

Bildeston

Parish Plan 2008

... your village in Suffolk



Table of Contents



Executive Summary	page 3
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Preface

1 Introduction	page 5
2 Why a Parish Plan	page 6
3 The Process	page 6
Map of Bildeston	page 7

Results of the Survey

4 Who Replied	page 8
5 Housing	page 9
6 Local Democracy	page 9
7 Local Services	page 9
8 Traffic	page 11
9 Community Safety, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour	page 13
10 Environment	page 15
11 Religion	page 16
12 Information and Communication	page 16
13 Voluntary Transport/ Good Neighbour Scheme	page 16
14 Social, Leisure and Sports Activities	page 17

Action Plan 2008	page 19
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Members of the Steering Committee

Graeme Ross (Chairman), Andrew Guttridge, Claire Suddaby, Paul Cousins, Martin Rodgers and Vic Ling

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and guidance given to us by Suffolk ACRE. We would also like to thank DEFRA's Rural, Social and Communities Programme, Bildeston Parish Council and, Babergh District Council for funding this project. We are extremely grateful to everyone in Bildeston who made this project possible by supporting the initial exhibition event, testing and delivering and collecting the questionnaires and finally to the people who completed the questionnaires as this document contains your views.



Executive Summary



- Bildeston is located in rural south Suffolk between Hadleigh and Stowmarket. Just over 1000 people live in the parish, in some 450 households. Most people live within the defined village – the parish does not extend far beyond the village and there are only a few outlying houses.
- The village lies at the crossroads of the B1078 and B1115 roads linking to Needham Market, Hadleigh, Sudbury and Stowmarket.
- There is a broad mix of housing in the village and Bildeston retains several shops, public houses and local small and medium sized business providing local employment. Local facilities include a primary school, a health centre, two churches, a sportsfield and a thriving Village Hall (Chamberlin Hall). There is also an excellent parish magazine, the Bildeston Bugle.
- The parish plan was developed through a step by step process to ensure that the outcomes represented the views of the parish on the most important issues.
- In November 2006, an open meeting/workshop at Chamberlin Hall used a variety of techniques to engage local people and find out what were the main issues for the parish.
- These issues were then developed into a questionnaire to find out what people thought about these issues. This was distributed door to door in March 2007.
- With 297 households responding out of approximately 450 in the parish, analysing the results was a major task.
- 617 people responded from the 297 households.
- Main traffic problems were seen as heavy lorries in the High Street and speeding in the High Street and Wattisham Road.
- There was wide support for more speed control measures (only 10% saying “not necessary”), but the only measure attracting majority support (more than 50%) was flashing speed warning signs.
- For all areas of the village, those who felt the level of street lighting was “about right” outnumbered those who wanted more or less lighting.
- Most popular locations for improving the appearance were the entries to the village (63%) and the Market Place (47%).



- There was a majority view that Bildeston cannot accommodate more housing (45% No, 32% Yes, 23% don't know).
- Of those who wanted more housing, the clear preference was for semi detached and terraced houses, bungalows and flats.
- Most people wanted Bildeston to stay as it is or develop as a working community, with only a very small proportion in favour of a commuter or retirement community or for second homes.
- 94% rated the countryside around Bildeston as important or very important to them.
- The main crime and anti social behaviour issues were seen as dog fouling and littering, closely followed by vandalism. The most popular locations for more dog mess bins were the High Street and Wattisham Road. Similarly, the most popular option to deal with litter was to have more litter bins (57%).
- There was strong support for more activities for young people, especially in the 11 to 16 age group.
- The most popular actions to improve the local environment were recycling (61%), reduce traffic (56%), improved public rights of way (46%), energy saving (43%) and more local employment (38%).
- Some 83% of people read every issue of the Bugle and 80% feel that the amount of information about what is going on in Bildeston is good or reasonable.
- Only 6% of people were dissatisfied with the way the Parish Council spends its small proportion of the council tax, but a high proportion (42%) did not know how it was spent. A case for more information in the widely read Bugle perhaps.
- However, only 27% wanted improvements in Bildeston to be funded from any increase in council tax. Most people favoured fund raising or sponsorship.
- The results were used to develop an action plan for the parish. This will help the parish council and other organisations develop and justify projects which are important to the community. It should also be an important document to guide the longer term planning of the parish (e.g. future housing or employment) and the services provided for its people.
- Bildeston Parish Council approved the action plan as a whole at its meeting on Mon 12th May 2008 and also accepted the actions and leading roles proposed for it in the action plan.



1. Introduction

Bildeston is a medium sized village of 450 dwellings and 1100 residents in south central Suffolk. The village, which has a Parish Council, is in the Brett Vale ward of Babergh District Council. The nearest neighbouring villages include Hitcham to the north and Chelsworth and Monks Eleigh to the west; the Army Air Corps base at Wattisham Airfield dominates the area to the immediate north-east.

Situated 15 miles west of the county town of Ipswich, 10 miles south of Stowmarket, 10 miles north-east of Sudbury and 5 miles north of Hadleigh, Bildeston is in a rural, agricultural area served by the B1115 and the B1078. There are no 'A' roads and the nearest railway stations are at Stowmarket and Needham Market to the north and north-east and Sudbury to the southwest.

The nearest airports are Stansted and Norwich.

Flanked by higher ground to the east and west, the village sits in a north-south vale; originally it comprised a main street, village square and 2 other streets with many houses and cottages dating back to the 15th century. The village has expanded since the 1960s with the addition of estates, both council and private, and individual houses; the most recent significant construction has been the building of 30 Housing Association Affordable Homes between 2004 and 2008. Bildeston has C of E and Baptist Churches, a Primary School, a health centre, a large modern well utilised village hall, one residential hotel/restaurant and 2 public houses, a general store, post office/newsagent, hairdresser and cycle shop.

The only light industry in the village is a joinery manufacturer.

History: The area named Bildeston on the map came into existence some 1,100 years ago when invading Danes mingled with the Anglo-Saxons in the same community. The Danes were dominant under their leader Bildr but reduced to speaking English. There is little archaeological evidence of any earlier settlements within this part of the Brett valley. The oldest surviving documentary evidence of Bildeston is in the Domesday Book, compiled under the direction of King William the Conqueror in 1086. This was also the first record of a church in the village and it is assumed that the building was on the site of the present church, St Mary Magdalene, which was originally built around the turn of the 14th century. The hill top site adjacent to the church was the original village settlement but this was already in decline in the 13th century as inhabitants moved to a less-bleak position in the valley. This destroys the myth that the Black Death in the 14th century was the explanation of desertion of the hill top site. Bildeston prospered at the height of the wool trade in the 15th



and early 16th centuries but this was followed by rapid economic decline that left the majority of the villagers on the poverty line. By the 20th century many of the fairs and markets had given way to established business premises; as late as the 1930s there were upwards of 60 traders and businesses but sadly this has now declined to the few listed above.

2. Why a Parish Plan?

It all started with a conversation at the Baptist Church during early 2006. Different ideas and projects were being discussed that could have been of possible benefit to people in the community. It was felt that a survey to identify what people felt were the real needs in the community was essential in finding the way forward. The church talked with Suffolk ACRE who recommended a Parish Plan; a conversation then followed with the parish council which led to the public meeting that began the whole process. At the end of the process, it is good to have a picture of what people of Bildeston think about the community in which we live.

3. Timeline

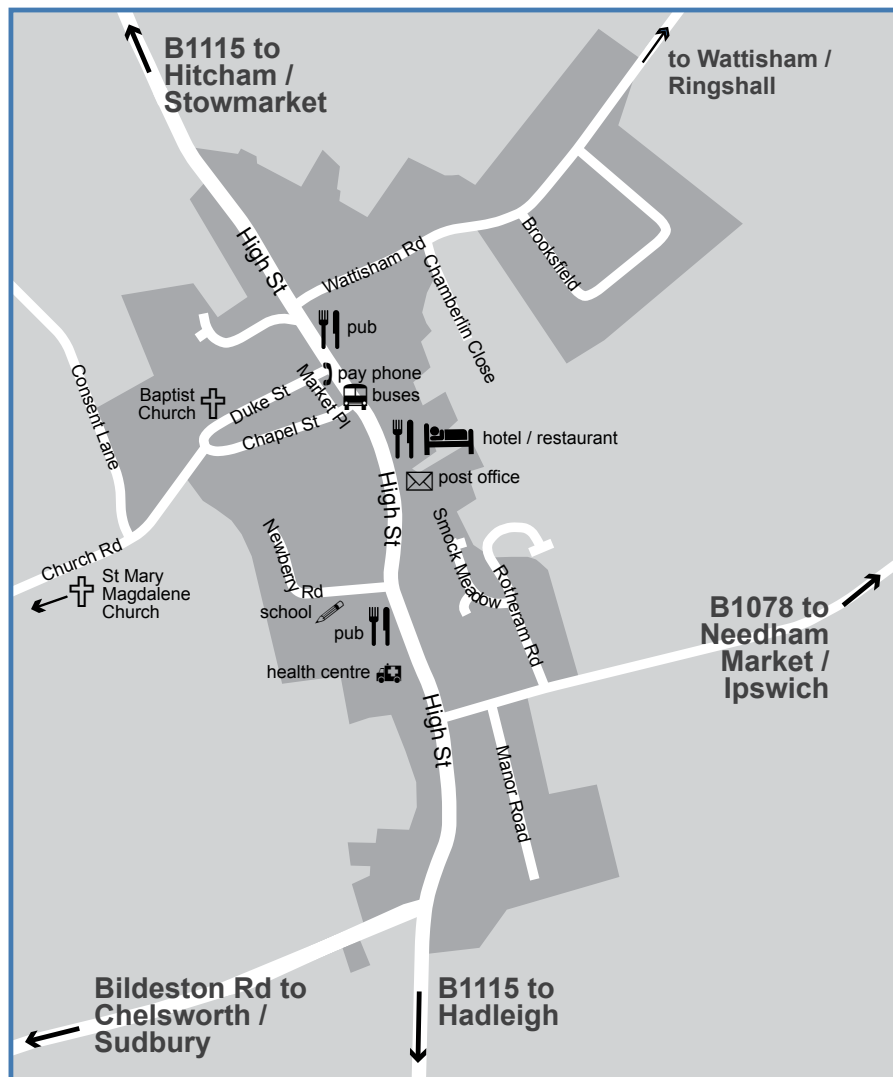
16 March 06	Open meeting in Bildeston Village Hall with address by Suffolk "Action with Communities in Rural England" (Suffolk ACRE). Attended by 90 villagers.
13 June	Inaugural meeting of Steering Committee.
26 June	Steering Group Planning meeting.
Sep/Oct	Preliminary Survey of all villagers to determine likes, dislikes and desired changes in village life.
4 Nov	Exhibition in village hall. All clubs, societies and amenities represented. Opportunity for villagers to raise concerns and comment on aspects of village life. This information used as basis for Questionnaire.
Jan/Feb 07	Meetings to discuss content of Questionnaire.
10-20 Mar	Questionnaires delivered by committee and volunteers.
27-30 Mar	Questionnaires collected.
May-Oct	Collation and analysis of Questionnaires – process delayed by software problem.
June	Social evening for Teenagers – completion of Questionnaire.
Dec	Commence writing of report.
17 March 08	Public Meeting to outline main issues in draft report and Action Plan.
12 May 08	Parish Council approves Action Plan.
May-Nov	Preparation of final report.
Dec 08	Distribution of Parish Plan.

Map of Bildeston

location map



Bildeston village



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Results of the Survey

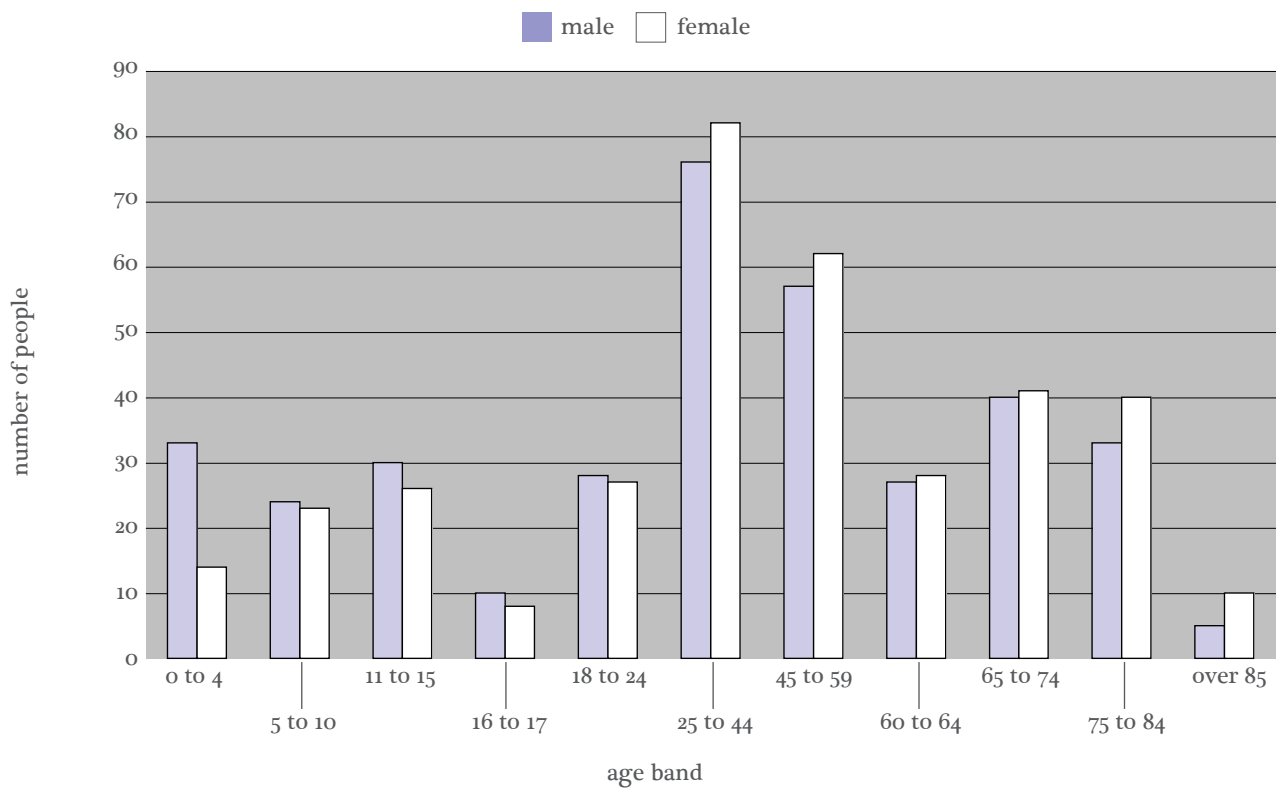


4 Who Replied

The overall response to the Questionnaire was very positive with a return of 66% (297 households) of those distributed. There is a trend towards an older population with 55% of respondents over the age of 45. 60% of all respondents have lived in the village for less than 15 years and half of those for less than 5 years.

