
Much Birch Herefordshire Parish Plan



Autumn 2004

The planning process has been funded by



**Much Birch
Parish Council**

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CONTENTS

A. Introduction:

What is a Parish Plan?

Why we produced our Parish Plan?

How we produced the Plan

B. Our Parish:

Location

History

Population and employment

The natural landscape, agriculture and wildlife

Housing

Services and Activities:

- Public transport
- Shopping and post office services
- The garage
- The hotel and public houses
- The Church
- Birch Methodist Church
- Poor Clare Monastery
- The school
- The surgery
- Meeting halls
- Library services
- The Museum
- Playgrounds
- Public open spaces
- Private sports fields
- South Herefordshire Hunt Kennels
- Sources of information
- Clubs and activities in Much Birch

Utilities:

- Roads, pavements and public rights of way
- Water
- Electricity
- Gas
- Drainage and sewerage
- Street cleaning and maintenance
- Refuse collection and recycling

Land owned by the Parish Council and The Poor Acre

Planning policies affecting the parish

C. Issues of concern to parishioners

Transport, roads and footpaths

Environment

Shopping and services

Housing development

Education, health and care

Social activities, Much Birch Community Hall and Little Birch Hall

Places of worship

Recreation and leisure

Other issues

Information about local activities and the Parish Plan Survey

D. The Action Plan

Introduction

Transport, roads and footpaths

Environment

Shopping and services

Housing development

Education, Much Birch Community Hall and Little Birch Hall,
places of worship

Recreation and leisure

Information about local activities



Acknowledgments:

Photos by local residents, including John Dinnen.

Aerial photo from "Hereford from the Air" by D. Foxton.

Sketch of the Church, Dr. Peter Garlick

A. Introduction

What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan gives everyone in the community an opportunity to say what they think about the issues affecting the parish and how they would like to see things change in the future.

Producing Parish Plans is part of the national policy of giving more power to parish councils to decide what is best for their own communities. The process of producing this plan has been funded by the Countryside Agency as part of its "Vital Villages" scheme. The Countryside Agency wants all sections of the community to join together to decide what they want to happen locally and then work with the right organisations to get things done.

Parish Plans can cover everything that is relevant for the people who live and work in the community. They set out the improvements people would like to see over the next few years. They have the potential to influence the actions of a wide range of organisations, as well as setting out a programme of future actions by the Parish Council itself.

Why we produced our Parish Plan

The Parish plan sets out in one place all the things that are special about Much Birch and important to parishioners – its history, its landscape and environment, the local services and facilities. We produced the plan to help preserve this distinctive character and to ensure that development and change make a positive contribution to the parish's future.

The Parish Plan will guide the Parish Council when it represents the views of parishioners and states the needs of the parish to external organisations. In particular, we believe that the plan will give Much Birch a voice and influence with Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Partnership in the following areas:

- Herefordshire Council produces the Unitary Development Plan and decides individual planning applications. The Council has agreed to the principle of adopting the planning components of Parish Plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the (emerging) Unitary Development Plan. This means that, once adopted by Herefordshire Council as SPG, the Parish Plan will influence planning decisions in the parish, including the determination of planning applications.
- The Government is introducing a new local planning system, replacing UDPs with Local Development Frameworks. When Herefordshire Council produces its first Local Development Framework, Parish Plans will provide an important source of local information and opinion.
- The Herefordshire Partnership has drawn up the Community Strategy: The Herefordshire Plan. This provides a framework for local groups to plan their work, a focus for other plans and a reference point for local people to measure progress. It identifies ten ambitions for the services provided by the different public, private and voluntary sector organisations in the area and makes links between them to improve service delivery. Ten Ambition Groups meet to work towards each of the Ambitions.

The Plan will help the Parish Council when it is making decisions about services and developments that will affect the parish. In some cases the Parish Council will be responding to proposals coming from local people or external organisations, but the research and discussion that has taken place during the parish planning process has allowed us to identify things that local people can tackle themselves. We have set these out in the Action Plan, the most important part of our document. We list a number of actions and for each action we explain why it is needed, how it will be carried out, who will be responsible and when it will be taken forward.

The Parish Council itself will be responsible for many of the actions in the Action Plan. It may be possible to involve some voluntary sector organisations such as Herefordshire Voluntary Action and Community First to assist in making progress with some of the activities.

Producing the plan has been a great opportunity for local people to work together contributing views, skills, energy and experience. People who are not usually involved in parish affairs have taken part. Young people have come forward with their thoughts about what is needed. Producing the plan has been a great way of bringing people together; it has helped build community spirit; we aim to keep up the process as we carry out the Action Plan.

How we produced the Plan

The Countryside Agency has for some time been promoting the benefits to Parishes of producing Parish Plans. Much Birch Parish Council recognised the importance of the opportunity and obtained a Parish Plans Grant from the Countryside Agency's "Vital Villages" scheme on March 8th, 2002 towards the cost of drawing up the Parish Plan. The Parish Council held an open meeting on March 13th and established the Parish Plan Steering Group.

The Parish Plan Steering Group was chaired by Dick Brimacombe and five Working Groups were established to identify the issues associated with the following topics: business, education, environment, planning/housing and transport. The groups collected information about each topic, identified the main concerns, discussed ideas and considered the links between the different topics. Regular Steering Group meetings have been held, all of them advertised on notice boards and in the local newsletter, and open to the public.

With the assistance of our Facilitator, Lynda Wilcox from the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, we organised three methods of consultation – a Planning for Real Event and two questionnaire surveys, one for adults and one for young people.

In September 2003 we sent questionnaires to all households in the parish. 259 residents responded to the questionnaire out of a total adult resident population of the parish at the time of the 2001 Census of 699, a response rate of 37%. The analysis of the information was completed in March 2004 and presented in a report "Much Birch Parish Plan Survey" which is available as a separate supportive document.

The "Ideas Harvest" was held on Saturday October 18th, 2003 at the Much Birch Community Hall. Seventy-eight residents of the parish attended. Information and ideas were collected on 1:1250 maps and on a model of the parish made by Year 6 children at Much Birch School. The model contains personal comments and anecdotes from the children and is now on display on a wall in the Community Hall.

The draft Parish Plan was produced by the Steering Group in the spring of 2004, based on the information provided through the survey research, consultations and community participation. The Parish Plan was formally accepted by the Parish Council at its meeting on September 8th, 2004 and the Parish Plan County Steering Group and Herefordshire Council have been consulted on the plan's content.

Every household in the parish will receive a Parish Plan Summary setting out the main action points. The complete document is available to local residents via the Parish Council.



The Ideas Harvest October 2003



B. Our Parish

We have set out here information about Much Birch.

