



Ashley Parish Plan

February 2005

Survey Findings and
Proposed Actions

A Countryside Agency Initiative



Written by: Ashley Parish Plan Group

Contents

Principal Findings and Actions	3
Endorsements from MP, Councillors & PC Chairman.....	4
From James Paice, MP for South East Cambridgeshire.....	4
From Ian J Stewart, Chief Executive, Cambridgeshire County Council.....	5
From Olive Oakervee, Chairwoman, Ashley Parish Council	5
Purpose	7
Description of the Village	7
Introduction.....	7
History.....	8
Population	9
Community Facilities.....	9
Countryside Character and Environment	11
How the Survey was Undertaken	12
Surveys and Questionnaires	13
Household Survey	13
Adult Survey — Descriptive.....	14
Travel and Transport.....	15
Occupation.....	15
Shopping and Leisure	16
Junior Survey — Descriptive.....	17
Education	17
After-school Activities.....	17
Meeting Friends	19
Other Activities.....	19
Adult Survey — Views	19
Transport and Highways.....	19
Leisure	21
Education-Related Activity.....	22
Housing and Other Development.....	22
Good Neighbour Scheme.....	22
Emergency Services.....	23
Crime and Antisocial Behaviour.....	23
Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	24
Other Services.....	24
Use of Shops and Other Facilities.....	25
St Mary’s Church.....	25
Communications	26
The Ashley Environment	26
Ashley Parish Council.....	26
Paying for Improvements in Ashley	27
Junior Survey — Views	27
What Young People Like and Dislike about the Village	27
Young People’s Views on the Play Area, Sports Field & other Facilities.....	28
Ashley Action Plan.....	29
Parish Plan Group Members.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Principal Findings and Actions

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire expressed the wish that the village community and environment remain largely the same; certain issues were highlighted and actions recommended.

Danger spots were identified on roads through the village with speeding and parking being major concerns. Many people felt improvement and additions to pavements and footpaths were necessary, as was the provision of cycle paths. With those villagers using the bus service, the main problem is with the timetable. Actions required include a review of traffic/pedestrian management and recommending specific measures.

Access to youth facilities and some need for after-school/holiday clubs for younger children were identified. Young people in particular expressed that improvements to the play area would be welcomed. Actions should include liaison with Newmarket Community Partnership to assess the scope for their initiatives being made available to the young people of Ashley.

Leisure: there was considerable interest for more leisure activities for adults, with 'keep fit' being the most popular. People willing to take a lead should be identified, as well as the possibilities for improving and increasing facilities already available.

Housing: many people thought that there was no need for further housing; those who did, felt there was need for small developments and that these be specifically for local and younger people. Local and District Councils should be made aware of these views and be asked to incorporate them in planning strategies.

Vandalism and dog mess were the antisocial issues of most concern to villagers, with many expressing the opinion that a higher police profile and the provision of more youth facilities may help to ease the vandalism. Closer links with the local Police Crime Partnership should be developed.

The village shop and post office facilities are used by a good number of villagers and although many people did not use St. Mary's Church regularly, it was thought to be an important building and focal point within the village.

Local recycling schemes attracted a high level of interest. Realistic schemes and suitable locations within the village should be explored.

Some interest was shown in the formation of Good Neighbour and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. People to lead and take part should be identified.

The main area causing concern regarding the appearance of the village is the pond area, with the suggestion of the formation of a 'Friends of the Pond' group put forward.

The major source of information about village matters is *About Ashley* and a number of people expressed an interest in contributing. Many people did not understand the function of the Parish Council or who the Councillors are. Those who expressed an interest in contributing to the magazine should be encouraged and the village magazine should be used to better publicise the work and membership of the Parish Council.

Endorsements from MP, Councillors & PC Chairman

From James Paice, MP for South East Cambridgeshire

JAMES PAICE, M.P.
(South East Cambridgeshire)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mrs Grace Crump,
9 Mill Road,
Ashley,
Newmarket,
Suffolk

18 November 2004

Dear Mrs Crump,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Steering Group of the Ashley Parish Plan. I very much welcome the fact that the Parish is to carry out such a plan. As you will know, similar plans have been produced in a number of villages in the area and I believe they provide a very considerable basis for villages to move forward. At a time when, regrettably, there seems to be an ever-increasing dislocation between people who make decisions and the people who are affected by them, it is ever more important that local people genuinely feel they have a say in what is done in their communities. The pressures for new development, the constant decline in village services and facilities are all causing immense problems for our rural communities such as Ashley and they have to be addressed. By far the most effective way of addressing them is to let local people have their input into the decisions that will affect them.

I very much look forward to seeing the conclusions of your Parish Plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Paice".

James Paice, MP

Email: paicejet@parliament.uk
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From Ian J Stewart, Chief Executive, Cambridgeshire County Council

I'm delighted to be given the opportunity to introduce the Ashley Parish Plan. Parish Councils work at the very heart of our communities, and the Parish Plan is a reflection of the hard work, undertaken over many months, of the often small groups of people who represent the village.

The Parish Plan provides a fascinating snapshot of village life and, more importantly, sets out a vision for the future of our communities by identifying the actions needed to tackle issues of concern and improve quality of life. It is Ashley's residents who have decided their priorities for action in the pages that follow – these are not imposed from either central or local government – and it is Ashley's residents whose determination will ensure that these actions bring results.

The adoption of actions that are highly relevant to the lives of local people gives your plan a good chance of success. I hope that the actions highlighted will materialise and that they will deliver some real benefits to the village.

Keep the plan live and keep it updated – by doing so you can ensure longer lasting benefits for the village.

Well done Ashley – and congratulations to all those who worked to bring the plan to fruition.

Best wishes

Ian Stewart.

From Olive Oakervee, Chairwoman, Ashley Parish Council

I am delighted to have this opportunity to congratulate Ashley on taking the initiative to produce a Parish Plan. More importantly I wish to place on record the Parish Council's thanks to all those on the Steering Group who have given so much of their valuable time to its preparation beginning with the initial consultation at the Church Garden Fete in 2003 through the preparation of the questionnaire to the final analysis and compilation of the Parish Plan.

The success of a Parish Plan in reflecting the wishes of the village is dependent upon the quality and quantity of the information collected so thanks are also due to everyone who participated in the completion of the forms. We understand that the percentage of completed questionnaires in Ashley was very much above average, so we have an excellent basis for our Parish Plan.

You may well ask, "Why do we need to have a Parish Plan?"

The survey, which formed the basis for the Parish Plan, provides a wealth of detail about the residents of Ashley and their needs and wishes so that in the future the Parish Council will be able to make decisions and go ahead with projects confident that it is in accordance with the will of Ashley villagers. This is of paramount importance if we are to be able to make the most of the precept which comes directly from each council taxpayer in the village.

