

Summary of First Village Consultation Responses

A Newsletter with a tear-off response section (Appendix 1) was produced to act as a first village consultation. Questions 1 and 2 were drafted to find out from the community what makes the village a great place to live, and what could be improved. Question 3 listed ten themes other neighbourhood plans had looked at to help identify specific issues to include as key local topics.

494 surveys were circulated by hand to all properties, with each household receiving two surveys. In addition, an Open Day drop in was held over two days in October 2016 where people were invited to come and talk to members of the Steering Group, look at some completed neighbourhood plans and put down their thoughts on post it notes on boards laid out with the ten theme pointers, plus room for any other issues.

A total of 74 surveys were returned, plus one freehand submission. The two Open Day sessions attracted a total of 66 visitors. 160 separate post it comments were received, with attendees being invited to indicate agreement or otherwise by way of a tick or cross against the comment. 249 ticks or crosses were made during the course of the two Open Days.

All survey returns and post it comments are included in the summary of responses.

The fully collated results of the consultation are included in full in Appendix 2. Here is a summary of the responses:

Question 1: What things do you like best about Sutton Poyntz that makes it a great place to live and work?

The objective of Question 1 was to establish what people like best about the village as it is now. Before anything else, it is clear that they value Sutton Poyntz as a thriving and friendly community. One person commented that they liked Sutton Poyntz because of the "strong sense of community, with village events and numerous activity groups available" and because of "the fact that there are fantastic people in the village willing to step up to the plate to organise all of these". This comment was typical of many others. Various village groups were identified as playing a strong part in this but the diversity of groups is clearly part of its strength, as is the support given by the village to a wide variety of events; the Street Fayre was singled out by some for particular praise.

The role played by the Springhead pub, the Mission Hall, and (to a slightly lesser extent) the Scutt Hall as focal points for the village's social life were all clearly important to people. As someone else said, they value "the social life, centred on the Mission Hall and the pub (both great success stories)". Very complimentary things were said in the responses about the publicans and the staff at the pub, and also about the Mission Hall Trust who manage the Mission Hall and many of the events there.

The next strong theme, more important than the village itself, was the easy access to a beautiful countryside and to stunning coastline. Views from the village, and also from the hills into the village, are clearly important, but even more important than that is the ability to step straight out from one's door in order to walk the hills and fields, and so to enjoy at first hand the "nature reserves, beaches, clifftops, woods, rivers and of course, the absolutely amazing walks around the village and valley area that are so easy to take for granted".

A smaller but still significant number of responses referred to the village centre, village style and character, and village heritage. In this context, a few responses noted the value of our village for holidaymakers and visitors, and praised the way the locals look after the village.

Several responses referred to the importance of the 'green wedge' that separates Sutton Poyntz from the more suburban Preston. As one person said "This separation is important in giving meaning to the identity of the village".

A number of responses praised the peace and tranquillity of the village, and a few responses also referred to it as a safe community.

The final topic that emerged strongly from the responses to Question 1 was the importance of easy access to facilities such as shops, hairdressers, doctors' surgeries, the railway and coaches, playgrounds, etc. etc., and the importance of the bus service in making that easy access available to everyone. One respondent described the village as "a peaceful oasis a short step away from the madding crowd that is Weymouth".

Question 2. What things would you change in order to make our community a better place?

The responses represented those aspects of the village and community life that people wanted to see continue or expanded and those where new initiatives were considered necessary.

In relation to the former, retention and possible extension of the bus service, continued support for community events centred on the Mission Hall and Springhead Pub and continued access within and around the village via well maintained footpaths (Puddledock Lane being the focus of much discussion) were prominent. People also considered it important to encourage a clean and tidy environment through the provision of additional public bins for litter and dog mess.

In terms of new initiatives there was a very strong focus on the provision of affordable housing in order to enable families and younger people to settle in the village, with some mention of the building of smaller homes/sheltered housing to enable people to downsize, as well as some opposing views on social housing provision. Reflecting the desire to encourage younger people the need for recreation and playgrounds was also mentioned by a significant number. There was support for the controlled introduction of small business and community enterprises e.g. waterworks museum and significant support for a village shop.

Perceived threats to the community were concerns as to the volume and particularly speed of traffic down Plaisters Lane and Sutton Road which was very strongly expressed and the impact on village life and services caused by the increasing number of second/holiday homes. Access issues along Sutton Road due to vehicle parking were also the subject of much concern and a number of suggestions were offered to mitigate this. Other prominent issues were the importance of ensuring that any new build aligned with the heritage context of the village and surroundings, retention of the 'green space' between the village and Preston and maintenance of trees and hedges in order to keep the village character.

Topics receiving little mention here but covered in greater depth elsewhere were fibre optic provision for improved IT access, opposition to unsightly solar panels and the need to conserve the surrounding countryside and promote biodiversity. Flooding and a larger village hall received a mention here and little elsewhere. Less bonfires were mentioned once here and nowhere else.

Overall the feedback reflected a desire to retain the existing character, services and community ethos whilst moving forward with the controlled and sympathetic change necessary to sustain this into the future.

