

Ellesmere Rural Parish Council

Parish Plan



October 2004

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Introduction

Parish Plans were first announced in November 2000 in a Government White Paper **Our Countryside – The Future**. They were designed to develop previous work such as village appraisals and village design statements, and set a framework for communities to plan their own future.

Parish Plans are part of the Countryside Agency's **"Vital Villages"** initiative, which aims to help 1000 communities produce a Parish Plan by 2004.

Ellesmere Rural Parish Council bid for, and received, grant aid to cover the costs of producing a Parish Plan for the local area. This would enable all residents to voice their concerns and share their views on a wide range of local issues.

This report explains the physical nature of Ellesmere Rural Parish. It also highlights the responses to a Residents' Questionnaire sent out in February 2003. The Action Plan shown in Section 8 has been formulated according to those responses.

The Ellesmere Rural Parish Plan will be divided into 6 sections:

- 1 **The Parish Today** describes the social and physical geography, historical context and economic and demographic features.
- 2 **Living in Ellesmere Rural Parish** gives details of the types of homes in the area, vehicle ownership, population mobility, building development, crime, the environment and quality of life.
- 3 **Education and Employment** summarises education, employment and job opportunities.
- 4 **Local Travel** explores public and private transport and associated safety factors.
- 5 **Local Services** focuses on general facilities, postal services and play facilities.
- 6 **The Action Plan** summarises the Action Points highlighted in the report and lists proposed action.

Consulting Residents

Consultation with residents was spearheaded by members of the Steering Group (see Appendix A). A newsletter was sent to all households in the area informing them about the proposals to develop a Parish Plan in partnership with members of the local community. Newspaper articles and posters advertised the Residents' Questionnaire, which would be delivered to all households in February 2003. .

Village Appraisal software (Countryside and Community Research Unit and Gloucestershire Rural Community Council 1998) was selected as the tool for designing the questionnaire and analysing the data gathered as a result of community consultation. The software is well established and is used by many community organisations such as the Countryside Commission, Rural Development Commission and the Council for Protection of Rural England.

A detailed Residents' Questionnaire (see Appendix B) was delivered to all households identified on the electoral roll. 926 questionnaires were delivered by members of the Steering Group – they were returned by free post. Comments were invited from all residents over the age of 11 years with the assurance of anonymity.

The geographical nature of Ellesmere Rural Parish (See Section 2) is such that it would be difficult to capture the potentially differing views of the communities involved. To overcome these limitations, the Parish was divided into six zones based on natural roads and boundaries (see Appendix C).

Questions were tailored to Ellesmere Rural Parish and were posed in 'open and closed' formats to encourage meaningful data to be generated. The software's capabilities enabled similarities and differences to be identified in each area.

From the 926 households in the Parish, 386 useable questionnaires were returned – a response rate of 42%. This is a good response for a postal questionnaire of this nature, bearing in mind that other consultation methods, such as public meetings or focus groups, would not be so representative. Only 2 questionnaires returned were spoiled. The household distribution and response rates for each zone are shown below.

It is interesting to note that 35% of the responses were from Zone 4. This largely reflects the population distribution in the Parish, but needs to be considered when interpreting the results of the survey. The 386 returned questionnaires allowed access to the views of 923 residents, including children. The table shows the number of respondents represented from each age category. There were approximately equal numbers of males and females represented.

	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage of households
Zone 1	50	13%
Zone 2	45	12%
Zone 3	21	5%
Zone 4	136	35%
Zone 5	52	14%
Zone 6	82	21%

Ages represented	
Up to 11 years	101
11 - 17 years	61
18 - 59 years	479
60 - 85 years	268
85 years and over	14

The Parish today

As a parish, Ellesmere Rural is quite unique. It consists of many villages and hamlets making up the hinterland of Ellesmere town covering the area west of the town as far as the Welsh border. The landscape is typical rolling English countryside, with woodland, copse, brooks and streams, sculptured and shaped by years of agriculture, predominantly dairy farming, dissected by a plethora of lanes and by-roads. Zones 5 and 6 has the Shropshire Union canal running through it. Nearby Ellesmere boasts the famous Shropshire Lake District made up of glacial meres. Although the area is rural there are almost 1000 households mainly clustered around Dudleston Heath/Criffsins, Welsh Frankton and Tetchill. The current population of the parish is 2,356 people (*Shropshire Primary Care Trust 2003*).

	Dudleston Heath	North Shropshire	England and Wales
Under 16	17.6	19.4	20.2
16 to 19	3.3	5.3	4.9
20 to 29	8.5	9.7	12.6
30 to 59	44.2	42.2	41.5
60 to 74	16.9	15.0	13.3
75 and over	9.5	8.4	7.6
Average age	43.0	40.4	38.6

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

Historically the parish was made up of large estates, farms and workers cottages. These all remain but are now mainly occupied by people who have recently moved into the area. However wealth accumulated in a by-gone era has left us some lovely properties. There are three beautiful churches at Criffsins, Welsh Frankton and Dudleston, this being the former Parish church and goes back to the beginning of the millennium. We also have chapels at Lee, Welsh Frankton, Criffsins and Dudleston Heath.

The majority of housing is owner occupied and with little provision for private or council rental. (2001 Census, ONS).

When the area was made up of large agricultural estates, this provided work for the majority of the villages, inhabitants. Each estate boasted brickyards, bakeries, carpenters, iron foundries and blacksmiths, serviced by a busy transport system of roads, railway and canals. Unfortunately all these industries have now gone and a great many jobs have also been lost in the recent past with the closure of Ifton Colliery in St. Martins and the Dairy in Ellesmere and most recently in agriculture itself.

Agriculture now accounts for only 4% of the rural economy, it is estimated that 39% of farms sold in 2000 were bought by non-farmers, who manage the land but do not farm it! (Shucksmith2000)

The unemployment rate in the parish as a whole is slightly below the national average of 3.4%. But to take Dudleston Heath/Crifton (Zone 2) on their own the figure of 3.2% is higher than the average for North Shropshire (2.5%)(ONS 2003).

On average 2/3rd of the population work out of the parish and 1/3rd work within it but this may reflect the growing trend of working from home.

Historically the parish boasted a school in each settlement but now we only have one primary state school at Crifton and one public fee-paying school for children from 8-18, day pupils and boarding at Ellesmere College.

The primary education provided at Crifton School has been recognised for the last two years by the receipt of the national school achievement award for the SATS results in Key Stage 1 & 2. However with reference to the census data it does show a higher incidence of the population of age 16-74 have no qualifications, in Dudleston Heath this stands at 30.8%, the national average being 29.1%. On the other hand 20.2% of the Dudleston Heath population are qualified to degree level, the national average being 19.8%.

Unemployment in the parish stands at an average of 3.2% which is below the national average of 3.4%. However this figure is higher than the average for North Shropshire which stands at 2.5%. Long term unemployed make up 33% of the parish's unemployed population (ONS 2003).

As Countryside Agency statistics report (*indicators of rural disadvantage 2003*) on average incomes of rural households tend to be higher than those of their urban counterparts. However this conceals wide gaps between the highest and lowest. Average rural incomes are inflated by higher earners living in rural communities, and people on lower incomes in rural areas were more likely to derive their main income from employment in the rural sector or be self-employed.