

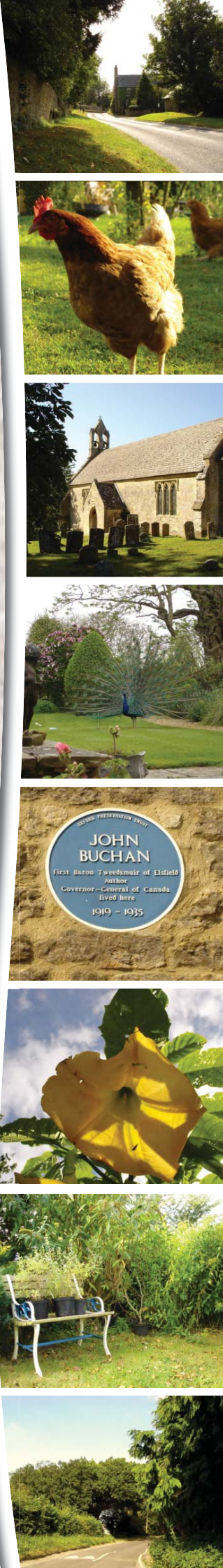


# Elsfield

## Parish Plan Report

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2009



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## Foreword

Parish Plans, growing out of the 2000 Rural White Paper and subsequent Countryside Agency guidance, are intended to serve a number of purposes.

In our case, the main purpose was to develop our community and work towards a consensus about future activities and actions which would enhance the life of the community.

Discussions and consultations among residents have been very positive and although there are a number of recommendations towards the end of the report many ideas have been implemented as the planning process has been running.

If you are new to Elsfield, we hope that this report will explain much of the history and background to the village and its activities.

If you are a resident, it may interest you as a record of the history, past and present, of the village.



## 1. Executive Summary

The government has been encouraging communities to have more input in and influence over local issues. The Rural White paper, published in 2000, proposed Parish Plans as a means of giving local communities the opportunity to make themselves heard. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) have positively encouraged the preparation of Parish Plans and made grants available to assist in this process.

A Parish Plan is a statement of how a community wishes to see its environment developing over the next decade. It should:

- reflect the views of all sections of the community
- identify which features and local characteristics people value
- identify local problems and opportunities
- clearly define how residents want the community to develop in future
- prepare a plan of action to achieve this vision

To this end we have consulted residents by a variety of means, including meetings and questionnaires. The consultation process has identified the following main issues:

- the road running through the village and transport to, from and through the village is a major cause of concern
- the lack of communal outdoor space
- concerns about erosion of the green belt.



Two matters peculiar to Elsfield which have been identified are:

- changes to the social make-up of the village. Historically Elsfield has been a “closed” village (see section 3) but this situation was gradually eroded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and accelerated in 1999 with the sale by Christ Church, the major land owner, of properties which had previously been rented.
- the number and roles of the three administrative units already up and running in Elsfield. We felt the need to define what they did, in order to examine whether they covered all aspects of village life.

## 2. Location and population

The Parish of Elsfield is situated 3 miles north of Oxford and is on the northern boundary of the South Oxfordshire District Council. The main part of the village lies along a road leading from the A40 northern bypass to the B4027. In 1991 changes were made to the boundary and the area from the Bayswater Brook to the A40, formerly in Old Marston, was included in the Parish of Elsfield. This area, known as Mill Lane, consists of three small farms with houses, two residential mobile homes, a traveller site, four private houses and a boathouse. This area is linked to Elsfield village via a bridle path and a footpath. A second boundary review in 2000 provided the opportunity to move the boundary at the northern end of the village to include Forest Farm and its associated buildings which had previously been in the Parish of Woodeaton and had therefore caused much confusion.



The main part of the village consists of 37 houses along the unnumbered village road. It falls into two parts. At one end are the church, four substantial houses, two of which were at one time working farms, and one which remains so, the Manor and its attendant housing, and several cottages. This part of the village lies within a conservation area. At the other end of the village are a substantial modern house, which is the latest building to be erected here (in 1953), a collection of cottages, one house which was formerly a farm, and its attendant outbuildings and which have been converted into a Montessori school. There is a population of something over 100.

## 3. Social make-up of the village

For much of its life Elsfield has been a “closed” village. Such a village is described by historians of the countryside as a place where the land is owned mainly by one, or sometimes two persons or establishments who control who can live in the village. This is in contrast to an “open” village where housing and services change to meet the needs of the local community.

During the past three hundred years the parish of Elsfield has been owned by the North family, resident in Kent, then Herbert Parsons, an Oxford banker, and since 1919 mainly by Christ Church College, Oxford. At that time the Manor and its attendant cottages and some land were split off from the bulk of the parish and sold to John Buchan, whose family subsequently sold it to Mrs Lane (Miriam Rothschild). The manor house itself was later divided into three apartments, with the outbuildings converted



into two dwellings. Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, therefore, houses and farms in Elsfield, apart from the Manor, were let to people involved in agriculture or to employees, ex-employees of Christ Church or to a multitude of other professional people.

In 1999 the College decided to sell off many of its properties, which meant that there was an influx of new people. The demographic information subsequently collected in 2007 as part of the Parish Plan process (see Section 5) indicated that 55% of the residents had lived in the village for less than 10 years, with 30% moving in fewer than 5 years previously.

Inevitably the arrival of such a significant number of new residents brought new interests and concerns to the village community and it was clear that new channels of communication and ways of thinking about the needs of the village community were going to develop.

We felt that the concept of the Parish Plan came at an opportune time, in that it would provide a focus to draw together the different elements of the community and develop a new sense of community. New interests and concerns were emerging among the residents, not least the needs of the 18 children who now live here. We felt it was important to explore and arrive at a consensus about how we wanted the village to develop in the future.

We do not want Elsfield to be thought of merely as a place where people sleep and eat, a commuter village. We think that by participating in village life, adults and children alike should be able to gain a knowledge and understanding of this beautiful part of Oxfordshire and to take an active part in its future



## 4. The Process – how we set about working on the Parish Plan

### 4.1 The ORCC briefing meeting and consultation exercise

Against this background of major change, the Chair of the Parish Meeting began to take steps to begin the Parish planning process. During 2006 all village residents were invited to a consultation exercise run by Anton Nath, of the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

Twenty three people took part in this exercise which encouraged us to consider our individual likes and dislikes about Elsfield and living in the village.

The group comprised 74% female and 26% male, with 48% of the group aged 51-75 years old. 38% of the group were aged 26-50 years old and 14% were under the age of 25 (most being school age). There was a good representation of the established residents (32% having lived in Elsfield for more than 16 years) and the relative new-comers (69% having lived in Elsfield for between 0 and 6 years).

We were given 7 topic headings – Crime and Community; Economy and Leisure; Education; Environment; Health; Housing; Transport. Each person wrote short comments on Post-It notes, under the categories of “Like”, “Dislike” or “Neutral” about each topic in relation to the Village. These were stuck on the walls around the Village Room and the comments noted and then weighted based on the number of comments for each topic.

It must be noted that some people commented positively about some topics whereas others commented negatively about the same topic. Whilst the collective comments below may appear to contradict each other, they are the record of individual feelings.



## Results of ORCC consultation exercise

1. Transport – (30% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: There were no positive comments made about transport.
  - b. Dislikes: The quantity of traffic coming through the village, together with the feeling of excessive speed was the biggest issue for the residents, accounting for 63% of the “Dislikes”. Further comments were made about the lack of public transport which particularly affects the older members of the village.
  - c. Neutral: Transport again consumed most (38%) of all neutral comments with issues highlighted around traffic speed, traffic management and the lack of regular public transport to the village.
2. Environment – (29% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: The views from the village and the sense of open space with wildlife evident in an unspoilt and peaceful countryside were highlighted as very important. The sense of community also added to the positive environment that people live in.
  - b. Dislikes: The traffic flow and speed made it difficult (unsafe) to walk through the village, especially with young children. Some people also felt that the lack of a communal playground was a negative factor.
  - c. Neutral: Despite the appreciation of the open space and peaceful countryside, comments were made about the desire for a communal space (such as a playground and central outdoor seating area) that would be a place for everyone. It was noted that any scheme dealing with the road or a communal space should not spoil the natural beauty of the village.
3. Economy and Leisure – (10% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: The closeness to Oxford provided access to many activities in the city. Various formal and informal events (including the book club and monthly beer nights) bring members of the village together.
  - b. Dislikes: A single note confirmed that Elsfield lacked a pub and village shop.
  - c. Neutral: No neutral comments were made.
4. Crime and Community – (17% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: Crime was noted to be very low. The good mix of people from all walks of life supported a strong sense of community spirit, especially when reinforced by events held in the Village Room, Church and other informal events.
  - b. Dislikes: It was felt that the Village Room was cold in Winter (note that since June 2006, new heaters have been installed with great effect to the warmth of the room). It was also noted that the lack of a communal space, a lack of children’s activities and the lack of community groups (theatre group, choir, etc) were negative aspects of the village.
  - c. Neutral: “Something for Everyone” was noted but did not describe whether there was... or was not... something for everyone. It was also noted that the Village sought a consensus of opinion for key matters affecting residents. This reflects the Village Meetings and, indeed, the Parish Plan process that these results were taken from.
5. Health – (4% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: The tranquil surroundings with ambient country sounds, including bird song, were considered positive for the healthy mind, body and soul. With the opportunity to cycle through the village and into Oxford, the Village has other clear health benefits for all.
  - b. Dislikes: Hay fever was an unfortunate effect for some people living in the countryside with wild plants and agriculture all around.
  - c. Neutral: No neutral comments were made.
6. Housing – (4% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: The lack of housing development was seen to be a clear benefit of living in Elsfield. The permitted development was sympathetic to the existing houses.
  - b. Dislikes: No “dislike” comments were made.
  - c. Neutral: Concerns were expressed about the risks of in-filling on old sites where houses had been many years ago but were not in evidence now. This included concerns also about new development. It was also noted that there are few houses suitable for the elderly.
7. Education – (4% of all comments)
  - a. Likes: Many children from Elsfield attended Beckley Primary School or Jan Weller Playgroup in Stanton St John.
  - b. Dislikes: No “dislike” comments were made.
  - c. Neutral: A number of comments were made in regard to using the Village notice board and the Village Room for educational purposes. This included the History Exhibitions which have been held since the inception of the Parish Plan.

#### **4.2 Initial consultation exercise**

Shortly after this meeting an informal group of 5 or 6 residents began to identify the kinds of issues which might be of interest and/or concern to the village. This led to an initial consultation exercise built around a short questionnaire focused on a number of broad areas derived from the ORCC exercise. The questionnaire was delivered by hand by volunteers and collected several weeks later. Responses were obtained from about half the households in the village. They were analysed and feedback prepared for a meeting in October. These areas ranged from recording the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the village to fundraising, and included consideration of ecological issues and the possibility of a range of social events.

This consultation also found the need to clarify the role of the existing committees particularly with regard to social events and fundraising in the village.

#### **4.3 Establishing a formal Steering Group**

A formal Steering Group, comprising nine members, grew out of the original informal grouping of residents and held its first meeting in December 2006. It agreed a constitution and, following the example of DunsTew, agreed that it saw its role as acting 'as a co-ordinating and enabling committee for other village organisations and individuals to participate in the development of an agreed parish plan'. It was important to clarify the role of the Steering Group at the outset and clearly to distinguish it from the role of the other three committees in the village: the Parish Meeting, the Village Room Committee and the Parochial Church Council.

The Steering Group held its inaugural meeting in December 2006 and has met regularly since. Three working groups were set up based around the areas of interest/concern emerging from the initial consultation process: the environment, which covered the road and transport, communications and committees and research into the history of the village.

#### **4.4 The work of the steering group**

The group initially consisted of eight residents, though inevitably for a variety of reasons that number diminished in the course of the formulation of the plan, and, because it was so near to finalisation, it was felt to be easier to carry on with the reduced number rather than appoint others in their place. A list of Steering Group members can be found in Appendix 1.

We would like to note here that the Steering Group discussion and consultations with residents have been very positive and many ideas have actually been implemented as the planning process has been running.

Links were made with and support sought and received from people at SODC and OCC, including Emma Morris at SODC and Kathrin Luddecke from OCC.

Three residents attended one of the ORCC training sessions run by Anton and Aimée Evans which was very helpful.

### **5. Understanding current day Elsfield**

The steering group felt that if we had a better understanding of the amount of change which had happened over recent years we would be able to perform our job more successfully. We therefore tried to find out information about residents' ages, work, length of time in Elsfield, and where we had lived before moving here.

## 5.1 A picture of Elsfield residents in 2007

The table below shows information about the age and work profile of the residents and how long they have lived in the village.

### Age

- Average age is 39 years old.
- 68% under 50 (including nearly 20% under the age of 10)
- 15 people in the village are retired at the time of this survey.

### Work

- Nearly 30% are students (from nursery, primary, secondary and university)
- 3% of the village is involved in farming
- Nearly 30% are involved in professional or academic work allied to those industries based around Oxford.
- As a result, 90% of us travel less than 5 miles to work, which must be a good thing for our collective environmental impact.
- 20% of residents are retired.

