

SUBJECT: **STUDLEY PARISH PLAN**
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PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** **COUNCILLOR S THIRLWELL**

SUMMARY

This report sets out the assessment of the Studley Parish Plan 2007-2011. Studley Parish Council formally adopted the Parish Plan at their meeting on 15 May 2007.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Parish Plan is adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant departments of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
 - (2) That the Parish Plan is adopted as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
 - (3) That the Parish Plan Steering Group, Parish Council and the residents of Studley 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 half of the communities in the District having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plan 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 Studley Parish Plan**
 - 1.3.1 The Parish Council, when approached, agreed that there was a need for the development of a Parish Plan for Studley. An invitation was delivered
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to all residents inviting them to an open day to discuss their requirements where graphic displays were on view concerning the issues in Studley and residents were asked for their views. An article in the local newspaper supported this. Written contributions from residents were also received. Progress was reported back to residents through the parish newsletter Studley Voice, and the local press. The project was funded by a Vital Villages grant, a contribution from the Parish Council, and significant contributions in kind from many volunteers.

- 1.3.2 Following this a steering group was formed from volunteers. A parish-wide survey was designed using the information gained from the previous consultations and advice from Warwickshire Rural Community Council. A questionnaire was delivered by hand to all 2725 households in the parish with the kind support of volunteers from Studley Neighbourhood Watch. Replies were received from 623 households, giving a response rate of 23% which is statistically very sound for a large village such as Studley.
- 1.3.3 The result of the analysis formed the basis for the Action Plan. The survey results and a draft Plan were presented at an open meeting of the Parish Council for feedback. A large public meeting was then held with a presentation followed by a question and answer session. A summary of the finalised Plan has been delivered to every household in the Parish. The Parish Council adopted the Parish Plan on 15th May 2007. The Action Plan will be taken forward by the Studley Improvement Group, who are a group of local volunteers, and Studley Parish Council. The Parish Clerk will be responsible for monitoring the actions against the timescales set out in the Plan.
- 1.3.4 The Parish Plan presents a clear picture of the needs and issues facing the community.

1.4 **Studley Parish Plan findings**

- 1.4.1 The findings of the Parish Plan, which have informed the Action Plan, cover:
- Highways and traffic
 - Shopping
 - Local and public services
 - Police and crime
 - Housing development
 - Sports facilities
 - Youth provision
 - Transport
 - The village environment
- 1.4.2 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 data and qualitative material that has informed the Action Plan and which provides a useful information source.

1.4.3 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Studley Parish Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Parish Plan.

1.5 Studley Parish Plan 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 Parish Plan Action Plan.

1.5.2 The policy position of the Local Plan Review is generally supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. Many of the actions identified can be undertaken entirely by the village itself. The District Council may be able to help in locating funding. Some actions request the support of SDC officers and it should be acknowledged that several officers are already actively involved in projects supporting the community of Studley. The Parish Plan sets out an aspiration for physical regeneration of the central areas and seeks support and resources for this from the District Council. This would require significant resources and could only be further considered if included as a priority through the Corporate Strategy 2008-2011 and future Service Plans.

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 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 Council to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have been so far identified to make this option necessary.

2.3 C) Not adopt the Parish Plan: The District Council would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information, and a material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Financial

3.1.1 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 District Council operates a Community Grants Scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the 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. It must be highlighted that the Action Plan also seeks the support of the District Council in taking forward significant physical regeneration projects in Studley centre, and that this would have significant resource implications. A response to these actions would therefore have to take the form of consideration for inclusion in the Corporate Strategy 2008-2011 and service plans and would be likely to involve a growth bid.

3.2 Environmental

3.2.1 Many of the actions within this Parish Plan aim to improve the local environment of the village and its surroundings. Several actions could increase the environmental sustainability of life within the Parish by reducing local people's need to travel for leisure activities, and promote recycling.

3.3 **Corporate Strategy**

3.3.1 The Parish Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Community Plan and Corporate Strategy for the District 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 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The actions recommended in this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the 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.

