



Hinton St. George Village Plan

January 2010

HINTON ST. GEORGE



VILLAGE PLAN

PREFACE

The Village Plan is intended to be a living document which lays out the future shape of the village as determined by its residents. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for local and central Government in the activities of village planning and prioritising the funding of projects. As such, it should be consistent with the policies and proposals of the Local Development Framework and, to this end, consultation with South Somerset District Council has been undertaken during its formulation. This document becomes a material consideration, which SSDC must take into account, when evaluating planning applications for development in and around the village.

The Plan has been presented to the Parish Council and has its approval. It is a rolling plan for the next 15 years to identify and implement the long term vision of the community towards improving quality of life for all age groups, adapting to social change, linking with surrounding communities, and enabling growth opportunities for local businesses. Formulation of the Plan, and statistical conclusions contained within it, are based on responses to a questionnaire circulated to all households in the village in early 2009.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times rural communities have undergone change in their way of life at a fast pace. Since the post-war years, Hinton St. George has evolved from a feudal to a freehold community. All of the five working farms within the village are now private residences – the last of these provided the sight of a dairy herd walking to and from pasture through the High Street as recently as 2000.

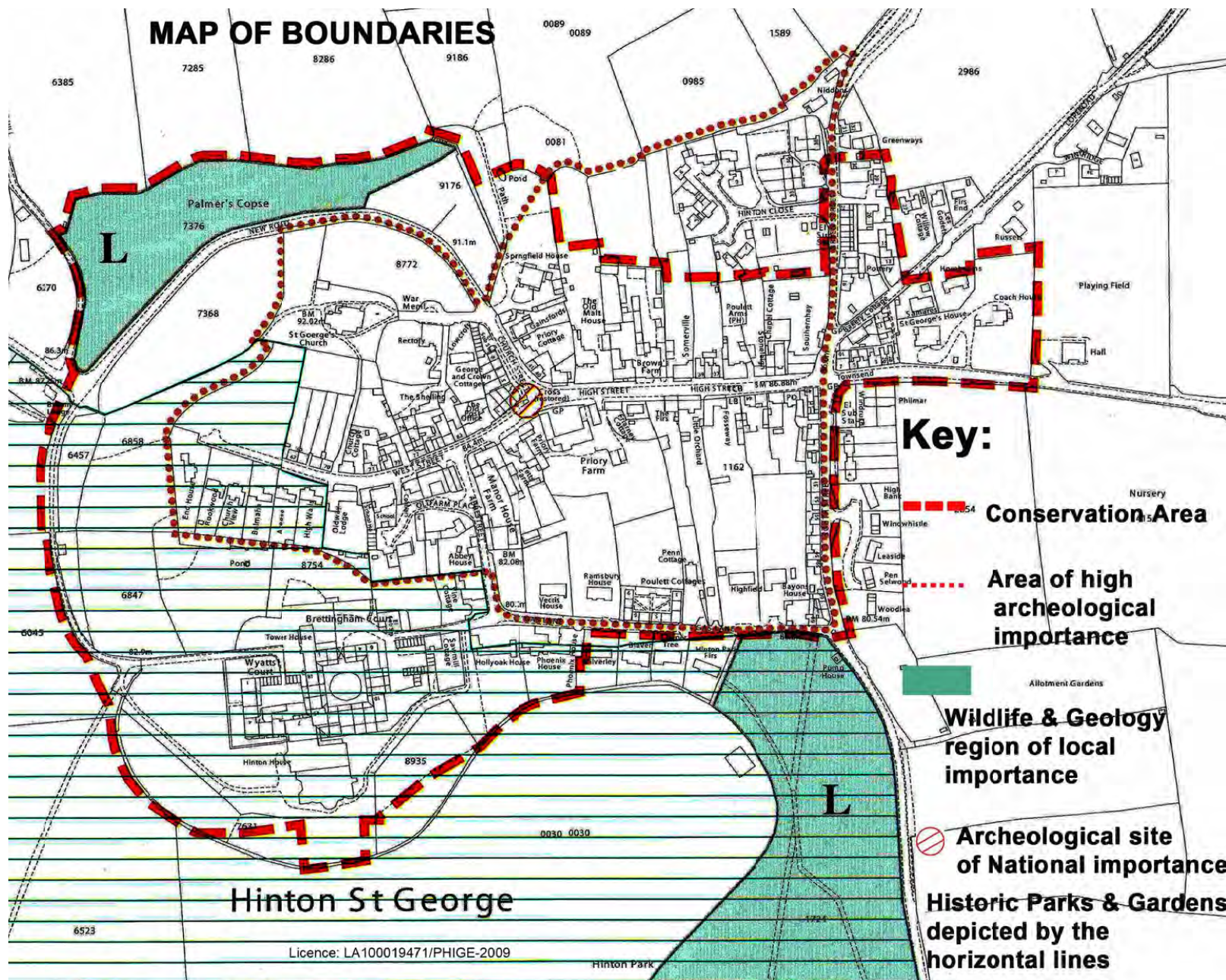
In the 1950's, there were few cars in the village. Reliance on public transport can be gauged by the fact that 26 buses per day passed along the Merriott road. Today, the car has brought an available and convenient means of transport to all of legal driving age but presents new problems to villages such as Hinton which are only reached by narrow unclassified roads, with very little off-street central parking provision. The parallel decline in available public transport places a burden on older residents who cannot or would prefer not to use a car to visit the doctor or go shopping.

Over say the last 30 years of the 20th century, with few opportunities for local employment, Hinton's population became increasingly of retirement age. Recent times have seen a trend of younger families settling in the village, with a steadily increasing proportion of the under-18 age group. This may be due to an increased willingness to drive further to work, and the ability to work from home. Also, there is an increased number of city workers who have second homes in rural areas.

Hinton currently has a population of around 400 living in some 240 residences. Its development is partially protected by a Conservation Area, which encompasses the majority of properties in the central part of the village. Within this area is a smaller zone of archaeological potential and land to the south of the village, within the parish boundary, is designated as an Historical Park. The 2001 Village Design Statement was written as a guide to preserve the heritage and environment in any planned development within the village, its surroundings and approaches.





