

Hamstead Marshall

PARISH PLAN

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These gate-piers in Hamstead Park are handsome emblems of a distinguished past.

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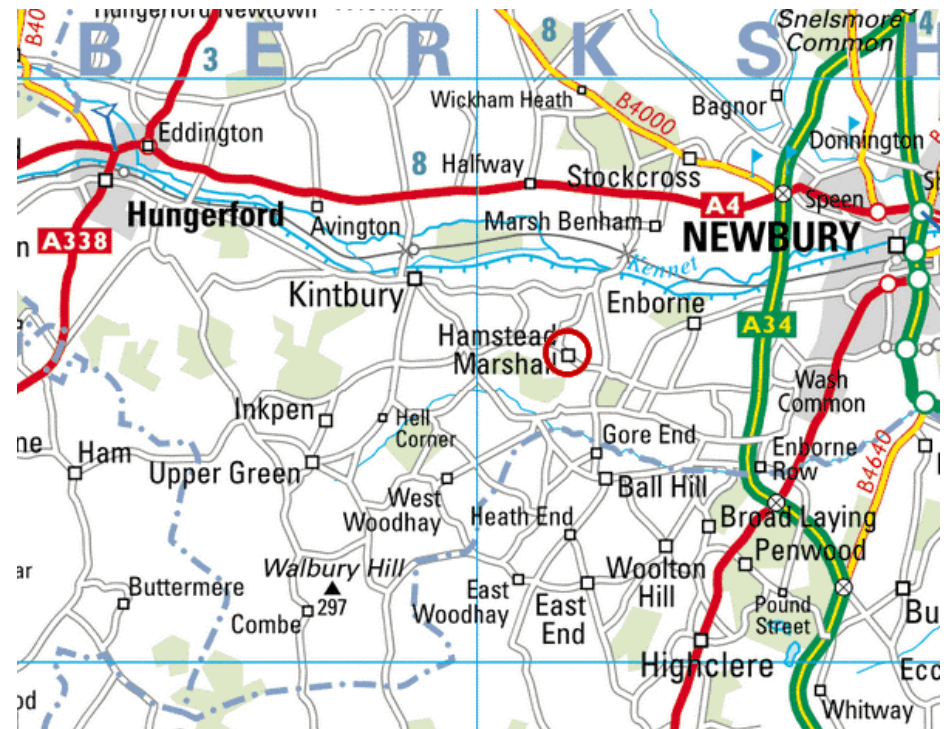
Introduction

Parish planning has proved to be a successful way for rural citizens to make their voices heard, and to influence the local authority, service providers and planners. This can lead to improved services, as well as an enhanced quality of life within the parish.

This parish plan consolidates the views, needs and opinions of the whole community in Hamstead Marshall, expressed over the last two years in a series of meetings, displays, publications and consultative processes. The steering group of local volunteers sought first to establish and prioritise issues of local concern, and then to find economically feasible solutions for tackling them. Local residents of all ages have been encouraged to input into the plan at all stages, and the sense of community which has been fostered by the development of the plan is in itself a significant achievement. As a small and widely scattered community Hamstead Marshall has benefited already from the parish planning process as a framework for social cohesion.

This document represents our shared vision, setting out objectives that will improve village life for everyone.

In accordance with recommended practice, this plan does not address planning issues, which will be dealt with separately in a Village Design Statement.



Geography and population

The civil parish of Hamstead Marshall comprises 769 hectares (1,900 acres) four miles to the west of Newbury. Adjoining parishes are Speen, Enborne, East Woodhay (Hants), West Woodhay and Kintbury.

The Ordnance Survey grid reference is SU4165.