### Time in Elsfield

- 22% of current residents were born in the village and
- Over 10% have lived here for more than 40 years.
- 55% have lived here for less than 10 years
- 30% moved in less than 5 years ago.

Before moving to Elsfield, half of us lived within 10 miles of the village with nearly 65% of us living there for less than 10 years. Before that, half of us moved up to 100 miles with a third of us staying for less than 5 years in that location.

We have therefore moved less distance and have stayed longer than in our previous homes, and this bodes well for developing a strong and stable community within Elsfield. People are now establishing their roots in the village, with the current average being 14 years living here.

### Summary

Elsfield has a predominant group of professional and academic workers with many young families moving to the village over the last 5 to 10 years. We have a large group of under-20s and, with work, school and family links to the village and Oxford area, are increasingly likely to stay in the village for a long time.

## 5.2 Existing committees

As has already been mentioned, there were already three committees up and running to administer various village activities. These were:

- The Parish Meeting
- The Village Room Committee
- The Parochial Church Council.

It was immediately obvious that there are two meanings to the word “parish”. One, as in “the Parish Meeting”, refers to a geographical and local authority administrative area. The other, as in “the Parochial Church Council” (where parochial means ‘of the parish’) refers specifically to the Church of England administration.

### **5.2.1 The Parish Meeting**

The village is not big enough to have a Parish Council, and until recently did not have a precept. Similarly to a Parish Council, the Parish Meeting provides an opportunity for residents to discuss local issues, to exercise any statutory functions and to try to influence, where appropriate, the decision makers who deal with issues which affect them. (The parish is a geographical and administrative area, not an ecclesiastical one.) During the period of the Parish Plan process, the Chair of the Parish Meeting sought agreement from residents to institute a precept. This albeit small sum of money will ensure a modicum of support for the Chair and provides a small degree of funding for such activities as the Parish Meeting may wish to support.

### **5.2.2 The Parochial Church Council**

St Thomas of Canterbury PCC is responsible for co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd Anthony Price, in promoting throughout the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. It is also responsible for the maintenance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century parish church in Elsfield. The PCC consists of the vicar, the church wardens, a treasurer and secretary and various lay people. It meets four times a year and welcomes everyone of any denomination or none.

In the 1990s the resignation of the vicar, a dwindling congregation and the enormous cost of the maintenance of the church had begun to render the future of the church problematic. The Parish Meeting decided to invite the Archdeacon to a meeting at which it was agreed that Elsfield should join with St Nicholas, Old Marston, and become the Parish of Marston with Elsfield, thus ensuring that services would continue to be held in the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury.



### **5.2.3 The Village Room Committee**

The Parish Meeting met with the PCC and it was agreed that in order to ensure the use and upkeep of the building and to meet the need within the village for a communal meeting space that a project to convert the west end of the church into a Village Room should be carried out. This meant raising money for a community project, a role which was not appropriate for the Parochial Church Council.

In order to raise the necessary funds clear organisational and financial distance between the church and the community had to be established and the Village Room Committee was accordingly set up in June 2000 to complete the fund raising and the building works. £250,000 was needed, an enormous sum of money for such a small community to raise. The driving force behind the endeavour was Carolyn Brown, of Sescut Farm, one of the two churchwardens, and much of the money raised was through the annual plant sale, matched by grants from SODC and other grant-giving bodies (see Appendix 2).

The Village Room was formally opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire in 2003.

Provision was made in the constitution of this committee for the maintenance of the facility. Therefore, now that the building is operational, the committee continues to need to raise sufficient funding to cover running and maintenance costs, currently running at £4000 a year. This is done by events such as the Harvest Supper, the St George's Day supper, bric-a-brac sales, beetle drives, children's entertainments and Christmas Fairs.



## 6. The working groups

### 6.1 The Environment Group

The Environment Group sought to cover a wide range of issues, from traffic to carbon footprints, but decided in the end to focus mainly on the most pressing issues.

#### 6.1.1 *The road*

The most contentious issue addressed at the original Parish Plan meeting in June 2006 was that of the road, in particular traffic volumes and speed.

In the 1990s many residents had come together to work on the problem of the road. They were concerned about the amount and speed of traffic passing through the village along an unlit road with no footpath. This was to a large extent resolved by the Oxfordshire County Council Highways Authority installing speed bumps with the attendant lighting.



At the time when the idea of a Parish Plan was mooted the Green Road roundabout was in the process of being altered and there was a great deal more traffic passing through Elsfield than had been the case, resulting in damage to the road surface and increasing the danger to pedestrians.

As a result of the anxieties expressed, it was decided to develop a specific questionnaire to ask residents about this particular matter.

The questionnaire and a series of graphs from the results are shown at Appendix 3.

44 completed questionnaires were returned and the results were compiled and annotated before being sent to Malcolm Bowler of the Oxfordshire Highways Agency for his comments.



The village provided a wide range of views about different suggestions. From reducing the speed limit to traffic calming measures (more and better speed bumps, chicanes through the village, road narrowing), and from creating a designated footpath beside the road, to allowing more ducks, chickens, guinea fowl and peacocks to roam the road (as they already have the effect of slowing traffic down).

The liaison with Oxfordshire Highways was provided by the chairman of the Parish Meeting. However, despite a fully involved input from the village, the Oxfordshire Highways Agency determined, for the following reasons, that there was nothing they could do to change what we have.

- There are not enough traffic accidents in the village to warrant a 20mph speed limit.
- The current speed bumps meet the required specifications and do not warrant repairing to make them higher or more pronounced on the edges.
- The idea of putting kerb stones throughout the village, to prevent the embankments being worn away by motorists, was declined as it is considered too “urban” for a village such as Elsfield.
- Any alterations to the road width and to installing chicanes as a method of slowing traffic was also turned down. It was explained that road width restrictions encourage speeding between the chicanes as drivers race to beat any on-coming traffic.
- The idea of a footpath was also declined as being too urban for such a village in the countryside. Any new footpath must comply with regulations that dictate its width and surface type as well as its need to have bobbled sections at passing places to ensure that disabled people can use the path safely. Such a new footpath would look out of place alongside the fields of Elsfield.
- With regard to animals roaming the road, we were informed that the owners of such animals would be held liable if the animals caused a traffic accident. Whilst some animals have been run over in the past, it is a point that we have to heed.

**Recommendation:**

The Parish Plan steering group recommends that a number of points raised by the Oxfordshire Highways Agency, notably the insertion of kerbing at various parts of the village, continue to be challenged through the Parish Meeting as they are not consistent with other neighbouring villages, including Woodeaton.

### **6.1.2 Public Transport**

We have a very clean, pleasant bus service. Unfortunately it is only three times a week, on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 10.30am. The bus goes to Oxford via Headington and Headington Quarry. It returns at 1.30 pm from Oxford but takes a circuitous route through Forest Hill, Stanton St John and Beckley. While going into Oxford takes roughly 20 minutes, the return journey takes 45 minutes.

It is not possible for Elsfield people who work in Oxford to use the bus. Nor is it useful to teenagers, who might want to travel into the city in the evening. It can be used by the elderly providing they are prepared to spend no more than two and a half hours in Oxford and can be of use to people who use the Manor surgery in Headington. We have no public transport to the John Radcliffe Hospital or to the GP service in Islip. Elsfield appears to be the poorest served by public transport of all the villages close to Oxford.

If we and other villages on the outer rim of Oxford had a service which went through the neighbourhood in the morning and evening, traffic flow into and out of Oxford might diminish considerably, contribute to a lessening of congestion within the city and greatly help our collective carbon footprint.



#### **Recommendation:**

That the Parish Meeting presses for a proper bus service which actually fits the needs of the residents. To do that might involve a survey of Elsfield residents' transport needs. It might also involve liaising with other villages in the locality to understand how a bus service to and from Elsfield would fit in with other services provided.

### **6.1.3 Planning**

Elsfield is sometimes called an “unsustainable” village because it is so small. It does not feature in the South Oxfordshire Plan except to mention that there is a beautiful view of the skyline and townscape of Oxford visible from the Elsfield road just south of the village. The District Council supports the City Council in seeking to protect this view of the skyline of Oxford.

Conservation areas are described in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as *"areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"*. Inevitably, these areas will be of many different kinds, ranging from landscaped parks surrounding a historic country house to urban terraced streets or small wayside cottages fronting onto common land. Pleasant groups of buildings, open spaces, trees, an historic settlement pattern, a village green, or features of archaeological interest, may all contribute to the special character of an area, and it is that character, rather than individual buildings, which conservation area legislation seeks to preserve and enhance."

Whilst one half of the village sits within a conservation area, it has been suggested that Elsfield explores the opportunity of extending the conservation area to include the whole village. Given the history of the village, the nature of its buildings, certain notable trees and areas of natural beauty, it is felt that Elsfield would benefit from the protection that a conservation offers against any future building development.

The village has a Planning Committee of three people which reviews all planning applications relevant to the village of Elsfield. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that any proposed plans for development, or change of use, have been considered and commented upon through the official planning channels by the village.

**Recommendation:**

That the Parish meeting should actively explore potential issues concerning planning and the role that conservation would play.

#### **6.1.4 Understanding where we live.**

A lot of positive steps to ensure improved understanding of the farm land in which Elsfield sits have been undertaken, especially through the work of the History Group, as maps of fields and diaries of farming methods have been discovered and displayed at exhibitions.



An excellent guided tour of the farm land which provided an enormous amount of information about the flora and fauna which surrounds the village was generously conducted in 2008 by a member of the farming community, Richard Brown.

In George Clark's "The Manor of Elsfield" written for private publication in 1926, there is a section written by John Buchan about the fauna of the area, and also a very detailed

section on flora. Interest has been expressed in undertaking a similar study now, so we can examine the changes which have occurred over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

**Recommendation:**

That the Parish Meeting should explore the level of interest in forming a group to study the local flora and fauna.

### **6.1.5 Reducing our carbon footprint.**

There was interest in a wide range of issues relating to energy conservation, carbon footprints, recycling, etc., but the time needed to explore and research the feasibility of introducing such matters to the village was beyond that available to Steering Group members. However, we have discovered another Oxfordshire initiative which may provide a way forward should residents decide through the Parish Meeting to participate – i.e. the establishment of a **Community Action Group** <http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/cags>

Each Community Action Group (CAG) is unique to the needs and interests of its community and if one were set up in Elsfield it would be appropriate for it to consider ways we can as a community respond to the pressures of global warming. There are Community Action Group (CAG) officers who would come and talk about community action, setting up a CAG or becoming part of the network.

#### **Recommendation:**

That if the Parish Meeting is interested a CAG should be set up to help our community to respond to the challenge of global warming.

## **6.2 The Communications and Committees Group**

### **6.2.1 Elsfield today**

An analysis of the work and age profile of the village was given in Section 5. A description of the existing committees governing various aspects of activities in the village was also given.

The Steering Group considered ways of rationalising this committee structure, but decided in the end that each fulfilled a separate role and that more transparent communication about these roles was the way to avoid any confusion.

However, the Steering Group was very aware of the importance of the work of the Village Room Committee in securing continuing funding for the valuable communal space which the Village Room affords the community and wished to incorporate this into a recommendation to the Parish Meeting.



#### **Recommendation**

That the Parish Meeting should actively encourage residents to support the Village Room Committee's fund raising process by proposing/participating in events.

### **6.2.2 Network groups**

In order to distribute questionnaires and other information to village residents, each member of the Steering Group adopted a small number of residents and took responsibility for delivering to and collecting information from them. In this way Steering Group members got to know residents they didn't normally meet and residents received information from a personal contact rather than through the letter box.

### **6.2.3 A village news sheet**

Another attempt to keep every one in touch with events in a situation where people don't meet was a village news sheet. However, not surprisingly among such a tiny population most of whom have full time employment, more time than people had available was needed to collect information and reproduce such a publication. In addition, most residents subscribe to the Marston Times, produced by St Nicholas' Church for both Marston and Elsfield parishes, and leaflets and information sheets about events taking place in Elsfield are regularly included in this monthly circulation.

### **6.2.4 Village identity – logo competition**

Soon after Elsfield started its Parish Plan, the committee proposed to create and adopt a visual identity as a positive way of branding all material relating to the plan and wider village matters. This logo would be used on village-related communications within Elsfield and also with external public-sector and private-sector organisations.

A Village Identity competition was set for all residents to enter, under the title "What Elsfield means to me". To encourage all ages to participate, a prize of £20 was offered for the best design from a child (up to 16 years old) and another prize for £20 for those over 16 years old. The winning logo (as used on this document) was created by James Plunket (a member of the Parish Plan Steering Group) who donated the prize money back to the fund.

### **6.2.5 Website**

The village already had a website built by one of the residents a number of years ago. Although not all residents are likely to use the internet, the Steering Group agreed that the original developer should be approached and asked to review the website in the light both of the significant amount of information now available on the history of the village, which would be of significant interest well beyond the village and the potential for improving communication among the majority of residents. The new website, which is still at an early stage of development can be found at [www.elsfield.net](http://www.elsfield.net)

## **6.3 The History Group**

It was very clear from the outset that there was huge interest in researching and compiling a contemporary history of the village. The village was very fortunate to have a resident (Mavis Curtis) with research experience and a great interest in local history.

### **6.3.1 Elsfield's history up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

For such a small village Elsfield has a surprising amount of history. The aim of our project was to give an account of Elsfield in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since a book about the village had already been written by Sir George Clark and circulated privately in 1926. However, there was so much material available from earlier times which had not been published – the census material from 1841 to 1901 for example – that it was difficult to keep focussed on the last century and some work has been done on Elsfield in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which was not covered by Clark.

As Clark has shown, Elsfield was already in existence in the Anglo-Saxon period. He concentrated on the Norman and Medieval periods and shows that Elsfield at the time of Domesday consisted of five slaves, eleven villeins, seven bordars and six others. Women and children would not be listed so this gives a probable population of approximately a hundred. In the succeeding centuries the land appears to have been farmed under the three field system though fields were enclosed earlier than in many places, and by 1703 virtually all the open fields had been enclosed.

In 1690 Sir George Pudsey, MP for Oxford and at that time Lord of the Manor, died and left debts which resulted in his son selling Elsfield to the North family in 1691. In 1703 a map of the parish, now in the keeping of the Bodleian library, was drawn up showing a list of tenants and the rents due to their new landlord.

The Manor was not lived in by the North family but was occupied by Rev Francis Wise. He had been tutor to Lord Guilford who bestowed the Manor and the living on him in 1728. Rev Wise was an antiquarian, described by Boswell, who accompanied Dr Johnson on several visits in 1754, as the "Radclivian librarian".

The estate was first rented then bought from the North estate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Herbert Parsons, part owner of the Old Bank in the High Street, Oxford and the estate remained in the Parsons family until 1919, when the estate was split into two parts. One was the Manor House with four cottages, the outbuildings and the land behind these properties, which were sold to Mr John Buchan, author, politician and later Governor-General of Canada with the title of Lord Tweedsmuir. There is a blue plaque on the wall commemorating his ownership, and his ashes are buried in the churchyard. The rest of the parish was sold to Christ Church College.

Clark's account finishes at this point, so there was plenty more history work to be done.

### **6.3.2 *What the history group has discovered***

In our quest to discover and record what has happened in Elsfield in the intervening years we have made some exciting discoveries. Residents have produced photographs and documents covering periods during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the minute book of the social club in the 1950s, farming diaries covering the last 30 years of the last century, old and not so old photographs of people and events such as the plant sale and the hassocks embroidered for the church in the 1970s.

Long term residents and ex-residents have been interviewed, turning up material with a directness that no amount of document reading can supply: facts such as the smell of apples spread out in the room above the stable at the Manor in Lady Tweedsmuir's time, or the dampness in the Hambidges' cottage which was so bad the wall paper would hardly stick to the walls.

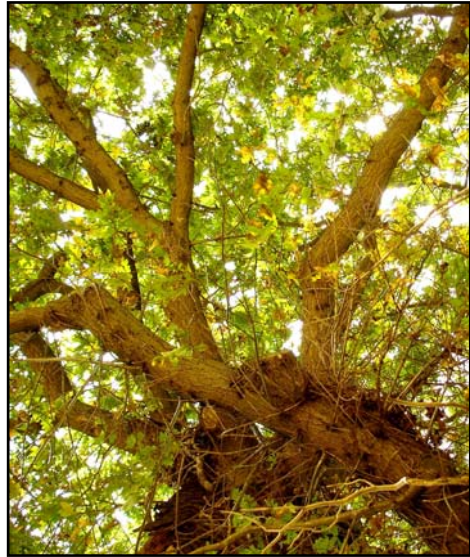
The research seems to have fallen naturally into three sections: the land, the buildings and the people.

### ***The land***

We have acquired copies of a number of maps, from that drawn up in 1703 which shows field boundaries, field names and to some extent ownership, to maps of Elsfield drawn up by the Russians during the Cold War in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We held a competition to guess the age of the “King Charles” oak which until 1991 marked the boundary with Woodeaton Parish. Using a formula developed by the Forestry Commission we estimated it was 334 years old.

Farming practices during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have also been recorded.



### ***The buildings***

We joined the Oxfordshire Building Records who helped us in our understanding of the buildings, and we would like to acknowledge here our indebtedness to John Steane and David Clark for sharing their expertise with us. We have recorded the windows and examined the building materials of the different houses in the village and recorded the work of the thatchers who were re-roofing two of the houses.



### ***The people***

It has been a great pleasure to listen to the accounts of life in Elsfeld from residents past and present. Alongside this, records from the past have been read, among them the school log books and the minutes of the Women's Institute from 1920 to its demise in 1963. Most interesting, perhaps, was a document from the East Kent archive, which gives the condition of the housing, and the numbers and names of people living in Elsfeld in 1824. The census material from the 19<sup>th</sup> century has also been collected and some analysis has been done on it.

The steering group has been extremely supportive of the history project, organising several exhibitions which have aroused much interest. We hope to compile a book with all this material we have collected and to publish on the village web site some of the material, which will be of interest not just to current residents of Elsfeld but also to former residents and their families.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Parish Meeting find somewhere to store the archive we have collected.

## 7. Summary of recommendations

The Parish Plan steering group recommends:

- That a number of points raised by the Oxfordshire Highways Agency, notably the insertion of kerbing at various parts of the village, continue to be challenged through the Parish Meeting as they are not consistent with other neighbouring villages, including Woodeaton.
- That the Parish Meeting press for a proper bus service which actually fits the needs of the residents. To do that might involve a survey of Elsfield residents' transport needs. It might also involve liaising with other villages in the locality to understand how a bus service to and from Elsfield would fit in with other services provided.
- That the Parish Meeting should actively explore potential issues re planning and the role conservation could play in this.
- That the Parish Meeting be used to assess the interest in forming a group to study the local flora and fauna.
- That, if the Parish Meeting is interested, a CAG should be set up to help our community respond to the challenge of global warming.
- That the Parish Meeting should actively encourage residents to support the Village Room Committee's fund raising process by proposing/participating in events.
- That the Parish Meeting find somewhere to store the archive we have collected.

## **Acknowledgments**

The **Steering Group** would like to thank ORCC for its generous funding and Anton and Aimee for their support.

