



BRIGHTWALTON PARISH
PLAN
REFRESH
2016 - 2021

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The Parish Plan at a glance

Key questionnaire findings

The Parish Plan refresh has been guided by feedback from the Brightwalton Parish Plan questionnaire undertaken in 2016. There was a 32% adult response rate to the survey compared to a 34% response rate in 2010. 64% of respondents have lived in the village for at least 11 years. In general, people cite the countryside setting and peace, friends and neighbours and a feeling of safety as the main things they like about living in the village.

Highlights of the 2016 survey were:

- Over 80% of respondents feel part of the village community.
- The majority of respondents (71%) said their current home would meet their needs for the next 5 years. 10% expressed a desire to extend their property and 5% expect to move out of the village (note –in absolute terms the % figures represent quite small numbers of people).
- 98% believe that Brightwalton is a safe neighbourhood
- One of the biggest changes from the last survey is the number of people who work from home. 29% of respondents work from home or within the village, (7% in 2010).
- The perception is that maintenance of the Common and green areas has improved with most people believing that these areas are well or adequately maintained and that it's important to maintain them.
- It is also clear that people feel communication is improving with 97% reading the Brickleton News. It continues to be regarded as the “oracle” in the village but is now supported by the Facebook page and website.
- There was some clear guidance on planning issues, for example, using “old style” materials in keeping with the age of the village and having a “no street light policy” were deemed important by respondents.
- Speeding, congestion during school pickup / drop off and road maintenance, in general, remain major issues.

“The best kept secret in Berkshire”

“A community spirit which welcomes and supports its villagers.”

“The community has blossomed.”

“The Parish still seems to be the beautiful place that my childhood memories are made of.”

“Don't spoil the village with any major developments.”

Village Views

What we like	What we don't like
Community, friends and neighbours	Speeding
The countryside setting and views	Traffic congestion during school pick up/drop off
Location	Traffic on the B4494
Peacefulness	Road maintenance (including flood prevention)
We feel safe	No pub
Good balance of activities	Fear of housing development pressures
Well-maintained environment	Lack of public transport
	Street lights in Ash Close
	Village very spread out (different areas)

Good things we can improve further	What we're concerned about for the future
Communication both in person and online (website, calendar, PCC magazine, email distribution list)	Excessive and inappropriate development (including infilling, prominent signage, green field development)
Encourage more people to volunteer to help with activities in the village	Further loss of essential services
Create more occasional activities that bring people together	Losing the historic narrative of the village and farming connections
Support use of village assets (Village Hall, Church, School) to ensure their long-term viability. Link with services available in the neighbouring villages.	

Guiding Principles

The refresh process has given guidance as to what is important to us. These guiding principles should steer us in our decision-making and actions affecting Brightwalton and its surrounding countryside. For example, planning changes, development or the provision of services, activities and facilities. They should be used by official bodies, voluntary groups and individuals whose decisions impact the Brightwalton environment and community.



People like the quality of life in Brightwalton with its rural setting, views, peaceful character and community spirit. We like sympathetic improvements, not wholesale development or change.

Preservation and management of the natural environment within and surrounding Brightwalton is a priority for preserving the character of the parish for future generations.



There is a sense of community in the parish which we want to strengthen. However, it is an accepted fact of modern rural life that people will travel out of the village for employment, shopping, entertainment and education after primary school. Therefore, we need to work hard to continue to enhance communication, to bring people together and to provide mutual support to keep this sense of community.



Some people in the village are more dependent on local services, such as those without transport or with greater needs (e.g. the elderly). The parish should work to ensure that these groups enjoy the same quality of life as those who are more mobile.

The parish needs to be vigilant about protecting and enhancing our strong sense of security, including improving road safety and road maintenance.

The Parish Plan in detail

What has happened since the 2010 plan?

Action	Achievements
Communication	We now have superfast broadband, a Facebook group, dilapidated noticeboards have been replaced and the Brickleton News is available by email and print.
Leisure & social activities	The ‘pop up drinks’ is proving popular and complements established occasional events including the fete, Xmas fayre, harvest fayre, bluffers wine quiz and safari supper. There has also been an open gardens day. The play park has been upgraded and goal posts erected in the field.
Green & countryside activities	Walnut trees have been planted at the Common and the Common cleared. Dunmore Pond has been maintained via volunteer working parties and is in the process of being donated to the village by the Wroughton Estate. A self-guided walks leaflet was published. A Walking of the Bounds took place in 2011.
Traffic & road management	Signs were erected on the B4494 at the Holt – though speeding continues to be an issue for Holt respondents. A soakaway was installed at the Holt to reduce road flooding.
Other	An oil syndicate has been introduced, offering considerable savings in oil costs. West Berkshire Council has modified their systems to involve the Parish Council to ensure that priority for affordable housing goes to those with local connections.
Things we haven’t done	The renewable energy (biomass) project proved not to be financially viable. The Village Design Statement was no longer recommended due to the Localism Bill

Why have a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan looks ahead to identify the needs of the parish and to create and implement an action plan that enhances life in the village.

