

## **Village design statement – Flackwell Heath**

### **A summary of what some residents like and dislike**

Residents enjoyed living in what was repeatedly referred to as ‘the village’, which they saw as an exceptionally friendly place with a strong community spirit. They liked that it contained a cross-section of residents: a mix of social groups; old and new residents; some retired and others still working; upmarket homes and simple cottages. All supported by clubs, associations, churches all offering opportunities to meet and mix. They liked that we had a post office and library as well as a choice of schools, banks and shops. They raised concerns that there was no NHS dentist in the village and felt that the doctors’ surgery was inadequate for the size of the village, with the provision of clinics and appointments in Loudwater dependent on the use of private transport.

They liked that the village was convenient for London, Wycombe and other local towns, yet valued highly being surrounded by fields, woods and the Chilterns AONB. Its location, slightly isolated, was in itself viewed as a benefit helping to promote a calm, peaceful and unhurried atmosphere. Though noise from the M40 motorway was seen as an intrusion for many in the village. There were very strong, negative feelings about the growth of through-traffic in the village. Exacerbated by what is almost universally seen as a disaster by many residents: the speed humps which do little to slow down heavy traffic – including buses - and have created rat-runs as both through-traffic and residents seek to avoid them.

The growth of vehicles owned by residents, frequently two and often three per family, and the consequent problems caused by inadequate parking spaces for older properties is recognised. There are concerns that the same lack of adequate provision is now happening for new developments. On-street parking is not seen as a solution.

Residents valued the green and spacious nature of the village: noting both the small and large green open spaces within the village; grassed verges; gardens, trees and hedges; with houses being set back on wide roads and pavements.

They liked the scale of housing, predominantly low rise, two storey houses and bungalows.

They felt strongly that redevelopment should be sympathetic to surrounding properties and that schemes which were an over-development of a site either because of height or footprint – in particular flats – were usually inappropriate for the village.

Scale and character issues were the primary reasons for the strong negative feedback about recent developments in the Conservation Area.

Attached is the list of issues raised by residents at the first public village design statement meeting on Thursday 9 June 2005. While some of the comments are not directly useful to the development of the design statement itself, they are nevertheless helpful in setting its tone.

It is clear that residents initially chose Flackwell Heath because of the location, visual impact and attraction it had for them and their families, and have subsequently come to appreciate the other aspects of what it has to offer; from friendly residents to the many services and facilities we enjoy.

The village will change and our design statement must be a positive tool in ensuring that its best features are respected and guides change so that development enhances 'our village of the future'.

We could do worse than paraphrase some comments made at the meeting:

'I like Flackwell Heath....it has a history.

I have lived here for 50 years – the village has evolved – let's not spoil it now.

But we do need to breathe new life into this village to survive'.

Flackwell Heath Residents Association  
Chepping Wycombe Parish Council  
June 2005

### **What some residents actually said they like and dislike**

*For this summary of comments made by those residents at the public meeting on Thursday 9 June there has been no editing, so that particular issues appear as often as they were raised to show clearly the extent of feeling about them.*

#### **Things they dislike:**

##### **Traffic and road issues including parking:-**

Too much traffic through the village.

The village being used as a short cut by commuters early morning and at teatime.

All through-traffic.

Increasing volumes of through traffic.

Heavy traffic.

Heavy through-traffic

Traffic volume through village, Swains Lane to Wycombe, at rush hours and motorway delays.

Over-weight traffic through the village especially up and down Sheepridge.

The parking and traffic problems

Speed humps.

Speed humps.

Speed bumps.

Road humps.

Escalation of speed humps.

Humps in Straight Bit which cause rat runs down other roads.

Roads used as cut through to avoid road humps (Fennels Farm Road).

Speed humps in Straight Bit is diverting traffic through: Northern Woods; Chapman Lane; Sedgemoor

The speed humps are a poor substitute for roundabouts.

Speed humps were poorly planned and sited and their purpose would be better served by roundabouts.

Insufficient speed control.

Infra-structure of roads not suitable for further development.

The village has an overwhelming and growing traffic problem. Too much of it and a lot of it is driven too fast. An almost total lack of enforcement and regulation leads to state bordering on anarchy.

Top of Sheepridge - junction with Heath End Road. Lots of scope for improvement.

Traffic congestion & pollution due to oversubscribed schools.

Roads where children play because of lack of local play space should be made into 10mph zones.

