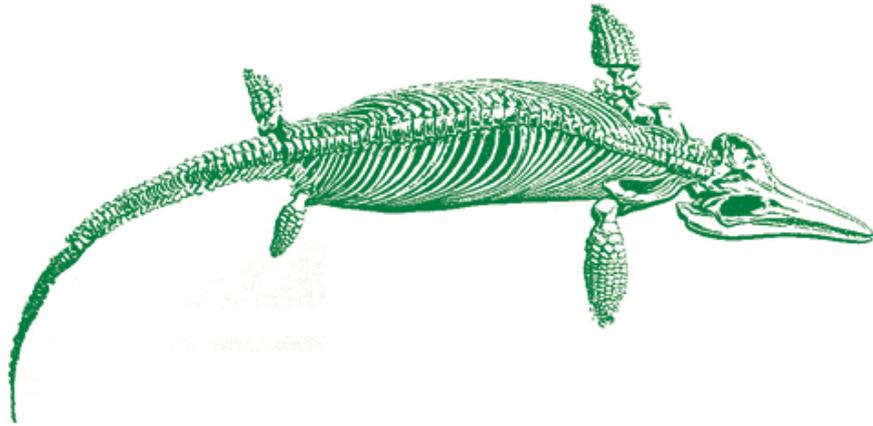


Stockton Parish Council

PARISH PLAN



Final Report: Stockton Parish Plan
April 2006



Introduction

What is a Parish Plan?

The Government has encouraged all parishes to produce a Parish Plan to help highlight the problems in the community. This should then identify actions the parish and its partners in local government and elsewhere should aim at to improve the community. In Stockton we undertook a parish appraisal about five years ago, so the basis of the work was already done. The Parish Plan takes this and adds to it through a range of information gathering methods, then publishes the results in a format that can be readily understood by our local government partners and other agencies. This includes an Action Plan which maps out ways towards achieving the goals that are identified through the process.

A vision for Stockton

A vision was put forward for Stockton, describing the sort of community the parish could be in 15 years time. The action plan includes aims for progress over the next five years towards achieving particular points in the plan, after which time a review will be needed to take account of progress and external events that affect the vision.

Our vision is to have a community that is safe, vibrant, healthy, well-educated, fully employed and well-housed.

In more detail, but not in any order of priority:

- The impact of private car ownership should be managed to balance personal freedom against the problems of parked cars and the road safety hazard they pose.
- In terms of physical appearance the parish should preserve some of the features that characterise the past, whilst acknowledging that a community must adapt to demographic changes and external pressures.
- Those institutions that contribute to life in the community should be supported and encouraged. Social interaction is the essence of village life.
- The community buildings and equipment must be maintained and replaced as necessary. Village organisations themselves should be properly funded and new organisations encouraged to cover a wider range of interests and all age groups.
- As working patterns and skills change, driven by new technology, the resources to support this should be developed.
- Good public transport links should be maintained to reduce the reliance on private cars and serve those without access to private transport.
- Stockton School should be supported and 'learning for life' services should be developed.
- Child care services that encourage pre-school development and provide child care facilities for working parents should be developed.
- Some level of residential development should be encouraged and facilitated to meet the needs of the community: to allow for the natural growth of families and to allow people with local connections, particularly younger adults, first-time buyers and older people needing to downsize, to remain in the community. Stifling all development for several years will build up pressures that might lead to larger-scale housing developments that the parish does not seem to support.

This Vision cannot be achieved solely by the Parish Council – it has to be done with the help of every individual within the community and other agencies.

Background

Stockton is a parish of approximately 1,400 people occupying about 550 houses. It is served by two shops (one including a post office), a florist, a fast-food takeaway, two pubs, one working men's club, a primary school, a CofE church, a football and cricket club with facilities for netball and tennis, a village hall, a scout hut, a playing field and several active community groups. It is also well served by buses to Leamington and Rugby. As well as the main village centre there is a small settlement at Greaves Cottages and several outlying houses and farms.

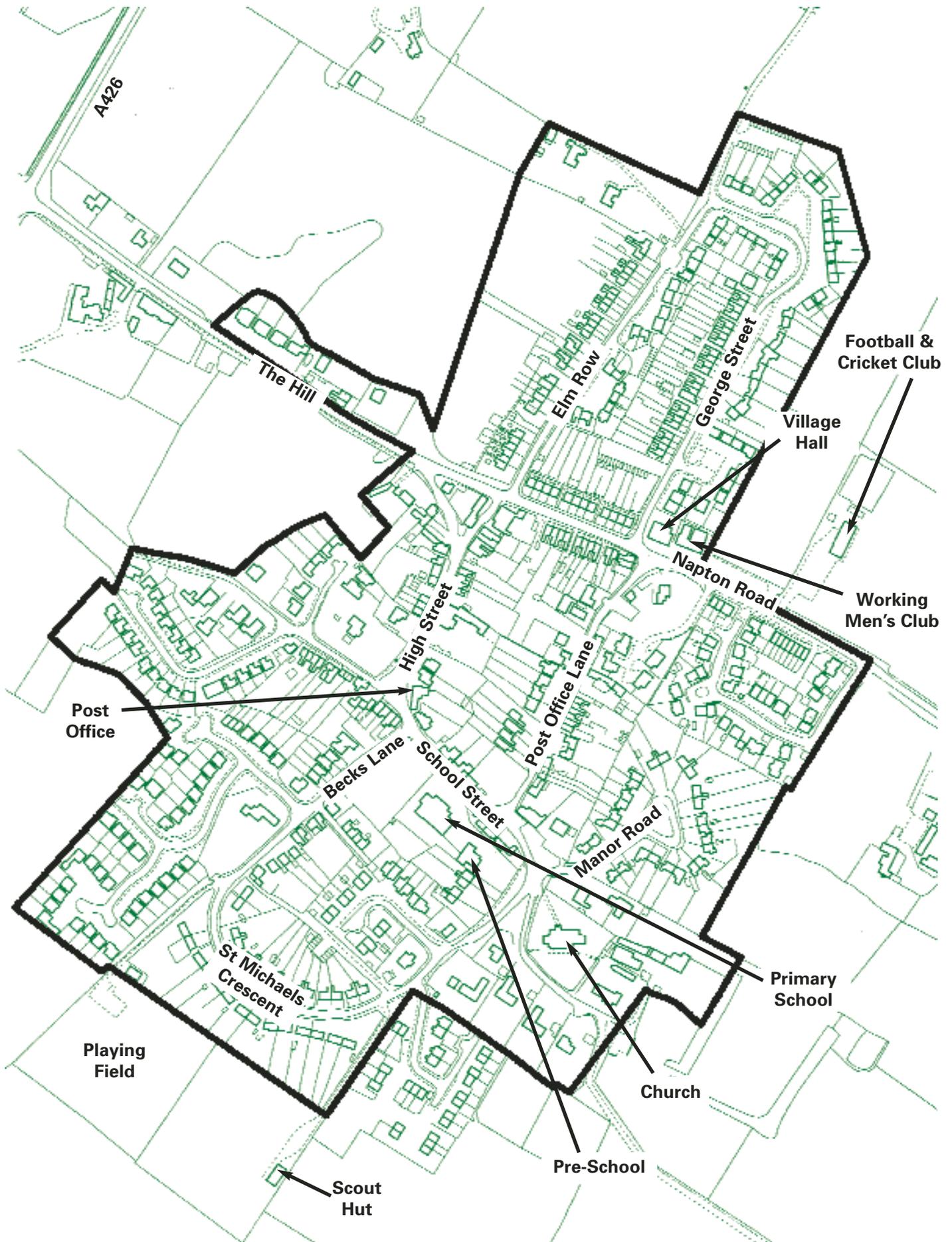
The recent history of the village is closely connected with the extraction and manufacture of cement with several active and worked-out quarries in the vicinity. Consequently the "feel" of the village is very much that of a working community rather than a sleepy rural backwater.

The decline of the farming industry has not significantly affected the parish which has low levels of unemployment.



Stockton village

Showing village boundary building line 1993



Putting the plan together

To develop the ideas put forward through the Parish Appraisal and to identify issues that have developed since that time, a newsletter was sent out in June 2003 and a public meeting held in September 2003 to introduce the themes and encourage volunteers.

A Steering Group was formed in December that year under the chairmanship of John Edwards of Tuckwell Close. Two sub-groups were formed, one to look in more detail at 'environmental' issues and the other to consider 'social and community' matters. The first group met several times and drew up some principles covering traffic, road safety, public transport, preservation of heritage features and village appearance. The second group decided to set up some 'focus groups' to identify the main social and community issues facing the village, but despite two calls for volunteers, insufficient interest was raised.

A Housing Needs Survey was undertaken in partnership with the Warwickshire Rural Housing Association and the results were published in January 2005.

In the summer of 2005 a questionnaire was sent to 200 people selected at random from the Electoral Roll and about 100 of these were returned.

To supplement the information gathered through these methods, some discussions and interviews were held with primary and secondary school children, thus giving a representative picture of the views of villagers.

In October 2005 a drop-in day was held in the village hall for parishioners to come and talk to members of the committee and parish councillors and to view the preliminary results of the survey. Newsletters have been sent to all houses in the parish to help keep people informed of progress and the issues that have arisen.

