

Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Plan

protecting and enhancing our parish



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The communities of Tidmarsh, Maidenhatch, and Sulham are situated in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Tidmarsh and Sulham are separate parishes with a single parish council.



TIDMARSH

Tidmarsh, the largest of the three communities, lies either side of a route that has been important to traders since Roman times. The age and importance of the village is reflected in details such as the 12th century church with its Norman doorway and the local pub dating from the 13th century.



MAIDENHATCH

Maidenhatch, a small community within the Tidmarsh parish, comprises a group of houses in the grounds of a converted manor house of the same name.



SULHAM

Sulham, which is east of Tidmarsh, is a hamlet of pretty cottages and historic buildings lying under the shadow of beech woods.



Foreword

by **Michael Broun**

Chairman, Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council

Our thanks must go to the steering and focus group members who have constructively and voluntarily engineered this parish plan over the last two years.

There has been considerable and consistent enthusiasm in constructing the parish plan and, after numerous meetings combined with public consultations, the action plans were formally adopted by the Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council on 16 May 2007.

The parish plan is divided into three major categories: environment, people, and traffic.

It now remains the task of the Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council, supported by the community, to implement these actions. Certain actions can be implemented immediately, or at least within a reasonable amount of

time. Other, more major actions, may take longer.

As the plan moves forward and targets are achieved, it will lead to new challenges where opportunities will arise for parishioners to become more aware and involved in its progress.

As privileged village communities living within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is important to address the relevant issues affecting the quality of life that we value so much.

Many thanks to everyone for all their support in the past and in the future.

April 2008

Sulham dovecote





Introduction

by **Robert Robertson**

Chairman, Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Plan Steering Group

The concept of the parish plan was put forward by government and adopted by local councils as a method of establishing what matters to people in their own community.

Following extensive consultation at a local level, parishes have been asked to produce action plans addressing all areas of concern to residents which the councils will then use to guide short and long term strategy. Many parishes have grasped this opportunity and some are already reaping the benefits.

The process

For the parishes of Tidmarsh and Sulham, the process began in May 2005 when West Berkshire Council and the parish councillors, as well as others with an advisory role, addressed a well-attended open meeting in the village hall to explain the idea and structure of parish plans and to encourage the community to embark on one of their own.

At that meeting views were expressed on the positive and negative aspects of life in the parishes and three major areas of interest emerged: people, environment, and traffic.

During the evening several interested individuals were recruited to form a steering group.

Over the following months a brief mini-questionnaire was circulated allowing space for comment and free text. The residents' responses were then collated to form the basis of a more specific quantitative survey.

The results were presented at a further open meeting and three focus groups were established to draft a series of questions with weighted responses to cover the defined topics.

The focus groups consisted of volunteers from the villages; steering group members were attached to each focus group to provide advice and guidance.

The resulting detailed questionnaire, accompanied by a separate questionnaire for young people, was delivered to all households in the summer of 2006 and achieved an excellent 76% return rate.





The action plans

Analysis of the figures derived from the questionnaires enabled the focus groups to create action plans for Tidmarsh and Sulham.

Each action plan contains a set of objectives. The objectives are prioritised and each has its own actions, timescales, and identifying partners, both inside and outside the local community, who can help us achieve it.

The finalised action plans were endorsed by the parishioners at an open meeting in May 2007 and have subsequently been adopted by the Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council, reviewed by relevant officers in West Berkshire Council, and ratified by the Eastern Area Forum.

The action plans now form the core of the overall parish plan and should not be seen as an end in themselves but as living documents subject to revision and renewal in years to come.

The action plans are inserted into the parish plan to facilitate smoother and less expensive alterations as and when the need arises.

The future

It is important to recognise that the parish plan is just the beginning of achieving the aims of the community.

More effort will be needed by groups of residents to realise the aspirations expressed in the plan.

Interest has been raised in the parishes and we hope that more people will come forward to champion specific causes which may be close to their hearts.

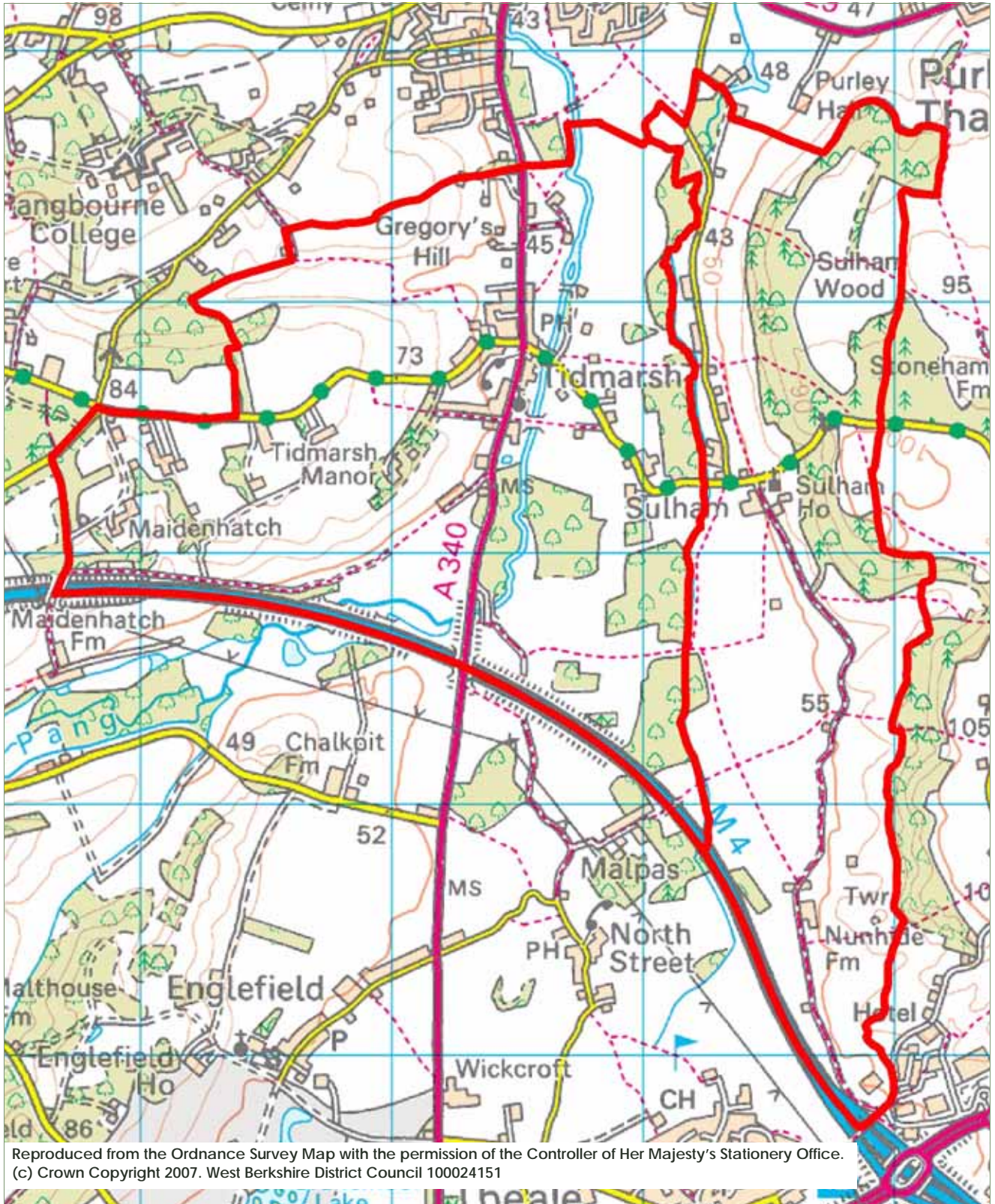
Some remain sceptical about the worth of this entire project to which many people have given considerable time and effort and that scepticism may be well founded. There is little doubt that financial restrictions and political expediency may, at times, delay or thwart our efforts. However, we are much more likely to be heard speaking as a community with a single voice. Indeed, councillors have made it clear that parishes without a ratified plan will receive scant attention for any schemes or proposals that they may put forward.

