

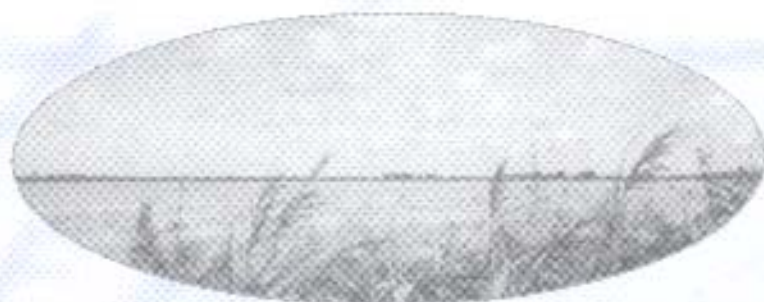


Fencott & Murcott Parish Plan

Vision 2003 - 2005

*Responding to community concerns
and resident needs*

**Fencott and Murcott
Parish Community
Planning Partnership**



CONTENTS

Foreword

1. The Parish Plan – a brief explanation
2. Fencott and Murcott – a parish in the process of change
3. How the Parish Plan was developed
4. How the Parish Plan will be put into action and results measured
5. Quality Parish status and the role of the Parish Planning Community Partnership
6. Our Vision
7. Our concerns and needs summarised into ten themes



Foreword

This Parish Plan has been prepared by the Parish Council for residents of Fencott and Murcott. The aim is to share with residents our three year plan for the community's future. It is a vision of how we can make improvements to key aspects of village life, based on the expressed needs and suggestions of community residents. However, the Plan is by no means a 'finished plan'. It is intended to be a flexible working document that will be amended and added to as proposals are put into action.

Over the last ten months the Parish Council has been meeting with community residents, community groups, and various organisations in order to recognise how people would like to see Fencott and Murcott develop in the years ahead. The challenge has been to listen carefully and record what residents have told us, then to bring together the many different initiatives so that we could set common aims and actions that will move us towards delivering the Plan. We have been particularly aware that within our parish we have a diverse community. Different age groups, different lifestyles, and different occupations, all with differing needs have a part to play in bringing this Plan to fruition.

We hope the Plan will meet your aspirations for the future of Fencott and Murcott. The responsibility for transforming it from plan to reality lies fairly and squarely with the Parish Council but it is a community project so community involvement is vital.



The Parish Plan – a brief explanation

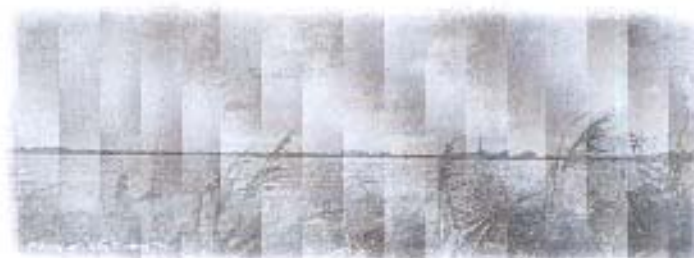
The Parish Plan for Fencott and Murcott is a distillation of the many views and ideas that residents have expressed when talking to Parish councillors and others over the last ten months. It reveals what the community feels is special about our parish; what features and facilities need to be preserved; and how development can be introduced without spoiling any of the things which we value. In other words it is a strategic vision for Fencott and Murcott covering the period from today until 2005.

As previously stated the plan is bound to change once it begins to be put into action. To do its job it has to be responsive to community needs but in addition it will be influenced by pressures from national and local government.

Other Community Plans

The Parish Plan adopts the same style and format used in the production of a number of Community Plans/Strategies based on the District areas in Oxfordshire. It links the delivery of the community's wishes with the broader District and County projects or initiatives such as those detailed in the new Cherwell Community Plan 2016 and Oxfordshire Plan 2002 - 2007.

These links have been clearly identified where they occur and will enable the Parish Council and supporting partners to work together effectively with other local government schemes.



Fencott and Murcott – a parish in the process of change

The parish of Fencott and Murcott has a total area of 3333 acres and is one of seven parishes within the Otmoor Ward. It is served by two councils; Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council and includes most of Otmoor, the RSPB reserve, English Nature, SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), and MOD boundaries. Much of the land is farmed by local farmers.

