

WEST AREA COMMITTEE**17 SEPTEMBER 2009**

Subject: Great Alne Parish Plan
Lead Officer: Karen Johnstone/ Colin Staves
Contact on 01789 260332/ 260333
**Lead Member/
 Portfolio Holder:** Councillor G Atkinson

Summary

This report sets out the assessment of the Great Alne Parish Plan. Great Alne Parish Council adopted the Plan in March 2009.

Recommendation

- (1) That the Parish Plan is adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant services of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
 - (2) That Stratford-on-Avon District Council seek to respond to the Parish Plan Action Plan in the ways suggested in Appendix C of this report.**
 - (3) That the Parish Plan is adopted by Stratford District Council as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
 - (4) That the Parish Plan steering group, Parish Council and the residents of Great Alne Parish be commended for preparing their Parish Plan and that they are encouraged to implement and review their Action Plan.**
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1 Background/Information

- 1.1 Parish Plans are community-led projects identifying and surveying the assets, needs, opportunities, problems and solutions of a community. Through 'capacity' and 'consensus building', Parish Plans provide communities with a framework to take stock of the present and to plan for the future.
 - 1.2 The momentum for Parish Plans is continually increasing, with many of the communities in the district having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plans or Appraisals with associated recommendations and Action Plans. Further background information on the process is included in Appendix B.
 - 1.3 **Background to the submitted Great Alne Parish Plan**
 - 1.3.1 The Parish Council agreed to support a Parish Plan in 2007 and
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advertised for volunteers. A Parish Plan Steering Group formed as a result and held its first meeting in March 2007. The Group was made up of 10 volunteers and included residents with a mix of backgrounds and ages, local business people, and representatives of local groups such as the Memorial Hall and Parish Council. The Plan was funded solely by Great Alne Parish Council and considerable contributions in kind from many volunteers.

- 1.3.2 Regular progress updates were given throughout the process by quarterly entries in the parish council newsletter which is delivered to every home in the parish, and discussions at each meeting of the parish council. Special events such as the display at the Memorial Hall were also advertised on the village notice boards and website.
- 1.3.3 The initial scoping exercise included reviewing the Great Alne Parish Appraisal 2001, looking at nearby parish plans such as the recent Alcester Town Plan, and discussions with the village school and Parish Council. From this a questionnaire was developed which was sent to every household in the Parish. 143 households completed the questionnaire out of 224 households in the Parish. This gives a response rate of 62% which is statistically sound when combined with additional consultation work. The responses to the questionnaire were analysed by an independent company. A separate questionnaire for children under the age of 16 was also circulated to each household and 40 responses were received. While the exact number of children in the parish is not available, the 2001 census results suggest that this represents approximately a third of all children under 16.
- 1.3.4 In June 2008 the results of the questionnaires along with a summary of each section was displayed at the Memorial Hall. Everyone was invited to attend the display at a Saturday event where comments could be discussed or submitted anonymously into a comment box. 32 residents attended. The feedback from the event, together with the questionnaire results, was used to compile a draft Action Plan. The Steering Group then worked closely with a wide range of partners to finalise the actions and start to take them forward. These partners have included SDC planning officers, WCC transport and footpaths officers, WRCC, PACT, Women's Institute, the village school, the Playground group, local bus company, public house, brownie group and cricket club.
- 1.3.5 Great Alne Parish Council adopted the Parish Plan in March 2009 and will oversee its implementation, reporting on progress annually. The Parish Council and others have already successfully carried out several of the actions in the Action Plan.

1.4 **Great Alne Parish Plan findings**

- 1.4.1 The findings of the Parish Plan, which have informed the Action Plan, cover:
 - Employment
 - Services
 - Housing
 - Road safety
 - Environment, footpaths and the Conservation Area

- Facilities and leisure
- The children's survey.

The Parish Plan has been prepared employing a range of community participation techniques including questionnaire surveys, public forums and a transparent process of reporting back to the community on progress. The process has generated a range of statistical and qualitative data that has informed the Action Plan and is a useful information source.

- 1.4.2 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Great Alne Parish Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Parish Plan questionnaire.

1.5 **Great Alne Action Plan**

- 1.5.1 Analysis and responses to the Action Plan are provided in Appendix C, and the following analysis and comments should be read in conjunction with the Great Alne Parish Plan Action Plan.

