

Bayston Hill Community Led Plan

The Big Survey

Preliminary overview of results



Parish Survey Summary

Introduction

A small group of volunteers has been working to develop a new 'Community Led Plan' designed to set out the needs and ambitions of the village over the next ten-year period. The views of current residents are key to that work and during the spring/summer 2018, villagers were asked to complete an extensive questionnaire covering four (inter-related) themes:

- Health and wellbeing
- Environment
- Community (inc Community Safety)
- Planning and development

Paper copies were delivered to all houses within the Parish and an online version was also made available and publicised widely. A separate questionnaire for younger residents was developed and circulated in the same way. Results were collated and analysed by independent consultants (Resources 4 Change) so that the steering group only received anonymised data.

In addition to the survey, the group has also conducted 'conversations' at events such as Coffee in the Lounge, held drop in sessions at local cafes and shops, organised a business breakfast and undertaken a number of projects with children from Oakmeadow School.

This paper gives a short overview of the survey results. The group is now working to convert the data and hundreds of narrative comments into a series of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) objectives. This will not simply be a 'to do' list for the Parish or Shropshire Council, but will be relevant for other statutory agencies, the social and voluntary sectors and for our community.

Overview:

Bayston Hill residents are happy, reasonably healthy, proud of where they live and the of their 'community'; they are well informed, but concerned about the condition of infrastructure, apparently rising crime and anti-social behaviour and the threat of excessive and misplaced development.

- The data reflects the views of 1313 people (representing between 23.9% and 27% of the population depending on population estimate used)
- The over 65 group is 17% over represented in the responses compared to the profile of ages within the Parish, but this is not untypical with this type of survey
- The gender balance is in line with the profiles
- **R4C are confident that the data sample is sufficiently robust for us to use to extrapolate and to build a plan around.**
- Over 80% of respondents are positive enough about the village to say (when asked) that they live in Bayston Hill (as opposed to Shrewsbury or Shropshire)
- Overwhelmingly, respondents cited the community spirit (overall rating of 4.66 out of 6), neighbourliness, friendliness of the village as the things they liked most about living here; the semi-rural location, green space, access to amenities (such as GPs, shops and other services) and easy access to Shrewsbury were also highly valued
- Over 40% of residents have lived in the village for more than 20 years and over 60% more than 10 years.
- The state of the Parade, paths, roads, traffic/speeding, youth crime and constant threat of development are the things liked least and also represented the things people would most like improved
- Residents feel they are well informed (nearly 90% say with little or no effort they can find out what is happening) with 97% saying they get news and information via The Villager, 62% via word of mouth, nearly 43% via social media
- Around 60% responded that they give some voluntary time to VCSE organisations in any year with 36% at least once a month or more frequently
- 74% said they felt they were in good or very good health, though over 20% had conditions that limited their daily activity
- When asked how satisfied with life they were, the collective response was 8 (on a scale of 1 to 10), even more felt their life activities were

worthwhile and that at the point of completing the survey they were 'happy'. As a note of caution, there was a notable level of anxiety at around 2.8 overall.

- Development is obviously a very live issue and there was some acceptance of the need for new builds – though the strongest support was for multiple small developments. The preferred location was the Oaklands site, with some support for Pulley Lane, the Glebeland and Lyth Hill Road. Sites not favoured were between the village and Meole Brace; Lyth Hill Country Park; Pulley Lane; the Glebefield; and a generic “green areas within the village”.
- There was also strong demand for larger 3- and 4-bedroom homes – however there is a very significant number of currently occupied homes with 2 or more unused bedrooms, suggesting opportunities for downsizing/sheltered or similar is needed.

Community, Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing

The definition of “Community” is broad, and it can be difficult to identify consistent responses and conclusions to a wide range of questions. However this is an important area of study, and one which can give a sense of how people feel about their place in the village. Each response is individual, but there may be patterns in their replies which can help indicate ways of collectively strengthening the community structure of Bayston Hill.

Q2. Q3. Q6. Once people move to Bayston Hill, they tend to stay. This is particularly true of the 55+ age group, a high proportion of whom have lived in the village for over 20 years, and many of them much longer. 80% of respondents said that, when asked where they live, they gave Bayston Hill as the answer rather than Shrewsbury. This suggests a feeling of belonging, supported by a liking for good amenities; the semi rural nature of the village; convenience and access to Shrewsbury; and the friendliness and community spirit of the place.

Q4. Q21. Inevitably there are concerns about some aspects of life, but despite adverse comments about traffic problems, littering and dog fouling, and the poor appearance of some parts of the village – in particular the Parade - these do not seem to outweigh the generally positive attitudes that are expressed.

