



Parish Plan 2007

Cofton Hackett Parish Plan

Aim

The Cofton Hackett plan aims to identify areas and activities which influence and have an impact on the lives and well being of residents within Cofton Hackett.

Layout of the Parish Plan

This plan is intended to cover a time period of 10 years and is structured to include the history and development of the village up to the present time. It includes a map of the area and statements on the key areas that impact on Cofton within this period.

Use of the Parish Plan

The plan will assist Government agencies, County and District Councils to understand and appreciate the needs of Cofton Hackett residents. It will also guide the Parish Council in the running of Cofton Hackett during the next 10 years.

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1. Background & History

Introduction

Cofton Hackett Parish, in North Worcestershire, lies to the south of Birmingham and has common boundaries with Birmingham in the north, Lickey in the West with Barnt Green and Hopwood lying to the South and South East.

The Parish has a population of approximately 2,100 and has three natural centres :-

1. The old tram terminus with Fentons the newsagents and a number of food shops,
2. Parsonage Drive with the post office,
3. The corner of Rose Hill and the Barnt Green Road, where there is the Library and Village Hall.

The true centre in the 1900's was behind the public house 'The Oak Tree' on Groveley Lane, and was called Cofton Green.

A large proportion of residents travel into the Birmingham area, for employment. The majority of children attend Lickey Primary School and then move onto Waseley Hills High School before entering university or employment within the area. New developments have been sparse over the last 50 years with Cofton Lake Road, Lickey Coppice and infill in Ten Ashes Lane and the Barnt Green Road. Plus major developments at the old Rover site when the foundry was constructed together with the JIT (Cofton Centre) warehouse on the North side of the railway, both developments taking up green field site areas.

History

The most surprising thing about the ancient village of Cofton Hackett - for it is a very ancient village appearing in written records three hundred years before the Domesday Book - is there is no village in the generally accepted sense of the word. There is no high street or village green lined by a church, shops, post office, one or more public houses, and a substantial number of older dwellings - as there is, for example, at Alvechurch. There is a church and a manor house (Cofton Hall) down a long cul-de-sac, but the through roads of the village are almost entirely lined with private houses built since the First World War. There was no public house, and most of the few shops are in an area on the northern edge of the village which was transferred from Kings Norton to Cofton Hackett only in 1911.

The oldest parts of Cofton are the magnificent late 14th century Cofton Hall, with its great open-timbered roof, and the cellars. The rest of the medieval buildings were destroyed by fire towards the end of the Civil War (1642-45). King Charles I spent the night of 14th May 1645 at Cofton Hall as guest of his devoted supporter Thomas Jolliffe. Before marching on towards Chester on the 15th, the Royalists set fire to Cofton Hall to prevent it falling, after their departure, into the hands of the Parliamentarians. The existing plain three-storied house was built in the early 19th century. What buildings occupied the site between 1645 and the erection of the present house is not known.

The main building is a three-storied, six-bay house from the early nineteenth century, but there is a west wing with ashlar facing that conceals a very fine fourteenth century hammer beamed hall. Some irregular-shaped outbuildings are of an uncertain date. Outside the line of the present buildings are traces of older foundations. It seems reasonable to suppose that this has always been the site of Cofton Hackett's former manor houses.

St Michael's Church



St Michael's Church is in Cofton Church Lane. There may well have been a church on this site since the 12th century, as a Papal Bull of 1182 mentions a "chapel" at Cofton. The present building dates back to the 14th century. It was probably built in 1330 by Robert de Leycester as a chapel for the Manor House, Cofton Hall, now known as Cornerstones.

The Cofton Hackett which exists today came into being as a result of four events: the opening of the Austin motor works at Longbridge in 1905; the extension of the area of the City of Birmingham to the northern boundary of Cofton Hackett in 1911, and the simultaneous transfer to Cofton of part of Rednal; the break up of the Earl of Plymouth's estate by auction in 1919; and the extension of the Birmingham trams to Rednal in 1924. These events carried Cofton very rapidly from the age of the horse and cart to that of the motor car and bus, and from a community depending chiefly on farming to a delightful dormitory for people nearly all of whom travel into Birmingham to work.

What remained constant throughout these changes, a delight to those who live in Cofton and a magnet to those who do not, was the spacious wooded area of the Lickey Hills. This was preserved as a public open space between 1887 and 1933 by the generosity of a number of public-spirited persons - T Grosvenor Lee, Lord Windsor, and several members of the Cadbury family. In 1919 it was stated that as many as 20,000 visitors to the hills had been counted on a Bank Holiday. Providing refreshments for this mass of people was an important source of employment and income in the Rednal area of Cofton Hackett, where there were four public houses and two large purpose built tea rooms (the Chalet and Bilberry Hill). Wider ownership of cars has made an outing to the Lickey Hills far too tame an expedition. The crowds have gone further a field, and the public houses and tea rooms have been demolished or converted to other purposes.

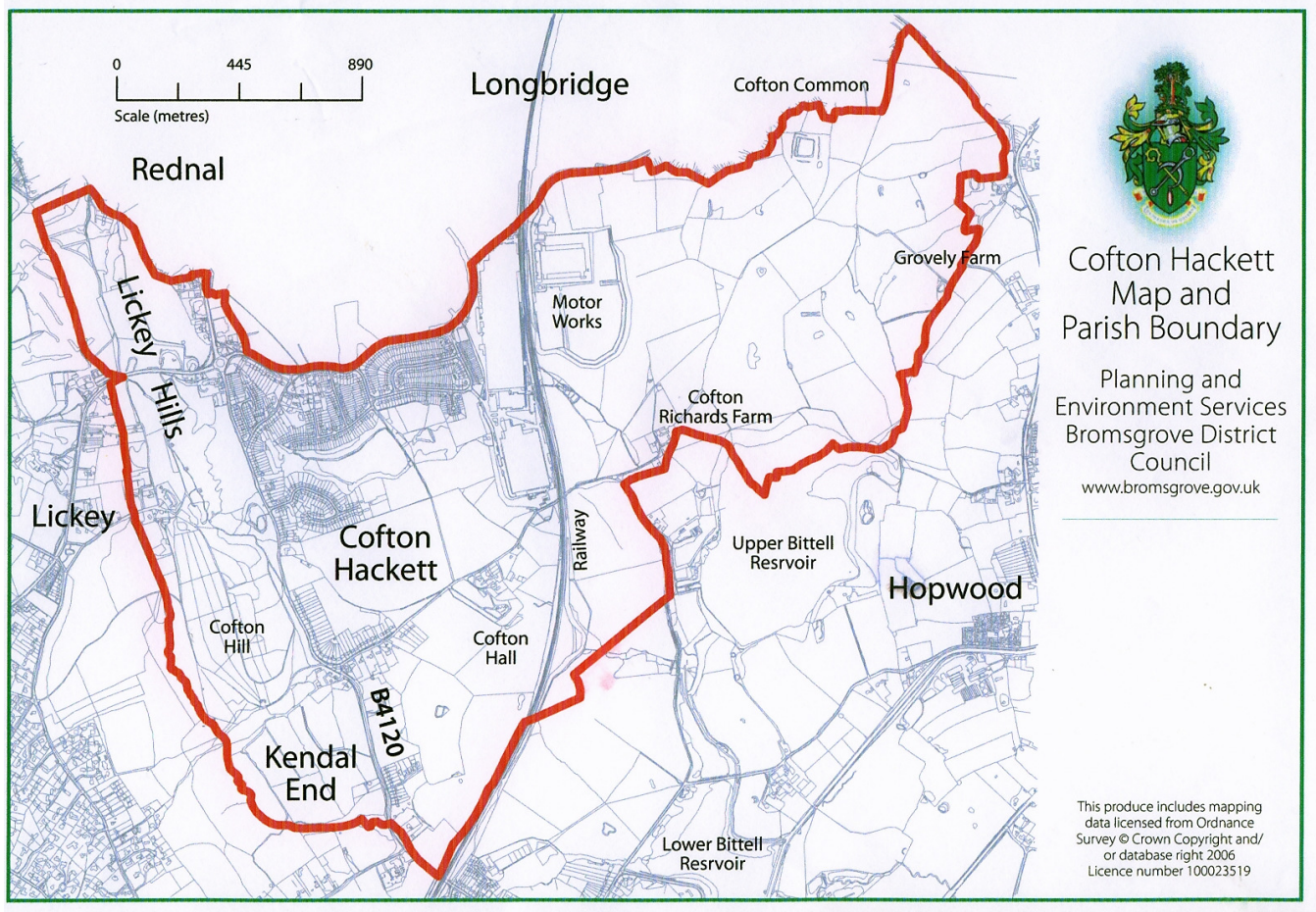
The house building which carried the population of Cofton Hackett from 211 in 1901 to 500 in 1931 and 5,209 in 1961 started with the demand for workers by the Austin factory and really got under way when the break-up of the Plymouth estate in 1919 released much previously agricultural land for building.

