

West Witton

PARISH PLAN



APRIL 2004

West Witton Parish Council



West Witton Parish Plan

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What is a Parish Plan?

Parish Plans were announced in the 2000 'Rural White Paper' which set out the Government's plans for the countryside and are part of the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' initiative.

The Government wants the local communities to be more active in the control of their own neighbourhoods by having a say in the shaping of them and engaging with other powers to help achieve their aspirations and to work with appropriate organisations and partners in order to deliver these aspirations.

A Parish Plan is a statement of how a community sees itself developing over the next few years.

It should:

- reflect the views of all sections of the community;
- identify which features and local characteristics people value;
- identify local problems and opportunities;
- spell out how the residents want the community to develop in the future;
- prepare a plan of action to achieve this vision.

It also gives everyone a chance to say what they think about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their community, and how they'd like to see it improve in the future.

The Countryside Agency is a government agency working to improve the quality of the countryside and make life better for people living in rural areas.

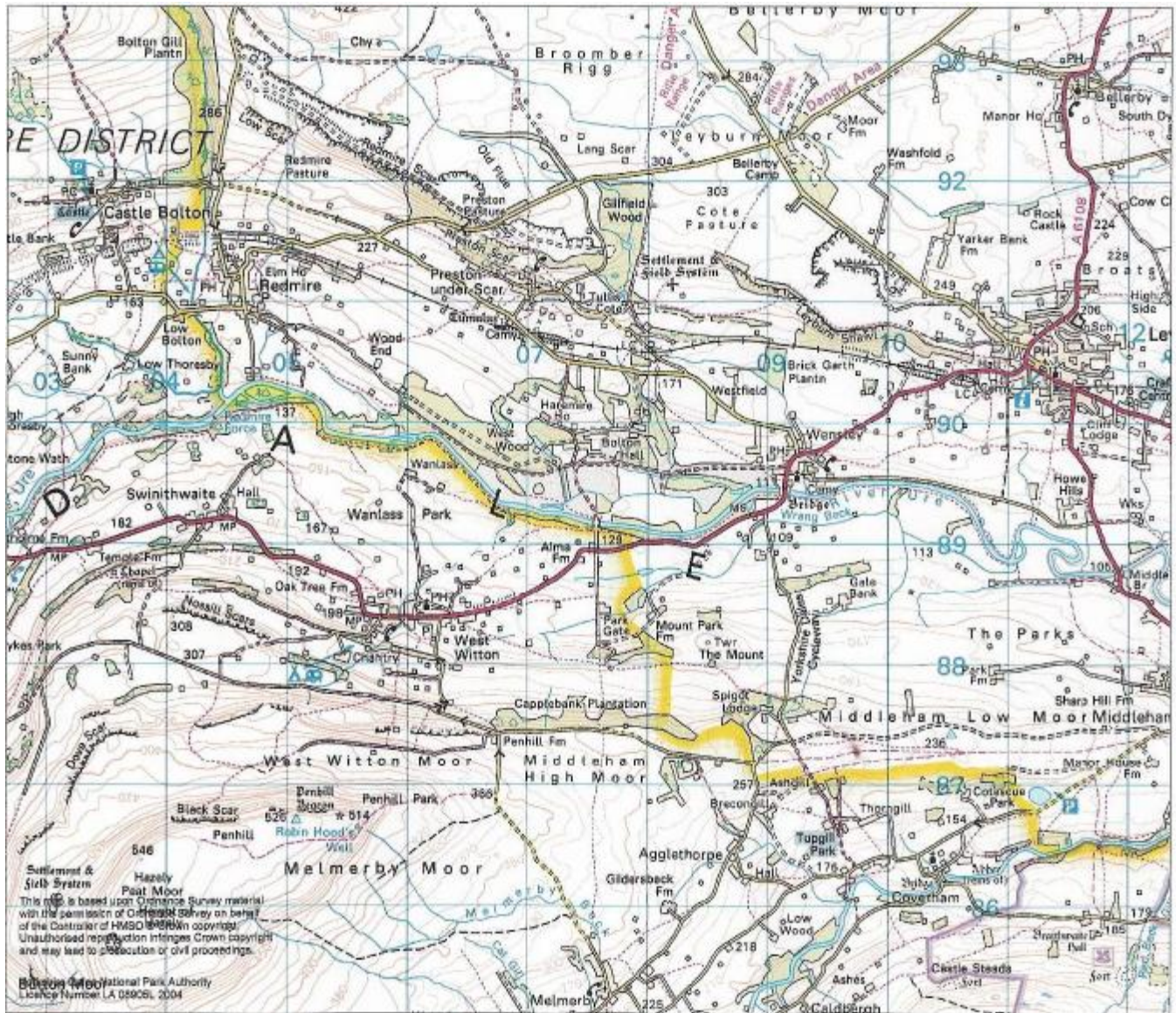
In order to be influential and effective at a strategic (County, District, Regional Government) level it is important that the Parish Plan complements policies in local documents and strategies such as the Richmondshire Local Plan, the Richmondshire Community Plan and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan.

