

Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire June 2018 Analysis and Summary of Responses

Introduction

In June 2018 the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group conducted a survey of the residents in Haversham-cum-Little Linford Parish. The survey took the form of a questionnaire which was designed to find out what is important to the community in order to guide the Steering Group in the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.

This summary is not intended to exhaustively report on all questions and findings, just to tease out what are perceived to be the key issues and priorities for the community. Further details can be found in Appendix A (Quantitative Responses) and Appendix B which lists the free text responses received.

Summary of Responses

334 households received two copies of the questionnaire and all residents aged 16 and over were invited to participate. The total number of questionnaires returned and analysed was 375. (Only one of these was downloaded from the website, the rest were returns of pre-printed copies.)

It isn't possible to calculate the exact average number of returns per household because a number of them were returned without their envelopes. However, as close as it is possible to estimate, 257 households responded, with a rounded average of 1.5 questionnaires returned from each dwelling. This gives an estimated response rate of 77%.

The Respondents

Of the respondents, 76% came from New Haversham 'The Estate', 16% from Old Haversham 'The Village', 3% from Little Linford and 5% were 'other' – that is outlying houses and farms.

The questionnaire included a request for some personal information from respondents. 52% were female, 45% were male (3% preferred not to say). The age distribution of respondents (by percentage) was as follows:

Age Range:	%
16-17	1
18-24	4
25-44	21
45-64	40
65-79	27
80+	5
Not stated	3

The length of residency in the community is as follows:

Residency (years)	%
Less than 5	15
5-9	17
10-19	17
20-29	15
30+	35

The question related to work status was answered as shown below:

Work	%
Employed	48
Self Employed	13
Retired	33
Student	2
Other	4

Housing

Based on the evidence of the initial community meeting, by far and away the greatest preoccupation of the community is with any plans for new housing – numbers, locations and types. New housing development will be a very important and visible part of the overall Neighbourhood Plan, and ultimately the whole landscape. In the earliest stages of the planning process, the most vocal members of the community were adamant that any development at all was unacceptable to them. The questionnaire has made it possible to discern a broader range of views.

Question 4 specifically addressed the issue of types of housing required in the community. 91% of responses to this section indicated preferences (expressed in terms of level of importance) for different types of houses that the community should be planning for. The answers of a small minority of respondents to this and other questions in the survey have indicated that they are implacably opposed to any housing developments of any kind in any part of the parish.

Accepting that we have to make room for some housing development in the parish, a fairly large number of sites have been mentioned in responses to the questionnaire. These are, in no particular order:

- Land adjacent to the Gayhurst Road, North of Little Linford
- Land to the West of Brookfield Road
- Land to the West of the North end of Wolverton Road
- Land to the North of Chalmers Ave., Rowan Ave., Keppel Ave.
- Land to the East of Wolverton Rd., South of current building boundary
- Land between Upper and Lower Haversham (aka Haversham Village and 'The Estate')
- Land known as 'The Triangle', High Street Haversham

- Land adjacent to the road between Haversham and Little Linford
- Land adjacent to the M1, Little Linford Lane
- Land adjacent to the road between Little Linford and parish boundary with Gayhurst
- Between Upper Haversham and Castlethorpe
- Between Lower Haversham and Little Linford

All of these sites have been mentioned at least once (and some cases only once) in the responses; some of them have been suggested quite frequently. However, it should be noted that the intention of the questionnaire was not to identify or endorse sites for development.

Community Priorities

Neighbourhood plans require a robust framework on which the vision for the future can be hung. At the start of the development process, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group identified six factors that on first analysis seemed to be key priorities for the community. These were identified by considering and where appropriate adopting issues that other communities have felt were important in their own plans for the future, or by considering the specific local circumstances of Haversham-cum-Little Linford.

These issues were discussed and affirmed as key priorities for the community at the first public Neighbourhood Plan meeting. To these six, ‘protecting agriculture’ was added as a seventh key issue following discussion at the public meeting. The full list is given below (Table 1). In the questionnaire, residents were asked to indicate the importance of each priority (Very Important, Important, Not Important, Don’t Know). The aggregated results are ranked in the table, in terms of importance, expressed as percentages of the total of responses.

Table 1. Community priorities ranked by importance from questionnaire.

