An aerial photograph of a village, likely Abbots Ripton & Wennington. The image shows a cluster of houses with red roofs, a church with a prominent spire, and surrounding green fields and trees. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

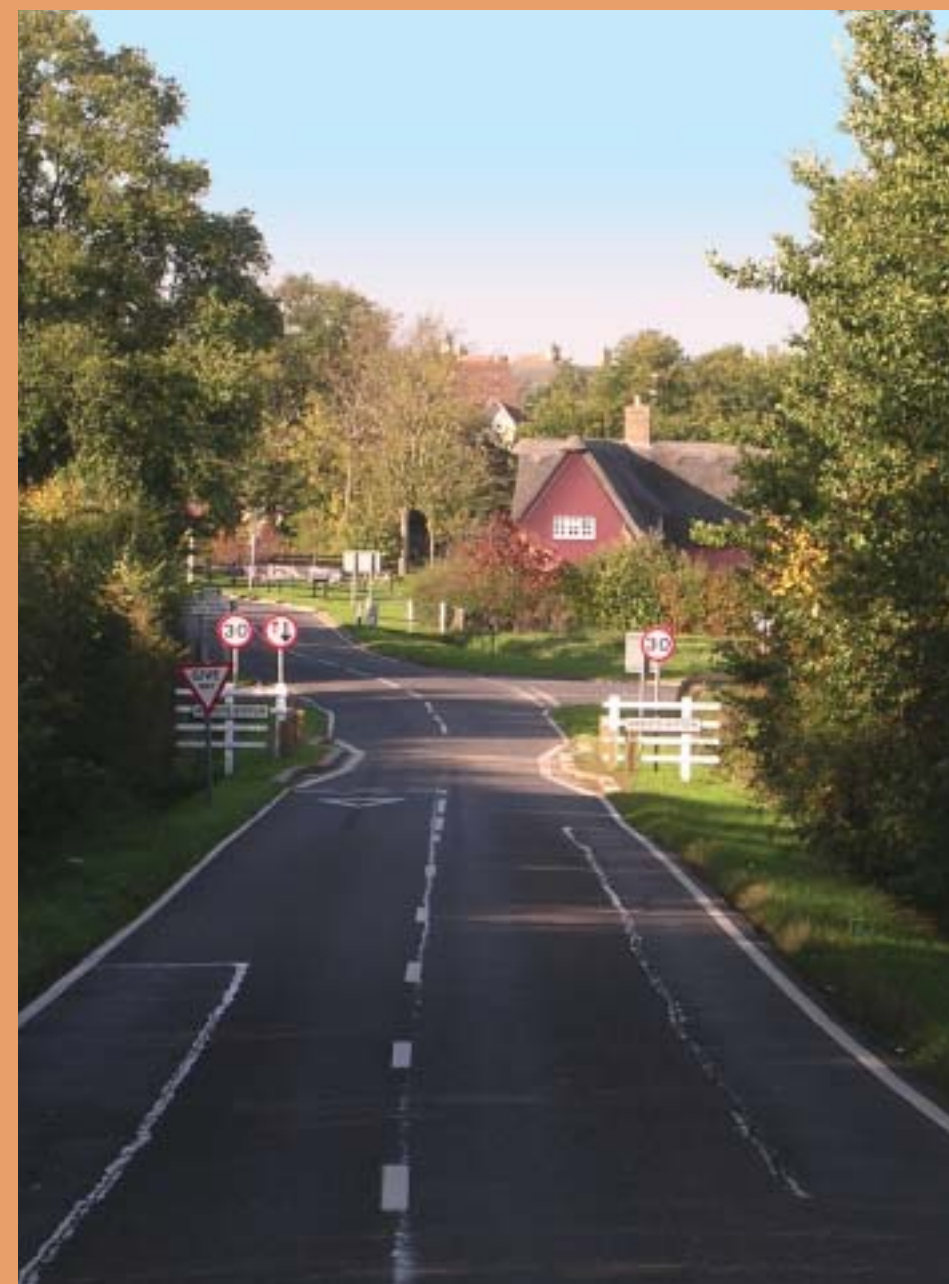
Abbots Ripton & Wennington

THE PARISH PLAN 2005



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INTRODUCTION



A questionnaire was sent to all residents of the Parish to ensure that the widest possible range of opinions, ideas and local knowledge was available to the team compiling the Plan. Questionnaires were sent out to all residents who are 18 or over. There was a 75% response rate (157 returns, some of which were representative of two residents - usually married couples). The questionnaire and the analysis are set out in Appendix 1.

The objective of the Parish Plan is to describe the village of Abbots Ripton and the hamlet of Wennington (described jointly in the text as the Parish), as they are in 2005, as seen by the residents.

It aims to identify the qualities that are valued, the character that should be preserved; the history which has lent the Parish its uniqueness; the main issues of concern and the amount, type and rate of change which people feel is acceptable and practical and is within parameters which reflect both the character and the fact that the Parish lies within a designated Conservation Area.

Change takes place gradually, not only through new developments but also by small alterations to homes, gardens, open spaces, paths & boundaries. These can and do alter the character of the Parish.

The following is an extract from a feature article by Becky Oakley on Abbots Ripton which appeared in the June 2005 edition of Cambridgeshire Life. It perhaps demonstrates well the uniqueness of the Parish by highlighting the inter-relationship of the Abbots Ripton Estate, Lord De Ramsey, the Parish, District and County Councils, the village communities and the parishioners. Lord De Ramsey remains the primary land owner and is very much concerned



with the present and future development in housing, roads and external factors such as the proposed expansion of Alconbury airfield, which would impact on the rural nature of the Parish and their potential to destroy what parishioners value most.

“Over the centuries Abbots Ripton has seen little development. The population was decimated in 1350 when the plague took hold and although it did recover it never really expanded a great deal. Most of the villagers were employed by the Abbots Ripton Estate and worked in agriculture. As people retired and farming became more mechanized, there was very little influx into the village and the community started to shrink.

“Things began to change about 15 years ago “ says Lord De Ramsey. “My Estate Manager was a governor of the local school and he told me that if another teacher was lost the school would close down. At the time the numbers had dwindled to around 40 children and it was a shock to realise that over the last 40 years there had been such a terrific change in the community. Around 75% of the labour force on the Estate and local farms had retired and not been replaced. We needed people and jobs to ensure the community in the village wasn’t lost”.

