



The Whitchurch-on-Thames 2009

Village Plan

Introduction



Village plans have been initiated by national government as a way for rural communities to express their views and aspirations and to be heard.

It is intended that the plans will form the basis of strategic planning at all levels of local authority.

In September 2007, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council appointed an independent Steering Committee to identify the concerns and wishes of all its residents and to prepare a Plan aimed at meeting them.

Plan objectives

The overriding objective of the Plan is to uphold and improve the quality of life in Whitchurch. It has three strands:

- Address any negative factors, such as traffic speed, uneven pavements and unsightly street furniture.
- Develop the existing facilities in the village, such as the village hall.
- Encourage residents to participate in clubs and societies and empower individuals to take

initiatives in pursuit of the Plan's proposals.

There are of course certain limitations to the project, and so the Plan must be realistic in its recommendations. Local authorities at all levels have limited funds and staffing, and projects will depend to a high degree on local volunteers. It is also important to avoid duplicating amenities that are already available nearby. Whitchurch relies heavily on Pangbourne for many of its basic services, including health care, transport, banking and retail trades. Whitchurch Bridge is a vital link for the village.

Without effective implementation, the Plan will be of little value. Much of the work will inevitably fall to the Parish Council, and the Steering Committee strongly recommends that it takes the following action:

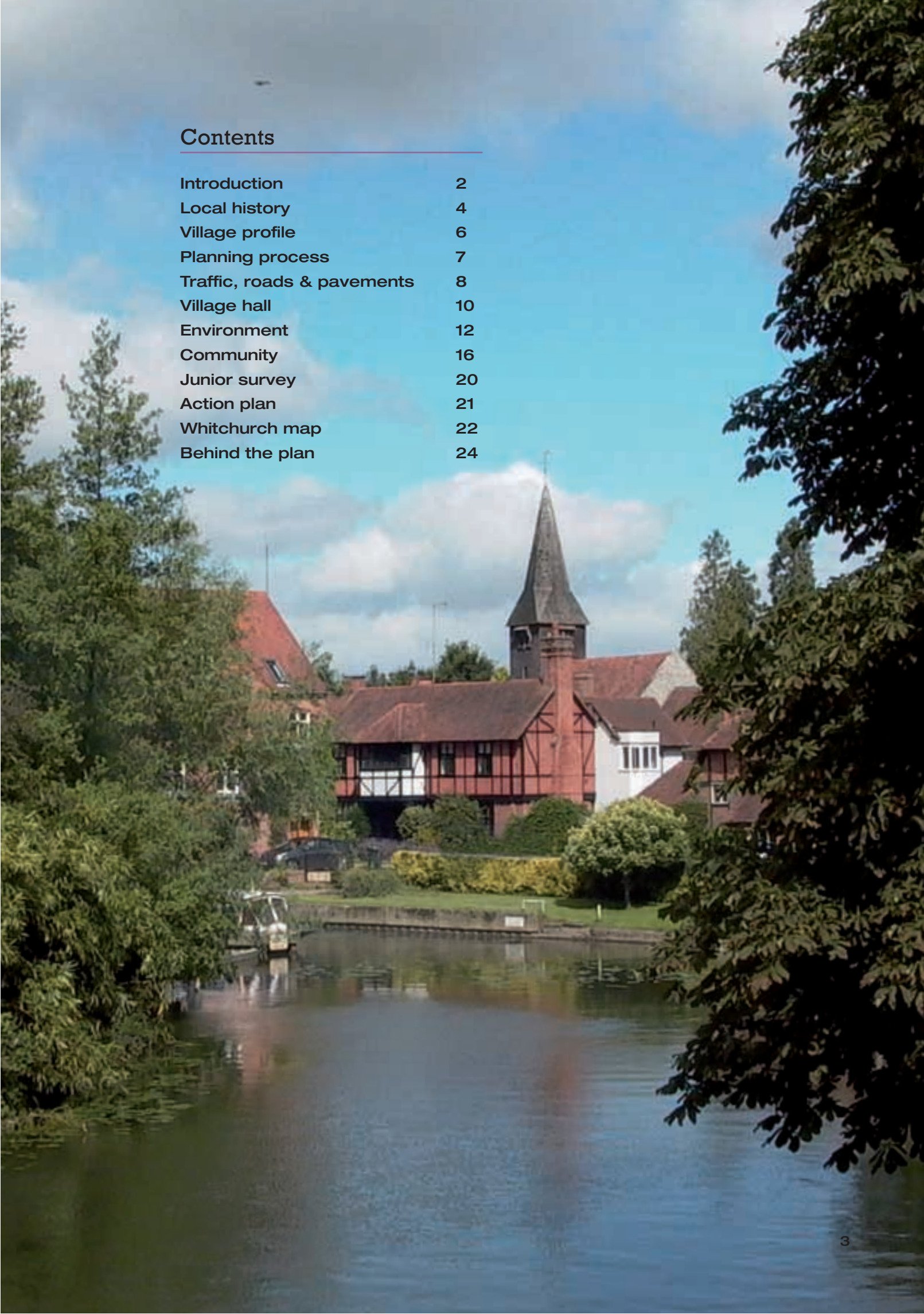
- Set up sub-committees based on the specialist areas defined in the Plan.
- Appoint a councillor to chair each sub-committee.
- Co-opt non-councillors with specialist interest and expertise to each.
- Designate one councillor to monitor progress on the Action Plan.

