



Hartford Parish Plan



November 2004

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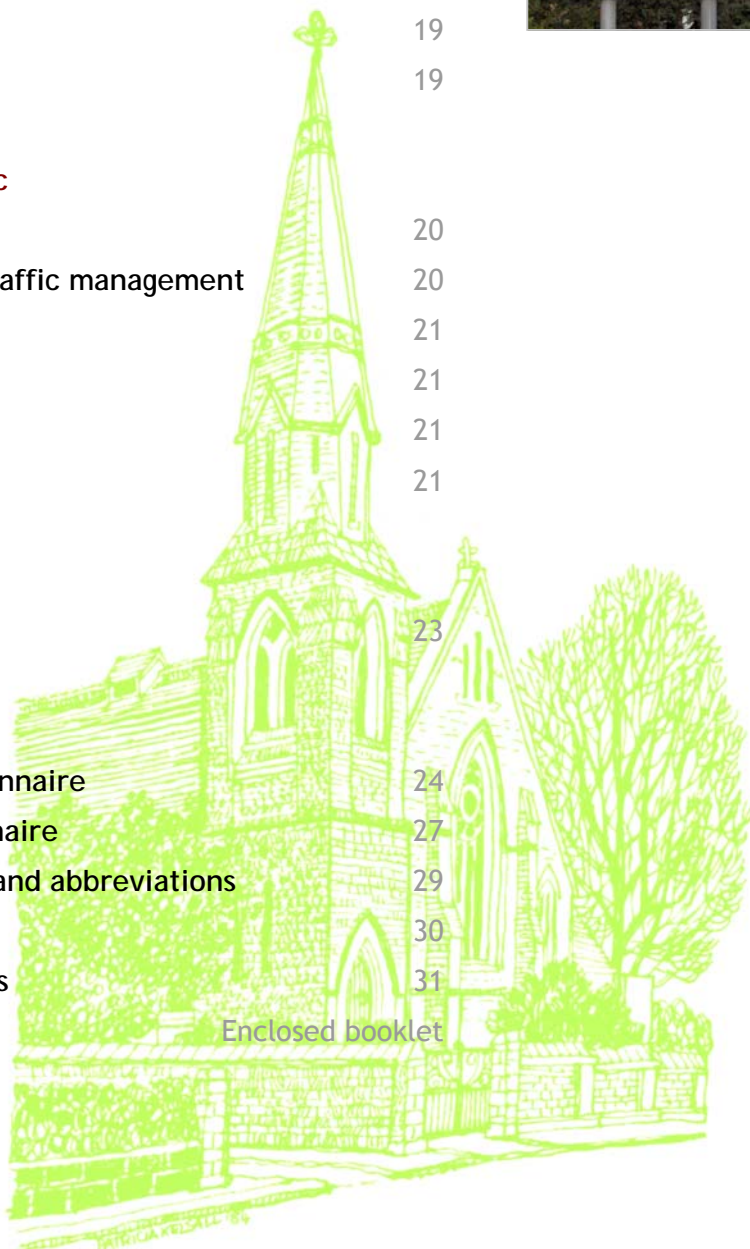
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The Hartford Parish Plan

● Introduction



In November 2000 the Government's Rural White Paper "Our Countryside - The Future" launched the concept of the Parish Plan to set out a vision of what is important to rural communities. It set out the Government's intention to encourage parish councils to take greater responsibility for running their own affairs, and influencing and shaping the future development of their communities, through the preparation of Parish Plans. The design and land use aspects of these plans could be adopted as supplementary planning guidance and would have a real role in influencing and helping to guide decisions.

A Parish Plan is part of the Vital Villages Scheme being managed by the Countryside Agency and can attract funding for its production. It is a holistic and comprehensive document, drawn up by the community that sets out a vision for the future encompassing social, economic and environmental issues of concern. It also enables the community to put forward recommendations as to how life in the village could be improved and how the village itself should develop over time.

Hartford Parish Council agreed that the production of a Parish Plan would enable the Council and the community to participate positively and constructively in the planning process for the village over the next five to ten years.

With this initiative in mind the Parish Council held a public meeting in March 2003. The meeting was very well attended by almost seventy residents. At that first meeting the Chair of the Parish Council outlined to the residents how the Plan could progress with a completion date of September 2004. The meeting was very positive and productive. All comments and suggestions made by those present were documented and the issues and concerns raised used subsequently in the formation of focus groups. The Village Plans produced by Hartford Parish Council in 1984 and 1995 respectively, while not yielding any form of action plan, provided further valuable information.

In September 2003 the Plan gained momentum with the next public meeting which again was very well attended. The format for the future programme and actions to produce a Parish Plan was agreed. This included the setting up of a Steering Committee and the formation of focus groups to investigate the main areas of concern. It was the role of each focus group to gather information by consulting with residents, groups and organisations, and to fully explore their area. These were population and housing, transport, education, natural environment, community services, amenities and recreation, community safety and business and industry. Each focus group chose a leader and had clear guidance to gather information on the history and

background of their topic, investigate the present situation, identify issues and problems and then to find out what was needed to enhance or improve that situation.

Once the focus groups had produced their profiles the Steering Committee set up a small working group to design questionnaires from their findings which were hand delivered to every household and business in the village. The decision to deliver the questionnaire by hand was taken to ensure that all sections of the community had the opportunity to express their opinions.

