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- Footpaths Report (including Footpath 14 Report)
“When the Government first introduced the proposal for parishes to compile a Parish Plan there was a general consensus that it was a good idea. However Salhouse Parish Council appreciated that such a project would entail enormous commitment from a dedicated team, in essence that for the Parish Plan to reach completion they needed the input of someone with drive, vision and enthusiasm.

The Parish Council would like to thank Pat Gallanders for taking up that challenge, for without her leadership and the untiring efforts of the whole Steering Group this document would not have reached fruition. It has surpassed all expectations. Well done!”

Peter J Jefford
Chairman, Salhouse Parish Council

Richard Squires
Community Development & Liaison Officer
Broadland District Council

“A parish plan is one of those exciting projects that puts the community at the forefront of action planning for their area, rather than the local authority or other service providers operating in the district. It is, after all, the residents who experience day-to-day life in their parish, who tend to realise where things work well and where things need improving.

Salhouse Parish Plan is testament to months of hard work and commitment on the part of the community, particularly a handful of volunteer residents who decided to step forward and form the Steering Group for the project. Their undaunted efforts have resulted, along the way, in securing a remarkable response to a Parish Questionnaire (60%), to village open days held at the Jubilee Hall and in meetings and positive discussions with various statutory service providers. They have produced a comprehensive action plan, based on the views and needs of their fellow residents, which details actions that the community can achieve itself and actions where the assistance of some of these service providers is needed.

All that remains now is for the enthusiasm that has greeted the work so far to continue unchecked, and set running the raft of projects and initiatives that are detailed in the action plan. This will rely on the commitment of the wider community as well as those other organisations on which the former are relying to help deliver particular projects. Broadland District Council has already pledged its support to the Salhouse Parish Plan. I hope that others will also rise to the challenge.”

“Parish Plans acknowledge that every community is unique and the residents are the “experts” in identifying their community needs. Parish Plans are a good way of securing funding for community projects and are a great source of information for local groups and statutory agencies alike.”

Janet Peachey
Norfolk Rural Community Council
This Salhouse Parish Plan Formal Report is the result of a 2 year project, which began in March 2006, of which over 15 months were dedicated to consulting with the villagers of Salhouse. The views and issues raised have formed the basis of this wide ranging Report and the comprehensive Action Plan is written to guide the village forward over the next 5-10 years.

My personal thanks go to the hard working and dedicated Steering Group, in particular the Core Group, without all of whom Salhouse would never have got its own Parish Plan.

The extent of their commitment has been consistently recorded on the Parish Plan pages of the village website with the full record of the meetings. Add to these names the numerous villagers who were co-opted onto the Working Groups and those who participated in one-to-one surveys and mini questionnaires as well as all those villagers who supported the Parish Plan process.

The Steering Group has dedicated over 4700 recorded volunteer hours for the benefit of the village and many members have, for the past 2 years, arranged their lives around the project timetables in order to meet deadlines. Already Salhouse is reaping the benefits of this considerable commitment.

My thanks also go to the Parish Council Chairman, Peter Jefford, who had faith in us and, together with the whole of his Council, has consistently offered support as well as jointly financing the project together with Norfolk Rural Community Council and Broadland District Council.

Janet Peachey of Norfolk Rural Community Council started us off down the long road and Richard Squires, Community Liaison Officer, Broadland District Council has been an invaluable supplier of information and materials, as well as coordinating our discussions with the Council and attending our Awareness and Open Days.

We have learnt a lot about our village in this process and about the aspirations of the villagers. The Parish Plan now gives Salhouse a real opportunity to gain better facilities for all age groups and to benefit from the new clubs and activities which are already being set up. Both Norfolk County Council and Broadland District Council are aware of the issues we have raised, particularly in Transport, Conservation and Planning, and can refer to them in the future. Landowners and businesses also understand how villagers feel about matters which relate to them.

