



*PLANNING FOR THE NEXT
THREE YEARS
IN DOWNTON PARISH*

AUGUST 2021

INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of the Strategic Plan?

This Strategic Plan provides a framework for Downton Parish Council to continue to work in the best interests of all who live or work in the parish. It sets out the Parish Council's 'action plan' for the next three years and includes actions not yet completed from the previous plan.

Why do we need a Strategic Plan?

The Strategic Plan helps to ensure that the Parish Council can take a planned approach on achieving its development priorities; maintaining its existing facilities and services; setting its budgets, prioritising its resources and achieving value for money.

Overview of the Parish Council

Downton Parish Council is responsible for the following facilities and services in the parish:

- Playgrounds at the Memorial Gardens, the Moot Lane Recreation Ground, the Charlton All Saints Playground and the new playground at Wick Lane
- Downton Memorial Centre (which is managed by a separate Management Committee)
- Downton Cemetery in Barford Lane
- Allotments (which are managed by the Downton Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association)
- Areas of public open space such as The Borough Greens
- The public toilets



Figure 1: The Parish of Downton - Neighbourhood Plan Area

- The minor repair and cleaning of bus shelters
- Provision and emptying of litter and dog waste bins
- Street cleaning

The Parish Council also looks after the interests of the parish where empowered to do so, bringing any other needs of the parish to the attention of the relevant authority. It responds to consultation documents and requests from a diverse range of other bodies and authorities which includes commenting to the Local Planning Authority, Wiltshire Council, on each and every planning application in the parish.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan for the parish, which was created by a team of volunteers, evidenced through numerous community consultation exercises and endorsed by the Parish Council, was put to a referendum in November 2016 which achieved a majority endorsement with a higher than average percentage of the village taking part. It was formally adopted by Wiltshire Council in January 2017. Although it remains an influence on planning applications, it is no longer considered 'valid' because Wiltshire Council does not have a 5 year housing land supply.

Parish Council's Development Priorities

The following priorities apply during the timeframe of this Strategic Plan:

- To work in partnership with Wiltshire Council, the schools and local organisations to build a strong community and maintain community cohesion.
- To work in partnership with the Head teacher and Governors of Downton Primary School to ensure that all children of primary school age living in Downton parish are given a right of entry to Downton Primary School.
- To address potential loss of facilities where possible
- To continue to implement the priorities of the Downton Neighbourhood Plan

About the village

ABOUT DOWNTON

Demography (needs updating)

- 3, 073 people at last Census (2011)
- Slightly more males than females (1504: 1569)
- Of which 2519 are adults
- Of these 1672 live as part of a couple
- 388 are over 75 – approx. 12%
- Approximately 1,346 households of which 961 have dependent children and only 149 don't have a car or van
- 2807 describe themselves as English
- 2,947 describe themselves of fair or better health
- 2,188 own their own homes

Landscape

- River Avon running North/South which created the wide flat valley within which the Parish is situated
- Includes the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Cranborne Chase
- Mostly fields and small woodlands outside the small built up areas
- Part of the floodplain is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Surrounded by downland – best views are from Barford Lane, the Avon Valley footpath and Wick Lane
- Central area of Downton designated as a Conservation Area in 1973, containing over 85 listed buildings

Description

Although all part of the Parish, the area includes significantly different characteristics depending on location. The small hamlet of Standlynch includes Standlynch Farm, Trafalgar House and a small number of houses; within Downton Village there is a traveller site at Lode Hill; Moot Lane and several small side roads of housing built in the second half of the last century including a complex for older people; the Borough and parts of the A338 with several thatched cottages and older buildings; relatively new housing at West Wick and Charlotte Place and the Charles Church development; other areas of housing built in the second half of the last century at Greenacres and off Marie Avenue and then, along the A338 to Charlton-All-Saints where most of the housing is older style.



Facilities

- Downton has over 30 clubs and societies

There are

- three pubs
- three churches
- a preschool, a primary school and a secondary school
- A Business Park (although most of the employees live outside the Parish)
- A public library
- A surgery
- A dentist
- A Coop and several small shops
- A Leisure Centre and Sports Club

What has informed the Plan?

The Parish Council is here to represent the views of the Parish and to undertake local activities in the best interests of the residents of the Parish. This Strategy should therefore be based on knowledge of the views of residents. Downton Parish Council is a 'precepting authority' which means that it sets its own level of local taxation for local households which is collected as part of the Council Tax. The budget for which the Parish Council has responsibility is therefore paid by local people and accountable to local people. The way that the Parish Council spends this budget is transparent and available on the website but this Strategy helps to explain how the Parish Council makes decisions about financial and other activities.

