

# Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire Results

Prepared by the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group  
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The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would like to thank all those who completed the questionnaire. The time spent giving detailed feedback is greatly appreciated and the findings will directly influence the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Aim of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire sought residents' views to inform the development of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan.

## Key Findings

### *What Ickleford means to you*

- Residents are generally very satisfied with living in the parish. The attractive and easily accessible countryside is an important aspect of this. Residents also enjoy Ickleford's location close to Hitchin but separate from it. They value its small village feel, sense of community and strong central hub.
- Respondents' greatest concerns relate to the speed and volume of traffic, with fears that new development both within and outside the village will make this worse.

### *Amenities and Facilities*

- A key aspect of Ickleford's character is the central hub of amenities and facilities on or close to the village green. The village store, primary school and the recreation ground are all rated as important by many residents, followed by the pubs. Several people highlighted how much they like the village centre as it is and would be uncomfortable with any changes.
- When considering priorities for investment, it is clear that traffic issues, parking and pedestrian safety are key concerns. Investment in the environment and green spaces would also be a top priority for residents. Another theme was to improve and make more use of the facilities the village already has, such as the village hall, sports and social club and school buildings.
- Many people would welcome somewhere in the centre serving refreshments that was not a pub, such as a café/coffee shop or bakery. A large number of respondents would also welcome the return of a post office, improvements to the shop, or another shop.

### *Ickleford Primary School*

- A large majority of residents consider it very important that the school remains in its current position. If more school places are required in the future, most would prefer development of the current site, rather than a new school east of the Bedford Road. The position of the school in the heart of the village is seen by many as integral to the village character and sense of community. The building itself was also often highlighted as an important visual feature.
- Ideas for how the site might be used if the school were to move included many comments showing a desire to keep it as a community asset available to all. Use of the building as some kind of community centre and the playing fields remaining as green space for recreation, were commonly desired. Many respondents feel strongly that the site should not be built on for housing, although not everyone is of this opinion. Shops and places to eat, particularly a café, were also suggested, as were a pre-school or nursery, flexible office working space and a health centre, amongst other ideas.
- Discussing the school and its possible change highlighted concerns around parking and safety. Many consider parking is currently a problem and would need careful consideration before any expansion. A number of people think more walking and cycling should be encouraged.

Use of a new site off the Bedford Road is also seen as problematic by many. There are serious fears around pedestrian safety and of further congestion on an already very busy road.

### ***Housing***

- New development in the Parish and surrounding area is a source of concern for many residents. People fear overdevelopment and some question the level of housing proposed. Sixty six percent would like to limit any development beyond that outlined in the emerging local plan. Many would like no further development at all.
- There are concerns over whether the infrastructure will be sufficiently improved to cope. Other concerns include the potential damage to the village identity and community if the village grows too large or starts to merge with Hitchin. Negative effects on the natural environment are also raised by residents who have a strong desire to protect the local countryside.
- There is an appreciation by many that some development is inevitable. In some cases, it is welcomed, to keep the village alive and functioning as a community.
- Generally, residents want development to be well controlled to maintain the village identity and integrity. People want building design and layout to be sympathetic to the character of the village.
- Housing in the village is currently unaffordable for many local people. There is a desire for any new housing to be affordable to local people, including young families, single people and elderly people wishing to downsize. Overall people thought there would be a greater need for two- or three-bedroom houses, bungalows and social/affordable rented homes than larger houses in the next ten years.
- Fifty percent thought brownfield sites should be considered for development, while some thought small infill sites may be appropriate.
- Many people highlighted the desire for any new housing to be high quality, energy efficient and environmentally sustainable. The need for green technologies was expressed; along with the provision of sufficient resident and visitor parking.

### ***Environment and Heritage***

- Maintaining a separate identity to Hitchin, Letchworth and neighbouring villages is considered very important by most residents. There is similar support for conserving Ickleford's historic conservation area.
- The natural environment, footpaths, rivers, common land, agricultural landscape and views are considered an intrinsic part of Ickleford's identity. In many cases, this was a significant factor for moving to, living in and remaining in Ickleford.
- Many respondents thought that the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns had increased appreciation of Ickleford's open spaces and highlighted their importance to residents' general and mental health.
- Many respondents commented that path maintenance, as well as that of the associated hedgerows and rivers, is of prime importance. Suggestions included better path signage and information boards, more benches and additional litter and dog bins. Numerous dog owners appreciate the local footpaths for exercise. However, dog fouling and the disposal of dog waste bags in hedgerows was met with frustration.

- Some reported conflict of use between walkers and cyclists, with guidance on cyclist use of footpaths unclear. Suggestions for new designated cycle paths were given.
- Comments on improving access to the countryside through better car parking were split between those who felt more should be done and those concerned it could be detrimental to the natural environment.
- The Cadwell Bridge crossing and Bedford Road were highlighted as dangerous for walkers.

### ***Economy***

- When asked which activities respondents would like to see encouraged, those gaining most support were community projects, sporting projects, a coffee shop/tearoom/restaurant, agriculture/horticulture and environmental projects.
- These were closely followed by working from home, which is perhaps not surprising given the impact of COVID 19 on current and future working practices. In line with this, when asked how the Ickleford economy could be supported, flexible office working space with good telecommunications, particularly in existing buildings, drew the most comments.
- Improved bus services, particularly with links to the stations at Letchworth and Hitchin, were also often mentioned.
- Respondents are supportive of the local shops/pubs/lavender farm amenities but indicated that a tearoom/coffee shop, post office and a larger village store would be beneficial to the economy.
- Other suggestions included: village events, a directory of local services, addressing traffic issues, and cycle routes to Hitchin and Letchworth, amongst other ideas.

### ***Transport***

- The car dominates transport in the village, with almost all respondents using a car at least once a week. Concerns about roads and traffic produced many more comments than other transport issues. A link was made between increased development and an increase in unwanted traffic.
- Approximately two thirds of respondents felt that both speed and volume of traffic were major problems, with pedestrian safety a key issue. Two specific potential accident black spots were Cadwell bridge (a major concern for over 80% of respondents) and the roundabout at the junction of Turnpike Lane, Westmill Lane and Bedford Road.
- Many respondents noted that footpaths were too narrow – especially when walking with children. There were also requests for pedestrian crossings on Bedford Road and Turnpike Lane.
- Additional traffic calming measures were frequently requested, including average speed cameras, 20mph limits and upgrading of the existing speed calming measures.
- The speed and volume of traffic is also seen as a barrier to cycling. Safe cycle routes were requested to specific locations including Hitchin, along the A600, Stevenage and Letchworth. There was a general request for more cycle paths to encourage cycling.
- Almost two thirds of respondents rarely or never take the bus. The reasons for this included that it was not frequent enough, too expensive and that other routes were required. The most popular new routes suggested were to Hitchin station, Letchworth or to any station. There

were also comments on the lack of a bus service timed to allow students in the village to reach secondary schools in Hitchin.

- It should be noted that the car ownership levels reported by our respondents were higher than those found in the 2011 census data. This may be due to an underrepresentation of lower income households, which was also suggested by the housing data. Poor public transport may therefore be a greater issue for residents than these findings suggest.
- There is an appreciation of rural footpaths, with almost three quarters of respondents walking every day. There is some concern about the upkeep of rural paths and those within the village.

### ***About your Household***

- The information in this section indicates the current composition and character of households in the Parish. Comparisons with the 2011 census data were made to see if the sample was likely to be representative of the population.
- The age profile of households and the gender divide were very similar to that found in the census 2011 data.
- The data on household residential status shows a larger number of homeowners than the 2011 census and a lower proportion of social renters. This may suggest that homeowners were more likely to take part in the survey and indicate an underrepresentation of social renters. While this is unlikely to affect the findings for most issues, the development of the Neighbourhood Plan will need to keep this potential bias in mind, e.g. in relation to housing affordability.

### ***Final Comments***

These echoed the rest of the survey and included:

- A desire to protect the character of the village. This included maintaining its sense of community, strong village centre, with the school in its current location and separation of the village from Hitchin.
- Concerns over traffic.
- A strong appreciation of the village, its community and the countryside around it.
- Concerns over the impact of new development.
- Suggestions for improvements.

## Methodology

### ***Questionnaire Development***

- The questionnaire built on earlier consultation at events, and findings from a feedback form sent to every household in the parish.
- A household survey, rather than an individual survey, was used to reduce the burden on residents and in the expectation that many questions would be answered in the same way across a household. Respondents were asked to try to provide the views of the whole household.
- Question development drew on other neighbourhood plan questionnaires and draft versions were tested with a range of individuals.

### ***Distribution and Publicity***

- Respondents were encouraged to complete the survey online via Survey Monkey. This was due to social distancing measures, to make analysis easier and a clear preference for this approach during testing. A hard copy was also available for those unable or unwilling to complete it online.
- The questionnaire was available online from 27 October to 21 December 2020. Hard copies could be collected/returned to Ickleford Stores or via a phone messaging service.
- The survey was extensively publicised via posters, banners, email, Facebook and a leaflet to every household.
- The national lockdown during this time limited the opportunity for face-to-face contact so effort was put into making the posters and banners very visible across the whole village with bright reminder notices added towards the end of the consultation period and reminders on social media.
- The local Helping Hands Group were also engaged to help publicise the survey and there was a phone service for residents who may have been unable to complete it online or leave their home to collect a copy.

### ***Sample***

- A total 355 questionnaires were received, all but ten of which were completed online.
- There were 821 households in Ickleford as of 2014, giving a response rate of 43%. NB the actual response rate might be slightly lower due to new houses built since that time and the possibility of a few questionnaires being completed by individuals outside the parish area.
- A review of the postcodes given showed a broad coverage of responses from across the village. Demographic data were compared with that from the 2011 census. This showed a very similar age profile between the data sets. When tenure was compared however, there was a higher percentage of homeowners and lower level of social renters in this survey. Although there will have been some changes in ownership since the last census, this difference may indicate an overrepresentation of homeowners in the sample.
- Similarly, car ownership was higher than in the 2011 census, again possibly suggesting a lower proportion of lower income households taking part.

- Given the good overall response rate and the large degree of agreement across many themes, this possible sampling issue is unlikely to have a great effect on the value of the findings. However, its possible influence should be considered in some areas, such as housing affordability and public transport. Housing affordability came up as a key theme but may affect even more people than the survey suggests. The public transport limitations voiced may also be a greater issue for residents than suggested. This serves as a reminder that development of the Neighbourhood Plan must be mindful of the needs of the whole community.

### ***Analysis and Presentation of Findings***

- The questionnaire was organised around a number of themes that had been identified during earlier engagement. It consisted of closed questions, where respondents had a number of discrete options they could select, and open questions, where respondents could leave their own suggestions and views.
- Open questions allowed respondents to express themselves more fully. The comments also showed how different comments were interrelated e.g., views on possible changes at the school related to village identity, traffic and safety, and views on housing, amongst others.
- Analysis of these open responses was done as follows. For each question, one member of the steering group worked through the comments and developed codes for the views expressed. This allowed shared concepts to be identified and labelled. These concepts were then reviewed and merged into more general themes. At this stage, a second steering group member reviewed the coding and themes that had emerged. There was usually a discussion and sometimes a little reworking of the themes and their descriptions.
- The analysis of such qualitative data is always subjective to some extent. The codes that were developed were not mutually exclusive, but instead used to draw out and highlight the detail in the data. Their frequency was recorded and used to illustrate how often certain views were given, however caution is needed to avoid using such numbers to draw inappropriate statistical conclusions.





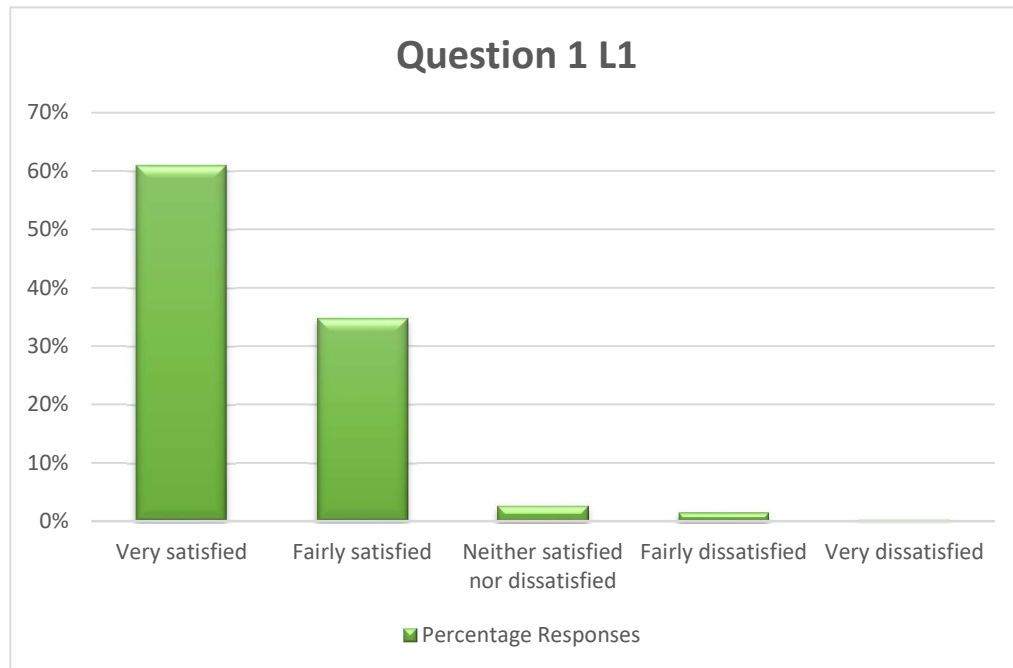
# Findings

## Introductory Questions

The first section of the survey asked respondents about what Ickleford meant to them (both the village and the parish). Of respondents who answered the question, 95% stated they were either very or fairly satisfied with living in the parish, with 61% very satisfied.

### Q1 L1: Thinking of all aspects of living in Ickleford, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you and your household with living in the parish?

349 from 355 respondents answered the question.

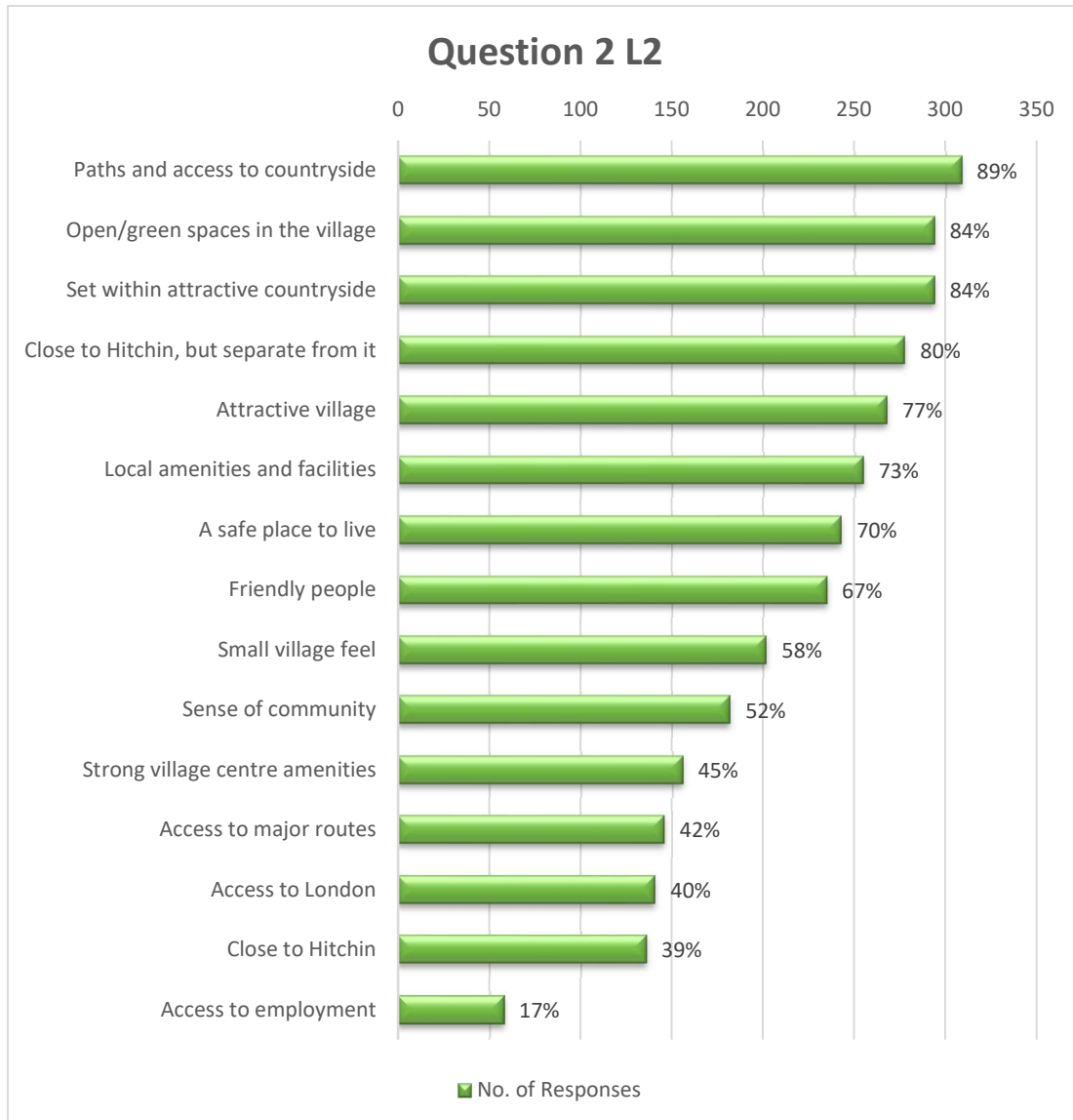


Answer Choices	Responses	
Very satisfied	213	61.0%
Fairly satisfied	121	34.7%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9	2.6%
Fairly dissatisfied	5	1.4%
Very dissatisfied	1	0.3%

Respondents were then asked what they liked about living in Ickleford, with a list of possible options to choose from. The three most popular options all related to the countryside and green spaces in the village. Being close to Hitchin, but separate from it, was the next most popular choice.

**Q2 L2: What do you like about living in Ickleford?**

349 from 355 respondents answered the question.



**Q3 L3: Do you have any other comments about living in the parish, including other things you like or things you particularly dislike?**

136 respondents left text that was analysed to produce 206 individual codes (henceforth referred to in this document as individual comments). These comments were grouped into a number of themes.

