although Roman roads to the south and east of the village prove that the area was peopled a thousand years earlier. The name Auckland appears in the tenth century as part of a gift of new land (Auckland is Scandinavian for 'additional land') from King Canute to the monks of St Cuthbert at Durham.

The village was founded as a planned 'green' village by the Bishop of Durham, one of many similar villages established to colonise the underdeveloped parts of the county. It was sited on a flat low-lying land between the River Gaunless and the Oakley Beck. Originally part of the large parish of St Andrew's at South Church, as the area was settled, people needed to worship where they lived and worked. St Helen's church began as such a chapel, probably in the early twelfth century, and served both St Helen's and West Auckland, growing larger as the two villages grew in size.

By the end of the twelfth century West Auckland was probably fully developed with the low timber-framed and thatched farms and cottages bordering the open green. There was a corn mill on the Gaunless and the manor house, probably the only stone building in the village at the time, on its present site. The village green, said to be the largest in the county, served as a grazing area for sheep and cattle, as well as for communal activities.

Coal mining began in the medieval period and in the fifteenth century there was a mine north of the village. In 1647 there was a 'great colliery' called Carter's Thorne, near Toft Hill. But the collieries of south west Durham did not have easy access to the North East ports and the development of the industry stalled. It was only with the opening of the Stockton and Darlington

Railway in 1825 that the mining industry was able to develop substantially in the area.

The colliery villages that opened up in County Durham in the nineteenth century were often separate industrial villages from their much older neighbours, sharing only a name, take Esh and Esh Winning, for example. At West Auckland the coal mine sunk in 1826 was so close to the village that new miners housing was built just off the village green, marrying the old agricultural community with a new industrial future. Railways grew rapidly in the area over the next forty years opening up new collieries. The population of the village and its surrounding farms grew from 978 in 1801, to 1509 in 1831, to 3651 in 1891.

The decline of the coal industry in SW Durham began soon after the First World War and in 1932 the village had 60% unemployment. Efforts to build new industrial estates in both St Helens and West Auckland were partially successful in encouraging new companies into the area but in the 1960s the two major industries suffered with the closure of the West Auckland colliery in 1969 and the savage 'Beeching' cuts on the railways.

At the same time the village was undergoing a dramatic change with the demolition of much of the older property around the village green and on Post Office Square, saving many of the most important historic buildings for a new lease of life. There was substantial new building of Council housing to the south and east of the village green, and private housing estates to the west. At the same time the village was promised a new by-pass, a promise about to be partially fulfilled.



The north side of Front Street in the late nineteenth century.

People and places

Outside of County Durham, West Auckland is known only through the **people** who have lived and worked here. Even the briefest parish history should not fail to mention them.

The construction of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 brought the great *George Stephenson* into West Auckland, surveying and engineering a route to the east of the village. His legacy was the Gaunless Bridge, the world's first iron railway bridge, now in the York National Railway Museum.

In a village that once had two lunatic asylums, some strange people came to stay. The mad *Jonathan Martin* was incarcerated in Fish Hall in 1817. Incapable of being cured he later achieved great notoriety by setting fire to York Minster.

Mary Ann Cotton, who lived at two houses in the village, vastly exceeded Martin in the extent of her crimes. She poisoned between 14 and 20 people including her own children and husbands. Until recently she was Britain's greatest serial killer. She was hung in Durham Prison in 1873.

Finally, and perhaps most famously, are the village's sporting heroes, the *West Auckland Football Team of 1909 and 1911*. Chosen to represent England in the first 'World Cup', the amateur team of mostly miners, travelled to Italy and won against all odds. Two years later they returned and won the cup again outright.



Fish Hall on East Green was once a lunatic asylum.

People come and go, but the **places** where they lived remain, and West Auckland can boast a great many listed historic buildings, most set around the green and within the village conservation area. Its oldest building, St Helen's parish church, actually lies outside the village but the *Manor House*, a grade I building, dates from the sixteenth century with later additions. Almost opposite stands the *Old Hall*, built at two stages in the seventeenth century, the two halves joined with a fine central porch. Of the same period is *East Oakley Farm*, at the end of



East Oakley Farm at the end of East Green has a fireplace dated 1651.

East Green, with its pretty bay window and dated fireplace of 1651. Many of the other listed buildings that surround the village green have their origins in the same period but were rebuilt in later centuries. The main groups are at Toadpool and along the north side of the green. All listed properties, inside and out, and their curtilages are protected, and consent is required for changes to them. All Grade II listed buildings are of national importance, with Grade I and II* listed buildings of outstanding national importance. The full list of listed buildings with grades is as follows:

Front Street, north side

Nos 1 (The Old Manor House Hotel) [I], East range to rear of The Old Manor House Hotel [II], Front garden wall at the Old Manor House Hotel [II], 12, 13, 15A, 16, 17, 19 and 19A, 20, 20A and 20B, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35 [all II],

Station Road,

No 1 [II],

East Green:

Nos 25/26 (East Oakley Farm) , 33/34 (Fish Hall) [all II].

Front Street, south side:

Nos 46/47 [II], 56/57 (The Old Hall) [II*], Walls in front of Nos 56/57 , The Pant [all II].

Staindrop Road

Nos 10-16 (even), 8 (Eden Arms), 4 and 6, Shelter shed at Manor Stables (formerly Ancrum Farm), 2A and Manor Stables (formerly Ancrum Farm), 2 (Erw Wen) , County Council marker stone in front of No 77, [all II].

Gaunless Railway Bridge abutments [Scheduled Ancient Monument, II]

Stockton and Darlington Railway Line [Scheduled Ancient Monument]

4 Social and economic background

A precise description of the social and economic background of West Auckland is best taken from the 2001 Census statistics. Unfortunately these statistics are analysed by ward, and the West Auckland Ward is much larger than just the village, embracing both St Helens Auckland and the factories running east to Tindale Crescent crossroads.

Consequently the conclusions drawn cannot be said to be a wholly accurate picture of life in West Auckland but the following information may be helpful in giving a snapshot view of the larger ward in 2001.



The Leech or Lakes Estate, also known locally as 'Hungry Hill', is the largest area of private housing in the village.

Age, marital status, religion and health

There were 4347 people living in the ward in 2001, 2048 men and 2299 women. In terms of age breakdown they were grouped as follows.

0-9	514	12%
10-19	513	12%
20-29	491	11%
30-44	852	20%
45-59	944	22%
60-74	648	15%
75-90+	385	8%

99% of local residents are 'White British' by ethnic grouping. In terms of marital status, 3507 people or 80% were over 16 and of those 959 (225) were single, 1462 (33%) were married, 95 (2%) were separated and 319 (7%) were divorced. There were 430 people (10%) who had been widowed.

People's health was assessed in the 2001 census. In our ward, 1191 (27%) of the population suffered from limiting long term illness of which 557 (13%) were of working age, a higher percentage than in some other Wear valley wards (eg Wolsingham and Witton-le-Wear (9%). 12% of the local ward

population provided some degree of unpaid care to people with long-term illnesses.

Household size and homes

There are 1853 households in the ward with an average 2.29 people per household. Each household in the ward has an average of 5.1 rooms. Most households (96%) have both internal bathrooms and central heating, only 4% not having central heating. Tenure of the households in the ward are largely divided between private owner occupiers, with and without a mortgage (60%) and Council house occupancy ((33%).

Employment

There are 3122 people in the ward in the age range from 16-74. They are divided in the census into those who are economically active' and those 'economically inactive' the breakdown is as follows.

Economically active (59%)

38%	full time employees
11%	part time employees
4%	self employed
5%	unemployed
1%	full time students

Economically inactive (41%)

15%	retired
3%	students
8%	looking after home/family
11%	permanently sick/disabled
4%	other inactivity

Of the 1680 people in active work in the ward, the largest groups are 30% working in manufacturing, 15% in retailing and 11% each in construction, and health / social work.



The Council housing around the south and east of the green is the largest housing development in the village.

5 Planning Background

West Auckland Parish Council is, by a long way, the smallest of the three tiers of local government operating in the village, with Wear Valley District Council and Durham County Council, operating at successively much higher levels and over wider geographical areas.

Each of the larger Councils is required by law to produce statutory plans to guide and inform their actions. Durham County Council produced a County Structure Plan in 1981, revised 1989 and reviewed in 1997. Wear Valley District Council adopted the Wear Valley District Local Plan in 1997. Each smaller plan should be compatible with the larger plan.

Recent government legislation has overhauled the national system of regional planning, replacing the current system with region-wide plans called Regional Spatial Strategies (to replace Structure Plans) and district-wide planning documents called Local Development Frameworks (to replace Local Plans).

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East is currently under public examination and the Wear Valley District Local Plan, which runs out this year, was reviewed in 2003, in a document called 'Moving Forward' as a start towards adopting the new Local Development Framework. This makes the already complex system of regional planning even more confusing to understand while it is a state of transition.

From the modest perspective of the West Auckland Parish Plan, it is important to ensure that our own aims and aspirations for the village, expressed through the questionnaires and public meetings, fit as much as possible into these wider policy documents. Like a set of Russian dolls, each smaller statutory plan should fit inside the larger plan, with our own parish plan very much the 'smallest of all' at the heart of the set.

This section outlines a number of the major policies set out within the current Wear Valley District Local Plan, as they affect our village, and as set out on the Proposals Map incorporated into that document (and reproduced here with the kind permission of Wear Valley District Council). Where those policies have been commented upon in the 'Moving Forward' review of 2003, this is also mentioned.

It is important that in implementing the Parish Plan, every opportunity is taken to engage with Wear Valley District Council in the Local Development Framework process and its attendant activities, such as the Wear Valley Open Space Strategy, all of which can assist in the delivery of the Plan objectives.