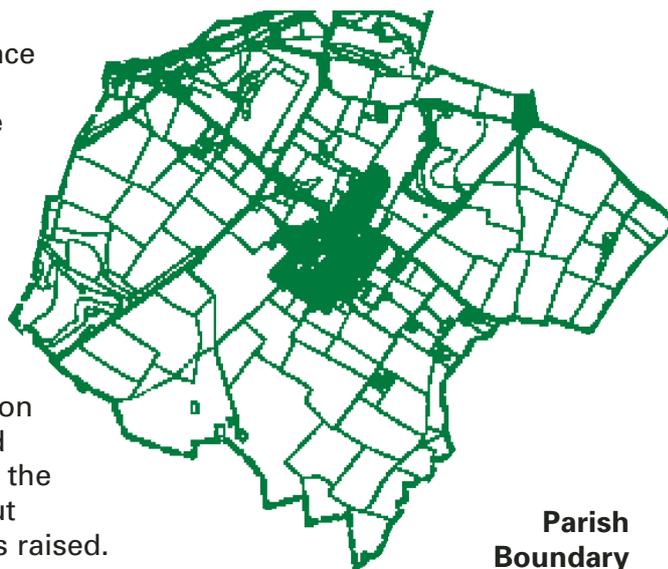
Once the plan report reached a draft stage it was circulated amongst members of contributing groups and external partners such as Stratford District Council and Warwickshire Rural Housing Association for final comments and guidance.

Summary

Replies to the questionnaire and subsequent interviews and discussions meant that a representative sample of all ages and both sexes was included. All groups generally shared the same areas of concern and there was little significant difference in replies, with common awareness of wider issues and how issues affect the whole community. The younger people surveyed did have less interest in areas such as having a 'clean and tidy village', but gave similar results in areas such as traffic, vandalism and the local environment. The main areas which produced the strongest responses from all groups were traffic calming, parking, housing and development and the provision of amenities

Focus groups, discussions, interviews and other responses

Two sub-committees were set up by the Steering Group. The first looked at traffic issues, village appearance and heritage features. The second was to look at social and community issues but was not able to meet regularly due to other commitments and so the Steering Group decided to send out a questionnaire to 200 people in the parish selected at random from the electoral register as an alternative way of exploring these issues.



Results

Results

"More housing for local people."

Housing Survey results

The Steering Group decided that it needed to understand what demand there was for housing, particularly affordable homes, in the parish. This survey was carried out by Warwickshire Rural Housing Association who analysed the results and produced a report for the Steering Group (the full report is available on the Parish Council website www.stocktonpc.org.uk).

The survey showed that nearly 75% of the respondents were in favour of a small social housing scheme of homes for local people in the village. On the other hand 61% of respondents would not be in favour of a large housing development. 30 respondents said they would have a need for affordable housing in the next 5 years and 11 said they would have a need for market housing in this period. Responses in the Parish Plan consultation process reinforced the objections to large housing developments even where these would include a proportion of social or affordable homes.

Based on these responses the Steering Group feels that it is sensible for there to be an ongoing low level of housing development each year that allows for the normal organic growth of the parish, rather than allowing pressure for housing to grow to such an extent that a larger scale development can no longer be resisted. In the Stratford Local Plan, Policy COM.1 states that only housing 1.) Based on local needs, 2.) Intended to meet these needs in perpetuity and 3.) At a location acceptable to the community, will be encouraged. The policy also requires that any scheme maximises the use of previously developed land, and follows other general location and design principles.

A more detailed 'Stage 2' housing needs survey is planned for the near future to provide a more detailed assessment of the housing needs already identified.

Other groups that have contributed to the results of the Parish Plan

Stockton Church - St Michael & All Angels



The oldest part of the present church dates back to the 14th century. In April 2006, work will start on a grant-funded programme of repairs to help preserve it for future generations.

Stockton became a combined Church of England and Methodist church, sharing a vicar with Napton and Lower Shuckburgh. Stockton is bucking the national trend as its congregation is growing, and the Parochial Church Council has plans, endorsed by the Bishops of Coventry and Warwick and Stockton Parish Council, to facilitate and promote wider use of the building by all Stockton residents. The aim is to make a flexible, user-friendly space within the building for services

and other community activities. Plans include major work on the path and entrance, disabled access, installing a kitchen, toilets, heating, lighting and sound systems, plus creating separate meeting or activity rooms.

A fundraising group conducted a survey in December 2005, and the results revealed solid support for Stockton Church (100% wanted to see it stay open) and strong approval (87.5%) for wider use of the building. Favoured options included concerts, use by schools and as a 'drop-in' place.

"More investment in games, plays, education for youth: youth club, karate, games, best kept village competitions"

Stockton Village Hall

The Village Hall in Stockton provides a venue for a range of activities, from keep fit classes to public meetings and rummage sales. It was originally obtained for the parish from Nelson Cement works and is currently run by a committee who have recently overseen considerable internal improvement works and who are considering a number of options for future development.



"Newcomers and their children are the future of Stockton."