Although started, the work is not yet done by any means and it will take a significant effort on the part of the Parish Council to maintain the momentum and keep the Action Plan alive. This is the stage when villagers must become involved with those issues which are important to them otherwise the changes and improvements they aspire to, despite much of the hard work to date, might not come to fruition.

Pat Gallanders
Chair, Parish Plan Steering Group

Steering Group

Malcolm Prestwood  Vice Chair, Editor, Chair of Transport, Highways & Village Infrastructure Working Group, our IT specialist and Core Group Member.
Juliette Bendy  Secretary, Chair of Recreation & Leisure Working Group, Researcher and Core Group Member.
Andrew Musgrave  Treasurer, Chair of Business, Agriculture & Tourism Working Group, Salhouse Parish Councillor.
Gerry Crombie  Chair of Lifelong Learning Working Group.
Kerry Robbins  Chair of Conservation, Environment & Planning Working Group, Salhouse Parish Councillor.
Ann Prestwood  Chair of Community Services Working Group.
Robert Cooper  Salhouse Parish Councillor, Member of Recreation & Leisure Working Group.
Mike Jordan  Member of Transport, Highways & Village Infrastructure Working Group.
Colin McCormick  Salhouse Parish Councillor, Member of Transport, Highways & Village Infrastructure Working Group.
Jenny Rose  Salhouse Parish Councillor (from 2007), Member of Recreation & Leisure Working Group.
Tim Nelson  Member of Community Services Working Group.
INTRODUCTION

PROFILE OF SALHOUSE VILLAGE

The Norfolk Parish of Salhouse is in the District of Broadland (See map at page 12) and adjacent to the Broads National Park by virtue of Salhouse Broad. It is part of the Wroxham Ward which also contains Belaugh, Wroxham and Rackheath and lies south of the River Bure; the Parish covers some 5.6 sq miles and, at the 2001 census, had a population of 1456 residents in 601 households. Since then the village has grown to some 650 households and 1600 residents.

The principal local authorities are Norfolk County Council and Broadland District Council, as well as the Broads Authority. This local government hierarchy is currently under review by the Boundary Commission and might change radically by 2010. In this respect Salhouse, in keeping with other Norfolk communities, has an uncertain future.

SITUATED IN AN AGRICULTURAL AREA approximately 6 miles northeast of Norwich on the edge of the popular tourist area of the Norfolk Broads, Salhouse is a predominantly linear village in layout. In recent years infill development has created small clusters adjacent to the original linearity.

The majority of the dwellings are situated in the easterly part of the village around Mill Road and Lower Street although there is a sizeable community living about ½ mile away to the west at Station Road, linked only by the main Norwich Road, which lacks a pavement, or by a rural footpath through fields. This geographical separation has a significant impact on community cohesion.

In December 2003 the older parts of the village along Lower and Upper Streets, Vicarage Road and Salhouse Broad were designated a Conservation Area (See map at page 70). This embraced all the older buildings including the Grade I listed All Saints Church, and 15 other Grade II Listed buildings, including Salhouse Hall and its outbuildings (See List at page 22).

The character of the village centres on its mix of housing encompassing traditional with more modern property set in established gardens, tree lined roads and a generally open aspect revealing its rural setting. The nearby Salhouse Broad, owned by a local landowner, is a popular tourist attraction and wildlife conservation area.

The village is fortunate in that the current Broadland Local Plan has a settlement limit boundary which is currently tightly drawn around the existing village in order to protect it from disproportionately future development (See map at page 71).

The village church of All Saints is situated ¼ mile north of the village and there is also a Baptist Chapel just off Lower Street. Salhouse has a thriving primary school, a small village shop/Post Office, hairdresser, dressage and riding schools, and two public houses, one of which is temporarily closed. The busy village hall supports many local groups and activities including a play group.

Local businesses include a thatcher, potter, garden centre, concrete artefacts, boarding kennels, cattery and bed and breakfast accommodation. There is also a small industrial estate off Station Road. The village is served by a GP surgery 3 miles away in Hoveton and the nearest library is in Wroxham.

