



Community Aspirations

While the Neighbourhood Plan focuses on land use and development policies, the consultation process has revealed a rich tapestry of community aspirations that extend beyond its formal remit. These ideas reflect the values, concerns, and hopes of residents, and form a vital part of the parish's long-term vision.

Traffic and Highways

Traffic volumes, road safety, and speeding are persistent concerns for residents of Little Hallingbury and were mentioned by a majority of respondents to the Residents Questionnaire. While the Neighbourhood Plan cannot implement traffic management measures—such as speed limits, signage, or enforcement—it can highlight infrastructure constraints and safety issues that must be considered when assessing development proposals.

Planning Context

The Neighbourhood Plan is primarily concerned with the use and development of land. As such, changes to traffic circulation, speed restrictions, or road signage fall under the jurisdiction of Essex Highways and Essex Police. However, development proposals must demonstrate that they do not exacerbate existing traffic problems or compromise pedestrian safety, particularly near schools, junctions, and residential clusters.

Community Response and Advocacy

Despite the limitations of planning policy, Little Hallingbury Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan team take the issue of speeding and road safety extremely seriously. Since the 2023 Residents Questionnaire revealed widespread concern, several proactive steps have been taken:

- **Speed Watch Team:** A volunteer-led Speed Watch group has been established to monitor traffic and raise awareness. Their efforts are showing results with some evidence to suggest the volume of speeding traffic is reducing since they have been established. Volunteers to assist with this task are always welcome.
- **Highways Liaison:** Essex Highways and ECC Councillor have received a comprehensive report detailing speeding concerns, particularly near the school at Gaston Green Chapel on Sawbridgeworth Road, as a result in 2025 Essex County Council agreed to fund improved signage for the school, following sustained local advocacy.
- **Police Engagement:** Essex Police have conducted speed checks in the village and are aware of the high accident rates.

- **Lower Road Crossing Request:** Following resident requests for a zebra crossing on Lower Road, a speed and PV² survey was conducted by Essex Highways. Unfortunately, the location scored 0.024—well below the 0.2 threshold required to justify a crossing. Additionally, Essex Highways confirmed that the road geometry and limited visibility make it unsuitable for a zebra crossing at the desired location.
- **M11 Junction Impact:** The opening of Junction 7A has increased traffic through the village, compounding existing safety issues. The Parish Council is collaborating with neighbouring communities to address shared concerns.
- **Potholes**
The poor state of some roads, particularly due to potholes, is a frequent source of frustration. The Parish Council will continue to report problems promptly to Essex County Council and to lobby for timely repairs.

Policy Implications

While enforcement and infrastructure upgrades lie outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, any future development should:

- Demonstrate safe access and egress for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Contribute to improvements in connectivity, such as footpaths and cycleways.
- Respect the rural character and avoid urbanising road corridors.

The Parish Council will continue to campaign for safer roads and use the evidence gathered through the Neighbourhood Plan process to advocate for meaningful change.

Community-Led Projects and Initiatives

The following themes emerged strongly from resident feedback and are recommended for future action by the Parish Council, local groups, and partner organisations:

Youth and Family Facilities

After Traffic this was one of the most frequently mentioned themes in the questionnaire:

- **Playground Provision:** A dedicated children’s play area was repeatedly requested to support younger families and provide a safe, social space.
- **Youth Club and Family Hub:** A youth club or informal gathering space for teens and parents was suggested to foster intergenerational engagement.
- **Community Café or Farm Shop:** Many residents proposed a café or farm shop with play areas and seating, serving as a social anchor for all ages.
- **Inclusive Village Events:** Suggestions included reviving traditions like “Carols on the Green” and hosting seasonal or volunteer-led events to strengthen community bonds.

Many residents voiced strong support for the creation of a dedicated children’s play area and a secure dog exercise space—facilities that would enhance wellbeing, encourage outdoor activity,

and foster community interaction. While no suitable site or funding is currently available, the Parish Council remains committed to exploring opportunities as they arise. Should land become accessible or external grants be secured, the Council will pursue partnerships to bring these ideas forward.

It is important to note that such facilities require ongoing care, supervision, and management. Their success will depend not only on initial investment but also on the willingness of local volunteers to undertake training and help oversee day-to-day operations. Community stewardship will be key to ensuring these spaces remain safe, inclusive, and well-maintained for all.

Local Amenities and Social Spaces

- **Expanded Village Shop:** Calls for a larger, better-stocked shop (e.g. Co-op or Spar) with longer opening hours were common, especially to support those without easy access to nearby towns.
- **Welcoming Pub:** Several residents expressed a desire for a village pub which is open longer.
- **Village Tea Room:** A recurring idea was a tearoom or social centre to encourage casual socialising and reduce isolation.

Turning Ideas into Action: The Power of Community Participation

A thriving community depends not only on good ideas but on the people willing to bring them to life. While residents often express enthusiasm for events and initiatives, these cannot be delivered without volunteers to organise and sustain them.

The recent closure of our long-standing Scout troop, despite decades of service, is a poignant reminder of this challenge. Similarly, the village hall coffee shop—once a source of real joy and connection—was unable to continue due to insufficient use.

These examples reflect a wider issue faced by many villages: the dwindling pool of individuals able to commit time and energy to community-led activities, and the need for consistent local support.

If we are to preserve and grow the spirit of Little Hallingbury, we must foster a culture of shared responsibility—where support for volunteers is visible, valued, and actively encouraged.

Housing and Inclusivity

- **Affordable Housing for Locals:** Many respondents stressed the need for smaller, affordable homes—especially for young families and older residents wishing to downsize.

In direct response to resident feedback, Little Hallingbury Parish Council supported a parish-wide housing needs survey in 2024. Conducted by an independent Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) from the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), the survey was distributed to every household.

The results confirmed a local need for a small number of affordable homes for people with strong ties to the parish—defined as those currently living in Little Hallingbury or who have previously lived here. Importantly, the survey also showed strong community support for a modest, well-designed development.

As a result, the Parish Council and RCCE are now working with a Housing Association to explore how a small scheme of around nine affordable homes could be brought forward. This may include a mix of housing types tailored to the needs of local people and will be subject to further consultation and site assessment.

Environmental Stewardship

- **Biodiversity and Green Belt Protection:** Residents expressed pride in the village's wildlife and landscape, with calls to preserve habitats and prevent urban sprawl.
- **Noise Mitigation:** Continued advocacy for noise barriers along the M11 and restrictions on Stansted flight paths was supported, including lobbying for flight hour restrictions. Late-night and early-morning flights can cause significant disturbance to sleep and wellbeing of villagers. The Parish Council supports calls for an extended night-time curfew to limit these flights and reduce the impact on residents.
- **Verge and Hedge Maintenance:** Requests for regular trimming and upkeep of hedgerows and verges were frequent, both for safety and aesthetics.
- **Community Gardening:** Ideas included village tidy-up days and shared planting schemes (e.g. herbs, flowers, vegetables) to enhance public spaces.

Hedges, verges, and footpaths form part of the rural character of the village, but their maintenance is essential to ensure they are safe and accessible. Well-maintained pavements and footpaths make it easier and safer to move around the village, especially for those with mobility challenges or pushchairs.

The network of bridleways, footpaths, and cycle routes supports healthy lifestyles and offers opportunities to enjoy the countryside. Residents would like to see additional routes created and the condition of existing ones improved.

These areas are managed by a range of parties, including Essex County Council, the National Trust, the Parish Council, and private landowners. Where maintenance responsibilities lie with landowners or other bodies the Parish Council will encourage timely cutting back to keep routes open and pleasant for all.

Bus Service, Footpaths, Cycleways, and Connectivity

- **Public transport** is a lifeline for some residents, enabling access to shops, services, and social activities. The Village is served by two routes which operate on 6 days a week at hourly intervals.

The service has been unreliable and as such it is difficult for resident to use these services for commuting to work, school or to attend appointments. The Parish Council continues encourages use of the service where possible to help maintain its viability.

Recognising the challenges of large buses navigating narrow country lanes, the operator appointed by Essex County Council has trialled a smaller vehicle on some journeys.

Ongoing dialogue with the operator will continue to ensure the service meets local needs as far as possible.

- **Safe Access to Sawbridgeworth Station:** Numerous residents highlighted the lack of safe pedestrian and cycle routes to the station, calling for footpath improvements and connectivity.
- **Circular Walking Routes:** Suggestions included linking existing paths to create recreational loops and improve access to Hatfield Heath and Bishop's Stortford.
- **Maintenance and Accessibility:** Overgrown paths, lack of footpaths, poor signage, and lack of lighting were noted as barriers to safe walking in addition the obvious traffic issues, especially for children and older residents.

Social Inclusion and Wellbeing

- **Support for Isolated Residents:** Ideas included coffee mornings, transport assistance, and outreach for elderly or vulnerable individuals.
- **Digital Communication:** A village website or digital noticeboard was proposed to improve transparency and community engagement.
- **Public Services:** Some residents requested better access to GP services, a community library, and more visible policing.
- **Creation of a social support** network for isolated residents, including events, transport assistance, and outreach.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Residents have voiced clear concerns about the resilience and adequacy of local infrastructure—from power outages and poor road surfaces to drainage and sewage capacity under pressure. As the village grows, so too must its ability to cope with demand. The community aspires to work collaboratively with utility providers and local authorities to ensure future-proofed services, timely maintenance, and infrastructure that reflects both rural character and modern needs. Reliable, well-maintained systems are essential to quality of life and long-term sustainability.

Safety, Crime and Governance

A safe and well-governed village is the foundation of community trust. Concerns about antisocial behaviour, drug activity, and limited police visibility have highlighted the need for stronger partnerships with law enforcement and clearer channels for reporting and prevention.

Encouragingly, the village now has a Neighbourhood Watch group, reflecting a growing commitment to community-led safety.

Equally, residents seek more transparent and responsive governance, where Parish Council communications are timely, accessible, and inclusive.

The aspiration is for a village where safety is actively supported, and governance empowers residents to shape decisions and feel heard.

Working Beyond the Plan

These aspirations, are deeply aligned with the community's desire to preserve Little Hallingbury's rural character, improve quality of life, and foster resilience. The Parish Council is encouraged to pursue

these initiatives in partnership with residents, local authorities, and funding bodies, ensuring that the spirit of the Neighbourhood Plan lives on through action as well as policy.