All of Hamstead to the west of Ash Tree Corner (ie, most of the parish) lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

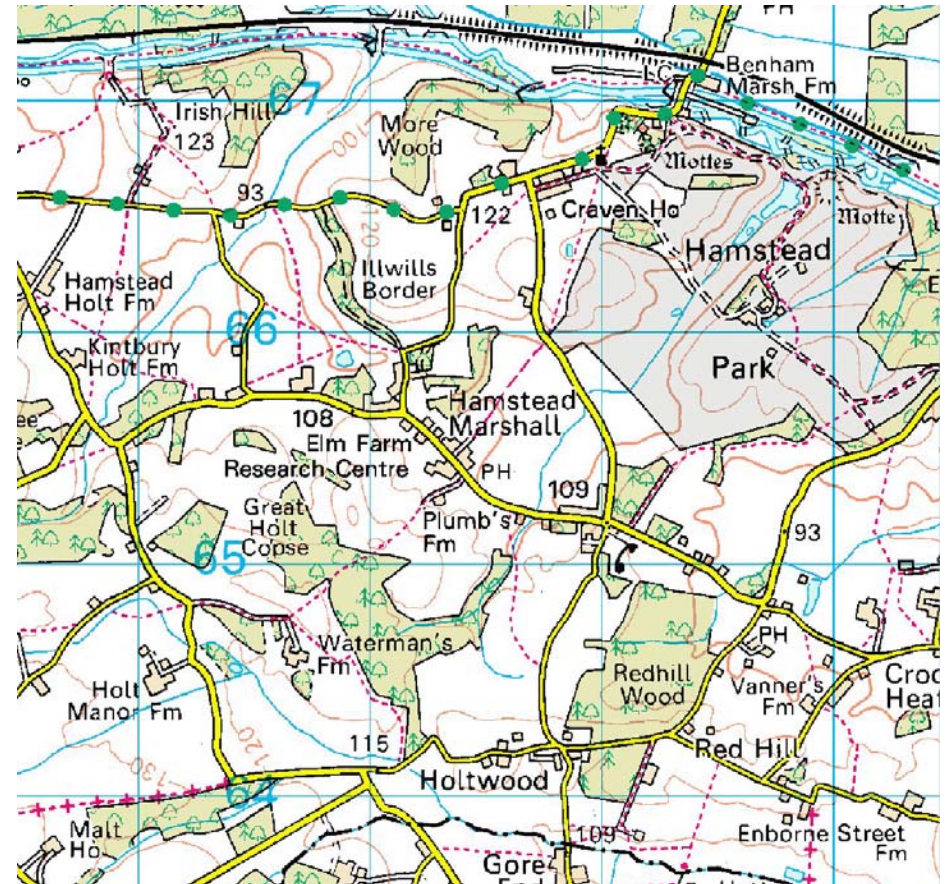
The 2001 census enumerated 267 people in the village, an increase of 19 on 1991. Households numbered 107 in the 2001 census (88 in 1991) but there are now known to be 117. Most properties are owner-occupied, with about 20 association houses and about 14 flats and houses privately rented. Very few of the houses are second homes.

Settlement is scattered over several centres:

- Ash Tree Corner
- Chapel Corner
- Holtwood
- the area comprising Craven Hill, church and river.

There is no clearly defined geographical centre: the principal social centres - the pub, church and village hall - are nearly a mile distant from each other. This presents significant problems in promoting social cohesion within the community.

Hamstead Marshall falls within the Kintbury ward, and is represented on West Berkshire Council by Andrew Rowles (Con) and Anthony Stansfeld (Con).



Architectural character and conservation

Hamstead Marshall has a rich historic heritage, which can be explored on the website <www.hamsteadmarshall.net>. An estimated 50 per cent of the buildings in the village were built before the twentieth century.

Grade I listing applies to five of the six surviving gate-piers of the seventeenth-century mansion site.

Grade II* listing applies to the sixth pair of gate-piers and St Mary's Church.

Grade II listing applies to the Regency manor house and gardens in Hamstead Park, and about a dozen other properties including cottages, farmhouses, Hamstead Mill, several barns, two bridges, two canal locks and pillboxes.