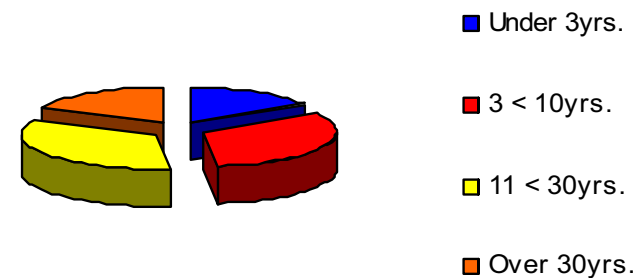


HOUSEHOLD DETAILS

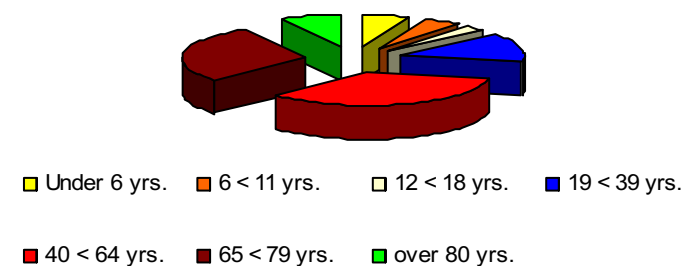
Consultation Results

- Just over half of the head-of-household residents who responded to the questionnaire have lived in the village for 10 years or more, 18% for 30 years or more.
- 37% of the residents of those households who answered the questionnaire are over 64 years of age, 8% over 80. Though statistical conclusions from a partial survey can be erroneous, it is evident that the number of residents in the 65 and over age category is proportionately about twice the national average.
- 6% are under 6 years of age, 11% under 12, 14 % under 19. 49% of residents are in the 'working' age group from 20 to 64 years.

Length of time respondents have lived in the Village



Age profile of Residents



VILLAGE AMENITIES

Hinton St. George First School

Background

The earliest account of education in Hinton St. George dates back to the mid 16th century. In 1850, the present school was settled in trust by Earl Poulett. In 1949 the school adopted the status of a Church of England Voluntary Controlled institution. As such it has a Christian Foundation, maintaining close links with the village church. In 1972 it was re-organised into a First School, taking children from 5 to 9 years of age. The school now accommodates 69 children, plus another 12 in pre-school (which is managed separately). As well as the classrooms and offices it has a playground, kitchen and access to a large playing field nearby, with a recently installed stage for outdoor events. Save for any change in County Council policy, the immediate future of the school seems secure. Many initiatives are already in place to maintain and strengthen relationships with the community, an aspect of village life which is increasingly important in any assessment by inspecting authorities.

Consultation Results

- 96% of responders consider the School to be an important contributor to village life.
- Of those who have lived in Hinton with children, 63% of those children attended the Village School. Of those currently with children of First School age, 72% attend. Of those with children younger than First School age, 90% intend that these children will attend.
- About one third of children in the village of First School age attend other schools, but the reasons were not stated.
- 41% of responders expressed a willingness to share areas of interest and experience with children at the school.
- There is a variety of opinion as to how the school could better integrate with the wider community: school concerts, greater involvement with elderly residents, use of school facilities for adult evening classes and concerts (including the playing field and stage), school visits to gardens.
- In summary, there is overwhelming desire for the continued good health of the School, and a desire for a broader interrelationship between the school and the community.

Objectives

- To support the continued health and vitality of the school as an important piece of village infrastructure

Actions

- Continue to strengthen the relationship between the School and the village community, with a range of initiatives: use of school facilities for non-school activities, increased educational interface with residents.





The Personal Service Stores

Background

The Personal Service Stores is undoubtedly a necessary and important asset to the village. Like other village shops (and Post Offices), in the face of the availability of supermarkets, its future is dependent on the continued support and patronage of the community, including weekenders. In 2008, there was a threat, originating in central government, to close the Post Office, a vital element of the viability of the shop. The community mounted a successful campaign to persuade the authorities to reverse their decision, although continued watchfulness is necessary.

Consultation Results

- Over 99% of the responders consider the Shop to be important or very important to the community
- 43% visit the Shop more than three times per week, 38% 1-3 times per week, 11% 1-3 times per month, 8% less frequently or never
- 12% use the Post Office more than 3 times per week, 45% 1-3 times per week, 29% 1-3 times per month, 14% less frequently or never
- Desired extra services include a Cash Point, and expanded banking provisions
- 96% of responders would support a community effort to keep the shop open should it face closure

Objectives

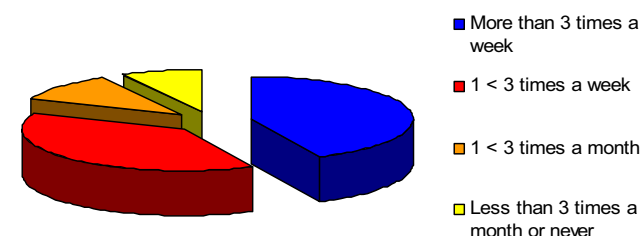
- To increase patronage of the shop and Post Office
- To ensure the continued operation of the shop and Post Office as a viable business

Actions

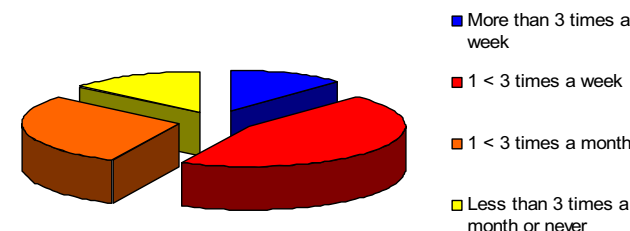
- Establish with the current management in what ways the village as a community can assist in assuring the future viability and security of the shop and the Post Office – greater patronage, use of expanded services, etc.
- Examine options for the continued operation of the shop and Post Office should the current management wish to retire.



