Results and Analysis of Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire ‘Our Environment’ results

# Introduction

A total of 348 people completed the ‘Our Environment’ section of the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. The 15 questions in this section were divided into three groups, Environmental Sustainability (including climate change), Natural Environment and Built Environment. Three questions in each area were required to use a 1 to 5 Likert scale, 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and 5 indicating strong agreement. These questions allow a scored average to use as an index for comparison across the questions; the higher the index the higher the high priority. Other questions were formulated to gather more specific responses within a subject area. The questions were generated through consultation with the community environmental group, by a leaflet survey distributed to all households in the parish in June/July 2013 and comments posted at a ‘Have your say’ event held in the Parish Hall in January 2014. Though there was no obligation to respond to all ‘questions’, the vast majority of people did so.

# Quantitative data

## Overview

Dealing with the quantitative data first. As an overview the average scores of each question form an index of priority. The average across all questions was 4.25. The index numbers for all questions are detailed here. The Sustainability questions (green) have a lower than average index, whereas the natural environment (amber) and the Built Environment questions (grey) have higher than average indexes indication a higher priority for the community. The local impact of climate change is of least concern to the community while the retention of green spaces is the highest priority of respondents.

## Sustainability Questions

1. Do you feel the Neighbourhood Plan should recognise the importance of sustainable development in future planning within the community?

Index 3.81.

The results indicate the community put a high importance on sustainable development.

1. How concerned are you that climate change will impact the community?

Index 3.25.

Results indicated a moderate concern to about the impact of local climate change impact. The responses were broadly equal with a slight bias toward the high level of concern.

1. What type of local energy development do you feel the Neighbourhood Plan should support? This question was split into two areas; renewables and conventional energy, each further divided into types. The renewable question was further divided to assess the communities view of the potential scale of renewable energy defined as domestic (within the home) and commercial schemes.

Domestic solar energy was very well supported to a lesser degree as was solar commercial. Wind was not a popular and had a significant negative response. Biomass was reasonably well supported though there was a significant number of “don’t know” which may indicate a lack of understanding of this type of renewable. The average responses across the range of renewables indicated only moderate support for renewable, with a noticeable proportion of resistance and lack of understanding.

Response to support for conventional energies was different between the established gas/oil energy and the potentially new fossil fuel derived from hydraulic fracking. Support for established fossil fuels was moderate and resistance was only slightly less. The view of fracking was significantly different with clear resistance to this new technology.

Taken together the response can be seen to indicate that the community has a mixed view on the provision of energy on a local scale. With the exception of solar domestic energy there is no overwhelming support for any either renewable or conventional local energy provision.

1. What kind of local pollution is your greatest concern?

The greatest concern of the community in term of pollution is litter. Comments indicate that this this may include fly tipping and dog mess. Noise is the second pollution concern and here comments indicate this relates mainly to traffic noise.

Dog dirt is commented on as a concern on many responses.

1. How important do you feel it is that the Neighbourhood Plan should recognise the need for the community to reduce its carbon footprint?

Index 3.66.

The response to this question indicates that there is a broad acceptance of the need to reduce the communities Carbon footprint.

## Natural Environment Questions

1. How would you prioritise the protection of local habitats, biodiversity and wildlife?

Index 4.64.

The responses indicated a very high priority should be given to protecting local habitats, biodiversity and wildlife.

1. How confident are you that the local nature environment and retention of wildlife corridors are protected?

Index 2.69.

The response to this question seems to indicate that there is only a moderate level of confidence that the local natural environment is protected.

1. How important is it for you to protect the local agricultural environment from urban development?

Index 4.6

The response to this question indicates that the protection of the local agricultural environment is a high priority for the local community.

1. How important is it to improve flooding defences?

Index 4.46.

Flooding had a very high level of comments; this is reflected in the responses which put flooding defences as very high concern to the community.

1. Which two aspects of the local natural environment are of most important to you?

This question seeks to identify what benefit the natural environment the community value. The natural athletic beauty and tranquillity had the highest importance. The response also recognised the wider functional benefit the natural environment offers.