Additionally, new government guidelines indicate that grants of cash for projects within parishes will only be forthcoming if it can be proved that there is a desire from within the village for such a project. Without the aid of various grants we can only tackle very limited projects unless you as taxpayers are prepared to dig deeper into your pockets to create a much bigger precept necessary to achieve the aspirations of the village. So a robust Parish Plan provides the proof necessary for grants and gives us a very powerful tool with which to make and prioritise all our future decisions and go forward on your behalf, making the most of the grants available in order to stretch our village contribution as far as possible.

When future developments affecting Ashley are being considered the Parish Plan will be available as a guide for those making the decisions at all levels from Parish upwards.

It is encouraging to note that many of the issues most people considered important to them and their families are those that the Parish Council has been addressing and in some cases is currently engaged in trying to remedy as you may be aware from the published agendas and minutes of council meetings. Parish Council meetings are open for everyone to attend although only elected councillors may speak at them. Elections are held every four years and Ashley's Council comprises seven elected councillors plus an employed Parish Clerk so if you think you would like to get involved in the running of your village, there is every opportunity and your interest is welcomed.

Finally, the village working together has produced a robust Parish Plan that will be a living document updated regularly to ensure our needs are clearly debated and recorded. From the enthusiasm shown in this important exercise I am sure we can continue to work together so that our village community and environment remains sustainable.



Chairman of Ashley Parish Council

Purpose

The main purpose of the Ashley Parish Plan is to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Ashley residents are properly reflected in the decisions of all who influence our everyday lives. Contained within is an Action Plan which summarises specific activities suggested by the responses to detailed questionnaires distributed to all residents in the summer of 2004.

Questions were asked across a broad range of issues: the responses received have enabled a picture to be painted of the sort of people we are, for example where we work and shop, how we enjoy ourselves and where we go to school. This in itself provides an interesting snapshot of life in Ashley in the early twenty-first century.

However, it is the understanding of Ashley residents' opinions gained from this survey which is the key to defining what specific improvements can help to improve our quality of life.

We are sure that all those in positions of authority will be able to take due note of the Ashley Parish Plan and help ensure that the recommended actions contained herein are put into practice.

Description of the Village

Introduction

Ashley is an attractive, relatively compact village situated about 3 miles south of Newmarket on the B1063 road between Newmarket and Clare. It is on a chalk ridge that stretches east – west across Cambridgeshire and into Suffolk. Although Ashley is located in East Cambridgeshire District, it is adjacent to the Suffolk boundary and has close ties to Newmarket, which is ~~(in Forest Heath District).~~

Much of the character of the village arises from a combination of attractive traditionally-built houses and farm buildings and of high quality surrounding countryside. Older properties in the village tend to be either rendered or built of flint and to be thatched or show evidence of previous thatching. As with many villages, more recent housing — particularly 20th century - varies design or style and is of mixed quality.



Village and Pond

The village has a clearly defined centre associated with both a prominent pond and the point where the road from Newmarket to Clare reaches the top of the chalk ridge and veers to the south west. Other routes out of the village lead to the neighbouring villages of Gazeley, Dalham, Moulton and Cheveley.

History

The place-name Ashley is thought to have been derived from the earlier Assle, Assele or Esselie, noted in the Domesday Book, meaning the lea or field of ash trees. The two ancient parishes of Ashley and Silverley were economically integrated by 1300: the ecclesiastical parishes were united around 1500.

In 1086, Silverley had 23 families, Ashley about 12. The total population in 1600 was about 160. From 1700, this increased slowly, falling back in the 1870s; by 1901 it had reached 584. By 1945, it stabilised at about 480: today, it is 585.

In 1801, there were only 38 houses: by 1851 this had increased to 100, rising to 129 in 1901. Many old thatched cottages, including a former Chapel dating from 1277, were demolished between the 1930s and 1950s and have been replaced by modern houses.

By 1991, the number of houses was 220: after 1945, several council houses and prefabricated houses were built. Some were replaced by sheltered housing in the late 1980s. Present local authority policy is for infill only, not major development.

Following the establishment of school boards in 1870, Ashley school was built in 1874 in Mill Road, and continued in use until the late 1970s. In the 1880s, the school was used for concerts and other events.

The Crown and The Plough were long established as public houses. The Crown used to be a coaching inn with stables. Like many public houses of the period, beer used to be made on the premises using local pond water. The Plough is now a restaurant.

The blacksmith's shop, first noted in 1815, was in use until World War II. It then became the village garage, selling petrol and repairing cars and agricultural machinery, until 2002. It is now a bed and breakfast.

In the 1850s, the present village stores used to be a tailor's shop, making ladies' mantles and dresses. Later, it became a grocery shop, then the general stores and post office it is today. The post office was originally situated by the blacksmith's; then in the shop by the pond; and finally in the current village stores.

Many other Ashley shops have long since disappeared. The butcher's shop in Mill Road had a slaughterhouse alongside. Above the school was the fish and chip shop; at the top was the windmill. Other shops included a wheelwright and a baker.

The present St Mary's Church, the only surviving church of at least five previously in the parish, was built in 1845, and extended in 1872. It replaced a much older church, on the Dalham Road. When this fell into disuse, parishioners worshipped in the chapel until the new church was built. A Methodist Chapel, built of corrugated iron, was also in use from 1891 until closed in 1980.

References

Victoria County History vol X, a History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, 2002

Newmarket Weekly News, Thursday 8 Sept 1983

Typescript *History of Ashley cum Silverley*, approx 1960: *About Ashley*, March 2002, Dec 2003

Population

The current adult population of the village is approximately 585, resident in 245 households (a further seven were empty at the time of our survey). It has proved impossible to gain accurate information on the number of children in the village although our survey of the village shows that of the 165 households who completed the 'household questionnaire', 81 had children in the 0–15 age group.

Community Facilities

Ashley Sheltered Housing provides independent living for older people, with the added security of help on hand in case of an emergency. It is primarily for people who are aged over 60, but other people requiring special facilities due to disability, will also be considered.



Ashley Sheltered Housing

The scheme has a resident manager who looks after day-to-day running and provides support and emergency assistance for tenants. The manager also organises a wide range of social activities.

Each of the 28 bungalows in the scheme has its own kitchen, living room, bedroom and bathroom. A community room is used daily for a wide range of social activities to which anyone in the village is welcome.

The community room is also equipped with two computers for use free of charge. These have broadband connections to the Internet via the Cambridgeshire Community Network. A tutor is available to help beginners.

Ashley Village Stores is a general stores, supplying a wide range of groceries and household goods.

The *Post Office* normally provides a Community Post Office service.



Ashley Village Stores

The Pavilion was purchased for £60 in 1969, from RAF Lakenheath School, dismantled and erected by volunteers.

Over the years, it was extended at the northern end to provide a kitchen and toilets, the wooden walls replaced with blockwork and central heating installed.



Ashley Pavilion

In 1994, an extension to the southern end provided a changing room, showers, and improved toilet facilities. This cost about £15,000 with a 90% grant from East Cambridgeshire District Council.