A regular bus service links Salhouse to both Norwich and Wroxham, a rural bus service also runs from Salhouse to Aylsham extending to Blickling Hall in the summer, and there is a new service to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. A train service runs between Norwich and the north Norfolk coast via Salhouse Station.

Communication within the village is through a well established, comprehensive magazine, the Salhouse SAGA, the village website www.salhousevillage.org.uk and a number of notice boards.

Over many years, as the City has expanded into the countryside, Salhouse has increasingly become a commuter village and seems to have lost much of the active community spirit so often found in rural villages.
Salhouse, at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, was included in the Manor of Wroxham which covered an area of some 33 acres and was itself part of the Taverham Hundred, an ancient administrative district. A large area of the village to the south of Lower Street was once part of Mousehold Heath which spread east from the city of Norwich for several miles. Previously known by the names of Sallus, Sallowes, or Salehouse, the village would have comprised isolated dwellings that gradually came together as a community around the 14th century.

The earliest recorded building in the village is the C14th All Saints Church which stands in an isolated position on high ground to the north of the village; however, no real evidence of an early settlement has been found nearby.

During the Middle Ages peat was dug out of the low lying areas to provide fuel for heating and cooking but, in the 14th century, the rising sea level caused these excavations to flood and become the Broads of today.

The rivers which connected these Broads provided a transport system linking local communities and the coast. Industries grew out of local goods such as milling flour or malting barley, reed beds were managed to harvest the material used for thatching and the area grew rich in plant and wildlife.

For many years flat bottomed barges or wherries were used to carry bulky goods and at one time these craft were able to navigate right up to Salhouse village staithe which was situated near today’s Broads car park.

Salhouse also had its own wherry, The Harvester. The Old King’s Head pub, now a private residence, would have provided welcome refreshments for the boatmen who may have been delivering reeds, bundled and ready for thatching, or corn and barley to Salhouse Mill.

The arrival of the railways in the 19th century brought about the gradual decline of this form of river transport. Roads improved too and the region took on another lease of life; newly opened boatyards offered wherry and yacht hire and so began the tourism industry we have today.

Records show that, during the 18th and 19th century, the village supported many businesses including a bakehouse, blacksmiths, two public houses, bicycle repairers, reed thatchers, butchers, two grocery shops as well as shoe makers/repairers, bricklayers, an agricultural machinery business and gardeners. Throughout though, the main employer was always agriculture.

Two roads, Mill Hill and Mill Road, mark the sites of grinding mills; however, old maps show evidence of only one mill in existence at any one time. As windmills could be moved from one place to another it may be that the earlier mill at the top of Mill Hill (near to the gradually declining river links) was later moved and re-established on Mill Road. The new location provided better road access to Norwich and the rapidly growing railway network although, by the beginning of the 20th century this mill was working only occasionally and was finally demolished in the 1930s.

As well as All Saints Church there was once a Methodist Church and two Baptist Chapels; an old map shows a Baptist Chapel (now gone) sited on Upper Street as well as the existing chapel on Chapel Loke.

Over the years, like many rural communities, Salhouse lost not only shops and useful businesses but leisure facilities including its allotments. The aforementioned King’s Head public house closed in the 1920s but The Lodge Hotel, formerly a vicarage and then a private residence, opened in the mid 1970s and, with the C17th Bell Inn (now temporarily closed), is still serving the community today.

The village also benefited from the Parish Reading Room. This small building, so called because a Trust ensured that a newspaper was placed in the Room daily, opened in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. It served the village in various ways including as a men’s club where snooker and billiards could be played and as a venue for Salhouse Afternoon W.I. During the First World War the ladies of the village held knitting sessions there to make scarves, hats and mitts for the troops and it was used as a cooking base for the WRVS during the Second World War. Latterly, it provided a venue for meetings but it has recently
been sold by the Parish Council, in consultation with the village, and is now a private residence.