The number of people in various age groups is illustrated in the following bar chart.

Age Profile of Respondents

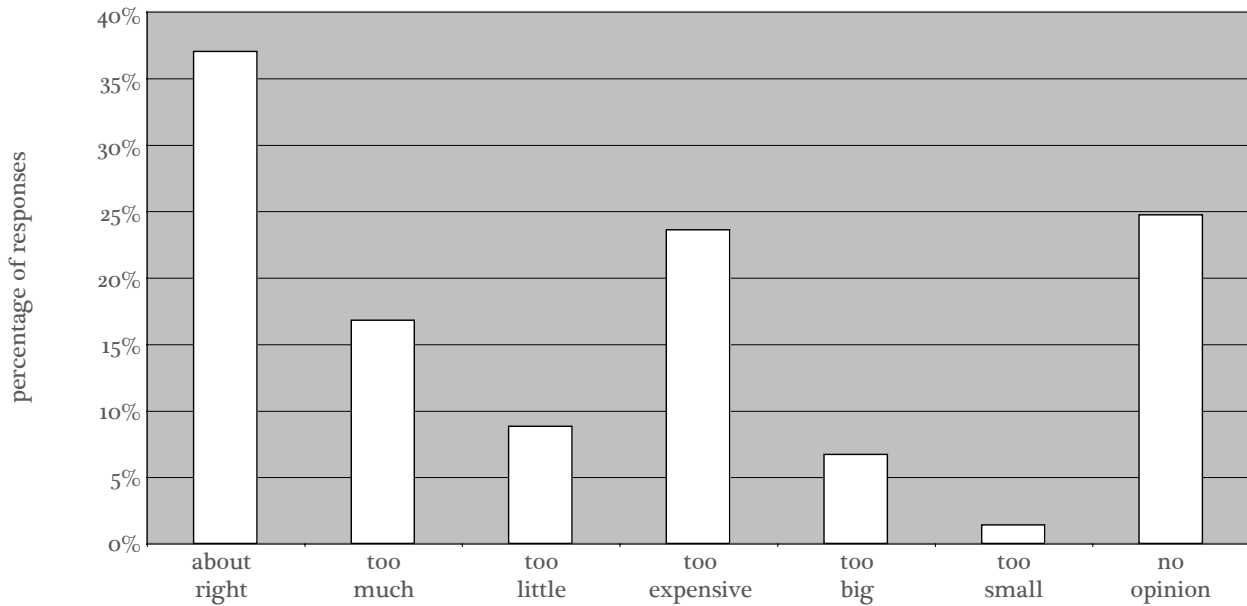


5 Housing

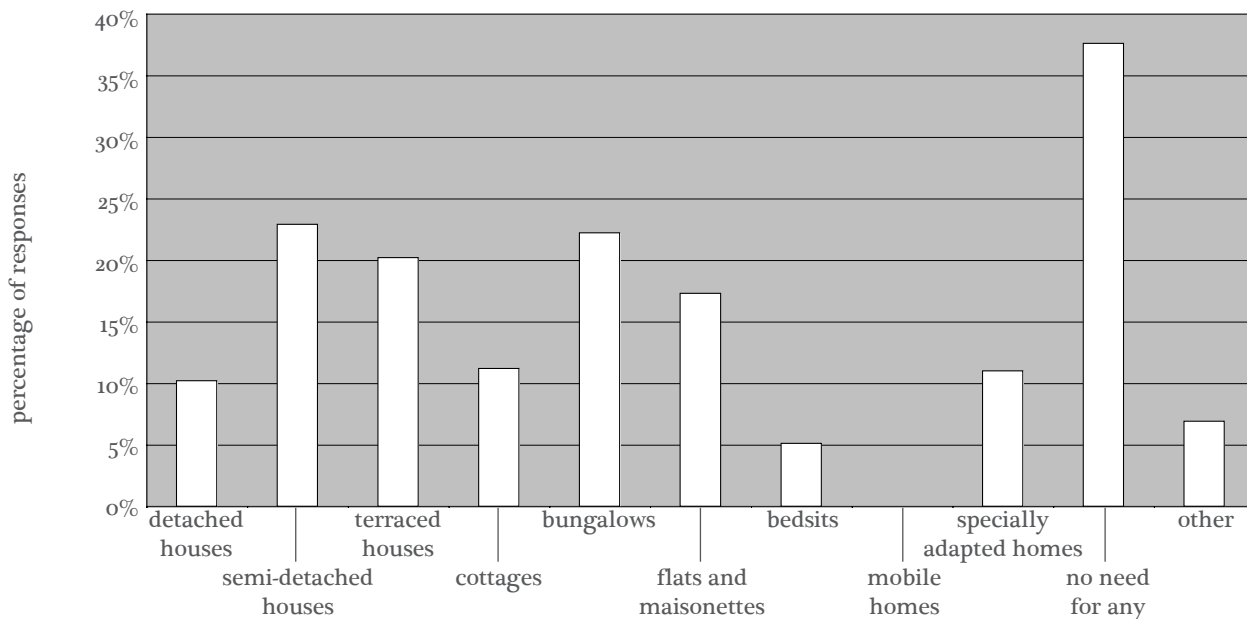
What the Survey Told Us

37% of respondents felt the amount of housing built in the last 10 years was about right, but 25% of respondents felt that housing built in the last 10 years was too expensive. If there was to be any further building, it should be concentrated on semi-detached houses, bungalows, terraced houses and flats.

What do you think about the number of houses built in Bildeston in the last 10 years? (571 responses)



What type(s) of home(s) is/are needed in Bildeston? (490 responses)



6 Local Democracy

What the Survey Told Us

In response to one question regarding the Parish Council raising money through a small part of Council Tax, 42% of respondents (234 people) had no knowledge of how the money was spent. However, only 6.3% expressed dissatisfaction.