2.5 hectares of walled kitchen gardens (now within grounds of Craven House) have been designated a **Garden of Special Historic Interest**.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments are three motte-and-bailey castle mounds (in the garden of North Lodge and in Hamstead Park) and Hamstead Park pale. These, together with the site of the medieval village and fishponds (in the same area) were the subject of a survey and report by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (Bonney and Dunn) in 1989.

The garden site of the original manor house (which burnt down in 1718) was the subject of a survey and report by English Heritage in 1996.

There are four **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** in the village:

- The pit in the quarry field, protected for geological reasons
- Irish Hill Copse, which is ancient coppiced woodland
- Redhill Wood, which is unusually well preserved ancient woodland
- The River Kennet.



Hamstead Mill (Grade II listed)

Village institutions and facilities

Hamstead Marshall Village Hall is in Park Lane, about 200 yards north of Ash Tree Corner. It was built in 1895 as a village school, converting to community use in 1933. Since then it has been substantially modernised, but care has been taken to retain its original Victorian charm. The hall is a registered charity (no. 1026745) managed by a committee of trustees. Regular users include a pre-school nursery group, a yoga class, an oil-painting class run from Newbury College and occasional courses in Scottish dancing. The village hall also accommodates the monthly village market and the annual harvest supper.

The field alongside the hall is a recreational area for the village, and is managed by the same committee. For the last three years this field has been used for a successful parish party. The action plan contains proposals to make more use of this field, particularly for young people.

The Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm <www.organicresearchcentre.com> has since 1982 been the chief farm in the village and also the main employer. The charitable trust at Elm Farm has always been a keen supporter of village events, offering accommodation for fetes, meetings and barn dances, and opening up a farm trail walk of around three miles. Organic farming ensures that the village has an enviable diversity of native flora and fauna.

The White Hart has served the village for at least 200 years (and possibly much longer), hosting regular social gatherings such as the popular monthly quiz and occasional public meetings.

Other businesses run from within the parish include a fishery, forestry management, various business consultancies, tourist accommodation, equestrian services, building, household and garden services. The Dogs Trust <www.dogstrust.org.uk> (formerly NCDL) runs a kennels at Plumb's Farm.



Hamstead Marshall Village Hall



White Hart

Village communications

The scattered settlement pattern of Hamstead Marshall gives rise to communication problems. The White Hart, near Chapel Corner, is a natural social focus, but it is beyond walking distance (one to three kilometres) for significant numbers of villagers. The church, in the far north of the village, is within walking distance for only a dozen households. The village hall is better placed, insofar as it is readily accessible to 30 - 40 households around Ash Tree Corner.

The village is well served by footpaths for leisure walking, but lacks a footpath connecting the east and west extremities of the village. Local residents have clearly indicated a wish for such a path, because speeding traffic along the Kintbury Road is a major disincentive to pedestrians; however geography, settlement and landownership make it highly unlikely that one could be constructed.

A regular bus service runs east-west through the village along the Kintbury Road, linking the village with Newbury, Hungerford and Inkpen, but around 40 village households are sited more than one kilometre from the route. An additional once-weekly service runs through Holtwood, and will divert up to half a mile on request.

Information is disseminated within the parish by:

- a monthly magazine published by the churches of Hamstead Marshall, Enborne and West Woodhay
- the *Hamstead Hornet*, produced quarterly by a local resident

(Both the above are delivered free to every household in the parish.)

- <www.hamsteadmarshall.net> which has been up and running since January 2004
- three public notice boards
- St Mary's Church has its own notice board, and posts information in the church porch
- a neighbourhood watch emailing list forwarding information from Thames Valley Police.

Parish plan timeline

Nov 2005: The parish council distributed a preliminary questionnaire to all 117 households, asking what was liked/disliked about the village, and what were thought to be the issues of current importance. 49 were returned.

