

An evaluation of the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England

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Abstract

Neighbourhood plans (NPs), an integral part of the English planning system¹, provide communities with the opportunity to influence and shape local development. NPs are declining in popularity; existing research does not identify reasons for this but notes they lack an image of success, complicating assessment of their effectiveness.

This study, involving English town and parish councils², evaluated the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning, focusing on three primary elements identified through a literature review; community engagement, role of the local planning authority (LPA) and planning policies. The study was conducted online using Google Forms. There were 75 responses, representing 2.5% of the total, (2965 local councils are undertaking/have completed a NP), (Locality 2023).

The research revealed a wide range of practices, providing up to date, empirical evidence about neighbourhood planning. In evaluating the three primary elements, this research aligned with the literature review, concluding that there are currently no clear indicators or means of measuring neighbourhood planning effectiveness. Whilst the NP process is legislated, it lacks a prescribed process or methodology leading to variability and confusion amongst participants.

Whilst findings are inconclusive, this research has identified trends and themes for further research. Future research on community engagement could focus on the role and purpose of the engagement, aiming to define and recommend community engagement standards. Additional research on the role of the LPA could define their responsibilities and obligations, establishing minimum standards of support. Further research on policies could interrogate why policies were changed, attempting to correlate a relationship between changes and NP effectiveness. Future research should include all qualifying bodies (e.g., community groups, business areas and others as defined in legislation), not just local councils.

¹ From this point forward, 'the planning system' (and like words) refers to the English planning system unless otherwise stated

² From this point forward, English town and parish councils will be referred to as local councils unless otherwise stated

About the Author

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CPRE:	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DLUHC:	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DMU:	De Montfort University
LC:	Local English Council(s)
LGA:	Local Government Association
LPA:	Local Planning Authority
LURB:	Levelling Up Reform Bill
MHCLG:	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MKDC:	Milton Keynes Development Corporation
NALC:	National Association of Local Councils
NAO:	National Audit Office
NDMP:	National Development Management Polices
NP:	Neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood planning (In the context of this work, the terms 'neighbourhood planning' and 'neighbourhood plans' are synonymous with one another)
NPPF:	National Planning Policy Framework
RCCE:	Rural Community Council of Essex
RCN:	Rural Council Network
RTPI:	Royal Town Planning Institute
SCI:	Statement of Community Involvement
SLCC:	Society of Local Council Clerks
TCPA:	Town and Country Planning Association

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Neighbourhood planning, a core component of the English planning system, was enshrined in law in the 2011 Localism Act and amended through the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 and 2017. Locality, a network supporting community organisations, summarises neighbourhood plans (NPs) as a “*powerful tool in shaping the development of a neighbourhood*” (2018:6).

Some 12-years since their introduction and with over 1,000 “*made plans*” (Locality, 2023), there is ample data to conduct an informed and detailed evaluation of neighbourhood planning and its effectiveness. A ‘made’ plan is one which has passed a series of legislative planning tests, approved by an external examiner³ and agreed by the community at a referendum.

1.2 About the Researcher and Positionality

The researcher has delivered two NPs with vastly different experiences. The first in Milton Keynes, working with a local planning authority (LPA) familiar with master-planning and place-based community development. The second in Saffron Walden, Essex, working with an under-performing⁴ LPA (Uttlesford District Council (UDC)) where the NP took ten years from designation⁵ to ‘being made’. The researcher believes UDC’s weak planning performance affected the quality of policies in the Saffron Walden NP, further theorising the support of the LPA is crucial to an effective and successful NP.

³ The qualifications and competencies of the Examiner are defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, C8, Schedule 4B, paragraph 7(6)

⁴ UDC’s planning function is currently designated under S62a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

⁵ Designation: defining the area covered by the neighbourhood plan

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to:

Evaluate the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England

Research objectives in the context of neighbourhood planning are to:

- (a) Define 'effectiveness';
- (b) Identify a method for measuring 'effectiveness';
- (c) Evaluate 'effectiveness' through validated, measured, and tangible research using quantitative and qualitative research via a sample survey of English local councils;
- (d) Analyse the research results;
- (e) Consider what makes an 'effective' neighbourhood plan.

1.4 Planning Hierarchy

The planning system is hierarchical with each tier obligated to comply, and be in conformity with, the tier above it, as shown below:

Figure 1: The key components of planning (CPRE/NALC, 2023:8)



English planning law: Legislation supports UK planning policy through Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments. The primary Act is the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The NPPF establishes the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England.

Local Plan: Sets out the vision for a defined area (usually a borough or district) and written by the LPA. It prescribes local policies and other planning related matters, often shaping local development and infrastructure.

Neighbourhood Plan: Sets out local planning policies. Written by the local community, containing policies specific to the local place and environment. NPs (as per local plans) must be in general conformity with the policies and legislation above it.

Whilst NPs are voluntary, they must conform with an obligatory and legislative process. NPs sit at the bottom of the planning hierarchy, deferring to the higher authority of those above, whereas from the perspective of local residents, NPs should arguably be at the top of the process, aligning with the principles of localism. The voluntary nature of NPs means they are often led by community volunteers with little, if any, planning knowledge or experience although NP policies must comply with a pre-existing, mandatory and regulated system.

Setting out and explaining the planning system contextualises the role of NP and background information on the English planning system is provided in [Appendix A](#).

1.5 Research Context

Since 2017, NP participation has been in decline (MHCLG, 2021a). In addressing this deterioration, Dr Luke Evans MP (2022) notes “*neighbourhood plans are not for everyone*”, stating the Government’s Levelling Up Reform Bill (LURB) will strengthen NPs and local planning participation through such innovations as ‘neighbourhood priorities statements’ and ‘street vote’ powers. These changes may alter neighbourhood planning but as they have not yet entered legislation, they are outside the scope of this research.

This research focuses on NPs in 2023, prior to the potential adoption of the LURB or other proposed planning changes. Using data from other research in this field, coupled with a 2023 survey compiled by the researcher, this research evaluates the effectiveness of NPs from 2011 to 2023. It does not hypothesise on the impact of any proposed changes, although proposed changes warrant recognition given their anticipated impact on the planning process.

Whilst NPs must conform to legislated planning tests, previous academic research evidences a lack of statutory prescription regarding exactly *how* NPs should comply with planning legislation, complicating evaluation of their effectiveness. In 2014, Prof Gavin Parker, a planning expert and former director of The Royal Town and Planning Institute (RTPI), and Dr Matthew Wargent, Planning Lecturer at Cardiff University, first note the difficulties of measuring success, later observing NPs lack an “*image of success*” (2018:3). This lack of

prescribed evidence, coupled with the uncertainty of what a successful NP looks like, complicates NP evaluation as any adopted measure is arguably subjective rather than objective. Adding credence to the belief that success can only be measured subjectively, guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2020:22) advises,

“there is no ‘tick box’ list of evidence required for neighbourhood planning”.

An independent examiner checks and inspects a plan prior to referendum, verifying compliance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, summarised below:

- (a) Compliance with national and LPA;
- (b) Contribution towards sustainable development;
- (c) Requirement upon the qualifying body⁶to:
 - publicise the NP to those who live, work, or carry out business in the NP area;
 - Provide details of the proposals, where these can be inspected and how/when to make representations;
- (d) Production of a “consultation statement⁷” confirming the consultation process, summarising key issues and concerns and how these were addressed in the submitted plan.

Having passed external examination, a NP is arguably ‘effective’ having met legislative requirements. This research does not therefore evaluate legislative compliance.

⁶ Qualifying Body: as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 61E (6)

⁷ As defined in Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, Reg 125(b) and Town and Country Planning Act 1990, c8, Schedule 4B

1.6 Effectiveness in Neighbourhood Planning

This research attempts to measure the *extent* of effectiveness of neighbourhood plans, evaluating final plans against community aspirations. Early government rhetoric by the former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP claimed the primary purpose of neighbourhood planning is to “*reverse the centralist creep of decades and replace it with local control*”, (2011). More recent government statements are that,

“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.”

DLUHC (2020:2)

In analysing these claims, this research assesses how and to what extent the community was engaged in the NP process, what was the support from the LPA and what policy changes were made to comply with local planning policies and national legislation. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out to evaluate these three primary elements.

1.6.1 - Evaluation 1: Community Engagement

How, and to what extent, did the qualifying body engage with the community to evidence a community-led plan?

NP legislation requires the qualifying body to submit a statement, providing details of their community consultation. Actual evidence of compliance is not required hence the statement could be fabricated as alluded to in the case of the Nether Edge NP where the plan passed examination and referendum, yet the local community alleges misrepresentation of the community consultation and exclusivity (Williams, 2022).

This research evaluates the effectiveness of NP community engagement by assessing what the qualifying body did and how, when and where it consulted with the community. It thereby evaluates whether, or to what extent, neighbourhood plans are community-led.

1.6.2 - Evaluation 2: LPA Support

What was the level of LPA support, and did it influence the NPs effectiveness?

The LPA's role⁸ requires them to, *"give such advice or assistance to qualifying bodies as, in all the circumstances, they consider appropriate"* (DLUHC, 2020:3).

Legislation does not mandate, let alone specify, a level of commitment or support from the LPA, causing diverse interpretations, inconsistency, and a lack of standardisation in support. A 2021 Local Government Association (LGA) evaluation found support was varied, often limited by the LPA's own capacity and ability. Some LPAs offered workshops, online mapping tools and technical advice whilst others barely engaged with or supported qualifying bodies.

A National Teaching Fellow at the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), Dr James Derounian (2016) asserts most NP groups are amateurs, reliant on professional support from the LPA. Parker's 2014 research supports this, noting the LPA's advice can enhance the final plan. The importance of the LPA's input cannot be down-played, potentially influencing the quality and effectiveness of the final plan. Evaluation 2 will measure the type and nature of LPA support.

1.6.3 - Evaluation 3: Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan

Did the NP compromise on policies to comply with national policies and local plans?

As defined in legislation,⁹NPs must *"have regard to national policies and advice"* and be in *"general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority"* (DLUHC, 2020:5).

This research will measure how many policies were changed at examination to meet planning hierarchical requirements and to what extent. A significantly amended plan arguably no longer reflects community aspirations, thus contradicting DLUHC's 2020 claim of community empowerment.

⁸ As defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 4B, paragraph 3

⁹ As defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 4B, paragraph 8(2)

1.7 Structure

This study is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A critical review of existing information, data, key ideas, themes and conclusions from practitioners, specialists and theorists on neighbourhood planning to identify further potential research which could contribute to this field in the future. This literature review will refer to existing studies, government papers, legislation, journals and practitioner guidance.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

An examination and analysis of research methods, reviewing the effectiveness and limitations of each whilst providing a rationale for the methodology selected. Ethical issues related to potential bias in the research, including in data collection and analysis will also be considered.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

An examination and analysis of research findings and an assessment of the chosen methodology.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

A summary of research findings and conclusions with recommendations to support NPs and future research based on the findings of this research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has summarised the overall focus of the research, providing rationale and structure for the study. It has addressed evaluation measures, focusing on how the community was engaged, the kind of support from the LPA (if any) and whether policies were amended, removed, or compromised to comply with planning hierarchy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyses existing literature on neighbourhood planning, focusing on the three primary evaluations of effectiveness. Martyn Denscombe, Professor Emeritus at De Montfort University (DMU), summarises the purpose of a literature review as identifying something already known and using this as *“the basis for deciding the specific things that need to be investigated”* (2019:41). Educationalists and academics Hayward and Wragg (1982:2) add it evidences the *“writer has studied existing work in the field with insight”*.

This literature review and research is influenced by the practice works of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Locality and published academics Brownill, Bradley and Professor Parker, all of whom have collectively researched neighbourhood planning providing a mix of academic research and practitioner experiences.

