

# MILTON ABBAS PARISH PLAN 2003



**Vital Villages**

Equipping communities to shape their futures

# ***MILTON ABBAS PARISH PLAN***

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## MILTON ABBAS AND VITAL VILLAGES

### Introduction

Milton Abbas is a parish of approximately 650 inhabitants, situated in the North Dorset District of the County of Dorset. It is located 8 miles from Blandford Forum, the District centre, and 10 miles from Dorchester, the County Town. (1991 statistical data appears



opposite. (Latest census data is awaited, March 2003).

The village of Milton Abbas is one of the most attractive in the County and is a very early example of estate planning, with its thatched cottages set in pairs in a steep valley, together with a school, church, shop and pub.

Half a mile from the existing settlement was the original site of the village up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, now deserted but protected as an Ancient Monument. It is the home of Milton Abbey and Milton Abbey School, a public school for boys,

both Grade 1 Listed Buildings.

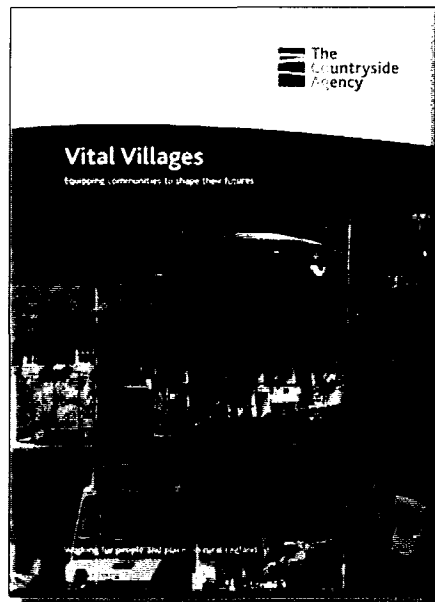
The main village is a designated Conservation area of outstanding interest, with an adjoining Historic Park. It is set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Rural Development Area. A fuller history appears in the next chapter.

### Vital Villages

The Vital Villages programme 'aims to help small rural communities to take stock of their village; to identify what they need to revitalise it; and ensure local people have a voice in their future; and to provide support to enable each village to make its own decisions and to implement some of the improvements needed locally'. (source: Countryside Agency)

In the White Paper, published in November 2000, 'Our Countryside: the future. A fair deal for rural England', it says,

'We want villages to be active, living communities, where people are also able to meet their essential needs and with opportunities for both old and young'. In the introduction by the Secretary of State and the Minister of MAFF: 'our vision is of a living, working, protected and vibrant countryside. Not an outdated, picture postcard version, but one where people have access to the jobs and services they require. We want to give a fair deal in public services, to support a diverse and successful rural economy, and to protect and enhance the environment. We want a countryside which can shape its own future, with its voice heard by Government at all levels.'



***Milton Abbas trusts that its voice will be heard.***

## Threats

We noted in the Countryside Agency's report, 'The State of the Countryside 2000' that 'recent studies and surveys have identified that there are a number of threats to community spirit and social cohesion in rural areas, including:

Increased mobility and rapid population change

More people commuting instead of working in the community

Decline of local shared facilities, such as shops, schools and pubs

Increasingly individualistic lifestyles

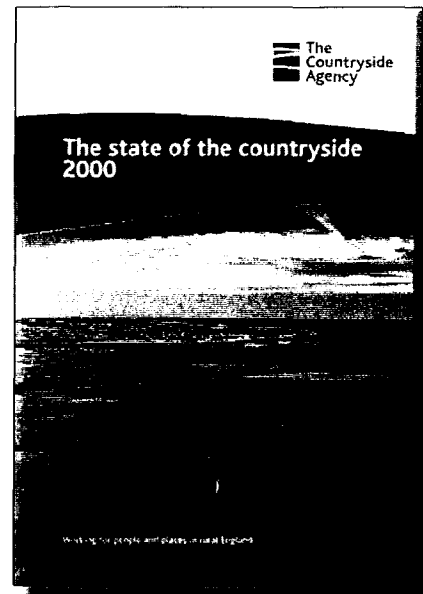
Loss of distinctive rural culture, language and dialects, and other intangible qualities

A possible weakening of links between market towns and surrounding villages and farms

Conflicts between incomers, and locals and farmers

Loss of younger people.

These factors are recognisable in rural Dorset and will be taken into account in the framing of this plan.



## The Parish Plan

In its brief guide to Parish and Town Plans, the Countryside Agency says: 'The Government wishes to give small rural communities a bigger opportunity to run their own affairs, and to set out a vision for their town or village to guide its future development. Some communities have already prepared village design statements or carried out a parish appraisal. Many have looked at local housing need and the allocation of land for industrial and residential development. But a Parish Plan must be more than a design statement or survey of housing needs. It should cover everything of relevance to the people who live in the parish including social, economic and environmental issues. It will need to address the needs of the entire community and everyone should have the opportunity to participate in its preparation'.

The Countryside Agency agreed to fund the Milton Abbas Parish Plan in 2002. This followed the publication of the 1996 Village Appraisal and the Village Consultation 2001. Findings of these two surveys will be referred to throughout this report. Many actions flowed from these studies, which has encouraged the Milton Abbas community to plan further initiatives through Vital Villages, with the support of our local authorities and agencies.

This document has been reviewed by Dorset County Council and North Dorset District Council, with regard to relevant chapters, and was formally endorsed by the Parish Council at its meeting of 10 April 2003.

# Milton Abbas & Winterborne Clenston 1991 Census information

	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Dorset</i>	<i>England &amp; Wales</i>
<b>Population, Households &amp; Dwellings</b>			
Resident Population	551	645,166	~
<b>Males</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>307,589</b>	<b>~</b>
Females	270	337,577	~
<b>Households</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>269,032</b>	<b>~</b>
Persons in Households	545	628,461	~
<b>Persons not in Households</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16,705</b>	<b>~</b>
Dwellings	213	263,241	~
<b>Age Structure</b>			
0-15 (%)	23.59	17.28	20.07
<b>16 &amp; 17 (%)</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>
18-44 (%)	36.48	35.07	39.42
<b>45 - Retirement Age (%)</b>	<b>17.79</b>	<b>19.41</b>	<b>19.23</b>
Retirement Age & above (%)	19.96	25.94	18.78
<b>85 &amp; above (%)</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>1.53</b>
<b>Economic Activity</b>			
Economically Active Population	258	298,679	~
Full-time Employees (%)	51.55	57	61.63
<b>Part-time Employees (%)</b>	<b>18.22</b>	<b>17.86</b>	<b>16.16</b>
Self Employed (%)	23.64	16.61	11.76
<b>Unemployed in April 1991 (%)</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>9.17</b>
<b>Tenure of Household</b>			
Owner Occupiers (%)	61.79	75.71	67.42
Renting Privately (%)	20.75	11.89	8.61
<b>Renting Publicly (%)</b>	<b>17.45</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>22.8</b>
<b>Household Characteristics</b>			
Lone Pensioner (%)	9.05	17.82	15.02
Long-term Illness within Household (%)	19.52	24.02	24.6
<b>Lone Parents (%)</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Dependent Children (%)	32.41	25.22	30.01
Lacking/ Sharing own Bath/Shower and/or WC (%)	1.43	1.44	1.33
Without Car (%)	14.76	23.9	32.41
<b>With 2 or more Cars (%)</b>	<b>40.95</b>	<b>28.07</b>	<b>23.84</b>
<b>Occupational Characteristics</b>			
Professional, Managerial & Technical (%)	57.14	38.64	37.54
Skilled, Manual & Non-Manual (%)	14.29	38.88	40.05
<b>Partly Skilled and Unskilled (%)</b>	<b>28.57</b>	<b>17.68</b>	<b>18.06</b>
<b>Employment Categories</b>			
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (%)	13.04	2.78	1.85
Manufacturing (%)	17.39	15.82	17.93
<b>Services (incl. Banks &amp; Finance) (%)</b>	<b>34.78</b>	<b>42.17</b>	<b>40.31</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>			
With a Higher Qualification (%)	24.39	13.95	13.39

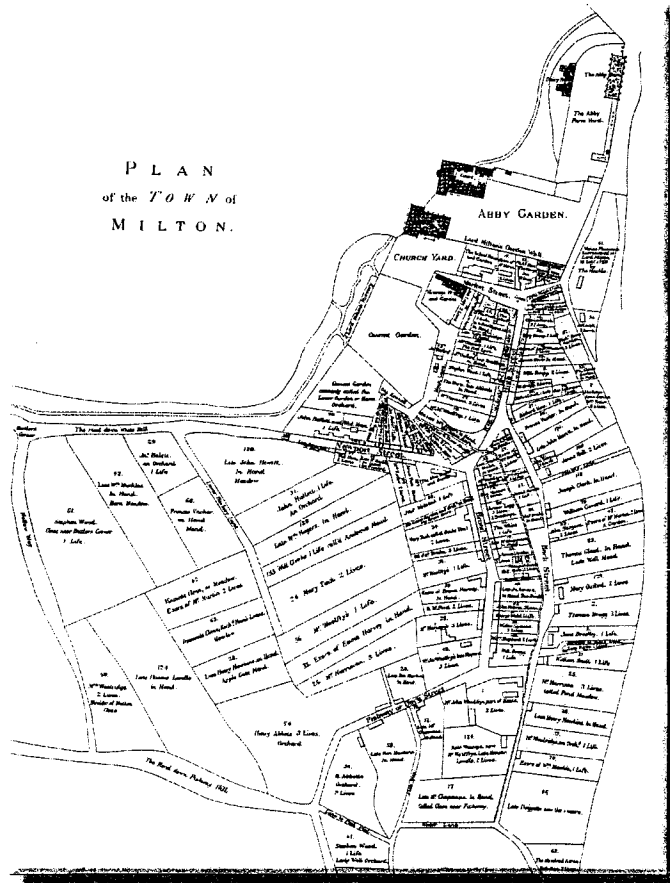
Source: 1991 Census, Small Area Statistics. Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. Crown Copyright.

Chapter 2  
**HISTORY**

Communities right across the British Isles have evolved over many hundreds of years and it would be a very brave historian who claimed that he could date precisely the formation of this town or that village. Milton Abbas is unique in that its creation is actually recorded and its birth is a matter of historical fact. People born here or those who have been assimilated take it all in their stride but for visitors or would be incomers the question always arises as to how this quite unusual village came to be the way it is. How did they get there, these 40 or so apparently identical cottages calmly gazing across the village street at their own mirror image?

Even to the casual observer, it is plain that Milton Abbas did not evolve in quite the same way as any other village. For a start, there is no diversity of architectural style which might suggest an earlier existence. No obvious clues which might signal a humbler past. Seemingly then, it may just have arrived, ready made and all of a piece? The truth is that to all intents and purposes that is exactly what did happen. One moment there was nothing, and then - in the space of a few years - a wooded but otherwise empty and steeply sided valley, suddenly became a village populated with families, installed into newly built lime washed dwellings; everything up and running with the inhabitants going purposefully about their business, as though it had always been so.

Strange, even odd, the old town of Middleton, their former home just half a mile away, was no more. It had been deliberately destroyed. The local landowner, Joseph Damer, Lord Milton, has declared that Middleton, a thriving community since Norman times, had to be removed because he intended to landscape his grounds. The grounds in question now included most of the existing town of Middleton. Over the years it had grown up around the Abbey. Lord Milton, having bought the estate some years previously, used the Abbey as his home. The close proximity of the townspeople to his Lordship did nothing for good neighbourly relations. In fact he believed that their enforced 'absence' would undoubtedly 'make his heart grow fonder'. Despite some 500 years of continuous habitation, the current residents of Middleton were now



deemed to be in the wrong place and consequently, very much in the way. Demolition was the order of the day. Nowadays such arbitrary behaviour on the part of a landlord seems shocking and undoubtedly would cause an outcry, but Damer was a man of his time and simply a follower of 18th century fashion. He wanted to be seen as one of those rich landed gentry who could afford to employ Lancelot "Capability" Brown to produce and carry out a grand plan which would literally change the landscape. If the Brown plans of 'parkland and lake' were to be realised then everyone was going to have to make way and move out. There could be no options or exceptions.

The new village of Milton Abbas was planned and brought into existence to house those dispossessed tenants whose labour and skills were necessary for working Lord Milton's estates. Naturally people objected, some strongly, but none prevailed and Middleton was gradually erased as its replacement Milton Abbas was being built. Yet existing records of the time, as recorded by the Poor Law Overseer, make no particular mention of what must have been a traumatic and momentous occasion for the entire population of Middleton who found themselves forced to move and then expected to rebuild totally their lives elsewhere.

The upheaval took place between the years 1773 and 1779 and perhaps significantly its instigator Lord Milton died just as it was reaching completion. All this a century and more before Bourneville, Welwyn Garden City or Hampstead Garden Suburb were even a glimmer in a Town Planner's eye or political concepts such as social engineering and Milton Keynes had been conceived.

Although its birth was sudden and arbitrary, once Milton Abbas was established, just like any other village it grew, took its chances and dealt with changes; in its own way reflected the social and political events taking place elsewhere in the land. Two hundred years ago almost every adult person in the village of Milton Abbas earned a living on or from the land. Everyone knew everyone else and in all probability they were all related at some level. There would have been a keen sense of self sufficiency within the community. Servant, Schoolmaster, Publican, Blacksmith, Tailor, Labourer, Clergyman and Shepherd. They were all here serving both Squire and village and everyone understood that they were dependent to some degree on each other, which no doubt was fine if you got on with your neighbour, and



presumably tiresome and unpleasant if you did not. But what records there are of social behaviour, suggest that the people of Milton Abbas were much like their counterparts in other villages, neither saints nor sinners but mostly preoccupied with

having a job, keeping a roof over their heads and food on their table. There were distant wars; times of tribulation and hardship, as well as highdays and holidays. Rural life was governed by the seasons and employment was mostly conditional on the needs of the Milton Abbey estates. After the death of the first Lord Milton the estate remained in the family for the next 60 years until its acquisition by the Hambro family in 1852, and for the villagers life continued much as it had before. During the 19th century this close community, linked as it was to a large estate, was to some degree sheltered from sudden and violent external change.

Towards the end of the century Milton Abbas and the Hambro family were to witness the first evidential signs of a new role that years later was going to play an important part in the economic future of the village. Tourists and in this case it was tourism with Royal patronage! It seems that country weekends in Dorset were the big attraction. Nothing to do with Thomas Cook but much to do with the future Edward VII. He became a regular house guest of the Hambros, not least, because as bankers they lived in comfort and in a style that suited Edward. He also sought and enjoyed the serenity of their Milton Abbas estates, ostensibly as a participant in game shooting parties, but later on in the day - rumour has it - where he could discreetly follow other pursuits of a rather more personal nature.

No one then could foresee that just over the horizon rather more serious issues were looming. Within a few years the whole world was to be gradually embroiled in a conflict which was to change everything. The effects of the 1914 - 18 Great War were considerable and this village was by no means immune. The Milton Abbas War Memorial records that as many as 15

young men from this small village lost their lives during that war. In such a small population the ending of the lives of those young men presented a terrible loss to the future of this community.

Those who survived and came home no longer believed that the old order would or could remain. In essence they were right but it did not happen overnight. In fact as far as Milton Abbas was concerned it was not until 1932 that the next upheaval took place. No doubt hard economic factors played a part in the decision that led the Hambro family to sever their connection with the village and to sell up their estate. One major effect of the sale was that the villagers were now given the opportunity to acquire the freehold of their cottages. The symbiotic relationship that for nearly two centuries had existed between the estate owners and their village community was now quickly withering away. The estate lands were sold off and the Abbey, as well as Joseph Damer's former home, were acquired by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and then leased as a Faith Healing Centre.



Seven years later in 1939 the Second World War overtook village life and by the time that event was concluded the whole of Britain had undergone irrevocable change. The day of the large estate supporting a satellite community was for the most part finished. Agriculture now needed fewer and fewer employees. Milton Abbas was no exception and soon became a place to live rather than a place to work. Land at Catherine's Well above the old village was set aside for the provision of council subsidised housing, particularly for those in the community who were unable to buy property in the village street. Young people growing up in the village knew that they would have to seek work elsewhere. More often than not this meant moving away from Milton Abbas to be nearer their place of work. In 1950 the village brewery owned by the Fookes family for over a hundred years closed down. Gradually the social profile of the people still resident in the village changed.

However, Milton Abbas still attracted people, and not necessarily locals. The village cottages once considered only suitable for lowly agricultural workers were now much sought after by newcomers seeking relief from the stresses and strains of urban life, hoping that residence in a picturesque village like Milton Abbas would meet their needs. Many of those incomers happily put down new roots and became part of this community. In 1954 Lord Milton's former home became a Public School - the Milton Abbey School. Which is deliciously ironic. It was after all the proximity of the Middleton Grammar School and the behaviour of its pupils back in 1770 that led Lord Milton to his eventual decision to move the village, and to get the school moved all the way to Blandford!

Today Milton Abbas is a village which supports a First School, a Pub, a combined Post Office and general store. In addition, mainly for visitors, there is a Gift shop and also a Tearoom. There is a firm of agricultural engineers who service and supply the whole county. Redundant farm buildings have been converted into a multi-user business centre, with potential for increased local employment. Yet its peace, beauty and tranquillity continue to attract visitors from all over the world. Knowingly or otherwise, nearly everyone who lives or visits the village falls under its spell. In the 1770's its future was by no means certain, but two and a quarter centuries later Milton Abbas has firmly taken root with its continuance no longer in doubt. But the manner in which our village is to continue, is very much a question for every one of us. One example of our commitment to the immediate future can be seen in the provision of new housing, homes intended for young families of limited means, recently built at Catherine's Well. Yet, and at the same time, we all still zealously guard our heritage as it exists in the 'Village Street'.

Peter Chafer



## CONSULTATION 1995-2002

There have been three formal processes of consultation during the period of 1995 to 2002. The first was a Village Appraisal conducted in 1995, with the report published in 1996. The second was the Village Consultation 2001. The third has been this Parish Plan, which involved a major community consultation process at the outset.



### Village Appraisal

Approximately 80% of the community responded to the survey, together with 38 completing the youth questionnaire. A number of important initiatives have been completed as a result of the Appraisal, e.g. two recreation areas, including a Millennium Green, upgrade of children's play park, landscaping of the Old Village Hall Site to become a picnic area, construction of a pavement (road safety), installation of traffic calming measures, construction of a new bus shelter, the introduction of a parish newsletter, The Bulletin, etc. Other initiatives are ongoing, e.g. seeking funds for building a village hall.

