



# Avon Dassett Parish Plan

May 2022

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks go to:

Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society

Avon Dassett Parish Council

Avon Dassett Village Residents and Groups

Churches Conservation Trust

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Performance  
and Insight section

The Yew Tree

# Avon Dassett Parish Plan



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## 1.0 Avon Dassett Parish Plan

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### 1.1 Introducing the Parish Plan

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Avon Dassett's original Parish Plan was adopted in 2007. Since then, the village has undergone a number of changes, including undertaking a new Housing Needs Survey in 2019. The Avon Dassett Parish Plan Survey 2021 was designed to gather the opinions and views of the residents of Avon Dassett Parish in order to help update and refresh the plan for the Parish, and to establish community-based priorities for the future of the village. It is important for the prospective development of Avon Dassett Parish, providing key information and evidence to inform and shape decisions going forward.

### 1.2 The Parish Plan Process

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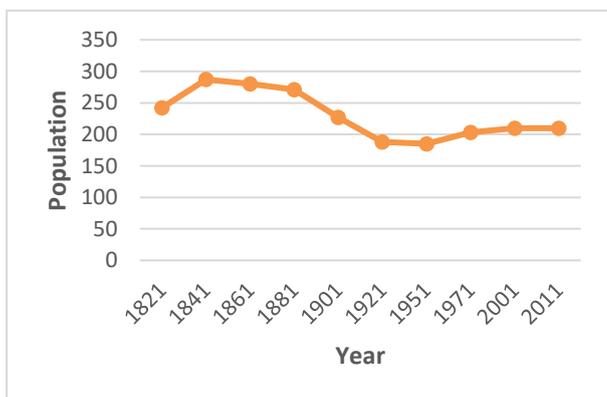
## 2.0 The Village of Avon Dassett

### 2.1 The History of Avon Dassett

The history of Avon Dassett is a story of continuity and change. The name of the village first appears in the written record in the Domesday Book of 1086. The first element 'Avon' appears to refer to a little stream which rises in the village and joins the Cherwell at Banbury. The second element 'Dassett' refers to wood, or possibly oak wood. The population has remained relatively static for the past two hundred years and the size of the village has changed little from Domesday times. But there have also been some dramatic transformations.

The Domesday Book also gives us our first impression of the size and wealth of the community. Before 1066, the manor was held by three thegns (landowners). In 1086 ownership had been transferred to the Count of Meulan. The manor was rated at 10 hides and included 50 acres of meadows.

#### Population of Avon Dassett 1821-2011



We only get fleeting glimpses into the lives of the poor before the nineteenth century. They were supported by levies of the inhabitants and there were also a number of village charities. The church in contrast was wealthy, the living was valued at £13 8s. 9d at the time of the Reformation rising to £450 by the mid nineteenth century. Religious and constitutional conflict came to a head in the locality of Avon Dassett with the first major encounter of the Civil War taking place at Edgehill. Both Royalists and Parliamentarians were active in the area and residents of the village claimed compensation after the war for the losses they had suffered.



'The Eve of the Battle of Edge Hill, 1642', 1845. Charles Landseer, (1799-1879) Walkers Art Gallery, Liverpool.

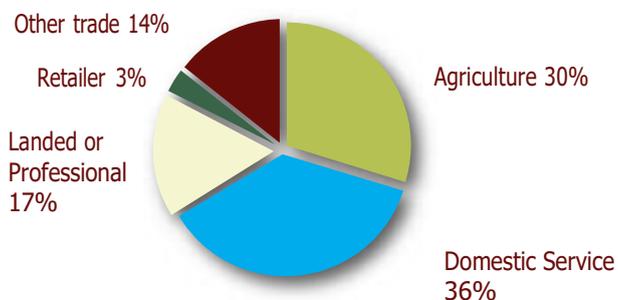
We get our first real insights into the lives of the majority of the population from the nineteenth-century censuses. There are around double the number of households today with half the number of occupants.

#### Households in Avon Dassett 1841-2011

Year	Average Household Size	Number of Households
1841	5.42	53
1851	4.94	62
1861	4.52	62
1881	4.44	61
1891	4.73	51
1901	4.63	49
2001	2.26	93
2011	2.30	93

An analysis of the occupations of the adult population also reveals the changes in the village. In 1841 60% of the population were engaged in agriculture, this figure had halved by 1901. In the 2021 Parish Plan survey only 8 people stated they were employed in agriculture or horticulture.