West Berkshire Council encourages communities to develop and maintain a Parish Plan. Applications for funding typically have more success if we can show they meet a need identified in our Plan.

Brightwalton Parish Plan refresh timeline

2004 Previous Brightwalton Parish Plan published.

2010 Brightwalton Parish Plan refresh published for 2010 - 2015.

Spring - Summer 2016

Parish-wide questionnaire distributed. Responses directly informed the development of the Parish Plan refresh.

May 2017 Refreshed Plan endorsed by West Berkshire Council and published covering years 2016 – 2021.

This Parish Plan Refresh should be read in conjunction with the 2004 and 2010 Brightwalton Parish Plans for context.

It contains both high level principles to guide actions and policy decisions together with initial actions.

The Action Plan 2016-2021

This plan uses the same themes template required by West Berkshire Council when the plan was last updated. This enables us to align our plan to the priorities and work of West Berkshire Council.

As we put this plan together we are living in an environment where budgets for public services are under huge pressure and the drive to de-centralise a number of services is putting more responsibility onto Parish Councils.

Equally, everyone has much busier lives, making it hard to commit to local events and activities. This is a factor in our society as a whole.

The implications of this are that:

1. We need to work with and look to our immediate neighbours (Parish Councils) to pool our resources for certain services.
2. We need to look to both Newbury and Wantage for some services – hence creating a different challenge which may mean sharing lifts to access these services.
3. As members of the community we need to be aware that if we want to keep certain services, it will be down to us all to make full use of them, to justify their continuation.

Within each of the 5 themes we have created some aims as well as a series of potential activities. These activities and their priorities will be refreshed from time to time.

- A Stronger Community
- A Greener Community
- A Safer Community
- A Healthy Community
- A Prosperous Community

How you can help?

If you would like to make a difference to life in Brightwalton, please contact any member of the Parish Council or check the website at www.brightwalton.org.uk to find existing lead volunteers.

1. A Stronger Community

i) Communication

96% are satisfied or very satisfied with communication from the Parish Council (up from 70% in 2010). 95% are satisfied or very satisfied with the information they receive about village matters. 67% are now satisfied or very satisfied with communication from the Church (PCC). Satisfaction with communication from West Berkshire Council remains at 51% - the same as 2010.

84% read the notice boards, 66% use the website and 51% use the Facebook group which has been introduced since the last Plan.

With no 'heart' to the village, people need ways to bring them together, including a range of activities and events.

Preserving the historic/environment narrative

There were a few comments about connections with the past being lost as elderly generations die, about a lack of understanding/connection with farming as most do not have agricultural backgrounds and about the evolution of the village and people's awareness of the history of houses, place names etc. There is a sense that preserving and communicating these links is important to preserving the narrative of the village.

ii) Services

In the main, people are aware of most of the current village services.

The most used service is Saddleback Farm Shop, used by 85% of respondents and the oil syndicate used by 50%. Both of these are new services since the previous plan. Other services are used by only a small percentage of respondents.

The defibrillator is another new addition since the last plan.

On a broader level we are increasingly seeing that services from West Berkshire Council and from our local vicinity are coming under scrutiny as budgets get tighter. The impact is that services not being actively being used or financially viable will be withdrawn. Building closer links with other local Parish Councils and indeed Newbury and Wantage is going to be vital if we are to sustain a varied and relevant set of services to Downland villages.

Services include:

Saddleback Farm Shop

Milk delivery

Paper delivery

Oil syndicate

Mobile library

*Downland volunteer group
(transport to surgery)*

Church services

Village agent

Defibrillator

Bus services to Newbury

iii) Development

Overall people feel that the general character of the village has not changed significantly.

The changes that would be seen as having a negative impact include:

- New properties on green field sites (92%)
- Infilling of green space/back gardens (77%)
- Prominent commercial/business signage (71%)
- Increasing roof height of existing properties (57%)

Views were mixed about new properties on brown field sites and replacement of old properties with new (although 38% view this as negative), with several comments that applications should be considered on individual merit.

