

Community Led Planning Hertfordshire

Little Hadham Parish Plan

Introduction

Straddling the A120, Little Hadham can trace its roots back to Anglo-Saxon times. Its 500 dwellings include timber frame houses and cottages as well as modern homes. The village comprises eight hamlets spread over an area of approximately 12 square miles. The dispersed nature of the village and the changing lifestyle of the population of what was once a purely rural parish made it increasingly difficult to sustain community spirit.

Discussions led by the Parish Council resulted in a decision to undertake a parish plan, following the principles of Community Led Planning, to help the community build and sustain a feeling of togetherness and to provide a better understanding of current and future hopes and aspirations.

What is Community Led Planning?

Community Led Planning is a structured process, undertaken by local community members to create a vision for their community. The vision will encompass social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects of life, celebrating the positive and highlighting needs through the development of a detailed action plan.

The plan and its actions:

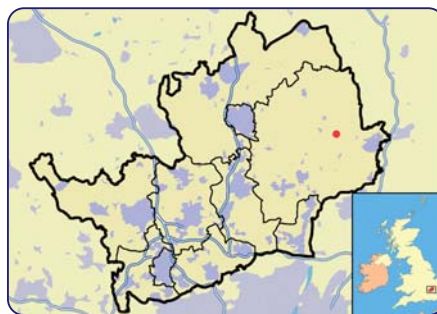
- Involves and includes everyone in the community.
- Maps out services and facilities currently available in the community.
- Discovers what issues and opportunities people feel need addressing.

Support provided

Valuable support, assistance and guidance on developing your Community Led Plan is available from your county Rural Community Council (RCC). For the East of England these are Beds RCC, Cambs ACRE, RCC of Essex, CDA for Herts, Norfolk RCC and Suffolk ACRE.

KEY FACTS Little Hadham

County: Hertfordshire
District: East Hertfordshire
District Council
Population: 1,200
Plan completed: June 2006



Little Hadham



Village of discovery fun run



Refurbished play area



Little Hadham COMMUNITY LED PLAN

The process

CDA for Herts' officers were key to the Parish Council deciding to undertake the parish plan process, providing the background information, the reasons and benefits of undertaking a plan. Through CDA, Little Hadham was put in touch with the community of Aston who were willing to share their experience of creating a Community Led Plan.

- Upon deciding to undertake the plan, the steering group put a great deal of effort into creating awareness of the benefits to the community, resulting in large attendances at a meeting to gain support for the idea and to seek volunteers either to undertake specific tasks or simply to 'muck in'.
- Volunteers were identified through their skills and wider contacts, such as a mum with links to the school, a business school lecturer who could oversee the questionnaire/research, someone from the Parish Council to ensure the plan remained on the agenda and another with a marketing and communications background.
- An example of the detailed planning was the appointment of 'street stewards' to ensure that copies of the initial questionnaire - to establish current opinions and future expectations - were not only widely distributed but also retrieved. As a result, the response rate was over 60 per cent.
- CDA for Herts, at the request of the parish plan steering group, ran focus groups around the themes that emerged from the questionnaire analysis, which was undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire Business School. Moderators from the CDA wrote up the results of the group discussions, which formed the basis of the final implementation plan.
- One of the issues that CDA for Herts impressed upon the parish plan steering group was the need for quick wins to maintain the momentum and increase the buy-in from the community.

Impact of the plan and its actions

Although not easy to precisely quantify the benefits of the Little Hadham plan, attendances at events and support for initiatives such as computer training sessions to improve communication within the village, are a positive success indicator. The first Fun Day event, attracted over 400 visitors and the recent Fun Run, 250 participants - the two routes took in every hamlet of the village as part of the 'voyage of discovery' theme that runs through many activities. Attendance at the annual parish assembly has gone from a handful to around 100.

The refurbishment of the village playground, which had been started by the Parish Council, was absorbed into the Community-Led Plan, providing a very visible family-focused activity. The other benefit was that by linking the new playground more closely with the adjoining village hall, the combined facility provided a more obvious community focal point.

It is more difficult to assess the plan's impact within the local authority but it has the backing of the parish council and supports aspects of the wider agenda of the district and county councils. For example, the district authority assisted with an affordable housing survey, which arose from the parish plan. The greater part of the funding for the new playground was secured with the help of CDA for Herts. At the focus groups run by CDA, several participants became engaged in the process and came forward as volunteers. One of the biggest gains was the 'carry over' effect: projects which were highly successful or which could not be accommodated in the first plan were continued in the second plan programme; and the work that went into the plan - especially the research - provided credibility and a solid case to support further fund-raising.

Local Authority engagement

The group received support from the district council in helping to fund publication of the plan as well as providing links to partner organisations and advice on other funding sources.

Quote from Community

"It's never completed. (We) always said it was not a one-off but a rolling programme."

COMMITTEE MEMBER OF STEERING GROUP

Encouraged by support for activities and positive feedback, a second Plan was produced in April 2009 with the first major community event taking place in June.

Benefit to Local Authority

Plan highlights the need for affordable housing and things for young people to do, which feed into the district wide Sustainable Community Strategy and the Children and Young people service plan.

Quote from Local Authority

"Senior managers and directors need to be convinced of the benefit."

COMMITTEE MEMBER OF STEERING GROUP

Key learning for others

Really test the water to see if there is a need, the volunteers, the commitment - it is not an ego trip. Further tips have been developed by the group for others undertaking the Community Led Planning process. 'Top Tips for a parish plan' - www.thehadhams.com

Further information

This Case Study was produced by Rural Action East in collaboration with Community Development Agency for Herts as part of research undertaken into CLP on behalf of the Regional Empowerment Partnership for the East of England. We would like to thank the Little Hadham Parish Council and East Hertfordshire District Council for making this Case Study possible.

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