7 Local Services

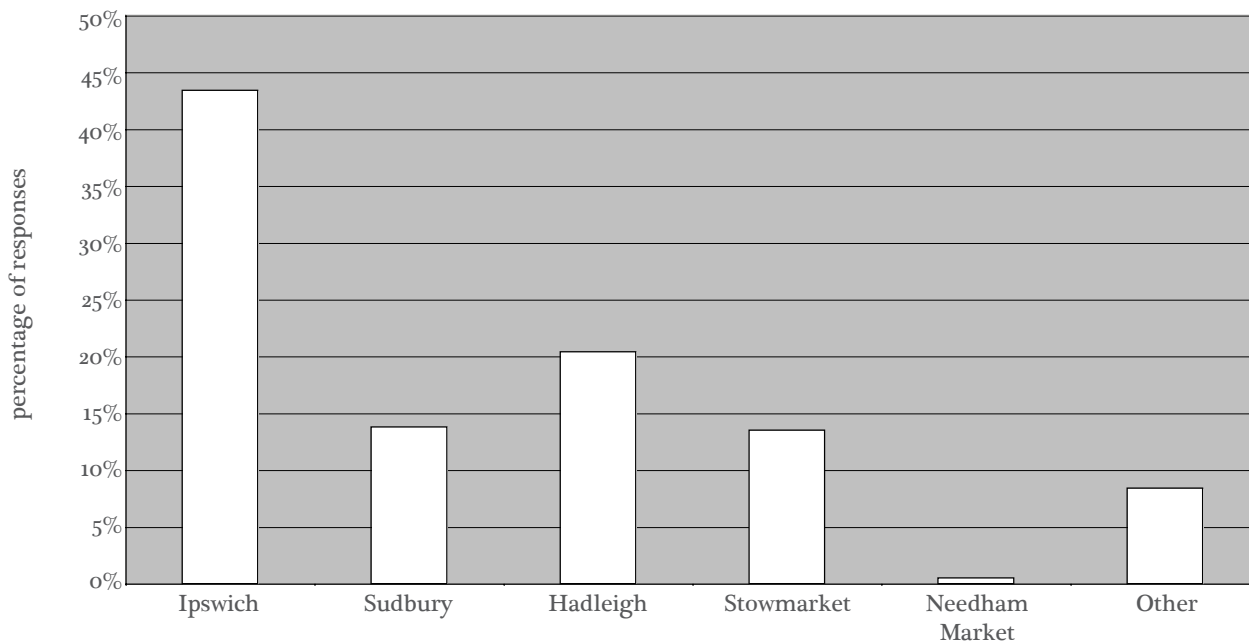
What the Survey Told Us

Healthcare: Whilst there were no questions relating directly to Healthcare, there was strong support and praise for the village Health Centre during the preliminary survey with many villagers citing it as the “best thing about the village”.

Post Office and Shopping: There was unanimous support for the Post Office and extensive use of all services in addition to the postal facilities. Over 70% of 580 respondents felt that the range of shopping in the village was good or reasonable. The primary reason for routine grocery shopping outside of the village was choice rather than cost or more convenient opening hours.

Public Transport: Responses to several questions on timetabled buses and community buses (Dial a Ride) were non-contentious. 70% of 568 respondents never use the timetabled buses and occasional use, less than once per week, was reported by 15%. The Dial a Ride service had even less patronage with occasional use by only 20 respondents out of 540. By a significant margin, Ipswich was the most important destination for those who do use public transport.

What would be your most important destination for bus travel? (392 responses)





Pavement Maintenance: A majority of respondents (52%) felt that the pavements are not user-friendly to people with disabilities, wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Lighting: Street lighting in the village as a whole was not a major issue and the majority of respondents were content. However, 20% of respondents felt that the lighting in parts of the High St and Wattisham Rd was inadequate; this comment should be linked with community safety.

Education: Although there were no specific questions on education, the Primary School in the village was singled out for praise by adults and young children during the Preliminary survey and exhibition.

Emergency Services: Respondents viewed the emergency services as being satisfactory or expressed no opinion.

8 Traffic

Background

The village is at an intersection of roads linking Sudbury and Hadleigh with Stowmarket and Needham Market with Hadleigh and Sudbury. The main street through the village is a 30mph limit and there are no restrictions on HGVs and no traffic calming measures. There is often significant build up of traffic at peak times; the High Street is particularly narrow at choke points to the north and south of the village square. Parked cars along the High St exacerbate the problem, but perhaps keep speeds down.

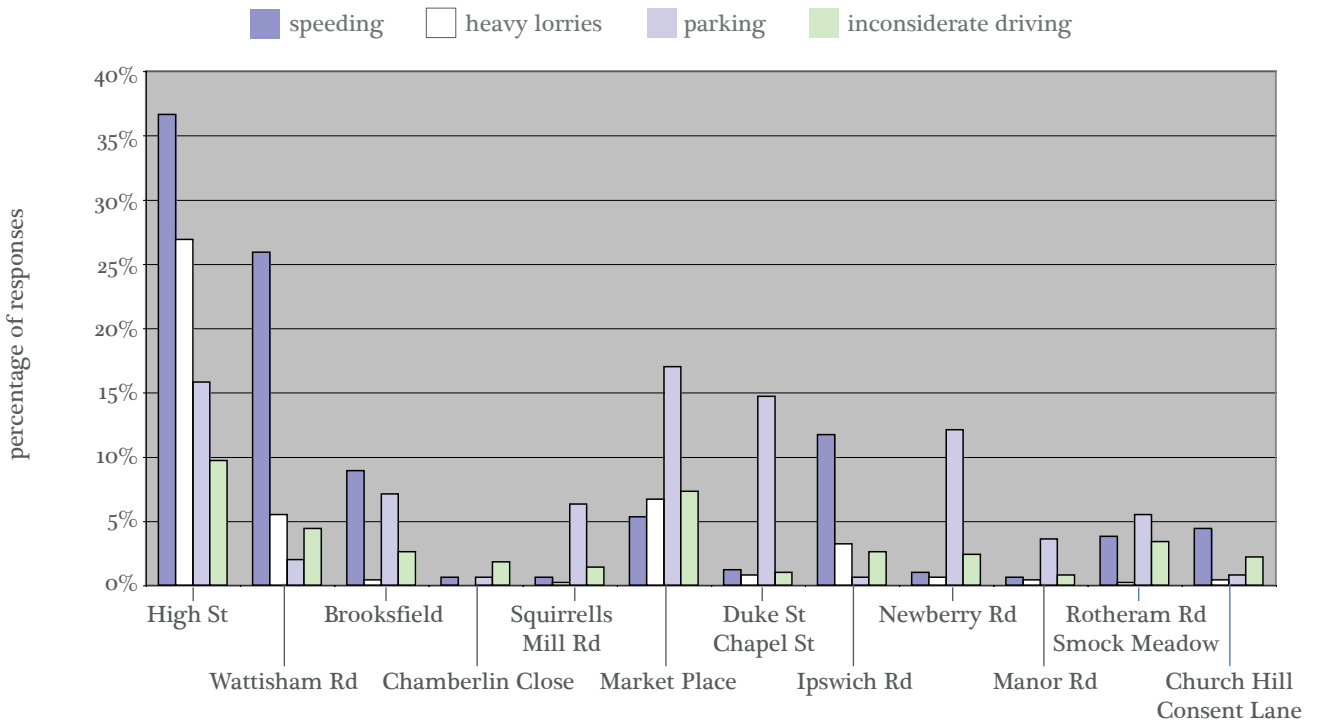
What the Survey Told Us

In all stages of the Parish Plan process traffic proved the most discussed and contentious issue. During the preliminary survey and the exhibition, traffic management, or the lack of it, was a very emotive subject with a large majority citing it as the “worst thing about the village”.

