

Neighbourhood Plan - Initial Consultation Survey Results

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

West Hoathly Parish Council is leading a project for the parish community to create a Neighbourhood Plan for the area – put simply “Our Plan”. The plan, once adopted through a referendum in 2013, will become a formally recognised part of the Mid Sussex District planning policy which will be specific to this Parish. It is therefore a very important initiative that must reflect the opinions and aspirations of the people in this community.



Initial Consultation Survey

During April and May a consultation survey was run using the booklet questionnaires that should have arrived through your letterbox and online via the Hoathly Hub. Below is a very brief summary of the results.

241 people submitted responses which included **710 individual comments**. This probably equates to about a quarter of parish households participating in the consultation.

75% of respondents “Strongly agreed” and 23% “Agreed to some extent” with the overall Vision proposed in the survey.

Thirteen so called “Defining Characteristics” were proposed for the Parish of the future covering aspects such as the countryside, public transport, homes and community. **All of these characteristics received a large majority of “In favour”** ticks with even the lowest (for the “Homes” topic) still being 79% “In favour”. The highest approval was for vision related to the Countryside with 98% “In favour”.

The consultation also sought opinions on life in the Parish today regarding what we most value about living here and what gives us most cause for concerns.

Way out in front of “**what we Value**” is the Countryside followed by the relatively low crime experience. Having the primary school comes next with historic buildings, local communications, community activities soon after.

Among our “Concerns” the biggest emphasis is on traffic volume and speeds, and pedestrian and cyclist safety. The other key topics are the continued viability of schooling for up to primary ages, public transport and facilities for an ageing population.

It is encouraging and reassuring to see that, in general, there is a remarkable level of consensus among local residents about our area as it is now and how we would like it to remain or evolve in the future. Obviously there is in fact a spectrum of attitudes expressed in the survey and the comments which may mean some refinements are needed to the vision and future characteristics.

Out of interest, 44 of the responses were on paper and 197 were completed online. 57% were from women. 40% came from each of Sharpthorne and West Hoathly and 10% from Highbrook. Half had lived here more than 20 years. 60% were over 55 years old. Just over a third had young people aged 18 and under in their households

I would like to thank everyone who submitted a response, members of the community who helped create the materials for the consultation and Jill Carter and her firm Abacus Insight who at no charge helped construct, run and analyse the survey.

Next Steps

This initial consultation will now enable the “Our Plan” project to build on this foundation by defining Parish objectives for the plan and the necessary policies to realise them which are consistent with the opinions expressed by residents..

If you would like to participate in the next phase of the “Our Plan” process over the coming months or have any queries about it, please either contact the Parish Clerk or me.

www.HoathlyHub.info/OurPlan also has further information.