

Eynsham Parish Plan 2007-08

55 LEISURE & RECREATION

55.1 The Facts

55.1.1 Eynsham has over 90 clubs, associations and support groups, catering for almost every age and taste: sports, arts and cultural groups meeting on a regular basis. These operate as independent organisations, meeting in venues such as the village hall, church halls and primary school, or as evening class activities in Bartholomew School.

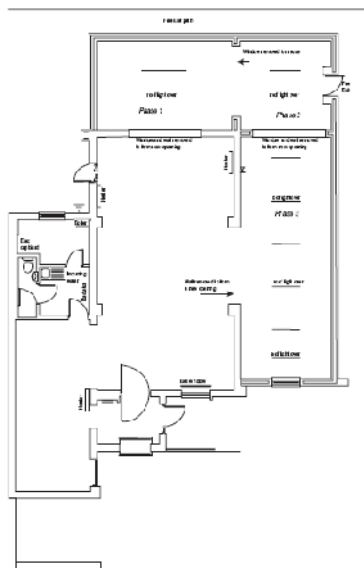


Illustration 1: Tapestry of village organisations, completed Autumn 2006



Illustration 2: Eynsham Library and proposed extension drafted 2003-4

Other options include 3 churches, a library, 10 pubs and a wide range of walks: see the Environment Section.



55.1.2 Use of the Square as a social centre has been much enhanced by separation of pedestrian and traffic zones and by sympathetic re-paving.



Illustration 3: Eynsham Market Square, renovated 2002



Illustration 4: People of all ages enjoying the Carnival in Market Square, July 2007

55.1.3 The village calendar includes May Day and other events centred on the Square, Eynsham Carnival, Flower Festival and Open Gardens (July) and Eynsham Show (September) – involving many village organisations and attracting visitors from outside too.

55.1.4 Art, culture and heritage are served by a strong showing in Arts week; lively choral and history societies; and over 90 listed buildings.

55.1.5 Venues available for groups to use are also diverse and have been greatly enhanced by the addition of the village hall (2001/2). The village Playing Fields, with recently refurbished Sports Pavilion, as well as the cricket and croquet grounds, also provide good quality venues for sports clubs and community activities.



Illustration 5: Eynsham Village Hall, opened June 2002

55.1.6 On a sadder note, the Hugh Cooper Memorial Library, opened in 1988 as “a pioneering collaboration between a village society and its local authority” (the County Council), now languishes in a cabinet in a private house with proportionately restricted access. Much of the material is available nowhere else, e.g. Eynsham History Group's own researches, local railway memorabilia, photographic records and other donations from the late Bishop Gordon's library.

55.2 Leisure & Recreation: The Opinions

55.2.1 Question 11 asked “What new leisure facilities would you attend in Eynsham?” There were 495 responses to this question, as shown:

i. Tennis	169	(34%)
ii. Rambling Club	139	(28%)
iii. Community Drop in Centre	121	(24%)
iv. Creative Arts for Children	93	(19%)
v. Community Lunches	89	(18%)
vi. Cyber Café ¹	59	(12%)
vii. Volleyball	37	(7.5%)
viii. Basketball	34	(7%)
ix. Whist Drive	4	(3%)
x. Senior Citizens Group	1	(0.2%)
xi. Other	182	(36%)

55.2.2 These results are supported by the responses to the open questions. Other suggestions for Eynsham leisure facilities included:

1 Voting for the cyber café is particularly striking, given that only 65 people under 25 years old returned a form

- i. restoration and improvement of the outdoor pool (59)
- ii. flood- lit all-weather tennis courts
- iii. flood-lit Astro turf pitch
- iv. clearing the Wharf Stream to allow small craft access to the Thames
- v. extending basketball hoop concrete area to create a full pitch

55.2.3 The main reason given for having these facilities locally was to reduce travel to facilities at towns such as Witney and Carterton. Attention was drawn to other settlements in the area that have access such facilities e.g. Yarnton; Kidlington; Carterton.

55.2.4 There were 736 responses to Question 12 on the children's playground(s). 438 people (58%) thought existing provision was good or reasonable; 30% had no opinion; only 9.4% thought it poor. The Parish Council has committed over £22,000 towards redevelopment of Witney Road Play Area in the financial year 2007/08. The plan includes a full-size basketball pitch.

55.3 Leisure & Recreation: The Vision

55.3.1 Three major projects, commanding broad support, are already under way and are outlined below. The other facilities suggested in the open question responses might also be developed by smaller groups of people. Further consultation may be required for these.

55.3.1 A large sports hall is being constructed at Bartholomew School. Thanks to a joint-use agreement and part funding from the Parish Council, there will be community access to a fitness suite in this building. This will provide an important new recreation and leisure facility in the community.



Illustration 6: Framework of school & community sports hall, February 2007

55.3.2 The Wharf Stream and surrounding area were mentioned in the Environment section 53.3.3:

“As well as being of heritage significance, (it) also visually enhances the walk from The Talbot inn to Swinford Lock². Currently it is clogged with fallen willows, eroded embankments, weeds and brambles. Elementary dredging would return the tributary to an open stream. Such work would need to be carefully planned to preserve the stream as a natural habitat for wildlife.”

55.3.3 *“If such work were carried out, the Wharf Stream could also act as an access route for Eynsham boats and canoes to the Thames. The confluence is approximately 150 meters downstream of Swinford Lock. The road to the Lock is private and the path down to the side of the river is steep, with no vehicle access or convenient unloading point. The west bank is privately owned.”³*

2 (sic). More commonly known as Eynsham Lock, though it is in the parish of Swinford.

3 Eynsham Wharf Stream: letter to Environment Agency by David Miller et al.

55.3.4 St Leonard's Church Hall now requires material updating and is not currently suitable for the variety of uses to which it can be put. In particular, the kitchen is not appropriate for modern catering use.

55.3.5 The congregation is keen for it to be a pleasant, useful, and well looked after resource for the village and the church, reflecting the congregation's faith. Initially, it is focusing on a "quick fix", spending a limited amount of money on making the hall presentable for a maximum of three years.

55.3.6 This work, already under way, involves checking electrics; limited re-painting; cleaning; acquiring new equipment; and making the kitchen safe and suitable for limited "coffee and cakes" type events. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) has approved spending of Hall funds to pay for some of this work.

55.3.7 The church's longer term vision for the hall is complete refurbishment or re-build, depending on planning constraints. Consultation has been carried out on what people would like to see in a new look; and there has been a very positive response for as versatile a building as possible. The processes leading to this are expected to take about 3 years and will involve a major fund-raising effort.

The hall also has a large and potentially very useful garden.

St Leonard's Church Hall is working towards a big vision whilst undertaking a "quick fix". Their energy and enthusiasm could be a model for other community initiatives.



Illustration 7: St Leonard's Church Hall at "quick fix" stage, March 2007