



Village Services & Facilities

This Section of our Report looks at Services provided to the village—by Councils, statutory undertakers, privatised utilities and other providers—and also at public facilities both within the village itself and in the immediately surrounding area.

SERVICES

In the Appraisal, village residents rated very highly the Refuse Collection service provided under the aegis of South Cambs District Council; in fact, by a considerable margin, it was the highest rated public service provided to the village. The Appraisal Group reserves its judgement on the recent changes to this service - involving the introduction of 'wheelie bins' - and the reduction of collections from a weekly to a fortnightly cycle. The improved arrangements for recycling that are associated with this change are, however, welcomed, provided that the range of what is eligible for doorstep collection is not reduced in the future. For many residents, refuse collection is seen as the primary service for which they pay their Council Tax and there is an understandable sensitivity to anything that smacks of a reduction or deterioration in this essential service.

Other highly-rated Services include Water and Sewerage, and it is interesting that electricity supply is well regarded despite its vulnerability to interruption owing to the use of overhead supply cables. The Appraisal Group would welcome these overhead cable routes being placed in underground ducts as soon as practicable, in the interests of maintaining consistency of supply.

More than half the responding households (58%) would like to see a mains gas supply in Guilden Morden. Unfortunately, since the privatisation of gas supply, the Group feels that this prospect is probably more unlikely than ever.

Radio and TV reception, street lighting and public telephones were all felt to be reasonable. Unfortunately, the Appraisal showed that the latter are used by only a handful of individuals on a frequent basis and the question must be asked—in this era of mobile phones and internet communication—as to how far our two familiar red telephone boxes will survive as part of the village scene. (This aspect is discussed further in the 'Village Character' Section) Cable TV would be welcomed by 35% of responding households.

While road gritting is deemed to be satisfactory, more than half of households feel that road and pavement maintenance is poor—the lowest rat-

How you rated the existing Services provided to our village

Refuse services	82% of households rated them "Good" or "Very Good"
Radio reception	76% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Good"
Water & Sewerage	75% of households rated them "Reasonable" or "Good"
TV reception	73% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Good"
Electricity supply	73% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Good"
Road gritting	69% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Good"
Street lighting	68% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Good"
Postal deliveries	65% of households rated them "Reasonable" or "Good"
Public telephones	46% of households rated them "Reasonable" or "Poor"
Road maintenance	67% of households rated it "Reasonable" or "Poor"

Opinion on **Mobile phone reception** was divided.

ing of all the public services covered in the Appraisal.

Mobile phone reception attracted the second-highest "Poor" rating, with 41% of households rating it "Poor" or "Very Poor". In contrast, a third of households considered reception to be "Reasonable". The Appraisal Group is aware that reception quality in the village varies considerably by network, and this may explain the differing opinions. The Group is also very aware of the national public sensitivity towards mobile telephone booster masts and anticipates strong negative reaction were such a mast to be mooted for Guilden Morden—although we are aware also that planning consent has been given to the Orange network for a mast at the sewage farm on Potton Road.

This must remain an unresolved issue as residents seek improved reception while rejecting the means by which that improvement is achieved. However, with the growing use of mobile phones and the prospect of Broadband Internet being extended to rural areas by means other than cable, the prospect of a mast on the village outskirts may have to be accepted as a necessary evil.

Postal services to the village also generated a mixed reaction. Asked



The Wheelie Bins are here—but do they have the capacity to cope?

their opinion on service quality, 65% of households ranked postal deliveries as "Good" or "Reasonable". However, 26% ranked them "Poor" or "Very Poor".

