

COLDWALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL
(HARDHAM, COLDWALTHAM & WATERSFIELD)

VILLAGE PLAN 2014



December 2014

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INTRODUCTION

This village plan is a development of the original plan of 10 years ago. We have used data from the original plan and from the housing need surveys of 2009 and 2010 to construct this plan and are conscious that many of the issues that applied ten years ago still do so today.

This plan will help to identify our social and environmental issues that affect us. It will help us define our community and guide our future contributions to Parish and village development.

We are fortunate to live in a very beautiful area which is now part of the South Downs National Park. Our community reflects its history and has many deeply rooted community elements such as its churches, school and active local societies. Our local residents appreciate our rural environment and wish to maintain and develop its attractive character for visitors and residents alike.

Since the last plan we have become part of the South Downs National Park in 2012. At the time of writing the SDNP is consulting on its policies. To-date the impact of this has been limited on our community but could become a key focus in the future as new planning issues emerge. The SDNP will be consulting on its preferred options early next year, and submitting its proposed Local Plan to the Secretary of State in 2016, with a view to formal adoption in the spring of 2017. Our local education centre Lodge Hill has recently become an independent provider of services and has established new community links with the Parish Council and other local community groups.

Our three parish communities (Coldwaltham, Hardham and Watersfield) have always worked closely together and with our neighbours. Our community is a close one without having a single centre. Our local amenities (which may be limited by some criteria) consist of our churches, our easy access to the mainline Railway at Pulborough and our local school. Our lack of regular local bus services remains a source of concern for many residents. Our local public house The Labouring Man was closed for a while but re-opened 6 years ago and is now a thriving village meeting point.

There has been no significant housing development since the last Village Plan although the village has expanded over the last 15 years, significantly in Watersfield. There has been consultation process currently underway for a development in Silverdale, Coldwaltham, which is still not resolved.

This village plan (as in 2004) will be led by the Parish Council. The actions identified are, therefore, the action plan for the future work of the Parish Council.

This reviewed and amended plan will review the key elements of the last plan and identify issues for future development and action, some of which reflect the previous data collected. It is hoped to include elements of a Landscape Character Assessment and a village Design assessment, in line with SDNP practices.

This up-dated Plan will be circulated to the whole village for comment and recommendations that will be incorporated into a final document in the autumn of 2014.

Our Parish has a number of important amenities which we wish to continue to support.

We have a Village School and a volunteer run Youth Club, both of which have received over time specific support from the Parish Council. The Village Hall, Sandham Hall, has a local committee who have raised from a wide number of sources over £60,000 to refurbish the Hall over the last five years. The local Sub-Post office has also benefited from the increased use of this facility. There is an internationally known music and art centre at Champs Hill.

The local Church, St Giles, has an active community role.

The village has a number of active local organisations and places of interest. (See below) The Parish Church at Hardham has a uniquely complete set of mediaeval wall paintings. Under the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty, the Waltham Brooks Nature Reserve is designated along with other areas of the Wild Brooks as a wetland of international importance.

The nature of the area is reflected in 'footpath owners' who volunteer to protect individual footpaths for the enjoyment of others.

The major landowner is the Barlavington Estate which owns land in the Parish and adjoining the Parish.

A key local organisation is the Lodge Hill Centre. This education and outdoor centre provides a special set of opportunities for schools, young people and adults and has close links with the local community.

There are fishing rights on the Arun River for local residents. A mobile library visits regularly. We have a 4.5 kilometre stretch of the Roman Road from London to Chichester. Due to changes to West Sussex policy on supporting Car Parks, the Greatham Bridge car park on the River Arun closed in 2012, and we are seeking to find ways to re-open this, as an important visitor and resident amenity.

The Wildbrooks is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as is Hardham Church and the grade 1 listed Hardham Priory and parts of Watersfield. There are in total 17 listed buildings in the Parish and a number of Tree Preservation Orders.

SECTION 1

Our Community and Voluntary Organisations

As a community, we continue to be welcoming and active. For a small community, we have a number of local organisations providing social activities, sport and help, including financial, to others within our community. This includes The Wild Brooks Society, the weekly Coffee Shop, the Youth Club and Football and Cricket Clubs and the Friends of St James and the Alban Head Playing Fields. These organisations reflect the local commitment of their members. These groups raise their own funds and often establish their own links with organisations outside the village and contribute to projects.

