



Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

Community Led Parish Plan
2014 - 24

An accessible, rural community nestling in the gentle shadow of the Sinodun Hills



Wassailing Night



The Diamond Jubilee Beacon on Brightwell Barrow



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1 Introduction

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is a Thameside parish of picture postcard prettiness. The main village nestles in a hollow below the Sinodun Hills, separated from the outlying hamlets of Shillingford Hill, Clapcot, Sires Hill and Mackney by a patchwork of fields, orchards, woods and meadowland. This is an area that has attracted artists, musicians, scientists and visionaries including Dr Edward Bach and the artist Paul Nash who was inspired by the hills that dominate the surrounding landscape.

The parish retains its 14th century village pub, a post office, a shop, a village school, a village hall, a riverside hotel, several garages and an award winning vineyard. Mixed farms, the Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary and Sotwell Manor Fruit Farm are a reminder of the area's agricultural past, whilst the Earth Trust's facilities at North Farm provide a site of high nature conservation interest. Footpaths criss-cross the parish offering excellent walking opportunities.

People have lived and worked here for over 5000 years – each generation shaping the landscape in their own way. Dotted along the narrow village lanes are the picturesque thatched cottages that are so typical of South Oxfordshire. These traditional buildings mix with new developments that on the whole blend seamlessly into the rural scene. New building has generally been contained within the village envelope designated in the 1970s, and the few undeveloped sites that remain within the village have usually been snapped up by developers for prestigious executive homes.

The parish is a thriving community, forming a very desirable place to live. There are all manner of events taking place throughout the year, and a variety of clubs and societies to belong to. Families have tended to stay put and build extensions, rather than move.

Very few younger people stay in the parish into adulthood. There is a significantly older population. Smaller homes suitable as starter properties, or for single people and the elderly, have virtually disappeared. Now, even medium sized homes are rapidly disappearing.

Balancing the demands of conservation with the need to create a sustainable, thriving community has been a difficult juggling act. The parish is located in the South Oxfordshire growth area. Excellent rail links to London and world class job opportunities have created a booming region.

The decision to place a high proportion of the county's development at Didcot, just four miles away, and the development of Site B on the periphery of the parish has put Brightwell-cum-Sotwell under unprecedented pressure. The consequences of this development are being felt in the parish, particularly on the road network.

In 2004, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell wrote its first Parish Plan setting out its vision for the next decade. This new Community Led Parish Plan is the first update and will cover the period 2014 to 2024.

The War Memorial and Stewart Village Hall



2 Summary

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is a special place for those people who live here. We have a long history and a strong sense of place. We see ourselves very much as a rural community and wish to remain so. We are a country parish whose peace and tranquillity is important to most of us.

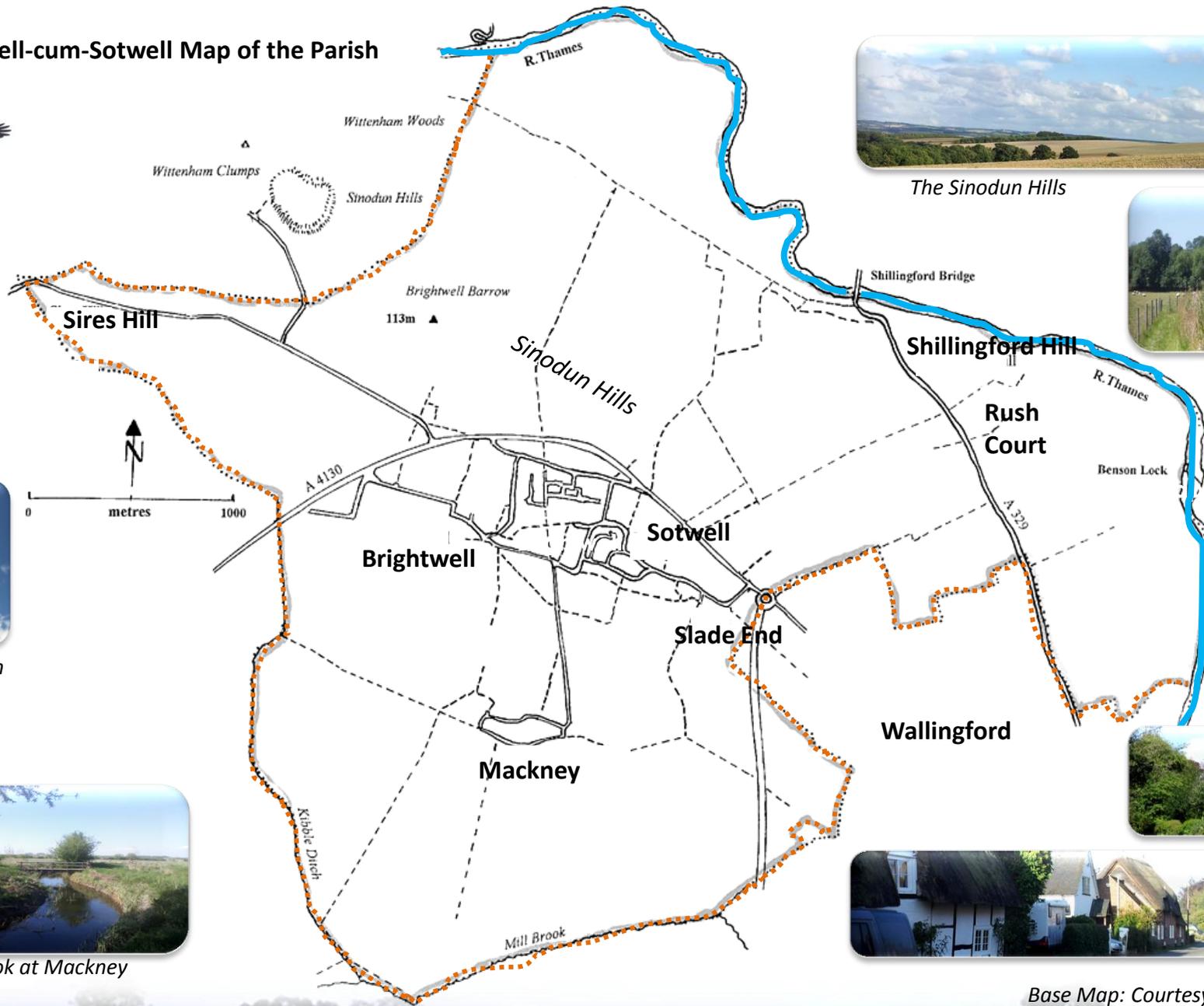
As development pressures continue to increase and more and more housing is built in South Oxfordshire, we are increasingly a community that is concerned that our rural character is potentially under threat. This does not mean that we want our parish to be set in aspic. We value the economic benefits that Brightwell-cum-Sotwell's location brings, and the results of our Parish Questionnaire show that we actively support change.

The main challenge for the next decade will be to find ways that sustain our separate identity as a country parish, including those elements of our parish we cherish, in a way that embraces the economic success of the region. We need to grow and evolve but we also need to conserve the rural character that so many local people cherish. This is not going to be an easy task.

The top four issues raised during the preparation of the Parish Plan were: loss of rural character, increasing traffic on the A4130, potholes and dog mess.



3 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Map of the Parish



The Sinodun Hills



The River Thames



Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary



Mill Brook at Mackney



The 'main Village'



Base Map: Courtesy of the Environment Group



4 The 2004 Parish Plan

In 2004, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell was one of the very first parishes in the country to publish a Community Led Parish Plan setting out a vision on how the parish should evolve between 2004 and 2014.

The Parish Plan referenced a Daily Telegraph article that had celebrated Brightwell-cum-Sotwell as its ideal village to live in – a sought after village that retained the ‘seven vital Ps’ being: a pub, primary school, parson, public transport, phone box, petrol station and a post office. As the new millennium started however, these facilities were under threat and one by one they seemed to be disappearing. The focus of our first Parish Plan was therefore on how to retain these core parish facilities.

Ten years on, how did we do? The parson is now a team vicar, the phone box is now an art gallery/defibrillator location (having become almost redundant with the widespread use of mobile phones), neither of the two garages sell petrol but they do still fix cars. The primary school is complemented by a pre-school, public transport has improved offering an hourly service to Wallingford, Didcot and Oxford, the pub is thriving and the post office and Village Stores are a magnificent community led resource.

All in all, the 2004 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Plan was a success!

The 2004 report, however, suggested that our rural community was under threat from outside development; in particular the expansion of Didcot and the possibility for a large new housing estate in the parish on the outskirts of Wallingford. The issues are now real and the resolution of them forms the basis of our new Parish Plan: how do we retain our pastoral character and our separate identity as a rural parish?

Use it or
lose it

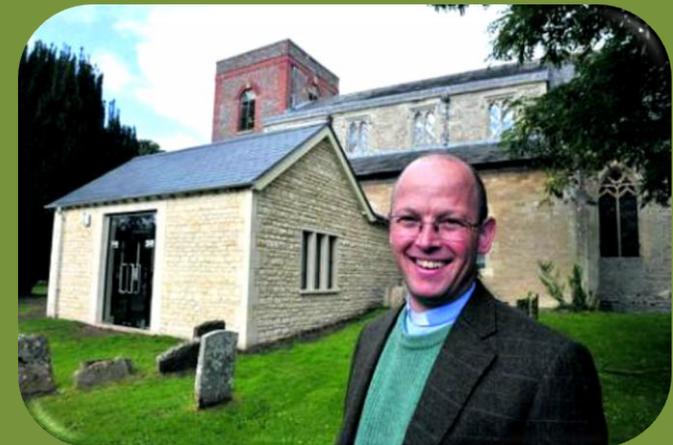


Opening of the Village Stores

The Main Achievements since 2004

- St. Agatha's Church Community Room
- Parish Welcome Pack
- New Village Stores
- Re-opened Post Office
- Set up a Parish Website
- Introduced a 30mph speed limit at Sires Hill
- Led a strong campaign against Site B

The Church Room



5 Development of the 2014 Community Led Parish Plan

There is no standard format for a Parish Plan, nor is there a prescriptive list of the subjects it should address. It has been up to all of us who live and work in the parish of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell to decide what is important, through consultation events and a Parish Questionnaire, to determine what should be included and what any priorities for action should be.



A Rowing Event at the Village Hall to find out what issues young people thought important

The 2014 Community Led Parish Plan attempts to set out what is special about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell - who lives here, why we live here, what we value about living here and what we would change. In essence, it is a statement of what the parish is in 2014 and how we would like to see Brightwell-cum-Sotwell evolve over the next ten years. To inform the plan, a two year process of consultation has taken place. Launched at a public meeting in the Village Hall in April 2012, a committee was formed to take the process forward. Over the subsequent 14 months, parishioners were asked to have their say about what their priorities were, what they liked about living here and what they would improve. This included a doorstep survey of every household in the parish (the 'Have your Say' survey), drop-in sessions and pop up displays at numerous local events .

Nine working groups were established to investigate specific topics including: community and facilities, business and economy, crime and safety, young people, landscape and built heritage, wildlife, transport, sustainability and housing.

In October 2013 every adult over the age of 16 was offered the opportunity to fill in a detailed questionnaire. This included 143 separate questions and has been used as evidence to inform the findings in this report. All phases of the consultation have been taken into account in writing this Parish Plan.

Younger people were targeted at a series of special events including a rowing evening in the Village Hall (led by local Olympic medal winners) and a pram race during Brightfest. Whilst young people were welcome to fill in the main questionnaire, the vast majority opted to complete a shorter document aimed specifically at their age group. In total, 64% of households completed and returned the questionnaire. 130 young people either completed a 'Have Your Say' form or returned their Parish Questionnaire.

A few words of explanation might be in order when interpreting the results of the questionnaire. It should be borne in mind that not everyone answered all of the questions although on the whole most people filled in most questions. Where there was a particularly high or low response, this has been noted. There was no significant variance between age, sex or location of where people live for most responses. If there was, this too has been noted.



Consultation at the Fete

6 The Origins of the Parish

This Parish Plan concerns 1,320 hectares, comprising the civil parish of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell in Oxfordshire. Formed by the merger in 1948 of Sotwell and Brightwell, including the adjacent lands of Clapcot. The hamlets at Mackney, Shillingford Hill and Sires Hill also fall within the parish, which has been part of South Oxfordshire District Council since the 1974 local government reorganisation when North West Berkshire was transferred to Oxfordshire.

The parish developed around several Saxon manors centred on a spring line at the intersection of two historic trackways. The first charter establishing Brightwell was in 854 AD, the estate subsequently being split to form two separate units: Brightwell and Sotwell. Brightwell and Sotwell's lands were considerably larger than at present, extending over what is now Wallingford, established in the 9th century as a Saxon new town.

The main village lies at the foot of the south-facing slope of the Sinodun Hills, Brightwell Barrow, rising 70m above the Thames floodplain. Settlement is along a narrow east-west gravel terrace, crossed by small streams fed by the springs. To the east are the Chiltern Hills and to the south the Berkshire Downs. Mackney lies 800m to the south on an old island rising above ground, which before drainage must have formed extensive marshlands. Sires Hill is a small hamlet to the north-west of the main village located on the crest of the Sinodun ridge.

Clapcot comprises all the lands north of Wallingford between Sotwell and the Thames and was for a long time a private territorial asset held by whoever had the castle and honour of Wallingford - presumably as a royal hunting park. Shillingford Hill and Rush Court are located in the old parish of Clapcot, 2km north west of the main village on the A329. The Clapcot communities are not connected directly to the main village by road. Vehicular traffic needs to pass through Wallingford.

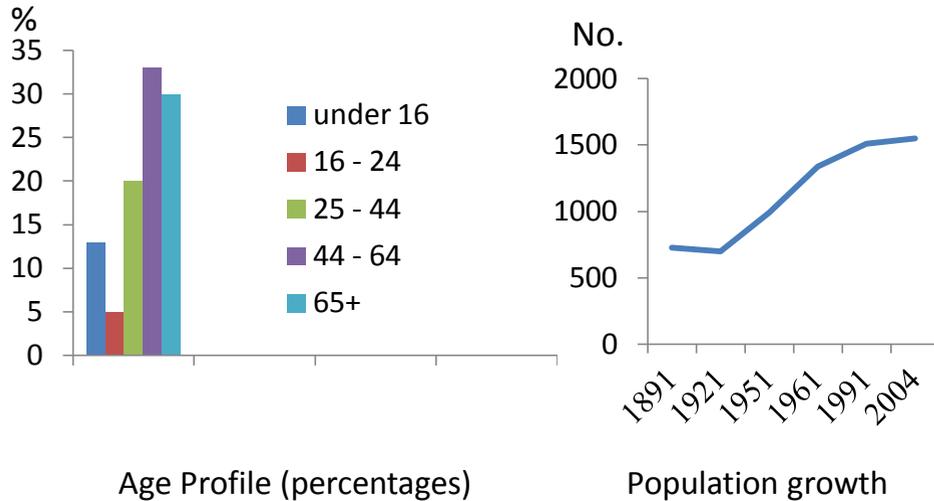
The main village evolved from a number of small hamlets spread out along the spring line located on The Square, the Red Lion, the Priory Farm, Bakers Farm/Sotwell Manor and Slade End (once known as Bishop's Sotwell). Over the centuries the 'gaps' in between have been developed. By 1910, several large properties had appeared on high ground north of the High Road.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell was, within living memory, a predominantly rural community where agriculture dominated; arable farming on the higher ground, grazing on the surrounding marshland and Thames floodplain and orchards around the settled areas. The main village developed as a mosaic of farmsteads, cottages and small manor houses, separated by orchards and smallholdings. It was only in the last half of the 20th century that this ancient pattern of life changed. Improvements in agricultural practices, the opening of the Cowley Motor Works and the expansion of Didcot saw many long established families re-locate, replaced by a new wave of people seeking employment in thriving Oxfordshire. Improvements in transport links (the opening of the M40 and M4 and the direct line to London Paddington from Didcot) put the parish firmly on the commuter map.



7 Our Vital Statistics

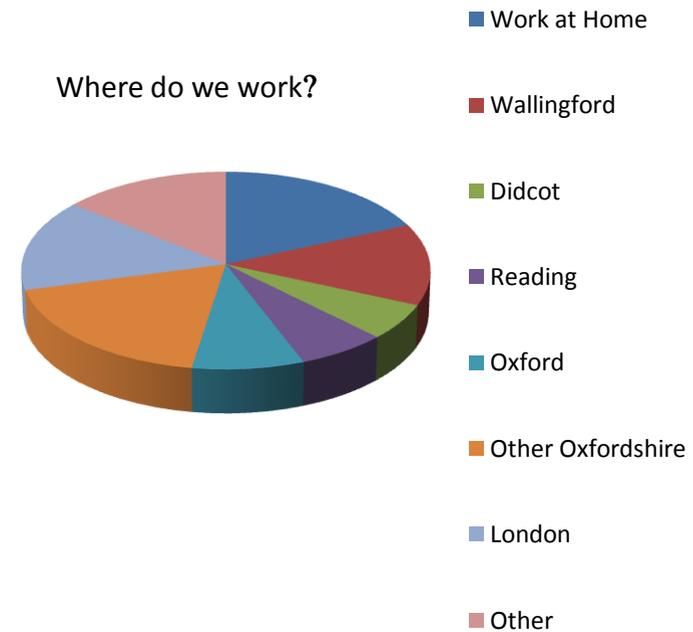
We can estimate the total population of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell as 1540 with 620 houses. Females outnumber males by 53:47 and we are a predominantly white community. Ethnic groups other than white European make up only 1% of the total.



68% of the parish population has lived here for more than 11 years: 10% for more than 40 years. People have moved here for a variety of reasons, such as for work, schooling, to be closer to family or marriage. Most comments referred to the parish's location as the main reason for choosing to live in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell; also to have a better quality of life, to be able to live in a village, to be able to follow a rural lifestyle or to live in a country environment.

Contrary to popular perception, not everyone in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell works in London. Commuters to the capital make up 17% of the working population whilst 22% of the working population work at home. This is a growing trend and is good for village services but highlights the need for better internet connections. More men than women work full time. 34% of respondents indicated that they are retired.

However, 27% of women are working part-time, while just 6% of men do so. 3% of residents indicated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem, age or disability. 85% had no problems. 5% of the population has experienced a problem specifically related to age and 4% due to a disability.



The Parish Conservation Plan demonstrates that Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is a green parish. The parish is very satisfied (98%) with all aspects of the South Oxfordshire District Council waste and recycling services. Most parishioners recycle.

The highest temperature recorded was on 19 July 2006 at 35.2°C, Our lowest was on 14 January 1982 at a shivering -21.°C



8 Community

8.1 Feeling part of the community

In 2004, three quarters of the parish felt involved in some aspect of community life. Ten years on little seems to have changed.

About one fifth (19%) play an active role and a further 44% sometimes get involved in helping to organise an activity. Just 9% said they were not involved, almost half of this category stating that they didn't want to be involved and were happy with this! Of those people who want to be more involved in parish life, it is younger people (16-44 years) who currently play less of an active role in the community but they are also the group that would like to do most. Suggestions to improve community cohesion include:

- More relevant community events/ activities (26% of total, or around half of those who gave views, rising to 43% for the 16 – 44 age group).
- Assistance with getting to venues (18%)
- More information about what's on and how to help (21%)

The parish 'welcome pack' delivered to all new residents has been well received and is a good way to introduce people to parish life.

8.2 Events and Activities

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell retains a strong community spirit with many organised activities (such as Brightfest, the Village Fete, Church Fair, Village Concert, Save the Children Christmas Eve Gathering and the Village Quiz) helping to bring people together.

There are activities taking place most evenings in the parish, be this a WI meeting, a talk, jumble sale or sporting event. In addition there are the one-off events such as the Diamond Jubilee activities.

Taking place alongside these more formal activities is a network of informal social events - groups of friends coming together united by a common interest. Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is a community that likes to party!



The Spring Fair at Brightwell Manor

There is still, however, much opportunity for the community to work together better. In the Parish Questionnaire it was suggested that there was strong support for more collaboration and sharing of resources between organisations and for more events focused on the parish streets to enhance neighbourliness. It was also suggested that shared spaces could be better managed with additional benches around Greenmere, an ecology hub and increased support for the primary school. Younger people in particular have asked for more organized activities tailored to their age group (see Youth section).

8.3 Communications and information

Communication is the lifeblood of any community. The questionnaire demonstrated that we must be getting it right in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell with an overwhelmingly positive response - 84% are happy with the current state. The Villager magazine is the most used form of communication (by 93%), notice boards and posters on telegraph poles (75%). By contrast, less than half use the websites (42% Community website, 13% Parish Council and 14% other websites) and older people are even less likely to use the websites (only 29% of over 65s use community website for example). At Shillingford Hill, the Resident's Association Newsletter is the main form of communication.

This would suggest that there is a case to raise the profile of the parish websites to encourage greater usage particularly to help older people with using community and other local websites. However, as most respondents don't see much of a need for better communication, this may be a low priority but the trend towards more of us automatically turning to the internet for all our information needs does suggest otherwise. It will be important to ensure that the Villager remains relevant and interesting.

The Parish Plan consultation highlighted the need for the parish to inform and engage with its hamlets more effectively, in particular residents at Shillingford Hill. More often than not information does not get passed on to residents here, and when it does the use of 'the village' to infer 'the parish' is considered annoying. Care must be taken and ways to engage in a more constructive way found.

8.4 The Churches' role in community

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has four churches: St James' in Sotwell and St Agatha's in Brightwell (both Church of England), the Brightwell Free Church (non-conformist) and the Plymouth Brethren on the High Road. 16% of the parish use a church at least once a month, 37% at least once a year. A further 29% do not use the churches but still value them, whilst, 18% place no value on them at all.

Whilst there is a good degree of support for the church and a small but active church going community, the function of the church has changed significantly since the establishment of social welfare and the introduction of state education. Residents were asked how the church could serve the community today. Half of parishioners are unsure about whether or not the churches in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell could play a greater role in the community; of the other half, views were then split evenly as to whether they even should or not (27% of total said yes, 27% said no). The majority of those who thought the church should play a greater role supported the traditional activities of worship, baptism, life events and prayer (over 80%), with the roles of a social meeting place and helping those in social need coming close behind (77%). The church still plays an active and important role in the Village School.

There is no longer a resident Church of England minister in the parish – Brightwell-cum-Sotwell falls within the Wallingford Team Ministry. St Agatha's and St James' are currently carrying out a survey to help inform the future of the church in the parish.



The Thames Valley from the Sinodun Hills by Sotwell artist Sydney R Jones.

8.5 Older People

Older people make up a significantly large sector of our community, well above the national average. Any aging population puts pressure on services. Services available for those older people who are unable to drive (but by no means restricted to them) include a mobile library, hairdresser, fish van and milkman. There is an active volunteer centre at Wallingford and a free Wallingford Surgery Car Service. Volunteer run events in the parish include a Lunch Club in the Village Hall and activities run by Age Concern. There is no longer a British Legion branch in the village. Residents at Shillingford Hill expressed a need for a community facility that would allow them to meet more regularly. A dementia awareness group has been established with the aim of making us a dementia healthy community.

When asked whether the needs of older people were met, more than half (58%) felt unsure that needs were met in terms of organised facilities or services, 12% thought yes, 11% no, with 18% of no opinion. Those responding with no or not sure (combined total of 69%) were asked to indicate what should be provided. The most popular suggestion was a “good neighbour network”, closely followed by an order and delivery service from the Village Stores. These suggestions were also well supported by the 16-44 age group who saw benefits of these initiatives for all ages. Other suggestions included more seats, a drop in centre, better public transport and more information about local voluntary services.



“Somehow we need to get the balance right between respecting privacy and independence and providing community help to avoid loneliness and need.”

8.6 Clubs and Societies

Almost 60% of those who responded to the questionnaire felt that the clubs and societies of the parish are very or fairly important to them with one third of the parish belonging to at least one club or society. The availability of these groups and the participation in them is an important aspect of parish life.

The variety of clubs and societies is quite diverse and includes: sporting clubs, special interest groups such as the Environment Group and the WI, groups aimed at specific sectors of the community such as Age Concern, the Playgroup and more informal groups such as quiz teams.

There seems to be general satisfaction with the current range of activities. Most respondents (80%) to the questionnaire did not have a suggestion for any new sports, physical activity or social amenities or changes to existing ones. However, over 100 comments were received with suggestions. More than half of the comments received were about further sports activities, in particular a running and cycling club, as well as exercise (Zumba, seated, challenging) facilities, perhaps outdoors, for all ages. Other suggestions included model flying, rowing, flyball, croquet, a tennis wall, groups to play board games and bridge with, a gospel choir, movie nights and street parties.

Considerable support was evident for further facilities for children of all ages, from toddler to teenage, indicated particularly were: junior sections of sports clubs (netball, golf, football, tennis and rugby), a babysitting group, ballet, band nights, discos, a youth club at the pavilion, a Duke of Edinburgh group and the opportunity for young people to sit on the Parish Council.

9 Facilities and Amenities

9.1 Core Parish Facilities

At the start of the 20th century, the twin parishes of Brightwell and Sotwell had six public houses, five shops, a fish and chip shop, a smithy and a bakery – everything that was needed to sustain a small rural community. It was only in the years following World War Two that we received piped water, drainage and electricity!

A core parish service is a facility that is judged by our community to be essential if we are to ensure a sustainable community. In Brightwell-cum-Sotwell these include:

- The Church (St. James' and St. Agatha's)
- The Village School (and Pre School)
- The Village Stores
- The Post Office
- The Red Lion
- The Village Hall
- The Rec and Pavilion

By 2004, the decline in core facilities was so acute that it formed the main concern of the Parish Plan. In the previous decade, the bakery and general stores had closed, the Red Lion had only just recovered from a devastating fire and the post office was reduced to a satellite branch located in the pub. **The message was clear – use it or lose it.**

Over the last decade, the parish has successfully raised the funds to open a much used and cherished community led Village Stores which is largely run by volunteers, and has seen the re-establishment of a post office. . Given the interest in the village to re-establish a village shop, it is good to see the high figures for using the new Village Stores. 76% of respondents use it at least once a month, and only 4% never use it.

The pub has recovered from its fire and changed its focus to a more family friendly atmosphere, often being the catalyst for village events and celebrations



The Red Lion

Other services considered necessary for a sustainable parish were the Red Lion and Post Office. Both have relatively high usage – 53% use the Red Lion at least once a month and only 6% never, while the Post Office is used by 62% at least once a month and 8% never. The lessons of the past however, need to resonate throughout the life span of this new Parish Plan – we must use and support our facilities if we want them to survive. If we don't, the consequences can be far reaching. To quote the 2004 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Plan:

'When the village lost its post office and also temporarily lost the Red Lion, closed for a year after a near disastrous fire, the streets were noticeably quieter. There was no excuse to walk down the road for a stamp or a pint, and so opportunities for casual social contact were lost.'

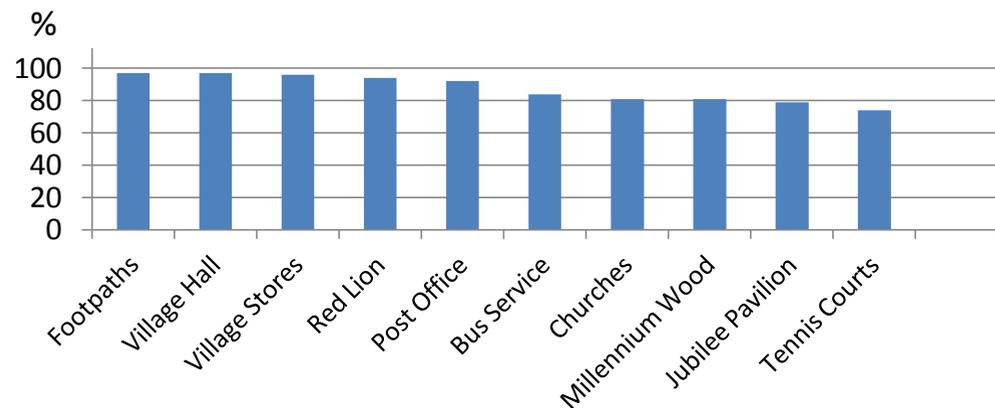
92% are satisfied with the cleanliness of our streets and footpaths and 70% do not regard litter as a major problem. Only 2% consider that there is a lot of litter. A need has been established for a defibrillator to be located within the main village.

9.2 Other Facilities

The parish has two main indoor venues: the Village Hall and the Jubilee Pavilion on the Recreation Ground (The Rec). These are used for a variety of events, meetings and sporting activities. Both can be hired for private functions. The Parish Room at St. Agatha's can also be hired for meetings. These facilities are well used and much valued. The parish facilities that are used most often are: the footpaths (used at least once a week by 71% of people), cycleways and bridleways (by 46%) and the Village Stores (by 41%).

For a medium sized parish, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has a good variety of sporting facilities. The Recreation Ground has a cricket pitch (with nets) and a football pitch. It also offers a fabulous open space for people simply to run around or as a venue for a large village activity. At Kings Meadow is another large open space, with a basket ball hoop, the recently restored tennis courts and 5-a-side football pitch. The Village Hall doubles as a badminton court and indoor bowls green.

Other public open spaces include the Swan Allotments (now completely taken up), the Swan Wilderness Area and the Millennium Wood that are used by the Village School for outdoor classroom activities. The top ten used or valued amenities are shown below.



9.3 Facilities For Younger People

All the parish facilities aimed specifically at younger people are highly valued by the majority of the community even by those who do not use them. The village school is most valued with 93%, followed by Preschool 89%, Playgroup/toddler group 86%, Scouts, Cubs, Beavers & Brownies 81% and youth sections of sports clubs 79%. Barely 1% felt these were not important and 4% were of no opinion.



Brightwell Primary School

The Village School is thriving, although not at capacity. It has recently improved its OFSTED rating inspection to 'Good with elements of Outstanding' and has an active parent's organisation 'The Friends of Brightwell School'. No small school can ever afford to be complacent. The same principle applies as to the village shop and post office: use it or lose it.

Comments received from residents also demonstrated a secondary function of these facilities, in that they provide the main way that many new residents to the parish meet each other and subsequently feel part of a community.

9.4 Playground facilities

The parish has two well used playground facilities at King's Meadow and at the Recreation Ground. Both sites are well managed by the Parish Council. Overall, there is more satisfaction than there is dissatisfaction with playground facilities although consultation suggests that there is considerable room for improvement.

Least dissatisfaction was shown for those facilities for toddlers and younger children at Kings Meadow, while most dissatisfaction was for those facilities for older children at the Rec and Kings Meadow (just over 20%) and for toddlers at the Rec (22%). This dissatisfaction rose to almost half (46%) of people in the 16-44 age group who do not think the facilities for toddlers at the Rec are satisfactory, and 44% and 41% said the same about older children's playground facilities at Rec and at Kings Meadow respectively. Over a third of respondents replied 'don't know', presumably because many might have no experience with them.

The 16 – 44 age group are more likely to be users of the playground facilities (as more likely to have a young family) so the higher levels of dissatisfaction among them is important to note. When asked for improvements, 154 comments were given. They ranged from the general to the specific, and could be grouped into two main kinds:

- Suggestions for general improvement, eg 'a separate area for toddlers', 'old fashioned and not very imaginative', 'no facility for older children', 'too busy', 'rec is pretty tired and in need of modernisation'
- Comparisons with others, eg 'I like Aston Upthorpe's playground as it is natural', 'need a playground like at Blewbury' (this appears to be a playground that Brightwell-cum-Sotwell might aspire to), 'Woodcote has playground for all ages'.

The range of comments and suggestions will be passed to the Parish Council for consideration of future action to improve play facilities, particularly for older children at the Rec.

Our wish list

'a greater variety of climbing frames and balancing equipment', 'stepping stones', 'more climb-on equipment for younger children', 'logs, logs, logs!', 'more natural landscaping, shady places, 'skateboard/BMX!', 'lower equipment for toddlers', 'zip wire', 'tunnels', 'more seesaw and games equipment', 'wooden train', 'more animals', 'natural play areas'



9.5 The Internet and Computing

518 (91%) of respondents use the internet for personal use and 41% for business-use. 3% currently are not connected but likely to do so and 7% unlikely to use the internet in the future.

The main village is connected to the Wallingford Telephone Exchange and whilst most of Wallingford is provided with superfast broad band (a minimum of 24 mbps), as of May 2014 the parish is still experiencing very low internet speeds (1 to 3mbps). A working group has been established to look into how connections can be improved. It is proposed that this will continue after publication of this Parish Plan.

72% of respondents were satisfied with their connection with 31% having no problems regarding the quality of the internet service. However 64% said the speed was too slow and 25% said there were too many interruptions to the service.

In May 2014 two new fibre optic enabled telephone distribution cabinets were installed by Oxfordshire County Council in the parish and BT has confirmed that “superfast broadband” will be available to the main village settlement by the end of June 2014. The Parish Questionnaire asked: if it was possible to increase the speed beyond the planned minimum of 24mbps, would you be prepared to make a one off payment? 25% said “yes”, 43% said “maybe” with 32% saying “no”. 53% of respondents indicated that they would be prepared to pay up to £100 to receive this service, 30% between £100 - £200 and 11% £200 - £300 with 6% more than £300.

It was proposed in the Parish Questionnaire to establish a volunteer run support service for those people experiencing computer problems. 40% of respondents indicated that they would use this service and 67 parishioners offered to volunteer.

9.6 A Natural Burial Ground

For those residents wishing to be buried in a more humanistic way the Parish Questionnaire asked whether the parish should investigate the establishment of a natural burial ground. This is an alternative to churchyards or cremation, offering people an ecologically sound choice, often with very simple or no markers other than the planting of a native memorial tree, which then becomes part of a lasting woodland tribute to those who rest there.

The Parish Questionnaire showed substantial support for investigating the establishment of a local natural burial site. Overall, two thirds would support this, while a further fifth were unsure (only 10% said no). Women were more supportive than men (74%:62%), as were younger people (77% of 16-44 age group).

10 Young People

A number of events were organised so that younger people could let us know what they would like. These included a pram race and a rowing event in the Village Hall attended by almost 100 young people. 130 questionnaires or survey forms were completed by young people. Almost half of young people wanted more things to do in the parish, particularly organised activities.

Suggestions included:

- Cycling and/or club
- Film club
- Band nights
- A monthly disco
- Babysitting club
- Cookery class



59% of young people wanted more places to meet up. Suggestions ranged from an internet café to having one night a week at an agreed venue for youth to drop in and meet each other. 57% supported the idea of forming a youth centre, 43% wanted a community youth leader. The use of electronic media to communicate such as 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' was suggested as the ideal way to communicate with this age group.

More outdoor facilities were suggested by 64% of respondents including:

- Undercover places to sit
- Gym type equipment at the Rec
- More challenging play equipment
- A zip wire
- A tennis wall
- Permanent goals and rugby posts at the Rec
- A running track
- A BMX track (supported by 40% of respondents)

"It is not perfect, but the crime rate is pretty low here"

Young people were also concerned with the difficulties in getting out of the village, particularly crossing the A4130 or cycling into Wallingford. Better buses to Wallingford and Didcot seemed important and 3 people suggested a mini bus to run trips out of the parish. 76 young people offered to help organise and run events.

11 Crime and Community Safety

We are a safe community. This does not say that crime does not happen but levels of criminal activity and vandalism are well below the national average. 66% of respondents felt very safe whilst a further 32% fairly safe. 61% of residents did not consider that there are any major criminal or safety problems in the parish, only 11% disagreed. There was very little difference between men and women or the various age groups in relation to the perception of crime in the parish.

A majority (60%) of respondents did not feel that they were linked to the neighbourhood policing team and a high number (91%) of these had never heard of other ways to link with the neighbourhood police team. Residents who may be worried about crime however and would like to receive messages from Thames Valley Police via their Thames Valley Police Alert system should visit www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk for more information.

Although a large majority (84%) of parishioners are aware of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, only 38% are part of the scheme. For those who aren't already a part of the scheme, over 100 parishioners would be interested in joining the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

Although the majority of parishioners do not think that there are criminal or community safety problems in the parish, respondents offered those issues that are known about. The highest number of comments related to break-ins to outbuildings, burglaries, car crime, road safety and vandalism. Other issues mentioned included bicycle thefts, litter, dog snatching and the poor lighting and quiet roads affording places for criminals to hide. Concern was also expressed that those people who allow their dogs to foul our streets are not dealt with under bylaw legislation.



Flooding at Church Lane in 2013

12 Business and Economy

The parish supports a surprising number of businesses including local traders (builders, roofers, plumbers, electricians etc), farms, garages, people working from home, joiners and other craftsmen, Shillingford Bridge Hotel, Frog's Island, a micro brewery and Brightwell Vineyard.

Local communities and economies benefit from the activities of a vibrant local small business sector. It is important that we provide the facilities and support for the development of existing and new businesses, and make the wealth of business expertise within the parish available to all businesses, in particular to young people.

There is a continuing trend of working from home with 7% of the questionnaire respondents working full time and 23% part time from home. This trend undoubtedly has implications for the provision of business facilities and services. It has been identified that an improved internet service and speed is required by business – the internet operating speed can be the deciding factor for locating a business in the parish.

Whilst there are a number of small commercial units already available in the parish it has been identified that there is room for additional types of commercial facilities, in particular, additional leisure activities, accommodation and commercial facilities. A majority of residents (69%) supported the establishment of new commercial/industrial facilities within the parish provided that they are located within the envelope of existing commercial and/or brownfield sites, fit in with rural character of the parish and do not generate excessive noise or other pollution. Only 29% would want new business units located outside existing built areas.

The type of new or improved business facilities that are thought to be acceptable would include: improvements to the Village Stores or new retail outlets such as a hairdresser, bakery, butcher, cafe or

restaurant; small commercial units for local traders; craft type studios for local craftsman or cottage industry, offices and additional tourist facilities. It was also suggested that local market garden production could be re-invigorated using existing sites.



12.1 Visitors and Tourism

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has a lot to offer the tourist. There is excellent walking, rolling countryside, the River Thames, the Sinodun Hills and our picture-postcard village lanes and cottages. The parish is located only 55 miles from London, is midway between Henley and Oxford and is firmly within the 'Midsomer' Trail. The parish benefits from the Shillingford Bridge Hotel (with open air Thameside swimming pool), excellent B&Bs, the Earth Trust, Brightwell Vineyard, Frog's Island Donkey Sanctuary and the internationally renowned Dr Bach Centre that attracts many overseas visitors.

Visitors can help to sustain some of our core services such as the pub and Village Stores. The Village History Group has published a number of good walking guides. The parish website is a good introduction to visiting the area. The Community Association's idea of an interpretation panel located within the centre of the main village has been welcomed by many residents. The possibility of a small, seasonal campsite has also been suggested.

13 A Rural Parish: Landscape & Our Sense of Place

Our Parish Design Statement

There are key characteristics and features of our environment that help shape the nature of our community – these aspects are set out in a Design Statement. This is a formal record of residents' views, addressing aspects of our landscape and settlements that are central to our identity and our sense of place. The Design Statement indicates how the parish would hope to enhance and protect our environment and we would urge for it to be considered in planning and development control matters.

The 2004 Parish Plan included a detailed Design Statement that has stood the test of time. Aspects of the original design statement have been re-tested during the village questionnaire consultation period to form the basis of an updated version set out within section 13 of the Parish Plan.

13.1 Landscape

The parish is set around a west-east ridge of low hills running from Wittenham Clumps across Brightwell Barrow towards Wallingford. To the south is a flat area of farmland and to the north the River Thames meanders through its floodplain. Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has four distinctive landscape types:

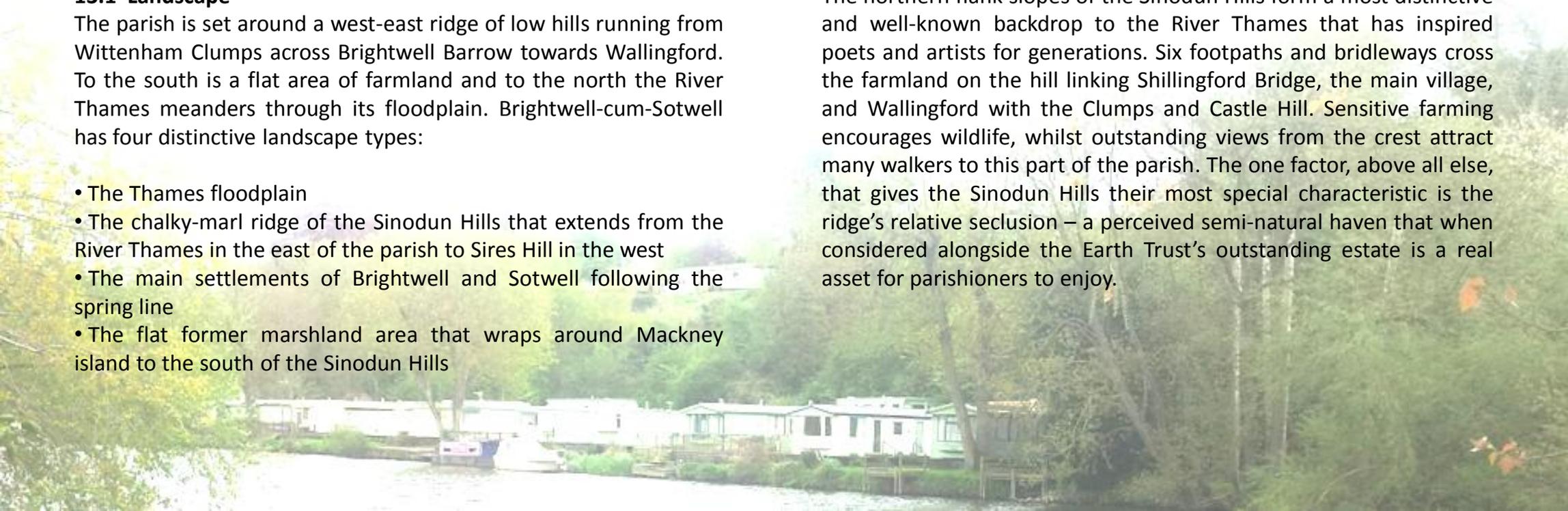
- The Thames floodplain
- The chalky-marl ridge of the Sinodun Hills that extends from the River Thames in the east of the parish to Sires Hill in the west
- The main settlements of Brightwell and Sotwell following the spring line
- The flat former marshland area that wraps around Mackney island to the south of the Sinodun Hills

The Thames floodplain is characterised by a network of meadows, willow and wet woodland. To the north of Brightwell Barrow, the floodplain is quite extensive and has recently been upgraded by the Earth Trust to restore lost wetland features. The landscaping has included the opening of new access routes which will provide a wonderful opportunity to get close to nature as the area matures. The chalky cliffs at Shillingford Hill are a distinctive landscape feature rising from close to the river to flat farmland above.

Downstream of Shillingford Bridge, the River Thames flows through a broad expanse of meadowland that once formed part of a Royal hunting park owned by Wallingford Castle. The Thames Path crosses into the parish at Benson Lock. Large fields and meadow continue to the Castle Meadows at Wallingford.

Living near the River Thames and Wittenham Clumps is important to 96% of residents.

The northern flank slopes of the Sinodun Hills form a most distinctive and well-known backdrop to the River Thames that has inspired poets and artists for generations. Six footpaths and bridleways cross the farmland on the hill linking Shillingford Bridge, the main village, and Wallingford with the Clumps and Castle Hill. Sensitive farming encourages wildlife, whilst outstanding views from the crest attract many walkers to this part of the parish. The one factor, above all else, that gives the Sinodun Hills their most special characteristic is the ridge's relative seclusion – a perceived semi-natural haven that when considered alongside the Earth Trust's outstanding estate is a real asset for parishioners to enjoy.



The defining landscape feature of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is the ridge of the Sinodun Hills sweeping up from the flat valley floor, rising through open countryside to the tree capped hilltop at Brightwell Barrow.

The Sinodun Hills are at the centre of a nationally important historic landscape that extends from Dorchester to Mackney and the Wittenhams to Wallingford. It is an area that was settled from the earliest times becoming an important Bronze and Iron Age community. It is likely that any trees on the southern slopes of the Clumps were cleared for agriculture at this time, revealing open fields sweeping down from the hilltops to woodland in the clay vale below. During the Dark Ages, silt being washed from the hills to the lower land below (eroded through agricultural activity) accumulated in the old meander of the Thames (that once looped around Mackney and Cholsey islands) creating an extensive area of wetland in the flat valley floor. This has only been drained relatively recently. Remnants of this ancient character of open hills managed for agriculture surrounded by meadow and wetland, has survived to the present day.

