



Holy Trinity Church



SEER GREEN VILLAGE PLAN

**Prepared by Seer Green Parish Council
March 2011**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The purpose of the Seer Green village plan is briefly to describe the history of, and outline the facilities available in Seer Green and having done so to set out a clear list of what the Parish council considers to be the most important priorities in order to achieve the vision set for the village in section 1.6. It is hoped that the pursuit of these priorities will improve the social, economic and environmental conditions in the village. As circumstances change, the plan may be amended so as always to be relevant in the prevailing climate.

Incidentally there may be many other persons, companies and organisations who may find the plan helpful, and these may include local residents, newcomers to the village, shopkeepers and other businesses in the village, local estate agents, other local councils and indeed anyone who may be interested in the village of Seer Green.

1. THE VILLAGE OF SEER GREEN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

1.1 History and background

The village and civil parish of Seer Green lie close by the historic village of Jordans and about one mile east of Beaconsfield.

There is a legend that King Arthur's 'seer' Merlin, rested here on his journeys to and from Camelot. Locals would consult with him about the future at the village well.

A more likely origin of the name 'seer' comes from a Norman map that shows a hamlet called 'Sere' (literally 'dry').

Edward, the Black Prince (1330 - 1376) hunted in the large forests that covered the area and built a hunting box close by. The box is now called Hall Place and is in private ownership - the oldest building in Seer Green and remarkably well preserved. The epithet 'Black prince', probably posthumous, referred to his black armour.

In the 1800s, the centre of the village was dominated by cherry orchards. Local people would harvest the fruit and take it by horse and cart to Covent Garden, the great London fruit and vegetable market. Seer Green became known as the 'Cherry Pie Village' and a Cherry Pie Fayre is held each year. Sadly, many of the orchards have disappeared to development but the careful observer can still find the odd tree. The Parish Council has a modest on-going programme of cherry tree planting.

The old village was sited around a village green now occupied by Holy Trinity Church (1846) a small parade of shops, a Post Office and two public houses serve local needs.

The principal source of employment in early years was based on agriculture. Some small industries such as chair bodging, tile and brick manufacture in nearby Potkilm Lane, and lace making were also in evidence. The Parish Church Hall, built in 1829 was at one time a school for lace making. Seer Green was renowned for its lace and the Seer Green pattern was the motif for many beautiful pieces of work.

The arrival of the railways in the early 1900s brought irrevocable change to the village with expansion of housing stock, halls and schools. Away from the busy London Metropolis but with easy access by train, property was and continues to be in demand. The availability of quality schools also continues to support demand.

1.2 2001 UK Census

Population	2267
For ages 16-74	40.6% in full time employment 11.2% in part time employment 13.6% self employed 1.3% unemployed 2.2% students with jobs 3.6% students without jobs 13.7% retired 9.9% looking after home or family 2.1% sick or disabled 1.8% economically inactive for other reasons 36.2% had a higher qualification or equivalent (National - 19.9%)

1.3 Environment

The village is enviably situated in Buckinghamshire and within 30 miles of London. It is also on the southern edge of the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within the Metropolitan Green Belt which ensures that additional development is minimal. It has retained the atmosphere of a typically affluent English village, but all this inevitably means that property prices are amongst the highest in England.

The village has retained its own individual identity and is distinct from its two larger neighbours, Beaconsfield and Chalfont St Giles. Many of its older properties such as Hall Barn, Pondstiles, the Parish Church Hall, the old Baptist Chapel, and Colliers add to its special character. It is surrounded by beautiful country on all sides. To the north is a large area of woodland known as Hodgemoor woods, to the west more woodlands before the road to Amersham is reached, to the south is the railway line and Seer Green & Jordans station with direct access to Marylebone station in central London (half an hour) which is surrounded by more woodlands, and Beaconsfield golf course, and to the east is a pleasant walk through fields to the neighbouring village of Jordans.

1.4 Housing Stock

There are approximately 900 residences in the village with no particular common style. In the centre of the village around the church, many of the houses are older Victorian cottages (linked, semi and detached), and nearby is a small ex council estate where most houses are now owned by a housing association. However a larger number of houses were built in the 1970s on the site of old cherry orchards and feature a variety of styles. This area is known as the Manor Farm Estate.

On the perimeter of the village are much larger houses, again both old and new (many sites feature recent rebuilds). To date the village does not have the large number of luxury apartment buildings now so prevalent in the two neighbouring towns of Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

1.5 Facilities and organisations

The village has two churches, Church of England and Baptist, a good primary school, a newsagent/post office and a small parade of shops catering for all basic needs (but no major supermarkets of which there are many within two miles in Beaconsfield). There are also two well maintained public houses, one of which has won numerous awards for its beer and food (South Bucks pub of the year recently).

There are two golf courses within a mile (Beaconsfield and Oaklands Park), facilities for other sports on the recreation ground, and as implied above beautiful country for walking or more strenuous exercise. There are two small woods within easy walking distance of the village, one, Long Grove wood owned by the Wildlife Trust, and the other, Green wood, owned by the Parish Council. It has a number of stables, and there is a caravan/camping site at Highclere farm which also offers bed and breakfast.

There are a large number of other local organisations (WI, scouts, brownies, yoga, bridge, gardening, and table tennis clubs, fuller details of which are available on the Parish council web site (see 2.6 below).



Shops in Orchard Road

1.6 A Vision for Seer Green

- A place where villagers can lead safe lives free of crime, anti social behaviour and irresponsible road users.
- A place that is attractive to the eye and where a preserved countryside provides a gentle and accessible environment.
- A place that supports small business and shops but retains the character of a 'home'village rather than a 'work place' village.
- A place where all sections of the community may access affordable housing within their means.
- A place that supports a diverse community of young and middle aged families and retirees in a healthy balance.
- A place where village and local children can attend for quality nursery and primary education.
- A place where there is reliable access to infrastructure supporting basic utilities, educational, medical and transportation needs.
- A place that protects its footpaths, Green Belt, woods, natural habitats and building heritage.

2. SEER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

2.1 The lowest Tier of Local Government

A parish council is the lowest tier of local Government in England and their existence is to be found in the country's 1000 years of history. There is a constitution and Code of Practice and council members are elected volunteers for a period of four years.

Whilst required to run its affairs legally and openly they have in fact little power in law to influence the decisions of higher authorities or intervene in local disputes.

For some years Seer Green has had a robust and dedicated Parish Council supported by a very active and experienced Parish Clerk.

2.2 Finance

The Parish Council works within limited financial means. Income is derived largely from the precept (collected through Council Taxes), with additional income raised through letting of the Pavilion, rental of Allotments and burial fees.

Expenditure is largely committed to maintenance of the village environment, certain services and the management of properties. Income levels are set to typically generate a small surplus to enable periodic reinvestment in more major capital projects.

2.3 Property

The Parish Council is custodian of the following land and properties:

- Cemetery
- Green Meadow, (a green space in the village with children's play areas)
- Green Wood, (a small and peaceful wood near the centre of the village)
- Jubilee Walk, (a small open space with flowerbeds, cherry trees, leading to the most recent large housing area)
- Recreation Ground, (a ground where football, cricket, and other recreations occur)
- Allotments (adjacent to the recreation ground)
- Pavilion (a building on the recreation ground which also houses a Montessori school)
- Street Lighting

Access to, and the public use of these properties is governed by covenants and bylaws.



Allotments at the Recreation Ground



Jubilee Walk



Green Meadow



Cemetery



Entrance to Green Wood

2.4 Footpaths

The council works to ensure all footpaths within its boundary, its grounds and properties are clean, tidy and safe.



Footpath from Bottom Lane towards Beaconsfield

2.5 Jubilee Hall

The Parish Council is now the sole trustee for the Seer Green Jubilee Hall Charity and provides the Chair and membership of the Hall's Management Committee. The hall is used by the local primary school during term daytime, but is available for hire to sporting clubs and private functions at other times.



Jubilee Hall

2.6 Planning

The Parish Council has no authority with regards to planning decisions. That is the responsibility of Chiltern District Council (CDC). CDC's Planning Policy documents, informed by national legislation and guidance, govern the decisions made on planning applications in Seer Green. Central Government planning reforms mean that the Chiltern District **Local Plan** (LP) will gradually be replaced by the **Local Development Framework** (LDF).

The LDF establishes policies for new development in the District, including provision for small amounts of additional housing in Seer Green (CS2). Other LDF policies key to our village include those impacting on: sustainable development (CS4); affordable housing units (CS8, CS9); retention of employment land (CS16); supporting rural economy (CS19); building design (CS20); maintenance of exiting character (CS21); Green Belt boundaries (CS23); etc.

A number of LP policies have been retained by CDC. The policies most applicable to developments in Seer Green are those relating to: general development criteria (GC1-14); Green Belt (GB1-30); built-up areas outside of the Green Belt (H1-22); established residential areas of special character – Long Grove, Bottom Lane and Long Bottom Lane, and around the centre of the village (H4); and various policies relating to Transport (TR1-16) and Recreation (R2-16)

The parish council reviews all proposed applications and where necessary provides an independent opinion to CDC. We will typically assess applications against the relevant policies, local knowledge and potential impact, particularly where a proposal is likely to impact on the broader environment and character of a locality. CDC does not always agree with us but our views are taken into account in their assessment. Residents often write to us, or attend our council public session, to make representations on planning issues they feel strongly about. We are always keen to hear residents' views and will take them into account when considering our opinion.

The Parish Council has no decision-making authority with regards to planning. That is the responsibility of Chiltern District Council (CDC.) However the parish council reviews all proposed applications and where necessary gives an opinion to CDC. They do not always agree with us but our views are taken into account in their assessment.

Residents often write to us, or attend our council public session, to make representations on planning issues they feel strongly about. We are always keen to hear residents' views and will take them into account when considering our opinion.

2.7 Communication

Details of councillors' residential and email addresses and telephone numbers may be found on the notice board in the church yard. Details may always be obtained from our Parish Clerk on 01494 874233, and if a message has to be left, she will always return your call.

The notice board is also the place to look for minutes of recent meetings, planning applications and relevant news, and all this is also available on the parish council website, www.seergreenparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Twice a year a newsletter is distributed to all houses within the village and covers all recent news from the council. This is distributed by the councillors themselves and at no cost to the parish.

Finally, residents are very welcome to attend parish council meetings which are held on the first Wednesday of every month (apart from August) to see what goes on or raise any particular concerns. You can do this during the first 15 minutes, the open session.

3. WHAT THE PARISH COUNCIL CONSIDERS TO BE IMPORTANT

Framework for decision making:

The Parish Council prioritises its decisions and therefore investment and influencing activities through a number of policy documents. These are influenced by the Council's knowledge of the Parish and the community; by individual Councillor's skills and experience; by understanding of the local government process and practices; by consultation with the community; and by debate within the Council meetings.

These include:

1. Village Plan – this document which provides a high level description of what is considered important within the Parish and community
2. Long Term Planning – a rolling four year view of potential larger capital investment projects
3. Risk Assessment – a rolling annual view of risks, their potential consequences, likelihood, and the control measures in place
4. Annual budget setting – to estimate income and expenditure and ensure phasing to manage within the Council's means

In the statements below, 'monitor' means that we keep an eye on an area, 'influence' means we may be able to have a direct say but do not spend our own money, and 'invest' means we may directly spend council funds on attaining the objective.

3.1 Travel and Transport

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Encourage the good repair and maintenance of bridleways and pavements for pedestrians and those with disabilities	√	√	
Encourage the safe condition of roads leading to the village and within its boundaries	√	√	
Encourage the provision of adequate public transport to serve the needs of village	√	√	
Implement practical measures to control/reduce the speed of vehicle traffic within the village and on adjacent roadways	√	√	
Maintain adequate street lighting	√		√
Encourage the education of children and young persons in road safety		√	
Ensure all footpaths are efficiently managed and maintained to a high, usable standard	√		√



Lamb's Newsagent and Post Office in Chalfont Road

3.2 Local Environment and Countryside

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Minimise any adverse impact of Parish Council activities on the environment	√		√
Maintain and preserve woods, hedgerows, sports/recreation ground, footpaths, cemetery and flora and fauna	√	√	√
Preserve the Green Belt	√	√	
Encourage the preservation of private property (buildings and land) in accordance with the character of a Chiltern village	√	√	
Preserve and where practical sympathetically extend the cherry stock within the village	√		√
Reduce the incidence and impact of dog/horse fouling in public places	√	√	√
Reduce the incidence and impact of litter in public places	√	√	√
Improve and enhance children and youth play and recreational facilities and maintain them, so far as is reasonably practicable, in a safe condition	√		√
Preserve existing open spaces within the village boundaries	√	√	
Encourage the development of affordable homes if land s available	√	√	
Review the impacts of all planned developments in the village and represent the general views and wishes of village residents on planning applications and proposals	√	√	



Bluebells in Green Wood



Jolly Cricketers Public House

3.3 Village Services

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Encourage support for village retail and business activities	√	√	
Encourage support for religious, educational, recreational, community and interest groups	√	√	
Encourage the use of village public meeting facilities	√	√	
Expand the collection facilities for re-cycling waste materials	√	√	

3.4 Sports, Social and Voluntary Services

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Encourage support for organised sport and social activities	√	√	
Maintain the recreation ground	√	√	√
Sponsor, if needed, the Youth Club	√		√
Support other community groups as required from time to time	√		√



Recreation Ground Car Park and Pavilion

3.5 Information and Communication

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Publish a Village newsletter at least twice a year and maintain working relationships with local newspapers and village publications	√	√	√
Maintain the Parish Council web site	√		√
Represent the interests of Seer Green residents in relevant local and regional forums		√	
Hold Parish Council meetings on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) and encourage public participation. Hold special Parish Council meetings from time to time as required			√

3.6 Security

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Encourage the education of villagers in securing their property and possessions		√	
Work closely with the Police to reduce/eliminate crime	√	√	
Support Neighborhood Watch Schemes		√	

3.7 General

	Monitor	Influence	Invest
Provide adequate access to Parish Council properties and spaces for those with mobility difficulties	√		√
Promote peaceful village life and a sense of community	√	√	
Promote progressive projects within the village that help deliver these intentions	√	√	
Promote pride in our village by entering the Best Kept Village competition annually	√	√	

4. Conclusions

The Parish Council hopes that the above has given you a brief picture of our village of which we are justifiably proud, and of our hopes and aspirations for keeping it this way and even improving it. If there is any other information you require do not hesitate to contact our Parish Clerk by email (clerk@seergreenparishcouncil.gov.uk) or telephone on 01494 874233.