Style and character of property, together with choice of building materials, are seen as important in determining whether a property is in keeping with the rural character of the village.

77% of us
take part in
the annual
fete.

The rural nature, countryside and views are all considered important in what we like about living in Brightwalton and want to retain.

Having priority for people with local connections within the affordable housing stock is seen as important.

The development of the Saddleback Farm Shop is generally considered a positive development.

iv) Leisure and Social Facilities

In the previous plan, we concluded that people tend to support occasional activities over regular clubs or groups.

- Most popular is the fete (77%)
- Pop up drinks attended by 39% (although 53% know of these but do not participate)
- Christmas / Autumn fayres (37% have taken part)
- There is still some lack of awareness of some of these events with, for instance, 40% unaware of the walks leaflet but many interested in it

30% help with the fete and 42% volunteer for other activities or committees within the community. Those not working are slightly more likely to volunteer but there is no obvious correlation between the distance people travel to work and volunteering.

What else would we like?

The most popular suggestions for additional activities included:

- Tennis
- Yoga/Pilates
- Table Tennis
- Circuits/Keep fit (including for older people)



Current occasional activities include:

Fete (May)

Bluffers wine evening (bi-annual)

Christmas / Harvest fayre

Parish Council AGM / Welcome / Thank You
Drinks

Safari supper

Self-guided walks leaflet

Cricket club

Pop up Drinks

Current Regular activities include:

Keep fit /circuit training

Downland Gardening Club

Evergreens (60+ social)

Young Farmers (<25 years old)

Children's activities

Of those respondents with children, almost everyone is aware of the services available for children, with the play park used by around half of respondents. Whilst the proportion of those using the service are statistically quite low, this may be because respondents do not have children of the right age.

There were a number of suggestions of new activities for children, including re-starting the youth club and activities for teens, sports and games, clubs/scouts and winter activities e.g. bell ringing and music.

Our aims:

1. The Parish Councils long term aim is to restrict “village creep” as this will change the character of the village. However, in keeping with original versions of the Parish Plan, we will endorse 1 new building per year and prioritise creation of 1-2 bedroom dwellings. This would help provide a wider spectrum of properties including providing retired people or young people that have grown up in the village the opportunity to remain in Brightwalton.
2. Ensure that we welcome, embrace and actively engage everyone within the village. Our aim is to use communication and events to encourage and foster a strong community spirit – 81% of respondents feel part of the village, our aim is to protect and grow this figure.
3. Encourage caring and neighbourly support for people who need extra help, for example elderly and disadvantaged members of the community.
4. Decentralisation of services – work with our neighbouring Parish Councils to ensure we can maintain the right level of services for our community.

Stronger Community Actions

- Develop a new village website with an events calendar to improve communication.
- Develop an Events Coordinator role to drive more events and participation within Brightwalton, attract other events and visitors and to optimise the use of our village assets in the Village Hall and Church.
- Create a secure village email distribution list used by the village committees to improve communication for events, activities, safety issues and opinion gathering.
- Improve the Planning consultation process so neighbouring properties can discuss proposals on neutral ground (PC have already changed their approach on this basis).
- Include the younger generation in village activities by better canvassing opinions and needs.
- Encourage regular social events to address the concerns of not having an informal meeting point in the village. Aim to add 2 or 3 more events to the current calendar, potentially also making the current bi-annual events to annual.
- Improve access to the Brightwalton Book & raise awareness of its existence, liaise with authors if a reprint is required.
- Church development project. Work with the PCC on their plans to develop the Church into a more flexible space for further use by the School and the community.
- Investigate lift share opportunities (via Facebook/website).
- Protect the vulnerable. Identify what services are needed by those who are more dependant on village services and work to make these available.

2. A Greener Community

Brightwalton is in an officially designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As such, all authorities down to Parish Council level are required, when exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the area to "have regard to" conserving and enhancing the AONB.



Maintenance of our environment

41% of the Parish Precept is spent on mowing and maintenance.

The play park, playing field and Village Hall are the areas that people feel are priorities to be maintained – the majority saying these were well or adequately maintained. The churchyard, common areas, Dunmore Pond and trees and hedges were also seen as being important for maintenance and the respondents felt they were either adequately or well maintained.

Only a handful of respondents felt maintenance was unimportant or had no opinion.

Countryside

The surrounding countryside is considered an important aspect of life in Brightwalton – 68% of us were attracted to the village because of this. Its conservation is therefore integral to the character of the village.