- 1.5.2 The policy position of the Local Plan Review is supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. The District Council and County Council can offer advice and support in undertaking some actions, and offer help in locating funding. Progress has already been made in taking forward actions including new play equipment for the playground. WCC has already worked to complete projects for traffic calming gates and dropped kerbs. However there are further actions where funding from other sources would need to be investigated, such as the possibility of a cycle path to Alcester.

- 1.5.3 SDC Housing Team and Warwickshire Rural Community Council welcome the action to investigate local housing need and can provide help in this area.

2 **Options available to the Committee**

- 2.1 A) Adopt the Parish Plan fully: This is a good, well-prepared Parish Plan that would be a valuable local information source and material planning consideration.
- 2.2 B) Adopt parts of the Parish Plan: If there are any concerns with certain aspects of the Parish Plan, this option would allow the District and County Councils to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have so far been identified to make this option necessary.
- 2.3 C) Not adopt the Parish Plan: The District and County Councils would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information.

3 **Members' comments**

- 3.1 Cllr Atkinson provided the following comments: "This is an interesting and well thought-out parish plan. The quest for mains gas is to be admired as well as the treatment of flooding issues, public transport and hospital access. In particular the comment about housing is personally welcome through the statement that in addition to affordable housing there is a need for market housing. Obviously this ambition must be defined and structured but I look upon the identification of market

housing as a refreshing attitude and one which I commend to the committee.”

- 3.2 Cllr Bowring commented that he has had some involvement in the preparation of the Action Plan, and is generally supportive of the recommended responses in the report. However he notes that the action to provide a cycle path to Alcester would work towards the District Council’s corporate priorities and is therefore disappointed that more support could not be offered.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 *Legal/Human Rights Implications*

- 4.1.1 If adopted, the Parish Plan will become a material consideration to be taken into account by the District Council when determining planning applications. The Plan does not conflict with the District Council’s policies.

4.2 *Financial*

- 4.2.1 Projects developed through this Parish Plan may need funding to take them forward and the recommendations contained in this report should be contained within existing budgets. The County Council fund a community grants scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the District Council’s Community Grants team may be able to help search for appropriate funding sources. It is hoped that the Parish Council and local residents will consider and pursue funding in order to develop their identified action points.

4.3 *Environmental*

- 4.3.1 Many of the actions within this Parish Plan aim to increase the sustainability of life within the village and reduce the need to travel to access activities and services.

4.4 *Corporate Strategy*

- 4.4.1 The Parish Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Community Plan and District Council Corporate Strategy support the range of topic areas and policies in the Action Plan. The Parish Plan also complements and helps move forward the District Council’s Agenda 21.

4.5 *Equality Impact Assessment*

- 4.5.1 The consultation for the Plan provided everyone within the community with an opportunity to comment.

5 Risk assessment

- 5.1 The actions recommended within this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the Parish Plan, adopt the Parish Plan as a local information source and adopt it as a material consideration. There are no identified major risks associated with these actions.
- 5.2 Choosing to not adopt the Parish Plan would risk losing the chance to adopt a valuable source of local information and a useful material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Parish Plan Steering Group, the Parish Council and residents of Great Alne should be commended and congratulated on completing their Parish Plan, and are encouraged by Stratford District Council and Warwickshire County Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.
- 6.2 The Great Alne Parish Plan is a good example of how a community can prepare a Plan that is both a good source of local information and provides a sound basis through the Action Plan to address the needs and aspirations of the community.

Pat Reid

HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers:

Great Alne Parish Plan 2009

Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015

Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006

Appendix A - Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans

- 1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:

Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.

Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.

Public involvement and endorsement at local level.

Level of implementation available to District and County Council services, (e.g. the District Council Planning Authority, Leisure and Arts etc.).

Conformity with District and County Council's policies, (e.g. Planning policies etc.).

- 1.2 The above five criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish Plan's detailed conclusions and Action Points.

- 1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:

(A) ENDORSE

The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the District Council. (For example, "Small scale development with a 'craft' emphasis should be looked at sympathetically").

(B) ACTION

The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with the support of the District or County Council. (For example, "A social housing scheme of ten units on land next to the Green should be provided").

(C) INVESTIGATE

Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District or County Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported. (For example, "An existing Conservation Area should be extended").

(D) SUPPORT

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is not the responsibility of the District or County Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority.

