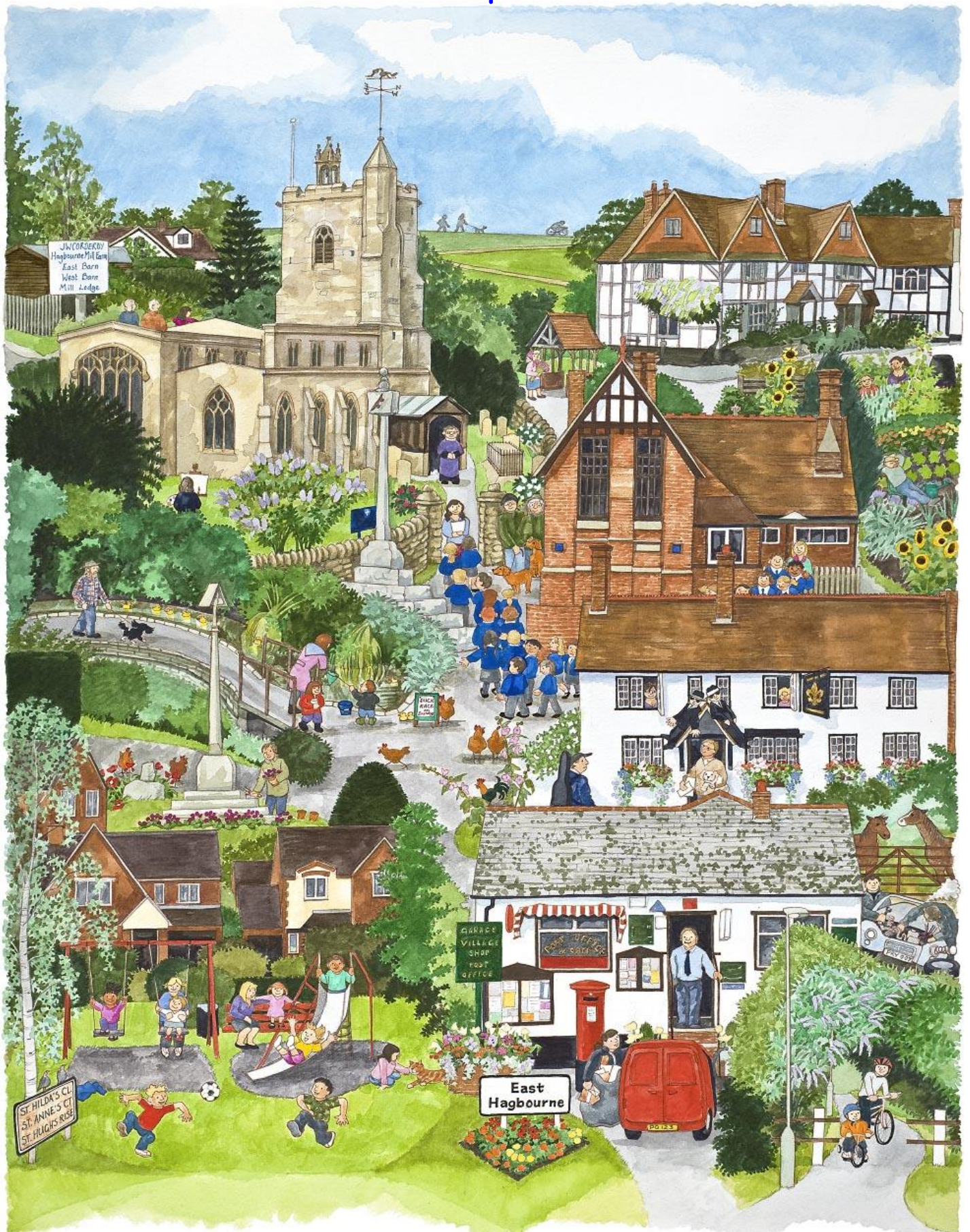


East Hagbourne Parish Plan Review - April 2015



Background

The East Hagbourne Parish Plan was published in April 2011 as the culmination of several years work by many people in the parish. It was based on a survey of all parish residents to identify interests, needs and priorities and formed the basis of an action plan, led by the Parish Council. The full Parish Plan report can be found at

<http://www.easthagbourne.net/council-indiv.php?id=357&name=Parish%20Plan>

The purpose of this brief review is to revisit the action plan as it was drafted in 2011, record what has been done as in response and highlight potential future actions including issues which may not have been apparent when the original plan was written.

Since 2011 the expansion of Didcot has begun in earnest. The pattern for future housing seems to be fixed for near future, but further developments are likely and will need to be monitored. The shape of our own parish is also changing with the transfer of Millbrook to Didcot parish from May 2015. With this change, the number of houses in East Hagbourne parish reduces by about one third to approximately 500 dwellings.

Review of the Action Plan

The Parish Plan was organised into 11 topics areas which are briefly reviewed below, together with a discussion of potential new areas of interest.

1. Urban Development

The growth of Didcot is a major development affecting the whole area including East Hagbourne. Our village provides a rural environment, green spaces and footpaths which are a benefit to town and village alike and should be preserved.

The Parish Plan put an action on the Parish Council to "input to regional development plans to protect the interests of East Hagbourne". In our discussions with SODC and OCC we have been able to establish an effective dialogue and contribute on the Local Plan, Transport Plan and other related activities. However, this is an ongoing activity and continued effort is needed if our voice is to be heard. While the whole Parish Council has been involved in this process, we have relied particularly on one Councillor, assisted by an outside expert, who has now left the parish.

- ***There is a need for new volunteers, in the Council or the general community, if we are to continue our interaction at a detailed level.***

2. Communications

The main channel of communication in East Hagbourne has for many years been the Parish Magazine, which contains news and reports on community events as well as church activities. This is supplemented by the village web site. Communications affect the whole community, but Parish Council has an important role to play in providing co-ordination and leadership. Actions from the 2011 Plan were:

- Issue a free promotional issue of the Parish Magazine.
 - This was done in January 2011, but unfortunately did not result in many increased subscriptions. About half the households in the parish receive the magazine
- Continue improving the web-site.
 - A new, fresh web-site format was introduced in 2012 and is efficiently maintained by our web-master. There is much valuable information on the web-site about village facilities and activities, however the calendar section is not well used and is not a reliable resource for "what's on".
 - The web site is only as good as the information provided by members of the community, there is scope for a knowledgeable volunteer to assist the web-master by collating and providing information for the site.***

3. Improve information on Parish Council and regional developments.

- Prepare brief statements of Parish Council activities
To inform residents of Parish Council news and issues, a monthly Newsletter is prepared and included in the Parish Magazine as well as being posted on the web-site.
- Prepare summaries of key regional developments that will impact East Hagbourne
In the Parish Plan survey, residents felt less well informed about regional developments that will impact East Hagbourne than on local matters. This remains a challenge, because much of the information on regional planning is complex and voluminous. To reduce this to a simple summary is sometimes a major task in itself. However, recent news items are posted on the main page of the web site periodically.
- Publicise this information through the web site, email circulation and parish magazine as appropriate.
The web-site and parish magazine are effective for the major news items, but can be rather slow. Not everyone looks regularly to the web-site for news and the take-up of email circulation requests has been low.
Rapid communication of regional activities remains a challenge. Since some activities are complex, we have to rely to some extent to referring readers to the SODC or OCC web sites. We do receive many requests from OCC, SODC and other bodies to publicise activities, often at short notice. The Parish Council is looking into use of social media as a way of providing quick alerts on new developments.
- Publicise activities through open meetings. Try to involve all the community.
The Annual Parish Meeting remains the main public forum for discussion of village issues, but involving a wider range of people is something that takes place mainly at the personal level. East Hagbourne is fortunate in having many volunteer activities that provide social or recreation benefits to the community.
We need to take all opportunities to make new residents and younger people feel part of the community and hopefully contribute to village activities.

3 Road Safety

- Prepare a plan to address concerns raised on traffic including:
A detailed action plan was prepared including a wide range of possible measures and their feasibility and agreed by the Parish Council in May 2012. It can be found at <http://www.easthagbourne.net/council-indiv.php?id=357&name=Parish%20Plan>
- Consult the community on the conclusions and suggested priorities.
The draft plan was discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2012. views expressed at the meeting were instrumental in deciding to proceed with the new pavement on New Road at Lower Cross.
- Approach the relevant authorities to agree plans, and schedule any expenditure.
Extensive discussions were held, particularly with OCC, to understand the wider issues related to traffic measures and help prioritise actions. A traffic survey was carried out in 2012 (the report is on the web-site at the link shown above). In addition, generous financial support was secured through our County Councillor to part fund the new pavement and speed warning signs on New Road.
- Implement Plans
Some of the problems related to road traffic remain difficult to address. Some proposed solutions such as lower speed limits and road layout changes have not proved practical. The introduction of traffic calming remains a controversial issue. Nevertheless, significant progress has been achieved:
 - A vehicle Activated Speed Sign has been installed in New Road at the entry to the village.

- A new pavement has been installed from Lower Cross, along New Road as far as Great Mead. This allows pedestrian access past Lower Cross, enabling people to cross the road away from the blind bend.
- Speed surveys have been carried out which give a clearer picture of driving patterns through the village and a baseline for evaluating future changes.
- The Give Way sign at Lower Cross for traffic exiting Main Road has been repositioned to be more visible.
- The Parish Council monitors parking and overhanging hedges in the village and continues efforts to prevent vehicles or overhanging hedges from blocking pavements.
- Further pedestrian crossings were considered but not actioned, because of practical difficulties and cost.

4 Footpaths

In considering what maintenance is needed on footpaths, the Parish Council considers internal village routes as first priority, while paths across open country should be expected to be muddy. Paths around the edge of the village we consider in an intermediate category

- Improve surface of footpaths.

In 2011, a village working party carried out repairs to FP8 (Baker's Lane to The Croft) and the short path behind the village Hall, laying new scalplings. The cost was significantly reduced by using volunteer labour. FP4 (Butts Piece) is muddy in places, but is considered a lower priority, because there is a dry route if needed via Harwood Road.

- Monitor and maintain existing footpaths

FP12 (Fieldside to the Church) has received some attention to improve access at the Fieldside end. In addition, a working party has cut back the vegetation on the bank to recover this slightly higher ground for pedestrian use. The old route under the trees at the Church end has also been reopened, and the entry to Parsonage Lane cleared and cleaned. The route remains muddy in places, because the field level is in some places slightly above the path. We consider this an intermediate route.

- Ensure roadside pavements are kept clear

Efforts are ongoing to avoid inconsiderate parking and to ask property owners to keep hedges cut back. As a result of discussion at the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting, a survey of pavements in the parish was carried out.

- Evaluate a footpath along the south side of Main road from the school to the embankment

At the 2012 Annual Parish Meeting, opinions were divided about the merits of this and as a result funds were applied instead to the new pavement in New Road.

The cost of a pavement along the south side of the road would be considerable, however council has explored the feasibility of extending the path currently running from the village Hall to the school playing field so that it runs all the way to the cemetery. We have agreement in principle from the land owners, the school and from OCC that this is acceptable in principle if the community wishes it to happen.

- Improve safety of road crossing from school to Upper Cross

There is no room for a pavement over this short stretch of road and no practical way of improving the road layout has been found.

- Improve safety for pedestrians at Lower Cross and Great Mead/New Road

This has been addressed by the new pavement. More work is needed to improve pedestrian access around the corner.

- Promote safe and considerate use of rights of way by all users

This is an ongoing effort. It has been clarified that the Sustrans route is open to all non-motorised users.

- Prepare a new map of footpaths and Rights of Way for the Parish

A new and colourful footpath leaflet was prepared in 2011 and is available from the village shop for 20p.

5 Anti-social behaviour

The parish does not, fortunately, have serious problems of anti-social behaviour (but see section 6). The general topic of village cleanliness and neatness is also included here.

- Maintain and strengthen efforts to keep the parish neat and reduce litter.

The annual litter pick in April has been maintained. The improved methods of collecting recycled waste have reduced wind-blown rubbish. General tidiness varies somewhat through the village. There are a number of dedicated individuals who keep public areas near their houses tidy and mown and provide flowers for the village entry points. There are also a few areas where hedges are allowed to grow out and the road front is less tidy. There seems to be more road debris (leaves, silt) than on previous years and this is augmented by straw from the large wagons which pass through the village at harvest time.

The question of what standards we expect is one for the whole community and everyone has a part to play in keeping their own areas tidy.

- Build better links with young people to discourage anti-social behaviour

See section 8 for more discussion on young people. Anti-social behaviour is most likely to come from littering or inconsiderate driving through the village. Problems seem to have got less rather than increased.

- Awareness and enforcement of crime and anti-social behaviour

The Parish Council has had good liaison with local police officers who have helped with parking problems around the school and more generally in increasing awareness of inconsiderate driving. We have a good Neighbourhood Watch network and although there are some problems of break-ins, the level of crime is generally low.

6. Dog Fouling

- Continue education and monitoring activities
- Keep abreast of related activities elsewhere
- Develop lively education/ communication themes
- Maintain links with local schools and encourage their support

We have a good network of dog-bins around the village paths and these are generally well used. We have had some problems related to regular emptying of the bins, but SODC's performance in this area has improved.

The behaviour of a minority of dog owners means that there is still a problem of dog fouling in public places, on footpaths, in Butts Piece and even on pavements in the middle of the village. Enforcement is difficult and in the end, education is probably more effective if we had a team prepared to put some effort into it.

The restart of sporting activities at the Recreation Ground will require us to look closely at our rules and procedures to regulating dog use - in the context of the playing field and the children's play area, dog fouling or unruly behaviour become more of a problem.

7. Sustainability & Environment

While we have not actioned all the specific items envisaged in the 2011 plan we can report some notable progress.

- Reactivate Hagbourne Environment Group as a focus for biodiversity.

Hagbourne Environment Group is very active and provides benefits to the community and to the environment. In addition to looking after the wildflower meadow, the group undertakes the maintenance and rejuvenation of the 'wild' part of Butts Piece, clearing scrub and planting new trees that will eventually be coppiced. In addition, the group works with Didcot Town Council to help maintain the Millenium Wood, clearing cut wood. Regular working parties are held particularly during the winter months to which all are welcome. Wood is sold as firewood to cover the costs of operations

- Promote local food.

The allotments at Butts Piece are well used and surplus produce from hers and other gardens in the village can be found in the village shop. The annual Produce Show also continues to encourage and feature local produce.

- Prepare a conservation statement and plan for the Parish, to identify what we value and how we want to improve. Stimulate interest in sustainability and environmental issues, and gauge interest for community activities

No formal activity in this area.

- Ensure that waterways and drains are properly maintained to minimise the risk of future flooding. A loose network of volunteers is in place to maintain the stream courses. The main activities of the group have been downstream of Blewbury Road where the two channels need to be kept reasonable clear. Following fairly heavy clearance over past years, the level of vegetation seems less this year, aided by bank cutting by the farmer on the main channel. Other stream areas throughout the village are monitored by individuals and kept clear as needed.

Responsibilities at higher government levels have been restructured with OCC taking the lead and support from SODC. We have had good support from both authorities, but it is not yet clear if the new procedures are working smoothly.

Efforts have been made to control himalayan balsam which is a rapidly spreading plant. There has been some success, however reseeding can occur if all land owners do not help with this task.

Responsibility for stream maintenance lies with those whose properties abut the water course. there are, however, about half a dozen properties at greatest risk of flooding and the risk often comes from the water course in general rather than the immediate area.

We can generally rely on support from SODC and OCC if major action is needed, however general maintenance needs to be resourced at local level - all offers of help are welcome.

8. Education and Young People

- Build a dialogue with young people to understand their needs and wishes for future activities

We are not able to report any specific progress in this area

There are many young people in the village who are engaged in and contribute to activities in different ways, however the profile of many village activities, including the Parish Council, relies heavily on people past retirement age.

The new Pavilion opens the way for new sporting and community activities and presents an opportunity to get more young people - of all ages - involved.

9 Church & Community

- Preserve and enhance East Hagbourne's archives

The archives have been moved into secure, dedicated storage in the Village Hall. The Archive Group has held a very successful open weekend when material was available for inspection and started on an 'oral history' drawing on the memories of some of our older inhabitants.

Activity is, as always, limited by the energy and enthusiasm of a small number of people. Offers of help are welcome.

- Follow-up interests expressed in the 2008 Parish Survey

There are thriving book groups including book reading, bridge operating both in the village and the wider area (including through U3A), so the range of activities available has increased since 2011.

One sporting activity highlighted in the survey was table tennis. A meeting has already been called with the intention of setting up a table tennis club based in the Pavilion.

- *The Friends Of St. Andrew's, East And West Hagbourne*

While not identified as an action in the 2011 Plan, the church of St Andrews is finding it increasingly difficult to finance both its own operations and maintenance of our historic church. A charity has been set up specifically to fund repairs and maintenance of the church building.

10 Sports & Community Facilities

- Define and execute plans for improved facilities within East Hagbourne

The new Pavilion at the Great Mead Recreation Ground was opened in January and provides a wonderful new facility for the village and surrounding areas.

Football activities have recommenced and we have a new Community Choir operating on Tuesday evenings, so both sporting and community activities are encompassed, as envisaged in the Plan. The car park remains to be completed and will be a reinforced grass surface. The Recreation Ground and Pavilion will be leased by the Parish Council to a new management group, the East Hagbourne Sport & Recreation Committee who will manage and develop activities at the site.

We welcome new, enthusiastic and fresh minds to help us develop activities for the benefit of the community. If you could help in any way, however small, please get in touch.

11. Shops & Services

- Review the possibility of larger premises for the shop and Post Office.

This question was reviewed with the shop management committee and it was concluded that the current location, although small, provides the best option at present.

The shop and Post Office continue to provide an excellent service to the village and the introduction of fresh bread and baked products on Saturdays has been a great success. New volunteers are always needed and welcome - this is an easy and pleasant way to get involved in village life.

djr 10/03/2015
