

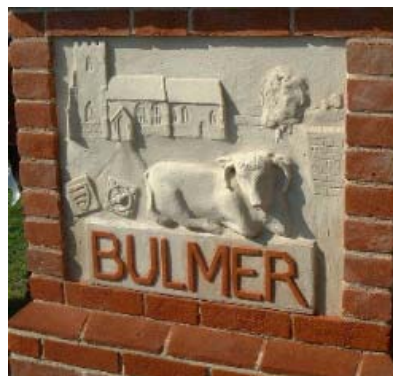
# THE BULMER APPRAISAL



## FIRST REPORT JULY 2003

This report analyses the results of the village appraisal carried out in July 2002. It consists of the following sections:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| A) Introduction  | Page 2 |
| B) Description of Bulmer                               | Page 2 |
| C) The village involvement<br>in the appraisal process | Page 3 |
| D) Summary Reports of the<br>aspects appraised         | Page 4 |



## ***A) INTRODUCTION***

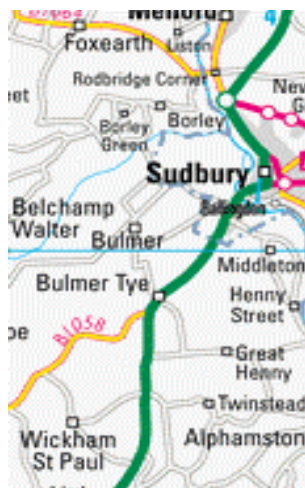
During the summer of 2001, at the instigation of the Parish Council, soundings were made at an event held at the Village Hall. As a result an open meeting was held in September 2001 to form a steering group to undertake the management of the village appraisal. After the initial meetings of the steering group various sub-committees were set up to draft the questions to be included in a village appraisal questionnaire. After several meetings, the form of the questionnaire was finally concluded and printed. During July 2002 volunteers delivered the appraisal questionnaire to every home in Bulmer, with a request that all occupants complete it. Collection of the questionnaires took place during late July and early August 2002, after which the data obtained was entered on to a computer for future use.



It is intended that this report should be available not only for those within the village who may be interested, but also for public bodies such as Essex County Council, Braintree District Council, the Police and Fire authorities, DEFRA and the local health authority.

*This is only a brief report of the mass of information produced by the questionnaires. Further details can be made available on request through the steering group.*

## ***B) DESCRIPTION OF VILLAGE***



Bulmer is a north-Essex village lying on the western side of the Stour Valley, some two miles from the market town of Sudbury, Suffolk. The village lies within the district of Braintree and the parliamentary constituency of Saffron Walden. It lies within the Eastern Region European parliamentary constituency. The main artery through the village is the A131 leading from Braintree to Sudbury and on to Bury St Edmunds via A134. To the north lies the parish of Borley, to the west that of Gestingthorpe and to the south those of Little and Great Henny, Twinstead and Wickham St Paul. To the east the parish boundary is the county boundary where it abuts on the county of Suffolk and the parish of Ballingdon, forming part of the administrative area of Sudbury Town Council. It has a population of around 600 souls according to the 1991 census.

The village itself comprises two settlements with several outlying hamlets. The settlement of Bulmer Tye straddles the A131 from its junctions with Church Road and Ryes Lane to its junction with Hedingham Road, the former B1058. Church Road leads northwards from the A131 at Bulmer Tye for about one mile to The Street where the main settlement of Bulmer is found. There are outlying settlements to the east along Sudbury Road at Batt Hall and Finch Hill, and to the west at Lower Houses and Upper Houses. Another outlying settlement is located on Hedingham Road approximately one mile from Bulmer Tye, adjacent to The Brickfields, where the Bulmer Brickworks manufacture bricks and tiles.

Bulmer has its own primary school, St Andrew's, linked to St Andrew's Parish Church, Bulmer, which lies midway between Bulmer Tye and Bulmer Street in Church Road. The school has a large catchment area, taking children from surrounding parishes as well as from Bulmer village itself and also from outside the county of Essex, owing to its strong reputation. For secondary education, children travel to Hedingham Comprehensive School in Sible Hedingham, to comprehensive schools in Suffolk at Great Cornard and Sudbury Upper Schools, or to grammar school education in Colchester, and Colchester Sixth Form College.



Bulmer Village Hall lies on Church Road (about one mile north of A131) and near the church. The hall, built shortly after the First World War and later extended and modernised, provides a centre for village activities such as keep fit, folk dancing, the WI, carpet bowls and a cross-stitch club. Until very recently, it has been used by the Friendship Club, providing a lunch meeting for elderly people on a regular basis. The hall is available for outside lettings and is in use most days of the week.

St Andrew's Church is one of five parish churches forming the Belchamp benefice. Unfortunately, there has been an interregnum since the retirement of the last vicar in November 2000. Nonetheless the parish church has maintained weekly services throughout this period.



