



The future of Saxmundham – the voice of our residents

Report on the results of the town household survey 2019

By Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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“Living in Saxmundham for the years I have seen changes many shops long gone, people’s faces you come to know, sadly died. It is the people who make Saxmundham, without them no town would exist!”

I love living in Sax. It is a great town. However, the station and high st are a little run down at present and with plans for expanding population this is the perfect opportunity for the local plan and community to embrace serious positive environmental changes to improve town and community”.

Introduction

By Jeremy Smith, Chair of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, June 2020

In June 2019, the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group organised a Household Survey questionnaire, to find out the views of the residents of Saxmundham on a number of issues that are important for our town’s future.

A team of volunteers hand-delivered the survey forms to every dwelling in town (to the best of our ability). In total, we delivered around 2,200 forms, each with a paid-for return envelope. Each form allowed for up to 4 residents to answer.

Over the following month, we received back around 550 forms, which had been completed by almost exactly 1,000 residents. (Not everyone answered all questions, of course). This represents a return of almost exactly 25%, which we feel is a good level for this type of town-wide initiative.

On behalf of the Steering Group, I would like to thank everyone who completed the questionnaire for their time and interest. Your answers have indeed helped to highlight the views of our residents on many different themes. And these views will strongly help us to shape the policies and proposals that will go into the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan. These cover issues like the future of housing in the town, the community facilities Saxmundham needs, transport and movement, our local economy, and the future of the town centre.

A Neighbourhood Plan can set very local planning policies, provided these do not clash with those set by other levels of government (central government, and the District Council’s Local Plan).

A Neighbourhood Plan can only come into operation if approved by a majority voting in a local referendum. Once approved, it also means that our town can benefit from a higher share of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) paid by developers for future housing development within our boundaries. This ‘levy’ is used to provide new physical or social infrastructure for our community.

So once again, our thanks to all of you who completed the questionnaire and gave us your views on all these issues. You have truly helped us in our task of shaping policies that will help make – and continue to make - Saxmundham a successful and attractive place for us all.

Finally, I need to apologize for our delay in publishing this report. We had so many answers to read and analyse that it took a lot of work to put together. It was close to completion in early March, but during the coronavirus lockdown, further work on it stopped. However, I am confident the results remain largely valid, as our town comes back to life once more, and together we look to the future.

Summary of some key results

Those who responded

990 local residents returned the completed questionnaire, a response rate of 25%. The gender and age balance of those responding reflected the population quite well, with a slight over-representation of older residents.

Future housing growth

Asked how much Saxmundham should grow over the coming 18 years, looking at future needs for housing, 950 people responded as follows:

- 13% supported an increase of 800 or more new homes,
- 16% supported 500-600,
- 34% favoured 200-300,
- while 33% wanted no increase in housing.

New housing – where to be located?

If the District Council's Local Plan proposal for 800+ new dwellings is to go ahead:

- just 8% of respondents agreed with the District Council's original proposal to site the new housing to the South of the town including on The Layers, i.e. on both sides of the railway,
- 18% supported the plan to build all to the South of the town, but only on the west side of the railway (up to the A12 by-pass).
- 35% thought all new housing development should be to the East (up Church Hill),
- 20% supported a division of new housing between East and South (to west of railway)

What types of new housing?

53% thought the share of affordable housing (for rent or ownership) should be in the range 10 to 25%, 47% thought the 'affordable' share should be over 25%.

73% of respondents supported owner-occupied houses as a priority, with 41% for social housing. Shared ownership homes and sheltered housing each had the support of around one third.

New Community facilities

Asked which types they favoured, the top priority specified was

- new medical facilities (824 respondents), followed by
- children's play areas (399),
- indoor sports centre (395),
- swimming pool (382),
- entertainment / performance centre (355),
- gym (320),
- cinema (269), and
- allotments (267).

Environmental issues for new housing developments:

The top environmental priorities identified were:

- Adequate off-road parking (backed by 806)
- Good quality cycle and pedestrian access to town (627)
- Eco-friendly and efficient design & construction (616)

Town Centre & High Street

Asked whether the High Street would benefit from a set of changes (up to 3 to be chosen), 1,836 answers were given by 915 respondents. The preferences expressed were:

- Additional parking facilities in/near town centre (cited by 461)
- Reduce speed limit (310)
- Pedestrianisation (306)
- Widening footways (278)
- Priority for pedestrians (233)
- Traffic control of narrowest part of High Street (141)
- None of these (101)

Saxmundham Market

Asked how the market might be made more successful, 857 respondents gave 1,700 preferences. The favoured options were as follows:

- Change the nature of the market, e.g. farmer's market, flea market (393)
- Improve publicity & marketing (366)
- Change market day to Fri, Sat or Sunday (353)
- Change venue e.g. to Fromus Square (331)

The wider Town Centre and Station area

Asked if the wider Town Centre and Station area would be improved by any of five options, 844 respondents expressed 1,731 preferences:

- Development of area round the station, including new business and employment opportunities (707)
- Improvements to Station Approach for cyclists & pedestrians (404)
- Improvements to cycle and pedestrian links to town centre (340)
- Designed signage at key points to direct to facilities & points of interest (280)

Transport and mobility in and around Saxmundham

405 respondents said they regularly use train services to and from Saxmundham (486 did not). 130 said they regularly use bus services (671 did not)

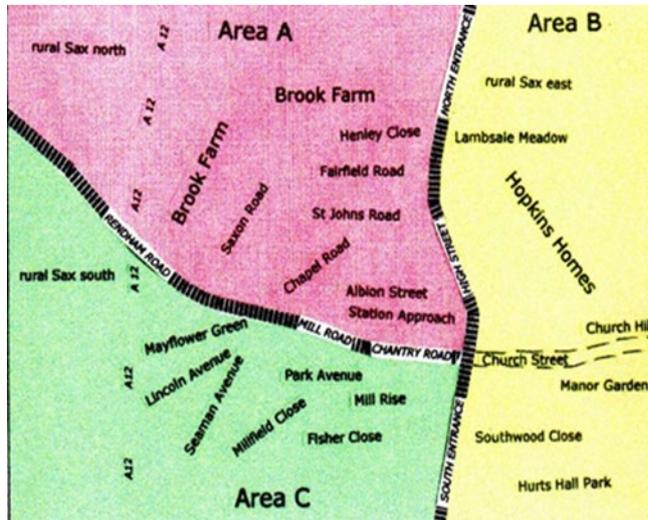
Of the train users, 66% said they were mainly satisfied with the local East Suffolk service, 34% that they were not. The main reasons for dissatisfaction were: frequency and timing; cost; lack of dependability.

Of bus users, 44% were mainly satisfied, 56% not. The main reasons for dissatisfaction were: frequency and timing; it doesn't get me where I want to go.

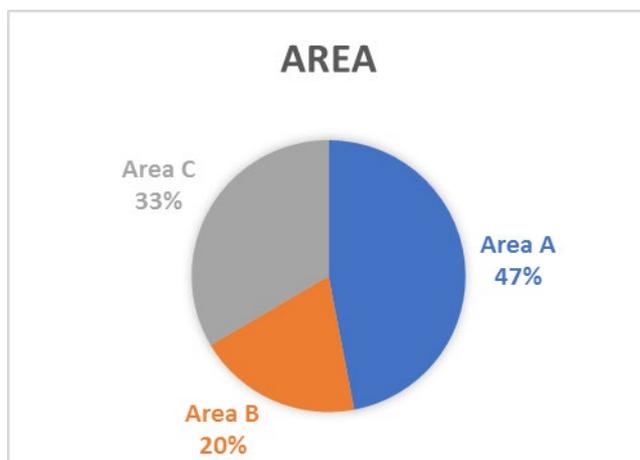
PART A – Who completed the questionnaire

Where people live

We asked people to say in which part of the town they lived, to help ensure we got a reasonable balance of the different bits of our town. For this purpose, we showed a map with 3 areas:



Of the 990 respondents, almost half (472) came from Area A (broadly, the Brook Farm Estate and nearby), one fifth (196) from Area B to the east (mainly, the Hopkins Homes area), and the final third (336) from Area C to the south of the Rendham Road.



We consider that this represents a reasonable 'spread' across the main residential areas.

Gender of respondents

957 people answered this question. 428 (45%) were Male, 528 Female (55%), and one 'non-binary'. This is very close to the actual gender balance within the Saxmundham area population.

Age of respondents

978 people responded to this question. Of these,

- 117 (or 12%) were under 26 years,
- 158 (16%) were between 26 and 45,
- 346 (35%) were 46 to 64, and
- 357 (37%) were 66 years or more.

By way of comparison, the official 2018 population figures for the Saxmundham ward for the District Council (which included Benhall and Kelsale as well as Saxmundham) for those over 15 years show:

- 10% for the 15-24 age group
- 23% for the 25-44 age group,
- 33% for the 45-64 age group, and
- 32% for the 65+ age group.

(Source: Office for National Statistics [via Suffolk Observatory website](#))

Work and education status of respondents

990 people responded to this question. Of these, 434 (44%) were employed or self-employed, 89 (9%) in education or training, and 427 (43%) were retired or not seeking work.

Employed	Self employed	In education or training	Unemployed	Not seeking paid work	Retired	Other	Total responses
342	92	89	14	19	408	26	990
35%	9%	9%	1%	2%	41%	3%	100%

Housing of respondents

980 answered this question. Of these 800 (82%) lived in owner-occupied private housing.

Owner occupied	Privately rented	Rented from a housing association or local authority	Other	Total responses
800	71	98	11	980
82%	7%	10%	1%	100%

Households with children aged 16 years or under

985 people answered this question. Around one quarter (237) of respondents were from a household with children. 748 (76%) were in households with no children.

Of those households with children, 90% had one or two children.

1 child	2 children	3 children	4 or more children	Total responses
111	105	19	6	241
46%	44%	8%	2%	100%

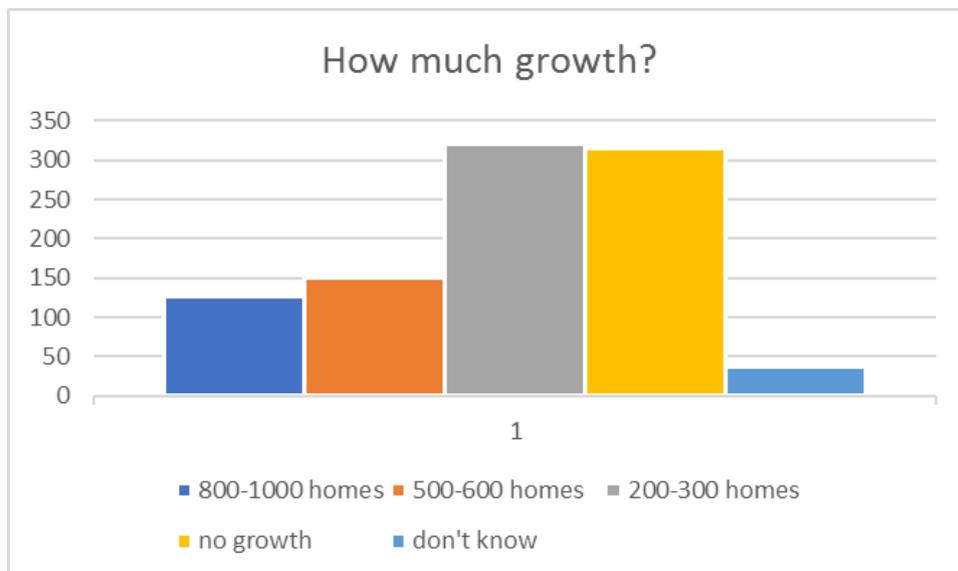


PART B – Future housing development in and around Saxmundham.

B1: In general terms, looking at future local and east Suffolk needs for housing, by how much – if at all – do you think Saxmundham should grow?

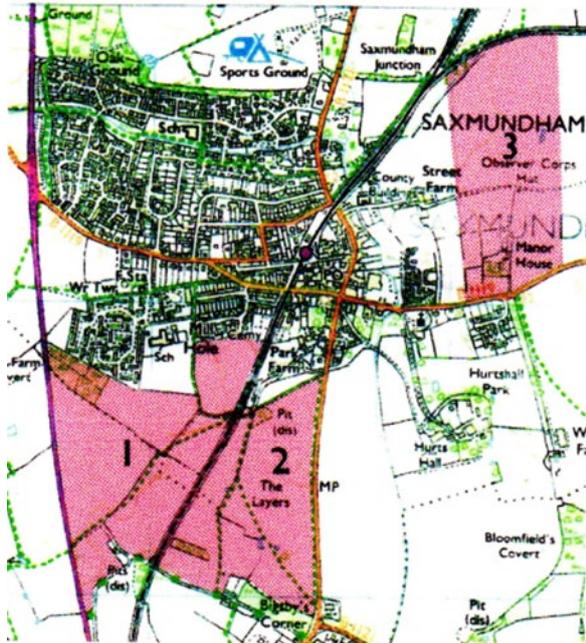
950 people answered this question. In general terms, about one third want the town to grow no further over the coming 18 years, one third think the town should grow 'just a little' (around 200-300), and just under one third (13% + 16%) support growth of 500 homes or more. Only 13% support the scale of growth of new housing proposed in the draft Local Plan (800+).