In addition, the Group would like to thank Sue Bradford for her valuable duties in distributing papers and newsletter, Wendy Wilson for her research work when we were flagging, James Plunket for collating, analysing and reporting the results of our questionnaires and everyone who listened to us, answered our questions, filled in questionnaires and helped out in other ways too many to mention.

The **History Group** would like to record its sincere thanks for their invaluable help of:

John Steane and David Clark of the Oxfordshire Building Archive who gave of their time and expertise to help us understand the buildings in Elsfield

Ann Cole of the Continuing Education Dept of the University of Oxford, who very generously made available research she had undertaken on hedges and field systems

Paige Johnson, who very kindly gave us a copy of her thesis on the grounds of Elsfield Manor

John Davies for maps of Elsfield and Oxford drawn up by the Russians during the Cold War

Emma Morris of SODC without whose help the material for the displays would have languished unseen.

## Calendar of events during the Parish Plan process



### 2007

12 & 13 May History exhibition in Village Room  
19 & 20 May

3 July Talk on how to estimate the age of buildings by John Steane, ex-county archaeologist and author of 'Oxfordshire'.

We join the Oxfordshire Building Records Society

25 November "Walk the Village". Guided walk by the secretary of the OBR

### 2008

3 & 4 May History exhibition in Village Room  
10 & 11 May

20 May Nature walk

22 October Photographing windows

17 June Aunt Sally trip

30 November "Guess the age of the tree" competition. The oak tree marking the boundary between Elsfield and Woodeaton was measured and estimated to be over 300 years old.

### 2009

17 May History Exhibition

## **Appendix 1: Members of the Steering Group**

Anne Matthews (Chair)

Kim Brown

Mavis Curtis

Caroline Lister

Lynn Morin (Secretary)

Cherry Mostesha

James Plunket (Treasurer)

Sarah Shaw

Kate White

## **Appendix 2: List of grant-giving bodies for the Village Room**

Brett's Charity

Doris Field Charitable Trust

Lottery Community Fund – Awards for All

Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust

Oxfordshire Preservation trust

South Oxfordshire District Council

South Oxfordshire District Council Historic Building Grant

St Nicholas Church, Marston

The Archdeacon's Trust

Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (WREN)

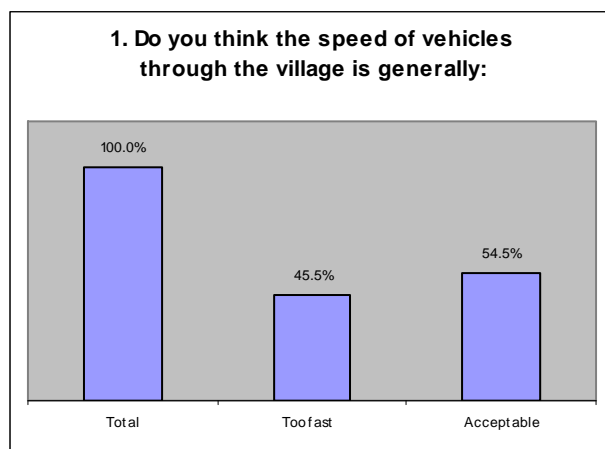
## Appendix 3: The Road Questionnaire

Many people have strong views about the road which runs through our village. When we produce our parish plan, we need as a community to have an opinion on what we would like in the future. This questionnaire is an opportunity to influence what may happen in the future with regard to the road.

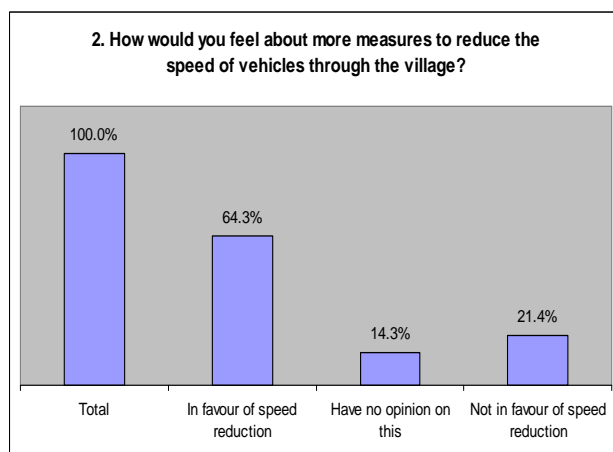
Please circle the response with which you agree.

1. **Do you think the speed of vehicles through the village is generally:**
  - a. Too fast
  - b. Acceptable
2. **How would you feel about more measures to reduce the speed of vehicles through the village?**
  - a. In favour of speed reduction
  - b. Have no opinion on this
  - c. Not in favour of speed reduction
3. **If you are in favour of speed restrictions, which would you like to see?**
  - a. 20 mile an hour speed limit through the village
  - b. 30 mile an hour speed limit on the approaches to the village
  - c. Flashing speed indicators such as the one outside Cherwell School on Marston Ferry Road
  - d. A chicane at the Beckley end of the village like the one at the Oxford end.
  - e. Chicanes along the length of the village as in Old Marston
  - f. Speed bumps.
4. **Some of the speed bumps are in poor condition. Would you be in favour of existing speed bumps being replaced by more up-to-date designs such as in Islip and Kidlington?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. **What about the number of speed bumps? Do you feel there are:**
  - a. Too few
  - b. Just right
  - c. Too many
6. **If the speed bumps were re-designed, would you like a passing place built in at the side of the speed bumps for cyclists?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't have an opinion
  - c. No
7. **The road varies in width. It has been suggested the road could be narrowed along all its length to the width of the narrowest part with the provision of passing places for cars and the extra space gained used for a footpath and/or cycle path. Do you think this is a good idea?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't have an opinion
  - c. No
8. **Whether or not you agree with Number 7 would it be a good idea to have a footpath right through the village?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't have an opinion
  - c. No
9. **Would it be a good idea to have a dedicated cycle path?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't have an opinion
  - c. No
10. **The hens, ducks and peacocks do a good job slowing the traffic down in the area of Church Farm and Rosie's Cottage. Do you think this idea could be developed further at the Beckley end of the village, i.e. more livestock roaming free?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't have an opinion.
  - c. No
11. **How would you feel about closing the road occasionally for events such as a street party?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. Don't mind
  - c. No
12. **Please write in below any comments you have about the road.**

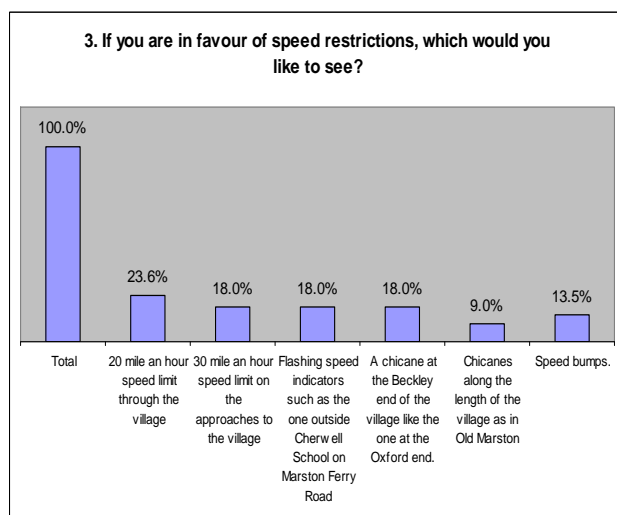
Many people have strong views about the road which runs through our village. When we produce our parish plan, we need as a community to have an opinion on what we would like in the future. This questionnaire is an opportunity to influence what may happen in the future with regard to the road.



