



Puriton and Woolavington

VILLAGES TOGETHER

BIG LOCAL PLAN 2015 TO 2025

Our Approved Plan for the First Three Years





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Puriton and Woolavington

The Villages Together Big Local Plan 2015 to 2025

Our Approved Plan for the First Three Years



1 What are Big Local and the Local Trust?

In 2012 the Big Local Lottery Fund announced that a distinct area based on Woolavington and Puriton would be one of the 150 areas identified nationally to benefit from a £1 million investment over 10 years.

The Big Local national programme is managed by the Local Trust on behalf of the Big Lottery. Our area was chosen as it has not previously had lottery funding or investment from funders. It was also evident from a range of statistics that the area was experiencing a number of issues that would have a significant impact on quality of life in the villages. Initially, particular issues of concern included young people, housing, employment, health, rural services, education and skill levels.

The way Big Local works is through local residents: we are in charge of this process and we will benefit!

Many local people and organisations have attended events or been interviewed, so we could better understand people's concerns and ideas for the future.

Of course that has meant that we have had to start from scratch in terms of organising to work with Big Local. Initially telling local people and organizations about Big Local, then getting a group of residents together to lead the project and then progressively endeavouring to inform all residents, canvassing their views and ideas and encouraging their participation. This has taken time.

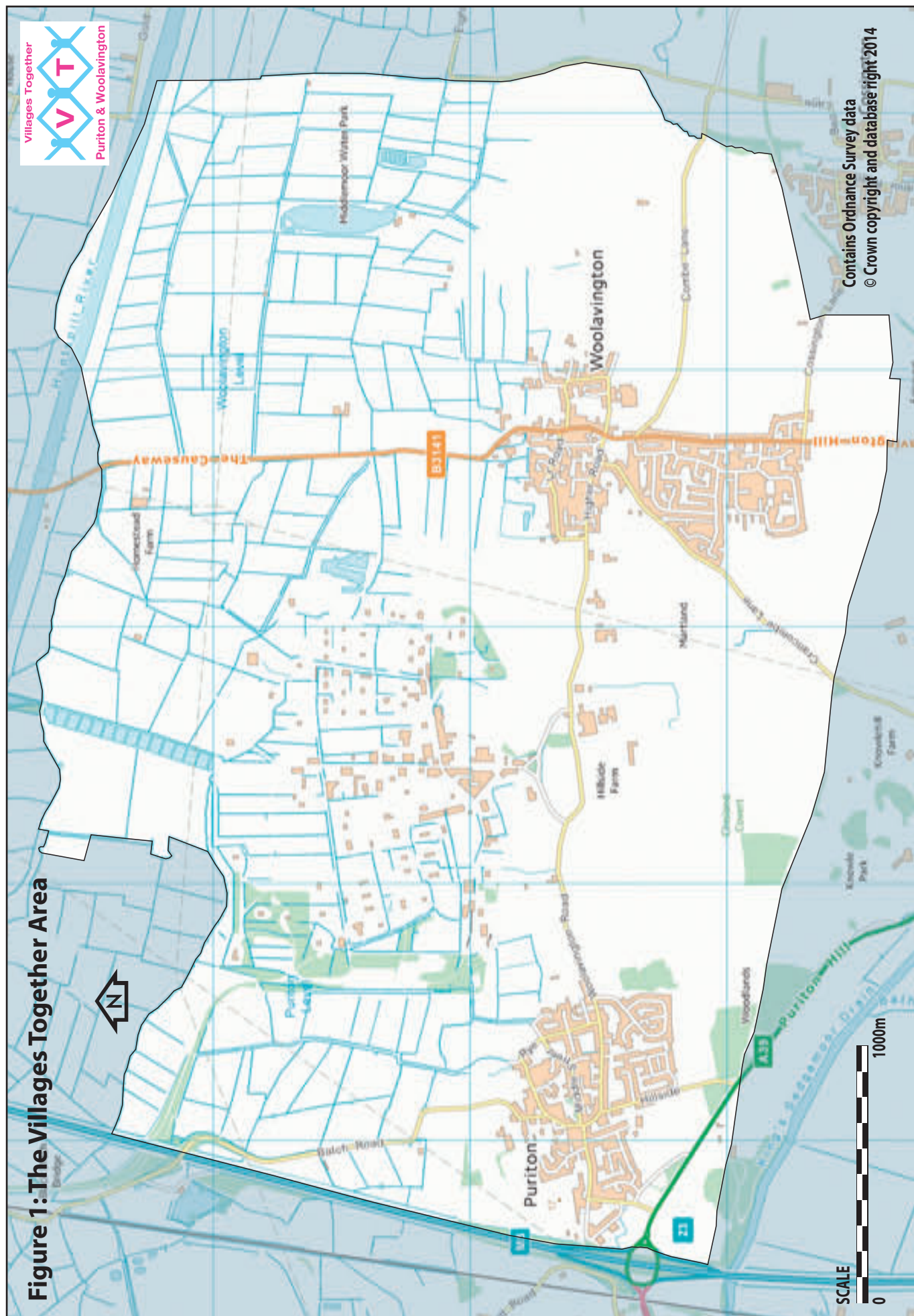
2 What is Villages Together?

Villages Together is the name we have chosen to work under for the Puriton and Woolavington Big Local Area. The name is less of a mouthful than using the names of both villages but it also symbolises what Big Local is about – both villages working together for our shared greater benefit.

Fortunately each Big Local area has had the help of a facilitator to guide and support us as we have developed our local programme of activity. We are grateful for all the help and advice our Big Local representative has given us while getting to this point and will continue to value his support as we progress our plan. This is what has been done so far:



Figure 1: The Villages Together Area



Contains Ordnance Survey data
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At the outset meetings were held with local groups and individuals in early 2013 to tell them about Big Local. This was followed in March by a notice sent to all households and posters being displayed in the shops. In April, three open meetings and drop in events were held – two in Woolavington and one in Puriton – when suggestions and ideas were recorded and we had a chance to say how we would like the area to be in 2023 as a result of Big Local.

Also in April there was an open invitation to form a local group to work on Big Local and following this the first meeting of the 'Interim Working Group' took place.

Further work with the two communities took place throughout the remainder of 2013 led by the Interim Working Group. This was supported, from the end of April, by a Community Organiser who conducted around 250 doorstep interviews asking residents what they loved about the area they lived in, their current concerns and their dream and visions for the future. They were also asked for project ideas.

In August 2013 Big Local approved a getting started grant of £20,000 and the Interim Working Group attended local events to spread the word about Big Local and flyers and questionnaires were circulated. The grant enabled the Working group to appoint two community workers in October 2013 to undertake more interviews and to liaise with residents and groups across the area. Their work carried on into 2014 ending in October. During this time they met with many individuals and nearly 80 local groups, organisations and businesses reaching around 1,000 people to explain Big Local and gather information,

Residents of both communities have been able to express their views. Through interviews, events and talking to the many organisations and clubs in the villages, we have reached over 1250 people to gather information for the plan.

ideas and opinions. The list of organisations is appended to this Plan (Appendix 3 on page 21).

In December 2013 a Small Grants Scheme was announced with an allocation of £5200 to support local projects and groups. This culminated in an awards event in May when 11 local organizations received grants of up to £500 each and two extra awards of £100 were given. The event was open to all residents and each could vote for awards to be made but the majority who attended came from Puriton. This affected the outcome to some degree and there was certainly a perception in Woolavington that the process was unfair. In fact it had been fully democratic but lessons were learnt and this method of making awards and providing funding will not be used again.

