

# HOUGH ON THE HILL, GELSTON & BRANDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

for all residents aged 16 and over

*February 2022*

## ***ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES***

### **BACKGROUND**

This survey/questionnaire was designed to assess residents' views about living in the Parish and whether the objectives of the existing 2015 Neighbourhood Plan were still in line with residents' wishes. Two paper copies of the survey, along with an accompanying leaflet explaining why the existing Neighbourhood Plan needs to be updated and setting out the process, were distributed to every household in the Parish. Where possible, the surveys were actually handed to residents and a verbal explanation given.

A period of 5 weeks was given for completion. Drop off addresses were available in each of the three settlements, and a sealed box was also made available in the porch of All Saints Church in Hough on the Hill.

The survey was also made available online (through the Parish Council website).

A 2nd leaflet drop was made to every household in the final two weeks reminding people of the closing date, and again giving the website link. A reminder about the Survey was also posted on the Nextdoor website group for Gelston, Hough on the Hill and Brandon.

### **WHO RESPONDED?**

A total of **113 responses** were received (39 paper copies and 74 online). This represents just over **one quarter of the population** of the Parish. It is perhaps worth noting that this response was substantially higher than that achieved during any stage of the previous Plan's preparation.

Location/spread of responses across our three settlements was as follows:

**Brandon: 26%      Gelston: 21%      Hough on the Hill: 53%**

Just over 50% of respondents were aged between 45-64yrs, 30% over 65yrs and 15% 25-44yrs.

27 respondents had lived here for less than 2yrs, 18 for between 2-10yrs, 27 for between 10-20yrs, 16 for between 20-30yrs, 14 for between 30-40yrs, and 9 for over 40 yrs.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The survey results provide strong support for the updated Neighbourhood Plan to focus on strengthened design guidance, and the potential designation of more Green Spaces. They also of course raise many issues that are outside the purview of planning policy, but which can be brought to the attention of the Parish Council, and other relevant authorities and organisations, for further consideration.

# ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

## 1 What do you like most about living within Hough on the Hill Parish?

Everyone answered this question and there was broad similarity of responses, with people placing high value on living in a quiet, peaceful, rural location. There was much appreciation of the countryside, of the open green spaces both within and beyond the villages, and many people also mentioned the friendly community. Here is a 'word cloud' of the most used words.



## 2 What do you least like about living here?

93 people mentioned dislikes, of which by far the most negative comments were about the state of the roads (potholes, no gritting etc) or speeding on roads. Also many people mentioned the lack of a local shop within the parish, and the lack of any public transport.

It is an awkward fact that whilst people don't want development, change, or for the villages to grow bigger, without new homes and an expanded population, services like shops and bus routes are unlikely to be achievable.

### 3 Do you agree that the Plan Objectives should remain the same?

Everyone, bar 2, responded to this question. There was broad overall support for our original Plan objectives, but with the most support for “Protecting green space and supporting nature conservation and biodiversity”. A few were less supported - eg, energy efficiency, economic development, and recreational opportunities. The percentages are as follows:

Objectives that were in the 2015 Neighbourhood Plan	Agree
Promoting sensitive development which protects and enriches the landscape and built setting of the Parish	86.49%
Prioritising local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth	83.78%
Protecting jobs, supporting sustainable economic development and local business	75.68%
Protecting green space, and supporting nature conservation and biodiversity	95.50%
Encouraging energy efficiency and, where appropriate, energy production from renewable and low carbon sources	72.97%
Improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy	72.07%
Seeking improvements to transport, utility infrastructure and digital connectivity	88.29%
Involving local people in an ongoing process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery	90.09%

### 4 Are there any objectives missing, or that should be removed or prioritised?

There were 41 responses to this question (discounting those that wanted no change) but most were to stress the importance of particular issues. These were the issues highlighted more than 1 person:

- Ecological footprint of new buildings/climate change/ renewable energy - 9 people
- Public transport & road safety - 7 people
- Digital connectivity - 6 people
- Street lights reduction: 2 people
- Protection Wood: 2 people

It is perhaps also worth pulling out two comments that highlight the tension between those who do not support development of any kind, and those who believe change and growth are necessary:

- Retaining the traditional character of the village should be overriding objective and development severely limited. Once a certain number of new houses are built the character is lost and ever more new houses are allowed as there is then less to be spoilt.
- The village must be allowed to grow, otherwise it will decline and as such facilities will decline as people move away from the area.

This tension is perhaps balanced by this comment focusing on the role of the Parish Council and, in particular, the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Promoting sensitive development and protecting green space should be prioritised as these fundamentally are what makes the parish desirable to live in. Involving local people in an ongoing process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery will be key in achieving any of these objectives.

## 5 Do you have any fears for the future of our settlements' tranquil, rural character over the next 20 years, or issues that could affect your future quality of life here?

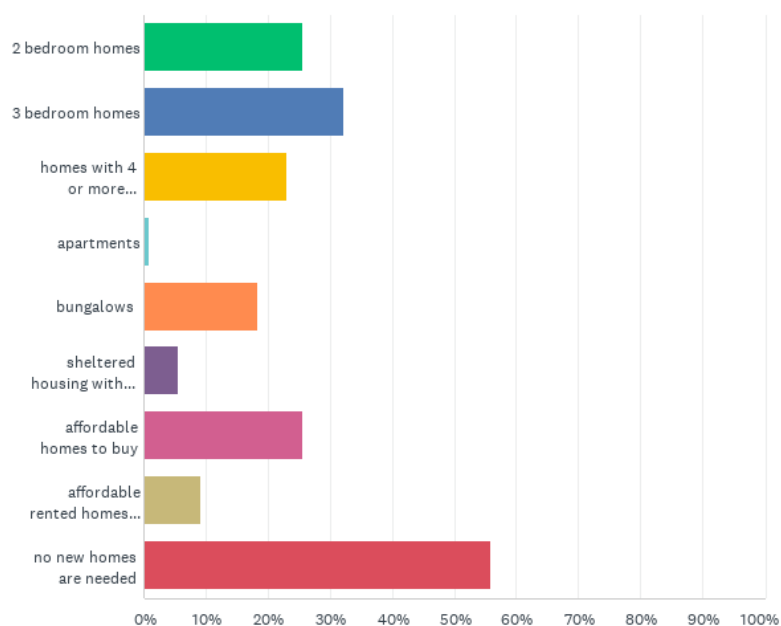
In all, 85 people said they have fears, and these were the most mentioned:

- 59 about development or insensitive development
- 12 about increased traffic
- 8 about loss of green space/countryside
- 7 about increased noise
- 4 about karting and/or shooting specifically
- 4 about sewage/infrastructure

## 6 What new homes are appropriate for our Parish?

Only one respondent didn't answer this question: the chart below shows responses:

Q6 What new homes are appropriate for our Parish over the next 20 years?



## 7 Please rate any concerns you have about the following types of development:

Only one respondent didn't answer this question: the chart below shows responses. The most concerns are about development in the open countryside (SP5) and development on the edges of our settlements (SP4), with slightly less concerns about infill development (SP3). There are far less concerns about conversions and extensions.

### Concerns about Types of Development

	1 = No Concerns	2 = Few Concerns	3 = Concerned	4 = Very Concerned	5 = Many Concerns
– Infill Development on land within our settlements (SP3)	12.73% 14	9.09% 10	15.45% 17	19.09% 21	43.64% 48
– Development on the edges of our settlements (SP4)	11.82% 13	6.36% 7	9.09% 10	16.36% 18	56.36% 62
– Development in the open countryside (SP5)	4.46% 5	5.36% 6	4.46% 5	5.36% 6	80.36% 90
– Conversions (eg barns, outbuildings)	36.94% 41	24.32% 27	12.61% 14	18.02% 20	8.11% 9
– Extensions	44.86% 48	22.43% 24	16.82% 18	9.35% 10	6.54% 7

There were also some comments made about other concerns:

- Mobile homes and caravan sites
- Developments that do not require planning permissions, e.g walls/fences/hedges. The replacement of a stone wall with a brick wall is not in-keeping with the built setting of the parish, however despite it being an objective it is not monitored / enforced
- Unsuitable building materials being utilised
- Development of renewable energy schemes like wind turbines or solar panel fields
- Uncharacteristic constructs
- To avoid stagnation the villages must be allowed to develop

## 8 For the above types of development, should they follow design guidance in keeping with our landscape, historic environment and building styles?

