



Residents' questionnaire survey

Results report

DJN Planning Limited

November 2016

For Little Birch and Aconbury NDP Steering Group

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1. Introduction

The communities of Little Birch and Aconbury are preparing a joint Neighbourhood Development Plan for their parishes. A Neighbourhood Area was approved in May 2016 and a Steering Group was established to carry out the work.

To help inform the Plan, a residents' questionnaire survey was undertaken in September/October 2016 to seek views on a range of matters including housing, the economy, community services and the local environment. The questionnaire took account of discussions and issues raised at three Open Day events held in June and July 2016.

This report sets out the results of the survey. The report:

- Includes a summary of the main findings (section 2).
- outlines the survey methodology, describes the overall response to the survey, and how the results have been presented in this report (section 3).
- sets out on a question-by-question basis the response to the questionnaire, covering the areas of:
 - housing - questions 1 to 7
 - traffic, transport and access - questions 8 and 9
 - jobs and the local economy - questions 10 to 13
 - community services - questions 14 and 15
 - the environment - questions 16 to 20
 - information provided about the respondents to the survey (questions 21 to 24).

A copy of the questionnaire is available separately.

This report has been independently prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group by Dr. D.J. Nicholson.

November 2016

2. Summary of results

The survey was undertaken in September 2016 and achieved a response rate of 76.9% (247 copies of the questionnaire pack delivered, 190 collected).

Housing

- Most respondents wanted to see new housing provided as 2 or 3 bedroom homes.
- The majority favoured private ownership over other tenures, with support for self-build and live/work housing.
- Limited support for housing association provision; shared ownership seen more favourably.
- In terms of defining the extent of village areas, there was a clear preference for a more flexible approach, using planning criteria, rather than through using settlement boundaries.
- Within such developed village areas or “clusters”, the preference was for single infill dwellings, followed by smaller schemes (3-5 dwellings). A larger development of 10-15 houses was not favoured.
- Comments suggested various locations as suitable for new housing, as well as places where housing should not be built. Several locations were mentioned in answers to both questions.
- In other comments, there was a recognition that more affordable, starter and smaller homes were needed to help enable young people and families to stay or move into in the area. This was part of a wider concern to achieve a more balanced demographic.

Traffic, transport and access

- Top priority for improvement was road, ditch, drain and verge maintenance, followed by the upkeep of footways and bridleways.
- Road and pedestrian safety was also an area for improvement.
- Comments emphasised issues around excessive traffic speed, including setting and enforcing speed limits to protect vulnerable road users, as well as the need for road maintenance, including on Barrack Hill – Parish Lane.
- Improvements to the bus service were also desired, to enable journeys to work as well as by replacing the present large-format buses with smaller vehicles more suited to the rural lanes and the modest level of patronage.

Jobs and the local economy

- Favoured types of employment were forestry and agriculture, reflecting the nature of the area. There was also significant support for local services particularly for the introduction of a shop/Post Office.
- Light industry, manufacturing and storage and distribution were less favoured.
- Home working and live/work should be provided for in the Plan, as should the conversion of rural buildings for business uses. Existing employment sites should be protected.

- Comments supported small-scale economic activity, including a shop/Post Office, local services, rural workshops, farm diversification and tourism and camping, whilst pointing out the rural nature of the parishes with their limited infrastructure.
- Improvements to broadband and communications was recognised as a pre-condition to effective home working and encouraging small businesses in the area.

Community Service

- The most important community service in meeting the current and future needs of the community was viewed as broadband; the least important as St. Mary's Church.
- Aconbury, Athelstan's and other local woodlands were recognised as important, as was mobile phone reception.
- Comments on the need for additional leisure and recreational facilities highlighted a requirement for play facilities for children, in various forms. Others saw a need for more facilities and activities at the Village Hall; for a shop, Post Office and café; and for more facilities for tourism, including walking and cycling as well as car parking, access and interpretation improvements at the woodlands.
- Other comments saw no need for additional facilities, reflecting a perceived lack of demand or need, limited viability, and a desire to protect the character of the area.

Protecting our environment

- Most respondents had not suffered from flooding, with the main reported problems stemming from road or field run-off.
- The most important ways to protect the local environment were for new development to be in keeping with its surroundings and for views and vistas to be safeguarded.
- Many local features and attributes were identified for protection.
- Solar power and ground heat pumps were favoured as renewable energy sources over biomass or wind turbines.
- Comments covered housing and transport as well as environmental issues such as hedge cutting, light pollution, resisting urbanisation/maintaining rurality, and protecting farmland.

Have your say

- Comments to this final question raised a wide variety of issues against the five topic themes: housing, transport, economy, community, and environment.

Information about you

- Compared to 2011 Census data for the Neighbourhood Area, females were slightly over-represented in responses.
- All age groups were under-represented against the 2011 Census except for the 65-84 age group. This group accounted for a third of responses whilst making up a quarter of the usual resident population aged 16 and over.

- Most respondents had lived in the Area for 10 years or longer.
- Just over three-quarters of respondents had land or lived in Little Birch.

3. Survey method, response and presentation of results

Method and response

The Steering Group developed the questionnaire to provide a basis for the further preparation of the Plan, taking account of issues raised at the earlier Open Days. Key themes were identified for the survey around housing; traffic, transport and access; jobs and the local economy; community services; and the environment. The questionnaire included a mix of open and closed questions on these topics.

The questionnaire pack also included a covering letter and a set of 'frequently asked questions' to explain the background to the survey and to the Neighbourhood Plan process more generally, as well as completion and return instructions. A Prize Draw was used to encourage response, with the prize of a £50 voucher towards a meal for two at The Castle Inn in Little Birch.

A total of 247 copies of the questionnaire pack were hand-delivered to households across the two parishes in September 2016 by members of the Steering Group. All residents aged 16 and over were invited to participate in the survey. Completed questionnaires were collected by hand a fortnight later. Return visits were made as necessary. Overall, 190 completed questionnaires were collected, a response rate of 76.9%. The number of responses represents 74.8% of residents of the Neighbourhood Area aged 16 and over at the time of the 2011 Census (254).

Presentation of the results

This report sets out an analysis of the responses to each of the questions. A variety of open and closed/multiple choice questions were used in the questionnaire. For the latter, the responses per option category are given, with percentages based on the number of completed questionnaires (190). This aids comparison of results overall and across questions by utilising a consistent base. Each table confirms the percentage base. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers. Table rows are presented in the same order as in the questions. Not all row options in multiple choice questions were necessarily selected or answered.

Responses to the open questions inviting free-write comments have been summarised in terms of the key topics raised. Individual responses may raise more than one topic hence the sum of the comments per topic are likely to exceed the number replying. A full set of all the comments made is also available (see separate Comment Listings report).

Housing

Q1: What size of new homes would you like to see up to 2031?

	Yes		No		No opinion	
Starter homes (2 bedrooms)	144	76%	22	12%	14	7%
Family homes (3 bedrooms)	159	84%	10	3%	6	2%
Larger family homes (4 or more bedrooms)	70	37%	69	36%	21	11%
Bungalows	95	50%	46	24%	25	27%
Flats/apartments including houses turned into flats	30	16%	112	59%	20	11%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by all respondents.
- Most respondents favoured the provision of 3 bedroom family housing (84%), with only limited numbers expressly against this format (3%) and very few having no opinion (2%).
- In contrast, larger family homes of 4 bedrooms or above attracted a more ambivalent response, with similar numbers for and against (37% and 36% respectively) and 11% having no opinion.
- Starter homes were the second most-favoured size of new dwelling, being supported by over three-quarters of respondents and opposed by 12%.
- Bungalows were supported by 50% of respondents and opposed by 24%. Over a quarter (27%) had no opinion on this format of dwelling, the highest proportion recorded for 'no opinion' for this question.
- The conversion of larger houses into apartments or via new-build attracted little support, with only 16% seeing this as a desirable means of providing new housing in the Plan area and 59% in opposition.
- Overall, the balance of opinion both for and against the dwelling formats canvassed in Q1 suggests a clear preference for 3 bedroom family homes and 2 bedroom starter homes over other forms of provision.