The remaining four areas scored below 3.0, indicating that they were of less importance to the people of Westbourne. These were:

## Built Environment Questions

1. How important is the historic fabric of the Neighbourhood Plan area to you?

Index. 4.53

The response indicates that the community puts high value on historical fabric of the village.

1. How important is it that the character of the area is not affected by future development?

Index. 4.62

The response indicates that the community puts the very highest value on retention of the village’s character and feel it is important that this is not affected by future developments.

1. Do you feel that the Village conservation area should be reviewed?

A total of 44% of respondent to this question feel the village conservation should be reviewed. There are a number of comments regarding this question which give a wider understanding of this response.

1. How important is the retention and improvement of local green spaces?

Index. 4.75.

There is a very strong indication that the community wish to retain the green spaces within the community. This may conflict with other wishes such as a demand for more parking.

1. Which two aspects of the local built environment are of most benefit or value to you?

This question seeks to identify the aspects of the local built environment the community value. The responses identify the rural charm and peace of the village as the most highly valued element village. Also highly valued are the shops and services within the village.

In summary the responses indicate that the two areas that concern the community the most are the retention of rural character and heritage of the village and the protection of the natural environment surrounding the settlement areas. There is an indication that there are concerns regarding sustainability this perhaps highest were the issue has local context, such as resistance to fracking.

## Qualitative data

Comments were invited on each area of the environmental questions. A total of 82 comments are included in appendix 1. Where there were a group of comments relating to one issue notes are details below by issue.

1. Agriculture. Two comment each supportive of protecting the local agricultural environment.

1. Carbon footprint. There were three comments on this subject; two of which express concern for the future and a third which did not see this as a local issue. Though small it may be indicative of the quantitative data.
2. Climate Change. Two comments indicate a sceptical view of climate change. A third comment highlighted the link between flooding and climate change, acknowledging a local context.
3. Conservation area. There were a number of comments supporting the conservation areas expansion. There were several criticism of the phrasing of the question and two which indicated a relaxation of the conservation area. Taken with the data there is clear indication that consideration should be given to reviewing the conservation area. It should however be acknowledge that there is no rational to do so in terms of what in addition need to be protected.
4. Energy (Local). There were a number of comments made against both fracking and wind energy within the local area. This view was reflected in the data and could be view as an further indication for the protection of the rural natural environment.
5. Flooding defences. There were a number of comments made about flooding. Most did not highlight flooding defences as the solution to local flooding. Solutions offered included not building on flood plans and maintenance of watercourses.
6. Pollution. Most comment on pollution related to dog mess, litter was also mentioned. Most other comment related to traffic pollution, noise and air.
7. Sustainability. Four comments were made in regard to sustainable development. Two of which did not accept the concept.

In summary the comments did not generally address any issue with any significant focus on a given issue. Some individual comments gave a good indication of feeling which may give an indication the rational of the quantitative data. It is clear that as expected in a local survey all issues regardless of the wider context are viewed locally. Nothing perhaps indicates this more than the understandable concern over dog mess which received more comments that climate changing pollution and its wider impacts.

## Conclusions and Implications for NP Policy

Still to come.

**Appendix**

**Respondents’ comments**

*In order to retain integrity comments are typed as seen and have not been amended.*