Lord De Ramsey set about working with planners looking at the possibility of building new properties. It wasn’t straightforward, as Abbots Ripton wasn’t on main drainage, but with Lord De Ramsey contributing a substantial amount of money, the connection to Godmanchester sewerage works was agreed with Anglian Water.

Planning permission was granted for the conversion of old farm buildings into offices and small industrial units.

“This was for non-agricultural jobs and we now have everything from an insurance company to a company which sells top-of-the-range white goods” says Lord De Ramsey.

Planning permission was also granted for 32 new dwellings but there were strict guidelines to follow in order that the village maintained its rural feel.

“All of the new buildings were on Estate owned land” says Caroline Hannah, chairman of the Parish Council.

“It was an advantage because Lord De Ramsey was very specific about the projects before the land was released for development. The new houses were designed very sympathetically and the essential character of the village was preserved. The development of Abbots Ripton has been controlled carefully and successfully. The Parish, although rural, is a great example of a rural community which is thriving. There is a good balance between those who live and work in the Parish and those who work in Cambridge and London. Similarly, there is a good blend of age groups in the village and many parishioners dedicate a considerable amount of their time to maintaining a sense of community.”

“In the last ten years there has been enormous change. There has been a turnaround in a community which was attractive but dying to one which is thriving” says Lord De Ramsey. “The school now has 112 children and a waiting list, there is a Post Office and shop, a garage and a vicar!”

In recent years there has been much discussion over the development of RAF Alconbury which abuts the western edge of the village. The re-opening of Abbots Ripton railway station has also been discussed. However, this is a debate which is likely to continue for a good deal of time and having worked so hard at building a thriving rural community it is unlikely that the villagers will allow this to be hampered by too much development.”



The Parish Plan is addressed to:

- Statutory bodies and Public Authorities
- Planners, developers, builders and architects
- Local residents
- Community groups
- Landowners and Businesses



THE ABBOTS RIPTON TYTHE MAP (1623) ON VELLUM CURRENTLY HANGING IN ST ANDREWS CHURCH



ABBOTS RIPTON

AERIAL PICTURES OF BOTH ABBOTS RIPTON AND WENNINGTON SHOWING THE CONTEXT OF BOTH THE WOODED AREAS AND THE NEW PLANTINGS.



WENNINGTON



AERIAL PICTURES OF THE AIRFIELD AND RAILWAY LINE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ABBOTS RIPTON.



LOCAL SETTING & HISTORY

Both Abbots Ripton and Wennington are set within a designated Conservation Area (30th July 1979). Abbots Ripton is a small village (pop:253) which lies four miles due north of Huntingdon. A further mile north of the village lies the hamlet of Wennington (pop: 59). Approximately six miles distant is the market town of Ramsey, whose abbey originally held the manorial rights. Lord De Ramsey, whose family ancestral home is Ramsey Abbey, presides over the Abbots Ripton Estate and lives at Abbots Ripton Hall.

Abbots Ripton is connected to Huntingdon by the C115 minor road. At the southern end of the High Street this road joins the B1090 linking St Ives with the A1.

Abbots Ripton and Wennington are set within one of the few remaining areas of substantial woodland in Huntingdonshire. In 1610 the surroundings were shown as one of six deer parks in the County. Travelling from the south of Abbots Ripton, Holland Wood and Wennington Wood give an immediate backcloth to the village whilst slightly more distant, Little Less Wood and Boulton's Hatch Wood lie on the western side. The large amount of trees in the local landscape is unusual for Huntingdonshire and of particular importance and interest is the predominance of the dominant species of Elm which have survived the devastating Dutch Elm disease (today there are over a thousand living elms – something unique to this area in the country). Many new trees (including lime, ash, oak, horse chestnuts, cherries, yews and birches) have been planted over the past 20 years by both the Abbots Ripton Estate and Parish residents, with the consequence that from the air, both Abbots Ripton and Wennington appear to be set within islands of trees.

The main line London to Edinburgh railway passes within a half mile of the village to the west. A station was constructed north of the main settlement but closed to passengers in September 1958. In 1876 a rail disaster occurred at Abbots Ripton which was to have a fundamental effect on signalling procedures ever after. It is recorded as one of the 50 most serious and important rail crashes to ever have occurred in Britain.

On the 21st January, in freezing conditions and blizzards at about 6pm, the 'Flying Scotsman' - or more specifically the 10.30am Edinburgh to Kings Cross express – travelling south, crashed into a shunting coal train at Abbots Ripton. Three to four inches of ice clung to telegraph and signalling wires causing the signals to freeze in the 'CLEAR' position. Fortunately no-one was killed.

However, because of the terrible weather, the lack of communication and human error, a second crash occurred at 6.52pm between a down express, the 5.30pm Kings Cross to

Leeds and the wreckage of the Flying Scotsman. Thirteen passengers were killed and fifty three injured.

As a result of this tragedy, a landmark recommendation was made by the Board of Inquiry that all signals on the rail network be redesigned so that they could not be made inefficient by ice and snow and if they failed this would be indicated in the signal box.

To the west of the railway is the perimeter of Alconbury Airfield, whose creation during WW2 severed the traditional road communications westwards from Abbots Ripton to Little Stukeley. The airfield is at present the subject of governmental consideration for redevelopment.

The village of "Riptune" was in existence at the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086. The word "Riptune" is derived from early Saxon meaning "wood", "woodland" or "adjacent to woodland". It came within the ownership of Ramsey Abbey which was founded in 969 A.D. and at the time of the Domesday held nearly three quarters of the land in Huntingdonshire. Ripton and Wennington (or Winnington as it was then known), were originally granted to the monastery by Earl Alfwold, brother of Aylwin, the founder of Ramsey Abbey, and they were confirmed in the possessions of the Abbey in King Edgar's Charter of 974 A.D.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, Abbots Ripton became known as Magna Ripton and Riptona Abbatis. Whilst following the dissolution of the monasteries it was known as St John's Ripton after the family who became Lords of the Manor.

Abbots Ripton was held by the Abbot of Ramesbury at Domesday and on the site of the building now known as Abbots Ripton Hall was a monastery where monks established substantial arable and stock farms and fisheries. Many of the original fields are still farmed today by The Abbots Ripton Estate.





Weavers and artisans who served the monastery lived largely in Wennington, at the time a larger settlement than Abbots Ripton, (the oldest house in Wennington is called Weavers Cottage circa 1246)

As has been mentioned the Parish lies within what was clearly once heavily wooded land and at the time of the dissolution,

timber accounted for a substantial part of the value of the Manor. The entire Parish was heavily wooded and, along with Somersham Chace and Sapley Forest, the Bishop of Ely claimed the right to hunt deer in the 14th century. Foresters however claimed that the woods bordering the road from Huntingdon to Ramsey through Ripton and Wennington were the King's forest and not the Bishop's free chace.

In 1541 the Manor was granted to Sir John St. John in exchange for the Manor of Paulesbury, Northants. His son Oliver became Baron St. John of Bletsoe in 1559. He died in 1582, the title was inherited by his son John, who died in 1596 without a male heir.

The Manor passed to his younger brother Oliver, and then to his son Oliver in 1618, who was created Earl of Bollingbroke. He conveyed Ripton to Hugh Audley in 1640, who died in 1662 and the property subsequently passed to Nicholas and Thomas Bonfoy. The daughter of Thomas Bonfoy married Sir Charles Caesar and the Manor then passed to their son Julius Caesar in 1741.

In 1794, the Manor was acquired by William Fellowes and has remained in the family to the present day. His descendant, John Fellowes, Lord De Ramsey, is currently Lord of the Manor. The family home is Abbots Ripton Hall, which was rebuilt on the site of the monastery and an earlier house and whose appearance was completely altered by the architect Salvin when he remodelled it in 1856.

The original Manor House was an early 16th century Hall house, now known as Moat House. Its site was once fully moated and the moat still remains on its southern and eastern sides. The house is now the home of Lord Renton, who was the local MP for Huntingdonshire between 1945 and 1979 and who has been an active member of the House of Lords since.

The layout of the Parish seems little changed from the 1776 Estate map of William Fellowes. The configuration of the village Green remains unchanged in its triangular shape and in 1776 was known as the Great Green.



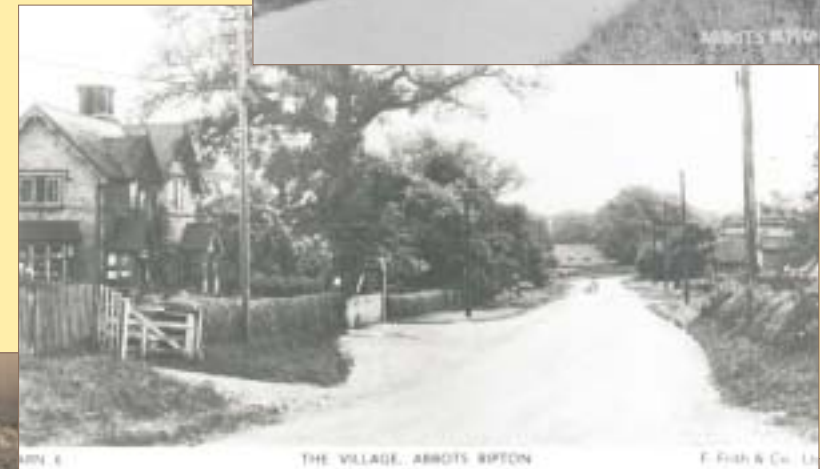
The population of Abbots Ripton has fluctuated since 1801 when it was 327 (source: Huntingdonshire records Office) to 253 in 1991.

As Wennington is a hamlet there is, de facto, no village green or church, and a substantial number of original vernacular buildings have been demolished over the years. There is however a pond which was used in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries by a forge, located in Wennington, which served the needs of the surrounding communities. The pond was laid with 'sets' or cobbles which enabled shire horses to gain purchase whilst drinking the water. The pond was recently drained and dredged and replanted with reeds.





POSTCARDS
AND
PICTURES
FROM
THE PAST



CHARACTER

- The essential character of the Parish is derived from the combination of five main factors:-
- Its uninterrupted history
 - The fact that it is located within the Abbots Ripton Estate, with until relatively recent times, most of the houses being owned by the Estate. This has ensured a controlled expansion of housing and industry.
 - The vernacular architecture with the dominant presence of timber-framed thatched buildings
 - The inter-relationship between the built environment and the natural landscape
 - The Parish lies within a designated Conservation area.

The land is still farmed actively, mostly arable, with several tenanted farms located either in or adjacent to both Abbots Ripton and Wennington. There has, in recent years, been significant new development in Abbots Ripton particularly, but the partnership between the Estate, developers, English Heritage, Huntingdonshire District Council and other interested parties has ensured that it is 'in keeping' and largely 'in character.'

The field adjacent to the Village Hall and the two meadows on the northern side of the St Ives road connect this area with the residential core of the village where the church, Post office and pub are situated. They give an extremely pleasant vista at the entrance to the village, of a view consisting of a group of thatched cottages in the foreground, behind which is the Parish church dominated by its west tower, standing on higher ground overlooking the village.

In *"The King's England"*, Arthur Mee writes *"this Estate village is one of the prettiest and best kept in the county"*. This view is reinforced by Gemma Pearce, writing in the July 1974 issue of *Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough Life* who comments, *"Paternalism is something which is rather sneered at nowadays, yet in Abbots Ripton and Wennington it appears to work"*.



Whilst, as previously mentioned, significantly more dwellings in the Parish are privately owned, all have benefited from the attention paid to the environs by successive generations of the Fellowes family, who have

ensured and continue to ensure, that both Abbots Ripton and Wennington are little spoilt and remain attractive and interesting places to live and to visit.

In Abbots Ripton, the village school and the village hall were designed by Sir Peter Foster and appear to reflect, in a modern way, the predominant vernacular architecture.

The houses have unusual coloured rendering (reflected in both old and new properties), providing a lasting impression of the village. Unlike the vernacular cottages of the Ouse Valley, whose rendering and paintwork is predominantly white, houses in the Parish display a variety of colours, the most common of which are terracotta, creamy yellow and pink. There are differences in the framing with some displaying outwardly the oak frames, different thatching materials are also evident. Most houses are 17th century with later additions and in the 19th century, homes were built for Estate workers or local residents. The latest development, prior to that of the 1990s was in the 1960s.

Farm buildings which date mostly from Victorian and Edwardian times, are tiled with old pantiles which complement the thatch and have similar colouration.

Wennington is situated one mile north of Abbots Ripton and is approached from the village via a winding ascending road, clearly based on an old cart track.





There is very little recorded history of Wennington, but it boasts some of the oldest buildings in the parish. Weavers Cottage, previously mentioned circa 1246 and Wennington Hall, which is in part a Medieval Hall house with later additions from the 15th and 16th centuries.

The hamlet consists of a loose arrangement of dwellings mostly located on the road which runs to Little Raveley and subsequently to Ramsey.

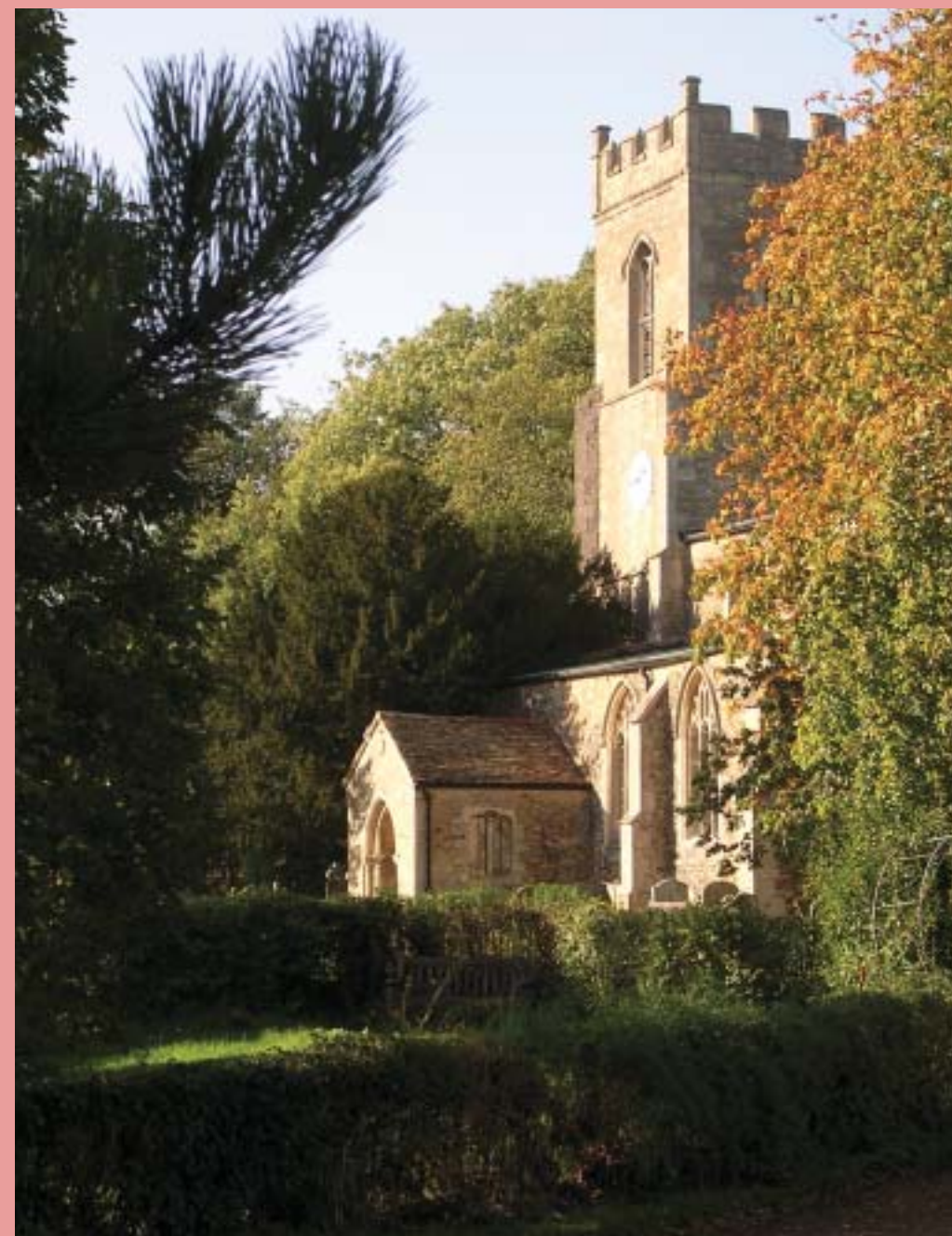
Most of the houses are timber framed and a significant number are listed. In the last six years, four new houses have been constructed within its purview. Until the 1980's the Royal Oak pub, situated on the southern edge, served Wennington and surrounding communities as well as attracting many visitors. It is now a private dwelling.



There is a complex of Estate buildings which formed part of the curtilage of Hill Farm, but is now leased as commercial premises. Manor Farm, which is a working Estate farm, is located on the northern edge. It is an arable farm.

As has been mentioned, the Parish lies within a designated Conservation area but is also set within an area of Best Landscape and the Huntingdonshire Local Plan identifies

areas of open space for protection. Both policies give extra protection to the area and stress the need to balance the appearance of the dwellings in the Parish with the natural landscape setting. This should ensure that the swathes of open land between the eastern and western portions of Abbots Ripton and between Abbots Ripton and Wennington remain undeveloped safeguarding their essential, attractive location and character.



LEFT: ABBOTS RIPTON POST OFFICE AND ABOVE: ST ANDREWS CHURCH

BUILDINGS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Church of St Andrew

This is the earliest surviving building in the Parish, circa 950, and is Grade I listed. It is basically constructed of Barnack stone rubble whose earliest features are its 13th century nave and south arcade. This work dates from 1230 – 1240 and was dedicated by the Bishop of Lincoln in 1242. It has a 14th century chancel and north arcade with the west tower added or rebuilt in the 16th century. The church was restored by subscription in 1858 and the roofs of the nave and south aisle were restored in 1868.

Green Lane Cottage & Chestnut Cottage, Hall Lane

Timber framed and thatched and date from the 15th century.

Rectory Farm Cottage

Is a 15th century aisled Hall although only one truss of the aisled hall remains but without its original rafters.



Moat House

As previously mentioned, the original moated manor house and early 16th century Hall house.

Home Farm

This dates from the 17th Century. Both barns are particularly fine buildings; they date from the early part of the 18th century and are Grade II listed.

The Three Horseshoes

This largely 17th Century building has recently been the subject of extensive renovation and now boasts a restaurant and accommodation.



Green Farm Cottage and farm buildings

This is a particularly fine example of early 17th century architecture. It is still owned by the Estate and is now leased to a Physiotherapist who runs a clinic there.

The farm buildings, which have undergone substantial renovation in the past few years, are timber clad and now serve as commercial premises (NFU Insurance).

Weavers Cottage, Wennington

As previously mentioned, this is probably the oldest dwelling house in the Parish dating as it does from the 13th century. It has been little changed externally over the years. It is Grade II listed.

Wennington Hall

A thatched Medieval Hall house with additions from the 15th and 16th centuries, again little changed externally. It is Grade II listed.





Pond Cottage

This thatched cottage dates in part from the 17th century with later modern additions. It is Grade II listed.



Hill Farm

A fine example of an early Georgian farmhouse. Its outbuildings of a much later period, now constitute a courtyard of leased commercial premises. These are constructed from brick with pantile or slate roofs.



Most Estate farmhouses are again of brick construction but are in the main rendered and colour-washed. Home Farm, Manor farm, Wennington Lodge farm.

It is apparent that little development took place during Victorian times but some examples are:- Rectory Cottage and Laundry Cottage, both of which are of white painted brickwork with Welsh slate roofs.



MODERN BUILDINGS

Modern secular buildings which reflect the character of the village are the Primary School and Village Hall, both designed by Sir Peter Foster. Several buildings with a common architectural style are Edwardian in character. These buildings generally have white painted brickwork with red tiled roofs and detailed features can include hipped porches, bargeboards and dormers. The stable block opposite Abbots Ripton hall exhibits such traits, as do Hall Lane Cottages, Moat Cottages and the Village Post office.

In recent years there have been several new housing developments within Abbots Ripton and single dwellings in Wennington.

In Abbots Ripton these are: Foxenfields, Dove House Wood, Rectory Farm Close, Home farm Close.

As these pictures show, the style and type of houses is diverse but all are in keeping with the character and architecture of the village. These developments have attracted a wide variety of new residents to the Parish both in age and nationality.



VILLAGE HALL



THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE



PRIMARY SCHOOL



RECTORY FARM CLOSE



ABBOTS RIPTON HALL

Special mention must be made of Abbots Ripton Hall which is effectively set apart from the village and does not exhibit an homogeneity with other Estate houses. It is the only period building of consequence in the Parish to be constructed of brick. The house was much altered in Victorian times and has undergone further change in the 20th century – for instance the front door with its pillared porch, was added before the second World War by Lord De Ramsey's father and is a copy of the front door of the Westgate Arms, Winchester!



ABBOTTS RIPTON HALL 1936



ABBOTTS RIPTON HALL GARDENS 1936



HALL LANE TODAY



ABBOTTS RIPTON HALL AND GARDENS

There are large formal gardens which are quite famous, parts of which were designed by Lansing Roper. These gardens are open to the public once or twice a year and are the venue for classical concerts and garden parties.

The surrounding farmlands and 5 acre lake, constructed in 1970 with a Chinese tea pavilion at its eastern end, are within an area covered by the register of Parks and Gardens.

LOCAL ECONOMY & BUSINESSES



As mentioned previously, the village of Abbots Ripton and the hamlet of Wennington were essentially farming communities, and whilst there are several working farms still situated in and around the Parish, most residents who have jobs now work outside the area. In present times only a handful of local people are employed by the Estate.



There are some 'overt' commercial operations such as the village shop and Post Office, the farms and the village pub, but there are others which are 'hidden' from view mostly housed in Estate buildings. They include an auto repair service, a garage, video makers, insurance offices, veterinary clinic, and sport physiotherapy centre.



There is a considerable livery and stabling business owned by Abbots Ripton Trust and a thriving paintball and clay pidgeon shooting business in Beville's Wood. The Estate also has a series of shoots, mostly partridge with some pheasant, throughout the year.

The village shop and Post Office offers a variety of goods and services as well as groceries, papers and magazines. One notable example is the sandwich making service much used by office workers, tradesmen, lorry drivers and motorists who use the village as a through route to the A1, St Ives and Huntingdon.

There is little overt catering to tourists other than accommodation at the Three Horseshoes pub, and Wennington Lodge farm.



TRANSPORT & TRAFFIC

There is very limited public transport from either Abbots Ripton or Wennington and at this time only limited community transport mostly used by the older residents.

In recent times traffic problems have begun to concern residents with up to 100 vehicles an hour in the early morning and late afternoon using the Wennington road and the B1040 as 'through' routes to the A1 or the A14.

Traffic calming measures have been introduced in Abbots Ripton but this does not seem to have significantly reduced the traffic volume. Residents feel that traffic should be rerouted with the provision of a roundabout at the junction of the Kings Ripton road and the A141 effectively diverting the 'rat runners'.





MAP SHOWING LOCAL FOOTPATHS. By courtesy of Abbots Ripton Estate

OLD MAP OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE CIRCA 1730



LEISURE FACILITIES & COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

In keeping with the essentially rural character, neither Abbots Ripton nor Wennington have extensive leisure facilities. Their proximity to cinemas, fitness centre, bowling alleys, retail parks etc. in Huntingdon, seems to obviate the necessity nor has there been any appetite shown by the residents thus far to import this type of facility into the Parish.

Abbots Ripton has a pub and a Village Hall which is available to all parishioners, although the hall is not used as much as it might be.

There are various community groups which meet e.g. the Gardening Club; the Friendly Club (for people of 55 or over); a very active Cricket Club and a Fishing Club. There are also many active members of the Church.

The Parish is well served by public footpaths and bridleways most of which cross Estate land, but no specifically designated cycle ways.

As the area is a designated conservation area, there are many opportunities to see conserving in action, from the flocks of geese which populate the small reservoir owned by the Estate, to the roe deer, muntjac, kites, pheasants, partridges, swans and owls which are to be found in the extensive woodlands, e.g. Monks Wood & Wennington Wood.

In the last twenty years, hundreds of new trees have been planted both in the arable farmlands and by residents of private houses so that from the air the parish appears to be nestling in an island of trees. As many footpaths cross the Estate land it is an opportunity for people to understand the interrelationship between working farms and the provision of leisure areas. This adds significantly to the character of the Parish and is something most people feel strongly should be preserved at all costs.



The village green in Abbots Ripton is a large open space which is presently accessible to all parishioners as are the grounds in which the village hall stands. There is a cricket square which is used by members of the village team.

Opposite the Post Office there is a commemorative garden, the Jubilee Garden which was opened to celebrate the Queen's golden jubilee in 1983. This is also space which can be enjoyed by all.

RESIDENTS SURVEY



A questionnaire designed by members of the Parish Plan Committee to elicit residents views, opinions and comments was distributed to all parishioners on the electoral role over the age of 18 in March and April 2005. There was a 75% response (157 returns although a significant number were completed to reflect the views of two people – usually married couples).

There are separate analyses for Abbots Ripton and Wennington, although the questions are essentially the same, the issues concerning residents have a different emphasis and bias. This may in part be due to the fact that whilst Abbots Ripton is a village with all the amenities that that brings, Wennington is a smaller settlement and a hamlet.

For the most part, residents gave more than one answer to many of the questions so percentages are difficult to calculate. Numbers of responses probably give a better idea of the strength of feeling and the frequency of comment. ('Significant' response is judged to be 6% of the total)

SUMMARY

Overall, residents of both Abbots Ripton and Wennington who were kind enough to respond to the questionnaire, seem glad that they have chosen to live in such a picturesque and unique location.

There does seem to be a split between those residents who do not want to change their environment in any substantial way and those who would welcome change providing it was "in character" and "in keeping". People did not seem to want any significant development of businesses although Farm shops and Craft workshops were mentioned most frequently. Most current businesses located in the Parish do not employ local people and most see them only as an increase in traffic volume.



A fairly surprising fact to emerge was little desire, especially in Wennington, to increase any sense of community. The responses from Abbots Ripton residents, not surprisingly perhaps, reflected more of a community orientation, manifested by the various clubs and groups which meet regularly e.g. Gardening club, Playgroup, Cricket club. There were however quite a number of comments which differentiated the 'old' and 'new' residents and the middle and expensive range of houses and 'affordable' houses.



The comments concerning the village pub perhaps reflected best the sense of a lack of any community for those who might want it.

The open spaces, walks and opportunities to see wildlife are obviously treasured as is the husbandry exercised by the Abbots Ripton Estate.

Safety did not appear to be a major issue although there was a fair amount of scepticism surrounding the subject of policing policy!

The Parish Council appeared to be quite well regarded and there was a fair amount of appreciation for the efforts put into communicating events and matters of interest and importance. The District and County Councils fared less well as most thought that they were out of touch with local concerns.

There was great dissatisfaction with the way Council Tax is spent and a surprising number of people who do not know how it is spent.

The increasing traffic problems and the development of Alconbury airfield seemed to be the two major issues of concern and ones which should not be neglected.

There was significant appreciation for the chance to be involved in the process of preparing the Parish Plan which bodes well for future projects!



QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **How would you describe Abbots Ripton/Wennington as it is now? (e.g. quality of life, look, facilities)**

AR: There were 103 positive comments in response to this question. Most centred around the picturesque nature of the village; its peaceful and unique character and the good quality of life to be enjoyed. The negative comments reflected the 'old' and the 'new' nature of housing, and the 'established' and 'new' residents. Traffic featured as a significant issue.

WV: There were 17 positive responses regarding the quality of life in Wennington, most frequent reason given was that it was extremely peaceful and pretty. 9 responses reflected the biggest intrusive concern – through traffic- ('rat-run') which peaks in the morning and evening 'rush hours' – up to 100 vehicles per hour.

2 i. **How do you feel about the expansion of Abbots Ripton/Wennington with a) new housing? b) extending the Boundaries to accommodate new development?**

AR: There were 91 responses which were in favour of 'new' housing with the strict caveat that whatever was undertaken had to "maintain standards" be "modest expansion" and "affordable". (This excluded 'social housing' and concentrated more on first time buyers). 47 responses reflected people's reluctance to see the village changed significantly. There was an unequivocal "NO" reflected in 75 responses to boundary change, and of the 46 who agreed that the village boundaries could be extended, 8 thought that any expansion must be "controlled" and "limited".

WV: Here there was a resounding "NO" to expansion or expanding the boundaries in 22 cases, although there were 11 responses which reflected a willingness to welcome expansion if development was "in keeping" and "in character".

2 ii. **If you think that the village can accommodate more housing, what type should it be and where should it be built?**

AR: Again, most residents contributed more than one suggestion or comment: There were 67 responses that indicated people would be in favour of more housing and 25 which indicated that respondents thought that AR was large enough. Types of houses ranged from cottages and "starter homes" to "same as Dove House Wood"; from cheaper/mixed rent/retirement to family homes and detached with a range of prices.

Most residents felt that expansion needed to be "in keeping" and "in character". There were 5 in support of building opposite Home Farm; 6 on the road towards Kings Ripton; 4 for the centre of the village/village Hall area; 6 on the road to Wennington, and 4 along Station Road.

WV: 20 responses rejected more housing development, whilst 11 reflected a willingness to have more if again it was within the boundaries and "in character". Where? Seemed to be a mixed bag. Out of 9 responses 4 mentioned the tree enclosed area 1 loop behind Hill Farm 2 past Poulter's Farm 2 in-fill in established paddocks.



2 iii. If you think that there should be more businesses in the village, what type of businesses should they be? (e.g. Craft Workshops, Farm Shops, Financial Services, Insurance etc.)

AR: 86 responses indicated a desire to encourage more businesses into the village, and 31 were definitely against it. 11 made no comment. Of the “No” responses, 4 felt that traffic would increase if more businesses were introduced and 5 felt it would change the character too much and affect the village shop. Of the “Yes” response there were 31 suggestions for a farm shop; 21 for craft workshops; 15 for cottage/small home businesses.

W: There were 19 “no” responses and 11 “Yes”. Most of the latter favoured some kind of Farm shop.

3. If there were opportunities to improve Abbots Ripton/Wennington, what would you like to see?

AR: There were 104 responses concerning the opportunities to improve the village and 15 which stated that no improvements needed to be made. Of the 104 responses, 28 (the largest number), mentioned the provision of a children’s play area (within the village 2; In the field by the rectory 2; bottom of Cricket field 2). 7 suggested more public transport and 6 more street lights.



Other comments covered areas as diverse as flower boxes; removing road signs; less restriction on the use of the village hall and weight restrictions for trucks. Overall people seemed open to the idea of changing/improving aspects of the village.

W: 6 responses reflected “No improvements” and assumed that the status quo was ideal. In 38 responses improvements were mentioned ranging from the construction of a traffic island at the junction of the Kings Ripton road and the A141 (6) to less traffic (11) to reinstatement of the original road width on the Wennington to Abbots Ripton road and (3) to stop cars speeding unnecessarily.

4 i. Are there traffic problems in the village/hamlet? If so, what are they?

AR: 9 responses indicated that people did not feel that there was a ‘traffic problem’, however 123 told a different story. Most comments were about the volume and speed of vehicles; the ‘rat run’ aspect of traffic patterns; motorcycles going too fast and using the village roads as speed tracks especially at weekends; traffic measures addressing symptoms instead of causes i.e. the need to address the reason cars use the village as a ‘short cut’ in the first place.

W: All responses confirmed that the ‘traffic problem’ in Wennington is increasing and becoming very serious. 9 again reflected the need to address the causes of the traffic and suggested the traffic island at the junction of the Kings Ripton road and the A141; 15 said how dangerous the “rat runners” had become and how noisy both the cars and motorbikes were.



4 ii. Are you in favour of the current traffic calming measures? If so, do you think they have had any effect?

AR: 76 comments were favourable towards current traffic calming measures, although most felt that there could be improvements; 49 were against. Most comments here concerned the location of the ‘chicanes’ which were thought to be dangerous and poorly sited.

WV: Most people were not in favour of the current measures in Abbots Ripton which all residents of Wennington encounter if not on a daily basis then certainly once or twice a week. There were in fact 19 “No” responses, reasons given ranging from “speeding is incurable” to “a by-pass would solve the problem not address the symptoms”. 11 responses were in favour, 7 reflecting the fact that they were not immediately applicable to Wennington!

4 iii. Do you have any suggestions for reducing the amount of traffic which passes through the village/hamlet?

AR: There were 91 suggestions for reducing traffic; 19 indicated that there was no problem with current traffic, and 11 had no comment. Suggestions included weight limits on heavy vehicles, a bypass, a traffic island at the junction of the A141 and the Kings Ripton road; banning HGVs; speed cameras; improving alternate routes; toll system (free for residents).

WV: There were a great many suggestions for improving road safety (a total of 25 responses). Again the traffic island at the junction of the A141 and Kings Ripton road featured highly (11); improve the road (5); build a by-pass (4)

5 i & ii. Would you use public transport if it were available in the Parish?

AR: 75 people said they would use public transport if provided and 47 said that they would not. Of those who would use it, destinations included Huntingdon, Peterborough, St Ives, Cambridge, Ramsey and Sawtry.

WV: Public transport was not a priority for the residents of Wennington, 23 responses reflected this. 7 responses were positive and the preferred destinations were Huntingdon (7) and Cambridge (3).

5 iii. Do you think that Community transport would be an asset? If so, how would you see it being used?

AR: With regard to community transport, 16 people said that they would not use it and 54 said that they would. Reasons given for use were – Doctors’ and hospital appointments; pensioners’ day trips; OAP dial-a-bus; one car families.

WV: Community transport again did not seem to be a priority (14) although there were 19 responses suggesting those who might benefit from such a service – pensioners and those without driving licences (9).

6 i. How often do you use the following village amenities?

	Every day	once or twice a week	once or twice a month	infrequently	never
Village Shop					
AR:	47	40	21	9	1
WV:	8	15	4	3	0
Village Pub					
AR:	4	24	45	34	0
WV:	0	3	4	19	4
Church					
AR:	1	5	15	22	11
WV:	0	2	0	20	7
Village Hall					
AR:	0	4	23	49	16
WV:	0	0	7	17	4

As expected, the residents of Abbots Ripton make more use of the amenities than the residents of Wennington.



6 ii. Have you any comments regarding the use of these amenities?

Some of the comments regarding their use or lack of were as follows:-
“Use don’t lose!”

(6)

Shop:

“There should be no-smoking policy”
“provision of Sunday papers please!”
“the shop is a lot better”

(2)

(3)

(3)

Pub: The pub attracted the most comments of all the amenities in both AR & W.

Some examples:

“the pub should be for villagers”
“the pub is a waste of space”
“the prices are far too high”
“there is no atmosphere”
“opening hours are restricted”
“not child-friendly”
“no vegetarian menu”
*pub is much improved

(7)

(15)

(12)

(9)

(7)

(5)

(3)

(2)

Village Hall:

“the hall is too big and poorly heated”
“it should be used far more for more ordinary things, like
teenage recreation”
“the kitchen needs improvement”
“it needs to be more accessible”
“use it for leisure pursuits such as a gym, dances, youth club,
fitness centre etc.
Evening classes

(2)

(2)

(3)

(9)

(3)

(4)

Church:

There were only a few comments regarding the church and these were mainly in relation to the inaccessibility of the Vicar and the fact that not many residents had met him, and the fact that some people would like the church to be open on a more regular basis (4)



6 iii. Do you think there should be more Leisure facilities available?

AR: 76 people thought there should be and 56 said not.

W: 7 people said “Yes” and 19 “No”

Of those who wanted more leisure facilities, the following are a selection of suggestions:-

“Indoor pool and tennis courts at the Village hall” 4

“Snooker/pool facility in the pub” 2

“communal barbeque” 4

“toddler play area” (this attracted by far the most comments in AR: 28

(Areas suggested for such a facility included the field by the Rectory in Abbots Ripton; the bottom of the cricket field; Jubilee Gardens)

7 i. Do you feel safe living in the village/hamlet?

Yes Yes most of the time

AR: 68 58

W: 23 8

7 ii. Are you satisfied with policing arrangements?

AR: Only 41 people stated that they thought there was adequate policing in the Parish; 39 were dissatisfied and 28 asked the question “What policing?”