Q2: What type of new housing should be built?

	Yes		No		No opinion	
Privately owned homes	160	84%	6	3%	9	5%
Privately rented homes	79	42%	62	33%	28	15%
Housing Association rented homes	56	30%	85	45%	20	11%
Shared ownership homes (i.e. part buy, part rent)	92	48%	45	24%	30	16%
Supported/sheltered accommodation for older people	90	47%	46	24%	31	16%
Self-build	121	64%	17	9%	31	16%
Live/work – homes with workshops	108	57%	30	16%	31	16%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by all respondents.
- The most favoured type of new housing was privately owned homes (84%), with little express opposition (3%) and few 'no opinions' (5%).
- The least favoured was new Housing Association rented provision, being opposed by 45% and favoured by only 30%.
- An alternative route to affordable homes in the form of shared ownership was more welcome – supported by almost half of respondents, albeit with a quarter against.
- A similar pattern of opinion was seen for supported or sheltered accommodation for older people.
- Significant numbers of respondents favoured self-build (64%) and live/work units (57%) – that is, dwelling units with specific workshop or similar provision allowing the operation of a small business from the premises.

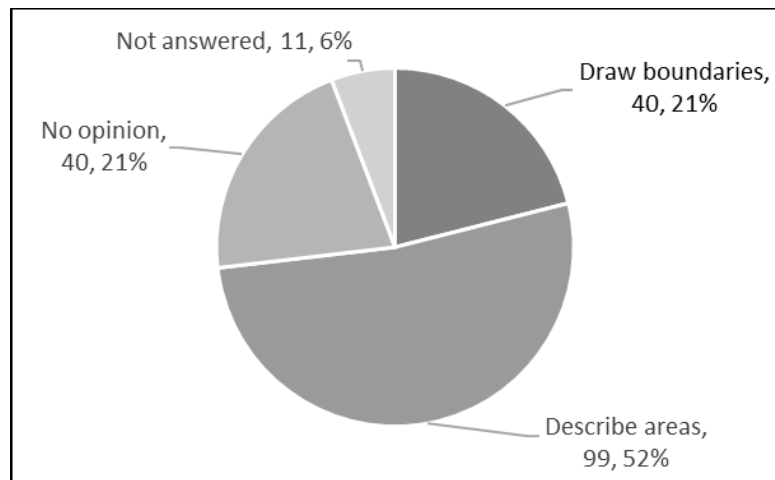
Q3: How should new homes be provided?

	Yes		No		No opinion	
As individual new houses within areas of existing dwellings	159	84%	13	7%	13	7%
Through smaller developments of say 3-5 new houses in more than one place	85	45%	69	36%	30	16%
As a single development of say between 10 and 15 new houses	20	11%	143	75%	21	11%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

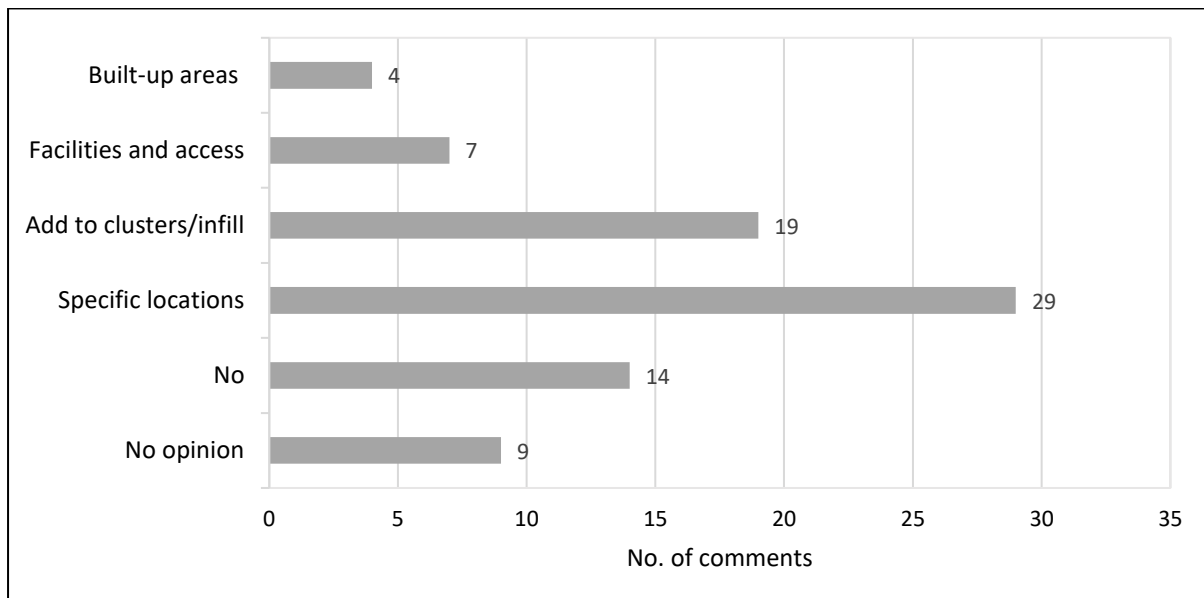
- This question was answered by 186 respondents (98%).
- The question sought opinion as to whether new homes should be provided on an individual, one-off basis via infilling; through smaller schemes, or as a larger development.
- The most favoured option was to provide new homes on an individual basis, within areas of existing dwellings. This was supported by 84% of respondents with correspondingly low levels of opposition or 'no opinion' (both 7%).
- The next favoured option was for smaller developments in more than one location. However, the response was mixed, with less than half in favour (45%) and notable opposition (36%).
- Least favoured was the single scheme option of a larger development, with three-quarters against this approach and equal numbers for or having no opinion (11%).

Q4: How should the Plan guide new housing?



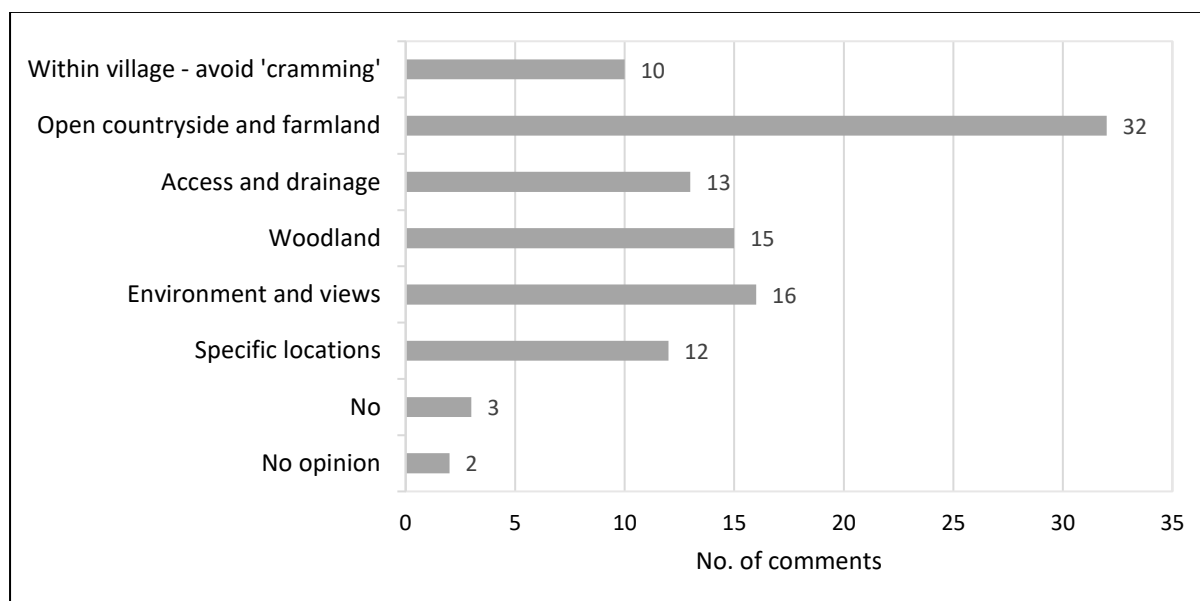
- This question was prefaced by a short explanation of alternative approaches to distinguishing between open countryside and the extent of Little Birch and Aconbury, the two villages within the Plan area identified for proportionate housing growth within the Local Plan Core Strategy. Opinion was sought on the use of settlement boundaries or an alternative criteria-based approach.
- There was a majority in favour of using a criteria-based approach to describe the main settlement areas as a flexible means of differentiating between the villages and countryside (52%).
- Some 21% of respondents favoured use of a settlement boundary, and the same proportion had no opinion.

Q5: Are there any specific locations you think are suitable for new homes in Little Birch or Aconbury? If so, where, and why?



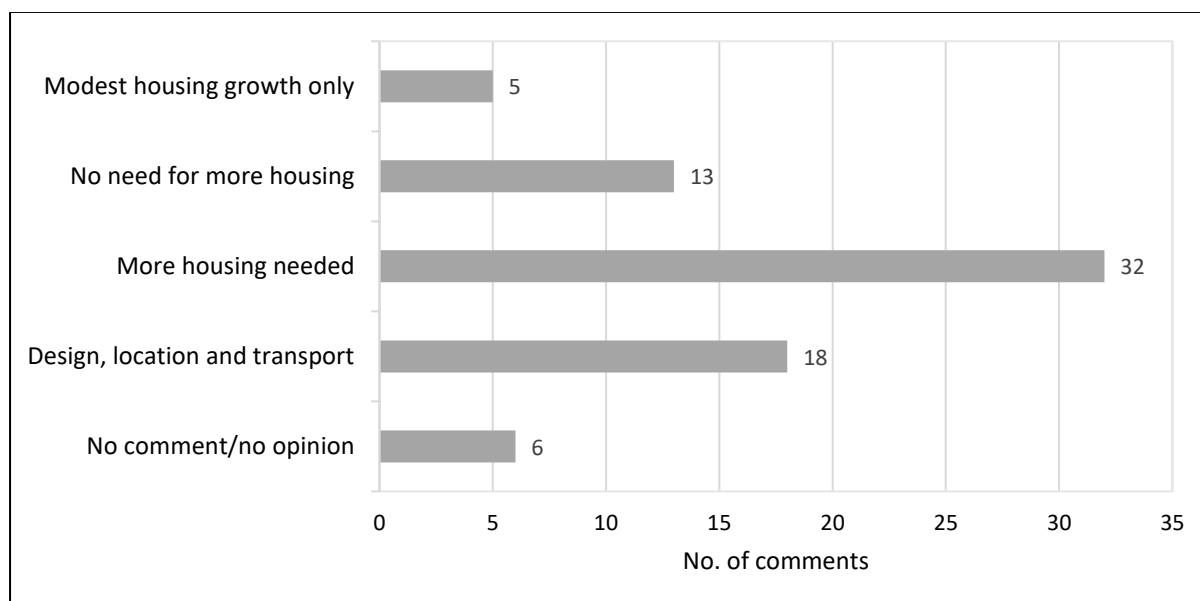
- A total of 82 questionnaires (43% of the total) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Many responses (29 comments) identified specific locations within the Plan area including:
 - Around the local pub/church
 - Barrack Hill
 - Mense Lane
 - Pendant Pitch
 - Crows Nest Lane
 - School Lane
 - New Road/Well Orchard.
- Other locations referred to included west of the A49 and to the north west of Athelstan's Wood, as an extension of Little Dewchurch.
- Other responses favoured making use of infill areas such as gardens, paddocks and unused small fields with limited farming value, thereby adding to existing clusters of housing (19 comments).
- Other comments identified criteria such as the need for new housing to have reasonable access by car; to be within walking distance of public transport; for adequate water supply and drainage; and for areas of flood risk to be avoided (7 comments). The potential of derelict or semi-derelict buildings for conversion was also noted.
- A significant number of comments did not favour any new housing development in the area (14 comments), with others suggesting it would be preferable for such new building to be directed to more built-up areas to preserve the countryside (4 comments).

Q6: Are there any specific locations where houses should not be built? If so, where, and why?



- A total of 80 questionnaires (42% of the total) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Many responses (32 comments) identified the need to avoid building in the open countryside or on fields and farmland. In this context, several responses mentioned that the village should not be extended beyond its present boundaries and that houses should only be built as infill.
- Comments were also made about the need to avoid over-development with the village areas, including in the gardens of existing houses (10 comments). Reference was made to Barrack Hill and to recent proposals east of the village hall.
- Others referred to considerations of access and drainage (13 comments), the need to avoid woodland areas (15 comments) and a range of environmental concerns – including respecting existing views; protecting green lanes, wildlife areas, archaeological sites, and heritage features; and avoiding noise pollution (16 comments).
- Specific locations where houses should not be built were identified in 12 comments, and included:
 - South of Little Birch church or around the two churches
 - Barrack Hill
 - Higgins well
 - Castle Inn
 - Pendant Pitch
 - Right hand side of Little Birch Road from Barrack Hill.

Q7: Do you have any other comments on housing need, including housing need?



- A total of 75 questionnaires (39% of the total) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- The principal topic raised (32 comments) was the need for more housing, notably for affordable, smaller and starter homes to enable young people and families to stay in the village. This was part of a wider concern that a more balanced demographic should be sought by enabling different kinds of homes to buy and to rent. Self-build was mentioned as one way this could be achieved. Other aspects raised were the need to bring more people into the village, that new housing would help support local services such as the pub and that downsizing should be enabled so that older people could continue to live within the community. Several commentators noted that the current minimum housing target for the Area derived from the Local Plan Core Strategy was too low.
- Not all saw a need for more housing. Responses (13 comments) referred to the increased strain on services such as schools, roads and health that would result; that houses should be developed elsewhere, in more built-up areas, to protect the countryside; and that the present elderly demographic of the area would mean that houses would naturally become available in the next 10 to 15 years for the younger generation, so removing the need for new building.
- Others accepted the need for new housing but thought only limited or modest growth would be sustainable (5 comments). This should be well-controlled, and planned to reflect the existing scattered pattern of development.
- Design, location and transport issues (18 comments) included: the need for better public transport; that new homes should fit in with existing dwellings; and that there should be an emphasis on energy efficiency and the use of eco-building techniques.

Traffic, transport and access

Q8: How important to you are improvements to the following?

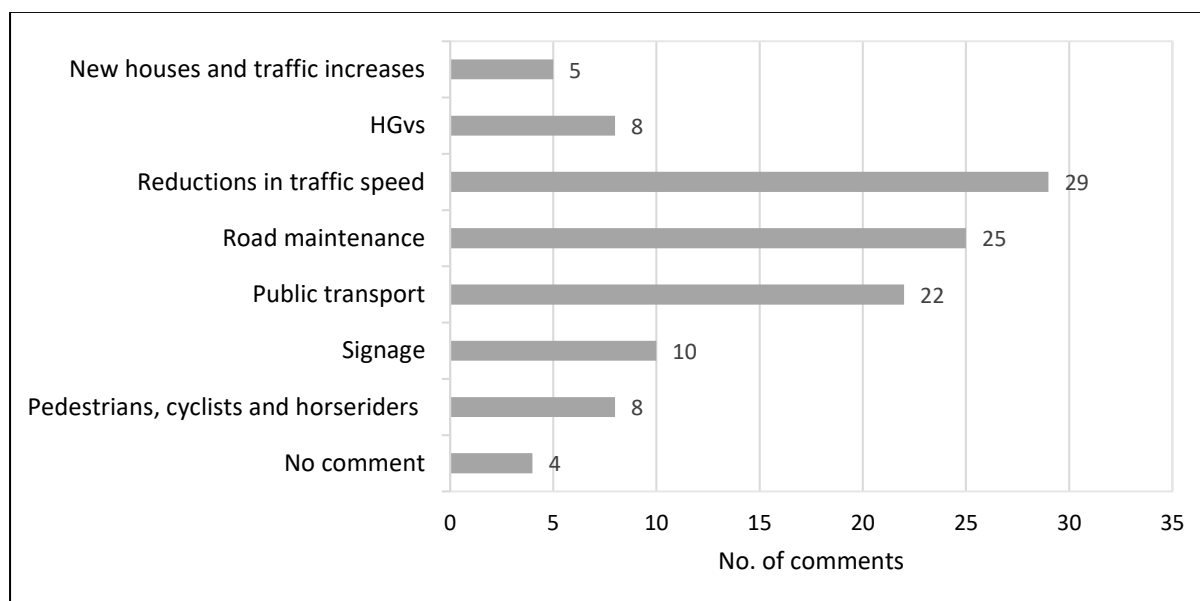
Where 1 = not important, 4 = very important

	1		2		3		4	
Road safety	21	11%	16	8%	27	14%	110	58%
Reductions in traffic speed	25	13%	35	18%	32	17%	84	44%
Pedestrian safety	22	12%	20	11%	26	14%	112	59%
Road maintenance	8	4%	9	5%	28	15%	138	73%
Maintenance of ditches, drains and verges	7	4%	19	10%	38	20%	117	62%
Traffic calming	67	35%	40	21%	29	15%	33	17%
Number of passing places	30	16%	52	27%	46	24%	48	25%
Footpath and bridleway maintenance	14	7%	35	18%	58	31%	73	38%
Signage on roads and paths	38	20%	64	34%	39	21%	39	21%
Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists	39	21%	46	24%	40	21%	54	28%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by all respondents.
- There were clear opinions on the importance of road and ditch, drain and verge maintenance. Improvements to both were thought to be very important by more than 60% of respondents – 73% in the case of road maintenance. Only 4% thought they were not important. Footpath and bridleway maintenance was also seen as important, but to a lesser degree; 69% of respondents gave this a rating of 3 or 4.
- Maintenance was closely followed by road and pedestrian safety as areas for improvement. Over 70% of respondents rated these areas as 3 or 4.
- Despite these high scores against safety improvements, areas for intervention usually associated with fostering safety for all road users received less emphasis. Reductions in traffic speed were very important to less than half of respondents (44%), and proactive interventions in the form of traffic calming were very important to only 17% (the lowest rating in this category) and not important to over a third (35%, the highest category score).
- Opinions were relatively evenly spread in respect of passing places, signage and pedestrian/cyclist facilities.

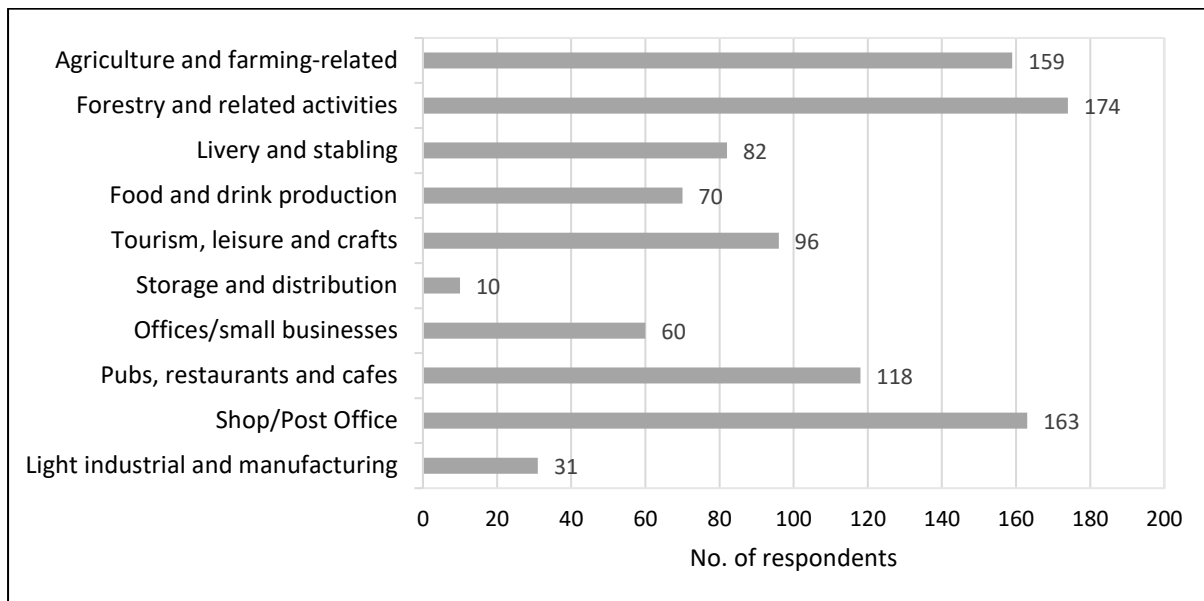
Q9: Do you have any other comments on traffic, transport and access?



- A total of 82 questionnaires (43%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- More emphasis was given in comments to securing traffic speed reductions over road maintenance, contrary to the balance of priorities identified in Q8. Excessive speeds were seen as a danger to vulnerable road users on the narrow country lanes and there were many calls for speed limits to be established and enforced. Linked to this were concerns about emerging 'rat runs' and suggestions for curbing them.
- The 25 comments around road maintenance referred to such aspects as poor highway surfacing and repairs, with specific examples such as Barrack Hill – Parish Lane; keeping roads free of snow and ice in winter; and enabling access via Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs).
- Comments on public transport (22) recognised its importance for some groups in the community and there were many calls for the service to be improved, for instance to enable a journey to work. Others pointed out that the buses presently in service were too large for either the lanes or the level of patronage.
- Opinions around signage were broadly in favour of more signs for road names and speed limits (6 comments) with others favouring no increase or a reduction in signs (4).
- Others (8 comments) pointed to the need for improvements to walking and cycling facilities and to the need to respect horses and their riders. The general view expressed in one comment was that "Little Birch and Aconbury are small, attractive, rural villages which should enable inhabitants to walk, cycle and ride in safety and peace".
- There was a view that heavy goods vehicles were too large for the road network and should be limited (again, 8 comments), with an axle weight limit being mooted.
- The increase in local traffic that would result from housing development was acknowledged, with calls for transport improvements to match (5 comments).