In recent years there has been a significant change in the Parish as it moves from a largely agricultural community to one housing a growing number of people who commute to their work outside the immediate area. The main attraction for these new residents is the distinctive character of the local countryside and its environmental quality. Approximately 250 people live in the two villages, although there are one or two outlying farmsteads.

However, although the population has increased in recent years the available facilities and services have decreased to the point of extinction. There are no shops, no post office, and no regular bus service.

This situation highlights one the biggest challenges for the Parish Plan, which is to introduce a sustainable level of facilities and services without spoiling existing attractions and benefits.



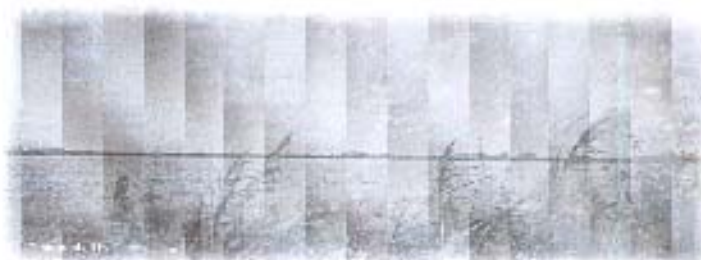
How the Parish Plan was developed

In July 2002 the Parish Council resolved to produce a Parish Plan and registered its intent to undertake this project with the Countryside Agency. Parish Plans are part of the "vital villages" scheme being run by the Countryside Agency. Vital Villages offers a range of grants and advice to help country communities take action on many issues. The aim of the Parish Plan is to identify the action needed to tackle any area of opportunity or concern.

A 'Village Appraisal' was initiated in November 2002. The results of this comprehensive survey were displayed in the Parish Village Hall during March of this year and have helped frame this document.

The Parish Plan 2003 – 2005 has been prepared having considered all the consultation feedback collated through the first half of 2003. The plan has been structured around ten themes, which reflect the top ten priorities that emerged from the Village Appraisal. Copies of the Plan will be distributed to a broad number of organisations and bodies -the proposed Community Planning Partnership- for their comments and endorsement.

For this Plan to be realistic a number of assumptions were made at the outset. The chief assumption was that the money available to implement the actions would be sought through grants, match funding, fund raising events and the corporate sector. Contributions from the Parish Precept would be within 5 or 10 percent of each grant total where policy permits.



How will the Parish Plan be put into action and results measured?

A major part of the Parish Plan 2003 - 2005 is essentially an *action plan*. It contains aims and actions to be carried out over the 3-year period ending in December 2005. The aims and actions are associated with each of the ten themes from the Village Appraisal and are broken down into the what, who, how, why and where that will be necessary to complete the action. A number of other actions will be necessary that it has not been possible to include in this Plan.

The *Action Plan* with details on each action such as targets and milestones will be published as a separate document and will be displayed on the Parish Notice Boards in both villages.

The role of the Parish Council is to monitor the Plan and to make sure that all actions have been satisfactorily carried out and all problems resolved. The Plan will be discussed at each Parish Council Meeting and any adjustments recorded. The Action Plan will then be amended to reflect the current status and progress will be reported to residents through 'Update', the Fencott and Murcott Parish Council Newsletter. ('Update' is delivered to every household in the parish) and on the parish Notice Boards in both villages.



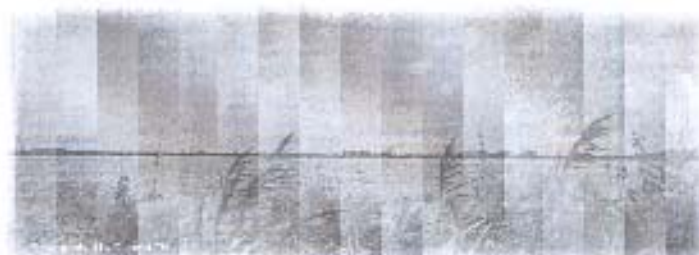
"Quality" Parish Status and the role of the Parish Planning Community Partnership

The Government would like to see an increasing number of "Quality" parish and town councils. In order to be granted "Quality" status a parish or town council has to meet specific criteria. One of the standards is that the parish or town council involves itself closely with community concerns and problems. Another is that they work closely in partnership with principal authorities and others to give their communities a better deal on local services and a stronger voice in the decisions, which affect people's lives. Although, the parish council is not actively seeking accreditation for 'Quality Status' it fully endorses its ethic and this is reflected within the Plan.

