

The Worminghall Village Plan

A scenic view of a village path leading to a stone tower in the distance, surrounded by green fields and trees. The path is a narrow, unpaved road that curves through a lush green field. On the left, there is a wooden fence and a large, leafy tree. On the right, there is a smaller tree and a hedge. In the background, a stone tower with a crenellated top stands prominently, surrounded by more trees and a clear sky.

Published Autumn 2014 and to be revised every five years (next revision 2019).
Progress on actions to be reviewed annually by Worminghall Parish Council.



Introduction to the Worminghall Village Plan

WORMINGHALL PARISH COUNCIL began the process of Community Led Planning with a number of open events in the Village Hall. Residents were invited to share what is important to their lives in the village and suggest ideas for matters that villagers should be consulted about, in order to formulate a plan for the future development of Worminghall.

A questionnaire followed and was completed by residents in 2013. Respondents who had expressed an interest in moving the plan forward were then invited to form a steering committee to turn these ideas into action points and produce a plan for the village. The Steering Committee did its best to interpret the responses to the questionnaire and create a vision for the future development of the village. A Draft Plan was drawn up and presented to the village at two dedicated events in June 2014, as well as being made available online. Residents were then encouraged to give their feedback.

The feedback was very positive about the efforts that had been put in to get the Plan to the draft stage. It reinforced the majority of points expressed in the Draft Plan, especially the view that Worminghall should retain a rural feel whilst promoting an active and more vibrant community spirit. It endorsed the great value of the groups and activities that already exist – the Village Fete, the Progressive Supper, the Parents, Carers & Toddlers, Over 50s Lunch, Time Out, the Saturday Café, Christmas Carols, Bookworms, the various Village Hall evenings - and that the village should encourage and enable more of these events.

It is clear that residents regard housing as an important issue; feedback was mixed on this subject. The plan asserts that gentle growth in housing of a more mixed variety is likely to be the best for Worminghall's future as a diverse and thriving community; however, due to the complex nature of housing development, the Village Plan suggests that there should be further and more in-depth consultation with residents before drawing up a specific plan around the number and type of housing that is to be encouraged.

Ss. Peter and Paul Church, The Clifden Arms and the Village Hall are Worminghall's precious remaining assets and the results of the questionnaire, as well as feedback on the Draft Plan, reflect the fact that these are greatly cherished by everyone. The plan emphasises that residents must support and protect these amenities if they are to survive into the future. The village would also benefit from a dedicated recreation space and the plan asserts that this is a top priority. Feedback suggests that this should be sympathetic to a peaceful village atmosphere but that it would be a significant bonus, especially for younger residents who currently have few amenities.

Finally, Worminghall's environment is clearly enjoyed by the majority who live here and we would like to see it enhanced further - with more attractive features such as planting and better signage, with slower through-traffic and with better accessibility for all.

The Steering Committee has attempted to formulate all of the above into this Village Plan. We have listed the issues, made recommendations and outlined a general timescale for when actions should be completed. The intention is that these should be reviewed annually to ensure progress has been achieved. With a joint effort from the Parish Council, village groups and interested individuals, Worminghall can continue to thrive and improve as a village community.

Worminghall Village Plan Steering Committee



How has development changed Worminghall?

I WAS BORN in Oxford and have lived all my life so far in Worminghall, or *Wernal*, as locals refer to it. In the sixties it was a quiet village with the pub and a shop and Post Office kept by Aggie and Tillie Hawes in the terrace of Victorian houses opposite the pub road. The land in front, which is now built on, was a vegetable patch where every square inch was used to produce food, as were most back gardens at that time. There were less than ten children of my age living in the village, and we spent our time fishing, bird nesting and helping on the farm with the harvest and bale cart. It was a happy existence, but there were no amenities for young people at all.

The first major housing development I remember was in the late sixties when the field behind Rose Cottage at the bottom of The Avenue was used to build the houses on the private road. Silvermead followed in 1976, then Old Farm Close, the houses to the east of Clifden Road on 'Ticky' Boyles' land, and the aforementioned Close in front of the old Post Office.

The effect of all these new dwellings was dramatic. Lots of young people moved in and as teenagers we had a youth club in the Village Hall, social events like The Wernal Olympics, The Wheelbarrow Race and The Wernal Players. As well as being a lot of fun these events, organised by the Social Committee, raised a lot of money for local charities, the Village Hall and the Church. For example, every child under 11 was given a Christmas present, distributed at a party by Santa in the form of Bob Spencer (the pub landlord). Those over 11 were taken on excursions to places like Thorpe Park, and the OAPs had a mystery tour and tea party. Worminghall was a very different place when I was a young man compared to my childhood.

Planning policy changed in the 1980s and only infill was allowed in ribbon developments alongside existing roads. This meant that fewer houses could be built compared to a 'close' type of layout. Developers naturally chose the most profitable option, i.e. to build big detached houses like the ones on the old Upper Brook Farm yard, which my father sold on his retirement in 1989. This type of house has dominated all building ever since. With the slowdown in population growth and less mixed housing types, in recent decades the character of the village has changed considerably and it has become almost a dormitory village. The social committee and its associated events have ceased to be and the village shop has gone. Those assets remaining - the Church, the Village Hall, the Clifden Arms - are precious.

So where to now? The majority of questionnaire respondents think Worminghall could sustain small developments of housing in the 'affordable family accommodation' bracket. Neighbouring villages have built new homes like this and seen their village populations become more balanced. A playing field would also be a fantastic asset. It would give people a place to meet and we might even see a football or cricket team develop. I believe we have incorporated the comments and feedback of villagers so that the Plan can now be acted upon to achieve what residents want. Planning rules can be heavily influenced by local opinion and we have all now had our chance to *Have Our Say!*

John Hopcroft, Chair - Worminghall Village Plan Steering Committee



A brief history of Worminghall or 'Wornal'

For sources and further reading please see publications listed on the back page

Roman times. There is some evidence of Roman settlement in the north of the village where a Roman coin of Constantine and some pottery pieces have been found.

Saxon times (up to 11th Century). Our place name of Worminghall comes from the Anglo-Saxon name **Wermelle** (meaning 'nook of land of a man called Wyrma'). The village was *"..held by Eddeva, wife of Woluard, for Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor"*. There was probably a wooden chapel on the site of the present church.

The Norman Conquest (11th-14th centuries). Wermelle is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and shows the village population was *'..26 households' comprising '16 villagers, 6 small holders and 4 slaves'*. The land was held by the French Bishop of Coutances, before being forfeited to the Crown and managed by successive earls, dukes, baroness etc under the feudal system (the village was part of the *Ashendon Hundred*) established by successive Kings before and after the Magna Carta of King John.

Our village church St Peter & St Paul, with its classic Norman nave, doorways, and chancel arch, dates back to 1160 and the bell tower and stained glass windows were added in the 15th century. It was first mentioned in a charter of 1158 from Pope Adrian IV to St. Frideswide's Priory in Oxford to whom it was subsequently gifted. The vicarage was ordained in 1229 and the first vicar was William de Estin - for the past 750 years there has been a vicar of Worminghall (now shared with Shabbington, Ickford and Oakley).

In the 14th century village life prospered when John de la Rivere (1304) succeeded Robert Fitz-Ellys as Lord of the Manor of **Wormehale**, as the village had now become known. A weekly market was held in the village on Thursdays and the tradition started of an Annual Fair and pig roast on the Feast of St Peter (29th June) on the village green. The great hunting grounds of the nearby Bernewode Forest became popular. *"There was once a windmill at Portway.."* which fell into disrepair in the 13th century.

The Middle Ages. We can deduce from old maps and earthworks visible on aerial photographs that the centre of our village was in former times clustered around the church, the vicarage (now converted to two cottages), and the Manor house (rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries and now known as Court Farm), and the village market and fair were probably held on the open area that still exists in front of the church.

The 16th to 18th Centuries. *'In 1525 Henry VIII gave the rectory to Cardinal Wolsey before his fall from grace.'* In 1670 John King, grandson of the Bishop of London, founded the brick and stone Almshouses and charity for six men and four women with the legacy money left by his father, Henry King, the then Bishop of Chichester. A memorial brass to the King Family can be seen in the church.

