



Environment

One objective of the survey was to gauge public opinion regarding the man-made and natural surroundings that provide the overall physical characteristics and setting of our community. The questions themselves related to three broad areas:

- the natural environment – our local landscape and wildlife
- the built environment – our buildings, roads and other urban features
- the historic environment – our local heritage sites and monuments

The responses to these questions provided information that highlighted the particular aspects of our environment that are important to us and how the community as a whole would like to see these dealt with in the future. Some of the questions were also designed to gather data relating to more particular concerns regarding the care, appearance and upkeep of the Community Plan area and how its residents are affected by certain specific features.

What Is Our Current Situation?

The Local Landscape - Context

A statement of the character of South Gloucestershire's landscapes, “their distinctive attributes and features, together with an assessment of the changes taking place in the landscape” was published by the local authority in July 2005.¹ The assessment is “a method of identifying, mapping and classifying the special qualities of an area of landscape” and is used largely to help the authority to make decisions about how to best manage local development.² Pucklechurch is defined as part of Landscape character area 6 – Pucklechurch Ridge & Boyd Valley. The following description summarises the main landscape features set out in this document.

Pucklechurch sits on an elevated plateau about 8 miles to the north east of Bristol, 8 miles to the north west of Bath and just south of the Cotswolds. Although now on the edge of Bristol's suburban fringe it is still largely rural in nature. Views to the north are dominated by the Cotswold Scarp whilst to the south lies the River Boyd valley. Panoramic views across lower lying areas are afforded in particular from Parkfield and Shortwood Hill. The gently rolling landscape is largely made up of fields, both pasture and arable in roughly equal quantities, surrounded in the main by managed hedgerows.

A myriad of roads and public rights of way criss-cross the parish (the M4 being a significant feature although there is no direct access either to or from it) as does Feltham Brook, a tributary stream of the Boyd. The underlying geology of the area has had a considerable influence on its industrial landscape, with both active and disused quarries, clay

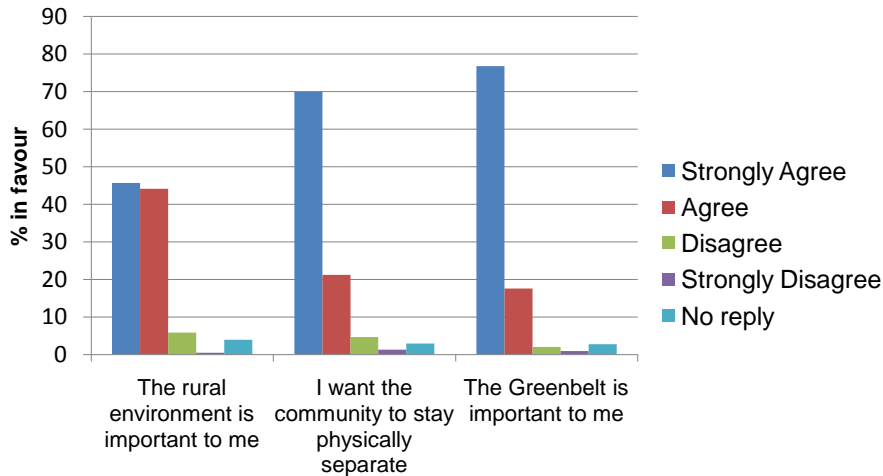
¹ South Gloucester Council Landscape Character Assessment SPD (2005)

² South Gloucestershire Council Website - Landscape Character Assessment



pits and former brickworks, as well as remnants of coal mining and a disused railway in evidence.

How do we feel about....?

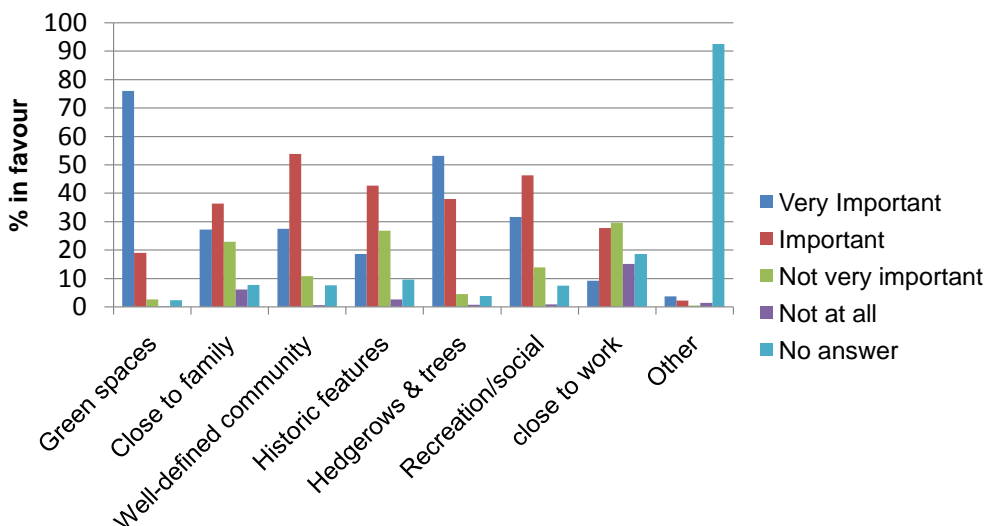


All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q6
Living in a rural environment physically separated from other settlements is very important to our community as is the preservation of the Green Belt

To understand the depth of feeling about a number of general aspects of our community respondents were asked to comment on a number of statements some of which related to the environment. Collectively almost 90% of those who answered this question strongly agreed or agreed that it was important to them to live in a rural environment, whilst 70% strongly agreed that the community should remain separated from neighbouring population centres such as Emerson's Green. The overwhelming majority felt that the preservation of the Green Belt was important to our community.

How important are....



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q7
The natural environment (green spaces, hedgerows & trees) is much more important to people than being close to work



When questioned about the importance of specific community features, people did not generally feel that being close to work was an important aspect of where they live – collectively only 36.8% of those who replied to the questionnaire overall placed any importance on it whilst 44.7% deemed it to be not very important or not important at all. The fact that this statement received the fewest responses in comparison to the others in this question may also indicate that a significant number of people had an indifferent attitude being close to work. The remainder of responses reflect the particularly high level of importance placed on green spaces, hedgerows and trees as well as, to a marginally lesser extent, recreational/social opportunities and historic features within a well-defined community. Collectively 63.4% of those who answered this question placed being close to family as important and this might have some bearing on whether or not the local built environment can support this aspect/desire in the future. A number of other respondents (47) identified other features that were important to them, including proximity to the school rather than work and peace and quiet.

The Green Belt - Context

Almost 30% of South Gloucestershire is protected from inappropriate development by its designation as “green belt”. The Government’s “Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts” outlines their history, purpose, extent and the safeguards relating to them.³ The Pucklechurch Community Plan area currently relates to areas 17 and 18 of South Gloucestershire’s Strategic Green Belt Assessment (2006).⁴ The conclusions of the assessment relating to these areas were as follows:

The green belt area to the east of the ridgeline preserves Pucklechurch as a separate settlement, open views from the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and prevents urban sprawl. Both of these areas are a considerable distance from significant employment or services in the existing urban area and if green belt was lost would result in urban sprawl and the loss of open countryside which provides a setting from Bristol and the Cotswold AONB.⁵

Recently the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has published “Proposed Changes to the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)”. These proposed changes allow for the development of an area east of the ring road (Search area 1C of the urban extension East of Kingswood in the RSS). This development would have a significant impact on the community plan area as it can only proceed if green belt status for the woods and fields near Shortwood, Cadbury Heath, Warmley and Oldland Common is removed.