4.2 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.

5 **CONCLUSION**

5.1 The Parish Plan Steering Group, the Parish Council and the residents of Studley should be commended and congratulated for completing their Parish Plan, and are encouraged by Stratford-on Avon District Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.

5.2 The Studley Parish Plan is a good example of how a community can prepare a Parish 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:

Studley Parish Plan 2007-11

Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015

Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006

Stratford District Council Corporate Strategy 2005-8

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 Council services, (e.g. the District Council Planning Authority, Leisure and Arts etc.).

Conformity with District 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 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 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 Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority. (For example, "Traffic calming measures are required and the County Highway Authority should prepare a scheme").

(E) NOT SUPPORTED

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is in contrary to the policy of the District 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 Review 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

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
Crime and anti-social behaviour	
Parish Council to monitor anti-social behaviour and liaise with ASB officer for active support.	Action – the community engagement officer and community services officers from SDC are actively involved in projects within Studley which aim to reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
Parish Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and encourage growth of Neighbourhood Watch Scheme - Support PACT - Continue sponsorship support of Police Community Support Officer and his bike. - Continue liaison meetings with police - Seek more support from Crime and Disorder Reduction Support unit. 	Support – these actions will help to achieve the Community Plan's aim to reduce crime and fear of crime in the District.
Retail and professional services	
Parish Council to encourage the formation of a retail traders and professional forum to discuss local business conditions.	Support – this action point can be supported.
Seek support from SDC Economic Development Officer to encourage wider range of businesses.	Not support – the parish is now aware that there is no longer an Economic Development post within the council and SDC cannot currently provide this type of support.
Parish Council, through planning system, to stress need for shops and facilities and retention of businesses.	Endorse – policies within the Stratford District Local Plan 2006 seek to protect existing business and commercial sites, and encourage uses which meet the needs of the local community. SDC Planning Service will continue to consult the Parish Council on all planning applications within the parish, and it is considered a very helpful approach for the Parish Council to base their views on these community prepared documents.

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
Planning	
<p>Parish Council to keep at forefront of its planning input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserving the Green Belt around Studley. - Maintaining identity of Studley as an independent village not a suburb of Redditch. - Containing urban sprawl and not expanding village envelope. - Awareness of regional strategy requirements. 	<p>Endorse – Studley is surrounded by land within the West Midlands Green Belt. National and local planning policy place strong emphasis on preserving the Green Belt.</p> <p>The Parish Plan and the community views expressed within it will be used by SDC as a material consideration when determining planning applications, as laid out in Policies COM.1 and PR.1 of the Local Plan Review. SDC Planning Service will continue to consult the Parish Council on all planning applications within the parish.</p>
<p>Ensure that SDC Planning Committees are aware of the features within Studley parish which are worthy of preservation and conservation.</p>	<p>Endorse – Policy PR.1 of the Local Plan seeks to prevent proposals that would damage or destroy features which contribute to the distinctiveness of the local area. It states that the value attached to such features by local communities will be taken into account.</p> <p>It would be helpful for the Parish Council to highlight any relevant features when responding to planning application consultations.</p>
<p>Plan for a Housing Needs Survey in the future.</p>	<p>Endorse/ support - The policies of the Local Plan Review (COM.1 and CTY.5) allow for the provision of local occupancy housing on a basis of identified need.</p> <p>The Rural Housing Enabler and District Council offer to work with the Parish Council to undertake a “housing needs” survey.</p>
Traffic and Parking	
<p>Parish Council to continue to lobby Highways Authority on traffic calming measures.</p>	<p>Support – the Community Plan seeks to reduce the number of road accidents in the district.</p>
<p>Parish Council to look for innovative ways of improving traffic flow, the increase and convenience of off-street parking, and possible introduction of resident-only parking zones.</p>	<p>Support – This would fall under the remit of WCC and in principle can be supported. WCC are aware of the concerns and when they have capacity will seek to address this project.</p>

