

KINGSTON ST MARY

PARISH PLAN 2008



Part 1

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



The village of Kingston St Mary sits on the edge of the south east corner of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) about four miles from the centre of Taunton. The parish, as can be seen from the map in the centre pages, includes the settlements of Dodhill, Nailsbourne, Fulford, Yarford and Cushuish.

As part of the great Manor of Taunton Deane, Kingston was owned by the Bishop of Winchester and was therefore not listed separately in the Domesday Survey of 1087. The Manor was split up in1859. In some old documents the parish is referred to as Kingston-juxta-Taunton to distinguish it from other places of the same name. But, in the late 1940's, it became officially Kingston St Mary by adding the dedication of the church.

Written accounts of Kingston in the past are sparse, but "Collinson's History of Somerset" gives a picture in 1791 of 740 inhabitants increasing to about 900 by the mid-19th century. Kingston St Mary was a largely self-sufficient community at that time with a number of tradesmen such as butchers, tailors, cobblers, thatchers etc living in the parish. The area was primarily one of mixed farming, but the peak of the woollen industry, from which Taunton and the surrounding area had profited, had passed. Electricity arrived in the village in the 1920's, and gas in 1934, but these services were not connected to many houses for some years. Mains water was not available until the 1960's as most people had their own supply. Later, mains sewage was introduced. Rubbish collection was unheard of until 1945. The village has lost its shop and post office during the last ten years. It now has a church, a primary school, a pub, a village hall, a garage and a playing field and playground.

The population is currently about 1,200. Nearly half are aged 60 or more.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Although it is rural, there is little semi-natural wildlife habitat in the parish. There are four county grade sites - Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). With one exception, a pond with protected species, these lie in the Quantock foothills. There is also a Woodland Trust nature reserve at the Spinney, the majority of which is a former garden rather than long-established semi-natural woodland. Hestercombe House holds a nationally important breeding population of lesser horseshoe bats which forage for a distance of up to five miles. With planned development north of Taunton, the bats are increasingly at risk.

Many of the streams do not run in the lowest natural channel. Historically, the rights to water from the streams in the parish were valuable and strictly controlled but, now that the need for stream water is less important, cleaning the channels and culverts is seen as a chore. As a result, and especially after periods of intense rainfall, blockages lead to surface flooding, particularly because in some areas the adjacent roads lie lower than the nearby streams.

Climate change could have considerable consequences for wildlife, gardens and those in flood-prone areas. One of the biggest threats to wildlife may be allowing the introduction or escape of exotic plants from gardens, especially to water but also to hedgerows and woodlands. Changing climate risks changing benign exotics into serious pests.

Good management is the linking factor to the three major issues we face:

- maintaining the structure of, and native species in, our hedgerows and verges;
- guarding against the release of invasive plants and animals into the wild; and
- protecting streams from excessive loading of sediments, nutrients, pesticides and invasive species.

Actions required to address these and other environmental issues will be included in a detailed plan to be developed by a separate working group.



WHY HAVE A PLAN?



The plan has been produced to meet:

- the Parish Council's objective of producing a Design Statement, covering future developments and village infrastructure, that reflects the views of parishioners and serves to influence decision makers in the planning process;
- the Community Council's aim to support the creation of a plan for the development of our rural community, to encompass both its physical and social fabric;
- the desire of parishioners to build on and supplement the many good things that already exist in our community and so provide everyone who lives here with the opportunity to have a better quality of life.

The plan is based on:

- a review of what already exists in the parish;
- an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire completed in July 2007. The survey was completed by 617 people in 310 households out of 443 in the parish i.e. 70% of households. Of these:
  - 325 participants (in 171 households) live in the village centre, and 257 participants (in 120 households) live outside
  - 53% were female and 42% were male (not all people answered the relevant question)
  - 544 people aged 16 or over completed the survey; of these 6% were aged 16 to 24, 17% were aged 25 – 44, 27% were aged 45 – 59, 31% were aged 60 to 75 and 17% were aged over 75
  - 73 people aged 15 or under completed the questionnaire designed for young people
  - 22% live on their own, and a further 41% live in two person households
  - 45% are employed, including 15% who are self employed;
- the views expressed by representatives of community groups active within the parish;
- the comments made at the two Parish Open Meetings held on November 20th and 27th, 2007;
- the comments made by Parish Councillors at the January Parish Council meeting.












THE OLD BAKERY




KINGSTON
POST OFFICE




135
Cushuish
19
68
Middlebrooks
58
Fennington
41
Pickney
Portman Fm
Lower Portman
Fm
Back
Stream
Fitzroy
37
Norton Manor
Camp
Knowle
Hill



Key

Parish Boundary

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Footpath

Bridleway

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WHAT APPROACH DOES THE PLAN TAKE?



The research outlined in the previous section confirmed a high degree of satisfaction with many aspects of life in the parish. The plan seeks to recognise these, as it is as important to say what we don't want to change as to identify what we do.

There were areas that many people felt concerned about (eg traffic, development, and the environment). In some cases there was a high level of agreement about the actions that should be taken and these have been incorporated as suggestions into the plan. However, in other areas, while there was general agreement on the problem (eg speeding traffic), there was either disagreement over the actions that should be taken to address it, or so many suggestions as to what needed to be done as to make it impossible to include specific actions that would carry the general support of the community. In these cases the plan suggests the process for determining the actions that should be taken, rather than the specific actions.

The plan consists of two documents – Part 1, contains background and introductory information, plus summaries on development and traffic, while Part 2 contains detailed analysis of the answers to the questionnaire, under a number of headings, with suggested actions. The actions are divided into those that the parish can undertake on its own and those where other bodies or organisations need to be involved.

For ease of presentation, Part 2 is divided into eleven sections, each of which is devoted to a separate topic or theme as shown on page 2.

Each section is divided into:

- the background information outlining what already exists in the parish and the relevant information from the research conducted;
- the proposed actions it is suggested we take. With the exception of the section on development the actions are divided into those that:
  - can be taken by the community without seeking the approval or agreement of bodies outside the parish;
  - are within our own hands, but which need support and /or action by groups outside the community.



HOW WILL THE PLAN BE TAKEN FORWARD?



The Parish Council has direct responsibility for implementing the part of the plan devoted to Development and for a large part of the plan for Traffic. The other sections of the plan are being further developed and implemented through a Parish Plan Committee created by and answerable to the Parish Council. The committee co-ordinates and supports the steering of each part of the plan through existing bodies, committees and individuals, or, where none exist, supports the establishment of new bodies to do this. This has enabled the workload to be spread and allows us to utilise the talents of the many people who volunteered help. The Action Plan contained in Part 2 makes detailed recommendations for how the plan should be taken forward.

It is important that the plan is treated as a living organism which continues to reflect the community's desires and needs and responds to changing external circumstances. Therefore it will be kept under continuous review, and it is envisaged this will be done every two years. For example, whilst a number of the actions in the plan address concerns about the environment, sustainability, and the impact of increasingly scarce resources on our lives, it is likely that technological developments and changing circumstances will mean that we will need to modify our plan to ensure it continues to be relevant.



DEVELOPMENT



Background

The parish is situated partly within the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and conservation areas, and is aptly termed "The Gateway to the Quantocks". At the centre is an attractive village. Although there is a wide range of style of buildings across the parish, most development to date has been generally sympathetic to a village character.

Of the three most recent multi-occupational developments in the parish, two have resulted in a planning gain for the parish. Farming is the main commercial activity in the parish. The only commercial premises in the village, apart from home offices, is the garage. There are a couple of light industrial premises in the parish.

Design statement

All future development should:

- take place within the existing settlement limits;
- be consistent with the village skyline as it was in 2005;
- preserve a village character, and be sympathetic and sensitive to the immediate area and the existing buildings that are in close proximity;
- only include premises solely devoted to industrial use that are compatible with a rural environment;
- have at worst a neutral impact on road safety for all users;
- where appropriate, contribute to the development of the parish infrastructure (eg the provision of footpaths or community amenities).

The developments that will be supported in the village in accordance with these principles are:

- a small amount of affordable housing for people with long standing family/employment ties within the village (such housing would need to have restrictive covenants to ensure that this usage is continued – legal advice will be needed to help create these);
- those making the best use of the existing and potential common resources;
- premises for enhanced facilities that serve the local community;
- enhancement of existing buildings to encourage home working;
- alterations to existing buildings to introduce facilities and services that have a proven environmental gain, provided that they are consistent with the above development criteria.



TRAFFIC



Background

A road from Taunton to Bridgwater runs through the centre of the village, with one carriageway in each direction. A network of minor roads connects the parish to other rural communities. Most of these roads have a number of sharp bends, and there are places where they are reduced to a single carriageway.

There are significant volumes of commuter traffic caused by parishioners going to work, school traffic to KSM school and Kings Hall, and commuters from outside the parish using the roads as a "rat run" through the parish from Bridgwater, Bishops Lydeard and elsewhere in the Quantocks.

Pedestrians, cyclists, cars, tractors and commercial vehicles have to share the narrow road through the village between the former post office and Mill Cross.

Traffic speeds and volumes, and pedestrian safety, were the main areas of concern raised in responses to the questionnaire and were the three things about the village that people would most like to change. There was less agreement on how to deal with them. More than half the respondents favoured the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, 43% wanted flashing speed signs; and 36% would like more pavements. Nearly two thirds complained of traffic black spots and hazards. There was no clear view regarding the possible introduction of street lighting.

There is more detailed information on the subject of Traffic, and many suggested actions, in Part 2.





THE DRAGON OF KINGSTON

There was a terrible dragon to Kingston St Mary, breathed out viery vlames he did, an' cooked his meat to a turn, looky zee. Well, no one couldn't get near to kill'n for vear of bein' roasted so brown's a partridge. Now, there were a bold veller as had a good head on him, and her climbed lane by Ivyton where there was a gurt rock those days. 'Tis a steep hill, look, and rock was right on brow, so he give a shout to dragon. Well then, dragon he d'look up and zees 'n. Then he open his gurt mouth to roar vlames, and the veller gives the rock a shove off. It rolled straight down hill into dragon's mouth and choked'n dead. Yes, it did.

(This tale was gathered in 1911 from harvesters and a maid-servant in Cothelstone and Ivyton. I was showed the very place in Ivyton Lane where the stone came from, but there are no real rock outcrops in the neighbourhood.
The 'bold veller' was called Fulk Fitz Warine.)

From: ' Somerset Folklore' by R L Tongue



