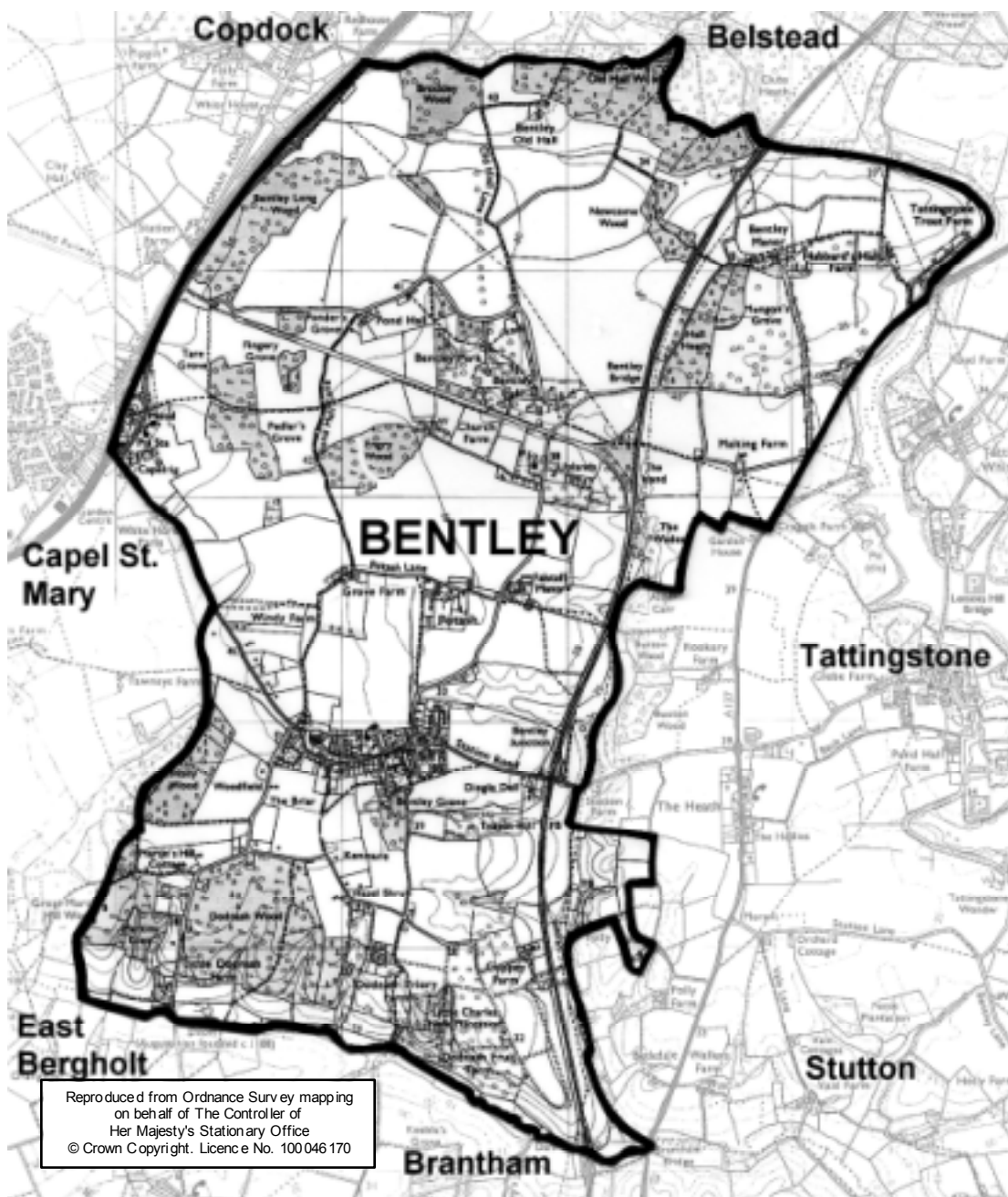


# Bentley Parish Plan

## Report

### January 2007



**The cost of producing the Bentley Parish Plan is 'core funded' by  
The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.**