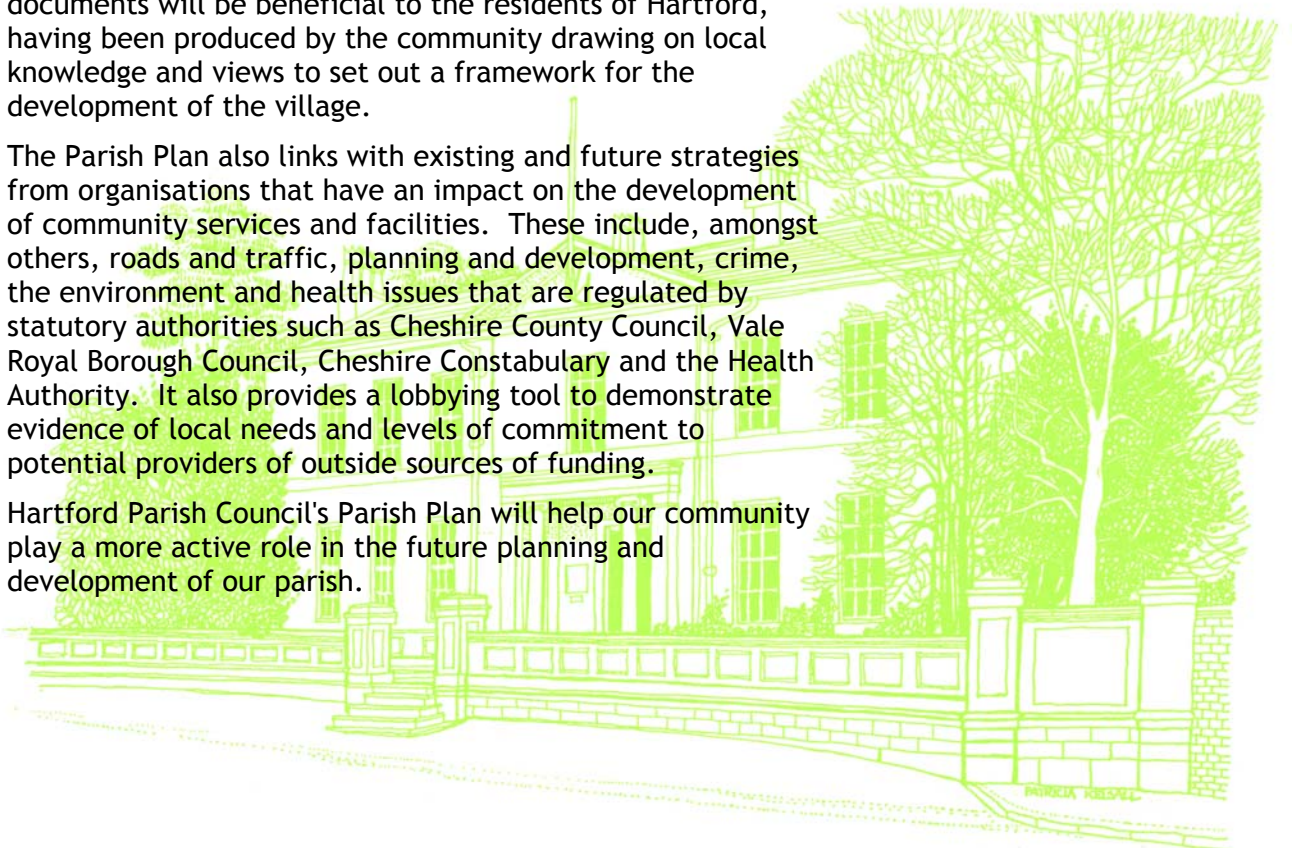
With the assistance of a local newsagent, volunteer house collectors and the local press the return rate from the survey was almost 50%. With this information plus the consultation with all groups of the community including schools and young people the final stage for the Steering Committee was to set up a design group to produce the final Parish Plan.

The completed Parish Plan is more than just a report on the survey results. It draws together the identified needs of the community, addresses their feasibility and how and when they can be implemented.

The Parish Plan links to and is compatible with the Village Design Statement produced by Hartford Civic Society. The VDS is a document prepared by members of the community which describes the physical qualities and characteristics that local people value in their village and surroundings which they would like to see respected in any future development. A VDS is intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system. The two compatible documents will be beneficial to the residents of Hartford, having been produced by the community drawing on local knowledge and views to set out a framework for the development of the village.

The Parish Plan also links with existing and future strategies from organisations that have an impact on the development of community services and facilities. These include, amongst others, roads and traffic, planning and development, crime, the environment and health issues that are regulated by statutory authorities such as Cheshire County Council, Vale Royal Borough Council, Cheshire Constabulary and the Health Authority. It also provides a lobbying tool to demonstrate evidence of local needs and levels of commitment to potential providers of outside sources of funding.

Hartford Parish Council's Parish Plan will help our community play a more active role in the future planning and development of our parish.



The Village of Hartford

● History



Pre 20th century buildings of note

- The Beeches
- Elmfield
- The Hollies
- Hartford Hall
- Hartford Manor
- Sandiway Cottage
- Sandiway House
- Terraces (The Green)
- Weaverham Grange
- Whitehall (formerly Hartford Lodge)

The village of Hartford can be traced back to the Domesday Book of 1086, when the Manor (Village) was held by Gilbert de Venables, part of the Barony of Kinderton.

Over the centuries the land of Hartford was divided up, with eleven different families owning areas. However by the 18th century Lord Delamere owned most of the village. The roads that still form the triangle in the centre of the village can be seen in the 1777 Burdett Map.

In 1840 the Tithe map shows fields with dispersed groups of cottages and a longer terrace facing Chester Road to the west of what is now the Red Lion Public House.

Between 1800 and 1850 several wealthy salt manufacturers from the Northwich area built houses in Hartford. By 1921 Brunner Mond was the principal landowner.

In the 1930s the bridge over the River Weaver was rebuilt from a narrow stone bridge to a high level bridge taking the dual carriageway Northwich by-pass. This opened School Lane to regular through traffic, thus creating the opportunity for housing development to commence on School Lane and to its west side. Development continued after the Second World War, and Hartford now has a wide range of housing stock that varies from small terraced houses to large executive properties. With this development the population of Hartford has also increased. In 1961 it was 2,272, but by the time of the most recent census, taken in 2001, it had more than doubled, reaching a figure of 5,515.

Part of the village is protected by a conservation area which was first designated in 1974. In February 2004 this area was extended. Still centred on St John's Church (itself a Grade 2 listed building), and its three-sided churchyard, it now encompasses The Grange, Walnut Lane and The Crescent.

Sadly the village of Hartford has not retained many pre-19th Century buildings but, of those that remain, there are wonderful examples that deserve protection and include some that are 'locally listed'. Hartford Hall, until the late 1950s a private residence, is now the village's main hotel. The actress Ann Todd (after whom a public garden in the village is named) was born at Elmfield. Several cottages on School Lane, and the terraces on The Green are integral to the character and charm of Hartford.

- **Today**

Hartford is a pleasant residential village situated in the borough of Vale Royal in mid Cheshire. It is conveniently situated approximately two miles west of the major town of Northwich, which forms one of its boundaries.

The village stands above the River Weaver, which forms another of its boundaries with Davenham. The rest of Hartford is surrounded by open fields along its boundaries with the parishes of Weaverham and Whitegate. The present village occupies an area of 556 hectares (1374 acres or a little more than two square miles).

The village offers a wide selection of dwellings, ranging from large executive five and six bedroomed properties, stylish three and four bedroomed family houses, individual cottages, flats and bungalows as well as Housing Association properties, including sheltered accommodation.

Statistics show that, in comparison with other parts of Vale Royal, Hartford is considered a safe environment in which to live. The Parish Council is very aware of crime trends and monitors these statistics every month.

Hartford hosts a number of large and small businesses including several working farms. It also has a variety of shops, a Post Office and two public houses, the Red Lion and The Coachman.

There are Anglican and Methodist Churches in Hartford, and other forms of religious observance can be made in nearby Northwich.

Hartford also has several sports grounds and playing fields as well as two children's playgrounds. Other facilities are within easy reach in nearby parishes. Hartford is unique in that it offers education to a wide range of students in ten educational establishments within its boundaries.

Hartford lies within easy road access of Manchester and Liverpool (and their respective airports) and other major cities via the A556 and nearby motorways. It is also served by three bus routes and two railway stations, on the West Coast Main Line at Hartford and, just to the east of the village, on the Mid Cheshire Line at Greenbank.