To the north of the Sinodun Ridge, the patchwork of fields and woodland is varied and forms an attractive and wildlife rich landscape. This is in stark contrast to the openness of the southern slopes of the Sinodun Hills (between the Roman Road and Sires Hill), that are only broken into smaller units where ancient roads climb the ridge or parish boundaries needed to be marked.

It is important to conserve the openness of the southern slopes of the Sinodun Hills from the valley below to frame the view to the tree topped 'peaks' at Brightwell Barrow, Castle Hill and Round Hill – each broken up from its neighbour by extensive tracts of open countryside.

To the east of the Roman Road, scrub and orchard start to dominate. Apples, cherries and plum were commonly planted trees. Many large areas of orchard with high landscape and wildlife value still remain around the old Sheard's and Chilton's Fruit Farm.

Sotwell and Brightwell are linear villages stretching 2km along the southern flank of the hills. Here the A4130 skirts the settlement on three sides, but from every aspect views of the settlement are mainly of surrounding farmland, with only a few village buildings and mature trees showing. Even at the four entrances into the village off the A4130, the settlement blends so well into the landscape they could easily be missed if it were not for the multitude of road signs. Road safety at these junctions is, however, a serious issue for villagers which needs to be weighed up against landscape considerations. If works to improve the junctions are deemed appropriate it will be important that any action should be as inconspicuous as possible with unobtrusive traffic calming measures to protect the rural character of the southern aspect of Wittenham Clumps.



The topography of the main village is important in maintaining the landscape character in that the shape of the village is hidden in its landscape. This is important to 93% of respondents.

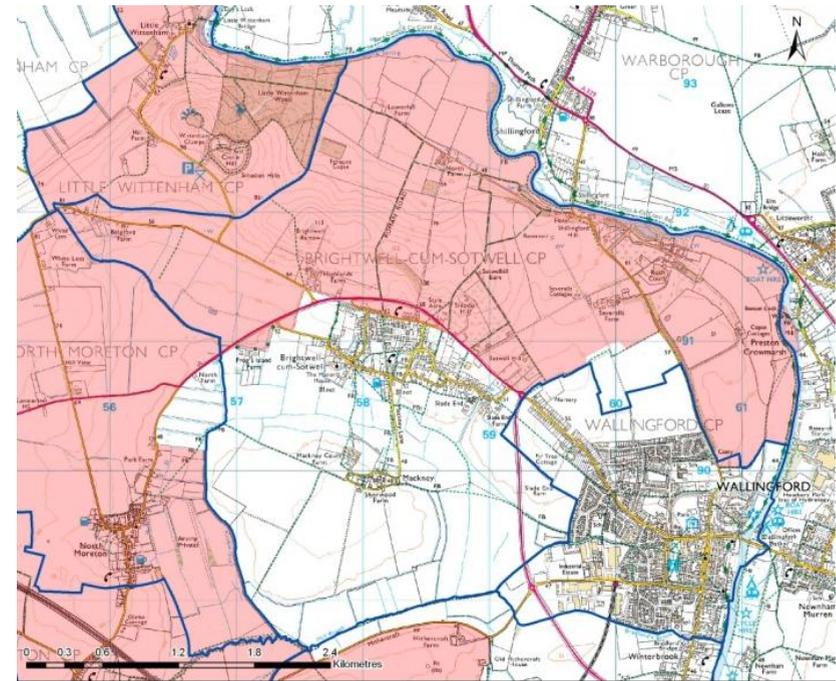
A remarkable series of Saxon boundary features ring the western and southern boundaries of the parish. The dyke and ditch between Sires Hill and the River Thames is of particular note. The landscape to the south of the hills is unusual and distinctive. Here, the open fields of Mackney (and Cholsey) islands are surrounded by areas of smaller fields, enclosed by streams and ditches that once drained marshes. The principal streams mark edges of Saxon estates still followed by the boundaries of the modern parish. Whilst possessing intrinsic landscape merit, it has significant amenity value. The area is criss-crossed by well used footpaths linking the villages of Cholsey, the Astons, North and South Moreton, Mackney, Brightwell, and Sotwell to one another and to Wallingford. Drainage is clearly an issue in this location – large areas flood during the winter.

13.2 North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is situated at the edge of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (formally known as the Berkshire Downs). Defined as an area of countryside considered to have significant landscape value, the designated area wraps itself around the north/west portion of the parish embracing most of the area north of the High Road and west/south of the Kibble Ditch but excluding the main village and Mackney island.

Much of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell parish is located in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 94% of respondents indicated that being part of the AONB was important to them. 56% of respondents would welcome further areas of the parish to be designated AONB (36% of respondents didn't know or did not have an opinion).

It was suggested by some residents that entry to the AONB could be celebrated through the installation of discreet and well positioned 'welcome to the North Wessex Downs AONB' signage positioned at Haddon Hill, Sires Hill and Slade End.



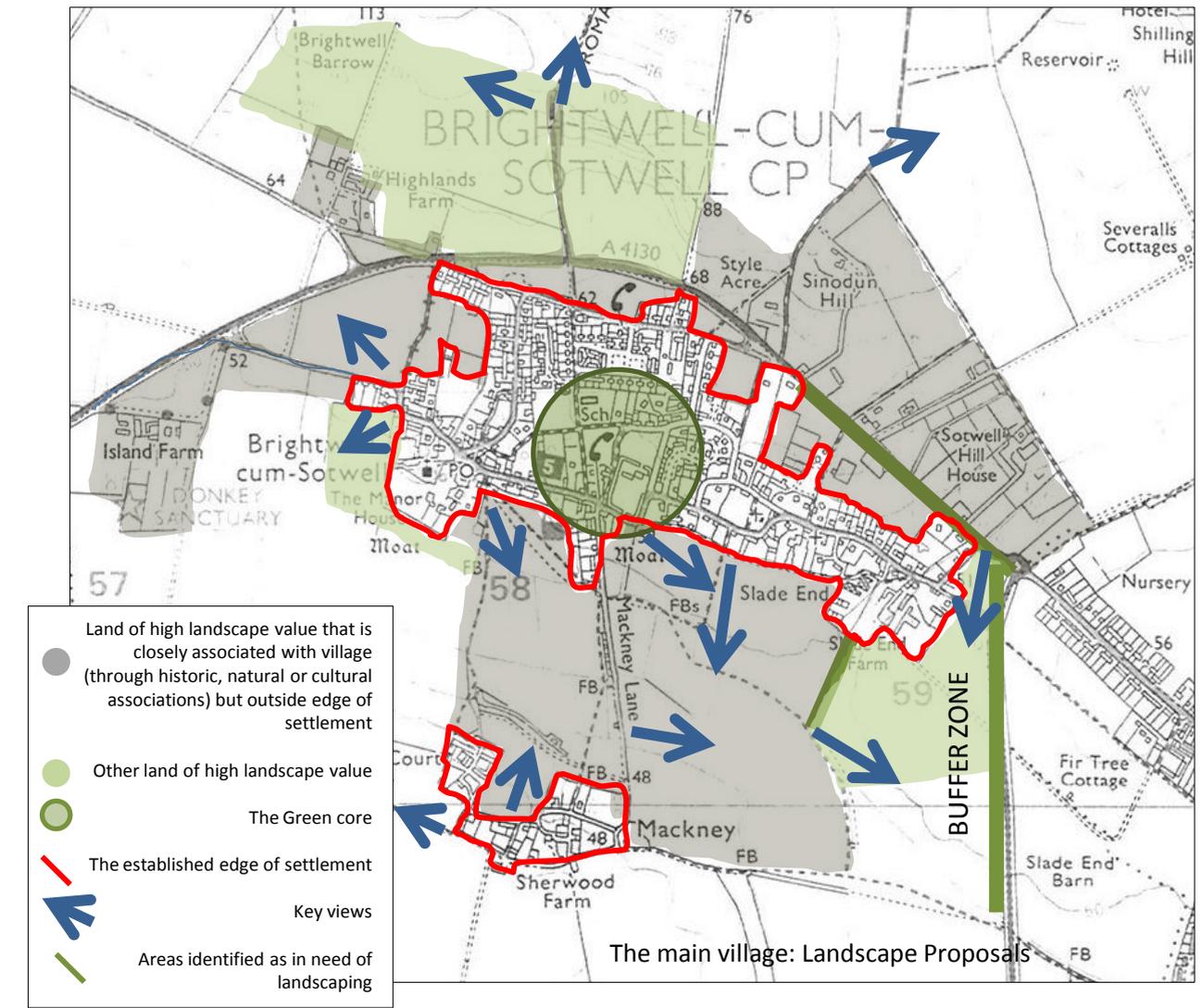
The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

13.3 Views

Views play a key role in how local people relate and interact with their surrounding environment. These may be long 'big sky' views on open farmland in Mackney, sweeping panoramas across the Thames Valley from the top of the Sinodun Hills, shorter views within settlements terminating on a particular feature or building or a glimpse of the Berkshire Downs seen through a gap between two buildings. **Distant views across farmland to surrounding hills from the village through gaps between village properties, and from lanes and footpaths is important to 95% of residents whilst long rural views across sweeping countryside is important to 96%.**

From the main village gaps between village properties, and from lanes and footpaths, connect residents with the surrounding countryside. There are fine views in all directions: south to the Berkshire Downs, west to the Moreton ridge separating the basin from Didcot, north to the Clumps, and east to the Chilterns and the Goring Gap. This is the aspect of our village that creates much of the rural character that our survey showed is so important to many local people.

The area of land between Mackney and the main village which includes allotments, a playground, our recreation ground and the Croft Fields (both sides of Mackney Lane) is perceived as an integral part of the boundary of the village and not simply an outside agricultural space. In our village survey, this led to observations that our conservation area might be extended in recognition of the importance of these views to the character of the village – supported by 77% of residents.



Note: An established line of settlement is important to a great many parishioners. This line has been identified and mapped - informed by the Parish Plan consultation. Whilst the edge of settlement line is important to many residents, it is recognised that there are no South Oxfordshire District Council policies that refer to an edge of settlement in our parish.



13.4 We are a Rural Parish

The overwhelming perception of our community is that we are a country parish and should strive to remain so. 98% of respondents indicated that the rural character of the parish is important. Only 1% said that it was not important.

Oxfordshire, however, has seen much economic growth over the past decade – the county is thriving. The consequence of this booming economic growth is the construction of thousands of new houses and all the associated infrastructure that this growth creates. It is anticipated that tens of thousands more homes will need to be built in Oxfordshire in the coming decades. **The peace and quiet of our parish is important to 98% of residents**

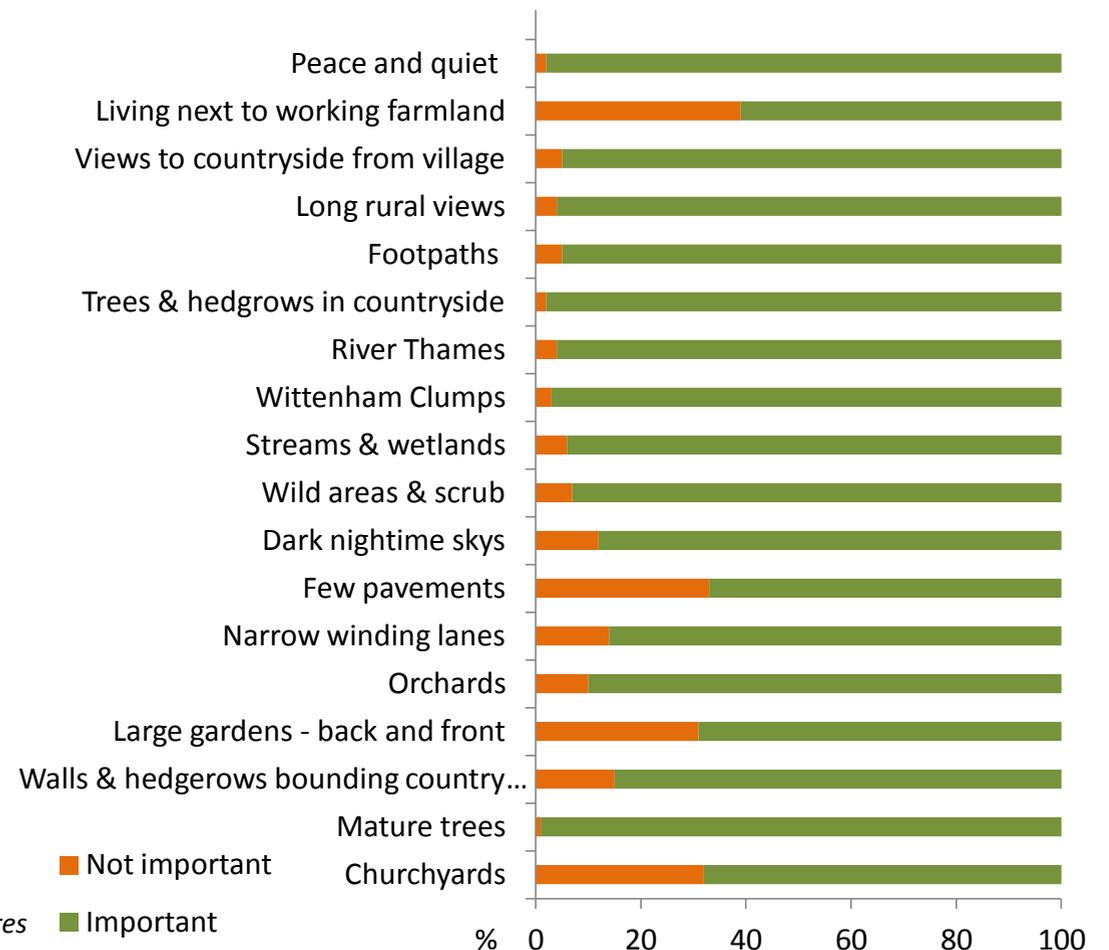
Residents of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell have benefited from this economic prosperity; cited by some as a key reason why they have chosen to live in the parish. We would strive for this economic growth to continue but as our Parish Questionnaire strongly suggests not to the detriment of the rural environment that is cherished by so many local residents. We need to find local solutions for our parish that minimise the unwanted effects of development if we are to retain our rural identity. This is no easy task as so many of the factors that could help achieve this goal are out of our control. In the Parish Questionnaire these factors emerged as the single biggest concern for residents and include:

- unsuitable house building in the parish (as opposed to house building in itself)
- over and unsuitable development at Didcot and Wallingford,
- increased road traffic on the A4130 and Shillingford Road
- noise and light pollution from nearby towns and roads.
- views being affected
- urbanisation of the countryside

The Parish Plan cannot challenge agreed policy – whether national, county or district. It can, however, identify those areas of policy that are seen as a threat to the parish. It is therefore right that our parish plan picks up the impact of development as a threat.

13.5 Landscape Features are Important to Us

The Parish Questionnaire asked what is it about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell that people like and what landscape features are important in shaping the rural character of the parish. As we move forward, we need to find ways to conserve and enhance those elements of our landscape which shape our rural community.



Right: Importance of landscape features

13.6 Retaining our Separate Identity: Development at Site B

The Wallingford bypass crosses the parish on its eastern edge. Our village was separated from the late Saxon town by 1.5km of open countryside. By the early 19th century this had reduced to about 1km; now the closest edge of building is within 200m at Slade End. It was feared in 2004 that the bypass would inevitably raise new interests in further westward expansion of Wallingford on the Slade End Fields known as Site B. The 2004 parish questionnaire asked whether it was important to retain a separate identity or to merge as a suburb of Wallingford. The overwhelming perception of our community was that we are a country parish and should strive to remain so. 98% of residents did not want to see a merger with Wallingford.



The Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council led a strong campaign against the proposed Site B development but following an Inspector's Report and adoption by SODC of their Local Plan, Site B was designated for the development of 550 houses. This will change the physical shape of the parish (in that it is proposed for the land earmarked for housing to be annexed by Wallingford) and bring the nearby town to within one field of the main village.

The parish's focus has therefore shifted towards mitigation against the potential loss of rural character following the construction of housing at Site B. 93% of respondents to this question indicated that it is important for an effective buffer zone to be established between the parish and Wallingford **in order to retain our separate identity.**

Written comments suggested that it will be important that Site B looks towards Wallingford and not to Brightwell. It is the view of many residents that the term 'Slade End Fields' for example, should not be used due to its intrinsic connection with the parish. 81% also suggested that our village school should not be affected by Site B and that our school should remain in its current place serving our parish community.

A significant concern appears to be the way that development could damage rural views from the parish. A key view identified in the parish planning process is eastwards across open fields to the Chiltern Hills seen from the south of the main village. 95% of respondents indicated that this long view from the village should be protected and measures taken to safeguard it as development takes place at Site B. The view could be significantly damaged if new road layouts, lighting and housing are visible.

91% of respondents indicated that they would not wish to see any increase in light pollution (from road layouts or housing). Tree and hedge planting will be important, as will winter views. 96% of respondents wished to see existing trees along the Wallingford bypass, on both sides, retained as much as possible.

Separation from the built area of Wallingford is central to maintaining our individual rural identity. The remaining fields that separate the main village from Wallingford should be retained as open working farmland and not be used for amenity purposes.

13.7 A Sense of Place

A major feature that shapes the character of Sotwell, Mackney and Brightwell is that these settlements have been bypassed since medieval times by the old High Road, now in turn replaced by the A4130.



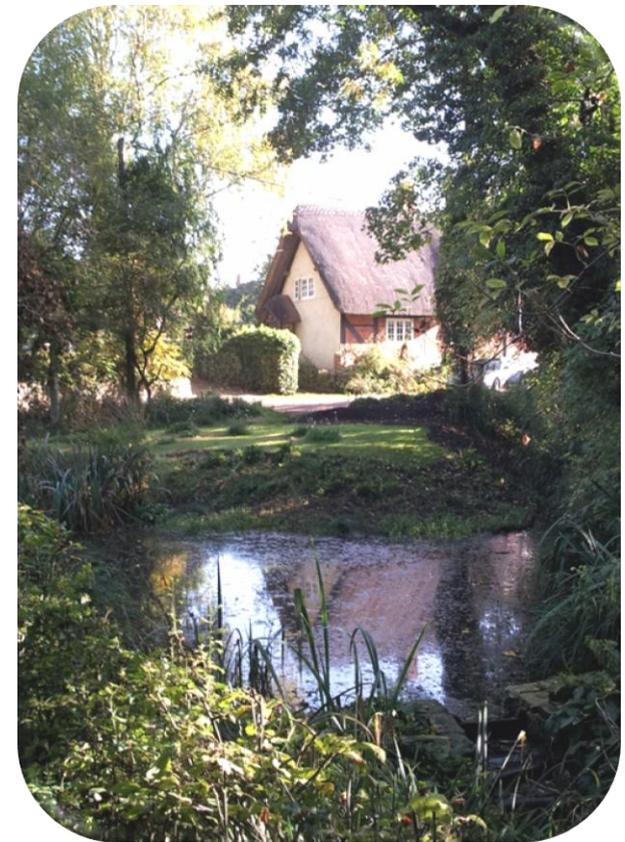
Mackney Lane

Without the need to have accommodated through traffic for over 500 years, internal movements are still largely via unimproved lanes and old trackways with few pavements. 86% of respondents see these narrow and winding lanes as a distinct advantage and 67% see few pavements as an advantage. They help create a very strong and special sense of place. It is a village that is naturally unfriendly towards vehicular traffic, with an internal network of ancient footpaths that encourages pedestrian movement. **For 97% of respondents village and countryside footpaths are our most important environmental asset.** Curving streets flanked by combinations of banks, hedges and walls will maintain the rural character and are important to 85% of residents. These should not dominate the building beyond, but be in scale with the property and with the style, period and setting of that location. Open plan frontages to properties with large car parking areas are not in keeping were considered by many out of character. Views from lanes, bridleways and footpaths across the surrounding farmland and countryside should be protected.

Living next to working farmland is important to 81% of residents. New roads within the village should be in scale with the rural character of the existing road network. Where pavements are absolutely necessary these should link to the footpath and bridleway network. It is important that highway specification roads and junctions are avoided. Improvements to historic roads, lanes and trackways should be strongly resisted.

Speed should be restrained by unobtrusive traffic calming measures (such as a 20 mph limit) in sympathy with the rural character. Noise from speeding cars along the Wallingford by-pass and the A4130 has a negative effect on the character of the parish for 77% of respondents.

Extension of the 30 mph speed limit to the Root One entrance of the village and measures to calm speeds on Calvin Thomas Way (by-pass) would go a long way in reducing the impact of noise. Off-street parking should be encouraged at existing properties lacking such facilities. Visually unobtrusive solutions or traditional 'barns' that preserve boundary features should always be sought.



The Wellsprings pond

Street lighting has been resisted in most parts of the parish. This is welcomed by some as a bonus adding to the rural identity, whilst for others it is seen as a detriment to living in the main village, finding the narrow lanes and potholes difficult to navigate at night. This is particularly so for some more elderly residents. The absence of street lighting does have advantages for nocturnal wildlife – bats and stag beetles are a common sight during the summer.

In the Parish Questionnaire 77% of people indicated that they liked not having street lighting. A further 88% felt a dark night time sky was important in shaping character.

Light pollution is more noticeable in the parish – a concern made more acute in a place largely devoid of any lighting. 61% of residents find light pollution from nearby settlements has a negative impact on character. Pollution from the Hithercroft Industrial estate and Hithercroft Sports Centre is of particular concern, measures to reduce the light spill could be easily retro-fitted.



The proliferation of lights on the Wallingford by-pass roundabouts is also perplexing many residents. 29 lights are found on the Hithercroft roundabout and 32 associated with the Slade End roundabout. There is clearly a case to reduce their impact, a measure that would have the additional benefit of reducing the suburban sprawl creeping towards the main village.

Within the main village, 76% of residents indicated that badly designed house lights were of concern. In particular the installation of flood lamps that are not attached to sensitive light sensors. There are excellent examples of soft, subtle lighting, often linked to movement sensors in the main village that can be used as good examples on how to light a building.



13.8 Design and the Built Environment

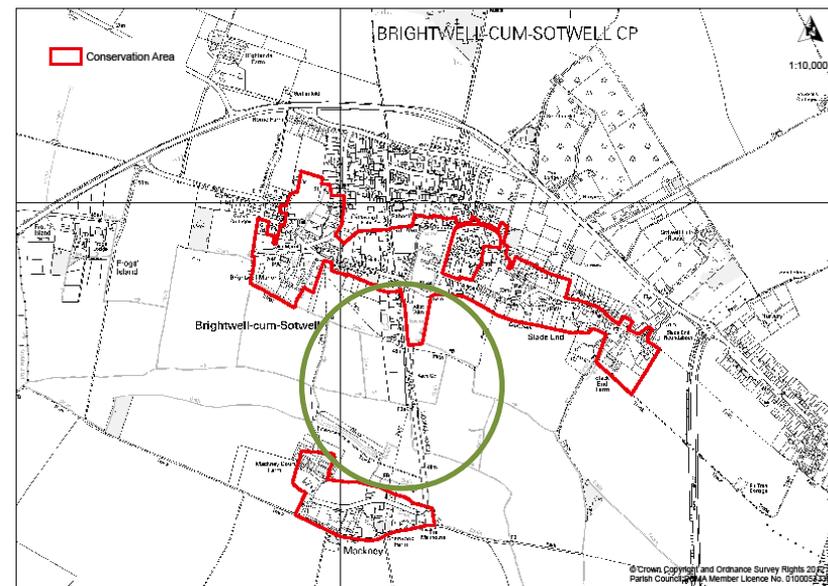
There is a very wide range of materials, styles and types of building in the parish. The height, scale and density of properties vary greatly and change rapidly. Much of the charm of the village is this variation, with well-treed large formal gardens, traces of old farms, and remnants of orchards retaining a very strong and important rural character. The Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Conservation Area Study sets out many good guidelines that should be followed. Our main villages are built around a mosaic of old barns and converted farmsteads that began to fall into disuse early in the 19th century. Until well into the 20th century most cottages were still lived in by tied agricultural workers and few had mains water, sanitation or even electricity. In the 1940s the Wallingford Rural District Council proposed wholesale demolition of these 'hovels'. Local campaigners successfully fought off this demolition proposal and we now have some 41 listed houses that preserve timber framed thatched buildings with clay and wattle, or brick.

The larger farmsteads were re-roofed beneath tile and slate, retaining good brick chimneys. Barns are weather boarded above local stone, brick and flint walls. A fine freestone Elizabethan house at Mackney merits a Grade I listed status. There is also a good scattering of Victorian properties, some showing fine ornate brickwork.

However, the main housing expansion was between 1945 and 1990. Two large building developments, Greenmere and Kings Orchard, considerably extended the main village but were separated from it by an internal green belt around the historic footpath network. This green core to the main village extends through the back gardens of properties located to the north of Brightwell Street to Vine House Orchard and onto the southern fields and eastwards through Wellsprings to Sotwell House. **This central green core is an important landscape element that should be retained.** Monks Mead and Datchet Green developments in-filled within that green core. Elsewhere small clusters of family houses and bungalows appeared, typically one property deep. These flanked the lanes between the older properties, but preserved boundaries of historic enclosures. At Shillingford Hill the post World War Two breakup of the Rush Court Estate led to the establishment of the residential site and a cluster of private homes around the Elizabeth Finn Trust home.



Greenmere: Designed as a model estate clustered around a village green



The conservation area (red) showing a possible extension (in green)

Our parish survey reveals nearly half of households believe that houses built after 1950 generally fit into the character of the village although many indicated ways that future building could be improved.

There is no excuse for the introduction of anonymous architecture based on the belief that there is not a strong characteristic village style. Many written responses suggest how new design might be improved. Most respondents preferred traditional architecture to a more modernist design – although some people felt that modernism is desperately needed in the parish – ‘a good old fashioned Huf Haus’ was suggested for example. It was however, the quality of design, and better use of materials to suit the character of the immediate setting in new works and on extensions, that was of most concern rather than a pastiche attempt to replicate what was there. Careful matching of building style to traditional materials and locally distinctive details should be sought far more vigorously. Written comments also highlighted the poor consideration to density and landscaping of developments.

This reflects a much wider and growing village concern that new works are now neither reflecting the proportions of nearby properties, nor are they in harmony with their site. Scattered groups of small properties on small sites would complement what we have; large houses on small plots do not. Within the main village, there was overwhelming support for keeping extensions small (83%), and that redevelopment (the demolition and re-building of existing properties) could be appropriate but any new build should not increase their size or change their use (78%). Any new building should enhance the character of the built area.

Outside the main village, it was considered that re-development could be allowed that replace existing buildings, and these may be of a larger size (58%).

We see considerable merit in retaining any landscape features, building details or historic enclosure lines that record the agricultural origins of that place including former orchard trees. Boundary treatments should be in keeping with traditional rural styles of the vicinity – native hedgerows and planting is particularly sought after. Landowners should be encouraged to retain trees on potential building plots until planning permission is given. It was pointed out in written responses that at some potential development sites within the main village trees have been needlessly clear-felled before the submission of a planning application.

Private and public space seems to be an important element in shaping our place. Large gardens – both back and front are important to 69% of residents, with a further 53% indicating that the subdivision of large garden plots is to the detriment of the rural character. The Churchyards are significant to 88%, trees and hedgerows surrounding our settlements to 98%, wilder areas and scrub to walk in or view to 93%, mature trees to 99% and orchards are important to 90% of residents. Paving over front gardens is seen as having a negative impact by 67%.

Streams and wet areas in the main village have a considerable positive effect on character, being important to 94% of residents. Indeed one of the great joys of walking around the village is the network of streams and drainage ditches. Be this sailing a toy boat down the brook alongside Wellsprings lane, feeding ducks on the moat or watching the horror of parents as their child leaps into the ditch at the Rec; each has its own charm. Measures to open up (both physically and through improved access) other water features in and around the parish should be explored.

It is generally accepted that Conservation Areas have been adequate in protecting the historic core of the main village. Some written comments have expressed concerns about the character and importance of spaces and associated views around the margins of the existing Conservation Area. Here, open spaces and gardens are under pressure as never before. Opportunities for extensions and building are simply too valuable for developers to expend on anything but large properties. These are seen to be increasingly out of scale relative to plot size and the setting.

Enclosed green space associated with gardens and small orchards is central to the appearance of our rural settlement, and this is being irretrievably lost.



Some written comments proposed the restoration of various historic features. These range from the opening up of culverted water courses, the replacement of the village fountain, the preservation of the old brick stairs to the river at Shillingford Hill and the restoration of the cob wall around St. Agatha's Church – this latter project supported by 73% of respondents.

13.9 The Shape of Our Settlements

It is clear to many residents that Brightwell and Sotwell are slowly being squeezed between Didcot and Wallingford. At small settlements such as ours, building development is resisted not just out in the countryside but right up to what is described as the edge of settlement or the village envelope of the 1970s. Inside this, building is now approved only for infill housing as long as it conforms to Nation Planning Guidelines and South Oxfordshire District Council policies.

88% of respondents support the principle that restricts development outside the established built-up areas of our settlements. Only 8% felt that this was not important. It is important that our settlement remains well hidden and sits inconspicuously within the landscape for 93% of respondents. For the majority of villagers, living surrounded by farmland and near protected open countryside was of significance in choosing to move here. This is of no significance to only 8% of residents.