#### Occupations in Avon Dassett (1901)



The population was far from static during the nineteenth century with a turnover of around a third between each census. There were dominant village families but these too showed great fluctuations in numbers. Perhaps the most important change in the character of the village was the arrival of the Catholic Church, Presbytery and Convent, which were built in the 1850s. These institutions were financed by Joseph Knight, a nurseryman from Lancashire, who had made his fortune in Chelsea in the early nineteenth century, and came to live at Bitham Hall. A number of Catholic families were attracted to live in the village in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because of the church and convent.



Avon Dassett village circa 1910

In the twentieth century, the village experienced both financial and political scandals. In 1922 a Captain Owen Peel and his wife Violet were summonsed to appear at Bow Street Court for obtaining money via forged telegrams sent from Avon Dassett Post Office. In 1963 Avon Dassett was again embroiled in scandal when the press besieged the village searching for John Profumo after the MP was forced to resign in disgrace.

Avon Dassett was affected by war in the twentieth century. The village war memorial records the deaths of four men who lost their lives in the World Wars. The social and economic structure of the village was also subject to profound change. Large houses and farms were split up and the church suffered a decline in its fortunes. However, in spite of witnessing extensive change, the twenty-first century village retains the strong sense of community that it has had since its foundation.

## 2.2 Avon Dassett 2022

The Parish of Avon Dassett includes a considerable amount of land around the village of Avon Dassett, and extends across the M40 and Leamington-Banbury road to include a small part of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village itself is wholly contained within a Conservation Area. It lies about mid-way between Banbury and Leamington, and is situated on a south-west slope of Shooters Hill, part of the Burton Dassett Hills, between two main roads to Banbury, one from Coventry, the A423 and one from Warwick/Leamington, the B4100. Since 1991 the M40 has run through this area almost parallel to the Warwick-Banbury road.

There are three access routes to the village, one from the B4100, one from the Farnborough road, which joins the road from the B4100 at the lower end of the village and one from the road to Fenny Compton. Access to the Coventry-Banbury road, A423 is obtained via Fenny Compton and Farnborough.



Church Hill



Edge Hill

## 2.3 Features of Avon Dassett

Most of the houses in the village line the main street running north/south through the village. However, the parish covers a much wider area and includes properties to the Farnborough and Fenny Compton parish boundaries and on the far side of the B4100,

The most noteworthy landscape feature seen from the village is Edge Hill lying on the opposite side of the valley in which the M40 runs.

Avon Dassett contains two churches, one St. Joseph's is Roman Catholic and the other St. John the Baptist which is a redundant Church of England building.

### St. Joseph's Church

St. Joseph's Church, the Catholic church, was endowed by Joseph Knight of Bitham House in 1854. Services are held by the Polish Community regularly and the church is also made available for the village carol service on alternate years.



St. Joseph's Church

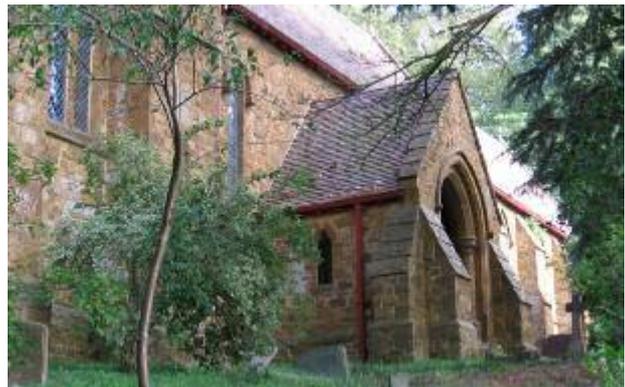
### St. John the Baptist Church

St. John the Baptist Church and churchyard stand on the sharp bend half way up the hill towards Fenny Compton. There may have been a church here in the 11th century as a priest in Avon Dassett was recorded in the Domesday Book. The present church was built in 1868 on the site of an earlier church. Within the church lies the 13th century tomb of Hugo

Deacon of Avon Dassett. The church was declared redundant in 1983 and is now maintained by the Church Commissioners and the churchyard by the Parish Council and Stratford District Council. It is very occasionally used for concerts and the village carol service on alternate years. Major repairs were undertaken to the spire in 2007.



St. John the Baptist Church before renovation in 1869



St. John the Baptist Church

### The Reading Room

The Reading Room was originally gifted to the village in 1898 by Mr. Thomas Aloysius Perry of Bitham Hall. The Reading Room provides a home for a Post Office on one morning in the week, a coffee morning and a few community activities.