The Manorial estate of the village, whose name had now become **Worminghale**, belonged to successive noble families, for example seven generations of the Tracy family (*'descendants of Sir William who was one of the Knights who murdered Becket'*) and amongst others, the Fitz-Elys, the Ingleton, the Tyrell, the Tipping and the Horne families (1766 - 1827).

Village growth. Farm development on pastures around the village started from the late 17th century (examples are Court Farm, Lower Brook Farm, Town Farm and Wood Farm), as well as building of an extension to one of the 15th century timber-frame thatched houses which later was turned into the village's Public House. As the village expanded northwards a plot of pasture land behind the Almshouses was used as the village green (now built upon).

The village population increased significantly after the Great Plague of London (possibly due to an exodus towards Oxford) and by 1722 the number of inhabitants in the village was *'259 comprising 45 families'*. The first official census in 1801 confirmed a slow down - *'..266 comprising 61 families in 36 houses'*. In 1851 the records show a higher level of 360.

The 2nd Viscount Clifden (an Irishman named Henry Welbore Agar Ellis) arrived in 1827 to become the most influential Lord of the Manor of Worminghall (also referred to by the name **Wornal** in the 19th century). *'He set about many tasks including thoroughly repairing and restoring the church, opening a school*'* (today it is our Village Hall), *'..had the farmland properly drained, had dry roads constructed and made improvements to the farm workers' cottages.'* After his death in 1836 the good work was continued by his family estate until 1911. His legacy lives on in the life of the village through The Clifden Arms and Clifden Road.

* further reading *"History of Worminghall"* by former headmaster Joseph Tanner (1884).

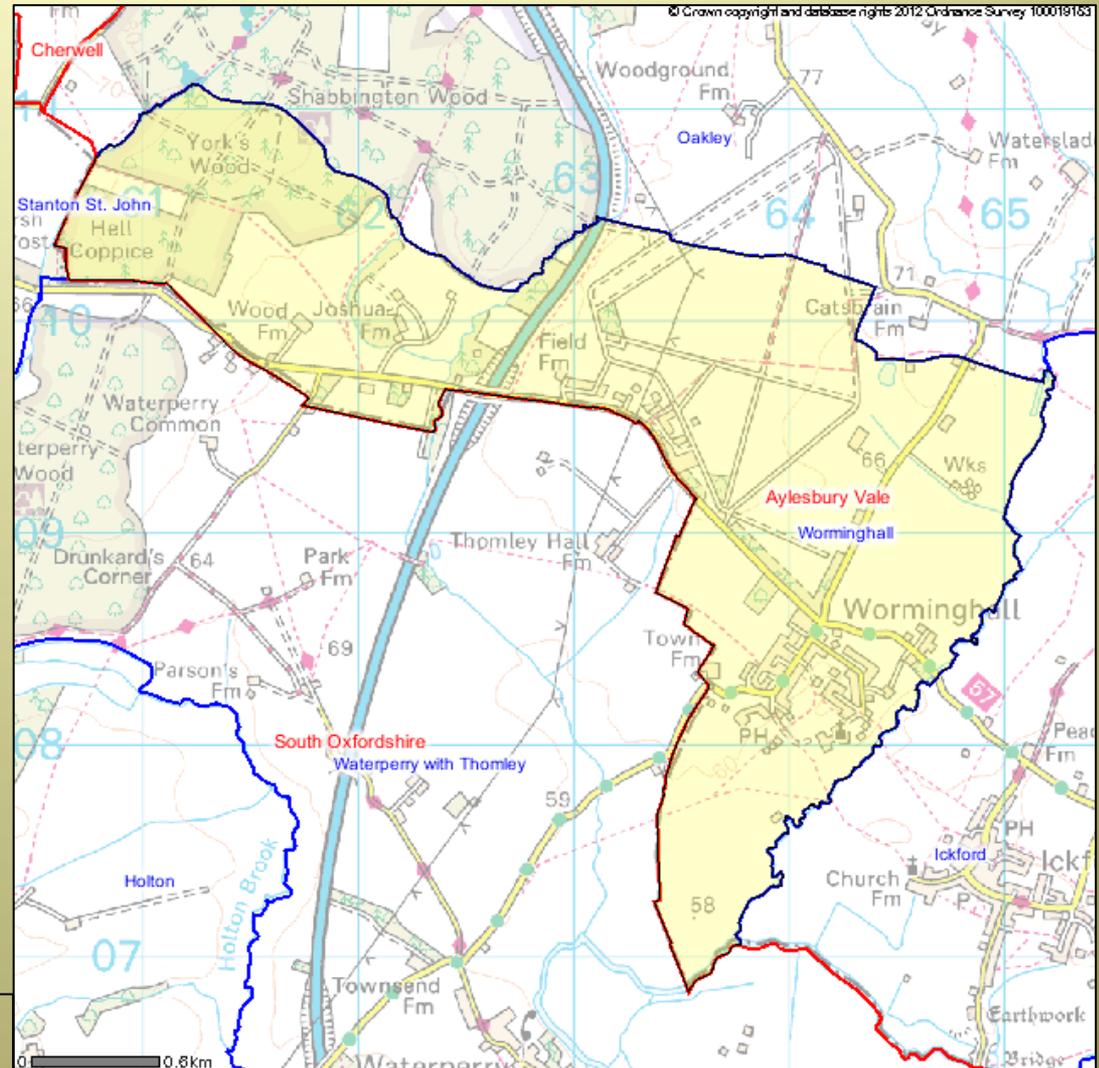
The 20th Century. Many locals still refer to **Worminghall** with the old pronunciation 'Wornal'. This is also the name used for the 'Wornal Industrial Park' which has been created for private enterprise on land formerly used as an airfield site during WW2. In 1942-45 it served as a training ground for Wellington bomber crews and became the reception place for Dakotas and Lancaster planes returning with thousands of repatriated POWs.

