Integration of parish plans into the wider systems of local government

Report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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A project commissioned by Defra undertaken by SQW with a team led by Scott Dickinson.

SQWconsulting

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Defra commissioned and funded this study, but the views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect Defra policy.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report looks at the development of parish plans, the extent to which they are integrated into the local government system, enabling factors that support integration and barriers to integration. The findings are based on case study work and consultations with stakeholders and form part of a wider programme of work to support local communities to shape their own lives. The report makes a series of recommendations for government, local authorities and local service providers and parishes to improve the integration of parish plans.

Development of parish plans

- In the overwhelming majority of cases, parish plan development is led by a dedicated voluntary community group. This self-driven approach helps to secure community ownership and is viewed positively by parish groups, local authorities and other strategic stakeholders. Parish councils tend to play a relatively minor role in the development of a plan (in line with national guidance); however, there are a few exceptions where the parish itself is comprised of a small number of residents.

- In most of the case studies, the development of parish plans was supported by the local authority, mainly in the form of guidance and advice. This support was provided, to varying degrees, by district, county and metropolitan councils. The 'quality' of a local authority's involvement is dependent less on its legal structure, and more on whether members and officers have sufficient commitment to respond positively to parish plans.

- Most of the parishes in the case studies received advice or help with resources from their Rural Community Council (RCC)[1] and this was widely regarded as beneficial to the development of parish plans. However, the effectiveness of support in our case studies did vary.

- Well structured plans with maps highlighting how parish priorities fitted with mainstream priorities were more effective at engaging mainstream providers than those mainly focused on a local audience.

1 For a glossary of acronyms and terms refer to Annex H.

Extent of integration

Planning

- Some of the case studies were able to achieve modest degrees of success in integrating their plan within the wider planning system. However, many parish plans had difficulty in being prioritised in local planning documents and in some cases getting noticed by the local planning authority.
- Where planning decisions conformed to parish requirements this was viewed by local stakeholders as an ad hoc rather than systematic process; and, therefore, they did not think the decisions indicated a fundamental shift in planning authority priorities or ways of working.

Mainstream services

- In the case studies, modifications to mainstream service[2] agendas and budgets in response to parish plans were limited. Where they did occur, environmental services tended to be among the most responsive services, although some modest successes were identified with transport and highways departments and the police service.
- Strategic health and education services neither appeared to regard parish plans as a priority nor planned delivery at such a micro level. However, GPs and local schools did, in many cases, demonstrate their receptiveness to the parish planning process.
- Local Strategic Partnerships are seen by many as a potential route through which to influence mainstream providers, as they can provide a co-ordinating forum for the articulation of parish priorities. However, to date this possibility does not appear to have been demonstrated in practice.

Enablers

- The early involvement of service delivery bodies increases
  - ➢ the likelihood of their long-term buy-in to plans
  - ➢ their ability to respond to parish priorities, as they have prior notice of potential requirements.

2 Refer to the Glossary in Annex H for a definition.

- The early engagement of the local planning authority is essential if the parish plan's structure is to align with the requirements of the planning system, which will enable its subsequent integration in the planning system.
- Effective guidance and support to parish groups in order to ensure parish plans are presented in the most digestible format and to minimise unrealistic objectives, increases the likelihood of mainstream providers identifying and responding to the practical implications of a plan.
- A structured process for presenting parish plans to the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) partners, for example, via a database and/or clusters of parish plans and issues enables systematic rather than ad hoc responses to parish plans.
- A single point of contact in the local authority (or LSP) is helpful to parishes and parish plan groups – it streamlines information flows, provides a trusted source of advice and can galvanise mainstream providers' responses to parish priorities.
- Sufficient resources to fund local projects make a difference in building momentum behind a plan.
- The production of a holistic and quality plan, based on evidence and robust community consultation is essential if local authorities and other agencies are to use a plan in a consistent and meaningful way.
- The separation of planning priorities from other community oriented objectives (for example by drawing up a stand alone Village Design Statement (VDS)) can make it easier for planning departments to digest and integrate the parish view.
- Clusters of several parishes with shared objectives make it easier to engage with mainstream service providers.
- A pro-active and determined parish plan action group or a chair dedicated to implementation can be of significant benefit to the delivery of a plan, enabling the monitoring of mainstream providers' responses and sustained follow up on the delivery of local priorities.
- Parish plans need to be endorsed and adopted by the parish council in order to be taken seriously by the higher tiers of government and other service providers.

- The commitment of senior politicians and officers in the local authority is essential for parish plans to have a systematic effect on mainstream services. Impact on policy agendas can also be aided by engaging with the LSP and using this as a channel by which to influence mainstream providers.

Barriers to integration

- Some local authority members and officers are reluctant to relinquish some of their influence and control to parishes. This limits the influence parish plans can have on the mainstream.

- There is often little recognition, by both local authorities and mainstream service providers, of the widespread benefits that parish plans can provide, not least the detailed levels of information on community desires and needs. The lack of appreciation of the 'added value' of parish/community plans means they are not used as effectively as they could be.

- The absence of synchronised timescales for the development of parish plans and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and community strategies makes integration difficult, as parish plans can miss the 'windows of opportunity' to influence decisions of mainstream providers and mainstream providers can find it difficult to respond to individual parish plans issued at different points throughout the year.

- A planning system which is characterised by a 'top-down approach' to policies and priorities, and the absence of any statutory responsibility to heed the demands of parish plans, means parish plans are not seen as significant documents in the planning system and therefore wield little influence.

- Changes to legislation – primarily the replacement of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – have put more demands on parish plan groups, in terms of the complexity of the process and the resources required for sustainability appraisals of plans. This has made it more difficult for parish plans to be integrated into the planning system.

- Funding and capacity constraints act as a hindrance to parish groups and mainstream service providers, constraining their ability to develop, maintain and implement parish plans.

- Case study consultees highlighted that there has been a lack of 'quality' guidance and inadequate levels of support for parish groups.[3] To date these issues have led to the production of plans that often do not conform to the standards required for formal adoption into local planning documents. It has also led to the production of 'wish lists' and 'NIMBY statements' that meant parish plans had (and have) a poor reputation among professional planners.

- Plans rely on volunteers, thus the process may suffer due to the inexperience of participants, apathy among potential volunteers and 'burn out' of those involved. It can be difficult to secure involvement from the development phase through to implementation, leaving some plans with little follow through, once they have been produced.

- The evidence also suggests there are particular problems of communication and co-ordination. Information comes from parishes in an ad hoc fashion, which makes it hard for mainstream providers to digest and respond. Parishes are also often unaware of the priorities, requirements and timetables of mainstream providers.

3 A Parish Planning Toolkit is being piloted by ACRE. This will, in future, be able to address many of the problems encountered by parish groups due to lack of guidance. The Toolkit is featured and reviewed in Box 4-3 of the main report.

Recommendations

For government

Table 1 Recommendations for government

- DEFRA and DCLG should issue a joint statement outlining the utility of parish and community plans in tailoring services to local needs. This should encourage local authorities and other service providers to both engage with parish plan preparation and give plans more weight in their decision-making processes.
- Guidance should be provided by government for local authorities and mainstream services to stress the utility and importance of integrating parish plan objectives into their agendas. The guidance should provide advice to all relevant authorities on mechanisms of integration, such as a parish plan database, clustering of parishes, and parish representation in LSPs; it should set out expectations of how LSPs should work with parish and community plans. The refreshed guidance should also reflect changes in the planning system and the implications of the Local Government White Paper (LGWP) for parish plans.
- Government should work with national, regional and local stakeholders to identify the most appropriate way to ensure any new plans have the resources required for their development and that the support is available to ensure the plans are quality documents that are seen to be the product of a robust process.

For local authorities and mainstream service providers

Table 2 Recommendations for local authorities and mainstream service providers

- For parish plans to be effective in bringing change at the local level, local authorities and other service providers should work with the process, rather than seeing it as a challenge to their own authority.
- Local authorities and LSPs should establish a single point of contact to liaise with parish groups and to advise mainstream providers how to work with parish and community plans. They need also to identify the role (or potential roles depending on local circumstances) of the ward councillor in assisting the development and/or implementation of community and parish plans. This will be particularly important as the role of ward councillors develops in line with the Local Government White Paper 2006.
- Local authorities and LSPs should consider making resources available to support the development and integration of parish plans as a cost effective way of consulting and engaging the public and gathering information on local concerns. Possible ways in which to do this include:
    - the establishment of a community development team to provide support to those working on parish and community plans – this may be within the council or as part of an LSP secretariat
    - the maintenance of a database of all parish plans and their priorities – to ease access to information for mainstream providers and to enable parishes and mainstream providers to identify common concerns
    - the allocation of some money to locally elected members to fund local priorities.
- Local authorities and LSPs should consider the merits of 'clusters' of parishes and/or joint meetings of parishes and service providers to drive the integration of parish plans in the ways that mainstream providers operate.
- Local authorities should identify how parishes can be engaged in both setting LAAs and in delivering on the priorities set out in them.

For parishes

Table 3 Recommendations for parishes

- Parish groups must ensure that contact is made with local authorities, LSPs and mainstream providers requesting their engagement from the outset.
- Should parishes want to include a planning dimension in their plans, they should seek involvement from planning officers at the outset. The final output on planning should form an identifiably separate section in the plan, in order to ease its absorption by the relevant planning authority.
- In order to show their own commitment to developing and/or refreshing parish plans and to demonstrate the community's belief in the added value of a plan, parish councils may need to use their precepting powers or revenue raised from charges for services to help develop plans.
- In order to ensure the parish plan is given due consideration by local authorities and other agencies, parish plan groups should ensure the process for producing the plan is robust and engages all parts of the community. The final document needs to be clear about what it wants from whom and why. This may best be done via a quality assurance process that enables parish plan groups to document what they did and how it affected the final plan or it may be done via an external judgement, for example, from the RCC or its designated agent.
- While parish plans should not be seen primarily as planning documents, where planning issues are addressed they should be based on guidance from planners and be treated separately, for example, in design statements that respond to the requirements of the planning process.
- Parish plans should be aspirational, but they also require 'actionable first steps'. In order to build momentum and confidence at local level and in mainstream agencies, parish groups should focus on achieving 'quick wins', which require minimal resources.
- In order to generate sufficient lobbying capacity, parishes should consider the option of forming a cluster, or working in partnership with neighbouring parishes, to pursue their aims, particularly where there are common priorities. This may also make it easier to deal with mainstream providers, who will gain economies of scale from acting with larger groupings.
- In order to ensure there is 'follow through' on a plan, parish groups and/or parish councils should establish a dedicated action/implementation group to take forward the objectives of the plan. This may, or may not, comprise the same people as those involved in the plan's development. This dedicated group should identify the actions which the local community can respond to and those where others are required to act and work with partners. It should also ensure there are regular progress reports for the community.
- Once a plan is completed, parish plan groups should seek its formal adoption by the parish council. This is the first step to its integration with

the wider system of local governance. In order to enhance the likelihood of adoption by the parish council, the parish plan group should demonstrate how it successfully expresses community views • When developing parish plans, groups should consider the requirements of the implementation process and identify people to lead on taking the plan forward. This may involve different people, as those interested in delivery of the actions in the plan may not be interested in getting involved in drawing up the plan.

For multiple partners

Table 4 Recommendations for multiple partners

• In order to minimise the disruption associated with local political rivalry, partners should seek to build a local consensus on the issues to be addressed and the ways to address them, thereby bringing an element of stability to the plan.

1: Introduction

Background to study

1.1 In September 2006, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) appointed SQW to:

- assess the extent to which parish plans are integrated into local statutory planning and service delivery processes
- identify best practice in integrating parish plans and other community planning tools
- highlight the key barriers to the integration of community plans in the mainstream
- recommend how barriers might be overcome and to share best practice.

Aims and objectives

1.2 The study set out to answer the following questions:

- To what extent are parish plans (and similar community action plans) being integrated in local and regional public services and planning policies?
- What are the critical success factors that influence the integration of parish plans in each key service?
- Are there particular processes/mechanisms that are more effective than others; for example, is the engagement of key agencies in the production of the plans more useful than involving them after a plan has been produced?
- Are there reasons why some services and areas are more responsive to parish plans than others; for example, do other priorities take up resources in some service areas, while other services have targets, for example on engagement, that parish plans help them to meet?
- Is there good practice in securing the effective use of parish plans? Can this be transferred?
- What are the key barriers to the integration and use of parish plans?
    - Which barriers affect which organisations/service providers?

- Are they affected by their geographical and/or institutional contexts?
- How could these barriers be overcome?

- What threats and/or opportunities does the Local Government White Paper 2006 (LGWP) and other changes in the policy environment provide for parish plans?

Methodology

1.3 The project began with a series of scoping interviews (Annexes A and B). The interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from national, regional and local levels. They were asked for their views on the objectives of parish plans, progress to date, critical success factors, barriers to integration and policy implications.

1.4 A literature review was carried out (Annex C). It looked at national policy and guidance on parish plans; guidance to planning authorities and service providers regarding the production of service plans, community engagement and parish plans; published research on the implementation of parish plans and its impact on delivery; case studies in the literature; and the Local Government White Paper and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

1.5 In consultation with the steering group (which was made up of Defra and DCLG), 14 case studies were identified to provide a mix of urban and rural and 'single' and 'two tier' authorities (Table 1.1 and Annex D). The case studies assessed how particular parish plans were integrated by mainstream providers. They explored the views of mainstream providers, parish councils (councillors and clerks) and those involved in developing parish plans – by face-to-face and telephone interviews (Annex E) and via an electronic questionnaire (Annex F). A bibliography is provided in Annex G and a glossary of terms is provided in Annex H.

Table 1-1 List of case studies by parish, council and region

Parish Case Study	District / County	Region	Reason for selection
Atlantic Partnership Clovelly, Hartland, Parkham, Welcombe and Woolsery (Devon)	Devon	South West	These parish councils in Devon have grouped together to form a partnership. Each produced a parish plan on the basis of which the partnership has produced a community plan for the five parishes. This has put the partnership in a strong position

Parish Case Study	District / County	Region	Reason for selection
			to influence other agencies to bring about sustainable improvement in local conditions.
Benson	Oxfordshire	South East	The parish council has formally adopted the plan and one councillor has been charged with ensuring progress chasing and implementation. Nothing was put into the plan that couldn't realistically be achieved. However interviewees were unhappy that there was no formal mechanism for the plan to be considered in the preparation of district and county policies.
Berwick-upon-Tweed	Northumberland	North East	The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) executive board invited representatives of two specific parish plan teams to sit on its sector boards, where the parish plans had focused to a significant extent on these themes.
Brilley	Herefordshire	West Midlands	Herefordshire County Council has adopted parish plan material as supplementary planning guidance.
Dalston	Carlisle City, Cumbria	North West	Local community based planning initiatives are now a standing item on the agenda of the quarterly meetings of the LSP that serves these areas.
Grenoside	Sheffield	Yorkshire and the Humber	This example was suggested because it has experienced problems with integration.
High Bickington	Devon	South West	The plan had a large amount of public commitment in its development and implementation. It was consulted as a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications. This case study focused on housing and planning issues.
Ilkley	Bradford	Yorkshire	Bradford is a Beacon Council for

Parish Case Study	District / County	Region	Reason for selection
		and the Humber	the delivery of the Rural Services. Bradford has gone from 7 to 15 parishes in recent years to promote parishes as a vehicle. Two case studies were chosen from Bradford to permit a look at the variation between parishes working within the same urban authority. Ilkley is urban in nature.
Llanymynech and Pant	Shropshire	West Midlands	A protocol for bridging the gap between parish plans and LSPs has been enthusiastically adopted by the LSP. Shropshire is also a Beacon Council[4] for the delivery of rural services. Llanymynech is a forward thinking and proactive parish. This is evidenced but its having been selected as a pilot for two areas or work (local training needs and rural transport). It has been selected as a local meeting pilot working with Shropshire County Council.
Long Bennington	Lincolnshire	East Midlands	In their parish plan, Long Bennington propose that it becomes the 15 year strategic development plan for the parish council and they also state that their objective is for the Village Design Statement included in the parish plan to be endorsed as a Position Statement by South Kesteven District Council and included in their new Local Development Plan as an Supplementary Planning Document.
Oxenhope	Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	Bradford is a Beacon Council for the delivery of the Rural Services. Bradford has gone from 7 to 15 parishes in recent years to promote parishes as a vehicle. Two case studies were

4 Refer to Glossary in Annex H for definition.

Parish Case Study	District / County	Region	Reason for selection
			chosen from Bradford to permit a look at the variation between parishes working within the same urban authority. Oxenhope is rural in nature.
Parson Drove	Fenland, Cambridgeshire	East of England	In their parish plan action plan, Parsons Drove outline resource implications and the planning authority involvement required for each action. It is a rural pathfinder for rural service delivery.
Upper Eden Community Plan Group (UECPG) (Cluster of parishes round the town of Kirkby Stephen)	Eden, Cumbria	North West	Local community based planning initiatives are now a standing item on the agenda of the quarterly meetings of the LSP. UECPG is a partnership of 17 parishes surrounding Kirkby Stephen who are working together to develop a joint parish plan. It is successfully managing to penetrate the local and regional policy agenda and is due to give evidence at the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Examination in Public (EIP), later this month. The group has developed a mutually supportive and complementary approach and it expects to have the plan adopted as part of the Statutory Framework. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has agreed to fund the Sustainability Appraisal required for all statutory documents in an Local Development Framework (LDF).
Wolverton	Milton Keynes	South East	Wolverton received £30,000 to undertake a health check. Subsequently Milton Keynes BC gave £80,000 to develop an urban design/economic development framework for the town – rather than a parish plan.

1.6 Finally, a workshop of key stakeholders was held in order to test the findings from the fieldwork and inform the report's conclusions. Those who attended the workshop are listed in Annex B.

2: Policy Context

2.1 The previous Chapter set out the purpose of the research and the methodology used to inform the report. This Chapter sets out the background to parish councils and the objective of introducing parish plans. It then outlines the implications for parish plans of recent national policy and the findings from recent research on neighbourhood and community working. The policy changes point to a supportive policy environment for parish plans and parish councils, but the research highlights a number of challenges for those working to engage mainstream services at the local level.

Background to parishes

2.2 Parish and town councils (local councils) are the first tier of local government. They are democratically elected and have a precept raising power. There are currently around 8,700 parish and town councils in England and approximately 80,000 councillors in England.[5] Over 15 million people live in communities served by parish and town councils nationally, which represents about 35% of the population.[6] Local councils are very broad in their range of characteristics and functions. Some have electorates of just 200 people, whilst the largest represents 70,000 people. Some are little more than representative forums whilst others contribute to service delivery (for example youth services, warden schemes, CCTV) and community leadership.

The objectives of parish plans

2.3 Parish plans were introduced in 2000 to enhance community participation in the planning process. They were part of the White Paper, *Our Countryside: The Future*[7]. The Rural White Paper committed the Government to establishing Parish Plans. This took shape as a key component of the Countryside Agency Vital Villages programme. Parish Plans were very successful and well received, with nearly 3,000 parishes becoming involved in just four years.[8] The 4-year programme and funding was administered and delivered by the former Countryside Agency. It enabled the development of more than 1,000 parish plans across the country.

2.4 Since April 2006, DEFRA has supported parish plans through the Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP), under which it provides £13.5 million

5 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-councils.htm

6 http://www.nalc.gov.uk/About_NALC/About_NALC.aspx

7 A full bibliography can be found in Annex G.

8 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-planning.htm

per annum for local activities.[9] DEFRA also made £1million available to support parish plans in the interim year between this current new programme and the changes to the Countryside Agency in April 2005.[10] According to a review undertaken by ACRE for the Cabinet and HM Treasury, 1,300 parish plans across England had been produced by 2006.[11]

2.5 The White Paper envisaged parish plans playing a part in the statutory planning process, including being adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), which due to changes in planning law, was subsequently replaced by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). However the plans offer an opportunity for the planning system to gain local knowledge, so that planning applications and decisions can be sensitive to local needs and views.

2.6 Parish plans also cover a wide range of issues associated with public service delivery and general well-being. Research[12] shows that plans were developed with a variety of expectations about their purpose and who they could influence and what they could achieve. In essence they are community documents setting out local concerns. They do not always prioritise planning issues, or even mainstream services, for example, some focus on local community responses to local community needs. However, many are holistic documents that set out needs to be met by mainstream services.

National policy context

2.7 This section outlines some of the recent policy changes that will affect the 'forces for change' in support of parish, community and neighbourhood working. It looks in particular at the Local Government White Paper. It asks what was in the White Paper, what did it say about neighbourhoods and community empowerment.

What was in the Local Government White Paper?

2.8 The Local Government White Paper emphasised:

- Strong & prosperous communities
- Responsive services and empowered communities
- Effective, responsive and accountable local government

9 The RSCP will run until March 2008.

10 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-planning.htm

11 Joint Cabinet and HM Treasury Review, ACRE, 2006

12 C Hughes and D Chesterman, *Assessing the Impact of the Parish Plans Grant Scheme*, Countryside Agency, 2005.

- Stronger cities, strategic regions
- Local government as strategic leader and place-shaper
- A new performance framework
- Efficiency – transforming local services
- Community cohesion.

2.9 The challenge for parishes and parish planning is how to ensure other agencies are confident that an empowered local tier of governance and planning can improve an area and public services.

What did the Local Government White Paper say about neighbourhoods and community empowerment?

2.10 The White Paper addresses the extent to which many people feel remote from local systems of governance and disconnected from local-decision-making. It recognises a need for local people to be 'empowered' to influence changes in their area and public services. This is a challenge to which parish/community plans can respond.

2.11 To support the aim of empowered communities, the White Paper highlights the need for improved support for citizens, community groups and local authorities it provides a significant opportunity to further the role of parish/community plans. There is also recognition in the White Paper that capacity within local authorities needs to be improved in order to engage with communities and raise their awareness of the opportunities available for involvement.

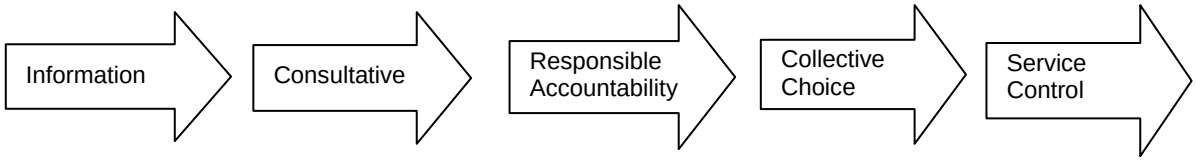
2.12 The White Paper sets out the prospect of:

- new powers for citizens and their local councillors
- local charters, setting out agreements about standards in the local area
- Community Calls for Action
- local authorities giving councillors small budgets to deal with local problems
- the promotion of the principles of neighbourhood management and join-up with neighbourhood policing teams
- increased opportunities for local communities to take on the management or ownership of local facilities and assets
- increased role for parish councils – with community governance reviews, which could lead to the establishment of a parish council, triggered by petitions of local residents.

2.13 These proposals build on *Citizen Engagement in Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*, which set out the levels of involvement (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2-1 Spectrum of responsibilities

Less responsibility **More responsibility**



Simply facilitating communication between service providers and the citizens in a neighbourhood	More formal mechanisms for consulting communities about services (e.g. to resolve problems and make best use of resources)	Representative and democratic forms which service providers are obliged to consult and/or account to (e.g. deliberative forums)	For example, choosing on behalf of a community between service options available from a provider or council	Empowerment to control service delivery (e.g. by commissioning additional services) Likely to be over very local services.

What did the White Paper on Local Government say about parish councils?

2.14 Parish councils are addressed in Chapter Two of the White Paper, which stresses their contribution to local democracy and management, and promotes them as a valuable tier of government. It proposes the extension of parishes. It also proposes to use the Quality Parish scheme[13], to build confidence in parishes among principal authorities, and suggests expanding the power of well-being to all parish and town councils, which satisfy the Quality Parish scheme. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill contains allowances for parishes to define themselves as community, neighbourhood or village councils. It also contains calls for community governance reviews (to be triggered by petitions); these reviews may spread parish arrangements to more areas and communities.

What did the White Paper on Local Government say about partnership working?

2.15 The White Paper discusses in some detail the need for partnership working, particularly with regard to LSPs and the development of LAAs, LDFs and Sustainable Community Strategies (SCSs). It acknowledges that the democratic legitimacy of local authorities naturally gives them a leading role. However it stresses that local authorities should not have a monopoly on

13 refer to glossary in annex h for definition. more information can be found on the defra website - http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/quality_parishes/guidance/chapter_2.htm

leadership and that they have responsibility to work constructively with the full range of local partners. The extension of the duty to consult in the preparation of LAAs and SCSs and the expectation that this will involve parish councils, opens up a potential channel for influence for parish/community plans.[14]

What did the Local Government White Paper say about Local Area Agreements?

2.16 The White Paper states that there will be:

- a single set of (around) 200 national indicators against which all partners in an area will report, these will focus on outcomes, rather than inputs or processes
- around 35 improvement targets for each local authority area (excluding the 18 statutory education targets)
- local targets will be agreed and managed locally
- progress will be reported to central government on the basis of the four 'blocks':
  - Children and Young People
  - Safer and Stronger Communities
  - Healthier Communities and Older People
  - Economic Development, Environment and Culture.

2.17 Subsequent guidance has indicated all areas will have a new LAA along these lines by June 2008.

2.18 The challenge for local authorities and their partners will be how to reflect neighbourhood level issues in either the 35 targets agreed with central government and/or in locally agreed targets.

State of current knowledge on neighbourhood working

2.19 In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of research on neighbourhood working – looking at the functions carried out at the neighbourhood level, governance arrangements, and neighbourhood working's impact on mainstream services. This builds an understanding of the

14 Part 5 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill puts a duty upon principal authorities to consult their partner authorities and 'such other persons as appear to be appropriate' in preparing their draft Local Area Agreements. It does not specifically mention parishes, but they could be involved in such deliberations.

functions that they can carry out, the factors affecting the impact that they can have, and the role of councillors. This section draws, in particular on *Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance*,[15] which was published by DCLG in 2006.

How big is a neighbourhood?

2.20 Work on 'neighbourhoods' indicates that the term is usually applied to one of the following:

- the streets and blocks of about 50-300 residents, where association, informal social control and mutual aid are key governance tools
- 'home neighbourhoods' or proximity neighbourhoods of c. 500-2,000 residents bringing together a few blocks
- public or strategic neighbourhoods of 4,000-15,000 residents where more structured governance starts to make sense[16]
- neighbourhood partnerships – for example, neighbourhood management covering a range of populations, from 5,000-20,000 people.

2.21 Parishes run from 100 or fewer people to 70,000.[17] A broad swathe of parishes falls within the population sizes of what has been termed neighbourhoods. Therefore, much of the research on neighbourhood working is likely to resonate for those working on parish plans.

What functions are carried out a neighbourhood level?

2.22 There are a range of functions that can be carried out at the neighbourhood level. *Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance* identified the following functions:

- providing a space for the people of an area to come together
- levering in resources to the area
- budget management
- furnishing local intelligence and advice to service providers

15http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/115/ExemplarsofNeighbourhoodGovernance_id1504115.pdf

16 The first three bullets are taken from Hilder (2005) Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The evolving landscape for neighbourhood arrangement, The Young Foundation.

17 County Councils average populations of around 500,000 to 1,500,000, while district councils average populations of around 100,000.

- consulting the public on changes in or to the neighbourhood
- consulting the public on changes in a district that may affect a neighbourhood
- responding to consultations by other stakeholders
- over-sight and provision of neighbourhood management initiatives
- designing and planning facilities/amenities, physical changes and service delivery in the neighbourhood
- advising mainstream providers on the commissioning of facilities and/or services
- commissioning facilities and/or services for some or all of those living in the neighbourhood
- acquiring land, assets and amenities
- co-production of services and/or outcomes in neighbourhoods
- delivering services in the neighbourhood
- managing and maintaining facilities/amenities located in the neighbourhood
- assisting in the performance management of services delivered by others in the neighbourhood.

2.23 Parish councils can (and do) carry out all of these functions. Parish plans, in particular, can help to lever in resources, bring people together, provide local knowledge to mainstream providers, consult on changes in a neighbourhood, and assist in the performance management of services delivered by others.

How do different services respond to neighbourhood working?

2.24 There has been much work looking at how mainstream services respond to citizen engagement and neighbourhood working. At the basic level, the relative catchments of different facilities in urban areas can act as a guide as to which services are likely to lend themselves to neighbourhood working (Table 2-1). These figures do not easily translate to rural areas.

Table 2-1 Facilities and the number of households they serve[18]

Facilities	Number of households
Primary school	1,000-5,000
Doctor's surgery	1,000-1,200
Corner shop	800-2,000
Group of shops	2,000-4,000
Post Office	2,000-4,000
Small local park	2,000-5,000
Community centre	2,800-6,000
Frequent bus services	4,000-6,000
Health centre	3,600-4,800
Library	4,800-12,000
Public sports facilities	15,000-25,000

2.25 *Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance* found the following mainstream services demonstrate most benefits from neighbourhood working:

- Housing management – including wardens and 'super caretakers'
- Environmental services – including parks, street cleansing, graffiti and waste
- Community safety – including policing.

2.26 Other mainstream services, such as education and planning, while important to local well-being have not proved to engage with neighbourhood arrangements on a consistent and/or effective basis. These service providers often prefer to operate on an area basis, rather than a neighbourhood basis (often below ward level). In the context of parishes, this may point to the need for 'clustering' of parish plans, in order to provide the links to mainstream providers at a scale they can work at.

What's the role of the ward councillor in neighbourhood working?

2.27 The Local Government White Paper highlights the importance of elected members and much of the work on devolution and neighbourhoods has sought to promote community leaders.

18 Anne Power, Liz Richardson et al, (2005) A framework for Housing in the Thames Gateway Vol. II, London: LSE.

2.28 Locally elected representatives are likely to become increasingly important for the development and implementation of local plans – whether developed at the parish level or via some neighbourhood or community-based approach. Therefore, those seeking to deliver parish plans will have to establish more positive working relationships with local ward members of they want to progress the plan in future. Furthermore, some parish councillors are also elected to one or more tiers of local government, which provides the parish with a vertical link into other tiers of local government. However, in some cases parish and ward councillors may experience some friction, as to who is performing the local community leadership role. Any friction will need to be addressed by establishing clear roles and responsibilities in an area.

2.29 It has been argued[19] that there are two key roles for the ward councillor:

- a community advocate who encourages resident participation and advocates for the area to the council and service providers in order to effect neighbourhood improvement
- a community leader who not only advocates for local concerns but who is also a local broker.

2.30 There are many tasks to be carried out within those two broad roles, including :

- engaging with, and on behalf of communities
- influencing and communication
- strategic and service planning to achieve outcomes
- service management, scrutiny and evaluation
- negotiating and brokering
- partnership working
- monitoring and enforcement
- representation and casework.

2.31 The challenge for the local authority and its partners is to ensure there is clarity over members' roles and that neighbourhood/community/parish arrangements enable them to exercise the roles effectively in partnership with those seeking to implement the parish plan – whether they be elected officials or volunteers.

19 Jane Foot and Ines Newman (2006) The neighbourhood agenda and the role of the elected member IDeA: London.

Summary and conclusions

2.32 This section has set out the context in which parish councils and parish plans operate, the salient features of recent policy changes, in particular, the Local Government White Paper and findings from research on neighbourhood working. It has indicated that the policy framework is broadly supportive of neighbourhood/parish plans. It has also indicated that neighbourhood level working has tended to focus on a number of services based around catchments and those services that require particular local knowledge in order to function well. It has also suggested that the role of locally elected officials is likely to be increased in the coming years and that therefore those seeking to implement parish plans and integrate them in the mainstream will have to work more effectively with local politicians. In this regard, it has suggested local parish and ward councillors may need to agree roles and responsibilities to ensure clarity for local people.

2.33 The next section sets out the findings from our primary research.

3: The development and integration of parish plans

3.1 This chapter presents the main findings of the review of secondary sources and the primary research undertaken for this project. Where appropriate, references are made to specific case studies to provide illustrative examples of the issues being raised.

Development of parish plans

3.2 Research revealed that organisations, agencies and groups that are included in the preparation of parish plans varied considerably. Some organisations were always represented during the development phase. In addition, there was relative consensus amongst those consulted that certain players' participation is a prerequisite for a parish plan's success and its subsequent integration with wider systems of governance.

Dedicated parish plan development group

3.3 According to national guidance, parish plans should be developed by a dedicated voluntary community group. This practice was confirmed by the literature review and stakeholder consultations. The case studies highlighted that such groups have varying levels of formality, for example, some parishes, such as the case studies of Oxenhope, Parson Drove, and Cornhill in Berwick-upon-Tweed, established formal committees. While, the committee in Brilley, Herefordshire, identified leads on particular subjects.

3.4 A bottom-up process was generally considered by stakeholders to be a positive approach that helped to secure community ownership of the final plan. There was a fairly consensual view that residents should take responsibility for instigating and then leading the development process. It was particularly successful when the incumbent parish group was characterised by strong internal capacity and enthusiasm for the process. The parish of Dalston in Cumbria, for example, commented on the benefits it reaped from a very dedicated and pro-active team.

3.5 Some parishes, including the case studies High Bickington, Benson and Oxenhope incorporated other community and voluntary groups, such as, Age Concern and youth groups, in the development of their plan. This helped to extend the level of community engagement. In Berwick-upon-Tweed, Community Action Northumberland (CAN) was heavily involved in the development of parish plans within the district, whilst Voluntary Action

Cumbria (VAC) provided expert facilitation to the Upper Eden Community Plan Group.

3.6 Community questionnaires, open meetings, exhibitions, community conferences, workshops and the drawing together of steering groups were some of the mechanisms used to reach out to the community. Particularly highlighted as getting people involved were 'planning for real' exercises with, for example, community visioning and 3d models. There was no clear 'right mix' of methods, however, it was clear that a range of methods used over time was a successful way to ensure a good level of participation.

The parish council

3.7 Notwithstanding the national guidance setting out the need for a dedicated plan group operating outside the parish council, some stakeholders observed that it was difficult for parish plans to be successful without the support and involvement of the parish council. In Grenoside, for example, the parish council was identified as a catalyst in the development process, while in High Bickington the parish council was instrumental in obtaining a £5,000 grant from the Vital Villages initiative, which enabled a formal parish plan to be drawn together. However, a significant point raised during the workshop session was that the national guidance on parish plans deterred parish councils from getting involved in the process and, as such, many have been wary about assuming a prominent role in championing the plans. However, a common stakeholder observation was that, even if involved with the development of the plan, parish councils should not be charged with leading the process (except in a minority of cases where this is the only feasible option due to the small size of the parish).

The local authority

3.8 The necessity to engage the local authority in the parish plan process, right from the inception stage, was acknowledged by all. This was not only seen as fundamental to successful parish plan development, but also to integration of the plan thereafter. It was commented during consultations that this is the only way in which to give parish plans teeth. The involvement of Torridge District Council and officer support was regarded as highly advantageous by High Bickington and the Atlantic Partnership cluster in Devon.

3.9 The types of local authority departments engaging with parish plan groups varied, depending on the issues to be addressed and the authority's internal structure and capacity. Some parishes benefited from the involvement of a planning officer, for example in Eden; while for others, engagement was via the regeneration department, for example, Parson Drove. Those parishes that

were furnished with a single point of contact at their local authority described it as a significant benefit to them.

3.10 Some consultees, during stakeholder interviews and the workshop, suggested single-tier[20] authorities were more conducive to effective integration than two-tier[21] local government, as the two tier system can be more challenging due to the effort required trying to marry together the multiple priorities of different tiers of local government. However, county councils were sometimes perceived as remote and less willing to participate in parish issues than districts or single tier councils. This view, however, was by no means universal.

3.11 There were examples of county councils being actively involved in parish plan issues, indeed several successes identified the case studies were in two-tier areas. County council involvement was often where the issues were 'strategic'. In Benson, for example, Oxfordshire County Council's involvement was secured on transport issues, which are clearly a pan-county consideration. Other county councils recognised parish plans' significance. For example, Kent County Council employs a dedicated link officer to support the process of parish plan integration, while Shropshire County Council has taken the lead in organising meetings between neighbouring parishes around the common issues identified in their plans. Devon County Council has also been extremely proactive as Box 3-1 illustrates.

20 Refer to Glossary in Annex H for definition.

21 Refer to Glossary in Annex H for definition.

Box 3-1 Good practice example – High Bickington, Devon

The initial impetus for the development of High Bickington's parish plans stemmed from a desire of Devon County Council to find ways of involving local communities in the regeneration process, as well as ensuring that there was a 'best value' approach to the use of publicly owned resources. In partnership with Torridge District Council and High Bickington Parish Council, Devon County Council agreed to the development of a 'pilot project' (High Bickington Project 2000) in which the local community were to be involved in planning for the disposal and subsequent redevelopment of the County Council owned farm at Little Bickington – land that had recently become vacant on the retirement of its tenant. The aim was that the local community would plan in a way that added social value to the capital released from the farm as well as building capacity for education, employment and economic prosperity within the local community on the site. This process started in 2000; the planning application for the land at Little Bickington Farm was submitted in November 2003 and was approved unanimously by Torridge District Council in April 2004.

3.12 The research found that the overall quality, volition and commitment of the local authority were more important than the particular local government structure operating in the area. In order to secure local authority buy-in, which is essential for effective mainstreaming of parish plans, there must be leadership at both political and senior officer levels.

3.13 At the same time, to maximise the likelihood of successful integration it was acknowledged, at each stage of the research, that local authority officers and planners require some degree of training in how to work best with the community, so that views and priorities set out in parish plans can be taken on board. One way to do this is to show local authorities examples of where and how things are working and some of the tangible benefits and outcomes that can result from working with parish plans. This is one way to incentivise them to embrace the parish planning process.

Rural Community Council

3.14 The RCC can provide invaluable technical assistance to parish groups to help the development of parish plans. This support can lead to plans being of higher quality and more credible to local and regional partners.

3.15 To date, according to those consulted in the research, views of RCCs' effectiveness varied from county to county. Several parish groups have been able to access support and guidance from their relevant RCC, for example

Benson, Grenoside and Eden. However, experience in Long Bennington, Lincolnshire, was less positive with some difficulty in engaging the RCC. In Devon it was noted that, whilst the RCC had assisted with the development of the Atlantic Partnership, a cluster of five rural parishes situated in the north-west corner of Torridge District in North Devon, its actions were not reported to be particularly co-ordinated with other agencies and the RCC was reported to be unaware of some county and district council activities.

Mainstream providers

3.16 Examples of mainstream providers engaging with the parish planning process were limited. All of the parishes in the case studies sought greater involvement from mainstream providers, and in one case study, identified in the literature review, the Commission for Rural Communities found that service deliverers were completely ignorant of parish/community plans.[22]

3.17 Certain services are more involved than others. The police, in particular, have been regarded as generally quite willing to get involved if invited to participate – perhaps linked to its move to community and neighbourhood policing. Engagement by the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Education Departments, however, has been far more limited. Several interviewees for the case studies also mentioned that closer working with the relevant planning authority would have been helpful in structuring the plan and ensuring its alignment with the more strategic planning policies.

3.18 However, the infeasibility of mainstream service providers' direct involvement with the preparation of all parish plans was generally acknowledged. This being said, there still remained a need for them to have an input into the plans and awareness of their development. In order to achieve this, several consultees suggested that the LSP should take a lead in joining-up mainstream service providers and parishes with parish plans. They also suggested an LSP coordinator could perform the link function – identifying the key people that need to be consulted on the specific priorities proposed for a parish plan.

3.19 The Long Bennington parish plan steering group was perhaps the most successful case study in securing the widest range of stakeholders in the development process (Box 3-2).

22 National Demonstration Projects on Local Strategic Partnerships and Rural issues, Commission for Rural Communities, 2005

Box 3-2 Good practice example – Long Bennington, Lincolnshire

The production of Long Bennington's plan was driven by a parish plan steering group consisting of local residents. Stakeholders involved from the outset included the Parish Council, South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) planning department and the local district councillor, with the Chief Executive of SKDC and the Head of Planning also attending public meetings. Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, Highways Agency, Police, local land owners and industrial estate land owners were also involved during the development of the plan. The planning department in particular was very helpful from the outset[23], commenting on early drafts and advising on the structure of the plan

3.20 Thus, in the development process, parish plan groups can provide an excellent way to engage local people in discussions about their area. The groups, however, need their own internal resources and they need support from outside, such as input from voluntary sector groups, the parish council and the local authority or, in the case of areas with two-tiers of local authorities, local authorities. There is no easy formula for success, with some groups aiming to address local issues not directly related to mainstream service provision, while others choose to focus on specific issues rather than develop a holistic plan. However, where parish groups do wish to influence mainstream service providers and the planning system, means need to be found to ensure parish groups are aware of the requirements of mainstream providers and mainstream providers need to be aware of individual parish concerns.

Quality and layout of plan

3.21 As well as the quality of the development process, the quality of the end product, that is the parish plan, affects its impact on mainstream services. Plans have most impact on agencies when there is a clear link to their own work. One community in Derbyshire has taken the step of relating each element in its action plan to the LSP's priority themes, to the Derbyshire Community Strategy, and to elements of the National Park's Management Plan, so that their priorities are easily legible for mainstream service providers.

23 This being said, the parish plan has not been integrated within the planning system. The original intention had been for the plan to be adopted as an (SPD); however the parish has been informed that due to delays caused by changes in the planning system, the district council (SKDC) would be unable to consider the plan as SPD until the summer of 2008.

3.22 Similarly, a plan will only be incorporated into planning documents if it is consistent with existing policy and genuinely adds local detail to the information already available and clearly distinguishes the planning elements of the parish plan from the other components.

Extent of integration

3.23 The previous section looked at the development of parish plans, in order to see how that part of the process affected integration. This section looks in more detail at the extent to which parish plans have been integrated by mainstream service providers and which services have made most progress.

General awareness and relationships

3.24 Overall, in the case studies, stakeholders were confident that their plan had helped to raise awareness of community objectives amongst mainstream service providers. It was confirmed in the consultations, that mainstream providers appreciated the value of parish plans' concise presentation of community needs and desires. Where parish plans work well, they serve as an unprecedented consultative tool and, with high response rates, provide a robust local evidence base.

3.25 A key outcome identified by many case studies in two-tier areas was the improvement of relationships with district and county councils. In some areas dialogue with various agencies, such as the police, water companies and the Environment Agency had also improved, although there was little in the way of hard outcomes, at this early stage of the integration process.

3.26 In Brilley, where the parish plan focused on the environmental agenda, success has been experienced in raising awareness of the negative impact of climate change, with Herefordshire Council taking on board local concerns. The parish group did acknowledge, however, that this has also been assisted by growing media coverage of the issue over the past year or two.

Planning

3.27 The extent of the integration of parish plans within the planning system is variable. A few positive examples emerged from the case studies, these are summarised in Box 3.3.

Box 3-3 Positive case study examples of integration with the planning system

Upper Eden Community Plan Group (Cumbria) – the UECPG had notable success at a local level, having developed a very strong relationship with the local planning authority, which is well aware of its concerns and works closely

with the group. The local planning authority is hoping to support the parish plan by funding the sustainability appraisal which is required if it is to become part of the formal planning framework.

Parson Drove (Cambridgeshire) - the parish plan stated a desire for affordable housing and requested that applications for larger housing developments would not be granted permission. Both of these priorities have been taken on board by the planners at Fenland District Council – although the provision of affordable housing will be through Registered Social Landlords rather than low-cost housing for sale, which was the preference of the parish committee. In addition, the Districts' Planning Policy Manager has acknowledged the role that the parish plan can play in the development of the LDF and the consideration of planning applications.

Brilley (Herefordshire) – in Brilley the parish plan has achieved modest success in challenging aspects of the County's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The parish plan Chair negotiated exceptional clauses through the public enquiry and consultation meeting with the UDP body to secure affordable housing, suitable for young local people, in order to prevent the 'shrinkage' of the village and the exodus of young people due to the lack of affordable accommodation.

Wolverton (Milton Keynes) – the parish developed two Development Frameworks for regeneration, which were submitted to the Cabinet of Milton Keynes Council, and were endorsed in 2004 and subsequently developed into Supplementary Planning Guidance in September 2004. The priorities included within the frameworks have been largely integrated into Milton Keynes' wider planning and regeneration framework and have been integral to the physical improvement of Wolverton and Greenleys.

The Atlantic Partnership (Devon) – the Atlantic Partnership's plan included an objective around affordable housing. This is beginning to become more integrated as the Partnership has been working closely with Torridge District Council to ensure that their plans not only fit with, but actually feed into, the LDF. At strategic level in Devon the parish plan has also been integrated by the County Council, which views parish planning as an important strand of community planning.

In addition, Devon County Council and Torridge District Council have worked together alongside other local authorities in Devon with the South West Regional Development Agency and the Rural Communities Council to develop the Bridges project to promote and support parish planning across the County. This aims to help develop plans for all parishes by the end of 2007. The plan is to input key information from these plans into a Community

Planning Database, identifying common problems and issues and enabling mainstream agencies to interrogate the data and plan strategically in accordance with local needs. This planning tool also has a benefit for parishes as they are able to look at and learn from solutions identified by other parishes nearby.

3.28 Elsewhere, however, experience has not been as positive. Several comments were made about the poor integration of parish plans with the wider planning system and the limited influence achieved to date. Some parish groups reported that their plans were being virtually ignored by local planning departments and thought that the plans had little more weight than a residents' petition. Box 3.4 identifies the difficulties experienced by some of the parish case studies.

Box 3-4 Negative case study examples of integration with the planning system

Oxenhope (Bradford) - the parish has been unable to integrate with the planning system, which it regards as skewed towards urban, rather than rural needs. Comments were made about changes to planning legislation and the way in which they impeded the plan's potential progress.

Benson (Oxfordshire) - although South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) has rejected a planning application on the basis of Benson's parish plan, there is no indication that it will take the plan into account when considering long term development issues. Benson's parish group regard the plan to be of little worth in terms of planning, having not been integrated with the planning system.

High Bickington (Devon) - Whilst the High Bickington parish plan has achieved some success, integration has been hindered by the complexities of the planning system. A development proposed within the plan had the full support of both officers and councillors at district and county levels. However, as it was developed separately from the Local Development Framework (LDF), it had to progress as a separate planning application and required Government Office approval because it represented a departure from the local plan. The application was subsequently rejected.

Dalston (Cumbria) – the plan proposed designs for regenerating the town square, making recommendation on parking arrangements and traffic management. Although this was a chief objective within the plan, the proposals have not been prioritised by Carlisle City Council, neither was the desire to have the plan adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance realised. This failure to obtain adoption has led to community disengagement.

While Carlisle City Council, as the Planning Authority, provided some support to the plan but it did not take 'ownership' of the process. One of the consequences of this was that the final plan did not conform to the planning regulations and was rejected by Government Office for the North West.

Long Bennington (Lincolnshire) – the parish plan has not been integrated within the planning system. The parish was informed that due to changes within planning legislation, South Kesteven District Council will not be able to consider the plan as an SPD until 2008. Although, theoretically SKDC could endorse the plan for decision making purposes, it would be nervous to do so. Since production of the plan, planning permission has continued to be granted for developments that the community feels are inappropriate. Moreover, at a parish meeting two senior planners confirmed they do not consult the parish plan. However, that SKDC is considering using parish plans as part of the robust evidence base for its refreshed LDF.

3.29 On the whole, parish plans are having difficulty being accepted as a long term developmental tool. A point made in the case studies, and confirmed by the other strands of research, was that where planning decisions have been made on the basis of a parish plan, they tend to have been a one-off or incidental, rather than systematic and integrated. Legislative changes were highlighted as a significant contributory factor behind the difficultly in integration with the planning system – these are discussed in more detail below.

Mainstream services

3.30 There was a degree of consensus that parish plans are far from being integrated into mainstream services as a matter of course, and where there have been modifications to mainstream agendas, it not always clear whether these were attributable to the parish plan or other factors. Consultees made comments on the variety of different agencies that could and should have regard to parish plans. A summary of the points is set out below.

Environmental services

3.31 Several case studies reported positive experiences with their local authority's environmental services department. Oxenhope and Ilkley both found that Bradford's Parks and Recreation Department has been pro-active. The Department sees parish planning as a useful tool in identifying community needs and a source of evidence for its own work. It also provided advice on parish planning design and on funding avenues. In Grenoside, where the

parish group has been successful in getting a park refurbished, Sheffield's Park and Woodlands Department was seen to be very responsive. Although, it was noted that funding was available for such work, and the parish group was not certain the refurbishment was directly attributable to the plan. The relative success of parish plans in engaging local environmental services chimes with the findings on neighbourhood management, where physical environmental improvements have often been part of 'early wins'.

3.32 While relations with the local environmental services have generally been positive, on a strategic level, engagement of the Environment Agency has been far less fruitful; attempts have been met with little success.

Police services

3.33 The case study parishes generally indicated positive relations with police services – with more regular dialogue and contact having taken place, for example, in Grenoside and Oxenhope. This is in line with much of the research on the synergies between neighbourhood management and neighbourhood policing. However, often there was a lack of tangible action due to the absence of additional resources, as was the case in Benson. Long Bennington and Parson Drove have both developed good working relationships with the police and have secured dedicated Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) resources for the parish.

3.34 It should also be noted that some parishes acknowledged their status as low-crime areas – which was the explanation behind their local police service's reluctance to divert funding and resources to fit with parish plan priorities.

Highways and transport

3.35 Highways issues were a common priority for local communities. However, this was not always matched with appropriate engagement from highways departments. Some parishes did acknowledge that highways departments found it useful to be made aware of local issues and priorities – even if they were not able to act upon them. Modest improvements to local community transport services have been witnessed in some of the case study areas, for example, increases in bus and train services in High Bickington; potholes were addressed in Benson; modest reductions in speed limits and other service improvements in Brilley and traffic calming measures in Long Bennington.

3.36 However, the picture is by no means consistent, as elsewhere transport departments have ignored parish plan objectives, for example, in Grenoside. Thus, with regard to transport and highways the evidence suggests responses

tend to have been selective and sporadic rather than systemic. Although where a cluster of parishes highlight an issue, responses can be made at a strategic level.

Health authorities, Primary Care Trusts and General Practitioners

3.37 PCTs do not appear to have a consistent strategy for responding to very local community needs and were often criticised by stakeholders in the case studies for not recognising or taking account of 'rural issues'. The case studies found that parish groups have found it virtually impossible to engage PCTs, even where health services were a parish plan priority. Although some plans did make a difference, for example in Ilkley, Bradford, facilities for the elderly have seen improvements. And GPs have been engaged at the parish level, even if the strategic partners have been largely absent.

3.38 RCC brokerage has been helpful in engaging with PCTs. Where they have been involved PCTs have tended to get involved at the action plan stage, rather than from the outset, as early engagement at a very local level has not been easy to resource, especially at a time of change within PCTs.

3.39 Some learning from urban neighbourhood management, where health services appear to have been more involved, was suggested by some interviewees; however, this may relate to a. funding and b. departmental requirements for PCTs to engage with certain initiatives, such as the New Deal for Communities, rather than the success of particular techniques used by groups in urban neighbourhoods.

Education

3.40 There was little evidence of education departments diverting resources or planning at the parish level. For example, in our case studies, Education Bradford had not engaged with the Ilkley parish group over its school places priority. Whilst evidence of involvement at strategic level is minimal, case study work found that local schools have demonstrated a positive approach to participation.

General progress on all fronts

3.41 It was not often that parish plans saw progress across all fronts. Of all the case studies undertaken, Parson Drove provided the most comprehensive achievement of objectives and secured positive responses from many mainstream services.

Box 3-5 Good practice example – Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire

A number of Parson Drove's parish plan objectives have now been delivered in collaboration with mainstream service providers:

- Environment – the District Council has implemented several measures to deliver a cleaner environment, such as paying for the emptying of rubbish bins (the new bins were paid for by the Parish Council), providing a rubbish collection vehicle for use on a street pride day, and the provision of rapid response teams to deal with bad cases of general waste and dog fouling.
- Communication – Fenland Links has provided funding for extra notice boards at the village hall, printing quarterly parish newsletters and directional finger signs around the village. Together with the County Council, Fenland Links has also funded a 'community access point' in the pavilion building. The District Council has funded a welcome pack for new residents.
- Older people – Citizens Advice Bureau now provide an outreach service in the village, while the Parish Council is required to fund the building in which it is provided.
- Police – the police appointed two PCSOs to cover Parson Drove in order to increase the police's presence and visibility. (Although this isn't entirely to the parish's satisfaction due to the reduced powers held by PCSOs by comparison with regular police officers.)
- Street lighting – the District Council and the County Council have contributed funding for a particularly expensive set of street lights.
- Adult education – Skills for Life courses have been put on in the village by the College of West Anglia. However, for budget reasons, these have been discontinued and relocated to Wisbech.
- It is worth noting one caveat here. Despite the evident success, the Parish Action Plan Committee pointed out the actions delivered by mainstream service providers were those that required the least funds. By contrast, the parish plan actions requiring more substantial funding, such as improving road surfaces, providing NHS dentistry and improving the response times of the emergency services, have not been delivered.

Local Strategic Partnerships

3.42 LSPs have the potential to provide a co-coordinating forum for the articulation of parish priorities and many consultees thought that – if properly resourced –

they could provide the means to join-up parish plans and the plans of mainstream providers. This may extend to parish representation on LSPs.

3.43 The Atlantic Partnership in North Devon, which is a cluster of five rural parishes, has produced an overall community plan. The partnership has succeeded in securing far greater contact with the LSP and its different partner organisations than was previously the case. The Partnership Chair has a seat on the LSP, as well as direct meetings with the LSP Chair and County and District officers. Although it is still regarded as too early to judge the extent of mainstream change, there is confidence that this process will lead to service providers modifying and revising their delivery agendas.

Summary conclusions

3.44 Overall, it appears that parish plans have not changed the way in which services are being delivered or commissioned, neither have they altered the deployment of staff or resources to a significant degree. In short, it appears that parish plan objectives do not represent a priority for most mainstream providers relative to other calls on their time and resources, although there are examples of impact, they are not systematic. Changing this environment and culture is not an easy task, which will require a better understanding of the barriers to integration and the critical success factors. These issues are addressed in more detail in the next section.

4: Enablers of and barriers to integration

4.1 The previous section set out the basic findings on the development and the integration of parish plans with mainstream local government. This section draws on the case studies and the literature review in order to identify some of the main success factors for the integration of parish plans in the mainstream. These factors inform the final section of the report, which outlines the issues for central government, local partners and parishes to address and makes recommendations on how they might address them.

Enablers and points of good practice

4.2 This sub-section outlines factors. Where appropriate, it also highlights good practice examples from which lessons can be learnt.

Early involvement of service providers

4.3 Engaging planning authorities and mainstream providers from the start of the parish planning process is a good way to ensure a plan's priorities are integrated by mainstream providers. This was supported by the literature review, where the message came through that early liaison can prevent parish plans becoming and being seen as 'wish lists'.

4.4 If the key agencies are involved with the generation and evolution of ideas, it is easier for them to respond to them. Whereas consultation, once the plan has been finalised, is often too late. Furthermore, early involvement means mainstream providers may be able to accommodate parish plan priorities in any upcoming decisions or resource allocations.

4.5 LSPs were highlighted by consultees as a likely key channel through which to engage service providers in the future; with protocols potentially providing a means to inform and engage mainstream providers at the appropriate point in a plan's development.

4.6 With regard to the planning system, early engagement of planning officers can increase community understanding of the planning system, signpost parishes to relevant sources of advice and enable officers to provide guidance on the necessary content and structure of a plan. In this way, there is more certainty that a quality document will be produced (Box 4-1). Again, this comes with the

warning against local planning authorities trying to dominate the process – it should remain community led.[24]

Box 4-1 Good practice example – Long Bennington, Lincolnshire

In Long Bennington, although parish plan priorities have not yet been integrated, the plan will be adopted by South Kesteven District Council in 2008. The help and guidance given by the planning department at the point of producing the plan ensured that it is in an appropriate format and included the correct information to make this possible.

4.7 Early involvement can be beneficial for the planning authority, as well as the parish group. Receiving early warning of key local issues allows planners to integrate them into the formal planning processes at the appropriate time.

Good quality guidance and support

4.8 Consultees argued that effective guidance and support can enable parish groups to develop realistic expectations and reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding and frustration between parish groups, parish councils and other mainstream providers.

4.9 For parish groups, clear guidance (and in effect specialist support) on planning is a necessary condition for the successful integration of the plan into the planning system (Box 4-2).

Box 4-2 Good practice example – Upper Eden Community Plan Group, Cumbria

UECPG used an experienced consultant with a planning background to drive the plan forward from a position of relative authority. It also received expert best practice guidance from the Voluntary Action Cumbria, which explained ways in which issues had been resolved or responded to in other Cumbria parishes

4.10 The literature review uncovered further examples where the provision of guidance, brokering and support led to positive outcomes in the integration process. For example, in West Berkshire the Local Strategic Partnership funds a Parish Planning Development Worker. It also has a Parish Plan Grant

24 A well-timed parish/community plan could have a greater chance to influence policy if it informed a development plan in its formative stages or during review. However, it should be noted that some local planning authorities have expressed concern that a commitment to the proposals contained in one or more parish/community plan could reduce their scope for decision making when reviewing development plans.

Fund of £150,000 to help develop projects resulting from Parish Plan Action Plans.

4.11 In terms of guidance, it is worth noting that, in spring 2007, led by the South East RCC, ACRE produced a Parish and Community Planning Toolkit, which is being piloted in 800 areas. The parish plans reviewed in this study were not able to benefit from this toolkit. However, it does provide refreshed advice for future community groups. Box 4-3 highlights its content and purpose:

Box 4-3 Good practice example – ACRE Parish and Community Planning Tool Kit

The toolkit was produced in 2007 and is being piloted in 800 areas. The toolkit is being developed to assist groups in the development of parish and community plans. It promotes the benefits of local plans and provides refreshed and detailed guidance for communities considering embarking on the process. It is designed to ensure that plans produced are robust, well structured and, also based on sufficient levels of community consultation. Quality is the overriding objective. The toolkit prescribes the involvement of a dedicated community development worker in order to advise on plan development and to 'authenticate' the consultation procedures undertaken.

The Toolkit includes a nine step process, which it suggests community groups should follow and provides advice sheets for each stage. These steps are outlined below:

- Getting Started – who to involve, how to engage and consult the community, suggested timescales, avenues of advisory and financial support, topics to feature as plan priorities.
- Establishing the Steering Group – ways in which to establish this, ideas for working groups.
- Developing a project plan – a checklist of steps for community groups; a detailed overview of the type of objectives to include depending on individual parish circumstances and local needs; consultation advice and tips; budgeting and funding advice.
- Community Consultations – ways in which to engage the community, consultation techniques, who to talk to; advice on questionnaires and analysis of results.
- Prioritising and action planning – how to prioritise objectives; advice on sustainability.
- Drafting the plan – structure and format of plans; making the plans reader-friendly and consumable.
- Finalising the plan – including circulation guidance.
- Implementing the Action Plan – ideas on how to see action on plan priorities.
- Monitor and review – suggestions relating to the need to monitor progress

on an annual basis.

The Toolkit also provides information on liaising with the different tiers of the local government and highlights the spheres of policy making which parish plans can hope to influence, such as LAAs, LSPs and LDFs and their chances of being able to do so.

The ACRE publication is a detailed, informative guidance document, which will provide community groups with invaluable advice on developing their parish plan. Its emphasis on community leadership and suggestions on the ways in which to engage and consult the community are particularly strong. It also provides a comprehensive list of topics that communities can consider including in a plan, helpfully moving thinking away from the perception that it must be exclusively spatial planning document. Its advice on funding and resource streams is also very useful for parishes.

However, the guidance does not particularly stress the importance of liaising with the local authority or mainstream service providers and involving them at the outset. This issue frequently mentioned as a critical success factor during consultations with existing parish plan groups; retrospective engagement was not regarded as an effective and as such should perhaps carry more weight in the Toolkit. Similarly, whilst some of the suggestions for implementation and integration with mainstream services concur with the findings of this study, they may require expansion to provide clear, tangible advice to parishes. Finally, it is worth noting that parish action is only one part of the jigsaw in terms of securing integration of objectives with mainstream service provision. Action also needs to be taken by both local and national government for change to be substantive and long-term. It might be worthwhile reflecting this more in the Toolkit so as to keep expectations realistic.

Structured procedures for the integration of parish plans

4.12 Local authorities and other mainstream providers need to be aware of the status of different parish plans and their subsequent action plans, so that they can plan to address and respond to them on an individual, geographic or thematic basis. Several stakeholders mentioned ways to improve access to information and the co-ordination of activity.

4.13 A number of consultees referred to the need for a database that integrates the priorities of all parish plans in an area. This would enable planners and mainstream providers to construct an aggregate picture of what local communities find important and allow everyone to monitor progress on meeting local priorities. Such a database was pioneered in the South East and has been taken on in the East of England and Yorkshire and the Humber. It aims to provide a systematic way of gathering, categorising and analysing data and issues identified by local community planning and presenting them in a way that is helpful to officers and professionals. For example, by structuring data on the basis of the Audit Commission's Quality of Life Indicators. The

database is capable of being interrogated at parish, district, county and regional level and can be used to feed into the planning of mainstream service provision.

4.14 A similar approach has been initiated in Devon, where a Community Planning Database is being developed to gather information from parish plans across the area and enable the identification of common issues to inform the development of clusters.

4.15 However, it should be noted that databases don't necessarily provide the definitive answer to problems of information and co-ordination, as they tend to be retrospective; and, as noted earlier, evidence suggests that if mainstream providers are approached after, rather than before the event, they are often less responsive than if involved 'upstream'. In addition, databases require maintaining and financing. These issues need to be addressed if the tools are to be embedded in the mainstream and the parish planning system.

4.16 The literature review revealed that other types of formal procedures for dealing with parish/community plans can also be beneficial. Essex RCC, for example, has developed a county-wide protocol with local authorities on how to promote parish/community plans and incorporate the results into wider strategies. This practical procedural approach would be reinforced, rather than replaced by a database. Furthermore, Cornwall operates a parish plan Action Group, which involves agencies, and the case studies found other examples of parishes integrated in to the work of LSPs, such as the process in Bradford.

A single point of contact for parishes

4.17 Consultees highlighted that a single point of contact at district or county level, with responsibility for receiving parish plans and drawing up a strategy for dealing with them, was a significant factor supporting the flow of information, the co-ordination of activity and demonstrating an authority's commitment to take the parish planning process seriously. The contacts provide feedback to parishes, so they are aware of progress. Brilley, for example, has benefited from Herefordshire County Council's recruitment of a Parish Liaison Officer for these purposes.

4.18 The desirability of having a single point of contact within the local authority was confirmed by the literature review, which identified three main functions of a dedicated liaison or community development post:

- to *work within the council* to integrate and adapt internal processes that help to deliver the actions described in community generated parish/community plans

- to describe and *report* those processes *to partners*
- to *act as animateur* within the area's parishes for the development of parish/community plans.

Funding for developing and implementing plans

4.19 Good quality, 'fit for purpose' parish plans come from an investment of resources – much in voluntary time and expertise, some from public finances. The active implementation of parish plans comes from local people's commitment to acting on the plan, from the use of resources being made available to fund projects and by influencing the provision of mainstream services.

4.20 Many consultees argued for more funding to ensure the development and implementation of plan objectives was sustained. It was indicated that some local authorities view parish plans as a cost effective way to get detailed information, based on robust consultation and, therefore, provide funding. Furthermore, some local authorities are beginning to allocate a share of their budget to help implement parish plans and/or support community projects. For example, in Devon, elected members have a 'pot' of money (approximately £8,000) to help meet the County Council's priorities, and it is often the case that the money is used to develop a parish plan or support its priorities.

An holistic and inclusive approach

4.21 The vast majority of those consulted commented on the need for parish plans to be both robust and holistic in their approach. If the parish plan is based on a single issue or is 'one-dimensional' it will not engage many stakeholders and tends to be viewed as the product of a lobby group. Plans are seen as most effective when they achieve the horizontal integration of issues, incorporating the social, economic and environmental agendas.

Separation of the planning agenda

4.22 A salient message that emerged from consultations was that parish plans should not be viewed purely as a planning document. The real value of community plans is wider than planning – they should be about the provision of community services, by and for communities and should look to influence the agendas of LSPs, LAAs and local services. This is a point also well made in ACRE's recently produce Toolkit, which comments:

"Parish and Community Plans should be comprehensive, considering all social, economic and environmental issues of concern to the community."[25]

4.23 It is difficult for local planning authorities to adopt holistic parish plans, as they cover such as wide range of issues. A suggestion made by some of the case studies was the separation of planning priorities from the other, more community-service oriented, objectives.

4.24 A separate chapter on planning issues – developed in consultation with a planning department – makes it more likely that a local planning authority will respond positively to a parish plan. Dalston's advice was to manage the production of the parish plan and the Village Design Statement (VDS) separately. Similarly, South Kesteven's planning department advised the parish group in Long Bennington to split the plan into a VDS and a Development Initiatives Report, to make it easier for the planning department to digest the parish's view. This was echoed by ACRE's Toolkit, which talks about the limitations of using a VDS as a parish plan. It specifies that "a VDS is different from a parish plan in that it only focuses on the spatial aspects of the community."[26]

Realistic objectives

4.25 While parish plan groups should not be restricted in what they consider, the successful ones recognise the importance of ensuring their plans include realistic objectives.

4.26 It was suggested during fieldwork that the guidance provided to community groups should manage expectations. Such an approach links plans to evidence and helps build their credibility with mainstream providers. One example of the pragmatic approach is Parson Drove, where the parish plan committee concentrated its initial efforts on those actions that could be achieved more readily – those that cost the least. This advice, again, is found within the 2007 ACRE Toolkit. It points out that "Getting what you want from service providers may not be as simple and easy as just making a good case. It is important to realise that local authority budgets are not unlimited. It may involve changing or influencing." And further recommends that often momentum can best be maintained when parish groups "work first on quick wins or starting off work on a hot issue that people will get involved in as they care about it."[27]

25 Parish and Community Planning Toolkit. ACRE, 2007.

26 Parish and Community Planning Toolkit. ACRE, 2007.

27 Parish and Community Planning Toolkit. ACRE, 2007.

Clustering

4.27 Clustering can take place prior to or after parish plans have been developed and is an approach that is often been adopted by neighbouring parish groups. An example of the former approach comes from Devon where very small parishes, with little capacity and resources, combine to write a plan. The latter approach can be facilitated by a local authority or by parishes themselves, and involves sharing concerns and approaches, once local communities have identified their priorities.

4.28 Two of the case studies looked specifically at clustered parish arrangements – The Atlantic Partnership in Devon and the UECPG in Cumbria. Both of these examples were able to highlight the benefits of the approach (Boxes 4-4 and 4-5).

Box 4-4 Good practice example – The Atlantic Partnership, Devon

The Atlantic Partnership in Devon consists of five parish councils - Clovelly, Hartland, Parkham, Welcombe, and Woolsery Parish Council – in a sparsely populated rural area. It has produced a charter on which to base its membership and methods of working. It has also selected a Chair to represent the Partnership at Torridge District LSP meetings.

The Atlantic Partnership has produced a "Community Plan for 5 Parishes" (currently in 'Draft Final' form) based on the individual parish plans developed by each of the five parishes. The plan does not intend to "supplant the individual efforts of the parishes" but rather "it aims to draw together similar threads and highlight individual nuances". In order to develop a common set of priorities, the different issues and priorities raised in each plan were analysed and the different subjects and priorities were assessed. From this the Partnership was able to create a list of key issues on which to base further action, discussion or input. This list is not 'fixed', and other issues can be added as they become more important or deleted as they become less of a priority.

It has a clear idea of the issues and priorities and is in a position to influence the principal authority and other agencies to bring about a sustainable improvement in local conditions.

Box 4-5 Good practice example – Upper Eden Community Planning Group, Cumbria

The 'cluster approach' was seen as being a key form of good practice being applied in Upper Eden. There was genuine recognition about the benefits

deriving from forming the group and having a joint plan. These included:

- 'Bringing a wider community on board' – this was important as many of the smaller bodies within the UECPG would have had insufficient capacity to develop a plan on their own. The cluster approach, therefore, has pulled them into the parish plan process. The spatial area for the UECPG was described as being a 'natural' geography for planning and service allocation.
- More efficient use of engagement time – Voluntary Action Cumbria stated that they have to dedicate more time and effort to UECPG than they would to a single parish approach, but, that this time and effort allocated was much less than trying to engage in 17 parish plan processes. This efficiency factor was also made by the local planning authority who stated that it allowed them to respond in a more structured way and gain a better appreciation of local needs and issues.
- More influence – it was felt that sharing common needs would be a critical success factor of the plan in the future – Partners (and in particular, the LSP) felt that the parish bodies coming together under a single umbrella plan added weight to their chances of achieving a change in service provision.

4.29 Further clustering examples were identified in the literature review. For example, in the Caradon District of Cornwall there is a Parish Plans Action Group, which is chaired by a member of the LSP. The group produces reports that contribute to the Community Strategy.

4.30 The utility and effectiveness of pre-plan clustering seems to be dependent on the size of the parishes involved – with pre-plan clustering a necessary condition for the production of plans for very small parishes.

4.31 Post-plan clustering enables parish plan groups to lobby mainstream providers as a group, giving them more weight than if they acted alone. It also makes it easier for mainstream providers to work with parishes, as it reduces the resource commitment required to engage, and, if the clustering highlights common themes, it can successfully inform strategic service delivery. Indeed, it would appear that the clustering of parish plans appears to be a necessary condition of systematically engaging with those mainstream providers that plan on the basis of large areas, in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Focused implementation groups

4.32 It was reported throughout the research that following completion of the parish plan, there is often uncertainty as to who should be charged with responsibility for ensuring its implementation.

4.33 Progress was made most consistently where there was an established view on how to take steps locally to implement the plan and/or a means of holding mainstream providers to account. In Parson Drove, for example, a Parish Plan Action Committee, separate from the parish council was established. This was regarded as important because the parish council had other issues to attend to, which could distract its attention and energies away from plan priorities.

4.34 Mainstream providers may also develop forums through which parish plans can be progressed (Box 4-6).

Box 4-6 Good practice example – Bradford Metropolitan District Council

In Bradford, the Council has been pro-active in embracing the parish planning process. A Parish Council Liaison Group has been established, chaired at Executive Level by the Council, and including all five Area Committee Chairs, Parish Councils and senior level planning officers.

Adoption by the parish council

4.35 An important point, articulated during the case study phase and at the stakeholder workshop, was that parish plans must be adopted by the relevant parish council in the first instance. Without this local endorsement, the plan will lack credibility with local authorities and other mainstream service providers. Once the parish council has adopted the plan, it starts to be part of the local government system, for example, in Benson, where the parish council has formally adopted the parish plan, one councillor has been charged with ensuring progress and chasing up implementation.

4.36 ACRE's 2007 guidance reinforces these sentiments:

> *"The parish council should adopt the plan having agreed to the final draft. Your parish council can acts as champions for the plan in liaising with the local authorities and any other service providers … It is important to ensure that progress on the parish plan implementation is an item on each parish council meeting agenda …"*[28]

28 Parish and Community Planning Toolkit. ACRE, 2007.

Local authority buy-in

4.37 Just as it is essential that the parish council adopts the plan, it is also vital that the local authority is committed to ensuring parish and community plans make a difference. This commitment needs to be at political and officer level and it needs to come from the top. Thus, the quality of the principal authority's approach to local community engagement and community planning, as well as the capacity of its staff to engage effectively with local communities is vital, if parish plans are to be effectively integrated into the system of local governance and service planning. The nature of the integration may then vary, for example, via area committees, as in Sheffield, representation on the LSP, as in Cornwall or separate action groups.

LSP buy-in

4.38 Arguably, plans will have most impact on agencies when there is a clear link to their own work. Many consultees expressed the view that parishes needed to engage with LSPs and, as these partnerships grow in stature, it is likely that in order to be systematically effective the parish plan process will have to interact with LSPs. One positive example of this did emerge from the case studies: Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council sees parish plans as integral to community involvement and they have been used to inform the Community Strategy and community plan. The literature review revealed that one community in Derbyshire has taken the step of relating each element in its action plan to the Local Strategic Partnership's priority themes, to the Derbyshire Community Strategy, and to elements of the National Park's Management Plan.

Barriers to integration

4.39 This sub-section sets out the key findings on the barriers to integration experienced by those working on parish plans, in order to inform local delivery and recommendations to key stakeholders.

Lack of local authority buy-in

4.40 The literature review reinforced the point that successful integration is dependent on the commitment of the local authority; indeed, many studies highlighted the need for a commitment across the council to build neighbourhood and parish engagement into decision making if mainstreaming of local plans was to be effective. A frustration among groups, with regard to the degree to which issues are picked up from the community plans, was highlighted. Some groups have received no acknowledgement of the plans they have sent to local authorities. Where an acknowledgement has been

received, has often been no follow up. In some cases, authorities have withdrawn from promoting the use of parish/community plans in their own planning because they lack the necessary resources. Council officers were also found in some cases to perceive the actions emerging from parish/community plans as extra work.

4.41 A number of consultees noted local authority officers, especially at district level, could demonstrate a desire to retain 'control' and were therefore reluctant to promote parish planning for fear it would challenge their influence. Furthermore, there was a view that elected members and officers could be suspicious about priorities generated at a grass roots level, rather than through the authority's strategic planning process. The view was expressed that there is sometimes a tendency to operate in 'municipal mode', in other words, adopting a 'we will consult approach', rather than encouraging communities to take the lead for themselves.

4.42 Of course, there are many instances where councillors sit on parish, district and/or county councils. This multi-role approach provides the opportunity for some vertical integration between parish and upper tier authorities. Furthermore, there are authorities, such as Bradford in our case studies, where the upper tier authority promotes parishes as a corporate policy; however, this level of commitment is the exception rather than the rule.

Insufficient service provider engagement

4.43 Effective engagement of public sector service providers is essential if parish plans are to influence decision-making over time. The engagement may need to be in the development stage of the plan, for example, where legislative requirements have to be met if a plan is to have bite; or it could be in the action plan phase, as was the case with some of the health work, where PCTs were unable to resource engagement in processes that may or may not relate to health outcomes, but could respond to specific health related issues.

4.44 However, where parish plan groups have not engaged or have tried and failed to engage mainstream providers it has been difficult for the plan to have influence 'downstream'.

4.45 The literature review highlighted four broad categories of barriers to neighbourhood/parish working amongst service providers:

- **Economic factors**: The costs and risks of working at neighbourhood level to engage service users and the wider community tend to be short term and are seen by service providers as significant. The benefits, on the other hand, are perceived as longer in coming, uncertain and not easily quantified.

- **Skills and capacity constraints**: Lack of skills, experience, and a culture of neighbourhood working could lead to lack of confidence in the ability to get started without incentives for mainstream providers to do so.

- **Structural factors**: Some service providers, for example, social services and Connexions are more traditionally focused on client groups, rather than spatial areas and others, such as GPs and JobCentre Plus (JCP), may operate with incentive structures that make a neighbourhood focus difficult to manage.

- **Organisational inertia**: A tendency toward established mechanisms may well stifle the opportunities to examine alternative options for service planning, commissioning/delivery and monitoring at smaller spatial scales. Previously prevailing management and performance measurement systems have tended to constrain the emergence of neighbourhood/parish level arrangements that engage service users and communities in the design and/or the delivery of services.

4.46 It is worth noting that doubts have been raised as to the ability of strategic providers, such as health and education agencies, to plan their provision at the micro level. In such circumstances, LSPs were often identified as the means to engage mainstream providers in the parish planning process. But there was little evidence of this happening in practice.

Random timing of the completion of parish plans and partial coverage

4.47 As well as vertical integration between the priorities and decision-making processes of the different tiers in the local governance system, the timing of when information and priorities is made available is an important aspect of influencing mainstream service providers.

4.48 At present, local authorities, LSPs and mainstream providers receive parish plans and their priorities on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore, over time the form and content of plans has altered. All of this makes it difficult for local authorities and other agencies to identify what plans are saying and to integrate them in planning and decision-making cycles. At the moment, there is no easy or systematic way with which to incorporate parish plans into mainstream process at timely and opportune moments. Also, only about one-third of communities have produced plans, and some authorities fear they may show bias if they pay more attention to areas with plans, relative to those without them.

4.49 Parish plans are community documents and mainstream providers cannot take over the planning process to meet their needs rather than the wishes of local communities. Thus, an element of uncoordinated activity is probably an inevitable part of the process; however, protocols could set out how local authorities and public service providers would endeavour to respond to parish plans over time.

Lack of co-ordination with other strategies

4.50 Not only are parish plans often produced 'out of sync' with each other, but their development timetables rarely relate to the planning timetables of mainstream providers. An LDF, for example, has a set chronology with particular windows of opportunity where parish plans can influence the agenda. Parish plans are not always attuned to this process, which can limit their influence.

4.51 Due to the difficulties experienced in integrating parish plans with the planning system, many consultees questioned the wisdom of focusing on planning; instead they see the potential synergies between parish plans and sustainable community strategies. However, consultees were fairly unanimous in their view that neither parish nor neighbourhood plans had been particularly well integrated with community strategies or LAAs to date. At best, it was commented there has been a top down process where parish /community bodies may have been asked if the strategy developed is satisfactory, rather than a bottom up approach with the parish/community plan playing an integral role in informing the wider community strategy. The tight timetable for agreeing LAAs suggests that there will remain tensions between the parish plan process and the timescales of central government, LSPs and mainstream service providers.

4.52 The lack of synchronisation between parish plans and the plans of mainstream providers is not conducive to effective integration; however, the development process of parish plans is rushed at a cost to community engagement, so a degree of misalignment may well be inevitable.

Constraints on parish influence in the planning system

Top-down nature of the planning system

4.53 The planning system is characterised by national policy prescription. This can often constrain the scope of local planning authorities to respond to local community desires. Communities often believe that parish plans will give them a substantive voice, but national and regional policies and objectives, rather than parish plans set the priorities of local authorities. The number of targets

that local authorities are required to meet also diverts time and resources away from working to integrate parish planning in the planning system. In effect, local planning authorities 'look up rather than down' with regard to planning. As such, the actions of a local planning authority are currently guided more by the relevant RSS and national policy than by parish plans. In fact, the literature review identified the fact that in many cases there are no formal mechanisms for the parish/community plans to be considered in district and council policies,

4.54 Furthermore, few parish plans are 'fit for purpose' in that they do not conform to what is required under the rules applying to LDFs, for example, often not meeting sustainability criteria. As such, their formal incorporation in the planning system seldom happens in practice. Where there is conflict between parish and other plans, parish plans do not have supremacy leaving parishes feeling that their plans are 'at the bottom of the pile'. The top-down planning culture can lead to parishes and communities feeling disenfranchised or disempowered.

Changes to planning legislation

4.55 In 2004, Supplementary Planning Documents superseded Supplementary Planning Guidance. In order to be adopted as an SPD, parish/community plans need to include a sustainability appraisal. Sustainability appraisals are proving to be both complex and expensive, and the requirement means that parish plans are not 'adoptable' without a significant commitment from parishes and/or mainstream providers.

4.56 The planning system is still in flux and this tests the relationships that have been developed between parishes and local planning authorities. For example, in Long Bennington the changes have meant delays to the parish plan being adopted into the formal planning framework (it is due to be incorporated in 2008).

Insufficient resources to develop and implement plans

4.57 The lack of financial resource, for both parishes and mainstream providers, was an issue cited as a barrier to more effective integration, both in terms of the resources available to develop parish plans and to implement them.

For parishes

4.58 Resources are required to ensure that enough time, thought and consultation activity are invested in the parish plan process. At present, only RCCs are providing active support to parish councils, but the availability of funding is

limited, particularly when compared with the number of parishes that require support.

4.59 In addition, parish plans now face the additional technical hurdle of undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal if they are to influence the planning system. This can be expensive and therefore acts as a disincentive to communities to develop plans to inform the planning system.

4.60 However, if funding is provided, the source and requirements need to be clear and straightforward, if it is to be successful – for example, the Dalston parish group commented that the multiplicity of sources from which funding could be obtained, can actually act as a hindrance to the development of a plan, as too much time can be spent on trying to get assistance and not enough on developing the plan.

For local authorities and service providers

4.61 Problems regarding funding impinge upon service providers as well as parish groups and councils. District councils' planning departments are anticipating possible resource problems in dealing with parish plans and especially those that are seeking to be adopted as part of SPDs. Meanwhile, for service providers, greater funding or a re-direction of funding may be required if resources are to be dedicated to the process of integration and made available to accomplish community priorities.

Issues with the provision, awareness and quality of guidance on parish plans

4.62 Comments were made by consultees about the provision of parish plans guidance. Some felt that there was insufficient guidance on how to do parish plans, some thought there was a lack of awareness of the guidance that was available, others argued that some of the guidance was unhelpful and still others argued that in many cases it was community development support that was required, rather than guidance, as such.[29]

Unhelpful guidance

4.63 Some consultees noted that previous guidance produced by the Countryside Agency was quite misleading in that it encouraged turning parish plans into SPG; planners were effectively being asked to turn an entire parish plan into SPG – including elements that had no relevance to spatial planning. The hangover result of this is that many planners are now quite negative towards

29 ACRE produced new guidance in 2007.

parish plans, and the real value of community plans, in terms of looking at all services of concern to communities, was often overlooked.

Guidance for parishes

4.64 During the case studies, many parish consultees commented on the complexity of the task involved in parish plan production. 'Official' documents and data were often difficult to understand and there felt like an expectation that individuals, who do not have specialist experience, will produce a plan that is compliant with statutory requirements. Acronyms such as LDFs, LAAs and LSPs often mean very little to parish groups when they embark on a parish plan – they are galvanised by community issues and concerns, but are not necessarily equipped with adequate knowledge about where to focus their efforts to ensure these concerns are addressed.

4.65 The research revealed several cases where lack of guidance and/or a lack of awareness about guidance prevented the adoption of parish plans for planning purpose (Box 4-7).

Box 4-7 Difficulties conforming to planning requirements

Dalston (Cumbria) – although Carlisle City Council recognised local development issues and the aspirations of the community – the structure and technical content of Dalston's Village Design Statement led to the document being rejected by Government Office. Therefore, it does not have any statutory influence on planning within the parish.

High Bickington (Devon) - a planning application for land at Little Bickington Farm, a key constituent of the High Bickington parish plan, was submitted in November 2003 and was approved unanimously by Torridge District Council in April 2004. However, in December 2004 it was called in for inspection by the Government Office because it was outside the development line and a departure from the local plan. In January 2006 the subsequent planning enquiry commenced and a negative decision was given in May 2006 on the basis that the proposed development was outside of the development line.

4.66 The repercussions of this are twofold. First, the plans do not carry enough weight to achieve parish objectives. Second, the failure of plans to secure formal incorporation into the planning system can breed a sense of disenchantment and disillusionment amongst the community. Increased guidance was called for, if parish plans were ever to influence the planning system, and ACRE has responded with new guidance, being piloted in 2007.

Guidance for local authorities

4.67 It is not always clear how local authorities were to respond to parish plans – along with other neighbourhood and community plans. And in some instances, the plans were seen as an additional burden on the authority, rather than as tools that could relieve some strain on officer and member time and lead to more tailored and efficient local services. There was a lack of awareness of the potential mutual benefits of the parish planning process which guidance could have reduced. The rural beacon councils (West Buckinghamshire, Bradford, Shropshire and Somerset) are now developing a web based tool kit for local authorities. It aims to help local authorities make better use of parish plans.

Parish plans seen as wish lists and NIMBY statements

4.68 A key barrier to the integration of parish plans into wider systems of local government is that plans can sometimes be seen to amount to nothing more than wish lists or 'Not in my backyard' (NIMBY) statements, which mainstream service providers not only cannot, but should not act on. It was commented that this can often be the result of a lack of 'hands on guidance', as to what makes a good plan, as well as an absence of relevant local authorities and other service providers. There is a need to avoid this in future, and there is still a need to alter perceptions of plans among some mainstream providers.

Insufficient community capacity and commitment over the long term

4.69 The parish plan process is reliant on voluntary time. It is not uncommon, therefore, for parish groups to suffer from reluctance to participate among potential volunteers and 'burn out' during the development of a plan, given the commitment required. Therefore, lack of initial interest and 'burn out' are issues to address if a plan is to be successful.

4.70 Furthermore, it can be difficult to sustain volunteers' engagement at all stages of the process: from development through to implementation. Enthusiasm to contribute to the process will more likely to be sustained when residents feel action is being taken. Ensuring regular progress reports are produced for the community, on the extent to which their priorities are being pursued, was suggested as a way to maximise community involvement. It was also suggested that a succession plan may be required, as people interested in 'doing' may not have been interested in engaging in the planning stage, so might need to be engaged 'downstream'.

Communication failures

4.71 Communication between parishes and mainstream providers is generally regarded as inadequate, if there is no formal structure or process through which it can occur. In many cases, it is not clear who to speak to, whose remit it is to take issues forward to the LSP, who holds information about local services and who should be responsible for ensuring delivery of parish priorities once identified. This lack of clarity hinders the integration of parish plan priorities in the mainstream.

4.72 A high turnover of local authority personnel can exacerbate this problem, making it difficult for parishes to achieve consistency in contacts with the council. This was a problem encountered in our case study in Brilley, but applies more widely. Many consultees felt a clear point of contact and communication channels at local authority level – district and county or single-tier – could ease integration.

Political rivalries can jeopardise local action

4.73 The potential for party political rivalries to cut across the delivery of specific parish or neighbourhood plans was suggested, for example, areas represented by minority political groups could lose out on the allocation of resources. The case studies, however, did not find sufficient evidence to make strong points on this issue.

Summary of the issues raised

4.74 The research has uncovered a number of enabling factors which ease the integration of parish plans with wider systems of local governance and mainstream service delivery. Several of these are the responsibility for parishes to ensure themselves, such as involving the right people at the right time, adopting a holistic approach to parish planning, keeping expectations realistic, developing a forward plan to implement objectives and securing adoption by the parish council. Other identified enablers, however, lie with local authorities and other agencies, including the provision of timely and quality advice, developing a structured procedure to receive parish plans and securing staff and political buy-in.

4.75 Similarly, there are a number of barriers to the integration of parish plans in the planning system and the wider systems of local governance and service delivery. Some of the barriers relate to the plan development process, such as a lack of resources in communities and public sector partners to participate fully in the process. Other barriers relate to the legislative and institutional environment, such as changes in planning regulations that make it difficult for

parish plans to have an impact. The evidence points to particular difficulties with engaging some service providers due to the fact that they do not plan spatially or at the level of the neighbourhood or parish.

4.76 The evidence also suggests there are particular problems of communication and co-ordination:

- information comes in to mainstream providers from parishes in an ad hoc fashion, which makes it hard for mainstream providers to digest and respond
- parishes are not always aware of mainstream providers priorities and timetables, which means they cannot influence them effectively
- parishes are not always aware of the requirements mainstream providers have, if a plan is to influence them, which means some work is nugatory, and which in turn leads to frustration.

5: Recommendations

5.1 The research has identified a number of factors that may support or hinder the integration of parish plans with the mainstream local government system – it has also found that the barriers are often the mirror image of the enablers. This section sets out in tabular form the issues to be addressed and the recommendations for central government, local government and local public service providers, and parishes. The issues are drawn from the enablers and barriers and the recommendations are either based on good practice identified by the research or stakeholder consultations.

Table 5-1 Issues and recommendations

Issues	Recommendations
Early involvement of service providers to ensure engagement of key public services and to gain their 'buy in'.	**Recommendation for government** - DEFRA and DCLG should issue a joint statement outlining the utility of parish and community plans in tailoring services to local needs. This should encourage local authorities and other service providers to both engage with parish plan preparation and give plans more weight in their decision-making processes. **Recommendation for local authorities and mainstream providers** - For parish plans to be effective in bringing change at the local level, local authorities and other service providers should work with the process, rather than seeing it as a challenge to their own authority. **Recommendation for parishes** – Parish groups must ensure that contact is made with local authorities, LSPs and mainstream providers, requesting their engagement from the outset. Should parishes want to include a planning dimension in their plans, they should seek involvement from planning officers at the outset and the final output should form an identifiably separate section in the plan, in order to ease its absorption by the relevant planning authority.

Issues	Recommendations
Good quality guidance and support to enable plans to be structured in a way that allows mainstream service providers to identify the issues in a plan and to enable parishes to understand the structures and processes that local service providers operate.	**Recommendations for government -** Guidance should be provided by government for local authorities and mainstream services to stress the utility and importance of integrating parish plan objectives into their agendas. The guidance should provide advice to all relevant authorities on mechanisms of integration, such as a parish plan database, clustering of parishes, and parish representation in LSPs; it should set out expectations of how LSPs should work with parish and community plans. The refreshed guidance should also reflect changes in the planning system and the implications of the Local Government White Paper for parish plans.
Structured procedures for integrating parish plans to manage the difficulties associated with the unpredictability of the timescales at which plans will be developed and the problems associated with co-ordinating responses to plans.	**Recommendations for local authorities and mainstream providers** – maintain a database of parish plans and their priorities in order to provide access to information for all mainstream providers and to enable parishes and mainstream providers to identify common concerns.
A single point of contact for parishes in local authorities to improve communications from local authorities to parishes and vice-versa.	**Recommendations to local authorities and mainstream providers** - Local authorities and LSPs should establish a single point of contact, to liaise with parish groups and to advise mainstream providers, how to work with parish and community plans. Local authorities and LSPs need to identify the role (or potential roles depending on local circumstances) of the ward councillor in assisting the development and/or implementation of community and parish plans. This will be particularly important as the role of ward councillors develops in line with the Local Government White

Issues	Recommendations
	Paper of 2006.
Funding for developing and implementing plans to enable parishes and other stakeholders to build the capacity to deliver the different elements of the plan.	**Recommendation to government** – Government should work with national, regional and local stakeholders to identify the most appropriate way to ensure any new plans have the resources required for their development and that the support is available to ensure the plans are quality documents that are seen to be the product of a robust process. **Recommendation to local authorities and mainstream providers** – Local authorities and LSPs should consider making resources available to support the development and integration of parish plans, as a cost effective way of consulting and engaging the public and gathering information on local concerns. Possible ways in which to do this include: • the establishment of a community development team to provide support to those working on parish and community plans – this may be within the council or as part of an LSP secretariat • the maintenance of a database of all parish plans and their priorities – to ease access to information for mainstream providers and to enable parishes and mainstream providers to identify common concerns • the allocation of some money to locally elected members to fund local priorities **Recommendation to parishes** – In order to show their own commitment to the development of refreshing of parish plans and to demonstrate the community's belief in the added value of a plan, parish councils may need to

Issues	Recommendations
	consider using their precepting powers or revenue raised from charges for services to help develop plans.
An holistic and inclusive approach to parish plans	**Recommendation to parishes** - In order to ensure the parish plan is given due consideration by local authorities and other agencies, parish plan groups should ensure the process for producing the plan is robust and engages all parts of the community. The final document needs to be clear about what it wants from whom and why, with a diverse agenda that can be democratically supported. This may best be done via a quality assurance process that enables parish plan groups to document what they did and how it affected the final plan or it may be done via an external judgement, for example, from the RCC or its designated agent.
A practical approach to planning is required if parish plans are to influence the 'top down' planning process	**Recommendation to parishes** – While parish plans should not be seen primarily as planning documents, where planning issues are addressed they should be based on guidance from planners and be treated separately, for example, in design statements that respond to the requirements of the planning process.
Realistic objectives to build momentum on delivery and credibility among stakeholders and to tackle negative perceptions of parish plans as 'wish lists' and NIMBY statements.	**Recommendation for parishes** – Parish plans should be aspirational, but they also require 'actionable first steps'. In order to build momentum and confidence at local level and in mainstream agencies, parish groups should focus on achieving 'quick wins', which require minimal resources.
Clustering to improve co-ordination of plans and mainstream providers' response to them.	**Recommendation for local authorities and mainstream providers** - Local authorities and LSPs should consider the merits of

Issues	Recommendations
	'clusters' of parishes and/or joint meetings of parishes and service providers to drive the integration of parish plans in the ways that mainstream providers operate. **Recommendation for parishes** - In order to generate sufficient lobbying capacity, parishes should consider the option of forming a cluster, or working in partnership with neighbouring parishes, to pursue their aims, particularly where there are common priorities. This may also make it easier to deal with mainstream providers, who will gain economies of scale from acting with larger groupings.
Focused implementation groups to take the work of the parish plan forward.	**Recommendations for parishes** - In order to ensure there is 'follow through' on a plan, parish groups and/or parish councils should establish a dedicated action/implementation group to take forward the objectives of the plan. This may, or may not, comprise the same people as those involved in the plan's development. This group should identify the actions which the local community can respond to and those where others are required to act and working with partners, it should ensure there are regular progress reports for the community.
Adoption by the parish council as a first step of building ownership of the plan among local institutions.	**Recommendation for parishes** - As their first priority, once a plan is completed, parish plan groups should seek its formal adoption by the parish council; this is the first step to its integration with the wider system of local governance. The parish plan groups needs to emphasise the democratically developed nature of the plan and the way in which it expresses community views in order to enhance the likelihood of adoption by the parish council.

Issues	Recommendations
The limited role of parishes in LSPs and LAAs may hinder both delivery of the parish plan and the LAA.	**Recommendation for local authorities** – Local authorities should identify how parishes can be engaged in LSPs and in setting LAA targets and delivering on them.
Political rivalries need to be managed, in order to ensure the parish plan priorities are supported by all local political leaders, and thereby increase the plan's influence on local authorities and other service providers.	**Recommendation for local partners** – In order to minimise the disruption associated with local political rivalry, partners should seek to build a local consensus on the issues to be addressed and the ways to address them. Thereby bringing an element of stability to the plan.
Insufficient community capacity and commitment over the long run can limit the implementation of the plan.	**Recommendation to parishes** – when developing parish plans, groups should consider the requirements of the implementation process and identify people to lead on taking the plan forward. This may involve different people, as those interested in delivery may not be interested in getting involved in planning.

Annexes

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Annex A: Scoping discussion guide

Integrating parish plans into wider systems for local government

Stakeholder Scoping Discussion Guide

Introduction

SQW has been commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to examine the different ways in which parish plans are currently being integrated into local statutory planning and service delivery. The project will identify best practice and critical success factors and will also highlight the key barriers impeding integration where it has not been successfully achieved. We are contacting you, as a key stakeholder in order to obtain your comments on all of these issues, plus your views on progress to date and the work still to be done to achieve the vision of coherent integration of parish plans into the wider systems for local government. We intend to look at and draw on good practice examples from both parish plans and also other community plans in order to highlight the most successful approaches.

Topics for discussion

Interviewee's engagement with the process

1. What is/has been your role in relation to parish/community plans?

The objectives of parish plans

2. What do you understand the rationale behind integrating parish/community plans into wider systems for local government to be?

3. Who in your view should be involved in the preparation of parish/community plans and when and how should key services providers be engaged in the process?

Progress to date – to what extent are the objectives being met?

4. In practice how successfully have parish/community plans been integrated with local strategies to date? Please discuss this in relation to the following areas Local Development Frameworks, Local Area Agreements, Community Strategies and services plans e.g. housing, employment, education, health, transport, policing.

    a. Has integration of some plans been more successful than others?

    b. Has integration with some service plans been more successful than others?

    c. How has success been monitored/measured?

5. How successfully have parish/community plans been integrated with/influenced local services?

    a. Do parish plans influence some mainstream providers more than others?

    b. And if so why?

    c. How have parish/community plans been responded to by the planning system?

6. What processes have been used to develop parish plans? Have key local stakeholders been involved from the outset? If not, why not (have local providers been suitably consulted/ have they been responsive)? What level of community engagement has been achieved? Please cite evidence.

7. Are you aware of local and variation in integration of parish plans?

    a. Are there differences depending on whether the area is urban/rural or whether there is a unitary or two tier government structure in place?

    b. Is integration more prevalent in certain regions?

    c. And, if so why do you think this is?

8. Are you aware of any examples of best practice in effective preparation and use of parish/community plans? What makes this area particularly noteworthy?

Critical success factors

9. In your view what are the critical success factors that influence the integration of parish/community plans? (Either overall or for particular services/strategies). E.g. key agencies or organisations with which to consult, or evidence to gather?

10. Are there particular processes or mechanisms that are more effective than others in delivering integration, e.g., one-off workshops, regular forums, newsletters and surveys, public meetings etc.?

Barriers to integration

11. What do you regard as the main barriers to the integration and use of parish or community plans? (In general or in particular service areas).

12. How may these barriers be overcome? (Evidence of this).

13. Do barriers vary between differing geographical contexts?

14. How can these barriers be overcome?

15. Do barriers vary based on the institutional context, e.g., is it easier or more difficult in areas with unitary authority local government?

16. How can these barriers be overcome?

Policy implications

17. Are there any key policy or guidance documents on the use of parish / community plans to which you would wish to draw our attention? Are there any key documents, which lack adequate reference to parish/ community plans and would benefit from being amended?

18. What opportunities/threats do you think the Local Government White Paper provides for parish / community plans?

SQW would like to thank you for your support and contribution to this research.

Annex B: List of consultees

B.1 The following table provides details of the individuals who were involved in the study and the way in which they were consulted.

Table B-1List of consultees

Organisation	Stakeholder	Consultation Phase
Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)	Sylvia Brown	• Scoping consultations
Berwick Borough Local Strategic Partnership	Ross Weddle	• Workshop
Carnegie Foundation	Kate Braithwaite	• Scoping consultations
Department for Communities and Local Government	Paul Whittlesea	• Workshop
Department for Communities and Local Government	Sam Ashby	• Steering Group • Workshop
Department for Communities and Local Government	Charles Woodd Richard Blythe	• Steering Group • Scoping consultations
Department for Communities and Local Government	Patrick Akindude	• Steering Group
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Modupe Manuel	• Steering Group • Workshop
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Rose Peake	• Steering Group • Workshop
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Kate Viner	• Steering Group
Department for Environment, Food and	Annie Cooper	• Steering

Organisation	Stakeholder	Consultation Phase
Rural Affairs		Group
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Kathleen Kelliher	• Steering Group
Devon County Council	Alison Boyd	• Workshop
Devon County Council	Matt Bell	• Workshop
Government Office East Midlands (GOEM)	Jane Barratt	• Scoping consultations
Government Office North East (GONE)	Dinah Jackson	• Scoping Consultations
Government Office North West (GONW)	Martin Wood	• Steering Group
Government Office South West (GOSW)	Scott Jacobs-Lange	• Scoping consultations • Workshop
Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH)	Anna Knight	• Workshop
Local Government Association (LGA)	Mary Burguieres	• Scoping consultations
National Association of Local Councils (NALC)	David Mahon	• Scoping consultations
Oxfordshire RCC	Aimee Evans	• Workshop
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)	Louise Waring	• Scoping consultations
Commission for Rural Communities	Trevor Cherrett	• Scoping consultations
South East Rural Community Council	Jacinta Thorley	• Scoping consultations • Workshop
South Kesteven District Council (planning)	Rachel Armstrong	• Workshop

Organisation	Stakeholder	Consultation Phase
South West ACRE Network of Rural Community Councils / Devon RCC	Stephen Knight	• Scoping consultations • Workshop
University of Gloucestershire	Elisabeth Skinner	• Scoping consultations
Yorkshire and the Humber Rural Community Council	David Mitchell	• Workshop

Annex C: Literature review

Integrating Parish/community plans

Literature Review

December 2006

1. This paper presents the main findings drawn from our review of relevant literature, research reports and guidance documents. This review has been undertaken to ensure that the study builds upon the recent research and evidence about the extent and effectiveness of current practice in integrating parish/community plans and similar rural/community action plans into local statutory planning and mainstream service delivery. Documents reviewed include:

   - national policy and guidance on parish/community plans
   - guidance to planning authorities and service providers regarding the production of service plans, community engagement and parish/community plans
   - published research on the implementation of parish/community plans and its impact – to identify current views on critical success factors and barriers to success
   - case studies already produced in the literature to identify examples of good and bad practice and evidence of critical success factors and barriers to success
   - the Local Government White Paper 2006 and other relevant policy documents.

Context

Parish councils

2. Parish and town councils (local councils) are the first tier of local government. They are democratically elected and have a precept raising power. There are currently around 8,700 parish and Town Councils in England and approximately 80,000 councillors in England.[30] Over 15 million people live in communities served by parish and town councils,

30 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-councils.htm

which represents about 35% of England's population.[31] Local councils are very broad in their range of characteristics and functions. Some have electorates of just 200 people, whilst the largest represents 70,000 people. Some are little more than representative forums whilst others contribute to service delivery (for example youth services, warden schemes, CCTV) and community leadership.

Parish/community plans

3. The Parish plans were introduced in 2000 to enhance community participation in the planning process. They were part of the Rural White Paper, *Our Countryside: The Future*[32]. The Rural White Paper committed the Government to establishing Parish Plans. This took shape as a key component of the Countryside Agency Vital Villages programme. Parish Plans were very successful and well received, with nearly 3,000 parishes becoming involved in just four years.[33] The 4-year programme and funding was administered and delivered by the former Countryside Agency. It enabled the development of more than 1,000 parish plans across the country.

4. Since April 2006, DEFRA has supported parish plans through the Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP), under which it provides £13.5 million per annum for local activities.[34] DEFRA also made £1million available to support parish plans in the interim year between this current programme and the changes to the Countryside Agency in April 2005.[35] According to a review undertaken by ACRE for the Cabinet and HM Treasury, 1,300 parish plans across England had been produced by 2006.[36]

5. Parish/community plans make a valuable contribution to citizen engagement in terms of both hours and money, with the South East Rural Community Council estimating that to date, £9,012,720 worth of work and community engagement has taken place on parish/community plans in the South East alone[37].

31 http://www.nalc.gov.uk/About_NALC/About_NALC.aspx

32 A full bibliography can be found in Annex G.

33 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-planning.htm

34 The RSCP will run until March 2008.

35 http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-planning.htm

36 Joint Cabinet and HM Treasury Review, ACRE, 2006

37 Volunteer hours in community plans, South East Rural Community Council, 2006

Recent Developments

Local Government White Paper

6. The Local Government White Paper 2006 (LGWP) includes very few direct references to parish/community plans and their integration into wider systems of local government. However, some of the central messages underpinning the document and the proposals which it makes do present several opportunities to raise both the profile and influence of parish/community planning.

Community Consultation

7. There is an emphasis within the White Paper on involving and consulting communities to a far greater degree than is currently the case, to ensure that they are engaged in decisions about service provision. This represents an opportunity for parish/community plans to provide a systematic way in which local authorities and mainstream service providers raise their awareness of and responsiveness to community priorities.

Performance Frameworks

8. The White Paper promises to reduce the amount of information that central government demands from local partners and proposes a single set of approximately 200 national outcome indicators. This is potentially significant for parish/community plans. Fewer centrally imposed priorities will permit more room and flexibility for local authorities and service providers to accommodate more community related agendas. In the development of LAAs, local authorities are, indeed, required to consult with citizens and communities and are being encouraged to tailor frameworks to make them as specific as possible. This will provide an additional channel of influence for parish/community plans, which groups could exploit, if they are sufficiently aware of it.

Community Empowerment

9. The White Paper addresses the extent to which many people feel remote from local systems of governance and disconnected from local-decision-making, and the need for people to be 'empowered' and trusted to influence changes in their area and services. This is a challenge to which parish/community plans can respond.

10. To support the aim of empowered communities, the White Paper highlights the need for improved development and co-ordination of support for citizens, community groups and local authorities. This could prove significant for parish/community plans as more people will be equipped to undertake their preparation which will, in turn, be likely to increase the status with which they are viewed by policy makers. Equally, there is a recognition in the White Paper that capacity within local authorities needs to be improved in order to engage with communities and raise their awareness of the opportunities available for involvement.

11. Within Chapter Two there is specific reference about local authorities making use of parish/community plans as a way to 'consult citizens and communities about the shape of local services and policies'[38].

Parish Councils

12. Specific attention that is paid to parish councils in Chapter Two of the White Paper and it stresses their contribution to local democracy and management, and as such promotes them as a valuable tier of government. It proposes the extension of parishes. Through the promotion of the Quality Parish scheme it also gives confidence to principal authorities that parish councils are equipped with the right characteristics and are properly representative of local communities. These positive messages about parishes being a legitimate part of the decision-making process will help to give parish/community plans more credence in the eyes of mainstream providers.

13. The discussion about Local Charters, which set standards for service delivery in an area, highlights that Charters tend to be more successful if underpinned or informed by a neighbourhood or parish plans.

Partnership Working

14. The White Paper discusses in some detail the need for partnership working, particularly with regard to LSPs and the development of LAAs, LDFs and Sustainable Community Strategies. It acknowledges that the democratic legitimacy of local authorities (LAs) naturally gives them a leading role. However it stresses that LAs should not have a monopoly on leadership and that they have responsibility to work constructively with the full range of local partners. The extension of the duty to consult in preparation of LAAs and Sustainable Community Strategies, and the

38 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' - Local Government White Paper. Department for Communities and Local Government, October 2006.

expectation that this will involve parish councils, opens up a potential channel for influence for parish/community plans.

15. The following table shows the highlights the key implications of the LGWP for parish plans.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

16. This Bill[39] contains several messages of relevance to parish/community plans. The Bill contains allowances for parishes to define themselves as community, neighbourhood or village councils as mentioned in the white paper. It also contains calls for community governance reviews, which may trigger the spread of parish arrangements to a wider variety of areas and communities.

17. Importantly for parish/community plans, Part 5 of the Bill concerns the co-operation of English authorities with local partners. Specifically, it puts a duty upon principal authorities to consult their partner authorities and 'such other persons as appear to be appropriate' in preparing their draft LAAs. However, it does not specifically mention parishes.

Guidance and Research

Scope and coverage of literature

18. The South East and South West are the most heavily represented regions within the research literature. Whilst the East Midlands and East of England have received some attention, there is generally a paucity of research covering the remaining regions. Research has also tended to focus on rural areas that operate within a double tier local government structure, rather than urban parishes and parishes in single tier authorities.

19. A notable exception to the above is Milton Keynes which is the largest urban area in England to be organised into a parish structure, and is also a unitary authority. However, whilst Milton Keynes has received a fair amount of attention within the literature on parishes, research has not focussed on parish/community plans in the area and little attention has been given to the integration of plans with other strategies, planning processes or mainstream service delivery. West Berkshire, a largely rural unitary authority, has also received a fair amount of attention, and is often hailed as an example of good practice in integrating parish/community plans.

39 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, Communities and Local Government, 2006

20. Much of the literature on parish/community plans focuses on the general relationship between parishes and the different tiers of local government. There is ample coverage of what makes a good parish plan and how to achieve community engagement, as well as analysis of how well parish plan priorities align with priorities in wider strategic documents. Whilst the literature did contain good practice examples and success factors for and barriers to integrating parish/community plans into local statutory planning and service delivery, it is worth noting that this information was often buried under coverage of wider issues and required some 'digging out'.

Typical methodologies

21. The majority of the literature has taken a case study approach, looking in detail at a selection of parish/community plans from a specific geographic area. The scope of the case studies ranged from those that simply reviewed parish/community plans and interviewed representatives from communities that had undertaken parish/community plans, to those that undertook a range of in-depth face to face and telephone interviews supported by desk based research and stakeholder questionnaires. The size of studies ranged from one to 80 parishes/communities. Overall, the collective literature does include representation from a wide range of stakeholders, but the geographical coverage of studies is not comprehensive.

22. Where a case study approach was not used, literature reviews, stakeholder interviews, surveys, workshops and seminars were common. For example, in the South West, the Countryside Agency undertook workshops on the subject of mainstreaming community planning and parish/community plans which were attended by a range of stakeholders including community development and planning officers at county and district level, members of the LSP and parish councillors.

Who should be involved in the development of parish/community plans?

Preparation

23. The stakeholders most commonly mentioned within the literature are the parish council (however, the literature was not consistent on this point, with some older literature claiming that the plan group should be completely independent of the parish council[40]), the local authority, the community, the LSP, the RCC, and the local planning authority.

40 See for example 'Impact of Community Planning Processes in Derbyshire' Derbyshire Rural Community Council, 2006

24. Other stakeholders mentioned included the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Government Offices, local councillors, transport authority officers, community development workers, the Countryside Agency, special interest groups, societies and organisations, independent consultants/facilitators employed as 'planning advocates' and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Delivery

25. A similar list of stakeholders arose when looking at the delivery of parish/community plans. Specifically, these were the local authority, rural community council, parish council, the local planning authority, LSPs, and agencies, such as the police, PCTs, and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

26. Other stakeholders mentioned included local business, charitable groups, community development workers, highways authorities, local politicians, representatives from the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi), and ACRE.

Critical success factors

27. The literature reviewed identified a number of critical success factors for the integration of parish plans, these are outlined in the paragraphs below.

28. ***Support.*** One document stated 'the capacity for a community to be actively engaged in the LDF process is likely to depend on its level of access to brokering or advocate resources as much as on the good intentions of the planning authorities to engage them'[41]. There are indeed several examples where the provision of support has led to positive outcomes in the integration process. West Berkshire's LSP funds a Parish Planning Development Worker plus a Parish Plant Grant Fund of £150,000 to help develop projects resulting from Parish Plan Action Plans. Parish plans have been integrated through the LSP, which also funds a part-time parish plan officer within the Community Council for Berkshire to work with local communities. Further examples of sources of support include officers' time from the local authority, local planning authorities and rural community councils.

29. ***Training networks, workshops and information sharing forums*** have been used in several cases to build community capacity and capability to integrate their parish/community plans. For example, in the Caradon

41 Local Context Testing of RRDF Priorities for the North West, Rural Innovation, Cheshire Rural Community Council, Voluntary Action Cumbria, 2006

district of Cornwall, a parish plan Training Network was established. The purpose of this group was to share experiences in developing plans, engage in training, and to build community links on common issues. This proved to be a cost-effective way of supporting parish plan groups. In some cases, parish councillors and council officers were also invited to events, which enabled more effective engagement and gave the opportunity to discuss and agree actions under each theme of the community plan.

30. ***Local Authority Commitment and the development of formal processes.*** Many studies mentioned that success seems to occur where local authority officers are strongly committed or have a remit for community engagement. But there also needs to be a wider commitment across the council to build neighbourhood engagement into their decision making. Furthermore, having a clear point of contact makes a considerable difference to relationships. This may or may not be a dedicated parish liaison officer within the council. Where a contact exists the main tasks given to a parish/community plans officer include:

    - To work within the council to integrate and adapt internal processes that help to deliver the actions described in community generated parish/community plans.
    - To describe and report those processes to the Project Partners.
    - To act as animateur within the areas parishes for the development of parish/community plans.

31. ***Development of formal processes.*** A further success factor is the development of formal procedures for dealing with parish/community plans. Where they exist they should be clear and must be understood by parish plan groups. For example, the RCC of Essex has developed a county-wide protocol with local authorities on how to promote parish/community plans and incorporate the results into wider strategies. This covers the role of parish/community village design statements and the ways in which these can be used by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Partnership working with Essex Planning Officers Association has resulted in the publication of joint guidance on this issue.

32. A more general point highlighted in the literature is the importance of good working relationships between parishes and local district and county councillors, characterised by shared aims, good communication and a spirit of partnership. A useful mechanism for ensuring this is a Charter, which can establish ground rules for partnership working and make

connections between parish/community plans and strategic planning. Authority wide commitment to this way of working is also a key to success.

33. ***Timely engagement with stakeholders.*** A key success factor, cited several times throughout the literature and in guidance documents, is engagement of the key stakeholders (particularly county and district councils and local planning authorities) from the start of the process to produce a parish plan. The evidence also shows that encounters between stakeholders and parish plan groups should be carefully managed, so that the diversity of voices can be heard. This will stop the plan turning into a 'wish list', and will also help to avoid conflict later on.

34. With specific regard to planning, early engagement can increase community understanding of the planning system, signpost parishes to relevant sources of advice, and provide advice on the planning scope of parish/community plans. It can result in a quality document, ensuring consistency between parish/community plans within a single authority. It also permits consistency between planning components of a single parish plan, the development plan and national planning policy. However it is important that the local planning authority should not try to dominate the process, as it should be community led.[42]

35. One example of successful engagement occurred in Derbyshire, where the community's support worker met with key stakeholders to develop a detailed action plan that identified lead agencies (with their agreement) for different elements. This proved successful in engaging constructively with partners and in ensuring a full understanding of the plan and the community's needs.

36. ***Representation on strategic forums and clustering.*** Several studies identified parish plan representation on wider groups or close linkages with strategic forums as being a critical success factor for integration. For example, in the Caradon District of Cornwall, the Parish Plans Action Group is chaired by a member of the LSP. The group produces reports that contribute to the Community Strategy. In Chipstable, a parish in the South West, a ward councillor for the main town was also a member of the community group for the surrounding parishes, which aided cooperation between the areas when the main town pulled together the surrounding parish/community plans to lobby for the area collectively.

42 A well-timed parish/community plan could have a greater chance to influence policy if it informed a development plan in its formative stages or during review. However, it should be noted that some local planning authorities have expressed concern that a commitment to the proposals contained in one or more parish/community plan could reduce their scope for decision making when reviewing development plans.

37. Similarly, the Atlantic Partnership in Devon which consists of five parish councils - Clovelly, Hartland, Parkham, Welcombe, and Woolsery Parish Councils – in a sparsely populated rural area, has produced a charter on which to base its membership and methods of working. It has also selected a Chair to represent the Partnership at Torridge District LSP meetings. The parishes within the Atlantic Partnership each completed a parish plan, on the basis of which the Partnership has produced a community plan for the five parishes. It has a clear idea of issues and priorities and is in a position to influence the principal authority and other agencies to bring about a sustainable improvement in local conditions.

38. ***Quality and layout of plan.*** Arguably, plans will have most impact on agencies when there is a clear link to their own work. One community in Derbyshire has taken the step of relating each element in its action plan to the LSP's priority themes, to the Derbyshire Community Strategy, and to elements of the National Park's Management Plan.

39. Similarly, a plan will only be incorporated into planning documents if they are consistent with existing policy and genuinely add local detail. To demonstrate this, planning proposals and guidance in the parish plan, together with justifications, should be written in a clear style, using and accompanied by a map. This also clearly distinguishes the planning elements of the plan from the other components.

Barriers to integration

40. The literature also highlights barriers to integration of parish plans. These are summarised below.

41. ***Local authority quality and commitment.*** In some instances, the planning process has served to reinforce tensions between the council and the community. Some feel let down by their council's lack of interest in the plan or by their reluctance to adopt the plan as a document to guide their work and functions.

42. The literature shows frustration among groups with regard to the degree to which issues are picked up from the community plans. Some groups have received no acknowledgement of the plans they have sent to local authorities. Others have received an acknowledgement, but there has been no follow up. In some cases, authorities have withdrawn from promoting the use of parish/community plans in their own planning because they lack the necessary resources. Council officers were also found in some cases to perceive the actions emerging from parish/community plans as extra work.

43. ***Traditional top-down nature of planning.*** Parish communities can feel disenfranchised by what they take to be the top-down culture, for example the top down targets in Regional Spatial Strategies. A tension exists in that planners tend, in ways reinforced by the statutory system, to think top-down and strategically, placing great emphasis on long term plans and feeling heavily constrained by law and precedent, whilst community groups always start with the specific and local, are more often project-led and short term and tend to resist the constraints of formal procedures.

44. ***Reputation/standing of parish/community plans.*** Although parish councils do not necessarily have involvement with the production of a parish plan, it is still important for the sector to gain respect and recognition from principal authorities. This is hindered by the fact that only a small percentage of councils have achieved Quality Parish Status or have a trained clerk and are therefore not seen by principal authorities as 'professionalised'. Some of the literature has found that principal authorities have a tendency to lump parishes with voluntary and community organisations, which obscures their status as a branch of local government. In one case study, the Commission for Rural Communities found that service deliverers were completely ignorant of parish/community plans.[43]

45. ***Support for / knowledge of parish plan groups.*** Where support has been available for parish plan groups, the focus has generally been on the preparation of the parish plan, and assistance is not always as readily available or co-ordinated during the plan's implementation. This has led to groups feeling let down and struggling during a period when it is vital to retain the energy and motivation of the community beyond the physical production of the plan.

46. One study[44] found that whilst on the one hand, those involved in the preparation of Community Strategies were generally aware of Parish Plans and Market Town Action Plans and supported the role that they could play in generating actions and ideas, on the other hand, the participants in Parish Plans and Market Town Action Plans themselves tended to be less aware of Community Strategies and how they could be influenced, and more focused on the direct actions they could take themselves.

47. Where plan groups do try to influence other strategies, they commonly have little knowledge about the best route of dissemination for their

[43] National Demonstration Projects on Local Strategic Partnerships and Rural issues, Commission for Rural Communities, 2005

44 'Planning for vital communities – good practice in linking parish/community plans, market town plans and community plans' Countryside Agency, 2004

completed plans and indeed how best to exert influence. There is some sense that plan groups absolve themselves of responsibility for certain actions once the plan has been sent to the authority that should be dealing with it. However, LA officers display some frustration when they are presented with plans that allocate tasks to them, with no prior consultation.

48. ***Quality of plan/engagement of stakeholders in its production.*** A prerequisite for integrating parish/community plans is that they are of a sufficient level of quality. Various case studies have pointed out however that all too often there seemed to be a straight leap from survey results into plan preparations without careful consideration of feasibility, funding and the ways to link plan recommendations into the planning system (or other systems). Public sector stakeholders are not always convinced of the robustness of data collection and analysis, are frustrated when proposals contradict policy, and when they fail to see the linkages to their work. Further, in some areas there has been insufficient consultation within communities for plans to be truly representative.

49. ***Complexities and uncertainties around the planning system.*** One study found that complexities and uncertainties within the planning system are putting off many groups from even starting a parish plan.

50. The majority of planning departments consulted in one study in the South East believed that it was unrealistic to expect parish/community plans to fit into the development planning system.[45] Parish/community plans are more holistic in nature than development plans, frequently covering issues that are beyond the scope of the planning system. All were of the view that the adoption of parish/community plans as supplementary planning documents under the new planning system was difficult or impossible.

51. Further, in order to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document parish/community plans need to include a sustainability appraisal as an integral part of their production. However Sustainability Appraisal procedures are proving to be difficult and complex and are having a debilitating effect on parish plan work.

52. ***Confusion about roles, responsibilities and structures.*** The literature identifies the fact that in many cases there are no formal mechanisms for parish/community plans to be considered in district and council policies, and where there is a formal process, this can be complex and long winded. Further, in practice, these policies are far more likely to be influenced by higher level targets and performance plans than outcomes

45 'Community Initiated Engagement – lessons from the parish/community plans programme' Catherine Hughes, 2005

from parish/community plans. The current system appears to be more a case of 'uploading' evidence from parish/community plans to support and inform decisions rather than engaging with issues at an early stage in order to be 'influenced'.

53. The national evaluation of LSPs[46] found stakeholders were frequently unclear as to the purpose of engagement with 'sub-localities', whilst a study in the North West[47] found that there appeared to be little clarity about the formality of any relationship between local communities and LSPs, and in particular any sense of mutual accountability. This problem is magnified when considering the number of individual parishes in each district, let alone at county level, and the need for intelligent and properly resourced facilitation.

54. ***Organisational inertia.*** The literature shows there are at least three broad categories of barriers to neighbourhood/parish working amongst service providers:

- Economic factors: The costs and risks of working at neighbourhood level to engage service users and the wider community tend to be short term and are seen by service providers as significant, whereas the benefits are perceived as longer in coming, uncertain and not easily quantified.
- Skills and capacity constraints: Lack of skills, experience, and culture of neighbourhood working could lead to lack of confidence to get started unless there are incentives to do so.
- Structural factors: Some service providers (for example social services, Connexions) are more traditionally focused on client groups rather than spatial areas and some (such as GPs and JCP) may operate with incentive structures that make a neighbourhood focus difficult to manage.

55. It may well be that organisational inertia gets in the way of examining alternative options for service planning, commissioning/delivery and monitoring at smaller spatial scales than traditionally has been the case. Previously prevailing management and performance measurement systems and incentives have tended to constrain the emergence of

46 DCLG, 2006, National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships Report on the 2006 survey of all English LSPs, Volume 1 Report of Survey.

47 Rural Innovation, Cheshire Rural Community Council and Voluntary Action Cumbria, 'Local context testing of RRDF priorities for the North West', March 2006.

neighbourhood level arrangements for engaging service users and communities in the design and delivery of services.

56. The above findings informed the fieldwork and provided examples for discussion with consultees.

Annex D: Case study reports

The Atlantic Partnership, Torridge, Devon

February 2007

Area profile

Location of the parish	The Atlantic Partnership is in the South West region in the north west corner of Devon.
Nature of the parish	The Atlantic Partnership is a cluster of five rural parishes (Clovelley, Hartland, Parkham, Welcombe and Woolsery)
Population	The parishes have a combined population of approximately 4,000 of which 98% are white British (Census 2001)[48].
Local governance structure	The Atlantic Partnership sits below the two tier local governance structure of Devon County Council and Torridge District Council.
Preparation / Publication	The different parishes completed their plans to their own timetables and then formed the Atlantic Partnership in 2003 to produce a community plan for Five Parishes.

Parish Plan objectives

The Atlantic Partnership has produced a "Community Plan for 5 Parishes" based on the individual parish plans developed by each of the five parishes. The community plan does not intend to "supplant the individual efforts of the parishes" but rather "it aims to draw together similar threads and highlight individual nuances".

In order to develop a common set of priorities the community plan firstly analysed the different issues and priorities that were raised in each of the individual plans and assessed the extent to which different subjects were

48 Refer to Glossary in Annex H for definition.

prioritised in the different plans. From this the Partnership was then able to create a list of key issues on which to base further action, discussion or input as necessary. This list is not 'fixed', and other issues can be added as they become more important or deleted as they become less of a priority.

Table 1: Common Priorities identified for the Community Plan

Seven subjects were identified by all five of the parishes. These were:

- Housing
- Environment
- Transport
- Education
- Churches
- Sports
- Local Business

Within this list the Partnership has agreed to initially focus work on two key action areas:

- Affordable Housing
- Recycling

Source: Atlantic Partnership community plan

Across North Devon and Torridge a strategic approach was developed, by the County Council and South West Development Agency (SWRDA), through the MCTi to cluster 'like' parishes into partnerships: "Local Community Partnerships" (LCP). The purpose of this clustering approach was to help raise the profile of parish issues within the LSP, as each Local Community Partnership had a seat on the LSP.

However, because not all of the parishes in Torridge fell within the MCTi there was a need for a number of them to create their own clusters and LCPs around common issues. This was the case with the Atlantic Partnership, who through piecemeal funding from the county council (£5,000) and the Countryside Agency, developed a Partnership between the five parishes around the common factor that their parishes contained some of North Devon's most attractive and unspoilt countryside and made up a key part of North Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): two of the five key landscape character areas within North Devon's AONB are located within the Atlantic Partnership area.

Development of the Parish Plan

The development of the Atlantic Partnership Plan has involved a number of different organisations and groups both within and across the five parishes. As highlighted above, the initial desire to create and work as a partnership of parishes arose from the desire of Devon County Council, SWRDA and the Market and Coastal Towns Association to see parish priorities both on and higher up the agenda of the LSP.

The impetus/need to create a partnership was then taken forward by the parishes who met together to discuss in loose terms what they wanted to achieve. However, it was agreed that in order to direct the work of the Partnership that each of the parishes needed to produce individual parish plans setting out their key issues and priorities. This was an important step because up until that point the only 'evidence' available of local priorities came in the form of three parish appraisals undertaken in the mid 1990s.

The development of individual parish plans was also key because it enabled local communities to engage with the process and to contribute to the development of priorities for their local area.

During the development of individual parish plans the County Council community strategy officers also helped to develop and form the Atlantic Partnership into a more effective group - support that speeded up their development.

Together these processes enabled the Atlantic Partnership to develop their community plan and identify the common priorities and issues.

Throughout all this work both the individual Parish Councils and the Atlantic Partnership itself received full support from Torridge District Council who worked in partnership with the parishes and provided officer support when required.

In addition to the support from the District Council, the Community Council of Devon also helped in the development of the Partnership, although there was often a lack of coordination with other agencies and often they were not aware of what the county and district councils were doing.

Overall however, this process was felt to be effective, if a little fragmented, and there were no perceived gaps that could have been filled through wider engagement or other partners.

Extent of integration

Having written individual parish plans and analysed the different issues and priorities the five parishes developed three objectives to focus on as a partnership. The first was the production of a combined partnership plan. The aim has been to tie the plan closely to the LSP's action priorities and to link it directly into the community plan.

The second objective was around affordable housing. This objective is beginning to become more integrated as the Partnership has been working closely with Torridge District Council to ensure that its plans not only fit with, but actually feed into, the LDF. The Partnership has also sought help from the Community Council of Devon and an Architect in an attempt to understand more about the 'how to' and mechanics of actually delivering and developing affordable housing. Both of these organisations have presented to the partnership around a number of different topics including a presentation from the Architect on how to build a £60,000 home.

The third objective is around improving recycling and it is an objective that the Partnership is looking to develop formally with the LSP, as it is important issue for the whole area. The partnership is to finalise its plan before developing the work with the LSP.

In addition to this and outside of the three broad objectives the Partnership has also worked with mainstream providers around two smaller issues of importance to the five areas:

- Putting postcodes on beaches. Beaches in the North Devon area did not have postcodes, a fact that was of concern to a number of local people as it was through postcodes that ambulances were directed to incidents. Therefore, the partnership took this issue forward, through the LSP, and it has subsequently been implemented by the ambulance service so that all the beaches in the area have postcode references.

- Common signage for AONB areas. North Devon AONB has used the Atlantic Partnership to consult with local people about the type and style of signage used for AONB. This joint working has enabled a successful flow of information to develop between the local community and North Devon AONB.

At the strategic level, the parish plan has been integrated into the planning system as both the district and the county see parish planning as an important strand of community planning. In addition to this both the county and district have been working together along with the other local authorities in Devon, SWRDA, the RCC and the Countryside Agency to develop the Bridges Project

– a project developed to promote and support parish planning across the Devon area. The project aims to have helped develop parish plans for all the parishes in the area by the end of 2007. The key information contained in these plans will then be inputted into a Community Planning Database. This database will therefore capture all of the problems, issues and priorities identified by each parish. By gathering all of this information in one place the database enables mainstream agencies, parishes and other partnerships to search and interrogate the information, for example: it enables mainstream agencies to look at clusters of parishes and identify their common issues and priorities; or it enables parishes to look at what other parishes have done to address specific issues. It is a system that whilst retaining the individuality of each parish plan integrates the different plans at a variety of different geographic levels and enables common issues, problems and priorities to be strategically planned and addressed.

At the Partnership level it is hoped that once the community plan is finalised it will enable and facilitate integration into wider planning systems. It is anticipated that this will occur largely through the LSP, as a key aim in the development of the plan has been to tie it closely to the LSP's action priorities and to link it directly into the community plan. A process that it is hoped will make it clear, who is responsible for different elements of delivery.

The development of the community plan has notably raised the awareness of the community objectives at not just the individual parish level but also at the partnership level. Five different parishes identifying similar issues has proved to be a very powerful tool to alerting partners to what needs to be done in the area.

A strong working relationship with both the county and the district councils exists and has from the outset of the process and there is a real sense of support within these organisations for what the parish is seeking to achieve. These relationships have been hindered by staff changes, but have been helped by the fact that the county and district now have dedicated staff that are responsible for improving and developing relationships with the parishes in their respective local authority areas.

Through the Atlantic Partnership the five parishes also have much greater contact with the LSP and its different partner organisations. The Atlantic Partnership Chair has a seat on the LSP as well as direct meetings with the LSP Chair, County and District officers and the chairs of the other four partnerships/clusters in North Devon: 'Chairs Meetings'. The latter of these meetings has been particularly beneficial as it has allowed the five partnerships to talk informally about issues and to identify priorities for the Chair of the LSP to being forward at full LSP meetings on their behalf.

Service providers, primarily the county and district councils, are beginning to modify their agendas and the development of Community Planning database will definitely help move this forward.

There have also been modest changes in the resources of both the county and the district council, although these changes are not specific to the Atlantic Partnership but rather to the wider local authority areas. Both local authorities have re-organised their budgets internally so that they have more 'assistant level', rather than 'senior level', posts. This has meant that they are better able to support parishes in the development and delivery of their plans. It is anticipated that as the Community Planning Database develops and common areas of need and priorities are identified across a range of parishes that both the county and the district councils will allocate staff to help deliver against specific priorities.

If was felt that the Partnership was still at a very early stage in the process and that it was too early to see change in mainstream resources, particularly as a number of the key organisations such as the police, the PCT and the LSP are also busy managing internal change within their own organisations.

Barriers to integration

A number of common barriers were identified. It was felt by consultees that these barriers hindered the integration of the plan and would continue to do so until they were resolved. They included:

- The lack of funding available within mainstream organisations to actually help deliver the priorities identified in the parish plan.
- The different boundaries that mainstream organisations work to make integration difficult, a factor that is then exacerbated by the fact that few mainstream providers plan work at the parish level.
- There is limited capacity within the parishes to ensure that an adequate plan is not just developed but that its priorities are delivered. It was felt that capacity is limited by both apathy within the local community but also by exhaustion as those initially involved stop as a result of the time and commitment required.
- Communication between mainstream providers is inadequate and they all seek to communicate in different ways, largely because there is no formal structure or process. This hinders the integration of priorities as it is not clear: who to speak to within the different mainstream organisations; whose remit it is to take issues to the LSP; who holds

what information about local services; and who is responsible for ensuring delivery.

Currently two key steps are being taken to address some of these barriers. The first is the 'chairs meetings' which enables common issues across parishes and partnerships/clusters to be identified and brought forward to the LSP. The second is the development of the community planning database. Both of these should enable mainstream services to work with parishes more easily as they allow common priorities and issues to emerge across a larger geographic scale and highlight those issues/priorities that most need intervention.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

The consultations also identified a number of common critical success factors, including:

- The need for committed and enthusiastic local people to develop and deliver the parish plan.
- Engagement of the wider local community around issues that appeal to their self interest – ensuring that the majority of the community are able to voice their opinions.
- Involvement of a wide range of service providers at a senior, decision making level, as it is only through this high level engagement that different priorities will actually be addressed.
- Adequate funding and resources to develop the plan. The 'seed corn' funding available through different grants was key in enabling the Atlantic Partnership to form and begin to develop a community plan.
- Realism from the parishes about the level of importance their local priorities will have in mainstream service agendas and an understanding of the often bureaucratic processes that need to be gone through – changes to mainstream services can not happen instantaneously.
- A willingness to work within wider structures with other parishes and an acceptance that in doing this other parishes' priorities may addressed first.
- Engagement with and a seat on the LSP as it is through this forum that local partners operate and local priorities are identified and then sought to be addressed.

- The Community Planning Database, a county wide initiative, has the potential to be a very effective mechanism for not only supporting the development of parish plans (as it enables them to share best practice) but in ensuring that parish priorities are implemented by allowing common issues and priorities to be identified across different geographical levels.

- The clustering of 'like' parishes. This process enables parishes to identify common issues and priorities and therefore raises the profile of the different issues amongst mainstream service providers. It also, through the 'chairs meetings', gives the clusters a key link into the work of the LSP.

Benson Parish Council, Oxfordshire

April 2007

Area profile

Location of the parish	Benson parish is in the South East region. It is located in South Oxfordshire, approximately 20 miles to the south east of Oxford.
Nature of the parish	Benson is a rural parish.
Population	According to the 2001 Census, Benson has a population of around 4,500, 96% of whom are classified as 'White British' and 3% of whom are 'White Other'.
Local governance structure	Benson sits below the two-tier local government structure of South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.
Preparation / Publication	The parish plan was published 2004; consultations began in 2003. The whole process including producing the final plan took 19 months (7 months of this was developing the questionnaire and carrying out the consultation).

Parish Plan Objectives

The main priorities contained in the Benson parish plan can be summarised under three headings, shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Benson Parish Plan Priorities

- Vandalism, anti-social behaviour and youth provision.
- Containing expansion, whilst recognising the need for affordable homes.
- Environmental concerns and in particular traffic and the condition of roads.

Source: Benson parish plan

Development of the Parish Plan

The parish plan group consultee stated that the Parish Council was not involved with the plan, as guidance stated that this was not allowed. However one member of the council did participate for oversight purposes. The group took great care to involve as many people as possible in the process, including every organisation operating within the village, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Oxford County Council on the issue of transport. In addition, working groups went to appropriate organisations such as the police and local health authority. No one that was approached by the group to participate refused. At the end of the process the parish plan was presented to the parish council as a working document and one councillor was tasked with progress chasing.

The parish plan group found it easy to obtain help from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) and SODC (who had appointed a single point of contact within the council for parish plans) when they needed advice or facts. The Rural Community Council also ran information seminars.

Although this development was after Benson's plan, it is worth noting that the South Oxfordshire Local Strategic Partnership now provides all parishes with a parish plan pack, outlining what support it can offer, what its role is in the parish planning process, what parish plans can and cannot achieve, as well as useful contacts and sources of information. SODC also now offer to build questionnaires and analyse the results for parish plan groups, as well as commenting on the resulting parish action plans, suggesting where proposed actions could be made more feasible, finding out if any similar or related actions are already underway, and suggesting appropriate partners, funders etc.

Extent of Integration

The parish plan group invited mainstream providers to meetings and communicated through telephone calls. However, by and large, their providers were constrained by a lack of resources for parish activity.

The drive behind engagement with mainstream service providers came from the parish plan group. However once the plan was complete, they handed responsibility for implementation to the parish council, who charged one councillor with progress chasing. It was felt by the parish plan group consultee that the parish council should sponsor a continuing development group, keeping key members from the parish plan group on board to track progress and review the plan annually.

Two of the priorities that required action from mainstream service providers have been taken forward. The first is the issue of potholes in the roads – this was dealt with by the County Council and has been seen as a major achievement of the parish plan. However this wouldn't have been achieved if it were not accompanied by a significant amount of pressure on the County Council from the village as a whole. The second was the suggestion for a walking bus to school to reduce car use and improve safety, and this was taken forward by the local school.

While the county council has acted on the issue of potholes, it has not conducted a traffic survey in the village, despite the survey being identified as a priority by the village. The parish feels there is an 'experts know best' attitude.

The ORCC consultee commented that it is primarily district and county councils that are currently responding to parish plans and other services are not so aware of them. Some services, such as the police, have struggled with the concept of community engagement, as it is not the way they traditionally do things. Many services will also have insufficient resources to respond to parish plans. This is backed up by the experience of Benson, which sent its plan to all relevant mainstream service providers but received no feedback, apart from the police who told them that Benson is a low crime area and police presence is based on reported crime, not on the issues identified in the parish plan.

The plan has not been integrated into the planning system. The parish plan group asked an SODC representative whether SODC were under any obligation to take the parish plan into account in planning issues and was told none at all. The parish plan group feels that in terms of planning, the parish plan is worthless and is being ignored by SODC. For example, a housing development study is currently underway in the village, and when those conducting the study were asked if they had looked at the parish plan to inform their decisions, the reply was 'what parish plan?'

However the parish chairman did state that SODC has turned down a planning application due to the parish plan, but this was only when apprised of it, and it would not otherwise have featured in the decision.

Since the Benson plan was developed, there have been significant improvements in the way the district and county councils deal with parish plans. There is now a parish plan steering group which brings together all the district councils in Oxfordshire as well as the county council, along with representatives from parishes who have completed plans. This group sorts out communication issues amongst all the different bodies that promote parish

plans, ensuring that referral procedures are working properly (i.e. ensuring that if a parish plan group initially approaches the district, the district lets the relevant people know a plan is being produced and puts the group in touch with a community development worker), and looking at how to promote parish planning and how to engage funders.

The parish plan steering group has been very important as previously, nobody really knew what to do with parish plans and no-one looked at them – they got lost in the system. Now, the county is in the process of pulling them all together. In theory, this will lead to parish plans being incorporated into community plans, but this has not happened yet.

Barriers to integration

- The main barrier experienced by the parish plan group is that no organisation has any obligation to take notice of the parish plan, and many hadn't heard of the concept before. The parish plan group feel that if a proposed action requires resources or funding on the part of the provider then it will not happen.
- In terms of planning, it was felt by the parish council that higher agendas guide decisions, such as Government saying 'x amount of new homes must be built'. As a result, the parish feels they are at the bottom of the pile and have no clout.
- Because the process relies on voluntary time, it can be hard to direct volunteers. Where people with pre-set and fixed views were involved, this was also a barrier.
- There was not enough money to follow up results or undertake integration of the plan..
- The ORCC consultee felt that political will is the major barrier to integrating parish plans. District and county councils are ultimately run by their elected members, so it is difficult when these members don't see the benefit of community engagement. A common attitude amongst members is 'we have been elected by the community so we know what's best for them'.

Critical Success Factors and ways in which to improve integration

Steps that can be taken to overcome these identified barriers are as follows:

- The Government could issue further guidance requiring relevant authorities take account of formally constructed and approved (by

parish council) parish plans. This would require co-ordination and working across government to a greater extent than currently takes place.

- Education of elected members is needed, as well as protocols and best practice for dealing with parish plans.
- Central co-ordination at the level of district council is required, so that all the plans in an area are reviewed and a strategy is drawn up for dealing with them. The district council could then feed back to parishes, giving an idea of what the overall picture is and picking out points that stand out. This would go some way to alleviate the feeling amongst parish councils and residents that they have no clout and are not listened to.
- SODC has taken some steps towards pulling information together, primarily by encouraging parish plan groups to send their results to the Oxfordshire data observatory. Oxfordshire data observatory is the evidence base used to feed in to community strategies.
- Parish consultees stated that if DEFRA could provide a standard questionnaire and analysis software this would make life easier in terms of preparation of the plan but also, importantly, make it easier for district councils to bring results together. It should be noted that at a local level, SODC does now offer to build questionnaires using a standard piece of software.
- Funding needs to be made available for the important follow up and implementation phase of the parish planning process. SODC are also trying to set up a system for monitoring implementation of parish plans, as well as identifying barriers to implementation.

Critical success factors contributing to successful integration of parish plan priorities were identified as follows:

- Parish plan groups will be most effective when led by those with a combination of local knowledge and prior experience of this sort of exercise.
- Having a single point of contact in the district council for parish plans made the process easier for the parish plan group, as parish groups often don't know how the local authority works and which part of the local authority deals with their particular areas of interest.
- The parish council has formally adopted the plan and one councillor has been charged with ensuring progress chasing and implementation.

Nothing was put into the plan that couldn't realistically be achieved. However, this will only be effective if the parish has sufficient resources to chase up implementation.

- Integration was only possible where mainstream service providers have the resources – both human and financial – to take forwards the issues raised in parish plans. For example, although the parish plan played a key role in raising the issues of potholes with the county council, the only reason it was actually acted upon in the end is because the council had money available.

Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland

March 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Berwick-upon-Tweed is in the North East region.
Nature of the parish	The area is rural in nature
Population	The district of Berwick-upon-Tweed has a population of 25,947. Ninety nine per cent of this population is of White British origin. There are 26 parishes in the district, 11 of which have either completed a plan or are in the process of producing one.
Local governance structure	Berwick-upon-Tweed is the district council. It sits below Northumberland County Council.
Preparation / Publication	N/A – This case study was selected to look at the way in which the LSP integrates parish plans.

Development of Parish Plans

Community Action Northumberland (CAN, previously the Northumberland Communities Council) was significantly involved in the development of parish plans in Berwick-upon-Tweed. It helped parishes to secure funding and gave active support. The individual who was particularly enthusiastic and helped with plan development has since left.

Some common issues identified in parish plans across Berwick-upon-Tweed are housing (especially affordable housing), access and transport, local economy and maintenance/highways issues.

Extent of Integration

The Borough Council sees parish plans as being integral to community involvement. This has manifested itself in the use of the parish plans to inform the Community Strategy and community plan. Parish plans were analysed and a matrix constructed of the priorities. As new parish plans are developed new areas and changes are noted.

With respect to planning, the extent of integration is variable and in a legislative sense unclear. With new legislation with regards to LDFs it is likely that some plans (especially older ones) will not have any material weight in a planning sense. Parish plans have been used as material for consideration in some planning applications in the past. For example, in the East Orde parish plan (which involved over half of residents) the community decided where they were/were not happy for development to take place. A Housing Association wanted to build a development in a zone that was earmarked for potential housing under the Local Plan. The parish plan was taken on board and the application was rejected.

Affordable housing is an important priority for many parishes (especially for young people and the elderly) e.g. young people cannot afford to stay in their communities and therefore move away. However, these needs can only be met if housing associations want to lead on developments (e.g. Belford parish).

The extent of integration is limited at the moment and varies with service providers. It has been easier to engage with some services, e.g. highways (County level) and police, possibly because these service providers can see how parishes can be their eyes on the ground and therefore be useful information providers, and also because the issues are normally small in scale. For others it has been much more difficult, a prime example being integrated transport.

One successful area has been with respect to play facilities. The Borough identified a lack of play facilities across the area and needed a way to attract funding. It asked each parish to come up with a theme based on their heritage for their own play area (e.g. coaching for Belford). They are now making successful funding bids (on behalf of parishes) to the Big Lottery Fund, to help pay for new play facilities (aiming for 14 of these).

Health agencies have been virtually impossible to engage, and there are important issues for the Borough as a whole, as the hospital in Berwick does not provide a significant range of services. The difficulties are partly due to the lack of communication with the neighbouring health trust in Scotland. Despite this, it should be noted that there have been no formal requests from parishes themselves that a health representative attends a Tripartite meeting (see below for tripartite meetings).

Approaches to integration

There are some interesting approaches to integration in Berwick-upon-Tweed. The LSP has supported the organisation of quarterly meetings (known as

Tripartite meetings) involving all parish councils, borough council and county council – with other agencies also involved. This aids networking, learning and integration. The meetings include specific agenda items for discussion and debate, e.g. planning and the LDF, LAAs, RSS, Local Government White Paper.

A particularly interesting aspect of the tripartite meetings is that the County representative for highways uses the meeting to take details of highways issues. The County representative reports back indicating which issues can be acted upon in current budgets, which cannot etc. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is thinking of adopting a similar approach.

Northumberland is organising itself spatially using Belonging Communities, which are smaller than boroughs, but larger than parishes. This is related to the current review which may result in a unitary authority, which could be at the level of Northumberland or may include two unitary authorities. In Berwick, parishes have been asked to group themselves into 4 Belonging Communities. Cornhill is part of Glendale Belonging Community, a large part of which is covered by Northumberland National Park. The Glendale Community has started to identify areas of common interest between parishes, with a view to undertaking collective action, putting in joint bids and possibly pulling together precepts. These areas of interest include tourism and the economy, maintenance issues and parish clerk services. In the case of maintenance issues, there is the possibility of the community taking responsibility for certain service areas. There is a belief here that this will be important given the possibility of a unitary authority with parishes expected to take more responsibility. It is still very early days, so it is unclear as to how borough and county services will view this possible approach.

The Berwisk Borough LSP (BBLSP) is keen for parish plans to become part of the service delivery template, and have, in a bottom-up way, analysed plan priorities to inform the community plan. One approach under consideration is to look at one stop shop approaches using the key settlements in each of the 4 Belonging Communities. The LSP also has sector boards, which have a parish representative who should feedback to other parishes. In practice, the parish representatives spoken to were not aware of what the sector boards did and had never had feedback from the “parish representative”. The LSP also undertakes work which it sees parishes as being useful in verifying and supplementing.

Barriers to integration

In developing the parish plans, the LSP commented on the fact that official datasets are difficult for the layman to negotiate. This can have detrimental

effects in how parish plans might become part of a planning framework that needs to be evidence-based using official data. In implementing plans, both the Borough Council (Democratic Services) and one of those giving a parish perspective identified the uncertainty over what the parish role is with respect to planning. This was particularly in relation to the new LDF and the fact that parish plans might have no material weight. Democratic Services also identified the perception of parishes that plans just sit on the shelf, and that there needs to be a more systematic way of taking into account priorities.

In bringing about improvements, one parish representative thought that actually focussing plans on areas where a difference could be made was important. In terms of planning, they also commented that feedback should be given on what kinds of objections are not valid.

A wider barrier noted by the LSP is that the policy agenda from central government with respect to local government has been taking far too long to come through, which means that deciding on the most appropriate direction with respect to County-Borough-parish levels is difficult.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

Where there have been successes, there are potentially some common factors:

- in-depth consultation in the community, which adds weight to the parish plan, e.g. for funding bids and in proving representation of community views
- dealing with small scale issues, where there is more chance of achieving success
- tackling issues where parishes can be used as an important source of very local information, for example highways issues.

Generally speaking, having strong leadership from within a parish can be very important in getting things done, generating interest and enthusiasm and ensuring people pull together. It was noted that two parishes have been in "civil war", with one still unable to get residents together.

There are potentially some interesting areas of good practice. The quarterly tripartite meetings fulfil a range of important areas including:

- sharing practice on developing and implementing plans
- networking

- influencing service delivery in some areas, especially highways maintenance and policing.

The other area to look out for as it develops is the use of the Belonging Communities to bring together parishes. This will enable them to focus on areas of common concern, providing a greater collective voice and potentially greater capacity to influence planning and service delivery.

Brilley, Herefordshire

20 February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Brilley is located in Herefordshire in the West Midlands.
Nature of the parish	The area is rural in nature
Population	Brilley has a population of 235, 98% of which are White British.
Local governance structure	Brilley sits under a single tier local government structure. Herefordshire Council (HC) is a unitary authority.
Preparation / Publication	The major steps in production of the Brilley parish plans were: • Open Day (October 2003) • Survey questionnaires (completed October 2004) • Public meeting (February 2005) • Publication of the plan (September 2005)

Parish Plan Objectives

The main action points resulting from the parish planning process are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Key Action Points from Brilley Parish Plan

Establish a Local Market in the Village Hall.

Improvements to the C1072/A438 junction to be kept under review.

Press Herefordshire Council to introduce speed limits outside the school (20 mph) and from the Council Houses to the school.

Press Herefordshire Council to impose a weight limit on the C1072.

Environmental group to develop proposals based on the responses to the questionnaire.

Investigate establishing a “Permissive Path” between the Brilley School and St Mary’s Church.

Source: Brilley parish plan, 2005.

The parish has undertaken work on climate change, which is not based on the plan, but is a progression of ideas developed by some of the people involved in the parish planning process. It is a weakness of the Brilley plan that a large amount of activity undertaken since and as a follow on from, the plan survey, was not written into the parish plan so that it can not be measured and not counted as a parish plan implementation achievement by Herefordshire Council (HC).

Development of the Parish Plan

The parish plan (the plan) was developed by a parish plan committee of ten people who each took responsibility for an individual subject area and scoped out questions for the survey on that area. After consulting with a small number of local people knowledgeable in the field, they submitted a long list of questions to the committee who then met to vote on a selected few questions from this long list. The parish plan priorities and actions were formed as a direct result of the questionnaire findings, a ‘Planning for Real’ exercise and a meeting to discuss these findings.

There were no outside organisations involved at any stage in the development of the plan – apart from at the questionnaire design stage where advice was sought from HC. The parish plan committee, via a parish councillor, did at the time have communications with the HC planning department however, on the subject of influencing changes to the UDP through the plan. A parish consultee thought that the Chair of the committee was the key to the successful development of the plan as he spent a lot time investigating the legal issues around the planning changes being proposed.

The parish representatives feel that more support financially from the Countryside Agency or HC at the time they began to implement actions from the plan would have helped things progress more smoothly. However it is not felt that any additional support or advice was required from statutory bodies at the planning stage.

The HC representatives feel that given the standard of Brilley’s questionnaire (and despite that fact that Brilley planners did seek help on it from HC) they should have sought more advice from mainstream bodies as they needed to produce more accurate results. The questionnaire is seen by them as the crux of the whole process and needs to be of a standard similar to that of

government research. HC representatives would like to have seen more integration at the earlier stages of the Brilley plan.

Extent of Integration

The HC approach to liaising and integrating with parish groups/councils is to go anywhere and everywhere in order to meet and encourage people to attend meetings and steering groups in parishes. Despite this, most real engagement at the moment for HC is with parishes that have just begun or are still going through the parish planning process. HC capacity increased after the first plans were published and improved their communication methods recently. Brilley unfortunately has lost out in this respect.

The drive behind the implementation of the parish plan came from the parish. All of the outstanding actions are internal to the parish. HC thought there is little more implementation that they can act on as the Brilley aims were not that ambitious or long-term. In terms of HC's overall agenda however, the drive now is to encourage parishes to be as far reaching and all encompassing with their aims as possible, including climate change and environmental issues. This presents a challenge for HC, as they currently do not have any guidance for parishes on climate change work.

The plan has achieved changes in services provided by HC highways department as a result of road safety concerns arising from the survey (changes include a 50 mph speed limit and crash barriers on a dangerous junction from the local A-road into the village and a 30mph 'advised' speed limit through the whole village, though the initial aim was to get a legal limit of 20mph).

It is the view of the HC representatives that Brilley would have been more likely to achieve the 20mph speed limit if the neighbouring parishes that have the roads in question running through them also had this as a priority and the parishes had got together to push through this issue with the highways department. This would be the ideal situation with all issues that are not just specific to one parish as it is then a lot more straight forward and cost effective for the service provider to deal with. A flaw in the parish plan implementation process is the inability of service providers in a county to deal with 45 different agendas. It should be noted that there is no expectation that parishes get together and draw up joint plans, instead though they should try and co-ordinate implementation of similar priorities.

In challenging aspects of the UDP that restricted development in Brilley, the parish planning process has influenced the county planning system. Four clauses out of six that Brilley disputed have been re-written in the final UDP.

The parish plan Chair at the time of the planning process negotiated exceptional clauses through a public enquiry and consultation meetings with the UDP body. This means that it is now possible for affordable private housing to be built suitable for young local people. The rationale behind this effort was to prevent shrinkage of the village and the exodus of young people and children due to the unavailability of suitable accommodation. In addition to the UDP changes, the parish council needs to be informed by HC of any local planning applications, about which it can make comments which HC is obliged to take note of. However, it does not have to agree with the comments and the parish council has no actual power in the planning application process.

One of the parish representatives feels that once a parish plan has been received and approved by HC it is "put on the shelf".

Brilley's climate change and energy saving work, which is outside the plan, does not focus on mainstream public services as such. However as part of the Herefordshire 2020 Environmental Strategy there are climate change reduction aims for HC services and private activity; Herefordshire has a higher than UK average rate of CO2 and Methane emissions. Brilley's work with Marches Energy Agency (MEA) is highlighted in this.

The parish representatives feel that there is now greater awareness of climate change affecting everyone in the county as a result of the work they have done. However, it is also their view that the majority of this is due to media coverage and efforts outside HC activity, rather than HC taking on board their concerns.

HC was aware of the predictable, main issues that have come out of parish plans, (e.g. lack of public transport). But there are plenty of new issues that have been brought up in plans that it was not previously aware of or it did not realise were linked, for example, lack of public open space in rural areas, facilities for young people and subsequent anti-social behaviour.

The parish plan consultation process has been a success for Herefordshire as all previous surveys in the county have had very low response rates partly due to geography, whereas the parish surveys have achieved response rates of up to 70 per cent. The process therefore represents an unprecedented consultative tool for HC and it would put a lot more resources into supporting parishes if the process was to be repeated in the future in Brilley. It has already increased its focus on the questionnaire design for parishes that have not yet gone through the process. The service providers outside HC are also beginning to realise this, as well as the Big Lottery fund, which now looks favourably on the consultative style of the planning process.

The parish representatives commented that despite repeated invitations to the meetings of the environment group that was formed as a result of issues raised in the plan survey, no involvement or support was received from HC until late 2006. It should be noted however that the formation of this environmental group was not a feature of the parish plan nor an explicit action in the action plan.

There has been plenty of support in the first year of the Brilley Mountain Eco (BMEco) group's operation from the MEA, a local climate change group that is piloting the Making Energy Sustainable in Herefordshire (MESH) project. Since the BMEco has been set up, members have collaborated successfully with the local primary school management, parochial church council, village hall committee and WI and with relevant departments at the LSP, HC, Powys County Council and the neighbouring district councils in Powys. BMEco group seeks grant funding for individual community projects such as calculating the carbon footprint of public and private buildings in the parish. In addition it support visits to enterprises and sites of environmental interest and invites speakers on environmental issues.

HC acknowledges a big communication problem between themselves and all of its parishes. It reports difficulties in getting the information it needs from parishes, including Brilley and it can see that this process could be more efficient. This is partly because parish plan groups do not see themselves as partners of the local authority. HC usually deals with the parish clerk, not those responsible for writing and implementing the parish plan. Both sides feel this is beginning to become less of a problem, since the current Parish Liaison Officer has been in post. After consulting representatives from both organisations however, it is clear that HC is not aware of Brilley's progress on the action plan.

The BMEco group has forged working links with the national Energy Saving Trust as well as with parishes within and outside Herefordshire through attending 'grass roots climate change' conferences. BMEco has acted as a disseminator of best practice on its work on climate change to other parishes.

With respect to the highways and planning departments at HC, there has been a positive improvement in service delivery and the changes that the providers have agreed are a direct result of the parish plan priorities.

Barriers to integration

- The high turnover of personnel at HC in departments that deal with parishes is a significant barrier to consistent and effective contact between the parish plan group and HC. Progress on a particular issue

has been affected by staff moving on before the issue has been resolved. The HC building control department has a more stable staffing situation and this situation means there is more effective communication between that department and the parish representatives.

- The parish feels that there was a lack of interest on the part of HC in getting mainstream service providers to take notice of parish plans, until 2006 when the current Parish Council Liaison Officer came into post.
- Conversely, although the two HC representatives were not in post at the time of development of the Brilley plan, they believe that the parish plan group failed to get involved enough with outside agencies for help and advice early on. HC and other service providers needed to act once the plan has been published, but the practicality of this would be greatly improved if they were consulted on realistic aims and methods of implementation.
- The emphasis in Brilley and a lot of other parishes was placed on the planning process rather than the practicalities and effort needed at the execution and implementation stages.
- The particularly long and complicated UDP writing process was felt to be a barrier to integration by the parish. The steps they took to overcome this were to take the challenge on through the correct channels and accept that this was a very time-consuming process.

Critical success factors and points of good practice

- The LSP (Herefordshire Partnership) has been gradually increasing its effectiveness and presence since its formation, this is good for the implementation process of parish plans and general communication.
- The parish representatives felt that they raised the status of their part of Herefordshire through positive press coverage and through support from local and national environmental non-governmental organisations and other local authorities in the field of climate change action. The good practice message here is to seek maximum media attention for innovative work related to the parish plan, so as to raise awareness of the issues that are important to the parish in ways other than through the statutory route of the local authority.
- The parish has created and put into use a multifunctional website which came about as a tool to improve communication during the

parish planning process. This provides information on (and for) a range of activities in the parish, as well as being the tool used to collect the majority of survey responses to the parish plan survey, through a restricted log-in system. This is such a success, the template for the website has been purchased by five other parishes. The website designer is also developing a carbon footprint calculator on the site which can be rolled out to every parish in Herefordshire.

- HC want parishes to ensure a minimum standard of survey for the planning process to make sure that it can produce useful and meaningful results. Seeking advice at this early stage on the quality, design and style is essential.
- In the view of HC, it is good for parishes to be as visionary as possible in their goals and aim high, but also to be as specific and prescriptive as possible so that they are not disappointed and they do get what they want. At the same time parishes should be wary of single issue agendas.
- A critical success factor in the implementation of road safety measures was the effective work of the county councillor. The parish planning group has always had a good relationship with him, as he regularly attends parish council meetings and acts on issues.
- For the parish, a success factor was getting the relevant department at the LA involved in its aims to change service delivery and finding a way of getting them to commit to this.
- HC see Brilley's critical success factor as being the fact their plan was well written, brief and well presented, using annexes well.
- The 'Planning for Real' exercise that Brilley undertook before writing the plan was also good practice, however it would also have benefited from a second round of consultation after the first draft was written, in order to explore goals, as well as promoting openness throughout the process and encouraging volunteering from the community.

Dalston Parish, Carlisle, Cumbria

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Dalston is situated within a few miles of Carlisle City Centre in the County of Cumbria in the North West region.
Nature of the parish	Dalston village sits on the edge of the urban/rural fringe. This creates an interesting duality – although the character of Dalston is essentially rural, it contains some significant assets that would normally be associated with an urban setting. This includes a railway station, some significant employment land (and large employers), as well as two secondary schools.
Population	Dalston has a population of around 2,650 people, 98% of which are White British.
Local governance structure	Dalston sits below the two-tier local government, of Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council.
Preparation / Publication	Consultations for the Dalston parish plan began in 2002. The plan was launched the plan on 3rd September 2005.

Parish Plan Objectives

The Dalston parish plan does not list specific 'objectives' but is instead organised around a number of priority themes. The structure of the plan is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Outline of the Dalston Parish Plan Structure

Section within plan	Description
Introduction	Purpose and process of the parish plan
Community	Outlines the community view of the parish, what it sees as important about itself, and a headline appreciation of

Section within plan	Description
Matters (Theme)	what people would like to see improved
Services (Theme)	Considered the current view of service provision – highlighting Police and library provision as important areas of concern
Environment (Theme)	Looked at both the physical and natural environment – starter homes and homes for the elderly are expressed to be key local needs as well as maintaining the natural environment and improving public rights of way
Traffic, Parking and Transport (Theme)	Traffic through the parish, and parking by commuters using the rail station (and lack of parking for visitors during the day), are significant concerns
What about Young People (Theme)	As a school location, issues with young people and anti-social behaviour are seen as a concern by some in the Dalston community – the parish plan specifically considers the lack of facilities and activities available to young people an issue to be addressed
Business (Theme)	Desire to encourage business to be more involved in the community and to rejuvenate agricultural businesses
Action Plan	A total of 33 Actions – numerous for each theme area

Source: Information taken from the Dalston parish plan

The Dalston parish plan, and a complementary Dalston Design Statement, were both published in September 2005. Both were produced by a unified process that provided a strong evidence base for thematic priorities and actions (within the plan), and design and development aspirations (within the Design Statement). Focussing specifically on the priorities and themes of the plan, each section establishes the aims for the parish, based on evidence from the surveys conducted[49]. The Action Plan then lists the 'tasks' the community hopes to achieve, and the agencies that might be involved in delivery. It also determines whether the task is a high, medium or low priority for the community. The plan itself is seen as a strong document and the parish council group are recognised by partners as being very committed. It is also recognised by partners that the community and parish council have a strong internal capacity, although, for its own reasons, it has not actively sought Quality parish status[50]. It was hoped that the Design Statement would

49 A household survey, survey of young people and survey of businesses were undertaken.

50 It was felt that the requirements, of completing various pieces of written work and evidence, was too much for the Parish Clerk to take on in addition to what they needed to do as part of their usual duties.

be accepted as SPG and would therefore have an active outcome on development activity within the parish – however, this has not been (for more information see below).

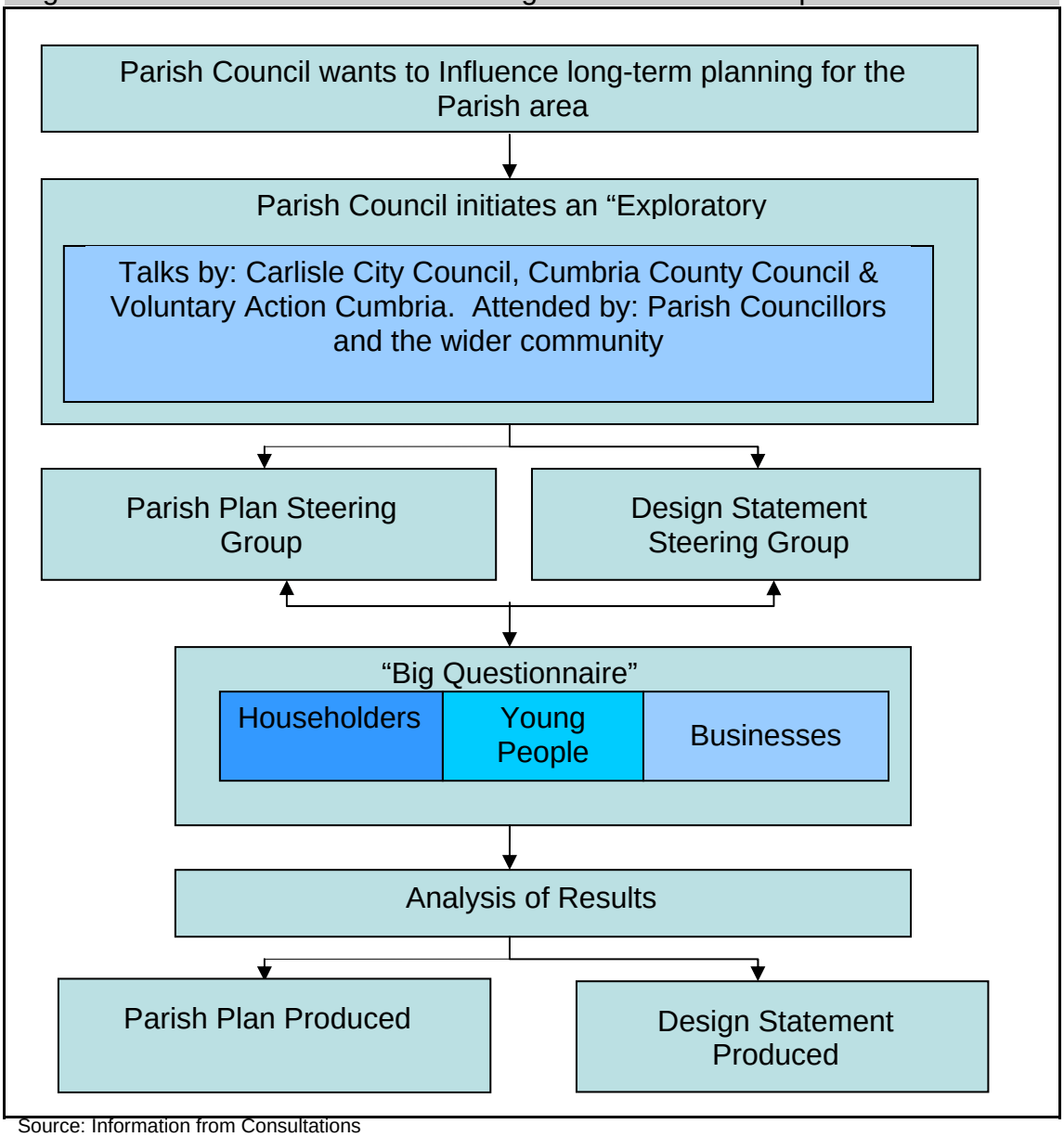
Development of the Parish Plan

The development of the parish plan and the design statement has been driven, from the start, by the parish council and the local community. The parish council, aware of parish plans and the push being made by the Countryside Agency, decided in 2002 to investigate the possibility of developing a parish plan and initiated an exploratory meeting. The parish wanted to be able to influence policies relating to planning and development that would impact on the village. Hence, the meeting was attended by a planning officer from Carlisle City Council (the LPA), a representative from the County Council, and a representative from VAC, the RCC, acted as expert facilitators for parish planning in Cumbria.

All Partners have stressed that it was the parish itself that sought to initiate the process and that, once underway, they led the process themselves and required minimal support. In terms of developing the actual parish plan, this 'self-driven' approach was highly successful, with a strong evidenced based list of actions developed. In terms of the Design Statement, there have been some notable issues. The communities desire to have the document adopted as SPG has not been realised. In developing the document Carlisle City Council, as the Planning Authority, provided support but did not take ownership of the process – as they recognised that the document must reflect the desires of the local community and not of the City Council. However, the final output did not conform to the rigid structures required by planning regulations and was rejected by GONW - much to the disappointment of the community. The City Council has now made more resources available to try and support adoption, but there is concern that the failure to obtain adoption has led to a disengagement with the process by local people.

The process which both the parish plan and design statement were developed is outlined below. It shows how the process was initiated by the local parish, involved a number of service providers in its formative stages, and was developed based on evidence collated.

Figure 1 Dalston Parish Plan and Design Statement Development Process



Source: Information from Consultations

The Parish Council did not feel that there were any organisations or service providers that were 'missing' from the process. Although the survey of residents highlighted policing as a local concern, the Parish Council has always maintained a good relationship with the community police representative, who regularly attends parish meetings. There was therefore seen to be no need to engage the police formally within the process. Dalston has a medical surgery, while the proximity to Carlisle means hospital health provision is also relatively close by. Healthcare provision, generally seen as an access to services problem throughout rural Cumbria, is a concern for the Dalston community. The parish felt, that in terms of the issues important to

the local community, the City Council and County Council were the most significant agencies with which to engage.

Extent of Integration

Approaches to integration have not been formalised and this has inhibited the extent to which priorities have been integrated within wider service delivery structures. As stated by Partner agencies, the parish was felt to have had significant capacity within itself and essentially led the development process internally. Carlisle City Council has a dedicated post of Rural Development Officer who supports community groups including parishes and the Parish Council has a strong relationship with them. Although the County Council also has a dedicated post, contact here is far less frequent. Within Cumbria, VAC acts to support parishes design their plans and provide support in meeting aspirations. However, as they themselves stated, in Carlisle the VAC often only offers responsive expert advice, as locally specific issues are responded to by the Rural Development Officer of the City Council. This approach, and the personal relationships involved were perceived to be good by the parish Council. However, how these relationships can directly influence policy and resource allocation is unclear.

- First, there is not, as yet, any formal mechanism for collating parish plan priorities and ensuring they are responded to. VAC has been collating parish plan priorities within a formal database to make them available to policy makers and the City Council Rural Development Officer has been involved in this. This has been made available to the Carlisle LSP, though no set procedure 'tests' that LSP priorities and those of individual parish plans are aligned. Indeed, the LSP officer admitted that any rural, or individual community issue, is often only known about if the community 'makes enough noise'. That said the LSP has a rural/parishes representative, feels it represents the concerns of parishes, but acknowledges it is difficult to balance the needs urban and rural communities.

- Second, although personal relationships with key individuals dedicated to responding to parish concerns are strong in the case of the Rural Development Officer and VAC support – and less so at the County Council level – it seems apparent that there are few structures in place to disseminate parish plan priorities to decision makers whose remits cover issues of direct relevance to parish plan concerns. For example, discussions surrounding the library issue appear to be taking place bilaterally between the parish council and the appropriate officer, while contact with the district council officers providing youth provision does

not seem to have been established. In both cases, whether the parish plan is acting as a mechanism supporting change is not apparent. It was hoped that the LSP might fulfil this role in the future.

As agencies, both the District and County Council had officers involved in the production of the parish plan. With regard to the design statement, a planning department officer attended the initial exploratory meeting and suggested it could become SPG and influence development control decision making. From being involved at the start, and in trying now to still see how it may be adopted – the process has, at least at a local level, made planners aware of local concerns. Planning officials have 'bought in' to the aspirations of the parish community, without successfully being able to establish the statutory tool the community wanted.

Table 1 lists just some of the tasks included in the parish plan and highlights the extent that they have been included within wider planning and service provision priorities.

Table 1: Selected Parish Plan 'tasks', agencies identified as necessary to involve, and extent of integration

Task (from parish plan)	Agencies (in parish plan)	Extent of Integration to date (from consultations)
New Community Building	• Recreation Assoc. • Victory Hall Committee • Parish Council • Cumbria CC • Carlisle CC	The parish currently has a community building that is regarded as not fit for purpose while the local police house was closed eight years ago. The local library was also recently closed. Therefore, the parish plan includes the action to obtain a new community building – which could also serve as a police office (a separate action in the plan) and house a library (another separate action). Police provision is currently provided from stations outside of the parish while a mobile library visits the parish but is not permanently located there.
Parish/Police Office	• Parish Council • Cumbria Constabulary	
Improved Library Service	• Parish Council • Cumbria CC	To date, little progress has been made, despite considerable efforts by the Parish Council. The Parish has considered the sale of its current building, and offered other buildings as a potential library location but each has failed to meet accessibility requirements. Unless a suitable building is made available the County Council will not consider opening a

Task (from parish plan)	Agencies (in parish plan)	Extent of Integration to date (from consultations)
		library and consider that there has been no loss of amenity as the mobile service is available. Although a community police officer would use any office provided when in the parish, there is no plan for a dedicated officer.
Town Square Regeneration (including solution of parking provision issues)	• Parish Council • Cumbria CC • Carlisle CC • DEFRA • Rural Regeneration Cumbria • North West Development Agency (NWDA) • Other outside agencies	Included within the parish plan, but a strong influence on the Design Statement too, regenerating the town square was an all-encompassing action that would also respond to key concerns around parking and patronage of small businesses. The parish had previously employed consultants to propose designs for the town square and make recommendations on parking arrangements and traffic management. These have not been prioritised by the City Council while it is unclear what role other Agencies might play. That said, the City Council are aware of the issues raised and do recognise the local problems faced -but do not feel they have the sufficient resources to respond.
Youth Co-ordinator Youth Provision	• Parish Council • Parish Council • Carlisle CC • Cumbria CC	Providing better facilities and activities for young people is a key objective of the parish plan and an area where there is strong community support and commitment. A youth club is already run by volunteers. However, there is a feeling locally that greater 'expert' support is needed at times as well as the need for investment in facilities. The community has itself, led developments in this area to date and the issue is known about at the level of the City Council. However, the City Council was unclear on whether it had ever been approached about providing support – particularly 'expert' help from the City Youth Officers. This suggests that there had been a breakdown communicating local need to the

Task (from parish plan)	Agencies (in parish plan)	Extent of Integration to date (from consultations)
		relevant authority.
Festival Week	• Parish Council • Parish Community • Dalston Show Committee	Where the parish felt it had had significant success in achieving an action from within the parish plan was in the holding of a 'Festival Week' which was held from Saturday 5th to Sunday 12th August 2006 for the first time. The Festival Week included a street party, parade, concerts, exhibitions and sports events involving the whole community and attracting many visitors. The Festival was timed to coincide with the Dalston Show which saw an up-lift in visitor numbers. The event will be held again week commencing the 4th August in 2007[51].

Source: Information extracted from the parish plan, web-site, and consultations

Table 1 shows that the parish plan was able to achieve its aims when it had direct control over making that aim a reality. When needing to influence other agencies the parish plan was less successful despite the commitment from community members and local efforts to enable outside agencies to provide support (as with attempts to find a new building to house a library). However, for a number of reasons (see 'Barriers to Integration' below) it has proven very difficult to achieve community priorities when outside agencies have been involved.

With regard to the Design Statement, there have been very significant issues in integrating this within the statutory planning process. It was the desire of the community that the statement would become SPG and therefore, directly influence development policy impacting on the parish area. Although the City Council recognise local development issues and the aspirations of the community – the structure and technical content led to the document being rejected by Government Office. Therefore, it does not have any statutory influence on planning within the parish. The City Council is now dedicating resources to support the parish in having some form of SPG produced that meets the aspirations of the community.

Concluding, whilst the parish plan and Design Statement have had a significant impact in raising awareness of community aspirations and needs, it

51 The full story of the Dalston Festival (2006) – and the events held can be witnessed on dedicated pages of the Dalston website -http://www.dalston.org.uk/DalstonEvents/Festival%202006/index.cfm

has not had a notable impact in influencing local authority priorities or those of other agencies.

Barriers to integration

From undertaking consultations with the parish plan group and local Partners, a number of barriers to integration were established:

- Lack of engagement from within the service provider organisation - in this case, the parish representatives spoke of a significant difference between the City Council (prepared to engage) and the County Council (often referred to as 'remote') while it was also recognised that the LSP needed to be engaging with the process too.

- Lack of County and City Councillor involvement – this was raised by Partners at the City and County scale though not by parish representatives. It was pointed out that Local Authority officers are accountable to elected members but those members are rarely involved in parish planning. The reason is that if they became involved, they could potentially lose any voting right on the Council if it was seen that they were an interested party. Allowing County and City Councillors to be involved, without risking their voting right, was acknowledged as being a potential means of enabling better communication between parishes and the officers whose remits they were seeking to influence.

- Lack of specialist knowledge - from the Parish Council perspective (but also acknowledged by the City Council planning officer) – there is too great an expectancy on individuals, without specialist experience, to produce a plan compliant with statutory requirements. In Dalston it was this mismatch that has been an issue in producing the Design Statement to a standard that conforms to the requirements necessary for it to be SPG. Although the City Council might have intervened more – they were conscious not to take over the process and dilute the communities own aspirations and ownership. Without changing the planning policy radically, or requiring parish plans to obtain (potentially at high cost) planning expertise it would be hard to resolve this issue. The outcome of this issue however is twofold:

  - A failure to achieve objectives – as the plan does not have the weight to achieve the objectives of the parish plan group

  - Creates disenchantment amongst the community involved – causing them to disengage because they feel they have not got

the ability to influence change. This is a real possibility in Dalston as the City Council and Parish Council consider the future for the Design Statement.

- Funding - the view of VAC was that greater funding for producing plans could help overcome issues with regard obtaining specialist knowledge etc. and they do provide some grants in this area. For service providers, greater funding would enable them to a) dedicate more resources to the process, and b) accomplish more of the aspirations of the community. Interestingly however, when referring to both parish planning and delivery of actions the community felt they could achieve themselves - there was not felt to be a funding shortage but instead, too many sources from which funding could be obtained. The result was that too much time was spent trying to understand the complicated networks of acronyms to which the parish could apply for discretionary grant assistance.

None of these barriers are likely to be unique to Dalston. Indeed, many of those consulted, including those representing the parish are, or have been, involved in numerous parish plans and expressed these barriers as generic to parish planning. What is perhaps unique is the combinations of possible barriers and how they interact. What was obvious in Dalston was that the plan had been well produced, had strong buy-in, and a substantive evidence base. It was also supported by a number of strategic partners who wished to help the parish achieve its objectives. Where the failures occurred it was in the systems by which those objectives could be realised. Some consultees felt that a more standardised approach to parish planning would enable a more systemic appreciation of the wants for individual communities. However, others suggested any standardisation of parish planning would prevent individual communities from actually defining their own requirements.

Critical success factors and points of good practice

Many of the critical success factors defined by consultees mirrored what were described as barriers to parish planning and integration. These included:

- The need to have community buy-in,
- Having ‘a willing ear’ in the City/County council that was prepared to listen
- Funding to start the process and, where necessary, buy expert knowledge.

A number of particular success factors associated with the Dalston process were picked up upon. These are all cases of good practice:

- Having a well defined process, pre-determined timescale and allocation of responsibility. Following the exploratory meeting, it was determined that there would be a need to establish an evidence base, analyse the data, and separately manage the production of the parish plan and the Design Statement. Who would do what, and by when, was established at the start 'maintaining pace' in developing the documents.

- Significant community capacity. As already discussed, Partners recognised that Dalston had considerable capacity and that it led its own process with minimal support. This appears to have helped achieve considerable ownership of plan actions – indeed, where the plan has had most success in achieving actions so far, has been in those it could lead itself without the need for outside help. Therefore, in achieving Actions, community ownership and capacity to self-deliver appears essential.

- Self confidence amongst the planning group. One thing that stood out about Dalston to council officers, relative to other parishes in Carlisle, is that the parish group is very vocal. Terms such as 'dynamic', 'having political clout' and 'noisy' were all used to describe, in a positive way, the parishes approach to making its priorities known. It is clear that this has been crucial in raising awareness of community aims. It is possible that this could have been achieved without the plan, but partners felt that the 'evidence' associated with the parish plan added weight to the argument being made.

Grenoside, Sheffield

February 2007

Introduction

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Grenoside Village is a part of Ecclesfield parish. The parish of Ecclesfield covers an area of about 22 square kilometres of north Sheffield in Yorkshire and the Humber.
Nature of the parish	Grenoside is urban in nature.
Population	The parish is one of the most highly populated in Northern England with 31,3609 people (source: Census 2001), although the village itself has around 4,000 people (source: Village Plan). 97% of the population is White British.
Local governance structure	Ecclesfield Parish Council sits below a single tier authority – Sheffield City Council.
Preparation / Publication	Consultations on the Grenoside plan began in May 2003, although the main period of consultation was undertaken from 2004 to 2006. The plan was published in Nov 2006.

Parish plan objectives

The Grenoside Village Plan introduces the village and its history, with the main body of the document on the plan's development, research methodology and findings. The priorities are summarised in "What happens next?" section (Table 1).

Table 1: Plan objectives

Implementation	Issues to be tackled
To be implemented by residents themselves	• Village website • Village Post Office

Implementation	Issues to be tackled
	• Computer training • Anti-social behaviour and conduct • Litter • Dog mess • Noise • Vehicle damage to grass verges
To be implemented through other agencies	• Local library • Local policing • Grass verges on Main Street • The park • Dog mess and litter bins • Public transport • Youth clubs and youth working • Protecting the environment (including the separate Village Design Statement) • Street lighting and state of the roads and pavements • Retention of buildings

Source: Grenoside Village Plan

Development of the Parish Plan

Sheffield's North Area Panel (NAP) and the Yorkshire Rural Community Council (YRCC) were key in obtaining Rural Objective 1 funding, and then the NAP ensured villages in North Sheffield were aware that the pot was available for parish planning. YRCC provided some base information on putting together a plan, and from then on it was very much a community-run planning process.

The parish council was a catalyst, and brought on board interested parties from the village, who volunteered their time and input. The NAP provided advice on questionnaires and some comments on drafting, and is now involved in the implementation of the plan. No other stakeholders would have been "welcomed" by the parish group, though City Council officers commented that their inputs may have been useful in easing integration. The local planning officer in particular commented that the lack of local planning input into the design statement has resulted in a document with no material weight.

Extent of Integration

There has been some progress with respect to the refurbishment of the park (with the Park and Woodlands department of Sheffield City Council) and improving Youth Services (with Sheffield Futures, an independent charity that delivers youth services in Sheffield). With regards to the park, a further consultation exercise was undertaken (in many ways duplicating work of the village plan) and a masterplan has been developed – a public meeting was held in February 2007 announcing what will be done with Section 106 funds. Objective 1 funding has been obtained to provide youth services in Grenoside (along with other villages in the north of Sheffield). There has been limited progress with the police, with whom there is an ongoing dialogue through the parish council, though presence in the village has not noticeably increased.

Village plan/design statement has not been integrated into local planning. The aim was for the design statement to be SPG, but the legislation has changed and now SPDs (replacing SPG) require additional work such as sustainability appraisals. Therefore the design statement holds no material weight. The design statement aimed to save old council buildings, but was unable to do so, it had no material weight. Also identified were the old Victorian School Building and moving the Green Belt back to its former position. The former has been successful and the latter has been proposed, but these would probably have occurred without the Village Plan/Design Statement.

The extent to which mainstream service providers have integrated parish plan priorities is very limited, though some early signs of progress have been achieved with certain services:

- The village plan has raised awareness of community objectives, though perception amongst members of the parish group is that this is limited. However, local service providers and planning claim that awareness has increased.
- There is more contact and an improved relationship with the police. With other service providers, the feeling amongst the parish group is that there is more contact, but not really an improved relationship.
- The delivery agenda of providers has not altered as of yet, except in the one-off cases with the Park and youth services. The plan was only produced in 2006 so it is still early days.
- No extra mainstream resources have been levered in, although external funding (e.g. EU funding from the Objective 1 programme) has been successfully obtained.

Sheffield Futures (delivery agency of youth services) have been particularly proactive, and were keen to work in partnership through the NAP. One reason for this was the fact that they are an independent charity, and external funding could be sourced because of their charitable status. The Park and Woodlands department of the Council have been proactive, partly as a result of the availability of some funding. Other areas have been less proactive, e.g. the Highways Department of the Council, because Grenoside is not in a priority area. Politics play a part here as priorities are greater in the deprived areas of the inner city.

The planning achievements may well have happened without the Village Plan, and improvements to the Park would also have occurred, though the consultation did help to focus minds on priorities for the Park. With regards to youth services, the Village Plan helped to provide evidence to aid the funding bid. It is too early to say whether any services have improved.

Approaches to integration

The village plan was only finished towards the end of 2006, and it took 18 months-2 years to do. The plan committee's remit was to produce the plan not implement it, and after the hard work put in (mainly on a voluntary basis), there has been a lull following its production. The parish group is meeting in the spring to see how best to take forward the plan into implementation.

At parish level, liaison with mainstream providers is via letter and active parish councillors. With regards to planning objections, they try to get as many people as possible to write. There has been limited success with regards to these mechanisms. Improvements could be made through using interest groups such as the conservation group and others setting up 'Friends of Grenoside Park'.

At Area Panel level, mechanisms have been more successful, e.g. through collective discussion with Sheffield Futures and handing over evidence to the Park and Woodlands Department. Writing to other council officers has been done for other issues, but it is much harder to get a collective discussion, e.g. due to political reasons and lack of priority attached to Grenoside (and also other parishes with plans). The view of the Area Panel is that they are the best and strongest route for integration, as they are recognised in Sheffield with the Council and other service providers. There is a lack of understanding of what parishes are, partly because there are few of them. With a full set of parish/village plans (all in the North Area), the NAP will be able to draw on this evidence for its area plan, which will have more weight with service providers.

The drive for undertaking the planning process came from the village community itself – once the NAP and YRCC had raised awareness of the availability of funding.

The drive behind engagement now seems to be variable and disjointed. There is a perception in the parish group that all engagement to integrate priorities comes from the community, and they recognise that they will need key groups/individuals from within the community to drive forward priorities. They did not identify the NAP as a significant engagement route and only appeared to be working in partnership with them to a minor extent. However, the NAP sees the drive behind engagement in integrating priorities as a partnership between itself and the parish. Communication is clearly an issue.

Barriers to integration

The key barrier to integration (as identified by the NAP) is that Grenoside (and the similar areas with plans) are not priority ones for Sheffield City Council given the significant deprivation in parts of the inner cities. This manifests itself to the parish group in the inaccessibility of key organisations/council departments.

It is unlikely that Grenoside on its own would be able to overcome this barrier, though the parish group's perception is that community level interest groups and finding local interest within service providers is the key to engagement. The NAP thinks that the combined weight of village/parish plans needs to be used through the area planning process.

A further barrier identified is that, in many instances, success is dependent on there being spare funding or funding pots to bid for. This is often not available for some mainstream services such as those services related to litter and highways.

With regards to planning, the changes in legislation mean that it is hard for village/parish plans or Design Statements to hold material weight. Success in producing an SPD needs to involve local planning officers in every step of the process (planning officers were involved in Loxley, Sheffield). However, in the case of Grenoside, the lack of involvement of local planning officers (and other service providers) in producing the plan has probably contributed to a lack of progress.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

There are two key success factors for those areas where progress has been made:

- energy of the parish group and having interested parties to drive forward priorities
- willingness of all parties to come together for common aims.

The village planning process itself has been successful in generating softer outcomes in the community, such as greater community interest. The response rate for the residents survey was just over 50%, which is high, and means that the document is potentially very useful (e.g. for funding bids) as hard evidence of what community objectives are.

In improving integration, it may be worthwhile to partner with other village/parish plans in the NAP area in order to carry more weight.

High Bickington, Torridge, Devon

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	High Bickington is in the South West region, in North Devon. It is situated 9 miles from Barnstaple.
Nature of the parish	High Bickington is rural in nature.
Population	High Bickington has a small, predominately white British (98%, Census 2001), population of around 700 people.
Local governance structure	The local governance structure that High Bickington sits within it two-tier, comprising Torridge District Council and Devon County Council.
Preparation / Publication	In 2000 a Parish Appraisal was held with subsequent exhibitions and parish planning exercises for the local community in 2001 and 2002. The plan was published in 2003.

Parish Plan objectives

The High Bickington parish plan is a 20 year plan (from 2003 to 2023) "designed to provide a blueprint for change and development that will regenerate and sustain rural life over the first two decades of the 21st Century".

Table 1: Aims of the Parish Plan

The principle aim of the plan is to enable the development of a level of housing, educational, social and economic infrastructure that is sufficient to:

- enable the provision of affordable housing
- build and restore economic prosperity
- create and sustain local employment
- provide educational and community facilities designed for life in the 21st Century
- find solutions to local parking and traffic issues
- find solutions to the above which meet environmental standards

Source: High Bickington parish plan

In order to achieve this, the parish plan had two main priorities. The first was to develop a comprehensive plan for the land at Little Bickington Farm. This plan was to be made up of a number of different developments including: quality retail outlets; a new primary school; community facilities; affordable housing; a health centre; space for parking; and a wildlife area. The second priority was to directly address 10 key local issues, some of which related directly to the land at Little Bickington but the majority of which were key local needs, these included: new parking facilities; a conservation project for the village; transport and access issues; and traffic management.

The initial impetus for the development of the parish plan stems from a desire of Devon County Council to find ways of involving local communities in the regeneration process as well as ensuring that there was a 'best value' approach to the use of publicly owned resources. Through this desire, and in partnership with Torridge District Council and High Bickington Parish Council, Devon County Council agreed to the development of a 'pilot project' in which the local community were to be involved in planning for the disposal and subsequent redevelopment of the County Council owned farm at Little Bickington – land that had recently become vacant on the retirement of its tenant. The aim was that the local community would plan in a way that added social value to the capital released from the farm as well as building capacity for education, employment and economic prosperity within the local community on the site.

This process was started in 2000 and the planning application for the land at Little Bickington Farm was submitted in November 2003 and was approved unanimously by Torridge District Council in April 2004. However, in December 2004 it was called in for inspection by the Government Office because it was outside the development line and a departure from the local plan. In January 2006 the subsequent planning enquiry commenced and a negative decision was given in May 2006 on the basis that the proposed development was outside of the development line.

Development of the Parish Plan

The development of the High Bickington parish plan involved a number of key organisations and groups. As outlined above the initial impetus for the process came from Devon County Council who saw, through the land at Little Bickington Farm, a real option to develop a new approach to community planning. This opportunity was quickly picked up upon by local residents who, after some early consultation with the County Council, created the High Bickington Project 2000 (now known as the High Bickington Community

Property Trust) – a not-for-profit voluntary organisation made up of local residents that sought to work in partnership with the statutory authorities, to consult with the local community and to identify possible ways forward. In 2000 the project carried out a successful Parish Appraisal (72% response rate) along with subsequent exhibitions and parish planning exercises for the local community in 2001 (300 residents attended) and 2002 (250 residents attending). This consultation process enabled the project to identify the key local priorities for both the land at Bickington Farm and the village as a whole.

In order to build on the work undertaken by Project 2000 and to achieve a balanced and forward looking approach to local development the High Bickington Parish Council obtained a grant of £5,000 form the 'Vital Villages' initiative. This funding enabled all of the work to be drawn together into a formal parish plan.

Throughout all this work both Project 2000 and the Parish Council received full support from the County and Torridge District Council who often worked in partnership with the parish and provided officer support when it was required.

This process was felt to be extremely effective and there were no perceived gaps that could have been filled through wider engagement or other partners.

Extent of integration

Significant progress was made in developing a comprehensive plan for the land at Little Bickington Farm. The Community Property Trust (CPT) was particularly successful in developing a plan that had the full support of the local community, councillors (regardless of party affiliation), and staff within both the County and District Councils.

The development of this plan was the key priority for the parish as it was felt that the subsequent development would provide the catalyst for addressing other local issues. As a result the focus on other issues, since the development of the parish plan in 2003, has been limited aside from modest improvements in transport: an increase, from two to four, in the number of buses serving the village each day and more trains run to Barnstaple and Exeter from the local station.

The failure to obtain planning consent has therefore severely hindered the progress made by the parish.

At the strategic level, the parish plan has been integrated into the planning system as both the district and the county see parish planning as an important strand of community planning – and the fact that Devon County Council have

actively sought to use the local community to develop the land at Little Bickington is a good example of their commitment to this process.

However, at the local level, integration into the district planning processes has been less, a factor that has hindered the proposed development at Little Bickington farm. Whilst the proposed development at Little Bickington Farm did have the full support of both Councillors and officers at the county and district level it was however developed as separate to the Local Development Framework. This fact meant that it not only had to progress as a separate planning application but that it also had to go to the Government Office for approval because it was a departure from the local plan: factors that posed a much greater risk to it obtaining planning consent.

The development of the parish plan has also notably raised the awareness of the community objectives and there is a much greater understanding amongst partners about what needs to be done in the area. The proposal for the land at Little Bickington Farm has also further raised the profile of the area, both in terms of what parishes can achieve but also as an option for actually delivering LSP objectives.

A strong working relationship with both the county and the district councils exists and has from the outset of the process and there is a real sense of support within these organisations for what the parish is seeking to achieve. These relationships have been hindered by staff changes, but have been helped by the fact that the county and district now have dedicated staff that are responsible for improving and developing relationships with the parishes in their respective local authority areas.

Service providers, primarily the county and district councils, are beginning to modify their agendas and the development of a community planning database will definitely help move this forward. However, the failure to get planning approval for the land at Little Bickington Farm has hindered this process as this development would have 'forced' service providers to modify/revise their delivery agendas.

As a result of the focus on the land at Little Bickington Farm and the subsequent development of the planning application, the response from mainstream providers has been limited to the county and district councils, both of whom have been closely involved in helping the parish and the Community Property Trust to develop the planning application.

There has been no change in service delivery exclusively attributable to parish plan priorities aside from modest improvements in the bus and train services in the village. It was felt that had the development at Little Bickington been approved then there would have been much greater change in service

delivery. This would have provided more incentive for mainstream providers to engage with the parish plan, particularly around the development of a new school and new houses.

Barriers to integration

The key barrier to the implementation of the High Bickington parish plan has been the failure to obtain planning consent for the development at Little Bickington Farm.

A number of other common barriers were also identified. It was felt by all consultees that these barriers hindered the integration of the plan and would continue to do so until they were resolved. They included:

- The lack of funding available within mainstream organisations to help deliver the priorities identified in the parish plan
- The different boundaries that mainstream organisations work to make integration difficult, a factor that is then exacerbated by the fact that few mainstream providers plan work at the parish level
- There is limited capacity within the community to ensure that an adequate plan in not just developed but that its priorities are delivered. It was felt that capacity is limited by both apathy within the local community but also by exhaustion as those initially involved stop as a result of the time and commitment required
- Parish plans do not link and align easily with other 'local' strategic polices such as the LAA or the Community Strategies. In turn, this makes it difficult to fit parish priorities and issues into the implementation and delivery plans of key local organisations

Currently two steps are being taken to address some of these barriers. The first is the creation of a Task Group to drive forward the Little Bickington development in light of the failed planning application and to prepare a new application that takes on board the comments made by the planning inspector. The fact that this group is chaired by the Chief Executive of Devon County Council and contains the Chief Executive of Torridge District Council along with local MPs, key county and district council staff and the key members of the Community Property Trust underlines how important this development is, not just to the parish but to the district and county as well: its success is seen as critical in promoting and developing effective community planning.

The second has been the creation of five parish partnerships within the Torridge district and the creation and development of the community planning database. Both of these developments will enable mainstream services to work with parishes more easily as they allow common priorities and issues to emerge across a larger geographic scale and highlight those issues/priorities that most need intervention.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

The consultations identified a number of common critical success factors, including:

- The need for committed and enthusiastic local people to develop and deliver the parish plan.
- Engagement of the wider local community around issues that appeal to their self interest – ensuring that the majority of the community are able to voice their opinions.
- Involvement of a wide range of service providers at a senior, decision making level, as it is only through this high level engagement that different priorities will actually be addressed.
- Adequate funding and resources to develop the plan. The 'seed corn' funding available through different grants was key in enabling the plan to consult with the local community.
- Engagement with the LSP as it is through this forum that local partners operate and local priorities are identified and then sought to be addressed.

Ilkley, Bradford

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Ilkley is located in the Yorkshire and Humber region in Bradford.
Nature of the parish	The parish is urban according to the Defra/ONS classification, though it is on the fringe of the Bradford district and acts as an important service centre for a rural hinterland.
Population	The total population in Ilkley is around 25,000 95% of which are White British (Census 2001).
Local governance structure	Ilkley sits within a single-tiered local governance structure – Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MDC).[52]
Preparation / Publication	In Ilkley, consultations began in 2004 and the plan was published July 2005.

Parish Plan objectives

The Ilkley parish plan contains a history of Ilkley, electoral information and a series of action plans. The action plans are by theme, with objectives summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: Ilkley Parish Plan objectives

Action plan area	Key actions/objectives
Built environment	• Stronger Planning Controls on Development in Ilkley. • Analysis of effect of building in Ilkley, and application of findings.
Anti-social behaviour	• Dog owners to be made to take responsibility for their Dog's fouling. • Chewers of gum to be made to take responsibility for the disposal of gum.

52 Bradford MDC is a Beacon Council for the delivery of rural services and has gone from seven to seventeen parishes in recent years. Another ten to fifteen are under discussion.

Action plan area	Key actions/objectives
Cinema	• Feasibility study into viability of introduction of a cinema in the Town. • Feasibility study into using the Kings Hall for showing of films.
Management of open spaces	• Timetable to be produced and made available for street cleaning. • Timetable to be produced and made available for cleaning of gullies and arrangements to be made to deal with parked cars that hinder street cleaning. • Study of condition of moorland paths to identify work required (including action plan).
School places	• Updated policy for identifying school places in Ilkley. • Involvement of Bradford Education in planning system to ensure local schools can accommodate children resulting from developments.
Sports centre	• Feasibility study into provision of a municipal sports centre, the accommodation required and location.
Facilities and help for the elderly	• Transport (shopping, Access bus). • Befriending, prescriptions delivery, assistance with shopping. • Pension and other information, form filling support. • Seats on street and in shops; disabled access to shops. • Central Point for services information. • Information for organising trips.
Vehicle management	• Measures to deter speeding, enforcement of speed limits, and education of drivers. • Reorganisation of parking within the Town. • Public transport co-ordination. • Enforcement of traffic regulations.
Youth issues	• Regular contact with young people in the Town – possible formation of Youth Council. • Identification of exactly what young people would like to be available and what they would use. • Provision of the required services.

Source: Ilkley parish plan

Development of the Parish Plan

The parish plan was led by the parish council, with support from two volunteers (a member of Ilkley Civic Society and a former parish councillor). Other organisations and people were involved at different stages and with respect to particular areas of interest, e.g. sports clubs, Age Concern. A survey of residents was done via the parish newsletter.

The parish group would have welcomed more input from the Planning Department (for the VDS) and Education Bradford with regard to school places (which has been an issue for a long time). It was noted by the Policy Development Service that Ilkley has historically 'kept itself to itself', was one of the first plans, so there was limited input from the council.

Extent of Integration

There has been progress on some areas. Facilities for the elderly has seen progress with a drop in centre at the medical centre – aided by funding to do a survey through Age Concern and working with the Primary Care Trust. Additional seats have been provided in the town, which was funded largely out of the parish's precept, but with support from Bradford MDC for installation. With respect to youth services, some progress has been made with a voluntary organisation, Churches Together in Ilkley, which has held sessions at a local venue.

The Riverside Gardens have seen improvement (although not a specific priority identified in the plan), through the parish council working with the Parks and Recreation Department. Most of the funding came from Bradford MDC, though some of it came from the parish precept – the ability to fund in partnership was important to success here. A further driver was the best value review, which criticised the department for its lack of input into rural services. The Parks and Recreation Department does not think that they would have necessarily made as much progress without the parish mechanisms, which facilitate partnership and can be used to provide the evidence of community needs (e.g. consultation through the planning process).

Less progress has been made in other areas, in particular school places. The problem from the point of view of residents is that schools with places are not the nearest or most desirable. From the perspective of Education Bradford, they take an holistic view of the Ilkley area and currently there are more places than children. The argument, which sometimes comes from the parish, is that the most popular schools should be expanded and the least popular ones closed, but has not proved workable to date. With respect to planning, the village design statement (separate from the plan) holds some weight.

The extent to which mainstream service providers have integrated parish plan priorities was seen by consultees as mixed, though the parish group does not have high expectations of being able to influence service providers to a great degree:

- The perception of the parish group is that it has not raised awareness of community objectives amongst local service delivery organisations. Ilkley is seen as well-off and so comes down the list in terms of priority areas. From the perspective of the Parks and Recreation Department, parish planning is seen as important in understanding and providing an evidence base for community needs because it is a source of more information than is otherwise available. However, the consultee in the Parks and Recreation department had not received a copy of the parish plan.
- The parish council has improved its relationship with Bradford MDC over recent years. This was not due to the plan, but more to do with the precept that the parish has, which has enabled them to do things in partnership (e.g. Riverside Gardens, installation of seats). The improved relationship was backed up by Bradford MDC, which suggested that its relationships with all parish councils were poor in 2001.
- The group does not think that mainstream resources have been reallocated, though they have not expected increases in these resources. The expectation is to access more external resource, when particular interest groups develop proposals and bids for particular issues, e.g. cinema.

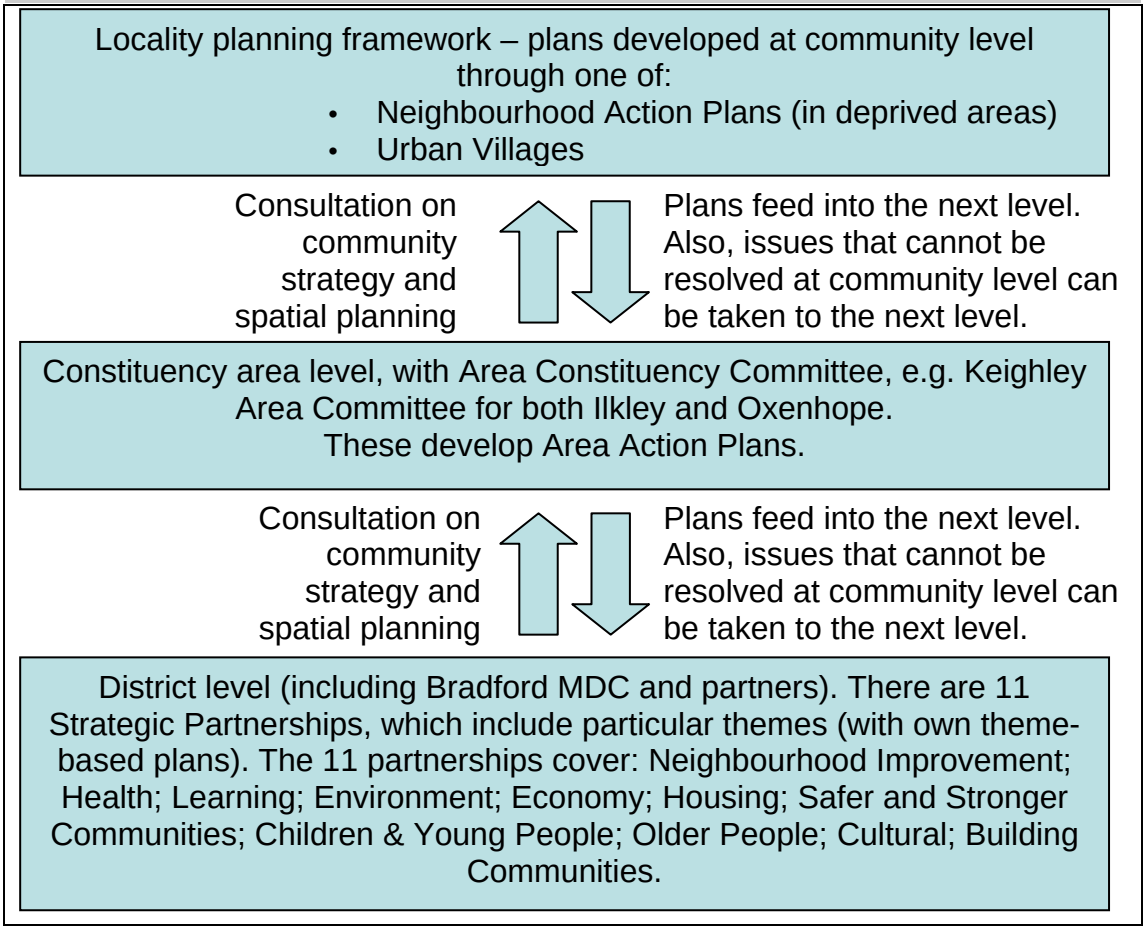
Approaches to integration

The integration from the parish goes mainly via the Parish Clerk, who has built up a range of contacts with different service providers. These have helped in developing contacts and improving the relationships with providers – though not really directly attributable to the plan itself. In a few cases, individuals go directly to service providers, and seek advice from the Parish Clerk. The parish group does believe that the parish plan gives them confidence in speaking on behalf of residents and in spending/making bids for funding.

Formal communication routes do exist in Bradford – revolving around a Strategic Partnership approach. The parish group does not seem to be fully aware of these formal routes, which are illustrated in Figure 1. Bradford MDC sees the parish plans as a key part of how they will do spatial planning in the future. There is also a Parish Council Liaison Group, chaired at executive

level from within the Council and including all five Area Committee Chairs, parish councils, Senior Planning level and officers from across the council.

Figure 1: Communication routes



Barriers to integration

Both the parish group and the Parks and Recreation Department identified finance as a key barrier. From the perspective of Parks and Recreation, capital funding is often easier to come by, but lack of revenue funding is a major barrier, as this inhibits the delivery of a sustainable project. This is where the partnership has been tested, as open space is not a key corporate priority for the Council. One potential way to overcome this is to use the parish precept for sustainable delivery of services. This is done in North Yorkshire (e.g. Sutton) where parishes use their precepts to take some responsibility for services (potentially helped by having a two-tier governance structure). Ilkley's parish group highlighted the need to prevent any possible double-rating (whereby the parish uses its precept to fund things that residents feel should be paid for out of normal council tax).

The parish group also identified that it takes time to change things and get different agencies to come together. This was found with the youth aspect of

the plan, where it became apparent that the council's youth worker and Churches Together had never met, but were doing similar things.

A key barrier/weakness (as identified by Bradford MDC) is that plans can develop as wish lists or NIMBY statements, which are not implementable. The policy Development Service consultee would like to see parish plans include business/implementation plans, and it is here that local officers can provide support and advice. This will help to move away from the scattergun approach to a more considered one (which is starting to happen).

It has become apparent that there has been a lack of sharing of parish plans with service providers. The parish group suggest that Bradford MDC read and approve the parish plan, whereas two consultees from providers indicated that they had not been sent the parish plan (which was common across Bradford). Service providers also consider that their involvement in the planning process might have been useful to ease integration. For example, Education Bradford may have been able to identify the practical difficulties in some of the proposals regarding school places. Education Bradford also noted that parish planning could be useful in helping develop extended school provision and the community use of school facilities, given the community consultation aspect of the planning process.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

There is a range of success factors in helping to ensure integration and these have varied depending on the person consulted:

- working between communities and service providers in partnership and funding things in partnership
- plans being used to identify needs of communities in a way that could be aligned with service provider targets
- from the perspective of the parish group, having local interest in particular priorities will be important, in particular objectives around having a local cinema and sports centre.
- Parish Plan Liaison Group, bringing together senior level officers of Bradford MDC and parish councils
- honesty about what can be achieved.

The joint working – in terms of preparing funding bids, identifying community needs and engagement helping with implementation – was thought to be easily transferable to other areas.

Llanymynech and Pant, Oswestry, Shropshire

20 February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Llanymynech and Pant (Llanymynech) is on the Welsh border of Shropshire in the West Midlands[53].
Nature of the parish	Llanymynech is a rural parish.
Population	The parish has a population of 1,500. Ninety-nine per cent of which are White British (Census 2001).
Local governance structure	Llanymynech is located within the ward of Llanyblodwel and Pant, in the district of Oswestry, and operates within a two-tier local government structure, comprising Oswestry Borough Council (OBC) and Shropshire County Council (SCC).
Preparation / Publication	Following a productive Village Appraisal in 1998, Llanymynech and Pant parish council decided early in 2004 to carry out a parish plan in order to update the findings of the Appraisal. Parish plan proposals were launched in February 2004 with public consultations and Parish Plan Steering Committee meetings continuing through 2004 and 2005. The plan was published in February 2006.

Parish Plan Objectives

Llanymynech's parish plan is organised around four main headings:

- Community safety and transport – the most important issues to emerge from the 2005 parish plan questionnaire was the problem of ever-increasing traffic flow through the villages. The desire of the vast majority of residents was to improve road safety with overwhelming support for a by-pass.

53 It should be noted that Llanymynech's parish plan is unique in that in covers a small part of Wales (Carreghofa).

- Amenities – the parish questionnaire identified that over three quarters of residents thought that bus shelters were needed in the parish, and others felt more dog waste bins, recycling points and litter bins were required.
- Information and communication – there was a lack of knowledge amongst residents about sources of information and about services and activities in the parish. Nearly three quarters regarded additional sources of information about local matters, either through a parish magazine or a community information point, as an important priority.
- Health – various health issues were agreed as significant by parishioners, including a prescription pick-up point, a health living clinic and improved access to GP and NHS dental services.
- Community and environment – identified as an attractive prospect for the villages was the restoration of the canal and steam railway. A heritage centre was also suggested.

From these priority themes the parish developed two action plans – one of these including objectives requiring low-cost or local action, the other four priorities requiring action at a strategic level. Both action plans identified whether the objective was a high or medium priority, the desired timescale and the organisation with lead responsibility for realisation. A summary of these actions plans can be found below in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Low cost or local action priorities

Theme	**Priority**	**Method**
Community and Environment	Publicise parish plan findings	Organise a sharing event
Community Safety and Transport	Address current road safety concerns; survey of road-side residents; traffic count.	Organise meeting with Borough Councillor and officers from relevant public sector agencies.
Amenities	Litter and dog-dirt bins	Contact OBC Environmental Health and Carreghofa CC; monitor dog-dirt bin emptying frequency.
Amenities	Play area improvements	Review available and potential future outdoor play facilities; form a task group to look into

Theme	Priority	Method
		funding opportunities.
Amenities	Energy and water supply	Lobby power and water suppliers about variations in supply.
Information and Communication	Retail development	Feedback to local shops about needs.
Information and Communication	Improve community information networks	Work with Parish Magazine organisers; provide more information on notice boards and in shops; provide information leaflet for new residents.
Health	Prescription Pick-up service	Liaise with PCTs/GPs and local shopkeepers

Source: Llanymynech and Pant parish plan

Table 2: Strategic action priorities

Theme	Priority	Method
Community and Environment	Prepare a Village Design Statement	Investigate potential funding sources; discuss with planners with regard to future development.
Community and Environment	Parish map	Consultation with OBC.
Community Safety and Transport	Lobby for by-pass	Copy parish plan to all relevant authorities, MPs etc.
Community Safety and Transport	Address current road safety concerns	Gather information to support installation of traffic calming measures; investigate de-trunking option.
Community Safety and Transport	Provision of bus shelters	Contact OBC, to investigate; identify possible bus shelter sites.
Community Safety and	Narrow lanes initiative	Highlight safety and

Theme	Priority	Method
Transport		access difficulties around narrow lanes.
Community Safety and Transport	Increasing use of public transport, travel concessions, travel outside office hours and cycle routes	Contact SCC Rural Transport Project officer; invite officer to visit and talk about cycle ways
Amenities	Provision of a recycling facility	Identify a suitable site; contact environmental health departments and recycling centre providers.
Health	Provision of Healthy Living Clinic	Liaise with PCT, health visitors and CAB; consult with Village Hall Committee.
Health	Lack of opportunity for resident to access NHS dentist	Lobby PCT

Source: Llanymynech and Pant parish plan.

Development of the Parish Plan

Parish plan proposals were launched on 21st February 2004 at a community consultation day in Llanymynech Village Hall. Information about the outcomes of the 1998 appraisal and the purpose of parish plans was presented. A further public meeting was held at a school in Pant in March 2004. Following the meeting in Pant, 16 residents signed up to help establish the plan; from these 16 a Parish Plan Steering Committee of 10 was formed, including four Llanymynech and Pant parish councillors, one Carreghofa (in Wales) community councillor and the clerks to both councils. Some of these participants had been involved in the previous Village Appraisal.

The Steering Committee researched current and planned provisions in all aspects of local life, meeting on a monthly basis. A questionnaire was designed covering environment, amenities, services to the community and leisure and tourism. Over 1100 questionnaires were distributed and collected during March and April 2005, with just over 600 individuals answering most of the questions. The Steering Group continued to meet through 2005 to record and analyse the data from the questionnaire, before developing the parish

action plan. This was subsequently distributed to all local residents and filed with local governing bodies.

Whilst the parish planning groups was responsible for development of the plan, advice was provided on the approach to take by the RCC and the groups looked at other parish plans within Shropshire, and the previous Village Appraisal, for ideas and guidance. Funding for the project was provided by the former Countryside Agency through Shropshire's RCC, which continued to provide advice, support and encouragement throughout. The county council also played a supportive role at meetings and there was some informal liaison with the OBC.

Extent of Integration

There was a general consensus that the parish plan process has given local people confidence to tackle the authorities and has raised awareness of parish concerns. It was also noted that, due to their robust consultation techniques, parish plans can help to highlight and justify where there is a need for a particular local service and various agencies within Shropshire have utilised the plan for this purpose. The plan seems to have acted as a catalyst or springboard for action, or for encouraging partnership through cluster events. It was also noted that SCC approaches the parish to ask for its views when it is developing its plans.

As to whether the parish plan has had a tangible impact on service delivery, comments were more variable. Some consultees commented that the plan had experienced success in drawing down funding from the county council and noted a variety of examples, at county level, where parish plans have been an influencing factor.

The county council, in particular has demonstrated a receptive attitude towards parish plans, recognising the evidence that they provide and the way in which they help enhance understanding of local people and their needs. Parish planning is now actually part of Shropshire's LAA. Key to this has been a firm commitment and buy-in at the chief executive level. The county council has organised cluster group events, involving parishes within close proximity to each other, around common issues and problems identified across multiple parish plans. It was recognised that local issues can often be similar and, therefore, shared solutions may be possible. Seven different clusters have been developed across the county, in conjunction with the RCC, bringing together people on one or two common issues. Relevant service providers also attended these events.

A cluster event was held in Llanymynech in September 2006. One of the problems common to Llanymynech and other parishes was a lack of information about services on offer. The answer to this, derived through discussions at the cluster event, was using parish magazines to improve dissemination. Similarly, there were unmet transport needs in surrounding parishes. Following the identification of this through parish plans and the cluster events, the county has taken a far more active role in a dial-a-ride community car scheme, providing 50% of the administration costs involved.

Further to the cluster events, on the back of Llanymynech's parish plan the county council decided to launch two pilots in the area to improve information and communication. 'Rural Customer First', a service already delivered by the county council, permits residents the opportunity to access council services, both information and transactional, online. The provision of Broadband at Llanymynech Village Hall has facilitated this. SCC is trialling whether this resource is relevant and helpful for a rural location. In addition there is a remote Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) pilot in operation, using secure video-conferencing facilities at the Village Hall and linking with a trained CAB officer in Shrewsbury.

The county council is also confident that parish plans, including the one in Llanymynech, will influence the development of the Rural Transport Strategy. There is an acknowledgement that this can't simply be rolled out from the top. In addition, some movement has been made on road safety priorities identified within Llanymynech's parish plan as they are being pursued through the county council's Safe Routes to School initiative.

To a lesser extent than the county council, OBC has demonstrated that it is prepared to address parish plans priorities. In accordance with the request to increase the use of public transport and concessionary travel, it has developed a bus pass for residents to make the trip to Wales (although it is noted that there is no service late at night or on Sundays which is a source of disappointment) and a half price senior rail card is also in operation. OBC had to increase its budget to facilitate this. It is felt that, by feeding priorities into the borough council, the parish has helped to influence the agenda.

The parish council has also made progress under the Information and Communications theme, undertaking work with the Parish Magazine group, providing more notice boards and developing an information leaflet for new residents has been developed.

Also in operation in Shropshire is the SNAP (Shropshire Neighbourhoods and Parishes) group, involving the local authorities, LSC, Community Council and Business Link and district planning offices among others. The group meets

about six times a year. The theory behind this mechanism is that new parish plans are presented to this group, providing a single point of contact, so that they might be acted upon. In addition, it is supposed to identify any cold spots where parish plans are not achieving impact. Whilst this mechanism demonstrates a positive attitude towards the importance and potential of parish plans, at present very little action is being taken; new plans simply get emailed out and without any subsequent follow-up.

Other priorities have met with little success. The parish group expressed considerable disappointment about the limited evidence of the plan penetrating mainstream agendas. The priorities outlined in Table 3 received particular mention.

Table 3: Examples of difficulty in penetrating mainstream agendas

- There has been no progress towards the bypass, which was established as the main priority by parishioners. The parish council (which was identified as the agency responsible for pursuing the bypass issue) has found the Highways Agency unsympathetic towards its demands. It has been neither pro-active nor receptive and does not regard the village as a priority.
- Shropshire PCT has paid for a new dentist in Oswestry. Other than that relations with the PCT have been described as very poor. The Healthy Living Clinic was investigated, but little has happened since. A prescription pick-up service did emerge but this has since folded due to data protection issues and the tightening up of restrictions by the health authority. The nearby maternity unit has been closed and the minor injuries unit has been minimised – Shrewsbury (the nearest alternative) is a round trip of 40 miles. Reports were made about the difficulties experienced in trying to engage the PCT in discussions.
- The objectives concerning water and energy supply have not been progressed.
- The district council has reacted to the calls for dog-dirt bins, however, it is restricted by financial constraints and parish plan objectives are not its top funding priorities. Similarly the county council has been asked to provide 75 per cent of the cost of the new shelters, but funding and maintenance issues are problematic.
- No progress has been made on the parish map.

The integration of Llanymynech's parish plan, therefore, has met with mixed success. Where response has been positive, the measures seem to have been small in scale and have required little funding from the relevant agency. The county council has been most receptive to demands, but there are some instances in which its action cannot solely by attributed to Llanymynech's parish plan – similar action may have taken place anyway. The cluster events, however, do seem to have had a positive impact on elevating the profile of parish planning and achieving action issues common to more than one area. On the whole mainstream service providers, other than the county council, seem to attribute little importance to parish planning with Llanymynech making little impact on wider agendas.

Barriers to integration

- Resident fatigue and disillusionment – galvanising people both to develop a parish plan and, more particularly, to implement it thereafter is a challenge. The parish plan process is based on volunteer time and can be exhaustive. Growing apathy has also been a feature in Llanymynech as no progress has been witnessed on the bypass, which was the main identified concern. Enthusiasm is waning amongst residents and there is limited desire to pursue other parish plans action points.

- Inappropriate document – some of the parishioners felt that they should have produced a VDS rather than a parish plan. It is felt that it would have been easier to galvanise interest around a VDS and that it would have carried more weight than the list of priorities contained within the parish plan.

- Lack of funding – parishioners recognise that both the county and district council were often willing to listen to their demands but that neither authority is willing or able to contribute the funds necessary to meet parish demands. For example, the county council does not have any money to contribute to the bus shelters nor their maintenance. In addition, parish groups themselves often have difficulties finding the resources required to put a parish plan together, and see it through to the implementation stage.

- Lack of statutory status and the top-down nature of the planning system – authorities often pay only lip service to parish demands because there is no statutory responsibility to consider them. Bigger agencies carry more influence over service agendas and budget allocations than parishes. It was recognised that planning objectives

set at regional or national level often usurp parish objectives. This can particularly be the case over houses. To date, the prevailing view is that progress on parish plan priorities has been due to 'happy accidents' rather than plans being systemically integrated into wider systems of local government.

- Lack of joined-up thinking – funding that parishes can access tends to be ad hoc and prevents proper planning. Similarly, authorities and agencies are hamstrung due to uncertainty over how to address, respond and use parish plans in their delivery.

- Lack of flexibility – a culture change is required to work with local people. There is a mixed reaction from service providers with some displaying nervousness towards embracing more community working; they see it as opening up the floodgates.

Critical success factors and points of good practice

- Prior experience - the Village Appraisal conducted in 1998 gave the parish planning group a good base from which to start. The parish group was able to draw on prior experience and community consultation success.

- Being realistic about aims – smaller gains are viable through the parish plans process and can be attained more quickly than those that require strategic action. It was noted that remaining realistic, and open to some flexibility to arrive at consensus, was fundamental to the success of the cluster events. There is some need to manage expectations so that wish lists are not created, which will inevitably breed future disillusionment amongst parish groups.

- Sharing good practice – this can help parishes develop ideas and mechanisms for pursuing their objectives and highlight effective ways of realising community aspirations. The cluster events helped exemplify this.

- Acknowledgement of parish plans priorities by agencies and local authorities - This is a crucial way in which to perpetuate community involvement and ensure that the plan is an organic and living document, which residents have faith in and are prepared to dedicate time and effort to implement. A mechanism, or requirements, to formally acknowledge parish plans, and provide feedback, would be helpful.

- Buy-in from council officers – this is a significant influencing factor, particularly at senior officer level. It can prove significant in easing the integration of parish plans priorities into mainstream service delivery.
- Robust community consultation – this lends a parish plan considerable weight and enhances its chances of being integrated by mainstream providers.
- Facilitation – a consultant was employed to pull the action plan together in Llanymynech. This expert help and facilitation was well received and beneficial.

Long Bennington, Lincolnshire

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Long Bennington is situated in Lincolnshire County midway between Grantham to the south and Newark-Upon-Trent to the north. It is in the East Midlands region.
Nature of the parish	Long Bennington is rural in nature.
Population	The parish has a population of 1,843. The parish is not ethnically diverse, with 99% of residents classified as 'White British' or 'White Other'. It is worth noting that Long Bennington has a larger proportion of older people than the national average – 26% of residents are over 60 compared with 21% across England and Wales.
Local governance structure	Long Bennington sits underneath the two-tier local governance structure of South Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council.
Preparation / Publication	It was decided to produce a plan late 2003. Grant received early 2004. One year was spent consulting and the plan was published in March 2005.

Parish Plan Objectives

The Long Bennington parish plan states that it aims to become the 15 year strategic development plan for the parish council. It also states that the objective is for the Village Design Statement that is included in the parish plan be endorsed as a Position Statement by SKDC and included in the new LDF as a SPD. As such, this case study provides a focus on the issues surrounding planning integration.

Within the parish plan, Long Bennington identifies six development initiatives. These are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Long Bennington development initiatives

- To build a new sports centre and develop leisure facilities.
- To develop a series of circular walks and park and nature amenities along the River Witham and around the village.
- To provide traffic calming measures along the main road to help cope with the growing volumes and speed of traffic.
- To strongly encourage the development of a new northbound slip road onto the A1 and a new southbound slip road off the A1, both at the southern end of the village, to relieve the burden of heavy goods vehicles negotiating the village for access to Roseland Business Park on Normanton Airfield.
- To provide zoning for the limited amount of residential development required or planned over the next ten years, encouraging only affordable and protected housing for the younger and older members of our community.
- To encourage employment-based commercial development to support 21st century working practices, including office and live/work accommodation.

Source: Long Bennington parish plan

The plan also identifies priorities with regard to services, and these are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Long Bennington Service Priorities

- A dedicated Police Community Support Officer
- Street lighting, particularly in the older parts of the village and on the main road.

Source: Long Bennington parish plan

Development of the Parish Plan

The production of the plan was driven by a parish plan steering group consisting of local residents. Stakeholders involved from the outset included the Parish Council, SKDC planning department and the local District Councillor, with the Chief Executive of SKDC and the Head of Planning also attending public meetings. Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, Highways Agency, Police, local land owners and industrial estate land owners were also involved during the development of the plan. The planning department in

particular was very helpful at the outset, commenting on early drafts and advising on the structure of the plan.

The RCC's involvement was sporadic in the early stages. However, discussions with the District Council indicate that, since the Long Bennington plan was produced, the Rural Community Council has become much more active, and organises information seminars for parish councils on the parish planning process, in conjunction with the District Council, as well as an annual parish council conference.

The County Councillor consultee did not get involved in the early stages; however, he became more engaged over time. In terms of service providers, the head teacher of the local school declined to be involved, stating that any strategic issues were a matter for the local education authority (LEA), and the water board have been difficult to engage, mainly due to the presence of two water companies in the village which has led to disputes over which of them is responsible for various issues.

Extent of Integration

The Parish Council regularly invites relevant stakeholders to participate in parish council meetings. This has been a successful approach as it has given the opportunity to directly question service providers and allows a two way exchange of information and opinions, and the development of ideas.

There is also a Local Area Forum in Long Bennington, which is attended by all three tiers of local government, the minutes of which feed into SKDC's decision making process via the Engagement Development and Scrutiny Panel. The District Council consultee stated that this is a useful place to pick up on and deal with parish plan issues.

The parish consultees felt that the plan has raised awareness of community objectives amongst mainstream service providers, particularly within the police service, who now understand that the community wants to see more police in the community and walking around (i.e. higher visibility), rather than just driving.

The parish plan has helped raise the profile of the parish council with the local authority and mainstream providers, as well as improving information sharing and engagement. There is now a good working relationship between the parish and the county and district councillors for the area, with all three tiers playing an active part in local area forums. This is partly due to an incidental outcome of the plan, which is that the parish council used to be (small 'c') conservative and opposed to change, but the parish plan process changed

this and brought in a lot of new faces, transforming the parish council into a more open and inclusive group.

Actual changes in services as a result of the plan are as follows:

- The implementation of traffic calming measures is underway, implemented by the County Council Highways department. However the community is not happy with the resulting traffic calming measures, which they feel are dangerous. This situation has arisen because whilst the Highways department agreed the measures with the community at the outset, it then implemented its own ideas without further consultation.

- The police have acted upon the priority for a dedicated PCSO for Long Bennington. This was achieved through a good working relationship with the police service, which was very receptive – following production of the plan, the group contacted the Police service in Grantham who went through the parish plan with them, and allocated the additional PCSO as a result. The police have also attended public parish meetings. In return, the parish council arranges public meetings for the police service when it wishes to get a message across to the village.

- The parish council is also taking forward several initiatives arising out of the plan. For example, it has put together a business plan for new sporting facilities with the help of business support from Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service (CVS), whom the parish chairman contacted. The CVS also now provides support to several new small businesses in the area as a result of this contact. Additionally, plans for a nature reserve have now been completed, and trees have been donated by Lincolnshire County Council.

The parish plan has not been integrated within the planning system. The original intention had been to produce the plan to be adopted as a SPD; however the parish has been informed that due to delays due to the changes in the planning system, SKDC will be unable to consider the plan as SPD until the summer of 2008.

Although the district council could endorse the parish plan for decision making purposes in the meantime, they would be very nervous to do so as without the LDF it has no legal status – currently the parish plan has no more ‘teeth’ than if the residents had signed a petition. If the council tried to use the parish plan to refuse a planning application, and the developer contested this in court, it wouldn’t stand up and the district would end up having to pay court costs. However, one district council consultee did state that she would direct people

who had a planning proposal for Long Bennington to the parish plan, and advise them to take it into account. The district council also plans to use parish plans as part of the evidence base when developing the LDF, and one consultee stated that it is a very useful document to refer to when allocating sites in the LDF, however, like SPD status, this won't have any effect until 2008.

Since production of the parish plan, planning permission has continued to be granted for developments that the community feels are inappropriate, with the feeling among parish consultees being that the council was bowing to pressure from developers. As a result of this, the parish called an open meeting with two senior planners who revealed the plan had 'fallen through a crack' due to staff changes, indicating that although some of the planning department do take account of the plan, this is not consistent.

The response of mainstream providers to the priorities contained in the parish plan has in many cases been disappointing. For example, when the Highways Agency was questioned about the bus pass system for the elderly in the village, the transport director claimed the department would do the 'minimum required' of them in addressing this issue. This particular problem has been magnified by the fact that neighbouring district councils do not coordinate their bus pass systems. One consultee commented that he did not see these sorts of problems where he previously lived, in a unitary authority area.

Similarly, the county council responded to the issue of street lighting by claiming the lighting was adequate despite this being raised as a priority in the plan. The water companies' responses have been limited, as there are boundary disputes and they are concerned about protecting their commercial interests.

Barriers to integration

With regard to planning, there have been several barriers:

- Firstly and most significantly, the planning system is in a period of change, which has led to confusion and delays, and now means that the parish plan will not be able to be adopted as SPD until 2008. This is the situation nationally. Whilst the parish council understands this, they are concerned as to what happens to guide and control development in the meantime, and does not feel they have been given a clear answer from the planning department on this.
- Secondly, there is a perception amongst parish consultees that there is an element of passing of responsibility occurring, having been told

many times ‘I’ve just started’ or ‘the person that agreed to x or y has now left’.

- Third, the parish has been told by SKDC planning that they don’t like the way parish councils respond to planning applications, but have not given any guidance as to how they would prefer them to respond.

- Finally, the actions of the district council are currently guided more strongly by the Regional Spatial Strategy and the national policy when considering planning applications than by local plans. Parish priorities in conflict with regional strategies have also hindered integration, for example, in the case of traffic priorities, where the overall regional strategy is for the removal of slip roads, whilst the parish plan advocates the construction of a new slip road.

- Looking to the future, the District Council planning department anticipates there may be resource problems in dealing with all the parish plans that want to be adopted as SPD when the LDF allows this in 2008. The issue is firstly, that they do not know how many parishes are producing plans, and secondly, they are unlikely to have the resources to undertake the sustainability appraisal which is a requirement of SPDs. This will mean the parishes will have to do the appraisals themselves – a ‘frightening task for non-professional planners’.

- The parish has found that its location close to three county boundaries and district boundaries has hindered integration as it has led to a shifting of responsibilities – this was cited as a reason why it has been difficult to engage the relevant stakeholders on the issue of Heavy Goods Vehicles in the village. A similar issue has occurred due to two water companies supplying the village, which has led to disputes over responsibilities.

- The parish also feel that they are viewed by SKDC as a ‘NIMBY’ village despite their efforts to be balanced. They are in favour of development, but it must be appropriate to the needs of the village. Finally, parish representatives felt they are on occasion bombarded with large and complex guidance documents. However as volunteers, there is often insufficient time or resource to properly digest the information, and often it is unclear exactly what the jurisdiction of the document is.

Critical Success Factors

Steps that can be taken to overcome the identified barriers are as follows:

- The District Council is currently considering how to deal with parish plans in the interim period until the LDF process is complete. It is considering using parish plans as part of the 'robust evidence base' for the LDF. For example, parish plans can be used to define settlement boundaries, which is helpful for planning policy. They also plan to engage parishes with the LDF process, and send out drafts for consultation.

- However, this will still only begin to have a tangible effect in 2008, so the importance of communicating this to parishes remains of the utmost importance, and the district is considering sending a letter to parish councils reiterating the current position with regard to the LDF, as an attempt to aid their understanding – however their resources are so stretched at the moment that this may not be possible.

- It appears that better guidance and information is needed on the LDF process both to enable parishes to maintain realistic expectations and reduce misunderstandings and frustration between the parish and district. Clear guidelines for parishes and planners are needed as to the current role of parish plans within the planning system.

- In terms of disseminating information, it was felt by the parish that presentations rather than large documents would be a useful approach, as they would be easier to digest, take up less volunteer time, and would enable questions and discussion.

- In terms of future resource problems associated with parish plans and the LDF, and particularly the prospect of undertaking sustainability appraisals, it would be helpful for the District Council if they had a better idea of the amount of plans that are likely to arrive on their desk in the period leading up to LDF implementation i.e. if all parishes in the area informed them when they decide to produce a parish plan. They are also considering going through the sustainability appraisal process for Long Bennington, as a pilot exercise to understand the issues and resources involved, which will help prepare the council for the anticipated influx of plans in 2008.

- In response to the issue that SKDC does not find the way parishes respond to planning applications helpful, Long Bennington is organising a seminar with other parishes in the area, in order to identify shared issues and share good practice.

- With regard to confusions around the planning system, SKDC organised a seminar for parishes, to inform them of how their plan fits

into the planning system, although this still seems to have left a few questions unanswered.

- On the water company issue, the parish has managed to achieve a positive result by going through their local MP.

The case study has enabled the identification of critical success factors contributing to successful integration of parish plan priorities:

- Although planning priorities have not yet been integrated, the plan will be adopted as a SPD in 2008. The help and guidance given by the planning department at the point of producing the plan has ensured that it is in an appropriate format and includes the correct information to make this possible. One planning officer offered advice and reviewed the plan, and suggested it be split into a Village Design Statement and a Development Initiatives Report, in order to make it easier for the planning department to deal with.

- Early and ongoing engagement with stakeholders, such as the police, including attendance at parish plan meetings and in depth discussions, has contributed to the successes of the parish plan. This happened largely as a result of a motivated and determined parish plan team. In addition, the presence of one key motivated individual in the Local Authority or service provider can make a big difference to the success of stakeholder engagement.

- In order to be given weight by mainstream providers and local authorities, parish plans must be balanced and representative of community views; not just pursuing personal agendas of the parish plan steering group.

- It is important for the parish plan group to take ownership of the priorities arising out the plan and identify what action they can take themselves, and what further steps need to be taken by other providers, as opposed to handing ownership over to the local authority.

- Information needs to be provided to parish councils on the role of parish plans in the planning system. This information needs to be presented in a way that is easy to digest, and must recognise that parish plan group members are volunteers who are time and resource constrained. District Council planning departments also need similar guidance, particularly for this interim period before the LDF becomes effective.

- From the point of view of the planning department, further factors to achieve successful integration would include: parishes developing their knowledge of the planning system and how it works – including its limitations with regard to parish plans; ensuring that their consultation is of a sufficient standard; a balanced plan that truly represents community views and doesn't just push personal agendas; and parishes taking responsibility for action points rather than just handing responsibility for them over to the council.
- One consultee from SKDC's planning department stated that in terms of timing, it would be useful if all parish plans were produced together at the beginning of the LDF process, so they can be slotted in from the start.

Oxenhope, Bradford

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Oxenhope is located in Bradford in the Yorkshire and Humber region.
Nature of the parish	Oxenhope is a rural parish.
Population	The parish has a population of nearly 2,500, 96% or which are White British.
Local governance structure	The local governance structure in which Oxenhope sits is single tiered – Bradford Metropolitan District Council.[54]
Preparation / Publication	Consultation started in early 2005 and the plan was published end 2006.

Parish Plan objectives

The Oxenhope parish plan sets out the vision for the local community, and a range of issues and actions (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of key issues to be tackled

Theme	**Key issues to be tackled**
Community services	• Education: lifelong/adult learning; school's contribution to village life; activities for school-age children. • Health: access and extension to health options. • Neighbourhood watch and good neighbour schemes: generate local support networks, particularly for isolated people, and engaging with people who commute. • Village facilities: more comprehensive use of local facilities.
Communication	• Various including: welcome packs; Outreach and village website; public transport; digital services; annual village booklet.

[54] Its is worth noting that Bradford MDC is a Beacon Council for the delivery of rural services, and has gone from 7 to 17 parishes in recent years another 10-15 are in discussion.

Theme	Key issues to be tackled
Housing	• Affordable and retirement homes.
Roads & traffic	• Traffic: village traffic strategy; pedestrian mobility. • Speeding: enforcement of limits; speed watch; illuminated indicators; extend 20mph zone.
Youth	• More activities and facilities for young people; youth services; stricter rules for sale of alcohol.
Planning & the built environment	• Housing development: negotiate with developers to improve infrastructure of the village. • Green belt and conservation: maintain watchful eye on developments in these areas. • Village Design Statement: consider updating.
Sport, leisure & tourism	• Oxenhope Sports Association. • Improve/add to sporting facilities, e.g. bowling green, football pitch, skateboard park, tennis courts. • Tourism: route maps for walks; promote Oxenhope as a "route stop".
Landscape & the environment	• Maintain/enhance natural environment – i.e. green space. • Village Design Statement. • Tackle any issues of dog fouling, litter. • Recycling and waste management.
Rural economy	• Ensure awareness of village services and locally produced goods and services. • Support to home workers. • Support to farmers, e.g. diversification.

Source: Oxenhope parish plan

The plan was only completed towards the end of 2006, so it is still early days in terms of the integration of priorities.

Development of the Parish Plan

Oxenhope's parish plan was developed and produced by the community itself. There was outside input in the form of advice from the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA) at the outset. Other external involvement (e.g. from Keighley Area Committee and Bradford Council) was sporadic with unclear routes of communication. The only LSP involvement was in the form

of a £5k grant. Additional involvement from external organisations may have been useful, but may have diluted the community's interest. The plan set out as an aspiration for the village, and a framework which could be used to access external funding, it is not necessarily a plan to be used to change existing service provision.

The parish learnt from other plans developed elsewhere, in particular in Cornwall, and built on community engagement in previous ventures, such as the VDS (produced in 1999 and adopted as SPG) and voluntary engagement in the Millennium Green. The Parish Plan Steering Committee was instrumental in the process, following thorough research with particular organisations and people and then synthesising findings.

The plan is a village document (one in every household) and the Steering Committee has just become a Delivery Committee, that is considering three key areas: Youth; Sports Association; and Open Space, Conservation and Environment.

Bradford MDC now funds all parishes with fewer than 10,000 people to help develop a plan. They are also becoming more involved in plan development, e.g. in Haworth.

Extent of Integration

There has been some progress with respect to the recreation ground (with the Park and Recreation Department of Bradford MDC), which now has a robust plan. The department offers design and advisory functions, which help to develop plans and provide guidance on where to go for funding, and now Oxenhope is on the City's list for the Big Lottery Fund. Elsewhere, there has been progress with respect to local policing through more contact and the parish council takes over as the coordinator of neighbourhood watch schemes. There is also more dialogue with Yorkshire Water (the largest landowner in the area) with respect to infrastructure/sewerage issues – though no hard progress has been made. There has also been dialogue with the Environment Agency with respect to flood protection, though again no hard progress. It must be emphasised that it is early days, and a time lag is expected before service providers can pick up and act upon plan priorities.

Changes to legislation on planning have meant little integration with the planning process has occurred.

The extent to which mainstream service providers have integrated parish plan priorities has varied, with some good individual examples of coordination set against a general issue of unclear communication routes:

- The perception of the parish group is that the plan has not raised awareness of community objectives amongst local service delivery organisations.
- The parish council has, in recent years, had good contact with the Local Authority, and in some cases this has improved, e.g. Parks and Recreation. Parishes are now empowered to approach service providers. However, there is a belief that a clearer single point of contact at the Local Authority is needed, possibly via the Keighley Area Committee.
- The delivery agenda of providers has not visibly altered from the perspective of the parish group.
- Mainstream resources have not changed, although there is the possibility of external funding through the Big Lottery Fund for the recreation ground.

The Parks and Recreation department at Bradford MDC has been proactive, and has worked with several other parishes as well as Oxenhope, e.g. Ilkley, Cullingworth and Steeton & Eastburn. Having community groups to work with is important for Parks and Recreation given decreasing capacity within the department and the need for community groups to bid for external funding. A further driver was the Best Value review, which criticised the department for its lack of input into rural services. Parks and Recreation do not think that they would have necessarily worked without the parish mechanisms which facilitate partnership and can be used to provide the evidence of community needs (e.g. consultation through the planning process).

The PCT has been less proactive, partly due to restructuring, but some consultees felt this was also because there is a lack of recognition of rural issues in the PCT.

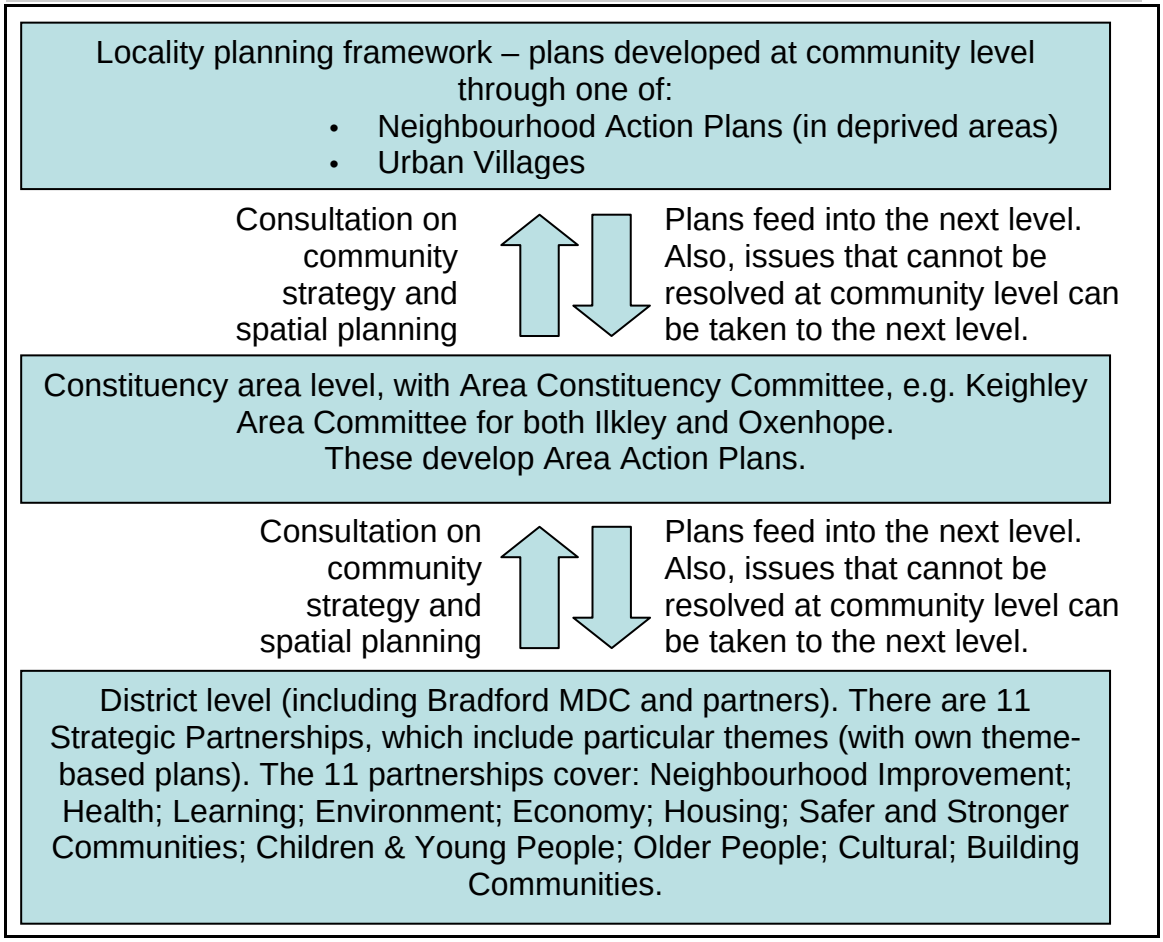
Approaches to integration

Liaison mechanisms are via parish council meetings, the Keighley Area Committee and individuals (backed by the parish plan). Success of the approaches has varied: an individual has been able to set up a dialogue with Yorkshire Water; the parish council has worked with the Parks and Recreation department and the local police. Liaison is felt to be hampered by the lack of a single point of contact within Bradford MDC.

Formal communication routes do exist in Bradford – revolving around a Strategic Partnership approach. The routes are illustrated in Figure 1, and indicate that issues/objectives should be taken to Area Committee level, and if

there is no resolution, then there are relevant partnerships at district level based around particular themes. Bradford MDC sees the parish plans as a key part of how it will do spatial planning in the future. There is also a Parish Council Liaison Group, chaired at executive level and including all five Area Committee Chairs, parish councils, Senior Planning level and officers from across the council.

Figure 1: Communication routes



Barriers to integration

The parish group identified different barriers. For example, despite useful dialogue, there was the lack of resources from Yorkshire Water; the parish group could not see how the needs of parishes were being identified and how this was being used to influence strategy, via the area committee process.

A key barrier/weakness (as identified by Bradford MDC) is that plans can develop as wish lists or NIMBY statements, which are not implementable. Policy Development Service consultee would like to see parish plans include business/implementation plans, and it is here that local officers can provide

support and advice. This will help to move away from the scattergun approach to a more considered one (which is starting to happen).

The Parks and Recreation Department identified finance as the main barrier to integration. Capital funding is often easier to come by, but lack of revenue funding is a major barrier, as it inhibits the delivery of a sustainable project. This is where partnership has been tested as open space is not a key corporate priority for the council. One potential way to overcome this is to use the parish precept for sustainable delivery of services. This is done in North Yorkshire (e.g. Sutton) where parishes use their precepts to take some responsibility for services. In Bradford there is an expectation for the council to provide everything.

It has become apparent that there has been a lack of sharing of parish plans with service providers. Service providers also consider that their involvement in the planning process might have been useful to ease integration.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

There is a range of success factors in helping to ensure integration and these have varied depending on the person consulted:

- Working in partnership between communities and service provider and funding things in partnership
- Plans being used to identify needs of communities in a way that could be aligned with service provider targets
- Parish Plan Liaison Group, bringing together senior level of MDC and parish council
- Honesty about what can be achieved.

The key aspect in improvement seems to be a need to raise awareness with parish groups and service providers of the formal communication channels (for example through the LSP) that are available to help achieve integration. A further important factor is to manage expectations of what can be achieved through parish planning and to prevent plans from simply becoming wish lists.

The joint working – in terms of preparing funding bids, identifying community needs, engagement and helping with implementation – was thought to be easily transferable to other areas.

Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Parson Drove is situated in the north of Cambridgeshire in the East of England between Peterborough and Wisbech. It lies on the border with Lincolnshire.
Nature of the parish	Parson Drove is a rural parish. The district in which it is located (Fenland) has been designated a Rural Development Area by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) because of its relatively high levels of unemployment, low education and skills base, high agricultural dependency, low wages and lack of access to community services[55]
Population	Parson Drove is home to just over 1,000 residents. Ethnically, the local population is overwhelmingly (98%) white British, with the ethnic minority presence made up mainly by traveller communities. Just under a third (31%) of residents were aged 60 or over in 2001 (compared with 21% on average across England, Census 2001), but the village has developed more of a balanced age structure in recent years, following housing developments.
Local governance structure	The local governance structure in which Parson Drove sits is two-tier – Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.
Preparation / Publication	The plan was published in April 2005. The total period of preparation was 20 months – from the official launch of the plan process to publication. Within

55 Commission for Rural Communities (2005) National demonstration projects on Local Strategic Partnerships and rural issues, accessible from http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/777847

	this there was a nine month period of consultation from the launch of the community survey to the final public meeting before the plan was drafted.

Parish Plan objectives

The Parson Drove parish plan was among the first to be produced in Cambridgeshire. It was researched and structured well and includes an Action Plan that sets out key partners and resource implications in an exemplary fashion. It is based largely on the findings from a questionnaire survey that was completed by (or on behalf of) 46% of the community. In no particular order, the following summarises the issues identified in the parish plan:

Table 1: The issues identified in the Parson Drove Parish Plan

Issue	**Description**
Environment	Cut the verges more often, provide more recycling facilities, extend footpaths and improve street lighting.
Housing	Resist larger housing developments, but provide affordable housing to help young people remain in the area.
Youth	Provide more sports and recreation facilities as well as youth-dedicated activities.
Older people	Provide a day care centre, a Citizens Advice Bureau outreach service and more public seating.
Health	Improve access to NHS dental services, provide local access to cancer screening and improve access to the repeat prescription service.
Roads and traffic	Reduce traffic speed and improve public transport services.
Education	Provide adult education in the village.
Other	Improve emergency services response times, investigate the need for child care, improve delivery of information, and examine need for business support.

Source: Information taken from the Parson Drove parish plan

Development of the Parish Plan

The development of the Parson Drove parish plan commenced officially in September 2003 when the Parish Plan Committee was appointed by the

parish council. The impetus for the development of the parish plan came mainly from Cambridgeshire ACRE, who promoted the benefits of completing a parish plan and made the parish aware of dedicated funding available from the Countryside Agency. Ongoing guidance and assistance was provided by the Regeneration Officer from Fenland District Council, the Neighbourhood Community Development Officer at Fenland Links and the Community Development Worker at Cambridgeshire ACRE.

Following the inception of the parish plan process, the first major event was a Vision Day held in May 2004 to promote the parish plan to the community. This was purposefully shortly in advance of the questionnaire survey that was carried out in May and June of that year that was designed to identify the key issues that needed to be addressed in the parish plan. Then in January 2005, various public meetings were held with the local community generally, and also with particular subsections, such as the over-60s and the youth, in order to discuss the findings from the survey. The parish plan was then drafted over the next two months before it was approved by the parish council in April 2005.

Following the adoption of the parish plan, a Parish Action Plan Committee was established and given responsibility for delivering the Action Plan. In terms of dissemination, each household received a one-page summary and a fuller version of the plan was published on a dedicated website. In addition, a parish plan open day was held in June 2005. This offered the opportunity for members of the community to see the full version of the parish plan (including the Annexes which were added to the website subsequently) and to put their questions to the Parish Action Plan Committee. More recently, a celebration day was held in September 2006 in order to advertise the parts of the parish plan that had been achieved by then.

Extent of Integration

Aside from several objectives undertaken solely by the Parish Action Plan Committee itself, a number of Parson Drove's parish plan objectives have now been delivered in collaboration with mainstream service providers. These are as follows:

- Environment – the district council has implemented several measures to deliver a cleaner environment, such as paying for the emptying of rubbish bins (the new bins were paid for by the parish council), providing a rubbish collection vehicle for use on a street pride day, and the provision of rapid response teams to deal with bad cases of general waste and dog fouling.

- Communication – Fenland Links has provided funding for extra notice boards at the village hall, printing quarterly parish newsletters and directional finger signs around the village. Together with the county council, Fenland Links has also funded a 'community access point' in the pavilion building. The district council has funded a welcome pack for new residents.

- Older people – Citizens Advice Bureau now provide an outreach service in the village, while the parish council is required to fund the building in which it is provided.

- Police – the police has appointed two Community Support Officers (CSO) to cover Parson Drove in order to increase the police's presence and visibility. However the Parish Plan Committee are dissatisfied with this solution because of the reduced powers held by CSOs in comparison with regular police officers.

- Street lighting – the district council and the county council have contributed funding for a particularly expensive set of street lights.

- Adult education – Skills for Life courses have been put on in the village run by the College of West Anglia. However, for budget reasons, these have been discontinued and relocated to Wisbech.

Despite the success evident through these achievements, it was pointed out by the Parish Action Plan Committee that the actions that have been delivered by the mainstream service providers are those which have required the least funds. By contrast, the parish plan actions that would require more substantial funding, such as the improvement of road surfaces, providing NHS dentistry and increasing the response times of the emergency services, have not been delivered. Indeed, these service providers were characterised by the Parish Action Plan Committee as having acknowledged the need for these, but then responded that Parson Drove was not alone in requiring them and that necessary funds were unavailable. In the case of public transport, the lack of delivery to date is, in part at least, because a study by the county council to find ways of improving transport links is being undertaken.

There has also been mixed success with the integration of the parish plan with the planning system. The two outcomes from the parish plan that were pertinent to the planning system related to housing: namely, the desire for affordable housing and the request that applications for larger housing developments would not be granted planning permission. Both of these requests have been taken on board by the planners at Fenland District Council. With regards to the provision of affordable housing, the planners

intend to make some available, but this will be through Registered Social Landlords, which is not to the satisfaction of the Parish Action Plan Committee who were hoping instead for low-cost housing for sale.

With regards to the request to prevent larger housing developments in the parish, this is to be implemented through the classification that Parson Drove is to be given in the planners' settlement hierarchy. The planners altered the parish's classification in the settlement hierarchy as a direct result of the parish plan, which had the effect that larger-scale housing developments would no longer be considered to be appropriate. Interestingly, however, it appears that the parish council (which has a different identity to the Parish Plan Action Committee) have disputed this reclassification, so that the district planners are no longer clear of what action to take.

Nonetheless, it is without doubt that the parish plan has raised awareness among service providers and the statutory authorities of the specific needs and desires of the community in Parson Drove. The parish plan was distributed widely to these various organisations and a presentation was made by the leader of the Parish Action Plan Committee to the LSP. In the case of the District's Planning Policy Manager, the parish plan did not present any issues of which he was not aware already. However, he did value the plan's concise presentation of community needs and desires that could be used as evidence of the community's voice in the development of the Local Development Framework or the consideration of particular planning applications.

Approaches to Integration

The prime mechanism that has been adopted within the parish to pursue the objectives identified in the parish plan is the appointment of a Parish Action Plan Committee. This was established immediately following the formal adoption of the parish plan by the parish council and comprised many of the members of the Parish Plan Committee, with some new members. The parish council has given responsibility to this Committee, which continues to meet regularly, for the promotion of these objectives to the relevant organisations.

Above the parish level, there are three key mechanisms that exist to facilitate the implementation of the parish plan objectives.

- The Rural Pathfinder Board of Fenland Links, of which the Chair of the Parish Action Plan Committee is a member – since Fenland Links exists to improve service delivery at neighbourhood level, this has been an effective way of ensuring that Fenland Links' funds are targeted at

the parish plan objectives. Furthermore, the Local Strategic Partnership – another key mechanism for parish plan implementation – chooses only to communicate with the parishes in this area through the Rural Pathfinder Board, so that membership on it is essential for the parish-level actors to influence this more powerful body.

- The Local Strategic Partnership – the only direct communication that the Parish Action Plan Committee has had with the Local Strategic Partnership occurred when the Chair of the Committee made a presentation about the newly-adopted parish plan, but no feedback was given to indicate how it was received or how the actions might be taken forward. This poor response was thought to be because of the relative youth of the Local Strategic Partnership at the time. As a body that is meant to be representative of the communities and one with responsibility for distributing funds, the Local Strategic Partnership will be central to the process of integrating the parish plans into mainstream service delivery in the future, but this had not yet been realised in the case of Parson Drove.

- The Community Planning Subgroup – this is another body at the local authority level that seeks to facilitate the implementation of the parish plan objectives. The subgroup, which includes representatives from Cambridgeshire ACRE (the Community Development Worker), the district council (the Community Development Officer), the PCT and the Community Safety Partnership. A community planning subgroup exists to appraise new or revised parish (and community) plans and promote them to the various partner organisations, but especially the LSP. In particular, the subgroup produces a report on each parish plan that extracts the key elements in a format for consideration by the LSP. This did not happen in the case of Parson Drove's parish plan because the inauguration of the subgroup post-dated the creation of the parish plan, but the intention is that it will be carried out at some point. According to Cambridgeshire ACRE, this subgroup has a more strategic role than the Rural Pathfinder Board, which is more geographically focused and is concerned with issues at the finer detail.

Other mechanisms for integration vary by the organisation in question. In the case of the police, for example, issues at the community level can be addressed through the Police Neighbourhood Panels. In the case of the statutory planning system, there are three particular points of access through which the parish plan can influence planning policy.

- First, the LDF is required to include a consultation process to which parish plans can serve as evidence of the community's aspirations, which has happened with the Parson Drove parish plan.

- Second, part of the Local Development Framework is the Community Strategy, which is intended to be informed from the bottom up by, among other things, parish plans.

- Third, on an ongoing basis, the planning system requires the completion of an Annual Monitoring Report, which among other matters, seeks to incorporate emerging issues, such as may be identified in a parish plan.

Barriers to Integration

A number of barriers to integration were identified by the consultees. The two main barriers according to the Parson Drove Action Plan Committee were:

- Lack of money – In general, while the mainstream service providers have acknowledged the need for these actions to be implemented, the response received from these agencies has commonly been that these same problems are experienced in many communities, but there is insufficient money available to address them.

- Slowness of taking on board the findings of the parish plan by the mainstream service providers – a particular example of this (referred to above) was the lack of response received from the LSP following the presentation made to them about the Parson Drove parish plan. The Chair of the Parish Action Plan Committee has sought to address this by making representations through the Rural Pathfinder Board, but an alternative vehicle would be the community planning subgroup, which has lines of communication established with the LSP in this particular regard.

The two more general barriers to the integration of parish plans that were identified by Cambridgeshire ACRE were:

- The lack of understanding (within the various agencies) of the benefits of taking note of what is generated by members of the communities themselves. Cambridgeshire ACRE accepts that trying to convince these agents of these benefits is a long-term process, which they see as being part of their remit. One example of how Cambridgeshire ACRE is trying to overcome this obstacle is by putting on a conference about parish plans and planning, to which they have invited planning officers from the various local authority planning departments across

the county. This will be used to explain to planning officers what the parish plan process is about and to encourage them to use the parish plans as a source of evidence for their work.

- The lack of enthusiasm amongst people in the local communities in question – this did not appear to be the case in Parson Drove, but it was stressed that the determination by local individuals to pursue the objectives of the parish plans is essential and often lacking.

Finally, the key barrier to integration identified by the planning officer at Fenland District Council was:

- The lack of knowledge (within the planning department) about the ongoing parish plan processes in the local area – the problem caused by this was that opportunities can be missed in the planning cycle for parish plans to influence decisions.

Critical success factors and points of good practice

Three critical success factors for the successful integration of the parish plan priorities were identified by the Parson Drove Action Plan Committee.

- The creation of a plan which was realistic (that is, not over-ambitious) and then for the Parish Action Committee members to concentrate their efforts in the first instance on those actions that could be achieved more readily (the "quick wins") – namely, those that cost the least.

- The establishment of a Parish Action Plan Committee that was separate from the parish council itself. This was seen as important primarily because the parish council has many other things to attend to that would detract attention and energies away from delivering the parish plan if its delivery was their responsibility.

- In terms of the development of the parish plan itself, the critical success factor identified was carrying out a questionnaire survey of the local community that achieved a good response rate, which was important in order to establish the pressing issues locally and also to encourage wider community engagement in the process.

The critical success factors identified by Cambridgeshire ACRE focused on the individuals in both the parishes and the various service delivery agencies concerned.

- With regards the parishioners, Cambridgeshire ACRE's experience has shown that the successful integration of parish plans is dependent on

active and determined members of the community – in this case, members of the Parish Action Plan Committee.

- It was also considered essential for these community members to receive continued capacity building to enable them to carry out this role most effectively.

- On the part of the service delivery agencies, Cambridgeshire ACRE testified to the importance of the willingness of the agencies to listen to and act upon the issues identified by the parish plans. It was emphasised that frequently this depends on individual personalities, so that it is important to find the right people within each organisation with whom to communicate.

For the planning officer at Fenland District Council, the main critical success factor for the successful integration of parish plans into the statutory planning process is:

- Receiving early information about the key issues that have implications for land use (for example, housing, transport, recreation, public open space and rights of way) that are to be highlighted in the parish plans. This would allow the planners the opportunity to integrate these issues into the formal planning processes at the opportune time.

Upper Eden Community Plan Group, Eden, Cumbria

April 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	The UECPG is in the North West region, in Cumbria. The 'cluster' is centred on the town of Kirkby Stephen.
Nature of the parish	The UECPG consists of 17 parish councils, parish meeting or Town Council groups who, as a single body, are developing one document to act as a combined parish plan. The area is rural in nature.
Population	The plan area has a population of over 2,500 people with Kirkby Stephen being the most significant settlement and service centre. Some of the individual parish meeting areas have populations of less than twenty people but are still members of the UECPG. 98% of the people living in the Eden District are White British in origin.
Local governance structure	The Eden Local Authority District, in which the area of the UECPG is situated, sits within the Cumbria County Council area as part of the two tier local government structure.
Preparation / Publication	The plan group formed in early 2005 and is aiming to publish in Autumn 2007.

Parish Plan Objectives

It is important to note, the final plan of the UECPG is not due to be completed until autumn 2007. It was therefore an ongoing process at the time of the fieldwork. However, based on their past experience and the research undertaken, a number of emergent priority themes have been recognised. The initial themes that have been outlined are:

- Economy – particularly economic diversity and the allocation of employment land and prioritisation of economic development activity outside of the Upper Eden area. The local economy is highly dependant on upland farming and the narrow economic base results in low incomes and a considerable reliance on part-time employment

- Environment – including consideration of the natural environment as a resource as well as the prospects for improved recycling and community owned renewable energy schemes

- Social and Community – a broad range of community issues are regarded as important, including:

  - Affordable housing – linked with the issue of low local incomes, the affordability of housing for young people and the elderly is an issue, especially with house prices inflated by people moving into the area

  - Young people – linked again with a lack of economic opportunity, young people tend to leave the area. At the same time, there are local issues of under-age drinking and anti-social behaviour, and a lack of facilities for young people.

- Transport (also access to services) – although transport is an initial theme being put forward it also considers access to services. Particular points are:

  - Improved public transport provision for all the communities and better provision of footpaths and cycle ways

  - Access to services – local GP, dentist and pharmacy provision is located in Kirkby Stephen and access to these services is generally seen as good. Hospital services are many miles away however (25 miles to Kendal and over 40 miles to Carlisle). The area also has poor ambulance cover. Another service that is not locally available and stated as important by the group in consultations is access to broadband internet.

Development of the Parish Plan

Kirkby Stephen, the main settlement within the UECPG area was a part of the 'Vital Villages Programme', funded via the former Countryside Agency, which developed a considerable evidence base, and internal capacity, within the Kirkby Stephen Town Council. As a continuation of the Vital Villages work, it was decided to go down the route of developing a parish plan in the Sumer of

2005, and with the expert facilitation of VAC, the RCC in Cumbria, it made sense that this should be done as a 'cluster' with neighbouring parishes and parish meetings, also involved. Grant assistance was provided by Defra, channelled through VAC, which has supported the development, and allowed for the employment of a local planning consultant[56] to lead, manage, and administer the process.

With financial support obtained, and with the pro-active support of VAC, letters were sent to all interested parties and agencies including a number of District Council departments (including planning), the County Council, the LSP and the local PCT, inviting them to an initial meeting. This was attended by the District Council Planning Department, a representative of the County Council, and an LSP representative. It was thought, even at that stage, that health and access to healthcare would be a significant issue but unfortunately, the PCT did not attend.

Following initial meetings (some for just the parishes themselves) the decision to undertake a survey was made, with over 2,500 people surveyed and a 33% response rate achieved – the results of this survey which are now feeding the ongoing development of actions and priorities.

To maintain momentum, regular meetings are held to report on progress and continue plan development. As well as these meetings, 'agencies meetings' take place where the aim is "…to develop the actions that meet local communities' needs, and make the best fit they can with the policies of organisations such as the County Council, District Council…".[57]

All meetings are facilitated by both the consultant, and a dedicated representative of VAC. An extensive level of engagement has been achieved with outside agencies. To date, the group felt it had been able to generate good engagement with service providers, except for the Primary Care Trust, which had been going through its own internal reorganisation. It had also been difficult to involve BT with regard to broadband provision. Table 1 below shows those bodies that were expected to attend Agencies meetings in February 2007. This includes the PCT for the first time; indeed, this was seen as a notable success by VAC.

Table 1: Agencies to due to attend February 'Agencies Meetings'

Bodies Attending 'Agencies Meetings' – February 2007	
Cumbria Rural Housing Trust	Cumbria County Council (Highways)

56 The consultant employed is a local resident and was committed to the process as an interested party – his employment within the process was below market rates.

57 Quote taken from guidance note to parish groups provided by VAC

Bodies Attending 'Agencies Meetings' – February 2007	
Eden Housing Association	Cumbria County Council (Transport)
Eden District Council (Housing Enabling)	Eden LSP Manager
Eden District Council (Economic Development and Tourism)	Eden District Council (planning)
Cumbria County Council (Waste and Recycling)	Cumbria PCT

Source: VAC

All partners spoken to stated that the commitment of the other partners and the organised structure of the approach helped them remain involved. For example, the local planning officer stated that they now spend more time on parish planning than previously, primarily due to the level of commitment shown by the group, the consultant employed, and VAC. This commitment is what is driving the process, especially the consultant's expert knowledge of planning, and drive to achieve change. The commitment of staff from VAC as 'expert facilitators', sometimes acting as a go-between between the group and other agencies, encouraging realistic expectations on commitments, was also seen as a driving force.

Extent of Integration

As the plan has yet to be completed, it is not possible to comment on the successes the group has achieved in seeing its priorities integrated within broader planning and service provision priorities. What can be considered is how the parish group has already begun to influence policy – just by the initiation of the parish planning process and the engagement with Partners.

Of considerable concern for the group is the treatment of the area within statutory planning policy – from the regional level down to the district level. Kirkby Stephen is regarded as a key service centre within Cumbria but, based on the draft RSS, only 'moderate development' can be supported. With local concern about economic development and the diversity of the economy the parish group felt that it was important that planning policy better represented their concern. With a planning specialist employed to support the parish plan process, the group has had the confidence to directly involve themselves in the development of policy – the group has attended and given evidence at the scrutiny of the North West RSS, highlighting the concerns of isolated rural communities. It has therefore been particularly active in attempts to influence policy and the group feels it is having notable success, especially locally, as

the group has a very strong relationship with the local planning authority. Indeed, the local planning authority is well aware of local concerns of Upper Eden and works closely, attending dedicated meetings, to work with the group. The local planning authority is hoping to support the parish plan by funding the sustainability appraisal required for it to become part of the formal planning framework.

A further area where integration is already being achieved is via the active involvement of the LSP. The LSP in Eden is new and is still developing the community plan for the district. However, it is clear that the LSP sees parish plans as foundation stones for the structure of the community plan – being sources of evidence, priorities and actions. The LSP is therefore actively involved in collating, with help from VAC, a list of priorities and actions coming out of parish plans within the Eden district to enable them to be integrated within the community plan. For the UECPG, this means attending the 'agency meetings' so that the priorities being considered are represented. The LSP also intends to establish a small 'community grant fund' in the future that parish groups could apply to.

Barriers to integration

A number of factors are seen by the group, and Partners, as barriers that are inhibiting the process of integration. These are not factors that are preventing implementation as the plan has not yet reached that stage. The process related barriers included:

- Lack of engagement from some service providers – there are some service providers that the group feel need to be involved more for the plan to be comprehensive. This has included the PCT, although they are now becoming involved, and British Telecom (BT). The latter body is interesting as engagement of a private sector provider of services is proving particularly difficult.

- Funding – everyone involved in the process has seen the benefits of having a consultant to organise the process and maintain momentum. However, this service is being delivered by someone locally based at well below normal market rates. Strategic Partners felt it would be very difficult to achieve success without funding and felt that more could/should be available and would offer considerable benefits.

- Engaging all the community and maintaining commitment – although the 'cluster' approach was seen as highly beneficial, it has meant that it can often be difficult to get all 17 members involved and engaged –

slowing down the process when there have been opportunities to increase the pace.

- Communicating in the language required - this was identified by strategic partners, but especially members of the planning authority, as a barrier to parish planning more generally but one that had been overcome to a large extent in Upper Eden by the appointment of a planning consultant. Partners expressed the belief that there will always be a need for someone with a degree of professional experience to enable communication.

For many of the above barriers, the key means of resolving the problems was felt to be via the allocation of additional resources (both financial and non-financial) to parish planning and greater recognition of the benefits that could be obtained. For example, the group and the LSP stated that the collection of evidence and defining of priorities by the group could efficiently feed the policy and resource allocation decisions of wider service providers and that this was not recognised by those providers.

Critical success factors and points of good practice

The group and local Partners identified a number of approaches that they believed to be good practice. In terms of critical success factors, the group felt that, as they had not yet seen success in terms of delivering the plan's objectives they could not state what the key factors were. However, insights were offered on what it was that they felt was supporting the process and what they hoped would be successful in the future.

- The 'cluster approach' was seen as being a key form of good practice being applied in Upper Eden. Although Kirkby Stephen itself could have probably gone alone, there was genuine recognition that benefits could be had from forming the group and having a joint plan. These included:
  - 'Bringing a wider community on board' – this was important for VAC in particular as they recognised that many of the smaller bodies within the UECPG would have had insufficient capacity to develop a plan on their own. Therefore, the cluster approach has pulled them into the parish plan process. The spatial area for the UECPG was described as being a 'natural' geography for planning and service allocation, with it recognised that Kirkby Stephen acts as a service centre for the wider area.

- More efficient use of engagement time. VAC stated that they have dedicated more time and effort to the UECPG than they would to a single parish approach, but, that the time and effort allocated was much less than trying to engage in 17 parish plan processes. This efficiency factor was also made by the local planning authority who stated that it allowed them to respond in a more structured way and gain a better appreciation of local needs and issues.

- All partners stated that the final plan must represent the concerns of the whole group and not just those of one or more particular parishes. In the case of Upper Eden however it was accepted that the key issues were broadly similar across the whole area and across all the member bodies. It was felt that sharing common needs would be a critical success factor of the plan in the future – as Partners (and in particular, the LSP) felt that the parish bodies coming together under a single umbrella plan added weight to their chances of achieving a change in service provision.

- VAC, as the RCC for Cumbria, provides expert facilitation to the parish planning process in the County. VAC support was felt to demonstrate best practice in a number of ways:

  - The commitment of a dedicated member of staff from the start of the process was significant in maintaining momentum. VAC was one of the bodies that initiated the process in the Upper Eden area and has been there at every stage, providing advice.

  - Provision of expert guidance – in Upper Eden the VAC provided short 'best practice notes' on a number of key issues that the group were responding to. These explained how the issues had been resolved or responded to in other parishes in Cumbria.

- Linked to the commitment of VAC, all Partners, and members of the UECPG, stated that having an experienced and capable consultant involved was an essential element for achieving success. Key factors were:

  - As a trained Town Planner, the consultant was able to communicate in the language of planning policy and develop a strong relationship with the planning officers.

  - Having someone employed meant there was always someone in place to drive the process from a position of relative authority,

able to engage with service providers and members of the group to ensure people meet their commitments.

- The consultant employed works on the project at well below commercial market consultancy rates. Being a local resident he has a strong personal interest in the process, and has been involved in other initiatives, such as Vital Villages, in the past. This reserve of tacit knowledge has been seen as an important critical success factor.

Wolverton and Greenleys, Milton Keynes

February 2007

Area Profile

Location of the parish	Wolverton and Greenleys is situated in the South East region, in the north west of Milton Keynes.
Nature of the parish	Wolverton and Greenleys is an urban, civil parish with a town council.
Population	The parish has a relatively large population of around 8,250 people of which 88% are white British. There is a small BME community (around 9% of the population) and the largest single ethnic minority group is Asian (5% of the population). The population is also relatively 'young' with 74% under the age of 50 (Census 2001).
Local governance structure	The local governance structure is single-tiered. Milton Keynes Council is the unitary authority. When Milton Keynes became a Unitary Authority in 2001 parishes were created throughout the whole borough giving the area a total of 45 different parishes. These parishes ranged from small rural parishes to very large urban ones.
Preparation / Publication	The parish plan process began with a Market Towns Initiative Health Check in 2002, funded by the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, Milton Keynes Council and Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council. The health check lasted for six months and consulted over 500 people. In 2003 Milton Keynes Council appointed and funded consultants to create a Development Framework for the Town. Following the formal consultation the consultants finalised the two Development Framework Plans, which were endorsed by Milton

	Keynes Council in 2004.

Parish Plan objectives

The Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council does not have a 'parish plan' as such, it does however have two "Development Frameworks": one for Wolverton, the Wolverton Development Framework Plan; the other for the west end of the town, the West End Development Framework. These two frameworks identify the key opportunities for regenerating the town, the key projects that need to be brought forward and they provide a blueprint for the redevelopment of Wolverton and Greenleys over the next 20 years.

Table 1: Development Framework Priorities

The Wolverton Development Framework Plan has seven key regeneration priorities:

- develop an attractive, vibrant mixed-use centre
- create a key linkage network
- create a hierarchy of linked public spaces
- promote a series of gateways to the town
- public transport improvements
- create opportunities for waterfront development close to the heart of the town
- identify options for development of the Railway Works.

The West End Development Framework has six key regeneration priorities:

- provide a neighbourhood with a strong sense of character and identity
- create a high quality, attractive urban environment
- promote the objectives of sustainable development through the layout of built form, energy efficiency and construction methods
- provide a development that is well connected
- provide a range of dwelling types, sizes and tenures
- create an environment that encourages walking, cycling and public transport usage.

Source: Wolverton and Greenleys Development Frameworks

Development of the Parish Plan

The creation of the two Development Frameworks for Wolverton and Greenleys has occurred through a number of different stages and involved a variety of organisations and groups.

The process initially began through the Market Towns Initiative Health Check that was funded by the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, Milton Keynes Council and Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and undertaken in 2002. The purpose of this health check was to enable the town council, through the local community, "to identify the economic, environmental and social strengths and weaknesses" of the town and provide it with "a sound basis for creating an action plan for regeneration".

It asked people about their priorities for the next 20 years. In addition to this, working groups met 31 times involving 70 people as well as a number of questionnaires undertaken with the public. This Health Check provided the area with a set of common principles on which Wolverton's future should be developed: the "Future Wolverton Vision".

In order to take this vision forward, in 2003 Milton Keynes Council appointed and funded (£80,000) the consultants GVA Grimley and Urban Initiatives to create a Development Framework for the Town. Reporting to a client group of Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council, Milton Keynes Council, English Partnerships and the South East of England Development Agency the consultants looked at the urban design and commercial implications of taking forward different aspects of the vision.

The work involved a range of further consultations with key stakeholders, landowners, and partner organisations as well as two further meetings with the community. The result of this work was a "Regeneration Strategy" detailing what was possible for the area in both physical and financial terms.

The Town Council then formally consulted the local community on this strategy, over a six week period, including exhibitions, a consultation event and a detailed supplement with the opportunity to provide written comments in the local newsletter.

Following the formal consultation the consultants finalised the two Development Framework Plans including an "Action Strategy" based upon the key project areas identified and a detailed financial strategy. The Wolverton Development Framework Plan focused on the redevelopment of a number of key town centre sites. Whereas the West End Framework focused on providing new housing and leisure facilities to link together Wolverton and Greenleys.

The plans were then submitted to the Cabinet of Milton Keynes Council and endorsed in April 2004. Following this, in September 2004, they were developed into SPG.

In 2005 the Milton Keynes Local plan, including the two Wolverton SPGs, were approved by the Planning Inspector and then formally adopted in 2006.

Extent of integration

Through the adoption of the local plan and the inclusion of the two Wolverton SPGs effectively all of Wolverton and Greenleys Development Framework Plan priorities have been integrated into the wider planning and regeneration work being undertaken by Milton Keynes Council particularly in delivering 2,000 of the 70,000 homes proposed in Milton Keynes as part of the Growth Area agenda.

In addition to this and outside of the Development Frameworks the Town Council has also worked with Milton Keynes Council, through an officers group, to improve the environmental quality of the local streets. Milton Keynes Council has also given some land to the Town Council to manage under the "Parish and Town Council Charter" (a formal agreement to work together, across the two tiers).

Through the involvement of the Town Council, and more specifically Wolverton Unlimited – a Community Association set up to protect the community vision that came from the Health Check – the two Development Frameworks do reflect, very closely, the original community priorities identified through the Health Check process. The Town Council and Wolverton Unlimited have ensured that the community was able to voice its opinions and views at every different stage of the development process. An input that has changed how some of the developments look, for example, the residential sites will be built to good eco-homes standards because the community wanted the developments to be more sustainable.

There have always been good links between the Milton Keynes Council and the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council through the Community Liaison Team within Milton Keynes. However, this relationship has been both strengthened and broadened since the creation of the Development Frameworks as the Town Council is now one of a group of Partners, including different council departments and English Partnerships, who meet monthly to take a strategic overview of the two developments. The group is chaired by the local CAB which also provides the link into the larger Milton Keynes Partnership.

It is too early to see if providers will modify or revise their delivery agendas. Although, the success of the Town Council in both creating and integrating the two Development Frameworks and its full involvement of the local community throughout the process was felt to highlight many of the potential benefits of

working at this more local level. Benefits it was hoped that other providers would see and seek to utilise.

Barriers to integration

A number of common barriers were identified in both the process of creating Development Framework Plans and the process of actually delivering against them. They included:

- the apathy of local residents, both to get involved in the process but also to remain engaged over the longer term
- the lack of funding available to deliver smaller, discreet projects that support the larger development plans for example street scene improvements
- the ethnic minority population was often not involved or represented in the public consultation
- change in Central Government policy can be very damaging to local work and relationships.

Critical success factors and ways in which to improve integration

The consultations also identified a number of common critical success factors, including:

- the need for committed and enthusiastic local people to help not only develop but to remain involved throughout the delivery of the plans
- the need for larger urban areas to be able to deal with issues on an individual basis rather than through one 'plan'.
- the need to work within local planning systems and structures and ensure that any developments fit closely with wider area agendas.
- the need to appreciate the 'real world' dimension – just because the community identify a priority it does not mean it can be delivered
- the need to develop strong working relationships between a number of different organisations.
- Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council have enabled the local community to play a key role in shaping the future development and regeneration of their town. Through close working with Milton Keynes, and other organisations, the Town Council has seen the community vision and priorities for the area developed into two substantial

Development Framework Plans that are not only fully integrated into the adopted local plan, but are being delivered.

Annex E: Case study discussion guide

Introduction

SQW has been commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to examine the different ways in which parish plans are currently being integrated into local statutory planning and service delivery. The project will identify best practice and critical success factors and will also highlight the key barriers impeding integration where it has not been successfully achieved.

Brilley has been selected by the DEFRA steering group as a case study in the West Midlands. We would like to obtain your views on progress of the Brilley parish plan to date, identify how successfully plan priorities have been integrated and the ways in which this has been achieved. We'd also appreciate your comments on the work still left to be done to achieve the vision of completely coherent integration of parish plans into the wider systems for local government. From our discussions with you, and with consultees in other case study areas, we will be able to identify good practice and highlight the most successful approaches.

Topics for discussion

Developing the parish plan

1. Who was/which organisations were involved in developing the parish plan?
2. At what stages were different stakeholders invited to participate in the parish plans process?
3. Were there any organisations/individuals that were key to the development of the plan? What made them key to the development?

4. Were there any local stakeholders that were not involved, but whose engagement you would have welcomed? Why? How would this have made a difference?

The extent of integration to date

5. Which specific plan objectives that needed the involvement of mainstream service providers do you feel have been acted upon most successfully? *(May be a particular policy/service area)* Why do you think this was? Which objectives have not been acted upon least successfully and why?

6. What impact do you feel that the parish plan has had on mainstream service providers and their delivery mechanisms? *If there is a specific policy area that the case study is focusing on then home in on this.*

    a. Has the parish plan raised awareness with providers of local community objectives? To what extent? How?

    b. Do you have better contact with your local authority and/or service providers based around the priorities of the parish plan?

    c. Have providers actually modified/revised their agenda or service delivery to reflect parish plan priorities? If so, how? Do you think this has lead to a more effective or successful local service?

    d. Has the parish plan been able to attract more resources from mainstream providers to meet its objectives? Has the plan resulted in reallocation of financial or staffing resources to meet plan priorities?

    e. How would you compare service providers' responses? And if there are variations what do you think the reasons are for them?

Approaches to integration

7. How do you liaise with mainstream service providers and other bodies? Did you establish any specific approaches with a view to getting plan priorities integrated into mainstream service delivery? *(E.g. dedicated liaison officer; regular meetings etc.)* Were there any mechanisms that were already established / in place which were utilised for purposes of integrating parish plan priorities?

8. How successful have these approaches been? Could anything be changed to make integration of parish plan priorities smoother in future?

9. Where did the drive behind liaison over the parish plan come from? Was it due to the activity of your parish plan group or was the engagement and integration process led by other bodies/stakeholders?

Critical success factors and barriers

10. In your view what have been the critical success factors that enabled the integration of [some of] the priorities of your parish plan? (Either overall or for particular services/strategies).

11. What barriers have you encountered when trying to get mainstream service providers to take notice of the value of parish plans and act upon their priorities?

12. What has / could be done to overcome these barriers?

SQW would like to thank you for your support and contribution to this research.

Annex F: Electronic questionnaire

Survey for parish plan groups

January 2007

Functions of parish plans

What do you see as the main purposes and functions of your parish plan? Please tick all that apply.

Function	Purpose of your parish plan?
Ensuring ***community involvement and consultation*** in priority setting	
Raising awareness of local community priorities	
Advising the ***parish council*** on resource allocation	
Advising the ***local authority*** (district/county/unitary) on: • Resource allocation • Service delivery mechanism • Commissioning services/facilities	
Advising other ***mainstream providers*** on: • Resource allocation • Service delivery mechanisms • Commissioning services/facilities	
Advising the ***Local Strategic Partnership*** of local priorities	
Designing and planning community facilities and area services	
Other purposes and functions – please state	

Involvement and integration of service providers

Which of the following mainstream service providers were involved with the development of your parish plan?

Mainstream Service Providers	(A) No, or marginal, involve-ment	(B) Some meaning-ful involvem ent	(C) Strong involve-ment
1. Police			
2. Probation Service			
3. Primary Care Trust			
4. Local Education Authority			
5. Local primary school(s)			
6. Local secondary school(s)			
7. Local FE/HE college			
8. JobCentre Plus			
9. Learning & Skills Council			
10. Connexions			
11. Local Auth – Youth service			
12. Local Auth – Leisure services (sport/culture/libraries)			
13. Local Auth – Social Services			
14. Local Auth – Housing Dept			
15. Local Auth – Environment Services			
16. Local planning authority			
17. RSL / Housing Association			
18. Public transport body			
19. Fire Service			
20. Other…….. (please state)			

Which mainstream providers have incorporated parish plan priorities into their service delivery?

Mainstream Service Providers	(A) Yes, incorporation of plan priorities into mainstream delivery	(B) No integration of parish plan priorities	(C) Not relevant as parish plan did not include service area priorities
1. Police			
2. Probation Service			
3. Primary Care Trust			
4. Local Education Authority			
5. Local primary school(s)			
6. Local secondary school(s)			
7. Local FE/HE college			
8. JobCentre Plus			
9. Learning & Skills Council			
10. Connexions			
11. Local Auth – Youth service			
12. Local Auth – Leisure services (sport/culture/libraries)			
13. Local Auth – Social Services			
14. Local Auth – Housing Dept			
15. Local Auth – Environment Services			
16. RSL / Housing Association			
17. Local Planning Authority			
18. Public transport body			
19. Fire Service			
20. Other…….. (please state)			

Service Delivery

Has service delivery improved since the development of your parish plan?

Key mainstream service outcomes	**Top what extent have services changed since the development of the plan?**			**To what extent was change due to integration of parish plans priorities by mainstream providers?** ***(tick one box)***		
	No change	**Some improvement**	**Significant improvement**	**Change was due to the service delivery body rather than parish plans priorities.**	**Parish plans priorities had some impact.**	**Parish plans priorities were fully integrated and were instrumental to change**
Crime services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Health services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Education and skills provision Please specify which service areas in particular.						

Youth services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Maintenance/repair of footpaths, street furniture Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Leisure services (sport/cultural/libraries) Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Social services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Housing services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Environmental services Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Public transport provision Please specify which service areas in particular.						
Other (please state)						

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Annex H: Glossary

Table H-1 Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
ACRE	Action with Communities in Rural England
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Beacon Council	The Beacon Council Scheme celebrates excellence in performance in local government and provides a range of learning opportunities for the sharing of good practice between councils to support the process of service improvement.
BC	Borough Council
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BMECo	Brilley Mountain Eco group
BT	British Telecom
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureau
CAN	Community Action Northumberland
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
Census	A census is a survey of all people and households in the country. It provides essential information from national to neighbourhood level for government, business and the community. The most recent census was on 29 April 2001.
Community Planning	For the purpose of this report, the term 'community planning' has been used interchangeably with 'parish planning'.
CPT	Community Property Trust (Torridge, Devon)
CVS	Community and Voluntary Service
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EEDA	East of England Development Agency
EIP	Examination in Public
FE	Further Education
GOEM	Government Office East Midlands
GONE	Government Office North East
GONW	Government Office North West

GOSW	Government Office South West
GOYH	Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber
GPs	General Practitioners
HC	Herefordshire Council
HE	Higher Education
JCP	JobCentre Plus
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCP	Local Community Partnership
LDF	Local Development Framework
LEA	Local Education Authority
LGA	Local Government Association
LGWP	Local Government White Paper
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
Mainstream service provider	This phrase refers to providers of public services including policing, education, health, transport, planning, environmental and youth services.
MCTi	Market and Coastal Towns initiative
MDC	Metropolitan District Council
MEA	Marches Energy Agency
MESH	Making Energy Sustainable in Herefordshire
MP	Member of Parliament
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
NAP	North Area Panel (Sheffield)
NHS	National Health Service
NIMBY	'Not in my backyard'
NWDA	North West Development Agency
OBC	Oswestry Borough Council
ORCC	Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PCT	Primary Care Trust
Quality Parish	A Government scheme to encourage all parish councils to reach the standards of the best and, in doing so, to demonstrate their status as the local representatives of their communities and help them to work more closely with partners in the delivery of local services.
RCC	Rural Community Council
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RSCP	Rural Social and Community Programme
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SCC	Shropshire County Council
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
Single-tier / unitary	A single tier or unitary authority means it has responsibility for delivering all services in its area. English unitaries can be called council, metropolitan district, city or borough.
SKDC	South Kesteven District Council
SNAP	Shropshire Neighbourhoods and Parishes
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
SWDA	South West Development Agency
Two-tier	Two-tier local government involves county and district councils working together to deliver services. County councils tend to deliver all-encompassing services, such as education, while districts tend to deliver the smaller, localised services, such as housing/planning.
UDP	Unitary Development Plan

UECPG	Upper Eden Community Planning Group
Unitary	See single-tier definition above.
VAC	Voluntary Action Cumbria (Cumbria's RCC)
VDS	Village Design Statement
YLCA	Yorkshire Local Councils Association
YRCC	Yorkshire Rural Community Council