UFFINGTON WOOLSTONE & BAULKING

Community Led Plan 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This community led plan covers the parishes of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking. It was compiled under the direction of the three parish councils or parish meetings and was led by a steering group of local volunteers. Work on the plan started in 2013 with a village meeting, followed by many months of engagement with locals and visitors to understand what are the important issues for our communities. In late 2014 this formed the basis for a focussed questionnaire, which was issued in early 2015 to all residents of the 3 villages, some 430 households, and had a decent 51% response rate. The questionnaire, and indeed this plan, was structured into the 12 key themes of Community, Environment and leisure, Housing and character, Roads and traffic, transport, Education, Shop, post office and pubs, Village hall, museum and Church, Communications, Employment and Health and Crime and each member of the steering group took responsibility for designing a section of the questionnaire and its subsequent write up after the results were collated. The detailed questionnaire analysis is available from the Uffington Parish Council on request.

The main purpose of the plan is to provide the three parish councils or parish meetings with clear direction on what it is that we, the villagers, see as important for the future of our villages. By a clear majority, respondents felt that the three best things about living in Uffington, Woolstone or Baulking are the community, the leisure and environment and the housing and character of the villages. Conversely, by far the most significant disadvantages to living in our villages appear to be the roads and transport network with communication, including both internal village communications and communications infrastructure, such as mobile phone and broadband services, also being obvious problems.

A QUESTIONAIRE OF 430 HOUSEHOLDS, WITH A 51% RESPONSE RATE

Focussing on the community, local events appear to be popular, with a large majority of respondents attending one within the last 12 months. The White Horse Show is especially important to the villages, both as a very long standing source of charitable support and as a rewarding collective enterprise involving many local individuals. Concern was raised about bringing new villagers into the fold and a ‘Welcome Pack’ for new residents was seen as an important next step. In addition a large proportion felt that the needs of the elderly are not met by current facilities or

services and would like to see more done to support this section of the community.

In terms of leisure and environment, the three villages are set in an agricultural landscape with the distinctive White Horse Hill being a major visual feature. Questionnaire responses show that villagers value this historic landscape and indeed, the most common reason for coming to live here was quoted as the country way of life. Within the villages themselves, it is the street-scape and conservation areas and trees that people value with a majority supporting more planting of trees. Most people felt no need for any increase in the relatively low current levels of street lighting. However, flooding is a major concern with over 75% of respondents having encountered floods across roads and nearly 20% having experienced some flooding of their property. Most respondents highly value our footpath networks around the villages but do not want more pavements in the villages. A large majority want better loop walks around the parishes, including giving consideration to reopening the old canal towpath.

The final area that people are particularly keen on is the housing and character of the 3 villages. Of the 169 comments made in response to the question about what are the main issues facing your village, over 80% relate to future development. Concerns centre around increased traffic and parking, strain on existing facilities, flooding and drainage, the potential to spoil the character of the villages and the impact on the environment and landscape. Responses to the survey suggest that the preferred types of new housing are sheltered housing for the elderly and affordable housing, plus houses with a range of sizes. Most prefer to see a lower density for future housing than is the norm today, and therefore accept that more sites may need to be identified for a given number of houses. A large majority made the point that no further development towards White Horse Hill should be accepted because this landscape is highly valued as it connects the villages of Uffington and Woolstone, (and to a lesser extent, Baulking which is set a little further to the north) to the White Horse escarpment and the AONB. Weight was given to ensuring the design of any future housing was done using local materials similar to those used on other older houses in the village. People felt that any development should come with improved facilities for young people, more managed green space and better leisure and sports facilities. While nearly all felt that maintaining a residential feel to the villages was vital, there was significant recognition of a need to provide industrial or work spaces for people who live here. Nearly all respondents wanted the parish councils and parish meetings to draw on these responses in the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. to create a formal land-use document that would form part of the Statutory Plan.

CONCERNS INCLUDE DEVELOPMENT, ROADS AND TRANSPORT LINKS, PROTECTING THE AONB AND RELIABILITY OF SERVICES

Our community is very concerned about roads and transport links with the state of the roads in relation to pot holes being a common theme. Speeding and volume of traffic is also a significant concern with a 20mph speed limit along with traffic calming, particularly near the school and museum, and a one way route around Uffington being particularly mentioned. 99% of respondents use a car as their main transport with most people unable to rely on buses as they do not go when and where they want. Buses to Didcot station for commuting and improving the frequency of the present two local bus services and widening their destinations to Faringdon and Swindon more regularly were mentioned as being useful. People also said they would support the reopening of Uffington Station for access to the rail network.

Finally, communication was cited as a key concern – village websites were seen as needing improvement and a majority want better email links throughout the villages. Nearly 25% of people struggle to use their broadband for daily requirements but the future plans for fibre broadband will help mitigate this. Villagers find mobile phone coverage very poor throughout the parishes.

In summary the community led plan has been a well supported endeavour which captures key strengths and weaknesses of our community, as viewed through the eyes of the residents. It provides clear indications to the Parish Councils and Meetings of how to take the villages forward and should serve as a record to help future decision making, particularly should development and investment in the villages become available. The Parish Council and Meetings need to focus on bringing new villagers into the fold and caring for the elderly, they need to protect our historic landscape and trees and better manage flooding. They need to carefully manage the future development of the villages through completion of a Neighbourhood Plan and should give consideration to the footpath networks to improve access to the environment in which we live. They should focus on traffic management and should engage with local bus services to make them more appealing to residents. Finally they should look at communications access through both internet and mobile phone provision.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community led planning has always been at the heart of rural communities. From the informal versions in bygone generations to the Parish and Community Plans of recent decades, Community Led Plans set out a vision of how a community wants to develop and progress and identifies the actions needed to achieve it.

In 2013, Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking agreed to work together to generate this plan, the last village-wide plan having been formulated in 1974. The CLP Steering Group canvassed views from locals, visitors, tourists, parents, church attendees, pub goers, shop users, walkers and cyclists to name but some of the groups engaged with.

Their responses informed a questionnaire distributed in March 2015 to all 428 households in the three villages. 51% of villagers responded. 74% of respondents were from Uffington, 11% from Woolstone and 15% from Baulking, which broadly reflects the differing sizes of the 3 villages. The respondents' views have been used to form this plan, which sets out villagers opinions, identifies actions needed to satisfy them and can be used to influence our local council and government on what it is that we, the villagers, want for our community. The Uffington Parish Council and the Woolstone and Baulking Parish Meetings have approved this document. Those who have worked on the CLP Steering Group are listed in appendix 2.

