

# Chearsley Village Plan

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## A Discussion Document

### Forward

The Chearsley Village Plan is being prepared as a statement about Chearsley as it is now and a guide to the way we wish to see the Village develop over the next 20 years.

It will present a snapshot of the village and the way of life here at the end of 2012, identifying those things that are cherished and we wish to keep as well as the things we would like to see changed or improved. Inevitably there is a range of opinion in many areas, but by ensuring that there has been wide consultation during its preparation the Plan will present a consensus view.

This document is part of that consultation. It presents the material gathered to date and provides an indication of the direction of the thinking in a number of areas. Most importantly, it presents a range of questions that we wish to use to check how the village as a whole feels about the direction of the work at this stage.

### **The Challenges and Benefits of being a Small Village.**

Within Chearsley we are all aware of the opportunities and challenges facing a small village.

The commercial difficulties facing The Bell Public House and our village shop. Commercial viability is recognised as a real issue for all small businesses and these are no exception.

Opportunities for further business development and employment opportunities within the village are extremely limited, given the size of village population and proximity of other facilities in the larger villages of Haddenham, Long Crendon and Cuddington

Over the years, we have also lost our school and our post office. These are important village facilities, amenities and meeting places. Once lost they are very difficult to restore

The village organisations such as St Nicholas Church, the Village Hall, the Cricket Club, the WI and the Chearsley Show all have to be conscious of the relatively small village population and the restrictions and demands that this places on their financial resources and indeed, in some cases, their longer term viability.

However, those same characteristics of being a small village are part of the charm of Chearsley as a small distinct rural community.

These are all factors that influence the way Chearsley will develop over the coming years, and they are all part of the context in which the Topic Groups have conducted the work that is presented here.

# The Consultation Process

Production of a Village Plan that has the support of the whole community requires wide and thorough consultation. In Chearsley, we are mid-way through that process.

## Activities to date.

- An initial Open Meeting in November 2011 at which there was agreement to proceed with developing a Plan
- A survey of the Village carried out on behalf of AVDC in December 2011 to provide information that was to inform production of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan
- Further Open Meetings on 6 February, 29 February, 20 March and 30 April. These sessions formally established the Open Meeting, or 'Planning Forum', as the decision making body for the Village Plan, set up a number of Topic Groups to work on various aspects of the Plan, and agreed to the establishment of a Steering Group to oversee and guide the work
- A great deal of work over the summer months by the Topic Groups
- A stand on the Village Green on the day of the village Jubilee Celebrations
- A further Open Meeting on 17 October to report back on progress to date
- Production of this first Discussion Document

The next step is to seek responses from the village to a range of questions that have emerged during this work.

## Subsequent steps are expected to comprise:

- Further consultation by means of open meetings, discussion groups, etc. to ensure the widest possible discussion of the points raised by this document and the responses to the questions it poses
- Further detailed work by the Topic Groups, informed by this consultation
- Production of a Draft Plan document
- A formal survey of the village by means of a follow-up questionnaire. This will be used to confirm acceptance of the Draft Plan, and ask the village to take a clear view (i.e. vote) on important issues where differences of opinion are apparent.
- Publication of the approved Village Plan. This will include an Action Plan identifying the work that will be done over the following 2 and 5 years to move us towards the vision we have for the village. It will be used by all the organisations in the village, by the Parish Council and, legislation permitting, by AVDC and Bucks County Council, as a basis for any development that takes place here.

We really do want and need as many people as possible to contribute to this consultation. There are some aspects of this document that are contentious and that is because it addresses issues that are real and have to be tackled if we really are to have an impact on how Chearsley develops.

It is vital that whatever the plan eventually says on these difficult topics, it really represents the majority view. We will only know that if everyone tells us what they think.

So please – do get involved, in whatever way you prefer, with the ‘Chearsley Discussion’ over the next few months:

- Read this Discussion Document then complete and return the Questionnaire.
- Look out for notices that will tell you about open meetings and discussion groups
- Consider joining one or more of the Topic Groups to contribute your ideas, wishes, expertise and experience to the on-going discussion (just contact any of the existing group members)
- Write to any of us with your ideas and opinions

### **Important Note.**

By completing the Questionnaire, you will be helping us gauge opinion on a range of important topics. That will help ensure we focus the next stages of the work on areas that are important to everyone in the village. You will not, however, be voting on the issues addressed. Your opportunity to do that will come - later

The questions have been identified by the Topic Groups on areas where they would like guidance at this stage. Those questions are included within the body of the document, and are also duplicated in the separate attached Questionnaire.

Please complete and return the Questionnaire by any of the methods indicated.

## The Topic Groups

The material presented here has been developed by five 'Topic Groups'. These Groups are at the heart of the development of the Cheersley Village Plan. To ensure that as wide a range of thoughts and ideas are captured, it is vital that there are plenty of volunteers willing to contribute to this work and we thank them for their work so far. All of the Groups are keen to increase their membership and anyone wishing to contribute will be most welcome.

### Context Group

The Context Group has gathered a large amount of information about the history of the village and how it appears today. An entire book could be written on just this subject and the challenge is to decide how much of the material to include in this document.

That work is under way. A section on "Cheersley – past and present" has yet to be produced. It will include key dates/events in the village history from earliest known times and a pen picture of village life. We hope to include a number of photographs illustrating how the village has changed over the ages.

*The current members of the Context Group are: Clare Clark, Adam Lazaruk, Justine Yorke, Sandra Towell and Alan Mitchener*

### Housing Group

Group meetings have been well attended and group members committed in their researches and genuine interest in the topics under discussion. The group recognises that this subject area is probably uniquely emotive, sensitive and of commercial interest to some villagers. As such, the group has made every effort to be dispassionate in expressing their views here and will continue to represent what they believe to be the best interests of the village as a whole for the future.

Membership of the Group is not closed and anyone wishing to join or express views by e-mail or letter would be welcome. Examples of this approach already taken are opportunities for verbal and written consultation processes at the manned stall on the Village Green at the Jubilee Celebrations, general reports on progress information on the Cheersley website and through the Open Meetings held during the year.

*The current members of the Housing Group are: Ted Frankland, Peter Crook, Laura Skinner, Sandra Towell, Larry Greenfield, Sarah Jakeman, Sue Gray and John Lewis*

## **Business Group**

This Group has been concerned to ensure that the interests of all operating businesses within the village, including those of either independent or corporate/remote home-workers, are taken into account. They have also looked at 'Not-for-Profit' organisations such as CHUFF, the Cricket Club, Youth Club and Village Hall Trust. Of particular concern has been the need to attract high-speed Broadband to the village and a summary of the national Broadband Strategy and commentary on 4G mobile services has been included.

