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## **ELSTON - A Snapshot**

For the benefit of those readers who do not know Elston, here are a few facts and figures to help give a flavour of what Elston is like. But it doesn't beat actually coming to visit - especially if you might be in a position to make some influential decisions about the village.

The parish of Elston lies between the rivers Trent and Devon, with the village set amongst trees and farmland a mile from the A46 Fosse Way. The historic market town of Newark is just five miles to the north, with the cities of Lincoln and Nottingham some eighteen miles north and southwest respectively.

### **A Bit Of History.....**

Elston has a long and varied history, dating back to the 5th Century when it was founded by the Angles; the square shape of the village is typical of an Anglo Saxon village. The name Elston is derived from a Viking leader Elva, and is cited in the Domesday book as Elvastun.

The Darwin family have been associated with Elston since 1680, their family home being Elston Hall until after World War 2 when the estate was sold. There are a number of historic and interesting buildings in the village, including The Old Chapel of Ease, All Saints Church, the Methodist Chapel and the very grand Middleton House, which has recently been refurbished as a luxurious day spa and renamed Eden Hall.

### **Elston Today**

Today, like many villages in the area, Elston is quickly changing in character. Farming is no longer a major employer in the parish, although there are four farms still in operation. Most people who work commute by car to local towns and cities.

Many farm buildings have been converted into residences and some into local businesses. A number of new homes have been built within the last twenty years on once open spaces within the main village boundary, and there continues to be infill development on some of the large gardens in the village.

## Some General Information About The Parish:

- Elston currently has about 650 residents in 280 households
- Surprisingly there are 26 businesses in the parish, including motor repairs, building trades, and beauty and fitness. It also includes 7 IT, training and consultation businesses.

Out of the 205 households completing the village questionnaire:

- 74 residents had lived in the village for more than 25 years
- Of the 484 residents profiled, 17% (83) are aged under 16 years and 29% (141) are aged 60 years plus, with the 40 - 59 year olds forming the largest group - 33% (160).

Elston has no shop or post office, the only shop having closed some five years ago when the owner retired. However we do have a pub, a village primary school, a village hall, a parish church, a Methodist chapel, and a regular bus service. There is a small village playing field and play area, with new play equipment. The village also supports a number of activity groups including :

- Brownies and Beavers
- Bell Ringing
- Art Group
- W.I
- Friendship Club
- Line Dancing
- Keep Fit
- Pentagon Society (Local History)
- Playgroup
- Mothers and Toddlers group
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Choir

So there is quite a bit happening already!

## Introduction

### *What is a Parish Plan?*

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years. It should set out a vision of how the community wants to develop and identify the action needed to achieve it. It can include any social, environmental or economic issues - from employment and leisure activities to the design of new buildings, transport and the protection of hedges and trees.

Parish Plans have the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and processes which affect rural communities.

They should influence local housing and land management strategies, as well as contribute to the way local services are delivered.

### *The Elston Parish Plan*

Our Village or Parish Plan outlines what you, the residents of Elston, think about the village and surrounding area within the parish, and what you would like to see happen within the next 5 to 10 years.

It's your opportunity to ensure that village life is enjoyed by all residents and that we have the best amenities and facilities that we can possibly attain.

Some things may take some time to achieve, but there are a significant number of things - identified as a current need - that can be achieved quickly.

By consulting with the whole community, through the questionnaire and the Open Day, the Parish Council can now make more informed decisions about how the village should develop in the future. If the Parish Council want something to happen, or want to oppose something, they can use the Plan as evidence and an informed basis for their decision making.

We also now have evidence of need, should we want to approach funding providers for grants. This is absolutely vital when making a bid for a grant of any sort.

## What are We Hoping to Achieve?

Some people have said:

*"Things are ok as they are - we don't want any changes, so why bother with a plan?"*

Unfortunately, nothing stays the same for long, and today the pace of change that is happening all around is quite alarming. We cannot just stick our heads in the sand and pretend it will all go away.

We have to work to protect what we value in Elston, and have plans and ideas in place to manage the inevitable changes.

This Plan is also an opportunity to identify ways that we can bring back services to the village which have been lost over the years, such as the post office, shop, Youth Club and Summer Play Scheme.

***This plan is all about you and the future of Elston; what you can do to make Elston a better community, a vibrant and inclusive community while still maintaining its unique identity.***

Your ideas and concerns have been summarised into an action plan for the future which includes:

- Action which the parish itself proposes to undertake (which is significant),
- Policies, decisions and action carried out by other bodies which the Plan might influence.

Talk to anyone and they will tell you Elston is a most welcoming, friendly and attractive place to live. No-one is a stranger for long and all are welcomed into the community. We already have a great place to live and our vision is to make it even better with:

- Better facilities for the younger members of the village,
- More support for the older members of the village,
- A say in matters that effect our daily life, such as the type of future housing development

Who knows what else? All you need is imagination and the willingness to make it happen!

