



## Bloxham

### Introduction

Located in North Oxfordshire, Bloxham is a large village which stretches for a mile along the A361, the main road from the towns of Chipping Norton and Banbury. A dominant landmark visible on the route through the village is St Mary's Church which dates mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries.

From its origins until the mid-19th Century, Bloxham was a largely self-supporting farming community with most inhabitants tied to the village. With the development of industry in Banbury, the opening of the railway and improved road communications, the socio-economic structure of the village gradually changed so that people could leave, or work away from, the immediate area of the village. Over the years there has been a gradual increase in population and additional housing to support it which has resulted in a mix of newer housing together with the medieval winding streets, alleyways and listed buildings. Bloxham retains a number of outlets, services and facilities including 3 schools, a doctors surgery, 3 pubs, a museum, shop and post office amongst others.



### Key Facts

<b>County:</b>	<b>Oxfordshire</b>
<b>District:</b>	<b>Cherwell</b>
<b>Population:</b>	<b>3300</b>
<b>Plan Complete:</b>	<b>2010</b>



### The Process

▶ An open meeting for ORCC to present the potential advantages of a Parish Plan was organised by Bloxham Parish Council in the autumn of 2006. The meeting agreed that Bloxham Parish Council should initiate the formation of a Parish Plan Steering

Committee that would operate separately from the Parish Council. Volunteers were asked to come forward and the steering committee was established in February 2007.

▶ A launch event and art exhibition (see photo) was held in the Ex Servicemen's Village Hall in June 2007. Prior to the day, children attending the 3 village schools were invited to submit artwork for the design of a 'logo' that would be used in publicity for the Parish Plan

▶ Members of the Steering Committee attended village events, meetings and key functions to obtain the views of all age groups on what villagers thought were the key issues of concern and the positives of life in Bloxham using a "love it; hate it" questionnaire.

▶ Information was collected at the Primary School Fete, St Mary's Church Fair, The Village Show, after services at St Mary's Church, the Baptist Church and Spiritualist Church, and from the Scouts & Cubs, Lunch Club, Day Centre and Playbus.

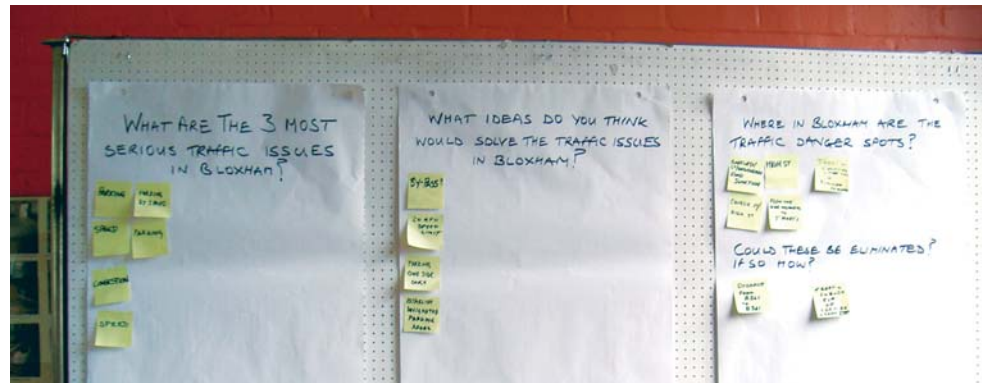
### What is a Community Led Plan?

A Community Led Plan is a process that underpins a community's vision for itself across all aspects of social, environmental and economic life. It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights local needs and contains a detailed action plan to help meet those needs.

These plans are produced by and for communities, based on a detailed survey and consultation which is widely inclusive, prompts action and influences others. Good plans use the Community Led Planning Toolkit framework, are supported by external facilitators from the Rural Community Action Network and include a robust evaluation process that ensures their quality.

## The Process (cont)

▶ Village Businesses were consulted, a traffic survey and bus survey were undertaken and the Warriner School provided details of a traffic survey undertaken by pupils. The Primary School Governors and Bloxham Football Club Committee also provided input.



