



# **Brenchley and Matfield Parish Plan Survey Results**

**March 2017**

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# Introduction

This survey was undertaken as part of a process, initiated by the Parish Council in May 2015, of preparing a Brenchley and Matfield Parish Plan. A number of working groups, involving over 70 volunteers from the community and initially coordinated by Nigel Woodward, first looked into particular issues under the headings now used in the Survey. Issues and ideas were discussed at an Open Day at Matfield Village Hall in January 2016, attended by around 200 people.

Volunteers then developed the survey. In addition to background demographic data to aid survey analysis, the 42 questions covered seven areas: Recreation, Social and Culture; Health, Care and Wellbeing; Business and Local Economy; Transport, Highways and Byways; Environment and Sustainability; Planning and Development; and Education. In the final two questions, respondents were asked to identify their priorities and any areas not covered by the survey.

Since June 2016 the Parish Plan has been coordinated by a Coordination Group of five people: Jane Buckley-Sander (Chair), Graham Bignell and Kevin Sparkhall, from the community; Duncan Batty and Lynne Butler from the Parish Council, with invaluable technical support from Parish Councillor Ian McEwen. After finalising the Survey and piloting it with a group of volunteers, the survey was carried out between 4th and 28th November 2016. Flyers were delivered by 54 volunteers, who discussed the survey with residents when possible. In the outlying areas of the parish flyers were sent by post.

This report is the summary of thousands of items of data collected from the survey and analysed by SurveyGizmo. The results have been studied by the members of the Coordination Group, who have cross-checked each other's work to ensure that the report is impartial and balanced.

Results were analysed by age, gender and location, as well as in total, to test whether results varied significantly across different groups. The report contains graphics to illustrate some of the responses. Direct quotations from some of the comments are shown in the margin.

The report summarises the principal findings, gives statistical detail under each section and highlights potential action points, including both those ideas included in the Survey that gained majority support and some of the other suggestions made by respondents. While every effort has been made to reflect the views expressed in the Survey, it is not possible to include all comments and suggestions. The full survey results, including comments, are available on the Parish website should you wish to see them.

The Coordination Group has started consultations with young people, through events with KS2 children at Brenchley and Matfield School and the LOGS youth group. A full record of these discussions is separately available on the Parish Plan page of the Parish Council website. Following the public meeting at Brenchley Memorial Hall on 25th March, it is intended that further work will be done to complete a Parish Plan and initiate actions suggested by the survey results.

## Summary of Principal Findings

### Overall Response

- The Survey was answered by around a quarter of those aged over 24 in the Parish but by only 2% (13 people) in the age group 14-24.
- The number of responses is sufficient to make results statistically significant overall, but care is needed in drawing conclusions from sub-sets of the responses, eg by age or location.

### Recreation, Social and Culture

- There was widespread satisfaction with existing community buildings.
- Brenchley Memorial Hall was most often mentioned as needing updating, though still attracting majority satisfaction.
- The Brenchley playground was also suggested to Require Improvement by 17% of respondents while 58% *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* with a new playground in Matfield.
- The need for better communication of information in the Parish was seen as an important, particularly on social events and volunteering issues.

## Health, Care and Wellbeing

- The doctors' surgery, dispensary and dental surgery are all seen as *Good* or *Very Good* by over three-quarters of those who use them.
- Brenchley and Matfield Ready Calls are highly rated by the 39% familiar with the services.
- Awareness of Caring Services, Home Care, Chiropody and Alternative Health Care was too low (under 20%) to rely on the views expressed.
- Physical fitness facilities were rated *Good* or *Very Good* by half of those with a view. 28 respondents made suggestions, including a gym, a swimming pool, more fitness classes and better conditions for runners.

## Business and Local Economy

- Post offices, pubs and restaurants and the butchers are used at least occasionally by most residents but cafés are much less used and the hairdresser by only 13% of the respondents.
- High speed internet is seen as much more important than any other factor in encouraging businesses, followed by public transport, better parking and a choice of premises.
- Comments suggested that better information on local businesses would be helpful.
- 64% of respondents are dissatisfied with their mobile reception, while 35% were dissatisfied with their broadband. Only 3% said this question did not apply to them.
- Areas of poor mobile signal and slow broadband speed are found throughout the parish, even in the village centres.

## Transport, Highways and Byways

- More than 80% of the respondents want a 30mph limit at the Pixot Hill junction, a 20mph zone past the School and restrictions on HGVs.
- 30mph limits in Castle Hill and for more of Maidstone Road in Matfield had significant majority support, as did 20mph through the centre of Brenchley and speed indicators.
- Speed cameras were supported by a majority of those with an opinion, while table tops and chicanes were rejected.
- The most popular measures for pedestrian safety were a crossing outside the School and a continuous pavement between Brenchley and Matfield.
- Improved maintenance and control of vegetation were seen as the most important measures for footpaths and bridleways, followed by upgrading and replacing stiles to improve access.
- Although there was a lot of concern about parking, the only proposal with strong support was improving parking at the back of Matfield Green.
- Two thirds of respondents said bus services were adequate; it cannot be said to what extent this is because services are seen as good or because most people do not use them.
- Only 19% of respondents *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* with a community bus service.

## Environment and Sustainability

- Respondents were very much in favour of maintaining the rural village character of the parish with open public spaces.
- Around half of respondents support a community energy project, with a preference for solar energy. 20% of respondents expressed a willingness to invest.
- There was strong support for advice on energy conservation in the home for all residents.
- Action on addressing litter problem was strongly endorsed.
- There was substantial demand for doorstep glass collection and a weekly amenity vehicle.

## Planning and Development

- A significant majority opposed allowing ribbon development that joined Brenchley and Matfield.
- There was a strong preference for building small rather than large houses, with majority support also, of those with an opinion, for low cost housing and warden-assisted housing but a clear majority against low-rise flats.
- Most respondents are prepared to see some new development, with only 7% saying they wanted no new houses. But they want it on a modest scale.
- There was a clear preference for small-scale developments and very little support for larger developments or estates.

## Formal Education

- Those with a view on playgroups thought them *Good* or *Satisfactory* but the majority had no view.
- There is very strong support (85%) for having a primary school in the parish.
- While more respondents supported rebuilding the school than opposed it (42% to 30% with a further 15% who might support but only on certain conditions), there were strongly divergent views. Resistance to the associated housing was the biggest reason for objecting, with some scepticism about need; supporters emphasised getting an up to date school and resolving parking issues.
- Respondents with an opinion want to see stronger community links, especially more community use out of school hours and child care. 80% thought that prioritisation of children from the Parish would improve links with the community.
- Adult classes in the use of smart phones, computers and tablets were supported.
- More research was thought to be needed on activities for young people; more clubs for youth activities were also frequently suggested.

## Respondents' Priorities

- The most frequently raised priority was ensuring that any development protects the character of the villages and the local environment. There was also concern to meet the needs of young families, first-time buyers and those wanting to downsize.
- The second most frequent priority was addressing traffic problems, most of all speeding but also parking and better pedestrian routes.
- There were broadly similar numbers of comments for and against rebuilding the School.
- Business issues were the fourth most frequently raised priority, notably mobile and broadband services.

## Other Issues Raised

- The most frequent issue mentioned was again planning and development.
- Several comments referred to the need to promote stronger community spirit.
- The majority of comments on the survey itself were positive but often with concern at its length.

# Overall Response to the Survey

The questionnaire was answered by 554 people (out of a total adult population of around 2,300, based on the 2011 census). All but 40 of these completed the survey online via a link on the village website. This section assesses how far results can be seen as representative of the whole parish.

- **Response rate**

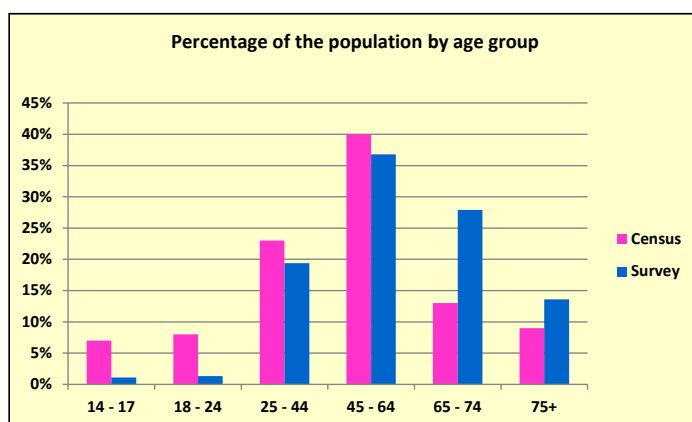
The survey was open to all Parish residents aged 14 and upwards. The responses represent about 24% of the adult population. This is a good sample size: opinion polls of the entire UK population normally have a sample size of less than 2,000. Although 554 people responded to the questionnaire, people did not necessarily answer every question. Evidence suggests that non-completion was mainly due to the Survey's length. However, most multiple choice questions were answered by 500 respondents or more. As would be expected, far fewer offered written comments.

- **Margin of error**

All surveys have a margin of error, depending on their size. For this survey, the normally accepted margin is just under 4% (compared to about 3% for national opinion polls). This means that if, say, 52% of survey responses supported a particular option, the true result for the Parish as a whole could have been anything from 48% to 56% in favour. So definite conclusions cannot be drawn from options supported or rejected by a small majority. It can only be said that opinion on that issue is split. Where the survey shows that the number of those who support an option is significantly larger than those who do not, it can be said with confidence that the view is representative of the Parish as a whole. More caution is needed with the smaller numbers in sub-sets of data, eg by location.