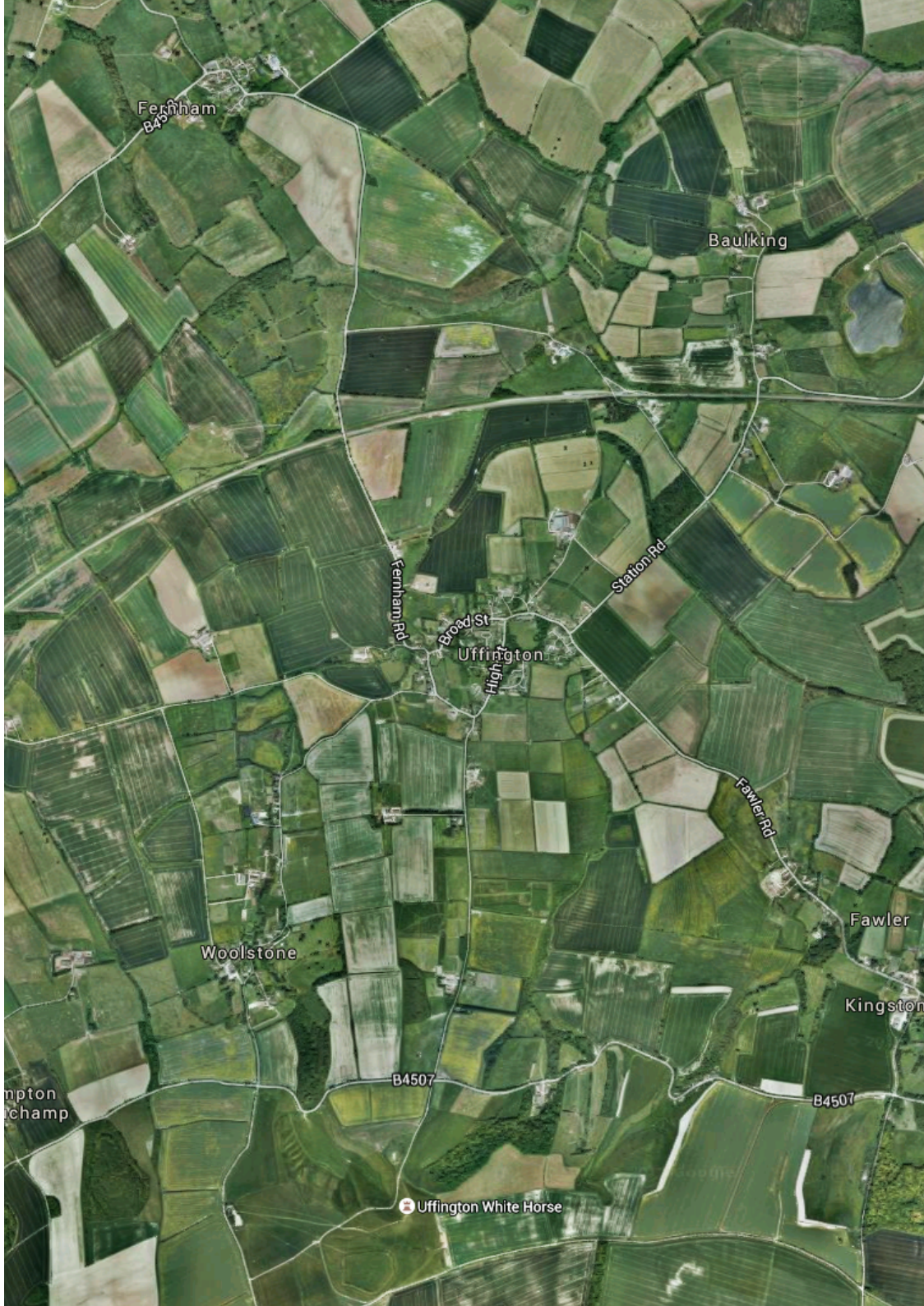
The respondents show a broad spread of demographics with the gender and age distributions much as expected.

Occupations cover a wide spectrum from self-employed, employed, unemployed, retired, student etc. The community has a complete mix of people from those who have recently moved to the village to those who have lived here for many years. This broad mix of respondents suggests that the sample of 51% who completed the questionnaire is likely to be a good representation of the total population.

It is the country way of life that has incentivised over half of respondents to live here, the next biggest driver being work or employment.

By a clear majority, respondents felt that the three best things about living in Uffington, Woolstone or Baulking are the community, the housing and character of the villages and the leisure and environment. Conversely, by far the most significant disadvantage to living in our villages appears to be the roads and transport network with communication, including both internal village communications and communications infrastructure such as mobile phone and broadband services, also being obvious problems.

This plan looks in detail at all these areas and others, explains what respondents have described through the opinions they have shared and sets out actions that could help to improve our villages.



2. BACKGROUND

Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking are villages and civil parishes about 5 miles south east of Faringdon and 6 miles west of Wantage. They were part of Berkshire until the 1974 boundary changes meant they moved into Oxfordshire. Until the 19th century they formed a single parish but now operate as 3 independent parishes.

While the whole area is of archaeological note, the White Horse is worthy of independent comment. One of the United Kingdom's best-known archaeological sites, at 114 m long and dating back to the Bronze Age, it is generally thought to have been a religious totem of some kind, and is probably associated with the adjoining Dragon Hill, a small natural hillock with a flattened top. Above them stands Uffington Castle, an Iron Age hill fort (overlying a Bronze Age predecessor) and a number of associated burial mounds including Waylands Smithy. Passing close to the hill fort, the ancient Ridgeway, possibly Britain's oldest road and trade route and now a well-known long distance walkway passes through the area.

The Romans are probably the earliest recorded occupants of the area despite the much longer historical connections, and the lands seem to have remained an area of national importance into Saxon times. Indeed, by the time of the Domesday Survey (1086), the Vale of the White Horse had become one of the most populous and prosperous parts of Berkshire, with good arable and pasture lands, woods and a plentiful water supply. From the 1600s the villages have been associated with the Craven estate and it wasn't until the 1960s that most of the estate was finally sold off.

The villages lie in the middle of the Vale of the White Horse, Like many parishes in the Vale, Uffington and Woolstone are long and thin, running north-south, and include both low-lying arable land and grazing upland on the downs. The River Ock and the now disused Wilts and Berks Canal form notable geographic features in the area while Dragon Hill, White Horse Hill, the downs and the gallops further define the local landscape. The railway line, built through the area in 1840 remains a key part of the built environment.

The villages have strong literary connections. Thomas Hughes, author of Tom Brown's Schooldays, was born in Uffington in 1822 and the village school mentioned in the book still exists, albeit now as a museum. Sir John Betjeman lived in Uffington in the 1930s and his daughter remained here until 2014.

Facilities today include a village shop and post office in Uffington, a school serving all three villages, again in Uffington, a public house in Woolstone, The White Horse, and another in Uffington, The Fox and Hounds, a village hall in Uffington and a church in each village. St Mary's Church in Uffington was built in 1250 and is known as the "Cathedral of the Vale". Large for the size of the village, it was built with a high standard of design and workmanship, being an important outpost of Abingdon Abbey at the time. Woolstone's All Saints Church was built in about 1195 as a dependent chapel of Uffington in a similar way to that of Baulking's Saint Nicholas's Church in the 13th century. They were made into ecclesiastical parishes separate from Uffington in 1846, but are now once again part of the Uffington Benefice, along with Shellingford. Strong and vibrant communities, all 3 villages benefit from regular events, close knit social groups and a rural way of life.

The 2011 census gives a more detailed breakdown for each of the three villages separately, covering not only population data but also equity/prosperity, economy, housing, transport, services etc. These profiles can be seen at

http://www.oxonrcc.org.uk/Content/Sites/oxonrcc-org-uk/Documents/Uffington.pdf

[for Woolstone and Baulking replace 'Uffington' as required]

Note that in the following analysis of returned questionnaires, the most significant statistics have been used – whether positive or negative – omitting some which are statistically insignificant.

Within each section of this plan we recommend actions. Some actions can be enacted immediately, others are more strategic with the results felt after a number of years. All actions are repeated at Appendix 1 with an indication of their importance, achievability, timescale and who will carry them out.

In certain sections of the questionnaire respondents were invited to volunteer to support a given activity (e.g. offer to assist in the school).

ACTION 2.1: Transfer lists of volunteers to the relevant organisation.

3. COMMUNITY

A majority of respondents answering the questionnaire felt that the best thing about living in the villages is our 'community'.

Community events are popular, with some 85% of respondents attending events within the last 12 months. The White Horse Show is especially important to the villages, both as a very long standing source of charitable support and as a rewarding collective enterprise involving many local individuals. 73% of respondents contribute in different ways to the show activity.

To encourage new residents to become more involved in the community, a number of "useful tools" were suggested:

A 'Welcome Pack' for new residents (42% of respondents) - a regular meeting place for socialising (26%) - more information regarding 'What's On' (35%). A small number felt assistance to get to events and/or have someone to accompany them would be helpful. However, 32% do not want to get more involved with the community.

Some commented that a 'Meet & Greet' for new residents would be useful and that a more accessible notice board was needed.

ACTION 3.1: Uffington Parish Council and the Parish Meetings of Woolstone and Baulking (PC/PMs) to address communications within villages for new residents including specific consideration of a welcome pack and to consider how to provide better 'what's on' updates to residents, using email and improvements to the village websites as preferred media.

New activities which respondents said they would support were:-

Outdoor concert (63%) - Village Picnic (44%) - Barn dance (38%) - Family Sports day (31%) - Charity Jumble sale (27%) - Choir (23%) - Flower arranging (15%) - Bingo (15%) - Bridge (14%). Some other suggestions were made, with 'Film Club' mentioned several times.

