



# Gittisham Parish Plan 2010



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**Written and produced in 2010 by Gittisham Parish Council, with acknowledgement and thanks to Carol Hall and her team, who produced the 2005 draft.**

**Gittisham Parish Council**

David Fallows (Chair and Parish Plan Working Group)

Russell Hayman (Vice-Chair and Parish Plan Working Group)

Sara Trumper (Parish Plan Working Group)

Gary Anderton

Rita Bennett

Edward Underdown

Maggie Walker

Philip Higginson (Clerk)

Cover design by Paul Edison ~ Gorse Cottage, Gittisham ~ Black Sun plc.

## **Introduction**

This plan is a profile of our parish and an analysis of our current and future needs and desires. It was produced from research conducted by the Parish Council in the Winter of 2009-10, together with an earlier survey carried out in 2005. By collecting the views of parishioners in a questionnaire and analysing the results, we have come up with a number of actions that, if implemented, will make Gittisham an even better place to live. The survey, and the plan, takes account of the differing nature of the two main settlement areas in the Parish: the Village and its surrounding small clusters of dwellings, and Gittisham Vale, a 1980's development contiguous with Honiton.

The plan was formally adopted by Gittisham Parish Council at its meeting in July 2010. It will influence local government (parish council, East Devon District Council and Devon County Council) – for example, through supplementary planning guidance which gives the parish a bigger say in how it wants the village and surrounding areas to develop.

We hope that it will help to attract funding for projects that the parishioners support.

And it will provide information for residents, visitors and prospective residents.

We would like to thank all of those who helped us produce the final report and of course everyone who completed a questionnaire.

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Within the questionnaire, there were opportunities for respondents to describe what they liked and didn't like about the parish by choosing options or by entering free text in spaces provided. It is a combination of statistics and the many comments received that forms the basis of this report and actions outlined.



## **The Survey**

We received 122 forms covering a total of 260 respondents. The response rate was 47% for the proportion of households and nearly 45% for the population as a whole. The responses were divided fairly equally between the Village and the Vale.

The majority of households are small with 48% of respondents having two members in the household and 31% only one person. Households in the Vale tended to be smaller than those in the Village with 54% consisting of two people and 32% of one person.

The age profile of respondents was high with over 43% of all respondents aged 65 years or over. In the Village 15% were under the age of 16 and 24% over 65 whereas in the Vale there were 2% under 16 and 60% over 65. These figures are consistent with those of the 2001 census.

The population appears fairly static with fewer than 10% of respondents reporting that a household member had moved away in the last 5 years and an overwhelming 88% stating that they had no intention of moving within the next 5 years.

### **What were the best things about the parish?**

- The countryside which provides recreational activities and contributes to the beauty of the area.
- The community spirit and the events that it brings about.
- The Location: it is well situated in the country with good road rail links. There is also an active regional airport.

### **What were the worst things about the parish?**

- Lack of maintenance of roads and verges.
- A lack of facilities i.e. shop and/or cafe etc. within the village.
- The concern that the increase of second homes will eventually lead to the loss of the community that makes the parish so special.

## The Parish

Most of the area of Gittisham Parish is situated within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Village itself contains a large conservation area, described in the East Devon District Council appraisal of 1999 as:

- Gittisham Conservation Area, which was first designated in 1982, comprises almost the whole of the village apart from Pomeroy House and Lodge to the north, and the avenue of trees leading to Combe House Hotel to the southeast. This is part of the extensive park and gardens surrounding the hotel which is included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England.
- The village has a near perfect setting in a slight hollow fed by a stream, and surrounded by largely pastoral countryside set against the wooded backdrop of Gittisham Hill (240m) and parkland setting of Combe House Hotel to the south and east.
- Within the existing conservation area are some 43 individually listed buildings giving 27 separate list entries.

There is also a large area of lowland heath, known as Gittisham Common, in the South East of the parish. This is maintained as a wildlife conservation area by the Combe Estate with help from funding by Natural England. Much of the land in the parish is owned by the Estate, which until recently owned most of the properties in the village as well.