*It is a small group that would welcome further input. The current members of the Business Group are Derek Allen, Larry Greenfield, Sarah Jakeman and Ian Houseman*

## **Community & Leisure Group**

This Group has looked at the wide range of facilities and organisations in the village that are at the heart of the community here. This includes businesses (the Bell & the Shop), the Church, The Village Hall, Cricket Club, and other organisations around the village. They have also considered the issue of open spaces available for recreation.

*The current members of the Community and Leisure Group are Catherine Greenfield, Adam Lazaruk, Ruth Holland, John Howard, Andy Yorke, Geoff Hogbin and Joy Payne*

## **The 'RESCU' Group.**

This group has carried out a wide range of work. It was formed from the amalgamation of the Environment & Conservation Topic Group and the Public Services, Roads, Transport & Utilities Topic Group. The amalgamation was agreed as the two groups had so much overlap in terms of their areas of interest.

The outcomes of the December 2011 village-wide consultation identified that most respondents are satisfied with the level of services such as health surgeries, health visitors, library etc. so these areas were not viewed as priorities by this group. However, issues such as Broadband provision, footpath maintenance, traffic concerns such as parking, speeding and safety, and the desire for underground public utilities were deemed important for the well-being of residents and the appearance of Chearsley. The future well-being of the Chearsley Conservation Area was also deemed important by a majority of respondents.

*The current members of the RESCUS Group are Peter Crook, Rose Dale, Andy Yorke, Paul Bown, Elaine Bown, Fenella Tillier, Phil Holland, Ruth Holland, Sharon Sampson, Keith Wright, Joy Payne and Steve Lock*

**The Topic Groups welcome further input. If you want to contribute your ideas, opinions, skills and experience to this work, either by attending group meetings or by writing in with your thoughts, please contact any group member.**

# Housing

## Introduction

In many respects the housing stock in the village, both in character and number, defines the village. The character of the housing has a bearing on who wishes, or is able, to live here and the number of houses impacts the number of people in the locality and hence the viability of local businesses, as indicated in the introduction.

These linkages have been a major consideration in the work presented here and will need to be considered carefully by the village in developing the Village Plan.

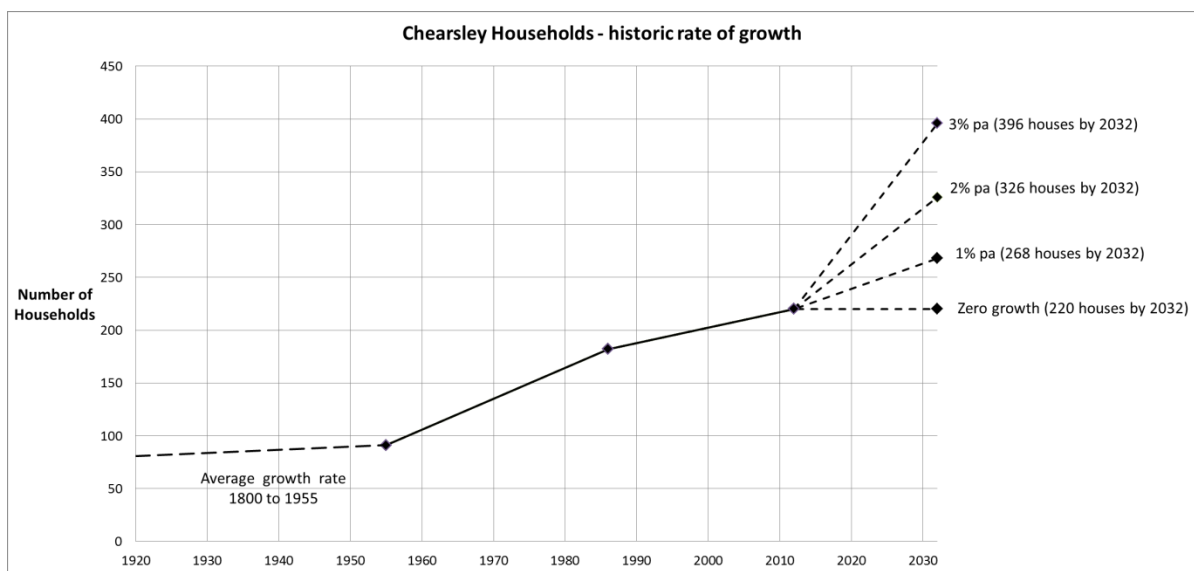
## The Current Situation

### Chearsley as a growing village

Historical data (Figure 1) reveals recent growth in Chearsley households from around 180 in 1987 to 220 in 2012, a 22% increase over that period (1.6 new homes per year). Simply continuing this rate of growth would bring around 32 new homes over the next 20 years, and an increase to an annual growth rate of 1% pa would result in an increase of 2.2 homes per year or 44 homes over the 20 year period.

Looking back to the period from 1955 to 1987, the rate of growth in Chearsley households was even greater, with an increase of 93 homes from around 87 to 180 over that period. If that level of growth had been sustained, we would have lived in a village of 270 homes at the present time and it would be looking at a total of around 330 households in Chearsley by 2032.

The consultation across the village carried out in December 2011 indicated no real appetite for such large-scale development. The Housing Group has taken that into account and is consulting on an even lower figure of just 22 new homes.



**Figure 1. Households in Chearsley – Historical Growth and Future Projections**

In coming to this view, it is recognised that there will be some who, when considering the impact of housing on business and other facilities, may wish to see a significant increase in the village population with the added advantages that would bring to local businesses and organisations. In contrast, others will wish to see no further housing development in the

village. Whilst being aware of the issues facing the development of businesses and village organisations within Chearsley, the pace of housing development as indicated historically by the figures above is not considered to be sustainable if the essential character of the village is to be maintained.

This is not to say that the group felt there should be a complete embargo on such development. There is a case for the village housing stock to be increased, for example to enable residents to remain in the village whose family, work or emotional ties are inextricably linked to Chearsley but whose housing needs change over the years. Provision for growing families, those whose family “leave the nest”, those whose lifestyle circumstances change or who find themselves living alone should have every opportunity to downsize or upgrade within the village, retaining their links with Chearsley and continuing the contribution their family has made to village life.

Weighing these considerations, the Housing Group came to a recommendation which is felt to offer a clear and relatively conservative recommendation. These issues, central to village development, will be a very important matter for formal consultation.

