

PARISH PLAN SUMMARY – FEBRUARY 2015

BACKGROUND

Withyham Parish Council's (WPC) last Parish Plan was published in 2008 and was intended as a 5 year plan. Its objective was 'To reflect the needs of the parishioners of Withyham and to ensure that the character of the community is maintained, whilst embracing change in a manner that enhances or strengthens the quality of life for its residents.' It outlined the key issues highlighted by residents that would drive the work of WPC for the period of the plan. It covered roads, transport and traffic; housing; recreation; social and community; environment; commercial development.

METHODOLOGY

In 2014 a group of residents were convened by Cllr Bowler to agree the content of a survey to inform the next Parish Plan. It contained questions on how people felt about living in the parish as well as about housing, flooding, services, dogs, crime prevention, cars and speed limits, road hazards, businesses in the parish, transport, parish information, parish facilities, leisure activities, tourism, what improvements could be made for young people, activities or clubs they would like to see for young people, key issues facing young people, and one aspect of the greatest priority for the parish plan.

There were also questions specific to young people asking what they do and do not like about living in the parish, whether they see themselves remaining in the parish when they grow up.

The questions were generally multiple choice with the opportunity for free text comments.

This survey was available online on SurveyMonkey, as well as in hardcopy (around 60 of which were completed and added on to SurveyMonkey by WPC). There was a link to it on WPC's website which was added in April 2014. It was advertised through WPC's newsletter and Facebook page and all three parish magazines from April 2014. The Chair held drop in sessions at Blackham, Withyham, St John's and Groombridge in September 2014. The deadline for responses was October 2014.

RESPONSES

There were 136 responses. On the basis that many of these would be one response per household, this would equate to 12.5% of households in the parish.

To follow is a summary of answers question by question:

1 The ward I live in is:

The response by Ward as a percentage of the total compared to the number of households by Ward as a percentage shows that the response by Ward was fairly representative of the composition of the parish, except for St Johns which was under represented:

Ward	% of Respondents	% of households in the Ward
Blackham	11.85	11
Groombridge	54.07	50
St Johns	9.63	19
Withyham	23.7	21
Outside the parish	0.74	

2 I have lived here for:

The vast majority of residents have lived in the parish for more than 10 years (77%). Only 3% of respondents had lived in the parish for less than a year.

3 Age of respondents:

Around half of all respondents were over 65. This is not comparative to the age composition of the parish, where 19% are over 65. Of the remaining respondents, the majority were 36-65.

According to the results no-one under 19 responded, however we did appear to have 4 people answer the questions for young people towards the end of the questionnaire.

It is perhaps not surprising that in many multi-age households, the parents (likely to be in the 36-65 age range) would have responded on behalf of the household.

4 How people arrived in the parish:

The vast majority of respondents moved to the parish by choice, suggesting it is a highly desirable place to live.

Around 10% of respondents were born in the parish. Of these 13 respondents, 2 were aged 26-35, 7 were 36-65 and 4 were over 65. As the latter age groups are of quite a large age span this seems fairly equitable and so there is no reason to assume that any particular age group is more likely to have been born in the parish.

5 How people feel about living in the parish:

A very high percentage 86% love living in the parish and feel they belong here. Less than 1% said that they were unhappy living here.

6 There was space in this question to give comments and 53 of the respondents used this for various suggestions. Some made comments that more directly related to the question about how they feel about living in the parish such as:

- A sense of community and friendliness in the parish was mentioned by 15 people, only one said that there was a lack of community spirit
- The countryside and beautiful surroundings was mentioned 6 times
- 1 said they loved living here but that it should move with the times whilst retaining its character

Some of the 53 respondents that left comments also mentioned specific issues, which one can only assume affects their feelings about living in the parish:

- Traffic calming was mentioned 9 times. 3 were general calls for traffic calming, particular locations mentioned were Hendl Hill with relation to pedestrian access, and twice Station Road (neither was specific as to whether this is Groombridge or Withyham but the Parish Council has received petitions concerning both). 6 specifically mentioned speed limits being too high, one in particular highlighted the A264. " people felt that generally there are too many cars
- 5 people mentioned parking as an issue, in particular there was a request for double yellow lines at the Victoria roundabout, concern about pavement parking, concern about the volume of cars parked at the garage, and improvements to parking at St Thomas' School and Station Road Groombridge.
- Highways maintenance was mentioned 3 times, particularly in relation to pot holes
- 2 people mentioned the need to repair the bridge in Groombridge
- 4 Respondents felt that hedges and roadsides could be kept tidier, 2 of these mentioned in particular the need to ensure road signs were kept clear and clean and 1 the need to maintain the footpaths between St Thomas and Station Road as they felt this was badly rutted
- Better public transport was requested 5 times

- 1 person called for weekly collections of domestic waste and recycling facilities for cardboard and tin. Another asked to end ‘the recycling rubbish’
- Faster broadband and better mobile signals was mentioned twice
- A lack of a village shop was mentioned 3 times in relation to Withyham. 1 person commented on the need for a coffee shop in Groombridge. 1 person commented on the useful shops and post office in Groombridge
- 1 requested a bin near St Thomas’ church
- 1 felt Groombridge play area needs updating
- Aircraft noise was mentioned twice
- 1 respondent was concerned that their children won’t be able to afford to live here
- 1 person requested better housing for older people, and 3 mentioned the need for bungalows
- 1 mentioned the excellent GP surgery facilities and treatment
- 1 person thanked the parish council, another cited the parish council as a reason they felt proud to live here

7 On the building of new houses:

Withyham parish sits within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which carries restrictions on housebuilding. This is exacerbated by the vast majority of the parish being within the Ashdown Forest 7km exclusion zone, which prevents the construction of new building except where a property has already existed there. The following questions therefore need to be considered within this context.

Overall the vast majority of respondents (67%) felt there should be SOME limit on housebuilding but only 3% felt there should be NO new housing, which is more akin to the current situation as outlined above.

This would suggest that if the moratorium were lifted then residents would be supportive of some new building. Bearing in mind the current restrictions on building new houses in the parish the next question was concerned with where people might accept the building of new houses. 51% felt it should only be where buildings have already existed, 28% on infill land only and 20% supported restricting building to conversion of derelict buildings.

8 What sort of houses should be built in the event of new building taking place?

A very large proportion support homes for local people.

The largest support was for smaller properties – starter homes and small family homes, but there was very little support for flats. Executive homes with 4 bedrooms or more also had less support.

Withyham Parish Council’s Planning Committee already comments to Wealden DC that a mix of housing stock should be maintained in the parish. The concern is that without new building being allowable, residents extend homes and smaller homes are lost which then prevents many people from being able to afford to live in the parish.

There was also good support for retirement properties and assisted living housing.

There was support for properties with small business potential such as workshops, which reflects a trend for home working.

The following comments were made in support of this question by 31 respondents:

- 2 respondents stated no new housing, feeling it would compromise the village of Groombridge. Another however felt that new housing helps a place develop and another felt a better mix of housing would help sustain the viability of the community
- 1 person specifically felt the 7km restriction is too wide
- 1 person felt there is nowhere to build more housing in St Johns
- 1 stated building should not be on good farmland
- 1 person stressed the importance of housing being kept in keeping with the parish
- 9 supported smaller, starter homes although the definition of what constituted 'smaller' was not clear. Affordable housing was mentioned 4 times but implied more often. 1 person felt starter homes should have a defined period occupancy. 2 requested more bungalows. 1 was concerned that affordable homes get bought for letting
- 3 endorsed homes for elderly people, although 1 person stressed that 'accessible' housing should be available for all types of people including families. 1 person felt Groombridge already has too high a proportion of older people to be sustainable long term
- 5 Respondents mentioned the effect of new housing on services and infrastructure, such as school places, road access, sewerage disposal, parking, service vehicles, doctors, broadband, and drainage. 1 of these advocated for solar energy, grey water systems and other environmental features in all new builds
- 3 people requested no more executive homes, with one suggesting a moratorium until the balance was re-established

9 Preferred features of new housing:

The majority of people to respond preferred traditional design. More people (46%) did not support contemporary design than did or that had no opinion on that matter (54%).

Respondents were very supportive of green housing with energy saving features, use of local materials in keeping with others, and the use of local craftsmen or developers.

17 respondents made additional comments:

- 2 of these stated no new housing at all, 1 stipulated no new housing outside the existing housing area
- 4 people felt that contemporary design could be fine if well designed. 2 others felt that quality or appropriateness to context was more important than style
- 1 person felt designs should be in keeping with existing
- 4 comments supported green housing, but one countered this with concerns about its expense when trying to provide affordable housing. 1 suggested groups of terrace houses with 'district' schemes for renewable energies
- 1 person advocated for use of local tradesperson but felt that in reality developers would not do so
- 1 respondent requested affordable retirement homes near to the shops
- 2 advocated for small scale developments, less houses on one site

10 Flood issues:

Around 39% of respondents had not been affected by flooding either on their property or on the roads in the area.

Of the remaining respondents were able to select as many of the choices that related to them and did so in the following order of highest to lowest: roads in the ward where I live (this was answered by people across all wards), roads close to my home, in my garden or driveway (answered by people in all wards), in my house (only answered by people in Withyham), in my outbuildings.

The winter preceding the survey experienced a great deal of rainfall which may have affected people's answers to this question.

11 I believe the causes of flooding that has affected me are:

Respondents were able to select as many of the choices that related to them.

The order of highest to lowest was road run off, field run off, rivers or streams overflowing (all 3 selections were chosen by people living across all wards) and most minimally was sewers overflowing (mainly Groombridge and St Johns).

WPC is aware of flooding issues in areas of the parish exacerbated by blocked drains (responsibility of ESCC) and infrequent cleaning of gutters (responsibility of WDC) and is in conversation with both bodies.

12 Would people support WPC using some of their budget to undertake a survey to look at what is causing flood issues:

The majority (65%) supported this but only if it was taken from existing funds rather than a small increase in precept.

19 Respondents commented:

- 7 of these recognised the responsibility of other agencies to undertake this rather than the parish, and in answering the highlighted the complex relationship of various agencies by citing ESCC, WDC, Environment Agency, South Eastern water and farmers. Some implied that as Council Tax is already paid to ESCC and WDC then WPC should not have to bear costs, others suggested better joined up working and match funding between those agencies.
- 1 person suggested looking at paddock Wood's flood and drainage policy, and suggested a survey should only be undertaken if building is planned
- 3 did not see flooding as a significant enough issue to require a survey
- 1 would prefer to see money spent on the roads, particularly near St Thomas' School
- 1 would prefer to see funds spent on sewers, blocked drains, localised surface water problems, and helping individual properties reduce their flood risks
- 1 person suggested residents helping by keeping drains clear themselves, and not parking over blocked drains when street cleaners are in the area

Some people pointed out particular sites susceptible to flooding:

- 3 of these mentioned the area where Old and New Groombridge meet
- 1 mentioned by the drive of Birchden Woods
- 1 mentioned Tanyards (caused by blocked culvert)
- 1 mentioned the Medway Valley

13 Parish Services

It was made clear in the survey that WPC is not responsible for all these areas of work and I have included the bodies responsible under each area. However, residents often approach WPC as the first point of call with concerns about them.

Respondents could state their level of concern for each area stated. For ease of visual analysis I have highlighted the highest response for each area. Any in the 'inadequate' category are of concern.

	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (%)	No opinion (%)
Hedge Management (ESCC/landowners)	58	35	7

Drainage and Ditch Clearance (ESCC/WDC/landowners)	30	56	14
Paved footways (ESCC)	50	39	11
Non paved footways	47	27	27
Refuse collection/ recycling (WDC)	71	21	7
Community recycling facilities (WDC)	75	16	9
Road Maintenance (ESCC)	23	70	6
Road sweeping and litter management (WDC/WPC)	61	32	6
Grass cutting (ESCC/ WPC)	66	25	9
Freezing weather management (ESCC)	36	58	6
Sign posting (ESCC)	78	13	9
Public footpaths (ESCC/ landowners)	63	22	15
Street lighting (WPC)	68	20	12

This shows that areas of particular concern are drainage and ditch clearance, road maintenance, and freezing weather management. All of these are the lead responsibility of ESCC and all have suffered budget cuts over recent years.