The Reading Room, by Mary Edgington

## The Yew Tree

There is one Public House, now called The Yew Tree, but in the past has been named The Avon, The Prince Rupert and The Red Lion. The Yew Tree was bought by the village by Avon Dasset Community Benefit Society in 2017 and is the main village meeting place, in the absence of a village shop and very limited opening of the Post Office.



The Yew Tree

## The War Memorial

The new War Memorial, which originally stood in St. John the Baptist churchyard, replaced a previous memorial in the form of a bombshell, which stood on the area where the bus shelter now stands, and is remembered by those who grew up in the village. The new War Memorial was moved to its present site and re-dedicated on Sunday, November 10th 1968. It commemorates those from the village who gave their lives in both the 1914-1918 and the 1939-1945 wars.



The War Memorial

## The Old School

The Parish School was created in 1860 and provided education for local children until its closure on April 13th 1938. The building has since been converted into a private house.

## Avon Carrow and Bitham Hall

In the nineteenth century two large estates were developed, Avon Carrow and Bitham Hall, formerly known as Bitham House. Both houses are now divided into a number of smaller houses and apartments.



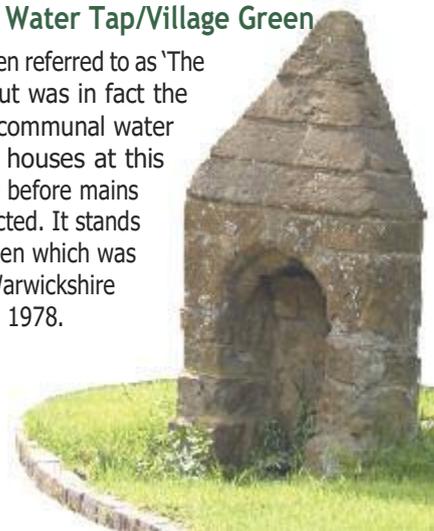
Avon Carrow



Bitham Hall

## The Communal Water Tap/Village Green

This feature is often referred to as 'The Gnome's Loo', but was in fact the housing for the communal water tap that served houses at this end of the village before mains water was connected. It stands on the village green which was registered with Warwickshire County Council in 1978.



## The Communal Water Tap and Village Green

## 2.4 Village Activities and Communications

### Avon Dassett Gardening Club

The club was founded in the late 1970s and has become a social and horticultural meeting place for those from within the village and adjoining parishes who are interested in plants and gardens. There are some forty members, which means that there is no sufficient space in the village for the monthly meetings so the group meets in Farnborough Village Hall.

### Avon Dassett Village Open Gardens

The first open gardens weekend was held in 1981. Money was needed to buy chairs and cups and saucers for the Reading Room for village use but more particularly for the fledgling Avon Dassett Gardening Club, £454.67 was raised. At that time no other village in the immediate area opened gardens to the public, but it proved so successful that many have followed suit since.

After similar openings in 1982 and 1984, when the money was divided between the village and Myton Hamlet Hospice, it was decided to join the National Garden Scheme in 1986. Avon Dassett gardens have opened annually for National Garden Scheme charities since. Over the years the village has raised thousands of pounds and welcomed thousands of visitors into the gardens.

### Dassett Men's Club

The Dassett Men's Club was founded in the early 1980s, by Rev. Dr. David Pym, then Vicar of the parish. The club meets in the Reading Room in Avon Dassett every month during the winter. Talks are given on a wide variety of subjects by invited speakers, and are attended by men from Avon Dassett and neighbouring villages.

### Dassett Country Show

The Avon Dassett Village Fete has been a local attraction for many years and was renamed the Dassett Country Show in 2013. The Committee meets monthly from October to August to plan and organise each year's events. The aim is not only to raise money for charity and village projects, but also to bring the community together to enjoy a great day. The success relies heavily on the dedication of the committee and the active involvement of villagers.

Over the years, thanks to the generosity of villagers and visitors alike, the Fete Committee has been able to make donations to a number of charities and village projects.

### The Playground

The playground land is leased by the Parish Council and has been an integral part of village life for many years. The Parish Council is planning further improvements to the playground.



Dassett Country Show - 2019

## Avon Dassett Soapbox Derby

Avon Dassett Soapbox Derby was launched in 2010. Competitors race down the steep and winding hill in the village, reaching speeds of up to 50 mph. It is a very popular family day out raising thousands of pounds for charities over the years.



Soapbox Derby Junior winner 2019

## Avon Dassett Pop-up Craft and Produce Market

A desire to support more local craft and produce businesses, save food miles and raise money for charity led to the establishment of Avon Dassett Pop-up Craft and Produce Market in 2019. The market takes place three times a year. All stall holder fees go to local charities.