Respondents to the questionnaire highlighted major issues as follows:

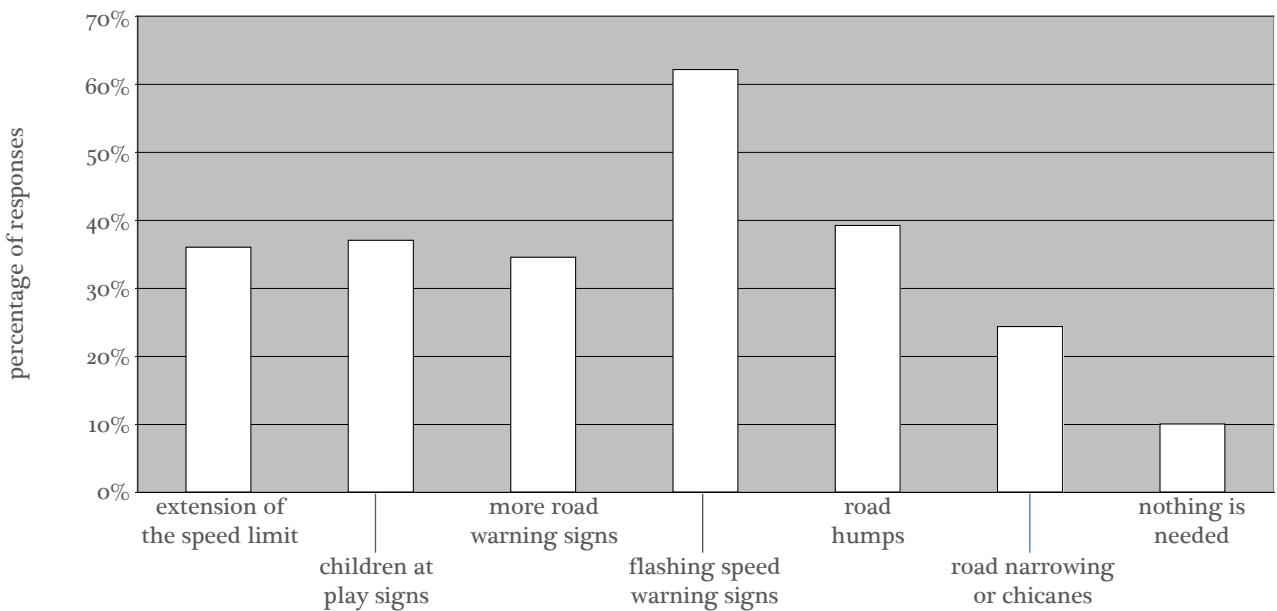
- Lack of public parking in village.
- Difficulty for residents parking in Market Place, High St, Duke and Chapel St.
- Widespread concern over speeding in High St and Wattisham Rd.
- The number of HGVs using the High St as a through route.

What do you think are the main traffic problems? (505 responses)



A range of speed control measures attracted between 30% and 40% support, but the clear favourite with over 60% was flashing speed warning signs.

Would you support the following speed control measures in Bildeston? (530 responses)



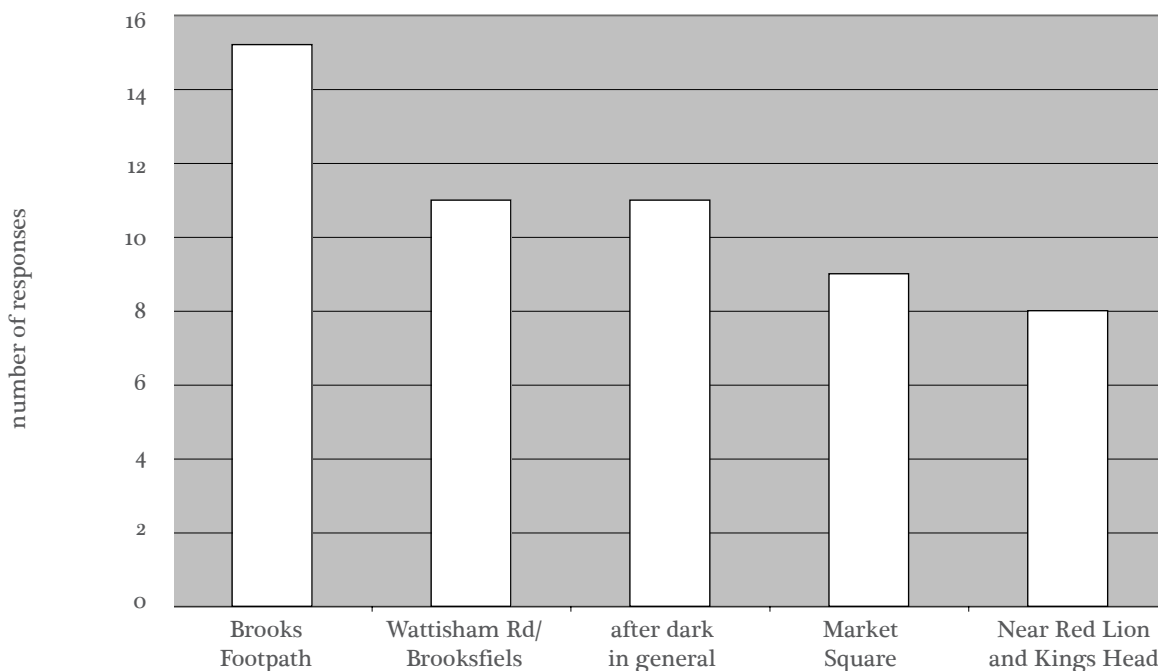


9 Community Safety, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

What the Survey Told Us

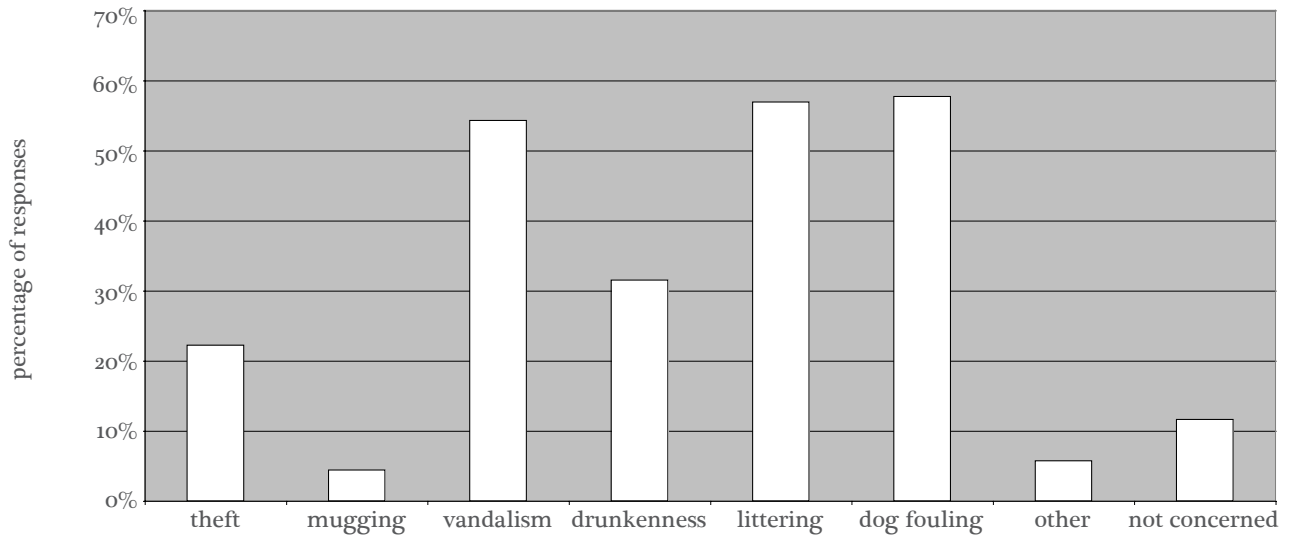
- Dog Fouling - Dog mess bins were required in all areas of the village; this was particularly important in High St, Wattisham Rd, Market Place, Consent Lane and Brookfield.
- Over 50% of respondents very concerned about Vandalism and Littering.
- Other main concerns were Drunkenness and Theft.
- Many respondents felt unsafe, especially after dark, in certain areas ie. Brooks Footpath, Wattisham Rd/Brookfield, Market Square, Vicinity of Red Lion/Kings Head on Friday & Saturday evenings.

Where do you feel unsafe in Bildeston? (top 5 locations)

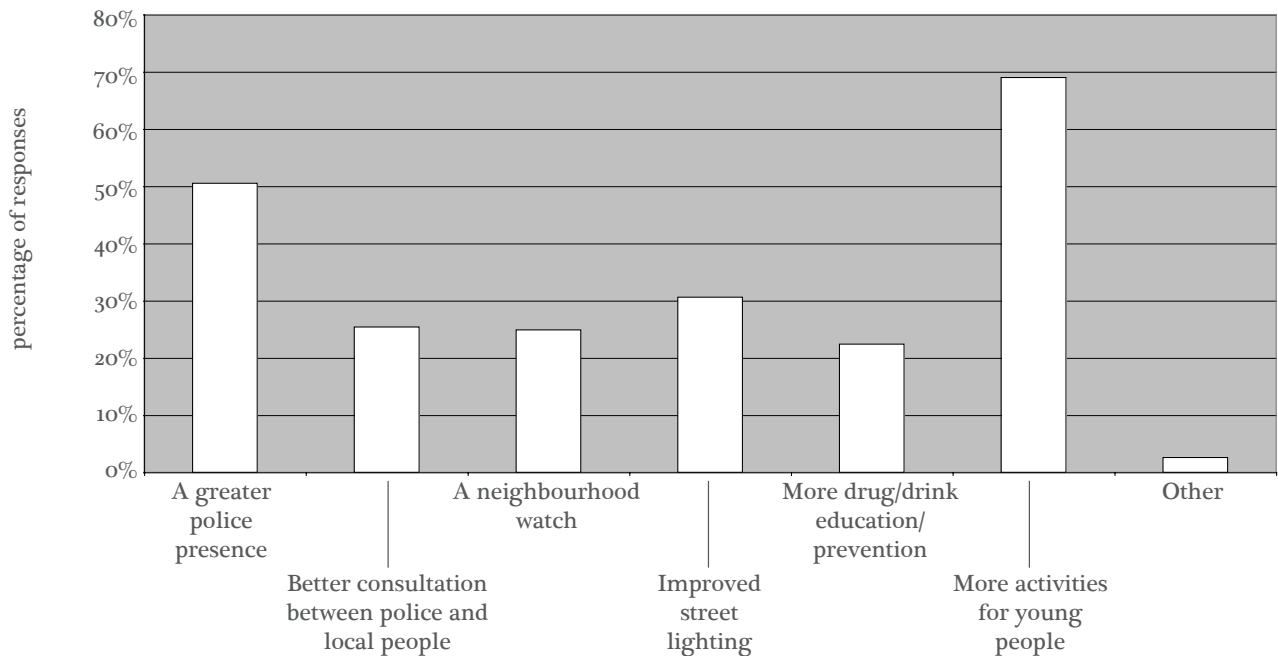


- There was a call for a greater community police presence, improved street lighting (see Section 7), Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and more organised activities for young people.
- There was a call from a majority for more litter bins. Other well supported measures in a bid to keep Bildeston tidy were to have a village Spring Clean twice per year and to consider entering the Village of the Year competition.

Which crimes and anti social behaviour concern you? (562 responses)



Do you think these measures are needed? (539 responses)



10 Environment

Natural Environment

Measures to protect and enhance the local environment:

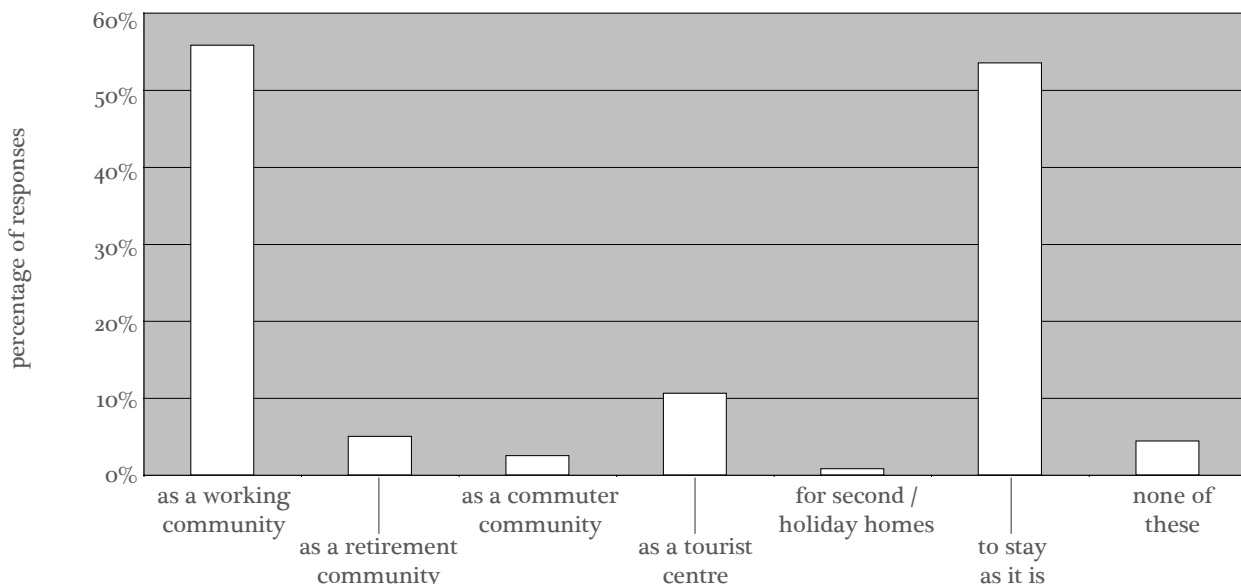
- Recycling and Community composting.
- Improve Rights of Way (footpaths/bridlepaths) by better signposting, clearance of bushes and nettles.
- Promote the importance of the local countryside and enhance approaches to the village by:
 - Keeping hedges short and tidy
 - Planting more trees and hedges
 - Planting more flowers
 - Caring for woodland
- Energy Saving
- Reduction of Traffic
- More Local Employment :

The availability of more local employment, full time and part time, would prove very beneficial to the community, specifically those who do not drive and those who cannot afford too much time away from the home. Furthermore, this would be an effective way of reducing traffic.