Poor level of road and footpath maintenance and upkeep of grass verges.  
Traffic.  
Too much traffic.  
Too much traffic.  
High traffic levels (some 60% of pupils at one of the local schools travel in from outside the area).  
Parking.  
Pavements parking.  
Parking problems relating from developments built with too little parking spaces.  
Lack of roadside parking along Heath End Road.  
Whether we like it or not everyone has or feels they need a car in this village. Properties without adequate on-site parking means they end up on the road.  
Cars parked too near junction of Fennels Farm road. An accident waiting to happen.  
Dangerous corner as you go from The Common towards Straight Bit.  
Inadequate parking facilities in new developments leaving cars on pavements.  
Noise from motorway.  
Noise from the M40.

### **Public transport:-**

Public transport to Wycombe only.  
Affordable public transport & frequent links to other towns.  
Public transport costs and options.  
If the college closes we will lose our bus service, or they will run a lot less frequently  
Difficulty in going anywhere other than H.W. on public transport.

### **Anti social issues:-**

Litter.  
Litter.  
Litter.  
Litter.  
Vandalism and litter.  
Vandalism.  
Vandalism.  
Vandalism.  
Vandalism.  
Crime and vandalism.  
Vandalism in the village.  
Vandalism in village – no police presence.  
People on skateboards and bicycles on the paths.  
There is a lot of casual vandalism and anti-social behaviour by mainly young people who know they will rarely, if ever, be challenged by offended residents, let alone by the (non-existent) police.  
Hedges restricting paths.  
Failure to pollard large trees adjacent to properties.  
The intrusive nature of many security lights on neighbouring properties.  
Parking on pavements.  
Parking on pavements.  
Parking on pathways where it restricts pedestrians  
Improper parking on highways.  
Abuse of double yellow lines.  
Parking by Budgens.

Parking outside Budgens, make the grass verge into disabled parking.  
On street parking especially in residential roads.  
Speeding.  
Drivers who exceed the 30mph limit.

#### **Lack of facilities:-**

Not enough police presence.  
More police surveillance.  
Lack of police presence, contact through Milton Keynes!!  
Lack of facilities for the youth of the village.  
Lack of youth facilities, they seem to be regarded as 'irrelevant'.  
Lack of real community centre – for all ages to use.  
No residential homes for the elderly.  
I would like to see some sheltered housing or/and care home.

#### **The natural environment:-**

Lack of cherry trees.  
Destruction of all the beautiful cherry orchards for which Flackwell Heath was famous.  
Fall out of dust (?carbon) from aircraft.  
I hate losing the views from the hilltops.  
Grabbing of land along Fennels Way, i.e. grass verges and entrance to Fennels Wood.  
Replacing hedges and low walls with 6 foot high board fences.

#### **The built environment:-**

Steel shutters on shops.  
Ugly shutters on the post office, video shop and elsewhere in the village. Budgens is better.  
Old betting shop and Chinese restaurant need a facelift.  
Centre of village needs to be improved – street furniture; flowers; shrubs, etc.  
30 mph painted on road; chevron hatching on mini roundabouts.  
Too many and often distracting road signs in the centre.  
Encroaching urbanisation – more houses means more streetlights and will turn a rural areas into another town. No more streetlights.  
Streetlights too close to bedroom windows.  
'Motor way service lighting' in village centre.  
The untidy corner opposite the new apartments at the Northern Woods roundabout - corner of Juniper Lane. (BCC dumped ripped up tarmac on this site 20 years ago).  
Reference by WDC to refer to this village as urban when it is clearly stated to be part of Wycombe RURAL district council.

#### **Infra-structure:-**

Low water pressure  
Low water pressure  
Low gas pressure  
Lack of a NHS dentist in the village  
The nearest NHS dentist is in Loudwater. Why can't we have one?  
There is a lack of suitable homes for the over 55 year olds  
Can we really support more homes? Schools are full.  
Shortage of education places

Siting of elderly persons accommodation – some are needed much closer to the shops.  
Lack of new infrastructure to keep up with volume of people in the village, e.g. medical, school & transport.

The doctors surgery in FH is inadequate for the village as it is. We now have to go down to Loudwater for clinics. This means having to take the car. Buses? Too infrequent and too expensive.

Why is the doctors only being extended in Loudwater? We need better facilities as well. Rapid expansion without adequate complementary development of facilities, i.e. schools, medical premises.

Lack of local shops.

Too many small shops disappearing.

### **Planning failures and issues:-**

The apparent current thinking on building new buildings.

Inappropriate building development.

### **Over-development, including flats:-**

Overdevelopment of existing plots in village, i.e. Juniper Court flats, Links Road flats, proposed flats at 56 Straight Bit.

