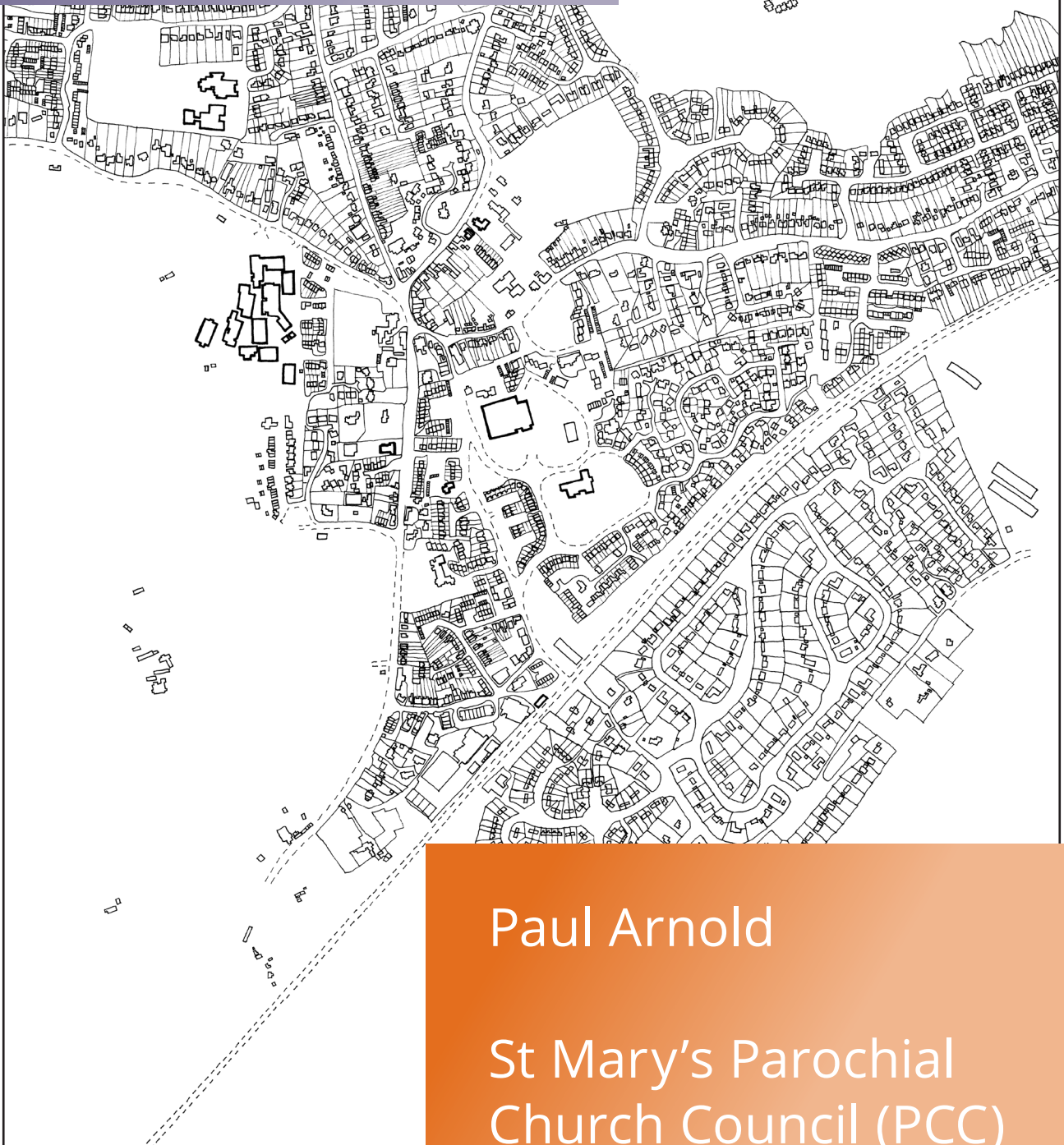


Bramshott & Liphook
Neighbourhood Plan

Position Statement

November 2017



Paul Arnold

St Mary's Parochial
Church Council (PCC)

ST MARY'S BRAMSHOTT AND LIPHOOK PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

PRESENTATION TO THE BRAMSHOTT AND LIPHOOK NDP DESIGN FORUM 1ST NOVEMBER 2017

1 Introduction

This presentation has been prepared on behalf of St Mary's Bramshott and Liphook Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC is a charitable body corporate and its composition is regulated by the Church Representation Rules. Its function is to further and promote in the parish the whole mission of the Church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. As part of this the PCC provides a benefit to the public by:

- providing facilities for public Christian worship;
- offering pastoral care;
- providing opportunities for spiritual, moral and intellectual development for its members and anyone else who wishes to benefit from what it offers; and
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the Church in and to their communities for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

2 Context

St Mary the Virgin Bramshott and Liphook is a Church of England Parish (boundaries co-incident with the Civic Parish) in the Diocese of Portsmouth. It has two worship centres: the 13th C Church of St Mary in the hamlet of Bramshott; and, St Mary's Church Centre (recent name change) located centrally in Liphook village. The original Centre building was constructed in the early 1970's for dual use; as a Christian worship and for use by the community, part funded by Hampshire CC.

We have 158 people on the Electoral Role of the Church, and a typical Sunday attendance of 140 adults and children (2016 figures) across both worship centres. There is a Weekday communion service at the Church Centre and children and youth activities on a Friday night. The services at St Mary tend to cater for those in the older age range with traditional prayer book style liturgies, whereas the Church Centre has a younger congregation with a less formal service.

3 Activity for the community

At the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter the numbers attending St Mary's increase considerably. The Remembrance Day service is a civic occasion and the church is full to overflowing. There is also a civic service around Canada Day in remembrance of the Canadian Soldiers who died at the First World War Canadian Hospital on Bramshott Common. In recent years there have been other services to mark key points in the First World War, and in 2016, marking the Queen's 90th Birthday.

The graveyard of St Mary's is the largest in the Diocese and has considerable spare capacity. Last year there were 19 funerals or memorial services and eight weddings. The Church is also used by local schools. Liphook Junior School is a C of E Voluntary Controlled school.

There is a weekly parent and toddler group (Little Lambs), and one for expectant mums and first babies (Bumps and Babies). The Rector takes assemblies in the local schools. Once a month there is a lunch club open to all, and a tea and company afternoon, originally designed to help support bereaved people in need of support and companionship and offer prayer where appropriate. We also visit care homes by invitation and have recently started a more formal ministry together with other churches in Liphook under the PARCHE (Pastoral Action in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly) organisation umbrella to help provide Christian based spiritual care. We have also run parenting courses and marriage preparation classes.

The Church Centre is well used by a variety of Local Organisations and play groups. It is also a popular venue for children's parties. East Hampshire District Council use it for their Rural Areas Play Scheme and as a Polling Station. The NHS Blood Donor service holds regular sessions. Ease of access and good parking provision contribute to the popularity of the venue.

We recently opened the Ark Pre-School Nursery offering a distinctive Christian value and ethos facility for 24 3-4 year olds of the parish. This initiative arose initially from our own sense of need and something we should be offering, and this was confirmed by Hampshire CC. Our commitment to this cost the church a net £49,000.

4 What is good about Liphook?

The reasons people in our church community like Liphook are in one sense no different to the rest of the community. A limited survey of a variety of church members carried out last year cited:

- a sense of community and neighbourliness (mostly the older age group);
- good accessibility by car and by train (younger age group);
- a good social mix of people;
- proximity to accessible countryside.

From a PCC perspective, the way the Church is integrated within the community is a major benefit, with St Mary's Church building seen very much as the village church even though it is geographically remote from the village centre. Another benefit is the support the village gives to the church, whether formally via grants from Local Councils for maintaining the graveyard, helping set up the Ark Pre-School, or informally through the "friends of St Mary's" to assist us in keeping the Grade 2* listed Building of St Mary's in good condition.

5 What is not so good?

In the survey above the following factors were identified as concerns:

- the scale of new development, particularly in terms of pressures on services and the transport system;
- a lack of a proper Village centre, compared for example with Grayshott;
- poor provisions for young people both in terms of places to meet and shopping;
- public transport, particularly bus services;
- the Community Talkback Chat Room tends to project a very negative image of people and the content can be quite personal and hurtful, while hiding under a cloak of semi-anonymity;
- there is more poverty in Liphook than might be seen on the surface;
- a lack of communication of what is available to each age group in the village;
- the pressures of modern day life on marriage partnerships and families.

From a PCC perspective, a major concern is the way the village always sees the church building in Bramshott as a focus and directing resources to it to the detriment of our Church Centre. This is suffering the way of most buildings built in the early 1970's and in need of significant refurbishment if it is to continue to serve the community.

6 Room for improvement

In one sense this flows from what is not so good. From a practical perspective, the PCC would like the village to see the Church Centre as a place of worship as well as a community hall, and that it has an interest in helping to maintain the building. The setting up of the Ark Pre-School has meant that we are now in urgent need of additional facilities to cater for our own church needs, particularly for our Sunday and weekday youth work which previously took place in the space now occupied by the Pre-School.

The Talk Back site needs to be more carefully moderated. It has become a major forum for complaints which would be better directed to the relevant organisation. There needs to be a review as to how the Liphook Community magazine might best contribute to community information and cohesion.

An easily accessible community diary regularly updated would be of benefit if all the community organisations committed to keeping it up-to-date. This would help prevent clashes or duplication of effort, and provide an over view of what is going on in the Parish.

Recently our church was approached by a neighbouring parish to see if we would set up a food bank because they were getting people from Liphook. We have done no research into this but it does suggest there may be a need. Unfortunately, this is not something we can offer at the moment due to lack of space at the Church Centre now the Pre-School is up and running.

7 Final thoughts

The 'spread out' nature of the retail outlets in Liphook does little for the community. This combined with the proportion of people who commute out of Liphook gives the village a deserted feel outside of rush hours (unless you go to Sainsburys!).

Liphook has a major challenge in how it integrates people from the new developments. Our Church took an initiative, with the Silent Garden development next to our church centre, to visit each new house and provide a welcome pack, not just relating to us as a church, but also basic information on Liphook.

The Church is pleased that it is seen as part of the community and will always look to play an active part, although its available human and financial resources are limited. Looking to the future we would like to offer drop-in social times for parents after leaving their children at Pre-school, and help to address the challenges of modern day marriage partnerships and parenting children, by running courses based on Christian values and ethos.

The PCC thanks the Parish Council for inviting it to make a submission to the NDP Forum.

Paul Arnold MBE, BA, BSc, CEng. MICE

Lay Vice-Chair of St Mary Bramshott and Liphook Parochial Parish Council, 26th October 2017