

SUBJECT: LOXLEY PARISH PLAN & VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT
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**LEAD MEMBER/
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR BEESE**

SUMMARY

This report sets out the assessment of the Loxley Parish Plan and Village Design Statement. The Parish Plan was completed and adopted by the Loxley Parish Council on 28th November 2005. It was agreed to postpone submission for adoption by SDC until the accompanying Village Design Statement was completed. The Village Design Statement was completed, and adopted by Loxley Parish Council on 8th January 2007.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement are adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant departments of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
 - (2) That the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement is adopted as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policies COM.1 and PR.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
 - (3) That the Parish Plan Working Group, Parish Council and the residents of Loxley be commended for preparing their Parish Plan and Village Design Statement and that they are encouraged to implement and review their Action Plan.**
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1 BACKGROUND/INFORMATION

- 1.1 Parish Plans are community-led projects identifying and surveying the assets, needs, opportunities, problems and solutions of a community. Through 'Capacity' and 'Consensus Building', Parish Plans provide communities with a framework to take stock of the present and to plan for the future.
 - 1.2 The momentum for Parish Plans is continually increasing with half of the communities in the District having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plans or Appraisals with associated
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recommendations and Action Plans. Further background information on the process is included in Appendix B.

1.3 Background to the submitted Loxley Parish Plan

- 1.3.1 In April 2004 interested volunteers were invited to attend a Parish Council meeting, from which a Parish Plan Steering Group was formed. Additional volunteers joined the group as a result of the early consultation events, which included a manned stall at the annual Loxley Strawberry Fayre. The initiative was funded by a Countryside Agency grant, Loxley Parish Council, and contributions in kind from the many volunteers. Events were advertised on the Parish notice board and with flyers delivered to each household, and ongoing feedback was published in the local newsletter "The Grapevine".
- 1.3.2 Preliminary information was gathered on the issues to be included in the questionnaire at a Community Meeting attended by 30 parishioners. The Steering Group also reviewed the outcome of previous discussions and actions by residents including on the local plan, aircraft flying patterns, footpaths, conservation areas and census material.
- 1.3.3 This informed the development of a questionnaire sent to all 159 households in the parish. Separate questionnaires were sent to young people, and to children in conjunction with the village school. The main questionnaire was returned by 105 households which is a response rate of 66%. This can be considered statistically sound once backed up with the other community involvement exercises carried out. The youth survey achieved a 50% response rate, and the children's survey 86%.
- 1.3.4 The results of the survey were presented at a second Community Meeting where residents had an opportunity to comment on the draft report and it was agreed that the some of the issues needed further work to clarify the problem and find solutions. Ten focus groups, each of 2-4 different residents, were set up to do this, and their findings also fed into the final plan and action plan. The Plan was launched at a third Community Meeting and a copy distributed to every household and to local organisations.
- 1.3.5 The Parish Plan presents a clear picture of the needs and issues facing the community. The Parish Council has agreed to take the Action Plan forward and working groups have been formed to focus on certain actions. Progress on the action plan will be reviewed bi-annually.

1.4 Loxley Parish Plan findings

- 1.4.1 The findings of the Parish Plan, which have informed the Action Plan, cover:
 - Aircraft noise
 - Crime
 - Footpaths
 - Housing
 - Parish Information Pack
 - Playing Field
 - Road Safety
 - School and Pre-school
 - Transport links

- Utilities
 - Miscellaneous topics.
- 1.4.2 The Parish Plan has been prepared employing a range of community participation techniques, including questionnaire surveys, community meetings and a transparent process of reporting back to the community on progress. The process has generated a range of statistical data and qualitative material that has informed the Action Plan and which provides a useful information source.
- 1.4.3 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Loxley Parish Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Parish Plan.
- 1.5 Loxley Parish Plan Action Plan**
- 1.5.1 Analysis and responses to the Action Plan are provided in Appendix C, and the following analysis and comments should be read in conjunction with the Parish Plan Action Plan.
- 1.5.2 The policy position of the Local Plan Review is supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. Many of the actions identified can be undertaken entirely by the village itself. The District Council may be able to offer advice and support in undertaking some actions, and offer help in locating funding. SDC Housing Team and Warwickshire Rural Community Council encourage the local community to consider undertaking a local housing needs survey. The Rural Housing Enabler and SDC can provide help in this area.
- 1.5.3 Progress has already been made in taking forward actions, for example the preparation of the Village Design Statement and the publication of a Village Information Pack containing useful information and a guide to local footpaths. Improvements to the playing field, such as resurfacing and clearing vegetation, have also been achieved.
- 1.6 Background to the submitted Loxley Village Design Statement**
- 1.6.1 The Parish Plan findings suggested that a Village Design Statement would be a useful way of addressing residents' concerns about new development and its impact, and this was therefore included within the Action Plan. A working group was formed from residents and parish councillors in March 2006. They drafted a design statement based on the views expressed during the Parish Plan process and on their analysis of the village environment. The draft design statement was available on request and at a drop-in meeting at the school. This was advertised through a flyer to every household, and notices on the village notice boards and in the pub. The meeting was attended by 15 residents and a further 5 households requested a copy of the draft. Their feedback was generally very positive, and the additional issues they raised were incorporated into the final document.
- 1.7 Findings and recommendations of the Loxley Village Design Statement**
- 1.7.1 The Village Design Statement analyses the character of Loxley village and its setting, and identifies the special qualities that should be retained. It also identifies and describes distinct character areas within the village.
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- 1.7.2 It makes recommendations on:
- New development: location, form and layout
 - Details and materials
 - Landscape and environment
 - Roads, footpaths, streetscape.
- 1.7.3 The Village Design Statement has been prepared taking into account the special character of the village and the views and values of local residents. It provides useful and well-presented information to inform the design of any future development in the village. The Parish Council is currently using it when commenting on planning applications.
- 1.7.4 Suggested responses to the VDS are provided in Appendix C.