Hartford is proud of its abundance of mature trees and many green spaces. Apart from Parish Council owned land there is a selection of publicly accessible open spaces that can be enjoyed by residents.

Hartford has developed into a thriving community enjoying a variety of amenities while valuing its rural charm and village atmosphere.



1 Environment

1.1 Natural Environment



Hartford's natural environment is highly valued by its residents. The overwhelming majority believe that the open green areas and widespread mature trees are very important to the character of the village. Concern is also evident about further in-filling of green spaces both within Hartford and in the surrounding farmland. The village is bordered on all but the eastern side by open countryside, much of which has been designated as having special environmental value by Vale Royal Borough Council and seen as essential for preserving 'green gaps' between Hartford and the neighbouring settlements of Cuddington, Weaverham and Leftwich. The high level of interest in the natural local environment is reflected in a healthy level of community activity to preserve and maintain these green areas, as commented on by the judges in the 2003 Best Kept Village Competition.

1.2 Green Areas

Fortunately we have ready access to several open green areas including parks and sports facilities, gardens and wooded areas, managed woodlands and walks alongside the River Weaver which borders the southeast of the village. These provide recreational facilities and encourage a diversity of wildlife in and around Hartford, the wetlands at Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve being designated as an area of special biological interest and the reserve itself containing remains of ancient broadleaf woodland. The slightly more distant Vale Royal Wood contains areas of special scientific or biological interest and is served by a network of public footpaths. In contrast, there are relatively few public footpaths within the village boundaries and, because they are not well signposted, their existence is not well known.

1.3 Litter

Many residents take pride in the appearance of the village so it is not surprising that Hartford has received several awards, including a Community Pride Competition in 2003. Many volunteers have taken part in 'litter picks' and other similar activities. Litter is seen as a major problem, particularly around the schools, colleges and shops in the village: the most popular solution is the provision of more litter bins. In respect of dog fouling, more residents favour the imposition of fines on owners who allow their dogs to foul public areas than the provision of dog litter bins.

1.4 Waste

Hartford has encouraged waste recycling for some time and provided collection facilities in the car park of Hartford Social Club for the recycling of glass and tin cans. Recent

Parks & recreation

Grange Park play area
Grange cricket field
Parker Avenue play area
Hartford Bowls & Tennis Club
Green Field football pitch & allotments
Hartford Campus

Nature reserve

Marshall's Arm

Green & wooded areas

Cricket Club wood
Grange Wood
Northerly Garden
Southerly Garden
Glebe Land
Ann Todd Garden

Managed woodland

Greenbank Wood
Vale Royal Woods
Thorn Wood

actions by Vale Royal Borough Council to increase waste recycling have led to fortnightly household collections of domestic refuse, garden waste, glass, cans and paper. Although the initiative to increase the type and quantity of waste recycled is welcomed, many residents are concerned about the potential health risks and malodour problems arising from less frequent collection of domestic refuse.

1.5 Noise

In general noise is not regarded as a major problem by residents, although some nuisance is caused by aircraft flying into Manchester Airport and traffic on the A556 trunk road. The increased use of fireworks in late night celebrations, part of a national trend, does concern some residents.

1.6 Actions

- Exert strong local control of planning developments to preserve the community and recreational character of the village. Refer to the VDS and monitor progress.
- Work with partners to preserve the open countryside surrounding the village.
- Maintain and enhance the existing open green areas (e.g. green spaces, woodlands, parks, sports fields) throughout Hartford. Arrange an audit of open spaces.
- Protect mature trees in the village (e.g. using TPOs and exploring viability of a tree warden to conduct an audit).
- Promote knowledge of the location of footpaths in the village, including clear signage.
- Promote and support the local nature reserve conservation areas.
- Support schemes designed to increase waste recycling providing they are environmentally and socially acceptable. Monitor recently introduced kerbside recycling scheme in Hartford.
- Provide more litter bins, and explore effective mechanisms for imposing fines on those committing offences.
- Provide more dog waste bins, and explore effective mechanisms for imposing fines on those committing offences.
- Promote litter picks organised by HPC and volunteers.
- Recruit volunteer(s) to promote entry into CCC Best Kept Village Competition.



2 Community Safety

2.1 Anti Social Behaviour



Hartford is a very pleasant village in which to live, work or visit. It has a strong community feel, a wealth of character and a great diversity of people. Overall, the village is considered a safe environment with well-lit open areas.

However, vandalism and intimidating groups are perceived to be a problem, although a significant number of respondents to the questionnaire believe the village is a safe place to walk after dark.



In and around the centre of the village various incidents have taken place over the years, evidenced by the boarding up of windows in the Football Clubhouse and the installation of roller shutter protection to the windows and doors of the Cricket Pavilion. Unfortunately some property and cars continue to be vandalised.

There are also instances where people congregate in certain areas within the village, particularly during the evenings. This sometimes leads to anti-social behaviour, leaving members of the local community feeling vulnerable.

Concerns have also been expressed from the business sector relating to break-ins and vandalism caused to their properties.

2.2 Policing

Many residents and businesses have stated that there should be an increased police presence in the village. There has been no local policeman assigned to the village since the late 1990s when Cheshire Constabulary withdrew “local bobbies” and introduced the Community Action Teams working from Northwich Police Station.

Cheshire Police gave a presentation in 2003 to Hartford Parish Council, clarifying the current policing position for the local villages. For the village to have its own Community Safety Officer a substantial annual cost would be incurred, although the Cheshire Constabulary indicated they would be willing to make a contribution towards this. It is possible that the village could fund this post through an increase in parish precept, although the amount and viability would have to be reviewed further. The response from the household questionnaire, indicated that people would be willing to pay, approximately, an extra £1 a month in the parish precept to fund a community safety officer.

2.3 Watch Schemes

A Homewatch Scheme was set-up in Hartford in 1984 and proved very effective. This particular scheme was used as an example to other villages and towns looking to introduce a similar operation in their area. Due to the resignation of the Co-ordinator and difficulties in appointing a replacement,

the formal Homewatch Scheme ceased to function in 2000, although there are some residents who operate an informal homewatch scheme within their neighbourhood.

Asked whether they would be prepared to regenerate a formal Homewatch Scheme many villagers responded that they would consider regenerating the scheme: a number of people were of the belief that the system was still in operation.