How much use do Villagers make of existing services and facilities in the village?			
Use by individuals	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Newspaper deliveries	404	17	183
Doorstep milk delivery	368	11	219
Footpaths	264	263	65
Pubs	142	258	199
Recreation ground	102	270	206
Village Hall	90	366	137
Children's playground	44	134	389
Mobile library	19	51	501
Tween Towns Wood	18	159	386
Mobile grocer	10	7	548
Phone boxes	3	79	493

This may reflect the changed pattern of deliveries whereby the village now receives only one delivery (Monday—Saturday) which some residents do not receive until around Lunchtime— too late for many. The Appraisal Group notes that, since the Appraisal, collections from village postboxes have been reduced from twice to once daily. Our concern is not only that our local postal services are clearly declining, but also that these changes are being introduced unilaterally by the postal authorities without consultation with the communities concerned or even the courtesy of advance notification to our Parish Council. Yet another example of villagers being rendered powerless to control imposed changes detrimental to the viability of our community. (Local postal services are also referred to in Section 8)

FACILITIES

Shop and Post Office

As fewer and fewer residents work in Guiden Morden, so their capacity to use local daytime facilities



The old Shop & Post Office in Church Street

such as shops and a post office has dwindled, making those businesses less economic to run—a situation far from exclusive to our village. In 1998, the one remaining village shop closed down, together with the Post Office. The shop is missed not only because there is no way now to buy either urgent or regular items without getting on a bus or into a car (apart from the fit cyclists among us) but also because the village has lost its meeting point – the place where villagers stopped to chat; the place where local children spent at least some of their pocket money.

It is clear from the questionnaire results that both the shop and Post Office in Church Street are still severely missed. These are by far the most requested *named* facilities in the survey, selected by over 90% of households (over 56% describing the need as 'Urgent'), followed by 60% seeking a cash point. The lack of the shop and post office is the one 'disadvantage of living in Guiden Morden' cited by the largest proportion of respondents (54%). Given another opportunity in the questionnaire to state which other facilities or services they would like to see, once again the overwhelming majority of answers (more than 70%) mentions either a shop or post office or both, this time without either of these being named in the question.

The Interim report circulated by the Appraisal Group clearly made an impression on the landlord of the Edward VII public house; he has since made plans to convert a building alongside the pub as a general shop.



The new Shop takes shape alongside the Edward VII PH

The plans do not include provision for a Post Office due to the costs of providing the necessary security. At the time of writing, formal planning consent for the conversion has been granted and construction work has started. We hope that this initiative proves successful and recovers much of the local patronage previously enjoyed by the Church Street shop.

The Appraisal Group is interested to note that the expressed demand for a local cashpoint is now served by the recent provision of cash banking facilities at Steeple Morden and Ashwell post offices linked to most major UK banks and building societies—a service that is, at least for the present, free of charge.

Pub Grub

Mention is made, by several, of the desire for quality food to be served in the village pubs. In fact, 12% of respondents wanted somewhere to eat out in the village.

This finding has, we believe, motivated the owner of the Edward VII pub to install a kitchen, to enable hot food to be served there. Residents will have seen, also, that the manager installed at the Three Tuns public house by its new tenant, has begun serving sandwiches at lunchtimes. There is also a series of "taster" events with food being served on certain evenings—a facility that may be expanded if a demand is shown.

Provided that the quality of menu offered at these two establishments is high, and prices reasonable, this can only be good news for the village, and a "result" from the Appraisal.

Village Hall

Almost 80% of respondents say they use the Village Hall, either regularly or on specific occasions. That is a



The existing Village Hall

very high figure, and one to be thankful for, from the point of view of "community". However, the current hall has become less than attractive for many, and its age is creating major headaches—and costs—in terms of upkeep and maintenance. As reported in the June 2003 GAMUT, the New Village Hall Steering Committee has had to pass the matter of "What shall we do about a new Village Hall?" back to the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council. This is because, at the time of writing, Sport England is not accepting any new appli-

cations for funding, and the Community Fund has made it clear that only exceptional cases will be likely to gain an award. So, for the present, it is back to the drawing board.