A large proportion (72%) felt that the needs of the elderly are not met by current facilities or services; suggestions for improvement were:-

More frequent buses (76%) and a wider range of destinations (56%) (See section 6) - additional healthcare support at home (44%) - a meeting place or drop-in centre (40%) - more seats/benches around the villages (35%) - more information about local voluntary services (32%) - more activities aimed at older people (23%) - more involvement with schools and youth (20%).

A 'Good Neighbour' scheme was well supported (88%) and people from 28 households are in a position to help.

ACTION 3.2 PC/PMs to appoint a good neighbour coordinator to liaise with the Oxfordshire Community Information Network and to address some of the needs of the elderly.

When operating, the Youth Club was attended regularly by 5 young people with some 14 attending on occasions but there are 36 young people who would like to see it restarted. However, there was a conflict of age ranges with 26% wanting high school age only and 35% wanting 7-14 years age range. A wider range of activities were suggested by 23% and others suggesting it being entirely separate from the church.

10 respondents showed an interest in joining the community garden scheme. Some 16 people were interested in being a parish councillor and 11 people in working for the parish council.

ACTION 3.3 PC/PMs to consider organising or co-ordinating an outdoor concert or village picnic for all three villages.

4. ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE

ENVIRONMENT

The three villages of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking are some 5 miles from the nearest town and 2 ½ miles from the nearest A-class road. By comparison with many other villages in Oxfordshire they are therefore relatively inaccessible and are served by quite narrow roads. The villages are set in an agricultural landscape but with the distinctive White Horse Hill and the escarpment to the south a major visual feature. This landscape is host to a wide range of wildlife.

As background we quote from the Vale of the White Horse Planning Policy NE9 Local Plan 2011:

The Vale of White Horse's supplementary planning guidance 'Residential Design Guide' (Dec 2009) describes the character of Uffington as falling firstly within the 'Western Clay Vale' and then more specifically within the small Landscape Character Area 'Zone 4: Chalk Villages along the Spring Line'. "*Zone 4 is characterised by small settlements, with Uffington being the largest. The villages have a distinctly rural character comprising informal cottages and farmsteads."*

Policy NE9 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 describes this area as being within the 'Lowland Vale'. Paragraph 7.66 of this document states that "… *this area has been celebrated for the contribution it makes to distant views from the higher land. The Lowland vale is also distinctive and valued for its own quality".*

In this policy particular mention is made of the landscape quality, noting that ''… l*ong views over the patchwork quilt of fields, farms and villages in the Vale are an essential part of the landscape quality of the district. Seen from the Ridgeway, Uffington Castle or Folly Hill the open views of the lowland vale have retained their integrity".*

Questionnaire responses show that villagers value this historic landscape and we value our role as custodians of this environment which we share with a large number of visitors to the parishes. These visitors bring valuable business to the villages - pubs, shop, horse livery, camp-site, farmer's market and tea room etc. (See also following section on Leisure).

The most frequently given reason respondents gave for coming to live in the villages is the country way of life. The rural environment and peace and quiet is often mentioned in comments. Leisure and environment is one of the top 3 things respondents like about our villages.

Within the villages themselves, it is the street-scape and more intimate views which provide the attraction. It is important to bear in mind that large parts of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking are designated as conservation areas (see maps) and there are listed buildings in all three villages (Uffington has 33, Woolstone 12, Baulking 12); most are Grade 2, but there are two of Grade 1 status, the churches of St Mary and St Nicholas in Uffington and Baulking respectively. Respondents value the conservation areas (see section 5, Housing & Character) and we consider any building within them needs to be managed with particular care. See Action 5.2.

Climate change is an important issue for people in our villages and 90% of respondents would like to support carbon capture through the planting of more trees in the parishes. Views on the location are varied. More than half suggested the Jubilee Field, but there was also strong support for the allotments (38%) and the community garden (42%) and also private land. Trees natural to our environment were recommended.

ACTION 4.1: PC/PMs to initiate a tree planting scheme which could include a funding mechanism for planting on private land, specifically considering the Jubilee Field, but also including other areas.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) think that no further street lighting is necessary in the villages. The remaining 35% suggested a number of locations for low level lighting, the two most popular being around the Uffington village hall and shop and along the footpath from the High Street to the hall.

The possibility of substantial additional housing was seen by most respondents as likely significantly to spoil the environment, not only directly but through secondary impacts such as traffic, flooding and pressure on village infrastructure. Most of these issues are dealt with elsewhere in this report. Flooding is already a great concern for responders with over 80% often having encountered floods across roads and no less than 17% having experienced flooding of their property. A surprisingly high number (34%) of respondents said they were personally responsible for some maintenance of streams and the great majority of those felt able to do this without help. 13% would like some help. It is encouraging to see almost 25% of respondents put themselves forward to be part of a standing Village Flood and Field work group, willing to help out with Jubilee Field tidying, ditch clearing etc.

Setting aside new building, the current threat from flooding should be addressed.

ACTION 4.2: PC/PMs to initiate analysis and action plan (with experts) of what further improvements to the ditches and streams can be achieved and what advice given to householders in particular locations.

LEISURE

This section presents features of the CLP relating to leisure. It covers leisure activities of villagers as well as visitors. As we said in the previous section on the environment, the villages are host to large numbers of visitors. Visitors are particularly valuable as they bring in business. We note that over 150,000 visits are made to the White Horse Hill each year, an increasing number of campers use the Britchcombe site and numerous cyclists, horse riders and walkers use our roads and paths.

Our footpaths, most of which were legally established in the 18th century, are highly valued by respondents. 77% use them regularly. 85% approve the idea of creating new loop walks. However most respondents (73%) are satisfied with the number of pavements, if not their condition. It was suggested that cutting back hedges alongside pavements and footpaths would be helpful and stiles should be better maintained. There was also a proposal to make crossing the Jubilee field from Patricks Orchard to the new shop easier in wet weather ('stepping stones' were suggested.) Maps of footpaths would be helpful to visitors.

Dog fouling was not a problem for 68% of respondents but the remainder cited locations where they did come across the problem.

Among responding households 60% use a bicycle in the villages although few saw the need for designated cycle routes. 11% of households included a horse rider and almost half respondents felt additional warning signs at the entrance to villages would help to keep riders safe from traffic. For the same reason there was a suggestion for more bridleways. We consider it most important that the popular leisure activities of walking, cycling and horse riding are not threatened by the growing traffic in and around the villages; (for actions on 'traffic' see section 6).

ACTION 4.3: PC/PMs to initiate action to create new loop walks and bridleways around the parish, specifically considering working with local land owners and government to look at reopening the tow path of the Wilts & Berks Canal, and to arrange for maps of footpaths to be more accessible.

Uffington is lucky to have a high quality sports field with well-maintained football, cricket and tennis facilities. Around 30% of responding households had club members while among the responding households there were 58 young people who participated in some sports within the villages. The play area next to the shop is well supported although a number of suggestions for improvements were offered.

ACTION 4.4: PC to consider suggested changes and additions to play area, focussing specifically on provision of more adventurous equipment for older children, ensuring a robust maintenance plan is in place, and also to consider provision of football goals at the Jubilee Field.

There are a large number of other well supported groups within the villages which focus on other leisure activities ranging from Amateur dramatics to the Gardening club. Four respondents offered to organise various classes for adults.

Respondents were asked what they believe attracted visitors to the three parishes. As well as the White Horse Hill and its historic features and views, the attractiveness of the villages themselves were cited, particularly the older parts at the heart of the conservation areas. Many respondents thought visitors would like more places to stay and more places to eat. 43% said public toilets would be helpful.

ACTION 4.5: PC and /or Village Hall committee to consider opening toilets to the public.

5. HOUSING & CHARACTER

Section 4 above describes the broader environment of the three villages and their landscapes, including listed buildings and conservation areas. This environment naturally forms the backdrop to many housing considerations.