2.2 Community Engagement

This section focuses on evaluating how, and to what extent, the qualifying body engaged with the community. To contextualise this section, it is important to define and quantify the strategic role of community engagement.

2.2.1 Community Engagement Defined

Tractivity, a UK engagement and management-solution organisation, defines community engagement as (2023):

“the process of working with and involving the community in order to create meaningful relationships between the organisation and the people it serves. It's all about communication, involvement, and collaboration, [to] achieve sustainable outcomes”.

The Eden Project (2023), renowned for its pioneering community work, describes engagement as a “*powerful tool*” which can change behaviour, creating inclusivity, optimism, and opportunities.

The Rural Council Network’s (RCN) ‘Rethinking Engagement Project’ (2018:12) reported poor engagement leads to “*disengagement*” as less than 50% of respondents believed they could influence local community decisions. RCN’s report continues residents had a “*clear desire to get more involved in: how decisions are made, how resources are allocated and how local services are planned and run*”; the very essence of neighbourhood planning. Community engagement and participation forms a key part of this research programme.

2.2.2 Community Engagement in Neighbourhood Planning

NPs are “*rooted in civic engagement and collaborative democracy*” (Conservative Party, 2010 cited in Wargent 2021:577); community engagement is a vital and legislative requirement.¹⁰ The statutory consultation statement requires qualifying bodies to provide details of who was consulted and how, whilst failing to impose methodology or make specific recommendations.

Research amongst pioneer NPs found a disproportionate number struggled with community engagement because of this lack of information and standards (Parker et al, 2014). Later research by both Brownill and Bradley (2017) and Parker et al (2020) found the engagement processes remain unclear and inconsistent, creating difficulties, uncertainty, and confusion for qualifying bodies. Parker’s latest research (2023) found these struggles continue.

Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Community Participation’ (1969) is a widely used and accepted model of community engagement and participation; its ascending rungs represent increasing levels of community empowerment ([see Appendix B](#)). In ostensibly subscribing to Arnstein’s ladder, neighbourhood planning seeks to devolve direct power to the local community.

¹⁰ As defined in the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 Part 5, Regulation 15

In its 'Step by Step Road Map Guide' to neighbourhood planning, Locality (2018:14) states, *"The idea behind neighbourhood plans is that they are community-led"* emphasising without community engagement *"neighbourhood planning is meaningless"* (2018:40). This information is condensed to a mere seven pages; one must question how a complex, intricate and foundational requirement is afforded such minimal guidance. Locality's government funded facilitator support is a valuable addition to overcoming the critical first steps of engagement, but groups must first know about this service and have the appropriate skills and competencies to complete the application process.

The government's LURB provides opportunity to address inadequacies in the NP process. In her opening speech to Parliament (2022), HM Queen Elizabeth II introduced the LURB, stating *"The planning system will be reformed to give residents more involvement in local development"*. However, such "involvement" falls short of participation; the Bill does not propose any specific or tangible changes to increase community engagement in planning, other than the nebulous 'neighbourhood priorities statements' and 'street powers' (as referenced in chapter 1) and their community engagement processes appear as vague as the NP consultation statement.

Some positive experiences of community engagement have been reported although research does not uncover vast quantities or examples. Brownill and Bradley (2017), for example, report an instance of the NP process creating community cohesion. Parker et al (2020) found NP often improves engagement and relationships with LPAs, a view supported by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA, 2018).

2.2.3 Engagement Fatigue

Locality (2018) reports communities may suffer from consultation fatigue, especially if already engaged in other programmes or projects; this fatigue cannot be overstated, potentially being the key to success or failure of neighbourhood planning. Continuous and varied engagement is paramount to providing sufficient and robust evidence for the NP examination, (Locality, 2013).

There are discrepancies in defining the length of time taken in completing a NP with Locality (2018) suggesting typically 18-24 months, Parker et al (2020) suggest 39 months and the researcher is aware of two NPs which have exceeded 10-years from designation to referendum. Community engagement is a foundational part of the NP process, legally it must pass external scrutiny and inspection at examination.

2.2.4 Community Engagement Summary

Being at the heart of NP, the importance of community engagement cannot be overstated, (LGA, 2013) yet evidence demonstrates there is a lack of guidance and specific support. There is a common thread; support and information are rarely sufficient to support embryonic, inexperienced, NP groups. Whilst there is a wealth of literature on community engagement in general, few publications specifically support NP groups, leaving communities to determine their own methodology and standards.

2.3 LPA Support

This section focuses on the level of support provided by the LPA and whether it influenced the NP's effectiveness.

2.3.1 The LPA's Statutory Duties

The LPA's support is mandatory,¹¹ requiring LPAs to articulate assistance through a statement of community involvement (SCI).¹² Despite this obligation, analysis by Parker et al (2016a) found inconsistencies, with each LPA self-determining the quality, level and type of support offered.

2.3.2 Levels of Support from LPAs

In their February 2010 Green Paper, Open-Source Planning, the Conservative Party approach was to mandate LPAs to work collaboratively with NP groups, but this requirement was not fully recognised in the Localism Act (Parker et al, 2023). Legislation

¹¹ As defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 4B, paragraph 3

¹² As defined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

does not determine exactly *how* LPAs should support neighbourhood planning, leading to variations and inconsistencies (Parker et al, 2022; LGA, 2021b).

Research in 2017 by Brownill and Bradley found the early NP groups and LPAs suffered from a lack of support or guidance, leaving question-marks over their exact role. Governance and guidance followed some 6-months after NPs were launched. As the advice and guidance of the LPA represents a critical component of a successful NP, (Parker et al, 2020; Brownill and Bradley, 2017), this information deficit grossly disadvantaged the first NP groups due to this lack of defined responsibility.

This lack of prescribed guidance continues; in 2023, there is still no LPA guidance or mandatory support process to ensure nation-wide, consistent support. The LPA, with its skilled and experienced planning professionals, could act as a constant and informed expert, easing the burden and adding planning competence. Dr Kat Salter, a Chartered Town Planner, and specialist in NPs, observes this lack of procedure enables LPAs to adopt one of three discernible practices; deflective, reactive or integrative (2021).

Funding for public services in England has reduced by 37% since 2009/10 (Institute for Government, 2023). The 2018 TCPA's 'Raynsford Review of Planning in England' confirmed LPAs have limited resources but, since this report, the country has witnessed unparalleled economic challenges through the covid-19 pandemic. The UK is wrestling with unprecedented financial pressures (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2021) while standing on the brink of an economic recession (Ernst and Young, 2022). The lack of support, the inconsistency and the resulting unfairness in neighbourhood planning are likely to increase as LPAs struggle to fulfil their statutory duties against this backdrop of financial tensions.

Parker's 2023 research found some LPAs actively discourage or frustrate NPs and whilst there is little research why they maintain this position, it may be due to financial constraints or even a desire to retain planning control. Certainly, some LPAs lack capacity or knowledge owing to a recognised shortage of professional planning officers (National Audit Office, 2019). Whilst SCIs attempt to impose levels of support, they neglect the imposition of specific support or engagement and are themselves varied in quality and content. Some

LPA set out a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’, offering specific and bespoke advice to NP groups (examples found in Braintree and Malden District Councils respectively) whilst others fail to include their SCIs online, Uttlesford District Council being one such example.

2.3.3 LPA Support Summary

The role of the LPA is crucial in navigating the complexities and intricacies of the planning system (Parker et al, 2020; Brownill and Bradley, 2017). Unqualified and inexperienced NP groups require professional LPA support and guidance (Locality, 2018), yet this support is not regularised or standardised.

The current lottery-style situation creates an unequal and unfair system (Salter 2022 as quoted in Parker et al 2023). This research investigates the relationship between the LPA’s support and the NP’s effectiveness, seeking to identify the varying levels of LPA support and whether this affected or contributed to, the effectiveness of the NP.

2.4 Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan

NPs must comply with national policies and local plans. This section assesses whether plans were compromised in this compliance, potentially to the extent they no longer fully or accurately represent community ambitions.

2.4.1 National Policies

The need to comply with planning hierarchy stifles community creativity, (Parker et al, 2015). Working in this restrictive environment, NP participants become sceptical and ask, “*why bother?*” if the NP cannot stand independently and purposefully contrarily, to national or local plans, (Brownill and Parker, 2010:280). Wargent’s recent research (2021:580), prompted one respondent to ask, “*what power have they given us?*”.

The TCPA’s 2020 updated ‘Raynsford Review’ specifically criticises this power imbalance, calling it a “*defining feature of the system*”, adding there has been a “*wider centralisation of policy on key issues*” (2020:7). This concern was pre-empted and raised from the outset of neighbourhood planning by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2010.

The LURB's proposed 'neighbourhood priorities statements' and 'street vote' powers further devolve planning power to local communities. Currently, however, information is lacking about their creation, governance, and material weight. Significantly, the LURB confirms the Government's commitment to considerable house building (DLUHC, 2023a) which states this is best achieved through the adoption of local plans; it is clear any new planning layers must comply with planning hierarchy whilst primarily meeting central government housing ambitions.

The LURB further proposes new 'National Development Management Polices' (NDMPs), intended to replace general polices in local plans and removing LPA policies on generic issues such as heritage, flood, and green-belt land. Whilst hailed by Government as an aid to decision-making, others express concerns at these proposals. Landmark Chambers, for example, a leading law set in planning and environmental issues, asks "*does it instead signal the demise of the plan-led system and the supremacy of national policy?*" (2022:17), a view echoed by the RTPi (2022), noting compliance potentially removes local needs and nuances, contrary to neighbourhood planning ethos. The TCPA echoes these concerns, writing the introduction of NDMPs will "*fundamentally change the planning system*" rendering it "*no longer plan-led*" (2023b:362).

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP acknowledges concerns "*about a perceived power grab*" (TCPA, 2023b:362), promising a full consultation on the proposals but it is unclear what this will mean; he has provided little narrative or commitment to substantiate this promise or to actively address legitimate concerns expressed by many in the planning industry.

This brief insight into national policies evidences the shifting sands of planning legislation which constrain NPs and threaten their independence.

2.4.2 Local Plans

A NP can quickly become out of date if the LPA regularly reviews, updates and modifies its local plan (DLUHC, 2020). This *“herd of elephants in the room”*, according to NALC (2018:59) is a *“major problem threatening the future of neighbourhood plans”*, which are often built upon *“shifting sands”*, as illustrated in the case of Farnham NP.

Farnham’s NP policies were dismissed by the Planning Inspector just six months after referendum as they did not align with policies in the local plan (NALC, 2018), creating angst, upset and disillusionment within the local community having invested five years in creating the town’s NP. A chief architect of the Farnham NP referred to this dismissal as *“a cruel blow for Farnham”* (NALC, 2018:60). Given the complexity and time commitment in completing NPs, it is unlikely a community group would have the same drive or capacity for continually reviewing and amending policies as the LPA does regarding its local plan.

Where a local plan is out of date, significant weight is theoretically afforded to the NP, as established by the Communities Secretary in upholding the value and validity of the Tattenhall NP (NALC, 2018). Surprisingly however, the Tattenhall case did not create planning law precedence as a Planning Inspector later afforded limited weight to the NP finding it could not be tested against an out-of-date local plan (NALC, 2018).

There is evidentially a need for synergy and alignment between NPs and the planning system to avoid conflict. This could be achieved with a uniformed and consistent approach in support from the LPA (Parker et al, 2020).

2.4.3 External Examination

Legislation requires NPs to be independently examined by an ‘appropriately qualified’ person, to check compliance with basic conditions.¹³ In 2016, Parker et al (2016a:186) found *“of the 130 NDPs [i.e. NPs] that had passed referendum, only one had passed the independent examination without any proposed modifications”* and others required significant policy changes or deletions. Later research found communities purposefully self-

¹³ As defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 4B, paragraph 8.

regulating, curtailing or watering-down policies to meet examination requirements (Parker et al, 2017a; Bradley and Sparling, 2017); these changes presumably compromising local preferences to comply with the administrative needs of the NP process.