A Project Manager had been appointed in March 2014 and in April a new 'Steering Group' was formed to replace the Interim Working Group. The Steering group is composed of fourteen residents from both Puriton and Woolavington operating under the 'Villages Together' name. Our last public events were when we attended the Party in the Park and Woolavington Show in August to continue spreading the word about Big Local.

Meanwhile work had started on collating all the

information and views gathered in order to prepare a Big Local Plan. Unfortunately our Project Manager had to leave in September 2014 but new Project Managers started work in November 2014 to help us continue the work.

The next sections tell you all about how the work has progressed and what we found out.

3 What is the Big Local Plan?

This plan has been produced by and for the people of Puriton and Woolavington who together make up Villages Together. The 'We' in this Plan means the residents of the area and the Steering Group which has coordinated and led the work to produce the Big Local Plan.

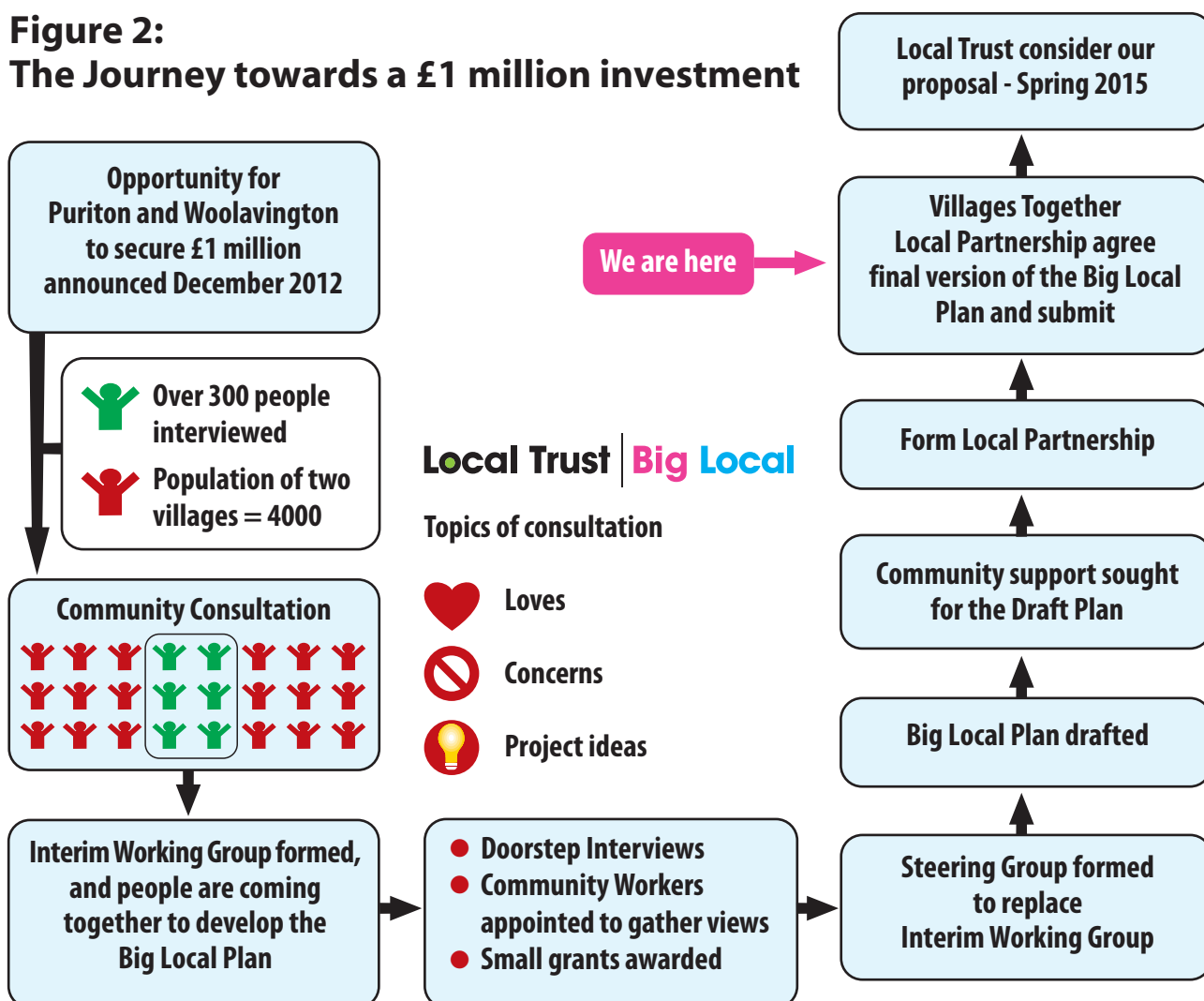
All the groundwork, which seemed to have taken a long time, was really important as all our concerns, needs and hopes had to be properly understood. This work has given us the facts necessary to develop this Big Local Plan for the Villages Together Area. This is a

plan that will lay the foundations to enable all of us, who live here over the next ten years, and beyond, to make our area an even better place to live. We believe it reflects the views of residents. Please read it, share your views and ideas with us but above all get involved.

The Plan's job is to put down in a single document what we believe needs to be done to improve things in the Villages Together area and to begin to set a framework for the work that will make a difference over the next ten years. We know that situations and needs will change over time so this cannot be a fixed blueprint laying out exactly how we will spend the lottery money. The Plan explains our priorities and sets out some projects that we believe will help meet them while also inviting people to come forward with ideas or suggestions for other projects. It also shows where we can influence individuals, businesses and organisations to help us achieve our aims for the area.

This is because we cannot do it alone – many other organisations have a major influence on what

**Figure 2:
The Journey towards a £1 million investment**



happens in the area. Sedgemoor District Council on Planning, Open Spaces and Street Scene; Somerset County Council on Schools, Social Services, Childrens Services and services to older people; BAE Systems and others on the future of the ROF site. These are examples, the full list is long and includes many local groups and organisations. But to transform the area we all need to be part of this journey – making our dreams a reality – so that all who live here, both now and in the future, can continue to enjoy living in Puriton and Woolavington and to experience real improvements in their quality of life.

4 Our Guiding Philosophy

Treating people equally across the whole Villages Together Area within three guiding principles: Sustainability, Capacity Building and Partnership Working

Local people have worked together to develop the shared vision, identify priorities and consider the actions that will help us achieve a better future for our community. The Big Local Programme sets out clearly a number of outcomes that it wishes each area to achieve. These are:

- Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- People will have increased skills and confidence so that they can continue to identify and respond to local needs in the future

- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live

Our Big Local Plan sets out broadly how we intend to achieve these outcomes in Puriton and Woolavington.

