

Stottesdon Area Parish Plan

January 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council received a grant from the Countryside Agency in December 2002 to produce a Parish Plan as part of the Vital Villages programme. The Parish Council developed a Parish Plan Group to undertake the Plan.

The Parish Plan Group decided to undertake a two-stage approach starting with a series of road shows promoting the Plan and discovering people's initial priorities. This information then allowed a detailed questionnaire to be designed with help from specialist consultants.

Seven local interviewers were recruited and trained to undertake the interviews with the aim of interviewing as many people as possible. 66% of all households in the parish contributed to the Plan.

While most people felt that there are many positive aspects about living and working in the Stottesdon area, there are some common areas of concern that need improving. These relate to:

- Travel, transport and roads
- Shops and shopping
- Young people and children
- Community activities
- Training and employment
- Housing
- Health
- Information and communication
- Policing and safety
- Household income
- Farming

The Parish Plan Group has produce a detailed Action Plan showing actions, responsibilities, timescales and priorities. The Plan will be used to influence activities of the Parish Council, as well as the activities of other organisations in the Stottesdon area, over the next five to ten years.



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INTRODUCTION

Parish Plans

Parish Plans form part of the Countryside Agency's Vital Villages programme and were announced in the government's Rural White Paper Our Countryside - The Future in 2000. They are intended to develop a framework for communities to plan their own futures by identifying problems that need to be tackled and celebrating and building on unique features of the local area.

Stottesdon Area Parish Plan

The Stottesdon Area Parish Plan is led by Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council who established a Parish Plan Group (PPG) to manage the development of the Plan. The PPG consisted of five parish councillors, one district councillor and eight volunteers who wished to help the process.

The PPG started the Parish Plan process in December 2002 after receiving a grant from the Countryside Agency.

Area Description

The Stottesdon Area Parish Plan covers the villages of Stottesdon, Sidbury and Chorley in the district of Bridgnorth in Shropshire. The area is predominantly agricultural although there have been a number of limited successful attempts to diversify from farming.

The village of Stottesdon is situated approximately 7 miles south west of Bridgnorth and occupies an elevated position with extensive views. It has developed as a fairly compact settlement, mainly centred around a fine medieval church and grounds. There is a mixture of older cottages, farms and more recent development within the village and the whole area is designated as a Conservation Area within Bridgnorth District Council's Local Plan. Stottesdon is about 3 miles from the Bridgnorth to Cleobury Mortimer road that is accessed by narrow lanes. Services within the village include a primary school, doctor's surgery and a public house.

Chorley lies about 6 miles to the south of Bridgnorth and is just over one mile from the Bridgnorth to Cleobury Mortimer road. Chorley is surrounded by farmland and comprises a mixture of old and new development. Services are restricted to a village hall, chapel and public house.

Sidbury is a very small hamlet about 2 miles north of Chorley. It is predominantly farmland and the only service consists of a church.

While most of the population of the parishes of Stottesdon and Sidbury is concentrated around the villages of Stottesdon, Sidbury and Chorley, the sparse nature of the area results in many isolated dwellings. The area of the parishes of Stottesdon and Sidbury covers 7,968 acres and accommodates 702 people.

PARISH PLAN OBJECTIVES

Vision

The PPG have a simple vision for the Parish Plan:

To make the Stottesdon area a better place to live, work and enjoy.

The Plan will establish local priorities for people living in the area. It will identify the issues that people feel most strongly about as well as building on what is already good about the area.

The Plan will not attempt to solve all problems immediately, but set priorities for improvements over the next five to ten years, seeking external funding where appropriate. As such, the Plan will set targets for the next five years. The Parish Council will measure the success of the Plan against these targets and regularly review the actions.

Looking Outwards

A risk of the Parish Plan is that it becomes inward looking in all of its intended improvements. The quality of life in Stottesdon is affected by developments in the surrounding area and the Plan has gone to great lengths to consider linkages to other local activities. This includes the Market Town Initiatives in Cleobury Mortimer and Highley and initiatives undertaken by Bridgnorth District Council and Shropshire County Council. The Plan has also considered regional initiatives being managed by Advantage West Midlands and Government Office West Midlands.

Influencing Others

Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council will be guided by the Plan and structure future activities around the findings. The Parish Council will also ensure that other organisations are influenced by the Plan, particularly Bridgnorth District Council and Shropshire County Council, when considering activities in the area.

Other organisations likely to be influenced by findings in the Plan include:

- West Mercia Police
- Shropshire Community Council
- Shropshire Primary Care Trust
- Market Town Initiatives
- Local schools and colleges
- Advantage West Midlands
- Government Office West Midlands

PLANNING PROCESS

Approach

For any local plan to claim to be representative of local opinion, it is important that a high proportion of the population have been included. The PPG decided to undertake a two-stage process to get an in-depth assessment of local feelings.

Stage 1 - Road Shows

In order to develop an initial scoping of the main issues in the area, the PPG created a Parish Plan display that was taken to various local groups and venues. The display consisted of a series of photographs of various localities around the area with three blank boards labelled 'sad, mad or glad'. People at the road shows could attach their comments that made them feel sad, mad or glad about the area to the relevant board.

The road shows also consisted of a three-dimensional model of the Plan area. Comments relating to a specific geographical location could be written on a flag on a cocktail stick and placed on the model where the issue occurred.

The road show was taken to the following groups and meetings:

- Duck Inn - Parish Plan promotion evening
- Fighting Cocks Public House - Parish Plan promotion evening
- Womens' Institute - presentation at general meeting
- Stottesdon Primary School - presentation to pupils
- Chorley Play Group - presentation to parents of play group children
- Stottesdon Church - presentation after service
- Chorley Chapel - presentation after service

238 comments were recorded at the series of road shows. These were grouped into similar issues, such as countryside, housing and play facilities to give an indication of the strength of feeling for each issue.

Stage 2 - Local Interviews

The PPG wanted to ensure that as many local people as possible contributed to the development of the Plan. Methods such as questionnaires delivered to houses often have a return rate of less than 25% so the PPG wanted to use a technique that would have a higher return rate.

CAG Consultants had been evaluating some of the Parish Plan processes for the Countryside Agency and have developed a Local Interviewer Process for community consultation activities. The PPG decided to commission CAG Consultants to assist with the development of the Plan using their Local Interviewer Process.

The Local Interviewer Process aims to undertake extensive consultation by interviewing high numbers of local people. Instead of buying this service from a marketing company, local people are trained and paid to undertake the interviewing. This allows skills to be developed that stay in the area as well as employing local people.

Details of the Parish Plan and local interviewing were promoted at the Parish Council Annual General Meeting in April 2003 and circulated through the Parish Council newsletter to every household. Seven potential interviewers came forward for training.

CAG Consultants arranged a workshop in June 2003 to train the local interviewers in interviewing techniques and to agree the format of the questionnaire. Health and safety issues were also covered at the workshop to ensure that the interviewers understood how to minimise risk while interviewing.

The questions were grouped into key issues that had emerged from the road shows. The draft questionnaire developed at the workshop was formatted by CAG Consultants and finalised by the PPG ready for interviewing. The PPG wanted every household in the area to be given the opportunity to be interviewed. All households were allocated to interviewers according to the number and area requested by the interviewers. The questionnaire used by the interviewers allowed up to three people to be interviewed from each household at the same time and was anonymous to encourage honesty.

Interviewers delivered an information sheet to their allocated households giving details of the Parish Plan and a contact telephone number for arranging interviews. Each household interviewed signed a form upon completion. The PPG developed a system to track every interview as well as failed interviews - where a request for an interview was rejected or the household not being in at the appointed time for an interview.

Completed questionnaires were sent to CAG Consultants for entering onto a database for analysis.

Communication

Communication of the Action Plan process was important throughout as was informing households of the outcomes. A local company was sought to assist with the communication and publicity and Design Conscious was commissioned. They produced a website with a new domain name specifically for the Parish Plan process (www.stottesdon-parish.org.uk) that gives current information about the Plan progress. The website will be updated throughout the forthcoming year as part of the Plan actions.

Design Conscious also produced a logo for the Plan and a summary of findings leaflet delivered to every household showing Plan activities.

FINDINGS

Highlights

Both the road shows and the interviews showed that a great majority of people take enormous pride from living in the area. The physical location of the area had the highest number of positive statements including:

"Our wonderful views"
"Lovely village - very attractive"
"Stottesdon is a lovely area"

These physical attributes were compounded by a large sense of community spirit:

"Caring and sharing neighbours"
"Lovely community spirit"
"Wonderful spirit of village life and friends"

The sense of community spirit was reinforced by a strong feeling of community activities:

"Village supporting fireworks and charities"
"All community activities - show, open gardens, Flicks, pub, social events"

While the area does not have many community facilities, those that do exist are seen positively:

"Historic beautiful church"
"Village pubs - good for socialising"
"Village hall nucleus for activities"
"School pitch for meeting and good apparatus"
"Good to have doctor's surgery"

Theme Findings

CAG Consultants analysed the interview questionnaires and grouped the findings into key themes. The PPG and CAG consultants then consolidated all of the issues under the following 11 themes. The themes are listed in priority order according to the number of comments.

Travel, Transport and Roads

- The survey showed that the deteriorating condition of roads was a high priority for many people.
- Lack of public transport is also a problem with only 8% of people able to travel by bus, whereas 70% of people interviewed use a car daily.
- The speed of traffic is a major concern.

Shops and Shopping

- There are no shops within the local area, yet 73% of people shop at least weekly from Bridgnorth, Cleobury or Highley.
- 72% of people would use local shops and 70% would regularly use a local post office.
- Most people want to buy local and fresh produce.

Young People and Children

- There is a lack of facilities for children and young people, yet over 30% of people would be willing to help with activities.

Community Activities

- The level of community activities was high with nearly 60% of people regularly taking part in community activities.
- Many people interviewed were not aware of the range of activities available and would take part in more if activities were better promoted.

Training and Employment

- There are no facilities within the area for training courses yet 42% of people interviewed said they would like to increase their skills. 31% of these people stated that they are not attending training courses because they are not available locally.
- The area has a slightly higher unemployment rate than the district and qualifies for a number of regeneration grants.
- Despite the level of unemployment, local employers often struggle to find suitably experienced or qualified employees.
- Local businesses need advice on grants and publicity, access to broadband and support for local co-ordination.

Housing

- The survey showed that there is a need for low-cost housing to enable young people and families to live and stay in the area, particularly in the next three to five years. This confirms findings of a detailed housing survey recently undertaken by the Parish Council.

Health

- While the area has a good GP surgery, there is concern over the lack of other health facilities, particularly emergency provision.

Information and Communication

- The survey showed that many people were not aware of all activities and initiatives being delivered in the local area.

Policing and Safety

- While the area suffers from relatively low levels of crime, the fear of crime remains moderately high, particularly in isolated areas.

Household Income

- The area has a slightly lower income rate than the district average.

Farming

- As the main influence on the landscape in the area, a weak farming economy will adversely affect the employment and environmental characteristics of the Parish.

Data Analysis

CAG Consultants organised a second workshop in November 2003 to analyse the theme findings to generate ideas for the Action Plan. The ideas were generated with a five-stage process, undertaken through brainstorming activity.

GATHER INFORMATION



DEFINE NEED



GENERATE IDEAS



GROUP IDEAS



TEST IDEAS

Information was gathered through the initial analysis from CAG Consultants. Need was defined through the formation of themes. The PPG went through the process of generating ideas, grouping ideas (through themes) and testing ideas in meetings over November and December 2003. These ideas form the basis of the Action Plan.

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
Travel, Transport and Roads	The Parish Council will investigate the possibility of speed restrictions within villages and at dangerous points through liaison with the Police, Shropshire County Council and the proposed Parish Watch scheme.	High	West Mercia Police, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	Spring 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	A formal method of reporting road defects to the County Council will be started by the Parish Council to enable tracking of repairs through the Lengthsman Scheme.	High	Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	Spring 2004	Parish clerk	Inexpensive, just cost of copying form
	The Parish Council will look to extend the Lengthsman Scheme to include verges and paths.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	Spring 2004	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
	The Taxi Voucher Scheme will be promoted by the Parish Council through the Parish Council newsletter and evaluated after a year.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Rural Transport Partnership, Parish Council	Promoted in February 2004 and evaluated in February 2005	Parish Council Chair	Less than £500
Shops and Shopping	The Parish Council will actively support the development of any local shops or a post office.	High	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, DEFRA, Countryside Agency, Chambers of Trade and Commerce, Parish Council	When appropriate support is sought	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
	Local suppliers will be supported and the high quality of local produce will be promoted.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Market Town Initiatives, Chorley Show, local suppliers, Parish Council	Expected during development of MTI Officer's work programme	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
	The Parish Council will develop partnerships with the Market Town Initiatives and other hinterland activities, as part of the promotion of local produce.	Medium	MTIs, local parish councils, Bridgnorth District Council, Advantage West Midlands	On-going	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
Young People and Children	The Parish Plan Group will undertake a separate process to accurately determine the needs of young people including pre-school children and play groups.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Early Years Childcare Development Team, Stottesdon Primary School, local secondary schools, MTIs, Shropshire Community Council, play groups, Wayfarers, Activity Centre, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	Existing and potential facilities will be identified, co-ordinated and promoted.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Stottesdon Primary School, local secondary schools, MTIs, Shropshire Community Council, play groups, Wayfarers, Activity Centre, Chorley Village Hall, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	Grants and funding will be sought that will provide facilities for older children during summer holidays.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, local secondary schools, MTIs, Shropshire Community Council, Activity Centre, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
Community Activities	Existing community activities will be co-ordinated and promoted regularly throughout the parish using the Parish Council newsletter.	High	Local groups, individuals, Parish Council	Spring 2004	Parish clerk	No additional cost
	The Plan will identify where gaps in activities exist and the Parish Plan Group will attempt to facilitate new activities where the need has been identified.	Medium	Local groups, individuals, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
Training and Employment	<p>The Parish Plan Group will develop links to local colleges, schools, professionals and trainers to seek to provide local training, particularly in the most desired needs of computer skills and local crafts.</p> <p>Regeneration programmes will be approached to determine grant availability for training and employment needs, including the Rural Regeneration Zone, EU Objective 2 programme, Market Town Initiatives and Learning & Skills Council.</p> <p>The Parish Plan Group will undertake a training and skills audit of local employers.</p>	Medium	Colleges, schools, Learning & Skills Council, local businesses, Parish Plan Group, Parish Council	Autumn 2004	Parish Plan Group Chair	Costs to be determined
	<p>Regeneration programmes will be approached to determine grant availability for training and employment needs, including the Rural Regeneration Zone, EU Objective 2 programme, Market Town Initiatives and Learning & Skills Council.</p>	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Plan Group, Learning & Skills Council, AWM, GOWM, MTIs, Parish Council	Autumn 2004	Parish Plan Group Chair	Inexpensive
	<p>The Parish Plan Group will undertake a training and skills audit of local employers.</p>	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Learning & Skills Council, MTIs, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Autumn 2004	Parish Plan Group Chair	Costs to be determined
	<p>The Parish Plan Group will determine accurate statistics on levels of school leavers, unemployment and training needs.</p>	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, GOWM, AWM, Regional Observatory, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Autumn 2004	Parish Plan Group Chair	Inexpensive
	<p>The Parish Council will use this information to form a policy on training and employment for the parish.</p>	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, GOWM, AWM, Regional Observatory, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	January 2005	Parish Council Chair	Less than £3,000
Housing	<p>The Parish Council has selected Shropshire Rural Housing Association to identify land suitable for approximately six houses and progress the scheme with Bridgnorth District Council.</p> <p>The Parish Council will develop a Design Statement for the villages that will influence future building works and the shape and style of the villages.</p>	High	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire Rural Housing Association, Parish Council	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Initial scoping exercise inexpensive
	<p>The Parish Council will develop a Design Statement for the villages that will influence future building works and the shape and style of the villages.</p>	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, West Midlands Planning Aid, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Autumn 2004	Parish Council Chair	Less than £1,000

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
Health	The Parish Council will work with the doctor's surgery to determine the possibility of expanding the range of services available.	Medium	Doctor's surgery, Shropshire Primary Care Trust, Shropshire Acute Health Trust, Shropshire & Staffordshire Strategic Health Authority, Parish Council	Summer 2005	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
	The Parish Council will seek to expand the service provided by the First Response network to ensure there is local provision.	Medium	Doctor's surgery, Shropshire Primary Care Trust, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Parish Council	Autumn 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	The Parish Plan Group and the Parish Council will seek to establish a group that uses local paths for exercise.	Low	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council, Parish Plan Group	Autumn 2004	Parish Plan Group Chair	Less than £500
	The Parish Council will update the Emergency Plan to take account of the potential lack of rapid emergency provision.	Low	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	Autumn 2004	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
Information and Communication	The Parish Council will increase the frequency of its newsletter from once every year to every three months. The newsletter will specifically have information included about community activities.	High	Local groups, individuals, local business, Parish Council	Winter 2003	Parish clerk	Less than £500
	The Parish Council will support the introduction of broadband internet access.	Medium	Telecommunication companies, Switch on Shropshire, Shropshire County Council, Bridgnorth District Council, Parish Council	When appropriate support is sought	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	The Parish Plan Group and Parish Council will use the internet as an additional method of communicating where appropriate including the use of a new Parish website.	Medium	Parish Plan Group, Parish Council	Spring 2004	Parish clerk	Inexpensive

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
	The District Councillor, County Councillor and Police will be encouraged to hold surgeries in local facilities, including the village hall and public houses.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, West Mercia Police	Spring 2004	Parish Council Chair	No additional costs
Policing and Safety	The Parish Council will support the development of a Parish Watch scheme across the parish. This will include residential areas, farms and other local businesses.	High	Bridgnorth District Council, West Mercia Police, Neighbourhood Watch, Parish Council	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
	The Parish Council will work with Stottesdon Primary School and local parents to increase children's levels of road safety and cycling proficiency.	Medium	Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, West Mercia Police, Stottesdon Primary School, Parish Council	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Less than £500
Household Income	The Parish Plan Group and Parish Council will use census and other data to determine accurate statistics on household income to influence regeneration programmes.	Medium	Parish Plan Group, GOWM, Regional Observatory, Parish Council	Summer 2004	Parish Council Chair	Inexpensive
	The Parish Plan Group will work with agencies to financially benefit the parish, such as benefit take-up, Family Tax Credits and energy efficiency grants.	Medium	Parish Plan Group, Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Parish Council	Autumn 2004	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined
Farming	The Parish Council will support plans for sensitive and appropriate diversification.	Medium	Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, DEFRA, AWM, Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	When appropriate support is sought	Parish Council Chair	Costs to be determined

Issue	Action	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource Implications
	Support for diversification will be included in the Parish Council's proposed policy for training and employment.	Medium	Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, DEFRA, AWM, Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	January 2005	Parish Council Chair	No additional cost as policy production costs already noted
	Promotion of sensitive countryside stewardship will be included in the Parish Council's proposed policy for training and employment.	Medium	Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, DEFRA, English Nature, AWM, Bridgnorth District Council, Shropshire County Council, Parish Council	January 2005	Parish Council Chair	No additional cost as policy production costs already noted

FINANCE**Income**

Source	Total
Countryside Agency	£4,991.00
Parish Council	£380.13
Volunteer Gift in Kind	£1,800.00
Total Income	£7,171.13

Expenditure

Item	Total
Public Meetings, Surveys and Consultations	£1,931.47
Consultancy and Professional Support	£2,526.76
Data Collection and Analysis	£1,000.00
Production and Distribution of Final Report and Action Plan	£710.00
Other Costs	£1,002.90
Total Expenditure	£7,171.13

PARISH PLAN GROUP LEARNING

Having completed the development of the Parish Plan, the PPG has considered a number of areas where learning opportunities have occurred.

Using a Two-stage Process

Using a lengthy two-stage process has meant that the Plan took 13 months to complete - longer than anticipated. However, it had two important benefits:

1. A very high proportion of all households played an active part in the Plan. 66% of households contributed compared to a likely 20%-25% success rate with mailed questionnaires.
2. The high percentage, together with attendance at the road shows, means that the reliability of the data gives a clear mandate for the Plan.

Using Local Interviewers

Training and paying local people to do the interviewing has been important in increasing skills within the area and financially benefiting local households. As none of the interviewers had previous experience, the interviewing process took longer than expected. Engaging more interviewers could have reduced this but would have required engaging non-local interviewers and slightly reduced the benefits.

As interviewers are now trained, it should be possible to use these skills again in further surveys as part of the Plan process.

Using Consultants

Using CAG Consultants and Design Conscious as part of the Plan development had two important outcomes:

1. CAG Consultants were able to bring expertise and previous experience of the Local Interviewer Process, providing valuable knowledge.
2. Design Conscious were able to produce professional looking literature and a website that contributed to the overall professional, business-like image of the Plan.

Using consultants was not cheap but the provision of the grant from the Countryside Agency provided the necessary resources.

Communication is Vital

Many interviewed people felt that there is not enough communication within the area on community activities and the activities undertaken by the Parish and District Councils. Communication of the Plan's activities will be vital in maintaining momentum in the Plan and increasing the positive level of community activity.

Evaluation is Part of the Process

The Parish Plan covers a timescale of up to ten years but should not be expected to set an immovable agenda for this period. As priorities change and resources become available, then the PPG and Parish Council should be prepared to evaluate the success of the Plan and set new priorities if needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Local Interviewers

Colin Bromley
Karen Dayus
Margaret Lomas
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Parish Plan Group

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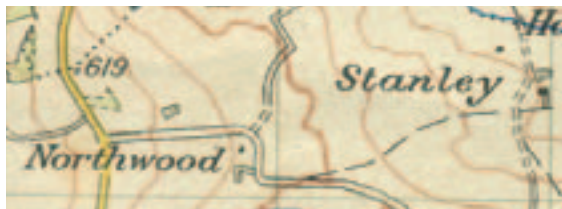
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Stottesdon Area
Parish Plan



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The Stottesdon Area Parish Plan has been supported by the Countryside Agency