



**Local People.
Local Decisions.
Local Future.**



Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan Consultation Survey 2019 Results

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Results from Consultation Survey 2019

Executive Summary

A group of local volunteers have come together to formulate a plan for the future of Finchampstead.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan will be used to guide Wokingham Borough Council on how the residents of Finchampstead wish to see the area develop to meet the increasing need for housing, while preserving access to the Countryside and maintaining Green Spaces.

As part of this, a questionnaire was circulated to determine the views of Finchampstead residents on a number of topics including Housing, Green Spaces, Economic Regeneration, and Transport.

Almost a thousand responses were received. This paper presents the results from that survey.

- The central vision that, *while housing was needed to meet a growing population it should not encroach on the semi-rural nature of Finchampstead*, received overwhelming support.
- *The preservation of Green Space and the wish to maintain green Gaps between distinct settlements* was seen as paramount, with the most important area identified to be preserved being around Sand Martins, the subject of a recent planning application.
- The single most attractive feature about living in Finchampstead was stated as being *the proximity of Green Spaces and the Countryside*.
- As to where future housing should be built, *the overwhelmingly preference was for this to be on Brownfield sites*, while building on Greenfield sites was almost totally rejected.
- When asked to choose the single most important thing that would improve the quality of life in Finchampstead, *'Reducing Traffic'* was rated as the highest.
- Because of the semi-rural location, it was not surprising that almost everyone used their car daily. There was little use of public transport, driven in part by people living in semi-rural locations and the infrequent bus services.
- The objective of *encouraging planned economic regeneration* was well supported, with the preference being for new enterprise to be located on Brownfield sites, and on existing Business Estates.

Key Findings are identified, with detailed Results presented graphically, later in this paper.

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Introduction

The Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) will form part of the Local Authority development plan and is the most powerful tool the Parish has ever had for influencing what development takes place.

It is the best way to safeguard the area from speculative and unplanned development and to agree a set of planning policies for the area, which are then used to decide whether or not to approve planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is written by the local community, the people who know and love the area, rather than the Local Planning Authority

An early task of our project team has been to use their knowledge and experience of Finchampstead to develop a Vision for the neighbourhood, and a number of Objectives that we think reflect what you and our community want and need.

Residents of the Parish were invited to complete a questionnaire to test their agreement of the proposed Vision and Objectives, and give feedback to influence policies and shape the NDP.

Once confirmed, the Vision and Objectives will then be used to draw up specific Planning Policies for the area.

This document reports on the results from those questionnaires.

Methodology

A trial run was carried out in September, by handing out the survey to a limited number of people. As well as completing the questionnaire, they were also invited to make comments on its content and format. Comments received were then incorporated into the questionnaire.

Following the distribution of a leaflet to raise awareness of the NDP, the questionnaire was delivered to every household in the Parish of Finchampstead (over 5,000 homes) during October 2019, and it was also hosted online on Survey Monkey, with a web link for those wishing to complete it online. If they wished, respondents could include their postcode, to ensure that all areas of the parish were represented, but otherwise all responses were anonymous.

A total of 993 surveys were completed, of which 39% were filled in online via Survey Monkey.

The results show that all age groups were represented in the responses, with the age distribution broadly following the age distribution taken from the 2011 Census for the Parish, but with a slight weighting in favour of older residents. This is not untypical of this type of Survey.

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Key Findings

Vision

Our vision is to embrace the need for change and to meet the expanding needs of a growing population whilst protecting those important things that have attracted generations of people to choose Finchampstead as a place to live and raise their families.

There was a high level of support with 85% agreeing with the Neighbourhood Development Plan Vision. Of the people disagreeing, the main reasons cited were that there was already too much housing and too much traffic.

Distinct Settlements

We will ensure that the identity of the distinct settlements that make up Finchampstead Parish will be protected so residents will be able to continue to enjoy life in a pleasant, well-served, semi-rural environment.

This objective received overwhelming support with 93% in favour. Of the few voting No the main reasons cited was that it was not achievable, or was already too late.

When asked where they lived, most people (over three quarters) stated Finchampstead, followed by Wokingham, Crowthorne and Finchampstead Village.

When asked what is most important in making Finchampstead an attractive place to live, an overwhelming number (91%) identified ‘Proximity of green spaces and countryside’ with ‘Safety and security’ being next at 47%.

Housing, Transport Links, Access to Shops, Local Schools, Community Spirit, and Leisure Facilities were also selected by approximately one in four people.

When asked for the single most important thing to improve the quality of life in Finchampstead the responses were varied but *Traffic Calming* was highest, listed by one in four, with *Public Transport, Limits on Housing* and *Improved Infrastructure* identified by one in six.

Three out of four people identified Green Spaces that they would particularly like to see preserved, with a common response being ‘All of Them’.

These Green Spaces identified on the Survey are listed in Q6 Results, later in the document.

The most commonly identified Green Space to be preserved was between the Think Ford showrooms and California Crossroads, the subject of the recently rejected planning application at Sand Martins.

It was noted that some areas identified in the survey are outside the Parish boundaries (e.g. Rooks Nest and Woodcray) and so are unfortunately not within the scope of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Housing

Appropriate housing development to meet the needs of a growing population will need to be accommodated in appropriate locations, which does not encroach on the overall vision of a semi-rural environment with green spaces between distinct settlements. Finchampstead will offer an attractive home for all age groups, but we recognise that housing for retired people, young families and first-time buyers may need to be prioritised so as to maintain a vibrant community of both younger and older residents

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Almost three quarters of people (71%) agreed with this objective. The main reason for those not in favour were that the area was developed enough already.

Over half of the people (55%) wished to prioritise homes for *Young Families/Starter homes*, with homes for *Established Families* not far behind at 42%. One in three were in favour of homes for Retired People and Elderly Care.

Regarding the location of new homes, three quarters of people wished to see them built on previously developed (Brownfield) land, with only one in four in favour of infilling amongst existing houses. Very few (4%) were in favour of extending existing developments onto adjacent Greenfield Sites.

The question was put as to whether people would support low rise housing up to three storeys in order to meet the need for affordable housing. Only one in two people supported this idea, with the main objection being that it would be out of character for the area.

Green Spaces and Recreational Facilities

We will aim to offer recreational spaces where local people and visitors can enjoy and appreciate the countryside. Specifically, the 'Crown Jewels' of the Parish such as Simons Wood, The Ridges, Blackwater Valley, California Country Park and others will continue to be protected for future generations to enjoy.

Again, this objective received overwhelming support with 92% in favour. Of the few voting No the main concern was that these locations would be overdeveloped, with large car parks and tarmac paths.

Of the areas listed all were highly valued with all the locations on average scoring 5 or higher out of 6. California Country Park was the most favoured with a score of 5.4

People were asked how often they visited the FBC, Memorial Hall, Ratepayers Hall and Waverley Playing Fields.

At first glance, the responses appeared to show that these were not visited that often, with a large number never visiting, or only very occasionally. However it should be remembered that the Halls especially are mainly used for rental by community groups and therefore closed when not booked. The halls are virtually fully booked throughout the day, although less so on weekends. Therefore it is less likely that many of the community would go to these halls unless they are booked into one of the many varied classes.

The responses are listed in Q13 Results, later in the document.

Managing Car Usage

We recognise that Finchampstead will be impacted by current plans for the transport infrastructure, and we will aim, where possible, to confine any traffic growth to the planned/recognised arteries through the Parish. We will aim to reduce car usage locally through better opportunities for other types of travel such as cycle paths and a bike friendly environment, greenways, and better public transport where possible.

This objective had a high level of support with 81% in favour. Of those not agreeing, the commonest reason was that it would not be possible to achieve. Other comments made were that people still needed their cars and that better traffic infrastructure was needed.

People were asked how often they used different means of transport. Not surprisingly almost all (95%) used their car daily or weekly. More than half cycled occasionally or more frequently, and more than three out of four people walked at least weekly.

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The bus had much lower regular use with only 1% using it daily, while the train had slightly better usage, with 4% of daily users.

The responses are listed in Q15 Results.

The question was asked as to whether more Cycle Paths were needed. Almost two thirds of respondents said Yes, and identified that a route into Wokingham was highly desirable. Nine Mile Ride also featured high on requested routes.

Desirable Cycle routes identified on the Survey are listed in Q16 Results, later in the document.

A similar question was asked as to whether more Walking Paths were needed. Almost half of respondents said Yes, but there were fewer suggestions as to where they should be.

Desirable Walking Path routes identified on the Survey are listed in Q17 Results.

The question was asked as to whether more Public Transport was needed. Over half said Yes, and identified that it should be more frequent or more affordable. The most requested route was from Finchampstead Village into Wokingham.

Desirable bus routes identified on the Survey are listed in Q18 Results.

Economic Regeneration

We will welcome and encourage planned economic regeneration including a range of commercial enterprise, light industry, small local retailing and workspace for small modern businesses. This will aim to encourage a growing population of home workers and business start-ups.

This objective also had a high level of support with 82% in favour. Of those not agreeing, the commonest reason was that there was already sufficient in the area. Other comments made were that it would encourage more traffic and that it was inappropriate for a semi-rural area.

When asked if Finchampstead would benefit from offering more local employment opportunities four out of five people said Yes. Main reasons against were the desire to keep Finchampstead semi-rural and that there was already sufficient in the area.

When asked what sort of businesses should be encouraged, *Small Local Retail* was the most favoured closely followed by *Small Business Start-ups* and *Artisan Crafts*.

Office based Enterprise, High-Tech, Serviced Offices, Light Industry and Services all received considerable support as well.

Further detail is shown in Q21 Results

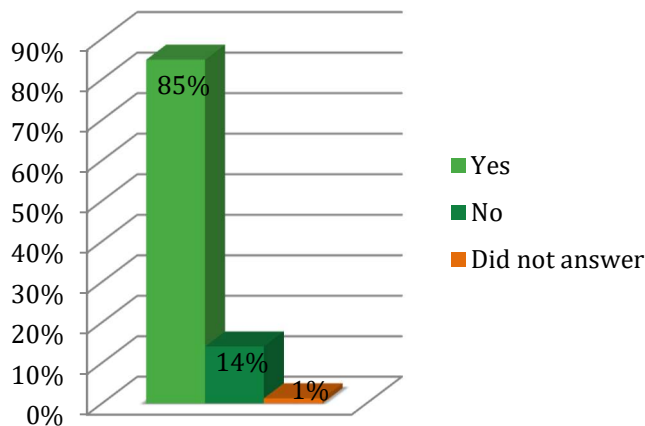
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Results

Q1 Vision

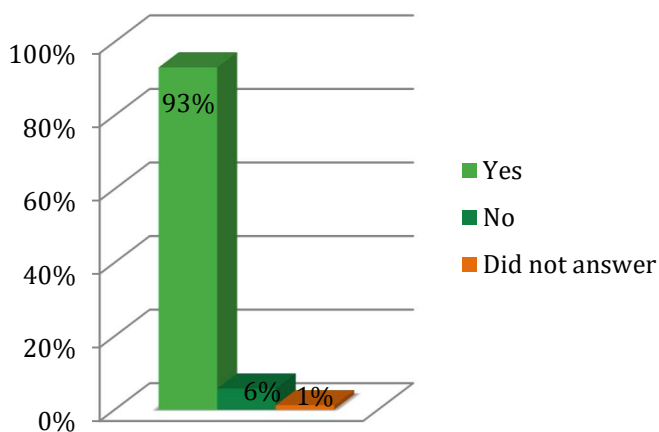
To embrace the need for change and to meet the expanding needs of a growing population whilst protecting those important things that have attracted generations of people to choose Finchampstead as a place to live and raise their families. Do you agree with this Vision?



Of the 'No' responses, 'too much housing already' (7%) was the most commonly cited reason, followed by 'too much traffic' (4%).

Q2 Distinct Settlements

We will ensure that the identity of the distinct settlements that make up Finchampstead Parish will be protected so residents will be able to continue to enjoy life in a pleasant, well-served, semi-rural environment. Do you agree with this Objective?



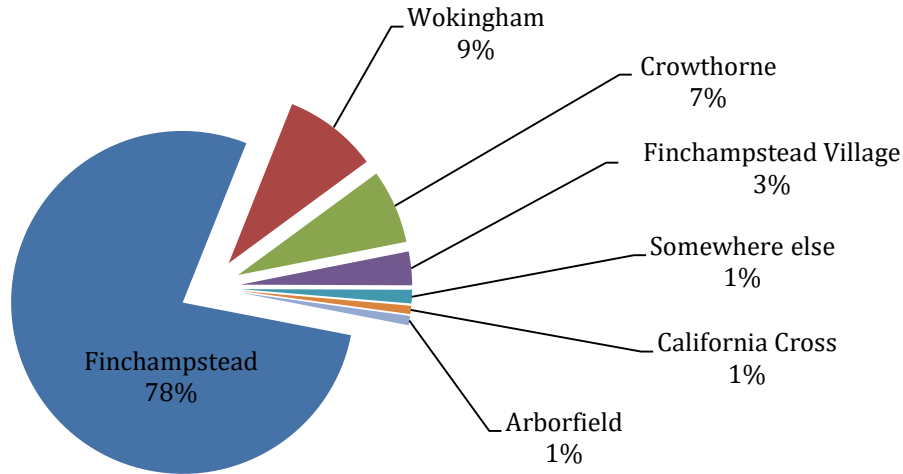
Of the 'No' responses, the main reasons cited were 'The objective is not achievable' and 'Distinct settlements no longer exist - Finchampstead is no longer semi-rural'.

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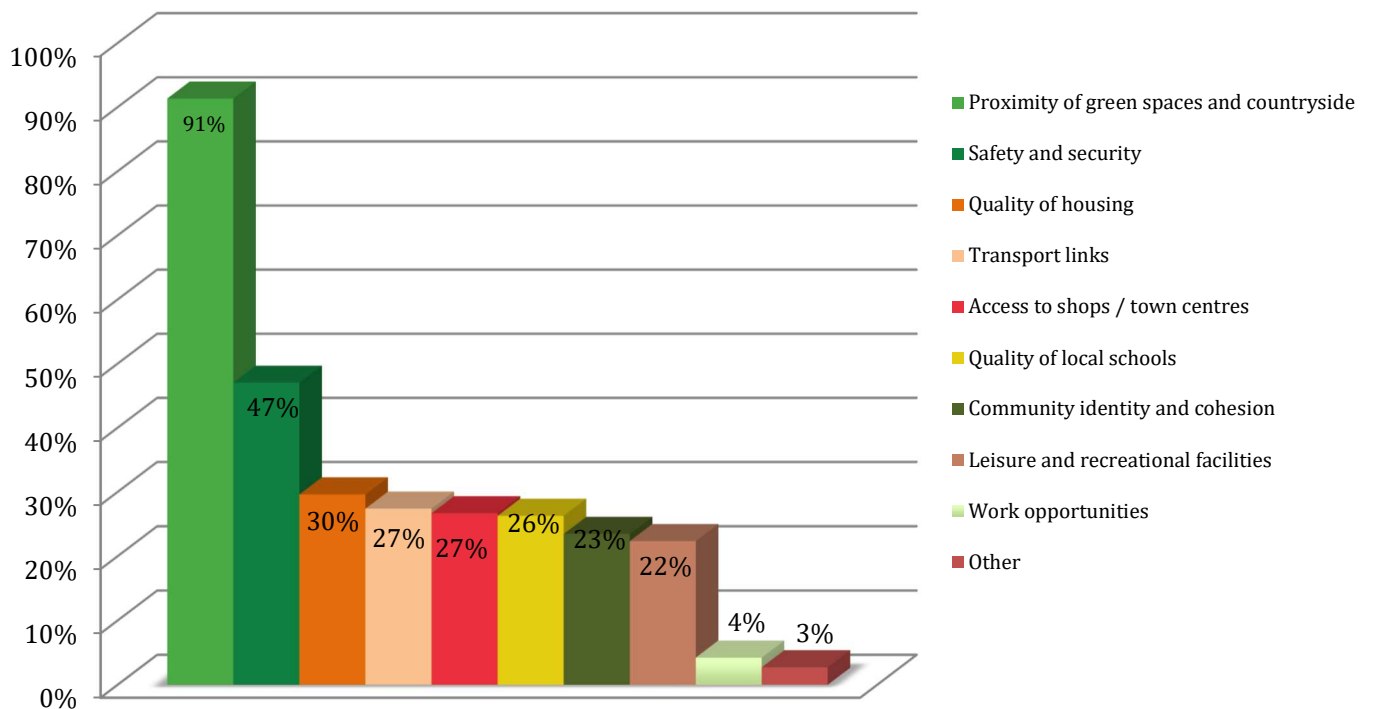
Q3 Where Do You Live

The Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan could identify critical 'gap' green spaces which separate distinct settlements and protect these gaps to prevent communities becoming merged together. When asked 'where do you live', how do you answer?



Q4 An Attractive Place to Live

What is most important in making Finchampstead an attractive place to live?



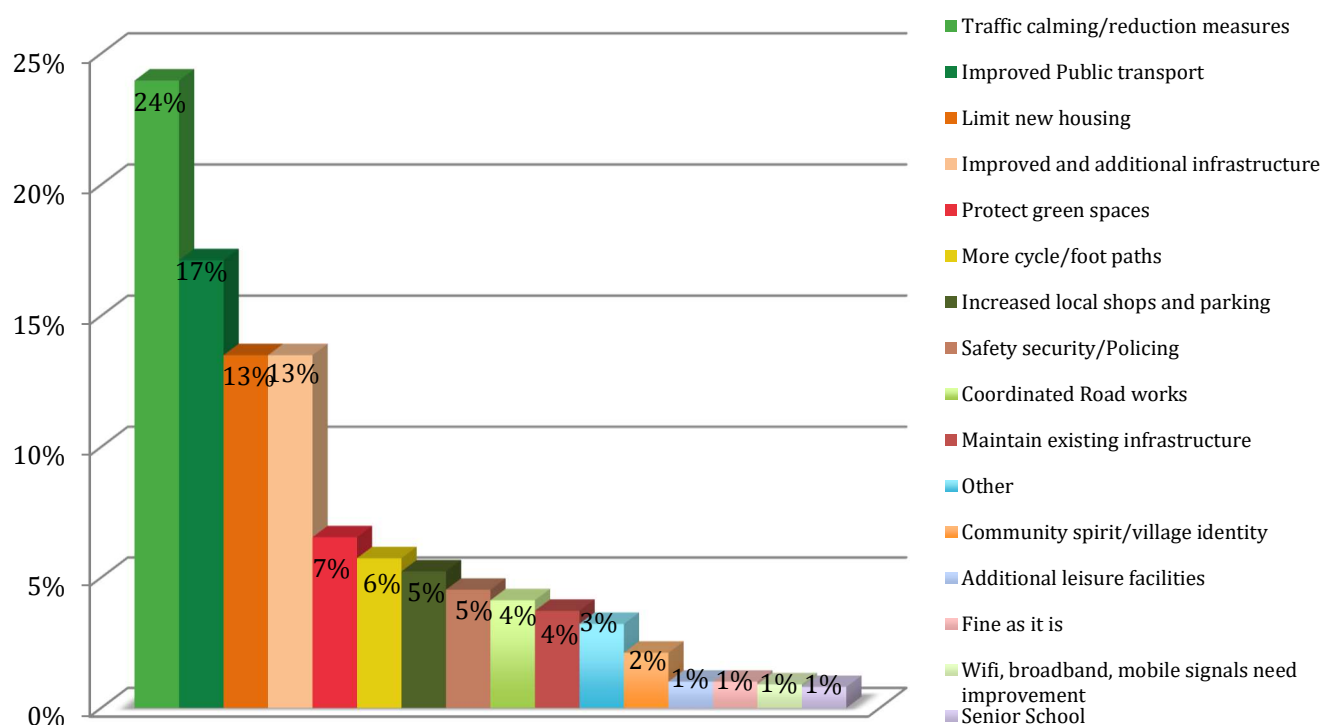
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Q5 Improving the Quality of Life

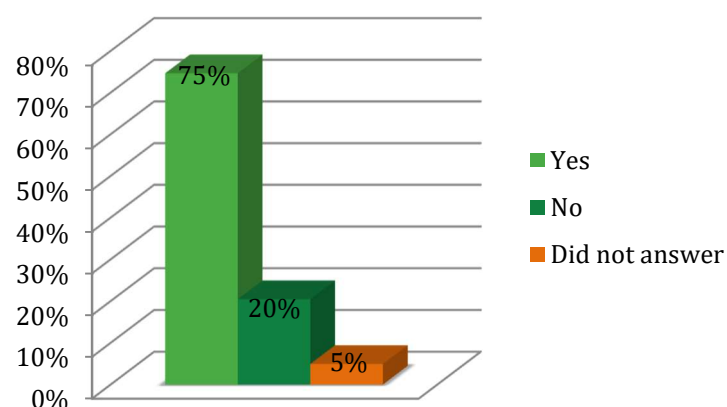
In your opinion what is the single most important thing that needs to be better to improve the quality of life in Finchampstead?

89% of respondents answered this question, with a wide variety of concerns, the single biggest recurring theme was traffic and road-works, with public transport, and limitation of housing, and infrastructure all scoring highly.



Q6 Maintaining Green Gaps

Following the Planning Inspector's refusal to allow building development in the Sand Martins green space, are there other key local green spaces between communities which you would wish to preserve?



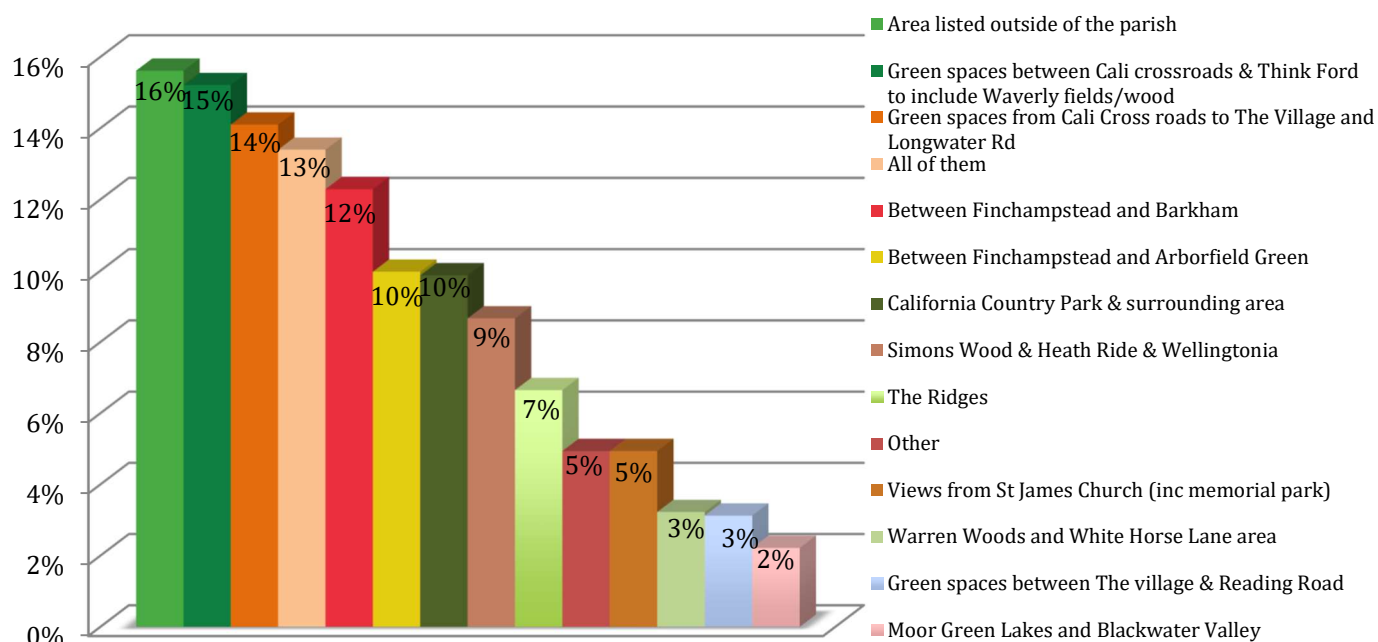
75% of respondents answered yes to this question, with a wide variety of location listed, including some that are outside of the parish boundaries (e.g. Rooks Nest, Woodcraiy).

12% replied 'All of them'.

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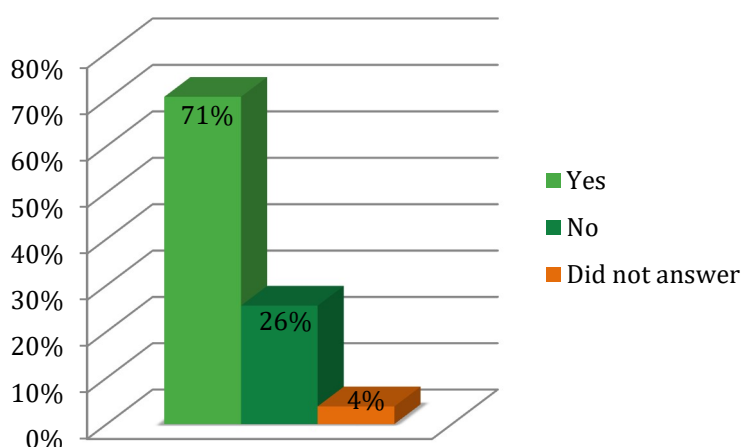
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Excluding the Out of Parish areas, the highest listed green space to be preserved was between Think Ford and California Crossroads.



Q7 Housing

Appropriate housing development to meet the needs of a growing population will need to be accommodated in appropriate locations, which does not encroach on the overall vision of a semi-rural environment with green spaces between distinct settlements. Finchampstead will offer an attractive home for all age groups, but we recognise that housing for retired people, young families and first-time buyers may need to be prioritised so as to maintain a vibrant community of both younger and older residents: Do you agree with this objective?



Of the 'No' responses, the main reason cited (13%) was that 'the area is already developed enough'

Reasons for disagreeing:

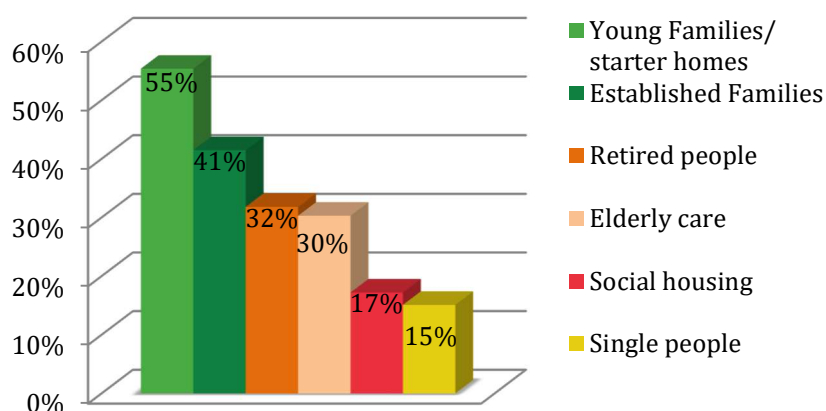
Developed enough already	13%
Disagree with wording or priorities as stated	7%
Insufficient infrastructure	6%
Would lose semi-rural/ village feel	3%
Affordable housing v profiteering	1%

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Q8 Housing Priority

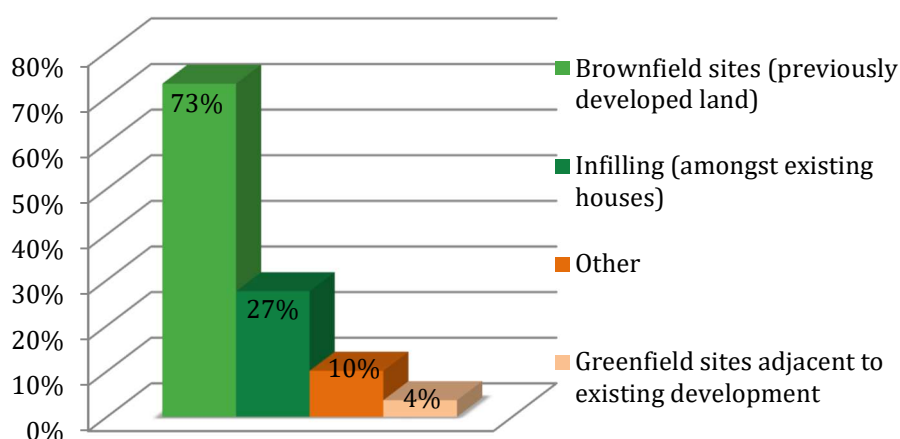
In terms of priority, whose housing needs should we be seeking to promote in the Neighbourhood Plan?



The highest scoring category was Young families/ Starter homes at 55%, with established families second on 41%.

Q9 Housing Location

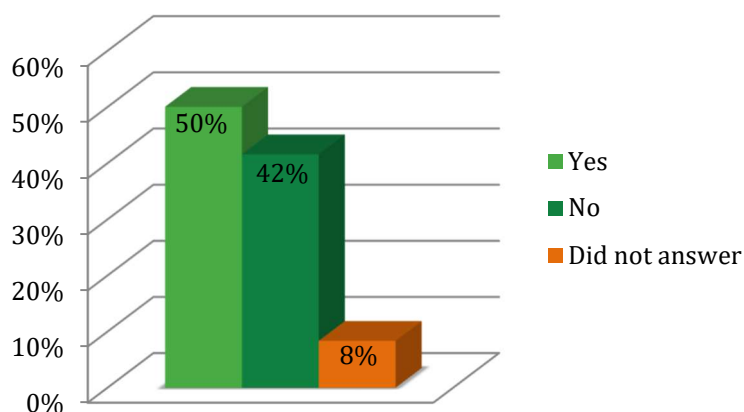
Are there any locations that you think would be suitable for new houses?



Brownfield sites scored highest with 73%, and Infilling was less popular at 27%. Greenfield sites scored low.

Q10 Affordable Housing

Would you support low-rise (up to three storeys) housing to meet the need for affordable housing in the parish in appropriate locations?



50% of respondents would support this, with 42% being against, and 8% not answering.

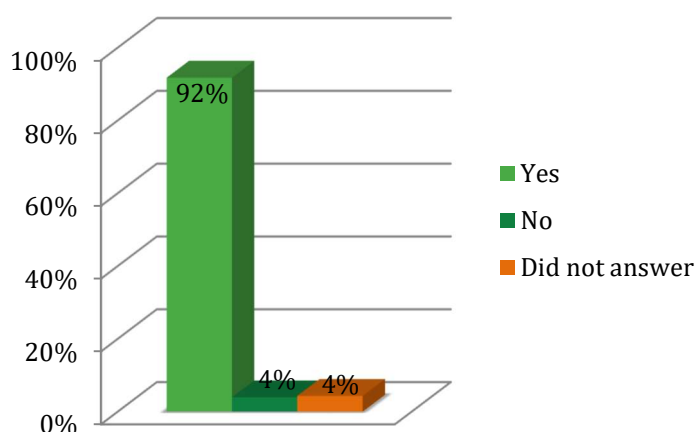
The main reason given for not having 3 storeys was that it would be out of character for the area.

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Q11 Preserving Green Spaces

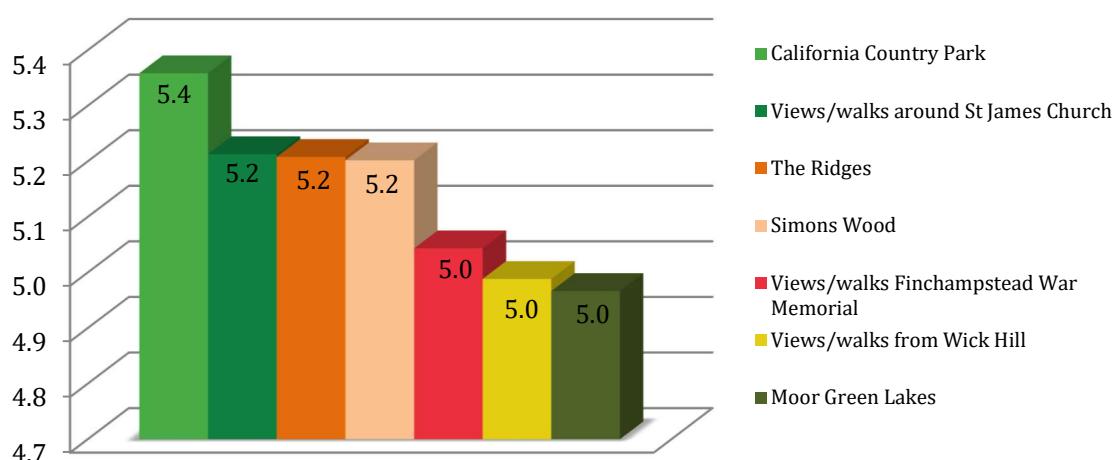
We will aim to offer recreational spaces where local people and visitors can enjoy and appreciate the countryside. Specifically, the 'Crown Jewels' of the Parish such as Simons Wood, The Ridges, Blackwater Valley, California Country Park and others will continue to be protected for future generations to enjoy. Do you agree with this Objective?



Of the few No responses, the main concern was overdevelopment of these locations with overlarge car parks, tarmac paths, etc.

Q12 Importance of Green Spaces to the Quality of Life

The table shows the weighted average score for seven specified locations in Finchampstead. Responses indicated that generally all of the areas identified in the survey are highly valued by Finchampstead residents, with all location scoring 5 or higher out of 6



Q13 Use of Facilities

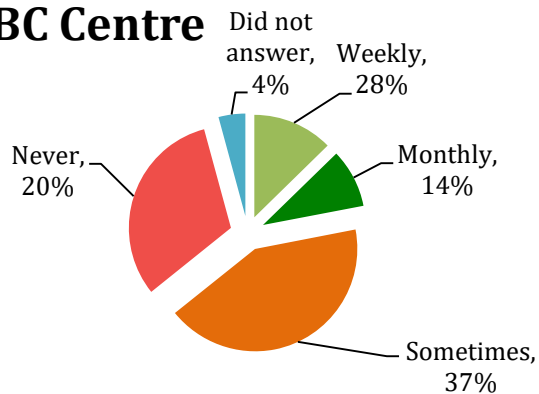
People were asked how often they visited some of the facilities in the Parish.

At first glance, the responses appeared to show that they were not visited that often. However it should be remembered that the halls especially are mainly used for rental by community groups and therefore closed when not booked. The halls are virtually fully booked throughout the day, although less so on weekends. Therefore it is less likely that a many of the community would go to these halls unless they are booked into one of the many varied classes.

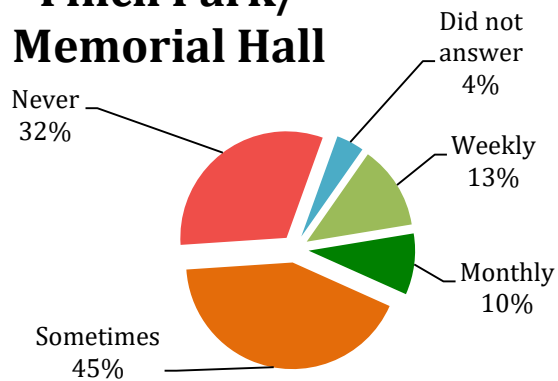
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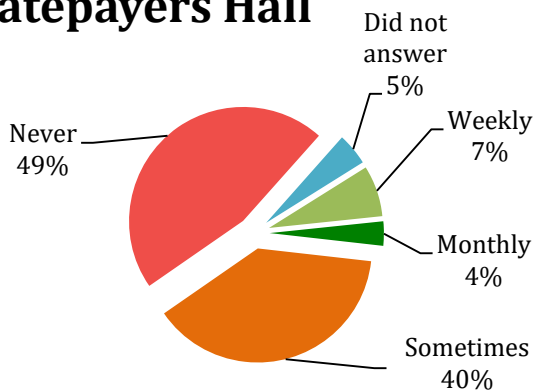
FBC Centre



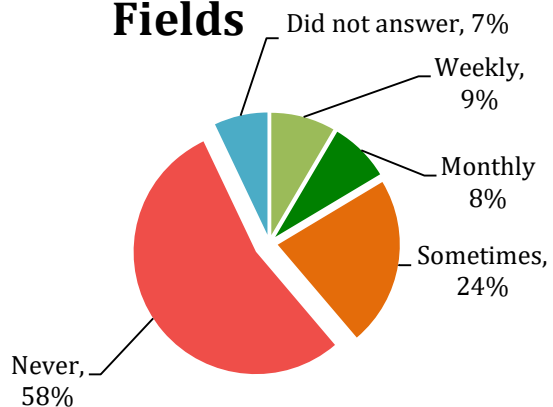
Finch Park/ Memorial Hall



California Ratepayers Hall

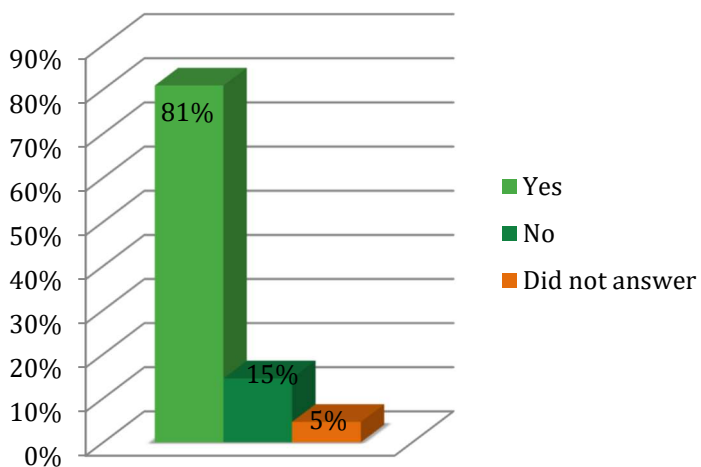


Waverley Playing Fields



Q14 Managing car usage and promoting alternatives

We recognise that Finchampstead will be impacted by current plans for the transport infrastructure, and we will aim, where possible, to confine any traffic growth to the planned/recognised arteries through the Parish. We will aim to reduce car usage locally through better opportunities for other types of travel such as cycle paths and a bike friendly environment, greenways, and better public transport where possible. Do you agree with this Objective?



Of the 'No' answers, the commonest reasons were that 'it was not possible to achieve' and that 'people needed their cars'.

Also many people answered that 'More/better roads/infrastructure/traffic management was needed'.

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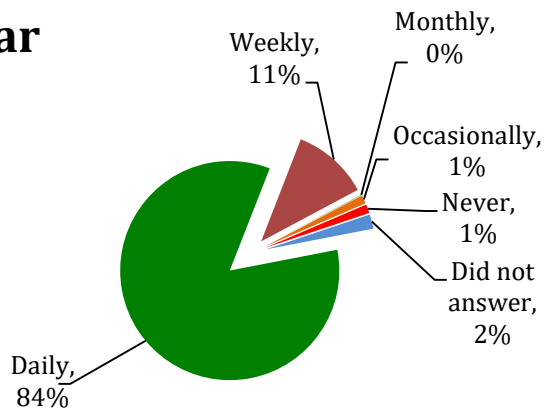
Q15 Means of Transport

People were asked how often they used different means of transport.

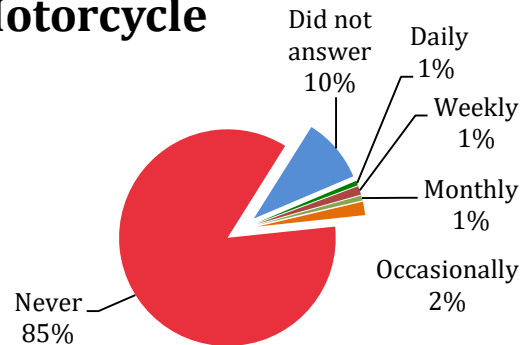
Not surprisingly 95% used their car daily or weekly. Cyclists were out and about at least once a month for 20% of respondents, with a further 21% cycling occasionally. The bus had much lower regular use with only 1% of daily users, and only 13% using weekly or monthly. The train had slightly better usage, with 4% of daily users and 30% weekly/monthly users. We had very few motorcycle users with only 5% of usage.

Walking scored high with 56% walking daily and 27% walking weekly. Only 2% never walked.

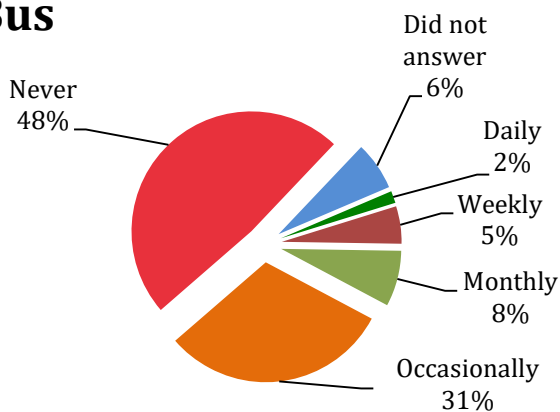
Car



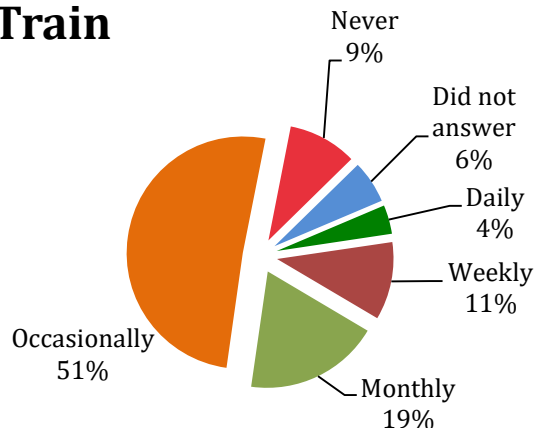
Motorcycle



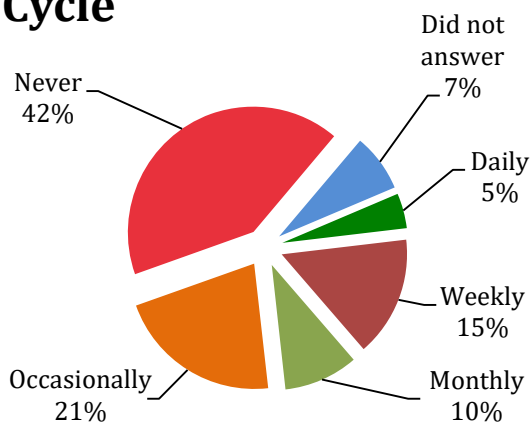
Bus



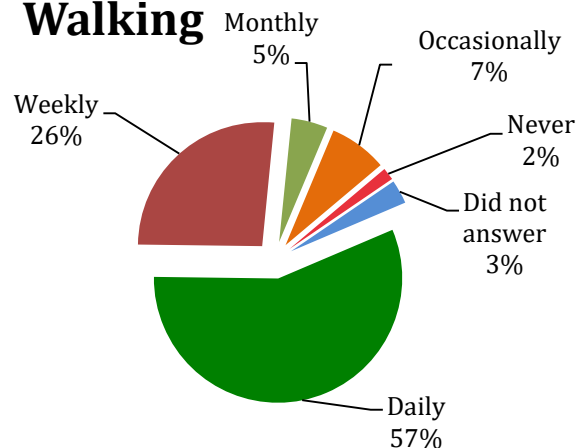
Train



Cycle



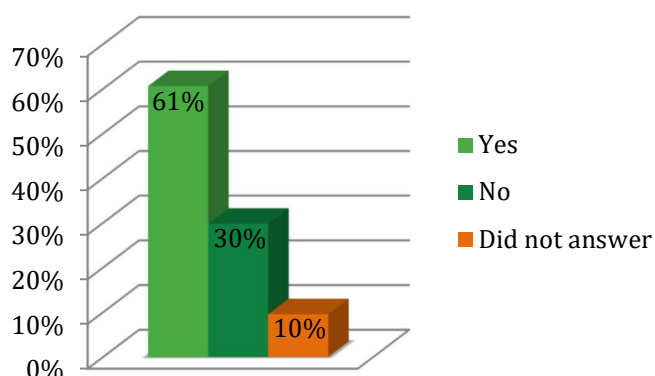
Walking



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Q16 Does Finchampstead need more cycle paths?

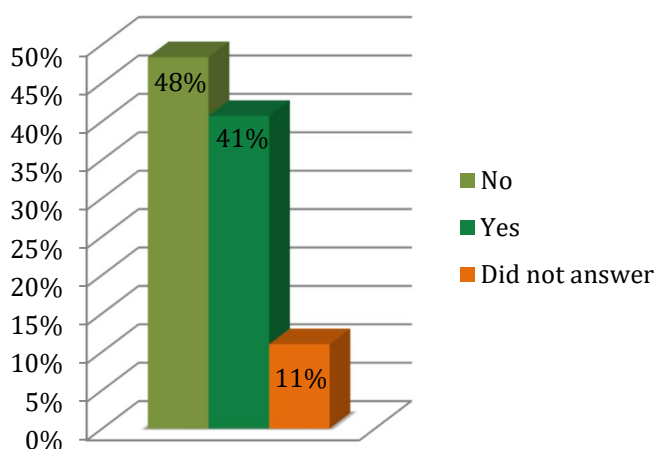


61% of respondents answered Yes, however 24% did not specify where they were needed.

The route most often mentioned was from Finchampstead to Wokingham.

Yes but no area specified	24%
To Wokingham	16%
Nine Mile Ride	10%
Finchampstead Rd from North & South	7%
To Barkham/ Barkham Ride	6%
Cali Crossroads to War Memorial/ The Village	4%
To Crowthorne	3%
Area listed outside of the parish	3%
To local schools	2%
Sandhurst & Lower Wokingham Rd	2%
Reading Rd A327	2%
The Ridges	1%
To Eversley	1%
To Arborfield	1%
To/ Around California Country Park	1%

Q17 Does Finchampstead need more walking paths?



While 48% of respondents felt there were enough walking paths, 41% answered Yes. Of these 18% did not specify where they were needed.

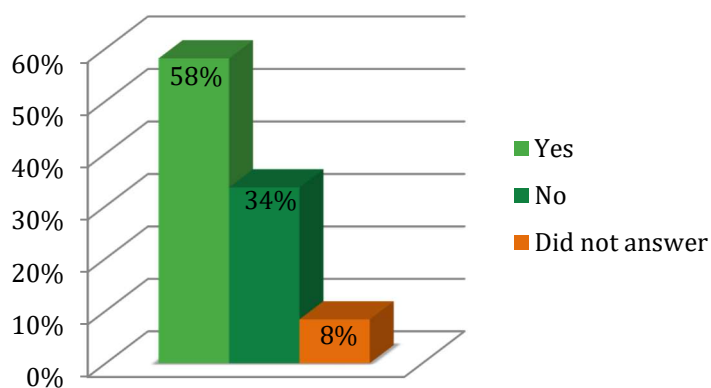
Various areas were listed with routes to Barkham being the highest at 5%.

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Yes, but no area specified	18%
To Barkham	5%
Finchampstead Surgery to War Memorial/Village	4%
Into Wokingham	2%
The Ridges to War Memorial	2%
Area listed outside of the parish	2%
Maintain existing ones better	1%
To Eversley	1%
Other	1%
A327 Reading Rd	1%
California Crossroads to the Village	1%
To Arborfield	1%

Q18 Does Finchampstead need more public transport?



58% of respondents answered yes, however 13% did not specify where they were needed.

The most common responses were around frequency and affordability (21%) with Finchampstead Village to Wokingham being the next most frequent response (20%)

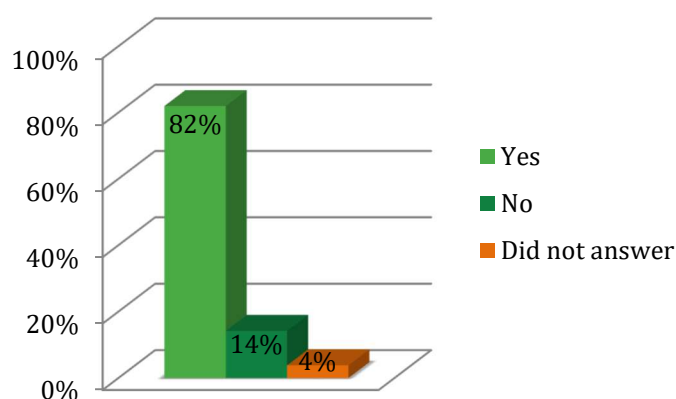
More frequent/affordable	21%
Finch Village to Wokingham/ Wokingham station	20%
Answered Yes, but not specified	13%
To Reading/ Royal Berks hospital	10%
To Crowthorne/ Crowthorne Station	6%
To Bracknell	6%
No/poor service to Village/south	5%
To Camberley/The Meadows	3%
To Trains	1%
To Yateley	1%
To Bohunt School	1%
To Barkham	1%

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Q19 Planned economic regeneration

We will welcome and encourage planned economic regeneration including a range of commercial enterprise, light industry, small local retailing and workspace for small modern businesses. This will aim to encourage a growing population of home workers and business start-ups. Do you agree with this Objective?



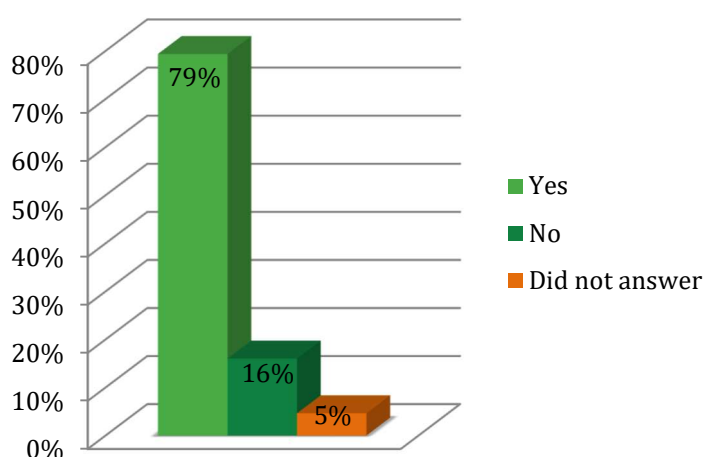
82% answered Yes to this question.

Of the No responses, the most common concerns were 'Sufficient already in the area', 'Would encourage more traffic', and 'Inappropriate for a semi-rural area'.

Sufficient already in local area	4%
Would encourage more traffic	3%
Inappropriate for a semi-rural area	2%
Want to keep Finch residential	2%
Only if in suitable/existing areas and not over developed	1%
Answered No, but no reason specified	1%
Would need better infrastructure	1%
Not needed/not important	1%

Q20 Potential Planning Policy

Would Finchampstead benefit from offering more local employment opportunities?



79% answered Yes to this question.

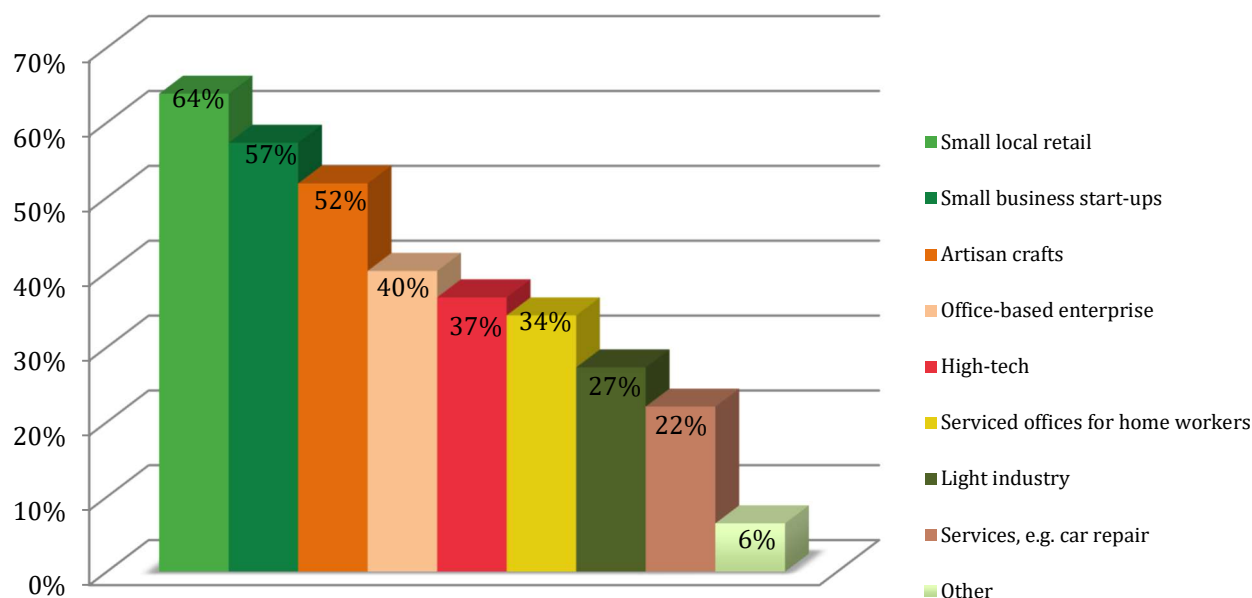
Of the No responses, the main reasons given were 'Keep Finchampstead residential/semi-rural' (6%) and 'Already sufficient in the local area' (6%)

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Results from Consultation Survey 2019

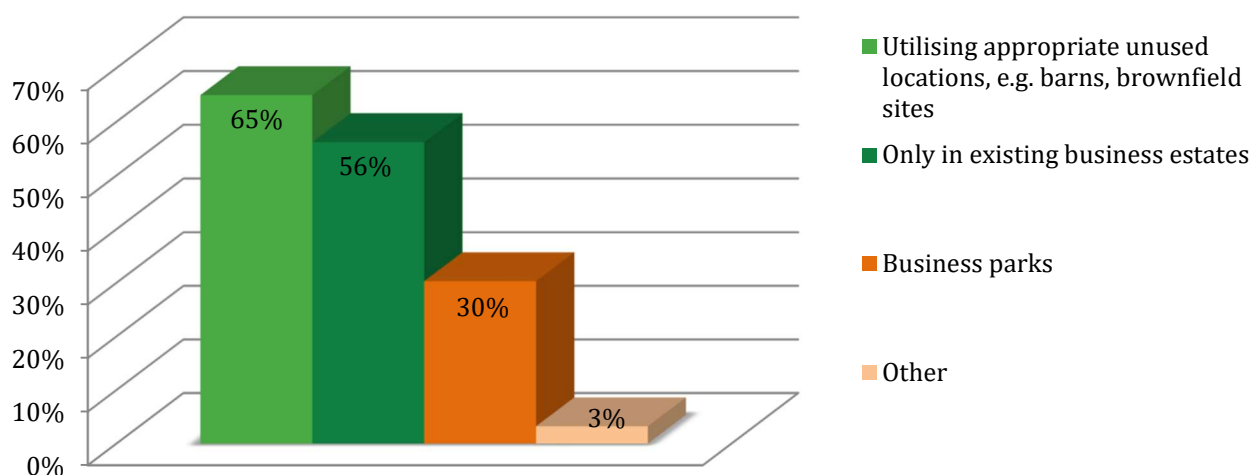
Q21 What sort of businesses should we encourage in Finchampstead?

Responses were fairly evenly spread with the three most preferred being Small local retail, small business start-ups and Artisan crafts.



Q22 Where should new business located?

All options received some support with 66% having a preference for utilising appropriate unused locations such as barns and Brownfield sites.



Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Results from Consultation Survey 2019

Q23 Further Comment on the Neighbourhood Development Plan

More than half of respondents provided further comment on completing the Survey. These fell into the broad categories listed below:

New Development & Sustainability	13%
Traffic/Speed limits/Road safety	8%
Aims of the NDP/Survey	8%
Infrastructure	5%
Green spaces	3%
California Crossroads	2%
Upkeep of Parish	1%
Policing/Safety & Security	1%
Public transport	1%
Schools	1%
Improved technology	1%
Legal status of FNDP	1%
Economic regeneration	1%

New Development & Sustainability

It was clear from the comments that many people were strongly against new development, but a number of respondents did accept that it was necessary:

'STOP BUILDING MORE HOUSES!!!'

'Make use of and modernise what already exists rather than new builds'

'There are already lots of new housing planned in the region with developments such as Arborfield. It is time that the infrastructure and services caught up with the existing developments, before anything new is built or even thought about'

'Embrace progression and development. Move away from anti-everything attitude. Welcome retail, social value & enhancement'

Traffic/Speed limits/Road safety

Many residents were in agreement over problems caused by the amount of traffic already present on local roads:

'Finchampstead needs a road plan i.e. Bypass'

'Traffic calming measures and more crossings along Nine Mile Ride needed'

'Managing the speed limit on Nine Mile Ride'

Aims of the NDP/Survey

Comments were generally supportive of the aims of the NDP and the efforts of the volunteers:

'It's a good idea to have this Plan put in place so that the wider community can have input into any future proposed plans. I applaud it'

'Impressed that there is an enthusiastic movement to direct the future of the area with well thought out proposals'

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Results from Consultation Survey 2019

'Great initiative. Let's make it happen'

Infrastructure

Residents stressed the importance of matching the infrastructure with any housing development:

'Things like Doctors Surgeries and Roads have to be looked at before we bring more population to the area'

'Ensure any developments have funding for the necessary infrastructure etc.'

'Key is to limit housing growth to sustainable levels for the local infrastructure. Improve the infrastructure appropriately or on a timely basis, to protect the vision as outlined, so that life in Finch remains as pleasant as today'

Green Spaces

As well as the responses in the earlier questions in the survey many respondents reiterated the need to preserve Green space:

'Most important thing is to keep it green. That is why we love it here.... the green spaces and footpaths'

California Crossroads

The need to maintain California Crossroads received several comments:

'We should develop the retail spaces at California crossroads to be in keeping with local needs - Bakers/ Fishmongers/Local foods'

'Redevelop Cali Crossroads to give a heart to the community'

Upkeep of the Parish

Many comments supported taking pride in the parish

'Support litter collections within the community throughout the year, to keep our area looking good (quarterly at least). Once a year is not enough. Develop pride in our area and community'.

'Maintain the footpaths for safe walking and easy use of a mobility buggy'

Policing/Safety & Security

'Get the law and order agencies to respect and engage with the residents'

Public transport

As well as the desire for better public transport already expressed in the answers to the questions, many respondents reiterated this need in their comments

'Improve the bus service to enable non drivers to keep independent.'

Schools

'Education should be our highest priority- providing breakfast clubs and after school clubs'

Improved technology

'Faster broadband is very important for remote working for professionals - this solves a load of other problems, including traffic, lack of employment opportunities, social care (home working may be the only option for people with disabilities) and social isolation'.

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Results from Consultation Survey 2019

Legal status of FNDP

'Not sure how this has any legal force or enforcement potential'

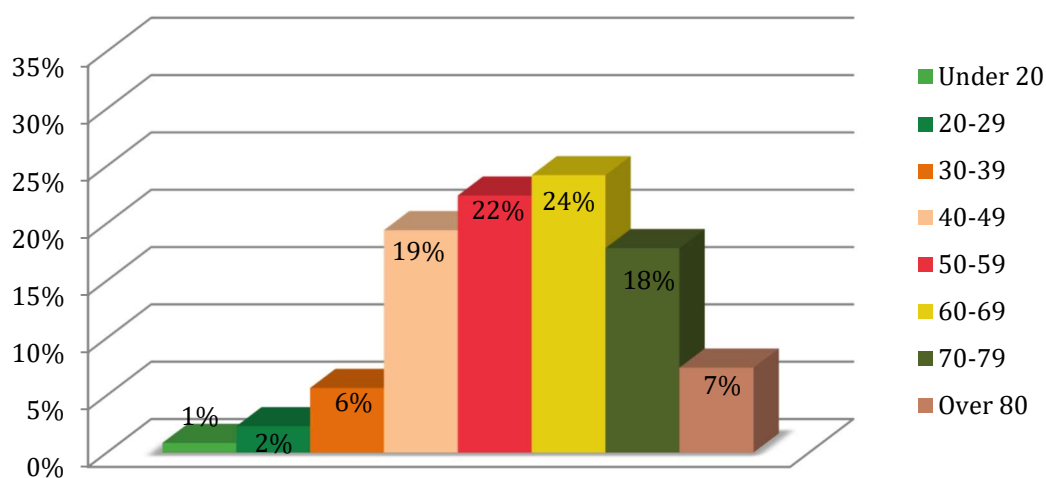
Economic regeneration

'Would leave business economic regeneration to the workings of the free market'

Q24 Age Group of People Responding to the Questionnaire

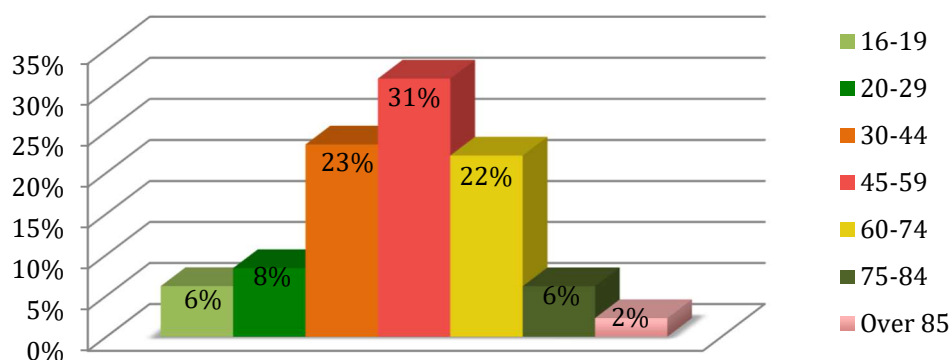
People responding to the questionnaire had the option of giving their age range. 88% of respondents did so and the distribution of age is shown below.

Survey age group



This broadly follows the age distribution taken from the 2011 Census for the Parish (below), but is slightly weighted in favour of older residents. This is not untypical of this type of Survey.

Finchampstead 2011 Census



Prepared: JA/LB/PG

Approved

(NDP Chair) Dated: December 2019



**Local People.
Local Decisions.
Local Future.**