Only one respondent didn't answer this question. **109 answered yes**, and only **3 did not agree** that design guidance should be followed. This shows strong support for the work we are doing to produce robust design guidance as part of the new Neighbourhood Plan.

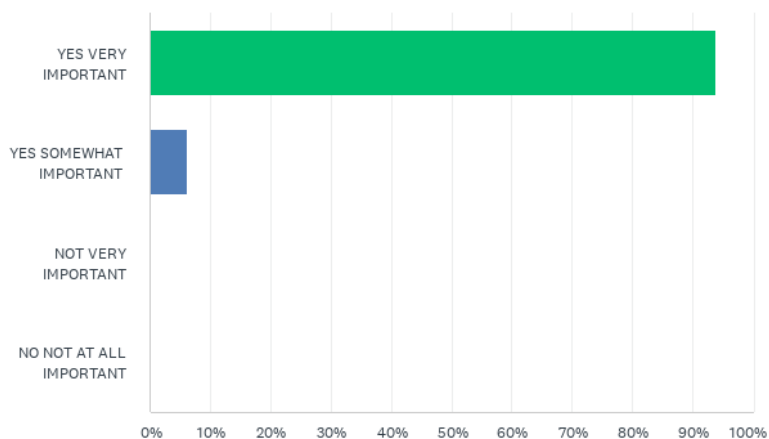
## 9 Do you feel safe on our roads, streets and public spaces?

Everyone answered this question. Some **60% said they do feel safe**, but **40% said they don't**. The reasons given for not feeling safe were predominantly to do with the state of the roads (potholes) or the speed of traffic (both along the roads and within the villages). People want lower speed limits and enforcement. The Parish Council is already discussing how best to approach the issue of our roads. A lot of people clearly feel very strongly that the situation is getting worse. The lack of gritting was also raised, as was the lack of pavements or poor state of pavements. One or two people were also concerned about dark areas without adequate streetlights.

## 10 Is the rural character of the parish important to you?

Everyone answered this question

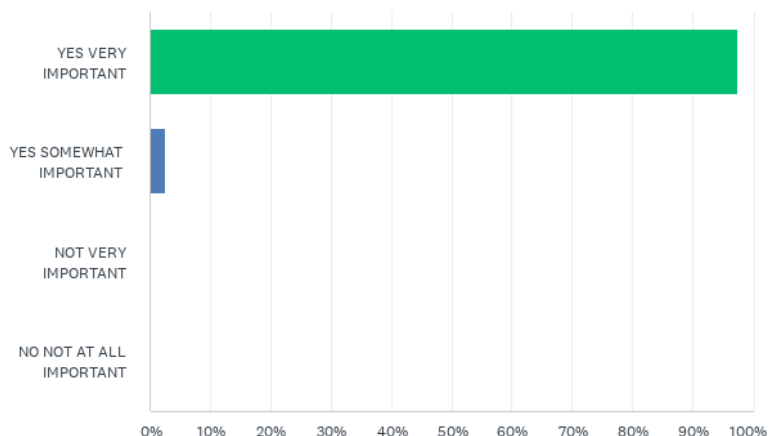
Q10 Is the rural character of the parish important to you?



## 11 Are the countryside and views important to you?

Everyone answered this question.

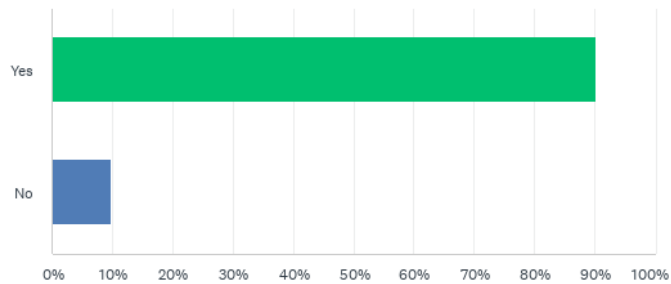
Q11 Are the countryside and views important to you?



## 12 Do you use local public footpaths?

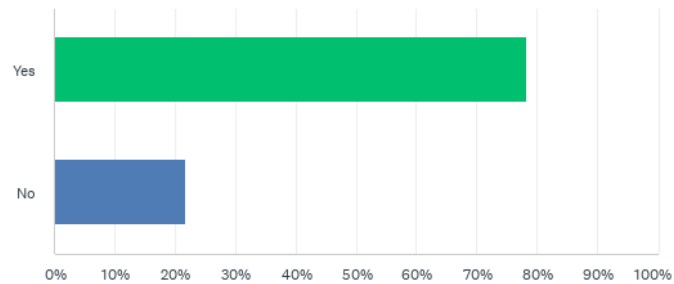
Everyone answered this question.

Q12 Do you use local public footpaths?



## 13 If yes, are the footpaths well-maintained/easy to walk

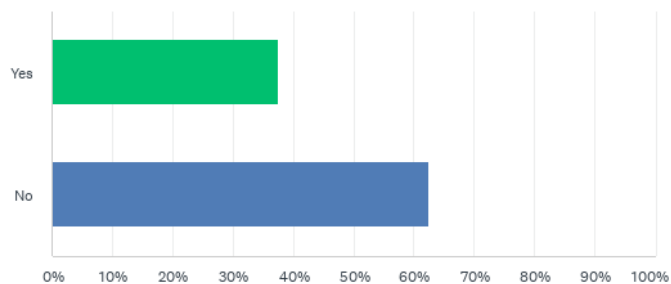
Q13 If yes above, are the footpaths well-maintained/easy to walk?



## 14 Are you bothered by noise from local sporting activities (including from those adjacent to our Parish boundary)?

Only one person did not answer this question.

Q14 Are you bothered by noise from local sporting activities (including from those adjacent to our Parish boundary)?



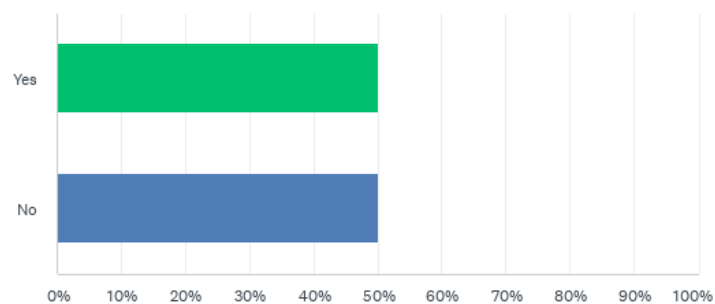
Examples of the bothersome local sporting activities were:

- Go-Karting
- Clay Shooting
- Shooting
- Race Tracks
- Quad Bikes

## 15 Do you believe that more could be done to support nature conservation, wildlife, or to improve biodiversity here?

106 people answered this question, and the responses are equally divided:

Q15 Do you believe that more could be done to support nature conservation, wildlife, or to improve biodiversity here?



The comments/suggestions made on this question mainly raised the following:

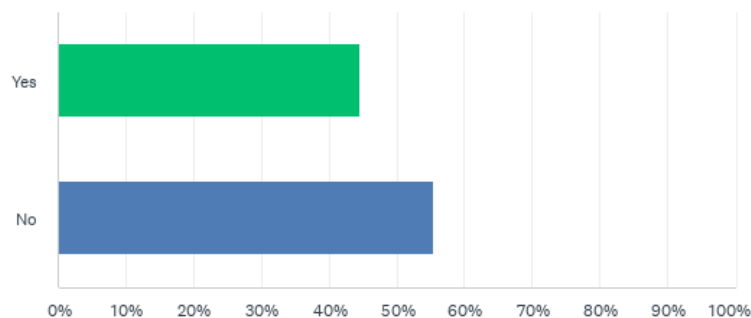
- Concerns about the cutting of verges and the loss of wildflowers
- Less/no pheasant shooting
- Concerns about tree and wood removal/loss
- More trees and hedgerows planted
- More ponds
- More bird/owl boxes
- Less cutting of village greens to allow wildflowers
- Nature trails/walks
- Light pollution to be avoided
- A couple would like to see the Hunt stopped
- A couple mentioned the good work already done by our farmers



## 16 Do you believe that this Parish should be doing more to tackle climate change?

101 people answered this question.

