

Bridestowe and Sourton Neighbourhood Development Plan

Chapter 3. Issues and Proposals raised by People in the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Planning Group sent out a questionnaire in April 2015 to all parishioners asking them to consider what they thought was important about their parish, features they valued, aspects they didn't like, and changes they would like to see. Parishioners were also consulted on additional points at two well attended annual events, the Bridestowe Ram Roasts, and at numerous other consultation events in both parishes over the period from August 2014 to Autumn 2016. This section of the plan looks at the results of that consultation, highlighting the issues raised and the proposals that were put forward, as well as highlighting issues raised by other research.

Responses to the April 2015 Questionnaire

A total of 178 questionnaires were completed out of approximately 475 questionnaires distributed; people chose to respond either on line or by completing the paper questionnaires. This gives an approximate 38% return overall, though this was much higher in Bridestowe village than in Sourton village.

Despite the length of the questionnaire - 42 questions in the main section and another 26 in the supplementary sections - most people completed the whole questionnaire, and few people omitted any significant parts.

Most questionnaires included information about **all** members of the household and the households from which completed questionnaires were received included a total of 397 people; this is 40% of the total population of the parishes of Bridestowe and Sourton - 996 according to the 2011 census.

A more detailed report of the consultation process and the results of the April 2015 questionnaire and the May 2016 Housing needs assessment are given in Appendix III and Appendix IV respectively.

The issues raised in the Consultation processes and in previous published assessments.

The issues raised in the consultation processes and in previous reports into the development needs of the two parishes and of West Devon in general are considered in this chapter under five headings:

1. Housing
2. Employment
2. Transport and traffic
3. Young People and Recreation
5. Environment and amenities

1. HOUSING

West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) in its emerging draft strategic core-planning document (prepared jointly with Plymouth City Council and South Hams District Council) has not allocated a specific figure for the number of houses to be built in Bridestowe or in Sourton for the period 2014 – 2034. The draft Joint Plan urges villages to propose a figure that will meet the need within their communities. However, WDBC expect the sum of these individual figures to be in the region of 1000 homes (there are 72 villages within the Joint Local Plan area.)

The WDBC Sub-Regional Housing Market and Needs Assessment (HMNA) carried out in 2006, highlighted the need for more affordable homes and a growing gap between the need for, and the current provision of, appropriate housing, including both affordable housing and market price housing for elderly and disabled residents in West Devon.

As noted in Chapter 1, the 2011 Census showed that the proportion of the population in the two parishes over 65 is 60% higher than the national figure, whilst for those over 45 the figure is 27% higher than the national average. In contrast the proportion between 15 and 29 is 72% of the national figure, and for those under 16 it is 83%.

There is a significant issue of out-migration among young people in the area, particularly school leavers, with 3 times more 15-19 year olds leaving the area than coming in. The retired population of West Devon is projected to rise by 56% by 2026.¹

The discrepancy between local incomes and the high cost of housing is detailed in Chapter 1.

In 2006 an Employment Land Review identified that West Devon has a high proportion of relatively low paid employment opportunities.² There are also notable differences between average annual earnings of residents in employment and workplace earnings, suggesting that those with higher qualifications and earning power are commuting out to work, while those commuting into West Devon to work are in lower paid employment.³

1. The Great Dartmoor Leaf 2015 -2020

2. 2011 WDBC Strategic Plan

3. CPRE Report Rural Connections

Many of the older residents although of retirement age still work, many in agriculture, making the profile of the local economy slightly different from national statistics.

The average price of flats in 2015 was £140,000 ⁴, which is 14 times the average earnings of newly forming households in West Devon.⁵ As noted in Chapter 1, the ratio of house prices to income in West Devon is amongst the highest in the country.

38% of households cannot afford private rental and 79% cannot afford home ownership. ⁶

The work of the Sub-Regional Housing Market and Needs Assessment also showed that in West Devon about 87% of newly forming households are looking to occupy one or two bedroomed units. However, within the Borough only 34% of current stock is of one or two bedrooms.⁷

These figures, together with the results of our housing needs assessment indicate that there is a need for smaller housing including both affordable homes and market price homes rather than larger homes.

