

A pdf version will be on the village website at [www.hempstead-essex.org.uk](http://www.hempstead-essex.org.uk) and a hard copy is available on the Parish Council Noticeboard.

### **Parish Council**

We are delighted to announce the addition of two new Councillors to Hempstead Parish Council. Carrie Hughes and Emma Tarry attended their first meeting in February and immediately actively contributed to the work of the Council. We wish them a successful future.

### **Bus Consultation**

The Council submitted a full and comprehensive letter of concern in response to the latest consultation. A full copy of the letter is shown later in this Newsletter.

### **Highways**

In the same way that Hempstead had an extended road closure to install a new water main a couple of years ago, Radwinter will have the same work effected between itself and Swards End closing the B1054 from August to December.

### **Local Plan**

The Inspectors' Report concluded that with the recommended main modifications, the Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 is sound, legally compliant and capable of adoption. The Local Plan Panel is recommending it to Cabinet and if they are minded, that it then be considered for formal adoption by the Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

If adopted by the Council, the Local Plan becomes immediately effective.

From that date:

- It forms part of the statutory development plan.
- Planning decisions must be made in accordance with it (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

### **Policing**

The Council noted the Christmas Drink Driving statistics showing 103 arrests for alcohol offensives but 307 for drug driving.

### **Litter Picking**

We ask you to join in a Litter Pick of the village within the 30mph signs on **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March** meeting at the village hall at 10am to collect equipment.

### **Bus Shelter**

The poor condition of the window frames in the bus shelter has been noted and will be replaced later in the Spring.

### **Mental Health Consultation**

Cllr Tayler highlighted a consultation by the Mid and South Essex ICS (Integrated Care System) concerning mental health services across Essex:

People across Essex are being invited to share their views on community mental health services, to help shape how services are provided in the future.

The NHS in Essex is reviewing how these services are currently delivered. Currently, different services – such as Talking Therapy services (previously known as IAPT) – are provided under several separate contracts. The aim is to move to one county-wide service, so that people can expect the same standard of care wherever they live in Essex.

To help design this future service, the NHS wants to hear from:

- people who have used mental health services
- carers and families
- community and voluntary organisations

What people say will be considered and help improve future services, alongside information about local health needs and service demand.

The future service will aim to:

- make it easier for people to get help when they need it

- reduce waiting times
- provide consistent, high-quality support across all areas
- offer more choice, including digital options such as online support
- make sure care is sensitive to people's needs

Whilst these are admirable aims, I am concerned that these proposals may result in a rather uniform approach and am uncertain how access for the relatively isolated rural communities will be managed. In my experience this has always been a problem, and I would welcome those who have comments or experiences contact me before the consultation deadline closes on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

Alternatively, the consultation itself can be reached via:

<https://virtualviews.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk/service-user-survey>

### Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on the **12<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm** in the village hall.

*Members of the public are always welcome to attend Parish Council meetings to raise issues with the council but can't speak during the formal proceedings.*

*Nick Turkentine - Chairman*

### Bluebell 2

Russ Wide & Dave

Boreham host Bluebell 2 this Sunday St. David's Day, **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March** from 12 noon to 6pm.

Bring friends and family and catch up with everyone for a great community event.

All proceeds to the village hall.



### 'Gig on the Glebe'

Save the date!

Saturday 11 July, 2-9pm, 'Gig on the Glebe', Hempstead

Live music, food, and a bar!

Children's activities, local stalls, and a chance to visit the church.

Please contact Diane Frainer on 07940 558328 if you can help with the preparations or on the day!

### Knitting Group



The next meeting dates for the group are March 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 10-11.30am in the village hall, £2 including refreshments. All are welcome.

### Table-Top Sale

Elspeh Butterworth's Table-Top sale in the village hall on **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March** from 10am to 12 noon is a sell-out so come along with plenty of shopping bags for a great morning of buying some fabulous goodies including fabulous clothes including designer and vintage items, toys, plants and flowers, jewellery, bric-à-brac, hobbies and much more. Refreshments available. Please park away from the hall around the village, so the car park is available for pick-ups and drop-offs only and accessible parking. *Thank you*



### The Village Hall's new look



The main hall has now been painted and looks fresh and fabulous for you to hire it for your events.

Contact Julie Dalton, Booking Secretary, via [villagehall2023@gmail.com](mailto:villagehall2023@gmail.com) or via the village website: [Hempstead Village Hall - Hempstead in Essex](http://Hempstead Village Hall - Hempstead in Essex).