- **Age distribution**

The graph compares the age distribution of survey respondents (blue columns) with the distribution of the Parish population as a whole in the 2011 census (pink columns). Only about 2% of responses came from those between 14 and 24, so the survey cannot be said to represent their views. Those above 65 are over-represented in the survey but an examination of responses shows that this older



section of the Parish did not have significantly different views from other age groups; their over-representation did not, therefore, significantly affect the survey answers.

- **Distribution by location**

The main village areas of Brenchley and Matfield are of similar size and this is reflected in the survey answers, with 37% of responses coming from Brenchley and 38% from Matfield. Response rates from Castle Hill, Petteridge, Market Heath and outlying Areas also appear to be roughly proportional to population. This suggests that the overall survey response was not affected by the location of respondents, though this was an important factor with some of the location-specific questions.

- **Distribution by gender**

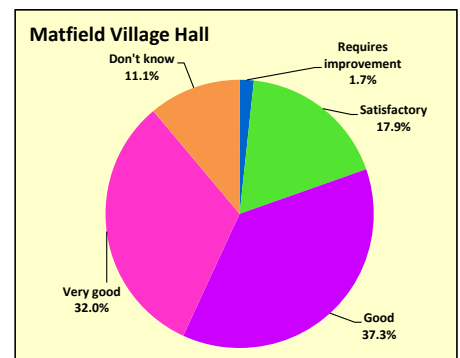
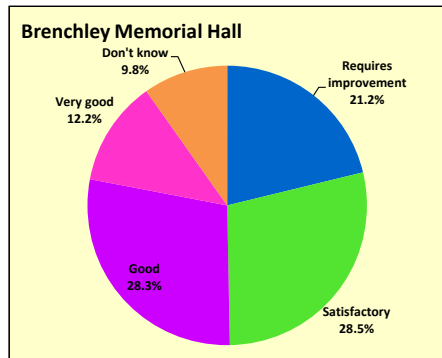
The 2011 census shows an almost equal distribution of men and women in the Parish. More women completed the survey than men (55% to 45%), but an examination of survey answers shows that the views expressed by women were not significantly different from those of men. There is, therefore, no reason to believe that the overall results of the survey were affected by the fact that there was a higher percentage of female respondents.

# Recreation, Social and Culture

This area of the survey looked at how parishioners view local amenities and for ideas on how they could be improved. Over 90% of respondents answered these questions.

## Views on Public Buildings and Spaces (Q6)

69% of respondents felt that Brenchley Memorial Hall (BMH) and grounds were *Satisfactory* or better, whilst the figure was 87% for the more modern Matfield Village Hall (MVH). 45 comments mentioned BMH, mainly asking for modernisation, although a few wanted it rebuilt. Eight comments referred to MVH, all looking for updating.



The new Matfield Pavilion was very highly rated by the 75% who expressed a view, with two comments suggesting some artwork inside to make it more interesting. About 40% of respondents felt able to comment on the Scout Hut, of whom 19% felt it *Needed Improvement*. The eight comments all suggested that it needed refurbishment, to encourage more use.

The 28% of respondents with a view on the allotments were generally satisfied, although seven comments suggested that maintenance and management could be improved.

The Play Area in Brenchley attracted a good deal of comment. Although three quarters of those with an opinion thought it at least *Satisfactory*, 24% thought it *Requires Improvement*, with 42 comments looking mainly for upgraded play area equipment and better provision for litter disposal. Several people also commented on the need for improved parking facilities, perhaps at the expense of some of the "Scout Field".

The public areas (greens, playing fields, etc) were felt by 86% to be *Satisfactory* or better. There were a number of comments, mainly looking for upgrading of the parking area on Matfield Green and clearing of Matfield pond. There were requests for improved maintenance and repairs of the Jack Verrall Garden, including the replacement of gates to prevent wandering dogs. A number suggested the playing fields in Pettebridge should be upgraded and access restored.

## Adequacy of activities offered within the Parish (Q7)

85% of those with an opinion felt that adult sports provision was at least *Satisfactory*. Around 54% didn't know whether such facilities for children or teenagers were adequate or not; of those that did, nearly two-thirds rated them at least *Satisfactory*. Only about one third felt that "Country Pursuits" (eg riding, fishing) were *Satisfactory* or *Good*, and about a quarter were satisfied with "Arts and Crafts" activities.

Over half of respondents had *No Opinion* on provision for Scouts and Guides; of those who did 87% thought them at least *Satisfactory*. Similarly, the majority had *No Opinion* on whether activities for children or teens were adequate; of those that

We need more advertising and awareness of what activities are available.

We need more community events, for all ages, that are reasonably priced.

Make it easier for old folk to meet up on a regular basis.

Improve and support the community links between the two villages, and keep our identity and rural heritage.

I wanted to do some useful charity / volunteering work, but there is no one source. It would be good to have information on the BM website, showing opportunities, and outlining skills required.

More cross country footpaths between Matfield and Brenchley. More off road cycle paths.

did have a view, 40% rated activities for children as *Requires Improvement*, while the figure for teens reached 63%.

When asked for suggestions other than those listed in the survey, 55 people suggested a total of 21 different activities, the most popular of which were organised walks and aerobic/yoga classes. Several said that there was no central information on activities that are available.

### Play Area in Matfield (Q8)

58% of those responding to this question *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that a new play area in Matfield would be a useful addition to village facilities; only 12% disagreed. Half of those who agreed suggested where it should be located, the favourite site being Matfield Green, although a good number expressed concerns about traffic and visibility and many thought it should be near the Pavilion. The second most popular suggestion was to clear an area in the grounds around the Village Hall, with its car parking and toilet facilities. The Drying Grounds were the third favourite site.

### Improvement in the Quality of Life (Q9)

The two areas thought by over 85% of respondents to be *Helpful* or *Essential* were a register of volunteers and volunteer opportunities, and improved publicity for local events. Around 75% felt as strongly in favour of a Farmers' Market, although several people suggested that there were enough in the area already and expressed concern over their possible impact on local shops. An increased police presence and Neighbourhood Watch were thought to be important by over 70%, but only 22% thought "twinning" at least *Helpful*. 10% of respondents expanded upon their answers, mentioning a variety of topics, the most frequent of which was speeding traffic through the villages.

### Willingness to Volunteer (Q10)

For all the areas identified, fewer than 10% of respondents said that they already volunteer, and, for most areas, between 60-80% said that they would not be prepared to volunteer in the future. The area with the strongest indication of interest was in clearing litter, where 67% said they either might, or would, get involved. 54% of respondents said they might, or would, help with Nature Conservation and footpaths, whilst 45% might help with implementing the Parish Plan. Whilst several people said they couldn't volunteer due to age, infirmity, or work/home commitments, a number registered their willingness to volunteer, and this will be followed up.

## Health, Care and Wellbeing

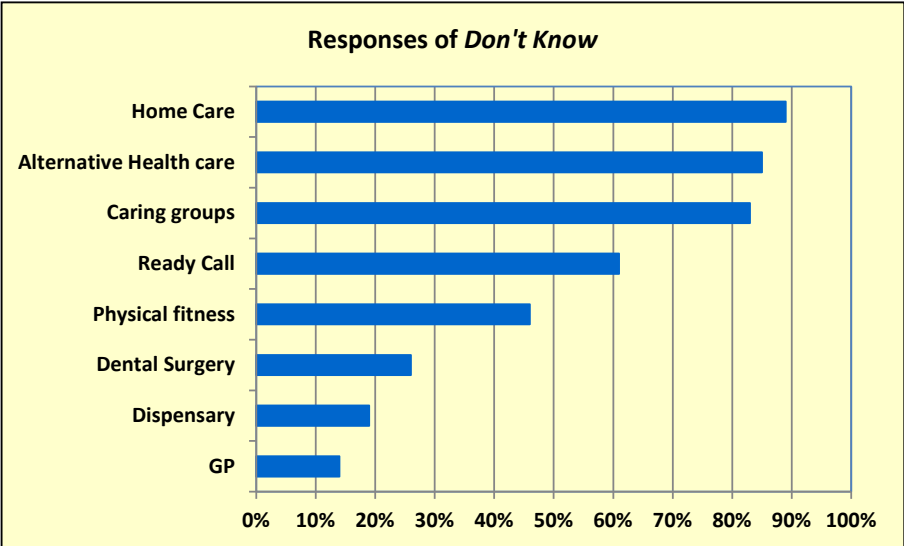
### Adequacy of Health and Care facilities and services within the parish (Q11)

This section contained only one question, seeking views on the adequacy of a range of services and inviting suggestions on other services that might be provided in the parish. Between 503 and 526 responded on the various categories. It is assumed that a response of *Don't Know* indicated that the respondent did not use that particular service. In Matfield, 21% responded *Don't Know* to the doctors' surgery, 33% to the dental surgery and 31% to the pharmacy. This suggests that a significant proportion of Matfield residents access these health care services outside the parish. The percentages quoted in the following paragraphs refer only to those respondents who had knowledge of that particular service.

The dispensary at the surgery was seen as *Good* or *Very Good* by 76%, with 6% saying it requires improvement. Brenchley gave the highest rating at 81% and Castle Hill the lowest at 70%. *Good* or *Very Good* ratings increased with age, with the 25-44 age group at 63% and both 65-74 age group and 75+ at 86%.



Would be good to have Pilates for older persons in the area.



The doctors' surgery was rated *Good* or *Very Good* by 79%, with only 6% saying *Requires Improvement*. All areas of the parish scored at least 75% *Good* or *Very Good*, although these ratings were lower for the 25-44 age group, at 69%, than for older age groups.

The dental surgery scored 82% *Good* or *Very Good*, with 3% responding *Requires Improvement*. Ratings were highest in Brenchley at 87% and lowest in Market Heath at 70%. The range by age groups was narrower, from 78-85%.

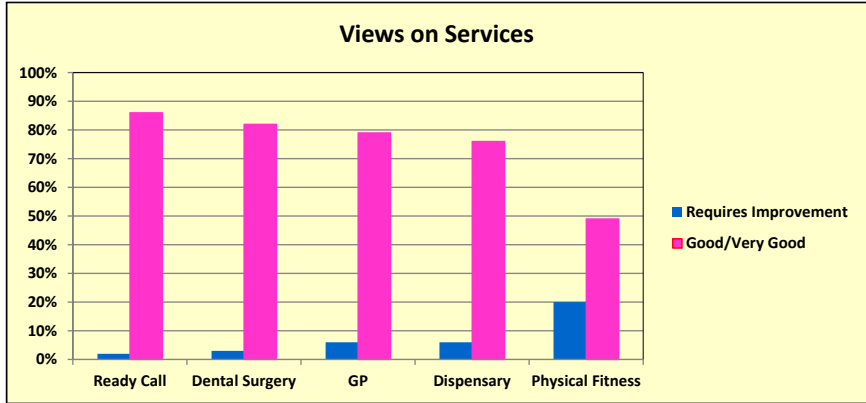
For Chiropody and Alternative Health Care, only 20% and 15% respectively had any knowledge. 37% thought Chiropody services *Good* or *Very Good*, while 36% thought *Requires Improvement*. For Alternative Health Care, 27% found them *Good* or *Very Good*, while 34% ranked them as *Requires Improvement*.

Brenchley and Matfield Ready Calls had a *Don't Know* response of 61% but were judged as *Good* or *Very Good* by 86% of those with knowledge of the services. For Matfield the rating was 88% and for Brenchley 82%, with other areas ranging from 73% to 100%. By age, only the 25-44 age group fell below 80%.

Awareness of Caring Groups & Services and Home Care was very low, with only 17% and 11% respectively having an opinion. Of those who had an opinion, 49% rated Caring groups and Services as *Good* or *Very Good*, with 24% saying they require improvement; for Home Care these figures were 27% and 46%.

In the category of Physical Fitness, 54% had a view. Of these, 49% thought facilities and services *Good* or *Very Good*, while 20% thought they *Require Improvement*. The ratings for *Good* or *Very Good* increased with age, ranging from 33% in the 25-44 age group to 63% at 75+.

Supported housing for elderly so many people who have lived here for years have to leave in their last years when needing care.



The villages need to be set up in visible ways to encourage fitness - eg better footpaths on key routes.

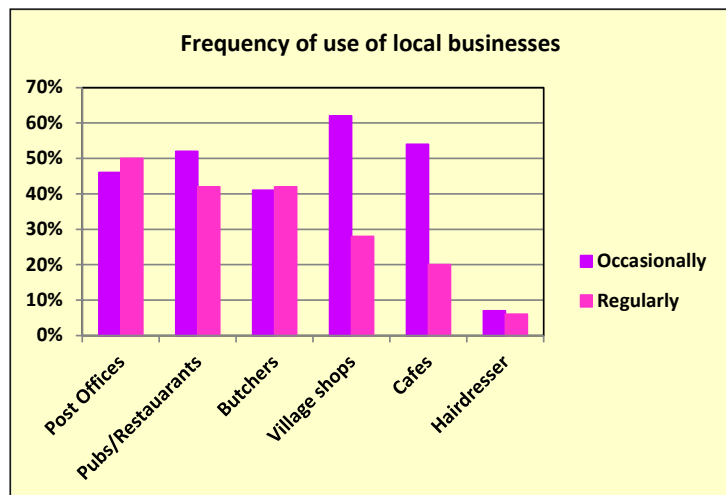
We worry too much about ...young people and not enough about older, less mobile people who want to stay in the community.

There were 28 suggestions for other services, excluding those who only said they had no knowledge. Around half related to physical fitness, including a gym, a swimming pool, more pilates and yoga classes and better footpaths and pavements for walkers, buggy pushers and runners. Other proposals included chiropody services in the home, eye and hearing tests and physiotherapy. The needs of older people were also mentioned, including sheltered housing and voluntary help with housework.

## Business and Local Economy

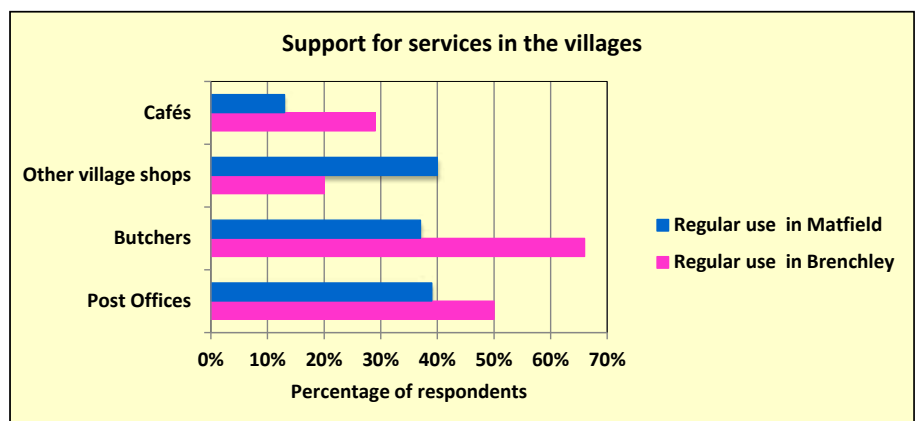
This section of the survey looked at the use made of certain local businesses, views on how to encourage more businesses and employment and the adequacy of mobile and broadband reception. The average number of responses was 516.

### Use of local businesses (Q12)



This question presumes that the respondent agrees that more business and employment in the village is required. I do not.

Most of the types of local businesses were supported at least *Occasionally* by three-quarters of the respondents, with the exception of the hairdresser. Regular use was much lower, with only the Post Offices used *Regularly* by as many as half the respondents. Regularity of use increased steadily with age, except with local pubs and restaurants and cafés, where the highest percentage use was in the 25-64 age range. Analysis of usage by respondents' locations suggests that proximity to businesses is a significant factor in their use.



Better post offices, replace lost post boxes, better internet speeds.

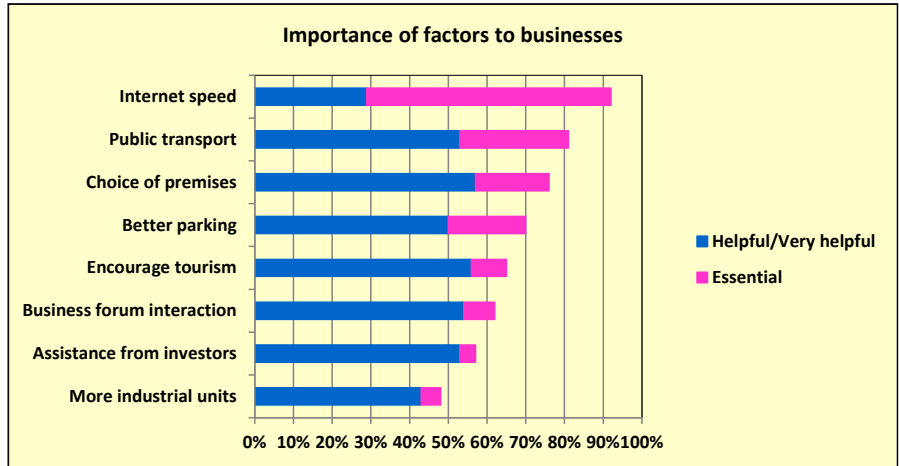
### Running a Business (Q13)

Of 519 respondents, 72 people (14%) currently ran or planned to run a business.

Poor stability of phone lines and electricity plus stability and speed of internet all affect my business negatively.

### Encouraging more businesses and employment (Q14)

By a substantial margin, high-speed internet was seen as the most important factor in encouraging more businesses and employment, with 63% seeing it as *Essential* and another 29% as *Helpful* or *Very Helpful*. 28% thought regular public transport *Essential* and 53% saw it as *Helpful* or *Very Helpful*. Other factors seen as important were better parking (20% and 49% of respondents) and choice of premises (18% and 59%). The other factors listed (see chart below) were seen as much less *Essential*, though still desirable.



I run a couple of businesses from home and need good commuting to London.

