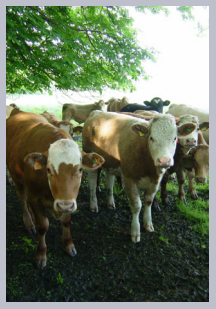
Waterperry
Village Plan
2014



Foreword

Welcome to the Waterperry Village Plan – the first of its kind. The following pages contain the opinions and aspirations of residents about what kind of village they want Waterperry to be. The plan reports village opinion on a range of issues, from development to social gatherings. Its findings – based on two canvasses of public opinion – reveal general approbation for the need to retain long-established virtues of rural life in a small village, along with sensitivity to the desirability of careful, managed change. The plan is a testament to the thoughtful responses of villagers and an expression of their wishes. It also speaks to those beyond the boundaries of the village who are official and informal guardians of the public good, providing them with a true measure of local feeling when decisions are to be made.

This document has been some two years in gestation and, like all good plans, its worth will be measured by how effectively it is implemented and how far its proposals continue to meet changing circumstances. For all of us it has been an engaging and rewarding process. As chair of the steering group I would like to extend my wholehearted thanks to my fellow group members for their skill and persistence in seeing the plan through to publication, as well as to all those villagers who took part in the deliberations of the various working groups that informed its progress.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy reading the village plan and, if you are a resident of Waterperry, that you will become active in its delivery.

Barrie Axford

Chair of steering group

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Introduction

Why a village plan?

Recently the government has been encouraging local communities to take more control over shaping their future. The Rural White Paper in 2000 introduced community-led planning – parish plans and neighbourhood plans – as a way of giving local communities the chance to make their wishes known. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) have encouraged the preparation of parish plans and made grants available to assist in this process.

A parish plan

- Reflects the views of the local community
- Identifies features and local characteristics that people value
- Identifies local problems and opportunities
- Defines how residents want the community to develop over the next few years
- Includes an action plan to achieve this vision

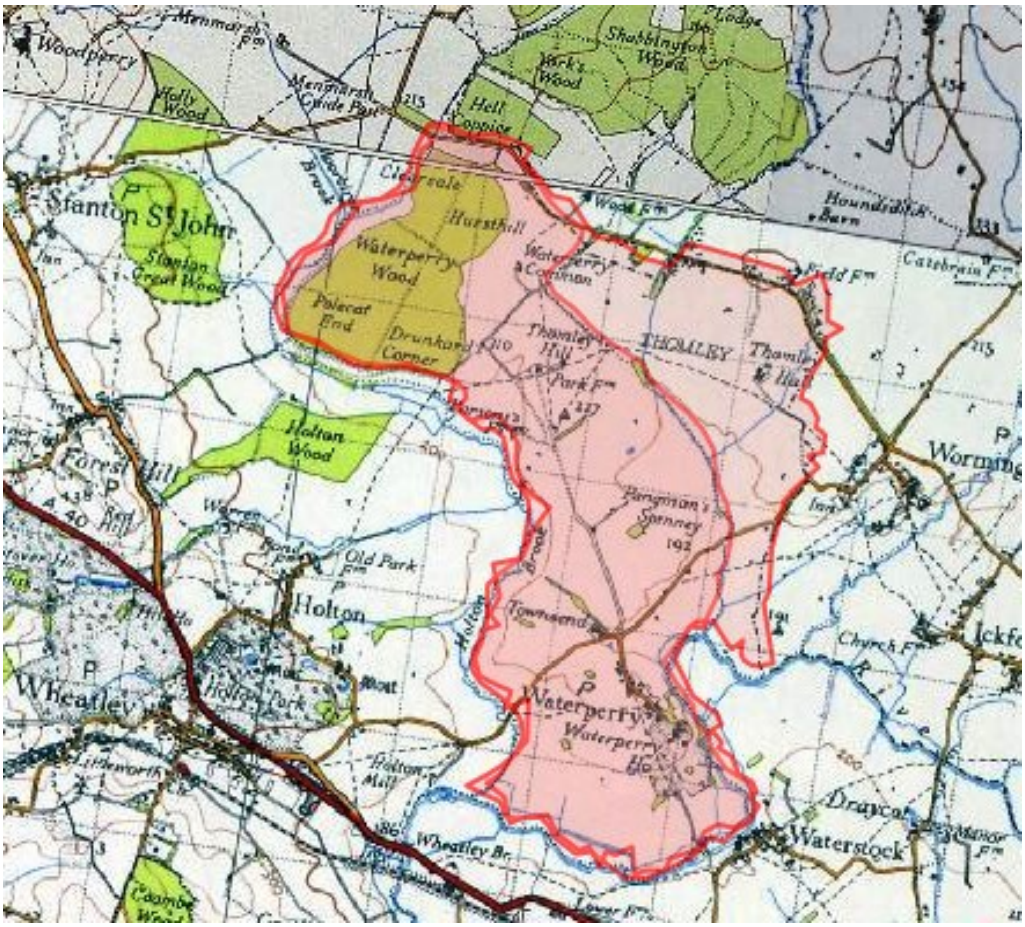
Parish plans have the potential to influence the policies and decisions of local authorities and other service providers. They can also help to secure local authority support and funding for projects which have clear community backing.

Why a village plan for Waterperry, not a parish plan?

The civil parish of Waterperry was merged with the neighbouring parish of Thomley in 1995.

Thomley is a largely depopulated village consisting of a few dispersed houses some distance away from the village of Waterperry.

For Waterperry's community-led plan it was decided to focus on the concerns and priorities of the village itself rather than the wider parish, although residents of Waterperry Common (closer to the village and traditionally part of the parish) were consulted.



1 Summary

The parish council takes many decisions on issues affecting the village. But how is it to know what people in the village want? The village plan consultation carried out in December 2013 was designed to find out what residents want for the village. All local residents have had the opportunity to say what they value in the village and what improvements, if any, they feel should be made.

This village plan is based on the findings of that consultation, the data from which is reported here. The information in this report and the recommendations it makes will be invaluable for informing not only our parish council, but all other local decision-making bodies, about the views of the residents of Waterperry.

Some of the report's recommendations require action by the parish council or other official bodies. However, many of them can be progressed by establishing groups of volunteers to explore the feasibility of various options or to co-ordinate action in a specific area. An action plan is included at the end of the report which sets out priorities and the body or group responsible for carrying out these actions.

The clear message from the consultation is that people value and wish to maintain the rural and unspoilt character of the village: the village road and verges are seen to be in need of care and repair; the green spaces, trees and wildlife are appreciated and people are keen to protect and enhance them. The consensus is that only very limited, sensitive development would be appropriate for the village.

One issue causing considerable concern is the slow broadband speed. Although Oxfordshire currently has a programme aimed at upgrading rural broadband, the fact that we are a small village and our exchange lies in Buckinghamshire, means that we are not likely to benefit from this upgrade.

Our position on the county border and our small size also affects another issue raised – the lack of public transport – since it reduces the incentive for Oxfordshire County Council to subsidise a bus link to the village.

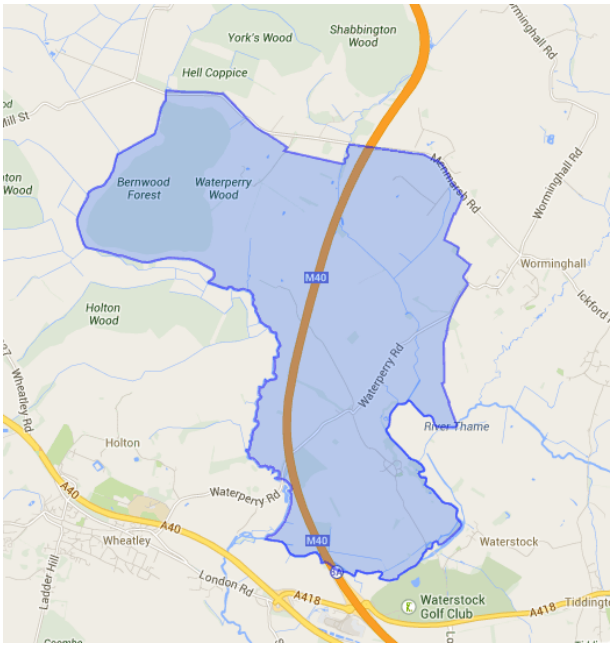
What was particularly gratifying about the consultation exercise was the number of people who volunteered to help progress improvements in the village or to help with social events. One of the disadvantages of the village was seen to be the lack of a social 'hub', but this plan offers us all the opportunity to work together to improve the aspects of our community we consider important.

Note: In the course of preparing statistical information for this report (see page 8), we have discovered that the published 2011 census figures for our parish have been combined with those of Waterstock. This distorts the figures and makes them largely unusable, so we have been forced to use outdated figures from the 2001 census, combined with information from the Electoral Register and our own local knowledge.

2 Location and description

Waterperry is a small and relatively unspoilt village of a residential and agricultural nature located some eight miles to the east of Oxford. It lies within South Oxfordshire, though it is very close to the Buckinghamshire border. The River Thame winds around the village to the south and east. The village itself stands on elevated ground but is surrounded by low-lying meadows which flood regularly during winter months. Waterperry was named after its pear trees, with the prefix 'water' added to distinguish it from Woodperry a few miles away. A considerable number of visitors are attracted to Waterperry Gardens and to Art in Action, an international art and craft festival held in the grounds of Waterperry House each July.

Waterperry is located 2.5 miles from the much larger village of Wheatley, which has shops, schools, health centre, fire station and other services.

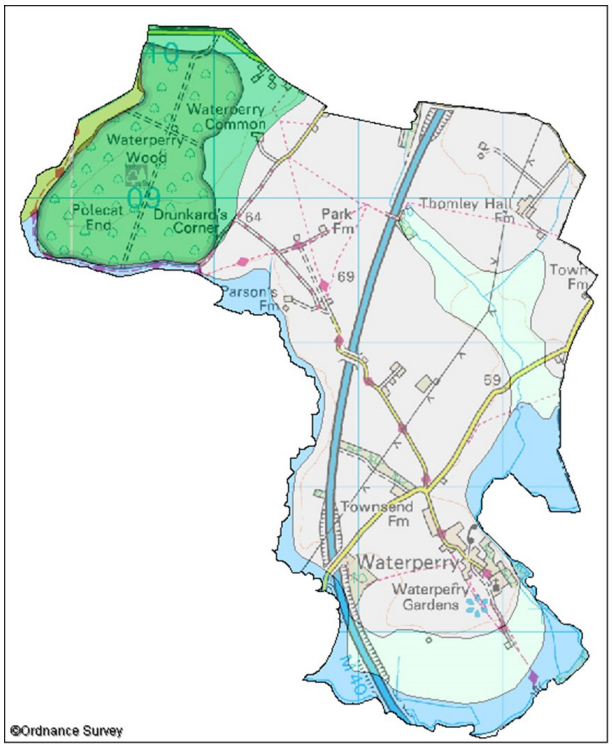


The M40 which runs to the west of the village provides good communications to London and the rest of the country but can also cause noise pollution in certain weather conditions. There are rail services from Oxford and from Haddenham, near Thame.

Waterperry is approached from the Wheatley to Worminghall road by a narrow no-through road, which leads to the Waterperry Estate. On entering the village there is a broad grass verge on the left, surrounding the village sign. This verge has been planted over the years with daffodils and with pear trees to mark the millennium. Behind the verge is a row of mature horse chestnut trees within the hedgerow and there are fields beyond.

On the right, beyond the 20th century housing, lies the recreation ground. This grassy area is the site of the old village hall, demolished many years ago after it fell into disrepair, and is sometimes used for village events. The parish council has recently had some new play equipment for children installed here.

Houses from a variety of periods flank the single village road which leads to Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry House and the adjacent village church of St Mary the Virgin. There is a footpath and bridleway, forming part of the Oxfordshire Way, which runs south from the village, past Waterperry House, via the 18th century Bow Bridge, to Waterstock. This is currently the most direct route to access public transport without travelling by car.



On the other side of the Wheatley to Worminghall road lies the narrow lane to Waterperry Common, consisting of a few dispersed farmhouses, and to Waterperry Woods (owned and managed by the Forestry Commission as a Site of Special Scientific Interest), which once formed part of the medieval royal hunting forest of Bernwood. The largely deserted village of Thomley lies within the civil parish, but this has not been included in our village plan.

3 The development of Waterperry over time

There is a long history of human occupation in Waterperry going back to prehistoric times. There is archaeological evidence from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman periods from in and around the village.

A prosperous manor was recorded here in Domesday Book in 1086 and it seems likely that there was a Saxon manor here before the Norman Conquest. This was probably on or near the site of Waterperry House, where Saxon pottery has been found.

The village church appears to have late Saxon origins, judging from its original rounded chancel arch. In the late 12th century the church and its land were given by the FitzElys family to Oseney Abbey in Oxford, who owned them until 1539. This land lay mainly in Thomley, but included some land in Waterperry and Ledall (a deserted hamlet on the way to Waterperry Common). The abbey had a tithe barn at Waterperry in the 14th century, where it received produce from the estate. It is just possible that the Abbey Gateway (next to the entrance to Waterperry Gardens) which has medieval features, is the surviving gable end of this barn. Abbey Cottage originally formed part of this structure, which could make it the oldest vernacular building in the village.

The oldest surviving wing of Waterperry House, next to the church, dates from the 17th century, but there is some evidence, including a stone doorway which appears to be 14th century, to suggest an older core to the building. Pottery finds suggest a medieval building of high status once stood here.

The village probably developed around the church and manor house in the late 11th to early 12th century. However, the remodelling of Waterperry House and the creation of a park around it in the early 18th century probably involved moving the village away from the house, creating the current linear layout of the village. The yew tree in front of the church originally stood within an enclosed burial ground, but the churchyard was moved to the rear when the house was remodelled.

Waterperry House, together with its granary (now a museum) stable block and barns (now garden centre buildings), coach house, lodges and walled gardens, dating mostly from the 18th century, form a fine and well preserved group of estate buildings, though the ice house (under a tree-covered mound near the garden centre entrance) has seen some damage to its mound and is currently in a rather neglected state.

Oseney Abbey gave land near the river for the building of a vicarage at Waterperry in the late 12th century, which probably lay close to the church. In the 17th century the rectory was described as in ‘great ruins and decaye’. In 1777 it was demolished and the current building (now the Old Rectory) was erected by John Curson of Waterperry House at his own expense. This seems a generous act, but, given Curson’s strained relationship with the vicar, it may well be that he was anxious to remove the unsightly structure from view!

The church of St Mary the Virgin is of considerable architectural interest, containing stained glass spanning four centuries, the oldest (in the chancel’s lancet windows) dating from the 13th century. It also contains a 14th century canopied tomb with a fine effigy of Robert FitzElys.

There are a number of listed buildings at the southern end of the village (see page 7) dating from the 17th–18th centuries. The large stone building which forms numbers 22–3 dates from the early or mid 17th century and was probably one farmhouse, before being used as the village school and schoolhouse in the 19th century. It was converted into two houses in the 1950s.

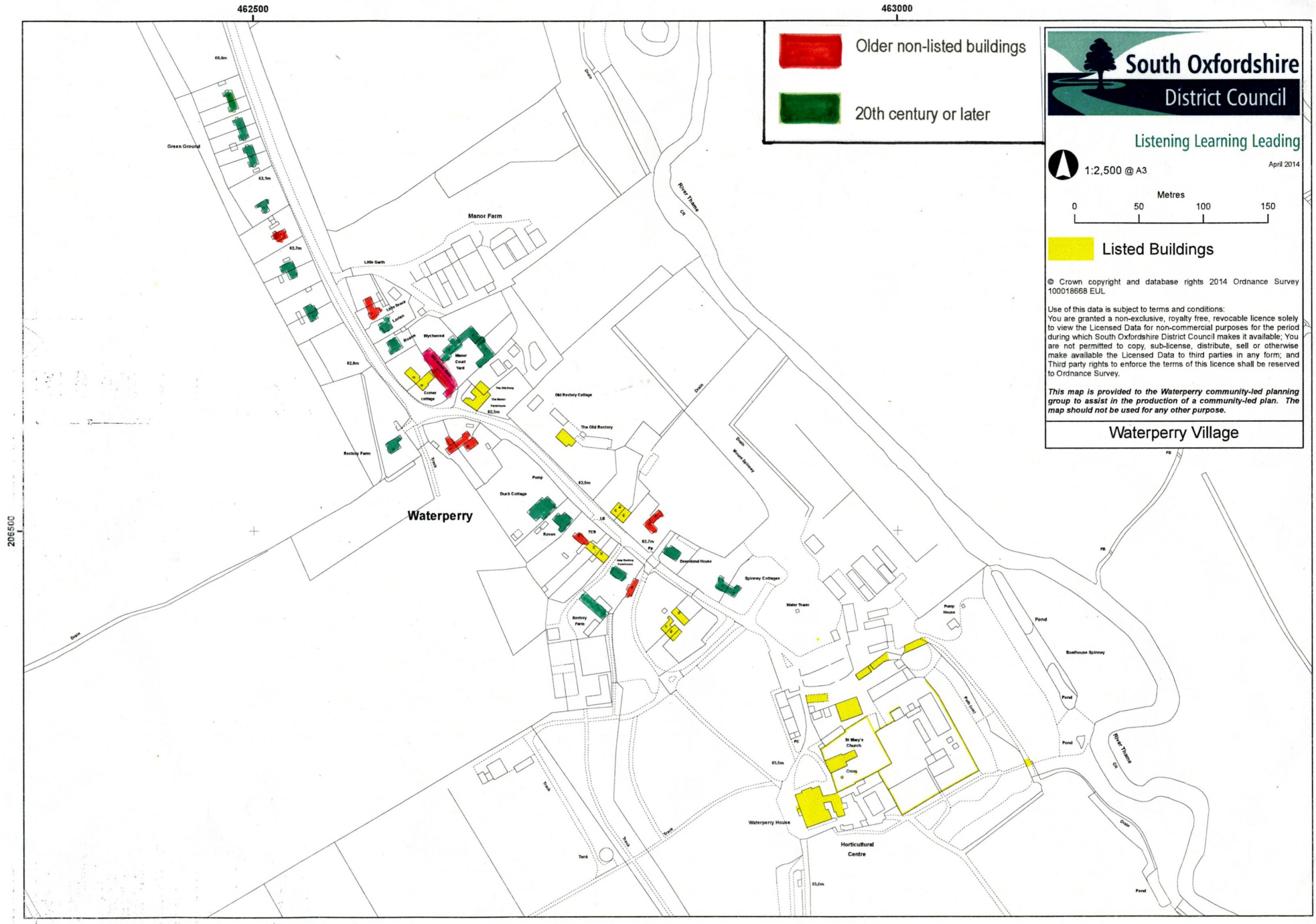
Abbey Cottage was originally part of a barn with a cruck construction and joined on to the gable end with pointed archway which is currently freestanding. Numbers 27–8 are largely brick built from the 18th century, but have an older stone core. Numbers 17–19 are brick built from the mid 18th century and were originally a single dwelling. They once contained a brew house, so this was probably the village pub! Next door, behind its railings, stands the 18th century Old Rectory.

Manor Farmhouse, on the bend at the centre of the village, is an impressive stone-built structure dating mainly from the mid-18th century, though there is evidence to suggest and older core. Next to it are Corner Cottage and number 10 – two 17th century timber-framed cottages. These were thatched until at least the 1930s, as were many of the cottages in the village. Townsend Farm, on the main Wheatley to Worminghall road, is a large brick-built house of the late 18th to early 19th century. It has an impressive 18th century barn, now converted into accommodation.

Non-listed buildings which make a positive contribution to the village include number 24, an attractive stone-built house, and the north and south lodges of Waterperry House. South Lodge, on the footpath to Waterstock, is the only remaining thatched house in the village. The row of agricultural cottages opposite Manor Farm (numbers 13-15) may well have older cores. Number 14 has a stone bread oven on the front, so perhaps this was the village bakery!

Number 20, a brick cottage, formerly thatched, was originally the post office (hence the location of the phone and post boxes). The shop later moved to the bungalow next door, before closing down in the 1970s.The red telephone kiosk (a ‘Jubilee’ kiosk from 1935, designed by Giles Gilbert Scott) makes a positive contribution to the village landscape and is valued as a landmark by many residents.

There are infills throughout the village from the 19th and 20th centuries in stone, brick and timber. The major twentieth-century building developments include the four semi-detached houses constructed in the 1930s and the six houses on Green Ground built in the 1950s. The most recent development was Manor Farm Courtyard, built in the 1980s.



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Older non-listed buildings
20th century or later
South Oxfordshire
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April 2014
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Listed Buildings
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This map is provided to the Waterperry community-led planning group to assist in the production of a community-led plan. The map should not be used for any other purpose.
Waterperry Village
Waterperry
Green Ground
Manor Farm
Little Garth
Wychwood
Manor Court Yard
Corner cottage
Old Rectory Cottage
The Old Rectory
Rectory Farm
Duck Cottage
Pump
Roses
Deepstead House
Spinney Cottages
Water Tower
Pump House
Pond
Boathouse Spinney
St Mary's Church
Cross
Waterperry House
Horticultural Centre
River Thame
Drain
Track
Tank

4 Waterperry today

The number of households in the parish (including Thomley) in March 2014 was 78. Five of these lie in Thomley and the rest in Waterperry and Waterperry Common. The main part of the village (excluding Thomley and Waterperry Common) consists of 66 households. There are 129 adults (over 18) normally resident in Waterperry and Waterperry Common. Because of problems with the 2011 census data (see page 3) an up-to-date breakdown of the population by age is not available. The 2001 census showed 22% of the population under 16, 15% over 65 and an average age of 41.85.

Our questionnaire results show a fair amount of stability in the population, with a high proportion of people having lived here for over 20 years (see page 11). Although many residents do travel out of the village to work (some working in London) a significant proportion do not, working within the village or from home (see page 19), caring for children or are retired. The 2001 census showed 80% of residents aged 16–74 as working. The self-employed and small employers made up 19% of the working population. There was an average of 1.85 vehicles per household (the SODC average in 2011 was 1.6%) probably high due to the lack of public transport.

Within the village itself, there are three farms: Rectory Farm, Manor Farm and Townsend Farm, the first two of which are still traditionally farmed. The Waterperry Estate (formerly home to Miss Havergal's famous horticultural school for ladies) is now owned by the School of Economic Science, which runs residential courses here and also holds Art in Action here each July.

Waterperry Gardens is the main commercial business in the village, with its garden centre, teashop, museum and gallery, as well as its famous ornamental gardens. It runs courses on gardening and arts and crafts and also stages events such as plays and concerts in the grounds.

The Waterperry Estate owns several houses and flats which are occupied by current or retired employees. Townsend Farm also has a number of converted farm buildings which were originally used by businesses, but are now all residential, and Manor Farm also lets a few properties. Most of the houses built on Green Ground as council houses are now privately owned. The 2001 census showed 4.6% of houses in the parish as social rented. It showed most houses in the village as owner-occupied (70%) with 26.5% of properties either privately rented or held rent free. This proportion (privately rented or rent free) has now increased to 38% of households in the village (excluding Waterperry Common), well above the SODC average for 2011 of 14%.

The church stands next to Waterperry House, and its churchyard serves as the village burial ground. The Waterperry Estate kindly allows the village to use their classrooms for village events in place of a village hall. The parish council owns a marquee which is used for village events in summer and can be hired by residents. Since its purchase by the parish council in 2008, the red telephone kiosk has been used for a wide variety of displays and uses, helping us to win a £1000 prize from BT in 2009, and creating local media interest.

Waterperry extends along a single road and lacks a ‘centre’ where people gather. There is no pub, school, shop or bus stop to bring residents together, unless they have a dog to walk or go jogging. People rely on cars to get around, which does not encourage social contact. However, preparing the village plan has prompted us all to think about our village – what we like about it and what could be improved – and what we would like to see happen here in the future. It has also prompted many villagers to volunteer to work together to bring about these improvements for our community.

5 The role of existing committees

Waterperry has both a parish council and a parochial church council (PCC).

The PCC deals with affairs linked to the management and maintenance of the church and the village burial ground. The fundraising events organised by the PCC (including quiz nights and the summer concert) mean that it is actively involved in the social life of the village.

The parish council is responsible for liaising with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and with other bodies on issues that affect the village. Much of its work involves reacting to communications from these bodies, though it can also be proactive on issues that affect the village. It raises funds by means of a precept which is added to our council tax bills. The parish council is also involved in the planning and organising of some social events in the village including Bonfire Night.

In the past Waterperry also had a village hall committee. When the village hall was demolished for safety reasons, control of the village hall fund (generated through past fundraising) was transferred to the parish council to be used for appropriate recreational or educational purposes. The trusteeship of the recreation ground has also passed to the parish councillors and clerk.

6 The process – how we set about producing the village plan

6.1 ORCC briefing and establishing a steering group

Following a briefing from Anton Nath of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), a steering group of seven villagers was established in July 2012 to oversee and co-ordinate the production of the village plan. A constitution was agreed and members were appointed to specific roles.

The steering group was set up with the backing of the parish council, who agreed that a new body was required to take on this role. The parish clerk took on the role of clerk to the steering group and provided liaison between the two bodies.

A leaflet was distributed in August 2012 to all households informing them about the village plan and seeking volunteers to help progress it. This was followed by an open meeting in September 2012, after which two more members joined the steering group.

6.2 The initial survey

It was decided to canvas opinions from residents on which topics they would like to see addressed in the village plan by means of an initial survey. This was an ‘open’ consultation carried out in November 2012 which encouraged residents of all ages to put forward topics, with only a few general headings suggested to prompt ideas. It also asked what people liked about the village and what they felt could be improved.

Although we were pleased with the response, the rate of around 50% could not be exactly quantified since the number of survey sheets sent out had not been precisely controlled. Because of its unstructured nature, we could not produce reliable quantified data from it, but it did give a good idea of areas of concern on which to base a more detailed consultation.

6.3 Presenting the results and establishing working groups

The data from the initial survey was analysed and grouped under topics. This formed the basis for a presentation at a village meeting on 24th March 2013 which was well attended.

Volunteers were recruited to form six working groups to explore the following topics further: travel and transport; landscape and environment; development and planning; communication and administration; amenities; and social events. Villagers who could not attend the meeting were kept informed by means of the parish magazine and the village website.

6.4 The role of the working groups

The working groups met individually during April and May 2013 to explore their topics further and to draft sets of questions to be incorporated in the village plan consultation questionnaire. This built on the initial survey, but asked a series of specific questions to provide quantifiable data on different aspects of these topics.

6.5 Finalising and distributing the questionnaire

The steering group finalised the questions drafted by the working groups and these were checked with ORCC, SODC and OCC. It was agreed to send one copy of the questionnaire to each adult over 18 (based on data from the Electoral Register plus local knowledge). The questionnaires were numbered so that the response rate could be accurately measured. In order to maintain anonymity, a separate volunteers sheet was produced where contact details were supplied. A prize draw was organised to encourage villagers to send back their questionnaires and volunteers sheets on time. The questionnaires were distributed in early December 2013 and replies were returned by January 2014.

6.6 Processing the questionnaire results

65 completed questionnaires were returned and 30 volunteers sheets, giving a response rate of just over 50% for the questionnaire and 23% for the volunteers sheet. This rate was judged to be good, especially considering the relatively high number of short-term lets within the village mentioned in the previous section (see page 8). The results were entered into a spreadsheet and then checked. ORCC was consulted and Anton Nath provided helpful advice on how to present the results. (See note at the start of Section 7 on page 11)

6.7 Writing the draft report and presenting the findings

The results were then written up as part of a draft report and were presented to the village at the Annual Village Meeting on 21 May 2014. Copies of the draft report were also sent to ORCC, SODC and OCC for comments.

6.8 The final report and action plan

Feedback from ORCC, SODC and OCC was very positive and some helpful suggestions were incorporated into the final report and action plan. The plan was reviewed by the steering committee in May 2014 and finalised for printing in July. It was agreed to hold a launch event, to distribute one copy to each household and to place the report on the village website. It was decided to review progress on the action plan after three months.

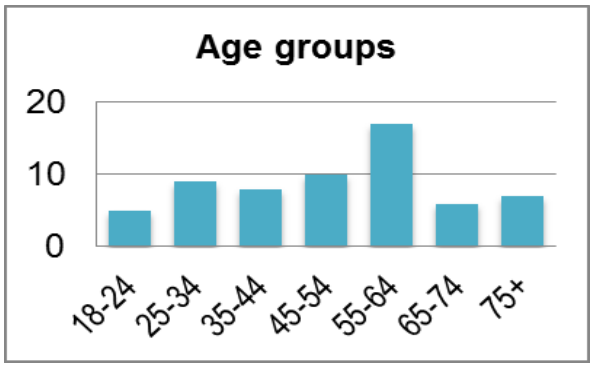
7 What the questionnaire results tell us

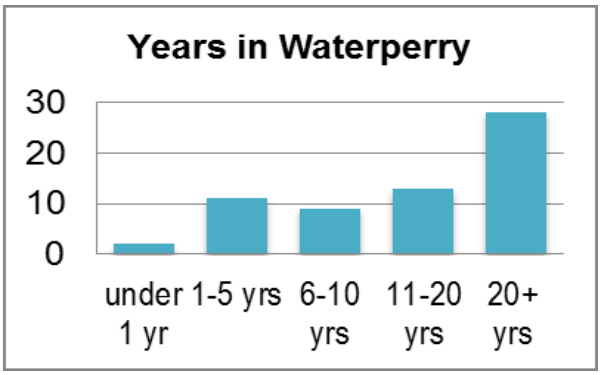
Note: *Numbers of respondents are given in the graphs below. Where percentages are given, these are based on the number of respondents who answered a particular question.*

For several questions a number of options were presented which were not mutually exclusive; in these cases respondents were free to tick all appropriate options.

7.1 The respondents

The numbers of men and women who responded to this question were identical. There was a wide spread of ages, although the largest age group was 55-64, which accounted for just over a quarter of respondents. Particularly interesting was the length of time people had lived in Waterperry, with nearly half (44%) of respondents having lived here for over 20 years and 20% between 11 and 20 years. These results lend some support to the theory (see page 10) that those in short-term lets may have chosen not to respond to the questionnaire.



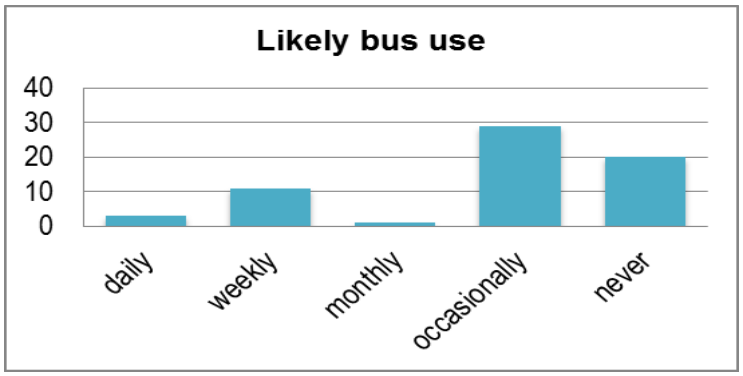


7.2 Village road and transport

Public transport

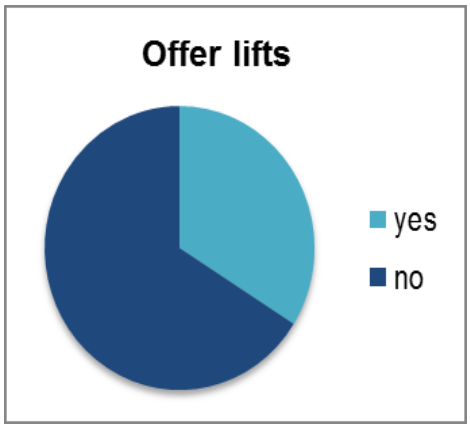
One of the main negative features of living in Waterperry suggested by the initial survey was the lack of a bus service. In the past there were four buses a day in each direction along the route from Aylesbury to Oxford, via Thame, Shabbington, Worminghall and Wheatley. These buses stopped at the entrance to the village on demand. The timings allowed people to use the service to get to work and for children to travel to school. The service was originally subsidised by both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, but Oxfordshire then withdrew its funding. For a while Buckinghamshire continued to subsidise the route but now the service terminates in Worminghall. In this respect Waterperry has suffered because of its position on the border of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Although the bus services from nearby Wheatley are good, there is no link from Waterperry to access the public transport network. This means that residents are forced to drive or obtain lifts to access all services, although transport is provided to the local schools in Wheatley. Even the elderly, entitled to free public transport, are not able to access the public transport network.

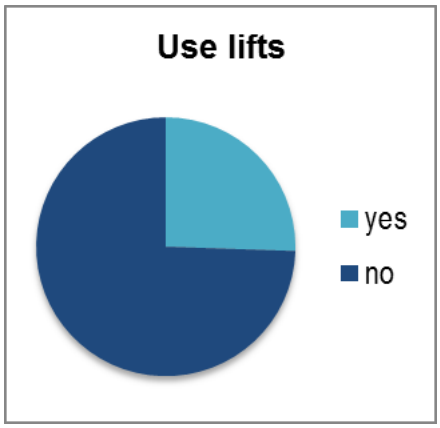
There was clear interest in using a bus link to Wheatley. Almost a quarter of respondents said that they, or members of their family, would use the service regularly – daily, weekly or monthly – with almost half saying they would use it occasionally.



Lift sharing

With regard to a lift-sharing scheme, 18 respondents said they would be prepared to offer lifts and 12 said they would use such a service.



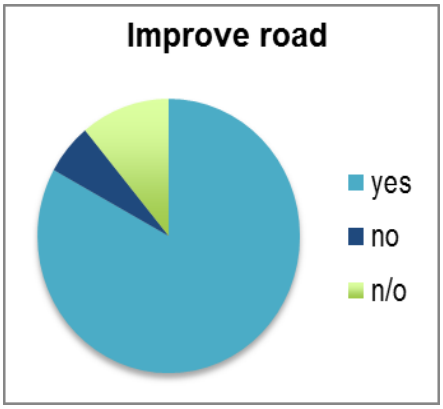


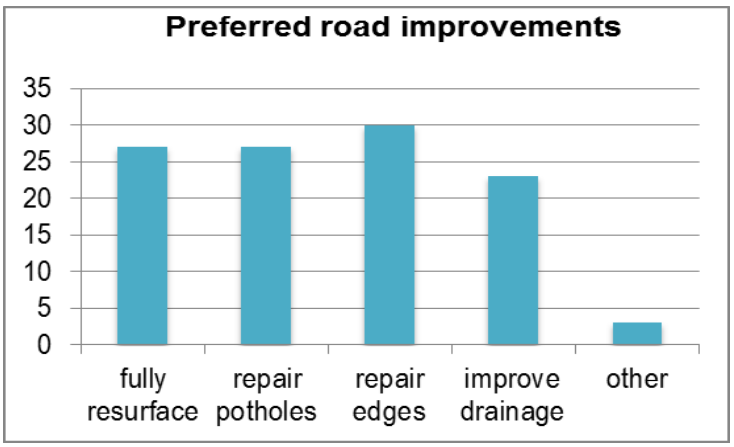
Road

The village road carries far more traffic than it was designed for. This includes large farm vehicles as well as heavy lorries, coaches and cars visiting Waterperry Gardens. The verges have deteriorated greatly in recent months due partly to the wet winter and partly to two building projects which have been underway near the bend in the village. Flooding has also been an issue over recent months, particularly on the main road towards Worminghall, opposite Holbeach.

In the initial survey, the poor condition of the road and the verges was raised by a large number of people, as was the volume of traffic, type of traffic and road safety. For this reason we included a range of options to help us to clarify what action residents favoured.

The questionnaire results showed that the condition of the village road caused concern to most respondents (83%). Repairing potholes* and fully resurfacing the road were supported by equal numbers of people (27) and 30 people wanted the subsided edges of the road repaired. 23 people wanted improved drainage to prevent flooding.





* potholes can be reported online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/potholes

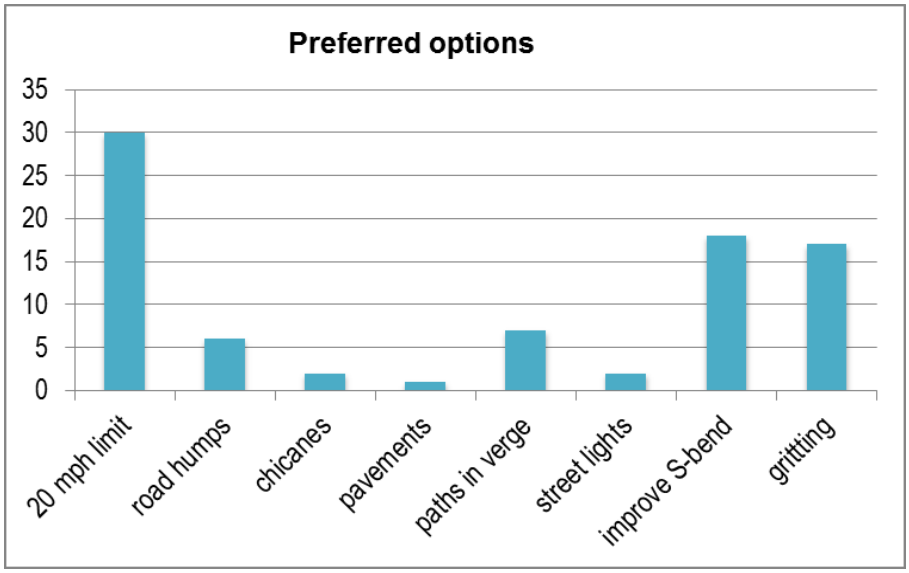
Recommendations:

- Parish council to explore feasibility of establishing a bus link to Wheatley or other transport options, liaising with neighbouring councils where appropriate
- Establish group of volunteers to explore feasibility of a lift-sharing scheme
- Parish council to press for repair of village road – potholes repaired and/or fully resurfaced – and subsided edges repaired
- Parish council to press for improvements to drainage of road

Road safety

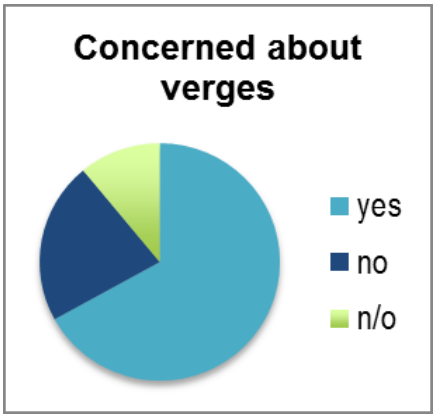
Road safety was considered a problem by 57% of respondents. Of these, 30 people favoured a lower speed limit of 20mph. Improving visibility on the S-bend was seen as important by 18 people and gritting in winter by 17. Paths within the verges were favoured by 7 people, but there was limited enthusiasm for road humps, chicanes or street lighting.

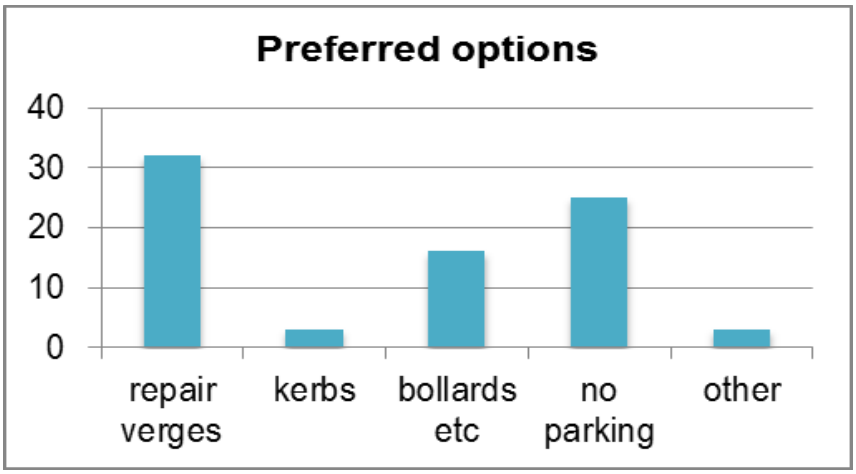
A traffic census to provide more information to aid road safety was favoured by 23 respondents and 12 people volunteered to help with such a survey.



Verges

The impact of traffic and parking on the verges was seen as a problem by two thirds of respondents. 32 people wanted to see the verges repaired and 25 wanted a request made for people not to park on the verges. The placing of bollards or other objects on verges to protect them was favoured by 16 respondents. Kerbs were not a very popular option.





Recommendations:

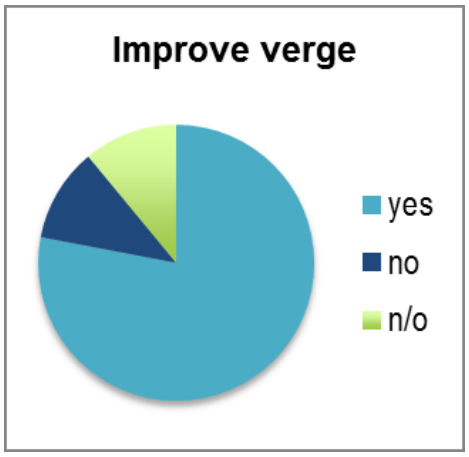
- Parish council to explore adoption of 20mph speed limit for village road
- Parish council to press for cutting back vegetation on S-bend to improve visibility
- Parish council to request residents not to park on verges
- Establish group of volunteers to organise a traffic census

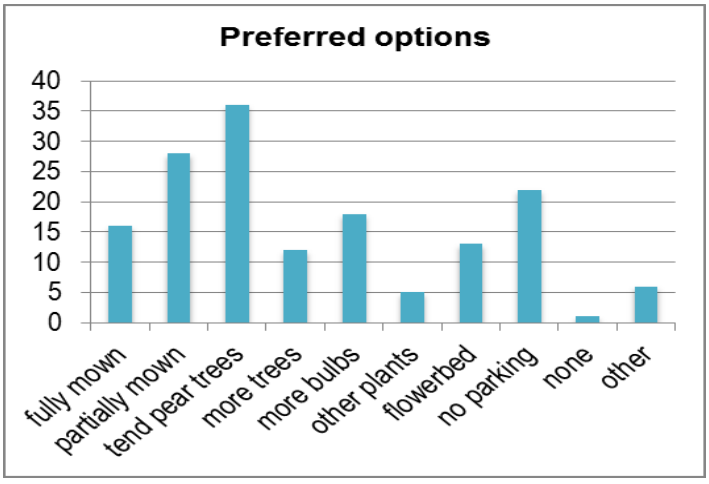
7.3 Landscape and environment

The initial survey revealed that residents valued the rural nature of the village and were particularly keen to maintain and enhance the green spaces within the village, especially the wide verge at the entrance to the village. The footpaths were also valued and seen by some as in need of improvement. We therefore included a range of options to help us to clarify what action residents favoured.

Wide village verge

The wide verge at the entrance to the village is clearly valued and many respondents (78%) wanted to see it maintained and improved. Most respondents (28 people) wanted paths mown through the verge to encourage wild flowers rather than full mowing (16 people). 36 respondents wanted the pear trees to be maintained and the hedge cut back. 18 people thought more bulbs should be planted and 13 thought a flowerbed by the village sign was a good idea. 22 people wanted a request made to stop people parking on this verge.





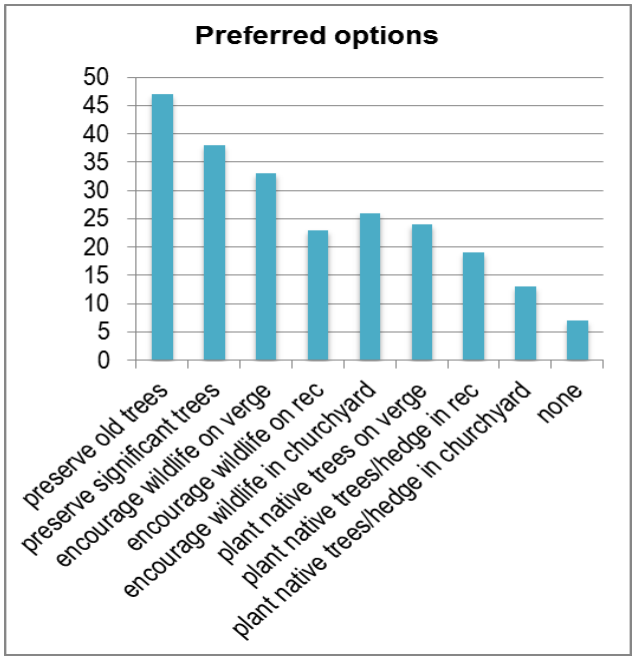
Recommendations:

- Parish council to organise partial mowing of wide village verge
- Establish group of volunteers to co-ordinate action on wide village verge maintenance and improvement

Trees and wildlife

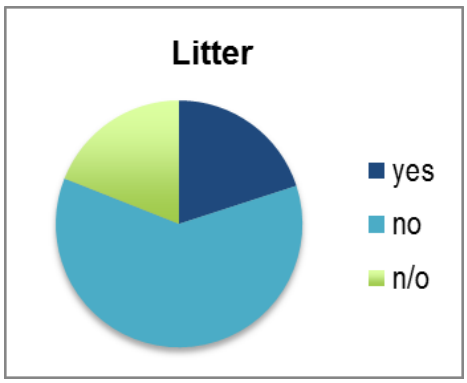
The mature trees in the village are seen as a positive asset, with 47 respondents wanting ancient trees to be preserved and 38 wanting other significant trees preserved.

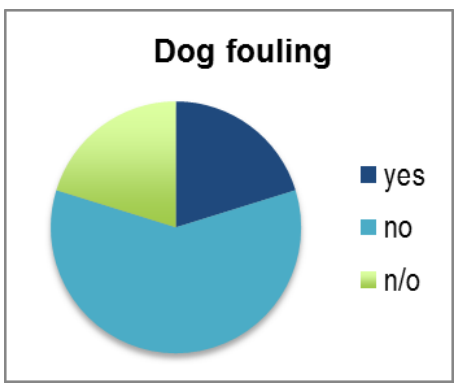
There was support for encouraging wildlife on the wide village verge from 33 people and to a lesser extent in the recreation ground (23) and churchyard (26). There was support for native tree planting on the wide village verge from 24 people and to a lesser degree in the recreation ground (19) and churchyard (13). 16 people volunteered to help with a tree, hedgerow and wildlife survey.



Litter/dog fouling

Litter was not seen to be a major problem in the village, but 20 people were willing to help out with a twice-yearly litter pick up. Dog fouling was not seen generally as a problem in the village.





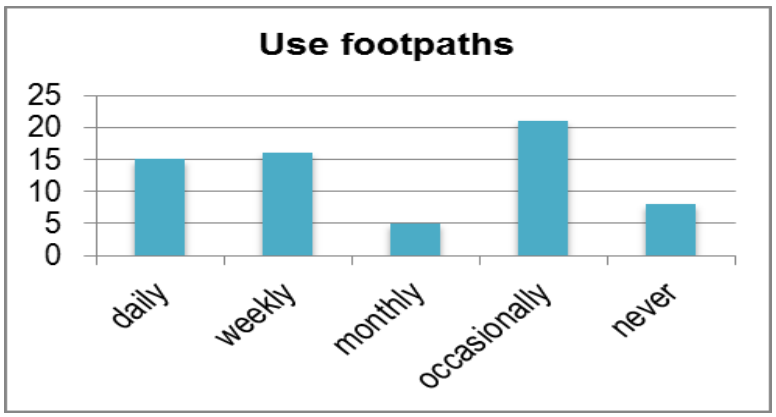
Recommendations:

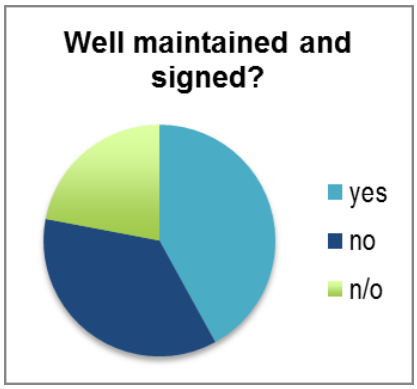
- Establish group of volunteers to carry out tree and wildlife survey
- Parish council to co-ordinate volunteers for twice yearly litter pick up

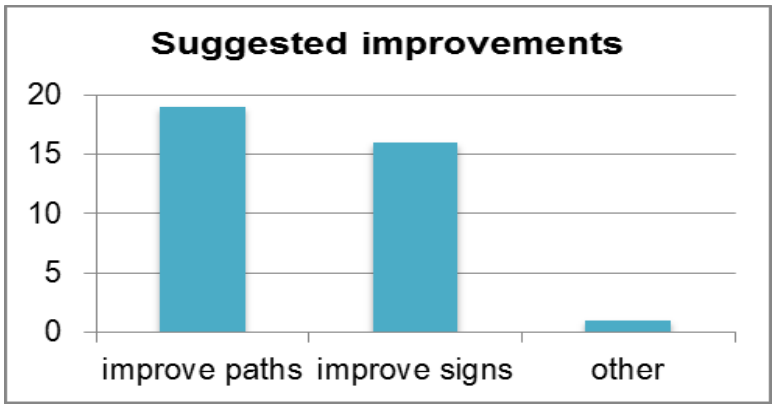
Footpaths*

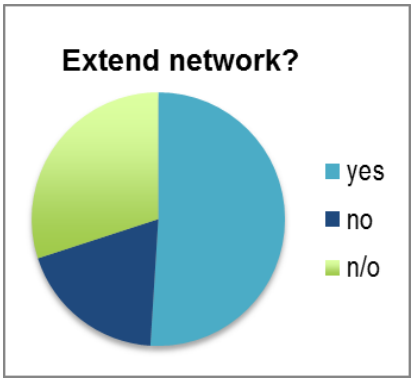
Local footpaths are in regular use by over half of respondents, with nearly a quarter using them daily. Opinion was divided on whether the footpaths are adequately maintained and signed, with 27 satisfied and 23 feeling there was room for improvement. 19 people wanted footpaths improved and 16 wanted better signage.

Almost half of respondents would like to see the footpath network extended and there were 16 volunteers to help progress footpath improvements.









*This consultation was completed in December 2013, before winter floods caused significant damage to the footpath to Waterstock just before Bow Bridge. SODC have been contacted by the parish council and some temporary repair work has been carried out.

Recommendations:

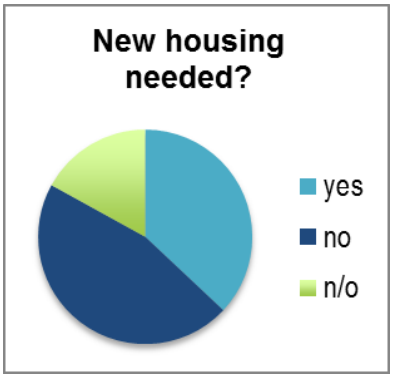
- Parish council to press for full repair of footpath to Waterstock
- Establish group of volunteers to co-ordinate action on footpath improvements

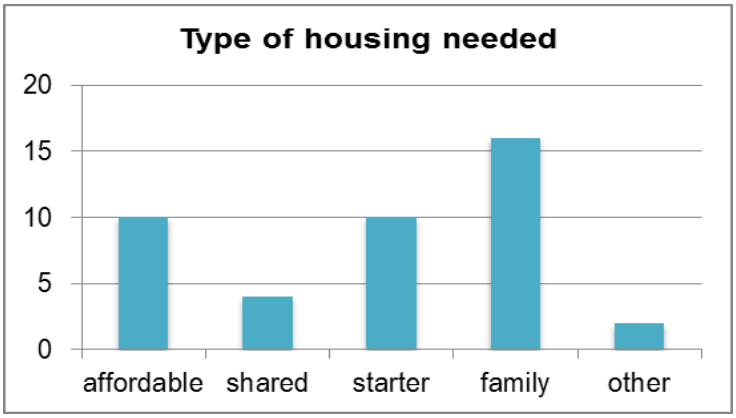
7.4 Development and planning

The initial survey showed that one of the things people valued most about Waterperry was its unspoilt character. Given the recent changes to the planning laws in favour of sustainable development, it was thought important for the village to express its views on what level of development, if any, was appropriate for the village. In the initial survey many people suggested that the village should become a conservation area, so a question on this issue was also included.

Housing

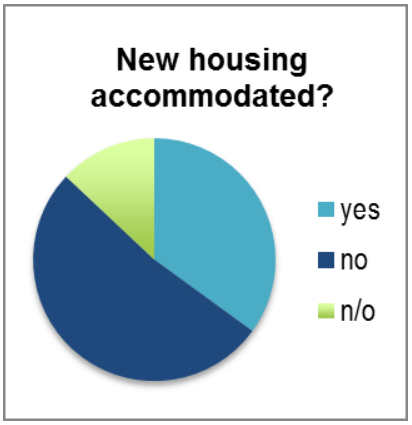
Nearly half of respondents (30 people) felt that there was no need for new housing in the village. Of those that felt new housing was needed, 16 favoured family homes, 10 favoured affordable housing and 10 starter homes.

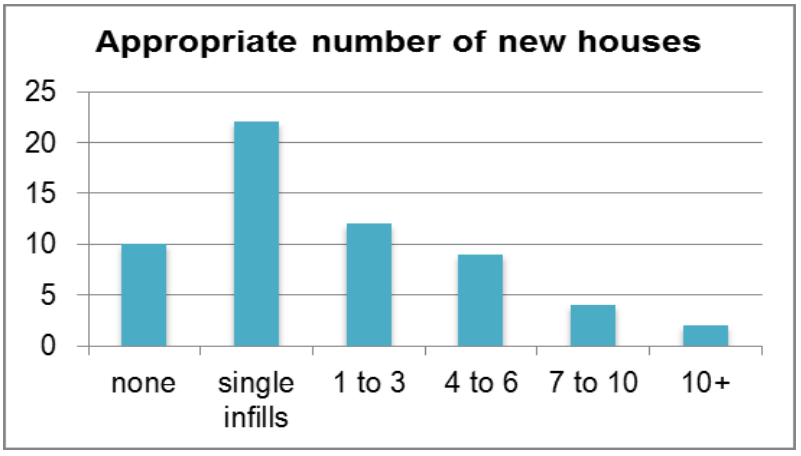




When asked if the village could accommodate new housing, just over half of respondents (32 people) felt it could not.

When asked to specify an appropriate level of new housing for the village, the consensus was for only very limited development. Over half of respondents (32 people) wanted none or single infills only and three-quarters (44 people) wanted no more than three additional houses to be built. 9 people favoured 4-6 new houses and 4 people thought 7-10 houses would be acceptable. Only 2 people favoured more than 10 houses.



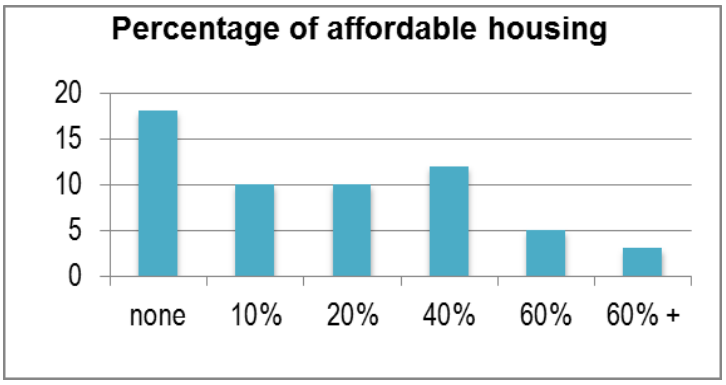


Recommendation:

- Parish council and SODC to take account of the views expressed on limiting development when making recommendations and taking planning decisions

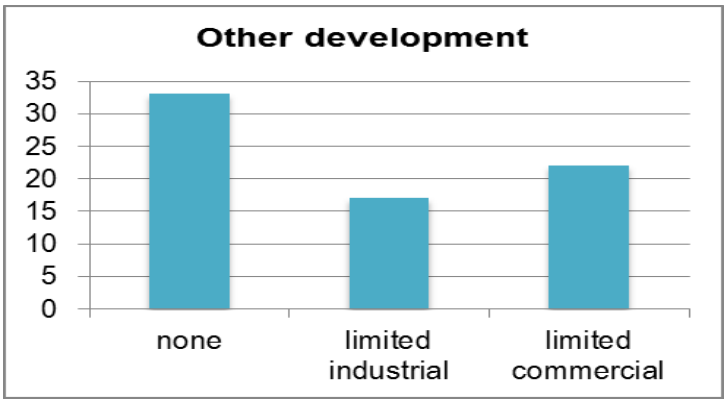
Affordable housing

When asked about the appropriate percentage of affordable housing in any new development, nearly a third of respondents (18 people) wanted none, though just over half felt that between 10% and 40% was appropriate.



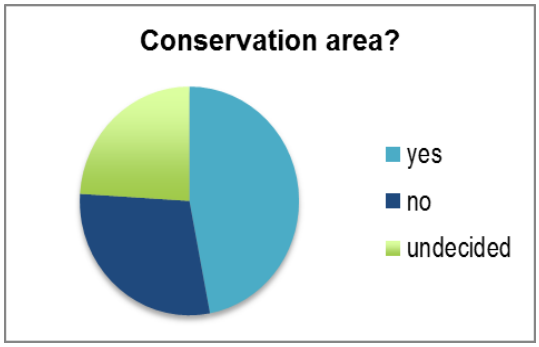
Other development

When asked about other types of development for the village, just over half of respondents (33 people) wanted none at all. 17 people felt limited industrial development such as workshops or light industry would be acceptable and 22 felt that limited commercial development such as offices or retail outlets would be acceptable.



Conservation area

Nearly half of respondents (47%, 29 people) favoured exploring conservation status for the village, or part of the village. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%,15 people) were undecided or wanted more information about this issue. 29% of respondents (18 people) were opposed to conservation area status.



Recommendation:

- Parish council to explore conservation area status for the village or part of the village

7.5 Communications and services

Broadband

Broadband speed was a topic raised frequently as a problem in our initial survey.

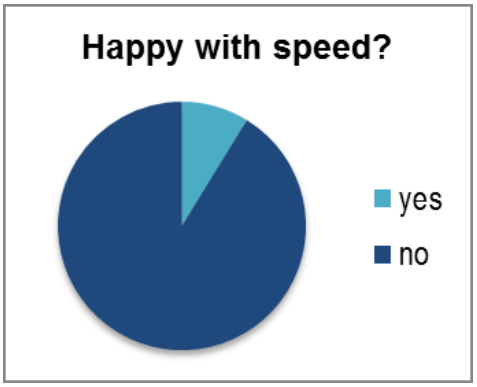
This problem is due to the following factors:

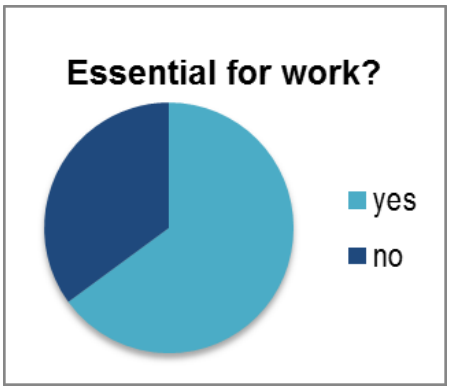
- *The age of the BT exchange in Ickford*
- *The distance from the BT exchange to the village*
- *Old cabling from the exchange to the village*
- *The small size of the village.*

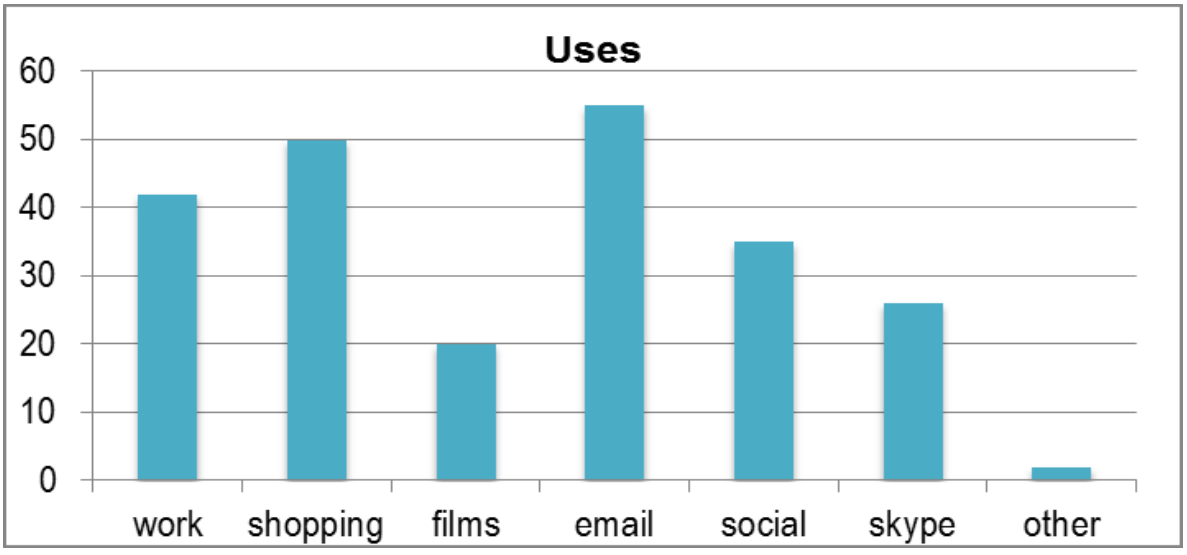
Currently BT has no plans to upgrade the infrastructure to the village.

Although Oxfordshire is planning to improve rural broadband services, our exchange lies in Buckinghamshire and we are unlikely to benefit from these improvements.

Most respondents (90%) had internet access and of these 91% (52 people) were unhappy with their broadband speed. Broadband is used by villagers for a wide range of purposes, with email and shopping the most prevalent. However, 42 respondents used broadband to work from home and 37 said that broadband was essential for their work. 20 people volunteered to join a group to help improve broadband provision in the village.





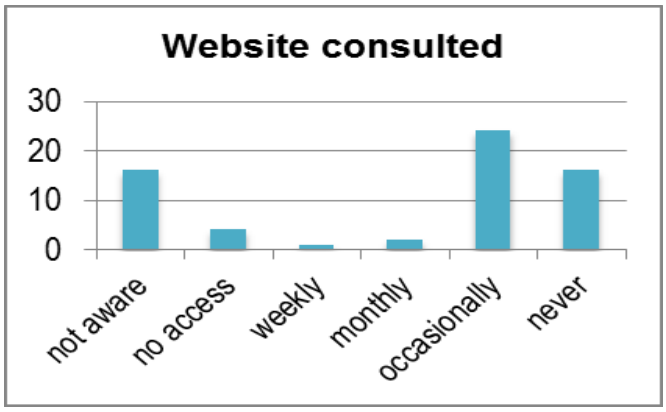


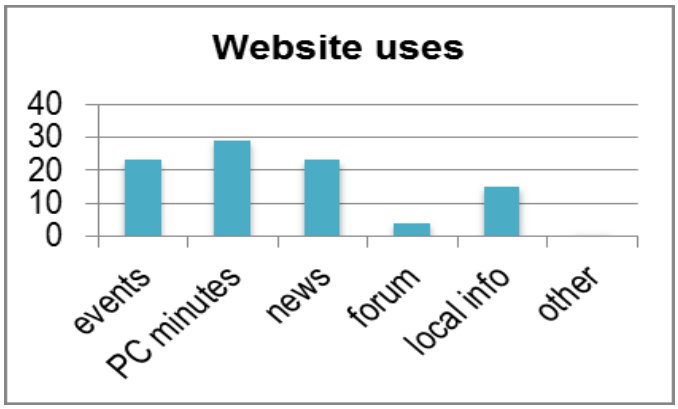
Recommendation:

- Establish group of volunteers to press for improved broadband speed, working with neighbouring villages where appropriate

Village website

A quarter of respondents were not aware of the village website (www.waterperry.org), though over a third used the site occasionally. 12 respondents were keen to see the website improved. The website was seen as useful for accessing parish council minutes and for local news and events. 19 people wanted to be updated by email about information on the website. There was only limited interest in connecting to the website twitter feed.

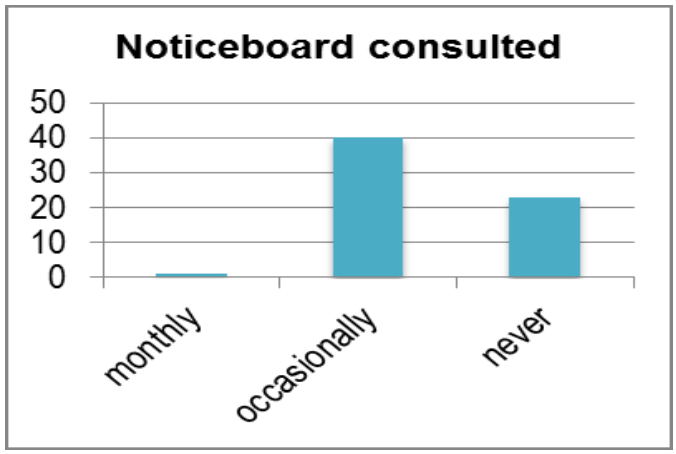




Noticeboard/Phone box

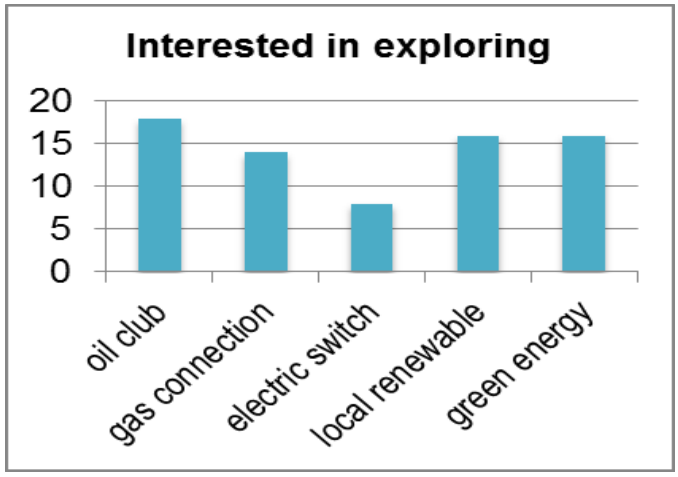
The village noticeboard is consulted only occasionally by 62% of respondents, and over a third never consult it. Nearly half of respondents (28 people) thought a noticeboard on the outside of the phone box would be useful.

There were 8 volunteers to put on occasional displays in the phone box.



Energy supply

18 people expressed interest in joining an oil-buying club* and 14 were keen to explore a village gas connection. 16 people were interested in exploring options for green energy and local power generation. 8 people were interested in exploring collective electricity switching. 12 people volunteered to help explore these options.



* An ORCC oil-buying group has recently been set up in the village.
For details see: www.oxonrcc.org.uk/home/bulk-oil-buying-scheme

Recommendations:

- Parish council to continue improvements to village website
- Parish council to explore placing new noticeboard on phone box
- Establish group of volunteers to explore gas link to village and other energy options

7.6 Amenities

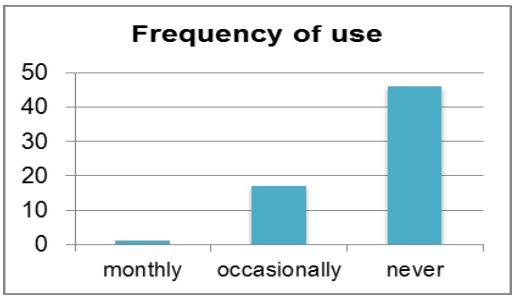
Waterperry is a village with few amenities – it lacks a shop, pub or a village hall to act as a meeting point. It does, however, have a garden centre and teashop, and Art in Action in July, seen by many residents in our initial survey as positive features of life in the village.

It is fortunate also in having the use of classrooms, generously provided by Waterperry House, for village meetings and social events, a situation clearly appreciated by residents. This means that the village does not have to bear the cost of running a village hall. A marquee was purchased by the parish council in 2008 to use for social events.

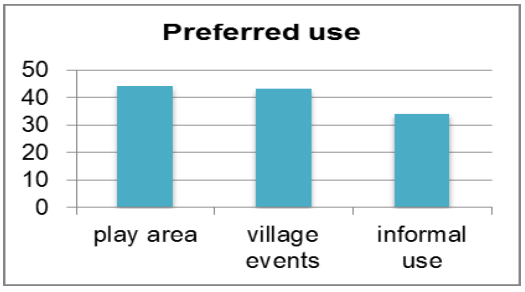
Waterperry does have a recreation ground (the site of the now-demolished village hall) with new children's play equipment recently installed. It also has a picnic table, a bench and a football goal. The parish council decided in January 2013 to purchase new play equipment for the recreation ground using the Village Hall Fund and funds raised by increasing the parish precept for 2013-14. Additional funds have recently been obtained from SODC to help with the cost of this project. The mowing and insurance cover for the recreation ground is paid for by the parish council from the precept and has in the past formed a major part of annual expenditure.

Recreation ground

For many years the recreation ground has been woefully underused, with nearly three-quarters of respondents saying they never use it. Just over a quarter said they use it occasionally. With the current level of use it is debatable whether the recreation ground is an asset or a liability. However, with the installation of new play equipment, it is to be hoped that usage will increase.



It is clear from the questionnaire that respondents would like to see the recreation ground used as a venue for a range of social events and not just as a playground for children. However, the lack of services such as power, water and toilets means that the location is not ideal for holding some village events.

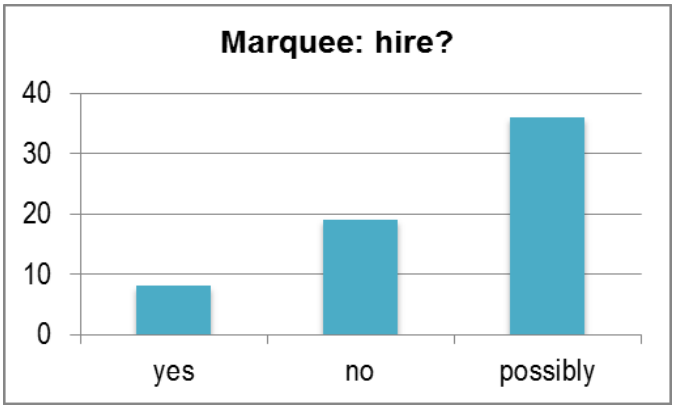


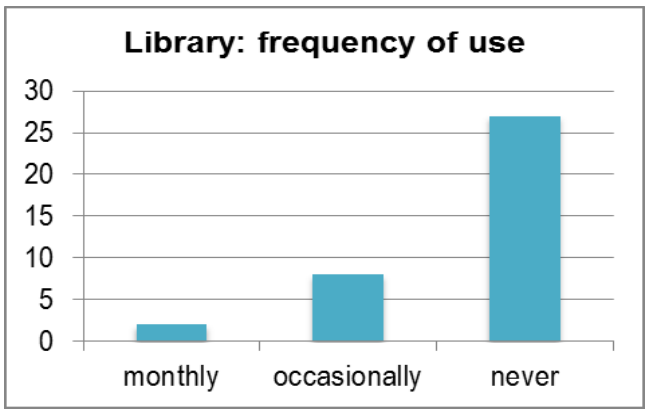
Recommendation:

- Establish management committee of volunteers to encourage wider use of recreation ground and to mitigate costs to taxpayers through fundraising

Marquee

Two thirds of respondents were aware of the fact that the parish council owns a marquee, used for village events and available for hire (by contacting the parish clerk). Nearly three-quarters of respondents felt that they might wish to hire it in the future.





Mobile library*

Although most respondents (59%) were aware of the mobile library (calling on alternate Wednesdays at 9.30 -9.45 am, parking in Waterperry car park), only 2 people use it regularly and 8 people use it occasionally.

15 people felt that they might use it if it called at another time. A more central location might also increase usage.