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
Parish Council to liaise with SDC about acceptable attitudes (“acting responsibly and reasonably”) by traffic wardens to road users.	Not support – The community are welcome to discuss aspects of parking enforcement with the District Council but they should be aware that parking regulations are defined in law and must be consistently applied and enforced by the District Council. There is a statutory process by which people may appeal if they do not feel that they have committed an offence.
Services and facilities	
Discuss with SDC the cost and availability of the Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre.	Investigate – the District Council has programmed the development of an Active Communities Strategy during 2007/08 which will encompass these issues. Residents and Parish Councils across the district will be consulted in the course of that review.
Highlight popularity of library to WCC and investigate possibility of using volunteers to extend opening hours.	Support – this action point can be supported.
Plan to maintain children’s play facilities better, and improve access for all children to play facilities.	Endorse – the District Local Plan Policy COM.4 sets out standards of open space and play space which will be sought in the district. Policy COM.5 requires new residential development to contribute where there is a shortfall against the standards. The District Council Community Grants team offers help locating funding, and can advise if a project may be eligible for the Council’s Community Grants scheme.
Parish Council to produce footpath map, promote setting up of volunteer footpath maintenance group, and volunteer group for anti-litter actions.	Support – the Community Plan seeks to increase access and enjoyment of the countryside.
Discuss with bus companies and WCC possibility of improved service to Stratford and Birmingham, subsidies for certain routes and display bus timetables at village hall.	Support - these action points should contribute to the Community Plan’s aim to improve individual’s access to services and activities.
Parish Council to continue to maintain and promote shopper bus to Redditch.	Support and action – SDC is a partner of the Community Links scheme which may be able to provide transport, or advice and support. The current transport scheme is available

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
	9.30am to 2.30pm to help those who are 'stuck for transport'. Phone Community Links 9am to 4pm weekdays on 01789 264491 for details.
Young people	
Parish Council to form a Youth Council to survey available facilities in relation to their needs. Seek support from SDC Officer for Youth.	Action – SDC Youth Officer is keen to support the formation of a youth forum for this area, which would be available for Parish Council discussions. However, a joint agency approach to creating the forum is recommended, involving key partners such as WCC Youth Service and Connexions. Findings would also be reported back to the WCC Participation Forum to avoid duplication of effort.
Discuss with local private Sports Club possibility of sports coaching for young people.	Support – this action should help to achieve the Community Plan's aim to maximise the use of existing facilities.
Regeneration	
Work to convince all local government authorities that there is an urgent need for a "regeneration programme" to be developed and implemented for Studley.	Investigate – This would require considerable resources and there is no current provision/ commitment in the District Council's Corporate Strategy or Service Plans. However this request could be considered when drafting the Corporate Strategy 2008-2011 and Service Plans for 2008/09.
Stress the need for a high of quality development within Studley.	Endorse – policies within the Local Plan seek to ensure good design and enhancement of local character through new development. SDC Planning Service will continue to consult the Parish Council on all planning applications within the parish.
Encourage design and re-engineering of pavements to improve access to businesses and make a safer pedestrian environment.	Support - this would help achieve the Community Plan's aim to improve road safety.

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
<p>Open discussions with SDC and Advantage West Midlands to achieve radical improvements to the High Street, Marble Alley and Alcester Road shopping area.</p> <p>Initiate a feasibility study into comprehensive redevelopment of Library, Health Centre and Youth Centre, to provide updated facilities and a Village Centre Square.</p> <p>Liase with SDC, WCC and Warwickshire NHS to establish the above concept in their future planning.</p> <p>Use de-trunking of A435 through village as an opportunity for significant improvements to that area of the village.</p>	<p>Investigate – This would require considerable resources and there is no current provision/ commitment in the District Council's Corporate Strategy or Service Plans. However this request could be considered when drafting the Corporate Strategy 2008-2011 and Service Plans for 2008/09.</p>
<p>Volunteer group to be formed to record village features.</p>	<p>Endorse – as discussed above, policies in the Local Plan take account of valued community features.</p>