Many of the action proposals will require collaboration with and support from a broad range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations both within and outside the community. **The Parish Community Planning Partnership**. They will come together to create a Partnership that will ensure delivery of the vision outlined in this Parish Plan.

The proposed Partners are as follows:

Cherwell District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Fencott and Murcott Parish Council
Charlton-on-Otmoor Parish Council,
Oddington Parish Council
Noke Parish Council
Islip Parish Council
Merton Parish Council
Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council
The Countryside Agency
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Thames Valley Police
Environment Agency



RSPB Reserve
Charlton-Services (bus company)
Charlton -on-Otmoor School
St Mary's Church
Otmoor Group
Fencott and Murcott Village Hall Committee
Fencott and Murcott Gardening Society
Fencott and Murcott Produce Show
Women's Institute
Bury Field Trust
The Nut Tree Inn
Neighborhood Watch and Countryside Watch Officers
Resident volunteers



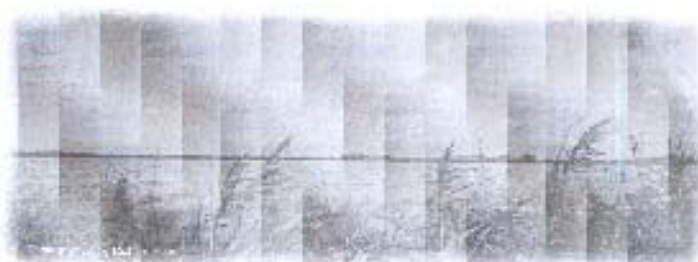
OUR VISION

**Residents and the Parish Planning Community Partnership
united in a common aim to tackle
community concerns and resident needs**

OUR CONCERNS AND NEEDS

SUMMARISED INTO TEN THEMES

- **Shaping the future of the Parish**
- **Protect and enhance the rural character of Fencott and Murcott**
- **Maintain (or lessen) the existing low crime-rate**
- **Support local education needs**
- **Seek ways to meet local transport needs**
- **Improve sport, recreational and social opportunities**
- **Improve road safety**
- **Support schemes to make local business more sustainable**
- **Protect and conserve the environmental character and heritage of Fencott and Murcott**
- **Promote a more open and accessible Parish Council**



1 SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH

Implementation of the plan

The Parish Plan has grown out of the unique circumstances in the parish and Otmoor area and has been produced by the community who live and care for it. The challenge now is to implement, promote and deliver the Plan to shape the future of the Parish.

Action proposals

1.1 Monitoring and review

- 1.1.1 • Allocate actions to the working groups
- 1.1.2 • Have 'Parish Plan Implementation' as a standing item on the parish council agenda
- 1.1.3 • Record progress and issue revised *Action Plan*
- 1.1.4 • Report progress to the community through 'UPDATE' posting revised Action Plan on parish notice boards and potentially new website.

1.2 Promoting the Plan

- 1.2.1 • Actively promote the Plan to local authority, other agencies and private and voluntary sector organisations both within and outside the community – *The Partnership*
- 1.2.2 • Emphasise the relationship specifically with CDC Community Plan 2016 and A Rural Strategy 2002 – 2006

1.3 Attracting potential funders

- 1.3.1 • Working with action groups and other partners formalise the process of grant and other funding applications



2 PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF FENCOTT AND MURCOTT

Residents of Fencott and Murcott care deeply about preserving the existing rural character of the two villages. Although it is recognised that the parish is passing through a period of change residents are anxious that any growth or developments within the parish should enhance rather than spoil the existing environment.

However, the nature of the existing properties in the parish automatically excludes people on relatively low incomes from the area. To overcome this it has been suggested that a supply of housing should be made available in order to attract young couples and retired people to maintain a balanced community.

