

Weston Colville Community Led Plan



Produced March 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The Weston Colville Community Plan Volunteer Group hopes you will benefit from this Report.

Our aim has been to involve all residents in establishing concerns, listening to comments and planning for the future. We were very impressed that those who responded cared very deeply about the environment in which they live.

The Plan has been prepared largely independently of the Parish Council but has been accepted by them and has their support.

What is a Community Led Plan?

A Community Plan is a comprehensive plan which addresses issues of concern to the Community together in one document. It has to be prepared by the community working together and based on information provided from research, survey and consultation. It must be focused on action and contain clear statements for the future.

Who was involved in producing the Plan?

A well-publicised open meeting was held in May 2014 from which a steering group was formed of residents keen to take part in producing The Plan. The initial steering group produced the 'love/hate' Questionnaire which was circulated and feedback obtained. The group through other commitments reduced in size and the final steering group produced a detailed Questionnaire based on the 'love/hate' Questionnaire and has produced the final Report.

Residents involved

Ian Ashbridge

Anne Bragg

Bob Coates

Richard Golding

Christine King

Jeremy Newton

Parish Councillors

Brian Cushion

Bridget Durham

John Garrod

Constantine Pagonis

Allen Scott

Ray Vidler

What were the objectives of the steering group?

The objective of the steering group in producing the Community Led Plan was to assess the issues and concerns raised within the Parish and see where possible improvements or changes could be made. Where appropriate, to take on specific areas of interest and to work with existing resources and associations in the Parish.

The main objective is to improve life in the Parish by establishing what is currently valued and where improvements or changes may be made.