Jan 2006: The parish council called a public meeting in the White Hart, at which the questionnaire results were discussed. About 40 people attended, and 12 people volunteered to help with putting a parish plan together. These people formed a steering group to take the plan forward. The steering group held regular meetings, in the course of which three sub-groups were established. Progress was reported regularly on <www.hamsteadmarshall.net>, in the *Hamstead Hornet* and to the parish council.

May 2006: The young people of the village were involved in a special consultation afternoon. They made a model of the village, and they were asked to express their likes, dislikes and ideas for the future. This was later used to consult the rest of the community at the parish party.

July 2006: A display of progress was mounted in the village hall to coincide with the annual summer parish party. Local residents of all ages were invited to record their opinions on possible proposals by means of stickers and annotated flags. In all, 1,287 opinions were recorded.

Nov 2006 - Jan 2007: A much more detailed questionnaire was delivered to every occupied household in the village. Returns were collected by personal contact. 65 per cent of households responded.

Mar 2007: The results (as below) were published on <www.hamsteadmarshall.net> and in the *Hamstead Hornet*. Action was initiated on a number of issues such as the inauguration of a monthly market, and negotiations were opened with West Berkshire Council highways department on traffic-calming.

June 2007: An action plan based on the questionnaire results was posted on village notice boards, at the annual summer parish party and as an ongoing display at the monthly village markets. In draft form the plan was vetted by the appropriate heads of departments at West Berkshire Council.

September 2007: The plan was formally adopted by Hamstead Marshall Parish Council.

October 2007: The plan was presented to the Downlands Forum for formal adoption by West Berkshire Council.



The children's model village on display at the Party in the Parish 2006



Ceilidh in the village hall, 2006

Christmas party in Elm Farm barn 2006



Tug o' war at the Party in the Parish 2006



Results of the November 2006 questionnaire

113 questionnaires were distributed and 74 were returned, a return rate of 65%.

These 74 households contain 175 people (23 of them under 16). Respondents were also asked to describe the composition of their households, and their occupations.

ENVIRONMENTAL & DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Responses in this section made clear that traffic speed was by far the biggest priority for most households: 48 named it as the number one problem. Road maintenance, litter, flytipping, hedge/verge maintenance and noise were also mentioned as locally significant issues. St Mary's Church, the Kennet and Avon canal bridges and lock, the Craven mansion site, the castle mounds, the Grade-listed buildings the SSSI and the park pale gained votes as the most treasured historic sites in the village. 58 of the 74 households deemed the "open countryside" status of the village as "very important".



RUBBISH & RECYCLING

58 households are broadly satisfied with WBC's rubbish collection, but there were several complaints about lack of street cleaning.

57 households use the WBC recycling baskets, but there was a substantial volume of complaint about the environmental value, range and frequency of the existing scheme.

60 households would support a village recycling initiative, including 9 who do not at present use the WBC basket scheme.

37 households are unaware of the existence of Streetcare (WBC's service for clearing litter, flytipping, road obstructions, graffiti etc) 12 of these also expressed concern about litter, flytipping etc.

40 households would support a village litter pick, of whom 27 individuals volunteered to help.

Hamstead Park, one of the favourite areas for walking

TRANSPORT & TRAFFIC

Traffic speed was a key issue for most respondents.

<i>numbers of people using village roads</i>	<i>for</i>
128	walking for leisure
52	cycling
18	jogging
14	horse-riding
9	walking to work

In addition, 69 households use village footpaths. A new footpath running east-west through the village was favoured to allow pedestrians to escape the hazards of walking along the Kintbury Road, but topography and land ownership suggest that this is unlikely to be feasible.

48 households/112 people named speeding traffic as the number one environmental problem

<i>proposed traffic-calming measure</i>	<i>in favour</i>	<i>against</i>	<i>reasons against</i>
gates at either end of 30mph zone	120	7	ineffective, ugly
road surface markings	102	8	irritating, noisy, non-rural
narrowing the road	67	18	dangerous, noisy non-rural
vehicle-activated signs (VAS)	100	4	ineffective, non-rural

29 people were in favour of extending the speed limit in some way. Most want the zone to extend to the Craven Arms eastwards, and for varying distances westwards (to Old Lane, Masons Farm, Kintbury Holt).