W: Only 8 people thought that policing was adequate and 18 were dissatisfied. 4 asked the question “What policing?”



7 iii. How could crime prevention be improved?

AR: Comments included:

"Police to be more visible"	4
"Neighbourhood watch scheme widened"	3
"More communication"	4
"Build a security fence behind the pub car park so houses cannot be accessed"	1
"Police surgery"	1

W: In Wennington 11 people thought that the Neighbourhood Watch scheme would be helpful; 7 thought an increased police presence would be beneficial; 1 a foot patrol.

7 iv. Do you suffer any inconvenience from noise, anti-social behaviour graffiti etc.?

AR: 72 people felt that there was no problem and 47 felt that there were significant problems to be tackled. Of the 47, the distribution of responses was as follows:-

Litter, traffic noise	6
motor bikes	6
aircraft noise	3
pets, particularly dogs	3
train noise	2
pub lights left on at night	2
rubbish from railway men	1
noise from farm traffic	1
'rat run' noise	1
chainsaws	1
pub customers leaving	1
fireworks	1

(Some residents although responding in the affirmative did not give any explanation)

W: There were 18 responses which indicated there were no significant inconveniences, and 16 which said there were.

These were:-

traffic	6
wheelie bins & frequency of collection	3
barking dogs	3
litter	2
noisy neighbours & motor bikes	1

8 i. Is there anything you do not like about Abbots Ripton/Wennington?

AR: Most felt that Abbots Ripton was a good place to live (30) and didn't feel that anything needed to be changed or improved.

There were however, 31 responses which highlighted those things people felt detracted from the village and their enjoyment of life there.

Most frequent comments concerned:

"Traffic speed and the dangers to pedestrians and cyclists"	13
"Traffic volume and noise"	7
"Litter"	6
"Low community spirit"	5

Other comments included villagers' resistance to change; the closure of walks by Lord De Ramsey; road signs.

W: A fairly even split with 12 "No", 13 "Yes" and 1 "No comment" responses. The comments again reflected the increasing traffic problems viz: volume, speed, noise; more frequent fly tipping and the Farm buildings at Hill farm, now commercial premises, which some residents (4) felt added nothing to the hamlet other than more traffic.



8 ii. Is there anything which you think should be of immediate concern to the residents of Abbots Ripton/Wennington?

AR: Most responses indicated no real issues of immediate concern (54), but 42 responses highlighted those areas people felt needed attention.

These were:-

Development of Alconbury airfield	20
Traffic volume and speed	17
State of footpaths	2
Overdevelopment of village	2

W: Immediate concerns were :-

Increasing Traffic volume and noise	11
Overdevelopment of the hamlet	6
Development of Alconbury airfield	6

9. How aware do you feel our elected representatives are of local concerns and feelings?

	FULLY AWARE	QUITE AWARE	NOT AWARE
Parish Council			
AR:	60	30	16
W:	15	11	3
District Council			
AR:	11	52	39
W:	4	12	11
County Council			
AR:	14	28	57
W:	4	5	18

10 i. Are you satisfied with the way the Council tax is spent?

		Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Don't know how It is spent
AR:	2	45	14	19	49
W:	0	13	4	7	8

10 ii. Any other comments?

There were many and varied responses to this question. The following is an attempt to reflect the most frequent.

“The Parish Council is appreciated for all that they do”

“Thanks for the questionnaire, keep up the good work”

“Refuse collection is very confusing and patchy and wheelie bins are very difficult for some residents to manoeuvre”

“A wonderful and friendly community. This helps to offset a sense of loneliness in a small village”

“People live in and move to Abbots Ripton/Wennington because they like it the way it is.

Any plans to alter it significantly must be resisted”

“Too many bureaucrats at District and County level. Too many booklets and leaflets stating how well the councils are doing”

“We are not happy with plans to develop Alconbury and feel more support ought to come from our local MP”

“I am very dissatisfied with the way the Council Tax is spent. Is there any recourse to the Council?”

“We need a balanced community. There are too many houses of medium size and too few ‘affordable’ places for locals”

“This is a peaceful hamlet with great character – adequately served by nearby town facilities but in danger of being ruined by ‘rat-run’ traffic – help!”

“This is a Conservation area. Conserve means to retain, to keep the same!”

“There is a desperate need for some drastic action to be taken to take the traffic out of the villages. We are treating the symptoms not the causes. We either need a by-pass or a traffic island at the junction of the A141 and the Kings Ripton Road”

“Wennington should have the equivalent of a village green so we can foster more of a community”



RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN

The Recommendations and Action Plan which follow have been formulated using the outcome of the Residents Survey. They are addressed in large part to the Parish Council although it is hoped that residents will be involved in some of the activities which will inevitably occur as a result of the Parish Council's agenda for the coming year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to work together with Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Abbots Ripton Estate and residents to monitor any proposed development and change in the Parish in order to ensure that it is "in keeping" and does not compromise the essential character of either Abbots Ripton or Wennington.
- Continue to represent the concerns of residents regarding increased traffic volume and traffic noise pollution to the relevant authorities.
- Continue to actively promote the uniqueness of the Parish through identification of footpaths, walks and leisure areas and monitor street furniture, road signs, calming measures and lighting so that they remain reasonable and of a design which does not compromise the rural nature of the Parish.
- Continue to inform residents in a timely way of events and items of concern in as interactive way as possible.

- Approach Huntingdonshire District Council with a view to having another traffic census and a new pollution survey carried out.
- Carry out a straw poll to ascertain which footpaths and access areas residents perceive to be either 'closed' or 'off limits' and actively promote their usage.
- Consider the provision of a 'Welcome Pack' for both new and those established residents who would like one, to include such things as shop and pub opening hours, church services; other services available in the Parish; village activities, clubs, groups, village hall usage, availability and costs; names of councillors and emergency telephone numbers.
- Carry out a survey of usage of the Village hall over the last five years, the ease of booking, the type of events held, fee structure, how information is disseminated regarding its hiring and availability.
- Review study previously carried out regarding a proposed 'play area' for children within the boundary of Abbots Ripton.
- Continue to actively liaise with relevant authorities concerning the possible development of Alconbury and Wyton airfields for commercial use and the possible opening up of 'link' roads with the village
- Set up a study to see whether it is feasible for all parishioners to belong to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and how this would be administered.

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