**Traffic and transport (105 comments)**

Comments about traffic and transport were much more frequent than any others. These included:

- Speeding and volume of traffic/concern over narrow footpaths and pedestrian safety/large volume of through traffic. **(51 comments)**
- Unhappiness with maintenance, safety or value of current traffic calming measures (including speed bumps). **(14 comments)**

- Request for speed cameras. **(4 comments)**
- Concern about the village's roundabouts. **(7 comments)**
- Safety of Cadwell Bridge. **(7 comments)**
- Parking issues. **(8 comments)**
- Concerns over new housing in Ickleford and the surrounding area. **(5 comments)**
- Other: the need for more infrastructure **(2 comments)**, noisy motorbikes **(3 comments)**, the poor condition of both Snailswell Lane **(1 comment)** and some paths in the village considered unsafe **(1 comment)**. A safe cycle route to the town and station **(1 comment)** and the desire for a bus service to Letchworth. **(1 comment)**

*"More and more traffic seems to be going through the village, made worse by massive housing developments to the north."*

*"We hate the dangerous driving and speeds going in and out of the village."*

*"Parking around school is awful. Nothing done about parking on double yellows."*

*"Dislike the speed bumps, not a good way of slowing or controlling traffic."*

*"Narrow footpaths in many places which renders speeding traffic even more scary."*

*"The lack of traffic controls that allow speeding and dangerous driving. Living [...] with young children, this is a serious and daily concern for our family that, unless sorted, would make us consider relocating away from the village in the future."*

#### **Community and identity (34 comments)**

The next most common theme related to Ickleford's community and identity. In contrast to the traffic and transport issues, these were generally positive, explaining why people liked the village and expanding on the options presented in the previous question.

The large number of codes that built up this theme described different aspects of people's experience of life in Ickleford.

- Liking the small village feel of Ickleford, often tied to the school and the village green hub at its centre. **(7 comments)**
- Sense of community, friendliness, or it being a happy and caring neighbourhood. **(7 comments)**
- It being a lovely place to bring up children **(3 comments)** and positive views on the school. **(2 comments)**
- Its sense of history and of how those who had lived there a long time could share this history. **(2 comments)**
- Enjoyment of Ickleford traditions, such as the Christmas tree and Ickleford children walking with gifts to the Harvest Festival in the church. **(2 comments)**
- Pride in the village and its upkeep. **(2 comments)**
- The peaceful feel of the village. **(2 comments)**

- Other comments: there being a lot going on **(1 comment)**, liking the Parish Council **(1 comment)**, the village not being part of Hitchin and having its own identity **(1 comment)**, it having the positives of a village without being insular **(1 comment)** and liking the Old George Pub. **(1 comment)**
- Negative comments on village life included: everyone knowing each other's business and the stretched nature of the village causing a lack of cohesive community. **(1 comment each)**.

*"We enjoy living in Ickleford, it maintains a village 'feel' because of the Upper Green hub - church, school, pubs and shop"*

*"It is a small friendly village with good community ties and facilities. It gives an entirely different feel compared to living in a town or city."*

*"The people of Ickleford have been there for me during the pandemic but are not intrusive."*

*"I like that the village is not part of Hitchin and has its own identity."*

#### **Concerns and suggestions regarding facilities and amenities (28 comments)**

Various concerns and suggestions were shared regarding the upkeep of the area under this broad theme. These included:

- Dog fouling or the need for more dog waste bins. **(6 comments)**
- Fly tipping and littering. **(4 comments)**
- Others: Luton airport aeroplane noise **(1 comment)**, noise from the Village Hall and the smell of the fish and chip van there **(1 comment)**, a dislike of the screening from the overflow car park at the sports club **(1 comment)** and the perceived poor standard of work that had been carried out around the village. **(1 comment)**

#### **Several comments related to shops and services:**

- Desire for improvements to the shop, more shops or a post office. **(5 comments)**
- The wish for wider use of the Sports and Social Club or more activities for younger and older residents. **(4 comments)**
- Better disabled access to pubs and the Sports and Social Club **(1 comment)** and a wish for more houses. **(1 comment)**

#### **There were also comments on environmental issues:**

- A need for improvements to hedgerows **(1 comment)**, illegal fishing **(1 comment)** and protection of the chalk river. **(1 comment)**

*"It would be good to have a couple more shops such as a bakery, small restaurant so can stay in village rather than venturing further afield"*

*"The play area is great up to the age of about 9 but there is nothing for older children. There is possibly a problem with loneliness, especially for older people."*

*"As dog owners could we have some more dog poo bins"*

#### **Drug use, antisocial behaviour and policing (16 comments)**

- Concern about drug use. **(7 comments)**

- Antisocial behaviour. **(6 comments)**.
- An apparent reduced police presence. **(2 comments)**
- Concern about apparent criminal activity on Icknield Way due to the frequent presence of police there. **(1 comment)**

*“Dislike the gathering of people after dark in various areas who then leave rubbish and paraphernalia behind”*

*“I dislike how drug use seems to be making an increase in the village, with frequent smells of cannabis being smoked in the air and I hate how the bus shelter on times is filled by teenagers smoking it and it makes me feel intimidated to not be able to walk past it in my own home area.”*

#### **Positive comments on the countryside (12 comments)**

- Access to countryside/country feel/beautiful countryside. **(5 comments)**
- Access to Hitchin/London/major routes yet in countryside. **(2 comments)**
- Abundant wildlife. **(2 comments)**
- Others: well-maintained footpaths, Hitchin Lavender and Ickleford Common. **(1 comment each)**

*“Ickleford is a particularly special place. Beautiful open countryside in a part of the country which is above average in population density.”*

*“Access to outdoor space is perfect and should be cherished.”*

*“Great access to Hitchin, London and major routes yet in the countryside”*

#### **Concern about development and change (11 comments)**

- Concern over new development, including fears of overdevelopment both within the village and in the surrounding area, of building on green space and that the village may merge into Hitchin. **(7 comments)**
- Unhappiness with changes that had already taken place in the village over the years. **(2 comments)**
- Sadness over preschool closure and a concern that the school may close. **(2 comments)**

*“Only worry is building of houses on green space, otherwise lovely place to live”*

*“Dislike unsympathetic and crammed in nature of some recent housing developments.”*

*“[negative characteristics include] The possibility that Ickleford will end up just merging into Hitchin.”*

*“We moved here as love the village and community feel, especially the community that revolves around the school that we hope to one day send our young children to. It has therefore been alarming to firstly see the preschool close, and to hear ongoing rumours about the village school also being in danger of closing. We would be devastated if this was the case.”*

## Amenities and Facilities

This section sought residents’ views on both current and potential new amenities. The village shop was rated as ‘very important’ by the largest number of people, closely followed by the school.

The village centre has a number of amenities and facilities close together, which has been recognised as an important aspect of the village’s character. When asked how the centre could be improved and on their priorities for investment, it was clear that traffic issues, parking and pedestrian safety were important issues.

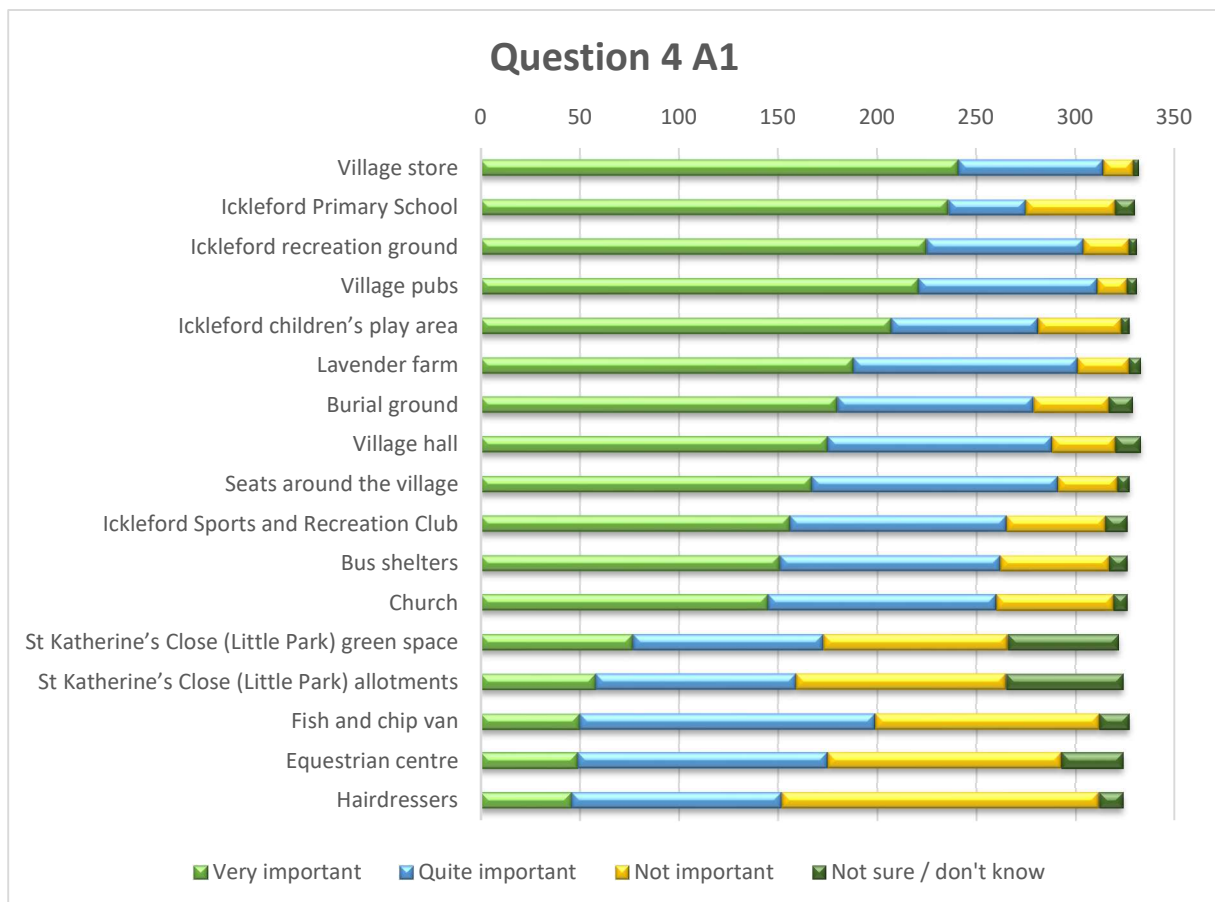
Investment in the environment and green spaces would also be a top priority for residents.

In terms of amenities, it was striking how many people would welcome somewhere in the centre serving refreshments that was not a pub, such as a café/coffee shop or bakery. A large number of respondents would also welcome the return of a post office. Improvements to the shop, or another shop, would also be popular.

Several people highlighted how much they like the village centre as it was and would be uncomfortable with any changes that affected its character. Some suggested the area could be improved through maintenance and additions, such as flowers or more seating.

Another theme was to improve and make more use of the facilities the village already has, such as the village hall, sports and social club and school buildings.

**Q4 A1: How important to you are the presence of the following facilities in the parish? Please select all that apply.**



Respondents were first asked to rate the importance of various facilities in Ickleford. The results are shown in chart Q4 A1, which have been ranked from highest to lowest. This question was answered by 335 of the 355 survey respondents.

Of the amenities presented, the village shop was rated as 'very important' by the largest number of people, closely followed by the school and then by the recreation ground. The chart provides a valuable insight into residents' priorities.

**Q5 A2: The centre of the village has many amenities and facilities close together. Do you have any suggestions as to how the village centre could be improved?**

Respondents were then asked to provide comments about the village centre. Feedback was left by 131 respondents, which was coded to produce 206 individual comments. These fell into the themes described below:

***Traffic and transport (68 comments)***

- Reduce speed and volume of traffic/introduce or improve traffic calming measures. **(35 comments)**
- Parking **(21 comments)**. Parking problems were highlighted for the shop in particular **(9 comments)**, but also for the school and at sports events. Other comments related to keeping cars off pavements and grass verges, or around the village green.
- Pedestrian safety **(12 comments)**. The issues raised included: the desire for a footpath on Chambers Lane **(4 comments)**, or signs to encourage use of off-road footpaths in this area **(1 comment)**, access to Lavender Farm **(3 comments)**, wider footpaths **(2 comments)**, the Bedford Road crossing **(1 comment)** and suggesting a Pelican crossing in the centre. **(1 comment)**

*"Proper speed enforcement and preferably a 20mph limit to encourage people to use the amenities and feel safe doing so, especially the young and old."*

*"Slow the traffic to make it safer for the school children, investigate proper parking for the store. Too many times I have to jump to avoid being hit by a car parking too quickly outside the store"*

*"I think walking access to the lavender farm would be the most significant improvement for the village."*

*"Parking on side roads near recreation ground when football matches are on, ridiculous number of cars parked making driving down Chambers Lane difficult and an accident waiting to happen around the bend."*

***New or improved shops or eateries (65 comments)***

There were only slightly less comments relating to this theme than on traffic and transport. Suggestions included:

- A café, coffee shop or bakery/other food outlets/somewhere to meet up and have refreshments during the day/somewhere that was not a pub. **(33 comments)**
- A post office. **(17 comments)**
- Improvements, or expansion of, the village shop. **(11 comments)**
- Another shop or supermarket. **(4 comments)**



*"It would be nice to have a cafe, somewhere to meet that isn't a pub. There isn't anything for 11-18 year olds to meet indoors."*

*"I believe the village would benefit from a coffee shop. It lacks a communal centre or meeting place that operates outside pub hours and caters to a different customer base."*

*"A bakery for fresh bread with some seats outside"*

*"A cleaner and better stocked village shop would make a huge difference."*

*"Frontage/pavements around shop smartened up"*

*"We would love a post office please!"*

### **Maintenance and appearance (23 comments)**

Suggestions included:

- More seating on the Green **(7 comments)** and more seating on the route from the playing fields to Snailswell Lane. **(1 comment)**
- Flowers. **(5 comments)**
- Make open space more wildlife friendly or have more wildflowers. **(2 comments)**
- Other: a village pond, more dog waste bins, paint posts, improve/maintain the green, improve streetlighting, keep path near school clear of leaves and mud, add an attractive village map and make the Church passage cut through pathway wheelchair accessible. **(1 comment each)**

*"More care should be taken in improving and maintaining the look of Upper Green"*

*"It would be nice to have some floral displays in the summer."*

*"Everything is within a very small walking distance which is hugely advantageous. Possibly a few more benches between facilities for people with lesser mobility to rest."*

### **New services, facilities or events (16 comments)**

These included:

- A GP and/or pharmacy. **(8 comments)**
- Facilities for younger children, e.g. a nursery or pre-school. **(4 comments)**
- Other: something representing the arts, a book exchange, a village fete and bringing the bells back to the church. **(1 comment each)**

*"Some access to health facilities would also be fab."*

*"It would be very nice if the Arts were represented occasionally...? "*

*"Proper village fete/ annual celebration like Kimpton or Pirton"*

*"What about a book exchange in the shelter on Upper Green"*

### **Improve or make better use of current facilities (15 comments).**

Suggestions related to the following:

- The Sports and Social Club or other sporting facilities (**7 comments**), including renovating the Sports and Social Club (**2 comments**), or making more use of it (including for inclusive community events) (**2 comments**) and creating an all-weather pitch (**1 comment**). Tennis courts, squash courts and a skate park were also suggested. (**2 comments**)
- The Room for All at the church, which is currently under construction, was also mentioned. (**2 comments**)
- Other: use village hall and school (out of hours) as community hubs, more classes in the village hall, improve school facilities (without moving it), have a place for the youth to go to stay out of trouble, renovate Little Park and improve communication from the Parish Council. (**1 comment each**)

*“More classes at the village hall - a wide variety.”*

*“Utilise the Sports and Social club more but it would need to be renovated to be more appealing.”*

*“Not necessarily in village centre but tennis courts in the village would be a positive addition. Maybe a skate park for young people also to give teenagers somewhere to go.”*

*“When I was a child 1980s-90s, and living in the village, the small park at the back of St Katherine’s Close was a useable space with a good play area. This is now pretty shabby and feels like a wasted space. It would be nice to have this area renovated.”*

#### **Keep centre as it is (14 comments).**

Many described how much they liked the village centre and did not want to see any changes as this could affect the character of the village.

*“The centre of the Village is the hub, there is little room for it to expand and it would destroy the character of the area if it was changed in any way”*

*“Not really, it is a really pleasant place to walk round and has everything I need or want.”*

*“The school is at the heart of the village, and naturally brings local people together on a daily basis. It should remain a central part of Ickleford village community life.”*

#### **Residential (5 comments)**

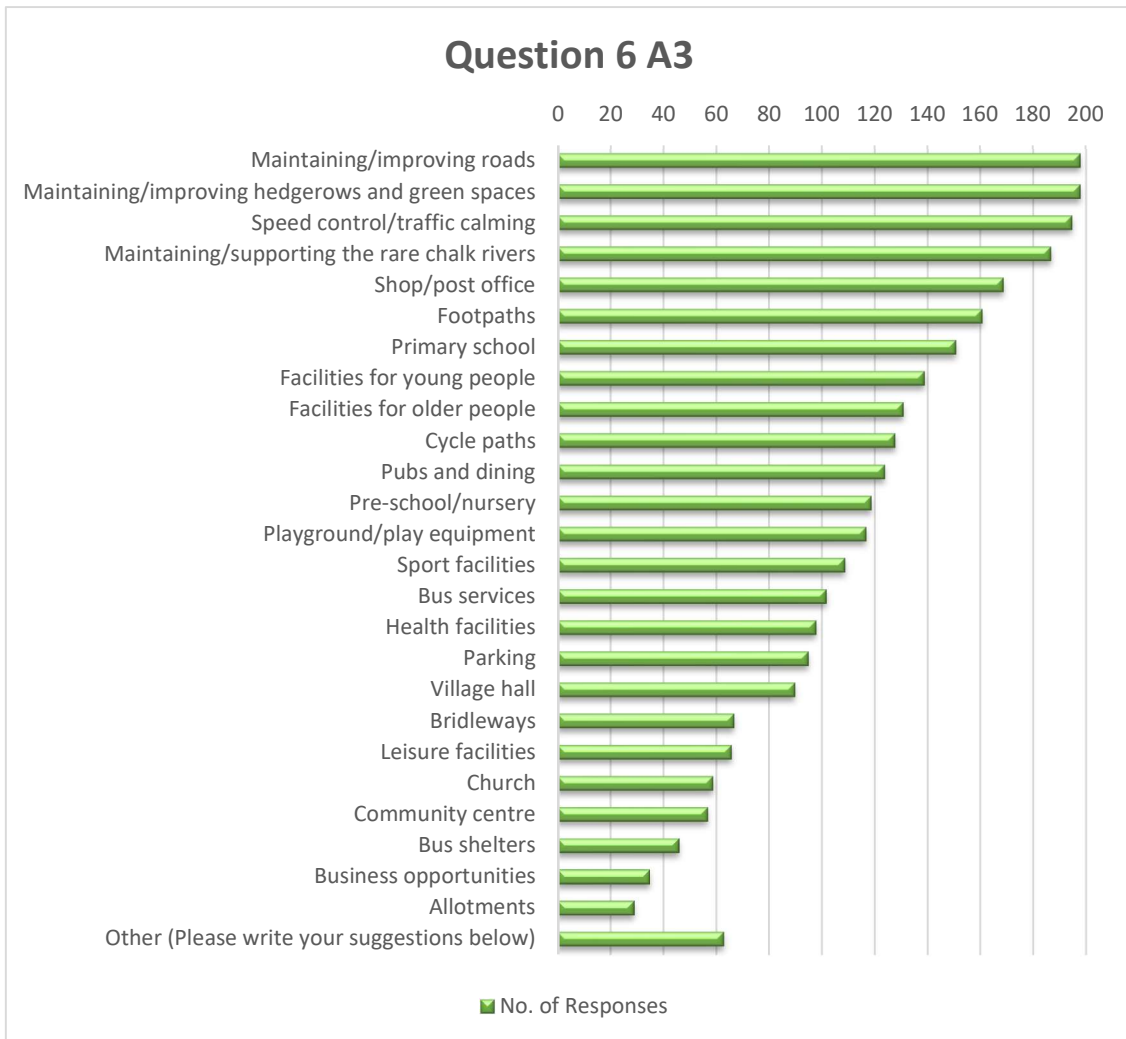
These included highlighting this possible use for the land next to Chambers Lane (**2 comments**) and central accommodation for elderly residents that was not residential care (**1 comment**).

*“More houses please”*

*“Do something with derelict land on Chambers Lane and include footpath.”*

#### **Q6 A3: If money was available to invest in the village as a result of new development, what would your priorities for investment be?**

Respondents were then asked about their preferences for investment. A list of options was offered followed by space for further suggestions. This question was answered by 335 of the 355 respondents. Sixty-three respondents provided further details, which were coded into 71 separate comments.



The top four options all related to traffic and transport, or the environment and green spaces. These were: maintaining and improving roads, maintaining and improving hedgerows and green spaces, speed control/traffic calming and maintaining and supporting the rare chalk rivers. These priorities were followed by the shop/post office, footpaths and the primary school. The above chart lists all the options in descending order of selection.

The further details given in the comments section were coded into 71 individual comments and grouped under the four themes outlined below.

**Traffic and transport (35 comments)**

- Better traffic calming measures, and improvements to pedestrian safety and footpaths (**22 comments**), including safer pedestrian access to the Lavender Farm. (**7 comments**)
- Improved and new footpaths (**5 comments**), including improvements at the entrance to Ickleford Common (**1 comment**), better footpath surfacing (**1 comment**) and preventing people from driving on the footpaths through the wetlands (**1 comment**). New footpaths by Turnpike Lane (along with clearing trees to let light in) (**1 comment**) and as part of any development of the Bowman site. (**1 comment**)
- Improved bus services (to Hitchin, Letchworth and Arlesey). (**4 comments**)

- Cycle paths (**3 comments**) including: having a safe asphalted circular cycle path around Ickleford (**1 comment**); a proper cycle path between Ickleford and Letchworth using Icknield Way (**1 comment**) and segregated cycling to encourage cycling rather than driving. (**1 comment**)
- Parking needed for the many visitors attracted by the countryside, especially at Bridleway 4 at Lower Green. (**1 comment**)

*“Traffic calming single speed bumps in Turnpike Lane very harsh on small cars. Replace with all across the road ones”*

*“The speed calming measures introduced a few years ago should have been extended to the southern end of the village adjacent to Laurel Way. Once free of the centre of the village, cars then speed in a dangerous way towards the small bridge near the entrance to Bowmans Mill.”*

*“Improve Turnpike Lane: clear some trees and undergrowth on Turnpike Lane to create an extra path/pavement, let more sunlight onto the road and give more open views across (to what was in the past a cricket pitch).”*

*“Speed cameras are a must”*

*“It has been mentioned so many times but safe pedestrian access to the lavender farm would be great. Going over the railway bridge via Gerry’s Hole isn’t always possible if muddy/pushchair etc. It is an accident waiting to happen”*

#### **Suggestions for improvements to facilities, services and for new events (20 comments)**

Areas for investment included:

- Maintaining and improving current amenities (**7 comments**), including investment in the school to keep it in its current location (**3 comments**), improved streetlighting (**1 comment**), improving Upper Green by more regularly pruning trees and clearing leaves (**1 comment**), improving Turnpike Lane, which was considered spoilt by refuse bins left out outside collection days/times (**1 comment**) and maintaining facilities. (**1 comment**)
- Sports and leisure facilities (**5 comments**), including making the sports and social club more available to the community (**2 comments**), better sporting/leisure facilities (**1 comment**), a fitness trail (**1 comment**) and an artificial grass pitch with floodlights, for hire. (**1 comment**)
- Community events. (**2 comments**)
- Other: a GP, a library, business facilities, the creation of more jobs, start-up initiatives for voluntary work (e.g. voluntary conservation groups) and tree planting or a community orchard. (**1 comment each**)

*“Better leisure / sporting facilities. Our family never goes the sports and social club - it seems like a resource that isn't widely available enough to the community.”*

*“More organised community events and awareness of these would be good.”*

*“Badly need to improve street lighting”*

*“Ensuring the primary school remained where it was with a pre-school/nursery on site.”*

*“The primary school must stay in the heart of the village. Investment, which I understand the building needs, should not be in building a new school on a different site away from the village centre.”*

***Shops and eateries (13 comments)***

- Café or bakery was mentioned. **(7 comments)**
- Other: expand the shop **(2 comments)**, a post office **(1 comment)**, a butcher **(1 comment)**, a chemist **(1 comment)**, pubs. **(1 comment)**

*“Bakery/cafe as another friendly meeting place would be good.”*

*“a larger shop with off road parking and space for wider range of stock would make the older population less dependent on travel.”*

*“Although I have ticked shops and pubs, these should be privately funded with perhaps incentives for businesses from the Parish”*

***Housing (3 comments)***

There were just three comments in this final theme.

- More housing. **(2 comments)**
- Affordable downsize accommodation. **(1 comment)**

*“Affordable down-size accommodation for single or elderly people”*

## Ickleford Primary School

Earlier consultation work has shown that the village school has an important role in village life. As the population of Ickleford and the surrounding towns and villages grows, there may be a need for more primary school places. The emerging Local Plan reserves land for a possible new school for use in the future, if needed, east of the Bedford Road.

The questions in this section aimed to gauge opinion on the school and thoughts about possible changes in the future. The comments received provide insight into people’s thoughts, not only on the school site itself, but also on the village more generally, including potential new development.

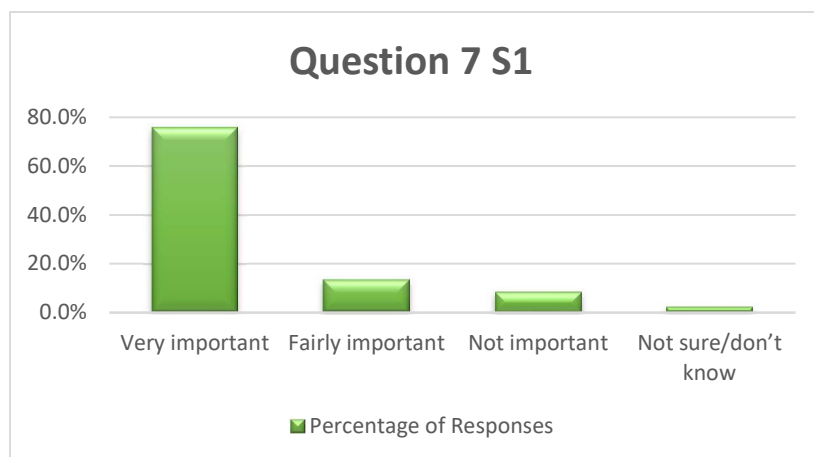
### Summary

The large majority of residents considered it very important that the school remains in its current position. If more school places were required in the future, most would prefer development of the current site, rather than a new school east of the Bedford Road. The possibility of change at the school was clearly an emotive subject. Residents provided many detailed comments and often used expressive language to convey their views. The position of the school in the heart of the village was seen by many as integral to the village’s character and sense of community. The building itself was also often highlighted as an important visual feature.

Ideas for how the site might be used if the school were to move included many comments showing a desire to keep it as a community asset available to all. Use of the building as some kind of community centre, and the playing fields remaining as green space for recreation, were commonly desired. Many respondents felt strongly that the site should not be built on for housing, although not everyone was of this opinion. Shops and places to eat, particularly a café, were also suggested, as were a pre-school or nursery, and a health centre, amongst other ideas.

Discussing the school and its possible change highlighted concerns around parking and safety. Many felt parking was currently a problem and would need careful consideration before any expansion. A number of people thought more walking and cycling should be encouraged. Use of a new site off the Bedford Road was also seen as problematic by many. There were serious fears around pedestrian safety and of further congestion on a very busy road.

### Q7 S1. How important to the character of the village do you think it is that the school remains in the existing location?



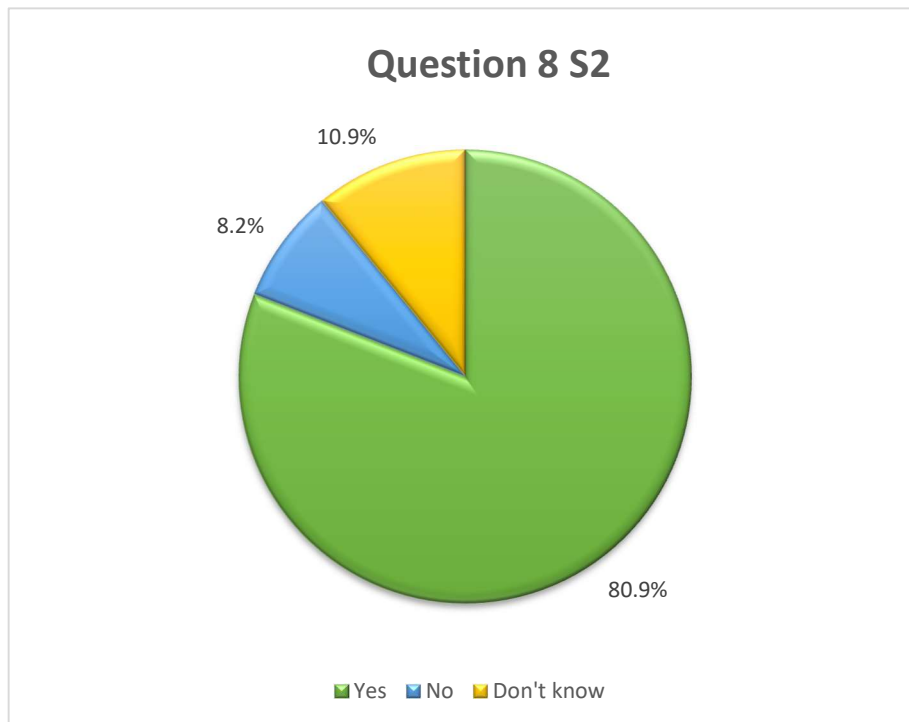
331 respondents from 355 answered the question.

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Very important	75.8%
Fairly important	13.3%	44
Not important	8.5%	28
Not sure/don't know	2.4%	8

This question showed that 76% of respondents felt it was very important to keep the school in its existing location and 89% thought it either very or fairly important.

**Q8 S2: The current school faces a number of significant infrastructure issues. If additional adjacent land could be provided and it was technically feasible, would you support development of the current school site to either expand capacity or improve facilities?**

330 respondents from 355 answered the question.

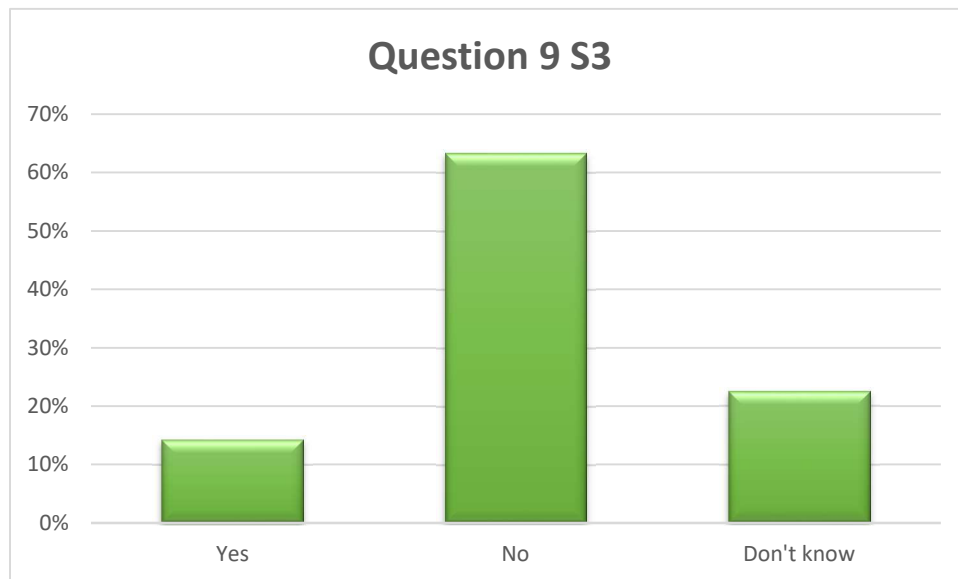


Answer Choices	Responses	
	Yes	80.9%
No	8.2%	27
Don't know	10.9%	36

A similarly large number of people would support development at the current site, if required and feasible.

**Q9 S3: If new school places were needed, would you prefer to see the development of a new two-form entry school at the site east of the Bedford Road?**

330 respondents from 355 answered the question.



Answer Choices	Responses	
	Yes	14.2%
No	63.3%	209
Don't know	22.4%	74

Sixty-three percent of respondents would not prefer the alternative of a new two-form entry school east of Bedford Road, if new places were needed. Fourteen percent would prefer this, and twenty-two percent did not know.

**Q10 S4: If the school were to move, what would you like to see happen to the current site (including playing fields)?**

Responses to this question were left on 230 of the 355 completed questionnaires. These were coded to produce 438 individual comments.

Strong opinions were voiced on this topic. There was a large amount of feedback and many detailed comments. Many respondents suggested multiple uses for the site.

The comments were grouped into the eight main themes detailed below. Quotes illustrating the themes are given under each section. These often contain points that were coded to more than one theme and show some of the ways in which they are interrelated.

***Community facilities (184 comments)***

This broad theme included ways the site could be used for the good of the community if it became available. The comments in this theme could be broken down into a number of areas.



- A community centre in some form **(77 comments)**. Terms mentioned included community centre, resource centre, village hub, community learning centre and a space for community events.
- Sports and recreational facilities **(41 comments)**. Ideas included: recreation, leisure and sport facilities; tennis, netball and basketball courts; football and floodlit pitches; a park; a playground; cycle tracks; a yoga studio and gym.
- Use as a pre-school, nursery or somewhere for young children. **(21 comments)**
- A GP surgery or health centre. **(14 comments)**
- Facilities for the youth. **(9 comments)**
- A place for older people. **(6 comments)**
- Use as craft or gallery space or a centre for the arts. **(5 comments)**
- Allotments. **(4 comments)**
- Other: community or commercial horticulture, a village pond, a small museum, a theatre, conference facilities, a church and the extension of Upper Green into field at the front of the school. **(1 comment each)**

*"It would be great to create a central meeting point for the community with some local business input - perhaps a community centre with a nursery that could run multiple daytime classes, yoga, art, karate...for example."*

*"Facilities for youths. Skateboard park? A safe hang out space? A positive space which is theirs and they are recognised as an important part of the community, not a burden."*

*"A village community green space/garden with space for exercise and relaxation. The historical building would also make a good space for craft or gallery space to provide an opportunity to draw visitors to the village. Community arts spaces do very well in the Hitchin area."*

*"turn school in community centre and use the land for activities not covered by sports club, e.g. tennis/netball/ basketball. Extra parking but still keeping a lot of green area"*

*"A community hub. Definitely not yet more housing"*

*"Some sort of public facility. A GP surgery, dentist, medical facility would benefit the village and reduce need to travel for these services. Particularly to serve the older population."*

### **Keep the school where it is (72 comments)**

The opportunity to comment was used by a large number of respondents to express their strong desire to keep the school where it is, often voiced in a very passionate way. Many of the suggestions reported under other themes were prefaced with a preference for the school not to move.

- Do not move the school/use money to improve or expand on its current site/build up or behind. **(33 comments)**
- Do not move due to its central position and role at the heart of the village. **(19 comments)**
- Do not move, pupil numbers do not require it. **(7 comments)**
- Keep it as an infant only/KS1 school. **(6 comments)**

- Do not move due to its history/links with past, present and future pupils. **(5 comments)**
- Keep school and build a new one for new development. **(2 comments)**

*“it would be such a shame to see Ickleford school close. It is in the heart and history of Ickleford. I cannot think of a better use for the site.”*

*“They have enough acreage behind the school to expand on premises if they can’t go out much go up”*

*“Possible housing development but would have to be very sympathetic. Preferably school to remain where it is and money used to improve current facilities. Current placement of Ickleford children at the school is adequate and no requirement for a two-form intake per year. Would be filling spaces from Hitchin which defeats the purpose of a village school”*

*“The school should NOT move. It is an important historical site. Any child attending the school senses its history and family/village feel. At the very least it should remain as an Infant school.”*

*“School moving would be a disaster. It is what our village is. The church, shop, school should all be around the green as it is and has been for so many years.”*

#### **A preference not to use the site for housing (43 comments)**

Comments expressing the desire for the site not to be used for housing were often strongly worded.

*“Not another site for residential development. Possibly the building for small business, flexible use, craftwork. The land for community or commercial horticulture use.”*

*“I would like the historic aesthetic of the building to be preserved and green open spaces to be maintained. I would not like for it to become a new housing development.”*

*“Not housing!!!! . Something every generation can benefit from within the whole community.”*

#### **Shops and businesses (46 comments)**

- Eateries such as a café, bakery and a new, or community owned, pub. **(18 comments)**
- A variety of shops, including a better village shop, post office, chemist, butchers, fruit and veg shop and antiques centre. **(15 comments)**
- Small businesses, flexible use, craftwork or office space. **(13 comments)**

*“A few more local facilities like small shops, eateries and some green space”*

*“Coffee shop/doctors/restaurant”*

*“Make it into a preschool /nursery setting in the village. And make a coffee shop/cafe with facilities for buggies and some toys for children. I think that would be very popular in Ickleford.”*

*“If the school was relocated, I really believe it would be converted to housing which would be awful. The current site would preferably be used for community purposes- maybe a community garden for people to enjoy, and the buildings used as business premises & office space which could be sold or rented out.”*

### **Protection or restoration of the buildings (33 comments)**

These comments highlighted a wish to protect or restore the school buildings. The school consists of a listed older front section and newer 1960/70s buildings at the back. A number of comments mentioned the older front section specifically and it is likely that many of the other comments were referring to this.

*“The original school building would need to be retained. The village has lost a lot of its older buildings that once gave the village greater character and to lose further links to the past life of Ickleford would be a tragedy.”*

*“It’s an historical building and the face/silhouette of the village. The front would have to remain!”*

*“To retain the existing building and grounds. No demolition of existing school buildings and no building on the grounds, so that the frontage to the village remains the same, including the boundary wall and arched entrance.”*

### **Housing (often with caveats) (30 comments)**

There were 30 comments that mentioned use of the school site for housing, in some cases reluctantly or along with other uses. Various caveats were raised in 23 of the 30 comments.

- Use of the site for more housing. **(7 comments)**
- Any housing being sensitive and sympathetic to the village. **(6 comments)**
- Social/affordable units **(6 comments)**: only build social/affordable units, and these for residents or residents’ children **(3 comments)**, only build social/affordable units **(2 comments)**, any housing must include affordable units. **(1 comment)**
- Conversion of the school buildings into housing. **(4 comments)**
- Some housing, along with keeping much of the green space for other uses. **(2 comments)**
- If housing needed, preference for some housing here rather than infilling on small plots elsewhere in the village. **(2 comments)**
- A preference for high quality housing. **(2 comments)**
- Self-build housing, rather than ‘poor quality’ estates. **(1 comment)**

*“small scale affordable housing for children of residents”*

*“Would be extremely disappointed if the school was lost from its current site, but if it were, then would like to see the area set out for leisure facilities, green space, wild/nature areas for the enjoyment of all. Small amount of low cost/affordable housing for children of existing residents would also be welcome, though not at the expense of building lots of additional executive homes.”*

*“Would be an opportunity to build houses, rather than ‘infilling’ small plots of land with housing all over village.”*

*“More houses please”*

### **Use fields as open green space (22 comments)**

These included using open green space for the community, as a garden or rest area, as a community growing area, a wildlife area, an orchard and a nature reserve.

*“Green public space, orchard or allotments”*

*“To keep a fair amount as green space preferably not just built on to its ultimate capacity”*

*“Green space for leisure. NO BUILDING!”*

**Parking issues (8 comments)**

- Development of the site (for various purposes) should offer good parking **(6 comments)**, including the need for good access **(2 comments)**, keeping a lot of green area **(1 comment)** and having parking only at the rear. **(1 comment)**
- The site should not be used for parking. **(2 comments)**

*“Community Centre / Health Centre with improved parking and access.”*

*“Housing, as long as it is in keeping with the area, has good access and plenty of parking.”*

*“Doctors surgery. Pharmacy. Post Office. Parking.”*

*“Not turned into car park space”*

**Q11 S5: Do you have any further comments regarding development of school facilities at either site (e.g. access and parking)?**

This final question in the school section of the questionnaire invited comment on other issues relating to the current, and a possible new, school. The 127 responses were coded into 172 individual comments. These were grouped into the four themes below.

**Views on retaining the school at its current site (69 comments)**

Many argued that the school should be kept in its current location, highlighting the school’s role for many people in the history and character of the village.

- Do not move the school. It is the heart of the village/moving it would break the village ‘hub’. **(24 comments)**
- Invest in school at current site, or expand at the back or on adjacent land. **(19 comments)**
- Priority should be given to children from Ickleford/a new school not needed as many places are taken by children outside the village/parish. **(10 comments)**
- If more places are needed, the current one should be kept as an infant school. **(3 comments)**

**Other comments included:**

- Providing the best environment for education is more important than location. **(5 comments)**
- The current school is in need of significant work. **(4 comments)**
- Other: co-locate pre-school **(1 comment)**, have only one school in the village as having two would be divisive **(1 comment)**, any development of a new school should be as least invasive as possible **(1 comment)** and a need for improved lighting at the current site. **(1 comment)**

*“The location of the current school site is the heart of the village and needs to be retained and expanded”*

*"I would much prefer to see current school facilities developed than a new one built. I think it's really important they can retain a good relationship with church, so children are able to visit for services like harvest festival."*

*"I don't think the school should move at all. If however, the whole school can't stay where it is, I'd like to see the current school building housing the infants and the juniors move to a new site. The current school building should remain a school."*

*"A big draw to village is the primary school, moving it would be a massive negative to the overall appeal for future generations."*

*"The school gives the village a visible vibrant centre and more than that, it provides generational continuity. It is also convenient for parents and gives its pupils a sense of village community. It could be extended (at the rear) in height and by using a proportion of the playing field."*

*"I feel that given almost half of school places currently go to non-Ickleford children, there is no need to build a new school."*

*"I would like any school development to focus on the optimum conditions for delivering education. It is nice that the school building is pretty, but the school environment should be modern and promote the best education possible for the development of the children in the village. This is best future investment we can have for the village."*

#### **Parking and access (46 comments)**

The question mentioned parking and access as examples of issues to consider, and many respondents gave their views on this.

- There is a need for adequate parking and access at either site. **(25 comments)**
- Parking is currently an issue **(17 comments)**, included safety concerns, with some very strong views expressed.
- Parking is not currently a problem, or only for a relatively small part of the day. **(4 comments)**

*"Wherever the school ends up off road parking is "ESSENTIAL""*

*"The Vehicular Access to the existing School is very poor and not suitable for more use than it has at present."*

*"If the school were to expand on current site which is preferable, review of parking facilities would be necessary"*

*"At the beginning and end of each school day there is a lot of congestion along the road in front of Ickleford Stores."*

*"Parking is fine, when parents/guardians are considerate (we live next to the school, most days it is ok)"*

#### **Other concerns about safety, access and traffic (46 comments)**

There were the same number of comments on broader aspects of traffic and safety beyond parking.

- Encourage walking or cycling to school, parking away from school, or better cycle routes. **(27 comments)**

- Concerns about safety, access and traffic at a potential Bedford Road site/current site is safer. **(16 comments)**
- Already too much traffic in the village. **(3 comments)**

*“Moving the school to Bedford Road is undesirable. It would further aggravate the terrible traffic on Bedford Road into Hitchin at rush hour”*

*“Currently many children walk to the village school. If children have to travel to their primary school from further afield more cars will be used and any planning developments should include allowance for this”*

*“More needs to be done to encourage parents to park at the sports and social club and to encourage children and their parents to walk and cycle to school.”*

*“The village needs better cycle routes and cycling should be encouraged.”*

#### **Housing issues (11 comments)**

- Do not put housing on the site or to keep it as a community asset. **(5 comments)**
- Preserve the existing building. **(4 comments)**
- Housing should be built. **(2 comments)**

*“It lies at the heart of village life and there may be ways of making it even more of a shared community asset.”*

*“Very important to keep the existing façade as it is a focal point for the village.”*

*“pull it all down and put houses on it”*

## Housing Development

New development in the Parish and surrounding area is a source of concern for many residents. The emerging Local Plan allocates sites that would allow large increases in housing for the Parish. The relatively large development of LS1, north of Ramerick Farm, began in 2020. Other large developments in the surrounding area include Lower Stondon, Stotfold (Fairfield) and the decommissioned RAF Henlow staff housing. New and potential development in the village itself includes the recently completed Ickleford Manor site at the south corner of Turnpike Lane and Bedford Road, the prospective development of the Ickleford Mill brownfield site, IC1 (Duncots), IC2 (Burford Grange area), together with the much larger development of IC3 (Bedford Road northeast) - see Figure 1 below. People fear overdevelopment and some question the level of housing proposed. Sixty six percent would like to limit any development beyond that outlined in the emerging local plan. Many would like no further development at all.

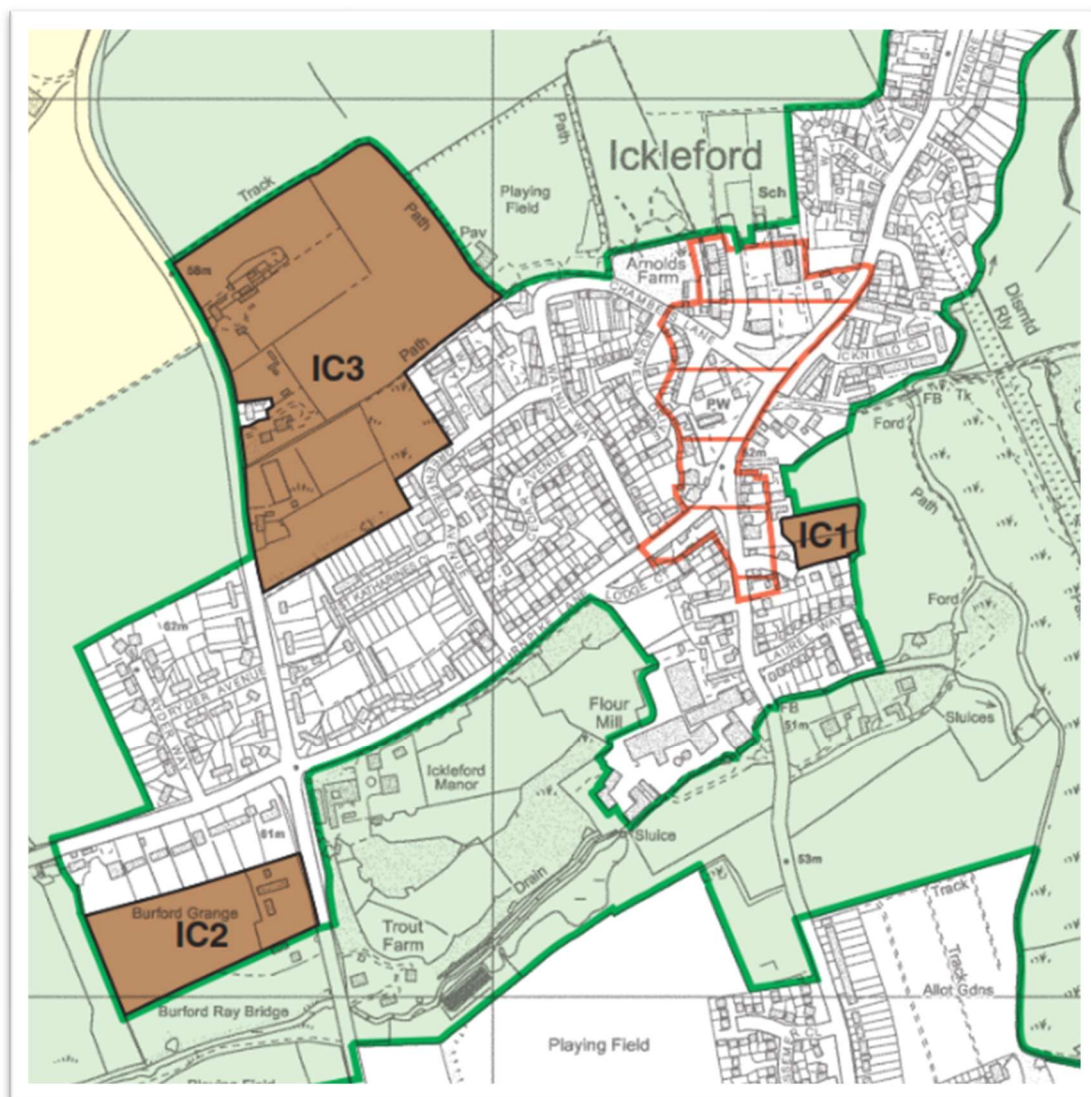


Figure 1: Development areas IC1, IC2 & IC3

From North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Proposed Submission Proposals Maps  
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There are concerns over whether sufficient improvements to infrastructure will be made and of the potential damage to the village identity and community if the village grows too large or starts

to merge with Hitchin. At the same time, there is an appreciation by many that some development is inevitable. In some cases, it is welcomed, to keep the village alive and functioning as a community. Generally, residents want development to be well controlled so as to maintain the village identity, with building design and layout sympathetic to the character of the village.

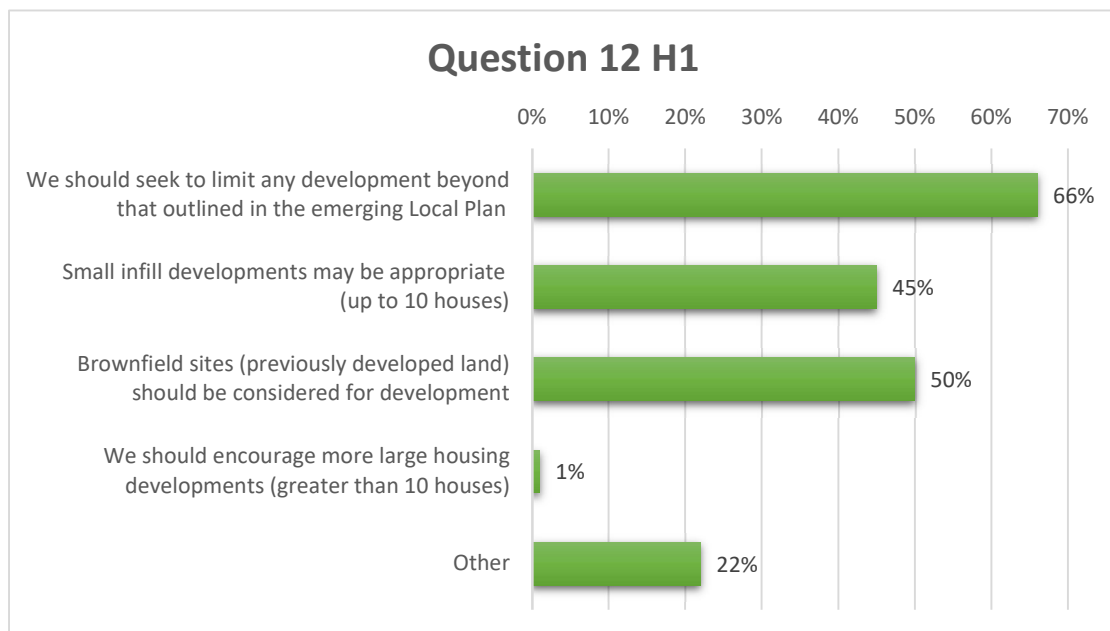
There is a desire for any new housing to be affordable to local people, including young families, single people and elderly people wishing to downsize. Overall people thought there would be a greater need for two- or three-bedroom houses, bungalows and social/affordable rented homes than larger houses in the next ten years.

Fifty percent of respondents thought brownfield sites should be considered for development, while some thought small infill sites may be appropriate. There was support for the use of green technologies and sustainable resources in construction, with sufficient resident and visitor parking important to any development.

Respondents are particularly concerned with the environmental health of the village and the protection of its ecology, natural habitats and wildlife. The Green Belt land is considered by many to be non-negotiable. Numerous residents said that the village is blessed with accessible countryside, which is enjoyed by many, and significantly more so during the nationally imposed restrictions.

**Q12 H1: What are your views on possible housing development beyond that allocated in the emerging Local Plan?**

306 respondents answered the question, which allowed multiple responses.





Answer Choices	Responses
We should seek to limit any development beyond that outlined in the emerging Local Plan	66%
Small infill developments may be appropriate (up to 10 houses)	45%
Brownfield sites (previously developed land) should be considered for development	50%
We should encourage more large housing developments (greater than 10 houses)	1 %
Other (Please write your comments below)	22%

70 respondents left 160 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- Concerns that the infrastructure will not be able to cope or that this must be addressed. Schools, roads, traffic volume and parking, flood potential, sewage and utility services were specifically mentioned by some respondents. **(42 comments)**
- Want to keep Ickleford as a village/small village. Do not want to spoil its character and the local environment. **(31 comments)**
- No new development should be permitted. IC2 and IC3 questioned as being suitable. Consider Local Plan allows too many houses or that the need for housing development has been over-estimated following recent ONS figures. **(27 comments)**
- Opposed to building on Green Belt land and that doing so will damage the local nature reserve and ecological environment. **(12 comments)**
- Want new houses to be low cost/affordable homes. Several respondents expressed concerns that they will not be. **(10 comments)**
- The use of brownfield sites is acceptable. Ickleford Mill was specifically mentioned as a site by some respondents. **(8 comments)**
- Small infill developments are considered acceptable. **(7 comments)**
- Want low density housing with emphasis on open space with designed-in communal space layout. **(6 comments)**
- Desire to restrict housing development for occupation by local residents or local social housing tenants. **(5 comments)**
- Understand that new housing is needed. **(4 comments)**
- Want housing development to be eco-friendly and sustainable. **(4 comments)**
- Neighbourhood Plan will be ineffective and overridden by developers and local authorities. New builds should have gardens, there should be no restriction on where to build, including building on Green Belt, development of flexible business opportunities could be incorporated within the development plan to allow working locally. **(4 comments)**

*“We should not be accepting the present, proposed emerging local plan because the revised housing needs figures would drop using the new formula based on recent ONS figures.”*

*“IC2 should be scrapped due to its proximity to very sensitive and precious ecological areas.”*

**Q13 H2: Are there any specific areas, both inside and outside of the village, where you think the development of new housing should be encouraged?**

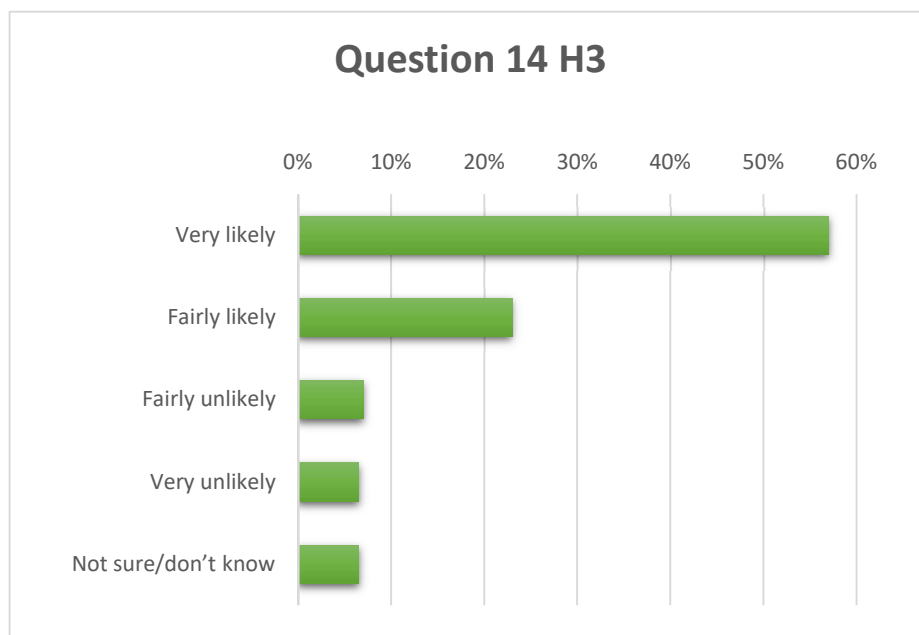
109 respondents left 129 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- Development should not be encouraged/permitted in any areas of Ickleford parish, or the respondent stated there are "no" sites suitable for development. **(57 comments)**
- Brownfield and infill sites preferred including locations at Ickleford Mill site, Arnolds Farm/Chambers Lane, Snailswell Lane Greenfield Avenue/Wyatt Close, Little Park. **(50 comments)**
- IC3 and areas on Bedford Road, including Burford Grange (IC2), land adjacent to Priory School suitable for development. **(8 comments)**
- Development sites identified at Brookers Yard near the railway, field adjacent to Icklefordbury and allotment access, Old Hale Way, Area on Bedford Road, to the north of Priory School, opposite Burford Way and Burford Grange, off Bedford Road. **(5 comments)**
- Development should be curtailed as far as possible. **(3 comments)**
- Development of brownfield sites outside of the village and the land adjacent to LS1. **(3 comments)**
- Concern expressed that village road and utility infrastructure will not be developed simultaneously with housing development, they had no confidence that the Local Plan will affect planning decisions, develop anywhere in the village and the surrounds. **(3 comments)**

*“Focus should remain on small developments and brownfield sites.”*

**Q14 H3: How likely is it that someone from your household will still be living in the village in 10 years’ time?**

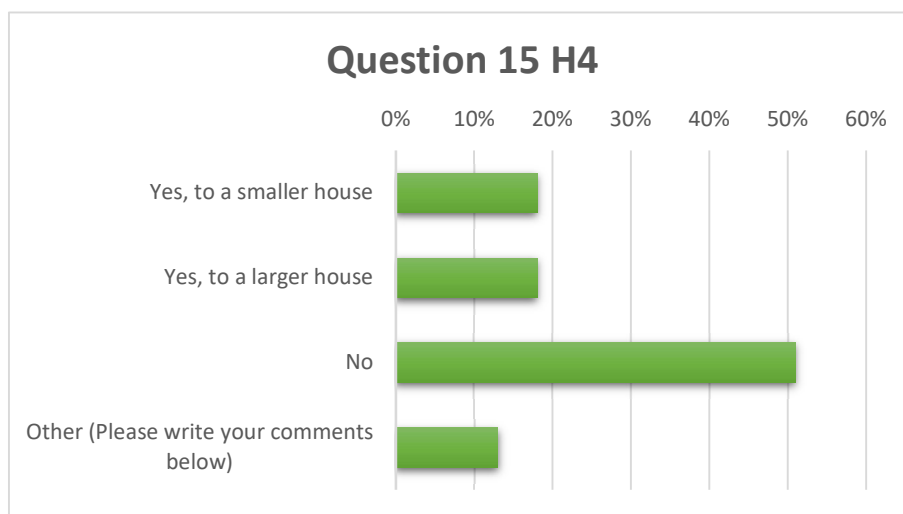
307 respondents answered the question.



Answer Choices	Responses
Very likely	57%
Fairly likely	23%
Fairly unlikely	7.0%
Very unlikely	6.5%
Not sure/don't know	6.5%

**Q15 H4: If appropriate housing were available, would your household consider moving within the parish in the next 10 years?**

305 respondents answered the question.



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, to a smaller house	18%
Yes, to a larger house	18%
No	51%
Other (Please write your comments below)	13%

39 respondents left 34 valid comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

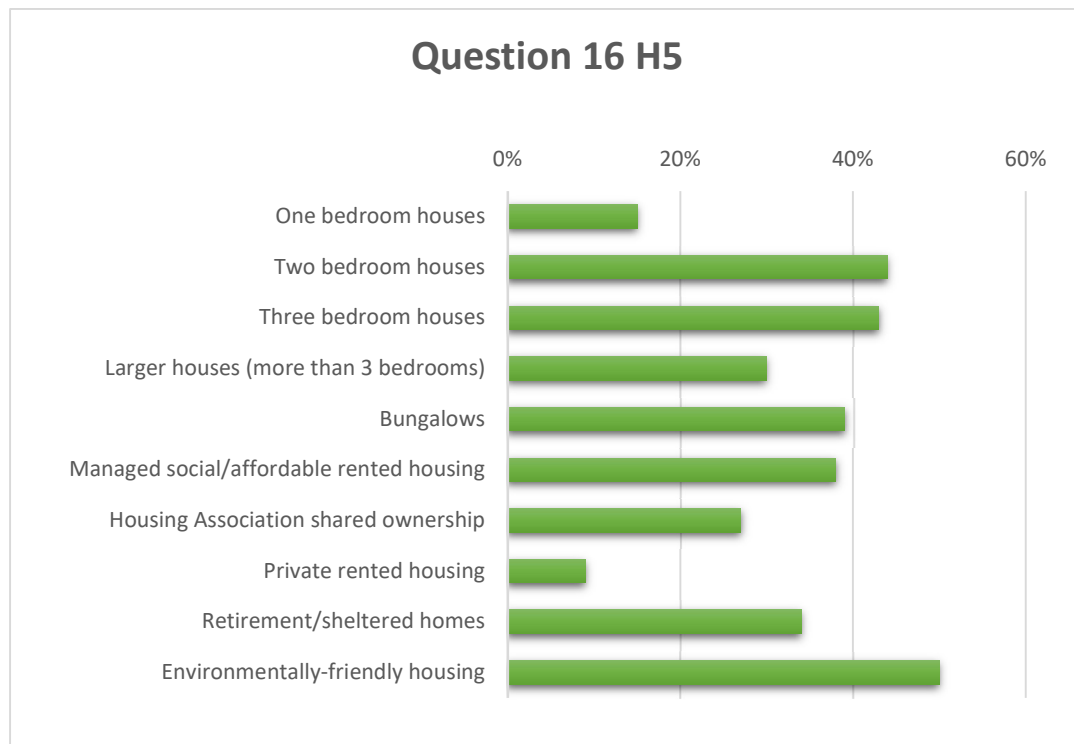
- Housing within the village was unaffordable for younger and 'upsizer' residents wishing to remain in the village. There was a need for 'affordable' homes rather than so called 'executive' styled homes that could only be afforded by non-village residents. **(9 comments)**
- Better designed or more suitable housing than that they were living in currently would attract residents to remain in the village. **(9 comments)**
- The effect of the future development on the village, the loss of village character and the traffic volume would affect resident's decision to remain. It was indicated that moving to a high density new build with small gardens and a lack of open space would not be an option to remain within the village. **(8 comments)**

- There is a lack of suitable smaller homes available for 'downsizer' or retiree residents wishing to remain in the village. Comments included availability of bungalows and 'over 55' social housing. It was also commented that commercial retirement housing, i.e. McCarthy & Stone type, was not a satisfactory solution due to high costs. **(7 comments)**
- Moving within the village would be an option if the schooling situation improved. (NB. No indication was given as to what the improvement should be or to what age group this applied to). **(1 comment)**

*“With an ageing population nationally more smaller properties/bungalows (needed) so larger family homes can be freed up” and “Not if developers continue at this rate. Ickleford will lose its identity.”*

**Q16 H5: What type of accommodation do you think will be needed in the parish in next 10 years?**

287 respondents answered the question, which allowed multiple responses.

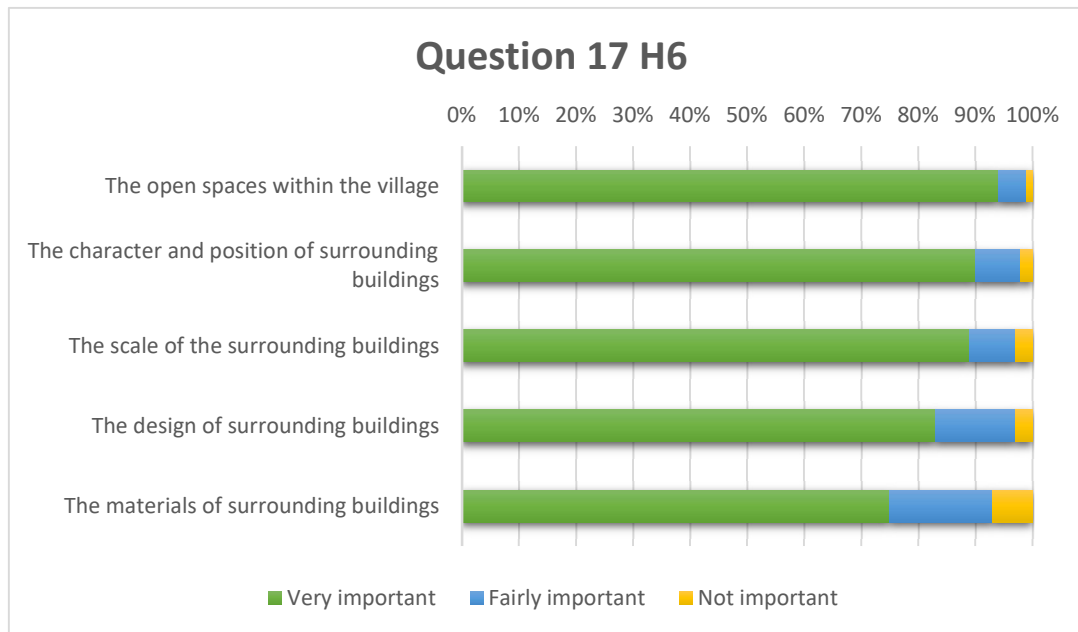


Answer Choices	Responses
One bedroom houses	15%
Two bedroom houses	44%
Three bedroom houses	43%
Larger houses (more than 3 bedrooms)	30%
Bungalows	39%
Social/affordable rented housing (managed by Housing Association)	38%
Shared ownership (provided through Housing Association)	27%
Private rented housing	9%

Answer Choices	Responses
Retirement/sheltered homes	34%
Environmentally-friendly housing	50%

**Q17 H6: How important do you think it is that new developments are sympathetic to the following?**

303 respondents answered the question.

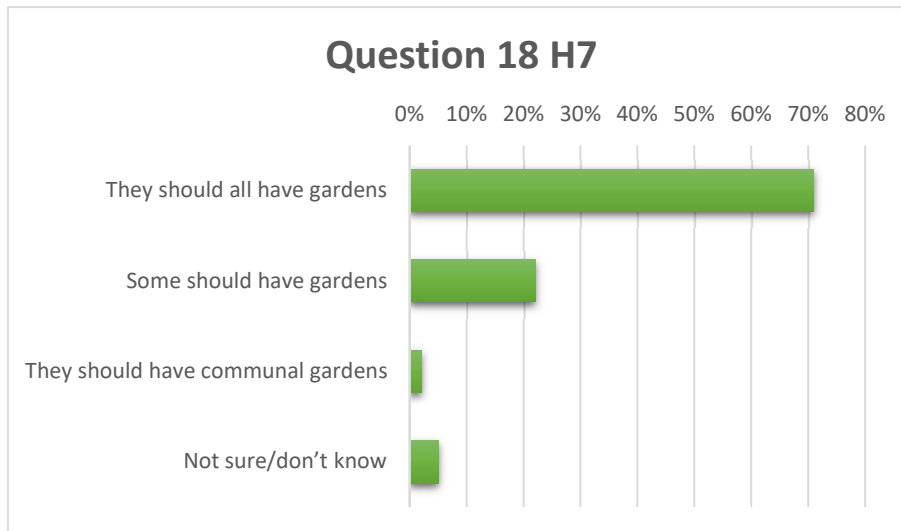


Answer choices	Very important	Fairly important	Not important
The open spaces within the village	94%	5%	1%
The character and position of surrounding buildings	90%	8%	2%
The scale of the surrounding buildings	89%	8%	3%
The design of surrounding buildings	83%	14%	3%
The materials of surrounding buildings	75%	18%	7%

**Q18 H7: Do you think future development in the village should have gardens?**

304 respondents answered the question.

Answer Choices	Responses
They should all have gardens	71%
Some should have gardens	22%
They should have communal gardens	2%
Not sure/don't know	5%



**Q19 H8: Considering parking within new developments, do you think there should be?**

301 respondents answered the question, which allowed multiple responses.

Answer Choices	Responses
Off street parking (driveways, parking bays, garages)	95%
The presence of ample visitor parking	50%
Other (please write your comments below)	12%

36 respondents left 40 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- The concern is that developers do not provide sufficient parking and it may be that NHDC policy does not sufficiently mandate this. There should not be overspill parking on village roads. A suggestion is made to introduce permit parking on certain roads where this has already become a problem; the Green Man development and Walnut Way being cited. A further suggestion that future housing development resident parking might be limited by covenant. **(27 comments)**
- Currently, parking along village roads. Including half on/half off parking, blocks footpaths and creates safety hazards for pedestrians, including whilst crossing roads. **(4 comments)**
- Development resident and visitor parking must provide for electric vehicle charging. **(3 comments)**
- Sufficient development parking should be designed discretely, i.e. to rear of development out of line of sight, to ensure the continuation of open space found within the village currently and prevent an eyesore to all residents. **(2 comments)**
- Development of footways/cycleways. Pedestrian only village with exceptions for public transport, blue badge and service vehicles, no commercial vehicle parking [Comment not clear as to whether there should be no commercial parking in the development or commercial parking should be provided for within the village], any development should provide for bicycle storage, and presumably mobility scooters, and the improvement and regularity of public transport, particularly to the rail stations, to the town centre and to Letchworth, might reduce the need to cars and hence parking. **(4 comments)**

**Q20 H9: Do you have any other comments about new housing developments in the parish, e.g. in relation to style, layout, green technologies or integration with the rest of the village?**

99 respondents left 172 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- New developments and the houses must be to high quality, energy efficient and environmental sustainability standards. Housing developments must include green technologies, e.g. no fossil fuel boilers, ground source heat pumps, solar panels, high insulation standards. **(58 comments)**
- New developments should be designed sympathetically with the surrounding environment including the existing architecture, i.e. no multi-storey (>3 floors including roof space). The village identity and character must be maintained and incoming new residents should be encouraged to integrate with it. There should, however, be different styles of houses compatible with the character of the village. **(34 comments)**
- Housing development must include discrete parking to ensure open space areas are provided and maintained. Parking must be controlled and not allowed to proliferate through the village on the side and main roads. Future development must avoid increasing the traffic volume on existing side roads and creating 'rat runs'. **(18 comments)**
- Future development must be avoided. IC3 must not be permitted. Burford Grange development should not be permitted due to environmental impact to the chalk river. The proposed local development housing should be reduced. IC2 must not be permitted as it will remove the divide between Ickleford and Hitchin. No social housing should be included in developments. **(17 comments)**
- Development should prioritise a minimal environmental impact and any reduction of open green space. The village should be held as a beacon for 'green living'. **(10 comments)**
- Wide footpaths and cycleways are necessary. A future IC3 development must include cycle and pedestrian access into the village. A pedestrian crossing is needed on the Bedford Road. **(9 comments)**
- Affordable homes and homes suitable for younger families and single people are needed with priority to allow for local residents to remain in the village. So called 'executive' styled multi bedroom/bathroom style houses do not fit with this concept. **(8 comments)**
- The local authority (NHDC) must make appropriate planning integrity and the conservation of the village their policy. The Parish Council is accountable for the proliferation of the proposed developments. **(5 comments)**
- Housing developments must include electric vehicle charging facilities. **(5 comments)**
- The Green Belt land must be protected. GB infill plots may also have a significant local impact. **(3 comments)**
- Improved public transport services are needed. **(2 comments)**
- The village infrastructure is insufficient for the proposed further housing developments. **(2 comments)**
- Suitable homes for 'downsizers' (bungalows, flats but not commercially run) to allow older residents to remain in the village. **(1 comment)**

*“The style of buildings should be sympathetic to the village style”*

*“Truly affordable. Encourage responsible young families/people”*

*“Empathetic, workable, infra structure, a sustainable plan for all to enjoy the very thing that living in a village entails. Ickleford is a village not a small town.”*

*“The beauty of Ickleford is the feel of a real community with people who care about where they live and their neighbours surrounding them.”*



## Environment and Heritage

The village environment, particularly the open spaces and natural habitats, and its identity is well supported and highly regarded by village residents. In many cases, this was a significant factor for moving to, living in and remaining in Ickleford. The five environment questions generated a total of 1218 responses, with E4 and E5 requiring free text comments, generating a total of 334 individual responses.

Residents consider that it is very important (82%) or fairly important (15%) that Ickleford maintains its own separate identity from that of Hitchin, Letchworth and neighbouring villages, with a similar proportion supporting Ickleford's historical and conservation areas, and keeping development within this area to a minimum.

The identity of the village, however, is not just defined by its separation from other conurbations. The majority of respondents consider the natural environment (its wildlife, rivers, common land and agricultural landscape) as not only important to conserve, but an intrinsic part of Ickleford's identity and culture. When asked in Question E4, 229 respondents took the trouble to collectively identify, through 719 observations, all the areas of 'natural beauty' from the "Discover Ickleford – Walk the Parish" map as being of significance for walking and cycling, and enjoyment of the countryside views.

Many respondents thought that the 2020 Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns had raised the importance of Ickleford's open spaces to the mental and general health of residents, both young and old.

The increased use of the village footpaths and bridleways, particularly in the late autumn and winter months, has seen a deterioration in their general condition. Many respondents commented that path maintenance, as well as that of the associated hedgerows and rivers, is of prime importance, considered a mixed responsibility of the Parish Council and the land owners/tenants. In some instances, it was thought that more could be done to improve paths and bridleways where drainage is poor and ground conditions liable to saturation. Oughtonhead Nature Reserve and the Letchworth Greenway were quoted by some respondents as examples where countryside is well managed and maintained. Path signage and countryside information boards were also thought to be beneficial to walkers.

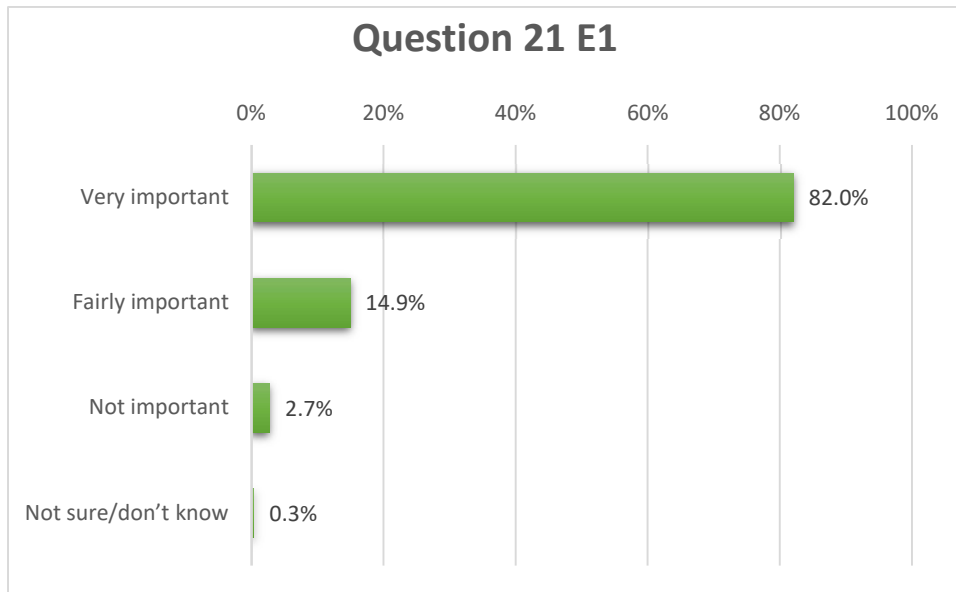
People's enjoyment of the countryside walks would be enhanced with the provision of more benches, particularly appreciated by the elder residents of the village, and additional litter and dog bins. Numerous dog owners noted their appreciation of the local footpaths for exercise, however dog fouling of footpaths and the apparent habit of disposing of dog waste bags in and on the hedgerows is met with equal frustration and annoyance.

Some respondents suggested some local projects that might be considered. These included clearing and improving the natural habitat at Gerry's Hole, and the riverside walks nearby which have become overgrown and littered and addressing the graffiti on the old Bedford Line bridge abutments and the mainline footbridge. Suggestions for new designated cycle paths were also given. There was a suggestion of potential conflict of use between walkers and cyclists, with guidance on cyclist use of footpaths unclear. There were differing views on the value of improving parking for countryside users.

The Cadwell Bridge crossing and Bedford Road were highlighted as dangerous for walkers.

**Q21 E1: How important is it to you that Ickleford village maintains a separate identity from neighbouring villages and towns?**

295 respondents answered the question.



**Q22 E2: How important is it to you to minimise the impact of development on historic buildings and the conservation area (shown on Figure 2 below)?**

294 respondents answered the question.

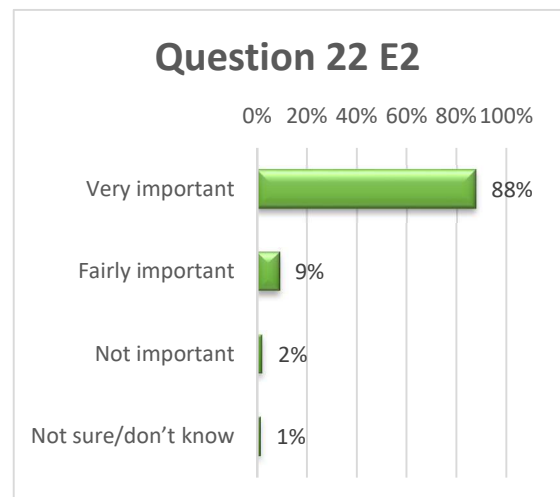
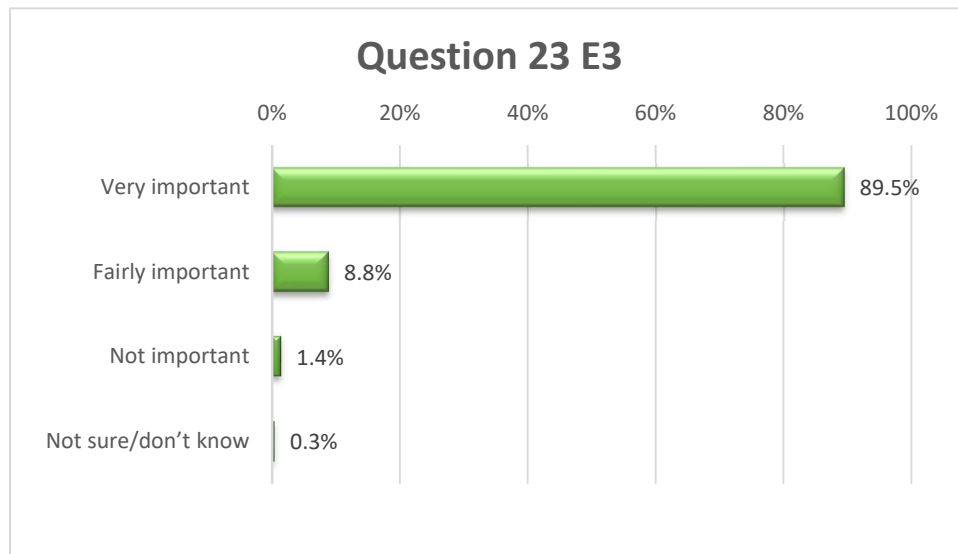


Figure 2: Ickleford conservation area

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**Q23 E3: How important is it to you to minimise the impact of development on trees, hedges, verges, footpaths, bridleways, rivers, ponds and wildlife?**

295 respondents answered the question.



**Q24 E4: Please look at the parish map (Error! Reference source not found.) and tell us which places are important to you. These may be, for example, green spaces, footpaths or views. This will allow us to build a picture of those places and help protect them for the future. You can use the names given on the map or your own descriptions.**

229 respondents left 719 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- Specific local places of importance (**309 comments**, see Figure 3 below):
  - Lower Green/ Christmas Common/Whitsun Common/Snailswell
  - Ickleford Common/Pestol Farm/Three Arches/Hicca Way areas
  - Gerry's Hole/ Duncots areas
  - Cadwell/Lavender Farm/Icknield Way/Wilbury Hills
  - Recreation ground/Alleyfield/Chapel Path open spaces
  - River Oughton/River Hiz chalk rivers
  - Upper Green/St Katherines church/school
  - Ickleford/Hitchin Green Belt divide
  - Bedford Road green space/agricultural land
  - Old Westmill to Oughtonhead/Pirton

All footways and bridlepaths, and general green open spaces including common, brownfield (infill) and agricultural land. (**244 comments**)

- Value is placed on the footpaths and open spaces having a significant effect on the well-being and health of the village and its residents, particularly during 2020 for recreation, as well as physical and mental health benefits. (**45 comments**)

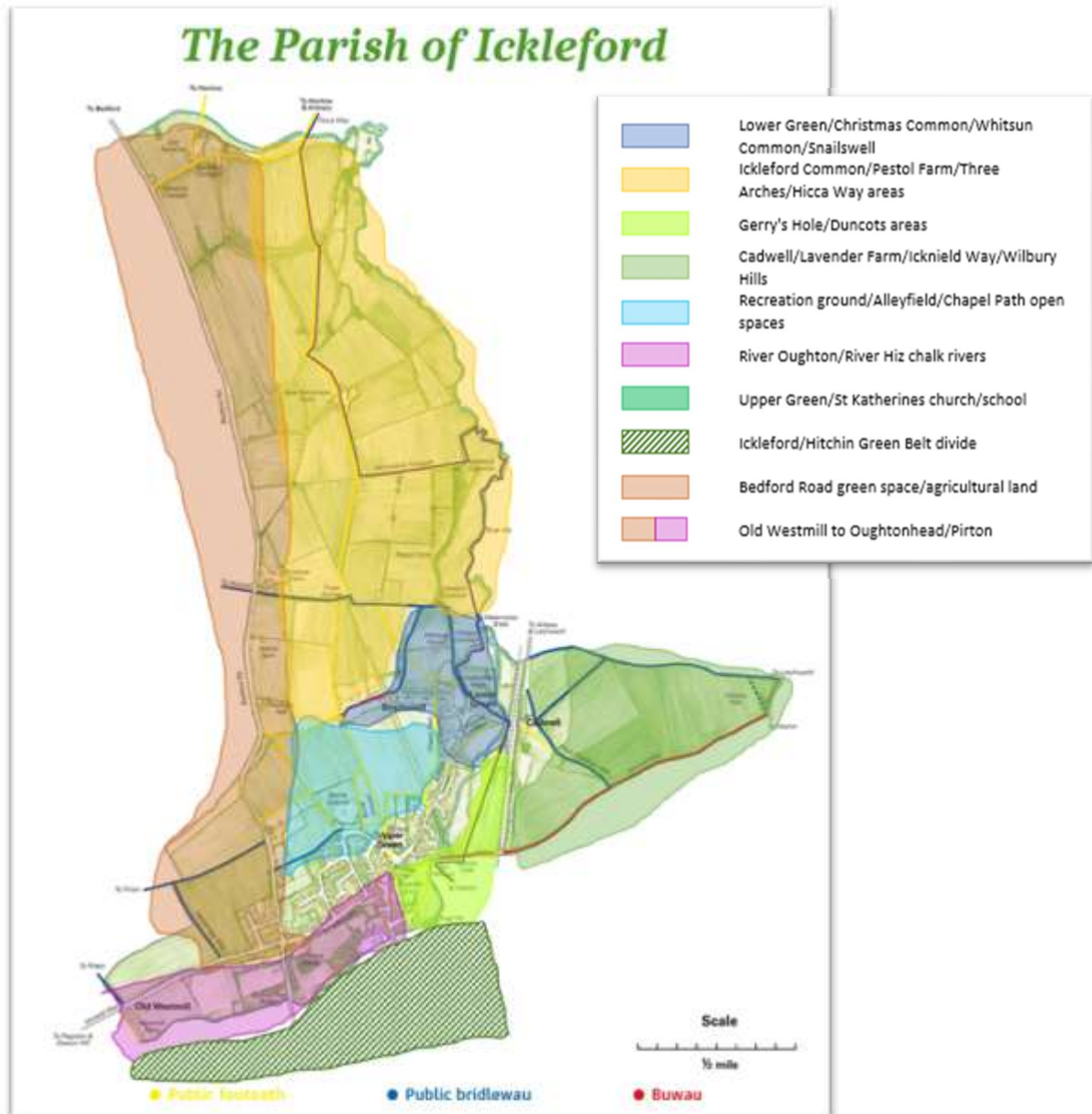


Figure 3: Specific local areas of importance identified by 309 respondent's comments. From the Discover Ickleford Walk the Parish map produced by Ickleford Parish Council. Based on Ordnance Survey Material © Crown copyright. Hertfordshire County Council LA 1000 19606 2005

- Recognition of the importance placed on the footpaths, open spaces and the associated other factors have on the character and historical value of Ickleford, and the reason that many residents chose, or choose, to live in the village. **(35 comments)**
- Countryside views from various locations around the village and its surrounds. Also linked to general village character and countryside accessibility. **(29 comments)**
- Recognition of the predominance of wildlife habitats, nature and natural environments, including the chalk rivers. **(26 comments)**
- The footpath network provides residents with areas for dog walking. **(17 comments)**
- Maintenance, or non-maintenance of the footpath network, and in some cases, the hedgerows, is considered an important issue. **(12 comments)**

- All footpaths are important, but not indispensable or re-routable depending on the **need (1 comment)** and introduction of upgraded footpath pedestrian routes & "route to school". **(1 comment)**

*"All of the footpaths. One of the reasons we love this village is its accessibility to the countryside. We love Wilbury Hill, the common, around the lavender farm, the route to Oughton Head and Pirton to name but a few."*

*"All footpaths are important especially along the River Hiz and all green spaces where we can observe "*

*"Every square yard south of New Ramerick farm"*

*"The countryside walks all around the edge of the village are beautiful, I can't pick a favourite & I'd be sad to see any of the fields built on."*

*"All the footpaths and bridleways around Ickleford are used by our family for walking, running, cycling, picnics."*

*"Ickleford Common and its beautiful views and its wildlife is a true gem."*

*"Wherever you stand you have a view, especially in the winter.....on the path across the top of the lavender field or standing near to the Bedford Road looking across to the lavender farm, we have wonderful views. This is such a positive about the village and has been appreciated even more so during all our lockdown walks."*

*" We watch the fish and ducks in the Hiz (observing the duckling families in the spring) and the kites and other birds of prey above the fields."*

*"A few years ago, the government committed to planting 11 million trees by 2022. .... can we do anything to support it in the Neighbourhood Plan?"*

*"I regularly walk all of the footpaths, bridleways, and byways, and did so before the coronavirus lockdown. For me, they are what make Ickleford special."*

**Q25 E5: If you have any suggestions as to how we could improve access to the countryside or support its recreational use, please give them here, along with any other comments you may have on this topic.**

105 respondents left 174 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- Maintenance of footpaths/bridlepaths/hedgerows is considered important and of high priority. It is suggested to encourage village resident's communal ownership of footpaths, possibly by organising volunteer groups/village action days to clear and tidy paths/hedgerows. It is also suggested to improve footpath surfaces (crushed stone etc.) and the 'kissing gates' to enable wheelchair/pushchair access. More accessible woodland areas. **(54 comments)**
- Conflict of use between walkers and cyclists. More designated cyclepaths with a cycle route on the disused railway track from Gerry's Hole to Hitchin suggested. Develop a cycleway and footpath network to Hitchin, Letchworth and other villages with an access connection to the Greenway (Letchworth). Guidance on cyclist use of footpaths seems unclear. **(28 comments)**
- Public footpaths become slippery/muddy/inaccessible in winter and non-metalled roads/bridlepaths become impassable due to car access by walkers/dog walkers. Off road designated parking for countryside access and to prevent car access to areas for non-residents

is suggested. Designated parking in Westmill Lane for countryside access is suggested. **(18 comments)**

- Improved access is not necessary and could be detrimental to the natural ecological environment. Increase village focus on the natural environment and biodiversity, create area conservation/AONB/nature reserves. **(17 comments)**
- Respondents suggested some specific ideas and projects: Create a cycle route on the disused railway track from Gerry's Hole to Hitchin. Reduce village traffic and improve the village natural features (although no specific examples were given). Improve the Gerry's Hole area, including the sign. Remove the graffiti and protect railway footbridge with anti-graffiti paint. Remove the graffiti and protect old rail bridge abutments. More benches sited on the footpaths, litter bins and picnic areas. A communal area/picnic area at Ickleford Mill, with cafe. **(12 comments)**
- Several comments referred to the improvement of footpath signage (numbering), more located maps and information, and nature trails. One respondent suggested the reissue of the "Discover Ickleford - Walk the Parish" pamphlet or to make available to pick up. **(11 comments)**
- Concerns with stewardship of the countryside by landowners/tenants/farmers, including their maintenance responsibilities of public rights of way. Adherence to the Nature Friendly Farming Network and its principles (<https://www.nffn.org.uk>) is suggested (probably PC involvement) and to engage with Countryside Management Services (Herts CC) who have influenced the Oughtonhead nature Reserve. The Letchworth Greenway scheme was considered to be a good model. **(9 comments)**
- The pedestrian access through Cadwell Bridge to the Lavender Farm is dangerous and requires improvement, i.e. pedestrian walkway or light controlled crossing. Several respondents are put off using this route and facility. The Bedford Road (A600) is considered dangerous for pedestrians, particularly for those wishing to access the village from Westmill Lane and accessing the Pirton footpaths. **(8 comments)**
- No more housing development was stated by some respondents, and to reduce countryside accessibility. In some instances this corresponded to references to the natural environment. **(6 comments)**
- There are requests for more dog poo bins but also by many (with detected frustration), a clamp down on the dog fouling of country footpath/bridlepaths. This included the antisocial behaviour of hanging poo bags on hedges etc. or dumping in the hedgerows. **(5 comments)**
- Riverside walks need improvement, i.e. River Hiz at Ickleford Common and River Oughton. **(4 comments)**
- Better utilisation of the sports pavilion for community use. Creation of a youth club. **(2 comments)**

*"Ongoing maintenance and improvement of footpaths. Use of gravel for better drainage; some footpaths get very muddy and limit access. Possible access for wheelchair users. Use of volunteers to cut back hedges and other plant growth. Organise a footpath tidying up day in the spring/summer."*

*"Involve/educate people about how important respecting nature and preserving biodiversity is. Nature is vital for our wellbeing (mental and physical)."*

*“Would be great if additional walks could be opened up along the river or to surrounding villages. Also cycle paths that would allow safe access to the greenway and other cycle routes. safe cycle route (as much off road as possible) linking Hitchin and Stevenage.”*

*“Cadwell bridge walkthrough footpath... the crossing area is LETHAL”*

*“Access to footpaths for families with a pushchair or disabled person should be encouraged. IPC do an amazing job of upgrading the footpaths”. Three Arches however remains a real problem and becomes unwalkable for half the year even with the best wellies in the world.”*

*“Information on footpaths should again be given to all households so new residents in the village will have all the relevant information.”*

*“Additional benches along some of the footpaths so that the views can be appreciated.”*

*“Access to public walkways could be better sign posted. Also the upkeep of walk ways and pavements around the village need attention.”*

*“Nature trails/information boards on wildlife.”*

*“Repair the sign for Gerry's Hole and the footbridge over the railway in a way that is graffiti-proof (both currently unsightly and vandalised).”*

*“Provide bins for dog-owners and encourage their use (dog mess on all paths has become a concern particularly since the first lockdown).”*

*“Where the mill is, it would be really nice to create a little area for the community where the duck pond can be enjoyed as a feature e.g. sheltered picnic tables or even a small cafe with a design that blends with nature e.g. using wood materials or similar”.*

## Economy

The business section of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire looked at the general economic health of the parish and possible future options for sustaining the community. When asked which activities respondents would like to see encouraged, those gaining most support were community projects, sporting projects, a coffee shop/tearoom/restaurant, agriculture/horticulture and environmental projects.

These were closely followed by working from home, which is perhaps not surprising given the impact of COVID 19 on current and future working practices. In line with this, when asked how the Ickleford economy could be supported, flexible office working space with good telecommunications, particularly in existing buildings, drew the most comments.