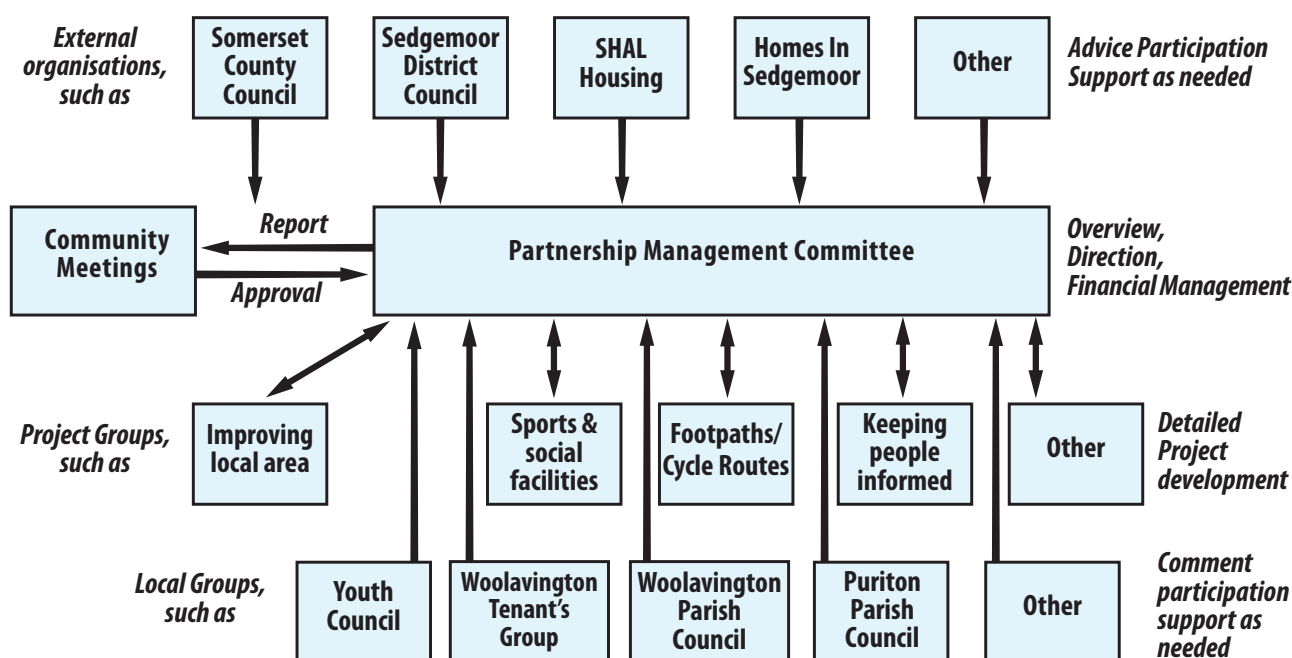
5 The Villages Together Partnership

The Steering Group was responsible for bringing together all the information gathered and getting the first draft of the Big Local Plan drawn up for consultation across the area. However the next stage is to submit the plan to the Local Trust for its approval. The money can then begin to be released and the work of delivering the plan begins. To do this and to develop a detailed work programme, a Villages Together Partnership is to be formed and will take over from the Steering Group. The way the partnership works is shown in the diagram below.

The majority of the Partnership members are local people but representatives of businesses and organisations with an interest in the area can also be involved. The Partnership will be responsible for future delivery and evolution of the Plan.

Although many of the members of the Steering Group may go on to join the Partnership much credit and grateful thanks must be given for all the work done by previous members of the Interim Working

Figure 3: Villages Together - Partnership Structure



Much has changed in the villages. These are brickyard workers at Puriton circa 1943.

Group and the Steering Group for all their efforts in making this Plan possible.

6 The Villages Together Area: A Brief Background History

Both villages owe their origins to farming and the fact that the Polden ridge offers a safe and flood free location for development. During the summer months the village farms had easy access to rich grazing on the levels to the north. There are Roman remains in the area and it seems certain there were settlements here at that time. The River Parrett close below the ridge would have been a trading link with areas further afield including Wales and Ireland and there is said to have been a pilgrimage route along the Polden ridge to Glastonbury. As close neighbours there would have been much interaction between the villages as they developed and there are several historic routes between them. Some of these have evolved into the current road network but the legacy of footpaths, bridleways and droves in the area show the importance of travel between the two settlements over many centuries.

Until the late 19th century very little changed in the



farming based villages except that with the advances in agriculture populations would have declined as people moved to the towns and cities for work. Local quarries were active over many centuries and the blue lias stone is the vernacular building material in the earlier parts of the villages. Quarrying and related cement making became important from the late 19th century but had come to an end by the 1960's and there was even a short period when rock salt was commercially extracted in the early 1900's.

Change accelerated in the 20th century with improvements in accessibility first by public transport and then by wider car ownership. As a result both villages changed considerably growing much larger than they had ever been in the past with the development of new housing. The new homes were largely provided for those who came to work at the Royal Ordnance Factory site (opened 1941) but were also attractive to those who could travel to work elsewhere. Now that the ROF site has closed, resident families have a much stronger dependence on jobs elsewhere as there are no significant employment opportunities in the villages. Tighter planning controls have increasingly limited further housing developments in recent decades.

Woolavington

Local authority houses were built in the village in the 1930s and the 1940s. Houses were pulled down opposite Dawbins to build new homes in the 1980s. In 1941 a large new housing estate was begun on the hillside south of the village to house workers at the Royal Ordnance Factory in Puriton. By October 1942, 177 pre-cast, concrete bungalows, described as temporary, had been built by the Ministry of Supply.

Two views of old Wooavington, showing Crossways and the former White Lion Inn, opposite the Church in the centre of the village around 1909.



For a long time it was a separate community with its own social centre and youth club. Between 1963 and 1966 the prefabricated houses were replaced by 228 local authority houses and bungalows. The space between that estate and the village was subsequently filled by private housing, and in the later 20th century more houses were built on orchards and other sites within the original village. It is evident that the southern part of Woolavington faces different challenges to the other parts of the village and Puriton and these are dealt with in the sections below.

Puriton

Increased employment at Dunball in the later 19th century gave rise to small units of terraced housing by 1881, both there and in Puriton village (Waterloo Terrace and Hillside). Local authority housing was introduced in 1927, the last added in 1965; over thirty dwellings were built between 1931 and 1947. Detached villas appeared in the 1930s, perhaps marking the beginning of the village as a dormitory for Bridgwater. From the 1960s a Coventry-based developer built several streets of standard housing both within and to the south of the village. Subsequently there have been a number of further housing developments on the periphery of the village and on smaller infill sites.

7 What we have learned about Puriton and Woolavington:

People

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) population figure of the two villages was 4,087 in 2013. Comparison between population data for the slightly larger ward area of Puriton and Woolavington at the 2001 and 2011 census shows a slight population decline of 100. This change is not dramatic and as household sizes have got smaller over recent decades (largely due to an ageing population) this trend is quite common and likely to continue where no significant development takes place.

During the 2001-2011 period the ward population has also become older with a significant reduction (c15%) in pre-school and school age children and a reduction in those of working age (25% reduction in 30 to 44 year olds) while those aged 60 and over has increased by over 32%. Such changes can have major implications in the longer term as the needs of the community will change correspondingly. These changes need to be monitored because maintaining a balanced community across all age groups is



important to the vitality of the area. It may mean that additional housing to attract particular types of families may become important, as might the need for adapted accommodation for older people enabling them to move on to more appropriate housing whilst staying in their village. Despite the changes school numbers have increased suggesting that local schools are able to attract pupils from a wider area.

Interestingly over the 2001-2011 period residents have become better qualified, more people have paid off their mortgages and around 80% of residents live in a home they own outright or on which they have a mortgage. That means around 20% live in rented accommodation, mostly Homes in Sedgemoor or SHAL, but with around 5% privately renting. Car ownership levels have increased but around 12% of households do not have access to a car.

Woolavington

Other than smaller infill schemes and redevelopments Woolavington has developed in three major phases. The older village around the main road from Puriton and the junction with the B3141, the southern part, which started as the wartime housing for the ROF workers, and the area in between which was filled in with housing in the 1970's and 80's.



Most of the rented properties are in the southern part of Woolavington. In this development there were originally 228 council rented homes but with changes in housing management 128 are now managed by Homes in Sedgemoor and 54 by SHAL. 46 have been sold to private owners. Additional rented housing has been provided in both villages in recent years but these are smaller developments that are more integrated with other homes in the villages.