2.4.3 Compliance with Policies/Plans Summary

Dr Andy Yuile, a Senior Research Associate at Lancaster University, asserts the fundamental principle of neighbourhood planning is to,

"invite communities to articulate their care for and knowledge of place, and give agency to that care and knowledge through the development of statutory planning policies" (2021:40).

Articulating such care is difficult when policies are externally controlled and imposed. In caring for a place, the community may include policies which purposefully conflict with hierarchical ones but will subsequently fail to meet basic compliance conditions. This imposed conformity potentially stymies and frustrates the very essence of neighbourhood planning, indeed, Brownill and Bradley (2017) observe the disappointment and frustration of local communities working in this restrictive environment. Several practitioners and theorists agree the planning system is in a constant state of reform, rendering it impossible for NPs to keep up to date (Brownhill and Bradley, 2017; Parker et al, 2015; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2015). NPs are often rescripted to maintain alignment to national and local policies (Parker et al 2015).

This component of the literature review has considered the conflict between NPs and national/local planning policies, identifying the struggles between community aspirations and hierarchical planning obligations.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Government rhetoric continues to proclaim the importance of NPs. The DLUHC's Chief Planner maintains they are:

"an essential part of the Government's reforms to help local communities play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals" (Averley, 2021).

This literature review evidences this claim is not factually grounded given the lack of any prescribed community engagement methodology, the varied levels of LPA support and the compromises and complications in aligning NP policies with planning hierarchy.

2.6 Researcher's Hypothesis

Building on the researcher's keen interest and differential experience of LPA provision and competencies, she hypothesises the LPA's support is a primary contributor to the effectiveness and success of neighbourhood plans. This hypothesis will be revisited in the research conclusions following an investigation into whether it is borne out by the research findings.

The literature has evidenced the adverse impact of sporadic and inconsistent advice and support from LPAs. Without competent and professional planning support, qualifying bodies are, at best, keen and enthusiastic amateurs. To test the researcher's hypothesis, both quantitative and qualitative research has been conducted with details provided in chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines research methods used in evaluating the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England, responding specifically to the three core measures as detailed in chapter 1.

It considers research methods, data collection and analysis, ethics and bias in research and assesses limitations and problems encountered during this research project.

Prof Reva Berman-Brown (2006) posits methodology is the foundation upon which research is based, Profs Glatthorn and Joiner (2005) assert methodology should meet two criteria:

1. Be the most appropriate to achieve the research objectives;
2. Should be like comparable research.

3.2 Research Strategy

Researchers and analysts Walia and Chetty (2020) summarise a research strategy as a “*step-by-step plan of action that gives direction to the researcher’s thought process*” continuing, its main purpose is to bring together all component parts of the research.

Research strategy considerations for this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Research strategy considerations

Topic	Considerations	Action Taken / Mitigation
Research objectives (see chapter 1)	The overall aim of the research must be immediately clear.	The introductory email inviting councils to respond to the survey and the opening paragraph of the survey both stated the primary purpose of the research.
Research design/questions	The layout and questions must be robust and sufficiently detailed to elicit informed and intelligent responses. They must equally be short and succinct to ensure participant retention.	<p>Questions were short and sub-divided into three categories with a short narrative underneath, to explain the context of the questions which followed.</p> <p>There was an opportunity for free narrative at the end of each section to enable respondents to add more information or data.</p>
Time available	The research period and time was prescribed by DMU. Research was conducted over a brief period, and this influenced the research methods used.	A timetable was drafted to ensure compliance with deadlines as prescribed by DMU (see Appendix C).
Data collection	The research was not sponsored nor financially supported by any third party, and it was conducted in the researcher's own time and at her own expense.	The time and cost influenced the nature and style of the online research, leading to the use of an automated and free online survey being selected.
Historic research methods	Familiarity of research methods to the researcher and awareness of industry known/acceptable research methods	<p>The researcher used methods with which she was familiar.</p> <p>Good examples of online surveys are common amongst town and parish councils, and they are an effective means of collecting data.</p>

3.3 Design

Research objectives, based upon findings from the literature review, identified a lack of research evaluating the effectiveness of NPs, highlighting the originality of this research. Survey questions were based upon the researcher's knowledge of the subject matter.

A mixed method approach was selected, defined by the following three characteristics:

1. *“Use of both quantitative and qualitative research*
2. *Specific focus on the link between the two (triangulation)*
3. *Emphasis on practical approaches (pragmatism); treating the research as a means of answering a question(s)” (Denscombe, 2010:138)*

Quantitative research added numerical values and analyses of data offering a structured, straightforward, and objective method of evaluation,

“Quantitative research is associated with the production of numerical data that are ‘objective’ in the sense that they exist independently of the researcher and are not the result of undue influence on the part of the researcher” (Denscombe, 2010:237).

Qualitative research complemented quantitative research, eliciting human, and emotional opinions rather than cold numbers.

An online questionnaire with open and closed questions, provided opportunities for qualitative and quantitative responses. Initial questions required a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response (quantitative) with respondents requested to further explain and substantiate responses (qualitative).

3.3.1 Pilot Research

The survey questions were peer-reviewed to ensure objectivity and eliminate any actual or inferred bias. This review comprised of six fellow-students, familiar with research concepts, and four people with no involvement in this research or neighbourhood planning. The approach provided useful and informative feedback with fellow students focusing on the content and quality of questions whilst the others focused on the survey composition. Following the peer-review, changes were made to the questionnaire; as summarised in [Appendix D](#).

3.4 Bias in Research

Intentional bias is a purposeful deviation from the truth, where data is shaped, changed, or massaged to produce false information. Unintentional bias occurs where a researcher's own personal experiences and preconceptions unconsciously influence the process and interpretations of the findings (Denscombe, 2010).

Professor Gary Comstock (2013:148), writes *"There are many different sources through which bias can be introduced into surveys"*. Statistical analysts, Utts and Heckard (2021), suggest the following sources of bias:

- (a) Selection bias: Participant selection does not represent the population of interest;
- (b) Non-participation bias: Respondents choose not to participate or cannot (e.g. no internet access for an online survey);
- (c) Biased Response: Respondents deliberately respond incorrectly or untruthfully to protect their own position.

Denscombe (2010:237) warns qualitative research places pressure on the researcher, asserting, *"the researcher's background, values, identity and beliefs might have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collected and the analysis of that data"*.

The author reaffirms the belief held prior to undertaking this research; the LPA's support is the single most influential contributing factor to the effectiveness of a NP. The researcher's

positionality is also acknowledged. Both factors informed the research methodology to reduce unconscious bias to a minimum and to uphold impartiality and objectivity, ensuring the research is led by the data and evidence alone. The following precautions were also taken:

- (a) Respondents were self-selecting with the opportunity to participate or decline;
- (b) Participation was inclusive, sent to all English county associations;
- (c) Research data was verified and compared to existing data to ensure consistency with previous studies.

3.5 Research Ethics

Research ethics date back to the 1947 Nuremberg Code and the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, both providing underlying principles in protecting the dignity and rights of research participants (Denscombe, 2005). Denscombe continues wider stakeholders now influence research studies, with research having to comply with 3rd party ethics and principles.

For this research, the researcher was obliged to seek ethics approval from DMU. This research was conducted in accordance with the Social Research Association's Guide (2021) and verified by DMU as low risk. Respondents were provided with information detailing the purpose, scope and rationale of the study along with a participant information sheet and consent form (see [Appendices E](#) and [F](#)). Specific ethical considerations included:

- (a) Participants were obliged to read and agree with the survey terms and conditions, reinforced in a covering email;
- (b) Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time;
- (c) A commitment to anonymise individual responses;
- (d) A clear and detailed statement of research objectives, confirming information would only be used for the stated research purpose;
- (e) Details of the secure storage and access of information, including confirmation of limited access to the student researcher and supervised university staff only.

3.6 Data Collection

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms, chosen for its ease of use, accessibility, security, built-in analytics and it is free. It was distributed to potential respondents electronically through English county associations of town and parish councils, specifically aimed at those who are undertaking or have completed a NP. Use of county associations obviated the need to compile email contacts for 10,000 local councils, adding a perceived layer of authority and credibility to the research (this view based on the researcher's own positive experience of county associations).

Most councils have email accounts/internet access (NALC, 2021) therefore an online survey was considered accessible and inclusive. The survey was further included on the SLCC's online forum (twice) and distributed by NALC to local councils. Some councils (approximately 20) known to have completed NPs, were directly contacted by the researcher.

3.7 Data Analysis

Google Forms collates and presents survey results in an easy-to-use and readable format, including presentation of data into pie charts. Exported into a .csv file, information can be easily filtered and sorted. Full details of the analysis are shown in chapter 4.

3.8 Response Rate

Table 2: Status of neighbourhood plans, January 2023 (Locality, 2023)

Status	Number
Made neighbourhood plans	1159
Passed referendum (waiting to be made)	378
Failed referendum	10
Passed examination	23
Failed examination	12
Submitted for examination	16
Pre-submission consultation	70
Designated	1297
Total	2965

The research was live for six weeks and 75 completed responses were received, representing 2.5% of the potential respondents. This could be considered a low response rate. Researcher and author, Johnson (2017) suggests a low return may lead to an inaccurate reflection of the broader picture. Prof Yehuda Baruch, specialist in human research asserts *“there is no agreed norm as to what is or what may be received as an acceptable, reasonable response rate”* (1999:422). It is worth restating this research is exploratory and as such, could be used as a catalyst for further analysis and study.

This research generated illustrative responses to the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England. Whilst results cannot be regarded as exhaustive or definitive, they have generated significant information identifying a range of factors influencing the effectiveness of NPs.

3.9 Problems Encountered and Limitations

The survey was intentionally targeted to English town and parish councils through their county associations. One known association did not forward the survey and whilst many responded to confirm support for the research, others did not respond at all, rendering it impossible to assess the survey distribution. Other national organisations such as TCPA and LGA were requested to share details of the research but did not. Future research should directly target respondents.

The researcher's intention was to test survey responses by conducting additional qualitative research in the form of interviews following the online survey. It has not been possible to fulfil this due to time restrictions although the electronic survey combining quantitative and qualitative questions, produced substantial and robust information such that the core objective was met.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the research strategy and methods used, explaining the benefits of the mixed method approach and research limitations, covering bias and ethical consideration in research. The following chapter will evaluate research findings, presenting these graphically with supporting text.

Chapter 4: Results and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyses the research results, looking at respondent profiles, further presenting and explaining the results. The survey asked a total of 45 questions covering five areas of research, linked to the overall research objectives:

- (1) Respondent profile and status of NP (13 questions)
- (2) Community engagement (12 questions)
- (3) LPA support (7 questions)
- (4) NP policies (7 questions)
- (5) Summarising NPs and further participation (6 questions)

4.2 Respondent Profile and Current Status of NP

Establishing the size of a local council both in population and expenditure enabled analysis of how large and small councils performed in all three measures of the research (effectiveness in community engagement, support from the LPA and policy changes). Of the 75 respondents, 68% (51) were local council officers and 32% (24) were councillors. Councillors tended to respond on behalf of smaller councils (population less than 5,000) whilst officers tended to respond for medium-sized or larger councils. This was to be expected as small councils generally employ part-time staff with limited hours and resources and councillors are more likely to lead on neighbourhood planning in these bodies.