There were 36 respondents to the request for comments:

- Road conditions such as potholes were mentioned by 8 people, 1 specifically mentioned the need for better maintenance of ditches and drainage
- Damaged stiles and poorly maintained footpaths were mentioned by 2 people, another requested kissing gates instead of stiles for access reasons. 1 felt that footpaths signage had been improved lately
- Street lighting had people in support of more light and some strongly stating they do not want more as it was not appropriate in a rural area (2 people suggested people should use torches). 2 people mentioned street lampposts need painting 1 person mentioned overgrown foliage blocking street lights
- 4 people were concerned about hedge and grass management. One suggested that grass and hedge cutting had been carried out too late in the season, leading to a lack of site lines. Another that grass cutting should be better targeted to avoid signage being obscured
- St Michaels School was mentioned twice, once as parking being inadequate and by someone else who felt WPC should advocate for double yellow lines along the bend there
- 1 person felt that we are a forgotten corner of the County

Specific issues and requests raised were (under the body with primary responsibility):

ESCC

- Mess created by parking on Wallisfield grass verge (ESCC)
- Traffic calming needed on Station Road Groombridge (ESCC)
- Need to clean drains on Hendl Hill (ESCC)
- Footpath along St Johns from top of School Lane to Murry Cottage needs cleaning (ESCC)
- Pathway by Victoria Apartments unsafe (ESCC)
- Crossing Withyham Road is very dangerous - not clear at which point the responder was referring to (ESCC)
- Concern that some footpaths 'disappear' at important places such as post office to the Homestead, Springfield Road South side, along Junction Inn (ESCC)
- A264 and Sussex Lane remains icy at times of ice and snow (ESCC)
- Permanent debris on footpaths between upper and lower Balls Green, and B2110 at bottom of School Hill (ESCC)

WDC

- Better handling of the recycling facility (WDC)

WPC

- Bin by the Groombridge shops (WPC/WDC)
- Untidy by Groombridge Village Hall (WPC)
- Better street lighting between St Thomas' School and Broad Oak (WPC) and on Station Road, Withyham (WPC)
- Bike racks in Groombridge (WPC/external funding possible for this?)
- Better hedge management by proactively writing to landowners, particularly Church Lane to A264 and Willetts Lane (WPC/ESCC)

Other

- Signpost needed to St Thomas Church at junction of Corseley Road (St Thomas' church?)
- Tanyard hedge overgrown (Tanyard)

One of the respondents commented that while many of these are the responsibility of others, WPC could be a helpful lobby

14 Other Parish Services

Again it was made clear in the survey that WPC is not responsible for all these areas of work however, residents often approach WPC as the first point of call with concerns about them.

Respondents could state their level of concern for each area stated. For ease of visual analysis I have highlighted the highest response for each area. Any in the 'inadequate' category are of concern. The clear areas of concern below are mobile phone reception and broadband (it is worth noting that the process of enabling superfast broadband is currently underway), while DAB reception also appears to be very patchy.

	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (%)	No opinion (%)
Mains electricity	92	4	4
Mains water	95	2	3
Mains gas	80	9	11
Foul drainage	78	11	11
Telephone services	83	12	5
Mobile phone reception	14	83	3
Broadband	13	81	6
TV reception	72	20	8
Radio reception (AM/FM)	82	9	9
Radio reception (DAB)	43	31	25

32 respondents commented on this section:

- Regarding electricity, 1 person felt this is not reliable in bad weather and that it is not recognised that there is a poor distribution of phase 3 electricity in the area, which could put businesses off moving here
- The need for superfast broadband was mentioned by 12 respondents – several commented on the current speeds being prohibitive to businesses locating here
- 8 people commented on poor mobile signals, one stated it was better with EE. While one person recognised and accepted that better mobile signals would likely necessitate a (well designed) mast, another strongly felt there should be no mobile masts.
- 5 people commented on poor digital signal (including TV and radio) in general, 1 specifically mentioned an issue with trees in a churchyard. One person commented on the current situation preventing people moving here

- Foul drainage was mentioned as an issue 5 times. 2 people felt that Southern Water was not accepting their responsibilities to residents
- 4 people mentioned they had no mains gas

15 Dogs

In both cases the largest proportion of people did not consider dog fouling to be an issue and did not have any dog related concerns. 50% of respondents felt that there were enough dog waste bins.

