

Cropredy Parish: Vision and Priorities Statement for Planning

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Introduction

Cropredy is a special place to live. Residents mention qualities including the sense of community, the clubs and activities, the range of facilities, and the quiet rural setting. Cropredy Parish Council (CPC) wants the village to continue to be a special place. Over the past year CPC has consulted residents through surveys and public meetings to identify what is important for the community and has used this to set out a **Vision** of what we would like for Cropredy from now and over the next twenty years. To move towards that Vision, we have drafted a 'Statement of Priorities' to guide how we respond to the pressures and opportunities that will arise. CPC welcomes further comments on this document so that it can evolve to reflect the changing views of residents and changing circumstances.

The document has three sections:

- Section 1 The 'Vision' of how Cropredy should evolve of the next twenty years.
- Section 2 Pressures and Opportunities
- Section 3 Statement of Priorities

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Vision

Cropredy is valued by its inhabitants as a great place to live. It has a strong sense of community, people know and help each other and there is a range of community activities. The village is well served with the shop, two pubs, cafés, the village hall, the church and chapel, and the doctor's surgery. Public transport is limited but there is a bus to Banbury on three days a week. The built-up area is an attractive mix of historic and newer housing. The village retains a rural character with the buildings interspersed by trees and green areas. Footpaths provide access to the surrounding countryside. The canal provides a valuable linear feature with the accessible towpath, the historic wharfs, and attractive bridges.

CPC's **Vision** for the Cropredy over the next twenty years is to maintain and strengthen wherever possible the positive qualities: the strong sense of community and activities, the range of local services, the historic features and buildings, and the rural character. In addition, the natural environment should be protected and impacts on climate change reduced. In short, CPC wants Cropredy to remain a great place to live that is valued by its residents.

CPC has very limited direct control so the Vision can only be achieved by working with organisations including Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the Canal and River Trust. CPC provides a channel to these bodies to communicate local knowledge and community views so that decisions are made with full information. Cherwell District Council is responsible for the Local Plan which is currently being reviewed. Cherwell states that the new Local Plan *'will set out policies for change and include a strategy for delivering any required future growth. It will set out how valuable historic and natural environments will be protected and enhances.* (Planning for Cherwell, Community Involvement Paper 2: Developing our Options, September 2021, para. 1.2.3). CPC has responded to various consultations on the preparation of Cherwell's new Local Plan. In the next stage, Cherwell will consult on a complete draft Local Plan including policies for specific types of places including rural areas and villages like Cropredy. This Community Preference Statement will guide CPC's responses to this consultation.

Oxfordshire County Council's responsibilities include education, transport, roads and footpaths. The Environment Agency is responsible for the rivers and flood protection and the Canal and Rivers Trust manages the Oxford Canal. CPC seeks to engage with these organisations to ensure Cropredy's particular needs and concerns are represented.

CPC's direct responsibilities include the Sports and Social Club and associated land, the Church Yard and Cemetery, the trees and verges that are within parish council ownership, and the children's play area. CPC also supports clubs and societies in the village particularly using funds from the sale of Fairport Tickets.

Pressures and Opportunities

Achieving the Vision for Cropredy requires a strategic response to pressures and opportunities that are likely to arise over the next twenty years. Current pressures include:

Population Age Structure

Cropredy's population has declined slowly over the last two decades and has aged significantly since the 2011 Census. Currently 29 per cent of residents are aged over 65 compared with 21 per cent in 2011. Over the same period, the proportion aged 25 to 44 year has fallen from 22 per cent to 14 per cent and the proportion aged 16 to 24 dropped from 8.4 per cent to 4.6 per cent. Such a change in age structure bring risks to Cropredy's community and economy as there are fewer young people to contribute actively to the community and local economy whilst at the same time there is an increasing demand for support services for the older population including voluntary community organisations, transport and medical facilities.

Economic

Many villages have lost their shops, pubs and other services. Cropredy may not be immune due to changes such as online shopping and increasing car-based shopping trips. The village resident population alone may not be sufficient to sustain services. The vitality of the village is dependent on these local facilities. Public transport is important because not all services can be provided in a village and some people will not have access to a car, however the bus service has reduced over the years and is now very limited.

Environmental

The natural environment is subject to pressures including climate change, habitat decline, and development.

Opportunities

The population of Cherwell District as a whole is increasing as it is an attractive place to live with employment opportunities and good transport links. Cropredy could tap into an **appropriate and proportionate** amount of this population growth to achieve a better balance of younger and older people within the village.

Cropredy's economy benefits from being a 'destination' village with visitors arriving by boat, car and foot. The annual Fairport's Cropredy Convention provides a vital boost to the shops, cafés and pubs. Cropredy also functions as a hub for the surrounding villages which brings in additional trade. Businesses employing people within and close to the village also bring additional customers for local service.

The open spaces within the village provide the opportunity to enhance their benefits for sport and recreation and, on those open areas with trees, improve wildlife habitats and help reduce climate change. The surrounding countryside is key to Cropredy's rural character and there is an opportunity to support planning policies that enhance its agricultural and recreational value.

Statement of Priorities

Progress toward the Vision needs a Statement of Priorities reflecting residents' views and also addressing the pressures and opportunities. This Statement of Priorities will guide CPC's responses to the consultation on Cherwell's Local Plan and also to specific planning applications.

Development and Housing

To achieve the Vision, CPC considers that some new housing development is required to address the risks of the ageing population. However, any housing development should:

- Be proportionate to the existing 348 dwellings, such that the rural character of the village is maintained.
- Provide a mix of housing types to attract younger people to achieve a more 'balanced' age structure.
- Enhance and not detract from existing buildings

- The conservation area, listed buildings and canal corridor should be protected.
- Developments within the village boundary (infill) should not harm the existing buildings and mix of open space.
- Developments outside the village boundary (extensions) should be of an appropriate scale and be connected by footpaths to the village, and mitigate any effects on the open countryside and agricultural land, and not risk coalescence with nearby settlements.
- Any development should protect the natural environment and enhance biodiversity
- Any development should mitigate climate change by the housing being energy efficient and maximizing the use of renewable energy, and incorporate measures such as sustainable drainage to prevent any increased flood risk.
- **Non-residential developments** should provide benefits to Cropredy including community facilities, local employment, tourism and be of an appropriate scale and protect the character of the village and the natural environment,

Services and Facilities

It is a priority to maintain and enhance wherever possible services including the shop, pubs, cafés, community buildings.

Any development should make the village services more viable.

Any development should take account of any necessary increase in services such as the doctors' surgery.

CPC will consider whether some existing facilities should be declared 'community assets' which would provide the option of 'community' operation in the event of proposed closures.

Transport

Public transport should be maintained and enhanced wherever possible, for those without access to a car (for example the young, the elderly who may no longer wish or be able to drive). Public transport also reduces the number of car journeys and the associated effects on climate change.

Renewable energy should be encouraged for cars by promoting electric vehicle charging.

The speed limit within the village should be reduced to 20mph to improve road safety and reduce vehicle emissions.

New opportunities for public transport should be investigated such as the possibility of re-opening the railway station and other innovative forms of public transport such as community buses and bookable services,

Cycling and walking should be promoted through improvement and development of footpaths and cycle ways.

Community

Community organisations and groups should be encouraged and supported.

Community buildings should to be maintained and replaced when necessary.

Open Spaces/The Natural Environment

Public open spaces should be protected for community well-being and managed to increase biodiversity and mitigate Climate Change.

CPC will consider ways to protect important open spaces within the village including: the Village Green, Chapel Green, and The Sports Ground

Valued countryside and open spaces should be protected and enhanced to benefit wildlife habitats and mitigate climate change.

Agricultural land of appropriate types should be protected to provide the opportunity for increase local food production.

Supplementary Documents

Cropredy Parish Statistical Profile. People and Homes

Cropredy Parish Council Surveys and Open Days 2001/22: Summary Results