



SANDFORD ON THAMES

PARISH PLAN





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KEY SURVEY RESULTS

Speeding traffic is a routine problem for 230 village households

The largest response (260) was from those agreeing that Sandford is an excellent place to live

228 households (87%) agree that, if there were a village shop, they would use it regularly, for up to a quarter of their shopping

86% approval rating for our Parish Council

Three quarters of households who responded supported a neighbourhood watch scheme in their area

84% of respondents are looking for improvements to policing arrangements

158 households are dissatisfied with the present bus services

Half of those who completed the survey support up to 50 more homes

Introduction

Welcome to the Sandford on Thames Parish Plan for 2005 – 2009.

During the late summer of 2003, in response to a proposal in the County Council's draft structure plan to build up to 3,000 houses 'south of Grenoble Road', a packed meeting in the Village Hall agreed to embark on a village appraisal that has now resulted in this Parish Plan.

In early 2004, an 8 page survey was distributed to all 577 households in the village and it was particularly gratifying that 282 households (49%) responded. Analysis of the response, plus other consultations undertaken e.g. with young people, the local farms and employers, gives good confidence that the results are truly representative of the village as a whole. By July, discussions had been held with a range of organisations such as Thames Valley Police, the Bus Companies, Kassam Stadium and SODC. A draft report was then circulated to all households, that was accepted with only minor comments.

This Parish Plan is the final product of the appraisal, which was discussed and agreed with the Parish Council on Monday 6th December 2004. Wherever possible, the agreed actions are specific. However, in a few cases, where agreement with other parties has not yet been achieved, they are descriptive, to define the further work that is required. Delivery of the actions has already begun with a very successful meeting about Crime and Policing on 29th November.

The Parish Council welcomes the plan and will review progress on the actions on a regular basis. The survey results will also be an excellent reference tool when discussing new issues that arise in the years ahead.

The Parish Council would like to express their great appreciation for the funding of this appraisal by the Countryside Agency, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and for all the work undertaken by the Volunteer Appraisal Group.

January 2005

Nigel Northcott
Chair, Sandford on Thames Parish Council

Steve Daniels
Chair, Village Appraisal Group

Housing in the Village

The village remains all but unanimous against the recent structure proposal to build at least 3,000 houses on land immediately adjacent to the village and 'south of Grenoble Road' i.e. in South Oxfordshire's Green Belt. However, this was clearly not a case of a bunch of NIMBYs at work, as half of respondents declared themselves happy to see up to 50 houses (an about 8% increase) built in the village to meet housing needs.



However, the equally clearly expressed requirement was that any such housing should be of mixed types including family and starter / affordable homes. Further consultation on this issue suggested that the preferred location for such housing would be the farmland on the left of Henley Road when entering the village from the bypass. It seemed that households saw this as least 'building up' the village or adding to Oxford's 'Urban Sprawl'.

Agreed Actions:

- 1. If approached to approve any house building proposals, the Parish Council discuss these village preferences with the developers.**
- 2. In such circumstances, the Parish Council undertake a housing needs assessment to verify local requirements.**
- 3. In any such circumstances, the Parish Council to promote to the developer the principle of providing a village shop unit, if such a facility has, by then, been proven to be viable.**

A Village Shop ?

Unsurprisingly, most people welcomed the idea of a village shop. Many said they would find it very convenient and that they would use it regularly. The results show that most people would spend around a quarter of their weekly shopping there. However, any shop would have to be a viable business and be able to cope with the lure of the nearby Sainsbury's & Tesco's.

The Office for National Statistics gives a range of figures for rural weekly shopping. Taking these, the support for a shop indicated by the survey and then extending this to the whole village, shows that it could generate turnover of about £8,000 weekly.

Spar and Londis require a turnover of at least £10,000 and the Co-op £15,000. Customers are likely to want late opening and a suitable location for the shop would also have to be found.

Agreed Action:

- 1. That a working group of Parish Council and Village Appraisal Members consider the case for a village shop in more detail, as well as to explore alternative approaches to maximise turnover potential.**

A Good Neighbour Scheme

The survey results largely agreed that villagers are 'friendly' and 'show they care'. Indeed, a massive 86% of respondents are willing to provide help to, and keep an eye on, an elderly neighbour. This could be a real contribution to village life and a great help to the Older Persons Homes along Henley Road.

Agreed Actions:

- 1. The Parish Council to place an article in 'The Link' and on the website to recruit a scheme co-ordinator.**
- 2. Once provided with some basic training, the scheme co-ordinator to establish a working group and launch the scheme via a public meeting in the Village Hall.**

Village Traffic

Most of the respondents to the survey had things to say about this subject. 83% of respondents said that speeding is a routine problem. A clear majority want highways improvements as a priority, to address clear danger spots e.g. the junction of Henley Road and Church Road.

Problems of village access, caused by a general lack of parking space (especially on match days) were clearly seen as exacerbating this situation. Strong concern was also expressed about the poor quality of the main village roads and of the pavements – particularly those in Church Road.

However, it is important to recognise that any scheme is going to be expensive and that SODC and OCC will inevitably have existing priorities for their limited funds, which we will be seeking to change.



Agreed Actions:

1. The Parish Council continue its endeavours to get the County Council to obtain or allocate funds, to deliver the following:

- a) Football traffic arriving northbound on the A4074 directed to the Sainsbury's roundabout and then south rather than, as now, via the bottom end of Henley Road and into Brick Kiln Lane.
- b) Mini roundabouts at Heyford Hill Lane, Church Road & Brick Kiln Lane.
- c) Adjustments to alignment of Church Road / Henley Road junction.
- d) Lower Henley Road (from Church Road to A4074) narrowed by parking bays.
- e) Re-introduction of vehicle weight limit signs along Grenoble Road
- f) Deeper bus bays at Brick Kiln Lane and Grenoble Road roundabout.
- g) Improved lighting to junctions, including beneath underpass bridge [A4074].
- h) New tarmac on Henley Road / Sandford Road / Church Road.
- i) Raised pedestrian crossings near to bus stops.
- j) Alternating priorities between Orchard House and Four Pillars Hotel.
- k) 30 mph signs painted onto road surface.
- l) Church Road pavement re-laid.
- m) Mirror at the junction of Broadhurst Gardens and Heyford Hill Lane.

Living and Working Locally

Over half of the working residents of the village already work in Oxford, a further 15% up to 10 miles away but only 10% in the village. Despite there being ambivalence about whether the respondents wanted to be the ones to work locally, 60% felt there should be more local work opportunities. However, 75% are pessimistic about the chances of this, and believe that the village will be a dormitory in less than 5 years.

Agreed Actions:

1. Local employers to be encouraged to advertise vacancies, alongside their services and activities, on the web site and in The Link.
2. The Sandford on Thames website to be enhanced to include links to local employment websites and those of all the local employers.

Village Policing

The survey showed some concern about the level of village crime appearing to have increased, including car crime, although a detailed breakdown of recorded crime provided by Thames Valley Police actually shows that it has fallen by 6% for the year to March 2004. 84% of respondents were unhappy about the level of village policing arrangements.



When contacted on this subject, TVP stated that a number of 'Community Support Officers' are being recruited and that a Community Beat Policeman is assigned to us.

Agreed Actions:

1. To hold an early meeting with a Senior Officer of Thames Valley Police, to raise village concerns and obtain an increased level and visibility of policing arrangements.
2. To make available additional crime prevention advice and support to village households.

Neighbourhood Watches

Opinions on the effectiveness of the existing two Neighbourhood Watches are mixed, with only 41% thinking the local schemes are effective.



These presently only cover a quarter of the village, but three quarters of the village welcomed the idea of a scheme being established in their area.

On the 29th November, the Appraisal Group, supported by Thames Valley Police, held a meeting of interested households, where enthusiasm for the existing watches was refreshed and the 'ringmaster' system was optimised.

Agreed Actions:

1. By mid 2005, to have established watches in parts of Henley Road and the Heyford Hill Estate.
2. By the end of 2006, to have established a comprehensive framework of schemes throughout the village, including the park homes.

Local Environment

Respondents to the survey strongly agreed that a 'green approach' to maintenance was important, even if it has since been difficult to obtain a clear consensus on precisely what that meant!

In contrast, the survey replies were evenly split over whether the village looks attractive when entering it. There were a number of comments to suggest that the village lacked a 'heart or soul'. At present a few villagers take it upon themselves to do litter sweeps of some areas.



An early success of the appraisal has been to identify that many households did not even know about the green box scheme or were not recycling all the materials that are accepted. A briefing in The Link led to lots of boxes being requested and more were claimed at the Village Fete.

Many requests were also made for glass recycling facilities in the village.

The Parish Council has already commissioned an improved verge-mowing programme in central areas that cuts more finely and removes the cuttings, in forthcoming years.

