

WOOLASTON PARISH PLAN 2004 – 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The Plan Process

In late 2002 a widely drawn working group of parishioners started the process of developing a Parish Plan. This project initially involved requesting information from every household in the parish and analysing the resultant deluge of questionnaires to produce the most complete “snapshot” of Woolaston since the inaugural Parish Appraisal conducted in 1989. As well as household questionnaires, the appraisal was concerned to ensure the voice of youth was clearly heard and a separate 11-17 questionnaire was developed, supported by class work carried out by the pupils at Woolaston School.

The result was much more than an interesting analysis of how Woolaston has changed over the years. The information provided by parishioners was played back to ensure the right messages had been heard and then developed in a series of public consultation meetings to produce a Parish Plan. Sponsored by the Parish Council and largely funded by grant from the Countryside Agency the plan is intended to be a living document charting the way forward for our parish over the next five years.

Why do we need a Parish Plan?

Woolaston is, by common consent a great place to live, work and relax. In the appraisal responses some 64% declared themselves to be very happy, 19% said they were fairly happy, and 7% said life was OK. Less than 1% said they were fairly unhappy and fortunately nobody admitted to being very unhappy.

As might be expected however, there were things people wanted

to change and other things respondents to the appraisal wanted to stay just as they are. The Parish Plan is about change and about retaining the essential character of Woolaston. It represents a collation of issues people are concerned about – chosen by the people with solutions suggested by the people in public consultation.

This planning process was not about the Parish Council or anyone else imposing their ideas from above. It was about giving everyone the chance to have their say and share their ideas, and then coming up with ways to make these things actually happen.



Woolaston at Play – The Annual Carnival

Success Means You

Very little will happen if everyone waits for someone else to do something. A major element of this plan is to come up with practical steps that anyone can take to improve life in the parish. The fact of the matter is that the Parish Council doesn't have the time or the resources to tackle all of the problems of the parish as well as the day-to-day administration and maintenance of basic services.

That's why this plan focuses on the key issues and what you can do to help resolve them, because there are plenty of simple, sensible things that anyone can do that could actually make a surprising difference.

There is a mix of smaller and larger projects included in the plan with something that should appeal to everyone. Some projects are easy to deliver, some more difficult and we have to accept that some will not be possible for one reason or another. Others need liaison with, and co-operation from other private or public sector bodies so are not completely within the control of the community.



Pupils from Woolaston school worked on the plan

Getting involved will make a real difference.

Help is at Hand

The Parish Council has sponsored the Parish Plan and carries responsibility for delivering some of the actions arising from it. Grants are available to help, both from the Council and from the other sponsoring body, the Countryside Agency. Countryside Agency and related Grants fall into a number of categories:

- ❖ **Community Services Grant Scheme** - Tackling the problem of dwindling services at the root, by enabling local people to set up their own enterprises.
- ❖ **Parish Transport Grant Scheme** - Supporting small-budget projects that help people in rural communities to meet their own local transport needs.
- ❖ **Rural Transport Partnership** - Grants for larger-scale transport solutions, awarded to people in different sectors of the community working together to solve specific transport problems.
- ❖ **Local Heritage Initiative** - The Local Heritage Initiative is an England-wide grant scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. The grant is provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) through a partnership, administered by the Countryside Agency with additional funding from the Nationwide Building Society.

Links to County and District Plans

Both the Gloucestershire County Council and the Forest of Dean District Councils are in the process of producing overarching Community Strategies. These are intended to act as a framework for all organisations to use when planning and delivering services and our plan links strongly with these wider aspirations.

The **Gloucestershire County Council** has set the following priority action areas within its draft Community Strategy:

- ❖ Tackle substance misuse and its causes/effects
- ❖ Promote more sustainable lifestyles and sustainable communities
- ❖ Improve transport and access to services
- ❖ Provide homes that people can afford
- ❖ Reduce social exclusion and target disadvantaged communities, groups and families

The **Forest Of Dean District Council** draft Community Plan has the following aims:

- ❖ **Health and Leisure** – improving the health of the community, tackling inequalities in health, developing and promoting enjoyable leisure activities.
- ❖ **Crime, Disorder and Community Safety** – Reducing Crime and the fear of crime, increasing community safety and quality of life.
- ❖ **Education and Lifelong Learning** – Supporting people to learn and develop their skills throughout their lives.
- ❖ **Environment** – Protecting and enhancing what is special about our natural and built environment and building a sustainable landscape, rich in wildlife for the benefit of future generations.
- ❖ **Business Economy and Tourism** – Developing and supporting a prosperous economy and developing and promoting sustainable tourism.
- ❖ **Arts** – Creating an environment where creativity and distinction in the arts are encouraged
- ❖ **Housing** – Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.
- ❖ **Access to Services** – Improving transport in the District and enabling better access to services for all.

At the parish “grass roots” level, our plan is perhaps more modest, practical and, some may say, achievable than the plans of the major Councils. We will however be reminding the County and District Council of their aims and looking to receive their active support in achieving ours.

The Government is particularly keen to see Parish Councils revitalised and the production of Parish Plans is key to that process. Their promise is that parishes that plan effectively can expect to be rewarded by grant funding for projects, greater delegation of powers from Principal Councils and their views being listened to where functions such as planning are operated at District or County level. Again, we look to see that promise delivered.

You Told Us

In your conclusions on life in Woolaston today, you told us that the parish has retained its essential character since the previous appraisal in 1989 and remains in 2003, a good place to live, work and play. The Parish Plan will need to build on the strengths of the community to improve it still further in the years to come without losing the indefinable quality of life today in Woolaston.

If you really want to make something happen to improve the quality of life still further, then there are suggestions on what you can do right here in this plan. Most of all though, it's a reflection of what people in the parish think is important now and how you would like our parish to be in the future.

If you are interested in talking further on any of the plan suggestions, or have any further ideas of your own, please contact the following primary contact point for each of the chapter headings within the plan.

Parish Plan Contact Names

Chapter	Lead Parishioner	Email Address
Community Confidence	Julie Stephenson, Highland Cottage, Netherend	
Local Information	David Storrar, Roselea, Woolaston Common	
Youth	Tina Truman, Pear Tree Cottage, Woolaston Common	
Planning and Housing	Steve Greenslade, 66 Severn View Road, Woolaston	
Highways and Footpaths	Stuart Shaw, 19 Birchwood Road, Woolaston	
Transportation	Martin Cardale, Hill View, Woolaston Common	
Village Environment	David Harris, Rosemont, Woolaston Common	
Cemetery and Churchyard	Liz Cann, Lambrook House, Woolaston Common	

How do we know if we succeed?

This is the community's plan and the community will determine what success looks like. The Parish Plan is intended to be a living document and the Parish Council will regularly monitor progress. Each year, at the Annual Parish Meeting in April, a report will be produced for the community, reviewing and updating the plan.

THIS IS WOOLASTON

What is Woolaston like?

Woolaston is located 4 miles south west of Lydney, 7 miles from the market town of Chepstow with its historic Castle and 4 miles from Tintern in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with its ancient Abbey and river views. Although it has grown substantially over the last 20 to 30 years, Woolaston has retained its rural character. The village centre has a school, a Post Office, a chapel and a public house in the central village, together with two further public houses a few hundred yards from the village boundary. The Church of St. Andrews stands apart from the main village. In addition there is a community hall and a substantial recreation ground.

The village abuts open land, both agricultural and woodland, on much of its boundary. The River Severn encloses the village to the South and the Forest Of Dean and the Wye Valley surround it on the landward sides. The lower slopes of the Severn escarpment on which the village lies provide spectacular open views over the River Severn towards the Cotswolds to the East, and the Mendip Hills distant to the west.

The village enjoys good road communications, being only 8 miles from the M4 and the Severn Crossing, and 12 miles from the north/south interchange with the M5.

How is Woolaston made up?

The 2003 parish appraisal produced demographic statistics based on questionnaire responses. The national 2001 census however provides a fuller analysis of the electoral ward of Hewelsfield and Woolaston. This is the lowest level of national analysis available but is considered to be statistically sound for the parish area. The following statistics come from the ward level data of the national census.

Age – The average age is higher in Woolaston *than either the Forest of Dean or England and Wales:*

Age	% Woolaston	% Forest of Dean	% England & Wales
Under 16	18.0%	19.6%	20.2%
16-19	4.8%	4.9%	4.9%
20-29	6.6%	9.7%	12.6%
30-59	49.2%	42.8%	41.5%
60-74	14.4%	14.8%	13.3%
75 and over	7.0%	8.2%	7.6%
Average Age	41.8 years	40.3 Years	38.6 years

Ethnicity – Inhabitants of both Woolaston and the Forest of Dean are primarily white, significantly above the England and Wales average:

Ethnicity	% Woolaston	% Forest of Dean	% England & Wales
White	99.5%	99.1%	90.9%
Mixed	0.2%	0.4%	1.3%

Asian	0.2%	0.2%	4.6%
Other	0.2%	0.3%	3.2%

Health – Woolaston is healthier than either the Forest of Dean or England and Wales:

Category	% Woolaston	% Forest of Dean	% England & Wales
Good	74.5%	68.0%	68.6%
Fairly Good	19.6%	23.6%	22.2%
Not Good	5.9%	8.4%	9.2%

Economic Activity – People living in Woolaston are, on average, more economically active than either the Forest of Dean or England and Wales:

Category	% Woolaston	% Forest of Dean	% England & Wales
Employed	64.3%	63.1%	60.6%
Unemployed	3.1%	3.0%	3.4%
Economically active students	2.0%	2.2%	2.6%
Retired	15.5%	14.9%	13.6%
Economically inactive students	3.3%	3.2%	4.7%
Looking after home or family	6.0%	6.4%	6.5%
Permanently sick or disabled	3.5%	4.7%	5.5%
Other economically inactive	2.2%	2.5%	3.1%

Housing – House prices are cheaper in the Forest of Dean than nationally but more people live in detached houses. Ward level data is not available:

Category	Forest of Dean		England and Wales	
	Average Price	% occupation	Average Price	% occupation
Detached	£151,104	45.7%	£178,806	22.8%
Semi-detached	£81,753	34.5%	£101,733	31.6%
Terraced	£65,924	13.0%	£89,499	26.0%
Flats	£42,705	5.9%	£120,185	19.2%
All Types	£108,724		£119,436	

Crime – The Forest of Dean is a very low crime area. Ward level data is not available:

Category	Forest of Dean Crimes per 1,000 pop.	England and Wales Crimes per 1,000 pop.
Violence against the	6.8	11.4

person		
Sexual Offences	0.3	0.7
Robbery	0.2	1.8
Burglary from a dwelling	3.1	7.6
Theft of a motor vehicle	2.4	6.4
Theft from a motor vehicle	7.5	11.9

COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE

What you told us

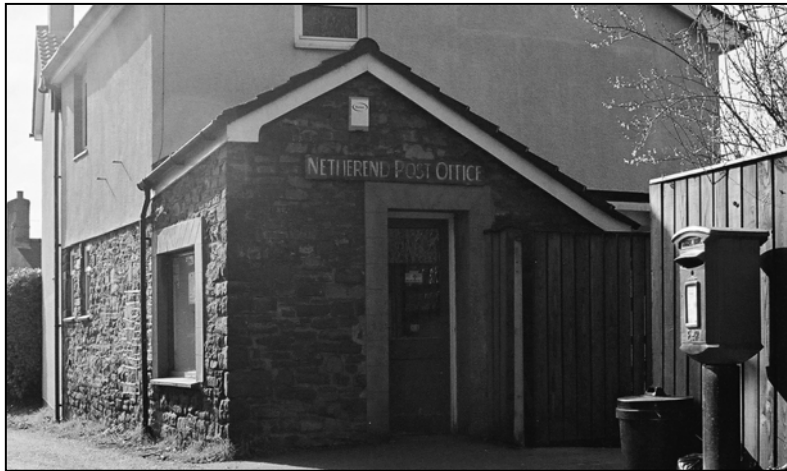
This chapter deals with some of the issues raised in the Village Services, Crime and Disorder, and Sport and Leisure sections of the Parish Appraisal.

The Memorial Hall had been used at some time by over 70% of respondents. Perversely however, half of its users rated the condition and facilities as "poor". The Playing Field was less used but fared better in terms of standard with over half of those responding rating it as good or reasonable. Separate questions asked for interest in four specific types of group activity. Just under half responded, with nearly a quarter expressing interest in evening classes. Almost 12% were interested in some sport or exercise activity, and a significant minority would like various forms of music (8%) or art and drama (7%). The Youth Chapter provides further information on the Memorial Hall and Playing Field.

[The village hall was replaced with a fine new building opened May 2006]

On the face of it the village shop is fairly well supported with over 50% of respondents reported as using it on a weekly basis although it is not known how much of their weekly shopping bill is spent there. Of the remainder, 15% used the shop at least monthly whilst only 5% never used it.

[This shop ceased trading January 2006]



The Post Office – an essential rural service

The Post Office fared somewhat worse with 32% using it weekly but 25% reporting at least monthly use. 8% of respondents never visited the Post Office. The Post Office was however well supported by villagers as a means of obtaining their pension or benefits. Some 57% of respondents used the village Post Office for this with only 10% going to Lydney, 9% using Chepstow and 7% going

elsewhere.

Approximately 35% of youths responding to the 11-16 survey indicated that they might be interested in a Woolaston Youth Council.

Somewhat disturbingly, 20% of respondents reported having experienced theft personally on at least one occasion, whilst a similar percentage reported having experienced vandalism. Turning those figures around more positively, the returns showed that over half of those responding had no personal experience of either theft or vandalism. Nearly 30% reported experience of anti-social behaviour with nearly 5% of respondents having experienced it on a regular basis.

You Concluded

Sport and leisure opportunities for all should be an essential ingredient in the Parish Plan. Local provision is especially important as it increases accessibility and contributes to a cohesive community. Whilst the young especially need good quality facilities, opportunities should be extended to all members the community. The Parish Plan needs to consider how best to support the Community Centre project in order to turn this vision into reality.

The Parish Plan needs to consider seriously how to protect the essential village facilities that contribute to the character of the parish as well as serving the needs of many. The fact that most parishioners have cars and can travel elsewhere is of no consolation to those who have not and cannot. A key element towards improving Community Confidence is full consideration of the youth of the Parish and their ownership of village amenities and facilities.

Whilst crime is absolute in that you are either a victim of it or you are not, the perception of crime is present in all of us to a greater or lesser extent. Although this is statistically a low crime area, that is no help if you are one of the statistics. The Parish Plan needs to consider whether action can be taken to further reduce crime and the perception of crime in order that community confidence is improved.

Commentary

Opportunities for sport and leisure are becoming increasingly important as work/life patterns change and people enjoy more active and longer retirement. For many years community sport and leisure has revolved around the Memorial Hall and the Playing Field. Whilst the Hall has served the community well, it has fallen into decay, is past cost effective renovation and is consequently in urgent need of replacement with a modern facility. Usage responses show how important the Hall is to the community and the Action Plan needs to ensure full support is provided to this vital parish initiative.

Practical	Self	Help	Example:
			Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are a way for local people to get together to help prevent crime and make their neighbourhood a safer place. There is room for everyone in a scheme – even if you can only spare a few hours a month.
			Neighbourhood Watch Schemes usually start by people sharing crime prevention advice, keeping an eye on each other's properties, and learning to communicate effectively with the police. Many then turn their attention to specific local problems such as vandalism, or visiting the vulnerable.
			To join Neighbourhood Watch, all it takes is a phone call to the Gloucestershire

The ability for people to feel safe and secure within their community is an essential human need. Whilst rural communities such as ours tend not to have the same level of crime, disorder and insecurity as more urban areas, the perception, if not the reality of crime is a real issue that can undermine the confidence of the community. Living in a statistically low crime area is no real comfort if you are one of the statistics. Whilst over half of those responding to the 2003 Appraisal told us that they had not experienced any form of crime, vandalism or anti-social

behaviour that still leaves considerable room for improvement.