In the same year, the Parish Council handed over the management of the Pavilion to trustees and it became a registered charity, ensuring that local council rates on the Pavilion were no longer levied, saving the Parish over £1,000 per year at that time.

The building is used for a variety of activities; further expansion and improvements, including better storage facilities, would make for more flexible use and enable it to be of even greater benefit to the community.

The Pavilion is self-financing through letting charges and fund raising, except for the insurance premium, which is met by the Parish.

Playing Fields and Play Area are situated beside the Pavilion. Users of the playing field are able to take advantage of the Pavilion facilities. Younger children have the use of climbing frames and equipment in the play area, built some twelve years ago.



Climbing Frames in Play Area

St Mary's Church opened in 1845, transepts and chancel were added in 1872. It replaced the earlier churches of St Mary's, Ashley which fell into disrepair in the 17th century and All Saints', Silverley, abandoned in the 16th century. For some time in the early 19th century, the villagers worshipped in the ancient Knights Hospitallers chapel, a wooden building — demolished in 1955 — formerly situated at the top of Chapel Row.



St Mary's Church

The present church is a pleasing building in a neo-Norman style. It was constructed during 1845 and extended in 1872. It is built of flint, without tower or spire, and situated within a walled churchyard. It had become very run down but, with a great deal of hard work by people in the village and the support and interest of the Parish Council, the interior of the building has been refurbished and the churchyards put into good order. Plans are now being put in hand for further restoration and improvement.

The Crown Public House provides food and drink and sports several teams which take part in local leagues.

The Plough Restaurant, formerly a public house, now is a well established restaurant.^s

Countryside Character and Environment

With much of the village straddling the chalk ridge, Ashley tends to enjoy views across open countryside in most directions. This is either across the Kennet Valley to the east and south or across the relatively plateau-like landscape to the west. Historically, views to the north (towards Newmarket) must have been extensive although these have tended to be limited by stud farm related landscaping. Traditional arable land uses are currently and increasingly giving way to a stud farm landscape.



View across Kennet Valley

How the Survey was Undertaken

It all began in November 2002 when Stan Rees from Cambridgeshire ACRE and East Cambridgeshire District Council came to talk to the Parish Council about Parish Plans. The Parish Council agreed it would be really important to know Ashley villagers' concerns and ideas for our village and so enable it to make its decisions more relevant and democratic.

A sub-group was then set up with a volunteer chairperson, secretary and treasurer. This subgroup invited each local association to send a representative to be key members of a Parish Plan Steering Group.

The first task of the Group was a formal application to the Countryside Agency for a grant to enable the work to proceed. In July 2003, success! We were offered the grant and given the green light: after a delay, the grant was approved so the Parish Plan could start.

The next task was the drawing up of a list of all the things we wanted to know about the village and about people's views. To help with this we had a stand at the Ashley fete where people were encouraged to write down the things they want to keep in the village; things they might want to change and things they wanted to scrap.

These responses were incorporated into a formal questionnaire using software made available by ACRE. After much thought, blood, sweat and tears, three questionnaires were produced:

- a household questionnaire
- an adult questionnaire
- a young person's questionnaire.

All the local groups and people with key interests were consulted to check that the questions were relevant and extra people were recruited to help deliver the forms.

Questionnaires were delivered during June – July 2004 and a money draw provided as an incentive to encourage people to complete them on time. Actually, we found that no one needed the incentive but we held the draw anyway! We got an excellent response rate of 68%.

Over the summer, the responses were independently analysed by an outside agency.

This Report is the conclusion of this major undertaking. It should be noted — with gratitude — that over this lengthy period, over 30 people have been involved in a number of different ways to help make the Parish Plan happen.

We are confident that the issues raised will be addressed, resulting in significant improvements in the village. Beyond this, the Parish Plan also provides a snapshot of life in Ashley in 2004, just as the Domesday Book did in its day.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Three separate types of questionnaire were distributed to all 234 occupied houses over the period 25 June to 9 July 2004. These were:

- a household questionnaire provided to each occupied dwelling,
- a questionnaire for each adult, aged 17 years and over,
- a questionnaire for each child, aged between 8 and 16.

Questions are of two broad types:

- **descriptive questions**
e.g. *which of the following is your main means of transport?* and
- **questions seeking a view** about something
e.g. *what is most important to you about Ashley?*

The descriptive results are covered in the sections:

Adult and Junior Surveys — Descriptive

whilst respondents' opinions are summarised in the separate sections

Adult and Junior Surveys — Views. The raw data from which these sections have been compiled are available from the Ashley Parish Clerk.

Wherever possible, numeric data concerning a particular question or issue are presented using actual numbers of responses, followed by the proportion in brackets as a percentage.

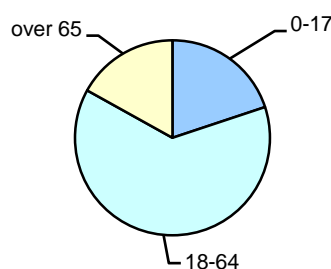
Two instances are:

- [Actual Response (%)] out of [Total Response]
e.g.: 62 (50%) responses out of 124; 120 (60%) responses out of 200;
- [Total Respondents, Actual Respondents (%)]
e.g.: . . . of these 165 houses, 117 (71%) are owned . . .

Household Survey

165 (70%) out of a total 234 household questionnaires distributed, were returned completed or partly completed. The results of this part of the survey help to provide a fuller description of the types of housing in the village: the extent to which they are connected to basic services, including Internet access; and vehicle ownership within Ashley.

A total of 437 people were recorded as resident within these 165 households, with the adjacent age profile.



Age Profile in Ashley Households

Of these 165 houses, 117 houses (71%) are owned by the occupier and 37 (22%) are rented from housing associations (Hereward Housing and Orbit Housing Associations). 57 (34.5%) are detached; 51 (31%) are semi-detached and 29 (18%) are bungalows. 162 have inside toilets; 148 (90%) have loft insulation; 137 (83%) double glazing; 68 (42%) have cavity wall insulation and 79 (48%) are on a water meter. 80 (49%) have access to the Internet.

Vehicle ownership is high in the village at 249 cars or an average of 1.5 cars per household. Beyond this, the household survey recorded 18 vans, 13 motor cycles, 5 lorries and 1 specially adapted vehicle. 65 bicycles were also recorded within these households.