Built Environment

West Auckland is a conservation area (see map) and in **Policy BE5** 'the character of each conservation area will be protected from inappropriate development.'

The public recreation ground, adjacent to Oakley Cross school, is covered by **Policy BE14** – '*Open spaces which contribute to the character and amenity of the area within the defined development limits as identified on the Proposals Map will be protected against development.*'

The Scheduled Ancient Monument of the former Stockton and Darlington railway line, including the Gaunless bridge abutments, which border the eastern edge of the parish, is covered in **Policy BE15** which states that '*Permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on scheduled and non-scheduled ancient monuments and their settings.*'

The Protection of Areas of Archaeological Interest is the subject of **Policy BE17**. A medieval village settlement around the green has been identified as such an area. The policy states that '*when development is proposed which affects areas of archaeological interest, as identified on the Proposals Map, an archaeological assessment will be required, before planning permission is given. Where possible the remains will be preserved in-situ.*'

Policy BE22 covers environmental improvements and in the village identifies the need for '*improvements to the Green including tree planting, floorscaping, traffic management and car parking provision.*' The policy states that the '*District Council will seek to improve the environmental quality of the District, both built and natural, through landscape improvement and enhancement schemes, as identified on the Proposals Map.*'

Housing

West Auckland is identified in **Policy H3** as one of those settlements in the District '*best able to support*' new housing development.

In **Policy H5**, two sites are '*allocated for residential development*' within the parish, each given a developable area and estimated numbers of dwellings - one south of Darlington Road, called 'Darlington Road' (3.0 ha, 64 dwellings) and one north of Darlington Road, District Council owned land, called 'Oakley Street', abutting the allotments (0.8 ha, 15 dwellings)

Policy H15 requires the District Council '*where a relevant local need has been established*' to '*seek to negotiate with developers for the inclusion of an appropriate element of affordable housing*'. Both West Auckland sites are included with the suggested number of affordable housing units set at 14 on south of Darlington Road, and 15 on Oakley Street.

A recent Urban Capacity Study carried out by Wear Valley Council, throughout the District, has reaffirmed the housing allocation at Oakley Street at a revised area and density of 0.585 ha and 23 dwellings.

The District Council's industrial land policies recognise the importance of existing industrial land in the village (**Policy I5**) which will be reserved for general industrial uses, specifically excluding retail, scrap yards and minerals storage. **Policy I2** allocates new industrial land throughout the District, identifying 8.2ha of land in the village to extend the existing industrial estate. However **Policy I14** states that this extension '*will only be allowed on the completion of ...major infrastructure works*', in this case, the completion of the West Auckland bypass.

Policy S8 identifies parts of the north and south side of the village green in West Auckland as one of a number of local shopping areas in the District where shopping proposal will be permitted. Any such permission will be subject to other Local Plan policies controlling hot food takeaways (**Policy S11**) and general development criteria such as design, environmental impact and highway matters (**Policy GD1**).

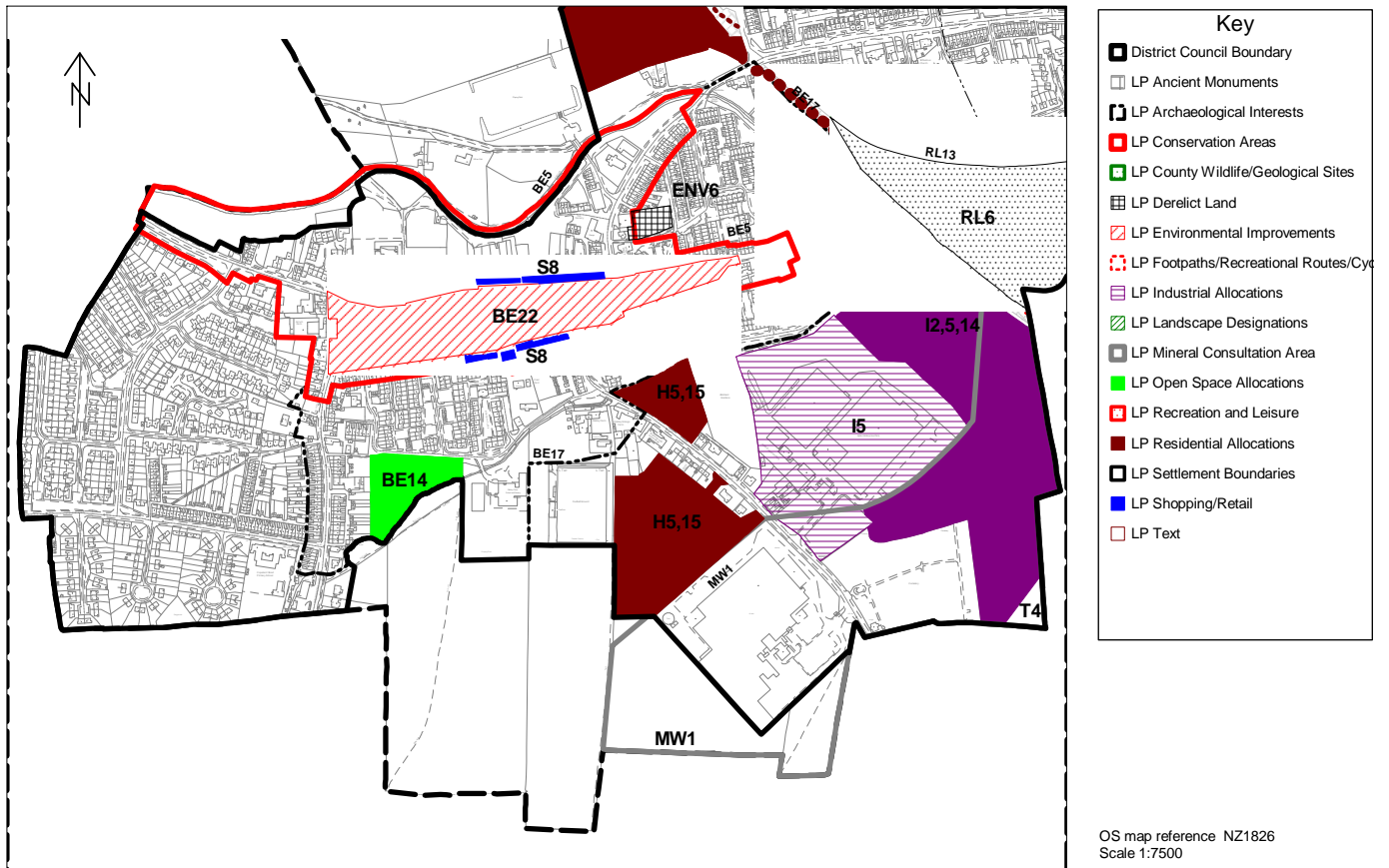


The land at Oakley Street, Darlington Road, owned by Wear Valley District Council, has been allocated for future housing, in the Wear Valley Local Plan



9

Wear Valley District Local Plan - extract



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West Auckland village green – one of the largest in County Durham

THE PARISH PLAN

6 The initiative

In May 2003, after a strong local campaign, a Parish Council for West Auckland was established, dedicated to improving the village and making it a better place to live. At the same time, there was a national initiative to provide individual parish councils with the means to formulate their own strategic plans by drawing up a Parish Plan, a document that would reflect the priorities of all sections of their local community, and a document that would be written by them. It would draw on local skills, knowledge and experience and embrace close consultation with residents and businesses.

The Parish Plan concept acknowledges that the Parish Council cannot work alone but needs the involvement and co-operation of all members of the community to give its work a sense of direction.

In June 2003 the Parish Council resolved to produce a Parish Plan, with guidance and funding from The Countryside Agency, an organisation funded by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

The Parish Plan would need to both reflect West Auckland's often conflicting character and address its unique mix of problems.



After the disastrous floods of 2000, the construction of the flood dam above Spring Gardens, here under construction, has given the village much greater sense of security and a new amenity area to enjoy.



Copeland Road houses in the SW of the village.

It is a large village of over 1200 households, close to an urban centre yet surrounded by countryside; rural footpaths rub shoulders with major trunk roads. The attractive village green conservation area is, at times, the scene of vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

Issues raised at Parish Council meetings have covered the recent construction of a flood defence system, the provision of mini-roundabouts and the proposed construction of a by-pass. Concerns about crime and security are frequently aired as are the quality of social housing areas and the maintenance of public footpaths and spaces. The Parish Plan process allows these and other issues to be defined and quantified and solutions identified.

By having the full backing of the community, the Parish Plan would strengthen the role of the Parish Council in its work with county and district councils. This 'local voice', informed and current, would greatly enhance the Council's opportunities for receiving support from larger regional and national funding organisations, and would help target such funding to where it is most needed. How was the final Plan achieved?

7 The process

Once the Parish Council agreed to go ahead with a Parish Plan, an 'expression of interest' was put forward to The Countryside Agency, with an application for funding towards the production of the Plan. The Council was successful in its bid and initially received half the funding to set the Plan process in motion. Their work was greatly assisted by the Countryside Agency's invaluable Parish Plan guide.

An initial steering committee was formed consisting of three parish councillors, Councillor Martin Roberts being appointed as chair. Flyers were sent out to all households in the parish inviting anyone who was interested to become involved as a steering committee member or to have an input into the production of the Plan. The aim was to recruit up to 12 additional people, who represented a good geographical spread, range of skills, age, sex and representation of the housing within the village.

The village in bloom in the spring and summer of 2006



An initial public meeting in November 2003 was followed by a series of Parish Plan working party meetings. Work focussed initially on the production of a questionnaire that was to be circulated to every household in the village during the summer of 2004. From the results of the questionnaire, a draft issues report was compiled and discussed at a public meeting at which the issues were agreed and solutions identified.

Drafts of the emerging plan were forwarded to Wear Valley District Council Regeneration Department to ensure compliance with statutory policies and plans (see Planning Background on page 8 for more details). In particular our Parish Plan will be a useful document in assisting Wear Valley District Council in developing the future Local Development Framework for the District and its more focused documents such as the Action Area Plan for South and East Bishop Auckland. There may be scope for the Parish Plan to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in support of these District plans.



8 The questionnaire

By producing and delivering a questionnaire to every household within the parish, an opportunity was given to everyone to have a voice and to express their views. The questionnaire was designed to not only discover what residents are most unhappy about, but to also find what is good about West Auckland and to possibly help build on these aspects in the future.

After a number of meetings to discuss the content of the questionnaire, a draft was produced. One criticism and major concern of the questionnaire was its length and complexity. The steering committee felt it was important to use this opportunity to gain as much information as possible, and this resulted in a substantial document being produced. It was felt that to reduce the number of questions and hence the number of issues would reduce the value of the questionnaire itself as a means to producing a viable plan for the future of the village.

There was expected to be a certain amount of difficulty in inputting, analysing and interpreting the results of the questionnaire. A database of some kind was needed to help simplify this process. The University of Gloucestershire had produced a piece of computer software specifically designed for this purpose, a tried and tested method which had previously been used by a number of parish councils and rural communities. 'Village Appraisal for Windows', a package containing the software on CD ROM, a menu of preset questions and an instruction manual was ordered.

The new software offered a large selection of questions to choose from and the ability to incorporate comment and self defined questions. Comment questions allowed for specific questions to be asked which required a written response, allowing people to be more detailed with their answers and to give opinions. These proved to be very useful in the final analysis offering more detail than yes/no answers. Self defined questions dealt with the issues that are particular to West Auckland, such as the construction of a bypass and a flood defence system, and helped to judge public feeling about these projects. The software also had its limitations, by restricting the number of self defined questions that could be used

After approval from the parish council, the questionnaire was delivered to all households within the parish, by the parish councillors and members of the steering committee.

While there is a need to highlight urgent and high priority issues within the community, the parish council hoped to look at other lower priority issues with a view to improving the overall appearance of the village and the quality of life of those living in the parish.

To accommodate the 'Village Appraisal for Windows' database, the original draft questionnaire had to be substantially altered



The north side of the village green is an attractive mix of eighteenth century houses and former pubs, most of them listed buildings

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

9 Deciding on the issues

The final voluntary response to the questionnaire was a 15% return to the local shops and post office which had agreed to receive completed questionnaires. This was a disappointing response, in comparison to other villages, admittedly smaller and more rural, in the area and was perhaps a reflection of the length of the questionnaire. Each area of delivery was analysed and in those areas where there was a poor response, parish plan and parish council members 'knocked on doors' to try and encourage a better return. There were a number of additional forms returned.



One of the parish council's early decisions was to take over the New Street playground, when faced with possible closure.

The spread of returned questionnaires was fairly even across the village and though the response was poorer than the parish council might have hoped for, there was a total of over 160 fully detailed replies representing the views of over 330 people in the village. This response the Parish Council took to be a representative response, given the opportunity to all to respond either through the questionnaire, the special youth questionnaire or the public meetings.

In addition to the formal questionnaires, letters were sent inviting a response to all community groups, churches, schools, retailers and industrialists, who as non-householders, fell outside the distribution of the questionnaires.

The questionnaire results were entered into the 'Village Appraisals' programme and levels of response and major areas of concern identified. Members of the Parish Plan Working Party each examined one emerging topic area to identify the key issues of concern to local residents. These issues were brought

together in report for the Parish Council and endorsed as the key issues arising out of the questionnaire. Subsequently a public meeting was held to present the questionnaire findings and seek further responses from anyone in the village who felt they had not had an opportunity to comment.

The public meeting endorsed the Parish Council's decision to structure the Plan in accordance with the following main areas of concern in the village.

Employment and the local economy

Transport and highways

Services

Crime and Security

Environment

Education, leisure and recreation

Community

The sections that follow set out the main issues that were identified and further set down how the Parish Council will tackle the issues identified. For each 'issue' there is an 'objective' setting out how to resolve the issue. In the Action Plan at the end of the Plan, how each objective is to be achieved is set out with the timescale for this, where appropriate and priority rating where particular issues were raised that required the most urgent attention.

In many cases the objectives are not uniquely those that the Parish Council can achieve, they are often the more strategic aims of our larger partners such as Wear Valley District Council and Durham County Council. The Parish Council nevertheless felt it was important to incorporate all the concerns of villagers into this one document, rather than focus solely on the smaller matters over which the Parish Council exercises a greater control. For example, the Parish Council cannot implement the full bypass, yet it was one of the most frequently raised issues in the questionnaire responses and demanded to be included in our Plan.

This final report was then prepared which has been endorsed by Wear Valley District Council as being compliant with its wider and more strategic Local Plan. This ensure that, like Russian dolls, each level of regional, county, district and parish plans, fit within each other without conflict.

Finally, for the Parish Plan to be a worthwhile document, it must not gather dust. A colourful glossy cover can hide a document that achieves nothing and is unused. The Parish Council feels that this Parish Plan sets out the direction that the community wishes to see the village take, and it intends to use the Plan to guide its actions over the coming years. It must be flexible to accommodate new issues as they arise but it does, we hope, give the Parish Council work a structure to work to, with clear goals to be achieved.

10 Employment and the local economy

Issues

West Auckland lies about three miles from Bishop Auckland, on the crossroads of the north-south A68 (45% of traffic) and the east-west A688 (55 % of traffic). The A1(M) is a 10 minute drive to the east. The proposed bypass aims to reduce the amount of through traffic in the village with Phase 1 (technically called Phase 2) taking away the A688 east-west traffic.

The village's position on these major roads offers a convenient stop off point for travellers and tourists, with shops, pubs, hotel, café, post office offering valuable services. For the residents of West Auckland, the village offers an attractive rural location on the outskirts of the Dales with countryside directly to the north and west. There is easy commuting to nearby towns of Darlington, Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Barnard Castle. Durham is only a little further away and the larger towns and cities of Newcastle, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Durham are all within one hour's drive. Mainline railways run from nearby Darlington and Durham with a branch line running from Bishop Auckland to Darlington.

West Auckland has a number of large and small industries and factory units and the much larger packaging factory, Smirfit Kappa, all based on Darlington Road. There are professional offices, shops, dentist and a range of shops that provide both good local services and employment.



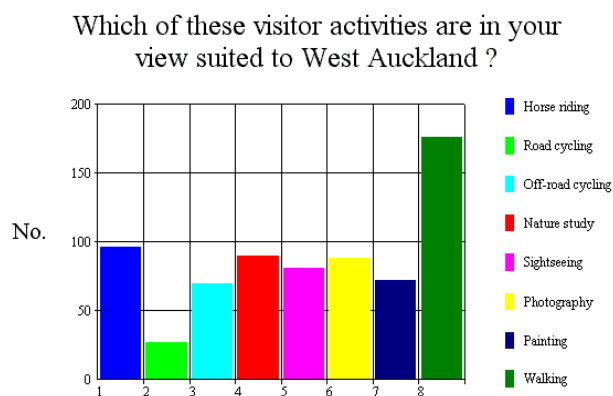
Farming is the oldest employer in the village. Its produce was traditionally all sold locally, much less nowadays.

Although the majority of the questionnaire respondents were themselves either in employment (40.5%) or retired (38.8%), their responses showed that there was still a need for more employment in the area. There was also a preference for the development of tourism.

Over 65% were in favour of small business developments. Similarly 46% would like to see development of small scale industrial workshops, with only 18% being against or having reservations. Overwhelmingly, over 66% of respondents felt that more jobs were needed in the area. Just under half said that in the event of development land becoming available in the village said they would support the provision of light industry.

A number of people commented that they would like the village to retain its rural character and to look more attractive for residents and visitors alike, as well as an incentive for encouraging new employers into the village. Comments noted that the village is the gateway to both Teesdale and Weardale and therefore be a good base for tourists visiting the area. The better interpretation of the Stockton and Darlington Railway line which passes through the village has been suggested including the replication of the missing Gaunless Railway Bridge.

When considering visitor activities, the questionnaire considered the types of activities that may suit West Auckland (203 respondents). Results are shown below.



Key issues

- Need for more jobs in and around the village.
- Encourage the development of new businesses and industries.
- Improve appearance of village to attract inward investment.
- Encourage development of tourism.
- Create more activities for tourists.
- Promote West Auckland as a 'Gateway to the Dales'.
- Boost local economy by increasing services for passing trade.

Actions: Employment and the local economy

Objectives

To support existing employment providers, encourage new job opportunities and develop the attractions of the village for both visitors and future employers.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Support the provision of development **land for business or industrial use**, where compatible with amenity and environmental considerations.
- 2 Support the **maintenance and development of businesses and industries** in the area, including support for local farmers, existing industrialists and businesses, that provide local employment..
- 3 Establish a programme of **environmental improvements** throughout the village that will enhance its rural character and increase its attractiveness for visitors and employment providers (see *Environment*).
- 4 Encourage the **development of tourism**, using the village's rich heritage, including the Stockton and Darlington railway line, the new wetlands behind Spring Gardens, its attractive countryside and as a 'Gateway to the Dales', to provide better interpretation, access to the countryside and advertise the village's local services.
- 5 Ensure that with the construction of the bypass, the **local village services and attractions are signposted** on the new road.



Smurfit Kappa on Darlington Road is the largest factory in the village.

