

Chearsley 2014

A Village Plan for Chearsley

This Document

Chearsley 2014 is a Village or Parish Plan and includes statements on a wide range of topics about the way the residents wish to see their village develop over the next 20 years or so, a timeframe that is more or less consistent with the planned period of the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan that is being prepared by Aylesbury Vale District Council (not yet adopted).

It is not a Neighbourhood Plan as defined by the Localism Act 2011.

As such it is not part of Planning Policy nor does it have any statutory effect or formal role in the planning process. It does however have the potential to influence planning outcomes. AVDC has stated that such Plans will be taken into account so far as possible when local issues are considered. It will also be used as a guide by Chearsley Parish Council on setting local Policy and responding to Planning Proposals.

January 2014

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Forward

Chearsley 2014 is a statement about Chearsley as it is now and the way we wish to see our village develop over the next 20 years.

It presents a snapshot of the village and the way of life here at the end of 2013, identifying those things that we cherish and wish to keep as well as the things we would like to see changed or improved.

Inevitably there is a wide range of opinion on most topics. There are those that consider the village to be more or less ideal as it is with little or no need for further development. Others take the view that things can never stand still and that there will always be a need for change to ensure we remain a thriving community in a changing world.

The challenge for the Village Plan has been to take the best from all points of view and to arrive at a statement that really is the best for our village. By ensuring that there has been the widest possible consultation during its preparation we hope and believe that the Plan achieves that end and truly represents a consensus view.

As well as presenting a commentary on most aspects of village life the Plan identifies a number of Village Objectives that have emerged as topics on which there is a clear feeling for further work to be done.

In that sense this document is a beginning rather than an end and it includes an Action Plan that will provide a structure for taking forward the work that will be necessary to enable these Objectives to be met.

To remain of value into the future the Village Plan will need regular updating and it is suggested that a formal review is carried out at no more than 5 year intervals.

Into Chearsley

The village of Chearsley is situated on sloping land high above the course of the River Thames, four miles north of Thame, an area designated as an Area of Attractive Landscape. The four approach roads, from Long Crendon, Chilton, Winchendon and Aylesbury, converge at an offset crossroads north of The Green and the lanes that enter the village from here, School Lane, Church Lane and Shupps Lane, all terminate as footpaths. The village dwellings are largely strung around an intricate, looping road framework of narrow, sunken lanes bounded by embanked grass verges and enclosed by hedgerows or boundary walls of witchert, brick or stone. This road pattern and form of enclosure is quite unlike any other village in the District, with the sunken lanes, or 'holloways', being a good example of a late Saxon village. Origins probably date to the eighth and ninth centuries.

The thirteenth to fifteenth Century rubblestone parish church of St. Nicholas is situated at the south-eastern end of the village. Adjoining the churchyard are some ancient earthworks which probably mark the site of an older settlement left derelict after the Black Death in the fourteenth Century.

The four approaches to the village are all interesting. The road from Chilton is along a ridge above the village with fine long distance views to the south and west. Directly ahead, beyond the focal point of the chequered brick and tile 17th century old farmhouse, are views eastwards across the Aylesbury Vale to the Chiltern Hills. Arriving at the road junction the picture broadens to include a group of black, weather-boarded and stone barns in School Lane, a colour-washed and tiled cottage, the fine horse chestnut tree and the whitewashed (but much altered) old Smithy. The two low brick outhouses to the farmhouse and colour-washed cottage mark the entrance to School Lane.

Approaching from Winchendon the road runs along the same ridge as the road from Chilton, descending gently between inter and post war housing and allotments to the crossroads with the horse chestnut tree. This approach gives superb long distance views across the Aylesbury Vale to the Chiltern Hills. Arriving at the crossroads from this angle gives a splendid view of most of the buildings enclosing The Green. The scene is in two parts with the barns; cottage and Smithy mentioned above to one aspect and the longer view to the thatched, colour-washed seventeenth/eighteenth Century Bell Inn and more recent brick and tiled village shop with its visually important old clay roofing tiles

Approaching from Aylesbury, the first features noticed is the tower of the parish church in the distance, a cottage and the tall intricate brick chimneys and tiled roofs of the 19th Century Vicarage set amongst the trees. This is in essence a rural approach to the village, well clothed with trees and hedgerows. The road ascends past a small stretch of ribbon development to the cross roads, flanked by two entrance cottages to the village. At the crossroads the road bends left and the view is across The Green to Church Lane beyond which disappears between a long, whitewashed, slate roofed cottage and brick and slate agricultural building.

On the ascending approach from Long Crendon there are excellent views to the west, and to the east extensive views to the Chiltern Hills. On the right is the high witchert wall to Manor Farm, culminating in the attractive black weather-boarded and tiled barn, then the whitewashed cottage and brick agricultural building to the Green on the right with the excellent double-gable elevation of the Old Farmhouse forming a focal point.

The dominating feature of the Green is the Bell Inn, with a brick agricultural building and a pair of Victorian brick cottages set back behind the hedges.

Into the lanes there is a mix of more modern homes and old and interesting cottages. One such is the terrace of cottages in School Lane and Lower Green Lane, opposite the Victorian old school building. These form an excellent visual group comprising a mixture of timber frame with brick infilling, rubblestone and brick, many colour-washed. Roofs are mainly of clay tiles but two are thatched.

The entrance to the footpath to the Aylesbury Road at this point is intriguing being tightly enclosed by the white colour-washed and thatched witchert and wall, and red brick wall opposite. The path curves from sight around the cottage, the brick wall first containing and then closing the view.

The red brick Victorian school building, with its low, enclosing brick wall, is a fine structure forming the focal point from School Lane. There are extensive fine views easterly from both Lower Green Lane and School Lane.

At Watts Green, where the grass verge widens out at a lane junction, there is an attractive cluster of cottages, three of timber frame construction with brick infilling and three of brick and tiled. An interesting glimpse of the old Farthing Cottage with its dormer window and thatch is afforded along Hicks Path leading from Dark Lane.

Walking the narrow, winding lanes of the village the eye is delighted by a variety of cottage gables, thatch and tile, views often and fortunately retained through new developments having been set back to a building line. A subtle contribution to the overall 'townscape' of parts of the village is made by small outhouses.

The old cottages are of rubblestone, rendered witchert, timber frame with brick infilling, and brick, some colour-washed. A few are a combination of two or even three of these materials. The finest of the witchert and brick walling is to be found at Manor Farm in Church Lane. Brickwork is generally orange/red in colour, sometimes of a chequered pattern formed with dark glazed headers.

Roofs are thatch, red/brown clay tiles or slates and generally fairly steep in pitch with simple gable ends, often with exposed purlins. Any barge boards are usually narrow and fairly insignificant, the principal exceptions being one or two Victorian buildings. Eaves are often flush, or, where they overhang, are formed by exposing the rafters.

There are many important trees and tree groups in the village in addition to the trees on The Green and the hedgerows flanking the lanes. Of particular interest are the hedgerow screening the back gardens of the houses in Old Plough Close from the main Aylesbury Road and the hedgerows enclosing the western side of The Green and road junction.

(Acknowledgement is made to Ted Hooton and his book 'Cheersley - Living Through History' as the original source of most of the material in this Introduction)

Housing

Introduction

In many respects both in character and number, the housing in Chearsley defines the village. The character of the housing has a bearing on who wishes or is able to live here and the number of houses determines the number of people in the locality and hence the viability of local businesses and their impact on the village environment.

These linkages were a major consideration in the initial Village Plan development work and were picked up by many respondents in the consultation process. This section of the Plan aims to capture these themes and reflect the variety of opinion in the village on what is an emotive subject, whilst not seeking to suggest any sort of Housing Policy which is beyond the scope of a Village Plan.

The case for and against housing growth

The main argument for growth in house numbers is the perceived limitations of the current housing stock in meeting the changing personal circumstances for Chearsley families. It is argued that a modest increase would help residents to remain in the village when their housing needs change but family, work or emotional ties remain inextricably linked to Chearsley.

Examples are the need to provide for growing families where a larger house is required, or alternatively families where children leave the nest or whose lifestyle or economic circumstances change and so require something smaller. There are also those who find themselves living alone and who would appreciate the opportunity to move within the village. In all these situations the opportunity to downsize or upgrade within the village is desirable, enabling people to retain their links with Chearsley and continue the contribution their family has made to village life.

There is also a sustainability issue arising from the beneficial impact of a larger population on local business and organisations. This is illustrated by the loss of the Village School some years back and the difficulties experienced in recent years in keeping the Village shop open.

The main counter argument to growth is that the village is already near optimum size and significant housing development, whether through one by one infill or multiple unit construction, would change the essential character of the village in a major way. There is an almost universal desire to retain the essential rural beauty of our village, including avoiding creep beyond accepted village boundaries, and significant increase in housing numbers could threaten that.

There is also concern about the impact of housing growth on associated infrastructure and in particular about the impact of infill housing on the historic sunken lanes, the Conservation Area and the rural green heart of the village.

Chearsley as a growing village

When considering possible future housing growth it is informative to review how the village has grown in the past. Historical data (Figure 1) reveals growth in the 25 year period up to 2012 from some 180 homes in 1987 to 220 in 2012, a 22% increase over that period or an average of 1.6 new homes per year.

Continuing the current rate of growth for the next twenty years would bring a further 32 new homes to Chearsley by 2032.

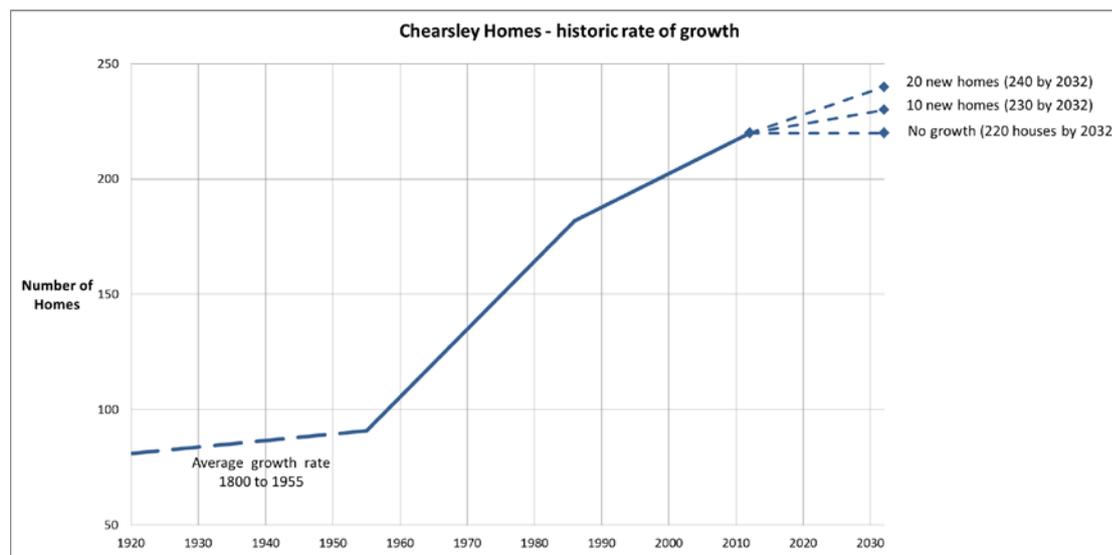


Figure 1. Households in Chearsley – Historical Growth and Future Projections

Looking further back to the period from 1955 to 1987, the rate of growth was even greater, with an increase of 93 homes from around 87 to 180 over that period, equivalent to around 3 new homes per year. If that level of growth had been sustained, we would now be living in a village of 270 homes with a total of over 326 households in Chearsley by 2032.

Higher growth rates would inevitably have an impact on the character of the village and make it feel a very different place to live. The consultations showed that many people would have deep concerns about this. It has also been noted that housing infill, a main feature behind the increases noted above, has almost reached a natural limit.

Throughout the Plan consultation period there has been a clear majority view that, being realistic, Chearsley would inevitably grow to some extent over the next twenty years and that to advocate zero housing development was not a realistic proposition.

In December 2011 the village accepted a planning indication from AVDC of up to 10 new houses in the village over the 20 year period of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan. The draft Strategy section of that document, which reflects that figure, was subsequently developed and published coincident with the work on the Chearsley Plan. This figure would be a significant reduction on the historic rate of growth as shown in Figure 1 at just 5% of the 2012 figure.

The results of the village survey in December 2012 showed a clear 78% majority view from respondents that they were happy with a continuation of the trend of the past twenty years or so, which works out at around 22 new properties in total or 10% of the 2012 figure. This figure was the subject of much comment on the July 2013 Draft Plan document, an analysis of which showed 22% preferring the 10 houses figure, 13% supporting 20, 19% asking for

'moderate' growth or some in-between figure and 15% wanting the whole subject re-visiting. 31% made no comment.

In addition to controlling housing numbers there was a strong 65% preference in December 2012 for spreading any development evenly over the 20 year period and this emerged very strongly again during 2013 when specific housing development proposals attracted a very strong negative reaction to a large number of houses being built in the same place at the same time.

As a Village Plan this document can set no formal policy or targets for housing development. As an indicator however, it is probably fair to conclude in summary, from all the many inputs received, that most people would be content to see growth of perhaps 10-15 houses over the next 20 years, so long as that growth does not put extra pressure on the historic heart of the village, building is reasonably evenly spread in both time and location and the appearance of any new build is in keeping with the character of the village.

Where to develop

Most housing in the village is in the lanes area to the East and South of the main road between Long Crendon and Cuddington. South East of the lanes the land towards the River Thames is low lying and prone to flooding, limiting scope for building development. To the South West of the lanes is the church and farmland, with more farmland to the North East. All providing natural boundaries to development.

To maintain the nature of the growth in Chearsley seen over the past 50 years, accommodating even a modest number of 10 new homes as indicated by AVDC will be challenging as sites for individual housing infill or very small developments are now virtually exhausted. It is arguable that the village has reached capacity in this respect.

In particular the area of the village bounded broadly by Church Lane, School Lane and Dark Lane now offers no further actual building sites other than building in gardens. To allow further development here would therefore further erode the green heart of the village, so lamented in Ted Hooton's published reflections on the historic growth of Chearsley. Relying on Listed Building status or a Conservation Area location of some properties might inhibit this possibility, but without guarantee. More development in this area will also place further pressure on the infrastructure, in particular putting even more traffic in the sunken lanes whose banks are already subject to significant damage from vehicles, plus the need for parking space. This concern emerged strongly in the consultation that showed a small majority believing there should be no further Infill with additionally a significant number suggesting limited infill.

It is recognised that national planning regulations have a major bearing on this issue and of course individuals have a right to apply for permission to develop under planning laws. However it is fairly clear that the view of the village as a whole remains that the pre-disposition of the Parish Council should be to oppose such development for the reasons identified here.

Village Objective 1.

Further infill within the village lanes and Conservation Area should be resisted.

This conclusion prompted a look at possible alternative approaches to housing development during the Plan preparation work. If growth is not to rely totally on infill, new housing build outside of the lanes area could be a more likely scenario. This thinking shaped the identification of a range of theoretical locations for housing development in the initial draft village plan. There was a degree of consensus on some of these in both the 2012 and 2013 consultations, but significant opposition to others. Since the output was not in any way conclusive it has not been pursued here.

Type of Housing.

Another important factor is the type of housing that is preferred.

Although a small village, Chearsley contains a reasonably wide variety of sizes and types of housing at present. In the 2012 consultation there was a clear 63% majority for that position to be maintained, with options purely favouring smaller, medium or executive style houses gaining relatively little support. The comments suggest overwhelming support for a mixture of housing to be maintained but also reflected a view that the current housing stock did not adequately provide for the needs of the younger families and senior residents of the village, suggesting that any future development should favour these sections of our community.

Village Objective 2.

Housing development should be preferred where it helps to conserve a balance of mixed housing across the village.

House Extensions.

A related issue is the extent to which there should be a set of guidelines by which the Parish Council can judge whether or not to support proposed housing extensions. At present, when considering applications, Parish Council members undertake site meetings, examine plans and take note of district-wide policies but have no Chearsley-specific principles to work to that would ensure a consistent approach to preserving and conserving the essential character of the village whilst respecting the rights of individual householders. Sympathetic use of materials, landscaping plans, over-development, access, off-road turning and parking, visual impact, etc. are each areas on which there might be guidance to assist both the Parish Council and individual applicants when developing alteration proposals.