The statistics and residents comments show that this part of Woolavington and the people living there face particular difficulties and some residents feel isolated from the rest of the village. The green spaces are rather bare and often damaged by vehicles; community facilities provided as part of the development have problems with their poor quality and use and there are underlying challenges faced by residents. We feel there has been limited investment in the area and housing stock over many years and that the current issues need to be given serious attention by the relevant agencies including the owners of the housing stock.

It must be acknowledged that this is the part of the Villages Together area that has the greatest need for action on many fronts. Despite this it is most important not to give a bleak picture. Woolavington is a vibrant and friendly community working hard to overcome the issues it faces. In doing so southern Woolavington deserves support, which Villages Together can provide, and this can only have wider benefits for Woolavington as a whole.

To illustrate some of the issues: In contrast to the

rest of the Villages Together area, the most needy part of Woolavington has a much higher proportion of older people (nearly 50% of tenants are over 60); a much higher proportion of people declaring one or more disabilities; a larger proportion of single person households (around 40% compared to 27% for the Ward area) and there are issues of fuel poverty because of a dependence on oil or electric heating in the homes. These and a number of other indicators demonstrate that there is a clear case for special help. This is currently recognised by the housing providers, SHAL and Homes in Sedgemoor who are working harder with tenants to overcome any negative aspects of the estate. Most of the physical and environmental issues have been documented and a Neighbourhood Agreement has been drawn up between the tenants and the various agencies that have a stake in the area. We want to see significant progress made on improving this part of Woolavington as soon as possible. We will ensure Villages Together acts on the residents' behalf by working with them to monitor the actions of the relevant organisations so that they deliver their obligations.

What You Told Us

We asked you what you loved about the area, your concerns, your dreams and visions for the future and any project ideas. Set out below is the top six choices in each category. This is not the whole list by far and there were many additional views and ideas that would also lead to significant local benefits. These have been taken account of in preparing this plan and will be kept in mind as work on delivering the plan continues into the future. However those



set out below are a good place to start as the work needs to take account of what is most important to most people and any projects need to focus on what will benefit most people's lives. As might be expected some people's wishes are contradictory – most significantly in relation to growth of the villages. These issues will have to be confronted during the life of this plan if development proposals come forward. We will campaign for changes to fit in as far as possible with resident's wishes and to get the best outcomes where development does take place.

Your Loves

- Rural location, the countryside
- It is a friendly place
- Good communications, close to motorway
- It is quiet
- Strong sense of community
- Good atmosphere and feel

Your Main Concerns

- Village will get too big, development
- Too much traffic, heavy traffic and speeding
- Not enough activities for younger people
- The impact of the new road to the ROF site
- Negative impacts of the development of the ROF site
- Loss of greenfields and countryside

Your Dreams and Visions

- More things for young people
- A new Community Centre / hub for the community
- The village stays the same

- The village will grow
- Village/community bus
- The Village does not get too big

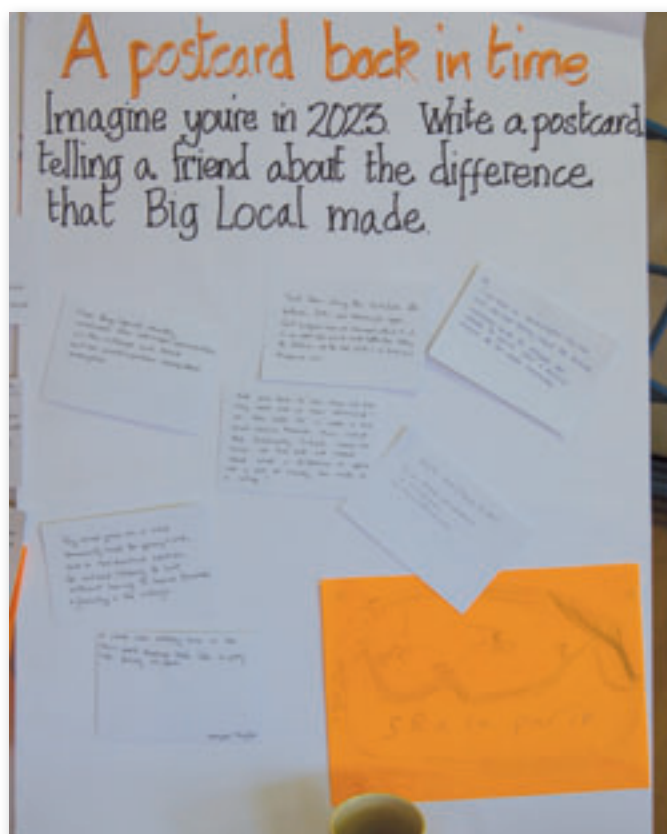
Project Ideas

- Children's and youth activities and facilities
- More/improved facilities overall
- Upgrade play areas and parks
- Footpath between the villages
- New Community centre or hub/drop in centre
- Better transport/Community transport

What Next?

We need to understand that some ideas put forward cannot be delivered or assisted financially by Big Local. This is mainly where a public or other body has a statutory responsibility for the provision or maintenance of something. There will be several other examples and this needs to be borne in mind to avoid disappointment. However as we detail below we must use Villages Together to influence other organisations in their plans and spending where they are beyond the remit of financial input through Big Local.

The Steering Group considered everything residents had said in the consultations and, based on this, have put together a vision for the future of the Villages Together area that the Plan seeks to achieve.



Our Villages Together Vision

8 Our Villages Together Vision

Our vision is that Puriton and Woolavington will become two thriving Polden villages where people are happy to live in an environment that meets the needs of everyone, from newborn babies to the oldest residents.

At a time of reduced public spending and higher need, our villages are working together to maximise the benefit that £1million can bring to residents in Woolavington and Puriton.

We recognise the different needs of both villages, reflecting their histories, their rates of development and their infrastructure and facilities.

However, by working together we can share community spirit, expertise and good ideas, and by sharing we can spread the benefit of £1million across both villages.

The Future

Our Villages Together community will be proud of its heritage and environment, one that breeds mutual respect and harmony among all of its residents.

Puriton and Woolavington will be highly attractive places to live and work with mixed affordable housing set in a rural context with landscaped industry not industrial landscapes, and we will work with our local councils to achieve this.

We will recognise the need for high quality

meeting places in both villages for all sectors of the community, offering social and recreational opportunities and the chance to share learning and encourage local talent.

We will have excellent communication between the villages and within each village to ensure that all members of the community know what their villages offer and how to access facilities and opportunities.

Our community will offer young people support, recreational activities and an environment that enables them to fulfil their potential.

All residents, especially young people, will be encouraged to become active in organising social and environmental improvements.

The villages will work together to influence the provision of public transport and support community transport schemes.

We will work with local businesses and employers to sustain local services and support the provision of training and employment opportunities.

Residents will be encouraged to work together and with outside agencies to help those in our community who suffer from poverty and lack social inclusion.

We will work towards creating access to support for families and individuals, to support their needs within their community. Inter-generational support and activities will be encouraged.



9 Finance

Big Local is providing us with £1 million pounds. This has to be spent within certain rules but subject to them the decisions on when and where are our own. However, we think it would be unwise to spend it all in one big rush and then find we had missed our targets. Far better to be careful with this major asset and use it thoughtfully over the period available to make lasting improvements. This is the approach adopted by all Big Local areas to date. Some may say why not spend it all on a few big items we have identified – well it is our money, promised to us

and what we do not use is invested by Local Trust and will gain in value. So we cannot lose. Also, in the real world, £1 million does not go far when considering new buildings such as a new community centre. We need to be extremely careful to get the best value and results from the Big Local money.

The Villages Together Partnership backed by Big Local funding and with a Big Local Plan in place should put us in a favourable position when competing for additional funding through grants and in influencing the spending of other organisations and businesses.



