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Steering Committee Members

The current committee that have steered the production of the plan are:

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We are grateful to past committee members who have also contributed:

- Dr Julie Draper
- Tim Elbourn
- John Gregory
- Jilly Hall
- Robert Long
- Marion Oliver
- Mike Pilkington
- Terry Symonds

Thank you to all the villagers, village organisations and businesses who have responded by providing input during our consultations.

Thank you also to:

- Meldreth Parish Council who started the process and provided additional funding
- Stan Rees at Cambridgeshire ACRE for his advice and support
- The Countryside Agency for the grant to make it happen
- ten village businesses who made donations towards the cost of publishing this plan.

Letters of Support

Andrew Lansley CBE MP

I welcome the Parish Plan that Meldreth has produced and was pleased to learn about the research findings on the village at the Parish Plan Open Day in February. Meldreth is an attractive village with an interesting mix of history, business and industry, agricultural undertakings and village organisations.

There are pressures for further developments and housing in South Cambridgeshire. The Parish Plan for Meldreth will ensure that the people of Meldreth and their Parish Council can put their case forward on how they want Meldreth to be in the future, balancing the needs of an active community with the architectural and environmental heritage of the village.

I congratulate all those who have worked on the preparation of the plan.

David McCraith, Cambridgeshire County Councillor

I would like to congratulate the Parish Council for deciding to go ahead with the Parish Plan for Meldreth.

This does indeed present a great opportunity for the future of Meldreth residents and I recognise it also means nearly 18 months of hard work to identify the village needs and expectations, for the future. Highlighting the issues and concerns for Meldreth will, I am sure, assist in setting the priorities for the County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, when helping to make life better for Meldreth residents.

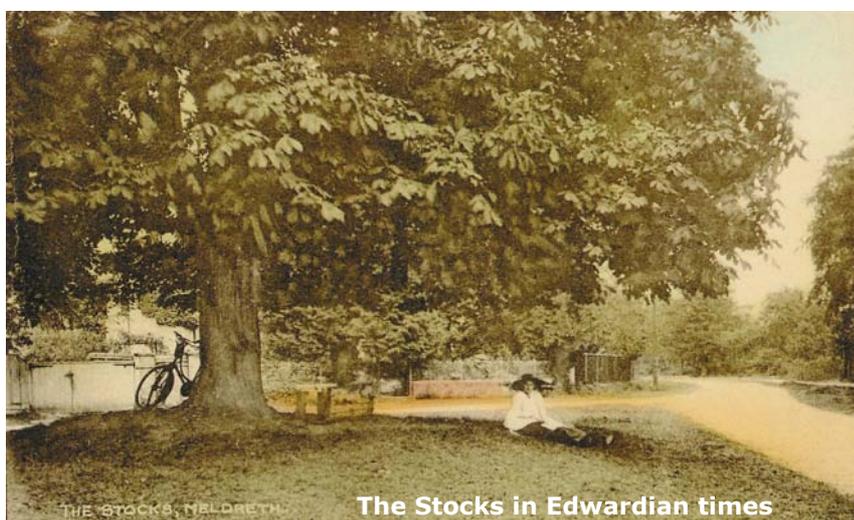
Congratulations are also due to the residents and local businesses of Meldreth in putting forward their priorities for the future. I am sure the result will help to get things right in Meldreth in the future, and I look forward to helping you all achieve that goal.

Dr Susan van de Ven, South Cambridgeshire District Councillor

I am delighted to have the opportunity to express my support for Meldreth's recently compiled Parish Plan.

The Parish Plan is a true village voice for the kind of place residents would like Meldreth to be in the future. It is ambitious in a time of huge development all around us, yet essential to the survival and prosperity of village life. In addition to protecting the beauty of our surroundings, residents have expressed in countless ways their hope that human contact and a sense of community will continue to be at the heart of life in Meldreth.

Our thanks must go to the dedicated volunteers without whom the plan could not have been so well prepared, and also to the many, many villagers who took part by completing a detailed questionnaire. The high response rate is testimony to the strength of feeling about the future of our community. Let's hope that in 50 or 100 years time, Meldreth will indeed bear the stamp of our Parish Plan.



Summary

The majority of people living in Meldreth like the village. They like the way it is now and would like it to remain broadly unchanged.

"Friendly, rural, peaceful, attractive, with a good community spirit and sense of village life" are all feelings held by many villagers. Over half have highlighted their love of village or country life, or being born here, or having relatives nearby, as their main reason for being here.

Meldreth has seen many changes over the last fifty years as it has grown and orchards have given way to arable farming in the area. Whilst retaining much of its charm as a rural village, new businesses have developed, and there are now some ninety businesses offering around nine hundred jobs; unemployment is very low. Rail links with London and Cambridge provide wide opportunities, but the village is not a dormitory town. Rather, particularly for those with use of a car, Meldreth offers an excellent base in attractive countryside for work, shopping and recreation.

Meldreth has a highly valued village primary school, well-regarded village colleges in adjacent villages, plus access to sixth form colleges and private schools in Cambridge.

The village has its own church, village shop, post office, butcher, greengrocer, pub, take-away restaurant, and fruit, arable and turkey farms. These, with the many social and sports organisations, provide a good range of facilities and activities for most age groups.

The Parish Plan surveys and consultations have highlighted the many good features of village life enjoyed in Meldreth. Not all is good however, and there are plenty of issues that can be addressed to remove worries and annoyances, and provide better facilities without detracting from what is valued in the village.

The main concerns villagers have highlighted are:

- any further increase in the numbers of travellers
- lack of a family pub, serving food
- speeding cars and lorries in narrow roads
- facilities for youth
- limited communications about social and sporting opportunities
- disabled access and pavement conditions
- potential loss of the post office or railway station
- poor bus service, particularly affecting those without a car.

Other concerns with potential for improvement are highlighted in the Parish Plan.

The challenge will be to carry out the plan to sustain and improve what is already a very good village to live in - Meldreth.



Introduction

Why do a Meldreth Parish Plan?

Creating a Parish Plan allows the people who live in the village to decide how we want Meldreth to be in the future and how to go about achieving it.

Without a clear sense of what the village wants and why, the Parish Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council cannot provide Meldreth with the right resources focussed on the right priorities. The efforts of people in the village to help each other, and the community in general, cannot be focussed on the right priorities without this clear sense of what the village wants and why.

We live in a world where we have to compete for resources – we must make sure we get our share from government and that we use our resources and our own efforts wisely.

During the consultation process a quote from someone in full-time work was:

"I don't want to spend my evenings sitting in committees – just tell me what I can do to be helpful, and I'll do it!"

How did we involve the community?

- we gave every household a Household Questionnaire.
 - 72% of these were filled in, involving 453 households containing 1137 people
- we gave a Business Questionnaire to the 76 businesses we could identify
 - 82% responded
- we had meetings with or received written submissions from 14 of the 29 village organisations
- we used our Village Model at nine events and gathered 238 comments about the good, could be better and the bad aspects of Meldreth
- we had 22 Primary School entrants to our art, poem and model-making competition
- we gathered a further 57 comments at our February 2005 Open Day when we presented our initial findings to the 150 villagers who came to see the progress made.

We believe that every person living in the village had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and opinions, and some took several opportunities.

Who has done the work?

The work has been done by a Steering Committee set up by the Parish Council. The committee has met practically every month since 9 December 2003. Meetings were to plan what needed to be done, review progress and allocate tasks. Committee members had a variety of backgrounds, skills and contacts.

The key activities and timelines involved in the process of producing the plan are described in Appendix 1.

Funding was obtained by a grant from the Countryside Agency (£3957), the Parish Council (£333), ten local businesses (£277 to help with publishing costs) and from members' own pockets, plus time freely given by Committee members and their long-suffering families. However, the most valuable resource has been the time given by residents, businesses and organisations in responding to questionnaires and contributing their ideas.

Analysis of the Household Questionnaire data was made possible by licensing the software "Village Appraisals for Windows" from the University of Gloucester. Most of the Committee members have good basic computer literacy skills, which saved the potentially significant data inputting, data analysis and secretarial costs of such a project.

Where do we go from here?

The current Committee will finalise the project accounts and ensure the raw data, data analysis and conclusions are archived in an accessible form. It is important that the data can be retrieved and used, both to underpin justification for actions and as a comparative baseline for any future Parish Plans or studies.

The Parish Council will set up an action committee to carry out the plan. This will consist of people willing to "champion" (to take the lead on) the issues – or be the prime contact for other volunteer champions.

The action committee will need some basic funding from the Parish Council and successfully to lobby for grants and funds from local government and from the local community in order to carry out the plan. However, it will be the sustained will and efforts of many people in Meldreth that will ultimately determine whether Meldreth is maintained and enhanced as the attractive, thriving and peaceful village that it undoubtedly is.

Description of Meldreth

Location

Meldreth is a semi-rural parish, surrounded by arable land and orchard farms, in South Cambridgeshire. It is located 16 km south-west of the university city of Cambridge and 6 km north of the market town of Royston in the valley of the River Mel. There is a conservation area covering the areas around the church and the village stocks.

The Melbourn by-pass was opened in July 1988, and runs south-east of the village, severing Meldreth from Melbourn. The parish covers 1,007 hectares.

History and Settlement

The parish stretches from the River Rhee, or Cam, in the north to Ashwell Street in the south. The western boundaries follow common field boundaries with Whaddon and Bassingbourn. The eastern boundaries follow the River Mel in the south and other water courses draining to the River Rhee in the north.

Until the 19th century Meldreth was divided into five groups of buildings but today, with 19th to 21st century infill, forms a continuous settlement of over 3 km between Shepreth and Melbourn. The parish church of Holy Trinity and two former manors identified by their moated sites occupy the north of the parish by the River Mel. Meldreth and Sheene Manors survive today and the mills of Topcliffe Manor and Sheene Manor were in use until 1942 and the First World War respectively. In North End the street formerly widened to a village green near the Malton Lane junction. Marvell's Green at the Fenny Lane junction still has the 18th century stocks and the base of a whipping post.



The first church in Meldreth probably dates from around 970. In the Domesday Book of 1086 the church is associated with the Manor that became Flambards. The present church building dates from the late 12th century with extensions in the 14th and 15th centuries. Extensive repairs were carried out to the south wall in the 19th century, when it was covered in roman plaster. The church is the only Grade I listed building in Meldreth and there are 38 Grade II listed buildings.



Before the 18th century, all buildings were traditionally built of a plastered timber frame with roofs thatched with long straw or plain tiled. Chiswick House, Sheene Manor and No.33 North End date from the 16th century. Farm buildings were weatherboarded and thatched until the 19th century when brick, slate and pantiles were more commonly used.

The enclosure of the open fields and commons took place in 1820 when the land was farmed from the village. The Royston-Cambridge railway line and the station were opened in 1851, opening Meldreth to wider markets.

Extensive plum and apple orchards were planted in the mid 19th century and are part of the intrinsic character of the village. The good flavour of the Cambridge Gage grown in Meldreth was widely recognised and the fruit delivered to London's Covent Garden by train.

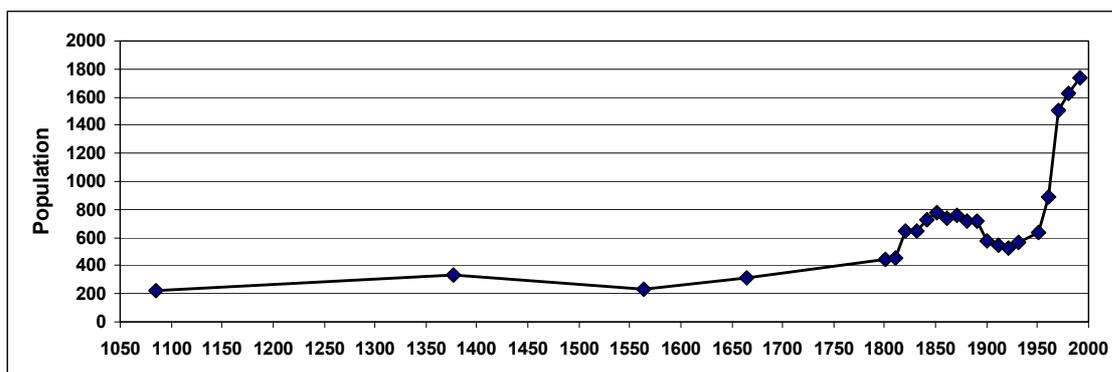
By 1900 there were at least two cement manufacturing and lime burning factories in Meldreth – Cambridge Portland Cement Co. Ltd. (now Cam Farm) and Meldreth Portland Cement & Brick Co. Ltd. (now Eternit) and 13 farmers employing 94 people.

Recent History

Post World War II expansion in Meldreth was rapid, with new housing being developed just north of the London-Cambridge railway line. Private residential estates such as The Grange, Oakrits and Flambards Close and local authority developments such as Elin Way and Howard Road have increased the size of the village since the 1960s. Other housing expansion has taken place in Bell Close and Gables Close.

Development at the southern part of the village has thus been consolidated, whereas in the north the village's linear character has been retained.

In 1951 Meldreth had a population of 636. By mid 1991 this had risen to 1,740 and to 1,790 by mid 1996.



The graph shows the population of Meldreth from the time of the Domesday Book. Official censuses started in 1801 so the earlier figures are estimates made by historians. In 1892 there were boundary changes and part of Meldreth became part of Melbourn.

Services and Facilities

Meldreth has a post office/shop, a butcher and 2 farm shops. It also has a public house, a primary school (opened in 1909), a recreation ground, village hall, a community room for the elderly and a church meeting room. There are some 900 people employed in the village including those working from home. The four largest employers are the Eternit building products factory, the Scope residential school at Meldreth Manor, Bury Lane Farm and Gocold.

Other key services, e.g. GP surgery, dentist, petrol station are in Melbourn or Royston.

In January 2004 there was permanent accommodation in the primary school for 180 pupils and no temporary accommodation and there were 173 pupils on the school roll. Secondary education is at Melbourn Village College.

Sewage is treated by the works in Meldreth.