Key actions

- Make continued and persistent efforts to acquire the cricket ground for the extended use of the village.
- Support the Parish Council to create effective traffic calming measures in the High Street and Hardwick Road.
- Undertake immediate cosmetic refurbishment of the village hall.
- Consult with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to upgrade street furniture and

signage, in Whitchurch High Street especially.

- Engage the support of local societies, notably the Whitchurch Society and WoTHabs, in fulfilment of environmental proposals and community activities.
- Develop the village website for better exchange of information and to increase involvement of residents in village activities.
- Make greater use of Whitchurch Primary School's facilities.
- Structure the Parish Council to form sub-committees responsible for the implementation of the Plan.

A background photograph of a village scene. In the foreground, a calm river reflects the sky and surrounding greenery. A small boat is visible on the left. In the middle ground, a large, traditional half-timbered building with a red roof and a tall, dark spire (likely a church) stands out. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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Local history

The settlement of Whitchurch has a rich history. Apart from an early Iron Age camp at Bozedown and assorted Roman finds in the area, it really begins with the Saxon Hwiticurke, a flint and rubble church, from which the village took its name. After



The Hardwick estate is a valued asset of the village, not only as a literary landmark but also for its network of permissive paths

centuries of contention, a Charter of AD844 declared its sovereignty over land on both sides of the Thames. Whitchurch has had jurisdiction over the full width of the river ever since.

The growing village gained an important mill and the church was soon grandly rebuilt in typical Chiltern style. It has been remarked that our entry in Domesday is more impressive than that of Pangbourne. Whitchurch had an even greater medieval heyday, with an inland port and royal manor with its residence near to the present church gate, from which twenty of King Edward II's

state proclamations were made.

It was also served by an ancient terrace route, the Tuddingway, between Caversham and Wallingford, passing along the present Hardwick Road. Until a Royal Inquisition of 1479 banned wheeled vehicles from crossing the Mapledurham and Hardwick estates, it had provided a land 'bridge' from the lower Thames (mainly Henley) for freight to be loaded at a quayside in Whitchurch (the present Mill Drive) on to smaller boats for the upper river. Agricultural estates now took over (Whistlers at Whitchurch and Lybbes at Hardwick) and one of Oxfordshire's finest barns was built (the site of today's Old Barn Cottages), but there was a shortage of good land, even with grazing rights at Whitchurch Hill.

Decline was arrested in 1792 by the decision of a number of local landowners and gentry to build a bridge, which led to the Coombe Park estate and genteel retirement residences, in a village which had already been castigated by poet William Shenstone, visiting the Whistlers estate, for 'too much trivial elegance, punctilio and speculation'. Shops and a doctor's surgery opened and the church was further enlarged. A new owner at Hardwick created a big stir with crazes for racehorses, fast cars, real tennis and literary house parties, and is believed to have inspired both Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*) and Henry James (*The Portrait of a Lady*).

Following the construction of the railway, commuters appeared, and many village people either went into domestic service or were squeezed out altogether. From the 1940s some village families moved with recent Polish exiles into Manor Road. Big houses were divided and the 1960s and 1970s saw a spate of private development in the Hardwick Road area, since when growth has greatly slowed.

Two of the village's original five pubs continue and the primary and pre-schools thrive. Whitchurch, with its stunning situation between the river and the wooded Chilterns, now presents a delightful mix of attractive old houses and comfortable modern properties.

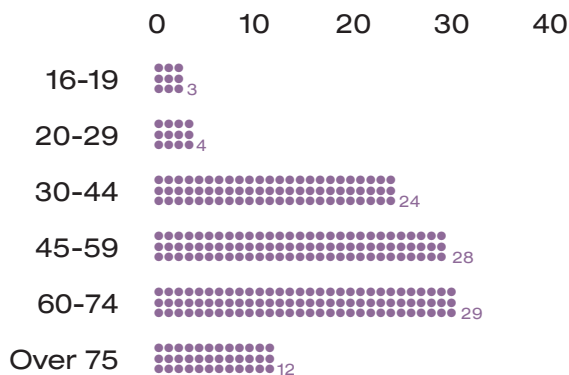


Clockwise from above: Only the road surface and presence of traffic has changed the appearance of the High Street over the last century. Swan Upping has taken place on the river every July since the 12th century. An Iron Age fort commanded the valley at Bozedown. Whitchurch expanded greatly in the 1960s and 1970s, with developments in Swanston Field and Hardwick Road

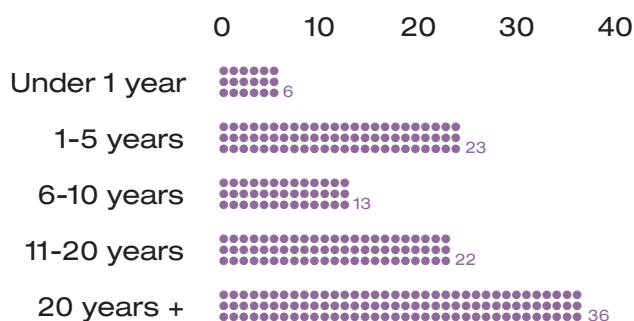


Village profile

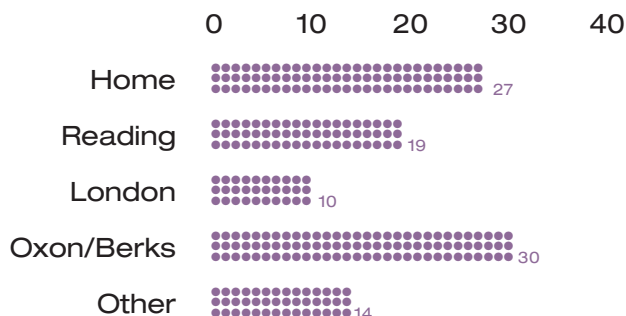
Age as percentage of sample of 460
(male 46%, female 54%)



Time lived in Whitchurch as percentage of sample



Place of work as percentage of 287 in sample who work



The population of Whitchurch was found to be 786 in the most recent census (2001) and is likely to be similar today. The number of households recorded in this year's Register of Electors was 338.

In our 2008 survey, completed questionnaires from 460 residents aged 16 and over were analysed. The charts here show the profile of that large sample. See page 20 for the results of the junior survey.

Those returning adult questionnaires included 137 residents of the High Street, 106 from Hardwick Road, 79 from Manor Road, 53 from Eastfield Lane, 52 from Swanston Field and 33 from other locations.

Recent years have seen a notable influx of newcomers: 29% have lived in the village for five years or less. But a large proportion, 36%, have been here more than 20 years.

Of those who work, only 10% commute to London. The largest group work in Oxfordshire/Berkshire and the second largest work from home.



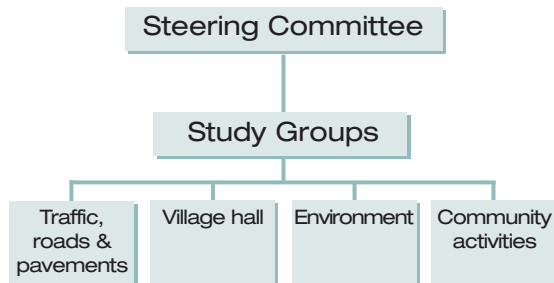
Planning process

A New Year Party held in January 2008 to launch the Plan attracted 150 adults and children from the village. The purpose of the Plan was explained and an open-ended invitation gave everyone the opportunity, both verbally and by means of Post-it notes, to express their concerns, needs and ambitions for the village.

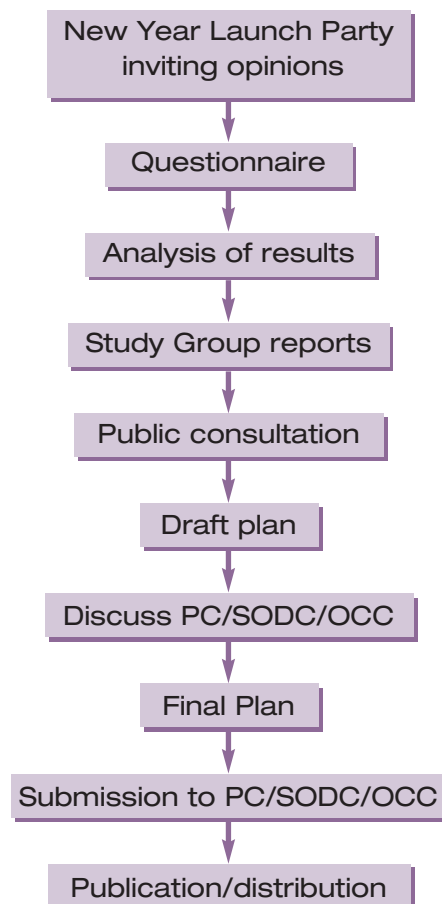
The information gained enabled the committee to compose a questionnaire to seek the views of every household. There was an outstanding return of 80% of the questionnaires, due to the enthusiasm of residents and the efforts of the 27 volunteers who distributed and collected the completed documents. Youngsters aged 8-15 were given a separate junior questionnaire to complete.

Having set up the initial phases, the Steering

Organisation:



Planning sequence:



The village New Year Party in January 2008 was a great success

Committee structured itself around four Study Groups – Traffic, Roads & Pavements; Village Hall; Environment, and Community. Each group comprised two committee members and three or four additional residents, bringing specific experience and expertise to each area of interest.

The results of the survey were analysed by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and supplied to the four Study Groups as a factual basis for their deliberations and subsequent reports (all of which will be available on the village website). A well attended public meeting in November 2008 provided further feedback on the

Groups' conclusions and proposals.