**The Bentley Parish Plan is also financially supported by: -**

Suffolk County Council  
Babergh District Council  
Bentley Parish Council  
Rookery Farm Shop  
Thorcross Builders  
Les Fuller  
D E Baker and Son

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## Steering Group Members

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Chairman            | Mr John Wheals      |
| Secretary/Treasurer | Mr Michael Anderton |
| Parish Councillor   | Mr John Blackmore   |
| Member              | Mr Jim Smith        |
| Member              | Mrs Aimee Barford   |
| Member              | Mrs Sue Telling     |

## Co-opted Volunteer Members: -

Mr Ray Bloomfield  
Mr David Eastall  
Mr Bob Feltwell  
Mr Bob Mawkes  
Mrs Sandra Mehan  
Mr Adrian Mills  
Mr Joe Orr  
Mrs Jackie Tiller  
Mr John Tombs  
Mr Ralph Tyldesley

## Chronology

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| January 2005   | First meeting of Chairman and Secretary   |
| February 2005  | Parish Council authorises appointment of Chairman and Secretary of the Parish Plan Committee and awards a set up grant of £100.   |
| March 2005     | Consultation meeting with Suffolk Acre to identify procedure and funding arrangements needed to produce a parish plan   |
| April 2005     | Annual Parish Meeting presentation by Suffolk Acre representative and the formation of a steering committee of 4 individuals to be known as the Bentley Parish Plan Group (BPPG). |
| July 2005      | Suffolk ACRE training day attended by BPPG members. Results of a pilot survey of residents analysed   |
| September 2005 | First grant application to National Lottery Awards for All (A4A), local support fund raising commenced.   |
| October 2005   | A4A grant application rejected on technical points associated with banking arrangements.  |
| November 2005  | Second grant application to A4A overcoming rejection points.  |
| December 2005  | Grant application rejected with further technical objections.   |
| January 2006   | Meeting at Suffolk ACRE to clarify application requirements, preparation of a DEFRA grant application started.  |
| February 2006  | Meeting at Suffolk ACRE for final check of the application submitted for DEFRA core funding.  |
| March 2006     | DEFRA and Babergh DC grant approved. 2 members of BPPG attended Suffolk ACRE consultation workshop.   |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| April 2006    | Parish plan software received from Cheltenham and Gloucester University.  |
| May 2006      | 2 additional members appointed to the BPPG. Meetings commenced to develop and agree the format and content of a survey questionnaire. |
| October 2006  | Main questionnaires printed by contract. Content of youth questionnaire agreed and printed in house.                                  |
| November 2006 | Ten additional volunteers recruited and briefed. Distribution and collection of questionnaires commenced.                             |
| December 2006 | Collection of questionnaires completed. Input of data to software completed by contractor and initial reports extracted.              |
| January 2007  | Report commenced.   |

## **Aims & objectives**

The aim of the BPPG was to identify the likes and dislikes of the residents of the parish of Bentley, and the issues that could be reasonably and practically be addressed, within acceptable financial limitations, to further improve the lifestyle of the parish.

The objective is to furnish Bentley Parish Council with an action plan detailing the actions sought, how they might be addressed and the names of those members of the community who would be prepared to assist in their delivery.

It is recognised that social pressures will inevitably bring change to our parish but the residents of Bentley must have their say in the nature, timing and environmental effects of such changes.

To this effect, copies of this report will be submitted to Suffolk Acre; Suffolk County Council Local Member, Babergh District Council Local Members; the Highways Authority; the Countryside Agency and Suffolk Police.

Following distribution of this report, an open evening will be held at the Bentley village hall in 2007. This will enable all present to contribute ideas as to how the key issues could be tackled and to volunteer their services to help progress any or all of them for the benefit of the parish of Bentley.

## **Procedure**

All residents within the parish were encouraged to take part in a pilot study by recording their needs within the parish and those characteristics they deemed not to be so attractive or acceptable.

This, in effect, enabled everyone in Bentley to voice an opinion on the above. 23 parishioners responded to the pilot questionnaire and comment sheet.

Based on these responses, the BPPG was able to start work on the contents of the formal questionnaire.