Responses were diverse, representing a good cross-section in population and expenditure. Whilst geographically diverse, most responses (50%) came from the Southeast or East of England (as opposed to the spread of NPs indicated in previous research, see Figure 2), although definitions of the regions in this and previous research are not identical. An increased response from the Southeast/East of England may be attributable to an unintentional bias as the researcher is based in the East and known to clerks in this region

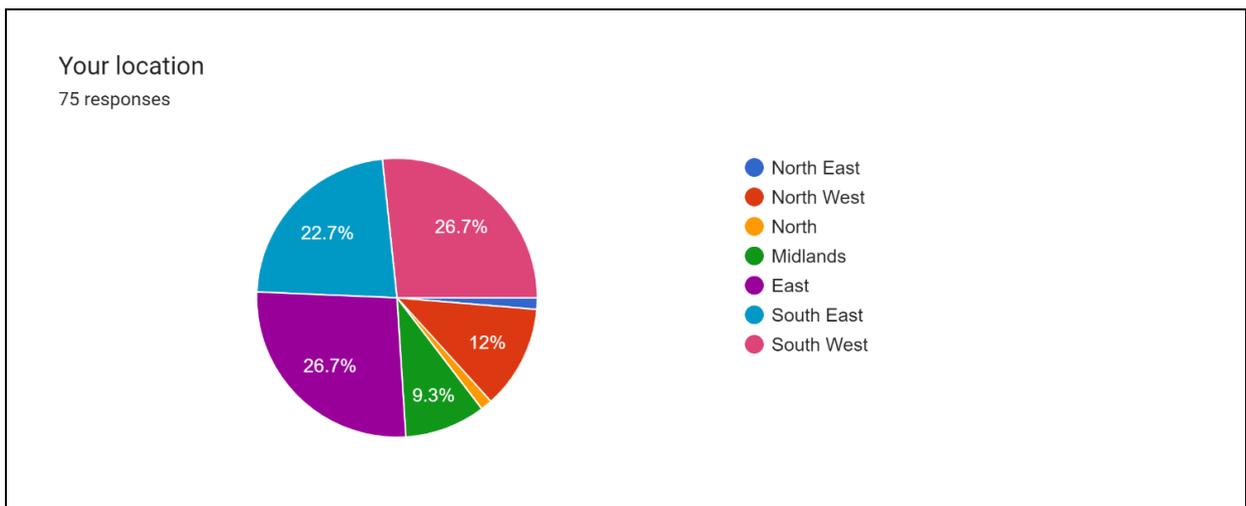
who may have felt more encouraged to respond due to this acquaintance. There was also greater support and engagement from the Southeast/East county associations which possibly further influenced participation. Councils in the North of England appear to be under-represented with just 11 responses, but this could be attributable to a lower take-up of NP there generally, aligning with the data below:

Figure 2: Regional distribution of NPs in 2020 (Parker et al 2020:13)



The figures below set out further characteristics of bodies responding to this 2023 research¹⁴.

Figure 3: Respondent Location



¹⁴ All diagrams and graphs which follow contain data from the author’s 2023 research and were created through Google Forms

Figure 4: Population of parish/town

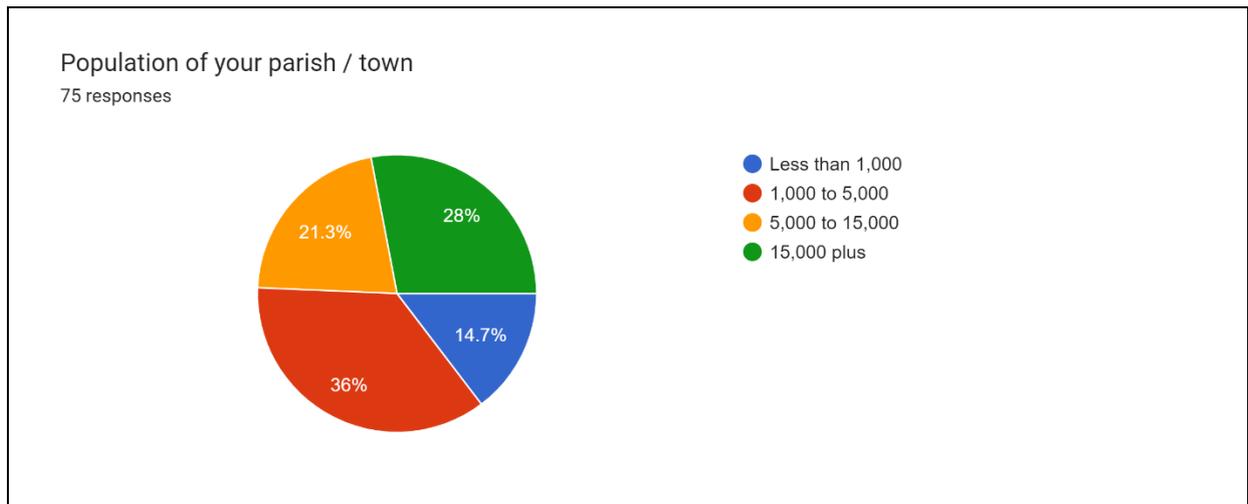


Figure 5: Average annual expenditure

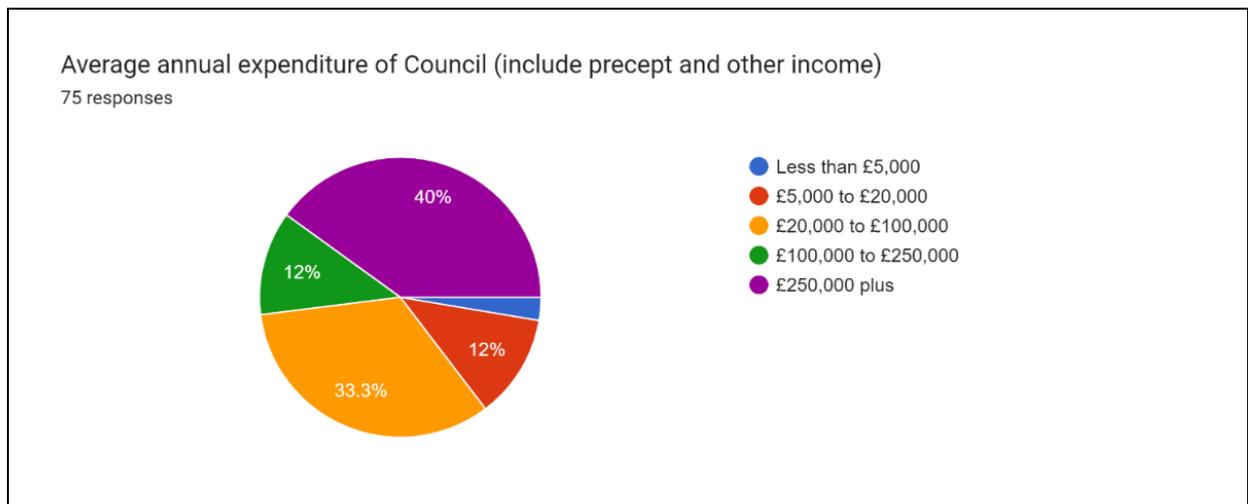
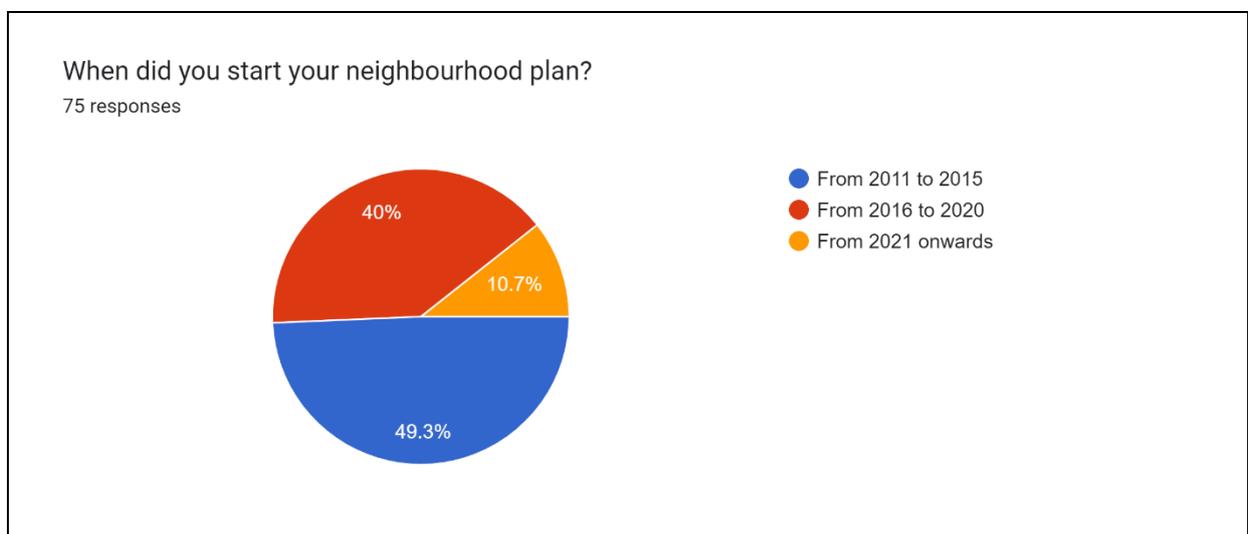
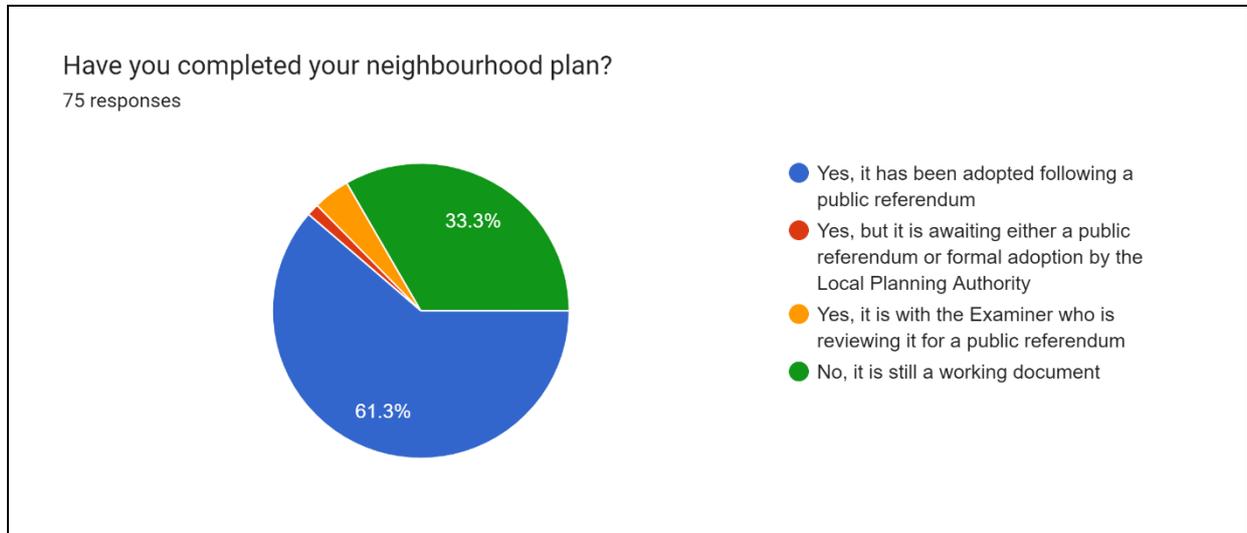


Figure 6: Start of neighbourhood plan



Just under 50% (37) commenced their NP process over eight years ago but only 10% (8) have started since 2021, supporting the reported evidence of a decreasing trend in neighbourhood planning (MHCLG, 2021a; Parker et al, 2020).

Figure 7: Neighbourhood plan status



66% of councils (50) have completed (or close to completing) their NP, adding credibility to this research as respondents could draw on experience of the whole NP process from start to finish.