### Village Consultation 2001

238 households responded to the survey, 63% of those distributed, together with 25 youth responses.

This study sought to examine in more detail those issues and activities that had not been addressed since 1996.

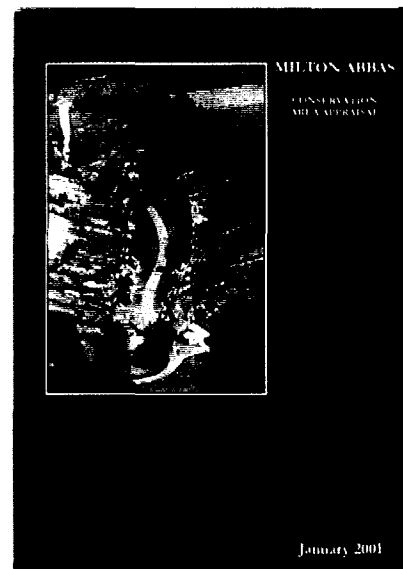
### Other Consultation

Four Housing Needs surveys have been conducted in the parish (in addition to the District Council surveys). There was also a Conservation Appraisal carried out in 2000.

### Parish Plan 2002-2003

The next two chapters set out the methodology of the Parish Plan and the findings of the public consultation and research.

Each subsequent chapter refers to findings of the Village Appraisal and/or Consultation 2001 as applicable.



## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN**

To produce a viable plan of action that will enhance the lives of the community of Milton Abbas over the course of the next five years.

### **Strategy**

To update data on issues and perceived needs of the community

To identify priorities for action

To establish what collaborative efforts can be produced on an inter parish/town basis

To explore sources of support and funding to make the plan of action achievable

### **Parish Plan Methodology**

A steering group was formed to manage the process. An early decision taken with advice from those with experience of Vital Villages was to appoint a consultant/facilitator for the consultation phase. We were fortunate to find a person with extensive experience in this field, Sarah Taragon.

The first 'pilot' discussion group was with members of the steering committee. After that, groups of parents, elderly residents, newcomers to the parish, children, teenagers and others met for discussions.

A manned exhibit was featured at the Village Fete and there was a series of discussions and activities at the Tent Week (described later) in August.

Further discussions have taken place in early 2003 with parents, and a children's activity /discussion 'away day' organised

A housing needs survey has been carried out with the assistance of the rural housing enabler, Rachel Kalis.

Local businesses have been contacted to find out their plans and needs.

Neighbouring villages have been approached to find out what social and leisure activities exist and whether they have transport needs.

Officers at the county and district councils have been met to seek information and guidance.

Meetings of local community groups, e.g. Blandford & District Community Association, Kickstart and Stourford Partnership, have been attended to encourage cross-fertilisation.

Relevant documents, such as the Rural White Paper, the County Structure Plan, various district policy papers, Countryside Agency reports, have been obtained and studied, in order that recommendations from the Parish Plan can be consistent with policies of superior authorities.

Throughout the planning process, the project has been widely publicised, both through flyers to households and in the Milton Abbas Bulletin, the monthly newsletter. The next chapter describes the consultation process with the community. More detail is provided in Appendix 1.

### **Tent Week**

An explanatory note is required regarding this project which features strongly in the consultation report. As the parish does not have a Village Hall, and the need for one is clear, it was decided to test the potential take up of rental by user groups by staging a 'tented hall' week. A marquee was erected and groups were invited to stage their events. The demand was overwhelming. This trial is to be repeated in 2003 and the period of time extended. It is to be

hoped that this Parish Plan will supply the substantive evidence that will lead to financial support for this urgent requirement.

### **Partnership**

Community partnerships are encouraged by all levels of government, and particularly by Dorset County Council and North Dorset District.

In the North Dorset paper on this subject, a set of objectives are listed. The relevant ones to this plan are:

- To bring together individuals from communities, private, public and voluntary organisations in partnership
- To encourage local partnerships to consult fully with their communities and identify local issues
- To encourage local partnerships to prepare local community plans
- To improve communication between towns and their surrounding areas, community groups, local private, public and voluntary sector organisations and specifically take account of local views in the community planning process
- To encourage existing and new voluntary and community organisations to be efficient and effective and gain new members/users
- To encourage Parish Councils to work together to prepare Parish Plans to integrate into the local partnership development plans.

We have attempted to participate in and encourage partnership wherever possible.



## **Milton Abbas Parish Plan General Consultation 2002**

### **Introduction**

A number of general consultation events were held during the period July 2002 to August 2002. These took the format of facilitated group events, and display and comment boards put up at social/general events. The aim of the consultations was to capture the wishes of local people, and to try to create a sense of ownership of the process of the Parish Plan.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used was community development based techniques, giving people an opportunity to pro-actively get involved. The processes aim to give people free reign with ideas and to encourage people to think about their "ideal" rather than being constrained by existing services and facilities.

The facilitated discussions held were:

- Short discussion with steering group members
- Discussion with young parents (July 2002)
- Discussion with newcomers group as part of social evening (July 2002)
- Discussion with older people during coffee morning at Tent Week
- Discussion with children held during Tent Week

( Tent Week was a special holiday time event to enable local groups to organise activities in a marquee, in the absence of a village hall)

All were facilitated by an external facilitator except the Children's discussion.

Boards were made available asking for comments (and staffed) at:

- Milton Abbas Fete
- Milton Abbas Tent Week

A brief questionnaire was also used during Tent Week.

Informal discussions were also held (mainly with children) during attendance at one Tent Week day by the external facilitator.

An example of the process used at discussion groups can be found over page, as can the instructions given to those present at the groups.



## Young Parents Discussion

### Introduction

We are trying to get the views of as many people as possible in the parish about what they would like to see in Milton Abbas in future.... What we are going to do now, is to have some discussions to find out what you like and dislike about Milton Abbas, and any ideas you have to make it a better place to live. We've only got an hour, but you will have other opportunities to give your opinions if you don't get chance to say everything you want to today.

10 mins

I want you to think about the things you **like** about Milton Abbas. If you can just shout out your answers. Think about the reasons you moved here, but also any other things you have discovered since you moved here which you like. You'll get a chance to write up more things you like at the end.....

15 – 20 mins

I want you to think now about the things, that make life difficult for you, or that you **don't** like about living in Milton Abbas.

If you could work in small groups. If one of you could write down the things any members of your group come up with on the GREEN A5 sheets. Make sure you write down everything that is said, even if no-one else agrees, and remember to write down your scribe's issues too. There are no right & wrong answers. See the yellow instruction sheets on your table for pointers, and remember these points (indicate sticky wall instructions).

15 mins

Get each group to give three of their issues.

Group them.

Ask for most different issues & group. The rest of the issues.

I am going to give you all three sticky dots. I want you to come up here and stick your dots onto the title issue(s) that are of MOST concern to you. You can stick all your dots on one, or split them up to put one dot on three different issues.

Sum up priorities quickly

### Thinking about Issues in Milton Abbas

- Make sure everything *you* think of gets recorded, even if no-one else agrees with you, or you think it is too small to mention.
- Make sure everyone in your group has a chance to give their opinions.
- There are NO wrong answers!
- Make sure your idea/issue is clear for others to understand and gives enough information e.g. don't write "traffic" or "housing", but "too much traffic through Named Street" or "not enough housing for local young people".
- Make sure everyone's ideas get recorded. Don't worry if they conflict – write them all down.
- Try to keep to a maximum of 7 words per sheet. Write large & neatly. Only include one idea per sheet.

### Think about.....

- Think about what it is like to live in Milton Abbas **now**. Think about what you dislike about living here, and what makes life difficult for you and your family/friends.
- Think about what has changed in Milton Abbas in the time you have lived here – is there anything that you would like to see as it was?
- If you are still living in Milton Abbas in 20 years time, what would you like to be different, and what would you like to see? What changes would make you want to stay here or would make your life much easier?
- Think about the people you know here – your children, neighbours, friends etc. What problems/issues have they mentioned?
- Remember to think about all the different elements of life here, including leisure, work, getting around, the physical environment and accessing services & information.

Where the Boards were used, titles were prepared in advance and put up around the tent/room. Examples of these can be seen in the box below.

### **Trawling for Ideas**

We're looking for any ideas you have that would make Milton Abbas a better place for you & others to live.

**Whether your idea is small or large, tell us about it!**

Write your idea onto a post-it, and stick it onto the sheet below.

**If you don't tell us your ideas, then we can't do anything about them.....**

### **What do You Like about Milton Abbas?**

- Write what **YOU** like on a post-it note and stick it onto the sheet of paper below. Write each thing on a separate post-it and put up as many things as you can think of.
- If you **AGREE** with something someone has already said, then stick a green dot on their post-it, if you **DISAGREE** with someone's comments, stick a red dot on that post-it.

### **Tourism**

**How do you feel about tourism in Milton Abbas?**

- Is tourism good for Milton Abbas?
- Are there any particular issues/problems caused by tourism?
- Would you like to see tourists & tourism managed differently?
- Are there opportunities from local tourism that Milton Abbas should be taking advantage of?

*Write your thoughts and ideas onto post-it note(s), and attach below.*

### **Children and Young People**

- What activities are needed for children and young people?
- Are there any particular issues/problems faced by children & young people in the village?
- What facilities, information or support should be available in Milton Abbas for children & young people and their parents/carers?

*Write your thoughts and ideas onto post-it note(s), and attach below. If you are 18 or under, please put a star on your post-it.*

Other areas covered by the Boards included

- What do you dislike about Milton Abbas?
- Traffic & Parking
- What is Important to you about Milton Abbas?
- Housing
- Local Economy
- Social/Recreation
- Accessibility
- Environment

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire used during Tent Week, listed 15 areas of potential improvement within the village e.g. playgroup facilities, rural transport, safety & crime prevention, facilities for the elderly. Respondents were asked to tick as many as they felt Milton Abbas should be doing something about. They were also asked for any other ideas.

### **Results**

A full report of results can be found in the Appendix for all the different groups/events. The following provides an overview of the results.

### **Issues discussion with Steering Group (May 2002)**

Five people attended this exercise, all of whom were further involved with the process of the Parish Plan, and are all active within the community in other roles. This exercise was carried out mainly to demonstrate to the group the process which could then be used with other groups.

The top four areas of concern in order of priority were:

- Space for recreational activities/village hall – linked to this, there were also many comments on the need for more activities for young people
- Complacency of local residents – apathy within the community, and a few people doing all the work
- Affordable Housing (for young families)
- Traffic (speeding)

The other concerns mentioned included: social activities for young people & children; litter; the potential for organisations & other local villages to work together to provide activities.

### **Issues discussion with Young Parents**

Eleven people attended, 10 were female, and 10 were under 40. All except one, had at least one child. They had lived in the village for between 2 ½ years and 27 years.

Generally, the group like living in Milton Abbas. The things they particularly liked were:

- The quiet and pleasant environment
- A good community feeling, with lots of clubs & groups
- The school & playgroup
- The doctors surgery

The top two concerns, with far more priority than anything else were:

- Space for recreational activities/village hall
- Facilities/groups for children & young people

Other concerns with some priority were:

- Affordable housing
- The pub not being child/local friendly
- Environmental concerns – dog mess and access to the lake

Other issues mentioned were: access to transport; speeding traffic; parking issues; lack of public toilets.

Ideas for improvements included:

- Provision of village hall/meeting space and perhaps a youth café Social activities that the group would like to see included: slimming/exercise classes, karate, yoga, youth club, brownies/cubs, and more general get togethers.
- Importance of the local shop & locals supporting it
- Networking within the village of groups, clubs etc – the community working together
- Charging for tourist parking, and making other income from tourism e.g. local leaflets, produce & crafts
- Distributing the Village Bulletin outside the village to bring others in to events

### **Issues discussion with Newcomers Group**

Fourteen people attended this group, most of whom had moved into the village in the past 5 years (some as recently as six weeks). Group included 7 men, and a variety of ages.

Overall, the group was happy with the village and liked it (which is why they chose to move to Milton Abbas). They particularly liked

- The quiet and pleasant environment
- A good community feeling, with lots of clubs & groups
- The doctors surgery

The main issues were:

- Parking – particularly on the Street during tourist periods
- Speeding traffic

Other issues mentioned included: the hill (i.e. getting around the village); the anti-social behaviour of some young people; lack of benefit from tourism; poor TV reception; bus service being at strange times.



Ideas for improvements were:

- Village hall/social centre for the village
- Access to the lake
- More pro-active response to tourism to keep local shop, tea shop etc going.

### **Issues discussion with Older People**

Fifteen people attended, mainly over the age of 65.

The main issues were:

- Affordable housing for young people
- Need for village hall
- Sheltered housing for older people
- Speeding through village & parking problems on the Street
- Improved facilities & use of sports field
- Transport – for those unable to drive, and also to get to employment

Groups/activities that were mentioned included: computer courses, archaeology, art classes, coffee & chat. It was also felt that a youth club is needed.

### **Staffed Stand & Map at Village Fete**

45 people visited the stand, of whom 20 were children.

Issues raised included:

- Need for a village hall (central to the village)
- Speeding – ways to keep speeds down in the village
- Parking on the Street
- Litter
- Making sure development in-keeping & maintaining green spaces
- Need for affordable housing
- More youth activities/clubs

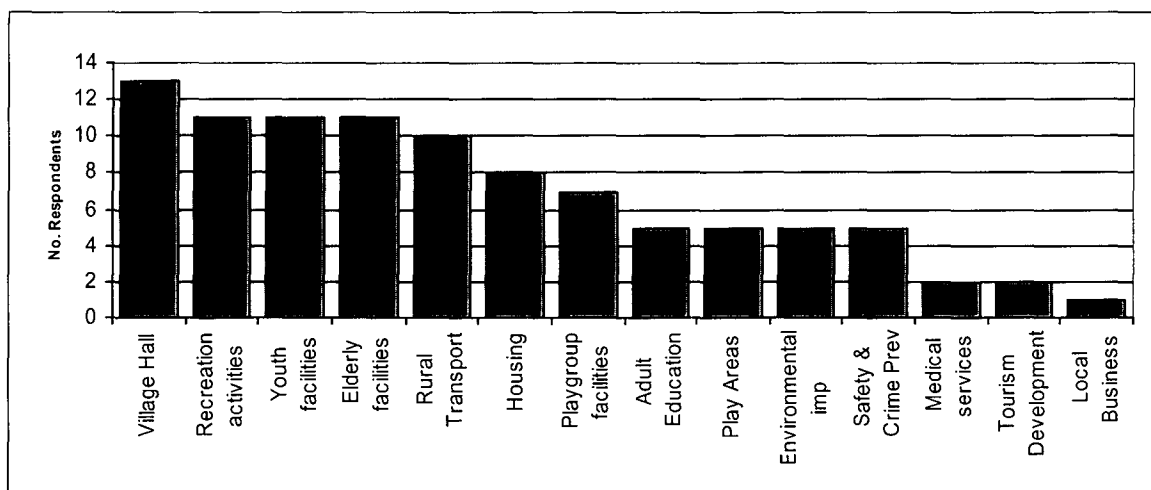
Suggested activities were: boules team on the green, a drama club, yoga, a tennis court for the sports field. The children suggested a wide range of equipment to enhance the Play Area.

### **Tent Week Questionnaire**

21 questionnaires were completed and returned. Respondents could tick as many of the 15 options as they wished. Overall, the most popular options were: village hall, recreation activities, youth facilities and facilities for the elderly. The least popular is local business support and tourism development.



**Chart to show Respondents Views**



A number of respondents made other comments. These focused in the main around the village hall, affordable housing and sheltered accommodation for the elderly. Other comments related to: recreational activities, traffic calming, bus times and tourism.

#### **Display Boards and Map at Tent Week**

Comments were requested under a variety of headings.

The most common areas of concern were:

- Need for a village hall

The children are happy to do many sponsored events to raise funds towards new equipment etc.

#### **Summary of Results**

Throughout all the consultation events, the main concern to come out is the need for a village hall or community space within the village. This should therefore be a priority in any plan for the village. Alongside and underlying this, are requests for a variety of improved recreational activities/groups, particularly for young people, but also coffee & chat mornings, cinema evenings as well as adult education classes, and dance/fitness classes.

The other issues which were most often repeated were:

- Affordable housing (particularly for young people)
- Sheltered accommodation
- Speeding through the village
- Parking problems
- Getting around within the village – and therefore the need for activities and facilities to be central, so as to be accessible to as many as possible
- Improved sports/outdoor facilities for children and adults

#### **Children & Young People**

There has been good input from young people on their views and needs, at a variety of events & sessions. Main priorities identified by children & young people:

- Skate park
- Hall/space to hang out
- Youth club

- Improvements to outdoor play facilities, e.g. play area equipment, sports space/equipment (e.g. tennis court, new football goals, basketball hoops) – very clear ideas especially on equipment/space for different age groups
- BMX track
- Somewhere to get sweets/drinks at the top of village
- More trips out to different places
- Litter/vandalism

### **Housing**

People are very concerned that housing *is* affordable to those on low incomes. There does seem to be support for additional housing to meet these needs, and no strong opposition to additional housing apparent, although people wish to keep the quiet ambience intact.

### **Recreation**

For most people, recreational activities seem to be tied up with having a new hall. However, some activities – for example, interest was expressed in coffee & chat morning – could be sited elsewhere and set up now, e.g. in someone's home or the café?

The Village Hall planning committee probably needs to do some work to come up with plans that can be consulted on, and then look at fundraising. (Note: This has already been done) Also probably needs to incorporate space for young people into hall. Are there any possibilities of space through move of school? Need to get a sub-group (I think you already have one) getting much more concrete on this.

### **Transport**

One of the main issues highlighted was the difficulty of getting around WITHIN the village i.e. the steep hill. One of the priorities therefore needs to be thinking about ways of moving people around the village. The other main transport need is to take groups of young people and children out of the village to other sources of entertainment. There were some comments suggesting bus times into Blandford need some slight adjustment to give people more time in the town. The difficulty of getting to work without own car was also mentioned.

### **Traffic & Speeding**

Speeding & parking cause much concern to villagers.