The dedicated software needed for this project was provided by Cheltenham and Gloucester University and contained some 323 specific questions many of which were not applicable to a small parish like Bentley.

Nevertheless, it was a necessary exercise to reduce the number of questions to a level that enabled the BPPG to obtain opinions from all parishioners on all issues relating to the village. The BPPG met at fortnightly intervals throughout the summer of 2006 until a consensus had been obtained and a final draft version of the document produced.

The final questionnaire contained some 69 questions, 2 of which were textual, thus allowing residents to freely add their views, fears and comments etc.

The parish was divided up into 16 areas of roughly equal numbers of dwellings to enable the 10 volunteers and the 6 BPPG members to undertake distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Using the latest version of the Electoral Roll and local knowledge it was possible to identify all 344 dwellings within the parish for the volunteers to visit.

Each volunteer was briefed and armed with the appropriate number of main questionnaires, a quantity of youth questionnaires, an identity badge, a list of dwellings to visit and a number of blank prize draw tickets for those that completed a questionnaire.

The result was 270 completed questionnaires, covering 516 people. This represents approximately an 80% response. However not all respondents answered all the questions and one questionnaire could not be used (insufficient data). In addition 20 youth questionnaires were returned.

The completed questionnaires were then each given a unique number and the details entered on the dedicated software by a contractor, ready for analysis. Reports recording the overall question counts and the details of the 2 textual question responses have been printed out for use in producing this report.

Full statistical analysis reports have not yet been issued but will be available to interested parties if required in due course.

## **Description of the community**

The parish of Bentley lies midway between the A12 and A137 roads some 6 miles from Ipswich and 1½ miles from the hub village of Capel St. Mary, in the county of Suffolk.

The parish is bounded to the west by the A12 and the parish of Capel St Mary, whilst to the east it is bounded by the A137 and the parish of Tattingstone. Although a scattered parish, the village is mainly centred around the C426 road that passes through the centre. It has a population of some 750 parishioners and around 344 residences.

Females outnumber males 51% to 49%.

15% of people are under the age of 18 years; 48% are between 18 and 59 years; 37% are over the age of 60 years.

10% of people are self employed, 40% are employees and 35% are retired.

Virtually all necessary services are to be found in Capel St Mary and although there is a bus service, great reliance is placed on motor cars for access.

The nearest railway stations are Ipswich and Manningtree, giving good access to the London to Norwich mainline services and connecting services to all parts of the country.

The parish receives regular deliveries of post, newspapers, milk and dairy products, whilst supplies of groceries, bread, fresh fish and other goods are available at Capel St Mary or a local farm shop. Tesco also deliver to the parish as and when required. There is a popular public house with recently built restaurant.

A petrol filling station and small amenity shop are situated within the parish boundary but this is on the A12 and not close to the village centre. Despite not having a village shop or Post Office, Bentley possesses a thriving and enviable community spirit revolving around the village hall and the Case is Altered pub.