Q9. Q10. Q39. There is a strong view that the services and facilities needed in the village are good or adequate (79%). However, concerns are expressed about the appearance of the shopping area; health facilities; public transport; road and pavement condition and parking controls; and access to affordable exercise facilities.

Q12. Q13. Q14. When asked about the most important facilities for local people, broadband and public footpaths came out top, but all the others listed were also seen as of above average importance, with the exception of allotments provision. Looking ahead, the most important services to improve over the next 10 years were also broadband and footpaths, coupled with facilities for young people, and schemes to reduce isolation. In the subsequent question about service improvements reference was also made to the library, better disabled access and traffic calming.

Q16. Q17. Q19. Q20. Despite the generally positive sense of community, most answers revealed that very few people had been actively involved in Bayston Hill groups in the previous 12 months. 40% had never given voluntary time to support a community organisation, although 37% had contributed at least once a month. There was strong support for more activities for young people, such as a youth club, (85%), and whilst 80% would not be interested in helping to run such facilities, perhaps it is encouraging that 20% would consider doing so.

Safety

Q22. Q23. Most concerns were about the level of policing; burglary and theft; anti-social behaviour; and vandalism. The level of policing in particular was thought to have deteriorated in recent years.

Health and Wellbeing

Q24. Q25. Q26. There was a positive response to the frequency with which people take aerobic exercise, and 74% declared their health to be good or very good. 79% did not feel that their activities were limited by health problems.

Q27. Q28. General satisfaction with life was very positive, an average score of 8 out of 10, and over 80% felt that their lifestyle and activities were worthwhile.

Q77. Q38. 80% of people felt that living in Bayston Hill affected their wellbeing in a positive way, and 76% that they could get support with any health and wellbeing issues if needed.

Conclusions

In general, the responses suggest that most people find life in Bayston Hill a positive experience, with a sense of community and belonging that is perhaps surprising given the size of the village. The setting of the village, its services and amenities are valued and contribute to the sense of wellbeing. However there are concerns which surface regularly, both in this section and in others (Business; Planning; Environment). These include “visible” matters such as parking, A49 access and speeding; the appearance of the Parade; dog fouling and litter; and the prospect of increased housing and loss of open space. Less visible but no less

important are concerns over the lack of policing, and associated fears of burglary, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The health of the population came over in a positive light, again perhaps surprising given the age profile of the respondents. However it is important not to neglect minority responses, and to note that while the majority reported good health, 22% reported as “fair”, and 6% as “bad” or “very bad”.

Because of the breadth of this part of the questionnaire, and the inevitable differences in some of the responses, it is not easy suggesting hard and fast courses of action. (Although some may be picked up if suggestions under the Planning and Environment papers are taken up). This is compounded by difficulties in identifying a group or groups within the village that could take up some of the more significant issues. (*But perhaps I’m wrong here and there may be organisations that I’m not aware of? Your help badly needed here!*)

Perhaps one way forward would be to identify the two or three most important issues which, if they could be wholly or partly addressed, would make the sense of community and wellbeing even stronger than it is. Once identified, individuals or groups could be targeted to lead the work, starting with the findings from the questionnaire, researching the issue in detail, and reporting regularly to the Parish Council and The Villager on their progress. The replies to the questions on volunteering suggest that there is a body of people who are prepared to give their time and skills to enhance the community life of Bayston Hill.

Environment

The term “environment” covers a range of subjects, and inevitably some of the responses will fall under other headings such as transport and development.

This is a good example of how each of the themed areas are interlinked. The general findings about how the residents of Bayston Hill react to environmental issues is as follows:

Q3. A significant percentage of people identified the semi-rural countryside nature of the village as being the thing they liked most about living in Bayston Hill. (40%), and 80% felt that living in the village positively affected their wellbeing.

Q16. Q18. Asked whether respondents would give one hour a month to the benefit of the village, and in what capacity, 43% replied that they would give the hour to practical environmental and conservation tasks. This was the most supported category. However, the vast majority of people had never been involved in any sort of environmental group.

Q12. Q13. The importance of public footpaths was stressed in reply to a number of questions, although it is possible that in some of their replies respondents were referring to pavements in the village, rather than statutory public paths.

Q75. Q80. 70% said they used public footpaths, byways and open spaces at least once a week, many of them daily, and over 80% wanted better access out into the surrounding countryside.

Q74.Q76. Replies regarding open/green space were a bit contradictory. Whilst people were concerned to protect and increase open space, (nearly 300 respondents saw the issue as “very important”), 110 of 160 (40%) did not think there was a need for more green spaces in the village.

Q79. On wildlife, 78% of the 476 replies saw a locally rich combination of all aspects of the natural environment as being most important, including hedgerows, trees and woods, watercourses and wildlife.

Q67. Q68. There was good support for renewable energy sources to serve the village, in particular a solar farm providing it was community owned. Wind turbines were less popular, but still favoured by almost twice as many people as opposed them. There was also strong support for all new housing to be highly energy efficient, as well as for the retro-fitting of high quality insulation.

Q69. Q70. Q71. Improving opportunities for sustainable travel focussed on reducing traffic speeds, providing better bus services and improving pavements. However when asked if they would use a Sunday bus service for example, the majority said no, and very few would be willing to take part in a car pool (12%) or a cycle hire scheme (15%). Despite these small numbers it is encouraging that some people are willing to consider these options.

Q72. It can be seen that there is general support for “the environment”, even though this is a very broad subject. Tangible and obvious initiatives such as recycling, renewable energy, supporting plastic free actions in shops and more tree planting are encouraged in the replies received. However the problem is often translating this general enthusiasm into action which would bring about positive, practical change and benefits.

Conclusions

Whilst most replies refer to tangible initiatives (see paragraph above) there is a need for communities to consider the wider impact of climate change, and to take action to mitigate its effects. This might come in the form of small scale actions in the first instance, but even these need to be understood in the wider context of the future of the planet if global warming continues at its current rate. People often shy away from this approach on the grounds that the actions of an individual, or a small group of people, can have no impact on a global problem. But this is defeatist thinking, and the replies to the questionnaire on this subject reveal that there is a level of concern in Bayston Hill that could be tapped to bring a concerted approach to environmental issues in the village.

Perhaps one way of approaching this is to call a meeting of concerned people from the village, including youngsters of school age, to debate how they might set up a group to raise awareness and look at practical actions that could be taken on the basis of the concerns illustrated in the questionnaire. It may be helpful to have a speaker from a group that is

already tackling these issues on behalf of its community, such as Stretton Climate Concern, to give practical advice on developing the group. Perhaps the village could nominate “champions” who would be willing to take the lead on specific subjects – wildlife, renewable energy, recycling etc. Help could also be sought from specialist groups such as Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Marches Energy Agency and Veolia.

Planning and Development

Most responses (and indeed questions) related to housing provision – need/demand; type of housing; location of housing.

Housing – Need/Demand

Q40. Q41. Approximately 120 respondents said they were seeking to buy or rent housing in the village, of whom about 70 would be looking to do so in the next 10 years. (Note that the Local Plan Review proposes that a further 171 houses are built in Bayston Hill up to 2036. The two main sites proposed are land off Lyth Hill Road (100 dwellings), and the Oaklands/Glebe site (50 – 60 dwellings). It would seem therefore that the local need recorded from the questionnaire returns could be met if the Local Plan proposals are delivered. However, note that a large number of households did not reply to the questionnaire, and there will be demands for housing from this group that has not been recorded.

Q52. Q53. Respondents saw the advantages of new housing meeting local needs, as well as providing affordable housing for young people. The disadvantages that were highlighted were concerns about over-stretching services such as schools and health, and putting pressure on other infrastructure including the A49 junction. Concerns were also expressed about the loss of open space,

Housing – Type

Q43. Q46. Of the respondents looking for houses, almost half (48%) were looking for a 3/4 bedroom home, and about 28% for a 1/2 bed house. When asked about the type of housing needed in the next 20 years, there was strong support for low cost starter homes, bungalows and retirement homes, as well as for more traditional 1/2/3 bedroom houses. The replies suggested that smaller properties (1/2 bedrooms, bungalows and starter homes) would be more needed than larger properties.

Q44. There was strong support for future social housing (rented and part ownership) to be restricted to local needs.

Housing – Location and Sites

Q50. Q51. Responses were clearly in favour of a number of small developments. (Contrast this with the Local Plan Review proposals on 2 main sites). There was also support for the suggestion that a housing partnership should be formed to develop land on behalf of the village and in line with the agreed Community Plan, and that new development should be guided by a master planning approach which would consider open spaces and other physical changes, in addition to housing.

There was very strong support for the protection of the strategic gap between Bayston Hill and Shrewsbury, complemented by opposition to development outside the current village boundary.

Q47. Q48. There were contrasting replies to the questions asking for views on the best and the least favoured locations for new housing. The preferred location was the Oaklands site, with some support for Pulley Lane, the Glebeland and Lyth Hill Road. Sites not favoured were between the village and Meole Brace; Lyth Hill Country Park; Pulley Lane; the Glebefield; and a generic “green areas within the village”.

While the majority of working people who replied to the questionnaire do so outside the village, there is still an important minority who work in Bayston Hill.

Travel to Work

Q54. The majority of people who work do so outside the village. Predictably, the majority work in Shrewsbury, (52%), with a further 12% elsewhere in Shropshire. Just over 13% work in the village, and 8% run their own business in the village, including working from home. The majority of people work over 30 hours per week, but a significant minority work part-time, mostly between 16 and 30 hours.

