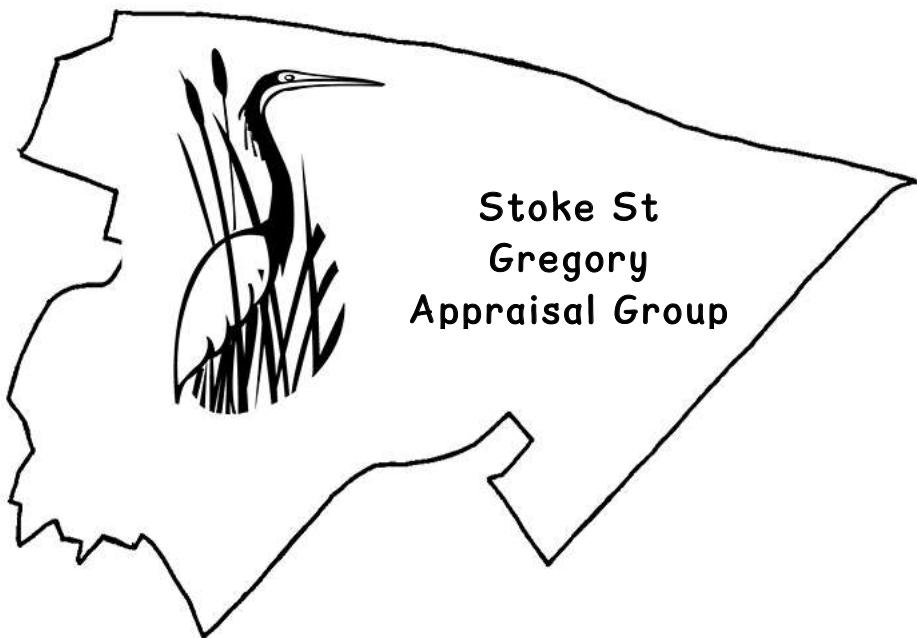


# **Stoke St Gregory**



## **December 2003**

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**Stoke St Gregory Appraisal Group** was set up by the Parish Council under the Countryside Agency's "Vital Villages" initiative. The Countryside Agency Grant was supplemented by financial contributions from Stoke Parish Council and the Community Council for Somerset.

Group members: Dave Evans (Treasurer), Ann Finn, Jean House, (Secretary), Graham Joll, (Project Manager), Tony Morkane, (Chairman), Gill Slattery, Fran Tecks

# FOREWORD

by Sue Hembrow

My father, Eric Hembrow, was originally approached to write this foreword. Unfortunately he passed away in September 2003 and therefore the honour has now passed to me.

Stoke St Gregory is undoubtedly a unique place to live. I often refer to it as 'fashionably unfashionable'. It is this uniqueness that has shaped its character over the centuries.

My family of Hembrows can be traced back as living here for fourteen generations. I feel this suggests that there must be something quite special for people to stay in this area.

We are most fortunate to live in such a caring community where we take an interest in and help each other. These are incredibly valuable assets. However, complacency needs to be avoided. We all need to be aware that our way of life is constantly changing and being challenged. We must absorb change and work with it rather than against it.

Shortly before Eric died he asked me if I thought Stoke had benefitted from him residing here. When I told him I thought it had, it was obvious how important it was to him to have made a difference to the village that he loved and cared for.

I have come to realise that we all have the capability of making a difference to our community. It is really quite simple - we have to pull together.

This plan has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to formulate and shape our future. The high standard of work put into compiling this document is outstanding and I was particularly impressed with the most encouraging response to the original questionnaire.

I therefore would like to propose that we adopt a "DON'T WAIT TO BE ASKED PHILOSOPHY". Support a project that you are interested in and make it happen. Rest assured that whatever you decide upon will make a difference to Stoke St Gregory.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Parish, like many other rural Parishes, is undergoing social, environmental and economic changes; changes which will influence the future character of the community. The Parish needs to be in a position to understand these changes and what people need in order to maintain and develop a socially and economically cohesive community.

It was considered that a Parish Plan would enable the Parish Council and local voluntary groups to understand these needs and to be better able to influence those whose decisions influence developments in the Parish: for example, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust

The Countryside Agency through the Vital Villages programme aims to help small rural communities to identify what they need to do to revitalise the community and to provide support to enable the Parish to implement some of the improvements needed locally.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Parish Appraisal Group would like to thank all those volunteers who through an "organised effort" made this survey possible and achieved a very high response to the questionnaire

Jenny Blackburn, Julia Clewes, Roger Hand, Sheila Hembrow, Margaret Hogan, Carole Joll, Alison Katte, Paul Katte, Anne Lowe, Helen Miles, Mary Parkinson, Inger Sloots, John Tipping, Stuart Wilkinson, Jane Wilkinson,

and Sue Hembrow for her support to the Group for publicity, Steven Willey for the design of the logo, Tony Ayres for the construction of the village hall noticeboard, Dave Elliott (Huntham Close) for the centrefold map, Nick Sloan for the hours of professional design time he put in for the questionnaire.

We would also like to thank all the contributors to the Showcase event.

## Method

The appraisal included mini consultations with a range of organisations who provide services in the parish.

A showcase consultation event was held in the village hall in March 2003.

It was organised primarily for local people to comment on the questionnaires and to raise awareness of the many activities that take place locally. It included displays from local businesses and artists.

Comments from the 175 visitors were also included in the discussion and action plans of the relevant section of the report. A separate event was organised by the Somerset Rural Youth Project for young people age 11-16 years.

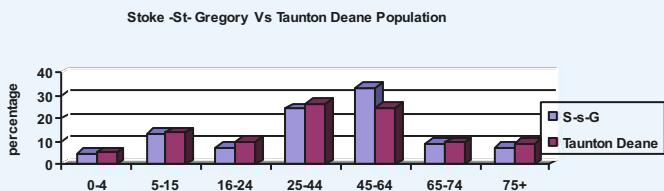
A questionnaire was distributed to all permanently occupied households in the parish, and were collected within two weeks.

An independent researcher was contracted to input the data from each questionnaire, and to provide the primary information.

## Survey Results

### HOUSEHOLDS

There was an 87% response rate from the households surveyed (334 /384 households).



797 people were recorded in the survey. This compares with 910 people recorded as living in the parish at the 1991 Census.

16.5% of the population living in Stoke St Gregory are over the age of 65 years (1% >85 years) compared to 18.3% for Taunton Deane (2.5% > 85 years)

61% of households live in detached houses; 24% in semi detached and 10% in terraced houses.

79% of houses have a name or number which is visible from the road.

43% of households own their property outright, 33% own their property with a mortgage and 16% rent.

91% of households have access to one or more vehicles available for use by members of the household (range 1-6 vehicles).

94% of these households have their transport needs met by these vehicles.

Approximately 10% of households' private transport needs are not met.

72% of households do not have problems with heating, insulation, draughts nor condensation.

Over 80% of houses have either/or a combination of a lagged hot water cylinder, loft insulation and double glazing.

81% of houses have a working smoke alarm

65% of households do their 'average' shopping in Taunton

**Percentage of shopping spent in the following**

	Average
Taunton	65%
Langport	10%
Stoke St Gregory	9%
North Curry	4%
Bridgwater	4%
Other: Cardiff, Bristol, Chard, Street	5%

### ACTION PLAN

Arrange for information and grants that are available for the installation of energy saving and safety devices installed in homes.

Review the transport needs of those households without private transport and for those people who are disabled.

Actively promote the clear naming and numbering of houses.

Explore opportunities with the shop owner to encourage greater use of this local amenity.

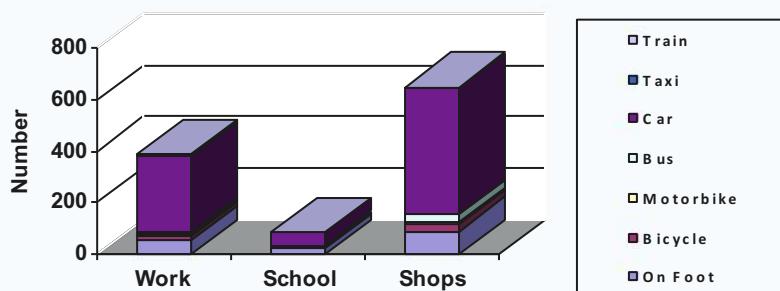
# TRANSPORT

The majority of people travel to work and the shops by car. Also the majority of people do not experience any difficulty in getting to the Health Centre or Post Office.

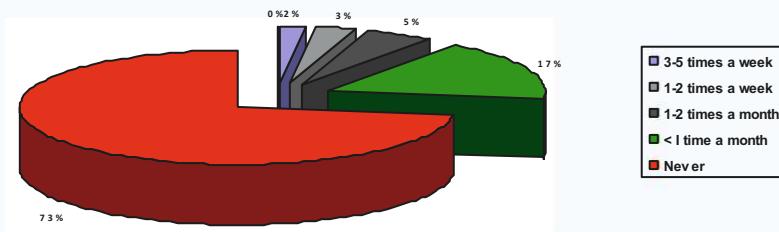
However, 13% of the people living in the Parish do have difficulty in accessing these services and getting into Taunton.

8% of people use public transport at least once a month but the majority of people never use it. Improvements to the route, timetable, cost and reliability might encourage more people to use public transport.

**Mode of Travel to Work, Education & Shops**  
NB There may be multiple entries across each category



**Percentage of People Using Public Transport  
(574 respondents)**



## **ACTION PLAN**

The Parish Council will -

review access to transport, public and private, for the households which are unable to access essential services and shopping.

consider the options for reducing private car use including car sharing, and improvements to public transport.

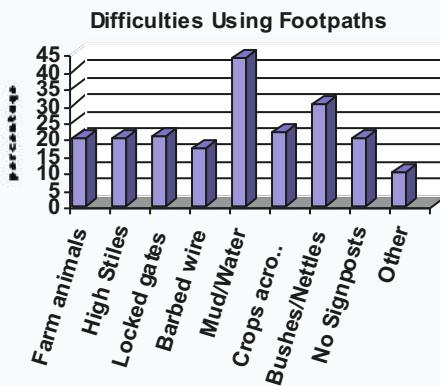
consider developing village minibus transport scheme.

assess whether a car share scheme should be set up and contact respondents who expressed a desire to join such a scheme.

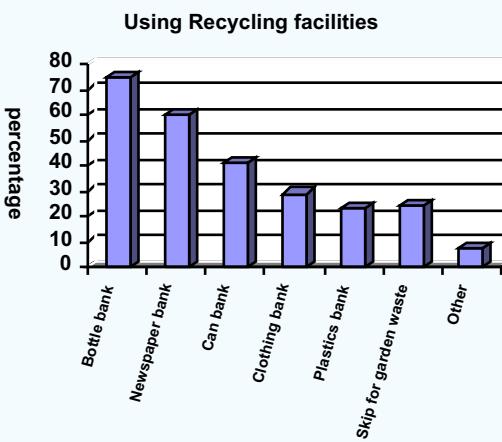
## ENVIRONMENT

The survey showed that there is a general need for improved management of roads and verges, including flooding. A more pressing need is the improvement of certain danger spots on the roads and a better control of speeding traffic. Improved facilities for cyclists do not appear to be a main priority, although some simple measures could be taken to improve cycling conditions in the village.

People are happy with the state of the footpaths on the whole, although changes could be made to make walking around the area easier for all.



People felt that there should be more litter bins in the Parish. There were, generally, favourable views expressed on the quality of refuse collection and waste recycling, with many people using the existing recycling facilities. The majority of people would be willing to separate out certain items for recycling if an extra kerbside collection were to be made.



Responses showed that there is a need for young people to be involved with local decision making, especially on issues which directly affect them.

## ACTION PLAN

A review of road, roadside and pavement repair and maintenance.

Consultation with the County Council for improving the main danger spots of 1) the bends by Walnut Tree Cottage and 2) the camber on the road at 'Denman's Hill.'

Traffic survey to ascertain the amount of speeding at different locations in the village and how best to reduce speeding.

Production of a map of rights of way in the area.

A review of the design of stiles, placement of mid-route 'waymarks' and stiles at locked gates.

Investigation of the positioning of dog waste bins.

A review of methods of reducing litter in the Parish.

Investigate the feasibility of separate collection of recyclable materials.

A review of ways in which young people can be involved in the business of the Parish Council.

## EDUCATION AND LEISURE

A marked interest is shown in Adult Education Classes; especially Computer, Languages, Gardening, Keep-fit, Painting and Slimming classes.

### Adult Education Classes

Languages	147
Computing	169
Drawing/painting	88
Sewing	38
Basket making	49
Gardening	99
Get fit	120
Smoking cessation	11
Slimming	67
Bridge	28

75% of the people agree that an Information Point is needed, with the shop/Square area being the preferred location.

Whilst more than half of the respondents have access to the internet at home, one third have no internet access at all.

Just under a half would like a Broadband internet connection to be available.

## ACTION PLAN

The Parish Council will

Liaise with the Playgroup, the School Governors and the Friends of the School to investigate possibility of providing childcare provision.

Explore opportunities for further education with Taunton Adult Learning and Leisure and local people interested in establishing clubs.

Review the provision and access to public and private transport (*See Transport section*)

Review the provision of a centralised Information Point.

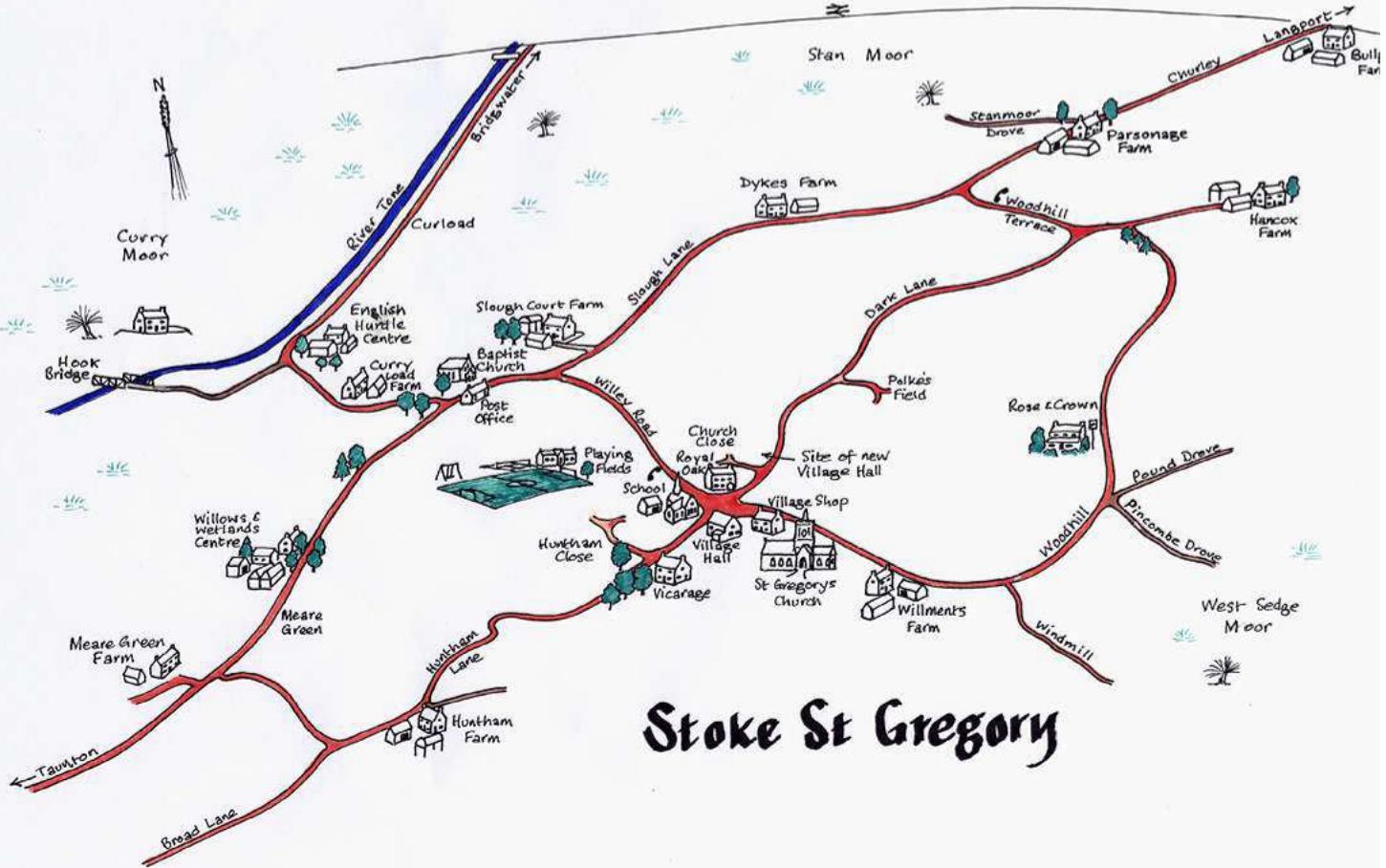
Consider the appointment of an Information Officer.

Review the possibility of delivering a Parish newsletter to each house on a regular basis.

Follow up those people who state that they are willing to help with new Children's Groups.

Investigate the possibility of providing public access to the internet and IT training.

Follow up those people who say they are willing to help set up new leisure activities.

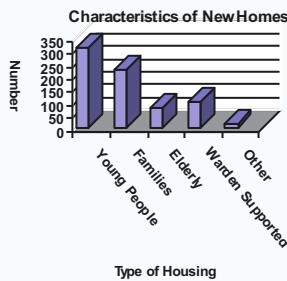


# HOUSING AND WORK

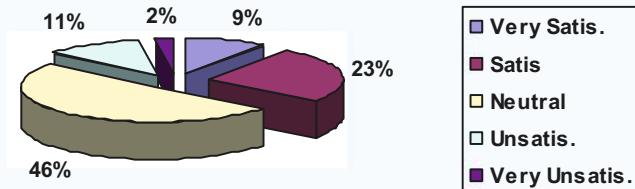
A majority of people feel that more houses for rent or freehold should be built in the Parish, although people are generally satisfied with the existing provision of housing. Most respondents feel that more should be done for young people, particularly affordable housing, family homes and warden supported homes for the elderly.

However, there is concern that the village lacks the necessary infrastructure to support more housing. People feel that more housing would encourage people to stay in the area and create more jobs. 95% of respondents were in favour of creating more local employment opportunities.

Qualifications put on new employment development include the need for low impact activities; i.e. the re-use of existing buildings.



### Provision of Housing



## ACTION PLAN

Set up local working group on how to achieve more affordable housing in the next 5 - 10 years.

Make any necessary changes to the local structure plan, to enable affordable homes to be built.

Apply for a grant for a feasibility study for affordable housing in Stoke St Gregory.

Set up local working group to look at ways of creating more jobs for local people.

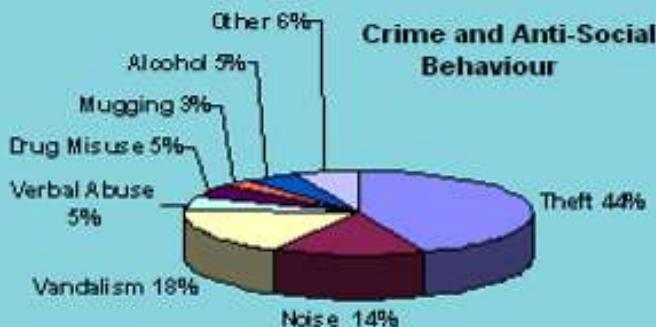
Take steps to create the necessary framework for employment creation for local people.

## CRIME

A majority of people are not aware of the community Police Service. More frequent contact with the Service would offer an opportunity for the village to get to know what systems exist for local policing with the aim of reducing concerns about theft, noise levels and alcohol and drug misuse.

Information is needed about when the Mobile Police Unit comes to the village. This could be included in the Parish News and on the website.

People are most concerned about theft and a range of anti-social behaviour such as speeding, excessive noise and vandalism. Public awareness needs to be raised about the effects of sudden loud noises, for example fireworks, on animals and people especially late at night.



More people would like to see a greater police presence.

More would like to have better consultation with the police.

Opinion on improving pedestrian lighting is almost equally divided (possibly reflecting whether or not there are lights near to each respondent's house).

The majority feel there should be more activities for young people.

125 people would like to see an alcohol/drug misuse programme, while 98 show less concern.

555 of people feel that a Good Neighbour scheme should be introduced and 41% are in favour of having a Village warden.

## ACTION PLAN

Review the role of the Community Police Service in crime prevention.

Investigate schemes for reducing speeding in the village.

Develop a "Welcome" pack for new residents.

Instigate Good Neighbour and Village Warden schemes.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

Overall, 92% of people who live in the Parish are very satisfied or satisfied with their quality of life.

People who are not so happy with their quality of life are people who are disabled and/or have difficulty accessing local services, or are not being visited in their homes.

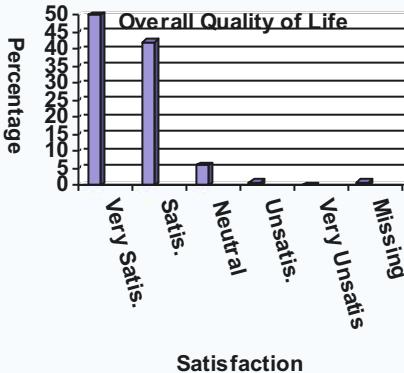
The Village Shop, Post Office, school and playing fields are the most important local amenities contributing to peoples' overall quality of life.

Only 0.7% of people living in the Parish are looking for work.

92% of people state that their health is "good" or "fairly good". However, 16% of people have a long term health problem.

70% are "very satisfied" of "satisfied" with the access to their health centre.

Almost 1 in 5 people give unpaid help to family members, and provide an average 7 hours of caring per week.



## ACTION PLAN

The Parish Council should try to ascertain that the support needs of those people who are disabled are being met.

The Parish Council should convene a 'patient user group', in conjunction with the health centre manager, to consider options for improving access, especially for disabled people.

The Parish Council should consider the establishment of a Care Support Group for those people who look after others, particularly the elderly and disabled.

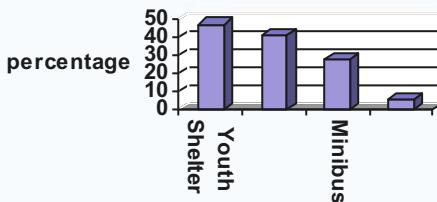
## YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst many 11-18 year olds appreciate that Stoke St Gregory is a good place to live, there appears to be a need for improved leisure facilities in the form of a meeting place, a hard surface sports area and a greater variety of clubs. Better public transport is needed for young people to access facilities in nearby towns.

Many over 14's would like to work in the village, but need to know how to obtain a job. Over half of respondents would like the opportunity for young people's voices to be heard in local decision-making.

About 30 young people stated a preference for the amenities as detailed in the diagram on the next page.

Youth Facilities. % saying Yes



## ACTION PLAN

Develop ways of involving young people in village decision making.

Investigate the feasibility of new hard court area with lighting and shelter on playing field.

Establish a register of young people available for work.

Look into the provision of public transport for young people.

# COMPARISONS

The Parish of Stoke St Gregory is one of 50 Parishes in Taunton Deane. The Parish population of about 900 people, as calculated by the 2001 census, is approximately 1% of the population of Taunton Deane which has a population of 104,000 people.

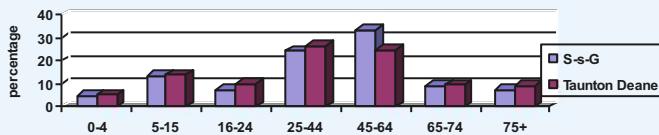
The Diagram below shows a comparison of the age structure of the Parish population compared to Taunton Deane.

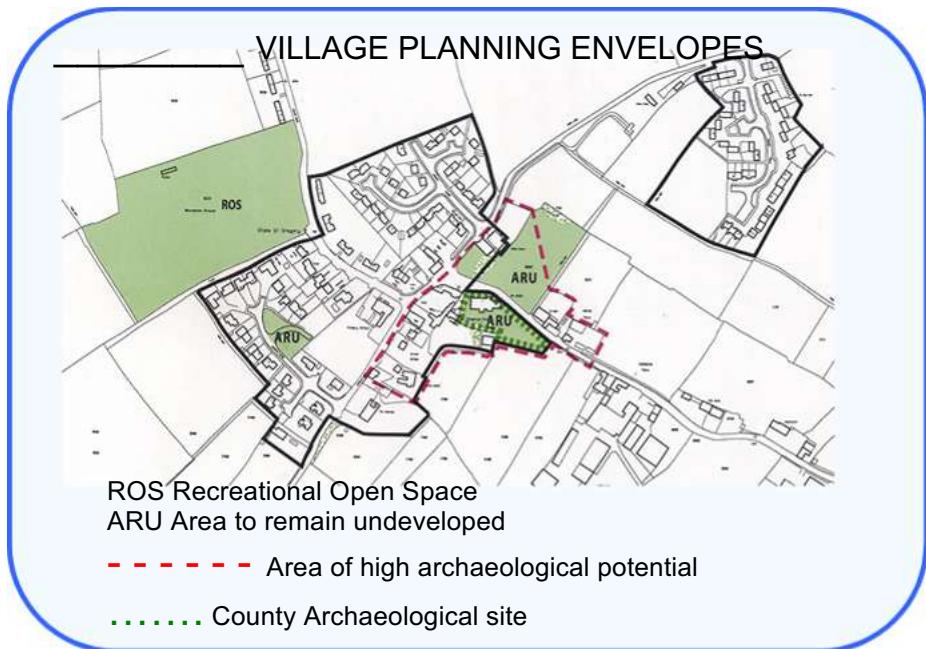
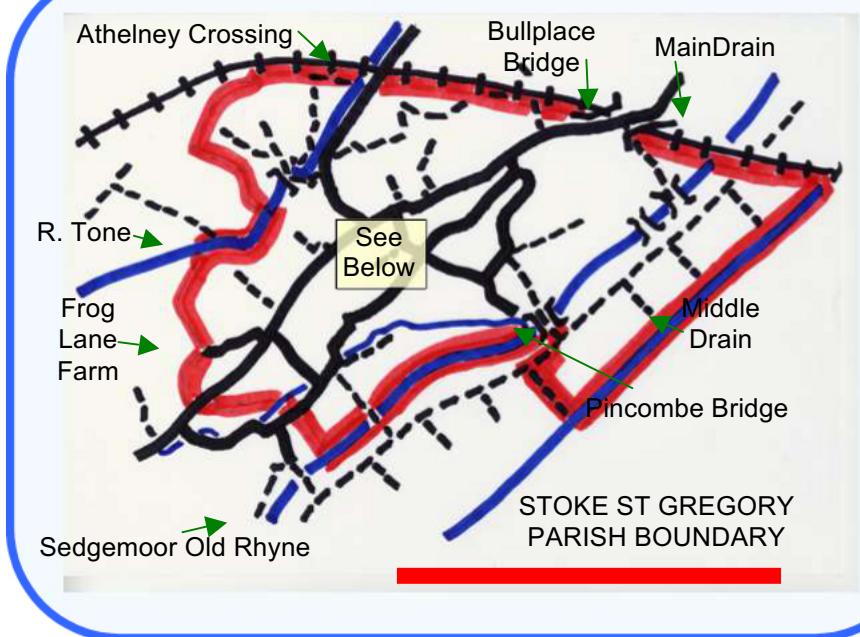
16.5% of the population living in Stoke St Gregory are over the age of 65 years (1% >85 years) compared to 18.3% for Taunton Deane (2.5% > 85 years)

In Taunton Deane 18.2% of the population had a long term illness. This compares with 16% of people in Stoke St Gregory.

7% of Stoke St Gregory residents stated that their health was 'not good' at the time of the survey, compared to 8.3% of people in Taunton Deane.

Stoke St. Gregory Vs Taunton Deane Population





# **Stoke St Gregory Action Plan**

## **NOTES**

## **GENERAL ACTIONS**

As a result of the Parish Plan Presentation Day (15.11.03) the Action Points have been prioritised as shown below, in to (A) short term (6-12months), (B) medium term (12mths- 3 years) and (C) long term (3 – 5 years).

The Parish Council undertakes to review this parish appraisal in 2010.

## **HOUSEHOLDS**

Arrange for information and grants to be available for the installation of energy saving and safety devices installed in homes. (B)

Review the transport needs of those households without private transport, or who are disabled. (A)

Actively promote the clear naming and numbering of houses. (A)

Explore opportunities with the shop owner, to encourage greater use of this local amenity. (A)

## **TRANSPORT**

Review access to transport, public and private, for the households which are unable to access essential services and shopping . (A)

Consider the options for reducing private car use including car sharing, and improvements to public transport. (C)

Consider developing village minibus transport scheme. (A)

Assess whether a car share scheme should be set up and contact respondents who expressed a desire to join such a scheme. (A)

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

Review road, roadside and footpath repair and maintenance particularly consider cyclists pedestrians and horse riders. (A)

Consult with the County Council for improving the main danger spots of 1) the bends by Walnut Tree Cottage and 2) the camber on the road at 'Denman's Hill.' (A)

Initiate a traffic survey to ascertain the amount of speeding at different locations in the village and how best to reduce speeding. (A)

Produce a map of rights of way in the area to enable easier access. (A)

Review with the Footpath Officer, the design of stiles, placement of mid-route waymarks and stiles at locked gates to improve access. (B)

Investigate the positioning dog waste bins. (A)

Review methods of reducing litter in the Parish. (B)

Investigate the feasibility of separate collection of recyclable materials. (A)

## **EDUCATION and LEISURE**

Liaise with the Playgroup, the School Governors and the Friends of the School, to investigate the possibility of meeting the needs for childcare provision. (B)

Explore opportunities for further education classes with Taunton Adult Learning and Leisure, and local people interested in establishing clubs. (A)

Review the provision and access to public and private transport. (B)

Review the provision of a centralised information point. (A)

Consider the appointment of an Information Officer. (B)

Follow up those respondents who stated that they are willing to help run clubs. (A)

Develop an IT training programme to offer computer training and use of the internet. (A)

Follow up those respondents who stated that they are willing to help to set up new leisure activities. (B)

## **HOUSING and WORK**

Set up local working group on how to achieve more affordable housing in the next 5 – 10 years. (A)

Work with Taunton Deane Borough to make any necessary changes to the local structure plan, to enable the building of affordable homes. (B)

Apply for a rural community grant for a feasibility study of affordable housing in Stoke St Gregory. (A)

Set up a working group to look at ways of creating more jobs for local people. (A)

## **CRIME PRENTION**

Review the role of the Community Police Service in crime prevention.  
(A)

Approach the present Neighbourhood Watch leaders and with them promote new schemes in areas of the village that are not presently covered. (B)

Investigate schemes for reducing speeding in the village. (A)

## **QUALITY of LIFE**

Develop a "Welcome" pack for new residents to the Parish. (A)

Contact those people willing to participate in a Good Neighbour and Parish Warden schemes. (A)

Ascertain that the support needs of disabled people are being met. (B)

Convene a 'patient user group', in conjunction with the health centre manager, to consider options for improving access, especially for disabled people. (B)

Consider the establishment of a Carer Support Group for those people who look after others. (B)

## **YOUNG PEOPLE**

Investigate the feasibility of new hard court area with lighting and shelter on the playing field, or short term use of the school playground. (B)

Establish register of young people available for work. (A)

Investigate public transport for young people to see if there can be improvement in timetables, fares, reliability and driver attitude or local transport alternatives . (A)

Review ways in which young people can be involved in the business of the Parish Council. (A)