Results from the public consultation are promised for summer 2009, but the validity of the consultation process has been challenged. The Shortwood Green Belt Campaign has been formed in direct response to the proposed changes to the RSS, and data from the Community Plan survey has been supplied to them.

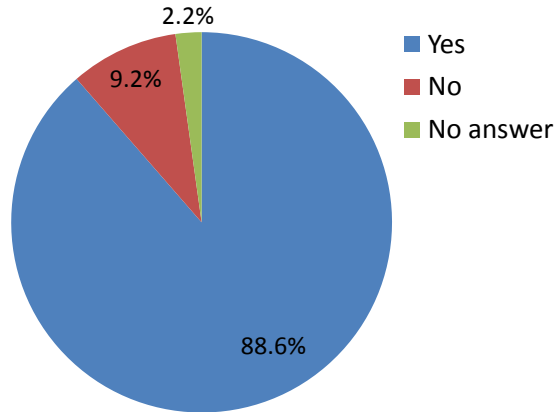
³ Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts. January 1995 (Amended March 2001)

⁴ South Gloucestershire Council: The South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Belt Assessment. September 2006

⁵ Ibid p.40



Should the Green Belt be preserved?



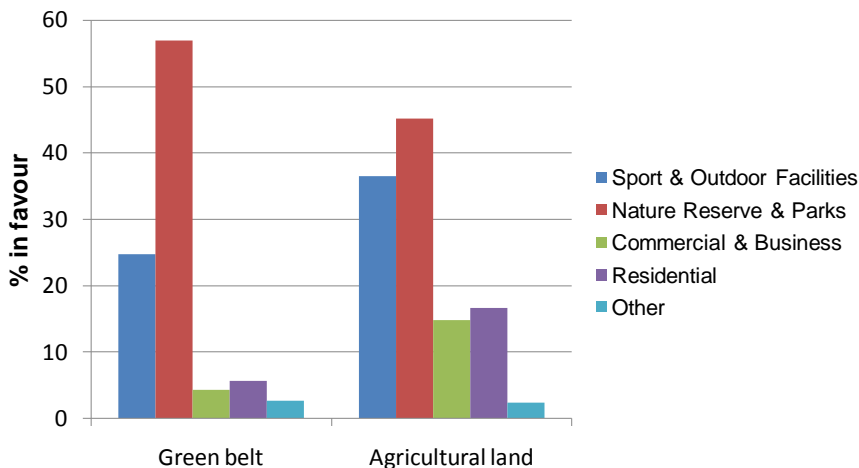
All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q8

There is overwhelming support for the preservation of the green belt.

Almost 90% of those who returned a questionnaire said that the green belt should be preserved at all costs, but when questioned further many people identified some types of development that might be more preferable to others on green belt or agricultural land. These were largely the types of development that might be described as complementing the rural locality, such as nature reserves, country parks or sporting and outdoor facilities. For those people who expressed an opinion, there was little enthusiasm for the development of either type of land for residential, business or commercial purposes, but more thought these were acceptable for agricultural land than land within the green belt.

What development is acceptable on Green Belt & Agricultural land?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

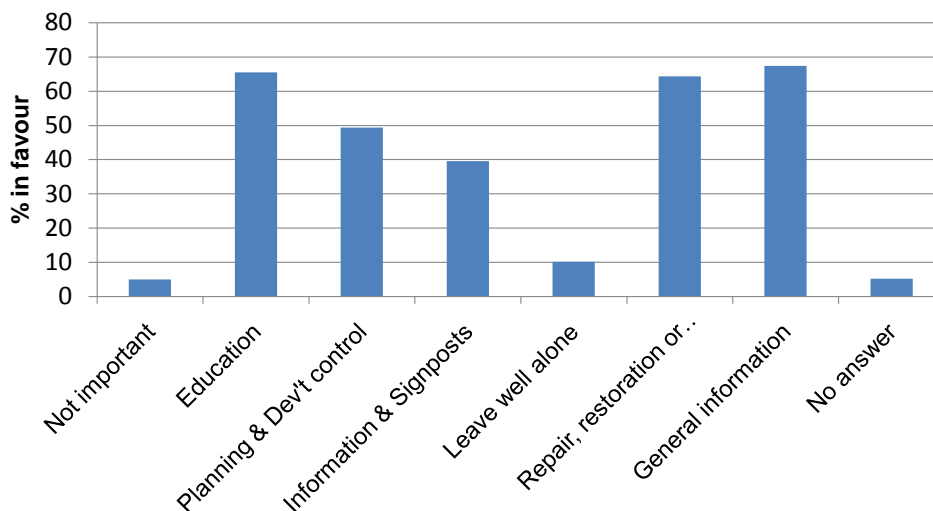
Key Finding Q9

Some types of development of green belt or agricultural land are preferable to others but there is little support for using either for housing, commercial or business premises.



The community plan area has a long and rich history of settlement with modern concentrations at Pucklechurch and Shortwood and to a lesser extent at Parkfield. Pucklechurch village, the largest of the three, is mentioned in the Domesday Book and is situated in the heart of what was the royal hunting ground of Kingswood Forest. Historically the village is most often associated with the murder of King Edmund, which is reported to have taken place in his hunting lodge in Pucklechurch in AD 946. Other evidence suggests that Pucklechurch was an important place even before the tenth century – it was most likely a royal centre, a “burh” with a minster church. The earliest indication of human activity within the parish as a whole, however, is prehistoric, and there is also considerable evidence of Roman settlement. Currently there are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the parish – a Bronze Age burial mound at Shortwood, the reputed site of King Edmund’s palace in Pucklechurch, and Brandy Bottom (Parkfield South) Colliery. More recently Pucklechurch was host to a 19th century colliery, a WWII barrage balloon centre (1939-45), RAF Station Pucklechurch (1945-59) and HM Remand Centre Pucklechurch (now demolished and replaced by HMP YOI Ashfield). A small trading estate has occupied most of the land which was formerly the RAF station for approximately the last 40 years.

How to preserve and enhance the historic environment?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q43

There is clear support for the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment, especially through education and the provision of information and by sympathetic repair and restoration.

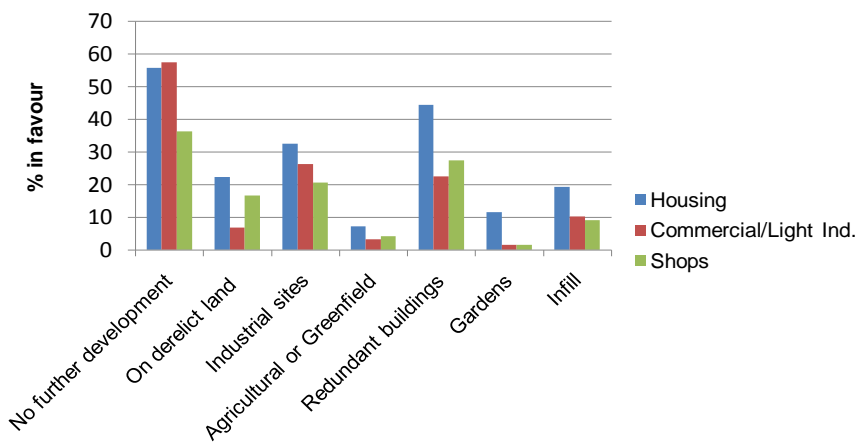
The historic environment is clearly important to the community – only 5% of those who expressed an opinion felt that it was not important to preserve and enhance it. The highest number of responses related to encouraging an active interest through education and the provision of information about historic sites in the area - one respondent specifically wanted to know what these were. Given the longevity of human activity as well as the significant number of historic features that exist across the community plan area, there is clearly much scope to provide a wide variety of opportunities to interest the local community.



Architecture - Context

The oldest extant building in the Pucklechurch is St Thomas à Becket Church (13th century) which stands at the heart of the village and its designated Conservation Area. The centre of the village is characterised by a number of grey stone-built cottages and large 17th and 18th century houses. There are more than 28 listed buildings (Grade II and II*) and 13 locally listed buildings of importance in the parish. The population of just over 3000 is housed within these buildings but also in just over a thousand more properties built in a variety of styles over a long period of time. The vast majority of these were constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries and consist in part of purpose-built terraced housing primarily to accommodate mining families (Parkfield Rank), as well as housing to accommodate RAF families and an estate of modern “Chalet Style” and terraced houses built in the 1960s, amongst others. Only a small number of properties have been constructed in recent years largely as the result of infill. Two buildings on Pucklechurch Trading Estate remain from the WWII barrage balloon squadrons and are Grade II listed. Other buildings of note include Victorian school buildings (now converted to dwelling spaces), a Methodist Church as well as a converted Methodist Chapel and the remains of a 19th century Congregational Chapel. The Community Plan Area as a whole is also host to a number of traditional farmhouses, barns and agricultural outbuildings.

What types of development where?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q10

A majority of people who responded to the questionnaire favoured no further development, however for all the circumstances suggested housing was the most acceptable option.

Given the position of the plan area within the natural and historic landscape, it is important to understand how the community feels about what kinds of building development are acceptable and where. Opinions were sought on a variety of statements and the highest number of individuals appear to have responded positively to the suggestion that there should be no further development – however it is also possible that some of these went on to comment on other statements relating to possible types of development in particular circumstances. The least favoured option related to any kind of development on green belt, agricultural land or gardens, and this is consistent with the other survey findings. Some residents believe that the



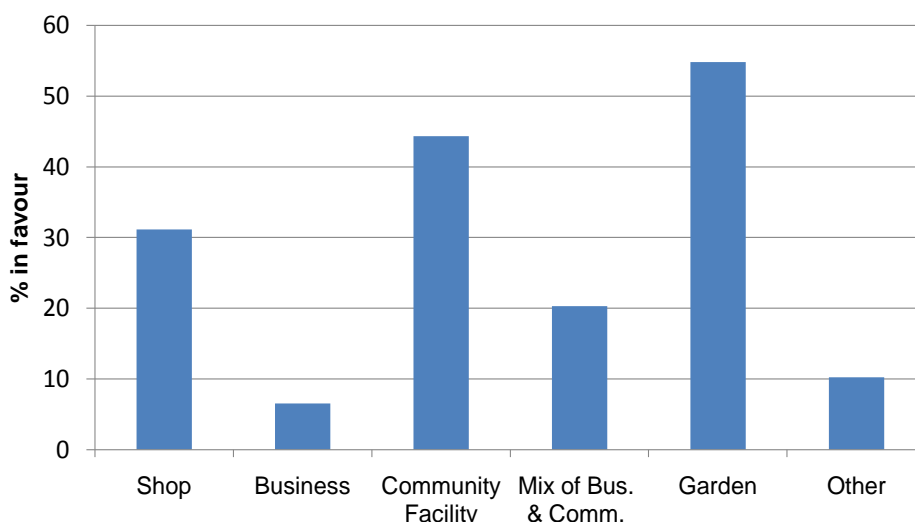
area could be improved by developing derelict or vacant land, brown field and industrial sites and a large number thought the development of redundant buildings was appropriate particularly for housing. In fact of all the types of development, housing was what most people who expressed an opinion felt was the most appropriate for any of the given circumstances.

Question 12 of the survey asked people to identify where derelict or vacant land exists in the Community Plan Area. There were 59 individual responses, but from the suggestions given it is clear that many people did not share the same opinion as to what “derelict or vacant” meant - many of the sites mentioned included land that was perceived to be “empty” but being used for agricultural purposes or sites in need of general refurbishment rather than derelict. Two areas that received repeated mentions were a piece of land at the end of St. Aldam’s Drive and the area adjacent to Pucklechurch Trading Estate at the top of Oaktree Avenue in Pucklechurch. At the time of writing a planning application is imminent for the construction of housing and a doctors’ surgery.

Pucklechurch Congregational Chapel – Context

The foundation stone of the Congregational Chapel was laid on the 11th June 1845 and the chapel was used for services for almost 150 years. For structural safety reasons the majority of it was demolished in 1991 with the exception of the vestry, which continued to be used for meetings and services until it, too, fell into disrepair. The vestry, the back wall of the chapel and its boundary wall with gates are all that remain, and these are now covered by an unsightly mass of brambles, weeds and overgrowth. The remains of the chapel occupy one of the most central positions in the village centre and efforts to secure its future redevelopment have proved fruitless.

How might the Congregational Chapel be best developed?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q11

There is overwhelming support for the redevelopment of the derelict chapel and little enthusiasm for leaving it as it is.

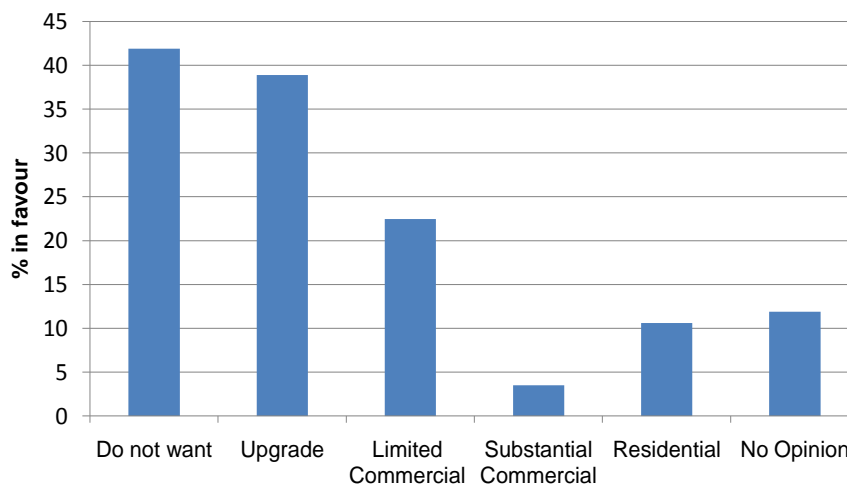


In responding to this question, people were able to select more than one of the proposed options. The majority of people who answered this question supported the idea of developing the site as a garden or general community facility, although there were an overwhelming number of more specific suggestions - 130 individuals volunteered ideas as to how the site might best be used. Their suggestions were wide-ranging and included housing, a youth club, and a war memorial, whilst some people added detail to one of the general suggestions already given, for example, requesting a specific type of garden. Only a very few people were of the opinion that it should be left alone or even reinstated as a chapel.