Over the past eight years there have been several surveys which give a good indication of the views of residents. The following surveys and evidence have informed this Strategy

- The Village survey which took place in 2010
- A Neighbourhood Plan survey asking for general views about what is important to residents took place in 2014
- Another Neighbourhood Plan survey asking how much various statements were supported (which was based on the responses to the 2014 survey) took place in 2015
- A Housing Needs survey took place in 2014
- The Village Design Statement

All these are available as appendices to the Neighbourhood Plan and can be viewed on the website at www.downtonfuture.org

The following pages identify what residents have expressed strong views about and what facts are known in relation to these. Each page is followed by an action plan of activities which will be undertaken or facilitated by the Parish Council. The topics cover: Housing, Buildings and Facilities, Land and Environment, Street scene, traffic and security, Employment and Retail, Education and Health and Parish Council Administration.

HOUSING

What people say

- There is a lack of affordable housing
- People don't want any new housing to increase the drainage problems
- All new buildings should adopt an approach to design and use of materials which is compatible with the local environment (as laid out in the Village Design Statement which was developed in consultation with the community).



What is known about the Parish's housing.

- The Core Strategy allocated 190 extra homes to Downton which have now been achieved
- A quarter of respondents to the housing needs survey live in houses with four or more bedrooms and over 85% live in owner occupied homes
- Over 70% of those responding to the housing needs survey felt that the most important type of new housing is affordable starter homes
- In October 2013, there were 175 households on the Wiltshire Council Housing Register seeking affordable accommodation in Downton parish
- Developers are only required to make 30% of the development available as affordable housing in this area.
- An up to date Housing Needs Survey is planned for October 2021

Housing related action plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget allocation
Review and revise the NP	PC/ NHDC	2022	Local influence on housing development	A revised Plan will be in existence	£1,000
Monitoring that building is being constructed according to planning applications for drainage systems in new build homes	NHDC	Ongoing	To ensure drainage constructed safely with no additional negative impact	Drainage in new build homes will be compliant with planning permission	

Routine ongoing actions include:

Review all planning applications and make comment to Planning authority

Building and Facilities

What people say

- The quality and availability of premises for the community should be improved
- The loss of any post office in the village is regretted
- Community building should be supported and improved



What is known about the Parish's building and facilities

- The Memorial Hall roof has been repaired and the redecoration of the Centre has taken place.
- A Memorial Centre Committee now leases the extended building
- The pre-school operates from new premises at the rear of the Centre
- The Public Toilets are now managed by the Parish Council
- The Football Club has updated and decorated the Sports Centre and the Sherwood Rooms
- The Leisure Centre is now run by a new manager

Buildings and Facilities Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Consult residents on the desire for the Parish Council to enable the setting up of a working group to assess the Community Right to Buy opportunities for Downton	PC	End 2022	To give opportunities to the community to have control over changing facilities or those where there is potential to lose community facilities	Wiltshire Council will register a list of assets if it is the decision of the working group to progress this	
Understand Wiltshire Council's plans for the library in order that the PC can consider an action plan to take over the lease of the library as a building asset	Parish Council	End 2022	More flexibility in the use of the building. Increased opportunity to gain a grant against WC's Community Funding	The Library service will continue to be managed by WC but the building will become a Parish hub for information exchange and availability	At least £1,000 (not currently in budget)
Support activities for young people by holding an event	Amenities	October 2022	An event which brings young people in the village and surrounding area together	Reduced antisocial and criminal behaviour by young people	£1,800 (not currently in budget)
Refurbish the public toilets	Amenities	April 2023	High quality, efficient public toilet facility	Visitors and residents will be happy to use the facility	£20,000 (CIL monies from Scotts House Dev)
A maintenance programme will be in place as part of ongoing playground inspections	Amenities	ongoing	To ensure safe and cost effective facilities	Parish assets will be maintained in good order	£3,000 pa

Land and Environment

What people say

- Sites of special scientific interest should be protected
- Facilities in the Moot Lane recreational ground should be improved
- The use of natural energy is supported as long as it does not damage the character of the area
- There are not enough safe places to cycle – new footpaths and cycle ways should be developed
- Additional recycling facilities should be provided for items not collected through kerb side collections



What is known about the Parish's land and environment

- The Parish has responsibility for the cemetery and areas of open space including the Moot Lane recreation ground.
- Moot Lane recreation ground is subject to conditions of a covenant which prevents certain uses
- Wiltshire Council have increased the type of recyclable materials that can be put into kerb side collections.