2 OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 A) Adopt the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement fully: This is a good, well-prepared Parish Plan and VDS that would be a valuable local information source and material consideration.
- 2.2 B) Adopt parts of the Parish Plan and VDS: If there are any concerns with certain aspects of the Parish Plan or the VDS, this option would allow the District Council to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have been so far identified to make this option necessary.
- 2.3 C) Not adopt the Parish Plan or the VDS: The District Council would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information, and a material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Financial

- 3.1.1 Projects developed through the Parish Plan may need funding to take them forward and the recommendations contained in this report should be contained within existing budgets. The District Council operates a Community Grants Scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the Community Grants team may be able to help search for appropriate funding sources. It is hoped that the Parish Council and local residents will consider and pursue funding in order to develop their identified action points.

3.2 Environmental

- 3.2.1 Many of the actions within this Parish Plan aim to improve the local environment of the village and its surroundings. A few actions could increase the environmental sustainability of life within the Parish by reducing local people's need to travel for leisure activities, and improving road safety and public transport provision.

3.3 Corporate Strategy

- 3.3.1 The Parish Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Community Plan and Corporate Strategy for the District support the range of topic areas and policies in the Action Plan. The Parish Plan also complements and helps move forward the District Council's Agenda 21.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The actions recommended in this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the Plan and the Village Design Statement, adopt the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement as a local information source, and adopt it as a material consideration. There are no identified major risks associated with these actions.
- 4.2 Choosing to not adopt the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement would risk losing the chance to adopt a valuable source of local information and a useful material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Parish Plan Working Group, the Parish Council and residents of Loxley should be commended and congratulated for completing their Parish Plan and their Village Design Statement, and are encouraged by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Loxley Parish Plan is a good example of how a rural community can prepare a Parish Plan that is both a good source of local information, and provides a sound basis through the Action Plan to address the needs and aspirations of the community.

HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers:

Loxley Parish Plan 2005

Loxley Village Design Statement 2007

Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015

Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006

Appendix A - Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans

1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:

Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.

Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.

Public involvement and endorsement at local level.

Level of implementation available to District Council services, (e.g. the District Council Planning Authority, Leisure and Arts etc.).

Conformity with District Council's policies, (e.g. Planning policies etc.).

1.2 The above five criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish Plan's detailed conclusions and Action Points.

1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:

(A) ENDORSE

The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the District Council. (For example, "Small scale development with a 'craft' emphasis should be looked at sympathetically").

(B) ACTION

The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with the support of the District Council. (For example, "A social housing scheme of ten units on land next to the Green should be provided").

(C) INVESTIGATE

Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported. (For example, "An existing Conservation Area should be extended").

(D) SUPPORT

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is not the responsibility of the District Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority. (For example, "Traffic calming measures are required and the County Highway Authority should prepare a scheme").

(E) NOT SUPPORTED

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is in contrary to the policy of the District Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate their commendation. (For example, "No development of any kind should take place within the settlement").

Appendix B – Further Background Information

- 2.1. Communities produce Parish Plans for a number of reasons:
 - To increase the awareness of community issues, foster community spirit and encourage a sense of pride;
 - To act as a strong basis for local action (the Action Plan);
 - To collectively represent the views of residents, to positively influence others to the benefit of the community.
- 2.2. In the 1980s the concept and practice of Village Appraisals first emanated nationally from the Rural Development Commission in conjunction with the Countryside Commission.
- 2.3. Nationally, Parish Plans have a role to play within the 'modernising Local Government' agenda, for example, shaping local services, public participation, decision-making and greater democratic legitimacy.
- 2.4. One of the aims within Chapter 12 of the Rural White Paper (Our Countryside: the future – A fair deal for rural England) includes involving people living in rural areas in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them – developing a vision for the future. Parish Plans are a recognised method of achieving this aim.
- 2.5. In line with guidance from the Countryside Agency issued in August 2000 ('Planning tomorrow's countryside', advice to local planning authorities, government and developers on how the planning system should operate and evolve), Parish Plans are a recognised community planning method to help achieve key objectives. In March 2003 the Countryside Agency produced detailed guidance for parish and town councils on the preparation of Parish and Town Plans.
- 2.6. Policy RA3 in the Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 encourages local planning authorities to use 'Appraisals' when establishing the views of local communities and when identifying local housing and industrial development need.
- 2.7. Stratford-on-Avon District Council is committed to the encouragement of Parish Plans as a means of identifying local issues and will respond to them positively. Much faith has been placed by the Government, the County Council and the District Council on local appraisals and their role in assisting the formulation of strategic policy.
- 2.8. Parish Plans can now play a broader role within the production of the statutory Community Plan for Stratford District.
- 2.9. The recommendations and Action Plans can both inform and help deliver the Rural Strategy for the Stratford-on-Avon District.
- 2.10. Policy COM.1 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan Review 2006 states:

"The views of the local community as expressed preferably in a Parish Plan (or equivalent) or in its absence an alternative source of reliable evidence, will be fully taken into account in the planning process. In particular they will be used:

 - To help assess the merits of schemes promoted by communities to meet needs which they have identified;

- As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to assist in identifying the scope and nature of associated planning obligations which might be sought; and
- To identify opportunities for environmental and other forms of enhancement.

In the case of Main Rural Centres and Local Centre Villages only, as defined in Policy STR1, small scale schemes which meet housing (particularly affordable housing) and employment needs will be encouraged in this way...”

- 2.11. Nationally, Parish Plans are broad, holistic documents addressing local issues at a local level. Whilst in this District ‘appraisals’ have had a close association with planning, they are no longer ‘planning-led’. Parish Plans address both planning and non-planning related matters and this is reflected in their assessment at Committee.
- 2.12. Parish Plans can and do act as a tool to assist in giving many of the services provided by the District Council greater community focus. Vice versa, many of the services provided by the District Council can and do feed into the Parish Plan process creating more informed Action Plans.

Appendix C

Summary of key action points

Abbreviations

SDC= Stratford District Council

VDS= Village Design Statement

Parish Plan Action	SDC Proposed Response
Aircraft noise – publicise complaint procedure and work with Aircraft Noise Group to negotiate improvements to the flying pattern.	Support – this action point can be supported.
Neighbourhood Watch Scheme - recruit volunteers and arrange scheme with community beat officer.	Support - The Community Plan seeks to improve confidence and public safety. These actions should work to reduce fear of crime.
Footpaths – distribute maps and guidance in Parish Information Pack. This action has already been successfully completed.	Support – The Community Plan seeks to encourage people to use and enjoy the wider countryside.
Housing development – action group to produce a Village Design Statement (now completed). More information on the VDS and housing is given at the end of this table.	Support and Action – the District Council encourages communities to prepare a VDS which can then be used as a material consideration when making planning decisions. The VDS has now been completed, with some guidance received from the council’s Planning Service.
Parish Information Pack – collect information on available services and publish information pack. This action has already been successfully completed.	Support – The Community Plan seeks to support communities and maximise their use of existing facilities.
Playing field – agree new equipment and work with the Parish Council on funding and implementation. Ensure maintenance is carried out regularly.	Support and Action – the Community Plan aims to increase the number of people playing sport regularly. The District Council Community Grants team offer help locating funding, and can advise if these projects may be eligible for the Council’s Community Grants scheme.
Road safety – Emphasise speed restrictions, arrange speed checks and investigate traffic calming.	Support – The Community Plan seeks to improve public safety and reduce the number of road accidents.
School and pre-school – work with the school on a Mother and Toddler Group. Continue to investigate provision of an Out of School Club.	Support and Action – the Community Plan aims to increase the number of people of all ages taking part in local clubs and activities. The District Council Community Grants