The village is served by an hourly bus service on weekdays, linking the village with Sudbury, Halstead and Gosfield. There is no permanent police presence in the village, although mobile patrols pass through from time to time. The Essex Fire Service provides fire service cover with its fire stations at Halstead and Sible Hedingham, and appliances from the Suffolk Fire Brigade stations at Sudbury or Long Melford will also attend incidents. The East Anglian Ambulance Service from Sudbury and Halstead provides emergency ambulance cover. Most village residents are served by the doctors' surgeries in Sudbury, and hospital services are available from the West Suffolk Hospital at Bury St Edmunds or Colchester District General Hospital.

Employment within the village is provided by St. Andrews School the surrounding farms and Bulmer Brickworks. Other residents who are in employment travel to their places of work outside the village.

### ***C) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT***

This section describes the process that was conducted to ensure it involved as far as possible the whole of the community in carrying out the Appraisal.

#### **July 2001**

The process commenced in July 2001 when the Parish Council agreed it should be carried out, not by the Parish Council, but by a separate steering group made up of independent residents from the village as a whole.



Later that month at the village hall event 'Bulmer Past & Present' the launch took place and all visitors were invited to take part. As a percentage of the village population, 10% identified issues that they felt were either special or were problems within Bulmer.

#### **September 2001**

By means of posters and leaflets (which were delivered to every household), the entire village was invited to a meeting in September 2001. A steering group was formed to devise a questionnaire based upon the aspects of special interest and

concern, identified at the launch meeting.

#### **July 2002**

Over the winter, the steering group devised the questionnaire, which was then delivered to every household in the village in July 2002. Each completed and returned questionnaire had its number entered in a prize draw. Although the second prize was claimed, the first, even after being drawn twice, was never claimed.

A grant of £500 from the Rural Community Council of Essex has funded the prize draw, printing of the questionnaire cost of hiring the hall for meetings and administration; in addition to this the Parish Council has funded the printing of this First Report.

#### **September 2002**

The completed questionnaires were entered into a computer database and then analysed, question by question, to arrive at the conclusions summarised in this report.

Out of 249 questionnaires issued, 192 were returned (77%) completed by 388 residents aged 12 & over, which represents approximately 75% of all residents. This is a significant number when the results are analysed, although some questionnaires were returned only partially completed, and six were not completed at all.

There was a plan to include children under the age of 12 by involving the school in a separate questionnaire, but this did not materialise for a variety of reasons. However, many children did participate at the launch and provided several suggestions that were used in the subsequent questionnaire.

### **July 2003**

This first report is presented to the Bulmer Parish Council and residents of Bulmer at a meeting held in the Village Hall. The Committee involved in producing this snapshot of the Village, its first task finished now takes on a subsidiary, mainly supportive role. This is to enable both existing bodies such as the Parish Council or newly formed groups to initiate change. Such groups may wish for example, to approach gas companies for a gas supply or set up a neighbourhood watch by enlisting the help of the local Police or Council. The information in this document provides information for residents to identify and protect the best of living in Bulmer whilst ensuring that the village continues to meet their needs for the future.

## ***D) SUMMARY REPORTS OF THE SURVEY***

- 1. Environment**
- 2. Housing**
- 3. Safety and Security**
- 4. Leisure and Facilities**



*One of the survey questions was concerned with the use of Coe's Meadow (previously known as Church Pasture), the field in The Street recently secured by the Parish Council. The results have been analysed and reported on in detail to the Coe's Meadow Management Committee. A summary report has been delivered to each household in the village. Therefore the findings are not repeated here.*

### **1. Environment - questions of recycling, maintenance of verges and open spaces, the placing of more trees and hedges, a gas supply to the village and the possible uses of a community bus.**

Most respondents (368) use existing recycling facilities, notably those at the Fox and at the site in Sudbury. 200 people welcomed a possible alternative site at the Village Hall. If Braintree District Council introduced a separate house collection scheme, nearly all (325) would use it.

The majority (247) thought that maintenance of verges and open spaces should be improved and a noble 284 are prepared to take part in such maintenance.

There was moderate support for the idea of a community bus, which could be used for school runs, village hall or special events and outings, hospital appointments, private hirings and a shopping service.

About 200 people would like to see gas supplied to the village.

More trees and hedges were suggested in more than 25 sites, with most enthusiasm for Coe's Meadow.

### **2. Housing - the mix of house types, the length of time households have been established in Bulmer, the age groups of the inhabitants and attitudes to housing development.**



The majority of houses in Bulmer are detached (161); 70 are semi-detached, and 46 are terraced, among other types.

Over half of the households have been established in the village for more than 10 years; a quarter for 25 years or more. One household in 7 has moved within the village.

There are more than 100 young people in the village (18 years old or less) representing 22 percent of the population, but only one in 15 are young adults (19-30 years). Half the villagers are over 45 years old,

with those 70 or over accounting for one in 6.

