



Calor Village of the Year® England

Entry Form & Guidelines 2007/2008

Village Name: Hertford Heath

County: Hertfordshire

Population: 2144 (at 2001 census)

CATEGORY 1

People

“How we live our lives is shaped by where we live our lives. Our village has a great deal to offer its residents as it successfully brings together all the different countryside dimensions – economic, environmental, community and enjoyment into a single neighbourhood.”

Martin Nash
Co-ordinator of Village of the Year Group

Without a doubt, Hertford Heath's biggest assets are its residents. The people of the village are as diverse as one could find in this area. There are Hertfordshire people born and bred (including many who have never lived anywhere other than Hertford Heath), and there are ex-Londoners, Europeans, Asians and, at Haileybury (an independent day/boarding school for boys and girls from the ages of 11 to 18), a veritable United Nations of race which enrich and make our society colourful and different.

Whilst there are facilities and activities aimed at various ages of villagers, the vast majority of our facilities, services and activities are enjoyed by all ages. For example, our Bonfire and Fireworks Night is enjoyed by babies and those in their 90s.

Specifically for pre-school children we have a number of activities including Tumble Tots, a Buggy Club and a new Tot's Service starting in the Church next year.

The children at our Primary School play a very full role in village life. They make guys and design posters for the Bonfire Night and two representatives come each year to meet the judges for the Village of the Year Competition. This year, both children were nominated for the Dorothy Abel Smith Award for young people which was awarded to them jointly.

The students at Haileybury also contribute to village life. For example, sixth form students act as teaching assistants in the Primary School and visit the elderly in their homes.

There are a number of after school clubs and groups for children and young people and we also have a Junior Football Club, Cubs, Beavers, Sunday School and a Church choir.

The Parish Council strives to work hand in hand with every part of the community to bring ideas to life. We have a children's play area designed for children aged 3 – 12. In a consultation exercise we held in 2004, the state of this area was high on the agenda for improvement and the Parish Council planned its refurbishment. In 2005, a working party of volunteers of all ages repainted the old equipment that was to remain and a number of new items were purchased at a cost of £24,000. All that money was raised from grants and donations.

For teenagers we have a Meeting Point, a Hang Glider, an Apple Ball Game and a practice goal on the Playing Field with a “Freeride” to be installed soon. There is also a well-used picnic table provided nearby. A Church Youth Group has been formed in the past year. A

table tennis competition was organised during the Summer as part of Hertfest. This was so successful that we are considering making it a regular event.

For older people, we have a number of sheltered housing units in our village linked to the main area of accommodation – Beacon Court. Here bingo sessions and other regular events take place which are open to all older residents. We also have a thriving U3A which meets in our area, the Chairman of which is a local resident.

For everyone, there are a number of annual village events organised by various parties. The Village Fete on the Village Green was revitalised last year by a Working Party of the Parish Council. All village organisations can run stalls to raise funds for themselves and each fete is extremely well attended. The Green is full of stalls, there are many entrants to the Children's Fancy Dress and to the Pet Show and we have had demonstrations of fencing and Morris Dancing. All proceeds from the Fete are distributed to local organisations. To date, about £2,500 has been given to around a dozen village groups. For example, our Junior Football Club received some money for rain jackets and the Church received a donation towards some children's Bibles.

The Bonfire and Fireworks Night on the Village Green is organised by a different Working Party of the Parish Council. Many local businesses support this event with donations and this year it is planned to give the surplus to village organisations in the same way that the Village Fete profits are distributed.

Carols by Candlelight on the Village Green are organised by the Chairman of the Parish Council with a collection for Kandelight - a charity set up by a nearby doctor to aid the poor in Rajasthan. Last December, despite the appalling weather, around 200 people enjoyed singing and listening to others singing and playing.

We have had a number of Village Picnics - for example, one was held on the wildlife meadow following the formal opening of Bob's Pond. These have been enjoyed by all who came.

Our village church is well attended and offers a full round of regular worship. It enjoys close links with the school, and it runs a Parent and Toddler group in the Mission Room - a small hall owned by the church and available for hire to organisations and individuals in the village. The church is also responsible for a regular discussion group in the Townshend Arms, called the Alpha Course.

