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| East Chinnock Parish Plan |
| January 2016 |



Introduction

East Chinnock is a village situated in Somerset, within the jurisdiction of the South Somerset District Council; it is situated on the A30 midway between the towns of Yeovil and Crewkerne, the centre of each approximately five miles distant. The parish covers an area of approximately two square miles of largely agricultural land and comprises some 231 households with a population of 479 in the 2011 census. Of that population 14% are under the age of 18, 58% aged between 18 and 64 and 27% aged over 65.

Amenities include the Church of St. Mary, the Village Hall (formerly the Village School) and a Pub, the Portman Arms.

There is a part-time Post-Office presence in the Village Hall. A former shop/Post Office currently lies empty, although there is a farm shop at Cott Farm, some ½ mile from the centre of the village. Regrettably this lacks a safe walking route from the village. Supermarkets are available in both Yeovil and Crewkerne, as are Banks and Council offices, with the nearest Doctor’s Surgery at West Coker, some two miles distant.

The village has a central bus stop with hourly buses running between Yeovil and Crewkerne during the daytime on weekdays and Saturdays only. Most buses run via Crewkerne railway station from where hourly trains run to London and Exeter. Of the working population, most commute by car to Yeovil, there being little employment available within the village itself. Although the village school closed in 1963, East Chinnock retains a Pre-School, and is within the catchment area for the popular Junior School at East Coker, to which a School Bus is provided by the Local Authority.

Although the surveys so far conducted indicate that residents consider East Chinnock a nice place to live at the present time there are concerns, which this Plan will attempt to address in the subject areas which follow.

Producing a Parish Plan

This Plan, intended to be a ‘living’ document, subject to future updating, has been prepared by a small independent Steering Committee who volunteered following an open meeting held at the Village Hall on 15th October 2014, which was attended by some twenty-five villagers.

Its aim is to highlight the aspirations and concerns of the community as a whole, and to provide a mechanism for these to be made known to those Authorities at all levels responsible for making decisions as to its future, including those relating to planning matters. With this in mind, it is hoped that the Parish Council will see fit to adopt the plan and to consider its content where appropriate when making representations to our District and County Councils and to other statutory organisations as appropriate.

In reaching its conclusions the Steering Committee has had regard the results of the Parish Plan Questionnaire which was issued to all households in January of 2014, to which 49% responded, as well as to the feedback from the Parish Council stand at the July 2014 Village Fun Day; these together having given everyone the opportunity to ‘have their say’. The Committee have also requested the views of interested parties with regard specific topics, and will continue to welcome the views of all residents of East Chinnock. Membership of the Committee remains open, and anyone wishing to become involved will be made most welcome.

In conclusion, the Committee would like to thank all villagers who have contributed so far for their input, and to thank the Parish Council for their support and encouragement.

Employment

The Current Situation

Presently the majority of the working population within the village do so in the surrounding towns namely Yeovil and Crewkerene.

These towns, as highlighted in the introduction of this document, are both within a comfortable commuting distance and access via regular public transport make the need for growing the villages internal employment options a low priority.

The village is however home to a handful of small businesses mainly focused on typically rural services such as tree surgery, farm shop, B&B’s and a cider farm.

Issues identified

Businesses within the village, with the exception of the Portman Arms, are independent from the population of the village in terms of their customer base and often rely on surrounding villages and towns to provide the bulk of their custom.

Vision for the future

Growth and awareness of local businesses to be encouraged in order to provide an increase in full and part time employment options for villagers particularly young people looking for low paid part time work.

Housing

The Current Situation

The village currently has a very mixed stock of housing, with newer properties being concentrated in small developments within the village itself.

Issues identified

Although the majority (56%) of those who responded to the village survey felt that the housing stock meets current residential needs, the same number felt that it will not meet these needs for the future, with most favouring any new building to be on available space within the village rather than on Greenfield sites outside it. Identified needs were for ‘downsizer’/ retirement housing (with some bungalows if possible) to free up family houses whilst allowing long-term residents to remain in the village, and for affordable housing (1 or 2 bedroom) to allow younger members of local families to get on the housing ladder without having to leave.

Vision for the future

Presently there is an East Chinnock Community Land Trust exploring and developing options to satisfy the villages housing requirements.

Transport/Highways & Traffic

The Current Situation

Availability of regular public transport in the village is deemed to be satisfactory with residents benefitting from a regular bus service to neighboring towns throughout the week and weekend. This regular public transport is essential to the village for working and retired villagers to access Yeovil and Crewkerne for both employment and shopping amongst other uses. In addition to this the existing public transport provides essential links for the handful of businesses within the village and for any potential new businesses looking to establish themselves locally.

Issues identified

High volumes of both recreational and industrial traffic through the village along the A30, is inevitable due to it essentially being a thoroughfare for vehicles heading to either Yeovil, Crewkerne or beyond.

The Parish Council lobbied for, and succeeded in getting, traffic calming measures installed on the A30 in September 2013. Currently these measures are due for review with many villagers still voicing concerns about the speeding traffic, dangerous overtaking and some concerned about damage to walls.

Several options are still available to address this problem with a village gateway considered to be a good way of clearly defining the traffics entry into a populated area. In addition to a village gateway, speed bumps at the entrance to the village and flashing speed indicator devices (SID’s) were also largely agreed upon as valid and effective suggestions.

Traffic densities along Chinnock Hollow are also high as it being increasingly used by day-to-day commuters for which it is clearly not suitable.

Vision for the future

Clear definition of the entry/exit of the village to through traffic in order to increase awareness of the village as a whole and the expected driving standard.

The Parish council should consider asking the Highway Authority to look at the possibility of widening the entrance to Chinnock Hollow road by cutting away some of the bank therefore increasing the visibility and suitability of this road for the unavoidable use of daily commuters. In addition, signage and/or traffic calming measures at the ‘pinch’ point at the base of the Hollow hill is a point for consideration to reduce the speed of traffic travelling south.

The introduction of cycle paths providing safer cycling routes for commuting cyclists and families/children who wish to cycle around the village for recreation, is another practical suggestion that residents feel would benefit the village as a whole.

Amenities

The Current Situation

Amenities include village hall, pub, farm shop and recreation field with the Church room used primarily for the village pre-school. Although basic in their variety, amenities are satisfactory on the whole and provide the village with locations to hold events, meetings and social gatherings with the village hall and recreation field building the most regularly used.

At time of the generation of this plan the village pub has been sold and it is understood that the intention is for it to remain a pub. There was no doubt amongst committee members and feedback from the village that there is still a need for the village to keep a pub and that the ageing and infirm population would continue to depend on this local amenity. With the recent increase in young families moving into the village and the consequent increase in demand for affordable housing in the long term, a pub is becoming a far more relevant amenity.

Issues identified

There is a lack of both general awareness and suitable/safe walking access to the villages only remaining local shop, the Cott farm shop, with the lack of safe walking access to this shop resulting in it not being fully used by villagers.

Vision for the future

The amenities in the village are very much the minimum requirement and therefore must be safeguarded. Improved access via green paths, to the Cott Farm shop is a recommendation to the Parish council.

A village pub, whether it be the Portman Arms as it is now or a scaled down version, must remain as available amenity in the short to long term to continue to provide the village with a social and functional outlet.

The village hall and pre-school buildings must be protected and maintained to continue to provide their existing level of functionality.

Recreation/Leisure

The Current Situation

The village enjoys the presence of a centrally located, well sized recreation field that offers a suitable location for ball sports such as football and basketball, and a separate play area for younger children/toddlers with swings and play equipment.

The recreation field is successfully used for village events, such as the summer fun day, the pre-school and croquet club.

Issues identified

The main issue highlighted with the recreation field is the dated play equipment in the play area. The swings, climbing frame, slide and ‘rocket’ have been a feature of the rec’ for over two decades and are jaded and in need of updating.

In addition to the updating of the play equipment, feedback from a questionnaire (composed by a steering committee member) also included suggestions for the inclusion of some basic adult outdoor exercise equipment and a small sheltered area.

Vision for the future

There is a need to replace/update the equipment in the play area; viable options include an all in-one play house, climbing wall and slide similar to that found at the Hardington rec’ and a new set of swings with the climbing frame and rocket making way to allow space for this new equipment.

Parking

The Current Situation

Parking in the village was identified as an increasingly significant problem that is, in some instances, causing social tensions

Parking outside of the pre-school is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to improve the safety of parents and toddlers when going to and from the pre-school as Weston Street quickly becomes congested and visibility of through traffic is poor.

Vision for the future

Investigations into this issue have only provided one viable option being to increase the size of the existing layby opposite the church to allow more cars to park and likewise to cut away more of the bank outside of the pre-school/recreation field to widen the road and allow for more parking and better access.

It is a mandatory stipulation that all new housing or building developments within the village will have adequate provision for off road parking in order to prevent this problem from exacerbating.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Scott Grinter: Chair Parish Plan Steering Committee