

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE – KEY FINDINGS for IDMISTON PARISH

BACKGROUND

Our Village Design Statement questionnaire was intended to gauge the level of support that exists for a range of planning policies which will influence and impact upon the future appearance of the villages in the Parish. We also sought help to identify the best and worse features in your villages and the scope for improving their appearance. Finally we wanted to establish the relative importance of 10 planning objectives that were taken from your Community Plan.

As well as helping to shape the Village Design Statement our findings will provide a useful input to the preparation of any future Neighbourhood Plan.

YOUR REPLIES

Nearly half of all households responded to our questionnaire.

Our questionnaire was distributed to all 890 dwellings in the Parish. 439 forms were returned, which is a fantastic 49% response rate.

Such a high return rate lends credibility to our findings as being representative of our community.

Q1 We asked in which village do you live?

You said that 213 of you lived in Porton, 153 lived in the Gomeldons & 73 lived in Idmiston.

The response rate for Porton and the Gomeldons was broadly similar at around 47% to 48% whereas the return for Idmiston was a much higher 61%.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Q2 We asked whether your village was rural, semi-rural, suburban or urban?

53%(232) of you said your village was rural & 47%(206) semi rural.

This supports the findings of the Community Plan which described the Parish as having a rural feel.

Only one person felt their village was suburban!

Q6 We asked what gave your village its rural feel?

You said its natural setting with its surrounding countryside, woodland, river, greenspaces & low density housing contribute most to its rural feel.

Not surprisingly, 51% (437) of all answers related to your villages' natural setting/surroundings, which is clearly seen as a major contributor to the rural feel of the Parish. Interestingly 29% (254) of your replies identified the built form of your villages as a contributor to their rural feel. This is a key finding because it identifies the importance of the way the villages have developed and the relationship of the buildings and the spaces about them with the surrounding countryside.

The most frequently mentioned features are listed overleaf.

KEY NATURAL FEATURES

Surrounding fields/countryside/farmland	172
Plenty of trees/woodland	71
Livestock/farms	49
River running through/ford	45
Country lanes/footpaths/bridleways/rights of way	27
Wild life/flora & fauna/birdsong/roadside flowers	23

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BUILT FORM

Green spaces/open space	60
Space between houses/low density/large gardens/not overdeveloped	59
Older parts of village/older housing (thatched cottages/brick & flint houses)	24
Small size of village/no large developments	23
Varied housing/shapes & sizes	15

All of the above are identified as key contributors to the rural feel of the Parish.

Q16 To maintain the rural feel of the villages was the 2nd most voted for objective overall & the 1st most voted for in Porton.

This is a measure of how valued the rural environment is and how much local residents wish to see it retained.

Q3 We asked what contributed most to the appearance & character of your villages? You said the villages' natural surroundings & aspects of their built form are seen as their main attributes with the river & parish churches being of particular note in Porton & Idmiston & the surrounding fields & views in the Gomeldons.

This time 49% (512) mentions related to the natural setting, which is hardly surprising given the rural nature of the Parish. Importantly 48% (508) were concerned with the built form of the villages.

KEY NATURAL FEATURES

Surrounding greenfields & hedges/open countryside/farmland/hills & views	174
River Bourne/fords/watermeadows(W.Gomeldon)	116
Trees & woodland	101
Flowers on roadsides & paths	30

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BUILT FORM

Church & grounds (Porton)	65
Church (Idmiston)	40
Open spaces/green spaces	63
Well kept gardens	43
Varied style of housing	39
Older buildings (Porton)	31
Thatched cottages (Porton & Idmiston)	30
Other key buildings – Memorial Hall, Baptist Church, Porton Hotel	24
Sportsfield & childrens' playground	19
Village shop & post office	15

In regards to natural features, it is important to note that the river and fords were identified as the most important features in Porton & Idmiston, with 70 and 38 mentions respectively. Whilst surrounding greenfields and views were most mentioned in the Gomeldons (105), where many properties enjoy an open aspect.

As for the built form, the two Parish Churches are clearly seen as landmark buildings. Our open spaces and green spaces are also seen as an integral and valued part of the fabric of the villages and important in softening the built environment as well as providing a recreational resource.

The varied style of housing was identified in all three villages as an important element in counteracting the monotony often found in built development. The contribution of older buildings was also recognised with thatched cottages being identified in Porton and Idmiston. Interestingly in Porton some of you specifically mentioned the contribution that could be made by the design of new developments where they referenced traditional materials, with Byford Gardens cited as an example.

Q4 We asked what had a detrimental effect on the character & appearance of your villages? You said the poor condition of the roads & footpaths, parking, litter & dog fouling were common to Porton & the Gomeldons, where as in Idmiston the poor condition of the river, traffic volumes & ugly modern buildings were seen as detracting most from the appearance of the village.

51% (350) of all your mentions related to maintenance issues which lie outside the scope of the Village Design Statement. Many of these matters are the responsibility of public agencies and indeed some work has already been undertaken eg the resurfacing of Winterslow Road and East Gomeldon Road.

18% (120) mentions related to elements of the built environment with many being too diverse to summarise. However, the most frequently mentioned relate to housing.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE BUILT FORM

Overhigh/oversize development	27
Housing not in keeping with the village	11
Ugly modern houses (Idmiston)	10
60's/70's housing/estates – uninteresting/out of place	8
Too many building projects/infilling	9
Overhead power lines/street lights	9

Two key themes arise from these comments;

1. The poor design and inappropriate form of a number of dwellings, especially those dating from the 60's and 70's.
2. The specific reference to overhigh/oversize development, which we understand relates to both the conversion of single storey dwellings to two storey ones and incremental increases to a dwelling's footprint leading to an overlarge building with little private open space.

Traffic and parking accounted for 19% (130) mentions. However, whilst the Design Statement does have a role in helping to address some of these problems, some are dependent on public capital works which in the current financial climate are a remote prospect.

TRAFFIC/PARKING

Congestion at shops & surgery (Porton)	25
Too much traffic (Porton & Idmiston)	33
Too many heavy vehicles	10
Rat running to Porton Down site	8
Inappropriate parking on roads & footpaths	19
Parking outside both primary schools	14

Q5 We asked what improvements would most enhance the appearance of your villages? You said better maintained roads, footpaths, public areas, trees & hedgerows, & the river. Other improvements related to reduced traffic volumes, traffic speed & on street parking.

Again the majority of mentions 54% (316) related to improved maintenance, which as indicated above is outside the scope of the Design Statement.

Traffic and parking generated an increased proportion of mentions on Q4 above, accounting for 24% i.e. (141), though again, what may be achieved through the Design Statement is somewhat limited.

TRAFFIC/PARKING

Improve parking at shops, surgery & schools/more off road parking	32
Reduce heavy vehicles/traffic volumes	39
Reduce traffic speeds	29
Provide new footpaths & cycleways	20

In response to these concerns, it is likely that an improved level of off road parking provision could be achieved in new developments by imposing minimum standards for car parking which is clearly supported by your response to Q11. Also it may be possible to secure a reduction in traffic speeds in the villages through the advocacy of specific traffic calming measures.

Your remaining responses were numerous and quite diverse and we have summarised those most mentioned below, which relate mostly, but not exclusively, to the built environment

Development of a village hub/hall/community feel (The Gomeldons)	15
More tree planting	20
More flower planting	11
Appropriate future development	10
Restricting development	10

From the above you will see there is some support for a hub for the Gomeldons as the villages are seen to lack a focus. However, not all would concur with this as some see the absence of a shop and a pub as a strength. Both Porton and the Gomeldons have expressed an interest in more tree planting which is reinforced by your response to Q8 below. Otherwise your responses concerned placing restrictions on further built development and where it is permitted ensuring it is appropriate to the character and appearance of the villages.

Q7 We asked how important it was to retain large gardens & their trees? 92% of you felt it was either important or very important.

It is clear that you see large gardens and their trees as important to the character and environment of your villages. This has implications for the future use of private gardens as infill sites.

Q8 We asked if you would support the wider use of Tree Preservation Orders?

