

CHEDDINGTON ACTION 2000

VILLAGE APPRAISAL

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CHEDDINGTON ACTION 2000

Background

Cheddington Action 2000 is an initiative started in 1996 with two primary objectives.

- To find out what you the villagers think about Cheddington as a community, it's services and amenities;
- To facilitate the ability for organizations such as the Parish Council, the Village Hall Management Committee, or the Residents Association to formulate and execute a series of action plans. These actions plans would inform planners, service providers, businesses, transport providers, the police authority and others of the wishes of the village. Some further action plans will also be set up with the aim of providing a positive direct impact on a village amenity.

What we hope to achieve in the long term is to make Cheddington a better place in which to live. A number of villages in the county have conducted similar surveys and these have proved to be useful in influencing decision makers on various aspects of village life.

Although the questionnaires were completed at the end of 1996, most of the findings are just as relevant today. A follow-up exercise should be undertaken at some point to update key points.

This report is available on the Internet at **www.cheddington.org.uk**

Key Results and Findings

1 SOCIAL AND PERSONAL

The typical Cheddington household lived in an owner occupied house (82%) and had lived in the village for less than 15 years (76%).

The typical household had 2.6 members and owned 2.0 vehicles.

Households responding had 309 children under 18 and 773 pets!

In the main, people chose to live in Cheddington for the village environment and for work related reasons.

Only 2% of respondents regarded themselves as unemployed, 21% were retired.

18% of respondents worked from home. 72% of respondents travelled to work or place of study by car, 11% by train, only 3% by bus.

The results indicate a relatively affluent community, with a significant percentage of workers commuting to work in London but with the remainder highly dependent on the private car. The vast majority of residents had lived in the village for a relatively short time, high even taking account of housing development over the past 30 years or so.

2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Over half of respondents wished to see more local employment opportunities though few wanted this within the village, most favoured more employment on Cheddington Airfield or other sites within 5 miles of the village.

Few were happy to see housing development on the Church Hill Farm orchard land. Preferences were either for it to be restored as a working orchard or for other agricultural use or to be used as a public amenity or nature conservation area. Few would like to see the size of the village increased. However nearly half did want some infill and small-scale development.

A high percentage of respondents claimed to use the village shops and post office at least once a week. The most frequently suggested additional service to be offered by the post office was motor vehicle licence renewal. 21% of respondents claimed to use the local pubs once a week or more.

Villagers seemed to have difficulty in finding plumbers, electricians and window cleaners although the latter was the most used local service followed by hairdressing and car maintenance.

Generally all utilities were regarded as adequate or good although a significant number of respondents regarded water and sewerage services as poor.

3. THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

Responses suggested that the country footpaths and bridleways were well used by villagers. Although fewer respondents claimed to know where the footpaths were! Most users felt that the

paths were adequately maintained and signposted but an overwhelming majority thought that maps should be provided in the village, particularly at The Green. Suggestions for additional paths were made, specifically footways alongside the road to Cooks Wharf and between Blenheim Cross Roads and the Bridleway in Mentmore Road.

A majority of respondents felt that the dog mess bins provided by the Parish Council to be an adequate response although 150 respondents felt that more bins were needed. Many felt that litter was a problem in the village and even more would be prepared to take part in a clean up day. Most respondents would like to see more wild flower areas in the village with many saying they would be prepared to help maintain them. (In practice very few villagers have responded to appeals for help with either).

Almost all respondents were satisfied with the household waste collection arrangements. There was a clear demand for additional re-cycling facilities, however since the Appraisal the District Council has changed to wheelie bins and kerb side collection of paper and plastic and metal containers.

Car parking was a concern to many respondents. The main concern was inconsiderate parking on pavements (a particular concern for respondents aged over 65) and in dangerous positions on roads. Many respondents were concerned about parents parking in High Street to drop off/pick up their children and would like to see parking restrictions imposed.

Nearly a quarter of respondents were concerned about the impact of traffic movements to and from Cheddington Airfield. Many respondents said that they would like to see traffic calming measures particularly in High Street and Mentmore Road.

4. LEISURE AND RECREATION

A minority of respondents had made use of the recreation ground with dog walking easily the most popular activity but a very high proportion of respondents felt that the recreation ground was well maintained. The most popular suggestion for addition facilities was an adventure playground.

Most respondents felt that the Village hall was managed and maintained adequately and that it catered for the needs of villagers. The most popular suggestions for additional activities were aerobics/keep fit and adult dancing.

Almost all respondents felt that the Green was properly maintained although many respondents were concerned about litter. Some felt that the fence needed better attention.

5. HIGHWAYS. TRAFFIC AND RURAL TRANSPORT

39% of respondents sometimes experienced transport problems, with 75% of those often experiencing problems being aged over 65. Having said that, 83% of respondents had daytime access to a vehicle. The most popular journeys were shopping, leisure and transport to work.

21% of respondents regarded the bus services as important or essential, 78% never use the bus. Improvements sought were timetables and routes.

66% of respondents regarded the train services as important or essential, 32% never use the train. Improvements were sought in station facilities, timetables and reliability.

Over half of respondents were dissatisfied with the standard of maintenance of the highways. Many were concerned about speeding and parking in High Street, speeding heavy vehicles in Station Road, dangers for pedestrians in Manor Road, parking in Goose Acre and the lack of footways to Cook's Wharf and from Blenheim Crossroads to Mentmore Verges. Suggestions of things to improve road safety included:

- Traffic calming in High Street/Mentmore Road
- Parking restrictions
- Prosecution of speeding offenders and people parking on the pavement
- More off-road parking
- Traffic prioritisation/traffic lights on railway bridge
- Pelican crossing outside school

Most respondents felt that the street and footway lighting in the village is good or adequate, (40% of those who felt they were poor were over 65).

6. COMMUNITY ISSUES

Facilities for young people - Whilst the majority felt that facilities for younger children were good or adequate, a high percentage of respondents felt that facilities for teenagers were poor, particularly for the 15 - 17 year olds. Additional facilities suggested included a decent play area, social club, more sport or a skateboard area.

Over 60s - The majority of the over 60s responding reported problems due to badly maintained footpaths, parking on pavements and overgrown hedges. Virtually all the over 60s responding felt that Cheddington fulfilled their needs and were happy with the activities available for them.

Medical Services - The vast majority of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with medical services although 5% of respondents - from all age groups - reported transport problems. 47% of those responding said that they would transfer to a permanent doctor's surgery in the village.

Education - A mix of reasons were given for why children go out of Buckinghamshire for their education, mainly age of transfer (which has since changed), preference for the comprehensive system and better schools. Although only 45% of parents with children below school age said that they would attend Cheddington School, the majority of the others did not answer the question. 26% of parents with pre-school age children would like to see nursery/crèche facilities in the village.

Policing - A majority of respondents were very or fairly concerned about crime, particularly burglary, car crime and vandalism, a significant minority were concerned about personal safety and drink/drug related crime. However, those responding felt that the level of policing in the village was adequate.

Places of Worship - Over a third of respondents claim to attend either St Giles or the Methodist Church at least occasionally. However 40% of respondents regarded St Giles Church as important to them. 120 respondents claimed to regularly support the church financially, a further 77 would consider doing so.

Parish Council - Of those answering the question, 98% thought that the Parish Council did a good job and most thought that it publicised its activities and decisions sufficiently. However 49% did not know even one member of the Council.

Residents' Association - Of those answering the question, 99% thought that the Association did a good job, however 62% did not know even one member of the Committee.

Local Authorities - Virtually all respondents answering this section knew who their District and County Councillors were, but a majority did not know whether they were sufficiently aware of local needs and feelings.

Member of Parliament and Euro MP - Most of those answering these sections knew who their MP and MEP were and felt that they were accessible, however, the majority felt that they did not fulfil their requirements. Only 13% of respondents completed the Euro MP section.

Communication/Information - Most respondents claimed to read the Village Newsletter and the Village Guide and found them useful and interesting. A third claimed to read the Parish Notice Board and found it useful and interesting. 22% claimed to read the United Benefice Newsletter and found it useful and interesting.

Community Spirit/Neighbourliness - Respondents rated Cheddington highly in terms of both community spirit and neighbourliness.

Action Points

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. County and District Councils to note views regarding employment opportunities.
2. District and Parish Councils to note views regarding Church Hill Farm site and housing development.
3. Post Office Counters Ltd to note demand for motor vehicle licence renewal facility at the post office.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

1. Parish Council to consider provision of footpath maps.
2. County and Parish Councils to consider provision of footpaths to Cook's Wharf and from Blenheim Crossroads to Mentmore Verges.
3. The Police, Parish, District and County Councils to note concerns about parking around the village.
4. Parish and County Councils to note concerns about heavy vehicle movements to and from The Airfield and the call for traffic calming measures.

LEISURE AND RECREATION

1. Parish Council to note concerns regarding litter on the Green and maintenance of the fence.

HIGHWAYS. TRAFFIC AND RURAL TRANSPORT

1. County Council to note concerns about bus timetables and routes.
2. Silverlink to consider concerns about station facilities, timetables and reliability.
3. County Council to note concerns about highway maintenance.
4. County Council, Parish Council and Police to consider road safety improvement suggestions.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

1. Parish Council to note views regarding lack of facilities for young people.
2. Parish Council, County Council and Police to note concerns of the elderly regarding maintenance of footpaths, overgrown hedges and parking on pavements.
3. Parish Council, District Council and Health authority to note demand for doctor's surgery in village.
4. Police to note views about crime and policing in the village.

Who organised Cheddington Action 2000?

The idea of a Village Appraisal was mooted by the Parish Council and put to an open public meeting at which members of the public were asked to volunteer their services. It was run by an independent Steering Committee with funding from a Rural Action Grant and the Parish Council.

The Steering Committee consisted of:

John Crane

Fenlon Dunphy

Meg Lawrence

Bill Perrett

Dee Wilkinson

Derek Wilkinson

Chris Shephard is thanked for all his help and expertise in creating, managing and interpreting the database of information.

We were grateful for the support and advice provided by Bucks Community Action.

We also thank the many other volunteers who helped compile, distribute and collect the questionnaires.

What happens next?

The delays in analysing the data collected and in compiling and publishing this report are unfortunate. However, many lessons have been learnt and most of the findings are as relevant today as when the appraisal was undertaken. A key lesson is that we were overly ambitious and the questionnaire was too comprehensive leading to difficulty in undertaking analysis.

We suggest that the Parish Council considers sponsoring a follow up survey focussing on specific issues arising from the Action 2000 results. Whether this is done via questionnaires to everyone in the village, via the Village Newsletter and Website or through participatory events needs to be considered.