The 2012 consultation however showed no clear view on this with just a small 47% to 40% majority favouring a formal Parish Council policy. Whilst this response was relatively even, the associated comments were mainly concerned as to whom would be the arbiters of such a policy and in particular that it could be subject to local interest group pressure. As the majority of comments considered the current planning processes as adequate, no objective on this subject is included here but it may be something the Parish Council could consider if the concerns identified can be adequately addressed.

Business

Independent Businesses

With Chearsley being essentially a rural residential village, there is little business here save for the village shop and The Bell public house, vitally important as these are, and Grove Farm and Bridge Farm on the outskirts of the village. Opportunities for further business development and employment are extremely limited given the size of the village population and proximity of other facilities in the larger villages of Haddenham, Long Crendon and Cuddington.

Commercial viability is an issue for small businesses everywhere and the challenges facing The Bell and village shop are clear examples of that in Chearsley. Over the years, we have lost our school and Post Office, both of which were important village facilities, amenities and meeting places. Once lost they are very difficult to restore.

It is conventional wisdom that a village without a shop and pub is a less attractive place to live. Such outlets act as a focus of community activity and evidence points to house prices being boosted by the presence of a vibrant village shop and village pub.

Despite that however, shops and pubs in village communities across the country are struggling; their existence being threatened by changing social habits and lifestyles, increasing customer expectations and competition.

The Chearsley Shop

The shop is located by the Green. It is fairly small and has limited parking but its convenient location affords it valuable passing trade. It is run with generous opening hours and provides a valuable, friendly and helpful local service to the community.

The trading position of the Shop reflects national trends with its future having been under threat twice in recent years. On the first occasion in 2000 the village rallied around and fought off a proposal to sell the property and convert it to domestic use. This resulted in the Shop continuing in business until about 2006 when it finally closed due the lease expiring. It remained closed for some twelve months during which time the Post Office was lost. The property was sold in 2007 to a new owner who opened the Shop with a Tea Room but this was a short lived, though well received, venture and the Tea Room closed in 2009 and the Shop in early 2010. The shop remained closed until 2011 when it re-opened with a new tenant who now has a ten year lease.

The Shop is reported as 'sustainable' as a business. The current tenant is seeking to build revenue through installing a lottery machine and providing limited postal services.

The main threat to the shop is the perennial difficulty of attracting adequate trade. The experience in Chearsley has been one of loud and vocal support when there is a threat to the shop's existence but an inability of the village as a whole to provide the long term, day in and day out, month in and month out, support that will ensure long term success. Failure of the village to support its shop will result inevitably in the loss of this major asset and significant contributor to the character of the village.

The Bell

The Bell is located on the lower side of the Green. It maintains the character of a traditional country pub and provides lunchtime and evening opening with dining. It has a family friendly garden with play equipment and a car park which contains recycling facilities.

It provides a much valued meeting place for socialising in the village, particularly in the evenings. Like the shop, it is an essential element that defines the quality and character of life in the village. The importance of supporting it as a business which serves the interest of the community in a fundamental way cannot be overstated.

The Bell is on a rolling lease until 2015. It is described by the landlord as 'sustainable', but it relies on its food sales and events to make it so. The beer garden with its children's playground is a big attraction when the weather is fine.

Initiatives to enhance business include employment of a dedicated chef, food promotional events such as Pie Tuesday or Fish and Chips with a bottle of wine, lunch time set menus and fun days

One area suggested in the 2012 Consultation was the idea of a Boules pitch. The Garden at The Bell is large enough to accommodate such a facility but the Landlords could not justify the investment and any request for assistance from the brewery would simply ratchet up the monthly rental. It was suggested that this might be a potential village project if there were enough support for the idea but the consultation indicated that this would not be the case, with only around 30% of respondents indicating they would support such an initiative.

One recent difficulty for the Bell was a perceived competitive threat from the Cricket Club resulting from social activities being promoted within their pavilion. Gladly, discussion on this sensitive issue between the parties established a desire for collaboration rather than competition and an intent to cooperate on generating the revenues that both organisations need.

Other Businesses in the Village

Other than these ventures there appears to be little business activity in the village. Homeworking is a rapidly developing way of working nationally which was tested in the 2012 consultation with questions asking "Are you are a business person in the area" and "Are you a homeworker". Surprisingly these elicited 70% and 60% 'No' responses respectively.

It is apparent however that more and more people will work from home in the future. Travel is not only getting more arduous with ever increasing road traffic but also high commuting and office space costs provide incentives for both employee and employer to favour home-working.

Technology is making it significantly easier to carry out many jobs from home and whilst many people won't work full time at home, increasing numbers may do so several days a week.

This trend brings more focus on the need for better electronic communications with the outside world as discussed in the section on Broadband. Indeed, 'improved Broadband' was the main response to the consultation question: "is there anything that you feel could be in the Village Plan that would help you run your business more effectively". The need for a Post Office or availability of common Post Office services was also mentioned by many.

With Internet shopping becoming increasingly popular there are a number of people in the village who are looking at building businesses based on this medium. Anyone who buys and sells on the Internet is dependent on a delivery mechanism to dispatch or receive goods. A central point in the village for the delivery or collection of parcels would simplify this considerably – especially for the people who are out of the house all day.

Similarly, as more people do start to base themselves from home there may be a requirement for shared secretarial services. These could include photo copying, short run printing, telephone message taking (not everyone wants to publicise their mobile number) and offices and presentation rooms for short term use. These ideas came forward in the consultation, along with suggestions such as breakfast networking meetings to talk about business matters (participants paying a monthly subscription perhaps to the pub), and a published list of professionals within the village who are willing to share skills to encourage working with local people as much as possible. A semi-retired farmer suggested better outlets for local produce to encourage consumption of more local fare in the village.

A more detailed analysis of the demand for facilities of this sort is included in the Action Plan.

Traffic, Roads and Lanes

In common with many other villages, Chearsley constantly grapples with problems caused by road traffic and the question of how to reconcile the need to accommodate traffic within the village with the difficulties, inconveniences and damage that it causes.

As at the time of the 1987 Chearsley Village Appraisal, the questions of speeding, mainly on the through route through the village, roadside parking, road maintenance, ease of vehicle access and damage caused by heavy vehicles in the sunken lanes exercises the minds of villagers in casual conversation and everyday experiences. This stimulates a range of responses expressed as keenly now as twenty-five years ago.

However the main difference in 2013 is the number of vehicles using the lanes, enhanced by the advent of home delivery and Internet shopping which did not exist to the same extent in 1987 and which significantly exacerbate these issues. Street lighting, light pollution and speed limits within the village lanes are also issues of great interest to many.

These issues were all investigated in the consultation.

Speeding

On speeding, there is a strong desire to achieve a much higher degree of compliance with the 30mph limit through the village, but also a view that this must be achieved “by whatever means are deemed to be most effective yet in keeping with a rural environment”. 86% of respondents in 2012 supported this approach. This could be achieved with passive measures, for instance differently coloured road surfaces at the entrances to the village but the 2013 consultation also showed some support for more extreme ‘urban techniques’ such as humps, strips, ramps and chicanes if that is the only way to control speed. A consequence of this however could be a need for related street lighting – a development that is strongly opposed. The Parish Council is also currently actively considering placing speed indicator signs at the village entrances, a device that has achieved success in some other villages.

Within the village lanes, 80% of respondents supported a move to a 20mph speed limit. There can be no doubt that current legal speed limit of 30mph within these narrow lanes presents an ever increasing danger to residents, especially children.

Village Objective 3.

To achieve better adherence to the 30mph limit through the village and to introduce a 20mph speed limit in the lanes

Traffic Around The Green

A specific aspect of road safety investigated was a perceived hazard at the junction of the road in front of the shop with Crendon Road. The 2012 consultation showed 51% seeing ‘a bit of a problem’, a further 30% a ‘serious safety issue’ and 19% ‘not a problem’.

Following the consultation an in-depth traffic survey around the Green was undertaken, the detailed results of which can be found on the Chearsley website.