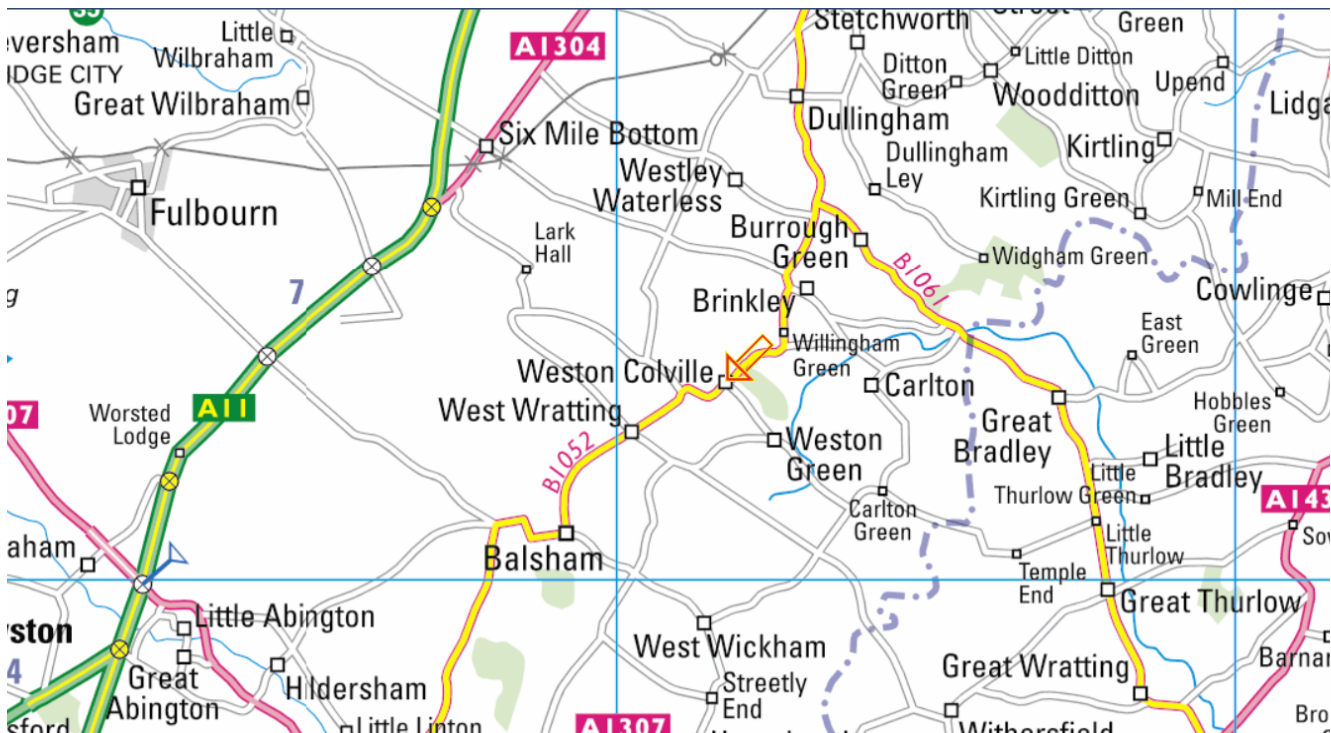
Background to the Plan

Weston Colville is a small rural community with approximately 180 houses and an Electoral Roll Register of 378 adults. There are limited facilities within the village and no significant development has taken place over the past 20 years apart from a few in-fill house builds.

The parish lies 15 miles south east of Cambridge; originally a farming community supporting a local economy, there is now little local employment. There is still a thriving shop/ post office but the primary school and public houses have been closed for a long time leaving the Reading Room as the main community asset used as the Village Hall.

With increasing pressure in South Cambridgeshire generally for development for both housing and industrial/commercial use the Parish Council commissioned a Community Led Plan to establish the views of the local community in respect of a number of issues and areas that would be affected by possible development or change of use.

Additionally, the Parish Plan Group was interested in feedback on local issues to establish the views of residents on day to day matters.



A Community Led Plan leads to an Action plan where objectives can be determined and prioritised. The services and facilities in Weston Colville are extremely limited and given the small size of the Parish the financial and practical resources that the Parish can draw on are limited.

Two Questionnaires were produced. A 'love/hate' Questionnaire to consider in broad terms issues that were of interest or concern. This was followed up with a formal Questionnaire with the questions derived from the love/hate responses.

The Questionnaire was broken into sections.

- Village Environment
- Village Services
- Public Transport
- Law and Order
- Amenities
- Housing Development

Questionnaires were delivered by members of the Parish Plan group to every house in the Parish in October 2014. There were two articles in the parish magazine Challenge encouraging response and completion of the Questionnaires and a session was held in the Reading Room for people to come and discuss the questionnaire.

Response Rate

We were pleased that we had responses from the occupants of over 50% of the houses in Weston Colville along with a number of answers to the general question 'do you want to add anything further to the questions and answers'.

In total, responses were received from 186 residents of whom 16 were under 10, 11 were between 11 and 18 and 159 were from people 19 or over.

It was felt that the number of responses was sufficient to give adequate weight to the findings as being representative of the views of the village

Summary

Responses to the questionnaire and consultation show that people living in Weston Colville appreciate the quiet rural nature of the Parish.

However there are concerns about a number of issues that affect both daily life and the future development of the village.

- Poor mobile phone signal was seen as the biggest issue for the village by the majority of those who responded to the questionnaire
- Low Broadband speed: The use of the internet is becoming essential to modern life. The poor broadband speed means we are at a disadvantage both domestically, for entertainment and educational purposes, and also for businesses working from home.
- Maintenance of roads and footpaths was seen as a significant issue by a large proportion of respondents.
- Pavements, ditches and verges were seen as a major issue requiring more attention following damage by large vehicles using the village.
- Speeding in the village was also seen as a major concern for a significant number of the respondents
- The village shop is seen as the most important asset in the village which people would like to see preserved
- The community social life of the village mainly takes place in the Reading Room. This is an old Victorian building for which the trustees are looking at ways of encouraging greater use for which the responses suggested there was a demand.
- The green spaces and extensive footpath network are valued. The green spaces, the recreation ground and Church End play area should be protected. The footpath network needs to be maintained to ensure access.
- Concerns over adequate Public Transport: we are fifteen miles outside of Cambridge but relying on public transport for regular access is difficult due to the infrequency of buses which encourages use of private cars for short journeys. There was also some interest in possible car share schemes
- Challenge was also seen as a positive being widely read by many of the respondents

It must be accepted that the resources of the parish are limited both financially and in people power. Many proposals require funding which may be achieved through the Community Charge or Grants. However much can be achieved by local residents working together to start new projects or maintain existing social events.