A key group in our community is the elderly. The Village Help Scheme provides assistance to all members but is primarily used by our senior citizens. There is a monthly lunch club, open to all held at Lodge Hill and an annual Christmas Party held at the Youth Club during which the Primary School (St James') choir sings. Our local sub Post office held at Sandham Hall is very important for this group of residents and is used by residents of all ages. The Post Office provides a central area for local organisations to sell tickets for events, a drop off point for articles for the parish link magazine, make bookings for the hire of the hall and request Village Help Scheme transport. Sadly, the village WI society has closed.

A key development in recent years has been the success of the Sandham Hall committee in regenerating itself and raising significant funds for repairs and re-development. This has also helped to sustain our part-time Post Office. Both these and the Youth Club are supported by the Parish Council. The Sandham Hall and Post Office provides a form of village centre for us all.

The sense of community is illustrated by many events and actions such as the two 'Street Parties' held in 2011 and 2012 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee and Royal Wedding which raised money for local groups and the Village School St James. Each Thursday a 'coffee shop' held at the Sandham Hall attracts a significant number of our community. The profits from this support the church. The millennium sign and small garden are supported by the PC. Communication with our neighbouring parishes remains through the Parish magazine, The Link, notice boards and local distributions.

Actions:

- For the Parish Council to continue to support local organisations.
e.g. The Sandham Hall and the Youth Club and Post Office
- Set up a Parish/Village Website to facilitate communication and advertising and community cohesion
- Support links with Parish Council neighbours to facilitate local groups
- To advise and support with fund raising.
- To work closely with the SDNP on fund raising opportunities for local organisations (including the Alban Head Playing Fields& the Sandham Hall)

SECTION 2

Our local environment *(protecting our world)*

Our parish is in a very important environmental area, which includes areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, SSI, local conservation areas and run by organisations such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

The protection and enhancement of our local environment and unique biodiversity is a key aim of our community. This is why many local residents choose to live here.

The PC sustains close links with the District and County council to achieve this and will work closely with the South Downs National Park Authority on matters within its remit.

Parishioners have been keen to support re-cycling initiatives of HDC and this has improved since the last plan with a new 'blue' and 'brown' bin collection service although many parishioners have not taken up the option of the additional payment for the 'brown bin' service. The PC is committed to monitor and report fly-tipping.

The PC has a severe weather action plan, again partly in response to issues raised in the last village plan. This embraces liaison with HDC, WSCC and local landowners.

Parishioners remain concerned about the high speed of traffic through the village although there is recognition that the local police have been more active in enforcing the 30 MPH speed limit in the past 12 months. The PC is seeking to improve its links with the local police.

The lack of any village retail outlet, besides the Sub-Post Office means that the majority of all journeys are car based, which adds to the traffic volume at all times. This means that traffic through and within the villages has a high priority in the perceptions of what needs to be addressed. The dangers of heavy lorry routing through GPS and traffic diversions from the A24/M23 are significant at certain times of the day (and night).

The Parish landscape is a mixture of open countryside, wetlands, grazing with some arable land, woodland, and small housing communities; there are significant formal wildlife reserves within the Parish boundaries. There are significant distances of footpaths that connect with neighbouring parishes, with very little habitation outside the formal boundaries of the villages. The landscape is crossed by only one major road (a source of anxiety for traffic management), but has many minor roads that connect small hamlets with both the villages and the larger settlements of Petworth, Pulborough and Storrington.

The River Arun is a major contributor to this landscape and the flood plain – which has not been built on – was largely able to absorb recent flooding in 2013/2014 without impacting on residential buildings; there are few bridges, which affect local transport routes, and the railway between Pulborough, Amberley, Arundel and beyond is a major feature of this landscape.

The villages do not represent any one distinct local characteristic; we do not have a preponderance of any one architectural style or feature, although there are some elements that have preserved the attractiveness of the villages as a whole. This might best be described as there being no overarching design features that stand out, which have meant that over time – maybe the last 50 years, all new housing and buildings have gradually absorbed themselves into the low rise, rural outlook of the village as a whole.

This feature of local design – essentially that buildings must ‘fit in’ is a key feature of the PC’s responses to planning applications whether for single development or larger developments. The care for trees and the road side environment has meant that this “whole village” perspective has been maintained, in spite of there being no overwhelming single design characteristic that stands out.

Actions:

- The PC will sustain and develop new links with local environmental groups and organisations including the SDNP and other national agencies.
- Through planning and work with District and WSCC the PC is to continue to work to preserve our local environment e.g. alerting Highways over roads issues
- Community support to keep our footpaths open, accessible and free of fly–tipping and other fouling.
- Promote recycling, and a care for the village landscape.
- To maintain our local environment distinctiveness though liaison with WSCC, Sussex Police, SDNP.

SECTION 3

Our Local services *(For all members, young and old in our community)*

We are a small community and, therefore, our services represent our size. We are fortunate to have good local primary school provision in St James C of E School which has been redeveloped in recent years. Our Youth Club sustains a range of activities for young people.

Our senior citizens benefit from much which is unseen. The Village Help Scheme provides transport for medical appointments and the Luncheon Club meets at Lodge Hill.

Since the last plan the Pulborough Medical Group has moved to new premises and is providing a wide range of services, which are used extensively by parishioners, many of whom are supported by a local Volunteer Transport scheme, which overcomes some of the difficulties faced by not having regular bus services.

Lodge Hill is providing a number of opportunities for the community (e.g. Such as ICT courses) and has all the potential of a conference centre and large hall for local events.

The Alban Head Playing Fields in Sandy Lane, Watersfield is a key local facility funded by the Parish, which supports both village and wider communities. This is a facility and resource for our community, owned by the National Playing Fields Association (now known as Fields in Trust) and managed by the PC. It is the largest single proportion of the annual precept of the PC. This provides a service for all ages and local sports clubs, in Storrington, Pulborough and Amberley, as well as locally in the Parish. There is a need to upgrade and renew the Pavilion and playground that are part of this responsibility, in order to make these facilities attractive to all.

Champs Hill provides a very specialist private concert venue with an international reputation that is connected to organisations in Chichester and beyond.

There is a village allotment plot donated by the Barlavington Estate, which is popular with local residents, on the edge of the village.

Actions:

- To sustain support for the enhancement and management of the Alban Head Playing Fields for the benefit of the whole community
- To sustain support for the Youth Club, Village Help Scheme and other local organisations providing services to our community
- Sustain links with PMG and other needed medical services
- Develop links with Lodge Hill to facilitate future community opportunities
- To maintain and manage the local landscape for the benefit of residents and visitors.

SECTION 4

Developing our local community

(Including transport, life long learning and business links and Crime)

We have limited direct public transport. A local bus service (on only three days per week, to different destinations) does exist but is subject to considerable variation and change in policy. Most transport is by private car with considerable sharing. Despite the main road A29, a lack of good bus transport remains an issue for concern. Access to and use of the main line railway from Pulborough is a key facility, although the journey times have not yet improved as promised. This enables connections to Gatwick, London and the South Coast. There is a weekly Mini-Bus service provided by the Pulborough and District Community Mini-Bus Association.

Lifelong learning is supported by opportunities at Lodge Hill and the mobile library service. Adult classes are available in the locality, provided through the West Sussex Adult Education programme. There is a daily school bus service for secondary age students to schools in Midhurst and Billingshurst.

Most employment is outside the parish; this tends to obscure the considerable number of small businesses and work undertaken from home in the village. Employment is provided by Lodge Hill, The Labouring Man, the Southern Water works at Hardham, the Barlavington Estate, and a small number of operations on the Hardham Business Park. There is some Bed and Breakfast accommodation that operates in the villages.

The West Sussex Better Broadband initiative is closely monitored in the village. It will be a central issue to develop our area, for business and private use, in the place of the current service which is poor compared to local urban facilities. The WSBB project has recently confirmed the roll-out of new facilities in the villages, which is scheduled for later in 2014 in Hardham and Coldwaltham, with Watersfield likely to follow in 2015. This has been an often commented upon as a major problem by our parishioners.

Our Parishes remain a low crime area. However, there is considerable support for closer links with our local Police and greater evidence of their presence within the community. However, crime does happen, and the village does experience anti-social types of vandalism and the mindless destruction of local property; and the local post office has been burgled.

Actions:

- To monitor and seek support improvement in the local bus service
- To continue to support the Village Help Scheme
- To support the advertising of local life long learning opportunities
- To campaign vigorously for a better broadband service
- To support Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and to increase our links with the local police, for the security of all residents and visitors

SECTION 5

Planning in our Parish

Planning issues continue to be of high concern in our parish. Whilst Watersfield has come close to doubling in size over the last 15 years and Hardham has seen a marked increase in homes we have not experienced the increased development which is common elsewhere in the county.