## How Did We Do It?

It seems a long time ago now, but the idea to develop a Parish Plan came about after the attendance by the Parish Council Chairman and Parish Clerk at a seminar aimed at showing how important it was to include community involvement in community planning.

At the same time, there came an offer from the Countryside Agency to help finance the development of a Parish Plan through community consultation. After discussions with other Parish Councillors, the decision was then made to go ahead with the process. Following on from the decision to go ahead with the drawing up of the plan, the next thing was, "How on earth do we do it?"

Help was enlisted from Notts Rural Community Council, and an initial Village Plan meeting was held in October 2002, attended by some 60 residents.

From that first meeting a group of 10 enthusiastic volunteers known as the Village Plan Steering Group got together to work on the Parish Plan.

An application for funding was submitted to the Countryside Agency in January 2003, which was successful, and a grant of £4313 was secured to support the development and production of the Elston Parish Plan.

### Now Began The Hard Work.....

After a series of long and regular meetings, a village questionnaire was developed, which included questions on a whole range of issues considered pertinent to Elston. A section just for younger residents was included, as well as a section for local businesses.

Another village meeting was held to let everyone know what the questionnaire involved, and this time over a hundred residents turned up - even better!

The Steering Group, as well as another dozen willing helpers, called at every house in the village in June 2003, to hand deliver the questionnaires and explain the aims. The questionnaires were then collected in - an impressive 74 % of households completed the appraisal - and the results were analysed.

A leaflet, showing the results of the questionnaire was produced and an Action Planning Day was organised in November 2003. Around 70 people attended and a number of them volunteered to help with the proposed activities.

Throughout the time that this was all happening, the village was being kept informed of progress via articles in the monthly Parish Magazine.

Further meetings have been held, and this Parish Plan is the summary of all the information gleaned throughout the process. It shows what issues are most important for Elston, and how these may be addressed.

The key issues identified are on the following pages.

*A copy of the full results of the questionnaire is available on request to Elston Parish Council.*

## Village Services

Quite a few things were identified here but one issue dominated the rest - the desire to have a village shop/post office again, and use the Village Hall to house more services.

- 148 households said they would use a village shop.
- 182 households would use a post office service.
- The lack of a post office service was considered detrimental to running a business in Elston.
- A café was identified as being a facility which people would use, including a number of young people.

Many people thought the Village Hall could be extended to house more services.

- 80 households thought it could house a playgroup facility.
- 100 households a facility for indoor sports.
- 85 households a community shop.
- 65 households a social activity area/café.

## What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?

Perhaps all of these can be combined to help secure funding to extend and refurbish our village hall. We're looking into several possibilities:

As other suitable premises have not been found, the possibility of extending the village hall is being investigated. There will be a feasibility study carried out later in the year to see how this might be done.

- *Funding is being sought from various bodies for support to help set up a community co-operative shop/café.*
- *The Government is very keen to help local initiatives get started, which are run for community benefit. Social Enterprises as they are called, come in all shapes and sizes, and this may be a way of getting some of what we want. Support, training and some funding is available. This avenue is being explored.*

## *Education and Childcare*

Facilities which already exist in the village are the All Saints Primary School, the Playgroup, Mother and Toddlers Group and a registered childminder.

The Playgroup however has concerns over its current venue, and would ideally like to find a purpose built venue to house the planned increase in activity.

There are no after school or playscheme activities for children; parents have to travel or bus their children to the next village for these and nursery facilities.

The questionnaire showed there were 55 households in the village with children under 16 or in full time education, with 16 children of nursery age.

The majority of primary age children attended the local primary school.

- 16 households would like to see the number of playgroup sessions increased.
- 21 households would like a purpose-built playgroup facility.
- 80 households thought that the village hall could be extended to include a Playgroup facility.
- 30 households were interested in their children attending a summer holiday play scheme for 5-11 year olds.
- 28 households were interested in having their child attend an after school club.
- 32 households would like the facilities of the Elston Village School to be available to the community out of school hours.

### *What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?*

There is much activity here! Questionnaires have been circulated to playgroup and school parents and information gathered in, and so far:

- A Play scheme committee has been formed and is working with an advisor to set up a Summer Playscheme for Elston. But more helpers are needed.
- Playgroup sessions have been increased, with more paid staff being taken on.
- Currently the Playgroup Committee are looking at the possibilities of having their own facilities in an extended village hall.
- At the moment there is not enough support to set up an After School Club. This will be reviewed at a later date to see if it may become a viable enterprise.

## Community Support

The aim of this part of the Parish Plan is to make sure that everyone in the village has the opportunity to get help when they need it and take part in village activities, particularly if they are elderly or housebound. A number of people said they would like some help.

- 7 people in the village would like help with such things as shopping and lifts to the Doctor.
- 13 would like help with the garden.
- 3 just want someone to pop in and check that they are alright.
- 11 households do care for someone elderly or disabled, and would appreciate help now and again with some respite care, or just a break.

The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is currently being re-vitalised, with new Co-ordinators being recruited, so things are happening.

### *What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?*

Elston is a small community, and it would be nice to think that the values of being a good neighbour are still very important in spite of our increasingly busy lives.

- *Each member of the Parish Council does have a part of the parish which they 'look after'. Should there be problems, they can be contacted or when anyone new moves into the village, information about the village and its services is handed out.*
- *There are other groups and organisations already in the village which can offer support, including the Friendship Club, the Church, the Chapel, and the WI, amongst others.*
- *Do you think it would be good to set up a Good Neighbour scheme, or get some activities going in the village just to help you get out of the house?*
- *What about a Lunch Club in the village hall?*

There were 41 volunteers who said they were willing to help in some way, so lots of potential good neighbours there.

If you know of someone who needs help - of whatever kind - please contact either a Parish Councillor or a member of the Elston Action Group.

## Environmental Issues

We are very lucky in Elston to live in such an attractive village - indeed this was the most important aspect for the majority of residents for living in Elston.

However it does take hard work and effort to keep it that way, and a number of residents are willing to help. Some of the issues identified within the village were:

- A need for better/more street lighting.
- Some problems with dog fouling and a need for an additional dog bin and litter bins.
- Problems with speeding traffic and lorries coming through the village.

Elston is part of the wider environment, and issues such as global warming, recycling and the protection of the countryside are high on the agenda for the Government and local councils.

The Parish Council is keen to ensure that residents do their bit for the environment in a number of ways.

### *What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?*

- *The existing streetlights are in the process of being replaced and funding is being sought to provide additional lighting.*
- *Dog fouling is not such a problem as in the past, thanks to dog owners acting thoughtfully and responsibly. However, to a large extent it is a question of education and awareness. There will be a poster campaign to promote the greater use of the existing bins and a new bin will be sited in a different part of the village.*
- *Traffic Calming. There are plans for gates to be sited on the verges at all of the entrances to the village. This will encourage drivers to slow down.*
- *Plans are afoot to set up an Environment Group/ Garden Club and an Environment Event is planned, funded by the Parish Council.*
- *133 residents were interested in taking part in environmental protection activities.*
- *58 residents were willing to make improvements around the village.*

If you want to help then please contact the relevant Elston Action Group member

## Elston Youth and Sports Facilities

A specific part of the questionnaire was set aside for young people aged 8 to 17 years of age. It asked what they thought of the village, and what facilities they would like to see developed in Elston for their age group and the wider community.

We received 45 responses from these young people and some attended the Open Day.

- The appraisal highlighted the fact that there is little for teenagers to do in the village, and that leisure and sports facilities were considered poor by almost all young people.
- Even so, the majority liked living here and thought it a good place to live.
- Indoor activities which were most wanted were a café and 5-a-side football, with tennis, football and a youth shelter being preferred outdoor facilities.
- 11 young people thought a shop would be good for the village.
- 205 households thought that sports and leisure facilities were poor for teenagers and young adults.
- 144 households thought that the village should have a playing field for outdoor sports.

### What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?

The need for a sports field has long been identified within the village, but the problem is - surprisingly - where?

Elston also did have a Youth Club, but it has recently closed.

With this in mind the Steering group have so far tried to:

- *set up a youth action group (already instigated) with the express purpose of engaging this age group by helping them to create their own new opportunities in the village,*
- *identify volunteers to help run a youth club,*
- *investigate possible sites for a playing field (as yet without success).*

We are currently working with a youth worker to set up some activities. The possibilities are endless - white water rafting, drama workshops, sports teams, karate classes and lots more.

*But it will not happen if no-one comes forward either to take part, or be willing to help get it started.*

If you haven't already been in touch please contact a member of the Elston Action Group.

## Transport

Although Elston does have a regular bus service to Newark, the service to Bingham and Nottingham takes quite some time. A service runs directly to Nottingham and Newark on a much more regular basis, but involves a long walk along an unpaved and unlit road to the A46.

The bus service has come in for criticism and suggestions were made both in the appraisal and at the Open Day for improvement to services.

- 15 households would like a night time service to and from Newark, Nottingham, Elston and Bingham.
- A diversion of the direct Nottingham service through the village during commuter times.
- 53 households showed an interest in alternative forms of transport such as Dial-a-ride.
- 91 households considered a footpath to the A46 (Fosseway) a good idea.
- Suggestions were made at the open day to set up a Lift/Car Share Scheme from the village.
- Another suggestion was for the village to obtain its own community minibus.
- 145 households considered street parking a hazard in the village.

### *What Are We Doing/What Can We Do?*

- *Promote the idea of a Lift/Car Sharing Scheme for the village, and investigate the insurance and risk implications of such a scheme.*
- *Investigate the possibilities of having the direct Nottingham - Newark bus service diverted through the village at peak commuter times, and the viability of a night time service through the village.*
- *Investigate what alternative transport schemes are available, such as taxi vouchers and Dial-a-ride.*
- *Investigate the possibility for a village minibus. Other villages have them, and are used by groups within the village as well as for private hire.*
- *Could we have a footpath to the A46?*

## Information and Communication

*How many times have you heard people say, "But I didn't know it was happening"*

Letting people know what is happening in Elston can sometimes be a bit of a hit and miss affair. There are a number of notice boards around the village, some official, and some, like Lockwood's stable door, unofficial. But all get their messages across, that is, if you walk or cycle around the village.

The Parish Magazine, Five Parishes, is produced monthly by our local vicar, and delivered by a steady band of volunteers. The mag is perhaps the most important method we have of letting people know what is happening in Elston but not everyone gets it.

Our vicar is soon to retire, and everyone is anxious to ensure that at least some sort of newsletter continues in the Parish, so what can we do?

Although the above may seem quaint and old fashioned to some - they are effective up to a point. So how can we improve on this?

- 101 households thought that a village website to promote village activities and achievements would be useful.
- Suggestions for topics included local history, village news and forthcoming events, club meetings and contact numbers

*Access to Broadband is a topical issue at the moment, and is currently not available to Elston.*

- 12 of the businesses operating from Elston will need to have Broadband access soon.

### *What Can We do/What Are We Doing?*

- *BT has reduced the trigger point for Broadband, so we should promote the sign-up to Broadband.*
- *Discuss with the new editor of the Parish Magazine how it may be continued and what improvements can be made.*
- *Develop a Village Website working group.*

## Housing and Development

Elston is a designated Conservation village, and as such, stricter rules and regulations apply when it comes to planning permission.

This Plan does consider residents' views on housing and development but has not specifically focussed on these issues as much as a Housing Needs Survey, or Village Design Statement would.

The subject of housing development is often the most difficult and contentious issue which the Parish Council has to deal with.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, there has been quite a number of new houses built over the last two to three decades, on what were open spaces within the village. And there continues to be a number of planning applications for infill development and extensions to existing houses.

There is growing concern about the number of large executive style homes being built within the village and possible pressures to build on land adjacent to the village. The following highlights some of those concerns, and preferences for housing types.

- 103 households did not think 4 bedroom executive style homes suitable for Elston.
- 130 households would prefer starter homes for young people, and 101 households affordable housing.
- 82 households would like to see more sheltered accommodation for the elderly.

What scale of development would/would not be acceptable?

- 121 households said larger developments outside the village envelope were unacceptable.
- 156 thought conversions or replacements within the village envelope acceptable.
- 116 thought single dwellings acceptable.
- The majority thought the total of new houses built over the next 10 years should be 10 but no more.

### *What Can We Do/What Are We Doing?*

- *Ensure the Local Planning Authority knows the views of the village.*
- *Attend open planning meetings.*
- *Ask the Parish Council and Local Councils to consider encouraging smaller, more affordable mix with planning development.*

## Where Do We Go From Here?

The most important part of the document is the Action Plan, which is very much a working document aimed at showing practical ways in which the Plan may be implemented, and who may help with this.

The production of the Parish Plan is a culmination of much hard work, effort, and hundreds of hours of volunteer time directly given to the delivery of the Plan.

It has involved hundreds of people from within the village and from organisations who have, and may have, an impact on how the village develops in the future.

The Parish Council will use the plan as policy, and encourage the Local Authority and others to work on the Action Points. It will also work with the Elston Action Group to monitor and review progress on the Action Points.

*And it doesn't end here: this is only the start. It is now up to you, the residents of Elston, to make things happen.*

In order to make some things happen, a number of potential smaller action groups could be set up to help develop and take forward your suggestions. Details of these are shown in the Action Plan.

- Existing groups in the village need your support.
- Come along to Parish Meetings and have your say.
- Volunteer to help with improvements to the village e.g Best Kept Village.
- Come forward with ideas for social events; what about helping form a Village Show committee?

We are sure that you have lots more ideas. Now is your opportunity to make it happen!

The Elston Village Plan Steering Group is willing to continue as a properly constituted group known as the Elston Action Group to help support the new groups and activities that we hope will emerge from the plan.

A copy of the full results of the questionnaire is available on request to Elston Parish Council.