Mobile Phone Signal

A large majority of people said that the village had poor mobile reception as reflected by multiple comments in the questionnaires returned.

Issue:

Providing good mobile phone signal coverage in all parts of the village

Objective:

To improve mobile phone reception in the village so that phones can be used in all locations

Action:

Liaise with mobile phone service providers to supply increased mobile phone coverage

Action by:

Parish Plan Group to consult mobile phone service providers

Broadband Speed

A large number of people were concerned by the slow broadband speed for internet access in the village with several free text comments on this subject being returned in the questionnaire.

This is especially an issue for the large number of village inhabitants who sometimes work from home but it is also seen as a significant inconvenience by nearly all users

Issue:

Providing an increased broadband speed for the village

Objective:

To improve village access to the internet and make it easier for people to work from home

Action:

Liaise with BT Openreach to provide a faster broadband connection for the village

Action by:

Parish Plan Group - ongoing

Maintenance of Roads and Verges

The majority of people agree that maintenance of the roads was the biggest issue in the village and would like to see more work carried out to improve the situation.

Those who raised concerns were not satisfied with the following

Pot hole repairs

Standard of road surfaces

Damage to verges from movement of lorries through village

Poor drainage due to blocked gullies

Road gritting – there were comments asking for more gritting in icy weather

Issue:

Improving the state of the roads and drains

Objective:

Better road and drainage maintenance plus better gritting in winter

Action:

Liaise with County Council Highways department to lobby for improvements and possibly use parish funds and apply for grants for specific road maintenance projects

Action by:

Parish Plan Group - ongoing

Speeding through the Village

Several people raised concerns about speeding in the village and would like to see it better controlled. There were several comments in the questionnaires referring to speeding cars, lorries and farm vehicles with a variety of suggestions for reducing speeding in the village.

Issue:

Speeding traffic in the village

Objective:

To get drivers to drive carefully in the village and within the sign posted speed limits

Action:

Parish Plan Group to support the local speed watch group

Action by: Speed watch group to carry out regular speed checks - ongoing

Village Shop

The majority of people saw the village shop as the most valuable amenity in the village and wished to support it. There were several comments requesting longer opening hours and requests for it to stock more food items. There were even comments from people volunteering to staff the shop if required to allow it to stay open.

Issue:

To retain the village shop and post office.

Objective:

Ensure the village shop and post office remains available for villagers to use.

Action:

To actively encourage villagers to support the shop and post office by using it as often as they can.

Action by:

Parish Plan Group to liaise with the shop owner to see if any help or support is required.

Social Events

Currently a small number of social events and community activities are held throughout the year. These are organised by volunteers or the Parish Council.

Regular activities include:-

Summer Fair by Cricket club

Occasional Quiz night by Cricket club

Barn Dance by Cricket club

Winter lunch in January by Friends of the Church

Pilates in Reading Room every Tuesday

Art Group

First Friday Tea and cakes in Reading Room

Annual Flower Festival in the Church

Cricket club fixtures

We asked people how they valued social events such as those above.

Clearly there is support with over 50% of people valuing these general social events and would like to see more on offer and there were requests in the questionnaire for regular events in the Reading Room to be published monthly in Challenge.

Issue:

To maintain and increase social events.

Objective:

To involve more people in becoming involved with ideas and organising events.

Action by:

Parish Plan Group and Reading room trustees to try to encourage more people to get involved in organising such events by actively talking to those who responded to the survey wanting more social events such as those listed in miscellaneous responses at the end of this document.

Publish routine events regularly in Challenge.

Enhance the advertisement for the Reading Room including the name and telephone number of the hiring contact.

Rural nature of the village

Maintaining the rural nature of the village including its access to countryside, peace and quiet and wildlife is very important to most people (79.5% of people said this is very important and 13.6% of people said it was quite important). Similarly 89% said the green spaces within the village are important to them.

Concerns were raised about the condition of public footpaths, dog fouling, flooding and light pollution. Others requested better maintenance of verges.

Issue:

How can we best maintain the rural nature of the village?

Objective:

Maintain rural nature of village.

Action:

Review current arrangements about informing residents about planning applications in the village.

Immediate Action by:

Parish Plan Group to continue its maintenance of Parish owned green spaces and verges.

Parish clerk to raise awareness within the parish of planning applications by publishing them in Challenge.

Church End Playing Field

A significant number of respondents wanted to see enhanced play equipment and facilities provided at the Church End playground and the creation of more space for sports activities to compliment the village green at the other end of the village. There were also comments requesting that the area be better and more frequently maintained.

Issue:

How can we improve the quality of the Church End play area

Objective:

To provide additional adventure play equipment and maintain the area for exercise more effectively

Action:

Sponsor project to buy new play equipment and improve the quality and frequency of field maintenance

Immediate Action by:

Parish Clerk to organise more frequent grass cutting and twice yearly hedge trimming.

Parish Plan Group to support local group application for new play equipment.

Public Transport

The majority of people seemed to want public transport for the village with a strong wish for more although exactly what is required is unclear

Those who were not satisfied with the current arrangements wanted to see:-

Nearly half said they would like buses to run more frequently in the evenings and at weekends.

Opinion was equal on:-

Later evening buses in the week

More frequent buses during the weekdays

There was also a modest demand for a car sharing scheme to be set up.

Issue 1:

Maintaining and extending bus provision

Objective:

Increase the frequency of buses running in the evening and at weekends

Action:

Liaise with bus operating company and County Council

Action by: Parish Plan Group and concerned volunteers – ongoing

Issue 2:

How to create a car sharing scheme in the village.

Objective:

To decrease the number of single occupant car journeys.

Action:

To find a volunteer car share scheme coordinator.

Action by: Parish Plan Group to canvass for a volunteer from the respondents requesting the scheme.

Housing

Nearly 50% of those completing the questionnaire did not express any views on this subject.

When asked about the provision of low cost housing in the village of those expressing a view, 27% said they wanted to see some low cost housing, 53% said they wanted any development to be only 6 or fewer houses and 20% said they didn't want to see any such development.

When asked about how they would like to see other housing develop in the future, roughly half of those that responded to this question said they didn't want to see any development.

Small scale development within the current boundary would be potentially supported by half of those who responded.

Issue:

No available sites for low cost housing have currently been identified in the village.

Objective:

To determine what constitutes low cost housing and what type of new build villagers would like.

Action:

Assuming that suitable sites are identified within the village, villagers need to be surveyed to determine what kind of new build they would like to see.

Action by: Parish Council to organise further survey whenever a suitable site is identified.

Miscellaneous Responses

We were pleased that a number of people provided additional comment in addition to the questionnaire. A number of these that expand the commentary in the report are listed below and also show the difficulties of meeting as many aspirations as possible.

Footpaths

Pushchair access from Church End to Weston Green.

Improved footpath maintenance.

Levelling of certain footpaths.

Rural Nature

Lower Wood is seen as positive asset.

Recreation ground is kept free for all to use.

Church

People saw the Church as important and want to see it both retained for use and maintained adequately and would like to see better car parking provision near the Church.

Electricity Supply

A small number of people thought the supply was unreliable and that the village had too many power cuts.

Crime

There were also a few comments asking for an enhanced Neighbourhood Watch to combat the rising number of thefts in the village especially from oil tanks and outbuildings.

Events and Facilities

Clubs and activities in the Reading Room, continuation of people organising events on a voluntary basis:-

Christmas Party

Youth Club

More equipment' at the playground for children.

Film nights

'Pop up' Pub/ Café in the Reading Room

