

Dallington



**ACTION
PLAN
2010 - 2015**

What is an Action Plan and why is it important?

- Local Action Plans identify community priorities through consultation
- They cover the issues that affect the daily lives of the community
- The actions within the Plan detail what is required to address community needs
- Delivering the actions will mean improvements to the quality of life of local people
- The Action Plan will help guide Dallington Parish Council's decision making
- Copies of the Plan will be presented to Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, The Safer Rother Partnership, other service providers and agencies
- The Dallington Action Plan will be reviewed annually and updated every 5 years to ensure that it continues to be relevant to local people and that the actions within it are reasonable, feasible and achievable

Who did we consult?

Dallington Parish Council set up a small working group in 2009 in response to Rother District Council's invitation to develop a local action plan. Informal discussions at village events over the summer helped to identify the main areas for the survey, which was launched at the Old School in September 2009.

Questionnaires were delivered to the 165 households in the parish (and to another 35 with Dallington postal addresses located in neighbouring parishes). 54 completed questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 40% from 'central' Dallington.

The results were analysed by the working group and discussed by the Parish Council and the Annual Village meeting in April 2010 in order to develop the actions contained within this Plan. (A full report of the survey results is available at www.dallington.net)

Get Involved!

To make this Action Plan and the Parish as successful as we can and for Dallington to continue to be a great place to live we would like any member of the community who has a particular interest, skill, knowledge or expertise to help us to take these actions forward. We are grateful to those people who have already offered their services or initiated new projects since the survey was carried out. If you would like to join any working groups, share your experience, contribute to the development of local projects or just find out a little bit more about being involved, please contact:

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Dallington: Background



Dallington lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and many parts of the parish enjoy spectacular views—towards the sea to the south, the Sussex Downs to the west, and Dallington Forest to the north.

Along with the local iron-bearing sandstone, charcoal from the Forest made an important contribution to the Wealden iron industry. There is evidence of iron making in the area from Roman times until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the local industry could no longer compete with cheaper iron produced in coke-fired furnaces in the North of England.



However, for most of the last thousand years, the village was predominantly a farming community. But as noted in a book about Dallington's history, published to celebrate the millennium, this situation has changed radically in the past century:

*The 1891 census shows that most residents were involved in farming or in trades that directly supported the village community. By the end of the twentieth century, very few residents earned their living from the land. The number of people of retirement age had increased while those in employment often travelled long distances to their places of work. In 1891, Dallington functioned as one big family. Everyone knew everyone else, village events were eagerly anticipated, clubs abounded and local shops flourished. All that was needed in life was here. Dallington at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a very different place. Village life has been changed and shaped by many external influences, such as television, cars, supermarkets, the mechanisation of the farming industry and the price of rural properties. Despite all these changes, a strong sense of community still exists. The preservation of this sense of community is likely to be one of the greatest challenges facing Dallington in the new millennium. (K. Bryant-Mole, **Dallington "Six Miles from Everywhere": The History of a Sussex Village**, 1999)*

Ten years after this was written the results of the 2009 survey and subsequent debates about the nature of the village, and what (if anything) should be done to ensure its continued vitality, have reinforced the view that this remains a key challenge for everyone who lives here.



Parish Profile

54 households responded to the survey, representing approximately 1/3 of the total population:

- o 26% of households contained 1 person
- o 54% contained 2 people
- o 20% contained 3 or more people.

They reported a total of 110 household members, whose age breakdown was as follows

- o 10 children aged 0-10
- o 4 young people aged 11-18
- o 11 people aged 19-44
- o 42 people aged 45-65
- o 43 people over 65

This profile is broadly consistent with the 2010 statistics for Dallington available from “East Sussex in Figures” (<http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk>) which show that 75% of our population are now aged over 45, and 27% over 65. Just 14% of respondents had moved into the village in the past five years, 37% had been resident between six and twenty years, and almost half (49%) had lived here for more than twenty years.

