

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The response was fantastic! We received 847 replies from 1,494 occupied households, a 57% response rate that far exceeded our expectations, and an indication of the very high level of interest that local residents have in the community. Most voluntary surveys get a fraction of this, and even recent local and general election turnouts have been below these levels! We can now move ahead with the confidence that we know what issues are of most concern to you.

This report is a summary that aims to communicate the essence of the results. A more detailed report and response rates by area will be available soon on-line at www.plan4prestbury.co.uk or in hard copy at Prestbury Library.

We are still analysing the 10,000+ verbatim comments that we received and these will be passed to the working groups to assist their analysis. 116 people returned volunteer cards and they are being invited to an introductory meeting to form the working groups later this month.

THE COMMUNITY

The biggest attraction of Prestbury to its residents is its “village feel”. Residents next most frequent description of the parish is “picturesque”, “peaceful and quiet”, “semi-rural” and “safe”, and “well-kept”, and they also comment positively on “community spirit” and “trees and hedging”. A quarter of you mention Prestbury’s location in terms of transport links, proximity to Manchester and beautiful countryside, and 20% of comments mention specific facilities, particularly restaurants and pubs, but also clubs, sports and medical facilities. Some people commented on the importance of local shops, good housing and good local schools, and 7% of respondents mentioned the friendliness of the parish.

Given these views, it is not surprising that questions dealing with perceived threats to the village atmosphere, appearance and rural character registered high concerns - we like our uniquely situated, pretty village and want to keep it that way. For example, any change of use or change of appearance of the distinctive older buildings in the village centre would be a potential matter of concern to 98% of our community; and 99% of respondents think “the current appearance of the village centre should be protected”.

Strong concerns were expressed about the closure of Ford House, particularly the loss of community facilities, including centrally located parking spaces. Over 75% of respondents believe the remaining community facilities require some level of improvement or expansion to meet the needs of residents. Many comments were received suggesting refurbishing or rebuilding Ford House with some proposing that the community helps raise the funds for this. **We have established a working group to look at community facilities and how we can ensure the needs of the parish are met as fully as possible.**

Regarding the possibility of an extension onto St Peter’s Church, 10% have no concerns at all whilst 23% object to any kind of extension. The other 66% were almost equally divided between those happy to leave a sympathetic design up to the Church and planning authorities versus those wanting to be

consulted about any specific proposals before giving their support. With regard to both Ford House and the church extension, the Plan for Prestbury has passed the responses to the Parochial Church Council and Prestbury Parish Council for them to consider the implications of these community opinions.

There is general agreement that we need to develop stronger community spirit and some support for more community events. There was a very strong view (76% definitely and 20% perhaps) that you would like more community information, and residents were more than 4 to 1 in favour of a village green. **We plan to set up two working groups in this area, one to look at community information and the other to investigate additional community events and the possibility of a village green.**

MANAGED DEVELOPMENT

Residents feel very protective of our Green Belt land: 84% want it protected; only 13% believe there should be some relaxation of the rules for housing; and a meagre 3% are in favour of a complete re-appraisal of the Green Belt. The prospect of Prestbury being required to accommodate more houses seemed so unacceptable that few answers were offered as to where they could be located.

85% have concerns about the rebuilding of houses within the parish, and 70% believe planning controls are too lenient. Although 66% of people think “some of the houses need demolishing and others need preserving”, there were 22% who believe the old houses as a whole “add character and should be preserved”. 50% hold “mixed opinions” on whether the new houses are good for Prestbury, while 28% think the new houses are generally “good”, and 22% think they are “bad”. On the surface the results present a slightly confusing picture, but one possible conclusion is that we feel the redevelopments are out of our control and they are changing the character of the community, physically and/or socially. **We will set up a working group to look at managed development and planning issues, including how to interpret these results.**

We love our trees! Only 1% said they were not important; more than 75% would like tree protection orders along roads and on public land and over half wanted more trees protected on private land. Not surprisingly given these figures, over 80% would support a managed tree replanting programme. Half of respondents also think more maintenance of trees and hedges is needed and the other half don't - further analysis of the results by area to identify any localised issues may help us understand this better.

Finally in this section, 2 out of 3 residents think the number of traffic signs and road markings in the village centre and the roads leading to it are about right.

FACILITIES

We asked about the quality and range of activities available in the parish for children and adults of different ages. Only 1 in 4 households in Prestbury have children, and 60-70% of replies to questions about children were “don't know”. If you take out the “don't knows”, about 90% of respondents rate the quality and range of activities for both the 0-4 year olds and the 5-11 year olds as “average” to “good”, and this is also the case for working age or retired adults. However, applying the same approach to activities for 12-18 years olds we find 53% of respondents rated the quality “poor” and only 13% said “good”, and 50% of respondents rating the range of activities for this age group as “poor” and only 7% saying “good”. Households are clearly telling us that both the quality and range of activities for older children in Prestbury are below par, and that is why **we have decided to set up a working group to look at the provision of activities for teenagers.**

