

A Community Led Plan for Dinton, Ford, Gibraltar, Upton and Westlington



Version v1.1
The CLP team, February 2020

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1 Introduction

1.1 Document context

This Community Led Plan (CLP), also known as a Parish Plan, is intended to provide a vision for how local residents would like to see their community develop over the next 10 years or so. The CLP includes statements and observations on a wide range of topics and aspects of the community that are important to the residents and describes how the community would like to see it evolve and includes a number of actionable recommendations.

This document is not a Neighbourhood Plan as defined by the Localism Act 2011.

As such it is not part of Planning Policy nor does it have any statutory effect or formal role in the planning process. It does however have the potential to influence planning outcomes. AVDC has stated that such Plans will be taken into account so far as possible when local issues are considered. It will also be used as a guide by Dinton with Ford and Upton on setting local Policy and responding to Planning Proposals.

1.2 Approach to developing the Community Led Plan

The initial effort behind the CLP was led by Dinton with Ford and Upton Parish Council (DFUPC) with council-led meetings held during 2016 and 2017, and a parish wide survey during 2017/18. The survey results expressed a clear desire that a plan should be developed for the Parish. In 2018, Parish Councillor Anne Dunne was tasked with taking forward the plan and volunteers were requested from across the community. The team was formed in late 2018 and sought assistance from Community Impact Bucks, a local charity that supports community groups.

CLP Core Team

- Anne Dunne
- Amanda Bassett
- Nick Cottman
- Mel Kidner
- Dick O'Driscoll
- John Owen

The team worked together to host two 'Launch Events' during February 2019. Invitations to the events were sent to all households in the parish and over 100 people attended across the two dates.

At the events, attendees were asked to give their input to the future of the community across a number of specific areas:

- Conservation
- Amenities
- Safety & Security
- Events, Sports and Social
- Traffic and Roads
- Other

The output from these events, plus the feedback from the Parish Survey, has formed the basis for this Community Led Plan.



2 Introduction to the Community

The Parish of Dinton, Ford and Upton lies some four miles to the south-west of Aylesbury just off the old turnpike between Aylesbury and Thame. It is bounded on the north by the River Thame and the villages of Haddenham to the west and Stone to the east. The circuit of the parish is reported to be about 17 miles (Lipscomb 1847).

Dinton is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Danitone, and prior to the Norman Conquest the lands including Upton and Ford, were held by Avelin, a theign of Edward the Confessor. These lands including the original Manor and the Church were given by William the Conqueror to his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux in 1070.

The only church in the parish is adjacent to Dinton Hall. St Peter and St Paul is a Grade 1 listed building with the south nave doorway dating from the 12th Century. There are instances of several old chapels in Ford and Dinton, now gone or converted into dwellings.

Dinton Hall was mainly rebuilt in the 16th Century and is a Grade II* listed building, recently extensively and sympathetically renovated. The hall is famous for being the residence of the regicide Simon Mayne and legend has it that John Bigg, Mayne's clerk, was the executioner of Charles 1. After the execution Bigg spent his life as a recluse known as the Dinton Hermit.

The Parish consists of the hamlets of Westlington, Dinton, Ford, Upton and Gibraltar. According to the 2011 Census the Parish had a population of 809, down from 861 in 2001 and is estimated to have risen to 824 by 2017. Based on the most recent survey, which only covered information on 178 individuals, the split was 9% of school age up to 18 years old, 31% between 19 and 64 years old and 60% 65 years and older.

The Dinton and Westlington Conservation Area and the Gibraltar Conservation Area were designated by Aylesbury Vale District Council on the 19th August 1989. The historic cores of Dinton, Westlington and Upton are included within a single Conservation Area, separated from the small Conservation Area that covers Gibraltar and Westlington House by a small stretch of agricultural land. Within Gibraltar, Dinton and Westlington nearly all of the building within the hamlets are included within the Conservation Area boundaries. In Upton, where the surviving historic buildings are much more widely separated and there has been a substantial amount of modern infill development only the historic buildings that sit within or abutting the Archaeological Notification Site have been included within the Conservation Area. A map showing the Conservation Area is shown below.