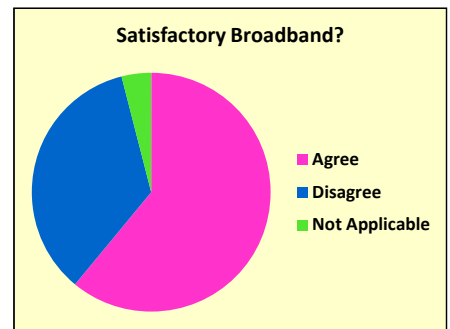
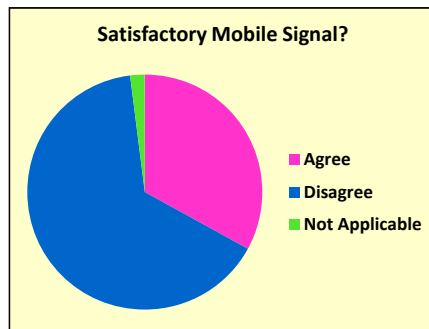
Respondents were invited to identify any other relevant facilities or services, but only 24 did so and a third of those were comments on factors mentioned in the survey. Additional suggestions related to information and advertising, mobile and broadband services, better post offices and a free-to-use ATM in the parish.

### Mobile and Internet Accessibility (Q15)

Mobile signal was the greater concern, with 64% of respondents saying they did not get a satisfactory signal. All parts of the parish answered in the range 62-67% except for Petteridge, where 85% were dissatisfied. There were higher levels of satisfaction with broadband speeds, with 61% expressing satisfaction. The main exception was Castle Hill, with 61% dissatisfaction. Only a small percentage of respondents said that these questions did not apply to them, suggesting that there are very high levels of usage of both services.

Respondents were invited to provide their postcodes to identify areas of the parish with poor mobile signal and slow broadband speed. 293 respondents indicated a poor mobile signal and 160 respondents indicated slow broadband speed. An analysis of the post codes demonstrates that problem areas can be found throughout the parish, even in Broad Oak, Brenchley High Street and Maidstone Road. In general it appears that a poor mobile signal is a greater problem than low broadband speed.

Increased advertising opportunities for local business. I run a business in the parish and many people still don't know.



# Transport, Highways and Byways

This section sought views on some very specific ideas on traffic management, pedestrian safety, footpaths and bridleways, and parking, along with a broader question on bus services. There were also 128 comments on bus services and 118 on other transport issues, with a further 116 from the questions on Priorities and Other Issues at the end of the Survey. All questions were answered by at least 500 respondents, except for Q21 on the adequacy of bus services (479).

In all of this section, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* are combined to indicate support, while *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree* combined indicate opposition.

## Managing traffic in Brenchley and Matfield (Q16)

The survey invited views on twelve ideas for improving traffic management in the parish. Three proposals were supported by over 75% of respondents:

- A 30 mph limit around the Pixot Hill crossroads (84% for, 5% against, with over 75% support from all areas of the parish).
- A 20 mph zone past Brenchley and Matfield School (81% for, 12% against, again with very strong support from all areas).
- Restricting HGV movements through the parish, (80% for, 10% against, with only Petteridge at 66%, having less than 70% support). The nature of any restrictions was not specified in the survey.

Five other measures attracting significant majority support (over 55% of respondents) were:

- Speed indicator devices as traffic calming measures (74% for, 16% against), with at least two-thirds support from all areas except Petteridge (53%).
- A 30 mph limit through Castle Hill (68% for, 12% against, with over 60% support from all areas). This proposal had a relatively high (20%) of *No Opinion*; of those with a view, 85% were in favour.
- Extending the 30 mph limit in Matfield to just past St Luke's corner (64% for, 25% against, with over two-thirds support from Matfield, outlying areas and Petteridge).
- Extending the 30 mph limit in Matfield down Geddes Hill, (59% for, 24% against, with majority support from all areas except Market Heath at 43%).
- A 20mph zone through the centre of Brenchley, including Windmill Hill (59% for, 27% against, with significant support from all areas except Petteridge and Castle Hill).

Opinion was more evenly divided on two of the proposals though, if those with *No Opinion* responses are excluded, there was still a significant majority in favour:

- A speed camera at Matfield Village Hall to replace the speed indicator device (52% for, 34% against, with only Market Heath and Matfield having significant majority support of all respondents).
- Speed cameras as traffic calming measures on busy roads (50% for, 38% against, with only Matfield showing significant majority support).

Only two of the proposals failed to attract majority support:

- Table Tops on busy roads (street lighting required) (40% for, 50% against).
- Chicanes on busy roads (street lighting required) (37% for, 51% against).

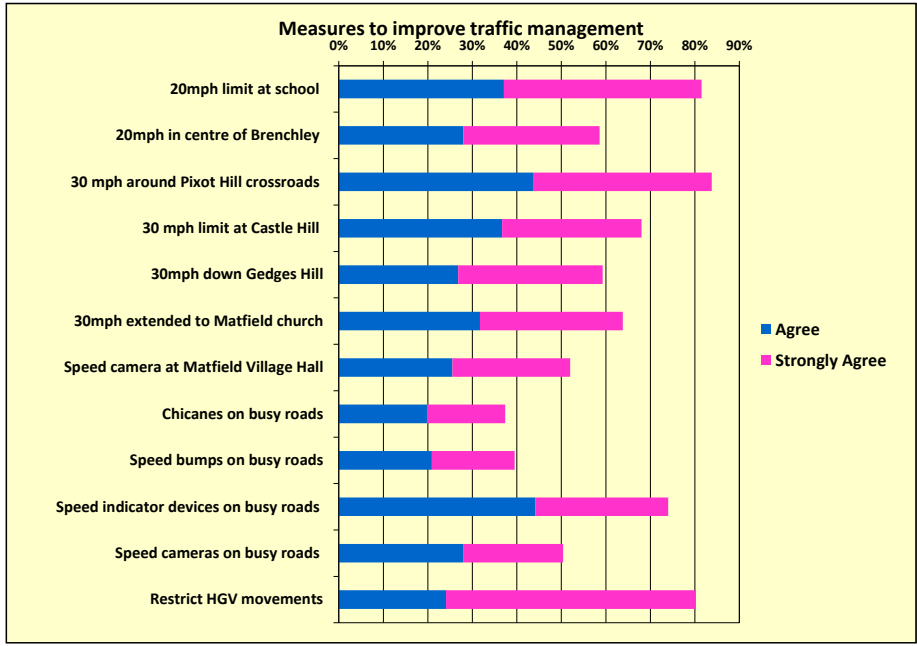
These results suggest a strong appetite for lower speed limits and restrictions on HGVs, but with relatively weak support for speed cameras and a clear reluctance to see more radical engineering measures that force vehicles to slow down. The overall picture does not look to be greatly affected by the overrepresentation of

Maidstone Road needs speed cameras!!! The cars come along here at 70 miles per hour!

It's not regular enough - but there are not enough passengers to justify more buses. Vicious circle. Would smaller busses more regularly be a solution?

The cars parked in Matfield along from The Star are a hazard.

I answered no to 30mph in various areas but I would support 40mph which is safe for out of village.



Encourage parents at Brenchley and Matfield School to park safely.

older age groups in the survey. While the over-75s consistently showed the highest levels of support, the responses of the 45-64 group averaged the same as the 65-74 group, while the 25-44 group were the second highest.

Speed featured strongly in the comments (over 70), especially but by no means only from Matfield residents concerned about Maidstone Road. There were calls for lower speed limits and better enforcement, while the potential impact of further development on traffic levels was also highlighted, notably in relation to Petteridge. The specific places most often mentioned as safety concerns were the centre of Matfield and the junctions at Pixot Hill and Standings Cross. HGVs were also a concern (16 comments), with some calls for banning them but a few recognising that some are necessary.

**Pedestrian Safety (Q17)**

There were five proposals under this heading:

- The strongest support was for a pedestrian crossing outside Brenchley and Matfield School, requiring street lights (75% for, 15% against).
- There was also strong support for a pavement/footway along Brenchley Road to link Brenchley and Matfield (74% for, 16% against).
- A smaller majority supported a pedestrian crossing, requiring street lighting, in the centre of Matfield ( 57% for, 22% against), the areas with significant majority support being Matfield, Petteridge and outlying areas.
- There was similar support for a pavement/footway down Gedges Hill to Mascalls School (56% for, 21% against, with over 70% support from Matfield).
- Linking the pavement in front of Brenchley Post Office with a new pavement to the junction with Windmill Hill Road attracted only 46% support overall, though it was supported by two-thirds of those with an opinion.

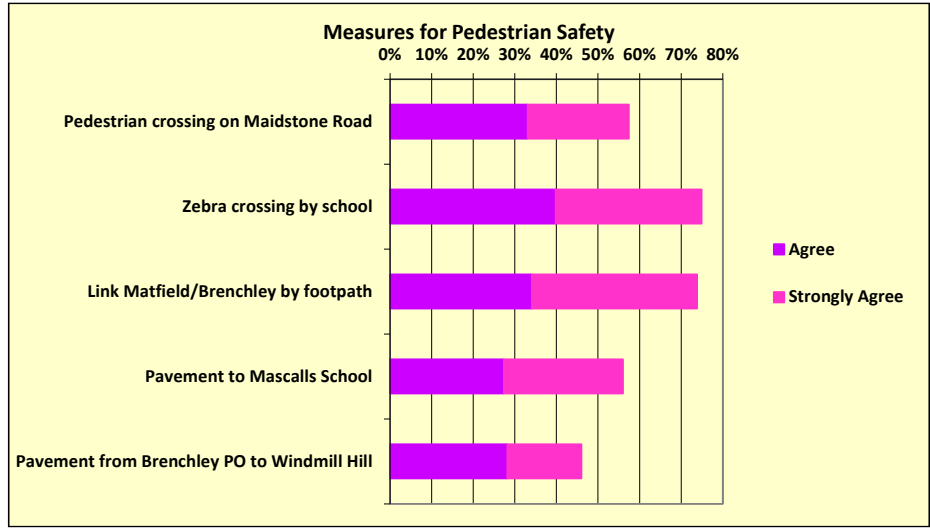
I strongly support extending pavements between Brenchley and Matfield.

Some of these questions had a relatively high percentage of *No Opinion* responses, peaking at 31% for the fifth proposal. The majorities of those with an opinion were correspondingly more convincing. The highest levels of support by age came from the 25-44 group, followed by over 75s and then 65-74 and 45-64.

There were strong comments about the need for a footpath from Petteridge to Brenchley and a few supporting other ideas. These included a continuous footpath

Buses to/from Paddock Wood - especially at commuting hours.

between Brenchley and Matfield and on the Maidstone Road towards Geddes Hill. Comments on ideas said to require street lighting were more mixed, with a desire for improved safety, particularly for pedestrians, offset for some by concern about the environmental impact.



I think the traffic speed and volume is the major issue. It really needs addressing.

### Public Footpaths and Bridleways (Q18)

Views were sought on four ideas:

- Better maintenance of footpaths and bridleways attracted strong support from all areas (76% for, 8% against).
- Upgrading some routes to provide adequate access for wheelchairs, pushchairs etc also had significant support from all areas (67% for, 12% against).
- Replacing stiles with a gap or gate for ease of access by all had a similar level of support (66% for, 14% against).
- Opinion was evenly divided on upgrading some footpaths to bridleways, with 33% in favour and 34% against.

Support was similar from all age groups. The most frequent comment related to this section was the need to cut back vegetation bordering both pavements and footpaths.

### Improving Parking (Q19)

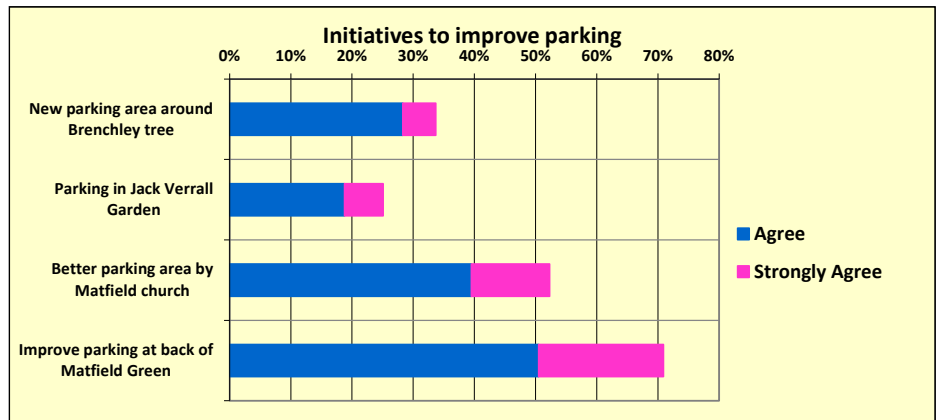
Of the four proposals on parking, only one attracted significant majority support from all respondents:

- Improving the parking area on the verge at the back of Matfield Green had strong support (71% for, 6% against, with particularly strong support in Matfield at 83%).
- Organising parking by St Luke's Church had 80% support from those with an opinion, but not a significant majority of all respondents (52% for, 13% against).
- Diagonal markings to allow parking outside South Cottage and Church House attracted the support of 53% of those with an opinion, too small a majority to be statistically significant, with over a third of respondents having *No Opinion*.
- Conversion of the lower part of the Jack Verrall Garden to parking was opposed by nearly two-thirds of those with an opinion

The speed limit through Pettebridge village is 60mph. This is astonishingly dangerous.

A pavement or tarmacked footpath is needed from Petteridge up to the Brenchley Road. Many children and elderly people walk along the lane.

The high level of *No Opinion* on these questions reflects respondents' limited use of areas outside their own village. Problem areas highlighted in over 50 comments included near Old Palace, the Surgery and the School in Brenchley, on Maidstone Road in the centre of Matfield and at Standings Cross, with some very strong objections to the idea of converting the Jack Verrall garden to parking.



More cross country footpaths between Matfield and Brenchley. More off road cycle paths.

### Adequacy of Bus Services (Q21)

Just over two-thirds of respondents said that the bus service was adequate for their needs. The highest levels of satisfaction came from Market Heath, Matfield and outlying areas, with only Petteridge showing less than majority agreement (48%). Agreement was significant for all ages, though it declined with rising age.

Since use of bus services was not surveyed, this response includes both people who use buses and find them satisfactory and those who do not want to use them. It is not therefore possible to report on satisfaction levels among current users.

### Suggestions for improvements to bus services (Q22)

128 respondents used the text box to make 155 comments or suggestions on improving bus services. More than half of these related to frequency of services. Many of these were expressed in general terms but others identified needs of particular users, notably commuters, students and shoppers. Inadequacy of weekend and evening services was also highlighted. Some comments, noting that increased services were likely to be uneconomic, suggested smaller buses.

The only other topic attracting more than 20% of the comments was on bus routes, some overlapping with those on frequency. The most frequent requests were for more direct services to Paddock Wood, followed by Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge.

### Community Mini-Bus (Q23)

Respondents were asked whether they would use and pay for a community mini bus for use by local groups. Over half of respondents (53%) had no opinion, while 28% were negative and 19% positive. The lack of interest or support was common to all areas and age groups except for the over-75s, where 55% of respondents had an opinion, 35% positive and 20% negative.

Where there are currently no pavements put up Beware Walkers in Road signs to warn drivers.

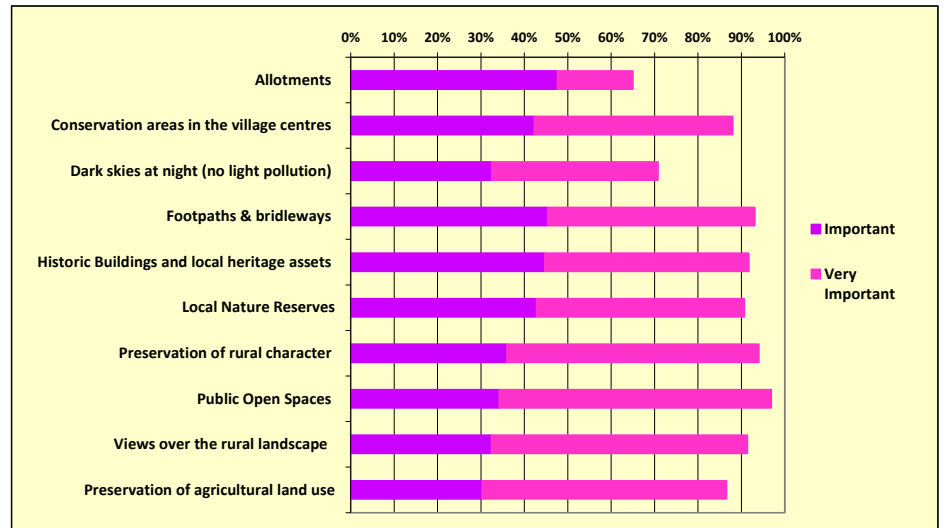
# Environment and Sustainability

Response rates on this section of the survey ranged from 493 to 513. The analysis covers these along with 42 comments from the final question on Priorities and 11 on Other Issues not covered by the Survey.

As a rural area we should be utilising local resources such as wood for burning or chipping for wood chip stoves.

## The importance of 10 listed aspects of the environment (Q24)

Combining the percentage of respondents who rated them *Important* or *Very Important*, six of the listed aspects gained over 90% approval ratings, as indicated below. The other factors also attracted high levels of support but more no opinions, particularly the allotments where 27% *Don't Know* is understandable since most residents do not use them.



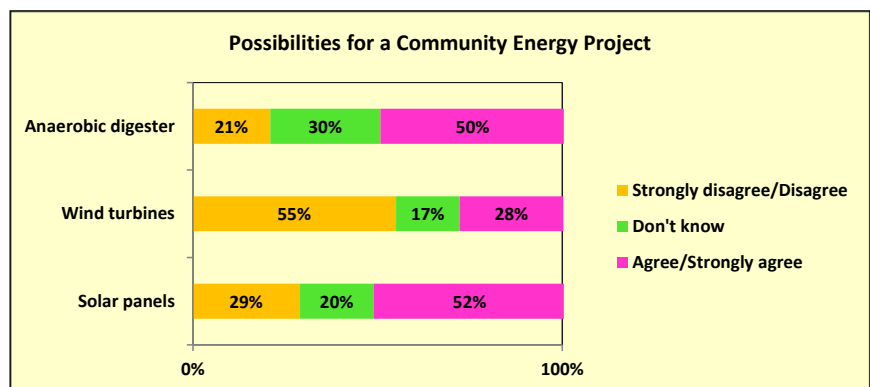
Communal composting facilities and a communal shredder with both creating compost for sale to parishioners while reducing pollution from bonfires.

This question also attracted 38 comments from the questions at the end of the Survey on priorities and areas not already covered. Almost all emphasised the need to retain the rural village community, including those who supported some development. Some referred specifically to open spaces, hedgerow maintenance, wildlife habitat, woodland, footpaths and avoiding light pollution as facets of the rural nature of the villages. Specific mention was made by several of applying this to Petteridge as well as Brenchley and Matfield.