We must continue to work together to achieve our goals.



Parish map

The red lines on the following map denote the parishes of Tidmarsh (left) and Sulham (right).





Rectory Meadow, Sulham

Landscape

The adjoining parishes of Sulham and Tidmarsh lie in the northernmost reaches of the Pang Valley close to the River Thames.

An area of outstanding natural beauty

The Pang Valley is a small part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which was established in 1972.

It is worthwhile understanding the importance of this designation as it shows why such a high proportion of residents enjoy living in the area.

Natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape but includes landform, plants and animals, landscape features, and also the style of human settlements developed over the centuries — everything that gives an area a distinctive character.

The purpose of this designation is to *conserve and enhance natural beauty* and, importantly, to *take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities*. The responsibility for achieving these purposes falls clearly to the local planning authority, West Berkshire Council, which now has a legal duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to protect the AONB.

Parish boundaries

The Sulham Brook forms the boundary between the parishes of Sulham and Tidmarsh.

The parishes are bordered to the east by the deciduous Sulham Woods which stretch from Purley Hall in the north to the Pincents Kiln Trading Estate in the south.

The M4 motorway forms the southern boundary with mixed woodlands to the west and open farmland to the north.

The land

The land in both parishes is predominantly chalk with the River Pang, a typical chalk stream, running northwards through Tidmarsh and supporting a wide range of plant and animal life including kingfishers, white clawed crayfish, and the increasingly rare water vole.

Moor Copse, a nature reserve south of Tidmarsh village, is part of the Sulham and Tidmarsh woods and meadows SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).





The mill pond in Tidmarsh

A report in the 1930s described the valley land as:

... being chiefly good, rich feeding pasture, resting on alluvial or chalk sub-soil, of excellent quality, being mainly dairy and cattle feeding land. The arable land is exceptionally good for the production of potatoes, and yields fine crops of grain and hay. It is good warm soil of average depth.

The predominant land use in both parishes continues to be agricultural, undoubtedly in excess of the average of 75% for West Berkshire and the national average of 68%.

The main farming activity takes place on the Sulham Estate where generations of the Wilder family have been farming since 1497.

Settlements

Sulham is a hamlet of pretty cottages at the foot of Sulham Hill, lying under the shadow of the beech woods almost in the centre of the parish. Several of the cottages are thatched, with the characteristically-styled schoolhouse that served the children of both Sulham and Tidmarsh until the 1970s now converted to a private house as is the nearby imposing Rectory.

Tidmarsh was always the larger settlement sitting at the crossing of the road once used by monks and travellers from the great Abbey of Reading to Wallingford and the old turnpike road that in coaching days led from the Great West Road (now the A4) to Oxford — the round tollhouse still stands just north of the thatched Greyhound public house.

Moving west up the hill on the opposite side of the Pang Valley and on the western boundary of the parish is the small community of Maidenhatch, living in the converted manor house of that name, its outbuildings, and attractive houses built in its grounds.

A charming position

The 1930s report mentioned earlier referred to this area as:

... occupying a charming position in one of the most beautiful parts of the County of Berks, a land of green pastures, winding rivers, with well cultivated uplands, and densely wooded valleys and hills notable for the diversity of scenery.

Despite high levels of residential and commercial development over the intervening years, this description is still relevant to the current landscape and it is reassuring that its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has recognised the importance of it being protected.



Sulham dovecote



The history of Sulham and Tidmarsh

When walking through our villages and their surrounding countryside, it is often easy to forget the historic environment that has made our community what it is today.



The Toll House, Tidmarsh

A closer look at the landscape reveals many clues about the past — from the 80 million year old oyster shell and fossilised sea anemone found scattered in the fields of Tidmarsh hinting at an early seascape, to the worked flint found on the edges of Sulham Woods.

The early occupation of Maidenhatch was confirmed by the discovery of flint implements in 1895, while work in advance of the M4 motorway in 1970 revealed a Romano-British farmhouse as well as a 4th century villa overlying an earlier field system. The finds included a hoard of 6,000 bronze coins.

Sulham

The manor of Sulham was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and was held by William de Calgi for the King. Valued at £4, it had a church with its residents listed as 4 villagers, 6 smallholders, and 2 slaves.

For the next 600 years the manor passed through different ownership until in 1632 it was bought by the Wilder family who had held the nearby estate of Nunhide since it was granted to Nicolas Wilder by Henry VII in 1497 as a reward for his faithful service.

The Norman church of St Nicholas was demolished and rebuilt by the Reverend John Wilder in 1838, one of many Wilders who became rectors of the parish; indeed, between 1823 and 1944 there was an unbroken line of them!

The Sulham Gap, through which the River Pang now flows, provided the original route of the River Kennet in the distant past.

During the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods our earliest residents lived on the wooded slopes and hunted the abundant animals that would have lived in the valley below.

According to the Historic Environment Record, finds from the Bronze Age have been found in Sulham, while field walking in Tidmarsh has uncovered Roman pottery as well as several bronze Roman coins.





Sulham House was built in 1701 during the reign of William and Mary, and passed through various stages of development until its final major alteration and extension, again by John Wilder in 1838. The estate remains in the ownership of the family today.

Sulham dovecote, with numerous nest boxes set into the brickwork, was built by the Rev Dr Henry Wilder when he was courting Joan, daughter of William Thoyts of Sulhamstead, who he married in 1768. The dovecote was located where each could see it from their home and think of one another.

