



THE GARSINGTON PLAN 2015



The GARSINGTON PLAN project was commissioned in January 2013 by Garsington Parish Council and has been supported throughout by:

- ❖ **South Oxfordshire District Council**
- ❖ **Oxfordshire Rural Community Council**
- ❖ **Oxfordshire County Council**

Funding for the work of the Steering Group has been for the most part provided by the Parish Council. A grant of £500 was received from South Oxfordshire District Council towards the costs associated with the Survey conducted in April 2014.

All pictures are courtesy of Simon Winner.

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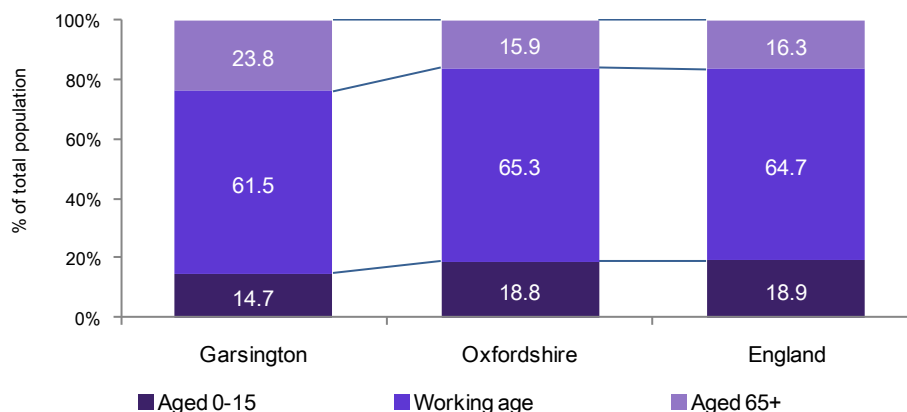
INTRODUCTION

About Garsington...

Here are some helpful facts and figures from the 2011 Census. *(All the figures included in this list are taken from a data extract supplied by SODC, except where otherwise indicated.)*

- ❖ Garsington Parish occupies an area of some **842** hectares (or approximately 2,080 acres) with a population density of about 2 per hectare. This population density is about the same as for the rest of South Oxfordshire District, but only half of that for England as a whole.
- ❖ Garsington had a total resident population of **1,689**, of whom 317 (18.8%) were aged 0 to 19 and 400 (24%) were aged 60 and over. This is below district and national averages for young people and above average for people aged over 60. Reinforcing the last point, 100 households (14%) were occupied by a single pensioner.

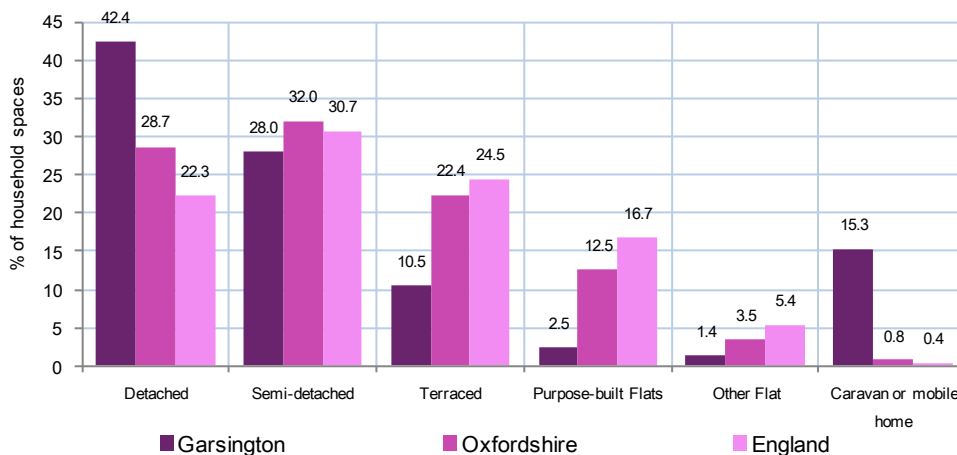
Population by age



Source: Census 2011 (table KS401EW)

- ❖ There were **727** households in the Parish, 84% of which were owned outright or with a mortgage, above district and national averages.
- ❖ It is worth noting that Garsington is not typical of either county or country where housing types are concerned.

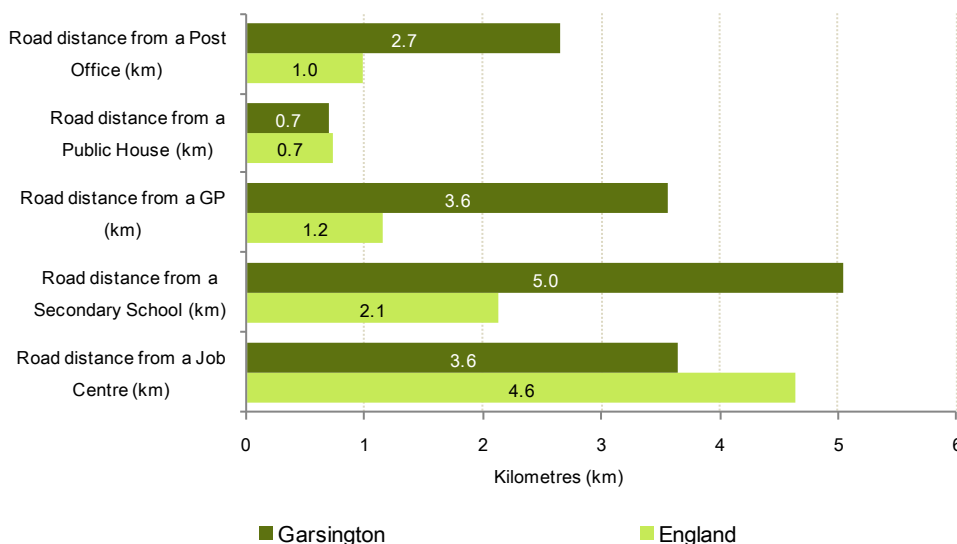
Dwelling type breakdowns



Source: Census 2011 (table KS102EW)

