

Buckland Village Appraisal Interim Report, December 2002



Buckland by Hannah Moore 2002

Buckland Parish Council

1 Introduction

Buckland Parish Council issued a survey questionnaire to all village households in June 2002, as the starting point in aligning the actions of the Council to the priority needs of the residents. This interim report aims to advise residents of the results of the survey, and the action plan that has been agreed to help meet the needs of village residents. The report is structured under the following headings:

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1 Introduction	
2 Our Residents	
3 Public Services ? Utilities ? Security ? Council Services ? Health ? Information	4 Transport and Traffic ? Buses ? Trains ? Road Traffic
5 Environment ? Countryside ? Recycling ? Pollution ? Village Shop	6 Leisure ? Attractions ? Activities ? Park Pit
7 Next Steps	

2 Our Residents

Buckland has a population of about 580 in 240 households. 493 people in 183 households responded to the survey questionnaire, representing a very healthy and interested 85% of the people and 76% of households.

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Our respondents include 23% under the age of 18, with 96 children attending school. 54% of respondents were between age 18 and 60, and 23% over the age of 60. This age distribution is perhaps a surprise to those who consider Buckland a sleepy retirement village. The diagram shows that while 19% are retired and 11% are unpaid housewife (or house husband); 53% work, and a further 15% are in full-time education.

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70% of the houses are owner-occupied and 9% are rented from the local authority – with most of the rest rented from private landlords, the largest of which is Dungates Estate Ltd. Although 9% of households moved to Buckland within the previous 12 months, 21% have been here for over 21 years. 8 residents who have lived in Buckland over 50 years attended the Golden Jubilee celebrations in June 2002.

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3 Public Services

Utilities

The majority had no problems with public utility services, but there is nevertheless an interesting ranking of those rated poorly. Gas (Transco) comes out best for service satisfaction – though the survey was before they dug so many holes at the top of Old Road.

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Utility/Council Service	'Poor' rating	Rank of service Satisfaction
Gas	2%	1
Refuse	5%	2
Water	9%	3
Snow Clearance	16%	4
Electricity	18%	5
Roadside care/cleaning	30%	6
Street-lighting	33%	7

Fire and ambulance services get widespread praise (only 2% rated them as poor), but the police and community police had 20% and 33% of respondents considering their service to be poor.

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Security

An increased police presence would be favoured by 47%, and a significant minority (34%) thought that better consultation between local police and villagers was needed. 63% considered that Buckland would benefit from neighbourhood watch schemes, but only 48% said they would join! The 'missing 15%' are presumably those that hope to get something for nothing! These results are linked to the fact that almost half the villagers (47%) consider that security is a considerable worry and concern. This may be because the incidence of burglary is high, or simply that the perception of risk of burglary is high, which requires further clarification.

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Council Services

214 people suggested a need for more accommodation in Buckland, which is a social dilemma due to the current building restrictions. With 195 respondents proposing more housing for the young, and 150 for the elderly, the question is should the Council now be promoting more housing schemes in Buckland? The opinion of 'the way the planning system works in Mole Valley district Council (MVDC)' was mixed. 50% had no opinion, but of those who had, only 13 were totally satisfied, 108 quite satisfied, and 67 left dissatisfied.

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The majority did not consider that street lighting was a problem, probably because we do not expect neon lights when choosing to live in a rural village. However 36% did consider the street lighting poor, though care is needed in interpreting how to make improvements in this area. The majority also considered that roads, pavements and verges were

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maintained in 'reasonable or good' order, though 40% thought that pavements were in a poor state of maintenance.

The options for improvement of paths and street lights did not get a clear-cut decision. A significant minority (100—145 people) favoured each of cycle paths, a pedestrian footbridge over the A25, streetlights on the A25, more and wider pavements, traffic islands and pelican crossings. Only roundabouts got a 'rejection' with only 6% of the vote. 10

Health

Only 22 people had difficulties in getting to a doctor or hospital, and 13 a problem with collecting prescriptions. Although a small problem, this is significant for the individuals involved. Although facilities are only available in nearby villages and towns, the car and good neighbourliness seems to keep this problem down to a minimum. 11

10 respondents (under 3 %) are registered disabled. Drink and drug problems were considered an issue by 10% (33 people). 12

Information

The Buckland Parish Magazine gained the vote for the best communications channel of village events, with 86% (308 people) considering it good or reasonable. Notice boards gained a 66% vote and the Dorking Advertiser a 37% vote as good means of communication about Buckland village events. The Buckland Village website had 62 people voice an opinion, of which 82% (53) considered it good or reasonable. Of the 364 respondents to the question, this indicates that 17% of villagers are 'logged on'. 13

The majority (54%) considered that publicity relating to Local Council decisions and activities was reasonable or good, but 48% considered that they would like to know more about village activities, prompting a wider channel of communication. 14