Building of blocks of flats which dwarf bungalows and houses already in the area resulting in loss of privacy.

Being overdeveloped so will no longer be a village.

Greedy developers building large developments instead of ones in keeping with surroundings.

No flats in the village!

Homes over two stories.

Homes with no gardens.

Homes with less than 3 bedrooms.

Under provision of parking spaces for the likely number of cars.

### **Style, design and character:-**

There are too many 'speculative' building applications being passed. Nothing wrong with profit but such developments must be kept in sympathy with the existing character of the village.

Developments that are out of keeping with the surrounding area.

Some aspects of how the village has developed architecturally are to be regretted.

Unsuitable design of recently built properties – "cottage style" is anything but – often more like office block.

So-called 'cottage-style' buildings are nothing of the sort – pastiche. The scale is wrong as developers try to put inappropriate buildings in sensitive locations and blind planners let them get away with it.

Number of new properties can be understood – but size, style, and design of building is totally inappropriate.

Wheelie bins – left in front gardens and on road-side verges are an eyesore.

Provision for bins needs reviewing. Now they vie for space with cars! And the cars end up on the road.

**In the Conservation area:-**

Awful terraced cottages by war memorial.  
Conservation area near war memorial is a joke.  
Conservation area: Hill cottage development; Pond Cottage development; Ingledell development on The Common are not in keeping with the conservation area.  
Conservation area: we have trees and hedges being removed without planning permission.  
The cottages built by Beeks in the conservation area.

**Erosion of the 'green belt':-**

I don't like the fact that we are in danger of losing our identity and becoming an extension of HW. This will happen if too much development is allowed between the U.S. base and A&W College.  
I hate becoming an extension of Wycombe (and London).

**Affordable housing:-**

No affordable housing.  
Housing is unaffordable but it doesn't mean we have to live like sardines.

**Community:-**

1 out of 10 people do not say hello in the morning.  
I hate losing the quality of the people who care about their homes because they are being over-run by 'townies'.

**Other issues raised:-**

Weekly green wheelie bin collection in the summer time.  
Double wheelie bin policy.  
We pay heavy penalty in council tax compared to other areas receiving same benefits  
Daws Hill - what's happening?  
Why are there only middle-aged and older people here tonight?  
Wider cross-section of community needs to be encouraged to participate.

## **Things they like:**

### **Location:-**

Ease of access.

I like FH because it is still a village – not a suburb of High Wycombe.

Proximity to London.

Good links to London, but still in rural England.

Easy access to London and all surrounding countryside.

It is rural and yet convenient to London and other towns and villages.

Can walk into countryside yet accessible to London.

Location.

Its rural location.

Proximity of countryside.

Access to countryside.

Easy access to countryside.

Near to countryside and wide-open spaces.

Area of outstanding natural beauty.

Like the fact that it is part of the AONB.

Surrounding AONB.

Surrounding ring of countryside and its peace.

Beautiful country.

FH is a well-defined community, slightly isolated, which greatly help to foster its community spirit. Yet at the same time it is conveniently located for road transport routes.

We are surrounded by beautiful countryside which adds to FH charm and as a buffer with surrounding communities (Wycombe, Bourne End, Loudwater, Wooburn).

A lovely village feel also being surrounded by other small villages and open spaces.

### **Traffic and road issues including parking:-**

Location – easy to reach local towns and London, but only by car.

Good connections to the outside world (as long as you have a car).

### **Public transport:-**

Good transport facilities.

Good public transport (to Wycombe and to London).

Good bus service.

### **The natural environment:-**

Fresh air and light.

Being on top of a hill.

Views across the valleys.

Distant views across Thames valley.

Wildlife.

Wildlife.

Proximity to wildlife.

Like history of village as series of cherry orchards – as witness many individual trees left in gardens.

Surrounding rural areas and footpaths e.g. Fennels Wood; footpaths overlooking Thames Valley e.g. Heath End – Crooked Billet, Sedgmoor – Pigeon House Farm and many more.

The country lanes that still remain and the footpaths.

Wooded areas.

Wooded areas.

Fennels Wood.

Fennels Wood.

Sedgmoor Woods.

The woods and nearby fields.

The green areas.

Space.

The open nature and spaciousness of the village

Gardens round houses

Space between properties

Houses set back from the road

Plenty of trees in the village

Trees in gardens, not just bushes

The roads are all bounded by greenery of one form or another

The open and green areas of the village roads

Green spaces and access to countryside

More green spaces or expansion of green spaces please.