The hamlet of Ford lies apart, being nearly two miles from Dinton which is the nearest settlement. It comprises some 70 houses set in water meadows, and this rural setting including many period houses, surrounded by lush pasture and grazing cattle, epitomises a traditional English farming community.

There is one school in the Parish, situated in Dinton village. Cuddington and Dinton Church of England voluntary aided school, takes pupils from 8 to 11 years old. The infants to 7 years old section of the school is based in Cuddington village a couple of miles away. The last

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Ofsted Report was in 2012 with an overall Good rating. A short inspection in 2017 stated the school continues to be Good. At present there are about 176 pupils attending both sections of the school.

The Parish is served by the 280 bus which travels between Aylesbury and Oxford along the A418 via Haddenham and Thame, with buses approximately every half hour. There is a good train service from Haddenham to London, Oxford and Birmingham.

There is a Cricket Club in Dinton with three senior teams playing in the Home Counties Premier and Cherwell Leagues. The club also has a thriving Junior Section for boys and girls, with up to 200 youngsters attending each Friday evening during the summer.

There are three pubs in the Parish and one restaurant. The Bottle and Glass in Gibraltar is a Greene King owned pub situated on the A418. In Dinton the Seven Stars is a community owned pub, bought by a number of villagers in 2011, with a pleasant garden and popular dining room. La Chouette, on Westlington Green, is a Belgian restaurant serving high end cuisine. In Ford is the Dinton Hermit, which is currently closed but expected to re-open in the near future.

There are a number of clubs and activities covering all ages in this thriving community, helping to increase social cohesion and adding to the sense of community in the Parish. The Parish survey mentions U3A, Ford Village Society, Ford local history, aikido, book clubs, cricket club, the church, Community Choir, culture club, Dinton Beer Festival, fete committee, gardening club, Good Neighbours, informal art group, La Chouette Photo Club, MVAS, marquee group, PTA, pub quizzes, table tennis and village hall quizzes.

The main reasons given by the Dinton with Ford and Upton inhabitants who responded to the Parish questionnaire for liking living in this area were the rural character of the parish, access to the countryside, the quality of the open and green spaces and the active community.

There is a Welcome Document available to all residents of the Parish. This Welcome Document resulted from the discussions and meetings leading up to the production of this Community Led Plan.



3 Conservation

To be included in a Conservation Area requires certain criteria and local inhabitants are happy to acknowledge and abide by these restrictions as they protect the villages on many levels. Currently, only certain areas are in the Conservation Area and it is felt that these could be better publicised.

We have had requests for the whole of Upton, Dinton and Ford to be included however, in the 2008 Review the Conservation Officer of AVDC set out in three pages the reasons for not including Ford and these pages are available for anybody to read. The next review is likely to take place in the next five years when further inclusions should be requested.



Overall, there was strong feeling that these are country villages and should not be over-developed. If any building was considered absolutely necessary, then only a few houses should be built in any one place.

All planning and building rules should be strongly enforced.

It was considered important to maintain the existing rural views as well as the intimate and friendly feel to all the villages.



4 Amenities

Beside the natural amenities of beautiful rural walks and attractive landscapes and nightscapes, the residents of the villages are served well by the traditional English village amenities of a church, village hall, pub and cricket ground. These amenities are mainly sited around Dinton and are well used by the residents of all the villages.

4.1 St Peter and St Paul Church

Dinton Parish Church is a handsome 12th Century Grade1 listed Norman church and is part of the Wychert Vale Benefice of six local village churches. Visitors come from all over the world to see the historic tympanum, very early brasses, memorials and other artefacts in the church. Modern facilities i.e. a kitchen, toilets and meeting room were added 8 years ago in order to enable more community use.

