

The Parish of Mottisfont



Parish Plan 2009

Mottisfont and Dunbridge Parish Plan

This plan has three main purposes:

- to enable local residents to express a view about the things they would like to see happen in the parish;
- to help the parish council make informed decisions about how to use its limited budget and work with other local organisations to shape the right sort of future for the parish;
- to demonstrate our thinking to partner organisations like the County and Borough councils who may be providing funding or services.

The character of the parish

Mottisfont and Dunbridge is a large parish in terms of geographical area (2,917 acres) but has a small resident population of 347 and an electorate of only 270. We are:

- a rural Test Valley parish. We are fortunate to live in beautiful and largely unspoiled countryside comprised of farmland and woodlands networked with footpaths. The rivers Test and Dun make the parish what it is;
- we have strong heritage. This is especially true of Mottisfont Abbey and its estate, originally a priory founded in 1201 but there are other buildings with historic associations such as Dairy Cottage, parts of which date back to 1315, and the Mill Arms at Dunbridge. Mottisfont village centre is a conservation area and St Andrews, our Norman parish church is grade 1 listed. The

National Trust is the biggest landowner in the parish;

- there is a high level of biodiversity. There is a Special Area of Conservation that includes ancient woodlands at Spearywell, which marks it out as an area of European as well as national conservation significance;
- we have few public services and use those in neighbouring parishes - schools in Awbridge, Broughton, Lockerley and Stockbridge, doctor's surgeries in Broughton and Romsey, village shops in Broughton and Lockerley. Fortunately, we still have an excellent pub in the The Mill Arms and Kimbridge Farm Shop is in the parish. There is a limited commercial bus service but the community village bus serves Broughton and Mottisfont. The train service on the Salisbury to Romsey line has recently improved markedly and now offers a regular service;
- the population is mainly resident and unlike neighbouring parishes, we currently have a low level of second home ownership. However, housing availability for local people is an issue and house prices are high. The proportion living in private rented housing is high because of the number of homes owned and let by the National Trust;
- parish residents tend to work in Romsey and Southampton although the National Trust is a significant local employer;
- the volume of road traffic and the speed and size of vehicles travelling through Mottisfont and Dunbridge far exceeds the purpose for which local roads were originally designed. Pedestrian safety is an issue;

- in terms of the built environment, there are two contrasting areas: Mottisfont village centre, with houses built principally of red hand-made Michelmersh bricks with tiled roofs; and mixed 20th century residential development in Dunbridge. The Borough Council's planning policy applying to the parish is one of constraint on development in the open countryside;
- we are an active and friendly parish. We have a range of activities centred mainly on the village hall. There is an active social club and the football and cricket clubs draw in players and supporters from outside the parish.

The recent past

If we look back over the last few decades, what changes has the parish seen?

Mottisfont Abbey and its estate was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957 but its popularity as a tourist destination is relatively recent, largely based on its famous rose garden. The Trust proposes to develop the Abbey and its grounds into a more significant visitor attraction. There were 140,000 visitors in 2008 and this number will be exceeded in 2009.

The village school used to have up to 100 children but it closed in 1983 and the premises are now used as the parish hall. Mottisfont's famous tea rooms and post office closed a decade ago.

The last new housing to be provided in the parish was Russell Drive in 1994.

Hatt Lane was closed to traffic in 2000 to create the Millennium Walk for pedestrians and cyclists. The Trust opened a popular 6 mile Estate footpath in the late 1990s.

The picture of the parish is therefore largely one of gentle change that has enabled it to retain its character over the years.

What the parish thinks

As part of the process of drawing up this plan the parish plan group, working with the parish council, asked local people to list their priorities. We suggested a list of 24 issues, covering transport and environment, housing and planning and the community, and we invited people to add anything they thought we had forgotten. There were 53 responses to the questionnaire from 44 addresses, meaning that around a third of the households in the parish responded.

The issues that came out top were:

- dealing with the flooding of local roads
- supporting the village hall
- working with the Police and maintaining a dedicated officer on the rural beat
- creating a new footpath at Barley Hill
- retaining the Dunbridge allotments
- improving tenanted housing in the parish

- reducing the 40mph speed limit on the B3084 to 30mph
- extending the footpath on Hatt Hill, if possible, and
- considering a play area for local children.

Highways issues and the safety of pedestrians walking at the side of busy local roads are clearly concerns of residents. The parish council, working with Hampshire Highways and the Borough Council, has been successful in getting speed limits introduced and has tried for many years to get footpath improvements on the most dangerous stretches of road. This work continues to be a priority for the parish council.