▶ From the information obtained a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 1,196 households in the village during January and February 2009. Prizes donated by the 3 pubs in the village offered an extra incentive for villagers to return the completed questionnaires. 37 questionnaire distributors were recruited and briefed over mulled wine and nibbles - each personally delivering and collecting questionnaires from every household.

▶ Those questionnaires that could not be collected could also be returned via a collection box in the Village Shops A high return rate of 76% was achieved.

▶ In May 2009 Bloxham School pupils helped to input some of the data gathered from the completed questionnaires. The remaining data was entered by the steering group and with the help of a resident skilled in I.T., analysis was drawn up and a draft plan was produced and circulated.



Although the completed Parish Plan is in its early stages, some actions have already been helped along by the results of the plan.

▶ Dog Bins and Litter Bins have been installed along the main road, with more to come.

▶ A window has been inserted in the bus shelter

▶ The Flood Action Group which was set up in parallel to the Steering Group is able to use results from the plan to help inform their actions.

▶ Police speed checks have been carried out in the village

▶ Support for a Village Event in Bloxham was evidenced in the Parish Plan and the first 'Bloxfest' took place in summer 2010

▶ Feedback and recommendations about future housing development in Bloxham has been shared with Cherwell District Councils Planning Department

## Achievements to date



# Community Led Plan Case Study



## In the Works...

- ▶ The actions in the Parish Plan have been allocated to the existing Parish Council sub groups and their Work Programmes for 2010/11 will reflect these.
- ▶ Distribution of the Parish Plan will take place with the help of the 37 volunteers originally recruited to deliver and collect questionnaires.

## Community Benefits

The Parish plan has attracted positive feedback from residents and in the long-term is helping the Parish Council to focus on the important issues in the village.

Important issues, such as access to the internet for over 55's, the under-reporting of crime, establishing a circular walk, traffic, parking, public transport and the lack of activities for young people are also issues that may not have been flagged up without the Parish Plan.



## Local Authority Engagement

The Parish Council has endorsed the completed Parish Plan and is using the Plan and its information about housing to respond to consultation.

The Steering group has also engaged with the District and County Council throughout the process - from consultation and questionnaire help to engaging local Councillors in issues of importance to the village.



## Going Forward

The Parish Council is continuing to update the Village through the Village Newsletter and a special page for the Parish Plan is being considered.

### Key Advice for Others

- ▶ Run consultation events before the survey to take in the views of as many parts of the community as possible.
- ▶ Before the survey estimate how much data you will have and how you are going to analyse it and the resources you will need to complete the task.
- ▶ Establish a time frame for the whole process but be realistic about expectations.
- ▶ Don't try to reinvent the wheel, there are lots of other village Parish Plans; use their experiences.



### Lessons Learned

- ▶ A high response rate to the questionnaire was a challenge for a large village like Bloxham and it's important not to underestimate the volume of data you may receive, in this case some 700,000 data inputs.
- ▶ The Parish Plan steering group was aware that by asking open questions the analysis would be more difficult; however the group decided they didn't want the questionnaire to be too prescriptive. Some comments, for example, information about street lighting - have been useful to explore where the need is.



*Developing a Parish Plan helps generate community spirit and enables residents to focus on local issues with a view to improving the environment and amenities for all.*

**Keith Janes (Parish Plan Chairman)**



- ▶ A resident who runs courses in access databases was able to help Bloxham analyse their data and to share the programme with the school whose pupils helped key in the data before the summer holidays. Recruiting volunteers in Bloxham was not a problem as key people were involved in the process and were easily able to make contact with others in the village.

This case study forms part of a series evaluating the impacts and benefits of Community Led Plans across the South East. It has been funded and produced by the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC) in partnership with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC). Both are members of the national Rural Community Action Network. [www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)



### Further Information

[www.bloxhamvillage.com](http://www.bloxhamvillage.com)  
[www.oxonrcc.org.uk](http://www.oxonrcc.org.uk)  
[www.sercc.org.uk](http://www.sercc.org.uk)