Stockton Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is a self funded pre-school that provides care for up to 24 children of pre-school age and offers a safe, secure and friendly environment with a high standard of care. It has strong links with the Primary School, which is where most of the children continue their education. Stepping Stones is run by a voluntary management committee and is sustained through fees and fundraising events held throughout the year.

Primary School

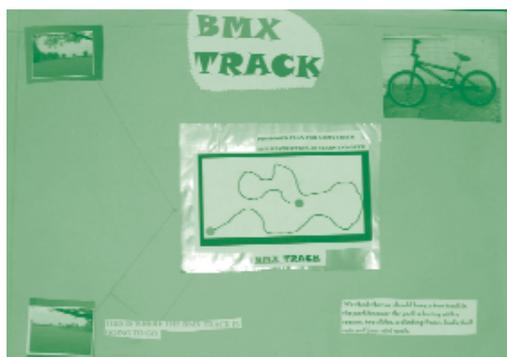
Stockton Primary School is nearly 100 years old and after many years as a First School, became a primary school for children aged 4-11 years in 1996. It currently has 109 children on roll, split into five classes. Small classes enable the staff to get to know children individually and there is a strong community feeling with a commitment to developing children's personal and social skills as well as their academic ability. Parents see the school as friendly and approachable and there is an active Parents and Friends Association: FOSS (Friends of Stockton School), who organise social and fund-raising events. Future plans include developing a new computer suite, introducing Before and After School Care and further developments to the outdoor environment.

"Ask all parents to walk to school with their children, not use cars."



The pupils at Stockton Primary School became involved with the Parish Plan and had a village walkabout and came up with ideas for the development of the village called 'Our Visions for Stockton Village'. These included plans for use of the Methodist Chapel that was empty at the time, plans for a youth club and for playing facilities. A presentation of their ideas was made to a member of the Steering Group.

"We need a bus stop at the end of Elm Row."



Two of the ideas for improvements put forward by Primary School children

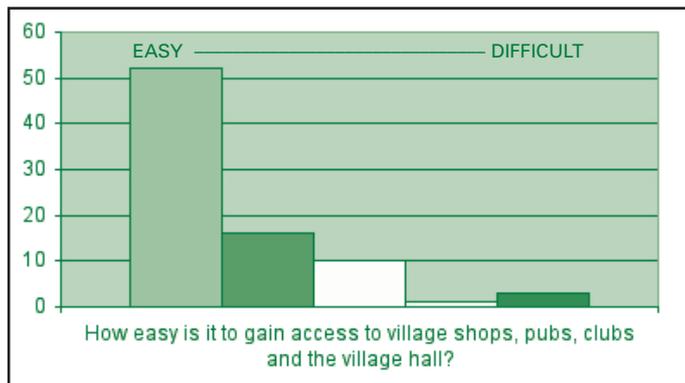
Results

Questionnaire results

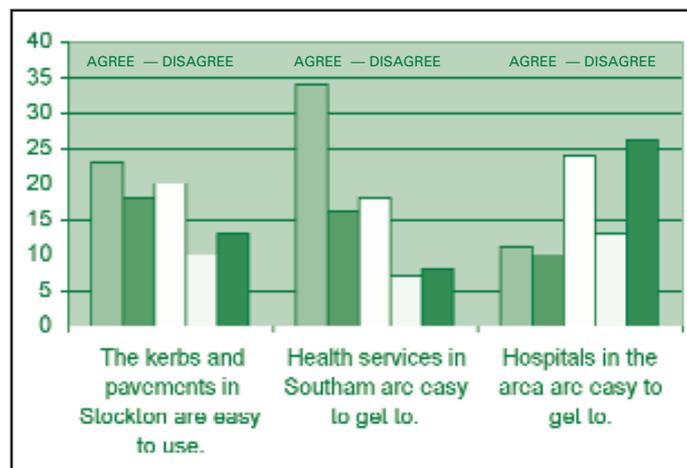
The questionnaire was circulated in summer 2005; the main results are shown below and on the following pages, together with just some of the comments received. The questions were in eight sections dealing with aspects of living in the village now and how people wanted to see things develop in the future.

1. Health and Mobility

The majority of people who replied felt that access to facilities in the village was easy, although there were mixed views about the state of kerbs and pavements.



"Health - easy to get to if you have a car."

