

Village Consultation – September 2014

Using display boards and tables, we invited our neighbours to answer the following questions:

- What would we like for the future? (85)
- What do we like about Plumpton & Plumpton Green now? (92)

The following key topic areas were presented and commented on for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks.

- Economy and Local Business (23)
- Environment (27)
- Transport (24)
- Housing (46)
- Heritage (20)

The numbers in brackets refer to the number of post it notes that were left on each display board and table. Many people will have left responses to more than one question, and because some responses had to be re-allocated because they were quite relevant to the question (i.e. refurbishing the Pit Stop in the Housing section). For this reason, the numbers and percentages should be interpreted as qualitative themes, indicating the balance of opinion, as opposed to absolute numbers.

Following is a breakdown of the themes in the questions. This process involved:

- a) Reviewing the post it notes under each section and defining around 5 key themes that emerged;
- b) Counting the number of post it notes that adhered to each theme ;
- c) Some post its fell under more than one theme, for example one post it note said that “housing should consider fields, smaller sites and the needs of residents” a tick was placed under all three headings (NB this will affect percentage counts);
- d) After these initial themes were analysed, more clarity was found by group them together, so example ‘opposed to change’ vs ‘encouraging change’;
- e) Within these ‘master’ themes, the percentage of people defining the kind of change were recounted as a percentage of the overall people within the master theme, rather than as a percentage of all post it in that section;

Below is the summary data for all the different questions and themes. The raw data are in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Display 1: What would we like for the future?

We had 85 responses that fell into the following categories:

local groups and facilities	13	15%
retain natural countryside and wildlife	19	22%
retain dark skies	10	12%
small discreet affordable development	13	15%
no development	2	2%
transport & infrastructure problems solved	10	12%
retain character of village	18	21%

Of these responses, just over half (58%) seemed wary about the role of development in the village and just under half (42%) seemed to expect a positive contribution. This is less in favour of development than the previous consultation in May, which found 36% of responses against change.

The positive responses highlighted opportunities to invest in infrastructure and transport links, including pavements, as well as community life such as clubs and sports.

Five people commented that they wanted the station gates to stay, however this is a matter for the Southern Rail Network and is not within the control of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In the last consultation in May, the following responses were collected:

	quiet, peaceful green landscape	safe	character/ community	facilities / location	dark nights
Total 24 comments (some post its with multiple comments)	16	2	14	4	2
percentage	67%	8%	58%	17%	8%

This shows that the same themes are broadly in place and that there is now more focus on what housing development could do for us. There is a significant sense of concern about the damage to 'rural character', 'green fields' and 'dark skies' which has remained consistently high in the minds of villagers.

Display 2: What do we like about Plumpton / Plumpton Green now?

We had 92 responses to this question and they fell into the following categories:

quiet/peace & landscape	59	64%
Safe	3	3%
Community	38	41%
Facilities & location	17	18%
Dark skies	4	4%
Love the village just as it is	12	13%

Below is a similar question from the May consultation, to show the consistency of answers:

How do we feel about living here?

	quiet, peaceful green landscape	safe	character/ community	facilities / location	dark nights
Total 23 comments (some post its with multiple comments)	14	2	8	2	2
Percentage	61%	9%	35%	9%	9%

The answers again are consistently referring to the rural location and the needs to retain the village character and countryside. 13% of people in the recent consultation requested that the village didn't change at all, which is a higher proportion than in May and may reflect the growing understanding that development sites are being proposed and will be actioned.

Display 3: Local economy and business

We had 23 responses to this theme in the fullest category, as some people only responded to one category.

Strengths (9 responses)	Rail Links The skills and trades in village Facilities
Weaknesses (23 responses)	Broadband capacity Parking Local businesses struggling Poor public transport Lack of amenities
Opportunities (20 responses)	Business development (e.g. tourism) Improved transport and pathways Community collaboration
Threats (1 response)	Multi-national companies (e.g. Tesco's)

Our neighbours had slightly contradictory opinions within this theme, as some think the facilities and transport links are excellent, when related to trains, the shop and local tradesmen. Others find there to be a lack, related to buses, broadband and road/walking travel.

The broadband issue will hopefully be resolved soon as is not a feature of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This theme elicited the same approach to development as above – that development could contribute to village improvements to road and infrastructure.

The response rates above demonstrate that there is a weight of positive thinking towards the impact of development on the local economy and business.

Display 4: Environment

We had 27 responses to this theme in the fullest category, as some people only responded to one category.

