

A scenic landscape photograph of a green field with trees and sheep under a cloudy sky. The field is lush green and sloping upwards. In the background, there are several large, leafy trees. A few sheep are grazing in the field. The sky is blue with white clouds. The text 'SIBFORDS' is written in white capital letters on a green rectangular background in the upper right corner.

SIBFORDS

COMMUNITY PLAN

2012

EARLY STAGES

In September 2010 the Parish Councils of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower mutually agreed to initiate the development of a Community-led Plan. They invited a person from each parish to co-ordinate the process and initially to establish whether the community was supportive of the development of a Community Plan for the Sibfords, to be steered by local residents. Initial guidance was received from the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council (ORCC).

The Launch of the Plan was held on 7 December 2010. Over 80 people attended and ORCC gave a presentation about Community Planning. Attendees were encouraged to join in a 'Like/Dislike' survey and at the close of the meeting the majority of those attending **confirmed their support for developing a Sibfords Community Plan.**

THE STEERING GROUP AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A Steering Group of 8 members, including a member from each Parish Council, was established from the 27 volunteers who offered their help at the Launch Event. The Group decided that a follow-up Open Day would be held on a Saturday in March 2011 to provide another opportunity to engage with the community. It was also agreed to distribute a Plan Newsletter to all households on a regular basis to keep them in touch with progress.

The Open Day was attended by 110 people who took part in another 'Like/Dislike' survey and a further 20 people volunteered to help. A Logo competition was also held to provide a recognisable symbol for the Plan.

Following an analysis of the comments expressed at the two public meetings, particularly the 'Like/Dislike' surveys, the Steering Group decided that a comprehensive Household Questionnaire should form the principal basis for the community consultation to cover the range of issues raised by the community. General matters were also considered such as the working of the Parish Councils and demographic structure of the two villages.

THE WORKING GROUPS

To guide the consultation process and development of the Questionnaire six Working Groups were established covering the following subjects:

- Housing and Planning
- Roads, Traffic, Footpaths and Bridleways
- Environment
- Leisure & Recreation
- Community Services
- Business & Economy

The Groups, which had up to 5 volunteer members from the community, undertook background research to familiarise themselves with their subjects.

THE HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

The Working Groups' major task was the development of the Questions to be included in the Questionnaire. These went through a number of drafts which were reviewed by the Steering Group. ORCC, Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council were also consulted on the Final Draft of the Questionnaire and made very helpful comments. It was finalised in November 2011 with 364 Questionnaires distributed and 288 collected by a group of volunteers, many of whom help with the Newsletter delivery. Allowing for empty properties this amounted to **an overall response of 83%** which was a very satisfactory return. The results of the Questionnaire were then collated by a group of volunteers and summarised by the end of January 2012.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The Questionnaire results were passed to the Working Groups for further analysis and to guide them in the identification of the principal issues and opportunities for inclusion in the Final Plan. This was a lengthy process during which the Groups formulated their sections of the Plan and proposed a range of Next Steps to take the opportunities and initiatives forward for action.

SUPPORT AND FUNDING FROM ORCC AND THE PARISH COUNCILS

ORCC has provided support and guidance throughout the Community Plan process and also awarded a grant of £900.00 towards the costs incurred in undertaking the work. The remaining costs have been shared by Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower Parish Councils.

COMBINING THE TWO PARISH COUNCILS

Question 15 asked: Do you think that a possible combining of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower Parish Councils should be studied?

Replies received were Yes: 327, No: 73, Don't Know: 124. With 62% of the respondents agreeing to a study being undertaken, this confirmed a considerable interest in the possibility of combining the two Councils.

The decision to combine the two Parish Councils rests with Cherwell District Council and will be considered in the Local Governance Review, which they intend to carry out in the latter part of 2012.

In the response to the Consultation Draft, James Doble, Cherwell District Council's Democratic Services Manager, commented: 'The Local Governance Review is a community led process. Combining two Parish Councils is a big step, so there would need to be a strongly expressed wish for it from the communities of the two parishes. Responses to Q15 mandate the Parish Councils (and/or the Community Plan Group) to conduct a study into the possible merger. It would be the outcome of such a study that could give a clear steer to the governance review'.

The minutes of meetings of both Councils for the past three years show that they deal with similar issues without showing significant differences

in approach. The only issue on which they have disagreed is that of meeting the maintenance costs of the Churchyard attached to Holy Trinity Church, which is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council. Resolution of this issue needs a community approach which a combined Ferris and Gower Council could achieve more easily. Agreement has been reached, however, on the maintenance of the new Burial Ground, the costs of which are shared equally by the two Parish Councils.

The Councils have some reservation about combination, and prefer to remain separate for a number of reasons:

- Two small and separate Parishes Councils are perceived as better able to present local views on planning matters;
- The separate Parish Councils can each conserve the local differences between the villages which have value to some of the community;
- There are concerns about the difficulty of finding a Clerk to act for a combined Parish Council as this would entail a greater level of time and commitment than the scope of work required for the separate Councils.

NEXT STEPS

- Present this report to Cherwell District Council and await the outcome of the Local Governance Review.

Question 17: Would you expect any housing allocation to be shared across neighbouring villages?

144 answered yes, 87 answered no, 11 made no comment. The second figure probably includes a number of people who gave low figures for the total number of houses, and therefore saw no reason to call on other villages. A conclusion might be that, in determining any expansion in the Sibfords, Cherwell District Council should report on the number of new houses constructed in surrounding villages, and count these against any quota proposed for the Sibfords.

Question 18: What size of houses do you consider they should be?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Smaller sheltered housing for elderly | 23% |
| • 1/2 bedroom/first time buyers | 34% |
| • 3 bedroom family houses | 27% |
| • 4 bedroom family houses | 12% |
| • Larger 'executive' type housing | 4% |

A total of 115 people answered this question with the balance of responses suggesting that there is a preference for 1/2 bedroom houses for first time buyers, and 3 bedroom family houses, together with sheltered housing for the elderly.

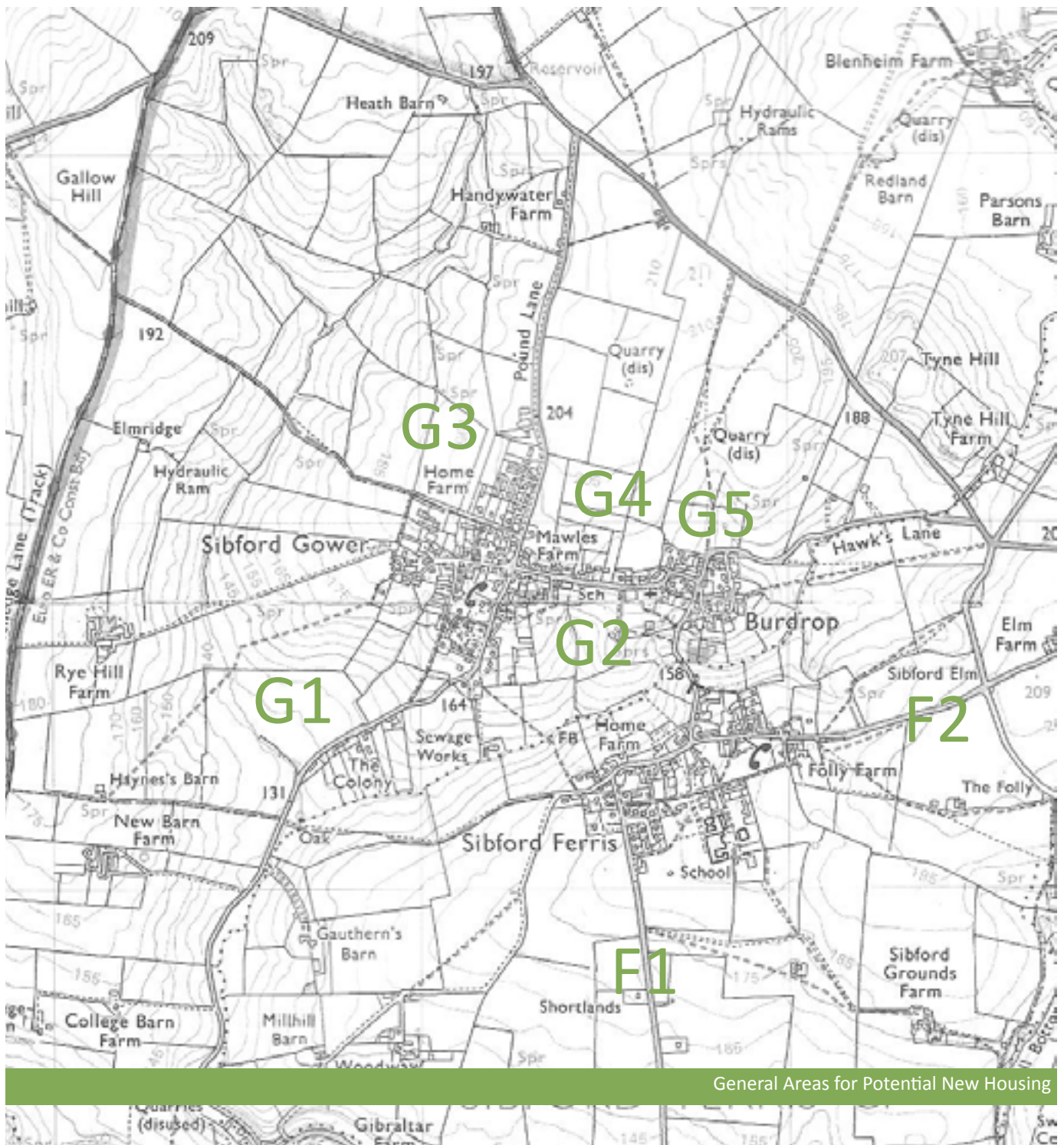
Question 19: What type of houses should they be?

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Traditional style in keeping with local vernacular | 76% |
| • Bespoke contemporary architecture | 15% |
| • Developers standard style | 4% |
| • No preference | 5% |

This indicates a very strong preference for traditional style architecture.

Question 20. New developments could enable new or upgraded facilities to be provided for the benefit of the Sibfords community. Please tick up to three favourites.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Extra off-road parking | 25% |
| • Upgraded roads | 21% |
| • Play areas (within the housing group) | 5% |
| • Village recreation/play facilities | 21% |
| • Trees and Woodland | 28% |



Question 21: Possible location of new housing

The community was offered seven possible locations for new housing, two in the Ferris and five in the Gower. The responses were graded in terms of preferences, as follows.

Preference	Location	For	Against
Strong	F1 Hook Norton Road	319 (76%)	102 (24%)
	G4 Pound Lane	279 (20%)	121 (30%)
	G5 Hawkes Lane	238 (59%)	164 (41%)
Mild Preference	G3 (High Meadow)	207 (51%)	198 (49%)
Almost Equal	F2 Sibford Elm	195 (50%)	192 (50%)
Mild Opposition	G1 Colony Road	178 (46%)	212 (54%)
Strong Opposition	G2 Wheathills / Sib Valley	47 (12%)	334 (88%)

The implication of these figures is that villagers would be more prepared to see new housing on the Hook Norton Road, and on the roads leading to the B4035. They wish to protect the view across Wheathills and the Sib Valley between the villages.

NEXT STEPS

- The Parish Councils will make these Community views on numbers, types, grouping and location of new housing known to CDC and OCC Planning authorities

CONSERVING AND CREATING LOCAL HABITATS

(Question 44)

It is clear from many of the comments received in the last section of the questionnaire that the natural environment is highly valued by residents of the Sibfords and Burdrop. This was reinforced by the answers given in the Environment section where 62% respondents overall described how environmentally friendly farm management was important to them, as was the creation of wildflower areas on publicly accessed land (69%).

The protection and enhancement of habitats was also valued highly with respect to trees and woodland (84%); hedgerows (78%); gardens and orchards (60%); road verges (56%); and species rich 'wastelands' (52%).

The vast majority of respondents are concerned about the protection and enhancement of birdlife (82%), butterflies (76%) and bats (62%).

With the impending ownership of the village pond by Sibford Gower PC, there is potential to undertake further works to the pond to enrich the habitat value and appearance of this valued village amenity.

FUTURE GUIDANCE

(Question 45)

In this last section, respondents expressed a high level of enthusiasm for discussion and learning more about environmental issues through attending village meetings.

Just over a half of all respondents said they would be interested in attending a meeting about reducing fuel costs and just under a half were interested in community schemes for sustainable heating and electricity generation. Reducing heat loss and carbon footprint each attracted one third.

Just over two fifths were keen to find out more about local food sourcing and also recycling and re-use schemes.

Two fifths were interested in local action groups for conserving and creating local habitats and species.

Over one quarter were interested in measures to deal with living in a radon affected area.

NEXT STEPS

- A note was included in the August/ September 2012 issue of the Sibford Scene inviting the many people who responded positively to the environmental section of the questionnaire to get in touch. It is anticipated that a number of initiatives will follow over the coming months, including a promising collaboration with parallel initiatives already well-established in the neighbouring village of Hook Norton, and elsewhere.
- If you are keen to learn more, or would like to become involved in some way do let us know: matthewconisbee@gmail.com or phone 01295 780641

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Question 50: How many of the existing 22 village societies and organisations do you belong to?

Although 57% of the respondents don't belong to any societies or organisations, many residents support the wide range of facilities, with 29% of the respondents belonging to between one and six groups.

Question 51: Would any of the following 'club' activities interest you?

Club / Society	Responses
Chess	19
Bridge	29
Bingo	12
Drama Group	55
Youth Club	38
Coffee / Social Group	29
Book Club	56
General Games Club	21
Walking Club	94

The responses received confirmed a wide interest in creating new clubs and societies, but will require volunteer groups to establish these.

In response to the interest shown in setting up new clubs, an evening event in the Village Hall was held in April 2012 to enable people to get together and share their interests and begin the process of setting up new groups. Although there was limited interest at this first meeting, future opportunities to continue this process could be provided.

VILLAGE ALLOTMENTS

Question 41 (Environment)

Question 41 in the Environment section of the Questionnaire confirmed that 66 people might be interested in using an allotment if they were available. There are no village allotment sites provided by the Parish Councils at present but Sibford Gower PC has identified two potential sites in Burdrop which together have capacity to accommodate six plots. However, to move the process forward will require the establishment of a volunteer Allotment Group.

HEADLINES

- The Sibford Stores and Post Office are used by nearly everyone in the Sibfords although in some instances only occasionally;
- The Wykham Arms serves a combined purpose of both eating and drinking although the majority of people responding only used the facility once a month or less;
- The use of the Wykham Arms as a place to drink has increased since the Bishop Blaize closed;
- Villagers identified the atmosphere of a public house being critical to its success;
- Sibford School is well recognised as a venue for a wide range of events open to the public;
- There is a strong demand for a range of evening classes which Sibford School would be able to provide.