The railway, which had once supported a busy station with a goods siding and a signal box, escaped the same fate as many such rural railway lines following the ‘Beeching’ railway review. However, having once employed 6 staff, it became unmanned in 1968 and the reduced services struggled on until it was re-branded as the Bittern Line in the mid 90’s. Since then the passenger traffic has increased under the Community Rail Partnership Programme.

At the same time the old village hall was coming to the end of its economic lifespan. Built on Mill Road on land donated by Mr Ward of Salhouse Hall, the Victory Hall was the culmination of years of fundraising by villagers who wanted to build something in memory of the Salhouse men who went to war in 1939-1945. They held gymkhanas, fetes, house collections, dances and even a ploughing match to raise the necessary funds and Victory Hall finally opened in 1949.

This Hall served the village well until, after a massive fundraising campaign by Salhouse 2000 committee which took several years and many volunteer hours, the new Jubilee Hall finally opened in the now renovated old school building in Lower Street.

As in many other villages the 20th century brought about a period of dramatic change. The second world war saw young men, some of whom would never return, leave Salhouse to fight for their country. Villagers became accustomed to the sound of aircraft with RAF Coltishall opening in 1940 and the presence of the US Army Air Force at nearby Rackheath. During the war years several aircraft came to grief around the village. A Spitfire from RAF Coltishall crashed near Salhouse Hall in 1941 and later that same year a Wellington Bomber was destroyed in fields behind the old school building. In 1944 two US Liberators crashed simultaneously in fog in the northern sector of the Parish. The village War Memorial is situated near to All Saints Church.

The austerity of the war years contrasts with the improvements to everyday life which that century brought. Utilities such as piped water to replace the village wells, mains drainage, electricity and finally natural gas in 1991 have changed the village forever. Improved communications and transport have helped alleviate rural isolation and improved access to health care and education. The village population increased dramatically in the 1970s with the new housing built in Cheyney Avenue and later, in 2003, when the village boundary was altered to include the established houses to the west of Station Road.

Village history has not been totally forgotten; new roads and developments have been named after notable villagers and local benefactors such as Reddel (Redell), Topcliffe, Howlett, Ward, Cheyney, Farman and Brian Cooper. Older houses in the village, particularly those which have a graded listing, have been incorporated in a Conservation Area enacted in 2003.

Salhouse Hall, located in historic parkland to the west of the church, is thought to have started life, circa 1550, as an Elizabethan manor house.

The Ward family purchased the house in the 18th century and became long standing owners of the estate as well as village benefactors.

The house was transformed in the 19th century and almost doubled in size. It was sold in the mid 1950’s, together with village farmland, to the Cator family who remain the current owners. During its heyday the sweeping lawns at the front of Salhouse Hall were used for village fetes and the building has continued to be an important landmark despite being in an unoccupied condition.

Included within Salhouse Hall Estate were cattle sheds and stores situated in Lower Street and known as the ‘Street Farm Buildings’. These were leased to various farmers over the years but eventually became The Grange and Salhouse Equestrian Centre: the latter operated until 1999.

The first village school opened in 1844 on land given by Mr Richard Ward, the local squire of Salhouse Hall. Two thirds of the funds were raised locally and in 1909 local landowners financed further enlargement and modernisation. The building finally closed as a school in 1976 when its replacement opened in Cheyney Avenue but it continued to be used for youth activities, and as a polling station, until the early 1990s at which time it was judged unusable.

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THE PARISH PLAN PROCESS

The Government wants local communities to take more control of their own lives, to set out a vision of what they want to do in their own neighbourhoods and to engage with other powers to implement their wishes. To achieve this, the Countryside Agency instigated a ‘Vital Villages’ initiative which incorporated Parish Plans. The scheme is currently promoted by Norfolk Rural Community Council on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and sets a framework for communities to plan their own futures.

A Parish Plan should include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings and protection of hedges and ponds. It can also include any social, environmental or economic issues.