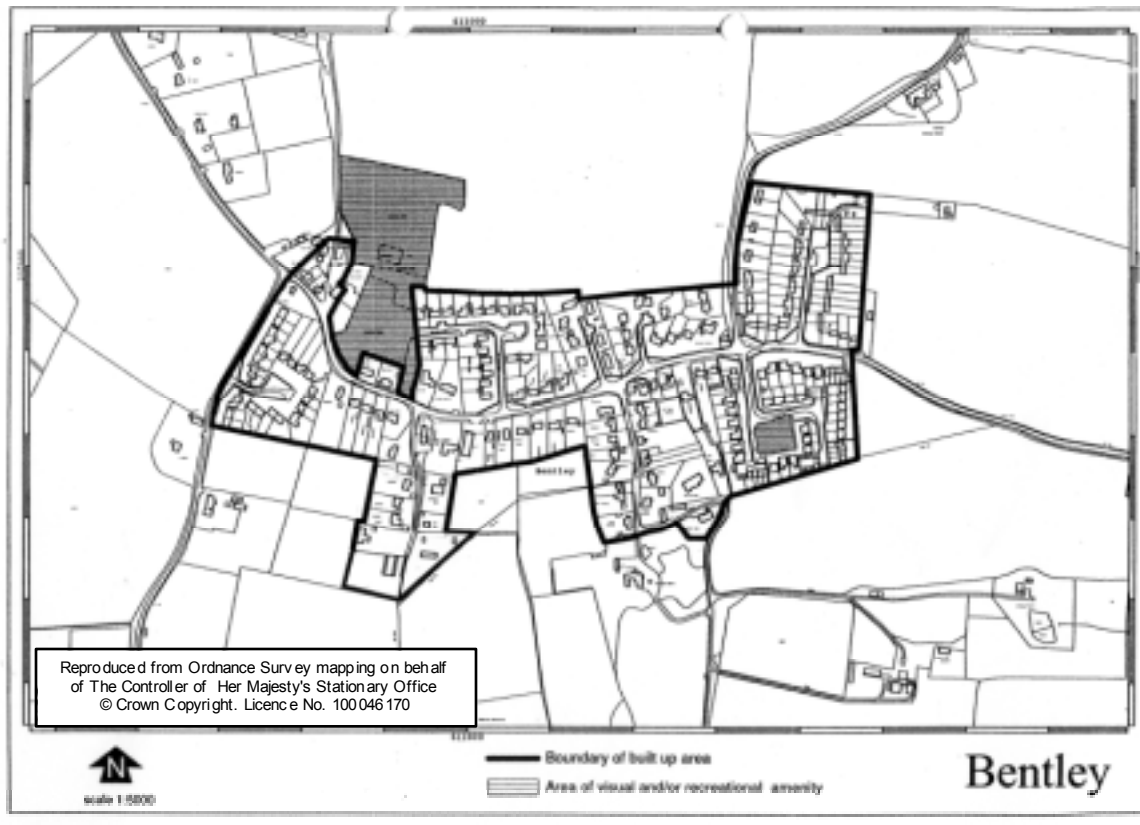
The primary school and church of St Mary's lie some distance from the village centre but have strong links with the community.

Activity groups in the parish include Outdoor Bowls, Carpet Bowls, Footpath Society, Horticultural Society, Aerobics, Luncheon Club, Parent Teacher Association, Play Group, Mums and Toddler Group, Tuesday Club (over 60s) and Women's Institute.

Work is underway to replace the well used wooden village hall with a new brick built construction that it is hoped will facilitate even more parish-based activities.

Over 92% of the responders feel that the community spirit, the environment and the location are the most important aspects of Bentley to them.

The built up area of the village is enclosed by a very tight development envelope, which only allows infill or limited deviations from the Babergh District Council Local Plan to take place.





## Households

The housing stock of Bentley was estimated to be 344 dwellings. In the 268 households that responded only 4.5% had an individual currently in need of alternative accommodation. Although 21 children from the village attended Bentley CEVC Primary School, 19 attended other primary schools. A similar number of children attend Bentley School from other villages. 21 (7.8%) households responding had a member registered as disabled.

**Area for action:** - Encourage more residents to send their children to Bentley CEVC Primary School.

## Personal

The majority of respondents (75%) had lived in Bentley for over 6 years and 31 (6%) had lived here for over 51 years. 42% moved here because it was an attractive area and 34% came with family or had family connections. 46% found the location as the most important attribute.

**Area for action:** - Maintain Bentley as a desirable location to live.

## Employment Status

503 people answered the question about their employment status. Of these, 32% were employed, 1% unemployed and 4% in full or part time education. 10% of the respondents were self-employed, and of these 3% employed other people. Those retired accounted for 35% of the sample, whilst 2% were permanently sick or disabled and 6% were unwaged housewives or husbands. Only 4 people were seeking employment at the time of the survey. 16% worked in Ipswich, 14% in the local area and 7% in Bentley. 23 people recorded London as their principle place of work.

**Area for action:** - Support a wide range of employment situations and note the high level of retired residents

## Transport

Nearly 93% of residents use the car as their major means of transport, with only a total of 3% using public transport. The community bus is rarely used except for leisure purposes (5% of users) and medical visits (1% of users). The majority of residents do not experience problems in getting out of the village and 40% of people would like to see an improved bus timetable. However, parking is a problem for some residents who often get driveways blocked or rely on roadside parking. 36 respondents were prepared to take part in a voluntary transport scheme although only 17 gave their contact details.

**Area for action:** - Seek an improved public transport timetable and develop a voluntary transport scheme.

## Traffic dangers

Over 65% of respondents felt that commuter traffic through the village was a major problem and that this was caused by speeding 64% (80% of which nominated

Capel Road) and lorries passing through (51%). There was a mixed view of how speeding should be dealt with, 31% supported traffic calming/speed bumps, 29% supported extension of the speed limit area and 26% supported a lower speed limit. A major concern was the danger at the Capel/Bergholt Road junction, this was widely nominated in the textual question No. 69. Half of respondents (50%) felt that the pavements were reasonably user friendly, but 44.6% felt that more were needed, while 33% felt that street lights were needed. A particular need was a footway along the Capel Road and into Bergholt Road. Overhanging vegetation (56%) was quoted as a problem for people with disabilities and nowhere to sit (48%) as a particular need.

**Area for action:** - Identify methods of reducing the speed and amount of traffic passing through Bentley. Develop proposals to improve the Capel/Bergholt Road junction and a footway along Capel Road.

## Education

Bentley CEVC primary School was rated as very important or important to the community (80%) in spite of only 21 of the 40 local children attending the school. In the area of pre school facilities, 49% felt the need for a playgroup, 39% for a nursery school, a fact born out by the textual responses that often felt that more than two mornings a week were required. The question of more educational facilities or new clubs within Bentley provided a wide range of information, with 52% wishing for adult classes followed by 23% wanting a holiday play scheme and 22% after school clubs.

There is an obvious demand for new clubs and activities with keep fit classes (41%) followed by computer/internet (35%), yoga (24%) and art (24%) clubs high on the list. A wide range of other clubs and pastimes also appeared to be popular and need to be further researched in order to find out exactly what is required and what can be accommodated in the new village hall.

The results of the question on social facilities for the various age groups resulted in 179 respondents with facilities for children up to 16 years being poor, young people 17-25 years being poor, people 26-60 years reasonable and over 60 years also reasonable. However, the majority appeared to have no opinion.

There was an overwhelming need for a children's playground in the village (70%) with a mixed response as to the preferred location. Most popular was the school playing field (36%), the parish playing field (31%) and the village hall (27%).

**Area for action:** - Develop the educational facilities available for all ages, including extension of the playgroup hours. Develop a plan to provide a children's play area.

## Development

The need for new housing in Bentley was generally split between those against (47%) and those in favour (39%), although 13% didn't know. The most popular type of housing need was homes for young people (45%), small family homes (31%) and sheltered accommodation (19%). The most popular type of accommodation required was low cost sale or rent (29%), restricted sale to local

people (25%) and local authority or housing association rented (23%). Over 40% of people felt that no further housing was needed.

When asked about what type of housing development would be acceptable, the main choices were small groups of less than 10 houses (37%) and single dwellings in controlled locations (36%). Over 17% of respondents felt that development outside the planning envelope would be acceptable. 41% felt that there was insufficient publicity given to planning applications.

People were asked how they would like the village to develop and 492 people responded. The clear majority (60%) would like Bentley to stay as it is, although 43% would like to see it develop as a working community. Some people obviously supported both of these ideas, so the consensus of opinion seems to be that Bentley should mainly stay as it is now, but with more emphasis on it developing as a working village. Less popular were the ideas of development as a retirement community (10%) and a commuter community (7%).