A draft Plan was then prepared for discussion with the Whitchurch Parish Council, SODC and Oxfordshire County Council, prior to the publication of the final Plan and its eventual formal submission to the local authorities.

Traffic, roads & pave

Traffic speed was cited by 85% of those questioned as the single most serious problem in the village, notably in the High Street and Hardwick Road. Traffic calming measures were therefore given the Plan's highest priority; from a choice of four, respondents rated these as shown:

Speed indicator devices	60%
Speed limit of 20mph	56%
Better signs/markings	27%
Speed bumps/ramps	21%

Speed indicator devices and a 20mph limit were clearly the most favoured options and the Parish Council will try to progress existing discussions actively with the OCC Traffic Department on both measures. Consideration is being given to the removal of certain white lines in the High Street and also to the introduction of a mini-roundabout at the Manor Road junction. The Parish Council will also examine the appropriate location of parking to effect speed reduction.

Pedestrian safety

When asked if pedestrians felt safe, 84% replied 'no', giving traffic speed as their primary reason. Indeed, a traffic census in September 2008 found that 45% of High Street traffic travels at over 30mph. This perceived lack of safety is exacerbated by the narrowness, and in some cases the absence, of pavements, particularly in the High Street and Eastfield Lane. Those aged 30-45 were especially concerned, as they are often with children, either on foot or in a pushchair. The unevenness of the surfaces makes the pavements unsafe, for the elderly in particular – improvements in the condition of pavement surfaces will be a priority.

Cycling

The survey indicated that 60% of those who cycle considered that cycling was 'reasonably safe', the remainder that it was 'not safe enough'. Given the narrowness of the roads, dedicated cycle lanes are not a realistic option. However, any traffic calming should benefit cyclists as well as pedestrians.

Eastfield Lane

Eastfield Lane, leading to the primary school and pre-school, poses a particular highway dilemma. The questionnaire asked if a pavement was needed. Only 21% voted for a pavement and residents of Eastfield Lane itself showed considerable opposition (64% against). Retaining the rural nature of



Parents with young children are particularly concerned about safety in the village, especially the lack of safe pavements

ments

the lane was preferred, many thinking that a pavement might encourage speeding.

Pavements

The historic layout of the village does not permit pavements throughout. The closeness of houses or their boundary walls to the road has created difficulties at the upper and lower ends of the High Street and the western ends of both Hardwick Road and Eastfield Lane. The introduction of kerbed pavements should be pursued where practicable and virtual pavements (white lines with no kerbs) should be regularly maintained as they are often the only protection offered to the pedestrian.

Further consideration should be given to the provision of marked crossing points (with ramps for the disabled and pushchairs), especially near the toll booth, where pedestrians have reported particular difficulties.

Whitchurch Bridge

Whitchurch Bridge is a vital and historic feature of the village.

As well as providing access to Pangbourne and beyond, it constitutes an extremely attractive entry point. In 2013 the bridge will need to be rebuilt and the Whitchurch Bridge Company has made an application to increase the tolls to finance this project.

Whitchurch residents, for whom the bridge gives essential access to local services, are continuing to press for preferential toll rates and other measures to reduce the financial burden on local users of rebuilding the bridge.

Overweight lorries cause inconvenience and delays for village traffic, and often require police assistance



Parking on and around the High Street and Hardwick Road acts to slow traffic, but is also a problem for pedestrians



Village hall

The village hall was originally built as a recreational facility for Canadian servicemen in 1945. It now falls well below the standard expected today, and it is not well used. The resulting low income generated is inadequate to cover essential repairs, insurance and maintenance.

Options

The Study Group examined three options for the future of the hall:

- Major refurbishment of the existing hall (favoured by 32% of respondents). The inherent limitations – a long, narrow building with little parking – would remain, and so this option could only be a stopgap measure. It is not recommended.
- Demolish the existing building and build a new hall on the same site (preferred by 24%). This is not recommended, as the site's proportions limit the application of economic,



The village hall is currently used for several activities, including Young Riparians, but for special occasions, many local people prefer to use Goring Heath village hall for its superior decor and facilities

modular construction, and the issue of inadequate parking would remain.

- Build a new hall on another site (favoured by 27%). This is recommended as the best long-term (100 years+) option for such an important facility.

The recommended course assumes the availability of a suitable site with planning

permission and sufficient funds but offers the prospect of the regeneration of village life in the widest sense, especially if it can be linked to outdoor sporting activities.

The Study Group discussed with SODC the criteria for judging prospective development sites, with respect to planning, highways, forestry and biodiversity.

Cricket ground

The cricket ground was suggested as a suitable location for a new hall by many of those responding and was the initial choice of the Study Group. However, SODC has always regarded this as a particularly sensitive open space, offering views of the wooded hills behind. The Planning Department has expressed its concern about the development of this site for a village hall on two principal grounds: (a) it lies outside the village built-up area; and (b) the narrow entrance to Eastfield Lane could not cope with the extra traffic that would ensue.

Negotiations have been revived with the owners of the cricket ground and SODC's planning officer to try to secure this valuable open space in perpetuity for the village.