In the view of the Appraisal Group, this gives some breathing space to consider whether a new, multi-purpose building is what the village really needs. There are, in fact, function rooms available currently in the Chapel and at the School, the former having an excellent new kitchen facility. Sadly, the Appraisal shows how few villagers use either of these facilities. St. Mary's Church building, too, obviously encloses a very large—and under-utilised—space, which, given some thought, might be suitable for certain functions, such as meetings, dances, etc. The Village Fete has already been held within the Church on a couple of occasions, illustrating its multi-functional potential—and the church nave has for centuries been the focal activity point for local people. Extra income from such activities in all these spaces would be more than welcomed by the managing groups concerned.

For this reason, the Appraisal Group suggests that these spaces, together with the current Hall, could arguably be considered as the Village Function Area, spread across multiple sites. Thought would need to be given to the management of a composite Area of this kind—in the context of the existing individual responsibilities for management—but the village is not without keen minds. The Group offers this concept for further consideration and development as an alternative to expensive new build.

We do, of course, recognise that this proposal does not obviate the requirement for improved sporting facilities and for any activity that requires a stage. These issues are dealt with elsewhere in our Report, in the context of closer collaboration with nearby communities.

Some residents suggested that a community shop could be incorporated into plans for the new village hall. If the Edward VII shop gets off the ground and is successful, a community shop is possibly not required in the short term. However, the Appraisal Group does not discount the concept of a Community Shop for the village, in the event that the present commercial approach does not prove viable.

Library

The Appraisal Group has been greatly concerned by the recent closure of Bassingbourn branch library, along with nine other similar libraries in South Cambridgeshire, as a cost-saving measure by the County Council. Although the Council points to the increased investment in improved facilities at the Central Library in Cambridge and in the provision of two new mobile libraries, the Group questions the extent to which this redistribution of library facilities will benefit Guildden Morden. Use of the mobile library that visits the village on a fortnightly cycle is limited (see previous panel)—as are the facilities and choice of books that it offers. We find it surprising, for example, that no local service information leaflets are available on board. There is no computerised access to the Library Service's book and CD databases, nor is it even possible to return

to the mobile library books borrowed from the Central Library! A singular lack of co-ordination.

Luckily for villagers, Hertfordshire's well-appointed libraries at Royston and Baldock are within easy reach, and are undoubtedly now the libraries of choice for local residents for general interest borrowing.



The mobile library waits hopefully for customers outside the Church

The Appraisal Group notes with interest recent reports of the opening of a Community Library facility in Bassingbourn; insufficient information was available on this initiative to comment further before this Report went to press.

Telephone Kiosks

The village retains two public call boxes of the traditional style, which are very much part of the street scene. Both tend to suffer from vandalism and misuse. Unfortunately, the Appraisal showed that only three individuals use these phone boxes on anything like a regular basis—unsurprising, perhaps, with the rapid uptrend in the use of mobile phones. So we must ask what the future is for these facilities? Do we value them as a facility—or simply as part of our village character? Should they receive more attention (i.e. should they be cleaned regularly by volunteers from the village)?

Clubs and Organisations

Villagers were asked to say what clubs or organisations they currently attend in the village. The responses to this question were hard to rationalise. For instance, from the answers, it appears that there are only 2 Brownies living in the village and only 1 member of the British Legion, which is obviously not the case. Then again, while there were 38 ideas for new clubs from villagers, there were, in most cases, only 1 or 2 individuals who mentioned the same idea.

It was also obvious from the responses that residents are not always aware of clubs and societies already in existence. As an example, there were calls for a Bridge Club, Youth Club and Local History Group, all of which exist in the village already, but are perhaps not advertised widely enough. There were also requests for Tennis facilities, already avail-

able in Steeple Morden, where the 2 floodlit courts are generally under-utilised and where new members would be welcomed. Under-11s Football and Yoga, again requested, are available in Ashwell.

As can be seen from the panel below, the questionnaire got much better feedback from the question which gave residents seven ideas for new clubs that they might like to attend.