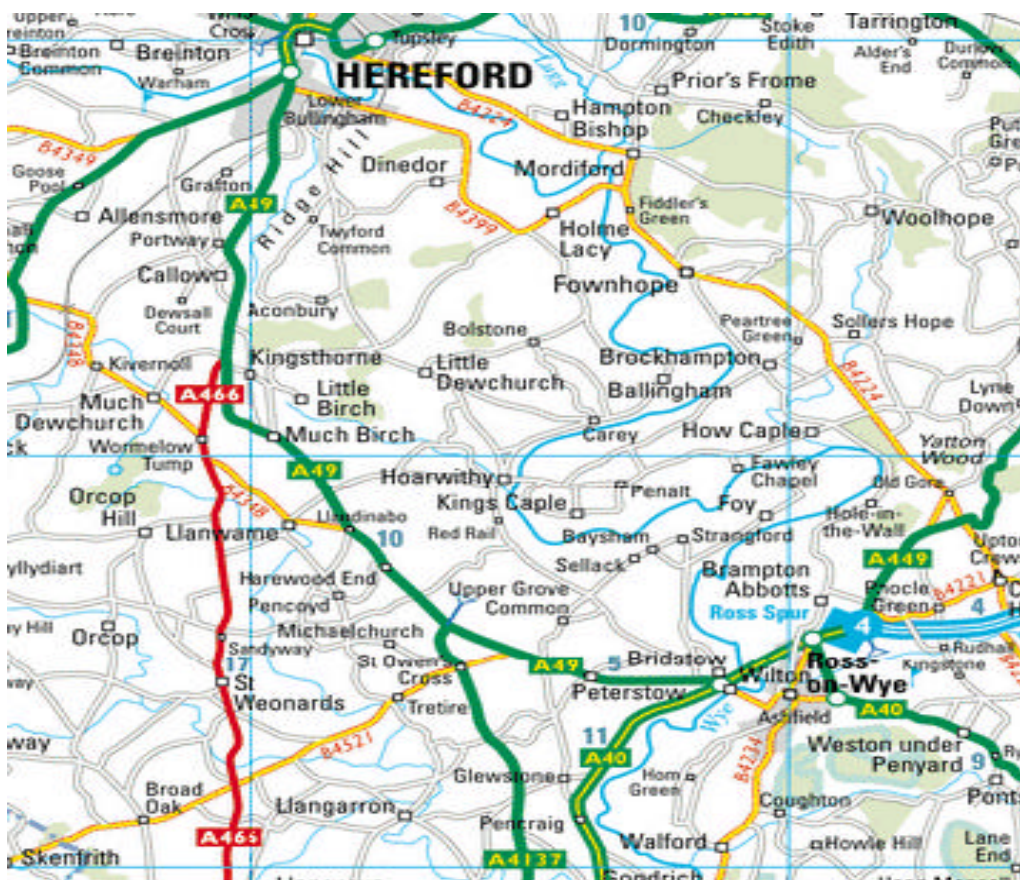
Location

The Parish of Much Birch in Herefordshire is located midway between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye (see Map 1). It extends for about 1.5 miles along the A49, a busy trunk road running from the border with South Wales to North West England.

The parish of Much Birch comprises the settlements of Kingsthorpe, Much Birch and parts of Wormelow. The remainder of the village green is located next to the old school at the junction of Tump Lane, the A49 and Kingsthorpe Road. The horse chestnut trees growing there now replace two magnificent trees that were felled for road improvements.

There are magnificent views from the high ground of the parish looking out over Herefordshire and across to the Welsh mountains, the Forest of Dean and the Malvern Hills.

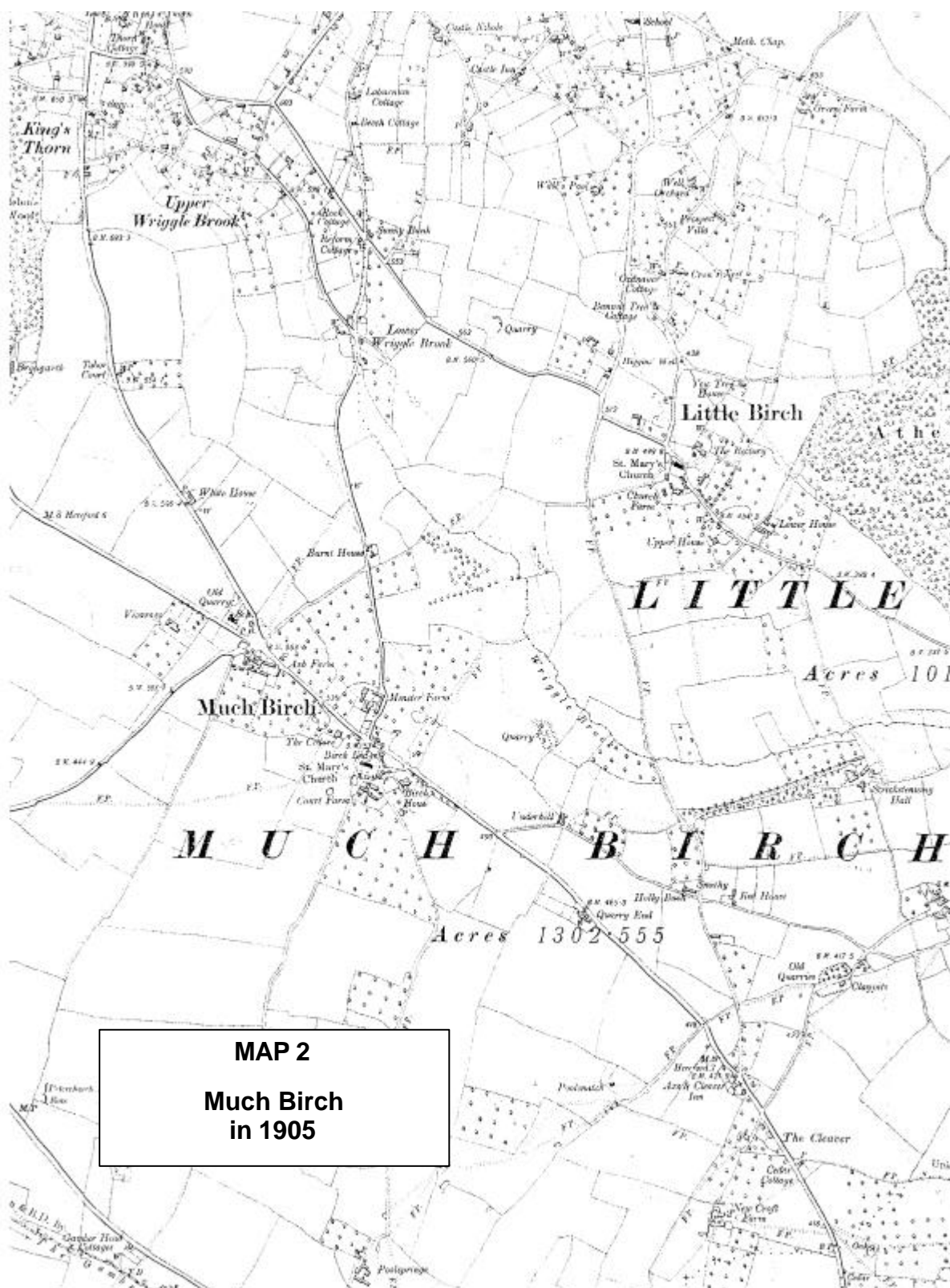
MAP 1



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Much Birch from the air





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Population and Employment

The parish had a population of 833 at the time of the 2001 population census and covers an area of 527 hectares. Its population density of 1.58 persons per hectare is roughly double the county average.

The age structure of the population is similar to the age structure of Herefordshire's population, although there is a smaller proportion of people in the 25 – 29 age group in Much Birch and a higher proportion of people in the 65 – 84 age group.

There are 353 households in the parish. 82% of households are owner occupiers, compared with 71% in Herefordshire. Only 10% of households did not have the use of a car or van compared with 18% in Herefordshire.

At the time of the census, only 1.7% of people aged 16 – 74 years were unemployed, compared with 2.7% in Herefordshire. 23.3% of the people in these age groups were retired, compared with 16.1% in Herefordshire.

Of the 358 people in the parish who were in employment in 2001, a large proportion worked in the professions and many ran small businesses from home. The proportion of people who work mainly at or from home was 23%, compared with 15% in Herefordshire.

People working from home have become more numerous in recent years and include people working in architecture, legal services and sales. There are at least 10 building contractors living and working from the parish.

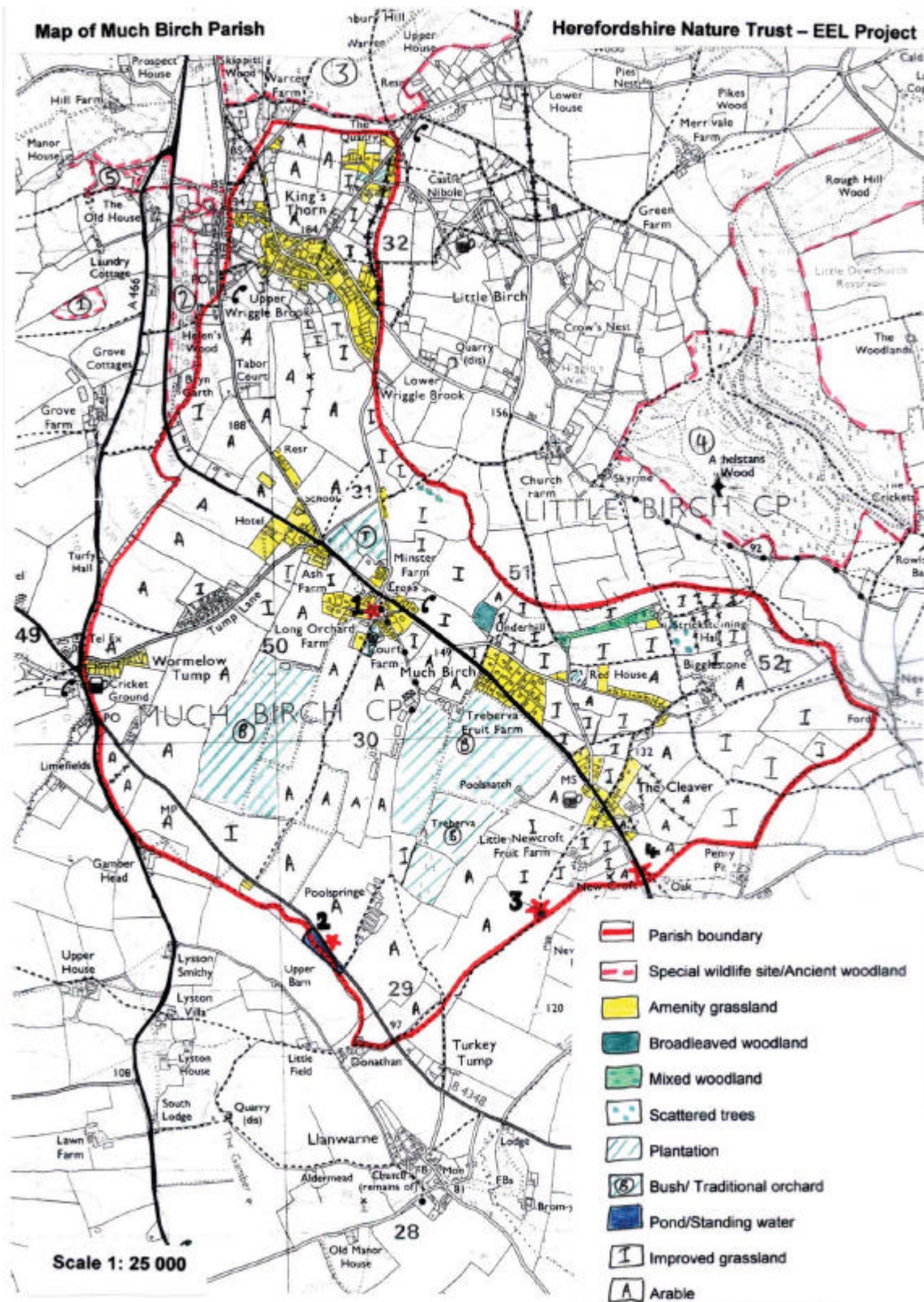
Tourists are catered for at the Pilgrim Hotel. Several houses offer bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Natural Landscape, Agriculture and Wildlife

The parish consists of attractive hilly farmland with well hedged fields and a variety of semi-natural woodlands, plantations and traditionally managed orchards. A wooded ridge forms a backdrop to the parish to the east and provides extensive views across to the Forest of Dean and the Welsh Mountains as the land falls away to the west of the parish.

The farmland is used for arable crops and improved grassland pasture. The boundaries of the parish and the pattern of land uses are shown on Map 3 which has been produced for the Parish Plan by the Herefordshire Nature Trust.

The soils in the Parish are mainly fertile sandy loams (Grade 2), suitable for a wide variety of horticultural and agricultural crops. Horticultural crops include strawberries and raspberries grown under polythene tunnels, black currants, eating apples and vegetable crops, including PYO.



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Farms are mixed, with crops and livestock, mainly cereals, sugar beet, beef and sheep. Broiler chickens are major enterprises on three farms.

In the last 30 years economic forces have led to a reduction in grass land, beef cattle and sheep, and an increase in arable crops.

Within the parish there are as yet no designated Nature Reserves (NR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Commons, Ancient Woodland (ANW) or Special Wildlife Sites (SWS). However, a Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the area, carried out in 2000 by the Herefordshire Nature Trust as part of the Herefordshire Millenium Map Project identified the following areas of potential value to wildlife:

1. Much Birch churchyard (SO 504 305)
2. Gamber Pond (SO 502 292)
3. Pond at New Croft Farm (SO 510 293)
4. Species rich roadside verge (SO 514 295)

See Map 3.

There are some existing sites of wildlife interest adjacent to the parish boundary or within a distance of 1km from it:

No.	Name of site	Category	Details
1	Manor Wood SO 492 318	ANW	Area of ancient semi-natural woodland.
2	Helens Wood SO 497 316	SWS	Oak dominated woodland with dormouse recorded.
3	Woodlands on Aconbury Hill SO 505 330	SWS, ANW	Ash dominated ancient woodland with species-rich ground flora, some conifer plantations.
4	Athelstan's and Rough Hill Woods and The Crickets SO 524 322	SWS, ANW	Oak dominated ancient woodland, some hazel coppice, some conifer plantations.
5	Kingsthorpe Common SO 495 321	Common	Land comprised of semi-improved neutral grassland and broadleaved woodland.

In addition, there is a fine example of a traditional English pond just outside the parish at Penny Pit farm.

Housing

Until the 1940's most of the housing in the parish consisted of farms, small holdings and cottages.

In the early 1950's the council houses and flats were built in Tump Lane. Bungalows and new houses were built, especially in the Wrigglebrook valley in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, and in the 1990's most of the new houses were of the "executive type". In Tump Lane homes have been built to provide low rent accommodation for local people.

Services

Public Transport

Car ownership levels in the parish are high and most people rely on their own transport arrangements. There is an hourly bus service between Hereford, Ross-on-Wye and Gloucester along the A49 and via Kingsthorne. Buses also run between Hereford and Monmouth via Wormelow eight times a day and from Wormelow to Hereford on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. There are less frequent services connecting Much Birch to adjacent villages.

People gain access to the national bus network in Hereford. There is a service to London three times daily.

One taxi service operates from Kingsthorne. Local people also use the taxi services based in Hereford.

Local people access national rail services from Hereford. 20 trains run daily to Cardiff, 14 to Birmingham and 4 to both London and Bristol.

Community Transport schemes operate in Herefordshire for people who cannot access the public transport network or are unable to use conventional buses. The schemes covering Much Birch Parish are operated by Hereford Dial-a-Ride, Dore Community Transport, and Ross-on-Wye WRVS County Cars. The Ross Action Committee takes elderly people from the parish for recreational drives in its ambulance between March and December each year.

Shopping and Post Office Services

Shopping and post office services are provided at the village shop in Wormelow where a wide range of goods is available. In 2003 a second shop and post office at Kingsthorne ceased trading. At one time the parish had a cobbler, butcher, a bakery and a sweet shop.

The Garage

Wormelow Garage sells fuel and vehicles, as well as carrying out vehicle repairs and MOTs. There is also a car sales outlet on the A49 at Much Birch garage.

The Hotel and Public Houses

The two public houses – The Axe and Cleaver on the A49 at the southern end of the parish and The Tump Inn at Wormelow - together with the Pilgrim Hotel on the A49 at the northern end of the parish, provide drinking and dining facilities. The Axe and Cleaver was built in the early 17th century. The name refers to the Harewood foresters who used the pub and the butcher who first lived there. The Tump Inn was built in 1780. Its name relates to the “Tump”, the area where the court met.

Tourists are catered for at The Pilgrim Hotel and by several houses offering bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Pilgrim Hotel



The Axe and Cleaver, circa 1900



The Church

The village church, dedicated to St Mary and St Thomas a Becket is in the Wormelow Hundred Group of seven Parishes. The church is located at the centre of the parish in a prominent position on the A49, its tower visible from most parts of the parish. The recently restored church clock was installed in 1921 as a parish war memorial and is a fine time piece. The church forms part of a grouping of community buildings with the Much Birch Surgery and the Community Hall. The church is well attended, providing weekly services for an Anglican congregation and conducting weddings and funerals.

The Old Rectory was built in 1880 but was sold by the Diocese in the 1970's when the house needed extensive repairs and the proximity of the A49 after straightening was making the house unsafe for children. The Old Rectory is now the Pilgrim Hotel. The replacement rectory from the 1970's was built next to the Community Hall but is now leased out by the Diocese as the present Priest-in-Charge resides at The Rectory, Birch Lodge.



Birch Methodist Church

The Chapel which has services every Sunday morning is at the top of Barrack Hill in Aconbury/Little Birch Parishes.

Poor Clare Monastery

Services in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels are open to the public. The monastery is located on the Much Birch to Kingsthorpe Road and is the home of an active Order of Catholic Nuns.

