



Cuddesdon and Denton Parish Plan

May 2010

Why a parish plan?

What's best for the village? What do young people need? How bad is the parking? These were just some of the questions that the new Parish Council members were asking themselves after their election in April 2007. A Parish Plan seemed one way to set about getting some answers.

The key part of a Parish Plan is the work done to produce it – a chance for everyone in the village to express their views on what matters for them; for the village, as a whole to identify what is most important and what it wants to do.

With support from the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, a steering group from all sections of the village launched the process at the Village Bonfire night in 2007. During 2008, we held a series of meetings to discuss the topics that had emerged. We took part in the annual Summer Fayre to gather the views of young people in the village. We then circulated a survey to every house in the village to check our findings. Lastly we drafted this plan.

What makes Cuddesdon and Denton special?

People in the village value its location in a beautiful, peaceful rural setting. They love the far-reaching views to the Chilterns and along the Thames valley, unspoilt by development.

They cherish the sense of community, with friendly people, a range of active village groups and a great pub.

Many people particularly appreciate the relationship with the Church. As well as its Norman church, Cuddesdon is unique in hosting a village-based Anglican theological college.

And then there is the rich history: a Roman villa at Castle Farm, a Saxon princely burial at Cuddesdon House, itself first built as the palace of the Bishop of Oxford and burnt down in the Civil War and again in the 1950s.

What did we find out?

People care about the village. They want it better looked after, in ways which cherish its traditional rural character.

The last major investment in our village was the extension of the village hall and recreation ground in the 1960s. Since then we have lost the village school and the shop. Whilst most adults take pleasure in the quiet rural location, those without their own transport and young people, particularly teenagers, can feel constrained by its limitations.

A conclusion from the Parish Planning process therefore is: "It's time to invest in the village again". This is as much about investing our own efforts as it is about investing money and the focus should be on:

- caring for the village;
- improving its facilities;
- Building on the strengths of our community.

How this plan should be read

Much of what is contained in the plan is the result of a parish survey. This was distributed to every house in the village and 38% of all adults responded. We don't know why many people chose not to respond; popular theories suggests that for some it was because they are content with things as they are, others that they had been asked and responded in the consultations earlier, some may have been cynical and yet others simply did not get round to it. Whatever the reasons we do not claim that the plan should be read as a blue print for our community but more as a road map which points us towards practical solutions to some concerns whilst also providing a context and direction for supporting the aspirations of those with the time and energy to invest in our community.

The plan is focused on three themes; caring for the village, improving its facilities and building on the strengths of our community. It looks at the issues in relation to them as they have emerged from the consultation process and notes actions which have been suggested to address them. Some of the suggestions are fairly simple and inexpensive to implement. Others will be more contentious involving sensitive negotiation within the community. Yet others will be expensive in terms of cash, voluntary time, energy and expertise.

The Plan indicates actions which could be taken to progress the plans ambitions and indicates a sponsor for the actions where we have one. Where we do not have a sponsoring organisation at present we hope that by listing potential agreed solutions we will be providing a list of challenges for groups in our community to take up in the future as energy and resources become available.

Overview

Caring for the village

The issues are:

- litter
- dog mess
- planning
- general improvements.

Improving its facilities

The issues are:

- facilities for young people
- road safety
- village hall
- village shop
- affordable housing.

Building on the strengths of our community

The issue is:

- building on existing groups and activities to strengthen our sense of community.



With thanks to Colin Hessey

Caring for the village - Litter and dog mess

Just over half of the survey respondents think that litter is a problem, while just under half -are concerned by dog-fouling. As one person put it, there is litter in “most places really”.

‘Hot spots’ for litter are the verges on the roads leading into the village, both for general litter thrown from vehicles and for more serious fly-tipping

Dog mess seems to be a more specific issue wherever dogs are walked.

Suggested Actions – Litter

- Organise a twice yearly village litter-pick agreed by Parish Council
- Report all fly-tipping promptly to SODC by any active citizen
- Monitor impact of new waste collection service agreed by Parish Council
- Install litter bin by play equipment on recreation ground. Completed by Parish Council.

Suggested Action - Dog mess

- Provide an additional dog-waste bin by footpath north of Parkside now installed by the Parish Council.

Caring for the village – Planning

Only a minority of people appear to be completely satisfied with planning decisions. These are the responsibility of SODC and the OCC with the Parish Council only having the right to comment on submitted planning applications.

Planning decisions can have a significant impact on individuals but may also affect the wider community if they are seen to have a negative impact upon the character of the Village or on road safety.