4.3 Research Findings

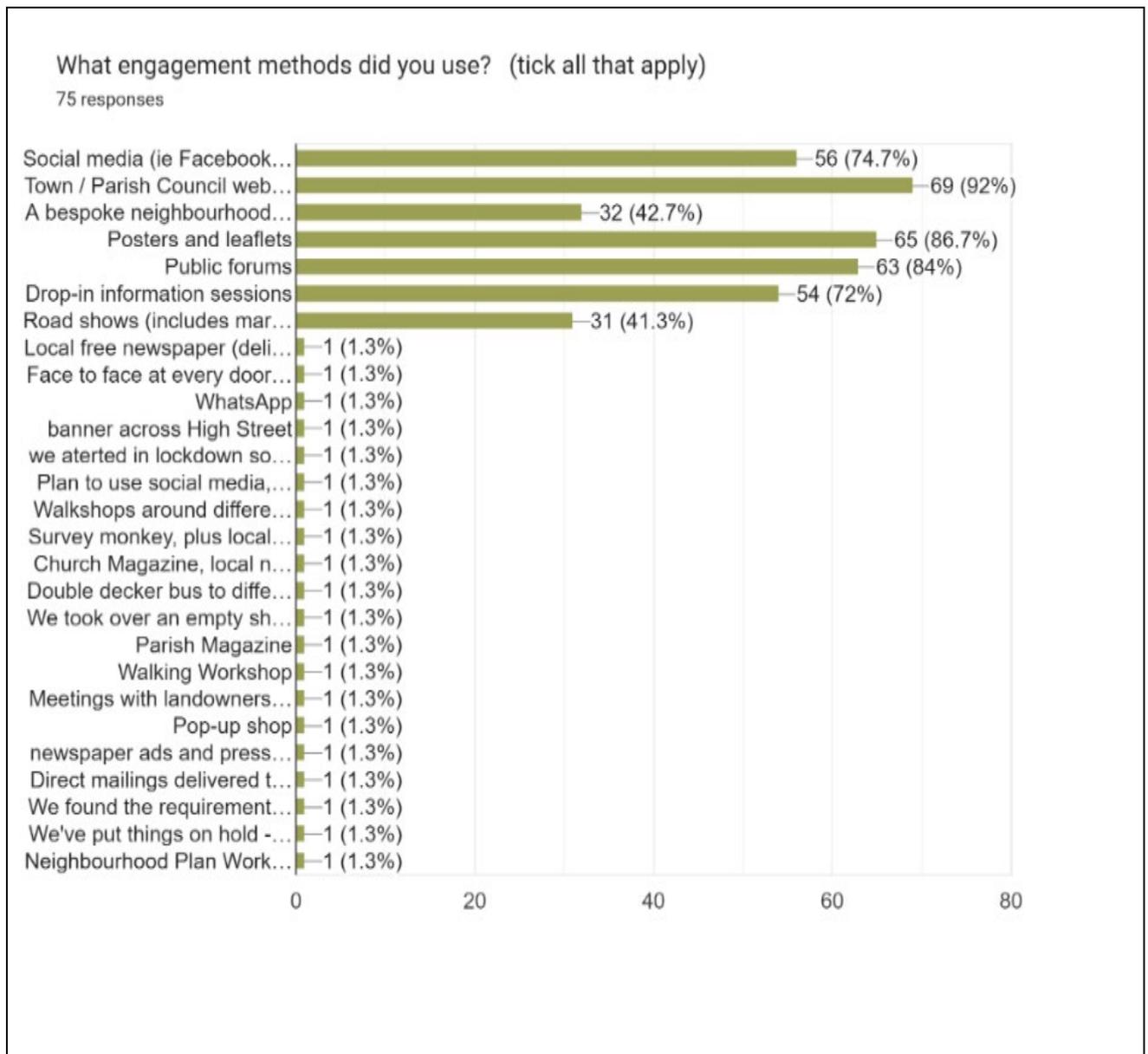
This summary provides data for the most significant survey questions and responses. A copy of all survey questions can be found in [Appendix G](#), and the full summary of responses is given in [Appendix H](#). 22 of the 45 survey questions were quantitative ('yes' or 'no' response) and 8 were qualitative (free text to support an earlier response).

Respondents were mandated to complete the profile and quantitative questions whilst qualitative responses were optional. The response rate to qualitative questions was high, averaging 74%. One question on community engagement, produced an even higher response rate of 88%. Extracts from both quantitative and qualitative responses are provided below.

4.3.1 Community Engagement

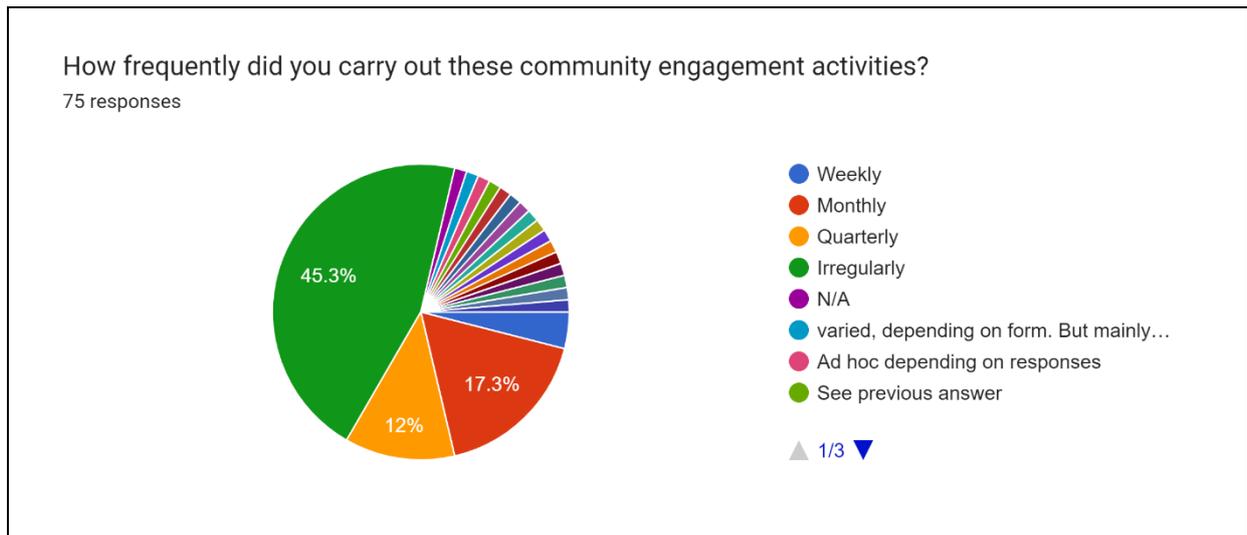
In addressing evaluation 1 “How, and to what extent, did the qualifying body engage with the community to evidence a community-led plan?”, participants were asked about their community engagement activities:

Figure 8: Question 14: What engagement methods did you use?



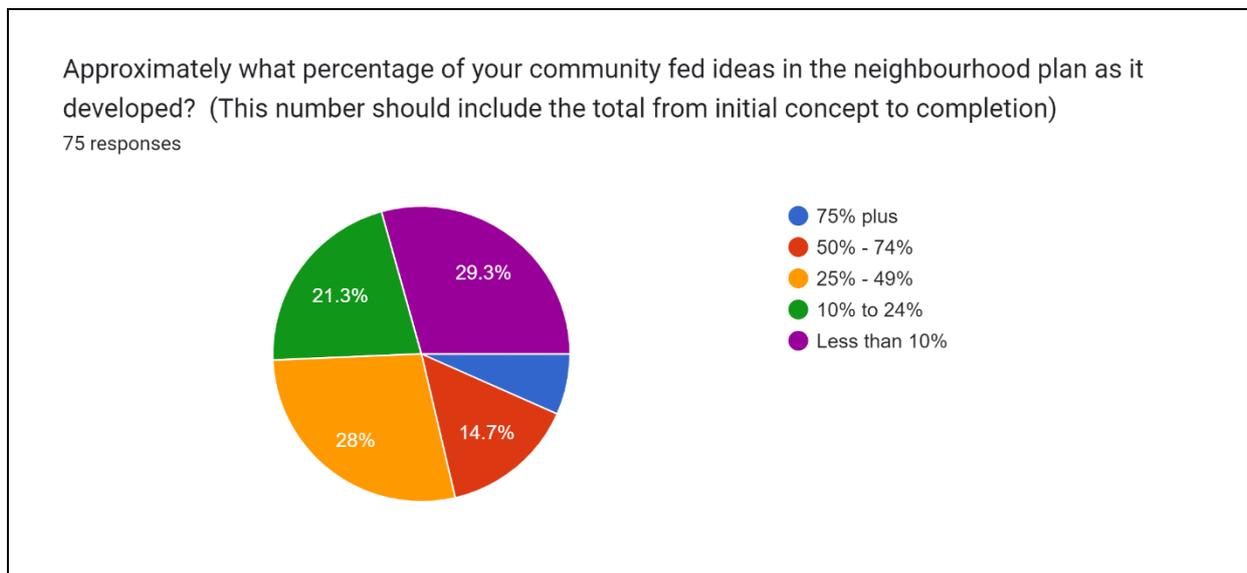
Familiar communication tools such as social media, posters and leaflets were used, aligning with Locality’s roadmap (2018), with the occasional use of more creative methods.

Figure 9: Question 15: Frequency of community engagement activities



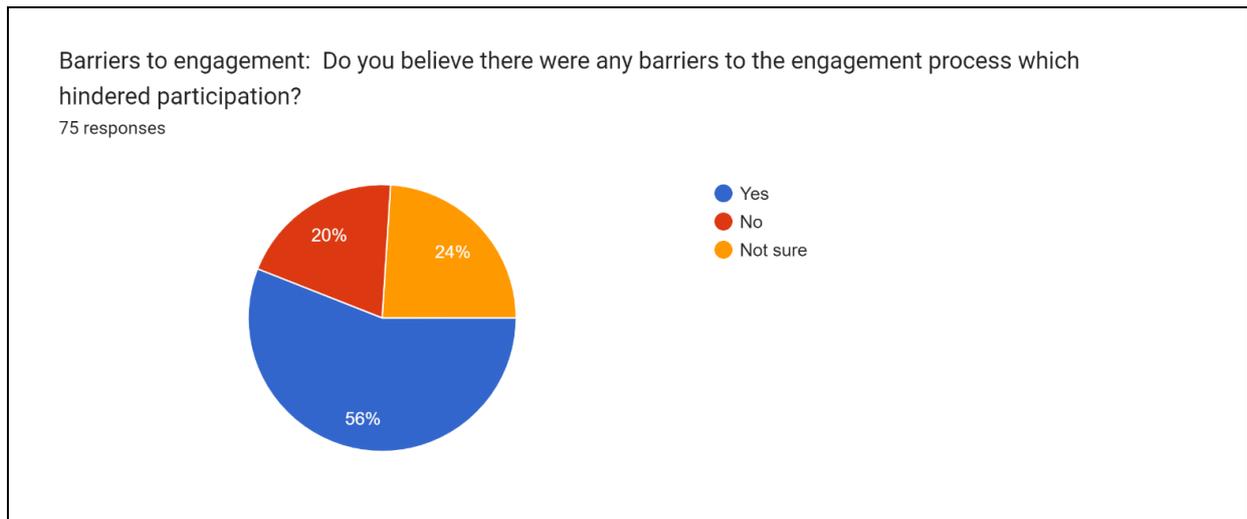
Slightly more than 45% (34) reported engagement was irregular but 29% (22) engaged weekly or monthly.

Figure 10: Question 16: What percentage of your community were involved?



50% (38) engaged with less than 25% of the community and only 21% (16) reached more than 50% of the community. A later question (not shown here, see question 7 of [Appendix H](#)) revealed that, despite this lack of engagement, as many as 92% (69) were content with their consultation methodology, hence it is possible to deduce councils had low expectations of engagement. Smaller councils returned the highest engagement rate, potentially evidencing the simplicity of covering fewer people.

Figure 11: Question 21: Barriers to engagement



At 56% (42), a considerable number reported barriers to engagement, consistent with the pragmatic acceptance of a low engagement rate shown in Figure 10.

Engagement barriers were attributed to lack or misunderstanding of a NP (56%), low priority for residents (53%) and consultation fatigue (37%), (respondents were able to select multiple responses). Other barriers included the impact of covid lockdowns/isolations, apathy (amongst residents and councillors) and resourcing issues.

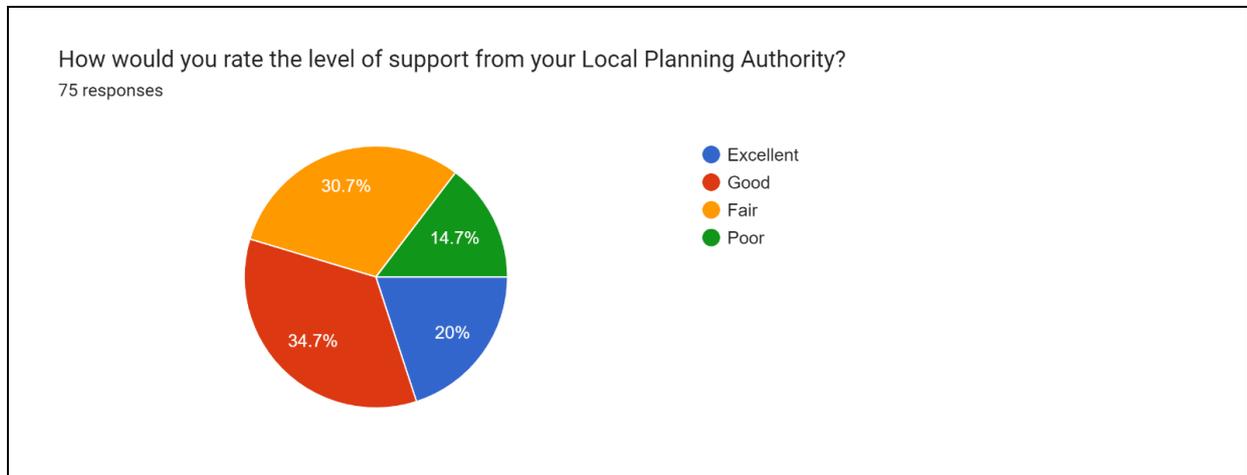
When asked what they would do differently, 45% (34) would carry out more targeted consultation, 18% (14) would carry out more general consultation and one respondent advised they would carry out less.

The above findings present mixed and contradictory responses to community engagement. 92% of respondents are content with their consultation process yet over half believe there were barriers and there is strong evidence of low engagement. These paradoxical responses support research in the literature review (Brownill and Bradley, 2017; Parker et al, 2020); NP groups struggle with community engagement.

4.3.2 LPA Support

In addressing evaluation 2 “What was the level of LPA support, and did it influence the NPs effectiveness?”, seven questions were asked, eliciting varied responses:

Figure 12: Question 26: Level of support from the LPA



55% (41) rated support as excellent or good but a significant minority (45%) rated support as poor or fair. Analysis of responses does not evidence any trend or pattern according to the council’s size, but it does reveal a wide range of experiences.

Positive comments include “*supported us all the way*” and “*outstanding support*” whilst negative responses included “*not very impressed*”, “*inadequate support*” and “*not engaged*”.

An extraordinary comment about one LPA was “*they were not involved, why would they be?*” suggesting either a lack of knowledge of the LPA’s role or a difficult relationship between the LPA and local council. A common observation was LPA officers were often distracted with other priorities and limited capacity.

Figure 13: Question 31: Evaluating the support of the LPA

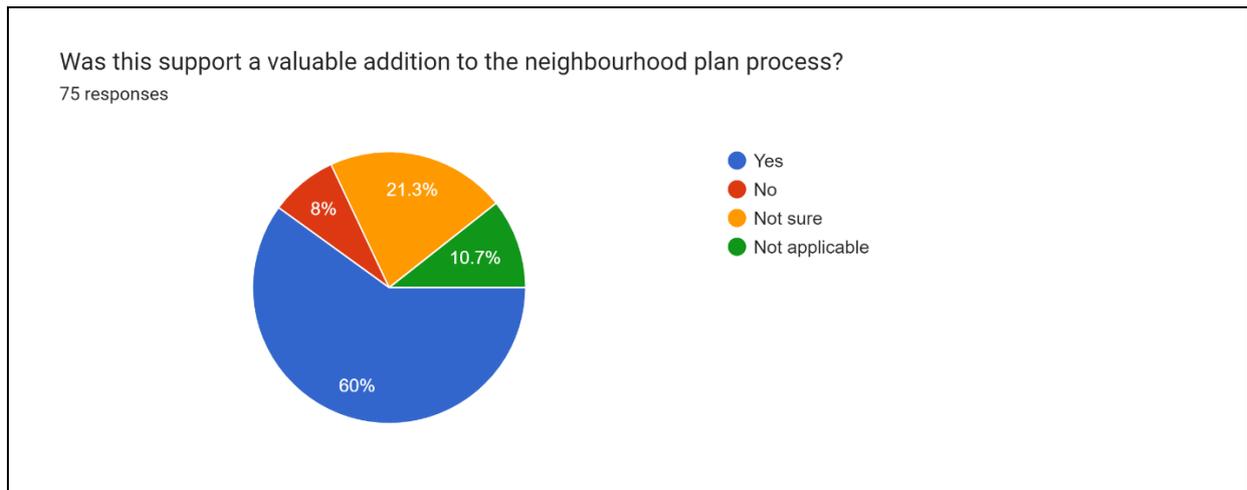


Figure 13 records 60% (45) found the LPA support was a valuable addition, although some of the qualitative responses purportedly explaining this response, confused the help of the LPA with that of 3rd parties. Some respondents received help from planning specialists such as AECOM whilst others employed their own planning officers or consultants.

In free text, respondents provided both positive and negative comments about general professional support and, whilst of interest, these comments clouded the evaluation of the role of the LPA specifically linked to NPs. Responses to questions 31 and 32 (see [Appendix H](#)) must be treated with caution. This confusion concerning what the LPA did and how it might have helped, hardly instils confidence local councils had an informed understanding of the LPA's role. It tells us little or nothing, about the quantity and quality of support some respondents might have received from the LPA, or how that support influenced the NP.

Given the contradictory quantitative and qualitative responses to this question, regrettably no overall opinion can be formed regarding the criticality of the LPA support. The data does not support the hypothesis that the LPA's support is key to the success of neighbourhood planning but neither does it disprove it. The qualitative responses could suggest respondents favoured support from external partners over the LPA, but this cannot be substantiated. Another interpretation is respondents found the support of both LPAs and 3rd parties valuable but in unknown proportions.

Future research could aim to correlate responses on the support of the LPA with the success of the NP, comparing LPA support against the robustness of NP policies. This is outside the scope of the present research, but it may provide a more informed view on the LPA's role.

4.3.3 Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan

In addressing evaluation 3 “Did the NP compromise on policies to comply with national policies and local plans?”, questions sought to understand the interaction of NP policies with LPA and national policies/legislation.

Figure 14: Question 34: Changes to NP policies

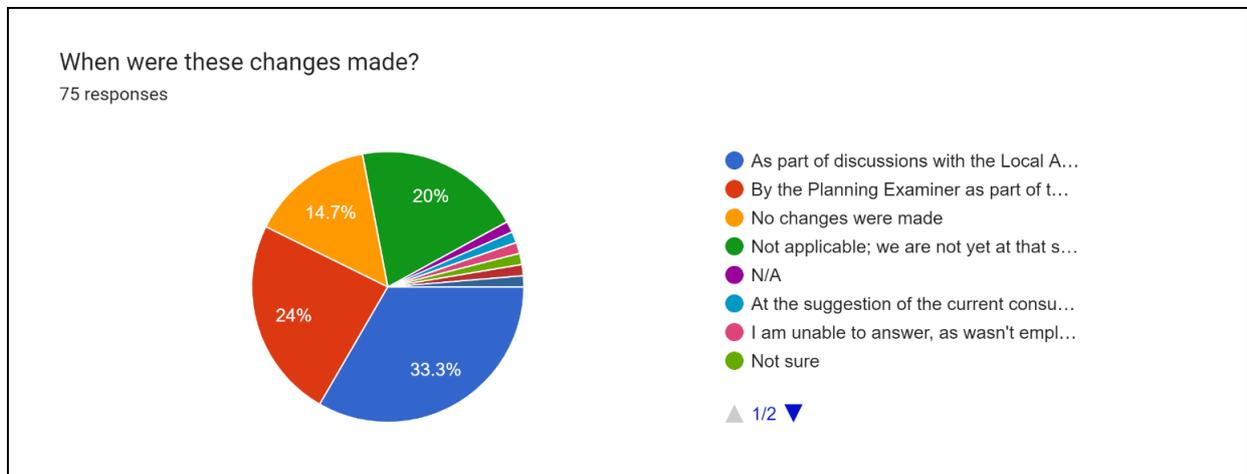
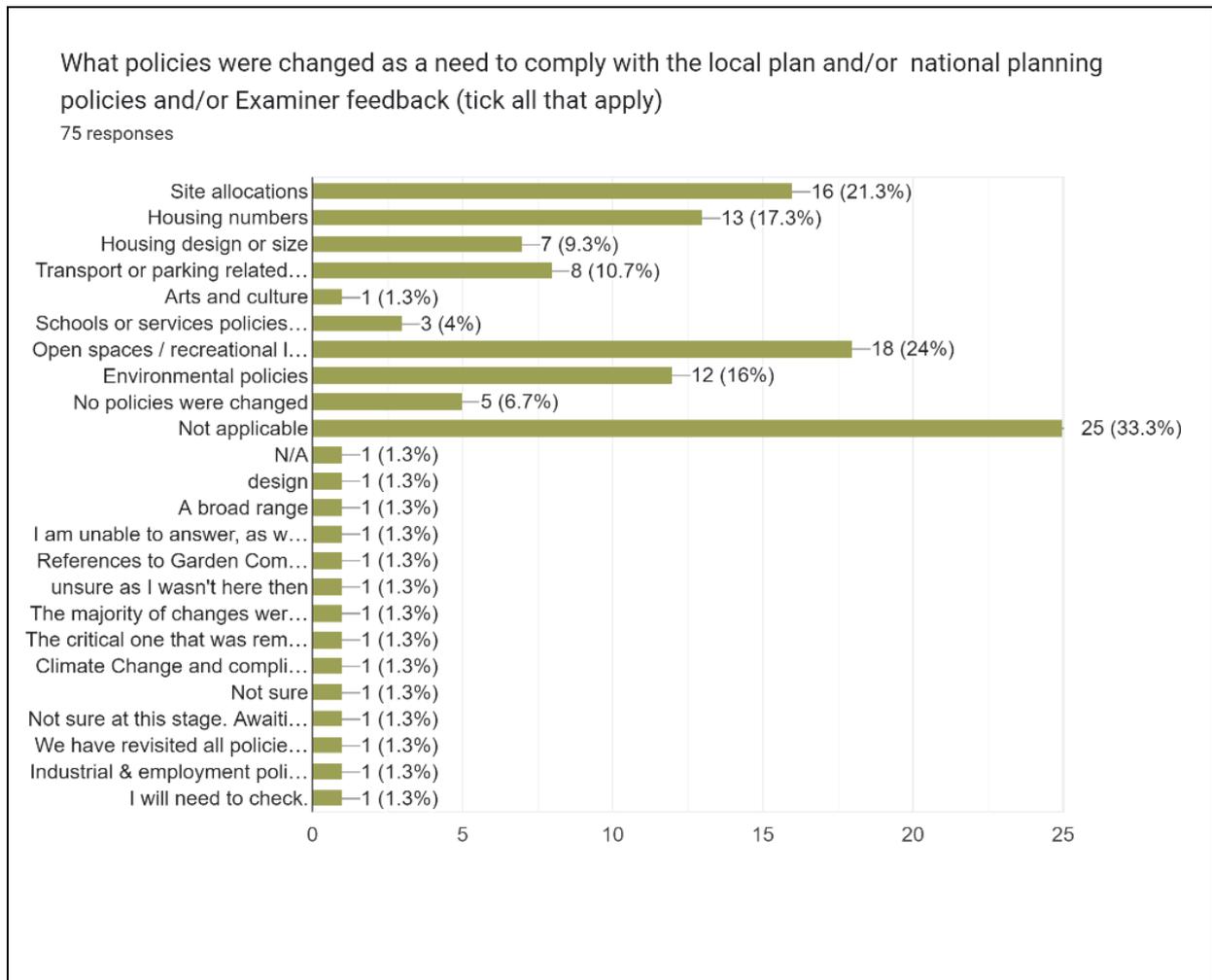


Figure 14 shows 57% (43) of plans were changed before referendum, bringing into question the plans reflection of community aspirations; this is further explored in the following Figures.