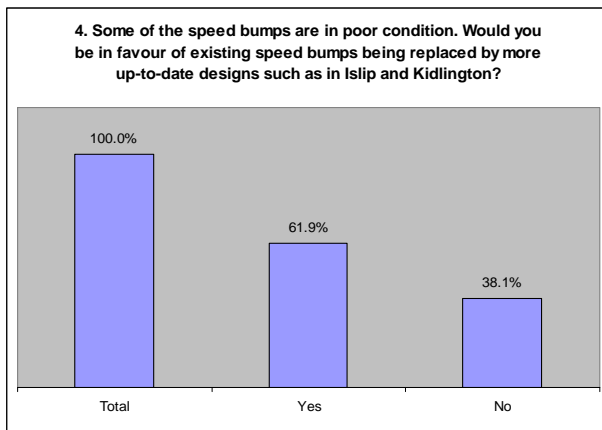
- Acceptable – with notable exceptions.
- Volume at peak times is more of an issue.



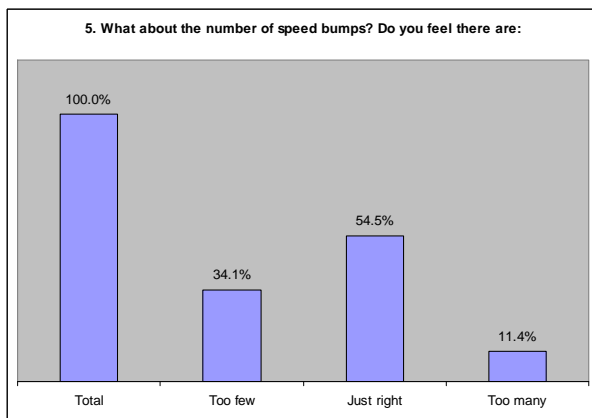
- No wish to see more signs or clutter in the village.



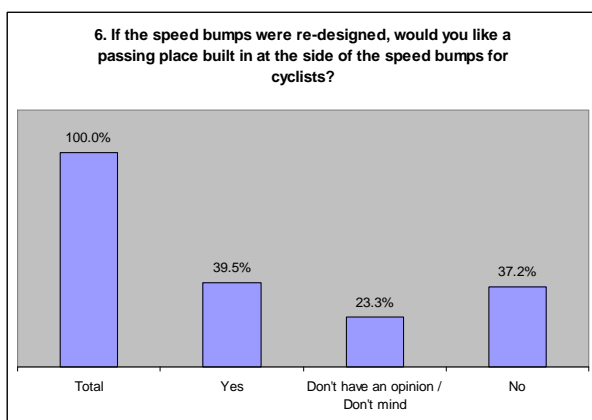
- (30 mph) Particularly between Forest Farm and B4027 // And through the village //
- (Speed bumps) Better speed bumps - these look like accidents // Definitely not // Present ones need improving // The current speed bumps and road surface are rubbish for cycling.
- (Chicanes as Marston) No - friends say it doesn't reduce speed in Marston. // In Marston, cars speed between chicanes to beat oncoming traffic //
- (Chicanes at ends) The chicane should be positioned prior to the bend before the village is entered so that people slow down correctly for the blind bend. i.e. A chicane next to the current Elsfield sign.
- (Flashing signs) At end of the village. // Inappropriate in a village context // Unsuitable for a village situation //



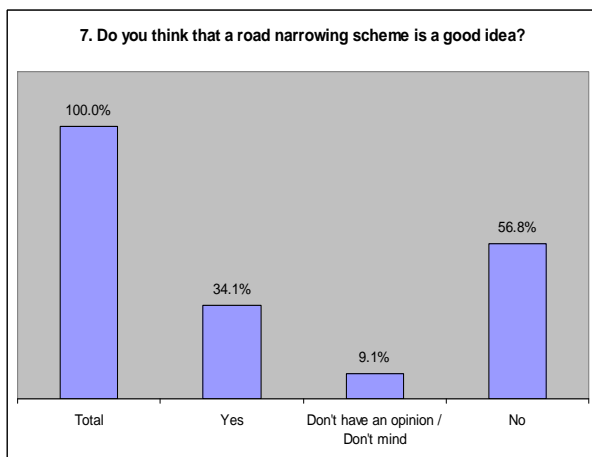
- Should be friendly to cyclists - not go to the side of the road. Also better for drainage.
- As long as they are not ugly.
- Repair existing.
- Repairs to existing bumps would be adequate.
- As long as they can be driven over (without a 4x4)
- Let's have legal speed bumps - no two are the same!



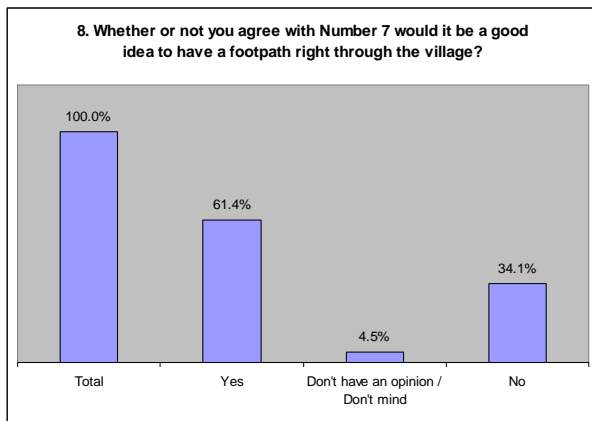
- Maybe a couple more.
- A couple more would be good though.
- The speed bumps between Rosie's Cottage and Rose Cottage are far too far apart - some vehicles sprint between them.
- They ruin the suspension on your car.