Surplus produce for sale at the pop-up market

## Avon Dassett Local History Group

The Local History group is project-based and over the last fifteen years has produced a number of publications related to the history of the village. In 2012 the group authored *A Chronicle of Avon Dassett*, a comprehensive illustrated history of the village, to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. From 2017-8, a Heritage Lottery funded project commemorating the anniversary of WWI charted a year in the life of the village from August 1918. For the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day the group published a celebratory newspaper remembering the contributions of the village to the war effort during WWII as well as relatives of villagers who served.

## Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society

Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society was established in 2017 in order to 'secure the long term future of The Yew Tree (formerly known as The Avon), as a flourishing business asset, for the benefit of the community and investors, by vesting ownership in a society controlled by the community and by running the business profitably'.

## Bridge Club

The bridge club meets twice a month at The Yew Tree and is open to all skills levels.

## Neighbourhood Watch Group

The group has been running for over two decades and operates as an email list of village 'eyes and ears'. The group has had a number of successes in preventing and reporting crime but there are still concerns about thefts from outbuildings, properties and vehicles.



Some of the beautiful china used for the vintage teas

## Vintage Teas

The vintage teas are held occasionally in the Reading Room and have raised thousands of pounds for charities over the years.

## Walking Club

The walking club meets at The Yew Tree every third Thursday in the month for gentle walks in the surrounding area. Dogs are welcome too! Walkers and non-walkers then convene back at The Yew Tree for a light lunch.



The Walking Club

## Avon Dassett Community Website

The Community website ([www.avondassett.com](http://www.avondassett.com)) was established as one of the actions of the 2007 Parish Plan. It was initially funded by a grant from the National Lottery and a further update was funded as part of the Local History Group's Heritage Lottery Fund grant in 2014. The website was part of Stratford-on-Avon District Council's beacon award for digital inclusion. It provides webpages for village groups as well as disseminating news and information on upcoming events.

## Avon Dassett Parish Council Website

In 2017 the Parish Council set up their own website ([www.avondassettparishcouncil.com](http://www.avondassettparishcouncil.com)) to meet the requirements of the transparency code. It publishes the agendas, minutes, papers and policies of the parish council.

## Avon Dassett Parish Council Mailing List

In 2016 the Parish Council set up a mailing list to communicate news and events to villagers by email. Village residents need to give their permission to be added to the mailing list.

## Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society Mailing List

The Community Benefit Society established their own mailing list which communicates information on village events and the Society to its shareholders and members.

## Avon Dassett Village WhatsApp Group

In 2019, as a result of the pandemic, the village set up a village helpline and WhatsApp group. It quickly became apparent that residents also wanted to use the group to exchange news and general requests and so a broader village group was established.

## Avon Dassett Facebook Page

There is a village Facebook page (@AvonDassett) which is linked to the community website and disseminates information on village news and events as well as sharing news from other local Facebook sites. Other village groups also have their own Facebook pages.

## Avon Dassett Twitter Feed

Avon Dassett has a Twitter feed (@AvonDassett) linked to the Community website and disseminates information on village news and events as well as sharing information from other local Twitter feeds.

## Avon Dassett on nextdoor.co.uk

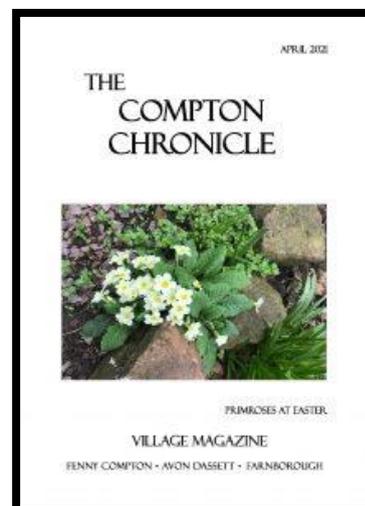
Avon Dassett village are well represented on nextdoor.co.uk and many village groups and residents use the platform to advertise events as well as raising requests.

## Avon Dassett Noticeboards

Avon Dassett has three noticeboards community which are a valuable source of information. Two are managed by the Parish Council and one is open.

## Compton Chronicle

*The Compton Chronicle* is an award-winning magazine covering the villages of Fenny Compton and Farnborough as well as Avon Dassett. It publishes ten issues a year which are distributed freely to each household in the village.



The Compton Chronicle

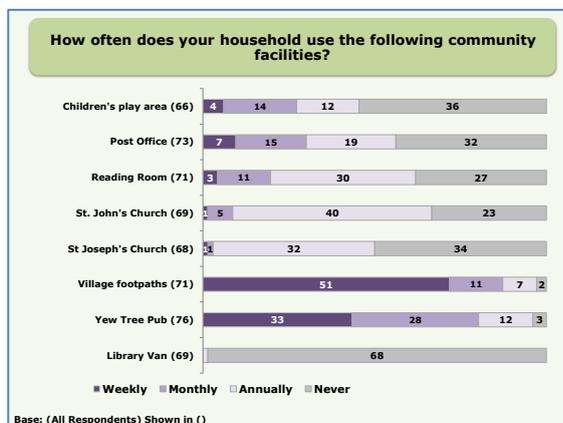
## 3.0 The Questionnaire Results

### 3.1 Your Household

- 78 out of the 93 households in the village returned the questionnaire (84%)
- The population of the households answering the survey totalled 178 people.
- 49% of this population was over the age of 55 years.
- 17% of the population was 18 years or younger.
- 87% of those completing the questionnaire have lived in the parish for more than five years.

### 3.2 Community

- The most common ways of accessing community information were via the Compton Chronicle and word of mouth.
- 88% thought broadband was very good or OK.
- 37% thought mobile phone reception was poor.
- Village footpaths and the Yew Tree Pub were the most used community facilities, with 72% and 43% respondents respectively saying that they used them weekly.
- The biggest issues with The Reading Room and St John's Church were lack of toilet/kitchen facilities, and utilities such as heating and electricity.
- Most popular future uses for these buildings were for social events and as shop/post office/tea room.
- The most popular other facilities which would be welcome would be a dog walking field, allotments and a shop.
- Over half of respondents (57%) said that they would use a village shop weekly. More people said that they would use it for staples plus newsagent items than any other product categories.
- The Dasset country show and Soapbox Derby were the most popular events attended in the past and potentially in the future.



A local footpath heading towards the village

### 3.3 Housing

- Most people (62%) owned their properties outright.
- 48 out of 78 (62%) respondents answered the question about housing need priorities following the Housing Needs Survey of 2019.
- Of these, more people thought that 2 x Housing Association/private rental 2-bedroom bungalows should be the priority in terms of housing need.



Hill View

### 3.4 Business

- 58 people (32%) were classed as employed full time, and 51 (28%) were retired.
- 40 respondents said that at least one person in the household worked from home, while 31 said that no-one did.
- People were employed across a diverse range of sectors.
- The largest problems for people were mobile phone coverage (88%) and broadband (28%)
- There was not much interest in a business hub or hot-desking facility within the village, with 69% saying that they would never use it.

### 3.5 Traffic and Transport

- 24 households (31%) had 3 or more cars.
- The majority of cars were kept on residents' property
- An overwhelming majority did not use bus transport or UBUS.
- A more reliable, more frequent service would encourage more to use public transport.
- Only 13% felt that a car-sharing scheme would be useful.
- Just under half were planning to buy an electric car in the next three years. Charging them at home was the most popular option (97%) with public sites second (65%).
- Vehicles parked dangerously was the biggest parking concern (58% respondents).
- 65% felt more off-road parking should be provided within the village.
- 69% felt that speeding was an issue.
- Reducing the speed limit to 20mph was the most popular traffic improvement measure, with 64% choosing this.
- While respondents generally felt safe to walk/run on the village roads, horse-riding and cycling were felt to be more dangerous.



### 3.6 Crime

- Over 97% of respondents felt safe at home and walking during the day; slightly fewer felt safe walking at night (74%). This pattern held for the other members of the household.
- 62% were interested in property marking.
- 78% were aware of the neighbourhood watch group; just under 50% would be prepared to join.

### 3.7 Environment

- While most houses had mains electricity (82%), half of all properties (51%) used oil and 40% used LPG. Under 5% properties each had solar-heated water, solar-generated electricity or air/ground source heat pumps.
- 84% would like to see renewable energy schemes for dwellings promoted.
- 80% would consider changes to their energy sources.
- 67% would support commercial renewable energy schemes within the parish.

### 3.8 Local Government

- More people felt acquainted with the work of Avon Dassett Parish Council than with Warwickshire County or Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
- Over half of respondents (53%) said that they never attended parish council meetings.
- The Compton Chronicle and word of mouth were the two most popular ways of finding out about parish council activities.

### 3.9 Young People

- 78% of respondents felt that there were not adequate local facilities for young people.
- 55% said that they took part in village activities and used the playground.
- Only 1 person used public transport – to get to Leamington – with other people saying that they would use it if it were better.



### 3.10 Summing Up

- The three most mentioned best things about living in Avon Dassett were: the village community and friendly people; its location in the countryside and access to country walks; and the Yew Tree pub.
- The three most common issues were: traffic-related issues including speeding, volume of traffic and heavy good vehicles coming through the village; worries about development and the changing nature of the village or lack of infrastructure; and lack of access to services due to its isolated location and lack of public transport.

## 4.0 The Avon Dassett Parish Action Plan

Category	Comments	Proposed Action	Partners	Priority	Time
<b>Communication</b>	Survey revealed residents obtain information in a variety of ways and different media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create 'communication checklist' for groups and events in the village</li> </ul>	PC/Village groups	High	Short
	Some were unaware of village WhatsApp group or mailing lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage all groups to use multiple forms of communication for inclusivity</li> </ul>	PC/Village groups	High	Short
	3 residents do not have internet or mobile phones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew mailing lists/WhatsApp contacts annually</li> </ul>	PC/Community Benefits Society	High	Short
	41% reported poor mobile phone coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate best providers for mobile phone reception in village and publish report</li> </ul>	PC	Medium	Medium
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise OFCOM's suggestions on ways to improve reception and ways to switch providers</li> </ul>	PC	Medium	Medium
<b>Community Facilities</b>	51% use footpaths at least once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve footpaths, replace stiles with gates</li> </ul>	Footpath group in conjunction with WCC	High	Medium
	St John's Church is rarely used because of poor facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve facilities at St Johns (access, toilet, kitchen, lighting, heating, projector)</li> </ul>	PC/Churches Conservation Trust/Action with Communities in Rural England	High	Medium
	Reading Room is rarely used because of size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve space in Reading Room by opening up into one room</li> </ul>	PC/ Action with Communities in Rural England	High	Medium