The planning authority is now the South Downs National Park. In their recently published Local Plan Options Document, the South Downs National Park Authority have suggested that: "The limited extent of services in Tier 4 villages (Coldwaltham is unlikely to rate any higher than Tier 4) casts doubt on whether expansion should be encouraged if the overall aim is to achieve a sustainable pattern of development" (P. 68).

Our parish commentary on individual planning applications reflects local views represented by the Parish Council. We will continue to:

- Resist developments which adversely affect our local environment
- Support local planning policy and the South Downs National Park policies
- Support planning applications which improve and enhance the landscape and lifestyle opportunities of our parishioners.
- Invite local comment and views as an integral part of our consideration of planning applications

We have limited facilities for development within our Parish. We will not, therefore, be supporting any significant development of new housing.

We recognise there is a need for affordable housing. We would therefore be ready to consider small-scale affordable and social housing for those households with strong local connections to the area, as envisaged in the South Downs National Park Authority's Options Document (P. 85) but these needs to be balanced with the pressures on our area and the sustainability of our community.

In Horsham District Strategic Housing Land Availability assessment three sites were identified as potential development sites: SA -069 Silverdale and 068 Bridge Nurseries of Brook Lane and SAO81 Coldwaltham Glebe. Sites identified by Horsham District Council for development may change in the future due to the SDNP own housing policies.

As a Parish Council we are committed to supporting the local churches and this includes having sufficient land for graveyards.

Our Parish Plan

For this plan to work we need the commitment and support of our community.

The 5 key principles set out by the South Downs National Park are reflected in this plan. We think beyond our parish boundary and work closely with our neighbours and we wish all to be 'on board' to make this plan work. We wish our plan to reflect the priorities of the National Park and to be part of the input into their planning. We pay careful attention to the evidence from within and beyond our parish and we represent and are representative of our local area.

This plan has been drawn up in liaison with Horsham District Council, Action in Rural Sussex and the South Downs National Park. Key village organisations have been consulted.

It will form the basis of the actions of the Parish council for the next five to ten years, allowing for the ever changing local and national landscape and the new demands which may arise.

As we implement the plan we hope you will make further contributions, directly to us or by e-mail and in other ways. We are committed to helping you to 'have your say' to help the delivery of this plan.

As Parish Councillors we are always in contact with you informally. Our meetings are public and we hold additional meetings if needed to aid public consultation. Occasionally people come directly to us. This is always welcome as well as electronic communication.

It always helps our work, and this plan, if the communication is polite and constructive.

In summary we are aiming to:

- *Preserve our local environment and beautiful rural area*
- *Support our local community organisations*
- *Develop new links with others in our locality*
- *Improve the services and opportunities for members of our community*

Listening to our parishioners

Village Plan Feedback

November 2014

The Village Plan was at first commented on by a number of local village organisations. We then circulated a copy to every (420) household in the three hamlets of our parish.

It was really good to receive so many warm comments of support and thanks for the effort put into constructing this plan. Most comments clearly were in broad support of the contents of the plan, which will therefore remain close in final detail to the version circulated to every household. We are grateful for the feedback and will act upon much of it.

The two issues which caused the most comment we will continue to campaign over and if they did not receive sufficient attention for some members of our community in the June edition of the plan we have now heard your concerns loud and clear.

The first was the amount of **traffic** on the A29 and the speed at which it travels through our community. This causes continuous concern to the Parish Council and many residents. We are committed to campaign for any measures which will both cut volume and speed, creating a safer and better environment for us all.

The second clearest issue was the poor nature of our local **bus service, which** clearly affects a number of residents. To support improvement of our bus service is already part of our plan but now will be a core priority for future action.

A number of other issues were also raised by residents and could be grouped under the title of our local **environment**. These include protecting our special countryside, supporting local services such as the school and Sandham Hall and making sure what we currently have is preserved.

There was strong support for a village website. We are glad to report that broadband for Coldwaltham and Hardham now seems to be arriving. There was a mixed response to planning and housing development. Whilst no one wants the parish to be distorted there was support for affordable housing and interest in how we fit into and work with the new National Park.

Some issues raised are beyond the scope of this plan or the work of the Parish Council. We respect the views expressed but cannot put items into the plan which lack practical application.

One issue that came up from a number of residents and gained a strong echo from within the members of the PC was the increasing lack of volunteers to run things in our community. We see no easy solution to this problem but will support any new approaches to encourage our residents to make a contribution, big or small.