Bridestowe and Sourton Housing Needs Survey

In order to obtain accurate, up to date data a Housing Need Survey (HNS) was carried out in April 2016 with funding from the National Lottery and all households in Bridestowe and Sourton were canvassed. Detailed and accurate information on existing housing stock was obtained together with a clearer understanding of what type of housing was needed to meet the present and future needs of the local population.

The survey identified a need in the near future for a minimum of 12 units of affordable housing in the two parishes, together with a need for at least 9 market price smaller homes for residents seeking to downsize within the locality. Although the response rate to the questionnaire was higher than in most similar recent surveys, the actual level of housing needs identified in this survey must be seen as a bare minimum requirement.

(see Appendix IV for details).

Where should new homes be sited in Bridestowe and Sourton?

The questionnaire sent to all Bridestowe and Sourton households showed that generally the community supports an increase in the housing stock. Development within the settlement boundaries was the preferred location, rather than outside the village or in the outlying hamlets, (50% of respondents) and a significant minority (25%) favoured conversion of existing agricultural buildings.

A number of specific possible sites for development, which have been put forward by the landowners were set out in the questionnaire and residents were asked their opinions on them - 5 in Bridestowe and 1 in Sourton.

It should be noted that all the sites put forward for Bridestowe fall outside the settlement boundary but are adjacent to it. The sites in Bridestowe put forward are shown in Figure 3 in Chapter 1 of this report, and are:

1. Town Farm. Adjacent to Town Meadow
 2. On the northeast side of Pool Hill
 3. On the south side of Pig's Leg lane/Rectory Road
 4. Between Bridestowe Cemetery and Hunter's Moon
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5, North side of Pig's Leg lane/Rectory Rd (Proposed housing for the elderly, adjacent to Springfield Residential Home)

One site was proposed in Sourton, northwest of the A386 near the Highwayman Inn as shown in Chapter 1 Figure 5 (this site has *now been granted planning consent*).

The responses revealed a considerable variation in opinion as to which site or sites would be appropriate options; the proposed site between the cemetery and Hunter's Moon received the greatest number of most positive responses and the lowest proportion of objections.

At a later event, the Ram Roast, parishioners were asked if certain conditions could make any of the sites more acceptable. There was broad agreement that if the possible new development at Town Farm was provided with its main vehicular access from the old A30 this could help alleviate traffic problems through Bridestowe Village.

There has been a long history of concern about sewerage provision for the previous new developments of housing in the village and concern was expressed by a number of people that further development would overload an already struggling system.

The development on Pool Hill would be considered more favourably if the development was landscaped into the hill to minimise it towering over that part of the village.

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- 4. Right Move
 - 5. 2011 WDBC Strategic Plan
 - 6. 2011 WDBC Strategic Plan
 - 7. 2011 WDBC Strategic Plan
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Asked if there were other specific sites in either parish that would be suitable for new housing developments, land adjacent to (on the North side of) Launceston Road was one suggested by several people. To date this site has not formally been proposed as a possible site for development by the landowner.

There was a clear preference for a number of smaller developments rather than a single large new housing development.

'Don't want the village to become too big and lose its character'

This was confirmed by the findings of the Housing Needs Survey (HNS)- 91% of respondents favoured small pockets of development.

Size and type of new Housing in Bridestowe and Sourton

56% of respondents thought it was important that some of the new housing in the villages should be low cost/affordable housing to rent and many emphasised how important it was that local residents particularly young people should be given preference in allocating such homes. The findings of the HNS revealed that a total of 12 households in the two parishes were identified as being in current housing need, (9 in Bridestowe and 3 in Sourton), 11 of which will need a 1- or 2- bedroom home and one will need a 3- bedroom home. Of these 9 will need affordable rented accommodation, whilst 3 could afford shared ownership. Because of mobility needs three will require level access. A further 9 households of older residents expressed the wish for smaller market price accommodation to allow them to downsize within the locality.

Style of new housing in Bridestowe and Sourton

When asked, which features of new homes were particularly important, low energy design, traditional and local style, green space and off-road parking, were all rated as being particularly important, whilst almost half of the respondents gave contemporary (21st century) style the lowest possible score.