We especially value our parish hall and the work that is done by the Village Hall Committee to organise parish activities such as the annual fete. The parish hall is effectively the only community facility in the parish and is consequently well used. It is largely self-financing but is partly supported by the parish council. Clearly residents think that is a good use of their money.

The questionnaire picked up some concern about tenanted housing in the parish. The Parish Council is consulted when there are vacancies for some of the social housing in Dunbridge and we have a National Trust Tenants Association.

The parish lost its dedicated police officer about 10 years ago but we are part of a rural beat. We are promised that this arrangement will continue - the parish council will always fight to retain dedicated rural policing for this area.

Finally, our questionnaire did not pick up the range of activities in the parish that we tend to take for granted. The list is long but includes the History Group, the Gardening Club, the Art Group, the

WI, St Andrews Church, the Mill Arms, the Social Club and others. Not forgetting of course, our parish newsletter, the Acorn.

Over the longer term

We think what most residents want is to plan for the future in a way that actively conserves the character of the parish while seeking to enhance its attractiveness both to the people who live here and to visitors.

There is concern about urbanising the parish. While residents want improvements in terms of footpaths on main roads and traffic restrictions, the risk is that we can quickly undermine the parish's rural character. We agree with the policy of Test Valley Borough Council to concentrate development on a few locations and not to scatter it in countryside locations.

We have poor local infrastructure that cannot support an additional population without significant investment. We should like to increase the number of services within the parish but realistically, our population is not large enough to sustain them. We can do more to join with other parishes and make greater use of what is provided in the locality.

There is a strong prospect of major developments on our doorstep in southern Test Valley that could mean areas like ours come under increasing pressure – in terms of more visitors, more traffic and potentially more development. We need to plan to accommodate these pressures – for example, by helping visitors enjoy the Abbey and its grounds – but to be vigilant to, for example, insensitive development and demand for new homes that bring no benefit to local people.

AREAS WITHIN THE PARISH

Some of the things that the parish would like to improve in different areas of the parish are set out below.

Mottisfont village centre

Mottisfont village centre is a conservation area and forms the historic heart of the parish. Some buildings have become neglected and, since closure of the Mottisfont tea rooms and post office, it feels less vibrant. We should like to put more life back into the village centre. Our survey of residents revealed only limited support for creating a village green.

There is nonetheless a steady footfall of walkers using Hatt Lane and the footpath to Mottisfont and Dunbridge station but pedestrians have to walk on the road through the village. Despite the new 30mph speed limit, we remain concerned about the speed and volume of traffic going through the village centre and the unsuitable size of some vehicles. We are continuing to work with the Highways authorities to find solutions.

The National Trust is key to improving Mottisfont village centre. The proposed expansion of the Abbey as a visitor attraction is welcome so long as it is well managed and helps generate the income to enable the Trust to continue to improve the run down buildings that they own. We should like to see:

- the Abbey farmyard restored. We would support refurbishment of the farm buildings for productive use. These could be a new hub of activity for both the village centre and we should like to see some economic activity such as the creation of a shop,

tearoom or workshops;

- repair of the Tithe Barn which is now to be converted for use as a dwelling and better use of the Old Forge;
- traffic calming on the C17 through the village centre including a footpath passing the Tithe Barn and Glebe Farm;
- increased access to the river banks of the Test so long as this is consistent with the fishing and conservation interest;
- we are willing in principle to see some new housing developed in the village centre so long as it blends in with the existing conservation area.

Spearywell Road

The key issue for this part of the parish is the speed and size of vehicles using the B3084: the road is narrow and potentially dangerous. Spearywell is significant in terms of conservation interest and contains a Special Area of Conservation and an SSSI for the conservation of bats.

We should like to see:

- a continuous 40mph speed restriction along the length of the B3084 from the Bentley Bends at the northern end of the parish to the top of Barley Hill in Dunbridge;
- a 30mph restriction replacing the current 40mph, reflecting the risk to pedestrians, including school children, walking along the side of the road in Spearywell and Hatt Hill. The parish council is

also proposing physical barriers, such as chicanes, to slow traffic;

- sympathetic reuse of the old Baptist chapel, the Ebenezer Chapel;
- work with the Police to reduce incidence of car crime in Spearywell Wood car park - which is now the starting point for the Mottisfont Estate's woodland walk.

Hatt Hill/Bengers Lane

The Village Hall is a focus for our community. It is a priority for the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee to ensure that it is well-maintained, accessible and well used.