(E) NOT SUPPORTED

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is in contrary to the policy of the District or County Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate their commendation. (For example, "No development of any kind should take place within the settlement").

Appendix B – Further Background Information

- 2.1. Communities produce Parish Plans for a number of reasons:
 - To increase the awareness of community issues, foster community spirit and encourage a sense of pride;
 - To act as a strong basis for local action (the Action Plan);
 - To collectively represent the views of residents, to positively influence others to the benefit of the community.
- 2.2. In the 1980s the concept and practice of Village Appraisals first emanated nationally from the Rural Development Commission in conjunction with the Countryside Commission.
- 2.3. Nationally, Parish Plans have a role to play within the 'modernising Local Government' agenda, for example, shaping local services, public participation, decision-making and greater democratic legitimacy.
- 2.4. One of the aims within Chapter 12 of the Rural White Paper (Our Countryside: the future – A fair deal for rural England) includes involving people living in rural areas in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them – developing a vision for the future. Parish Plans are a recognised method of achieving this aim.
- 2.5. In line with guidance from the Countryside Agency issued in August 2000 ('Planning tomorrow's countryside', advice to local planning authorities, government and developers on how the planning system should operate and evolve), Parish Plans are a recognised community planning method to help achieve key objectives. In March 2003 the Countryside Agency produced detailed guidance for parish and town councils on the preparation of Parish and Town Plans.
- 2.6. Policy RA3 in the Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 encourages local planning authorities to use 'Appraisals' when establishing the views of local communities and when identifying local housing and industrial development need.
- 2.7. Stratford-on-Avon District Council is committed to the encouragement of Parish Plans as a means of identifying local issues and will respond to them positively. Much faith has been placed by the Government, the County Council and the District Council on local appraisals and their role in assisting the formulation of strategic policy.
- 2.8. Parish Plans can now play a broader role within the production of the statutory Community Plan for Stratford District.
- 2.9. The recommendations and Action Plans can both inform and help deliver the Rural Strategy for the Stratford-on-Avon District.
- 2.10. Policy COM.1 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan 2006 states:

"The views of the local community as expressed preferably in a Parish Plan (or equivalent) or in its absence an alternative source of reliable evidence, will be fully taken into account in the planning process. In particular they will be used:

 - To help assess the merits of schemes promoted by communities to meet needs which they have identified;

- As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to assist in identifying the scope and nature of associated planning obligations which might be sought; and
- To identify opportunities for environmental and other forms of enhancement.

In the case of Main Rural Centres and Local Centre Villages only, as defined in Policy STR1, small scale schemes which meet housing (particularly affordable housing) and employment needs will be encouraged in this way...”.

- 2.11. Nationally, Parish Plans are broad, holistic documents addressing local issues at a local level. Whilst in this District ‘appraisals’ have had a close association with planning, they are no longer ‘planning-led’. Parish Plans address both planning and non-planning related matters and this is reflected in their assessment at Committee.
- 2.12. Parish Plans can and do act as a tool to assist in giving many of the services provided by the District Council greater community focus. Vice versa, many of the services provided by the District Council can and do feed into the Parish Plan process creating more informed Action Plans.

Appendix C

Summary of key action points

Abbreviations SDC= Stratford District Council
 WCC= Warwickshire County Council
 WRCC= Warwickshire Rural Community Council

Appendix A gives an explanation of what is meant by each suggested response key word.

Great Alne Parish Plan action	SDC and WCC Proposed Response
Services	
Mains Gas: Approach gas suppliers to assess whether it would be viable to have mains gas in the village.	Support – This action point can be supported.
TV/Radio: Discuss poor digital TV/radio signal with BBC/local aerial suppliers, and identify planning restrictions on aerials.	Support – SDC Planning Services can advise on planning regulations relating to aerials.
Public Transport: Discuss with bus companies and WCC whether bus service to east end of village could be reinstated.	Investigate – Great Alne Parish Council are advised to contact WCC to discuss this further. WCC advise that bus companies are unlikely to respond without their intervention unless the service is profitable.
Community Transport: Identify community transport schemes running in area and advertise to parish on notice boards and website. Identify volunteer drivers and engage with organisations to provide transport to Warwick Hospital for those who need assistance.	Support/Action – The Community Plan aims to support individuals by increasing the number of people using tailored transport schemes. SDC and WCC are partners of the Community Links, Back and 4th, and Volunteer Centre’s Medical Journeys schemes which could help meet the need of eligible residents.
Travel to Hospital: Consider placing a defibrillator in village and training volunteers to use it.	Support – This action could be supported. However Great Alne Parish Council has decided not to pursue this further having investigated practicality and time likely to be saved in responding.
Housing	
Local Housing Needs: Prepare a Local Housing Needs Survey in conjunction with WRCC and SDC. Investigate options to meet the needs identified in the survey.	Action and Endorse – Under current local plan policy, new housing would be acceptable in the parish if it was a small-scale scheme of affordable housing designed to meet identified local need in perpetuity in accordance with Policy CTY.5.