Agreed Actions:

- 1. A village 'environmental group' to be created, under a volunteer leader, with support (including finance) from the Parish Council.**
- 2. That, subject to the acceptability of the likely costs by the Parish Council, more is made of the village and its green spaces, by:**
 - a) flower and shrub beds created at a variety of key points throughout the village, as part of the traffic management proposals.**
 - c) a programme of trimming and edging that maximises the usability of village pavements and paths.**
 - d) other areas being left to naturalise or being maintained as wild gardens.**
- 3. The village to have an annual 'litter blitz' to share out the work followed by a social event such as a BBQ, funded by the Parish Council.**
- 4. A suitable location for a glass recycling bank to be found, that does not cause traffic or litter problems, which a contractor empties on a regular basis.**
- 5. Current recycling options to be regularly re-iterated in The Link.**

Young Voices



About a third of young people in the village aged from 4-17 responded to a separate questionnaire covering issues specific to them. It was clear that, like the adult respondents, they were strongly in favour of a village shop and a better bus service. They also object to vandalism, fast cars, poor lighting and misuse of the play equipment.

The Ozone bowling and cinema facilities are also used regularly by teenagers and under 12s. However, they feel strongly that the range of activities and recreational equipment in Sandford itself is inadequate, and does not reflect the wide range of interests they have. This view is endorsed by the majority of adult residents.

Most young people attend schools outside the Sandford area, such that they are less likely to have school friends living locally. Teenagers in particular care about having a suitable place to meet up. Sadly, a small number of 4-12 year olds felt that some villagers in Sandford were unfriendly, in contrast to adult views that Sandford is generally a friendly place to live.

Agreed Actions:

- 1. To promote the activities that are already available locally to young people, in a dedicated section of the village directory.**
- 2. Advertise in the link for volunteer organisers of activity sessions in subjects shown in the appraisal to be of interest to young people.**
- 3. The Parish Council to seek grant support for these initiatives.**
- 4. The Parish Council's play equipment budget for this year to be targeted upon facilities for the 7 - 12 year age group.**

Village Information & Communications

An interesting outcome of the appraisal was that many villagers clearly do not know about the many facilities already available to them. Requests for clubs and societies, to be run in the Village Hall, were made with many already being available at the Village Hall. The general level of knowledge about the bus timetables and about the mobile library's schedule was also low.



Limited communication, especially to those new to the village, is quite apparent in some areas. The existing services do a good job in keeping people informed. Indeed, the highest percentage of 'strongly agrees' in the survey concerned the importance of The Link, Village Noticeboards and Sandford Web pages.



Agreed Actions:

- 1. An annual directory of village services to be issued, by March 2005, as an extra issue of The Link with extra copies that can be given to all new arrivals, as a 'welcome to the village' pack.**
- 2. Initiate a project, by June 2005, using any available grants, to extend www.sandfordonthames.co.uk into an information 'portal'.**
- 3. Promote the use of the library service in all information media.**
- 4. Meet with OCC to obtain more visits by the service, especially in the late afternoon.**

Village Hall



The village hall received the most written opinions from the survey and generated more suggestions than the questions on traffic problems.

Over half of the respondents (57%) have visited the village hall at least once, and a third have hired the hall at some time. Inevitably, some concerns were raised about noise and other nuisances for which the letting regulations have already been tightened.

Agreed Actions:

1. The Village Hall Management Committee to continue to encourage the use of the hall by advertising its facilities and conditions of hire more widely, including in the directory, website and on a new noticeboard outside the hall.
2. During 2005, to expand the range and type of activities as highlighted in the appraisal survey.

Buses

127 respondents said they would welcome a service to take them to the nearby Sainsbury's or Tescos. Subsequently, it was established that Tappins Coaches already runs a service to Tesco on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The numerous requests for improved bus services, especially on Sundays and in the evenings, have had some limited successes.



Journey timings have been adjusted to link to school closing times. However, Thames Transit observed that Sunday and Evening services have been tried previously but were not used sufficiently for them to be commercially viable.

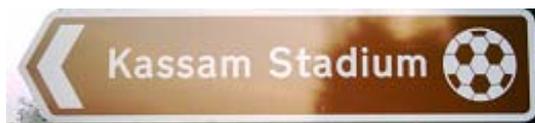
Agreed Actions:

1. Encourage increased use of the existing services by advertising the times, destinations, fares and bus stops in all information channels.
2. To hold a further meeting with a Senior Manager of each of the bus companies, to raise village concerns and obtain an increased level of services.

The Stadium and The Ozone



The creation of the 'Ozone' Centre adjacent to the Kassam Stadium has generally been welcomed and is expected by parishioners to be even more beneficial as more units are opened. At the same time, traffic congestion has improved as new car parking facilities have been opened on site.



Agreed Actions:

1. To help achieve greater awareness of the centre through the website and services directory.
2. To continue liaison with the Kassam Stadium, Ozone Centre and Thames Valley Police, to seek further ways to minimise the impact of increased traffic levels upon the village.