**Sutton Benger Parish Plan**

Discussion Document by Coun. Kay Taylor, February 2009, amended March 2009

# **A: Aims of the Plan**

A.1.To define the parish boundaries, the building framework of the village of Sutton Benger and the hamlet of Draycot Cerne, and the extent of the village conservation area. Also to identify the permanent ‘anchor points’ of the parish, such as the churches, the primary school, village hall, the doctor’s surgery and the SSSI (site of special scientific interest).

To this end the following maps will be appended to this document:

Map 1: Map of the Parish of Sutton Benger, with the footpaths marked.

Map 2: The Sutton Benger Conservation Area, 1990.

Map 3: The boundary of the building framework of the village of Sutton Benger, taken from the North Wilts Local Plan, 1995.

Map 3a: Draycot Cerne

Map 4: The permanent ‘anchor points’ in the village of Sutton Benger.

Map 5: The Site of Special Scientific Interest, taken from the North Wilts Local Plan, 1995.

Map 6: The North Wilts Committee Areas for Planning, 1999.

A.2.To outline the existing state of the parish which covers the village of Sutton Benger, the hamlet of Draycot Cerne, and a number of farms, identifying the number of houses, shops, pubs and other businesses/employers.

A.3.To identify all sites for possible future development and formulate a policy of local preferences for the use of each site. Previous views on development will be included where appropriate.

A.4.To identify, where possible, ownership of all verges, gossip areas, ornamental beds, greens, tracks and lanes.

A.5.To provide a statement of traffic and transport policies for the parish.

A.6.To ensure that any future development within the parish is integrated within the existing framework.

There is a need to be aware of government guidelines for the provision of new housing to be in areas that minimise the need for car travel, and also a need for an integrated public transport policy for access to schools, shops and employment outside the parish.

To take account of the prevailing conditions, such as the projected possibility of the population falling. Such a fall could indicate that the demand for additional housing could stabilise. However there is also a predicted demand for more single and single parent family homes, which might counterbalance the fall in population.

Any future development should also be within the criteria laid down in the NWDC Local Plan. Planning decisions for the parish of Sutton Benger are made by the NWDC Area Committee 3, which covers the market town of Chippenham, Chippenham Without, and fourteen rural parishes. (see Map 6)

# **B: The Existing State of the Parish and policies for its future development**

B.1. The heart of the village of Sutton Benger conforms to the traditional ancient North Wiltshire village layout of a High Street and Back Lane (renamed Chestnut Road in the 1960s). Although in the Civil Parish of Sutton Benger many residents of the hamlet of Draycot Cerne look towards Kington Langley for their social, religious and schooling needs.

By road the village is approximately 4 ½ miles from Chippenham, 9 miles from Malmesbury, 17 miles from Swindon, 18 miles from Bath, and 25 miles from Bristol. Junction 17 of the M4 motorway, linking the area to London and South Wales, is 2 miles from the village.

The parish contains 334 properties in Sutton Benger and a further 35 in Draycot Cerne, as listed in the NWDC 2004 Register of Electors. The B4069 High Street bisects the village, with the church, post office and the site of the former poultry processing factory on the north side and the primary school, village hall, recreation field, doctor’s surgery and much of the housing to the south of it. A dozen houses on Seagry Hill form a small outpost detached from the main village community.

There is a small development of 14 sheltered housing bungalows for the elderly, and a small permanent caravan site, adjacent to Sutton Lane.

The size of the village doubled in the 1970s when a large housing estate was built to the south of Chestnut Road. This estate provided a good mix of two, three and four bedroom terraced, semi-detached and detached properties. However, many of the properties have been extended as residents seek to increase their living space whilst remaining within this popular village. In the 1980s two small developments of detached executive homes were built, at Bell Piece and Manor Farm Drive, and in the 1990s four detached properties were built off Barrett Lane. There has been infilling with detached homes in various village locations, with only one infill of a pair of semi-detached properties, on Chestnut Road.

Five large detached houses on part of the Church Piece, to the north of the High Street, were completed in August 2000.

Temporary permission for three years was granted for one gypsy pitch at Frampton Farm in 2008.

# B.2. Affordable Housing

It is understood that a local Housing Association owns one of the properties in Neville Terrace, which is tenanted under an affordable housing scheme. Many of the council houses erected in Chestnut Road and Seagry Hill the 1950s have been sold to the sitting tenants.

