



Bitton Parish Plan

*A Community Led Plan
for the Parish of Bitton*

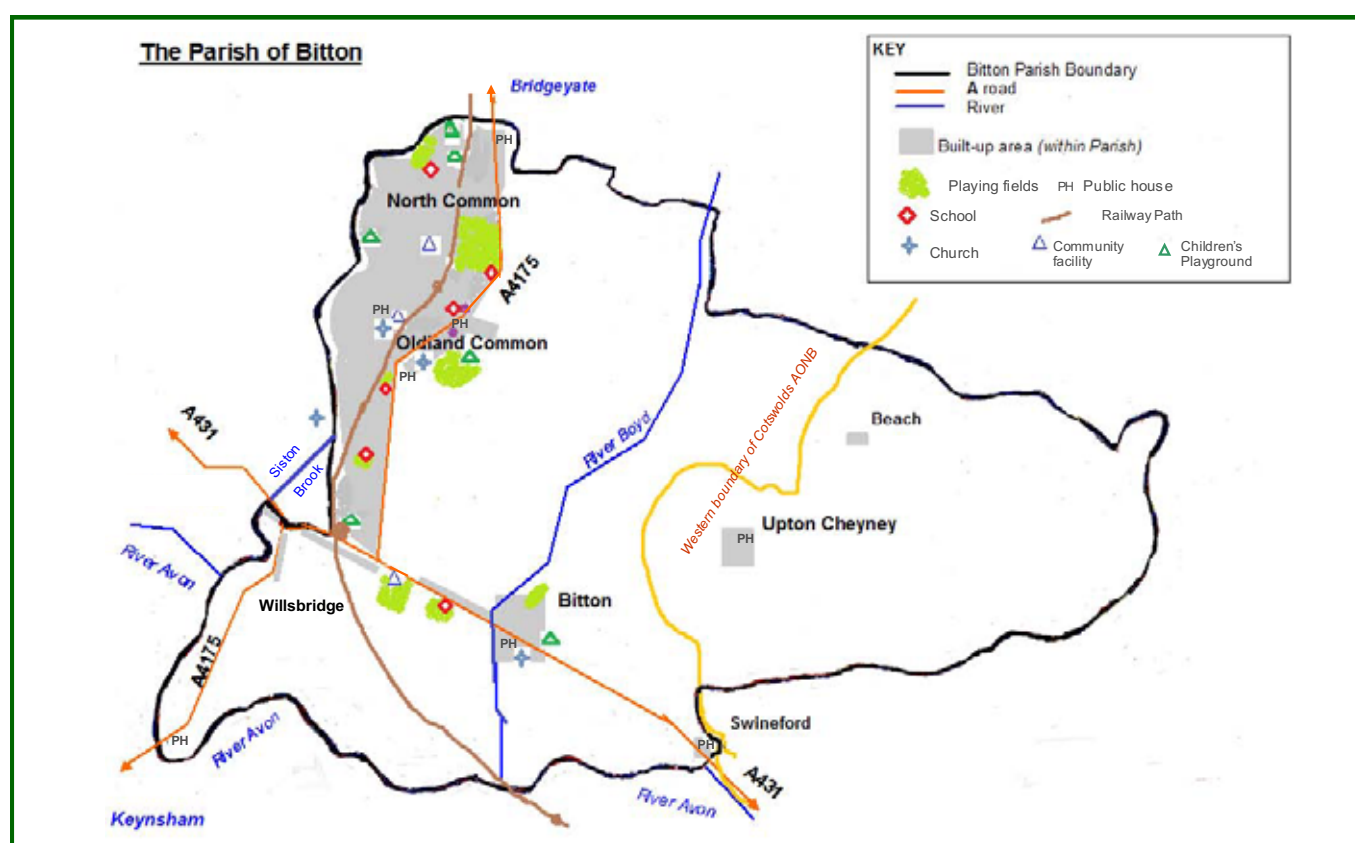
Bitton Parish Plan -

a Community Led Plan for the Parish of Bitton

This Plan is the result of consultations with and surveys of the views and aspirations of those who live and work in the Parish of Bitton. It incorporates an Action Plan, presented in sections, intended to pave the way for these aspirations and preferences to be met.

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The Parish of Bitton



The Parish of Bitton lies to the far south-east of the South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority area, bounded, roughly, to the east by the Cotswold Escarpment; to the south by the River Avon and to the west by an Avon tributary, Siston Brook. Situated almost equidistant from the city centres of Bristol and Bath, the Parish is mainly rural in nature, with all of its farmland being Green Belt.

The most northerly of the diverse communities that comprise this Parish is North Common; to the south of this lies the busy village of Oldland Common; and south-east of this is the oldest settlement, Bitton, with its Roman remains and medieval church, St Mary's – complete with gilded angels! To the far south-east is Swineford, on the Avon; while to the north of this are the Cotswold communities of Upton Cheyney and Beach. Part of the village of Willsbridge, to the south-west, is also in the Parish. (For full information on each district of the Parish, see www.bittonparishcouncil.co.uk).

Connections

Through the geographic heart of Bitton Parish flows the River Boyd. This tributary of the Avon runs down through Golden Valley, past what was once a paper mill in Bitton village, and enters the main river just to the west of where the Bristol and Bath Railway Path bridges the Avon, carrying cyclists, walkers and the Avon Valley Steam Railway. The two major roads running through the Parish are the A431 – the more northerly of the two A roads linking Bristol and Bath – and the A4175, which runs approximately north–south down past North Common, through Oldland Common and Willsbridge, towards the neighbouring town of

Keynsham. These converge at Cherry Gardens and run together along to the Willsbridge roundabout, where they part. Other important nearby roads are the Avon Ring Road, just to the west, and the A420, just north of the Parish's northern boundary, both of which offer fast links to the region's motorways, the M4 and M5.

As well as proximity to Keynsham – an attractive small town with a range of shops, a Library and a Leisure Centre – immediately to the west of the Parish lies Longwell Green, with a range of facilities including a new retail park and the Aspects Leisure Centre, with swimming pool, restaurants



and a cinema complex. There are regular buses during the daytime running between these neighbouring areas through Bitton Parish. On Sundays most neighbouring areas are linked, except for Keynsham, by revised hourly services, although Bitton Village has only a Bristol/Bath service *via* Aspects Leisure Centre every two hours. There is a fortnightly mobile library service serving Bitton, Beach and Oldland Common. The Parish, whatever improvements might be required or desired, is nonetheless considered by most residents a good place to live, and by businesses in the Parish a place from which hardly any wish to relocate.

History and housing

The parish has a wealth of history – and prehistory too, for instance the round barrow in Bitton. The A431 runs along the course of the old Roman road that ran westwards from Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) to the sea. There are Roman remains in Bitton and a site thought to be a medieval fish pond in Oldland Common. The evidence of the diverse architecture tells of Tudor, Georgian and Victorian habitation amongst other eras. The area is part of the once thriving Somerset Coalfield, with now derelict buildings, and tales of the long ago disaster at Golden Valley Pit. Indeed, the Dramway path, now



for walkers only, follows much of the route of the old dramway that carried coal down from local pits to Londonderry Wharf, where Siston Brook meets the Avon.

There is railway history, too: what is now the Bitton and Bath Railway Path was once part of the old Midland Railways line coming down to Bath from Mangotsfield and the Midlands. Part of this old route is now a busy tourist venue, the Avon Valley Steam Railway, with Bitton Station the headquarters, and a line from Oldland Common to the Avon just past Bitton Village (see

www.avonvalleyrailway.org).

Although at the heart of each community there are still many older, characterful houses, the majority of dwellings sprang up in the last 50 years or so. There are also bungalows, semis and pleasant former council houses from earlier last century. Pride is taken in the appearance of gardens and in general the housing developments have been made with careful consideration of layout and landscaping – although, as elsewhere, newer houses tend to be less spacious. The increase in the number of community facilities – shops, public houses, play areas, community buildings and suchlike – would not appear to have kept pace with the increase in housing numbers.

Facts and figures

The total area of land in the Parish is just under 14 sq km (just over five square miles), of which only around two sq km (less than one square mile) is built up, the rest being mainly farmland.

Population

According to the most recent Census results published (that of 2001):

- population – 9,307, of which 22.2% under 16 years, 12.3% 65 and over;
- of all 3,650 household spaces, 91.7% are houses, and of all households 84.4% are owner occupied (with or without mortgage or loan);
- less than 20% of people live alone, with fewer than 300 of these being pensioners;
- of those aged 16-74, 75.2% are economically active; 1.1% unemployed; 1.9% permanently sick/disabled;
- only 9.3% of households have no car/van.