	800-1000 homes	500-600 homes	200-300 homes	No growth	Don't know	Total responses
Number	126	151	321	314	38	950
Percentage	13	16	34	33	4	100



B2. If the current proposal that Saxmundham should grow by over 800 new dwellings goes ahead, where do you think they should mainly be located?

895 people answered this question. Three numbered sites on a map were offered as choices:

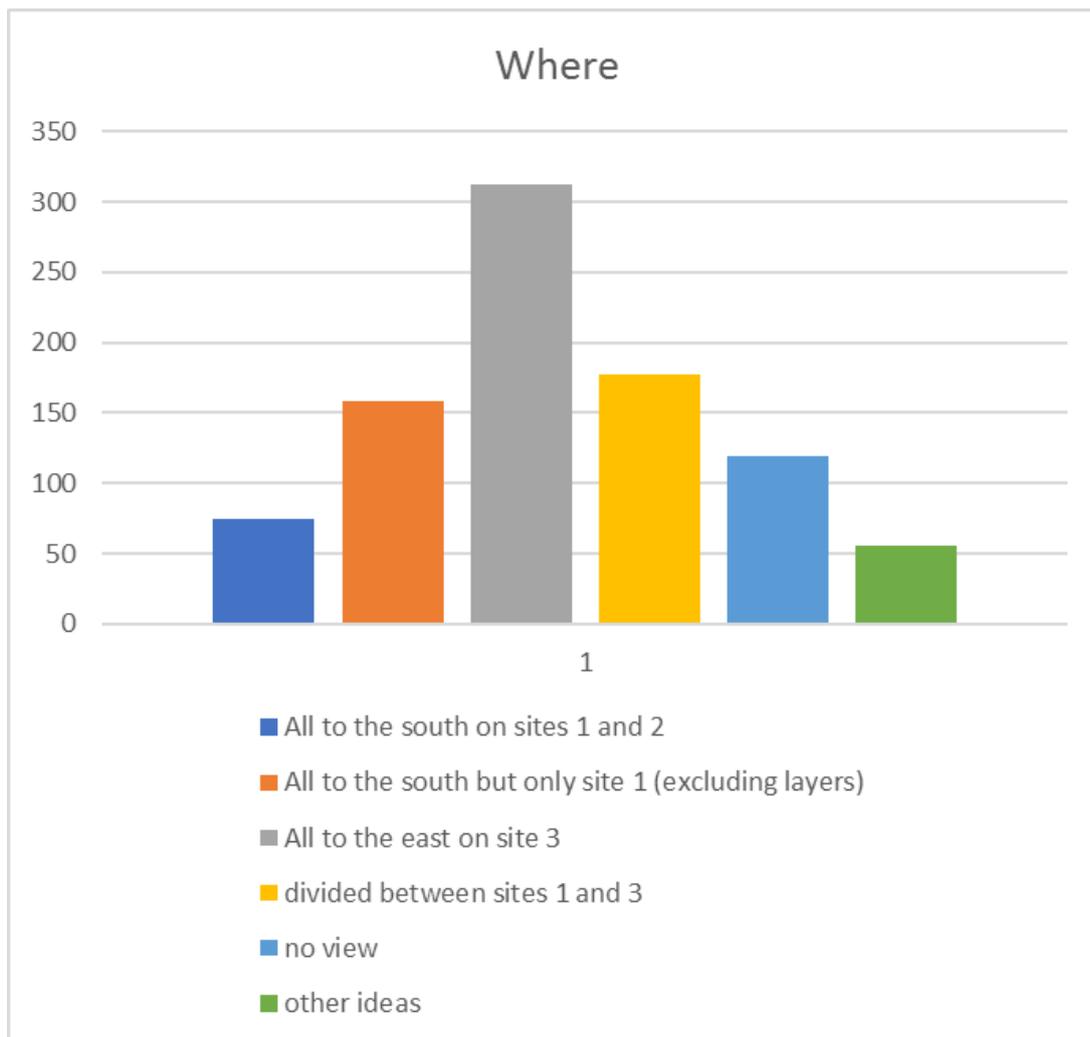


Broadly speaking, sites 1 and 2 form the location of the new South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood proposed by the District Council.

The location with most (but not overall majority) support (35%) is site 3 was to the east, up Church Hill, and a further 20% think that at least part of the housing should be there, as well as part on site 1 (between the railway and bypass A12). It is to be noted – since this has been a live local issue - that only 8% favour including the site to the south of town (and east of the railway) which includes The Layers.

	All to the south on sites 1 and 2	All to the south but only site 1 (excluding layers)	All to the east on site 3	Divided between sites 1 and 3	No view	Other ideas	Total responses
Number	74	158	312	177	119	55	895
Percentage	8%	18%	35%	20%	13%	6%	100%

As a chart, this becomes:



B3. Other comments on location

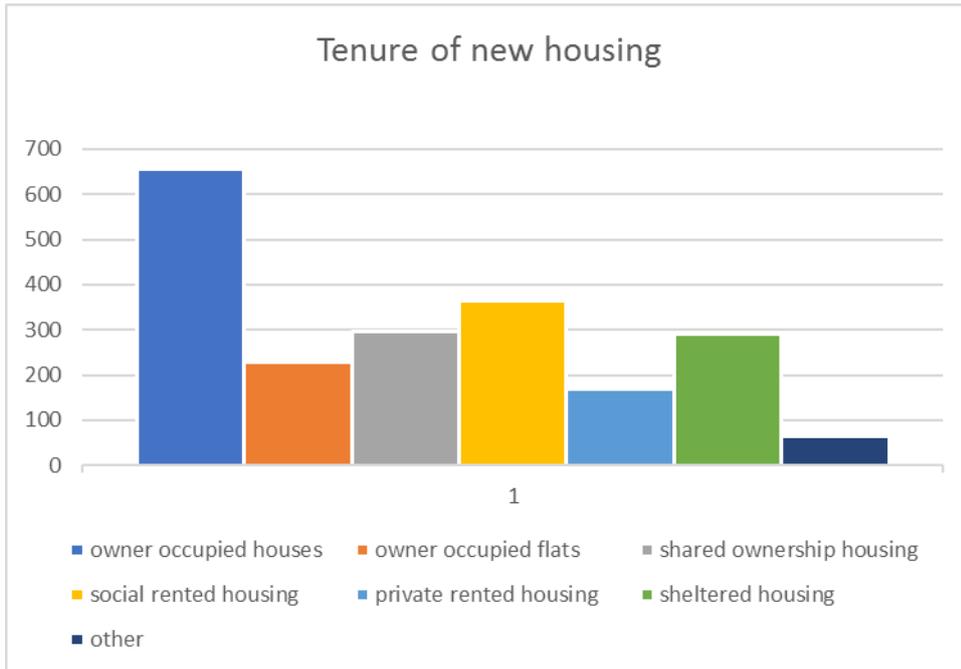
Respondents were asked if they had any other comments about the location of new housing. This garnered over 100 responses (see Appendix for all responses). Many expressed opposition to further development on grounds that the town lacks the necessary (physical and social) infrastructure and services to meet existing needs. The impact on the road network and especially the traffic light cross-roads at Chantry Road were also mentioned in numerous responses.

B4: Which types of new housing development in Saxmundham do you consider the most important to meet housing needs?

896 people answered this question. Respondents were invited to tick up to three options, and 2070 preferences were expressed.

Of these, 656 respondents (73%) support owner-occupied houses as a priority, followed by 354 (41%) for social housing. Shared ownership homes (297) and sheltered housing (290) each have the support of around one third of respondents.

Of those (approx. 60) who ticked "other", several want a mix of all different types, and several called for bungalows to be part of the mix (see Appendix for details).



B5. What size for new housing? Future housing is likely to be built to a mixture of sizes, which do you think is most needed for Saxmundham?

870 people answered this question. Respondents were asked to tick up to two options, and 1451 preferences were expressed. Of these, 1160 (80%) were for 2 or 3 bedroom homes.

1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms	Total preferences expressed
Number				
152	548	612	139	1451

B6. If Saxmundham’s future 800 homes major development goes ahead do you think the share of affordable housing (for rent or ownership) should be...

886 people answered this question. Just over half (53%) think the share of affordable housing should be in the range 10 to 25%, 47% think the ‘affordable’ share should be over 25%.

10-25%	25-50%	over 50%	Total number of responses
467	274	145	886
53%	31%	16%	100%

Question B7: For all major parts of future large-scale housing developments in and around the town, please tick any of the following design elements you consider important. (6 options offered)

889 people answered this question and 2107 preferences were expressed. The most supported concepts are “highly energy efficient” (79% of respondents) and “landscaping of high visual and ecological quality” (57%). In relation to house building style, 43% express support for “Traditional Suffolk”, 18% for “Innovative design”

Highly energy efficient	Traditional Suffolk	Innovative	Dementia friendly	Landscaping of high visual and eco quality	Other	Total preferences expressed
Number						
706	384	164	255	509	89	2107

PART C – Community facilities for Saxmundham



C1. If Saxmundham’s future 800-1,000 homes development goes ahead, do you think that the town needs additional community facilities, to be funded in whole or in part by the developers?

934 people answered this question, and (perhaps not surprisingly!) 917, or 98%, agree.

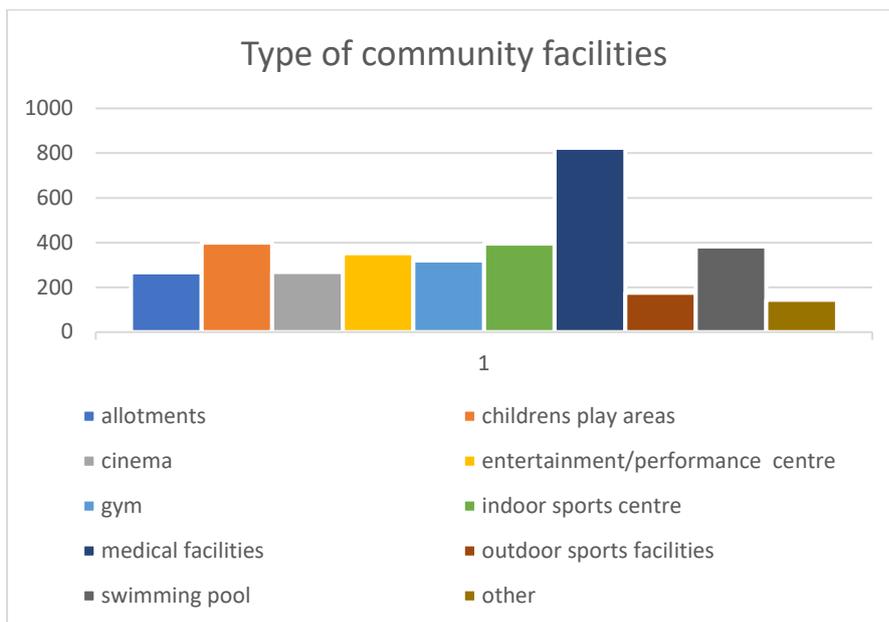
C2. Please indicate which facilities you think are the most important ones for Saxmundham.

931 people answered this question. Respondents were asked to tick up to four options, and 3,528 preferences were expressed.

Allotments	Children's play areas	Cinema	Entertainment Performance centre	Gym	Indoor sports centre	Medical facilities	Outdoor sports facilities	Swimming pool	Other	Total preferences
Numbers										
267	399	269	353	320	395	824	175	382	144	3,528

While 89% of respondents ticked the box for “medical facilities”, the other suggested facilities were rather more evenly supported, save perhaps for “outdoor sports facilities” (175) – almost certainly because the town does have the Sports and Recreational Club at Carlton Park.

Of those who ticked “other”, around 30 support provision of a (family-friendly) pub/bar/restaurant. Apart from this, a wide range of proposed facilities (public and private sector) were suggested (see Appendix).





Part D – Environmental issues for new developments.