Dinton Church has a thriving children's church and stable adult numbers. The school and the church work closely together and the children have services and classes in the church. It is a brilliant venue for weddings, with a wonderful set of bells and enthusiastic bell ringers, and also a notable organ.

The church has good sound acoustics and is a popular music venue. Because one of the parishioners is a band promoter the church hosts some great Americana gigs; in addition to concert bands and also classical concerts all of which are very well attended.

In addition, the recently installed swift nest boxes at the top of the Tower have generated a lot of interest with conservation groups.

4.2 Village Hall

The village hall was built in 1927 and donated to the village by the then occupants of Dinton Hall, the Currie family. Approaching 100 years old this building has served its purpose well but is now barely adequate for the needs of the parish. The building consists of one large hall with a small stage, small kitchen area, toilets and store rooms. There is an outdoor garden area and parking for two cars. This is a well-used facility, in daily use for the pre-school nursery and booked for various clubs, societies and meetings during weeknights and at weekends.

Following the survey and comments from the launch events it is clear that residents want a new purpose-built multi-use village hall with adequate parking which would provide a focal point for the parish.

ACTION: Form working group to investigate viability of moving location and building new village hall on Parish Field including sourcing of funds/grants/design of multi-use hall/community input, etc.



4.3 Parish Field

Some 30 years ago the Parish Council bought the Parish Field and spinney adjacent to the Cricket Club, for the benefit of all parishioners. This area has been used throughout the years for siting various events such as the Dinton Annual Village Fete and various village fundraising events utilising the village marquee. It is in everyday use for villagers walking with or without their dogs and the children's playground is positioned in the north-east corner beside the main access gate.

Several comments were received during the launch events about the under-utilisation of the Parish Field and e.g. the possibility of creating some allotments there.

ACTION: Consider viability of allocating section of PF for creation of several allotments and form committee/working party to manage and allocate allotments.

4.4 Village Pubs and Restaurants

There are three pubs in the Parish and one restaurant. The Bottle and Glass in Gibraltar is a Greene King owned attractive thatched Grade 2 listed building situated on the busy A418 from which it attracts most of its custom, along with numerous villagers. In Ford village is the privately owned Dinton Hermit pub. This has been closed for the past four years but is expected to open soon under a lease arrangement. The Seven Stars in Dinton is owned by some 62 local shareholders and operates as a community pub, frequented by many in the village. The Seven Stars sponsors the Dinton Cricket club lunches during the season and is the venue for regular meetings for various clubs and organisations and for the monthly pub quiz. Each year in the gardens, there is a Beer Festival held in August and the Village Christmas Tree is lit up in December. Adjacent to Westlington Green is La Chouette, a Belgian restaurant with an excellent reputation and a faithful clientele.

4.5 Cricket Club

Situated just off the A418 and bordered by the Parish Field, Dinton Cricket Club is a successful village team running three senior teams. A feature of the club is the very vibrant Junior section catering for 5 to 15 years old which attracts up to 200 children with their parents on Friday evenings during the season, providing a very successful and enjoyable family night out.

5 Safety and Security

Generally, it was felt that the locality was a safe place to live with some residents saying that 'safety and security were things that they worry about least, as this is a good place to live!' However, there is always room for improvement even in localities such as ours and the main theme in this regard was to speed communication when it was felt safety and security were compromised. Residents remarked that 'it was important to make the connection in terms of what is going on in respect of security risks (across the villages) on the day it happens'. In addition, it was felt we should encourage one another to share unsafe practices (such as when we see sheds or garages left unlocked) as we don't want to become complacent!



ACTION: Encourage more use of the Nextdoor App.

ACTION: Investigate reintroducing Neighbourhood Watch. Will require volunteers and co-ordination.

Regarding moving around using roads and footpaths there were two consistent themes in residents' feedback.

- Roads when walking and cycling.
- Roads and bus stops at night.