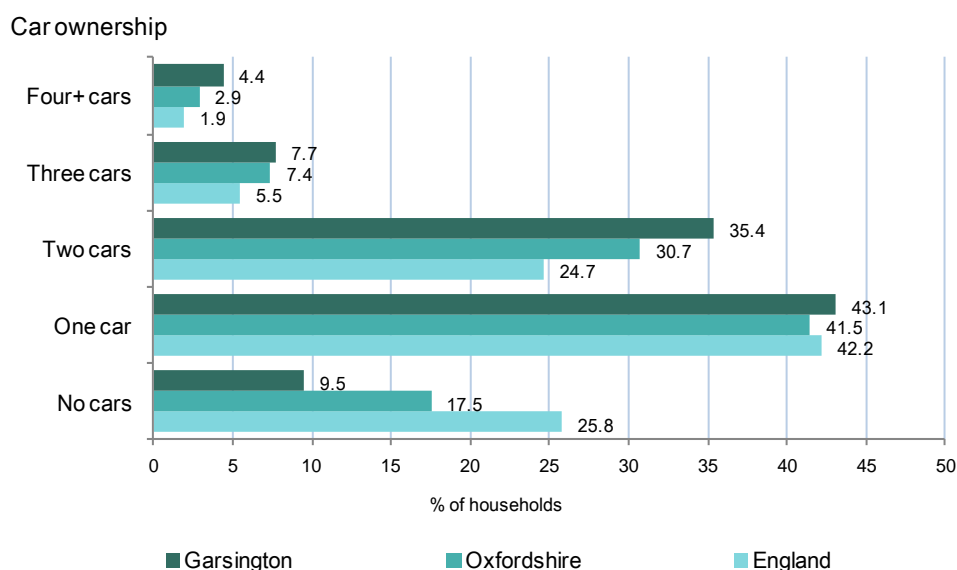
- ❖ 368 of residents aged 16 and over (26%) had no qualifications, which is well above district average. 404 residents (28%) aged 16 and over had a degree or higher, which is below district average (37%), but just above national average (27%).
- ❖ 32 (3.5% of economically active residents) residents were unemployed - similar to district average, but below national average. 158 (17% of the economically active) were self-employed.
- ❖ 7% of residents were from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is below the district average (9%) and well below the national average (20%).
- ❖ There were 31 single parent households (4.3% of households), which is similar to the district average.
- ❖ 281 residents (16.6%) had their activities limited by illness, which is above district average (13.8%), but below national average (17.6%).
- ❖ 164 residents (9.7%) were providing 20 or more hours per week of unpaid care, above district and national averages.
- ❖ Key services tend to be relatively distant from Garsington, as the following table shows:

Road distance to services



Source: Commission for Rural Communities 2010

- ❖ Perhaps unsurprisingly, we find that Garsington has a lot of cars. There were 1.6 cars per occupied household, roughly the same as the district average, but more than in the rest of the county or country.



Source: Census 2011 (table KS404EW)

An ageing population is by no means unique to the village of Garsington. It is, however, worth noting a significant change recorded in the age structure of the parish. In the 10 years between 2001 and 2011, the population of Garsington fell slightly (from 1,745). In that same period, the number of young people fell from 366 to 317 (that is to say, from 21% of the total population to 19%). At the same time, the number of people aged over 60 in the parish rose sharply from 427 (25%) to 566 (34%).

The question arises whether the village, when involved in any planning exercise, should seek to halt this change. We return to this issue in Chapter Two, Housing and the built environment.

But if some things change, others remain the same. In 1974, a group of seven students of architecture at Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University) produced a fascinating Study of Garsington. Their study focussed chiefly on buildings and layout of roads. 40 years on, many of their comments still ring true. They said, for example:

“In general, the village fabric is a product of the relatively random erection of buildings over a long period of time...”

“...transporting their children to and from the [school]. This, combined with the lack of parking space, leads to a blocking of the already narrow roads at peak hours of the day...”

The work undertaken by the Steering Group suggests that these issues remain a source of great concern to many of the residents of Garsington in 2014.

About the Garsington Plan...

In January 2013, over 60 people attended a meeting on how to “Make Garsington a Better Place”, arranged by the Parish Council. The meeting was facilitated by Anton Nath, from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), who explained the benefits other local villages had achieved by developing Community Led Plans.

People identified what they liked about Garsington, what they disliked, and what changes they would like to see. The meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of developing a Plan for Garsington; eight people volunteered to form the Steering Group, and 20 volunteered to help with follow-up activities.

On the plus side, the village was seen as having “the basics” - such as a village hall and school; some good services and activities, such as the newsletter and the lunch club for older people; and it is an attractive village. There were, however, a list of more specific concerns and suggestions, including the following issues:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe pavements & footpaths• Traffic calming• Reliability of public transport• Pothole repair• Broadband coverage• Pre-school group• Volunteer cars for the elderly and unwell | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Litter pick• Affordable housing for young people• Smaller housing units for single people• Activities for younger people• Playground in lower village• More opportunities for adult recreation |
|---|---|

Over the next nine months or so, the Steering Group attended events in the village, and organised one or two of its own. This enabled us to gather the opinions of individuals and families to inform our work. We also made contact with clubs, societies and businesses in the village, with a view to understanding their future plans and aspirations.

During the course of our work, we explored new (or, in some cases, renewed) areas of community activity in the village. The aim was to bring people together and, where appropriate, support them to form a firm basis for future action in their chosen area. A case in point was the litter-picking initiative. Another group looked into the possibility of setting up a volunteer driver service for elderly or disabled people. They have now been operating successfully for a year, and have recently been joined by another group of volunteers who came together after a dementia-friendly course. As a result, Garsington has a Good Neighbour scheme, part of the Oxfordshire network.

In the autumn of 2013 and spring of 2014, the focus of the Steering Group’s work was to get a more precise idea of what people were thinking about key issues. With considerable help from the various local authorities involved and ORCC, we put together the Survey which was delivered to, and collected from, every household in the Parish in March/April. About 25 volunteers not only hand delivered the survey to an average of 30 households each, but took the time to talk to residents and provide help if required. They returned a week or so later to collect the completed form.

The Survey was in two parts: a Questionnaire (comprising 55 questions) and what we called the “wrap”. Reference is frequently made to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire in the Plan. The data collected was scanned and analysed electronically through the good offices of South Oxfordshire District Council. The topline results are to be published alongside the Plan.

Also included in the Garsington Plan Survey, the “wrap” allowed people, in return for their contact details, to express an interest in, or volunteer their services to, village clubs or societies. Where appropriate, the contact details were passed on to an existing group. Where no group existed, we have tried to bring people together to form new groupings in their chosen area of activity.

It is very important to stress that the Steering Group was commissioned by the Parish Council to produce a Community-led Plan, not a Neighbourhood Plan. It was considered important to approach formal planning activity in this order, as has often been the case elsewhere. Community-led Plans tend to focus more on village amenities and activities. They do not carry any legal force. Neighbourhood planning, on the other hand, is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood Plans become part of the Local Plan and the policies contained within will be used in the determination of planning applications. More is said about this in the body of the Plan.