Protect our green spaces within the village. All of them. Not just the big ones but also the smaller ones. Once they are gone they are gone forever.

Protection of wildlife, allotments and woods

Rural surroundings at borders (at present)

Very attractive countryside right up to the edge of the village

I like the closeness to open countryside and the local footpaths and wooded areas

Village footpaths and surrounding 'green ' spaces for walking

Surrounding woodlands

Plenty of footpaths for walking

### **The built environment:-**

Village setting (Chilterns)

Individual village "feel"

There is a definite village atmosphere.

Calm, peaceful, unhurried atmosphere around central shopping area.

General air of tranquillity.

Quiet cul-de-sacs.

Brick and flint

The low-rise nature of most of the existing buildings

Generally uniform scale of properties – 2 storey family houses and, bungalows; but variety of ages and styles and of design

Individuality of streets and houses.

Houses set well back and wide streets and pavements.

Mix of housing in styles of architecture and size

Mix of old and new buildings in right proportion (at present)

Existing mix of houses and bungalows on decent size plots

Houses have nice gardens; flowers and trees enhance appearance of village

Would love family units 3 bed; garden; car space; affordable

FH is a charming mixture of mature and old cottages, more modern estates and a number of 'up market' mansions. It already has enough developments and similar. Must protect the conservation area and control the design of buildings adjacent to it to ensure they are sympathetic with buildings within it. Design of buildings around the Magpie; Magpie Cottage, Fairview Lane must be controlled to be sympathetic with the old character buildings in the original heart of the village.

### **Community:-**

Own identity as a community  
Friendly people.  
Friendly atmosphere.  
A friendly village.  
Friendly village  
Friendliness.  
Friendliness of people living here  
Friendly family type village.  
Friendliness of people and good community spirit.  
People who say 'hello' in the street  
9 out of 10 people say hello in the morning.  
Community spirit.  
Good community spirit.  
I love being a village community.  
Village atmosphere which is returning.  
It is a village community.  
I like the community spirit and the people here.  
Community spirit at evidenced by this meeting.  
Still retains a village feel despite getting bigger.  
I like the village atmosphere and friendliness, despite the size of the village.  
The village "feel" has not changed dramatically in the 35 years we have lived here.  
The people integrated well - old and new residents, working, retired, etc.  
I like FH because of the variety of people and the activities there are here.  
Cross-section of people. Mix of social groups - a real place to live.  
Social activities.  
Good social activities.  
Good opportunities to join all the activities and clubs/recreation in village.  
Good local support within community.  
The Grapevine.  
The community association.  
Local residents association.  
The starting up of the residents committee to deal with these matters.  
Strong Christian presence.  
Church communities.  
Caring church community.  
The village pub(s) an important element in any community must not be administered out of existence.

### **Facilities:-**

Village centre facilities.

Compact village centre with easy access to good facilities  
Good local facilities, e.g. shops, banks, doctor, vet, post office.  
That all facilities are available in the village – e.g. doctor, dentist, library.  
Two banks and one post office is a great feature.  
Schools.  
Two decent schools.  
Many good schools in the heart of village and senior schools close by.  
We have very good school, shops and other local amenities (doctors, dentist, vets, etc) and many active clubs and organisations, including a growing Residents Association.  
Local facilities with everyday opportunities to meet and know local people.  
Shops.  
Variety of shops.  
Good range of shops.  
Mix of shopping (Budgens especially).  
Limited number of commercial outlets and acreage taken up.  
Community centre.  
Community centre/ British Legion hall.  
Range of activities and clubs.  
Recreational facilities encompassing wide circle of activities.  
The amenities available and how well used e.g. Christ Church, community centre, football for kids.  
Recreation ground.  
Recreation fields.  
Outdoor spaces and activities for youngsters.  
Guide and Scout hut for young people.  
Playing fields for children and fetes, etc.  
Bowling club.  
Annual fairground.  
Allotments.  
Local walking choices.

#### **Other comments made**

I like FH as it has a history  
I have lived here for 50 years – the village has evolved – let's not spoil it.  
We need to breath young life in this village to survive.

#### **Want to know more about village design statements?**

About the concept and process:

[www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/landscape/CC/landscape/village/introduction.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/landscape/CC/landscape/village/introduction.asp)

Some examples of completed village design statements:

<http://www.little-ann.co.uk/design/design.htm>

[http://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/ASSETS/PDFs/lp\\_buckingham\\_vision.pdf](http://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/ASSETS/PDFs/lp_buckingham_vision.pdf)