Q16 Do you believe that this Parish should be doing more to tackle climate change?



In the 36 comments received on this question there is an undercurrent of frustration that we are not, as a community, doing more about this issue. Below are a selection of the types of suggestions put forward:

- New builds - insulation and solar or heat pumps.
- Relax listing restrictions for renewable energy/insulation.
- Encourage solar PV and air-source heat pumps.
- Make it easier for houses to be more efficient, particularly the older ones
- Sharing recommendations of what is available and how it works for different types of houses.
- Make it easier to go eco (solar, ASHP, etc) without planning hurdles.
- Protecting and developing green spaces.
- Avoid increasing light pollution.
- Maybe we could all get together and discuss what we can all do as individual households; we have great skilled and knowledgeable people in our parish that could help and advise, so let's pool resources.
- This is a massive question I recommend a meeting every 3 months.
- Increased carbon sequestration would arise from increased tree planting in the Parish.
- I think allowing solar panels on roofs will help especially with current fuel prices
- Education and information for the Parish.
- External lighting on public buildings and private housing is very often intrusive in our rural settings. Turning them off will help in the fight against global warming.
- Changes to farming methods, using renewable energy
- Highlight Govt initiatives and grants
- A community wind turbine or solar park

## 17 Are there areas, important to you, that you would like to see designated as Green Spaces?

65 people commented on this question, although several just answered yes, or the 'whole area' or all existing green spaces between houses, and all the fields. Several people also mentioned the need to protect views. Specific locations suggested included:

- The Wilderness
- Bosom Hill
- Gelston Green and Pinfold
- Brandon Green
- The Priory Field
- Fields to both sides of Hough Road and road leading to Gelston
- Protection Wood
- Loveden Hill
- Mott & Bailey/Castle Hill
- Hough Manor kitchen gardens
- Field to west of Gelston Green overlooking the vale
- Drake Yard
- The paddocks sloping down New Hill below Church Farm Barns
- The Playing Field
- All fields adjacent to Dike Furlong Lane
- Fields either side of Lower Road, New and Brandon Road
- OS Landranger map references SK915 482, SK936 477, SK913 466, SK931 460
- All escarpments and ridges

A great deal of further work is required to identify eligible and appropriate locations for potential Green Space designation and consultants from AECOM will be working with us on this during the coming months. There will, of course, be further consultation, especially with landowners.

## 18 How do you rate your broadband speed?

110 people answered this question:

	Gelston	Brandon	Hough	Parish
<b>Excellent</b>	0	10	7	<b>15.45%</b>
<b>Usually good</b>	7	9	30	<b>42.73%</b>
<b>Sometimes poor</b>	6	7	12	<b>22.73%</b>
<b>Very poor</b>	10	1	10	<b>19.09%</b>

Broadband issues are consistently raised as very important to residents, and increasingly so. Over 22% of all respondents across the Parish report sometimes poor, or very poor broadband services, especially in Gelston and parts of Hough on the Hill. This remains a critical issue, especially given responses to the following question.

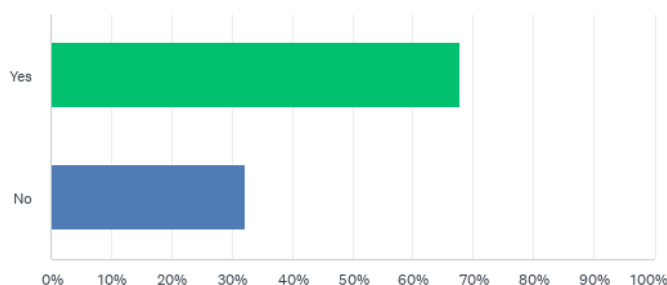
## 19 Do you rely on your internet for your work, or anticipate needing to do so in future?