13.10 Trapped by Passing Traffic

For many residents the biggest concern associated with increased development at Didcot and Wallingford is the increasing volume of traffic on the A4130. **No other issue seems to affect us more than this.**

The Parish Conservation Plan notes that “In the years after the Wallingford bypass opened on 29 July 1993, an extra 2000 vehicles per day were passing the village, an increase of 25%, making it more difficult to turn out on to the A4130. Since then the volume of traffic has mounted every year: now it exceeds the original design capacity of the M1! Noise levels have increased considerably”.

The Conservation Plan also notes that traffic surveys carried out on the A4130 over the last 15 years, reveal a steady growth to a 12-hour total of 12,000 vehicles in September 2011 between 07.00 to 19.00. The morning flow peaks between 07.00 and 08.00 while it is more spread out in the evening. It was noticeable that most traffic flowed away from Didcot in the morning and towards it in the evening.

Traffic levels are now so high that it is considered that the main village is cut off from the fields and hills on the other side of the A4130 because of the intensity of passing traffic. 75% of respondents indicated that they have difficulty accessing (by foot, by bike or horse) the Sinodun Hills from Brightwell, Sotwell or Shillingford Hill due to the volume of traffic on the A4130 or Shillingford Road. It was suggested during the consultation that a 'green bridge' covered in trees and grass could cross



the main road between Brightwell and The Sinodun Hills – a lovely thought but probably beyond the scope of the parish. It is important that we campaign for no more improvement to the A4130 that would increase traffic volumes and to work with authorities to find solutions to reduce vehicular movement in the region.

Access in and out of our settlements is now a serious problem. Every household at Sires Hill complains of traffic speeding past their homes although the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit has helped the problem. **59% of residents feared that any improvement to the A4130 between Wallingford and Didcot would be to the detriment of the parish (26% didn't know). 68% of residents indicated that they have problems with access to the A4130 from the main village or from Sires Hill.**

Of those respondents who indicated that they do have a problem 86% considered that speed of traffic was an issue, 98% that it was the volume of traffic and 55% that it was caused by restricted views.



Wellsprings: one of our country lanes

Opinions are divided however on what to do. As in 2004, residents fall into two opposing camps:

- **Don't change the entrances**

The appearance of the entrances is an important part of the established character and they should be kept largely as they are now. The speed and volume of passing traffic is seen to be the problem and access should be improved by a lower speed limit, visually unobtrusive traffic calming measures, and regular cutting of grass on sight lines. More trees and hedges to screen the village from the road and reduce noise pollution would be welcome; most engineering solutions would not.

- **Safety is more important than appearance**

The entrances need to be changed. Safety should be paramount, and that using the entrances is now dangerous. Right hand turns into the village at West End and Highlands Farm are especially bad. Measures could also include the widening of the road to accommodate a filter lane or roundabouts installed.

42% would support the introduction of a roundabout whilst 58% were against their introduction. There were many different views on which entrance from the main village onto the A4130 would be most suitable. 74% of respondents were against traffic lights and 89% against speed bumps. 65% of residents were in favour of extending the 30 mph speed limit from Slade End to just beyond the Root One turn. When asked whether any of the four entrances should be reconfigured, 65% of respondents indicated that they would be against this. 86% would not want any of the entrances closed.

83% of residents indicated that the rural appearance of the entrances is an important consideration – the A4130 being well screened from the main village by banks, hedgerows and cuttings.

14 Traffic & Transport

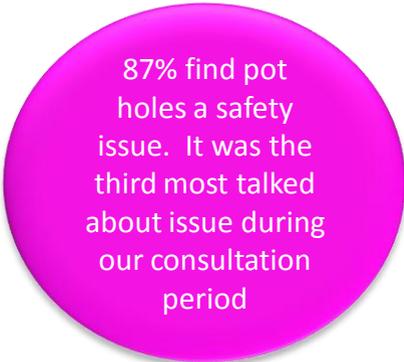
Without a need to accommodate through traffic, internal movement is still via largely unimproved lanes and old trackways. 80% of respondents see our narrow and winding lanes as a distinct advantage. A single pavement flanks parts of the main street and the old high road but not most of the pre-1940s road network. The majority of residents consider few pavements and no street lighting as a distinct advantage of living in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

The nature of our winding, narrow lanes makes street parking difficult and almost impossible in places. All this discourages and slows down traffic; it is a village that is naturally unfriendly towards vehicular traffic. This contributes very strongly to our sense of place and is welcomed by most. However, traffic still speeds through the village and is an issue for 60% of people, particularly parents with young children. The main problems are seen to be along Brightwell/Sotwell Street, Slade End, Didcot Road, Mackney Lane and the High Road but the many other places mentioned suggests that there are problems throughout.

A 30 mph speed limit at Sires Hill has helped to significantly reduce speeding although speed is still a real concern. Within the main village, 81% of residents would support the introduction of a 20mph speed limit if agreement was given by Oxfordshire County Council. The over-whelming view of respondents, however, was to resist any other forms of traffic calming measures such as chicanes, speed bumps or mini roundabouts and excessive signage. It was pointed out by some residents the role that vegetation along our lanes, and even potholes have in naturally slowing cars down. There was mixed support (50% for and 50% against) for the use of community speed checks, although 49 volunteered to help run them if they were deemed appropriate. Parking and delivery vans blocking the lanes are seen as an increasing problem in the main village particularly in Greenmere, Brightwell Street, High Road and Church Lane.

On many roads, most available parking spots are taken and some residents are concerned that the number of parked cars are spoiling the village. Particular concern has been expressed regarding cars parked between Wellsprings Lane and Sotwell Street on the grass verge. 70% felt that even the limited use of double yellow lines would impact adversely on the established character.

It has been suggested that either a community bus service could be established, or that the existing bus route between Brightwell and Didcot could be re-routed, on summer weekends and public holidays via Sires Hill to link with the Earth Trust facilities.



87% find pot holes a safety issue. It was the third most talked about issue during our consultation period

15 Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has a good network of footpaths both in the main village and in the countryside that are cherished by many local people. A variety of routes connect the parish and connect us with our neighbouring settlements at Wittenham, Wallingford and Moreton. **With 88% of parishioners regularly walking around the parish, our network of paths is the most used asset. In total, 97% value or use them at least once a month.**

64% consider our footpaths well maintained, although 50% of respondents find either surface debris, dog mess, over-hanging weeds (nettles) and encroaching vegetation a problem, particularly on more rural stretches and along some of the narrower lanes. This figure increased for older people and was a particular concern for parents with younger children. 'Hot spots' have been indicated along the Back Lanes, on the Thames near Shillingford Point and along the Kibble Ditch between Mackney and Tadsey Bridge.

Access can also be restricted by stiles and rough ground. 74% agreed with measures to replace stiles with more accessible buggy friendly gate. It has been suggested that an access audit should be carried out to determine which features could be upgraded.

Several residents suggested that they were uncertain where the public rights of way went and suggested a 'Parish Walking Map' showing not just footpaths but also places of interest on the way. Longer routes that could be incorporated with a bus ride home were suggested with places to see, and places for a picnic or pub lunch included.

Residents at Sires Hill do not have a footpath connecting their community with the main village and speeding traffic prevents any idea of walking along their road. 66% of respondents (with 24% don't know) would welcome a new off-road footpath linking the main village with Sires Hill and then onto the Earth Trust facility at Wittenham via existing rights of way.



Beating the Bounds

Residents at Shillingford Hill would welcome improvements to the footpath between Shillingford Bridge and Wallingford along the Shillingford Road. This could be linked to improvements for cycling. A further suggestion for a new footpath along the Sinodun ridge linking the Roman Road with Style Acre Lane was supported by 51% (this route has been dubbed the 'skyline walk').

Enclosed developments with no through routes are undesirable. The Monks Mead cul-de-sac frustrates others, and a link to Bell/Bakers lane would be very popular.

2% of the parish regularly ride a horse. Opportunities for more equine based youth activities could be explored. Cycling is clearly an activity valued by many residents. 52% regularly cycle around the main village - including many families. 25% however, indicated that there are not enough safe places to ride a bike and 39% are restricted by speeding cars. 43% suggested that safer routes, less potholes and/or slower cars would persuade them to cycle more.

Whilst cycling around the village is very popular, not many of us venture further. Only 13 hardy souls cycle to Wallingford or Didcot every day and just 25% to Wallingford or Didcot once a month. Half have never cycled to Wallingford at all and 84% of us have not cycled to Didcot. This is not surprising. When asked if safer routes would be an incentive to cycle further afield, 40% would consider cycling to Didcot if an alternative route was created and 55% to Wallingford. A cycleway to North Moreton from the main village was supported by 61%, while a route from Sotwell to Shillingford appealed to 62%. It has been suggested that a route to North Moreton that avoided the A4130 would make getting to Didcot much easier by cycle.



16 Wildlife and Nature Conservation

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is rich with wildlife. The parish has a variety of different habitats that support a diverse range of species. To the north of the parish on the floodplain of the Thames, the Earth Trust has recently created a large area of wetland through its River of Life project. The Site of Special Scientific Interest at Wittenham Clumps is located immediately to the west of the parish.

Surrounding the settlements is a patchwork of fields, woods and meadowland. To the south of the parish is a network of streams and ditches draining the land towards the Mill Brook. This environment, although being predominantly agricultural, does contain a good number of species and could be further improved through more wetland habitat creation possibly linked to drainage enhancements. The area given over to woodland in the parish has increased significantly over the past 50 years and the destruction of our hedgerows has been halted. Many of our landscape trees are ash however; how these will fair in light of Ash dieback disease is unknown. Around the margins of the fields, strips are left for wildlife.

Deer and badger are a common sight in the parish. Many garden song birds have declined over the past decade whereas other species have increased. The red kite and buzzard are now a common, yet awe inspiring sight.

Orchards once dominated the main village and a good number survive although many are in a poor state. Their wildlife importance is only now being recognised with Natural England recently supporting their conservation through new legislation. Brightwell-cum-Sotwell's old orchards are our most unique and special habitat and should be conserved. Many fruit trees are found in our hedgerows providing an ample supply of fruit for homemade jams and drinks.



Large gardens provide a valuable habitat for wildlife. Our native hedges and flower-rich verges add much to the character. They are also an essential part of the natural cycle that sustains the countryside, providing food for our hungry pollinators and other wildlife such as birds and mammals, and green chains for wildlife to move about in.

79% supported the establishment of a locally managed verge management contract that would be transferred to the Parish Council from Oxfordshire County Council. In 2014 a trial has been carried out to see whether this is feasible, with a view to making it a locally run service in following years. The contract would include the cutting of vegetation along our lanes and footpaths within the main settlement .

Data regarding the state of our natural environment has been gathered by the Environment Group that carries out survey work for the following areas: hedgerow survey, garden bird survey, moth survey, water course survey and a fruit tree survey. The group also carries out practical conservation work at the Swan Wilderness Area, the Millennium Wood, St. James' Churchyard and Wellsprings Pond.



Above: Damson at Bakers Lane

Right: A wildlife strip to the edge of a field



16.1 Establishment of a Community Orchard

Orchards once surrounded the main village but now most of the fruit trees are found in gardens. A survey was conducted in 2009 to discover how many trees are left and what species remain, 70 were counted. Apple Days are held each October, displaying a selection of the apples and providing the opportunity for community apple pressing.



86% supported the establishment of a small, unfenced community orchard to act as a focus for the celebration of our orchard heritage. 76% would support the establishment of a community orchard between the Swan Allotments and Wilderness Area – this must now be seen as the preferred location. 59% would support the planting of trees in small clumps around King's Meadow and at the grassy area to the bottom of Bell Lane. 289 residents suggested that they would be willing to sponsor a tree.

Apple Day at the Red Lion



17 Flood Risk Management, Climate Change & Emergency Planning

Flooding is not seen as a major issue, although for those who are affected it is a significant problem. Over the past several winters the River Thames has filled its floodplain and large areas of low lying agricultural land around Mackney have been inundated and left unproductive over the summer. Surface water has flooded several sites in the main village at Slade End, Sotwell Street and around the War Memorial. Local gangs of 'volunteer rodders' have been a common sight un-blocking drains to allow water to drain away. It is understood, however, that the problem needs a more holistic solution to minimise the effects of flooding, linked to the network of ditches that feed the Kibble Ditch.

As climate changes it is expected that rainfall patterns will evolve and more flood events will become the norm, associated with long periods of drought. This will affect our parish in several ways. Springs and streams may dry, whilst at other times surface water flooding will continue to increase. Drainage ditches may not be able to cope with increased rainfall and larger areas of agricultural land will flood causing disruption to agricultural activity and blocking public rights of way. It is anticipated that the River Thames will flood more often. The Parish Questionnaire revealed that few parishioners are prepared for an emergency. Only 5% have been affected by flooding so unsurprisingly 97% have made no plans as to what to do in an emergency. 4% respondents suggested flood-protection measures they would like to see: ditches to be cleared regularly, more wetland areas created around Mackney to store water, the purchase of a parish pump, the storage of sandbags locally, and the discouragement of paving over gravel drives. 18% feel prepared for a major emergency within the parish, leaving 82% unsure and unprepared. There was an apparent reluctance to offer to help support the vulnerable in a time of crisis (71% unwilling/unsure) and less willingness to help maintain ditches to lessen the risk of flooding (91% unwilling/unsure).

18 Dog Fouling

Throughout the development of the Parish Plan, dog mess has consistently been raised as one of the two top concerns of parishioners. It is a particular concern for parents. At times, the problem has been so acute that the Village School has been forced to introduce 'stop and inspect' at the school gate before pupils could enter the building. Contact with dog mess can cause blindness in children; biologically there is a world of difference between dog excrement and cow or sheep poo.

The problem is parish wide although there are particular hot spots – the Back Lanes, Kings Meadow, the Rec, Croft Path, Croft Field and Slade End. The Croft Field is so disgusting that it has become a 'no go' area for many parents. One response received during the Parish Plan consultation noted 34 separate piles of dog mess here. Three responses reported domestic dog mess left on their drive. Respondents also reported aggressive behaviours towards them when challenging some dog owners who had not picked up their mess. It is known that the vast majority of dog owners pick up and remove their dog mess and that it is a small, persistent minority who offend. Bagging and hanging the bag in a tree is not acceptable. Kicking the dog mess into the edge of the path, a field or hedge is equally not acceptable – children use these places to play. **The only acceptable means of disposing your dog mess is to pick it up, bag it and bin it.**

The strength of feeling is highlighted by the 74% of respondents to the Parish Questionnaire supporting the prosecution and fining of offenders. 86% support additional disposal bins with a further 66% support for the introduction of disposal bags at the bins. 56% support leafleting and 65% support a poster campaign. 29% of respondents who suggested other actions would like to see owners who do not remove their pet's excrement named and shamed within the village whilst there was also strong support for more frequent visits from community police officers.

19 A Sustainable Future

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell on the whole is a green parish. There is a thriving Environment Group which in 2013 published a 2nd edition to its Conservation Plan for the parish. This sets out a detailed summary of the state of the environment in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. **It is recommended that the Environment Group report is read alongside this Parish Plan.**

The businesses within the parish are well supported by the parishioners, hopefully reducing the necessity for some car journeys. Since 2004 the Village Stores has opened and Root One Garden Centre has flourished encouraging parishioners to stay local. Further provision for the production and sale of local produce is planned by the Earth Trust – this could be sold in the Village Stores. The Appleford Brewery is based at Highlands Farm – selling its 'Brightwell Gold' bitter at the Red Lion.

Eggs and potatoes can be bought at Highlands Farm, award winning wine from Brightwell Vineyard and village produced apple juice at the Village Store. It is unfortunate however, that most of the apples that ripen in the parish are allowed to fall to the ground. There is a good market for this produce (to make cider). Community picking days could be introduced and the income raised ploughed back into environmental projects. The allotments are thriving (10% of respondents indicated that they have one) and a further 63% grow produce at home. 78% have no interest in the option of further allotments being found, suggesting the present number is probably right.

In the winter of 2009, a thermal imaging camera was employed to collect images from more than 70 properties in the village. Many houses were found to be well insulated, while for others, points and areas where energy was being lost were identified. Following a series of public meetings, 12 properties were equipped with photo-voltaic solar panels.

19.1 Sustainable Energy Production

The Parish is suitable for both solar and wind power generation of electricity; however it has been established that the close proximity to Benson Air Base means that planning permission would be unlikely not be granted for a wind turbine. The potential for Solar Energy production has been explored and deemed feasible through the establishment of a cooperative community owned Solar Farm. To be economically viable, the farm would need to cover up to 30 Acres using Polycrystalline Photo Voltaic (PV) panels generating 4.8 GigaWatt Hours per year (GWhr/Yr) – approximately the equivalent of a year's electricity requirements for 1,400 homes. This would make Brightwell-cum-Sotwell self sufficient in terms of its energy production and would save 2,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. 31% of respondents in the Parish Questionnaire supported the idea for a community owned solar energy plant, 50% were undecided and 19% against. 23% of the parish would be willing to invest between £100 to £20,000, 44% potentially and 33% were not interested in investing.



Wassailing Day

20 Housing

20.1 How many new Houses?

South Oxfordshire District Council's adopted local plan sets out policy regarding the building new of housing. Our Parish Questionnaire set out to find out what local people thought was appropriate. Most respondents to the Parish Questionnaire were in favour of some new houses being built in the parish over the next ten years. 15% were against any new houses being built, with 15% wanting more than 20. 77% of respondents, would see up to ten houses and 46% up to 20 houses. A further 8% were unable to provide a precise number as, in their opinion, it depended on the type of house and its suitability to the parish's needs.

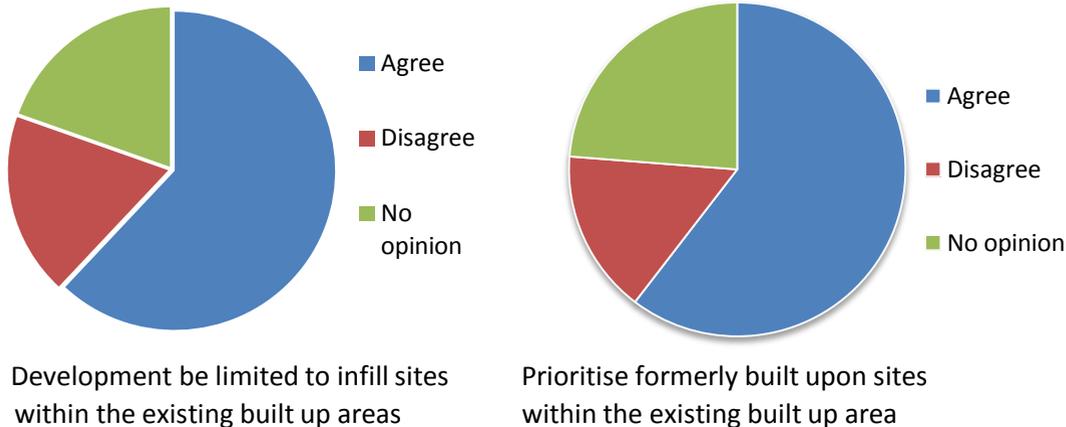
20.2 Where to Build?

While there is support for some more new houses, the overwhelming strength of opinion is that the current footprint of the built-up area of the village should remain the same. 53% of respondents indicating that this was very important and a further 35% that it was quite important, in total 88%. **The message from the parish appears to be clear. No new building on farmland or open countryside outside the existing built area should be allowed, retaining the established edge of settlement line.**

In the Parish Questionnaire residents were asked if new building was to be constructed where should this be. 57% of respondents agreed that if development is to take place that any new houses should be limited to infill sites within the existing built up areas such as the old nursery sites at Slade End or West End. When asked whether formerly built upon sites in the main village should be prioritised, just over 60% agreed. When asked whether affordable housing should be built outside the existing village footprint only 30% agreed, with 45% of respondents disagreeing.

There was 50% agreement for the construction of some new homes outside the village footprint on formerly built upon sites, 20% disagreement and 30% unsure. There was 63% agreement for the construction of tied farm cottages that could be rented to farm workers.

When asked where development should be in the parish, there was 47% agreement for within the main village, around one third agreement for Mackney, Sires Hill, Clapcot/Rush Court or Shillingford Hill and only 8% on open farmland.



20.3 What Type of New Housing is Appropriate?

When asked in the Parish Questionnaire what type of new housing is most suitable for the village, the greatest support was given to two and three bedroom houses – 79% and 83 % respectively, 50% thought 1 bedroom houses were appropriate and 56% saw 4 bedroom houses as appropriate. The cost of buying a larger house within the parish is undoubtedly a significant factor. Next in popularity came ‘Sheltered housing (for elderly, disabled or other vulnerable people)’ and ‘affordable housing for rent /shared ownership’, with 68% and 65% respectively feeling they were very or quite suitable.

The Croft Villas – C19th speculative development

There was little support (7%) for additional park homes in the parish (it is assumed beyond the existing area at Shillingford Hill), or for flats (25% support). Just under half of respondents considered that either low cost private housing for rent or private housing for rent was suitable.

20.4 Affordable Housing

53% of the parish consider that there is a need for more local affordable housing than is currently available, only 10% disagreed and a third had no opinion or did not know. There was a higher level of support, almost two thirds (64%), for a small development of affordable homes (rent or shared ownership) for people *with a local connection* (assuming a suitable location could be found).

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell has a higher proportion of older people in the parish (33% over age 65 years), than the national average. The Parish Plan set out to establish whether the needs of older people are being met. 70% of respondents felt that more homes needed to be built to suit the needs of older generations. 81% suggested that a variety of different property types are most suitable as no one size fits all. 67% considered that any new housing tailored towards older people must be high quality, well designed build to incentivize ‘empty nesters’ to downsize. The Parish Questionnaire asked whether Rectory Meadow was an appropriate Rural Exception Site. There was no agreement reached whether an open meeting should be called on this issue and thus its suitability as a Rural Exception Site will be explored through the Neighbourhood Plan process.



21 The Neighbourhood Plan

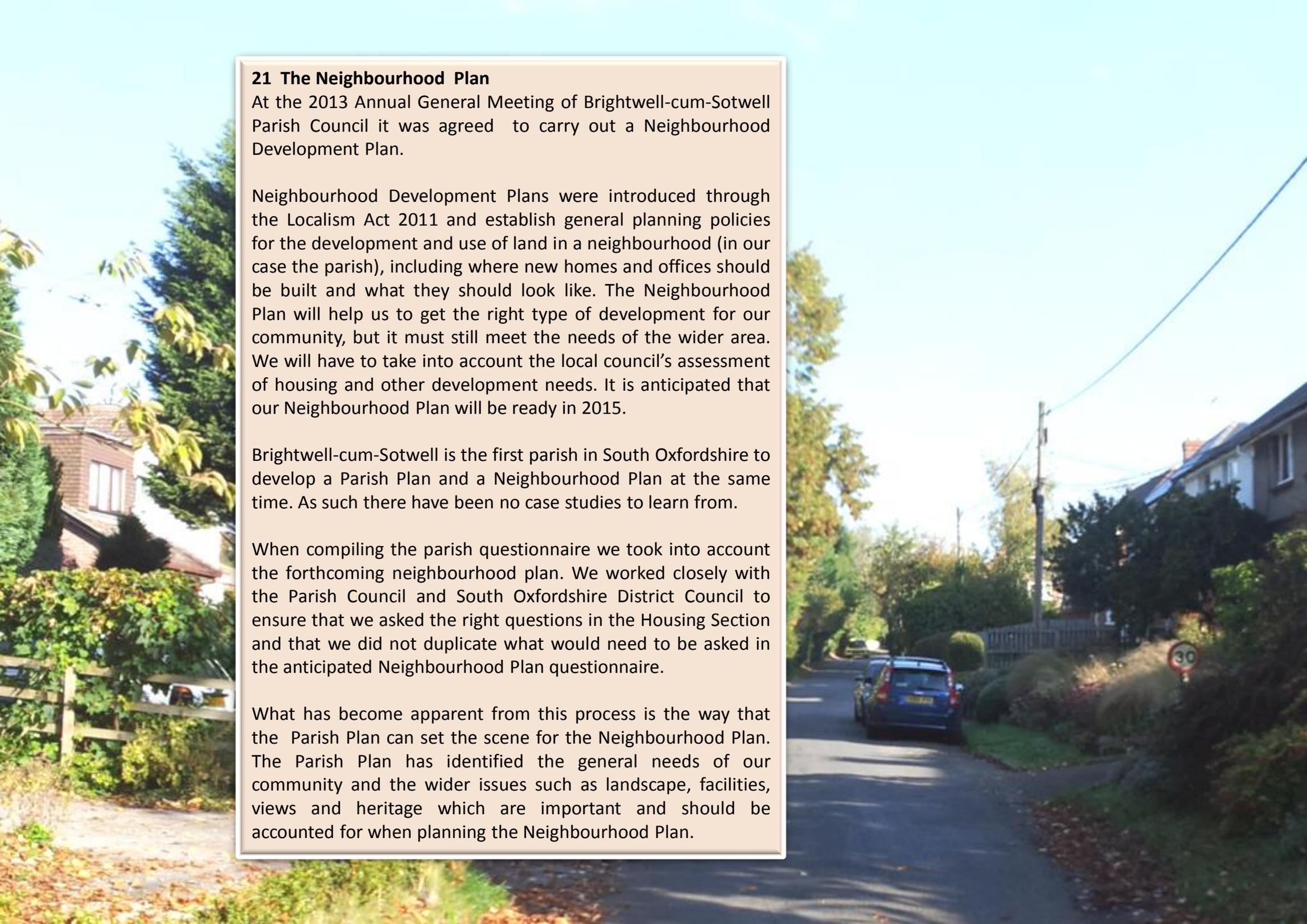
At the 2013 Annual General Meeting of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council it was agreed to carry out a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Development Plans were introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood (in our case the parish), including where new homes and offices should be built and what they should look like. The Neighbourhood Plan will help us to get the right type of development for our community, but it must still meet the needs of the wider area. We will have to take into account the local council's assessment of housing and other development needs. It is anticipated that our Neighbourhood Plan will be ready in 2015.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is the first parish in South Oxfordshire to develop a Parish Plan and a Neighbourhood Plan at the same time. As such there have been no case studies to learn from.

When compiling the parish questionnaire we took into account the forthcoming neighbourhood plan. We worked closely with the Parish Council and South Oxfordshire District Council to ensure that we asked the right questions in the Housing Section and that we did not duplicate what would need to be asked in the anticipated Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire.

What has become apparent from this process is the way that the Parish Plan can set the scene for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Plan has identified the general needs of our community and the wider issues such as landscape, facilities, views and heritage which are important and should be accounted for when planning the Neighbourhood Plan.





New Development within the Parish (Housing and Commercial)

22 The Action Plan

The Action Plan sets out a series of measures based on the needs and aspirations of parishioners identified during the development of the Parish Plan. These actions are not exclusive and hopefully they might inspire other positive action as time goes on.

Many of you indicated in the Parish Questionnaire that you would be willing to help establish or manage some of these actions and provided contact details for this purpose. We will ensure that those of you who expressed a willingness to be contacted for a particular project will be contacted as relevant projects are investigated. Where appropriate, a lead organisation has been proposed to take forward an action. These are referenced in the text as followed:

- BCSPC – Parish Council
- EG – Environment Group
- CA – Community Association
- BVOG – Brightwell Village Orchard Group
- SHRA – Shillingford Hill Residents Association
- VS – Village Stores
- VHS – Village History Society
- PCC – Parochial Church Council

Priorities for action and anticipated costs have also been suggested. These are demonstrated by a series of different coloured dots and should be read as follows:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------|
|  | Priority for action |  | High cost |
|  | Priority over the lifespan of this action plan |  | Lower cost |
|  | No immediate priority |  | No cost |
| | |  | Unknown |

BCS 1 It has been agreed by Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council to carry out a Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Plan has identified the key issues to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. These can be summarised as:

- conserve and enhance the established rural character of the parish
- preserve the aspect of a hidden village
- Retain the established edge of built settlement line for the main village.
- do not extend the village ‘footprint’
- there should be no building on open farmland
- some new build is acceptable but will depend on the exact site, style and appearance on a house by house basis. Any new building should prioritise use of brownfield and derelict sites in the village
- in-fill development is acceptable but not at the expense of the conservation area where it is considered it will damage the rural character particularly in the green core of main village
- homes should be a mixture of sizes from 2 bedrooms to four.
- prioritise some homes suitable for older people and some affordable homes for people with local connections
- there is substantial support (77%) for up to 10 homes over the next ten years and some support (40%) for up to a maximum of 20 new homes.
- building is acceptable within the hamlets
- some commercial development may be appropriate
- It is appropriate for well designed and discreet farm dwellings to be constructed that have an associated farm tie
- suggestions as to what constitutes the established line of settlement of the main village are proposed
- what rural views and open spaces that are valued and should be conserved are outlined
- the Neighbourhood Plan will need to identify whether the parish supports the principle for an identified area of land (inside or outside the established edge of settlement line) to be appropriate for use as a ‘rural exception site’
- (Lead BCS PC)



Community

BCS 2	Identify ways that the 16 – 44 age group can get more involved in parish life and at community events	 
BCS 3	Establish more organised activities for younger people including events, trips, activities and a possible place to meet up	 
BCS 4	Continue to support the Village School and Pre School. Maintain the village school in its current location	 
BCS 5	Put in place a mechanism for parish organisations to share resources	 
BCS 6a	Ensure that communications are improved with all sectors of the community (including better use of modern technologies)	 
BCS 6b	Ensure that communications are improved across all geographical areas of the parish. (Lead BCS PC)	 
BCS 7	Establish a Good Neighbour Network	 
BCS 8	Identify ways of educating those dog owners who habitually allow their dogs to foul the parish to stop. To campaign for the fining/prosecuting of offenders who do not comply. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 9	Encourage other community based measures identified in this Parish Plan and find other ways to celebrate parish life through events, celebrations and activities are found	 

Facilities and Amenities

BCS 10	Ensure that we maintain and strengthen our core parish services and encourage more local patronage of our shops, pubs and businesses, using the Villager and Parish Website to regularly remind people of the need to “Use it or lose it”	 
BCS 11	Find ways to maintain and support junior sections of parish sporting clubs and societies	 
BCS 12	Improve play facilities for older children at both Kings Meadow & at the Recreation Ground and for younger children at the Recreation Ground as identified in this Parish Plan. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 13	Install permanent goal posts at the Recreation Ground. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 14	Install new benches around the parish. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 15	Work with the Community Association to install an interpretation panel in the main village. (Lead: BCS CA)	 
BCS 16	Investigate whether a community facility at Shillingford Hill is feasible in order to provide a place for residents to meet. (Lead: BCS PC/SHRA)	 
BCS 17	Investigate the feasibility for a natural burial ground to be created in the parish. (Lead BCS PC)	 
BCS 18	Install a defibrillator in the main village and at Shillingford Hill. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 19	Establish an order and deliver service at the Village Stores. (Lead: BCS VS)	 
BCS 20	Investigate the instalment of additional dog disposal bins (Lead: BCS PC)	 

Business

BCS 21	Establish an Independent Business Advisory Group (IBAG) for the parish with specific expertise to provide advice and guidance to existing and or potential new businesses and young people	 
BCS 22	For the parish Broadband Group to continue as a sub group of the proposed IBAG and maintain its established links	 
BCS 23	Use the proposed IBAG as a focal point to establish a BCS Parish Computer Support Service	 
BCS 24	Investigate the potential for sites for new commercial facilities	 

Landscape and Heritage

BCS 25	Work with authorities, landowners, local groups and relevant partners to conserve and enhance the rural character of the parish paying particular regard to those landscape features that have been identified in this Parish Plan as important. Conserve the established character of the Sinodun Hills as the dominant and iconic landscape feature of the parish as set out in this Parish Plan	 
BCS 26	To work with the relevant authorities to ensure that the main village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell retains a distinctly separate identity from Wallingford, creating a strong buffer zone both sides of the Wallingford by-pass. Ensure that the fields between Slade End and Wallingford by-pass remain as working farmland. (Lead: BCS PC)	 

BCS 27	Investigate the establishment of stronger links with surrounding parishes (including the Wittenhams, Moretons, Astons, Blewbury and Cholsey Parish Councils) to create an alliance of parishes in order to lobby for the conservation of rural character. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 28	Continue to lobby against those measures that this parish considers detract from the identified character of the parish, in particular measures that would increase traffic on the A4130. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 29	Investigate the potential to enlarge the Conservation Area to embrace the fields between the main village and Mackney. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 30	Work with the North Wessex Downs AONB to investigate the feasibility and implications of an extension of the area designated as AONB to embrace all of the parish. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 31	Work with the North Wessex Downs AONB to install 'Welcome' signs on entry to the AONB. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 32	Restore the cob wall at St. Agatha's Church. (Lead: PCC)	 

Traffic and Transport (including walking)

BCS 33	Work with statutory highway authorities to investigate whether a lower speed limit can be extended along the A4130 Wallingford by-pass to the Root One turning to the main village and on the Shillingford Road. (Lead BCS PC)	 
BCS 34	Investigate the feasibility for a 20mph speed limit within the main village	 

BCS 35	Work with statutory highway authorities to investigate ways to improve vehicular access into the main village from to A4130. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 36	Investigate the potential to establish a bus link between Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Didcot via Sires Hill on summer weekends and public holidays. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 37	Continue to lobby for improvements in the parish bus service. Publicise the bus timetable more widely to encourage greater use.	 
BCS 38	Publish a walking guide for the parish. (Lead: BCS EG/CA/VHS)	 
BCS 39	Establish a working group to carry out an access audit of the parish's footpaths and propose measures to improve access (Lead: BCS EG/PC)	 
BCS 40	Establish a working group to investigate the feasibility to open up new footpaths as suggested in this Parish Plan (Lead: BCS EG/PC)	 

Wildlife and Countryside Management

BCS 41	Work with the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Village Orchard Group to promote the harvesting and use of locally grown fruit. (Lead: BCS BVOG)	 
BCS 42	Establish a Community Orchard between the Swan Allotments and Wilderness Area. (Lead: BCS BVOG)	 
BCS 43	Conserve and enhance the tree stock and native hedges particularly in the main village	 

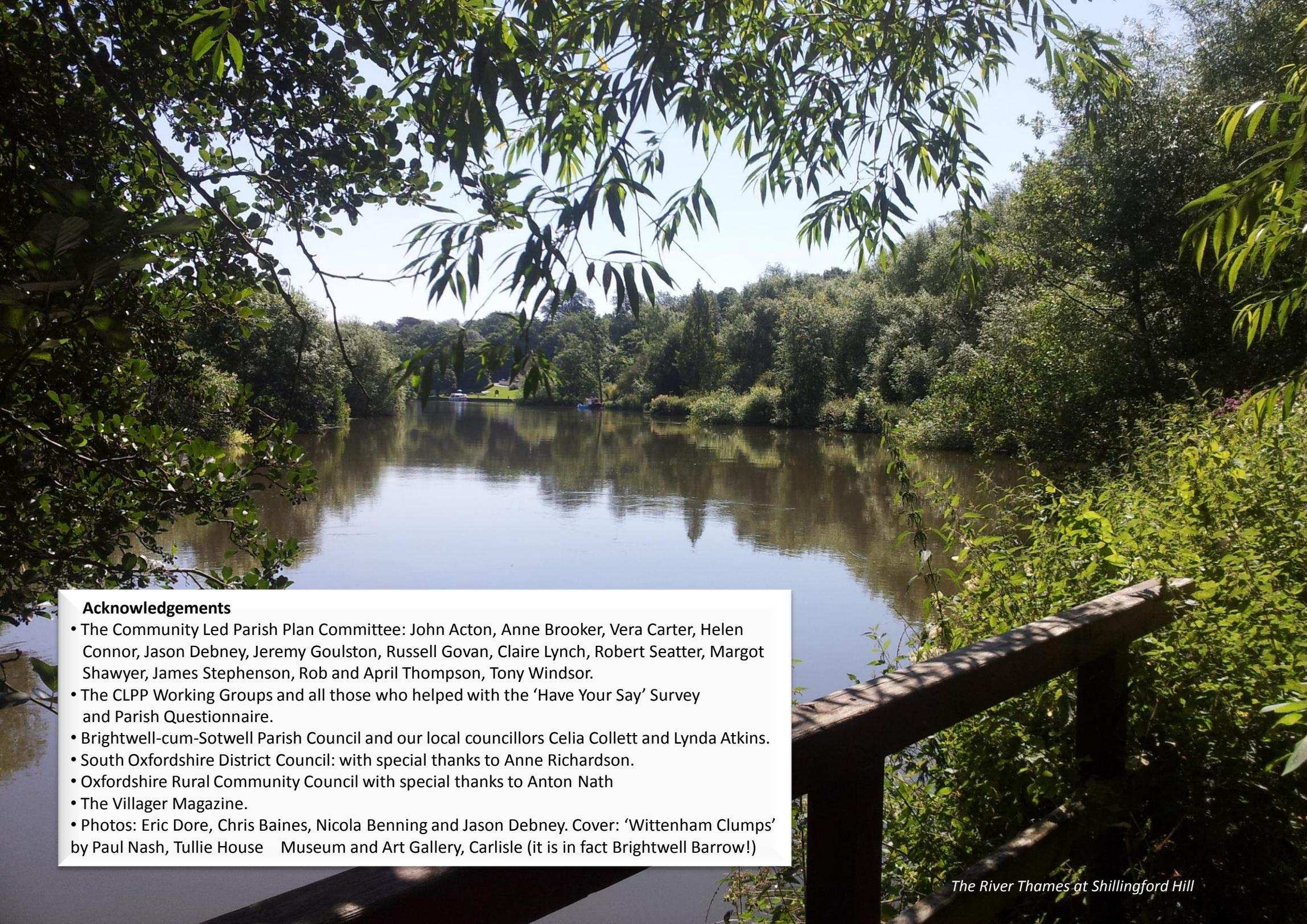
BCS 44	Establish a parish led verge and footpath management regime to increase access and to enhance the biodiversity value of our verges and hedgerows. (Lead: BCS PC)	 
BCS 45	Establish a group to look at how flooding and drainage can be managed in the parish linked to potential enhancements and creation of further wetland habitat	 

A Sustainable Future

BCS 46	Investigate the potential for and, if feasible, pursue the possibility of a community-owned solar energy scheme. (Lead: Independent Business Advisory Group/Environment Group)	 
BCS 47	Make people more aware of actions they can take to prepare for an emergency through the establishment of an emergency planning Group. (Lead: BCS PC/SODC)	 

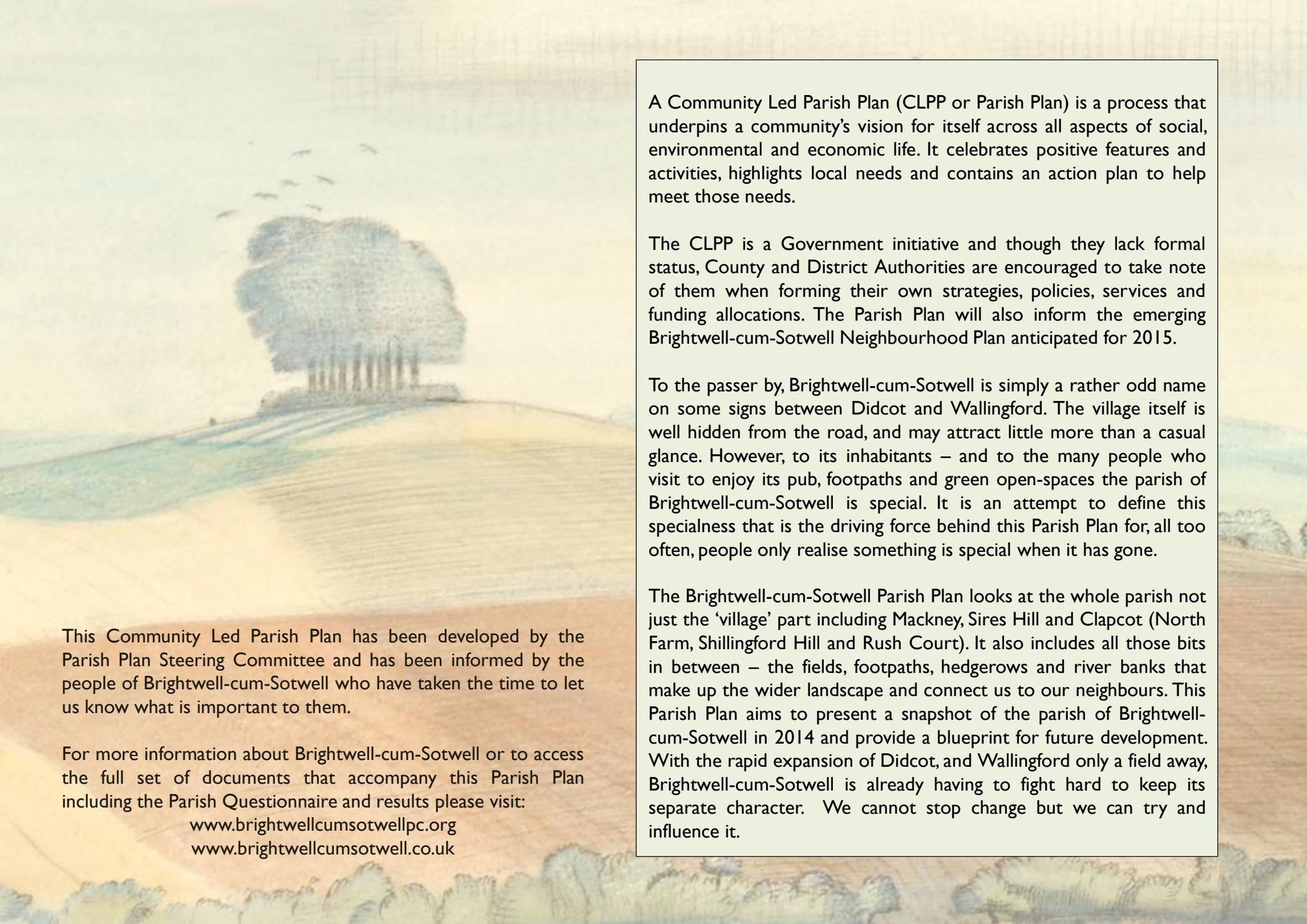
Taking the Plan Forward

BCS 48	For the existing Parish Plan Committee to evolve into a Parish Plan Continuation Committee of the Parish Council to ensure actions are implemented. To identify leads, set timescales, prioritise and monitor actions	 
BCS 49	Store all CLPP documentation with Parish Council, using their website as a portal for CLPP data	 
BCS 50	Establish a list of organisations in parish and an associated volunteer data base using information from CLPP on Parish Council website	 



Acknowledgements

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A Community Led Parish Plan (CLPP or Parish Plan) is a process that underpins a community's vision for itself across all aspects of social, environmental and economic life. It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights local needs and contains an action plan to help meet those needs.

The CLPP is a Government initiative and though they lack formal status, County and District Authorities are encouraged to take note of them when forming their own strategies, policies, services and funding allocations. The Parish Plan will also inform the emerging Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Neighbourhood Plan anticipated for 2015.

To the passer by, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is simply a rather odd name on some signs between Didcot and Wallingford. The village itself is well hidden from the road, and may attract little more than a casual glance. However, to its inhabitants – and to the many people who visit to enjoy its pub, footpaths and green open-spaces the parish of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is special. It is an attempt to define this specialness that is the driving force behind this Parish Plan for, all too often, people only realise something is special when it has gone.

The Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Plan looks at the whole parish not just the 'village' part including Mackney, Sires Hill and Clapcot (North Farm, Shillingford Hill and Rush Court). It also includes all those bits in between – the fields, footpaths, hedgerows and river banks that make up the wider landscape and connect us to our neighbours. This Parish Plan aims to present a snapshot of the parish of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell in 2014 and provide a blueprint for future development. With the rapid expansion of Didcot, and Wallingford only a field away, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is already having to fight hard to keep its separate character. We cannot stop change but we can try and influence it.

This Community Led Parish Plan has been developed by the Parish Plan Steering Committee and has been informed by the people of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell who have taken the time to let us know what is important to them.

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell or to access the full set of documents that accompany this Parish Plan including the Parish Questionnaire and results please visit:

www.brightwellcumsotwellpc.org

www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk