

BARROW cum DENHAM PARISH PLAN

FINAL REPORT - Part I



This report is based on the community wide surveys conducted by the Parish Plan Steering Group and is in three parts. Part I includes the main points and all households will receive a hard copy; Part II (supporting detail) and Part III (action plans) are online at www.barrowcumdenhamparishplan.com and the village websites; hard copies will be displayed in public places and a limited number will be available on request.

The full report is provided for the Parish, District and County Councils, the MP and anyone interested in particular topics.

The proposals for action, and the supporting analysis data, need to be read carefully to reach a considered view. Many of the actions will need to be carried out by individuals and voluntary groups.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Barrow and Denham are good places in which to live. Many people value the 'countryside' feel of the parish, the sense of community which is apparent, and the way amenities are generally well maintained and have been improved, amongst other positive features.

At the same time however, in the fast changing environment in which every rural community exists, there are aspects which can and do create concerns and anxieties: more and faster traffic, uncertainties about the scale and pace of future housing developments, poor public transport, and facilities for younger people - to name a few. There are also a number of potential new initiatives, small and large, which could enhance and improve the quality of life of people living here.

This report brings forward draft proposals, based on a detailed analysis of the results of the survey, for a set of actions aimed at addressing both concerns and opportunities.

These proposals for action need to be developed and taken forward by individuals from within the community itself – via 'Project Groups' formed by those individuals who wish to see progress on specific items.

Some but not all, of these projects may need the guidance or support of the Parish Council, St Edmundsbury BC, or Suffolk County Council. The Parish Council may decide to take a 'lead role' itself in a few areas.

2. MAIN POINTS

Detailed supporting evidence for each of the topics in this summary can be found in section 3 in Part II of the report; action plans are in Part III. The comments and recommendations are intended to help parishioners and their representatives to develop actions which will overcome today's problems and manage the future.

Parishioners' are concerned that the planned growth of Barrow could irreparably damage the attractions of living here (section 3.1)

The community has shown that it greatly enjoys living in the parish. The main features it likes are the surrounding countryside and village atmosphere.

However, only 20% of respondents to the questionnaires welcome or accept the amount or rate of growth which is planned for Barrow in the next five years.

- *The need to preserve the countryside and village atmosphere has been strongly stated as well as the preservation of several other important features.*

The community has low awareness of planned development (section 3.1)

Recent planning approvals have already exceeded those in the Rural Vision 2031 plan on which the public was consulted, and a submission now under consideration could increase growth further from 25% to 35%.

- *There is a miss-match between what appears to be happening and the community's knowledge of the situation. This needs to be addressed and the public fully informed of the up to date position, especially as there is little enthusiasm at present for the planned 25% growth (see above).*

Significant traffic problems exist: parking, HGVs, speeding, danger spots (section 3.2)

- Parking - particularly at the Shop in The Street and at the start and finish of school days - is the most mentioned traffic problem (61%)
- HGV and lorry traffic are close behind.
- Several black spots have been identified for action.
- *57% of respondents would accept flashing 30 mph signs and 56% want to restrict HGV traffic through the village. Other improvements are also suggested.*

40 people said they required affordable houses (section 3.3)

- *35 affordable houses are included in the developments already approved.*

Little use is being made of new sources of energy collection; also mains gas would be popular if available (section 3.4).

More and safer pavements and cycle ways are required (section 3.5 and 3.6)

- Many pavements need maintenance.
- There is a danger from traffic in some places where pavements are obstructed, too narrow or non-existent.
- Cyclists are particularly exposed to danger from motor vehicles on the country roads in and around the parish and there is the interest and potential to develop a network of cycle ways within the parish and build off-road cycle routes to Bury St Edmunds and other places outside it.
- *A small group has been formed to look into the topic which in Europe is considered to be good for health and also cost effective.*

Road drainage needs further improvement (section 3.7)

Although some of the worst drainage problems have been dealt with, drainage of the roads is still not good enough to handle the flash rainfall which regularly occurs. Various problem areas have been identified.

- *With increased traffic expected, the hazards presented by deep puddles and by water running on to and down the side of narrow roads need to be eliminated.*

Amenities will need to be developed to meet future needs (section 3.8)

Views were obtained on the wide range of amenities available in the parish.

