

INTRODUCTION: THE VITAL VILLAGES INITIATIVE

Parish plans are part of the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' Scheme, designed to highlight issues important to the community and, in doing so, produce an action plan for the future.

A wide variety of local people have been involved in the formulation of this plan, a key element of which was a questionnaire survey of residents, completed in 2004. The questionnaire was distributed to all households in the parish and 472 households responded. The survey helped to highlight the main problems affecting the parish and the results are reflected throughout the various sections of the Parish Plan and in this exhibition.

BOROUGH GREEN - THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE

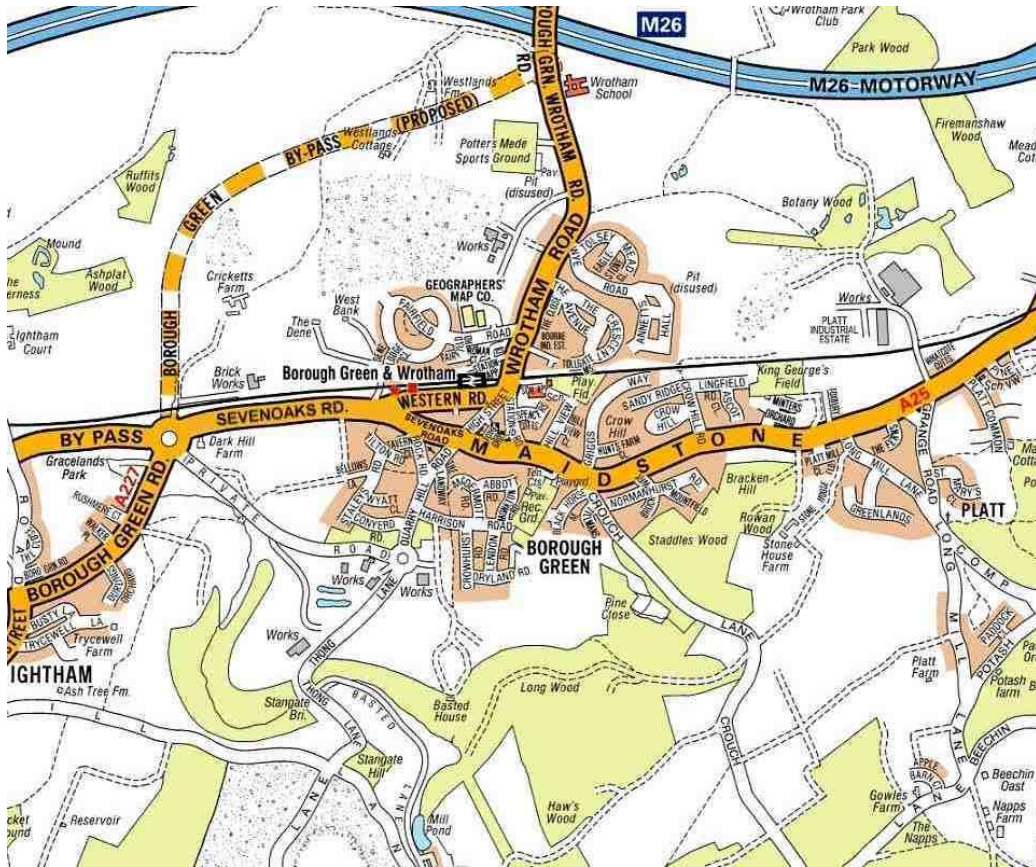
The Place

The Parish of Borough Green is centred on the village of Borough Green and located in the Tonbridge and Malling district of West Kent. The parish is relatively small, having been created in the 1930s from land released by three surrounding parishes. Despite this, it has become heavily populated and has a wealth of local services and businesses, and because it straddles the Holmesdale Greensand Ridge, it is particularly notable for its sand quarries. It has now become established as the key service centre for nearby smaller villages.

Borough Green is a popular village as a result of the local amenities and proximity to transport links. In turn these have created significant pressure on open space and other facilities.

To capitalise on its excellent attributes, this plan has been prepared to set out a vision for the future that balances modern demands against the obvious desire to foster the areas unique heritage.

