



## Ripley

### Introduction

The Surrey village of Ripley is adjacent to the A3 and one mile from the M25 motorway. While providing excellent travel links to and from London and the South Coast, it has retained its rural atmosphere and a strong sense of history.

Ripley is a friendly village with many active community organisations, and a thriving range of businesses, from small local shops through to light industry. Many of the businesses are locally run and employ members of the community.

The centrepiece of the village is the 64 acre village green, which hosts the Farmers Market. There are two schools in the village, a State Primary School and a Private Prep School. Despite having no rail station, Ripley has good local bus links.



### Key Facts

<b>County:</b>	<b>Surrey</b>
<b>District:</b>	<b>Guildford</b>
<b>Population:</b>	<b>2041</b>
<b>Plan Complete:</b>	<b>2008</b>



### The Process

Following a workshop by Surrey Community Action, Ripley's residents and Parish Council took the decision in early 2004 to begin the Community Led Plan process.

The steering group of eight people launched the Ripley Plan to the community at a Consultation Day in April 2005, with the aim of stimulating ideas and identifying key issues. The response from the 200 participants identified a range of issues, and highlighted 10 immediate priorities for the community.

The steering group wanted the community to see a positive benefit right from the start and endeavoured to get things moving from the beginning of the engagement process, rather than waiting for a final document to be produced. Building on one of the key issues identified at the Consultation Day, in conjunction with the Parish Council, they supported the set up of the community run, farmers market. This provided both a community resource and a quick win for the Plan. An information stall at the monthly markets provided a key vehicle to continue the consultation process.

From this point the Plan gained momentum, and many members of the community came forward to offer their skills. Whilst developing an Action Plan questionnaire, the steering group continued to generate interest by sending out regular newsletters. They also made a concerted effort to contact the harder to reach groups; older people, younger people and the community around Send Prison.

The questionnaire was hand delivered to each household during Easter 2006 and had a response of just less than 50%. These responses and the outcomes of the other consultations were collated and presented in a preliminary brochure.

The final plan was released in spring 2008.

### What is a Community Led Plan?

A Community Led Plan is a process that underpins a community's vision for itself across all aspects of social, environmental and economic life. It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights local needs and contains a detailed action plan to help meet those needs.

These plans are produced by and for communities, based on a detailed survey and consultation which is widely inclusive, prompts action and influences others. Good plans; use the Community Led Planning Toolkit framework, are supported by external facilitators from the Rural Community Action Network and include a robust evaluation process that ensures their quality.



# Community Led Plan

## Achievements to date

### Farmers Market

▶ The initial Consultation Day identified a need in the village for additional shops and a market. Five volunteers formed a committee and began to seek support from local producers to set up the county's only community run Farmers Market, on the village green.

The first market day in June 2005 was a resounding success with over 2,000 shoppers and 40 stallholders.

The revenue from this non-profit-making venture has been used for several community projects and the committee are investigating how it could be used to set up a local community shop, stocked by market producers and run by volunteers.

Markets are held monthly and continue to draw large numbers of shoppers.

For more information, visit:  
[www.ripleyfarmersmarket.co.uk](http://www.ripleyfarmersmarket.co.uk)



### Youth Club

▶ Through the consultation process the young people of Ripley were able to voice their need for a place to meet and call their own. With the help and support of the Community Police Officer and the Surrey Youth Worker a volunteer run Youth Club has been set up. Several of the volunteers are being trained as Youth Workers and the club goes from strength to strength.

The community engagement process helped identify a site for the Club and the provision of the youth building, "The Ripley Shed".

### Elections

▶ The buzz surrounding the Community Led Plan raised confidence within Ripley that change could happen.

When the Parish Council elections were held there were 13 nominees for 7 seats, previously unheard of in the parish. More impressively, there was over 50% voter turnout; this resulted in three members of the steering group being voted onto the Parish Council.

### Speedwatch

▶ Traffic speed through the village was another key issue raised at the Consultation Day. Surrey Police were invited to work with the community to develop the Ripley Community Speed watch programme.

Every other week 12 trained volunteers monitor the traffic and report directly to Surrey Police. The Speedwatch equipment is shared with neighbouring communities.

### Village of the Year

▶ The Farmers Market was a contributory factor to Ripley's success in capturing the "Business Award" in the Surrey Village of the Year competition in 2006.

Both the 2006 award and the community engagement in the village plan acted as catalysts to maintain momentum, which resulted in Ripley achieving recognition as "Surrey Village of the Year" in 2007.

### Policing

▶ Volunteers have come forward to staff the Police Station which had been closed and Ripley now has a dedicated Community Police Officer.

The Ripley project will be developed as a Best Practice Case Study on Community Policing.



### Football Club

▶ The community has joined together to support the local football club. The local private school allows the club to train and play on their land. The Ripley Farmers Market fund provided goal posts, and local businesses financed the new kit.

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## Other

- ▶ New community noticeboard installed outside the Post Office.
- ▶ New Ripley Map has been designed and is available from local shops and the parish office



## In the Works...

- ▶ Volunteers are investigating funding for the redevelopment of the village hall in consultation with stakeholders and users.
- ▶ Community enthusiasts are working to raise awareness of environmental issues and disseminating information to the community.
- ▶ The Parish Council is developing a Village Planning Policy.
- ▶ The Community Led Plan group are supporting the Infant School to enable it to become a primary school.
- ▶ The Ripley website has been set up and is currently being developed. The site includes a business directory and the "Ripley Grapevine" community forums and messageboard.

## Community Benefits

- ▶ Having tangible results from the Plan raised confidence in Ripley residents that change could happen and empowered them to undertake further action.
- ▶ The process has provided an excellent forum for encouraging groups and organisations to talk to each other and has promoted partnership working.
- ▶ New volunteers have come forward and have become involved in determining and shaping the future of their community.



## Local Authority Engagement

The Ripley Plan Group has worked hard to engage with Local Authorities. They have gained the support of local councillors and kept all departments at Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council updated on progress through newsletters.

The results of this were seen when Guildford Borough Council made effective use of data from the Ripley Plan in a recent parking review. Now that the final Action Plan has been circulated further opportunities for partnership working will be identified.



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## Going Forward

Ripley Parish Council has adopted the Plan and will use it to inform and direct activities. A specific budget has been set aside to address issues raised throughout the Plan process.

The community will continue to be updated on progress through the Ripley Grapevine forum on the village website, the Parish Council newsletter and the Parish notice boards.

Motivated by the steering group, the community are working together to maintain the current project. Ripley is also planning to repeat the process and probe deeper into some of the key issues affecting the community.



### Key Advice for others

Perseverance is key, and a committed steering group is essential.

Don't be afraid to get projects up and running early in the process, if the issue is obvious to all, get on and do something about it!

“ Ripley’s distinction lies in the way in which the residential and business communities interact to the advantage of all. It is certainly a caring community working hard on local issues and interests. This is a community that will welcome change for all that it offers.

**Surrey Village of the Year judging panel report**

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This case study forms part of a series evaluating the impacts and benefits of Community Led Plans across the South East. It has been funded and produced by the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC) in partnership with Surrey Community Action. Both are members of the national Rural Community Action Network. [www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)



## Lessons Learned

- ▶ Outside support and advice is invaluable.
- ▶ Make sure the questions can be analysed usefully.
- ▶ Data capture was a long and difficult process.
- ▶ Undertaking the plan was a robust and valuable experience for the community.

▶ You can't win with everybody.

▶ Need to involve, communicate and work with as much of the community as possible.

▶ A positive attitude and enthusiasm are key to success.

▶ Communicate with your stakeholders to ensure they continue to support the vision.



### Further Information

[www.ripleyvillage.co.uk](http://www.ripleyvillage.co.uk)

[www.surreyca.org.uk](http://www.surreyca.org.uk)

[www.sercc.org.uk](http://www.sercc.org.uk)