Villages Together Proposals

10 Our Big Local Plan Proposals

The consultation results have given us plenty to think about but certain issues have 'risen to the surface' and we hope we have dealt with these in our Vision set out above.

In considering our approach to the plan we noticed that there were several areas of action where we could meet a number of our important aims. Communication - Access and Travel is one area and as an example a safer and easy walking and cycling route between the villages would improve access to existing facilities, services and our friends but would also benefit young people in terms of things to do and also promote healthy activity for all. It would also be a big step to making the Villages Together a more physical reality for everyone and strengthen our image and sense of community. So here we set out our key themes that arise from our Vision and explain a bit about them. Inevitably there is some overlap between these themes as they are complementary and work together to achieve our vision. The themes are then further developed by illustration with project areas and possible projects on a series of tables.

We then set out a notional budget for the first three years of the Plan programme.

Key Themes

Pride in our Villages

It may seem hard to say what this theme might mean in practice but here goes: We like where we live

and hope you do too. Being proud of where you live is all part of sharing community life and contributes to a cared for and caring place to live. We want to show that by improving the image of Puriton and Woolavington and making sure we can continue to maintain pride in our villages over the coming years. If we all – individuals and organizations – had Pride in Our Villages in mind whenever anything is done maybe we would see improved results. Perhaps we would see more people coming forward to contribute to community projects and maybe more positive reports in the media about people from the villages and what they have achieved and about the villages themselves. The more positive we can be about the villages and what we want to achieve the better our chances of influencing others and maybe securing additional resources.

The consultation responses showed that living here is something people value. So let's 'blow our trumpet' a bit louder and let everything we do reflect the pride we have in where we live. We might do that through better media contacts and through our website. Maybe really attractive 'welcome to our village signs' would improve entrances to the villages and show anyone visiting that they have come to a special place. But most of all 'Pride in our Villages' should be behind all of our actions set out in the following sections and will come from our achievements. The more we achieve the better we feel.

Keeping our Area Attractive

How our villages look is important to us all. At the most basic level it maintains property values for



homeowners but it is also good for our quality of life – an attractive place is simply a better place to be. We enjoy living in our villages - the 'feel' of a small community and the rural location surrounded by fields, trees and hedges – and we want to keep it that way and, where possible, make it even better.

This is a theme where there are lots of ideas for improvements and improving the landscape around our homes comes out top. Ideas include: planting more trees in the villages; making the entrances to the villages more attractive; tidying hedges and verges; maintenance and planting of green areas; protection of green areas from traffic damage; encouraging responsible dog ownership to minimize fouling; improving the condition and appearance of rights of way – footpaths and bridleways.

Support for All

Older people and younger people in our community face problems with access to facilities, having suitable activities to engage them and, in some degree, both face some forms of exclusion. The specific needs of each group to overcome these problems may be very different however. We want to ensure that all in our community who need support, and this might include families and single people of all ages, get access to the help they need. Their needs will be very varied. They may be ongoing and be met by an outside agency where our role is limited, or they may be a complete one-off requirement where we might have some influence and can assist. We will need to be alert to the forms of support people have identified and where we can have a role, either directly or indirectly through information, advice or influence.

There seems to be a need to improve support networks – both official (health and social services) and unofficial (friends and neighbours) – as a way to better understand people's needs and either to provide the help needed or to show where it can be obtained. This might be achieved through an informal local advice service with training provided for volunteers. For younger people this could perhaps be an extended role of the Youth Clubs. For older people

There are many keen gardeners in the area. Not everyone can achieve results like these but we think it would be wonderful to make our villages even more attractive.

better use might be made of the Somerset Village Agent (a scheme run by the Community Council for Somerset) allocated to the villages. They help maintain people's ability to live independently by providing advice to older people on getting the help they need. Other ideas include; promotion of family events and activities; giving younger people a voice through a Youth Council; helping older people to get the Sedgemoor Lifeline service.

Quality Meeting Places

Meeting places are at the heart of community life. We need places where we can run events, where local organizations can hold meetings, to enjoy cultural and sporting activities and simply to socialise – to meet and be with friends and neighbours. Meeting places can be buildings but are also public open areas and sports fields. We have a number of established meeting places, which already host a wide range of activities. The question is, do these meet our needs now and in the future? We have identified the following as important meeting places in the Villages Together area:

- Woolavington Village Hall
- Playground and open space at Village Hall
- Woolavington Meeting Room
- Woolavington Playing Fields
- St Mary's Church, Woolavington
- Prince of Wales public house
- Puriton Village Hall
- Open space and playground adjacent to Village Hall
- Puriton Sports Centre and playing fields
- St Michael and All Angels Church, Puriton
- Puriton Church Hall (The Clist Hall)
- 37 Club

The schools are also important meeting places,



particularly for children, and for adults at drop off and collection times and for school events and parents evenings.

These places are all available at present so one option would be to leave well alone but in your responses issues were raised about the quality of some facilities and limitations in their usability. So we want to take a closer look at all our meeting places to see what steps – if any – could be taken to make them work better. However, it is important to recognise that many of these places depend on volunteers for their day-to-day running and any plans for the future would have to involve the relevant groups.

Some have asked for a new all purpose social and sports centre to serve both villages but this would be a huge project and may not be the best way forward even if it were affordable. We cannot rule out such an option but having facilities spread around the villages certainly improves local access. However, it also spreads resources – both financial and voluntary – more thinly. Maintaining the right sort of facilities for the future of our villages is a difficult subject and will need further work before any firm proposals can be made.

We propose a review of our social and sporting facilities that should come up with recommendations about their future. This will have to be done realistically having a clear view on what resources may be available but the main objective will be to make sure that we have the facilities we deserve in future years and that these can be protected, that they are financially sustainable and can be progressively improved to meet peoples needs. It will need to look at how the facilities are managed, who uses them, do they meet local needs, what, if any, changes or improvements can be made and it should look at the option of a completely new centre. A detailed brief for the work will be needed but we feel this is such an important topic it does need this level of attention so

that coordinated and effective action can be taken.

We have taken note of the many detailed ideas that have been put forward. These include: the need for a youth shelter(s); a community café/tea room; fighting the possible loss of the Prince of Wales pub in Woolavington and making the playing field and pavilion at Woolavington fit for use.

Communication – Access and Travel

Travel, both locally and further afield, has become very important as our journey networks for jobs, services, shopping destinations and family and friendship circles have got progressively wider. Cars perform a major role and for many journeys they can be essential. At the same time they can be a nuisance, causing visual and environmental problems, congestion and safety issues. Some choose to use a motorcycle or scooter, which have less impact but still can contribute to a significant concern – unwanted traffic.

Locally we rely more on walking and some cycle. For those without a car those options, the bus or a taxi are the only choices. This particularly applies to younger people and the elderly or disabled who may not be able to drive and of course there are those who choose not to have a car.

Improving choices of transport, especially for those with more limited options is one of our aims. We would like to protect and if possible improve bus services, after all, an increasing number of people in the villages are becoming eligible for concessionary travel. We also see a role for a community transport service of some form, which could be a minibus or voluntary driver scheme or an extension to an existing service elsewhere in Somerset. This is a project we would like to see developed.





The network of public footpaths and bridleways in the area is limited but improving them and promoting their use will help access in some places and provide an opportunity for leisure and promote fitness. Woolavington is slightly more difficult to move around on foot and by car because the main road access points come off of the B3141. We would like to make this easier and make the village feel more 'connected' if possible. Where necessary the pedestrian paths through the village could be improved and it might be possible to create safe cycle routes. It is most unlikely that the road network could be changed.