Next steps

It is recommended that Whitchurch Parish Council appoints a sub-committee specifically to manage the hall's affairs and to plan for its long-term replacement. This should include non-council members. In the meantime, the present hall should be given minor cosmetic upgrading in the form of redecoration, new vinyl flooring and curtains/blinds up to a maximum cost of £7000. Its potential use for new village activities can then be assessed realistically.

A comprehensive study of the viability of a new hall would include the identification of suitable sites, their likely costs, SODC planning consent, appropriate forms of construction and materials and reliable budget costs, funding opportunities and realistic projected operations.

If approved by the Parish Council, there is no reason why these recommendations could not be put in hand immediately.



The current village hall is shabby and poorly equipped – and thus under-used. A new building, perhaps in the style of Little Milton's new village hall (below), would attract many more users and would not only provide a valuable village amenity but also a greater income



Is a new village hall viable?

The Study Group examined many examples of building types and made a visit to Little Milton, where a smart contemporary hall in timber has been extremely successful.

A new hall of the necessary size and quality on a new site would cost at least £500,000, excluding the cost of the land. Grants of up to half the capital cost might be available. The balance would have to come from private subscription or other sources.

Crucial to the success of such a project would be its on-going financial operation. A satisfactory ten-year cash flow of the realistic income and costs of a new hall will need to be demonstrated before any commitment can be made.

Environment

The village of Whitchurch is an attractive environment, and residents responding to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly in favour of minor improvements to the existing situation rather than radical change. They considered it important to conserve a generally rural ambience, as opposed to allowing any further urbanisation.

The built environment

The Conservation Area The core of the village, both sides of the High Street between the Bridge and the Hardwick Road junction (see map on p22), is a Conservation Area containing a number of listed buildings. It is



Several large houses have been built in the village recently

appropriately defined, as are the listed buildings, and no change is recommended to the current position.

The wider built environment The development of the village beyond the conservation area has been largely random and unstructured, but the overall effect is pleasing. A design statement is not considered appropriate since there is no predominant building style to preserve, however being in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty justifies a very strict standard of planning with regard to both design and building density.

Planning applications should not be approved unless the design is sensitive to the size of plot and sympathetic to the

environment. Applications for house building within gardens should be dealt with strictly on their merits and to the above standards.

The Planning Officers and Committee at SODC must take the views of the Parish Council, as elected representatives of those who will live with any decision, as of primary importance. Residents would like to see more careful scrutiny of each planning application's design, scale and environmental compatibility by SODC Planning Department before permission is granted.

Street furniture & signage

The existing presentation of the village roads, in terms of street furniture and signage, is distinctly poor and should be improved in a coordinated manner to match the high development standards expected of a Conservation Area. A full illustrated report on this issue will be provided on the village website.

Development

Opportunities for future development in the village are limited by the flood

plain to the south and the steep slope of the Chilterns to the north. Pressure for developing the narrow strip between is to be firmly resisted. Residents' support for further development in the village is very limited, with few calling for affordable or social housing.



Open spaces within the built environment

Within the village there are various open spaces, some with as yet unknown ownership. A complete schedule of these areas has been prepared (and will be displayed on the village website), with some suggestions for further action. Though some are very small, these areas are assets to the village if properly maintained. Respondents to the questionnaire favour the planting of more trees, shrubs and wild flowers. It is not clear how or where this would be practical, given the uncertainties over ownership and control, however the possibility of a coordinated programme of enhancement of open spaces will be explored.

The idea of 'guerrilla gardening', whereby groups of residents take responsibility for uncared-for open spaces, is attractive, and local residents who are already taking responsibility for the public areas adjacent to their homes are to be encouraged. The important issue is that these areas should be pleasant and tidy rather than sculpted and cultivated, as befits a rural environment rather than a suburban one.

Currently there is very limited river access from Whitchurch – at the slipway next to the toll booth, the short public footpath at Mill Cottages, and at Sheepwash Lane. Further controlled access for recreational purposes would be welcomed by respondents if it were to become available. In the meantime the river is accessible at Pangbourne meadows.

The Conservation Area comprises a delightful mix of period properties



Flash flooding is often a problem, and it is vital that drainage is carefully monitored and maintained

Conservation and ecology

The parish has a wide variety of subsoils and consequently a range of habitats, supporting very diverse flora and fauna. There are six designated County Wildlife sites in the parish providing species-rich habitats. The Village Plan recognises this fortunate state of affairs and pledges support to the activities of the Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group (WoTHabs) in promoting and preserving it.

Flooding

There are two distinct elements to the flood risk at Whitchurch:

- The risk posed by intermittently high levels of the Thames and the associated water table, which are properly overseen by the Environment Agency. The flood plain is an integral part of the village's flood protection and its preservation, free of any development, is considered absolutely essential.
- At least as importantly, areas of the village





Many village residents are unhappy with the level of lighting at the toll bridge crossing

Noise

A number of comments were made about noise pollution caused by helicopters and other small aircraft. Although irritating at times, such planes are subject to regulatory controls and it is not thought to be a serious problem.