Roads when walking and cycling. Overall residents accepted the dark lanes and roads and felt this was precisely why they had chosen to live in a rural area, in that they did not want 'light pollution'. Residents acknowledged that when living and moving around a rural area (especially at dusk or dawn) that wearing high visibility jackets and using torches was a sensible thing to do. When taking ownership for personal safety in this way overall it was felt that the locality was safe to move around, including at night when walking to friends or to village amenities. However, there were several points where it was felt collectively the residents could do more to improve visibility and safety in respect of the roads.

Action: Discuss installation of reflector posts beside ditches on Upton Road with Parish Council and investigate funding options.

Action: Explore the potential to link the villages better perhaps with a footpath between Ford and Dinton.

Ensuring local children arrived at school safely was a concern of many residents. 'Parking around the school is still dangerous' and whilst recent developments were welcome many residents remarked that 'more could be done'.

Action: Review where white lines have been marked out to reduce parking immediately outside the school and consider should these be extended further.

Action: Explore other parking options for the school E.g. a designated parking area identified and then the children 'walked in crocodiles' with 'Safety Leaders' so parents can drop them off *quickly* and safely? It was noted by residents that this is achieved in other schools and villages and we should be learning from the experiences of others.

When using roads for longer journeys such as walking between Ford and Dinton or cycling to nearby villages and towns there were several residents that felt that footpaths or cycleways could be developed.



Action: Review options and funding to develop a cycle path between Aylesbury, Haddenham and Thame (incorporated into Traffic & Roads action).

Action: Address the need to have a cycle rack at locations such as the pub and bus stops so that residents can safely leave their bicycles locked up (incorporated into Traffic & Roads action).

Roads and Bus Stops at night. Amongst the feedback from residents there were two schools of thought relating to using roads and bus stops at night. On one hand it was felt that there was no need for street lighting, so residents could 'enjoy the stars' and 'feel' that the villages are different from 'lit' towns.' However other residents felt that there were 'unsafe areas' around the A418 when crossing over for bus stops or waiting at bus stops.

ACTION: Install solar (or other non-light polluting) lighting in bus stops.

Overall when reviewing feedback, it was clear that we need to balance the feeling that 'we don't want more lighting generally BUT some lighting at bus stops would make it easier to use the buses at night and safer for people waiting or getting off buses.

Finally, when considering safety and security residents felt that we could be learning more from others outside of our villages and this would help reduce siloed thinking and ensure our villages were taking the very best of security measures as compared to other rural areas.

Action: Initiate an annual fire audit of our villages and publish the findings to raise awareness of the impact of cars parked poorly e.g. parked down a narrow lane blocking it for fire tenders. The findings could be made fun by having a community 'fire day' to share the ideas from the audit and monitor take up over time.

Action: Initiate a bi-annual presentation from the police on improving security in homes in rural areas.

In summary, when learning from others outside our villages fire and safety were top of the agenda for residents. The suggested actions set out above reflected a real appetite to learn more about how we can collectively mitigate risks that could impact any one of us.



6 Events, Sports and Social

There are several active groups within the villages, with the village hall being used extensively. The community also benefits from a parish-owned Marquee, although there has been little use of this asset in recent years.

Sadly, the annual village fete has also been cancelled although there were comments from residents that a new, more up-to-date format should be investigated.

ACTION: Formation of a Community Social Committee to lead the organisation of local events.

7 Traffic & Roads

Although parking (especially near the school) and speeding (particularly through Ford) were highlighted by several villagers the two most frequently mentioned issues were:

- Cycle track linking up to Haddenham, and
- Traffic calming measures on Chestnut Avenue going down from the A418 towards the school.

7.1 Cycle Track

Currently it is too dangerous to cycle along the A418, but there is a cycle track / pedestrian footpath which runs from Stone alongside the A418 finishing just past the Bottle & Glass pub. The path is in need of some repair work/renovation as it is in poor condition in several places. This is a Bucks County Council responsibility.

The path ends shortly after the Bottle & Glass, before a new path (known as Green Lane) emerges on the other side of the road a few hundred yards down the A418 towards Thame. Plenty of villagers asked if it is possible to link the end of the path with the Green Lane footpath. This would then enable cyclists to travel from Stone, via Upton, Dinton etc to Haddenham.

The Green Lane path emerges in Haddenham opposite the Londis Post Office. Cyclists could then cycle to the Haddenham and Thame Parkway station.

If it was possible to link the paths, it would enable commuters to cycle to the station without travelling on the A418.

There was some discussion as to whether the council were already investigating the cost of installing a cyclist pathway to link these two places.

If it was possible to link them, the major problem to overcome would be that cyclists (and pedestrians) would have to cross the busy A418 to get onto the Green Lane path.

ACTION: Investigate extension of cycle path.

In progress. Green Lane Working group of Haddenham, Stone and Dinton Parish Council Clerks and Chairs. Proposals for routes are being reviewed.



7.2 Traffic calming

There were plenty of requests that a traffic calming system should be installed near the Upton/Dinton crossroads on Chestnut Avenue coming down from the A418 going towards the school.

Since the new kerb slabs have been installed on this section of road, it means that the road is even narrower and does not allow two cars to pass.

We should investigate whether a traffic calming system (similar to the priority system used at both ends of the road going through Bishopstone) can be installed to give priority to drivers going up the hill from the school direction towards the A418.

ACTION: Raise the issue of traffic calming to Transport for Bucks via the Parish Council Resolved. Transport for Bucks has installed road narrows warning signs at both top and bottom of the crossroads. Slow signs are also painted on the road.

8 Other topics incl. Housing

This section has captured thoughts and ideas from the launch events in relation to topics not already described in previous sections.

8.1 Communications & Utilities

Various comments were raised by residents regarding local information and awareness of existing facilities. There are several means of communication around the Parish, although invariably all are dependent upon individuals seeking out information.

- Parish Notice Boards: Notice boards are located in Dinton, Ford, Gibraltar and Upton. Notices can be posted by contacting a member of the Parish Council.
- www.nextdoor.co.uk: The web site and app NextDoor is a useful and easy way to share information. Approximately 50% of the parish is already using it.
- www.dinton.info : A locally managed web site that includes useful information from in and around the parish
- www.dinton.org : The official web site of the Parish Council, includes information on Parish Council meetings and regulatory information
- Bigg Issue: Parish newsletter (named after the Dinton Hermit), issued quarterly and distributed to all houses in the Parish

Access to fast broadband was also raised by a number of residents. As of November 2019, work has progressed significantly in response to extensive lobbying by local individuals and the Parish Council, resulting in the majority of residents having access superfast broadband.

8.2 Demographics

Several residents commented at the CLP Launch Events that young people and especially young families needed to be encouraged into the Parish, which is critical for the ongoing regeneration and sustainability of the community.



8.3 Affordable Housing

A popular topic was Housing, and whilst this plan cannot specifically address a housing strategy for the community, it is clear that there are strong feelings with regards to housing and development across the villages.

The need for affordable housing was raised by several people, in particular to encourage young families to move to or remain in the parish. Strong opinions were voiced in relation to limiting the development of large, expensive homes vs allowing a small development of affordable housing.

There may be an opportunity, should the Village Hall be relocated, to undertake some development of the current location in order to provide some affordable housing. This would require an investigation into the existing covenant on the Village Hall land and what restrictions might be placed on it in relation to further development.

ACTION: Investigate covenant on Village Hall ground or other brownfield sites with a view to a potential small development of affordable houses.

ACTION: Depending on result of above, investigate business models available to fund and manage affordable housing. NB: this may support funding for Village Hall.