Q31. Q32. Q33. When asked about commuting 45% replied that their work involved a commute, 55% that it did not. (These results may be skewed by retired people answering). Of the commuters, 78% travelled less than 30 minutes, and 15% for 30 to 60 minutes. Asked about commuting affecting

wellbeing, 70% said it did not, but a significant minority (22%) felt that it did, and 8% were unsure.

Q56. Q57. Travel to work is predominantly by car (74%). Rail commuting is very low, most of the balance being made up by use of the bus, cycling or walking. Changes that would allow more sustainable travel referred almost exclusively to better and cheaper bus services.

Business Needs

Q61. Q62. Of the people who run a business in the village or work from home, the overwhelming needs were for a good mobile phone service and superfast broadband. Respondents were generally satisfied with the infrastructure that they required, such as the availability of workspace and supply of appropriately skilled staff. Very few problems were identified which hindered the development of local businesses, but this is not to say that everything that is needed is provided for. The businesses themselves, together with other agencies such as Shropshire Council, must be aware of opportunities to improve services and facilities when they occur.

The Community Response to Business

Q63. Q64. Q65. The community was asked if it supported more employment opportunities in Bayston Hill, and this was agreed overwhelmingly (83%). In particular, respondents referred to professional services, IT, shops and cafes, and light industry. Reasons given opposing expansion were traffic and parking problems; the effect on village character and residential areas; the lack of need; and the lack of appropriate land and buildings. However this opposition was tempered by encouragement, providing the businesses were small or involved working from home.

Respondents were also heavily in favour of encouraging more visitors to Bayston Hill (80%), with opposition citing an increase in traffic, the lack of tourist facilities and the residential nature of the village.

Conclusions

Although the subject is Planning and Development, most responses referred to housing issues. Inevitably, there were contrasting views on the number of new houses required and the location of new sites, and to

get a cohesive village view on housing will not be easy, nor should it be expected.

However there was consistency in some areas, in particular over the need for new housing to meet local needs with the provision of starter homes, bungalows and smaller properties. Views on location varied, but again there was a sense that the strategic gap between Bayston Hill and Shrewsbury should be maintained (although there has been some erosion of this in recent years with new developments off Pulley Lane). The protection of open spaces was also a fairly common theme, as was the need to ensure that infrastructure was not overstretched by new development.

The control of new housing lies in the hands of Shropshire Council, and it would be misleading to suggest that the Parish Council, or any other village grouping, can dictate the strategy for new housing. However, there may be ways in which more detailed matters can be influenced, such as the type and design of the houses, and even some say over location. The Council's Local Plan Review, and consultation thereon, offers a way of influencing matters. The Parish Council already has a role on representing village views, and this representation could be guided by the feedback from the questionnaire. A paper to the Parish Council summarising the key messages from the village over housing might be helpful – supported of course by the full questionnaire responses.

The replies suggest a stable and satisfied response to employment issues in Bayston Hill, and an encouraging attitude to new employment opportunities, providing they are low impact. The services and facilities that already exist for local businesses are well regarded, although it would be a mistake to be complacent and assume that everything is perfect.

Clearly employment opportunities in Shrewsbury, Telford and the wider West Midlands serve most working people in Bayston Hill well, and there would seem to be little need to seek out new areas of land in or around the village to meet limited requirements.

A significant shift that could take place in favour of the environment would be to try and reduce the proportion of people who travel to work by car. Given that large numbers of people are working in Shrewsbury, it

would be worthwhile examining whether more could be done to encourage sustainable travel by improving bus services, cycle ways and the potential for car sharing or pooling.

On the subject of new land for employment and industry, there was little in the questionnaire replies to suggest that this was an issue, and nothing to indicate that a new site was required. Again, this might be helpful feedback to the Local Plan Review.

SUMMARY

The planning group is most grateful to the many hundreds who took the time to complete what we know was a very detailed questionnaire. The thousands of narrative comments are also most welcome – though are taking some time to analyse!

What is clear is the sense of belonging that residents feel toward the village and the typical length of residence combined with the general sense of happiness says a lot about it as a place to live. Dilution of that, physically through development and consequent impact on services and other infrastructure are clearly concerns. As a broad overview it is probably fair to say that current dissatisfaction is mainly with the physical infrastructure, appearance and design of the village and most satisfaction with the social, community and inter-personal.

Where next?

The group is currently working on turning all this data and feedback into a SMART plan which will then be circulated and consulted on before finally being submitted to the Parish Council for adoption.

To repeat this will not be a 'to do' list for the Council nor any sort of instruction to the Parish or other statutory agencies. It will though contain realistic ambitions and suggested developments and activities that reflect the views of residents and which if completed will get us to where we want to be in 10 years' time – the definition of which will be a critical part of the next stage.