

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, BUILDING ON THE PAST

Parish plan for Norton St Philip





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Reference is made in the text to a **Supplement**. This contains additional information relating to various sections and is available separately.

Introduction by Paddy Rich

CHAIRMAN, NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL

In order to guide the future development of our village the Parish Council commenced a Village Appraisal and a Village Design Statement in the late 1990s, to build on the Conservation Area statement already completed by Mendip District Council.

This work was soon overtaken by the new-style Parish Plans, supported by the Countryside Agency, which were introduced at the end of 2001.

Work started in earnest soon after on our own Plan which, with Mendip District Council's blessing, is intended to form supplementary planning guidance for all future planning applications within the parish.

At last, after much work we have finished the main document and supplement. Many people have been involved since the Plan process first took shape and the Parish Council is grateful to all who have contributed.

In particular I would like to thank those who hosted the table-top discussions and open meetings, members of the special interest groups and of course the Parish Plan Steering Group, who were given terms of reference by the Parish Council and asked to take the Plan forward.

The content and conclusions of the Plan result directly from villagers' input throughout the process. Although I'm sure we don't have all the answers to the future of our village, the plan is a living document and can be amended as and when circumstances dictate.

What the Plan has done is to give us, as a village, the opportunity of saying not only what we need, but also what we want. I am, personally, hugely excited at the part the Parish Plan will play in the future development and maintenance of our lovely and historic conservation village.

Paddy Rich

February 2005

Why a Parish Plan?

The aim of the Norton St Philip Parish Plan, part of the Countryside Agency's Vital Villages Initiative, is to discover how residents want the local community to develop in the future and to identify the actions needed to achieve this result. It is hoped that the process will bind the community together and that the report will be a source of strength when dealing with local and regional government, especially in planning matters.

Norton was an early adopter of the Parish Plan. A representative Steering Group was set up under the auspices of the Parish Council (PC) to direct the work.

The parish includes Farleigh Hungerford and Hassage. The main focus of this Plan is on the village of Norton St Philip.

Method

An innovative Village Appraisal programme, fully endorsed by the Countryside Agency, was developed in order to reach as many people in the village as possible. Everybody in the parish was invited to a series of 'Round the Kitchen Table' discussions in 40 different homes in the village. Over 70% of the adult population attended and were given a map of the village, topic sheets and stick-on notes to enable them to record their input. Discussions centred on the key elements of thriving villages as identified by the Countryside Agency. Records of all the meetings were summarised on large sheets.

The full list of these topics is given in Supplement, section 1.

At an open exhibition in the Palaiet Hall, topic sheets were displayed, summarising the areas of concern that had emerged. People were encouraged to indicate their own priorities for the village by posting 30 adhesive coloured dots each among the topic(s). Over 180 attended, including 10 under 18s. Despite some reservation about possible overlap in the topics, this process was judged to have produced a comprehensive record of residents' views on the future of the village at that time. These topic sheets are referred to throughout this plan.

The detailed results of the exhibition, topic by topic, are given in Supplement, section 2.

The results were detailed in a progress report to the Parish Council in July 2002 and formed the basis of a newsletter to villagers in November of that year. After a thorough review, and feedback from the Countryside Agency, interest groups were appointed to develop the themes, incorporate statistics that had emerged from the survey and produce individual reports. These reports form the basis of the Plan. Several versions of this were produced and revised during the second half of 2004 and the final version was completed early in 2005. The Parish Council were able to obtain funding from the Countryside Agency and part of this has been used to fund the Plan's compilation.

In some sections of the Plan, eg housing, additional information from other sources was available and this is identified and included.



>ACTION PLANS

Each section concludes with action point(s), which it is intended will turn the recommendations of this document into reality. For each of the identified action points in the plan, the PC intends to enlist an individual villager who will 'own' that issue, ensuring that action is taken and followed up as appropriate, in consultation with the PC.

The majority of action points have associated timing statements. Unless otherwise stated, all timing statements (eg 'within 3 months') relate to the date of formal publication of the plan. Where there is no timing statement, the action point is a policy to be continuously applied.

Enjoying the Open Day on Church Mead



Background

Village setting

Norton St Philip is a medium-sized village in the north-east corner of Somerset, on the edge of the Mendip Hills. It has a population of approximately 900 in around 310 households. The nearest towns are Frome (seven miles), Bradford on Avon (six miles), Midsomer Norton/Radstock (eight miles) and Trowbridge (six miles). Bath is eight miles away. Norton St Philip village has two pubs, a garage, a primary school, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, chapel, village hall and a recreation area known as Church Mead. The village shop and post office closed as this report was being finalised.

The majority of those in employment commute to the surrounding towns. In addition to farming, some local work is provided by firms working in areas such as publishing, graphic design and conference organisation. Others are engaged in electrical work, plumbing, building, shoemaking, gardening, painting and decorating. The garage has a filling station and substantial contract vehicle hire business. There is a considerable retired population.

A detailed list of local employment can be found in Supplement, section 3.

A number of groups operate within this active village, including a cricket club, drama club, pre-school, circuit training, Royal British Legion and Women's Institute.

A bus service connecting Bath and Frome runs through the village.

Village history

The Manor of Norton with Hinton is listed in the Domesday Book. Hinton lies two miles north and it was here that a Carthusian Priory was founded in 1232.

The Priory made Norton St Philip its trading estate. The George Inn predated the monks by a few years, but it was the Priors of Hinton who extended it and turned it into one of the most famous inns in England. Here they developed a trade in wool and cloth, based on the flocks of sheep that they kept on the downland around Norton.

The George, a focus for development up the hill from the earlier settlement by the church of St Philip and St James, not only accommodated those who came to the important wool fairs (held annually from 1255, with regular markets from 1291) but, in an upper storey, provided the wool trading floor itself.

Norton, with its market cross, came to be described as a town. The population at its height is believed to have been at least ten times what it is today. There were 11 pubs and extensive strip farming in four-acre blocks, evidence of which can still be found to the left of the drive up to Norwood Farm. The fairs and markets continued when the manor passed into secular hands at the Reformation, though by the 1650s both the cloth trade and the market were said to be in decline.

Norton hit the headlines in 1685 during the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion against his uncle, King James II. Though Monmouth was successful in his skirmish at Norton, once the rebellion was over scores were settled and a dozen men were tried, probably by Judge Jeffreys. They were hanged in Bloody Close, behind the Fleur de Lys, an inn since 1584.

Eventually the cloth market ceased, but a cattle market continued until 1902. As Norton was on a turnpike crossroads it attracted considerable coaching traffic. In



North Street looking towards the George Inn



this way the village continued largely undisturbed in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries and, while there is evidence of plenty of Victorian building and an extensive, some would say over-restoration of the parish church, much of the medieval street pattern remains, as do individual dwellings.