Priority	% Very Important	% Very Important and Important
Managing Traffic	79	100
Protecting Sensitive Landscapes	72	96
Avoiding Harm to Biodiversity	64	94
Protecting Agriculture	62	96
Protecting Characteristics of Current Settlements	60	90
Preserving Heritage	55	95
Preserving or Enhancing Community Facilities	49	95

All of the priorities should be considered important to a significant degree. Even the priority that ranked lowest in the questionnaire (Preserving or Enhancing Community Facilities) was considered important or very important by 95% of respondents. This indicates:

1. That all the priorities that were originally identified have been affirmed as significant or very significant to the community, due to their uniformly high, or very high ranking.
2. That the addition of 'protecting agriculture' as a priority was a correct addition, as it comes 4/7 in the ranking, with 96% of respondents considering it either very important or important.
3. That these priorities are best fitted to help us articulate our vision for the future of our community.
4. That this set of priorities can individually and collectively serve as tests that will be applied to any potential development area within the parish, to establish the area's validity.

Managing Traffic

Everyone (with the exception of two individuals) who responded to the questionnaire ranked managing traffic as most important, or important as a community priority. Rounding up this makes 100% of the community. In responses to question 3 ("What are the three most important factors we should take into account in identifying suitable land for housing development?") a regular and recurring reported factor is traffic. Frequently the answer has been given as just one word – 'traffic' - but it has also been qualified as a problem in terms of volume, speed, and safety; noise and other pollution.

The problem of traffic, and the resolution of that issue is a preoccupation that pervades the responses in the questionnaires, and in particular the responses to Question 8 ('If we are not to make traffic on our roads any worse in our own plan, what general locations around the Parish would be best for us to look at?'). Here is a preliminary attempt to classify and summarise the responses. These are:

1. A widely held difficulty with the apparent intractability of the problem of increasing traffic with any additional housing (more housing almost invariably leads to more vehicles and traffic, especially in a village setting).
2. A recognition that the location of Haversham just to the North of Milton Keynes leads to a significant volume of commuter traffic through the village, either from MK heading North, or from Northampton and the village communities to the North, heading South. This trend is perceived to be increasing.
3. The 'school run' into and away from Haversham School creates an additional burden at rush hour, especially with children coming in from outside the community
4. There are many suggestions for partial (mitigating) solutions to the increased burden of traffic – speed bumps, additional roundabouts, traffic chicanes on busy through roads, a zebra crossing across the Wolverton Road.
5. Suggestions for large scale road schemes to take traffic away from built up area, namely by-passes, the major widening of existing roads, building a bridge and dual carriageway across the river Ouse.

6. The creation of housing developments in areas geographically remote from existing settlements in order to prevent further growth of traffic pressure in built up areas.
7. The strategy of creating a number of small scale developments that will not create single point source traffic congestion of any magnitude.

Protecting Sensitive Landscapes

This is ranked second as a community priority with 96% of respondents stating it was Very Important or Important. The priority was identified and discussed at the first public meeting as relating to developments potentially interfering with areas that might be regarded as sensitive landscapes.

Avoiding Harm to Biodiversity

When asked to rate the importance of Avoiding Harm to Biodiversity, 94% indicated it was either Very Important (64%) or Important (30%).

Protecting Agriculture

'Protecting Agriculture' emerged as a priority following the first village open meeting concerning the Neighbourhood Plan. The answer to question 16 of the survey ('Most of the land in the Parish is actively used for farming. Do you think that the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect this current pattern of land usage?') gave an overwhelming positive response with 89% of those who answered in support. Only 4% answered to the contrary, the remainder (7%) indicating that they didn't know.

The answers to the follow-up (free text) section of question 16 demonstrate the exceptional importance that farming has in the minds of the parish inhabitants. The views and sentiments of the community are broad ranging, and by and large thoughtfully arrived at. People also hold the agricultural landscape in a deeply held affection located in their local feeling for the land, but also are concerned about the strategic role that farming has in the long term food security in the light of Britain leaving the EU.

The following list represents a summary of the responses in the questionnaire:

1. Agriculture has defined the landscape of Haversham-cum-Little Linford, and continues to shape where we live.
2. Most of the land in the parish is given over to farming; this balance should be retained, whilst recognising that a modest amount of land must be given over to housing development.
3. Agriculture is responsible for creating a landscape of great charm; farmers are seen as custodians of the landscape through their practices

4. Farming practices help maintain an environment that supports wildlife diversity through means of field management but also through maintaining hedgerows, copses, woodlands and new plantings.
5. The best way to preserve the historic and traditional character of the landscape is to maintain farming.
6. Agriculture has an exceptionally important strategic role in our national life, in securing food, especially at a time of vulnerability created by Brexit.
7. Other than the floodplain of the River Ouse to the South, most of the land in the parish is high quality agricultural land suitable for arable production.
8. Farming is the most important sustainer of our economically important and cherished landscape in the long term, into the future; high value agricultural land is a fixed resource and diminishing with every developer intervention.
9. The community has a deep and abiding love for the landscape as it exists now
10. There is also some affection in the community for the individuals who make their livelihoods from working the land, and also contribute so much to the community