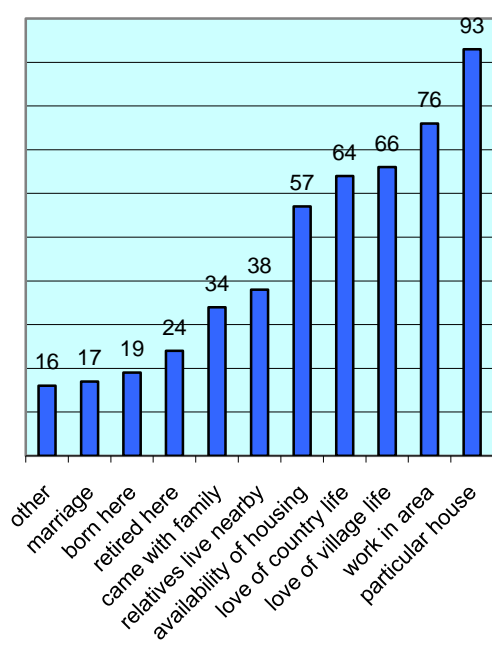
Adult Survey — Descriptive

The total adult population of the village is approximately 450. We were able to distribute questionnaires to 363 Ashley residents; 294 responded, 20 being joint responses, giving a response rate of approximately 65%. Of residents completing the questionnaire, 134 (46%) were male and 160 (55%) female; 119 were below the age of 45; 77 were aged 45 to 59 and 97 were aged 60 and over.

128 (43%) of respondents have lived in the village for 5 years or less; 46 (37%) for between 6 and 25 years and 41 (14%) between 26 and 50 years. Only 18 respondents were actually born in the village.

Respondents gave a range of reasons as to why they came to live in the village which are summarised in the bar chart opposite.

Respondents attach almost equal importance to Ashley’s location and environment in terms of what is important to them about Ashley. They also consider the village community important.



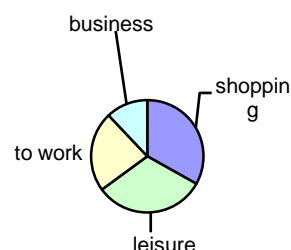
Reasons for Living in Ashley

Travel and Transport

The car is the major means of transport for 269 (91%) adults in the village. Only 14 (15%) listed buses.

The major purposes for which car journeys are undertaken were:

- shopping – 223 (28%);
- leisure – 214 (26%);
- transport to work – 155 (19%);
- business journeys – 81 (10%).



The bus is used much less than the car. The main purpose is: shopping – 14; transport for work – 3.

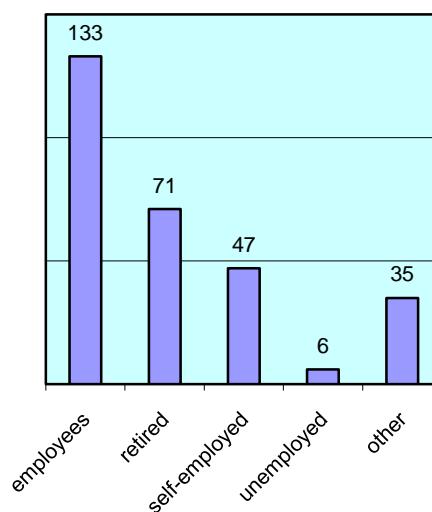
Very few respondents make regular use of taxi services, with 3 using taxis daily, 13 weekly and 16 monthly.

Car Usage

Occupation

There were 292 responses for employment, training and business. 180 (57%) respondents are employed. Very few are unemployed – 6 (2%).

Ashley has a significant retired population – 71 (24%), with a few full time carers and volunteers; few in full time education (although this might be influenced by the time of year when the questionnaire was distributed). Unwaged housewives/husbands comprised only 15 (5%) of respondents and permanently disabled – 6 (2%).



Of the 180 in paid employment, the majority – 133 (74%) are employees; 20 (15%) are self-employed but also employ others, whilst a further 27 (11%) are simply self-employed.

Newmarket is the most significant location where people work – 60 (32%); with a significant number – 30 (16%) working in Cambridge. Surprisingly few – 8 (4%) work in Bury St Edmunds; and 38 (20%) work in other unspecified locations which may well be at some considerable distance from the village.

Ashley itself is the location for 27 (14%) of those in employment. Anecdotally these are likely to be either home based workers, those employed on stud farms or those working in Ashley's pub, restaurant or shop.

62 respondents provided answers to a question asking about barriers preventing people taking up work or study with a broad spread of answers ranging from the cost/availability of childcare or availability of care for a dependent adult, to lack of experience, training or information. 10 respondents stated that lack of transport was a barrier and more than a quarter suggested that disability or ill health prevented them from working.

269 respondents provided the following views as to what type of development should be encouraged in Ashley.

Note that Bed and Breakfast includes Guest Houses.

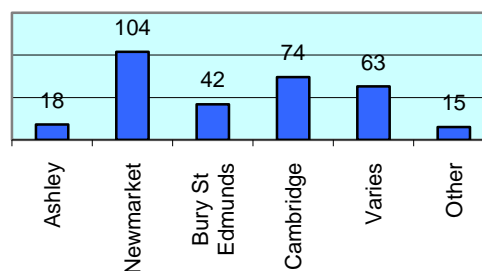
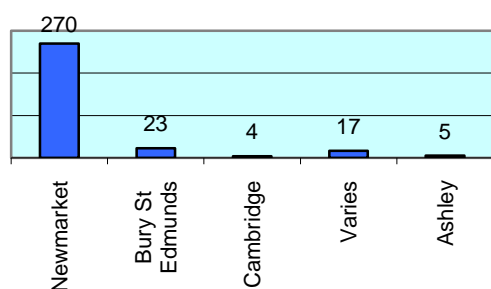
	Development For	Against	No Opinion
Suggested Developments for Ashley			
Small Business	88	49	84
Small Ind. Workshops	37	33	136
Small Housing Groups	93	49	88
Large Housing Estates	8	5	193
Bed & Breakfast	111	83	16
Small Retail Outlets	140	37	54
Other	6	2	3

Shopping and Leisure

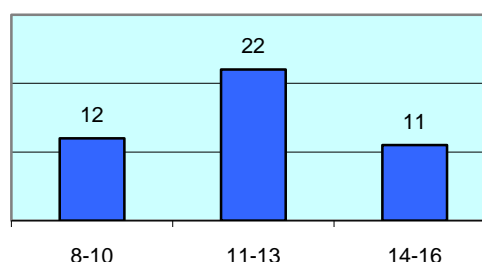
Of the 319 respondents, by far the great majority, 270 (85%) of Ashley residents choose Newmarket as their main place to shop for food; with only 23 (7%) choosing Bury St Edmunds; and 4 (1%) Cambridge.

Main Places for Food Shopping Types of Occupation

In contrast, there appears to be a much greater spread of destinations for leisure with Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge all appearing to be significant.



Age Range of Junior Respondents



Junior Survey — Descriptive

59 questionnaires were distributed to children and young people aged between 8 and 16. 45 completed questionnaires were returned with nearly equal numbers of boys, 23; and girls, 22 responding.

Of these children, only 10 (22%) were born in the village; whilst 22 (49%) had lived in the village 5 years or less; 13 (29%) had been more than 5 years in Ashley.

Primary and Secondary Education

Education

The table adjacent summarises where these children go to school (42 responses indicated schools).