Links between the villages are important and there are existing rights of way which could be improved. The bridleway route following the ridge between the south edge of Woolavington and the A39 near Puriton could be improved. The connection into Puriton could be further improved as part of the proposed new link road into the ROF site from the A39. The Development Brief for the ROF site provides for the creation of a new footpath/cycleway link between the villages along the southern boundary of the site. We see this as a major benefit to the development of the site and

There are a number of bus services through the villages. We want to investigate the potential for a community transport scheme and, if needed, how we might provide it

connections between the villages.

We also need to maintain a close watch on proposals for the ROF site in order to achieve improved access onto the A39, which can cause problems at peak times for residents. At the same time we must make sure that the proposals and the new link road do not increase unwanted traffic into our villages. This might require particular traffic management measures and traffic controls to discourage 'rat runs'. The road proposals should be funded as part of the development and be implemented under the guidance of the Highway Authority. We expect that full consultation on any detailed proposals will take place with the Villages Together Partnership and the two Parish Councils.

Communication, Information and Influence

We need to improve our influence on other agencies that affect our lives so that they can help us deliver this plan and achieve our aims for a better life for everyone. We need them to work with us rather than despite us or even against our better interests. As yet we do not have a strong image as Villages Together. We need to make the most of our image and the strength of our voice for the community should be widely heard and respected.

Communication also needs to improve within the

The Bridleway running between the B3141 at Woolavington and the top of Hillside, Puriton, could become a cycle route.





Villages Together area so that we can all participate in shaping our future. Our voice will be stronger if we join together more often; making the most of our shared events and in so doing we strengthen our sense of community – of being an active part of the place we live.

Making our Villages Together Partnership more inclusive and ensuring all involved are given the training and help and support they might need to play

The junctions from the villages with the A39 can be a problem at peak times. With the potential for a new road to serve development at the ROF site it is hoped that improvements can be made and that the impact of unwanted traffic in the villages can be reduced.

an active role in community projects and activities is part of this and we refer to this further below. We also want to ensure information is easily accessible and spread to all with a stake in the community. We want to make better use of our Villages Together web site and that will mean upgrading it. Other suggestions include the creation of a Big Local or Villages Together Hub – which might take the form of a community run Internet Café. We can also make use of existing local news sheets and magazines and there may be scope for an occasional Villages Together Newspaper.

We want organisations that work in our area to involve us in their decisions and take account of our views – we want our views to be well informed by the wider community so that they can have a valuable impact and make those decisions better for all.

Community Involvement

The whole point of Big Local and Villages Together is community development. Giving people at the grass roots the ability to change the places they live for the better. That means we all, in one way or another, ought to be involved and it is the case that the more we put in the more we get out of the process. Not everyone can get involved to the same degree and we all have different skills, abilities and amounts of time but this is a great opportunity. Please bear in mind that if you are not part of the process then it is not fair to complain about those that





The Villages Together web site is an important way for people to get news and information as well as submitting their views. We want to improve it and make sure it is kept up to date.

views and ideas about a project or issue.

Business and Services

Not many people raised this topic during the consultations but it is an important part of our vision for the future. We need working people in our village and some provide essential services from builders and plumbers to child carers and hairdressers. A successful local economy with good levels of employment is an important asset and we also need our younger people to be able to get jobs when they finish education – not necessarily within the villages but hopefully in the local area so they can stay here if they wish.

Our shops and the two pubs are also assets, they help make a thriving community and we want to keep them. However the closure of Jessops store and the recent consent for alterations allowing for a change of use to a supermarket at the Prince of Wales in Woolavington is a great disappointment.

We have a significant number of self-employed people and a range of small businesses including the shops and pubs. There are no significant industrial or commercial areas aside from the former ROF site, which is largely redundant land at present, but if plans come to fruition will be a thriving Green Energy Park with a wide range of new businesses. This development should be a major benefit to our villages if any negative impacts, for example unwanted traffic,

have done their best to make a difference. We also believe that we can achieve much more in the longer term with the fullest possible involvement of the community.

We will continue to spread the word about Villages Together more widely and encourage even more people to get involved, at whatever level they can, in achieving our aims. That could be as simple as putting more flowers in a garden or planting bulbs in the verges. It could mean joining a group to help manage an important local facility, becoming more active on one of the Parish Councils or becoming more involved in a tenants management group. Or it might simply mean responding to consultation or sending in your

We want as many people as possible to be involved in Villages Together with both communities equally represented. There are opportunities to join the new Partnership or to offer support in many other ways





Our shops and pubs are important local services which we want to support and protect. Sadly, in Woolavington, Jessops is now closed and to let and the Prince of Wales pub is under threat

are avoided. We want the developers, the planning authority and highway authority as well as the future occupiers to take account of what we can offer and what we expect from the development.

This should mean jobs for local people and we can offer a pool of local workers with a range of skills. We want to see work for local contractors during construction and established jobs at the new companies into the long term. We must work to ensure that arrangements will be made for local tendering and recruitment, that apprenticeships will be offered where possible for younger people and that links with Bridgwater College and other training providers are made to provide appropriate training for jobs or training on the job.

We cannot support businesses financially but we would like to investigate the potential to set up a small business development loan scheme and there may also be scope to promote community business ventures where essential needs are identified, a local group has organised to run the business and there is a

clear business plan. We also have a role campaigning to maintain local services – for example to retain the Prince of Wales pub in Woolavington.

Building Capacity

How can a group of volunteers deliver a long list of potential projects while still managing to have a life of their own? The old adage of many hands making lighter work is very true and the intention is that participation in projects by a wider group of people, perhaps with specific skills or interests will increase the capacity of our community to achieve more. However, our experience with our Community Workers and having the benefit of a Project Manager to help us at certain stages of the Villages Together process has shown that having someone paid to undertake parts of the work will enable things to progress much more quickly, will bring in additional skills and will enable the Partnership to be more effective.

That is not to say we will be reliant on paid help. A major outcome of this process is to give the community the skills, confidence and desire to think and act for itself. And throughout we will remain in charge of the process, making the decisions and directing the work. Some people will want to gain new skills to help them get involved so we should provide training where it can make a difference, we will also



The development of the former ROF site will be a major investment in the villages. However we must be alert to any potential problems and ensure we monitor progress to ensure we achieve maximum benefit

need to facilitate meetings and sub groups working on specific projects or themes. We will also need to be aware of and seek to use additional sources of finance to further our objectives, including the substantial community funding for the area arising from the Hinkley Point power station development.

Our Action Programme

The Key Themes can also be seen as outcomes or goals. The table (Appendix 1 on page 19) sets out each Key Theme alongside which are listed the action areas relevant to that theme which give

some indication of the work we intend to do. Action areas are not unique to each theme as they will be relevant to more than one. On the right hand side of the table are some of the related projects or specific tasks that arise. Many of these require further work but we believe it is important that we include some 'quick wins' with projects that we can get off the ground quickly - these are projects which we are sure will have an immediate and lasting benefit and will not compromise any of our longer-term aims. These 'quick wins' are targeted at both villages unless otherwise stated, and are marked in Appendix 1 with an asterisk*.

This is our starting point. The Themes may evolve as time passes to reflect changing priorities. The Action Areas and Projects certainly will as some are completed and new ones are added.