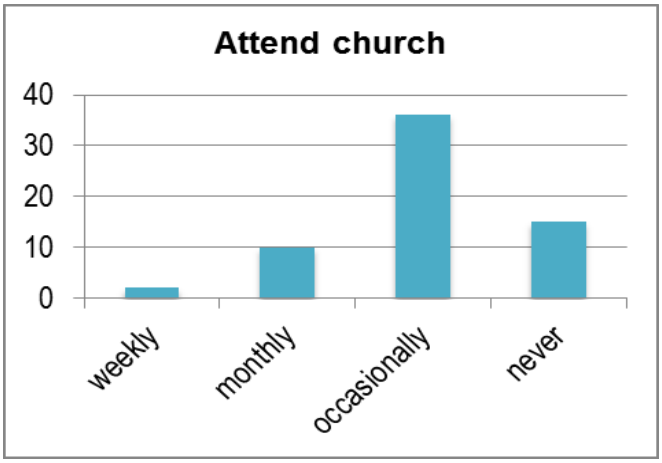
* For details and timetable see: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/mobile-libraries

Recommendation:

- Parish council to explore changing time and location of mobile library

Church

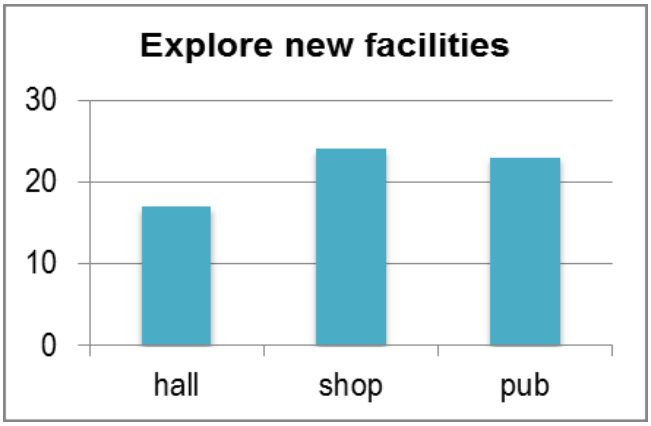
Only 10 respondents attended church regularly and 36 occasionally, with 15 people never attending. 4 people felt that they would be more likely to attend if the services were at a different time. 24 people felt that it would be a good idea to use the church for a wider range of purposes such as concerts.



Other facilities

There is clear interest in exploring the possibility of new facilities within the village.

There was interest in exploring the feasibility of a shop from 24 people, a pub or social club from 23 people and a village hall from 17 people. 7 people volunteered to help explore these options.

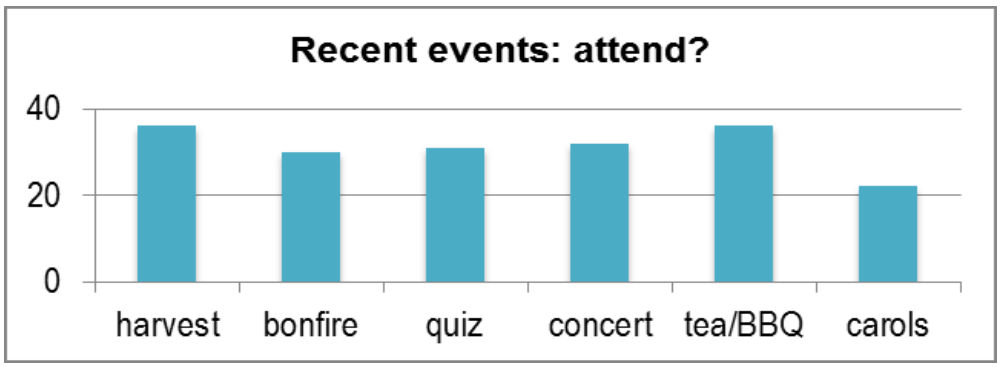


Recommendations:

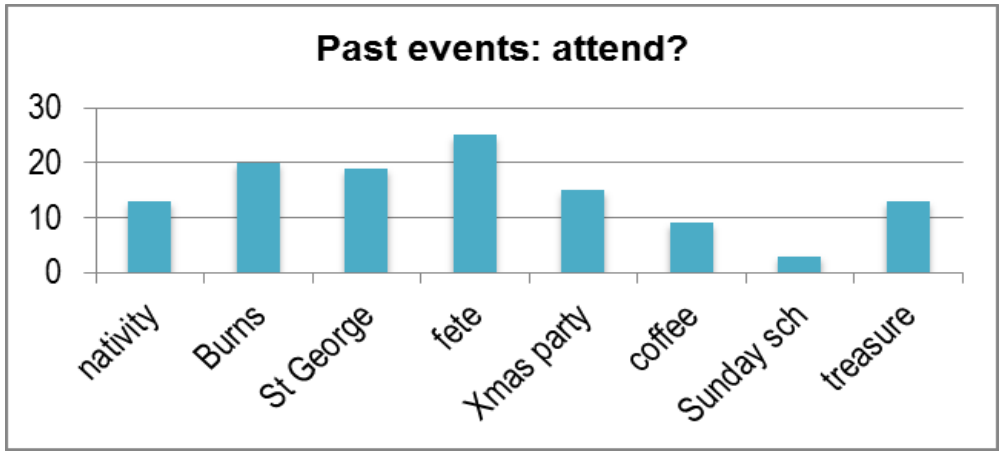
- PCC to explore using the church for a wider range of events
- Establish group of volunteers to explore feasibility of a shop, pub/social club and village hall

7.7 Social events

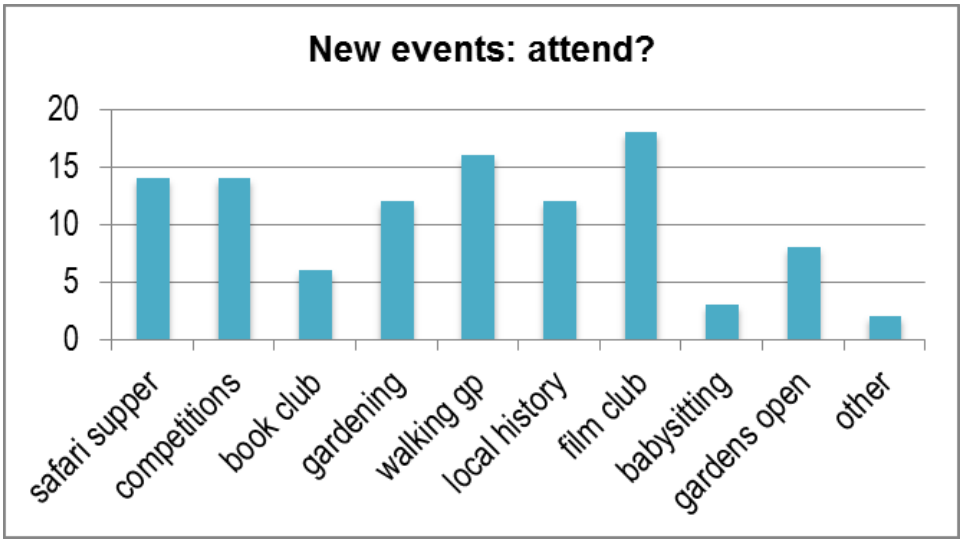
There is clear enthusiasm for more village events. Respondents were presented with a list of current or recent social events, or ones that have been a success in the past. As can be seen from the responses below and on the next page, most of these suggestions appealed to sufficient respondents who indicated a willingness to attend or, even more important, to help out with them.



In addition to the regular events (harvest supper, bonfire night, quiz night, summer concert, village tea party/barbecue, carol singing around the village) other popular ideas included a summer fete, and Burns Night and St George's Day suppers.



As regards suggestions for new groups and clubs, a film club and walking group were the most popular ideas, but inter-village competitions or events, a gardening club and safari supper were also seen as attractive options.



Recommendations:

- Establish social committee to plan and co-ordinate social events within the village, using volunteers to help to organise these events
- Establish groups of volunteers to progress suggestions for new clubs and groups within the village

8 Action plan

Action	By whom	Priority
Road and transport		
Explore feasibility of bus link to Wheatley or other transport options, liaising with neighbouring councils where appropriate.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Explore feasibility of a lift-sharing scheme.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Press for repair of village road – potholes repaired and/or fully resurfaced – and subsided edges repaired.	Parish council	HIGH
Press for improvements to drainage of road.	Parish council	HIGH
Explore adoption of 20mph speed limit for village road.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Press for cutting back vegetation on S-bend to improve visibility.	Parish council	HIGH
Request residents not to park on verges.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Establish group to organise a traffic census.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Environment		
Organise partial mowing of wide village verge.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Establish group to organise wide village verge maintenance and improvement.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Establish group to organise tree and wildlife survey.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Press for full repair of footpath to Waterstock.	Parish council	HIGH
Establish group to press for footpath improvements.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Co-ordinate volunteers for twice yearly litter pick up.	Parish council and volunteers	MEDIUM

Action	By whom	Priority
Development and planning		
Take into account the views expressed on limiting development when making recommendations and taking planning decisions.	Parish council/ SODC	HIGH
Explore conservation area status for the village or part of the village.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Communications and services		
Establish group to press for improved broadband speed, liaising with neighbouring villages where appropriate.	Volunteers	HIGH
Continue improvements to village website.	Parish council	MEDIUM
Explore placing a new noticeboard on outside of phone box.	Parish council	LOW
Establish group to explore gas link to village and other energy options.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Amenities		
Establish management committee to encourage wider use of recreation ground and to mitigate costs to taxpayers through fundraising.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Explore changing time and location of mobile library.	Parish council	LOW
Explore using the church for a wider range of events.	PCC	MEDIUM
Establish group to explore feasibility of a shop, pub/ social club and village hall.	Volunteers	MEDIUM
Social		
Establish social committee to plan and co-ordinate social events within the village, using volunteers to help to organise these events.	Volunteers	HIGH
Establish groups to progress suggestions for new clubs and groups within the village.	Volunteers	HIGH

Appendix

Members of the steering group

Barrie Axford (chair)

Adrian Cave (clerk)

Kit Arnold (publicity/writer)

Tricia Hallam (publicity/writer)

Kendall Turner (treasurer)

Sue Fonge

Jonathan Hawes

Katie Parsler

Carolyn Saunders

Members of the working groups

Road and transport

Adrian Cave, Frances Axford, Adrian Peake, Sue Parker

Landscape and environment

Jonathan Hawes, Adrian Cave, Chris Evans, Sue Parker, Tricia Hallam, Carolyn Saunders, Will Selmes

Development and planning

Tricia Hallam, Dean Fonge, John Einig, Chris Evans, Sue Parker, Barrie Axford, Kendall Turner, Kit Arnold, Will Selmes

Communications and administration

Kendall Turner, Antony Turner, Sue Parker, Carolyn Saunders, Lawrence Wootten

Amenities

Sue Fonge, Katie Parsler, Sarah Fonge, Kit Arnold

Social

Kit Arnold, Katie Parsler, Sue Parker, Carolyn Saunders, Adrian Peake

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