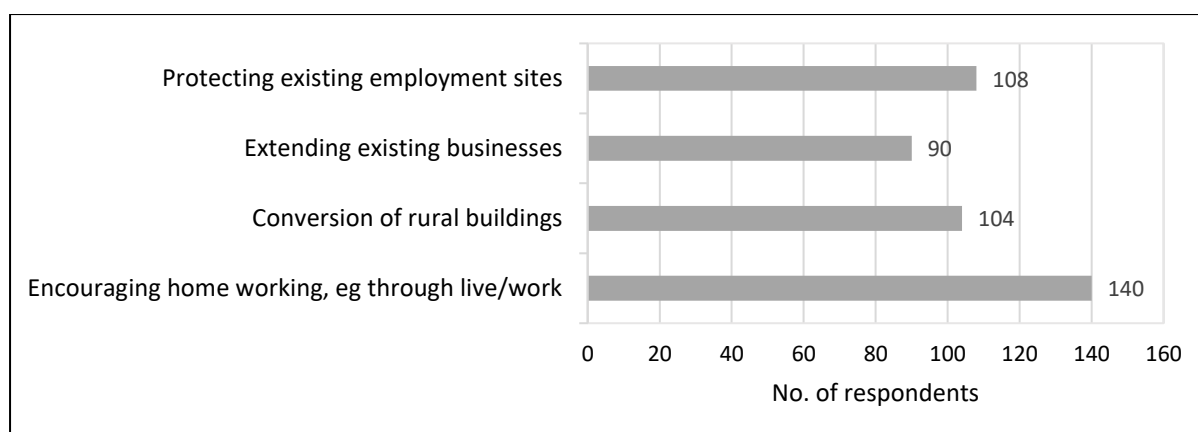
Jobs and the local economy

Q10: What types of employment should the Plan encourage?



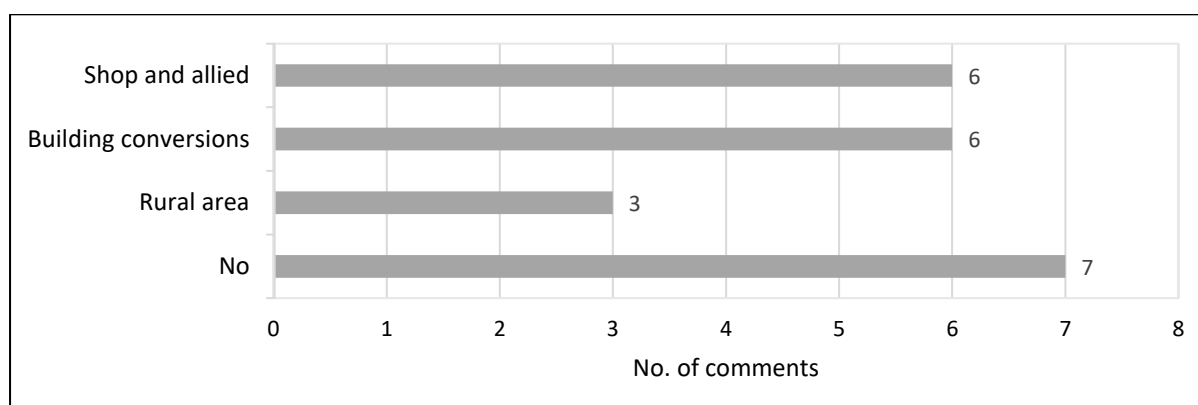
- This question was answered by 187 respondents (98%).
- Forestry (91% of respondents overall) and agriculture (84%) were favoured types of employment to be encouraged, in line with the rural nature of the area.
- A further popular choice was for a shop/Post Office (85%), reflecting aspirations rather than current provision. The desire to expand local services was also seen in the support given to the pubs, restaurants and cafes category – 62%.
- The least favoured types were light industry and manufacturing (16%) and storage and distribution (5%).
- Between these two extremes, there was modest support for (in descending order) tourism, leisure and crafts (50%), livery and stabling (43%), food and drink (37%) and offices/small businesses (32%).

Q11: How should the Plan provide for jobs and the local economy?



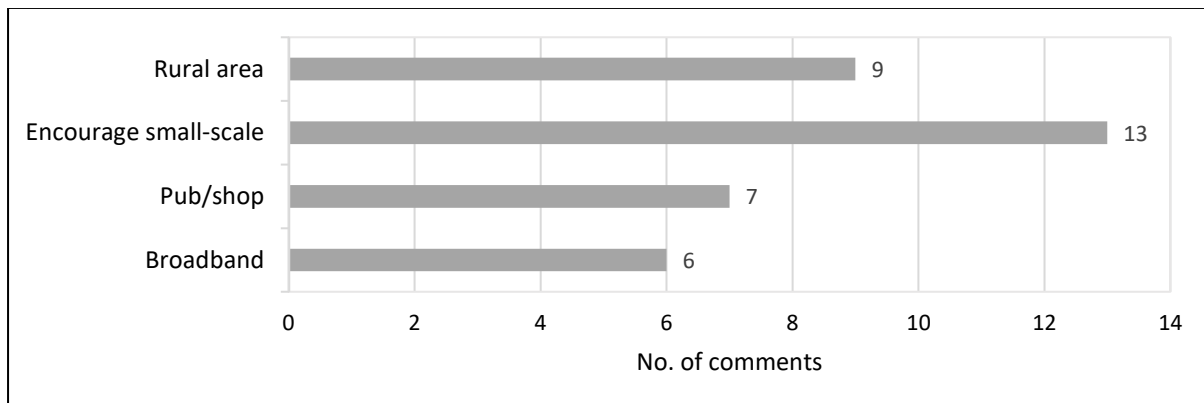
- This question was answered by all respondents.
- Most thought that the Plan should encourage home working, including through live/work units (74%).
- There was also support for protecting existing employment sites and for the conversion of rural buildings for business use (57% and 55% respectively).
- Just under half of respondents supported extending existing businesses (47%).

Q12: Are there any specific locations you think suitable for new employment development? If so, where, and why?



- A total of 30 questionnaires (16%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Some thought that the area was unsuitable for employment development, simply answering 'no' or pointing out the rural nature of the parishes with limited infrastructure (7 and 3 comments respectively).
- Others pointed to scope for the conversion of rural buildings, some mentioning a barn at The Castle Inn in this context.
- A further theme was the provision of a local shop, café, Post Office and similar. The old Methodist Chapel and the village hall were identified as potential locations.

Q13: Do you have any other comments on jobs and the local economy?



- A total of 40 questionnaires (21%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Replies generally echoed the comments made to Q12. For instance, 9 respondents pointed to the essentially rural nature of the area which should be retained and protected.
- More supported small-scale economic activity, notably tourism and camping as well as offices, rural workshops and farm diversification (13). Creating such opportunities within the local communities was viewed as a way of reducing congestion and CO₂ emissions.
- Mention was again made of the need for a village shop/Post Office/bakery to improve services available locally and reduce trips to Hereford.
- Several recognised the need to improve broadband and communications infrastructure, to allow effective home working and small businesses in the area.

Community Service

Q14: How important do you think the following facilities, services and amenities are in meeting the current and future needs of the local community?

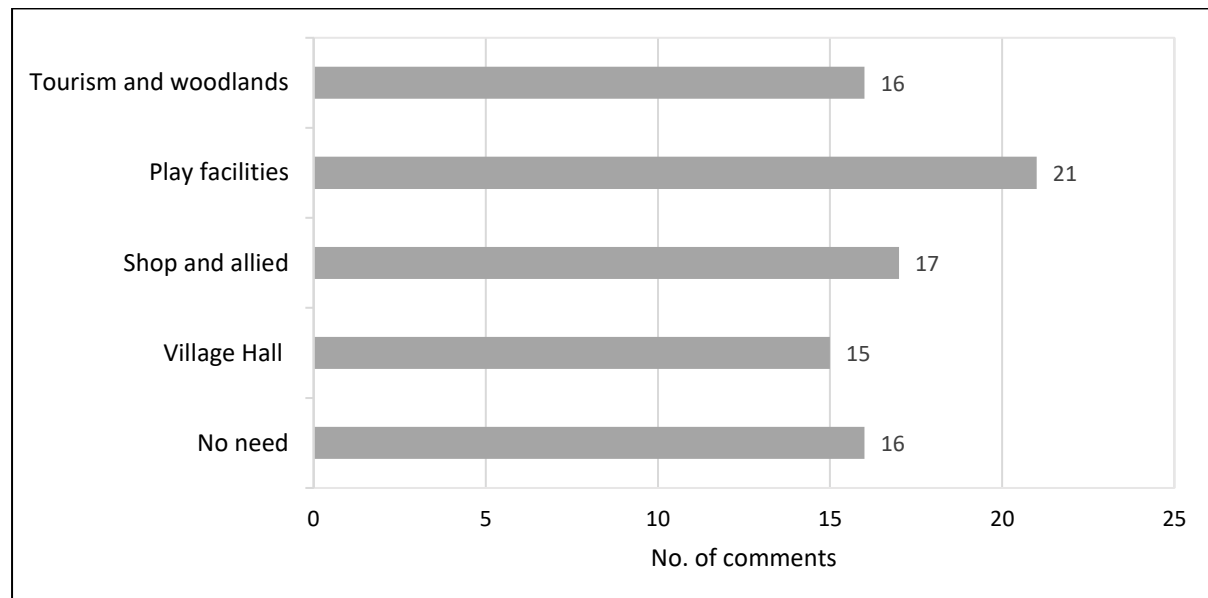
Where 1 = not important, 4 = very important

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Mobile phone reception	7	4%	15	8%	33	17%	121	64%
Broadband	3	2%	8	4%	14	7%	160	84%
Little Birch Village Hall	4	2%	16	8%	48	25%	108	57%
The Castle Inn	7	4%	19	10%	57	30%	94	49%
Local bus services	10	5%	20	10%	43	23%	111	58%
St Mary's Church	18	9%	45	24%	54	28%	60	31%
Aconbury and Athelstan's Woods	12	6%	14	7%	36	19%	123	65%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by 185 respondents (97%).
- Broadband was judged the most important of the services listed, with a clear majority of 84% seeing this as very important and 91% giving ratings of 3 or 4.
- A group of facilities and amenities scored between 84% and 79% when ratings 3 and 4 were combined. In descending order, these were Aconbury and Athelstan's Woods; the village hall; mobile phone and bus services in equal place; and the Castle Inn.
- Within this group, the woodlands and mobile phone reception showed a clear lead in the very important scores at 65% and 64% respectively.
- Respondents regarded St Mary's Church as the least important in meeting community needs, being not important to 9% (the highest score in this category) and very important to 31% (the lowest category score).

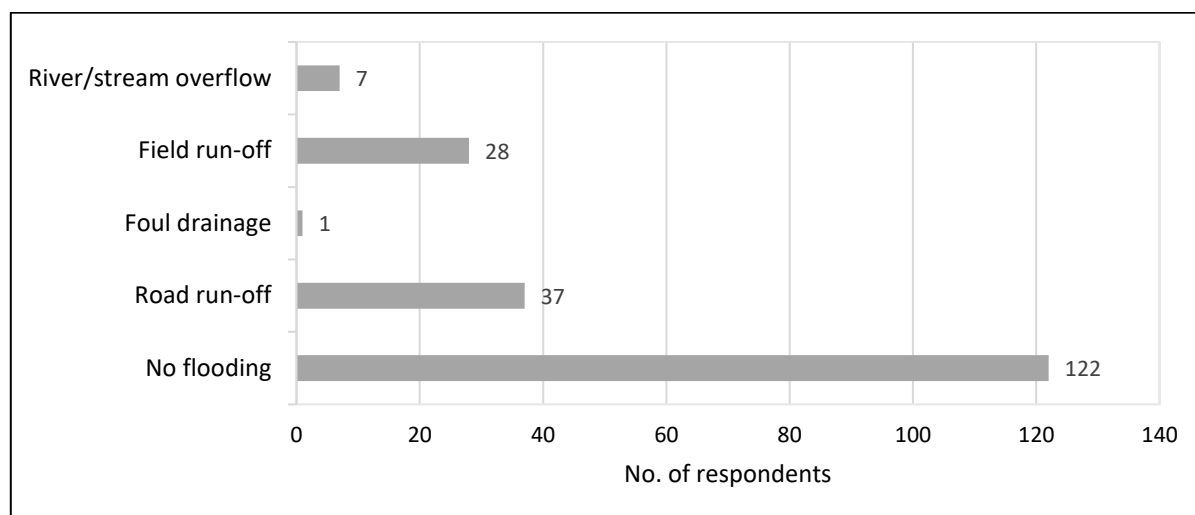
Q15: Do you think that more leisure and recreational facilities are needed? Please tell us how and where this could be achieved. Are there any other community services you would like to see provided, if possible?



- A total of 67 questionnaires (35%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- There were a diverse range of responses to this question. The five key themes are highlighted above.
- Additional play facilities for children received most emphasis (21 comments), including in the various forms of a children's play area, playing field, and adventure playground. The Parish Field opposite the village hall was referred to by several respondents as a suitable location. The use of facilities at Much Birch Primary School during holidays was also suggested.
- Similar numbers of respondents thought that additional provision was needed in each of the following areas:
 - at the Village Hall, through fabric upgrades and more activities
 - a shop, Post Office, and café
 - facilities for tourism, incorporating walking and cycling as well as car parking, access and interpretation improvements at the local woodlands.
- Others considered that there was no need for more leisure and recreational facilities (16 comments). This reflected a perceived lack of demand or need, limited economic viability, and a desire to keep the area as it is.
- Other comments covered:
 - Public transport improvements
 - The need to trim hedgerows to reveal views
 - Poor broadband speeds
 - Renewable energy
 - The scattered nature of Little Birch and lack of a village focus.

Protecting our environment

Q16: Has your property, land or access suffered from flooding in the last 10 years?



- This question was answered by 171 respondents (90%).
- Most respondents had not suffered flooding (64% overall).
- Most flooding occurrences were associated with road (19%) or field run-off (15%), perhaps explaining in part the importance attached to maintenance of ditches and verges in Q8.

Q17: Which of the following ways of protecting and enhancing the local environment are important to you?