D1: Which of the following environmental factors are important for you when considering any additional major housing development in Saxmundham?

Respondents were asked to “tick all [choices] you consider important”.

920 people answered this question and 4,261 preferences were expressed. “Adequate off-road parking” gained the highest support (88% of respondents), followed by “good quality cycle and pedestrian access to town” (68%) and “eco-friendly / efficient design & construction” (67%). In fact, all of the offered options received majority support.

Eco friendly/ efficient design and construction	Natural, biodiverse open space nearby	Recreat- ional open space	Adequate off-road parking	Nearby services/fa- cilities to limit need for car use	Good quality cycle and pedestrian access to town	Local on- site recycling facilities	Other	Total prefer- ences
Numbers								
616	477	551	806	589	627	534	61	4,261

Among the “other” were a wide range of issues – solar panels, electric car charging points, better public transport, better roads, allotments, better provision for wildlife and ‘wilding’ areas, town centre pedestrianisation, high speed internet... full list available in Appendix.



PART E – Saxmundham Town Centre

E1. On average, how often do you visit Saxmundham Town Centre?

940 people answered this question. 95% said they visited the town centre either most days, or once or twice a week.

Most days	Once or twice per week	Once or twice per month	Rarely	Never	Total responses
486	402	27	22	3	940
52%	43%	3%	2%	0%	100%

E2. How do you normally get to the Town Centre?

There were 1130 responses to this question. 57% said they came on foot, 38% by private motor vehicle. Only 4% said they came by bicycle, and 1% by public transport.

E3. What is/are the main reason(s) for your visits to the Town Centre?

941 people answered, giving 2,483 responses. An overwhelming 93% said they visit the supermarkets, and 74% local shops and services.

Going to super-markets	Visiting local shops and services	Visiting café, restaurant or pub	Shopping at the weekly market	Visiting library or other public services	Social/community purposes e.g. Market Hall or Museum activities	Other	Total reasons
Numbers							
883	698	333	120	226	135	88	2,483
Percentages							
94%	74%	35%	13%	24%	14%	9%	Of voters

E4. Do you think that Saxmundham High Street would benefit from any of the following changes?

Respondents were asked to tick up to three options. There were 1,836 responses from 915 people.

The largest single issue supported, by 50% of respondents, was for additional (near to) town centre parking facilities.

However, there is a high level of support shown for different options for the future of the High Street' traffic management and use. 34% favour reducing the speed limit, 33% want pedestrianization, 30% want to widen the footways (pavements) in the street, and 25% favour giving more priority to pedestrians over vehicles.

Against this, 107 respondents (12%) voted for "none of the above".

Pedestrianisation	Priority for pedestrians	Widening footways	Reduce the speed limit	Traffic control of narrowest part of the High Street	Additional parking facilities in or near Town Centre	None of the above	Total preferences expressed
Numbers							
306	233	278	310	141	461	107	1,836
Percentages							
33%	25%	30%	34%	15%	50%	12%	Of voters

E5. Do you have other proposals for improving the way the High Street looks and works?

We confess that we had not expected a very large number of answers to this "write in" section. But as it turned out, many residents did indeed have views they wanted to express – and that is true for other "write in" questions, further on. In relation to the High Street, we received about 450 comments, ideas and suggestions. All are contained in the Appendix.

Many of these ideas can be grouped under a few general headings:

1. **Too many empty shops, too many charity shops** and the need to attract more good quality shops – with many ideas of what people would like (mainly, a wider variety of shops), or how to provide incentives e.g. through business rate incentive systems.
2. **Improving the street environment**, through a variety of suggested means – better signage, more flowers and trees in the centre, pedestrianisation and pavement-widening, repainting business exteriors, pull down or renew derelict buildings...
3. **Enforcing parking rules and restrictions** – a large number of comments expressed frustration at the lack of enforcement especially in and around the High Street and Market Place.
4. **Better traffic management** – here, suggestions relate largely to Church St and especially the cross-roads / traffic light junction at Chantry Road, but also many ideas to control and change traffic in the High Street. This could be by introducing a one-way system, or full or part pedestrianisation etc.
5. **More and better pubs and restaurants** – many feel that the town lacks sufficient good quality, family-friendly places to eat and drink.

E6. The market - how might we make the town’s market (held on Wednesdays in the Market Place) more successful?

857 people replied, giving 1,700 preferences – all options could be ticked.

Though no single option received a majority, there appears to be a wide ‘constituency’ in the town to change or add to the present market. Over 300 preferences were expressed to change the nature of the market, to change the day from Wednesday to weekend, and/or change the venue (e.g. to Fromus Square).

Change market day from Wed to Fri, Sat or Sunday	Change the venue e.g. to Fromus Square	Move to Market Hall	Improve publicity/marketing	Change the nature of the market e.g. farmers market or flea market	Other	None of the above	Total preferences
Number							
353	331	76	366	393	103	78	1700

E7. Do you think that the wider Town Centre and Station area would be improved by the following?

844 people replied and 1,731 preferences were expressed by them (all options could be ticked).

There is very strong support for the concept of redeveloping the area around the railway station (707 or 84% of respondents). There were also substantial ‘votes’ for improving cycle and pedestrian links to the town centre, for improvements to Station Approach (the road from the High Street to the station) and for designed signage.

Improvements to cycle and pedestrian links to the town centre	Designed signage at key points to direct to facilities and points of interest	Improvements to Station Approach in particular for cyclists and pedestrians	Development of the area around the station, including new business and employment opportunities	Total preferences
Number				
340	280	404	707	1731
Percentages				
40%	33%	48%	84%	Of voters

Finally, in the section on the Town Centre, we asked if people had “other ideas for improving the Town Centre”. Once again, they certainly did! We received over 300 comments. Many were along similar lines to the comments on improving the High Street, (e.g. deal with empty shops, improve range of shops, improve attractiveness of street environment, enforce parking, better traffic management, new pub/ bar/restaurants) but other issues were also highlighted:

- Tackle anti-social behaviour, more police needed, CCTV
- Repair the station building and area and bring the station building into use
- New through road from Kelsale to Church Road and/or from Benhall to Leiston Road
- More leisure and entertainment facilities in the centre, and community events, festivals
- Town centre looking tired and needing attention
- Make the town more pedestrian friendly



PART F – Transport and mobility, in and around Saxmundham.

F1. Do you regularly use public transport to travel to and from Saxmundham?

