

DORNEY PARISH PLAN



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"OUR PLACE IN THE COUNTRY"

Dorney Parish is a small rural community at the southern tip of Buckinghamshire. The river Thames defines the southern border and the M4 motorway runs across the north of the Parish. Despite its close proximity to neighbouring urban areas the Parish retains numerous attractive features. Two Conservation areas have been designated, three properties are afforded Grade I listing and forty-two are Grade II listed.

However, the Parish is within the dynamic and economically affluent Southeast. As a consequence it is subject to many developmental pressures and has to accommodate significant changes. The recent creation of Dorney Rowing Lake and the Jubilee River are examples. There are also the inevitable problems of the twenty-first century such as increasing pressure from through traffic on the roads. The Parish is inadequately served by public transport and has no shops. Agricultural land use practices are evolving as a consequence of economic and market pressures. Leisure activities for in-comers are being encouraged. Demand for further development may be only a question of time.

Background

It was therefore prudent for the Parish Council to solicit the views of Parishioners for their opinions on local issues. This was done in the year 2000 through a Parish Appraisal Questionnaire delivered to each of the approximately three hundred households in the Parish. The subjects and issues were addressed in the Questionnaire through nearly a hundred questions and the responses received have been analysed and edited to form the basis of the Parish Plan. The Plan also draws on a paper submitted to the Parish Council that was prepared by a group of local residents and which, in particular, highlighted environmental issues. The Buckinghamshire Rural Strategy paper was used as the structural model for the Plan.

Aim of the Parish Plan

The aim is to provide guidelines for the Parish Council that reflect a consensus of the concerns, priorities and expectations of Parishioners. Thus the Plan covers a wide range of issues, some clearly focusing on the community and quality of life. Others relate to security, transport and environmental matters.

Through publication of the Parish Plan, both parishioners and the Parish Council are making a commitment to a positive approach towards sustaining and strengthening community and environment. It follows therefore that the Plan will provide a mandate for the Parish Council since, it can justly claim, the Plan reflects local views and priorities. Thus it will serve to reinforce decision making on, for example planning issues, and in discussions with local government departments.

It is also relevant to all who live in the Parish, as the Plan sets guidelines for standards that are valued by today's Parishioners and, in the longer term, will contribute to protection of these standards for the benefit of future generations. Hopefully the Plan makes common sense and is both practical and worthwhile.

Structure of the Plan

The various issues selected for inclusion in the overall Plan have been grouped under ten headings. Within each heading there are three component sections:

- identifying and briefly explaining the issues
- deciding upon and trying to enable appropriate actions
- setting targets for monitoring achievement

Quotes from a summary of the results of the Parish Appraisal Questionnaire are given in *italics*.

The Plan reflects issues and concerns at the start of year 2005. It is recognised that the plan should be dynamic and be subject to modification in the light of future developments and priorities.

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ROAD USE AND TRANSPORT

ISSUES

Increasing intrusion of through traffic in the Parish

Speeding traffic is perceived as being a problem through Dorney

72% of respondents pointed to major danger-spots on Dorney roads, especially Marsh Lane and Village Road

Risks to pedestrians and cyclists (Marsh Lane in particular)

There should be more cycle and footpaths

Non-car owners are poorly served by public transport

Improvement in routes, timetable and reliability of the service is needed

Street lighting needs improvement *More and environmentally friendly lighting is needed; 30% thought it poor; 10% thought it good*

Damage to grass verges by parked vehicles

ACTIONS

To liaise with BCC to implement and seek enforcement of measures to restrict traffic volume, speed and inconsiderate parking (speed restrictions, traffic calming, warning signs, footpaths)

To secure improved street lighting

To liaise with BCC to seek improvement to the bus service or taxi alternative

TARGETS

Traffic speeds are reduced

Pedestrian and cyclist safety is improved

Street lighting is improved (all existing lights will be replaced early in 2005)

Better access to public transport is provided

Damage to grass verges is prevented

DEVELOPMENT

ISSUES

The future of heritage sites within the Parish should be safeguarded. (e.g., the upkeep of St James Church and the Churchyard is an example where maintenance is a significant commitment accepted and provided by the few).

Need to maintain the rural character of the Parish

There is very strong resistance to any sort of development in the Parish, including housing, tourist, business or industrial development; the majority want the character of Dorney to stay as it is

The consensus is that more publicity needs to be given to planning applications that affect Dorney

Risk of excessive development around the Rowing Lake

Concern over the influx of too many visitors to the Parish

ACTIONS

Encourage interest, pride and respect for Conservation areas

The Green Belt designation of the area is to be protected

There is a need to encourage appropriate income-generating business within the Parish (e.g., using converted redundant farm buildings)

Parish Council to resist developments that are considered inappropriate

Parish Council to ensure appropriate publicity is given to planning applications

Introduce proper traffic and parking arrangements for visitors to the Parish

TARGETS

Ensure the future for the conservation and heritage sites

Prevent future development that will erode the character of the Parish and safeguard the existing properties and the environment