In the early 1980s an area of agricultural land to the East of the parish at its border with Honiton was developed into residential properties, marketed under the brand of Gittisham Vale.

The Heath Park industrial estate is partly in the Parish, Combe House Hotel and a sawmill and timber retail outlet at Iron Bridge also provide employment opportunities. There is further employment on the farms and the Combe Estate has a small work-force. There is a Caravan Club site at Putts Corner, in the South-East corner of the parish. The site has room for 117 pitches and is very popular and also provides some employment. A farm shop operates in Hayne Lane and there are several craftspeople working in the Parish, including a blacksmith, a sculptor and an organ restorer. A well known artist has a studio at Town Farm buildings.

To the West by the River Otter is part of Bloody Meadow, the site of the battle of Fenny Bridges where, in 1549, Cornishmen protesting the introduction of Cranmer's Prayer Book were halted in their march on London. A commemorative stone marks the field.

## **Survey Findings**

The majority of respondents appreciated the appearance of the parish and the countryside. The peace and quiet and quality of life were frequently mentioned, as was the location.

The vast majority of respondents want the village to retain its present character and develop as a balanced community. The responses indicated broad agreement that there should be some additional housing in the parish, but not in the area around the Vale. The Parish Council feels that there may be a case for the conversion of some of the dwellings in the Vale to sheltered housing to cater for the inevitable consequences of the aging population.

Housing development elsewhere should be strictly limited in number and directed to the provision of more affordable housing for local people to use as their main home. There was a strong agreement that any development must enhance the environment.

The survey was carried out in the middle of the coldest winter for more than 20 years. Ice on roads and pavements lingered for many days and there were complaints about the lack of gritting down the spine road in the Vale and in the access lanes to the village. There was also a lot of damage done to the lanes with many pot-holes persisting into early Summer. It was no surprise that the service with the worst ratings was the maintenance of roads, verges and gutters. However, most of the other services were rated as adequate or good by over 80% of the respondents. The postal service and recycling were particularly appreciated.

Some properties in the Village have been flooded in the recent past, indeed 12 of the 50 Village respondents reported properties affected by flooding. Much of this has resulted from exceptional downpours producing run-off unable to get into watercourses.

Respondents felt that the footpaths and bridleways are accessible. There were mixed views on the necessity for a Parish dog warden with more respondents agreeing in the Vale and disagreeing in the Village.

### Actions:

- Continue to prioritise a sustainable natural and built environment to maintain the quality of life of the residents and the natural diversity of the Parish landscape.
- Support any initiatives to provide some sheltered accommodation for the Vale, without additional use of green-field sites.
- Support strictly limited housing development on brown-field sites elsewhere in the Parish and under strict planning and residency constraints.
- Continue to press Devon County to maintain the roads to acceptable standards and grit main access roads and bus routes in severe weather.
- Seek funding and agency support for small-scale measures to prevent flooding from field run-off.
- Publicise the availability of the East Devon District Council dog warden service.



## **Employment**

Nearly 60% of the population reported in the survey are not employed: of these three-quarters are retired. Only one is seeking employment. Of the employed, 40% are self-employed. 52% work at home, in the parish or within 5 miles. Occupational categories are mixed, with over half of respondents indicating that they are in managerial or professional occupations.

Respondents broadly agreed that there should be more opportunities for employment within the parish and that the council should seek to enhance tourism. There was less support for tourist accommodation or for small-scale light industry, with many respondents having some reservations about these.

Actions:

- Support initiatives to provide further sustainable employment consistent with the parish environment.

## **Environmental Issues**

The survey asked for views about alternative energy. Most respondents did not support the installation of wind turbines, though the provision of turbines on the high ground of the Common was not put to the question. There was, however, broad support for solar cell energy generation.

Respondents were broadly against further communication masts being constructed, and most would support the placement underground of power and telegraph cables.

Actions:

- Support initiatives to provide further sustainable 'green' energy supplies consistent with the parish environment.