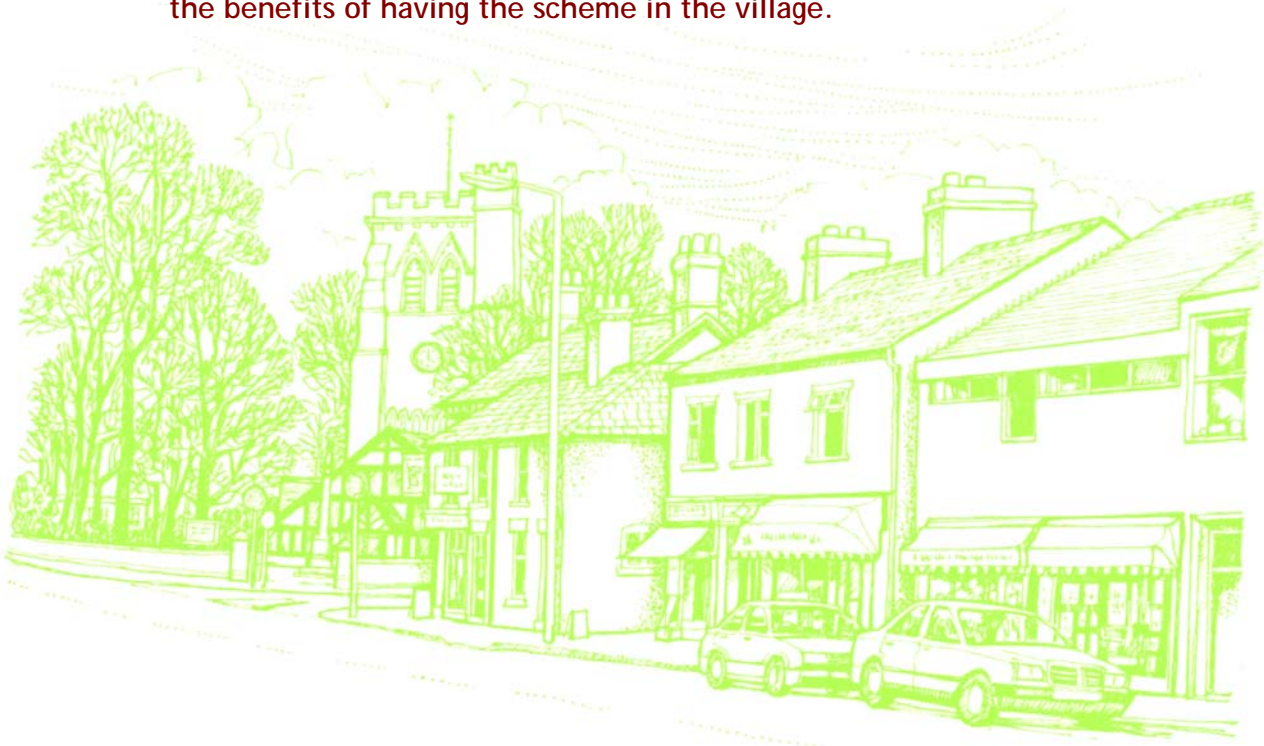
A volunteer from the community is currently liaising with the newly appointed Homewatch Co-ordinator, based at Northwich Police Station, with a view to re-establishing the Homewatch Scheme. People who expressed an interest in becoming involved in the scheme will be contacted in due course and, in the meantime, all the previous information is being reviewed in the hope that the scheme can become fully operational again.

With the increased leisure use of the River Weaver a Waterway Watch Group has been set up during 2004. Co-ordinated by Cheshire Constabulary, its aim is to keep the river safe for all responsible users.



2.4 Actions

- Encourage residents to report all criminal activities and incidents.
- Liaise with police and other agencies concerning prevention of crime and anti social behaviour.
- Investigate the appointment of a Community Safety Officer being assigned to the village.
- Regenerate the Homewatch Scheme and publicise the benefits of having the scheme in the village.



3 Business

3.1 Shops, services



Chester Road shops

Newsagent
Hairdressers
Childrens' shoes
Charity shop
Baker
Greengrocer
Video rental
Florists
Chemist
Beautician
Lighting/electrical

School Lane shops

TV sales & repair
Hairdresser
Barber
Convenience store
Dry cleaners

The Green shops

Post Office
Haberdashery
Beautician

There are three groups of shops in the centre of Hartford. The largest is on the south side of Chester Road, with a smaller group on the east side of School Lane and three further shops on The Green. As well as serving pedestrian customers, these areas attract passing trade from motorists and, with them, attendant parking problems. Residents are generally not in favour, however, of additional restrictions being made on roadside parking.

The last butcher's shop in the village closed in 2002, and it was no surprise that, when residents were asked which type of shop they would welcome, a butcher predominated in their responses. Others that would be welcomed include a cafe and a DIY store. Although Hartford does not have a bank, there are cash machines at the Co-op and one of the petrol stations, while banking facilities are available at the Post Office.

Accommodation is available at the Hartford Hall Hotel and at one of Hartford's two public houses: all of these establishments have restaurant facilities. The only other food outlet in the village is a take away establishment near the station whose delivery vans are regularly to be seen in the area.

There are two petrol stations in Hartford, both on the A559, at opposite ends of the village.

It is believed that keeping the variety of shops and services that exist within Hartford is important to its future as a village with a vibrant centre and facilities commensurate with a community of its size. It is important, therefore, that awareness of the range of shops and services available is promoted among local people. Similarly parking problems near our shops should not be allowed to dissuade potential customers from visiting them.

3.2 Employment

The single biggest source of employment within the village is to be found on the campus of Hartford College and the nearby schools.

The Hartford Business Centre, located near Hartford station, was established by Vale Royal Borough Council in 1981 and has sixteen light industrial units let to local businesses. Age Concern occupies a separate office building on the site.

Serviced offices are provided on School Lane in the Whitehall Business Centre. Two other large employers in the village are AMEC, based at the western end of the village, in a modern complex in the grounds of Sandiway House, and Eurocamp, which has its head office at Hartford Manor.

Several farms are to be found partly or wholly within the village boundaries, and a veterinary hospital catering for large and small animals is located on Chester Road.

3.3 Links with the community

Some 80% of employees of the businesses in the village live outside Hartford. Although the proportion varies considerably with the differing types of business, an average of 40% of business is said to be done with local people. The opinions expressed by businesses about transport in and around Hartford mirror largely those of local residents: most consider road links to be adequate.

A number of businesses support one or more organisations within the village and others have expressed a willingness to consider supporting, for example, a local sports team.

The issue of anti social behaviour raised most commonly by businesses is that of vandalism, although concern also exists about break-ins and theft.

3.4 Actions

- Promote liaison between business and organisations in Hartford, identifying ways in which businesses can support local organisations.
- Promote local knowledge of shops, services and businesses available in Hartford. Use website and produce local directory.
- Maintain or enhance, as appropriate, parking facilities near to shopping areas in Hartford.