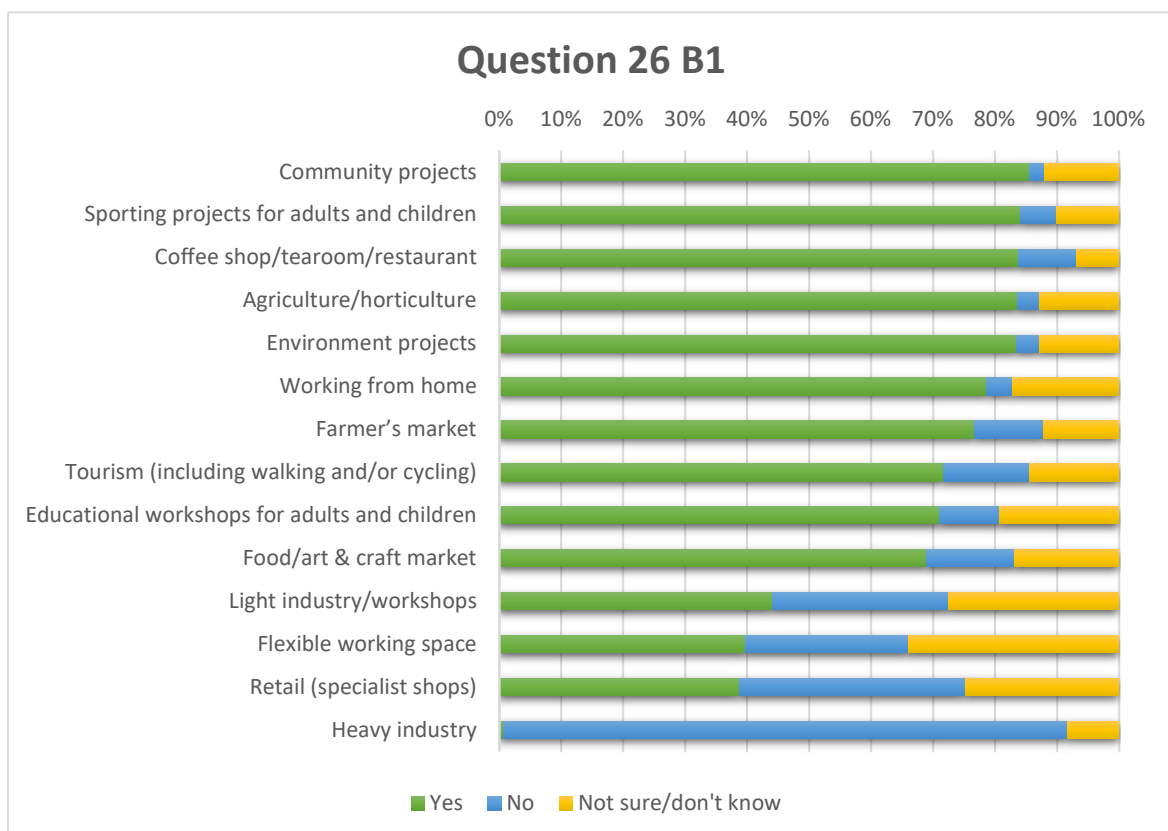
Similarly relating to business, improved public transport bus services, particularly with links to the stations at Letchworth and Hitchin, and with extended hours into the evening, were thought to be important.

Respondents were supportive of the local shops/pubs/lavender farm amenities but indicated that a tearoom/coffee shop, post office and a larger village store would be beneficial to the economy.

Other suggestions included: village events, a directory of local services, addressing traffic issues, and cycle routes to Hitchin and Letchworth, amongst other ideas.

### Q26 B1: Should any of the following activities be encouraged in the parish of Ickleford??

293 respondents answered the question.





Activity	Yes	No	Not sure /don't know
Community projects	86%	3%	12%
Coffee shop/tearoom/restaurant	84%	9%	7%
Sporting projects for adults and children	84%	6%	10%
Agriculture/horticulture	84%	4%	13%
Environment projects	83%	4%	13%
Working from home	79%	4%	17%
Farmer's market	77%	11%	12%
Tourism (including walking and/or cycling)	72%	14%	14%
Educational workshops for adults and children	71%	10%	19%
Food/art & craft market	69%	14%	17%
Light industry/workshops	44%	29%	27%
Flexible working space	40%	26%	34%
Retail (specialist shops)	39%	36%	25%
Heavy industry	1%	91%	8%

**Q27 B2: Do you have any other comments or suggestions as to how the economy in Ickleford could be supported (e.g. through types of workspace, transport, skills, infrastructure, business support)?**

65 respondents left 80 comments, summarised as follows in the order of frequency:

- Flexible office and workshop space, particularly using existing buildings, serviced with good high-speed broadband and mobile communications. Potential locations include Ickleford Manor, the school if this were to be relocated and the village hall. Local enterprise subsidy initiatives for small local businesses including subsidised or low-cost workspace rents. **(21 comments)**
- Improved public transport services (evening services, rail station). Local minibus service between Hitchin and Letchworth via Ickleford. A train station. **(13 comments)**
- More local shops, café, including a post office facility, and a larger, more competitive local store. Encourage agricultural/horticultural activities/garden centre and the development of an orchard. **(11 comments)**
- Café/bakery or similar type meeting place. **(9 comments)**
- Village organised events (markets, fetes, festival, fairs, fund raisers). Better use of existing buildings for social activities and workshops. **(6 comments)**
- Directory of local skills and services promoted using notice boards and online website/links. **(6 comments)**

- Traffic and safety: Review/reduction of through-traffic volumes with speed restrictions. Cadwell bridge pedestrian access improvement (Lavender Farm/Cadwell residences). **(4 comments)**
- Safe cycle routes to Hitchin and Letchworth. **(3 comments)**
- Support for Ickleford sports clubs and facilities. All-weather sports facilities (commercially run). **(2 comments)**
- Better parking facilities (i.e. shop, church, for events etc.) **(2 comments)**
- Local accommodation facilities (mentioned in the context of tourism/Lavender Farm) **(1 comment)**, activities/organisations for children and teenagers **(1 comment)**, not appropriate to develop the Ickleford local economy (retain village identity). **(1 comment)**

*“A place for working/meeting etc that people who mostly work from home can use when needed would support self-employed and those who no longer commute.”*

*“Provision of a shared business support centre for small start-ups and those working from home”*

*“With more people working from home, a coffee shop/cafe would be good so people can meet up in a communal space”*

*“Potential to encourage inclusion of small shops or businesses as part of the Mill redevelopment - e.g. a small independent bakery”*

*“Safe pedestrian access through Cadwell railway bridge.”*

*“Markets, [fêtes], fairs, fund raising events. Anything that can bring the community together too would be a bonus.”*

*“Wider use of the village hall for people to run classes, talks without having to pay a big rental until established.”*

*“Bus route to Hitchin or Letchworth rail station”*

*“Better cycle routes to/from Hitchin and Letchworth.”*

## Transport

Transport is historically an issue that is of concern and debate in Ickleford. Results of our previous consultations suggested there was concern over the volume and speed of traffic passing through the village. Two specific potential accident 'black spots' were also identified; Cadwell bridge and the roundabout at the junction of Turnpike Lane, Westmill Lane and Bedford Road. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that the free response questions in this section generated over 500 individual comments.

The car dominates transport in the village. Less than 3% of the respondents reported that their household had no car and 98% use a car at least once a week. Concerns about transport, almost exclusively issues relating to roads and traffic, produced more respondents (**287 comments**) than issues relating to public transport (**101 comments**) and the promotion of walking and cycling (**99 comments**).

Approximately two-thirds of respondents felt that both speed and volume of traffic were major problems. These issues contributed to a danger to pedestrians at Cadwell Bridge (83.6% selecting this as a 'major problem'), and for both pedestrians and vehicles at Turnpike Lane/Bedford Road roundabout. They were seen as a barrier to safe walking and cycling. Cycle routes were requested to specific locations including Hitchin, along the A600, Stevenage and Letchworth.

Additional traffic calming measures were requested in 24 comments – including (average) speed cameras, 20mph limits and upgrading of the existing speed calming measures. Several comments connected an increase in development with an unwanted increase in volume of traffic.

Public transport is not well used – 64% rarely or never take the bus. Reasons for not using the bus included that it was not frequent enough, too expensive and that other routes were required. Of the 54 responses suggesting new routes, the most popular were to Hitchin station (**22 comments**), Letchworth (**21 comments**) or to any station (not specified) (**17 comments**) suggesting that the current public transport offering is not integrated enough. This is also shown by the comments on the lack of a bus service timed to allow students in the village to reach secondary schools in Hitchin.

It should be noted that the car ownership levels reported by our respondents were higher than those found in the 2011 census data. Poor public transport may therefore be a greater issue for residents than these findings suggest.

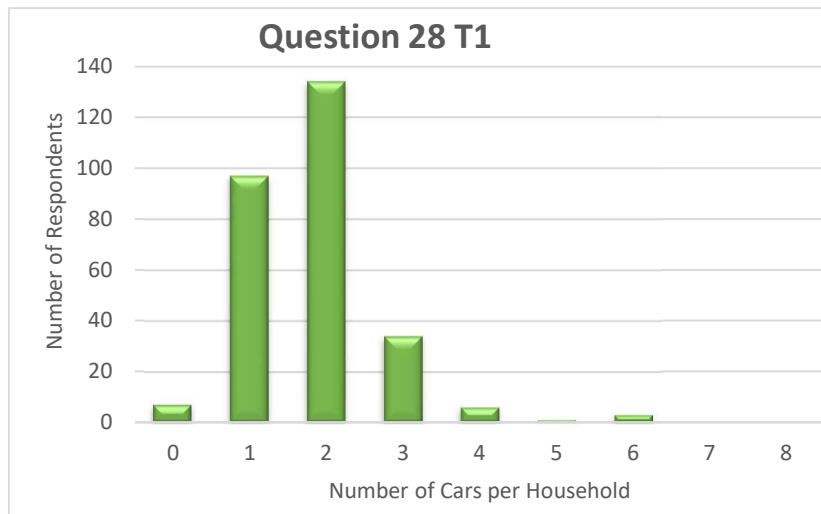
Finally, there is clearly an appreciation of the rural footpaths in the village, especially during the lockdown period with 74.5% of people walking every day. There is some concern about the upkeep of the rural paths. Those walking within the village, especially with children, again report feeling unsafe due to the speed and volume of traffic.

### **Q28 T1: How many motor vehicles does your household have?**

282 respondents answered the question.

These figures show a very large majority of respondents belonged to a household with at least one car. This is a larger proportion than found in the census data from 2011 (see table Q28T1). There may be changes in car ownership over time and the census data is not always fully representative at a very local level (to protect anonymity). However this could suggest a lower

response rate from certain types of households, potentially low income households. The risk that this survey may underrepresent public transport needs should be considered.



Vehicles/household	Census 2011	Ickleford NP 2020
No cars or vans in household	14.5%	2.5%
1 car or van in household	42.2%	34.4%
2 cars or vans in household	33.1%	47.5%
3 cars or vans in household	7.9%	12.1%
4 or more cars or vans in household	2.2%	3.5%

**Q29 T2: What forms of transport does your household mainly use?**

287 answered this question. Some data may be affected by lockdown restrictions.

- 98.3% use a car at least once a week and 63.5% use a car every day.
- The most popular form of transport (frequency) was walking – 74.5% walked every day.
- 64.0% rarely or never use the bus. Only 4.6% travel by bus once a week or more.
- 11.0% cycle daily, 26.0% weekly.
- 9.8% use the train every day, 10.6% once a week and 12.6% once a month.

**Q30 T3: Are you concerned about any of the following?**

287 answered this question.

- 83.6% of respondents felt that pedestrian access at Cadwell bridge was a major problem.
- 65.5% of respondents feel that traffic speed is a major problem.
- 64.6% of respondents feel that traffic volume is a major problem.
- 53.6% of respondents feel that pedestrian safety is a major problem.
- 53.4% of respondents feel that the Turnpike Lane / Bedford Road roundabout is a major safety issue with a further 30.5% a minor safety issue.

- 50.6% of respondents feel that cyclist safety is a major problem.

From the free responses to this question, 188 separate points were identified from 85 respondents. These issues were collated into themes ranked as follows:

- Excessive vehicle speed. 30 comments** related to speeding which was often a compounding factor in other issues – for example pedestrian safety at Cadwell bridge and the roundabout at Turnpike Lane/Bedford Road/Westmill Lane.

*“the humps do not calm traffic...those people who want to speed do, they do not slow those down who are speeding. We walk along the paths to school and they are narrow, with the amount of traffic and speed of traffic it can be scary.”*

- Pedestrian safety**, excluding the bridge at Cadwell. Comments included requests for pedestrian crossings on Bedford Road and Turnpike Lane. Many respondents noted that footpaths were too narrow – especially when walking with children. **(26 comments)**

*“The crossing of Turnpike Lane at Bedford Rd end is particularly dangerous. Anyone a bit slow on their feet or people in wheelchairs take a huge risk crossing the road.”*

- Requests for more or better traffic calming infrastructure.** This included requests for more traffic calming such as speed cameras and also complaints about the existing measures, especially the poor state of repair of the humps between the village centre and Cadwell bridge on Arlesey Road. **(24 comments)**

*“ The through road in the village carries a huge volume of traffic, + school and residential. The present scheme for traffic calming DOES NOT WORK. The speed humps, other than full width, are useless to all...they are dangerous, worn out and should be removed and replaced with either FULL width tarmac, or speed camera's/CCTV to catch HGVs”*

- Excessive volume of traffic.** Respondents reported concerns about the increased volume of traffic, with some relating this to development nearby. **(19 comments).**

*“There has been a noticeable increase in traffic flowing into Hitchin along the Bedford Road particularly since development of housing along the Shefford bypass which comes under Central Bedfordshire.... we seem to fall in the crack of being in the boundary of Central Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire with no one having the responsibility of looking at traffic flow overall and the impact increased volume can have on a separate nearby community.”*

- Roundabout at Turnpike Lane/Bedford Road.** Police crash data up to 2019 shows only two minor injury accidents at this location (<https://www.crashmap.co.uk>, date last accessed 21.7.21), however there were **18 comments** on the potential danger at this location.

*“The Turnpike Lane roundabout is an accident waiting to happen.”*

*“Visibility is poor at the Turnpike Lane/Bedford Road roundabout which makes it dangerous.”*

*“Hedge on right at top of Turnpike Lane is far too big and is a serious danger when entering the roundabout. Some very near misses as traffic speeds along Bedford Road towards Hitchin.”*

*“Difficult to see traffic from the right when approaching Bedford Road from Turnpike Lane. Some cars do travel at speed from the right when they can see it is clear in front.”*

*“The roundabout on Turnpike Lane is a major road traffic hazard particularly with the increase of traffic using Bedford Road.”*

vi. **Pedestrian access at Cadwell bridge.** Cadwell bridge was specified as an issue for pedestrian safety. **(14 comments)**

*"We are very concerned about access to the lavender farm under Cadwell bridge as we live a 5 minute walk away and simply don't want to risk our lives walking there!"*

Among other themes identified were dangerous parking **(9 comments)** and HGVs **(5 comments)**.

**Q31 T4: Do you think that public transport in the village could be improved? If so, what routes would you like to see?**

101 people provided a free response producing 188 unique comments.

- The top single theme identified was that the bus service should be 'better' including a more frequent, reliable and cheaper service that operates a better service in the evening and at weekends. **(26 comments)**
- Many respondents requested new bus routes. The most popular were a direct route to Hitchin station **(22 comments)**, Letchworth **(21 comments)** or to *any* station (not specified) **(17 comments)**. Other routes requested included Ickleford to Stevenage, the Lister hospital, Baldock and Luton Airport.
- Of the 188 comments identified (17%) felt that no improvement was required/did not use public transport/don't know.
- It was noted that there is currently no public transport from Ickleford to Hitchin that allows secondary school pupils to arrive in time for school. **(6 comments)**

*"... the bus service in the morning is useless for village children attending schools in Hitchin as the timings (every hour) mean that the kids would be late for school! This means parents having to drive the kids, adding to traffic, pollution and unnecessary journeys."*

**Q32 T5: If you have not already commented on this, do you think that there are ways walking and cycling around the village could be encouraged? Are there any particular routes you would like to see developed?**

136 unique comments from 99 responses.

- The most popular request was to improve footpaths **(24 comments)** by widening paved footpaths within the village and improving the quality of rural footpaths and bridleways – the muddiness of the paths was often referred to:

*"Improve footpaths around Gerry's Hole area towards Hitchin/Old Hale Way. Some have become very overgrown and difficult to walk along, particularly in Winter."*

- To encourage cycling there was a general request for more cycle paths **(13 comments)**, with specific requests for cycle paths to Hitchin **(8 comments)**, Lower Stondon/Henlow/A600 **(8 comments)**, Hitchin Industrial Estate/Grove Road **(5 comments)** and other locations **(11 comments)** such as Stevenage, Arlesey and Letchworth.
- Several respondents requested better awareness and signage **(9 comments)** with some people pointing to the success of the guide produced by the Parish Council in the past with a request for something similar again.

Some comments highlighted themes from previous questions that provide a barrier to safe walking and cycling such as the speed **(11 comments)** and volume **(5 comments)** of traffic and Cadwell bridge **(10 comments)** was again noted as a pedestrian hazard.

## About your Household

The questions in this section sought information about the current composition and character of respondents' households. Comparisons with the 2011 census data were made to see if the sample was likely to be representative of the population. There may be changes over time and census data is not always fully representative at a very local level (to protect anonymity). However, large differences could indicate a potential sampling bias.

Postcode data showed respondents came from across the area, while the age and gender profiles were very similar to that found in the 2011 census data.