Authority	Primary	Secondary
Suffolk LEA ¹	1	12
Cambridgeshire LEA ²	8	15
Private	5	1
Total	14	28

A significant number of Ashley’s children are choosing to attend local secondary schools in Newmarket (43%) rather than remain in the Cambridgeshire system and travel to Bottisham. Some primary school children are being educated outside the state sector but are returning to state education when they reach secondary level.

Of the 44 respondents, 25 (56%) of travel to school by car; 16 by bus; 1 walking; 1 cycling; 1 by taxi.

After-school Activities

Activity	No.
Sport	29
Music, Dance, Drama	10
Youth Groups	6
Arts & Crafts	4

¹ St Felix Middle School (8), Scalback Middle (2) and Newmarket (2)
² Primary — 7 attend Cheveley School; Secondary — all attend Bottisham.

Main Places for Leisure

24 of the 43 respondents take part in after-school activities; obviously some in more than 1 activity!

Other	11
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After-school Activities

Meeting Friends

Children appear to meet their friends mainly in their own or friends' houses although the recreation ground is also significant in summer time. 85% suggested that they used the playing field in summer although approximately half did so less than once a week. Football and socialising are listed as the most popular activities. Not surprisingly, a much smaller number use the playing field in winter.

A significant number are dependent on being driven by car to meet their friends although a similar number are able to walk or cycle. Only 23% felt that lack of transport was a restriction to their socialising. Few travel to visit their friends by bus.

Other Activities

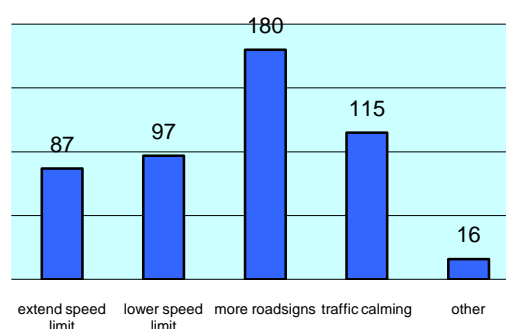
Children appear to be significant users of the village shop – 41; 17 use the post office; and 18 the fish and chip van; however, only 12 recorded that they use the Pavilion and 7 use the church. 73% of the children use the Internet at home.

Adult Survey — Views

This section summarises the responses to questions seeking people's opinions about a range of issues, facilities and aspects of Ashley life. It is mainly from these responses that the issues and actions described in the Action Plan have been drawn. The views of adults and of young people are considered separately. The order in which the issues have been considered reflects the order in which questions were listed in the questionnaires and does not of itself reflect any prioritisation.

Transport and Highways

Road safety and traffic speeds are clearly a major concern in the village. 236 of the 272 respondents (87%) considered that there were 'danger spots' on Ashley's roads and 203 of the 568 responses (74%) to traffic problems were concerned about traffic speed. Lack of parking and the need for traffic regulation were also raised as significant issues.



Responses in Favour of Speed Control Measures

115 (46%) of the 249 Ashley residents responding to this issue felt that some form of traffic calming is required. In practice, a number of complementary solutions might well be considered as suggested by the chart above. However, 233 (81%) of the 289 respondents thought that the level of street lighting in the village was either *good* or *reasonable*. 110 (41%) of the 277 appear happy with the level of cycling facilities in Ashley (*although this is puzzling as it is not apparent that there are any! This possibly reflects just how few people in the village cycle*).

Of the 284 views about the state of pavements in the village, 123 (43%) suggest that they are not user-friendly for people with disabilities, pushchairs or wheelchairs. 105 (37%) are apparently content with them.



No Pavement!

On the other hand, 58% of those expressing an opinion about the state of the public footpaths felt that they can be used without difficulty and 147 (53%) felt that they were at least reasonably accessible.

However, 163 people responded to a separate question about what problems they found when using public footpaths by suggesting a number: e.g. bushes/nettles; mud/water; crops across path; no signposts; stiles being difficult to use; unsuitable for dogs were the most frequently expressed.

When asked about preferences for a range of highways-related improvements, 218 respondents replied and offered support to a range of improvements: of which the most popular appears to be: more footpaths; more cycle paths; zebra crossing and more street lights, particularly environmentally friendly ones.

Of the 309 respondents who answered the question whether transport problems made it difficult to travel from Ashley, 220 (71%) stated that they had no problems³. For the remainder, however, other issues were raised. These included: problematic bus services; lack of access to a car; inability to drive; and physical disability problems.

Of the 275 respondents to car parking, 200 (73%) stated that they never had a problem parking their cars; 44 (16%) occasionally; and 8 (3%) often. Unsatisfactory on-street parking and blocked entrances appear to represent the major causes of problems.

Respondents were asked to rate the bus services in terms of routes, timetable, reliability, cost and access for those with disabilities. With the exception of timetables, many respondents had no opinion — probably reflecting their lack of use of buses. In regard to timetables: of the 93 responses received on this issue, 65 (70%) said that the timetable was poor. Of those who did express views of the other issues, opinions were mixed with generally poor ratings for access for those with disabilities and reliability. It was also in regard to timetables that most expressed a view that improvements were needed.

Of the 266 respondents to the taxi service, 150 (56%) felt it adequate; 7 (3%) inadequate; and 109 expressed no opinion: although few Ashley residents appear to make regular use of taxis.

³ More specifically very few respondents considered that they had problems accessing healthcare (hospital, doctor dentist etc) or had difficulty in collecting prescription medicines.

Leisure

Proposed activities: 468 responses indicated that several activities would be of interest if available in Ashley.

This suggests a considerable latent demand for a greater range of leisure activities in the village as well as there being individuals prepared to help organise such activities. Some activities would clearly require major capital investment (e.g. badminton or tennis), others, however, could be undertaken now with little or no new equipment required.

Activity ⁴	No. Interested	No. who would help Organise
Keep Fit	72	11
Badminton	52	4
Yoga	45	1
Rambling	44	4
Computing	35	?
Tennis	34	6
Bird Watching	31	5
Outdoor Bowls	26	6
Marshall Arts	26	2
Cycling	23	4
Crafts	22	2

New Activities

The preferred venue for such activities would obviously relate to their specific requirements, however, in general terms by far the most popular are the Pavilion, 187 (50%); with remainder — in order of preference — being the playing field – 89 (24%); pub – 57 (15%) and church – 33 (9%).

Of the 407 responses for the best time of day, weekday evenings, 166 (41%) came as the firm favourite in terms of the preferred time for such activities, followed by daytime at the weekends, 127 (31%).

Current Activities: In contrast to this apparently significant demand for more leisure activities, only 57 responses were received from residents who are involved in one or more of the existing leisure activities in the village. The best attended are shown in the adjacent table.

Activity	No. Attending
Carpet Bowls	19
Pub Sports	16
Silverley Way Social	15
Church Groups	11
Wavier Quilters	10
Art Classes	4
Other	6

Current Activities

⁴ Smaller numbers of individuals also expressed interest in other activities including youth football, volleyball, table tennis and skittles and in each case some individuals expressed an interest in helping.