Street lights

A number of people cited an absence of street lights in most of the village as a positive aspect of the character of the village. There were, additionally, a number of negative comments about the street lights in Ash Close / Saxons Acre.

Our aims:

1. Encourage “greener initiatives” that are practical, cost effective and do not detract from the rural, historic nature of the village.
2. Encourage the use of traditional building materials for new developments and extensions that are in keeping with the history and rural nature of the village.
3. Ensure that the rural character and far-reaching views are preserved in any planning application. This includes air quality, minimising signage and street furniture and maintaining views.

Actions to create a greener environment

- Tackle the issues of litter in the village – organise litter picks, talk to West Berkshire Council about the spillage from the collection lorries.
- Raise concerns over low flying helicopters and agree what the boundaries should be.
- Review the street lighting policy – discuss with West Berkshire Council, a trial switch off and canvass opinion of those properties that are affected by the light pollution. Consider different timings more suited to the two different locations (Ash Close & Saxons Acre).
- Expand the working party concept – make this more of a village event, cover more areas in the village, provide full refreshments, liaise with the PCC.
- Improve understanding of the farming community – seasonal updates from farmers about what crops are growing, farming activities etc.

98% of us feel safe in the parish
– and we need to protect this.
But there are concerns about
roads – speeding, congestion,
maintenance and flooding.

3. A Safer Community



89% are worried about speeding within the village, 84% about speeding on the B4494 (particularly through Brightwalton Holt) and 80% are concerned or very concerned about congestion and speeding at school drop off and pick up.

85% are concerned about both road maintenance and flooding.

Our aims:

1. The vast majority of inhabitants say they feel safe living in Brightwalton. This hasn't changed in recent years. This is a characteristic of the village we will actively strive to protect.
2. Community spirit is at the heart of this with neighbours looking out for each other. We will work to maintain and develop community level support both in person and online.
3. Initiatives to maintain or improve individuals' safety will be judged not only on how effective we believe they will be but also to ensure they are in keeping with the character of the village.

Actions to create a safer community

- Focus on speeding – look at what can be done long term to reduce speed on the B4494 and the village lanes.
- Work to reduce the congestion at school pick-up & drop-off.
- Communicate seasonal safety concerns – e.g. verge cutting in the summer and gritting in the winter. Communicate who is responsible and how to report issues. Investigate and communicate what the Parish can do e.g. awareness of salt bins
- Creation of a new footpath to Saddleback Farm Shop to make a safe walkway to the shop.
- Investigate creating footpaths to link all areas of Brightwalton.

4. A Healthy Community

General fitness

There is some interest (see Activities under Stronger Community) in sports and fitness activities – and in extending the types of activities available.

Concerns about speeding led to suggestions to create footpaths linking different areas of the village to make walking safer (including supporting children to walk to school).

Our retired community

23% of respondents are retired. Around ½ of retired respondents volunteer and around ¼ do not feel part of the village community. A key aim is to take care of those living within the village at all stages of life.

Health services

Since the last plan, the defibrillator has been installed at the Village Hall and a number of villagers have attended training in its use.

Only 10% were using the currently suspended prescription pick up but a further 14% were unaware of the service and would use it. No respondents are using the transport to/from the Downlands Practice (Downland Volunteer Group).

Our aims:

1. The outdoor life is an important characteristic of a rural village both in terms of our farming connection and countryside pursuits. We will continue to encourage and support initiatives that make use of the beautiful countryside in a sympathetic manner.
2. Encourage stronger links with both Wantage and Newbury as these locations have the capability to offer a broader range of services and activities that can be enjoyed by people of Brightwalton.

Actions to create a healthier community

- Review the activities available in the village that promote health and wellbeing and investigate the possibility of adding those suggested in the survey.
- Increase the number of annual outdoor village activities e.g. Walking the Bounds, Tennis Safari, Summer Family Sports Day.
- Improve access to the Brightwalton Walks Booklet (e.g. via the website) Produce booklet as an 8 page PDF and upload to website for anyone to download and print.
- Investigate footpaths to link different areas of the village together (also to assist with road safety). Where possible ensure footpaths are accessible to all.

5. A Prosperous Community

6% of respondents work within Brightwalton, 24% work from home at least some of the time and 13% travel less than 10 miles to work. 21% travel more than 31 miles to work.

17% now run a business from the Parish – one of the biggest changes since the last survey.

