

EDINGTON 2030

EDINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING FOOTPATHS

INTERIM REPORT

April 2017

INTRODUCTION

This interim report draws together in summary the findings of the Environment Including Footpaths Focus Group meetings, and is intended to form the basis for the Environment Including Footpaths section of the Edington Local Development Plan. The report will be presented to the Parish Council during the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2017, and therefore will form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Plan.

Edington lies in an attractive rural setting, on the northern scarp edge of Salisbury Plain, and is valued by the community and visitors alike for its scenic beauty. The key landscape characteristics that give the village this setting is derived from its farmland, meadows, intact hedgerows, woodland cover, rolling topography and soft village edges. The village sits on a north facing hillside that makes it visually prominent when approached from the south. The countryside around the village, including that which provides its immediate setting, is designated a Special Landscape Area (SLA) and is therefore considered of County Importance and is protected through the County Structure Plan and Local Landscape Policy. The good condition of the landscape and its high sensitivity to change results in the village having a relatively low capacity for any future development that would impact upon this. Therefore the village community is resistant to inappropriate development where, individually or in their cumulative impacts, it represents a force for change that will negatively impact upon the character of the village's landscape setting.

It was recognised that an important way that the community interacts with its local environment is through the use of its network of footpaths. Therefore it was considered appropriate to include 'footpaths' alongside 'environment' within a single section of the Local Development Plan. [The questionnaire showed that just under 30% of respondents walked locally for leisure.]

Within this context, whilst it is recognised that there is an overarching need to protect Edington's rural landscape character and environment generally, local residents were keen to highlight local issues, and these were brought out as areas of interest in people's responses in the Edington Parish Council Local Development Plan Questionnaire. The key environmental/footpath issues identified in the initial meeting of the Local Development Plan Group as a direct response to peoples concerns (using the Edington Parish Council Local Development Plan Questionnaire as an evidence base) were the following:

- Littering
- Dumping including green waste
- Pond needs attention
- Footpath to connect two sides of village
- Protection of green spaces within built up area
- Improved signs for footpaths
- Improved maintenance of all footpaths around the village and leading up onto the hills
- Volunteer group like Eves for basic maintenance
- Footpath warden to help "Old Jack"
- Fracking – how to prevent it

Taking each of these in turn, the Environment (Including Footpaths) Focus Group looked in detail at each of the issues and, where relevant, set out overall aims and objectives for these. These are summarised below.

LITTERING

Various 'hot-spots' were identified within the village where littering is a persistent problem. Principal amongst these are various locations along the B3098 where wind strewn litter and litter thrown from moving vehicles tends to collect. There is obviously very little that can be done as a community to counter those who are of the mind-set to do this, other to encourage the reporting of incidences when witnessed. However, regular organised litter-picks are reasonably effective in dealing with the consequences, and continued community participation in these should be encouraged through the parish magazine and on parish notice boards. Points of contact for those organising the litter picks should be well advertised, and any particular issues should be drawn to their attention.

The provision of litter bins in the village (including dog waste bins) was examined. Whilst there are 9 litter bins within the village, there are 'gaps' on Tinhead Road (at the junction with Lambourn Lane) and at the bus shelter on Westbury Road where it is considered locating additional bins would be beneficial. Both locations could be easily incorporated into the existing WCC waste management route for the village.

In addition to the above, there should be a general encouragement to 'keep our village tidy' through the use of posters and notices where most appropriate.

Action Points: Organise regular littler-picks; approve locations for new bins; install new bins in these locations.

DUMPING INCLUDING GREEN WASTE

Fly-tipping is another issue that is very difficult to mitigate for. There have been incidences of this on the edge of the village, particularly on Bratton Road, and again, anyone who is witness to this activity should be encouraged to report it to the authorities. The potential for covert surveillance was discussed, but deemed to be unfeasible at this stage due to the unpredictability of this problem. Signage could be used where there are more persistent problems, but the effectiveness of this was in doubt.

The dumping of green waste in and around the village has become a more significant issue since the WCC charge for collection was introduced in June 2015. The possibility of an annual green waste collection by WCC from a central point within the village was investigated. Wiltshire Council's Head of Waste Management confirmed that the Council's Waste and Environment department could not allow for additional collection of this kind as there would be no way for them to recover their costs. An alternative would be for the Parish Council to investigate the cost of hiring a commercial skip annually for this purpose, although the advice from Wiltshire Council's Head of Waste Management is that the provision of these for community use is likely to be abused, often resulting in the waste becoming heavily contaminated which would result in additional disposal costs. It was therefore decided not to pursue this further at this stage.

Action Points: Monitor situation; report to Parish Council as appropriate.