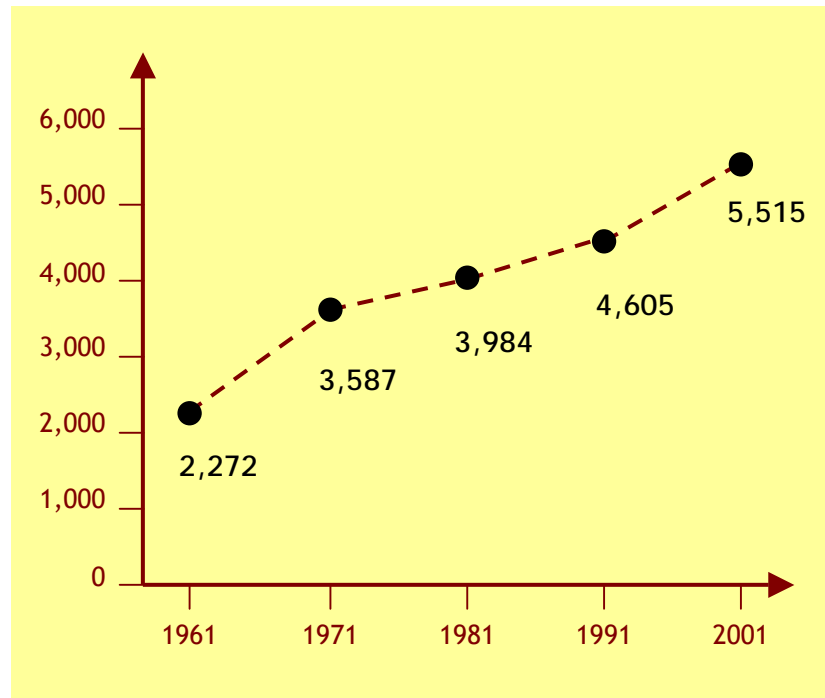


4 Population & Housing

4.1 Population



Hartford has seen a steady growth in its population over the past forty years. On average the population has increased by around 800 residents per decade and the most recent census, carried out in 2001, reported 5,515 residents. The vast majority of residents now believe that no further increase in the population of Hartford should be permitted, and are greatly concerned about new housing developments, which



cause further in-filling of green spaces in the village with a detrimental impact on the surrounding environment. Moreover, given that Vale Royal Borough Council has already made draft changes to the local plan to identify the building developments which are required to meet its planned housing targets, there is no obvious justification for the continued future expansion of Hartford's population.

4.2 Development

The wide range of high quality schools, transport links via local trunk roads, motorways and railways, and relative proximity to the conurbations of Manchester and Merseyside have increased the residential attraction of Hartford leading to several new building developments in the village, most of which are situated in the area between Chester Road and the A556 bypass. Ironically this continued growth has placed considerable strain on its infrastructure, especially roads and schools, and it is widely recognised by residents that Hartford now lacks several facilities (for example a medical centre, library, community centre) commensurate with the population of the village. As reported more comprehensively

in the 2004 Hartford Village Design Statement, there is a wide variation in the age, size and style of houses in the village, ranging from small housing association bungalows to large executive properties. In contrast to the new developments, the central part of the village lies in a conservation area and contains properties built during the 18th and 19th centuries. To cater for our more senior and/or less able residents there are 48 bungalows served by a Community Visitor and facilities such as Weaver Vale Careline which helps people to live independently in their own homes.

4.3 Living in Hartford

Almost one third of households responding to the questionnaire have lived in Hartford for more than 25 years and over half for more than 15 years, suggesting that it is a place where many people wish to settle. This is consistent with information about age distribution gleaned from the questionnaire, which shows that over half of residents are over the age of 40 and one quarter over the age of 60. The average occupancy per household in the village is 2.5, slightly higher than that of the local authority Vale Royal, and England as a whole. Reasons for living in Hartford are many and varied, with convenience for work and good schools frequently cited by residents. Interestingly, “village life” was one of the most popular reasons given for living in Hartford suggesting that, to date, the village has been able to absorb building developments and a rapid growth in population without any major adverse effects.



4.4 Actions

- Restrict further residential development in Hartford, especially developments which cause infilling of green spaces.
- Limit any new house building to sites which have previously been developed and/or built on
- Ensure that the design of new buildings or extensions is in sympathy with surrounding properties.
- Rigorously protect the character of the conservation area, and enhance wherever possible.
- Preserve traditional buildings that are integral to the character of the village.
- Investigate the provision of basic community facilities for residents (e.g. medical centre, library, community centre).

5 Facilities & Amenities

5.1 Allotments

Adjacent to the football field on The Green, there are twenty allotments let to residents: anyone wishing to rent an allotment should liaise with Hartford Parish Council.

5.2 Halls

There are currently six buildings in the village that provide facilities for social and recreational activities. Examples of the many activities to be found either during the day or evening include ballet, French tuition, handicraft demonstrations, library book reading group, Pilates, and Scottish dancing.

The existing facilities of the Village Hall are inadequate to meet current requirements or to hold large scale functions. The meeting hall is limited in size, poorly equipped and has outdated catering and toilet facilities. The Village Hall is very much the centre of the village but the building needs to be improved and enlarged to provide a more suitable “community centre”. Essential repairs are being carried out to the roof of the building, prior to the onset of winter.

5.3 Hartford News & information

Hartford News, funded by the Parish Council and edited and produced by volunteers, is the official newsletter of Hartford Parish Council. It is available, free of charge, from a number of distribution points, including shops, petrol stations and pubs in the village. It provides information about events in Hartford and neighbouring towns and villages, together with other news affecting the village. Noticeboards at the Post Office and Village Hall are also regularly updated. The Hartford website (www.hartford-cheshire.co.uk) is currently being updated and developed.

5.4 Health Care

There are no GP practices in Hartford, the most accessible being in Northwich, Barnton, Sandiway and Weaverham. The 1995 Hartford Village Plan stated that “every encouragement had been given to a group of doctors wishing to set up a surgery in the village”, but this did not materialise. In 2004 residents indicated that there was still a strong need for medical provision within the village.

Leighton Hospital, near Crewe, is the main hospital for residents of Hartford. It provides NHS and private medical care, as well as an Accident & Emergency department. Victoria Infirmary, located on Winnington Hill in Northwich, is an Integrated Care and Independent Living Centre, providing a range of health care services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiology, day surgery, inpatient unit, pathology service, outpatients and minor injuries to residents of Vale Royal.



Halls in Hartford

Hartford Methodist Church Hall

Hartford Social Club

Cricket Pavilion

Parish Church Hall

Scout Hall

Hartford Village Hall

5.5 Library

A central library is located in Northwich town centre and Cheshire County Council operates a mobile library, which calls at Hartford for two half days each week. Feedback from the questionnaire suggested that the village needs a permanently based library. Enquiries made by the Parish Council have made it clear that it is very unlikely that funding will ever be made available for such a resource in the village.

5.6 Religious observance

There are two churches in Hartford. St John's Church stands at the centre of the village and Hartford Methodist Church is to be found on Beach Road. Groups based in nearby Northwich participate in other forms of religious observance.

5.7 Nurseries, playgroups, childminders

Pre school provision is provided in the village by two day care nurseries and five pre school playgroups. Additionally, in July 2004, six registered childminders work in Hartford, although there are over forty in Northwich as a whole.