'Do not want the wrong type of development that does not integrate or compliment the area'

Arising out of this consultation this Neighbourhood Development Plan should:

- Support development within the settlement boundary if possible.
 - Support small pockets of development.
 - Support conversion of agricultural buildings where these are amongst other farm buildings.
 - Consider suggested sites in the Plan in the light of resident's opinions, especially giving weight to suggestions on how to reduce any negative aspects.
 - Support developments that take account of residents' opinions as expressed in this Plan, with particular weight being given to approaches to minimise the identified negative aspects of each of the proposed sites for development.
 - Include statements on the importance of good design, sensitive to the character of the communities
 - Support the use of sustainable drainage systems to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges.
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It is important to state that new sites for possible development may come forward during the fifteen years covered by the Plan and for this reason, general principles for development have also been set out in the Plan.

2. EMPLOYMENT

Historically, in this rural area, agriculture has made an important contribution to the local economy of West Devon for centuries; it has played a major role in shaping and maintaining the Borough's landscape character.⁸ Although agriculture provides only about 7.5% of total employment, this figure is still above the national average.

Tourism is an important part of West Devon's economy and within the two parishes there is a wide variety of holiday accommodation on offer from hotels, bed & breakfast, bunk barns, self catering cottages and camping and caravan parks. *Visitors swell the numbers using existing facilities, shops, pubs, garages and make use of bike hire facilities to explore the Granite Way, an increasingly popular Sustrans route.* Tourism not only contributes to the local economy but provides employment.

8 WDBC 2011 Strategic Plan

An ageing population brings with it a need for residential accommodation and community care services. Springfields is a well-established residential home within Bridestowe with extra care bungalow accommodation; its employees are drawn from the local area. Residential and nursing homes in Okehampton provide local employment opportunities too.

There are many small businesses and trades that serve the local communities, such as electricians, builders, providers of financial services, chiropodists, mobile hairdressers, to name but a few.

One of WDBC's overarching Core Strategy objectives is to "Sustain an active and working countryside, acknowledging the importance of agriculture, tourism and small rural businesses" (*WDBC Core Strategic Plan 2011 SO9*).

Rates of employment are close to but slightly lower than the national average: in the 2011 Census 72.6% of people of working age in Sourton and 73.2% in Bridestowe were described as economically active compared to the UK average 76.7%. As noted in Chapter 1, this figure is distorted by the relatively large number of family farms in the parishes, to which many family members contribute but may not be identified as economically active.

From the 2011 Census 5.5% of working age residents were reported to be receiving 'out of work' benefits.

120 people reported that they worked from home.⁹

Location of new businesses, their size and factors inhibiting local business development.

Almost 60% of respondents to the Bridestowe and Sourton questionnaire thought that encouraging new business to the parishes was quite or very important. New housing without access to new job opportunities could lead to the two parishes becoming "dormitory" settlements with the occupants all commuting outside for work, leaving the villages empty and soulless. The great majority of respondents (78%) favoured siting new businesses on already developed sites within settlement boundaries if possible, whilst 15% of respondents preferred development on farmsteads.

No respondents suggested encouraging a large enterprise to locate to the area.

"Cottage industry development should be encouraged in parallel with housing to create small local businesses using some of the redundant farm buildings and inefficiently farmed land in the area".

Local residents showed great appreciation of existing small businesses and trades and a desire to see them flourish.

Factors adversely affecting local businesses include business rates (noted by 19%), lack of suitable premises (25%), lack of skilled labour (25%) and poor broadband connection (50%).

Of the 149 respondents who reported using broadband internet, 42% found it be poor or variable, with many respondents reporting extreme slowing of their internet connections during the early evenings and at weekends, whilst many drew attention to the wide discrepancy in service depending on how far they were from the main villages.

Although the Broadband service has improved since April 2015 with the provision of fibre optic connections to the main cabinet in Bridestowe village this has not resulted in a measurable improvement in service for residents living more than a mile or so from the cabinet.