Conservation area status reflects the local council's (VWHDC) commitment to preserving and, if possible, enhancing the character and appearance of these rural villages, whose historical ambience and environmental quality make an important contribution to the Vale of White Horse, showing varied types and ages of development. The character and appearance of these conservation areas are particularly vulnerable to the impact of development. Where unsuitable development is visible from public roads and footpaths, it damages the visual amenity of the conservation areas and seriously detracts from the setting of listed buildings. The effect of conservation area status and the presence of listed buildings have to be taken into account in discussing the Housing and Character of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking. See Action 5.2.

Of the 169 comments made in response to the question (Q5) on what are the main issues facing (your) village, 139 (over 82%) relate to housing and possible future development. In the view of respondents from all three villages, this is the most important question about the future of their village. Responses indicate that any development needs to be properly planned and managed.

In more detail the following consequences associated with additional housing are quoted as the principal concerns:-

Increased traffic and parking (79%) - strain on existing facilities (e.g. school) (77%) - flooding and drainage (77%) - poor design that may spoil the character of the villages (75%) - impact on environment and landscape (68%).

So a very large proportion of respondents are concerned about future expansion of their village, particularly as regards the sustainability of existing resources and the impact on the historic landscape.

In the event of future development (and noting the potential for a Neighbourhood Plan) there are variations on the preferred options for the siting of new houses. 47% prefer infill between existing houses; 33% believe that new houses should be outside the conservation areas (particularly the Uffington Conservation Area). 23% prefer greenfield sites bordering the villages, and 21% believe new housing should be in large gardens. 13% would prefer greenfield sites within the villages.

There are a number of opinions on how this should be managed. 60% believe in small scale infill; 51% would prefer multiple smaller developments of 1-5 houses, and 12% would prefer larger single developments of 20 or more houses. 12% are of the opinion that their village should resist any development and have no new housing. This is consistent with the analysis in the previous paragraph. Accepting that some development is possible, the majority of respondents would prefer this to be in small packets around the villages. A much smaller minority are in favour of larger scale developments and the same proportion of respondents (12%) would resist all development.

Should there be some development, the preferred types of new housing to be provided are:-

49% would like to see sheltered housing for the elderly; 48% would like to see affordable housing for rent / shared ownership; 47% prefer houses with 1 /2 bedrooms and 43% want houses with 3 or more bedrooms.

Opinions are therefore more or less evenly divided on the size of homes to be provided. The next two questions are closely related. A large majority (79%) would support a small development of affordable homes for people with a local connection to the village; 21% were opposed to this. Similarly, 47% are in favour of future developments including up to 40% (or the local policy minimum) of affordable houses.

A combination of responses to questions about maintaining the integrity of the landscape from White Horse Hill to the south of the villages show that 89% of respondents are strongly opposed to development in this area. 60% think that no further development should be accepted to the south of Uffington or Woolstone. Put slightly differently, 29% think development only as far as the current southern extremity of Uffington is acceptable.

Thus, continuation of the current, historic (sometimes described as “iconic”) landscape between the villages and White Horse Hill is thought to be extremely important by a very large majority of respondents.

In the event of new housing being approved, residents’ preferences for new facilities, should they become available, are:-

facilities for young people (52%) - green space (39%) - leisure / sports facilities (34%).

We note that of course new housing will actually destroy green spaces. But we also note that within a Neighbourhood Plan, Local Green Space allocations can be made.

Getting into more detail on the design of any future housing permitted in the villages, a very large majority (90%) were in favour of utilisation of local materials similar to those used on other houses in the village – i.e. a mix of chalk stone, red brick and timber cladding. 5% think that modern building techniques should be favoured over maintaining character, and to 5% this was not an important issue.

Opinions are more evenly divided on the importance of the density or spacing of any housing permitted in the villages. 46% think that any developments should be of similar density to other recent developments such as Waylands, Craven Common and Patricks Orchard – this is less than modern building techniques would deliver and may mean that additional sites would need to be identified. 37% think that the density of any developments should be no higher than the average for the historic areas of the villages, including the conservation area in Uffington – making it highly probable that more sites would need to be identified. However, 20% think that any development should maximise the number of houses on identified sites to make best use of the space available and minimise the number of sites to be identified.

This is important as it shows that the majority of respondents would prefer to see a lower density (on two scales, above) for future housing than is the norm today, and therefore accept that more sites may need to be identified for a given number of houses.

Over 90% of respondents believe it important to maintain the three current conservation areas with 52% saying that these conservation areas should be reviewed to include other historic properties within the villages. See Action 5.2.

A high proportion (74%) thinks it is important for local businesses to be afforded the opportunity to use business premises within the villages; 26% are not concerned about this. Possibly contradicting this response, an overwhelming majority (93%) think it is important to maintain the villages as residential settings.

There are a number of views as to whether a small amount of development to provide industrial premises should be permitted,

and where these might be located, as follows: 48% thought that the provision of industrial premises was not important, and would damage the residential setting of the villages. 22% thought that this was important and should utilise land outside the three conservation areas. 11% thought this was important and should utilise green field sites bordering the villages.

A very small number of respondents (1% in both cases) are of the opinion that industrial premises should be provided in large gardens or green field sites within the villages; these views may be discounted. The majority view is clearly that industrial premises should not be provided within the villages.

What the above findings fail to address is that there is already a small business park in existence close to the railway bridge on the Baulking – Fernham road. This happens to be in the parish of Baulking but it is close to Uffington and Baulking and provides a site for further business premises, in easy reach of the residents of both villages, to improve employment prospects. Greater usage of this existing location would satisfy all three of the above findings.

ACTION 5.1 PC/PMs to encourage new business operations at the station site, pressing the appropriate authorities accordingly, and to investigate how the parishes could create better facilities for local businesses. (This action might be subsumed within the Neighbourhood Plan – see Action 5.2 below).

It is apparent from the above and particularly the 169 responses to Q5 (which asked for comment on the main issues facing the villages), that, as in many communities, housing is the most important issue for residents of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking. The Community Led Plan questionnaire gives a useful picture of people's fears and preferences regarding new housing. It carries relatively little weight in law, although it could be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications where the material issues can be supported by evidence. However, if the values and opinions expressed in the CLP become enshrined in a Neighbourhood Plan, which is a legal document, they can then be used in a more formal way to help determine planning policy for the three villages. The great majority of respondents to the questionnaire support progression to a Neighbourhood Plan. As this has already received agreement in principle from Uffington Parish Council and the Parish Meetings of Baulking and Woolstone, work should now go ahead on this as quickly as possible.

ACTION 5.2 PC/PMs to initiate a Neighbourhood plan to address future housing development in the three villages; to consider the Local Plan and Conservation Area policies as well as design guidance to determine what additional local policies are needed on the location, size and appearance of new buildings and extensions within Conservation Areas giving attention to the impact on the character of the villages; to review the current Conservation Areas to ensure that all appropriate areas and buildings are included and that there is an up-to-date appraisal supporting each conservation area; the Neighbourhood Plan also to include other appropriate themes such as infrastructure, transport, economy, heritage, green spaces etc.

Our three villages currently lack mains gas and most homes use oil or Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as their principal fuel source. Piping gas to houses in the villages would be an expensive exercise and views on having mains gas are divided. A majority of householders (53%) are content to stay with existing arrangements. However around 10% would be interested in having gas at present prices, and a further third would like it if the price were lower or they qualified for a fuel poverty grant.

6. ROADS AND TRAFFIC, TRANSPORT

There is a strong consensus (84%) among respondents that roads and transport is the thing that they would most like to change. The majority of the respondents have very similar concerns at the more detailed level.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

The state of the roads in relation to pot holes was a common theme, with all roads approaching Uffington from Woolstone, Baulking and Fawler suffering from extensive potholes. Although the reporting system works well and the holes are regularly patched, it is only a short term solution as they regularly recur. Proper resurfacing, as has been done on part of Claypits Road and along Baulking Green, demonstrate a more satisfactory and longer lasting solution.

ACTION 6.1: PC/PMs to work with local government to address pot hole issues, specifically reviewing the Fawler Road area through Fawler, but also considering all roads in the parishes.

Speeding, within and approaching the villages, was an issue for a high percentage of the respondents. A suggestion (from a number of replies) for a 20 mph speed limit within Uffington village has been made along with traffic calming devices in certain areas of the village. The road by the Uffington School and the Church came in for particular mention with large vehicles having difficulty with parked cars. A one way route around the village was mentioned as a possible solution.

An approach to the Highways department for a speed reduction along Baulking Lane from the A417 was also mentioned. At present it is set at the national speed limit of 60mph, whereas the A417 and the A420 are 50mph for much of their length in the locality.

ACTION 6.2: PC/PMs to consider speed restriction on all roads within the parishes, specifically considering 20mph zones and speed chicanes as preventative measures.

TRANSPORT

The great majority of the respondents (99%) say that they travel either by car or van. This is for both work and pleasure. Very few people make use of the public bus and fewer still are using the community bus. The main reasons given in the comments for not using the public bus were that it did not go where people wanted to go and did not go at times that were acceptable or practical.

It was commented that for the bus services to be of use in this rural community buses need to leave and return at times that were practicable for people to get to work, i.e. leaving around 06.30 and returning around 18.30.

Buses to Didcot station for commuting to either London, Reading or to Swindon were put forward as a possible solution. The frequency of the present two local bus services, the daily 67 bus to Faringdon/ Wantage and the X47 Saturday bus to Swindon are said to be useless as a means of commuting, or for much else. Consequently the services are underutilised, thereby being at risk of being cut. A much more regular service connecting to Shrivenham/Watchfield would give a link to the frequent buses to Oxford and Swindon.

The reopening of Wantage Road Rail Station would be a great benefit to many residents who work away from Uffington. A request stop at Uffington Station also was mentioned as being useful.

ACTION 6.3: PC/PMs to work with local government and bus companies to improve both frequency and range of destinations that services cover, specifically considering Oxford as a destination and provision of evening services. Longer term PC/PMs to undertake an analysis of potential transport needs of residents over the next 15 years and explore communal solutions to fulfilling these needs.

7. EDUCATION

At the present there are approximately 120 pupils (including pre-school) attending Uffington C of E Primary School. Some of these pupils are drawn from outside the catchment area. 96% of those people who responded to the questionnaire thought that it was important that all the children from Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking should be able to attend the school if they wished.

There was concern that places were not limited to children living in the catchment area so that some younger siblings did not have a guaranteed place at the school.

The results of the questionnaire show that there are concerns about the future of the school. These are mainly as a result of the recent planning applications which would obviously increase the need for more places. More places could be created by extending the school and by adding classrooms.

Parking in the area of the school is a problem as there is very limited on-site parking and it is located on a narrow stretch of Broad Street, close to a sharp bend, (see section 6).

The school has a useful means of communication with its weekly email, outside notice board and school website.

About 58% of respondents attend one or more of the fundraising events run by the P.T.A. This provides significant funds to support the school by buying equipment etc. 22% of respondents felt they had skills and interests that could be useful and that they were willing to share with the school.

It is obvious that the school in its historic setting is highly valued by the residents of all the villages. They would like its future to be assured, since it plays an important role in village life and is the reason that many people choose to live here.

ACTION 7.1: PC/PMs to work with school governors to make a phased plan for addressing the parking issues and extending the school so that it can take more children when necessary due to planned future development.

8. PUBS, SHOP AND POST OFFICE

PUBS

The response from Uffington and Baulking residents were made in relation to the Fox and Hounds and those from Woolstone residents regarding pubs were made in relation to the White Horse Inn.

The majority of respondents (56%) felt that it was 'very important' to have a pub in their village; and another 31% felt it was 'quite important'. Given this level of support, actual usage recorded by respondents is relatively modest. 15% attend at least once a week, 36% once or twice a month, and 49% attend rarely or never.

The most important aspects of the pub were recorded by 77% as the welcome and ambiance and a range of freshly cooked food. 48% saw a range of beers & real ale as important and 42% wanted a beer garden. 34% rated the bar service as important.

To encourage more visits, the following changes were suggested: cheaper food & drink (49%), a regular quiz night (29%) and a loyalty scheme for locals (Fox & Hounds) (27%).

ACTION 8.1 CLP to pass responses (tick boxes and comments) to the pubs.

SHOP AND POST OFFICE

66% of respondents visited the shop at least twice a week, while the remainder visited once a week or less often. The most likely purchases made by respondents were bread or milk (80%), newspapers/ magazines (63%), last minute cooking ingredients (62%), sweets/biscuits (29%) and prescription collection (29%).
The most popular improvements proposed for the shop are bakery (77%), click & collect service for parcels (56%), sewing/ mending service (43%) and Cafe/hot drinks service (36%). A number of suggestions for improving the shop were also made in comments.
A majority of respondents would support the Parish Council spending more on benches & picnic tables around the shop or village playground.

ACTION 8.2 CLP to pass responses (tick boxes and comments) to the shop.

9. VILLAGE HALL, MUSEUM & CHURCH

THOMAS HUGHES MEMORIAL HALL

The Uffington Village Hall has been used by 54% of respondents with 77% of those who have not used the Hall saying that they have no use or need for it. Based on limited responses there is a view that the THMH is worthy of Uffington. It is worth noting that there was support for new activities which could take place in the THMH (eg Film Society/Club, Pilates) but these would require somebody to organise them. Sadly 95% of respondents were not interested in joining the Management Committee.

ACTION 9.1: Advise the THMH Management Committee of the responses and, as with other community activities, try to identify new initiatives and people to run them.

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL MUSEUM

It is clear that most respondents think that the Museum is an important part of the village (96%) and have visited (80%). There was support for more activities and events and for better communication about events and opening hours. One comment asked for refreshments to be on sale, for lavatories and disabled access but these would be difficult to provide.

ACTION 9.2: Advise the Museum curator of these observation.

CHURCH

There are four Church of England parishes in the Benefice of Uffington – St Mary's in Uffington, St Nicholas in Baulking , All Saints in Woolstone and St Faith's in Shellingford, the latter being outside the area covered by the CLP. There is also a Strict Baptist Chapel in Uffington. (Note that it was not possible to distinguish between responses from different parishes)

Questionnaire replies indicate that respondents see the Church buildings as historic monuments (86%) and providing focal points within the communities they serve (65%). Similar percentages value the Churches as places of worship (43%), for quiet contemplation (49%) and for the bells (47%). Baptisms, weddings and funerals were also valued by between 41% and 53%. The Churches were valued for the link to Uffington Church of England Primary School (39%), as venues for concerts and plays (42%) and teas in the summer (24%).

Interestingly 66% of respondents were satisfied with the current forms of worship although 34 respondents asked for multi faith services/gatherings as well as some individuals suggesting more obscure practices. There was some support for more Benefice services and for creative ideas which would attract young families.

ACTION 9.3: The churches to consider multi-faith services and wider diversity in use of the churches to better encourage congregation membership.

Overall the Questionnaire confirms that the Churches have a special place at the heart of our communities but this is not borne out by attendance except on special occasions, nor is it easy to find volunteers to help run the Churches.

ACTION 9.4: Advise the PCC of results. (Note that by the time this Report is circulated a new Vicar will have taken up his post. His arrival will undoubtedly prompt a review of the pattern of services within the Benefice).

MESSY CHURCH

7% of respondents said that their young children attended Messy Church which is run in the THMH. Perhaps significantly 2 out of 11 respondents expressed a preference for any day other than Friday.

ACTION 9.4: Advise Messy Church organiser of the responses.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Respondents appear to make good use of the communication channels available locally. 81% said that they read “What’s on in and around Faringdon” (yellow paper) and 76% read The Courier. Uffington village shop noticeboard and notice boards / posters on telegraph poles are also well utilised, scoring 71% and 63% respectively. It should be noted that there were several comments pressing for the village shop noticeboard to be relocated to a more convenient place.

The village websites **www.uffington.net** and **www.woolstonevillage.co.uk** were not seen as such useful sources of information, scoring 30% and 3% respectively.

56% of respondents would like to be on a residents email distribution list, but 44% would not. When asked if there is a need for better communication in the parish, 52% said no, with 48% answering yes. See Action 3.1

‘Better Broadband for Oxfordshire’ is a £25m project to bring fibre broadband to over 90 per cent of homes and businesses in the county by the end of 2015 (minimum speed 24MB/s). The Uffington exchange is in the plan and, according to the betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk website, planning and survey work is currently underway. Residents can register online for updates, but registrations will not affect the order of the upgrades.

20% of respondents feel that the current broadband provision is too poor to meet their needs. Nevertheless, broadband is successfully used by many in the parish for domestic purposes including home shopping, education and information, work and leisure.

Respondents said that they do suffer from landline telephone disruption to services, but on the whole disturbances were reported as rare (77%). Villagers are less happy with the mobile phone coverage that they receive in their homes: a total of 58% answered that it is fairly poor or very poor.

ACTION 10.1 PC/PMs to liaise with BT Open Reach and local government to drive through as soon as possible the broadband improvements expected and to seek improvements in mobile phone reception by liaison with mobile phone providers.

11. EMPLOYMENT

The majority of respondents aged 18+ are either working, full or part time, or retired. Of those who work, responses show a fairly even split between those who work at home; very locally (Faringdon or Wantage); locally (Swindon / Oxford / Witney / Abingdon etc.) or travel further afield, for example to London or Reading.

When asked what three things would help residents to work at home or more locally, there were clear winners. In order of priority, these were: a more reliable mobile phone service; more reliable broadband and faster broadband. (See section 10 above).

Respondents welcomed the idea of creating an Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Business & Services Directory. 95% responded that they would use it and 23% said that they had a business or service to list in it.

ACTION 11.1 PC/PMs to co-ordinate a better and more comprehensive business services directory, stand alone from the current provision through the Courier and the village website.

12. HEALTH & CRIME

Safety in the villages was generally felt to be good with 85% of respondents feeling safe at all times. Only 4 people felt unsafe at home, 8 walking by day and 28 by night. 51 respondents (27%) declared an interest in participating in a Neighbourhood Watch scheme and submitted their names. 33 people (18%) are signed up to Thames Valley Police alert and 32% intend to do so. 50% are not interested.

115 respondents were aware of access to First Responders in the villages via a 999 call whereas 97 were not aware. 15 people volunteered to become first responders and left their names on a separate volunteer sign up sheet.

177 respondents (87%) were aware that prescriptions ordered from the local medical practices could be collected from Uffington Post Office Stores.

ACTION 12.1 PC/PMs to set up a working group to liaise with local NHS to consider how better to provide healthcare support for elderly at home.

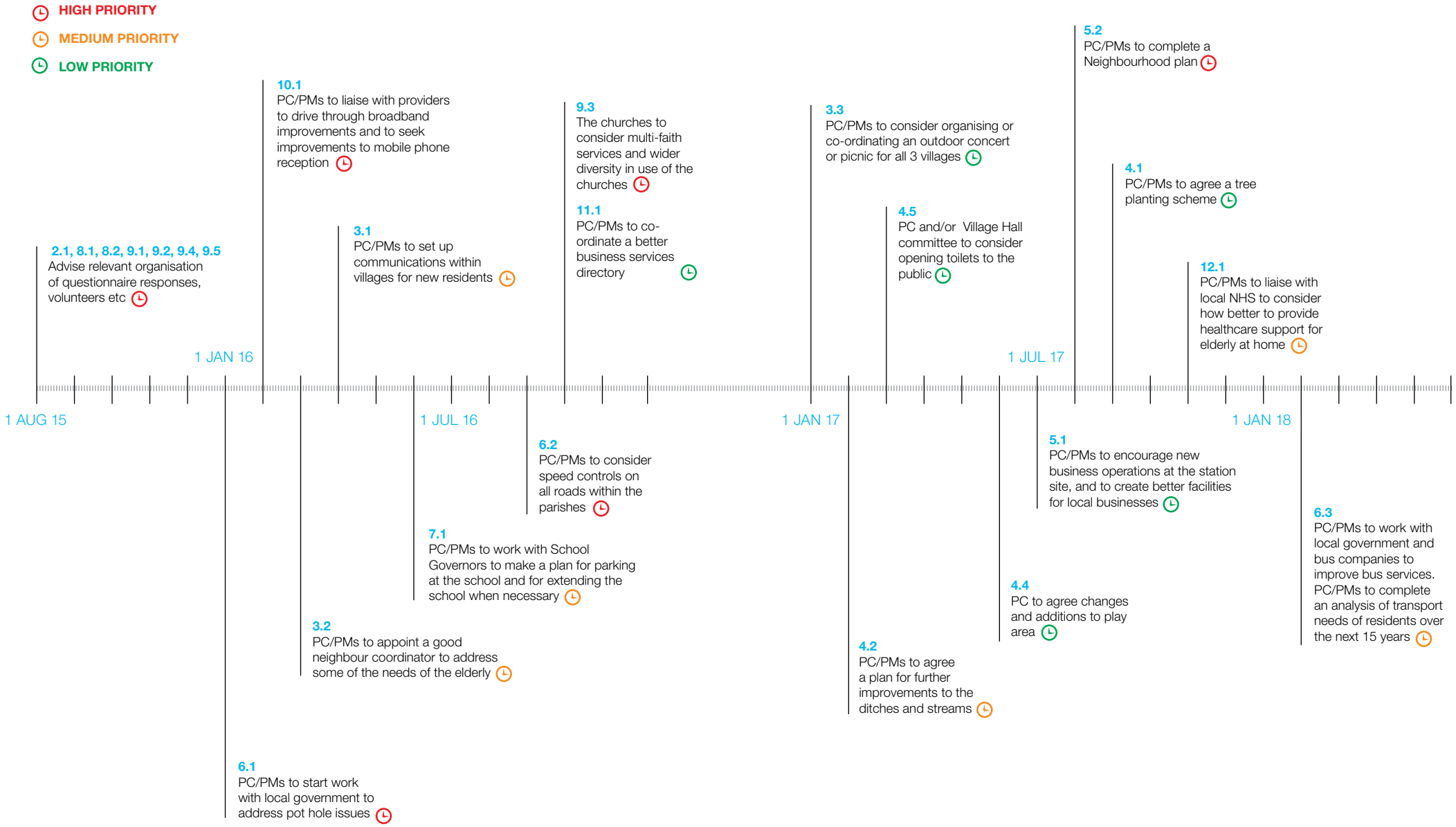
APPENDIX 1A: ACTION PLAN TABLE

The actions formed from the questionnaire analysis are highlighted in the body of the text and summarised in this appendix. The actions have all been assessed for importance based on the degree of majority opinion as per the results, complexity as considered by the CLP Steering Group and cost as estimated by the Steering Group. These scores have all been multiplied to create an overall score to facilitate Parish Council (PC) and Parish Meeting (PM) prioritisation (higher score means higher priority). This leads to a clear 14 stage plan, the stages of which do not necessarily have to be managed in series, the tasks largely being discrete and lending themselves to parallel activity.

		IMPORTANCE	COMPLEXITY	COST	OVERALL SCORE	RELATIVE PRIORITY
2.1	Transfer lists of volunteers to the relevant organisation	5	5	5	125	1st
3.1	PC/PMs to address communications within villages for new residents including specific consideration of a welcome pack and to consider how to provide better 'what's on' updates to residents, using email and improvements to the village websites as preferred media.	5	3	3	45	6th
3.2	PC/PMs to appoint a good neighbour coordinator to liaise with the Oxfordshire Community Information Network and to address some of the needs of the elderly.	2	2	5	20	10th
3.3	PC/PMs to consider organising or co-ordinating an outdoor concert or village picnic for all 3 villages	2	2	2	6	13th
4.1	PC/PMs to initiate a tree planting scheme which could include a funding mechanism for planting on private land, specifically considering the Jubilee Field, but also including other areas.	2	3	2	12	12th
4.2	PC/PMs to initiate analysis and action plan (with experts) of what further improvements to the ditches and streams can be achieved and what advice given to householders in particular locations.	5	2	2	20	10th
4.3	PC/PMs to initiate action to create new loop walks and bridleways around the parish, specifically considering working with local land owners and government to look at reopening the tow path of the Wilts & Berks Canal, and to arrange for maps of footpaths to be more accessible.	3	3	5	45	6th
4.4	PC to consider suggested changes and additions to play area focussing specifically on provision of more adventurous equipment for older children, ensuring a robust maintenance plan is in place. Also to consider provision of football goals at the Jubilee Field.	4	3	1	12	12th
4.5	PC and /or Village Hall committee to consider opening toilets to the public.	1	2	1	2	14th
5.1	PC/PMs to encourage new business operations at the station site, pressing the appropriate authorities accordingly, and to investigate how the parishes could create better facilities for local businesses.	2	2	2	6	13th
5.2	PC/PMs to initiate a Neighbourhood plan to address future housing development in the three villages; to consider the Local Plan and Conservation Area policies as well as design guidance to determine what additional local policies are needed on the location, size and appearance of new buildings and extensions within Conservation Areas giving attention to the impact on the character of the villages; to review the current Conservation Areas to ensure that all appropriate areas and buildings are included and that there is an up-to-date appraisal supporting each conservation area; the Neighbourhood Plan also to include other appropriate themes such as infrastructure, transport, economy, heritage, green spaces etc.	5	3	5**	75	2nd
6.1	PC/PMs to work with local government to address pot hole issues, specifically reviewing the Fawler Road area through Fawler, but also considering all roads in the parishes.	4	4	4	64	3rd
6.2	PC/PMs to consider speed restriction on all roads within the parishes, specifically considering 20mph zones and speed chicanes as preventative measures.	4	4	3	48	5th
6.3	PC/PMs to work with local government and bus companies to improve both frequency and range of destinations that services cover, specifically considering Oxford as a destination and provision of evening services. Longer term PC/PMs to undertake an analysis of potential transport needs of residents over the next 15 years and explore communal solutions to fulfilling these needs.	5	2	4	40	7th
7.1	PC/PMs to work with school governors to make a phased plan for addressing the parking issues and extending the school so that it can take more children when necessary due to planned future development.	4	2	4	32	8th
8.1	CLP to pass responses (tick boxes and comments) to the pubs.	5	5	5	125	1st
8.2	CLP to pass responses (tick boxes and comments) to the shop.	5	5	5	125	1st
9.1	Advise the THMH Management Committee of the responses and, as with other community activities, try to identify new initiatives and people to run them.	5	5	5	125	1st
9.2	Advise the Museum curator of these observations	5	5	5	125	1st
9.3	The churches to consider multi-faith services and wider diversity in use of the churches to better encourage congregation membership	2	5	5	50	4th
9.4	Advise the PCC of results. (Note that by the time this Report is circulated a new Vicar will have taken up his post. His arrival will undoubtedly prompt a review of the pattern of services within the Benefice.)	5	5	5	125	1st
9.5	Advise Messy Church organiser of the responses.	5	5	5	125	1st
10.1	PC/PMs to liaise with BT Open Reach and local government to drive through as soon as possible the broadband improvements expected and to seek improvements in mobile phone reception by liaison with mobile phone providers	5	2	5	50	4th
11.1	PC/PMs to co-ordinate a better and more comprehensive business services directory, stand alone from the current provision through the Courier and the village website	2	3	3	18	11th
12.1	PC/PMs to set up a working group to liaise with local NHS to consider how better to provide healthcare support for elderly at home	3	2	4	24	9th

APPENDIX 1B: ACTION PLAN TIMELINE

This diagram indicates the target date for each action based on the Steering Group's analysis of responses to the CLP questionnaire. These dates may have to change in the light of new factors and particularly the response of local government and others. The Parish Council will report on progress from time to time.



APPENDIX 2:
CLP GROUP & CONTRIBUTORS

The members of the Steering Group which prepared this report for approval by the Uffington Parish Council and the Parish Meetings of Woolstone and Baulking were: Robert Hart (chair), Michael Lord (treasurer), Anthony Parsons (secretary), Ray Avenall, Anna Bendall, Pam Coulson, Hilary Deakin, Simon Jenkins, Mike Oldnall, Maxine Parsons, Jude Reynolds, Tory Russ, and Mike Thomas.

We are very grateful to others who helped in the earlier stages: Natasha Camplin, Evelyne Godfrey, Trudy Hansen, John Haxworth, Janet Kirk, Clive Shanley and Mary Wiltshire. We also thank others who helped from time to time and particularly those who assisted in distributing and collecting the questionnaires. And of course we thank all those residents who took the trouble to complete the questionnaires across the three parishes – without their conscientious efforts no worthwhile conclusions could have been reached.

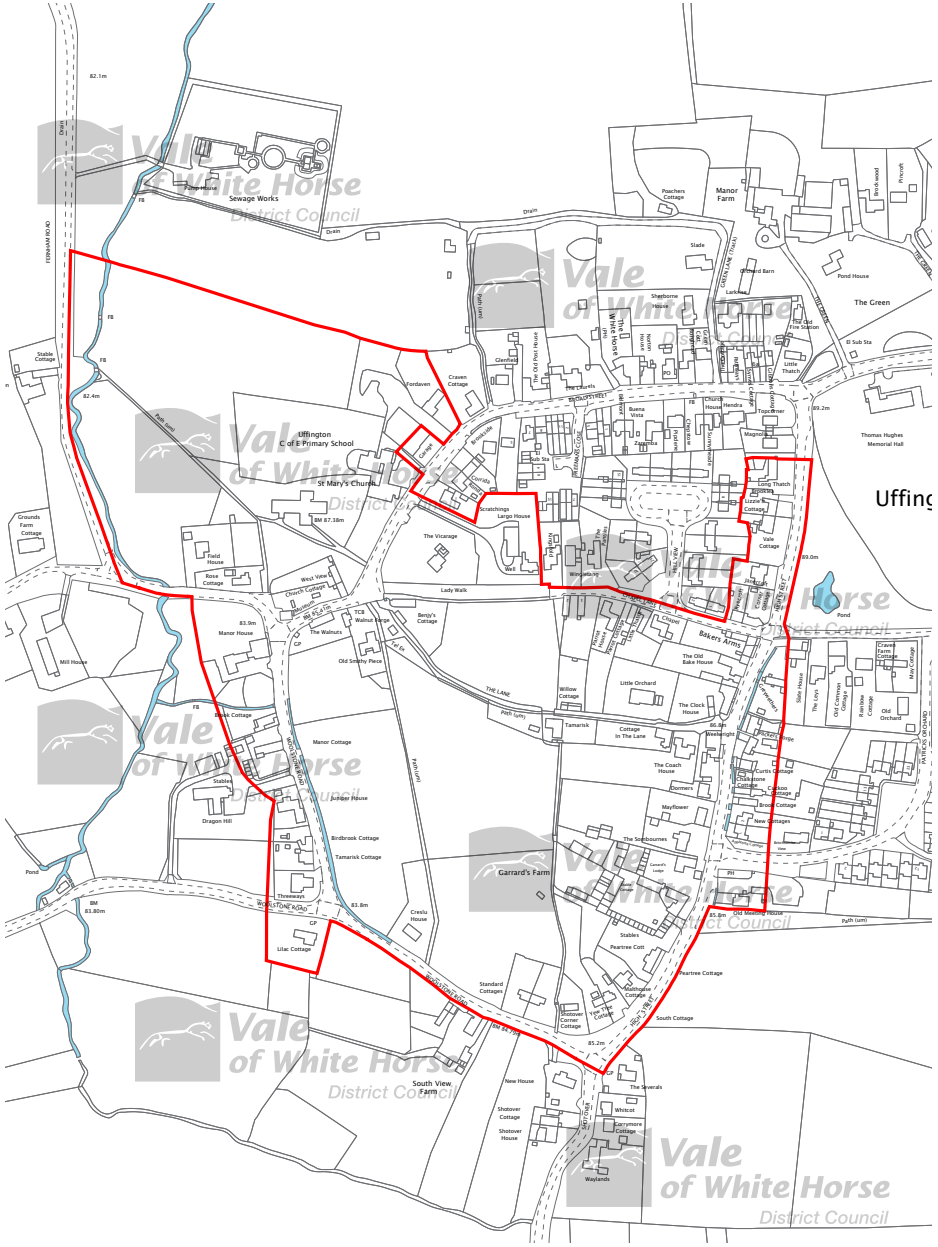
We were helped at various stages with valuable advice and analysis from colleagues from our local councils: particularly Andreea Anastasiu (OCC), Fiona Mullins (ORCC), Anne Richardson (VWHDC)

We are grateful to Mike Oldnall and Muriel Lindo for the use of their photographs and to Google for the satellite view.

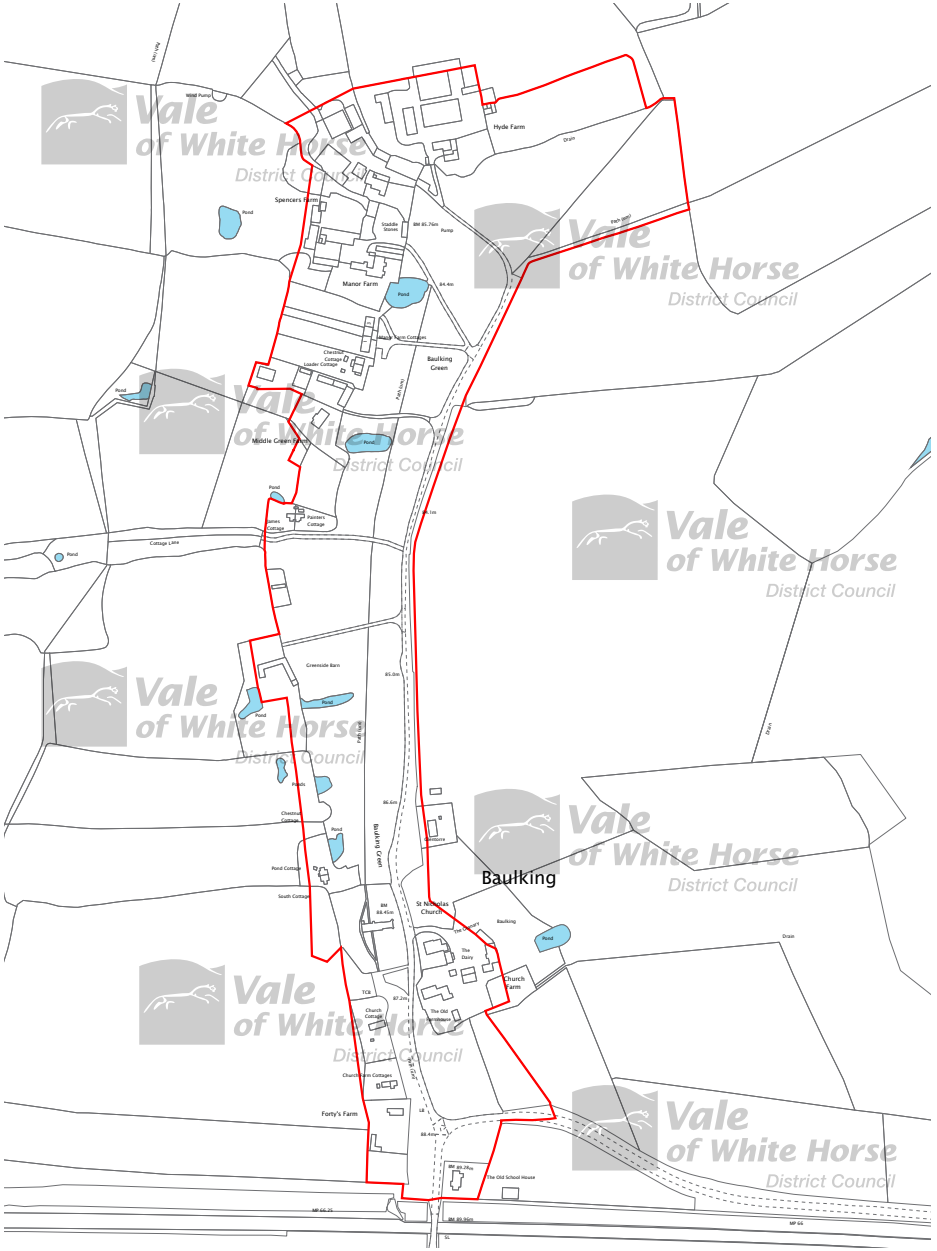
Funding for this project was generously provided by Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, Uffington Parish Council and the Trustees of the White Horse Show Trust.

MAPS: CONSERVATION AREAS

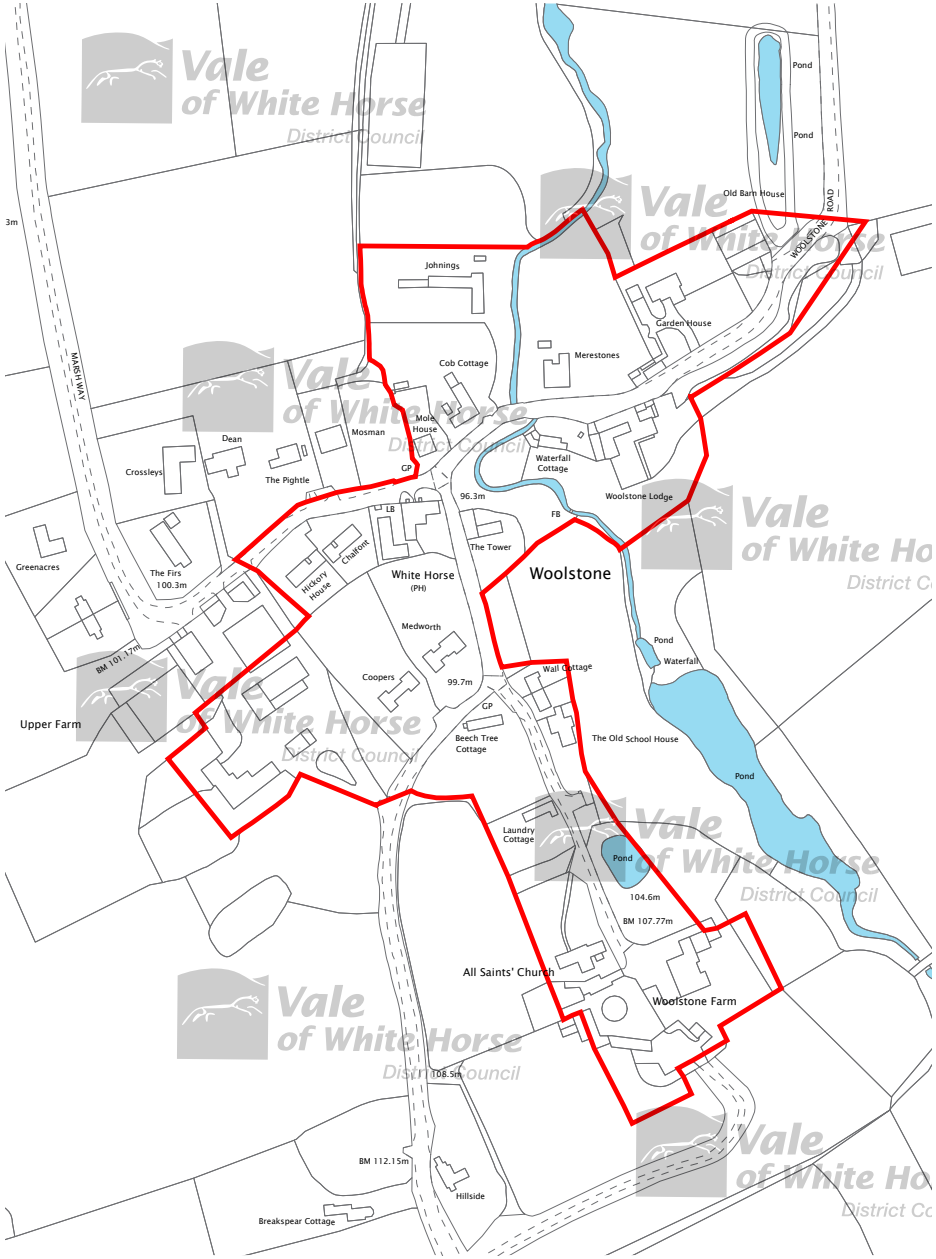
UFFINGTON CONSERVATION AREA



BAULKING CONSERVATION AREA



WOOLSTONE CONSERVATION AREA



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