

ASHENDON COMMUNITY LED PLAN (CLP)
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PARSIH COUNCIL, 15th April 2019

Since the formal completion of the initial Community Led Plan investigations in 2012, the Steering Group has concentrated on progressing the five key areas of concern that were highlighted in the surveys, questionnaires and focus groups that had been undertaken.

The Steering Group has been delighted that the Parish Council has acted with considerable success in rectifying concerns in many of these key areas.

1. Retaining a Village Pub.

The greatest anxiety about the most valued facilities in the village during the consultations was the threat of closure for the village pub, then named The Gatehangers. As a precaution the CLP Steering Group arranged for the pub to be included on AVDC's list of assets of community value. This gave the village the option of buying the pub should it be for sale, but in the event a new tenant was found who, over the past few years, has developed it into a well-regarded and hopefully profitable business, and it remains as a key focal point of the village.

The pub's designation as an asset of community value has now expired, but the Parish Council is in the process of trying to have it renewed by AVDC.

2. A Village Housing Development Policy.

In consultation with the Parish Council Chairman and Clerk, the results of previous housing development surveys had been passed to Mrs Jean Fox, the AVDC Rural Housing Enabler who was asked to undertake a Housing Need Survey. This was done and some 39% of the village responded, well above the national average of 25%.

The survey results were published on the Parish Council website and in essence recommended the building of:

☐ 2 x 1 bedroom homes for rent and

☐ 2 x 2 bedroom homes for rent

OR

1 x 2 bedroom house shared ownership and

1 x 2 bedroom for rent depending on the availability of suitable mortgages.

However, following detailed consultation within the village and an extensive search, it was not possible to identify a suitable site for these proposed new houses. It was therefore decided in 2016 that this project would not be taken any further.

3. Roads and Traffic

Over the past three years considerable resurfacing of the roads in and around Ashendon had been completed with much support from our County Councillor. The road throughout the village and down the Westcott Road have been finished, white road markings laid, and road signs rationalised.

There are few issues still to be resolved: the consideration of a 20 mph speed limit near Pollicott, the continual problem of potholes in the nearby roads, the need already to repaint the white lines, kerbing and surfacing the Causeway footpath and the continual need to find ways of keeping HGVs to a minimum and traffic speeds low.

In this respect the Group were delighted that training of volunteers had taken place to operate speed measuring equipment.

4. Facilities for Young People

The CLP Steering Group believed that the building of an all-weather Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) on the playing fields would be an excellent addition to the community's facilities for young people. This was supported by the Parish Council who earmarked £5,000 for the project, and an Ashendon Playing Field Association Working Party was formed to develop this initiative. A total of £91,000 was raised via grants from various sources and the MUGA was subsequently built and was officially opened in July 2016.

5. Broadband

Despite extensive liaison with BT and Bucks Business First (who advised AVDC on superfast broadband expenditure) during 2013/14, and clear assurances that we would be connected by fibre-optic cable in early 2015, this offer was withdrawn in February that year once they discovered that they had confused the relevant BT cabinet in Ashendon with the one in Westcott.

Subsequently a village Broadband Working Party was established with members drawn from the CLP Group and the Parish Council. Following extensive investigations it was decided to take advantage of a BT Community Fibre Scheme which allowed some £35,000 to be raised by means of government funded vouchers towards the £65,000 cost. The remaining £30,000 was raised by donations from residents and many various and imaginative village fund-raising events.

A village Community Interest Company (CIC) was founded in 2017 which contracted in March 2017 with BT Openreach to install superfast broadband in both Ashendon and Pollicott by 25th March 2018. The broadband installation (albeit via a temporary cable from Watbridge Cottages) was finally connected in July 2018 and download speeds of up to 70 Mbps can now be obtained throughout Ashendon and Pollicott.

The Future of the Steering Group.

Between them the Parish Council and the CLP Working Party have now substantially covered all the main items that were identified as needing urgent work/improvement: safeguard the pub; improve the roads; manage the traffic; get better broadband; secure recreational facilities for children; and consider affordable housing for the village.

Inevitably several of these matters will continue to need routine or special consideration by the Parish Council, but now that the broadband project is complete the CLP Working Group is not needed to facilitate this. Furthermore, it seems that AVDC has quietly dropped this aspect of

community engagement and we do not seem to be under any obligation to continue to liaise with them.

I have much enjoyed my time as Chairman of the CLP Working Group over the past seven years but I have decided that now is a good time to end my involvement and so, should the Parish Council decide that they wish the CLP to continue, a new Chairman will be needed to take matters forward.

David O Crwys-Williams

Chairman

Ashendon Community Led Plan Steering Group

9th April 2019