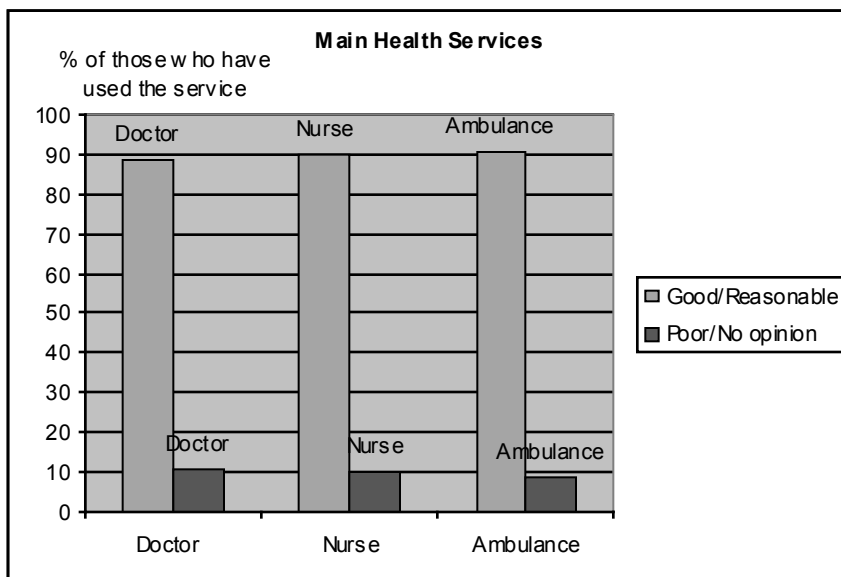
A complete housing needs survey has not been carried out and it may be necessary to undertake this as a separate exercise. Such schemes are developed in partnership with Parish Councils, the District Council and a Housing Association and can result in small housing developments kept for local people in perpetuity that can never be sold on the open market. A legal document is drawn up to keep the houses for local people and will state clearly who is eligible for housing in the new development.

**Area for action:** - Extend the development envelope to allow small groups of affordable/social/retirement housing to be built. Give consideration to a housing needs survey.

## Services

### Health

465 people answered the question on the standard of medical services in Bentley.



Of the respondents who have used the services the rating for good/reasonable were doctor 89%, nurse 90% and ambulance 91%. Except for the doctor's services, nearly 50% of respondents had not used the other medical services.

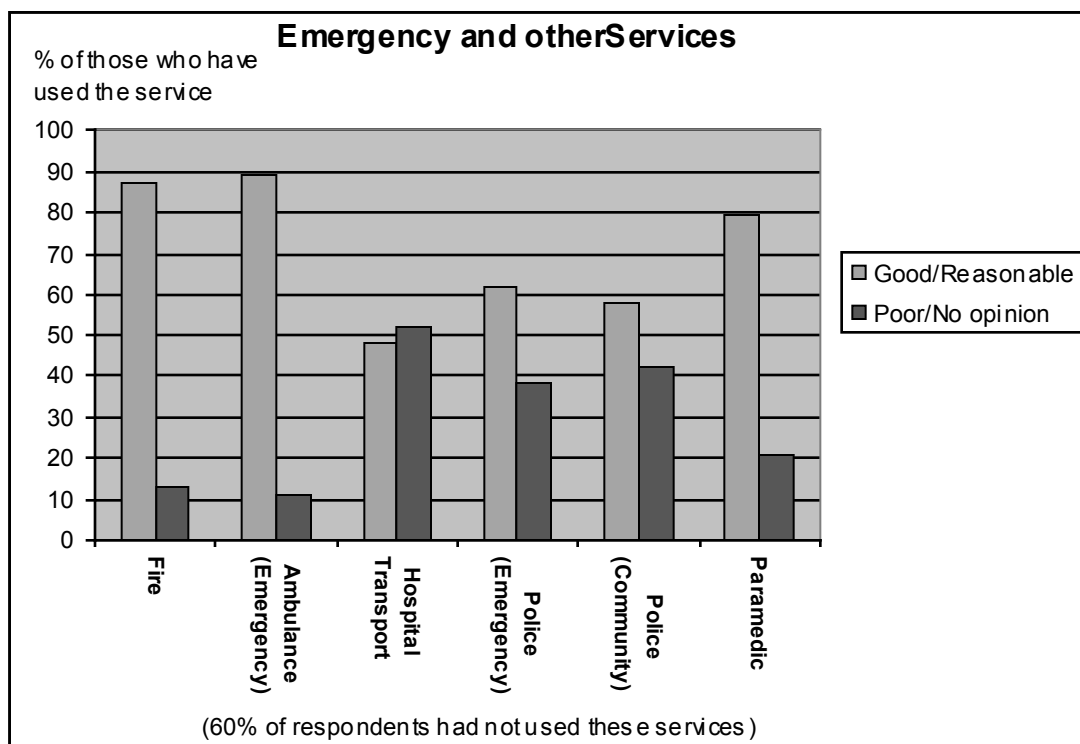
Households where there was someone registered as disabled living amounted to 7.8% of the 270 responding households.

**Area for action:** - Give full support to the Constable Country Medical Practice and seek to improve the appointment system.

**Emergency and other services**

There was a good response to the question of the quality of the emergency services within Bentley with 465 respondents. However, over 40% had not used these services except for the police and nearly 3% had no opinion. Most highly rated was the ambulance service (18%) and fire (16%). The opinion on the local community police was split between good (8%), reasonable (10%) and poor (10%).

Support for improvements called for a greater police presence (56%), more activities for young people (52%) and better consultation between police and local people (38%).



**Area for action:** - Encourage greater presence and liaison with the local police and more activities for young people.

**Shopping**

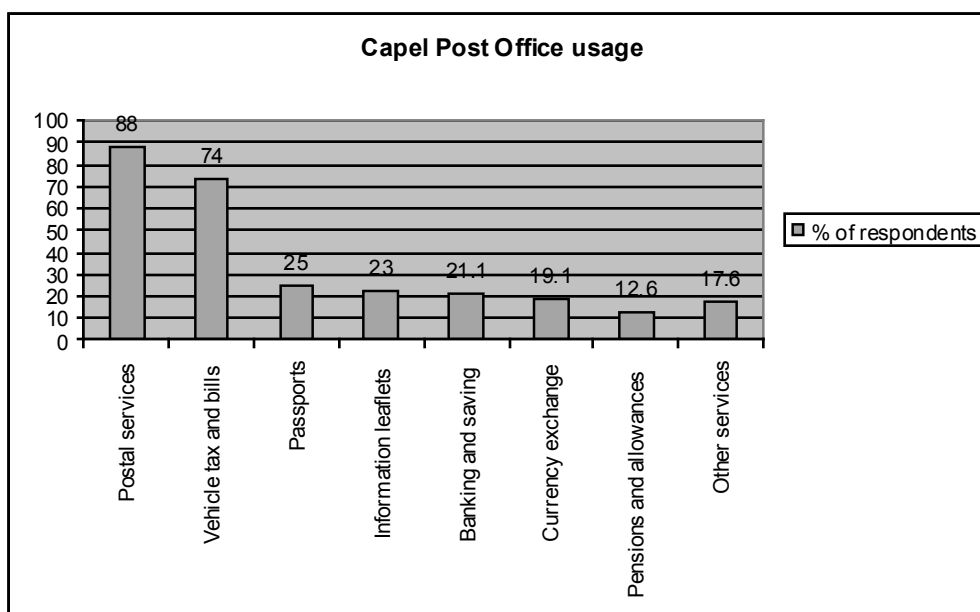
With very little opportunity to shop in Bentley, it is not surprising that there was a wide range of places where residents obtained their day to day supplies. Groceries

were bought either in a superstore (71%) or Capel St Mary (15%). Although newspapers can be delivered in the village (5%) many people preferred to buy them in Capel St. Mary (55%).

**Area for action:** - Support any initiatives (e.g. Community shop) to provide local shopping services.

### Mail/ Post Office

Most respondents were happy with the location of mail boxes (57%) and deliveries (48%) although 23% thought the size of the box opening was poor. The Capel St. Mary Post Office is used by 88% of residents for postal services, 74% for vehicle tax and bills, 25% for passports, 23% for information leaflets, 21.1 % for banking and saving, 19.1% for currency exchange, 12.6% for pensions and allowances and 17.6% for other services.



**Area for action:** - Support the provision of local Post Office services and the return of a Post Office in Bentley.

### Village Hall

60% of residents were aware of what was available at the village hall, 34% were not aware and 5% were not interested. 504 people responded regarding a community shop, 52% would use it weekly and 30% occasionally.