Question 3. Have a think about the topics in the picture below and list in the table those topic headings you would like to be included in the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan. Add in the 'Other' box any topics you feel are not covered. Briefly identify the issues that you want to see addressed under each topic heading.

Many respondents touched on these in answering Questions 1 and 2, and in addition, comments under one theme often related to, or were also relevant to, another theme.

Responses as received are summarised below:

Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

Respondents felt it was important to co-operate and collaborate with landowners, residents and environmental groups and bodies to actively conserve wildlife and its habitat through the promotion of biodiversity measures and responsible access for the enjoyment of all. Biodiversity issues such as garden size and tree and hedge planting should be considered in relation to new build properties. People wanted a clean, tidy and healthy place in which to live through the provision of sufficient appropriately located waste and dog litter bins.

Business/employment/tourism

Respondents felt it was important to encourage the establishment of small scale business enterprise and work with existing employment providers such as the local pub, shops and farms to help create local job opportunities, particularly for young people. In addition, people suggested catering for the needs of visitors by developing attractions such as the waterworks museum or providing a cafe. The local economy should be supported and community sustainability should be promoted and ways should be sought to encourage the year round occupation of homes.

Heritage

Respondents wanted active measures to protect local heritage sites along with visual and physical access and to promote healthy interest and safe accessibility through the provision of information and archived records. Development and siting of new buildings and structures should reflect empathy with the heritage character of the area.

Housing and Planning

Of the 75 consultation responses, 60 included comments relevant to Housing and Planning, which also gathered large numbers of responses at the Open Days. There was considerable consensus on several topics:

- Attracting more young people and young families into the village;
- Focusing any development on smaller rather than larger properties, suitable both for younger people and for downsizing older people. This focal topic included a number of responses that supported affordable housing, sheltered housing and social housing. In this context, however, two Open Day responses opposed to any social housing should be noted;

- Encouraging full-time occupancy of houses in the village, as opposed to second homes and holiday lets;
- Preventing the village from spreading out into the countryside, with a preference for growth through infill. As a sub-theme to this, numbers of respondents wanted to protect views both out of and into the village, and to ensure that the 'green wedge' separating the village from the more suburban Preston is protected;
- Use of appropriate design and materials, respect of heritage, and conservation of natural beauty.

A few other topics attracted less attention, including flood risk; over-development; adequate parking allocation.

There were two general comments relating to housing that didn't fit neatly in any grouping: first the question "Should we keep the development boundary as it is?", and second an aspiration that "development should meet the area's needs, not maximise the developer's profit".

The final topic covered in the survey responses dealt with the degree of control over future development. Here twelve respondents wanted firmer controls than at present, and little (or in some cases no) development in the area. However, four respondents took the opposite view, wanting the village to take a more liberal stance in doing its bit to meet national and local housing need.

IT/Communications

People were keen to ensure the continuous improvement of TV, mobile telephone and internet signal in terms of coverage, speed and reliability whilst seeking infrastructure that is non-visible and non-intrusive, for example underground ducting. There was support for a variety of traditional as well as technological means of communication in order to be inclusive of the whole community.

Land Use and Conservation

There was much support for maintaining wildlife habitats, important views and the gap between the village and Preston. Other similar concerns mentioned were protection of trees, hedgerows, woodlands and the pond, maintaining the agricultural use of the land, protecting the open countryside and the rural character of the village and its lanes.

Some respondents were more specific, saying that the village geographical boundary should be maintained and that there should be no building outside the development boundary, although one respondent said that this could be considered for a sports or playground and another comment suggesting that the community should decide what fields to sacrifice for housing.

There was a suggestion that better communication with rural landowners would be helpful and a request for allotments or a community farming/orchard project. There were two differing views on solar and wind energy projects and camping.

There were a number of comments saying that policies on land use and conservation were felt to be an important inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Renewable Energy

There was some support for the principle of using renewable energy but also concerns expressed about the visual impact. Some people suggested the use of energy saving technology.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

Community facilities - in the form of sports and recreation - were important to many correspondents. The Mission Hall was universally valued and regarded as highly important to the village, although there was a question raised about the size of the facility and its long-term security (as a leasehold property).

The need for a dedicated children's play area was highlighted by several people, but there were also concerns about the potential impact. The opportunity for sports facilities was mentioned by a number of villagers. One response recognised, however, that this might potentially impact on the development boundary.

The need to maintain (and enhance) village footpaths and walking tracks (access, safety, signage, etc.) was also identified, as was the potential to create a Village Green at the heart of the village.

There was some concern expressed about litter and dog mess.

Transport

A large number of respondents had significant concerns about preserving the bus services to the village.

Parking on village roads, especially Sutton Road, was affecting the bus access to the village and road safety.

A 20 mph speed limit through the village needs investigating.

There were numerous comments regarding poor pedestrian access along Puddledock Lane. A few respondents expressed a wish for the Lane to be made up.

Next Steps

The Steering Group will use this information to create a draft vision for the village and a set of objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan. The village will be consulted on these later in the Spring.