Parish Plan Action	SDC Proposed Response
	<p>team offer help locating funding, and can advise if these projects may be eligible for the Council's Community Grants scheme.</p>
<p>Social events – form a Social Committee to co-ordinate and publicise activities.</p>	<p>Support and Action – the Community Plan aims to increase the number of people of all ages taking part in local clubs and activities, and to encourage a sense of community.</p> <p>The District Council Community Grants team offer help locating funding, and can advise if these projects may be eligible for the Council's Community Grants scheme.</p>
<p>Improved public transport – discuss arrangements with the District Council following their review of services.</p>	<p>Support and Action - SDC is a partner of the Community Links scheme which may be able to provide transport, or advice and support. The current transport scheme is available 9.30am to 2.30pm to help those who are 'stuck for transport'. Phone Community Links 9am to 4pm weekdays on 01789 264491 for details.</p>
<p>Utilities – share report findings with utilities companies, and investigate mains gas provision.</p>	<p>Support – these action points can be supported.</p>
<p>Social facilities - Parish Council to continue to seek ways to meet demand for a village hall in Loxley.</p>	<p>Support and Action – The Community Plan seeks to maximise the use of existing facilities for community use, and support development of new facilities where they are needed. The Local Plan Review encourages the provision of new services to meet the needs of the local community.</p> <p>The District Council Community Grants team offer help locating funding, and can advise if these projects may be eligible for the Council's Community Grants scheme.</p> <p>WRCC Village Halls Adviser is able to supply guidance and support, and can be contacted on 02476 217 344.</p>
<p>Roads and pavements – Discuss views on inadequate gritting of roads and maintenance of pavements with the relevant authorities and agree actions.</p>	<p>Support – These actions can be supported. Since the production of this Plan the pavements have been resurfaced.</p>

Parish Plan Action	SDC Proposed Response
actions.	
Planning Process – Parish Council should take community views into account when considering planning applications.	Endorse – The Parish Plan & VDS and the community views expressed within them will be used by SDC as a material consideration when determining planning applications, as laid out in Policies COM.1 and PR.1 of the Local Plan Review. SDC Planning Service will continue to consult the Parish Council on all planning applications within the parish, and it is considered a very helpful approach for the Parish Council to base their views on these community prepared documents.
Parking – Parish Council to lead on discouraging irresponsible parking within the village. The Parish Council has already actioned this through notices to prevent people parking in specific problem areas.	Support – This action point can be supported.

Village Design Statement key statements	SDC Proposed Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of the special character of Loxley defined by historic features, small-scale diversity and elevated position. ▪ 5 character areas identified and described ▪ Development should take account of local context in terms of density, scale, size of building on site, design, materials, boundary treatments etc as analysed within the document. 	Endorse - The views of the community as expressed in Parish Plans and Village Design Statements will be taken into account in planning decisions, as set out in policies COM.1 and PR.1 of the Local Plan Review.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New housing development should only be permitted if it is in response to unmet local need.	<p>Endorse and Action - Under current local planning policy, new housing would only be acceptable in the village if it was a small scale scheme of affordable housing design to meet an identified local housing need in perpetuity, in accordance with Policy CTY.5.</p> <p>SDC Housing Team and Warwickshire Rural Community Council encourage the local community to consider undertaking a local housing needs survey. The Rural Housing Enabler and SDC can provide help in this area.</p>
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REPORT INFORMATION SHEET

Please complete and submit to Committee Services with draft report

COMMITTEE/DATE	STOUR AREA COMMUNITY COMMITTEE – 27 TH MARCH 2007	
ITEM NO/TITLE OF REPORT	LOXLEY PARISH PLAN AND VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT	
CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN		
CONSULTEE	✓	DETAILS / DATE OF CONSULTATION / COMMENTS RECEIVED
WARD MEMBERS	✓	CLLR SECCOMBE/ 26 TH FEB 07
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN/ PORTFOLIOHOLDER * <i>*Required</i>	✓	CLLR STEPHEN GRAY/ 26 TH FEB 07 CLLR STUART BEESE/ 26 TH FEB 07
FINANCIAL SERVICES * <i>*Required</i>	✓	RICHARD BURRELL/ 26 TH FEB 07/ NO FURTHER COMMENTS
LEGAL SERVICES * <i>*Required</i>	✓	SERINTHER ATKAR/ 26 TH FEB 07
OTHER SERVICES	✓	HOUSING/ 20 TH FEB 07 POLICY AND PR/ 20 TH FEB 07 COMMUNITY SERVICES/ 20 TH FEB 07
OTHER ORGANISATIONS	✓	LOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL/ 26 TH FEB 07 WARWICKSHIRE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL/ 20 TH FEB 07/ SUPPORTIVE, ENCOURAGE ACTIONS OF VILLAGE HALL/ CENTRE AND HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL/ 20 TH FEB 07
FINAL DECISION BY THIS COMMITTEE OR RECOMMENDATION TO ANOTHER COMMITTEE/COUNCIL ?		FINAL DECISION RECOMMENDATION TO : EXECUTIVE / COUNCIL COMMITTEE <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
DOES THIS REPORT CONTAIN EXEMPT INFORMATION? IF SO, UNDER WHICH PARAGRAPH(S) ?		No YES, PARAGRAPHS : <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
DOES THIS REPORT RELATE TO A KEY DECISION (REFERRED TO IN THE EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN)		No YES, FORWARD PLAN ITEM – SCHEDULED FOR (date) <i>Delete as appropriate</i>