Figure 15: Question 36: What policies where changed?



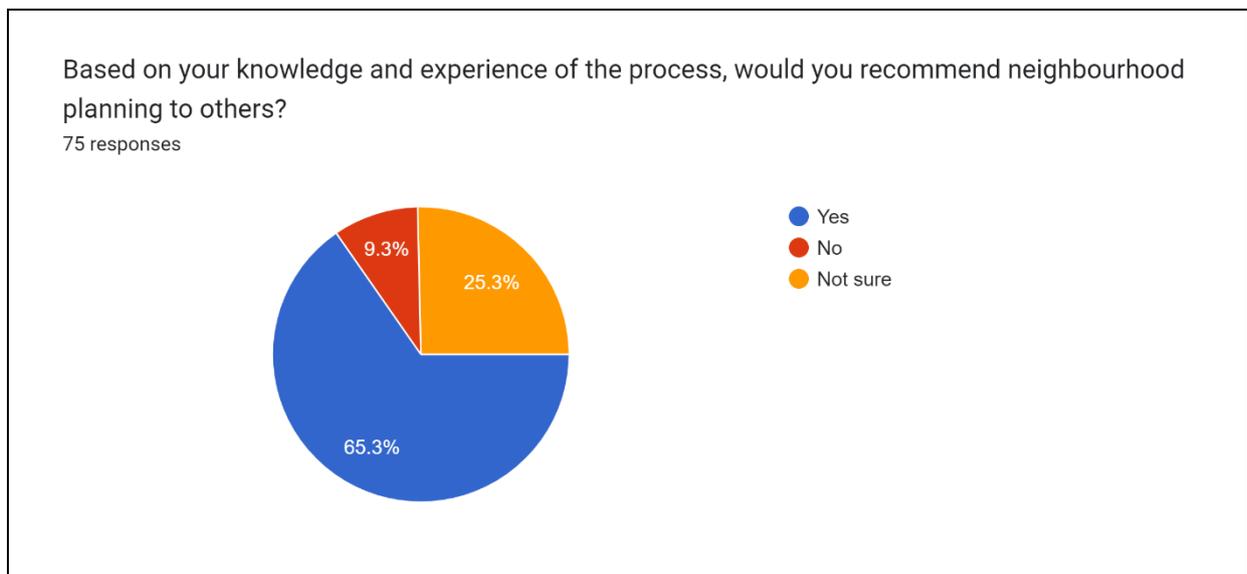
The most changed policies relate to open spaces and recreational land (24%). This is important as most local councils manage and provide these services (NALC, 2023), but, if they are affected by local and national policies, and if local wishes are countermanded, the community-led nature and effectiveness of NP are undermined. This important topic is outside the scope of the present research and supplementary evaluation would be useful.

This research evidences more than 50% of NPs were changed to comply with local/national policies or legislation, aligning with Parker's 2015 findings, although only 12% (9) reported the NP was compromised or weakened because of policy changes.

4.3.4 Summarising the Experience

A supplementary measure of the effectiveness of NPs was gained in asking if respondents would recommend the process and whether they would do it again. This could be considered the 'acid test'.

Figure 16: Question 40: Would you recommend neighbourhood planning?

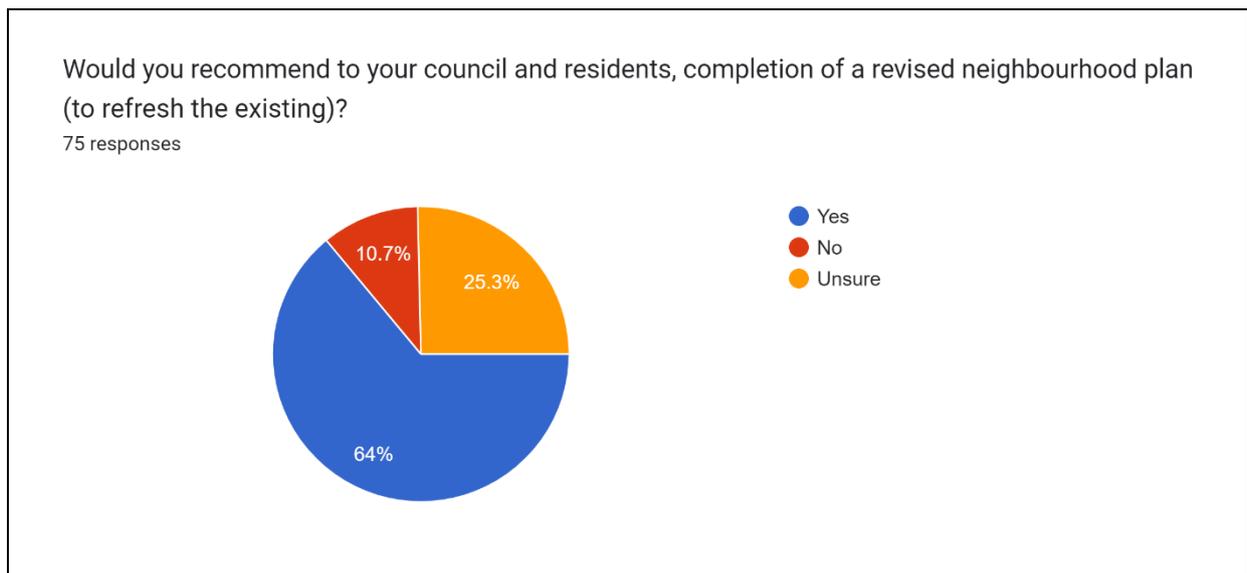


65% (49) replied they would recommend neighbourhood planning. Whilst not itself a measure of effectiveness, it may evidence a belief and trust in the process.

Comments included *"our policies are being used"*, *"great way of engaging with your community"* and *"brings planning local"*.

A number referenced the considerable time, complexity and resourcing difficulties, aligning with findings from the literature review.

Figure 17: Question 42: Would you recommend completion of a revised plan?



When asked if they would recommend refreshing an existing plan, responses aligned with question 40. Some polar-opposite comments are worthy of inclusion, illustrating pride in the process and outcome, and cynicism respectively:

Respondent 1: *“People fail to understand the real value of a neighbourhood plan”, and “None of this [success] would have been possible without a neighbourhood plan”.*

In stark contrast stand the following responses from similarly sized councils in population and budget:

Respondent 2: *“I would not recommend an NP as I am not sure that the return would be worth the investment”.*

Respondent 3: *“In reality will the planning officers truly place as much focus on these neighbourhood plans as they should for the work that has been involved?”*

4.4 Analysis of Research Methodology

The objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning by focusing on three tangible measures, community engagement, the role of the LPA and policy changes. Although the researcher's hypothesis could not be verified by data, the mixed use of quantitative and qualitative research met the aims and objectives of the research with the 45 survey questions providing a wide range of experiential responses which were collated and analysed.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed and evaluated primary research in evaluating the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England. Responses were diverse, representing a good variety of councils and experiences.

This study has found parity with existing literature and research, concluding there is a distinct lack of success criteria to measure NPs (Parker et al, 2023), complicating their evaluation.

Whilst this study does not provide conclusive evidence that any one part of the process adversely or positively affects the final plan more than any other part, it provides up-to-date empirical evidence and experience of neighbourhood planning by local councils.

The following chapter provides conclusions about the effectiveness of NPs, including recommendations to improve the process and for future research arising from this study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the original aim of measuring the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning, addressing the research methodology, drawing research findings to a conclusion, assessing the researcher's hypothesis and identifies potential for future research as a direct result of this study.

5.2 Conclusions about NP Effectiveness

This research has broadly met the primary aims and objectives as established in chapter 1. The research methodology was appropriate for the research topic and the target audience; a full methodology assessment was provided in chapter 3.

In defining effectiveness, this research measured and evaluated changes, amendments, and influences on NPs against three criteria:

Evaluation 1: How, and to what extent, did the qualifying body engage with the community to evidence a community-led plan?

Evaluation 2: What was the level of LPA support, and did it influence the NPs effectiveness?

Evaluation 3: Did the NP compromise on policies to comply with national policies and local plans?

Bringing these evaluations to a conclusion has proven complex given the subjectiveness of responses. Evaluating community engagement and LPA support has proven especially difficult with no prescribed benchmarks against which to measure. NPs can only be objectively assessed against defined criteria of success or failure, yet the primary measure is in the external examination which assesses the plan against legislation rather than

established practitioner methodology or best practice, and there are limited common criteria. The survey elicited detailed and varied responses, raising more questions than it answered with respondents keen to provide real-life, comprehensive feedback.

Responses to questions on community engagement demonstrate frustration, aggravated by a lack of any established process.

Responses on the role of the LPA were inconclusive, with no trends, patterns or causality clearly discernible.

More than 50% of plans were amended to comply with national/local planning policies, calling into question whether NPs truly represent community aspirations, aligning with findings from the literature review in chapter 2.

Concurring with Parker et al (2015/2023) and Brownill and Bradley (2017), this research concludes there are indeed no clear indicators or means of measuring the success of NPs given the lack of benchmarks or success criteria. The evidence is not there to conclude that any one part of the process leads to a more, or less, effective NP. The research findings have not proved the researcher's hypothesis of the criticality of the LPA's role but equally, they have not disproved it.

5.3 Recommendations for NPs and Further Study

This research has uncovered further areas and opportunities for review to support the introduction of practical, tangible benchmarks as recommended below:

5.3.1 Community Engagement

This research has revealed a lack of structure and support for community engagement. Given the disparate community engagement methods, it would be beneficial to assess the quality of community engagement against voter participation at referendum. Where the plan evidenced strong community involvement, was this matched with a high referendum turn-out? Did poor community involvement result in a low referendum turn-out? Another

potential explanation for a low turn-out is residents were given opportunities to take part in the NP consultation but actively chose not to and/or did not care. High community participation might mean residents did not feel the need to vote as they were satisfied with (or exhausted by) the process and already familiar with the NP. A high turn-out might follow poor participation, if residents are coming to the NP from a standing-start, making their views known at the referendum.

These questions were outside the scope of the present research and cannot be confidently addressed, evidencing inconsistency in, and the immeasurability of, community engagement. Future research could usefully focus on the role, value and purpose of community engagement in order ultimately to define engagement standards, whilst equally acknowledging local nuances and community characteristics.

5.3.2 LPA Behaviour Towards NP Groups

This research did not evidence any trend or pattern in responses concerning LPA behaviour. A question which generated most insight concerned the assessment of the LPA's support, where responders rated it from 'poor' to 'excellent', but the definition of those terms were subjective.