The population of Borough Green in mid-1998 was 3,400 people. At 216 hectares, the parish is the smallest not only in Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's area, but also in Kent. The density of population per hectare is 16.2, which also makes it the most densely populated Parish. In comparison, Wrotham has a density of 1.3 people per hectare.



The People

The Parish has a relatively mature local population with 25% of the local inhabitants aged over 60 years compared to the Tonbridge and Malling average of 20%. Compared to statistics for the whole country, the Parish has a much lower percentage of people under the age of 30, especially in the 20-29 year age bracket. There is a much greater than average proportion of 60-74 year olds compared to the national average. This trend is predicted to continue.

The local population is home to fractionally more males than females, and has a low proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The results of the Residents' Questionnaire show that three-quarters (75%) of the 472 households that responded to the questionnaire consist of either one (25.6%) or two people (50%). The remaining 25% of households had three or more people living in them.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

A picture of housing in Borough Green today

Borough Green is host to a variety of dwelling types. Terraced housing, bungalows and flats / maisonettes account for a significant proportion of dwelling types amongst the household respondents of the questionnaire.

Close to half of the households (47%) live in semi-detached dwellings with detached properties accounting for the next most frequently occurring type of dwellings at 19%.

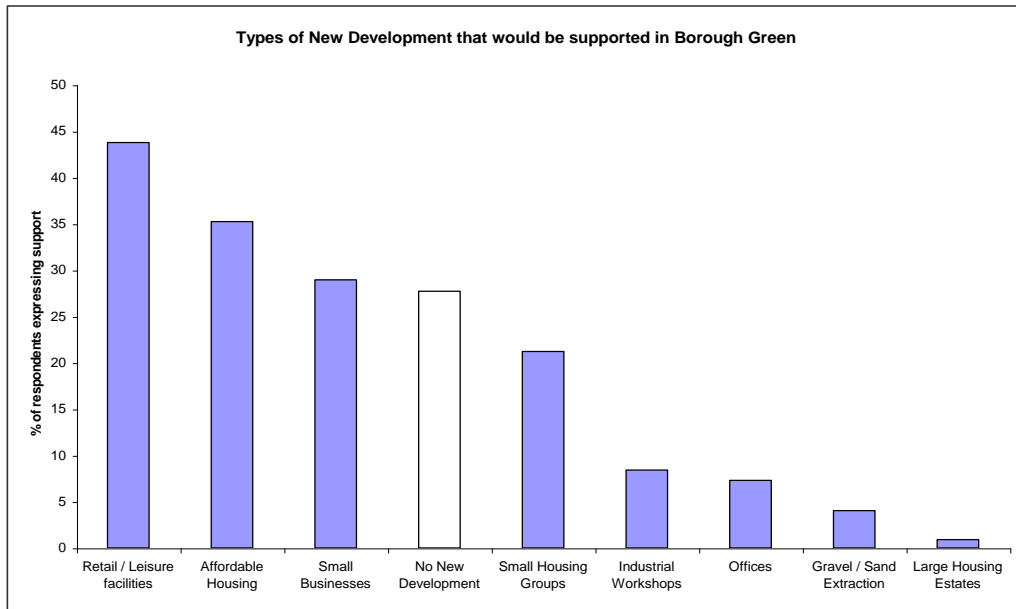
The vast majority of Borough Green's households are owner-occupied (88%), characteristic of wealthier or more rural locations. The remaining 11.8% live in rented property, of these, slightly over half are in social rented accommodation (housing association and local authority) and slightly under half are in the private rented accommodation.

Rising House Prices

The rise in house prices in recent years is pushing first time buyers out of the market, with young people potentially not able to afford to buy a house in the village where they grew up. It is generally the older and more affluent who are able to afford property in the village, accentuating the age profile of the local population.

Local estate agents consulted said that Borough Green is a popular village owing to the schools and transport links, which often means that there are not enough houses coming onto the market. This has pushed up property prices, effectively pricing out young people and first time buyers.

This has knock-on effects for the types of services that will be demanded and even the viability of the primary school. To combat this problem, new housing schemes in the area should be encouraged. However, it must be ensured that these are suitable for families and have a large element of key sector worker housing or housing association properties.



Source: *Borough Green Residents Questionnaire*

The Housing Association.

Tonbridge and Malling Housing Association controls all housing association property in Borough Green. It was formed in 1990, when it took over the Borough Council's housing stock.

The Borough Green Office oversees 1,293 properties, covering a relatively dispersed and mostly rural area. In the recent inspection, it was found that 86% of tenants were satisfied with the service they receive, the highest level of satisfaction out of all housing associations surveyed.

URBAN DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

Borough Green has often been criticised as an unattractive village. A proposed bypass would help to eradicate noise and pollution, as well as making walking around the village easier, safer and more pleasant. In addition, any new developments should be designed to ensure that they both assimilate into and actively enhance the built environment.

Village Initiatives

There have been a number of initiatives in the past to try and improve the appearance of the village.

- For example hanging baskets are used each year to help to soften the appearance of the village.
- Other measures that could be considered are parking restrictions, pavement improvements, increased signage, traffic calming, seating, ensuring the upkeep of buildings and enhancing the consistency of road furniture.

Urban Design Statement

The Parish Council is in the process of formulating an Urban Design Statement to inform future development/redevelopment in the village. Progress should be made here to ensure that the character of the village could be protected and indeed enhanced.

Recycling



The recycling point for Christmas trees at Potters Mede.

Last year residents within the Tonbridge and Malling District recycled 15% of their waste, the highest rate in Kent. The nearest recycling centre for the parish is at Borough Green and Wrotham Station where food and drinks cans, newspapers and magazines, cardboard and textiles can be disposed of. There are also two further centres in Wrotham. A bulk refuse vehicle visits Borough Green locations several times a month.

TRANSPORT

Proposed Bypass receives overwhelming support from residents

A massive 84% of residents backed the proposed bypass, even if it means a larger H + H Celcon factory. The proposed bypass, which is undoubtedly the key traffic and transport issue amongst residents, was identified by many as the single biggest way in which the environment in the village can be improved.

A successful campaign was fought against the deletion of the by-pass from the Kent Structure Plan, but the scheme has still not received the go-ahead. Local manufacturer H+H Celcon are a proposed partner in the construction of the by-pass as the benefits for the operation of their business would be considerable. This would be particularly important to ensure the viability of a second factory on their site, for which they have now submitted a planning application.



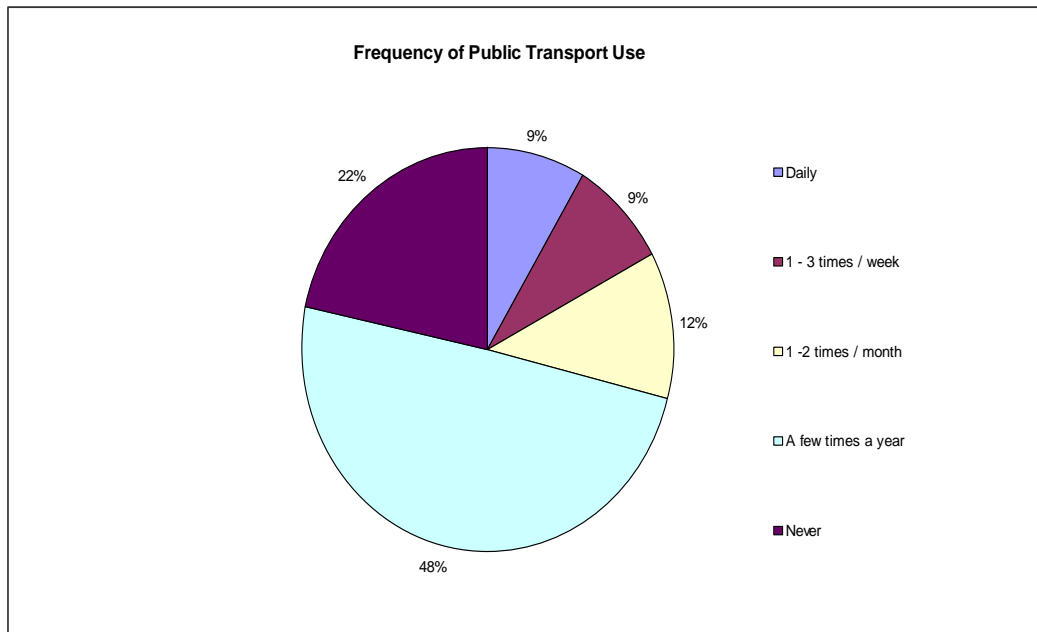
Full weight road train, typical of the type of heavy goods vehicles that are forced to pass through the village whilst we wait for the Bypass

Parking

Parking provision also proved to be an issue of contention. Just over half (52%) of respondents thought parking provision is adequate, but some 40% did not agree, calling for measures to deal with poor or illegal parking. (8% were unsure).

Public Transport

The majority of respondents use public transport rarely, if at all (see pie chart). This finding underlines the apparent dependence of the households in the village on private transport.



Source: *Borough Green residents survey*

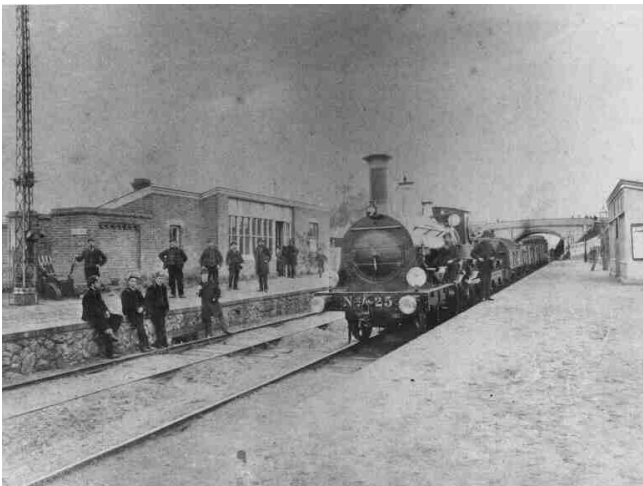
The village benefits from several bus services run by Arriva, however none of the services run with a frequency of more than one per hour with some two-hourly or only at run school times.

Borough Green has a train station, running a service to London Victoria, every half hour, taking 45 minutes. The station car park is used to capacity during the week despite the cost. The junction of the approach to the station and the A227 is viewed by users as dangerous, particularly given recent changes to the right of way at a nearby bend.