Education-Related Activity

Altogether, almost 500 suggestions were received from the 187 responses to a question asking whether Ashley needs more educational facilities. The most popular suggestions (in order) are: a youth club; adult education evening classes; after-schools clubs; play group and nursery school.

Housing and Other Development

When asked how Ashley should develop in the future, 54% of respondents want it to stay the way it is now. Most of the remainder (37%) want the village to develop as a working community.

279 respondents consider that Ashley can accommodate new housing while 101 disagree. Most people felt that this should be to provide small family homes or homes for young people. Relatively few supported the building of further larger executive-style houses.

The survey also suggests that 132 (65%) respondents would find further such housing development in the village acceptable. Of these, the most favoured means of doing so are conversion of redundant buildings, small groups of ten or less houses; single dwellings in controlled locations. Only a few respondents favoured larger groups of houses. 74 (36%) respondents would be prepared to see expansion of the edge of Ashley in order to accommodate this new housing.

There is a much less clear picture of people's preferences as to the way accommodation should be provided e.g. owner-occupied or some form of assisted scheme. 123⁵ of the 278 responses suggested no need for any kind of assistance whilst in the table adjacent are indicated preferences for those supporting some kind of scheme.

Types of Accommodation	No. in Favour
Restricted sale to local people	45
Local Authority/Housing Assoc	42
Shared ownership	29
Sheltered housing	29
Other	10
No need for 'assisted' housing	123
Total	278

Housing Provision

Good Neighbour Scheme

This is a scheme which is set up and run by a group from within the village. Its idea is to provide practical support and help for anyone in the village who might need it. These types of schemes have been shown to help people extend the time they can remain in their own homes and to lessen the impact the loss of village services and facilities, such as a garage or shop, would have on their lives. They can also help people to feel less isolated.

The kind of help that might be offered could include helping people with shopping, cooking, transport to appointments or assistance with minor repairs or form filling. People who ask for

⁵ This includes those expressing a preference for housing to be 'owner-occupied' or 'private rented'.

help are not charged (except where petrol costs or parking fees are incurred) but can make a donation. Running costs are low and are usually covered by donations from individuals, businesses or the Parish Council.

Of a total of 275 respondents, 150 (54%) felt that there was a need for such a scheme in Ashley and 86 people offered to help with such a scheme.

Emergency Services

There is a considerable contrast between people's opinions of the police service on one hand and of the fire brigade and ambulance services on the other hand as shown in the adjacent table.

Emergency Service	Poor Opinion	Total Response ⁶
Fire	6	210
Ambulance	10	226
Police – emergency	70	225
Police – community	120	236

Emergency Services

Lack of police presence in Ashley is clearly a significant concern for many (just over half of all responses), whilst 34% of 272 respondents felt that the response of the police in an emergency was poor.

Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

799 responses from 262 respondents to the question 'Which, if any, of the following crimes and antisocial behaviour concern you in Ashley'. The adjacent table summarises these.

When asked what measures were needed to tackle these concerns, the two most frequent answers either involved the police or the provision of more activities for young people. Over 50% of responses suggested that either a greater police presence, a regular police advisory service in the village or more consultation between police and local people were required. 29% of responses favoured more activity for young people in the village.

Concern	No. of Responses
Vandalism	178
Dog Mess	128
Inconsiderate Parking	110
Litter	95
Noise	77
Fly Tipping	62
Theft	37
Drunkenness	33
Garden Bonfires	33
Abandoned Vehicles	25
Mugging	9
Not Concerned	12
Total	799

Antisocial Behaviour

⁶ The remaining responses were either 'good', 'reasonable' or 'no opinion'.

Responses to these two questions suggest that a link exists between the lack of young people's facilities and the incidence of vandalism in Ashley but also that the police could play a much greater role to tackle this problem.

It is important to note that with the exception of vandalism, which can amount to criminal damage, most of the serious concerns of Ashley residents revolve around issues of consideration for others (e.g. in clearing up dog mess or in parking cars). The only real solution for these concerns is a change of behaviour on the part of the people involved. However, 84 people felt that the number and location of litter bins was poor and 57 people considered that more dog mess bins were required.

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

217 (78%) respondents out of 278 feel that Ashley should have a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. However, a much smaller number – 97 said that they would join such a scheme and 153 either said they would not or had no opinion.

Other Services

People are generally satisfied with refuse collection, road sweeping, and council grass cutting.

Other Service	Acceptable	Poor	No Opinion
Refuse Collection	200	47	13
Road Sweeping	126	76	46
Grass Cutting	162	67	24

Other Council Services

On the other hand, the survey suggests that very much more could be done to improve the provision of recycling facilities in the village. Over 1000 responses were received from 263 people providing suggestions as shown in the adjacent table.

Recycling (24%) and composting schemes (16%) are also considered by residents to be the most important ways that we could help protect and enhance the village environment⁷.

Recycling Facility	No. in Favour
Bottle Bank	220
Garden Waste Recycling	213
Newspaper Bank	206
Plastic Bank	190
Can Bank	184
Other	22
Total	1035

Proposed Recycling

⁷ Others ways that were significant in the survey are considered in the environment section.

Use of Shops and Other Facilities

A specific question was asked regarding people's use of the post office⁸, which suggests that for the 251 respondents using it, this is mainly for postal services (83%); TV licence and other bills (34%), and pensions and allowances (19%).

Only 7% of adult respondents consider the facilities at the children's play area were poor. This should be contrasted with the views of children and young people (see appropriate section below).

Shops and Facilities	At least weekly	Monthly or less	Never
Post Office	115	125	37
Mobile Shops	15	14	188
The Crown	35	94	109
The Plough	9	131	93
Mobile Library	-	37	193
BT phone box	2	7	216
Village Stores	209	69	9
Church	11	83	135
Play Area	18	86	121
The Pavilion	26	99	112
Sheltered Housing Dayroom	14	19	197

Use of Village Facilities

St Mary's Church

680 responses were received about St Mary's Church. These are summarised in the table adjacent which, along with the table above, suggests that very few use the church regularly for Sunday worship but many value its continued existence and functioning both as a place of worship and in its own right.

Church Function	Responses
Weddings & Funerals	126
'Every place should have a Church'	120
'As an Historic Building'	113
'Focal Point for the Community'	86
Special Services e.g. Christmas and Easter	80
Baptisms	56
Sunday Worship	29
Other	8
Not Important	62
Total	680

Uses for the Church

Many felt that the Church could also be used for non-religious activity: e.g. concerts; meetings; play groups; and lunch clubs, although 11% of responses were not in favour. Such other uses of the Church would require the installation of adequate heating and toilets.

⁸ Open only on Wednesday and Friday mornings at present.

Communications

Ashley residents can obtain information about events and activities taking place from a number of sources. The most important of these is *About Ashley*, the Ashley village magazine, and that 192 (66%) respondents read every issue and only 12 never. The vast majority of readers consider *About Ashley* to be good or reasonable and only 4 people out of 263 thought it poor. 25 people also said that they would be prepared to write for it.