The remaining survey questions were answered by or on behalf of all family members over eleven. There were 100 of these (4 aged 11-18, and 96 aged 19 or over) therefore percentages quoted in later sections normally represent actual numbers of people.

Village Communications

We asked how people currently find out about what’s happening in the village. “Word of mouth” was cited by 75%. This was not surprising, but we also received several comments which suggested that dependence on word of mouth communications causes problems for newcomers or people living outside the village centre, who may miss out on informal networks and then feel isolated or ignored. *The Messenger* parish magazine (54%), notices and flyers delivered to houses (46%) or displayed on notice boards (35%), were also seen as important sources. Just 19% had visited the village website (www.dallington.net) which at the time of the survey had only recently been redeveloped, but 75% said they had regular access to the internet.

ACTION 1: Improve communications within the village

1.1 Develop the village website as a definitive source of local information (and explore provision for those currently lacking internet access) and publicise the site and its email alert service more widely

1.2 Improve level of Dallington information in the Messenger and co-ordination with the website

1.3 Compile a Welcome Pack to be hand-delivered to all new residents, giving key information, encouragement to join local groups and a named contact.

1.4 Improve the village notice-board and consider locations for additional boards

Village Activities & Events

Two-thirds of all respondents had attended at least one community activity or event during the previous eighteen months. These included events at the Old School village hall (43%), the Flower Festival (41%) and other church-based activities, coffee mornings (37%), Open Gardens (34%) and the Sugar Loaf Proms which are held every two years (34%). There was support for more regular coffee mornings, a revival of the village fete and for new activities such as the Book Club and Dallington History Group and the Time Exchange scheme, designed to help people get to know each other and share their skills and experience. 38% would also welcome a gardening club and flower & vegetable show. These are all heavily dependent on the time and energy of a few individuals, so we need to find ways to support this.

Apart from the School and the Church (considered in following sections) the village possesses two key locations for community activities: the Old School, which is an independent registered charity run by a committee with some financial support from the PC, and the Sugar Loaf Recreation Field on the B2096, whose trustees are the Parish Councillors but which does not currently have its own management committee. Respondents suggested a number of physical improvements to both sites and a wider range of activities.

ACTION 2: Support village activities, groups and events

- 2.1 Set up a Sugar Loaf Field Committee to take over day to day management and explore ways to make better use of this amenity*
- 2.2 Continue to support the Old School through the existing Committee*
- 2.3 Publicise opportunities for new and existing groups to apply for support from the PC and other organisations*
- 2.4 Expand the Dallington Area Time Exchange (DATE) Scheme*

Dallington School

Although only 6 of the responding households had children currently at the school, most respondents were positive about its importance to the life of the village. However, there were concerns about ongoing disruption caused by parking and traffic in the Street. Some noted the risk of a 'them and us' situation if an aging local population led to reduced communication and engagement between school and village. Suggestions for improvement included joint local history projects, a photography competition and fundraising publications, and use of the premises for adult education or other activities.

ACTION 3: Support Dallington School in its positive contribution to village life

- 3.1 Support the School in its planning application for an off-street car park*
- 3.2 Explore new ways to improve communication between the school and village residents and to develop joint projects*

St Giles Church

Traditionally the church is the heart of the village, and although only 17% of respondents said they regularly attended services or other events at St Giles, almost half did so occasionally. One pointed out that “*attendance’ may not be as useful a measure of its value to the village as its continued availability to all whenever it might be needed*”. There were also positive comments about the broader role the church continues to play in village life, for events such as the Harvest Festival, lunches and coffee mornings. Since the survey took place, the Tower appeal has also been launched with several successful fundraising events and initiatives.

ACTION 4: Continue to support St Giles Church

- 4.1 Support the Dallington Church Tower appeal*
- 4.2 Explore other ways to support the church and its activities*

Local Amenities & Environment

The survey responses suggested that existing local amenities such as the Post Office Store and local delivery services need to be more actively supported if they are to remain viable. There was also interest in a number of potential new initiatives, the most popular of which were a monthly village market for local produce (73%), glass recycling point (64%) and a community fuel purchase scheme (50%). Over a third of respondents regularly use the local footpaths and bridleways and there was support for village walks and other means to raise awareness of the local environment.

Other suggestions included a children’s play area, bonfire guidelines to improve air quality, and ways to reduce the village’s carbon footprint, including a local food production scheme.

ACTION 5: Increase use of existing local amenities and explore new services

- 5.1 Explore ways to increase use of local shopping facilities*
- 5.2 Investigate feasibility of holding a monthly produce market*
- 5.3 Investigate feasibility of a community fuel purchase scheme*

ACTION 6: Maintain and improve the quality of the local environment

- 6.1 Identify suitable location to trial a glass recycling point*
- 6.2 Invite volunteers to join a ‘local environment’ group to explore new initiatives to increase local food production and reduce Dallington’s carbon footprint*
- 6.3 Raise awareness of the local environment through walks and other projects*
- 6.4 Consider potential locations for a children’s play area*
- 6.5 Consult on the introduction of guidelines for bonfire use*

Roads and traffic

Traffic speed is an overwhelming concern, with 47% reporting serious problems, particularly at the Woods Corner junction, The Street and Carricks Hill. 21% reported problems relating to parking, mainly in The Street (see Action 3.1) though some noted that parked cars act as a traffic calming measure. Other key issues were the increasing presence of heavy lorries on narrow lanes and the poor state of the roads in the area. Hard winters since the original survey was conducted have led to further deterioration and revealed a need for extra grit bins. There was also support for the introduction of road name signs in an appropriate design and perhaps a village map on the B2096 to help visitors and delivery vehicles avoid getting lost.

ACTION 7: Improve safety & quality of Dallington's roads

7.1 Work with ESCC and Sussex Police to find practical solutions to reduce speed and improve road safety in the village

7.2 Work with ESCC to speed up road mending programme; publicise the online fault reporting facility on the website

7.3 Order additional grit bins and publicise location and guidelines for use

7.4 Investigate cost of installing road name signs throughout the parish

Local transport

Of those who answered questions about their own travel arrangements, around half (33) said they worked or studied at home or within 5 miles. Most of the rest worked more than 10 miles away, commuting by car and/or rail. However, not everyone owns a car or wishes to be dependent on car travel. There were requests for improvements to the 355 bus service (currently subject to consultation on service reductions) and suggestions for community transport schemes; some people already use the Time Exchange scheme for this purpose.

ACTION 8: Improve public/community transport services

8.1 Contribute to Rother DC consultation on the future of the 355 bus service stressing its importance to residents

8.2 Explore range of community transport options including more systematic use of the Time Exchange scheme to help people arrange lifts

Policing & Community Safety

Twelve people said they had experienced crime in Dallington in the last 2 years (though did not specify the nature of this). Most would appreciate a more active and visible police presence; 35% confirmed that they knew how to contact the local Community Officer. and 61% would like the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to be revived.

ACTION 9: Improve links with local police

9.1 Work with local PCSO to improve communications with village residents

9.2 Seek volunteers to revive the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

External and mains services

A minority would welcome additional mains services (i.e. gas or mains drainage) if available, but most felt this would be unnecessary as well as impractical. Most comments related to existing services. There were widespread complaints about the frequent power cuts experienced in the village and some suggestions for improvements to mains water supply routes. There were several requests for faster and more reliable broadband internet connections, extra phone lines and to retain the public phone box as not everyone has a mobile phone (or reliable coverage). However, the majority of comments in this section related to problems with refuse collection and recycling.

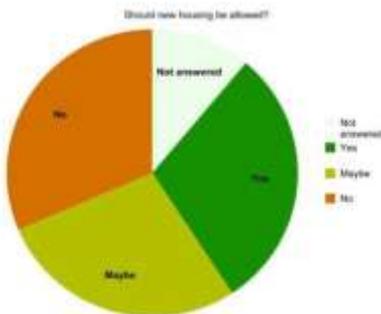
ACTION 10: Work with external suppliers to improve services to the village

11.1 Monitor incidence of power cuts and lobby EDF to resolve underlying causes

11.2 Liaise with other external service suppliers to explore possible improvements

11.3 Follow up complaints about rubbish collection with Rother DC, and explore additional recycling options (see Action 6.1)

Housing needs



We asked whether some additional development in the village should be permitted in order to encourage a more balanced population profile (see page 4), bearing in mind that any such development would still be subject to normal planning procedures and restrictions.

As anticipated, opinion on this question was sharply and evenly divided: 16 households (30%) answered YES, 15 (28%) answered MAYBE, 17(31%) answered NO, while 6 (11%) left this question blank.

Most of those in favour of some additional housing preferred to prioritise the needs of local young couples and small families and emphasised the need to be sensitive to the existing environment. It was also suggested that some older residents might welcome the chance to move to smaller homes within the village, thus releasing a larger house for family use. Those against any new building argued strongly for preservation of the status quo, and a lack of need, local employment opportunities or infrastructure to support this.

Both groups share a common desire to maintain the character of this beautiful and historic village - the question remains how best to do so.

ACTION 11: Preserve the historic character of Dallington as an attractive place to live

12.1 Liaise with Rother DC to ensure any new building or alterations to existing buildings are in keeping with the character of the village and in line with current planning guidelines

12.2 Continue to review housing needs within the village

Land use & diversification

If farmers and landowners need to diversify, most respondents would prefer current agricultural land to be used in ways consistent with rural traditions, such as local food production schemes (48%) or additional grazing for horses (40%); it was also suggested that some land could be transformed into wild flower conservation meadows.

There was support in principle for agricultural buildings to be adapted to use for small craft workshops (46%), holiday accommodation (26%) or other small business use (13%). *"Anything that brings income and employment to the area should be welcomed"* was a common theme, again provided that such initiatives are in keeping with the rural character of the village and its position in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

ACTION 12: Ensure agricultural land and buildings are used for purposes appropriate to the countryside

12.1 Explore ways to encourage viable agriculture and food production in the village

12.2 Support appropriate new uses for agricultural land and buildings

Parish Council

Any successful local action plan is a partnership between the Parish Council and the wider community. Most people were aware of the work of the Council, and a third of respondents had attended at least one Parish Council meeting and a quarter had read minutes of meetings. We invited suggestions to help the Parish Council to operate more openly and effectively and most of the comments related to better communication

ACTION 13: Improve Parish Council communications

13.1 Post approved minutes on the village website and a summary in the Messenger

13.2 Publish additional information about council members, roles and activities

13.3 Encourage people to stand in May 2011 elections

13.4 Continue to work with the local community on actions in the local plan, and publicise relevant funding opportunities for new initiatives

N.B. In the summary overleaf, Dallington Parish Council is identified as the lead organisation for most of the actions arising from this consultation. That is simply for convenience, because the Council is best placed to co-ordinate activities and to support community groups and new initiatives. The Parish Council also has a duty to review and update the action plan annually in consultation with residents, which will normally be done on the occasion of the annual village meeting in March/ April.

However, this does not mean that the Parish Council can singlehandedly undertake all the work that is needed to achieve the aims identified here - it's now up to all of us! If you have any suggestions or would like find out more about how to help, you can find contact details under "Get Involved" on the inside front cover of this booklet.

Summary of actions and lead responsibilities

ACTION 1: Improve communications within the village

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, residents, website and newsletter editors
Timescale: 1-2 years

ACTION 2: Support village activities, groups and events

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Old School Management Committee, Sugar Loaf Field management Committee (tbc), local groups, residents, website editors, Action in Rural Sussex
Timescale: 1-5 years subject to annual review

ACTION 3: Support Dallington School in its positive contribution to village life

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Dallington CE Primary School governors, staff, parents and villagers
Timescale: Ongoing

ACTION 4: Continue to support St Giles Church

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, St Giles Parochial Church Council, Dallington Church Tower appeal committee
Timescale: Ongoing

ACTION 5: Increase use of existing local amenities and explore new services

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, residents, local shopkeepers and suppliers, local farmers and food producers, website editors, Action in Rural Sussex
Timescale: 1-5 years

ACTION 6: Maintain and improve the quality of the local environment

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Rother District Council, residents, local shopkeepers and suppliers, local farmers and food producers, website editors, Action in Rural Sussex, Transition Network
Timescale: 1-5 years

ACTION 7: Improve safety & quality of Dallington's roads

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, Highways Agency

Timescale: 1-5 years or until achieved

ACTION 8: Improve public/community transport services

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Rother District Council, Battle Area Community Transport, Action in rural Sussex, Time Exchange Scheme coordinator

Timescale: 1-5 years or until achieved

ACTION 9: Improve links with local police

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Sussex Police, Safer Rother Partnership, villagers

Timescale: Ongoing

ACTION 10: Work with external suppliers to improve services to the village

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, EDF, British Telecom, internet service providers, Southern Water, Rother District Council

Timescale: 1-5 years or until achieved

ACTION 11: Preserve the historic character of Dallington as an attractive place to live

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Rother District Council, villagers

Timescale: Ongoing

ACTION 12: Ensure agricultural land and buildings are used for purposes appropriate to the countryside

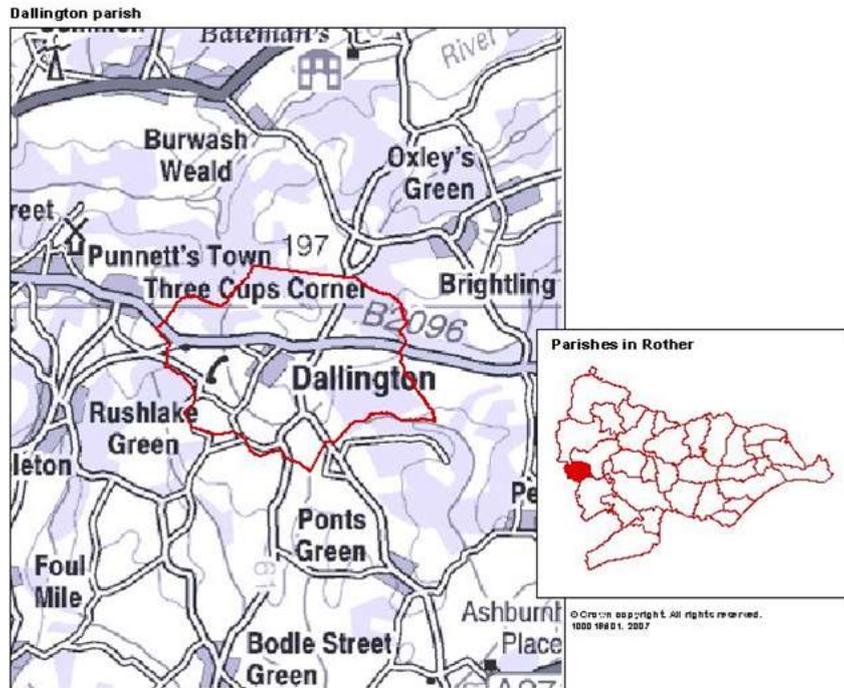
Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, Rother District Council, local farmers and producers, villagers

Timescale: Ongoing

ACTION 13: Improve Parish Council communications

Those involved: Dallington Parish Council, website editors

Timescale: 1-2 years and ongoing



Map of Dallington supplied by ESIF—www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk
(Parish boundaries outlined in red)

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Dallington Parish Council

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