Ease of travel into Birmingham also played an important part - from 1913 to 1924 by bus from Rednal to the tram terminus in Selly Oak, after 1924 by tram right through to Navigation Street. Increasing motor traffic, first buses carrying workers to and from the Austin works and later private cars, caused the narrow, twisting, and hilly lanes of the parish to be widened and straightened into the roads which exist today. The most striking of these developments was the replacement of the age - old crossroads at the bottom of Rose Hill by the present roundabout, constructed on lower ground over the bed of the River Arrow (which is carried under the roundabout in a culvert).

Between the wars most of the frontages of existing roads were built up ("ribbon development", characteristic of this period of inadequate planning controls). The area between Groveley Lane and Cofton Reservoir was completely built up, with a new road system. Plans were in existence for similar development between Cofton Reservoir and Cofton Church Lane, but these were interrupted by the outbreak of war in 1939 after only Reservoir Road and Cofton Lake Road had been laid out. Stricter planning control introduced in 1947 has so far prevented any extension to the built up area in this direction.

These few pages of history will perhaps remind the present inhabitants of Cofton Hackett of the ancient heritage of which we are heirs and of the long and tortuous ways which have brought the parish from the Romans and Anglo-Saxons to the jet, atomic, and space travel present. That heritage is still rural and delightful, but it lies under constant threat of urbanisation and vandalism. Its best protection is an observant and active public opinion, always ready to keep the Parish Council informed and to support the Council's efforts to preserve the environment unspoiled.

2. Map of the Parish



3. Economic Aspects

The plan sets out two objectives relating to the economic aspects of Cofton Hackett, these are as follows:

- i. To ensure decisions taken on economic aspects within Cofton Hackett will not impinge on our present green belt areas and will use the already designated brown field sites.
- ii. To support mixed development of industrial, green areas and housing within the present brown field site of MG Rover, this borders onto Groveley Lane and Parsonage Drive.

To meet these objectives the Parish Council has outlined the following areas:

❖ Business

a) **The present MG Rover site** has been purchased by St Modwen and discussions during 2006 have taken place between residents, County, District and Parish Councils, West Midlands Development Agency and Central Government officials on suitable development plans for the site. **See Appendix 1.**

The site in question is divided by a main railway line; the northern area consists of a modern JIT warehouse (The Cofton Centre), a large free standing tarmac and concreted area and a smaller adjacent building. The southern area, known as East Works, will be levelled and ready for development within the next 12 months.

It is important to appreciate the history of this site which has been positive towards the economy of the area but very poor on responding to residents concerns.

In the 1940's aircraft were constructed on the site and shipped across the main road of Groveley Lane for completion in the flight shed and subsequent testing on the adjacent airfield.

Developments have continued at a pace since the 40's and have brought with them plenty of controversy and resident objections but the overriding cry of 'economic necessity' has always ruled the day, often to the overall disadvantage of residents.

These have included:

- Concern has been expressed by residents about local flooding.
- Access from the car park on the East Works site into Parsonage Drive has created traffic hazards, pollution and extensive damage to footpaths and road surfaces in the area.
- Numerous environmental issues, in particular when the foundry was in operation, noise, fumes, 24 hour lighting and excessive heavy goods movements within the extended site.