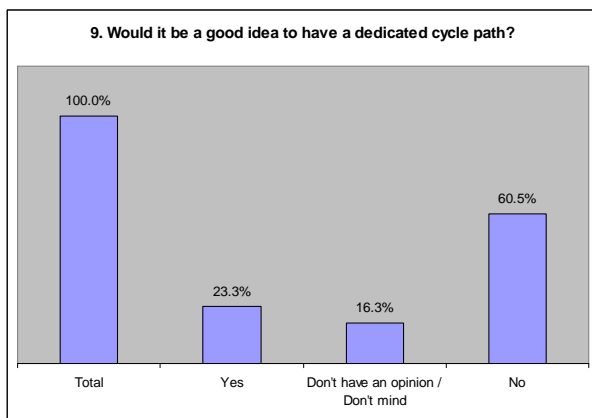
- Essential
- For pedal cyclists! But the motor cyclists would take advantage of them.



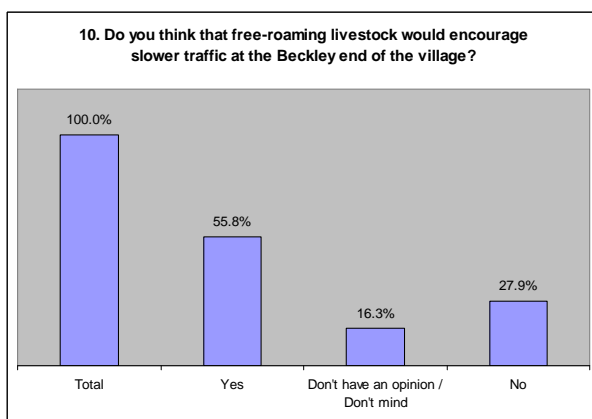
- A combined pedestrian / cycle path would be good.
- It would be good to redevelop the existing footpath from 1 Manor Cottages to the church.
- Yes to narrowing / no to foot and cycle path.
- In theory, although not too suburban.
- Impractical.
- What about agricultural vehicles
- Practical problems - access for service vehicles, residents' cars, agricultural vehicles
- What about tractors etc travelling up and down the village.



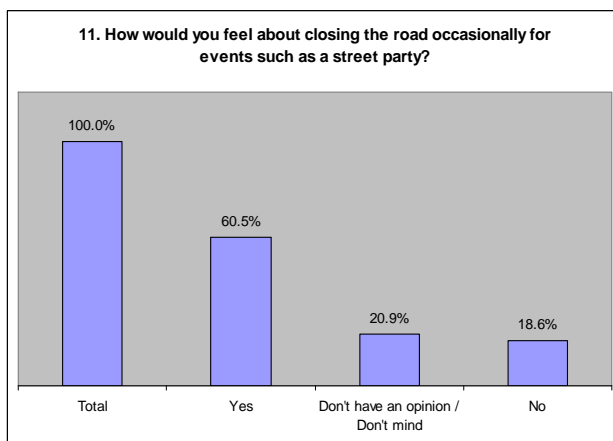
- In theory, although not too suburban.
- Not suitable for footpath.
- Where would residents park their cars?



- But if there were a footpath and speed restrictions, cyclists would be ok, therefore cycle path not essential.
- Is there room?
- Not if we get a dedicated cycle path.
- Cycling is made more hazardous on the approaches to the village due to traffic speed and poor visibility due to lack of verge maintenance.
- In consultation with the Cycling Association



- I don't think road safety should depend on wild stock.
- More ducks please!
- If people want ducks, let there be ducks!
- Not a viable speed reduction strategy.
- I don't think they would live long. Drivers come round the bend at considerable speed.
- How ludicrous - surely this is an individual choice not Parish policy - would the Parish fund feed and vets bills?!!
- The guinea fowl all got run over!



- Great idea - every weekend.
- Wonderful
- Why not use the church room?
- Street party to celebrate what!

### **Leave it as is**

- The road has been quite adequate for many years and should be left alone.
- Elsfield road has been adequate even when there was a school and cattle used to be driven through the village. No need for a footpath or cycle lane - it's a village not a town. The true country people do not want it changed. Village parties were held in the farmers' fields and in the Manor grounds. The road is not just for Elsfield people to shut and open when wanted.
- I would hate to see the village urbanised. Its charm comes from unspoilt surroundings. If the number of cars coming through the village has fallen, as suggested by the survey, we shouldn't need to alter the village at all.
- There are two issues regarding the road: speed and volume. For speed, see above. For volume, strongly opposed to closing the road to non-village traffic. We are lucky to live close to the City (one of the attractions of Elsfield) and, as a result, we should be prepared to take our share of the traffic going to Oxford ("No to NIMBYs).
- We have to be practical and realistic about the width of the road, allowing access for deliveries and farm vehicles and ensuring the safety of road users whilst preserving the features of the hilltop village.

### **Improve the existing road**

- How about pot holes being repaired - getting the road in good order - that would be a good start.
- Let's get pot holes, verges, culverts and grass verges put right first. Who is going to pay for all these suggested changes? It is a single track road but as yet there have been no accidents!
- Put kerbing as it is by the church through the remainder of the village. This would define the current road width and prevent further erosion of the verges. Verge cutting and gulley maintenance should be more frequent on the approaches to the village.
- It would be nice to see the road made safer in the future. Ideal if you could walk from one end of the village to the other!
- Any road improvements need to be part of an integrated scheme involving Islip, the Bayswater Road and Woodeaton - It would be excellent to have projections for future road use. I'd favour the following traffic proposal on the B4027 junction (no right turn to Wheatley / no right turn from Islip.

### **Narrowing the road**

- Narrowing the road could have the opposite effect of cars feeling they could go faster in that bit. We need to give drivers the feeling of being in a predominantly pedestrian zone.
- Speed is less of a problem than volume of traffic. A narrower road with better passing places would deter the rat-runners!
- The road outside the village should be a single track with marked passing places.
- Needs to be narrowed to enable more allocated parking spaces. The danger of all developments is that it becomes too urban rather than being a country lane!

### **Foot path / Cycle path**

- The nature of traffic passing through the village is changing (i.e. increasing speed and volume) every year. The current road is very unpleasant to walk on, especially with children. I think a sensitive footpath would be the most important development incorporating speed reducing measures such as a chicane.
- If a cycle path is needed then cyclists should pay a road tax to use it, as motorists do. There are enough footpaths without putting one through the village.
- Lessons elsewhere show that separate provision for pedestrians and cyclists increases car speeds.

### **General comments**

- Too much traffic in general.
- A gate at the Beckley end with a key for Elsfield and Beckley locals (electronic lifting bar as in Dartmoor and JR car park).
- Would like more buses!