5.8 Educational establishments

There are ten educational establishments in Hartford, attended by around 6,000 pupils and students, a total remarkable in that it is higher than the population of the village itself. Given the number and range of educational establishments on our doorstep, it is not surprising that almost 90% of Hartford children under the age of 16 attend schools in the village. Many adults in the village attend courses at Mid Cheshire College.

The new primary school in neighbouring Kingsmead is unlikely to be large enough to satisfy the needs of its own catchment area for some time, while The Art College is to be relocated onto the Hartford Campus during 2005: clearly the numbers of pupils and students will remain very high for a village of this size.

More than a third of respondents to the questionnaire identified good schools as a reason for living in Hartford. Their opinion is supported not only by the favourable reports given to the schools by OFSTED, but also by the indicators published in DfES 'league tables'. These show that academic performance of pupils attending Hartford schools has been consistently above the average for England, and there is a widely felt satisfaction amongst residents and students alike that the schools and college provide a high standard of education.

5.9 Youth activities



Day care nurseries

Sir Leslie Martin
Day Nursery

Old Tree Nursery

Pre school playgroups

Hartford Manor Pre
School

Hartford Primary
Nursery

St Wilfrids Pre
School

Sugar 'n' Spice

Woodlands Pre
School Nursery

Scout and Guide organisations are represented in Hartford, and both churches organise clubs for children and young people.

The 1995 Hartford Village Plan stated “clearly there is a need for a youth club”, and subsequently one was set up at Mid Cheshire College. It proved to be very popular but because some individuals were disruptive or destructive, and there were difficulties in recruiting volunteers the youth club was disbanded. In 2004 residents again indicated that there is a need for a youth club in Hartford. Some Hartford youngsters attend a youth centre on Winnington Hill, opposite Victoria Infirmary. Public transport to and from the venue is poor, however, which often means people having to walk home late at night. Five teenage members of the community (all girls) and two youth social workers attended a public meeting held in 2003, and discussed these points with residents. All felt that what was needed was somewhere for young people to meet with their friends, listen to music and enjoy coffee, soft drinks and refreshments.



- Primary schools
 - Hartford
 - Hartford Manor
 - St Wilfrids
- Secondary schools
 - Hartford High
 - St Nicholas
- Tertiary education
 - Mid Cheshire College
- Special education
 - Cloughwood
 - Greenbank
- Independent schools
 - The Grange Junior
 - The Grange Senior

5.10 Actions

- Revisit options for establishing a library within the village (consider use of existing building with available rooms).
- Consult with young people to establish their current requirements and needs in Hartford.
- Investigate grant funding to extend and up-grade the village hall and the parking needed to enable the village hall committee to offer wider range of amenities to the residents of Hartford.
- Investigate availability of room(s) within the village, for a weekly health care surgery.

6 Sport & Leisure

6.1 Play Areas

Play equipment for children is provided by the Parish Council at Grange Park (Bradburns Lane) and Parker Avenue (off Hodge Lane).

It was one of the objectives of the 1995 Hartford Village Plan to provide new play equipment and establish a regular maintenance programme: this has been achieved at the Grange Park play area.



6.2 Sport

There are a number of sporting activities operating within Hartford, in addition to which the Sports Complex at nearby Moss Farm provides a range of other facilities, including squash courts and a swimming pool.

The football field on The Green is subject to water logging, due to poor drainage, which also has an impact on gardens abutting the playing field. The Parish Council has investigated the cost of remedying the problem but there are insufficient funds available for the appropriate work. It is a very popular venue, not just for the Football Club but for residents of all ages.



6.3 Actions

- Investigate means of addressing the water logging problem of the football field.
- Consideration to be given to redesigning the play area at Parker Avenue with more imaginative and varied facilities.

Sporting activities

Vale Royal Athletics Club

Hartford Bowls & Tennis Club

Hartford Cricket Club

Hartford Football Club

Hartford Golf Club

Hartford Gymnastics Club

Hartford Sub Aqua Club

Mid Cheshire Table Tennis Club

7 Transport & Traffic

7.1 Public Transport



The centre of Hartford village lies half way between Hartford and Greenbank railway stations. Greenbank station is served by an hourly First North Western Trains stopping service between Chester and Manchester. Presently an hourly Central Trains service that runs from Liverpool to Crewe calls at Hartford, although it is several years since West Coast Main Line services stopped there.

Only a small percentage of residents feel that the train service from Hartford station is acceptable. During recent years the service has reduced in frequency and it is not uncommon for it to be subject to delays or replaced by a bus service. Residents rated the service from Greenbank better.

Although some underused bus services have recently been curtailed, three bus services from Northwich pass through Hartford. An hourly service runs to Chester and a much less frequent service to Warrington. The 'Weaverham Circular' runs along Beach Road and is the only service that operates in the evening or on a Sunday. Over half of residents were unable to rate the services: this may be symptomatic of the high level of car ownership in Hartford, or a lack of knowledge about them, or their perceived inadequacies. To improve facilities new bus shelters have been installed and kerb and road markings updated at all stops.

7.2 Infrastructure and traffic management

The quality of the infrastructure in Hartford is variable, and while some pavements have recently been renewed many residents are concerned about the condition of roads and pavements in certain parts of the village. Disabled access is poor where pavements don't exist, or are too narrow or uneven to accommodate a wheelchair safely.

The A559 runs through the centre of Hartford and traffic from Chester is signposted to follow this route into Northwich. Most through traffic, however, follows the A556 Chester to Manchester road, which bypasses Hartford and Northwich along a dual carriageway and provides the link between the village and the M6 motorway.

The majority of roads in the village, including the A559, are governed by a 30mph speed limit, although speeding, even on minor roads, is of concern to the majority of residents, notably those living to the west of Hartford station, where the 40mph limit was recently reduced to 30mph.

New traffic calming measures and pelican crossings have been welcomed, and residents expressed a desire for further such installations. Speed humps have recently been installed in Abbey Lane, Riddings Lane and Chantry Avenue. Fewer residents would welcome the control of more junctions by traffic signals. During 2004 traffic signals have been installed

at the junction of School Lane with the high speed A556. Traffic is now prevented from turning right from School Lane onto the A556, encouraging more motorists *en route* to Chester to pass through the centre of the village.

7.3 Educational traffic

Hartford plays host to some 6,000 pupils and students at its ten educational establishments, and as such is unique in Europe for a village of its size. Some of these pupils and students travel into Hartford from surrounding areas, although a significant amount of traffic congestion is caused by parents who live in Hartford driving their children to school. Nearly half of parents living in the village who drive their children to school say they would be encouraged to let them walk or cycle to school if safer routes for doing so were available.

7.4 Goods traffic

There is a medium sized transport depot on the boundary of Hartford. The Parish Council, with neighbouring Weaverham, has succeeded in obtaining a weight restriction on certain roads to and from the depot, for the benefit of the residents of the village. On several occasions, however, some visiting lorries have been seen to ignore the weight restrictions imposed. The presence of HGVs in the village is a concern to residents.