We remind the reader that this document is a plan, not a celebration of village life. The Steering Group was not tasked to catalogue the many reasons why it is good to live in Garsington. As such, it focusses mainly on things which don't exist, that we can do; or on things that do already exist, but which we can do differently.

Finally, it was always going to be impossible to produce a Plan covering every aspect of village life. We in the Steering Group knew from the outset that we should have to be selective and exercise our judgement over what to include. There are, however, one or two areas “missing” from the Plan that would have surprised us at the start of our journey. In what follows, for example, there is no positive action recommended in respect of improved broadband connections. For all its importance, we do not currently believe that this issue merits action within the context of the Plan – this is because, at the time of writing, the County Council's plans seem to promise significant improvement (and, even if that is not achieved, we have no way of predicting how or why).

The members of the Garsington Plan Steering Group are:

Matthew Dovey
Katherine Ferguson
John Hall
Steve Inch

Jane Kay
Jonathan Kay
Annie Winner
Annie Wright



The Parish Council

The work of the Steering Group, preparing for the Garsington Plan, suggests that people are very satisfied with the efforts of the Parish Council to look after the interests of the village. It may seem surprising, therefore, if our first section proposes a new approach by the Parish Council and recommends several actions to them. This is because we believe that the act of commissioning and producing the Garsington Plan has changed the landscape. Carrying out our preliminary work has shed a light on village activities, new and existing, many of which will require active support at different stages of their evolution. There is a long list of actions which need to be monitored and implemented.

The Parish Council already gives lead responsibility for certain areas of activity (e.g. transport or children's play areas) to individual members - although this is perhaps not sufficiently widely known. We recommend that this practice be strengthened and increased to cover the various areas identified in the course of the Garsington Plan. (Where appropriate, these areas will be flagged in the sections below.)

Since time is inevitably limited by routine (but essential) business at the Parish Council meetings, consideration should be given to the creation of a committee system. This would allow the necessary time and space to be given to the additional planning that we identify in the sections that follow.

The Parish Council is currently composed of 7 members. The additional activity arising from the adoption of the Garsington Plan will place an enormous burden on the shoulders of so small a number of people, all acting in a voluntary capacity. We propose that the Parish Council should consider actively attempting both to increase the size of the Council itself, and to identify people with the skills and time to serve on individual committees.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|----------------|--|---------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Action Point 1 | Create a committee structure to deal with future planning on behalf of the Parish council. | H | Quarters 1 & 2, 2015 | To be specified by the Parish Council. (See further Action Points in relation to Transport & Traffic & Road Safety below.) | The election or co-option of more Councillors. The recruitment of people willing to serve on individual committees. |

Garsington and the Green Belt

The outstanding result from the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire 2014 was the response to the question: “How important to you is it that Garsington remains ‘separate’ from Oxford, and does not become part of some bigger urban development?” Overall, 92% of the nearly 800 people who responded to that question said that it was important that Garsington remain “separate”, with 79% saying it was very important. It is clear that residents of all ages and from all parts of the village regard this as a matter of extremely high priority.

There are, of course, some very complex issues involved here. On the one hand, Garsington is firmly situated in the Green Belt, and the centre of the village is designated a conservation area. On the other, plans have been put forward involving major housing development on the western borders of the parish boundary. Irrespective of the success of this proposal, there remains considerable pressure for continued development. Oxfordshire as a whole is expected to find space for an additional 100,000 homes by 2031. The South Oxfordshire District Council is engaging its citizens in a major review of its Local Plan.

For the time being, we believe the Survey finding should form the basis for any response made on behalf of the village to likely planning initiatives. It would justify, for example, the Parish Council adopting a robust approach to any proposed encroachment on the Green Belt.

Many people would also see the changes in the age profile of Garsington’s population (see *Introduction* above) as a source of concern. A continuing decline in the ability of young people to remain in or join the village must in the end be a threat not only to the future of our highly-valued village school but also to the fabric of the village as a whole.

All of this suggests that Garsington should, as a matter of priority, avail itself of the opportunity offered by neighbourhood planning powers under the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to:

- make a neighbourhood development plan (specifying where new homes and offices can be built, and what they should look like)
- make a neighbourhood development order (allowing the community to grant planning permission for development that complies with the order, and removing the need for a planning application)
- make a Community Right to Build order (giving permission for small-scale, site-specific developments by a community group).

For more information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/giving-communities-more-power-in-planning-local-development/supporting-pages/neighbourhood-planning>

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|----------------|--|---------------------|-----------------|--|------------------------------|
| Action Point 2 | Undertake a public review of the arguments in favour of neighbourhood planning for Garsington, together with: Determination of the nature and scope of Garsington’s response Assessment of the overall budgetary requirement | H | Quarter 1, 2015 | Parish Council, in conjunction with the Garsington Society. Assistance should be sought from: South Oxfordshire District Council & Oxfordshire County Council. | Open meeting at Village Hall |

Neighbourhood planning usually combines a number of different aspects: housing, employment, transport and connectivity. All of these aspects require detailed consideration for their impact on Garsington. It will be a matter for the Parish Council to decide how to “blend” these different streams of work. Should they be brought together at Council or at Committee level?



The steering Group is convinced that neighbourhood planning is right for Garsington. If, however, our recommendation is not accepted, we believe that any such decision would not do away with the need to look separately at some of the key issues below (housing development, transport, traffic in the village, and so on).

Housing development

The results from the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire show that the large majority of people (about 70%) who completed it are in favour of some form of housing development. Preferences for different types of additional housing vary a little according to where people live, and their time of life.

In 2004, a Housing Needs Survey was conducted in Garsington with the assistance of ORCC. It suggested strong support for the development of a limited number of units of affordable housing. (Affordable housing means housing for rent or shared ownership, normally from a registered provider, for specified eligible people whose needs are not met by the market.)