### **Tourism**

There are very mixed opinions. Still support for provision of toilets & car park. (Previous scheme by District Council was cancelled) Some good ideas about how to provide additional things for tourists to do in the village, e.g. selling leaflets of local walks, and therefore generating income for the village from tourism. The general feeling is that tourists should be putting something more into the village as a whole, e.g. some kind of charge for local facilities?

### **Local businesses**

The Pub and its lack of use by locals is a big issue.

There were also some suggestions (particularly by young people) about the need for a shop that is open in the evenings & sited at the top of the village, with more focus on food etc and less on tourist articles. There was also the suggestion of hosting markets in the village and of a need for a hairdresser/beautician – perhaps a mobile service? Otherwise, little comment on local business & economy.

### **Environment**

Need for more litter bins and dog bins. Some comments over lack of consultation over purchase of woods. Some comment over: provision of leaflets on local walks; potential for access to the lake by locals; dislike of hunting on local land.



## **Recommendations**

### **Children & Young People**

Need to try and get a small group of parents/adults and young people/children together to look at taking forwards some of the things identified. (Note: this has been implemented). Could we pursue some kind of “youth forum” idea? Also involve young people/children in taking responsibility for fundraising – could say that you will apply for grants/find funding to match whatever they raise?

Need to think about use of Reading Room & proposed Village Hall – is there anyway a dedicated “youth” space could be included – playgroup during the day & drop in/youth club in evenings?

Also need to pursue viability of out-of-school club for younger children.

### **Housing**

Need to pursue options with District Council on provision of local needs housing, and sheltered accommodation for older people who want to stay in the village.

### **Recreation**

- Encourage the start-up of some activities now, which are not reliant on the new Hall.
- Investigate shared use of facilities/groups with nearby villages and the Abbey School (may have transport implications).
- The Village Hall planning committee needs to do some work to come up with plans that can be consulted on, and then look at fundraising. (Note. Done) Needs to incorporate space for young people into hall.

### **Transport**

- One of the priorities needs to be thinking about ways of moving people around the village. Therefore probably need a sub-group and to do some interviewing/questionnaire on specific options & how often/long people would want to move between the two areas etc.
- Investigate the viability of the purchase of a mini-bus for the village, to take young people out and move others around the village.
- The use of facilities at the Abbey School and in surrounding villages also needs to be considered with regard to transport.
- Further investigation of bus times & possible alterations to the timetable.

### **Traffic & Speeding**

Need to liaise with Highways and look at options for speed control/enforcement and parking restrictions. Would need to then present options to villagers to make decision on (either by door-to-door interviews/questionnaire AND/OR displays around the village of options asking for opinions AND/OR public meeting).

### **Tourism**

- Need to pursue car park/toilets within the village again.
- Further investigation of how tourists can be of more benefit to the village.

### **Local businesses**

- Concerns over the local publican should be pursued with the District Council who provides the licence for the Pub.
- Alternatively, the need for a social club should be considered in village hall development.

Investigate viability of a shop that is open in the evenings & sited at the top of the village, with more focus on food etc and less on tourist articles, or of a vending machine which may meet the children/young people’s needs.

Investigate idea of hosting markets in the village and of a need for a hairdresser/beautician.

### **Environment**

Identify potential sites for additional litter bins and dog bins.

Investigate: provision of leaflets on local walks.

**Sarah Taragon**  
**Consultant**

Chapter 6  
**SWOT**

<b>STRENGTHS/ASSETS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Historic village	Apathy
AONB	No village hall (small Reading Room)
Tourist attraction	Limited job opportunities
School/shop/pub	Community divided physically
Communications	Few volunteers
Sports Club/ MATCH	Poor transport links
Medical practice	
Social groups	
Pre-school group	
Riding school	
Abbey School	
Business/craft centre	
Local businesses	
Farms	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
Unwanted housing	Apathy
New youth activities	Village Hall
New school	Possible long term loss of shop
New social activities	
Improved transport provision	
Tourism development	
Support for businesses	
Co-operation with neighbouring villages	

## YOUTH FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

The young people of Milton Abbas have been consulted on a regular basis over the past 8 years. As part of the Village Appraisal, a separate youth questionnaire was issued and there were 38 respondents in the age group of 8 to 15.

The key findings were:

- The majority were members of clubs and groups outside Milton Abbas, due to lack of facilities
- Most travel by car when they go to see friends or attend clubs, etc.
- Only a quarter said they would like to work locally after finishing school
- A minority said they would be interested in voluntary work in the community
- The possibility of using facilities at Milton Abbey School was popular for a variety of activities, e.g. cinema nights, tennis, sports hall, computers.

In the 2000/2001 Village Survey another youth questionnaire was distributed.. Key findings were:

- A youth club was seen as the highest priority
- The need for a village hall was emphasised
- Improved bus services were called for
- They requested better sports facilities

The respondents were asked whether they would like to be involved in setting up these activities and the reply was enthusiastically positive.

Interest in using Milton Abbey School facilities was reconfirmed.

As has been reported in the chapter on the consultation process as part of the Parish Plan preparation, there has been extensive involvement of the young people in the community. Since receiving the consultation report there have been subsequent discussions with the children. They have expressed clear views:

A youth club should:

- Be based in Milton Abbas
- Have somewhere to chat
- Organise trips to Tower Park/Weymouth, etc.
- Provide internet access
- Organise discos
- Sell soft drinks, sweets, crisps
- Talks on teenage issues
- Have access to table tennis, darts, pool/snooker
- Times should be different for younger/older
- A small charge for entrance
- Children should be on the committee

### **Playpark:**

To give some impression as to the detail of the discussions that have been involved in the consultation process, we report on one:

'We then got on to the items that they wished to be installed; Fun Box, Low Quarter Pipe. Grind Rail-5 metres long-. They fully supported the design for the shelter and agreed it should be in the far corner opposite the electricity station box. They felt this was far enough away from houses and that it would tuck away nicely and wouldn't ruin the design of the Millennium Green.

...They also stated that their (younger) brothers and sisters would like a bigger slide and that more swings were needed.'

It has become evident that the most urgent requirements are:

1. The provision of outdoor play facilities in the village. Out of the recent discussions came the design of an over 12s play park and this has been submitted as a proposal and major funding has been granted by the Countryside Agency, with additional support from the District Council.
2. 'Youth group' activities, prior to the possible formation of a Club. A list of popular activities has been drawn up, and transport organised. Joint activity with the neighbouring Ansty Youth Club has also been organised.
3. completion of the under 12s play park
4. organisation of cinema nights
5. provision of access to computers
6. improved sports facilities, including potential greater use of Milton Abbey School facilities

There follows a report of a project to take forward many of these findings, under the title of 'The Milton Abbas Youth Development Research Project'



# MILTON ABBAS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

## 1. Background

Further to the consultation exercises that took place in Milton Abbas during 2001 and 2002 a number of gaps emerged in the provision of facilities and services for particular groups within the community.

As the scope of this research project is limited to the interests of the young people within the village, a summary of their views is attached as Appendix 1.<sup>1</sup> The responses themselves are all very specific, but when viewed as a whole, clearly show that the youth of Milton Abbas are searching for activities, places to go and things to do that can occupy them across the age range and at varying times during the day. This latest piece of research (2001/2002) has updated and expanded upon the Village Appraisal conducted in 1996 from which some of the youth issues raised have been addressed and others are 'works in progress'.

This research has shown that the requirement for development falls into two separate but linked areas, a) Activities and Facilities, and b) Transport. This report deals with each issue separately although it is acknowledged that in many cases the development of the activity is interdependent on the provision of transport.

For the purposes of the research into activities and facilities it was essential however to put the transport issue to one side, making an assumption that transport would be provided when required, to enable an unrestricted flow of ideas.

In addition to the existing research with the young people a separate consultation exercise has recently been conducted for this project with the parents in the village to gain their views on what they would like for their children – and indeed what level of commitment they are prepared to give to making any plans a reality.<sup>2</sup>

There are 176 young people in Milton Abbas.

## 2. Activities and Facilities

### 2.1 What already exists?

A base analysis was undertaken to ascertain what facilities and activities already exist for young people a) within Milton Abbas itself and b) within neighbouring villages. The list of these things is attached as appendix 2.<sup>3</sup> The list clearly shows that very little activity is in the village itself. In addition it is interesting that of the two groups that are active, both are designed for pre-school children. In neighbouring villages too the focus is weighted towards pre-schoolers with little in the way of organised activity for older children. Where activities do exist for older children, i.e. Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Youth Club, transport becomes the issue barring attendance.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.2 What's next?

The future of activities and facilities for young people in Milton Abbas can be broken down into 3 stages: -

- i) What can be achieved immediately in the short term
- ii) What progress can be made for the medium term
- iii) ..and then what will take more planning for the longer term.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was undertaken prior to the involvement of the author of this report.

<sup>2</sup> The Parents Discussion Forum is covered in more depth in section 2.2

<sup>3</sup> This list may not be exhaustive as other groups may be in existence or have formed after this research was undertaken

<sup>4</sup> Although transport was put to one side when considering new ideas, it was a very real problem for accessing existing activities and came up time and time again in the research.

A number of initiatives have been considered which fall into all three categories and prior to any action being taken agreement was sought from the parents of Milton Abbas via the mechanism of a Discussion Forum.

The Parents Discussion Forum took place on 30 January in the Reading Room, Milton Abbas. The calling letter is included as appendix 3 for information. It was designed to achieve a number of aims: -

- i) To bring the parents up to date with the summary of the research,
- ii) To inform them about what was happening as a result.
- iii) To engage them in ideas that had potential and to gain their agreement to proceed.
- iv) To foster ownership on their part and to ensure that they understood that their participation in delivering any of these ideas was crucial, both in the launch phases and into the future.

A number of speakers were invited to attend. Terry Vine (Young Energy Project Worker) Dorset Youth Association, Helen Reid –NORDCAT and Rochelle Smith from Dorset Community Action were all provided considerable amounts of help and were able to bring the potential of the ideas alive for the parents.

The following initiatives were put to the parents on the evening and fall into the three categories as described above.

#### 2.2.1 The Short Term

In the short term it is important to deliver tangible results quickly following the periods of consultation to keep the momentum and interest levels high in the village.

To this end the following have been agreed and are proceeding: -

- o The Big Day Out!

On Sunday 4 April

a coach will take young people and their families on a day trip to Weymouth. This day has been designed to enthuse the young people about the potential of a youth group and to be a visible sign that things are being done.

The day itself will of course not only be a fun day for all the family but will specifically provide an opportunity to get a critical mass of young people in one place at one time and enable a re-check of the temperature of their feelings towards a youth group and associated activities.

In addition to the 'corralling' of the young people, they will get to choose one of three activities to participate in and be provided with a seaside lunch!

- o Day Trips

Following a suggestion made at the Parents Discussion Forum a series of Youth Daytrips will be organised to take place over the coming months. These will cover a wide range of interests. These trips will either be fully or partly subsidised.

- o Youth Club

The overall Youth Club project is a long term one. However in the short term arrangements have been made with Ansty Youth Club for Milton Abbas

6-10 year olds to join. Those that attended the Forum meeting in January enthusiastically received this. Transport can be provided if required<sup>5</sup> and this new activity is scheduled to commence prior to Easter.

- o Information Dissemination

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<sup>5</sup> Transport arrangements will be covered in the transport section, 3.



It is apparent that some of the activity options available already are unknown to some parents. An information sheet will be circulated giving parents up to date information on what is out there already.

#### 2.2.2. The Medium Term

- o Milton Abbas Leisure Bus

A transport led initiative, the Milton Abbas Leisure Bus is loosely based on the Purbeck model. Details have yet to be agreed, but in principle can either take the form of a membership scheme or be on a more 'hop on - hop off' basis. The membership scheme is the more favourable option as this provides a more solid cost base.

In principle, the Milton Abbas Leisure Bus will take people from the Village to Blandford Leisure Centre on a regular weekly basis. A discount package has already been agreed with Blandford leisure centre for users of this service.<sup>6</sup>

Looking to the future, once the Milton Abbas Leisure Bus has settled in on its Blandford run other venues could be opened to the scheme and indeed rolled out to neighbouring villages.

- o Computer Bus

The first visit by the bus run by Kingston Maurward College was well attended by adults. The possibility of youth sessions will be explored.

- o Youth Group<sup>7</sup>

Although ideal facilities do not currently exist within the village a youth group could still be set up that takes advantage of differing venues each month. Potential indoor venues include the Reading Room and the Tea Clipper. As summer approaches, outdoors activities could be arranged that use the sports field, the community woods, the play park area etc for sports, games, nature trails, orienteering, camping etc. Indeed the day trip activities arranged as part of the short-term plans will be extended to become part of the Youth Group calendar itself.

- o After School Club

To serve the primary school age children within the village the potential for an after school club is to be researched. Currently there are no facilities for this age group.

#### 2.2.3. The Longer Term

- o Skate Park / Multi Sports Facility

Significant funds have already been secured for the development of the Skate Park, multi-sports facility and youth shelter. Further funds still need to be secured and a date for the start of the development is June 2003.

- o Youth Club

A permanent facility for a youth club would be ideal. This will require a location to be sought that will either be a conversion of an existing building – for which funding sources are available<sup>8</sup> - or by making use of the Milton Abbas village hall, when it is built.

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<sup>6</sup> With thanks to North Dorset District Council

<sup>7</sup> More about setting up a youth group in section 4

<sup>8</sup> More on funding in section 5

### **3. Transport**

Sources of transport grants have been investigated and monies have been made available to carry out research.

To enable a number of the initiatives to take place it is important to find a flexible and cost effective solution. The following options have potential: -

- 1) Taxi vouchers
- 2) Purchase of a minibus
- 3) Buying into an existing service.

Option 3 is being pursued most vigorously.

Local mini bus supplier options were considered, but costs were prohibitive. (Further information has still yet to be gathered from Milton Abbey on what potential there is for loaning one of their fleet.)

Discussions with NORDCAT (North Dorset Community Accessible Transport) have been very encouraging. To hire one of their 4 minibuses there is a £20 charge, plus a fuel charge of 19 pence per mile. (It can be provided with or without a driver, but the charges shown are based on Milton Abbas providing its own volunteer driver who would have to collect it from Sturminster Newton.) The service achieves both of our aims of being flexible and cost effective.

NORDCAT would provide all of the volunteer drivers with a short training / orientation session on a one to one basis prior to them using a bus. This session includes familiarisation of the buses themselves, basic vehicle care, completion of log sheets etc and a short test drive. For ease of process all of the Milton Abbas volunteer drivers would be registered as NORDCAT drivers and would be insured accordingly. NORDCAT will also undertake to complete all of the CRB checks, free of charge. All volunteer drivers must have passed their driving test before 1997 and not be over 70 years of age.

As a condition of using a community bus any activity that we undertake should not be designed to make a profit as this contravenes the section 19 permit. A copy of this permit is attached as appendix 4. This condition will have to be given consideration when assessing the price point for each of the activities involving the use of a NORDCAT bus.

### **4. Youth Group**

To enable Milton Abbas to progress forward with some of the ideas described, a properly constituted youth group will need to be created, with a committee to manage the funds, the arrangements and to agree the legally required policies that should be in place.

The following policies need to be put in place: -

- Insurance
- Child Protection
- Disability
- Equal Opportunities
- Training
- Criminal Records Checks

There are templates available for all of these and Dorset Youth Association will provide assistance with this. A sample of a Child Protection policy is attached for reference. Appendix 5.

### **5. Funding**

Various funding opportunities exist and details are attached for those most appropriate.

#### **5.1 Community Services Grant – Countryside Agency**

Under the umbrella of the Vital Villages programme this new scheme is designed to help smaller rural communities provide the services they need. Grants are available up to £25,000 and can provide up to 75% of funds required. This grant may finance conversion work on a property for the youth club and pay some ongoing costs associated with a part time Youth Group Leader. Details of this grant are attached. Appendix 6

## **5.2 Local Network Fund**

Aimed at children from deprived backgrounds, this fund can help provide some of the funds towards a specific activity project, for example creating a community garden, or to put on a piece of theatre. There are four themes under which this fund will make awards. They are Aspirations and Achievements – projects that give children experiences or help them achieve goals that more privileged children may take for granted; Economic Disadvantage – projects that help families to improve their living standards and cope with difficulties that come from being on low incomes; Isolation and Access – projects that help children that are isolated or alone, or have trouble accessing services; Childrens Voices – projects that give children and young people the chance to express their opinions and give advice on matters that concern them. Appendix 7

## **5.3 Local Heritage Fund**

As Milton Abbas is rich in heritage, the youth group may be able to develop a specific project that brings a part of that history back to life. Appendix 8

## **5.4 Community Projects Fund**

Administered by Dorset Community Action this fund gives small grants for projects in rural Dorset that benefit the local community. Appendix

For all of these grant applications, Simon Thompson of Dorset Community Action has offered to review any project proposal before an application is made

## SOCIAL AND LEISURE

The Dorset Structure Plan Monitoring Report 2000 drew attention among the major issues raised to: **‘the need better to address social issues**, particularly with regard to the requirements of different groups of people’.

North Dorset District Council commissioned a ‘Leisure Needs Survey’ from RQA Ltd in 1999 to inform the Council’s emerging Sport and Recreation Strategy. The report notes that ‘the rural nature of the District, country road and sparse transport networks, are particular features which provide actual and perceived constraints and limitations in terms of access to sport and recreation facilities and activities’. It goes on to say:

‘provision and access to facilities and activities are needed at a local level within, in the main, a 10 minute travel time catchment, subject to the nature of the activity.’ Our own investigations confirm these views, and point to the inadvisability of relying on the facilities of more distant towns.

A key finding of the North Dorset report is:

‘The potential recreation needs for Area South can be summarised as:

**...-a village hall and play space in Milton Abbas...’**

2.24 ‘In rural areas, local recreation facilities such as pitches, village halls, play areas and tennis courts play an important part. They act as a focus for the community and for many without access to a car they will be the only recreational opportunity available. This is of particular importance for young people, women, the elderly and the unemployed.’

The authors of the survey produced in graphic format the potential benefits of a Leisure Strategy. We share the notion that community participation can act as a counterweight to the threats to local spirit and social cohesion referred to in our introduction and in ‘State of the Countryside’.pp22-23.