NWDC carried out a survey of housing needs, in conjunction with the parish council in 2007/8, which identified a need for seven low-cost housing units. Jephson Housing Association acquired land outside the village building framework on which they have applied to build seven affordable housing properties. Since this is an exemption site the parish council is seeking secure guarantees that any housing provided on the site will be solely for local needs. The application was refused by NWDC and is currently awaiting an appeal by the applicant.

Although exemption sites allow for land to be purchased at less than development rates the scheme can lead to a low-cost housing enclave separate from the main village community so may not be desirable. Other sites within the building framework, at Hazelwood Farm and the Faccenda factory site may provide viable alternatives within the village envelope.

***Policy (i):To ensure that affordable housing is provide to meet the identified local need and that any scheme gives priority to applicants from the parish or with family connections with the parish.***

# B.3. Religious Worship

The parish church of All Saints is situated at the eastern end of the High Street, Sutton Benger with an attached burial ground that is nearly full. A part of the burial ground has been set aside for the internment of cremations.  The parish council makes an annual grant towards the upkeep of the burial ground. There is also a cemetery with a small chapel at Draycot Cerne on the road to Draycot Village although the church of St James’s Draycot Cerne, near the old site of Draycot House, is now redundant and is opened only for special services. Draycot Cerne as an ecclesiastical parish is joined to Kington Langley.

There are plans for a major re-ordering of All Saints’ to provide a meeting room, kitchen and toilet facilities. It is used regularly by the village school. Sutton Benger is part of the Draycot Benefice, a collective of the parishes of Sutton Benger, Christian Malford, East Tytherton and Kington Langley. In June 2009 the parish of Seagry will also join the Benefice. A new Benefice Rectory was built in 2007 in Seagry Road, Sutton Benger

The redundant church of St James in Draycot Park is opened only for special services. There is rarely used mortuary chapel in Draycot Cerne.

Other denominations are represented in nearby Chippenham and Kington Langley.

***Policy: To continue to support the maintenance of the church setting within the conservation area, and to seek to limit the number of parishes in the care of one incumbent to protect the interests of parishioners.***

# B.4. Schooling

For nearly four decades Sutton Benger Primary School was housed in a collection of temporary buildings. These were replaced with a purpose-built modern school in three phases, completed in 2002. The school currently has 127 pupils up to the age of 11 years, taught in 5 classes.

Children move on from here to secondary schools in Chippenham, the parish being in the catchment area of Hardenhuish School.

A Pre-School Playgroup operates in the neighbouring village hall.

# B.5. Health Services

There is a modern, purpose-built doctor’s surgery with dispensary in Chestnut Road. A health visitor attends the Baby & Toddler Group session in the village hall once a month.

Other health services such as chemists, dentists, opticians, and hospital accident and emergency departments are available in the towns.

***Policy (ii): To support the continuation of dispensing medicines at the village surgery.***

# B.6. Recreation/Leisure

The village hall and the adjoining 8-acre recreation ground off Chestnut Road is a registered charity, for which the Parish Councillors are the custodian trustees. The facilities are operated by a body of managing trustees. A new building, which provides the purpose-built amenities of a hall with a stage, meeting room, fully-equipped kitchen, toilets, showers and sports changing rooms, and storage facilities, was opened in October 2000. The old hall has been demolished and the land it occupied used to create a car park for approximately 20 cars.

A Biodiversity Group is engaged in a programme of planting native species around the perimeter of the recreation ground.

Groups and organisations that use the village hall include the Parent & Toddler Group, the Pre-School Playgroup, Brownies and Rainbows, the Women’s Institute, WRVS Over 60s Club, the Sunday League Football Club, Cricket Club, Rugby Club, Green Buttons Theatre Company, Friends of the School (FOSBS), and the P.C.C. Children’s judo and adults’ Pilates classes are run on a commercial basis. The managing trustees frequently hold fund raising and social events. The village holds two annual fetes over the summer, one run by the P.C.C. and the other by the Friends of the School, and a sub-committee of hall users groups usually organises the annual fireworks display in November. An autumn Variety Concert, organised by the hall management committee, has become a key part of village life, involving participants from most of the village organisations.

