EASTLEACH PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH PLAN

March 2026

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INTRODUCTION

This Parish Plan document sets out the focus of the Eastleach Parish Council's attention in the forthcoming years, commencing in the 2025/26 financial year. A parish plan is not a statutory document but rather a more informal collation of views and focus areas which underpin and guide a parish council's work and activity. It is informed by the opinions of parish members although it is the responsibility of the parish council to shape their work in ways in which they believe the parish will be best served. The parish covers the villages of Eastleach Turville and Eastleach Martin, together with the hamlets of Cote and Fyfield.

The document is informed by:

- Eastleach/Fyfield Parish Survey carried out by Eastleach Parish Council in 2023
- Eastleach Cotswold District Parish Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2024 by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council on behalf of Cotswold District Council
- Community drop-in session held in Eastleach village hall in March 2025
- Questions and issues of interest raised by parish members in Eastleach Parish Council meetings

The plan will continue to be relevant for as long as parish council members believe it represents the challenges faced by the community. In the first instance, it is thought that this should be until the new unitary authority is created, when it might need to be further reviewed in the light of amendments brought about through that change.

The plan reviews the key areas of interest expressed by residents and aligns them to the powers of the Parish Council.

To achieve objective discussion and agreement on the subject matter raised, EPC has agreed that it will need to define principles and a mission statement providing a clearly defined goal for the parish to work to, and to achieve these statements, EPC must agree principles on which decisions are made about the work focus.

EASTLEACH PARISH COUNCIL – PRINCIPLES

EPC has agreed that decisions on matters to be included in the Parish Plan under its management and influence should be based on the following principles, to ensure consistency and alignment in its approach.

The principles are:

Preserving The Heritage of Eastleach – ensuring that the very distinct nature of Eastleach (both in the built and natural environments) is protected for generations to come and reflected in the work focus of the parish council.

Sustainability – both in terms of the natural environment and our human community, EPC looks to ensure that the parish will provide a sustainable natural environment, balancing social, environmental and economic needs of the community for current and future generations fostering a place where people want to live and work. It will seek to support initiatives which give access to homes to a diverse range of people of all incomes and backgrounds whilst minimising environmental impact to ensure that the parish does not become a fossilised weekend retreat, devoid of residents during the working week.

Best Value – How we use our modest financial resources gives the parish, wherever possible, an investment in the future rather than just a short-term solution to an emerging situation. The parish should also leverage its stakeholders to contribute towards the objectives set for the parish to minimise use of its financial resource and maximise voluntary contribution to the community.

Engagement – EPC is mindful that on its own, it has insufficient resource (both people and money) to meet the challenges it faces. For the plan to work and develop, it aims to consult with residents and involve them to engage the knowledge, skills and talents of every member of the community to achieve results. We all can have a part to play and EPC wishes to foster active participation and collaboration among residents to address community challenges and goals.

Equity – meeting the needs and aspirations of all residents, providing a welcoming environment to encourage new residents to live and work in the parish and a community which will encourage and facilitate existing younger residents to remain in the parish.

Evidence based – EPC will take decisions using the best available local, relevant research/evidence whilst adhering to its afore-stated principles. This involves critically appraising any findings and research related to a specific question, in a bid to make appropriate decisions based on fact and not just feelings.

EPC MISSION STATEMENT

EPC's Mission for the Parish of Eastleach

The recent surveys and questionnaires leave us in no doubt that this beautiful parish is very precious to the community that lives here. At a time of constant, rapid change, there is something very reassuring about our parish which has preserved a steadier pace of life and where people are closer to the natural world. EPC wishes to preserve the peace and quiet of our beautiful Cotswold landscape and village and maintain the beauty of the location for all to enjoy in the years to come. At the forefront of EPC's focus is the conservation of the beauty of the landscape and historic built environment.

The rural idyll, that is Eastleach, can only be maintained by the engagement of all residents, their understanding of the preciousness of the area and enabling their thoughts and concerns to be voiced, discussed and resolved, if not within the powers of the parish, then to channel their thoughts to higher authorities.

EPC recognises that progress and change is inevitable but believes it must be managed as sensitively as possible so as not to destroy the very nature of the parish.

Objectives of the Parish Plan

To involve parishioners who wish, to participate in the maintenance and development of the Parish and community activities.

To support changes or improvements that conserve the beauty of the landscape and the historic built environment.

To support changes or improvements that maintain or improve the way of living in the Parish.

To carry weight with Local Authorities and landowners when formulating policies, allocating funding.

INFLUENCES ON THE PARISH PLAN

RESIDENTS DROP IN 2025 SUMMARY

How you feel about Eastleach and Fyfield…

Lots of people shared positive feelings about the village, some of the comments received:

"It's one of the few truly beautiful villages left"
"Beautiful, unspoilt Cotswold Village"
"There is good access to footpaths for walking and bridleways"
"We are a real, friendly community that comes together in times of need"
"It's peaceful and quiet"
"A haven for wildlife"
"The village has unique beauty, no street lighting, no road markings, Cotswold stone cottages, open spaces, mixed housing stock"
"There are traditional community events, the Fete, Frolics, candlelit service, apple day that have been going for years"
"Handy pub" "Useful village Hall"
"I like the dark skies and river with clean water"

Some people shared negative feelings about the village, some of the comments received:

"The village is increasingly vulnerable to outside forces"
"A peaceful place to live but out of touch with reality"
"Unaffordable"
"Divided- permanent/weekend residents"
"Not enough young people and people to do work to build the community"

What you told us needs to be addressed…

Maintenance was highlighted as an issue.

- Potholes & poor state of the roads
- Overgrown trees, paddocks, and gardens
- "The river path by the clapper bridge needs to be improved and looked after"
- ECT houses need to be looked after and populated
- The Village Hall and car park needs improvement
- Dog fouling an issue
- "The bus stop needs tidying up"
- Verges, shabby

Comments were made on infrastructure.

- More social housing to improve the demographic
- "A mixture of affordable, rental and freehold properties are needed"
- Sewerage and drainage need to be appropriately managed
- Parking "there is more parking by visitors in the village now"

Thoughts about the community

- More community events to increase the sense of belonging and community spirit
- "The pub is no longer the centre of the community, you often go and no one you know is there"
- We need more volunteers "it's always the same faces who turn up to help"

Feedback from the drop in 15th March 2025 run by Eastleach Parish Council gathering information for the Eastleach Parish Plan

INFLUENCES ON THE PARISH PLAN

PARISH EASTLEACH COTSWOLD DISTRICT PARISH HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY 2024

The Eastleach Cotswold District Parish Housing Needs Survey and Homeseeker Plus housing register has highlighted the following issues:

- There were in 2024 up to 12 households needing social or affordable housing in the parish
- Five households might need to move away from the parish because of their mobility/accessibility needs
- Based on the average selling price of houses sold in the parish in 2023 and 2024 of £1,058,872; the ability to raise a mortgage of four times gross income, a person in receipt of a median Cotswold District income of £36,238 cannot afford to purchase even the average price property in the parish, without raising a considerable deposit of circa £900,000. Nor can they afford the lowest priced property sold in Eastleach of £669,500, without raising a deposit of circa £525,000.
- Rental costs researched in a one-mile radius of the parish show that in 2024, a 3-bedroom cottage cost £1600-3,625 PCM, totalling £19200-43,500 per annum.
- Among the highest number of comments received in the survey related to the Ernest Cook Trust, loss of affordable housing stock, and the poor state of repair of the ECT housing stock.

(Homeseeker Plus housing register is a scheme to deliver affordable homes through Section 106 affordable housing obligations within Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire.)

INFLUENCES ON THE PARISH PLAN

FINDINGS OF EASTLEACH/FYFIELD PARISH SURVEY 2023

The significant response rate to the 2023 survey of 58% means that this survey can be taken as a good indicator of village focus at the time the survey was taken.

Importance of Community Facilities (in descending order of importance – parish survey results)

- Footpath and bridlepath network (including permissive rights of way, Twittens, and byways)
- Victoria Inn
- Broadband
- Letter boxes
- Village hall
- St Andrews' Church
- CHEQS Magazine
- Bouthrop Church
- Notice boards
- Playing field
- Village playground
- EPC website
- Public transport
- Holiday lets

Importance of Environmental issues (in descending order of importance – parish survey results):

- Condition of roads
- Conditions of footpaths
- Condition of grass verges
- Condition of ditches
- Dog fouling
- Litter
- Fly tipping
- Flooding
- Climate change
- Light pollution
- Electric car charging

Importance of Public Transport

- Four in ten households view the daily bus to Cirencester as important but only 1 in 9 households use it
- Farmors School bus is used by pupils from the village and is a vital service
- The survey indicates that residents believe there is a problem for residents parking and visitor parking

Importance of good communication routes

- Good communication needed for emergency notifications, such as flooding updates, personal and property safety, community events
- Importance of good broadband and connectivity was underlined
- Declared interest in EPC email/newsletter
- No need identified for a Facebook page for Parish Council – CHEQS perceived as a good route for updates
- Annual Village Meeting and Parish Council AGMs are important formal ways to interact with EPC but are much underused
- Comments on housing were updated by the Eastleach Cotswold District Parish Housing Needs Survey but were consistent with the desire to see more young people in the village with measured interest in expanding the housing stock in the parish

Community Engagement

- There are never enough volunteers in the parish to help run its events and committees and more volunteers are required

INFLUENCES ON THE PARISH PLAN

PARISH COUNCIL - QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Residents have the option of raising questions with the parish council in two formal ways:

- When the regular parish council meeting is adjourned to permit residents to ask questions within a ten-minute period. After which the meeting is reconvened, and formal parish matters are formally discussed and minutes taken without intervention from members of the parish.
- In writing to either the council clerk or an individual councillor.

Informally, residents of the parish can approach a council member and seek clarification on a particular point, but discussion with an individual council member can only be to clarify points already discussed and agreed. Residents may express an opinion but cannot request council's opinion unless already agreed at a formal council meeting.

As such in recent years, areas of concern and interest expressed in these ways are:

- Planning applications, their progress and outcome and opinions on said applications.
- ECT housing stock and its management
- Housing for those who wish to live permanently in the village
- Potholes and road conditions
- Dog fouling – bin locations, bag collections, prevalence of faeces
- Flooding
- Condition of river
- Parking

EASTLEACH PARISH COUNCIL – POWERS INVESTED AND CURRENT ACTIVITY

Direct Management and Control

The funds available to EPC are derived from the parish precept, fundraising for specific projects, grants and donations from individuals.

The parish council is the tier of government closest to the community. While residents sometimes expect it to deal with every local matter, in practice, their role is to use the powers available to them selectively, focusing on those areas where local action can deliver the greatest benefit.

More broadly, parish councils exercise a general consultative role on behalf of local people: for instance, they have statutory consultation rights on planning matters. At national level, they are represented by the National Association of Local Councils, and its county-level associations.

EPC uses its funds:

- To employ an appropriately qualified parish clerk who discharges all business on behalf of the council – councillors cannot undertake business on behalf of the council
- To mow the verges, greens and playing field
- To manage the village assets - see list in appendix
- To invest in training of councillors and the clerk

Eastleach Parish Council Influence

EPC may work to influence but does not control the following principal areas:

- Planning applications within the parish – statutory consultee
- Roads and highways – influence only
- ECT property stock – influence only
- Footpaths and bridleways – influence only in a complex landscape of responsibility
- Management of the river and riverbanks – influence only
- Public transport – influence only

APPENDIX

Eastleach/Fyfield Parish Assets List (assets owned or managed by the parish council)

Village greens

Playground equipment

Bus Shelter

Defibrillator

Notice boards

Wooden benches and picnic table

General waste and dog bins emptied by CDC

Handrails on the Twittens

Filling cabinet

War memorial