The School

Much Birch School caters for 5 to 11 year olds. Currently there are 193 pupils, with a head teacher, 10 other members of staff, 7 ancillary staff and the administrator.

A specially designed log cabin, The Cabin Crew, opened in the school playground in September 2003. It is used for a Breakfast Club between 8.15 – 9.00am and an After School Club between 3.15 – 5.15pm. It also accommodates a nursery class for up to fourteen 4 year olds. In the holidays and half terms a Play Scheme is run for 4 to 8 year olds.

Children of secondary school age travel out of the parish to schools in Hereford, Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth. The Hereford Waldorf School is located in Much Dewchurch and a number of children from the parish attend.



The Surgery

The surgery, located opposite the church, serves an area within a 7 mile radius of Much Birch. It is a long-established rural dispersing and training practice with four General Practitioners, two Nurses, a team of Administration, Reception and Dispensing Staff, and a Practice Manager.

The Practice provides morning, afternoon and early evening surgery sessions each weekday, and an emergency surgery on Saturday mornings. The Practice also offers a wide range of clinics.



Meeting Halls

Much Birch Community Hall was completed in 1979 for the use of the whole community in the parish. It is owned by the Parochial Church Council of Much Birch who are also the trustees of the building. It is used for church meetings and activities, and by a variety of groups for a wide range of activities including Guides, Brownies, Yoga, Line Dancing, a Lift Programme, a Bridge Club, Women's Institute meetings and IT courses. One of the rooms is used for a resource centre where printing and copying facilities are available for use by community organisations and the church. The Community Hall can also be hired for private functions.



The Community Hall

Little Birch Village Hall was opened in 1951 as a World War 2 memorial. The hall was built on land donated by David Dyke of Castle Nibole and the cost of £2,000 was raised by the public subscription. Little Birch Parish Council are the trustees of the hall and in 1977 they refurbished the building to celebrate the Jubilee.

Kingsthorpe Memorial Hall (previously known as Much Birch Little Hall) was built as a World War 1 memorial on land made available by Cecil Manning. The hall was originally used for all village communal activities, but after Little Birch Hall was built it was used only by the Scouts and the rifle club. There is an obsolete rifle range at the rear of the building.

Library Services

A Mobile Library visits the parish once a month, on the second Friday of the month. It stops at fifteen points in the parish.

The Museum

The Violette Szabo Museum was established by Miss Rosemary Rigby MBE to commemorate the life and work of Violette Szabo, the resistance hero. The museum is located in a building adjacent to “Cartref”, the house formerly owned by Violette Szabo’s aunt. Violette Szabo stayed at “Cartref” for respite visits during the war.



Playground

There is a children’s play area at Tump Lane with equipment for children aged between 1 – 14 years.

Public Open Spaces

Much Birch has the only Millenium Green in South Herefordshire – the 3.5 acre (1.4 hectares) field at Wormelow next to Cartref House and the Violette Szabo Museum. The Green was donated by Rosemary Rigby MBE and designated in 2000 as part of the Government scheme to create 250 Millenium Greens across the country. It is available as an “open breathing space” for the whole community. The chestnut tree in the centre of the field is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

Private Sports Fields

The Wormelow Cricket Club has its field and pavilion in the centre of Wormelow next to the garage.

South Herefordshire Hunt Kennels

The South Herefordshire Hunt has had its kennels on the same site in Wormelow since it was formed in 1860 following the split of Herefordshire Hunt into the North Herefordshire and South Herefordshire Hunts.

The Hunt owned a large area of land in Wormelow and made available the sports field that is now used by the Wormelow Cricket Club.

The kennels are home to 34 couples of hounds and have been completely refurbished in the last two and a half years. The kennels hold a licence for receiving and processing farmers' fallen stock.

Sources of Information

There are parish notice boards on the village green at Much Birch, alongside the Community Hall and at Wormelow Stores.

The King's Thorn and The Birches Newsletter and the "Parishes of the Wormelow Hundred" magazine are produced monthly.

Clubs and Activities in Much Birch

For Adults:

The Evergreen Club

A club for the Senior Citizens who go on coach trips to places of interest monthly from April to October.

The Birches Forum

Meets monthly in Little Birch Hall and has speakers on a wide variety of subjects of general and topical interest.

The Kingsthorpe and Little Birch Gardening Club

The Club holds monthly meetings with speakers on gardening topics and runs an Annual Open Horticultural Show in September. Meetings are held at Little Birch Hall.

The Halfway Community Theatre

A Musical and Drama group. The main activity in the last three years has been running a well supported concert several times a year in Much Birch Community Hall.

Much Birch Womens Institute

There is a long standing and active W.I. Branch which meets on a monthly basis at Much Birch Community Hall.

The Wormelow Cricket Club

The Club was formed in 1965. The excellent Club Pavilion built in 1988 was opened by Fred Truman. The club is in the First Division of the Flint Cook Marches League. Over 60 under 15's from all over South Herefordshire and the City turn out for practice each week in the Summer.

The Birches Bridge Club

This active club meets twice a week in the Much Birch Community Hall.

LIFT run by Halo

These exercise classes are run once a week in Much Birch Community Hall for patients referred by Doctors.

Country and Western Line Dancing Group

Weekly sessions in Much Birch Community Hall

Yoga Group

Meet once a week in Much Birch Community Hall

Pop In

Fortnightly afternoon meetings and social gatherings for men and women of all ages living mainly in Much Birch and Much Dewchurch. Meetings are held in the Much Dewchurch Village Hall.

Much Birch Flower Club

This club, founded in 1972 by the late Mrs Billy Pedley, MBE, has been extremely active for many years but closed in June 2004 due to a fall in membership and the high cost of speakers and flowers.

For Children:

Mothers and Toddlers Group

Meets twice a week in the Much Birch Community Hall for mothers with babies and children aged up to four years.

Much Birch Brownies and Guides

Well supported Packs that each meet once a week in term time in the Much Birch Community Hall.

The Cubs

The Pack meets at Little Birch Hall

The Scouts

Meetings are held at the Kingsthorne Memorial Hall.

Activities in Much Birch Church

Activities for young families include a regular Children's Workshop for the 5 – 11 year olds, PUFF which meets once a month in the Church for the under 5's and their parents, and a bi-monthly meeting for 11 – 16 year olds called The Banana Bunch. There is also an Ecumenical Bible Study Group in the parish which meets once a week.

Utilities

Roads, pavements and public rights of way

The parish is divided by the main A49 trunk road where traffic speeds are high because only the national speed restrictions apply. The other significant roads through the parish are Tump Lane which has a 40 mph restriction and Kingsthorne Road which has a 40 mph restriction for about one third of its length. Elsewhere, most of the minor roads and narrow lanes which allow access around the parish have a 30mph limit.

There are several stretches of pavements in the parish: pavements run along one side of the A49 from Much Birch school to the former shop premises at Kingsthorne; from the A49 to the surgery car park; from the Tump Inn to Wormelow shop; and for about two thirds of the length of Tump Lane (although the middle stretch is missing). All the pavements are maintained by Herefordshire Council. Herefordshire Council pays an annual grant of £200 to the Parish Council for additional grass cutting and weeding.

The Public Rights of Way in the parish are shown in Map 4.

MAP 4

Public Rights of Way



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Water

The village water supply is provided by Welsh Water and comes from the River Wye. The mains water is good and the pipes have recently been replaced.

A borehole on a local farm supplies good quality water to 86 households in Little Birch and Kingsthorpe; some people in the parish use local wells.

Electricity

All properties in the parish are supplied from overhead lines, some of which are currently being improved. Power fluctuates regularly in some areas and each year there are a number of power cuts.

Gas

There is no gas supply to the parish.

Drainage and Sewerage

There are no plans to install mains drainage in the parish. Households have cess pits, septic tanks and bio-disc systems. Careful management of these systems is necessary to prevent pollution of water courses.

Street Cleaning and Maintenance

The Department of Transport is responsible for cleaning and maintenance along the A49. Herefordshire Council is responsible for maintaining and cleaning all other highways in the parish.

Other cleaning, maintenance and tidying is carried out by local residents on a voluntary basis.

Refuse Collection and Recycling

General household waste is collected by Herefordshire Council once a week.

There are no recycling bins in the parish and skips for public use are only available on an occasional basis.

