

GREAT BENTLEY



1999 VILLAGE APPRAISAL



Foreword

By Bob Wright, B.Sc., FRICS, FAAV,
Chairman of the Steering Committee

We humans have a limited life, but our village goes on for ever. We have a duty to hand on Great Bentley to the next generation a better place than we inherited. But who decides on what is better? It was for this reason that a group of villagers called a meeting in the Village Hall, where over one hundred residents agreed that a Village Appraisal should be undertaken. This report summarises the wishes of the inhabitants.

Great Bentley has seen many changes over the centuries. It is part of the Tendring Hundred, which covers 31 parishes. The Tendring Peninsular was described in about 1750 as an area, "Very much covered with wood and full of foul and bushy growth". Even in 55 BC it was described as forest land full of deer, wolves and boar. It obtained its name from Tendringa - one of our Saxon forefathers.

The name Bentley is from the word "bent", a type of grass, and "ley", meaning pasture or unploughed land. How apt and fortunate we are that we still have one of the largest village greens in England.

For many years in the 14th and 15th centuries, it formed part of the Earldom of Oxford (de Vere family) with intermittent breaks. In 1461 it fell to the Crown and in 1485 Richard III granted it to the Duke of Norfolk, but Henry VII restored it to the de Vere family. The 17th Earl of Oxford wasted his estates and the Crown took Great Bentley in settlement of debts of £11,000 (how much is the equivalent figure today?). By 1592 the process of selling parts to various owners had commenced; a process that continued until the second half of the 20th century when many farms amalgamated. Farms that were once separate holdings in the village but have now joined to other farms include, Heckfords Grange, East Mores (Risbys), Cottage, Coppice, Moynes and Sturricks.

In the Domesday Book it is recorded that Bentlea was held by Alberic de Vere in demesne. He founded Earls Colne Priory to which he gave his lands in Bentlea.

Until 1805, when the Ordnance Survey maps were first produced, the villagers "Beat the Bounds" annually to teach the young the exact location of the Parish boundary. It is good that this old custom is still preserved, even if held at less frequent intervals.

How many features have we lost over the years? Behind the Church was a Great Hall set in an ancient park. In her "Glimpses of Great Bentley Past" written in 1882, Kate Sizer conjectures that The Lodge was probably the entrance to that Park. We have also lost the windmill on the green, built in 1762, the brickfields, the almshouses, the gaol, the pound, the wharf, ponds on the green and the moors. The latter was an area of land between Admirals and Moorlands which was snake (adder) infested wet land that belonged, until freed in 1796, to the Manor which owned the green. Fortunately the village bought the Lord of the Manor's rights when it did, even if still affected by copy holders' rights.

The character of a large area of land including the moors, was completely changed when the Clacton Council bought the area now known as the waterworks, and pumping commenced, lowering the water table on Admirals farm. Leonard Newman, in his "History of Great Bentley", refers to water meadows full of snipe. When my father bought Admirals in 1943, this same area was described as gravel pit meadows.

Until the coming of the railway in 1865, most inhabitants never left the village all their lives. They described Weeley as foreign parts. The coming completely changed people's lives and no doubt was the cause of the ending of the original purpose of many events, including the Annual Fair, where people bought their ironmongery, clothing, haberdashery and the like, for the ensuing year.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's the character of the village was completely altered when the planners allowed the development of both the "Bird" and "Tree" estates; an event that doubled the village population in a very short period of time. At the time you were not considered to be a "Bentley Person" unless you were born in the village, or had lived there for at least twenty years. Previously there had been many pleadings for people to serve on the Parish Council. However, one year there were twice as many candidates as seats at the election, with two political parties - the Bentley People and the Newcomers. After that public airing the village became a united society again.

As to the future, we must ensure that changes are the will of the majority of villagers and their current views should be better understood by reading the rest of this report.