7.5 Parking

In most parts of the village residents are not in favour of greater restrictions on parking but those living near to shops at the north end of School Lane are an exception to this. A particular problem is encountered on The Green where access is restricted for emergency services at certain times, when the left hand lane becomes blocked by parked cars and the right hand lane by traffic in a slow moving queue trying to join Chester Road.

Parking on pavements further compounds the problems faced by pedestrians. Elsewhere damage to grass verges is caused where cars are parked on them: wooden bollards have been positioned on some verges to prevent this. Many residents experience problems, to varying degrees, when parking in the village. It is considered important that such problems do not lead to the loss of 'passing trade' at the shops at the centre of the village. There are also significant parking problems near the schools at the beginning and end of the school day.

7.6 Actions

- Continue to lobby MPs to raise the issue of the poor train service from Hartford station.
- Raise awareness and use of available bus services.
- Raise standards of infrastructure maintenance.





- Review provision and condition of pavements to ensure safe access to all members of the community, including people with disabilities.
- Investigate the options for enforcing speed limits throughout the village.
- Investigate the options for enforcing parking restrictions throughout the village.
- Review options for improving and managing parking in the village, with consideration for the needs of people with disabilities.
- Investigate and progress realistic options for safer walking and cycling to schools. Promote cycling through training courses.
- Examine progress made by schools in developing transport plans and determine how they can best be made effective.
- Continue the biannual traffic survey to monitor road traffic in Hartford.
- Write to the transport depot to remind them of their obligations. Report future instances of weight restriction infringements to the police, copying to the traffic commissioner.

Conclusion

- **The way forward**

The information contained in this Parish Plan was obtained from a consultation exercise with residents and businesses which took place during the twelve months from October 2003 to September 2004. It gives a picture of the wishes and aspirations of the people who live and work here.

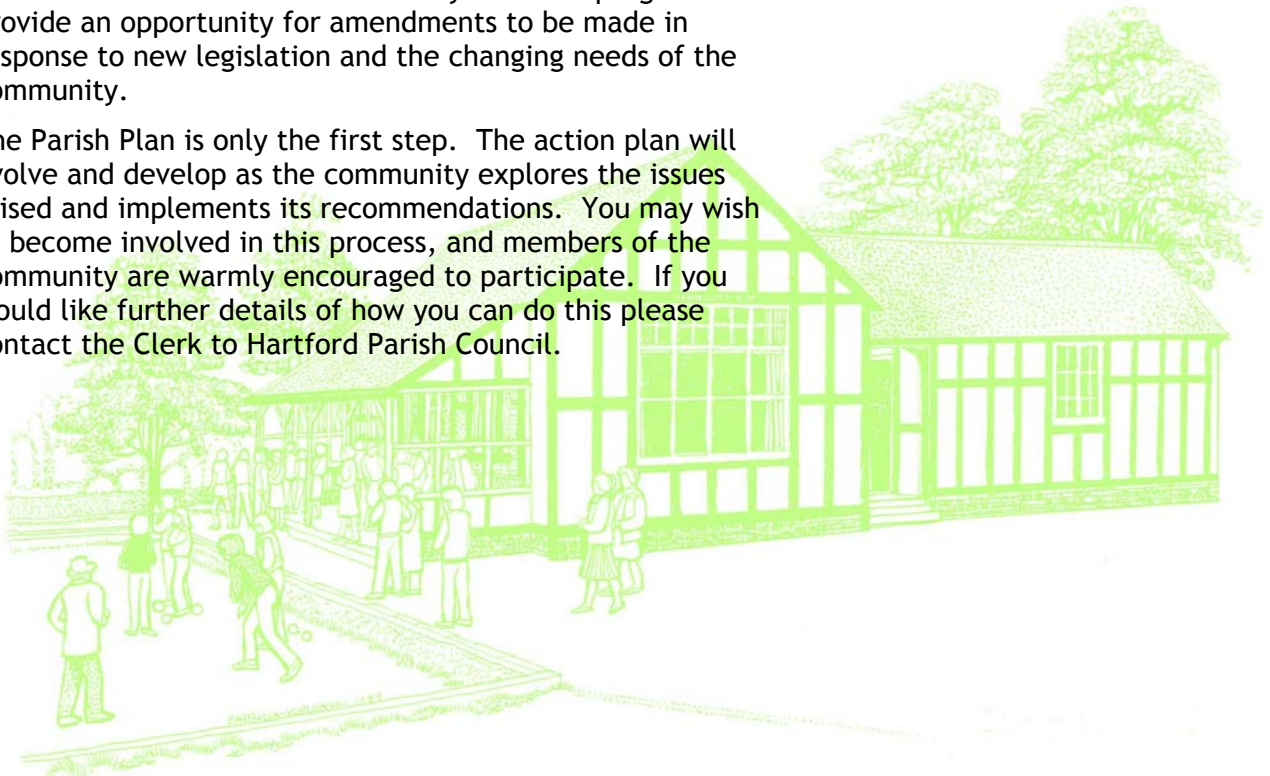
The Plan is the end result of the Vital Villages Initiative which, with the assistance of Cheshire Community Council, encourages Parish Councils to produce Parish Plans. Hartford Parish Council set-up a Steering Committee which, with the help of volunteers and the co-operation and assistance of the community, produced the Parish Plan.

From the information gathered the Steering Committee has identified the issues that concern residents and businesses and looked at what actions are required to overcome problems. It has also identified those organisations and authorities which can assist in achieving this aim, and proposed a timescale for implementing the improvement actions.

The production of the Parish Plan will enable the Parish Council to work with the various stakeholders in pursuance of these goals, and to implement the wishes of the community by influencing the statutory planning system and shaping the way in which the village develops in the future.

To ensure the Parish Plan is effective a system will be set up to monitor the progress made with the action plan. The Parish Plan will be reviewed annually to assess progress and provide an opportunity for amendments to be made in response to new legislation and the changing needs of the community.

The Parish Plan is only the first step. The action plan will evolve and develop as the community explores the issues raised and implements its recommendations. You may wish to become involved in this process, and members of the community are warmly encouraged to participate. If you would like further details of how you can do this please contact the Clerk to Hartford Parish Council.



Appendices

● Household questionnaire

The household questionnaire was developed during February 2004, then issued to and collected from households during April 2004. An impressive 45% of households submitted completed questionnaires, returning them to a collection box at a local newsagent, to a door to door collector, or by post.

Why do you live in the village?

23%	Convenience for work	22%	Village life
21%	Good schools	8%	Transport
7%	Born here/lived from childhood		

How long has your household lived in Hartford?

32%	over 25 years	21%	15 to 24 years
29%	5 to 14 years	18%	less than 5 years

How many people normally live on your household in each of the following age groups?

770	over 60 years old	924	40 to 59 years old
432	20 to 39 years old	282	12 to 19 years old
221	6 to 11 years old	195	up to 5 years old

How many vehicles are there in your household?