### **Development Constraints.**

Turning to consideration of where development might take place, it becomes clear that there are limited potential development sites in the village.

The physical distribution of housing within Chearsley is asymmetrically divided by the main road between Long Crendon and Cuddington, and further divided by the crossroads near the War Memorial. The land towards the River Thames is low lying and prone to flooding, limiting scope for building development. There are also other village boundaries, delineating potential priority areas of village development and infill.

The view of the Housing Group, reinforced by returns from the earlier (December 2011) village consultation, is that the overwhelming majority of potential sites have already been developed, reflecting the growth referred to earlier. In particular, it is considered that the area of the village bounded broadly by Church Lane, School Lane and Dark Lane is now fully developed. Although there is obviously the potential for individual larger houses to be demolished, large gardens sub-divided and new housing developments to be proposed by individuals, it is considered that residents as a whole should be opposed to such development.

The reason for coming to this conclusion is that failure to restrict further development in these areas would have the following undesirable consequences:

1. It would increase the already vulnerable character of the sunken lanes, their verges and hedgerows, the very environmental attractions that makes Chearsley a unique village in this area.
2. It would fundamentally change the rural “green” nature of the Chearsley Conservation Area and immediate environs.
3. It would pose even greater demands on the existing infrastructures and utilities serving these areas.
4. The inevitable increase in traffic along these narrow, unlit, essentially single track roads would represent a danger to walkers, children and families already living in these areas.
5. It would exacerbate the existing problems of roadside parking on Chearsley’s minor lanes, particularly those issues associated with visitors, tradesmen or deliveries.

This would be another significant topic for formal village consultation.

## Possible Locations for potential housing development.

The Group has identified the following areas as potential candidates for housing development (see also Figure 2)

Site No.	Location	Notes
1	Millennium Playing Fields	Potential development area for housing. Alternatively, it is a possible site for the relocation of a new improved Village Hall/Community Centre and some housing with parking off Chilton Road. This may be linked to the sale of the existing Village Hall site.
2	Existing Cricket Ground	Potential housing development, although this necessitates relocating the existing cricket ground and pavilion facilities somewhere and certainly further out of the village.
3	Field area to east side of Winchendon Road between allotments and "The View"	Potential housing development accessed off Winchendon Road.
4	Location of existing Village Hall	Potential Housing, the development of which could be used to finance a new Community Centre. Alternatively, a location for a larger Village Shop and recreation area.
5	Field area to east side of Lower Green Lane	Potential housing development, although access via Lammas Lane could be tricky and expensive.
6	Field area to north side of Crendon Road and to west of Chilton Road.	Possible significant housing and recreational/retail development accessed from Chilton Road via existing drop kerb entrances. Alternatively, alongside some housing development, the shop and Village Hall could also both be relocated here with a suitably placed entrance off Crendon Road.
7	Orchard area to south side of Crendon Road, bordering Manor Farm	Potential small scale housing development area accessed via existing entrance within the wicket wall down an existing but widened entrance drive to Manor Farm.
8	Field area to south side of Church Lane and west of the church.	Potential housing development area accessed via a widened entrance to Manor Farm off the Crendon Road and extending between Manor Farm and the existing field pathway. Alternatively, if a much larger area was developed, this could also be the site for a relocated Village Hall and children's recreation area, thus improving Church parking and linking village amenities.

### Notes to the Table

1. It is very important that readers do not view this list as representing anything other than an objective list of potential sites for development.
2. It is emphasised that there has been no consultation or discussion with landowners of land either on this list, (or not on it!).
3. We invite others to contribute to this list if they feel any area has been inadvertently omitted.
4. In the event of any housing development being undertaken it is clear that by no means all the areas on the list would be included for development as this would enable development far in excess of that envisaged.



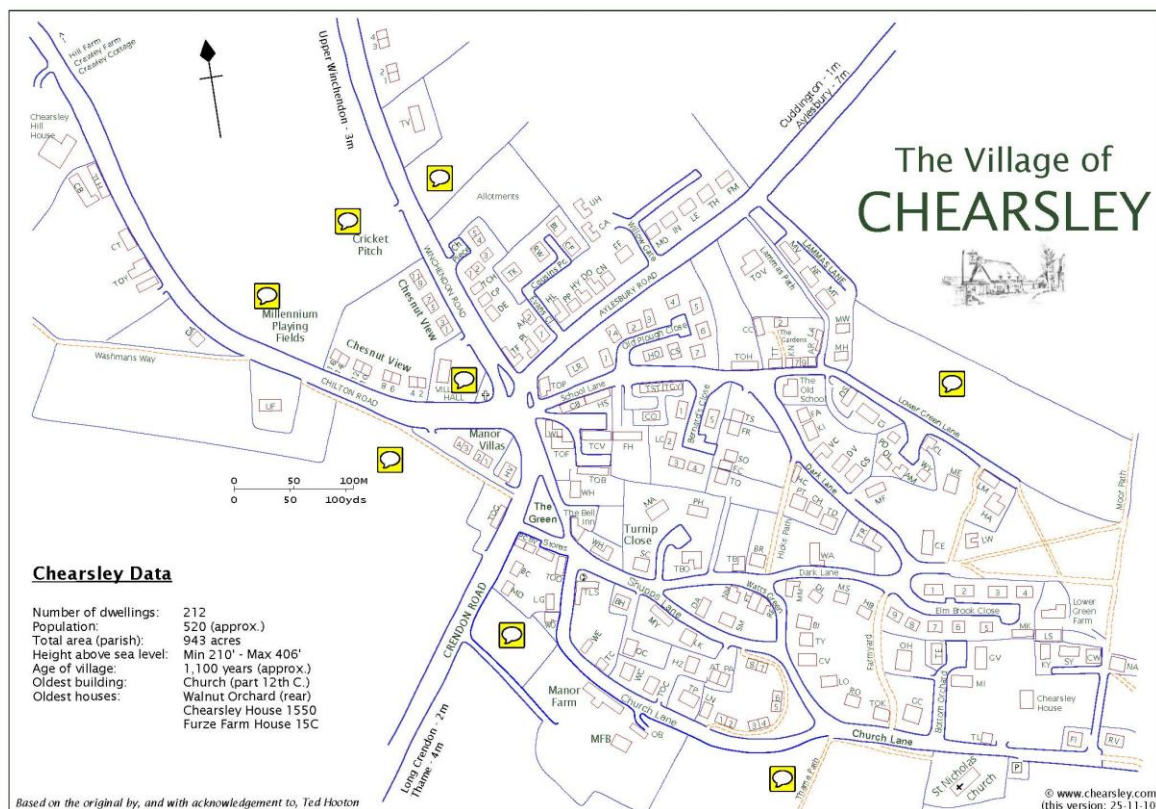


Figure 2. Potential Sites for Housing development

### Recommendations for six areas for Consultation.

At this early stage 6 recommendations are offered in areas for consultation. The feeling of the Housing Group is that if clear recommendations are not offered for the village to respond to then there is the risk of consulting on unclear objectives, making any feedback of limited value.

These recommendations should be considered in the context of the information offered above.

1. Consultation should be on a recommendation for an increase of up to **22 new homes**, a total increase of 1% on current provision, over a 20 year period. This would be across a range of relatively small but new development sites, (listed without favour above).
2. Consultation should be on a recommendation of a policy to **specifically oppose further infill development**. The recommendation would be to the Parish Council (and thereby to Aylesbury Vale District Council) that any increase in housing stock should not be achieved through 'infill', implying a 'default' position is taken by the Parish Council and AVDC against infill. It is recognised that national planning regulations have a major bearing on this issue and of course that individual applicants have a right of appeal on the matter, but that the pre-disposition of the Parish Council should be against it for the reasons listed earlier.
3. Consultation should be on a recommendation for a programme of **mixed housing developments**, including homes of varying size, reflected in a wide price range to meet different needs.
4. The recommendation for consultation will be for **phased development** across a range of new sites over the period of 20 years.

5. It is emphasised that the Housing Group believes it has **identified all possible potential sites for housing development**, but in recognition of the commercial sensitivities involved has deliberately refrained from prioritising, promoting or eliminating any of them.
6. On a related matter, **the Village Plan should offer Chearsley-specific principles and guidance on matters of house alterations and extensions**, enabling the development of agreed policy and good practice. At present, when considering applications, Parish Council members undertake site meetings, examine plans and take note of district-wide policies. They are acutely conscious that they have no Chearsley-specific principles to work to, supported by the mandate of a Village Plan, which would assist in preserving and conserving the essential character of the village whilst respecting the rights of individual householders. Sympathetic use of materials, landscaping plans, access and garaging, issues of over-development, visual impact, etc. are each areas on which we would wish to consult at a later stage of our work with the intention of assisting both the Parish Council and individual applicants for housing alterations within Chearsley.

## Questions and Recommendations from the Housing Group

**Question 1.** In the light of the information offered earlier, including the fact that the village would wish to have a powerful voice in influencing inevitable development proposals, the Group have come to a recommendation that: “There could be up to 22 new homes built on agreed sites over the next 20 years”. **What is your view on the Housing Group continuing to investigate this proposition?**

**Question 2.** If, as is almost inevitable within or outside the influence of a Village Plan, there was some housing development in Chearsley, the Group wishes to consult on the urgency or desirability of the phasing of such work. The Group seek guidance from the village on thoughts on this matter. **What is your view?**

**Question 3.** The Group are trying to assess the housing needs of the village for the future and, at this point, recommend that “There should be a programme of mixed housing developments for Chearsley, including homes of varying size, reflected in a wide price range to meet different needs”. **What is your view?**

**Question 4.** “We have identified all possible potential sites for housing development”. Without any suggestion that all sites identified should be put forward for development (the Group believes this to be totally out of the question) **to what extent do you agree with the list of sites indicated, and where do you think any development should take place?**

**Question 5.** For the reasons given in the consultation document, and in order to express a local voice for sustaining the essential character of Chearsley, the Group feels strongly that “The policy of the Parish Council should be to specifically oppose further infill development within the Conservation Area and sunken lanes of Chearsley Village”. **Do you agree with this recommendation?**

**Question 6.** Although, as yet, the Group has not really looked at the detail of possible policy for housing alteration or extensions we feel that, in principle, “The Village Plan should offer Chearsley-specific principles and guidance on matters of house alterations and extensions” and we should therefore look at this further. **Do you agree?**

## Business

### Independent Businesses

Shops and pubs in village communities across the country are under threat. Their existence is being threatened by changing social habits and lifestyles, increasing customer expectations and general competition. Organisations like the 'Plunkett Foundation' help to coordinate the activity of 283 community shops (or 'Pub is the Hub'), supported by Prince Charles and The Countryside Agency, help pubs to diversify and stay in business.

It is conventional wisdom that a village without a shop and pub is a less attractive place to live. Evidence points to house prices being boosted by the presence of a vibrant village shop and village pub.

During the last twelve years the future of the shop has been under threat twice. On the first occasion around 2,000 the village rallied around and formed a committee to fight the proposed sale of the whole property as a domestic house. The shop continued until about 2006 and closed again for twelve months. The timing was unfortunate, in that the village Post Office was lost in this period.

The property was sold in 2007 to a new owner who opened the Shop with a Tea Room. The Tea Rooms closed in 2009 and the Shop in early 2010. The shop was closed for a further period and reopened in 2011 with a new tenant on a two year lease.

So loud and vocal support is evident when there is a threat, but does the support exist day in and day out, month in and month out? Will the shop and pub be there in 5 or 10 or 20 years' time?

Apart from good intentions and statements of support, it is not clear what the planning process can achieve while these businesses are privately owned.

#### The Bell

The Bell is located on the lower side of the Village Green. It maintains the character of a traditional country pub and provides lunchtime and evening opening with dining. It has a family friendly garden with play equipment and a car park, which contains recycling facilities.

It provides a much valued meeting place for socialising in the village, particularly in the evenings. This village pub is essential to the quality and character of life within the village and villagers must recognise the importance of supporting it as a business which serves the interest of the community in a fundamental way.

Ollie and Sharon had been consulted on the plan prior to Ollie's tragic death in September. The Bell is on a rolling lease until 2015 and Sharon has decided to continue running it.

The pub was described as 'sustainable', but it relies on its food sales and events to make it so. The beer garden with its children's playground is also a big attraction.

Of all the initiatives discussed, most are in the control of the Bell and this plan has no bearing on their success or failure e.g.

- The decision to employ a dedicated chef
- The food promotional events such as Pie Tuesday or Fish and Chips with a bottle of wine
- The lunch time set menus
- Fun days

However there were two areas where active support from the village could be considered.

#### 1. A Boules Pitch

The Garden at The Bell is large enough to take a boules pitch. The pub cannot afford this investment and if requested from the brewery it would simply ratchet up the monthly rental. This might potentially be a village project if there were enough support for the idea.

#### 2. Competition from within the Village

At the time of the meeting with Ollie and Sharon, there was a perceived competitive threat from the Cricket Club, if too many social activities were promoted within their pavilion without any sense of collaboration on generating the revenues that both organisations needed. Clearly a sensitive issue, a subsequent meeting with the newly appointed Joint Chairmen of the Club, Peter Crook and Ian Houseman established that their view was that the future lay in collaboration rather than any sense of competition.. The Cricket Club leadership feel that its' role in the village was to promote Cricket work closely with other village organisations, including focussing more on enrolling local members and developing its role in coaching youngsters of the village.

#### The Shop

The shop is located abutting the green. It is fairly small and has limited parking. The convenient location by the green affords it passing trade. It is run with generous opening hours and provides a valuable local service to the community. Like the pub, it is important that villagers recognise that support of this local business is essential to keeping the facility for Chearsley.

The shop is currently on a two year lease and is reported as sustainable as a business. The current tenant is seeking to build revenue through installing a lottery machine and providing limited postal services. (Any lobbying support from the village would be appreciated.)

The main threat to the shop is therefore the short term lease – just two years, which is due for renewal in 2013. As for The Bell, this plan has no bearing on the commercial relationships of the business, but would be concerned if there were a threat to the viability of the shop.

Any proposal in the village to re site the shop and generate a more secure lease would be viewed positively by the current tenant.

### **Home Workers/Telecommuters**

Input required – likely to be an important aspect of work in the future.

### **CHUFF**

Input required

## Questions from the Business Group

**Question 7.** Are you are a business person in the area, and if so is there anything that you feel could be in the Village Plan that would help you run your business more effectively?

**Question 8.** We would like to know how many home workers there are in Cheersley (i.e. people who's main place of work is at home)? **Are you are a home worker.**

**Question 9.** Would you make use of a boules pitch in the garden at The Bell?

## Public Services

### The Current Situation

#### Traffic, Roads and Lanes.

As was the case in the Chearsley Village Appraisal of 1987, the questions of roadside parking, road maintenance, speeding, preservation of the sunken lanes and ease of vehicle access exercises the minds of villagers in casual conversation and everyday experiences. This stimulates a range of responses expressed as keenly now as twenty-five years ago.

However the main factual difference in 2012 is the number of houses and cars using the lanes, the advent of “home delivery” and “Internet shopping”, which of course, did not exist in the same manner in 1987, both of which significantly exacerbate these issues. Street lighting, light pollution and speed limits within the village are also issues of great interest to many in the village.

### Questions and Recommendations from the RESCU Group on Traffic, Roads and Lanes.

**Question 10.** The group wishes to increase the level of adherence to the 30mph speed limit on the main road through the village limit by whatever means are deemed to be most effective, yet in keeping with a rural environment. We intend to investigate this further but currently believe this to be a flat (no humps, strips or ramps) differently painted surface to the main carriageways at the village limits. **What is your view?**

**Question 11.** The group believes that the current 30mph speed limit within the lanes of the village is too high. We favour formally requesting the appropriate authorities to reduce this to a more safe 20mph legal limit. **What is your view?**

**Question 12.** The group recognises that the access from The Green to Crendon Road can be a problem junction with cars coming up from the shop area coming ‘face-to-face’ others turning off Crendon Road, creating potentially dangerous blockages on the main road. Our group was divided on the range of possible responses to this situation. **We seek views on the best approach to dealing with this.**

**Question 13.** The group is against the notion of street lighting being introduced into Chearsley. We also recognise that excessive exterior home lighting contributes to light pollution in the village and recommend that minimising such lighting should be considered by existing householders and by the Council in considering Planning Applications. . **What is your view?**

## **Public Services and Utilities.**

The outcomes of the December 2011 village-wide consultation identified that most respondents are satisfied with the level of services such as health surgeries, health visitors, library etc. The advent of Broadband and other new technologies relating to home-workers, leisure pursuits and telecommunications has however brought a new set of challenges to the provision of utilities in the village. The lack of provision of high-speed Broadband and reliable mobile phone communication in particular is challenging in our village and this is discussed in a separate section of this document.

Underground utility piping on School lane, not without its problems, has nevertheless transformed the visual environment of that part of the village by the removal of street poles. There is considerable interest in extending this elsewhere, possibly incorporating other utilities and services, improving reliability and enhancing the appearance of the village landscape.

With an eye to the future there is also some interest in the development of village-wide alternative technologies and sources of renewable energy.

In the earlier consultation, the Mobile Library and Bus Services provoked little response either way, giving little steer to the Group in terms of residents' satisfaction. However, the loss of the Post Office is still a bone of contention and the proprietor of Cheersley Store has expressed interest in offering some services if the demand is there and the authority can be secured.

Although there are those who lament the loss of the Village School, there seems to be recognition that Cheersley is simply not big enough to offer a case for its re-establishment. However, the provision of nursery care is a thriving element of the Village Hall diary, arguably, in some eyes, to the detriment of other opportunities there.

In recognising the value of the work of those involved, there appears to be a strong case for re-examining the role, limitations and potential of the present Village Hall building and site in effectively providing for the social, recreational and educational needs of the village over the next twenty years.

### **Bus Service**

Input required

## **Questions and Recommendations from the RESCU Group on Public Services and Utilities.**

**Question 14.** The group recommends that the appearance of Cheersley should be enhanced where practicable; for example, by the removal of overhead utility wires and their poles, replaced by the underground cabling of services? **Do you agree?**

**Question 15.** The group believes that, like other communities, Cheersley should be more active in investigating the potential for village-wide opportunities for the utilisation of alternative sources of energy and renewable energy. We recommend that investigations are undertaken to examine viable options such as solar power, biomass boilers and provision of an electric power point for vehicles. **Do you agree?**



# Broadband and 4G Mobile in Chearsley

Broadband is key to Britain's economic future, and is now also seen as a vital service, like water electricity, and sewerage. The value of housing stock is also being influenced by the availability of good Broadband.

For Chearsley to thrive economically and in the digital social future, good Broadband is critical. This will influence how public services are delivered (health care at home, etc.), home working, teleworking, small businesses, education (like Open University), along with entertainment and media content. For the latter, it is predicted that the majority of entertainment services will be delivered via Broadband by 2015 rather than free-view, cable or satellite. The need for good Broadband in the future is indisputable.

Speeds of up to 5 Mbytes per second (5mbps) are all that are available in Chearsley and in 5 or 10 years may not be adequate. It is not clear how many people in Chearsley work from home and how many are dependent on Broadband for their business. This is a key question to ask.

What is clear is that Chearsley, like every rural village in the country, is in danger of becoming 'second class' with regard to the service provision. Below is a strategic outlook for Superfast Broadband in Chearsley.

## Strategic outlook for Superfast Broadband in Chearsley

### Introduction

The UK government and BT have committed to deliver 'Superfast' Broadband (24mbps+) to 67% of UK homes by 2015. This will target the most financially viable locations in the UK, such as cities and dense urban areas. The final third are not covered under the standard provision. The Government has set aside a further £580m to address the 'final third' but this is seen as insufficient to make a real difference for the whole of rural England.

BT (through its Open-Reach subsidiary) is working with Councils to identify which locations will be targeted by this funding, and therefore which ones will receive Superfast Broadband. Places like Chearsley are currently not on the plans for upgrade, so we will miss it on the first 67%, and quite possibly the final third rollout too, if we are not proactive.

The acquisition of better Broadband can be achieved in a number of ways. One is to join in the discussions for Superfast Broadband being rolled out by BT now. The second is to lobby the Council to be included in the final third expenditure currently underway, and the third is to engage in a bespoke deployment, either led by village, or in conjunction with an alternative service provider.

### Engagement in current rollout

Our exchange is based in Long Crendon, and is still not '21<sup>st</sup> Century' ('21CN' - BT's name for its very latest network designed to deliver services based on Internet technology). To get Long Crendon upgraded to 21CN we need to lobby BT, perhaps along with residents in Long Crendon and other areas served by that exchange, to demonstrate enough interest from the villages in faster Broadband. Ideally this would be through some joint parish Council initiatives or other means. Residents should be encouraged to register their interest on the BT and Council websites and work with local Councils to encourage BT to upgrade our area.

Longer term, AVDC is responsible for allocation of BDUK funds to provide Superfast Broadband to the final third. In order to be considered for this funding we need to lobby the correct Council departments to ensure we are evaluated as part of the plan. This activity is

happening now so it is imperative we get going. Joining forces with other villages along our route (Cuddington, Nether Winchendon, Long Crendon etc.) will also help. Additionally, the Council has a mandate to provide Broadband to the school in Cuddington so this could be a driving factor.

### **Bespoke**

As an alternative, Chearsley could provide a bespoke solution for the village. There are a number of microwave backhaul (another type of long distance communications network technology) and other providers we could work with to deliver reasonable bandwidth speeds. However most of these will have a medium term life span given the eventual emergence of new technology.

BT Open-Reach has said that if landowners were willing to provide way-leaves and trenching, they will provide fibre to the village. This could also be an option for us but would need local farmers to be willing to cooperate, either as part of a housing development scheme, or as a 'legacy' to the village. A possible combination of this with the options above (lobbying the Council) may produce a favourable outcome as it means the Council can stretch their budget further to enable more homes, thus hitting targets more easily.

### **Mobile 4G**

4G mobile technology is emerging as the evolution from 3G providing much higher bandwidth speeds for connected devices. However it is still very early days yet, and not obvious how this technology will enable home networking environments (as well as mobile) for the variety of services likely to be demanded. 4G enablement will also mean the replacement of all current wireless technology using 3G (mobiles, tablets etc). Pricing structures are also not evident, but likely to be quite high to recoup the cost or the huge mobile investment required.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, if Chearsley wants to be part of the digital revolution, a long and sustained residents led campaign, linked to the parish and local Councils, needs to be initiated now; one that can coordinate with nearby villages, landowners, and the residents to ensure that our needs are heard by Open-Reach (or alternate) as the service provider, and the Councils as the controllers of available funding.

## **Questions from the Business Group on Broadband and Mobile services.**

**Question 16.** What is your experience of current Broadband Services?

**Question 17.** The groups believes that the current provision for Broadband Internet services in Chearsley is unreliable, being slow and often unstable. We recommend investigating collectively how a better level of service can be improved across the village.

**Do you agree?**

**Question 18.** Are you interested in Superfast Broadband (20+ Mbps) and have you done anything about it?

**Question 19.** How much more would you pay for higher speed Broadband?

**Question 20.** The group believes that the current mobile phone service in Chearsley is unreliable and characterised by no-signal areas. We recommend investigating collectively how reception can be improved across the village, without the construction of unsightly masts. **What do you think?**

# Conservation

## The Conservation Area

The Chearsley Conservation Area was designated in October 1991 and the AVDC document (2008). A map is on Page 20 and full details can be found at

<http://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/environment/conservation-listed-buildings/conservation-areas-in-the-district/g-conservation-area-summaries-chackmore-chearsley/> which highlights its attractions and character and is well worth reading in full.

Our Conservation Area is an invaluable resource in protecting the character of Chearsley and many feel that all villagers should be aware of its existence, value and the contribution it makes to the rural village environment. The concept and purpose of the Conservation Area is to protect old buildings, hollow ways, important trees and hedgerows, important walls and landscapes and as a part of the definition of the village limits.

It currently extends to most of the areas bounded by School Lane, Lower Green Lane and Lammas Lane to the east, and Shupp's Lane, Church Lane and Dark Lane to the south and west. It's somewhat complex and convoluted boundaries, however, can result in some confusion by residents and neighbours about the exact extent of the designated area. This is important as Conservation Areas carry particular restrictions on any development or alterations that can be made by individual householders or by the local Council and these are well documented.

## Village Environment and Listed Building

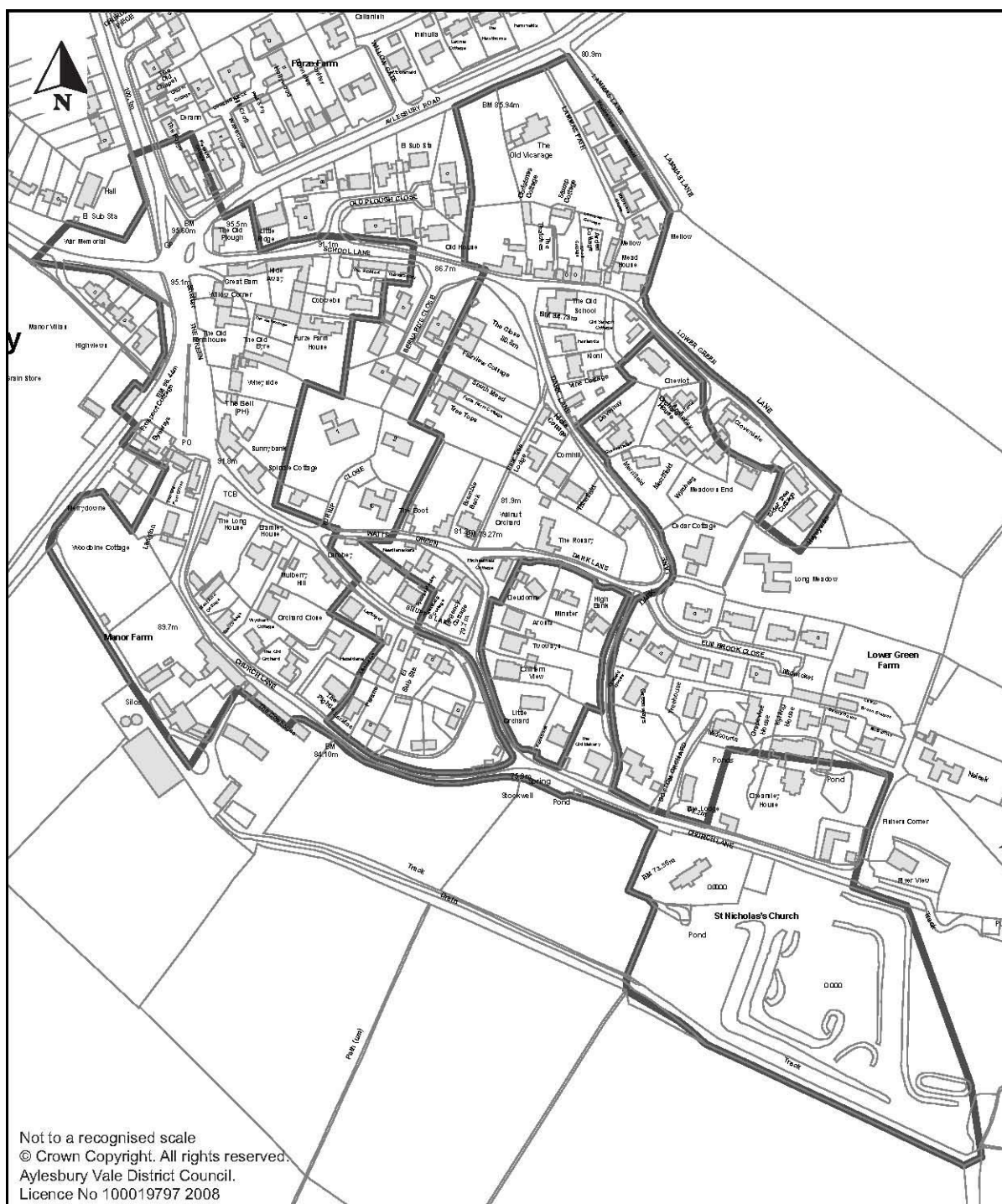
The AVDC Conservation Area document also refers to the importance of the footpaths, significant trees and hedgerows which characterise this defining area of the village.

The appearance and character of Chearsley also benefits from the existence of several Listed Buildings, the vast majority of which are in good state of repair and maintenance. Within the village, there is also a number of witchert walls and boundaries of historical and cultural significance. Unfortunately, there are occasions where this puts individuals or the Council in conflict when exterior changes are viewed as desirable by individuals but not by others or where residents are simply unaware of the implications of living within a Conservation Area or in a Listed Building.

## Questions and Recommendations from the RESCU Group on Conservation Area Issues.

**Question 21.** The group regards the value of the Chearsley Conservation Area as being significantly beneficial to the village, both for the present and future. **What do you think?**

**Question 22.** Looking at the current map, the group favours a fresh look at the extent of the Conservation Area with a view to simplifying and updating it. **What do you think?**



### Figure 3. Chearsley Conservation Area

## Environment

### **Footpaths, Hedgerows and Countryside Access**

Chearsley is latticed with public footpaths which are well used and much appreciated by residents. These can become overgrown seasonally and some access points become periodically in disrepair. There are occasional problems with the dumping of green waste or dog fouling. The grass verges throughout the village and the “informal” nature of our roadways is also much appreciated, and there is a general desire for the further development of wild flower areas to enhance these.

However, striking a balance between this and allowing a neglected overgrown wilderness, with English wild flowers strangled by aggressive invasive common weeds or cut down by over aggressive strimming offers a challenge for effective stewardship and maintenance, prompting questions about the current AVDC maintenance programme and the role of those living on the borders of public Right of Ways.

There is some impetus for extensions to the current pathways, bridleways and cycleways, with some residents keen to explore such possible routes as that between the village and Thame and Haddenham Parkway Station. There is also some enthusiasm for the better linkages of pathways to create more “circular walks” between the villages embracing our scenic countryside in a well-managed way appropriate to land usage by the farming communities.

Some residents are also keen to see the establishment of a recreational picnic area in a location to take advantage of the riverside nature of Chearsley, whilst the significant increase in the number of families with children also has brought about an interest in the establishment of a play and sports area

### **Renewable Energy**

*There is an offer to provide input on this subject*

## Questions and Recommendations from the RESCU Group on Environmental issues.

**Question 23.** The Group wishes to understand your views on use made of our village footpaths and your opinion of their condition. We have no specific recommendation on this issue at this time. **To what degree do you use any of the footpaths within the village?**  
**Does the condition of any footpath cause any access problems for you?**

**Question 24.** The group believes that some of our footpaths currently cause access issues for those with young children or with mobility difficulties. As such, we recommend the replacement of styles with suitable gates and, where appropriate, the unobtrusive levelling of some pathways to improve access. **How do you feel about this?**

**Question 25.** The group recommends the creation and maintenance of more wild flower areas, in agreed suitable locations to benefit the appearance of the village and intends to consult further on possible locations. **Do you agree?**

**Question 26.** The group believes that the roadside maintenance programme currently provided by AVDC (1metre of each roadside verge) requires more village-based direction and management. We wish to look at means of improving this. **What do you think of this maintenance service?**

**Question 27.** The group believes that it may be better to employ a local contractor, guided by the Parish Council to maintain road verges and footpaths throughout the village and recommends that such possibilities be investigated to improve appearance and possibly save money. **Do you agree?**

**Question 28.** The group believes that potential new cycle/bridleway paths in the area should be investigated with a view to improving access and leisure, school-run and commuting routes. **Do you agree?**



## Leisure

Chearsley is presently served by a number of community facilities including a Village Hall, church, pub, shop, small play area, Cricket club, allotments (including a community orchard), and the Village Green. These facilities create the social cohesion which supports the character of Chearsley. Apart from the church, these facilities are centred around the Village Green near the top of the village which creates the concept of a village “centre” or hub.