The Church holds occasional public meetings and concerts. The last such meeting was an open meeting on the subject of Fair Trade, and the next event will be a concert in support of a new group, the Friends of Holy Trinity, set up to offer financial support to the church building.

Church members are involved in village life in many other ways, for example visiting the housebound and elderly, serving on the parish council, and this summer they were engaged in a series of short term projects for the benefit of the community, under the banner of Hertfest, a town-wide initiative of Hertford's churches.

Our senior football team has been very successful in recent years. It now plays in the Premier Division of the Herts Senior County League having carried out all the improvements

to the pitch required to play at that level. With all voluntary help, they put a post and rail fence around the pitch, provided a dry standing area by the pitch and satisfied all the other requirements of the League.

We are extremely lucky to have Haileybury's sports facilities available for all. They have Astroturf pitches, tennis courts, swimming pool, gym, archery, squash and a magnificent Sports Centre.

Our Village Hall has a very active Management Committee that has recently refurbished the kitchen and bar areas with the help of many volunteers from the village. It was placed third in East Herts' Village Hall of the Year competition this year and received £4,000 in prize money. It puts on a number of fundraising events each year including the very popular Quiz Nights and Casino Nights. The Hall is well used in the week by a variety of groups including the Buggy Club and the Carpet Bowls. It is used too for parties, wedding receptions and the monthly Farmers' Market.

We also have a Mission Room which is used by a number of groups including the Women's Institute, Amwell Quilters, a painting group, a Geology Group and the Parish Council for meetings.

A Petanque Terrain has been constructed on the Village Green by local residents with money from last year's Village Fete which used on a regular basis.

Teenagers were encouraged by our PCSO Karen Broad to come to a Parish Council meeting to discuss and express their concerns about the leisure facilities for teenagers in the village. Many more came to a meeting of the Playing Field Committee where a number of issues were discussed, including improvements to the Meeting Point. Some of those improvements have been carried out while others are awaiting further information and/or funding.

Karen remains a strong link between the Parish Council and our teenagers who appreciate her support. The Parish Council Chairman, Mary Bourne, has a very good relationship with the young people in the village who are only too willing to comment (favourably or otherwise) on village issues.

We are extremely lucky that so many people either volunteer to help or simply get on and do whatever is necessary. For example, someone noticed that the daffodils on the War Memorial Green needed deadheading. Without saying: "Why don't they do something about it", they simply went ahead and did it. Some of these come from the group of volunteers formed by our Parish Council Chairman which she has called "Mary's Merrie Men". Others help the Village Hall, the Playing Field or with village events.

But the people of Hertford Heath are not just generous with their time and money for the village alone. Within three weeks of the Tsunami, a Bring and Buy Sale had been organised which raised over £1400 in two hours with many people giving a £10 note for an item costing 10p and saying "keep the change".

All this makes Hertford Heath the great place it is to live.

CATEGORY 2

Business

The village has two farms, two shops, four pubs, two garages and the country's smallest pottery. Haileybury and East Herts Equestrian Centre are located in Hertford Heath and are both major employers and keen supporters of community life.

Over 400 residents said they worked in the village in the 2001 census, many of those being small businesses.

We did have a Post Office but this was summarily closed just before Christmas 2006 while a fraud investigation was being carried out. Our Parish Council worked very hard with our MP Mark Prisk to restore interim facilities to the village. Our Postmistress, who is also the Bookings Secretary for our Village Hall, had the support of the whole village - no one thought she was "guilty" and everyone thought the procedure used during the investigation was fatally flawed. However, the investigation resulted in our Postmistress's contract being terminated although no charges have been brought against her. The Parish Council has recognised that there is no way that she will be re-instated and is working with the Post Office Limited and with our MP to get the facilities back into the village. In January, it did secure from Head Office a commitment to fund a very limited minibus service to take villagers to and from Hertford Post Office until facilities are resumed in the village.

Whilst the Post Office Limited appeared keen to restore our facilities in another of the local shops, the financial obstacles being put in the way of this are proving difficult to overcome. In addition, it now seems to have retreated on its intent and has just proposed leaving any further work until the Post Office closure review in March 2008. However, the Parish Council is looking at other ways to get service back into the village and hopes to hold a public meeting in January 2008 to look at all options.