11 Transport and highways

Issues

West Auckland has always been a major road junction, consequently traffic, and the associated problems it brings, is one of the issues of the utmost importance raised by the residents in the Parish Plan questionnaire.

Over 92% of residents considered the **construction of the bypass** to be a critical factor in the future improvement of West Auckland. Many of the current issues with regard to speeding, danger spots and parking will hopefully be removed when the bypass is complete. The first phase, in Tindale Crescent, was completed some years ago. While the implementation of the second phase of the bypass, due to start in 2005, is very welcome in removing the A688 traffic, many residents thought it would not be a complete success until the final third phase, west of Copeland Road, was constructed that would remove the A68 too, so eliminating all through traffic from the centre of the village. The impact of the second phase on existing village roads will need monitoring to see if there are localized areas of increased traffic.



Illegal car parking, blocking the pavement, on double yellow lines and adjacent to a road junction is both dangerous and antisocial.

Residents expressed huge concern with **speeding** in and through the village with 82% stating that it is a serious problem. The approach roads are the most dangerous areas. The roads where there is the greatest danger are:

- A68 Darlington Road, Spring Gardens
- A688 Staindrop Road, Station Road
- Copeland Road – this road is of major concern as it is adjacent to a primary school.

Suggestions to help alleviate this situation by introducing more rigid speed limits and calming measures were well supported by over 50% of the residents. Over 30% thought there should be more warning and 'children at play' signs.

There were a number of **danger spots** throughout the village that 85% of respondent residents thought were dangerous to both drivers and pedestrians, because of the level of traffic.

These were:

- Mini roundabout at Chapel Street (A68)
- Mini roundabout at Manor House – junction of A68 and A688
- Pedestrians crossing the road at the Late Shopper, Station Road (A688)
- Pedestrians crossing the road at entrance to the Leech -Estate (A68)
- Pedestrians crossing the road at Staindrop Road (A688)

Resident car parking would not appear to be a problem as the majority of vehicles are parked 'off road' (77%) with only a small percentage on the road (9%). However, the problem of **cars parked illegally**, on public footpaths and pavements was highlighted as a major concern. This frequently aggravates the dangerous traffic problems, forcing pedestrians into the road because of cars blocking the pavement. Parking on double yellow lines was also common around the green. Parking on the village green itself also occurs. The under use of the village green car parks adjacent to the Old Hall and the Post Office was noted, caused in part by their poor surface condition.

The major **means of transport** is the car, being used by 74% of respondent residents. This high level of car ownership accounts for only 22% using the bus service. A very small minority use cycles or taxis (4%).

40% of residents never use the **bus service**, while only 12% use it for work. Leisure, shopping and medical visits were the reasons for most frequent use of the bus. Of those residents who do use the bus services, the main areas of discontent are reliability and timetabling. The location of bus stops and the routes travelled are considered acceptable.

Heavy vehicular traffic causes **air pollution and excessive noise** within the village. Less traffic and slower traffic will improve the quality of life for residents.

Key issues

- Bypass construction, monitoring and extension (urgent)
- Vehicle speeding on all roads (urgent)
- Pedestrian safety crossing all roads
- Traffic calming measures
- Illegal car parking on pavements and village green (urgent)
- Improved car parking in the centre of the village
- Improvements to mini-roundabouts
- Noise and air pollution
- Maintenance of regular bus services

Actions - Transport and highways

Objective

To achieve a wholly bypassed village with only local low-speed traffic, with well maintained car parking provision, regular bus services and an improved environment that is completely safe for pedestrians, especially children and elderly people.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Support by all means, the **implementation of the full bypass** for the village, through the recently commenced Phase 2 construction, the monitoring of its impact on the village, and lobbying for the execution of the final Phase 3, from Staindrop Road to Spring Gardens.
- 2 Campaign, as a matter of urgency, for the prevention and detection of **speeding vehicles**, working with the highway authorities and police, to include measures such as improved 30mph signs, 'school' and 'children playing' signs, and speed indicators on major roads.
- 3 Encourage initiatives that will improve **pedestrian safety** throughout the village but especially on the major roads.
- 4 Investigate with the highway authorities the use of **traffic calming** measures especially on through roads in residential areas and on the A688 after the completion of the Bypass Phase 2.
- 5 Prevent, as a matter of urgency, the dangerous, antisocial and **illegal car parking on pavements and the village green**, working through highway authorities and other agencies, such as the police.
- 6 Seek **car parking improvements in the central area of the village**, particularly the two car parks at East Green and in front of The Old Hall.
- 7 Seek improvements to the **mini-roundabouts** at Chapel Street and the Manor House to improve vehicle movement and pedestrian safety, after further consultation with the village community.
- 8 Support the provision of **regular and reliable bus services** through the village.
- 9 Support the efforts of others in **reducing the noise and air pollution** from vehicles travelling through the village to achieve a quieter, cleaner and healthier village environment.



East Green Car Park is badly in need to resurfacing



Mini roundabouts have had a mixed reception in the vill

12 Services

Issues

The various concerns about village services were voiced by over 200 people, on average, through the questionnaire, reinforced at the public meetings and exhibitions throughout the Plan process.

Environmental Services (gas, electricity and water supplies) were, for all but four respondents, good or reasonable.

Commenting on **local authority services**, most questionnaire respondents (84%) were happy with the refuse collection service but agencies need to adopt a better system of informing their customers of changes over holiday periods. However the implementation of the new wheelie bins (after the questionnaire) has caused considerable local difficulties.

The lack of public toilets has been raised as an issue for the village. There is a need to develop facilities for the many visitors who stop off here on their way to/from the dales, but this may best be provided within existing commercial premises. Roadside care and street cleaning is generally good but 28% of respondents considered it poor. This may be more of an issue of litter which is dealt with elsewhere.

31 respondents were local authority tenants. 19 thought the Council house repair service was poor, 12 were content. There has been a massive programme of installation of double glazed doors and windows in recent months, this may have addressed the concerns of those who were unhappy. Perhaps the Council should be finding out from its tenants if they are happy with the service.

There were strong views expressed on the poor maintenance of open spaces, roads, pavements, lighting and verges.. These issues are covered under *Transport and highways* and *Environment*. However, it is worth noting here too that well maintained open space makes a real difference to quality of life and to people's perception of a village. As a "feel good" factor it is also a relatively cheap strategy.

The questionnaire was undertaken during the summer of 2004 and expressed general satisfaction with the **medical services** for the village. That position has now changed dramatically. In December 2004 the Primary Care Trust (PCT) announced that the Auckland Medical Group intended to move to a single site clinic in Bishop Auckland, with the closure of the St Helen's Surgery. This might also lead to the closure of its dependant chemist. A very significant number of residents have now petitioned the PCT for the retention of facilities in St Helens or West Auckland, where there is no alternative facilities. The Parish Council has objected strongly to the proposal. The PCT are still revising their consultation document in the light of changes in site availability, pending a new round of public consultation.

There were no comments on the two **parish council services**, the children's play area, recently adopted from Wear Valley District Council, and the allotments in Darlington Road. The parish council however wishes to maintain and improve both these amenities in the future.

A majority of respondents (65%) thought that **local shopping facilities** were good or reasonable, though a significant minority (31%) thought they were poor. Most people used the Post Office and Select and Save on a regular basis. The Chemist was also well supported as were the petrol station and the pubs. The mobile library sees 13 people monthly and perhaps needs to be advertised more aggressively (see *Education*).

Respondents' answers to the question "where do you usually buy the following?" highlighted the fact that the range of village shops is not extensive enough. There was concern about the high cost of shopping locally. Empty retail units sometimes take a while to occupy and new businesses need to be encouraged to move in. One solution to the problem might be a weekly market. There was huge support for local farmers and producers selling their own goods in the village.

Understandably, there was a slightly older age profile in the questionnaire respondents commenting on **disabled facilities** reflected in 17% of them being registered disabled and 30% having a health problem which restricts their lifestyle. Of the 129 people who expressed a view about facilities for the disabled half thought they were poor with only 14 rating them good. More work needs to be done here to determine exactly what the requirements are for those residents who are disabled or in poor health.

Good **TV and Radio reception** is patchy with 41% having poor TV reception and 25% experiencing problems with radio. From over 111 respondents there were requests for **new additional facilities** with 49% wanting sheltered housing, 44% sheltered provision for the disabled and 21% more nursing homes. Additional medical facilities included 31% wanting a family planning clinic and 24% asking for a baby clinic.

Key Issues

- Refuse collection changes
- Council house repairs
- Maintenance of open space, roads and footpaths
- Threat of closure of St Helens Surgery and chemist
- Protect existing shopping, new shops
- Farmers market, local produce in shops
- Disability issues in the village
- TV/radio reception
- New sheltered accommodation and clinic facilities

Actions - Services

Objective

To ensure that the public utilities, health trusts, local authorities and other agencies provide a satisfactory service level and range of facilities in the village, and also to support and develop a strong range of shops, post office and other amenities for the benefit of residents.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Fight for the provision of a **local surgery and chemist** either within the village or close by.
- 2 Seek the retention and development of a wide range of **local shops**.
- 3 Support the provision of a **post office** in the village.
- 4 Work with Wear Valley District Council to improve the delivery of **Council house repairs**
- 5 Address **disability issues** in the village through an audit of the village environment and through direct contact with registered disabled residents to improve their mobility and access to village services.
- 6 Ensure the maintenance of the New Street **children's play area**
- 7 Work with the village's Allotments Association to support the provision and improvement of the **Allotments**.
- 8 Seek to ensure the high quality **landscape maintenance** of the village's open space, roads and footpaths
- 9 Encourage the sale of **local farm produce** within village shops and through the possible provision of a farmer's market.
- 10 Encourage the provision of **new sheltered accommodation**
- 11 Examine with the local surgery the provision of **family planning and baby clinics**.
- 12 Identify and publicise the solutions to poor **TV and radio reception**.
- 13 Encourage the provision of **visitor toilet facilities** within existing and new commercial premises.
- 14 Support local residents in seeking an acceptable level of the new wheelie bin **refuse collection** and also seek better information on holiday changes.



Select and Save on the south side of the Green



The Crusty Loaf and Fabulous Flowers on the north side

13 Crime and security

Issues

Overall it is thought that crime in West Auckland is no different to other rural villages in South West Durham, although almost 50% of those people that responded to the questionnaire think that crime is increasing throughout the village. Residents' biggest concerns are vandalism, theft and drunkenness with one quarter of respondents reporting that they had actually been a victim of crime in the last 12 months. When such incidents are reported the residents maintain that police response time is not quick enough and wrongdoers escape without warning or punishment. On occasions there have been reports of no response from the police, which in itself causes frustration and anger among residents. These incidents are fairly evenly spread around the village with all areas being subject to some levels of law-breaking or delinquency.



Graffiti is fortunately not a major problem in the village, but it identifies the anti-social behaviour hot-spots.

Most residents have felt insecure at one time or another, whilst walking in the village on an evening or at night. This is particularly so around the late night opening shops and other places where groups of youngsters congregate. The presence of these youngsters, often with their rowdy and disruptive behaviour, can be intimidating. These places are also hot spots for underage drinking and littering.

There is a problem of speeding vehicles on Copeland Road and Staindrop Road, which is made significantly more dangerous by the number of cars that are parked in front of houses on these roads (see Traffic and highways). Quad bikes and off-road

motor bikes are causing anxiety among residents when they are being driven, at speed, on footpaths and bridleways.

In the Parish Plan questionnaire people were asked what they would like to see as improvement measures in combating or eradicating some of the current problems. A resounding 85% wanted a greater police presence in West Auckland with three-quarters of the respondents identifying foot patrols as a way of boosting confidence in villagers whilst reducing anti social behaviour. Over half stated that better consultation and communication between police and local people would also help. The Police alone cannot prevent or solve these problems and a successful community safety approach requires the participation of local people: individuals, groups and organisations.

Many people expressed a desire for more or new 'beat' policemen, and a 'more visible' police presence. It is worth noting that recent highly authoritative research has shown that introducing, for example, increased levels of 'beat' policing to improve community safety can sometimes worsen the situation. Any such initiatives that might be started in West Auckland must be monitored for their effectiveness. If introduced there should be agreed measures of acceptable response times and police attitude that could be used to distinguish between a satisfied and an unsatisfied 'victim' of crime.

Although the majority of completed questionnaires came from an older age group it was evident that more activities for the young was seen as another way of reducing overall crime in the village. Finally just under half would like to see security surveillance systems (CCTV) installed around the village to capture first hand misdemeanours.

In considering solutions to improve security it should be remembered that some anti-crime installations can brutalise areas and detract from pleasant surroundings. Crime and antisocial behaviour in West Auckland is committed by a very small minority of people who either live in or visit the village. In striving to improve the situation, it is important that the attractive appearance and amenities of the village, enjoyed by the vast majority of residents, should not be undermined by measures to deter the actions of a few.

Key issues

- Sense that crime is increasing
- Vandalism, theft and drunkenness
- Poor police response time to reported crime
- Insecurity walking in the village in the dark
- Intimidating behaviour of groups of youths
- Speeding cars in residential areas
- Motor bikes on footpaths

Actions - Crime and security

Objective

To encourage a greater sense of security and well being in the village, to reduce the fear of crime and to assist the police and other agencies in its prevention and detection.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Support existing, and encourage new, **neighbourhood watch schemes**.
- 2 Support initiatives to offer advice on **home security**
- 3 Examine planning applications to '**design out crime**'.
- 4 Support the installation of **security surveillance systems** (CCTV) by others, in specific areas where their deterrent effect is assured and where they will not detract from the appearance of the village.
- 5 Support improvements to **street and footpath lighting** to remove blind spots.
- 6 Discourage fly tipping and litter by supporting the provision of more **litter bins** where appropriate (see Environment).
- 7 Continue to **liaise with Durham Constabulary** on a regular and formal basis with a possible community-based partnership with them to look at specific issues, such as police response times and foot patrols.
- 8 Liase with recently appointed **security wardens**.
- 9 Identify **hot-spot areas** where underage drinking, unruly behaviour and any other criminal or anti-social activities occur.
- 10 Further discourage underage drinking by investigating the supply of alcohol and **discussing with local traders** its sale to under age customers or to older youths for use by others.
- 11 Discourage the misuse of footpaths and bridleways by **quads and motorbikes**, by the installation of gates and other devices which maintain pedestrian access for all, and by identifying constant offenders.
- 12 Adopting a parallel course of action to secure a wide range of **youth activities** to discourage juvenile misbehaviour (see *Education, leisure and recreation*).



Footpaths in the village must be well maintained and well lit to give security to all users

14 Environment

Issues

West Auckland has its roots as a **separate rural village** and throughout the whole Parish Plan exercise there has been a strong will to reinforce that character, accepting the busy road system and the proximity of Bishop Auckland.

The village has a rich **heritage**. It is a conservation area and contains many listed buildings around its medieval green. That heritage, overlaid by the later industrial heritage of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and the colliery is important in defining the character and quality of the village. It merits strong protection and many respondents also thought it could be better interpreted, though a Heritage Centre, a Centre about the village people as well as its places.



The Old Manor House Hotel

Respondents were asked what they thought of **the appearance of the village**. Of these, the village green was viewed most positively (94% good or reasonable), followed by the Lakes Estate (71%). The approach roads had a stronger 'reasonable' vote, with Staindrop Road (57%), Copeland Road (59%), Darlington Road (58%), while Station Road (47%) also registering a sizable 'poor' vote (31%). The 'poor' areas of the village were the Oakley Beck (51%) and Gaunless (49%) riversides followed by East Green (41%) and Oakley Green (36%).

When asked about **improving the village**, not surprisingly there was a large vote for improving the poorer areas, particularly the river walks that are enjoyed by all. There was also support for continued improvements on the village green. There was broad support for better landscaping and more greenery as the best way to achieve many of these improvements. There was strong support for preserving our existing trees and planting new ones. Maintaining hedges was considered important and particularly planting flowers and bulbs. Respondents thought that better footpaths (57%), more seating (49%) and the improvement of derelict buildings (48%) were important. There was also support for improving the children's play area and tidier shop fronts..

The condition of village paths is discussed under Highways but there was also strong support for good **footpaths and bridleways** in the surrounding countryside. A third of the respondents did not know where local paths were and almost 60% thought they were poorly signposted. Access difficulties arose from bushes and nettles, muddy paths, high stiles and locked gates, barbed wire, litter, farm animals and crops across paths.

The questionnaire asked what **type of new development** the village needed. Community and recreational space (66%) scored highly as did light industry (46%) and workshops (38%). Housing in small groups was supported (32%) but not in large estates, which drew only 2% in favour. The new bypass will only release for development agreed industrial land adjacent to the existing estate and, south of the village, farming is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. There was a high level of satisfaction with the recently completed flood defence works in the village.

How could the village be kept **clean and tidy**? The centre of the village is already kept in good condition by a very diligent litter warden and there was support for more wardens and road sweepers. Additional waste bins were requested and 'dog mess' bins were seen as most needed in the Lakes estate. There was some support for a Best Kept Village competition and a Spring Clean Day.

Key issues

- Maintain the rural village character
- Heritage
- Maintain and conserve good
- Improve the environment of West Auckland and in particular the appearance of specific areas.
- The provision of community and recreational space.
- Footpaths and roads village and countryside
- New development
- Tidy village

Actions - Environment

Objective

To ensure an attractive and distinctive environment in the village and its surrounding countryside by conserving its rich heritage, protecting the good and, improving the poor areas, and encouraging sensitive new developments.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Work to **maintain the good aspects** of the village, such as its rural character and conservation area.
- 2 Conserve and promote the unique **history and heritage** of West Auckland.
- 3 Work to **improve the poorer areas of the village**, such as the river walks, identify and prioritise areas, establish an action plan..
- 4 Promote the **planting of trees, flowers and bulbs** throughout the village in consultation with schools, businesses and residents.
- 5 Continue to encourage high quality in **new development** through the inspection of planning applications.
- 6 Work for the satisfactory **provision of community and recreational space where it is needed** in the village.
- 7 Ensure the land in the Parish Council's care, such as the **allotments and play areas are well maintained**
- 8 Work with Wear Valley District Council to **maintain and improve the village cemetery**.
- 9 Encourage a **coordinated approach to improving public space** (village and rural footpaths, roads, verges and greens, etc).
- 10 Establish a **footpaths and bridleways group** to promote well signed and well used routes, that could also liaise with local council highways, countryside and footpaths officers.
- 11 Build up a detailed **village land ownership map** for responsibility of open space, footpaths, riverside land etc.
- 12 Work to provide **access for all** both within the village and the along wider countryside.
- 13 **Identify unused and 'unowned' land** and encourage its use for the benefit of the village, e.g. public space, employment.
- 14 Encourage a sense of shared pride and responsibility in the village, keeping it **litter free and tidy**.
- 15 Inform the relevant Council departments of the need for more **waste bins and 'dog mess' bins**, and suggest position



West Auckland lying in the shallow valley of the Gaunless, from the south.

15 Education, leisure and recreation

Issues

West Auckland is well provided with two schools, two youth clubs, a football club, a memorial hall, a club, an hotel and four pubs. In addition the three local churches provide further social activities in or close to the village. So are residents social needs adequately covered? The Parish Plan questionnaire tried to find out the educational and recreational needs of residents which were *not* provided at present.