21 respondents commented on this section:

- 1 stressed the very good dog walking on the Ashdown Forest that could help mitigate the 7km exclusion and justify additional housing
- 8 commented that even with dog bins, people still do not use them
- 7 commented on dogs being allowed off the lead (Forest Way), allowed to roam free (Withyham), sheep worrying (Ashdown Forest) and constant regular barking (Blackham)

The following specific locations for dog fouling problems/requiring a bin were suggested:

- Harrisons Rocks (Forestry Commission)
- Tanyard
- Forest Way cycle path
- St Michaels School

16 Crime Prevention

The majority of respondents felt that on the whole crime was minimal in the parish.

In response to whether response to reported crime was adequate, and whether more could be done to prevent crime the majority either agreed or had no opinion.

There were 24 comments made:

- 4 commented positively on the effectiveness of the PCSO, 2 suggested more regular PCSO meetings and another suggested the PCSO rounds should be better timed to coincide with school parking
- 1 felt the police presence was better than it had been, while 3 felt that it was worse
- 4 did not feel that crime was an issue where they lived
- 4 had experienced crime and 2 of these were unhappy with the response from the police
- 1 blamed lack of police resources for poor response to crime
- 2 suggested more Neighbourhood Watch
- 2 suggested that people should take more responsibility for themselves with one of these suggesting people have their own CCTV

17 Cars, parking and speed limits

98% of respondents had one or more cars.

40% of households had 2 cars, 31% 3 or more and 27% 1 vehicle. 2% had no vehicle.

18 More on cars, parking and speed limits.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)
Do you have an issue with people parking near your home	19	69	2
Do you have an issue with finding parking near your home	14	83	3
Is their sufficient parking to access community	65	31	4

facilities			
Are designated car parks adequate	58	27	5
Are the needs of pedestrians sufficiently met given the nature of a rural community	52	39	10
Are the needs of cyclists sufficiently met given the nature of the roads	48	32	20

The majority of people did not have an issue with people parking near their homes or finding parking near their homes.

The majority of people felt parking was sufficient in designated car parks and community facilities, and that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists were sufficiently met.

32 respondents made comments:

- 2 felt that generally the roads were insufficient
- Poor/inadequate parking in was mentioned 10 times, specifically at the Groombridge GP surgery and village Hall, at access to the Forest Way, Blackham village Hall, St Michaels School (4) and St Johns School (2)
- Dangerous parking was mentioned twice around the Victoria – both to other vehicles and for pedestrians due to pavement parking
- 4 people suggested lower speed limits, specifically outside the GP surgery, at St Michaels School and through all the villages, 1 suggested speed bumps on Station Road
- 1 person felt that there were too many cars parked on the Withyham Road, exacerbated by the garage
- 2 requested cycle racks in Groombridge
- 4 requested a path on the A264 to link Blackham and Ashurst
- 4 commented that roads were unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians, either due to pot holes or inconsiderate drivers. 1 of these suggested a cycle track on Groombridge Hill
- 2 people felt that there were too many cyclists at the weekends

19 Are speed limits too high?

The majority (57%) answered yes while 37% answered no.

Comments were made by 57 respondents, the majority citing specific places:

- A264 Ashurst to Blackham and near Ironchurch Lane (11)
- Withyham Road between the Ridge and the GP surgery (8)
- Station Road was mentioned 4 times, either Groombridge or Withyham (it was not always clear which). Specifically Groombridge was mentioned 4 times, Bridge by Groombridge Station (1)
- and Withyham Station Road 8
- Through the villages and/or outside schools (7)
- Corseley Road (2)
- Near Ducklings Farm (2)
- School Lane (2)
- Hendl Hill (2)
- Crowborough Warren (1)
- Eridge Road (1)
- St Johns Road near Reading Room land (1)
- Withyham (1)
- 30mph sited in a dangerous place as approaching Groombridge from Broadwater Warren (1)

20 Are the speed limits too low?

The majority (91%) said they were not too low. There were only 5 comments:

- 3 named specific places that they felt should have lower limits; Hendal Hill, Withyham Road and A264 (pointing out that the limit is lower on the Kent side of the bridge)
- 1 felt 20mph is better through villages
- 1 felt the speed limits are ok but not observed

21 Are you aware of a dangerous road hazard where you have concern for pedestrians or other road users?

The majority (73%) said they were.