In essence, the Parish Plan:

♦ Reflects the views of all sections of the community.
♦ Identifies which features and local characteristics people value.
♦ Identifies local problems and opportunities.
♦ Spells out how residents want the community to develop in the future.
♦ Prepares a plan of action to achieve this vision which the Parish proposes to undertake together with all interested parties.

The content of the Parish Plan Report should be capable of influencing the policies, decisions and actions to be implemented by external bodies.

SALHOUSE PARISH PLAN OBJECTIVES

The main objective of undertaking the Salhouse Parish Plan process was to consult with and involve all the residents of the village to identify their concerns about and views of the village today and to understand their vision for the future in relation to:

♦ Preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.
♦ Future protection and enhancement of the character of Salhouse village, its safe and pleasant environment and its surrounding countryside.
♦ The type of new development required, if any, and appropriate location.
♦ Retention and provision of shops, housing and services to suit the village requirements.
♦ The need for additional recreational activities and facilities for the village, particularly its youth.

It was also intended that the process would have the effect of unifying what has effectively become two separate communities; this could make the Parish as a whole more socially cohesive. The various groups and activities which already exist within the village should benefit from wider support and new interests could be generated to include villagers who, at present, may not already socialise within the community.

Another aim was to raise the profile of existing and future fundraising groups who would be attempting to provide better facilities for all the villagers.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Parish Plan has taken over 2 years to compile in the form of research, setting up the Steering Group and 6 Working Groups, consultation with the village, analysis and report writing. The consultation phase included an Awareness Day and 2 Open Days, mini surveys, one to one interviews, consultations with village groups, a school art competition, village walkabouts and a comprehensive household Questionnaire; the latter contained 128 wide ranging questions and a Youth (under 18) Section of a further 14 questions.

The purpose of the Awareness Day was to allow villagers the opportunity to discuss with the Steering Group their views about the village and any issues they felt should be addressed.

Discussion was generated by wide ranging and thought provoking displays. Some 252 villagers attended from nearly every area of the village and represented a wide range of age groups. Much of the concern centred on traffic speed and volume, pavements and footpaths, development, street lighting, playgrounds for the children, provision for the elderly and the youth of the village. Information gathered was used to compile the Questionnaire.

Throughout the consultation process the Steering Group has done everything possible to not only publicise the Parish Plan but also to encourage villagers to become involved, to voice their concerns and to express their aspirations for the future. As is so often the case there have been
those who have chosen not to participate for whatever reason, and the results therefore represent the views of the majority who did become involved.

**Chronological Summary**

**2006**

February  Decision by Parish Council to sponsor a Parish Plan.
March  Research by a Core Group and setting up of funding.
April  Inaugural Meeting of 12 volunteers from which a Committee was appointed.
July  Awareness Day.
Aug – Nov  Compilation of Questionnaire.
November  Distribution of Questionnaire to all households in the village.
Nov – Dec  Return of Questionnaires.

**2007**

Jan – Mar  Data analysis.
June  Open Day to display results of the Questionnaire and Consultation process.
December  Draft Report to Parish and District Councils.

**2008**

January  Open Day to raise interest in additional activities and volunteer groups.
Feb—Mar  Completion of Final Reports, Compilation of Conservation Area Appraisal.
April-May  Distribution of Report.
May  Open Meeting to discuss the Report.

**SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

**Overview**

It was interesting to note that overall, long standing villagers, mainly home owners and resident for over 21 years, as well as older retired residents, were predominant in returning the Questionnaire; however, attendance at the Awareness and Open Days was from all age groups.

The response to the Questionnaire was 60% of households (378), which represented a 50% cross section of almost all of the village post codes. The overriding impression gained throughout the extensive consultation process and from those who completed the Questionnaire was that they really value living in a rural setting with easy access to amenities, namely Norwich, Wroxham and the Broads. The location is considered to be peaceful, relatively safe and still retaining a village atmosphere and this is the quality of life they wish to protect and conserve.