Action proposals

2.1 Protect the rural setting of the two villages

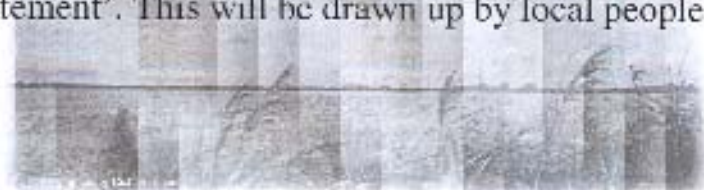
- 2.1.1 • Support the Cherwell Local Plan green belt policies but without seeing them as an impediment to meeting the needs of the parish community and farming diversification.
- 2.1.2 • With the support of 'Planning Aid' (an independent body providing planning advice) seek education and guidance on key / sensitive planning matters and / or proposals.

2.2 Establish a consistent approach to the planning process

- 2.2.1 • Undertake a review of past planning applications.
- 2.2.2 • Consider forming a Planning Committee
- 2.2.3 • Ensure that all councilors are familiar with the function of the District Council as a local planning authority and its relationship with the Parish Council.
- 2.2.4 • Ensure that all councilors are familiar with the Cherwell Local Plan and Oxfordshire Structure Plan (to be quoted where a Parish Council wishes to object to an application).

2.3 Support sensitive development that meets community needs and concerns.

- 2.3.1 • Evaluate the benefits of conducting a 'Village Design Statement'. This will be drawn up by local people to



demonstrate local commitment to high quality design and appropriate development and can be presented to the District Council for consideration to adopt as supplementary planning guidance.

2.4 Examine opportunities for encouraging the development of houses suitable for first-time buyers and the retired.

- 2.4.1 • The aim here is to create a more balanced community. At the same time all proposals for such developments will be subjected to the same assessment as other proposals to ensure that the rural setting is maintained.

2.5 Examine what opportunities exist for re-use of agricultural or other such redundant buildings

- 2.5.1 • When considering community needs such as facilities for sport or recreation any existing unused buildings in the two villages should be assessed for their suitability for re-use if suitably modified. This could also apply to applications for commercial premises.

2.6 Conserve and enhance the existing built heritage

- 2.6.1 • Within the parish we have a wide variety of structures some of which have been designated with 'Listed Building' status. In order to further preserve the built environment consideration will be given to seeking 'Conservation Area Status' for a designated boundary incorporating a number of dwellings which the community believe are an irreplaceable part of the Parish's heritage.
- 2.6.2 • Where appropriate recommend 'developer' contribution – such as new / improved roadside paving or recreation facilities – to be included in the scope of the planning application.



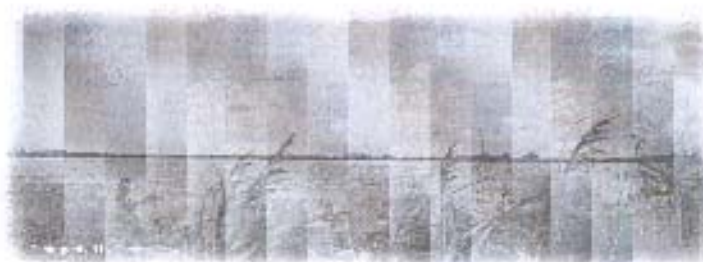
3 MAINTAIN (OR LESSEN) THE EXISTING LOW CRIME RATE

Our concerns and needs relating to crime

Although the parish of Fencott and Murcott has a relatively low crime rate there is concern regarding theft and vandalism – particularly amongst the elder residents. Taking measures to further reduce crime and reassure older people will be high on the Parish Council's agenda.

Action proposals

- 3.1 Introduce a series of self-help measures
 - 3.1.1 • Liaise with Thames Valley Police Community Safety Trust to provide information that will help residents protect their property and increase personal safety.
- 3.2 Support the local Neighborhood and Countryside Watch coordinators
 - 3.2.1 • Actively support the Neighborhood Watch and Countryside Watch initiative and jointly work to plan which problems to target and what action to take.
 - 3.2.2 • Raise the visibility of the scheme by issuing new window / door stickers and placing new signs on the highway.
- 3.3 Establish a working relationship with the local Beat Officer
 - 3.3.1 • Meet with and discuss ways to promote higher visibility for crime prevention and resident reassurance.
- 3.4 Review the proposed CDC rural CCTV scheme.
 - 3.4.1 • Monitor and review the proposed CDC rural CCTV pilot scheme and Consider installing at Murcott Village Hall / Children's Play Area.