Litter bins

Litter bins do not provide a complete solution to unsightly litter. Many pedestrians and passing motorists choose not to use them. But our litter bins

suffer from flash flooding at times of extreme rainfall. It is therefore critical that drainage throughout the village, but particularly at the lower levels of the High Street and in Eastfield Lane, is effective, regularly inspected and well maintained. Any new development or paved areas must take this factor into account in order to avoid adding to the problem. Vulnerable households should be given emergency advice.

Recycling

Recycling is for the most part a bigger issue than can be fully addressed by a village plan. In particular, however, attention should be given to the current developments in waste and hydro power, offering localised benefits. Private recycling initiatives are well publicised in the Whitchurch Bulletin and deserve support wherever appropriate.

Residents are justifiably proud of the overall village appearance and ambience, and would like to see only minor changes to the local environment

should be reviewed to see that they are in a satisfactory condition and sited in appropriate places, particularly along the Thames Footpath. More frequent litter blitzes would also make a difference.

Dog fouling

Most dog owners act responsibly by clearing up after their dogs. Those who do not would be unlikely to use dog bins. Further discreet notices plus repeated well publicised appeals to dog owners and walkers should be tried in the first instance. Articles will appear in the Whitchurch Bulletin and on the website.

Lighting

One in three residents expressed the need for improved lighting, primarily in two particular areas – the High Street close to the bridge, and The Cut (between Eastfield Lane and Swanston Field) – though overall the majority (62%) felt that a fair balance was struck between maximising personal safety and minimising light pollution.



The rural environment

The local rural environment is an enormous asset to the village, and the preservation of access and rights of way should remain a high priority. Access to permissive paths on the Hardwick estate is particularly valued, and illustrates how important benevolent ownership is to the provision of rural assets.

It is recommended that a proper (trodden) footpath is constructed from the end of the Jubilee path to the West Lodge of the Hardwick estate along the south side of Hardwick Road (similar to the path recently created alongside the road from Whitchurch Hill to Crays Pond). This would be greatly beneficial to all pedestrians (but especially to families) in separating them from traffic. It is noted that Hardwick Road between Bozedown Farm and the West Lodge is becoming damaged and ill-defined by cars parking on verges and the development of informal passing places. Vigilance will be needed on this point at the time of the Bridge closure in 2013, when increased traffic is expected.





Community

Witchurch benefits from a range of community activities and services, some state provided, others organised by specialist clubs or societies. One of the purposes of the Plan is to explore the need for additional activities or services, suggest how they might be provided and identify any facilities needed.

Societies and groups

The questionnaire responses highlighted some thriving groups and societies within the village but also revealed that nearly 60% of respondents are not involved in any local society or club. No mothers and toddlers group exists in the village, despite the increase in the number of young families. The central location of the village hall is ideal but it is 'too run down and unappealing', according

to one respondent. The younger residents (8-15) expressed the need for 'to do' places. A large number of young people belong to clubs outside the village and this may be partly attributed to some of this age group being educated at independent schools. However, local clubs and societies are being encouraged to widen their membership.

Church

The parish church of St Mary the Virgin is highly regarded as a beautiful and historic asset to the village. Its specific importance to respondents varied: 66% valued its historic preservation; 57% its role in helping those in need locally; 29% the opportunity to worship, and 19% its Christian teaching. The church as a venue for other activities was discussed but currently this would be very limited due to the absence of toilet facilities and limited parking. However, the church proposes to convert an adjacent outbuilding for community use.

Whitchurch Primary School

Almost half (46%) of those responding said they would be interested in using the excellent school facilities for evening activities. Extended use of the school might include fitness and computer classes, or a venue for a film club or other meetings. 62 parents felt that the school was an appropriate

venue for a holiday play scheme and selective activities for teenagers. It was noted that parking is limited.

The Board of Governors has been approached and in principle has approved the wider use of the school. Once the details have been agreed, the organisers of activities will be able to make arrangements with the Headteacher.

Sport

A very large majority (84%) of respondents considered the acquisition of the cricket field by the village to be desirable, with almost as many in favour of its extended use for other outdoor recreational pursuits. Current negotiations for its acquisition will be pursued. In general there was a high response to both indoor and outdoor sporting activities. In the short term, a refurbished village hall could accommodate some of the indoor exercise/sporting activities for all age groups. Another possible sports venue is the primary school, supported by 25% of respondents.

Crime

Although police-recorded crime has been low in Whitchurch, the questionnaire surprisingly revealed that 80 residents have experienced a burglary, 54 car crime, 31 criminal damage and 7 physical assault.





The church is felt to be a great uniting factor within the village, and is strongly valued by the community

Support for a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme was widely registered, with many willing to display window stickers and 33 respondents agreeing to act as road co-ordinators.

In general, anti-social behaviour is rarely experienced in Whitchurch. The most common complaint by far is of inconsiderate driving, with dog fouling and litter also frequently mentioned. Vandalism and abusive behaviour were cited by a very few respondents.

Community activities

Residents expressed considerable interest in taking part regularly in non-sporting activities. Top of those listed was yoga/pilates, followed by evening classes, film club, art and craft classes, quiz nights, IT classes and book club – each recorded by over 25% of respondents.

Many people miss the village shop, once the main 'hub' for meeting others. The return of a shop is not a viable option but the study

group looked at the possibility of a Saturday morning market once a month. An 'open day' for villagers has also been proposed, giving groups and societies an opportunity to advertise themselves and to gain new members. A 'one o'clock club' was suggested for mothers to meet up before the school run. An interesting idea to link the

older members of the community with the younger ones is that of 'days gone by', when the older residents recall childhood and other memories for the young people of the village.

While there is undoubted interest in such activities, the organisation of them is entirely dependent on volunteers who are willing and competent to run them. The upgrading

of the village hall and the use of the primary school will help greatly.

Communication

The Whitchurch Bulletin and the Parish Magazine are currently the main sources of village information, considered the most useful source by 75% and 53% respectively,



The Twinning Society regularly welcomes friends from La Bouille in Normandy

with 42% mentioning 'word of mouth'. The Committee felt that there was considerable benefit to be gained from the development of the village website and use of email for those with internet facilities (87%). Over half of these said that they would like to receive information through this channel. There was widespread support (84%) for improving broadband facilities at the Pangbourne exchange.

The present website receives few visits. Respondents found that it was not kept up to date and generally lacked journalistic appeal. Young people asked for more information for them and a chat room. It is proposed that a small team is created to publicise forthcoming events in the Whitchurch area, contribute news items and keep the website up to date and appealing.

The Church supplies an attractive Welcome Pack to new residents

of Whitchurch, and this could usefully be supplemented by wider information and contacts on the website.

Bus service

Usage of the 142 bus service to Reading is low for the village as a whole but regarded as essential for those who use it. The new free bus pass for senior citizens may well increase usage. Whitchurch is only one village along this popular route, which is reported to be very well used as the bus progresses into Reading. Some 8-to-15 year olds reported that they would use the service more often if fares were lower and the services more frequent.

Right: The school is a favoured location for further village activities

Below: The maze, created in 2004, has become a well regarded landmark within the village



Junior survey

Playground

Comparing the 2001 Census with other data suggests that there are currently about 160 children under the age of 11 in Whitchurch, many of whom enjoy the attractive new playground in Manor Road. Built thanks to a substantial private donation plus SODC grants, it has proved very successful and is greatly appreciated by parents and children alike. It is hoped that the additional facilities suggested can be funded in the near future.



The opinions of young people are important and a modified questionnaire was designed specifically for 8-to-15 year olds to supplement information provided by their parents. 52 responded, which is about half of those in the age group. Some broad conclusions emerged:

- General support for the extended use of the cricket ground, with enthusiasm for a football goal and skate park (for example).
- Widespread approval of the playground, which could be improved further by adding a basketball net, picnic table and play house.
- Greater use might be made of the bus service if fares were cheaper and the service more frequent.
- Little awareness of the website and low level of interest – it could be made more appealing to young people by adding a junior page and a chat room.

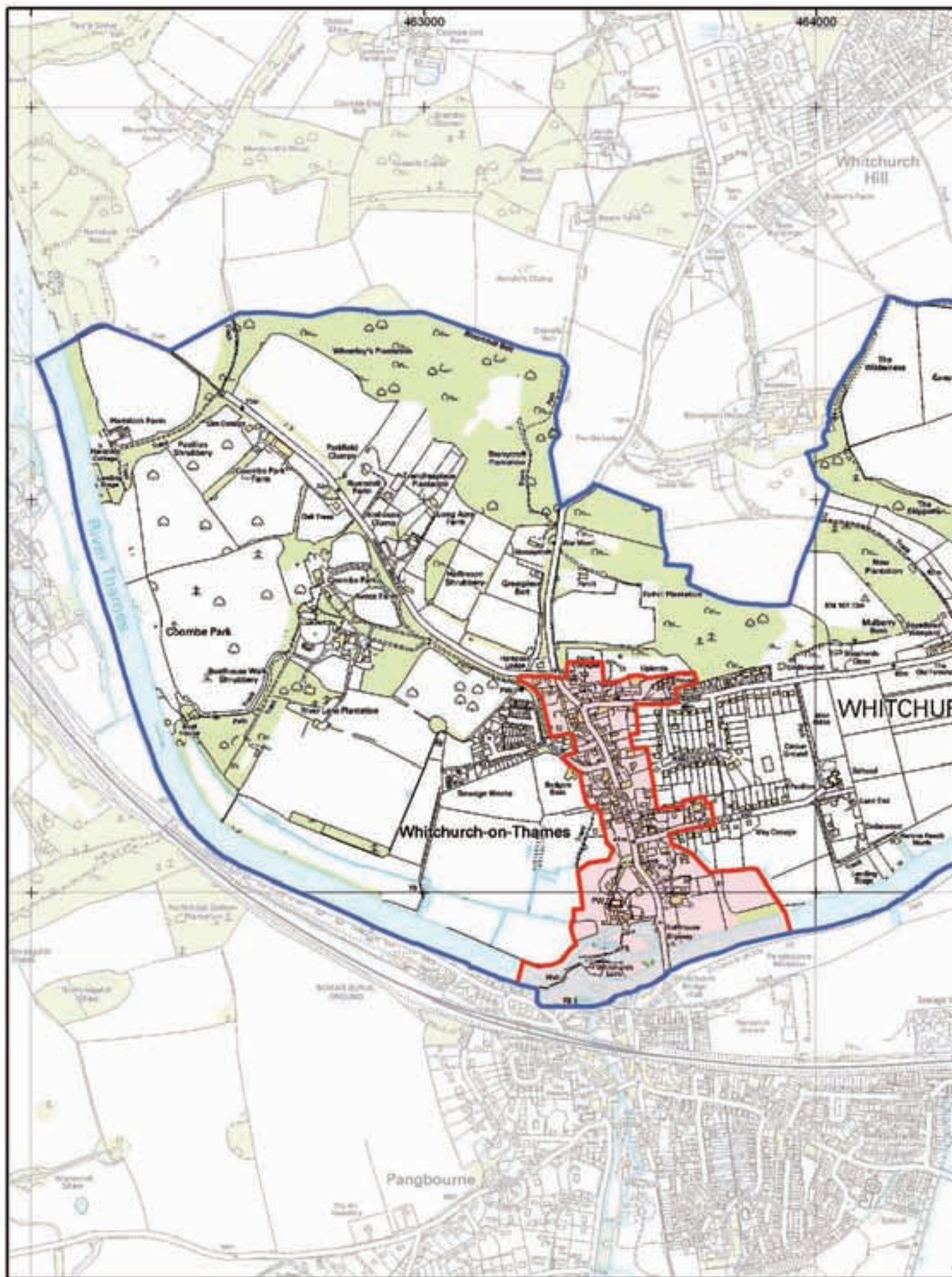
Future youth club activity will probably be well met by the refurbished Dolphin Centre in Pangbourne. Whitchurch Primary School has excellent modern facilities, and it is hoped to extend their use to the wider community. There may also be scope for holiday programmes at the school for young people. These possibilities will be explored.