Following the closure of the school in Tidmarsh around 1904, Sulham School provided an education for the children of both villages until it finally closed in the 1970s and the building became a house.

Tidmarsh

Tidmarsh, unlike Sulham, is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, but this could be because it was included in the lands of another manor, lord, or holding.

It appears to have had a number of variations of its name, including Tedmers, Thedmerse, Thydemers, and Tydmerssh. Suggestions for the meaning of its name range from *common marsh* to a Celtic alternative of *Tyddyn Mar* — a small farm for horses.

The first documentation for the manor appeared in the late twelfth century when it was held from the King by John de Thedmers *by service of finding one Knight to guard the Castle of Wallingford for forty days in the time of war.*



The lordship of the manor suffered from many changes from the 13th century, including many legal disputes and scandal. It belonged at one time to the manor of Englefield until it was forfeited to the Crown in 1585.

Frequent changes of ownership occurred throughout the 17th and 18th centuries until it was bought by the Hopkins family in 1798 with the estate finally being broken up with the sale of the Maidenhatch and Tidmarsh Estates in 1937. At that time it consisted of 1,186 acres with five main residences including Maidenhatch House, The Manor House, Tidmarsh Grange, The Mill House, and The Old Rectory. In addition there were four farms, several smallholdings, and over twenty cottages as well as water meadows, copses, and the Village Club Room.

The mill in Tidmarsh provided a valuable asset to the village for over 700 years until it was finally closed in the 1930s and later converted into a residential property.

The original corn mill, which was probably in the same location as today's Mill House, was documented as early as 1239 and for several hundred years was held by the Abbot of Reading until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

Tidmarsh's most notable occupants, perhaps, were the artist Dora Carrington and author Lytton Strachey, after whom *Strachey Close* in the village is named.

A fulling-mill first mentioned in 1592 has long since disappeared, but it is likely to have been sited around Moor Copse since a map of the late 18th century shows the site of the old mill.

Historical picture of The Greyhound, Tidmarsh

Aerial view of Tidmarsh in 1964



Tidmarsh in the early 1900s



Another view of Tidmarsh in the early 1900s



St Nicholas Church, Sulham

Tidmarsh Mill in the early 1900s



Sulham Stocks in the early 1900s



Outside Tidmarsh Mill in the early 1900s



St Laurence Church, Tidmarsh

The rich and fertile landscape of Tidmarsh seems to have provided a wealth of resources to its manor and the Abbey at Reading — a vineyard, a fishery as well as a *warren of conys* and a dove-house are all mentioned in documents.

Not all of Tidmarsh's residents benefited from the wealth generated by this agricultural economy and many of its labourers and elderly were supported by the parish through the provision of bread etc. Following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 when people could no longer receive 'outdoor relief' a number of them were sent to the workhouse in Bradfield.

Other notable buildings in the village include the Greyhound pub, the church, and the old tollhouse. The Greyhound dates back to the 12th century and is a timber-framed cruck house with a thatched roof. Prior to its conversion to an inn in 1625, it was originally a church house called The Grid Iron, the emblem of St Laurence.

St Laurence itself is a 12th century church with a rare 13th century polygonal apse, rare early wall paintings, and splendid Norman font and doorway. Fortunately the church escaped most of the ravages of Victorian rebuilding.

The main A340 from Pangbourne to Theale, which now divides the village, was formerly a turnpike road with its own tollhouse. However the route, proved to be unprofitable and the trust which ran the turnpike was closed in 1872 and the tollhouse became a private residence.

Maidenhatch

Maidenhatch's first known residents were a Romano-British farming community during the 4th century AD.

It appears that this small settlement was self-sufficient as facilities for grain storage, iron-smelting, and pottery-making were found during excavation of the site. Nothing further is known about the settlement until it is mentioned in the 13th century.

Sometimes known as Maydeheth or Maydeneth, it was held by the Abbey of Reading as part of the manor of Pangbourne and had a mill worth 20 shillings a year.

And finally...

A perhaps rather surprising aspect of the villages' history is the part played in the defence of the country during the Second World War.

Clearly visible today are a number of pillboxes and anti-tank blocks along the valley, but less obvious is the series of anti-tank ditches now buried below the fields originally built in case of invasion. Also no longer visible is a decoy site at Moor Copse. Known as a *starfish* installation, this fire decoy was designed to draw bombers away from urban targets — in this case Reading.

The landscape of our villages has supported its population for at least 8,000 years and continues to do so today. With agriculture, country life, and the buildings of the past, which still provide a focal point for everyday life, it is imperative that our historic environment is protected and continues to be at the forefront of our villages' future.



Cottages in Tidmarsh

Profile of our parishes

The questionnaire, which was completed by 76% of households, provided information used to draw up a profile of our community.

We received 105 completed questionnaires from households in Tidmarsh and Maidenhatch and 28 from Sulham.

Note Maidenhatch, consisting of about 15 properties and approximately one mile from Tidmarsh, is part of the parish of Tidmarsh and is only mentioned separately when there are instances where data differs significantly.

Size and character

Tidmarsh is roughly five times the size of Sulham both in terms of the number of recorded households and the population size.

Although at first glance the villages of Tidmarsh and Sulham appear quite different in character, there are in fact many similarities both in their demographic make-up and in the opinions expressed by residents of the two communities.

Dwellings

The 2006 Register of Electors records 144 dwellings in Tidmarsh and 33 in Sulham; a total of 177. It is interesting to note, however, that according to the 2001 Census the number of occupied dwellings was 156 in Tidmarsh and 34 in Sulham; a total of 190.

The parishes contain a high number of older homes:

- 45% of homes in Tidmarsh and Sulham are over 100 years old.
- 27% of homes in Sulham are over 300 years old.
- In Maidenhatch there are no homes under 20 years old.
- In Sulham there are no homes under 50 years old.

Choosing to live here

The expected pragmatic and practical reasons for moving into the parish were not high on the agenda of the population.

58% moved into the villages because of access to the road and rail network and only 44% to be close to their place of work.

These were hugely outweighed by aesthetic considerations with over 90% stating that the rural nature of the villages within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the character of the dwellings, and the small friendly community made the villages desirable.



Sulham Lane, Sulham





Length of residency

From the responses received it appears that the average length of residency is perhaps not as long as expected.

It is likely that some of the turnover is due to changes in tenancies of a small number of rented properties.

131 households answered the question on length of residency:

- 33% of households in Tidmarsh and 25% in Sulham have lived there for 5 years or less.
- 51% of households in Tidmarsh and 43% in Sulham have lived there for between 6 and 25 years.
- 16% of households in Tidmarsh and 32% in Sulham have lived there for more than 25 years.



In the under-45 age group, 68 (44%) are children and young people under the age of 18.