In general, Salhouse is considered to be a friendly village with residents willing to help. That said, community spirit is only thought to be evident by 35% of the Questionnaire respondents and about the same percentage regularly attend village events; 25% felt that already the village was losing its identity and is becoming a dormitory village. The 'geographical divide' of the village features to a large extent in terms of lack of facilities, interaction, little sense of belonging as well as the physical difficulty of access.

**Conservation, Environment and Planning**

In the light of current government proposals there is a natural fear of unwanted development and yet there was recognition that the village would benefit from the input of some youth. While villagers were firmly against further development they acknowledged the need for some carefully chosen, but limited in numbers, affordable housing for villagers. They would accept a few individual properties and barn conversions but green field development was not supported. Infill, provided it was not the splitting up of gardens, was felt by some to be a reasonable option while others expressed a preference for sheltered housing for the elderly. Most who commented were not in favour of any development centred on the 'second home' principle. In all cases, it was felt that any small development still had to be sustainable.

The principle of expanding the existing Conservation Area was very popular, while the suggestion of environmental improvement schemes attracted some volunteers. The need for more benches, litter and dog bins, tourist signs and notice boards was also recognised.

**Business, Agriculture and Tourism**

In response to the question whether there should be more businesses in the village, the consensus seemed to be that if it was in keeping with the character of the village and provided local jobs, then it could be considered. Sadly, the reality that some businesses had already closed and others were struggling had not escaped the notice of the villagers. Increased use of the Broad, with the addition of a tea room, provision of a farm shop, of better tourist facilities, and of parkland with public access, were consistently raised throughout.
the consultation process as was need for development of Salhouse Hall.

Transport, Highways and Village Infrastructure

The blight for the overwhelming majority of villagers is the increase in general traffic, heavy goods vehicles, a perceived increase in the breaking of speed limits and a general lack of consideration by drivers whether 2-wheeled or 4 wheeled. Many felt that the lack of discipline and enforcement of existing limits contributed greatly to the problem and the ever increasing presence of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on village roads was unacceptable.

The introduction of an HGV route through the village in 1995 together with the “feeder” route between the Norwich southern bypass and north Norfolk have resulted in a substantial increase in traffic and drew fierce comment. The majority gave a conditional acceptance of the Northern Distributor Route (NDR) expecting, in return, a potential reduction in such traffic and removal of the HGV route.

A variety of methods of combatting these problems was offered. The principles of street narrowing and flashing speed signs were popular but speed humps were less so. In addition, there was consistent criticism regarding the anomaly of the different speed limits, the need to extend or even to lower them further, as well as the requirement for some form of traffic calming. The overwhelming opinion of the village was that there was no need for major street lighting anywhere in the village.

The condition of the pavements, which hampered the elderly and mothers with children going safely to school or playgroup, was a major issue. Lack of maintenance by householders resulting in overgrown hedges and encroaching root growth, with the consequent narrowing of pavements as well as inadequate surface maintenance, were cited as major problems.

The lack of pavements was another cause for concern, particularly on Norwich Road, Bell Corner to the Church, as well as parts of Lower Street, Thieves Lane and Station Road. The latter road produced a mix of views; although a few residents were adamant that there was no traffic problem and no need for pavements, most disagreed.

The geographical divide of the village resulted in a strongly stated need for a good path link between the two halves of the village, namely between Station Road and Mill Road. Better cycle paths and a traffic light pedestrian crossing on Mill Road would give children the ability to get to school more safely; it could also reduce traffic speed. Opinion on the pedestrian crossing was evenly divided.

The village also expressed concern that the current bus service had gaps in the timetable, particularly in the evening, and coaches which were unsuited to the elderly and disabled had frequently been used. Many felt that all trains should stop at Salhouse Station.

Although a large majority of villagers were concerned about pollution, whether noise, aircraft or vehicle, fewer were worried about possible additional flight path activity from Norwich Airport.