All our local businesses are very involved in village life.

East Herts Equestrian Centre provided and installed a picnic table and two benches on our Wildlife Meadow, relined Bob's Pond to stop it leaking, supports the local Football Team, and sponsors the Horticultural Society's Annual Show. (More information on the Wildlife Meadow and Pond appears in the Environment Section.)

Haileybury is also very involved. Its grounds staff have assisted with various village events and projects. Its Sports Centre is open to all and many other of its facilities and events, including choral society concerts and military tattoos, are open to local residents. Haileybury owns the land on which the Village Hall stands which is leased to the Hall's Management Committee.

Other business support includes:

- * Haileybury Motors sponsors our Reserves Team and a local scaffolder supplied all the rails for the fence around the football pitch.
- * GreenDays cut the turf on the Village Green before the Bonfire and re-laid it afterwards at no charge.
- * Local shops and pubs have been involved in fundraising. For example, the Goat Inn gives a generous donation to the Parish Council for the Bonfire and Fireworks Night as do many other local businesses.
- * Local shops volunteer to act as central points for the collection of questionnaires sent out to all villagers by the Parish Council.
- * Black Dog Leisure supplies the tables for the Fun Casino Nights at the Village Hall and framed the certificates won in the Village of the Year competitions which are displayed in the Village Hall.
- * The Silver Fox is hosting the Parish Council's Internet Access Point. This has proved to be so successful that we are planning a second Access Point with the Townshend Arms agreeing to host it.
- * The Goat Inn hosts a Cheese Night and monthly meeting of sports and classic cars, and the Townshend Arms hosts the Church's Alpha course and holds a monthly pop quiz.

Local businesses can advertise for a small charge in the Parish News produced monthly by the Church. Our website carries sections on shops, pubs, lodging, taxis and other services. A large number of villagers use these local businesses, including a Farm Shop which has just opened on the edge of the village.

Where appropriate, the Parish Council will support planning applications from village businesses.

The Parish Council uses village businesses wherever possible. It always asks for quotations from local contractors. A village contractor cuts the grass on the village greens and in the churchyard as well as the paths on the allotments and meadow. Another village business is running the minibus service for customers of the village Post Office mentioned above and a local fencing contractor erected the new fencing around the Children's Play Area.

The Village Hall also uses local contractors where possible - eg to fit the new kitchen and cooker.

CATEGORY 3

Environment

In its Landscape Character Assessment, the County Council describes this area as one of gently undulating wooded farmland, much of it pasture, with extensive areas of woodland and heath, the distinctive features being the settlement of Hertford Heath and Haileybury, Ermine Street and the Nature Reserves of Balls Wood and Hertford Heath.

The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust manages the two nature reserves, both of which are SSSIs. These reserves have a local volunteer warden who co-ordinates monthly working parties attended by six to ten residents.

Due to a decline in the demand for allotments, our Parish Council decided in 2003 to turn part of the allotment site into a Wildlife Meadow. The area was cleared of rubbish by volunteers who found a safe that had been stolen some years before from a nearby pub. Unfortunately it was empty!

We obtained advice on the Meadow's management from the Wildlife Trust who also advised on the construction of a pond. The pond was dug in the winter of 2005 and formally opened in June 2006. It was named "Bob's Pond" in honour of the Parish Council's Vice-Chairman, Bob Akers. Bob celebrated his 80th birthday last year - in between the Queen's actual and official ones! He was born in the village and has lived here for most of his life. He has always been active in local affairs and still is today. He has been the council's allotment manager for over 20 years, has been a member of the Council's Planning Committee for over 10 years and Committee Chairman since 2003. He is also an active member of the Council's Playing Field Committee helping secure the grants needed to re-furbish the children's play area .

Children at the Primary School produced collages to celebrate the Queen's birthday which were much admired at the opening of Bob's Pond and which were later sent to Buckingham Palace. We received the following reply:

"The Queen wishes me to write and thank you for the letter which you have sent on the occasion of her eightieth birthday and for enclosing the book of splendid collages made by the children at Hertford Heath Primary School. The Queen was delighted to see the children's individual wonderful works of art."