In the light of Action Point 2 above, we consider that these issues should be investigated further as a matter of high priority.

| Action Point 3 | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|----------------|---|------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | Appoint a Committee to focus on housing development and related issues | H | Quarter 2, 2015 | Reporting to Parish Council Part of wider neighbourhood planning exercise | To be determined by the Committee |

TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

Transport generally

The Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire told us a great deal about people’s transport preferences. We can say that:

- The residents of Garsington are heavily reliant on their cars, with 85% of us using them as first choice for most purposes.
- The bus service is the village’s only public transport and is widely criticised. Nevertheless, it seems one third of residents do use it at one time or another. Despite recent improvements in reliability and timetabling, there is still concern based on unhappy past experiences. There remains a serious problem with the lack of bus service to the Kings Copse mobile home park.
- Car-sharing is not popular - certainly not as a means of getting to work (92% of Survey

respondents said they were unlikely to use it). There may be a limited need for car sharing in relation to shopping (something not currently covered by the Voluntary Driver scheme).

Although the journey of a majority of people going to work or education is less than 11 miles, a significant minority (28%) travel further. The Steering Group considers that transport should form a significant part of any neighbourhood planning (see above) that is undertaken, and that a separate Committee should be set up to deal with this aspect of the work.



Parking

87% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire said they had sufficient garage or off-road parking, while 4% said they used the public highway. However, many individual comments related to parking being a hazard, especially around school (19), outside Greenwoods (17) and generally on pavements obstructing pedestrians (15). There was also negative comment about parking at other sites on Oxford Road obscuring sight lines. These comments reflected what was consistently said to the Steering Group when it attended public events.

We deal with parking around school in the section on traffic below. In other respects, we endorse the Parish Council's efforts to reduce street parking (for example, outside Greenwoods). Since these issues form part of the discussion at every Parish Council meeting, we do not propose an additional recommendation here.

| Action Point 4 | Priority (H/M/L) | | | | Timescale | | Responsibility and monitoring | | Resources required | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|-----------------|--|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| | H | | | | Quarter 2, 2015 | | Quarterly report to Parish Council | | To be determined by the Committee | |
| | Appoint a Committee to focus on Transport issues. | | | | | | | | | |

We strongly recommend that the Transport Committee should include in its work the following actions:

| Action Points 4a-c | Priority (H/M/L) | | | | | Timescale | |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|--|-----------------|--|
| | M | | | | | Ongoing | |
| | H | | | | | Quarter 2, 2015 | |
| | L | | | | | Quarter 3, 2015 | |
| a) | Continue to attend existing series of six-monthly meetings with Thames Travel and OCC | | | | | | |
| b) | A public meeting for the residents of Kings Copse with representatives of local bus companies | | | | | | |
| c) | Refer the issue of car-sharing for shopping for elderly or vulnerable people to Good Neighbours (Voluntary Drivers scheme) | | | | | | |

TRAFFIC AND ROAD SAFETY

This is a topic which greatly exercises the residents of Garsington, no matter where in the village they live. As we expected, the questions around traffic and road safety in the Garsington Plan Survey produced some very interesting data. Some of the comment was as expected, some - like the strong condemnation of speed bumps - slightly less so.

All of the roads leading out of the village have problems with volume of traffic, speed of traffic and size of vehicles. There are continuing unresolved issues around getting to school safely.

Traffic system in the centre of the village

In the centre of Garsington, there are (at least) two dangerous junctions, drawing comments in the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire: the junction from the Green to Wheatley Road; and the junction at the hairpin entering Pettiwell with poor sight lines. The difficulties involving through traffic, parking and crossing the road by the school have been a source of concern for many years. In several areas, pavements are either non-existent or too narrow for push chairs or wheelchairs.



Speeding and Speed Watch

Most people (85% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire) think there is a problem with speeding vehicles in Garsington. However, the Survey provided no clear view on the need for, or methods of traffic calming. Although a bare majority (57%) wanted to see more traffic calming measures, it was the third most popular proposed use for increased Parish Council precept.

The Parish Council is about to acquire a portable speed sign, which will shortly be in action at different locations in the village. Anyone willing to assist with this process (and with a parallel initiative on vehicle weight) should contact Parish Councillor Matthew Dovey.

Signage

Many comments were received by the Steering Group about the need for more signs to remind drivers about speed limits and the presence of pedestrians in different parts of the village. 80% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire wanted better signage for both speed and weight throughout the village.

The wrongly placed "leaving Garsington" sign on Wheatley Road has already been moved at the request of the Parish Council.

Large vehicles

72% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire think there is a problem with large and/or overweight vehicles travelling through the village. In fact, large Vehicles are restricted throughout the whole of the village except for access, although the signage - see above - might be clearer. Part of the problem seems to arise from large vehicles driving into Wheatley and having then to proceed on to Garsington because there is no way back. Once in Garsington they either struggle around the hairpin to get back to the main road system or use Pettiwell to the detriment of verges. The village of Wheatley has recently undertaken a major review of its traffic problems.

Road surfaces

The roads into and around Garsington are riddled with pot holes. Some areas in Southend, Pettiwell and the hill on Oxford Road have suffered from water damage due to springs becoming uncapped. These road surfaces may damage vehicles and are particularly dangerous for cyclists.

These issues form part of the discussion at every Parish Council meeting, so we do not propose an additional recommendation here. We note, however, that it is important that pressure is kept up on the County Council to ensure that the necessary steps are taken.

Pavements, footpaths and safe movement for pedestrians and cyclists

81% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire think we need to improve safety for pedestrians within the village. Additional comments related to:

- Narrow pavements, especially on The Hill and the Wheatley Road, where it is not possible to take a pushchair or wheelchair
- Lack of pavements at the top of both Pettiwell, Southend and on the way down Denton Lane to the Recreation Ground
- Poor street lighting in some areas of the village
- The severe difficulty in crossing the road safely outside school.

83% of respondents think we need to find safer ways for pedestrians to access the surrounding area. 98 individual comments suggested there should be a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to reach the outskirts of Oxford at Johnsons Buildbase. The most popular use of an increased precept was improving pavements and cycle paths. The second most popular was improving footpaths and public rights of way.