Although the Parish Plans have no formal status as yet, it is hoped that they will influence a wide range of organisations that provide services to rural communities and help shape the future of these rural areas. The Parish Plan will also help when trying to access funding for parish projects.

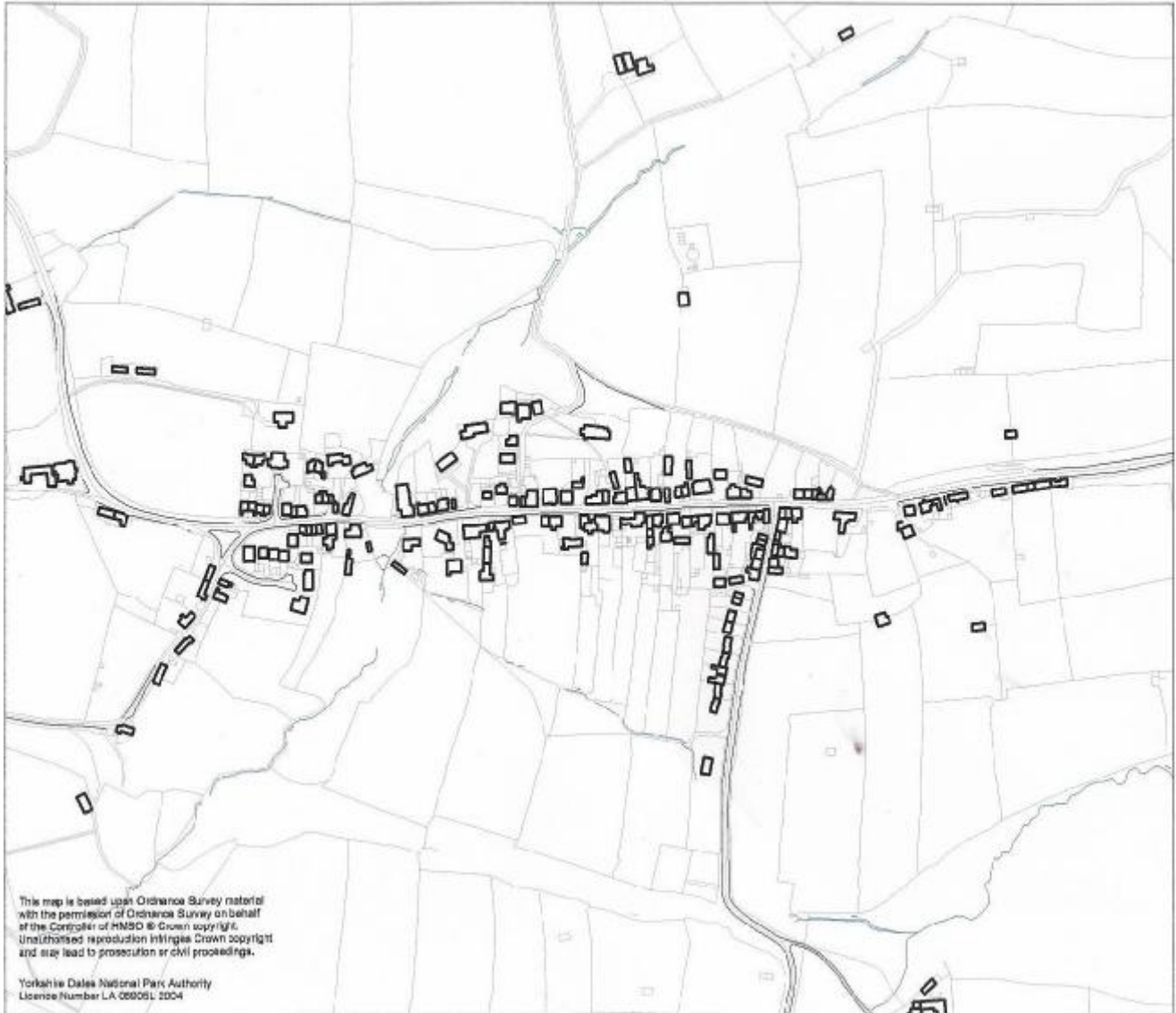


Swinithwaite Village

Location Plan



Village Plan



Introduction to the Parish.

The Parish is situated on the A684 road in Wensleydale about 4 miles west of the market town of Leyburn, and just within the eastern boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

It encompasses the villages of West Witton and Swinithwaite with a total population of 318, taken from the register of electors for 2004.

The larger village of West Witton stands on a limestone terrace on the north slope of Penhill and is of a generally linear layout the major part of which straddles the busy trunk road.

Swinithwaite is a further mile to the west and dominated by Swinithwaite Hall. It is clustered around a small village green and largely untouched by modern urban development.

The Parish amenities are mainly in West Witton and include:-

The Shop, open seven days a week, providing all the essential daily needs including newspapers and a convenient pick up point for prescription medication.



Village Shop and Post Office

It also operates the very necessary rural Post Office amongst other services.

St Bartholomew's Parish Church and the Methodist Chapel both hold weekly services albeit with dwindling congregations. The church is opened for visitors each day as part of the historic churches initiative and the Chapel Sunday School is used



St Bartholomew's Church

for village functions such as the Thursday 'Pop-In' coffee morning.



The Methodist Chapel and Sunday School