Appendix 1: Villages Together Key Themes

Theme or Outcome	Action Areas	Project Areas
'Pride in Our Villages'	<p>Many of our actions and projects will contribute to this theme.</p> <p>Overall we want people to identify with Villages Together and their own village - Puriton or Woolavington - and to be involved in making the future better for themselves and everyone else in whatever way they can manage.</p> <p>Our Village Shows and activities demonstrate the pride we have and simple projects like a big clear up or community bulb planting scheme can all contribute. But basically this is an individual response we want to stimulate through Villages Together.</p>	<p>Promoting our image and maintaining progress on the Plan.</p> <p>Almost all of the projects set out below will benefit this theme.</p>
Maintaining the Villages and their surroundings as attractive places	<p>Being actively involved in Development Planning through our Local Councils to improve outcomes.</p> <p>Village and Rural Landscaping schemes</p> <p>Village Plans and/or Design Guides</p> <p>Conservation projects</p> <p>Environmental improvement schemes</p> <p>Working with Parish, District and County Councils to secure village improvements through their work.</p> <p>Working with Housing Providers (SHAL and HIS) on their housing areas</p> <p>Individual encouragement</p>	<p>Tree Planting Fund*</p> <p>Bulb and Flower planting project*</p> <p>Village Entrance Project*</p> <p>Support production of Woolavington Design Guide/Village Plan</p> <p>Greenspace Landscaping Plans</p> <p>Traffic Management</p> <p>Establishing links with relevant Council departments</p> <p>Seeking involvement of relevant agencies – councils and housing providers - in Villages Together Partnership</p> <p>Supporting an Estate Action Group with Tenants at Woolavington</p> <p>Best Garden awards for each village (classes to suit all homes)</p>
Support For All	<p>Places to go</p> <p>Things to do</p> <p>Advice and Help</p> <p>Opportunities to Socialise</p> <p>Support mechanisms and information</p> <p>Link with 'Village Agent' Scheme</p> <p>Improvement of Woolavington Estate</p>	<p>Youth Shelter (see below)*</p> <p>Secure Additional funds for Youth Clubs</p> <p>Investigate potential for a younger children's club</p> <p>Summer/Holiday Activity Schemes</p> <p>Investigate potential to support access to 'Sedgemoor Lifeline'</p> <p>Develop Woolavington Estate Action Team</p>
Quality Meeting Places	<p>Maintaining and Improving our current facilities</p> <p>Active Lifestyles</p> <p>Social Development</p> <p>Leisure and recreation</p>	<p>Youth Shelter at Woolavington playing field with improved access and lighting*</p> <p>Make Woolavington playing field more useable</p> <p>Review of Social and Sports Facilities for the two villages to recommend future development and funding options</p>
Better Communications - Access and Travel	<p>Investigating the potential for a Community Transport Scheme in some form</p> <p>Community Connections – making sure we get the best decisions on bus services and highways works including the ROF Link Road and access onto A39</p> <p>Assessing where improvements to local pedestrian routes are needed</p>	<p>Promote cycling and walking route/s between the villages</p> <p>Longer term ensure that the proposed link via ROF is achieved</p> <p>Improving footpaths and footways that link between housing areas and local services</p> <p>Better signposting where needed</p>

Theme or Outcome	Action Areas	Project Areas
Better Communication, Information and Influence	Informing people Education Training and Development Publicity Making connections	Developing the Villages Together 'Brand' Gaining regular coverage - Local press, radio etc. Newspaper/Web Site etc*
Wider Community Involvement	Local Events promotion Contact/social networks New opportunities for local people to be involved Leadership	Support Current Annual Events Villager of the Year Awards for their contribution to each village* See also under Building Capacity below
Thriving Local Business and Services	Jobs and Training Maintaining Access to Services Reducing the need to travel Community cohesion Community business development	Projects to evolve after further work
Building Capacity in the Community	Community Work Expanding Participation Plan implementation and project development	Employing a Community Action Worker to support the Partnership on a day to day basis* Training and development sessions, as required, for those wishing to organise local events or run a project* Funding for events and activities that will broaden skills in community action and increase participation*

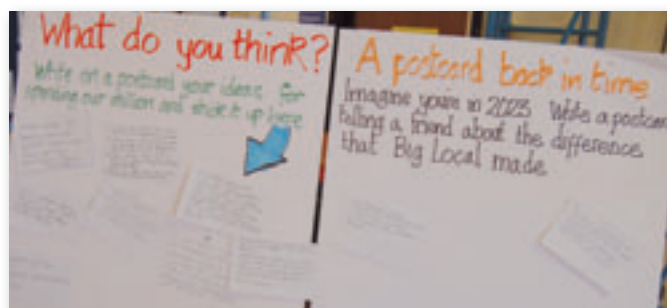
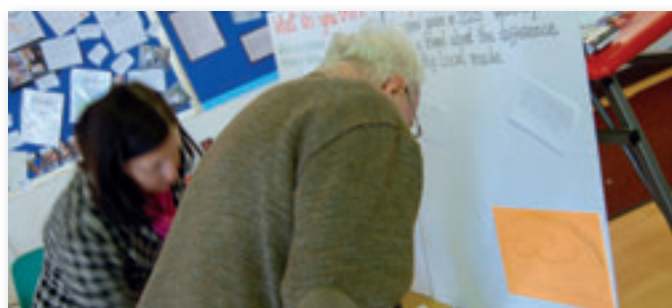


Appendix 2: Villages Together Big Local Plan Budget

Project Heading	Budget Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Partnership support: Community Action Worker including on costs and administration	Up to £25000	Up to £20000	Up to £15000
<i>These are interim sums for support to cover any needs that may arise. We believe that in order to make rapid progress additional time, effort and skills will be required beyond that which can be provided solely by the Partnership members and volunteers.</i>			
Web Site Upgrade/Social Media, including hosting and maintenance	£250	£250	£250
<i>These figures are primarily for hosting and limited support based on the website being created by voluntary effort at this stage</i>			
Tree Planting Project	£1000	£500	£500
Flower and Bulb Planting Project	£100	£100	£100
Village Entrance Improvements and initial maintenance	£5000	£100	£100
Woolavington Youth Shelter	£15000	£500	£500
Woolavington Estate Project: Set up and action fund	£1500	Subject to approval of project bids	Subject to approval of project bids
Youth Projects fund / Youth Clubs/ holiday play schemes/ Detached Youth Worker	£10000	£10000	£10000
Social Activities fund for older residents	£5000	£5000	£5000
Evaluate need for Community Access Scheme (Minibus/car/taxi/village wheels)	Unknown at this stage	Unknown at this stage	Unknown at this stage
Bridleway/Cycleway and Footpath Improvements	nil	£5000	£5000
Community and Sports Facilities Assessment, including Puriton Sports Centre and Woolavington Playing Field and Pavilion	£30000	-	-
Projects arising from the Facilities Assessment	Not known at this stage	Not known at this stage	Not known at this stage
TOTAL	£91350	£41450	£36450

Unless otherwise stated these projects are for action and activities in both villages

NB: These figures are estimates at this stage and will vary in practice as detailed costs are finally calculated and projects are agreed for implementation. We anticipate that the annual spend will average out at £100,000.