Community confidence is about more than just crime however. It is about the totality of the environment in which we live, from the confidence that we will be looked after should we fall ill, to the confidence that support mechanisms will be available should misfortune befall us; from confidence that development will be more about the needs of the community than about profit or the logistics of building design to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Above all, it is about the community responding to help itself.

Fortunately, by far the majority of respondents to the survey were happy living in Woolaston, thereby directly expressing confidence in the community at large. That is no cause for complacency however and there are a number of things that were suggested to us that, if actioned, would increase community confidence still further.

This is a major area where self help is the only way to make a difference. The Parish Council simply doesn't have the resources to run Neighbourhood Watch schemes or any of the other things people suggested would be useful. Whilst the Parish Council will offer co-ordination and support to the extent to which things actually happen depends on the enthusiasm and practical offers of help coming from groups or individuals.



Rural Services under threat – use them or lose them must be the clear

Our Goals

- ✓ To help people feel safe in their homes and in the community
- ✓ To encourage the use and enjoyment of village amenities
- ✓ To engage positively with the community and its concerns
- ✓ To support local provision of sport and leisure opportunities for all

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Support Community Centre Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Council representation on project Group • Finance "Seedcorn" Funding • Community Design Overview (e.g. Security Lighting, CCTV etc.) 	Parish Council nominee to Hall Committee	By reference to project plan: ongoing 2004 - 2008

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Support the development of sport and leisure opportunities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link strongly with the Community Centre project as a focal point • Develop use of the playing field 	Parish Council nominee to Hall Committee	By reference to project plan: ongoing 2004 - 2008
Improve Community Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain "Quality Council" status with consequent better access to external funding opportunities and partnership working with principal Councils 	Parish Council	2005 - 2006
Engage with younger people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Community Centre project to gain ownership • Ensure young people are fully consulted in facilities • Consider the introduction of a Youth Council 	Parish Council nominee to Hall Committee and identified Volunteer Effort	By reference to project plan: ongoing 2004 - 2008
Support Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a small grants scheme for organisations with a benefit to some or all parishioners 	Parish Council	2004 - 2009
Encourage use of village facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity in "Woolaston News" • Publicity on Parish Web Site 	Parish Editorial Panel (see local information chapter)	2004 - 2009
Extension of Neighbourhood Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek volunteer co-ordinators 	Parish Council in liaison with Police Authority	2004 - 2009
Ensure Street Lighting is operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend terms of reference for Parish Property Officers to include lighting fault reporting 	Parish Council in consultation with County Council	2004 - 2009

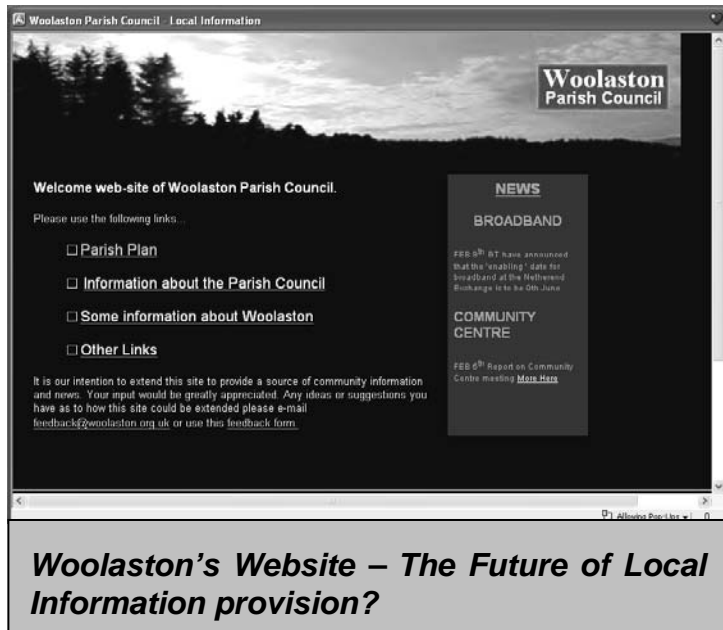
LOCAL INFORMATION

What you told us

Respondents to the 2003 survey found three sources of information equally useful: the “Woolaston News”, local press and “word of mouth”. Notices in the shop and post office also reached a wide audience, unlike the parish notice board, which was almost universally ignored.

The fact that almost half of the 11 to 17 age group use the internet on at least a weekly basis shows that many people have a computer but make little use of it to get local information. Comments made by individuals suggested that the introduction of Broadband might “kick start” wider use of the internet.

Within the youth survey, 20% of respondents felt involved and informed about local issues, overshadowed by the 50% who did not. Only 29% were bothered about this however!



You Concluded

The village newsletter, the “Woolaston News”, is well received but the Parish Plan needs to consider:

- ❖ How to develop and guarantee the future of this publication as it relies wholly on voluntary effort for its production.
- ❖ If or how, to promote the use of electronic communication as a mechanism for providing locally based information.
- ❖ Why the Parish Notice Board is not well used and whether this can be brought into useful service.

Commentary

Local information is the lifeblood of a vibrant community and enables everyone to feel part of it. Ensuring that all parishioners know what is going on and why is both difficult and essential. The difficulty is accentuated in a parish such as ours where the population is widely dispersed and where many people work elsewhere and are not able to pick issues up in the historical village networks of shops, pubs and meeting places. The general lessening of community worship at the Church and Chapel also reduces opportunities for information provision and gathering.

Given both the challenge and the essential need for information, the community needs to mount a positive response. The “Woolaston News” has become embedded within the community in recent years as a useful source of information and reference material and could be further developed given some additional funding and given that the essential band of volunteers continue or are able to be replaced over time. The internet is not greatly used at present but is a developing feature, especially with the young. The parish needs to grasp the opportunities this presents as a simple and cost effective mechanism for the dissemination of information.

Notice Boards are somewhat old fashioned by comparison but can be of use provided they are correctly positioned and well maintained with useful, colourful and interesting information. However, in a busy, car dominated and widely dispersed rural environment, providing sufficient notice board facilities for all would be likely to result in an unacceptably unwieldy rash of boards throughout the village.

The planned Community Centre is anticipated to be the future hub for village activities and its provision will greatly assist in the provision of local information.

Information is also a key ingredient to the enhancement of Community Confidence and there are significant links between these Chapters of the Parish Plan.

Our Goals

- ✓ To provide wide ranging opportunities for people to be aware of village news and events
- ✓ To promote involvement in the provision of local information
- ✓ Specifically, to maintain and improve on the highly successful “Woolaston News” as the main focus for parish information
- ✓ Specifically, to increase opportunities to use electronic communication for obtaining local information

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Develop, co-ordinate and maintain information on a wide base throughout the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a parish editorial panel working to defined terms of reference and covering information policy, the “Woolaston” News and the Parish Web Site 	Editorial Panel with Parish Council and Memorial Hall representation	2004

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Review need for and content on Parish Notice Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether more notice boards are needed • Consider whether existing notice board is in the right place • Consider wider use of Memorial Hall Notice Board and Church and Chapel Boards • Consider content and display 	Editorial Panel	2004
Make best use of existing retail information outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether outlets would be willing or able to disseminate information on a more formal basis than at present 	Editorial Panel	2004
Develop “Woolaston News”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure content includes as much information as possible on forthcoming events • Include a section on Parish Council issues • Lever in external funding to enable development 	Editorial Panel	2004 - 2009
Develop Parish Web Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and develop design • Determine content • Consider use of commercial Internet provider to ensure ease of use • Provide hyperlinks to related sites • Put arrangements in place to maintain site currency 	Editorial Panel with named information contacts for maintenance of information	2004 - 2005
Encourage internet use by provision of Broadband Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Broadband Access within the Parish 	Parish Council in liaison with British	2004

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
		Telecom	

YOUTH

What you told us

The 2003 Appraisal included a separate youth survey for the 11-17 year olds. In addition Woolaston Primary School did some work in support of the survey. Both pieces of work clearly identified that the youth element of the parish had impressively clear views on what they liked most and what they liked less about living in Woolaston.

Respondents told us that spare time on a daily or weekly basis is far more often taken up with activities within the home (TV/stereo, computer games and other hobbies) than outdoor activities (bikes, skates, riding, team and individual sports). Nearly half of those responding took part in after-school activities on a daily or weekly basis. Many used the Memorial Hall on a regular basis but use of the playing fields appeared to be poor.

Echoing opinions expressed in the Household Survey, most felt that the condition of the Memorial Hall was either poor or very bad. Similarly, most felt the same about the playground and the playing field (see also the Community Confidence Chapter for further information on the Memorial Hall and Playing Field).

Concerning future educational or work expectations, a good response was received from across the age range. 36% would like to go to college or university with 18% wanting a gap year or to travel beforehand. Only 4% would like to stay and find a job locally with 9% expecting to work elsewhere. 15% indicated that they were still unsure of what they wanted to do.

Noting the lack of leisure opportunities in the parish, 60% traveled to Lydney, 60% to Chepstow and 40% to Monmouth for recreation. The majority of respondents (nearly 89%) relied on parents on a daily or weekly basis for transport compared to the 22% who used public transport on a daily or weekly basis. The main reason given for the lack of public transport use was the irregularity of public transport whilst many also identified destinations, cost and the lack of information as prohibitive. Public transport was not however a significant feature in the "Worst things about Woolaston" with only 17% identifying it as a specific issue.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, school was the biggest source of concern or worry to youngsters. In descending order, this was followed by fast traffic, rubbish or litter on the streets and having nothing to do.

Approximately 35% of youths responding to the 11-16 survey indicated that they might be interested in a Woolaston Youth Council. This possibility is considered in the Community Confidence chapter of the Parish Plan.

The work undertaken at Woolaston Primary School identified the playing field as the most appreciated feature in the parish, with peace and tranquility coming a surprising second. A significant minority appreciated having a sweet shop close to school whilst the school itself gained nearly 10% of votes cast. In terms of the worst things about Woolaston, traffic was the worst feature with litter coming second. Other matters featured included the "smell of muck" and bullying.

You Concluded

The young are our future and their views have to be given due weight. The responses showed an impressive maturity in terms of the opinions of respondents and with the strength of their suggestions for improvement. Many of their views corresponded with or complemented responses from the main questionnaire. The Parish Plan needs to link strongly with the needs and aspirations of young people, and to develop policies that provide them with life opportunities.

Commentary

It is often the case that when providing services or facilities for adults we listen to what they have to say but the same cannot always be said when considering youth provision. The appraisal process showed that young people do not need adults to think for them but do need community support in helping them to give effect to their needs, desires and aspirations. This support can come in part from formal channels such as community youth workers but voluntary effort is absolutely essential.

The appraisal underscores the importance of looking upon young people as a resource, as not as a problem that needs to be solved. Reacting to problems is at best a short-term solution because it will be seen as “fire fighting”. It is considered much better to view young people as a resource focusing on longer term solutions, identifying needs and developing solutions such that young people are enabled to realise their full potential.

The Community Centre project is a case in point and has the potential to be part of the key to addressing the lack of leisure and recreational opportunities within the parish. The Centre should aim to be a primary driver in improving community involvement through promotion of clubs, societies and events. Success must however be more than delivering facilities for youth and must include the views of youngsters in designing and delivering the project. This is the only way that the youth of the village will take ownership of their facility and feel committed to its ongoing success.

Examples of the facilities requested by the young:

- ❖ *Skate Park*
- ❖ *Tennis Courts*
- ❖ *Netball / Basketball*
- ❖ *Indoor Bowls*
- ❖ *Amateur Dramatics*
- ❖ *Dance Classes*
- ❖ *Climbing Wall*
- ❖ *Arts Club*
- ❖ *Meeting Place / Coffee Shop*
- ❖ *Artificial surface*
- ❖ *Use of school swimming pool*



There is an essential need for a new Community Centre to replace the Memorial Hall

At the same time, any largely rural setting can sometimes be a bit dull for some young people and Woolaston is no exception. That is not to say there are no activities available, but just that there are not the facilities for youth that somewhere bigger would have. It has therefore to be accepted that, especially for older young people, the facilities of surrounding towns and the opportunity to gather there with friends from secondary school will often prove more attractive than the village and we need to facilitate their access to Lydney and Chepstow in particular.

Gloucestershire County Council operates a youth service and we need to encourage it to operate closely in delivery of elements of the Parish Plan. Their service charter is to:

- ❖ **Help young people have fun, feel secure and valued, learn to take control of their lives and to resist the damaging influences around them**
- ❖ **Promote equality of opportunity for all young people**
- ❖ **Work mainly with young people between the ages of 14-21.**
- ❖ **Work in partnership with voluntary organisations to ensure that young people in the County have the widest possible choice of quality youth work**
- ❖ **Develop informal education programmes which challenge young people to widen their horizons and develop themselves personally and socially.**

In supporting youth activities here is real scope for volunteer effort to make a real difference. All it takes is for a few people to spare some time to help. And it won't just benefit the young people, but the whole parish. No amount of activities will keep all young people from hanging around the streets, but it is not fair to blame a whole group for the actions of a minority. Even if people only make a few things happen, it sends a clear signal to young people in the parish that they are valued. But it will need people to get involved to make a success of the parish action plan.

Our Goals

- ✓ To provide increased youth opportunities within the village and that those opportunities reflect the needs and desires of village youth
- ✓ To work closely with the County Youth service
- ✓ To encourage and support voluntary effort
- ✓ To ensure youth is fully involved in and takes ownership of the Community Centre project.
- ✓ To seek transport provision for those wishing to travel to other recreational and leisure facilities

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
<p>Engage with the current Hall Committee to promote best possible community usage of these facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate financial support for the Community Centre Project in short to medium term. • Contributing to the formation of a Village Entertainment's committee for Community Centre and Facilities in medium to long term • Gaining youth ownership via focus groups and representation on village entertainments committee 	<p>Parish Council in co-operation with Hall Committee. Community Centre project group and youth focus groups</p>	<p>2004-2008</p>
<p>Support voluntary effort in the provision of youth activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support involvement by small grants scheme (see community involvement chapter) • Encourage voluntary effort by information and publicity (see local information) 	<p>Parish Council</p>	<p>2004 - 2009</p>
<p>Make the best use of existing facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider opportunities to use school facilities of an evening and out of term time 	<p>Entertainments Committee in liaison with school governors</p>	<p>2005</p>
<p>Investigate increased activity of the County Youth Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainments Committee to liaise with County Council 	<p>Entertainments Committee</p>	<p>2008 - 2009</p>
<p>Investigate provision of "Liberty Bus" by Transport Grant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and options appraisal 	<p>Community Transport Group (see Transport Chapter)</p>	<p>2005 - 2006</p>

PLANNING AND HOUSING

What you told us

Some 51% of respondents to the 2003 appraisal did not think more housing was needed whilst 34% thought that it was. 15% expressed no opinion. Amongst those expressing a view, the greatest need was identified as housing to suit first time buyers followed by family housing. Smaller numbers identified the need for sheltered accommodation or rented accommodation but very few respondents felt any more executive type houses were required.

Of the 56 written comments received, 18 wanted some low cost housing for young villagers and smaller properties suitable for the elderly. Another 18 wanted no further development. 7 asked for a little well controlled and carefully designed housing, whilst the same number was opposed to any development. Planning decisions came in for criticism from 5 respondents. There were many written comments against more housing, largely on the grounds of loss of village identity, the rural nature of the village and the stretching of amenities.

Respondents were generally wary of commercial and industrial development except where linked to rurality and local employment opportunities. In these cases, any development needs to be sensitive to the character of the parish.