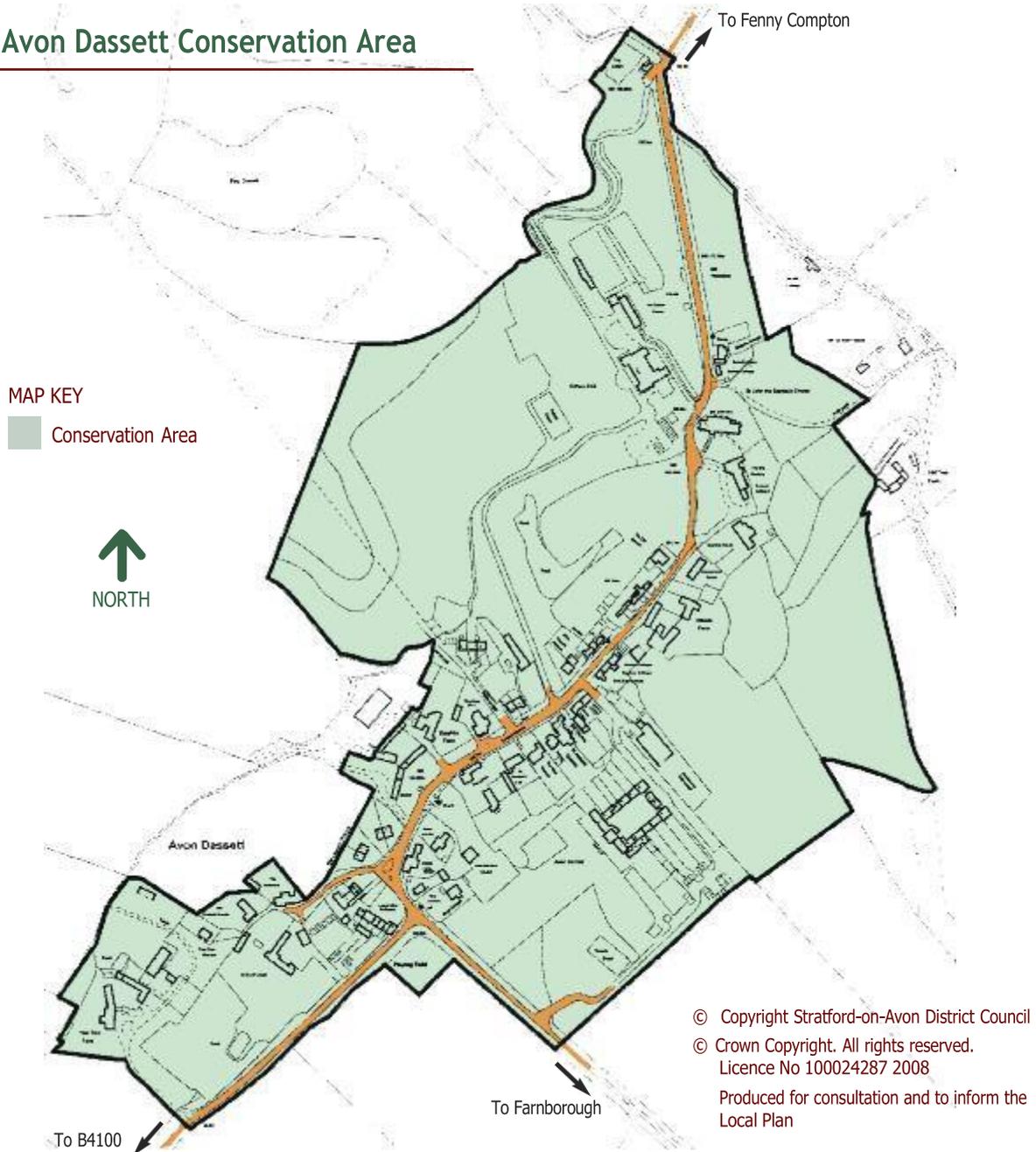
<b>Community Facilities</b>	49% of village are over 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form working group to look at provision of facilities for over 55s</li> </ul>	PC/Village residents	High	Medium
	40% support dog walking field 31% support allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact local landowners to discuss sites for dog walking field, allotments, wild area, community garden</li> </ul>	PC/Village residents	High	Medium
	10% support improved bridleways/cycle paths A significant proportion of those who cycle or ride on village roads feel unsafe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form working group to consider ways to improve bridleways/cycle paths</li> </ul>	PC/village residents in conjunction with British Horse Society, SDC, WCC	Medium	Medium
<b>Village Shop</b>	57% would use shop weekly The most popular products were emergency staple items and newsagent products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form working group to create business plan for village shop</li> </ul>	PC/Community Benefit Society	Medium	Medium
<b>Village Events</b>	Existing village events are well supported There is enthusiasm to increase the number of events and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form village social group to co-ordinate activities</li> <li>Have village-wide publicity/marketing of events</li> </ul>	PC/village residents	High	Medium
			PC/village groups	High	Short
<b>Housing</b>	Only 7 households that responded to the questionnaire rent properties in the parish (the remainder are owner occupied) 73% of those who responded to the question supported 2 units of social housing in the village Over half of the respondents did not want any new houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore with local landowners (including those who may wish to give up some of their garden) possibility of plots for small scale social housing</li> <li>Any future housing will be expected to include sustainable drainage to reduce flood risk and comply with planning policies</li> </ul>	PC/WRCC/local landowners/village residents	High	Medium

