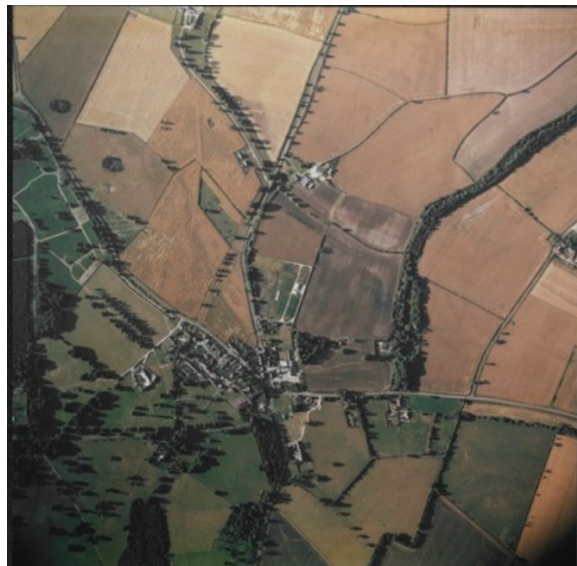


Middleton Stoney Village Plan : 2024-2028

OUR VISION

A village with a strong sense of community, spaces to meet and countryside to enjoy



SUMMARY

This draft Plan sets out our ambitions for Middleton Stoney for the coming five years until 2028. It draws on discussion at the Village Meeting in May 2023, but we now want your views on whether we have identified the right priorities and actions.

We suggest 3 key areas for action:

1) Tackling the Traffic Problems in the Village.

We have made a start with road resurfacing, speed flashing signs at four entrances to the Village, and an application for a 20mph zone. We have now drawn up an action plan to introduce traffic improvements and make it safer and easier to move around the village.

2) Improving Village Life

We have secured over £15,000 external grant funding for village improvement works and used this to update the Village Hall internally (Wi-Fi, new screen, projector, new tables) and externally with new paving and painting, planted 1,200 bulbs and installed new planters around the village, cleaned the war memorial, and installed new benches and tables. Priorities going forward include further improvements to the Village Hall, including a Disabled Toilet, seeking support for a new playground, and supporting the PCC on improvements to All Saints' Church.

3) Making the Planning System Work for us

We have worked hard to oppose inappropriate developments near our village, such as the proposed rail interchange at Ardley, and will continue to do so. Priorities for the future include making sure any lorries from the Smiths quarry north of the village do not come through the village, and that Cherwell's new 2040 Plan preserves Middleton Stoney as a village where new build is limited.

DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE PRIORITIES?

WHAT OTHER ACTIONS DO YOU SUGGEST?

1. Introduction

The aim of this Plan is to enable the people of Middleton Stoney to shape the future development of the Parish. It pulls together our history, where Middleton Stoney is today and what are our ambitions for the next five years. As such it will help the Parish Council respond to future developments affecting the village, and working with other village groups help shape the type of community we want to be.

The Plan has been drawn up in partnership with the many groups working for the village including the Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council, and the Village Hall Management Committee. It has also benefitted from views expressed at the Village meeting in May 2023. We are now circulating it as a draft to get everyone's views.

2. History of the village

Archaeological evidence demonstrates that the area around Middleton Stoney was occupied in the neolithic age, iron age, Roman and early Saxon periods. The first written record of the village is in the Domesday Book (1086). After the Norman Conquest a motte and bailey castle was built but this was pulled down in 1216; its' remains are clearly visible. The earliest portion of All Saints' church dates from the mid-12th century and a thriving community grew up around it. The village suffered badly during the Black Death (1348/49) and as a consequence never developed into a market town.

There has been a manor house on the current site since the 18th century. Ownership passed to the Earls of Jersey and in 1826/27 the family demolished the village houses around the church and moved the core of the village to its current location.

Until the Second World war Middleton Stoney was an agricultural village most of whose inhabitants worked directly or indirectly for the Earls of Jersey. The village had three schools, a post office, a Co-op, a pub and a policeman.

3. Middleton Stoney To-day

Middleton Stoney is a small village of 300 people situated about 4 miles west of Bicester and 12 miles north of Oxford. It enjoys good transport links being close to the M40 motorway, and the Chiltern line railway serving London and Birmingham.

Middleton Stoney is built around the crossroads of the B430 and B4030 and still surrounded by green fields and agricultural land. At its heart is Middleton Park, created by the Earls of Jersey, and including the village Church (All Saints' Church) and the last country house in Great Britain built by Lutyens which is now residential accommodation.

Village amenities include:

All Saints' Church: part of the Akeman Benefice with weekly services. Alongside the Church is the Village War Memorial, and a graveyard maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The PCC has just secured a grant of £300,000 to improve the Church, and create a Blossom Wheel around the village.

Village Hall: originally the village reading room, the Village Hall hosts regular events for the village, and has recently been upgraded with new furniture, WIFI and a projector and screen thanks to a Lottery grant. An active Village Hall Management Committee lays on regular events such as quiz nights, soup lunches and bangers and mash evenings.

Playground: the Parish Council runs a children's playground at the heart of the village with swings, slides and small green space for meeting up. After nearly 30 years, we are planning a refurbishment if we can obtain external funding.

Cricket Club: cricket has been played in Middleton Park for over 200 years since the first game in 1801. There is a regular programme of matches each summer.

The village no longer has any shops but the village hotel and inn, the **Jersey Arms**, recently re-opened and provides a bar and restaurant for both villagers and visitors.

4. Middleton Stoney's People

The population is just over 300 people living in about 100 households. The most populous areas are to the west of the Village in School Lane and Park Close with many residents also living in Middleton Park. Roughly half the village live in detached houses (England and Wales average is a quarter) with at the last count 20% young people (aged 0-17), 59% working age (18- 64) and 21% over 65. Once a village based very much on agriculture and farming, many villagers now commute to work and/or post Covid work from home.

5 Middleton Stoney's Challenges

Over recent years, the village has seen growing traffic problems- the main crossroads in the village is over capacity- and there has been lots of major development nearby including an incinerator to the north of the village, a major expansion of Heyford Park to the west, the growth of Bicester to the east, and a planned new water park to the south-east. The growth of traffic, and especially HGVs, has meant it has become increasingly unpleasant to walk and cycle around the village.

It has also been the case that some of the amenities in the village are in need of refurbishment: the playground and the village hall need updating while the Church needs new facilities (eg toilet facilities, and a space for refreshments).

Fortunately, a good start has already been made. The Parish Council received a grant of £10,000 to improve the village hall and kick start new community events. The PCC secured a grant of £300,000 to improve facilities at the Church.

In addition the COVID pandemic saw the launch of a Village What's App group which means people across the village regularly communicate and share ideas and suggestions. There is also a monthly magazine (ABC) distributed to every household in the village.

6 ACTION PLAN 2023-2028.

Our priorities for the coming 5 years are as follows:

TACKLING THE TRAFFIC PROBLEMS IN THE VILLAGE

Problem: Too much traffic comes through the village, there are too many HGVs clogging up our roads, too many vehicles speed, and it is unpleasant to walk or cycle around the village.

What Have we Done?

- Introduced automatic speed limitation signs at the 4 entrances to the village.
- Applied to introduce a 20mph speed limit across the village.
- Campaigned for restrictions on the number of HGVs passing through the village.

What Do We Propose?

- Using the £150,000 allocated to MS for traffic mitigation.
- Clearing and widening pavements to make them easier to use.
- New Pedestrian Crossing at Traffic Lights.
- Road improvements at entrances to village.
- Continuing to campaign for restrictions on HGVs.

IMPROVING VILLAGE LIFE

Problem: many of our key facilities like the Village Hall, All Saints' Church and the Playground need new investment. We want to make the village a greener and more welcoming place, and we want more community events bringing the village together.

What have we Done?

- Installed Wi-Fi, screen and projector in Village Hall.
- Bought new furniture and fitments for Village Hall.
- Refreshed the Hall's external appearance with new paving and painting.
- Planted 1,200 daffodils across village.
- Installed planters, tables and benches around village.

- Repaired playground, and organised regular village clean-ups.
- Organised new social events including soup lunches, a quiz, and flower arranging session.

What do we Propose?

- Seek funding to replace children's playground.
- Seek funding to install disabled toilet in Village Hall.
- Seek volunteers to run movie nights.
- Double the verge grass cutting from 2x to 4x a year.
- Work to create a Blossom Wheel of public paths across village.
- Create a Public Right of Way to all Saints' Church, and increase times of access from Oxford Road.
- Improve All Saints' Church with new toilets and refreshment facilities.

MAKING THE PLANNING SYSTEM WORK FOR US

Problem: Over the last ten years Middleton Stoney has suffered from uncontrolled development to north, south, east and west of village with the local authorities failing to give sufficient attention to the traffic and other implications on villagers' quality of life.

What Have we Done?

- Opposed plans for a Strategic Rail Interchange at Ardley.
- Opposed plans by Smiths to extend quarry operations north of village, and pressed for a ban on HGVs coming through village if it goes ahead.
- Worked with neighbouring Parishes to update the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan as a framework for new development.

What do we Propose?

- In the next five years, the Parish Council will continue to challenge proposed development in the interests of villagers.
- We will also seek funding from developers to mitigate impact of development elsewhere on our community.
- We will seek to preserve the allotments as a green space, and create a new "Green Gap" to the north East of the village.
- We will oppose new developments at Heyford park until promised traffic mitigation is in place.

7. NEXT STEPS

This is a draft Village Plan, and we would welcome views on it. We will report annually on progress at the annual Parish Meeting which usually takes place in the Village Hall in May. All of the village groups are run by volunteers who give their time freely. If you want to get involved, feel free to contact one of them. We would love to hear from you.

November 2023