Action plan

Ref	Subject/action	Priority	Cost	By whom
General				
1	Restructure Parish Council to implement the Plan	●●●	●	PC
2	Engage support of local societies for the Plan	●●●	●	SC/PC
3	Develop village website	●●●	●	PC
4	Pursue negotiations with Whitchurch Primary School for use of facilities by the wider community	●●●	●	PC/WPS
Traffic, roads and pavements				
5	Press OCC for 20mph/speed indicator devices in High Street	●●●	●●	PC/OCC
6	Examine parking in High Street and Hardwick Road to effect speed reduction, without losing parking facilities	●●●	●	PC/SODC/ Police
7	Press SODC for improved pavement surfaces, defined crossings with ramps and regular maintenance of virtual pavements	●●●	●●	PC/OCC
Village hall/cricket ground				
8	Implement immediate cosmetic upgrade of existing hall	●●●	●●	PC
9	Conduct feasibility study of building new village hall	●●	●●	PC
10	Pursue negotiations with owners of cricket ground and SODC to secure for village use	●●	●	PC
Environment				
11	Arrange professional inspection of drains to establish capacity to cope with flash flooding	●●●	●	PC/OCC
12	Initiate discussion with SODC Planning Department about planning criteria for applications	●●	●	PC/SODC
13	Undertake coordinated improvement of street furniture/signage	●●	●●	PC/SODC/ OCC
14	Programme enhancement of open spaces	●●	●●	Local socs
15	Create a new footpath along Hardwick Road to the Hardwick estate	●●	●●	PC/SODC/ OCC
16	Post additional notices and Bulletin article about dog fouling	●●●	●	PC
17	Examine case for extra lighting in lower High Street and The Cut	●●	●●	PC
Community				
18	Encourage local clubs and societies to widen their membership	●●	●	PC/SC
19	Set up comprehensive Neighbourhood Watch coverage	●●	●	PC
20	Provide extra facilities suggested in playground	●●	●●	PC
21	Invite young people's participation on website/Bulletin	●●●	●	PC
22	Actively campaign for volunteers to help with Plan implementation	●●●	●	PC/SC

KEY: ●●● High ●● Medium ● Low



Behind the Plan

Steering Committee: Stephen Trinder (Chairman), Harry Butterworth, Audrey Kingham, Matilda Oppenheimer, Anna Szczeponek, Richard Wingfield

This Plan is the result of work by many people. The Steering Committee would particularly like to thank Peter Smith for chairing the Environmental Study Group and Kate Preston for her help in launching and designing the Plan. Over 70 people have been actively involved in the project. The co-option of members to the Study Groups has been especially valuable and indeed has supplied a body of expertise that will be of ongoing benefit to the village. Finally, thanks go to everyone who completed the questionnaire, offered comments and attended meetings. Such interest was tremendously supportive to the Steering Committee.

It is now up to all of us to maintain the interest generated by the Plan and to turn it into reality.

Acknowledgements

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Peter Hawley – for the local history.

The full questionnaire results, Study Group reports and the Village Plan will all be available to view on the village website:

www.whitchurchonthames.com