78 respondents commented:

- Victoria roundabout (11) – parking, narrow footpath, cars mounting path and visibility were all mentioned
- A264 turning to Ironchurch Lane and Florance corner crossing from bus stop (10)
- Hump back bridge near Groombridge Station (8) – dangers for motorists and pedestrians highlighted
- St Michaels School (8)
- Florance corner/Withyham Road/Hendal Hill corner (5)
- Station Road Groombridge (5)
- Outside St Thomas school (4)
- Withyham near pub and village hall (4)
- GP surgery (3)
- Potholes (3)
- Corseley Road/Florance Lane bend (3)
- The Ridge (2)
- Leaving Groombridge village hall car park (2)
- Walking from Blackham to station (2)
- St Johns Road (2)
- There were also individual places identified - Newton Willows, Inadequately maintained hedges, Groombridge shops, Junction Lye Green Road and Plumyfeather, Forest Way Crossing, Eridge Road, St Johns Road/School Lane corner, Cars too fast from Crowborough to Lye Green, Overflow at pond at Lyewood Green makes road icy, Hedge near St Michael's Church gets too overgrown and affects sightlines

22 Comments about cars, parking and speed limits

37 respondents commented:

- Public shouldn't park on corners or doubles yellow lines (6)
- Better enforcement of speeds and parking needed (4) particularly over the Forest (1) and on St Johns
- Parking near schools an issue (4) St Michaels mentioned three times here
- Speed limits too fast (3) – Forest Fold mentioned by one in particular
- Grass needs to be kept cut at top of Hendal bridge road (2) and a stop sign rather than give way (1)
- Road (1)
- Limited residents parking at Withyham Road near Victoria apartments (2), School lane (1), Teasley Mead (1)
- Bend at Corseley Road/Florance Lane (1)
- Mud outside Wallisfield (1)
- Parking and crossing at GP surgery (1)

23 About your business

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)
Did you acquire a business in the parish?	3	54	43
Did you establish a business in the parish?	25	31	44
Is your business home based?	37	17	46
Were you attracted to the parish to establish a new business?	0	53	47

'No opinion' is likely to be those who do not work or have a business in the parish. I have therefore highlighted them where they are the majority answer, but the majority yes or no has also been highlighted as this is likely to reflect the people who do.

In the main it appears that people have not chosen the parish for their business, what is implied is that they have chosen to live here and therefore perhaps work here because they work from home.

24 Number of employees

There were 14 respondents. 64% of these were sole workers, 29% employed 2-4 people, 7% 5-7 and no-one employed 8 or more.

25 Are there benefits to running your business within the parish?

Results to this were inconclusive.

21 people responded. The majority (48%) had no opinion. Of the remaining 11 people 6 said no and 5 said yes.

In the comments one person mentioned access to motorways, trains to London and Gatwick, 2 others indicated that they work where they live which they find convenient. 1 person mentioned the post office being of value to their business.

26 Are there issues running your business in the parish?

20 responded. 35% had no opinion. Of the remaining responses the majority (8 of 13) answered yes.

9 respondents commented. All but one indicated that mobile phone signals and poor broadband were an issue. 1 suggested a few small business units in a central location would be useful.

27 Other comments

There were two comments.

One person indicated that the 7km zone exclusion is an issue to businesses wanting to expand; the other person suggested a Parish Council trade directory, perhaps linked to the parish council website and a forum for local businesses through the parish council.

28 Transport

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)
Do you use bus services to travel within the parish	22	76	2
Do you use bus services to travel beyond the parish	48	52	0
Do you use Wealdlink	2	97	1
Are bus services adequate given the rural nature of the parish?	22	49	29

While the majority of people do not use bus services within the parish, a nearly equal number of the 116 respondents did and did not use them to travel outside the parish. Given the level of car ownership this shows quite a good level of use of public transport. The majority of respondents do not feel that services are sufficient.

The majority of respondents do not use Weald link.

36 respondents made comments:

- 13 would like a bus service between Groombridge/Withyham and Crowborough
- 12 would like the Tunbridge Wells to East Grinstead to be more frequent, run later and to run on Sundays
- 2 respondents had no bus service running close enough to them
- 3 people said that if they were older and unable to drive they would value the Wealdlink service
- 1 person said they help with driving people to hospital because of the inadequate public transport

29 Other types of transport used to travel beyond the parish

117 people responded to this but as they were able to select more than one option the percentages do not add up to 100%.