All bar one person answered this question

67.86% (76 people) said YES

32.14% (36 people) said NO

Q19 Do you rely on your internet for your work, or anticipate needing to do so in future?



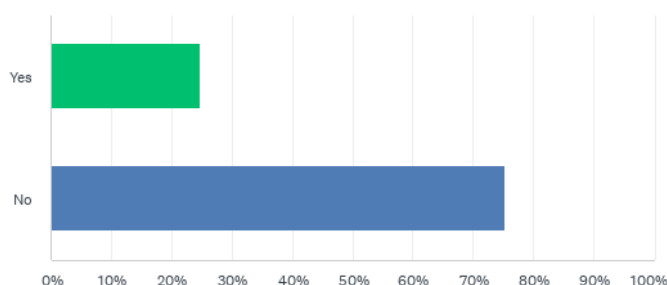
## 20 Do you think our Parish needs some allotment provision?

109 people answered this question

24.77% (27 people) said YES

75.23% (82 people) said NO

Q20 Do you think our Parish needs some allotment provision?



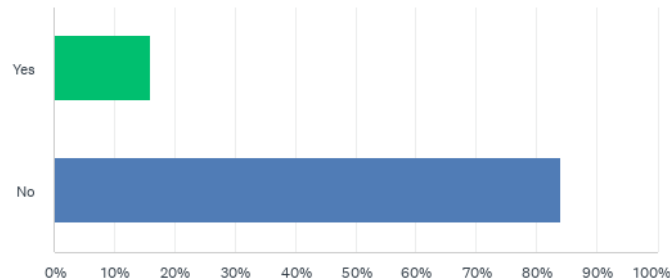
## 21 Do you think our Parish needs more recreational/sporting facilities?

106 people answered this question

16.04% (17 people) said YES

83.96% (89 people) said NO

Q21 Do you think our Parish needs more recreational/sporting facilities?



The types of new facilities mentioned in the comments include:

- Tennis Court
- Better use of Playing Field (Farmers Markets, Car Boot Sales, County Fairs & Shows)
- Cricket Pitch
- Skate Ramp
- Off-lead dog walking areas
- Improved Children's Play Area in Hough (or additional play areas in Brandon & Gelston)
- Village Hall/better use of church

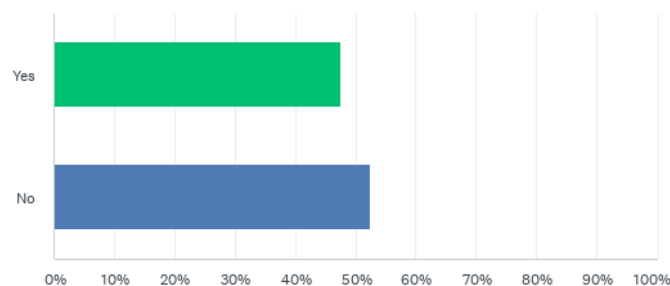
## 22 Do you think All Saints Church could be better used for wider community events?

103 people answered this question

47.57% (49 people) said YES

52.43% (54 people) said NO

Q22 Do you think All Saints Church could be better used for wider community events?



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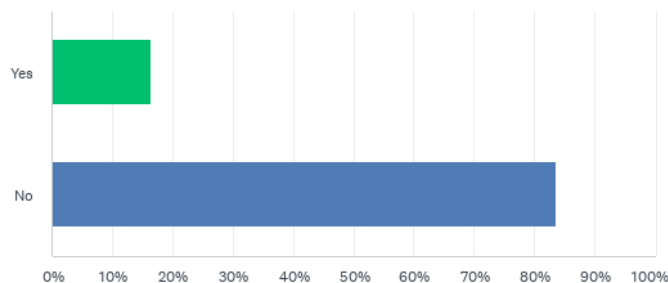
The responses indicate that approaching half of all respondents thought that better use could be made of the Church. 42 people commented on this question, and typical remarks include:

- I think they do a good job already
- Appeal to more age groups
- Publicity of any events that are on - I am not aware of any.
- Any use of our beautiful church to keep it relevant (not religious) would be very welcomed.
- Much has been done to try and encourage more use but to no avail.
- Depends on volunteers
- I enjoy going to church, think its a good place to interact.
- Ensuring community events are not just for a select group of people and involving the whole community Using digital platforms (eg Nextdoor) to notify the wider community as well as leafletting. Not everyone is aware of the Noticeboards/they may not pass it on foot.
- Could possibly be used, but lack of parking
- I think it already is practical and appealing, nobody thinks to use it
- More community events like films, live music
- Activities and groups for residents of all ages
- Construction of an inside space suitable for club meetings all year round.
- We don't have a community hall but the church has invested in space at the rear, and removable seats (or part of them) could make for a increased useful place.
- Current balance is about right, but concern this may drop as older residents become less involved.
- Being warmer in the evening may make evening classes/groups more comfortable.
- I think many people go to great efforts to make everyone welcome at the Church
- Take out the pews
- Can't hurt to have a ceilidh occasionally.
- Winter cinema nights, community gatherings
- Weekly exercise class eg yoga would be great.
- Is there a schedule of regular events?
- Improved access and external lighting. Online booking system. Comfy chairs.

### 23 Do you think we need more business premises in our Parish?

110 people answered this question. The majority answered NO (92 people).

Q23 Do you think we need more business premises in our Parish?



Most of the 20 comments on this question were to suggest a shop.

## 24 If you are in employment, do you work within the Parish?

75 people answered this question; those working from home and those working outside the Parish were evenly divided. Only 7 people answered that they work in the Parish.

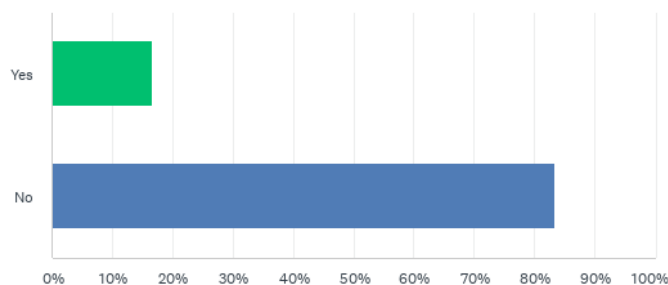
YES in the Parish but away from my home	9.33% 7
YES work from my home	45.33% 34
NO outside Parish	45.33% 34

## 25 Should we make improved provision to encourage tourism?

108 people answered this question (NB amended question number).

Most people (83.33%) answered NO. 18 people (16.67%) answered YES.

Q24 Should we make improved provision to encourage tourism?



Some typical suggestions to support tourism were:

- Make better use of the history of church, carvings, local history and historic assets.
- Small-scale diversification of rural businesses by the farm into holiday let/lodges should be encouraged to help support and keep local businesses economically viable.
- More interpretation boards/walking routes around the historic parts of our settlements

## 26 If there was ONE change you could make in the Parish, what would it be?

91 people had comments to make here, and not surprisingly there is strong correlation with the things people didn't like about living here. Issues that were mentioned by more than 1 person are:

- 12 said tackle speeding traffic (and a suggestion for Lower Rd to be 'No Through Rd')
- 10 said improve the roads/gritting
- 9 wanted more community spirit/social events/village hall/space in church
- 8 said a bus service

- 7 said no further development
- 6 said a shop
- 5 said improved sewage/drainage
- 3 said the Parish Council should be more ambitious or enable more involvement
- 3 said Fibre broadband
- 3 want the pub to be more of a pub
- 3 want improvements to footpaths/bridleways
- 2 mentioned street lights (white not orange/lower power)
- 2 want more residential and commercial development to be allowed
- 2 want improvements to pavements

## **27 Is there anything else you want to say to help guide the updating of the Neighbourhood Plan?**

Peoples' comments are reproduced in full as follows:

- Every village should be allowed to evolve in a natural controlled way.
- More effort to ensure the roads are improved - maintenance. Also paths (roadside) cleared of leaves/mud - become slippery.
- No need for development or conversions.
- Involve the people in the village much more
- Please keep this beautiful area of our county and country as idyllic as it already is.
- Changes to the area should be of benefit to the majority and discreet.
- People choose to live in Hough specifically to seek the rural tranquility that it offers, and do not therefore need development or increased traffic. Protection of this ancient and rural village should be prioritised, prevent development in any green areas within and surrounding the village other than restricted changes to existing properties in the existing nature and style of the buildings. The small roads will not support further development.
- We live in a lovely place and while we have to move with the times, I hope we keep the special atmosphere Hough Parish offers, for many years
- I truly hope that no housing development will be allowed in this historical area
- Hough on the Hill is a special village, residents moved to live here for all that it offers. I would not want to see it expand with more housing other than a handful of infill properties that are in keeping with the neighbourhood.
- The lack of facilities, homes, footpaths, lack of transport and even poor connectivity are all part of its charm and need to be cherished and not destroyed for the sake of modernisation/so called improvement.
- Crime is a slight concern I have, after hearing of a few break-ins and a van being stolen, maybe something like a local next door neighbour group for Hough, Brandon, and Gelston.
- Do not agree with the "smaller village" status of Hough on the Hill. A pub should not mean that development should take place. If there were shops, on a bus route, doctors surgery, maybe, but not a pub. How does that equate to the village being suitable for development?
- We should not be designated a "smaller village" - we have virtually no services (which is nice actually), but this means we should not be subject to SP3, SP4, SP5
- Greater voluntary effort. For example the occasional emptying of the well to stop that hole appearing in the road on high road.
- Develop urban brownfield sites before housing developments in the rural green belt, we need space for crops and livestock.
- Please use whatever means are to hand to allow Hough to stay the way it is, villages like ours are becoming a rarity
- Keep rural villages distinct and not full of modern housing. Is a pub that is open 24 hours a week really a reason to designate Hough a sustainable village? Who will buy it as a public house when the current owners retire?

- Retain the tranquility of the village and if that is not possible, place as many barriers as possible to prevent a large building programs.
- For a village to create a thriving community it must be a place of wealth creation, enjoyable outside space, good communications and transport.
- Many miles from any source of employment, money for affordable housing should be spent in towns with jobs and transport links.
- Horses to be directed off the highway when defacating onto grass verge.
- Clearly defined village boundaries to stop extra/unnecessary building
- I think that most of the villages lack the capacity for expansion unless serious thought is put into how their amenities are developed.
- Involve the people in the village much more
- The Neighbourhood Plan needs to be clearly defined so that it is difficult to override and/or abuse.
- Everyone should be included and I doubt that this is the case.
- Whilst change and improvement is important for the parish, it is important to reflect on what makes the parish so desirable to live, and what therefore should not change. Care should be taken when making plans to achieve one objective whilst failing on another. Eg, building wind turbines for achieving more renewable energy production then is not in keeping with the local parish built setting and landscape.
- Protect this lovely area
- Development in this parish, where a car is necessary for the majority of journeys is not environmentally sensitive - it is not sustainable.
- SKDC planning enforcement need to ensure that residential development is actually in keeping with existing buildings. Too many times original features are either removed, masked or not sympathetically melded into the final development, regardless of conditions set when planning consent is given.
- Above all, resist the growth of 'affordable housing' which is great in theory but useless if the intended occupants have no local employment or transport to support their lifestyle. Unemployed reliant on benefits would be bored and as miserable as sin living here.
- It should not be created as a tool for NIMBYs. It should be remembered that a huge amount of housing stock in the parish has been built within living memory and we need to continue to allow careful expansion, not just slamming the door on all development outside the larger villages.
- Having lived in this parish for over 30 years I am bitterly disappointed that there has been static policy for a considerable time and there is no appetite for sensible growth. There is room to share!

(NB A longer written comment was also received, largely about the restoration/conversion of existing buildings and, for infill new builds, the critical nature of building materials.)

**THE PARISH COUNCIL AND  
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING COMMITTEE  
ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO MADE TIME  
TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY,  
AND FOR ALL THE THOUGHTFUL COMMENTS  
AND VIEWS PUT FORWARD**