80% of you support the wider use of TPO's & replacement planting.

Significant support for tree protection is indicative of the value placed on woodland and trees in the villages and their contribution to the character and appearance of the Parish. Indeed in Q6 Trees & woodland were seen as the 2nd most important natural feature.

Q9 We asked Idmiston residents if they would support the promotion of parts of their village as a Conservation Area?

89% of Idmiston respondents said you would support such an initiative.

Idmiston residents clearly want to see a greater control over development in the older parts of their village. This has implications for the standard and quality of future development to ensure it enhances the appearance and character of any future Conservation Area and for any potential infill sites which fall within its boundaries.

Q10 We asked if you would support the use of traditional or quality replica materials in building in the older parts of your villages?

78% of you said you would support this, with 89% of Idmiston respondents in favour.

Again the level of support for the use of such materials signifies the importance attached to ensuring new works complement the older properties in the vicinity and do not detract from the appearance of these buildings.

Q11 We asked if you would support minimum standards for car parking in new builds?

83% of you said you would support this requirement.

This high response reflects an interest in ensuring the congestion and road safety implications of overspill parking on access roads does not arise in future developments in the villages.

Q12 We asked if you would support a requirement that the density of new housing should not exceed that of housing in the vicinity?

92% of you said you would support this.

It is evident that you favour low density type developments to avoid the urban cramming that is prevalent in many new housing estates and which would be out of character with your villages. This has implications for the number of dwellings that can be built on any given development site.

Q13 We asked whether you would support some form of affordable housing?

60% of you said you would support the provision of this type of housing

The value in permitting new housing developments is that they can provide the opportunity to secure an element of affordable housing at no cost to the public purse. However, a wide variation in the level of support, from 68% in Porton to only 48% in Idmiston, has implications for the possible future siting of such developments.

Q14 We asked if you would support the release of Greenfield land for affordable housing? 58% of you were opposed to this and only 35% in favour!

Although there was a degree of support for the provision of affordable housing, when the possible use of Greenfield land for this purpose is mentioned the position is reversed, with widespread opposition particularly in Gomeldon with 74%, and in Idmiston with 64% opposed.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES.

Q16 We asked you to rank 10 planning objectives in order of importance to the appearance and wellbeing of your villages.

You said “To protect Greenfield sites from development” & “To maintain the rural feel of the villages” were the most important of the 10 objectives listed.

The planning objectives, which were taken from the Community Plan, were to be ranked with the most important scoring 10 and the least important 1. In this regard 365 of you completed this exercise. The table below shows the objectives arranged in order of the total score recorded for each.

RANKING OF OBJECTIVES.

To protect Greenfield sites from development	2537
To maintain the rural feel of the villages	2460
To ensure small sites are not overdeveloped	2276
To limit new development to small or infill sites	2251
To ensure new development complements the character & size of the surrounding housing	2249
To ensure no loss of wildlife habitats	2046
To maintain the Conservation Area in Porton	2041
To ensure new developments have adequate access & parking facilities	1733
To ensure developers make provision for improvements to drainage on new builds	1347
To seek inclusion of some affordable housing in new developments	1296

Although the exercise cannot be definitive it does give a reasonable indication of where your priorities lie. Porton, Idmiston and the Gomeldons all identified “The protection of Greenfield sites from development” and “The maintenance of the rural feel of the villages” as their two most important objectives. This comes as no surprise given the modest size of the villages and their rural setting.

What is interesting is the importance you attach “To ensuring small sites are not over developed” and “To limit new development to small or infill sites”, which clearly complement your two most important objectives.

The objective with the least support is “To seek inclusion of some affordable housing in new developments” This is the lowest scoring objective in both Idmiston and Gomeldon below even “to maintain the Conservation Area in Porton” which is in the adjoining village!

THE NEXT STEPS

We are very grateful for your support in responding so enthusiastically to our questions. Both the broad thrust of your responses and the detail in your comments will play a major part in shaping the content of the Village Design Statement, which is our next task.

The specific concerns that you have expressed regarding the levels and quality of maintenance in your villages will be tabulated and passed to the appropriate public agencies for action.