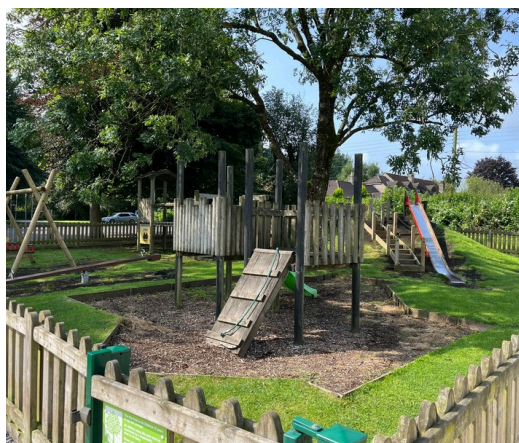




Ashwick Parish Community Review 2024 Executive Summary



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Introduction & Methodology

Ashwick is a small rural parish, lying towards the eastern end of the Mendip Hills, about three miles from Shepton Mallet and six from Wells. It is an ancient settlement, mentioned in the Domesday Book, its Parish Church (St James) dates from 1413. Today the village of Oakhill accounts for about half the Parish's population of 1,400, with the remainder living in scattered farms and among several hamlets: Ashwick, Nettlebridge, Neighbourne, Benter, Moorwood, and part of Gurney Slade. It is hilly countryside, with narrow (often steep) lanes running between the hamlets, plus two (often congested) main roads connecting it to other places. Most of the countryside is farmland, mainly permanent pasture (supporting beef cattle, some dairy and sheep), and also areas of woodland including part of the ancient Harridge Wood.

Today the parish benefits from a variety of amenities: a primary school; two thriving pubs; a village shop in Gurney Slade (including a post office) and two churches (St James & All Saints – part of a wider benefice), with church halls and associated activities. There is an excellent medical practice and a Care Home in the village. The recently refurbished Village Hall houses the Oakleaf Café, a popular meeting place which is open two days a week (with volunteer staff). Several associated clubs and social activities operate here. The recreation ground (with a childrens' playground and adult outdoor gym apparatus), plus a golf club just outside the village, and many footpaths and bridleways in the parish, help cater for physical activity. There is a strong sense of community in the Parish, with the village atmosphere being much valued by those who live here.

A previous Ashwick Parish Design Statement was published in 2003. In 2023 the Parish Council (PC) was considering the development of a new Parish Design Statement when it became aware of the opportunity to undertake a Community-wide consultation to establish the views of the Parishioners on the pros and cons of living in the Parish. It was recognised that a report based on a wide consultation across the Parish would be very useful in seeking support, including funding, for any changes that might be desired.

Publicity was achieved through social media, posters around the Parish, leaflet drops to houses, businesses, GP Surgery, Village Hall, Oakhill Primary School, Pubs, Phoenix Magazine, etc. A Public Drop-In Session was held in the Village Hall in April 2024 to encourage members of the Community to highlight issues and topics of concern to help inform the scope of the main consultation survey.

With support and guidance from CCS a final set of questions for the on-line survey was devised and promoted extensively, which led to a final figure of 305 accredited responses being received. The Steering Group wish to thank the generosity of the 7 local businesses in offering prizes for a draw which encouraged more residents to complete the survey. The high number of contributions provided valuable input to take the Community Review forward in identifying a set of key findings.

Key Findings

The results have now been analysed and a summary of the main findings follows:



Demographics

Nearly two thirds of respondents have lived in the Parish for more than 11 years. 57 have moved to the community since 2021, during or since the Covid 19 pandemic. The smallest group of respondents are those newest to the Parish. The sizeable majority of respondents are working age (18-64 years). Around 1 in 3 people are older respondents (65+ years), while there are a very small number of under 18's who took part in the survey.

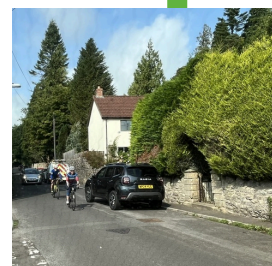


Housing

Affordable housing and sustainable small scale development are most important to respondents in the survey. Nearly one third feel that no more housing is needed.

The majority of respondents consider it very or extremely important that Ashwick Parish retains its village character in the design of new build housing, and that there is adequate parking considered in the design. Green space and energy efficiency are also important factors.

The Chapelfield development presents particular concerns around traffic impact, parking and a perceived risk of road traffic accidents. These concerns are also closely linked with inadequate local facilities, pressure on infrastructure (sewers), health services and the lack of employment in the area meaning that residents will have to commute to work. Many also consider that this is overdevelopment of land and that there is a resulting loss of green space.



Traffic, Travel & Transport

Speed and increase of traffic are key concerns in the Parish. General safety and safe walking/cycling routes through the village to school are also a significant concern, with either narrow, or no, pavements in particular areas. Safe walking and cycling routes are also a barrier to reaching destinations for a sizeable proportion of respondents when they consider their journey is too far to walk. This appears again in the Children/Young People's topic with the challenge of moving around the Parish safely on foot and by bike; and in Community Facilities, where safe access to community buildings would increase engagement in activities.

When considering the state of the roads, potholes and poor drainage are the main concerns for respondents, with additional comments focused on improving drainage and flood mitigation. There is a lack of awareness of Community Transport – and the single respondent who already uses it – suggests there is some communications work to do around promoting the service.





Climate Emergency

Two in three respondents indicate that the climate emergency is either very or extremely important to them. As before, where limitations in public transport stop respondents from reaching local facilities, inadequate local public transport is also frustrating efforts to reduce individual carbon footprints.

Planting wildflowers, trees and hedgerows are the priority calls to action in improving biodiversity and wildlife. The outstanding majority consider it either very or extremely important that steps are taken to protect wildlife and access to it.



Local Environment

The survey shows that respondents are most satisfied with their access to the countryside, parish green spaces and Rights of Way. Flooding, litter and fly tipping (particularly around Pound Lane, Galley Batch) are their highest concerns.

Better maintenance of Rights of Way is key to improving the experience, as is the need to improve access for all. Dog waste is the biggest concern. Overgrown and blocked routes continue to be a theme, and the comments again highlight the lack of disability access and lack of dog friendly stiles/gates. The majority of respondents do not know how to report Rights of Way issues. The lack of awareness around this suggests there is some communications work to do around promoting the process for reporting any issues.

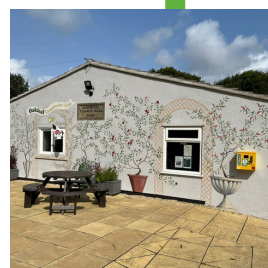
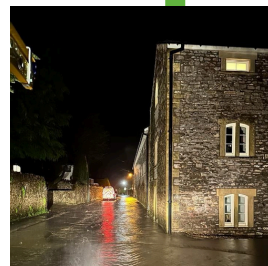


Community Facilities & Services

The most used facilities are the Pub, GP Surgery and the Recreation Field/Play/Park Area. More shops, a takeaway, a theatre/cinema club and a community orchard/garden would be the most popular new amenities in the community.

Teenagers are the priority group to consider when increasing leisure and recreation provision in the parish, followed by older residents and families. Better communications (and not just online), timings of events and safer access (as before) would help respondents to take part in more social or community activities. In considering new events to add to the community calendar, the three top responses called for were a beer/cider festival, village fete and live music events.

In considering new activities in the Village Hall, activities around re-use/re-purposing were most important with a repair shop and second-hand swap shop being most popular.



Young People & Children

Respondents with connections to young people in the Parish answered questions on youth provision. When asked what facilities they would like introduced to the Parish, the top response was for a skate park followed by running facilities (which also appears in other questions in the survey around setting up a running club or Park Run provision). For younger children, a Forest school appears as another strong choice.

Barriers to engagement are there being nothing for specific age groups, followed by difficulties around travel (as before), safety concerns and lack of information.



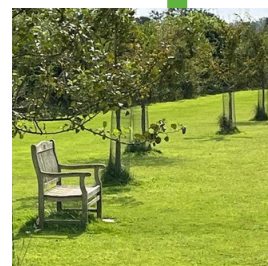
Health & Wellbeing

The majority of respondents report themselves to be in good/very good physical health, and in good/very good mental health. It is concerning that 28 consider themselves to be in very bad/bad mental/physical health.

Most respondents find it fairly easy, easy, or extremely easy to access health information and support. When considering health related activities and therapies, gardening or nature activities are the most popular, followed by art and music.

Most respondents are confident with accessing information and services locally. As energy costs continue to fluctuate, it is little surprise that respondents ask for support with energy savings advice.

When asked for a preference of A&E destinations in an emergency, the outstanding majority would prefer to be taken to Bath. The majority of respondents would prefer to attend a local Community Hub in Shepton Mallet for their health needs.



Communications

Most respondents indicate they feel fairly well informed about what's going on in the Parish. However, 1 in 5 respondents - more than 50 - feel not at all informed or not very well informed. The community Facebook page is the most popular means of finding out what's going on, closely followed by Phoenix magazine. To improve local communications, respondents suggest better use of social media, improvements to the village/parish website, alongside a welcome pack for new residents.



What next?

The Steering Group is now developing an action and funding plan to deliver on those issues raised by the community through the survey. This will be a focus and priority for the Parish Council over the next couple of years as they oversee the actions which ideally are undertaken by the most appropriate community group or individuals. The Parish Council will review progress against actions on a regular basis. An update will be included in its annual report.

Privacy Statement

Analysis will be conducted by the Community Council for Somerset (CCS). Data is captured for legitimate and contractual purposes. Information is collected and analysed in accordance with CCS's role as a Data Controller and Data Processor.

Digital copies are retained for 12 months and deleted after this period. Any personal data that is captured is anonymised with the report and held securely for the purposes of analysis.

No data will be published which can identify an individual without their consent. If you have provided contact details to offer help this data is shared with the Ashwick Community Review steering group. If you have only entered your details to take part in the prize draw and you win, your data is shared with the Ashwick Community Review steering group.

If you would like to find out more about how we use your data or want to see a copy of the information about you that we hold, please contact info@somersetcc.org.uk or call 01823 331222. Protecting your Personal Data is important and we fully comply and adhere to the Principles of Data Protection set out in our Data Protection / Privacy Policy visit <https://ccslovesomerset.org/data-protection-policy/> and <https://ccslovesomerset.org/privacy/>

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Ashwick Parish Community Review

The Survey
Results are in

What can we all
take forward?

You've said what
you want

Appendix *to the* ***Executive Summary***

The following pages highlight the principle issues raised. Can you help resolve them, are there activities or events that you would like to see happen, etc?

Volunteer groups are beginning to emerge to take suggestions forward but more help is always welcome .

Parish Council, Village Hall Committee and Patient Participation Group are all open to discussing proposals, offering advice on funding and other strategies to realise your ambitions. Get involved!

Contact Details:

Parish Council:	clerk@ashwickparish.org
Village Hall Committee:	aandovhc.chair@gmail.com
Patient Participation Group:	chairoakhillppg@gmail.com



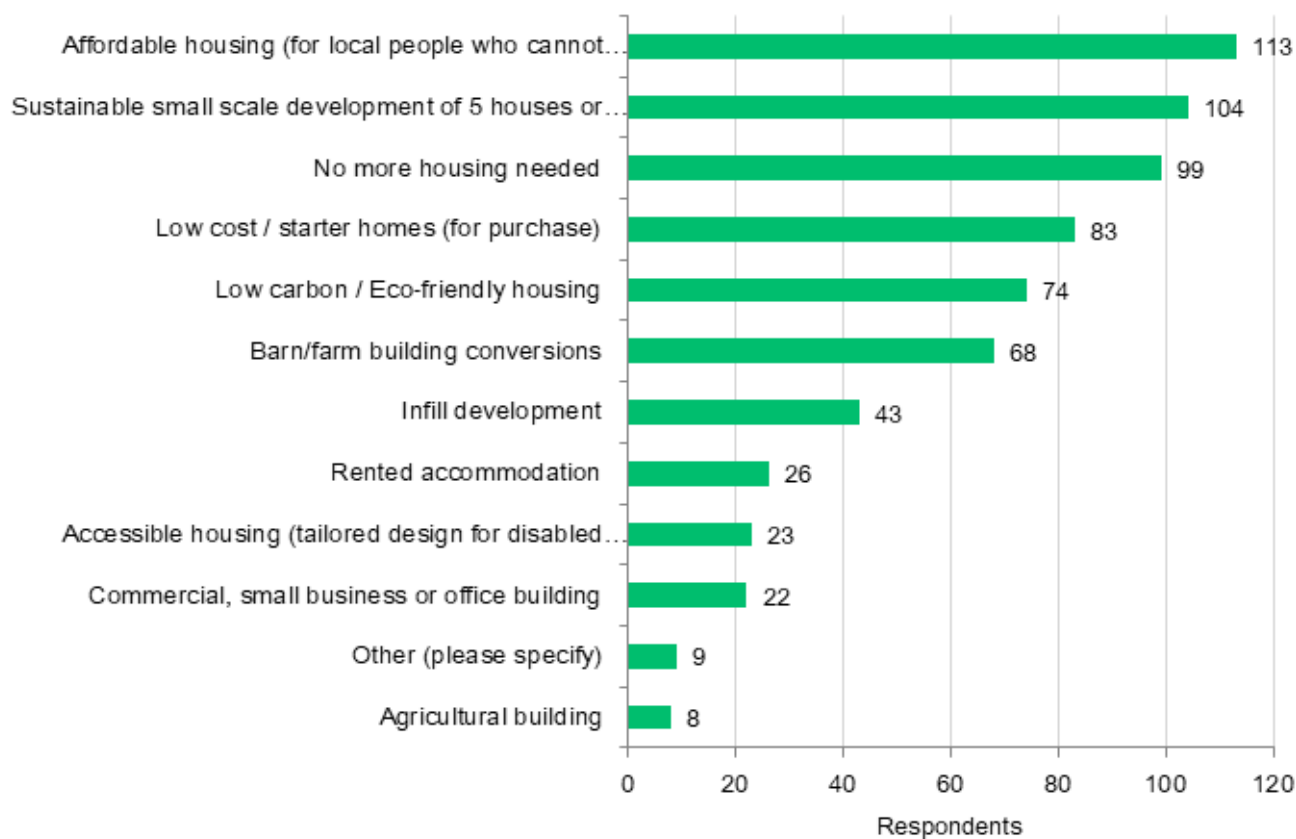
Housing

Chapelfield
Development!

Affordable
Starter Homes

Barn
Conversions

Downsizers &
Retirees



Are you interested in Planning & Development and protecting the Rural Environment?

Can you help update the Parish Design Statement to reflect the results of the Community Review?

Consider joining the Parish Council!



Transport Travel

Traffic

Traffic volume

Public
Transport?

Accessability to
Parish?

Transport for
school, shops,
work?

Safety?

Speeding?

This topic drew many comments in the Survey!

- Calls for speed reduction (20mph through the village) and general speed reduction initiatives in the Parish
- Concerns around HGV traffic (definitely there are issues with HGVs getting stuck in Fosse Road).
- Parking (on pavements, at school time, High Street, bottom of Zion Hill, Fosse Road & Bath Road opposite Oakhill Inn).
- Badly parked cars blocking access to, and exit from, houses and obscuring views at junctions.
- Cannot safely walk to the bus stops that are 5 - 10 minutes away.
- Bus services don't run into the evening forcing us to use cars more than we would through choice.
- Need to drive to all local shops and services.
- I was not aware of the availability of Community Transport.
- Maintenance of verges and paths (Overgrown pathways hanging bushes and trees from gardens blocking pathways).
- Safe off-road routes for horse riders and dog walkers.
- Desperate need for traffic management in the High Street - e.g. as in Stoke St Michael and Stratton with bollards, etc.
- Introduce traffic calming, narrowing of the High Street, wider pavement from the Granaries up to the Old Maltings.
- Footpath to Oakhill Surgery up the A367 dangerous: Fast traffic, narrow pavement, debris, overhanging foliage.

Other Comments – with a focus on improving drainage and flood mitigation - included:

- Deep drops off the road by the verges.
- Drains need to be cleared regularly to reduce flooding and road damage.
- Weeds growing on pavements and in the road. Bad potholes.
- Failed road resurfacing project last year, road flooded, verges washed away and road surface damaged.
- Flooding to the High Street, lack of maintenance, roads swept when leaves falling, blocking and filling gulleys up.
- Old gulleys not fit for purpose, and no new ones getting installed despite constant promises from Somerset Highways.
- Bad maintenance to no maintenance at all.
- No storm sewers means flooding on roads and nearby properties.
- Our country lanes are being washed away. When potholes are filled it seems only some are cherry picked.
- Road surface is awful. Drainage inadequate and causing water damage to my property.
- Tarmac edges of some lanes very deteriorated which is difficult pulling over for cars to pass.
- The pavements are in a dreadful state in places causing people with walking aids to walk in road.
- The quality of some of the roadworks has been poor, e.g. on the A37 the turn into the village is already breaking up.

**Can you help with plans to collect evidence, lobby for change, etc?
Maybe join Speedwatch and contribute to Parish Council?**



Young People

A Running Track
or Running
Club?