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| **Comment** | **Issue** |
| *Just leave our country side as it is please.* | Agriculture |
| *Agriculture activities need to be retained in the environs.* | Agriculture |
| *Wouldn’t it be amazing if Westbourne could work towards being Carbon neutral? We need to protect the environment for when my daughter grows up.* | Carbon Footprint |
| *The proposal to reduce carbon footprint is great in principle but will have a minimal effect until the industrial nations of china and India recognise their responsibilities.* | Carbon Footprint |
| *Given the size of the population and types of business locally carbon foot print is a big concern.* | Carbon Footprint |
| *The village should be protected from turning into a sprawl and having no boundaries. It will lose its identity as a village if any more large builds happen. The footpaths and rural areas are maintained really well – please keep it that way.* | Character |
| *Westbourne has the benefit of being a picturesque village; beautiful walks into the countryside can be reached from the door step as well as shops, doctors and entertainment. Why change what is not broken.* | Character |
| *You will not stop climate change check history records.* | Climate Change |
| *The climate has always changed and will continue to change whatever man does or does not do.* | Climate Change |
| *Climate change impact on Flooding is a big concern to us* | Climate Change |
| *The conservation area should include all within in the blue area* | Conservation area |
| *Conservation area needs to be enlarged.* | Conservation area |
| *Conservation area. Is a silly question, increase or decrease>* | Conservation area |
| *Enlarge the conservation area.* | Conservation area |
| *Stronger controls should be enforced within the conservation area. Very little is done to protect it. Listed building consent is required but conservation consent is not.* | Conservation area |
| *Difficult to read the map as to the exact roads included.* | Conservation area |
| *I cannot understand how a conservation village prevents existing buildings from major change to retain the history and charm, yet hundreds of box homes can be considered in keeping with the environment around it.* | Conservation area |
| *To see if more protection is needed – conservation area* | Conservation area |
| *The conservation area should be expanded to cover the whole village or is it now a village with a conservation area within a town.* | Conservation area |
| *The village wouldn’t be destroyed if someone wanted to make tasteful changes to a house. E.g. Thatch to tiles. Progress can still happen and look nice.* | Conservation area |
| *Conservation Area should be larger’* | Conservation area |
| *Already breaks in the hedges with new houses. Ref wildlife corridors.* | Corridors |
| *The village is already being affected by new developments in the surrounding area in an adverse manner – small and sensible development (proportionate) must be prioritised.* | Development |
| *Build new homes but in the style of the existing village not the box cheap housing that in 10 years look awful.* | Development |
| *Fracking would destroy the current natural environment and potentially the water table. Cannot be emphasized enough this is not a good idea.* | Energy |
| *Fracking absolutely no.* | Energy |
| *We don’t believe in fracking as it’s bound to have a knock on effects. The best ways forward is renewable energy and make it easy for residents to have this on a domestic scale.* | Energy |
| *Provided there are proper planning controls or subsequent policies fracking and gas/oil shouldn’t be excluded. Solar is practical with landscape protection.* | Energy |
| *I am very concerned that payments for harmful energy development like fracking will the wishes of the residents and that development of green spaces that provide habitat for wild will disappear and so change the look of the villages like Westbourne to residents who want peace and tranquillity and access to nature after a long day at work.* | Energy |
| *The use of farm land for wind and biomass would be an economic waste of a fine agricultural resource.* | Energy |
| *I feel very strongly that energy from wind power should not be supported; it is inefficient, nosy and expensive.* | Energy |
| *Solar panels are unsightly and can ruin the look of character houses and feel of the village. Turbines are unsightly and noisy.* | Energy |
| *When renewables can be proved to produce enough energy without scaring all the landscape. And the creating of the means to produce the xxxxx? for said renewables which at the moment produces as much greenhouse gasses.* | Energy |
| *I don’t think it’s very productive to expect individuals to spend a lot on, for instant, insulation. Something everyone can do is much better, like the litter pick is better.* | Energy |
| *Essential that sustainable (wind/solar) is developed in parallel with primary ?????? – of which Nuclear is obviously the best – so there is always something available.* | Energy |
| *Wind, not feasible here insufficient wind.* | Energy |
| *Issue – solar panels is difficult if retaining village character of old buildings.* | Energy |
| *Flood defences schemes need to be implemented to enhance existing schemes and not pass on the problem further downstream – so to speak.* | Flooding |