There were 1,692 responses. There were 1,692 responses. 891 people answered about use of trains, 801 about use of buses.

Of those answering about trains, 45% said they used the train service. Of those answering about buses, only 16% said they used bus services.

Train yes	Train no	Bus yes	Bus no	Total responses
405	486	130	671	1692

Train service

F2a. If you regularly use the train, are you mainly satisfied with the local East Suffolk train service?

441 people responded. Of these 289 (66%) said they were mainly satisfied, 152 (34%) were mainly dissatisfied.

F2b. If you are NOT mainly satisfied with the local train service, what are your main reasons for this? (Five options)

285 people made 499 responses. The two principal reasons cited were “cost” and “frequency and timing”, followed by “lack of dependability”.

Frequency and timing	Lack of dependability	Cost	It doesn't get me where I want to go	Other reason	Total
135	101	163	41	59	499
47%	35%	57%	14%	21%	

F2c. What would be your ‘top’ improvements in the local train service that you would like to see?

The questionnaire invited respondents to specify one or two improvements.

Around 400 people answered this question, of which nearly half (just under 200) gave two. That gave us around 600 answers to this. From the different answers, we have summarised the key improvements sought as follows*:

Improvement	No. of respondents
Saxmundham Station (deal with very poor state, need for services & amenities)	147
Frequency & longer hours service (more often than hourly, later trains, more trains at weekends including earlier start)	97
Rolling stock (state of stock, small size of many trains)	54
London train connection (need for more direct trains)	52
Fares (should be reduced)	41
Parking	14
Norwich train service (needs good connection)	7

(*The number of respondents for each type of improvement in the above table is approximate, based on our assessment of the very differently phrased responses)

F4. When waiting or arriving at Saxmundham Station, are there any physical improvements or new customer facilities you would like to see put in place?

Almost 500 people answered this question, and offered around 750 proposals. The main themes that emerge are set out in the following table:

(Again, the number of respondents for each type of improvement in the above table is approximate, based on our assessment of the very differently phrased responses)

Improvement	No. of respondents
Renovate/reinstate Station building	145
Refreshments : Café, shop, buffet, vending machines	143
Waiting area/seating	129
Provide toilets	78
Better parking	34
Public information/local map/signage	18

Bus service

F3a. If you regularly use the Bus, are you mainly satisfied with the local service?

There were 179 responses (n.b. this is a higher number than those who had answered the earlier question on regular use of bus). 78 (44%) were satisfied with the service, 101 (56%) dissatisfied

F3b. If you are NOT mainly satisfied with the local bus service, what is the main reason or reasons for not being satisfied?"

There were 305 responses from 171 people. Two main reasons given for dissatisfaction were "frequency and timing" (cited by 73%), and "it doesn't get me where I want to go" (45%).

Frequency and timing	Lack of dependability	Cost	It doesn't get me where I want to go	Other reason	Total
125	48	32	77	23	305
73%	28%	19%	45%	13%	

F3c. Do you have any top improvements in the local Bus service that you would like to see carried out?

Just over 150 people answered this question, putting forward a total of around 210 proposals for improvements. The main themes raised were:

- Increase frequency of the services
- Run later services, and Sunday services
- Introduce new services, including more direct services. Destinations specified by respondents include Ipswich (especially the hospital) – the present service takes too long; Norwich; Framlingham.
- New or better buses – including smaller buses, electric buses etc.
- Better rail / bus coordination
- Better information including timetables, electronic signage

The first three (frequency, timing, new or more direct/faster routes) were the dominant issues raised.

F5. When waiting for buses in or around Saxmundham, are there any physical improvements or new customer facilities you would like to see put in place?

Around 120 people answered this question, offering around 160 proposals for improvements. By far the largest number of proposals related to the provision of **more shelters and seating at bus stops** (over 100 responses). Improved **signage and information**, including digital timing displays at bus stops, and timetable information, were the main other themes.

Cyclists and pedestrians

F6. Do you have any top improvements to encourage and help pedestrians and cyclists which you would like to see in Saxmundham?

Almost 300 people responded to this question, offering over 400 proposals. Many proposals relate to specific sites or areas of the town, but the main points from the responses include, with approximate numbers raising each:

- Cycle lanes and paths (over 70 proposals)
- Pedestrianisation (mainly of High Street) (30)
- Wider pavements and footpaths (25)
- Lower speed limits / traffic calming (25)
- Cycle parks and racks in town (25)
- Parking law enforcement (25)
- Better lighting (10)
- More pedestrian crossings of busy roads (10)

Respondents also raised the need for better upkeep/repair of roads and of pavements generally, and for footways between newer housing estates and the centre.

Motorists

F7. Do you have any top improvements in relation to private motor vehicle use, which you would like to see put in place in Saxmundham?

Around 450 people answered this question, putting forward over 600 points or proposals. The main themes that were raised concerned much stronger enforcement of parking restrictions, especially in the High Street, and the operation of the traffic light junction close to the two supermarkets, linked to the exits from the supermarkets. A variety of proposals were made for controlling traffic in the town centre and other areas, as well as specific areas such as Brook Farm Road, or North and south Entrance. Here is a table listing some key issues with the approximate number raising each issue:

Issue for improvement	Approx. number of respondents
Need for better functioning of traffic lights and supermarket access/exit	110
Enforcement of parking regulations, especially in High Street	100
More parking	50
Pedestrianisation, especially of High St	15
One-way system around High St	15
One-way system – other areas	10
Other High Street traffic control measures	15
Speed restrictions (e.g. 20 mph)	15
Traffic calming measures	15
New/bypass road to avoid lights	15
Brook Farm Road issues	15
Rendham Road / A12 junction	10

People with impaired mobility

F8. Do you have any other top improvements to make transport and movement easier or safer for those with impaired mobility?

Around 270 people responded to this question, making around 350 points or proposals. Again, many are site specific, but in general terms, the number one issue raised is the need for wider pavements and paths, at various points in the town and especially in the town centre. The need for more or longer-phased pedestrian crossing points also featured strongly, also the need to stop parking on pavements.