## **Recreation and Community Facilities**

The parish is small in population, and most facilities are located in Honiton and Ottery St Mary, both within 5 miles of the Village centre. There is a mediaeval Parish Church and a Village Hall. Both of these buildings are attractive, maintained in good condition and highly valued by the community. Apart from the Combe House Hotel, there are no licensed premises or eateries.

The Village has a playing field, including a play area. This land is owned by the Combe Estate, with the Parish Council owning the play equipment. The Council wishes to have a greater degree of security of tenure over the playing field, to enable it to enhance the facility and secure the amenity for the future. There are attractive open spaces within the Village which are owned and maintained by the Combe Estate.

### What the Survey found

The use made of the Church and Hall varied between respondents in the Vale and the Village: many residents of the Vale never use either, whereas many in the Village often do. The other geographically separated facilities were similarly different in their usage patterns.

There was strong support (86%) for the Parish Council to secure the ownership of the playing field and nearly as many respondents would support a project to upgrade the play area. Nearly all were happy with the maintenance of the open spaces and nearly 70% would support the Parish Council taking over responsibility for these areas.

Many felt that the playing field area could be enhanced to the benefit of the whole community; there was a call for some adult exercise and recreational facilities to be provided as well as more for the children.

40% of the respondents thought that Village signage could be improved. There was a call for a sign at the boundary of Gittisham Vale and Honiton on Old Elm Road.

Most respondents felt that Gittisham is a lovely place to live with some problems but is for the most part superior to many areas in the UK.

### Actions:

- Complete an agreement with Combe Estate for a long lease on the Playing Field.
- Re-grade and Re-grass the playing field area.
- Upgrade children's play equipment and consider more facilities for adults.
- Consider a new sign in the Vale and explore the replacement of the damaged sign on Honiton Lane.

## **Communications**

The local free newspaper is delivered to all. The church newsletter, the Gittisham Gazette is delivered in the village and to other members of the congregation who live in the Vale. The Parish Council owns two notice boards that serve the two communities. A web-site was set up a few years ago, but it needs refreshing and enhancing, and possibly a change of the supplier. The BT telephone box in the Village is listed, but the service has been discontinued through lack of usage. The Parish Council has bought the box from BT and is maintaining it as a feature of the Village centre. The police have extended their neighbourhood watch scheme to a community messaging service: forms were distributed to the households with the questionnaires.

### What the Survey Found

The Midweek Herald is the printed media that was most read by respondents. Many in the Village, and some in the Vale, read the Gittisham Gazette. Parish notice-boards were consulted on occasion. The majority (75%) felt that the Parish should have an active web-site, but most did not want actively to contribute to it. 60% of the respondents had not heard of the police community messaging service.

### Actions:

- Improve the Parish web-site service.
- Continue to support the Gittisham Gazette.
- Continue to publicise community messaging.

## **Housing and other development**

Since the development of the Gittisham Vale there has only been one (net) new residential building in the Parish. The light industrial estate at Heath Park extends from Honiton over the Parish boundary and plots there have been developed, thus providing employment opportunities. The redundant farm buildings at Iron Bridge on the A30 have been converted to a saw-mill and timber outlet, and a Nursery has opened on the link road. Hayne Farm has also opened a farm shop, which has been welcomed by the community, though it is nearly two miles from the Village Centre.

What the survey found:

Over 80% of respondents were against any extension of Heath Park or Gittisham Vale to the West of Hayne Lane. Many of those expressed strong disagreement.

Respondents were split in their view that the supply of housing is adequate for the community: the Vale agreed, but there was, generally, disagreement with the statement amongst Village respondents. Respondents felt that there should be more affordable housing for local people and there was a broad agreement that there should be more housing available for rent. They also felt that uses should be found for redundant buildings and there was a strong agreement that any new houses must be designed to enhance their surroundings.

Actions:

- Support new housing that is strictly limited in number and directed to the provision of more affordable and/or rented accommodation for local people to use as their main home.
- Any development must enhance the environment.
- Explore possible future provision of sheltered housing in Gittisham Vale.
- Continue to oppose any extension of Gittisham Vale or Heathfield West of Hayne Lane.