You Concluded

Housing is an important and sensitive area. The Parish Plan will need to consider carefully the views of respondents in producing its policy for housing in Woolaston. There will need to be full consultation with the District and County Councils who hold responsibility for the District Local Plan and the Structure Plan respectively. The Parish Council will need to take heed of the Parish Plan policies when responding to planning applications.

In terms of linked employment opportunities, the village needs to remain vibrant whilst maintaining its rural character and positive community "feel".

Commentary

The District Council carries primary planning responsibility for the Parish and the District Local Plan has the following to say about the Parish in general and its planning housing policy in particular (*source- Forest of Dean District Local Plan Review; Revised Deposit Version.*):

"Woolaston (including Netherend)

Introduction

51.1 *The village of Woolaston is located adjacent to the A.48, about 5 kilometres south west of Lydney. The majority of the village dwellings are located to the north west of the A.48 and is composed of a number of post war housing estates superimposed upon a previously dispersed settlement. Originally Woolaston comprised a loose scatter of dwellings on the lower slopes of the Severn Escarpment.*

The village has experienced a period of rapid growth well beyond its original boundaries, and now has a character quite different to that of 20-30 years ago. The village has the appearance of a series of housing estates, mostly formed around cul-de-sacs leading off the access roads through Woolaston. The process of change has been incremental, so that generally each new housing development has pushed further into the open countryside away from the A.48, following the alignment of the access roads. Subsequently there has been a process of infilling of spaces left within the village framework. The village has therefore grown substantially as new boundaries were successively defined for the village, and then infilled. In the last ten years there has been some slowing of the previous rapid growth rate, as new housing generally has taken the form of small groups and infilling rather than large estates. Today it contains almost 300 dwellings, together with related services.

- 51.2 *The village has a school, two shops, a Post Office, a chapel, a public house and a number of small employers including a dairy and two garages all located within the defined settlement boundary of the settlement. In addition there are two assembly halls and a substantial recreation ground.*
- 51.3 *In 1941 there were only approximately 35 dwellings in Woolaston. The Parish population has expanded in line with the level of new housing construction. The population of Woolaston village is estimated to be 745 with a housing stock of 287 in 1999. There were no outstanding commitments on January 1st 2004.*
- 51.4 *The village abuts open land, both agricultural and woodland, on much of its boundary. The lower slopes of the Severn Escarpment on which the village lies are very open to views from the upper escarpment and from the A.48 in places. In the north west quadrant of the village the built-up area abuts a series of small fields, open areas, and dispersed housing which provide a much more open settlement form. It is important to safeguard this more open area from what could be the cumulative effect of infill development which could result in the loss of this open character.*

Development Strategy

- 51.5 *Within the Defined Settlement Boundary of Woolaston there are likely to be only limited opportunities for further residential development. The strategy of the Plan is to safeguard the surrounding open countryside from development and resist piecemeal incursions beyond the built up area boundary. The strategy will allow development in the form of infilling and small groups on appropriate sites within the defined settlement boundary which follows the built-up area boundary closely. A small site capable of redevelopment for housing is allocated by the Plan.*
- 51.6 *The few remaining open areas in the village will be protected from development. Several important open areas have been identified on the Inset Map, these being virtually the only remaining undeveloped areas within the village. Of equal importance, but generally outside the village itself, is the extensive recreation ground and related open area.*

Housing

Housing Allocation - Netherend Farm

(R)F.Woolaston 1

Approximately 1 hectare of land at Netherend Farm will be allocated for the provision of up to 30 new dwellings. The development will be required to provide:

- 1. an acceptable means of vehicular access**
- 2. an appropriate number of affordable housing units**
- 3. appropriate landscaping to the site boundaries and within the site**
- 4. an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the future**

51.7 *The above site is located to the south of the center of the village and is contained within previously developed land occupied by an existing dairy farm, an area of former orchard and a garden. The site is currently bordered by residential properties to the north and east which will limit views of the development from the village but it is visible to the south west and west from the adjacent open countryside. The land has been identified as an area suitable for the development of up to 30 dwellings. The Plan will support proposals which bring forward a development which secures a mix of dwelling sizes in accord with the needs of the locality. The Forest of Dean District Council will seek to negotiate an appropriate number of affordable housing units to meet local need over the Plan period. Development will need to ensure the establishment of a firm landscaped boundary to the adjoining open countryside. A development brief has been prepared for the site and is available as supplementary planning guidance."*

Our Goals

- ✓ To protect the village development envelope
- ✓ To protect important open areas within the village
- ✓ To maintain the essential character of the village
- ✓ To resist incremental and new development in open countryside
- ✓ To support the District Council policy of 40% affordable housing within any new development
- ✓ To garner developer contributions for youth and adult recreation towards the Community Centre project
- ✓ To monitor development compliance
- ✓ To support linked employment opportunities where these are consistent with development policies

Our Housing Policy Statement

The Parish Council agrees the District Local Plan's general description of housing potential within the village, especially the requirement for any development to be tightly constrained within the development envelope which, by inference, and given the limited capacity for infill, will lead to only very small scale development being considered. Any infilling will be closely scrutinized by the Parish Council to ensure it is sympathetic to its immediate surrounds and with the general character of the village. The remaining open areas within the village will be closely protected and scale of the built area in proportion to the site will be an especial consideration.

The Parish Appraisal evidenced little enthusiasm for "executive" style housing and the evidenced need for smaller affordable housing for rent or purchase will be more than met by the sites now allocated. The Policy of the Parish Council is, in consequence, one of not supporting further extension of the village envelope during the currency of the Parish Plan.

The rural nature of the parish results in a number of planning applications being made for dwellings in open countryside. The Parish Council is anxious to support local agriculture and needs also to maintain the rurality of this attractive area. There will therefore be a presumption against new development outside the village



The Parish Council planning policy will seek to protect the remaining open spaces within the village envelope

envelope unless justified to support the agricultural infrastructure of the area. In such cases there will be an expectation of an "agricultural tie" condition accompanying any planning permission. The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings will be closely evaluated against planning and impact criteria.

In pursuit of its aim of protecting the character of the Parish, the Council continues to be concerned with incremental development of, often small, properties in open countryside. A number of these properties have been

enlarged out of all recognition by a series of planning applications that would have been unlikely to be permitted as a single application. When commenting on planning applications, the Parish Council will be mindful of the planning history for the site in question and will consider any cumulative impact over time. It urges the District Council to similarly view the totality of the planning history for the site.

The Parish Appraisal identified concerns that planning conditions were not being complied with on occasion. The Parish Council will always investigate and report its conclusions to the District Council planning enforcement officer on matters referred to it by parishioners. In addition, the Parish Council will charge a number of Parish Councillors with the responsibility for monitoring compliance with planning conditions.

Any parish needs local employment opportunities to remain vibrant and with the pressures on agriculture in recent years other employment possibilities need to be given serious consideration. In support of its housing policy, the Parish Council will seek to support local employment opportunities where these are consistent with its overall planning policies.

The Parish Council supports the small scale development of the Memorial Hall site (not referenced in the Local Plan but for which planning permission exists) which is linked to the provision of a much needed Community Centre and will provide a mix of shared ownership and housing for rent. This is consistent with the Parish Council's policy of supporting the retention and, where possible, development of village amenities.

The Council continues to oppose the release of the Netherend Farm site (increased in scale by the Planning Inspectorate to 30 dwellings) and the consequential



Housing – Birchwood Road

amendment to the village envelope. This policy of opposition is given greater prominence by the recent approval for the Memorial Hall site, all of which will be allocated for social or affordable housing geared towards meeting local need. This development is in sympathy with the findings of the appraisal in

favour of small scale, affordable housing and meets the entire identified local need. The proposed Netherend Farm development is not in accord with the wishes of the village as identified through public consultation within the adopted Parish Plan,

However, this development is contained within the substantive District Local Plan however and in the event a planning application results, the Parish Council will expect the following issues to be addressed within the planning approval process:

- ❖ Strict adherence to the District Council expectation of 40% affordable units.
- ❖ Consideration of the highway access issues to the site and the current parking difficulties at the School and in Severn View Road (dependent on selected site access)
- ❖ Negotiation of Section 106 developers contributions directed towards Youth and Adult Recreational provision and specifically at the Community Centre project

- ❖ Consideration of the storm and foul sewerage infrastructure problems previously experienced within the village

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Ensure compliance with Housing Policy Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive scrutiny of all planning applications • Creation of Parish Planning sub-committee 	Parish Council	2004 - 2009
Consult with the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish planning applications and decisions on the web site • Call special meetings for strategic planning applications as necessary 	Parish Clerk	With effect from 2004
Ensure Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via Parish Planning sub-committee 	Parish Council	2004 - 2009
Encourage linked employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with District Economic Development Strategy 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council	2004 - 2009
Press for affordable / social housing for local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with Forest of Dean Housing association • Pressurising District Planning authority to deliver their policy expectations • Supporting the Memorial Hall site for affordable and social housing 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council and Forest of Dean Housing	2004 - 2009
Use the planning process to deliver improved village amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press for substantial Section 106 gains from all commercial developments 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council	2004 - 2009

HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

What you told us

Car ownership appears vital to most families wishing to reach work or leisure activities outside the village. Some 253 households now keep 448 cars, lorries or vans at home. Cars of course predominate with 425 cars, an average of 0.8 cars per person in the parish. The sheer numbers mean that many vehicles park on the street.

The total number of vehicles has increased since the 1989 survey with a greater number of two or more car families appearing in the statistics. Whereas in 1989 42% of households had two or more vehicles at their disposal, this has increased to over 60% in 2003.



The “School Run” – a recurring issue

Most people used the survey as an opportunity to declare the areas they considered to be hazardous. Analysis of the responses identified concern with heavy vehicles using the rural lane network and with the A48, especially at the village entrance. Parking is seen as a major irritant and hazard with further breakdown of the written responses revealing where these parking problems are perceived to be.

- ❖ “School” was the word most often found and the link with parking when taking or fetching children repeats the complaints made 13 years ago. The situation in 2003 was even worse. There were some positive suggestions about the school parking problem though these all have a downside which might destroy some amenity without a complete solution being achieved.
- ❖ The lower part of Severn View Road near the shop is shown to be another black spot for obstruction as was Netherend Crescent but other places within the village also featured to a lesser extent.

Old and young alike frequently mentioned speeding. This complaint was assumed to mean excessive speed for the prevailing conditions as there is now a legal restriction of 30mph covering most of the village centre.

Roads, pavements and verges were obvious areas of concern to many with a majority giving them either a “poor” or “reasonable” rating. Over 40% of respondents rated both roads and pavements as “poor”.

You Concluded

The car rules and car usage continues to escalate. We all know the damage it causes to health and the environment but in a rural community can we do without it? The Parish Plan will need to consider how we live with the car, which is harmful but essential, and whether policies can be developed to mitigate its adverse impact on the community.

Significant liaison will be required with the major local councils and public service bodies to address the infrastructure concerns of respondents. The reduced satisfaction level of respondents between 1989 and 2003 for roads and pavements must be given full weight.

Commentary

Society enjoys a love hate relationship with the automobile. When vehicular transport was in its infancy at the start of the last Century, public opinion was sharply divided between those who viewed the car as extremely dangerous and those who considered it an essential development. In truth it is both. We have to acknowledge its value, especially in rural areas but ensure that the damage and irritation and inconvenience caused by the internal combustion engine is controlled and managed.

Many parts of the village were not built to cater for the numbers of cars around today. The same applies to the village road network, which in many areas consists of single track lanes with verges and culverts becoming damaged or eroded by vehicles they were never designed to accommodate.

The Parish Council view is that many parking irritations reported are insoluble and can, in some cases contribute to a safer environment by slowing traffic. Other issues fall into the "inconsiderate" category and some are downright dangerous. The Council policy is one of taking direct or indirect action where random parking is considered to present a hazard but not to seek blanket bans or a proliferation of yellow lines throughout the village. In this context, direct action means an approach to the "culprit" by a Parish Councillor whereas examples of indirect action would include report either to County Highways or to the police.



The A48 Village Junction – a major hazard

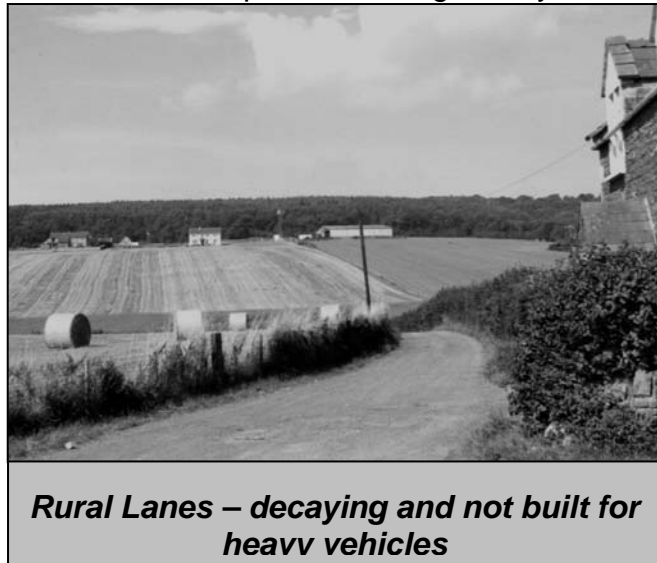
The A48 village entrance is considered to present a real danger and the Council will continue to press for safety works to be carried out. Acknowledging that a mini-roundabout or traffic lights are unlikely, the next preferred solution is for a physical central refuge to be provided so that A48 traffic is unable to overtake close to the junction and providing a central refuge for those

turning right out of the village.

Whilst the village junction is considered to be the single most significant risk, the whole length of the A48 through the parish contains a number of hazardous areas. The proposed de-trunking will return responsibility for the road to the County Council and the Parish Council will need to keep the road under continuous review, working with the relevant agencies to minimise risk where possible. In the wider context, pressure needs to be maintained towards discouraging commercial vehicles from using the A48 as a means of avoiding the tolls at the Severn Bridge, although statistics suggest that there is not a significant volume of “through traffic” using the road.

A path leading from the Post Office towards the shop is a long standing aim designed to improve highway safety and one that has been previously promised by the County Council. The Parish Council will continue to pursue this vigorously.

The need to provide an adequately maintained road and pavement network is acknowledged and year on year budget cuts at County Council level as funds are transferred towards their priorities of Social Services and Education have not been helpful to this objective. The Council will seek to work in partnership with the County Council to improve the position.



We are fortunate to live in an area with many rural paths and rights of way. These are well used and much valued by the community and by visitors. The Parish Plan will seek to ensure the rural paths network is properly maintained and accessible to the public whilst being sensitive to the needs of farmers and landowners whose active assistance is critical to success.