- 4 want the zone extended down Park Lane and Holtwood Rd
- 5 want a change to the level of the speed limit
- 4 want it lowered to 20mph
- 1 wants it raised to 40mph
- 10 want more active policing of speed
- 4 want speed camera(s)

Gates on either side of the Kintbury Road, bold road surface markings, physical obstructions which narrow the road and vehicle activated signs received substantial support as traffic-calming measures. Other ideas mooted included bumps, better hedge-trimming, more and cleaner signage, priority systems, mini-roundabouts and mirrors, but there was a less clear consensus for these suggestions.

Parking for residents was another hot topic, particularly around Ash Tree Corner where 15 Sovereign Association owned garages were lost to demolition recently. Current parking practice was identified as

- 55 households/126 cars on their own property
- 9 households/10 cars off-road (not own property)
- 8 households/14 cars on roadside.

It was apparent that at least 10 cars would use a grasscrete parking bay alongside the Kintbury Road, and 6 more would use expanded parking in Ash Tree Grove.

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

55 out of the 74 households had taken part in one or more of the events in the existing village social calendar, which included the monthly village market, the White Hart monthly quiz, Circle of Friends, Scottish dancing, the summer Party in the Parish, the Harvest Supper, Christmas carol singing around the village, Elm Farm guided walks and Garden Society meetings.

There was a clearly expressed and widespread wish for more social activities in the village. Art and craft classes/workshops, walks and talks on local history/environment, practical skills classes, book club or discussion group, film club, tea/coffee etc and the chance to chat with neighbours were all popular suggestions to be followed up. Around 10 people volunteered to help organise such activities, with four more offering special interest expertise or knowledge which they would like to share.

12 respondents volunteered to help with compiling an information/welcome pack for newcomers, and a footpath leaflet.

8 households with a total of 17 or more children expressed interest in youth activities, with circus skills, film club, art and craft, games and computer workshops gaining votes. There was also a strong wish for the village hall field to be better maintained for children's recreation. Around 12 respondents volunteered to help with youth activities.

BROADBAND

Most of the village cannot receive broadband, a situation which becomes an increasingly significant disadvantage for those self-employed or working at home, and it is of course a distinct handicap for students of all ages. Hamstead Marshall shares this unfortunate status with a tiny minority of households in the UK – estimated at 100,000 households in total – which currently lie beyond BT's broadband reach because of the length and/or quality of the landlines connecting them to the local exchange.

15 of the 117 households in the village are already on broadband*. Of these

6 (01488 Kintbury) are at Irish Hill, Pear Tree & Craven Hill

1 (01488 Kintbury) is at Three-Cornered Hat

3 (01635 Newbury) are around the mill area

5 (01635 Highclere) are east of Ash Tree Corner and at Holtwood

**since the questionnaire it is believed that about six more households have now combined to subscribe to a satellite service*

Several of those with a BT-based service are receiving very poor speeds due to extension and poor quality of landlines.

49 households/110 people are on dial-up and want broadband.

8 of these 49 are on 01635 Newbury exchange, and are located in the park or at Hamstead Mill*

41 are on 01488 Kintbury exchange and are located at

17 around Ash Tree Corner/Grove

21 around Chapel Corner

2 at Craven Hill*

1 at Burgess Lane

*At Craven Hill (01488 Kintbury numbers) and at Hamstead Mill (01635 Newbury numbers) some residents have obtained a broadband connection on BT landlines whilst their immediate neighbours have been refused a connection.

Main internet uses: within the 49 households/110 people who are on dial-up and want broadband:

57 people need the internet to earn a living (either self-employed or for an employer)

40 people need the internet for education

11 people need the internet for voluntary work.