In Tidmarsh and Sulham 21% of the population is less than 18 years old:

- 13 children are less than 5 years old.
- 15 children are aged between 5 and 10 years.
- 40 young people are aged between 11 and 17 years.

Places of work

There is a wide variation in the distances between homes and places of work though the majority (39%) travel less than 10 miles to work and 18% work within the parishes.



Population

In 2001 the population of Tidmarsh was 391 and Sulham 80. As there has been very little development since 2001, it is unlikely that the population size has changed significantly.

From the information received, the population is fairly evenly split between the genders (48% males to 52% females) the exception being Maidenhatch where the ratio is 66% males to 33% females.

Of the 330 people who responded to the questionnaire, 144 (44%) were under 45 and 186 (56%) were 45 or older. This indicates that our community is rather older than the UK average of 59% and 41% respectively.

Cars and bicycles

As might be expected there is a high level of car ownership. A total of 247 cars were recorded by the 133 households responding. Considering there are 262 people aged over 18 years, this is an average of almost one (0.94) car per person over 18.

It can also be determined from the responses that 71% of households run two cars or more.

In contrast, there are apparently only 28 bicycles used more than once a week by the 330 respondents.





Footbridge over Sulham Brook, the boundary between Tidmarsh and Sulham parishes

Environment and planning

The local environment, both natural and man-made, creates the character of this area and is clearly of great importance to the residents of both villages, as indicated by the very high responses to many of the questions in this section.

Despite the majority of the villagers having little direct contact with the land except as a leisure amenity for walking, cycling, horse riding, or carriage driving, over 90% of respondents attributed the appeal of living here to the rural nature of the villages (97%), the character of the dwellings (92%), and the presence of the parishes in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (91%).

This strong attachment to the natural environment was focused particularly on the rivers flowing through each village, the River Pang and Sulham Brook (and also the proximity of the River Thames), on Sulham Woods, the fields and meadows of the farmland surrounding each community, and the footpaths and bridleways that intersect them.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that there is a strong desire (over 90%) to see action taken to preserve and maintain woodlands and hedgerows and also the roadside verges that on many of the lanes are being eroded by the passage of inappropriate traffic such as heavy goods vehicles.

Footpaths

With over 70% of respondents claiming to use the footpaths regularly, there is undoubted backing for the regular maintenance of the network and such improvements as replacements for stiles to make easier access for the less mobile.

View of West Berkshire District Local Plan

West Berkshire Council will safeguard and, where appropriate, seek the enhancement and expansion of the public rights of way network ... improving public access to the countryside ... where this can be achieved without detriment to the landscape, agriculture, the rural character of the area or local amenities.





Flooding

As mentioned earlier, the rivers are seen as an important and valued feature.

Although 80% of residents considered that flooding was not a potential risk to their property, well over a third had no opinion on whether the Environment Agency was effective in keeping the rivers clear to minimise the risk of flooding and to sustain and maintain wildlife. In light of the floods in July 2007, it will be appropriate to consider ways of increasing this awareness.

The issue, however, of flooding on roads caused by blocked drains attracted serious dissatisfaction with 70% of residents considering local authority work to be inadequate.



Moor Copse

Many villagers recognise and value the attraction of Moor Copse, the Site of Special Scientific Interest that spreads over both villages with its diversity of plant and wildlife.

However, there is a belief that a closer engagement between the communities and the Copse's owners (The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) would serve not only to increase local awareness of this outstanding amenity but could lead to ways of improving access without impairing the tranquillity of the site.



Moor Copse

Parish map

Easier access to, and the awareness of, features within the villages supports the production of a detailed parish map.

Environmental pollution

With the appearance and character of the area being of such importance, anything adversely affecting this will be of concern.

This is seen in the strong reaction to the blight of fly-tipping, with calls for stronger action both locally and at district level. Environmentally, this is by far the greatest concern, significantly higher than the noise pollution from the M4 motorway, passing traffic, and aerobatic aircraft although action on these will also be targeted.

Future development

Turning to the built environment, the highest response was to the need for strategic gaps to be maintained between the communities of Tidmarsh, Sulham, Pangbourne, and Tilehurst.

View of West Berkshire District Local Plan
 West Berkshire Council will not permit development which would detract from the open, or rural character of areas of land identified as essential to the maintenance of a clear physical and visual separation between distinct settlements.

The only relevant area in the West Berkshire District Local Plan is between Tidmarsh and Pangbourne and action needs to be pursued to include the other villages referred to.





Lychgate to St Nicholas's Church, Sulham

There was much concern about future development within the villages with a small majority resisting any further development. There was an overwhelming view that any development should be in a style appropriate to the village affected.

View of West Berkshire District Local Plan

Development permitted in the AONB ... should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape, visual quality and amenity of the area. ... West Berkshire Council in considering proposals for development will seek to conserve and enhance the special features and diversity of the different landscape character areas found within West Berkshire.

The issue of the provision of affordable, that is, low cost, housing in the area attracted only a low response with a small majority against such provision.

Planning

Administration of the planning process found narrow support for the Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council but dissatisfaction with West Berkshire Council and, in particular, the lack of enforcement of planning breaches.

Additional amenities

Parishioners were invited to look ahead and consider a wish-list of additional amenities for their communities.

Results were unexpected, with the majority of residents opting for no changes.

Tidmarsh considered the introduction of mains drainage and gas to be important but Sulham and Maidenhatch did not. Neither did these two communities wish to receive mains water.

Views on whether street lighting was important in Tidmarsh were closer but a narrow majority opted against it. Unsurprisingly the majority against street lighting was significantly higher for Sulham.

Moving forward

Many of the issues and concerns expressed by villagers have been identified already by West Berkshire Council as evidenced by the quotes from the West Berkshire District Local Plan. Support for their resolution should, therefore, be forthcoming from the local authority.

However, it is encouraging that further support across a wide range of subjects that affect the character of the AONB will now come from the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.

The items in the action plans range from identifying and protecting what local people value in the landscape and the features of the AONB, through the visual and noise impact of the M4 motorway, improving woodland management, countering the impact of urban sprawl, control of fly-tipping, rights of way improvements, to the adoption of consistent approaches to major and intrusive developments in the AONB.



Lychgate leading to Millennium Green

Tidmarsh and Sulham community photograph, Summer 2007



The Greyhound public house, Tidmarsh



Tidmarsh village hall

People and community

No matter how beautiful a setting, it's the people who make it come alive. Here we look at some of the things that those in the parishes like and want.

Community facilities and services

Facilities are limited in the community; however, those establishments that provide services in the villages are generally highly valued with the village hall, the Greyhound pub, and the Millennium Green being important to around 90% of villagers and the parish churches to 71%. Interestingly, 94% of respondents highlighted the importance of the post boxes in Tidmarsh and Sulham and there was a plea for a post box in Maidenhatch.

In terms of service developments, there was little call for mobile shops or library (26%). The concept of a village shop/newsagent was favoured by 68%, but many recognised the doubtful viability of such a venture. 55% of people pointed out a need for more provision of facilities for young people.

Tidmarsh village hall

Being the only indoor facility for secular community functions, the village hall has a high approval rating.

However, use of the hall is on a booking-only basis and its popularity as a venue means that availability is limited, particularly in the evenings during winter months. Nevertheless, there is a taste for increasing the scope and number of activities undertaken in the hall, the most called for being indoor fitness classes, local history, and adult dance amongst a wide variety of suggested uses.

Special joint village functions in the hall are generally well attended, but the survey underlines some ambivalence toward them with just over half of respondents rating the annual quiz, the village party, and the village show as important while a slightly larger number (64%) felt that the children's Christmas party was of value.

The village hall has recently been refurbished with the installation of disabled access and toilets as well as a hearing loop. The next large project is the replacement of the roof with removal of contained asbestos. This will be an expensive venture and funding is currently being sought with some difficulty.





View of the Village Hall Committee

The village hall is self funding and where grants have been sought they have been used to make improvements to the fabric and amenities of the building.

The popularity of the hall as a venue does mean that it can be difficult to add new regular courses/meetings, however it is hoped that by utilising the new village web site that the hall diary will be published so that availability can be more readily viewed and then a booking made in the usual way.

There is a large proportion of the villages' population which do not attend the social events but those that do come find them enjoyable and then attend further events — generally 30 to 50 people attend each event. The Village Hall Committee welcomes both new ideas and new members.

Increased use of the hall could be assisted by extension of the building to provide a separate room, but this would be a longer term aspiration.

The funding, maintenance, booking, major works, and organisation of functions in the hall are all run by the Village Hall Committee.

View of the Community Council for Berkshire

The Village Hall is the hub of the community and is used by residents of all ages. It provides a venue for activities of all types and is run as a charity by volunteers in the parish. We have had a long involvement with Tidmarsh Village Hall, helping it to get Lottery money for the extension and a grant for the floor, so we are really keen to keep seeing it well used.

The Millennium Green

The Millennium Green was developed on a field purchased from a local landowner and is managed by a board of trustees working on an established constitution. There is a widely held feeling in the community that the space is not well utilised because of restrictions imposed by this constitution.

The annual village fete, which is periodically held on the Millennium Green, is the most popular of all the organised joint village functions and is rated highly by 86% of the respondents.

There are a number of suggestions for increasing the usage of the green including one-off events such as family fun days, the provision of facilities for ball games, and the possibility of personal hire.

Use of the Millennium Green for dog walking was an unimportant consideration for most, recognising the inherent risks and the space already available for this activity.

View of The Millennium Green Trustees

The trustees of the Millennium Green are sympathetic to the desire expressed by many villagers that greater use could be made of this facility. We look forward to considering all proposals put to us and will consider them carefully against not only the guidelines and criteria laid down in the Trust deed but also against the wishes of the donor landowner and, importantly, the effect, if any, of such proposals on the wider community.



Tidmarsh vs Sulham cricket match



2007 Tidmarsh and Sulham village fete held in the grounds of Sulham House



Communication and information

The physical separation of Sulham, Tidmarsh, and Maidenhatch poses problems for communication and the dissemination of information on parish issues.

The parish magazine is seen as a good/excellent source of information by 83% of villagers, Neighbourhood Watch by 62%, and the village notice boards by 48%.

Parish magazine

Villagers are aware that our parish magazine has become much more church orientated than those of neighbouring parishes and 70% of respondents felt that improvement of the magazine is desirable, with more breadth of social interest in its content.

The predominance of church-related material has stemmed partly from a paucity of contributions on broader topics and partly from the current method of production and distribution which depends heavily on the rector and church volunteers.

Parish web site

The development of a parish web site is strongly supported by 66% of the community. A web site (www.tidmarshwithsulham.co.uk) has now been established by a local resident, and a volunteer webmaster has designed the structure and oversees content.

It is hoped that the web site and the parish magazine can be developed hand in hand to improve communication in many areas.

Good neighbour scheme

Over 60% of villagers supported the establishment of a good neighbour scheme to assist those who are elderly, infirm, or immobile with practical matters such as transport, collection of prescriptions, and help with shopping.

At present, local people with such needs are assisted by neighbours and friends on an ad-hoc basis.

A good neighbour scheme, possibly coordinated through the parish web site, would widen the network of those willing to help and provide more outlets and information for people requiring assistance.

View of Volunteer Centre West Berkshire

Within West Berkshire at least 10 good neighbour schemes exist. These schemes for the most part provide transport for those people that are unable to use public transport due to an infirmity of some kind be it temporary or permanent.

In our opinion these good neighbour schemes operate best at parish level, benefiting from local knowledge, local volunteers, and local cash or in kind support to sustain them. The Volunteer Centre would be pleased to offer further help if required.

Facilities for young people

Sulham and Tidmarsh are unusual, although not unique, in having no school in the parish and no available facility for people under the age of eighteen to gather and socialise.





Houses on Sulham Lane

Youngsters attend numerous different schools over a wide area and largely have parents who are able and willing to transport them to social and sporting activities outside the villages, although a significant proportion also use public transport, bicycle, or walk to other places.

The lack of facilities in the parish, and the relative restriction of their use, allows very little chance for young people to organise activities for themselves. This is borne out by the responses to the youth questionnaire which indicates that the majority only become involved in local activities at village events such as the annual fete, family evenings in the village hall, and the annual village cricket match.

There were suggestions from the young people for organised sports, an equipped children's play area, and a youth club although fewer were prepared to help organise the latter than attend. Some of these suggestions would require the extended use of and different attitudes toward the village hall and the Millennium Green.

As yet, there has been no direct discourse with young people as a group and this may prove quite difficult to achieve.

Linking youngsters through the parish web site is a possibility which is being examined and continued efforts will be made to listen to their opinions and improve their access to facilities in the community.

Crime and social nuisance

The villages are considered to provide a relatively safe and peaceful environment.

There are active Neighbourhood Watch schemes and a regular article from the Pangbourne Police in the parish magazine gives useful information and reassurance.

Only 19% of respondents felt that fear of crime adversely affected their lives. Fewer were disturbed by antisocial behaviour (8%) and noise from social functions (6%). However, 68% of the community indicated that a threat to their safety from traffic was a significantly adverse factor in their life within the parishes.



View of Thames Valley Police

Crime and antisocial behaviour are not an issue for most of the residents of Sulham and Tidmarsh and this can be evidenced by a public consultation meeting that was held in March 2007 in Tidmarsh village hall for the residents of both of these villages. The purpose of the meeting was for people to tell the police what their concerns were in the local area.