Transmitter reception quality has been a problem for a number of people in Buckland. 185 people would like action to improve the quality of TV reception, and 124 people radio reception. Cable TV was of interest to 96 people, and improved mobile reception to 68 people. 15

4 Transport & Traffic

Buses

Whilst only 33 people use the bus as a main means of transport to work or study, 263 use their car or van, and a gallant 3 people use their bicycle. 62 people use the bus 'sometimes', mainly for school, shopping and social visits – but 200 people considered that improvements to the buses are needed. In order of importance, improvements in the timetable, reliability, costs and routes would help to attract more bus passengers. 16

Trains

290 respondents considered that trains could be improved through reliability, timetable, service and cost. Leaves on the line continue to be a frustration. 17

Road Traffic

Car sharing is most popular for social events, such as going to the pub. Only 5% car share for work and 8% for the school run. 18

Largely due to our cars, only 11% of residents ever have a transport problem, and only 2% have parking problems (could this be husband and wife competing for a space in the garage?). 77% consider that speeding traffic in Buckland was a problem and 85% people thought that Buckland has accident 'danger-spots', of which the three main ones were on the A25, by the church (75%), the 'Buckland Bends' (47%) and the Shell garage (43%). Traffic noise pollution was also considered a major annoyance (see section 5 below). 19

What should the Council do about the problems of traffic? Of the various speed control measures available, the simple application of reduced speed limits was most favoured (66%), with 47% requesting more road warning signs and 43% supporting traffic calming ramps. 20

5 Environment

Countryside

Elements of the Countryside most valued around Buckland	Ranked % vote
Tranquillity	82%
Groups of trees	72%
Ponds	71%
Open Spaces	66%
Hedges	60%
Heathland	56%

We clearly appreciate the tranquillity of our countryside, whilst being so close to London. 21

However, only 31% were 'entirely happy' with the state of local footpaths and 22

bridleways. Problems were faced with obstructive bushes and nettles 38% (122 people), mud and puddles (35%) and other obstacles such as poor signposting, not being able to find the path, crops across the path and horses on paths. On the plus side, 30% of all respondents (146 people) claim that they are prepared to help with practical conservation measures. Protecting wildlife habitat came out with 102 'volunteers', whilst footpath maintenance getting 69, pond clearance 50 people and tree surveys 44 people. If this team is mobilised, we will have one very smart village!

Actions to keep the countryside more attractive were prioritised with reducing traffic (54%), keeping road verges mown and tidy (52%), removing litter (46%), repairing gates, stiles and footpath bridges (30%), signposting paths (30%) and bridleways, and opening more footpaths (30%). Removing unnecessary signposts got the vote of 64 people, perhaps including the "You are entering a rural area" signs at the top of Old Road? 23

Recycling

An impressive 84% (321 people) are prepared to separate refuse for recycling. Roughly half of respondents thought that local waste disposal sites were not adequately publicised, and the majority would use recycling banks (in rank order) for bottles, newspaper, cans, clothing, public bulk rubbish, and garden rubbish. We can infer that the majority would also recycle plastics if facilities were made available. 24

Pollution

Noise pollution is clearly a major concern, from traffic (81%) and motor-cycles (77%) in particular. Smaller numbers (50-73 people) were troubled by low flying aircraft, hooting trains and light pollution. 25

The majority 56% did not consider litter to be a problem, though a significant minority (30%) thought that it was. The efforts of the Council already include litter-picking days.

Village Shop

The village shop is a focal point of our village, though many of us have more 'good intent' than 'practical custom'. When asked 'what would encourage you to use the shop more often?', 68% (200 people) requested longer opening hours and 50% (142) local produce. A smaller number (40-60) would be drawn by lunch-time snacks, and ordering and delivery services. Almost all villagers (98%) used the Village Post Office for postal services and only 9% (27 people) for pensions or allowances.

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6 Leisure

Attractions

Our residents consider the most favoured attractions for 'visitors' to Buckland to be walking (88%), closely followed by painting (72%), horse riding, photography and nature study (61%). 20-35% of respondents thought that cycling, shooting and fishing also attracted visitors. Maps of local footpaths would be appreciated by 68% (235 people), together with leaflets of local walks (49%) – and presumably larger numbers that live outside the village would also appreciate such maps.

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Activities

Of the favoured activities that people would attend in Buckland if they were provided, the favourites were Keep fit classes (96 people), tennis (75), badminton (59), golf (50) and a gardening club (40). Other activities were trailing behind, but even the 24 people interested in youth football and the 16 interested in darts could pull-together to get a village team off the ground!

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Given suggestions for new activities, a children's village bonfire got the top vote (71 people), ahead of a babysitting circle, disco and creative arts. 48% (148) of respondents supported the construction of a village playground, with only 18% (64) against, so this maybe a positive action that the Council might follow through.