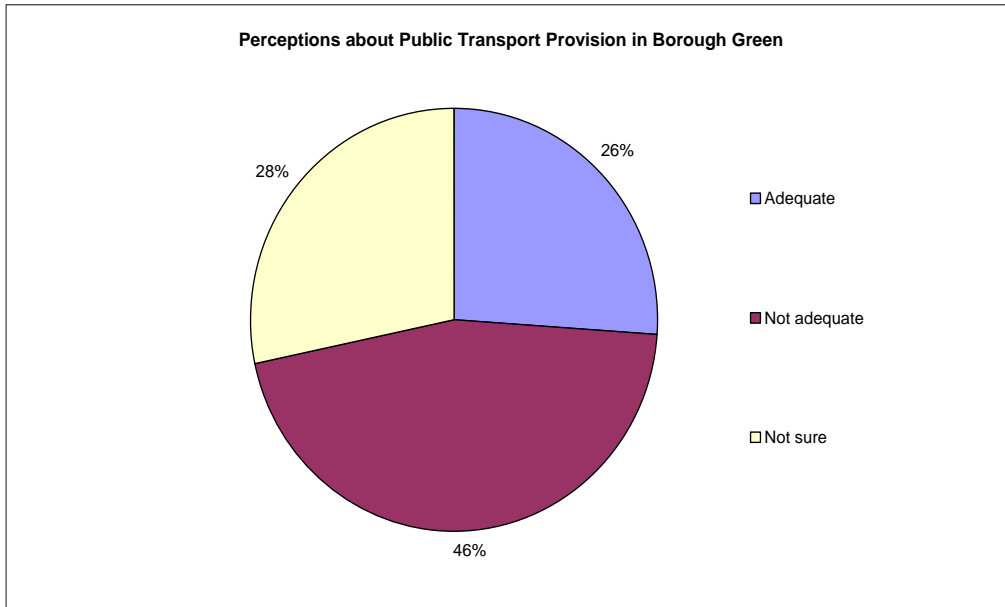
Borough Green and Wrotham train station

Close to half (48%) of respondents believe public transport provision in Borough Green is insufficient, with just over a quarter believing it to be adequate, (28% were unsure). This implies that the infrequent use of public transport by respondents, highlighted by the previous question, could be linked to the level of provision, rather than an unwillingness to use it. This is supported by over 40 comments, which made reference to the paucity of



public transport at weekends.

However, anecdotal comments (184) pointed towards public road access and public transport as one of the positive attributes of the village.



Source: Borough Green Residents Questionnaire

Summary of key issues of concern in terms of transport, ranked in order of priority:

Transport Priorities:

Rank	Priority	Number of Respondents
1	Construct the bypass	191
2	Slow down or reduce through traffic	112
3	Road safety issues	60
4	Enforcement of speed restrictions	36
5	Deal with poor and illegal parking	32
6	Repair and maintenance of roads and footpaths	12
7	Better public transport on Sundays and in the evenings	11
8	Revert the junction of High Street and Western Road to the old layout	11

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Shopping

As a rural local centre Borough Green has a good supply of shops. These include the following;

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two banks• Three hairdressers• Bakery• Two grocers• Gift shop• Two newsagents• Optician• Florist•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Antique/video shop• Three estate agents• Beauty salon• Nail beautician• Jewellers• DIY shop• Photographic shop• Lawnmower shop• Fancydress/party shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charity shop• Funeral directors• Dry cleaners• Chemist• Solicitors• Off licence• Butchers• Car dealership• Six fast food outlets• A visiting Fishmonger
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Borough Green High St.

The Ofsted Inspector's Report (2000) states;

"Borough Green Primary School continues to be a very good school and has been most successful in recent years in building upon the high standards of pupil's achievement and quality provision. In particular, in response to excellent leadership and management and very good provision in many areas, but especially in teaching, most pupils now achieve very well as they move through the school and standards continue to rise. This school provides very good value for money"

Most of the children who attend live within the parish of Borough Green, but despite this, there are perennial traffic congestion problems associated with the 'school run', exacerbated, as entry to the school is via two dead ends. This had led to complaints from nearby residents.

Wrotham school is the main source of secondary education for Borough Green, and is situated just over the parish border in Wrotham. It draws pupils from other areas, including those from as far afield as Meopham, Ditton, New Ash Green and Otford. The school used to run and subsidise seven coaches to outlying areas. However, this proved too costly and so there is now a reduced public service of three buses. This has led to a large increase in traffic congestion as parents drop off and collect children by car.

Medical Facilities

The Medical Centre on Quarry Hill Road has 13,000 patients registered and covers a wide area of Kent stretching from Tonbridge to Kemsing and West Malling. The practice has six GPs and provides other services including physiotherapy, counselling, midwifery and minor surgery. The closest hospital is in Maidstone.

The village benefits from a dental practice which has around 8,000 patients registered. The practice has four dentists, three of whom are private and one of whom is still NHS. However, the NHS dentist has stopped taking on new patients due to a surge in demand.

The positive benefits of the scheme are already being seen. At the weekends and in the evening an average of around 34-37 youngsters use the drop-in centre, including those from Wrotham, Plaxtol and Ightham. The scheme is addressing a local need and has been highly commended by the local police who are currently putting it forward as an example of best practice.