POND NEED ATTENTION

Over the years the village pond adjacent to Tinhead Road has become increasingly silted up resulting in low levels oxygen and aeration. The current depth of water (between 4 feet and 10 inches) is despite recent efforts to remove some silt. A member of the focus group submitted an application to the Wessex Water Board who provide grants to improve the health of ponds. This was recognised as the best and most cost-effective means to carry out the improvements (an independent commercial quote to provide the improvements was not considered financially viable at present). Subsequently a grant for £1030.00 was awarded (*further details to follow*).

Action Points: Set up voluntary group (or include in 'EVES' type group) to carry out improvements; use grant to fund improvements.

FOOTPATH TO CONNECT TWO SIDES OF VILLAGE

A permissive route is provided between the two sides of the village in the adjacent pasture, providing a safe path off of the B3098. The route is easily accessed via recent galvanised kissing gates at either

end. In the past there had been some concerns regarding cattle in this field, although in recent years the practice has been to fence off a strip adjacent to the hedgerow when cattle are grazing using livestock deterrent electric fencing. This fence is removed for two or three weeks in early Autumn to allow the strip to be grazed off, and is removed during winter months when only sheep will be grazing. The landowner and farmer have shown tremendous generosity in allowing a permissive right of way, and great consideration in erecting the electric fence during summer months.

In addition to this permissive route, there is a public right of way that connects the B3098 on the edge of the western part of the village with The Weir to the east.

Action Points: Maintain status quo.

PROTECTION OF GREEN SPACES WITHIN BUILT UP AREA

Current planning law should protect infill plots where there are material planning considerations to prohibit development. Other green spaces within the village include the playing field and the 'triangles', and the parish council will protect these as community assets.

Action Points: Protect green spaces through LPA/planning law.

IMPROVED SIGNS FOR FOOTPATHS

The network of footpaths is considered a great community asset, and a means to explore the wonderful countryside around the village. As well as having a recreational use, the footpaths enable residents to safely move around the village and between Edington and the neighbouring village of Bratton. At the time of writing, the updated footpaths booklet was nearing completion. This [will be available for purchase in due course, and] will provide a guide for residents and visitors alike in order to fully utilise the network. Notwithstanding this, it was accepted that there is an ongoing need for maintenance of signs and stiles, and for path clearance generally, and the coordination of this would fall to the Parish Council and volunteers within the village. Additionally the Parish Council will refer to the Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Officer periodically and when required.

Where there are issues of farmers/landowners leaving too narrow a strip for footpaths, the PC should take this up with Wiltshire Council who have enforcement powers in this matter.

Action Points: Maintain signs with appropriate maintenance when required (to be coordinated by Parish Council); refer issues as they arise to Wiltshire Council via the parish Council.

IMPROVED MAINTENANCE OF ALL FOOTPATHS AROUND THE VILLAGE AND LEADING UP ONTO THE HILLS

It was felt that the best way for this to be carried out would be via a periodic report prepared by the Parish Council which would set out specific maintenance requirements as they arise. Routine maintenance tasks could then be carried out by community volunteers, with any expenses met by the PC. In the event that professional contractors are needed (for example, of a dangerous tree needs to be felled, or a stile needs to be rebuilt) then the report would also cover this. Villages should be able to report any immediate or potential maintenance issues to the PC which can then be raised at the next meeting and included in a report.

Action Points: Refer issues as they arise to the Parish Council who will prepare a periodic report setting out maintenance requirements; routine maintenance carried out by volunteers with specialist contractors engaged when necessary.

VOLUNTEER GROUP LIKE EVES FOR BASIC MAINTENANCE

It was considered that the 'EVES' group was effective in the past in having basic maintenance requirements carried out the village via voluntary means. The reintroduction of the group would provide a cost effective and quick-reacting solution to these needs as they arise, and would also allow residents to actively contribute to the community. Therefore, it should be a priority to re-establish such a group, and support it in the community via the Parish Council.

Action Points: Parish Council to advertise locally for volunteers to set up and contribute to 'EVES' type group, and to provide adequate support in order to maintain ongoing involvement.

FOOTPATH WARDEN TO HELP JACK PYLLE

Jack's services to the village should be recognised.

The focus group considered that a voluntary group such as EVES would be effective in assisting Jack Pylle who has provided a wonderful service to the village over the years. Jack's advice should be sought on this so as to fully include him and keep him appraised.

Action Points: When set up, the voluntary group or Parish Council should make contact with Mr Pylle to discuss any specific issues and provide support where needed. Follow up with regular contact.

FRACKING – HOW TO PREVENT IT

No options to 'Frack' locally have been taken up, and it was felt resources should not be put into this at present. Obviously the PC would have to take a stance should anything arise in the future.

Action Points: No action at present.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

It was felt that biodiversity could be improved within the village, by planting up banks and triangles with wildflowers, encouraging the gapping up of hedges and making them more species rich, and improving the margins of the pond. Aside from providing gains for biodiversity, this will also help the public realm/civic pride.

Action Points: Include within Parish Council's periodic report to set out maintenance requirement throughout the village.