"Her Majesty has been very moved by the overwhelming response to her birthday and I am to thank you for your loyalty, support and good wishes which she warmly appreciates."

A nature walk around the wildlife meadow prior to the formal opening of Bob's Pond in 2006 and another this year, prior to the Village Picnic, were enjoyed by children and adults alike.

A picnic table and two benches were placed near the pond so that children especially can enjoy pond dipping and other nature activities on the meadow and to encourage impromptu picnics by local residents.

Bob's Pond was leaking but thanks to the generosity of the owners of East Herts Equestrian Centre who dug it out, provided a liner and replanted it, it now appears to be holding water.

We have sown wildflower seeds around "Bob's Pond" and added a number of water plants. A family of ducklings were seen happily swimming in the Pond last year which is also regularly visited by a heron. We have skylarks over the fields, nightingales in the woods, kestrels hovering over our paths and owls screeching in the night. Nesting and roosting boxes have been erected in the meadow and we are considering putting up owl and bat boxes too.

The Parish Council has planted daffodils on the War Memorial and Pindar Greens and more daffodils are to be planted on the Village Green near the mini-orchard and the entries to the village.

Our Primary School has a nature area on the edge of its playground.

We have a Horticultural Society membership of which is open to all residents and to those renting allotments in the village. There are currently about 120 members of the Society. The Society holds a Plant Sale and an annual Horticultural Show in the Village Hall. Last year and this, the show was shared with the Village of the Year awards ceremony.

The allotments are provided by the Parish Council and now actively cultivated by a diverse age group with many women and children taking part.

The Parish Paths Partnership project for the coming year is to publish the various local walks devised by a village resident. These walks are on the village website and we are planning to get them professionally drawn and printed either in a leaflet or booklet form for anyone to purchase.

The Parish Council recruited a volunteer tree warden who checks on the Council's trees and advises on remedial and other work. He has replaced a dead tree in the mini orchard, planted a new one and trimmed dangerous overhanging branches.

The Parish Council employs two litter pickers who are paid for eight hours a week but do considerably more.

Our church is seeking grants to fund solar panels on its roof.

The village is very accessible for older generations with good paths, seating areas, wheelchair access to the Village Hall and local shops are just some of the provisions in place.

The District Council organises a fortnightly kerbside collection for paper, tins and glass. A brown bin collection of garden waste was eagerly expected to be provided this Autumn but the District Council has cancelled that for the time being.

Recycling bins collecting glass, tins, paper, clothes and shoes have been provided by the District Council in the village. The Parish Council has asked for a plastic bottle bank on this site but unfortunately this is another cut by the District Council.

Haileybury pupils run a recycling scheme within the College which extends into part of the village. This year they provided re-cycling opportunities for Yellow Pages directories.

The Primary School has a recycling project in respect of cans which are crushed to raise funds for the PTA.

For many years, the parents of girls attending Presdales School (a secondary school in Ware) have been trying to get a minibus to take their children to and from school. The quickest walk is not at all safe. However, the County Council determined that it had no obligation to put on a bus, because Presdales was not the nearest school they could safely walk to (although that is debatable as the walk involves crossing an unlit road where the speed limit is 60mph). Going into school in the morning was not too bad but coming home meant an hour's wait in Hertford for the bus to the village.

Our Parish Council has been looking at ways of providing a bus and one of its members has worked hard on this project. She has found a local minibus that will take the girls to and from school at a reasonable cost. Hopefully, this initiative will save the dozen or so parents driving to and from Ware twice a day.

CATEGORY 4

Communications

The main way information is communicated locally is via the Parish Council's monthly newsletter. This is delivered (both by a commercial organisation and by volunteers) to approximately 99% of the village. It contains information on the Parish Council and on matters such as the Post Office closure, Neighbourhood Watch warnings, the East of England Plan and the proposed Police Reorganisation. It carries articles by village organisations and advertisements for charity events. We have also included information on recycling and energy conservation. Our most recent editions have carried poems written by the children at the Primary School for the Hertfordshire Village of the Year judges' visit.