Great Alne Parish Plan action	SDC and WCC Proposed Response
	The Rural Housing Enabler and District Council are keen to work with the Parish Council to undertake a housing needs survey.
Development: Ensure that the Parish Council's response to any planning application follows the results of the Parish Plan survey, which indicates that residents would be prepared to accept development of no more than 20 hours during the life of the plan.	Endorse – The Parish Plan and the community views expressed within it will be used by Stratford District Council as a material consideration when determining planning applications, as laid out in Policy COM.1 of the Stratford District Local Plan 2006.
Road Safety	
Traffic Speeding and Calming: Seek advice on effectiveness of different methods of traffic calming. Work with Traffic police, Road safety organisations and WCC.	Action – The WCC Regeneration Projects Team has worked closely with the Parish Council to install village Gateway Features. If the Parish Council wishes to pursue the idea of traffic calming further, they are advised to discuss the options with the Road Safety Liaison Officer, Safety Engineering Team at WCC.
Increased Police Presence: Raise residents' requests for increased police present through PACT or Local Area Forum.	Support – The Community Plan seeks to reduce crime and the fear of crime.
Pavements: Identify road locations where dropped kerbs are needed for pushchairs and wheelchairs and lobby WCC to install them.	Action – The required dropped kerbs were installed by WCC in February 2009.
Environment	
River Flooding: Develop long term strategy to manage run-off and ensure river banks are kept clear, working with volunteers and the Environment Agency.	Support – The Parish Council are advised to liaise closely with the Environment Agency.
Road Flooding: Develop a programme with WCC to ensure that roads, drains and ditches are regularly checked, cleaned and repaired, and that new drains are provided where necessary. Report blocked and damaged drains to WCC promptly.	Action – WCC has carried out a full survey of drainage, including site meetings with the Parish Council and camera surveys of drainage systems. Jetting works and root cutting has removed blockages and drains are now running clear.
Coffee Pot Wood: Tidy woodland, and work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to provide information plaques at entrances.	Support – This action can be supported. The Parish Council are encouraged to use the Parish Biodiversity Action Plan to help identify issues and work to improve wildlife and biodiversity.

<p>Field Footpaths: Seek advice from WCC to replace way marks and deal with other problem areas. Landowners to maintain paths to required standard.</p>	<p>Action – the Parish Paths Partnership scheme run by WCC can support this action. They advise that the Parish Council should identify and prioritise problems, then work with WCC to resolve identified issues. WCC and landowners will maintain paths to the appropriate standard.</p>
<p>Conservation Area: Request that SDC reviews the current Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Investigate – SDC have a programme in place to review the 75 conservation areas across the district. However as priority is given to areas where significant changes have taken place since the last review, Great Alne is not scheduled until 2016. If the parish would like an earlier review they will need to make a convincing case why Great Alne should be a priority.</p>
<p>Tree Preservation Orders: Survey trees within village and investigate applying for additional TPOs on identified trees.</p>	<p>Investigate – New TPOs are normally only made when there is reason to believe a tree is under threat. The SDC Forestry and Landscape team can be contacted on 01789 260324.</p>
<p>Facilities and Leisure</p>	
<p>Village Shop: Assess the viability of a community store using existing facilities or a mobile store.</p>	<p>Endorse/ support – Local Plan Policy COM.3 encourages the provision of new shops and services which meet the needs of local communities. WRCC have been providing the Steering Group with advice and support on this issue.</p>
<p>Great Alne and Kinwarton Memorial Hall: Publicise all events held in the Memorial Hall in the Hall Herald and on village website.</p>	<p>Support – The Community Plan seeks to maximise the use of existing community buildings. The Village Halls Advisor at WRCC can offer support.</p>
<p>Social Club: Set up a group to explore viability of a Social Club for residents.</p> <p>Social facilities: Create a volunteer group to organise and run social facilities/clubs for old and very young people in the Parish at suitable locations.</p>	<p>Support/Action – The Community Plan seeks to increase the number of residents joining local clubs.</p> <p>The District Council Community Grants Team offers help locating funding, and can advise if projects may be eligible for the WCC Community Grants scheme distributed through the Joint Committees.</p>
<p>Adult Education: Create a volunteer group to organise adult education classes. Suggest that to avoid excessive fees these should be created and run by members of the local community.</p>	<p>Support – WCC Adult and Community Learning Service may be able to provide advice or support.</p>