4 SUPPORT LOCAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Our educational concerns and needs

To keep up with today's fast-changing world we all need to receive new knowledge or acquire new skills from time to time. In our leisure time too we can gain considerable pleasure from learning more about pastimes and interests. Both these needs were mentioned during the village appraisal and concerns were voiced about community awareness of educational opportunities.

Action proposals

4.1 Support Charlton-on-Otmoor school

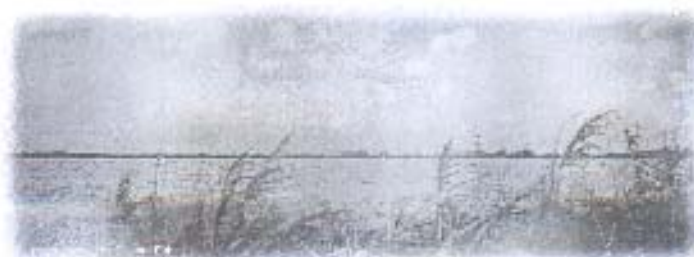
- 4.1.1 • This will be fostered by establishing a working relationship with the headmaster, the school governors and the PTA.

4.2 Promote adult education

- 4.2.1 • Begin by supporting schemes such as the OCC Adult Learning Initiative.

4.3 Create facilities for children and young people to meet and socialise

- 4.3.1 • Examine the possibilities for creating after-school or weekend/holiday activity clubs operating on a voluntary or for-profit basis.



5 SEEK WAYS TO MEET LOCAL TRANSPORT NEEDS

Our concerns and needs relating to local transport

The car is by far the most common way for residents to get around. Some members of households that do own a car may not have access to it or be able to drive it. For example:

- The main wage earner may use the car for most of the day to commute to work;
- Some members of the household, particularly younger or older people, may not hold a driving license;
- Some older people may no longer be able to drive, or may feel unhappy about doing so in busy towns;
- Young people going out may not want to drive, or the car owner may be reluctant to lend it to them.

Those with older children face particular problems transporting them to and from out of school activities and social events.

Action proposals

- 5.1 Undertake detailed research to assess the need for public transport
 - 5.1.1 • Discover which areas have residents most in need of public transport by initiating and / or supporting a local transport needs assessment survey in the community.
- 5.2 Establish a working relationship with OCC Public Transport Department and Charlton bus service
 - 5.2.1 • Foster a working relationship with OCC Public Transport Department and Charlton Bus Service to improve / extend existing services. Discussions will be influenced by the results of a transport needs assessment.
 - 5.2.2 • Explore the opportunity / benefit of providing a weekend 'connecting bus service' to the Oxford Park & Ride
 - 5.2.3 • Leverage the Rural Transport partnership grant scheme to improve the availability and access to transport providers



- 5.2.4 • Identify innovative schemes to meet the transport needs - particularly those of benefit to young and older people including school service
- 5.2.5 • Explore the opportunity / benefit of 'Chiltern Railways Village Bus and 'Dial A Ride' extending their existing service to the Parish.



6 IMPROVE SPORT, RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Our leisure time concerns and needs

At all levels of our two village communities there is an unfulfilled desire to take part in, or simply witness, more local sporting, recreational and social events. At present only limited facilities are available so the opportunities are low.

Action proposals

6.1 Create access to open spaces

- 6.1.1 • Evaluate using all or part of Alice's Meadow for sport or recreational use.
- 6.1.2 • Working with local landowners and OCC to assess whether or not it would be possible to create a 'passive' Right of Way adjacent to the River Ray – from Fencott Bridge to Charlton-on-Otmoor.

6.2 Support community recreation

- 6.2.1 • Promote greater use of the Village Hall and its facilities
- 6.2.2 • Promote and take advantage of CDC and OCC outreach and seniors activities.
- 6.2.3 • Evaluate the opportunities to use Murcott Church as a venue for local events.
- 6.2.4 • Review resident proposals for improving the Village Hall playground area.
- 6.2.5 • Maximise grant aid and support for facilities which act as a village focal point.