There is widespread interest in the possible development of the barns at Dove house Farm and of other potential developments.

Suggested Actions – Planning

- Produce a village design statement
- Advise SODC of the Village interest in the Dove-house Farm and other potential developments and ask them to provide opportunity for early involvement in any proposals. Action taken through Parish Council.

Caring for the village - General improvements

Throughout the process, people made suggestions for improvements to the appearance of the village. Some of these have already started; others need more consideration. Some belong naturally to the Parish Council as the responsible authority, others could be taken on by the proposed Conservation Group but many depend upon developing a sense of pride as a spur to individual action in respect of their own property or immediate environment.

Suggested Actions – Improvements

- Improve footpath along Denton Brook. Offer of finance made by Parish Council.
- Better maintenance of footpaths past College
- Enhance Verges in High Street
- Massive planting of bulbs
- Wide-spread tree planting
- Improve the appearance of Denton Brook
- New planting on the Green is being arranged by the Parish Council.
- Paint Parkside bus shelter. Completed by Parish Council

Improving village facilities – Parking and Road safety

Parking

The layout of the village was established at a time when most people walked to get anywhere. Nowadays most households in the village rely on at least one car for transport.

Many respondents think that parking is unsatisfactory. The worst area is Denton Hill up to Vine Cottages, followed by the High Street near the Bat and Ball. The main reason is safety many of respondents think it is difficult to drive past the long line of parked cars; and some find it is difficult to find a parking space.

Some people proposed creating parking spaces on the recreation ground or the grass opposite the Bat and Ball. Others do not want them touched

One person did note that the parked cars slowed traffic down.

Road safety

Traffic speed is another concern for many people who think that cars are speeding through the village – confirming the findings of a recent police survey. Children are discouraged from cycling by the speed of cars through the village. The main hot spot is the Wheatley Road past Parkside.

Some people have experienced near misses during the past year because cars were going too fast for the road conditions, particularly on Denton Hill and at the bend by the Old Vicarage.

Suggested actions – Road safety

- Create more passing places
- Improve road markings at entrance to the village and by the green. Action taken by County Council.

Suggested actions – Parking

- Encourage people to use their own parking spaces
- Property owners to consider ways to increase offstreet parking.

Improving village facilities – transport and affordable housing

Bus service

Very few people use the bus service regularly and a minority only occasionally. Recent changes to the time table seem to have made matters worse...

One of the main reasons for people who might use the bus service not doing so is the longer journey and less convenient times. If the bus service were improved – with a direct service to Oxford or perhaps a feeder service to Wheatley the main uses would be for shopping and evenings out, although even then many respondents said they would still not use a bus service. There is also fairly limited support for a car sharing scheme

Suggested actions – Bus service

- Make the case for a service bus service.

Affordable housing

At the same time as the Parish Survey, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council ran a confidential survey to explore the need for affordable housing in the village.

ORCC concluded that first time buyers would generally struggle to afford a home in the village. They identified the following needs over the next five years:

- Three 1 bed properties for rent.
- One 1/2 bed property for shared ownership.
- One 4 bed property for rent
- Many respondents said they would support a small development of affordable homes for people with a genuine connection to the parish although as the survey shows there is hardly any need for this. ORCC reported that Dove-house Farm and Parkside would be the most popular sites for any such development.

Suggested actions – housing

- Share the ORCC housing report with the Parish Council and SODC
- Seek to influence the allocation of existing social housing stock

Improving village facilities – Young people and village hall

Top of the list of priorities for the village as perceived by the adults appear to be better facilities for young people. A substantial majority of those responding think this is very or fairly important. Almost as popular is support for improving the village hall and building a new multi-purpose play surface on the recreation ground

Half of the young people responding to the survey would like a play surface. Other suggestions included picnic tables and a teenage shelter on the recreation ground.

As well as improving the kitchen and toilets in the village hall, other suggestions for the hall included providing a level area to the side or rear of the village hall to make it safer. It would also make it more attractive for events by making the most of the view.

Suggested actions – Play surface

- Secure funding and build a multi-purpose play surface on recreation ground. Parish Council keeping this under review.
- Use spoil to create level area alongside village hall.

Suggested action – Basket ball hoop

- Provide this on recreation ground for older children separately or as part of multi-purpose play surface. Accepted as a project by Parish Council.

Suggested action – Village hall

- Improve kitchen and toilets. Completed by Village Hall Committee.

Suggested actions– Village hall parking

- Increased use of the Village Hall and recreation ground is likely to compound parking problems hence need to consider solutions possibly in conjunction with the College or other land owners. College has offered assistance on an occasion by occasion basis.