## A community energy project (Q25)

Three options were offered: solar panels, anaerobic digesters and wind turbines. Combining *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* responses, solar panels generated more support (52%) than an anaerobic digester (49%) and far more than wind turbines (28%). Resistance to wind turbines (55% against compared to 28% in favour) was clear. *Don't Know* answers were high, with 29% for anaerobic digesters, compared to 20% on solar panels and 17% on wind turbines. Counting only those respondents with an opinion, the percentages for *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* rise to 65% for solar, 70% for anaerobic digesters and 34% for wind turbines.

Maintenance of footpaths (and making dog walkers clear up after their animals!





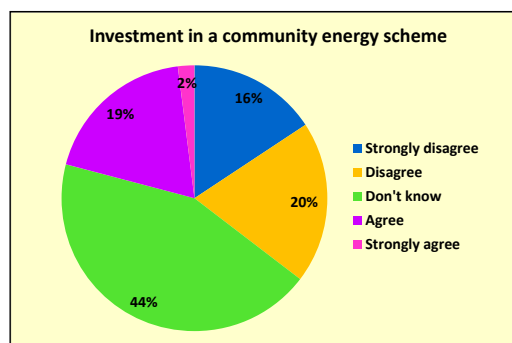
Encourage local landowners and those who rent farmland from them to be proactive in maintaining hedges alongside public footpaths to enable safe passage.

This question had a supplementary box asking for other measures respondents might like to see. This generated ten creative ideas. These included:

- Using local resources for wood chip stoves.
- Investigating rivers and streams for hydro electric potential.
- Communal composting facilities.
- More energy conservation measures in Porters Close apartments.
- Collective purchase of oil and solar panels (and not going for solar farms).
- Piping gas into the village.
- Converting to air or ground sourced heating with government grants rather than replacing oil fired boilers.
- Localising food production, which could also provide more local employment.
- Community energy schemes.

### Willingness to invest in a community energy scheme (Q26)

21%, or 105, respondents were prepared to support a scheme with their own money, with 35% not willing. The highest percentages of respondents were *Don't Know* (44%) while three supplementary comments wanted more detailed proposals, costs and information, with one respondent asking who or which body would decide such questions and drive them forward.



Question 26 is difficult to answer as it is not clear how much money these projects would need to get them up and running.

### Options for energy conservation (Q27)

Three options were tabled:

- Community advice for the elderly and others on energy conservation in the home was supported by 73%, with only 5% disagreeing and 21% having *No Opinion*.
- Car shares were supported by 46%, but 38% had *No Opinion* and 16% *Disagreed*.
- Electric charging points for cars had only 42% in agreement with 27% disagreeing that it would be desirable and 32% having *No Opinion*.

Only six supplementary suggestions were made. These covered car shares to the station; providing energy advice to all age groups; more locally sourced and marketed produce; and improving footpaths to encourage walking.

I own a leasehold flat in Porters Close and would really like the block to have more energy conservation measures as an environmental and cost saving initiative.

### Maintaining a clean and sustainable environment (Q28)

Again there were three ideas for consideration. All of these were strongly supported:

- The strongest agreement, at 92%, was with action on reducing litter. Suggestions included prosecuting fly tippers and more signs about cleaning up dog mess.
- Doorstep collection of glass and bottles was also strongly supported, at 81%, with 9% disagreeing and 10% having *No Opinion*. Several

Play area - uninspiring - need bins with lids to stop rubbish overflowing.

respondents wanted improved recycling facilities, commenting on the mess around the recycling centres for glass, with overspill adding to the litter.

- 79% supported for a weekly amenity vehicle, with 17% having *No Opinion* and 4% disagreeing. Two respondents commented particularly on the need for this in the two open questions at the end of the Survey.

## Planning and Development

This section contained five questions. There was also one text question, on types of housing, which respondents used to express their general views on Planning and Development, as there was no other opportunity to do so in this section. The 33 responses ranged across the whole agenda, as did 93 comments from Q41 on priorities and 35 from Q42 on areas not covered by the survey. The comments were too diverse for meaningful statistical analysis.

There were mostly 450 to 500 responses, but only 349-391 answered the complex question on the scale of individual developments (Q33), while a maximum of 299 indicated their future plans (Q30), a question which was to be answered only if relevant to the individual.

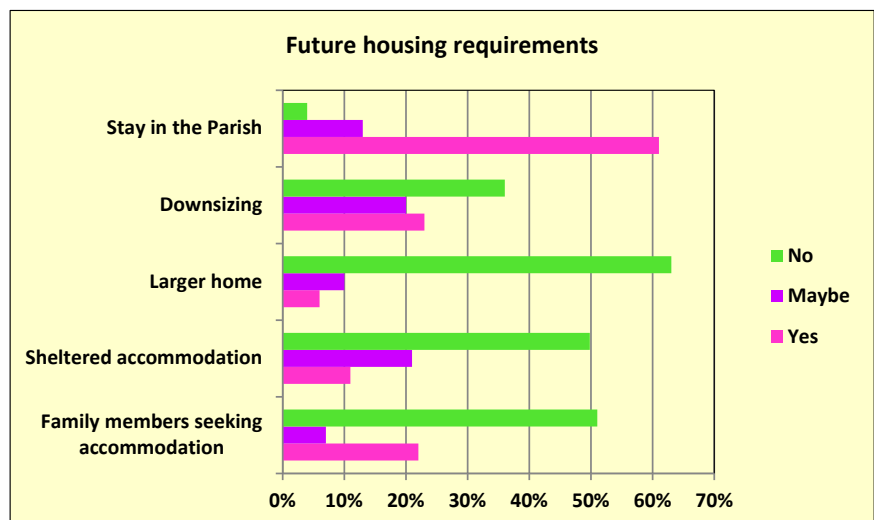
### Location of Development (Q29)

The survey did not set out to test views overall on where any development might take place, but there were two questions on aspects of location.

- 66% of respondents *Agreed or Strongly Agreed* that it was important to avoid continuous development between Brenchley and Matfield, with only 17% *Disagree or Strongly Disagree*. Agreement was strongest among residents of Market Heath (86%), Brenchley (70%) and Matfield (65%), but was the majority opinion among residents of all areas.
- The second question invited views on a more permissive approach to infill development in Castle Hill, Market Heath and Petteridge, in line with what is allowed in Brenchley and Matfield. Overall, 51% of responses said *Agree or Strongly Agree*, with 29% against and 20% having *No Opinion*. The statistical significance of the results for each hamlet is limited by the small numbers involved. Votes were too close in Castle Hill and Petteridge to be confident of the hamlets' views, but in Market Heath a clearer majority (60% to 40%) disagreed. Several comments indicated strong feelings about the extent of past development and future proposals in Petteridge.

Please leave the look and character of our beautiful village. Developments should be in areas like Paddock Wood.

### Respondents own plans (Q30)



We need to provide a greater mix, attract younger generations and provide alternatives for older residents who might move from family houses.

The parish needs no more houses, flats or development. It will change the values of country life.

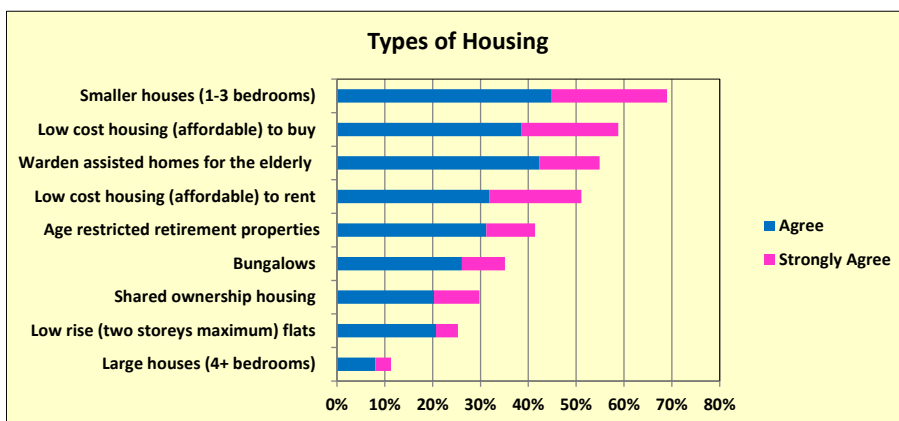
Regarding their own plans over the next five years, 61% of respondents definitely intended to stay in the parish if suitable housing is available. 23% are looking to downsize (including 65% of those 65-74), while only 6%, mostly in the 25-44 group, would like a bigger house. 11% of respondents thought there was a possibility that they or family members might be interested in sheltered or warden-assisted accommodation in the parish. 22% said they had family members who would like to live in the village but cannot find suitable accommodation.

### Types of housing (Q31)

Respondents were asked to *Agree* or *Disagree* with building more of different types of housing. Their views were:

- There was a clear preference for smaller (1-3 bedroom) over larger houses (4+ bedrooms), with 69% *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with the former and only 11% with the latter.
- There was some support for low cost housing, with 59% supporting them to buy but only 51% to let. 22% were against more low cost houses to buy and 29% against building them to let. Support was, perhaps counter-intuitively, weakest in the 25-44 age group.
- Warden assisted housing was also supported by a small majority of respondents (55% for and 17% against). Support for age restricted properties was weaker, but still with a majority of those expressing an opinion in support (42% to 27%). Support for these was understandably strongest among older age groups.
- Opinion on bungalows was more evenly divided (35% for and 33% against), with a clear majority support in the over-75s offset by declining support from progressively younger ages.
- There was a clear majority of expressed views across all age groups against two storey flats (25% for but 49% against), with a particular lack of support from the 25-44 group.

The villages should take a positive view of housing development on a controlled basis.



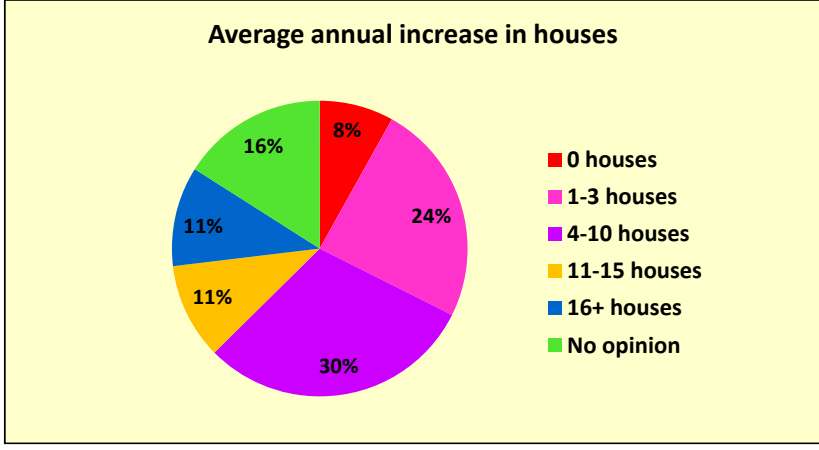
### Scale of development (Q32)

Most respondents are prepared to see some new development, with only 8% saying they wanted no new houses. But respondents wanted it on a modest scale overall and in small scale developments. 30% supported building 4-10 new houses per annum (pa), while a further 24% would only accept 1-3 pa. At the upper end, 12% supported 11-15 pa and 11% over 16 pa. 15% of respondents had *No Opinion*.

There is no evidence that the relative overrepresentation of older age groups in survey returns produced a bias against development. Indeed, a significantly lower proportion of the 65-74 and 75+ age groups supported no development or 1-3 houses pa (26%) than was the case for the 25-44 group (41%).

The centres of Brenchley and Matfield should be maintained as quintessential Wealden villages.

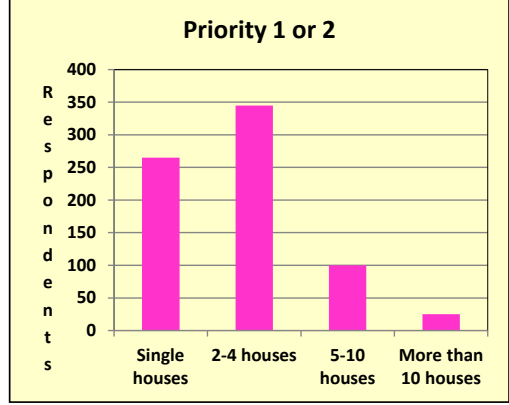
Housing estates would be detrimental to the character of the villages.



**Size of individual developments (Q33)**

Respondents were asked to put four options for the scale of individual developments in order of preference. The complexity of this question may explain the lower overall response rate.

The highest number of first preferences went to single house developments. If account is taken of second to fourth preferences, under an alternative weighting system, then developments of 2-4 houses move into first place. These options are greatly preferred to larger developments, especially those over 10 houses, which attracted very few first or second preferences, as indicated below. These figures are hard to reconcile with the fact that 42%



There are many small areas which could support small developments and should be released from planning restrictions.

of respondents supported or strongly supported building a new school, which was explicitly stated to necessitate allowing 25-35 houses to be built on the existing school site.

**Formal Education**

This area of the survey looked at a variety of broader topics concerning education provision within the Parish and also the specific question regarding the building of a new school financed by the sale of the existing school site for the construction of 25-35 houses. There were a number of open text questions in this section, with responses ranging from 214 to only 15.

Overall response rates for these questions were strong, but there were a number where *No Opinion* levels were high, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn.

**Adequacy of current pre-school provision of playgroups/babysitting and childcare support and ideas for improvement (Q34)**

58% of the responses selected *No Opinion*. Otherwise, 36% rated these services as *Good* or *Satisfactory*, compared with 6% for *Inadequate* or *Needs Improvement*. Results were not skewed by age range, location or gender. In particular there were limited distinctions between age categories, except that 16% in the 25-44 age group voted *Needs Improvement* versus the 45-64 age group at 3%.

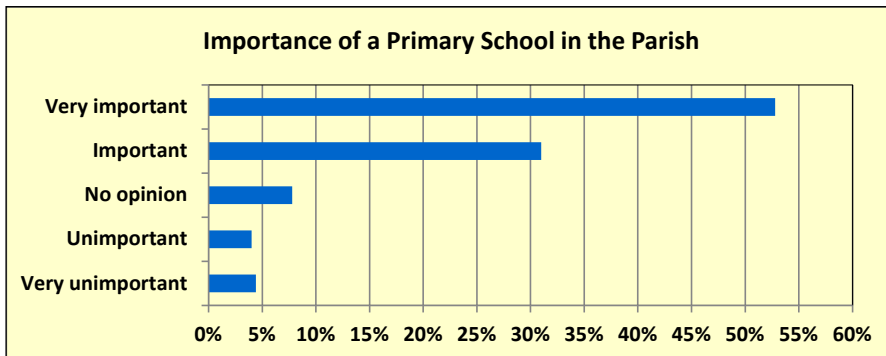
There were only 15 comments, focused on lack of playgroups, particularly for children under two, and the lack of facilities catering for parents' working hours.

Existing school needs upgrading not rebuilding by a means of a large development.

A village cannot be sustained as a village without young families and a good school brings young families.

### Importance of having a primary school in the parish (Q35)

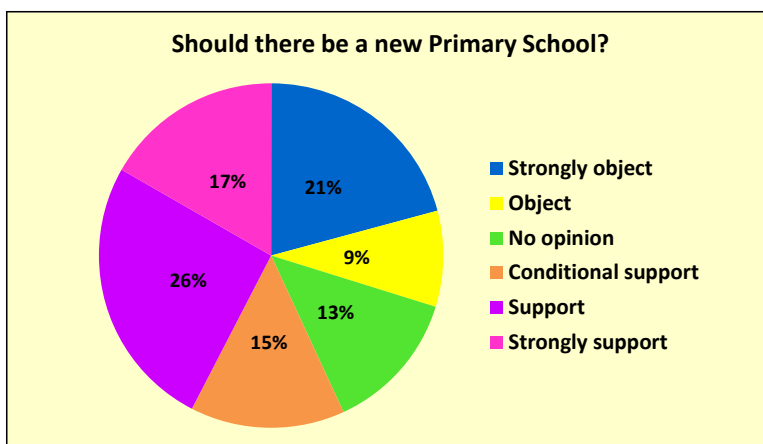
There was strong support for having a primary school in the Parish, with 84% of respondents considering this *Important* or *Very Important*. A higher proportion of respondents from Market Heath voted *Unimportant* or *Very Unimportant* (33%), with Brenchley the next highest at 13%. Age did not play a huge factor in voting; the greatest proportion of *Unimportant* or *Very Unimportant* responses was 13% for the 75+ age bracket and the next highest being the 45-64 bracket at 9%.



214 comments were left in the open text box. In general these reflected the positive sentiment expressed in the option boxes, although some negative comments were made. Some general themes were:

- A school is good for age diversification, sustainability and attracting people to the parish.
- It provides a nucleus or hub for the parish.
- Concern over the number of children attending who were not from the parish and about demand from the parish itself.
- Parking problems at drop off and pick up time.

There is sufficient schooling already offered in places like Paddock Wood. Most children arrive by car to Brenchley and live outside the parish.



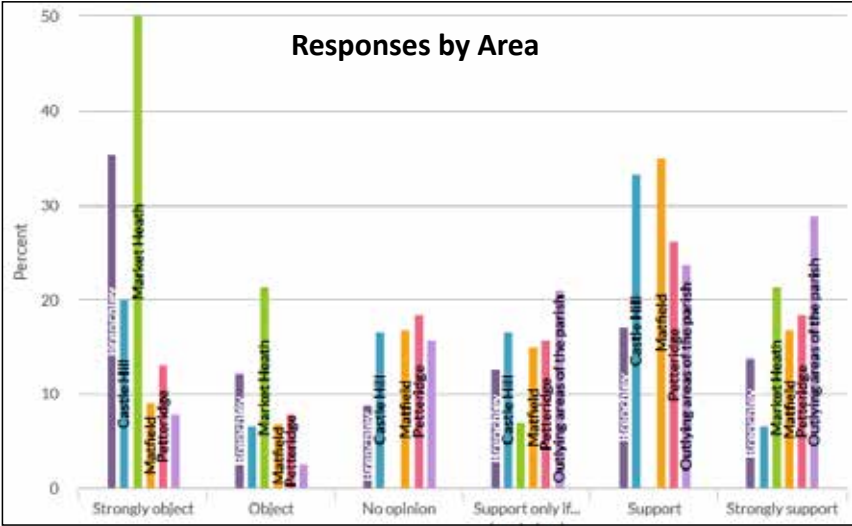
### Views on proposed rebuild of the school (Q36)

This question produced strong and conflicting views, with relatively few of *No Opinion* and some forceful text responses. Supporters of a rebuild, at 42% (*Support* 26%; *Strongly Support* 16%) exceeded objectors, at 30% (*Object* 9%; *Strongly Object* 21%). A further 15% said they would support only on certain conditions.