Many of the organisations in the village, such as the Over 60s Club and the Village Hall Committee, struggle on year after year with the same people at the helm, those people doing a magnificent job for residents of the village. For many of them, there is little or no help forthcoming from other villagers. The results of the Appraisal, showing as they do that villagers are, in

How villagers say they would support NEW clubs or activities in the village, if they were provided

Individual participation	Frequently	Occasionally
Gardening Club	59	117
Theatre/Cinema trips	55	217
Computer Club	31	98
Rambling Club	29	95
Cycling Club	23	103
Shopping Trips	19	106
Luncheon Club	16	53

many cases, unaware of what goes on, might also point to the fact that people *would* be willing to help out if they knew there was a club or group with such a need. And, perhaps, organising a meeting in the Village Hall to drum up help is not always the best way. An invitation to a private house, with comfortable seats and a few drinks and nibbles with like-minded souls might generate more enthusiasm.

St. Mary's Church publishes a list of Village Groups and Organisations, which is included in the Welcome Pack for new residents, although it is not a definitive list. Both GAMUT and *Prospect* give details of forthcoming events, but there is a need for better advertising of **all** events, whether regular or occasional, together with some background about what goes on, and stating who is welcome at each event.

Voluntary Organisations

For a minimal charge, the *Mordens & Litlington Mobile Warden Scheme* provides a daily (weekdays only), friendly telephone contact and a weekly visit by a qualified warden/carer for the elderly and housebound. This provides families with the confidence that, should anything untoward happen to their relatives while they are

not close at hand, then help can be provided quickly. The Warden is a friendly ear, and can help with filling out forms and all the other little worries that can beset folks on their own. There are currently over 20 users of the scheme, evenly distributed through the three villages. The scheme also manages to arrange outings for its customers, usually at Christmas and some time during the summer.

The *Heron Car Scheme*, manned by a team of voluntary drivers, transports the elderly and disabled to local medical, hospital and other essential appointments, once again for a very reasonable rate, charged by the mile. The volunteers drive many hundreds of miles a year between them. This service is likely to be required more frequently as the population ages, and since the medicine basket, which used to deliver medicines to Guiden Morden residents, has ceased (see Health & Welfare Section). The Heron Car Scheme is discussed in more detail in the Public Transport Section of this Report.

Wheels for Martin's Friends is a local charity assisting local residents with limited means to obtain a wheelchair and other necessary mobility aids.

The *Over-60s Club* meets on the 2nd Wednesday each month in the Village Hall. It aims to provide a means for socialising within the village for those over 60 years of age. Tea and biscuits are served, there are regular Bingo sessions and other games, and there is a Bring & Buy stall.

Because there are always newcomers to the village, these services should be included in the advertising of clubs and organisations suggested above.

Sports Facilities

The Appraisal questionnaire did not contain any specific questions on sports or sports facilities. However, a survey on sports facilities conducted in the village in 2000 found that more than 250 respondents were interested in participation in other forms of sports activities which were not available in an organised form in the village at that time. The sports clubs which existed then and continue to do so now are the Cricket Club, the Men's Football Club and Edward Dynamos (under 16 boys football).

Other sporting clubs did exist in the village at different times in previous years. For example a very active Rugby Club, linked to The Three Tuns pub, was running until recent years. The club ceased when those actively involved reached an age when they could no longer actively participate and there was not sufficient interest coming through to sustain it.

The recreation ground provides an expansive facility for outdoor sports and is used by the cricket and football clubs. It is a valued amenity and is used regularly for impromptu football, rounders and other activities. In the survey, out of 578 responses to "how often do you use the recreation ground", 102 residents (18%) used it frequently, 270 (47%) occasionally and 206 (36%) never. As there was a separate question on the playground it is reasonable to assume that these responses related predominantly to sporting activities, although the 'occasionally' responses could well include those who attend the September Village Show.

On other facilities, 5 respondents stated that they wished to have a tennis court and 1 a basketball court. For new

clubs 5 mentioned tennis, 4 badminton and 2 Yoga. There were also mentions for other minority sports such as shooting and archery.

Local, traditional rivalry exists with neighbouring villages in some sports, especially cricket and football and this is an important aspect of community pride and spirit. However, the Appraisal Group is of the view that sharing of clubs and facilities with surrounding villages should be considered where practical. One strong club shared with other villages must surely be preferable to two or more struggling clubs.

With the increase in interest in sport and leisure, from both a hobby and health perspective, and the prospect of new facilities becoming available in the new Village Hall (now, sadly, on hold) a Sports Forum was formed in the village in 2001. The purpose of the Forum was to support the community in evolving a high level of participation and development of sports in the locality. This would include the promotion and encouragement of new clubs and activities as well as assisting to sustain and develop existing ones.

The Sports Forum got to the stage of producing a very professional draft Strategic Development Plan for Sports in March 2002. However, as the objectives were very much linked to, and dependent upon, new facilities being available as part of a new village hall, the work of the Forum has temporarily ceased.

The Group believes that sports clubs are best formed and sustained to serve local demands, by people who themselves, or through family members, have an interest and involvement in particular activities. Such interest and demand fluctuate over time with changing demographics in the locality. The existence of an effective body such as the Sports Forum would coordinate and encourage the organisation and sustainment of clubs and activities to provide local, active and healthy outlets for those who are interested.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Residents are, on the whole, happy with the majority of Services provided to and within the village. However, the village does desperately need a shop and a post office. Were a post office to return, this would bring with it the bonus of a very local cash-point facility, similar to that at present available in adjacent villages.

The future of our public telephone call boxes in the village is uncertain.

There is wide support for the village hall, both as a current facility and in its new guise, whatever that may turn out to be.

The Group deprecates the way in which Services to the village are altered and curtailed by Local Authorities and commercial service providers in a unilateral manner without prior consultation with the

village communities most affected and without any form of redress on the part of those communities. The recent changes to the postal services and refuse collection services to the village are a case in point. There is little point, in the view of the Group, for local communities to respond to exhortations to be more proactive in determining their own future if decision-making which materially affects that future continues to be pursued in such an remote, dictatorial and "top down" fashion

The village is not made up of hugely clubbable people, although this might change if more advertising and marketing of current groups were done. In this context, the village would benefit from publication of a comprehensive list of all clubs and organisations, updated on a regular basis.

There is a requirement for certain additional sports activities, but the facilities for them are not there at the current time.

Although, in purely numerical terms, the demand does not stand out significantly, the Group conclude that there is a wish on the part of some elderly residents for a regular group luncheon facility within the village. We do, however, note that the Steeple Morden Luncheon Club recently advertised for new members, and the Heron Car Scheme is available for any Guilden Morden residents who wish to make use of this facility. Another possible opportunity for collaboration between the two villages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- we look for closer consultation with the community and its elected representatives in the context of proposed change to existing levels of service provision to the village.
- we recommend that a new working party is formed, to carry out a feasibility study into a Village Function Area over multiple sites.
- when the shop at The Edward VII opens, it is important that villagers support and use it.
- we propose that the Sports Forum continues to assess and, where possible, influence the facilities to be made available in any new village hall, should the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council decide to go ahead with further plans.
- We recommend that, irrespective of the outcome of the plans for the new Hall, we suggest that the Sports Forum continues with its work within the limitations of whatever facilities are available and seeks appropriate grant funding to support improvements.
- we recommend that consideration is given, where appropriate, to cooperation with Steeple Morden and surrounding villages in the provision of sports facilities and clubs.
- we suggest that GAMUT becomes the vehicle for residents who wish to start a new club. The first candidates are gardening, theatre trip, computer, rambling, cycling, shopping and luncheon clubs.
- we recommend that all existing club leaders use GAMUT to update villagers on a 6-monthly basis as to the service/facilities they provide, and GAMUT should include, every 6 months, a pull-out of up-to-date information about village facilities and services. This should also include information about the facilities available for hire in the Hall, Chapel, School and Church, together with contact names.
- we recommend that the demand for a Luncheon Club for the elderly and housebound in the village should be assessed. If sufficient demand is detected, help in getting something up and running should then be invited from within the village.