Introduction



A meeting of Parishioners was called at the Village Hall on Monday 5 October 1998, chaired by Robert Taylor, Chairman of the Parish Council, and addressed by a representative of the Rural Community Council of Essex. Over one hundred people attended and it was agreed a Village Appraisal should be undertaken. Concerns were raised as to how the survey would be financed. These fears were overcome when The Book Service of Frating Green agreed to sponsor the printing of both the questionnaire and this report. A grant of £350.00 was also obtained from the Rural Community Council of Essex, and the Parish Council sponsored the hire of the Village Hall for the opening meeting. We are extremely indebted to these sponsors and to Adrian Watson for the photographs in this report. At the meeting a Steering Committee was formed, who then elected their own officers, as follows:

Chairman	Bob Wright	Distribution Officer	Ron Poynter
Vice-Chairman		Committee Member	Jamie Bradbury
Press Officer	Mary Maskell	Committee Member	Tony Johnson
Treasurer	Carol Wyatt	Committee Member	Christine Black
Data Analyst	David Hinds		

The Committee first met on 13 October 1998 and have held meetings since that date. At the first meeting they discussed and agreed their aims, as follows:

1. To obtain the views, via a questionnaire, of as many people and organisations in the village as possible as to what is good, what is in need of improvement and what is lacking within the village for a full enjoyment of life by its citizens.
2. From the results of the survey, to highlight matters that may need improvement and matters that may need to be conserved to improve and enhance the quality of life for those who live or work in the village.
3. To summarise the matters needing improvements according to the wishes of the people and help formulate actions for future development of the village and its community.
4. To publicise the results to all those who have an influence on life within the village, including all households, all organisations and clubs, Parish Council, Tendring District Council, Essex County Council, Member of Parliament, utility companies and any other providers of services.
5. If appropriate, to set up voluntary working groups within the village which can tackle and take action on needs that have been identified.
6. One year after publishing results, to review the situation as to the action taken on the identified requirements and produce a report as to what has been done and what still needs action and again, publicise the results as in 4. above.

Through direct contact and notices in the Parish Magazine, suggestions for questions to be asked were obtained from various organisations and people within the village. A Village Appraisal computer software package was purchased from the Cheltenham & Gloucester College, which provided a large menu of possible questions. The Committee then drafted the questionnaire and finally produced the form as circulated. These were distributed during the week commencing 22 March 1999 to every household in the village by 53 people, mainly Road Stewards of the Great Bentley Good Neighbours scheme, but with some other volunteers.

The same people called on every household to collect completed questionnaires during the week commencing 12 April 1999. For those who were out when collectors called, arrangements were made to return the completed questionnaires to either the Post Office, Dillons Store, or Carpenters Farm Shop.

920 questionnaires were delivered, representing approximately *2241 inhabitants. 544 questionnaires were returned, showing that 59% of the households in the village participated in the survey.

The completed questionnaires were then analysed on the computer and the Committee drafted and finalised this Report for printing by The Book Service.



The Report is to be delivered to every household in the village during October 1999. Copies will also be sent to Bernard Jenkins Esq., M.P., the Chairman, the Chief Executive and the Chief Planning Officer of both Essex County Council and Tendring District Council, the Editors of the East Anglian Daily Times, the Essex County Standard, the East Essex Gazette, the producers of BBC Look East and ITV About Anglia and local radio stations.

A Public Meeting to launch the Report is to be held at the Village Hall on Monday 8 November 1999 at 7.30 p.m., when the guest speaker will be Mrs. Rosemary Smith, Chairman of Tendring District Council. The meeting will be followed by refreshments.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND

The matter must not be allowed to end with that meeting. The Steering Committee propose to meet again in October 2000 to examine whether the action agreed has been carried forward and if not, how this may be accomplished.

* Estimated figure supplied by Tendring District Council.