The meeting was well attended and the two main concerns were vehicles exceeding the speed limit whilst travelling through Tidmarsh on the A340 and vehicles travelling at excessive speed on the roads around Sulham. The results of the meeting will be taken back to the local Neighbourhood Action Group to see what actions can be taken to resolve these issues.



Cyclists on a flooded Sulham Lane





Traffic and transport

Of all the issues addressed in the parish plan questionnaire and at village meetings, traffic and the problems it causes raise the most feeling and comment.

Traffic problems

Three quarters of residents consider traffic problems in Tidmarsh, Maidenhatch, and Sulham to be

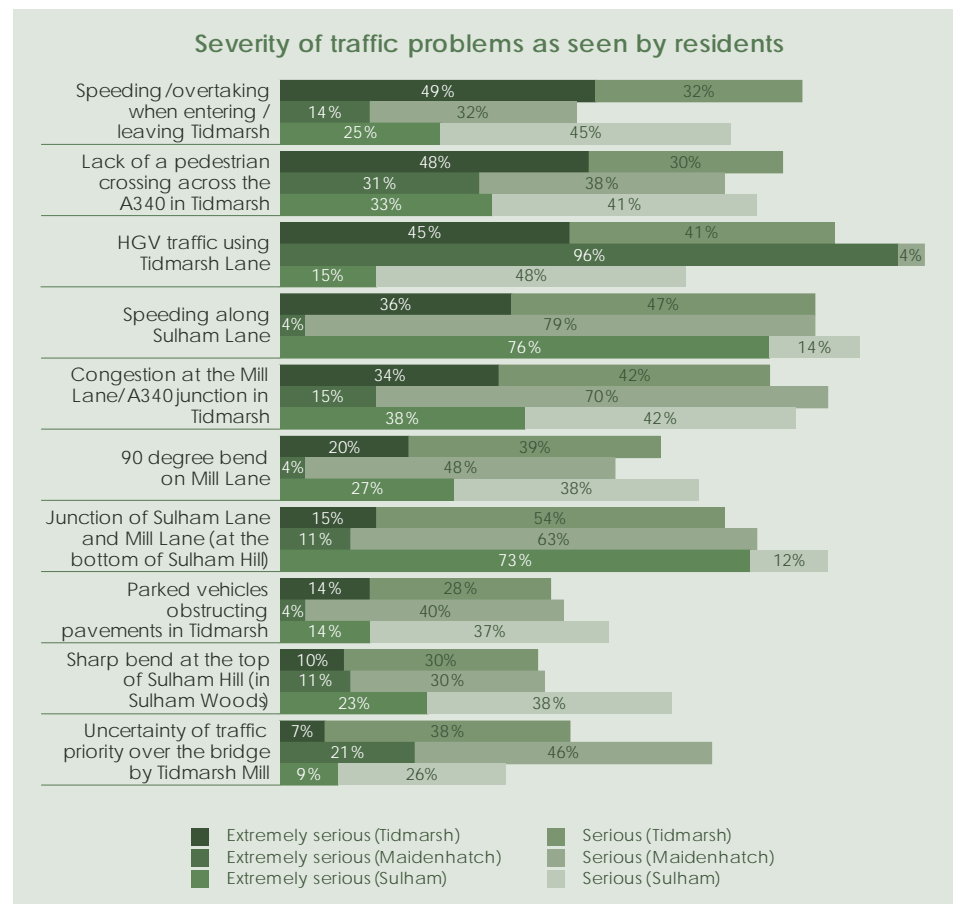
extremely serious or *serious*. The areas causing the most concern are shown below.



Vehicles at the bottom of Sulham Hill



Traffic approaching the bridge by Tidmarsh Mill



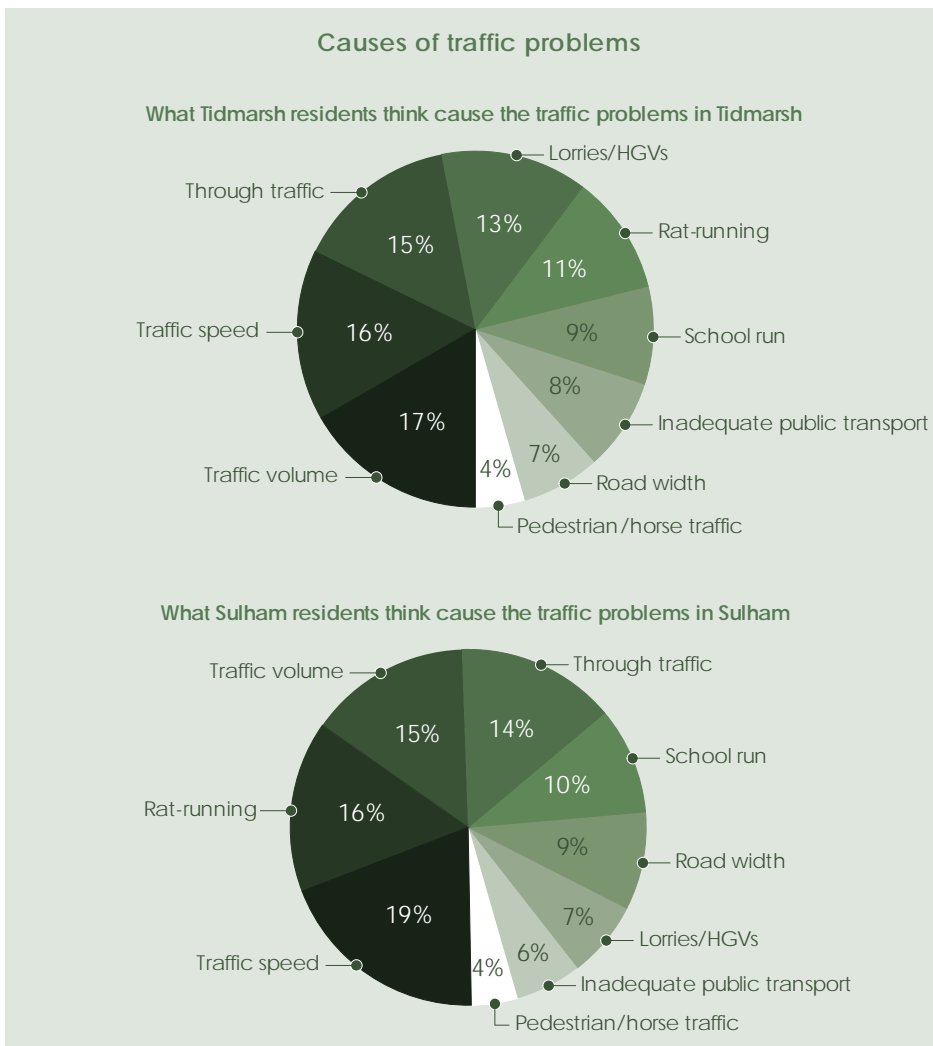


Although there were many common themes, feedback from Tidmarsh, Sulham, and Maidenhatch generated some difference in emphasis:

- The A340 passing through Tidmarsh and the narrow lanes of Sulham and Maidenhatch have their own impact on the experience of residents.
- Analysis of specific causes of concern indicated traffic speed and volume as common factors.
- In Tidmarsh and Sulham, through traffic is considered a major issue.
- In Maidenhatch *all* respondents identified the use of Tidmarsh Lane by HGVs as a serious concern.