Facilitate the establishment of appropriate businesses

Ensure that the Parish is not overburdened by visitors

ENVIRONMENT - COUNTRYSIDE

ISSUES

90% of respondents consider the quality of the Dorney countryside to be important to them; a majority felt that the environment had changed for the better in recent years; most valued are the meadows, green fields, hedges and small woods, along with the rivers and streams

Both Dorney Lake and the Jubilee River are regarded favourably now that they are established

Interest in the environment was expressed through willingness to help with conservation and preservation of wildlife

Special features of Dorney should be recorded

Fences, hedges and footpaths are valued

Concern over litter and overgrown paths

Loss of biodiversity (degradation of hedges, trees dying, wet areas drying out)

Excessive grass cutting

ACTIONS

Recognise the strength of Parishioners' concern for environmental issues

Ensure that land-owning and land use interests are aware of the Council's stance on the environmental matters and the importance of safeguarding the countryside

Continue to work with Dorney Lake and the Environment Agency to harmonise initiatives for the management and improvement of the environment

Work with SBDC and BCC to achieve tidier roads and paths

Rationalise grass cutting regimes and timetables

TARGETS

At minimum, sustain or at best increase, biodiversity by nurturing the environment

Ensure that felled, old trees are replaced

Cleaner, tidier roads and foot paths

The Natural History of the Parish has been recorded

ENVIRONMENT - WATER AND RIVER MANAGEMENT

ISSUES

Uncertainty over water table levels as a consequence of new developments
Decline of streams and wet areas leading to loss of biodiversity
Risk of over-promotion of Thames Path and Jubilee River leading to degradation of the pathway and possible inconvenience to local residents
Possible long-term consequences of river management and climate change might lead to flooding

ACTIONS

Maintain the Flood Warning System
Liaise with the Environmental Agency to obtain information on flood management, maintenance of water courses and water tables
Ensure appropriate arrangements for visitors to the Parish (on foot, by car and cycle)

TARGETS

Risk of flooding is minimised
Water courses and riverside amenities are well maintained

ENVIRONMENT - POLLUTION

ISSUES

Traffic noise is considered a major disturbance in Dorney
A major cause of noise is the surface material used on the M4 motorway
The level of aircraft noise is also of concern
Air pollution levels occasionally significant close to the motorway

ACTIONS

Obtain and monitor published data on noise and air pollution
Investigate incidents where noise levels arising from the M4, aircraft and specific local sources (e.g., Dorney Lake) exceed statutory levels
To support BCC policy of reducing night flights
Continue to press for the replacement of high noise asphalt with sound reducing material when the M4 is next resurfaced

TARGETS

To reduce noise and pollution levels

SECURITY

ISSUES

Concern over vandalism
Although the majority of respondents said they felt safe in Dorney, 26% said that there were areas where they felt unsafe
Demand for greater police presence in the Parish
Police score poorly compared with ambulance and fire services

ACTIONS

Liaise with Thames Valley Police, obtain better community policing
Liaise with Community Safety Officers at SBDC
Support and promote the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
Consider introduction of CCTV in key areas

TARGETS

Ensure continuation of Neighbourhood Watch
Fear of crime is reduced

RECREATION AND EDUCATION

ISSUES

There is high demand for a children's playground in the Parish
Local leisure facilities within the Parish are deemed poor for all age groups but especially for children and the 17-25 age group
Utilisation of the Village Hall and the tennis court is very low
About 80% of residents use the facilities either never or less than once a month
The Horticultural Society is the most popular choice of residents
The Parish Magazine was received by 90% of respondents who value it as an important source of information and 60% wish it to be delivered to every home in the Parish
Only 11% of respondents thought that Council decisions and activities were well reported
Demand for publication of maps of local footpaths and leaflets of walks

ACTIONS

The Parish Council has investigated the possibilities of a childrens' playground and of a grant. Safety, insurance and maintenance regulations have so far made this unviable. Parish Council will continue to liaise with District Council to resolve issues.
Stimulate awareness of leisure opportunities in the Parish
Investigate obtaining concessions for nearby leisure centre facilities
Support independent production of the Parish Magazine and continue to report Parish Council matters
Parish Council to develop its Website
A footpath map linking the new opportunities provided by the Jubilee River and Rowing Lake is being published in Spring 2005

TARGETS

Ensure that appropriate leisure facilities are available and publicised
Ensure the continuity of publication of the Parish Magazine and that Parish Council matters are reported
Distribute the local footpath map

SERVICES

ISSUES

Problems were reported with the provision of public utility services in the Parish (unreliability of telephone, radio, TV, water and post)

There is high demand for recycling facilities in the Parish

ACTIONS

Parish Council to monitor complaints from Parishioners and take up significant problems with the respective utility providers

Work with South Bucks District Council to facilitate more arrangements for recycling in the Parish

TARGETS

The level of complaints is reduced

Recycling of refuse is maximised

FINANCE

ISSUES

Improvements for the benefit of the Parish should be either funded by moderate tax rises or fund raising and sponsorship

ACTIONS

Investigate availability of grants and opportunities for sponsorship for improvements

TARGETS

Ensure optimal use of available funds

References

Buckinghamshire Rural Strategy, July 1997

The Natural History of Dorney Parish, March 2000