The Wensleydale Heifer, dating from 1631 and situated opposite the village garden and pond, provides the Parish with hotel facilities including accommodation, restaurant, bistro and function room.



The Wensleydale Heifer

The Fox and Hounds, a traditional dales pub and a social centre of the village. It plays host to the darts, dominoes and quoits teams.

The Village Hall, formally a school, is used regularly as a meeting place for most village organisations, functions and on three days a week the children's Pre School Group.



The Village Hall

The Playing Field recently revived, with the addition of a pavilion and an update of the children's playground, provides the villages with an open recreation area for football, cricket, quoits and outdoor events, etc.



Pavilion and Children's Playground

There are regular household deliveries of milk, coal and fuel oil. The mobile library calls every three weeks and a fish and chip van visits each Thursday.



The Fox and Hounds

The Parish is served by a daily bus service linking Hawes with Northallerton.

The villages are now largely farming communities, with a stable training racehorses, both offering some local employment but many inhabitants now commute to work outside the parish.

Public Consultation

This Parish Plan has been developed from the results of the questionnaire delivered to each household during August 2003.

The questionnaire was part of the Bolton Manor Ward Community Initiative with five parishes in partnership and devised to seek the views of residents to the following subject areas:

People – You and Your Household

Education

Employment

Housing

Social Issues

Crime and Safety

Health Care

Leisure Issues

Children and Child Care

Transport

Some 50% of households completed and returned the survey which were analysed by the Yorkshire Rural Community Council and a draft of the results was published for further discussion and comments by the community during Spring 2004.