A fuller analysis of the questionnaire responses, including details about the other issues, can be seen on
<www.hamsteadmarshall.net>.

Action plan

On the basis of the responses, and further exploration of the viability of the measures suggested, the steering group drew up the following action plan under three main headings:

- **Broadband**
- **Traffic**
- **Social, community & environment**

Each was tackled by a separate subgroup. The leader of each subgroup is on the steering group, but has also enlisted a great deal of practical help from other interested residents.

The actions in the action plan below represent those which the steering group considered reasonably attainable in the medium term. As these objectives are achieved, other ideas from the questionnaire responses may be included in subsequent action plans.

The action plan has been posted on all village notice boards and at the monthly village market.

Some significant objectives have already been achieved. These are:

- ✓ **A successful grant application to Awards for All has obtained £3,914 to buy new furniture for the village hall**
- ✓ **Agreement has been secured from West Berks Council Highways Dept for an extension of the 30mph speed limit and the installation of gates and signage at either end of the village**
- ✓ **Agreement has been secured from the Downlands Forum to grant £2,000 for fund traffic-calming measures at Ash Tree Corner**
- ✓ **Agreement has been secured from West Berks Council Highways Dept for the installation of VAS on Holt Road**
- ✓ **A monthly village market in the village hall has been running successfully for a year**
- ✓ **In the absence of any available publicity material from Streetcare the steering group produced and distributed its own leaflet and posters**

HAMSTEAD MARSHALL ACTION PLAN

BROADBAND						
The Broadband Group is headed by Frank Ellis, liaising with Kate Gunn on the parish council, and drawing upon the technical expertise of David Green and Bob Baddeley.						
<i>Project</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>		<i>Partners</i>	<i>Funding</i>	<i>Priority & Timescale</i>
		<i>Completed</i>	<i>Planned</i>			
Obtain an effective broadband service for the village	Obtain BT landline service	Contact established at BT high level (regional director SE)	Continue dialogue and pressure at regional and local level	HMPC BT	BT discussions needed	High priority but BT solution timing is beyond local control. Pressure ongoing to obtain a meaningful timetable, enabling decision re satellite options
		Publicity obtained in national & local media	Continue publicity to maintain pressure	local & national media		
		Richard Benyon MP has expressed support	Follow up and obtain practical support	Richard Benyon MP		
		Letter to Ofcom from HMPC to encourage universal service obligation (USO) on BT	Reply indicates USO is increasingly an EU issue; pursue accordingly	HMPC Ofcom BT		
			Contact SEEDA to push for support	SEEDA		
Failing a BT solution, obtain effective community satellite broadband service	Preliminary survey of satellite service options	Produce shortlist of possible providers			Possible GCT or SEEDA grant-aid for capital costs; thereafter self-funding from subscribers	
		Request viability survey by interested providers	Avanti			
		Determine likely local uptake	HMPC			
		Encourage SEEDA to take interest and provide funding by means of letter from HMPC pointing out similar action by other regional DAs	HMPC SEEDA			

Abbreviations: GCT=Greenham Common Trust HMPC=Hamstead Marshall Parish Council SEEDA=South Eastern Economic Development Agency USO=Universal Service Obligation

TRAFFIC

The Traffic Group is headed by David Harris, working closely with Jerry Ree and (until his recent departure) Nick Townsend.

Project	Objective	Action		Partners	Funding	Priority & Timescale
		Completed	Planned			
Traffic-calming	Better enforcement of 30mph speed limit	WBCH has undertaken to put pressure on police (30 Mar 07)	Monitor and follow up	WBCH police		Ongoing
	Extension of speed limit E to Craven Arms & W to Barrs Farm	WBCH has agreed	Monitor progress	WBCH	Available from WBCH	Promised by Christmas or Mar 08 latest
	Obtain installation of village gates as at Stockcross	WBCH has agreed installation of village gates and more signage	Monitor progress	WBCH	Available from WBCH	Promised by Christmas or Mar 08 latest
	Implement measures at Ash Tree Corner	WBCH recommends staggered-junction warning sign, SLOW road marking on red surfacing, relocation of direction sign	Monitor progress	WBCH	Downlands Forum has voted £2,000	Oct/Nov 07
	VAS for Holt Rd	WBCH has agreed in principle	Monitor progress	WBCH	WBCH has budgeted for 2008-09	2008-09
	Implement measures at Chapel Corner	WBCH to assess specific measures needed	Maintain pressure on WBCH	WBCH	Bid for £5k to be put in to Highway & Transport Capital Programme	Part of 5-year programme
Off-road parking	Grasscrete for Kintbury Rd layby	Costed by WBCH at £18,000 min for 50m	Cost is being queried	WBCH HMPC	still to be clarified	Medium priority
	More parking at Ash Tree Grove	Sovereign is being approached by HMPC for a significant contribution	Monitor progress	WBCH Sovereign	Sovereign	

Abbreviations: HMPC=Hamstead Marshall Parish Council VAS=vehicle activated signs WBCH=West Berkshire Council Highways Dept (Andrew Garratt)

SOCIAL, COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT

The Social & Community Group is led by Sue Watts, who has a large number of supporters. Jon Phillips liaises with the parish council on public services. Information projects are being handled by Penny Stokes. Robin Tandy has taken on conservation issues.

Project	Objective	Action		Partners	Funding	Priority & Timescale
		Completed	Planned			
Village market	Expansion	Successfully started 2006, running monthly in village hall	1. Source more local produce 2. Visit other community markets	Berkshire Food Group HMOVHC	Vibrant Villages	Ongoing
Refurbishment of village hall facilities	Replace chairs & tables	£3,914 grant from Awards for All has paid for new furniture	Useful home to be found for old furniture	HMOVHC	Awards for All	ACHIEVED
Social events	Organise rambling group		Organise walk & advertise	WBC Activities for Health project		3-12 months
	Organise youth activities		1. Organise games 2. Obtain play equipment for VH field	HMOVHC WBC Leisure in the Parishes project		
	Hold community lunches		Set up monthly			
	Run afternoon social events		Organise talks & courses			
Information	Produce a pack for new residents and footpath guide		Compile info/materials & produce as needed (est. up to 6 pa)	Local business WBC NWDAONB	NWDAONB	12 months
Recycling	Enhance existing usage		Promote awareness of existing facilities & lobby for extension to incl plastics & card	WBC HMPC Community Furniture Project		Medium priority
Litter & flytipping	Make village cleaner	Streetcare info has been distributed to every household and is displayed on village noticeboards	1. Lobby WBC for better street cleaning 2. Organise local volunteers litterpick	WBC		Medium priority
Historic sites	Conservation of deteriorating sites	Hamstead Park has been granted Higher Level Stewardship by English Nature	Liaise with and support partners on priority sites	Natural England landowners	Natural England	Low priority

Abbreviations: HMOVHC=Hamstead Marshall Village Hall NWDAONB= North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
S&C Group=Social & Community Group WBC=West Berkshire Council

Where do we go from here?

Once formally adopted, the plan will be printed and distributed to every household in the parish, as well as to the relevant bodies and individuals in local government. Thereafter it becomes formally incorporated into West Berkshire Council's district policy.

All work on the compilation of this plan has been funded by private donation and voluntary effort from within the parish. Greenham Common Community Trust Ltd has kindly sponsored the printing of 130 copies. Finding the funds for the individual action points will be an ongoing priority. Unlike larger villages, Hamstead Marshall cannot look to the usual local sources: there are no large businesses in the village, and the parish precept barely covers parish council admin costs.

The steering group will continue to meet, listen, fund-raise and when necessary amend the plan, drawing on the substantial reserves of energy and goodwill which have been generated within the village over the last two years.

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17 September 2007