

3 The Key Issues

This chapter sets out the issues that we have identified through community engagement. Some of these issues are planning related and can be addressed through a NP planning policy. The NP planning policies are set out in Chapter 5 of this plan. Some of the issues fall wholly or partly outside of the scope of planning policy. Where possible, Great Gransden Parish Council will seek to address such issues (those that fall outside the remit of the Great Gransden NP) through Community Action Plans. These are set out in Chapter 6 of this plan.

3.1 Key Issue 1 – Sustainable development and growth of the housing stock in Great Gransden.

The need for further growth and development of the village is understood, however this must not undermine the essential character of our small, rural community.

Sustainable growth must help support and maintain village infrastructure, not threaten it. The phasing and scale of new development is an important factor.

New development should improve the affordability and diversity of housing stock to meet village needs.

New development should be small scale, with a focus on brownfield sites and infill.

3.2 Key Issue 2 – Protection and enhancement of the rural character

New developments must have a rural rather than urban character, consistent with this small rural parish.

New developments must enhance and not compromise the street views, adding to the interest and attractiveness of the street scene. The design and density of housing in new developments should be similar to that already existing in the village. The layout should have a spacious feel, with use of hedges and tree planting to mirror the rural environment.

Particular care should be taken with proposed developments that impact the conservation area. Views to and from the conservation area must be protected.

3.3 Key Issue 3 - Access to open space and enjoyment of the countryside

The countryside character and setting of the parish is valued highly, but public access is relatively limited. Around 95% of the area of the parish is in private ownership, of which XX% is used for arable farming and xx% for equestrian and/or hay.

Existing public open green space today is very limited, confined to a few small areas that are owned by the parish council, including the Sportsfield, the Playing Field, Mill Weir and the Allotments, The Sportsfield lends itself mostly for organised recreational and sporting uses and the small parking area at Mill Weir gives access only for limited local coarse fishing. None of these areas is suitable for walking or attractive for other informal countryside uses.

Under local byelaw, none of these existing public open green spaces allow dog walking - a major daily activity for many village residents around the streets and public footpath network. Consequently dog walking is a significant and important activity amongst visitors to the Wildlife Trust Waresley and Gransden Wood Reserve (including Browne's Piece), putting pressure on the conservation goals of this SSSI.

Large parts of the parish are not accessible through or even viewable from the limited public footpath network. Virtually the only accessible area of semi-natural wildlife habitat is the Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve at Gransden Wood, with access to the wood by the permissive

path network established by the Trust. One third of Gransden Wood is in private ownership and this area is not open to the public at all. None of the other woodland copses in the parish have any established public access.

Circular walking routes from the village are very limited; those few that do exist depend on use of public roads (without pavements) for at least part of the walking route or on use of permissive paths through Gransden Wood, which the Wildlife Trust have sometimes closed off in recent winters.

A number of other walking routes depend on individual private agreement with the landowners. Misunderstandings on access rights can sometimes cause local tensions.

3.4 Key Issue 4 – Road safety and traffic

At peak times there is a high level of through traffic, both passenger cars and commercial vehicles, causing congestion and road safety problems, especially during the morning rush hour which coincides with the time younger children in the village need to get to the village primary school.

The absence of pavements on some of the key roads in the village, and the narrowness of some of the pavements results in pedestrians having to share the road with vehicles, including HGVs and agricultural vehicles. Even where they exist, there are gaps in the pavement network, and in many locations, poor visibility.

A number of the road junctions have limited visibility for vehicles emerging from side roads or for pedestrians trying to cross the junction. A number of properties on the edge of the village have driveways that emerge on or close to blind corners or blind humps.

Vehicles often exceed the speed limits in the village, including the 20mph stretch adjacent the school.

There are no designated cycle paths in or around the village. Many of the roads connecting the village to other villages and the local towns have blind spots requiring cyclists to be particularly wary of other road users, and in some places the hedges and ditches block escape routes.

3.5 Key Issue 5 - Education and Health Services

Housing development in the village will have an impact on the resourcing and character of Barnabas Oley Primary School. Barnabas Oley Primary School can accommodate around 150 pupils in its current buildings and configuration of classrooms. Revenue funding for schools is pupil-related, so growth in pupil numbers is financially beneficial and a fall in numbers would have a negative financial impact. Demographic projections suggest modest growth in primary-age pupil numbers over the next eight years (less than 10%) but the proposed housing development of some 87 houses could take this growth over the 150 mark. If numbers were to expand beyond 180 a full capital appraisal would be necessary in order to determine the best solution for the school.

Great Gransden falls within the catchment areas of both Longsands Academy and Comberton Village College, so children of secondary age may attend either school by choice. However, free transport is only provided by the County Council to Longsands School, as the nearer of the two. As most secondary-age children attend Comberton Village College, parents have to organise and pay for bus transport themselves.

The Reading Room will need ongoing investment to ensure that it is fit for purpose for learning and other related activities.

The withdrawal of the weekly Bourn Surgery Clinic in the village is a significant loss of a valued service, particularly as there is no bus service to either of the local surgeries. This has increased the number of car journeys from and to the village.

3.6 Key Issue 6 – Facilities for younger children

On the Playing Field there is a small playground which, though safe to use, is in a poor state and in need of refurbishment and improvements to offer a more challenging, safe play environment. The playground at Mandene Gardens is unsafe and cannot be used.

The Sportsfield has a pavilion, with shared use by the nursery and Gransden Football Club. The large car-park, which is shared by the Nursery and the Preschool Playgroup requires resurfacing.

The Tennis Club, which is situated to one side of the Sportsfield, has three floodlit courts for use by members. It has a small clubhouse which requires updating with toilet/washing facilities to improve hygiene and safeguarding, especially as children use the club.

3.7 Key issue 7 – Uncertainties of major infrastructure decisions

The planned east- west road link will pass to the north of the parish. The implications for commuter and traffic levels are not yet clear.

The planned East-West rail link will run through the parish of Great Gransden. The precise route is subject to public consultation. The route must not compromise highly valued countryside with rich biodiversity.