We await with interest the preparation of a ‘Cultural Strategy’ by North Dorset, as we are seeking a framework of support for our proposed ‘10 Village Partnership’ and will respond actively. ( Ansty, Cheselbourne, Dewlish, Hilton, Melcombe Bingham, Milborne St Andrew, Milton Abbas, Winterborne Houghton, Winterborne Stickland, Winterborne Whitechurch )

In the ‘State of the Countryside 2000’, reference is made to levels of participation in community activities in rural areas. It draws the data from the RDC report of 1997, as follows:

<b>Percentage of parishes with the following activities:</b>	
Women’s Institute	59
Senior Citizens	39
Keep fit	31
Gardening	25
Dance	21
Music	18
Other	50
This list excludes various youth activities	

Milton Abbas has a Women’s Group, an Art Club, and a Quilters Group, and has been concerned to explore the possibility of catering for a wider range of interests.

**Village Appraisal 1996**  
309 responses were received

There were clear expressions of interest in participation in a range of social activities. The number of individuals interested was:

<b>Interested</b>	
Gardening	120
Rambling	54
Music	47
Art	45
Quilting/needlework	43
Whist	21
Drama	20
Classified as 'sport', a keep-fit club attracted 65, and yoga 31.	

It is interesting to note that under adult education classes, there was a high level of interest: Individuals wishing to participate:

Computing	75
Keep fit	65
Languages	60
Handicrafts Handicrafts	58
Gardening	57
Art	38

Whilst the educational aspect will be dealt with in the chapter on that subject, the findings are indicative of the level of interest in these subjects, for which organised activities will be explored.( in the parish or locally) as part of this plan.

**Milton Abbas Village Survey 2000/2001**  
238 residents responded

The data was substantially confirmatory of the earlier findings. Those interested in joining organised activities:

Cinema nights	99
Keep fit	62
Theatre	51
Gardening	49
Computing	46
Music	28

Again, the level of interest in adult education classes was high:

Computing	59
Keep fit	59
Gardening	45
Languages	34
Crafts	34

Working on the principle of avoiding duplication as much as possible, the Parish Plan team researched current provision of activities in the 9 neighbouring villages, as well as nearby towns. Nevertheless,

careful consideration needs to be given as to why these are not already accessed, for example, due to lack of transport, failure to provide information, or just 'not ours', i.e. not based in our own village. The findings are set out in the attachment to this chapter.

### **Cinema Nights**

The possibility of organising these in the theatre at Milton Abbey School has been researched, and it has been established that these could be organised at an acceptable cost, if some subsidy were provided. Entry would be available to neighbouring villages.

### **Gardening Club**

Research has been conducted into the structure and organisation of a club.

Advice has been provided by local experts and a framework has been drawn up.

### **Milton Abbey Music Festival**

This event has been held for several years in August, but ceased in 2002. A concert was held in Sherborne in substitution. The venue of the Abbey is superb and the acoustics are excellent. The festival lacked financial and organisational support. It is intended to examine the restoration of the event, with concerts being blended with a summer music school. Interest has been expressed by potential performers, and there have been indications of likely support from North Dorset District Council as part of its cultural strategy.

### **St James Church**

St James is the parish church, within a recently re-aligned benefice, including Turnworth, the Winterbornes Stickland, Whitechurch and Clenston. St James is required to pay the Salisbury Diocese



£11,000 per annum towards the costs of the ministry and there is an estimated £40,000 of outstanding repair work. Services are held on a weekly basis, supplemented by special services such as for children and carols. The Parish Parochial Council organises social and fundraising events. As with the majority of rural churches, there is a small regular congregation, swelled from time to time by larger numbers. It remains a constant challenge to attract more regular worshippers.

The church houses a historical display of the village for the information of visitors, and there has been discussion of holding other community activities in the building.

## **Social/Leisure Recommendations**

We note here the objective listed in the 'Community Partnership Working in North Dorset' (NDDC):

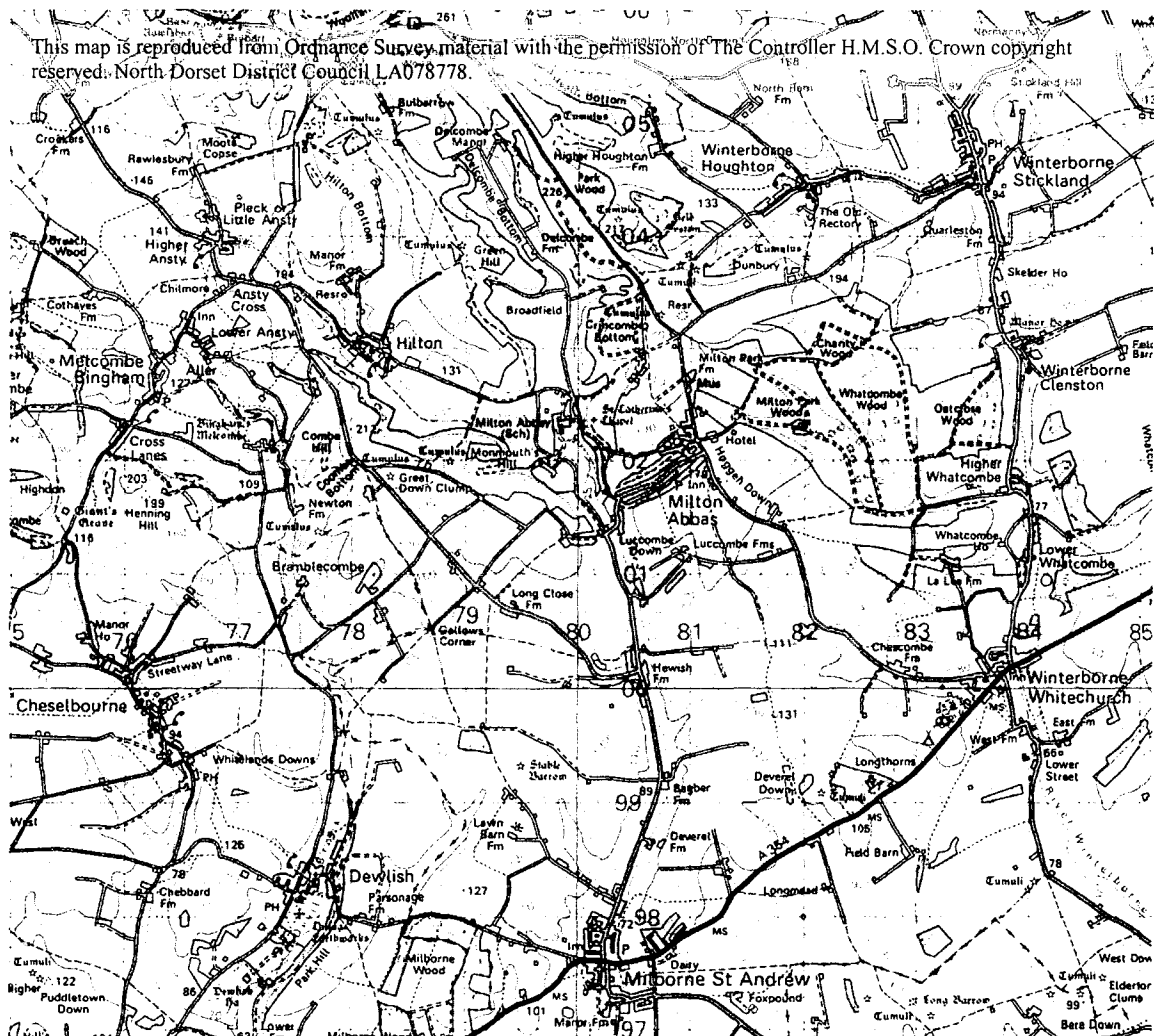
**'6 To support existing and new voluntary and community organisations to be efficient and effective and gain new members/users.'**

With this in mind, we propose to

1. Form a Gardening Club
2. Form a Computer Club
3. Provide transport to 10 Village Partnership activities
4. Continue 'newcomers' gatherings
5. Continue Tent Week, possibly extended.
6. Encourage coffee mornings.
7. Organise cinema nights.
8. Organise keep-fit sessions
9. Research Summer Music Festival

# PARISH PLAN

## SOCIAL & LEISURE FACILITIES IN NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES



### Ansty/Melcombe Bingham

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Children | Youth Club held fortnightly for 6 – 10 years old.<br>Drama Club – Madcap productions pantomime has lots of kids<br>Also drama and craft schemes etc during school holidays          |
| Sports   | Short Mat bowls weekly<br>Badminton Club weekly<br>Round Robin Ramblers – social walks  |
| Adults   | Garden club (Cheselbourne)<br>Drama (see above)<br>Arts reach in Brewery hall at various times during year. (Concerts, drama, recitals, exhibitions).<br>Quiz nights (fund-raising) |
| Seniors  | Ansty club – meets during summer for outings etc in evenings.   |

**Cheselbourne** (contact Sue Widdowson 837791)

Children	Playgroup based on school Young Farmers (12 + years old)
Sports	Cheselbourne Cricket Club
Adults	Garden Club weekly (membership 80+) patronised by surrounding villages. (6 members approx from M/Abbas) Theatre Club (40+ per trip) to theatres in Poole, Salisbury etc. Pub runs Darts and Crib team and quiz nights
Seniors	Some villagers go to Ansty club

**Dewlish** (contact Mel Gregory – 839079)

Children	Scout group (run by Milborne St Andrew but in Dewlish village hall) Beginners brass tuition free of charge (see Swing band below)
Sports	Cricket club Darts, crib in pub
Adults	Line dancing Ladies group (similar to WI but not affiliated) Swing Band, semi-professional standard – gigs for charity etc.
Seniors	Church coffee mornings etc

Active social life in village with much fundraising by above groups.

**Hilton** (contact Helier Exon)

Virtually nothing in the village. Hilton patronises Rainbow group (Milton Abbas) Bowls and Badminton (Ansty) garden club (Cheselbourne) Ansty Club for seniors.

**Milborne St Andrew** (contact Derek Clarke)

Children	Beaver cubs Cubs Scouts (held in Dewlish) Youth Club – all ages Under 5s (school connections) Ladybirds – (pre school)
Sports	Sports Club – just developing football, cricket etc. Badminton Club Rifle Club (Milton Abbey school)
Adults	Drama group – pantomime etc Bell-ringers Wednesday Social group – all ages Food and Wine Society Slimming Club Keep fit Horticultural society Line Dancing (Dewlish) Modern Sequence Dancing W. I.



## **Milton Abbas**

Children	Pre-school playgroup Rainbow mothers and toddlers
Sports	Football Club Cricket Club Abbey Swimming Club Football and cricket teams train during winter in Abbey sports hall
Adults	Ladies 2001 club Milton Abbas Arts group (painting) Cottage Quilting group Muckspreaders (folk group - Church choir in secular guise) Middleton Players (drama) Whist Beekeepers club Milton Abbas Trust for Community and Heritage (MATCH)

## **Winterborne Stickland and Whitechurch (W or S)**

Children	Songs for pre-school children (S) Kingdom Kids (S) Brownies (S) Peter Pan Mother/Toddler (S) SKIPS (drama) (S)
Sports	Ladies Keep Fit (W & S) Short mat Bowls (W) Karate (W) Winterborne Sports and Social (W & S) Sports Park and Recreational (S) Ladies Self Defence Course (W) Stretch and Tone Exercise (W)
Adults	Stickland and District Horticultural (S & W) Classical Musical Evenings (W & S) Royal British Legion (S) Stickland Craft Guild Valley Bell Ringers (S & W) Winterborne Tree Planting Group (W & S) Valley Antiquarians (S & W) Local History Winterborne Stickland W I

## **LEISURE FACILITIES NEAR MILTON ABBAS**

### **CHILDREN**

- Ansty/Hilton Youth Club (6 – 10 y/o) fortnightly
- Cheselbourne Pre-school playgroup  
Young Farmers (12 years +)
- Dewlish Swing band, beginners brass tuition (free)
- Milborne St Andrew Beavers, Cubs and Scouts (latter meet in Dewlish)  
Youth club, all ages  
Under 5s (school based)  
Ladybirds: pre-school group

- Milton Abbas Rainbow Mothers and toddlers  
Playgroup
- Winterborne Stickland Songs for pre-school  
Kingdom Kids  
Brownies  
Peter Pan Mother/Toddler  
SKIPS (Drama)

## SPORTS

- Ansty/Hilton Short mat bowls weekly  
Badminton club weekly  
Ramblers
- Cheselbourne Cricket club
- Dewlish Cricket club  
Darts, cribbage (in pub)
- Milborne St Andrew Sports Club, cricket football etc. just getting going  
Badminton Club  
Rifle Club (Milton Abbey School)
- Milton Abbas Cricket Club  
Football club  
Abbey swimming club
- Winterborne Stick Sport Park and Recreational  
Keep-fit ladies
- Winterborne White Ladies Keep-fit  
Short Mat Bowls  
Karate?  
Winterborne Sports and Social  
Ladies Self Defence Class  
Stretch and Tone Exercise Class

## SOCIAL (ADULTS)

- Ansty/Hilton Drama group Madcap productions (youth interests also)  
Arts reach in Brewery Hall (concerts, drama recitals etc)  
Quiz nights  
Garden club (at Cheselbourne)
- Cheselbourne Garden Club weekly (membership 80+) patronised by other Villages (Milton Abbas 6 members)  
Theatre Club (40 + per trip) to theatres in various towns  
Pub runs Darts and Crib team and quiz nights
- Dewlish Line Dancing  
Ladies Group  
Swing Band, semi-professional – gigs for charity etc
- Milborne St Andrew Drama group  
Bell-ringers  
Wednesday social all ages  
Food and Wine Society  
Slimming club  
Keep fit  
Horticultural society  
Modern Sequence dancing  
WI

- Milton Abbas  
Middleton Players (drama)  
Muckspreaders (folk singers)  
Ladies 2001 group  
Cottage quilting group  
Whist club  
Beekeepers
- Winterbornes  
Stickland and District Horticultural  
Musical Evenings (classical)  
British Legion  
Valley Bell Ringers  
Winterborne Tree Planting Group  
Valley Antiquarians
- Winterborne Stickland  
WI  
Stickland Craft Guild  
Fellowship Group

## SENIOR

- Ansty/Hilton  
–  
Ansty Club – meets mainly during summer Cheselbourne  
some members of above
- Dewlish  
Church coffee mornings etc
- Milton Abbas  
Ladies 2001 club are mostly seniors,  
according to them!



## Chapter 9

# SPORT

### The Dorset Sports Strategy

#### Background

Successive Government documents have recognised the need to encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles including the taking of adequate physical activity which is accepted as having very direct health benefits for people of all ages.

The English Sports Council, now branded as “Sport England”, is the leading organisation in the development of sport. Their strategy is to:

- Involve **more people** in sport
- Provide **more places** to play sport
- Gain **more medals** through higher standards.

#### The Issues

Everyone who lives, works in or visits Dorset should have the opportunity to achieve their sporting potential. By working in partnership with a range of partners in public, private and voluntary sectors, sports opportunities for everyone can be improved. It is imperative that the best use is made of existing resources and facilities and that priorities should be identified for the development of new facilities. By protecting and maintaining existing sporting facilities and making them more accessible, the social and economic welfare of the county will be enhanced.

#### A Sporting Future for All

In April 2000 the Government announced “A Sporting Future for All”, produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

In the Introduction, the Prime Minister said: “The Government does not and should not run sport. Sport is for individuals, striving to succeed – either on their own, or in teams. However, those individuals, together or alone, need the help of others – to provide the facilities, the equipment, and the opportunities. So there is a key role to play for those who organise and manage sport – local authorities, sports clubs, governing bodies, the Sports Councils and the Government”.



#### Dorset “The Vision”

##### Vision Statement

“Dorset County Council believes that all people who live, work in or visit Dorset should have the opportunity to ‘reach’ their sporting potential. It believes that by working with and supporting a range of partners in public, private and voluntary sectors it will encourage sports opportunities for everyone. It believes that sports participation contributes to improved health and fitness, enhances the quality of life, not least by encouraging the development of community spirit and personal well being. It believes that by advising on the development of new facilities, protecting and maintaining appropriate existing sporting facilities and making them more accessible, it will contribute to the social and economic welfare of the County”.

### **Dorset Aims Through Working with Its Partners:**

“To encourage the delivery of sport, to all abilities, across the County.”

“To provide equal opportunities for the people of Dorset to participate in sport at all levels.”

“To raise awareness of the benefits of participating in sport, in improving physical and mental health.”

“To encourage sport participation as part of a healthier lifestyle and as a way to develop community spirit and reduce anti-social behaviour.”

“To maximise through partnership all potential resources for the development of sport and sports facilities in Dorset.”

“To provide pathways for the attainment of excellence.”

“To ensure that the most effective and efficient use is made of all existing sports resources identified in the Sports Strategy.”

“To safeguard opportunities and resources for sport for the future.”

### **North Dorset Sports and Recreation Strategy 2000-2005**

Through its Sports and Recreation Strategy the Council aims to improve the physical, social and economic well-being communities and individuals within the district.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- **Participation** – to increase access for the greatest number of the district’s population to a wide range of facilities and opportunities to participate in recreation.
- **Community development** – to build stronger, safer communities by supporting opportunities for sport and recreation, building community relationships and sustainable local provision.
- **Healthier living** – to improve the health of communities and individuals.

Development – to support and create opportunities for sports development from foundation to excellence for individuals, schools, clubs and the community, with greatest emphasis on the inclusion of many.

### **MA Sports Club Development Strategy 2003**

#### **Vision/Purpose**

*To provide a range of opportunities for all members of the community to participate in sporting, fitness and social activities aimed at developing skills, promoting health and fostering community spirit.*

#### **Aims**

To provide facilities, activities and structured opportunities for the community to be involved in sport, fitness programmes and social interaction through:-

- Provision and enhancement of sports pavilion, pitches and facilities
- Provision of an increased range of sporting, fitness and sporting activities
- Involvement with sports, games and fitness organisations and local league and county activity.

#### ***To actively seek community participation through***

- Establishing the sports club as a community organisation with local people encouraged to become members.
- Seek participation of the membership in decision making and club development
- Publicise the club's activities and achievements via newsletters and the local press.
- Hosting events aimed at both the membership and the wider community.
- Working positively with other community organisations.

#### ***To provide and offer volunteering and training opportunities through***

- Encouraging members to volunteer for coaching supervising, transport and other tasks
- Promoting opportunities in sports coaching, team development and community group management.
- Provision of lessons, coaching and health and fitness information.

### **Current Activities and Membership**

From a sporting perspective, the club's activities are focussed on football and cricket. In addition the club is involved in some community activities mostly through the use of the sports field.

Membership mainly consists of the football team, the cricket team and junior members of the cricket squad under training. There are very few members actively involved in managing the club and maintaining its facilities.

A substantial percentage of the membership comes from the villages and towns around Milton Abbas.

#### ***Football***

The club runs one senior football team in the North Dorset league division 4. There are some 15 members involved.

Until last year the club organised a thriving fun training session for juniors but this has folded due to lack of volunteers and coaches. The Football Foundation consider that Milton Abbas should be a feeder club to Milborne St Andrew where it is making substantial investment. However, no formal arrangements are in place.

We have some talented local girls who now play football with Queen Elizabeth Wimborne.

#### **Cricket**

There is not enough senior cricket membership to run a full league team in the summer. However a number of friendly fixtures are played over the summer months and there is a competitive six aside team which plays in winter Dykes Indoor Cricket League.

The junior cricket section is thriving with

- 25 players under training, including three girls
- Summer teams in West Dorset League at under 15 and under 11 levels
- Team and facilities sharing arrangement with Milton Abbey School.
- Winter teams at under15, under13 and under 11 levels.

#### **Community Activities**

The Club participates in the following:-

- Milton Abbas Street Fayre
- The Church Fete
- Children's Summer Activity week
- Dunbury First School after hours sports club

## Development Activities

The Club has identified a series of activities to take the Strategy forward. These activities are listed below.

### *Football*

- Explore formal arrangements with Milborne St Andrew.

### *Senior Cricket*

- Build full senior membership via friendlies and progress to league
- Discuss potential joint team arrangements with other local clubs (Dewlish, Milborne, Stickland)

### *Junior Cricket*

- Seek volunteers for coaches, team managers and scorer
- Achieve registration as accredited Dorset Junior Club
- Build membership to develop full range of teams

### *New Activities*

The club needs to broaden the base of membership and its appeal to the local community by providing new activities as follows:-

- Tennis – explore potential from Milton Abbas, Stickland and Milborne St Andrew
- Athletics
- Junior Golf (Led by NDDC) – feeder to Milton Abbey School Facilities
- Short Mat Bowls
- Swimming, aqua aerobics, – liaison with The Abbey Swimming Club, Milton Abbey School and NDDC.
- With Surgery, participate in NDDC & NHS/NDPCT Healthy Living and Exercise Initiatives in support of Coronary Care and Diabetic prevention and rehabilitation.
- Build on identified need for aerobics and yoga
- Raise awareness on need for senior stretch and tone and walking.
- Offer premises for Youth Club, Junior Conservation Group and Bingo
- Develop social activity calendar. Facilities Improvements

All of the above are dependent on potential improvements to the facilities and the sports field as follows:-

- Repair and renovation of pavilion and changing rooms for immediate use (£10k?) - improve foundation, flooring & heating to accommodate eg short mat bowls and stretch & tone, yoga and pilates.
- Repair artificial cricket pitch (£5k)
- Provide cricket nets (£2k)
- Storage for short mat bowls
- Tarmac access for pavilion
- Renovate the two grass courts
- Design the new modular pavilion, changing rooms and exercise room
- Site and design capable of incorporating village hall/small community sports hall if appropriate
- Bid for funding



## HEALTH

'The challenge for health services in rural areas is to provide good quality accessible care to an often scattered population, and to ensure that people living in the country with particular needs have the same opportunities to benefit from targeted help as those living in towns.' (Rural White Paper 2000)

### Report from the Milton Abbas Surgery

#### The Development of The Surgery



Fifteen years ago, the team at the Milton Abbas Surgery consisted of two doctors and three part-time receptionists who also dispensed the medicines. There were no appointments which meant you might have to sit for two or three hours in order to see the doctor. There was no practice nurse and the district nurses and health visitors were not based in the surgery. If you had asthma, diabetes, needed physiotherapy or a simple test like an ECG, you were referred to the hospital.

Now there is a highly trained Practice team, ranging from receptionists and office staff to doctors and nurses, who are there to help you and to look after all your health needs. We have double the number of receptionists, three dispensers, one full-time nurse practitioner, four nurses, two nursing assistants and three doctors. Many of the staff are part-time but it still represents a significant increase in resources. In addition, there are two counsellor sessions, two physiotherapy sessions and one chiropody session each week. We are involved in the training of doctors in their final year of medical studies and also of general practitioners in their final year of post-graduate training.

We hold special clinics for asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, travel advice, cervical screening, immunisations, baby clinics and new patient checks. We are able to provide minor operations, including vasectomies, within the surgery.

We have Sue Brazier, 'Friends of the Practice' Co-ordinator, who runs a transport service for those who would otherwise not be able to attend appointments.

Thanks to the efforts of the Patient Participation Group which is involved in raising funds for new equipment, we are able to do a range of investigations in the surgery which previously could only have been done in hospital.

Over these 15 years, the number of patients has risen from 2800 to 3600 – a significant increase bearing in mind the much wider range of tests and treatments we are offering within the surgery.

#### Practice Profile

Our ethos in patient and family care is to promote independence and maintain good parenting, enabling individuals to make informed decisions regarding their own health needs and those of their families.

The Practice is a Personal Medical Services (PMS) practice in the North Dorset Primary Care Trust (NDPCT). We are in the Blandford Locality Group of Practices and have access to GP beds in the Blandford Community Hospital. We refer patients to Blandford, Dorchester and Southampton. We are fully computerised (EMIS clinical system), networked and 'paperlight' including scanning of letters onto patients' computer records.

As a Practice we support innovation and have a record of successfully piloting and developing new approaches to patient care. We are currently working with NDDC and NDPCT and local organisations



to provide opportunities for exercise and fitness in support of NHS policy to reduce Coronary Heart Disease.

### **Practice Area**

Milton Abbas is in the heart of rural Dorset. It is well known for its thatched village erected by 'Capability Brown' in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century from the timbers of the medieval houses moved from their position beside the Abbey.

We serve an area where farming and light industry are the main occupation. There are a growing number of professional families who choose to live in the country and commute to Poole, Bournemouth, Dorchester and sometimes as far afield as London.

The Practice, which has been based at Milton Abbas since 1948, serves a group of villages and hamlets within a radius of 12 miles. The population of the area is about 5,000 of which 3,600 are patients of the Practice. The Practice is growing by about 100 patients each year and includes Milton Abbey private school. The main Practice premise is at Milton Abbas. It was built in 1976, extended in 1988 and was further extended and modernised during 1998.

There is a branch surgery at Milborne St Andrew, and purpose built consulting facilities at Winterborne Stickland and Winterborne Whitechurch adjacent to the village halls.

Expansion of our services is constrained mainly by availability of premises and finance. Car parking is and will continue to be a major issue for us and our neighbours.

### **Practice Services**

To all our patients we provide medical services led by the GPs, the Nurse Practitioner and the integrated Primary Care Nurse Team. We offer as much extended care as is appropriate and feasible. Examples of extended services provided from the Practice are: chiropody, physiotherapy, counselling, joint injection clinics, acute pain management and warfarin monitoring. Regular clinics include hypertension, diabetes, asthma, antenatal care, child health and smokestop. Minor surgery is undertaken including vasectomy clinics. We are keen to improve and add to the services we provide for our patients.

We are a dispensing Practice for around 95% of our patients and operate a repeat prescription drop off/pick up system in several villages.

### **Access**

We operate a 'sameday' appointments system in line with NHS guidelines. This means that patients can have an appointment with a health care professional - usually the Nurse Practitioner or a doctor - on the same day. We ask patients to ring between 8.30 am and 9.30 am for appointment in the morning and between 1.30pm and 2.30pm for an appointment in the afternoon

### **The Clinical Team**

There are 3 Partners: Drs Malcolm and Ethel Hillier and Dr Martin Longley. Dr Elizabeth Jones joined us in 2002 and works for 4 sessions a week as a GP Retainer. We are a Training Practice with a Registrar - a qualified doctor who is completing a year's post graduate training in General Practice. We also participate in the training of undergraduates. Our commitment to training benefits our patients by ensuring we are in touch with the latest clinical knowledge and other developments in General Practice.

During the 1990's we also had the opportunity, because of District Nursing vacancies, to integrate our Primary Care Nursing Team under the management of Angela Ironside, now a qualified Nurse Practitioner. Our small team and a 'bank' provide nursing services both in the Practice and in patients' homes. This gives the benefit of continuity of care and swift communications between the patients clinicians. It has been a great success for all concerned. The role of Nurse Practitioner, together with increasing use of nurses, and their organisation into integrated nursing teams now feature in NHS policy for quality care.

### **Volunteer Services**

We have a 'Friends of the Practice' Organiser, Sue Brazier, based at the Surgery (shared with Cerne Abbas and Puddletown). This is a volunteer service which provides transport for patients to the

surgery, support for carers and cared for, and for the prescription delivery service mentioned above.  
*(check with Job Description)*

We have a Patient Participation Group (PPG) which meets regularly and distributes a newsletter to each patient household twice a year. The PPG feed back your views on services and actively fund raise to provide the latest equipment for use at the surgery or in the home so that patients do not have to wait for availability via the hospital. PPG funding has enabled patients to benefit from high tech monitoring equipment eg 24 hour blood pressure cuff and 24 hour ECG monitor as well as defibrillators and nebulisers

#### **Feedback**

We are keen to receive patient and staff comments and suggestions. There is a comments box in each surgery for patients to use or they may phone and speak to the Practice Manager.

We make every effort to get things right. However, occasionally things go wrong and it is a cause of great concern if this happens. We treat all complaints with urgency and do our utmost to put matters right as quickly as possible.



## **BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **Changing Patterns of Work**

Rural enterprise creates the prosperity which enables people to enjoy a decent standard of living. It creates the jobs which give young people a future in their communities and the wealth which sustains England's villages and market towns. (Rural England 1995)

In the Rural White Paper 2000, the first of the Government's objectives is:

'To facilitate the development of dynamic, competitive and sustainable economies in the countryside, by helping rural businesses to succeed through improved skills, business support and better infrastructure, and by helping farmers to restructure, among other measures'.

The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP)- South West Region- contains Economic Goals, including:

- Opportunities are developed for new rural enterprises, including tourism, both on and off farm,
- Business competitiveness and employment prospects improved through skills development and by placing of innovation, creativity and technology at the heart of the rural economy.
- The marketing and distribution of rural products is supported and developed through collaborative activity and enhanced accessibility to markets.

Major emphasis has been placed on support for Market Towns, but these initiatives are intended to embrace neighbouring parishes. It is the intention of Milton Abbas to participate and benefit from schemes set to achieve the goals stated above.

### **NDDC- Economic Development Strategy 2003 Onwards**

#### **THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- Supporting a sustainable and growing economy
- Addressing the needs of the local and rural communities
- Protecting and enhancing the environment
  
- Access, communication and consultation
- Planning for the future
- Efficiency

#### **STATUTORY POWER**

The Local Government Act 2000 gives Local Authorities the power to: "promote economic, social or environmental well being" and do anything they consider is likely to achieve one or more of these objectives. It also imposes a duty to prepare a "community strategy" to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

#### **LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS**

*"This Council enthusiastically embraces the progress that has already been made by local partnerships towards addressing the social, economic, environmental and cultural themes for their individual towns and their surrounding areas. This process will take considerable time and resource in order to be sustainable in the medium and longer term. Partnerships will need to be capable of identifying local issues and needs, preparing strategies and actions plans based on evidence to offer*

*solutions. In the longer term they will need to be capable of attracting, holding and managing funds and resources in their own right, to implement the action plans and provide working solutions”.*

There are currently three reasonably robust community led partnerships and it is hoped that a fourth will be established. The Council convenes a Local Community Partnership Steering Group that meets regularly to monitor progress, support the partnerships and the three Community Development Workers, exchange ideas and co-ordinate activity.

Greater business involvement in community partnerships would be appreciated and stronger links with business support agencies and private sector businesses need to be formed. These can then feed into future economic development strategies and ultimately into the Community Plan.

The Local Community Partnerships will require ongoing commitment and support from both Members and Officers to try to find a “can do” response. That may require resource in time and budget and the relinquishment of some control to partnership working. This authority sees itself as providing the framework, strategy and environment to create the opportunities to enable others to deliver the actions at a local level.

## **5. PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

Nearly everything that is done by the Rural Economy Team is undertaken in partnership with other organisations. The Council’s own resources are limited and it cannot achieve everything. Resources need to be targeted on areas of activity which will make the most impact and achieve the greatest results and value for money. This can only be done by working closely with other agencies and organisations and concentrating on priorities. These are local, sub-regional, regional, national and international. It is intended to maximise leverage of funds into North Dorset.

## **6. COMMUNICATION**

The previous consultation clearly identified a role for the Local Authority in disseminating information. The Rural Economy Team has access to various databases, including Property Pilot (land and premises), a redundant building database, a business database, a grants database and lists of applicants looking for premises in North Dorset. One off events, training programmes and opportunities to bid for funding could be better promoted, together with a list of useful contacts. The improvements to be made to the Council Web Site will assist with this.

The availability of Broadband is seen as crucial to the competitiveness of the businesses in North Dorset. Several initiatives are being pursued by different organisations both locally and within the region. A co-ordinated approach is required.

## **7. RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SKILLS**

The Regional Economic Strategy and the BDPEP Sub Regional Strategy both recognise the importance of a knowledge based economy. Closer links are being forged with Further Education and Higher Education Colleges and the Learning and Skills Council to ensure that communities and local businesses have access to appropriate training to meet their identified needs. North Dorset District Council is now represented on BDPEP and currently chairs the Executive. The possibility of merging this Executive with that of the Lifelong Learning Partnership is being investigated.

The report goes on to say:

- **The role of this Council will be in developing opportunities to obtain the maximum benefit to the businesses in this district from the new working arrangements and programmes available**

## Milton Abbas Employment

The Village Appraisal 1996 showed that 36% of the residents work outside the parish, with a similar number in the parish. 50% of those working are full time employed, with 27% employed part time. 23% were self employed. The remainder were retired (16%), housewives/husbands (10%) and only 2% unemployed. The survey did not cover location of work or data about wages/salaries.

These figures compare with the 1991 census data ( 2001 awaited) related to Milton Abbas as 52% employed full-time, 18% part-time and 24% self-employed

**The Appraisal showed very strong support for more employment opportunities to be created locally.** Of the youth respondents, 27% said they would like to work in the parish. This low figure may reflect a realistic appreciation of the current lack of local job prospects.

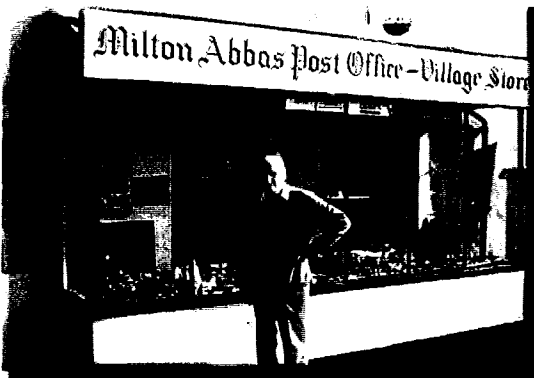
The issues that arise are:

- the factors that will influence prospective employers to move to the parish e.g. grants, sites, potential employees
- opportunities/support for start ups
- skills availability among local job candidates
- business sites
- local services and facilities
- public transport
- road access

As described earlier in this chapter, it is these very issues that the Government's rural economic development strategy for the South West Region is designed to address, as does the Sub-Regional Strategy prepared by the Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Economic Partnership.

### Local Businesses

An analysis has been carried out ( for the first time ) of the businesses operating in Milton Abbas and the details are shown at the end of this chapter.**Retail/Tourism**



The viability of the retail businesses is dependant on visitors to the village. The village shop/post office, the Tea Clipper tea room and the pub, Hambro Arms, are heavily reliant on external trade.

In the Village Appraisal, 45% of respondents claimed to visit the shop once a week at least; however, 80% said that their main reason was to use the post office services.

The subject of tourism is covered in the next Chapter

### New Businesses

A number of the businesses in the directory are local start-ups. In line with Government policy and District strategy new business formation should be actively encouraged. All available support should be sought and publicised.

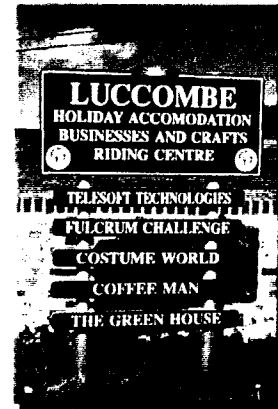
For example, there is a free start -up training programme called Enterprise for All, and assistance can be given in carrying out thorough market research and business planning to demonstrate the viability of new businesses.

## Business premises

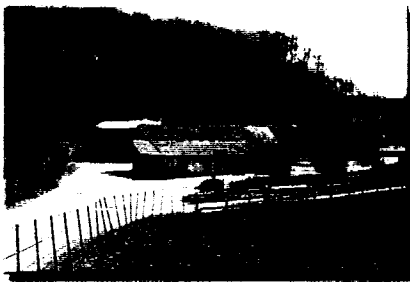
There are three sites currently providing business premises:

### 1 Luccombe Business & Craft Centre

Luccombe has been farmed by the Kayll family since 1967, with 670 acres engaged in arable and dairy. The first non-farming activity started in 1985 was holiday cottages. This was followed by the conversion of farm buildings into business units, assisted by the MAFF Farm Diversification Scheme. Subsequently the Pound Cottage Riding Centre was added. The 16 lettable business units were developed over 11 years and are occupied by a variety of businesses. One of the long term tenants, Telesoft Design, has also set up a head office in the new Stour Park development in Blandford.



### 2 Milton Mills



This 1.2 acre site of the former John Deere dealership on the Milborne Road, close to the village, has 5 business units ( offices and workshops), with only 2 currently occupied.

### 3 Barnes Hill Farm (planning permission granted)

This is owned by Murray Kayll and it is planned that on completion there will be 6 business units.

There is the possibility of other redundant farm buildings becoming available.

It is clearly of potential benefit to the community if these premises are fully occupied, to enhance employment opportunities, encourage new business formation and generate revenue for the local economy.

#### Potential Schemes



There are plans by Little Hewish Crafts to develop a craft centre in one of the barns at Hewish Farm, which is located approximately one mile from the centre of the village.

Another project that was explored with the District Council in 1999 was a combination of visitor centre, craft and produce market and car/coach parking facility, located approximately ¼

mile from the centre at the top of the village hill. The District Council favoured the Hambro Arms site, before the whole project was abandoned. The building known as 'Ray's Barn' remains unused and the possibility of achieving several objectives should be reconsidered.



### **Business /Skills Matching**

No attempt has been made to examine the scope for matching training to potential businesses.. Inward investment strategies at regional/district level obviously take such factors into account. If examined at the micro- level of a cluster of rural villages ( in collaboration with market town), it may make equally good sense, in terms of increase in the cohesion of the community, reduction of traffic movements, housing, education and other considerations, to plan appropriate training programmes. This clearly would require support from the District Council and funding agencies. For example, there is a mobile training vehicle and an existing workforce development programme. The training might need to be specialist, e.g. management or computer skills.

### **Business Marketing**

The prosperity of existing and future businesses will be dependant to a large extent on their success in marketing their goods and services. Clearly they could benefit from external support, whether it be through promotional schemes, use of marketing services or other measures, e.g. marketing training is available through the Workforce Development Programme.

To start the process we have created a business directory for local marketing., to both other businesses and customers. There is clear scope for this to be more widely focused, and will require assistance from District, e.g. inclusion in the NDDC data base.

### **Premises Marketing**

The conventional marketing of business premises through estate agents does not necessarily tap into the potential of the databases of local authorities and regional development agencies.

There is a county wide property register called Property Pilot which is a database of commercial land and premises available in Dorset. This can be accessed through NDDC which also holds a database of redundant buildings and a list of businesses looking for local premises.

## **Recommendations**

1. Publish and publicise business directory
2. Explore joint marketing schemes
3. Investigate skills matching/training potential
4. Study potential craft/visitor centres
5. Access business premises marketing support

Employer	Business	Family	Total employed	Fulltime	Part-time	Professional	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Clerical	Domestic
Abbey School	Education		138	89	49	63	15	3	11	46
Surgery			29	3	26	13	3		10	3
Turners Minibuses	Transport	1	15	1	14		1	14		
Dunbury School	Education		8	2	6	2	4		1	1
Holiday lets	Tourism		6		6					6
Delcombe Manor			3		3		3			
Michael Coleman	Agricultural	1	3	2	1		3			
Shop	Retail		3	1	2			3		
Bulbarrow	Timberyard		2	2			2			
Green House (L)	Retail	1	2	1	1			2		
Murray Kayll	Agricultural		2	2			2			
Richard Rowe	Picture-framing		2		2		2			
Bridget Townsend	Cards	1	1		1					
Little Hewish	Crafts	5	1		1					1
Magenta	Church restoration		1	1					1	
Hambro Arms	Catering	2	8							
Liz Taylor	Int Design	1								
SB Services	Car mechanic	2								
Tea Clipper	Catering	2								
Telesoft Technology (L)	Computers		5	5			5		5	
B & G Homes (L)	Developer	1								
Heritage Art	Paper manufacturer	2	1 planned						1	
Ace Safes	Safes	2	1	1					1	
Green Man	Stone Mason	1					1			
Fulcrum Challenge	Gap year project		5	2	3	4			1	
Oracle Fleet UK	Tale car sales		2	2					2	
Coffee Man	packed coffee	?								
Costume World	Theatrical costumers	8	8	6	2		5		3	
Pound Cottage riding school	Riding school	2	2	2				2 trainees		



## TOURISM

This topic arose frequently in the consultation phase of the Parish Plan, with a mixture of views – often conflicting – emerging. The most widely voiced opinion was that more local benefit should flow from visitors.

### Village Appraisal

Of the respondents, 30% said tourism should be encouraged, 18% discouraged, 31% said there should be a policy and 21% had no view.

### Dorset Tourism

The latest research suggests that in 1999 2.7 million staying visitors and 12 million day visitors spent a total of £534 million in the Rural Dorset area (total for Dorset: £772 million). This generates **12,000 full time equivalent jobs** over the year. However, at the peak of the season a total of 18,000 jobs (including temporary seasonal and part-time) depend directly on tourism with another 4,500 jobs with suppliers and other service providers indirectly dependent on tourism. In total, about **15% of the Dorset economy** by value is based on tourism.

### Tourism in North Dorset

Tourism forms an essential part of North Dorset's economy. Over 1.3 million visitors annually spend over £33 million in the District and over 1,036 jobs are directly or indirectly supported by tourism, mainly in the accommodation, catering, entertainment and retail sectors. Indirectly, tourism can also stimulate growth in associated industries and act as a considerable catalyst for increased economic generation.

The District's natural environment and rural towns and villages form the major part of the overall tourism product, complemented by a small range of visitor attractions. The District's location, within reach of the south coast yet on the border with Wiltshire and Somerset, makes it a good central location for staying visitors but also a popular venue for day-trippers.

### The Benefits of Tourism

The North Dorset Tourism Strategy sets out the following benefits.

- Generates economic activity, providing direct and indirect income for local businesses, helps to promote business confidence, encourages business development and creates a better climate for inward investment.
- Underpins existing employment and creates new job opportunities for local residents in a variety of sectors.
- Enhances the image of the District and stimulates local pride.
- Helps to support leisure/cultural facilities for local residents which would otherwise be financially unviable.
- Acts as a catalyst for environmental initiatives, assisting in the protection and enhancement of the local environment.



### Milton Abbas and Tourism

There are no figures available on the number of visitors to the Parish or their expenditure locally.

The only indication of volume of visits and expenditure is the trade of the three retail outlets – the shop/post office, pub and tea-room – as well as donations to the St James Church and the Abbey.

Reports from these sources vary. A reduction in visitor numbers, particularly those in coaches was reported by the Tea Clipper (possibly as much as 50%). In contrast, the shop/post office reported increased trade, which is not reliant on coach business. Some 700 visitors signed the book in the St James Church in 2002.



### Implications

There is a potential conflict between the parking problems caused by visitors' vehicles and their potential to contribute to the local economy.

It is clear that the structure of the main village, i.e. The Street, places a constraint on visitors' vehicle numbers. This might be alleviated by a public car park. Similarly, car parking for the Abbey is very limited.

Due to these factors, any tourism 'plan' would require a strategy of sensitive growth. This would indicate 'niche' rather than mass marketing to special interest groups. In discussion with the North Dorset Tourism Officer, ideas such as guided heritage walks have been discussed, which would cater for limited numbers.

Whilst aiming for controlled growth in visitor numbers, the income opportunities from 'tourism' should be examined to benefit not only the current commercial and church interests but also the community at large. Existing and potential employees should also benefit.

There is scope for the existing 'beneficiaries' to gain, whilst wider community revenue is pursued. Potential areas for investigation are publications and merchandise, for example. These are sold currently through the shop and tea-room, plus selected items in the Abbey. All of these could benefit from selling a "Milton Abbas Collection" of products, specially designed and competitively sourced, by "Milton Abbas Enterprises", who would act as wholesaler and possibly a retailer, if suitable premises could be identified. One possibility would be the craft/visitor centre referred to in the Business chapter.



At present the visitor experience is completely casual, with no organised direction – or information. The concept of a Milton Abbas 'familiarisation' is far removed from the current situation. Without being overly commercialised, it could be professionally organised.

The starting point would be an interpretation centre – most likely based initially in St James Church. The current historical display would be replaced with a more sophisticated, possibly audio-visual, presentation. The 'tour route' would be introduced here. Other possibilities that have

been mentioned are the rental of a cottage as a visitor centre and museum, or location in a visitor/ craft centre on the edge of the village. Another possibility being investigated would be to locate this facility within the Hambro Arms building, although this would be small in scale.

Suggestions have been made for small-scale visitor attractions, such as guided nature walks; an 'Abbas Trail' (tour of the Abbas villages); the Milton Estate story from 1750 to 1932. These need to be investigated further.

Another requirement is for improved road signs to the village , e.g. on the Dorchester by-pass.

### **Tourism Recommendations**

- Design interpretation centre
- Research guided walks/tours
- Research scope for Milton Abbas branded merchandise/literature
- Explore possibility of visitor centre
- Investigate road signs



## Chapter 13 HOUSING

### The Issues

'England faces increasing demand for housing because of the rising number of single person households and elderly people living apart from their families. In addition, there are special factors to be taken into account in rural areas. These include demand from incomers with town-based jobs or those retiring to the country, the rising rural population and the restricted availability of sites for new housing. The strength of these pressures will vary but in some rural areas they can make it difficult for people who work locally to find affordable housing' ( Rural White Paper 1995)

'There is a shortage of affordable housing in many rural towns and villages which are frequently popular and attractive places to live. Demand for housing is high, both from local people and from new residents- commuters , the retired and second home owners. This can create unbalanced communities and deny local people the chance to acquire a home.' ( Rural White Paper 2000)

These problems are echoed in the Countryside Agency's 'State of the Countryside' report.

### Milton Abbas Background

The housing in Milton Abbas has changed radically since the Second World War. Up to 1932 the village formed part of the Hambro Estate, which was broken up in a sale that year. Pre-war the houses in the main village street continued to be occupied by agricultural workers.

In the immediate post-war years a council estate was built in two phases at the top of the village, at Catherines Well. This resulted in the movement of many families from the main street in the coming years



Subsequently there has been significant expansion in the village, with three houses being added at the top of the main street, the conversion of the brewery into the Maltings development of 10 houses, some 15 bungalows in or near Catherines Well, 7 starter homes in Sylvan Row, a Signpost Housing Association development of 6 houses in 1996 And 8 higher value houses forming Athelstan Way at the edge of Catherines Well.



The fact that the population of 557 in 1921 has only grown to approximately 650 is explained by the fact that the cottages in the main street were each occupied by 4 families and today they hold either one or two. There has been a great deal of movement in and out over the past 50 years. In the process the idyllic scene of a tree lined street of unaltered cottages has changed with modernisation, including garages, extensions and the other features of modern living. Yet it retains its intrinsic charm, within an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The statistical breakdown of households from the 1991 census are shown in the first chapter.

### Dorset Strategies

The Local Strategic Partnership (DCC and districts) produced the report, 'The State of Dorset', in which it identified the increasing demand for housing, and affordable housing in particular, as a key issue over the next 20 years. Key facts noted included:

- Dorset's recent population growth has been second only to Cambridgeshire's.
- The increase in population and declining household size means continued demand for new housing
- Affordability of housing is a major concern with house prices 16% above the national average
- Weekly wages in Dorset are 14.2% below the national average

### **MORI Survey**

The survey commissioned by Dorset County Council found that of 'the possible changes to the area that are most important for improving your quality of life', the highest priority was given to " **more affordable housing for local people**".

### **North Dorset Housing Strategy 2002-2005**

The objectives stated were:

1. Fully integrating the strategic housing process into the Council's approach to community planning
2. Delivering a high quality cost-effective housing service
3. **Providing local people with access to a home of their own**
4. Securing adequate resources to provide new homes in sustainable communities
5. Ensuring that housing costs remain affordable
6. Maintaining the fabric of housing and its environment

### **Housing Need**

NDDC carried out a housing needs assessment in January to May 2002. Key findings included:

- The two most important issues are the problem of affordability and the level of 'concealed' households living within an existing household, the vast majority of whom are not recorded on a register of housing need
- The house price and income study shows that over 60% of these 'concealed' households are not able to afford even the cheapest available type of housing in the District
- Most new household demand is for the smaller and affordable type of housing, particularly flats and terraced houses, to meet the needs of new forming households.
- The total affordable housing need is for 1,019 units. Re-lets of the existing social are the major means of addressing the identified need, but it is estimated that there is a need for 626 additional units from new build or conversion each year, a total of 5,634 in the period to 2011.

The Parish Council has initiated 4 housing needs surveys, in collaboration with the District Council. The most recent has been carried out as part of the Parish Plan process by Rachel Kalis, the Rural Housing Enabler. Her report is included in this chapter. These surveys have been carried out because it was considered that the district wide surveys did not provide accurate enough data at village level.

The first survey in 1996 showed 5 families/individuals in need. The following year there were 3. In 1998 there were 3 and in 2002 there were 4. In each case the requirements have been examined and met where possible.

It is interesting to note that the perceived requirement for low cost housing as being a high priority in the view of the majority of residents does not match the actual need, as identified by the survey. A possible explanation is given in the Rural Housing Enabler's report that follows.

A different issue relates to those young people who have left the parish and find it impossible to return due to lack of affordable housing. The surveys have tried to identify such needs, and future requirements, without success.

It is noteworthy that the population projection for the age group from 20-29 grows from 6,425 in 2003 to 10,375 in 2011 (an increase of over 60%) -potential new household formers.

## **HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To invite Dorset Community Action to hold a housing 'surgery', as suggested by the Rural Housing Enabler
- To carry out periodic parish housing needs surveys
- To investigate need for sheltered housing

**Rural Housing Enabler's Report to Milton Abbas Parish Council**  
**Milton Abbas Housing Needs Update November 2002**

**1 Background**

I first attended Milton Abbas Parish council in August 2000, when I introduced myself and explained the role of the Rural Housing Enabler. In April 2002, the post of Rural Housing Enabler transferred from employment direct by North Dorset District Council to Dorset Community Action (The Rural Community Council). The Parish Chairman approached me in July 2002 to do an update of the two previous Housing Needs Surveys (1995 and 1997). The Parish currently has about 264 households, according to NDDC's Council Tax records.

**2 Method**

The Parish appointed a subcommittee of Michael McAvoy and Tony Hopson. In consultation with them, it was decided to do a 2 part questionnaire. The first form (Appendix 1) would identify any households who regarded themselves as in some sort of housing need or who said they had relatives who had left the parish because of the lack of affordable housing and might return if there were either (a) more affordable housing or (b) better employment opportunities, public transport or other facilities.

The second part, with detailed questions about their current housing situation, future needs and financial situation, would be sent to all the households who replied to the first. From this, an assessment would be made of the housing needs of the parish. The Parish Council would then consider the options available to it for meeting those needs.

The questionnaires were finalised in a series of meetings and correspondence in September and October. from the Parish Chairman They were produced by the Rural Housing Enabler at North Dorset District Council. North Dorset District Council covered the cost of these and the prepaid envelopes for replies direct to the Rural Housing Enabler. A covering letter from the Parish Chairman was enclosed. They were enveloped by the subcommittee and hand delivered to every household by Parish Councillors and others in early November for return by the end of the month.

### **3 Result of Part One**

Disappointingly, only 5 forms were returned (1.9%). One was just to say that relatives had left the parish because they could not afford to buy or rent accommodation and would wish to return if something suitable came up. That household did not reply to the question which asked whether they would reconsider if there were better employment opportunities, public transport or other facilities; nor did they sign it, so it was not possible to follow it up. The 4 others were from people with some sort of existing housing need. All wished to remain in Milton Abbas if at all possible. Three were from tenants of Registered Social Landlords (in this case Housing Associations) and one from owner-occupiers. Two of the Housing Association tenants needed bigger accommodation and one needed adaptations for disability. The owner-occupiers had 2 hidden households, one an older generation and one a younger and needed general advice about accommodating them within the household or separately.

### **4 Results of Part Two**

Because there were so few people and their apparent needs were so different from each other, the RHE decided to interview them, using Part Two (Appendix 2) as guidance. All four interviews took place on 9th December. Each household was sent personal advice based on the information given at the interview and an opportunity to amend any of the information given.

The rest of this report seeks to protect the identity of individual respondents whilst giving the Parish Council an overall picture of the type of housing need emerging in Milton Abbas.

Household 1 needed same number of bedrooms (2) but downstairs toilet and better heating. The household is on the transfer list. With tenant's permission, RHE contacted the landlord and Housing Needs Register team leader. The landlord agreed to consider upgrading the panel heaters ahead of the planned maintenance for the scheme in a few years' time; but could not provide a downstairs toilet because of the design of the house, which would make it prohibitively expensive. The household is in the highest category of housing points and awaits

availability of a suitable property in the areas of choice. They have been advised about the number of RSL properties in each parish within their area of choice but this is a poor guide to the rate of vacancies in different locations.

Household 2 was in a 3-bedroom property with 2 adults and 3 children but 2 of the bedrooms were very small. With their permission, the landlord was contacted and agreed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bedrooms were designed as 1 person bedrooms (with the appropriate level of grant). The house is therefore a 3 bedroom x 4 person house. This means that they should have a higher number of points than had been awarded for transfer to a 3 bedroom x 5 person house and have been advised to tell the Housing Needs register team that this is the case. They have also been made aware of the rules about extending the house if they could see their way to affording to do so and if permitted development rights were not taken away at the time of the planning consent.

Household 3 was in 2 bedroom house with 2 adults and 3 children, and had converted a box room into a bedroom. They sought a 3 bedroom house. They could afford shared ownership through a Housing Association but would have great difficulty in accessing open market housing with 3 bedrooms anywhere in North Dorset but especially in a village as opposed to a town.

With their permission, their status on the Housing Needs Register was followed up and they were advised that their registration on the transfer list had lapsed. They were advised about registration and extending their areas of choice; and also where low cost market and shared ownership schemes existed in North Dorset.

Household 4 were owner-occupiers with other members of their family living with them for an unpredictable period of time. They were advised in general terms about where to seek the relevant planning advice. And



one of the “hidden households” received separate advice about local housing options based on a separate interview.

## 5 Summary

The response was disappointing. With hindsight, Question 6 should have been at the top of Part 1 of the questionnaire, before the invitation to dispose of the questionnaire if the immediate household were not in housing need. This should have been foreseen by the RHE.

In 6 recent previous surveys in North Dorset, a response rate of 33% to 57% was achieved when the questionnaire was a single document. However, more than 90% of households in most communities were adequately housed, so there is a huge amount of redundant information to be logged when doing a housing needs survey in that way. Nonetheless, there were usually between 5 and 10% of households with a definable housing need which could not be met from the housing available on the market, so less than 2% is surprisingly low.

Milton Abbas has a reasonable quantity of RSL stock compared with other North Dorset villages of the same size. The 39 RSL properties represent 14.7% of the total housing stock in the Parish. Amongst similar sized villages, only Stourpaine (27%), Winterborne Kingston (19%) and Winterborne Stickland (16.6%) have more. East Stour has a similar amount (13.75%). Spetisbury, Iweme Minster and Hilton have considerably fewer (around 3% each). There are currently 26 empty properties, 22 of them "furnished empties", which means that they are either second or holiday homes. This represents 10% of the parish housing stock.

Either people have no confidence that filling in a form of this sort will make any difference or emerging households do not see their future in Milton Abbas. However, the families with young children I spoke to like the village very much and wanted to stay there. They say that the somewhat larger ex-council stock is in great demand. The couple who could afford shared ownership no longer have the opportunity of applying for the Knightstone Housing Association shared ownership properties because the

shared owners there have now become tenants. These properties were built without the benefit of Housing Corporation grant and the combined mortgage and rent proved too expensive for the occupiers. Other models of shared ownership might prove more popular; in particular fixed shared equity, with no rent or a very low rent on the retained equity.

On the evidence of this housing needs update, there appeared to be no justification for building more Housing Association property in Milton Abbas at present. However, in the whole of the Rural West Area (Anderson, Hilton, Milbome St Andrew, Milton Abbas, Winterbome Clenston, Winterbome Houghton, Winterbome Kingston, Winterbome Stickland, Winterbome Whitechurch and Winterbome Zelston) there were only 31 vacancies in 2002, and 17 of those were either bedsits or one-bedroom properties. The Housing Needs Register has hundreds of new applicants and scores of transfer applicants (with some housing need points) for the Rural West Area. As applicants can nominate up to 7 areas of choice within the District and different sizes of property, the computer trawl does not give a discrete total number of applicants for Rural West and it gives no indication at all of people specifically wanting Milton Abbas Parish council area.

The rest of the Parish Plan process, of which this housing needs update is the first stage, may shed more light on the dynamics of the housing situation in Milton Abbas. Alternatively, a well advertised housing "surgery" by DCA staff for a few hours at the Village Hall might attract a greater response than this survey has done.

*RHE/rk/230103*

## EDUCATION

### Rural White Paper 2000

#### 4.3 Education and Learning

‘Improving education and learning opportunities for people throughout their lives is fundamental to our objectives for a globally competitive economy, a highly skilled workforce, equality of opportunity, the elimination of child poverty within one generation, and a better quality of life for all. This applies in rural as much as urban areas. We intend to make sure that people of all ages living in rural areas have full access to the range of opportunities available and that obstacles to access are addressed.’

#### Dorset Data

Numbers of pupils aged 4 to 10 attending schools have increased from 26,101 to 29,730 and those over 10 from 20,183 to 25,545.

The projected population growth of Dorset is from 710,515 in 2003 to 774,400 in 2011. In North Dorset, 63,945 grows to 70,685.

In North Dorset, the population projections relevant to primary education are as follows:

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2021</u>
0-4	3,085	3,145
5-9	3,250	3,130

At the same time it should be noted that in the period to 2011 the age group of 20-30 grows from 6,425 to 10,375, (potential young parents), an increase of over 60%. It is not known whether this factor has been taken into account in the projections.

These statistics are relevant to both the Dunbury School and the Rainbow Pre- School in terms of potential future numbers of children.

#### Dunbury CE VC School

The Milton Abbas School is housed in a Victorian building of about 1865, located towards the top of the hill in the main Street.



After threat of closure 12 years ago, the Milton Abbas primary school joined three others from neighbouring villages to form a unique Federation, under one head teacher. This was approved by the Diocese of Salisbury and the local education authority, Dorset County Council.

In the latest Ofsted report, the results were very positive regarding the educational performance. However, the Dunbury governors were advised that more satisfactory facilities should be provided for the under 5 age group. Subsequently

it was decided that the Milton Abbas School should be moved to a new site that was to be provided by North Dorset District Council in Catherines Well. In order to fund this move, it was necessary that the existing site should be redeveloped for housing.

These proposals proved controversial, and lead to a petition being lodged against the development of the current site. Both sites are outside the settlement boundary and the applications for planning approval required special justification.

The Parish Council endorsed the planning application for the new school in February 2003, which was followed by approval of the Dorset County Council planning committee, subject to no objection by North Dorset District Council. At the time of writing this is being considered by the District planners.

### **Rainbow Pre-School**

This group currently has 32 children. Rainbow Pre-School was started in 1978 and is based in the Reading Rooms, opposite St James Church, Milton Abbas. It is a registered charity (No. 1027657). It currently has places for 19 children per session, Monday to Thursday, and it is open from 9.30 to 12.00 noon. Their main aims are to provide a safe, caring and fun environment for children aged two-and-a-half until school age. They strive to create a partnership with parents to promote the development of good care and education practices. Children are encouraged to play and mix with their peers as well as feel more confident with adults. They are also taught to respect the feelings and needs of others in the group. All this provides an excellent grounding for entry into full-time education.



Rainbow Pre-School is registered with Dorset Social Services and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA). It is Ofsted inspected and the most recent report was very favourable.

The play group suffers from the fact that it uses the Reading Room, which is a small all-purpose hall, with a serious lack of space and the requirement to pack away all equipment after every session. Currently there is no other accommodation available in the village.

Rainbow have investigated alternative solutions to their accommodation problem. One possibility was in conjunction with the new Dunbury school, but this seems unlikely. Secondly, the possibility of a village hall might provide space, but this also does not appear practicable.

The Dorset Early Years Development and Childcare Unit have supplied details of 'relocatable buildings', which indicate a likely cost of in excess of £100,000 for a 26 place structure. Details of possible funding sources were provided.

The possibility of such a structure being located on North Dorset land in close proximity to the new Dunbury School would greatly enhance the project, with access to playing facilities.

### **Shared and community use of school facilities (Rural White Paper)**

3.4.4 'This can enlarge opportunity for the whole community, through providing facilities not otherwise available including: sports facilities, after school clubs, neighbourhood learning centres, libraries, playschools and nurseries and lunch clubs for pensioners. Schemes of this kind can make a big contribution in many locations and help people from all backgrounds.'

### **Milton Abbey School**

This boys public school is the largest employer in the Parish and has some 200 boys aged 13-18, the majority boarders. It was founded in 1954 and is housed in the historic buildings next to the Abbey, approximately one mile from the centre of the village.

From time to time groups of boys from the school take on community tasks, which are greatly appreciated, for example, repairing steps on footpaths in the village.



The facilities of Milton Abbey School are used widely, in almost all cases on a paid basis. The Swimming Club pays a block rental; members of the

Golf Club pay an annual subscription; some individuals play squash; the sports hall is used by the Sports Club for training sessions; and the theatre is used from time to time for performances. Clearly the first priority is for the use of all these facilities by the boys, but there could be scope for wider use by the community.. There can, from time to time, be a conflict regarding charges, due to the requirement of the school to cover increasing costs, and the limited resources of the potential community users. In addition, there are restraints which are linked with the school's charitable status, which limits the amount of direct help that can be given.

There is a clear interest by the community to make greater use of the facilities, and further discussion should take place with the school to establish the scope for meeting this demand.

### Adult Education

In the Village Appraisal, as was noted in chapter 6, interest was expressed in classes for computing, keep fit, languages, crafts and gardening.

Almost identical results emerged from the Village Survey 2001.

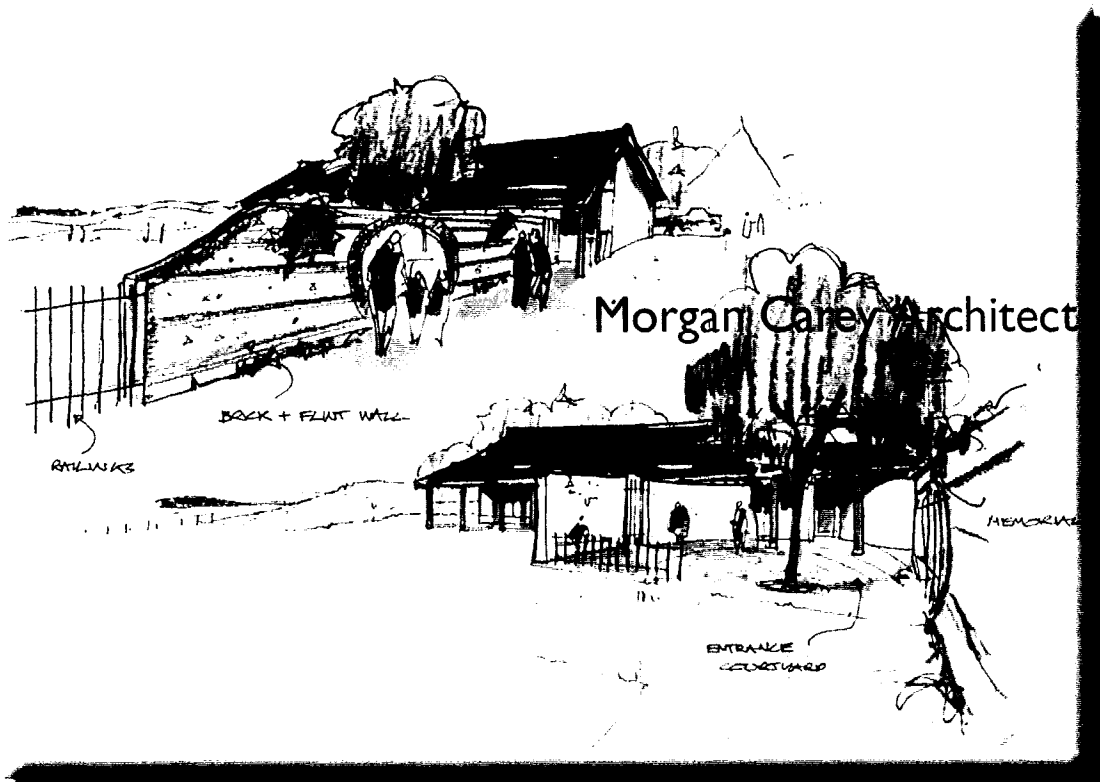
A first initiative has been to arrange a visit by a mobile computer classroom. The sessions were well attended, and the 'students' were enthusiastic about a repeat visit.

There are a variety of courses organised by Dorset County Council in neighbouring towns. However, the possibility of more on-site classes in the village is being explored.

Learning Action Dorset is a charitable business that aims to promote education and training for adults. Their Community Learning Co-ordinator has offered to provide advice on a programme to meet the identified demand.

### Recommendations

1. Assist the Rainbow Pre-School to solve accommodation problem
2. Explore prospects for greater access to Milton Abbey School facilities
3. Organise adult education courses in the village



## TRANSPORT

### Rural White Paper 2000

One of the objectives set out in this document:

‘To provide more flexible and demand responsive local transport’

### 6.4 More responsive public transport

6.4.1 ‘Our policy is to support a range of different public transport services, for different needs, and different places. That may mean better conventional, scheduled bus and train services; but in some areas the emphasis may be on less conventional services: buses with flexible routes which respond to passengers’ demand, community buses and schemes for sharing taxis. We want to make it easier for people to plan specific journeys which may rely on several of these.’

#### The State of the Countryside (Countryside Agency)

To quote : ‘transport is a key issue in rural areas, due to both the transport needs associated with the lower densities of population, workplaces and services in rural areas, and to the impacts of transport on the rural environment.

Most rural people rely on their cars for the majority of journeys. Car ownership is higher, on average, and journeys are longer ( and take more time) in rural areas than in urban areas; average distances from homes to bus stops and railway stations are greater and public transport less frequent.

Levels of traffic are increasing faster on minor rural roads. Roads in the countryside are becoming increasingly more hazardous than on other roads. While more accidents occur in towns, they are more likely to be fatal on rural roads. Casualty rates are falling, but this is slowest for pedestrians, cyclists and riders.’

#### MORI Research

In the study commissioned by Dorset County Council in 2002, one of the key findings was that ‘poor public transport’ was the highest in the public concerns expressed, and ‘more frequent bus services’ was the third highest in the list of improvements required.( in North Dorset this rose to the highest priority for improvement)

#### Dorset County Council - Local Transport Strategy

##### Dorset’s Vision

‘Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset now and for the future’ is the vision for a sustainable Dorset. The Local Transport Plan is a very important means of achieving that vision.

‘The challenge is to co-ordinate transport with the wider community to produce an integrated approach to improving the quality of life’.

##### Aims and Objectives

The Strategy document lists 24 objectives, from which have been selected the following, as being most immediately relevant to Milton Abbas:

- Providing effective, affordable transport links between towns and the communities that depend on them
- Providing viable, sustainable and quality alternatives to the private car in both urban and rural , in order to reduce the growth in car traffic
- Safeguarding Dorset’s unique natural and built environment through reducing the impact of traffic in towns, villages and the countryside, particularly in the most sensitive areas
- Providing improved and affordable access to jobs, training and essential services, especially for those who are disadvantaged by age, low income, disability or isolation

##### Current Provision

A **public service bus** (311/322) provided by Damory runs between Dorchester and Blandford, who also provide the **School bus service**, which picks up in Milton Abbas at 7.30 am for Dorchester, and 8.13 am for Blandford, returning at 15.20 and 15.40 respectively, on schooldays. The service bus operates two usable return services to Dorchester on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, leaving at 9.15 and 13.10, and returning at 12.10 and 15.20 (there is a further bus into Dorchester, but it

arrives after the last return bus). A Saturday service to Dorchester apparently provides four buses into the market town, but effectively only three, as the last bus arrives too late for any return to be possible. Transport to Blandford is even more limited: two buses on Thursdays and Saturdays (with a third Saturday bus allowing 30 minutes before the departure of the return).

All these buses are during working hours, and there is no service in the evenings. The published timetables are extremely complex and a simplified version applicable to Milton Abbas alone would be helpful.

The nearest railway station is in Dorchester, with access to Weymouth, Sherborne, Bath, Bristol and London.

**NORDCAT** (North Dorset Community Accessible Transport) currently has six wheelchair accessible minibuses, one of which is based in Blandford. This picks up weekly in Milton Abbas for trips to Blandford, and also for day trips on Tuesdays. These minibuses are available for hire in the evenings and for special day trips when required.

#### **Volunteer Transport**

The Friends of the Surgery organise a volunteer driven transport service principally for medical appointments, but are also currently providing social transport for shopping etc. This service is already stretched, and the organiser would be glad to confine the service to medical trips if possible.

#### **Consultations**

An extensive consultation process has been undertaken, as part of the Parish Plan. Initially the neighbouring villages of Hilton, Milborne St Andrew, Winterbornes Stickland, Houghton and Whitechurch, and Cheselbourne were invited to discuss a co-ordinated transport scheme, but none have as yet pursued this possibility.

The Village Consultation carried out in 2001 indicated that 55% of respondents would like a better bus service.

During the summer of 2002 numerous consultations by means of focus groups of Young Parents, Newcomers, Older People and Children/Young People were carried out by the facilitator, Sarah Taragon. As will have been noted in the consultation chapter, the need for improved transport was a recurring theme. The main issues were: unsatisfactory bus services; lack of facilities for younger people who do not own cars; needs of the elderly and disabled, and transport to group social activities.

The Sports Club was asked to investigate any transport difficulties they were encountering. The local Women's Group was consulted and asked to make suggestions as to any transport requirements or difficulties of which they were aware. A parents' evening was held in January 2003 to ascertain their support for the formation of a youth club with the aim of taking the children on regular outings. In addition, the Transport Co-ordinator of the Milton Abbas practice was approached to assess medical needs.

#### **Bus services**

In the Village Appraisal, over 20% of the respondents said they would like to see improvements in the timetable. In the subsequent Village Survey 2001/02, improvement of the bus service was seen as the fourth highest priority.

However, it was calculated that only a dozen use the bus more than 10 times per month, and a further 60 use it less than 10 times per month. It was not established whether there would be a higher propensity to travel this way if an improved service were provided

### MILTON ABBAS/DORCHESTER

	School	Holidays	M/T/W/F	M/T/W/F	M/T/W/F	SAT	SAT	SAT	SAT	SAT
M Abbas Catherine's Well	7.31	7.40	9.15	13.10	16.08	10.18	13.15	15.05	17.15	
M Abbas Post Office	7.33	7.42	9.17	13.12	16.10	10.20	13.17	15.07	17.17	
M Abbas Abbey School entrance	7.35	7.45	9.20	13.15	16.15	10.23	13.20	15.12	17.22	
Dorchester Acland Road	8.27	8.27	10.09	13.57	16.32	11.05	14.02	15.27	17.37	
Dorchester Trinity Street		8.29	10.11	13.59	16.34	11.07	14.04	15.29	17.39	
Dorchester Trinity Street	15.20		12.10	15.20		8.30	11.10	14.10	15.35	
Dorchester Museum	15.22		12.12	15.22		8.32	11.12	14.12	15.37	17.45
M Abbas Abbey School Entrance	16.18		12.58	16.01		7.11	11.51	14.51	16.16	18.26
M Abbas Post Office	16.20		13.01	16.04		9.14	11.54	14.54	16.19	18.28
M Abbas Catherine's Well	16.22		13.03	16.06		9.16	11.56	16.20		18.31

### MILTON ABBAS/BLANDFORD

	School		Thurs	Thurs	SAT	SAT	SAT			
M Abbas Abbey School Entrance			9.16	12.46	9.11	11.51	16.16			
M Abbas Post Office			9.19	12.49	9.14	11.54	16.19			
M Abbas Catherine's Well	8.13		9.21	12.51	9.16	11.56	16.21			
Blandford West St	8.40		9.51	13.06	9.51	12.11	16.28			
Blandford East St	15.40		11.45	14.10	10.03	12.55	17.00			
M Abbas Catherine's Well	16.12		12.15	14.31	10.18	13.15	17.15			
M Abbas Post Office			12.17	14.33	10.20	13.17	17.17			
M Abbas Abbey School Entrance			12.20	14.36	10.23	13.20				

### Needs

These consultations resulted in the identification of the following needs.

- *Sarah Taragon* One of the main Transport issues highlighted the need for transport *within* the village, with its steep hill; the Surgery being situated at Catherine's Well at the top, and the Shop, Reading Rooms and Church in the lower part. We need to think about ways of moving people around the village. The other main transport need is to take groups of young people out of the village to other sources of entertainment. The difficulty of getting to work without a car was mentioned, but no actual applications for assistance have been received.
- *The Sports Club* require help with transport to take young people e.g. to cricket practice during the winter months at indoor nets; also many requests have been made for exercise classes, which are difficult to accommodate in the Reading Room. A minibus to take people to such classes currently held in neighbouring villages would be highly desirable.
- *Women's Group* pointed out the difficulty of accessing evening entertainment during the dark winter months, with an elderly population reluctant to drive; they would support a minibus to occasional theatre or concert (and local Arts Reach entertainments) in neighbouring villages and towns.
- *Friends of the Practice* transport co-ordinator, Sue Chalk, currently provides fortnightly shopping trips for two households with transport problems. With a shortage of volunteer drivers, she would be very glad if this social, rather than medical need could be sourced elsewhere. The number of social transport needs does vary from time to time, and involve as much as four or five occasions.
- *Parents and young people.* Pending the construction of a Village Hall, the only possibility for a Youth Club is to visit neighbouring clubs, or organise a series of activities and outings. A list of proposed outings was drawn up at a Parents' meeting, and the response to this, together with



priorities is awaited. As will have been noted in the 'Youth' chapter, transport options have been identified to meet these requirements.

- *Adults* It has become clear that participation in the social activities taking place in neighbouring villages is constrained by lack of transport

#### **Needs - other villages**

As indicated earlier, neighbouring villages have been approached. It is felt that if Milton Abbas initiated a regular service for young people to sporting or entertainment activities, there might well be support from other areas. Similarly the Women's Group is sure that support from near-by villages would be forthcoming for any recreational trips.

#### **Transport Grants**

There are a variety of schemes applicable to the needs of Milton Abbas. One of these could be, in conjunction with neighbouring villages, the Parish Transport Grant scheme. . Discussions have taken place with the local representative of DART to seek advice , and he has indicated that longer term another possibility would be the Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) scheme.

#### **Recommendations**

- Use of NORDCAT fully accessible vehicle for transport of disabled and otherwise housebound parishioners for shopping trips to neighbouring market towns – as indicated by Sue Chalk.
- Use of NORDCAT minibus to provide regular outings for young people
- Use of NORDCAT minibus for Sports Club practice sessions which take place out of the village
- Use of NORDCAT minibus to exercise class in neighbouring village
- Use of NORDCAT minibus for occasional recreational outing (Dorset Community Action says this has not been tried before, but it is definitely catered for in Countryside Agency 'Getting your Community moving' page 9 and 18.)
- Explore funding for publication of simplified bus timetable within village.
- Transport **within the village** is very difficult to organise over such a short distance – volunteer drivers for specific events such as Coffee Mornings would be a possibility? Further research is needed to substantiate the regularity of need for 'in village' transport.
- Minibus to Abbey School for specific events, or shuttle service of volunteer drivers for Cinema Evenings and theatre.
- Appoint volunteer 'transport' representative.

## TRAFFIC AND PARKING

### Traffic Management

Traffic and parking have emerged as among the highest priority issues in the Parish Plan consultation. This may seem strange, far from the controversy surrounding Central London and its traffic charging system, in a supposedly tranquil part of Dorset. Sadly it also has its problems, but they differ because the traffic moves too quickly, rather than too slowly. Unfortunately the Parish Council does not have the powers of the Mayor of London to solve them!

The total number of vehicles licensed in Dorset has risen by more than a third in the past 20 years. There are over 250,000 licensed today. In the 1991 census, less than 19% of households were without a car in North Dorset and over 30% had two or more cars.



Traffic patterns in Milton Abbas have been studied by the Highways Department of DCC. Subsequently, certain traffic calming measures have been introduced, such as high profile 30-mph signs and 'pinch point' road markings. These have had some effect, but traffic speed remains a high profile issue..

In the Village Appraisal, 68% of respondents said that the speed limit should be "vigorously enforced". Our discussions with Dorset Police have regrettably demonstrated that they have higher priorities

elsewhere. They have, nevertheless, made token visits and have become more visible.

In the 2001 Village Survey the third highest priority identified for improvement in the Parish, after a village hall and a pavement, was "traffic management". 49% said that the speed limit should be reduced to 20-mph, 45% favoured traffic calming, 37% favoured more warning signs, and 35% extension of the speed limit area. The latter is currently in the County Council programme for investigation.

After years of lobbying, Milton Abbas got its pavement and has prevented the potential accident that was waiting to occur for the mothers and children going to and fro the school. So there is hope to meet the other needs of improved traffic management. As has been pointed out by experts, the main problem is the attitude of drivers (the majority of whom do not live in Milton Abbas), but no communications campaign has been recommended to change attitudes, apart from somewhat ineffectual road safety material.

It is considered that the greatest problem is through traffic rather than that of Milton

Abbas residents. This makes the task of 'driver education' a great deal more difficult



Dorset Safety Camera Partnership is becoming very active in rural Dorset with mobile cameras. Speeding tickets given out will eventually increase 6 fold( to 120,000 per annum). Initially targeting is focused on casualty sites, but consideration will be given, to a lesser extent, to non-casualty sites which are of great concern to local communities. 'The objective is to produce better compliance with speed limits everywhere'.

**It is clear from observation of speeding vehicles on all approach roads to the village, as well as the main street, that the problem remains unsolved.**

The County Council has published a Review of Speed Limit Policy and the application of this to Milton Abbas should be discussed, particularly the 20 mph speed limit.

### **Recommendations**

- Keep under study other traffic calming measures, with Traffic Management at Dorset County Council
- Maintain active contact with Dorset Police
- Explore 'driving with care' communications

### **Parking**

In the Village Appraisal there was a 50/50 split in favour and against parking restrictions being introduced. The practicality of this is very dubious, as residents are opposed to yellow lines being introduced. Similarly, enforcement would be a major problem. (The County Council is now responsible, and not the Police) Ironically, parking is a form of traffic calming, used intentionally for that purpose in other villages. However, it can be a major problem, both in terms of preventing the movement of large vehicles, if double parked, and presenting a road safety hazard, for example outside the school.

The problem of parking in the main Street is caused by two main factors. First that there is inadequate use of off-road space by multi vehicle owning residents. Secondly, during the high tourist season, there is an influx of cars and coaches for whom there are no public car/coach parking facilities. After an extensive investigation by the Parish and District Councils, a suitable site was identified behind the Hambro Arms, but after a long period of vacillation by the brewery, the District Council decided to abort its funded plan for the project. The problem remains.

As was noted in the Conservation Appraisal p.15:

**The Green** ( the grass areas in front of the cottages)

'The green is a fundamental element to the special character of the village. It is also very sensitive to change. Currently most cars are parked on the green and are visually intrusive. A broad consensus was that, where possible, cars should be parked up beside the cottages, concealed from view up and down The Street'.

There is another problem of parking in The Street which is caused by parents' cars outside the school.

The second problem area is Catherines Well. This is caused principally by the popularity of the surgery with the resultant volume of visiting cars. The car park area is inadequate, particularly as a large number of spaces are taken by the staff, but the problem is compounded by the fact that many patients ignore the car park and park instead in the front of the surgery, frequently causing a blockage of the road. In spite of exhortations to do otherwise, the problem persists.

The land adjoining the surgery car park is owned by North Dorset District Council who might facilitate an extension to the area. There would be associated costs requiring funding.

The Traffic Management team at County have offered to consider the potential for selective application of 'yellow lines' in both the Street and Catherines Well.

### **Parking Recommendations**

1. Review feasibility of public car park project with District Council
2. Encourage off-road parking by residents of The Street
3. Examine with the Medical Practice and the District Council extension of the surgery car park
4. Discuss possibility of application of 'yellow lines'

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Milton Abbas lies in an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), with the main village street and the Abbey being within a Conservation Area. The village is in a Chalk Uplands Landscape Character Area It is also within the Rural Development Area.

The Abbey and the ancient market town site is an Ancient Monument., with significant archaeological interest.

The area is well served with paths and bridle ways. It is popular with visiting walkers. There is a recently completed walking circuit around the village.

### **Litter**

There is a constant challenge to overcome litter thrown from vehicles onto the roads leading to the village. This requires constant vigilance and caring effort to tidy up.

Within the village, there are litter bins supplied and emptied by the District Council.



## PLANNING

The Local Plan Strategy of North Dorset District Council is to achieve 'sustainable development', making sure that development does not harm the overall environment for future generations. Policies directly affecting Milton Abbas include:

- Development proposals are subject to a comprehensive list of assessment criteria to protect local character and amenity (Policy 1.9) and will normally be contained within the 'Settlement Boundary' of the village.
- Within the designated Conservation Area, development will only be permitted if it is in keeping with the character of the area (Policy 1.21). General enhancement of the area will be encouraged and the demolition of any building of architectural or historic interest in the area will be resisted (Policy 1.24).
- Development which would detract from the character of the Historic Park will not be permitted (Policy 1.30).
- Important Open or Wooded Areas within the settlement boundary will be conserved. Development will not be approved if there is an adverse affect on the character of such areas (Policy 1.10).
- The countryside around the village will be protected from non-essential development (Policy 1.7) with extra controls afforded to the landscape which is within the AONB (Policy 1.32).
- Under Policy 1.33, development will only be permitted if it is situated and designed so as to integrate with the distinctive landscape character of the locality.
- Under Policy 2.3, new housing proposals for single dwellings or small groups of houses may be granted permission on environmentally suitable infill plots within the settlement boundary. Additionally, in exceptional circumstances, low cost affordable housing provided by a Housing Association, may be provided on land immediately adjacent to the village settlement boundary (Policy 2.9).
- The provision and retention of community and recreation facilities will be encouraged in the village (Policies 3.4 and 3.2.24).

With this tight regime in place, the pressure is on, nevertheless, to effect change. There have been over 400 planning applications submitted since 1974. 32 of these were for alterations to properties in the Conservation Area in the main Street since 1985, with 25 in the past decade.

The Parish Council raised concern in 2000 about the volume of planning applications and the speed and nature of change in The Street and sought guidance from the North Dorset planning department.

Consequently, to assist both residents, current and future, as well as the planners, a Conservation Appraisal of The Street was carried out in 2000 by the residents and the North Dorset conservation team. Their report was published in January 2001. In addition to providing a history of the village and its construction and description of the architecture, this gave guidance on maintenance and use of materials.

The report noted: 'the cottages, and the spaces between them make Milton Abbas unique. Knowing how best to extend them, to respect this special interest, is a very challenging task. The gaps between the cottages are important spaces to respect and as a general rule all extensions should be to the rear of the cottages. How far new building extends to the rear and outwards will always be a subject of considerable debate. A key to the success of any scheme will be in its detailed design and the way in which it respects the open spaces between buildings as well as the qualities of the original cottages'.

Later in the same report, it says: 'Bearing in mind the debate on alterations and extensions, an analysis of the number of cottages with extensions could be useful. For example it is likely that most if not all the cottages have already been extended. If this is the case then thought should be concentrated on the opportunities for improvement, as and when cottages are sold or renovated, rather than debating the principle. Also it will enable clearer analysis of what works and what doesn't (shape, size and materials).'

The concluding section of the Conservation Appraisal stated: 'a key purpose of this document is to facilitate the local community and the local authority to understand what is special about the village. This will enable everyone to identify opportunities for improvement in the village as well as spotting circumstances where change would be detrimental.'

'If, for example, a proposal for development of a site comes forward, it should be possible, through the information and guidance provided in this document, to determine whether the existing building, or site, contributes to the special character, and whether what is proposed will detract from the interest and character. This objective analysis will allow the local authority and local community to participate in the development process on equal terms using a language and criteria for assessment that both understand'.

'An attitude to not wanting any change is probably not realistic in today's society, but a local authority will not hesitate or shrink from refusing permission for a particular development if there are sound planning reasons to do so. More positively, this process or objective analysis will help to ensure that the right sort of changes happen in the right places, at the right time to reinforce what is special about Milton Abbas rather than let things detract from it. Already the village recognises that there are opportunities for improvement within the green frontages and has reached a broad consensus of what could be done. This work could be extended to look at other areas, whether in public or private ownership. In other words it is a process that should be used all the time and not just when there are perceived or real threats to the equilibrium of the village'.

The Parish Council and District Council will continue to bear this in mind in dealing with planning applications.

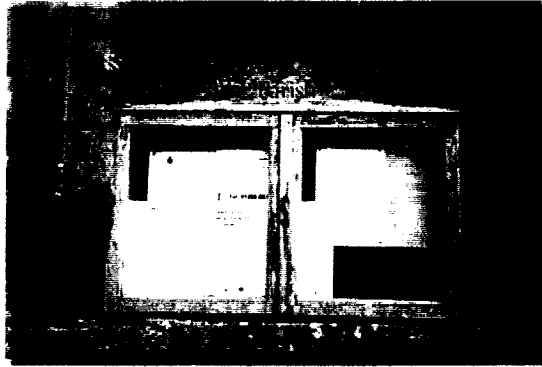
#### **Recommendations**

1. Carry out analysis of Street cottage extensions and develop guidelines
2. Examine scope for driveway improvements



## COMMUNICATIONS

In the Village Appraisal it became clear that there was a need to improve communications within the Parish. The original two notice boards have been increased to five, strategically placed to cover a much larger area. Previously there was a newsletter covering all the parishes in the benefice, called the Village News. This is distributed only to those who subscribe, and is sustained by advertising. It was decided to publish a free newsletter to Milton Abbas households only, sponsored and without advertising, thus not damaging the viability of the existing publication. This was entitled 'The Bulletin' and is published monthly. Following changes to the structure of the benefice, another newsletter, 'Valley News', is now also delivered to Milton Abbas households. It should be noted that The Bulletin is produced single handed by Peter Chafer, an experienced journalist, upon whom it is totally dependant. Likewise, regular sponsors, including the Parish Council, are vital.



There is a parish website: [www.miltonabbas.village.org.uk](http://www.miltonabbas.village.org.uk)

In the Village Consultation 2001 only 14% of respondents thought communications poor. It appeared that some did not receive The Bulletin, so distribution was improved. Views were sought on content and every effort has been made to accommodate as wide a range of interests as practical.

It was noticeable that communications was not an issue that emerged in the Parish Plan consultation . It is an area where it is always possible to "do better", and will be kept under review.

One possible addition to the communications process would be a regular Parish Plan Progress Supplement to The Bulletin. This would require funding.



## **Participation**

As was noted under the heading of 'threats' in the opening chapter, there are many forces at work that weaken the social cohesiveness of rural communities.

A critical factor is the stability of the population. In the Village Consultation 2001, 67% of respondents had lived in the parish for less than 15 years and 39% less than 5 years. From this it is clear that there is a rapid turnover of residents. This, of course, contrasts with the very different, stable lifestyle of the first half of the last century.

The questions that flow from this are: what sense of 'community' exists? What sort of Milton Abbas identity is in people's minds? But most importantly, what are they prepared to do, in their busy lives, for their community? And, if not, why not?

The consultation during the preparation of the Parish Plan identified 'apathy' as a problem. On a day to day practical basis, this equates with lack of volunteering to do the things that make the community function better. When important issues arise, the sense of commitment to the community is vulnerable.

The success of the implementation of this Parish Plan will be influenced far more by the willingness of the whole community to participate than it will be by drawing in support and financial assistance from outside. 'Can do' needs to be the attitude – and not that somebody else can do. This will be the challenge. After all, we called this Parish Plan project 'Challenge Milton Abbas' - and that is what the implementation will be.

The reason for linking the topics of 'Communications' and 'Participation' in this chapter is that they are inextricably linked. The issue is attitudinal – what are priorities? What matters? Who benefits? Why me?

Since the answers to these questions are unlikely to be clear for many, effective communications become the key influence that may 'turn people on'. The cause is good – beneficial to all. The hope must be that everyone 'buys in'.

The final chapter of the Plan describes the Delivery of the plan recommendations. The commitment and involvement of the community will be essential to successful achievement.



## **DELIVERY**

Mention has been made previously of the need for commitment and participation by the community in the delivery of this plan. It will be essential to have the active involvement of the Parish Council, MATCH, the Sports Club and other groups in the Parish. To this it will be necessary to add many other volunteers to assist with the wide range of projects.

Ideally a Programme Co-ordinator would manage the process of delivery. It may be possible to obtain grant funding to engage the services of such a person.

The list of recommended actions contained in the final chapter could become a 'wish list' if the delivery capability is not put in place. This is the challenge facing the community and the funding organisations who have offered support in the preparation of this plan.



## **AGENDA FOR ACTION**

Throughout this document there have been recommendations for action. The following is a full list, which is extensive. Clearly it is necessary to prioritise, to arrive at a deliverable programme for the next two to five years. Others may be included in a longer term programme.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Youth**

- Install over 12s Playpark
- Complete under 12s Playpark
- Form 'youth group'/ identify venue
- Organise programme of day trips
- Organise Leisure Bus to Blandford
- Research After School Club
- Investigate need/facility for computer access'

#### **Social/ Leisure**

- Form Gardening Club
- Investigate Computer Club
- Organise transport scheme for trips outside parish
- Continue 'newcomers' events
- Continue Tent Week
- Encourage coffee mornings
- Organise cinema nights
- Organise keep-fit sessions
- Research Summer Music Festival

#### **Sport**

- Continue development of Junior and Senior teams
- Identify volunteers for coaching support
- Broaden base of membership to include fitness activities
- Maximise use of playing field, e.g. athletics, junior golf
- Work with Swimming Club, Milton Abbey School and NDDC to improve water based sport
- Renovate the pavilion
- Replace artificial cricket pitch
- Provide cricket nets
- Longer term: new modular pavilion, renovate 2 grass tennis courts

#### **Businesses**

- Publish business directory
- Explore joint marketing schemes
- Investigate training opportunities
- Study potential craft/visitor centres
- Encourage business premises marketing support

#### **Tourism**

- Design interpretation centre
- Research guided walks/tours
- Research scope for branded merchandise/literature
- Explore possibility of visitor centre

## **Housing**

- Invite Dorset Community Action to hold housing 'surgery'
- Carry out periodic housing needs surveys
- Investigate need for sheltered housing

## **Education**

- Assist Rainbow Pre-School to solve accommodation problem
- Explore potential for wider access to Milton Abbey School facilities
- Organise adult education courses in the parish

## **Transport**

- Organise NORDCAT programmes for disabled, youth, sport practice, and recreational outings
- Organise simplified bus timetable
- Investigate transport within the parish
- Organise shuttle service to Abbey School events

## **Traffic and Parking**

- Study other traffic calming measures, including 20 mph
- Maintain active contact with Dorset Police
- Explore 'driving with care' communications
- Review feasibility of public car park with NDDC
- Encourage off-road parking
- Explore Surgery car park extension

## **Planning**

- Carry out study of Street cottage extensions and develop guidelines
- Examine scope for driveway improvements



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