The Hertford Heath website - www.hertfordheath.com - was re-designed and re-launched in 2004 and is used to promote local businesses, attract tourists and help visitors and former residents keep in touch. The site contains a brief history of the village, information about all the village organisations, all Parish Council minutes, agendas, newsletters, etc as well as reports on village events. We have included a set of walks around the village produced by a local resident, together with a link to a local walking site. We have sections for the Church, Schools and Village Hall as well as details of our shops, pubs, lodgings and other services. Our site is used for many purposes. Those who have moved away can keep up with what is going on and those who are interested in moving to or visiting Hertford Heath can see what village life is like. We have also seen an extract of the names on our war memorial copied onto an individual's genealogy site. The site is updated on a regular basis with maintenance carried out by a local resident.

The Parish Council makes great use of ICT, both for communication between members, the Clerk, our PC and PCSO, our County and District Councillors, and for research. Local businesses and the local tourism industry also benefit from the village's ICT activities and there is no charge for inclusion on the website.

For newcomers, the Parish Council produces a Village Information booklet printed in A4 which is an extract of the information on the village website. This is freely available to all. Members of the Parish Council try to ensure that all newcomers in their neighbourhood receive a copy and we take copies to the Village Fetes.

Two of our Parish Councillors are compiling a booklet of information for the elderly who should then have all the telephone numbers and addresses they need at their fingertips.

Church members call on newcomers who are introduced to the Parish News – the monthly magazine produced by the Church which contains a diary of the events for the month, reports from village organisations such as the Parish Council and the Village Hall, and advertisements from the shops and pubs and others offering a wide variety of services. The Parish News is widely read in Hertford Heath and is posted to many subscribers outside the village.

Two of our residents have compiled a village history – “Beating About The Bush” which is very near to being published. It is based on individual questionnaires to recover personal memories from old village families and contains a number of old photographs.

We have four Parish Council noticeboards which advertise village and other events as well as including posters for the Dogs Trust’s Canine Care Card and the Ware Sight Information Point.

Parish Council meetings have a special slot at the start for members of the public to voice their concerns. An effort is made to keep this section informal so that people are not intimidated.

We have a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the village which uses our noticeboards, SMS and email to warn of local scams.

A number of villagers have signed up to the search engine www.everyclick.com . Every search raises money for our Village Hall at no cost to those using the site or the Hall. Over £100 has been raised to date.

Last year, we set up an Internet Access Point in one of our local pubs with the help of a grant from Defra. The Internet provides a great new opportunity to bring information to rural people. In setting up a computer and internet access point in the village, residents have easy and convenient use of information and communication technology to help them access health advice, employment opportunities, legal and court services, renew library books or make online applications, bookings and payments without the need to drive into Hertford.

The first Internet Access Point has proved so successful that we are setting a second one up in another pub, again with the help of a grant from Defra.

The Parish Council carried out a “Village Fair” type consultation in May 2004. The responses to the various questions asked at that event have directed the Parish Council in its efforts to improve village life. For example, a number of parents felt that the Children’s Play Area was crying out for improvement and the Council worked on that project, raising over £24,000 in funding. The Council has just circulated the village with a questionnaire on what projects the village would like carried out and how the Parish, District and County Councillors can better serve the villagers.

The Parish Council is also looking at developing a Parish Plan as it wishes to develop a Travel Plan (which can only be done within a Parish Plan). The Council recently conducted a survey on whether or not a 20mph speed limit would be welcomed by villagers. Well over 90% of responses agreed that it would and also suggested various improvements to the highway system. Unfortunately, the County Council rejected our petition and the Parish Council is looking at the possibility of funding this itself.

Villagers are also looking at how to work with the Police and the Highways Department on combating speeding in the village and a list of those willing to go out with our PCSO to check speeding has been drawn up.

PART B

It's easy to see why people come to live in Hertford Heath – and stay. The village has everything going for it. Despite being so close to Hertford and only 45 minutes from London, it retains its village character. It is surrounded by ancient woodland, unique heathland and farmland, with access to wonderful walks. The sunsets across the fields are truly amazing!