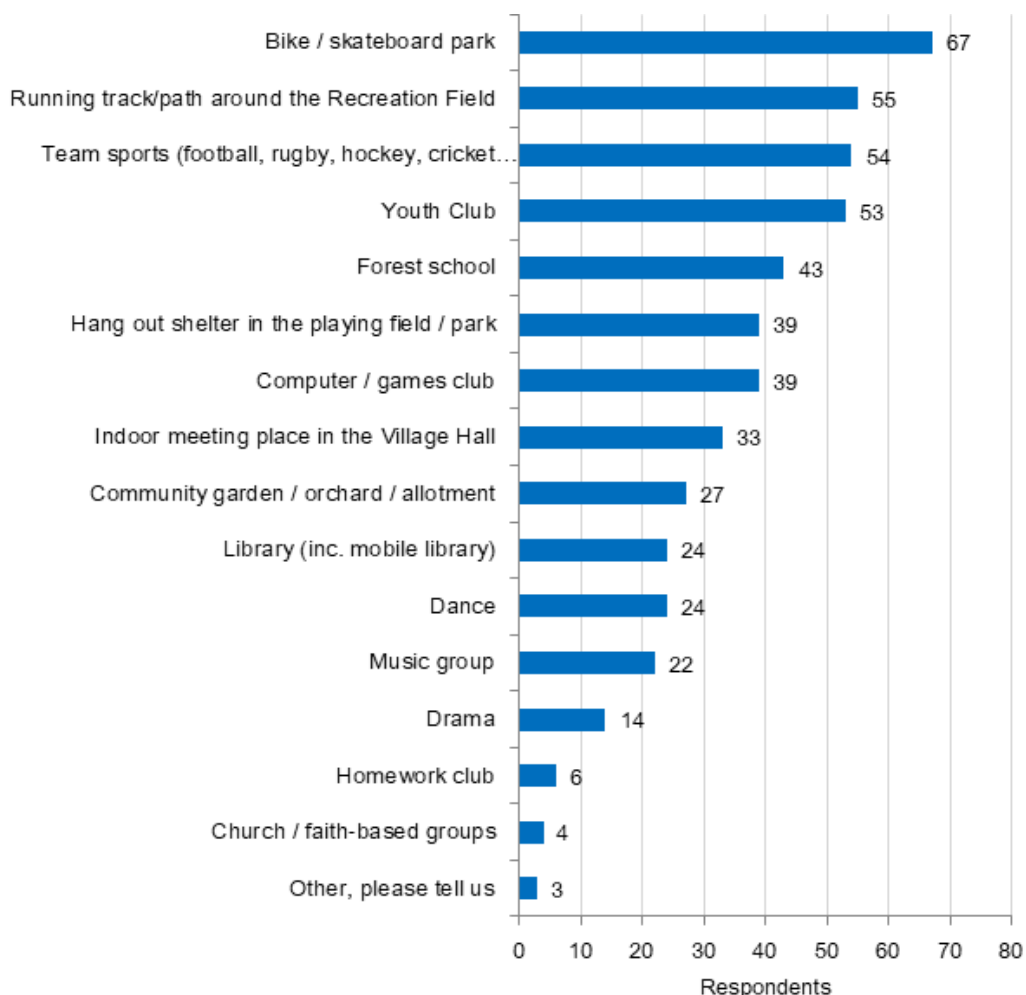
Youth Club?

Team Sports?

A Hang Out
Shelter?

Forest
School?

Are your needs being met?



These suggestions have been put forward!
What would you like to do? The ball is in your court!
Be creative, get a group together and make proposals to
the Village Hall Committee who can help and advise!