**Area for action:** - Develop a wider range of facilities and events in the new village hall.

## Local Environment

### Protection

When asked what should be done to protect the local environment, recycling topped the list at 68%. Improved public transport scored 44%, energy saving 43%, and reduction of traffic 40%. Litter picking was nominated by 37% and many locations were listed in the textual question No. 63 where litter, dog fouling and fly tipping was a problem.

**Area for action:** - Improve opportunities to recycle and organise regular litter picking events.

### Countryside

We live in a beautiful rural area and it is therefore not surprising that respondents attached a great deal of importance to the question about features of the surrounding countryside.

143 respondents (72%) thought that meadows and green fields are very important, with only 12% offering no opinion or regarding them as not very special. A total of 456 people (94%) regard small woods as either very important or important and 88% attaching the same categories of importance to open spaces.

More than half thought hedges and ditches 'very important' with well over 24% rating them 'important. Traditional farm buildings were rated 'very important' by 198 people (41%) whereas 213 people (44%) rated modern farm buildings as 'not very special'.

Most respondents said that wild flowers (76%), birds (82%), wild animals (78%) and insects (68%) were very important to the countryside around Bentley, although up to 10% had no opinion.

**Area for action:** - Support local landowners to maintain the rural environment and wildlife habitats.

### Public Rights of Way

In the personal section, 465 people answered the question on footpaths and bridleways.

397 (85%) said they know where the local paths are, with 58 (13%) saying they do not know where they are. This number fell to 302 (64%) who said they can use them without difficulty and increased to 79 (17%) who said they cannot use the paths without difficulty. 320 people (68%) said the footpaths are well signposted with 65 (14%) saying they are not well signposted. Because all public paths are signposted from the roads in Bentley, this question may have been confused with the need for waymarks; these are the direction arrows used for guidance along the way.

When asked whether they would be willing to maintain the footpaths, 89 people (19%) said yes and 212 people (45%) said no, while 48 (10.3%) offered no opinion. Only 37 respondents provided their contact details.

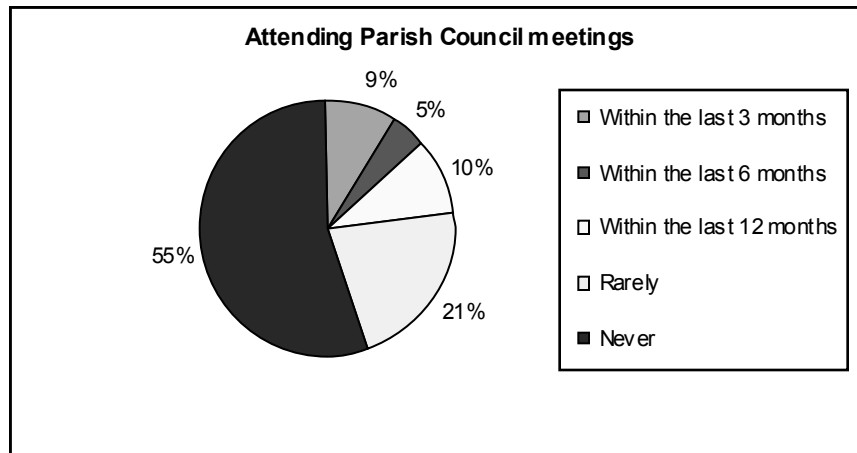
The main difficulties reported were bushes and nettles (36%), mud and water (29%), difficult stiles (17%) and crops across paths (16%). However, 42% had experienced no difficulties.

**Area for action:** - Support the waymarking and regular maintenance of public paths. Organise self help work parties when required.

## General

### Parish Council

Parish Council meetings were attended by 9% within the last 3 months and 76% rarely or never attended.



**Area for action:** - Encourage greater interest in the work of the parish council.

### Information

When asked about getting information about what is going on in Bentley, 479 people answered. The main sources of information were parish magazine (77%), notice board (62%), community news (56%), village hall (17%) and local paper (16%).

**Area for action:** - Develop better ways of distributing news about local matters and events.