Traffic and road safety is so “live” a topic in Garsington that we recommend without hesitation:

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|----------------|---|------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| Action Point 5 | Appoint a Committee to focus on traffic and road safety | H | Quarter 2, 2015 | Reporting to Parish Council | Budget required, including meeting expenses |
| | | | | Part of wider neighbourhood planning exercise | Further advice from SODC and OCC Possible need to seek external expertise |

We strongly recommend that the work of the Traffic and road safety Committee should include:

| | | Priority | Timescale |
|--------------------|---|----------|----------------------|
| Action Points 5a-f | a) A review of options for the centre of the village, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicanes on Wheatley Road at either side of the school with single lane traffic A 20mph speed restriction on Wheatley Road in front of the school Closing the junction in to the Green from Wheatley Road. | H | By Quarter 1, 2016 |
| | b) Considering the options for reducing vehicle speed in Garsington, taking into account the measures adopted in neighbouring villages, and report to the Parish Council. This review should include the stretch of the B480 by Kings Copse. | M | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| | c) Considering the options for improving signage for both speed and weight in Garsington and report to the Parish Council. This review should include the stretch of the B480 by Kings Copse. | M | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| | d) Considering the options for reducing the number of large vehicles passing through the village and report to the Parish Council. This review should involve discussion with neighbouring villages, especially Wheatley. A large vehicle count is recommended. | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| | e) A review of options for improving movement for pedestrians and cyclists in and around the village, including the creation of a properly paved path and cycleway between Garsington and Johnsons Buildbase (either by way of Oxford Road or by Kiln Lane/Watlington Road). | H | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| | f) A review of the adequacy of street lighting throughout the village, especially during winter months. | M | Quarter 3 2016 |

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Broadband

The Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire revealed that 16% never use broadband. 72% of respondents use it daily, of whom 80% use it for communication, 78% for getting info, and 79% for shopping. A lesser number (36%) use it for education, and 25% for work from home.

Oxfordshire County Council has embarked with BT Openreach on a programme to improve broadband speed and reliability. Garsington should shortly benefit from the improvement. This situation is being monitored closely by the Parish Council so we make no further recommendation at this stage (but see also the section below at *Website*).



Mobile phones

The majority of people in the village use land lines as their main phone at home. However, it seems most people do also have mobile phones. The strength of mobile phone signals varies greatly in the village, with just over one third of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire finding it good; one third, satisfactory; and just under one third, poor.

Given that a majority of respondents (55%) would be willing for an additional phone mast to be built in Garsington, it may be worth entering into discussions with the mobile phone providers to try to improve the coverage overall. We suggest that the matter be kept under review by the Digital Volunteers (see the section on *Website* below).

Television

Since over 90% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire report their TV signal as either good or satisfactory, we have no recommendation to make on this subject.

SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Newsletter

It was suggested to the Steering Group that the Garsington Newsletter might not be read by people living in the village. This suggestion was quickly dispelled by the results of the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire. Only 8% of respondents said they did not read it. It is also clearly the preferred medium for people to receive information about future events.

The Newsletter appears every other month and is delivered to every household in the parish. In 2013 (the latest figures available), printing the Newsletter cost the Parish Council about £6,000, of which about £5,000 was recouped from advertising space. To judge by the results quoted in the paragraph above, this is money well spent.

We have no formal recommendations to make in respect of the Newsletter, but we do suggest that the Editor should work closely with the village website (see below) to ensure consistency of content.

Welcoming newcomers

Many villagers fondly remember a time when newcomers to the village received a welcoming information sheet about Garsington, usually delivered by the vicar. This practice fell by the wayside some time ago, but many people who have spoken to the Steering Group suggest it should be revived.

| Action Point 6 | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|----------------|---|------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------|
| | Create a Welcome Pack group to produce and circulate an information sheet welcoming newcomers to Garsington and providing information about the village | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) | Printing costs |

Website

36% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire wanted to learn about village events through a website and 20% by email. We expect that those numbers will rise steadily as the years go by.

Garsington already has a number of community websites. The Parish Council uses www.garsingtonparish.org. www.garsington.org.uk was set up by Greg Brain in 2006 - it contains some history but needs updating. The Steering group has been using www.plan.garsington.org.uk.

The Steering Group considers that it would be sensible to bring all of these community websites to a single place, and at the same time to work with several other issues identified by our research.

| | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Action Point 7 | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) | Budget to be submitted to Parish Council |
| Establish a Digital Volunteers group to set up and run a unified community website and: Champion the use and monitor the speed and reliability of broadband Review the position regarding mobile phone signal Work closely alongside the Editor of the Newsletter and the Welcome Pack group to maintain consistency of content | | | | |

Burial ground

The Parish Council is concerned to ensure that the village has sufficient space at the burial ground for the foreseeable future. The Parochial Church Council has undertaken to free up additional space in the church grounds, but this may not be sufficient to meet demand for burial space in unconsecrated ground. It would be helpful in response to the concerns of some villagers if this matter could be resolved.



| | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Action Point 8 | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 | Parish Council & Parochial Church Council | To be established |
| Establish a joint working group to assess need and propose relevant solution | | | | |

Good neighbours and Volunteer drivers

This section is included chiefly to report and celebrate the setting up of a Good Neighbours scheme, part of the Oxfordshire network, in Garsington. It is hoped that the scheme will eventually involve not just travel to health appointments, but also home visits for vulnerable people and meeting opportunities of a social nature.

The Steering Group has no formal recommendation to make here, but we stress the importance of a group of this nature in a village with an ageing population.

Post Office

For some years, Garsington has had no Post Office. At present, undelivered letters or parcels have to be collected from Post Office premises more than 2 miles away.

Most respondents (84%) to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire thought Garsington would benefit from some form of postal facility, and the majority said they would use it if it was there. 85% said they would find a central delivery point for letters and parcels helpful.

Initial enquiries suggest that the Post Office is unlikely to reinstate full services. (This situation is currently mirrored in Horspath.) The position requires a more thorough review.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| Action Point 9 | Review the position in respect of postal delivery by contacting Post Office with a view to getting more detailed response. If necessary, identifying a central delivery point or points in the village | M | Quarter 3 2014 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) | None initially |

Play areas

The Steering Group's research revealed very strong support for the creation of additional play spaces at the bottom of the village. Many consider that Poplar Close would be the best site.



| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Action Point 10 | Produce action plan for new play areas by: Consulting with families at the bottom of the village about location and contents Discussion with land owners Costing acquisition of land and equipment | H | From Quarter 3, 2015 | Parish Council with GPAG (see Action point 20, below) | None for report |

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

Sports & Social Club

Garsington Sports and Social Club currently provides a number of sports facilities, including football, cricket, darts and Aunt Sally teams, and hosts a table tennis club. It hosts the Senior Citizens' Club and the Toddlers' Group. Garsington C of E primary School now holds its Sports Day there, and the Sports & Social Club wants to strengthen the link with the school. The hall and meeting rooms are available for hire for private events. There is currently no licence to cook meals on the premises.



It is important to stress that the Sports & Social Club runs entirely on voluntary effort.

This year, South Oxfordshire District Council has provided a grant for essential maintenance, which has enabled necessary work to be done to the fabric of the building. The Sports & Social Club Committee has also worked hard to stage a number of social events to make the Club more open and approachable to the residents of Garsington.