- Public footpaths were mentioned as the amenity most frequently used.
- 42% of people thought a drop-in centre/café should be encouraged.
- The recreation ground is most used by dog walkers, followed by the play area. 27 youths, and a few adults, use the tennis courts. 46 youths and 71 adults use the skate board area.

- 40% of the respondents consider All Saints and St Mary's Churches as important for regular services and 67% think them important for weddings, christenings, blessings and funerals.
- Several locations were identified where people with mobility problems experienced difficulties.
- Those interested in allotments indicated that there were several practical steps which could be taken to encourage people to take up the unallocated allotments.

There are problems of vandalism, lighting, noise, seclusion and dog fouling at the Recreation Park. The Village Hall is heavily booked at key times, the Town Estate Room is not yet available and the Academy is on the periphery of the village. The joint working party on the long term use of the recreation ground has not reported, though a satisfactory long term solution may require consideration of other locations as well as the Recreation Ground.

- *Some of the principal recreational amenities suffer from fundamental difficulties which will have to be overcome to allow for the effect of new activities and growth of the parish.*
- *A plan is needed to ensure that the development of future leisure activities is not prejudiced by earlier short term decisions.*
- *Data on people's leisure interests (section 3.9) will help planning of future amenities.*

Demand for new and existing leisure activities has been measured (section 3.9)

- There is sufficient interest to consider starting several indoor and outdoor sports (including interest from age groups most likely to take part). 197 adults and 107 children are interested in indoor sports. 175 people thought a pavilion was needed and over 100 people requested a variety of other sports activities.
- 331 people were interested in a film club and respondent numbers suggested there may be sufficient to justify several other clubs.
- 324 people said they were interested in adult education classes.

Communication methods within the parish should be overhauled (section 3.10)

Pressure is needed to overcome poor broadband and mobile connections and TV reception.

- *If fibre optic broadband delivery is not available within an acceptable period of time, other available ways to increase speed should be considered.*

People use a wide variety of sources to get information with over half using "The Stile" (66% of respondents), "Post office/shop" (59%) and "word of mouth"(57%).

The internet is little used as a source of parish information. Over 200 people wanted outside community notice boards and other listed improvements.

75% of the people have internet access, and in view of their interest in parish affairs (demonstrated by 1020 people completing the questionnaire) a holistic review of all methods of communication should be carried out:-

- *This would enable the village to achieve the standards obtained in other villages for communicating official, social and commercial information*
- *And by implementing the best methods, enable everyone to have information in a form which suits their needs.*

Community involvement will be needed to implement many of the proposed changes (section 3.11)

The changes which are coming to the parish will put heavier demands on the Parish Council and other groups and the involvement of more people will be required.

- 387 respondents (46%) said they were prepared to give some time to village projects. 121 gave their contact details.

This excellent response needs to be built upon through the establishment of a good system to encourage new people to take part and to match them with suitable projects. Good communication about parish matters (3.10 above) will also encourage greater community involvement – a key requirement of most organisations offering funding for parish projects.

Parishioners need more information from the Parish Council (section 3.12)

The answers to many questions asked in the questionnaire point towards this need.

- *Transparency would be greatly improved if agenda, minutes and financial information were publicised in a way and time which allows busy parishioners to respond and to attend meetings if they wish.*

Education and school (section 3.13)

- 83% of respondents rated the school as very important.
- 47% of respondents preferred the three tier system compared with 20% for the two tier system (for those aged 17-49, the three tier system was three times as popular).
- Rural Vision 2031 has no provision for the growth of the school.
- *Expansion of the school will be required to accommodate the growth of the village.*

Provision of better playgrounds for children (section 3.13)

Two thirds of respondents supported the provision of playgrounds for children and toddlers’.

- *Barrow Community Play Project has been formed to provide a playground for children up to 12. The needs of older children also need to be considered.*

Growth provides an opportunity to improve bus and train services (section 3.14)

Under 20 people use the bus regularly in working hours and 48 weekly; 276 occasionally use it. 132 said that better times for going to work would induce them to use it. Both adults and young people wanted better evening times. Many users are retired.

148 people said they would use the train to go to work if Higham station was reopened, 263 would use it for holidays and 661 for occasional journeys.

- *The building of new houses should increase demand and help justify a better bus and train service.*

Security around the recreation park and village hall (section 3.15)

The public agree that the crime rate (not high on national standards) can be reduced by following police advice including Neighbourhood Watch, CCTV and providing youth activities.

Health – surgery appointments (section 3.16)

61% of the respondents use the surgery and, of these, a third mentioned some concerns about making a convenient appointment. Travel to the surgery and parking were issues also referred to the surgery for attention.

Environment (section 3.17)

- Dog fouling is the main concern. 51% even say they want fines enforced. A "best practice for dog owners" is suggested to set standards for both owners and the public who may witness the problem.
- A Dog Owners Project Group to monitor the ongoing situation is proposed.
- Litter is also highlighted and "Litter picking days" are suggested.
- There is a strong interest in several projects to do with the natural environment; formation of a wildlife group is being considered.

Formation of a group to provide attractive activities for young people (section 3.18)

As well as a shelter in which to "hang out", young people require organised activities of interest to them. There is sufficient evidence from young people, and from adults, for a viable youth group to be formed. Key to its success would be finding and training a few good leaders prepared to commit the necessary time, strong parental interest and the ideas of the young people.

- *The activities could be informal or within a group or club, but they would have to comply with the regulatory requirements for working with young people.*
- *A youth project should be started as soon as possible.*

Business responses (section 3.19)

- Employment - many residents are self employed
- only a small number of parishioners work in the parish
- There is some interest in a local business forum which could act as a medium to improve communication between local government and among local businesses and the community.

Develop a strategic plan to integrate the development of the parish (section 3.20)

Such a plan would address those issues which need attention but cannot be funded in the short term. It would help to ensure that the community benefits fully from the monies due for in respect of new building. It could be reviewed annually and be available to the public to monitor progress.

- *87% think there should be a strategic plan to deal with future growth, including all services and amenities.*

Denham (Appendix E)

Unlike Barrow, Denham is not a Key Service Centre but is classified as countryside. Appendix E summarises responses from Denham residents to identify issues where their views may differ materially from those of the parish as a whole.

Project groups should be formed by the community to achieve the improvements sought.

The action plans in Part III include the formation of a number of project groups by the community to address issues raised in this report. Not all of the tasks require immediate action, and they vary from one-off fact finding exercises to ongoing duties; some require specialist skills and others merely enthusiasm. Some, but not all, of the projects may need the guidance and support of the Parish Council, St. Edmundsbury BC, or Suffolk County Council. The project groups should be as small as is practical.

The following project groups appear to be required to deal with the problems identified by the community (some are already in being or are being considered):-

| <u>Project Group</u> | <u>Main role suggested</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Housing /Development | Ongoing involvement to monitor effect on village |
| Gas supply | Fact finding re possibility of gas supply |
| Walkers | Consider possible future footpaths |
| Riders | Consider possible future bridleways |
| Cycle/pathway | Fact finding re off road and other cycle paths |
| Leisure/Amenities | Assess leisure and amenity needs, location, equip't |
| Under 5's amenities | Assess needs, location, equipment. |
| Barrow Community Play Project | In existence re childrens' playground |
| Film | Investigate viability of a "flix in the stix" |
| Allotment | Improve attraction to fill empty allotments |
| Internet and communications | Complete review of all Parish communications |
| Community | Encourage volunteering and new projects |
| Transport | Investigate improvement of bus and rail service |
| Parish maintenance | Assist with practical parish projects and maintenance |
| Natural environment | Projects about the natural environment and wildlife |
| Lighting | Assess more lights vs. environmental impact |
| Dog owners | Set standards and provide/locate more fido bins |
| Litter | Hold "litter picking days" |
| Youth | Establish and run activities for young people |
| Business | Consider a forum |
| Strategic plan | Annual exercise to prepare the plan |

It will be best if those who want change are the people involved in the process of achieving it. Hard data to enable the projects to start is in Part II of the report.

*On behalf of the Steering Group,
many thanks for your help with and
contributions to the questionnaire and
events.*

*The responses have exceeded all our
expectations and we hope they will help the
community to work together to achieve a
better future.*

***John Bainbridge, Sarah Chrisp, Peter Chrisp, Nicki Green,
Mary Damerell, David Mann, Roy Banks.***