<p>Playing Field: Parish Council and volunteers to increase maintenance of playing field to improve surface for ball games.</p>	<p>Support – This action can be supported.</p>
<p>The Mother Huff Cap: Establish liaison group to communicate what residents would use to the pub tenants.</p>	<p>Support/Endorse – Local Plan Policy COM.2 seeks to retain shops and services which serve the needs of local communities.</p>
<p>Allotments: Consider providing new allotments, identify possible sites and level of demand and consider facilities for old, disabled and young.</p>	<p>Support – the Community Plan seeks to encourage more healthy lifestyles and to promote local food.</p>
<p>Dog Fouling: Publicise location of bins, and fines for failing to clear up dog waste.</p>	<p>Support/Action: the SDC Dog Warden may be able to provide support and advice and can be contacted on 01789 267575.</p>
<p>Energy Conservation: Investigate and publicise the benefits available for elderly residents to insulate their homes, through the Parish newsletters.</p>	<p>Action - SDC intend to write to all residents informing them of available schemes for energy efficiency improvements in the near future. The SDC Social inclusion officer and the local advice organisation 'Act on Energy' (www.actonenergy.org.uk) may be able to provide further advice and publicity materials if the Parish Council considers this useful.</p>
<p>Cycle Path to Alcester: Assess if a practicable route can be found between Great Alne and Alcester. Work with WCC and Kinwarton Parish Council to get cycle path included on WCC work plan.</p>	<p>Investigate – This action would improve sustainability and access to services. However unfortunately the scheme does not directly contribute to the LTP (2) Cycling Strategy objectives of developing the cycle network in key urban areas of the County, and as such WCC Transport Planning will not be able to provide financial assistance to this project. However. WCC Transport Planning department could provide some technical support on any proposals to ensure that they are consistent with WCC cycle design guidelines etc. If Great Alne, working with WCC, could provide evidence that a significant number of children would use it to cycle to school then the scheme could be eligible for matched funding from Sustrans, as part of its Links to Schools initiative.</p>

REPORT INFORMATION SHEET

Please complete and submit to Committee Services with draft report

Committee/Date	West Joint Committee – 16 July 2009	
Item No/Title of report	Great Alne Parish Plan	
Consultations undertaken		
Consultee	✓	Details / Date of consultation / comments received
Ward Members		Cllr Bowring/ 17 th June 09, Cllr Gittus/ 17 th June 09
Committee Chairman/ Portfolioholder		Cllr Atkinson/ 17 th June 09/ comments reported in section 3, Cllr Lawrence / 17 th June 09
Financial Services		Richard Burrell/ 17 th June 09/ no further comments
Legal Services		Leenamari Aantaa-Collier/ 17 th June 09
Other Services		Housing/ 4 June 09 Policy and PR/ 4 June 09/ Supportive, advice on transport schemes and energy efficiency reported in Appendix C Warwickshire County Council Transport Planning, Traffic Project and Safety Engineering Groups, Environment and Economy Directorate/ 2 June 09/ Comments reported in Appendix C Warwickshire County Council Countryside Access Team, Environment and Economy Directorate/ 4 June 09/ Comments reported in Appendix C
Other organisations		Warwickshire Rural Community Council/ 4 June 09/ Supportive, offer help in taking forward housing needs. Other advice reported in Appendix C.
final decision by this Committee or recommendation to another committee/Council ?		FINAL DECISION
Does this report contain exempt information? If so, under which paragraph(s) ?		No <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Executive Forward Plan)		No <i>Delete as appropriate</i>