Most utility services were thought to be satisfactory with the major exceptions of mobile phone coverage and inconsistent broadband speeds. In the case of mobile phone coverage, the problem extended to medical staff on house visits who needed to be on call, tradesmen working in the village and villagers themselves. Broadband speeds appear to vary greatly with BT citing the reason as being the distance from the exchange.

Community Services

Community Services, in general, were considered by most villagers to be adequate. A minority were still experiencing difficulty in getting to Hoveton Medical Centre, which is not on a practical bus route, and the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital; the latter is now accessible by a regular bus service.

Jubilee Hall is valued by the community and there was a real desire for the expanded use of this facility. Any events to improve community spirit were popular, in particular a village fete, village tea party and open gardens. The lack of visible policing featured strongly.

On the recycling front, brown bin usage had increased significantly in a 3 year period and increased recycling was supported.
Lifelong Learning

The fact that the School still had 'mobile' classrooms and toilets attracted much comment as did the issue of traffic outside the School at drop off and pick up times.

Local residents complained about inconsiderate parking of vehicles, the fact that many parents who live within walking distance used the car and that other vehicles drove too fast in the vicinity of the School. The suggestion that School facilities could be used for extra village activities was well supported.

Recent price increases for Adult Education classes, together with the removal of discounts, had affected attendance. There was a wide range of suggestions as to the type of adult education classes that might be provided in the village, computer literacy being one of the more popular.

Recreation and Leisure

The depressing state of the children's play area, as well as the minimal use of the playing field other than for football, were consistent criticisms throughout the consultation process.

The idea of utilising the playing field for more popular sports with basketball hoops, rugby posts, a football wall and hard court facilities was popular. A youth club, a wider variety of general activities for all ages and increased usage of village venues were suggestions.

Young Adults and Youth

Both categories appreciate the rural setting and relatively safe environment; however, there is a 'yob' element which they dislike. The overriding opinion is that there are not enough leisure activities in Salhouse. Young adults find their leisure activity either in Norwich or, prior to its closure, The Bell Inn. Transport just about meets their needs but is perceived as expensive.

The play area is inadequate for children of all ages and therefore infrequently used. A School Art Competition supported the younger children's stated preference for equipment such as swings and a slide, while the youth consultation confirmed a desire for more sports facilities on the playing field and a designated place where they could meet. Currently there is nothing to do there and no organised activities other than football. A wider variety of sports facilities including ball court games, rugby and cricket would be appreciated.

The re-establishment of a youth club would be popular amongst a large age range.

Communication and Local Government

Throughout the consultation process, Salhouse SAGA proved to be the most popular form of communication and was read thoroughly by many. This contrasted with the 12% in the Questionnaire who stated they did not know what was going on in the village or know that there was a village website, albeit that it had been online for several years. As always, word of mouth and notice boards proved to be effective.

In the Questionnaire, villagers were asked as to whether they voted, whether they considered their elected representatives were sufficiently aware of local concerns and whether they felt they were kept informed of various Parish Council processes. Lack of knowledge of Parish Council elections was significant; about half felt that the Parish Councillors and the District Councillors were aware of villagers’ concerns, while the majority of respondents either did not know about, or stated that they were not kept sufficiently informed of, Parish Council processes.

Conclusion

There was an encouraging response to the Parish Plan. People were more than willing to express views on many aspects of village life at the Awareness and Open Days and in the excellent 60% return of the not insubstantial Household Questionnaire, which exceeded expectations.

Key issues arising from the consultation
reinforced some existing views and opinions about village life and the major problems resulting from traffic, the ever diminishing amenities and lack of leisure facilities.