## **Paper Outlining the Potential Impact of Withdrawing the 320/321 Bus Service from Hempstead**

### **Executive Summary: Impact of Withdrawing the 320/321 Bus Service from Hempstead**

Hempstead is a geographically isolated parish of 450 residents, situated seven miles from the service hubs of Saffron Walden and Haverhill. The 320/321 bus service represents the village's sole public transport link, providing essential access to healthcare, employment, and education. The removal of this route would effectively create a "transport desert," directly contradicting local and national strategies aimed at rural sustainability.

### **Key Impacts of Service Withdrawal:**

- **Social Isolation and "Entrapment":** Losing this link forces a "shrinking world" on residents, particularly the 56% of vulnerable and lower-income groups in similar rural areas who face immediate risk of being cut off from basic services. This loss of incidental social interaction mirrors the isolation experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Health and Wellbeing Crisis:**
  - **Physical Health:** The bus is a "lifeline" for medical access; withdrawal will lead to missed GP and hospital appointments, delaying diagnosis and worsening patient outcomes.
  - **Mental Health:** Research identifies that transport deprivation accounts for 37.7% of the link between low income and depression in older adults. Removal of this service is a primary driver of anxiety, depression, and loss of independence.
- **Demographic Erasure (Young People & Families):**
  - **Education Barriers:** For families whose children attend schools like Joyce Frankland Academy due to oversubscription elsewhere, the bus is the only way to reach compulsory education while parents' work. Loss of service prevents participation in extracurricular activities, stifling holistic development.
  - **Economic Stagnation:** Lack of transport is a "poverty of access" for those aged 16–24, limiting apprenticeship and work opportunities. This factor leads 86% of rural youth to feel forced to leave their communities.
- **Marginalisation of Vulnerable Groups:**
  - **Older Residents (65+):** 40% of older bus users rely on these routes weekly, with 25% of trips being for healthcare. Withdrawal nullifies the value of the national concessionary pass, forcing a choice between £40+ taxi fares or total isolation.
  - **Disabled Residents:** This group already takes 38% fewer trips than non-disabled peers; removing the bus creates a profound accessibility gap, leading to physical confinement and extreme economic strain.

### **Conclusion:**

The withdrawal of the 320/321 service is not merely a transport change but a catalyst for systemic rural decline. It replaces a high-value public investment with a cycle of isolation, worsened health, and the forced exodus of working families.

### **Introduction:**

Hempstead is a geographically isolated parish with a population of approximately **450 residents**. Its linear layout and distance from service hubs (7 miles to Saffron Walden/7 miles to Haverhill) create a unique vulnerability to transport cuts. The only public transport available is the 320/321 Bus service. This bus service provides essential connectivity to Saffron Walden, Haverhill, healthcare facilities, employment centres and educational institutions. As rural transport networks across England continue to decline, this service in Hempstead has become increasingly important for residents who do not drive or cannot afford private transport.

**The consequences of withdrawing the 320/321 bus service are:**

- 1. Increased Isolation and reduced social cohesion for residents of Hempstead:** Research indicates that the loss of rural bus services causes a sense of "entrapment," where residents travel less frequently and within a smaller geographical area<sup>1</sup>. The Campaign to Protect Rural England states that when a community lacks the public transport options for residents to be able to travel conveniently on a day-to-day basis without driving "transport deserts" are created. Analysis of 160 villages that have become "transport deserts" in England identified that 56% of the villages impacted had significantly increased numbers of residents at risk of being cut off from basic services, particularly those from vulnerable, lower-income, and marginalised groups. In addition, public transport facilitates provide the opportunity for incidental social interactions, which are crucial for community ties. Removing these routes forces a "shrinking world" onto residents, often compared to the isolation felt during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>
  
- 2. Health and Wellbeing Impacts:** The withdrawal of the 320/321 bus service will have direct, measurable negative outcomes for physical and mental health:
  - a. Access to Healthcare:** Some residents in Hempstead rely on the 320/321 service to attend medical appointments. The bus is a vital link for patients who do not have alternative means of travel. Without a bus service people will struggle to access GP surgeries, hospitals, pharmacies, opticians, dentists and other healthcare facilities including hospitals, leading to missed routine and nonurgent appointments. This can exacerbate delays in early diagnosis and routine monitoring, potentially impacting patient outcomes overtime<sup>3</sup>. The NHS has also highlighted that travel difficulties are common reasons for missed appointments<sup>4</sup>.
  - b. Mental Health:** The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in August 2025 highlighted that the removal of bus services in rural areas acts as a significant driver of poor mental health by exacerbating isolation, creating "transportation poverty," and severing access to essential services. The Campaign to Protect Rural England has identified that a decline of over 6% in rural bus mileage has left many residents, particularly the elderly and young, stranded, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and a loss of independence. Research conducted by the University of Southampton in 2025 identified that transport deprivation accounts for up to 37.7% of the relationship between income deprivation and depression among older adults. In 2023 Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee MP's expressed deep concern about how isolation because of poor public transport is contributing to poor mental health outcomes for all categories of people across rural communities in England<sup>5</sup>.
  