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Park Pit

Dungates Estates Ltd plan to reclaim Park Pit as a recreational park with a large lake and specimen trees. Although a private venture, the Parish Council wished to collect the views of residents through the survey. Overwhelming support (85%) was given for the plans to turn Park Pit into an arboretum park, with 50% supporting fly-fishing in the lake. Over 90% of villagers would appreciate a 'season-ticket' or reduced entry fee to the arboretum and fly-fishing facilities, as an offset to the increased traffic that the attraction might bring.

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The proposal to build a Surrey-style traditional barn in the reclaimed area of Park Pit, as a meeting place and concert hall, gained 72% support, and 70% look forward to events at this new location. The Hanson-sponsored open day in June 2002 gave many visitors a preview of the arboretum and the site of the proposed building, and no doubt that this has encouraged the very positive response.

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7 Next Steps

Communication 85% of respondents requested that the survey results be communicated by an information sheet delivered to each household – here it is! The full survey results supporting this report is available on the website at www.bucklandvillage.co.uk, and a meeting will be held at Buckland Village Hall on XX DATE to present the results. 32

Action Plan From the analysis of the Appraisal Survey, specific actions have been outlined for Buckland Parish Council. We need your help and support to implement the plans, so we invite you to contact us at the contact points below to offer your assistance or leadership. 33

The technique we have used to prioritise the tasks is based on the “attention priority” of traffic lights, with the following key: 34

RED	Actions for urgent attention this Financial Year
AMBER	Actions for the next two Financial years
GREEN	‘Watching briefs’ – where no immediate action is needed unless circumstances change

The proposed actions agreed by the Buckland Parish Council are detailed overleaf. 35

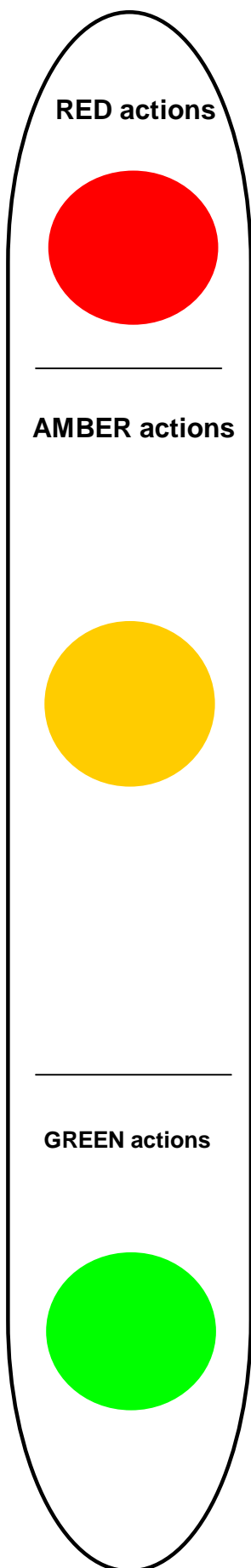
We trust that you find this report of interest – and look forward to your support in implementing the actions arising. 36

Contacts

If you would like to be actively involved in any of the above actions, or have any questions on this report, please contact Iain Launson

Telephone : 01737 248909
Email : mLaunson@tiscali.co.uk

Acknowledgements To all those who designed the questionnaire, input the survey data on the computer and contributed to the final report – a very big thank you. Your help is still needed to follow through the actions to further improve Buckland as a place to live. 37



1	Lobby MVDC for speed restriction signs and traffic calming measures, to reduce risk of accidents and noise pollution annoyance from traffic and motor-bikes	38
2	Work with Police and take measures to improve the perception of a safe and secure environment	39
3	Improve publicity of recycling facilities currently available, and lobby MVDC to provide more recycling facilities	40
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4	Lead and Co-ordinate conservation action events that bring together volunteers for wildlife habitat preservation, footpath maintenance and pond clearing	41
5	Organise bonfire and fireworks for village children in 2003	42
6	Evaluate possible sites, costs and funding for a children's playground in Buckland, and secure funding to build in 2005	43
7	Co-ordinate the production of maps of local village walks and maps	44
8	Approach the village shop with constructive recommendations	45
9	Work with footpath wardens to design and install at least 3 new footpath signposts per annum for the next 5 years	46
10	Promote increased car-sharing amongst village residents for school-runs and commuting-station/work-runs to support the reduction of traffic in the village	47
11	Lobby for improvement to the bus and rail services, and monitor the impact on usage to determine the success of the actions	48
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12	Maintain Litter control	49
13	Maintain pond clearance	50
14	Revisit the dilemma between building constraints and the requirement for new low-cost housing for both the young and elderly residents	51
15	Liase with MVDC on how to improve the planning process, so that fewer residents are dissatisfied with the results.	52
16	Lobby the providers of transmitters in the region to improve the reception and coverage of TV, radio, cable and mobile telephones within the parish boundaries	53