Here is a table listing some key issues with the approximate number raising each issue:

Issue for improvement	Approx. number of respondents
Wider pavements, especially in town centre	60
More or longer-phased pedestrian crossings	30
Stop parking on pavements, enforce parking restrictions	30
Repair and maintain pavements and paths, including shrubs etc	20
Speed limit reductions / enforcement	15
Better street / public area lighting in some areas	15
Pedestrianisation, one-way, traffic restricted High Street	15
Local bus services e.g. shuttle bus, serving housing estates & near villages	10
More disabled parking	10
Better disability access to shops and services	10



PART G – your additional comments or points

G1. Do you have any other comments or points about the future of Saxmundham which you want us to take into account?

When we drew up this questionnaire, we decided to add this question to ensure that residents had a chance to raise any issues of concern for the future of our town. To be honest, we expected some but not a huge number. In the event, the residents of Saxmundham used this opportunity in large numbers – we received over 450 comments and ideas, ranging from the general to the specific, some very short and to the point, others at some length... Many respondents reaffirmed their view that they do not want the town to grow, or at least not to grow as much as proposed by the District Council. Many others state that future growth of any scale absolutely requires improved services and infrastructure – which many feel has not been the case with developments in recent decades.

It has not been practicable to add all of the comments up by ‘category’ or theme, but we can summarise some key points made with frequency:

- Future growth must be linked to a proper provision of services and infrastructure
- The need for a larger, better provided medical centre and related services
- The road structure is inadequate already, and too busy, especially by the Chantry Road traffic lights and supermarkets, while the High Street traffic is also an issue
- The town centre needs improving and regenerating, with a particular need for family-type restaurants and pubs, community services and activities, and for evening entertainment for all age groups
- Generally, the town lacks recreational and leisure facilities
- There is a perceived problem of increased misbehaviour and crime, with insufficient police presence, which needs tackling
- We need to offer more for young people to do in the town
- We should pay attention to environmental and ecological issues

The full set of comments will be available on the Neighbourhood Plan website, and are well worth a read, to see the wide range of views expressed.

But to give a 'taster', we have copied and pasted a selection of the comments made, which covers a wide spectrum but is not a representative sample as such. But we think they reflect much of the diversity of opinion that exists in the town. And we feel they provide a fascinating read in their own right!

Extracts from the 'additional comments' section

I am pleased to see that Saxmundham has an exciting time ahead for growth and potential to thrive. My concern mainly surrounds local existing facilities being unable to keep up with demand as Sax grows. (doctors, schooling, supermarkets)

I don't think that 800 new homes in Saxmundham is manageable. The increases should be gradual only up to 300 homes to enable new schools, doctors, road infrastructure and leisure facilities to grow at the same time. The natural habitat should not be disrupted and lost to new homes; it will be lost forever.

A growing town is a good thing but planning 1000 new homes must bring extra facilities. The doctors are already too small, the primary school was too small before the estate that build it was finished and the traffic Thursday evenings onwards summertime around Tesco's is bedlam, 40 minutes to get out of the car park! Keep some of the money out of Hopkins pocket for local improvements.

More facilities to draw people into town centre. New people = new demands on leisure etc. Community police to tackle increase in youth anti-social behaviour.

We need more recreational/club/social areas for young adults. 18-30.

I have worked in Saxmundham for 20 years and lived here for the past 6 years. It is a great town that deserves every support and input possible.

I was born and brought up in Sax. We've grown as a town enormously since I was a child. I no longer shop locally for myself unless I can go on foot as the high street and parking is diabolical and more houses will make this even worse. Personally, I think Sax has reached breaking point.

Saxmundham is reaching saturation point. You need to upgrade facilities e.g. medical, schools before expanding any further. Roads are inadequate for the volume of traffic. This will only get worse once Sizewell C starts.

We really, really need to do something to regenerate the high street.

Pedestrianize market square. Trinity's could have outside seating etc.

Additional houses mean more cars and more pressure on the infrastructure of the town. Saxmundham facilities are already at breaking point, more houses will only make things worse. In my experience since moving here, houses are built but infrastructure is not improved. It's not sustainable.

The town centre needs to become the focus point of Saxmundham. It should consist of areas/buildings for leisure, dining, entertainment and some housing. It is no longer possible for it to rely purely on retail outlets.

A new entrance and exit road into the new Hopkins estate, eg Street Farm road.

Police or warden presence to enforce existing or future rules and regs.

Saxmundham surgery has become woefully inadequate for its increased population. This needs to be sorted out before more building work happens.

Medical facilities need improvement. Pedestrianise high st. Improve look of high st with landscaping and market. Stop speeding traffic at top of Brook Farm road. Improve leisure facilities.

My concerns about further housing are - Doctors surgery being big enough, chemist able to cope with more patients, parking issues and even if the supermarkets can cope.

The traffic to supermarkets. Warnings were raised when the supermarkets were given permission that traffic would be a problem, and it is getting worse.

Improvement to social facilities within the town such as family friendly eateries and bars might mean Saxmundham was less of a dormitory town. It might encourage residents to stay in Sax for social activities rather than getting on a train to Woodbridge and Beccles.

Do not allow the only lovely pub to be changed into a charity shop! A disgrace.

I have lived in many, many towns and villages throughout the UK. It appears to me the town lacks a central point of interest. Making the town centre more pedestrian friendly would be a start. Please get rid of the signage that isn't required. Speeding car and children crossing the road at north entrance is a big concern, especially with new estates and further is walk to school.

The infrastructure needs improvement before any more houses are built as its struggling now.

I know it's on the plan but bigger, better doctors' surgery. Ban on households parking on pavement. Enforced.

I seriously think that cctv operated in streets and public places would help with safety but also security against theft and vandalism which unfortunately is a growing problem in town.

Desperate for a family pub which does food, children's play area, sports etc.

The future of the town could be improved if the council was proactive. There appears to be a lack of interest from the council with regards to the needs of the people. I think they have mostly been ignored for many many years!

Shoppers from out of town need encouragement to go beyond the supermarkets to the high street, which does not benefit from the large numbers of people who only come here for Waitrose or Tesco.

With the ever-increasing number of cars using the traffic lights, please try and sort out the amount of time it takes to get in and out of the supermarket carparks up to and away from the traffic light crossroads. On weekends the whole road grinds to a halt for ages!!

We need to love our town centre and make it easy to get to, park and wander around the shops - it has some great stuff but so many just drive through to out of town shopping.

Saxmundham is a lovely Suffolk market town. To restore it to its old glory in conjunction with modern needs is difficult with older world narrow streets needing to accommodate modern high vehicles and people's expectations of what the council should supply. This requires community spirit and private investment and support.