Appendix 3: Clubs & Groups in Puriton & Woolavington that were approached during consultation by the Community Workers

Venue:	PC	Puriton Church	PCR	Puriton Church Room	PSC	Puriton Sports Centre
	PVH	Puriton Village Hall	WC	Woolavington Church		
	WCC	Woolavington Community Centre				
	WVH	Woolavington Village Hall				

Numbers refer to the number of members of that group or organisation spoken to. Some additional local organisations and businesses that were not contacted have also been included in this Appendix)

Club/Group/ Event Name	Day/Time	Venue	Approximate Numbers	Comments
Zumba	Tues 9.30am - 10.30am	WVH	12	-
Stay & Play	Tues 1.45pm - 3.00pm	PVH	15	Run by the Children's centre
Coffee Stop	Tues 10.30am - 12 noon	PCR	26	-
Social Arts & Crafts	Alternate Tues 2.00pm - 4.00pm	PCR	26	Predominantly same people as coffee stop
Art Group	Tues 9.45am - 3.00pm	WVH	8	-
Over 60s	Alternate Thur 2.30pm - 4.30pm	PVH	28	-
Patchwork & Quilting	Last Thur in month 10.00am - 4.00pm	PCR	12	-
Puriton Sunday School	1st Sunday of the month	PCR	5	-
Whist	Alternate Thur, 2.00pm - 4.30pm	PSC	1	Information passed through group leader
Cardiac Rehab	Thur 10.00am - 11.00am	WVH	12	-
Coffee Morning	Thur 10.00am - 12 noon	WCC	20	-
Craft	Thur 10.15am - 12.30pm	WVH	8	Very few residents in this group
U3A Bridge	Thur 10.15am - 12.15pm	WVH	15	-
Youth Group (SRYP)	Mon 6.00pm - 7.30pm	PSC	3	Info given through Group Leaders
Flare	Wed 4.00pm - 6.00pm	WVH	34	-
Line Dancing	Mondays	PSC	0	No contact made
Bingo	Mon 7.00pm	PVH	1	Info passed through group leader
Over 50s exercise	Mon 8.55am - 9.55am	WVH	16	-
Woolavington Toddlers	Mon 10.00am - 12 noon	WVH	10	-
Fitsteps	Fri 9.30am - 10.30am	WVH	8	-
Archery	Tues 7.00pm - 9.00pm	PSC	1	Info passed through group leader.
Ballroom Dancing	Tues 7.00pm - 9.00pm	PVH	1	Info passed through group leader.
Rainbows	Tues 5.00pm - 6.00pm	PVH	2	Info passed through group leaders.
Brownies / Guides	Tues 6.00pm - 7.30pm	PVH	2	Info passed through group leaders, same as Rainbows.
Patchwork & Quilting	Tues 7.30pm - 9.30pm	PCR	8	-
Bell Ringing	Tues 7.30pm	PC	1	Info passed through Vicar
Puriton WI	First Tues in month 7.30pm	PVH	1	Info passed through group leader
Church Guild	4th Tues in month 2.15pm	WVH	3	-
Scottish Dancing	2nd & 4th Tue in month 7.30pm	WVH	-	8

Club/Group/ Event Name	Day/Time	Venue	Approximate Numbers	Comments
Woolavington WI	3rd Tues in month, 7.30pm	WVH	0	-
Coastal Archers	Weds 7.00pm -9.00pm	PSC	0	-
Junior Karate	Wed 6.00pm -7.00pm	PSC	1	Info passed through group leader
Zumba Gold	Wed 6.00pm -7.00pm	PSC	0	-
T'ai Chi	Wed 7.00pm	PVH	0	-
Bingo for over 60s	Wed 2.30pm	WCC	20	-
Choir	Wed 6.45pm	WC	0	-
Church Café	Wed 10.30am	WC	12	-
Chilton Polden Cricket Club	-	PSC	2	Info passed through group leaders
Woolavington Friendship Club	Wed 7.00pm	WVH	14	-
Puriton Boxing Club	Thur	PSC	0	-
Ballroom Dancing	Thur	PSC	1	Info passed through group leader
Kickboxing	Thur 5.30pm - 6.30pm	WVH	12	-
Sequence Dancing	1st, 3rd and 4th Fri 8.00pm - 10.00pm	PVH	1	Info passed through group leader
Bell Ringing	Fri 7.30pm	WC	1	Info passed through group leader
Bingo for all ages	Fri 7.30pm	WCC	0	-
Quilling	1st Fri in month 7.30pm	WVH	0	-
Job Club	Fri 10.00am - 12.30pm	WVH	17	-
The Children's Centre	Tue, Wed, Fri 9.00am - 12.30pm	W	8	-
Sunshine Pre-School	Mon-Fri 9.30-1.15pm	PVH	6	-
Puriton Players	Thu 6.30-8.30pm	PVH	8	-
Woolavington Church	-	-	2	Info passed through group leaders/Rev
Puriton Parish Council	2nd Tue in month	PVH	9	-
Woolavington Parish Council	Every 6 weeks	WVH	33	-
37 Club	-	-	2	-
Puriton Primary School	-	-	150	-
Woolavington Pri- mary School	-	-	14	-
The Cutting Room	-	-	1	-
Court Farm Butchers	-	-	2	-
The Corner Stores	-	-	0	-
The Puriton Inn	-	-	0	-
Jamie Stevens Hairdressers	-	-	4	-
GP Surgery	-	-	0	-
Puriton Post Office	-	-	1	-

Club/Group/ Event Name	Day/Time	Venue	Approximate Numbers	Comments
Woolavington Post Office	-	-	3	-
Woolavington Village Hall	-	-	20	-
Puriton Village Hall	-	-	14	-
Hunny Bears Day Nursery	Mon - Fri 7.30am - 6.00pm	P	-	Not consulted
Woolavington Pavillion	-	-	5	-
Woolavington Neigh- bourhood Watch	2nd Weds of the month, 10.30am	WC	0	Not consulted
Community Centre	-	-	50	Woolavington Neighbourhood agreement meetings
The Prince of Wales	-	-	3	-
Co-Op	-	-	3	-
Jessops (now closed)	-	-	2	-
Church	-	Woolav- ington	2	-
Church	-	Puriton	2	-
Flower Show Society	-	-	2	-
Allotment Associations	-	Woolav- ington	2	-
Allotment Associations	-	Puriton	4	-
Sports Centre	-	-	2	-
Individuals/Couples	-	Woolav- ington	75	-
Individuals/Couples	-	Puriton	40	-
Groups	-	Woolav- ington	3	School parents
Groups	-	Puriton	62	-
Party in the Park	-	PVH	Public comments received	*Also attended in 2013 but no figures held*
School Fairs	-	WPS	4	-
School Fairs	-	PPS	12	-
Village Shows	-	WVH	Public comments received	Woolavington Show
Village Shows	-	PVH	Public comments received	Puriton Flower Show
Total	-	-	945 ~	

This excludes the number of individuals whose views were recorded in data collection sheets at the various public events.
(also excludes numbers reached via group leaders e.g. Woolavington Primary School Council spoke to their peers on our behalf and provided feedback)



Our Thanks

Many people have been involved in work on Villages Together over the last two years. Listed below (in no particular order) are those who have given their time in support of the project either individually or as part of the Interim Working Group and latterly the Steering Group. If we have missed anyone out we apologise and extend our gratitude to all who have contributed.

Julian Mellor -
Big Local Representative
Jon Cousins - *Community Organiser*
Helen Baker
Tina Otley
Peter Bashford
Paul & Tricia Canham
Graham Lockley
Jenny Morgan
Cindy Riley
Andy & Cori Taylor
Joh Dabenett
Abi Jones
Treez Marshall
Barbara Klippenstein
Alan Scott
Lucie New
Peter Burke
Robert & Teresa Hemms
Jan Froud

Ade Long
Jacqueline Manning
Roux Renard
Sue Wood
Carole Matthews
Heather Strawbridge
Sam Lewin
Nicky Lewin
Carol Edney
Rhoda Barrie
Alan Sharp - *Woolavington
Parish Council*
Simon Langley - *Puriton
Parish Council*
Pam Earnshaw (*Polden Post*)
Yvonne Kay (*Village Agent -
Somerset RCC*)
Emma Britton (*BBC Somerset*)
Julie Cooper (*Sedgemoor DC*)



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