Village School



Cricket on the Green

Setting the Scene

We are privileged to live today in a village that is in many ways unique. The central feature for which we are famous is, of course, the forty-five acres of village green. This is largely used for recreation, but we also have a conservation area growing various acid loving plants. In 1992 one acre of the village green was planted with a variety of trees to celebrate the 40th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.



The second reason for the uniqueness of the village, is the establishment of an industrial estate during the 1960's, which still thrives today. Both large and small units and offices are available and present tenants represent a wide variety of businesses. Today, as in years gone by, many people live and work in Great Bentley. Farming remains an integral part of village life. One farm grows its own soft fruit and asparagus and sells the produce from its farm shop: just one example of how farmers approaching the new millennium have had to diversify.

Within the village there is an extensive range of shops, trades and businesses, which is unparalleled in the area. The Plough Inn is now the only pub in the central village, whilst at Aingers Green is the Royal Fusiliers. We are also fortunate to have our own doctors' surgery and dispensing pharmacy. The village school, which celebrated its centenary year in 1997, has approximately 175 pupils and seven classes at September 1999. There are 56 children at the play group, now known as 'preschool', which runs seven sessions each week and a holiday scheme. These are held in the Village Hall. The caring side of the village is reflected by the Good Neighbours organisation, which also runs the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The 12th century Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin, stands to the western side of the green, evident by its square tower. Members of the Roman Catholic Church celebrate Mass in St. Mary's Church. On the green we have the Methodist Chapel.

Sport has always played a large part in village life, the green providing the perfect foil for relaxation. Gone are the days of horse racing, boxing, sheep sales and cock fighting. The game of cricket has been played on the green for over 220 years, the road providing a definitive, if not dangerous, perimeter on the northern and western sides. Football continues to be played on the green over a hundred years since the first club was formed. Fun runs are held in the village, usually twice a year. There are children's play areas on the green and at Aingers Green.

The Carnival and Village Show are held annually on the green, which also plays host to visiting fairs and a circus. For those who prefer their leisure pursuits and interests under cover, we can boast one of the best village halls for miles around. This comprises a large main hall, (which can house two badminton courts), two separate meeting rooms and a kitchen. Opened in 1987, it is a very popular venue for village activities.

This gives a flavour of village life as we approach the next millennium. What will the future hold in store, one wonders?