Land and Environment Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Purchase and install new playground equipment as a result of consultation	Amenities	2023	To provide high quality play equipment for children of all ages	Increased use of play venues	Initial £70,000 from existing s106 monies
Inter-generational planting of fruit trees for a community orchard	Amenities	October 2022	Improve surroundings and create an opportunity for all generations to work and learn together	More trees and a community orchard will exist within the village	£2,000 (not currently in budget)
Request an update and follow through a report from the Downton Green Group to establish actions and opportunities to reduce carbon footprint of Downton Parish	Amenities group	Dec 2022	A more sustainable community	The community will be aware of actions they can take to reduce waste and maintain the environment for the future	£500 (not currently in budget)
Create & implement a community emergency plan to include snow, flood & cyber security plans together with a community emergency volunteer team	Parish Council	May 2020	To increase community resilience	A plan to reduce risk and improve community safety in times of critical need will be in place	£500 (not currently in budget)
Support the creation of a plastic free community by meeting costs of PFC steering group	Parish Council	October 2021	To reduce local impact on our carbon footprint and climate change	Fewer single use plastic items will be used locally	£50 (not currently in budget)
Continuing support for Downton in Bloom	Parish Council	July 2022	To improve community spirit and environment	Downton will have been recognised in the Britain in Bloom scheme	£1,500

Routine ongoing actions include: Consideration of increase in cemetery charges; Continue to maintain land owned by the PC; Bi-weekly inspections of the play areas

Street Scene, transport and security

What people say

- There is too much congestion on the A338
- Parking is a problem in the village – additional parking should be available in the High Street and the Borough
- There are too many lorries coming through the village – people want the HGV ban enforced
- There should be better public transport



What is known about the Parish's street scene

- There is little monitoring of parking violations even if yellow lines are put in
- The majority of children are brought to school in a car even when they live within one mile of the primary school and most of those cars return home again after dropping off (i.e. are not on their way to work)
- The land behind the coop and the Goat pub is privately owned
- Bus companies have previously stated that more frequent bus services are not financially viable
- Public notice boards, social media and local magazines are the main means of communication between residents

Street Scene and security Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Consideration of the cost of cleaning and maintaining the pathways, pavements and riverside working with Walking group, Downton Society and Rights of way group.	Amenities	ongoing	Clarity about the financial cost of maintaining pathways, pavements and riverside	A decision will exist about the future responsibility of the PC to fund/undertake the cleaning of these facilities	£500
Support the Primary School to initiate a '20 is plenty' advisory speed limit in the Borough if requested by the Primary School.	Amenities	June 2022	Safer environment for school children and carers during drop off and pick up times.	An advisory speed limit will be in place and adhered to.	£1,000 (not currently in budget)
Support the 'lorry watch' initiative monitoring HGV restrictions and establish plan to work together	Parish Council and volunteer support	Dec 2022	Less congestion and safer passage along the Borough	HGV restriction will be adhered to fully	
With new ownership of the Goat pub, investigate opportunities for increased parking to the rear of the pub	Parish Council	October 2022	To increase parking spaces and reduce unsafe parking	Clarity about whether land currently privately owned can be used for additional parking	

Routine ongoing actions include: Continuing to work with Highways to review rural roads and village centre; Liaising with local police to maintain diligence over anti-social behaviour; The regular inspection and maintenance of 11 bus shelters

Employment and Retail

What people say

- The expansion of the Business Park is supported
- There is support for businesses and commercial expansion to maintain a thriving economy
- The High Street shops that have closed are missed
- Superfast broadband is still not available in all areas of the Parish



What is known about the Parish's employment and retail outlets

- Any expansion of the Business Park area would need to be to the North on land which is owned by the Longford Estate which does not support expansion
- There are vacancies in the Business Park
- The public subsidy of the Leisure Centre is subject to reductions in funding.
- The High Street grocery shop has had several attempts at viability but has remained unrepaired following a fire
- The shop on the corner of the high street near the Wooden Spoon has now had permission to be converted to residential accommodation

Employment and Retail Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Continue to work with BT to maximise the implementation of superfast broad band for homeworking	Parish Council	Dec 2023	Superfast broadband availability throughout the Parish's residential areas	Clarity of BT's intentions and how the PC can influence this will be understood	
Enabling the setting up of a group to work with the Business Centre, schools and retail/business outlets to maximise communication with the Parish Council and increase employment and leisure potential opportunities – not necessarily a Councillor group but supporting residents with report to PC	Parish Council working with interested residents	Dec 2023	Good communication opportunities with all businesses and the schools of the area to maximise potential for a strong local economy and apprenticeships	The working group meeting will be regularly well attended and businesses will see this as a key way of communicating	£250 (not currently in budget)

Education and Health

What people say

- People want to be able to make an appointment quickly with a doctor – any future plans to increase the surgery services or premises should be supported
- People agree that there should be support for public funding for the retention and improvement of the Leisure Centre



What is known about the Parish's education and health

- The Leisure Centre would need to be returned to its previous state (i.e. removal of the solar panels) if it were to close. This is likely to cost in excess of £90,000
- The surgery has stated that they would be willing to increase the number of GPs but that, currently, they have in excess of the required number for the population.
- The Primary school has an admissions policy that prioritises local children and has space available

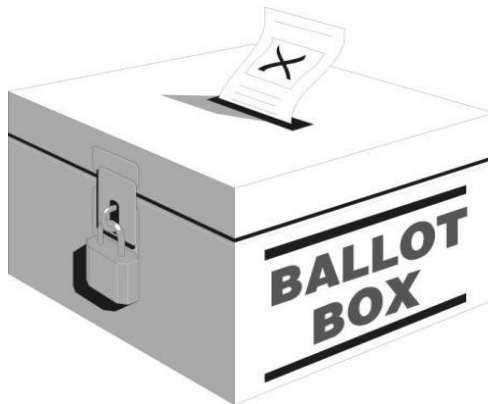
Education and Health Action Plan

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Implement improvements to the village in line with the Dementia Friendly Community actions	Parish Council	October 2022	A more supportive environment for people living with dementia	People with dementia and their carers will feel safer and more involved in the village	
Work with Leisure centre , WC and BWSCA clubs to support the creation of a plan to improve and increase the facilities and to create a wellbeing and social hub for the village applying for Community Review funds	Parish Council/ BWSCA	May 2020	The ongoing viability of the Centre and reduced potential for reversion of the building to its prior state	The Centre will have a clear plan of how to increase use of the centre and obtain independent funding The number of people using the Leisure Centre and Social Club will be increased	
Contribute to additional facilities to encourage young people and adolescents to use the Centre	Parish Council/ BWSCA	October 2021	Facilities such as a climbing wall can be achieved	Anti-social behaviour will decrease due to more facilities being available	£3,500 (not currently in budget)

Maintaining the Administration

What people say

- People want an accountable Parish Council
- Many people do not know what the Parish Council does
- People often expect the Parish Council to undertake actions that they are not funded or empowered to do.



What is known about the Parish's administration

- The Parish Council should have 15 Councillors but has only 9 with 6 vacancies. Once elected, councillors are public servants and stewards of public money.
- Not all councillors have had life experience which gives them the knowledge to perform the role and so need relevant training.
- The Parish clerk works 30 hours per week and the Parish Administrative Officer works 10 hours per week to ensure compliance and administer the business of the Parish; the Parish Council is the employer of the clerk and Administrative Officer.
- Elections have to be held every four years if there are more nominees than required for the councillor roles

Action	By whom	By when	To achieve what?	How will we know the difference?	Budget implication
Improve communications including a regular newsletter to all households	Parish Council	Ongoing	Well informed residents	Increased understanding of the role of the Parish Council	£500 (not currently in budget)
Undertake active recruitment of local people to ensure sufficient councillors to complete the full complement	Parish Council	ASAP	Full statutory compliance. The ability to take on the work required to complete this strategic plan.	The Parish Council will be able to take on the tasks in an equitable way and achieve development of the Parish	
Purchase of a 'pop up' tent	Parish Council	June 2022	To facilitate community events	Improved communication and consultation between the Parish Council and residents	£150 (not currently in budget)
Continue to support funding for meeting room hire overall – working groups	Parish Council	ongoing	To enable meetings and working groups to be properly facilitated in an environment which maximises positive working	Strong output from workgroups and other organisations related to Council business	£700

Routine ongoing actions include:

- Employment of a part-time Clerk to ensure that the Council as a whole conducts its business properly and in compliance with the law and to provide independent, objective and professional advice as well as undertake a wide variety of actions on behalf of the Parish Council.
- Appropriate support and training for Clerk and Councillors

Monitoring the Strategy and being answerable to the residents of the Parish

Frequency of reviews

This strategy will be reviewed at least every six months at the Finance and Strategy Committee which is publicly held and will be updated annually by the Parish Council according to priorities and circumstances

Publication of results

The annual review will be available at the annual Parish Meeting; a copy will be made available in the library and it will also be posted on the Parish Council website

How residents can comment

Residents can comment at any of the public sessions of the Parish Council meetings (held during the first 15 minutes of all meetings) and at any time to the Parish Clerk at clerk@downtonparishcouncil.gov.uk or in writing to Dean Chase, West Dean, Salisbury, SP5 1JJ