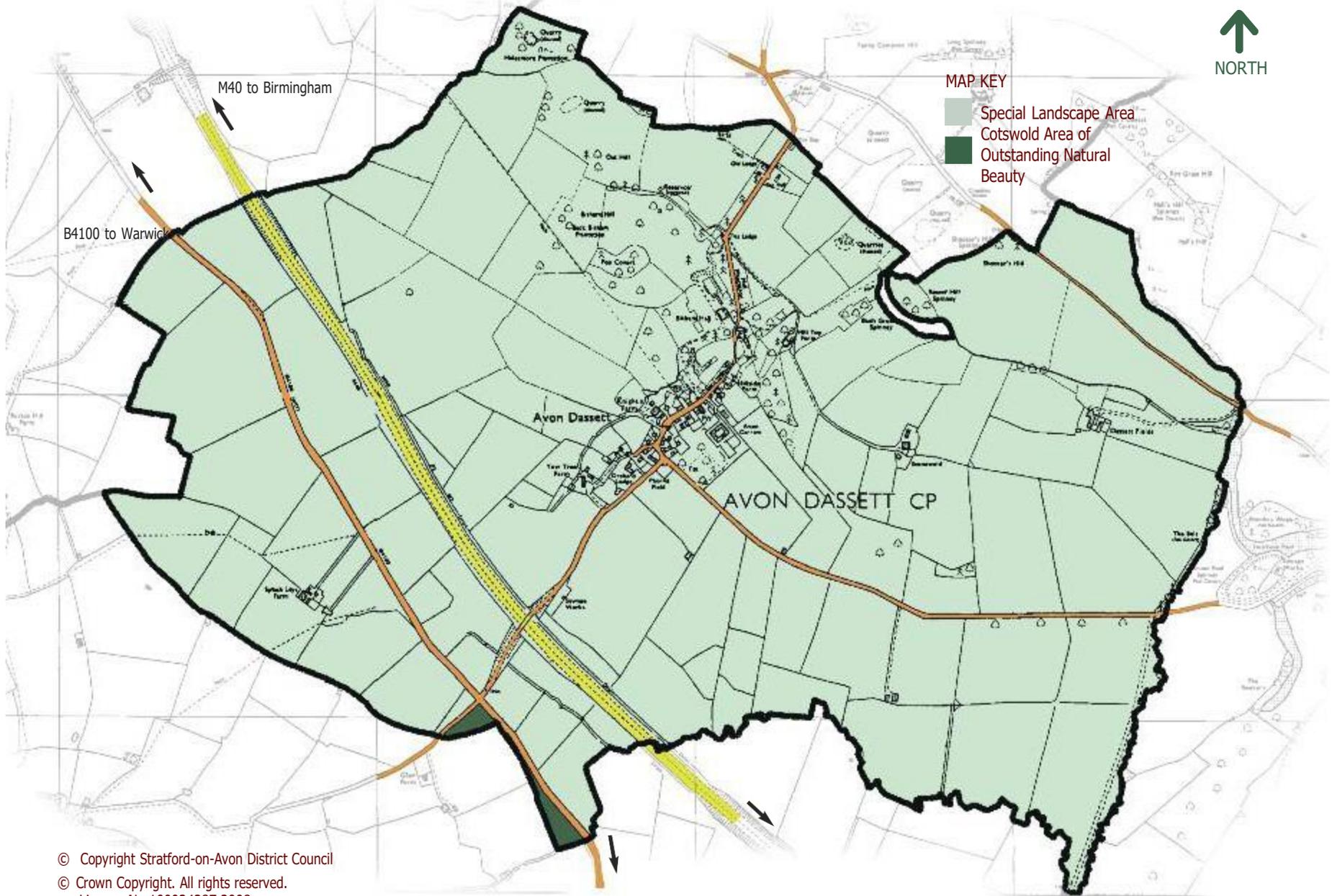
<b>Business</b>	Over 50 people in the village work from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up working from home support group</li> </ul>	PC/village residents working from home	High	Short
	There are a large number of different businesses in the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile business directory (updated annually) to encourage residents to support local businesses</li> </ul>	PC/village businesses	High	Short
<b>Traffic and Transport</b>	A significant number (31%) of households have 3 or more cars 80% have concerns about parking in the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of increasing communal parking</li> </ul>	PC/WCC/local landowners	High	Medium
	97% do not use local bus services and many were unaware of UBUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicise UBUS regularly</li> </ul>	PC	High	Short
	47% may move to electric vehicles in the next 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form group to establish electric vehicle charging points and explore community transport options</li> </ul>	PC/village residents/WCC	High	Medium
	69% think speeding is an issue in the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for reduction in speed limit</li> </ul>	PC/WCC/Speedwatch group	High	Medium
<b>Crime</b>	Over half of the village would like increased crime prevention measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the police to provide more crime prevention measures</li> </ul>	PC/Police	High	Short
	A fifth of the village are unaware of the Neighbourhood Watch Group Half are willing to join the Neighbourhood Watch Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicise Neighbourhood Watch Group and renew membership annually</li> </ul>	PC/Neighbourhood Watch Group	High	Short

<b>Environment</b>	84% would like the parish council to promote renewable energy schemes and 80% are willing to change energy source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicise existing renewable energy schemes and grants</li> </ul>	PC in conjunction with SDC/WCC	High	Medium
	67% support a commercial renewable energy scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form working group to consider sites/types of commercial renewable energy schemes</li> </ul>	PC in conjunction with SDC/WCC	High	Medium
<b>Parish Council</b>	Only 4% attend parish council meetings frequently 25 out of 33 responses made suggestions to improve communication of parish council decisions and encourage inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of live streaming parish council meetings</li> <li>Give personal invites to annual meetings</li> <li>Publicise parish council activities and encourage public to get involved</li> </ul>	PC in conjunction with SDC	High	Short
			PC	High	Short
			PC	High	Short
<b>Youth Provision</b>	78% of young people think facilities in the village are inadequate Just over half use existing facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form working group including young people to improve village facilities for youth</li> </ul>	PC/young village residents/ Action with Communities in Rural England	High	Medium

## 5.0 Maps of Avon Dassett

### 5.1 Avon Dassett Conservation Area





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Aerial View of Avon Dassett