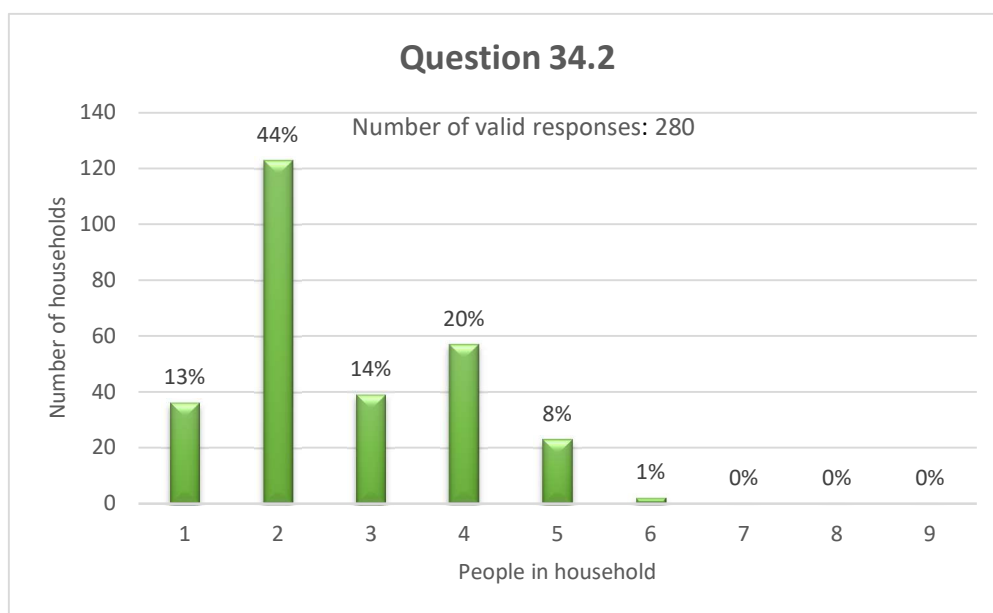
The data on household residential status gave a larger number of homeowners than the 2011 census and a lower proportion of social renters. This may suggest that homeowners were more likely to take part in the survey and indicate an underrepresentation of social renters. While this is unlikely to affect the findings for many issues, the development of the Neighbourhood Plan will need to keep this potential bias in mind, e.g. in relation to housing affordability.

### Q33 1. Please give your postcode.

268 from 355 respondents gave a full local postcode. These showed a broad coverage of responses from across the village.

### Q34 2. How many people live in your household?

281 respondents answered the question.

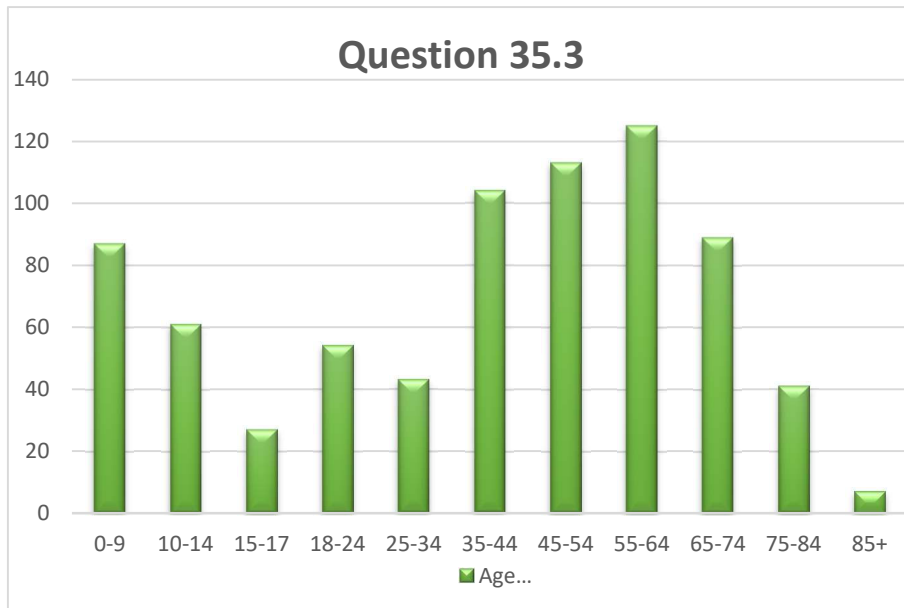


### Q35 3. Please select which age band each person falls into.

279 respondents gave a valid response to the question

The data shows the age demographic of the residents in the village, with the comparative figures for the 2011 census shown in the table below.

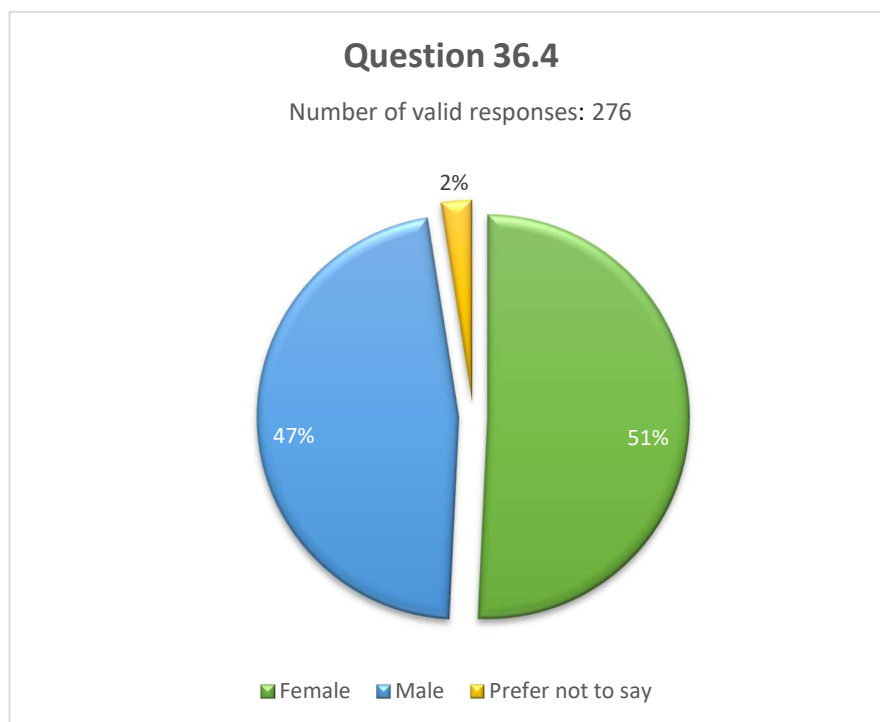




Age	Census 2011	Ickleford NP 2020
0-17	20%	24%
18-24	6%	7%
25-74	64%	63%
+75	10%	6%

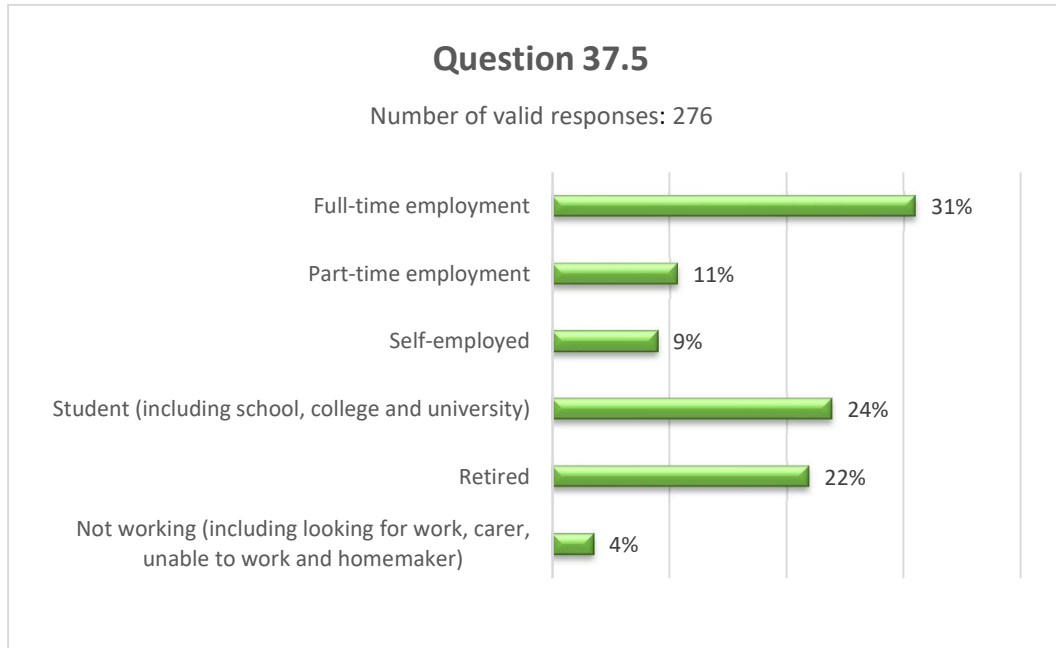
**Q36 4. Please select each person’s gender.**

276 respondents gave a valid response to the question.



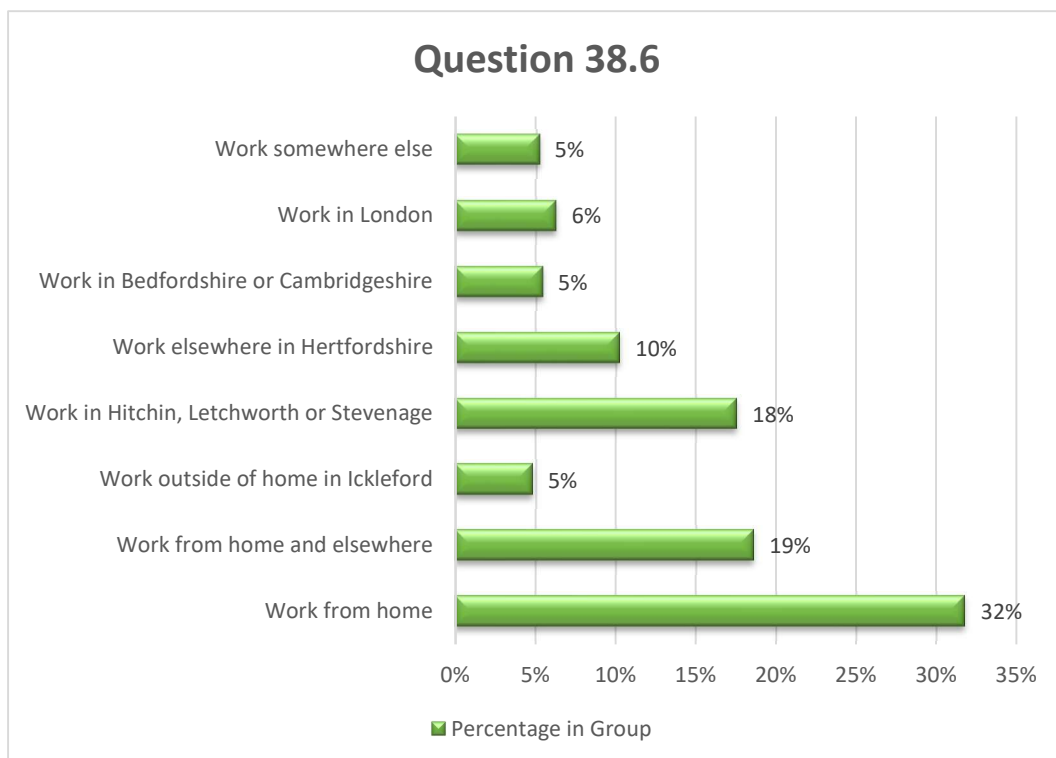
**Q37 5. Please select each person’s employment status.**

276 respondents answered the question.



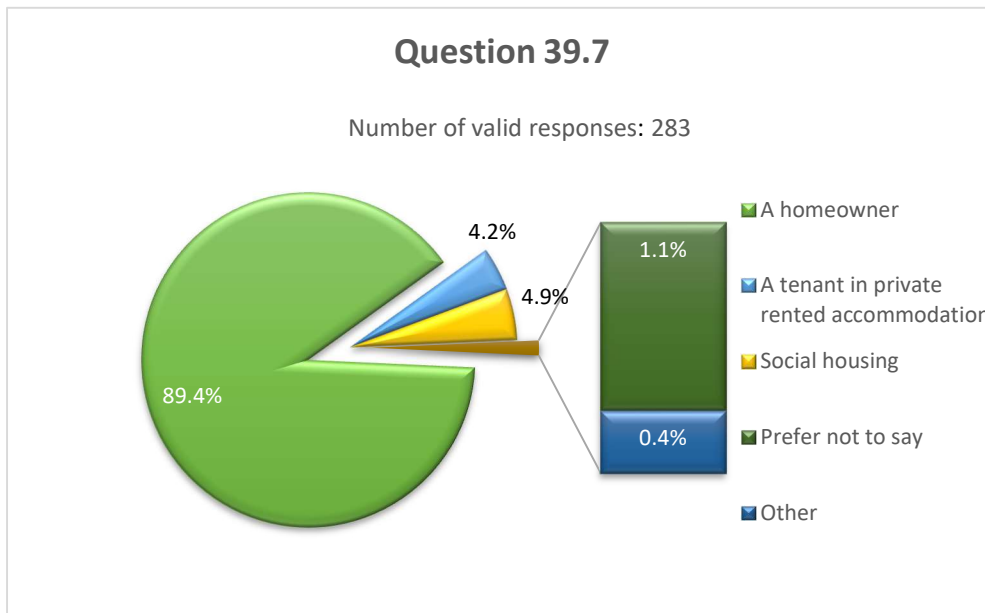
**Q38 6. If any household members are currently employed, please indicate their place (or places) of work at this time. (Responses given during COVID-19 restrictions)**

195 respondents answered the question.



**Q39 7. Please give your household’s residential status.**

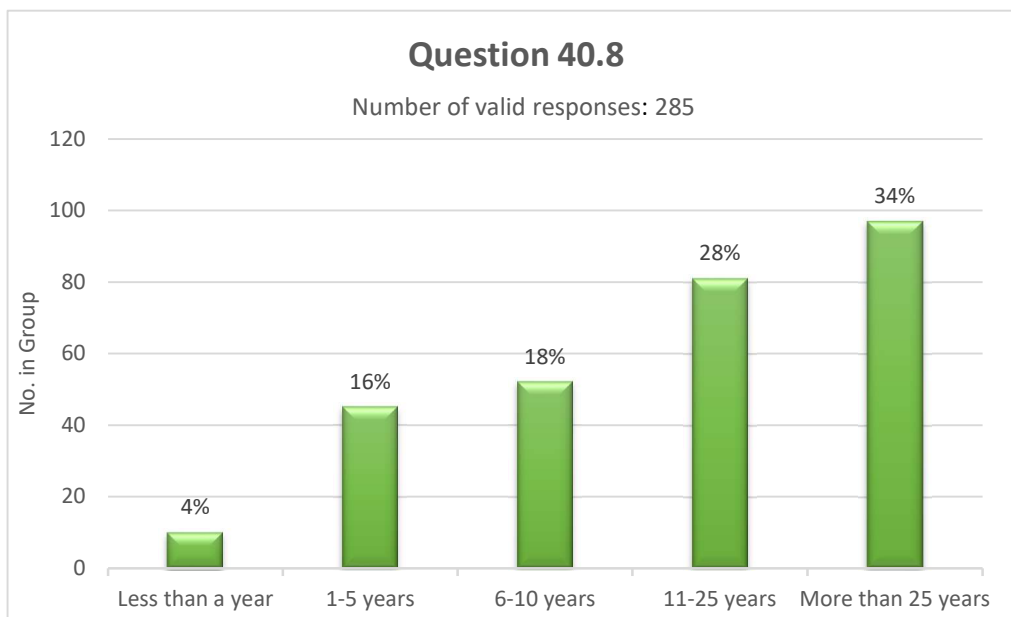
283 respondents answered the question. The comparative figures for the 2011 census shown in the table below.



Tenure	Census 2011	Ickleford NP 2020
Owner	64%	89.4%
Social housing	24%	4.9%
Private renting	10%	4.2%
Other/Living rent free/Prefer not to say	2%	1.5%

**Q40 8. How long has someone from your household lived in the parish?**

285 respondents answered the question.



## Final comments

### *Please write any other thoughts you would like to share with us*

The final page of the survey thanked respondents for taking part and invited them to write down any other thoughts they wanted to share. Fifty-nine respondents left their views, which were coded into 95 separate individual comments. These echoed those of the rest of the survey and are outlined under six themes below. Many respondents also mentioned that they were pleased to have been asked to give their views.

#### **Keep the character of the village (28 comments)**

- Desire to protect the character, or essence, of Ickleford and its sense of community, or its strong village centre **(14 comments)**. There were also concerns that overdevelopment would stop Ickleford feeling like a village.
- Fear of merging with Hitchin and the need to avoid this. **(5 comments)**
- Keep the school in the same place, or at least keep an infant school there. **(5 comments)**
- Make changes positive, including supporting what is good about the village and a belief that it was possible to keep what is special through good planning. **(3 comments)**
- Development needed, but should be done carefully and developers held accountable. **(1 comment)**

#### **Traffic concerns (24 comments)**

- Volume/speed/parking issues, both current and potentially worse due to development. **(12 comments)**
- Cadwell Bridge. **(7 comments)**
- Issues at the village roundabouts. **(4 comments)**
- Request for a crossing on Turnpike Lane. **(1 comment)**

#### **Lovely village (16 comments)**

- These comments mentioned how much residents liked the village. It was often described as lovely or as having a great community.

#### **Countryside (12 comments)**

- Beautiful surrounding countryside. **(3 comments)**
- Concern over loss of green space, walking routes or rural life due to development. **(3 comments)**
- Avoid reducing green belt. Other sites, such as brown field sites, should be used first. **(2 comments)**
- Concern about development causing damage to wildlife. **(2 comments)**
- COVID has highlighted the importance of green spaces to mental wellbeing. **(1 comment)**
- Preserve the greenery in Turnpike Lane. **(1 comment)**

**Further housing issues (9 comments)**

- Disagree with housing need forecasts or feel questionnaire made an assumption that there would be building. **(3 comments)**
- Encourage new housing. **(3 comments)**
- Ickleford should be welcoming to any new residents. **(1 comment)**
- Concern that development in the Local Plan would put pressure on services locally, e.g. doctors in Hitchin. **(1 comment)**

**Further improvements (6 comments)**

Six comments made suggestions for specific improvement to Ickleford's amenities and facilities. These were: a pond, communal tree planting, clearing of the River Hiz further down the river, a village police officer, a scouting field and lodge in the south east corner of Ickleford Common and community village events **(1 comment each)**.

*"We very much appreciate our village and particularly so during this time. We wish to see its essence retained but allow it to continue to thrive. With proper planning and consultation this should be easily achievable."*

*"Keeping the village's essence /character whilst also trying to future-proof it, is a delicate balancing act. However, it is important to try to keep its history and character. Far too many lovely villages have been swamped by towns such as Stevenage and Luton. Homogenisation of Ickleford into a suburb of Hitchin must be avoided at all costs."*

*"A safe passage under the bridge at Cadwell for pedestrians and cyclists is especially important before someone is killed or badly injured there."*

*"Really don't want to lose our countryside walking routes and school from the heart of the village"*

*"Strongly opposed to large developments on green belt land. There are pockets of waste/brownfield land where it would be possible to build houses that are sympathetic to the surroundings without losing precious green belt."*

*"It's not that long ago that many of the properties in Ickleford were fields (or smaller homes than they are now) if earlier generations had complained then many families would not have the joy of living in this lovely community. I do hope that they current residents give others the opportunity of living here too."*

*"We need village events to enhance community. And not linked to war or religion preferably. A food festival maybe?"*