There were substantial differences in views by location of respondent. 47% from Brenchley and 71% from Market Heath voted *Object* or *Strongly Object*, compared with only 16% from Matfield. In turn, 52% from Matfield voted *Support* or *Strongly Support* compared with 31% from Brenchley and 21% from Market Heath.

The opportunity to develop a new school together with additional community facilities is too valuable to miss.

Development of the existing 2.5 acre site is only acceptable if based on far fewer than 25-35 houses.



There were 149 responses to the invitation to outline the conditions under which a rebuild would be supported, although there were only 71 conditional responses. Many comments were on the idea in general. They were varied, with some forthright views expressed. Some themes were:

- Improving the current school should be further explored.
- Whether the school had explored all options for funding.
- Concerns that a 25-35 home development is too large, not in keeping with the character of the parish and would place too great a strain on infrastructure.
- A desire to achieve an appropriate mix of homes with smaller family houses encouraged.
- Support depending on location of the new school, on which views varied.
- Insufficient information was included to be able to make a decision on the topic.
- A desire for children in the parish to be prioritised.
- More community use of the school, including improvements like a gym and pool.

I would like to see facilities at the new school being made available to the community.

**Adequacy of links between the school and the community (Q37)**

This was another question where more responses (53%) were *No Opinion* than anything else. Of those with a view, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*, totalling 30%, outweighed *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*, which totalled 16%.

Market Heath had both more definite opinions and a less positive view than other areas, with only 13% *No Opinion* and a small, but statistically insignificant, majority saying *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree*. *No Opinions* were high for all age groups; for those expressing an opinion, only the 65-74 group, at 55%, had less than two-thirds with a positive view

I sort of support the idea but the specifics are unclear and slightly suspicious.

**Ideas for improving links between the school and the community; encouraging attendance by village resident children (Q38)**

The Survey sought views on seven ideas for strengthening links: more formal school-community liaison; greater community involvement in governance; more community use of school facilities; volunteering; incentives for staff to live in the parish; child care before and after school; and prioritisation in admissions for parish children. Those putting *No Opinion* were again significant, accounting for over half

All facilities need to be suitable for all ages to encourage more interaction and socialising.

the responses for school-community liaison and more than 40% for governance, volunteering and incentives for staff to live in the parish. Excluding *No Opinion* responses, all the ideas were supported by a substantial majority.

The positive responses are not entirely surprising, given that all of the ideas are aimed at improving school and community links. Looking at responses for *Strongly Agree*, *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree* may be more illuminating. Options which had a relatively high score in these categories were:

- Using the school for more community activities (11% *Strongly Agree*).
- Child care before and after school (11% *Strongly Agree*).
- Prioritisation of children from the parish (38% *Strongly Agree*).
- Incentives and encouragement for school staff to live in the parish (13% *Disagree*).

An open text box for other suggestions attracted only 35 responses. The only general themes were that the quality of education should be prioritised and that sports facilities could be important. Although there were other suggestions, the small number of responses means that limited conclusions can be drawn.

### Suggestions for new activities for young people of secondary school age to bring them together more in the Parish (Q39)

This was an entirely open box question and attracted 116 responses. There were two overriding themes from the responses, which were to ask younger people directly and the provision of youth/sport/social clubs.

### Views on ideas for activities for adults in the Parish (Q40)

This question invited views on an indoor gym, outdoor keep-fit equipment, a parish University of the Third Age and classes to help people use computers smart phones and social media. These did not attract particularly strong views and *No Opinion* responses were high. For classes to help people use smart phones, computers and tablets, 55% said *Important* or *Very Important* (77% of those with an opinion). The only other idea that attracted significant support of those with an opinion was a parish based U3A, rated *Important* or *Very Important* by 38%, compared with 23% saying *Unimportant* or *Very Unimportant*.

There was again an open text box for this question which attracted only 41 responses. There were no consistent themes in this, with only a swimming pool and social events receiving multiple mentions.

A youth club, to include safe internet access, homework assistance, sport, lectures on social issues, inclusion in Parish business.

All facilities need to be suitable for all ages to encourage more interaction and socialising.

# Priorities

189 respondents to Question 41 expressed their views on what they thought to be the most important priorities. Many raised more than one, leading to 301 comments on thirty-three topics, often mentioned by only a few people. It is not practical to list all of them, so these paragraphs pick out the most frequently raised issues. The full survey contains all the comments that were made and is available as a link on the parish website.

The topic that was a priority to the largest number of people (about 37% of those who commented) was controlling development so as to preserve the character of the villages and their rural environment. Many saw the environment being threatened by over-development, with several expressing fears of “urbanisation”. This did not usually mean opposition to any development, though for some it clearly did, but rather that it should be on a modest scale and sensitively planned. On the other hand, a small minority of respondents called for a more positive view of development.

The second-most important priority, reflected in 26% of comments, is traffic, with speeding and heavy goods traffic threatening the peace of the villages and, more importantly, the safety of their residents. Problems caused by parking and lack of pavements and footpaths were also raised as priority issues.

The ageing population, the need to modernise and encourage young families into the villages were a priority for 13%. Issues identified included a shortage of smaller, low-cost/rent housing (at both the young and older ends of the market) and the need for more community activity, including shops and pubs/cafés.

11% of respondents mentioned the school, expressing opinions for and against a new school in equal numbers. The proposed associated housing development was a key factor in much of the opposition. Comments also referred to traffic generated by non-parish pupils, and the current parking problems.

The last priority mentioned by significant numbers was business, with 9% of responses. Key concerns raised were: broadband/mobile phone communications; protection for businesses against change of use to residential properties; and farmers’ markets.

# Other Issues

131 respondents to Question 42 made suggestions on issues that they felt the survey had not covered, or commented on the Survey itself. 29 broad topics were addressed. In most cases, comments underlined issues already raised and have been reflected in the relevant sections of the report. As in the previous section, the greatest interest was shown in the preservation of the character of the villages, the prevention of over-development and traffic problems. Several comments were made on the need to encourage greater community spirit.

Around one tenth of the comments were on the survey itself. The majority were positive, though often with reservations on length and some concerns on whether and how it will be used and any implementation funded.



# Action Points from the Survey

These actions are directly supported or implied by the answers to questions in the Parish Plan Survey.

## Recreation, Social and Culture

- Develop new Play Area in Matfield.
- Establish a register of volunteers and volunteer opportunities.
- Improve information on local events and facilities.
- Increase awareness of sources of local information.
- Request a more visible police presence.
- Seek volunteers to extend/strengthen Neighbourhood Watch.

## Health and Care Services and Facilities

- Build awareness of Ready Call.
- Explore the need for improvements in Home Care.

## Business and local economy

- Campaign for improved mobile reception/broadband.
- Promote a Farmers' Market.
- Promote actions on issues seen as important for encouraging business and employment, eg on transport and parking, tourism and availability of premises.

## Transport, Highways and Byways

- Campaign for action on speed, especially: speed limits (Pixot Hill, past the School, Castle Hill and Petteridge, Maidstone Road (B2160), Brenchley centre); greater use of speed indicators; possibly speed cameras.
- Explore options and campaign for restrictions on HGVs.
- Promote pedestrian crossings: (i) outside the School; (ii) in the centre of Matfield.
- Explore options and costs for improved pedestrian safety: (i) between Brenchley and Matfield; (ii) down Gedges Hill; and possibly (iii) Brenchley Post Office to Windmill Hill.
- Establish group on maintenance of footpaths and their improvement (access for wheelchairs and pushchairs, and replacement of stiles).
- Explore options and costs for improved parking, including : (i) at back of Matfield Green; (ii) by St Lukes Church.

## Environment and Sustainability

- Explore feasibility of a community energy project based on solar power or an anaerobic digester.
- Provide more direct advice to the elderly and others on energy conservation in the home.
- Explore possibility of electric car charging points and car share schemes.
- Set up group to organise voluntary litter picking and campaign for other action.
- Campaign for house collection of glass (if still needed).
- Campaign for restoration of weekly amenity vehicle.

## Planning and Development

- Lobby for development to be limited to up to 10 houses in the parish per annum.
- Lobby for developments to be small scale, up to 4 units each with no estates or apartment blocks.
- Lobby for small rather than large houses, suitable for young families and downsizing.
- Encourage proposals for Affordable Housing and warden-assisted homes.
- Lobby to retain a clear physical gap between Brenchley and Matfield.

## Formal Education

- Continue dialogue with the School on proposed rebuild, to reconcile support for a new school with desire to avoid large housing developments.
- Explore options for improving School/Community links, especially greater community use of the School out of hours and improved child care before and after school *[NB would include as highest priority the prioritisation of children from the parish except that the school is currently undersubscribed]*.
- Consult young people on desire for new parish-based activities.
- Enhance provision of youth social and sports clubs.
- Provide classes for older people in use of smart phones, computers and tablets.