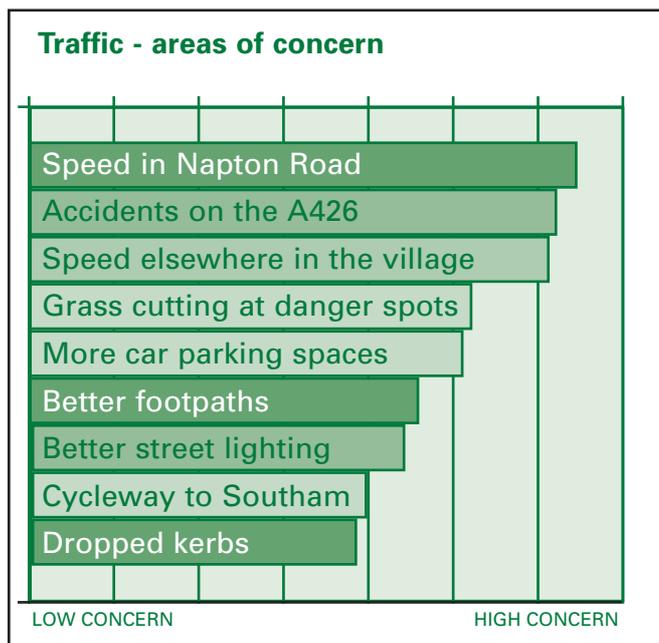


The health services in Southam were generally regarded as easy to get to, although some commented that transport for non-car owners and the infirm could be improved. Fewer people thought that access to the hospitals was easy.

"I don't agree with cars parking on footpaths; anyone in wheelchairs don't have a chance."



2. Traffic in Stockton



People were asked to score their concerns about traffic hazards. The responses are listed in the following chart, with major concerns surrounding speeding, accidents on the A426 and parking problems. Parking and traffic speed produced the majority of comments from those expressing concerns generally, particularly parking in George Street and Elm Row, and parking on pavements and too close to junctions.

"Too many cars use the pavement as parking."

"An island at Stockton Cross Roads could slow the traffic down on the A426 and make it safer."

"I think parked cars become a traffic calming measure without having to have speed humps."

School dropping off and picking up, traffic calming, buses and other large vehicles also caused concerns.

3. Safety

Replies overwhelmingly reported that people feel safe in the home and walking around the village. There was support for more police visits, although people may not be aware of the level of policing as patrols are not always obvious. The majority of people stated they knew where to go to report crime.

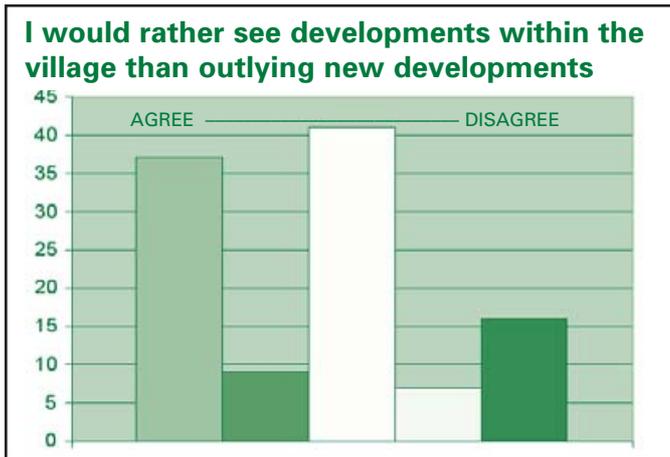


"Children and animals don't stand a chance with the maniac drivers."

"We need more policemen to walk round the village."

Results

4. Housing in Stockton



After concerns about traffic, housing produced some of the strongest responses and comments in replies. The question about whether any developments should take place within the village or in outlying areas produced either strong agreement or indifference, with a lesser number disagreeing.

Suggestions for where developments might be considered included all areas of the village, but the ones most mentioned were concentrated in areas adjacent to the main through routes.

Comments ranged from those vehemently opposed to any development to suggestions that some be encouraged for those in need, particularly people with a local connection and for first time buyers.

"Only small bungalows for single people living in large houses."

When these results are taken with the results of the Housing Needs Survey it is clear that, while there is support for small-scale housing developments within the perceived boundary of the village (the 1993 building line), particularly where this includes provision for local people and first-time buyers, there is strong resistance to larger scale developments, even when including social housing to meet local needs, and particularly outside the current village boundary. Certain types of housing were identified as being likely to be needed in the coming years, with 2-bedroom and 4-bedroom houses showing significantly.

"Stockton is big enough already; if it became bigger it would no longer be a village!"

The following principles should apply to future housing development.

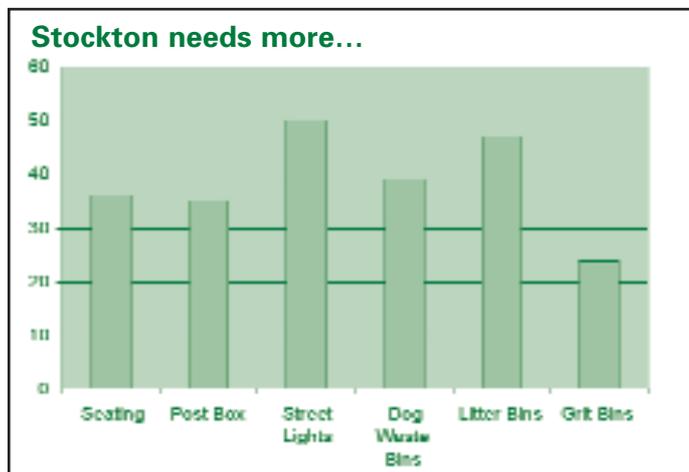
"Brownfield sites rather than building in the outlying countryside."