## **Health**

The health services are based in both Honiton and Ottery-St-Mary. Both have General Practice surgeries and GP hospitals, a primary health care team and dental surgeries. The services provided by the nearer hospital, at Honiton, are more comprehensive and include a 24 hour accident and emergency facility and a maternity unit.

The East Devon Primary Care Trust was amalgamated with other trusts to form the Devon PCT in October 2006. This amalgamation has been the cause of some concern locally with worries that the previous high level of service could be compromised, particularly for mental health and maternity care. The shortage of NHS dental care was highlighted as an issue in the 2005 survey. In 2010 there were 6 NHS dentists with places available within 12-15 miles, one of which is in Ottery-St Mary.

Action:

- Continue to monitor services and liaise with appropriate authorities.

## **Education**

The only education provision in the Parish is the Little Treasures play group. This has operated since 2004 from the Village Hall, which was upgraded and made more suitable nearly ten years ago. Children of primary school age in the Village are in the catchment area of Feniton CE Primary School and those of secondary age of The King's School in Ottery-St-Mary. In the Vale the primary school is Littleton School and the secondary is Honiton Community College. Manor House School provided independent education for school-aged children, but was forced to close for economic reasons in 2010. FE College provision is available at Exeter and Tiverton with some specialist provision in Honiton.

The schools are very popular and have gained high grades in Ofsted inspections. Feniton was graded as outstanding; Littleton as good and improving; Honiton Community College as good, and improving rapidly; and the King's School as good with outstanding features. Little Treasures was also inspected and considered satisfactory.

What the survey found

Respondents were happy with the quality of education and with the resources available for learning there.

## **Fund-Raising**

We realised that some of the projects identified in the survey will need funding, and we asked respondents about their preferences.

### What the survey found

There was strong general support for the idea of community events to raise funds and for making funding applications to charities and other funding bodies. Respondents were less keen on using the Parish Precept to fund projects. The view around a small rise was very balanced, with a three-way split between support, reservations and disagreement. A once-only larger rise had less support.

### Action:

- Consider a range of funding opportunities for the playing field projects.

## Actions

### **Overall Actions**

- Continue to prioritise a sustainable natural and built environment to maintain the quality of life of the residents and the natural diversity of the Parish landscape.
- Support any initiatives to provide some sheltered accommodation for the Vale, without additional use of green-field sites.
- Support strictly limited housing development on brown-field sites elsewhere in the Parish and under strict planning and residency constraints.
- Continue to press Devon County to maintain the roads to acceptable standards and grit main access roads and bus routes in severe weather.
- Seek funding and agency support for small-scale measures to prevent flooding from field run-off.
- Publicise the availability of the East Devon District Council dog warden service.

### **Specific Actions**

#### **Employment**

- Support initiatives to provide further sustainable employment consistent with the parish environment.

#### **Other Environmental Issues**

- Support initiatives to provide further sustainable 'green' energy supplies consistent with the parish environment.

#### **Recreation and Community Facilities**

- Complete an agreement with Combe Estate for a long lease on the Playing Field.
- Re-grade and Re-grass the playing field area.
- Upgrade children's play equipment and consider more facilities for adults.

- Consider a new sign in the Vale and explore the replacement of the damaged sign on Honiton Lane.

### **Communications**

- Improve the Parish web-site service.
- Continue to support the Gittisham Gazette
- Continue to publicise community messaging.

### **Housing and other development**

- Support new housing that is strictly limited in number and directed to the provision of more affordable and/or rented accommodation for local people to use as their main home.
- Any development must enhance the environment.
- Explore possible future provision of sheltered housing in Gittisham Vale.
- Continue to oppose any extension of Gittisham Vale or Heathfield West of Hayne Lane.

### **Health**

- Continue to monitor services and liaise with appropriate authorities.

### **Fund-Raising**

- Consider a range of funding opportunities for the playing field projects.