| *Flooding’, Ref OE – ‘depends on extent and location’* | Flooding |
| *Maintain the river Ems banks. When we flooded it came from behind the school (flooded where they have not built). Who checks the banks? The mill house is up for sale, will new owners look after the lock gates? We need our shops they make our village.* | Flooding |
| *As recent sustained periods of rain have demonstrated surface water is not able to drain away fast enough. In particular relief at watersmeet is critically needed.* | Flooding |
| *At this moment in time the sewage system cannot cope with the housing development we have had, e.g. Edgell Road manhole cover sewage rising after flooding.* | Flooding |
| *Flood defences are of limited value if landowners fail to maintain watercourses and ditches.* | Flooding |
| *I hate seeing water streaming into the sea. We ought to create a reservoir within the parish, store the water and not allow FREE rain water to drain off our land, such a waste of resources.* | Flooding |
| *With 2 rivers at the rear of my property and the fact that my late husband and I kept our stream cleans. At the age 0f 82 would it be possible to receive some help? Spring Meadows, King St.* | Flooding |
| *The best way defend against flooding is not to build on flood plains. Alas it is too late in this village for that.* | Flooding |
| *Improving flood defence can only be a short term goal as sea levels continue to rise. Otherwise I would say “high”.* | Flooding |
| *Flood defences for exiting areas ( but we don’t seem t bad) future developments should be built where flooding is not likely.* | Flooding |
| *Flooding! – ref climate change* | Flooding |
| *All the pollution points are important. Sustainably development in my view, includes keeping and using field for agriculture, horticulture and woodlands. We need to keep the means to feed future generations. I have ticked 5 but all are important both Natural and built environment.* | General |
| *Important that Westbourne retains its charm and native beauty and that we protect our wildlife for the future generations. But must also plan to prevent flooding.* | General |
| *Local green spaces, depends whether you mean countryside or urban style parks.* | Green Space |
| *Natural environment should be the highest priority* | Nature |
| *QN5. Having identified more than 5 which are important I feel that most are relevant. The same applies to QB5* | Other |
| *No more comments just keep it clean for us to breathe fresh air in.* | Pollution |
| *Dogs and their owner!!!!* | Pollution |
| *Dog* | Pollution |
| *Particularly dog shit* | Pollution |
| *The amount of dog mess is a kind of local pollution that should cause great concern.* | Pollution |
| *Dog poo* | Pollution |
| *We need more waste bins and dog waste with bags if needed.* | Pollution |
| *Climate Change and Flooding! Dog Poo’* | Pollution |
| *Lighting in North Street is too bright outside my bedroom window. It is imposing and affecting my sleep.* | Pollution |
| *CDC has a good recycling system. Hambrook tip is essential for residents. Fly tipping north of river Street and commonside is a persistent problem.* | Pollution |
| *Litter is a major problem in Westbourne* | Pollution |
| *There is too much fly tipping in the area; we have Marpit Lane so there is no excuse for such anti-social action.* | Pollution |
| *Where have all the bins gone* | Pollution |
| *Aircraft noise pollution* | Pollution |
| *Traffic!!!* | Pollution |
| *We need to reduce the amount of cars by improving public transport. A reward scheme could be put in place to encourage this.*  | Pollution |
| *No development of pxxxxx should be allowed to increase traffic pollution.* | Pollution |
| *The worst pollution in the village is not referred to in the question above but questionably is the proliferation of parked cars in every available space on and off the highway. If we don’t cure that we have a blighted village.* | Pollution |
| *Noise – Traffic noise in particular.* | Pollution |
| *Sewage is currently a problem is anything being done about it?* | Pollution |
| *Improve public transport, community orchard, garden more sourcing real food.* | Sustainability |
| *I need information before I answer these things. Needs of future generation can’t be known.* | Sustainability |
| *No more development* | Sustainability |
| *Sustainable development is a contradiction. All development is unsustainable unless the development is continued forever; this village is already overdeveloped which is why every service is under strain.* | Sustainability |
| *The tow path alongside the Ems tributary is a public footpath; as such dogs should be on leads. Several years ago there was a colony of water voles which have been wiped out mainly by people encouraging their dogs into the stream. Footpath signs should be put up. Similarly horses are not allowed on the footpath again residents are above the law.* | Wildlife |
| *The environment is being damaged by development of the wrong kind i.e. little boxes with no gardens for encouraging wildlife* | Wildlife |
| *More open spaces should be protected within the village, planting more trees such as fruit trees to encourage nature such as insects bees etc..* | Wildlife |