People – You and your household.

All respondents completed this section and it showed an even balance of gender in most households with the majority in the 35 to 74 years age group.

23 families have lived in their present home for 21 or more years.

28 have lived in the Parish for between 6 and 20 years.

23 in their present home for between 1 and 5 years.

7 have moved into the Parish within the last year.

These results indicate a fairly stable community.

Education

Full Time – the majority of children in full time education attend the primary or secondary schools in Leyburn and mostly travel on the buses provided.

Further Education – nearly a third of responses showed an interest in undertaking further adult training or educational / recreational courses. This interest is concentrated on IT and computer training as almost a half of the respondents use a computer on a regular basis and of these one third indicated an interest in improving their skills.

Those residents who have taken computer courses in the main attended sessions at Middleham Key Centre or Wensleydale School. These courses are regularly available in Leyburn, Askrigg and in Catterick.

The responses show that there is no benefit to be gained from the 'laptop loan' scheme.



The Green Hill – Kagram

Employment.

Taking into account that about half the population are retired this reflected in the low response.

Whilst many people are in paid full-time or part-time work a significant number take up work on a casual basis.

The majority of respondents felt that they make full use of their skills in the workplace.

Employment prospects could be helped by more support with child care, better public transport, more training and qualification opportunities and job seeking information.

Housing.

There are some 187 dwellings in the parish of which 20 are bungalows and 10 farms.

The majority of properties are owned outright or being bought with a mortgage. A few are being rented, of these five are owned by the Smorthwaite Trust set up by a beneficiary for the village.

There are a number of holiday cottages and some of the owners do identify with and integrate into the community.

A quarter of respondents see a future need for sheltered housing but there was little interest in a low-cost starter home development within the villages.

There was some concern expressed that young people, and hence future young families, are moving away! In some cases this could be for reasons of employment but it is more likely to be due to the recent increasing trend in property values.

Social Issues.

People were very positive in their responses about the area and the Parish. They see it as friendly, helpful and with a strong community spirit. In-comers have moved to the villages to be close to families, their workplace or were attracted to the area with its beautiful surroundings.

Unlike many of the villages in the area it has been fortunate to retain most of its amenities.

Many residents already play an active part in the community, indicative that much more involvement is unlikely. However, more than half the respondents are prepared to volunteer for environmental / clean up schemes, to sort waste for recycling and use a locally sited skip for garden rubbish.

By far the greatest problems identified from the survey are issues in having a main trunk road through the villages, in particular West Witton. It is considered to be dangerous for its entire length with the volume of traffic, its speed, noise, the poor street lighting, its very narrow or non-existent pavements and lack of off street parking.



Heavy Traffic in the Village

The majority of families obtain advice and information from a variety of agencies, but principally from the Richmondshire District Council, the Health Centre or the Library.

There is a positive response for the Parish To have its own Web Site as an aid to communication, a better Notice Board and possibly a Newsletter.

The most significant improvements to the quality of life were considered to be better facilities for children, better job prospects, more money/resources and a better environment. This probably refers to the pollution from the main road?

Crime and Safety.

Crime is not a major concern in the area, but the service offered by the police is considered to be at a level of poor to acceptable and officers are now rarely seen in the community, this, despite an open invitation to call in at the weekly Coffee Morning. This said the village does have a resident traffic police officer.

There is a surprising lack of knowledge about the Neighbourhood Watch and Daleswatch schemes operating in the area but respondents are willing to be involved by joining a scheme.

Health Care.

Families are registered at either the Aysgarth Surgery or the Leyburn Health Centre, the majority attending between once and five times a year. Few people claimed having difficulty travelling to their health centre or getting prescriptions.

The hospital services at Northallerton, Darlington and Middlesbrough were in the main used for outpatient treatment in the past two years.

Some respondents occasionally experienced difficulty in getting to hospital, probably as the public transport timetables are restrictive.