However, the most disappointing element of the whole consultation process and, in particular the analysis of the Questionnaire, was that most villagers wanted something but very few were prepared to give anything to achieve that something. There were comments to the effect that proposals to tree plant, form community groups to help older residents or join environmental groups were 'the responsibility of the Parish Council', and the like. The will to join in fundraising, even for an improved children's play area, was equally lacklustre. 'No' was a regular answer to the questions regarding volunteers. Added to which, on a large number of general issues, the standard response in the Questionnaire was 'don't know'. There was a definite sense of a loss of community spirit in Salhouse which was increasingly identified as the process evolved.

Sadly, this apathy and attitude probably reinforces the view of some villagers that Salhouse is in danger of losing its rural character and taking on a dormitory status. The long-term consequence of all this is depressingly evident in other communities. Many in the village work and seek a life elsewhere and some display a lack of commitment for the future of the community in which they live, while others simply lack time. Salhouse village is striving to achieve an uneasy balance between rural and suburban interests.

On a more optimistic note, notwithstanding the disappointment felt by the Steering Group at this lack of community cohesion, it was decided to hold an Open Day to display the suggestions for additional activities and groups which had emerged from the consultation process. Already, there were plans to start a Youth Club but, by highlighting what became 32 different suggestions, a further 9 groups were formed; Community Speedwatch, Carers Group, Grant Application Committee, history, gardening, wine and book clubs as well as a village rambling group and environment enhancement group called Team Salhouse. Later in 2008 it is hoped to start an IT club.

Today, traditional activities for senior citizens are not as well received as in the past. Hence, a monthly afternoon tea has been successfully trialled and set up for all age groups which is also benefitting older villagers; in time, this might lead to other social events.

The Parish Council has set up a Playing Field Committee which will also address the refurbishment of the children's play area and the need to provide additional facilities on the playing field, including a multi use games area (MUGA).

In recognition of the fact that there appeared to be a lack of communication between the Parish Council and the community, the Parish Council has this year, for the first time, held an Open Evening for their Annual Parish Meeting. Local groups were invited to attend; refreshments and entertainment were provided. It is hoped that this format will provide a basis for greater understanding and encouragement to villagers to participate more in Parish business in the future.

These results have shown that with a little encouragement there is scope for villagers to interact and widen their local interests which can only be to the benefit of Salhouse, as a community.

Finally, following a Parish Plan meeting with Norfolk County Council, the rural footpath linking both ends of the village has already been cleared and is now on their regular maintenance schedule. There are also plans to upgrade the surface to make it usable in all weathers. The dangers to pedestrians at the Station Road railway bridge are also being addressed in a feasibility study and a request to conduct a footway assessment of Thieves Lane has also been initiated.

LOCAL ISSUES WHICH MIGHT AFFECT SALHOUSE IN THE FUTURE

The need to reinforce and to defend village status has never been more important with Government policy highlighting the probability of major development NE of Norwich. With the level of new housing planned for the region and with the Northern Distributor Route (NDR) being proposed to run just west of Rackheath, it would seem inevitable that the potential for much of the new development will be adjacent to the Route.

Question: If new houses had to be built in Salhouse where would you prefer to see them?

Answer: Scroby Sands!
The debate has commenced on Unitary Status for Norwich and the Boundary Commission is embarking on the process of examining the local government tiers in Norfolk. Salhouse, together with other Norfolk villages, is facing an uncertain future; Norwich City Council has already proposed extending its boundary to include the neighbouring parish of Rackheath.

Unless the village of Salhouse appreciates the reality of this situation, the prospects of green space being eaten up and the village being drawn closer to Rackheath and ultimately the City, are all too real. All those rural aspects, which the community of Salhouse values highly could be rapidly diluted.

THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH PLAN

A Parish Plan is a living document and should be reviewed bi-annually to take account of the changing needs of the village, of projects that have been instigated and changes imposed by external bodies.

The way ahead, through the Action Plan, will involve not only local government but more importantly action groups comprising volunteers. The latter will be instrumental in taking the Parish Plan forward and continuing to formulate a greater community spirit by initiating more activities and by actively fundraising to underpin the relevant projects.

Salhouse Village Location