Straddling the centre line at the base of Sulham Hill



Cottages in Tidmarsh



Turning right out of Mill Lane, Tidmarsh



Mill Lane, Tidmarsh

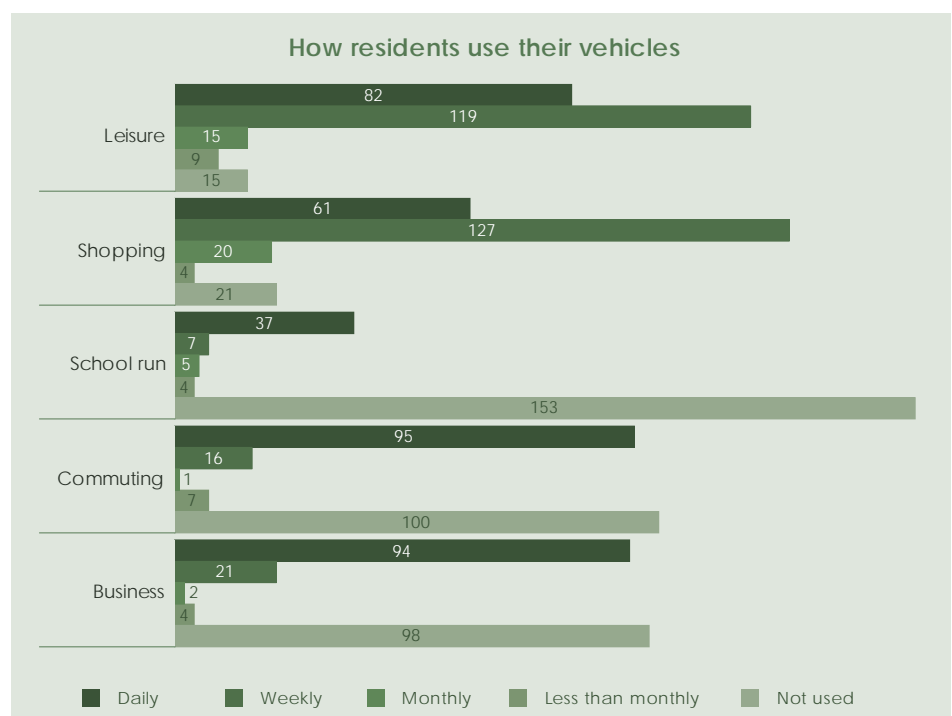
- Overtaking both into and out of Tidmarsh, the lack of a safe pedestrian crossing over the A340 that splits the village, and congestion and queuing at the Mill Lane junction with the A340 are considered important matters.
- 84% of Tidmarsh residents called for a pedestrian crossing on the A340 to improve safety for children accessing school bus stops and to improve access to community facilities (like the village hall and the Millennium Green).
- In keeping with Sulham's rural nature, 93% of its residents favour the designation of Sulham Lane as a *quiet lane*.

Structural traffic calming and more speed cameras do not have any popular support in the villages. Instead, stricter speed limits, flashing speed indicators, and more warning signs all gain strong support from more than 70% of residents.

Public and private transport

Other than school buses during term time, there is not a daily bus service available to the community and local train stations are not conveniently accessible by foot.

As a result, public transport usage is very low. More than 90% of villagers do not use buses and, although trains are used by 32%, only 6% do so on a daily basis.





Sulham

These facts are reflected in the high level of car ownership, with, on average, two vehicles for over 71% of households, where the main daily usage is for business and commuting.

Almost half (47%) of residents said that they would use buses if service improvements were made to the timetable, reliability, and routes. Under these circumstances, the most popular routes would be to Pangbourne and the supermarket in Calcot.

Pavements and cycleways

Because of traffic speed and volume, the absence of pavements on most roads, and the discontinuity and poor upkeep of those paved ways which are provided, many people feel at risk walking along the roads within the villages.

If pavements and/or cycleways were to be constructed, the favoured routes are:

- Tidmarsh to Pangbourne continuous (91%)
- Tidmarsh to Moor Copse Nature Reserve (80%)
- Tidmarsh to Theale (80%)
- A pavement or cycleway to Pangbourne along Sulham Lane had less support, attracting an overall vote of 68%, but only 50% from Sulham residents

The way forward

The challenge now is for members of the community to press the relevant authorities to improve road safety and to make improvements to reduce the impact of the ever-growing volume of traffic on the quality of life in the villages.





Acknowledgements

First and foremost, our thanks go to the residents of Sulham, Tidmarsh, and Maidenhatch without whose input and interest the production of the parish plan, and hopefully the ensuing benefits to our community, would not have been possible.

Special thanks also go to the following for their contributions.

Steering committee

Rob Robertson (Chairman)
 Rosemary Thomas (Secretary)
 Mike Broun (Parish Council Liaison)
 Colin Pawson (Parish Council Liaison)
 Geoff Arnold
 Jonathan Pearson
 Steven Webb

Steering committee members in the early stages of production: Colin Limb, Dorothy Pickering, and Nigel Shepherd.

Focus groups

Many thanks go to the focus group leaders and members who generously gave their time and effort in forwarding the process of the plan.

Environment group leader
 John Haggerty

People group leaders
 Joanne Walker
 Gillian Alderton

Traffic group leader
 John Alderton

Village history

Karen Elliott

Photography

Mark Farrington
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 John Alderton
 Dorothy Pickering

Design

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- Community Action West Berkshire, in particular, Sarah Ward who has nurtured and aided this project from start to finish
- Greenham Common Trust
- North Wessex Downs AONB
- Tidmarsh Village Hall Committee
- Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council
- Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish News
- West Berkshire Council

Action plans

Inserted into the flap to the right, you'll find the action plans that address the areas of concern to residents.

Each action plan contains a set of objectives. The objectives are prioritised and each has its own actions, timescales, and identifying partners, both inside and outside the local communities, who can help us achieve it.

The action plans are living documents subject to revision and renewal in years to come.