Key conclusions were:

- 1) Although the traffic flow around the village green is undoubtedly a safety issue, one-way systems proposed by some villagers would not necessarily resolve the issues and would cause new safety concerns, including that of child safety around the bus stop, access to the shop, and making local “in-village” journeys more convoluted.
- 2) The main concern was vehicle speed, both on the main road and within the village, notably at the village junction between Shupps Lane and Church Lane.
- 3) This was made more of a daily danger to pedestrians and road users by the lack of clear road markings denoting the “Give Way” and “Stop” nature of the junctions in the Chearsley lanes.
- 4) 20mph is the very limit of safe speed within the village lanes and everything possible should be done to put this on a legal footing for the protection of all.

Kerbing

The issue of roadside kerbing is one on which there are varied opinions. Whilst some favour it as a means to maintain the banks and verges of the sunken lanes, others are concerned that it detracts from the informal rural nature of our village. Recent housing developments and the increase in home deliveries using large vans exacerbate the problem. The Parish Council determined some time back that partial kerbing is inevitable and a programme prioritising the areas where the banks are in danger of erosion and damage from vehicles and the ravages of nature was developed. This policy is supported here but noting the need to prioritise areas selectively where kerbing acts as a defence against bank and verge-side erosion and with the caveat that this should be done to blend in with the natural contour of the land.

The other specific road-related issue investigated was that of street lighting and light pollution from household external lights. There was an overwhelming 95% majority in favour of maintaining a policy of no street lighting, and a 60% majority view that household external lighting should be minimised with the Parish Council supporting that where possible when assessing planning applications.

Village Objective 4.

Light pollution should be minimised through an on-going policy of no street lighting in the village and all households should be encouraged to minimise external lighting.

Public Services and Utilities.

The outcomes of the December 2011 village-wide consultation identified that most respondents are satisfied with the level of services such as health surgeries, health visitors etc. Perhaps the biggest disappointment in recent times has been the loss of our Post Office facilities. This was investigated in the consultation which showed 91% wanting to see the return of a Post Office, preferably in the shop, and the proprietor of Cheersley Store has expressed interest in offering some services if the demand is there and the authority can be secured. The Mobile Library provoked little response either way, but the 2013 consultation confirmed that Cheersley residents greatly value the bus service and urge its protection from further erosion. Another facility investigated was a cash point in the village but this drew little support with only 32% saying there is a need. Those that did support the idea linked it to the shop.

Overhead Cables

The visual impact of overhead utility cables has also been examined. Underground utility ducting on School lane, not without its problems, has nevertheless transformed the visual environment in that part of the village by the removal of street poles. There is considerable interest (79% support in the consultation) for extending this elsewhere by removal of utility poles, possibly incorporating other utilities and services, improving reliability and enhancing the appearance of the village landscape. Preliminary investigations suggest that such an initiative is possible and there is a clear route to potentially achieve this over time.

Village Objective 5.

With particular focus on the Conservation Area, Utility poles and overhead wires should be removed wherever possible and replaced by underground services.

Renewable energy

With an eye to the future there is also some interest in the development of village-wide alternative technologies and sources of renewable energy. 58% of respondents to the consultation supported further investigation into the use of renewable energy in the village. At this point, switching to alternative sources of energy seems most realistic on a house by house basis. However, the need to move towards greater sustainability within the village overall is recognised. To this end, sustainable building development, the use of renewable energy and a reduction in the carbon output of the village are all to be encouraged and promoted during the period of the village plan. In particular, efforts will be made to assist and educate village residents in reducing their energy consumption for example in obtaining grants to better insulate their homes.

Although there are those who lament the loss of the Village School, there seems to be a recognition that Cheersley is simply not big enough to establish a case for its reinstatement. However, the provision of nursery care is a thriving element of the Village Hall diary.

Broadband and 4G Mobile in Chearsley

Broadband

Broadband is key to Britain's economic future and is accepted as a vital service as water and electricity. Housing values are also influenced by the availability of good Broadband.

For Chearsley to thrive economically and in the digital social future, good Broadband is critical. It will influence how public services are delivered, home working, teleworking, small businesses, education, entertainment and media content. It is predicted that the majority of entertainment services will be delivered via Broadband by 2015 rather than free-view, cable or satellite. The need for good Broadband in the future is indisputable.

At present broadband speeds in Chearsley are limited to around 5 Mbyte per second; that is not enough to support the digital future. Whilst there is not a strong home-working or business community in the village, it is clear that everyday home services will become increasingly dependent on fast broadband services. Chearsley, like every rural village in the country, is in danger of becoming 'second class' with regard to home service provision.

The level of satisfaction with current broadband services was investigated in the 2012 consultation which showed mixed results however, with 65% considering it 'useable but would benefit from improvement' and only 24% finding it 'completely unsatisfactory'. Most respondents (48%) said they had not yet registered an interest in faster broadband with either BT or Bucks CC, but were willing to do so. When it comes to willingness to pay for a faster service, 66% said they would pay little or nothing, and 24% only up to 50% more.

Satisfaction with the mobile telephone service in the village was much less with 71% saying we should investigate ways of improving service, although it was noted that 'unsightly masts' would not be desirable.

Village Objective 6.

Means of improving both Broadband speeds and mobile phone reception in the village should be investigated.

Strategic outlook for Superfast Broadband in Chearsley

Introduction

The UK government and BT have committed to deliver 'Superfast' Broadband (24 Mbyte per second or more) to 67% of UK homes by 2015. This will target the most financially viable locations in the UK, such as cities and dense urban areas. The final third are not covered under the standard provision. The Government has set aside a further £580m to address the 'final third' but this is seen as insufficient to make a real difference to the whole of rural England.

BT is working with Councils to identify which locations will be targeted by this funding, and therefore which ones will receive Superfast Broadband. Places like Chearsley are currently not on the plans for upgrade, so we will miss it on the first 67%, and quite possibly the final third rollout too, if we are not proactive. The other alternative is to engage in a bespoke deployment, either led by the village, or in conjunction with an alternative service provider.

Engagement in current rollout

Our exchange is based in Long Crendon and is not upgraded to the latest technology necessary for SuperFast broadband. Residents have previously been encouraged to register their interests for faster broadband, both with BT and Bucks CC, and this remains an important requirement. While it will still take some time before we get SuperFast broadband based on Fibre technology at Long Crendon, BT has recently committed to a planned upgrade of the exchange that will provide broadband speeds up to around 24Mbyte per second. Given the distances to Chearsley, this should enable speeds in the village in the 5-10 Mbyte per second range.

Longer term, AVDC is responsible for allocation of certain funds to provide SuperFast Broadband to the final third. In order to be considered for this funding we need to lobby the correct Council departments to ensure we are evaluated as part of the plan. This activity is happening now so it is imperative we get going. Joining forces with other villages along our route (Cuddington, Nether Winchendon, Long Crendon etc.) will also help. Additionally, the Council has a mandate to provide Broadband to the school in Cuddington so this could be a driving factor.

Bespoke Approach

The alternative is to provide a bespoke solution for the village. There are a number of technologies and providers that could deliver reasonable speeds but most of these will have only a medium term life span.

Alternatively, BT has said that if landowners are willing to provide way-leaves and trenching, they will provide fibre to villages but this would depend of course on the cooperation of local land owners. A possible combination of this and lobbying the Council may produce a favourable outcome as it means the Council can stretch their budget further to equip more homes with high speed broadband, thus hitting targets more easily.

Mobile 4G

4G is emerging as the next generation from mobile technology providing much higher speeds for connected devices. However it is early days yet and not obvious how this technology will provide the variety of services likely to be demanded in the home and mobile environments. Pricing structures are also showing signs of being quite high as suppliers try to recoup the cost or the investment required.

Way Forward

In conclusion, it is evident that if Chearsley wants to be part of the digital revolution a sustained residents' led campaign will be required, probably coordinated with nearby villages and landowners. Coordination with BT or other service providers will also be required, along with local Councils as controllers of available funding.

The recent news of the Long Crendon upgrade is a welcome step but does not automatically mean higher speeds will follow. BT will monitor the take up rate of new services and will only consider further upgrades if there is an indication of sufficient interest. This would probably need around 30-40% of households to be taking the faster service, either from BT or other providers that they supply with network capacity (e.g. TalkTalk - so those who prefer an alternative to BT are still counted in the overall numbers).