As things stand, it is clear that the internal decoration of the building needs to be refreshed. In the longer term, however, the Committee faces some even greater challenges. Despite the recent maintenance and repair work, the building as a whole is moving towards the end of its “natural life”. In order to meet rising standards, the site in its primary role as a sports club requires considerable improvement. For example, it is not possible at present for the Sports & Social Club to consider setting up teams for women or girls because there are no designated changing facilities. The Committee, of course, would also very much like to extend the existing facilities to permit other sports or games to be played. All of this adds up to a major project, requiring very considerable resources.

In past years, it is said that there has sometimes been discord and bad feeling between the Sports & Social Club Committee and other groups or societies in the village. Echoes of this are to be found in the comments submitted to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire. The current Sports & Social Club Committee is very anxious to bring that era to a close, and to involve all of Garsington’s residents in the Club’s future.

The Steering Group believes that the Sports & Social Club is a significant asset to the village, which should not be allowed to disappear for want of trying. We agree with the Sports & Social Club Committee that this is a matter that is important for everyone in the village, and that the residents of Garsington should be able to have their say

| | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| Action Point 11 | H | Quarter 2, 2015 | Parish Council and Sports & Social Club Committee | Meeting costs initially In future, external grant funding will be essential from sources such as SODC and the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association |
| Hold a public meeting to discuss the future of the Garsington Sports & Social Club and, if appropriate, set up a working group to plan for the Club’s future, the meeting to be jointly hosted by the Chair of the Parish Council and the Chair of the Sports & Social Club Committee | | | | |

Other clubs and societies

Our research suggests there are more than 20 clubs and societies in the village. There may well be quite a number more of smaller, informal ones. Their fortunes fluctuate with the times and those involved. They range from the Senior Citizens Club, to book groups (of which there are at least four), walking groups, gardening clubs and the Women’s Institute.

The work done by the Steering Group on receipt of the results of the Garsington Plan Survey has enabled us to bring together some groups which now seem to have a future (Swapshop; tree and bulb planting). This has not been possible in every area and there are still some newly-forming groups that require further support (activities for children and young people, for example) if they are to succeed.

The very considerable interest - a total of 1128 ticks in the Survey Questionnaire - expressed in cultural activities (such as dance, choir, music, arts & crafts, concerts, exhibitions, films, lectures) might translate into the formation of new groups. A village choir has recently started, meeting on a weekly basis in the Village Hall.

| Action Point 12 | Action required | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|---|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Create a web page with contact details for existing clubs and basic tips on how to set up an interest group or club | M | As soon as possible | Garsington Digital Champions (GDC) | Include in GDC budget |

Pre-school activities

A strong majority of respondents (73%) to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire were in favour of more pre school facilities, although only 9% said they were in a position to use them.

Oxfordshire County Council believes that the area that includes Garsington is well served with facilities for young children. However, comments have been made to the Steering Group suggesting that the existing facilities are fragmented or too distant. The only current facility for pre-school children is the Toddlers' Group, which meets once a week at the Sports & Social Club.

The Steering Group considers it important to improve facilities for pre-school children to protect the future of the school and make Garsington more attractive to young families.

| Action Point 13 | Action required | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|--|------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | Review the facilities available in Garsington to pre-school children | M | From Quarter 3, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below), in consultation with the Toddlers Group and Garsington C of E Primary School | Discussion with OCC and SODC |

Activities for children and young people

In the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire, this item produced 186 comments, including some very varied and imaginative suggestions. The dominant request was for a youth club, with many suggested activities and facilities (BMX track, skateboard park, film club, space for band practice, art & craft, music, dance, drama, social events, trips and so on). Sport was also a strong thread – football, cricket, rock climbing, swimming, tennis, table tennis, snooker, athletics, badminton, orienteering, fitness, gym and others. Some said this was especially needed for girls. The possibility of reforming Cubs, Brownies or Scout groups in the village was also suggested.

We must acknowledge, too, that there were some negative comments. Some respondents apparently felt something along the lines of “parents should entertain their own children”. Others commented on the lack of suitable accommodation or facilities and equipment, and the reductions in the County Youth Service.

The Steering Group considers that, in the interests of creating a healthy, balanced community, Garsington should continue to seek to provide activities for children and young people. The responses from the Survey “wrap” suggested there were a number of people willing to become involved in activity of this sort, but lack of time has so far prevented us from taking that further.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|--|---------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Action Point 14 | Review the possibilities for creating social and sports facilities for children and young people | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) Refer sports issues to Garsington Sports & Social Club | Meetings expenses The review should include investigation of sources of additional funding and contact Oxfordshire Youth for support |

ENVIRONMENTAL

Litter pick

Garsington has benefitted for some time from the activities of individual litter pickers. In 2013, with the support of the Steering Group, this was turned into an organized group activity. Volunteering to take part in litter picking was tremendously popular in the Garsington Plan Survey “wrap”, with no fewer than 41 people putting their names forward.



With new leadership and the activity's tremendous popularity, we expect the Litter pick to go from strength to strength and therefore have no specific recommendation. We would expect, however, that the Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) will remain in touch with the leaders of this activity and provide support if appropriate.

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch has also had a strong presence in the village, and was also very popular in the responses to the “wrap”. There is, however, an impending vacancy for the village coordinator and this will offer an opportunity to review and strengthen the existing arrangements.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Action Point 15 | Refresh the activities of the Garsington Neighbourhood Watch and find new leaders | M | Quarter 1, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group | Meeting expenses Support from Thames Valley Police |

Planning for severe weather and other emergencies

Oxfordshire County Council strongly recommends emergency planning for a wide variety of possible situations and the strengthening of “community resilience”. To date, opinion in the village has been that this approach casts the net too widely. However, Garsington has already identified some community 'survivor reception centres' (such as the church and sports hall) and key holders that can be contacted 24/7. There is also concern in some quarters that Garsington has established no emergency plan to cover the impact of severe weather on vulnerable people (cold/snow rather than flooding). It is expected that the experience of the newly-established Good Neighbours scheme in Garsington will - over time - provide more evidence upon which to base a decision.



| Action Point 16 | Action required | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| | | M | From Quarter 3, 2016 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below), reporting to the Parish Council | Support from Oxfordshire County Council and SODC |

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Energy in public buildings

A clear majority of respondents (73% to 27%) to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire want solar/photovoltaic cells on our public buildings. Yet, as far as the Steering Group knows, none of the village's public buildings - school, Church, Village Hall or Sports & Social Club - currently uses renewable energy sources. It seems that opportunities may have been lost in recent years to take action in this area, and we hope that this will not be the case in future.

| Action Point 17 | Action required | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | M | Ongoing. From Quarter 2, 2015 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) | None at present |

Swapshop

Swapshops are community events for the public to bring along household items that they no longer need and/or take home for free something that catches their eye. 69% of respondents to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire suggested they would use a Swapshop if one were held in the village.

As a result of a meeting based on the responses in the Garsington Plan Survey “wrap”, it now seems very likely that an inaugural Swapshop will be held in Garsington in Spring 2015. We therefore have no further recommendation at this stage.

Allotments

It seems rather odd that a rural village like Garsington should have no allotments of its own. Some Garsington residents rent allotments in other parishes. Relatively few people (13%) responding to the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire actually said that they would rent one. The number of people involved (96) was, however, quite sufficient to suggest that this is not a possibility that should be abandoned altogether.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------|---|---|
| Action Point 18 | Review options for provision of public allotments, and report to Parish Council | L | Quarter 1 2017 | Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) | None initially, but provision of this kind would inevitably involve significant cost. |

Green areas/wildlife conservation areas/tree and bulb planting/paths and stiles

The two questions in the Garsington Plan Survey Questionnaire that touched on hedges and verges and encouraging wildlife received support from 93% and 77% of respondents respectively. 86% felt that maintenance of green areas by the Parish Council, and 90% that vegetation, stiles and gates on public rights of way needed improvement.



In the “wrap”, 26 people declared an interest in conservation activities and 20 in planting trees and bulbs. Despite this, bulb or tree planting was not high priority (only 14%) in the question about how the Parish Council should spend additional precept. This suggests that people see this area of village life as being within the remit of the Parish Council but requiring additional sources of external funding.

| | | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Action Point 19 | Create Village Environment Group with responsibility for co-ordinating action on: publicly-owned green areas, allotments, wildlife conservation areas, paths, stiles and tree and bulb planting possible target sites for planting and conservation measures. (Membership of group to include: “lead” Councillor, Village Path Warden, members of Stile Group) | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 | Parish Council Garsington Plan Action Group (see Action point 20, below) to assist in developing work groups, etc. | Requires Group budget Seek additional external funding |

SUPPORTING NEW AND EMERGING VILLAGE GROUPS

The final action point involves the creation of a successor to the Garsington Plan Steering Group, under the control of the Parish Council, for the following purposes:

- Liaison with existing clubs, groups and societies in the village
- Encouragement and support for new activities within the scope of the Community-led plan
- Monitoring of designated sections of the Garsington Plan
- Quarterly report to the Parish Council.

We recommend that the membership of the Garsington Plan Action Group (GPAG) should be six in total, and include at least two Parish Councillors.

| | Priority (H/M/L) | Timescale | Responsibility and monitoring | Resources required |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--|---|
| Action Point 20 | H | Quarter 1 2015 | Quarterly GPAG report to PC Support for village groups Monitoring designated sections of Garsington Plan Annual report to PC and village | Budget to cover meeting expenses, etc. Members with different interests and new skills |

OTHER ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

This section is designed to catch a small number of issues that do not crop up elsewhere:

1. The Steering Group has focussed very much on Garsington's affairs from the inside. We have not had much time to study, nor to observe what happens in other communities. This situation has been partially offset by the very helpful stream of advice and information received from ORCC and SODC. We strongly suggest that future work undertaken either by the Garsington Plan Action Group or the Parish Council would benefit from closer collaboration with other villages and towns in South Oxfordshire. This suggestion would clearly apply in respect of neighbourhood planning, but might equally well hold good for other areas such as conservation or sustainability.
2. It is not possible to plan to put right something that has not occurred. There is, for example, no reference above to Garsington's public houses. Yet one of the most frequent comments made to the Steering Group at village events was the importance of keeping the pub open. Having seen two of the three Garsington pubs disappear in as many years, residents clearly view the possibility of the third disappearing with great alarm. The Parish Council has responded by having the Three Horseshoes designated a community asset. It goes almost without saying that, if the pub were to close, it would be a matter of priority to establish whether any action of the kind which has benefitted neighbouring villages should be taken. The Parish Council might choose at that point to refer the matter to the Garsington Plan Action Group.

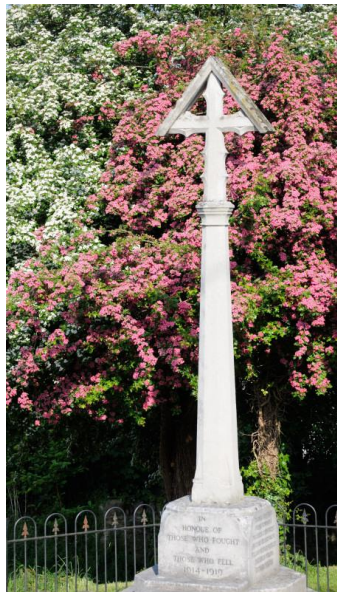
The position is perhaps not quite so clear in relation to the village's general store. There has been a significant period in recent years where the village has had no shop. Its location is not

very convenient for everyone in the village. Nevertheless, the Steering Group believes that a swift attempt should be made to review possible alternatives were the shop to close.

For the time being, of course, we wish every success to the owners and managers of the pub and shop!

3. As was noted in the Introduction, the Steering Group has been pleased to note that its interest and support appears to have had a positive impact in a number of different areas of village life. This applies both to the encouragement of new facilities and to the renewal or reinforcement of existing activity. In particular, we include:
- The setting up of the Volunteer Drivers scheme, which has since become part of the Oxfordshire Good Neighbours Network. Following a series of meetings arranged by the Steering Group about dementia-friendly communities, the scheme will soon add other forms of support for vulnerable people and their families to its offer.
 - The formation and subsequent renewal of the Litter Pick scheme.
 - The creation of a group focusing on the planting of trees and bulbs throughout the village.
 - Starting up a choir which meets on a weekly basis in the village hall.
 - The strengthening of existing clubs and societies by passing on names of interested people who had responded to the Survey “wrap”.

For the most part, these activities do not take up further space in the Plan, because the necessary action has already happened, or is already in the pipeline. They will, however, form part of the scope of the reviews to be undertaken by the Garsington Plan Action Group.