Environment action plan

Priority	Topic	Objective	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timescale
High	Map of Tidmarsh and Sulham parishes	Increase awareness of features and amenities within the parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, design, and produce map • Make available as a leaflet and on web site and display board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Ordnance Survey • Webmaster 	12 months
High	Road drains and verges	<p>Improve effective maintenance of road drains to eliminate flooding and improve road safety</p> <hr/> <p>Preserve and maintain existing verges, prevent or limit further erosion by traffic, and test feasibility of reinstatement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify problem locations • Institute reporting procedure • Raise awareness • Compile evidence (map/photos) • Liaise with Traffic Group • Consult West Berkshire Council on solutions • Recommend action by Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • All villagers • West Berkshire Council • Traffic Group • Countryside manager • Local landowners • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	6 months
High	Planning	<p>Raise awareness of local planning applications and outcomes</p> <hr/> <p>Improve reporting of planning breaches and effectiveness of enforcement action by West Berkshire Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish in magazine and on web site • Provide contact details and links to appropriate West Berkshire Council departments • Raise awareness in parishes • Provide reporting procedure • Consult West Berkshire Council on improving enforcement action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	6 months
Medium	Fly-tipping and litter	Eliminate fly-tipping and litter in both parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult West Berkshire Council on possible actions and legal remedies available • Research methods used by other parishes and councils • Raise awareness, advertise "hot-line" alert system in parish magazine and on web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Environment Agency • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • Webmaster • All villagers 	12 months

Environment action plan (continued)

Priority	Topic	Objective	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timescale
Medium	Noise reduction	Minimise noise pollution from, specifically, aerobatic aircraft, the M4, and motorbikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire evidence (noise log) • Liaise with adjoining parishes • Determine and support mitigating measures • Contact MP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • Civil Aviation Authority • Neighbouring parish councils • Highways Agency • All villagers 	2 years
Medium	Footpaths and stiles	<p>General improvement of rights of way and access, including replacement of stiles</p> <hr/> <p>Create a circular walk through both parishes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, justify, and recommend specific improvements, including methods and the cost of implementing • Identify route • Negotiate with landowners • Consider signage • Implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • Local landowners • Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust 	12 months
Medium	Planning	<p>Produce a Village Design Statement reflecting residents' views on maintaining and improving the appearance and characteristics of Tidmarsh and Sulham</p> <p>Have the statement adopted by West Berkshire Council and incorporated into the general planning guidelines for the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish plan and resources required • Implement and lodge with West Berkshire Council • Publish locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire Council • Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council • Environment Group • All villagers 	12 months

People and community action plan

Priority	Topic	Objective	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timescale
High	Sources of information	Ensure that Tidmarsh and Sulham have the most effective communication vehicles available to them for sharing community news and information on activities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review parish magazine style/content Create a web site by end of agreed timescale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editor of the parish magazine Local printers and publishers Webmaster 	12 months
Medium	Sports activities for Tidmarsh and Sulham	Set up sports activities, which have been requested, across the two villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial fitness classes at Tidmarsh Village Hall Set up walking group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rambling groups in West Berkshire Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council Parish magazine 	3 months
Medium	Use of Tidmarsh Village Hall	Expand and extend the use of the village hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a range of classes in response to demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group Village Hall Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External service providers Parish magazine 	3-12 months
Medium	Development of Tidmarsh Village Hall	Investigate the possibility of extending the building to accommodate extra use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review popularity of additional classes and source funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group Village Hall Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council West Berkshire Council 	2-3 years
Medium	Use of Millennium Green	Increase utilisation and benefit of Millennium Green for Tidmarsh and Sulham community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach Millennium Green trustees regarding questionnaire responses and agree which items can be actioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millennium Green trustees Vibrant Villages Scheme Parish magazine 	12 months
Medium	Services for young people	Start a dialogue with young people to understand their needs in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with young people to agree suitable activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	12 months
Low	Additional services in the community	Advertise Good Neighbour Scheme (for those who need it and those who can support it) in parish magazine and on web site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert in parish magazine and on web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council Parish magazine Webmaster 	12 months

Traffic and transport action plan

Priority	Topic	Objective	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timescale
High	Traffic problems awareness	Raise awareness of traffic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight in Parish Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	3 months
High	Traffic census information	Gain further information and data on traffic speed and volume to support initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain and review traffic data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	9 months
High	Traffic accident tracking	Get villagers to report and record accidents and near misses in the villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up an accident log Make villagers aware of the initiative and encourage reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Neighbourhood Watch representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All villagers Thames Valley Police 	3 months
High	Sulham traffic hazards and safety	Reduce excessive traffic speed on Sulham Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain information (including traffic data) to support speed restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	9-12 months
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get authorities to support initiative and implement mitigation measures, such as, quiet lane designation, reduced speed limits, and flashing warning signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	12+ months
		Improve safety at junction of Sulham Lane and Mill Lane at base of Sulham Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council and authorities to support the initiative, help identify the solution, and get West Berkshire Council to implement improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	12+ months
High	Tidmarsh and Maidenhatch traffic hazards and safety	Reduce speeding and overtaking through Tidmarsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain information (including traffic data) to get authorities' support for restriction measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	12+ months
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify improvement options, establish optimal solution, and get West Berkshire Council to implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	18+ months
		Improve junction of Mill Lane and A340 to reduce congestion and accident risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness with authorities and gain support for improvement initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	12+ months
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss improvement options Establish and implement optimal solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	18+ months

Traffic and transport action plan (continued)

Priority	Topic	Objective	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Partners	Timescale
High	Pedestrian safety	Safe pedestrian crossing on A340 in Tidmarsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get pelican-style or similar controlled crossing in Tidmarsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	18+ months
Medium	Tidmarsh and Maidenhatch traffic hazards and safety	Reduce number of HGVs/lorries using Tidmarsh Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with businesses, Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council, and West Berkshire Council to reduce HGV/lorry usage of Tidmarsh Lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	9+ months
		Establish the degree of hazard posed by the 90° bend along Mill Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult further and seek information to decide whether improvements are warranted/necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council West Berkshire Council Thames Valley Police 	12 months
Medium	Pedestrian safety	Create safe pedestrian routes from Tidmarsh to Pangbourne, Moor Copse, and Theale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight need for safe and improved paved routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Berkshire Council 	18+ months
Low	Public transport	Make questionnaire data available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion in village plan documents and on web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee Webmaster 	3 months
		Increase awareness of existing bus services and establish if improvements are worthwhile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of existing bus services and review the need for improvements, such as, improved frequency at peak times, route changes, and so on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee People Group Bus companies 	3 months
Low	Village vehicle use	Make questionnaire data available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion in village plan documents and on web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee Webmaster 	6 months



protecting and enhancing our parish