Pucklechurch Trading Estate – Context

Pucklechurch Trading Estate (PTE) consists of 20 acres of industrial properties and occupies land that was once part of RAF Pucklechurch. The estate had been owned by Pucklechurch Development Company for over 40 years but was sold in January 2007 and is now part of Slough Estates Group. In the main PTE is comprised of light industrial, logistics, distribution and warehousing units.

Further Development of the Trading Estate?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q13

Opinion on further development of Pucklechurch Trading Estate is divided but very few people actually supported the idea of substantial additional commercial development.

When asked to comment on a number of statements relating to the future development or otherwise of PTE, opinion is divided; almost as many people did not support further development as supported its upgrading. Of the options offered for additional development, suggestion with the least support was substantial commercial development, with only 3.5% of those who replied to the questionnaire approving of this idea. A number of extra comments were made by residents who live near the PTE, and significant concerns were expressed regarding the current number of lorries, the level of noise and light pollution emanating from the estate, as well as the capacity of the road to cope with additional traffic. (See also further comments relating to noise and light pollution below).



Traveller Sites – Context

Current estimates from South Gloucestershire Council suggest that about 100 Gypsy and Traveller families are living permanently in South Gloucestershire, accommodated in Council owned sites, privately owned sites, or in housing. This number does not account for those groups who are in transit, pass through seasonally and who occupy unauthorised sites – there are currently no official transit sites in South Gloucestershire. In response to a Direction from the Secretary of State in 2006, South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) is currently in the process of preparing a plan to deal with the unmet accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in this area. To this end public consultation (now closed) on a series of options and issues relating to this was undertaken early in 2008. The South West Regional Assembly has also recently been working to determine the amount of additional accommodation of this type required across the whole of the South West. The draft vision of the SGC Development Plan Document put out to public consultation at the end of 2008 is:

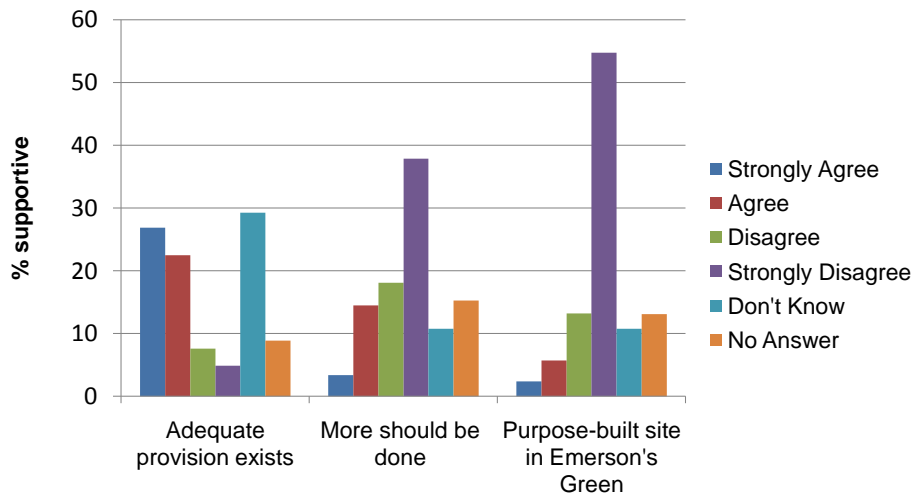
By 2011, South Gloucestershire Council will ensure that land is available to meet the identified need for an additional 53 residential and 25 transit pitches. In ensuring this provision, this will achieve a marked reduction in the levels of unauthorised occupations and achieve improvements in the quality of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, and access to services within our communities.⁶

The draft development plan was published after our Community Plan Survey was undertaken and suggests 17 locations for the development of new pitches, eight of which are existing Gypsy and Traveller sites that could be used more effectively. Whilst none of those suggested lie within the immediate area of our Community Plan, a number of sites already in use within it are proposed to be safeguarded by Policy C of the Development Plan Document. At the time of writing there are five legal developments and one that requires a retrospective planning application in order to remain legal. There is also one illegal development that has recently been taken to appeal after a court case. It is understood that the Community Plan Area is not expected to provide any additional Gypsy and Traveller sites.

⁶ South Gloucestershire Council: Gypsy and Traveller Sites 'Towards Preferred Options' DPD



Provision of Facilities for Travellers



Key Finding Q14

Collectively most people who responded agreed that adequate provision already exists and disagreed that more should be done – the idea of a site at Emerson's Green was clearly not supported.

All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

At the time of writing the Plan Questionnaire, information regarding local proposals for Gypsy and Traveller provision was not immediately forthcoming. As proposals have now been produced and consultation is ongoing, these have somewhat superseded the questions that were asked, particularly in relation to the Emerson's Green development. The question of provision has however come to the fore, largely due to a number of local high-profile cases relating to the unauthorised occupation of land on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. Data that was collected relating to the adequacy and nature of provision is still important, therefore, as it reveals something of the depth of local opinion. Collectively most people who responded agreed or strongly agreed that there was adequate provision for travellers but the data also reveals that almost a third of people who answered "did not know" and this may suggest there is a need for information to be made more easily available. Most people strongly disagreed that more should be done to provide sites and over half were against the idea of a site within the Emerson's Green development. A small number of extra comments (18) were made that were largely very negative in their attitude towards the provision of any sites in the area.

Local Flora & Fauna - Context

A comprehensive report provided to the Community Plan Steering Group by Bristol Regional Environmental Record Centre shows that our local area supports a wide array of wildlife in a variety of different habitats, from woodlands, ponds and meadows to household gardens.⁷ Our information regarding the local natural environment was taken from a variety of reports and data produced by ecological consultants, natural history societies and members of the public. The following paragraphs summarise the data:⁸

⁷ Several bound documents were supplied – all this information is now held by the Steering Group

⁸ N.B. many of these records were made several years ago



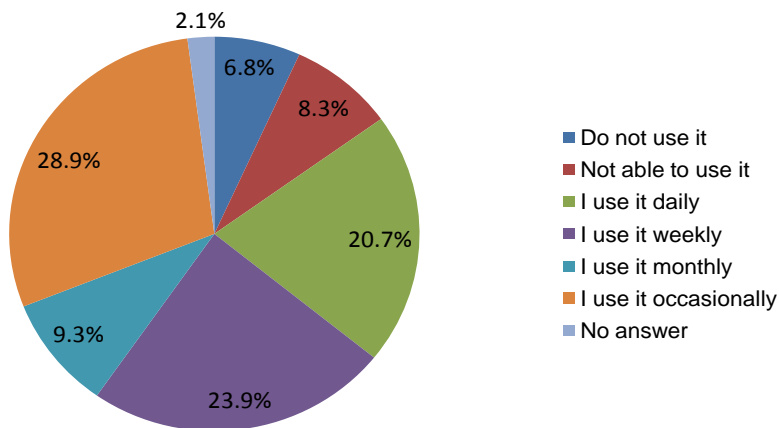
- *Notable and Non-Notable Species:* There are a large number of records relating to plants and animals, some of which are considered to be “notable” or “scarce”, although there are varying degrees of scarcity which may be added as a qualification. It is impossible to list all those which are notable for our Community Plan Area here, but they range from those which are largely widespread and common, such as the badger, and those which are rare and declining, such as the water vole, and plants that are scarce such as Cornfield Knotgrass or Field Gromwell. Some of the species noted are legally protected.
- *Sites of Nature Conservation Interest:* There are currently 9 SNCI designated areas in our overall Community Plan Area ranging from ancient woodland at Shortwood to marshy grassland at Lyde Green Common. Many of these have been designated due to the diversity of habitats and flora, as well as individual notable species.
- *Regionally Important Geological(RIG)/Geomorphological Sites:* There is currently one fully designated RIG site at Shortwood Clay Pits and one proposed site at Shortwood Brick Pit. The latter is described as the “best and probably only exposure of barren red measures in area”. There are also 18 other geological sites noted, including many individual coal pits other than Parkfield Colliery.
- *Habitats, Ponds and Veteran Trees:* There are 10 areas of lowland meadow and lowland mixed deciduous woodland that are categorised as UK Priority Habitats. Priority Habitats are natural and semi-natural habitats of high nature conservation value as defined within The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (the UK’s national biodiversity strategy), prepared in response to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).⁹ There are also six natural ponds that have been surveyed and eight trees that have been afforded veteran status - English Nature defines a veteran tree as ‘a tree which, because of its great age, size or condition is of exceptional value culturally, in the landscape or for wildlife’.