6.3 Seek to attract more tourists to the parish by encouraging the practice of arts and crafts, the promotion of local historical connections, and greater use of available recreational facilities

- 6.3.1 • Work jointly with other parishes and organisations in the Ward to evaluate plans for a local heritage centre
- 6.3.2 • Evaluate the possibilities of publishing booklets featuring: local walks, local history / heritage, local crafts and customs, and local wildlife information, for purchase by visitors to the parish.
- 6.3.3 • Establish a working relationship with the RSPB Reserve and examine the possibilities for creating greater access to the



Reserve via the Parish as an alternative / complement to the Beckley access point

- 6.3.4 • Work with faith groups to identify their needs and where possible integrate them into the Plan
- 6.3.5 • Establish a working relationship with the local farming community and assist in any diversification initiatives that can increase local and / or visitor recreation
- 6.3.6 • Work with OCC Countryside Services to undertake an audit of all Bridleways and Public Footpaths, and seek guidance on how they can be made more accessible and maintained
- 6.3.7 • Seek ways to maximise and promote existing tourist streams and events such as Oxfordshire Cycleway, RSPB Reserve and the Otmoor Challenge.



7 IMPROVE ROAD CONDITIONS AND TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

Our road safety concerns and needs

Concerns have been expressed about several points on roads and pavements throughout the parish. Pedestrians and motorists are put at risk when road conditions invite speeding, create hazards or raise the possibility of pedestrian injury or vehicle damage.

Action proposals

7.1 Reduce the impact of vehicles on Parish roads

- 7.1.1 • Ensure that all newly installed 30mph signs are clearly visible by ensuring they are not obscured by the hedgerow.
- 7.1.2 • Review the effectiveness of the new limit and evaluate extending to the Little Owl and Fencott Bridge boundaries and the long straight between Fencott and Murcott.
- 7.1.3 • Actively monitor progress regarding the installation of Parish Traffic Calming measures e.g. White Gates.
- 7.1.4 • Explore further opportunities to raise awareness of speed – such as getting involved in Road Safety Week
- 7.1.5 • Review how existing 7.5 Ton weight restriction can be enforced / emphasised to deter HGV's using the Parish as a cut through.

7.2 Improve road surfaces and create safe walkways

- 7.2.1 • Fully evaluate and cost outline proposal to reduce verge and landscape at 'Corner Farm' Fencott with the intention of creating a natural 'Traffic Calming feature and easing negotiation of the corner by large vehicles.
- 7.2.2 • Request OCC Highways to initiate a HAMP report re Black Bull Lane
- 7.2.3 • Prepare and submit a plan to OCC Highways re priority paving and kerbing scheme for the two villages. (This will focus on key areas where residents have expressed concern).
- 7.2.4 • Request OCC Highways to undertake a survey of roadside trees between Marlake House and Little Owl to assess condition and



take necessary action to limit potential danger to from falling branches.

- 7.2.5 • Record and log major pot holes and ensure OCC Highways meet their obligations to patch
- 7.2.6 • Evaluate and cost resurfacing and enhancing car park area at entrance to Splash Lane, Fencott
- 7.2.7 • Evaluate the cost of resurfacing and enhancing the boundary of the Public Telephone box, Murcott

7.3 Improve visibility of road signs and culverts

- 7.3.1 • Organise volunteer/s to wash Village name signs
- 7.3.2 • Request OCC Highways to paint railings at Chapel Bridge
- 7.3.3 • Review siting 'Kill Your Speed' sign/s at key locations (currently outside the speed restriction) to maximise effectiveness.



8 SUPPORT SCHEMES TO MAKE LOCAL BUSINESS MORE SUSTAINABLE

Promote and support local business and village services

Residents of Fencott and Murcott live more than 5 miles from a supermarket with no access to a village shop. It is recognised that on the surface provision of such a service may not appear financially viable however, access to Community Service Grants and rural business rate relief could help address this and other small business requirements. The Parish Council will seek to understand the needs of the community and local service providers and explore alternatives such as community projects and co-operatives possibly in premises such as the hall, pub or church.

Action proposals

8.1 Support local business

- 8.1.1 • Support any proposed village shop scheme through visits by ORCC's Village Shop Development Worker and promote alternative structures such as co-operative ventures.
- 8.1.2 • Pursue funding to support installation of Broadband in the Parish
- 8.1.3 • Establish a working relationship with the landlord of the Nut Tree inn to support existing and new business.
- 8.1.4 • Evaluate constructing an online arts and crafts shop and / or a 2nd Hand free ads page as part of a broader parish council website
- 8.1.5 • Evaluate the benefits of forming an annual 'round table' comprising local trade / business professionals
- 8.1.6 • Ensure that all appropriate local / other Otmoor ward businesses are given the opportunity to tender for any proposed works associated with the delivery of the Plan.

