



2009

Appleford-on-Thames Parish Plan



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Introduction

- Purpose
- Terms of Reference
- Timescale
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The **purpose** of a parish action plan is to enable the whole community to voice their opinions on what actions they wish to see taken locally in order to improve village life in the future. To this aim the residents of Appleford village were invited to complete a questionnaire. The parish action plan highlights the main issues taken from the questionnaires which affect daily life in Appleford. Out of a total of 141 properties in Appleford, 123 households participated. Of those, 91 households completed questionnaires, representing 74% of the total. The final number of questionnaires came to 170, averaging out at almost two questionnaires per participating household. Each household was given the opportunity for every family member to complete the questionnaire. In accordance with the well-held view in western developed countries that we are an ageing population, Appleford appears to fit the trend, with 34% of respondents being over 61, with the 51-60 age range coming in at 25% of respondents. At the other end of the spectrum, the under 20s represented 9% of respondents.

The **terms of reference** for producing a parish action plan which is supported by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and recommended by the Parish Council can include the following aims:

- (a) Highlighting actions that can be taken by community members;
- (b) Using the plan to influence councils and service providers;
- (c) Providing justification of need when applying for funding.

The **timescale** involved in this project reflects the commitment to producing a parish action plan which truly reflects the concerns of the village. In February 2007, a meeting was held in the village hall which was run by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council to explain the purpose of producing an action plan for the community. In March 2007 a parish action plan strategy committee was set up to take the plan forward. The committee met regularly from March 2007 to the summer of 2008 to agree on a suitable questionnaire for Appleford. Some events were held to get feedback from the village and a questionnaire was circulated. Data from the questionnaires was entered onto a spreadsheet and analysis of the data, together with further comments was published in the Appleford newsletter. A document called the 'parish action plan' has now been produced from the analysis and presented to the parish council both for their endorsement and mandate for future action. Once approval has been reached the parish action plan will be circulated round the village and all relevant authorities, websites and newsletters.

The **structure** of the parish action plan points to the major concerns of the village along with possible actions and timescales for those concerns to be realised.

Review of results

Areas covered in the questionnaire included: **Crime and Safety, Transport, Environment and Health, Community and Leisure, Help for the Elderly and Disabled, Young People, Housing, the Village Hall** and the **New Hall Project**. The areas which most people felt passionate about were as follows:

Crime and Safety

82% felt that traffic speeding was an issue in Appleford with 50% favouring road narrowing as a means of correcting the problem.

83% were concerned about pedestrian access to the railway station, with 76% wanting a path or a bridge for pedestrians.

Respondents were also concerned about lack of pavements in places but most would be satisfied if the present pavements were repaired, especially in Chambrai Close, Main Road and Church Lane because of a number of accidents.

Of the 149 respondents (out of 170) who chose to answer the prioritisation section of the questionnaire, 57 put traffic speeding, calming and safety issues as the most important area to be tackled.

Transport

64% would leave their cars at home if Appleford had a train service with greater frequency and/or a regular bus service to Abingdon or Didcot, although there was a greater response about improvements to the train service.

Environment and Health

49% were adversely affected by the near presence of the rubbish tip, complaining of flies, bad smells, vermin and noise but had not complained officially. Large vehicles and motor bikes added to additional annoyance.

67% said they would be more careful with their use of resources at home in order to save energy, whilst 59% said that they would like better home insulation. These percentages include people who are already taking these precautionary measures.

61% of respondents wanted more paths into the countryside.

73% thought it should be possible to see a doctor outside surgery opening times with 59% in favour of a Saturday morning surgery.

Community and Leisure

67% of respondents wanted more social events in the village with particular emphasis on an annual village fête and the return of the horticultural show. It is not surprising that 78% of respondents said that they were not involved in any Appleford organisations or clubs since there is not much to offer.

On the questions concerning the Appleford Church, 33% said that they never attend with a higher proportion attending the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals, or festivals. Only 3% attend weekly and 9% monthly. It should be mentioned, however that some villagers attend churches outside the village and that the village church does not suit everyone's denomination. 39% of villagers said that they would be prepared to help the church financially.

There was a good response from the village regarding parish council developments. 93% preferred to be informed via the Appleford Pressings and 89% would support local services if they knew more about them. 82% would find it useful to have a mini Appleford directory and 87% would use a community shop/post office.

Help for the Elderly and Disabled

It is useful to note that the highest percentage of respondents were in the over 61 age bracket, returning some 34% of questionnaires. A high percentage (45%) felt that services for the elderly and disabled were inadequate with the emphasis being on better transport facilities to give this group greater independence. Not everyone in this group was able to or chose to drive. The elderly also felt nervous about walking on poor pavement surfaces and in fact some had suffered accidents because of substandard pavements.

Young People

Only 15 people under the age of 20 chose to complete a questionnaire, representing only 9% of the total. Some of these chose to complete the relevant parts of their parents' (carers') questionnaire. There is a feeling that this group was underrepresented but all had the opportunity to participate. However, 46 people who responded on behalf of the young were keen to have tennis courts in the village. This request was also reflected across the board over all age groups.

Housing

There was a cool reception to the question as to whether Appleford should grow with more housing with 66% being against the idea. However, 38% said that Appleford should provide low cost rented housing, but solely for people with a local village connection.

Activities in the Village Hall

Many respondents found this question difficult to answer because in some ways it presumed the existence of a village hall which would be suitable for holding many of the activities listed. [Since the questionnaire was circulated round the village, the new hall project has had to be shelved for the time being because of lack of funds. The present village hall has been refurbished to include a main hall (similar in size, but much improved from the original), an additional large meetings room, a large, modern kitchen and four small rooms which are set up for future shower rooms when funds are available to include the showers. This last item was deemed necessary to make the building suitable as a sports pavilion for clubs who want to play sports in the recreation ground.]

In general terms, the greatest interest shown was for a shop and/or café (56%), followed by parties and receptions (42%), antique fairs (38%), quiz evenings (36%), yoga and keep fit (34%), staged performances (32%), and a paperback/hardback library (31%). Overall, 28% said they would be

interested in helping to run events. Of those, 29% said they would help run a shop or café and 13% would help run keep fit classes. Others said they would help with performances, painting, cooking and sewing, pool/snooker, antique fairs, DIY, games and card playing and winetasting. A few people said they would not be interested in helping unless Appleford had a bigger village hall for activities. It would seem, therefore that villagers are interested in a whole range of activities with an ample number of people willing to help run them.

New Hall Project

As mentioned above, this project has been shelved for the time being because of financial restrictions. However, villagers were asked to respond as to the size and type of hall they would like to see in Appleford. This was following previous campaigns for a new village hall, culminating in a majority vote in the village for a new hall. To this end, therefore, 34% of respondents said they would like the hall to be big enough to take 80-100 people [present hall seats around 40 comfortably and a capacity of 70 within the fire regulation requirements]; that it should be suitable for informal gatherings or meetings or use as a part-time shop or café, aside from the main hall (69%); that it should be suitable for performances, live music or dancing (61%); that it should be designed and built to be economical and easy to run (82%); and that it should have a low carbon footprint (76%).

Some respondents (40%) took the opportunity to state in the further comments section that they did not agree with the building of a new village hall for reasons of cost, parking and interlopers from other villages hiring it out. Another two respondents wanted to see how the refurbished hall pans out before committing to a new hall.

Prioritisation

Asked to prioritise the most important issues in the village, 38% were most concerned about traffic speeding, calming and safety issues with another 17% being more concerned about transport issues. Environmental issues only accounted for 9%, although when the questionnaire was circulated the possibility of a large incinerator close to Appleford was not on the agenda. This item has now become a serious issue with villagers petitioning against the building of such an incinerator.

Further Comments

In this section of additional comments, many villagers took the opportunity of showing either their support or rejection of a new village hall. Those in favour felt strongly that many of the proposed activities could only take place in a hall built for the purpose, whilst those against the building of a new hall felt that it would be money wasted for such a small village. Now that this project has been shelved for the time being, it is, however, important that all views should be respected.