Land Owned by the Parish Council and The Poor Acre

The Parish Council owns two small areas of land. The first has been used for many years as part of the garden of Barrack View, a cottage near the bottom of Barrack Hill. The second is a small field (OS5129) of about two thirds of an acre at Rosebank near the top of Barrack Hill, which has been let for a number of years to the owner of Rosebank. The Parish Council is looking into the possibility of selling the land at Rosebank for residential development to finance the provision of low cost accommodation for local people on the land it owns at the rear of Barrack View.

In addition, the Parish Council appoints two Trustees, one of whom is the Rector, to administer the Joseph Cook Charity (The Much Birch Old Charities). The main asset of the charity is "The Poor Acre", a one acre field (OS322) on the north side of Holly Bush Lane.

The field has been rented for many years to Bigglestone Farm. The Charity income is to be given to "The Poor of the Parish". The land is on record as having been given to the Parish of Much Birch by an unknown benefactor in 1786.

Planning Policies affecting the Parish

The planning policies affecting the parish are set out in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. The plan consists of Proposals Maps and a Written Statement.

The parish is not directly affected by any of the designations in the Proposals Maps. The villages of Much Dewchurch and Llanwarne just outside the parish are identified because Llanwarne contains a Conservation Area and Much Dewchurch is classified as a "Main Village" with a site allocated for housing. The Proposals Map also identifies Helen's Wood, just to the west of Kingsthorne, and Athlestans Wood in Little Birch Parish, as Special Wildlife Sites.

The Written Statement contains the policies that Herefordshire Council will use when determining planning applications in the parish and when giving people advice about development proposals or changes affecting the environment.

One of the most relevant policies for the parish is "H6: Housing in smaller settlements" because the plan defines both Much Birch and Kingsthorne as "smaller settlements". Within these settlements proposals for residential development on plots arising from the infilling of small gaps between existing dwellings will be permitted, subject to limits on the size of the dwelling, the plot and the infill gap. Development may be permitted on larger plots for affordable housing where a proven local need has been successfully demonstrated.

Elsewhere in the parish, outside these settlements, residential development is limited to accommodation which meets the needs of agriculture, forestry or farm diversification.

Other policies in the Written Statement relevant to the parish are essentially concerned with conserving and enhancing the rural and historic character of the area.

C. Issues of concern to parishioners

The issues of concern to parishioners which are set out in this section of the Plan were identified through the household survey, the youth survey and the “Ideas Harvest”.

Transport, Roads and Footpaths

The questionnaire survey showed that although only a small number of people use the bus service regularly, many more people in the parish think that the service is important. Hereford is the most popular destination for bus travel. Changes to the timetable, improved reliability, alterations to routes and cheaper bus fares would encourage people to use the bus service more often. Bus shelters are needed in the following locations:

- at Much Birch Church/the surgery
- on Kingsthorpe Road opposite Tump Lane
- opposite top of Holly Bush Lane.

At the Planning for Real event people identified a need for more bus timetables at the bus stops and on the village green.

People are concerned about the poor condition of roads, pavements, verges and road drainage. More frequent maintenance and more regular cleaning of road gullies are needed.

People are worried about road safety:

- Vehicles travel at excessive speeds on the roads and lanes in the parish: speed restrictions and traffic calming measures are needed, especially on the A49 and where young children walk to school and where there are elderly pedestrians.
- People have asked for pedestrian or pelican crossings at major junctions on the A49, especially at the Tump Lane/A49 Junction.
- Heavy goods vehicles using narrow lanes through the villages create hazards for pedestrians and other road users. People would like to see weight restrictions introduced, especially along Tump Lane. Unfortunately, the highways authority have indicated in previous discussions that this is not feasible.

Most people think the local footpaths are very important and use them on a regular basis, though older people make less use of them than younger people. The main problems people face when using footpaths and bridleways are caused by overgrown hedgerows and vegetation, and by mud and water. There is a particular problem along Pool Spring Lane where debris and effluent from the poultry houses, together with overgrowth from the hedges, sometimes make it impossible to walk along this public right of way between the church and Pool Springs.

A number of people have asked for improved means of access to footpaths for their dogs, e.g. appropriately designed gateways and stiles. People would like to have clearer maps showing the footpaths and clearer signage on the paths themselves.

More parking spaces are needed for the school, the Church, the Much Birch Community Hall, Little Birch Hall, the shop and the Post Office.

The A49 “then and now”



Environment

People have a number of concerns about the quality of the environment in the parish.

Litter is one of the biggest environmental concerns, especially the verges along the A49 and around bus stops and bus shelters, e.g. in Tump Lane.

Poor maintenance of verges, trees, ditches and drainage is a problem, creating hazards to visibility and safety on the roads. Many people feel that the verges need to be kept mown and tidy, though there is also support for letting them grow to provide wildlife habitats.

Environmental problems are caused by poor maintenance of footpaths and bridleways. Overgrown hedges, bushes and nettles cause the greatest problems, though dog mess also makes using footpaths unpleasant.

People use recycling facilities outside the Parish. Most people who replied to the questionnaire would appreciate a regular bulky household refuse collection service.

Residents in some parts of the Parish have problems of flooding from unsatisfactory storm drainage arrangements. Wrigglebrook Lane, Tump Lane and the B4348 just outside Wormelow cause the biggest flooding problems. In the recent past some residents have also experienced the problem of mud draining off fields that have been used for intensive cultivation of potatoes. Changes to crops and to methods of cultivation seem to have reduced this problem.

Many of the suggestions about actions to improve the environment refer to traffic, highways and footpaths. These subjects are dealt with in the section of the plan dealing with "Transport, Roads and Traffic".

In the questionnaire responses and at the Planning for Real event, people suggested planting trees, shrubs, bulbs and hedging material. A tree planting programme could be used to help give more identity to the parish. Benches located at beauty spots would enable people to enjoy the environment.

Shopping and Services

Most people use the village shop and Post Office at Wormelow on a regular basis.

As well as postal services, people use the Post Office to pay bills, collect pensions and allowances, access the Girobank and pick up information leaflets. On a more occasional basis, people also use the Post Office for cash withdrawals, to cash cheques, to buy daily papers and obtain foreign currency and vehicle licenses.

People value all these services, though a number would like a new post box designed to take larger envelopes.

More people would consider using the local shop if pricing were more competitive and the range of goods were increased. People would particularly like a choice of fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, cheese and meat, and the opportunity to buy organic produce.

People are not happy with the car park at the shop. More spaces are needed and action should be taken to improve safety.

Many people in the Kingsthorpe area think the Wormelow shop is too distant to serve as their local shop and would like to see the shop and Post Office at Kingsthorpe re-opened. At the Planning for Real event, interest was expressed in setting up a community shop on Kingsthorpe Road.

People would like to see improvements to the winter weather service (highway gritting and snow clearance), to TV reception and the mains electricity supply. There is support for mains gas, mains drainage and broadband internet access in the parish. People would like post boxes provided on Wormelow Road and Wrigglebrook Lane.

Housing Development

Views are mixed on this subject.

Respondents were asked if they thought that Much Birch parish had enough homes for the needs of the current population; 53% (137 people) thought there were enough homes, 22% (56 people) didn't think the parish had enough homes, 18% (47 people) had no opinion, and 5% (14 people) did not respond to the question at all.

Respondents were then asked if they thought that the mix of homes was right for the current population. 46% (119 people) believed that the mix was right, 28% (72 people) did not think the mix was right, 17% (44 people) had no opinion, and 8% (20 people) did not respond to the question at all.

Parishioners were then asked a further question on what kind of additional accommodation was required. This was a multi-choice question where respondents were invited to tick as many of the 11 boxes available that they felt applied. On average, respondents ticked two or more boxes, and in some cases, ticked as many as eight. Ten people ticked the 'none' box and yet proceeded to also tick several categories of accommodation. The following table shows these citations (ticks). It is important to remember that the number of ticks should not be read as the number of people wanting a particular type of accommodation, but rather, as the number of times each category was cited (ticked.)

None	87	ticks
Homes for single people	50	ticks
Homes for couples	57	ticks
Homes for larger families	14	ticks
Homes for the retired	45	ticks
Homes for the disabled	38	ticks
Sheltered homes	49	ticks
Homes to buy on the open market	19	ticks
Affordable homes	96	ticks
Executive homes	5	ticks
Other	3	ticks

Subsequent questions found that 5 young people might leave their current home to form a new household, 4 of whom wished to stay in Much Birch, and one wishing to live outside the parish, but still in Herefordshire. 21 people felt that they might need sheltered housing in the next five years.