We can however see that cars are the main mode of transport at 95% of the 117 people. 21% of them use bikes and 20% of them use taxis. 3% of respondents have a car share arrangement.

11 people also commented:

- 6 of them mentioned that they use the train, which hadn't been included in the survey question
- 1 person mentioned how good the school bus is to Crowborough but that it is dangerous for the children to cross the road from the bus stop
- 1 person mentioned the variety of transport used in their family
- 2 people mentioned support of neighbours and family for lifts
- 1 person encouraged the parish council to campaign to prevent the introduction of car parking charges at Ashurst station

30 Parish information

117 people responded to this but as they were able to select more than one option the percentages do not add up to 100%.

The majority (90%) get information through the church/parish magazines - the parish council makes a contribution to all 3 magazines. 48% of the respondents look at shop and pub notice boards for information. A smaller percentage use local newspapers, flyers and leaflets and emails.

Of information from WPC, 56% obtain information from the WPC newsletter (this was launched January 2014 just before the questionnaire went live). 18% of respondents used the website and 14% used the WPC facebook page. This demonstrated that these are used by the community but that there is scope for them to be better used.

8 people commented and from these:

- people clearly value the church magazines (2)
- 2 mentioned find out information through a variety of ways

- 1 person noted the lack of Withyham or Groombridge correspondent to the Courier (Groombridge has since secured a correspondent)
- One person had not received a Parish Council newsletter at the time of answering
- Another person noted that the Chairman’s blog on the website was not up to date. This demonstrates how people value up to date information.

31 Parish facilities

	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
Children’s play areas	13	35	52
Recreation ground	13	45	41
Public footpaths	68	29	3
Parish churches	38	35	26
Village halls	46	50	4
Mobile library	9	14	78
Wildlife and countryside areas	65	30	5
Cycle routes	37	39	24
Local pubs	39	58	3

In considering the answers to this question it is worth remembering the age of respondents. For example, if around 50% of respondents are over 65 this could be reflected in 52% of people answering the question never using the play grounds.

Footpaths are very well used by the people that responded with 68% using them frequently and 29% sometimes. This is also the case with wildlife and countryside areas, and cycle routes. This demonstrates how important these open spaces are to residents.

Churches and village halls are also used either frequently or sometimes by the majority of the respondents, as are pubs. This demonstrated the importance of such hubs in the communities.

Considering the age demographic the mobile library is not well used. This could be that it is not stopping at the most convenient places, or that it is not advertised appropriately enough.

4 comments included how important sports grounds, shops, the post office, GP surgery and schools are. Also mentioned specifically were Spa Valley Railway and Harrisons Rocks.

32 Other leisure activities

On the whole people seem satisfied with the breadth and range of clubs and societies available.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)
Are there enough organised activities (eg clubs and societies) where you live	64	11	25
Are there enough organised activities in the whole of the parish?	47	9	43
Are there enough organised activities to attract people into the parish	46	14	40

There were 11 comments:

- One person suggested more activities for 12-18 year olds and for the elderly
- One person specifically mentioned Harrisons Rocks and the Tanyards

- 2 people indicated that it is necessary for people to initiate such activities and 2 others that local people need to support them
- 1 person suggested free wifi at the village hall to attract young people
- Activities were mentioned for younger children by 2 people, including the need to update the Groombridge play area
- 1 person mentioned that Groombridge is well served while someone else said that in the past Withyham has struggled to sustain activities

33 Tourism

The majority of people felt there are enough attractions to bring tourists to the area, and support the encouragement of tourism.

In the comments 12 people responded. Some people listed local tourist attractions, others made suggestions and comments:

- 1 was concerned about visitors exacerbating parking issues
- 3 supported tourism as long as it is balanced with being an AONB
- 1 person advocated for the preservation of the facilities at Harrisons Rocks
- 1 person suggested a café in Groombridge and a notice board with information about local attractions, another stressed the importance of visitors bringing money in
- It was suggested that there should be a cycle route along the SVR line, with cycle hire at the Junction Inn in order to encourage tourism without increasing traffic

(see below for q34-53 – this was the survey available to young people to complete)

54 What could be done to make where you live better for young people

This was asked of all respondents in the main survey. 26 people commented and these are summarised as:

- Better public transport (11)
- Local affordable housing (4)
- Better play facilities in Groombridge and Balls Green (5) including a hard standing court for ball games (1)
- Road safety and speed limits (4) – particularly named were A264 (1) and safe pavement to school (1)
- Schools, village halls and parish council to work together to fundraise for parish projects (1)
- Better access to work opportunities (3)
- Better facilities for children over 6 (1) and teenagers (2)
- A visiting library for young people to use (1)

55 What clubs or activities would you like to see for young people?

This was asked of all respondents in the main survey. 17 people commented and these are summarised as:

- Youth club/teenage activities (10)
- Sports/Football/cricket club (3)
- Forest school/bushcraft club (2) – this ties in with how the young people answered their questionnaires about their appreciation of living near the countryside
- Skate boarding facility (1)

56 What are the key issues facing our children and young people living within our parish?

This was asked of all respondents in the main survey. 20 people commented and these are summarised as:

- Lack of transport and cost of public transport (10). One person added that this affects their ability to get part time work
- Not enough for teenagers to do (9)
- Lack of affordable housing (3)
- Traffic and road safety (3)

57 Any comments

There were just 4 comments here:

- One voiced concern that 7km zone policies are preventing growth in housing, business space and tourism initiatives in the parish
- One commented on the success of the Bushcraft activities in Withyham
- Another requested free wifi in all village halls
- The fourth apologised if it was hard to understand what they had said

58 One aspect people identify as highest priority

There were 49 comments:

- 14 people were concerned about road safety, including speed limits and parking. Of these, 5 were particularly concerned about the A264, 3 about St Michaels school, 1 about the Withyham Road and 1 about parking in St Johns
- 9 commented that lack of housing is an issue; of these 5 specifically were concerned about affordable housing and 1 felt that housing development should be done properly and sympathetically
- 4 were concerned about air noise
- 4 people cited improvements to play areas
- 2 felt community safety is a priority and 1 child safety specifically
- 2 wanted to see better 'traffic management'
- 2 wanted faster broadband
- 2 wanted more effective public transport
- 1 person wanted any building to continue to be restricted
- 1 person wanted the facilities at Harrison's Rocks preserved
- 1 person wanted ESCC and WDC to amalgamate in order to save costs and work more effectively
- 1 wanted the village halls to be kept open
- 1 person was concerned with maintaining green areas

Children's questionnaire (Q34-53)

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Male	38	63	0	0
Female	62	37	100	100
Under 8	53	63	0	0
9-12	29	25	0	0
13-15	17	13	0	0

Child 1 – of 15 respondents the majority were female and under 8

Child 2 – of 8 respondents the majority were male and under 8

Child 3 – there was 1 respondents, a female, and she did not indicate her age as she was 17

Child 4 – one respondent said she was female and then did not give her age

What do you like about living here?

Respondents could choose more than one.

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
My friends are here	87	88	0	0
Playing on outside space	60	88	0	0
Near to the countryside	93	100	100	0
Close to school	67	50	0	0
Clubs & Activities	27	25	0	0

The 'child 4' respondent did not answer this question

The children who answered the questionnaire all valued the countryside. Playing outside and proximity to friends were important. Organised clubs and activities do not appear to be as important to them.

What don't you like about living here?

Respondents could choose more than one.

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Not enough to do	36	38	100	0
No transport	18	0	100	0
Too dark	27	0	0	0
Dangerous roads	73	88	0	0

The 'child 3', who was 17 felt there was nothing for her age range to do and that was exacerbated by the lack of transport links to get to places she wanted to go like Lewes and Brighton. She was also frustrated by her and her friends living on different train lines which made meeting together problematic and expensive.

Dangerous roads appear to be a real issue to the younger children who made up the majority of respondents for child 1 and child 2 answers. They were also concerned about there being not enough to do.

The 'child 4' respondent did not answer this question

Do you see yourself living here when you grow up?

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
Yes	50	50	0	0
No	0	0	100	0
Not sure	50	50	0	0

The younger children who answered the questions in the child 1 and child 2 categories were all equally split in either seeing themselves living here or were not sure. The only 'child 3' respondent was older at 17 and her comments to the previous question might explain her answer that she does not see herself living here.

The 'child 4' respondent did not answer this question