### Village Hall

The Village Hall is situated in a central location by the Village Green on a plot of land bordered by Chilton Road and Winchendon Road. This land was left in trust to the village for the purpose of a Village Hall. The current Village Hall was constructed after the Second World War and whilst there have been efforts to maintain the structure over the years, the original construction materials mean that the fabric of the building is not in great shape. It has a small stage area, kitchen and toilet facilities. Outside, there is a small car park, an outdoor play/BBQ area, some playground equipment for younger children and a grass area also on the site.

The hall is used regularly by a number of groups including CHUFs, WI during the day, and various exercise classes and the Youth Club in the evenings with occasional use for functions and meetings.

Consideration must be given to whether the current Village Hall continues to provide the amenity that Chearsley desires and whether it meets the needs of users in both size and facilities.

### The Cricket Ground

The current Cricket Ground is located a short distance from the Green up Winchendon Road, so is easily accessible from the village on foot. In addition to the cricket pitch, it is served by a modern purpose built club house which includes a function room, bar, kitchen as well as toilet and changing facilities. The club house is available for use by the community. The use of the cricket ground is currently restricted to the cricket season. The long term future of this facility is uncertain as the land is leased.

#### Expanded use of the cricket ground

In consultation with the Cricket Club, it may be feasible to expand the use of the cricket ground and neighbouring Millennium Field area to provide a facility for our youth. Currently the cricket pitch itself is extensively used for cricket and is used in the summer season every Saturday for league fixtures for the two village teams and often on Sunday for friendlies. During the week the existing Club hold practices and training, which twice a week throughout the summer provides coaching and match fixtures that cater for up to 60 boys (and some girls) from the village and surrounding area.

The Club also organise an “Aunt Sally” team of villagers, which meets regularly and is based adjacent to the pavilion; they have recently constructed a canopy for this purpose. However, we suggest the periphery of the outfield or parts of the Millennium Field could be used for sporting activity compatible with the ground’s role as a good cricket pitch which is well respected in the local area. Other sports which could be considered are 5-a-side football, basketball and tennis. This would both foster year round use of the space and provide the additional benefit of more people being around than might be the case if a new sports field was created in a new location.

## **Church**

St Nicholas' is a much loved medieval church located at the bottom of the village on Church Lane. It contains a small kitchen area and toilet facilities and has the use of a small car park adjoining the well-tended church yard. There is a small pond beyond the church yard and the site is surrounded by farm land.

There is an active and supportive group of worshippers within the village who attend church regularly. There is a group who ring the bells within the church tower. The church also attracts a small number of visitors as a tourist attraction.

*(There is an offer to provide some additional text on the Church)*



## Community

Chearsley has an active community and groups within the village include the cricket club, CHUFs, WI, fitness groups, youth club, and other users of the Village Hall.

Sections of the community which we have identified are children, youth, adults and seniors. Of these sections we feel that the least well catered for presently are the youth and the seniors. Both of these groups may find it difficult to access facilities outside the village due to mobility and/or transport issues.

### Youth in Chearsley

We feel that whilst there is some provision of a playground by the Village Hall for young children, there is little being provided for older children. The shift in demographics within Chearsley towards younger families means that there will be approximately 50 teenagers in Chearsley in 5 years' time. We feel this plan should be addressing the lack of facilities for this age group.

### Youth Club

*Input required*

### Seniors in Chearsley

Our group also desires to ensure that the needs of Chearsley senior citizens are met. The loss of facilities like the post office and a place to meet and socialise like the Tea Shop have affected this sector of the community disproportionately. We wish to see facilities remain within the village and hope that they can improve over the time covered in the plan such as the provision of some postal services, cash point, and a daytime social venue.

### The Green

Chearsley has an open Green which is surrounded by roads near the top of the village. The open nature of the Green and its proximity to the roads limits its use, although occasional use is made for village functions, such as the fete. The Green provides an attractive area which enhances the character of the village and provides a concept of a "centre" surrounded the pub, shop, Village Hall, bus stop, post box and war memorial. It contains several trees and a couple of benches and a dilapidated path.

### Allotments

There are allotments located on Church owned land a short distance from the Green up Winchendon Road. Whilst continuing to provide a valuable facility to a village in which there is limited garden space, the allotments have recently been enhanced by the provision of a Community Orchard.

### Community Spaces

The group also identified the general lack of community space within Chearsley due to the lack of a park or large Green.

We noted that the previous village plan included the provision of a playing field in the village, which has not been achieved. Concerns have been raised by residents in previous village surveys around children being noisy in gardens and playing in the lanes. In the village consultation from the Jubilee over half the comments were about improving the outdoor leisure facilities within the village. About a third of all respondents to the consultation were young people and their most popular request was for a dirt track for bike riding.

Our group think the most sensible solution on sports provision should be centred around the current Cricket Ground.

Other outdoor recreational activities could benefit from another less formal open space set aside for amenity land. One possible solution to this would be to create a rural village amenity space between the church and the river, subject to land owner approval.

This land is unsuitable for development as it is a flood plain. It contains interesting ancient earthworks which must be left in situ, so precludes the ploughing or levelling of the land. This topography, the location of two ponds and the river frontage of this land provide great interest from a leisure point of view. Possible uses of this land could include fishing, paddling, a site for picnics, benches overlooking the river, dirt track cycling, playground, etc. The location next to the church means the existing car park could possibly be used and there are already footpaths crossing this land. The location of this amenity at the bottom of the village away from the busy roads by the Green would also be an advantage.

## **The WI**

*Input required*

## **The Village Show**

*Input required*

## **Questions from the Community and Leisure Group**

**Question 29.** Do you think we need a new Village Hall with better facilities?

**Question 30.** Would you like to see the facilities of the cricket ground and Millennium field expanded to enable year round use of the space?

**Question 31.** Would you like the use of a rural village amenity space/park?

**Question 32.** The groups believe that Chearsley residents require village-based post office services and recommend that this should be located within Chearsley Stores. Do you agree?

**Question 33.** Do we need a cash point within the village?

**Question 34.** Do you agree with the conclusion the least well catered for are the Youth and Elderly?

## Action Plan

The published version of the Chearsley Plan will contain an Action Plan. This will set out the follow-up actions that will ensure that, so far as possible, the village does indeed develop as the Plan envisages.

Sample format.

Ref.	Action Description	Planned Start date	Target Completion Date	Who will lead	Constraints, conditions, etc.