

Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford and Ruckley & Langley Parish Community Led Plan 2019 (an update of the 2013 Parish Plan)

1. Introduction and background

The parish of Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford and Ruckley & Langley has produced two Parish Plans since 2000, the last of which was in 2013. This included the results of a detailed demographic survey of the parishes together with a summary of residents' views about the community and its future and concluded with a list of actions which were seen as important to the development and maintenance of the villages and the well-being of their residents. Some aspirations were also noted.

The 2013 plan was prepared by a volunteer community steering group, drawing on information from questionnaires completed by the residents and by students at Concord College and also from discussions at a tea party event at Pitchford Village Hall.

With some 5 years having passed since this plan was produced, the Parish Council felt it timely for the community to review the plan.

The plan will form part of the Place Plan for Church Stretton and surrounding area and will influence local planning and infrastructure decisions.

The issues and items which have been identified will require action from the Parish Council, Shropshire Council, the community or will need to be shared. However, issues and items not addressed in the plan are unlikely to attract support from Shropshire Council. An action plan will be developed to determine how the issues might best be addressed.

2. Developing this update

As there had been few changes to the structure of the parishes since 2013 it was not felt necessary to repeat the demographic survey. This update therefore comprised a community wide questionnaire based on the main action points identified in the 2013 plan and which also invited residents to raise any new issues.

The questionnaire results were reviewed by a volunteer community group and their report (this report) was then made available to the community for comments which were noted before producing a final plan for submission to Shropshire County Council.

3. Action issues and status

The action issues from the 2013 plan fell under nine headings, plus aspirations, which seem to cover all areas of likely community concern. These are noted below together with observations and additional comments from the questionnaire and from subsequent discussions.

3.1 Education

There are no primary schools in the parishes but the (PC) Parish Council was asked to oppose any plans to close the two primary schools which serve the villages.

3.2 Housing

The area is designated as “open countryside” with Acton Burnell additionally classed as a conservation area.

Note: The conservation area designation adds extra planning controls to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special. This affects those who wish to alter the outside appearance of any properties, including not only buildings but also trees, hedges, fences etc. - introducing a requirement to “enhance and preserve”.

Residents continue to feel that small developments may be acceptable with an emphasis on low cost/low rent housing for local need, noting the open countryside requirement for development only *“where it maintains and enhances countryside vitality and character and improves the sustainability of rural communities”*.

The Stoneleigh Park, Home Farm barns and Mulberry House developments in Acton Burnell are progressing and residents felt strongly that further commercial development should be opposed.

3.3 Traffic

30 mph speed limits are in place in Acton Burnell, Pitchford and Frodesley. However, these are frequently not observed. Additional traffic calming measures were suggested, possibly flashing warning lights or raised road bumps, particularly for Pitchford and Acton Burnell.

Concern was also expressed regarding the increased volume of traffic on local lanes and any measures to improve general road safety would be welcome.

A foot/cycle path from Acton Burnell to Pitchford was strongly supported. This would include a necessary extension of the existing Acton Burnell pavement to reach the new Stoneleigh Park development.

Access from the Stoneleigh Park development is on a bend with very poor visibility, opposite a junction and is seen as hazardous. Improvements are needed as soon as possible.

Parking restrictions near Acton Burnell crossroads had been suggested previously but concerns have been expressed that this might lead to increased traffic speed and also limit access to the shop. Restrictions are no longer seen as particularly desirable.

3.4 Environment

Footpath and bridleway maintenance and improvement were seen to warrant continued action and support.

3.5 Health

Since the 2013 plan, the PC has funded the 'Village Directory' which provides local practice information. Defibrillators have also been/will be installed in each village. Further, the NHS now offers a delivery service for repeat prescriptions.

A mobile clinic was requested in the past but this is no longer felt to be necessary.

No further actions were proposed which linked directly to health.

3.6 Communications

The PC continues to support 'Village Views' newsletter through a volunteer team and will continue to develop the PC website to carry local information.

Faster broadband is now available across the parishes, with fibre available to most homes, but mobile phone coverage remains poor. Providers should be contacted to explore how this could be improved.

A community WhatsApp group and/or Facebook page has been suggested.

3.7 Children

Provision of a children's play area continues to receive strong support. Suitable sites, possibly adjacent to St. Mary's church in Acton Burnell or the village hall in Pitchford, need to be investigated.

3.8 Elderly

With an increasing elderly population, provision/continuation of services, i.e. the shop in Acton Burnell, public transport and the facilities provided by the village hall is seen as vital.

3.9 Services, amenities and facilities

Village hall and Village shop/post office

These are the two most important amenities for residents and should be strongly supported.

Village directory

Following previous comments regarding local information, the PC has funded the 'Village Directory', assembled by a volunteer team.

Mobile library

Although the current level of use is not high it was felt that this should continue to be supported. It is seen as particularly important for the elderly.

Transport

Public transport should be maintained at as high a level as possible to provide access to work, education and other amenities in Shrewsbury.

Support for a community transport scheme should be encouraged.

Waste collection

Large waste collection is now available from Pitchford Village Hall and kerbside collection of cardboard along with recycling is also now provided.

Dog waste notices/bins

Dog mess, mainly in the castle and church area, remains an issue and provision of signage and additional bins should be considered.

3.10 Aspirations

The desirability of a local pub has been noted previously but there does not seem to be sufficient commercial justification to maintain one. The pub in Frodesley closed some time ago and is scheduled to become housing.

Pitchford Village Hall Committee have arranged monthly Pub Nights which provide an opportunity for residents to meet and chat. A mobile fish and chip van also attends regularly.

The provision of allotments is of interest to a number of residents. This can be pursued through existing procedures if there is sufficient community support.

A community oil buying scheme was suggested as existing large schemes currently seem to offer little or no savings.

There were seen to be opportunities for closer cooperation between residents, the Parish Council, the Village Hall Committee and the local church groups to press many of these issues with Shropshire Council and other funding bodies.

Closer ties between Concord College, its staff and other residents was also seen to be desirable, particularly the involvement of staff in community activities outside the college.

4. Conclusions

To meet the needs expressed by local residents, support from the Parish Council and Shropshire Council is required, particularly in relation to ensuring appropriate housing development and resolving traffic issues. Community involvement is the key to realising a number of the other issues raised.

Funding and support will be required for an Acton Burnell – Pitchford footpath, continued maintenance of existing footpaths and bridleways and for a children's play area if a suitable site can be found.

There is also a need to fund and support local groups in maintaining the village hall and there may be a need to provide support for the shop/post office in Acton Burnell.

The additional housing in Acton Burnell will increase the need for the services and amenities which have been identified.