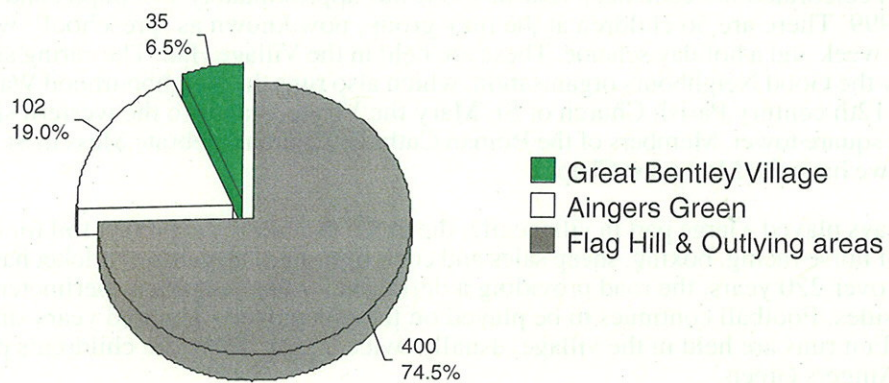
The Hollies Surgery



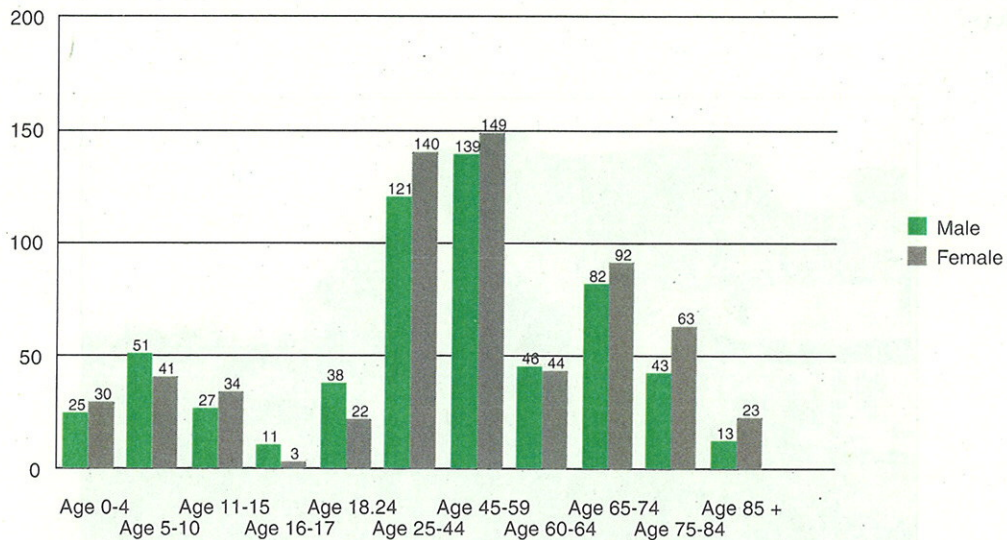
About those who responded

❖ 537 households representing 1229 people returned questionnaires

Location of responding households



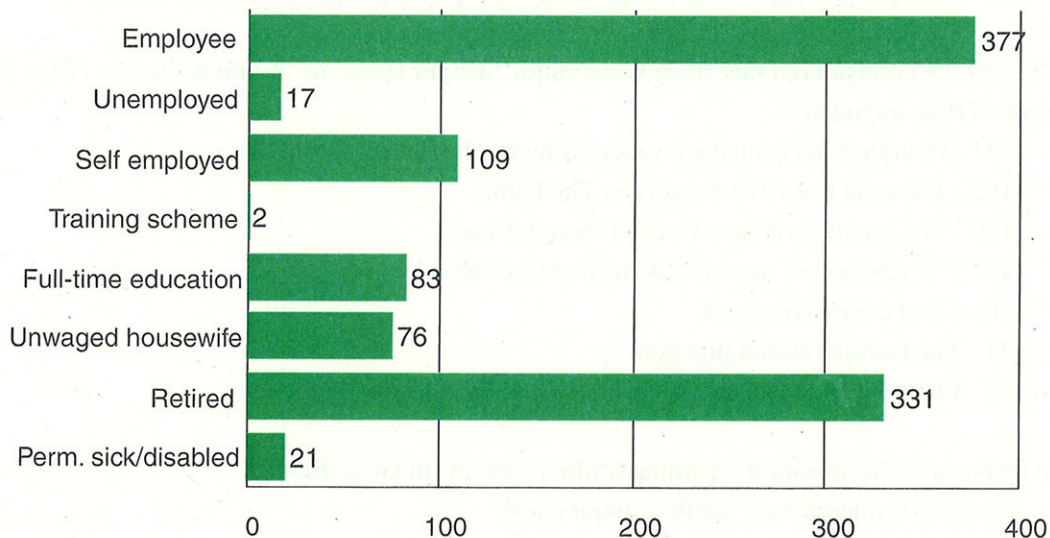
Membership of households by age



About those who responded



Full Time Occupation



- ❖ 277 (92%) of those who stated that they were not in waged employment were not seeking work.
- ❖ 567 (71.8%) thought a local job vacancy board would be useful.
- ❖ 460 (49.8%) thought the facilities of Great Bentley School should be made available to the community.
- ❖ 435 (67.8%) felt that adult education evening classes should be available in the village.
- ❖ 49.2% would like after school clubs for the children and 46.9% a holiday play scheme.
- ❖ Only 9% thought the social provision for young people 14-25 was reasonable although most thought that other age groups were better catered for.
- ❖ 47.3% were in favour of the provision of a youth centre, 40.2% want a multipurpose hard surfaced area and 30.8% would like additional facilities at the village hall.