Educational establishments

In the Parish there are:

- five primary schools: St Anne's C of E VC Primary School, Cherry Garden Primary School and Redfield Edge Primary School in Oldland Common; St Barnabas C of E VC Primary School in North Common; and The Meadows Primary School in Bitton Village;
- one secondary school, Sir Bernard Lovell in Oldland Common;
- three pre-school facilities: Redroofs Children's Nursery in North Common; St Anne's pre-school in Oldland Common; and St Mary's pre-school in Bitton Village.

Businesses

During the conduction of the *Business Survey* performed during the preparation of this Plan (to which there was a 57.35% return rate) it was ascertained that:

- there are some 136 businesses in the Parish;
- of these there is a wide diversity of business category, including:
 - about ten farms (although unclear as to numbers still farming) including an alpaca farm;
 - manufacturing, warehousing, storage and distribution;
 - service, retail and catering;
 - high-tech, office and administrative.

Within these broad bands lie many obvious and less obvious enterprises: eight public houses; two fish and chip shops; nurseries and garden centres; residential and nursing homes; cafes; medical and veterinary surgeries; hairdressers; a pharmacy; craftsmen and corner shops - and much else, large and small.

The Purpose of the Parish Plan



The purpose of a Parish Plan – also known as a Community Led Plan (CLP) – is first and foremost to make the Parish a better place in which to live and work. Bitton is not alone in preparing such a plan: it is a process being undertaken by many parishes all over the country. Successive government policies have encouraged the idea of community led planning with the aim of enabling villages and rural areas to have more say in how they develop.

The ideas behind these CLPs are that they should:

- provide a plan for the community's future;
- bring the community together and create a greater sense of community spirit;
- encourage community involvement and partnership working by highlighting projects that need help from local people as well as external agencies to get things done;
- provide clear evidence of the needs and priorities of the community to help inform how the council, other statutory agencies and community groups plan their services and activities locally;
- support applications for external funding for projects – some grants are only available if evidenced by a CLP.

Independence

The formulation of this Parish Plan, although encouraged by both South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) and Bitton Parish Council (Bitton PC), has been undertaken independently of both bodies.

The group that has prepared this plan is the Bitton Parish Plan Steering Committee (BPPSC). This group of people comprises volunteers resident in the Parish of Bitton, all of whom have lived in the Parish for many years, who have been able to bring to the process a wide range of experience (see following section, “The Process of Plan Formulation”).

The Plan is derived entirely from what residents, businesses and schools in the Parish have said during the various consultations that have taken place in the last few years – this is what is meant by “Community led”. And the response rate to these consultations was high. Independence does not, however, imply any lack of support from the SGC – guidance and information have been readily provided where required. Bitton PC has also been most helpful and supportive during the Plan’s formulation when information or logistical assistance has been requested, and has also provided additional financial assistance.



Aims

The aim of a CLP is that it should provide guidance for local government bodies on decisions affecting the Parish. As a result of the Plan, both SGC and Bitton PC will be much better informed as to the needs and desires of the inhabitants of the Parish when they come to take decisions that concern their lives and welfare.

On a wider front, the present Government’s “Big Society” strategy is particularly concerned with how things are undertaken at a local level. There is also the Localism Bill 2010-11, the aim of which is to pass much more decision making to local communities themselves.

For further information on this please see link below:

www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/

The Process of Plan Formulation

The process of formulating the Parish Plan began in late 2007 when, with encouragement, facilitation and advice from South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) and its partners, interested volunteers came together to meet, form the Bitton Parish Plan Steering Committee (BPPSC), elect officers, prepare a constitution, apply for grant funding and otherwise make a start on the process. Meetings were held regularly to forward the process, and preparations were made for various forms of public consultation to obtain the views of the community – this was to be a Community Led Plan (CLP).

Public consultation

There were initially four public consultation events, at which members of the public were invited to give their views and ideas on relevant topics, ranging from issues concerning community facilities to transport and traffic, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Consultation Events

The consultation events took place in May 2008, in Bitton, Oldland Common (two events) and North Common.

These were lively occasions, with a combination of formal presentations, information displays and questionnaires, designed to obtain a good “feel” for the issues that concerned the parishioners of Bitton. The events used a model provided by SGC, featuring eye-catching display concepts such as a “Happy Hedge” (for what people liked), a “Weeping Wall” (for what they didn’t) and a “Wishing Well”, (for what they would like to see happen), to encourage people to express their feelings about the environment in which they lived and worked. An analysis was made and used, with other data, to help produce an Action Plan.

Schools Survey

A Children and Young People’s survey was undertaken at schools in the Parish in late 2008, and a report produced. Again, the information obtained was used in the preparation of the Action Plan, particularly in the section concerning Young People.

Domestic Survey

A survey of the views of all parishioners was undertaken in the spring of 2009, with additional volunteers involved in the distribution and collection of Community Questionnaires. Every household in the

parish received a questionnaire, with opportunity for response both as a household and individually, each form providing space for up to six respondents.

The number of survey forms returned was 1225 (approximately one third of all households in the Parish), this representing 2710 people.



Business Survey

The last of the surveys that was made was of the businesses in the Parish. Questionnaires were again used, but in this instance volunteers used a variety of methods, that included drop-off and collect; telephone interviewing; and interviewing business owners or managers face-to-face, to get results. Almost 60% of the 136 undertakings contacted agreed to provide the requested information.

Other consultations

Other public agencies such as Social Services, the Police and local GP’s Surgeries, were contacted for their input into the process. Unfortunately, however, there was a nil response.

Analysis and construction

When all the information from the surveys had been collected, the work of data entry and analysis began. An outside body was employed to perform the task of data entry. A statistician was then employed to analyse the collated data and produce an Analysis Report on each in early 2011. Following this the Action Plan was developed.

The Action Plan, presented in sections in this document, is the way forward visualised from the data. This identifies solutions to local issues which will help realise the shared vision. Each section is introduced with a more detailed description of how the data was obtained and a “verbal picture” of the kind of ideas and issues that formed the conclusions reached.

The sections are as follows:

- **Community**
- **Young People**
- **Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation**
- **Business Community**
- **Environment**
- **Traffic and Highways**
- **Transport**
- **Crime, Personal Safety and Anti-social Behaviour**

The Community

Bitton Parish comprises at present not one single community but several distinct communities. These are based on the villages and settlements that, even if some are no longer as obviously separate each from the other as they were a century ago, still have identifiable hearts or “hubs”.

The two largest are North Common and Oldland Common; then comes Bitton itself; there is Upton Cheyney, with outlying Beach; part of Swineford; and also parts of Willsbridge. For practical purposes results are considered for the three wards of the Parish – North Common, Oldland Common and Bitton (which last for this purpose includes the smaller communities).

Although the aim of the Plan is to improve the future decisions made that affect the whole community, it must be borne in mind that some aspects of what has been learned relate particularly to a given village community rather than to all parts of the Parish. It is to be hoped that an outcome of this Plan will be increased information being shared with parishioners about Parish facilities and about events all around

the Parish, from the Upton Cheyney Chilli Festival to the Oldland Music Festival, so that residents in every corner of the Parish feel included.

Community centres, halls and library facilities

Each of the three wards has a “community facility”, i.e. a village hall or club. These are as follows:

- North Common Village Hall, the most modern of the three premises, which has good parking, a large main hall, separate meeting room and a large fully equipped kitchen. This is a community centre with good facilities, including facilities for the disabled and for recycling.
- Oldland Village Club, which has two bars, a skittle alley, a snooker room and a dance/function room. It is also home to the Oldland Players who put on two productions a year.
- Bitton Recreation Club, which, as well as social club facilities, is an important sports venue for the Parish (*see also the section on “Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation”, page 13*). The main building has recently been rebuilt.

It might also be worth noting that there are four church halls in the Parish: in the heart of Oldland Common there are the halls of Unity Oldland





Methodist Church, Oldland United Reformed Church and St Anne's Oldland; and in Bitton Village, that of St Mary's.

Although there is no library in the Parish, there is a fortnightly mobile library service serving Bitton, Beach and Oldland Common. The nearest static libraries are at Cadbury Heath, just to the west of North Common, Kingswood and Keynsham, each accessible by bus (but see *Transport* section for limitations to bus access).

Public houses and cafés

There are eight public houses in the Parish: three are in Oldland Common; one in each of Swineford, Bitton Village and Upton Cheyney; the Lock Keeper on the Willsbridge/Keynsham road by the River Avon; while in North Common the pub has been closed but, at the time of writing, is undergoing renovations with view to re-opening in the near future. There are also several cafés, mainly in Bitton ward: however, none are in North Common.

Post offices

There is now only one post office in the Parish, on Oldland Common High Street. As well as services normally provided by a sub-post office, stationery, cards and various other goods may also be purchased there; there is also a photocopying facility. There is only limited parking outside. However, buses from most parts of the Parish stop in West Street, about half a bus-stop distance away.

Information from the consultation events

The report on the public consultation events held early in the process of the formulation of this Plan identified the following considerations in the "*Community*" category.

- From Bitton ward there were positive comments. It was felt to be more of a community as it has a village at its heart, with a good community spirit. It was felt to be a good place to bring up children, with an excellent Primary School and community activities centred on the parish church, St Mary's.
- Oldland Common also was felt to have a good community spirit and village feel. There was considered to be a threat to one of its major advantages, the Green Belt, from the Core Strategy of SGC, which includes the area just east of the village in its area of search for possible housing development.
- North Common too had positive comments made about it: one resident described it as "a nice area despite various developments".

These consultation events also included a specific "*Housing*" category, which underlined concerns about future housing development and the preservation of the Green Belt mentioned in the "Community" section.

Concerns were voiced over four sites in particular:

- the moving of the Green Belt boundary in Oldland Common and the building of houses between Barry Road and Bridgegate;

- discouraging intensive development on the former mill site in Bitton (known as Golden Valley Mill or the Intier site) and concern for the future of this abandoned site;
- returning Springfield Nursery (at the easterly side of the junction with the road leading up to Upton Cheyney from the A431) to the Green belt and not allowing ribbon development;
- there to be no building of the 13 houses planned for the northern end of the Sir Bernard Lovell School playing fields.

There were some calls for a total halt to development, while those who were in favour of some development suggested that the emphasis should be on starter homes.

There was also a *“Facilities”* category in these initial consultations, covering concerns that overlap with those covered in the Parks, Open Spaces and recreation section of this Plan. Amongst a long list of facilities people felt either needed to be provided or existing provision improved were:

- pubs that were “unloved” and needed to be spruced up and opened up for morning coffee and afternoon teas;
- more shops, commensurate with a growing area;
- free cash dispensers;
- the refurbishment of Bitton Recreation Club with improved parking;
- the lack of playground facilities and the possibility of joint use with local schools.

Concern was also voiced over the then imminent closure of Bitton Post Office (that has now taken place).



Information from the surveys

The responses from the Community Questionnaires in the main echoed the feeling that there was a good community spirit. However, there were those who did not consider this to be the case, feeling that this was linked to lack of places to meet. Better publicity across the whole parish concerning community facilities and events, such as Bitton Beer Festival, Oldland Music Festival and various fairs and fetes, would seem to be the way forward here.

Lack of community facilities: in particular, the closure of both Bitton and Willsbridge Post Offices in recent years was a concern, as was the closure of the White Hart public house in Bitton Village (now reopened).

Parishioners responded that they mainly used the



Post office for actual Postal Services, although other services there, such as banking, pensions and allowances collection, payment of utility bills, obtaining information leaflets and foreign currency, even mobile top-ups, were also used.

As regards the three community centres, these were mainly considered to have good or adequate facilities: however, at the time of the survey, prior to the rebuilding of the main clubhouse in the summer of 2011, 26.7% of respondents considered facilities at Bitton Recreation Club to be poor.

Shops There are a number of shops in the Parish, mainly in the centres of the villages. When asked

about their usage of these shops, while 657 households stated that they would prefer to shop locally, many gave reasons for not using local shops as that they were either too expensive and/or that they lacked choice. In the open question, one of the concerns voiced was a lack of shops.

Multifunctional green spaces In answer to the question asking residents to select from a number of possible actions those that they felt would improve the character of the Parish, the highest number selected the choice “Create multi-functional green space”, with almost as many choosing “Ensure equal opportunity to access green space”.

Focus: Community		
Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Lack of sense of community as whole, linked to a lack of places to meet.	a) Develop partnerships to find ways to increase community action and publicity of events. b) Tackle problem across the Parish.	Scouts etc, notice boards, Post Office, public houses, papers, publications, word of mouth, Women's Institute, Mothers' Union, shops, clubs, SGC, Parish Council, providers of meeting facilities, local clubs and churches, local Safer and Stronger Community Groups.
2. Closure of White Hart PH (now re-opened) and Post Office in Bitton.	a) Explore alternatives, e.g. satellite Post Office at White Hart PH. b) Lobby relevant authorities to put on hold further closures. c) Establish whether freeholders have total control/trying to install a tenant at PH. d) Establish whether local PO proprietors would agree to an outlet facility, then approach owners of business premises.	Developers of Golden Valley Mill site, Government (via MP), BVRA, Oldland Common PO.
3. Need for multifunctional green spaces with access to all.	a) Develop collaborative initiatives, e.g. develop “Pound Ground” in Bitton and a play park in Aubrey Meads. b) Approach local organisations, schools and Bitton Rec. c) Approach SGC with details of shortfall.	Parish Council, BVRA and Bitton Recreation Ground, local Safer and Stronger Community Groups.
4. Communication.	a) Ensure full circulation of Parish News Letter, e.g. do all church magazines go to all? b) Make more use of the Parish Council website. c) Develop a community “Directory”, leaflets, email, website.	Churches, Parish Council, magazine editors.
5. Community events.	a) Promote/publicise community events such as Bitton Beer Festival, Oldland Music Festival, visiting events such as fairs.	Parish Council, event organisers.

Young People

The provision for young people throughout the parish is felt to be poor: meeting places that serve older members of the community, such as public houses, cafes and halls, are not usually frequented by teenagers. And, while there are a number of children's play-grounds, these are perceived as insufficient and inappropriately sited to meet current demand. These places are also frequented by teenagers and older children from early evening onwards, discouraging parents from letting younger children play there.

Information from the consultation events

The report on the public consultation events held early in the process of the formulation of this Plan highlighted the following positive proposals concerning youth in the area:

- there needs to be better provision for young people in all wards across the age range. In particular:
 - there needs to be improved provision of playgrounds and play equipment for small children;
- the promotion of the idea of a “walking bus” to primary schools to reduce carbon footprint, encourage a healthy lifestyle and discourage parking around schools at the start and end of the school day.



Information from the surveys

Consultation with school children

Children in all five primary schools in Bitton Parish and Sir Bernard Lovell Secondary School were consulted to discover their opinions about the Parish. School councils were asked to assist in consultation of their peers, so this was a child-led enterprise. Some responses were outside the scope of the Plan, but by using the “Happy Hedge” (for what they liked), “Weeping Wall” (for what they did not) and “Wishing Well” framework, as for the public consultations, an idea of the opinions of children and young people was obtained. Interestingly there were 351 responses to the “Happy Hedge” as against 245 to the “Wailing Wall”.

Children particularly stated they liked their places to play (48%), friends and neighbours (59%), services such as shops (55%) and that it was quiet and peaceful (40%).

Children's dislikes to some extent mirrored those of adult respondents – “cars and roads” were the highest, with 21%, followed by “litter” and “teenagers and anti-social behaviour” at 16% each and noise and pollution at 13% (this out of 245 responses in this category). Other issues mentioned included the need to improve the environment and parks; dog fouling; the lack of places for young people/teenagers to go to; and green issues.

When it came to saying what they wished for in the Parish, 32% wanted more parks and 15% wanted more facilities for children and young people. Other wishes included wanting improved shops and amenities; more

bins; improvements to the environment – not building on Green Belt; a swimming pool; and improved road safety and police presence, less anti-social behaviour and crime. These response results were consistent throughout the Parish.

Domestic Survey

The responses from the Community Questionnaires included:

- Oldland Common Youth Club redevelopment: of those who responded to this question, 1337 knew nothing about the idea; 510 were in favour of it; and only 57 were against the idea;
- when asked about facilities for young people, about half of respondents described them as “poor”, while about a third said they considered them to be “very poor”;
- when asked whether physical activities should play a more important part in the school curricula, the overwhelming majority of respondents said yes.



It is clear from the information gained about perceptions of crime in the Parish (*see pages 27 and 28*) that people see a direct link between antisocial behaviour and underage drinking and lack of places for young people to go.

Focus: Young People

Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. A seating facility in parks especially for young people.	a) Look at the possible siting of a youth shelter in one of the parks.	SGC and Parish Council to consult with young people and Friends Groups.
2. Lack of sufficient play facilities for children.	a) Approach churches and schools. b) Develop facilities at Bitton Recreation Ground, e.g. Children's Gardening Club. c) Provide a skateboard ramp. <i>See also Actions 3.a) and 3.c) in "Focus: Community".</i>	SGC, Parish Council, BVRA, Bitton Recreation Ground, Bitton Gardening Club, churches and schools. Section 106 Agreement – Golden Valley Mill site.
3. Lack of provision generally for young people. Teenagers need clubs and something to do.	a) Co-ordinate activity to combat problem. b) Involve young people in community initiatives, e.g. community theatre, film/media presentations. c) Make use of church and school halls, community halls and clubs.	SGC, Parish Council, School Governors, Scouts and Forum of young people, Church Trustees, BVRA, Bitton Recreation Ground, St Mary's Church "Living Stones", other church organisations, community initiatives.
4. Increase physical activity in schools.	a) Discuss with Education Authority and schools. b) Combine physical activity initiatives with healthy eating. c) Local sports clubs e.g. providing facilities where schools don't have them.	SGC, School Heads and School Governors. Local sports celebrities and celebrity chefs.
5. Concern over underage drinking.	a) Education campaign plus police action.	Parish Council (publicity), SGC, Health Authority, School Heads and School Governors.

Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation

Many people cite “access to countryside” as one of the things they particularly like about living in the Parish. Others felt that access to the countryside could be improved, and some people asked for a network of footpaths. However, there are many interlinked paths, so the likelihood is that there is insufficient publicity and information easily available to enable people to use these. (There are, in fact, 78 Public Rights of Way (footpaths) in the Parish that link to numerous paths in adjacent parishes). The majority of the Parish is countryside. As well as the designated sports and play facilities, there is also a green corridor running beside Siston Brook, on the Parish’s western boundary, used by many in Oldland Common and North Common for informal recreation, dog walking etc, and played in by children too.

Recreation in the Parish

Sports - there are several sets of sports facilities within the Parish that the community is able to use. The newest – and perhaps least well known as yet - is the ultra modern SBL Sports Centre (see

www.sblsports.co.uk/ for full details). There is a wide range of sports available, from Zumba and Karate to Badminton, Dance and Gymnastics. There is also outdoor football, netball and tennis (home to SBL-Bitton Tennis Club). The sports hall can facilitate both casual players and teams wishing to compete in badminton, volleyball, table tennis, basketball, futsal (indoor soccer), netball and tennis.

Football

- In Oldland Common there is the Aitcheson Playing Field, home to Oldland Abbotonians FC, in the Tool Station League .
- Bitton Recreation Club football grounds are home to Bitton AFC, also in the Tool Station League, with a ladies team as well as many youth and boys teams (see www.clubwebsite.co.uk/bittonafc/). New facilities were opened at the Clubhouse on 1st August 2011.

Cricket - Also at Bitton Recreation Ground is Bitton Cricket Club (see <http://bitton.play-cricket.com/home/home.asp>).

Road running -The Aitcheson Field is also the base for Bitton Road Runners, (see www.bittonroadrunners.co.uk/), a running club.

Archery - Bitton Archers also have their headquarters at Bitton Recreation Ground (see www.bittonarchers.co.uk).

Walking - Several long-distance footpaths include the Monarch’s Way, coming up from the Avon at Keynsham Locks, up through Bitton, Upton Cheyney and on up Golden Valley northwards; part





of the Cotswold Way around Hanging Hill, on Lansdown; the Avon Valley Trail; and the Community Forest Path. There are more local routes, the Dramway and the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, and a mesh of interlinking footpaths.

Fishing – The waters of the River Avon from Pipeley Brook, Swineford down to Siston Brook, excluding Keynsham Marina, are fished privately by Bristol and West of England Federation of Anglers and, by agreement, members of Amalgamated Fisheries Ltd. Anglers may be seen dotted all along the banks at regular intervals. There are also several fishing lakes in Golden Valley, including the commercial Boyd Valley Lake.

Boating – Also along the Avon there are moorings

and the Keynsham Marina – which, despite its name, is in Bitton Parish - giving opportunities for boating.

Cycling – As well as being a means of transport, leisure cycling is a popular form of recreation in the parish, particularly along the Bristol and Bath Railway Path (see www.bristolbathrailwaypath.org.uk).

Allotments - There are two fields of allotments in Oldland Common, at North Street and Redfield Edge.

Information from the consultation events

This category was not dealt with separately during the public consultation events held early in the

process of the formulation of this Plan – however, as was noted in the section on “Community”, there were various points identified that are relevant here:

- the refurbishment of Bitton Recreation Club with improved parking;
- the lack of playground facilities and the possibility of joint use with local schools.

In the “Environment” section it was stressed that there was:

- a general need to preserve as many playing fields/green areas and fields as possible.

As throughout the consultations, the need to preserve the Green Belt in the Parish was considered of the highest importance.

Information from the surveys

Domestic Survey

The responses from the Community Questionnaires were to a question on participation in leisure

activities. When it came to the reasons given for not participating in leisure activities, three factors stood out: residents said they were either too tired, too busy or that the cost of the facility put them off. It was clear from the responses—and perhaps the choices respondents were given—that households were considering facilities outside the Parish, e.g. in Aspects West, Keynsham, Bath and Soundwell.

Schools Survey

The child-led survey of children in the Parish’s schools had parks and recreation/play at the forefront of their concerns.

The thing they most liked about living in the Parish was its places to play; the thing most wanted was more parks, with a swimming pool being on the wish list of a good number; and they also showed clear concern over the lack of places for young people/teenagers to go to and a desire for the improvement of existing parks and play spaces.

Focus: Parks, Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation		
Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Inadequate access to sports facilities. Lack of or availability of reasonably priced facilities locally.	a) Investigate and promote local facilities. e.g. new sports hall at SBL. b) Discuss with providers.	School Heads, Trustees, School Governors, Facility Managers, SGC, sports clubs and voluntary groups, Bitton Sports Club Trustees and BAFC.
2. Desire for greater access to countryside.	a) Check signing of footpaths and bridleways. b) Promote and publish countryside walks and rambles.	SGC Specialist Officers, Parish Council, Ramblers Association and other walking groups, Avon Valley Railway, BVRA.
3. Limited access to cycle path.	a) Create a network of cycle paths, footpaths and bridleways. b) Provide links between existing facilities.	SGC and Parish Council.
4. People do not know where the facilities are.	a) Better signage and publicity through newsletters.	SGC and Parish Council.
5. Need for further improvements to Bitton Recreation Ground Clubhouse.	a) Identify funding to carry out the second phase rebuild of the clubhouse.	Section 106 Agreement with Golden Valley Mill developers. Community action.
6. More seating needed in parks and shopping areas.	a) Provide further seating in all parks and in Oldland Common, North Common and Bitton Village.	SGC, Parish Council and Friends groups.
7. Better play facilities needed in all parks.	a) Work to improve play facilities throughout the Parish, especially adventure style equipment.	SGC and Parish Council and Friends Groups and funders.
8. A potential new open space at Golden Valley Mill site.	a) Use ‘Planning Gain’ under present legislation. Consider adventure play equipment, fitness trail, allotments and bowling facility.	Section 106 Agreement, SGC and Parish Council and funders.

The Business Community



Bitton Parish has many thriving businesses within its bounds, as the Business Survey undertaken as part of the preparation of this Plan shows (*see below for further details*).

Amongst the outcomes desired by the business community to make the Parish a more attractive place in which to live and work and increase footfall are: better accessibility – in particular more frequent buses; an increase in the amount of parking available to workers and customers; more availability of land/premises; and more favourable treatment by government and local government bodies, e.g. speedy response to planning applications and attention to overhanging trees and hedges that damage vehicles making deliveries to the premises.

Information from the surveys

Business Survey

The Business Survey results provided a wealth of information.

There is a large range of business types, skills sets, premises size and number of employees. The businesses (apart from the farms) are mainly to be found in the built-up areas throughout the Parish.

- Many are private companies or sole traders.
- Tenancies were a mixture of freehold (37%) - particularly for larger premises; leasehold with varied lengths (15%); and rented accommodation (21%).
- Employment levels in the main had changed little in the year prior to the survey date, except an increase in retail and a decrease in the catering

and office/administration sections.

- Prospects for future growth were considered to be mostly about the same or slow, although good growth was foreseen in the high-tech sector and by some retail, catering and service businesses: no business said it was in sharp decline, although a few across the board said they were in slow decline. Reasons given:

- positive forecasts were notably because of quality and niche market considerations; also mentioned were the positive effects of an ageing population on business;
- negative ones were increased competition, recession nervousness, lack of availability of bank credit and overseas costs.

It was particularly notable that, of those businesses who knew their long-term location plans, almost all, irrespective of how long they had been in their current premises, had no intention of relocating: and of those who had, only two of the four said they would relocate outside the district. The two main reasons given for initial location were that proprietors had been born in, or lived for many years in, the Parish, or the availability of premises.

Employment in businesses within the Parish

From the survey it was clear that a large number of employees of the businesses surveyed actually reside in the Parish. Many staff also come from the Kingswood area, Bristol, or nearby areas such as Keynsham and the area just to the west of the Parish, with a few from Bath and elsewhere.

Employment of residents in general

As well as those going out to work, nowadays people

also work from home (74 in the domestic survey) either full or part time. This can be either in a self-employed capacity or by “teleworking”, where modern technology enables workers to have the same integrated technology features at home as they would at a desk in their employer’s office. South Gloucestershire Council encourages this as part of a “green transport” strategy, as do other employers, and it is on the increase. Of a total of 1361 respondents to the question asking where they worked, the highest number (684) work in the Bristol area. Of the rest, main locations were fairly local, e.g. Kingswood, Keynsham, Longwell Green or Hanham, and Bath. Only 159 said they worked further afield or away from home. Sectors of industry in which they were employed were right across the board, with peaks in public services, financial legal and professional services and other service industries, followed by engineering and manufacturing, retail and wholesale, and construction. Of a similar number who gave their employment status, most were either full time employees (785)



or part-time (365), the rest being mainly self-employed, either with or without employees. A few were either carers or voluntary/charitable workers (15 in each of these categories).

Farms

Of the five farms responding, all kept livestock, one also said horticulture. Opinion was split as to whether or not the countryside was threatened: one respondent said they felt that farming was not valued.

Focus: Business Community

Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Better access – more frequent buses.	a) Work towards improvement/ rationalisation of bus services through Parish.	Integrated Transport Unit of SGC, First Bus, Wessex Connect.
2. Lack of parking.	a) Look into improved provision of parking facilities near shops and businesses for both workers and customers.	SGC, Parish Council, BVRA, local businesses.
3. Ability for growth and expansion. More favourable treatment by Government necessary.	a) Link closely with SGC as regards emerging legislation. b) Input into SGC Core Strategy. c) Work through local MP.	Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, CBI, Business Link Advisory Service, SGC Planners, local MPs.
4. Slow response to planning applications.	a) Look carefully at possibility of supporting applications that would benefit the Parish by increased provision of jobs etc.	Parish Council.
5. Lack of regular attention to over-hanging trees and hedges that damage vehicles making deliveries to the premises.	a) Lobby SGC Streetcare about frequency of attention to overgrown foliage etc.	Parish Council, SGC Streetcare.

Environment

The overall feeling of residents was that the Parish is a good place in which to live: in the “Things liked” section of responses to the surveys, access to countryside, having clean fresh air to breathe and being in such a pleasant rural location were often mentioned. The preservation of the Green Belt is seen as of vital importance to the Parish.

Information from the consultation events

The report on the public consultation events states that people in all parts of the Parish recognised that they were privileged as residents to be so close to the Green Belt, most feeling that the key to the area was in the Green Belt and the informal recreation that this offered. However, several residents in Oldland Common stressed the importance of preserving the Green Belt, there being a perceived threat to this in the medium to long term.

Positive suggestions to improve the environment were:

- more tree planting and fewer front lawns to be turned into car parks;
- the need to preserve as many playing fields/green areas and fields generally as possible;
- promotion of greater awareness among the public of the impact of their actions on nature and on the environment;
- landscaping adjacent to Siston Brook to be improved;
- street cleansing and lighting to be improved, particularly in Oldland Common;

- overhead cables should be buried;
- kerbside collection of plastics for recycling (which now happens);
- better access to footpaths, particularly for older people;
- permanent stone flower tubs.

On the debit side, there were two main issues:

- dog fouling – a wish was expressed for better monitoring, co-operation from the public and more specialist bins;
- litter – rubbish in general; fly tipping on the roadside and in water courses. One resident called for an anti-litter campaign.

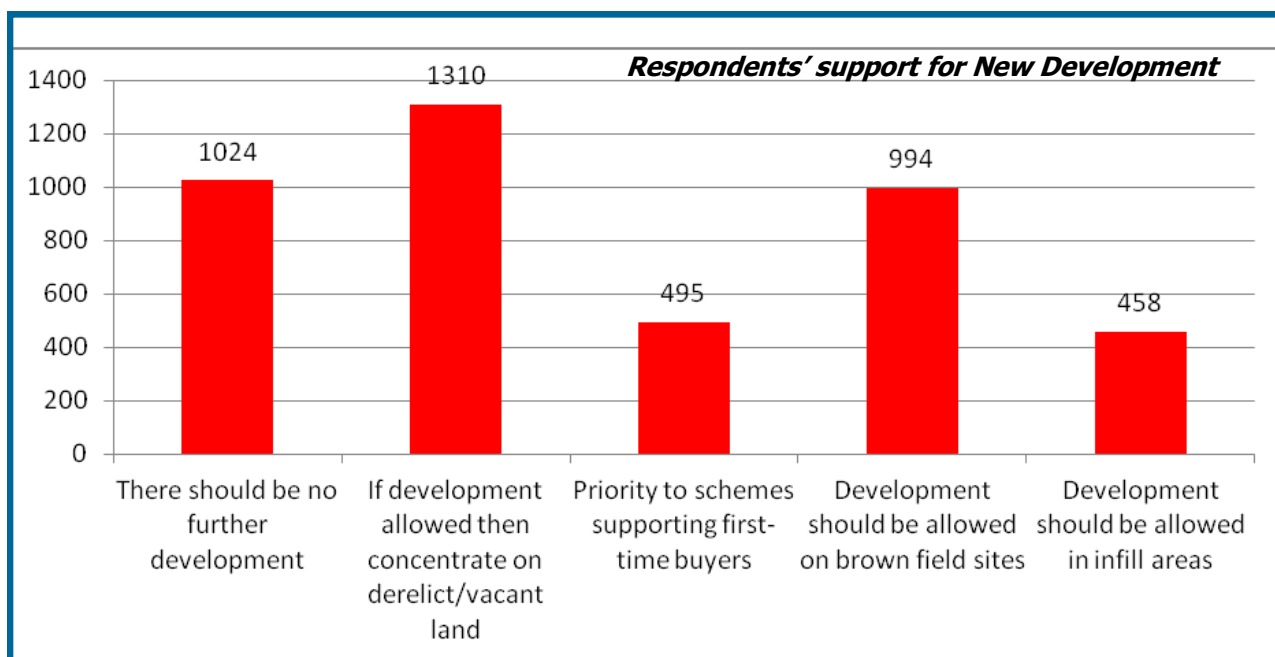
Information from the surveys

The responses from the Community Questionnaires revealed that the greatest concern amongst parishioners – some 89% of respondents – is *the possibility of development in the Green Belt*. When asked for specific reasons, their responses were as follows:

- loss of Green Belt – 77.3%;
- the amount of traffic that would be generated – 42.3%;
- change of character of the area – 42.2%.

It is worth noting that the survey was, coincidentally, made at the time of a major development application for the land to the rear of Park Farm (subsequently refused), which is Green Belt land on the west side of Barry Road, Oldland Common. It could be surmised that this concentrated people’s minds on the impact of development and what they would lose if it took place.

One question concerned *New Development* in general. Residents were (with choices) asked to indicate what type of development, if any, they would favour (*see chart below for details*). Standard definitions of “brownfield sites” and “infill” were







given (see “Terms and Abbreviations” page iii). Limiting building to the areas indicated is in line with South Gloucestershire Council’s current policy. Another question specifically concerned options residents would support as *Development on Green Belt* land. The only options supported by more than a small number of people were either use as a nature reserve/country park; for agriculture, or for sport/outdoor activity. The proposal off Barry Road also included commercial provision – only 3.7% of respondents would support such activity on the Green Belt. By leaving out any response against the “residential properties” option, almost 90% of households that responded were, by implication, suggesting that they considered residential development to be unsuitable in the Green Belt.

Improvements to the environment of the Parish

When asked to select from a number of possible actions they felt would improve the environment of the Parish, the most support came from the maintenance-type suggestions, e.g. maintain foot-paths and bridleway, walls and hedges, deal with damaged pavements and potholes in roads speedily and ensure drains and gullies are free from flooding. These concerns were mirrored in the “dislike about the Parish” answers also, narrow lanes in particular being made more difficult to use by infrequent hedge trimming. Another big concern was fly tipping, and the need to prosecute offenders. The need to empty

overflowing litter bins was also considered important. Planting trees, putting flower baskets/tubs on lamp posts was a well supported suggestion too. A similar question on improving the character of the parish had environmental aspects – creating multi-functional green spaces, and equal opportunities to access green space was important here, as was the need to introduce more conservation areas. The suggestion to put telephone and electricity cables underground was also well supported – a particular concern with the proposed development on Barry road was that any houses there would be directly underneath the overhead electricity wires. There was support, too, for the idea of more dropped kerbs for the disabled.

General environmental issues – People expressed particular concern about animal fouling (dog and horse), litter, and the general cleanliness and appearance of the Parish.

Local government services – Most people considered that local government services were good, or at least adequate, in the areas of refuse collection, household recycling and grass/verge mowing. However, both street cleansing and litter collection services were seen as only adequate or poor by respondents. In addition, the responses from farms in the *Business Survey* indicated that some at least considered the countryside to be at risk, while one considered farming was not sufficiently valued.

Focus: Environment		
Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Call for more “greenness” and need to plant trees.	a) Approach Parish Council over tree and flower planting - to also cover landscaping. b) Appeal to people to designate areas. c) Explore community orchard idea.	Parish Council, Woodland Trust, Women’s Institute, BVRA Gardening Club.
2. Maintenance of foot-paths, bridleways, walls and hedges (overgrowth making narrow lanes even more narrow)	a) Approach Parish Council over foot-paths and bridleways maintenance. b) Similarly SGC over maintenance of walls and hedges. <i>See also “Focus Business Community” Action 5.a).</i> c) Arrange Community Action Days (as below).	SGC, Parish Council, DEFRA, National Trust.
3. Litter and graffiti.	a) Clean up Cycle path. b) Organise spring clean events (two events per annum). c) Seek volunteers to litter pick in their home patch. d) Provide more bins in specified locations. e) Promote existence of 48hr graffiti service.	SGC Streetcare, Parish Council, Community, local people willing to volunteer for spring cleans and litter picks.
4. Street cleanliness.	a) Regular road gulley emptying. b) Regular sweeping cycles.	SGC Streetcare, BVRA.
5. Waste reduction, recycling, collection and disposal.	a) Analyse where the problem areas are. b) Improve means of storage for cardboard to prevent it being windblown. c) Approach SITA and SGC.	SGC, SITA, Environment Agency.
6. Fouling in parks and on pavements.	a) More dog bins in parks. b) Public awareness campaign about the Streetcare Help Desk number where dog fouling is a big problem so that the SGC Dog Warden can be informed. c) Educate horse owners.	SGC Dog Wardens and Parish Council and all dog and horse owners.
7. Lack of housing for first time buyers.	a) Lobbying, liaison, maintenance of dialogue. b) Approach SGC Planning Dept.	SGC, Housing Associations, Commercial Builders. Section 106 Agreement with developers. Part purchase schemes.
8. Green Belt not to be developed. (Concern over loss of land, more traffic and change of character to the area).	a) Protect Green Belt.	SGC, Parish Council, local communities, Members of Parliament, BVRA, “Save our Green Spaces”.
9. More social housing needed.	a) Ensure tighter control on development standards by SGC.	SGC, Housing Associations.
10. Promote development of brownfield sites.	a) Require SGC to state where development will/will not be permitted. b) Potential for Neighbourhood Plan to act under “Community Right to Reclaim Land”.	Various developers such as for Golden Valley Mill site.
11. Farming not being valued, countryside under threat.	a) Promote knowledge and understanding of rural matters in schools and the community	Farmers and rural businesses; SGC; Parish Council; WI etc.

Traffic and Highways

As well as the major routes through the Parish described earlier – notably the A431 and the A4175 – there are also other through routes, both in the built-up areas, with many smaller roads serving housing developments branching off them, and through the countryside (*see details in box*).

Traffic hot-spots include the A431 at the centre of Bitton Village and the A4175 at High Street Oldland Common, where traffic is generated partly by through vehicles using it as a short cut north-south and partly by local traffic accessing the Parish's only Post Office; the doctors, dentist and veterinary surgeries; the pharmacy; two fish and chip shops; a hairdressers; and the United Reformed Church, with its hall. There is no car park for the village.

Various other areas have traffic congestion issues – West Street, Oldland Common, where there are speed bumps near Oldland Village Club (which does have a car park) and Unity Methodist Church and hall (which do not); the vicinity of the six schools at “school run” times; and the southern section of the A4175, the Willsbridge-Keynsham road, at peak times.

Information from the consultation events

The report on the public consultation events highlighted three major issues concerning traffic and highways.

OTHER ROADS THROUGH THE PARISH

In Oldland Common there is a triangle of roads central to the village where the original common once was and where now stands the secondary school, Sir Bernard Lovell, accessed from North Street, the top side of the triangle. The High Street, which forms the east side of the triangle, is part of the A 4175. The third part of the triangle is West Street, an important and busy through route.

In North Common notable roads include:

- Southway Drive/Victoria Road/Mill Lane, running east-west through North Common and linking the A4175 with Tower Road, a continuation of West Street just outside the Parish boundary;
- Poplar Road (one way in parts) leading north-eastwards off Victoria Road to link with the A4175 as it leaves the Parish heading for Bridgegate;
- and Millers Drive, a bus route and on which is situated North Common Village Hall.

There are also country lanes that link Bitton to the back of Oldland Common *via* Golden Valley; Bitton to Upton Cheyney and then either to Beach and Lansdown or to Wick on the A420; and also across from Oldland Common to Beach. Some are narrow – others extremely narrow.

Parking – although specific streets were mentioned, the major problem lay in inconsiderate parking – double parking, parking on pavements – all of which caused a danger to older people and to children.

Speeding – this was a general complaint in all three wards, specific streets again being identified.

Traffic congestion was also a concern.





Information from the surveys

The responses from the Community Questionnaires showed that the major concern which residents had in this respect was the speeding of traffic. (It was, in fact, the second most voiced concern after loss of Green Belt, mentioned by over 40% of respondents.) They were particularly concerned about the A431

Swineford to Bitton; Mill Lane, North Common; the A4175 Bath Road from the abattoir at the north end of Oldland Common towards Bridgegate; and the A4175 from its junction with the A431 up to Oldland Common. They also felt that motorists were not fully aware of speed limits on the roads affected.

Child road safety was another major concern: addressing this will need further investigation as to the best way forward.

Other issues raised by respondents were problems to do with the condition of the roads, particularly potholes and the poor surface of pavements, and the issue of vehicle parking – double parking, parking half on pavements and generally inconsiderate parking. Quite a number complained about speed bumps and the damage done to vehicles, especially as they sometimes led to vehicles driving on the wrong side of the road to avoid them. Others, though, thought they would be of use in certain parts of the Parish.

Focus: Traffic and Highways

Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1.Speeding traffic, especially on A431 Swineford, Mill Lane, A4175/A431, Oldland Common, A4175 abattoir towards Bridgegate.	a) Better enforcement. b) Rationalise speed limits between 30mph, 40mph and derestricted.	SGC, Police and Highways Agency, Transport Planners and Engineers.
2. Pavement parking.	a) Increase enforcement by SGC.	Police, PCSO'S and Wardens.
3. On-street parking.	a) Review possible sites to create off street parking.	SGC and Parish Council, businesses with premises on or near streets.
4. Maintenance of roads and pavements, e.g. potholes and flooding road gullies.	a) Fill in potholes. b) Deal with damaged pavements quickly. c) Ensure drains and gullies free from flooding. d) Public response system to Parish Council.	Street Care SGC, Parish Council, local residents.
5. Traffic calming measures.	a) Provision of raised ramp continental style crossovers (as per Hanham High Street).	SGC – Traffic Planners and Engineers.
6. Combat the use of local lanes as "Rat Runs".	a) Reduce speed limit. b) Introduce chicanes.	SGC, Parish Council and Police.
7. Heavy congestion in Oldland Common High Street outside the Post Office and the Pharmacy.	a) Discuss with local Councils and the Police. b) Provide off-street parking. <i>See also "Focus: Business Community" Action 2.a).</i> c) Implement parking restrictions and enforce.	SGC, Parish Council and Police, businesses with premises on or near streets.
8. Concern about the heavy congestion and dangerous parking outside schools at the beginning and end of the school day.	a) Discuss with local Councils and schools. b) Raise awareness of safety implications among parents and public. <i>See also Action 7.c) above.</i> c) Promotion of "Walking Bus" with parents..	SGC (as local Education Authority), Parish Council (for publicity), School Heads, Governors and especially parents, Police, Road Safety Officers.

Transport

In the Parish of Bitton there is a high reliance on private modes of transport, mainly car and van, rather than use of public transport, which is perceived as costly, infrequent, unreliable and inconveniently routed. Public transport on Sundays or after 7 pm in the evenings is infrequent. There are good road links to neighbouring towns and cities, as described earlier, and access to the motorway network is also good.

Trains - The nearest train station is at Keynsham, some two miles from the centre of the parish, to which there are regular buses in daytime (not Sundays), see routes 532 and 533 below. Only nine people said they use trains on a daily basis. There is not a taxi rank at Keynsham station to facilitate late return. If travelling up to London, Bath Spa station is only some 20 minutes away by bus – however, a taxi back from Bath is very expensive if required.

Taxis – are considered by most people prohibitively expensive if wanting to go to either Bristol or Bath on a regular basis.

Buses are provided mainly by First Bus and Wessex Connect. Please see box for detailed information on current provision (January 2012). Only a few hundred residents use buses on a regular basis.

Cycling is used to travel to work and for other journeys, as well as for leisure. Over 100 people said they use a cycle daily. The Bristol-Bath Cycleway along the Bristol and Bath Railway Path is the best known cycle route. There is also a dual-use, cycle/footpath, along one side of the Willsbridge to Keynsham road.



Information from the consultation events

The report on the public consultation events found that the main positive point in this category was that people approved of the Bristol-Bath cycleway along the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. A warning was however sounded concerning the excessive speed of some cyclists, as this path is shared with pedestrians. There were many negative points made, particularly about the transport provider First Bus, including:

- high prices generally with all providers – taxi fares, however, were even worse;
- it is costlier to get to Bath than to Bristol by bus, despite the shorter journey time;
- the lack of a bus on most days between Bitton and Keynsham;
- poor time-tabling in Bristol City Centre for buses returning to this area;
- poor access to Frenchay and Southmead hospitals.

Information from the surveys

The responses from the Community Questionnaires yielded the following information concerning transport.

BUS SERVICES THROUGH THE PARISH OF BITTON (AS AT JANUARY 2012)

- The **42** service (formerly the 41), every 20 minutes to Bristol City Centre, running north from Cherry Gardens (the junction of the A431 and the A4175), through Oldland Common and North Common, and circuitously on through Kingswood shopping centre to Bristol. On Sundays this service is hourly.
- The hourly **332** service running along the A431 from Bristol to Bath. However this does not at present run beyond Longwell Green westwards of an evening, Bitton Village residents needing to change there to go into Bristol, and is only two-hourly on Sundays. It is seen as the main bus service for Bitton Village.
- The **318** and **319** routes, also hourly, which run respectively from Keynsham and from Bath to Cribbs Causeway, stopping outside Frenchay Hospital. The 318 runs through Willsbridge and the 319 through Bitton and Oldland Common, but neither goes through North Common.
- The **532** and **533** services, both from Keynsham, running through Willsbridge, Oldland Common and North Common to Aspects Leisure Centre and Mangotsfield respectively. Each serves the retail outlets in Longwell Green.

There are also some school buses to secondary schools outside the Parish; a once-a-week Faresaver bus, route **684**, that goes through Upton Cheyney and Bitton Village to Keynsham (but only gives the shopper just over an hour in the town before returning); and a morning Abus service, the **A7**, through Bitton Village to the large Asda supermarket in Longwell Green.

Travel to work – about 80% of those who responded to the questionnaires said that they used a car or van to get to work. (The 2001 Census gives the figure as 66.7%). Only 0.5% travel by rail (the Census has 0.6%), and the figures for bus, bicycle and on foot are, from the Census, 7.7%, 2.5% and 5% respectively, the figures again giving reasonable agreement with the survey results. Only 12 people use taxis on a daily basis.

Satisfaction with local bus services: despite many issues with the bus services provided, respondents on the whole expressed themselves as satisfied or quite satisfied in general. Some were even “very satisfied”.

- The most dissatisfaction was expressed about the routes followed and the frequencies of the services, followed closely by dissatisfaction with the reliability of services.
- The provision of and state of bus stops received little criticism.

Proposed solutions to bus route dissatisfaction

There was an additional option to respond with suggestions for solutions to problems with the routing and timetabling of buses serving the Parish. This received a large number of responses, with residents giving some interesting suggestions as to what they saw as the way forward in this respect, as well as further insight into some of the problems with the current situation.

A fast, more direct, route to Bristol. The most frequent suggestion, made by over 90 respondents, was for a fast, direct bus route into Bristol, either by:

- reinstating the bus route that once ran down through Oldland Common (now starting in North Common) and Barry Road to Cherry Gardens, then along the A431 through Hanham and Longwell Green to Bristol City Centre (this used to take about 30 minutes, as opposed to over an hour taken by the 42 nowadays); or by
- reinstating the **X67** limited stop bus, not only for peak time travel but also at other times during the day, alternating with the 42, to give the option of a faster service. However, the “wiggly route” issue would still remain.

The former suggestion would also please those who wish to be able to go to Hanham (where the medical practice that now serves many Oldland Common residents is based), a worry also expressed in other open question answers.

Timetabling, fares and destinations. It was suggested by a number of respondents that shorter journey times and lower fares would be beneficial - the times taken on the current routes to Cribbs Causeway and Bristol were seen as ridiculous, as

was the high cost of bus travel (£3.60 to Keynsham was cited, and £4.70 each way to Bath for a 17-year-old on minimum wage, returns not being available till after 9 am). Integrating discount bus cards, e.g. for students, so that they can be used with different service providers was also suggested – important in an area where there might be a long wait for the “right” bus. Also mentioned was the lack of an integrated travel approach to make connections viable, e.g. with trains at Keynsham Station (which seem always to arrive just after the bus home has left), or so that links can be made with routes into the cities from the smaller bus routes for onward travel without a long wait. Sunday and evening services were seen as particularly poor, there being none through the Parish to either Keynsham or Kingswood (although this has now been reinstated), nor to Bath from Oldland Common and North Common. A service to Cribbs Causeway on a Sunday was seen as being needed to enable shoppers to go there without a car on what is now the main shopping day. There was also a positive suggestion that another of the “40s” buses that terminate at Cadbury Heath could have its route extended to cover Oldland Common and North Common on Sundays and in the evenings to increase the frequency of services at these times.

Other destinations respondents thought would improve the services provided included Southmead Hospital – soon to be the area’s main hospital; Keynsham from Bitton more frequently than once a week; Yate; Temple Meads Station; Emerson’s Green; Filton; and Fishponds – for the UWE campus and Blackberry Hill Hospital.

A positive suggestion concerning information about the services was that, as well as putting clear, up-to-date timetables on all bus stops, timetable information could be provided in local shops, e.g. leaflets on



stands, so that people could easily find out what went where when.

Several more cynical suggestions were along the lines of having “a bus driver who knows the route”, since it is not unusual, as several people pointed out, for drivers towards the end of a route to skip parts of it, e.g. the North Street/West Street part of the route through Oldland Common, going down the High Street if empty and leaving people stranded, or even to turn round early and go back before reaching the terminus. It was also suggested that buses should, instead of going back to depot empty, take passengers on the return route, thus extending the service times.

There was also the idea of using smaller buses along the country lanes to serve outlying parts of the

Parish, such as Beach, even if only to link in with the main bus services.

Other transport issues.

There were also many travel-related comments in the “Things you dislike about the Parish” replies. In the main these reinforce the issues already covered above.

One complaint amongst cyclists was the lack of accessible links to the main cycleroutes. The roads in the Parish are all single carriageway, only the Willsbridge to Keynsham road having a facility for cycle use, so riders have to brave the traffic to access the cycleways. As well as the danger to the cyclists, there were some adverse comments from motorists who would much rather they were not on the roads at rush hours!

Focus: Transport		
Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Frequency and lack of reliability of the bus service.	a) Discuss with local councils and bus companies. b) Lobby First Bus and Wessex Connect with copy to Integrated Transport Unit of SGC.	Integrated Transport Unit of SGC, Parish Council, First Bus, Wessex Connect, BVRA and schools.
2. Lack of fast, direct route from some parts of Oldland Common and North Common into Bristol.		
3. Lack of direct route from all parts of Parish to Southmead Hospital and from some parts to Frenchay Hospital.	As a) and b) above. c) Work with community transport groups.	Integrated Transport Unit of SGC, Parish Council, First Bus, Wessex Connect, BVRA. Kingswood Community Transport. Keynsham Dial-a-Ride.
4. Particularly difficult in getting to Keynsham from Bitton Village.		
5. Poor service between Bath and Oldland/North Common.	a) First Bus to be required to consult with people living in the worst affected areas. b) Supply data obtained in the survey to the bus companies and SGC.	Integrated Transport Unit of SGC, Parish Council, First Bus, Wessex Connect.
6. People in the area too dependent on the car.	a) Discuss with local Councils, Sustrans and other interested groups. b) Promote a campaign for greater use of buses, trains and “green” transport methods in general.	SGC, Parish Council, Sustrans, other cycle and walking groups. First Bus, Wessex Connect, Integrated Transport Unit of SGC and Government via MP.
7. Lack of integrated transport system for buses and trains.	a) Work in joint effort with all local Councils. b) As 6.b) above.	Integrated Transport Unit of SGC, Bristol City Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council.
8. Mobility.	a) Look at the provision of community transport.	Campaign groups, Sustrans, Integrated Transport Unit of SGC. Kingswood Community Transport. Keynsham Dial-a-Ride.

Crime, Personal Safety and Anti-social Behaviour



An important consideration in how people feel about where they live is how safe they feel - their perception of the crime and safety issues in the Parish. Most respondents to the survey question on the issue of how safe they felt said that during the day they felt either safe or quite safe, and the same at home; while most people felt quite safe at night, although some did not. In the open question in the domestic survey many people said there was a lack of visible police presence, and that they would like to see police on the streets – some long term residents had “never seen a beat bobby”. The three areas of greatest concern amongst residents are vandalism, anti-social behaviour and underage drinking – all associated with young people. As was noted in the chapter on Young People, it is they, most of all, who say that they have nowhere to go and meet – facilities such as village halls and clubs, cafes and public houses are not appropriate to their needs.

Information from the consultation events

The main outcome of the public consultation events with regard to crime and safety was a call for a more proactive police presence and quicker response times.

Information from the Domestic Survey

The responses from the Community Questionnaires can be broken down into types of crime and concern about each by ward.

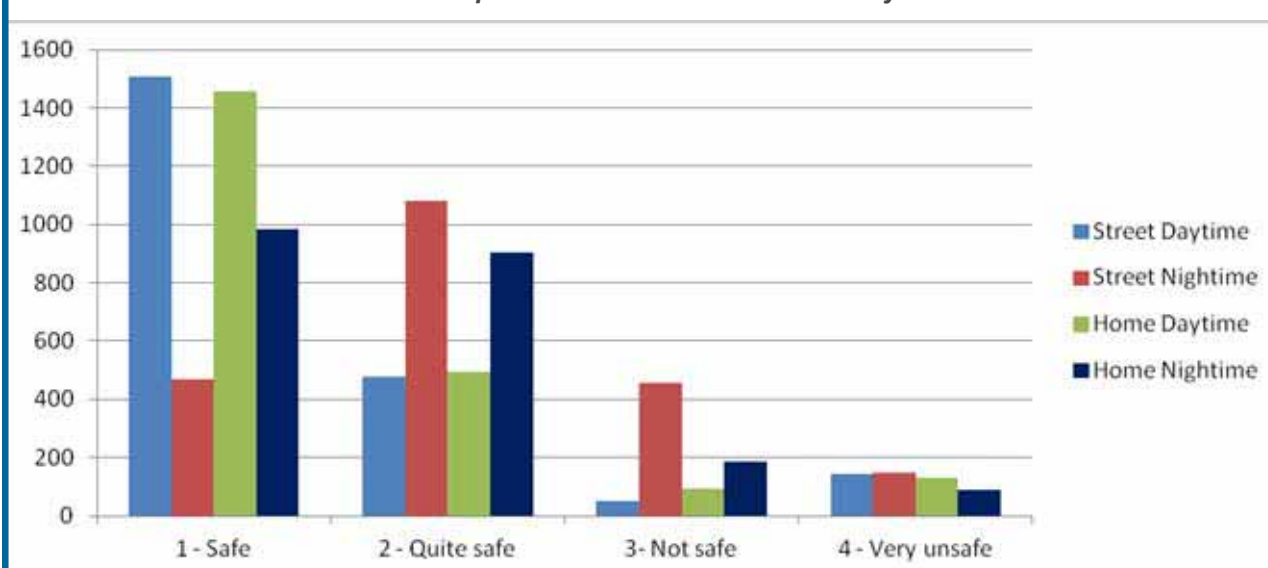
Burglary – Respondents in Bitton were mainly very concerned (35.4%), concerned (24.2%) or quite concerned (30%), with only 10.4% not concerned at all. A similar pattern in Oldland Common gave figures of 24.7%, 31.6%, 33.7% and 10% respectively. In North Common there would appear to be slightly less concern overall, the figures for concerned or quite concerned being the same as for Oldland Common, but only 24.7% professed themselves to be very concerned, with 15.6% not concerned at all.

Violence against the person – The incidence of concern in Bitton is relatively low, while in Oldland Common some 35% are concerned or very concerned. In North Common the figure is 41%, with the level of concern rising to 48.2% for those aged 60 to 74.

Drug or solvent abuse - The figures in the responses show that those most concerned about this are the older members of the community.

Vandalism – Here too the level of concern was highest in North Common and Oldland Common: 51.6% of the 40-49 age group who were “very concerned” lived in North Common and this represented 47% of

FEELING OF SAFETY—how safe respondents to the Domestic Survey felt at home or in the street



Focus: Crime, Personal Safety, Vandalism and Anti-social Behaviour

Issue	Action	Potential Partners
1. Noise nuisance, particularly from pubs at going-home time.	a) Neighbourhood Watch schemes, community policing. b) Let residents know who they can contact if they have problems with noise.	Environmental Health/Social Services/Licensing Officers of SGC and Police, local Safer and Stronger Community Groups.
2. Vandalism, anti-social behaviour and underage drinking by young people – greatest problem in North Common.	a) Request greater Police presence. b) Develop/re-launch Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.	SGC, Police and PCSO'S, Wardens, local residents, peer pressure initiators, local Safer and Stronger Community Groups.
3. Poor lighting on cycle path near Oldland/ North Common.	a) Approach SGC over strategic locations.	SGC, Parish Council, Avon Valley Railway, Sustrans.
4. Fly tipping.	a) Greater action – prosecute offenders. b) Campaign for greater whistle blowing by public.	Police, Neighbourhood Watch, residents to report to Streetcare at SGC.

the total in this category and ward. It should again be noted this does not mean that vandalism actually occurs at the level that respondents believe to be the case, simply that they are concerned about it.

Anti-social behaviour – 804 respondents were “very concerned about anti-social behaviour (ASB), with many more concerned or quite concerned. The criticism was greatest amongst those aged 40 to 49 (51.2% of those who responded and lived in North Common). Further information about these concerns comes from the “Don’t like” section of the open question, where there are many mentions of groups of teenagers and “gangs” gathering on bridges (there

are a good number of bridges over the Railway Path all down through North Common and Oldland Common) and on the Railway Path itself, as well as on children’s playgrounds.

There is mention in the same set of comments of Underage drinking happening in conjunction with this, an area of concern for even more people than for anti-social behaviour. Again, concerns were greatest in North Common, where 70% overall expressed themselves as “very concerned”. Also mentioned as frequently in these responses was the issue of the unwelcome noise from pubs and the disorderly conduct of people when leaving them.

Moving Forward

Bitton Parish Plan is only the first step in an ongoing process – it identifies ways in which the future of the Parish will be the future that parishioners themselves want it to be. The concerns of business organisations within the Parish have also been taken into account.

The Action Plan identifies paths of action: some issues highlighted in the surveys, such as plastics recycling, have already been addressed, and progress is already in hand on several other issues. Many issues need the active support of community members – things cannot always be simply left to “them” (whoever they might be). If you think you might be able to contribute in any way, please e-mail bittonpc@blueyonder.co.uk or telephone 01454 868102 to speak to the Clerk to Bitton Parish Council, Mrs Sharon Robbins.

As well as actions identified to be addressed with the help of likely partners in these actions, South Gloucestershire Council is fully supportive of Community Led Plans and is keen to assist its Town and Parish Councils to achieve the aspirations of the communities they represent. SGC is committed to considering CLPs when developing strategy.

The Parish Plan has been presented to Bitton Parish Council for them to take forward.

Bitton Parish Plan will be available on the SGC website at www.southglos.gov.uk/NR/exeres/33a37e08-ed38-4c52-a277-c9461a33db54 and on the Parish Council website, www.bittonparishcouncil.co.uk.

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 - "Bitton (East) - then and now" (1997)
 - "Around Bitton" (2001)
 - "Around Oldland" (2005)
- Chris and Wendy McHale for an image from the White Hart, Bitton

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAFC	Bitton Associated Football Club
BANES	Bath and North East Somerset Council
BVRA	Bitton Village Residents Association
Brownfield	Brownfield sites are empty industrial or commercial sites available for development.
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Footfall	The number of people visiting a shop or business premises in a period of time is known as its footfall. This is an important indicator of how well a business is doing.
Futsal	A kind of indoor football.
Golden Valley Mill/Intier site	Derelict former paper mill in Bitton Village, subject of consultations with view to development for housing and community facilities. For BVRA's response see BVRA website, INTIER tab.
Infill	Land inside a built-up area being used for further development.
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PH	Public House
PO	Post Office
S106/Planning obligation/gain	A planning obligation is a legally binding agreement secured under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. This secures funding from developers of land towards community facilities.
SBL	Sir Bernard Lovell School
SGC	South Gloucestershire Council
SUSTRANS	UK charity working to enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they make every day.
Zumba	An exercise/dance activity.

Bitton Parish Plan



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