Recent history

After the Second World War, and particularly from the 1970s onwards, Norton saw increasing numbers of incomers, with the result that the nature of the village and of employment changed considerably. Those engaged in farming became fewer, and other employment opportunities also declined as businesses closed or moved away.

Notable amongst these was Automowers (later T.H. White of Frome), on the site of what is now the Monmouth Paddock housing development. The old dairy, subsequently occupied by hygiene products company J. Mullet & Co., is now the site of another small housing development, Norton Grange.

Right up until the 1980s the village had several shops – the Haven Stores in Church Street, another grocer (formerly the Co-op) in what is now Northmead House in the High Street and a newsagent and sweet shop next to the Fleur de Lys. The Post Office stores on Bell Hill survived until the start of 2005. At the top of Bell Hill the modern Catholic church had an old wooden hall, effectively a second village hall. All have now gone and the village is the poorer for their loss.

While shops declined, housing increased. The relatively dense terraced housing fronting the streets was supplemented with detached dwellings, singly or in small developments. The bungalows off Tellisford Lane were added in the '60s, as were those in Fairclose, down the side of Bell Hill. In the last quarter century 58 dwellings, an increase of 20%, have been built in Norton. These are looked at in more detail in the **Character of Building Development** section.

The chief exception to the outward flow of businesses was the establishment of a poultry packing station at the south end of the High Street in 1959. The history of the site and a discussion of its implications for future development in the village are dealt with in the **Faccenda Site** section.

**A view of Norton St Philip
from the South West**

Environment

>Environment ACTION PLAN

- PC will, in collaboration with District Councillor, clarify prospects for extension of kerbside recycling facilities and establish what complementary collection facilities should be made available within the village
Timing: 1 month

- PC will initiate discussion with Mendip planning officers as to how we can ensure new build or restoration reflects the importance of protecting existing wildlife / creating new habitats / planting more trees and shrubs, wherever practicable
Timing: 3 months

- PC will establish working group to survey the village with a view to determining what further street lighting is needed and whether existing lighting is appropriate
Timing: 3 months to initiate action; 6 months for report

- PC will strive to ensure that any new street lighting in the village is
 - a) specific to pedestrian needs and safety
 - b) low level, environmentally sensitive, avoiding light pollution and intrusion

- PC will initiate dialogue with Somerset CC to agree how recommendations of the lighting working group can be implemented, and on what timetable
Timing: 3 months after completion of report

While the consultation process showed that there is a high degree of satisfaction with the environment of the village, some key concerns emerged. The major one – the intrusion of growing levels of traffic and the need for safer pedestrian routes – is dealt with under **Traffic and Transport**.

Strong concern was expressed about the look and cleanliness of the village, maintenance of the historic buildings and intrusion of overhead cables. Every opportunity should be sought to put electricity and telephone cables underground.

There was some support for investigation of renewable forms of power generation, as long as sensitivity to the historic built environment was maintained.

There was a strong call for more village-based collection of recyclable materials. The survey preceded the introduction of fortnightly collections.

Despite appreciation of the existing environment there was support for further tree planting and wildlife habitat creation and protection.

Street Lighting To light or not to light has long been a debating point. In the consultation it emerged that, while it was not a major issue, more people wished to see increased lighting than didn't.



Traffic

The conflict between road traffic, pedestrian safety and environmental quality is the issue that featured most strongly in the consultation process. Residents saw through-traffic as the prime cause of environmental deterioration but also felt that any new development should take into account the impact on traffic from the outset.

Residents support a total approach to the traffic situation, combining careful overall design of pavements and provision of more safe opportunities to get around the village. There was strong feeling against the clumsy engineering solutions of chicanes and speed bumps.

When managing the village's large numbers of cars a balance must be struck between the requirement of motorists to park near their homes and the equally important need for pedestrians and cyclists to circulate freely. Adequate car parking must not infringe unduly on the preservation of open spaces.

The Plan's action proposals also reflect the work of a Parish Council-sponsored group, whose report, entitled *Reclaiming the Streets*, was adopted by the Parish Council and unanimously endorsed by villagers at a public meeting shortly prior to the consultation process.

Following its adoption, the Parish Council set up the Traffic Action Group to manage traffic issues. A survey by the group confirmed the great number of pedestrian movements around the village throughout the day and evening and that the existing footways were inadequate and unsafe. Plans to improve the footways at eleven locations were submitted to Somerset County Council Highways Department in May 2003. Five of the locations were accepted as being inadequate. Two of the locations were subject to a review of land ownership. Work has been carried out so far to improve the standard of the pavement at two locations:

- The area in front of The Plaine is now much safer for pedestrian use.
- A new footpath to the A366 has been installed at the side of the Fleur

This is a good start but a lot more footpath improvements are needed before it is safe to walk around the village.

The Traffic Action Group has laid the foundation for a campaign to ban large goods vehicles from the A366, in the form of a document submitted to Somerset County Council. This document makes a strong case for a 17 tonne weight limit by demonstrating that the presence of LGVs on the narrow, winding streets of a conservation village conflicts with several policies stated in the Somerset Local Transport Plan.

If a weight limit is not forthcoming, redesignation of the road as a B road would be a worthwhile step in the right direction, signalling to LGV drivers the true nature of the route.

The case for a 17 tonne weight restriction is given in Supplement, section 4

Speed of traffic is a major concern for pedestrian movement in the village. In consultation with the police, volunteers have been trained to monitor the speed of traffic at specified points on the A366 and the B3110 with the use of a speed gun, which has been purchased jointly with Hemington Parish Council. Motorists exceeding the speed limit are reported to the police, who issue warning notices.

Good progress has been made in introducing progressive speed reduction signs.



>Traffic ACTION PLAN

- PC will brief Traffic Action Group on the need for production by that group of a brief paper summarising proposals to encourage motorists to use the A36 to bypass the village. Paper to be distributed to Somerset CC, B&NES, Hinton PC and all other interested parties as a basis for renewed dialogues with those parties

Timing: 1 month to initiate action; further 6 months to distribution of paper

- whenever the opportunity arises the PC will continue to campaign for a speed limit of 20mph in the centre of the village

- PC will reconsider and restate its demands for additional and improved footways in the village (see Supplement, section 10 for details) and secure from Somerset CC an agreed timetable for the provision of these footways

Timing: 1 month to restate demands; further 3 months to secure timetable

- PC will press Somerset CC for a formal response to its Case for a New Weight Limit of 17 tonnes on A366 with a view to securing a timetable for dealing with the weight restriction issue

Timing: 1 month to request response; further 3 months to secure timetable

- PC will take every opportunity to encourage the owner of the Faccenda site to include in future development plans garages for cars belonging to High Street properties with no garage

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- PC will open a dialogue with Somerset CC about operation and maintenance of the existing traffic calming scheme with the aim of reaching a clear agreement designed to maintain the scheme in a safer and visually acceptable form
Timing: 1 month to open dialogue; further 6 months to secure agreement

- PC will commission a consultant's report on management of traffic on the B3110 and in particular the High Street, with a view to replacement of the existing chicanes with a new traffic calming scheme capable of securing lower traffic speeds while causing fewer accidents

Timing: 3 months to commission; further 6 months to replacement

>Transport ACTION PLAN

- PC will establish a dialogue with the operators of the bus services through the village with the aim of securing their cooperation in providing services that work to a more user-oriented timetable and are better used as a result
Timing: 3 months to establish dialogue

The 30 mph signs have been moved further away from the village on all inward routes and these have recently been supplemented by 40 mph signs further out still. Twenty mile per hour areas in the village centre have yet to be achieved.