The recreation ground has a small play area with swings etc for younger children, on the recreation ground. There is a Multi-Use Games Area marked out to provide two hard tennis courts, a netball court, and an area for five-a-side football. In addition there are two football pitches, a rugby pitch with mobile floodlights and a cricket square, together with training nets.

A mobile library visits the village once a fortnight.

There is one public house, one licensed restaurant and a licensed hotel.

There is an equestrian centre at Roward Farm, and some holiday homes to let at Manor Farm, Draycot Cerne.

Policy (iii): The playground equipment for younger children could be updated. The possibility of providing additional recreational facilities on the north side of the village should be investigated.

# B.7. Shopping

In the High Street there is a sub-post office, which offers banking facilities together with newspapers, stationery, confectionery, cigarettes and newspapers. The last traditional village shop closed in the early 1990s. Mobile shops provide a service for bakery and fish products, and newspapers and milk deliveries continue. A mobile fish and chips van visits the village each Wednesday evening.

The neighbouring village of Christian Malford still has a shop, and the filling station at Lower Stanton St Quintin also carries a useful range of merchandise. For the bulk of their grocery and other shopping needs most parishioners travel to the neighbouring market towns.

At a time when village post offices are increasingly under threat positive action should be taken to support our village sub-postmaster.

Policy (iv): The Parish Council believes there should be incentives to maintain local rural post offices and shops and that, if possible, these should be re‑instated where they have closed. [See NWDC Local Plan 2011 Issues’ Paper.]

# B.8.Employment/Local Businesses

The Faccenda poultry processing factory closed in October 2008, leaving a vacant 10-acre site to the north of the High Street. Although most of the work force had been bussed in from other villages the loss of a major local employer is to be regretted.

A limited amount of local employment is provided by the village hostelries, the school, and farms, as well as by other local businesses, including a market gardener, and the Hideaway Truckstop on the B4122 motorway spur road.

In addition there are a number of independent small businesses, such as carpenters, window cleaners, hairdressers, registered child minders and gardeners, in the parish.

There are small developments of light industrial/office units at Gate Farm and Westbrook Farm.

***Policy (v): To encourage the setting up of appropriate small local businesses and crafts within the village framework, providing there is no conflict with residential neighbours regarding noise, traffic movements, pollution etc.***

# B.9. Farms

A number of working farms still operate within the parish, as follows:

**Lake Farm** adjacent to the B4069. This is a mixed farm of 558 acres, of which 433 are arable, 118 are permanent grass, and 7 are woodland. The farm handles 120 cattle and 6000 poultry per annum.

**Hazelwood Farm**, Seagry Road is still operating as a dairy farm but the owners have recently sought planning permission for residential development.

**Sutton Lane Farm**, - details needed

**Arms Farm**, High Street. There is an historic working barn on the farm that should be protected from possible future development. Arms Farm, in general, is in need of protection as the land has not been subjected to modern farming methods. It is believed that the fields contain an important mix of ancient flora and fauna. The owner died in 2007 and although the farm has been sold, the plans for its future are unknown.

**Gate Farm**, High Street. Many of the farm buildings have been converted for use for office/light industry.

**Langley Burrell Farm**, Sutton Lane – mainly in the neighbouring parish.

**Manor Farm**, Draycot Cerne, has some holiday lets, and is involved in a Pilot Pig Breeding Scheme.

**Roward Farm**, Draycot Straight, has some leisure activities as an equestrian centre. Barns converted to provide holiday lets have recently been sold for residential use.

**Westwood Farm**, B4122, has converted some redundant buildings for light industrial use.

Policy (vi): To support the farming community wherever possible and to encourage alternative uses for redundant farm buildings, and land. It is considered that use of land for large business events, such as car boot sales, is out of keeping with the rural setting, especially when linked to the down-graded main road, and should be resisted.

***When considering the conversion of redundant buildings for light industrial use the size and scale of transport movements connected with such industry should be a major factor. Consideration should also be given to noise and other possible forms of pollution. The positive nature of such proposals, such as the benefits of local employment opportunities, should also be explored.***

Every effort should be made to maintain those farm buildings outside the building framework for agricultural use, and other uses only considered as a last resort. [See also NWDC Local Plan policy RH 12.]

# B.10. Recycling/Waste Disposal

NWDC operates doorstep collection for bottles, tins and papers, but not plastics or cardboard. There is also a mini recycling centre for newspapers, bottles and tins, in the village hall car park in Chestnut Road.

A Household Recycling Centre opened on the B4122, on the northern boundary of the parish in December 1999. This attracts users from across North Wiltshire which often leads to problems with lengthy queues of vehicles along the B road.

***Policy(vii): To improve the range of items that can be recycled on the doorstep. To improve the access to and internal layout of the Household Recycling Centre in order to relieve the queues on the B4122.***

# B.11. Sites of Special Scientific Interest

There is a site of special scientific interest on the southern edge of the parish, which needs continued protection. (Map 5)

Arms Farm, in general, is in need of protection as the land has not been subjected to modern farming methods. It is believed that the fields contain an important mix of ancient flora and fauna.

***Policy (viii): To provide continued protection for the last vestiges of the parish’s rural heritage.***

B.12. Parish Assets

Ownership and maintenance of verges, greens etc is currently being investigated by the Parish Council.

There is a raised brick-built causeway, similar in design and age to the Kellaways Arches (but smaller), on the north side of the B4069 running along the verge to the bridge over the River Avon at Christian Malford. Former county archaeologist Roy Canham expressed the view that it should be fully investigated, kept clear of encroaching vegetation, and properly maintained.

The Parish Council owns or is responsible for village furniture such as the bus shelter, parish noticeboards, the benches on the Cowley Way gossip area and at Draycot Corner, and the ornamental flower beds. It is also responsible for maintaining the gossip areas on Cowley Way, Neville Terrace and between Cowley Way and Queens Close.

The BT telephone box near 27 High Street was decommissioned in 2008 and removed (following an accident) in January 2009. There is one remaining BT telephone box at Draycot Corner.

W.C.C. provides street lighting along the length of the High Street, Chestnut Road, and on the Chestnut Road estate. No street lighting is provided for Draycot Cerne or Seagry Hill.

***Policy (ix):To ensure the preservation of the historic causeway on the north side of the B4069 and to bring it back into daily use. To make the best use of all the council’s assets for the good of parishioners.***

**C: Sites for Possible Future Development**

A number of sites within the parish may be proposed for development in the future. Some have already been considered in the past and the parish council views at the time are included below.

***Policy (i): As a general policy the Parish Council would prefer any new housing provision to be weighted in favour of smaller homes for local people and first time buyers. Any substantial housing development should only be granted with planning conditions that require the developer to contribute to the necessary village infrastructure. This could involve the expansion of the school, road/drainage improvements, incorporation of a shop within the scheme etc to support the population influx generated by the development.*** ***In addition any such development should only be permitted provided that sufficient secondary schooling is available within the existing catchment area. [NWDC Local Plan 2011, Issues Paper 2.3.5 relates to affordable housing.]***

***Policy (ii): Future development should be contained within the existing building framework of the village. Expansion into green field sites should be resisted. [NWDC Local Plan policy RH8.]***

***Policy (iii): The Parish Council needs to formulate a policy regarding alternative uses for redundant farm buildings.*** *[****See NWDC Local Plan policy RH 12 on residential conversions.]***

***Policy (iv): The council’s views on the erection of mobile phone masts (although unlikely), gravel extraction, rural building conversions, use of redundant farm buildings etc needs to be formulated. [See NWDC Local Plan, policies RH 8 and RB 3.]***

***Policy (v): There is concern at the tendency for gypsies and travellers to purchase and develop land outside the building framework and then to apply for retrospective planning permission. While it is accepted that gypsy pitches may be required within the county it is felt that due consideration should be given to the needs of both planning law and the settled population. The granting of temporary permission on the Frampton Farm site adjacent to the flood plan and accessed from a dangerous part of the road is not satisfactory, either for the villagers or for the gypsies.***

C.1. Rural Buffer

The NW Local Plan 2011 Issues Paper (2.2.4) shows a Local Rural Buffer between the villages of Kington Langley and Langley Burrell. It would be useful to have some similar buffer identified between both these villages and Sutton Benger. A buffer with Christian Malford is also desirable, especially as the fields close to the boundary marked by the River Avon are liable to flooding. There have been some concerns about suitable land use, and the use of potentially hazardous access for the temporary gypsy pitch at Frampton Farm. Concerns remain that the land between the two villages could be used for unauthorised purposes.

***Policy (vi): The parish council would like to see the introduction of rural buffers between Sutton Benger and all its neighbouring parishes, and some protection for the character of the hamlet of Draycot Cerne.***

C.2. Faccenda Factory site

The closure of the factory in 2008 has resulted in a vacant 10-acre brown‑field site in the centre of the village. Initial views are that the village could not assimilate the amount of housing that could be erected and that it would be more beneficial if the site were to provide mixed development of light industrial premises and some housing. Provision of a shop within such a scheme would be desirable.

***Policy (vii): To ensure that permission for any large scale development is only granted on condition that appropriate infrastructure provisions are contained within the plans, and to ensure that any scheme could be assimilated into the existing village structure. [See policy C.(i) above.]***

C.3.The Recreation Ground, Chestnut Road

This 8 acre site was given to the parish as a recreational facility in 1920 and it appears from the charity deed that it should not be considered for development. The area is outside the current designated building framework of the village.

***Policy (viii): To preserve this site as a recreation field for the benefit of the community.***

C.4. The Church Piece/Glebe

A small development of five houses was erected on part of this site in 2000, and a new rectory was built on the Seagry Road frontage in 2007. The remaining portion of the field, between the Church and The Vintage Inn is part of the conservation area for the setting of the church. Although within the designated building framework it is unlikely that any further development would be permitted here.

C.5. Land to the south of Lee Crescent/Cowley Way/Queens Close

This land, which is frequently subject to flooding, is outside the building framework of the village and it is deemed that the village has already expanded as far to the south as is practical if the shape and centre of the village is to be maintained.

***Policy (ix): To resist the building framework encroaching into open countryside, and to prevent further southern expansion of the village.***

C.6. Land to the east of College Green

An attempt was made by Hills Aggregates in 1990 to gain planning permission for a large scale gravelling operation on this site, which was met with a vociferous protest campaign. Among the many objections was the proximity of the site to sheltered accommodation for the elderly, the proposed traffic to be generated, and the potential dust, dirt and noise pollution. The application was refused, (see PC minutes 16/1/1991), and Hills decided not to appeal against the refusal.

***Policy (x): To continue to oppose the extraction of gravel from this sensitive site.***

C.7. Land to the west of Lee Crescent/south of Arms Farm

The vacant farm house and outbuildings at Arms Farm are within both the building framework of the village and the conservation area. The large barn is the last unconverted barn of its type within the village and any development of this range of buildings would need to be undertaken sympathetically. The 23 acres of farm land is outside the designated building framework the area and, since it has not been subjected to modern farming methods, may contain flora and fauna that should be protected. It should be noted that the land is prone to flooding in winter. There is no satisfactory access to this site, since the Highways Authority expressed concerns at the prospect of access to the site from the High Street, opposite the Wellesley Arms. There is no access via Chestnut Road/Cowley Way/ Lee Crescent since the land at the end of Lee Crescent is privately owned. The Highways Authority deemed this route to be unsatisfactory for access for a variety of reasons in 1987.

***Policy (xi): To seek to preserve the character of this site. Only sympathetic alternative use of the farm buildings should be permitted in order to protect the ancient barn. [See B.11. (vii) above.]***

C.8. Hazelwood Farm

Hazelwood Farm is included within the current building framework of the village. Applications have been submitted for residential development on land there, but led to numerous concerns at encroachment into the flood plain and potential overcrowding of the site. It is likely that more suitable plans for the site may be submitted in future, especially as it might link up with the vacant Faccenda site.

***Policy (xii): To ensure that any development of this site is in keeping with the surrounding properties and that the integrity of the flood plain is not compromised.***

C.9. Others sites for possible future development

Areas of open land that may be considered in the future include the French Gardens, Seagry Hill, and Draycot Park. There may also be further expansion of the light industrial activities at Westwood Farm and the equestrian activities at Roward Farm.

Other areas for potential development may also be identified.

**D: Traffic and Transport Policies**

***Policy (i): The parish plan should include a prioritised statement of traffic calming/improvement requirements.***

D.1. Status of the High Street

Despite being down-graded from the A420 to the B4069 in the 1980s the High Street that bisects the village remains an unofficial alternative route for the M4 motorway between junctions 16 and 17. This is a cause for major concern in the village. In view of its down-graded status the B4069 should not be signed as a route for traffic going to the Household Recycling Centre on the B4122, or used for access for heavy lorries going to the refuse tip at Compton Bassett. The council supports the calls by Lyneham parish council for a weight restriction on the B4069 from the B4122 motorway spur road, via Lyneham Banks, to Compton Bassett.

***Policy (ii): To support calls for a weight restriction on the B4069.***

D.2. Flooding

The B4069 between the village and Christian Malford crosses the Avon flood plain and has been frequently closed because of flooding in recent years. See B.12 above for the need to protect and maintain the historic brick-built causeway there.

The storm drains along the High Street seem to be inadequate and need to be upgraded.

***Policy (iii): Consideration should be given to measures to alleviate flooding of the road and to upgrade the drainage network for removal of surface water. Restoration of the historic causeway would provide a safe pedestrian route along the B4069 towards the Christian Malford bridge over the Avon.***

D.3. Road safety/Pavements/footways

Sharp bends in the High Street and narrow pavements in places make it unsuitable for heavy volumes of traffic, such as the lorries *en route* to the Compton Bassett landfill site, and that generated when the motorway is closed.

The narrow pavement on the north side of the High Street between Church Piece and Barrett Lane is in need of urgent repairs, as are many of the footways throughout the Chestnut Road estate.

The improvement to the footway at Bell Lane/High Street has led to an improvement in pedestrian safety at that junction.

The delineated pedestrian zone along Seagry Road needs to be properly signed to alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians.

Although recent traffic surveys have shown that average speeds through the village are within acceptable limits it is felt that some vehicles are using excessive speed for the road conditions. Parishioners make regular calls for the use of flashing speed signs and other traffic calming measures.

***Policy (iv): To implement traffic calming measures and to ensure the safety of pedestrians throughout the parish.***

D.4. Future developments

Any future developments within the parish would be likely to have an impact on road usage, speed of traffic, visibility at junctions etc which should be an important aspect of any planning consent. Surface water running into the existing drainage system would overstretch an already failing network.

***Policy (v): Future developments should not exacerbate existing traffic/ visibility or other problems.***

D.5. Parking

Parking problems, such as those near the Wellesley Arms on the High Street and near the school in Chestnut Road, may have a bearing on future planning proposals. The opening of the new village hall in October 2000 with approx. 20 car parking spaces has improved the situation in the vicinity of the hall.

***Policy (vi): To encourage parents to walk their children to school whenever possible and to investigate possible ‘Safe Routes to School’ schemes. [See NW Local Plan 2011 Issues Paper 2.5.7.]***

D.6. Improvements to road junctions

Further developments of the amenities on the B4122 motorway spur road have highlighted the inadequacies of the junction of the B4069, the B4122 and the access road to Draycot Cerne.

***Policy (vii): Any further expansion of the Hideaway Truckstop, the Civic Amenity Centre/Household Recycling Centre, or industrial units at Westwood Farm should be conditional on improvements to that junction.***

D.7. Cycling

The existing rural road network is not suitable for use by cyclists wishing to commute to nearby towns, especially for children cycling to school.

***Policy (viii): Consideration should be given to the provision of cycle ways between the parish and nearby towns.***

D.8. Public Transport

Sutton Benger is on the bus route between Chippenham and Little Somerford. The nearest railway station at Chippenham is not served by this route.

***Policy (vi): To lobby for improved public transport services. NW Local Plan 2011 Issues Papers 2.5.1 refers to the provision of public transport. The Parish Council considers that this should be up and running to meet anticipated demand, since people are unlikely to switch from private car use without a reliable alternative already in existence.***

**E. Links with Chippenham**

The nearest market town to Sutton Benger is Chippenham. Villagers have to rely on the facilities in the town for secondary schooling, shopping and leisure.

The main drawbacks are: a) the problems with parking; b) the poor range of quality shops in the town centre, such as good quality clothing; c) the paucity of leisure facilities for all age groups.

***Policy: To encourage Chippenham Town Council to recognise its responsibility to the villages in its rural hinterland and to take account of their needs as a vital part of the town’s economy.***

**F. Community Policing**

F.1. Neighbourhood Watch

F. 2. Community Safety Partnership/Beat Officers