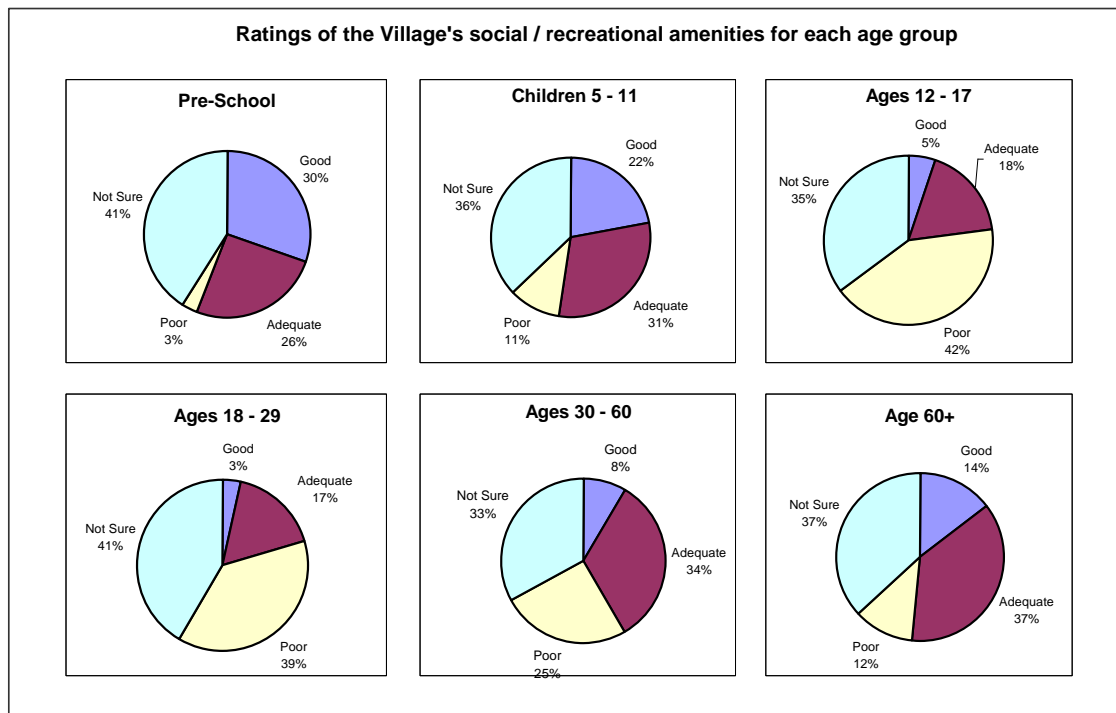


“The Joint has proved successful because it is both a true community project, involving volunteers from throughout the village who planned, built, and run the centre; and because young people themselves have been just as involved in the whole process. The Joint has been a springboard for a range of community projects involving young people. They may still be loud, profane and profoundly irritating at times, but they are beginning to realise their place in our community”. Mike Taylor, Youth Worker and project co-ordinator



The Village Hall and car park

Respondents were also asked to rate the local amenities available for six particular age groups (pre-school, 5-11, 12-17, 18-29, 30-60 and 60+). The results are shown in the following charts.



Source: Borough Green Residents' Questionnaire

Broadly speaking, respondents rated the village's amenities most favourably for younger children, with facilities for those of 60+ were rated fairly well, (over 50% of respondents indicating that they are either good,14%, or adequate, 37%,).

However, social and recreational facilities are rated as the poorest for the teenage and young adults. For both the 12-17 and 18-29 age groups, a tiny minority rated amenities as good, with respectively 42% and 41% of respondents rating facilities as 'poor' for these age groups

Community Groups/Organisations



*Borodara join in a rousing version of Status Quo's
"Rocking All Over The World"*

Borough Green has a large number of community groups. They include the following:

General:

- Borough Green Active Retirement Fund (Borodara)
- Borough Green Dramatic Society (Borograds)
- Borough Green WI (who have an excellent WI market on a Thursday afternoon in the Village Hall).
- Women's Fellowship
- Woodvale Folk (Dancing) Group
- Ightham & District Horticultural Society
- 2 Lunch Clubs
- Borough Green Rock 'n' Roll Club
- Amnesty International
- Christmas Lights Committee
- Borough Green Traffic Action Group

Children:

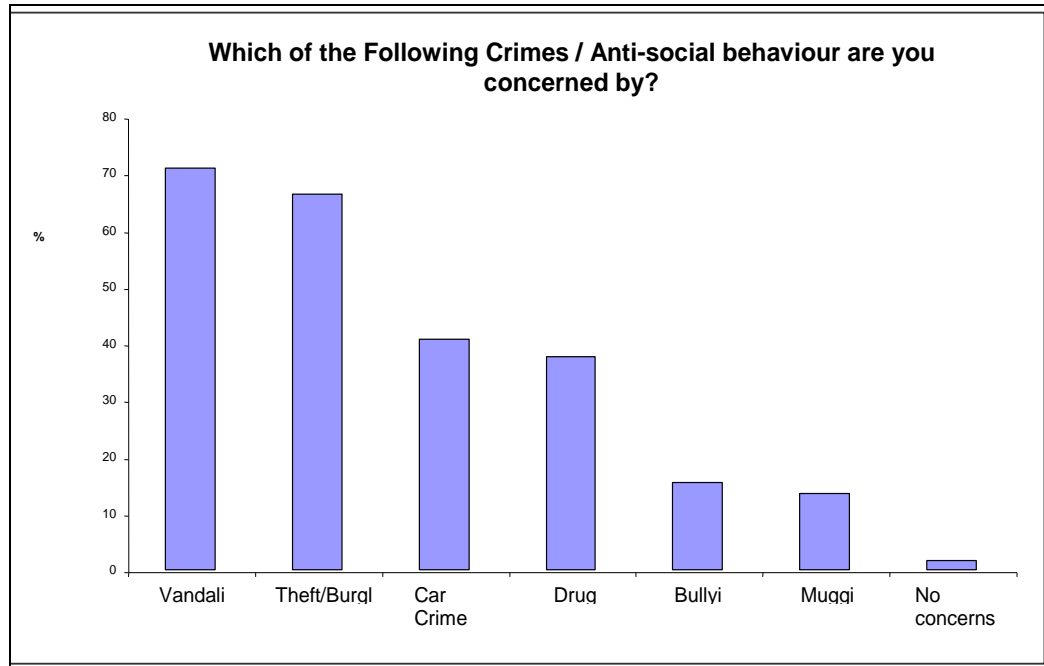
- 2 Brownies Packs
- Rainbow Guides

- 4 Scouts Packs
- Toddler/Play Groups
- National Childbirth Trust Group

Sport:

- Borough Green Football Club
- Borough Green Junior Football Club (which has some 200 members)
- Ightham Badminton Club
- Borough Green Bowls Club
- Borough Green Tennis Club





Rural Community Warden

In addition to normal policing, Borough Green benefits from having a Rural Community Warden, Sarah Port.



Sarah has become closely involved in many elements of village life, including the youth drop-in centre to help - she is a trained youth worker. She has also begun making contact with the primary school, where she hopes to conduct talks on road safety and possible training as a lollypop lady. A rural warden has a fixed annual budget for projects within the community.

Sarah Port chats at Brands Hatch Morgans

THE ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

Borough Green has a strong employment base that provides around 1,300 jobs. This is coupled with a very low unemployment rate and a high level of part time workers who live in the village.



Headquarters of Geographers' A-Z Map Company based in Borough Green

Businesses in the village generally see it as a good location due to the buoyant local economy and good transport links. There are several major employers, including H+H Celcon, and Geographers' A-Z Map Company. Borough Green is also home to several quarries:

- Borough Green Quarry: This quarry is run by RMC, and although it has not yet been worked out, it is becoming uneconomic. The site has existing High Court permission to be used as a landfill/recycling site for inert material only, which is scheduled to start by the end of Jan 2005.
- Ightham Sand Pit: Run by H+H Celcon. This site has only a few areas of sand still to be extracted.
- Isle Quarry East and West: This site has been worked out, and so its future is unsure. It may be developed for light industry or housing given the existing consents for development of part of the quarries.

Businesses would like to see the traffic problems improved and believe the by-pass and possible traffic-reduction methods could be the answer to making the village more pleasant and attractive to clients and shoppers.

Local shops and services also provide considerable employment acting as a source of part-time employment, enabling an increase in economic participation for those who may be unable to work full-time.



The H+H Celcon block plant whilst not strictly in the Parish of Borough Green is a major employer for the community.

It is worthy of note how clean a modern construction material factory is.

Economy

The affluence of the parish is clear when we look at indicators such as car ownership. Very few households in the parish do not own a car, with the number of households with three or more cars at nearly three times the national average.

Owner occupation levels are also higher than the national average with the number of those renting accordingly much lower than average.

The types of houses in the parish are also an interesting indicator of local wealth, with twice as many detached houses compared with the national average, which generally denotes local affluence.

GOVERNANCE - THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council - who are we and what do we do?

The most local and immediate form of government is the parish council. Traditionally, the parish council has had limited powers to make real change for the community. However, under the Rural White Paper (what will this mean, what new powers will we be given?), it is now envisaged that a new and expanded role for parish councils will be forged, which will allow rural communities to "play a much bigger part in the running of their own affairs". The production of this Parish Plan is the first step towards realising this new role.

During 2004, the parish council has been considering ways in which it might improve the service it provides to the public. With the growth of population in recent years, the scale of activities delivered by the parish council has increased with traffic planning applications and recreation at the forefront of public awareness. As the free flow of information between the public and the parish council is important in improving communication, the parish council has decided to fund the renovation of a disused kitchen in the village hall as a parish office. It is a central location, easily accessible to all and with the Clerk in attendance on occasions still to be determined, the public will be able to access plans etc. and generally seek information.

When asked how well the parish council publicises its activities and decisions the residents' questionnaire found that the majority of respondents to this question (69%) were positive about the parish council with 53% stating that the parish does this reasonably well and a further 16% stating that the parish does this very well. However, just under a fifth (19%) believed the parish council is poor at informing local residents.

Community Information

Community access to information is done via the parish newsletter '**The Voice**' , published once a month and distributed to every household in the parish. Information is also available through two recently launched websites, www.boroughgreen.org, providing useful information and contacts, and www.boroughgreen.gov.uk which is about the parish council. Information is also displayed on the village notice boards.

SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES AFFECTING THE PARISH

Overall, the residents' questionnaire highlighted several negative aspects to living in Borough Green. By far the biggest concern was the speed and volume of traffic through the village. Poor public transport on Sundays, bored teenagers and 'job' culture were also key concerns. However, the questionnaire also highlighted the many positive aspects to living in the village. Three aspects stood out as being particularly good; friendliness and community spirit; good overall public transport and access to the road network; and a good range of shops.

Bypass and Traffic

The major issue is the rising volume of traffic through Borough Green's small streets. This is a particular problem given the nature of the traffic generated by local business. The proposed bypass is regarded as the best way of improving the quality of life in the village.

Car parking

Linked to this is a similar growth in car parking problems, due principally to commuters parking their cars near to the station, which fills not only the station car park but also the car parks in the centre of the village. This prevents them from being used by shoppers and those travelling to use the many local services, who are also creating a large demand for car parking.

Young People and Leisure Facilities

A lack of youth activities in the village has caused problems with youth crime. The opening of the youth drop-in centre is trying to address this, and although the scheme is still in its early days, initial reaction from youngsters and the Rural Community Warden has been positive. The proposed skateboard park would also help with activities for young people.

Local Opinion

The residents' questionnaire found the following issues were highlighted as negative aspects to living in the Village.

Rank	Priority	Number of Respondents
1	Volume and speed of traffic	273
2	Poor public transport on Sundays and weekends	45
3	Bored teenagers and 'yob' culture	43
4	Poor and inconsiderate parking	35
5	Need for safe road crossings	27
6	Pedestrian safety in Western Road and High Street	25
7	Noise and dirt pollution	25
8	Village is overdeveloped for the capacity of services	21
9	Poor footpaths	21
10	Available open spaces taken by too many new houses	21

However, this was tempered by the questionnaire drawing out the many positive aspects to living in the Village, these were found to be the following:

Rank	Priority	Number of Respondents
1	Friendliness and community spirit	249
2	Good public transport and access to the road network	184
3	Range of shops and amenities	128
4	Proximity to attractive countryside	75
5	Easy access to larger centres	30
6	Schools and churches	28
7	Medical and dental services	28
8	Range of activities available	21