The views on educational facilities suggested that nursery and playgroup provision is adequate but with a significant minority feeling the need for more - nurseries (20%) and playgroups (17%). There was also a small demand for more registered childminders. There was, however, much stronger support for the provision of after-school clubs (57%) and holiday play schemes (55%). The provision of outdoor play equipment for younger children on the southern side of the village has recently been secured by the Parish Council adoption of the New Street playground.



The new Sports Hall, Oakley Cross School

The need for centres of physical recreation was also high on the list of residents needs. The questionnaire asked residents which clubs/activities they would attend if they were provided. Respondents favoured an indoor sports centre (71%) with an outdoor sports centre in close second (52%), with a swimming pool and a skateboard park not too far behind. The likelihood of major public facilities in the village, such a swimming pool is unlikely when there is one close by in Bishop Auckland. However, the new sports hall facilities at Oakley Cross School should answer some of this demand.

The availability of existing sports facilities within the village outside of their normal periods of activity should be examined to see if they can be put to beneficial village use.

The new facility at Oakley Cross School answers a strong feeling voiced throughout the consultation that the growing problem of some young people, vulnerable to the influence of a

gang mentality, underage drinking and drugs abuses, should be tackled not just as a police matter but by the provision of a range of alternative venues and activities for them throughout the year. The modest success of the twice weekly Village Centre youth club and drop-in, in addition to the main Millbank Youth Club, demonstrates the need to encourage somewhere where young people can meet in the evening.

Amongst an older age group, there was also strong support for adult education evening classes (52%). Of four suggested classes, the most take-up was for computing (70%) with a good demand for languages, crafts and woodwork classes too. In line with this there is seen to be a need for Internet facilities within the village with 74% positive responses. The majority of respondents were aware that the County Council library stops in the village, but it is little used at present and is in need of greater publicity.

There were also a number of suggestions for new clubs given. Of these, the gardening club (37%) was popular, receiving the most positive response, suggesting that in addition to the popular Allotments Association which provides much needed gardening ground, there is still demand amongst the village's 'green fingers'. A suggested rambling club was well supported by 35% of respondents and activities here could also be linked to suggested improvements to the wider network of footpaths spreading out from the village (see Environment section).

Senior citizens group, art club, drama, and creative arts for children each received good support. There was also some support for a young people's drama group, choir and music society and a whist drive. There has also been strong support in the past for a local history group, possibly linked to a WEA course in the village.

New clubs and activities require accommodation and support is needed for those non-commercial premises, such as the Memorial Hall and The Village Centre that provide invaluable activities for many in the village.

Key Issues

- Support to existing facilities
- Extended use of existing facilities
- Publicize the existence of all such facilities
- Setting up of clubs and activities eg, after school clubs and holiday play schemes.
- The provision of adult evening classes.
- The provision of Internet facilities.
- Awareness raising of the County Council library facility.
- Provision of sports facilities in the village

Actions – Education, leisure and recreation

Objective

To encourage the provision of as wide a range of educational and recreational activities in West Auckland as possible, to meet the requirements of all sections of the village community, through support and publicity for existing facilities and the development of new ones.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 The production of an **audit of local community activities and facilities**, in such places as school halls, churches and church halls, Memorial Hall, Village Centre, Manor House Hotel, WM Club, public houses, football ground, the 'colliery' football pitch and other open spaces.
- 2 **Further consult with specific target groups** in the village, such as young mothers and young people, to assess more accurately their educational and recreational needs.
- 3 **Supporting existing social facilities** by all available means, including publicity.
- 4 Encourage the **extended use of existing facilities**.
- 5 Encourage the **provision of satisfactory sports facilities** in the village.
- 5 Publicise all activities and facilities, through the production of a **village community guide**.
- 6 Explore the potential for **adult evening classes** with WEA and others (eg adult literacy, IT skills, local history.)
- 7 Raise an awareness of the **County Council mobile library facility**, through publicity and other initiatives..
- 8 Encourage the setting up of **new clubs and activities**, such as after school clubs and holiday play scheme
- 9 Encourage the provision of **publicly accessible Internet facilities**, in either a commercial 'Internet café' or through a non-commercial community facility.



Children enjoying the new sports facilities at Oakley Cross School.

16 Community

Issues

West Auckland is a village that is sometimes said to lack a sense of community. In many ways that is clearly *not* the case. Many villagers can trace their families back in the village for hundreds of years, so West Auckland is a place where people stay, where they feel happy and at home – a good community.

The village also has a whole range of social groups within it. Most villagers belong to one or more of these groups, be it a local church or chapel, a public house or the WM club, football club, a special interest club or residents association.

The village now has the ability to speak with one voice, formally, through the recently established parish council. But that is not the same as being a community in the true sense of the word. So is West Auckland any different from any other village that shelters people of all ages, different backgrounds, long established families and incomers, the poor and the wealthy, the fit and the infirm? Perhaps not.

In one way however West Auckland is unfortunate in not easily being able to be *seen* as a whole community. The strongest visible expression of the village as a community is the village green – the area of land where, centuries ago, villagers would herd their animals for collective protection, barter and trade, talk and dance and fight. But unlike many village greens it is not the stage set for some of the most important village activities. All the village's churches are elsewhere, many of the village community buildings are elsewhere too. It is left to the WM Club and the three public houses and the local shops to give the area vitality. The wide open grass areas of the village green are in fact wholly underused, only the occasional ball game takes place. The village pant, so often mistaken for the War Memorial has no longer any communal significance, and the memory of our War dead is celebrated elsewhere.

So perhaps West Auckland is a typical village community with its many smaller communities within it, but with limited ability to express itself, to be seen acting, as a single community. With the prospect of half the village through traffic being removed shortly, and the need to lobby for the completed bypass, there is major opportunity to reclaim the village green area, in the summer months at least, not just as an attractive area to look at, but a place to linger, to sit, to meet, to talk and play together, to remember, to celebrate and to worship.

Any sense of community must also be community for all. The fear that some youths cause in the village must be tackled both within the community and also through formal policing. Our young people must be encouraged to feel a part of this community, to feel it cares for them as well as realising that being a part of the village carries two-way responsibilities to respect and care for its people and places. The recent initiatives at The Village Centre have extended the opportunities already afforded by the Millbank Youth Club.

Local schools have a vital role to play in developing community pride and respect.

So the parish council's job must be to reinforce the sense of community and much of the issues and actions that have gone before are aimed at just that. This section identifies a number of initiatives and proposals that have the sense of community at their heart.

Individuals and families in the village need to know what is going on. There is a need for a village notice board. The West Life newsletter, pioneered by the parish council, will inform villagers of what is going on, and will complement in a small way what appears in local church newsletters, the Teesdale Mercury and Northern Echo. The West Auckland Web is also invaluable, giving a world wide view of our village and should be supported.

The local churches are central to the social life of many people in the village. To a wider circle, who may not be regular attenders, they remain an important fixed point in the community life of the village, whether at Easter or Christmas or throughout the year when they become the natural home where we celebrate the rituals of birth, marriage and death. Schools also play a major part in the village's community life and foster a sense of belonging in our young people at an early age.

In recent years there have been major improvements in the Christmas lights and decoration both on the village green and throughout the village. A fantastic community effort raised the funds for the new lights for Christmas 2004, and more are planned in future years.

The village green has also been the home for the intermittent Summer Carnival, a wonderful celebration of village life that still lacks the essential core commitment to run from year to year without interruption. The green might also be able to support other events such as farmers and Christmas markets, particularly when the level of through traffic will be significantly reduced. Summer games, such as quoits, might also be provided.

The village pant is an attractive and important piece of community history, its setting is ruined by road signs and poor landscaping. It could be so much better. It could become the centre of a redesigned garden area rededicated to the memory of the village's war dead.

Key Issues

- Young people in the community
- Village information
- Local churches and schools
- Christmas
- Community events.
- Village green

Actions - Community

Objective

To maintain and develop a strong sense of community in the village by supporting existing churches, schools, youth and social clubs, promote better communication in the village and encouraging community events.

The Parish Council will seek to achieve this objective by the following measures:

- 1 Encourage the **involvement of young people in the community life of the village**, though organisations such as the locals schools, the Millbank Youth Club and the new Village Centre drop-in.
- 2 Work towards a **village community that is fully informed** of what is going on, through maintaining the Westlife newsletter, provision of a village information board and working with other local agencies, papers and web sites.
- 3 Maintain close links with **local churches and schools** in developing community activities and events and promoting them through Westlife, village notice boards, etc
- 4 Support community bodies such as the **Memorial Hall and The Village Centre**, encouraging the latter to be used as a village notice board.
- 5 Support the annual **Christmas celebrations**, assisting the provision of more lights and decorations, the Christmas tree and community events and services.
- 6 Encourage the **use of the village green for communal activities** such as annual carnival, church and memorial events, farmers and Christmas markets as well as summer sports such as quoits.
- 7 Establish the **Summer Carnival** as a regular annual event, drawing on community-wide support in its organisation.
- 8 Promote a newly landscaped area around the **village pant** as a war memorial garden, as a focus for community commemoration and as an enhancement to the village green.



The setting up of the annual Christmas tree on the village green, as here in 2004, relies on volunteers from across the community.

17 Resources

Financial resources

The financial resources of the Parish Council are very modest indeed. In 2006/7 the parish precept – the money allocated to the Parish Council through the Council Tax – amounts to only £15,000. To this can be added a relatively small income from Allotment rentals. The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the Allotments and also the 'New Street' play equipment on the recreation ground. The Parish Council has also taken on, on very good terms, the redundant community rooms at Monteith Close, as their own parish community hall.