People expressed their concerns over traffic issues, in particular the large amount of HGVs passing through the village. There were concerns raised about traffic speeding in some parts of the village, in particular, Main Road and the railway bridge. Different opinions were raised as to what measure of traffic calming could be adopted which would result in the minimum amount of disruption to the village. Many people were concerned about the amount of car parking in Main Road and the subsequent dangers. There were strongly held views about the danger for pedestrians on the railway bridge where the lack of a pavement puts rail travellers at risk, especially at night.

Many respondents added their disgust at the state of repair of most of the pavements in Appleford in terms of how many walkers had suffered accidents because of uneven surfaces. People also wanted pavements on at least one side of each road in the village and to be able to walk to the river. There were concerns raised about not having proper cycle paths to other villages.

Finally, villagers wanted more of a community spirit – more sociable, without impeding on the peacefulness; awareness of the village pub with its present and future role; and landscaping and tree planting to improve the look of the village.

Action Plan

Priority	Description	Action points	Timetable	Responsibility
1	Safety for Roads and Pavements			
	- Roads	Promote means of traffic calming in the village, in particular for Main Road and the railway bridge. Road narrowing was the favoured option in the questionnaire.	5 years	O.C.C. via Parish Council
	- Rail Footbridge	Investigate low-cost options for pavement for rail footbridge to ensure safe crossing to and from rail station.	5 years	O.C.C./ Network Rail via Parish Council
	- Pavements	Promote improvements to pavements in the village to enable ease of use by the elderly and the disabled; by carers with pushchairs and by anyone pushing a luggage trolley.	2 years	O.C.C. via Parish Council
2	Community and Leisure			
	- Community Spirit	The proposed building of a new village hall has been a divisive force in the village amongst those in favour and those against, irrespective of weighting on either side. Efforts should be made to try and pull the community together. An action panel should be set up to concentrate on what we have available for use and to reintroduce more social events such as the annual village fête and the horticultural show. Health and safety barriers should be investigated to this end.	Ongoing	Village Hall Management Committee and Residents
	- Village Hall and Recreation Ground Improvements	The village hall has been refurbished with a much better kitchen and meetings rooms. There could be a need in the future to install showers.	Ongoing regarding showers	Parish Council

Priority	Description	Action points	Timetable	Responsibility
	- Help for the Elderly and Disabled	<p>There is a need for car park improvements and disabled parking.</p> <p>There was an overwhelming desire for a multipurpose surface area for playing tennis, badminton, etc. This would provide recreation for all ages.</p> <p>The majority of villagers wanted to have a Good Neighbour Scheme in place. Investigations should be carried out in order to ascertain what that might involve.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Not feasible</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Parish Council</p> <p>Residents</p>
3	<p>Transport</p> <p>- Rail Service</p> <p>- Minibuses</p>	<p>Efforts should continue to be made to ensure that our rail service does not deteriorate further. Huge efforts have already been made by some villagers with the rail companies to ensure that our service will not be cut further. However, timetabling is rather erratic at present with lots of stopping trains between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. (especially going towards London) but the recently implemented 6-hour gap between trains to London and Oxford for the off-peak service continues to be the weakest part of the timetable. At the time of printing negotiations have been entered into to attempt to reinstate at least 2 of the 5 trains which were cut for the May to December 2009 timetable.</p> <p>The introduction of minibuses to Abingdon, doctors' surgeries, etc. would be beneficial for all ages in Appleford.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Not feasible</p>	<p>Parish Council and Villagers liaising with our local MP/ County Councillor and the rail companies</p>

Priority	Description	Action points	Timetable	Responsibility
4	Environment and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Footpaths - Appleford Directory and Website 	<p>Consider creating a circular path in Appleford so that people could appreciate the countryside around them rather than marching past houses or taking their dogs to the recreation ground.</p> <p>Create a community directory to include useful business addresses; whom to contact for complaints about environmental issues, etc. In addition, consider what needs to be included in the Appleford website and its continued maintenance.</p>	<p>5 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Parish Council, Sustrans and local landowner</p> <p>Parish Council via the Pressings at www.applefordwebsite.co.uk</p>

NOTE: The Parish Council cannot exceed its statutory powers. Therefore, the Parish Council is unable to take on projects outside its remit.

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