

Histon & Impington Parish Council

Identity and Vision Statement: Towards 2020 and Beyond

This statement seeks to outline defining characteristics of this community of two villages and to offer a vision of how they might develop in years to come in order to ensure universality of participation for residents. Public feedback currently indicates a high level of community satisfaction with the qualities they embody and the facilities they offer, complemented by clear and ambitious ideas for the future.

Histon & Impington is and will continue to be a mixed community close to but not a part of Cambridge. It will develop in a way which benefits from this relationship and which protects and enhances its own identity. It will be a sustainable community: nurturing its open spaces and enabling its residents and visitors to minimise their collective impact on the environment.

Commerce

People value their local shops, both convenience stores and those with a specialist appeal. Whether it is the fish van on Wednesdays or the ease with which you can pick up a prescription, the availability of much of one's weekly needs is a key feature of what makes the villages 'special'.

A superstore does not feature as part of future expectations, although the reintroduction of a hardware store would plug a perceived gap. There is acknowledgement that the viability of the retail sector depends as much on the villages being a destination of choice for people from outside as it does on the patronage of residents.

Community

Proximity both to the Green and to Cambridge balance each other within the sense of community enjoyed by those who live in Histon and Impington. People are only too aware of their ease of access to all the economic and cultural opportunities of Cambridge whilst simultaneously enjoying the cohesion of village life so obviously symbolised by the beauty and permanence of the Green. Future development must ensure that the 'vibrant, active, friendly' nature of the community that has grown up in the villages is not jeopardised by threatening either one of those proximities.

Communications

The refurbishment of the Histon Post Office, notwithstanding the demise of its counterpart in Impington, is a simple reminder of how easy it is to take for granted the advantages of being a resident in this community. With a well equipped library at the other end of the High Street, and banks and other businesses between them, it should now be possible to create an area of free and open Wi-Fi at the very centre of village life.

Connections

The guided busway is a key expression of how travel to and from the villages has improved in recent times. Together with the establishment of a reliable bus service and dedicated cycleway, the real expectation of A14 improvements and a rail link at Chesterton, the busway will continue to serve us well in putting the villages on the social and economic map. Future priorities should focus on travel within the villages as set out in the Transport Vision statement, notably in terms of safety, access, environment and integration of modes of transport.

Education

The overwhelming majority of children who grow up in either of the two villages receive their entire primary and secondary education at local schools. Moreover, with the high quality of their achievement recognised repeatedly both by parents and by Ofsted inspection, educational provision in Histon and Impington is a major influence in attracting people to come and settle here. Future governance of local schools must ensure not merely that educational standards are maintained and, indeed, improved where appropriate, but also that the opportunity to access those schools continues to be available to all children resident in the villages. In addition, initiatives to support and

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expand the vibrant non-compulsory sector of education, from playgroups to sport and community activities, must be both seized and sustained.

Employment

Whilst the villages may provide an 'interesting' and 'inviting' place to live, there are concerns over the lack of local employment opportunities, especially for young people, which in the long run will impact upon the future demographic profile of the community. The worst scenario is clearly that local young adults may be forced away from the villages to find work and housing, whilst the villages provide no more than an expensive dormitory for business, academic and professional people working in Cambridge and London. To retain the 'family-oriented' social mix, regarded as fundamental to the character of the community, it will be vital to support energetically all those developments which will help to bring varied economic activity to the villages; to complement the office park with an industrial estate.

Environment

Quick, easy access to the open countryside and considerable green space within the villages are highly valued by residents and undoubtedly attract others from more urban settings to come here. Even so, there are requests for forested areas, lakes and a wildflower meadow to emphasise further the rural atmosphere of the villages. To reduce the spread of urbanisation, calls are made for tighter traffic controls and extensive provision for safe and convenient cycling. Many of these proposals are expressed in the context of ensuring that the villages continue to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which to bring up children.

Housing

'More affordable housing' is a recurrent theme in responses to the issue of what is most lacking in the villages, although, significantly, no more so than cafes. Clearly, current residents taking the short view do regard the villages as 'wonderful places to live' with a genuine sense of 'belonging' and with improvements needed only at the fringes. That feeling, however, cannot be shared amongst young people, who, from economic necessity, are forced to move elsewhere. With the overwhelming sentiment being a desire to keep a genuinely mixed community 'as it is', it would be perverse in the extreme to allow unfettered development of housing which is out of reach for most buyers; rather, measures must be actively encouraged which allow current residents actually to continue to live in Histon and Impington as well as to enjoy its manifold amenities.

Recreation and Leisure

A huge range of physical, cultural and social activity goes on in the two villages, to which notice boards and telegraph poles bear witness. Indeed, whether it is the community orchard, Pilates or the pub quiz, it would be easy to say there was 'something for everyone'; unfortunately, for the youth of the villages, provision is perceived as limited. 'Places (needed) for young people to meet' and '...more for teenagers that's drop-in': such comments indicate a problem which has not yet been effectively addressed, despite brave attempts to do so. Managers of facilities need to work more closely together to rationalise provision rather than simply compete; this is particularly true of a village with a multiplicity of pubs but a paucity of restaurants; a well subscribed sports centre metres away from a recreation ground with outstanding facilities.

It needs to be stressed unequivocally that, more often than not, it is the intangible aspects of village life which inspire people's commitment to and affection for Histon and Impington as places to settle in indefinitely: 'lively, caring'...'people who devote time to making a difference'...'unique community spirit'. Nonetheless, such 'passionate' concern for community identity needs to be nourished and rewarded, and that is best achieved by the planned development of infrastructure and other resources, such that future generations will also reflect, 'I'm immensely proud to live in Histon and Impington; I feel sorry for people who don't!'