Since the last plan, superfast broadband (FTTC) has been introduced to the majority of the village and, at the time of publication, Gigaclear are in the process of installing fibre (FTTP) to provide full coverage. 41% have superfast broadband and 57% remain on the standard service. 1% have no internet connection. This has increased overall broadband usage from 90 to 99% since the last survey. High speed internet connectivity will be increasingly important for work, education, and access to both essential and non-essential services.

The ability to travel to work and education is important. Budget pressures have put rural bus services at risk and 64% are concerned or very concerned about availability of public transport.

Several comments within the survey point to a desire to combine prosperity with the need to conserve and protect the rural character of the village and support a strong community spirit.

Our aims:

1. We will balance making a more prosperous parish with maintaining the village and rural environment.
2. We will encourage and support local businesses, particularly those that provide important services to the community.
3. We will actively seek to foster greater co-operation between the Church, Village Hall, School and the Parish Council to deliver a unified approach to building and developing a strong prosperous community.
4. A prosperous community should support different incomes and life stages. Ensure any development or changes impact this positively, rather than negatively (e.g. protect against loss of services).

Actions to create a prosperous community

- Review the social housing allocation process with West Berkshire Council – ensure those with local connections are prioritised, as originally intended.
- Provide advertising opportunities for local services by adding a section on the new website for people to advertise their local business at a minimal charge.
- Secure future of village assets. Create more events in the village so both the Village Hall and Church can benefit from having funds available for maintenance.
- Broadband. Ensure the entire Parish has access to Superfast Broadband, and monitor future improvements in speed so Brightwalton is not left behind.
- Improve communication about services available in neighbouring villages and towns. Encourage villagers to make use of the pubs in local villages to ensure they prosper (at time of publication the Stag in Leckhampstead has just ceased trading).
- Improve links with Brightwalton School and their engagement in the local community. Improve communication within the village so residents can support the school.

The Role of Village Organisations

Parish Council

The perceived role of the Parish Council is to oversee and carefully maintain the environment within the village

The typical responses were to:

- Act honestly on behalf of the village.
- Invite views from Parishioners and act on them.
- Spend the precept in line with the village plans and in the best interest of the village.
- To lobby and challenge West Berkshire Council when necessary.
- Ensure that where planning restrictions are imposed, they are enforced.
- Keep hedges and verges cut and trimmed.

Parochial Church Council

The expectations of the Church Council were seen as being to manage, run and make our Church viable:

- Communicate and engage with the Parish.
- Restart the Parish newsletter.
- To be an involved body in the village.
- To be supportive of local people as needs arise.
- Upkeep and run the Church for everyone.

Prioritised Action Plan

The Parish Council have put together a prioritised action plan based on an assessment of the likely impact of each item on the village and the ease with which these can be implemented. These are the priority projects that the Parish Council will be focusing on in the next 5 years:

High impact - easy to implement	Development of a new village website with events calendar
High impact – medium level of difficulty to implement	Broadband
	Communication of seasonal safety concerns
	Expand the working party concept
	Regular community social events
High impact, Hard to implement	Development of an events coordinator role
	Focus on speeding
	Reduce the chaos at School pick-up & drop-off time
	Church development project

There are a number of other actions in this plan that we have categorised as being easy to implement with a low to medium impact on the village. The Parish Council will be implementing these in addition to our priority projects above.

Appendix

The Refresh Process

A working party of the Parish Council and volunteers from the parish was set up to create a questionnaire, based on the 2010 questionnaire, which was distributed around the parish in the spring of 2015.

A total of 86 questionnaires were completed by those aged 18 and upwards, which represents approximately 32% of the parish. 60% are female and 68% are aged between 45 and 64, raising a possibility of a slight over-representation of the views of those within these categories.

Acknowledgment

In putting together this Parish Plan refresh, the following people are thanked for their hard work and effort:

- The Parish Plan Refresh Team: Shaun Orpen (Parish Council Chair), Anna Britnor-Guest, Sarah Youldon (Parish Council Clerk), Jackie Boxall.
- Distributors and collectors of the questionnaire, including the Parish Plan Team, Parish Councillors.
- All those who took the time to complete the questionnaire.
- All volunteers now involved in implementing the actions from the plan.

Want to volunteer or get more information?

If you'd like more information about anything in this Plan please either:

- Contact any member of the Parish Council.
- Go to the Brightwalton website at www.brightwalton.org.uk to find the latest action plans and volunteer groups.



**This Plan was produced by a team of volunteers on
behalf of Brightwalton Parish Council**

For more information visit:

www.brightwalton.org.uk