Whilst there is a current programme to provide wide area high speed WiFi internet connection to areas outside the reach of the fibre optic network the precise specifications, geographical provision and accessibility of this proposed new service is not yet clear for residents of the two parishes.

For 80% of residents who use the Internet for business purposes a fast connection was reported as being important or very important, particularly for those who worked from home.

'Internet speed and mobile phone signal are poor. Problem with phone lines often in the winter'

Factors that might support or facilitate local businesses included faster broadband (mentioned by 82%) better public transport (mentioned by 41%), and business accommodation units to lease (mentioned by 22%).

On a positive note, almost half of those completing this section (47%) stated that they would or might be able to offer work experience or apprenticeships to local young people in the future. The questionnaire included a section specifically to canvass the views of those running or considering starting a business.

A total of 36 respondents completed this section, including 31 who currently run a business here and 5 who are thinking of expanding relocating or starting a business here. These included 9 farm based businesses, 2 based in business premises and 28 who conduct at least part of their business from home. Most are quite small, with 12 employing 1-3 people, 3 employing 4-10 people, and 2 employing more than 10 people.

Arising out of this consultation this Neighbourhood Development Plan should:

- Support sustainable growth and expansion of appropriate, new small businesses as well as existing ones
- Support new business units in appropriate local locations through conversion of existing buildings or discrete well-designed new buildings
- Support sustainable rural tourism with respect to the character of the countryside
- Promote the retention and development of local facilities, such as shops, pubs, etc
- Encourage improvements in broadband connection, including the provision of transmission facilities for high speed WiFi broadband where this can be achieved without significant negative visual impact.

3. TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC

West Devon is a rural, sparsely populated area and there is heavy reliance on the car to access essential services and facilities. Both parishes have seen the reduction of public transport services. WDBC, in its strategic core plan (2006-2026), recognises that public transport is not accessible to everyone and that certain rural areas run the risk of isolation despite larger villages having a bus service.

The Draft Joint Local Plan notes an intention to promote flexible car use through park and ride facilities, car sharing and car clubs and to promote good quality, accessible and safe footpaths and cycle routes.

The Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2006-2026) states:

'Development should be located so as to reduce the need to travel and to optimise the potential for the most sustainable forms of travel having regard to the following hierarchy:

1. Walking
2. Cycling
3. Public transport
4. Private vehicles.'

Possible railway developments. (see also Appendix VII).

The draft Joint Local Plan sets out an intention to reinstate the railway from Bere Alston to Tavistock, to reduce congestion on the A386 into Plymouth. This is reinforced in the South West of Tavistock Masterplan with funding for the railway and associated infrastructure to come in part from proposed development. This proposal is supported by both Devon County and Plymouth City councils in their respective transport plans. The reinstatement of the rail line, associated engineering works, station works at Tavistock and Bere Alston and land are estimated to cost £26 million. Depending on funding, it is possible that Tavistock station could be open from 2022.

The East of Okehampton masterplan seeks to safeguard the ability to provide a shelter, platform and car park as an alternative point to access rail services, as part of proposed development. This sits within aspirations to reinstate daily passenger services between Okehampton and Exeter (*Facilitating Economic Growth in South Hams and West Devon -JOHT Resources Ltd, May 2014*).

This leaves a relatively small gap in the rail line, between Meldon and Tavistock. Re-establishing a second main line from Exeter to Plymouth has been explored and benefits to the local and regional economy are clear. The 2015 report commissioned by the Campaign for Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) *Rural Reconnections; The social benefits of rail reopening*, [<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/rail/item/3986-rural-reconnections>] highlighted the increased likelihood of local housing development; the reinstatement would transform the locality into a commuter belt for Exeter and Plymouth. The proposal for reinstatement of this railway was also viewed in a mainly positive light by the cost/benefit analysis conducted on behalf of Dartmoor National Park.

Respondents were asked in the questionnaire whether they supported or opposed the possibility of the railway being re-opened between Meldon and Tavistock. Of the 162 respondents who answered this question, 64% were in favour or strongly in favour and 20% were opposed or strongly opposed the idea.

