

558

KENT COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

VILLAGE APPRAISALS

I INTRODUCTION

How has life in your village changed over the last 20 years?

What is it like now?

How would you like to see it develop in the future?

The main objectives of a village appraisal should be to answer questions such as these by examining the social, economic and environmental aspects of life in the village - past, present and future. An appraisal should seek to look at village life as it is today and to put forward realistic recommendations as to how life in the village could be improved and how the village should develop over the next 10 - 20 years.

Information of this kind can be invaluable to Parish Councils and Amenity Societies when commenting on local planning applications and proposals. It enables each proposal to be considered as part of an overall village plan and not merely as an isolated proposal to be judged on its own merits irrespective of the present and future needs of the village.

Ideally, as many people as possible should be involved in the appraisal, both in the preliminary survey work and later in the implementation of the resulting recommendations. This can perhaps best be achieved by setting up a special committee made up of representatives from all the various organisations in the village, e.g. Parish Council, Amenity Society, Women's Institute, School, Youth Club, etc. There should be something for everybody to do.

Of course, no two villages are the same - each has its own particular problems and each will therefore wish to concentrate its efforts and resources in different ways. The topics listed in Section II below, although by no means exhaustive, need not necessarily all be studied. The list has been drawn up simply to illustrate the sorts of topics which fall within the scope of a village appraisal. It is up to each village to select those topics which are particularly relevant to local circumstances and to the objectives of the appraisal they wish to undertake. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the more effort and information that goes into the project, the more valuable will be the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the results.

II POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. GENERAL FEATURES

Mr. Williamson

- (i) Geographical Location of the village in relation to other villages, towns, roads, railways, etc.
- (ii) History - the growth and development of the village.
- (iii) Form of the village e.g. cross-roads round a green, linear with a wide or narrow main street, compact or dispersed.

Is there a focal point?

What is the relationship between open space and buildings?

- (iv) Landscape and Geology - is the village a prominent feature on the landscape?

To what extent is the character of the village influenced by the surrounding topography and geology? (e.g. hills, valleys, woodland, rivers, agriculture, etc.).

- (v) Character - what is the overall character of the village community, both visually and socially? How has this changed over the years?

2. POPULATION

- (i) What is the total population in the village?
Is the total population increasing or decreasing?
- (ii) What is the age distribution within the population?
Is this changing and if so, how?

Mrs. Knight

3. EMPLOYMENT

- (i) Where do the people work?
- (ii) What employment opportunities are there in the village?
Are these sufficient and of the right kind, particularly for young people?
- (iii) Should small rural industries and crafts be developed in the village?

4. HOUSING

- (i) What is the situation regarding housing in the village?
- (ii) If additional housing is required, where should it be sited?
- (iii) How many houses belong to second homers, city commuters, retired professionals, etc.?
- (iv) What effect is this having on the village?

5. EDUCATION

- (i) What facilities are there for nursery, primary and secondary school education? Are these sufficient both now and for the future?
- (ii) What facilities are there for adult education and how do these meet the requirements of the community?

DTA.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT *W. Down*

- (i) What public transport services are provided in the village?
- (ii) To what extent are the inhabitants dependent on public transport?
How many people have their own cars?
- (iii) Are the services provided adequate?
- (iv) How could they be improved?

7. AMENITIES AND SERVICES

- (i) Shops, health services, playgroups, old people's welfare, places of worship, libraries, allotments, etc.
Sewerage, water, electricity, gas, telephone and postal services, etc.
- (ii) Are these services and facilities satisfactory?
How could they be improved?

8. RECREATION AND LEISURE

- (i) What societies and leisure activities are there in the village?
- (ii) Are there suitable meeting places and facilities for these activities? e.g. a village hall, a football pitch, tennis courts, etc.
- (iii) Where is the nearest theatre, cinema, bingo hall, swimming pool etc?

Sports Club - Guedes

9. ENVIRONMENT

- (i) Buildings - what are their characteristics? Note features such as scale, materials, fenestration, roofing, chimneys, etc.
Are any of the buildings of special architectural or historic value?
If so, are they listed? What condition are they in?
Are there any designated conservation areas in the village?
To what purpose could disused buildings be put?

- (ii) Trees - how many trees are there in the village?
Are any of them in need of care or replacement?
Should any of them be protected by a Tree Preservation Order?
Where could further tree planting be carried out?
- (iii) Public Rights of Way - are all the footpaths and bridleways properly waymarked and maintained?
- (iv) Treasures and Eyesores - are there any special features in the village which should be preserved and enhanced? e.g. An ancient monument, a nature reserve, the village pond, etc.
Are there any eyesores which should be removed or screened?
e.g. A rubbish dump, unnecessary advertisements, etc.
- (v) Street Furniture - bus stops and shelters, seats, litter bins, road signs, street lighting, overhead wires, etc. Is there scope for improvement? e.g. Are all the road signs essential? Could the overhead wires be put underground?
- (vi) Traffic - could and should through traffic be diverted?
Are there problems with heavy lorries?
Should road widening be resisted in order to keep down speeds?
- (vii) Car Parking - are car parking facilities satisfactory?
Are car parks properly screened?
- (viii) Tourism - is the village popular with tourists? What are the effects of this?
- (ix) Land Use - is there any land available in the village?
To what use could this best be put - housing, rural industry, car parking, open space, nature reserve, etc.?

III RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Ideally, the findings of an appraisal should be published in a report, in which any social, economic and environmental problems emerging are clearly identified and recommendations put forward as to how they might best be overcome. Copies of the report should be sent to the County and District Planning Authorities as well as any other interested persons.

It is also useful to draw up an 'action programme', phased over several years if necessary, indicating tasks to be carried out and who should be responsible for doing them.

e.g. The local Youth Club might volunteer to restore the village pond, clear the overgrown footpaths and plant some trees to screen the car park.

The Parish Council might undertake to approach the Electricity Board about placing the overhead wires in the conservation area underground, and look into the feasibility of a private mini-bus service to supplement the local bus service.

The Amenity Society might find out whether those old cottages should be listed, and compile a village guide or trail describing the main features of interest.

The successful implementation and undertaking of the recommendations and 'action programme' resulting from an appraisal is as important as the appraisal itself. The whole project can provide a tremendous opportunity for stimulating the interest and initiative of the local community and this potential should be realised to the full.

Further information and copies of this paper (price 5p each) may be obtained from the Countryside Officer, Kent Council of Social Service, 1 Holmesdale Terrace, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2AH. Tel. Folkestone 52333.