CONCLUSION

General comments

The Plan in its essence breaks down to a number of different recommendations which are listed again in abbreviated form below. Before that, there are a number of general comments that the Steering Group (“we” in what follows) wish to make.

A great deal is done in Garsington. There is a great deal more that could be done if the residents of the village are willing to do it. Put bluntly, GARSINGTON NEEDS YOU!

We are aware that the long list of recommendations puts a very considerable burden on the Parish Council. We expect the Parish Council to take, and maintain, overall control of the Plan. We do not, however, think that it is reasonable to expect the Councillors, currently 7 in number, to carry out this task on their own. They will require the assistance of a good many others, working at different levels, to ensure the successful realization of the Plan. They may decide to increase their numbers (see our suggestions in the section on *Governance* above) to carry out some of the actions, but they will certainly need people to work alongside them in a whole variety of different capacities. We hope that, reading this, you will resolve to volunteer your services.

It is also worth pointing out that we recognize that people may not agree with all of our recommendations. We hope that won't mean too many of them for any one person! We do know, however, that some courses of action will not command 100% support. We have therefore tried to include only those recommendations where we think the clear majority are either in favour or, at least, not opposed.

We hope that a group of people will be formed to carry forward the work of the Steering Group (see Action point 20 above). In that event, if you think we have made a mistake with our recommendation, or you would like to see the stated goal achieved in a different way, there will somewhere to refer your comments. We believe, however, that the final decision whether to make significant changes to the Plan after it is published should rest with the Parish Council.

Finally, we also recognize that the priority levels, start dates and duration allocated to each recommendation cannot be set in stone. For example, we have labelled the priority for action in relation to allotments as low, and for consideration in 2017. That does not mean that someone with a particular passion for allotments should not seek the agreement of the Parish council to approach local landowners before then. In a different context, the comments above about the pub and shop might lead to necessary changes in direction and priority. Circumstances and people's interests must sometimes carry the day!



THE PLAN IN BRIEF: A LIST OF ACTION POINTS

| Action | Priority | Recommended Timescale |
|---|----------|-----------------------|
| 1. Create a committee structure to deal with future planning on behalf of the Parish council | H | Quarters 1 & 2, 2015 |
| 2. Undertake a public review of the arguments in favour of neighbourhood planning for Garsington, together with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determination of the nature and scope of Garsington's response Assessment of the overall budgetary requirement | H | Quarter 1, 2015 |
| 3. Appoint a Committee to focus on housing development and related issues | H | Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 4. Appoint a Committee to focus on Transport issues, to: | H | Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 4a) Continue to attend existing series of six-monthly meetings with Thames Travel and OCC | M | Ongoing |
| 4b) A public meeting for the residents of Kings Copse with representatives of local bus companies | H | Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 4c) Refer the issue of car-sharing for shopping for elderly or vulnerable people to Good Neighbours (Voluntary Drivers scheme) | L | Quarter 3, 2015 |
| 5. Appoint a Committee to focus on traffic and road safety, to: | H | Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 5a) Review options for the centre of the village, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicanes on Wheatley Road at either side of the school with single lane traffic A 20mph speed restriction on Wheatley Road in front of the school Closing the junction in to the Green from Wheatley Road. | H | By Quarter 1, 2016 |
| 5b) Consider the options for reducing vehicle speed in Garsington, taking into account the measures adopted in neighbouring villages, and report to the Parish Council. This review should include the stretch of the B480 by Kings Copse. | M | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| 5c) Consider the options for improving signage for both speed and weight in Garsington and report to the Parish Council. This review should include the stretch of the B480 by Kings Copse. | M | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| 5d) Consider the options for reducing the number of large vehicles passing through the village and report to the Parish Council. This review should involve discussion with neighbouring villages, especially Wheatley. A large vehicle count is recommended. | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 5e) Review options for improving movement for pedestrians and cyclists, including the creation of a properly paved path and cycleway between Garsington and Johnsons Buildbase (either by way of Oxford Road or by Kiln Lane/Watlington Road). | H | By Quarter 2, 2016 |
| 5f) Review the adequacy of street lighting throughout the village, especially during winter months. | M | Quarter 3, 2016 |
| 6. Create a Welcome Pack group to produce and circulate an information sheet welcoming newcomers to Garsington and providing information about the village | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 |

THE PLAN IN BRIEF: A LIST OF ACTION POINTS (CONTINUED)

| Action | Priority | Recommended Timescale |
|--|----------|-------------------------------|
| 7. Establish a Digital Volunteers group to set up and run a unified community website and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion the use and monitor the speed and reliability of broadband Review the position regarding mobile phone signal Work closely alongside the Editor of the Newsletter and the Welcome Pack group to maintain consistency of content | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 8. Establish a joint working group to assess needs for the burial site and propose relevant solution | M | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 9. Review position in respect of postal delivery by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacting Post Office with a view to getting more detailed response If necessary, identifying a central delivery point or points in the village | M | From Quarter 3, 2015 |
| 10. Produce an action plan for new play areas by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consulting with families at the bottom of the village about location and contents Discussion with land owners Costing acquisition of land and equipment | H | From Quarter 3, 2015 |
| 11. Hold a public meeting to discuss the future of the Garsington Sports & Social Club and, if appropriate, set up a working group to plan for the Club's future, the meeting to be jointly hosted by the Chair of the Parish Council and the Chair of the Sports & Social Club Committee | H | Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 12. Create a web page with contact details for existing clubs and basic tips on how to set up an interest group or club | M | As soon as possible |
| 13. Review the facilities available in Garsington to pre-school children | M | From Quarter 3, 2015 |
| 14. Review the possibilities for creating social and sports facilities for children and young people | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 15. Refresh the activities of the Garsington Neighbourhood Watch and find new leaders | M | Quarter 1, 2015 |
| 16. Undertake a "community resilience" review, adapted to meet the perceived needs of Garsington | M | From Quarter 3, 2016 |
| 17. Contact Committees responsible for public buildings (see above) to ensure any future opportunity is not lost | M | Ongoing. From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 18. Review options for provision of public allotments, and report to Parish Council | L | Quarter 1, 2017 |
| 19. Create Village Environment Group with responsibility for coordinating action on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> publicly-owned green areas, allotments, wildlife conservation areas, paths, stiles and tree and bulb planting possible target sites for planting and conservation measures. (Membership of group to include: "lead" Councillor, Village Path Warden, members of Stile Group) | H | From Quarter 2, 2015 |
| 20. Appoint an implementation & monitoring group: the Garsington Plan Action Group (GPAG) | H | Quarter 1, 2015 |