A note on the Plan from the Parish Council

“OUR RESIDENTS FIRMLY express the overall desire to improve the amenities, facilities and community groups in our village. The demand and use of such amenities, facilities and community groups will follow the gentle growth in housing and numbers of residents living in Wормinghall, alongside a younger age demographic of our village.

“The delivery of this plan will therefore require a careful balance between the provision of such services alongside creating the environment for the increased demand and use of such services. For example, with an increased demand and use for improved bus services the bus companies will be more likely to improve the services to Wормinghall. This will be a big challenge.”

Worminghall Parish Council, May 2014



Worminghall's parish boundary

Priority issues for the Village Plan

Residents who responded to the questionnaire indicated which aspect of village life was **most important** to them. The issues were ranked as follows:

1. Housing
2. Facilities
3. Footpaths and traffic
4. Road surfacing
5. Facilities for the young
6. Speeding
7. Flooding on roads
8. Other (cycle ways, shop, faster broadband, bus to Oxford)





A Vision for Action in Worminghall

An overview of the priority issues

The **Worminghall Village Plan** recommends the following four visions for change in our village to ensure its future as a thriving and active community:

Housing:

Top priority is to encourage a broader mix of age groups within the village, especially young families, by supporting more affordable housing.

Community Facilities and Groups:

Top priorities are to support and protect our three key assets, and to provide a recreational space and play area in the village.

Traffic and Connectivity:

Top priorities are to slow down traffic passing through the village and to achieve access to faster internet broadband.

Environment:

Top priorities are to improve the quality and accessibility of the footpaths and enhance the visual attractiveness of the village.



Housing:

The Plan for future housing development and population growth in Worminghall

THE ISSUE

Expansion: The consultations with residents identify a desire for the village population to grow in order that our community can thrive.

Development: The consultations show it is important to residents that Worminghall retains its rural character.

Affordability: Residents expressed a need for more affordable starter homes for younger residents and for families with children.

Further consultation: A detailed survey is required on the Plan's top priority issue in order to achieve a balance for residents between a plan for development and the retention of Worminghall's rural character.

THE PLAN

The **Plan** identifies Housing as a priority issue for residents. The committee envisages that village life would benefit if future development allowed for a gentle growth in population, a broader mix of age groups and younger families living in Worminghall. This would enrich village life, build a more active community and allow the village to support its key assets so that they can survive.

The **Plan** recommends new housing is limited to within the village parameters and to **small-scale** developments. Residents suggested the following possible sites: near the crossroads, opposite Kings Close or land behind The Clifden Arms.

The **Plan** recommends that any new housing developments must cater for starter and family homes. If any infill or conversion properties become available, then smaller affordable homes should also be given development priority.

The **Plan** recommends that the views of villagers should be canvassed again in more detail on Housing in order to clarify what is meant by "starter" and "affordable" homes, as well as "small-scale development", so that a plan can be formulated.

PRIORITY ACTION

Over the next five years
High
Parish Council /Community Impact Bucks to invite the Rural Housing Enabler to scope the possibility of a rural exception scheme for Worminghall.

High
PC to give due consideration to this in its planning decisions

Immediate
Rural Housing Enabling Service to complete a Housing Needs Survey.

Community Facilities and Groups:

The Plan for supporting and enhancing amenities and social events in Worminghall

THE ISSUE

Village Meeting Places: The questionnaire has demonstrated the high value that residents place on the village's meeting places.

Recreation and Play Area: Demand for a recreation and child play area was identified by a campaign in 2009 and the responses to the questionnaire confirm that a majority want this.

Facilities for the Young: There is an expressed desire among residents for more community activities including a Youth Club and events for young people in the village.

Neighbourhood Watch: Concern has been reported over recent break-ins to homes and parked cars.

THE PLAN

This **Village Plan** reinforces the need to maintain and support the village's three essential social resources: the **Church**, the **Village Hall** and the **Pub** (Clifden Arms). The addition of a village shop would be another desirable benefit to serve the community if it could be run as a financially viable business.

The **Plan** supports the demand for the provision of public land for a village recreation and play area. This must also be a pre-requisite for future housing development and the desired growth in the number of families living within the village. Suitable land or vacant space must be identified within the village and a partnership with a landowner and/or developer formed.

The **Village Hall** is a highly valued community facility and the **Plan** calls for full support of its ongoing use and maintenance. Social groups and events based at the hall, such as the 'Parent, Carer & Toddler' group (which is fulfilling a need for a playgroup and social network for new parents), the Saturday Cafe, the Thursday Timeout, Film Evenings, luncheons for older residents and so on are all supported by the **Plan**. More events for young people, indoors and outdoors are wanted.

The **Plan** supports the village's Neighbourhood Watch initiative and considers it appropriate that all residents apply a 'No Cold Calling' rule. Residents should be made aware of the Thames Valley Alert scheme.

PRIORITY ACTION

Immediate Introduce a Welcome Pack for new residents.

Immediate PC to approach landowners and consider funding options such as a Public Works Loan.

High PC to consider funding a youth sub-committee to plan its own events.

Medium PC/Bernwode News to increase resident awareness

Traffic and Connectivity:

The Plan for better traffic management, transport and internet access in Worminghall

THE ISSUE	THE PLAN	PRIORITY	ACTION
Traffic: Residents expressed serious concerns about potential accidents due to the speed of traffic through the village, especially the risk to children and pedestrians at the sharp bend by the road to The Clifden Arms; to drivers at the Ickford Road crossroads, and along the Menmarsh Road, including at Wornal Park.	The Village Plan endorses the Parish Council's installation of a speed calming device and 30mph sign in Clifden Road and on Menmarsh Road. Additional speed calming measures must also be reviewed along the roads to Oakley, and Ickford especially as the village grows.	In progress	PC to monitor situation in partnership with BCC Highways. PC / Bernwode News to increase resident awareness.
Potholes and Flooding: The poor condition of the road surface is of concern to drivers and a safety risk to the many cyclists that pass through the village.	The Plan encourages residents to report cracks and potholes and calls on the relevant authorities to set higher road maintenance and safety standards. In addition the Parish Council should liaise with local authorities and landowners to resolve the issue of regular flooding of access roads into the village.	Immediate	PC to monitor situation in partnership with BCC Highways. PC to publicise Pothole reporting hotline.
Public Transport: Many of the village's older residents and young adults who do not drive, and also parents with children, would like to have more regular bus services to Thame (shopping, friends etc), Haddenham (rail station), Aylesbury and Oxford (schools, shops, entertainment).	The Plan recognises that an attraction of living in Worminghall is its proximity to towns, markets, culture and so on. The bus service should support younger and older residents and families. Local authorities should be asked to increase the range of services that stop in Worminghall.	Medium	PC to organise setting up a transport action group, possibly in conjunction with other villages.
Broadband: A significant number of residents would like to receive faster broadband.	The Plan presses for an action programme to study how neighbouring villages have achieved faster speeds and how improvements can be implemented in Worminghall.	Medium	Volunteer expert to drive project forward.
Car Parking: There is some concern about the increasing trend to park cars on pavements and block the path of pushchairs, wheelchairs and emergency vehicles.	The Plan requests residents be mindful of keeping access free for pushchairs, wheelchairs and emergency vehicles when pavement parking is necessary.	Low	PC / Bernwode News to increase awareness.

Environment:

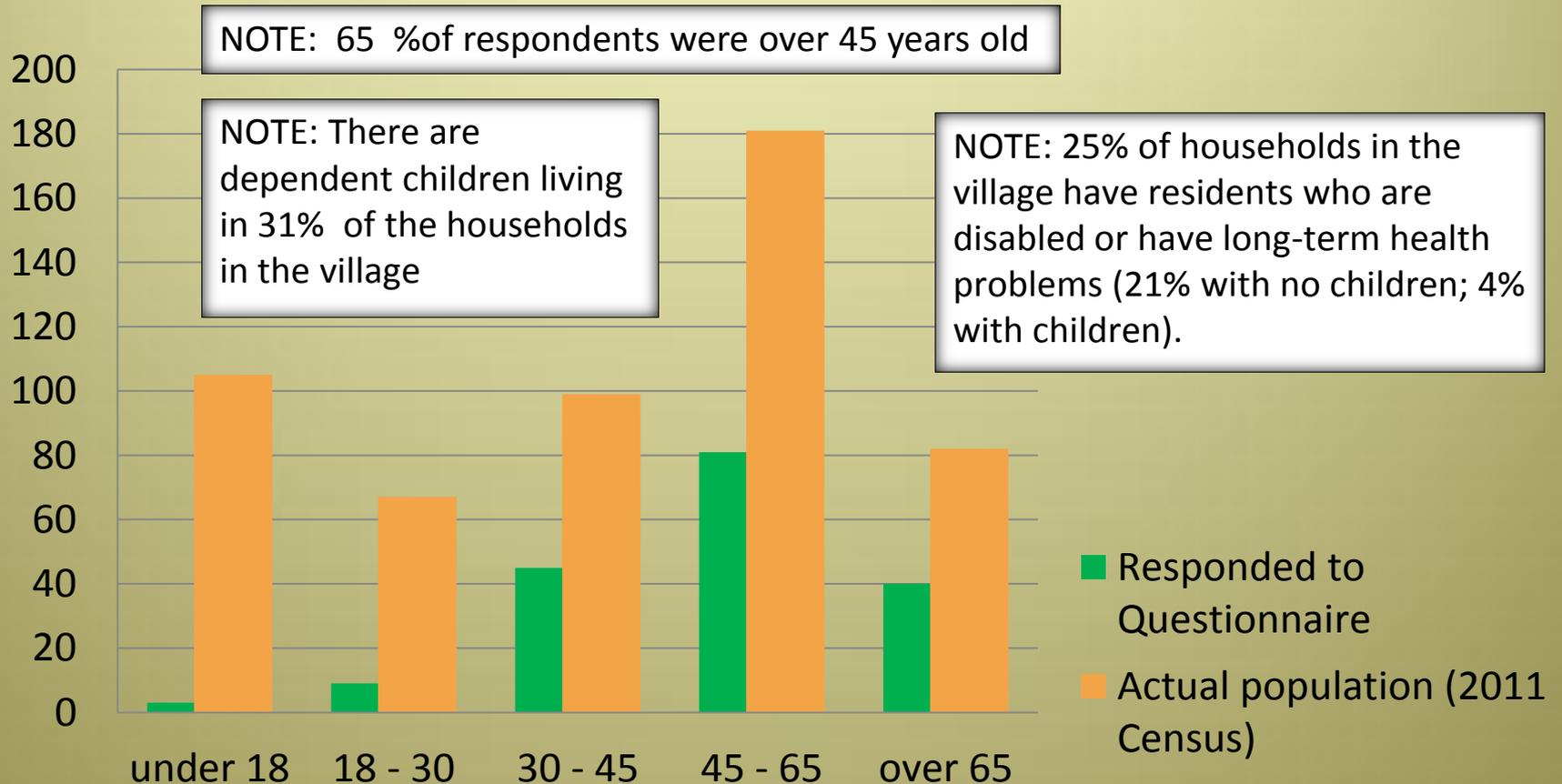
The Plan for improving the appearance and enjoyment of Worminghall's environment

THE ISSUE	THE PLAN	PRIORITY	ACTION
<p>Appearance: Residents would like to see improvements to the visual appearance of the village, particularly upon entering and driving through.</p>	<p>The new village entrance signs with attractive planting have had a big impact on the visual appearance of Worminghall and meet some of The Plan's objectives for the environment. In addition, the Almshouse verges and the land at the crossroads would benefit from planting. Local authorities/landowners must ensure hedges are regularly cut back and ditches kept clear.</p>	In progress	PC to appoint a volunteer action group and provide funding for bulbs etc.
<p>Footpaths: Existing footpath routes are considered adequate and are well used but improvements are necessary to ensure accessibility for all.</p>	<p>The Plan asks that good access for pushchairs and disabled residents is made a top priority so that Worminghall can be enjoyed by all. This will require an investment in accessible gating to enable a circular walk from Clifden Road to the Church and back via the Avenue and weather-proofing of paths around gated areas. In addition, the footpath to Ickford should be accessible to walkers all year round.</p>	High	PC to appoint a volunteer action group and budget for funding of improvements.
<p>Tidiness: As well as improving tidiness the village needs more litter bins/dog bins.</p>	<p>The Plan recommends that additional litter bins, including bins for bagged dog litter, should be installed near to the Church and the Pub. A village clean-up day should be held once a year to show the village's commitment to an improved environment.</p>	High	PC to purchase and install additional bins and coordinate volunteers for litter-picking.
<p>Pavements: Many pavements in the village are uneven and there is a need for extra pavements.</p>	<p>The Plan recommends creating a safe pavement extension to the Clifden Arms, creating a paved footpath all the way to the Church, and ensuring regular maintenance of footpaths for safer and easier walking for all.</p>	Medium	PC to liaise with BCC / landowners.
<p>Lighting: Current levels of street lighting are adequate but there may be a case for more street lighting as the village grows.</p>	<p>The Plan draws attention to the eventual need for additional or improved street lighting at three locations: the Ickford Road crossroads, The Avenue and at the pub end of Clifden Rd.</p>	Low	PC to monitor
<p>Bonfires: Inconveniences were reported by a significant number of residents.</p>	<p>The Plan recommends residents adopt a good neighbour 'bonfire etiquette', details of which should be circulated to all households.</p>	Low	PC / Bernwode News to increase resident awareness

APPENDIX

The 2014 questionnaire and the 2011 Census data

189 village residents (35 % of the Wормinghall population of 543* people / 214* households) responded to the 2014 questionnaire



* source 2011 Census

Accessing our Village Plan

This Worminghall Village Plan is available online:

www.facebook.com/worminghallaction

www.worminghallaction.weebly.com

Publications on life in Worminghall

- **History of Worminghall** by Joseph Tanner (1884) - dedicated to Viscountess Clifden; reprinted 1991 with proceeds to Worminghall Church.
- **History of St Peter & St Paul Church, Worminghall** by Anne Sharpe (resident), illustrations by Norman Pace (1979 and 2000).
- **Worminghall (Wornall) in the 1920s** by V.E.Hawes (1991)
- **The Bucks Village Boy** by Vic Hawes (resident) (1994)



Acknowledgements

The Steering Committee consisted of:

Grace Blackwell, Joanna Botha, Matt Grierson, John Hopcroft, Ramsay Hovell, Nick Hughes, David McBain, Laura Merry, Carol Robson, David Small, Mark Tasker

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Finally, thank you to all the residents of Worminghall who completed questionnaires or gave feedback.