

Neighbourhood Plan

Village Consultation April 2014

As part of the work towards creating a Neighbour Plan, an Open Consultation was held on 29 April, prior to the Annual Parish Meeting. A number of displays were created and villagers were invited to offer comments and suggestions, using post-it notes. A total of 168 post-it comments were left, which we have analysed and report (in brief) here. The full report and raw data are available from Paul Nicholson, Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group: paul.nicholson@plumptonpc.co.uk

We invited comment under the themes of: Village identity (172 comments); Housing (118); Transport (120); (Business (28); Leisure activities (58); Wildlife and public spaces (31), and Other matters (85). Some comments covered more than one issue. (With many thanks to Nancy Doyle for her brilliant number-crunching.)

1: Village identity

Overall, of 172 comments relating to village identity (What makes Plumpton special? Why do we live here?), 40% mentioned 'quiet, peaceful green landscape, 3% said 'safe'; 31% said 'character/community'; 18% said 'facilities/location', and 8% said 'dark nights'. Many people used terms like 'love' and 'belonging' and 'home'; one even talked about 'married to the village! Plumpton people clearly feel very strongly about the village and its qualities, and the most important were countryside views and a strong sense of community.

2: Housing

A total of 118 post-it notes were left on this topic. Overall, the majority (81%) said that some development was acceptable, but with conditions; 19% were totally against any development. The conditions can be summarised as follows: sites should be small and spread evenly around the village (38%); brownfield sites should be used wherever possible and open countryside, views and wildlife protected (25%), and affordable housing should be incorporated (31%) to provide housing for young families and young people (33%) and older residents (28%).

Some concerns were expressed about infrastructure. Of 44 post-it notes, the need for gas and the cost of oil were the most common concerns (30%), followed by the lack of good broadband provision (27%) (although this should be addressed by the end of the year). Other concerns included water (20%), electricity (14%), facilities (11%), and 16% specified the need for eco-friendly alternatives.

3: Transport

A wide range of concerns were raised about transport issues, some in direct conflict with each other. Of 120 comments, the most common issue was the need for more parking space (33%); a further 20% wanted more control over parking and 18% specifically mentioned parking at the station; 19% wanted more speed limits, and 10% didn't; 19% were concerned about accidents; 14% wanted greener transport; 13% wanted more trains/bus services, and 11% mentioned the shop.

4: Business

There was a lot of support for local businesses and ideas for improving the economic activity of the village through tourism (cafe and cycle hire) in order to capitalise on the links to the South Downs National Park. Overall, of 28 responses, 64% were in favour of some development and change, and 36% preferred to maintain the status quo. Infrastructure again emerged as a concern, and space, broadband and utilities were all mentioned. Some people said they didn't want Plumpton to become a 'dormitory' village, with only commuters living here.

5: Leisure activities

Of the 82 comments about maintaining and developing leisure activities, 17% wanted better broadband access and utilities; 19% wanted more fitness activities; 16% wanted more facilities and activities for young people, and 17% for older people; 34% wanted more access to green spaces; 12% wanted more support for clubs and societies, and 26% said there should be better use of/improved village facilities (village hall green and the sports pavilion) generally.

6: Natural spaces and wildlife

We asked people about what matters most to them in relation to natural spaces and wildlife. An overwhelming 90% of responses favoured conservation in some form as a village priority. The majority (39%) said they wanted to preserve wildlife, and 39% specifically expressed concerns about the effects of housing development; 29% wanted to preserve natural spaces; 26% wanted to establish nature reserves; 16% were concerned to preserve trees and hedges, and 6% specified that any developments should be carbon neutral. Two responses in particular highlighted a need to avoid overly managed open spaces, with an emphasis on natural, as opposed to 'green'.

7: Other matters

We asked a final open question about matters other than housing that concerned people in the village. Issues involving transport stood out as the most important (49%), with schools second (18%). Other concerns included infrastructure (6%), families (8%), older people (8%), businesses (4%), village GP (5%), and clubs and pubs (5%).

All your comments and concerns will be taken into account when we draft the Neighbourhood Plan. A second open meeting is planned for 18th September, from 3pm–8pm at the village hall, to give as many people as possible a chance to attend and find out about the next steps.