Whilst the potential advantages of better travel links to the rest of the country, and the possibility of not needing to take the car for long journeys were recognised and emphasised by many respondents, the possible disadvantages of disruption during construction, increased noise and adverse effects on the cycle track were also identified. The potential benefits of being able to travel easily to work in Exeter or Plymouth for local residents were to some extent balanced by the likelihood of increased numbers of people moving to the area, with increasing pressure on housing and house prices.

Overall however the overwhelming view was to support the proposed development, with many people making this conditional on retaining the cycle track in its present or slightly revised position.

Traffic in the Villages.

Major roads run through the parishes: the A30, old A30 (West Devon Way) and A386. Because of the speed of traffic on the A386 and the old A30, crossing these roads is hazardous and it can prove particularly difficult to cross safely for those who are hard of hearing, or unable to walk briskly. There is a current proposal to reduce the speed limit on the old A30 as it passes the Village Hall and turnoff to the village, which has very strong local support.

Additionally, the volume of traffic through Bridestowe was considered a problem by 58% of respondents. Children walking from the primary school to Treetops Preschool have no complete pavement route.

West Devon Borough Council do not address speeding problems in their strategic plan but residents in both main villages expressed a wish for future housing developments to be linked to the introduction of possible traffic calming/ speed reduction measures.

Bus Services

Although buses pass through the centre of Sourton, Bridestowe residents must walk some distance to the nearest bus stop. A recurring theme in many responses was the inadequacy of the bus services and in particular, the lack of a usable bus service to Tavistock.

A further concern raised by many people was the distance of the bus stops on the old A30 from the village in Bridestowe and the great difficulty faced by the elderly, those with limited mobility, or those with young children of getting up Pool Hill to the bus stops.

'Not enough buses running and bus stop too far from the village'

The community transport *Ring and Ride* service operates to take people with no access to a vehicle to Okehampton and Tavistock once a week. Only 8% of respondents reported that they used the Ring and Ride service – mainly for travel to Tavistock or Okehampton, and 15% reported that a locally organised community car service would be of interest to someone in the household.

Parking

The questionnaire highlighted that 62% of people have 2 or more cars available for use in the household whilst 10.6% had no car.¹⁰ Cars parked on the roadside in the middle of Bridestowe village narrow the road to such an extent that the free flow of traffic is difficult. It is a problem that is particularly bad at the start and end of the school day when the additional volume of traffic makes it difficult to get through the village at all. There is concern that with an increase in the village population, further pressure will be put on the road system by the increased number and movement of cars.

'New development will increase traffic and put pressure on parking, etc on all local roads''

For this reason, at the Bridestowe Ram Roast in 2015, people were asked their views on the suggestion of moving the school to the edge of the village, perhaps adjacent to the village hall. Of those who responded there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the suggestion. This would ease traffic congestion at peak periods and potentially free up a large, level plot in the centre of the village for housing.

Sourton

There is limited parking at Sourton Village Hall which is situated adjacent to the Church and an access point to the Granite Way. At busy times visitors are allowed to park in the pub car park opposite but as this plot of land is earmarked for development, it is only a temporary solution.

The popularity of the Granite Way means that in busy periods car parking becomes a problem at the nearby hamlet of Sourton Down, with cars parked along the road to the Prewley Moor Arms, inconveniencing local residents.

Arising out of this consultation this Neighbourhood Development Plan should:

- Ensure that all developments in Bridestowe have sufficient off road parking provision for residents and visitors.
 - Encourage developments where traffic is diverted away from the centre of the village so that it does not create a significant increase in the volume of traffic on roads that do not have sufficient safe capacity.
 - Support the provision of additional parking in Sourton
 - Ensure that development around Sourton Down does not lead to additional parking along the section of the A386.
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- Support in principle the opening of the railway, but flag up concern about possible pressure to increase the number of houses built as a result of this new traffic highway.
- Ensure that residential and environmental amenity is not adversely affected by traffic;
- Ensure the provision of new and improved footpaths not just within new developments but with appropriate extensions to create safe pedestrian routes to the key locations in the villages
- Ensure that roads in new developments should be wide enough to allow vehicles (especially emergency vehicles) to pass each other without using the pavements;
- Promote the development of cycleways with entry points that provide adequate parking facilities.
- For the future - explore the relocation of Bridestowe's primary school to the periphery of the village, near the village hall.