Local Environment

Footpaths,
Bridleways

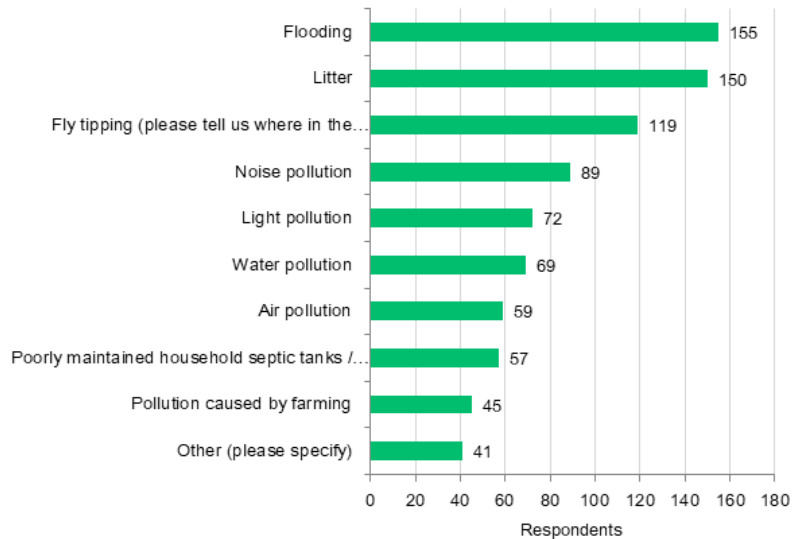
Flooding, Litter
& Flytipping

Signage

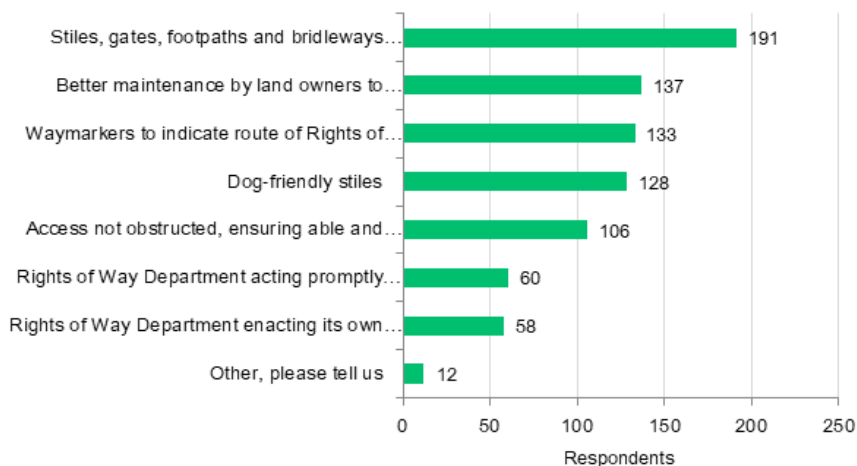
Walkers with
multiple dogs

Disabled
Access

Issues you felt affect your Local Environment



What would enhance your walks in the countryside?



Would you like to be a footpath monitor?

Join the team and help everyone enjoy the environment!

Parish Council & Village Hall Committee can advise and help!



Communication and Connectivity

How do you hear about events?

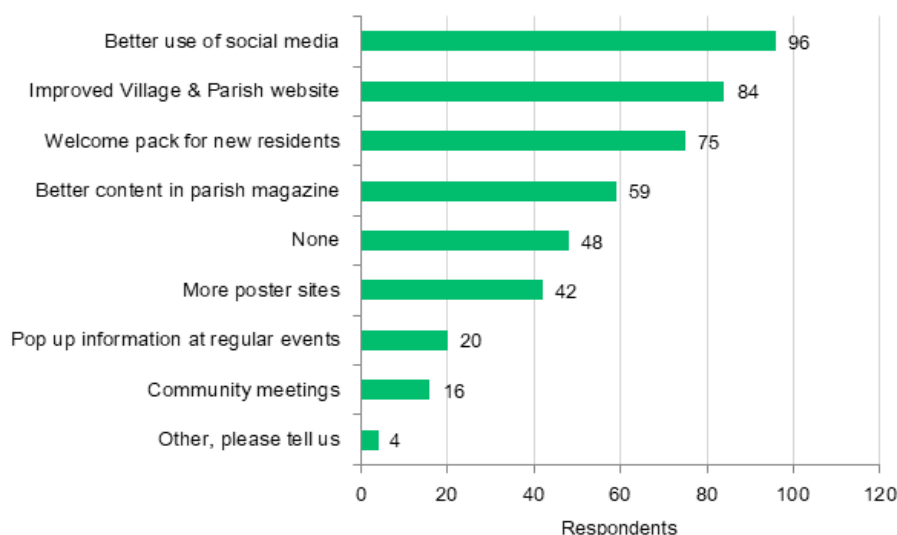
Do you feel included?

Involving all ages

Awareness of activities on offer?

IT for older

Ways to include and connect everyone?



Responses show a need for:

- Better use of social media
- The village/parish website
- A welcome pack for new residents would be useful

Other comments included:

- Bigger notice boards are desirable
- An E-magazine would help
- The existence of the Village & Parish website needs to promoting
- More advance notice of event dates would be appreciated

**Do you have marketing or IT skills and would like to help?
Contact the Village Hall Committee and/or Parish Council!**



Climate Change and Environment

Conservation
Group

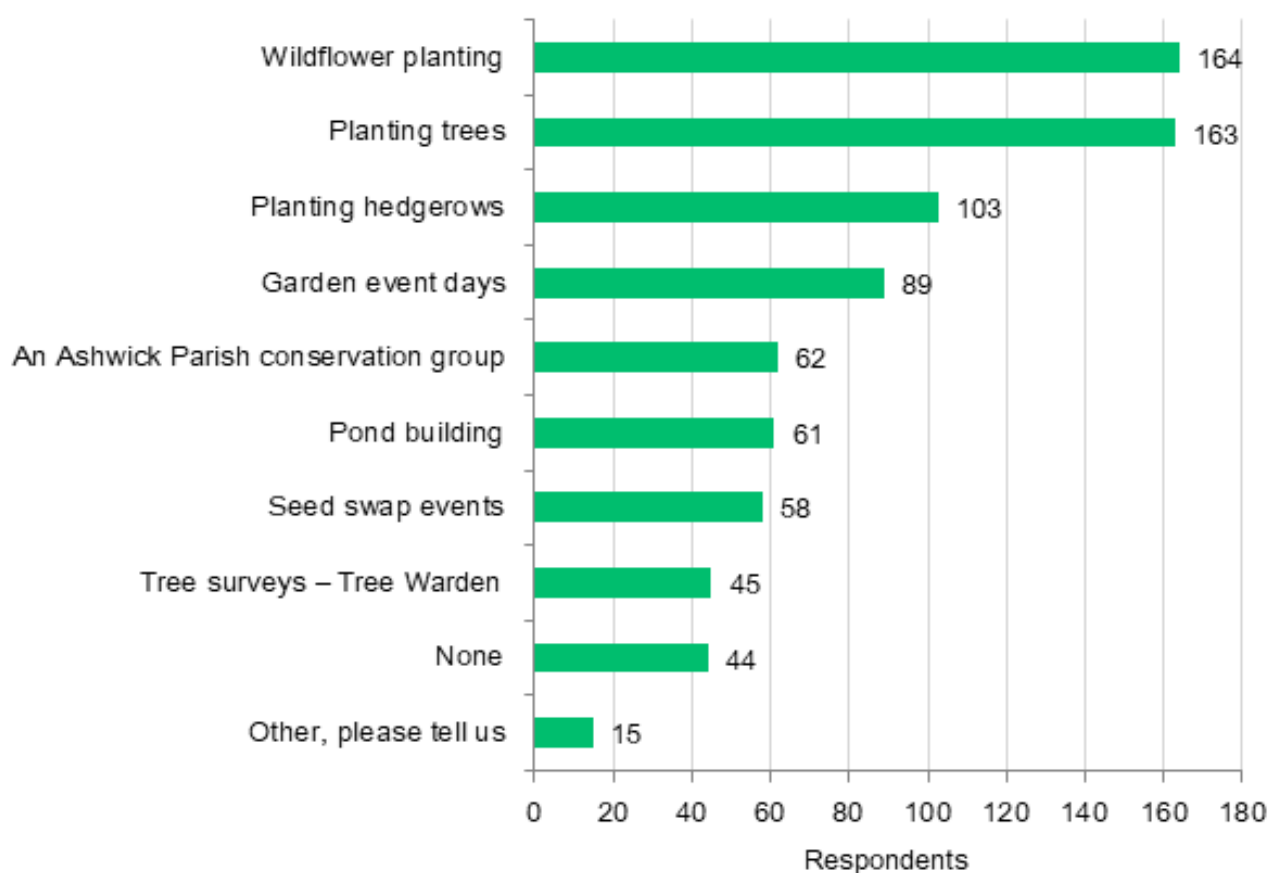
Wildflower
Planting

Seed Swaps?

Garden Event
Days

Tree
Planting

**You've given us ideas of what you
would like to encourage**



What is your passion? Get a group together, come and talk to the Village Hall Committee and Parish Council about where things could happen and find what support may be available, etc.



Community Services

Leisure

Facilities you use and enjoy

Public toilets

Defibrillator Training?

First Aid

Walking and Cycling

New activities suggested in the Survey

- A choir group
- Art and craft classes, crochet, drawing, painting
- Cooking classes and demos
- Sharing skills - suggest?
- First Aid in the home
- Baby & Toddler groups
- Club to bring elderly and lonely people together to chat
- Computer/technology lessons for the elderly
- Fitness classes
- Library of things. Two possibilities: toys for children to borrow; tools for adults (e.g. power tools, scaffolding tower)
- Proms in the Park - bring your own food, drink etc. minimal charge
- Car Boot Sales on the Rec
- Swap Shop, Repair Shop

Do you like to socialise in a group with similar interests?

Have you friends that would like to join you, are you looking for a place to meet and develop your interests, learn new arts, crafts and skills, share your worries, or simply to chat?

Check activities at the Village Hall, speak with the Village Hall Committee which is keen to support clubs and group activities, including new initiatives and ideas on start-up funding.

Health & Wellbeing

Is the existing support enough?

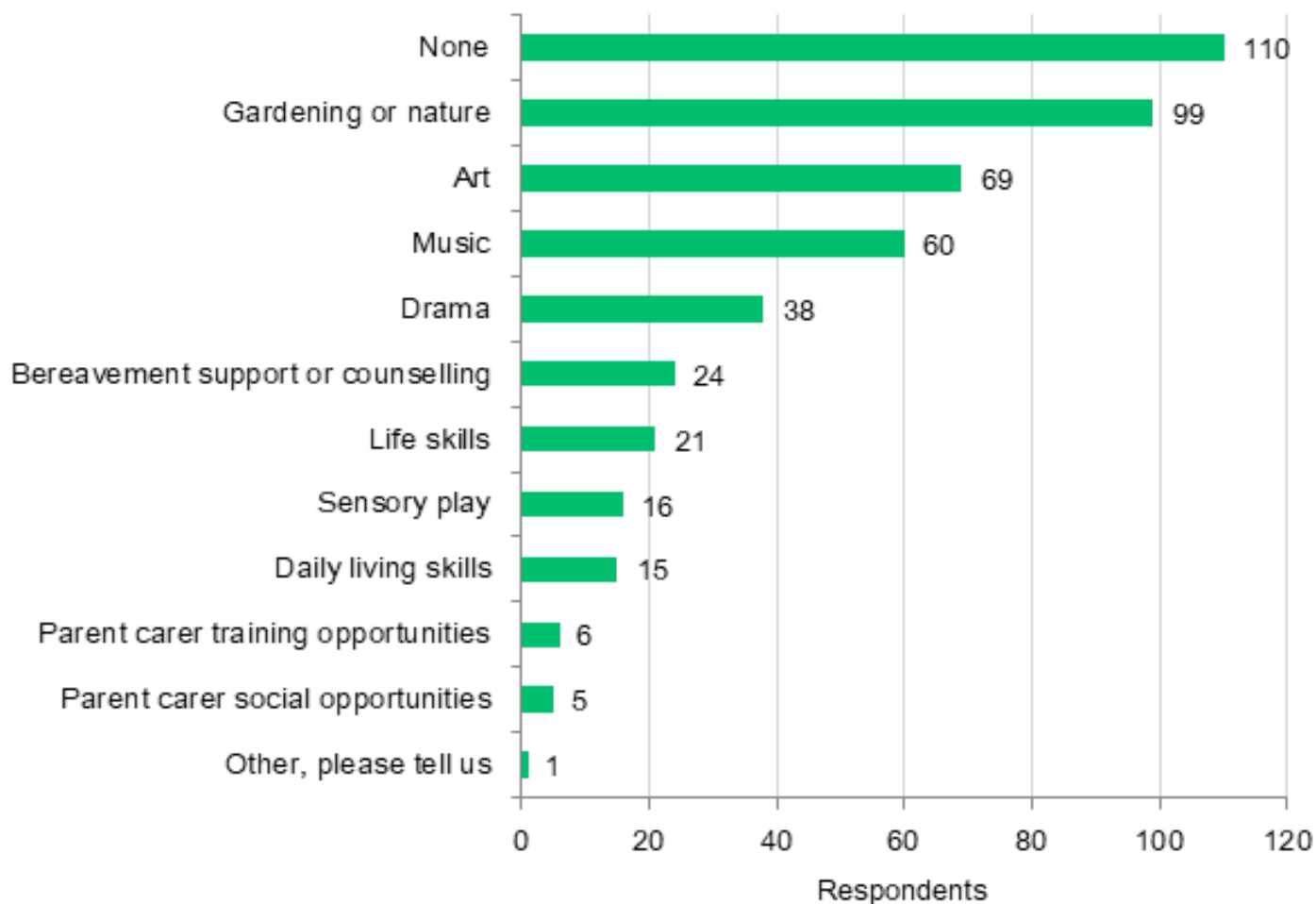
Mental Health support?

Care for the elderly?

Home help?

Life Skills?

Would you, or someone in your household, use or attend any of the following health and well-being inclusive activities or therapies?



The Survey results indicated that, on the whole, we are a pretty healthy Community but some of us derive pleasure from more sedentary forms of leisure and relaxation. Parish Council, the Village Hall Committee and Patient Participation Group are keen to support initiatives that contribute to the Health and Wellbeing of our Community.