Permit parking on roads around train station. Make the station and high street more desirable.

A town centre to be proud of and one that I would be pleased to visit with a good variety of shops, pubs to attract people from local area and far off.

Town centre needs redesigning and we need town centre managed.

I have lived in Saxmundham for 27 years, enjoy the town and its facilities, shops and clubs, would appreciate a community centre or drop in for us elderly, some are alone and need company and chat like myself weekdays, and Sundays can be a problem.

To stop into social behaviour in evenings, more community policing, get the infrastructure sorted before any more building starts.

I love living in Sax. It is a great town. However, the station and high st are a little run down at present and with plans for expanding population this is the perfect opportunity for the local plan and community to embrace serious positive environmental changes to improve town and community. Nothing should be done without considering carbon emission, impact on wildlife and biodiversity, and minimising negative effects on these.

Saxmundham is the town at the centre of Suffolk's coastal region yet has almost no tourist attractions such as an indoor pool or sports complex, theatre or family restaurants. It does not make the most of its position.

Saxmundham dies at night as no pubs or leisure activities. The Bell is good but is a hotel so no atmosphere. Something like Halesworth Cut would be ideal - venue for shows, concerts, cinema plus café and classes with venue run by volunteers. I have to drive out of Sax for evening entertainment.

Perhaps gather locals who have grown up in Saxmundham to discuss and bring back things that we had in Saxmundham as children. Take the town back to tradition as a historical town with a modern element. DO not expand the town anymore, it will kill it!

Saxmundham will grow but need to be a living town. Too many holiday/second homes put additional demands on local infrastructure and facilities but do not contribute to the life of the town. Inevitably Saxmundham will be largely a dormitory town as even local employment is outside the town but needs to function as a community of all ages.

Need to encourage more employment within town so that it can be a place where people live and work.

There needs to be somewhere where the teenagers can go eg cinema, community club or something as there continues to be a social problem and antisocial behaviour that has been clearly demonstrated recently.

Encourage more local shops to remain such as our butchers. They are invaluable!

Improve the appearance of vacant shops in town centre eg large adverts placed on shop front advertising the local market etc. Shop fronts boarded and painted by school children as a project.

Keeping the town clean and tidy.

Any more estate development will be detrimental to the environment and the present inhabitants of Saxmundham. There has to be a limit. There is a climate and ecological crisis - more and more building is part of the problem.

More cultural/arts activities in the community. A pub/restaurant. More activity for young people.

A cinema. A vibrant retail and business community - more varied.

Look to other local towns to gain knowledge of how to improve things. For example: Woodbridge/Framlingham. Top of Brook Farm road, cars park way too close to the junction, there is going to be an accident there soon! Needs to be looked at.

Lovely place to live. Would benefit from more community wide events and improved medical facilities.

More spaces for teenagers - outside spaces. Less demonising of young adults in the town and more empowering them, ask what they want, this will know they are heard and valued resulting in less antisocial behaviour.

Saxmundham has more than many small towns, but it is let down by local and county authorities in policing, parking, rubbish and a lack of the local council doing more for residents and fighting for the town.

The whole town needs a makeover! North entrance - signs and posts need a good clean, tubs need planting, remove old "Anglia in Bloom" signs with the spelling mistake!! Fromus Square - planting area badly needs weeding, notice board needs updating regularly. Old post office - shrubs and bushes need trimming away from pavement. Flower tub outside "The Store" needs planting. Memorial field needs landscaping. Market Hall could be turned into a craft arcade.

With more people being encouraged to take up running through weekly parkrun and great run local events, it would be good to see the town host an annual 10K race with closed roads. This happens in Framlingham and Woodbridge and is an excellent platform for promoting the town, businesses and all that is on offer.

Saxmundham is an inherently beautiful town with fascinating history, sadly run down and it needs to attract more independent shops/alternative health shop/maybe encourage artists/artisans to work and revitalise some of the empty, sad buildings. More sociable areas for young people. The old pub now houses another charity shop, it's a missed opportunity for providing a community cafe/pub. There is no point providing more homes without revitalising the town centre. Nobody will be encouraged. The town needs a heart and soul, which is currently lacking.

I like the thought of Saxmundham growing, providing facilities are built/improved to accommodate the extra people.

For any more housing to work a new school and doctors will need to be put in as the current ones are already inadequate. Also, a youth club is desperately needed for the kids.

It is a lovely town but need support and new facilities as it grows.

Regulation of speed of vehicles on entering high st, preferably from Kelsale outwards.

Whenever I see or read about leisure and recreation in Saxmundham it is always in regard to young people. What about the rest of us? Do we not count? Saxmundham needs facilities for mums, dads, grandmas and grandads as well in the town including a night life.

Definitely friendly family pubs or restaurants. New GP surgery/Health facilities. Larger library. More parks for children.

Housing only for local people as it was in the olden days.

Saxmundham needs to attract a major high street restaurant to the town which cater for family get-togethers. Prezzo, Café Rouge etc.

Almost total lack of leisure facilities will drive me out of this town. Access to nature is great...if you can afford a car. Otherwise with no leisure centre or gym or swimming pool or community centre...

Don't build any houses just improve the town.

Swimming pool. Indoor gym. Street cafes and banks. Pedestrianise high st. Better, wider pavements on both sides of rd. Meter all parking except supermarkets.

In general, all shops, facilities and flow of traffic needs to improve if we are going to have no choice and grow in size.

Litter is a serious issue. It may help if school children as well as adults could be organised to litter pick or not drop litter so that they all take pride in their surroundings. Himalayan

My main concern is the danger when coming off A12 onto Rendham road. There are so many accidents here because at night you approach completely blind.

We must not lose the great things about Sax, but we must find a way to integrate newcomers - annual event to welcome them?

More dog poo bins around Sax

Improvements to GP surgery necessary with more housing. There needs to be more activities and access for young people to discourage anti-social behaviour.

Improve junctions at entrance/exit to supermarkets

Lighting required in open space/park area

More areas to socialise outside in the town centre. More varied shops and a greengrocer

High streets increasingly have to adapt to modern shopping trends. To increase footfall and future use they need to have social community space and active events calendar for all ages and abilities so the community can connect with its town centre.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would like to express warm appreciation to Jennifer Morcom, the Assistant Town Clerk, and Lee Mickiewicz for all their work in inputting data from the survey, and in transcribing the vast volume of answers to the many open-ended questions in the survey.