This still leaves a very substantial portion of the precept to be spent on a variety of benefits for the village, and in the past couple of years this has included new public seating throughout the village, environmental improvement schemes at the cemetery and on the village green, support for the Village Centre drop-in proposals and support for improvements in the Christmas lights.



A proposed Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, in the conservation area around the green, funded by English Heritage, Durham County Council, Wear Valley District Council and West Auckland Parish Council, will hopefully bring substantial property restoration grants and environmental improvements.

But the hopes of the village community expressed in this Parish Plan cannot be realised by the Parish Council alone, but only by working in **partnership** with others. These may be bodies that can offer substantial financial support or can offer expertise and guidance in helping the community achieve its goals. Most importantly are the two local authorities Wear Valley District Council and Durham County Council, whose officers have already given valuable time to the Parish Council. The Parish Council already enjoys a good working relationship with Durham Constabulary, with the police attending every meeting.

Specific schemes may attract specific funding and we have already received some modest help with tree planting from Durham County Council. We have also been working closely with Durham County Council and Wear Valley District Council recently in preparing a bid for a conservation area enhancement scheme to be submitted to English Heritage for funding.

There are considerable sources for possible grant support for projects depending upon the nature of the scheme. Environmental schemes have already been mentioned and for the future, the Heritage Lottery Fund may be able to help. For community schemes, the local Wear Valley Community Fund is a possible source of support as could be the Big Lottery nationally.

The Parish Council will try to ensure that it does not spend its own money without first seeking possible financial partners who can be brought in help achieve our aims.

The Parish Council will seek to ensure that for every pound it spends it attracts matching funding whenever possible.

Human resources

A glance down the long list of 'Actions' in the sections above will illustrate that many of the community's wishes cannot be achieved without the right level of financial resources – we need money to do the job.

But a second look at those lists will also show how many of those 'Actions' need no funding at all. All they need is someone's time or someone's knowledge. Human resources are, in the end, the most important and precious resource we possess.

In past few years when there was a call to raise money for Christmas decorations in the village, it was individuals organising fund raising events, individuals coming together to play a fancy dress football match and individuals who actually helped put the Christmas lights on the village green, that got the job done. The strength of the village lies in the individual contribution each member can make towards the common good.

West Auckland is a rich mix of people with a wide range of skills. The Parish Council alone cannot achieve all the aims set out in this Parish Plan. It needs to call on the time and expertise of a wider group of volunteers throughout the village. If those talents can be offered, if people with some spare time can come forward, a great deal more can be achieved for the benefit of the village. Parish Councillors will be pleased to hear from anyone who can help.

ACTION PLAN: EMPLOYMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Land for employment – support provision	Support the provision of land for employment, subject to amenity and environmental considerations, in local and regional planning documents	High	Continuous	WVDC, DCC	
Employment support – farmers, industrialists, businesses	Support local businesses, farmers, industrialists that provide employment, as circumstances arise that offer the opportunity for parish council comment.	High	Continuous	WVDC, DCC, employers	
Environmental improvements – establish programme	By establishing a village wide programme of environmental improvements that will ensure its attractiveness to employment providers.	High	Two years (programme)	WVDC, DCC	Individual schemes in funded through Action Plan in 'Environment'.
Tourism development – encourage and promote in village.	Support the promotion of the village heritage in publications inc <i>West Life</i> , its Stockton and Darlington history, attractive countryside and services.	High	Continuous	One North East, WVDC, DCC	
Village services – ensure bypass signage	Request and lobby County Council for 'local services' signage on new bypass to mitigate impact of loss of passing trade to village shops, pubs and services	Medium	One year	DCC	

ACTION PLAN: TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Bypass – support Phase 2 construction and lobby for Phase 3.	Monitor impact of Phase II bypass on completion, through public meetings, <i>West Life</i> , etc and press for implementation of final phase.	High	One year after opening of Phase II	DCC, WVDC, Department of Transport	DCC, Department of Transport
Speeding vehicles – help in prevention and detection.	Press highway authorities to provide speed indicators, improved signage. Work with police on detection, through Neighbourhood Watch.	High	Six months (proposals)	DCC, police	DCC
Pedestrian safety – encourage initiatives	Seek local opinions for pedestrian safety initiatives from villagers, through <i>West Life</i> and PC meetings. Promote suggestions with highway agencies.	High	One year	DCC	DCC
Traffic calming – investigate measures with highway authority	Seek problem areas from villagers where speeding local traffic is dangerous. Seek implementation of calming measures by highway authority.	High	One year	DCC	DCC
Illegal car parking – prevent parking on footpaths, green, etc.	Identify illegal parking black spots and work with commercial premises and police to warn first, then prosecute offenders. Use <i>West Life</i> to highlight problem.	High	Six months	DCC, police	
Car parks – seek improvements in central area car parks.	Obtain estimates for resurfacing of two central car parks and suggest partnership funding to implement improvements.	High	Six months	DCC, WVDC	DCC, WDCD
Mini-roundabouts – define concerns and discuss with DCC.	Invite written submissions, through <i>West Life</i> , on problems with mini-roundabouts for forwarding on to DCC for discussion.	Medium	One year	DCC	
Bus services – support regular and reliable provision.	Test satisfaction with bus services through <i>West Life</i> , and respond to any legitimate concerns with Bus companies and DCC.	Low	Two years	DCC, bus companies	
Noise and air pollution – seek monitoring and reduction measures.	Support monitoring before and after bypass opening, project improvements on full bypass implementation	Low	Two years	DCC, WVDC	

ACTION PLAN: SERVICES

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Surgery and chemist – retain local provision.	Maintain close scrutiny of future primary care trust (PCT) proposals	High	Continuous	PCT, DCC, WVDC	
Local shops and post office – retain and develop range.	Encourage wide range of local shops through inspection of planning applications and support for local traders as necessary.	High	Continuous	WVDC, Chamber of Trade, Post Office	
Council house repairs – improved delivery.	Work with WVDC and its housing management organisation to ensure tenant satisfaction	Medium	Continuous	WVDC, Housing Management Organisation	
Access for all – ensure disability issues are addressed.	Secure audit and, if needed, improvements of local roads, paths, shops and public buildings to ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act	Medium	1 year audit and 3 year Action Plan	WVDC, local disability agencies	WVDC, DCC
Allotments and Play Area – maintain and improve.	Allotments and New Street play area are in Parish Council care	Medium	3 year allotment Improvement Plan	Allotment Association, Groundwork West	DCC, environmental charities
Landscape maintenance of village public spaces.	Develop and maintain good working relationship with public land owners and their maintenance agents	Medium	Continuous	DCC, WVDC, Sones Landscaping	
Refuse collection and recycling – maintain provision	Work on unresolved wheelie bin problems and encourage, through <i>West Life</i> , greater recycling efforts in line with district, county and national targets.	Medium	Continuous	WVDC	
Sheltered accommodation – new provision.	Support the maintenance of current sheltered accommodation and encourage more provision.	Medium	As opportunity occurs	WVDC, housing agencies	
Family planning and baby clinics – encourage provision.	Work with local surgery and primary care trust to investigate need and, if proven, encourage provision of clinics.	Low	6 months (investigation)	St Helen's Surgery, PCT	
TV and radio reception – encourage better quality reception advice	Use <i>West Life</i> to publicise solutions to poor TV and radio reception.	Low	1 year	Local TV suppliers, TV companies	
Visitor toilet facilities – encourage provision.	Assess toilet facilities within publicly accessible shops, pubs and hotels, and advertise availability.	Low	2 years	Local commercial premises	
Local farm produce – encourage village sale	Use <i>West Life</i> to promote local producers and encourage local shops to see their products	Low	2 years	Local farmers and shops	

ACTION PLAN: CRIME AND SECURITY

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Neighbourhood watch schemes - support new and existing schemes.	Promote value of NW schemes in <i>West Life</i> , support police authority in extending schemes in the village.	High	Continuous	Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, Police	
Youth activities – encourage wide range of village activities.	Encourage provision of social facilities in the village, supporting out of schools activities, the local Youth Club and The Village Centre drop-in.	High	Continuous	Schools, Youth Club, WA Community Partnership (VC)	WVDC, community funding agencies
Quads and motorbikes – eradicate misuse of footpaths by bikes.	Work towards a safe pedestrian footpath network by provision of anti-bike gates and barriers, and by the identification of persistent offenders.	High	Continuous	Local landowners, WVDC, DCC, Police, Community Wardens	DCC (Parish Paths)
Hot-spot areas – identify and discourage anti-social behaviour.	Work to identify areas of antisocial assembly, ensure police awareness and work with landowners to improve hot-spots by lighting, landscaping, etc.	High	One year (to map hot spots), and continuous	Local landowners, WVDC, DCC, Police, Community Wardens	DCC, WVDC, Environmental charities
‘Design- out crime’ – examine all future village development.	Ensure all new planning applications, and other environmental improvements are scrutinised to eliminate the risk of encouraging criminal activity.	High	Continuous	WVDC, Police	
Public lighting - seek a safe, network of well lit paths and roads.	Undertake a survey of public roads and footpaths, including unadopted and non rights of way paths, and ensure a safely lit network throughout the village	High	One year (for survey) and continuous	WVDC, DCC, local landowners.	DCC, WVDC
Durham Constabulary – maintain regular liaison meetings	Continue with monthly parish council meeting reports from Police, with further high level liaison as specific issues and incidents require.	High	Continuous	Police	
Security wardens - improve liaison	Invite periodic reporting to parish council on wardening activities in the village, and otherwise ensure good liaison on specific issues.	Medium	Continuous	Community Wardens, WVDC	
Traders and underage drinking - support initiatives to control.	Through support for police, working with local traders and publicity in <i>West Life</i> continue to discourage underage drinking in the village.	Medium	One year (<i>West Life</i> feature) and continuous	Community wardens, Police, local traders	
Home security - support initiatives, advice, etc	Use <i>West Life</i> and other opportunities to promote police home security, including provision of smoke alarms.	Medium	One year (<i>West Life</i> feature) and continuous	Police. Community wardens, Fire Brigade	
Security surveillance – Support CCTV where appropriate	Support installation of CCTV by others, where deterrent affect is assured, and permanent visual damage to the village is minimised	Low	As circumstances arise	Police, Community wardens	

ACTION PLAN: ENVIRONMENT

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Maintain the good – protect the character of the conservation area	Vigilance in assessing planning proposals, supporting initiatives to fund conservation work throughout the village.	High	Continuous	DCC, WVDC, Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage	DDC, WVDC, HLF, EH
Village heritage - promote unique history of village	Supporting proposals that interpret the village's heritage, to residents and visitors alike.	High	Continuous	DCC, WVDC, HLF, EH	SDCC, WVDC, HLF, EH
Poorer areas - identify and implement schemes of enhancement.	Implement, alone or with others, scheme of improvement in the poorer areas of the village, particularly the river walks	High	Three years	DCC, WVDC, Groundwork West, Environmental agencies	DCC, WVDC, Environmental charities
Landscaping improvements – implement schemes.	Undertake both specific and routine landscape improvements throughout the village, including tree planting, flowers and bulbs, where appropriate	High	Continuous	DCC, WVDC	DCC, WVDC
New development - support high quality building in the village.	Through the inspection of planning applications and support to the local planning authority (WVDC), encourage good new development.	High	Continuous	WVDC	
Recreational space - work towards ample provision in the village	Identify existing play and recreational spaces in the village and assess the need for extra provision.	Medium	Two years	WVDC, DCC, local schools, West Auckland Football Club	Sports and play funding agencies
Cemetery – maintain and improve.	Implement an improvement programme, with WVDC, to develop tree planting, entrance improvements, grave repairs and cremation garden	Medium	Three years	WVDC	WVDC, HLF
Public spaces – identify and implement improvements.	Identify public realm, survey and seek implementation of programme of improvements to roads, paths and open spaces.	Medium	Five years	WVDC, DCC	WVDC, DCC
Paths and bridleways – establish working group.	Set up working group to walk village and rural paths to promote improvements, signing, and encourage recreational use.	Medium	One year	WVDC, DCC	
Land ownership - identify who owns what.	Establish a land ownership map of the village, by collating local authority land, Land Registry searches and voluntary disclosure.	Medium	Continuous	WVDC, DCC, Land Registry	
'Unowned' and unused land - identify and resolve ownership	From land ownership plan, identify 'unowned' land, take legal advice on communal ownership and encourage beneficial use.	Medium	Continuous	WVDC, DCC	
Litter and dog dirt bins – monitor provision and provide more, if needed	Take stock of existing provision and, where necessary, provide additional bins in collaboration with WVDC	Medium	Low	WVDC	WVDC

ACTION PLAN: EDUCATION

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Audit of community spaces	Production of fact sheets for all public halls and spaces, including outdoor spaces, with booking contact numbers for inclusion in Village Community Guide (see below)	High	Two years	DCC, WVDC, Memorial Hall, Youth Club, etc	
Consultation with target groups – youth, young mothers, senior citizens	Seek contacts through local papers, information board and <i>West Life</i> , enlarge on Parish Plan questionnaire responses	High	Two years	Youth and residents groups	
Support existing social facilities	Publicise availability of all existing facilities through Village Community Guide, West Life and other agencies	High	Continuous	DCC, WVDC, WA Com. Partnership	
Produce a Village Community Guide	Coordinate feedback from community space audit and add in information on all local services, churches, retailers, etc	High	Three years	DCC, WVDC, all local community groups and organisations	PC funding with possible WV Community Fund and Lottery support
Seek extended use of existing facilities	Arising from consultation with target groups and others, encourage the extended use of existing facilities	Medium	Continuous	As appropriate from feedback	
Provision of sports facilities	Specifically identify existing provision and encourage areas where provision is deficient, publish availability through Village Community Guide	Medium	Three years	DCC, WVDC, local schools, WA Football Club	
Encourage adult evening classes	Discuss with local providers the possibility of adult education classes in the village, as highlighted in questionnaire responses	Medium	Three years	WEA, Bishop Auckland College	
Encourage use of mobile library	Publicise library dates on Information Board and in West Life	Medium	Continuous	DCC	
Encourage new clubs and activities	Where need arises, assist those seeking to establish new clubs by identifying venues, possible financial partners and publicising in West Life.	Medium	Continuous	As need arises	
Encourage public access to internet facilities	Support the proposed provision of internet access in The Village Centre and encourage wide availability across the whole community.	Medium	Continuous	WA Community Partnership	

ACTION PLAN: COMMUNITY

Action	How it will be tackled	Priority	Timescale	Other partners	Financial resources (where applicable)
Young people- promote full involvement in village life.	Promote youth activities through <i>West Life</i> , notice board and by offering, with others, financial support as circumstances dictate	High	Continuous	WVDC, DCC	Possible PC grant support also from WVDC, DCC, youth agencies
An informed village – improve communications.	Maintain PC Press officer, <i>West Life</i> newsletter, use current media links, provide village notice board, develop links with West Auckland Web site.	High	One year (communications strategy)	Local media, West Auckland Web, The Village Centre	Maintain current PC support for <i>West Life</i>
Local churches and schools - maintain close links.	Ensure point of contact in all schools and churches, events in <i>West Life</i> , access to village notice board.	High	Continuous	St Helens, St Paulinus, Methodist, Oakley Cross, Copeland Road	
Community bodies – maintain close links.	Ensure point of contact in Memorial Hall, Youth Club and The Village Centre, events in <i>West Life</i> , access to notice board. Possible financial support.	High	Continuous	Youth Club, The Village Centre, Memorial Hall	Possible PC grant also from WVDC, DCC, community agencies
Christmas celebrations - maintain support.	Maintain support for Christmas tree, village decorations, lights competition and publicise through <i>West Life</i> all Christmas events and service	High	Annually	Churches, village businesses	Possible PC grant support
Summer carnival - establish and maintain	Support others or, in default, organise an annual summer carnival, drawing in community wide support.	High	Annually	All community groups	
War memorial - establish an external site in the centre of village.	Implement a new landscaping scheme around the village pant and rededicate it as a war memorial garden with names displayed.	High	Two years	British Legion, Friends of War Memorials,	Environmental and remembrance charities
Village green use - encourage community use	Encourage use of village green, through events, carnival, farmers markets, remembrance day, summer sports (eg quoits). Promote in <i>West Life</i> .	Medium	Continuous	All community groups	Possible PC support for summer sports provision

Thanks

The Parish Plan has taken over three years to produce from the first decision to undertake the project to final publication. This is longer than we would have wished and the preparation of the final report, based on the village questionnaire has been a particularly lengthy process.

In the end this has been the work of volunteers drawn from all sections of the community and deadlines are inevitably subject to the changing personal circumstances and daytime work commitments of all those who take part. We apologise to those who wished to see this Parish Plan sooner, but we are equally grateful to all those who have given so generously of their time in achieving this final report.

Firstly thanks must go John Ferguson, Parish Council chairman for our first three years, who suggested the Parish Plan at our first parish council meetings in May 2003.

To achieve the Plan needed the financial support of the Countryside Agency and we thank its officers, Lesley Milgate, Claire Hall and Rachel Oxley for their continued support, advice and gentle encouragement throughout the project. Sharon Hall, the Parish Clerk kindly acted as our link to the Countryside Agency throughout the preparation of the Plan and minuted the early steering group meetings.

The first few meetings established a Parish Plan Working Party whose members managed the whole process, helped deliver and collect the questionnaires, analysed them, and arranged further public meetings. They discussed the conclusions from each of the topic areas and wrote the relevant chapters of the final report.

The working party comprised:

Anne Ferguson
Keith Tweddle
Gerry Rielly
Lynn Rielly
Michael Stocks
James Docherty
Martin Roberts (Chair)

It was important in the early stages of the Plan to include as wide a section of the village community as possible in the public meetings and in the door-to door circulation of the village questionnaire. Our thanks to the following who gave generously of their time.

Jean Waggott
Judith Brydon
Ann Docherty
Richard Wade
Chris Jennings
Ann Hudson
Joan Sangster
Doreen Walker
Gerry Powell
Ron Powell
Gayle Clennell

John Cowen
Pauline St Clair
Scott Soulsby

At all stages of the Plan, the progress was reported back to the Parish Council, whose members offered sound advice at all stages. Parish Council members also took part in the delivery of all the questionnaires. Our thanks to them. (Their contact numbers are included)

Jack Bell	834839
Hazel Charlton (C)	832464
Ed Farrer	832810
John Ferguson	832019
Debbie Ingon	834825
Colin Mairs (VC)	833616
John Niven	834368
Jim Palfreyman	833784
Lynn Rielly	833032
Martin Roberts	833214
Andy Turner	606021
Andrew Whitehead	833884

The Parish Clerk is Sharon Hall of 20 Loweswater Grove, WA, DL14 9NA

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Darren Ferguson of the West Auckland Website has been invaluable in encouraging online access to both the Parish Plan and all Parish Council documents.

Our printer Wayne Dobbison also generously produced flyers at no charge during the early part of the questionnaire delivery.

The final report was prepared by the working party under the editorship of the chairman.

A large print version of this Parish Plan is available on request, and will be kept in the Parish Community Room at Monteith Close.

Please contact your local parish councillor if you would like to see it.

