

1 Read the text fragments 1–4. What are they about? Choose from the options, a, b, or c.

1 Everybody knows the positive influence a good school in the neighbourhood can have on property prices. So, what do you do when you don't have one?

- a the importance of good schools
- b rising property prices
- c the price of education

2 A group of residents in Bolnore, near Haywards Heath, West Sussex, decided to build a school themselves. They successfully bid to start an eco-school in local woodlands. The parent-led group has just appointed a headteacher; the primary school, with space for 210 pupils, will open in September.

- a applying for jobs in primary schools
- b the power of parents
- c environmentally-friendly building

3 The group is just one of a growing number across the country: people banding together to improve their way of life, from saving a village shop or pub to starting a shared agriculture scheme, where everyone helps out and gets fresh vegetables weekly.

- a the importance of healthy eating
- b the disappearance of traditional village life
- c the trend of taking action

4 Across Britain, a community spirit is growing. The fact that most of the schemes are also green adds to their appeal. So, what is going on, and could you do the same in your area?

- a the attraction of green schemes
- b a call to action
- c growing your own vegetables

6 Use appropriate strategies to help you do the task.

The passage below has three paragraphs, labelled a–c. Which paragraphs mention the following? You may use any letter more than once.

- 1 a countryside issue _____
- 2 an example of a successful protest _____
- 3 a reason why pubs close _____
- 4 an organisation that encourages partnerships _____
- 5 a well-known person _____

a

According to recent figures from the British Beer & Pub Association, 39 pubs close every week. These days, it's far cheaper to buy alcohol in supermarkets to drink at home than it is to visit the local boozer. But that's not deterring the drinkers who are banding together to save their local pubs.

b

In Hesket Newmarket, Cumbria, 125 people raised £1,500 each and bought the Old Crown: each of them now has a say in how it is run. The pub in Charlton Horethorne, Dorset, was virtually derelict and about to be turned into a car park until the village rallied, set up a 'save the pub' group and had planning permission for the car park turned down: the Kings Arms reopened for business earlier this month. There are other examples up and down the country.

c

'The rural pub is the heart of the community – we've got to keep it as the heart,' says Pub Is the Hub, a scheme initiated by the Prince of Wales, which encourages breweries, pub owners, licensees and local communities to work together to support pubs in isolated rural areas. Pub Is the Hub (www.pubisthehub.org.uk) offers support and suggestions on how to go about things: it has assisted more than 350 pubs since its formation in 2001.

Part 3: Exam practice

The following passage has seven paragraphs, labelled A–G. Which paragraphs mention the following information? You do not need to mention all the paragraphs.

- 1 the relationship between local environment and behaviour _____
- 2 the benefits of asking around _____
- 3 becoming an organiser _____
- 4 partnerships against crime _____
- 5 problems which are not really problems _____
- 6 aspects of neighbourhood research _____

Will you love your neighbours?

A

When you are interested in buying a house, it's easy to check the location and specifications of the house, but how can you assess an area's community spirit – not just if the neighbours are friendly, but whether people will get involved in helping to deliver public services, setting up social enterprises and tackling local issues? Here are some tips for finding out what an area's community spirit is like.

B

If an estate agent shows you around, ask for the vendor's phone number. 'Meeting the seller is an opportunity to find out what an area is like,' says Chris Gittins, manager of Streets Alive (streetsalive.org.uk), which works with residents, councils and voluntary groups to build communities by hosting events and activities in streets. It is also worth trying to meet the neighbours to find out more about an area. If you don't find anyone at home, or don't get a clear response, talk to people in the pub or the corner shop.

C

Living Streets (livingstreets.org.uk), which promotes safe, active and enjoyable streets, says steer clear of heavy traffic. Its research shows that people living on busy streets shield themselves from noise, don't go outside and restrict their children's independence – all of which reduces interaction with neighbours. And although an open space may seem like an asset, it can also become a source of conflict, says Dominic Church, senior adviser at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. 'If they are not kept clear and nobody is clearly responsible for the maintenance, they can become breeding grounds for graffiti, antisocial behaviour and kids mucking about,' he says.

D

Local police can tell you whether there is a Neighbourhood (or Home) Watch scheme in your area (mynhw.co.uk). Living in an area with a scheme doesn't just reduce your insurance premiums and ensure that the police tackle local issues such as theft: research shows that even when neighbours have nothing in common they share a desire to create a safe area and create a community spirit. If there isn't a scheme, find out why.

E

Councils have lists of local voluntary organisations that can help to reveal the interests and activities of local communities. Some councils also run award schemes, which may include prizes for active and inspirational groups. Search the web, use social media and post queries on forums to find out residents' views. This may give you more varied and up-to-date information than the council. Look at newschoolsnetwork.org to see if there are any plans to set up a new free school in the area. This is a sign of socially engaged parents and community motivation.

F

Floods, high crime levels and other issues can give a neighbourhood a bad image, but they can boost community spirit. In my case, the floods of 2007 brought people together to tackle climate change, which led to a low-carbon group that this year won two national competitions worth more than £800,000. The CrimeMapper website (maps.police.uk) provides information on crime and antisocial behaviour by area and police force. You can search by five types of crime and get details of your local neighbourhood policing team, its contacts, and the next 'Have Your Say' meeting.

G

If you are confident about the house, you could go ahead with the purchase and hold a street party to boost community spirit. 'People who have just moved into a house are critical to setting up street parties,' Gittins says. 'After two or three years it becomes harder – they meet neighbours, get set in their routines, and feel less motivated.'