9 Conclusion to Community Led Plan and taking the Action Plan forward

9.1 Community Led Plan - Parish Council Responsibility and Involvement

As mentioned earlier in this document, the Parish Council initiated the Community Led Plan, (formerly the Parish Plan) and responsibility for development of the Plan was delegated to Anne Dunne, along with a steering group: Dick O’Driscoll, Mel Kidner, Amanda Bassett, Nick Cottman and John Owen. At the outset, support for developing the Plan was provided by Community Impact Bucks; their advice was to use the name Community Led Plan – to make it more inclusive and appealing to the wider community.

Whilst the Parish Council may be involved in developing a Community Led Plan, there is no absolute requirement for this to be the case. However, it is envisaged that once complete, the Community Led Plan will reside with the Parish Council.

The output from a Community Led Plan is usually an action plan that sets out how the volunteer group intend to make improvements to the local area. The actions may be for the group to deliver themselves or jointly with a partner such as the Parish Council.

Where specific actions will directly impact the Parish Council; where Parish Council land or property is involved, then the Parish Council must be consulted and may be required to take responsibility for the ongoing support and maintenance of an action item. For example, one action item relates to installing lighting on bus shelters, which are the responsibility of the Parish Council. Therefore, the Parish Council must be involved in order to approve and budget for ongoing maintenance and support costs of any proposed solution. On the other hand, the action item of the Community forming an Events and Social Committee does not require Parish Council involvement. If the Committee wishes to run events on the Parish Field, then Parish Council permission must be sought.

Once the Community Led Plan document is finalised and the proposed actions are underway, the Parish Council will take ownership of the document, as a Parish artefact, and a copy of this document will be placed on the Parish Council web site for reference.

9.2 Action Plan

The action plan in Appendix 1 is the summary of all actions identified within this Community Led Plan. The status of each action is as at November 2019.



Appendix 1

Summary of proposed actions & related activities

Amenities

New Village Hall

ACTION: Form working group to investigate viability of moving location and building new village hall on Parish Field including sourcing of funds/grants/design of multi-use hall/community input, etc.

Key activities likely to include research, documentation and community engagement for:

- Funding
- Business plan
- Survey & design
- Developer partners
- Community input
- Communications

Allotments

ACTION: Consider viability of allocating section of PF for creation of several allotments and form committee/working party to manage and allocate allotments. Also Community Gardens, perhaps involving the School.

Key activities likely to include:

- Community input / viability
- Options for implementation
- Establish management process & team

Safety & security

Neighbourhood Watch

ACTION: Investigate reintroducing Neighbourhood Watch. Will require volunteers and co-ordination.

Key activities likely to include:

- Research into NW schemes
- Establish volunteer framework
- Liaison with Police & other services

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Reflectors on Upton Road (and other areas)

ACTION: Install reflectors beside ditches especially on the way into Upton near the Church

Key activities likely to include:

- Establish requirements for reflectors across Parish
- Liaison with PC and Transport for Bucks
- Funding requirements
- Funding opportunities

Cycle racks at pubs

ACTION: Install cycle racks at Seven Stars and Bottle & Glass

Key activities likely to include:

- Liaise with establishments
- Funding opportunities
- Costing & suppliers

Lighting at bus shelters

ACTION: Install solar (or other non-light polluting) lighting in bus stops

Key activities likely to include:

- Liaise with Parish Council, Bus companies and Police
- Funding opportunities
- Costing & suppliers

Events, Sports & Social

Establish community Events & Social Committee

ACTION: Formation of a Community Social Committee to lead the organisation of local events

Key activities likely to include:

- Liaise with Marquee Team
- Garner support and interested parties
- Establish calendar
- Communications

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Other inc. Housing

Affordable Housing I

ACTION: Investigate covenant on Village Hall ground with a view to a potential small development of affordable houses.

Key activities likely to include:

- Research into covenant
- Document options
- Liaise with relevant parties

Affordable Housing II

ACTION: Depending on result of covenant research, investigate business models available to fund and manage affordable housing. NB: this may support funding for new Village Hall

Key activities likely to include:

- Research into funding & business models
- Liaise with AVDC / BCC / PC
- Community liaison
- Surveys & designs
- Developer partners