Pedestrian safety on Hatt Hill is a constant concern. The to-do list includes:

- with Hampshire Highways, seek to improve drainage on Hatt Hill and Bengers Lane to reduce the incidence of flooding. Some improvements have already been made;
- extend the footpath on Hatt Hill. The council's priority is the missing stretch from the River Dun to Hatt Lane, in order to provide a safer, all-weather pedestrian link between Mottisfont and Dunbridge. This will also serve visitors to the Abbey arriving by train;
- replace the current 40mph speed limit with a 30mph limit and extend the limit to Bengers Lane.

Dunbridge

We should like to see the environment of Dunbridge improved by sympathetic redevelopment of the station goods yard. The parish council suggests that it should be redeveloped for housing, including some affordable or sheltered housing. This proposal came out tenth (out of 24) in the order of priorities in the questionnaire. Flooding in Lockerley Lane is a key issue, as is traffic speed and volume.

If it were possible to provide a children's play area for the parish, it would probably be best to locate it in Dunbridge. The parish council and WI has considered this on a number of occasions and the issues have always been about finding a suitable location and about public liability. But we will look at it again.

Mottisfont and Dunbridge station is especially important for the parish. The recent improvement in the quality of the service has been very welcome and volunteers are helping to maintain the station. As a parish, we need to support these initiatives.

We plan to:

- work with Hampshire Highways to secure the missing stretch of footpath on Barley Hill past the goods yard to the station. This is a high priority for local residents;
- support redevelopment of the station goods yard for housing for people with a local connection. That includes, especially affordable housing;

- work with the Rail Partnership to increase use of the station
Parking has been increased but more spaces could be required;
- work with Network Rail and TVBC to ensure that the level crossings at Dunbridge and Kimbridge are well-maintained and that closures are properly notified to the parish. We expect Network Rail to avoid simultaneous closure of both crossings which effectively cuts road access to parts of Dunbridge. We are concerned about safety at the crossings;
- support the use of the allotments. These are owned by the National Trust. We need to see if there is demand for more;
- consider whether a play area for children is needed and can be provided;

- work with the Police to enforce speed limits throughout the parish including Barley Hill;
- welcome the initiatives taken by the Mill Arms to make it a community pub and to support local activities.

Kimbridge and Saunders Lane

Since mineral workings ceased entirely in 2008, our priorities are to:

- support the sympathetic reinstatement of the mineral workings;
- seek restrictions on the speed of traffic and use of Kimbridge Lane by HGVs.

The parish council only has a small budget derived mainly from the parish precept (part of Council Tax) and we supplement that by obtaining grants and by working in partnership with the County and Borough Councils and other national and local organisations. This year, we were awarded over £2,000 in Lottery grants for the village hall. The parish council's priorities will reflect those of local residents as revealed in the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are set out below.

	Weighted Results	Weighted score	Top rankings
	Transport		
1	Extend the footpath on Hatt Hill, if possible	80	8
2	Create a footpath by the Station Goods Yard on Barley Hill	89	4
3	Reduce the 40 mph speed limit to 30 mph on the B3084	84	7
4	Create a new road layout in Mottisfont village – such as provide a pavement for walkers	57	
5	Seek more parking at Mottisfont and Dunbridge rail station (but only if you will use the station!)	56	
6	A better village bus service (but only if you will use it)	57	
	Environment		
7	Seek repair and reuse of decaying buildings such as the Old Forge and the Tithe Barn	62	
8	Reuse the Abbey farmyard in Mottisfont, perhaps providing a new visitor attraction for the Abbey	62	
9	Encourage more use of footpaths for visitors to the parish and create cycleways	51	
10	Deal with flooding at Bengers Lane and Lockerley Road	112	1
11	Try to reinstate the village green in Mottisfont village centre	41	
12	Plant new trees for spring and autumn colour in the parish especially on Hatt Hill	37	
	Housing and Planning		
13	Support the provision of new housing, some of which will be affordable, on the Station Goods Yard	66	
14	Work with the National Trust and housing associations to improve tenanted housing in the parish	85	6
15	Continue to seek good design in new buildings and extensions	56	
16	Seek to restrict other development to retain the character of the parish	67	
17	Object to further extension of gravel workings near Saunders Lane	63	
	Community		
18	Continue to support the Village Hall Committee in providing facilities and events for the parish	98	2
19	Do more to publicise events and use facilities in neighbouring parishes eg lunch clubs	38	
20	Work with the Police to maintain a dedicated police officer our rural area	96	3
21	Consider creating a play area for local children	76	
22	Support the Acorn and develop the village website	62	
23	Make sure that the allotments in Dunbridge are retained	87	5
24	Consider creating a Mottisfont Good Neighbours scheme	55	