- 3. Impact on Key Demographics**
  - a. Children and Young People (up to 24 years):** Growing up in a rural area like Hempstead offers families an opportunity to develop a connection to nature that helps to foster independence and creativity. However, these benefits are often balanced by the potential for social isolation. Without a reliable bus service, young people in Hempstead will need to depend on parents for lifts to see friends or attend hobbies/ extracurricular activities, and they may face more limited access to diverse cultural experiences and specialised educational resources compared to those that have access to a range of public transport options:

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Health and Transport (2025). Robersshaw. L, et al. Missing the bus: Impacts of loss of bus services on the wellbeing of older adults

<sup>2</sup> Rural Services Network (2024): The Decline of Bus Services in Rural England: A Deepening Divide

<sup>3</sup> Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives (2023) Krasniuk. S, and Crizzle. A, : Impact of health and transportation on accessing healthcare in older adults living in rural regions

<sup>4</sup> NHS Website: (2023) NHS drive to reduce 'no shows' to help tackle long waits for care

<sup>5</sup> UK Parliament Rural Mental Health Report (2023), Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

- i. **School Age children:** Some children from Hempstead are not eligible for free school transport and will not be able to get to or from school without the 320/321 bus. For example, for one Hempstead family, their eldest child attends Joyce Frankland Academy Newport, not through choice but because there were insufficient spaces at Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS) despite this being their catchment and closest secondary school. This family has made the decision to send their two youngest children to Newport with the understanding that they would pay for the 320/321 bus. Both parents cannot drive the children as they work full time, they cannot change their pending school application and previous in-year applications to SWCH for other children in Hempstead have been unsuccessful. As such these children could not make their journey to school without a public bus in Hempstead.

In addition, school age children who access after school activities would not be able to return to Hempstead as they would have used the 320/321 bus service to return home. By withdrawing the bus service their opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities will be reduced and they will lose out of the potential benefits of holistic development, enhancing academic performance, and building crucial life skills. Participation in extracurricular activities boosts social, emotional, and physical well-being while improving confidence, time management, and resilience. These activities allow students to explore passions, reduce stress, and develop skills like teamwork and leadership that enhance future employability.

- ii. **Working age young people:** Lack of transport is a major barrier to education, training, and apprenticeships. Removing the 320/321 bus service will isolate those aged 16–24 by creating a "poverty of access" that stifles their transition to adulthood. From an employment perspective it will significantly limit young people's opportunity to local part-time work in the surrounding villages or towns. For those seeking fulltime employment it will prevent them from reaching wider labour market and ultimately result in social marginalisation and loneliness. In August 2025 Transport East noted that this factor alone has resulted in 86% of rural youth eventually feel forced to leave their communities in search of better connectivity.
- b. **Older People (65+):** Representing a growing portion of the Uttlesford district, older residents are statistically more likely to depend on bus services for social connection and healthcare. The removal of the 320/321 service would leave residents over 65 virtually stranded and dependent on private cars or expensive taxis (costing upwards of £40 for a single trip to the nearest town). Evidence submitted to the Government by Age UK estimate that approximately 40% of older adults who use local buses at least once a week use these routes are a "lifeline" for accessing healthcare, including the 25% of journeys dedicated specifically to medical appointments. Without these scheduled services, elderly residents face a "vicious cycle" of social isolation. Furthermore, the loss of these services effectively nullifies the benefits of the national concessionary bus pass, forcing those on fixed incomes to choose between expensive taxi fares or foregoing vital social and economic participation.
- c. **Vulnerable People:** The removal of the 320/321 bus services in Hempstead creates a profound transport accessibility gap for disabled residents, who already take 38% fewer trips than their non-disabled peers (Motability Foundation 2023). Losing these routes forces an extreme economic burden on a population already facing high living costs, as they are often pushed toward expensive private hire vehicles when their free concessionary passes become unusable. Beyond the financial strain, the loss of a predictable "lifeline" leads to missed healthcare appointments and physical confinement.

Ultimately this withdrawal strips away the autonomy of disabled individuals, fostering a cycle of social isolation and worsening long-term health outcomes.

#### 4. Economic Impact and Long-term Rural Decline

- a. **Access to Employment and Education:** The removal of the 320/321 bus service would create a logistical deadlock for residents, as those that use the bus to commute to work would be forced to either find other means of transport, find another job or give up work entirely without their transit link. This impact is particularly severe for those that are job seekers who do not have access to a car and rely on buses to reach employment hubs like Saffron Walden or Haverhill. Buses are the primary driver of social mobility for those entering the local labour market.
- b. **Local Businesses and High Streets:** Bus passengers contribute significantly to local economies, generating an estimated £660 million annually in Essex (Essex County Council). Withdrawing the 320/321 bus service removes potential customers from neighbouring high streets in Saffron Walden. Research in 2024 by The Confederation of Passenger Transport showed that bus passengers contribute approximately £39.1 billion annually to local economies, spending an average of £32 per return journey in shops and cafes. Removing these links often suppresses this expenditure entirely or shifts it to online retailers, potentially costing high streets £9.2 billion per year.
- c. **The "Cycle of Decline":** In addition to the possible consequences of the loss of young people remaining within the village it has been raised with the Parish Council that some families are considering moving if the bus service is lost as it will create an untenable crisis for working parents, as the "school run" becomes a statutory barrier to employment. Since the National Travel Survey indicates that those under 22 are most dependent on public transport for education, its removal forces parents—particularly those in low-income or single-parent households—to choose between their livelihoods and their children's schooling. For many, it is physically and financially impossible to "stop work" to provide twice-daily private transport, yet they may not qualify for Essex County Council's free transport if they are not attending their "nearest" school (for reasons previously cited). This logistical deadlock leaves families with "no choice but to move" to better-connected areas, accelerating a demographic shift where the village loses its working-age population and becomes an increasingly isolated, car-dependent settlement. This in turn leaves behind an increasingly elderly and isolated population, potentially damaging the long-term sustainability and vibrancy of the village.

#### 5. Policy Alignment and Strategic Considerations

The proposed removal of the 320/321 bus services from Hempstead stands in direct contradiction to Essex County Council's (ECC) strategic commitments to rural connectivity, social levelling up, and environmental sustainability.

Under the Everyone's Essex plan, the Council pledges to "level up" the county by addressing socio-economic inequalities and ensuring all residents have access to key services like healthcare, education, and employment—outcomes that are impossible to achieve in Hempstead without a viable public transport link.

Furthermore, the withdrawal undermines the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2022-2027, which explicitly aims to protect "valuable but not commercial" rural services and provide a "realistic alternative to car use. While the council uses a £5 cost-per-passenger threshold, this metric often fails to account for the unique geographical challenges of rural areas. Recent research suggests that for every £1 of public funding spent on bus services, it can generate at least £4.55 in wider economic and social benefits. The council has been urged to utilise Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding, which includes a recent £17.8 million allocation for Essex, to safeguard "socially necessary" rural links.

By effectively forcing a shift toward private vehicle dependency, this decision also conflicts with the Essex Climate Action Plan, which prioritises decarbonisation through sustainable travel modes.

**Recommendation:**

To address the critical transport needs of Hempstead and align with Essex County Council's strategic goals, it is recommended that the Council:

1. **Grant "Socially Necessary" Status:** Formally designate the 320/321 routes as "socially necessary" services. This acknowledges that while the route may not meet commercial profit margins, it provides an essential lifeline that prevents statutory failures in education access and healthcare.
2. **Utilise BSIP Funding:** Allocate a portion of the £17.8 million Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding specifically to subsidise the Hempstead service. This investment would leverage the proven £4.55 return for every £1 spent by reducing future demand on adult social care and mental health services.
3. **Adopt a Holistic Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Move beyond the narrow £5 cost-per-passenger threshold. A revised assessment should account for the £40+ cost of private hire for those on fixed incomes and the economic loss of 11% of commuters who may be forced to leave the workforce if the service is withdrawn.
4. **Implement a Youth & Education Guarantee:** Guarantee service continuity for students who were allocated schools outside their immediate catchment (such as Joyce Frankland Academy) to ensure the Council does not inadvertently create barriers to compulsory education for working families.

**Consider and consult/pilot alternative provision rather than complete removal of service:** Reduced Frequent Service specifically protecting peak-hour travel for workers and students and Pilot Demand-Responsive Enhancements: If full fixed-route frequency cannot be maintained, integrate the 320/321 into the DigiGo or DaRT network to ensure Hempstead does not become a "transport desert".

**T&C:** Newsletter entries must be received by [diana\\_frost@lineone.net](mailto:diana_frost@lineone.net) by the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month. Only village events will be promoted. No advertisements or personal profit promotions will be featured. To unsubscribe, email Diana Frost.