

BISHOP'S WALTHAM
A MEDIEVAL MARKET TOWN



A MARKET TOWN HEALTHCHECK

JANUARY 2010

**A Report prepared by Terry Wilson, Project Coordinator, on behalf
of the "Bishop's Waltham Matters" Market Town Healthcheck Group**



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History & Membership of Healthcheck Process

History

2002 November	Public Meeting in Jubilee Hall agreeing to conduct a Healthcheck
2003	Independent Tourism Group created
2006 April	Tourism & Community Committee set up by Parish Council
2006 May	Steering Group agreed as the Tourism & Community Committee
2006 June	Fact Finding about the detailed process commenced
2007 August	Three Healthcheck Groups established
2007 September	Data collection by Groups commenced
2007 September	Bishop's Waltham Community Questionnaire
2008 April	SWOT Analyses by Groups commenced
2008 June	Bishop's Waltham Junior School Questionnaire
2008 June	Action Planning by Groups commenced
2008 September	Draft Report presented to the WCC Way Forward Group
2008 September	Draft Report presented to B W Parish Council
2009 December	Final Group Meeting
2009 June	Draft Report Agreed by Group Members
2009 July	Draft Report Accepted by Bishop's Waltham Parish Council



Healthcheck Membership

Steering Group

Project Coordinator Terry Wilson
Bishop's Waltham Parish Council Tourism,
Community & Environment Committee

Economy Group

Lead Councillor Judy Marsh (Originally David McLean)
Georgie Busher
Andy Grover
John Hayter
Cathy Headdock
Helen Johnson
Ed Pickering
Debbie Walker
Pat Wilson

Environment & Transport Group

Lead Councillor Dorothy Quiney
Wendy Belfield
Pauline Daniels
Alan Inder
Helen Johnson
Pat Lambert
Pat Lukey
Bob Pearson
Pat Wilson
Occasional Members -8

Social Group

Lead Councillor Rona Pickering
Jon Belfield
Bill Drake
Jean Hammerton
Helen Johnson
Rebecca O'Loghane
Steve Porcher
Peter Stevens
Diana Underwood
Pat Wilson
Occasional members – 3

A total of 39 people have attended at least two meetings



Introduction to Bishop's Waltham

Bishops Waltham is an ancient market town, now of primarily medieval origin, sitting approximately in the centre of a principally rural parish of almost 7,000 inhabitants. It lies amidst the chalk downs of Southern England on the fringe of the recently created South Downs National Park and along the scenic greenbelt route from Winchester to Portsmouth.

Waltham had originated as a Saxon village with a church also being built in the area about 640. The name was derived from the words Wald meaning wooded area and Ham meaning settlement, and the village became known as Bishop's Waltham after 904 when the King gave the manor to the Bishop of Winchester in return for Portchester.

The principal feature of the urban core of the town is the extensive ruins of the original Palace of the Bishops of Winchester, a Scheduled Ancient Monument which is in the care of English Heritage and is used for a wide range of public activities.



Bishops Waltham Palace

Parts of the original estate are still recognisable outside the main ruins, especially the Bishops' Fish Ponds and several sections of the Park Lug that originally identified the original boundary of the estate. Recently, the Bishop's Waltham Museum has appropriately relocated to the Farmhouse building within these ancient grounds.

The Palace was associated with many royal visits until its destruction in 1644 on the orders of Oliver Cromwell, and these include those of Richard the Lionheart on his return from the Crusades, Henry V in 1415 on his way to Agincourt, Henry VIII in 1532 before he travelled to France for the pageantry of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Queen

Mary in 1554 when waiting for King Phillip II to arrive from Spain for their wedding, and Charles II following the Stuart Restoration.

The whole of the town centre is a designated Conservation Area, and includes most of the old town, the Palace ruins, fishponds, parish church of St Peter and the tree-lined main roads to Winchester, Wickham and Corhampton. The interest and historical value of the built landscape of Bishops Waltham is well recognised and appreciated, the layout of the streets of the old market centre and the medieval houses having developed over hundreds of years. This development has resulted in the listing of a large number of buildings within the town centre, the majority being of Grade II status, and these include the 16th century Crown Inn situated in St Georges' Square.