Roads and road safety

- ❖ 574 (60%) of people responding thought that street parking represented a safety hazard.
- ❖ 733 (79.2%) considered that there were major 'danger spots' or 'bottle necks' on Great Bentley's roads. These included:-
 - 331 - Plough Road from the level crossing to The Plough/Post Office.
 - 162 - The road from The Surgery to The Path.
 - 139 - The junction of New Cut and Plough Road.
 - 48 - The junction of the A133 with Heckfords Road.
 - 40 - Cited excessive speed.
 - 31 - The Lufkins corner junction.
 - 28 - Plough Road, Aingers Green (including Weeley Road junction)
- ❖ In response to the question regarding traffic problems in Great Bentley.
 - 65.3% considered lorry traffic a major cause.
 - 55.0% cited lack of parking.
 - 48.0% excessive traffic speed.
 - 42.0% general congestion.
 - 34.1% thought improved public transport is needed.
 - 54.3% thought a car park was needed.



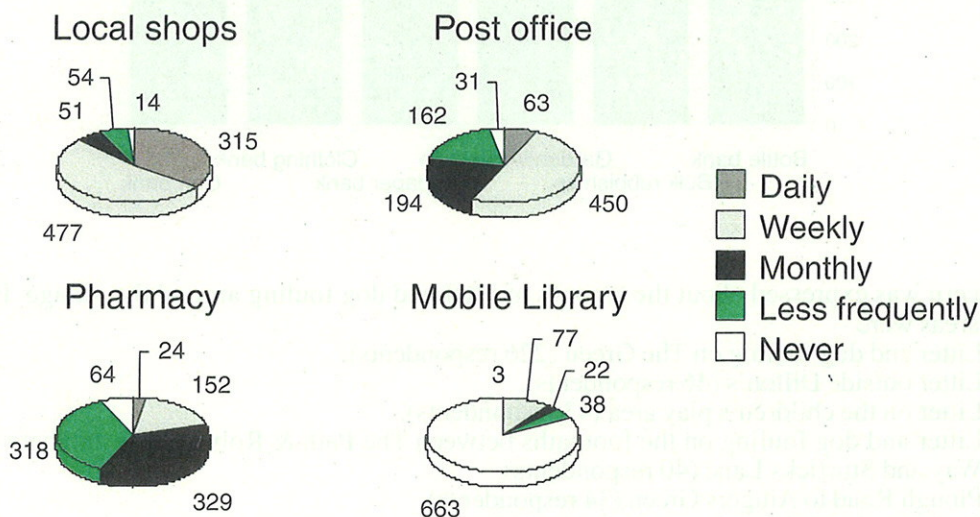
Heckford Road/A133

Local Shops & Services



- ❖ 67% of those responding considered the postal service good or reasonable.
- ❖ 72% thought the service provided by our community police officer was reasonable or good. 66% thought police coverage was acceptable.
- ❖ Although 71.9% of households realised that they were in a neighbourhood watch scheme, surprisingly 17.7% or 95 families did not know they were.
- ❖ Most of those who had used the fire, ambulance or hospital services thought the service reasonable.
- ❖ 92.7% consider the range of shopping facilities good or reasonable.

How often do you use?