'Fliers through the door'; 'word of mouth'; shop window and *The Link* (church magazine) are other important sources of local information. 52 (18%) respondents receive such information via the notice board by the pond. It is gratifying to note that more than 85% of respondents consider the amount of such information to be at least reasonable. The *Newmarket Journal* is also widely read by Ashley people and is a significant source of local information.

The Ashley Environment

Most respondents consider that the approach to the village and appearance of the playing field area and churchyards are either good or reasonable: however, 107 (38%) respondents view the appearance of the pond area as being poor. As already noted, recycling and composting schemes score very highly amongst activities respondents feel would be beneficial to the local environment. Of the others, improved public transport, reductions in traffic and energy saving measures all score highly. 36 people would consider car sharing.

Ashley Parish Council

A number of questions in the survey were asked about the role and functioning of the Parish Council with the overall conclusion that most people do not have a good understanding of what the Parish Council does. 157 (57%) out of 275 respondents had no opinion as to whether the Parish Council reflected local concerns in the issues it discussed; 122 (43%) did not know how money was spent that is raised via the Council Tax and available for Parish Council expenditure. 206 (72%) out of 285 respondents did not even know who their elected representatives were.⁹

On the other hand, 172 (60%) respondents had never attended a Parish Council meeting and 27 (9%) didn't know that you could.

Somewhat in contradiction to the other findings, 155 (55%) respondents felt that the Parish Council publicised its decision and activities either reasonably or very well. 29 (10%) respondents were 'quite' or 'very' dissatisfied with the way money is spent by the Parish Council.

⁹ Although they are listed in *About Ashley*!

Paying for Improvements in Ashley

This analysis of the survey results suggests that there are many ways that people living in Ashley would like to see improvements being made and these are summarised in the Action Plan at the end of this document. When asked how such improvements should be made, most of 222 responses (42%) suggested that this should be via fund-raising activity, or sponsorship 145 (28%). Only 73 (14%) considered that increases in Council Tax should be used for this purpose and almost none wanted significantly higher rates of tax.

Junior Survey — Views

This section summarises the views of young people in the village, particularly in regard to what the respondents like or dislike about the village and more specifically, what they think of the play area and sports field and what sports and other activities they would like to have in the village. Young people's responses to other issues are included under the appropriate headings above.

What Young People Like and Dislike about the Village

The responses to these questions suggest that young people primarily value the quietness¹⁰ and attractiveness of Ashley ('it's a nice place' was a typical comment). When the respondents were asked if and how they would be prepared to keep Ashley tidy, 24 out of 35 responses said that they would be willing to help do this and by far the most common suggestion related to picking up litter. Other positive comments about the village related to the friendliness of people in the village and to their friends also living in the village.

There were, however, two clear aspects of village life that the respondents were concerned about. One was that there is 'nothing to do' (24%) and the other very significant issue was the intimidating behaviour of 'vandals', sometimes specifically described as 'teenagers' (44%). 'What I dislike like about Ashley is people who vandalise the village...' is a reasonably typical comment from this group. Other issues of concern that were mentioned relate to roads and traffic; lack of buses; litter and not feeling safe.

The junior questionnaire included a specific question about vandalism: 'How do you think vandalism in Ashley could be stopped?'

The table adjacent summarises the responses which fall roughly between preventative measures; more punishments and the provision of activities to keep potential vandals occupied.

How to stop Vandalism	No. of Responses
CCTV Cameras	9
Stricter Punishments	8
More Activities ¹¹	8
Greater Police Presence	2
Neighbourhood Watch	2
Can't Stop It	2
Not Sure	1

Preventing Vandalism

¹⁰ Although 'quietness' was also mentioned as something that some did not like about Ashley.

¹¹ Includes the suggestion of a youth group.

Young People's Views on the Play Area, Sports Field & other Facilities

Respondents were asked what extra things they would like to see on the playing field and this is summarised in the table adjacent. Questions were also asked about what respondents like or don't like about the play area. Relatively few appear satisfied with the play area, preferring the sports field.

New Sports Field Facility	No. of Responses
Tennis Court(s)	11
More Trees Shelter & Benches	8
Cricket Nets and a 'Square'	7
Basketball/Netball Posts & Nets	8
Football Goal Nets	6
Other Suggestions ¹²	10
Total	50

Sports Field Suggestions

The most frequently mentioned concern (32%) about the play area, however, did not concern equipment at all but was about the inappropriate behaviour of many users:

'I don't like the playground as kids do drugs up there';

'people sell drugs';

'idiots hang around up there they are horrid and shout abuse...'

were three such comments.

The most popular suggestion for new equipment was for a roundabout (10 out of 39 suggestions); others included a cable swing way (also described as a 'zip line'); more swings and slides; a climbing frame (including a fireman's pole). The provision of a greater range of sports equipment as above, was also highlighted, along with a place to skateboard and a place to shelter.

The question was also asked: 'Why do you think people like to meet at the bus shelter?'. Nearly half of the 44 responses suggested that there was nowhere else to go or nothing else to do or because of the bus shelter itself. It was also seen as a meeting place in the middle of the village. Only 2 respondents suggested that it was to catch a bus.

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In answer to the question 'Which activities would you go to if available in Ashley?' responses tended to reflect the facilities desired for the sports field as outlined above, with the most popular being football – 21. Beyond this, many young people aspired to be a members of a Youth Group – 15; Computer Group¹³ – 10; or Dance Group – 8. Few young people appear keen to get actively involved in helping to run such groups, only 10 said 'yes' or 'maybe'.

¹² These included rugby pitch, swimming pool, trampoline, badminton net and a skate park.

¹³ With respect to computers, virtually all (95%) expressed a desire to have Broadband at home.

Ashley Action Plan

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Ashley Parish Plan	Very large response rate to the questionnaire indicates considerable desire on the part of Ashley residents to share their views about the village.	<i>Endeavour to achieve the actions outlined in this Plan and as prioritised below.</i> <i>Review the Plan annually (at the Annual Parish Meeting).</i>	APC , ^{14, 15} Cambs ACRE, East Cambs DC ¹⁶ Everybody!	High — to continue over the 5-year life of Plan.	Cost levels are indicated for individual actions. Annual review will require volunteer time only.
Transport and Highways	Specific danger spots in the village with parking problems in some parts of the village, e.g. Church Street.	<i>Review required of traffic/ pedestrian management in and through the village; identifying danger spots and recommending specific measures.</i>	APC , CCC ¹⁷ Highways, East Cambs DC	High	High cost likely.
	Speeding traffic is considered to be a considerable issue by many.	<i>Liaise with Ashley Speedwatch Coordinator: further measures required to reduce speed.</i>	Ashley Speedwatch , APC, Police	High	High

¹⁴ APC — Ashley Parish Council.

¹⁵ Lead Responsibility shown in **Bold**; partner in normal type.

¹⁶ DC — District Council.

¹⁷ CCC — Cambridgeshire County Council.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Transport and Highways (cont)	More footpaths, pavements and cycle paths (98.9%) required and some existing pavements require to be improved.	<i>Specific surveys of footpaths and pavements to identify problems.</i>	APC, CCC Highways	Medium	Medium
		<i>Continue to press highway authorities and householders to keep hedges and shrubs from encroaching on pavements.</i>	APC, CCC Highways, Residents	High	Low
		<i>Explore scope to extend footpath network with landowners.</i>	APC Ramblers Assoc. Planning Authority	Medium	Medium
	For those without a car the bus service was described as problematic particularly in terms of the timetable.	<i>Continue to press CCC to exploring ways of improving public and community transport.</i>	APC Bus companies, Hereward Housing, NCP ¹⁸	Medium	No cost implications.

¹⁸ NCP — Newmarket Community Partnership.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost	
Education and Leisure	Need for a youth club in the village.	<i>Explore links with NCP to assess scope for young people in Ashley to benefit from initiatives being developed in Newmarket.</i>	Ashley lead yet to be identified, APC, NCP	High	High	
	Need for greater facilities for younger children (after schools and holiday clubs etc).	<i>Explore links with NCP as above.</i>	As above	High	High	
	Considerable interest in a range of leisure activities with keep fit the most popular.		<i>Identify people prepared to lead on individual activities and organise an Activities Evening as part of the launch of the Parish Plan. Use About Ashley to publicise activities for which little or no facilities required.</i>	Parish Plan Group, APC, People interested in specific leisure activities	High	Low
			<i>For other activities: explore availability of facilities locally and focus more activities on evenings and weekends.</i>	Adult Education (Suffolk/Cambs)	tbd	No cost implications.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Education and Leisure (cont)		<i>Explore scope to develop the range of facilities within the village hall/play area/ playing fields.</i>	APC, Pavilion Trust	High	Medium/High
Housing	<p>The survey results were mixed in terms of this issue. Although a significant number felt that there was no need for assisted housing, the majority of respondents favoured a range of options with the most popular being sale restricted to young people and LA/Housing Association rented.</p> <p>It should be noted, however, that a significant number feel that no more housing is needed.</p>	<i>Continue discussions between relevant bodies to determine the extent of the problem and (where required) options available within Ashley.</i>	E Cambs DC (Housing and Planning Depts), Hereward Housing, NCP, APC	Medium	High
Good Neighbour Scheme	Survey suggests that there is scope to explore this further with about 40 expressions of interest in helping to organise such a scheme.	<i>Explore further via Ashley Parish Meeting and in About Ashley. Need to identify individuals prepared to take this on.</i>	Local coordinator to be identified <i>About Ashley</i> editors	Medium	Low

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	The survey suggests that most people in Ashley would welcome such a scheme.	<i>Explore scope for Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.</i>	Identify local person from volunteer list to become coordinator, Police, APC	Medium	Low
Crimes and Antisocial Behaviour	The issues of most concern were: Vandalism Dog mess. Although a range of other concerns were reported including poor parking, noise, litter and fly tipping.	<i>Solutions to many of these concerns generally require a greater police presence therefore more liaison with local police required.</i>	Local Government Police Crime Partnership, APC, NCP	High	High
Recycling Facilities	There was a generally high level of interest in using a range of such facilities if they were available (i.e. can, plastic, paper, garden waste, bottle banks).	<i>Determine what types of recycling are realistic within the village and identify suitable locations.</i> <i>Provide appropriate facilities and encourage proper use and management.</i>	APC, CCC, East Cambs DC APC, CCC, East Cambs DC	Medium High	Recycling can generate an income for Ashley. See above.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Play Area	Although the majority of those expressing an opinion thought the facilities reasonable, it is clear particularly from the young persons questionnaire responses that improvements to the play area would be welcomed.	<i>Provide equipment for younger children.</i>	APC	Medium	High
		<i>Improve retention of bark chippings and in the longer term explore the scope for alternative surface.</i>	APC	Medium	High
Communications	The survey clearly shows the importance of <i>About Ashley</i> as a means of finding out what's going on in the village (it also showed that the vast majority considered it to be 'good' or 'reasonable').	<i>Build on current success of About Ashley. Increase to six issues per year from the current five issues.</i>	About Ashley Editors, APC	High	Low
		<i>Volunteer writers to be contacted.</i>	About Ashley Editors	High	Low
	Strong desire to have Broadband in the village.	<i>Now available in the village – provide more publicity in About Ashley.</i>	About Ashley Editors	Medium	Low
	Some desire expressed for Parish Website.	<i>Identify lead organiser to develop Parish Website.</i>	Person to be identified to work on this with Parish Clerk	Medium	No cost

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
St Mary's Church	Although the questionnaire results suggest that few use the Church regularly for Sunday worship, it clearly remains important to Ashley residents for worship/ceremonies on special occasions. The Church is also important as an historic building and focal point in the village. Few felt that it was not important.	<i>There is clearly scope and support for the uses to which the Church is put to be diversified and developed. Such uses would need to be considered carefully and sensitively and to fit around/be compatible with its prime religious functions.</i>	PCC ¹⁹ , APC	High	High
		<i>Seek funds for installation of kitchen toilets, etc.</i>	PCC , APC	High	High
		<i>Seek ways to resolve lack of parking.</i>	PCC , APC	High	High
		<i>New facilities for St Mary's Church must be considered in relation to potential improvements at the Pavilion.</i>	PCC , APC	High	High

¹⁹ PCC — Parochial Church Council.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Parish Council	Responses to specific questions suggest that many residents do not have a good understanding of what the Parish Council does or how it actually works. Residents overall are not familiar with who the PC members are or know how the PC uses the precept (that part of the Council Tax which is allocated to Parish Councils).	<i>Find ways to better publicise the work and membership of the Parish Council. Greater use of About Ashley for this purpose should be considered. Find better ways to distribute minutes of meetings, including use of the Website.</i>	APC, Identify someone to write synopses of PC meetings for the <i>Newmarket Journal</i> and <i>About Ashley</i>	High	Low
Village Environment	Some concerns regarding the pond area.	<i>Explore scope to set up a 'Friends of the Pond Group'. Continue to push for the pond area to be designated a Conservation Area in order to access further funding.</i>	Identify interested persons. APC	Medium High	No cost. No Cost.

Issue	Survey Result	Action	Responsibility Lead/Partner	Priority	Cost
Development in the Village	General consensus that Ashley can accommodate some further housing: however, this should be either in small groups or single dwellings with focus on homes for young people/small family homes. There may be scope to expand the edge of Ashley to do this.	<i>Develop more detailed principles that should be considered by planners in determining planning applications.</i>	APC, East Cambs DC (who would need to agree to consider adopting principles as a Supplementary Planning Document)	Medium	Low