Looking at sports activities and facilities, we find the community overall does not think there is a need for more activities (40%) or better facilities (42%). However, of households with children, 55% would like more activities and 62% would like more facilities. For households with people 65 and older (and there are more of these households in Prestbury) only 30% would like more sporting activities and 34% more facilities. So, households with children want more sporting activities and better facilities and the older generation think what we have are adequate. **Another working group will be assigned to this topic.**

COMMERICAL ACTIVITY

Shops, banks, restaurants and pubs are “important to your household” and “important to the future of the Village” in 90% of your responses. This suggests we feel our commercial centre is important in maintaining “village life”, something that is central to what we like about Prestbury. Most of us say we use the shops and banks in the village several times a week (which might surprise the merchants) and use the restaurants and pubs once or twice a month. When asked what would encourage us to use the businesses in the village more, the responses were (in order of greatest frequency): quality, choice, parking, range of shops and finally (with significantly fewer mentions) price. The clear winner of new shops we would like to see in the village was a bakery/coffee shop with greengrocers second and a deli in third place. **The working group looking at commercial activity will analyse the wide range of answers we received about how to ensure the survival of our shops.**

90% feel that parking is either “very important” or “somewhat important” to them, and this came out as an important factor in using village shops. Although 39% are “very satisfied” with the current parking situation, 51% think “some improvements could be made” and 8% were “very dissatisfied”. **One of the working groups will include parking issues within the scope of their work.**

TRAFFIC

92% of us are very or somewhat concerned about HGV’s in the parish, and 94% are very or somewhat concerned about traffic volume and congestion, whereas traffic speed, noise and pollution were of lower concern.

Opinion about improvements to roads is affected to some extent by ages within a household. For example, 76% of households with children think changes to road layouts would help safety significantly or somewhat, and only 24% said it would not help “at all”. For households with people over 65, the responses were 49% and 51% respectively. This may be linked to the fact that 44% of households with children drive through the village several times a day and 27% several times a week, whereas only 16% of older residents drive through several times a day, with 50% doing so several times a week.

We suggested some actions that could be taken to reduce traffic speeds and increase pedestrian safety, and again different view points emerged between households with and without children. A majority of households with children would like the 20 mph zone extended, the introduction of more flashing speed signs, better designed junctions and traffic restrictions on Bollin Grove at school drop off and pick up times (probably reflecting their concerns about the safety of children getting around the village, especially to and from school). However, the support is considerably weaker for these measures from residents who do not have children. All sections of the population reject speed cameras and traffic calming measures. **The two working groups looking at traffic and paths/pavements will need to explore these issues in more detail as well as the responses for the provision of school buses.**

PATHS, PAVEMENTS & LIGHTING

We asked questions about pavements, road crossings, cycle paths, footpaths and a riverside park, and the majority wanted everything on offer. The highest “agreed” scores were for more information on the Parish’s footpaths and for a riverside park in the Bollin Valley. Households with children tended to be the most strongly in favour of all these options; older residents divided equally between those who wanted cycle paths and those who did not. Residents were also equally divided about increased street lighting. **The hundreds of verbatim answers attached to these questions will clarify the locations in which residents would like lighting, extended pavements, wider pavements, road crossings, cycle paths and footpaths; a task which the working group assigned to this topic will undertake.**

PUBLIC SERVICES

About 10% of us use the bus, and for those that do it is very important. On the whole, bus users are satisfied with the service, although the verbatim comments suggest that some would like to see an airport/Wilmslow route and that a more direct route to Macclesfield would be popular. 60% of respondents use the trains and here again it is an important service to those users and the satisfaction rate quite high. A preliminary look at the verbatim responses suggests that more people would use the train if the frequency was improved (especially at weekends) and if people felt safer after dark at the station. **A working group will be looking at transportation issues, and will explore suggestions made by bus and train users.**

By at least 3 to 1 we agree that black bins should be collected weekly; every two weeks is OK for green bins and paper/cardboard/glass. 89% “agree” or “strongly agree” that Macclesfield Borough Council should recycle plastic. 68% of residents have some level of concern about litter in the parish with only 28% “not at all concerned”. We will pass this information to Prestbury Parish Council and ask them to take up these matters with the Borough.

Although one key reason we like Prestbury is that it is “safe”, 23% are “very concerned” and 58% “somewhat concerned” about becoming a victim of crime here, with only 16% “not at all concerned”. Once we have completed our analysis of the verbatim comments about why people feel this way, we will discuss the concerns with local police and the Parish Council’s police liaison sub-committee.

Many of us think the school, post office, doctors/dentists and the Village Hall are all very important to the Parish.

The last question was very open-ended: “what else would you like to tell us?” 492 of you told us a lot! We are working through these comments to make sure that your ideas and views are taken into account.

The next step is to get our volunteers assigned to the following working groups and start to develop solutions wherever possible:

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & PARKING
PATHS, PAVEMENTS & CROSSINGS
TEENAGERS
SHOPS, BANKS, RESTURANTS & PUBS
MANAGED DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

SPORTS FACILITIES
TRAFFIC / TRANSPORT
VILLAGE GREEN & COMMUNITY EVENTS
COMMUNITY INFORMATION

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY!