

ASHENDON COMMUNITY LED PLAN (CLP) REPORT

5th April 2018

Since the formal completion of the initial Community Led Plan investigations in 2012, the Steering Group has concentrated during the past few years on progressing five key areas of concern that had been highlighted in the surveys, questionnaires and focus groups that had been undertaken.

The Steering Group has been delighted that the Parish Council has acted with considerable success in rectifying concerns in many of these key areas.

1. Retaining a Village Pub.

The greatest anxiety about the most valued facilities in the village during the consultations was the threat of closure for the village pub, then named The Gatehangers. As a precaution the CLP Steering Group arranged for the pub to be included on AVDC's list of assets of community value. This gave the village the option of buying the pub should it be for sale, but in the event a new tenant was found who, over the past three years, has developed it into a well-regarded and hopefully profitable business, and it remains as a key focal point of the village.

2. A Village Housing Development Policy.

In consultation with the Parish Council Chairman and Clerk, the results of previous housing development surveys had been passed to Mrs Jean Fox, the Rural Housing Enabler. Subsequently she addressed a Parish meeting and the Council asked Mrs Fox to undertake a Housing Need Survey. This was done and some 39% of the village responded, well above the national average of 25%.

The survey results have been published on the Parish Council website and in essence recommend the building of:

☐ 2 x 1 bedroom homes for rent and

☐ 2 x 2 bedroom homes for rent

OR

1 x 2 bedroom house shared ownership and

1 x 2 bedroom for rent depending on the availability of suitable mortgages.

Following detailed consultation within the village and an extensive search, it was not possible to identify a suitable site for these proposed new houses. It was therefore decided in 2016 that this project would not be taken any further.

3. Roads and Traffic

Over the past two years considerable resurfacing of the roads in and around Ashendon had been completed with much support from our County Councillor. The road throughout the village and down the Westcott Road have been finished, white road markings laid, and road signs rationalised.

There are no outstanding issues to be tackled save for the consideration of a 20 mph speed limit near Pollicott, the continual problem of potholes in the nearby roads and the remaining need to find ways of keeping HGVs to a minimum and traffic speeds low.

In this respect the Group were delighted that training of volunteers had recently again taken place to operate speed measuring equipment.

4. Facilities for Young People

The CLP Steering Group believed that the building of an all-weather Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) on the playing fields would be an excellent addition to the community's facilities for young people. This was supported by the Parish Council who earmarked £5,000 for the project, and an Ashendon Playing Field Association Working Party was formed to develop this initiative. A total of £91,000 was raised via grants from various sources and the MUGA was officially opened in July 2016.

5. Broadband

Despite extensive liaison with BT and Bucks Business First (who advised AVDC on superfast broadband expenditure) during 2013/14, and clear assurances that we would be connected by fibre-optic cable in early 2015, this offer was withdrawn in February that year once they discovered that they had confused the relevant BT cabinet in Ashendon with the one in Westcott.

Subsequently a village Broadband Working Party was established with members drawn from the CLP Group and the Parish Council. Following extensive investigations it was decided to take advantage of a BT Community Fibre Scheme, which allowed some £35,000 to be raised - by means of government funded vouchers - towards the £65,000 cost. The remaining £30,000 was raised by donations from residents and many various and imaginative village fund-raising events.

A village Community Interest Company (CIC) was founded in 2017 which contracted in March 2017 with BT Openreach to install superfast broadband in both Ashendon and Pollicott by 25th March 2018. As of today, BT has singularly failed to fulfil their side of the contract and the latest of several new dates by when the new fibre system may be commissioned is the end of May 2018.

David O Crwys-Williams

Chairman

Ashendon Community Led Plan Steering Group

5th April 2018