South Gloucestershire Council runs and supports many projects to encourage the enjoyment of the local natural environment and has prepared a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) that sets out the action required to protect and enhance priority species and habitats.

⁹ Joint Council for Nature Conservation Website: Status of UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats



Use of the Countryside



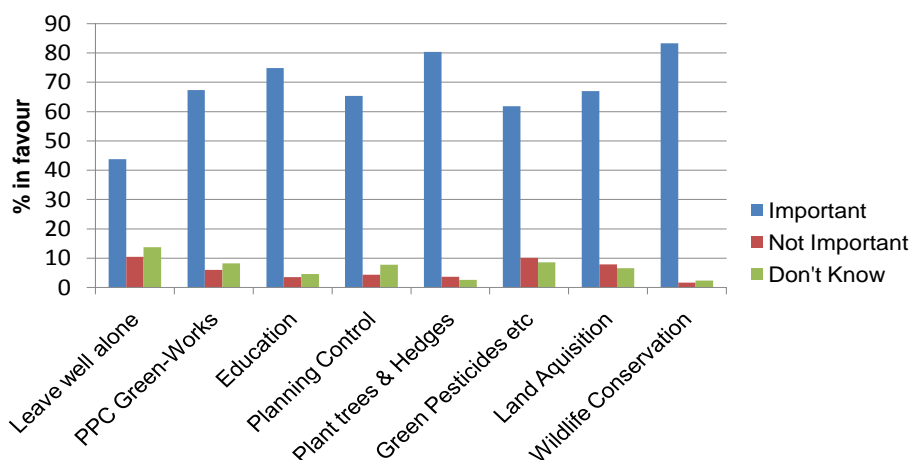
All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q15

Our local countryside is well-used by people on either a daily or weekly basis

The data indicates that the local countryside is well used by residents as a leisure amenity, i.e., for walking, rambling or cycling – 44.6% of those who responded to the questionnaire said they took advantage of it on a daily or weekly basis and a total of 82.8% use it at least occasionally. Some people who made extra comments said they used it more than once per day. The number of people who do not or cannot use it is comparatively small. A supplementary question regarding the exact type of usage people made would have been a useful indicator as to whether or not the countryside was being used primarily as an outdoor open space for exercise or for more wildlife orientated interests.

How best to preserve the natural environment ?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q16

Preservation of the natural environment is clearly important with a high level of support for all the measures suggested.



In responding to this question, people were able to select as many or as few of the proposed measures as they wished. The high level of support for each of the suggested measures clearly shows that preservation of the natural environment is an important issue for the majority of people who responded to the questionnaire. If this level of importance can reasonably be taken to reflect the level of interest in the natural environment then given the wide range of assets that exist locally there is a great deal of scope for stimulating interest and pro-active engagement amongst the local community.

Litter, Fly-tipping & Dog-Fouling - Context

Encams, the organisation that runs “The Keep Britain Tidy Campaign”, usefully describes the problems of litter and fly-tipping as follows:¹⁰

Litter: “waste that is left in the wrong place by human agency “ This can be as small as a sweet wrapper or as large as bag of rubbish. To drop litter can be considered an offence under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and people who do so can be fined – the level of fine dependant on the level of offence, but anything between £95 and £2,500. Local authorities are empowered to employ litter wardens who can also issue on-the- spot fixed penalty notices. The local authority has a responsibility to clear litter from public places so far as is practicable.

Fly-Tipping: “the illegal deposit of any waste onto land (i.e. waste dumped or tipped on a site with no licence to accept waste)”. This type of waste could consist of anything from a household item such as a fridge/washing machine to industrial or builder’s waste. People who dispose of waste must have a Waste Management Licence and use only authorised waste disposal sites. It is a serious offence to fly-tip punishable with fines of “up to £20,000 and/or six months imprisonment. Fines are unlimited if the case goes to Crown Court, and up to two years imprisonment, and up to five years if hazardous waste is dumped”.¹¹ Responsibility for the removal of fly-tipped waste varies between landholders, local authorities and the Environment Agency.

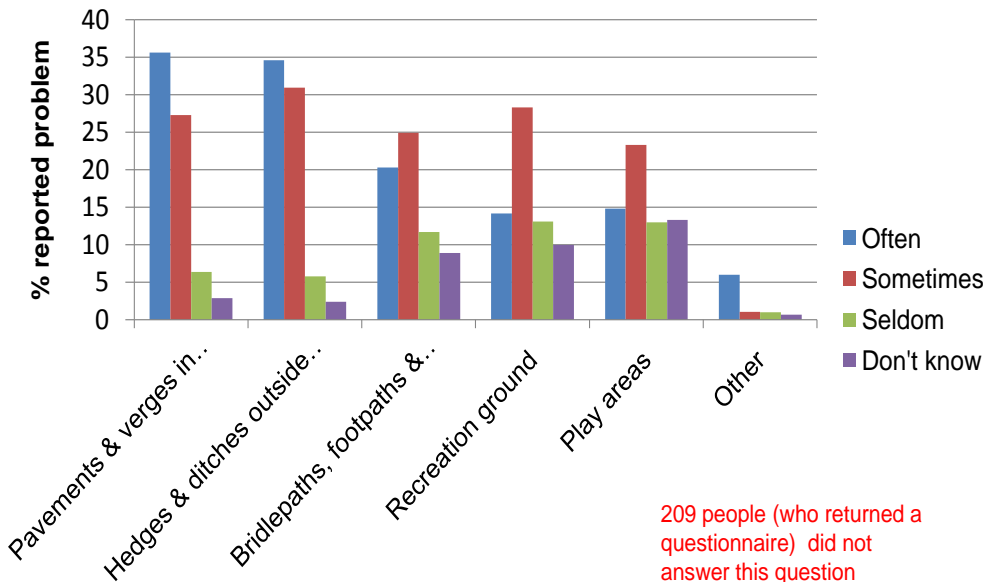
In respect of dog-fouling, the responsibility for clearing up dog mess lies with the owner or handler of the dog. There are several pieces of legislation that govern dog-fouling including the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CNEA) 2005. The maximum penalty for committing an offence in an area governed by a Dog Control Order is £1000 although on-the-spot fines of c. £75 may be issued. There are serious public and animal health issues relating to dog-fouling, especially those relating to Toxocariasis.