Frequency of visits to the village shop



Frequency of visits to the Post Office





St. George's Hall

Background

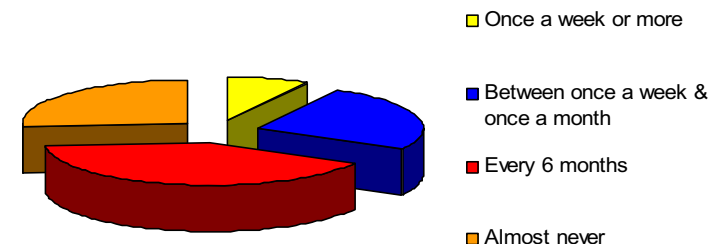
The original Village Hall was built in 1957. Development and improvements have occurred over the years, and the playing fields are adequate for football in the winter months and cricket in the summer. There is a children's playground adjacent to the hall. The facilities are well utilised for a range of activities, but require careful management and support for fund-raising to enable continued improvement

In recent years the village hall has been significantly upgraded, with the provision of a new kitchen, state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems, and improved toilet facilities.

Consultation Results

- The village hall was considered important or very important by the great majority of responders (98%) and is used by 74%.
- 8% visit the Hall once a week or more, 25% between once a week and once a month, 41% once every six months
- Though 90% of responders consider the present building adequate for the needs of the village, suggestions were made for additional activities and in order of popularity they are:
 - Film shows
 - Evening keep fit classes
 - Dancing
 - Badminton court
- Suggestions for additional facilities include enlargement of main hall, improved changing rooms, more storage space, dishwasher, improved parking

Frequency of visits to the Village Hall



Objectives

- Improved and expand facilities to accommodate new activities, for all age groups
- Increased participation of villagers and visitors in activities
- Increased sense of community within the village, with more opportunities for a wider range of villager participation

Actions

- Village Hall Committee to encourage the establishment of suggested new activities
- Investigate the possibility of extending the current building to accommodate: badminton court, additional storage space and improved changing room and toilet arrangements to provide 'home' and 'away' facilities



Playing Field

Background

The Playing Fields are the responsibility of the St. George's Hall Trust and its management committee. The ongoing maintenance of the sports field and playground is a considerable expense, involving frequent grass-cutting and mole control. Currently, the income received from organisations which use the field is insufficient to cover the costs and, effectively, income from the letting of the hall itself has to support the costs of the sports field. It should be noted that the main users of the sports field are football clubs which draw their membership from outside the village.

Consultation Results

- As might be expected, a minority (39%) of responders use the village playing field for any reason during the year – the younger section of the community and spectators primarily for football and cricket, for walking, and for occasional specific events
- In a survey of preferences for any new facilities, the most popular (58 votes) was a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), followed by bowling green (22) and mountain bike track (17)

Objectives

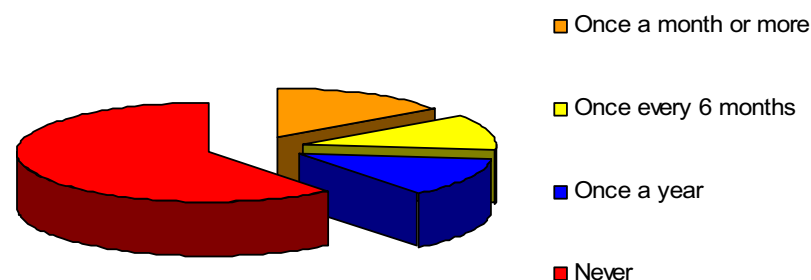
- To improve the utilisation of the existing field by the provision of a wider range of facilities.

Actions

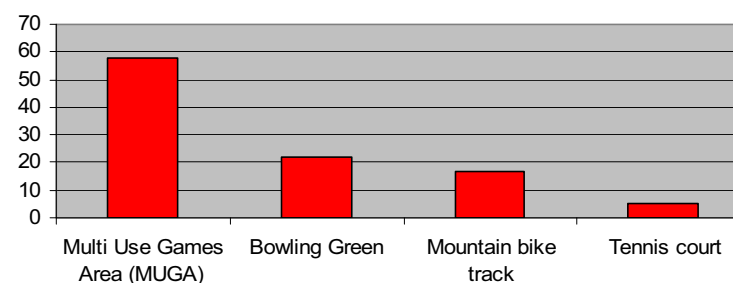
- Organise a village sports/leisure day to raise awareness, encourage greater use of the existing facilities, and to promote support of village teams
- Investigate reconfiguration of the football pitch to permit the incorporation of new facilities within the current boundaries of the field
- Investigate the financial feasibility of providing some or all of a MUGA, badminton court, bowling green, mountain bike track, skateboard track



Frequency of use of the Playing Fields



Number of people in favour of possible new facilities





St. George's Church

Background

Hinton's 15th century church has, during the past feudal times of village life, been an important focus of activities, being largely sustained and supported by the Poulett family. In modern times, all funds needed to maintain the Grade I listed building – fabric, churchyard, insurance, heating – and to meet the Parish Share, which pays for the share in the cost of maintaining the priesthood within the diocese, must be raised locally. As is the case with many other villages in the land, continued viable operation of the church is becoming an increasing challenge as the rate of increase in costs outstrips donations and fund-raising. Some churches have closed, or been taken over by the Church Commission. Many have generated additional income through the use of the building for non-worship events.

Consultation Results

- 93% of the community think that the church has an important role to play in village life.
- 11% visit the church once per week, 20% once per month, 42% once per six months, and 27% almost never.
- 25% think that the church should play a stronger role in village life. On how this could be achieved, responders were unsure.
- 45% of responders would be willing to become involved in fund-raising activities to help to meet costs. Others wish to help with maintenance where possible, and to help with fetes, festivals, and other church-based events.
- 57% would like to see more non-worship activities. Of these the overwhelming view is in favour of more musical events. Others are in favour of talks, meetings, poetry readings, and plays.
- In summary, continued good health and operation of the church is strongly desired. This view is evidently held even by a majority of those who almost never visit it.

Objectives

- To improve and sustain the continued financial stability of the church as a working institution.
- While preserving the church building as a place of worship, to enable it to feature in village life in more vibrant and active ways.

Actions

Discuss with the Parochial Church Council (PCC):

- How the community can help with the cost of maintaining the fabric of the Grade I listed building
- What additional activities could be promoted to create a greater sense of involvement of the community with the church





SOCIAL AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Background

In addition to the Village Hall and Playing Field activities, various groups such as Hinton Fund Raisers, Hinton Players and Hinton Singers, the History Group, book clubs, Wine Club, and Workers Education Association, meet in members' homes or elsewhere, offering a wide range of activities for village residents, and the opportunity to support other village institutions

Two biennial events, the Village Street Fair, normally held in the High Street, and the Hinton Music Festival, with a week of concerts primarily in the church, take place in alternating years. Every year the Horticultural Society, in co-operation with the National Gardens' Scheme, organises Open Gardens weekends in support of Charities, as well as a wider biennial opening of village gardens in support of the church. The traditional Punkie Night procession takes place on the last Thursday in October.

Consultation Results

There is up to 15% participation in each of the existing organisations/activities, with the exception of the music festival, of which 60% of responders attend some or all of the events. Some responders thought that the festival should be more diverse in music and venue, with prices more affordable

- The main reason for non-attendance at activities is the inconvenience of current timings for those who work or have families
- A great majority of responders (92%) were in favour of continuing with the Street Fair, 73% favouring its location in the High Street.
- There was a majority of 56% in favour of more "whole village events" with social events being the most favoured.
- Of the additional activities suggested, art, dancing, film, music and keep fit clubs received the greatest interest.
- Film shows, plays and art exhibitions were the most requested spectator activities. There was some demand for classes in language, computers and photography

Quick Win

- Establish a film club, and establish links with other local clubs with a view to sharing equipment

Objectives

- To increase awareness and attendance at existing organisations and events.
- To create a range of new activities, preferably which are whole village events, to enhance community spirit and cohesion

Actions

- Identify where possible from questionnaire returns those who supported new activities in the village and encourage them to get together to form committees to establish such activities
- Resurrect the Street Fair in 2010
- Encourage the use of the village hall by visiting performing arts groups





FOOTPATHS

Background

The land surrounding the village has a limited footpath network but is popular for dog walking and/or for general exercise and enjoyment of the scenery and fresh air. Designated footpaths follow routes established many decades ago as a means of travel between communities. To a large extent these routes pass across or along the fringes of agricultural land. There is generally good co-operation between the walking community and the farmers. In fact there is permissive use of some popular routes which are undesignated.

Maintenance of footpaths and their signage is the responsibility of SSDC, but resources for this task are limited. Some designated footpaths are partially obliterated from time to time by farming activity and some signage is erroneous or has disappeared altogether. Some access points and footpaths are difficult to negotiate, particularly after wet weather, or where the gate mechanism has failed. Hinton Park to the south is largely inaccessible for walkers.

Consultation Results

- 77% of responders consider that the local network of footpaths and bridleways are well used, and 68% considered them adequate.
- The condition of the paths and signage was criticised and 30% of responders were willing to help improve their condition.
- The most popular additions to the present footpath network would be a circular walk encompassing Hinton Park

Objectives

- To improve the maintenance and signage of existing footpaths and the expansion of the footpath network.

Actions

- Form an outdoor activity group with responsibilities to:
 - Research existing pathways – signage, access, quality
 - Work alongside SCC in discharging its statutory obligation to maintain the footpaths around the Parish to a high standard
 - Explore the possibility of providing additional walking routes where possible





COMMUNICATIONS

Background

Passage of information concerning village events, facilities and important matters outside the village, has traditionally been achieved through telephone, internet, radio and television, or internally through the local shop, tea room, notice board, church magazine and word of mouth. Flyers are also used by some of the village organisations to promote their events.

The advent of broadband has provided easier and more rapid access to information sources for those with connection capability. BT has confirmed that Broadband speed currently experienced in Hinton is determined by the capacity of the Crewkerne exchange (approximately 1.5mps download) and Hinton's situation on the fringe of the exchange operating area (5.5Km of copper wire) is the best we can expect, and that there is presently no plan for improvement.

Consultations Results

- External information sources were generally considered adequate with the exception of broadband internet. 78% of responders have access to the internet and of those 62% are dissatisfied with the service provided.
- Areas of the village suffer from poor mobile telephone signal & reception
- The village notice board, which is probably read in conjunction with information in the shop window, is considered adequate by a significant majority (85%). Most feel that they are adequately informed about village news and events.
- There is a small majority (52%) in favour of a village website.
- A greater number of villagers (63%) are in favour of a monthly newsletter.

Objectives

- To improve the standard and quality of broadband connection & mobile telephone reception
- To improve the communication of information about village news and events to encourage wider attendance
- To improve dissemination of information about the resources of the village



Quick Win

- A village website has already been established for the purpose of publicising the Village Plan and detailed back-up data. It is intended this should be expanded to cover all village societies, clubs, and organisations together with schools, churches and links to other related websites. It will also include a database of Local Authority officials, and minutes of Parish Council meetings. There will be a need to appoint a website manager.

Actions

- Investigate the potential for broadband performance improvement, through an upgrade of the Crewkerne telephone exchange (BT landline), or alternative wireless methods of accessing broadband connection from other sources
- Form a group to create and publish the monthly newsletter.
- Work with national mobile telephone network providers to improve the quality of mobile reception in Hinton



TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC

Background

Hinton St. George is a relatively isolated village without a full range of community services within walking distance. The nearest railway station is at Crewkerne, some 5 miles away and road transport is the only practical way of carrying on daily life. There are bus services to Crewkerne and South Petherton but these are infrequent, especially at weekends. Additional services recently provided by the Stagecoach company have improved choice, but general use has been affected by poor publicity and some initial unreliability. There is also a Nippy bus; but for commuting purposes, the car is the only practical form of transport.

Although there is generally little through traffic on the very narrow approach roads to the village, there is considerable traffic to the school at peak times, and added density in the High Street for access to the popular Lord Poulett Arms, mainly in the evenings. This generates a number of problems for the village. With the exception of standard statutory road signs, no measures have been put in place to manage the resulting speeding and parking problems that have arisen. Recently, as a result of satnav guidance, there have been instances where the route through Hinton has been used as a shortcut between the A30 and A303 by drivers of HGVs and other vehicles.

Consultation Results

- 88% of responders currently drive and 95% of households responding own at least one car, with 37% of households owning 2 or more.
- 93% of residents state that they never use public transport and of the 12 disabled responders, 67% said that they were unable to use the public transport provided.
- 75% of people believe that public transport is inadequate, suggesting that there may be a latent increased demand for public transport if it was better advertised and provided as a more convenient service.
- 57% of responders were against the provision of a bus shelter
- A small number of people (9) were prepared to form a Public Transport Action Group to co-ordinate the provision of better advertised and improved services, mainly the provision of a better service at weekends.
- Low utilisation of what public transport there is may be due to poor publicity of route and schedule information
- Although only 6% of responders said that they had difficulty in accessing a doctor or medical clinic, 84% were in favour of establishing a register of volunteer drivers. Responders were split over the issue of a car-sharing scheme, with only 48% in favour.
- Somewhat surprisingly, only 49% of responders were concerned about traffic, although 66% were in favour of measures to reduce the flow of heavy vehicles through the village. 62% of responders were against or strongly against measures to widen the access roads to the village.
- 67% of responders are concerned at traffic speeding through the village. Of the measures to reduce speeding, the most popular were the imposition of a 20mph speed limit (65%) together with some support for the extension of the existing speed limits and the provision of some form of traffic calming (18%). Other measures attracted little support.
- 51% of responders were concerned about on-street parking, probably a reflection that two streets (High and West) experience the worst of serious parking difficulties. Of the measures to reduce the problem, the most popular were a village car park (54%) and residents' parking permits (32%). Specific problems identified were the danger caused at the High Street/Lopen Road/South Street crossroads and the High Street/West Street/Church Street junction by thoughtless parking which restricts visibility. Particular problems identified were inconsiderate parking by school parents and patrons of the Lord Poulett Arms.
- 25 people said that they were prepared to form a group to plan and implement traffic and parking proposals.

Objectives

- To increase use of public transport, with special provision for the elderly and disabled.
- To reduce both the volume of heavy traffic and the speed of traffic through the village.
- To reduce the safety hazards created by thoughtless parking near junctions.

Quick Win

- Establish a register of volunteer drivers to improve the ability of the infirm, elderly and disabled to access services.

Actions

- Establish a Public Transport Action Group to discuss with the bus companies how to provide better publicity of routes and schedules, and the most important needs for an improved service.
- Explore with the Parish Council the possibility of providing improved parking.
- Explore with SCC the provision of additional parking for school staff and parents on part of the school playing field adjoining West Street.
- Work with Somerset County Council Highway Department to:
 - Review the speed limits through the village, including relocation of speed restriction signs further out, and introduction of a 20mph limit through the centre of the village;
 - Explore the options for traffic calming appropriate to the Conservation Area, taking into account the broad spread of views among residents;
 - Identify measures which could reduce the hazards created by thoughtless parking.
 - Consider signage to discourage drivers of HGVs using satnav from using the route through Hinton as a shortcut





EMPLOYMENT

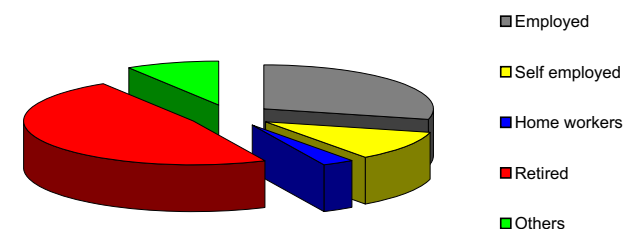
Background

Hinton St. George is a relatively isolated village and for commuting purposes to the main centres of employment and for carrying on daily life the car is the only practical form of transport.

Consultation Results

- The key employment statistics of the village are as follows:
 - 29% of responders are employed;
 - 11% are self-employed;
 - 3% describe themselves as home workers;
 - 48% are retired;
 - 9% fell into other categories, with only one responder being unemployed.
- While retired people do indeed form the largest block of residents, anecdotal evidence suggests that more retired people filled in the questionnaire than those in employment.
- However, the fact that only one person described themselves as unemployed suggests that the residents of Hinton do not have great difficulty in finding work, although some have to travel some distance to do so.
- Of those who are in employment,
 - 23% work either at home or in the village;
 - 14% commute 5 miles or less to their place of work;
 - 63% commute over 5 miles to work.
- These statistics suggest that few village people work in Crewkerne or nearer, and that most probably travel to Yeovil, Taunton and beyond to their workplace.
- Of the 17 people who said that they could work from home but were currently unable to do so, 76% cited communications as being the cause, with the main reason being poor broadband internet connectivity.

Employment statistics



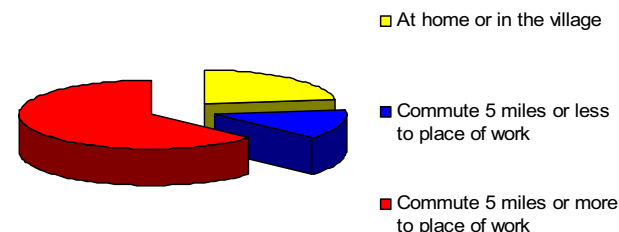
Objectives

- To improve the attractiveness of the village for those of employment age.
- To facilitate business activity and home working by improving fixed line and mobile telephones and broadband internet connectivity.

Actions

- Investigate the provision of affordable housing in Hinton, to encourage more people of working age to live in the village.

Location of Employment



LOCAL BUSINESS

Background

All the known businesses in the village that responded to the questionnaire directly employ less than 20 people although a considerable number of suppliers and sub contractors rely on their custom to some extent. There are at least 20 businesses and self employed people based wholly or partly in Hinton, covering a diverse range of enterprises including :-

- Direct retail sales and service – Shop/Post Office, Lord Poulett Arms, B&Bs, and Dorothy's Tea Room
- Rural activities – Agriculture & Farming ,Woodyard, Forestry and wood products
- Service and Professional – Veterinary, Finance, Legal, Consultancy, Research, Distribution & Wholesale
- Construction, Security & Home Services such as Gardening
- Art & Sculpture

In an age in which rural pubs are closing as economically unviable, the Lord Poulett Arms has become a successful award-winning business, bringing many customers into Hinton from far afield. Dorothy's Tea Rooms is now established as a popular attraction for villagers and visitors and also serves as a venue for club meetings.

Consultation Results

The majority of businesses have been established in the village for 5 years or more. More recently established businesses tend to be those that are based at home.

- Not surprisingly, in the present economic climate, recruitment is not a major problem, although suitably qualified staff frequently have to be recruited from outside the village.
- With very few buildings available for business growth or expansion, those needing larger premises have had to relocate outside of the village unless they have had suitable land available within their existing sites. This has not necessarily resulted in a loss of employment to village residents.
- 80% of responders consider the Lord Poulett Arms to be an essential and integral part of village life, but there is a feeling that the pub could play a much closer role in the community, participation in more community events, and availability of facilities for use by local groups.
- Business growth is being held back by a number of factors such as:
 - Regulatory planning restrictions
 - Poor Government support to the Agricultural Industry.
 - Poor highway access and lack of maintenance.
 - Slow internet speed and mobile phone reception in Hinton.
 - Theft of stock and equipment together with the perception of inadequate police action, causing the need to install costly security systems.
- The businesses are reliant upon each other to the extent that the Post Office, Shop, Pub, and B&B's are services that are used by other enterprises based in and around Hinton.
- Clients/Customers also appreciate the pleasant location, history, buildings and surroundings of Hinton in which to do business.

Objectives

- To encourage businesses to establish themselves in the village and provide employment for village residents.
- To support the continuing success of all local businesses particularly those which contribute to the social fabric of the village.

Actions

- Improve electronic communications via broadband, internet, and mobile telephones
- Establish a village website with links to business sites, products and services (see pages 22 & 23 - 'Communications')
- Improve public transport to and from Crewkerne railway station (see pages 24 & 25 - 'Transport and Traffic')
- Improve highway maintenance and road signage



HEALTH, HOUSING AND SAFETY

Health

Background

National Health Services to the village are provided by the Doctors' surgeries in Crewkerne and Ilminster, and by major hospitals in Taunton and Yeovil. Dental and Opticians Practices are available in the surrounding towns of Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster.

Nine homes for elderly residents in the village are provided in the Almshouses in Gas Lane and two care homes for the elderly are located in Merriott. However, Oak Lodge in Chard is the only local specialist home catering for the ever-increasing problem of dementia. Patients with this type of illness otherwise have to be referred to homes in Taunton, Wellington, or Yeovil.

Consultation Results

- The majority of responders are satisfied with the current arrangements for healthcare in the village, although 10% of people suffer with health or disability problems that affect their day to day living.
- Major improvements that could be made to healthcare feature accessibility. There is a desire to bring services directly to the village and/or for the provision of a Health Centre in Merriott.
- Specific recommendations by responders are:
 - Availability of hospital drivers and public transport to improve access to doctors' surgeries
 - A prescription collection service
 - A regular doctor's and nurses' clinic in the village
 - Care home provision in the village

Objectives

- To improve the accessibility of doctors' surgeries and hospitals, particularly for those who cannot, or would prefer not to drive.
- To make it possible for those requiring home care to be able to continue to live in Hinton.

Actions

- Investigate the possibility of setting up a pool of voluntary car owners to take non-drivers or those unable to drive, to doctors' and hospital appointments.
- Contact the Bus Companies to discuss route changes to provide stops directly outside Doctors' surgeries.
- Discuss with NHS Somerset the possibility of a weekly clinic in the village.
- Investigate with the County Council and Somerset Care the possibility of providing a Care Home in Hinton St. George



Housing

Background

SSDC is responsible for providing social housing throughout the District and for administering planning policy and development control in relation to private and public housing. Although the bulk of housing provision in Hinton is privately owned, there are some houses owned by Yarlington Housing Association.

Consultation Results

- Nineteen households in the village have immediate family members who would like to live in the village but are unable to afford to do so.
- Although there may be opposition to any new dwellings in the village, 40 responders indicated the need for affordable starter and retirement homes, if land were available.

Objectives

- To enable younger families to enter the village and older residents to stay in the village as long as they wish.

Actions

- Contact the Rural Housing Enabler at the Community Council for Somerset to carry out a detailed survey of housing needs in Hinton St. George.
- Contact the Housing Needs Officer at SSDC to establish the numbers on the existing Housing Needs Register covering Hinton.
- Establish how and where affordable starter and retirement housing might be provided.



Safety

Background

The Police and Fire Services are responsible for responding to safety and security situations. The Police Community Support Officer assigned to Hinton, and the village neighbourhood watch (NHW) scheme, augment the general police activities in advising residents on how to improve their security and how to respond to criminal threats and actions affecting homes and businesses.

Consultation Results

- Nearly everyone feels safe and secure around the village. However, although there are no specific areas where people feel unsafe, worries were expressed regarding recent burglaries, which may have been made easier by poor lighting in some parts of the village. However, 80% of responders are against more street lighting in the village.
- Although there is an existing NHW scheme operating in the village, responders felt that there was a need for improved communication and publicity regarding the identity of the NHW coordinators and what streets they cover, and for a system of notification to villagers of any risk of, or actual crime perpetrated in the community.

Objectives

- Enhance the general of security among residents in the village.

Actions

- Contact the Police Community Support Officer and Area Coordinator of the NHW to call a village meeting to discuss improvements, and how the community can help.



SUSTAINABILITY

Background

In recent times most people have become more aware of the possible environmental damage from pollutants, emissions, a wasteful way of life, and general carelessness. There is greater awareness of the need to use sustainable or renewable resources, and to reuse or recycle assets.

'Environmental Responsibility' has become part of everyday language, and Central Government encourages compliance with World and EU commitments to reduce our reliance on the earth's natural resources.

Somerset County Council and the five Somerset district councils are responsible for the collection and disposal of household waste through a joint body which they have established, the Somerset Waste Partnership. The Partnership runs the nearest recycling centres to Hinton at Crewkerne and Chaffcombe.

Consultation Results

- 60% of homes in the village have gas as their primary energy source, 20% oil, 13% electricity, and 7% solid fuel.
- 69% of the community would be interested in a consortium to buy energy at cheaper prices.
- 65% of the community use the recycling facility in Crewkerne at least once a month.
- 66% are of the opinion that facilities for recycling in the village are inadequate. 66% of responders would like to see improved waste collection procedures, in particular the re-introduction of the green garden waste bins.
- 32% would like a village recycling facility, if a suitable site could be found.
- 60% favour the provision of a community composting facility.
- 66% would be interested in a bartering or swapping network to save purchase cost of books, CDs, etc., and to circulate surplus produce or other unwanted goods.

Objectives

- To improve kerbside waste collection services, to include plastic and garden rubbish.
- To improve awareness of energy saving opportunities, and the possibilities of fuel cost savings.
- To investigate a village recycling facility, if a suitable site can be found.

Actions

- Establish a Village Sustainability Group with the following tasks:
 - Investigate ways of obtaining cheaper energy sources for the village, including the concept of collective procurement linked with advice on energy usage reduction.
 - Explore the merits/constraints/disadvantages of providing a village wind turbine.
 - Contact SSDC regarding improvements to the waste collection system.
 - Investigate the feasibility of providing enhanced recycling and composting facilities in the Village.



HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT

Background

Hinton St. George is known to have been a settlement as far back as the 12th century. As a feudal village well into the 20th century, essentially under the control of the Poulett family in Hinton House, the community has a heritage rich in listed buildings, ancient trees, and mature agriculture. Development of the village to keep abreast of changes in modern society is almost inevitable. However, as is implied in the 2001 Village Design Statement (VDS), this should take place in ways in keeping with the ambience of the village and not be at the expense of traditional values.

Consultation Results

- Only 59% of the community are aware of the VDS. Of those who are aware of it, there is an overwhelming view that it is adequate for the needs of the village.
- 87% consider that the existing boundaries of the Conservation Area are adequate. Of the remainder the predominant view is that the boundaries should be extended to include all properties in the central village and beyond, the village hall and playing field, and perhaps Hinton Park. However, this is an important enough subject to deserve some research into feasibility and value of expanding the boundary.
- 51% are in favour of the establishment of a village green.
- Responders suggested diverse ideas to improve the village's environmental responsibilities, including:
 - Greater use of public transport, and car sharing.
 - Improvement in air quality by tree planting and discouraging bonfires.
 - A wind turbine to contribute to the village electrical power requirements (an idea now strongly supported by central government and SSDC – see the previous section on Sustainability)

Objectives

- To ensure that any planned development is sympathetic to the architectural heritage of the buildings in their settings in the village and its surroundings.
- Where possible, to improve the quality of life in Hinton through greater care in the appearance and upkeep of streets, gardens, buildings and approaches to the village.
- To encourage an environmentally responsible community with a sustainable way of life



Actions

- Ensure the VDS is firmly incorporated into planning guidance as a set of fundamental guidelines for any future development in the village and its surroundings.
- Consult with Planning Authorities to establish the feasibility, advantages, and any disadvantages of an expansion of the Conservation Area boundaries.
- Research possible sites for a village green: size, uses, necessary furnishings, budgetary costs.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Background

From the total number of 290 people living at the 144 addresses where a questionnaire was completed and returned, 18 are aged under 6, 14 are aged between 6 years and 11 years, and 8 are between 12 years and 18 years. There is therefore a significant 14% of the residents - and increasing - in the under-18 age category.

The village has an active toddler group, a pre-school and first school. There is a well-equipped play area beside the Village Hall. Additional play equipment has been added recently on the school playing field at the western end of the village.

Facilities and organised activities for the older children and young people are limited to those at the playing field adjacent to the Village Hall – football, cricket, and other improvised games. There are currently no clubs or societies specifically providing facilities for teenagers

Consultation Results

- 88% of those who use the current facilities for toddlers and young children consider them adequate. Suggested improvements to the playground, in order of preference, are: additional picnic tables, roundabout, zip wire, seesaw.
- The playing fields are used by 83% of those young people who responded to the questionnaire.
- The demand for new facilities is largely around sporting provision for older children and young people (e.g. skateboard facility, BMX track etc) with a youth club becoming increasingly important as the younger children in the village become teenagers.
- The large proportion of the younger members of the population enjoy living in Hinton St George, although 54% of them do find transport difficulties in reaching activities which take place outside the village.
- Whilst there are 'whole village' events for older people, it would be a good idea to organise something similar for the younger residents.

Objectives

- To enhance the attractiveness of the village as a place to live for children and young people.

Actions

- Continue to support the toddler and pre-school groups as important and attractive aspects of the community.
- Encourage the Village Hall committee to initiate a programme of continuous improvement of the playground, widening and updating the range of equipment, to ensure its appeal to as wide a range of children as possible
- Consult on the emerging requirement for a youth club in the village, and seek advice from the Senior Youth Worker within the County Council's South Somerset West Local Service Team as to how this should be done and how it can be staffed.





OLDER RESIDENTS' NEEDS

Background

The social changes within the village have tended to yield a predominantly ageing population with a decline in the number of young families. Though there are signs that things are changing, 72% of the village population are in the 40 and over age category, and 37% are over 64. By its nature, Hinton today has a distribution of age groups skewed towards retired and elderly people when compared to national averages. Most are comfortable, but many are on fixed retirement income, many suffer from decreased mobility, and some would prefer not to have to drive.

There are already many initiatives in place to provide for older residents – carpet bowls, 'Active Living' meetings in Dorothy's Tearooms, and ad hoc assistance with transport.

Consultation Results

- 55% of responders over 55 lived in Hinton prior to reaching that age group.
- Only 18% of the elderly attend the 'active living' meetings. Lack of knowledge of the meetings is the prime reason for non-attendance.
- The majority of elderly are still able to maintain their garden, although 13% are unable to do so.
- The great majority of those needing care felt that it was adequate for their needs.
- 71% of responders would welcome the provision of sheltered housing/care home in the village.
- 74% of responders would welcome a 'good neighbour' scheme to assist with shopping, gardening, etc..
- 77% would like there to be a committee to discuss and initiate programmes to support older residents.

Objectives

- To improve community support and comfort for elderly residents, particularly those with special needs
- To provide adequate assistance with transport and other essential facets of daily life

Actions

- Establish a committee to address the specific needs of older residents in the village. Though numbers requiring additional help are small, even that small number should be identified and their needs understood and provided for.
- More generally, needs of the elderly can be coupled into other initiatives discussed elsewhere in this Plan, in the areas of increased public transport, co-operative assistance with visits to Crewkerne for shopping or medical reasons, sharing of garden produce etc.



PARISH COUNCIL AND ALLOTMENTS

Background

Elections to the Parish Council (PC) are held every four years, although in recent years such elections have rarely been necessary as the number of candidates has been less than the places available. The PC is made up of 7 councillors together with a Parish Clerk, and it meets in the village hall on the second Monday of each month. Each meeting starts with a public open forum when villagers are welcome to attend and express any views or ask any questions of the councillors. Generally meetings are not well attended by the public unless there is, for example, a controversial planning application within the village.

The PC aims to take a leading role in facilitating developments within the village and special meetings can be convened for this purpose, and to elect new councillors. The PC has a variety of responsibilities placed upon it through statutory legislation. Each year, parish councillors fix the parish precept, which is levied as part of the council tax. Historically this has not been onerous in Hinton as the PC does not have many amenities to run. However, they do provide support to organisations such as the PCC, for churchyard maintenance and the Village Hall committee by way of grants.

One of the statutory obligations of the PC is to provide allotments if these are requested by at least 6 villagers. Currently, the available allotments in the village are rented from a private provider, from whom additional plots are potentially available.

Consultation Results

- 71% of responders indicated that they always or sometimes voted in PC elections (when they take place), a very high figure for such a local election. Only 61% of responders knew who their parish councillors are which is perhaps disappointingly low in such a small and friendly village. When questioned about their knowledge of PC powers and responsibilities, only 39% of those who replied felt they fully understood this. 22% have no idea of these powers, the responsibilities nor the limitations or what the PC could do for them.
- There was a large majority of responders (71%) in favour of increasing the parish precept should this be necessary to fund improvements or new projects within the village.
- Currently 16 responders have an allotment and a further 21 expressed an interest in having one (this represents 10% of those who answered this question). A larger number (18%) were interested in participating in a communal village vegetable plot. Very few responders (8%) would be happy to allow others to cultivate their garden if they were unable to do so.

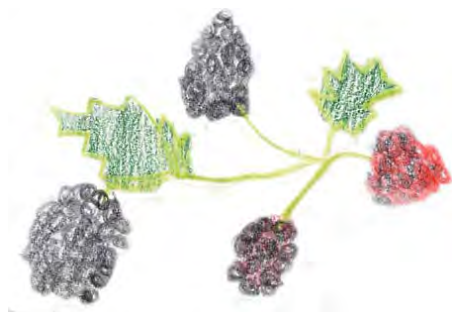
Objectives

- To raise the profile of the PC to ensure that its role in village life is more fully understood and supported

Actions

- Ensure that contact details for all councillors and the roles and responsibilities of the PC are widely disseminated
- The PC should publicise widely its annual meeting as a way of encouraging villagers to meet councillors, see what they do, and to attend regular meetings more frequently
- Include a section in a future website giving a brief outline of the powers and responsibilities of the PC, and providing notices, agendas and minutes of meetings
- PC to take action to ensure that the supply of allotments is adequate to meet demand





IMPLEMENTATION



Now that the Hinton St. George Village Plan has been published and distributed to households, the work of the Steering Group is complete. It is now the responsibility of the PC to establish a new working party to prioritise, plan and implement the recommendations contained within it. It is very important that this Implementation Group is appointed as soon as possible in order to maintain the momentum of the process and deliver early results. In this way the village residents will see progress, and that the preparation of the Plan was not just a paper exercise.

In addition, the Plan reflects the aspirations of the community to achieve sustainable improvement in quality of life for all, not all of which may be feasible, but all of which should be considered in the prioritisation and planning process. It specifies in many places the need for various actions and study groups to research the issues raised. Whilst the PC should play a proactive and leadership role, it is hoped that the villagers in general will co-operate and participate in this work – it cannot all be accomplished in a timely way by the PC and Implementation Group members alone.



APPENDIX

Glossary/Definitions

NHW	Neighbourhood Watch	SSDC	South Somerset District Council
VDS	Village Design Statement	VP	Village Plan
VPSG	Village Plan Steering Group	PC	Parish Council
PCC	Parochial Church Council	SCC	Somerset County Council

The Steering Group

The VPSG was established by the PC in May 2008, with permanent members Eric Burgess, Roger Clemas, David Clements, Bob Kefford, Louise Walker, and Amanda Warry. Tina Cogan joined the group in August 2009 as sub-editor and added liaison with the PC. An Open Day was held in the Village Hall in September 2008, at which villagers were invited to put forward issues and questions to be considered in the Plan. The results formed the basis of a Questionnaire distributed to all households in February 2009, and responses from this provided the data from which to draft the VP document. This was reviewed and commented on by the PC and representatives from SSDC in October 2009. James Atkinson assisted the production of the plan with his review of the statistical conclusions drawn from the data collected from the questionnaire.

The 60% response rate to the questionnaire was considered to be a fair representation of the feelings of the community. However, in all the proportionate representation of results from the Questionnaire which are contained within the Plan, it should be born in mind that the numbers only reflect proportions of that 60%, or in some cases less where not all responders answered a specific question. Care has been taken to eliminate as far as possible irrelevant or erroneous statistical conclusions.

Website

The VP is now a menu item on the Village website www.hintonstgeorge.org.uk. Also, the file of basic data from responses to the Questionnaire is available. This website was set up in July 2009 to carry the draft of the Plan only, and served a useful purpose in this limited status during the editing phase. Responses to the Questionnaire, as noted in the Communications section of the Plan, indicated a desire for a village website as an information centre, in which capacity the website now exists.

Funding

The activity of the VPSG was funded by contributions from the PC, SSDC, SCC, Somerset Community Foundation, Awards for All (Lottery), and the Hinton St. George Reading Room Trust. The Group wishes to thank these organisations for their interest and support.

Acknowledgements

The VPSG wishes to thank many contributors to the effort to establish the Hinton St. George VP, including all those who provided photographs, helpers in the Village Hall for the presentational events, and specifically:

- Andy Vines, who provided the database software with which to gather all results from the questionnaire,
- Andrew Norton, who developed the format of the questionnaire and the Village Plan document itself, and also established the embryonic website,
- John Rock, who contributed time to acquire the majority of the photographic illustrations,
- John Bowman and Ann Lawrence of Merriott who provided much valuable advice
- The children of Hinton St. George First School who have provided the images on the 'Implementation' page opposite.
- Anne Goldsmith and Zoe Harris of SSDC,

.....and all of the residents of Hinton St. George who took the time to fill out and return the Questionnaire.



Hinton St. George Parish Council



Hinton St. George Reading Room Trust