Our Goals

- ✓ To ensure inconsiderate parking does not impact adversely on highway or pedestrian safety
- ✓ To press for highway and footway improvements in particular areas of danger
- ✓ To adequately maintain the highway and footway network
- ✓ To ensure the network of rural paths and rights of way is properly maintained and fully accessible
- ✓ To reduce the adverse impact of vehicles on the village environment
- ✓ To promote pedestrian safety

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Improve safety at A48 junctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of physical refuge for vehicles turning right out of Netherend • Consideration of reduced speed limit at junctions • Traffic Management solutions 	Parish Council in liaison with A48 Group, County Council and police.	2004-2008
Work to improve safety along the length of the A48 within the Parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor arrangements for de-trunking • Consider and recommend on safety improvements • Press for action to discourage use of the A48 to avoid the Severn Bridge tolls 	Parish Council in liaison with A48 Group, County Council and police.	2004-2008
Provide Footpath from Post Office towards shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring adequate progress is made with previous County Council pledges 	Parish Council in liaison with County Council	2004-2006
Monitor village parking with action where inconsiderate or hazardous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity • Education • Creation of passing refuges • Reference of hazardous situations to police 	Parish Council in liaison with County Road Safety Unit and Police.	2004 - 2009
School Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Walking Bus" to school • Car Sharing Scheme • Extend "No Parking" area 	Parish Council in liaison with School Governors	2004 - 2005
Reduce adverse impact of traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider traffic calming where justified • Consider "Village Gateway" scheme • Consider means of banning large commercial vehicles 	Parish Council in liaison with County Council	2006 - 2008

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
	from village roads		
Adequately maintain road and footway network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend terms of reference for Parish Property Officers to include road and footway imperfection reporting • Continuous referral to County Highways • Partnership working under "Quality Councils" scheme for street services 	Parish Council in liaison with County Council	2004 - 2009
Ensure rural rights of way are adequately maintained and accessible to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with current Parish Council footpaths sub-committee • Refer difficult issues to the County Council Footpaths Officer 	Parish Council in liaison with interested access groups, County Footpaths Officer and landowners	2004 - 2009

TRANSPORTATION

What you told us

Car ownership is vital to most families wishing to reach work or leisure activities outside the village. The 2003 Appraisal identified that 253 households now keep 448 cars, lorries or vans at home. Cars predominated with 425 cars, - an average of 0.8 cars per person in the Parish. The total number of vehicles had increased since the 1998 survey with a greater number of two or more car families appearing in the statistics. Whereas in 1998 42% of households had two or more vehicles at their disposal, this had increased to over 60% by 2003.

Only 18 households are reported as being without a vehicle at all. Since most of these people were identified as elderly, it is possible they have support from family or friends, but there is a very small minority who rely exclusively on public transport.

Only 12% of adult respondents work within the parish of Woolaston and together with other statistics, this supports the contention that this is increasingly a dormitory village. The most substantial group (20%) traveled 6-15 miles daily, a distance that takes in the Forest towns of Lydney, Coleford and Cinderford as well as Chepstow and Monmouth. However, residents clearly needed or were prepared to travel increasing distances to their workplace, with 8% travelling between 16 and 40 miles, 4% travelling over 50 miles and 2% who travel over 100 miles.



It is no surprise that 86% use the car to get to work given the distances people travel and the limited availability of public transport (used by only 4%). However 29 people (9%) do walk to work, although this amounts to only half of those who work in Woolaston itself.

Very little use is made of the local bus services or the railway. Indeed, more regular use is made of taxis than either of the more traditional means of public transport. The "Dial a Ride" service is also little used.

With so little use being made of bus or train, it is of little surprise that, when asked to rate the standard of public transport, by far the largest "vote" was in the no opinion category. Those expressing a view found the bus service satisfactory with the "Lydney Link" gaining the highest satisfaction rating.

By far the majority of respondents (62%) expressed no interest in car sharing but 10% said they would if possible. Some 6% of respondents already share.

You Concluded

The car rules and car usage continues to escalate. Everyone knows the damage it causes to health and the environment but in a rural community can we do without it? The Parish Plan was asked to consider how we live with the car, which is harmful but essential, and whether policies can be developed to mitigate its adverse impact on the community. Scarcity of public transport is viewed as a key issue.

Commentary

The lack of efficient and good quality public transport that runs where people want to go when they want to go there inevitably results in high dependency on the motor car. The car is however expensive and contributes significantly to environmental pollution. It creates hazards whether moving or parked and the rural road network is operating beyond capacity. One may conclude that the answer rests with better quality public transport but there is doubt that even this would persuade people away from the car.

The Parish Council's view is that the rural nature of the village combined with the high mobility needs of most of the parishioners is such as to render high car usage inevitable. Whilst therefore increased public transport opportunities are likely to be at the margins they are no less important for that. It also has to be acknowledged however that for the minority without access to a car, public transport is essential. For the young too, public transport is a way of accessing leisure and recreational activities outside of the village.

Closely linked to transportation is the ability of commerce and visitors to locate the Parish and addresses within it. The Parish Council has fought long and hard for Woolaston to be properly recognized on highway signs and for Netherend to be recognized as simply a road within the Parish.

The government has admitted defeat on its targets of reducing vehicle usage and is seeking to address the transport challenge on a broad front. An integrated transport infrastructure is but a distant dream and a return to the heady days of trains stopping at villages like Woolaston is unlikely in the extreme. Increased public or community transport opportunities need to revolve around road transport with strategic and more local rail links. To encourage usage of public transport in a predominantly rural area some form of community engagement and subsidy is needed.

One potential opportunity is for the community to develop a bid for a grant under the Parish Transport Grant scheme, which is designed to help people in rural communities meet their own local transport needs. The scheme is a flexible one, supporting a wide range of small-scale projects to enhance the lives of local people. Up to £10,000 per project is available and there are few hard and fast rules, since each community may have very different needs. However, some ideas might include:

- ❖ **car clubs**
- ❖ **vouchers for taxis or taxi sharing schemes**
- ❖ **social car schemes**
- ❖ **projects to promote walking or cycling for local needs**

- ❖ new ways to provide transport information
- ❖ youth “liberty bus”

Although widely drawn, there are a number of areas not covered by community transport grant, including:

- ❖ Traffic management schemes, such as speed humps, and car parking
- ❖ Projects which do not relate to local transport needs, such as bus shelters
- ❖ Projects which do not cater specifically for rural communities
- ❖ Routine maintenance
- ❖ Work required as a condition of planning permission

This Chapter links closely with the chapter dealing with highways issues.

Our Goals

- ✓ To reduce reliance on car transport
- ✓ To introduce new public transport opportunities
- ✓ To look after the interests of those without access to car transport

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Create a Community Transport Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of interested individuals and providing information on options and possibilities 	Parish Council	2004
Produce a needs analysis and options for community transport grant consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan leading to grant applications 	Community Transport Group	2004 - 2005
Promote the Village Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better highway signing • Correcting “Netherend” postal addresses 	Parish Council in consultation with County Highways, Ordnance Survey and the Post Office	2004 - 2008

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
<p>Consider possible opportunities identified in Parish Appraisal, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased bus service • “Liberty Bus” for youths • Car Sharing scheme • Village pool car • Voluntary driver scheme • “Wiggly Bus” project • Improved facilities and services at Lydney and Chepstow rail and bus stations • Integration of rail and bus transport • Fare subsidies to increase take up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and options appraisal 	<p>Community Transport Group</p>	<p>2004 - 2008</p>
<p>Promote “Dial a Ride” and hospital car schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woolaston News and Web Site 	<p>Editorial Panel (see local information)</p>	<p>2004 - 2009</p>

VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT

What you told us

The 2003 appraisal asked for views on a range of environmental services. The Refuse Collection service was considered to be a good service by over half of the respondents, whilst recycling provision was well regarded by less than 25%. Litter was a cause for concern with 38% of respondents rating it as “poor”. The related area of grass cutting obtained a majority “reasonable” score. The full tabulated results were as follow:

Service	Good	Reasonable	Poor	No Opinion	% responding
Grass Cutting	23%	46%	16%	4%	89%
Litter	8%	40%	38%	1%	87%
Recycling	22%	43%	17%	5%	87%
Refuse Collection	55%	29%	3%	2%	89%

Specific comments received identified an increasing perception that litter was a problem within the village on roads, hedgerows and verges. The Memorial Hall area and the Play Area were particular “hot spots” and there was obvious concern at dogs fouling community areas, especially where children play. Suggestion for improvement included more village seats, litter bins, dog waste bins and improved facilities for recycling. The appraisal concluded before the District Council initiative for a kerbside collection of green waste and the linked removal of the recycling bins at the Memorial Hall.

You Concluded

Litter is a concern and significant liaison between the relevant public sector bodies will be needed to address this issue. Protection of the environment is a much wider issue and an obvious area of concern to all. The will is there to re-cycle responsibly but appropriate facilities, information and education will be key drivers for success.