Supporting Statement

Road traffic is a matter that greatly concerns most residents. Whilst road safety and the improvement of roads, footways and cycleways is not a matter for policy in this Plan, all new developments should prioritise any possible transport measures which promote positive sustainable impacts for the benefit of residents.

4. YOUNG PEOPLE, SPORT AND RECREATION

Provision of play facilities for primary school aged children is generally good in small communities with play equipment funded and maintained by parish councils. Older children are less well served.

“ Children and young people in rural Devon are at greater risk of social isolation which has consequences for their emotional and physical health and wellbeing. Isolation and lack of reliable and affordable public transport impacts on their ability to access education, recreational facilities and services.”

from Devon County Council's "Rural Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Devon 2010 -2013" (Children and young people).

The report recognises the unique problems faced by young people living in rural areas such as long walking distances to school buses and/or public transport on unlit, isolated and/or unsafe country roads; heavy reliance on school bus transport that can make it difficult to participate in extracurricular activities due to rigid bus timetables, fewer youth clubs/activities within smaller settlements.

Limited opportunities, boredom and low self-esteem impacts on the well being of this age group and can lead to high-risk activities including substance misuse and self-harm as well as tension with other residents.

The questionnaire sought the views of respondents on provision for the needs of children and young people. Whilst social, play and recreational provision in the parishes for the needs of children aged between 4 and 11 years was considered as excellent by over 60% of people, provision for children aged 12-14 and over was considered very poor by 80% of respondents.

‘My son would like somewhere to skate / skateboard’

Many respondents made suggestions about how to better serve the young people of the parishes, including establishing a skate park in the sporting green/ playground area, more activities focused on their needs and better public transport to allow teenagers to access Okehampton or Tavistock. Many respondents drew attention to the hazards faced by teenagers playing or skateboarding in the villages because of the speed and high volumes of traffic, as well as the hazards to children from large traffic volumes at the beginning and end of the school day.

A section of the questionnaire that was specifically aimed at children and young people was only completed by 15 (6 boys and 9 girls) and not all answered all questions. Because of this poor uptake a further survey was carried out in July 2015 targeting young people.

Reassuringly 76% of respondents said that they thought Bridestowe and Sourton were good places to grow up – and cited safety, peace, good links to the countryside, the parks and sporting facilities as things they particularly liked.

Poor internet connection, poor public transport (to meet with friends from other villages or Okehampton) and a lack of activities focussed on teenagers in the parishes, plus lack of access to a skate park were all given as things they did not like about living here.

Only 25% thought that they would stay in the parishes when they grew up, and 50% thought they would not, whilst 25% were not sure. The things they said they did not like about Bridestowe and Sourton as listed above were all cited as reasons they might not stay (presumably with their own future children in mind).

Activities for young people in the parishes.

The very wide range of activities in which the children reported taking part included Guides, Scouts, Football, Rugby, Martial Arts, Tennis, Drama, Dance, Art, Cricket, Swimming and Church. Interestingly none of the young people who completed the questionnaire reported using the local youth club.

Whilst some of the activities (e.g. Scouts, Guides, Cricket) were reported as being held in Bridestowe and Sourton, the children reported that they would prefer if more could be held or organised here, including Martial Arts, Tennis and swimming.

The list of possible additional activities listed in the questionnaire and the proportion of children/young people who said they would like to see them are given below:

Activity	Percentage who wanted this
Film shows in the village hall	80%
Summer holiday activities	40%
Organised sports facilities	50%
Better facilities for performing arts	60%

Arising out of this consultation this Neighbourhood Development Plan should:

- Promote the provision of better facilities for older children
- Promote opportunities for play and physical activity
- Support development that enhances and increases community facilities, recreation and local services within the core villages

5. THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES

The scenic quality of the area is reflected in the fact that part of the area is designated as a National Park (the highest status possible for landscape). The beautiful scenic nature of the area is well recognised. Devon County Council in their landscape character assessment in 2008 described the local area thus:

A gentle agricultural landscape of high scenic quality, characterised by ribbon-like rivers. Slow-flowing, meandering streams fringed by trees glide through quiet, inaccessible floodplains. A semi-regular pattern of fields, edged with hedges and earth banks, covers the undulating landform and adds pattern and texture to the landscape. The area feels remote and peaceful, and away from Okehampton has seen very little C.20th development; the scattered stone-built farms and villages have a timeless quality. Narrow, earth-banked lanes thread across the valleys, contrasting with the A30 which cuts across the landscape.