The visual attractiveness of this central area is much enhanced by the presence of a large number of mature trees, often with a well developed shrub under storey. These trees are found to a large extent along both sides of the main highways, in larger private gardens, and in public open spaces; but a surprising number are present along smaller residential roads and footways outside the central area.

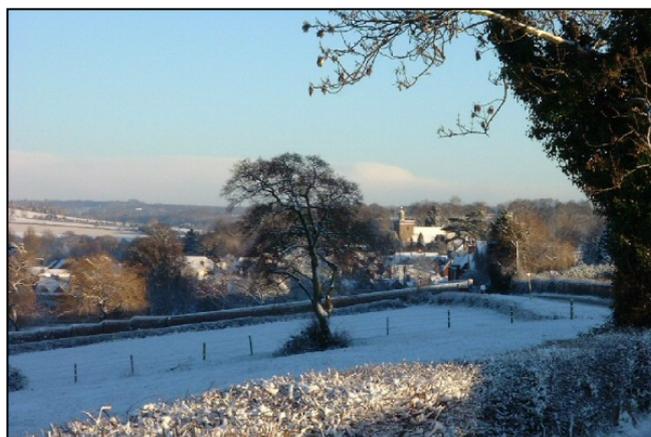
BISHOP'S WALTHAM A MARKET TOWN HEALTHCHECK



Not all of the listed buildings are within the town centre but are situated in the rural fringes. These include Vernon Hill House, the Stakes and Brooklands Farmhouses, and Chase Mill, now renovated to become a working mill again. It is interesting to note that a mill was recorded on this site in the Domesday Book, approximately 1086.

A significant proportion of the mainly farmland which surrounds the town is listed as of wildlife importance as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) or lesser designations; most of the sites are associated with either water, Hamble, Moors and Ponds, or ancient woodlands such as Runny Down and Galley Down.

Most of the rest of the rural area can still be regarded as farmland, with some 25 farms of typically 150-250 acres (often fragmented). Traditional market gardening has almost disappeared, as has the raising of cattle and sheep (except in small sub-economic herds). A few larger farms are still raising crops on the downland to the North and East. There is an obvious commercial move towards "horticulture", with much grassland now rented out for pony grazing. The fluctuation on food prices leaves doubt over what effect changes in farming practice will have over the appearance of our countryside, and effectively of access to it.



Countryside around Bishops Waltham

Much of the parish is covered by woodland in parcels of widely differing sizes. Due to the collapse in the price of timber and the difficulty in harvesting, this is almost all reverting to "ancient natural woods". The possibility of planting or managing for short rotation coppice for fuel is not really being assessed, but is only likely for local usage. There is still a scatter of woodland, ranging from small copses to large plantations. Of particular interest are the Hangers, belts of woodland on the slopes of the Downs too steep for easy working.

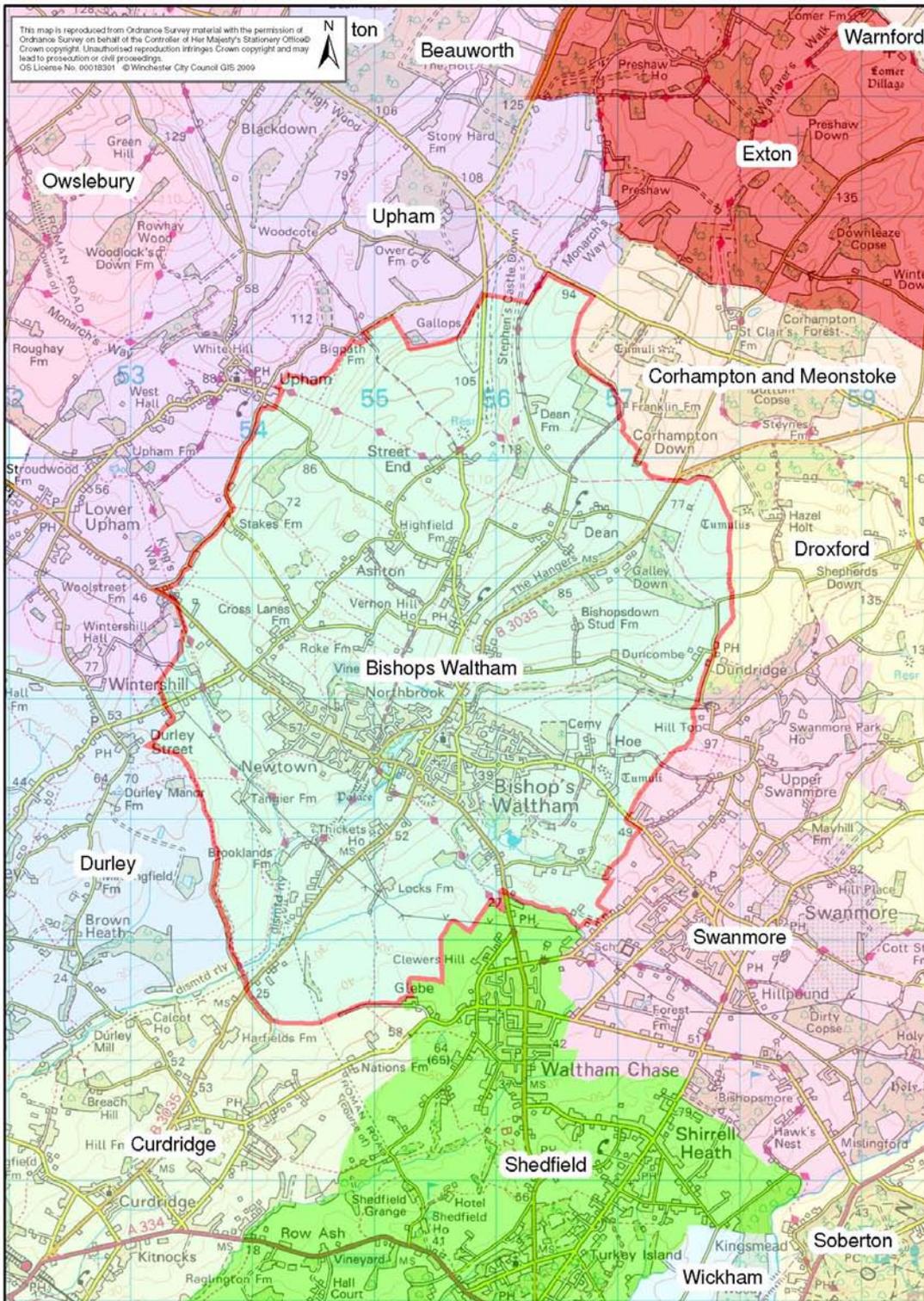
Access to most of this area is good, mainly by a network of 55 footpaths, 5 bridleways and a byway. Some of these paths are based on the original Roman Road, parts of which can be easily identified. The Parish Rights of Way Officer is active in checking and encouraging the use of this network.

Bishop's Waltham has an elected Parish Council and operates within the Local Government Districts of Winchester City and Hampshire County Councils. It is very active and efficient in its work on behalf of the community and owns and manages a large amount of land and several buildings that are used primarily for community leisure activities.

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The map below shows Bishop's Waltham Parish and the surrounding rural areas that are served by the town.

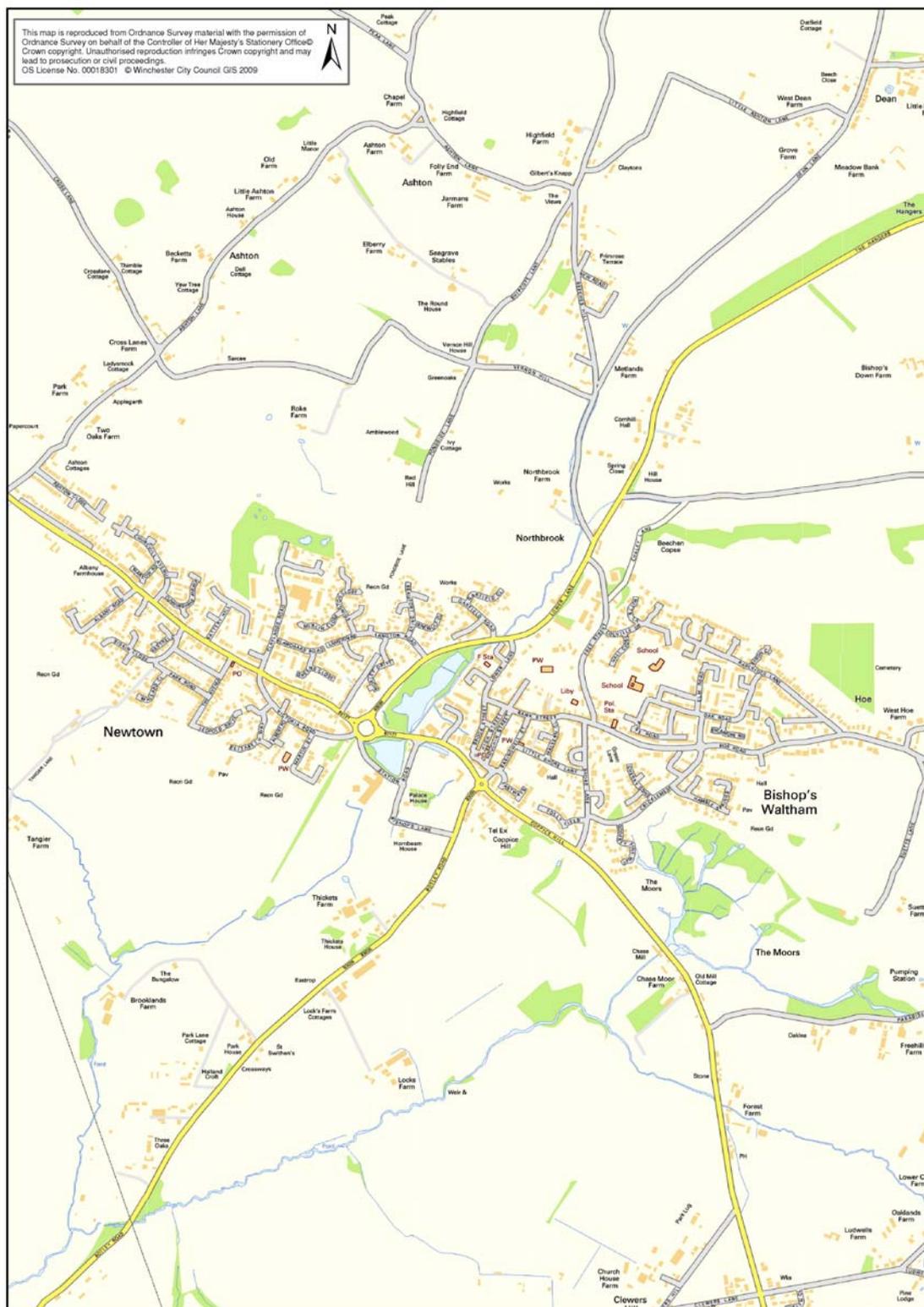


Bishops Waltham and surrounding Parishes

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The map below shows the settlement of Bishops Waltham.



Bishops Waltham Town



Vision Statement

The Vision Statement of the **BISHOP'S WALTHAM MATTERS** process is:

- We will provide a good quality of life for those who want to live, work and take leisure in Bishop's Waltham.
- We will build a lively town, with sustainable communities and a mix of interesting and inviting opportunities for visitors.
- We will provide a thriving business environment and attract inward investment.
- We will make positive use of our proud heritage and buildings.

This Vision Statement underpinned all of the work that followed and sets out the principles on which this document is based.



Healthcheck Findings

A full SWOT analysis has been undertaken, with details appearing in each of the Market Town Healthcheck worksheets (see appendices 5-8). This has been summarised below to identify the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally based economy • Infants and Junior Schools • Well defined town in an attractive rural setting, with many natural environmental features • Strong community spirit • Sports grounds and Play Areas • Range of Cultural Monuments 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of expansion opportunities in existing businesses • Poor maintenance of roads & infrastructure • Lack of “user friendly” public transport • Lack of an integrated transport system • Little meaningful local decision making regarding planning applications • Low tourism activity
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a Business Park • Community control of Palace Ponds • Facilitate “Safe Cycling” routes within the Parish and also to link with others • Improve diversity of sports & leisure activities • Encourage positive participation in local issues • More suitable “social housing” 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of appropriate car parking facilities • Excessive water abstracted from Palace Ponds • Increasing quantity and speed of road traffic • Housing development pressures • Lack of local work opportunities • Little community involvement with Parish Council



Economy

There are very few opportunities to increase employment within Bishop's Waltham because of the lack of small / medium business units. It is extremely rare to see a vacant shop premise or small industrial unit and on the rare occasion that it happens they are quickly re-occupied. There is no local opportunity to expand existing business premises.

Although employment within the community is not a significant issue, it is only because the vast majority have to travel outside the parish to work. At present the largest employer employs less than 40 at their local premises, thus highlighting that the dependency is spread over many small businesses.

The only significant "business park" is set amongst housing development, and these premises are fully occupied.

All nursery and pre-school groups report full memberships but it is currently unknown if other children travel to attend groups based outside Bishop's Waltham because of a shortage of facilities.

With the increase of families with both parents in full time employment, the school holiday periods create a problem because the majority of leisure, schooling and other activity groups also close down. This results in parents having to take leave from their employers to take care of their children and the availability of activities for children of all ages during these periods would be less disruptive to their working life.

It is believed that "Bed and Breakfast" accommodation has high occupancy rates but this remains to be confirmed. If correct, any additional tourism activities may result in increased demand.



The car parking situation to enable access to the High Street shopping centre is critical at certain periods, especially Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturday mornings. This problem must be resolved before any significant improvements to encourage more visits from adjoining parishes and tourism activities, such as the pedestrianisation of the High Street, can be implemented.

Parking in Bishops Waltham High Street



The key actions identified by the Economy Group are as follows:

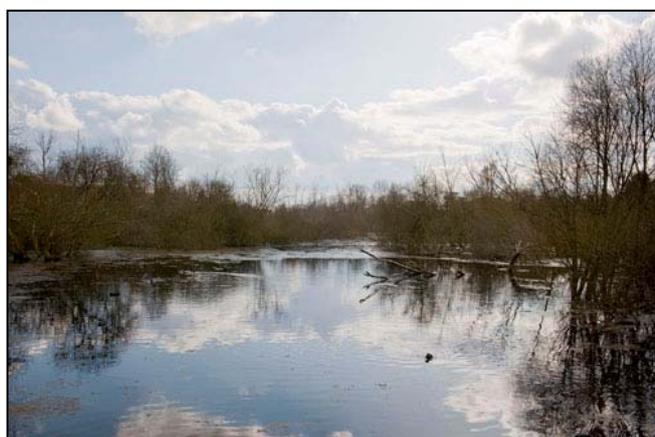
- EC1.1: Create a Business Park on the outskirts of Bishop's Waltham
- EC2.1: Support the activities of the Chamber of Trade
- EC3.1: Investigate demand for additional nursery and pre-school places
- EC3.2: Encourage activities in holiday periods – all ages from nursery up to secondary school
- EC4.1: Encourage more 'general' business related evening classes
- EC5.1: Encourage more diversity of businesses in the High Street
- EC5.2: Development of youth hall site to link Budgens and High Street
- EC5.3: Provide a "Welcome to Bishops Waltham" booklet for estate agents
- EC6.1: Provision of additional small business units
- EC7.1: Investigate demand regarding the provision of additional bed and breakfast accommodation
- EC7.2: Provision of additional car parking spaces



Environment

Bishop's Waltham has many natural environmental features including Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The major part of the town centre has been classed as a conservation area and there are more than 100 listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. There are more than 50 footpaths within the area and more encouragement to walk these and to view the monuments, by the community and visitors, must be a priority.

The environment around the "North Pond", including fish and wildlife, is affected most years by the abstraction of water by the water company without notice, and an ugly eyesore is the result.



North Pond



South Pond

Domestic gardens have apparently not been a consideration for much of the recent housing development and this, coupled with the amount of "infill" development, has contributed to the loss of environmentally friendly land within the Parish.

A lack of community spirit is displayed by the increase in shrubs and trees being permitted to grow outside gardens and provide hazards to other members of the community walking by. Litter, together with "dog mess", is also a continuing problem throughout the Parish and these issues can only be addressed properly by the community itself.



The key actions identified by the Environment Group are as follows:

- EN1.1: Take North & South Pond fully into community ownership
- EN1.2: Improve the surrounding area of South Pond
- EN1.3: Ensure prompt repair of all roads and pavements
- EN2.1: Clearance of litter outside the Town Centre
- EN2.2: Removal of all fly posting
- EN2.3: Clearing of all house frontages
- EN2.4: Cut back garden shrubbery to property boundaries
- EN2.5: Additional tree planting within Bishops Waltham – apple / cherry blossom
- EN2.6: Additional flower planting within Bishops Waltham
- EN2.7: Circular Walks Leaflets – start and finish in Bishops Waltham
- EN2.8: Clearance of litter in the countryside
- EN3.1: Extend railway path to Botley for walkers and cyclists
- EN3.2: Provide more public seating
- EN3.3: Provision of cycle routes within Bishops Waltham & beyond
- EN3.4: Provision of a public park (botanical)



Transport and Accessibility

The lack of local work opportunities and the poor public transport system, especially in the evenings, together with a lack of a coordinated Traffic Management Plan has resulted in Bishop's Waltham becoming heavily dependant upon the car, and it is in serious danger of becoming a "dormitory town" with the resulting loss of community spirit.

Continuing complaints about the lack of maintenance of roads and infrastructure do not appear to influence the responsible bodies and the "policing" of parking restrictions is virtually non existent with some yellow lines only becoming visible to the walking public late at night.

The speed and quantity of traffic appears to have increased significantly with a lack of safe crossing points at some important junctions. Accidents are believed to be increasing but this cannot be proved, or disproved, because of the lack of meaningful data.

There are no defined cycling routes throughout the Parish thus providing another excuse for the community to use their cars. This is especially problematic on the "school runs" with both Infant and Junior Schools being sited within a residential estate. The creation of other cycle routes, together with the extensions of pavements, between Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore / Botley may also help in relieving these roads of car traffic.

The only public transport system accessing the town is buses whose timetable, in general, is satisfactory during the day. However, after 7.00pm, Bishop's Waltham becomes a modern oasis, no car means that you cannot get out or return before the morning.

Car parking is as much an issue as to the Transportation Group as it is to the Economy Group and their comments reported previously are endorsed by us.



The key actions identified by the Transport Group are as follows:

- T1.1: Improve availability of public bus services
- T2.1: Reduce traffic speed limits
- T2.2: Additional crossing points – e.g. Winchester Road
- T2.3: Road signs review
- T2.4: Additional / extended pavements (NB country footpaths)
- T2.5: Cycle Paths
- T2.6: Traffic Management Plan
- T2.7: Pedestrianise the Upper High Street
- T2.8: Car Parking
- T2.9: Upgrade Footpaths
- T2.10: Bus Shelters
- T2.11: Additional chevron car parking spaces
- T2.12: Facilitate life share and car share groups



Social and Community

The latest population figure of 6,551 as recorded in the 2001 census is a 13% increase on the 1991 figure and shows that the opening up of new housing developments, such as Langton and Cherry Gardens, heavily influences the normal gradual increase. The number of under 16's equals those of retirement age; the sum of both representing 40% of the total population.

The housing market is extremely busy with more than 20% of homes sold every year, however, there is lack of affordable / social housing that results in many if the younger members of the community having to obtain their first homes elsewhere.



New affordable housing development at Vine Gardens

The provision of outdoor sports grounds is very good but the changing facilities are old or inadequate and should be replaced or modernised. Football and cricket are well supported but the demand for more minor sports should be encouraged. The only indoor sport adequately supported is badminton but there are no facilities available to be used if any other demand was identified. A social swimming facility is provided at the Junior School.



Cricket at Albany Road

Appreciation of the town's culture and heritage is very low key within the community, most organisations target tourists, but more efforts must be made to encourage the growth of knowledge about the local ancient monuments within the population of Bishop's Waltham.

Despite the population movement, the community spirit within the Parish is still very obvious with over 75 voluntary organisations based here. The concern is that many of these organisations are organised by the same people, many of who are in the older age category. The younger members of the community must be persuaded to take part in their management in order to provide continuity.



The key actions identified by the Social Group are as follows:

- S2.1: Affordable Housing
- S2.2: Build additional affordable housing
- S3.1: Provision of a drop-in day centre for the elderly
- S3.2: Health Service
- S4.1: Parish Council relations with the community
- S4.2: Parish Council to achieve Quality Council status
- S4.3: Support community organisations
- S4.4: Youth Communication
- S5.1: New Play Area – Langton Road / Pongside Area
- S5.2: Reinstate a play area at the Jubilee Hall
- S5.3: Reinstate a play area at Priory Park
- S5.4: Provide a leisure centre for indoor sports activities
- S5.5: Replace sports pavilion at Priory Park
- S5.6: Replace sports pavilion at Hoe Road
- S5.7: Provision of additional allotments
- S6.1: Increase community events
- S6.2: Improve publicity for all local events / attractions



The Next Stage

Although the essence of a rural Market Town is intangible and difficult to define, using the results from the Healthcheck process, including all surveys and questionnaires, a picture has emerged of where some of the gaps are. The next stage is to look at achievable ways to bridge the gaps through the implementation of the Action Plans already identified.

Essential to successful implementation will be an ongoing dialogue with a range of statutory agencies and other service providers whose assistance and input will be required. This process has already begun and will continue for the foreseeable future. Where necessary, officers from the City and County Councils and Community Action Hampshire will help facilitate this dialogue to ensure that progress continues. Some of the actions are going to be long-term, and some may not ever be achievable, but the Parish Council will work with volunteers and other agencies to make sure that the Vision is achieved.

Although many of the Action Plans are inevitably part of the remit of the Parish Council; the process has given the community a voice in bringing these identified issues to their attention. Some of the Action Plans have already been implemented and many are being discussed at Parish Council level because the Tourism, Community and Environment Committee continues to be the Steering Group of the Healthcheck process.

The implementation of other Action Plans may be led by interested local voluntary organisations or individuals and this will be undertaken through regular communication with the Project Coordinator in order to ensure that there is no duplication of effort.

Since the Healthcheck process commenced, there have been several major developments that were not included in our thoughts at the time, and remained outside the process.

The Local Development Framework – Where the District is to allocate its increase in housing building between 2006 and 2026, the effect in Bishop's Waltham is likely to be a targeted increase of 500 Houses by the end of the period.

The announcement by **Sainsbury's** that they purchased the Abbey Mill site from David Wilson Homes in December 2008. If permission is given by WCC to implement the expected Planning Application, this will have the effect of replacing the 70 Houses and 16 "Office Units" that were already agreed, with a large food store together with 10 – 12 Houses.

It is therefore recommended that the Healthcheck process be formally revisited in 2012, after the basic results of the 2011 Census are published. This review will provide an update on all data following the changes that will already have been experienced, and also a measure of achievement regarding the implementation of existing agreed Action Plans.



Any enquiries about this report or the Healthcheck process should be directed to:

Terry Wilson
Healthcheck Project Co-ordinator
c/o Bishops Waltham Parish Council
Parish Office
The Jubilee Hall
Little Shore Lane
Bishops Waltham
SOUTHAMPTON
SO32 1ED