

## Villagers' vision for Norton St Philip

Villagers who took part in the Norton St Philip Village Appraisal gave a clear message for developers:

**'Any building or development in Norton St Philip should meet current and future needs of residents, and reduce the impact of traffic'**

People's concerns and hopes for Norton St Philip were recorded at 'Round the Kitchen Table' discussion groups and a 'Village Open Day' held in June - *see backpage*.

In the heart of this conservation village

lies a derelict chicken factory site. If developed sensitively, the site could play a pivotal role in maintaining the vitality of the community.

But if developed without listening to the views of local people, it could threaten village life, hastening the loss of services and isolating vulnerable residents.

Government guidance now gives a greater strength to local people in planning the future of their communities.

The Mendip Local Plan makes provision

for new housing in urban areas. Development in villages should respond to local needs and reduce the need to travel.

The emerging Village Plan and recommendations will be presented to Councillors and officers who are involved in local planning decisions.

Villages all over the UK are suffering from the loss of shops, doctors, transport, etc. However, Norton St Philip has a wonderful opportunity to halt this loss.

The villagers know what they want.

Now it is up to local representatives to listen.



## Norton St Philip Village Plan

### Recommendations for Chicken Factory Site

People in Norton St Philip wanted to see the Chicken factory site developed for:

- **Community facilities**
  - building for shop, leisure facilities, clubs etc
  - outdoor facilities, e.g. all weather surface
  - small business

units, e.g. new shop premises

- **Smaller homes for residents** wishing to stay in the village
- **Some starter**

**homes & houses for key workers**

- **Sheltered accommodation for villagers**
- **Parking/garaging**

*Design was important to villagers. They wanted to see:*

- ◊ *Energy efficient building and use of renewable energy*
- ◊ *Building design sympathetic to the village*



# The Village Plan.....What People said.....

## Traffic and Transport

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This issue was highlighted by the greatest number of villagers. They identified the main problems as:

- ◊ Excessive speed
- ◊ Lack of safe pedestrian access
- ◊ Too much through traffic
- ◊ Lack of parking
- ◊ Inadequate bus services

Proposals to overcome some of these problems included:

- Improving pavements
- Installing speed cushions
- Creating 20mph speed limit
- Encouraging use of the A36
- Developing bus shelters

Many of these issues are being taken forward by the Parish Council's 'Reclaiming the Streets' adopted policy.

## Services

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People recognized the need to improve the services that remained in the village. For instance, it was felt that the shop and doctor's surgery needed better premises.

Key proposals were:

- **Replacing or renovating the cricket pavilion and making it available for a variety of uses**

- **Creation of an all-weather surface for outdoor activities**
- **Development of a new com-**

"It would be so nice to have somewhere to see the doctor without thinking that everyone can hear your intimate details"

**munity centre** that could incorporate leisure & IT facilities, café, health premises

- **New shop premises** on the Chicken Factory site
- **New pre-school premises**
- **Recycling facilities** - preferably 'green boxes'

## Business

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Interest in business support was not generally a high priority amongst the villagers.

However, people did feel that there was need to:

- **Support existing small business**
- **Create a limited number of unobtrusive business facilities for local people.**
- **Support businesses that would help to prevent the need to travel out of the village.**



## Housing

Although housing was a concern for many villagers, the appraisal showed no support for further expansion of the village.

And no-one identified the need for large, detached, 'executive homes.

People were, however, concerned about the lack of:

- **Housing for young people** who wished to stay or return to the village

- **Rented accommodation** for local people who couldn't afford to purchase
- **Accommodation for older residents who wanted to downsize**
- **Sheltered accommodation**

Further work is now being undertaken to investigate the specific housing needs of local people



## Environment

Concern for the environment was one of the major issues for villagers, in particular:

- **Creation of safe pedestrian access and routes**
- **Maintenance and cleanliness**, and the need to create more pride in the local environment

- **Sympathetic building design and use of materials** in new buildings and signs

"It would be lovely to be able to walk around our village more easily and safely"

"It is so attractive; it would be nice to show it off"

- **Creation of wildlife habitats and planting of trees**
- **Use of renewable energy**
- **Burial of overhead cables**
- **Protection of the village's heritage**

## Chicken Factory Site

During the village appraisal comments were also invited about the future of the Chicken Factory Site.

Comments from all the topics

listed above can be used to develop the site.

In general people wanted:

*'A mixed use development which fulfils residents needs,*

*with limited business units and houses, integrated with a community centre and leisure facilities.'*



## Airing the villagers' views—how was it done?

Norton St Philip is a small, Somerset village of just over 300 dwellings, located eight miles south of Bath. Despite the pressures of modern life it still retains a shop, post office, primary school and several small businesses, as well as many historic buildings, including one of the country's oldest inns.

Adjoining the conservation area lies a large derelict site which originally housed a small chicken business employing local people. By the time it closed in 2000 the business was run by a national processing firm and covered an area of 5.2 acres.

After a public enquiry had rejected proposals for this site the Parish Council and a group of residents realized that insensitive development could threaten the vitality of the village. They de-

ecided to find out how villagers wanted the whole village, including the chicken factory site, to develop.

Funding was obtained from the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' programme. And an innovative Village Appraisal programme was developed to reach as many people in the village as possible.

To start the process, everybody was invited to a series of 'Round the Kitchen Table' discussions in 40 different homes in the village.

They were given a map of the village, topic sheets and stick-on notelets. Discussions centred on the key elements of thriving villages, which had been identified by the Countryside Agency.

The records of all the meetings were summarized on large sheets. At an open meeting

people were then encouraged to use this information to indicate their own priorities for the village.

This innovative process has resulted in a comprehensive record of residents' views on the future of their village.

People now want to make things happen. But if they are to succeed their views must not be ignored by those who make the decisions about the future of Norton St Philip.



## Taking forward the plan

Gathering people's ideas and opinions can be done independently. But making things happen requires partnerships.

The people of Norton St Philip are now taking forward the ideas described in this newsletter by working with all the different organisations involved in maintaining village life.

Future actions include:

- *Take forward traffic issues through the Parish Council's 'Reclaiming the streets' initiative.*
- *Develop a project to gather the*

### *views of young people*

- *Research existing data on housing and business use*
- *Complete a housing questionnaire targeting older persons*
- *Continue discussions with affordable housing providers*
- *Investigate the potential of a village Community Development Trust, centred on the Chicken Factory site*
- *Complete the Village Plan*
- *Investigate affordable housing needs in detail*

For further information contact:

Norton St Philip Village Plan  
Tel: 01373 834856