Improving village facilities – Village shop

When asked the question by itself, the majority of respondents support the idea of having a community shop although around half of those responding indicated they would be unlikely to use it.

A reasonable number of people said they would help to run a shop and suggestions included:

- a farmers market in the village hall selling local produce;
- a Saturday morning shop selling local produce, pre-ordered bread and milk;
- a campus shop in the college open to the village;
- a more conventional village shop stocking the basics.

Suggested action – Village shop

- Encourage and nurture enthusiasm amongst people who may be willing to lead and test options.

Building on the strengths of our community

There are a remarkable number of village groups and activities for our size of village – Youth Club, Mother and Toddlers, Film Club, Women’s Institute, College Ball, Bingo, Church Fete, Senior Citizens Lunch, village walks and fireworks and regular football on the recreation ground, as well as the recently established coffee morning.

As well as a parish newsletter, we now have a village web-site. There is an active Church as well as the key umbrella organisations: the Parish Council, Village Hall Committee, Parochial Church Council and Neighbourhood Watch. And, of course, there’s a great pub.

A number of people made comments which suggest that building on the strengths of our community should be a third theme to the village plan:

- “Greater interaction between college student and village; keeping up a community spirit “

- “It would be good if more contact points were developed so I could get to know my neighbours better. Things like a coffee shop, exercise class, etc would be great.”
- “Continue events involving all the village and increase them”
- “More events to promote community spirit”
- “More community events”

Traditionally the Parish Council organises the annual fireworks night – it can obtain insurance more easily. The Village Hall Committee manages the hall and organises social events. Another important group is the Youth Club which relies exclusively on volunteers, without professional training.

Facilities for young people were recognised as a key priority by all. The young people themselves want both improved facilities and a wider range of activities, including trips outside the village.

Many adults would like to see cultural events, such as concerts and exhibitions in the Hall and there seems good support for exercise classes with more women than men being the potential participants.

Suggested actions – Community

- Existing Village Organisations could foster and support new initiatives by individuals or small groups. Such actions could lead to more of the Plans objectives being achieved but is dependent on interest, volunteers and energy in our small and resources limited community.

Building on the strengths of our community – new groups

Taking better care of the village was a strong message through the parish plan process. Less strong was the need to take care of each other, which was brought home by the extreme weather conditions this winter when travelling out of the village was difficult.

In fact neighbours do take care of each other but the sense from some of the survey responses is that perhaps we could do more to welcome new people to the village and to help some people get involved in village life. This might entail existing organisations extending their roles or the formation of new interest groups.

To build on existing networks of good neighbours, the Parish Council is giving consideration to setting up a simple emergency plan to make sure that no one falls through the net when there is an emergency event such as a prolonged power cut or extended severe weather. The aim is to provide a back-up to the existing networks, helping them to manage in conditions which are out of the ordinary.

Suggested actions

- Prepare a simple village emergency plan. Considered by Parish Council who have decided no action is needed.
- Encourage new village organisations, e.g. a conservation group

Background to the plan

Parish Plan events

The Parish Plan was launched on 5 November 2007 at the annual village bonfire night.

There were four focus group meetings in the spring of 2008:

- affordable housing;
- parking;
- village shop;
- The appearance of the village.

Young people were encouraged to come to the Summer Fayre with a climbing tower where Kevin Brophy from the Oxfordshire County Youth Service chatted to them informally about their aspirations for the village. There was also a display of the findings so far.

The steering group then worked with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to develop a survey which went to every house in the village during the autumn.

The Parish Survey

The total population of the village at the last census in 2001 was 502; the total over 16 population 375. The Adult survey received 131 replies – a 35% response rate. The survey is therefore a useful indicator of what those willing and able to respond are thinking and gives credible support to the suggestions outlined in the plan. The fact that so many people did not respond may indicate that they are happy to leave decisions to others or that they are negative in their expectations of what the plan will achieve. Either way and as the plan makes clear we should feel challenged to increase community involvement and therefore ownership for all that we would hope to achieve.

53% of those replying were female, 47% male. Only 18% of those replying were connected with Ripon College, suggesting that the results were not biased by an over-representation of College replies.

We received only 16 “under 16” replies, which means that young people's survey cannot be taken as representative of the

Whole under 16 populations of 127. In addition to the survey, views of 15 young people were captured at the Summer Fayre.

Steering Group

Members of the steering group were:

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With thanks

The Steering group would like to thank the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council for their support and advice.