Six out of 10 people felt there was no need for more housing developments in Bulmer. If there is to be new building, starter homes were most favoured; large family homes, homes for the disabled, sheltered homes and homes for single people were suggested by small numbers of respondents. The majority of those who favoured building of any type, including starter homes, were aged over 50. In all cases developments should be small. Church Road, Finch Hill, Smeetham Hall Lane and Hedingham Road were all mentioned as possible areas for new houses. *(It should be noted that most of these areas are either outside the village envelope or not owned by the Parish Council).*



### **3. Safety and Security - aspects of the roads and footways in and around Bulmer, the security of households and the well-being of all residents.**



More dropped kerbs, footpaths to link the school with the Street and the Tye, a reduction in pavement parking, and cycle ways were all suggested; there was no clear consensus on any of these ideas, however.

Whilst the current speed limits were welcomed, they should be more rigorously enforced, and additional ones were called for at Finch Hill, Batt Hall and on the A131 at Bulmer Tye. Also a lower limit in the vicinity of the school, and calming measures in the Street.

More winter road-gritting, summer verge-cutting to improve visibility and more street lighting were also suggested.

To some extent HGVs are seen as a safety risk in all parts of the village, and parked cars cause a danger in parts of the Street and near the school. Suggestions include encouraging residents to park off-road and others to have provision on a part of Coe's Meadow.



With regard to the local police service, most people wanted a pro-active police presence, either on foot or bike, and more information about local police telephone numbers for non-999 matters. Although the present police service was not rated highly, 80% of respondents felt their property was safe and secure. The 20% who felt unsafe suggested the official introduction of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme as well as a more overt police presence. Many were in favour of a 'Good Neighbour Scheme' to look after the more vulnerable (as well as each other's properties during holidays), but few seemed prepared to organise it.



### **4. Leisure - clubs, groups and facilities in the village, the extent of their use and how they might be improved or extended.**

Among the wide variety of organised activities suggested by responses to the questionnaire, footpath walks, local history, keep fit, a gardening club, sports for the young, and tennis gained the most enthusiastic responses; local history, footpath walks and keep-fit already exist.

Many people prefer to go outside the village to engage in a range of activities that is extraordinarily extensive, with no single activity being so popular that the village might sensibly accommodate that interest. Although Sudbury is the most frequently mentioned destination, people do travel as far as Chelmsford, Ipswich, Colchester and Bury St Edmunds for leisure activities.

Existing village facilities appear to be appreciated, particularly the post office, the Fox restaurant, the Parish notice board and the bus service. The mobile library and the phone box appear to be less used. Apart from the Fox, the use of all these facilities depends on geographical factors; for example: the Post Office is heavily used by those in The Street, but not much by those living in other areas of the village.



There were many suggestions for improvements to the facilities, including a wider range of beers at the Fox, the services of a small general store, possibly integrated with the Post Office, a bus service connecting with trains arriving & departing from Sudbury railway station, and more (and more accessible for use) public notice boards displaying post office opening hours and the bus timetable. There was support for the village website ([www.bulmeressex.co.uk](http://www.bulmeressex.co.uk)) and those who used it found it useful.



The most popular community events included car boot sales, open gardens, quiz nights, historical events, church flower festivals, summer fetes, school activities and village hall dances: the support for some of these is age-related.

Proposed new events included a beer festival, concerts, barbecues and a bonfire party.

There was interest in the following suggested new facilities: a sports field, a children's play area, a newspaper outlet (strong support), a coffee/tea shop and a shop for small items (also strong interest). Some would like to see a 'real' pub in the village again. There was minimal enthusiasm for a lunch/friendship club, photocopying site, computer access or banking facilities.

There was strong evidence of frequent use of the public footpaths and bridleways. Likewise, many suggestions were made for the use of Coe's Meadow, including the provision of a children's play area; these have already been publicised.

The survey looked carefully at attitudes to St Andrew's Church and how the community values it. This brought a very large response, many people regarding the church as a focal point in the Parish, architecturally, historically and socially, as well as for its spiritual significances. It appears that the church is most valued for worship and/or spiritual help by those over 70 or adults without children.



## **SUMMARY**

The Bulmer Appraisal Steering Group has carried out this appraisal; names are below and they have devoted a considerable amount of their spare time in designing the questionnaire and analysing the results. Many statistics and much more detailed information can be produced from a very extensive database which could be made available for researching a specific aspect in more detail. Please contact anyone of the group should you require more information.

R.Tomlinson (Chairman)	372858	M Crome	378155	K Cant	J Rowe
E Wood (Secretary)	373464	S Harris	371463	S Davies	A Skipper
K Mills (Treasurer)	269377	P & N Owen	269315	P Denayer	J Wright
A Burbidge	376947			C Massey	