Strengths (16 responses)	Unspoilt countryside and wildlife Dark skies Footpath network and leaflets
Weaknesses (6 responses)	Lack of wild flowers Lack of bee keepers Lack of pavements and signpost
Opportunities (15 responses)	To consider wildlife in development To improve flood defences
Threats (27 responses)	Any development is a threat Wildlife and countryside are in jeopardy Privacy and damage to existing property Flooding

On balance, our neighbours seemed to think that development of the village is, on balance, a threat to the environment and likely to cause damage. However some people did suggest that development projects could be done sympathetically.

Display 5: Transport

We had 24 responses to this theme in the fullest category, as some people only responded to one category.

Strengths (9 responses)	Railway Buses Car sharing
Weaknesses (24 responses)	Parking (availability and danger of bad parking) Junctions and speeding issues Lack of buses Lack of late night traings
Opportunities (9 responses)	Limit speed Improve parking Cycle routes Creating pavements
Threats (15 responses)	Increasing bottlenecks at Half Moon and Plough Junctions Increased parking Increased speeding

Our neighbours considered, on balance, there to be significant weaknesses in the transport system for Plumpton / Plumpton Green. This needs to be accounted for in significant development plans, which at the moment are seen as more of a threat than an opportunity.

Display 6: Housing

We had 46 responses to this theme in the fullest category, as some people only responded to one category.

Strengths (8 responses)	Visually attractive Good spread of housing Rural community
Weaknesses (19 responses)	Services and infrastructure insufficient for large developments Flooding risk
Opportunities (30 responses)	Affordable housing for young families and older people Develop local nature reserves Improve flooding
Threats (46 responses)	Risk of damaging public trust if covenants not honoured Countryside and wildlife damage Flooding risk Traffic and parking Risk to village Character

Our neighbours seemed to perceived a greater threat than opportunity from housing development and this has polarised since the May consultation, again potentially due to the reality now being apparent (the developer's leaflets, for example, showing potential sites).

The following summary from the last event still stands:

1. Sites should be small and spread evenly around the village, to include sites north and south as well as east and west. There was only one response that conflicted this.
2. Brownfield sites should be used wherever possible and open countryside, views and wildlife protected.
3. Affordable housing should be incorporated to allow housing for young families, young people who want to remain in the village and our older neighbours who may be struggling to maintain larger homes.

On that occasion 5 people mention the covenants and in the present consultation 7 people directly referred to the covenant.

Display 7: Heritage

Strengths

historic landscape
beautiful countryside
well connected footpaths
racecourse
church
amenities
saying hello and smiling is part of the way of life
has always been somewhere where people get involved and volunteer
people talk to each other and say x 2
safe place for children to grow up
Beautiful Location
Community Feel

Opps

village walking groups
more on at racecourse
park and ride scheme
community involvement from pub
find out who owns pit stop
pit stop chance to promote Plumpton at south downs
getting people to work together re parking
village walking groups

more on at racecourse
park and ride scheme (x2)
community involvement from pub
leaflet on how to use defib (x3)

Weaknesses

no bonfire society
no plumpton signage on B2116
no village carnivals anymore
pit stop in terrible condition
Pit stop in poor repair
pit stop looks dangerous

not enough flowers

Threats

Old Plumpton not part of village
risk to landscape and wildlife
pocket park risks natural habitat
light [pollution
suburban dormitory feel
threat to walking of reduced access to fields and loss of countryside
loss of historic landscape and network of hedges etc
dilution of family friendly feel
Beautiful Location - no over development of natural habitats
Community Feel

The following is a direct transcription of the post it notes, to show the voice of our neighbours and how people articulate their commitment to the village and appreciation of our heritage.

Conclusions

In the May 2014 analysis, an overwhelming 90% of responses favoured conservation, of some form, as a village priority, which dovetails with the indications from the Village Identity board of Plumpton as a rural community. Of these, some referred particularly to the wildlife, others to trees and hedges and others to the need for natural public space. Two responses in particular highlighted a need to avoid overly managed open spaces and the emphasis was on natural, as opposed to just 'green', which wasn't mentioned at all.

The same sentiments are expressed in the current set of responses, which have raised significant concerns about the possibility of damage to the environment that development may bring. While a large number of people are positive about the opportunities that development can bring in terms of affordable housing and contributions to infrastructure, the needs of the wildlife and landscape must be addressed in the Neighbourhood plan.