Conservation

The Conservation Area

Chearsley is located within one of several designated Areas of Attractive Landscape in Buckinghamshire and a Conservation Area within the village was designated in October 1991. An AVDC document, published in 2008, that provides full details including the attractions and character of the Conservation Area can be found at <http://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/environment/conservation-listed-buildings/conservation-areas-in-the-district/g-conservation-area-summaries-chackmore-chearsley/>. A map outlining the area is at Figure 2.

Our Conservation Area has long been seen as an invaluable resource in protecting the character of Chearsley and the 2012 consultation confirmed that this remains the view of the majority with 90% agreeing that the Conservation Area is “significantly beneficial to the village, both for the present and future”. The concept and purpose of the Conservation Area is to protect old buildings, hollow ways, important trees and hedgerows, important walls and landscapes and is a part of the definition of the village limits.

It currently extends to most of the areas bounded by School Lane, Lower Green Lane and Lammas Lane to the east, and Shupps Lane, Church Lane and Dark Lane to the south and west. It's somewhat complex and convoluted boundaries can however result in confusion as to the exact extent of the designated area. This is important as Conservation Areas carry particular restrictions on any development or alterations that can be made by individual householders or by the local Council and these are well documented. The consultation showed 64% agreeing that it is too complex and favouring an investigation to simplify and update it.

Village Objective 7.

The Conservation Area should be re-examined with a view to simplifying and updating it.

Village Environment and Listed Buildings

The AVDC Conservation Area document also refers to the importance of the footpaths, significant trees and hedgerows which characterise this defining area of the village.

The appearance and character of Chearsley also benefits from the existence of several Listed Buildings, the vast majority of which are in a good state of repair and maintenance. Within the village there are also a number of witchert walls and boundaries of historical and cultural significance. Unfortunately there are occasions where this puts individuals or the Council in conflict when exterior changes are viewed as desirable by individuals but not by others or where residents are simply unaware of the implications of living within a Conservation Area or in a Listed Building.

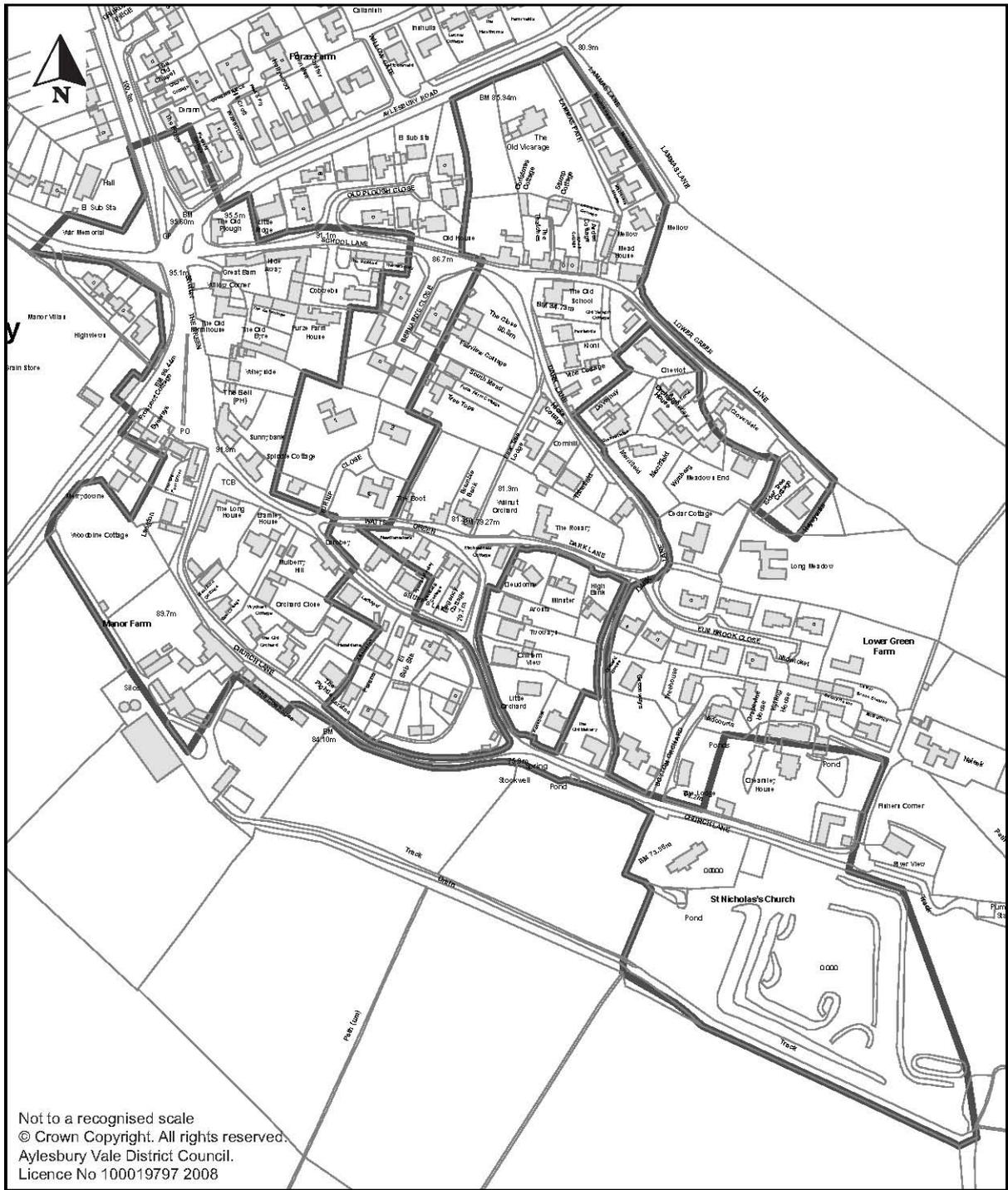


Figure 2. Chearsley Conservation Area

Environment

Footpaths, Hedgerows and Countryside Access

Chearsley is latticed with public footpaths which are used to a varying extent by most people in the village. They can become overgrown seasonally and some access points periodically drop into disrepair. 74% of respondents to the consultation considered footpaths currently to be in 'average' condition, and 57% thought there are 'some access issues'. There are also occasional problems with the dumping of green waste or dog fouling which has recently led the Parish Council to install Dog Bins at key points. Footpath routes in the Long Meadow field area are somewhat unnecessary complex and there appears to be a case for simplification of the present situation.

There is some considerable enthusiasm for extensions to the current pathways, bridleways and cycle-ways in the area. 69% agreed that potential new cycle/bridleway paths in the area should be investigated with a view to improving access and leisure, school-run and commuting routes. There is particular enthusiasm for exploring a possible route between the village and Haddenham and Thame Parkway Station although initial investigations with Network Rail and landowners suggest that the probability of achieving this is low. There is also keen interest in better linkages between existing pathways to create more "circular walks" between the villages embracing our scenic countryside in a well-managed way and in keeping with land usage by the farming communities. This is believed to have a much better chance of success although landowners will need to be approached sympathetically and sensitively, recognising the needs of active rural farmland usage and the need to allow wildlife to enjoy a quieter habitat without encroachment by humans and their dogs.

Village Objective 8.

To review the routes of current footpath provision in the light of development in Chearsley in recent years and to seek to create accessible circular footpaths and cycle ways.

Verges

The grass verges throughout the village and the "informal" nature of our roadways is much appreciated although some concern has been expressed at the way AVDC maintains the verges. There is a view that they might be looked after more sympathetically if there was more local input to the way maintenance work it is carried out. 80% agreed that there should be more direct input from the village, and 89% supported Chearsley taking direct control of this works programme, employing its own contractors to do the work under local direction. There are however potential legal and financial implications for such a move and these need to be considered carefully before any policy decision is made.

Village Objective 9.

Subject to financial and legal considerations, Chearsley should take more local control of roadside verges maintenance through the Parish Council employing a contractor to do the work.

Wild Flower Areas

There is also a clear desire for further development of wild flower areas to enhance the verges and 73% of respondents agreed they would like to be consulted on development of further wild flower areas around the village.

However, striking a balance between this and allowing a neglected overgrown wilderness, with English wild flowers strangled by aggressive invasive common weeds or cut down by over-aggressive strimming, offers a challenge for effective stewardship and maintenance, prompting questions about the current AVDC maintenance programme and the role of those living on the borders of Public Right of Ways.

Village Objective 10.

We should actively consider creating more wild flower areas around the village.

Leisure

Chearsley is currently served by a number of community facilities including a village hall, church, pub, shop, small play area, Cricket club, allotments (including a community orchard), and the Village Green. These facilities assist with maintaining the social cohesion that is central to the character of Chearsley. Apart from the church, these facilities are centred on the Village Green near the top of the village which creates the concept of a village “centre” or hub.

Village Hall

The Village Hall is conveniently situated near to the Village Green on a plot of land bordered by Chilton Road and Winchendon Road. This land was left in trust to the village for the purpose of a Village Hall. The current hall was constructed after the Second World War and whilst much work has gone into maintaining the structure over the years, the age and construction materials mean that the fabric of the building is not in great shape. It has a small stage area, kitchen and toilet facilities. Outside, there is a small car park, an outdoor play/BBQ area, some playground equipment for younger children and a grass play area.

The hall is used regularly by a number of groups including CHUF and the WI during the day and various exercise classes and the Youth Club in the evenings with occasional use for functions and meetings. The aged interior of the building does not however make it an attractive location for most social functions. The extensive use by CHUF is unfortunately a source of some discontent as it tends to limit hall availability for other purposes.

It's clear that whilst the hall has performed excellent service over the years, it is now at best adequate for the needs of the village and that consideration has to be given to an uplift of some sort. Options appear to be a major refurbishment on the current site, a new build on the current site or a new build on another site. If on a new site, the only viable options seems to be a combined Village Hall plus Crickets Pavillion, located somewhere on the cricket ground. Other considerations are the obligations/constraints on the Trustees, cost, continuity of use during construction - a particular concern for CHUF - and whether or not it is appropriate to link the new facilities to housing developments in such a way that a developer would contribute to cost. These issues all came up in the consultations with various degrees of support for each. It's not possible to reach any conclusions here on a recommended approach - a good deal more research is required - but it is clear that at the very least an investigation of options should be carried out. 72% of respondents to the consultation said it needs improvement, with more than half of all comments suggesting that the current facilities were inadequate and in need of improvement. Other comments expressed concerns over possible relocation, recommended relocation and commented on the possible impact of any development on CHUF.

Village Objective 11.

We should pursue a major uplift of the village hall facilities.

The Cricket Ground

The Cricket Club is a thriving venture that has achieved significant success in recent years. It fields two village teams in league fixtures most Saturdays during the season and often a Sunday team for friendlies. During the week the Club holds practices and training and provides coaching as well as the match fixtures twice a week throughout the summer that cater for up to 60 boys (and some girls) from the village and surrounding area. The Club is keen to promote Cricket in the village, working closely with other village organisations, focussing on enrolling local members and developing its role in coaching youngsters of the village. The Club also organises an “Aunt Sally” team of villagers which meets regularly and is based adjacent to the pavilion.

The Club has a well maintained and mature pitch, well respected in the area that is extensively used throughout the summer season. It is located a short distance from the Green on Winchendon Road and is easily accessible from the village on foot. Additionally the Club boasts a modern purpose built club house with a function room, bar and kitchen as well as toilets and changing facilities. The club house is available for use by the community.

Expanded use of the cricket ground

The cricket ground is currently used only during the cricket season and it has been suggested that expanded use would be desirable, in consultation with the Club. There have been suggestions that the periphery of the outfield, perhaps along with parts of the Millennium Field could be used for other sporting activity so long as they were compatible with the ground’s primary role as a cricket pitch. This could provide facilities for younger people, perhaps offering such things as 5-a-side football, basketball and tennis. Such use would both foster year round use of the space and provide a ‘hub’ of activity that would be preferable to creating a new sports field in a new location. 60% of respondents to the 2012 consultation thought this would be a good idea. Some respondents further suggested that the Village Hall could be moved to and combined with the Cricket Club pavilion. For the last two years there has also been a summer vintage car fare on the field, with plans for a repeat in 2014. This is starting to look like an annual event.

Any ideas for both continued and expanded use are however dependent on discussions with landowner. The facility is currently provided on a short term lease, making the future somewhat uncertain, and the Millennium Field has also been returned to the landowner.

Village Objective 12.

Find ways of utilising the cricket field for a wider range of sporting activities.

The Green

Chearsley Green is located at the top of the village, just off the main Cuddington to Long Crendon Road. The open nature of the Green and its proximity to the roads limits its use to some extent although occasional use is made for village functions such as the fete. It provides an attractive area which enhances the character of the village and provides a concept of a “centre” surrounded by the pub, shop, Village Hall, bus stop, post box and war memorial. It contains several trees, including a recently planted Oak and a couple of benches.

Other amenity spaces

The idea of developing a community park or open space in the village has been discussed for some years and the previous village plan included the provision of a playing field in the village. Over half the comments received at the Jubilee celebrations consultation in 2012 were about improving the outdoor leisure facilities within the village. About a third of those replying were young people and their most popular request was for a dirt track for bike riding. The significant increase in the number of families with children would also suggest an interest in the establishment of a play and sports area.

Some residents have suggested establishing an informal amenity space between the church and the river (subject to land owner approval) that would enable advantage to be taken of the riverside location of the village. This land is unsuitable for development as it is a flood plain and contains interesting ancient earthworks which must be left in situ, so precluding any ploughing or levelling. The topography of this land, the location of two ponds and the river frontage provide great interest from a leisure point of view.

Possible uses could include fishing, paddling, a site for picnics, benches overlooking the river, dirt track cycling, playground, use by junior church, etc. The location next to the church means the existing car park could possibly be used and there are already footpaths crossing this land. The location of this amenity at the bottom of the village is away from busy roads which would also be an advantage.

These ideas were investigated in the 2012 consultation but with mixed results. 38% said they would like the use of such a space but 32% said no, preferring to maintain the natural beauty of the area. 29% expressed no view. Many of those that commented were families concerned at the lack of open space. The inconclusive response is consistent with the experience of the Millennium Field that was established in 2000 along Chilton Road as a recreational area but which was little used. A number of comments to the consultation suggested that the Millennium Field was a better place for recreation.

Allotments

There are allotments located on Church owned land a short distance from the Green on Winchendon Road. They provide a valuable facility to a village in which there is limited garden space, and have recently been enhanced by the provision of a Community Orchard.

Community

Chearsley has an active community and groups within the village include the church, the cricket club, CHUFs, WI, fitness groups and youth club. They thrive despite the relatively small size of the village that limits their potential for members and finance.

Youth in Chearsley

The shift in village demographics towards younger families means that there will be some 50 teenagers in Chearsley in 5 years' time. Apart from a playground by the Village Hall for young children there is however little provision for children and youths.

The lack of facilities for this age group is a subject that some feel should be investigated further. The Millennium Field was an attempt to address this issue in 2000 but it was not well used. Views differ as to why - lack of facilities, location, poor maintenance were all suggested - but the end result was a decision by the land owner to return the land to its previous use.

Seniors in Chearsley

Similarly the needs of Chearsley senior citizens is a topic of discussion. The loss of facilities like the post office and Tea Shop, not only as service providers but also as places to meet and socialise affected this sector of the community disproportionately. There is a desire to see facilities for this age group improved, examples mentioned being postal services, cash point, and a daytime social venue. Other ideas put forward in the consultation included opening the cricket club in the evenings and tea/coffee mornings at the village hall and/or pub.

Another idea put forward in the consultation was assistance with transport outside the village. There is however already an informal Car Group that aims to provide such transport for those in need but it has proved very difficult to find enough volunteers to keep it running.

The need to improve provisions for both the Youth and Seniors of the village was investigated in the 2012 consultation but the results showed no strong evidence of a problem. 47% agreed these groups were not well catered for, against 25% who disagreed and 28% who expressed no view.

Village Objective 13.

Investigate further what can be done for the Youth and Seniors of the village.

St Nicholas Church

The Church of England parish church of St Nicholas is situated at the bottom of the village on Church Lane. Parts of the building date back to the 10th Century, but the present external appearance has looked much the same since the thirteen hundreds. There is a small pond beyond the churchyard and the site is surrounded by farmland. As with all buildings of this age, many alterations, mainly internal, have been carried out over the years and recently the church has had a kitchen, lavatory and a sound system installed. There is a plan to increase the number of bells in the tower from three to six and an active fund-raising campaign is underway. The church is warm and comfortable and benefits from a small car park.

The village vicar looked after the parishes of Chearsley and Nether Winchendon until 1977 when both joined Long Crendon and became part of a three parish Benefice. Chearsley's vicarage became a private house and the present vicar lives in Long Crendon. He is assisted by local lay ministers (LLMs) and retired priests who live in the area.

For a small village, the church is vibrant. It holds at least one service every Sunday and baptisms and weddings are conducted regularly. It is supported by an enthusiastic group of bell-ringers, flower arrangers, cleaners, gardeners, Sunday School leaders, lay service leaders and many other volunteers. The well-kept churchyard is the village graveyard and is still in use for burials and the scattering of ashes.

A variety of services are offered. Sunday congregations vary in size from around 20-30 for Eucharistic Services to 30-50 for Family Services. These numbers increase dramatically for church festivals and the normal pew capacity of 80 can be exceeded at these times (and also for some weddings and funerals). A small number gather for Evensong once a month. The church also attracts a small number of visitors, many of whom are walkers.

Although the Church of England generally is considered to be in a state of decline with falling numbers of those who attend services, Chearsley's church would, at least for the moment, seem to buck the trend. An influx of families with children to the village over recent years and a desire to meet their needs, has led to increased attendance over the last twenty years. In fact the number of children in attendance has grown so much that the Sunday School has split into two age groups and there is a desperate need for more space to accommodate them.

Maintenance of the Grade 2* listed building is costly and generally met by the congregation (with help from charities), but there is an acceptance in the village that the community has a responsibility towards its upkeep. For instance, a proportion of the proceeds generated by the Village Fete are thus allocated and residents have willingly made donations to specific projects in the past.

The building contains a small kitchen area and toilet facilities, and wider use of the church, for instance for social gatherings (e.g. coffee mornings), are possible should a demand be identified, but its position at the extremity of the village down a relatively steep hill probably make it unattractive. However, concerts are held every so often and are very well attended. The church also attracts a small number of visitors as a tourist attraction, many of whom are happy to leave complimentary comments in the visitor's book.

The church provides allotments on the Winchendon Road for the benefit of the community and also owns the field behind them, which is at present rented as farmland for grazing.

The village church community welcomes everyone and would love to see a full congregation every week. That said, the church is reasonably well-attended by an enthusiastic regular congregation, supports the wider village when required and does not face any identifiable threats to its existence in the immediate future.

Chearsley Women's Institute

There has been a Women's Institute in Chearsley for over sixty five years. The original idea that women of all ages might like to join a group for topical debate, listen to interesting speakers on a wide range of subjects, join in outings and take opportunities to try new sports and activities as well as making new friends, has grown stronger over the years. It has become a more adventurous and outward looking organisation until it has reached a position today where it is considered an important part of British heritage, often controversial and not without influence.

Chearsley WI, as a group and as part of the Buckinghamshire Federation of Women's Institutes, offers all these opportunities. It is a thriving, forward looking WI that plays a large part in village life. One of its most notable achievements in recent times was having their resolution selected for debate at the National AGM. The resolution was presented by the President of Chearsley WI to an audience of 5,000 delegates in Liverpool.

The group is always pleased to welcome new members as well as anyone who would just like to come and see what they do. Monthly meetings are advertised on the village notice board.

The Village Show

Chearsley village show is held at the village hall in September and is an opportunity for gardeners, flower arrangers, home bakers and those with craft skills to display their goods in friendly competition. The show is open to residents of Chearsley and there are classes for children and adults. All the judges are well qualified in their subject. There are money prizes and silver cups to be won in the children's section and certificates, cups and plaques for adult winners. The classes range from sweet peas in a vase to the best misshapen vegetable and from lemon drizzle cake to a garden on a plate.

The Show has been a part of Chearsley's calendar since 1991 with a break in 1998 but remerged the following year with a new committee and renewed enthusiasm. It has continued to expand and there is always a good response from villagers, not least because the Show is kept light-hearted and perfect specimens are not expected. Just come and show what you have grown or made this year!

2013 has seen a new look to the Show. The programme style and image has been completely changed with new classes and a fresh approach. The committee look forward to building on this and hope to have enough entries in the future to further expand and use the area outside the hall for exhibits and stalls

Chearsley Village Show is funded by entry fees, raffles and teas on the day and a grant from The Village Trust when available

The Village Fete

A summer Fete has been held in the village for many years – longest memories go back to the 1950s but it's hard to say for sure when it started.

The event originated as an annual Church Fete, held in the grounds of Chearsley Hill House. In the late 1960's the Village Hall committee became involved with organising the event and shared in the proceeds. Towards the end of the 1990s it migrated to a wider village event and moved to the village Green. For a period it was elevated to a Village Carnival, held every two years and with themes such as Pirates, Mediaeval Fayre and The Seaside, involving elaborate structures appearing on the Green. At the same time the benefactors were extended to include the Village Trust in addition to the Church and Village Hall. This two yearly cycle has continued although it was slipped in 2012 with a more village focussed event being held to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. A large Crown on the Green marked this occasion.

The 2013 Fete was held in the last week of June. It was another splendid sunny day with a large crowd turning out to enjoy the many traditional attractions and stalls along with a bouncy castle, huge inflated slide and, for contrast, a sheep shearing demonstration. All based on a 'Best of British' theme

Action Plan

This Action Plan has been established as a guide to follow up work that will be required to ensure that the Village Objectives set out in this Plan are achieved. It will be necessary to establish individuals or groups to take the lead role in each case before target dates can be realistically determined. This will be essential follow-up work after the Plan is published.

Ref	Action Description	Who will lead	Target Start date	Target Complete date
1	Investigate the demand and feasibility of providing shared business facilities for homeworkers in the village			
2	Investigate and implement means of achieving greater adherence to the 30 mph speed limit through the village (Objective 3)			
3	Secure a 20mph speed limit in the lanes (Objective 3)			
4	Investigate with the relevant authorities the feasibility of removing overhead utility cables. (Objective 5)			
5	Investigate options for bringing high-speed broadband to the village (Objective 6)			
6	Investigate options for improving mobile phone coverage in the village (Objective 6)			
7	Review the Conservation area boundaries with a view to simplification (Objective 7)			
8	Investigate how circular walks can be created in the area (Objective 8)			
9	Investigate provision of a footpath/cycle track from the village to Haddenham and Thame station (Objective 8)			
10	Parish Council to take control of local verges maintenance through letting a support contract (Objective 9)			
11	Investigate creation of more wild flower areas in the village (Objective 10)			
12	Pursue a major uplift of facilities at the Village Hall, by means of a replacement building if necessary (Objective 11)			
13	Investigate how the cricket field might be used for a wider range of activities, compatible with its status as a quality local cricket field (Objective 12)			
14	Investigate the demand for and feasibility of providing increased facilities for the Youth of the village (Objective 13)			
15	Investigate the demand for and feasibility of providing increased facilities for the Seniors of the village (objective 13)			

Annex 1 – How this document was developed

The Consultation Process

Production of a Village Plan that has the support of the whole community requires wide and thorough consultation and this approach was used in Chearsley to develop this plan in a manner that truly reflects the view of the community as a whole.

Main Activities in preparing the Plan.

