

Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth

Autumn 2008

# Parish Plan Final Report



## Dear villagers

This report brings the main work of the Parish Plan Steering Group to an end and forms the basis of future action.

The process started two years ago when we received a DEFRA grant and the Parish Council agreed to support the project. The first phase of work began in October 2006 when issues that concerned the residents were identified through public consultation and questionnaire.

The second phase of work was launched with the Interim Report which identified four specific areas where working parties could investigate the issues raised in detail. These were Living Local, Community Facilities and Events, Opportunities for Young People and Traffic and Travel. Volunteers came forward to work within these groups and over the past 10 months a lot of time and effort has been given by the group members.

If we were to report all the details of the research carried out by the groups this report would be very long indeed. Instead, this report summarises the work of each group and highlights the main actions for the future. Where relevant some of the groups work will be available on the village website [www.bassingbourn.org](http://www.bassingbourn.org)

At the back of this report we have condensed and summarised specific recommendations into an Action Plan. Some of these are concrete and readily implemented whilst others require more work.

Where we have been fortunate enough to have a working party willing to continue working together (like the Living Local group), the Parish Plan has immediate impetus for future action with initiatives like 'Bassingbourn Transition Village' (launched with this report).

Other things will be passed to the Parish Council who have undertaken to take forward the recommendations of the Parish Plan.

Our village is constantly evolving, and the steering group hope that this final Parish Plan properly reflects the views and hopes of the majority of the parishioners. We hope that everyone will remember that Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth is not just bricks and mortar but is a living community and has the potential to be whatever you want to make it.

The Steering Group



# Community Facilities and Events



## ***So what has the Community Facilities and Events working party been looking at?***

Responses received from the Parish Plan identified a lack of a 'centre in the village – a proper village hall' and a need to engender a greater community spirit through village-wide events.



## ***A dedicated village hall would be a great asset - what did your investigations reveal?***

We have looked into this in some detail. The cost to build a new hall from scratch can be estimated at £1,500 per square metre. For example, a hall measuring 20m by 12m would cost around £360,000. On top of this there would be the purchase and preparation of around a two acre site (to accommodate the hall and parking) which at current market rates could be as much as £200,000 per acre.

Of course rates do vary and these figures should be a guide only.

There are very few central sites that could feasibly be used for such a purpose or even sites that could be converted.

We therefore see the building of a village hall as probably low priority at the moment but still something that the Parish Council should be considering in the long term.



## ***But don't you think the village needs a community focal point?***

As far as a focal point in the village is concerned, we believe there are a few existing facilities which do already act as a focal point for different groups of people. The primary building that currently serves as a focal point is the Spar shop but the Parish Church, the Village College, the Pavilion and recently the new Sports Centre can also be considered as focal points. All these differ from each other in terms of what they offer the village.

## ***What other community facilities are there in Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth?***

Venues include the College and Primary school, community centre, recreation pavilion, Church room, Knutsford Road centre, The Limes, Bassingbourn Sports Centre and the Parish Church United Reform and Cemetery Chapels. We felt that most activities - from children's birthday parties to whole-village events - can be enjoyed at one or more of these facilities. However it is felt that the range of available venues is not largely known within the community and we thought these assets should be brought to the village's attention.

We would recommend that the Parish Council arrange the collation of this data and



produce a leaflet which could be available to all villagers as well as making the information available on the village website.

## ***Another of your tasks was to investigate community activities within the village. What were your findings?***

There have been a number of successful events held in the village, which tend to be organised by a particular school, group or society and whilst they are open to the whole village they rarely promote the feeling of a single village entity or spirit.

Obviously people from the village can take part but they are not usually run with the aim of engendering a sense of community in the village.

We feel that if a group of people could be pulled together with the remit to encourage and organise village events, this would be a great step forward in creating a greater sense of community.

Successful events in the past have included the annual Primary School fete and bonfire night, Jubilee Parade, school sports days, church services, Barracks' fireworks, amateur dramatic plays, street market, scarecrow festival, Big Village Gig and various sports club events.

## ***What would you like to see happen in the future?***

We believe there are a number of events that could be organised to help provide a sense of village spirit and of belonging to a rural community. Central to making events like this happen will be the formation of a Village Events Group with support from the Parish Council and community volunteers. Anyone interested in joining such a group should contact Rupert Webb - rkwebb@aol.com

## ***Give us a taster of what you think we could look forward to ...***

A photography competition has already taken place and other suggestions include:

- Village Games
- Fireworks Evening – Village run event
- Village Fête, Fair or Flower Show
- Village Christmas Tree, Carols or Party
- Concert
- Beer Festival
- Society Recruitment Day
- Fun Run
- Funfair
- Comedy Night
- Sports Day for Children
- Film Evening
- Conservation Day, Bulb Planting
- Air Display

# Opportunities for Young People

## ***So what has the Opportunities for Young People working party been looking at?***

A drop-in centre would be top of our list - there is currently no place for young people to meet and hang out together on a regular basis but a suitable place needs to be identified. Potential sites have been identified and continuing discussions are taking place regarding their suitability and availability

## ***What else do you see as a high priority?***

An area for BMX riders, definitely! This has been ongoing for some while now. The Rouses has been identified as suitable land for BMX jumps/ramps and there are already a few natural mound ramps in place made by the youngsters who use them. The County Council and the Parish Council are currently negotiating a lease which, if all goes smoothly, could be in place within 6 months. We have also been looking at forming a Bassingbourn Youth Website. We have in mind an interactive website to be set up with password log-in details for Bassingbourn young people - possibly linked to the main village website.

The youth site will contain a list of what's on in and around our village, encouraging them to make full use of what is available.

The estimated cost for set-up is around £400. The updating and monitoring costs are not yet established - and, of course, we need to find a web designer to start us off.

## ***What other longer-term ideas were discussed by the working party?***

A football wall has been suggested by Bassingbourn Football Club - this could also be erected on the land at the Rouses. A football wall would be a welcome addition to the existing sporting activities for young people.

## ***How can young people in the village find out what's available for them?***

We have investigated the production of an Information Booklet which would be given to all young people, containing information on what activities are available in and around the village.

This could possibly be combined with the Community Centre information booklet and could also list activities for the whole family. We were considering a publication of approximately 50 pages, linked to the website where all up-to-date information would be held. We haven't yet established the cost of such a publication but we hope some of it would be matched through sponsorship from local

companies.

## ***Do you envisage young people becoming involved in any other aspects of village life highlighted in the Parish Plan?***

Yes, we were very interested in the Time Bank concept and felt it was something our teenagers could be involved in.

The group was pleased that the idea was actioned by the Living Local group and taken to the point of launching a Bassingbourn Time Bank. (See Living Local section) We hope that this will become a vibrant part of village life. We will be exploring if the Time Bank is able to offer an alternative reward scheme for young people.

This should not be a costly scheme as most people would be volunteering their time, although costs would be involved if alternative rewards were offered to young people.

## ***How will you ensure you involve the young people of Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth in future projects?***

We very much feel that the formation of a Youth Forum should be the next step in listening to the voice of the younger members of our community.

It would be made up of young people within the village, nominations would be called for and elections held.

This Forum would investigate what young people in our community want and need. Ideally the Youth Forum would have direct communication with the Parish Council and possibly attend two or three meetings per year.

## ***How can young people find out more about the Youth Forum?***

The next step is for the working party to identify a suitable venue for meetings. Further work is also needed to create a constitution i.e. a document that sets out the way in which the Forum is to be set up and the rules which will govern its operation.

Finally, there will need to be arrangements for nominations of prospective members and for elections - after that it will be up to the Forum how it proceeds!

Young people who are interested in the Youth Forum should contact: Pat Piggott, Telephone 01763 246136 Monday to Friday during office hours.



# Living Local



## **So what has the Living Local working party been looking at?**

The group explored issues which would help villagers 'live local'. Amongst other things the group carried out extensive research into local food production, establishing a village exchange system and increasing renewable energy use. As well as gathering information, the group has taken action and made clear proposals for the next steps.



## **What sort of practical action has the group worked on?**

The group has helped kick start local energy generation by working on wind turbine and solar panel projects at the primary school. Planning permission has been applied for and the turbine should be installed later this year. A plan for solar panels for the primary school is ready for governors' consideration.



## **There has been talk of a 'Village Exchange System' - what will that involve?**

After exploring two different exchange systems and meetings with the co-ordinator of the Royston Time Bank it was decided to launch a Bassingbourn Time Bank as a satellite of the Royston one. The Bassingbourn Time Bank system will link people locally to share time and skills. One hour of your time earns one hour time credit to spend when you need. Of course, launching a Bassingbourn satellite of the Royston Time Bank will mean that Bassingbourn will immediately be supported with the practical aspects of co-ordinating and administering. A number of people have already filled in the joining forms to become the start of what we hope will be an exciting and growing Bassingbourn Time Bank.



**This report officially launches the Bassingbourn Time Bank so if you would like to become a member and tap into what is a vast amount of skill and goodwill in Bassingbourn please contact Angela Snelling (01763) 247937 or <http://www.timebank.org.uk>**



## **How can I find out more about Living Local?**

You should have received a Transition Village leaflet along with this report with some interesting background information, hints and tips that it is hoped will help make it easier for us all to live a little more locally. There will also be a new 'Transition Bassingbourn' library of books and DVD's in the Book Café.



## **So what's next?**

The Bassingbourn Transition Village.

## **Explain!**

This will be an umbrella for future 'living local' activity in the village. The Bassingbourn transition initiative is about re-imagining how Bassingbourn works and thinking about the

future. It is about being aware of some of the big issues of our time and looking for simple local responses. For example moving from a feeling of anxiety and fear in the face of climate change and 'peak oil' to developing a positive vision of the future and taking practical action to create a more self-reliant local community.

## **Isn't this a rather large task?**

Yes it is a large and exciting project but one that will focus on 'bite size' village scale answers that are right for Bassingbourn. Happily a national charity has already been established (based on the experience of other communities who have begun transition initiatives) therefore the Bassingbourn initiative will benefit from support from this charity. (<http://transitionculture.org>)

## **It all sounds very global - how does this affect ordinary Bassingbourn residents?**

For example, how can we stop being forced to pay increasing energy costs - could we use less or generate our own energy? Our supermarket system is based on finite fossil fuels so how would Bassingbourn feed itself without Tesco? What about preserving and using our own stores of natural resources (water, building materials, soil and trees)? How could we encourage and benefit from traditional rural skills such as land and woodland management or local building design and construction etc? We may even find life in a re-imagined Bassingbourn will be less stressed and we may have more time to appreciate an improved local environment.

## **Sounds interesting - what happens now?**

As well as running informative film evenings, it is hoped that the first major project for Bassingbourn Transition Village will be the launch of a local food project. The Living Local group has researched a variety of community supported agricultural schemes and believes they have potential for Bassingbourn. The Church and local schools are interested in the project and the Village College is looking at providing a currently under-utilised site.

Bassingbourn Transition Village will also be highlighting the importance of reducing energy use and using energy efficiently by running workshops and providing information. The project will also get to grips with nitty gritty issues such as inspiring more sustainable local travel networks (for example we have started working with the District Council to push forward the plans for the Bassingbourn to Royston cycle path).

## **What can I do?**

Please register your interest/support for the new Bassingbourn Transition Village initiative by contacting Simon Saggars (01763) 243960 or email [simon.saggars@googlemail.com](mailto:simon.saggars@googlemail.com)

# Traffic and Travel

## ***So what has the Traffic and Travel working party been looking at?***

We have been seeking to establish a list of priorities for action that would help improve the traffic flows and make travel to and from the village easier.

The key areas were traffic in the High Street, speeding, safety of pedestrians and facilities for cycling. For some, the problem with parking in the High Street is that it delays their journey; whilst for others there is not enough parking close to the shops.

Also, cars park on the North side of the High Street and congestion occurs at school/college start and finish times.

## ***How can villagers help the situation?***

We felt that consideration should be given to the promotion of a 'courteous driving culture', including promoting events and distributing a leaflet suggesting ways in which people could use their cars more considerately.

## ***What about implementing further restrictions - or even providing alternative parking facilities?***

We felt further waiting restrictions were inappropriate as they may increase traffic speed and have a detrimental impact on the retail businesses in the village.

There is little opportunity to provide further on-street parking in the High Street and the provision of off-street parking would require a substantial financial commitment for land purchase.

## ***What about speeding?***

There is a widespread perception that traffic speed is a problem in the High Street and The Causeway. Police speed checks show that the majority of drivers obey the speed limits but officers performing these checks have a very visible presence and most drivers will slow down. Flashing speed limit signs are thought to help in reducing speed.

Lower speed limits are considered helpful in reducing speed and the consequent danger to cyclists and pedestrians. We agreed that a coherent speed control plan for the whole village should be developed bearing in mind that in some parts, driving at the legal speed limit may be too fast.

## ***Would traffic calming schemes help?***

We feel that the Parish Council should work with the developer of the affordable housing development on the south side of The Causeway to provide traffic calming for the approach to Bassingbourn from the east. We would like to see gates on each side of the road to give the appearance of road narrowing, together with a change in road surface colour.

Alternatively a small roundabout could be provided; speed humps are not considered to be appropriate for the village.

## ***What about the pedestrians' perspective?***

Pedestrians cross the High Street in many places and provision of a single controlled crossing point would not meet all their needs. It could meet a need for older people crossing from the Knutsford Road / Spring Lane area but this would have to be weighed against the loss of parking spaces and the nuisance of signs, lights and audible tones

There is not sufficient width in the High Street for central pedestrian refuges, but some lower level marked and signed crossing point might prove useful.

We strongly support the continuation of the school crossing patrol at The Cross, and the development of 'walking buses' encouraging children to walk safely to school.

## ***And cyclists?***

Concern has been expressed about safety of cyclists, particularly children, in the High Street. The 'Safer Routes to School' project being worked on by the Village College and Primary School should be supported as a priority, including a cycle route through Elm Tree Drive, Pepper Close and across the recreation ground and Village College. A 'walking bus' already uses this route. A route from the Barracks to the school and college should also be considered.

A cycle route to Royston from Bassingbourn should be considered, using The Stret and the west side of A1198 where a new section of path needs to be constructed and the existing path widened. For cyclist from Kneesworth, an additional section needs to be constructed on the west side of A1198 between Tudor Court and The Stret.

## ***What about alternative forms of transport?***

Integrated bus services are necessary, connecting in Royston with other bus and train services.

Wider use could be made of the College mini-bus for community use - for example it could be used for additional school transport or for additional services to the station.

The Heron transport service for those unable to drive, enabling them to attend medical appointments, should have a higher profile in the area. Opportunities do exist for car sharing but these could be promoted further on the village website.

## ***What's the next step?***

We recommend that the Parish Council takes professional advice to consider the details of our Action Plan.