¹⁰ Encams Website: Litter Advice

¹¹ Encams Website: Fly-tipping



Where and how often is litter a problem?



209 people (who returned a questionnaire) did not answer this question

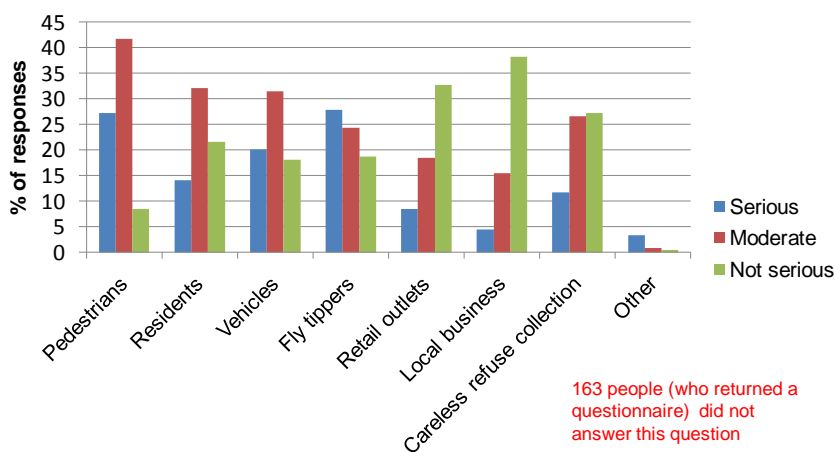
Key Finding Q19

Litter appears to be a problem more often than not in a wide variety of places, although the Recreation Ground and play areas are perceived to be less problematical

All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Litter appears to be a general problem more often than not in most places with marginally higher incidences along what might be described as public thoroughfares, both inside and outside the built-up areas. Collectively, however, hedges, ditches and verges seem to be the most problematical. The Recreation Ground and play areas seem to have fewer problems, but this may in part be due to the combined efforts of a Parish Council employed litter warden and particular residents who take it upon themselves to voluntarily litter-pick these areas. It is important to note that 209 individuals who returned questionnaires chose not to answer this question. As one of the options was to move on to the next question if litter wasn't perceived to be a problem, this number is significant and may also highlight the fact that responses to this type of question may be highly subjective. Over a hundred individuals identified other specific locations as problem areas, and these were largely diverse although some specific places were mentioned more than once, such as the Oaktree Avenue underpass.

Origin and severity of litter



163 people (who returned a questionnaire) did not answer this question

Key Findings Q20/22

Most people identified pedestrians as the source of litter and there is a perception that the younger generation are largely to blame.

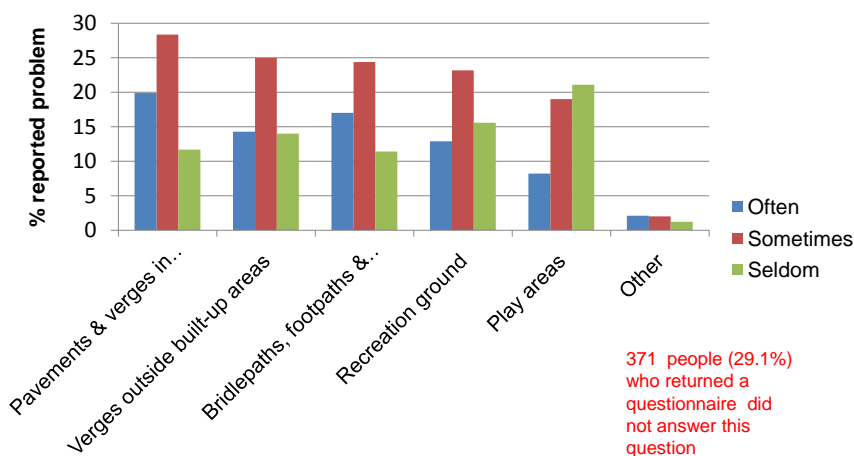
Fly-tipping is prevalent in a number of out-of-the-way places



Pedestrians were identified as the greatest source of litter – collectively 68.9% of those who returned a questionnaire labelled them as the source, although most of these rated the severity of the problem as moderate. Vehicles and residents were rated marginally lower as a potential source, but again the severity of problem was rated as moderate. Clearly some people felt fly-tippers were also responsible, but comparatively more felt this to be a serious issue and this may reflect the way in which the community perceives the actions of fly-tippers. Nearly 70 individuals commented on the source of litter and, with a few exceptions, largely blamed the younger generation, schoolchildren, teenagers and local youth, although we have no statistical evidence to support this. Fewer people declined to answer this question, 163 as opposed to the 209 who opted out of the previous question. One can only assume that some of these may not have thought litter was a problem, but could identify a source and/or opted to rate the severity.

Over 400 individuals identified specific locations where fly-tipping takes place. Many of these might be described as quieter out-of-the-way places and back roads. Some locations were identified by multiple individuals. The top five were: Coxgrove Hill, Redford Lane, Shortwood Hill, Cattybrook Road and Westerleigh Road.

Where and how often is dog mess a problem?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding Q21

Most people that answered this question perceive dog fouling to be a problem “sometimes” in a wide variety of places – a relatively large number of people may not think that dog fouling is a problem at all

Like litter, dog mess is also perceived to be a problem more often than not in a wide variety of places, although in almost all places more people rated it as “sometimes” a problem rather than “often”. The only exception to this was in and around play areas where more people felt it was seldom a problem. It is important to note that almost 30% of those individuals who returned a questionnaire did not answer this question, and it might be reasonable to assume that they didn’t because they did not feel dog-fouling was a problem and therefore took the option to move onto the next question. No opinion was sought on the severity of the problem, but if we look collectively at the numbers of people who felt that there were “often” or “sometimes” problems, we can see that in all places fewer than 50% of those people who returned a questionnaire thought there was more than a seldom a problem.



A number of individuals identified specific locations where dog-fouling is a problem as well as making comments on sites for dog waste bins.