"Why build more?"

- Preference should be given to developing 'brownfield' sites before 'greenfield' sites. Brownfield sites could cover existing larger gardens where the final development did not lead to the density of housing being out of keeping with the rest of the village.
- Developments of affordable homes would be supported. Affordable housing in this context means properties available to rent from a housing association or shared ownership. A full housing needs survey of the parish should be undertaken by the developer prior to the development to determine the level of need and type size and tenure of property in demand at the time and how the occupancy would be restricted to households with a local connection.
- Properties that give priority to people with local connections to the parish will be supported. Any new housing should be accompanied by an appropriate planning agreement restricting occupancy of the houses to people who live in the parish, people who previously lived in the parish and wish to return, people who have employment within or closely adjacent to the parish, and people with close family already living in the parish. This applies to local market housing as well as affordable homes and so speculative building of houses for sale on the open market would not be supported. Local market housing must have a buyer with local connections as defined above.
- Conversion of non-residential properties to residential would only be supported if it could be proven that there is no market for retaining the building as a non-residential property.
- As many of the roads in the village have to accommodate large numbers of parked vehicles, particularly at evenings and weekends, any future development should have adequate off-street parking areas and traffic to and from the development should not lead to unacceptable congestion on access roads.

5. Local Environment

We asked which local physical feature(s) need to be preserved. Answers included strong support for the church, school, village hall and other buildings as well as seating, the stone and pump. Natural features: hedges, trees and fields, including the playing field, also figured strongly.



The playing field was largely considered to be for younger children only, and that more provision should be made for teenagers, with the lack of a shelter or building cited as the main problem. A suggestion that the wall should be replaced or used as a graffiti experiment was also raised. The

younger respondents called for the netball pitch to be refurbished and the football goals tidied up, and generally saw the playing fields as a good asset to the village.

Other suggestions for things Stockton needs more of included more lock up garages, a conservation scheme, additional seating, a bus stop at the end of Elm Row, a post box in George Street, better maintenance of seating, and hedge and grass cutting.

We also asked about facilities in the village and who should be responsible for decisions on their purchase and upkeep. A large majority felt this should be the responsibility of the Parish Council.

"Post boxes are needed in George Street and Manor Road for elderly residents."

"There is nothing for older children."

"I suggest that more emphasis is put on the environment within the Vision."

"Can the old quarry workings and surrounding area be developed and turned into a feature/nature area?"



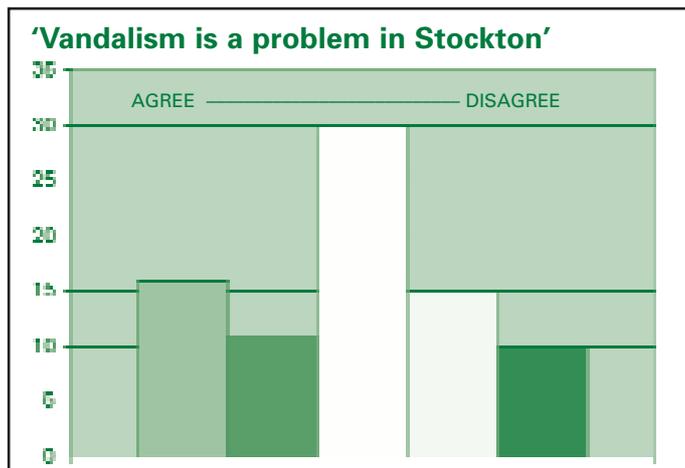
"A conservation/listing scheme could include not just buildings but trees and other aspects of the village where appropriate."

Results

6. A Clean and Tidy Village

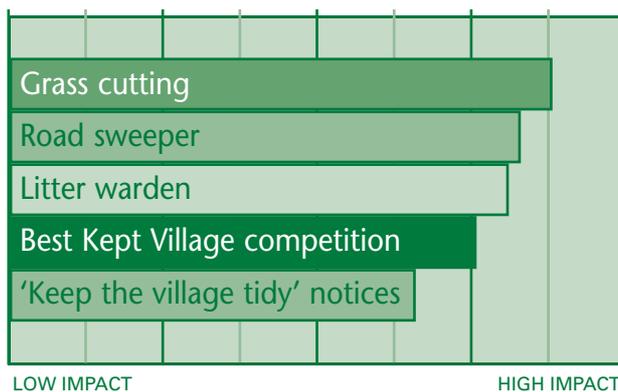
Vandalism is not seen as a major problem in Stockton, but litter around the village was, mentioned particularly by younger people.

"Village people should keep village tidy."



"I can't tick vandalism because we are quite lucky up George Street, there are some nice children, but it could be a lot tidier."

How can we make the village more attractive?

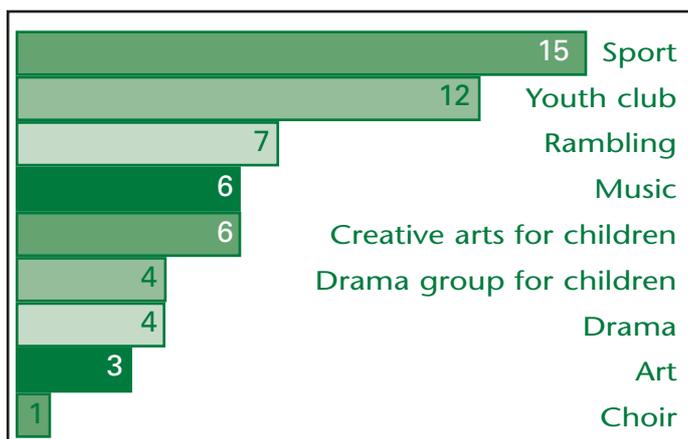


Suggestions for maintaining a clean and tidy village included encouraging villagers to help by keeping their properties tidy, planting flowers and hanging baskets, and having a village gardener.

"Hedge trimming, along footpaths."



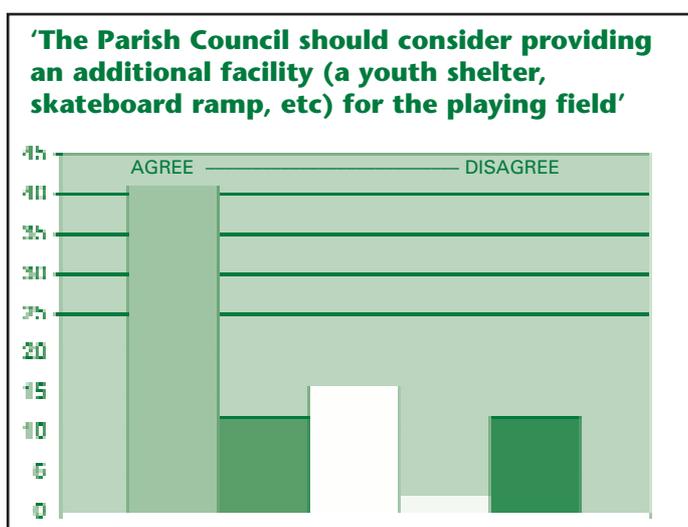
7. Leisure in Stockton



Few people expressed a desire to engage in leisure activities by organising or joining a club or society. Of those that did the following were the interests they highlighted, with other interests mentioned including more for the elderly, fishing, evening classes and bridge.

"There is scope for promoting greater social interaction and perhaps a Stockton village week."

"Something should be done to occupy the teenagers, to keep them out of mischief."

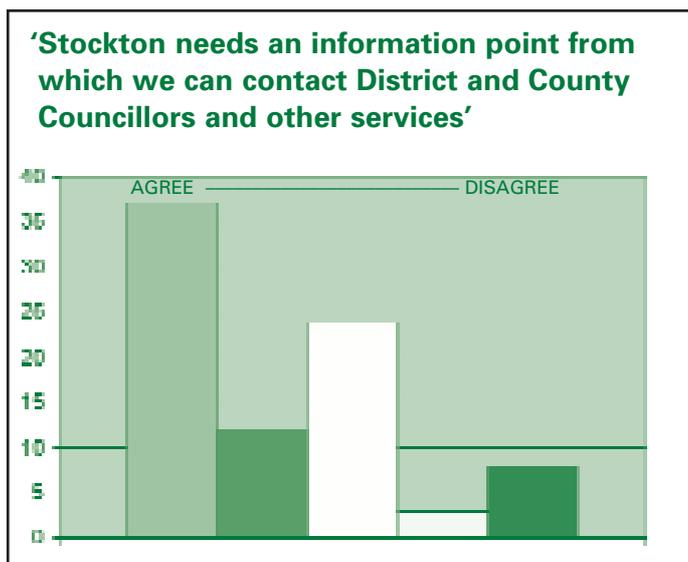


Sport is well catered for in the village by the football and cricket club, and netball and tennis facilities.

In comments and suggestions there was strong support from all age groups for a youth club or youth shelter.

"I think the vision is a very good one and most of the ideals expressed are sound."

8. Stockton's Community



Few respondents planned to use nursery facilities in the next few years, although many expressed support for them.

There was strong support for an information point, and other suggestions included a call for a cash card machine, and a return of the village carnival as a community activity.

"Try and get a carnival or annual event going."

"The Parish Council should concentrate on the things that they can do and which they already do well."