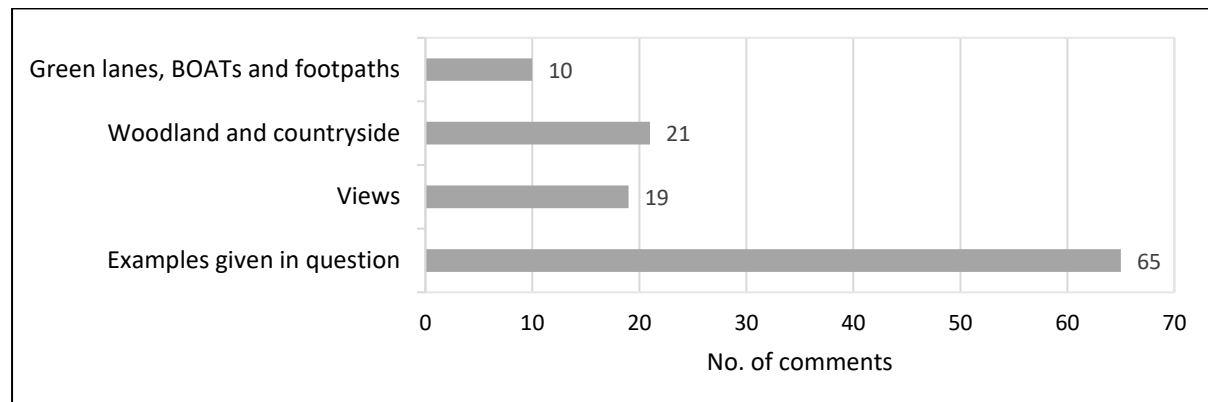
Where 1 = not important, 4 = very important

	1		2		3		4	
Protecting important views and vistas	5	3%	15	8%	23	12%	139	73%
Identifying land for local green space	11	6%	18	9%	32	17%	98	52%
Identifying special local features of significance eg orchards	11	6%	24	13%	37	19%	93	49%
New development to be in keeping with surroundings	6	3%	11	6%	17	9%	140	74%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by 182 respondents (96%).
- Replies to this question identified the importance of both new development being in keeping with its surroundings and of protecting views and vistas, with 74% and 73% of respondents respectively seeing these as very important.
- Around half of respondents thought that the Plan should identify local green space or local features (very important to 52% and 49% respectively).

Q18: If there are any particular local features, open spaces or views that you think should be protected, please describe them below. Examples could include cider orchards, Higgins Well, the Holy Thorn, the Parish Field and Aconbury Hill Fort.



- A total of 80 questionnaires (42%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Most replies (65 comments) endorsed some or all of the examples given in the introduction to the question – that is, cider orchards, Higgins Well, the Holy Thorn, the Parish Field and Aconbury Hill Fort. The latter received particular emphasis.
- The local woodlands and countryside including meadows and daffodil fields were mentioned in 21 responses.
- The 19 responses on the topic of views and vistas acknowledged the many fine and expansive views offered from local vantage points over Hereford and further afield to the Welsh Hills and the Malverns. Mention was made of the views from Aconbury Hill and from Barrack Hill from the old Methodist Chapel and village hall, looking south-east. There were also several comments referring to the need to trim back hedgerows and other vegetation, to enable these views to continue to be enjoyed.
- Opportunities for walking in the area were mentioned in 10 comments, with particular reference to the green lanes or byways (BOATs) as well as to footpaths generally.

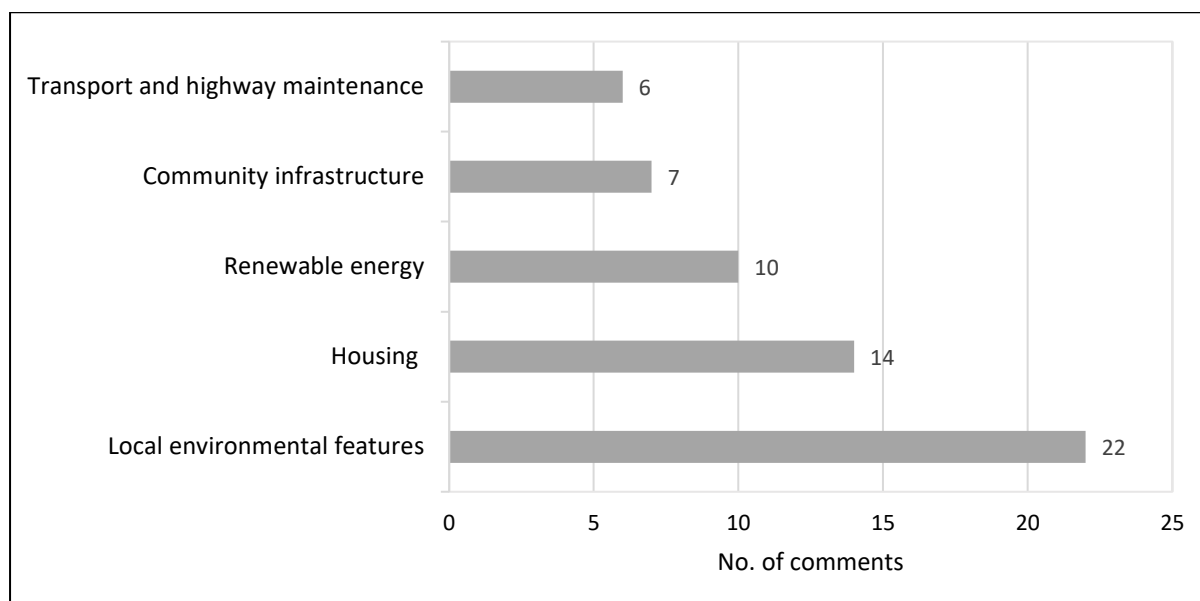
Q19: Which of the following ways of producing local renewable energy should the Plan encourage?

	Yes		No		No opinion	
Wind turbines	56	29%	99	52%	20	11%
Solar power	145	76%	17	9%	16	8%
Ground heat pumps	117	62%	11	6%	47	25%
Biomass units	80	42%	42	22%	53	28%

Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)

- This question was answered by 186 respondents (98%).
- The most favoured type of renewable energy was solar power, favoured by 76% and with relatively low levels of opposition and 'no opinion'.
- Also supported was ground heat pumps (by 62%) although a quarter had no opinion.
- Fewer than half of respondents favoured biomass (42%) or wind turbines (29%), with opposition to the latter standing at 52%.

Q20: Do you have any other comments on the local environment? This is your opportunity to tell us your views on conserving and improving the local environment.



- A total of 43 questionnaires (23%) included comments in response to this free-write question.
- Many responses (22 comments) addressed a wide range of aspects of the local environment, including:
 - Need to trim and reduce hedgerows to restore views
 - Light pollution
 - Less urbanisation
 - Maintain the rural nature of the area, including woodland and lanes
 - Signage encouraging dog walkers to clear up after their dogs
 - Protect farmland – needed for food production
- Various matters linked to housing also attracted comments (14), including design, tenure, energy efficiency, use of derelict buildings, need for new housing, scale and location. Several responses pointed to the need to respect the current dispersed settlement pattern, and to avoid suburban sprawl. Others referred to buildings constructed initially as garages then converted to accommodation.
- Taking the opportunity to add further detail to their replies to the previous question, 10 respondents addressed renewable energy. Most supported its provision within the area, with several commenting on the need to ensure it was appropriate in scale and location – for example, avoiding large wind turbines. One response referred to community power generation.
- Other aspects of community infrastructure were also addressed (7 comments), including more parking at the village hall, provision of a shop at the pub, village green, and playgroup.
- Aspects of transport mentioned by 6 respondents were speeding traffic, road signs and a need for smaller buses.

Information about you

Q21: Are you male or female?