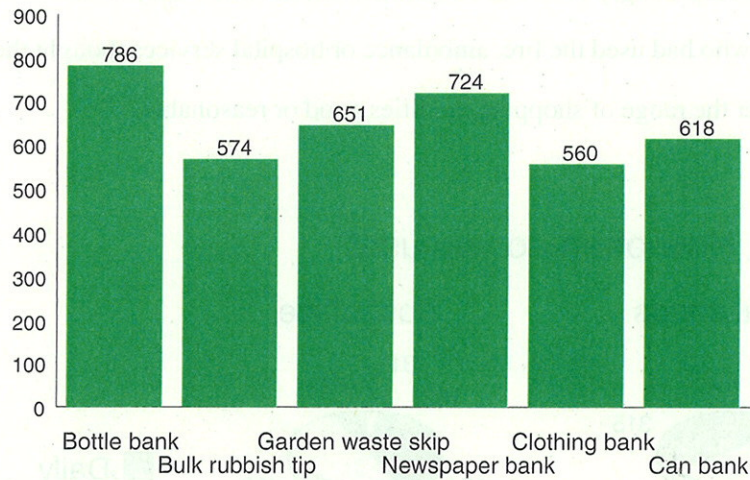


View from New Cut into Plough Road



The Recycling & Conservation

- ❖ 897 (91.9%) of those responding would be prepared to separate items for recycling from their refuse.
- ❖ If they were provided the following numbers would use recycling facilities:-



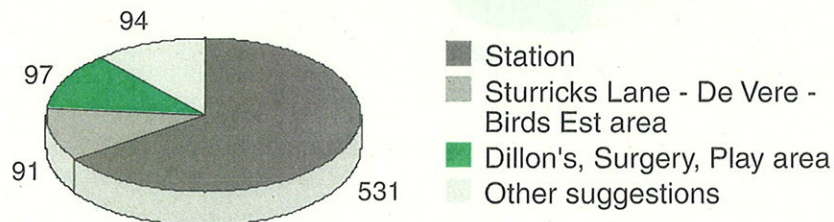
- ❖ Concern was expressed about the amount of litter and dog fouling around the village. Particularly bad areas were -
 - Litter and dog fouling on The Green (226 respondents).
 - Litter outside Dillon's (46 respondents).
 - Litter on the children's play area (43 respondents).
 - Litter and dog fouling on the footpaths between The Path & Robin Close and between Linnet Way and Sturicks Lane (40 respondents).
 - Plough Road to Aingers Green (34 respondents).
 - Various other sites were mentioned by 102 people.



Housing & Future Development



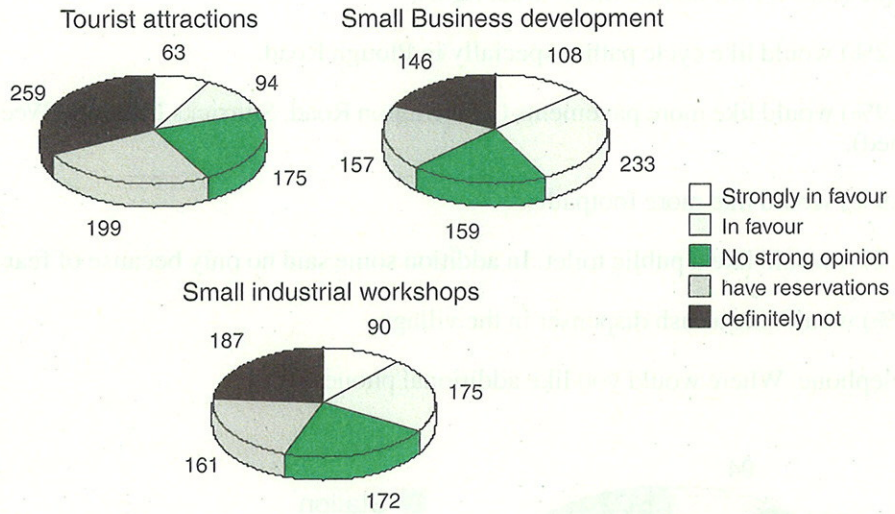
- ❖ 20 Households (3.7%) had individuals currently in need of alternative accommodation, 14 stating that they needed low cost housing.
- ❖ 225 families were against a small development of mixed private and social housing and 213 families were in favour.
- ❖ Of the suggested sites
 - 114 selected St Mary's Road, Aingers Green
 - 99 selected Plought Road adjoining 'Field End'
 - 74 selected Thorrington Road adjoining 'Littlefield'
 - 56 selected Weeley Road adjoining 'Roseways'
- ❖ 401 people (62.5%) would like more street lights
- ❖ 271 (42.2%) would like cycle paths especially in Plough Road.
- ❖ 224 (34.9%) would like more pavements (Thorrington Road, Sturricks Lane and Weeley Road being mentioned).
- ❖ 173 (26.9%) would like more footpaths.
- ❖ 467 (47.7%) would like a public toilet. In addition some said no only because of fear of vandalism.
- ❖ 571 (53%) would like a cash dispenser in the village.
- ❖ Pubic telephone. Where would you like additional phones?





Housing & Future Development

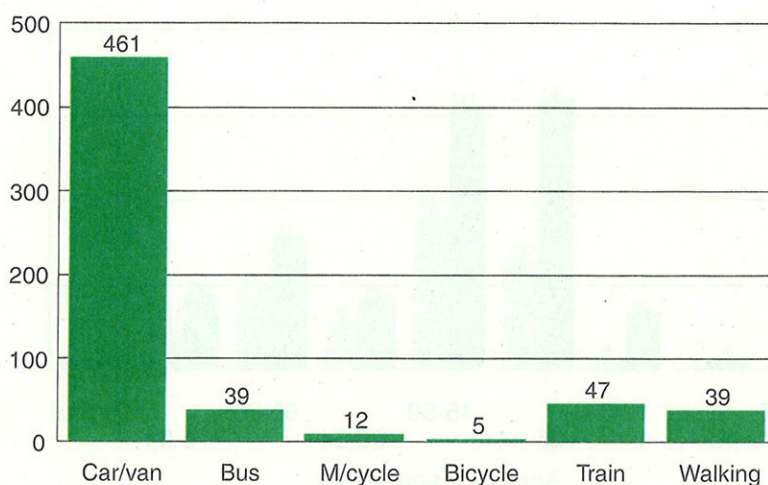
❖ Should any of these developments be encouraged in Great Bentley



Transportation



❖ What is your main means of transport to work, training or study?



However:-

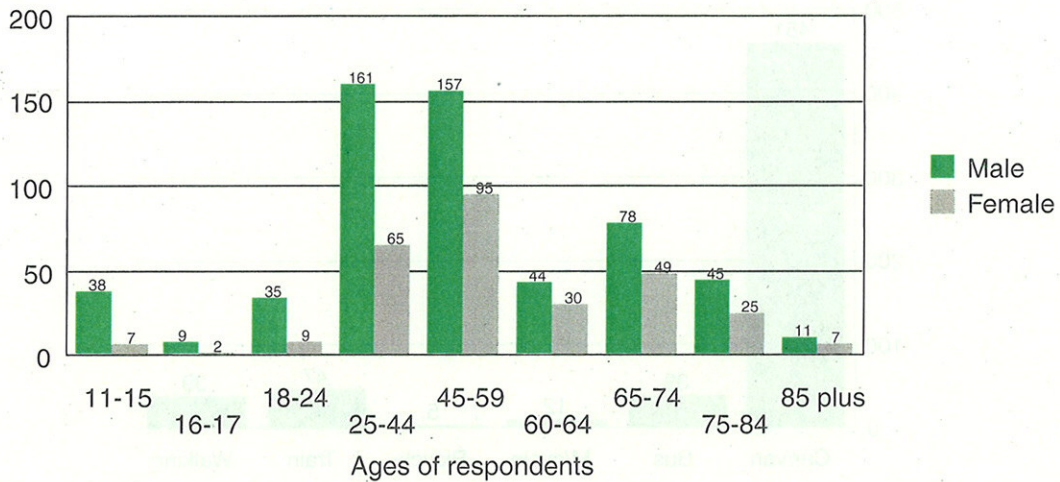
- ❖ 525 (53.7%) use the train service, but only 99 (10.1%) use the bus.
- ❖ Over 40% considered the bus service routes and timetable to require improvement
- ❖ 453 (50.6%) considered the cost of rail travel to be too high and 31.3% thought the timetable could be improved.
- ❖ The responses to the question of being prepared to share private vehicles were:-

Purpose	Often	Occasionally	Never
Shopping	48	124	275
School	38	35	221
Social	51	140	214
Work	61	59	251



Local Democracy

Do you think the young people of the village should have a greater say in its running



- ❖ A total of 869 people responded to this question. 580 (66.7%) saying yes.
- ❖ 637 people (58.8%) thought the Parish council publicised its activities very or reasonably well. 38% had the same opinion of Tendring District Council and only 25.6% for Essex County Council.
- ❖ 51.9% considered that the Parish council were aware of local concerns and feelings as against 32.6% for Tendring District and 18.4% for Essex County.



Other Summary Results



- 10 Children have special educational needs.
- 774 (81.5%) Thought road signs adequate.
- 48 People needed assistance to carry shopping and 50 to get to shops.
- 538 (61.8%) Thought children's playground facilities good or reasonable and 251 (29.3%) had no opinion.
- 587 (62.8%) Would like to see improved Public Transport.
- 552 (59.1%) Thought ways should be found to reduce traffic.
- 841 (93.9%) Thought the Village Green needed to be protected and a majority thought other landscape features need to be protected.
- 522 (48.2%) Would like a local Nature Reserve created.
- 785 (72.6%) Would like a campaign against litter and rubbish.
- 435 (48.2%) Would like a record prepared of special features.

The appearance of village features found to be good or reasonable were:-
Village Green 78.9%, Children's play areas 59.2%, Business Centre 63.8%, Churchyard 70.8%, School 68.9%, Shopping Centre 64.7%, Station 62.9%, and Village Hall 76.7%.

- 715 (81.5%) Would have no objection to the hard surfacing of Southside Track by the adjoining house owners.
- 560 (59.3%) Considered tree planting on the Green about right.
- 587 (63.5%) Considered planting of Bentley in Bloom about right.
- 635 (70.95%) Liked the present format of Great Bentley Show.





Main Points Arising from Appraisal and Action Recommended

Respondents Views

- 733 (79.2%) Considered there were many "danger spots" or "bottle necks"
- 574 (60%) Thought street parking a hazard.
- 577 (65.3%) Considered lorry traffic a major problem. Ask Parish Council and Highways Authority to further investigate and consider traffic calming measures between Railway crossing and Plough Inn and one-way systems Southside, Station Road and The Cut between the Surgery and Thorrington Road.
- 523 (54.3%) Thought a car park was needed. Ask Parish Council to consider use of Village Hall car park by shoppers, and the delivering and collecting of children from School.
- 401 (62.5%) Would like more streetlights. Ask Parish Council to investigate with Eastern Electricity.
- 639 (66.4%) Thought Police coverage of Great Bentley to be good or reasonable, but many requested enforcement of speed limits and no parking on double yellow lines. Ask Essex Constabulary to take action.
- 897 (91.9%) Would be prepared to separate recycling items from their waste. Ask Tendring District Council to make provision.
- 571 (52.8%) Would welcome a cash dispenser in Village. Ask the owners of the Village Post Office.
- 531 (60.1%) Would welcome a public telephone at the Railway Station. Ask Railway Company if pay phone could be provided.
- 225 (51.3%) Are against even a small development of mixed private and low cost housing. Ask Parish Council and Tendring District Council to note.
- 549 (62.1%) Thought that more activities should be available for young people. Ask Youth organisations to consider action needed.
- 435 (67.8%) Expressed a need for adult education classes in Village. Ask Essex County Council & W.E.A. to consider.
- 567 (71.8%) Considered there was a need for a Job Vacancy Board in the Village. Ask Parish Council to consider Local Job Vacancy Board to be displayed.
- 24 (8%) *Were looking for work*

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