Ten years ago traffic-calming chicanes were introduced on the B3110 at both ends of the village. The scheme is perceived locally as having created at least as many problems as it has solved and the chicanes have been the sites of numerous accidents and one fatality. An evaluation of alternative schemes already in place in villages near Norton St Philip will be made as a first step to identifying an alternative solution. Solutions supported in the consultation process included speed cushions, improved road marking and installing speed cameras.

A radical solution to excessive and increasing traffic on the B3110 appears to depend on an integrated solution involving Woolverton and Hinton Charterhouse as well as Norton. To keep drivers wishing to skirt Bath on the A36 and discourage them from coming through the village may require a relief road on the Bath side of Hinton Charterhouse.

Transport

First Bus service 267/767 from Bath to Frome runs hourly through the village in either direction throughout the day. Faresaver also operates an hourly service (also numbered 267), but this does not mean that the village enjoys a half-hourly service; Faresaver runs minutes before the First Bus service. Whilst the young in particular like the latter's cheaper fare (and, if travelling to Frome, the fact that it goes direct and not via Rode) it would appear that this form of 'under-running' is designed to minimise the operator's risk while maximising his revenue and does not provide the best service for the village. This bus does not run during evenings or at weekends.

The First Bus service presently operates in the evenings and at weekends, but the subsidy for these services was recently threatened with withdrawal. The continuance of the service is considered to be an important element in maintaining the village as a viable base for all, rather than simply as a dormitory for the car-driving commuter (see also section on **The Young**).

'The Ridings' car scheme, staffed by local volunteers, is used by those without cars, particularly the elderly. For a village such as Norton St Philip, only six miles from its nearest market town and with a high level of commuting, there should be a regular half-hourly bus service to reduce the need for car use and to encourage old and young alike to travel independently.

THE RIDINGS VOLUNTARY CAR SERVICE

Covering
NORTON ST PHILIP
HINTON CHARTERHOUSE
FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD

Provides transport for the elderly or for people who have no access to public or private transport, for visits to the doctor, hospital, social trips etc.

BOOKINGS
Mavis Bennett
01225 722699

Funded by voluntary donations
Charity No.1049339

Character of new building development



Those responding were generally content about this issue, but keen that new build should fit well into the existing environment and should show awareness of current policy guidelines and statements of commonly accepted good practice in a village setting.

Some of the topics raised are dealt with in the section on **Energy Efficiency**, but the design of new buildings and extensions and the enhancement of the built environment fall into the current section. While the Parish Plan is not an architectural design manual, it is important to focus on the major issues of density, character, materials and external spaces.

Two key documents provide guidance on how to extend, modify or build new buildings within or outside conservation areas or on brownfield sites in villages.

- Conservation Area Statement – Norton St Philip ¹

This well researched document provides guidance on how the village can retain its character in the future. The amendments it proposes to the conservation area were subsequently adopted.

- Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (PPG3) ²

A note of relevant planning guidance is given in Supplement, section 5

A key target of this guidance is to promote good design in new housing developments in order to create attractive, high quality living environments in which people will choose to live.

Building Density

The character of much of the village is based on relatively high density housing in terraces fronting the pavements of the main streets. A significant number of low-density detached houses have been established on the periphery since the 1970s.

High density need not mean a lowering of design quality.

>New building development ACTION PLAN

- PC will initiate a discussion with Mendip development control officers of the recommendations set out in this section in order to agree appropriate planning guidance against which planning applications relating to the parish can be assessed

Timing: 3 months

References

¹ Conservation Area Statement – Norton St Philip, Mendip District Council: circa 1995

² Notes for National Land Use: Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing: March 2000



Church Street: interesting disorder



Town Barton: dormer windows or in-line roof lights?



A cast iron rain water pipe

Right and far right: good material and design quality at Maple Cottage and The Old Police House

Building Design Character

The Conservation Area Statement amply describes the character of existing buildings. The terraces in the High Street, North Street, Church Street and Bell Hill demonstrate a varied mix of styles made up of a range of roof, chimney, wall, window and door designs and finishes. The result is interesting disorder.

To complement and contribute to the character mix, new buildings should be designed with good proportions, variable roof heights, step backs, recesses, differing window and door sizes, designs and colours, and a mix of materials. Innovative contemporary designs which respect their environment would be welcomed.

When converting roof space, dormer windows are to be preferred, particularly if similar to existing examples in the village. If in-line roof lights are used, they should be placed on rear elevations.

Existing houses are predominantly two storey, in single ownership. To respond to changing needs, new two- or possibly three-storey buildings should be built to accommodate single-floor housing for the elderly, small affordable units for the young or housing for people who have no desire for gardens.

Innovative designs for higher density accommodation could include arched entrances into courtyards with smaller units accessed off the courtyard. These would create a sense of security.

A particular challenge is to keep cars off the streets and to provide parking areas and garaging to an acceptable design standard. Garages could be incorporated into or under houses. Strategic landscaping may help to screen parking areas.

Economical housing should be encouraged without adversely affecting site layouts or the external architectural design and material quality of individual buildings.

When considering devices such as solar collector panels located on the outside of buildings, the design impact should be considered.

Fittings such as porches, canopies and conservatories should be selected for material and design quality to ensure compatibility with the character of the building.



Building Materials



Left:
Mixed finishes in the
High Street

Natural stone slabs at Manor
Farm House



Natural stone should always be the first choice for walls and window and door surrounds for new buildings. Where stone walling has, in the past, failed to keep out the damp, rendered finishes or stone paint have been applied. Coloured render is not common, but would not be out of place in a mixed finish development.

Many former stone roofs have been replaced with slate and clay double roman tiles and some pantiles, all of which are appropriate for new or extended buildings. Concrete tiles should be discouraged as being too regular in appearance.

Older buildings that have been rendered over random stone walls to improve weathering qualities have generally turned dark grey. The village would actively support measures to replace or cover-up these rendered surfaces.

The village would actively support the use of reclaimed building materials – which should help buildings blend into the village environment within a shorter period of time.

External Spaces

Stone boundary walls should be preferred to painted or stained timber. Gates should be in stained or natural timber or painted metal. Landscaping of hard areas should include traditional stone slabs and granite sets rather than asphalt or tarmac.

Trees, shrubs and other durable soft landscaping should be protected and new planting and landscaped areas encouraged.

Street furniture, including street lighting, signs, litter bins, bollards, etc should be selected to meet appropriate practicality, durability and aesthetic needs.

Previous village reports have advised of an urgent need to reduce the number of overhead electricity and telephone cables and poles. These problems have been addressed in recent housing developments but there is a need to encourage utility companies to place services underground for all new and extended buildings.

Pantiles and painted metal
gates at The Old Hopyard



Utility cables and poles in
North Street



Energy efficiency and renewables

Local concerns

Concern for the environment was a major issue for villagers in the survey. Issues that attracted particular attention were

- Refuse, maintenance and recycling facilities
- footpath design and accessibility
- use of low energy alternatives
- enhancement of the built environment
- design of new buildings and extensions

In this section local architects have set these concerns against the background of current government thinking and the Mendip District Local Plan, to see what is practicable.

>Energy efficiency ACTION PLAN

- future development to show awareness of current thinking and seek to incorporate practicable renewable energy opportunities
- PC to encourage formal use of car sharing for regular, duplicated journeys by villagers

References

¹ Architecture for Today EcoTech
8 November 2003: Insulation
Choices

² Third Conference of Parties to
the Framework Convention on
Climate Change (FCCC) Kyoto
Japan December 1997

³ Architecture for Today October
1995: Timber Suppliers' Forestry
Policies

⁴ The United Kingdom Ecolabelling
Board Regulations 1992

Energy resources

Wind and Hydro Wind turbines and electricity from water sources are not locally practicable. Use of water from the Wellow Brook would require various landowners' agreement.

Solar energy Designers are the key to increasing the use of solar, as the industry is not receptive to the concept. Villagers would be encouraged by having more information on the long-term savings that solar energy could bring.

Biomass Farmers could well make use of this easily-available fuel source which requires no planning permission (though the plant does).

Heat pumps Are already in use locally and should be further encouraged.

Energy in dwellings Accounts for 30% of all energy consumed in the UK; 6% of total expense goes on domestic energy.

Car use One way to mitigate the effects of pollution from heavy car use (inevitable in a village with few facilities and limited public transport) is for car journeys to be shared whenever possible.

Building design

Building orientation and the use of passive solar heating are keys to energy efficiency in the design of new houses. Increasing thermal insulation would help.

Sustainability is promoted by the Building Regulations, which require air leakage to be controlled. The more economical use of rainwater is encouraged by use of low-flush WCs, and the recommendation to utilise rainwater to flush and return rainwater to the ground by soakaways, rather than discharging into sewers.

Earth-sheltered housing could be considered.

Building materials

Apart from environmental considerations, relevant factors include effectiveness and durability, compatibility and cost.

Insulation¹ can reduce the energy required for heating and cooling. Wool insulation is from a sustainable source, uses a low level of energy in production and provides reasonable high insulation values. Oil-based plastic cellular materials are probably a less sustainable source in the long term. Using high levels of energy, they provide the highest insulation values.

The Kyoto Protocol² committed developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which should favour materials using lower levels of energy in production.

Some **suppliers**³ are managing the environment whilst providing the desired products. Certain timber-producing countries have national policies based upon the principle of sustainability and multiple forest use.

Recycled materials are available from local sources.

Ecolabelling⁴ of building materials and products, voluntary within the EU, promotes products with a reduced environmental impact during their life cycle.

Living



The young

The wishes and aspirations of young people and teenagers were highlighted in various sections of the village consultation process, notably those considering facilities. In March 2004 detailed surveys of the needs of younger children and of teenagers were carried out. Prior to this a Youth Project Committee had considered a particular need: the provision of a skateboarding area.

Youth Project Committee

In March 2001 (so pre-dating the Parish Plan process) a Youth Project Committee was formed with the aim of funding and building a skateboard area at the top of Church Mead, for which there was then demonstrable demand. There were at that time between 60 and 70 children aged 10 to 16 in the village.

Plans were drawn up and costings obtained, but after consideration the Parish Council decided to defer a decision pending the outcome of the then planning appeal relating to the Faccenda site.

Mendip District Council subsequently refused planning permission on the grounds of ambient noise. Grants that had been offered had to be declined.

Pre-school and pre-teens

The March 2004 survey concluded that there is in general good provision for younger children, though extra adult help is always welcomed. Clubs available at the time of writing include Brownies, church youth clubs and sports activities for the under tens in the summer holidays. In terms of schooling the current government emphasis on providing same site pre- and primary school facilities has led to detailed discussion about building a pre-school on the school field.



>ACTION PLAN for the young

- PC will establish a Youth Action Group to work continuously to develop facilities to meet the needs of village youth
Timing: 3 months
- the first task of this group will be to review facilities in communities resembling NSP and to report its findings as a prelude to making proposals for developments in the village
Timing: 6 months to report



Teenagers

The March 2004 Teenagers' Discussion Group report (see *Supplement, section 6*) provides detailed and occasionally surprising insight into village teenagers' leisure activities and attitudes. 51% (19 of 37) 13-17 year olds contributed. 18 year olds showed little interest. This may be partly explained by the fact that their focus has become wider, due to attendance at university and college, working out of the village and being able to drive and go to pubs and clubs. The following themes emerge:

- the biggest drawback to living in the village is the lack of a room or hut in which to meet. This is particularly acute in winter. Teenagers have practical ideas on how to maintain such a facility, fund its running, who should be allowed in and what should happen there
- big advantages to living in the village are that it is safe, friendly and 'that we know everyone'
- curtailing of the local bus service (constantly under review) would affect the parts of their social lives that take place in Bath and Frome. A Trowbridge-Radstock bus would be useful
- exclusion of over 12s from the Mead play area is resented, particularly given the lack of an alternative
- organised trips to supplement those provided by Nigel Done, the Rector (which are appreciated), would be welcomed

Though teenagers may be able to use the veranda of the recently-erected cricket pavilion to meet, they still want a place where they can hang out and play music, pool, table tennis, etc. All-weather sports facilities (though on the adult wish-list, see **Facilities**), a 'multi-games wall' or swimming pool are not high on their list of priorities, because these are already within travelling distance. However, they would certainly use a skateboard ramp, ground-level trampoline, basketball net/court and bike dirt-jumps if these were available.

The old

Norton St Philip conforms to the demographic profile of the South West and has a large number of elderly people. Their main concerns, as shown in the consultation process and subsequent work of the special interest group, are **housing** and village **facilities** and the results of consultation will be found in these sections. When driving is no longer an option, the need for a reliable and affordable public transport system is also stressed.

In spring 2002 the owner of the village's only nursing home announced that it was to close that autumn. Concern was expressed by older villagers, led by members of the Royal British Legion and the Fellowship Club, as to what facilities would be available to them in the future.

A survey carried out by members of the village branches of both the Royal British Legion and the Fellowship Club found that the majority of people would prefer to downsize and remain in the village if possible (see **Housing**).

>ACTION PLAN for the old

- PC will establish a dialogue with the Beckington medical practice, initially via the practice manager, with a view to clarifying and strengthening the commitment of the practice to the service it provides to the village

Timing: within 3 months

- PC will seek every opportunity to develop an improved doctors' facility in the village, suited to the needs of the elderly

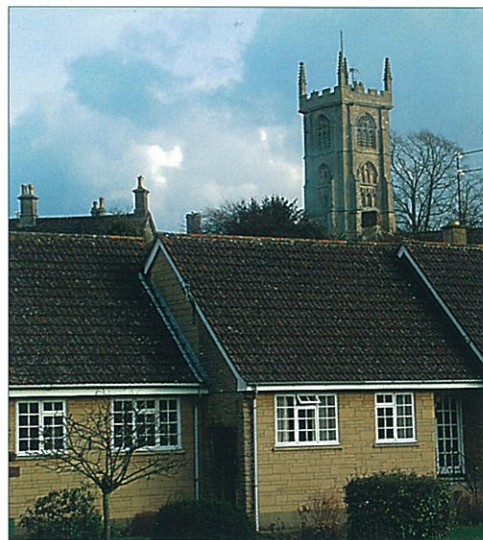
Housing and the community

The current housing situation



Bearing in mind possible weighting of results due to those who responded, the Housing Needs Survey (HNS: see *right*) showed that

- The parish has a much higher proportion of owner occupation (92%) than Mendip (73%) or the UK as a whole (68%)
- The parish has a relatively elderly population, compared with Mendip as a whole
- There are very few one-bedroom properties; nearly a quarter had two bedrooms; most had three or four
- Three quarters of respondents had lived in their present house for four or more years.



As mentioned in the **Recent History** section, the number of dwellings in Norton St Philip has increased by 20% in the last quarter century. Of these new dwellings, nearly 90% (51 properties) are in six separate small developments ranging in size from four to 16 homes. There are bungalows – some semi-detached – in Springfield, linked houses in Monmouth Paddock and a small terrace in North Street. Otherwise the housing is detached and all is relatively highly priced. No social housing, sheltered accommodation or starter homes have been built during this period.

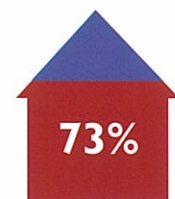
The Parish Plan research process established that housing provision is far from the first priority of villagers. Even focusing entirely on development-related issues

Housing in the village

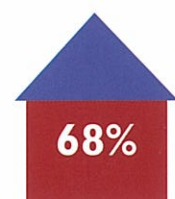
This section of the plan draws not only on research done within the village, but also on the results of a housing needs survey (HNS) carried out in 2002 by the Community Council for Somerset, which was responded to by 152 households – a good response rate of just under 50%. The HNS was in two parts. Everyone was asked about the type of housing they occupied and the ages and number of inhabitants. Those 'likely to need to move to another home in Norton now or in the next five years' were asked additional questions.



Owner occupiers in the village



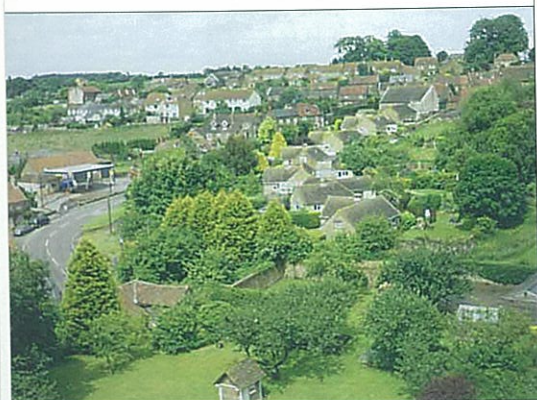
Owner occupiers in Mendip



Owner occupiers in the UK

Three pieces of research shed light on the matter of provision of housing for the elderly:

In the winter of 2002 a survey was carried out by members of the Royal British Legion and the Fellowship Club, to establish the number of pensioners in the village and their housing needs. In the course of this research, 102 people were interviewed. In 2003, a further, similar survey provided a bit more detail on the basis of interviews with 33 households. Finally, the HNS produced some relevant information. Detailed results of all three surveys are presented separately in the Supplement to this document.



(leaving aside the dominant matter of traffic, for example), improved community facilities of various kinds come before housing. But housing is clearly a fundamental matter, and there are some important issues to be dealt with here.

Housing priorities in general

At the most general level, the Parish Plan research established that provision of homes for the elderly and low-cost starter homes were the two main housing priorities of villagers. Provision of affordable housing (in the sense of housing made available at below normal market rates, as opposed to open-market housing designed to be built down to a price) was not widely supported. But the HNS showed that some provision of this kind is undoubtedly desirable.

The following sections aim to establish the scale on which these kinds of housing should be provided, and in what precise form. Provision is considered over a five-year period. This represents a reasonable horizon, beyond which it is difficult to look.

Homes for the elderly

We have established that there are approximately 250 pensioners in the village – and all but a handful are intent on staying here. But in what sort of accommodation?

Drawing on all the available evidence – national statistics, the HNS and special local research among the elderly people in the village – a picture has been formed of the likely demand for various forms of special accommodation. The evidence available is discussed in detail in the Supplement to this document. In summary, it seems reasonable to suggest that over the coming five years an appropriate level of provision would be:

- 10 downsizing homes, with no attached support, the majority being sold for owner occupation but some available to rent
- 20 sheltered flats, with warden assistance on hand.

The likelihood is that further such provision would be required in the years ahead, but this would obviously be kept under review.

The scale of residential care provision is likely to be determined not by short-term local demand, which is unlikely to justify creation of a care home, but by what forms an economically viable institution. A care home in the village could perfectly well attract residents from outside the village in the first instance; the sad fact is that places would become available in later years to meet local demand.

Starter homes

Although Norton has a relatively large elderly population, the proportion of children is not far short of the Mendip average. There are 180 children aged under 18 in the village at present. The housing needs of young people pose a significant challenge to planners for a well-supported village in future years, but they are difficult to get to grips with.

The HNS showed that:

- The age group 16-44 represented only 26% of the parish, against 38% for Mendip overall, suggesting that young adults are not staying or settling here
- Although there is a good stock of properties with two, three or four bedrooms,

one-bedroom properties represent only 1% of households surveyed; this clearly limits the opportunities for young people to get on the housing ladder

- 13 households reported that, over a 10-year period, a member of the household had left the village because of a lack of affordable housing (presumably here meaning affordable in its general sense – housing they could afford – rather than subsidised housing). A further three households reported a departure because of a lack of suitable housing.

The total figure of 16 departures represents about three people every two years. To establish an appropriate provision for that rate of demand requires an assumption about how long the young person would stay in their starter home. Assuming it's four years, the demand could be met by building three units in year one and three in year three. In year five, the first three units would become available.

An alternative scenario would be to provide a greater number of units initially, in the expectation that supply would initially exceed local demand, but that units occupied by incomers would find their way back on to the market before too long.

Assuming a longer period of initial occupation of course requires the continuing constructing of more starter homes.

Affordable family housing

The HNS report recommended the construction of 8-10 'affordable' units, meaning "a mix of rented, shared equity and low-cost ownership properties". The last category is partly covered by the starter homes section, above.

The HNS reported that 21 households had a need to move at some time over the coming five years. Of these, nine were elderly people looking to downsize – dealt with in a separate section of this plan. We are thus left with 12 households with a present or expected need to move. It is clear that the primary reason in this group is that the existing home was too small – nine of the 12 households specified this reason.

The 21 householders looking to move were asked what forms of accommodation they preferred. Respondents were allowed multiple answers, which blurs the picture somewhat, but a picture can nevertheless be formed. A key result is that 16 households expressed a preference for open-market housing – and even if all nine of the elderly householders looking to downsize are among these 16, that still leaves seven out of the remaining 12 householders preferring open-market housing, and therefore only five possibly looking for non-market solutions. Other relevant preferences expressed were:

- 3 for self-build
- 3 for housing built down to a price
- 2 for housing association rented housing.
- 1 for private rented housing
- 1 for shared equity housing.

It seems fair to conclude from these figures that the priority should be to find ways of providing low-cost open-market housing, but that there is also a need for a small amount of subsidised housing made available on a rented or shared equity basis.



>Housing ACTION PLAN

- priority to be given to construction, either in a single development in the near future or in phases over the coming five-year period, of around 10 homes suitable for elderly people downsizing and a sheltered housing community offering around 20 units
- discussion to be opened with appropriate providers with a view to construction and operation of a residential care home on a viable scale, still to be determined, which would more than meet the immediate local demand
- priority be given to construction of around six low-cost one-bedroom starter homes, either in a single development in the near future or over a three-to-four year period
- priority to be given to construction within the five-year period ahead of up to four low-cost but non-subsidised family homes, perhaps including some constructed on a self-build basis
- priority to be given to construction within the five-year period ahead of two or three housing-association family homes to be available on a rented or shared equity basis

>Facilities ACTION PLAN

- PC will establish a Community Facilities Action Group with representatives of all interested parties to review current and planned facilities and to make recommendations as to the construction of further facilities – in particular a new pre-school
Timing: 6 months to review; a further 6 months to recommendations
- new development of 'brownfield' sites within the village to contribute to village needs (improved doctor's facility, meeting room, etc.) enabling residents to travel less and help contribute to sustainability
- PC will conduct discussions with the owners of Bell Hill Garage so as to reach a shared understanding about the owners' ambitions for the business, on the basis that the PC would support the movement of some elements of the operation to an alternative suitable site within the village
Timing: 3 months
- PC will press Royal Mail to supply a box at the bottom of the village
Timing: 1 month

Facilities

This section gathers the opinions and concerns expressed during the survey process and in the subsequent work of the Facilities sub-committee of the Parish Plan group about the services and the physical structures that support life in Norton St Philip. Transport has been dealt with separately.

Villagers appreciate the few services that are available, but would like more. They are aware that demonstrable sustainability is the key to obtaining additional services and that only use will ensure survival of what already exists.

Community facilities

The consultation process showed that residents would like to see a range of facilities including:

- leisure facilities, notably an all-weather surface suitable for a range of activities for all ages
- tea room/coffee shop/meeting room/small office/ interview premises

The garage

The garage is an important asset to the village, providing petrol, car repairs and MOTs. It has a small shop and reception/pay desk. It is a useful local employer.

The garage also has a growing contract vehicle hire operation. Planning permission was granted a few years ago to store vehicles in the field to the rear of the garage. There was some opposition from neighbours and residents whose properties overlooked the field but also a measure of support for this planned expansion. However the majority view remains that expansion to the rear of the garage would not be appropriate in the middle of the village and a more suitable storage site now seems to be required.

Residents would not wish to see the business relocate out of the village for want of space, provided a suitable new site could be found within the village boundaries.

The garage would benefit from a more attractive and sympathetic frontage if it is to remain on its current Bell Hill site. It is a substantial building and site and needs to blend in, perhaps more appropriately, with neighbouring dwellings.

Pre-school provision

There is a fair proportion of younger families in the village and a high demand for pre-school facilities. Whilst these are currently provided in the Palairat Hall there are considerable limitations and there was strong support in the village consultation for a new pre-school adjacent to the existing primary school. There is a case to be made for allowing this, though it would mean intrusion into the field next to the school and outside the tightly drawn development limits.

Other facilities

The arrival of a fortnightly doorstep recycling collection since the date of the survey has been widely welcomed. The weekly visit by a doctor from the Beckington practice is also appreciated, but the lack of privacy for consultations definitely is not. Suitable premises for a doctor's surgery feature high on the wants list. The doctor will only visit if there are 1.5 hours of pre-booked appointments in a week. Better facilities would encourage more use.

Meeting venues

Following requests for further services in the 2002 survey, the facilities group devised a questionnaire to establish potential demand for a variety of facilities.

Details of the Facilities Group survey are in Supplement, section 8.

The village has benefited from an entrusted village hall since the generous donation of the Palairet Hall in 1923 to a church charity. It is held by the parish council on a lease from the trustees. The lease expires in 2017. There was a great deal of debate in the 1990s about the need for a new hall and a survey carried out in December 2000 showed the majority of group users would support a new facility. Individual households were also surveyed and of an initial 179, 17% felt the facilities were very/good, 47% adequate and 36% poor.

In 2003/4 the facilities group questioned village organisations using the Palairet Hall to gauge demand for a new community centre, possibly on the Faccenda site. The questions were about location, parking, access, size, cost, suitability of heat, light and furniture, cloakroom and kitchen facilities, storage and the backstage area also used for the weekly doctor's visit. Giving weight to the size of the organisation, the conclusion was that 26% of responses from organisations found the facilities good, 51% acceptable and 22% found the facilities a problem. Parking and size were considered the main drawbacks.

There are five meetings venues in the village – the two pubs, the Palairet Hall, school and church. New facilities in the church Hub will be completed in the first half of 2005. All will then offer a private meeting room with space varying from committee to public meeting size, toilets, refreshment facilities and limited car parking. Extended use of the new sports pavilion is under consideration.

All venues have spare capacity – the Palairet Hall is approximately 50% booked. The largest user, the Pre-School, is exploring the provision of a customised facility on the school site. They have indicated that failing that they would wish to remain in the Hall and are not currently interested in a new, shared building on the Faccenda site.

At the time of the survey a new cricket pavilion was urgently needed. This has since been provided at very reasonable cost through a great deal of hard work by members of the cricket club. The potential of a self-help approach has not been lost on other organisations reviewing their facilities.

At present the village appears to view improvement in facilities in terms of small, incremental steps and is suspicious of a multi-use new community facility, probably because of the site on which it is mooted.

Postal provision

There is no letterbox in the lower part of the village to serve the needs of Ringwell/Springfield, despite the large amount of development/house building in that area.



Village hall entrance



Norton St Philip First School



Building the new pavilion
in 2003

Working



MAN WITH VAN & TRUCK FOR MUCK



Jill of all Trades

Garden maintenance and makeovers



CRUCIBLE PUBLISHERS

>Working ACTION PLAN

- proposals for major new developments should where possible increase opportunities for villagers to work in the village rather than travelling out of the village to work, by providing a balance of housing and workplaces and by ensuring that employment created is appropriate to the local population, and not likely to draw in workers from outside
- planning conditions should ensure that premises fit properly within and comply with the existing qualities of the village
- PC will take the lead in encouraging community involvement to ensure a sustainable post office and shop facility is provided

Business needs

Research at the time of this report shows that there are nearly 30 small businesses in the village (see *Supplement, section 3*). Of these, approximately a quarter are in the IT/design/ publishing field, a third in services such as building construction, repair and decorating. The rest range from tree work to catering and shoe manufacture. There is also a garage and two pubs. If the community can become more self-sustaining it will encourage more businesses to grow and stay.

The key business issue emerging from the consultation process was that there should be an opportunity for people to live and work in the village. There is some evidence – albeit anecdotal – that provision of discrete, affordable space for business would encourage more residents to develop enterprises in the village. There was a cautious welcome for a small number of additional office- or craft-based units, as long as they were unobtrusive.

However it was made very clear that villagers require any business provision to be very strictly controlled as regards traffic generation, noise, hours and pollution.

There was support for the retention of existing small businesses and appreciation that they reduce the need to travel.

Early in 2005 the combined shop and post office closed and the building was marketed as a private dwelling. The village was previously without a shop for a number of years following the introduction of business rates, but now faces life with no shop and an extremely limited visiting post office service (1.5 hours twice weekly in the Palairt Hall). Royal Mail is trying to find an alternative solution, but without success at the time of writing.

As well as providing petrol and repairs, the garage operates a substantial contract vehicle hire business. Some years ago the owner was granted permission to use part of the field behind his premises for vehicle storage, but further extension here seems unlikely to be permitted under guidance in the Mendip District Local Plan and would not be welcomed by the village. Now a potential new business contract for body repair work means that the owner is again looking for more space.

Whilst the survey suggests that villagers are only in favour of small business units being permitted in any future development, it is also clear that they would not wish to see the existing garage relocate out of the village for want of space. The Faccenda site could readily supply the required space, should a development be agreed.

The Faccenda site Former Chicken Processing Plant

Since the major fire in November 1999, when the factory was burned beyond repair, the site and its future use have assumed a position of primary importance in the village.

The recent decision by the Planning Inspector to uphold the appeals lodged by Faccenda, thereby giving them outline planning permission for six residential dwellings and seven industrial units, has not really solved the problem for the village of how best to use the site.

At over five acres it represents a considerable impact on the village and villagers are still united in concern that any development should be in keeping with village needs.

The Parish Council has always supported a mixed use of the site to include, for instance, starter homes; homes for the elderly; affordable housing; some garaging; allowances for certain village facilities; open ground; a small number of business units. To this has been recently added a possible overflow for the churchyard that has limited remaining space. The results of the many surveys carried out for the Parish Plan support mixed use of this and other development sites. There remains some support for a multi-purpose community building to include provision for sports facilities and young peoples' needs.

Phasing of any development is also essential: a village is a dynamic place but on a small scale; needs identified at one time may well be added to and changed in later years. A site like this has potential for gradual improvement in facilities over a period of time.

Although there was only modest support for larger open-market houses, the decision to allow six dwellings would fit into a mixed development without destroying the balance sought and needed by the village.

For a history of the site and how it relates to the Mendip District Local plan see Supplement, section 10

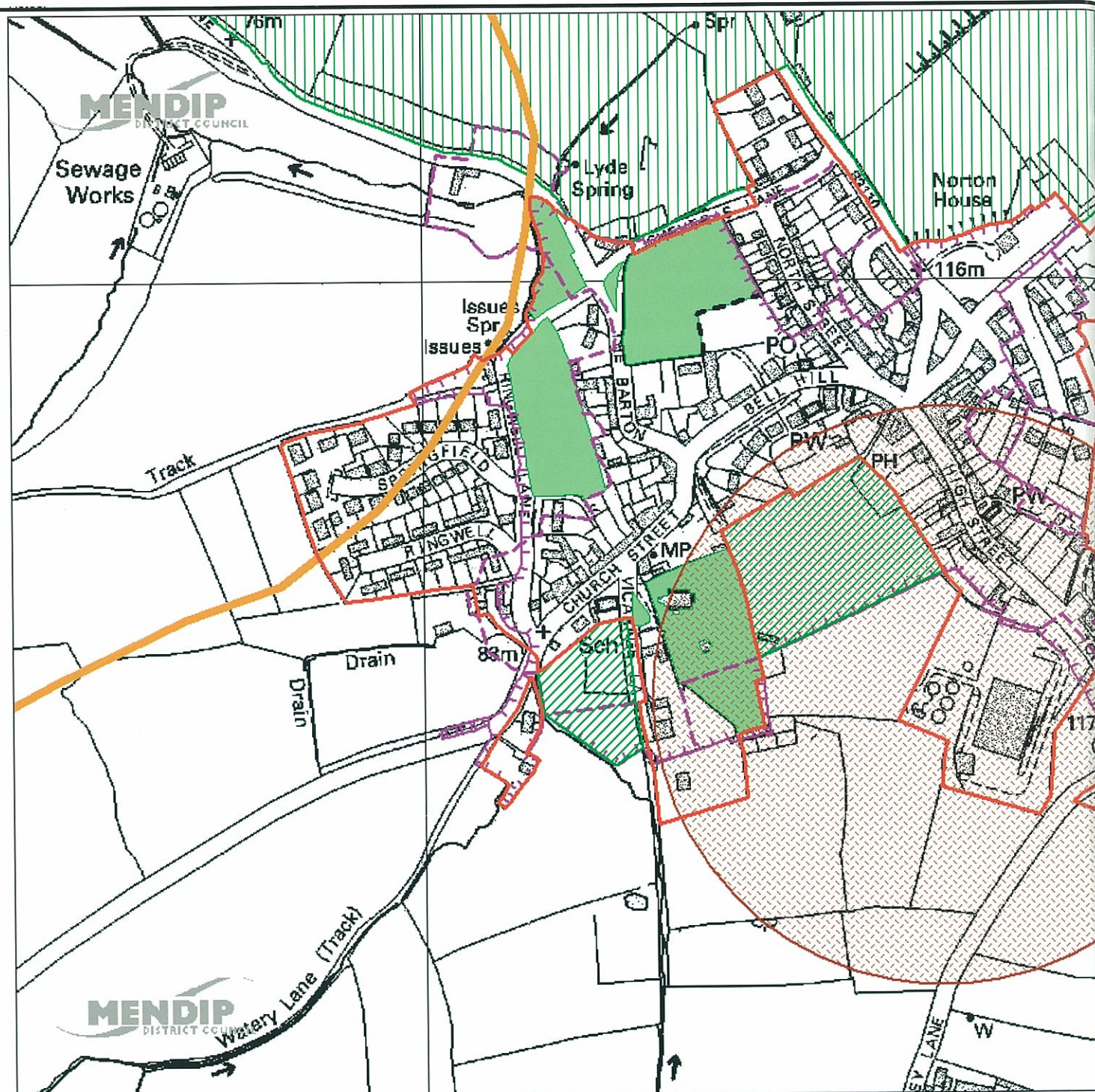
Nevertheless the Inspector's decision is disappointing. A copy of this Parish Plan will be sent to Ian Faccenda, suggesting that it offers a basis for a more coherent development of the site that would deliver greater benefits, both to the landowner and the community, than the scheme for which there is outline planning approval.



The Faccenda site after the fire in 1999

Norton St Philip Village

Illustrating some Mendip District Local Plan Policies



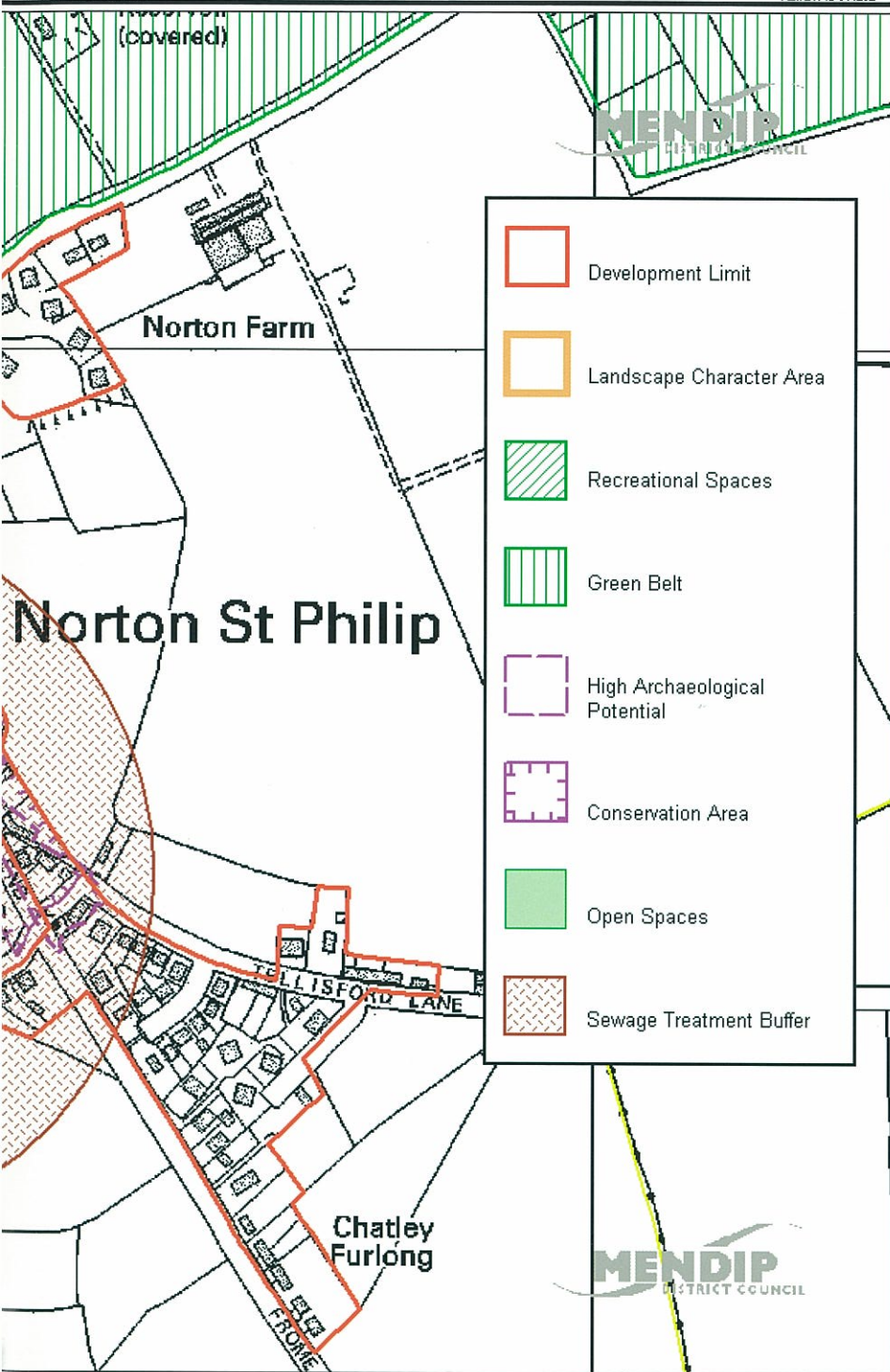
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Summary of planning guidance

Norton St Philip Parish Council urges Mendip District Council to adopt the following as supplementary planning guidance

Environment

- improved kerbside recycling facilities
- new building to take account of wildlife habitats, which should be maintained and, where possible, increased
- new or replacement lighting to be environmentally sensitive in nature

Traffic and Transport

- To regain some of the quality of life in the village lost because of huge increases in through-traffic, the village should have:
- 20 mile per hour speed limit in the centre of the village
- weight limit of 17 tonnes on the A366
- improved footways
- safer traffic-calming scheme on the B3110

There should be

- garaging for cars from High Street properties with no garage
- a better bus service

New Building Development

- Appropriate planning guidance against which future applications relating to the parish can be assessed should be agreed

Housing

The following housing should have priority in the village

- homes for elderly people downsizing
- sheltered housing
- low-cost starter homes
- a residential care home
- affordable family housing

Facilities and Work

- development of brownfield sites to contribute to village needs, including improved doctors' facility and meeting room
- construction of new pre-school to be given serious consideration
- garage to be supported if it wishes to relocate partially within the village
- new mail box to be provided at the bottom of the village