Protecting Characteristics of Current Settlements

The current settlements of the parish are very different from each other. The settlement known as New Haversham, alternatively Upper Haversham or The Estate, mostly comprises brick built housing put up in a series of speculative building ventures in the 1930s, and very typical of the period. The remainder of the houses in this area of the parish consist of standard design infill blocks including some bungalows, from the 1960s, up to the construction of a small block of mixed social housing completed in the late 1990s.

Old Haversham (also at times Haversham Village or Lower Haversham) is the part of the community that is mentioned in the Domesday Book. A distinctive settlement, it has a number of unique buildings built in the local Jurassic limestone, a grade I listed church, C17 dovecotes and a range of limestone built vernacular cottages. The linear village clustered around the High Street is completed by limestone built agricultural buildings.

Little Linford is a small hamlet, the characteristics of which are difficult to discern as most of the settlement turns its back on the road, and is cloaked by trees. The attractive limestone built church of SS Leonard and Andrew, originally a small chapel-at-ease of Tick ford Abbey, is revealed only by close approach down a lane through a collection of individual modern dwellings that comprise the settlement, apart from a grade II listed farmhouse.

Responses to Question 7 ('Do you think the Neighbourhood Plan should ensure that any new building developments in our community are sympathetic to existing building styles by using similar materials and designs?') suggests that the idea of maintaining the character of the different areas is valued. 84% agreed with the question, whilst only 9% disagreed. 6% didn't know.

Housing Type

The table below summarises the importance of different house sizes by bedroom number, as well as design (bungalows, flats and specialist housing), ranked by the % who ranked them as important, and very important

Type of Home	% Very Important	% Important and Very Important
Specialist Housing for older retired people	35	70
Bungalows	27	71
1 -2 bedroom houses	24	72
2/3 Bedroom Houses	24	76
1-2 bedroom flats	12	39
4 + Bedroom Houses	10	40

Preserving Heritage

95% of respondents indicated that preserving heritage was either Very Important (55%) or Important (40%).

Preserving or Enhancing Community Facilities

A broad range of community facilities are central to the life of the parish community. The table below lists the significance of community facilities ranked by % of respondents who considered each in terms of importance, as very important, or both very important and important.

Facility	% Very Important	% very Important and Important
Haversham School	71	92
Recreation Ground, Manor Drive	60	90
Social and Community Centre, Manor Drive	52	91
The Green in The Crescent	41	73
St. Mary's Church, Haversham	36	76
The Allotments	34	80
The Greyhound Public House	32	69
Sailing and Angling Amenity Lakes	28	67
St. Leonard's Church, Little Linford	23	56

These numerical rankings are supplemented by the free text answers of questions 10 ('What enhancements or changes to existing facilities would you like to see?') and 11 ('What additional community facilities would you like to see being developed from any additional financial resources?'). A significant number of suggestions have been made, such as

‘sleeping policemen’ traffic calming measures on the main roads through to the provision of sporting amenities (such as a swimming pool, squash courts, bowling green, etc.).

A desire was also expressed by some respondents for a community space that would be available for longer hours, unconstrained by sharing space with the school, and was capable of serving more social and community functions. Other suggestions include the possibility of using the two worship spaces – St. Mary’s Haversham and St. Leonard’s Little Linford – for a wider range of social and community functions. Predominantly, however, there is a widespread concern to preserve and enhance community facilities, and it should be noted there has been in addition resistance to the idea of accepting any money for new or enhanced community facilities at the cost of significant housing development.

Conclusion

77% of the residents of Haversham-cum-Little Linford participated in the Community Questionnaire undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in June 2018. A wide range of issues were examined and invaluable information provided, which will assist the Steering Group greatly in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.

The Steering Group and the Parish Council are very grateful to everyone involved in this process; those putting the Questionnaire together, those who delivered and then collected the questionnaires, those who typed up and analysed the responses. Last but not least, receiving a 77% response rate is very impressive for this type of exercise – thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views on what they feel is important to our community.

APPENDIX A

Neighbourhood Plan Community Questionnaire
Quantative Responses

APPENDIX B

Neighbourhood Plan Community Questionnaire
Individual comments to Qualitative Questions

APPENDIX C

Neighbourhood Plan Community Questionnaire
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