Very few of these issues were resolved to the satisfaction of residents.

Restrictions placed on any development approvals are very difficult to enforce, hence the need to get it 'RIGHT FIRST TIME'.

Additional comments made by residents at the meeting with St Modwen, Advantage West Midlands and the District Council, together with local meetings with Parish Councillors, have drawn the following responses:

- i. No retail park or warehousing type activities on the East Works site. Any warehousing should be restricted to the Cofton Centre site, (JIT.)
- ii. No site access from Parsonage Drive and Cofton Church Lane into or off the site.
- iii. Use to be made of access points already in position on Groveley Lane, towards the Cofton Centre (JIT) warehouse.
- iv. A mixture of affordable and other types of residential housing plus the maximum use of green open spaces.
- v. The impact of noise, pollution, traffic flows and litter to be effectively managed.
- vi. Any developments on the Cofton Centre (JIT) site to be subjected to flood controls that will work and can be implemented.

b) **Potential developments on Lickey Road** will inevitably place more strain on traffic flows and other critical services, with particular reference to sewerage and water flows. The present system is already under pressure and has problems coping, evidence of which can be seen with regular flooding around Rose Hill Island and land adjacent to Cofton Green. Any intended development will need to make clear how these areas will be managed.

❖ Services

Ensure service provision is adequate within any development, which is likely to include schools, bus services, car parking and general services already provided by the District Council.

- ii. Ensure any new services 'fit' into the environs of Cofton Hackett.
- iii. Ensure the Parish Council is involved in a comprehensive review of the existing and expanding services required, e.g. sewerage, drainage, power.

❖ Transport

- i. Cofton Hackett is reasonably well served by road networks, rail links and bus routes, which give access to the main destinations of Birmingham, Bromsgrove and Redditch. This mixed mode of transport services needs to be supported by maintaining contacts with the appropriate rail, road and bus operators and agencies.
- ii. Question how proposed developments and changes to the travel to work patterns will impact on traffic densities within the Cofton road systems. Any issues arising will be taken up with the Highways Authority.
- iii. With the potential increase in population, and the upgrading of the rail line facility at Longbridge, it will be an aim of the Parish Council to work towards a link bus / ring and ride operation in Cofton.

❖ Employment & Training

These areas will be influenced and controlled by outside bodies and agencies. Appropriate reference will be made to these organisations as and when they involve Cofton Hackett residents.

❖ Finance

The Parish Council sees its role as managing and supporting the Parish Plan. For the objectives of this plan to be carried out we will need a vibrant Parish Council who will be supported by the residents and partly funded by the Parish Precept (this Precept already funds the wide range of activities presently carried out by the Parish Council).

4. Environmental Features

The environment is clearly an important aspect and in this regard the Plan sets out the following objective.

To promote an appropriate balance between what is required and what is needed to maintain a safe environment with community involvement across all ages within Cofton Hackett.

To meet this objective the Parish Council has outlined the following:

❖ Traffic

Traffic issues can be best served by the Highways Authority and the Highways Agency, consulting with the Parish Council on any traffic or highways initiatives likely to impact on the Parish. The Parish Council will liaise with the Highways Authority on the following:

- Those parts of the M42 & M5 motorways which run adjacent to the Cofton Hackett boundaries.
- Proposed developments on the present MG Rover site.

Critical areas will always include the utility, weight and speed restrictions on the key roads of Groveley Lane, Barnt Green Road, Kendal End Road, parts of Rose Hill and Lickey Road. In addition, attention will be drawn to ‘rat runs’, which can develop, on minor roads.

❖ **Pollution**

The Parish Council will seek the co-operation of Bromsgrove District Council’s environmental health department on a range of pollution issues which affect the area due to increasing land use demands. These include:

- Air quality/noise pollution.
- Fumes, smoke and in particular bonfire smoke.
- Transmission and receiving masts as they impact on residents health.
- Building structures, which pollute the skyline (see height of present buildings on Lickey Road).
- Abandoned vehicles.

The Parish Council will seek a three yearly review carried out with the District Council, to identify and take actions against any excesses within these areas.

❖ **Litter**

The Parish Council will seek to control all forms of litter, graffiti and dog mess by supplying litter bins at appropriate locations and employ a litter picker within the parish area.

Also local authority services will be employed as required to support and control excesses in these areas.

❖ **Footpaths**

The Parish Council will establish a footpath map and keep these areas clear of undergrowth and accessible to walkers. A footpath warden will be appointed and this person will report back to the Parish Council on a six monthly timetable.

The community will be encouraged to become involved in the monitoring of footpaths and the preservation of hedgerows in the areas of:

- North Worcestershire Way
- The Stocken
- Cofton Church Lane
- Kendal End Road

The Parish Council will organise a ‘Beating the Bounds’ event in Cofton every two years, this will also serve as an additional monitoring mechanism within the area.

❖ **Green Areas**

The Parish Council will establish a policy for verges, green areas, traffic islands etc, which will enhance the appearance and maintain these areas in a tidy condition. Acceptable standards will be agreed and the Parish Council will seek to maintain these within the budget.

❖ Street Lighting

Responsibility for the arterial roads of Groveley Lane, Barnt Green Road, Kendal End Road and those parts of Rose Hill and Lickey Road which fall within Cofton Hackett, lie with Worcester County Council. Lighting on the minor roads is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Contracts are already in place to manage parish street lighting. Regular night checks are carried out and repairs dealt with swiftly. The Parish Council will seek to ensure the most cost effective contracts are agreed and maintained.

❖ Waterways

View across Cofton Reservoir



The Parish Council will seek to ensure good water standards along the route of the River Arrow. Also included are Cofton Reservoir and Upper Bittell Reservoir. NOTE: Bittell Reservoir sits within the parish and is a water dependent site of national importance for various bird species.

❖ Neighbourhood Watch

The recently reformed neighbourhood watch group has been a great success for the local community and will be supported by the Parish

Council. The following will continue to be monitored:

- **Boundary Issues:** There is concern in this area on gaining adequate police response to crimes recorded on the borders of Birmingham and Bromsgrove. To improve this issue, continuous contact will be necessary between the chief inspectors of both West Midlands and West Mercia forces.
- **Police Support:** It is the intention of the Parish Council to raise the profile of Cofton Hackett and ensure we receive a comparable service to other areas within the County and to continue to develop the support from both West Midlands and West Mercia Police, under their relevant areas of responsibility.

5. Development Criteria

The Parish Council will seek to work closely with Bromsgrove District Council's planning and development objectives, which are designed to ensure 'The long term protection of Cofton Hackett and its green belt areas'.

It should be noted, present central government policies (2005) give priority rating to developments which enhance economic activities within an area (employment, business developments and affordable housing). In practical terms this means Parish Plans of this nature must be drafted in a form which will relate to and complement planning policies contained in the West Midlands Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Framework for the Bromsgrove District.

In order to withstand the pressures imposed by developers seeking to take advantage of economic opportunities and politically driven directives, it is vital the Parish Council works closely with all resident groups, District and County Council representatives and other interested parties within Cofton Hackett.

❖ Land Development

We should be seeking to support any developments which will maintain the existing qualities and character of Cofton Hackett. Therefore, any private, residential, commercial, industrial or recreational developments will be evaluated in the first instance by the Parish Council to ensure acceptable densities, adequate facilities and appropriate support services are in place prior to any approval.

Due to time restraints on the District Council for making decisions on planning applications, being 8 weeks from receipt, a speedy response from all interested parties is necessary. The Parish Council will

attempt to keep all residents up to date with impending developments through the notice boards in Parsonage Drive and Barnt Green Road, plus the Parish Magazine.

❖ Amenities

At present, these hang by a thread and the Parish Council will be aiming to at least maintain the present levels of service and, where possible, improve provision. These include:

Myhill Field Play Area



- Post Office Facilities.
- Newsagents and General Stores.
- Take Away Food Outlets.
- Myhill Field Play Area.
- Village Hall.
- Library.

❖ Employment

Within Cofton Hackett there is potentially a large area on the existing MG Rover site which at some stage will be developed for industrial, commercial and/or residential purposes. The Parish Council will be supporting any plans which will blend into and maintain the existing rural/urban character of the area. A balance would be sought between employment needs, housing provision and open spaces.

❖ Education

Educational provision is presently provided by Worcester County Council, with higher education at universities and colleges funded by Central Government. The Parish Council will be supporting all these agencies and encourage any pre-school activities currently taking place in Cofton Hackett.

Other than general support, there is very little influence which a Parish Council can exert in these areas of state funded education.

6. Service Requirements

Any plan will need to address the provision of Services, therefore the Parish Council will seek to provide, through a variety of agencies, levels of support to residents which will enhance and develop their life styles. It is acceptable for many of these services to be provided by outside bodies, which use a variety of measures when determining service levels. The Parish Council will aim to engage in dialogue with these bodies to ensure residents receive the best possible service, and are economically and environmentally sound.

The Parish Council will seek to represent the diverse population and in particular to focus on:

- i. Indoor activities such as dancing, exercise facilities, instructional sports and the provision of social events.
- ii. Residents needs and their access to a range of outdoor facilities such as organised walks, horse riding, cross country running, fishing (permit required) etc, which will use our unique environment.
- iii. Children's needs for safe play areas with the appropriate equipment and organised social events will be provided via the Myhill Field and Village Hall, with possible support towards a Youth Club, Brownies and provision for Scouting activities.
- iv. Pre-school children's activities and their requirement for playgroups and pre-school activities.
- v. Supporting the existing transport modes of rail, road, bus and taxi which already exist in the Parish and are used for the benefit of all age groups, in particular school children, OAP's and those adults who choose these services rather than motor vehicles. These forms of transport are essential in ensuring we continue to maintain healthy and viable links to the towns and cities in our area, namely Bromsgrove, Redditch, Worcester and Birmingham.
- vi. Supporting the Village Hall, this is considered to be an important facility and a focal point for the wide range of activities currently taking place in the Parish. It is the intention of the Parish Council to continue in their support of the Village Hall Committee and thus ensure this facility continues to develop with its present role of providing indoor sporting facilities, Parish Council and Public Meetings, pre-school play areas, tea dances, OAP Christmas parties and a number of society meetings.
- vii. Supporting places of worship within the Parish, the Anglican Church dating back to the Domesday Book and the Mission Church to 1920. They both act to support and bring together a community of different ages and religious persuasions.
- viii. Ensuring the Parish continues to retain a library service which not only services Cofton Hackett but also the adjacent areas of Lickey, Barnt Green and Rednal.

APPENDIX 1

MG Rover Site, relating to Cofton Hackett

Discussions have taken place between Parish Councillors, residents and the site owners, St Modwen.

The Parish Council, with the Parish Plan in mind, has set out its preferred outline options below:

- No development on Cofton Park or around its boundary.
- Variety of homes to be built on the East works site, which need to compliment and blend with the aesthetics of the existing residential area.
- No industrial, warehousing or retail units on the East Works site.
- No access to the East Works site from Parsonage Drive and Cofton Church Lane.
- A new village centre developed and maintained by the owners of the site (St Modwen). Suggested buildings, village hall, library, health centre, sports hall and parking area.
- The Parish Council's preferred location for the new centre would be at the now entrance to MG Rover (Parsonage Drive/Groveley Lane), behind the Focus Store, opposite Cofton Park.
- When considering the government requirement for green areas where new developments are concerned, the Parish Council feel attention should be drawn to Cofton Park/Common in its entirety. In addition, the Lickey Hills should be considered as going a long way to meeting this goal.
- On the site of the existing JIT warehouse (The Cofton Centre), the Parish Council would have no objection to the development of further warehousing, provided this would be carried out on the existing brown field area and with no further use of green belt land.

Site Owners, St Modwen:

1. Have to consult with residents and interested bodies before submitting any plans.
2. They have to submit several proposals for discussion to the planning committees.

This process will be carried out before the end of 2007.