1866	cars	1725	bicycles
55	motorcycles/scooters	30	vans

Do you have difficulty parking in the village?

19%	Regularly	60%	Occasionally
21%	Never		

Should there be more restrictions on roadside parking in Hartford?

69%	No	31%	Yes
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What is your opinion about the quality of bus services to and from Hartford?

3%	Very good	19%	Acceptable
26%	Poor	52%	Don't know

What is your opinion about the quality of train services to and from Hartford station?

2%	Very good	17%	Acceptable
56%	Poor	25%	Don't know

What is your opinion about the quality of train services to and from Greenbank station?

3%	Very good	36%	Acceptable
20%	Poor	41%	Don't know

Do you think road speed limits are adequately enforced in Hartford?

62%	No	38%	Yes
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Has anything that has happened in the community or surrounding area, had a beneficial influence on your business in the last two years?

74% No 26% Yes

To what degree are you satisfied with road transport links to your business?

2% Very satisfied 36% Satisfied
38% Adequate 14% Don't know

What is your opinion about the quality of bus services to and from Hartford?

0% Very good 19% Acceptable
37% Poor 44% Don't know

What is your opinion about the quality of train services to and from Hartford station?

0% Very good 34% Acceptable
37% Poor 29% Don't know

What is your opinion about the quality of train services to and from Greenbank station?

5% Very good 40% Acceptable
17% Poor 38% Don't know

Would your organisation be interested in Broadband?

67% No 33% Yes

Would you be prepared to sponsor any community centred projects, such as flower beds, litter bins, street lights, charity events?

67% No 33% Yes

To what degree would your organisation be interested in supporting a local sports team?

12% Already do it 2% Would be interested
31% Will think about it 55% Not interested

Do you already have links with organisations in the local community?

57% No 43% Yes

What additional type of shop(s), if any, would you like to see in Hartford?

Responses included:

Butcher, restaurant/café/tea shop, hardware/DIY, bank/ATM, delicatessen.

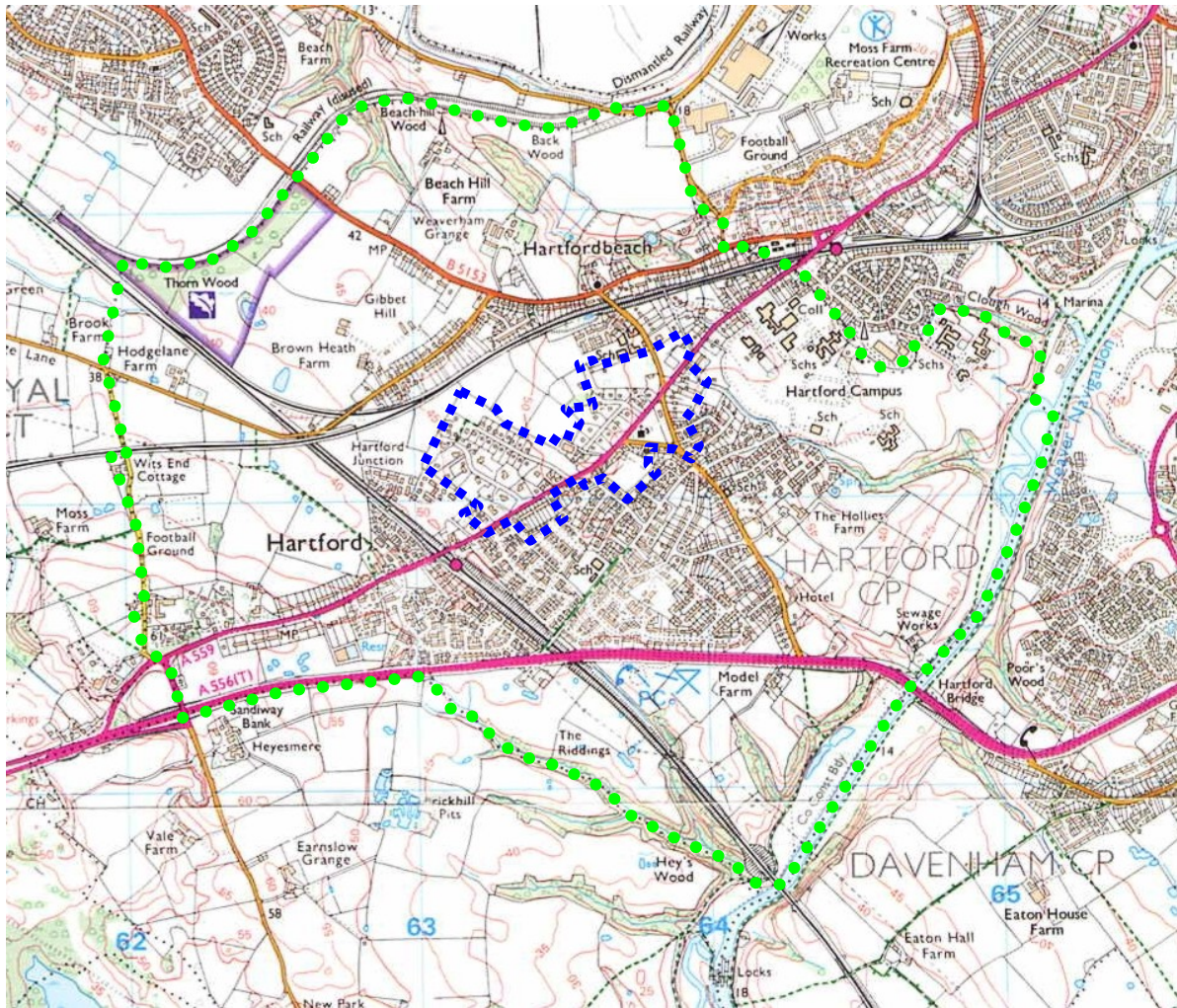
There is a proposal to provide a uniformed Community Support Officer to supplement policing within the village. Would you be prepared to make a contribution to fund this?

57% No 43% Yes

- **Map**

Extract of Ordnance Survey mapping at 1:25 000 scale (4 centimetres to 1 kilometre or approximately 2½ inches to 1 mile)

The market town of Northwich lies 1½ miles to the east of the centre of Hartford. The extent of the Parish of Hartford is indicated by the green line, and that of the recently extended Conservation Area by the blue line.



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- **Acknowledgements**

The Steering Committee would like to thank the residents of Hartford and all members of the community who have, in any way, been involved in the production of this Plan.

Special thanks go to the members of the two Design Groups, seven Focus Groups, those involved in distributing and collecting the questionnaires and the independent readers.

Thanks are also due to Patricia Kelsall for allowing the use of her drawings and to the people who have supplied photographs used in the document.

The Steering Committee wish to thank the Parish Council, Vale Royal Borough Council and Cheshire Community Council for all their encouragement and support in the production of the Plan.

Full details are available on request of those residents who formed the above groups. Requests for any further information should be made to Hartford Parish Council.

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Hartford Parish Plan

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