Action points

From the results a number of issues have been identified that demand action, by the Parish Council or by other bodies, addressing some of the points raised. A few areas lie outside the remit of the Parish Council and cannot be addressed directly, but the relevant bodies will be notified. Other areas are not affordable without significant changes in the level of precept and would require considerable consultation to implement.

Traffic

Item	Action needed	Responsibility	Urgency	Timescale
Traffic calming	Speed reduction on Napton Road	PC to agree best treatment with WCC and fund/ part fund	Medium	End 2008
Accidents at A426 crossroads	WCC to install accident prevention measures	Possible funding by Cemex. PC to engage with WCC on suitable measures	High	End 2006
Accidents on A426 between Southam and The Boat	Monitor accident record and put pressure on WCC to take action	PC	High	Ongoing
Parking on verges and pavements	1. Trial with mesh surfacing on verges 2. Establish WC and WCC view on parking on pavements and at road junctions and set up enforcement measures	PC PC/WC/WCC	Medium Medium	End 2006 End 2006
Bus route	Investigate alternative bus routes through village to avoid congestion	PC/WCC	Medium	End 2007

Housing

Item	Action needed	Responsibility	Urgency	Timescale
Affordable and market housing to meet local needs	PC to adopt the principles in the section on Housing Needs Survey and respond to planning applications accordingly	PC	Medium	As applications arise
	Carry out a Stage 2 housing needs survey	PC/WRHA/SDC/WRCC	High	By 2007
	PC to explore opportunities for building affordable homes on suitable sites in the village	PC/WRHA/SDC	High	By 2007
	PC to adopt the principles in the section on Housing Needs Survey and respond to planning applications accordingly	PC/SDC	Medium	As applications arise

Abbreviations Used:

CVS	–	Council for Voluntary Service
CWAS	–	Coventry & Warwickshire Ambulance Service
PC	–	Stockton Parish Council
SDC	–	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
WC	–	Warwickshire Constabulary
WCC	–	Warwickshire County Council
WRHA	–	Warwickshire Rural Housing Association

Facilities

Item	Action needed	Responsibility	Urgency	Timescale
Playing field	Continue redevelopment programme with emphasis on facilities for youth	PC	Medium	End 2007
Heritage features	1. Investigate use of Tree Preservation Orders for specimen trees	PC/SDC	Medium	End 2007
	2. Maintain and preserve open spaces in village	PC	Medium	Ongoing
	3. Preserve frontages of Church, Stockton School, Countrywide Stores, Chair Workshop in High St.	PC/SDC	Medium	Ongoing
	4. Preserve cemetery railings, village pump and Mt Sorrell stone	PC	Medium	Ongoing
Village facilities and appearance	1. Continue programme of providing seating, litter and dogs bins, street lights, dropped kerbs at junctions	PC/SDC/WCC	Medium	Ongoing
	2. Maintain public footpaths and improve signage, remove stiles or replace with kissing gates	PC/WCC	Medium	Ongoing
	3. Employ village handyman for litter picking, cleaning signs, maintaining public footpaths	PC	High	Mid 2006

Services

Item	Action needed	Responsibility	Urgency	Timescale
Village Institutions	1. Continue financial support for Village Hall, playing field, graveyard maintenance	PC	High	Ongoing
	2. Continue general support for existing and new village organisations	PC	High	Ongoing
	3. General support for redevelopment of Church	PC	Medium	Ongoing
Improve supply of information	1. Continue PC Newsletter and Website 2. Explore use of information board 3. Prepare an information sheet for new villagers	PC PC PC	Medium Medium Medium	Ongoing End 2006 Mid 2006
Travel to hospitals	Investigate access to volunteer drivers scheme and Ambulance Passenger Transport Service	PC/CVS/CWAS	Medium	Mid 2006

Conclusion

What happens next?

The plan will be put forward for adoption by the Parish Council and by the District Council, so that it becomes part of overall planning for the village and immediate area. The Parish Council will consider the Action Points and take measures to either act upon them or, for longer term and more expensive schemes, initiate plans for the future. Follow up information gathering will take place over the next few years, including a more detailed housing needs survey, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the parish.

A pdf copy of this report and details of subsequent developments will be available on the Parish Council website: www.stocktonpc.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all who contributed to this plan, including members of the committee sub-groups; parish councillors, past and present; all who contributed in interviews, completed survey forms and attended meetings, and particularly to Willy Adam, Howard Collerson and John Edwards for the production and analysis of materials.



Get involved

Several people have expressed an interest in being more involved in village activities, whether it be helping to maintain the village playing field, helping to run a youth club or participating in leisure activities. Others have stated in their contributions that they would like to see certain aspects of the village and its facilities developed or preserved.

If you would like to volunteer to participate in part of village and community life, please fill in the details on the form below and send it to the Parish Council Clerk at the address given.

I would like to be involved in: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Return this form to the Clerk, Bill Robinson, 74 George Street, Stockton. Tel: 814094