Lighting , Noise & Vibration - Context

Street lighting is reported to cost South Gloucestershire Council £1.1 million a year, and this is predicted to rise to £1.6m by Oct 2009. As a result the Council, like many others, is now considering switching off some of the lights for a number of hours each night in order to achieve a 40% cut in energy costs and carbon emissions. The Council has promised that areas such as sheltered housing and accommodation for vulnerable people, hospitals, areas with CCTV surveillance equipment, pedestrian crossings, subways, enclosed footpaths and alleyways, roundabouts, approaches to major junctions and speed humps will still be lit. Other councils in the UK have undertaken trial switch-offs in villages and residential areas as part of plans to reduce their carbon emissions, but concerns have been raised about rising crime and road accidents in the darkened areas.¹²

Artificial light that shines into a home can be considered a statutory nuisance under the terms of The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Many types of premises are exempt from the law, however, especially where high light levels of light are necessary for safety and security reasons. This is particularly relevant to Pucklechurch as the exemptions include prisons and goods vehicles operations centres (such as at Pucklechurch Trading Estate), although the Pucklechurch Environment and Sustainability Group is currently in discussions with Serco over lighting levels at Ashfield YO1. The law is not clear relating to street lighting, and it does not specify what level of light constitutes a nuisance, so environmental health officers have to adjudicate on a range of factors, including whether or not an average person would be bothered by the light.¹³

"Noise Nuisance" is a term used in law, and means noise that affects the enjoyment of homes to a level which would be unacceptable to most people. Excessive noise can affect quality of life and be detrimental to health and well-being. There are consequently many regulations that govern noise, including multiple Acts of Parliament such as The Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Noise and Statutory Nuisance Act 1993, The Noise Act 1996 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, as well as many sections of others, including the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Action can be taken against noise nuisance where it can be shown that the levels "are prejudicial to health or sufficiently severe and/or frequent to cause an unreasonable disturbance to your lifestyle".¹⁴ South Gloucestershire Council has published comprehensive information relating to noise, and introduced a number of initiatives saying "National research shows that half the population say noise affects their quality of life and in 2007 around a million people said they had moved home because of noisy neighbours. Meanwhile, 70% of people are bothered by noise in their neighbourhood."¹⁵ It is interesting to note that road vehicles are required to meet certain noise levels, and drivers can be prosecuted for driving in

¹² Bristol Evening Post 10/12/2008 & Liberal Democrats Focus on Sodbury, Yate & Dodington

¹³ South Gloucestershire Council Website - Nuisance from light pollution

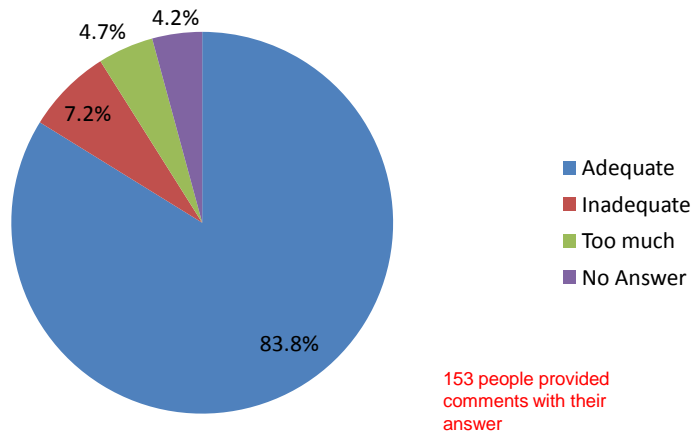
¹⁴ Wiltshire County Council Website – Noise Nuisance

¹⁵ South Gloucestershire Council Website – Noise Action Week



ways that creates too much noise, but there are no specific legal limits on noise from roads. Similarly, dealing with noise from aircraft is not the responsibility of the local authority but a variety of organisations, including the Civil Aviation Authority and the MoD.

Is our street lighting adequate?



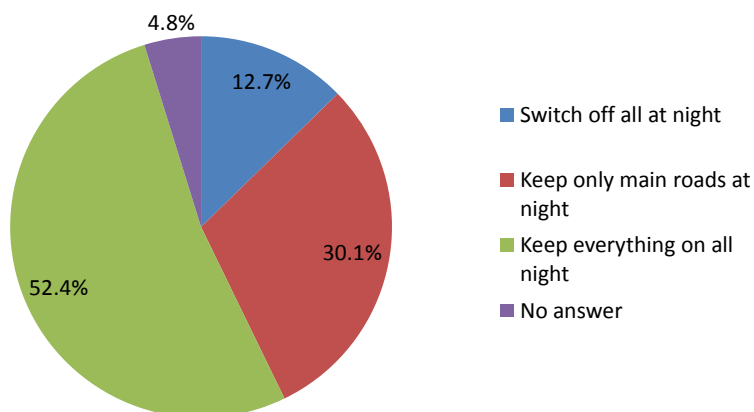
Key Finding Q17

Our street lighting is considered to be adequate by most people, but there are significant localised issues for some.

All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Although the vast majority of residents who returned questionnaires felt that our street lighting is adequate, for a small number of localities lighting is a specific problem with light levels that are either too low or too high. Over 150 individuals qualified their responses to this question, and it is clear from some of these comments that the adequacy or inadequacy of lighting can be a question of personal preference as near neighbours made contradictory statements. Some people also qualified their answers with comments relating to general light pollution, and others expressed concerns over the amount of light emanating from Ashfield YO1 and PTE.

Switch street lights off at night?



Key Finding Q18

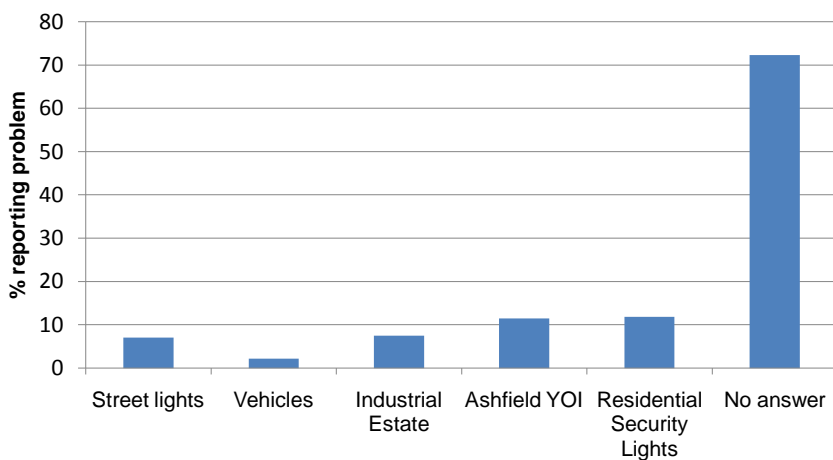
Almost as many people think our street lights should be switched off at least in some areas, as those who think our street lights should stay on all night.

All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned



More than half of those who expressed an opinion thought street lights should stay on throughout the night, but almost as many collectively believe they should be switched off completely or in areas other than main roads or. Some individuals added extra comments, of which some highlight the range of misgivings some residents have about how this might affect personal safety and levels of crime. The vast majority of comments, however, consisted of suggestions as to how lighting might be reduced practically without necessarily switching all street lights off completely.

If you suffer from Light Pollution, what is the source?



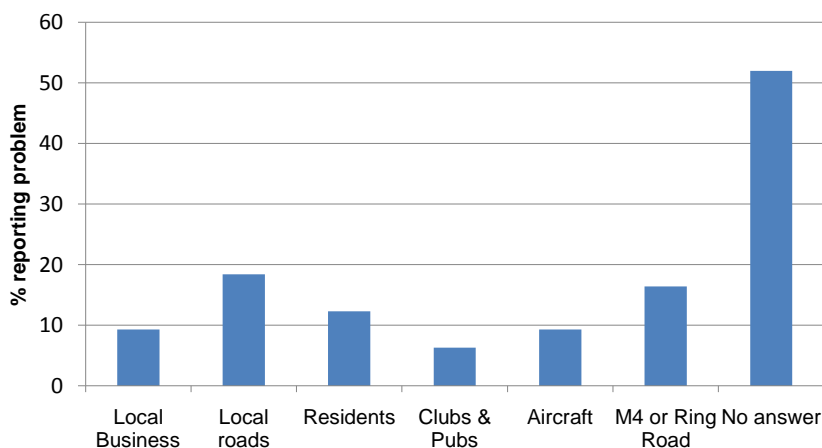
All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Almost three quarters of those who returned a questionnaire chose not to answer the question about light pollution, so we can only assume that for most people this is not an issue. Although collectively the PTE and Ashfield YOI were identified as the biggest source of light pollution, it is residential security lights that are reported most often as the culprits.

Key Finding Q23.2

Light pollution is not an issue for the vast majority of people but residential security lights cause problems for some and collectively light from Ashfield YOI and PTE cause the most concern

If you suffer from noise pollution, what is the source?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

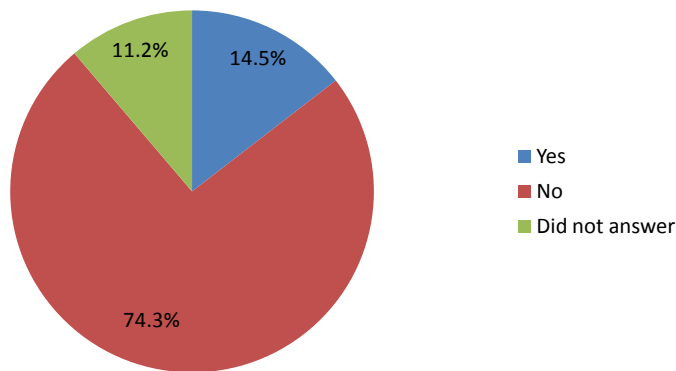
Key Finding Q23.1

Noise is not a problem for most people but some report problems relating to roads and for other residents - there appears to be a specific issue with noise from PTE



The Community Plan Area appears to be relatively quiet – more than half of the people who returned questionnaires didn't answer this question and so it seems reasonable to assume that the majority have no problem with noise pollution. Where problems are reported, they appear most often to depend on relative proximity to roads and the motorway. Individual comments make frequent references to noise from neighbours, cars and motorbikes. There appears to be a specific issue relating to noise and vibration from lorries on the PTE, with lorry movements at night identified as a particular nuisance to some residents late at night.

Are you affected by vibration from vehicles?



Key Finding

Q24

Most people are not affected by vibration from vehicles but lorries, particularly those dealing with freight at PTE at night cause problems for some.

All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Flooding – Context

Although most of the Community Plan Area sits on an elevated plateau and not naturally subject to major flooding nevertheless there are areas that have, and do experience problems as the result of sewer and surface water, particularly during storms. Most recently (Jan. 2008) Parkfield Road near to the Rose & Crown required emergency action by Avon Fire & Rescue to pump it out.

The question of sewerage disposal has been a long-standing problem for the Parish Council – in the 1950s a public enquiry was held in to the issue and this resulted in the sewerage scheme receiving the sanction of the Ministry of Health in 1957. However since that time our community and the number of properties have grown considerably and neither the sewage nor the surface water systems are able to cope during periods of heavy rainfall.¹⁶

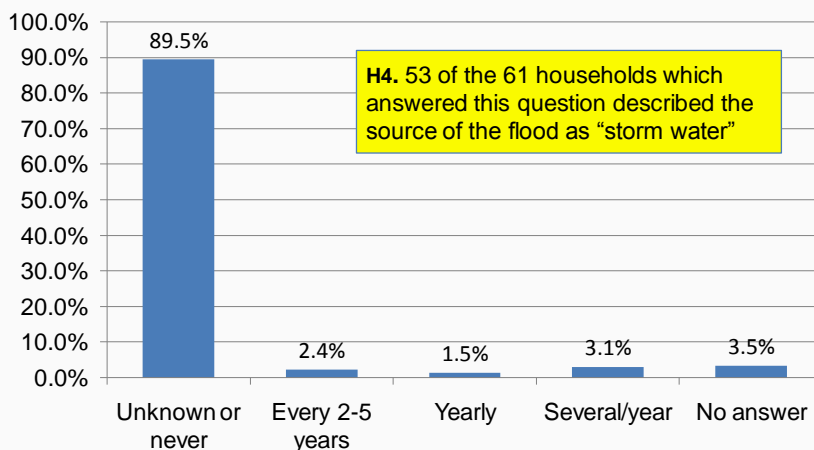
In 2007 Wessex Water outlined proposals to upgrade the sewer system that addressed particular problem areas but which did not address problems experienced with sewage in places that do not appear in their “at risk” register such as Maple Walk, Partridge Road, Hawkridge Drive and Oaktree Avenue. These works have

¹⁶ For a comprehensive summary of the issues and systems see Smith, M. 2007 “Flooding and Sewage Problems Plague Village” http://www.pucklechurch.org/html/features_sept07.html#flood



now been completed but the feeling of the Parish Council before they were concluded was that these works would not go far enough towards resolving all the issues.

How often are you affected by flooding?



All percentages expressed in relation to the total number of questionnaires returned

Key Finding H3/4/5

Flooding is not a problem for most households but in a small number of localities it is a regularly occurring issue caused largely by the accumulation of storm water

For nearly 90% of people who responded to the questionnaire flooding was not identified as a major problem, but it is clearly of considerable concern for a number of households in particular localities - 22 reported problems occurring several times a year. When and where problems do occur, 87% of those people who chose to identify the problem reported the accumulation of storm water as being the issue . Although most people who returned household questionnaires chose not to identify places where flooding occurs, a wide range of locations were identified that need further research. Several places were repeatedly mentioned such as Coxgrove Hill, Main Road Shortwood, Parkfield Road, Oaktree Avenue and Westerleigh Road.

Environment – What do we want for the future?

There are clearly many features of the local environment that are of importance to the community and results from the questionnaire give an indication of which of these should either be protected and enhanced or are in need of attention and improvement. In short the results tell us what we like, what we don't like, what we want to keep and what we want to change and in simple terms should form the basis of an action plan that enables the local environment to be managed accordingly. The Community Plan area does not however sit in isolation: there are many external challenges and factors that will affect or limit the outcomes of such an action plan and these will also necessarily affect its specific content. An example of this would



be the Regional Spatial Strategy which if implemented in its current form will have far-reaching consequences for all aspects of the local environment in the future. The focus areas for the environment section of the questionnaire were:

- the natural environment – our local landscape and wildlife
- the built environment – our buildings, roads and other urban features
- the historic environment – our local heritage, sites and monuments
- particular concerns relating to the care of the environment and the effect of specific environmental factors on residents

Three key elements will enable the local community to make a positive contribution to the focus areas in the future:

- **Information** – a well-informed community will understand issues and be able to act decisively or change their attitudes as well as appreciate the current situation.
- **Engagement** – an engaged community will take responsibility because they care about something they are involved or interested in.
- **Empowerment** – an empowered community will be able to take positive action because residents either as individuals or as a collective will be enabled to make their voices heard at many levels.

The aspiration for the future of the local environment is a simple one:

To Inform, Engage & Empower = To Preserve, Improve, & Enhance

This is the principle which has been used to underpin and generate a vision for its future direction and the resulting action plan will:

- Maximise the ability of the community to protect and shape its own environment
- Ensure the local environment contributes to the community's overall sense of well-being and contentment
- Improve a sense of community identity through a shared knowledge of the special characteristics of the local environment
- Promote better communication and contact between all parties interested in the local environment
- Empower local residents to make a difference and act responsibly towards the local environment



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