8.2 Support the farming community and assist diversification and promote ancillary business

- 8.2.1 • Actively support the local farming community and offer assistance/advice in any proposed diversification strategy such as tourism, recreation and small business development.



8.3 Develop local tourism

- 8.3.1 • Explore opportunities for existing or new business to benefit from visitors to the area



PROTECT AND CONSERVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE OF FENCOTT AND MURCOTT

Our concerns and needs for nature conservation

Otmoor is a significant habitat for trees, plants, wildlife and insects. Much of it is within the Fencott and Murcott parish so it is a valuable feature which the parish needs and wants to conserve.

Action proposals

- 9.1 **Support local community environmental action**
 - 9.1.1 • Encourage local planting schemes
 - 9.1.2 • Ensure the maintenance of hedges, ditches and culverts.
 - 9.1.3 • Arrange and promote a volunteer litter pick day
 - 9.1.4 • Undertake a full audit of TPO's (Tree Preservation Orders) and recommend any other trees to be considered for protection
 - 9.1.5 • Prepare proposals for at least one tree planting/nature conservation scheme
 - 9.1.6 • Prepare proposals for at least one 'Fencott and Murcott in Bloom' scheme
 - 9.1.7 • Undertake a landscape assessment of the Parish and promote and support projects that contribute to the enhancement of the local environment
- 9.2 **Protect, conserve and enhance common and parish council managed land**
 - 9.2.1 • Commission and erect a sign at the entrance to 'Alice's Meadow' in accordance with contractual obligation
 - 9.2.2 • Evaluate erecting signs at The Pound and The Old Horse Pond (Nut Tree Inn) detailing the history, and heritage value of the feature.
 - 9.2.3 • Review and cost cleaning and enhancing The Old Horse Pond, Murcott and ongoing regular maintenance
 - 9.2.4 • Instruct an arboricultural contractor to supply a no obligation site visit for any tree related works identified.



9.3 Monitor pollution

- 9.3.1 • Work with Thames Water and Local Enforcement Agency to respond quickly and effectively to odour emissions at the Charlton-on-Otmoor waste treatment plant

9.4 Minimise risk of flooding

- 9.4.1 • Work with the Environment Agency – Local Flood Defence
- 9.4.2 • Coordinate a public meeting to meet concerns about local flooding
- 9.4.3 • Provide information that will help residents protect property from flooding
- 9.4.4 • Make sandbag provision for key households and/or areas of high risk



10 **PROMOTE A MORE OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE PARISH COUNCIL**

Our concerns and needs for more awareness of Parish Council decisions

To meet these concerns the Parish Council will attempt to create more openness and general awareness of matters, which are under consideration.

Action proposals

- 10.1 **Provide more information and exploit ICT opportunities**
- 10.1.1 • Leverage the Otmoor Review and 'This is Otmoor' website
 - 10.1.2 • Pursue OCC funding for the development of a Parish Council website
 - 10.1.3 • Develop an online and publicly accessible database
 - 10.1.4 • Promote access to parish records
 - 10.1.5 • Create centralised location for filing and archiving of records
 - 10.1.6 • Establish online banking and electronic transfer of parish funds
- 10.2 **Encourage vibrant and thriving Parish community and social activity**
- 10.2.1 • Maximise grant funding for community initiatives, voluntary groups and local business
 - 10.2.2 • Pursue funding to provide internet supported 'public information point' in the Parish
- 10.3 **Promote the Parish Council and the Community it represents**
- 10.3.1 • Evaluate cost / benefits of 'Quality Parish' accreditation.
 - 10.3.2 • Increase networking between Otmoor villages and other surrounding parishes
 - 10.3.3 • Continue to participate in the Otmoor Group to encourage protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the Otmoor
 - 10.3.4 • Encourage more residents to become parish councilors and/or sit on one of its proposed action groups
 - 10.3.5 • Evaluate implementing a scheme for the payment of allowances to elected members of the parish council as proposed in 'The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003'.



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
North Oxfordshire



The
Countryside
Agency



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL



ORCC

OXFORDSHIRE RURAL
COMMUNITY COUNCIL





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