But don't just take our word for it. Read what people say about us:

"It's very encouraging to feel the community spirit in the village. In spite of people's busy and demanding lives, they still find time to help out. The band of unseen helpers is growing, doing little things which mean so much – deadheading the daffodils, mending benches, clearing up after events, and baking when we entertain. This for me shows the village spirit is alive and well."

Mary Bourne
Parish Council Chairman
Working Artist/ Owner of the Country's Smallest Pottery

"In some places, part of the church's job is to try to persuade people to care for their neighbours, to take pride in their surroundings and have a sense of ownership of their neighbourhood. There is no need for that here – it already happens. People feel that the church is their church, the village is their village, they love and care for this place and the quirky, individual people who live in it."

Revd Nick Sharp
Vicar of Holy Trinity Church

"What makes for an award winning village? It needs the basics such as a village green, a well organised village hall, as well as a school, church, shops and of course a pub or two. A variety of houses is important as are allotments and sports and social activities. Hertford Heath has all these - and much more besides.

However, these form only part of community life. What is even more important is the commitment and interest that brings these facilities to life and this comes from the residents themselves. The very successful Bonfire Night and Summer Fete are just two examples of the village's collective energy and enthusiasm. I am pleased to be associated with such a thriving and progressive place."

Mike Tucker
Hertfordshire County Councillor

“Hertford Heath has managed to preserve nearly all the facilities which help to support a thriving and vibrant local community, but above all it has a splendid village spirit, keen, cooperative, and friendly, with a dynamic Parish Council leading a multitude of successful local organisations. It has been a great privilege to represent such a welcoming and well run village. The effort, imagination, and skill put into the application are typical of this community, which thoroughly earned the success it achieved and deserved. I cannot praise it too much.”

William Ashley
East Herts District Councillor

“HAVE SOME FUN”

Hertford Heath is
Full of fun
With lots to do
For everyone ...

So if you do
Decide to come
Bring a cake and
A sticky bun!

Remi Hodges
Hertford Heath Primary School
Poem for Village of the Year 2007

Entry form details

Please complete the below details and email with your **COMPLETED** entry to: info@calorvillageoftheyear.org in good time to meet the competition closing date of 30 November 2007.

Entries received after this date may not be considered.

Name of your village: **HERTFORD HEATH**

Your Village website address: **www.hertfordheath.com**

Central village postcode: SG13 7RJ

Village contact name: **CAROLYN MORGAN**

Contact address: **97 LONDON ROAD, HERTFORD HEATH**

Postcode: **SG13 7RJ**

Telephone no(s): day **01992 509060** eve **01992 581994**

Mobile number for the Judges and/or the Competition Coordinator to be able to contact in case of an emergency : **07707008984**

Email address: **clerk@hertfordheath.com**

Population of village (total pop): 2144 (at 2001 census)

County competition entered: **HERTFORDSHIRE**

PLUS THE FOLLOWING ITEMS SHOULD BE SENT BY POST OR EMAIL:

A simple map/directions on how to find your village and meeting place (two copies).

A sketch map of points of interest within the village (two copies). This will be particularly useful if you are taking judges on a short tour.

A list of newspapers that circulate in your area, and regional TV and radio stations (media coverage of your achievement is important, not only for you but also the success of the competition.)

Photographs (requirements as follows)

Photographs: Six photographs of your village for non commercial purposes only; namely for the use on the Calor Village of the Year® website, at the Awards and for use in Calor house magazines and in brochures and promotional material for Calor Village of the Year®.

NB: Please supply photographs separately, do not include them within the text.

Format: You can supply either prints or photographs taken with a conventional camera, or digital images.

Size: Prints should be no smaller than 8in x 6in (230mm x 152mm). Digital photographs should be a minimum 300dpi resolution.

Content: A variety of images to represent the village, its activities and its people. These might include views or shots of local areas, e.g. park, high street, businesses, community activities, environmental work, village hall event, annual fete etc. A brief note explaining the image content would also be very useful.

Send to: info@calorvillageoftheyear.org or Suzanne Weir, manager, Calor Village of the Year Competition®, Calor Gas Limited, Athena House, Athena Drive, Tachbrook Park, Warwick, CV34 6RL. Send in good time to meet the competition closing date of 30 November 2007.

Please keep a copy of what you send to Calor