Single wind turbines are a feature of the local area but are not numerous and none have been installed within the two parishes.

Photovoltaic panels (solar electricity) and solar thermal panels (solar hot water) are becoming more common and Boasley School is an example of an amenity building that has deployed them. Following the results of a renewable energy feasibility study, instigated by Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council, the group CORES (Community of Okehampton Renewable Energy Society) has been set up as a community benefit society by a working group of volunteers. CORES aims to generate electricity locally, sell it at near half-price to local businesses and put the profit made to good community use in the Okehampton area.

Many villages have witnessed declining service provision in recent years and local shops, post offices, schools and public houses continue to be under pressure to survive.

Physical well-being

If the built environment is well planned and implemented to a high standard, it will have a beneficial impact on the physical well-being of its inhabitants. Similarly planning for an environment that supports people of all ages in making healthy choices, helps to promote active travel and physical activity, promotes access to healthier food, provides high quality open spaces, green infrastructure and opportunities for play, sport and recreation, will all contribute to promoting healthy lifestyles.

There is strong community support for safeguarding existing parish assets - halls, schools, churches and sports fields and an enthusiasm for creating future sports' facilities and green ways.

The rural surroundings are an important leisure asset for local inhabitants wanting to be physically active; they enjoy the proximity to the Dartmoor National Park providing many opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and other outdoor pursuits.

Potential pollution and other environmental hazards, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, must be accounted for in the consideration of new development.

Social well-being

Countering rural isolation by promoting social engagement and inclusivity will improve social well-being. Measures to address local transport deficiencies by introducing alternative schemes like car sharing should be considered. Increased connectivity through telecommunications is not only important for rural

enterprise and home-working but allows fuller interaction for young and old across the area and beyond. The numerous clubs and church activity are proof of a good community spirit. By creating places and spaces for people to meet promotes community engagement and helps foster community spirit. It is important to ensure that the disabled as well as the able-bodied have equal access to all aspects of community life.

Landscape, renewable energy and amenities.

The landscape is treasured by parishioners with 100% of respondents to the questionnaire considering it important or very important to them and 100% of respondents considered conserving unspoilt countryside, village greens, open spaces, wildlife designated conservation areas and rights of way were important or very important to them. In the survey 34% said that they used the footpaths and cycle paths on a regular basis.

Development of existing footpaths to improve pedestrian and possibly cycle access between the villages received unanimous support

A significant majority of respondents to the questionnaire showed strong support for small scale developments of each type of renewable energy other than wind turbines, but strong opposition to larger scale developments. There was opposition to the development of wind turbines on any scale.

'there are enough wind turbines scarring the countryside already'

Several alternative suggestions were made by respondents, including several suggestions of installation of community sized ground source heat pump systems as possible sources of low cost renewable heating within villages or settlements.

In response to a question to gauge interest in a community energy scheme as a way to buy electricity, gas, oil or other fuels at lower cost, or to manage and generate energy, 83% of respondents expressed a definite or possible interest.

Amongst the specific local facilities listed the ones rated as most important included the Village Halls, and Methodist Hall, the pubs, the sporting green and cricket field, the children's play area, but overwhelmingly the one rated the most important by the largest number of people was Bridestowe Shop and Post Office.

Arising out of this consultation this Neighbourhood Development Plan should:

- Include a strong statement about the importance of the landscape quality to ensure that development does not diminish the scenic quality of the area.
 - Support small scale renewable energy projects
 - Investigate community energy schemes
 - Compile a comprehensive list of amenities
-