At the very end of the questionnaire, where people were asked to write additional comments or suggestions, the issue of housing development was frequently raised. Many people felt that there should be no further development in the parish at all. On the other hand, one person felt that housing in the area was too expensive for their children to remain here, and another, that they might need sheltered accommodation. It was also felt, that allowing some 'infilling' might bring cohesion, or encourage more shops and

other facilities. Whatever the opinion expressed, it was clear from these comments that any development that did take place, should be strictly controlled. There were various ways in which people felt that might be achieved; waiting for mains drainage before allowing any further development, renovation of any existing derelict housing, and the consideration of ecological impact and design in all planning schemes.

The parish council looked into the possibility of selling the land it owns adjacent to "Rosebank" Barrack Hill, for residential development to finance the provision of low cost accommodation on the land it owns to the rear of "Valley View" Barrack Hill. Porosity tests on the land adjacent to "Rosebank" revealed that drainage was too poor for development to be feasible. The question then was, should the land to the rear of "Valley View" be leased, or sold outright to a private developer and the revenue raised used for other projects in the parish. Parishioners requested that the parish as a whole be consulted, and a vote taken on this matter. The results of this vote were:-

To lease the land at the rear of "Valley View"	154 votes
To sell the land to a private developer	42 votes
Spoilt papers	3

Accordingly, tenders for the rental of this land were invited, and the parish council resolved at its meeting of 6th April 2006 to accept the highest. The new tenant, a Much Birch parishioner, will use the land as an allotment.

Education, Health & Care

80% of respondents to the questionnaire felt that Much Birch School is important or very important to the community. People would like to have a nursery, a playgroup, after-school clubs and holiday play schemes for the children, plus adult education and evening classes. Other suggestions included classes during the day, social activities and access to a resource library or the internet.

61% of respondents were interested in attending adult education or evening classes. There was more interest in evening classes amongst the employed than the retired population. The most popular classes, in declining order of popularity were, computing, arts/crafts, languages, aerobics/keep fit, history, D.I.Y, photography and music. Some people suggested canvassing every house in the parish to discover the skills that local people could provide and pass on to others in an informal group atmosphere. A creche would help some people to attend.

Most people are happy with the health and care services they have received. The majority of people use the G.P.'s surgery in Much Birch.

Social activities, Much Birch Community Hall and Little Birch Hall

Of the respondents to the questionnaire, 8% use Much Birch Community Hall weekly and 12% once or twice a month; 53% of the respondents seldom use the Hall and 21% have never used it. The level of use is higher in the 60 – 74 age group than amongst the questionnaire respondents generally, with 13% using it at least weekly and 21% using it once or twice a month. Despite these levels of use, 45% of respondents rate the facilities at the Hall as good and a further 27% as reasonable.

However, this survey information on use probably does not adequately reflect the success and popularity of the Hall. When people were asked in the questionnaire about additional facilities they would like to see in the Hall there was a high level of interest in a stage for performances, additional storage, an entrance cloakroom, larger meeting rooms and additional car parking; activities requested included adult education classes, discos for children and young people, aerobics, yoga, keep fit, badminton and clubs for children and senior citizens. This level of interest in the Hall is reflected in the fact that bookings are high and not all requests can be accommodated. As a result, the Hall Management Committee has produced a Business Plan and drawings to show how additional space can be provided to meet current and future needs (see Part D, The Action Plan).

Of the questionnaire respondents, 3% use Little Birch Hall weekly and 12% once or twice a month; 45% of respondents seldom use the Hall and 26% have never used it. The level of use is highest in the over 75 age group, with 28% of respondents using it either weekly or once or twice a month compared with 23% of the 60 – 74 age group. Little Birch Hall does not fare as favourably as Much Birch Community Hall when people are asked for their views on facilities. Only 9% rate its facilities as good and 31% as reasonable. People would like to see the building totally modernised or even rebuilt, with additional car parking.

In addition to the responses to the questions about the two halls, people also made general suggestions about additional clubs and activities they would like to have in the parish. The most popular suggestions were, in decreasing order, gardening, rambling, University of the Third Age, art, senior citizens group, music, whist, choir, drama, creative arts, yoga and local history.

Places of Worship

The majority of people who responded to the questionnaire are not active members of any of the places of worship listed. A quarter of respondents are active members of the Anglican Church. A number of people travel to places of worship outside the Parish.

People felt that the church would become a more important part of the Parish community if it were used for meetings and social events such as coffee mornings, concerts, music and plays.

The Palm Sunday Procession



Recreation and Leisure

The questionnaire survey asked people for their views on the facilities provided in the children's playground at Tump Lane. However, the level of response to this question was low, probably reflecting the fact that at the time of the 2001 Census only 22% of households within the parish had dependent children and 16% of the residents were aged under 16. Nearly 60% of respondents had no opinion on the subject, 12% felt the facilities were good or reasonable and 5% felt they were poor. Only 19 respondents (7%) indicated that their families use the playground. The people who responded to the question about additional facilities at Tump Lane thought the site should also be used for football and cricket, and that more swings and slides should be provided alongside the existing equipment.

Over a third of respondents to the adult survey (34%) thought that there should be more facilities for children in the parish and in the Youth Survey the two main responses to the question asking “what would make Much Birch a better place for young people to live”? were “greater access to sports facilities”, and “a wider choice of things to do”.

A number of people felt that the playground at Tump Lane was not conveniently located for children living in other parts of the parish, especially those living on the other side of the A49. Additional playgrounds were requested in Kingsthorpe and in Little Birch, possibly next to Little Birch Village Hall. At these playgrounds people would like to see areas and equipment for young children and separate play areas for older children to use skateboards (29 respondents), BMX bikes (17 respondents) and play ball games (48 respondents suggested a football pitch). These findings were confirmed in the Youth Survey. At the Planning for Real event, further support was given for these activities and for a fishing lake, a golf course, a mountain bike track and an archery range. People were also interested in having informal nature areas; suggested locations included the field above Bryngarth, the field near Mannings (no. 8548) and near Castle Inn.

Many respondents thought that more should be done to help children and young people to use their leisure time productively. There was support for a youth club and organised sports, arts and drama events, possibly even a local arts festival.

People also suggested that more use could be made of the Millenium Green, both by children and adults.

Other Issues

Questions were asked in the survey about work, training and employment. Very few people stated that they faced barriers preventing them from taking up employment, training or opportunities for study. On the whole, people wanted to encourage limited development connected with tourism and small businesses. This could include small industrial workshops, farm shops, more overnight accommodation and greater promotion of local attractions such as the church and countryside walks. Some people felt that development should be environmentally friendly and reflect the rural character of the area. They mentioned rural crafts, green woodworking and organic market gardening.

The parish has a Beat Manager who covers a very wide area. A Neighbourhood Watch Scheme covers parts of the parish, but it is not very active and needs revitalising.

Information about local activities and the Parish Plan Survey

Most people responding to the questionnaire think that arrangements to provide information about what is going on in the Parish are good or reasonable, but people are less happy with the way the Parish Council publicises its decisions.

Most people find the Parish Magazine/Newsletter a good source of information, though fewer people find notice boards useful.

A village website should be set up to publicise events, hold parish council minutes and information on planning applications.

There was some evidence that people who are new to the parish find it difficult to make contacts and discover what is going on. Organised walks would be a good way to introduce the parish and make sure everyone knows the area.

D. Action Plan

The Action Plan lists a number of actions that will be carried out in response to the issues that parishioners have identified. Each action is accompanied by a brief explanation of why it is needed, how it will be carried out, who will be responsible and when it will be taken forward. Producing the plan has helped bring people in the parish together; the aim now is to involve local people as far as possible in achieving the Action Plan.

Action Plan – *Transport, Roads and Footpaths*

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisations	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
40 mph speed limit on A49, especially through Much Birch Village, near the school, from The Pilgrim to Much Birch Garage.	Dept for Transport/ Highways Agency	Herefordshire Council – Highways; West Mercia Police	Maintain pressure on Dept for Transport during 2005/06	Dept for Transport	Parts of Much Birch will have a 50mph limit by 2005. The Parish Council will maintain discussions about the possibility of a 40mph limit and seek the support of Herefordshire Council
<p>Improve safety measures along the A49:</p> <p>“no overtaking” road markings through Much Birch Village from Tump Lane junction to south of Treberva Fruit Farm;</p> <p>traffic calming through the village;</p> <p>improvements at junction of Tump Lane and Kingsthorpe Road;</p> <p>car parking ban, especially in bus stop area opposite Much Birch Church;</p> <p>pedestrian crossings and traffic lights at the main junctions, including a pelican crossing at the Tump Lane/A49 junction.</p>	Dept for Transport/ Highways Agency	Herefordshire Council – Highways; West Mercia Police	Maintain pressure on Dept for Transport during 2005/2006	Dept for Transport	The Parish Council will seek the support of Herefordshire Council to the implementation of appropriate measures described in the Department for Transport “Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04”


Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
30 mph speed limit and traffic calming through Kingsthorne, Wormelow Village and along Tump Lane.	Herefordshire Council - Highways	West Mercia Police	2005/2006	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council contribution towards traffic calming	Working with Herefordshire Council Members, aim to include in Herefordshire Council Transport Plan.
20 mph limit on all minor roads and lanes.	Herefordshire Council - Highways	West Mercia Police	Letter 2005 seeking future provision		This is a longer term objective
Maintain passing places on minor roads and lanes.	Herefordshire Council - Highways		Programme implemented from 2005 onwards	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council will prioritise, and present proposals to Herefordshire Council to include in maintenance budget.
Enforce speed limits and weight restrictions (including installing traffic cameras along A49).	West Mercia Police		2005	West Mercia Police	Liaise with local Beat Manager; send letter to the Traffic Department, West Midlands Police; raise subject of speed limit enforcement with Chief Superintendent via HALC..
Construct pavements: - along A49 through Much Birch - along Tump Lane - from old shop to bus stop - on The Thorn for access to and from the bus stop	Dept for Transport Herefordshire Council Highways		Letter in 2005 seeking future implementation Begin process in 2005; lengthy implementation programme	Dept for Transport	Letter to Dept for Transport Site meeting with Herefordshire Council to agree a programme.

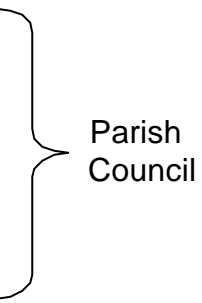
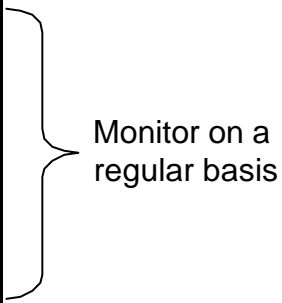
Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Where not possible to construct pavements, make road edges safer, especially for children and the elderly.	Herefordshire Council - Highways		Programme implemented from 2005 onwards.	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council identifies priorities.
Improve maintenance of ditches along highways.	Herefordshire Council - Highways	Adjacent land owners	Begin programme in 2005	Herefordshire Council (via Lengthsman Scheme)	Parish Council to prioritise, produce programme and explore Lengthsman Scheme.
Improve drainage along Parish Lane, Little Birch (a Byeway Open to All traffic: BOAT)	Herefordshire Council - Highways	Parish Council	2006	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council	Discuss design issues and funding arrangement with Herefordshire Council.
Provide additional bus shelters: - at Much Birch Church/the Surgery - on Kingsthorpe Road, opposite Tump Lane - opposite top of Holly Bush Lane	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council	2006 ongoing	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council	Parish Council to discuss in 2005 with Herefordshire Council to agree a programme to include all 3 shelters. Implement programme
Provide additional car parking: - for the school - for the church/surgery/ Much Birch Community Hall	LEA Parochial Church Council, Surgery, Trustees of Community Hall	Parish Council, local land owners and Herefordshire Council -Highways Parish Council, local land owners, Herefordshire Council -Highways	Progress during 2005; aim to implement in 2006/07. Progress during 2005; aim to implement in 2006/07.	LEA, Parish Council PCC; Surgery; Parish Council	Process underway, but need to find a willing vendor Process underway, but charitable status of Community Hall has to be resolved, site to be agreed & joint negotiations opened up.

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Improve highway maintenance, including drain & gulley cleaning	Herefordshire Council - Highways		2005	Herefordshire Council (including Lengthsman Scheme)	
Erect second signpost at Upper Wrigglebrook Lane	Herefordshire Council - Highways	Local residents	2005 if supported by local residents	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council	Confirm support at Parish Council and discuss with Herefordshire Council
Improve maintenance of footpaths and bridleways.	Herefordshire Council - Rights of Way	Parish Council	2005	Herefordshire Council	Explore Parish Paths Partnership (PPP3) as source of funding from Herefordshire Council
Extend footpath system: - to other villages, especially between Kingsthorpe and Wormelow. - to form recreational circuits	Herefordshire Council - Rights of Way	Parish Council	2006 onwards	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council; Countryside Agency	Parish Council to set up a Footpath Working Group to produce a plan of new footpaths and an implementation programme.
Display the definitive map of footpaths and introduce better footpath signage	Herefordshire Council - Rights of Way	Parish Council	2005	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council	Begin immediately with the display map.
Introduce cyclepaths	Herefordshire Council - Highways	Parish Council	Parish Council to communicate with Herefordshire Council in 2005; implement in longer term		Parish Council to investigate possibilities

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Introduce "school buses"/ community transport to reduce number of vehicles involved in school run.	LEA	Community Transport Schemes	Begin process during 2005; implement, including securing funding, in September 2007	Possibility of Parish Transport Grant from Countryside Agency	Parish Council to initiate discussions with LEA
Provide a community minibus for the elderly and people with disabilities.	Herefordshire Council - Social Services	Hereford Dial-a-Ride and Community Car Scheme; Ross-on-Wye WRVS County Cars; Parish Council	Begin 2005; implement 2006	Possibility of Parish Transport Grant from Countryside Agency	Parish Council to initiate discussions with Herefordshire Council and voluntary sector providers, including the Rural Transport Partnership Officer.
Set up a car share scheme.	A local interest group	Parish Council	2005	To be identified	Parish Council to identify demand and support local people in setting up a group.

Action Plan – *Environment*

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
<p>Increase frequency of litter collection, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - along A49 - along B4348 - along Hollybush Lane - along Kingsthorpe Road - around bus stops in Tump Lane, near church, near School, opposite the Thorn - around the school - around the shop 	<p>Dept for Transport/ Highways Agency</p> <p>Herefordshire Council - Highways</p>	Parish Council	 <p>Litter collection to be carried out regularly on basis of an agreed programme.</p>	<p>Dept for Transport</p> <p>Herefordshire Council</p>	<p>Parish Council to write to Dept for Transport</p> <p>Parish Council to explore possibility of voluntary litter picks.</p>
Provide a bulky refuse collection.	Herefordshire Council - Environment	Parish Council	2005	Herefordshire Council; Parish Council	Parish Council to discuss use of Parish Freighter Scheme with Herefordshire Council.
Provide a door-to-door recycling collection.	Herefordshire Council - Environment	Local residents	2005	Herefordshire Council	This is being introduced on a phased basis across Herefordshire. Parish Council will discuss programme with Herefordshire Council

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Set up a parish recycling point.	Herefordshire Council - Environment Parish Council	Local residents	2006	Herefordshire Council; Private companies; grants	Parish Council will liaise with Herefordshire Council and identify a site
Prevent discharge of water and mud from fields that affect: - Tump Lane - A4348 - Barrack Hill/Little Birch Road - Forge Lane - Parish Lane - Hollybush Lane - Wrigglebrook Lane	Herefordshire Council - Highways	Parish Council; Land owners	Commences 2005; monitoring ongoing	Inputs of time from Herefordshire Council and Parish Council	Parish Council to monitor local farming practices.
Prevent discharge of water from the following highways and areas of development: - A49 - Hollybush Lane - Tump Lane - Ash Farm	Dept for Transport Herefordshire Council - Highways; Private owner	 Parish Council	 Monitor on a regular basis	Dept for Transport Herefordshire Council	Parish Council to monitor and specify problem areas.
Keep ditches clean and build more gullies into them.	Herefordshire Council - Highways; Landowners	Parish Council	Monitor on a regular basis	Herefordshire Council; Input of time from Parish Council	Parish Council to monitor and specify problem areas.

Action	Person/Body Responsible	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/Resources	Comments
Introduce Bye Laws requiring dog owners to remove dog mess, especially along footpaths.	Parish Council; Herefordshire Council - Environment		2005 Finalise any changes in 2006	Inputs of time from Herefordshire Council and Parish Council	Parish Council to check that existing Bye Laws cover all areas where needed; if necessary, extend coverage.
Enforce legislation related to domestic bonfires.	Herefordshire Council - Environment	Parish Council; Residents	Information item in local newsletter in 2005. Implement on a regular basis	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council to inform/remind local residents of Herefordshire Council's powers related to bonfires.
Begin a tree-planting programme, e.g. birches at Community Hall	Parish Council	Highways Agency; Herefordshire Council - Highways	Introduce a programme in 2006 which will run over a number of years	Parish Council; seek trees from sponsors.	Parish Council to prepare a scheme
Commission an artwork for the Much Birch crossroads to give more identity to parish.	Parish Council	Herefordshire Council - Leisure; West Midlands Arts Council	Plan during 2006 Implement in 2007	Parish Council; Local Heritage Grant; West Midlands Arts Council	Parish Council to set up a local design competition.
Run a "village in bloom" competition.	Parish Council	"Herefordshire and the Wye Valley in Bloom"; local residents	2005	Parish Council; Local residents	Parish Council to enter Much Birch in the "Village Pride" category of the "Herefordshire and the Wye Valley in Bloom" competition.

Action	Person/Body Responsible	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Establish more conservation areas for wildlife, including reduced mowing of roadside verges where width allows this to be done without causing danger to animals, walkers and vehicles.	Parish Council; Herefordshire Council - Highways and Countryside	English Nature; CPRE; Herefordshire Nature Trust	2005	Herefordshire Council - Highways and Countryside; Parish Council	Parish Council to produce a plan identifying priority sites.

Action Plan – *Shopping and Services*

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Extend the car park at Wormelow Stores and/or improve the layout of parking spaces and the vehicular access point.	Owner, Wormelow Stores; Herefordshire Council - Highways		Medium Term	Owner	Parish Council to initiate discussions.
Provide a post box designed to take larger envelopes at Wormelow stores.	Owner, Wormelow Stores; Royal Mail		2005	Royal Mail	Parish Council to initiate discussions
Provide a 24 hour cash point at Wormelow stores	Owner, Wormelow Stores		2006	Private sector	Parish Council to initiate discussions
Provide Broadband Internet Access	British Telecom		2005	British Telecom	To be implemented during 2005
Provide Mains Gas supply.	British Gas		Letter 2005 seeking future provision	British Gas	Parish Council to write to British Gas.
Provide Mains drainage.	Welsh Water; Herefordshire Council - Engineers		Longer Term	Welsh Water	Parish Council to write to Welsh Water and Herefordshire Council.

Action Plan – Housing Development

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Parish Council scheme at Barrack Lane to provide 2 semi-detached cottages for low cost accommodation for local people	Parish Council	A selected Housing Association	Aim to implement in 2006/07	From sale of land owned by Parish Council; Social Housing Grant from Housing Association/ Housing Corporation	Investigations are underway by the Parish Council
Explain Parish Council's policies on housing to Herefordshire Council.	Parish Council		2005	Nil	Parish Council to invite Strategic Housing Officers to a meeting.
Quantify the need for starter homes and sheltered accommodation and identify suitable sites.	Herefordshire Council – Housing	Parish Council	2005	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council to discuss updating of Housing Needs Study with Herefordshire Council
Work with a selected Housing Association to encourage provision of starter homes and sheltered accommodation.	The selected Housing Association	Herefordshire Council - Housing; Parish Council	2006/07	The selected Housing Association	Parish Council to open up discussions
Hold discussions with developers/builders interested in providing starter homes and sheltered accommodation.	The selected developer	Herefordshire Council -Housing; Parish Council	2006/07	The selected developer	Parish Council to open up discussions

Action Plan – Education, Much Birch Community Hall and Little Birch Hall, Places of Worship

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
<p>Consider the layout and design of Much Birch Community Hall extension with a view to providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a stage (for plays, etc) - a cloakroom - another meeting room (and/or bigger committee room) - more storage space 	The trustees of the Community Hall	Herefordshire Council – Policy & Community; Parish Council	Investigations have begun and a Business Plan has been produced for the expansion of the building	Grants; Local fund raising; Parish Council	Parish Council will support the work underway.
<p>Consider the facilities at the Community Hall with a view to providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more car parking - tables and chairs for hire - outdoor fixed play equipment - internet access 	The trustees of the Community Hall	Herefordshire Council – Policy & Community	Progress in the context of the work underway on the Business Plan	Grants; Local fund raising; Parish Council	Parish Council will support.



Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
<p>Extend the range of activities at the Community Hall to cover the priorities identified in the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult Education Evening Classes - Computer courses - Classes in arts, crafts and languages - Keep fit, aerobics and history - Start “Flicks in the Sticks” - Start a Youth Club 	The trustees of the Community Hall	Herefordshire Council – Policy & Community	Begin planning immediately and agree a target date for introduction of each activity.	Grants; Herefordshire Council; Income from users	Parish Council will support.
<p>Decide on the role of Little Birch Hall and examine the costs and benefits of the following options for the building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major refurbishment and modernisation - demolish and rebuild on site or on a new site - “catch-up” maintenance 	Little Birch Parish Council	Herefordshire Council - Economic Development	Begin an appraisal as soon as possible	Grants; Herefordshire Council	Much Birch Parish Council will support need for an appraisal of this building.

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Encourage foundation of a Much Birch Rambling Club	Herefordshire Council - Leisure Services; Local residents	UK Ramblers Association	Follow up in 2006 when implications of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 have been clarified	Time input from Herefordshire Council.	Parish Council supports and passes to Herefordshire Council - Leisure and publicises the local interest.
Encourage foundation of a local branch of the University of the Third Age	Herefordshire Council - Leisure Services; Local residents	University of the Third Age	Follow up in 2005 and identify a date for implementation.	Time input from Herefordshire Council.	Parish Council passes to Herefordshire Council - Leisure and publicises the local interest.
Examine the additional activities people would like to see carried out in the Church, e.g. concerts, plays, meetings, Sunday School, coffee mornings, contemplation, and agree a programme of events.	Vicar/Parochial Church Council	Local residents	Follow up in 2005 and identify a date for implementation.	Time input from Parochial Church Council and local residents	Parish Council writes to Parochial Church Council and publicises this interest.

Action Plan – Recreation and Leisure

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Produce a plan for the provision of additional playgrounds in the parish.	Parish Council	Local residents; Herefordshire Council – Parks Officer	Produce Plan in 2006; Begin implementation, including securing grants, 2007	Time inputs from Parish Council	Parish Council could set up a Working Group to progress this.
Produce a plan for additional equipment and new activities in the playground at Tump Lane, e.g. a football pitch.	Parish Council	Herefordshire Council – Parks Officer	Begin in 2005; Implement in 2006	Herefordshire Council	Parish Council could carry out a more detailed survey, based on initial findings from Parish Plan work.
Parish Council to support: a) Setting up a Youth Club b) Setting up leisure activities, e.g. arts and music events, “Flicks in the sticks”.	Herefordshire Council - Youth Service Herefordshire Council - Leisure	HCVYS Local residents	Advertise in newsletter in 2005; if successful in securing volunteers and inputs from other bodies, aim to set up in 2006.	Herefordshire Council; Income from users	Parish Council will publicise these interests.

Action Plan – *Information about Local Activities*

Action	Responsible Body	Partner Organisation	Timescale	Budget/ Resources	Comments
Parish Council to consider methods for publicising its decisions, including: - additional and up-dated notice boards - put Parish Council minutes & planning sheets on notice boards - content of Parish Magazine/ Newsletter & distribution to all parishioners - possibility of setting up a parish website	 Parish Council		Implement a programme Underway Underway Publicise interest immediately	 Parish Council	One new board provided; plan future provision Implemented, and service now to be regularly monitored by Parish Council Distribution of newsletter has been increased and includes Parish Council decisions (the Parish Council provides a grant) Parish Council will publicise and aim to recruit volunteers to progress this scheme