Practical Help: “Fly Tipping” is illegal and has been on the increase since a change in taxation for landfill. The Environment Agency and the District Council Environmental Health Department have powers of prosecution.

If you witness tipping, please take note of any vehicles involved and preserve any identifiable material such as letterheads, invoices etc.

Then please report either to the police, the District Council or the Parish

Commentary

The overall village environment is important to everyone and the District and Parish Councils have important parts to play in ensuring Woolaston remains clean and tidy.

The greater responsibility however rests with the community itself, in terms of voluntary action and in promoting a culture of responsibility. Litter is more than an irritation and can of itself be a danger and a health hazard.

Parishioners obviously have a wider concern for the environment but a strong lead needs to be taken by the public authorities to provide guidance on the best action to take. Recycling initiatives are positively welcomed but need to be consistently and effectively applied. To be effective they need to be simple to adhere to.



Litter close to the Play Area

The protection of the rural environment is a key issue. Wildlife, hedges, flowers and fauna are an essential element of Woolaston. The remaining open spaces need to be protected and partnership working with the Woolaston Pools Land Charity Trustees needs to be developed to maintain the open amenity areas in their stewardship and to ensure the long term future of the

parish allotments.

This Chapter needs to read in conjunction with the chapters on Community Confidence and the Cemetery and Churchyard, with which it has significant links.

Our Goals

- ✓ To make Woolaston litter free
- ✓ To conserve, protect and manage the diversity of wildlife in Woolaston
- ✓ To maintain and improve the village environment
- ✓ To promote recycling initiatives

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Encourage Recycling Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and comment on effectiveness of kerbside collection scheme • Consider whether there is a residual need for recycling bins • Consider effectiveness of green waste and composting initiatives 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council	2004-2005
Improve the immediate village environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean road signs • Bulb Planting • Christmas Decorations 	Parish Council to co-ordinate voluntary effort	2004 – 2009

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Environmental awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and advice on Web Site • Work with youth • Publicise collections better • “Best Kept” street contest 	Parish Editorial panel (see Local Information), Community Centre project group, School Governors	2005
Protect the rural environment and its accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Parish Charity Trustees to maintain accessibility of charitable open spaces and long term availability of parish allotments 		2004 - 2009
Enjoyment of parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide village seats • Maintain accessibility of rural paths (see Highways and Footpaths chapter) • Protect rurality (see Planning and Housing chapter) 	Parish Council and local effort	2004 - 2009
Litter Bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider provision of more bins at various locations 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council (for collection)	2004 - 2009
Litter Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend parish collection • More regular District Council “litter pick” 	Parish Council in liaison with District Council	2004 - 2009
Dog Fouling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposition of Bye-Laws • Notices at playing field • “Poop scoop” facilities and bins 	Parish Council	2006
Grass Cutting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater cutting frequency • Extend areas of cuts • Increase verge cutting 	Parish Council in liaison with County & District Councils	2005 - 2006
Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise Charity Open 	Parish Charity	2004 – 2009

Awareness of Parish Charities	Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help Trustees increase utilisation of allotments	Trustees and Editorial Panel (see also local information)	
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CEMETERY AND CHURCHYARD

What you told us

A large majority of those responding to the 2003 Appraisal thought that the Churchyard and Cemetery each merited a “reasonable” rating as far as condition was concerned. There were however a number of comments suggesting that both areas should be better maintained. Specific concerns about the Cemetery revolved around

- ❖ Grass not being collected after cutting
- ❖ Spoil from burials not being removed
- ❖ Paths needing re-surfacing
- ❖ Trees and hedges needing to be cut back
- ❖ Facilities being needed for green waste collection
- ❖ Lawn cemetery rules not being adhered to in a minority of cases



St.Andrews Church —

In respect of the Churchyard, the comments were more general and were concerned with more frequent cutting of the area whilst protecting flowers and shrubs early in the cutting season.

You Concluded

The Church and Churchyard are treasured places of remembrance and historical interest. The Cemetery is valued and provides assurance that parishioners will be able to be buried within the parish when they die. The Parish Council needs to ensure each area is maintained satisfactorily, whilst acknowledging the particular maintenance problems with the Churchyard.

Commentary

The Parish Council provided the Parish Cemetery in the early 1970s when it was becoming apparent that the Churchyard would not be able to accept new burials for much longer. The Parish Council wholly manages it as a lawn cemetery. Three areas are set aside for burials with one remaining currently as unconsecrated ground. A separate area has been set aside for the burial of cremated remains. The Clerk to the Council maintains



The Churchyard – Difficult and Expensive to Maintain

Cemetery Regulations and Charges.

The Churchyard was closed for new burials some years ago. Subsequently, as permitted under legislation, the Parochial Church Council gave notice on the Parish Council declaring the Churchyard as being maintainable at the public expense and this action required the Parish Council either to take responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the grounds or to pass this obligation to the District Council. In order to maintain local ownership the Parish Council determined to accept the maintenance obligation itself. Due to the character of the Churchyard, maintaining it is more labour intensive, and hence more expensive than the Cemetery.



The Parish Cemetery – Filling up Fast

For both the Cemetery and the Churchyard, memorials and structures are the responsibility of grave owners (relatives) with the Parochial Church Council (for the Churchyard) and the Parish Council (for the Cemetery and for the Churchyard in respect of its own obligations) having an overall duty of care for the wellbeing and safety of the public. Recent injury and fatal accidents in England

and Wales caused by falling memorials have resulted in the Health and Safety Executive strongly recommending that authorities regularly test the safety of memorials and lay down those considered dangerous. Repair and/or re-erection remains the responsibility of grave owners.

Many churchyards in the area are full or near full and few Parish Councils have provided new local burial areas. This caused the Parish Council to make regulations that only parishioners or former parishioners were entitled to be buried at the Cemetery. Even with this restriction the Cemetery is now more than half full and due to the long lead in time to provide a further burial area, the Council recognises the need to consider how best to extend the facilities.

Our Goals

- ✓ To maintain the Churchyard and the Cemetery to a satisfactory condition
- ✓ To protect new burials in the Cemetery for parishioners or former parishioners
- ✓ To seek a new area for a Cemetery or cemetery extension

What we intend to do

Idea / Action	How Considered/Implemented	By Whom	By When
Better governance of Churchyard and Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of joint committee to manage risk, oversee and produce action plan/ review policies, maintenance needs etc. • Draw up agreement with Parochial Church Council on relative responsibilities 	Parish Council and Parochial Church Council	2004
Maintenance of Cemetery and Churchyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring and review of general condition and seasonal requirements • Rolling maintenance programme • Periodic safety testing of memorials 	Joint Committee with voluntary effort	2004 - 2009
Environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of excess spoil • Placement and collection of green waste bins 	Parish Council in discussion with District Council	2004
Sustainability of provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and procure new cemetery or extension 	Parish Council	2004-2008

CONCLUSION

This plan creates a framework for creating an even better future for everyone who lives, works or plays here.

The issues covered in the chapters are the results of analysis of the appraisal questionnaires and a number of consultation exercises. Action plans within each chapter explain what local people have told us they want to happen. Delivery of actions will depend on a mixture of Parish Council and voluntary action together with the involvement of other partners and key stakeholders.

Publishing this plan marks the start of the process not the end. We will review our priorities for action over time, as circumstances change and working in partnership with the community strengthens. We will report on a formal basis each year to the Annual Parish Meeting in April.

This is the community's plan rather than the Parish Council's. The Parish Council has an important part to play however in terms of:

- ❖ Being responsible for project management of the Parish Plan
- ❖ Committing resources to deliver the Parish plan
- ❖ Facilitating community and partnership working, and the sharing of resources between organizations
- ❖ Supporting, but not stifling voluntary work

We are grateful for the support of the community and all those who helped in the production of this Parish Plan. We are also grateful for the financial support of the Countryside Agency and the Woolaston Parish Council.

The Woolaston Parish Council adopted the Parish Plan on 7th April 2004.