	Male		Female	
Questionnaire responses¹	88	46%	100	53%
Census 2011 Little Birch and Aconbury, all usual residents²	152	50%	154	50%

1. Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)
2. Percentage base = all usual residents (306)

- This question was answered by 186 respondents (98%).
- Compared to the Census 2011 figures for all usual residents, females were slightly over-represented. Note the Census data includes under 16s.

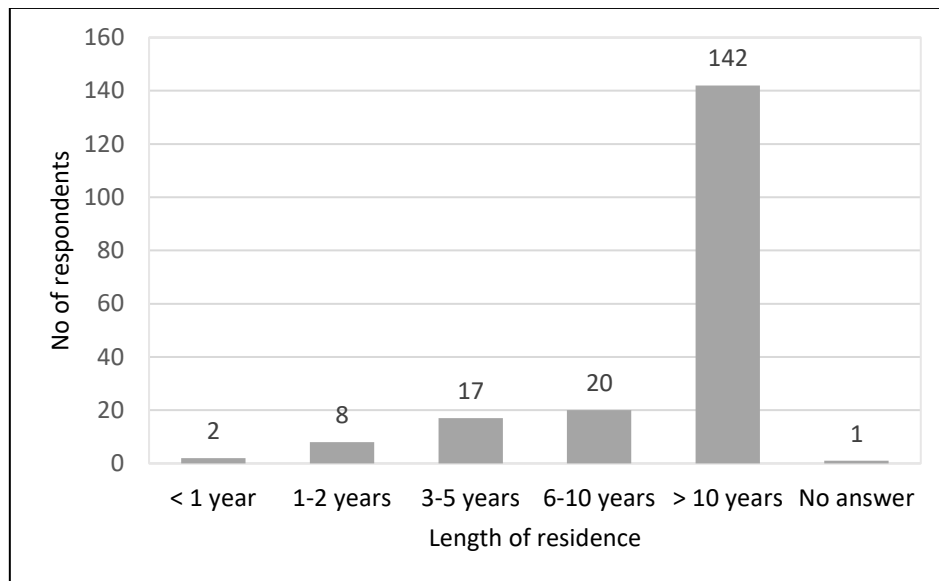
Q22: How old are you?

	16-17		18-24		25-44		45-64		65-84		85 and over	
Questionnaire responses¹	3	2%	14	7%	29	15%	75	39%	64	34%	0	-
Census 2011 Little Birch and Aconbury, all usual residents²	7	3%	24	9%	48	19%	109	43%	63	25%	3	1%

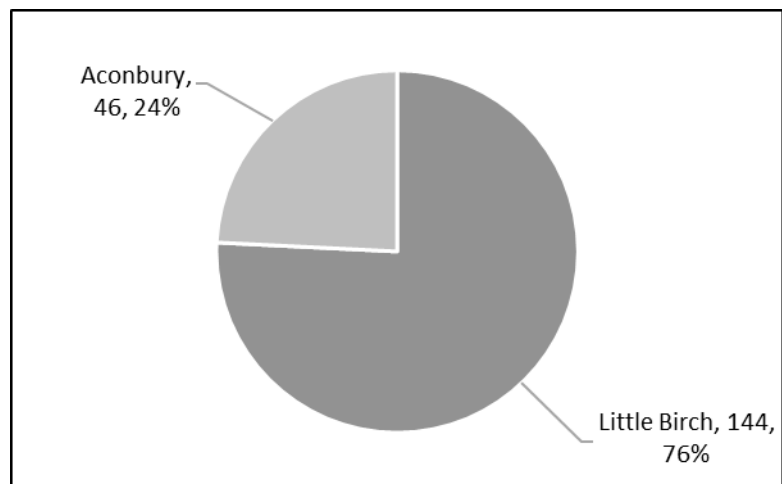
1. Percentage base = 190 (all respondents)
2. Percentage base = all usual residents from age 16 (254)

- This question was answered by 185 respondents (97%).
- All age groups apart from 65-84 were under-represented in terms of level of response, compared against the Census distribution of population amongst these groups.
- The 65-84 group, a quarter of the usual resident population at the time of the Census, accounted for 34% of questionnaire responses.

Q23: How long have you lived in Little Birch or Aconbury?



Q24: Which parish do you live or have land in?



Have your say

A total of 43 questionnaires (23%) included comments in response to this free-write question.

Respondents took this opportunity to expand on the various issues which had been broached in earlier questions and on their responses to them. The summary of the comments given here is organised against the five main topic areas explored in the questionnaire.

Housing

- Housing should be located close to a bus stop and with suitable highway access
- A choice of housing for all demographic and economic groups is desirable
- Possible housing sites, to avoid areas where there is already enough housing: Little Birch Road towards Little Birch church, Sunnybank Cottage to 'Withycombe', an area across from the Old School House, beyond the old Rectory towards Athelstan's Wood
- Little Birch and Aconbury are not sustainable and the plan should limit damage to the environment
- More imaginative approach needed to design
- Traditional style and materials should be followed
- The possible polluting effect on local water courses of new development, due to lack of mains drainage, should be taken into account
- Take more account of landscape context and views, landscaping and tree planting
- Planning decisions should be more flexible to enable family members to relocate adjacent
- Minimum target is too low to meet shortfall of affordable homes
- More flexible approach to planning criteria reflecting scattered nature of Little Birch and Aconbury
- Make use of unused land rather than farmland
- Prefer ad-hoc development, adding one or two dwellings to existing clusters whenever possible over large housing estates
- Like to see new housing to be well designed, respect local vernacular, be super energy efficient and produced to high conservation standards (zero carbon producing)
- Avoid building houses in remote areas where people value a standard of living – we need our countryside
- Do not put making a profit over protection of the countryside
- Young people who have grown up here are unable to live here due to unavailability of housing – require a proportion of affordable housing and housing suitable for families

Transport

- The suburban effect of pavements and street lights to be avoided
- Transport in and out of the city needs to be improved, with park and ride and better public transport
- Introduce speed limit of 40 mph on Kingsthorpe Road

- Bus stops too remote and unsafe to access

Economy

- Preserve agricultural and forestry employment
- Support farm diversification and rural tourism
- Would not want to see industrial estates – “small is beautiful”
- Support for live work units, small commercial units, rural offices and workshops
- Enable home working by fast fibre broadband and better mobile phone coverage
- Local services and employment will help reduce carbon footprint

Community

- Need a local vet
- Increased population needs more external services and capacity, such as at the hospital
- Shop, Post Office, cafe and pub: to provide jobs, social contacts, reduce distance travelled and as a village hub
- Little Birch is rather disparate, with church, pub and village hall some distance from each other – create a focal point for future services and amenities, to create a village heart over time
- Joint parish community centre at the school
- Broadband improvements needed for education e.g. to carry out homework assignments
- More local amenities and opportunities for children and younger people including park, playground, football pitch, youth club
- Outdoor community space for events and sports e.g. tennis court

Environment

- Major responsibility to establish a judicious plan to protect this beautiful ancient, rural village
- Avoid urbanisation – reduces habitat for wildlife
- Reduce light pollution
- Local green energy would reduce carbon footprint and protect from national energy shortages
- Views: from Hereford towards Aconbury on the Hoarwithy Road; approaching Aconbury from Caldicot crossroads
- Plan should highlight need to respect elements that make village a functioning whole
- Stop farmers ploughing on steep fields
- Preserve and maintain the unique rural character
- Promote sustainability in construction and promote carbon reduction in materials and energy used over a building’s lifetime