Almost a fifth has circumstances which place limitations on family life. The main reasons being, care for the elderly, long-term sick and disabled relatives needing help with daily care, shopping, housework and companionship.

Leisure Issues.

Although there was a relatively low level of response, events and activities organised within the villages are generally well attended, particularly those focussed around the annual 'Feast'.

Comments would indicate that perhaps a broader range of activities might be held in the Village Hall, for example, day/evening classes for Keep-Fit, Arts/Crafts, something for teenagers?

The lack of time and no local facilities were the two main factors which prevented the take-up of sports, particular reference was made to there being no local swimming pool.

In general, access to shopping, restaurants, cinema, library, etc was considered good.

Children and Child Care.

The relatively high proportion of retired residents reflected in the very high 'no response' to this subject. Those who did made reference to the lack of nursery places, location and cost of child care provision and four considered that a crèche is needed.

The Pre School group, held on three days a week in the Village Hall and taking children from neighbouring communities, was considered a valuable asset.

There were only two requests from youngsters, one for a Youth Club and the other for a BMX bike track.

Transport.

Of the respondents 80% of households own a car and about 50% of these give lifts to other members of the house. The car is equally for travel to work, shopping and leisure.

Public transport time tables (bus) were said to be available in the villages and other transport information was mainly obtainable by telephone, (Traveline).

Although there is a regular daily bus service through the villages less than 20% of respondents use them. Some 60% said that the timetables were too restrictive and were not integrated with other transport for convenient through travel.

About 25% occasionally use taxis and were interested in a taxi voucher scheme, but community transport and dial-a-ride are rarely used.

Cycling would be more popular if there were more safe cycle routes.



Main Street – Looking West



Grassgill



Action Plan.

People were generally satisfied with the villages as they are and not looking to any major change or development.

The projects outlined in the Action Plan address this wish and have been derived from the respondent's views, opinions and comments gathered from the Parish questionnaire and subsequent consultations.

Dangers of Main Trunk Road.

The subject of most concern are the dangers arising from the main trunk road running through the village of West Witton, but all these problems can only be solved or improved by the relevant Local Authorities.

To date, following continual parish lobbying and a petition from residents, all that has been achieved is the promise of a token form of traffic calming which is still awaiting completion.

A number of residents have seriously suggested a by-pass road for through traffic as the only solution!

Keep lobbying the Authorities.

The issue of street lighting has recently moved forward as a result of the pending under-grounding of the electricity supply. A new lighting scheme has been agreed with the District Council following public consultation, and is to be implemented during the under-grounding work.

A previous offer of street lighting for Swinithwaite was rejected by the residents following a survey of the village.

Off Street Parking.

The lack of off street parking in West Witton, for both residents and visitors, is considered another contributory factor to the danger of the main road.

There is no obvious suitable site in the village and land would have to be found then purchased or leased.

Environmental Schemes.

Some areas in the Parish would benefit from tidying up, possibly landscaping, and subsequently maintained. These areas require identifying, and if necessary permission from owners obtained, prior to organising volunteer parties to carry out the work.

Recycling Schemes.

People offered to sort their waste for recycling if a provision for collection was available. This could possibly operate in conjunction with the paper collection scheme operated by the Council. Similarly people were prepared to use a skip for garden rubbish.

Village Communications.

The questionnaire results showed a need for improved means of communicating information within the parish. Three suggestions emerged from further discussion; a single centrally sited village Notice Board, a Newsletter and a Web Site.

Village Hall.

There were numerous requests for more activities in the Hall, ranging from courses in keep-fit and arts/crafts to youth activities. The parties interested in arranging further uses for the Hall will have to liaise with the Village Hall Committee to determine its suitability and how they can be integrated with the existing regular programme of uses.

It maybe worth considering that the new Playing Field pavilion would be more suitable for some of the suggested activities.

This Action Plan is based on the current requirements of the community. It is in no way a hard and fast document and can be amended or added to as circumstances change.