Built Environment

In response to the question “How would you like Bildeston to develop” ?, there was strong support for maintaining the status quo and for the village to develop as a working community. Whilst there was modest support for development as a tourist centre, the idea of becoming a commuter community or for holiday/second homes was not supported.

How would you like Bildeston to develop? (520 responses)





11 Religion

What the Survey Told Us

The majority view of respondents was that the level of involvement of religious groups in local community affairs was about right. As to the importance of the Anglican or Baptist Church to the individual and community, the majority view was that the churches were more important as an institutional symbol, focus for the community and for weddings & funerals than for Sunday worship and baptisms.

12 Information and Communication

What the Survey Told Us

There was a positive response to questions on dissemination of information in the community. The vast majority of all respondents read every edition of the free monthly village magazine (The Bugle) and felt reasonably well informed on activities in the village. However, there was strong support for the Bugle to include more information on local events, leisure activities, sports and the arts.

13 Voluntary /Community Self-Help (Good Neighbour Scheme/Voluntary Car Scheme)

What the Survey Told Us

Of over 500 respondents, 50% felt that a good neighbour scheme was needed; 15% were prepared to help with such a scheme once per month or more often. There was a similar response on the question of willingness to provide volunteer transport (expenses and insurance provided) in that 11% would commit to infrequent support of the scheme.

Note: Clearly, many adults are already committed to voluntary schemes such as WRVS, Red Cross etc. On a positive note, a very successful Good Neighbour Scheme has already been established as an immediate response to the Initial Survey and Questionnaire.

14 Social, Leisure and Sports Activities:

What the Survey Told Us

Awareness

There was generally a very good awareness of the facilities on offer at Chamberlin Hall, The Sportsfield and at the Anglican and Baptist Churches.

Facilities for Children up to 16

Amongst adult and young teenage respondents there was a strong feeling that social, leisure and play facilities were poor for the 11-16 year olds. Play facilities for the 5-11 age group were reasonable but the under 5s were very well catered for.

Note: Some 10% of adult respondents were willing to assist with leisure activities for the young.

Facilities for 17- 25 year Olds

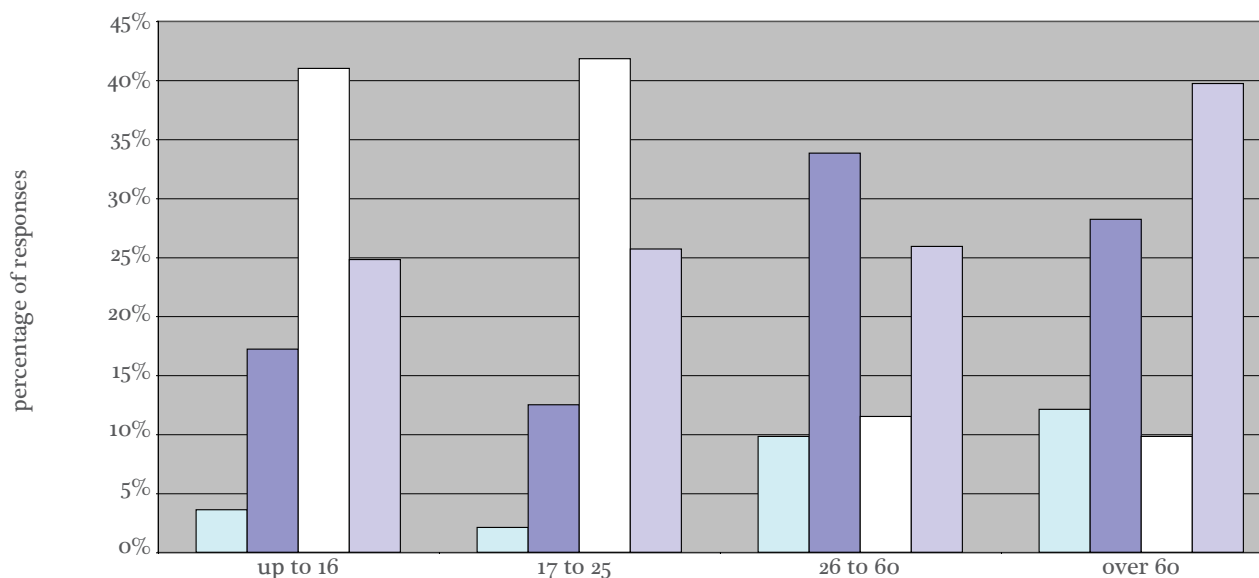
Local social facilities for elder teens and young adults were rated as poor to non-existent.

Facilities for People Over 26

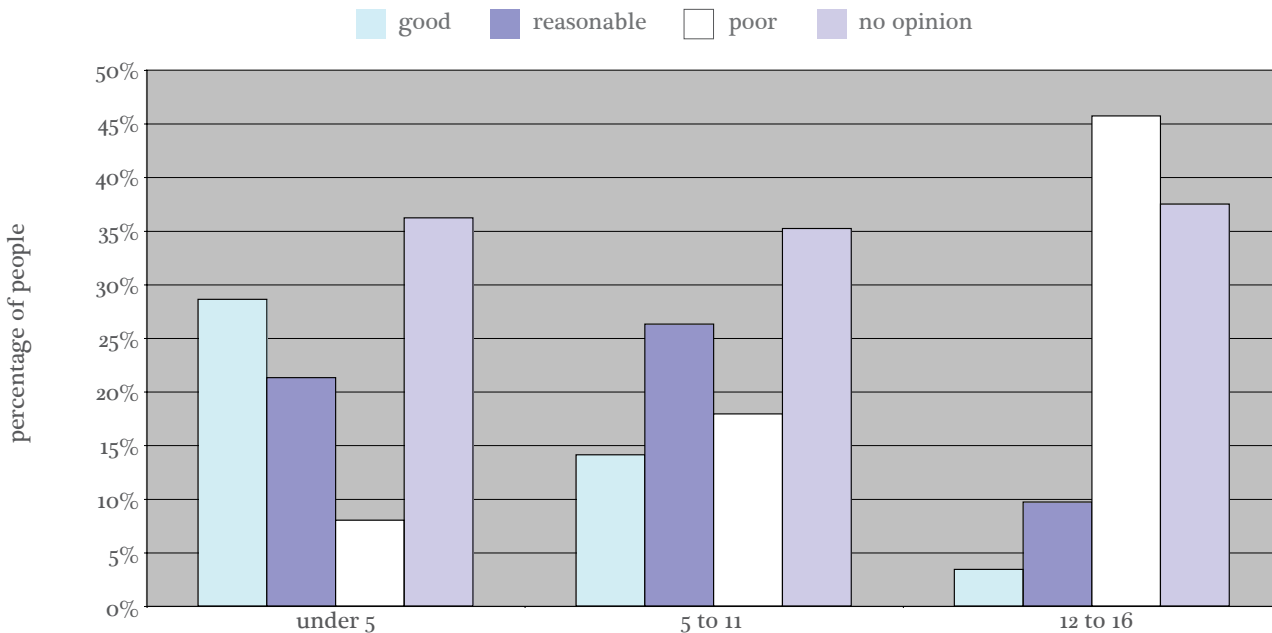
The majority of respondents in this broad age category best described their local social facilities as reasonable.

What are your views on social facilities for the following age groups? (529 responses)

good reasonable poor no opinion



What do you think of play facilities for the following age groups?



Sports Facilities

Many people had no opinion on the various sports facilities such as Soccer, Cricket, Tennis, Bowls, Snooker and Darts. However, those expressing an opinion felt that facilities were reasonably good except for cricket where a majority in a very low number of respondents felt that facilities were poor. In response to an open question on new sports clubs and facilities which should be made available there was strong support for the provision of a Gym/Keep Fit facility and for Badminton.

Youth Questionnaire

The results of this questionnaire, completed by 27 young people mainly in the 12-14 age bracket, strongly echoed those of the main questionnaire. The vast majority felt that there were insufficient activities for those of secondary school age. Whilst 52% spent most of their spare time in the village, several spent spare time in Hadleigh. There was a strong lobby for a Youth Club or Youth Council to be held in Chamberlin Hall.

In response to a question on method of travel for leisure time outside the village, 18 out of 27 in the 12-14 age bracket were driven by parents and 6 used the bus. However, there was no predominant answer amongst 15 who responded to a subsequent question relating to the impact of improving public transport.

Of 27 respondents on the subject of access to Internet in the home, the vast majority were aged 14 and under. 19 (70%) of the respondents had access anytime, a further 3 shared access with the family and only 5 had no access.

The Action Plan



- The results of the survey told us what are the important issues in the Parish and what people would most like to improve.
- The action plan sets out the practical steps to doing something about it.
- A first draft was the basis of discussion at a public meeting at Chamberlin Hall on 17 March 2008, and the final action plan has incorporated the outcomes from that meeting.
- In some cases, there are specific actions which can be taken forward straight away. For example, to improve facilities for teenagers.
- In other cases, the results of the survey will help shape longer term planning. For example, how Bildeston develops in the future, what sort of community it is and what, if any, further development takes place.
- Similarly, many of the actions fall to the parish council. This is either because the parish council is best placed to take them forward, or because the parish council can best represent Bildeston in discussions with Babergh District Council or Suffolk County Council.
- The parish council considered the action plan at its meeting on Mon 12 May 2008. The action plan as a whole was approved and the council accepted the actions and leading roles proposed for it in the action plan.
- However, some of the key actions can only take place and be sustained if people come forward from within the community to make them happen. The parish council may be able to offer advice and even financial support, but the parish council is only nine volunteers out of over nine hundred people in the parish. There are already other people and organisations in the parish who are starting to take actions forward. For example, the Helping Hands scheme supported by the Baptist Church. This provides practical help to residents of Bildeston with things like household chores, errands, shopping, collection of prescriptions, etc.
- The survey also found people willing to volunteer for good neighbour and community car schemes. However, a key area where strong volunteer support is needed will be in building social and leisure facilities in Bildeston for teenagers and young adults.
- The action plan is important, the more people who become involved, the more likely it is to become a reality.

Ref	Issue	Proposed Action	Orgs Involved	Lead Org	Timescale	Comments
1	Housing					
1.1	No substantial housing development is sought. That which does take place should focus on semi detached and terraced houses, bungalows and flats.	District Council to take into account in local development plan and planning decisions. Parish Council to take into account in representations to Babergh DC and in comments on individual planning applications.	PC BDC	PC	Advise BDC immediately, then ongoing.	
2	Local Democracy					
2.1	Many people do not know how money raised by the Parish Council through their Council Tax is being spent.	Parish Council to encourage greater public interest and engagement in local democracy. As part of this, PC to provide easily understood information showing what the parish precept is spent on.	PC	PC	Starting with 2008/9 budget and ongoing.	
3	Local Services					
3.1	Ipswich is by far the most important destination for public transport users, followed by Hadleigh.	Suffolk County Council to take into account in future planning of bus services in the area. Parish Council to take into account in responding to any consultations or communications on the subject.	SCC PC	PC	Advise SCC immediately, then ongoing.	
3.2	Pavements not considered to be user friendly to people with disabilities, wheelchairs and pushchairs.	Parish Council to consider feasible improvements and work with Suffolk County Council to agree an implementation programme.	PC SCC	PC	PC to agree timescale.	Funding will be an issue.
4	Traffic					
4.1	Main issues are speeding and heavy lorries in the High Street, and speeding in Wattisham Road. Flashing speed warning signs were strongly supported.	Parish Council to lead discussions with Suffolk County Council to agree mitigating measures and a programme for implementation.	PC SCC	PC	Immediate discussions then timescale to be agreed.	Local funding only likely to be supported by the community if met from within current precept level.
5	Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour					
5.1	Dog fouling is the worst problem, followed closely by littering and vandalism.	Parish Council to consider provision of more bins for dog mess and litter. Other measures could include sustained campaigns of publicity and enforcement.	PC BDC Police	PC	PC to determine.	

Ref	Issue	Proposed Action	Orgs Involved	Lead Org	Timescale	Comments
5.2	Greater community police presence was supported as a measure to combat crime and anti-social behaviour.	Parish Council to press Suffolk Constabulary for more community police or community support officer resource for Bildeston.	PC Police	PC	Immediate and sustained.	
6.	Environment					
6.1	Strong support for Bildeston to retain current character and to remain and develop as a working community.	District Council to take into account in local development plan and planning decisions. Parish Council to take into account in representations to Babergh DC and in comments on individual planning applications.	PC BDC	PC	Advise BDC immediately, then ongoing.	
6.2	Support for recycling.	Ensure existing facilities are well publicised.	Bugle	Bugle	Immediate and ongoing	
6.3	Public rights of way could be easier to use.	Work with Suffolk County Council to improve surfaces, signposting, vegetation clearance and access for people who are less mobile. Eg. removing stiles or replacing with gates.	PC SCC	PC	Establish dialogue with SCC immediately, then ongoing.	
7	Voluntary/ Community Help					
7.1	Support for Good Neighbour and voluntary car schemes.	Local community groups to tap into community support evidenced from the survey.	CG Suffolk Acre	CG	As groups determine	
8	Social, Leisure and Sports					
8.1	Main areas of poor current provision were social, leisure and play facilities for 11 to 16 year olds, and social facilities for older teens and young adults.	Development of activities needs to be led from within the community. Parish Council could potentially assist with start up funding and making land and/or facilities available. May also be support available from District and County Councils, such as through extended schools.	CG PC BDC SCC	CG	As groups determine	Parish Council will have a strong supporting role, but needs to be led and owned from within the community if to be successful long term.
8.2	Young people have little say in facilities and service in Bildeston.	Consider forming a youth council for Bildeston. Baptist Church has offered to develop ideas and research experience elsewhere.	PC BC	BC		Would need to have real influence, not just be a talking shop.

key: PC-Parish Council BDC-Babergh District Council SCC-Suffolk County Council CG-Community Groups BC-Baptist Church