- An initial Open Meeting in November 2011 at which there was agreement to proceed with developing a Plan
- A survey of the Village carried out on behalf of AVDC in December 2011 to provide information that was to inform production of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan
- Further Open Meetings in 2012 on 6 February, 29 February, 20 March and 30 April. These sessions formally established the Open Meeting, or 'Planning Forum', as the decision making body for the Village Plan, set up a number of Topic Groups to work on various aspects of the Plan, and agreed to the establishment of a Steering Group to oversee and guide the work
- A great deal of work over the summer months of 2012 by the Topic Groups
- A manned display on the Village Green on the day of the village Jubilee Celebrations in June 2012, with invitations for verbal or written suggestions
- A further Open Meeting on 17 October 2012 to report back on progress to date
- Production of a Discussion Document and Questionnaires distributed to every house in the village in December 2012 (the "2012 Consultation"). Replies were accepted until mid-January 2013.
- Publication in February 2013 of the results of the 2012 Consultation exercise
- Much more work by the Topic Groups in the Spring of 2013
- Publication of a Final Draft Plan in July 13, presented at an Open Meeting on 17 July 2013. Comments were accepted through to September 2013
- Review of comments received and re-drafting of the document during the Autumn of 2013
- Publication of the Final Document in January 2014. All residents aged 16 or over invited to vote on adoption of the Plan by the village

Throughout all this activity, progress reports were posted on the village web-site and a mailing list was maintained for email and postal updates to be provided

As a result of this approach a very large number of people contributed to the consultation. Some aspects of this resulting plan are contentious but that is inevitable because it addresses issues that are real and have to be tackled if we really are to have an impact on how Chearsley develops.

The Topic Groups

The material presented here has been developed by five 'Topic Groups' that were central to the development of the Chearsley Village Plan. To ensure that as wide a range of thoughts and ideas as possible were captured, it was important to have plenty of volunteers willing to contribute to the work. All of the Groups made every effort to maximise their membership and anyone willing to contribute was welcome.

Steering Group

The Steering Group met regularly to direct and coordinate the work of the Topic Groups, to ensure consultation and liaison with the wider village was maintained as required and to organise document distribution.

Steering Group members were John Lewis (Chairman), Gerry Wiles (Secretary), Peter Crook, Ted Frankland, Derek Allen, Sandra Towell, Larry Greenfield, Catherine Greenfield, Laura Skinner, Adam Lazaruk, Clare Clark and Margaret Morbey

Context Group

The Context Group gathered general information about the village and how it appears today. An entire book could be written on just this subject and the challenge is to decide how much of the material to include here. The section "Into Chearsley" was the result, introducing the Plan with a view of how the visitor will first experience the village.

Context Group members were: Clare Clark, Adam Lazaruk, Justine Yorke, Sandra Towell and Alan Mitchener

Housing Group

The Housing Group tackled the difficult and sensitive issue of housing development in the village. Group meetings were well attended and group members committed in their researches and interest in the topics under discussion. The group recognised from the outset that this subject area was uniquely emotive, sensitive and of commercial interest to some villagers. As such, the group made every effort to be dispassionate and even-handed in researching and presenting what was believed to be in the best interests of the village as a whole for the future. Membership of the Group was open and anyone wishing to join or express views by e-mail or letter was welcome.

Housing Group members were: Ted Frankland, Peter Crook, Laura Skinner, Sandra Towell, Larry Greenfield, Sarah Jakeman, Sue Gray and John Lewis

Business Group

The Business Group was concerned to ensure that the interests of all businesses operating in the village, including both independent and corporate home-workers, were taken into account. They also looked at 'Not-for-Profit' organisations such as CHUF, the Cricket Club and Youth Club. Of particular concern was the need to attract high-speed Broadband to the village.

Business Group members were Derek Allen, Larry Greenfield, Sarah Jakeman and Ian Houseman

Community & Leisure Group

The Community & Leisure Group looked at the wide range of facilities and organisations in the village that are at the heart of the community here. This included the Church, the Village Hall, Cricket Club, and other organisations around the village. They also considered the issue of open spaces available for recreation.

Community and Leisure Group members were Catherine Greenfield, Adam Lazaruk, Ruth Holland, John Howard, Andy Yorke, Geoff Hogbin and Joy Payne

The 'RESCU' Group.

The RESCU group carried out a wide range of work. It was formed from the amalgamation of the original Environment & Conservation group and Public Services, Roads, Transport & Utilities group because the two groups found much overlap in their areas of interest.

The December 2011 consultation suggested that most people were satisfied with services such as health surgeries, health visitors, library etc. but issues such as Broadband, footpaths, traffic, public utilities and the future of the Chearsley Conservation Area were seen as much more important and hence were a focus for the work.

RESCU Group members were Peter Crook, Rose Dale, Andy Yorke, Paul Bown, Elaine Bown, Fenella Tillier, Phil Holland, Ruth Holland, Sharon Sampson, Paul Persson, Joy Payne, Steve Lock and Brian Green

Annex 2 – Notes of a meeting with AVDC

These notes are included because they provide answers to several questions that were critical to residents during the preparation of the Plan.

Meeting between Chearsley Parish Council representatives and AVDC Planning Department. Friday 20 September 2013.

Attendance.

Nic Brown	Chair Chearsley Parish Council (attended only part of the meeting)
John Lewis	Vice Chair Chearsley Parish Council, Chair Village Plan Steering Group
Peter Crook	Chair Village Plan Housing Topic Group
Charlotte Glithero	AVDC Senior Planning Officer
Louise Stevens	AVDC Planning Officer

These notes were originally drafted by the Chearsley representatives and subsequently modified/agreed by AVDC .

Headlines

Limits to the Role and Scope of a Village Plan.

The Chearsley Village Plan reference to housing matters and surveys of opinion regarding housing issues is legitimate within any Village Plan to reflect the views of the community about the future of the village and the infrastructure needs. . Unless and until this is developed into a formally adopted Neighbourhood Plan such conclusions or opinions have no statutory power and can be given no or very limited formal weight as a part of the planning processes.

The issue of Planning Precedent being created.

Any decision made by a Parish Council in supporting or denying support for an individual housing development application does not set a wider precedent when considering further applications subsequently received. The parish council will judge each application entirely on its individual merits in accordance with planning policies. The same applies for how AVDC judges an application.

Detail

On the Chearsley Village Plan. We agreed:

- That we have produced a Village (or Parish) Plan – NOT a Neighbourhood Plan
- That such a Village Plan IS NOT part of Planning Policy, nor does it have any statutory effect or formal role in the planning process
- That such a Village Plan CAN nevertheless include whatever statements we wish with regard to the communities wishes, desires and ambitions for the village on any subject, including Housing
- That if we do choose to include Housing matters, it is your advice that statements indicating the limitations of the Plan's formal effect be included to prevent readers being misled or confused about what it can achieve

On wider Current Planning Policy. We agreed:

- Until such time as the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP) is adopted (the examination for the first part of VAP, VAP Strategy, is anticipated to be in November/December 2013 with adoption following a successful examination. The second part, VAP Delivery, is timetabled to be adopted

by the end of 2014), planning policy will continue to be governed by the current Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

- Key relevant elements of AVDLP for housing delivery are policies RA13 and RA14. Also relevant is paragraph 55 of the NPPF.
- The effect of AVDLP is to limit developments to probably at most 5 units at a time, and only in 'infill' areas (defined broadly as plots with three sides already developed) or rounding off sites.
- That any application for a larger number would not be consistent with AVDLP policies.
- Having said that, every application is treated entirely on its own merits. Even IF a larger development were to be approved, it would NOT set a wider precedent in any way for any further application that might follow
- Planning Applications are referred to the Planning Committee if the Parish Council oppose it and the planning officer is recommending it for approval, or vice versa. For more information about when planning applications go to committee please see attachment to email .
- Once at Committee, an application is in the hands of the elected members. Officers will provide a recommendation as well as legal and other policy advice and guidance but it is ultimately for the elected members to decide, by vote.

On Future Planning Policy. We agreed:

- This will be governed by the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP) once it is adopted
- That Plan mentions 'up to 10' houses for smaller villages, which Chearsley is categorised as, over the 20 year Plan period. (It is important to note that housing numbers have the potential to change during the examination of VAP Strategy).
- The VAP is supportive of Neighbourhood Plans. Where these exist they have formal and statutory weight alongside the District and National planning policy.
- There is no requirement for a village such as Chearsley to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, but we would need to do so if we wanted to provide any extra control of Planning Policy in the village on top of VAP and national policy or to make allocations for housing.
- It would likely take (I think we said) up to 12-18 months to produce such a Plan, at a likely cost (very rough estimate) of £10-15k. Grants are available from DCLG of up to £7k. A first step is to define the exact area covered by the Plan – in our case likely to be based on the current parish boundary.
- Our existing draft Village Plan, supported by its extensive consultation, is more comprehensive than most and would put us well on the path to producing a Neighbourhood Plan should we so wish.