Future research should objectively define these measures, to enable learning from best practice and recognise the impact of weaker support. There is further opportunity to correlate responses on the LPA's support with the number and type of policies changed at examination. This might enable strong LPA support to be associated with fewer and less serious policy changes (given the professional knowledge of LPA planning officers) and weaker support with more policy changes or deletions at examination, and it might discover a causal connection. It could also inform an understanding of the relationship between LPA support and the survival of community aspirations which might otherwise be killed off at examination.

Chapter 2 noted the government's original intention to mandate and prescribe LPA support, but this has not been realised in legislation. A better understanding of exactly what 'poor' and 'excellent' LPA support looks might enable objective calibration to be set for LPA

support. Further research could even lead to mandatory standards for LPAs resulting in a more equitable, efficient, and effective service for NP groups.

5.3.3 Policy Amendments

Parker's 2015 research found many NPs were amended to comply with local or national planning policies; this research confirms the practice continues with more than 50% of plans amended prior to referendum, the most commonly changed policies related to open spaces and recreational land. It is reasonable to deduce from this that plans may no longer represent community aspirations.

Further research could seek to interrogate and understand the rationale and impact of policy changes and if/how they compromised community wishes.

5.3.4 Inclusivity

This research focused on local town and parish councils in England. Further NP research could include all qualifying bodies, including neighbourhood forums, community organisations and business areas. Full inclusivity would provide comprehensive research data and might reveal different and varying experiences according to the type and nature of the qualifying body and its relationship with the community and LPA.

5.4 Chapter Summary

The research objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans in England. The research has yielded a mix of responses and experiences. From the wealth of information generated by this research, the stand-out conclusion affirms the position as found from the literature review; NPs lack a measure of success thus, their effectiveness cannot be fully evaluated.

The hypothesis that the LPA is critical to the NP's success could be neither proved nor disproved; this finding alone further recognises the inherent difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans. The illustrative and exploratory findings of this research suggest several themes, providing opportunities for additional research, adding to

existing knowledge and the establishment of benchmarks. These might aid legislators, policy makers, LPAs and qualifying bodies which would benefit from equitable and defined levels of LPA support.

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Appendices

The following appendices support this research programme into the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans:

Appendix A: The origins of neighbourhood planning

Appendix B: Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'

Appendix C: Research timetable (written February 2023)

Appendix D: Summary of changes made to survey, following pilot testing

Appendix E: Research participant information sheet

Appendix F: Research participant consent form

Appendix G: Survey questions

Appendix H: Summary of data: all responses to survey

Appendix A: The origins of neighbourhood planning

This appendix identifies the origins, concept and primary aims of neighbourhood planning.

Origins of Planning

Town planning is evident throughout history with early farming settlements apparent along rivers and close to food sources (Town Planning Info, 2023). The industrial and agricultural revolutions of the 18th century saw significant organisational change as people migrated from the countryside to towns, creating conurbations; town planning is not, therefore, a new concept.

The current English planning system was first legislated through the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, laying down “*procedures to control urban sprawl into the countryside and implement a ‘plan-led’ system for the first time*” (Town Planning Info, 2023). It is divided into two parts:

1. Primary legislation through Acts of Parliament or Statutes (law) and
2. Secondary legislation through Statutory Instruments (such as Orders and Regulations)

Planning Legislation and Hierarchy

Figure 1 within the main body of the research paper shows the hierarchy of planning in England. Each ‘layer’ of planning must have relativity to and comply with the layer above it.

The national planning policy framework (NPPF) is England’s primary planning policy, underpinned through Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments. There are other planning policies covering specific areas of the planning system, including nationally significant infrastructure projects, waste management, travellers’ sites and parking. England’s “plan-led” system consists of national and local planning policies with local

planning authorities (LPAs¹⁵) adopting responsibility for production of a local plan for their area, establishing strategic policies on housing, major infrastructure, community facilities and conservation measures (including climate change) (MHCLG, 2021b).

The UK Government determines national planning policy as set out in the NPPF supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Introduced in 2012 under the Localism Act 2011, the NPPF replaces and consolidates several former planning policy statements and guidance notes. Its overall aim is to “*ensure the planning system contributes to the achievement of sustainable development*” (Planning Aid, 2022) whilst maintaining three overarching sustainability objectives:

- **Economic:** ensuring development is in the right place to support the economy
- **Social:** ensuring houses are appropriate in quantity and size to support the local community
- **Environmental:** protection of the natural, built and historic environments with enhancements using the most environmentally advantageous process.

These objectives are at the heart of national planning policies and development and neighbourhood planning is no exception.

Neighbourhood plans must conform to a series of prescribed planning tests namely the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and subsequent amendments in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. The 2012 Act remains the principal legislation whilst the 2017 Act “*is intended to strengthen neighbourhood Planning*” (Local Government Association (LGA) 2017:2), focusing on NPs relationship with the wider planning system.

¹⁵ LPAs: Often defined by geographical boundaries. The LPA is usually the planning department of the district or county council

Appendix B: Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'

Sherry Arnstein was the author of a widely referenced and acclaimed 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'; an influential model in the field of democratic public participation. Devised and included in the Journal of the American Institute of Planners in 1969, the ladder is a concept which visualizes the various levels of citizen participation in a community decision-making process. The lowest rungs represent low levels of participation whilst the highest rungs represent citizen power, where the community determines how information is shared and used.

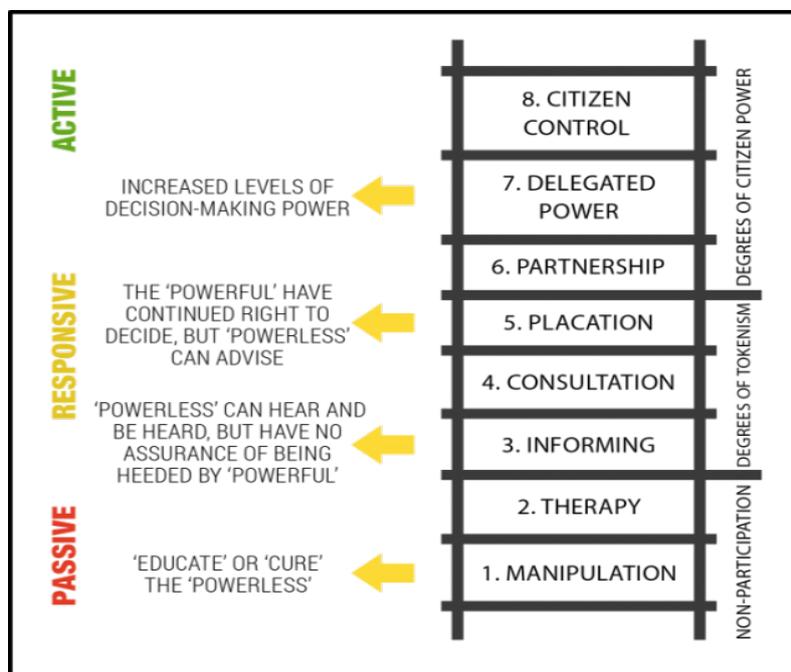


Figure 18: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Google, 2023)

In explaining citizen participation, Arnstein (1969) wrote:

"The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy—a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, and whites. And when the have-nots define participation as redistribution of power, the American consensus on the fundamental principle explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological, and political opposition."

Appendix C: Research timetable

Task	Dates	Notes
Start to collect and collate email lists / contacts for individuals and groups who will form part of the research process	20 th Feb 2023	Use list from previous module? Use County Associations / Direct contact to those with NPs
Determine research methodology	1 st March 2023	
Draft research methodology to James Derounian (tutor)	3 rd April 2023	
Complete ethics form and seek approval	10 th April 2023	
1 st draft of questionnaire	20 th April 2023	Share questionnaire with students and others for first evaluation and feedback – pilot testing
Complete questionnaire	25 th April 2023	
Send out questionnaire to consultees	30 th April 2023	Need to have researched and prepped emailing list Have open for 2-3 weeks (extend as necessary)
Draft results of research results and analysis to James	23 rd June 2023	
Draft presentation to James	30 th June 2023	
Date of online presentation	13 th July 2023	20-minute presentation with 5 mins Q & A See module guide for info and guidance on presentation
Draft conclusion and recommendations to James	12 th September 2023	
Dissertation deadline	12 th October 2023	

Appendix D: Summary of changes made to survey, following pilot testing

The following summarises changes made following pilot testing with fellow students, friends, family, and colleagues:

Query / issue raised by pilot testers	Action taken
General comments / feedback	
In the preamble, clearly set the date for closing of responses	Details added and made more evident in the preamble and covering email with survey
Purpose of survey? Is this clear enough?	Narrative strengthened to add further detail and context to the survey
Will the answers remain anonymous?	To make this information clearer, it was included in the participation consent form, participant information sheet and repeated in the covering email sent with the survey
Be clear that personal information will be permanently deleted and clarify exactly how data will be held. Can participants withdraw at any time? Will data be anonymised?	The details in the participant information sheet were strengthened to address the queries raised, specifically addressing queries on data retention, withdrawal from the research and anonymity
Formatting issues on the participant form and consent form – text / lines did not align	Text and format revisited to remedy formatting issues
Error with contact details which auto filled and populated the questions, putting contact name under all headings	Formatting revisited, error noted and corrected in formatting of Google Forms
Should you ask if councils wish to refresh their existing NPs?	Question 42 added to address this query
Unclear where respondents could indicate further involvement and/or receipt of research summary	These questions were moved to the end of the survey, thanking respondents for their contribution, questions 44 and 45 respectively
Question specific feedback	
Question 7: East is missing from original location area (3 respondents noted this omission)	Added to final survey
Question 7: Have included 2 options for 'south'	Options amended
Question 9: Suggestion to add in 'other' in addition to the responses already provided	No changes made as the researcher believes the options provided are adequate and cover all principal authority structures in England
Question 10: This asks "when did you start your neighbourhood plan" but there is no opportunity to say "have not started one"	The introductory email and text to the survey was strengthened to request that only those who have started or completed a NP should complete the survey. The survey is not intended for those that have not started a NP
Question 10: add option 'from 2021 onwards'	Option added
Question 11: The original question only asked, "have you completed your neighbourhood plan". The pilot respondent suggested it would be good to understand what stage the plan was at	Options amended to move from a simple yes/no response to options which describe the current status of the NP

Query / issue raised by pilot testers	Action taken
Question 13: No option to note the NP is completed	Option added
Question 14: Add option to include parish magazine	Option added
Question 14: Add option to state 'other' and then describe what this is	Option added along with free text opportunity
Question 16: The question is ambiguous and should be clearer – not sure what you are asking (2 respondents queried this original question)	Wording amended to add clarity to the question
Question 19: Suggest this is reworded to ask to 'what degree' was the community engaged	No changes made as adding this additional subjective element would potentially influence responses
Question 21: The slide scale seems odd and does not fit with other questions	In the original questionnaire, question 21 was a sliding scale, asking respondents to rate (1-5) if there were barriers which hindered participation. Question type amended to align with all others
Question 23: How will you use this data? What is the point in knowing this information?	The question remained, providing a baseline understanding of the average age demographic. In doing so, it identifies engagement areas of strength and weakness (for example in responding to question 23, no respondent selected the average age group as being under 40)
Question 34: add option that it was changed following feedback from the external Examiner	Option added to question
Question 35: change 'Planning Inspector' to 'Examiner'	Question amended
Question 34 and 36: Questions unclear and needs to include why policies were changed	Both questions amended and reworded, including the addition of a range of reasons why policies were changed
Question 36: increase policy options to include arts and culture	Option added to question

Research Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: Research into the Effectiveness of Neighbourhood Planning in England

Name of Researcher(s): Lisa Courtney, Undergraduate student at De Montfort University

Dear Participant

I would like to ask you to participate in a research study and data collection on the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England. The research is being conducted by me and I am an undergraduate student at De Montfort University and the findings will be used in my final dissertation as part of the Community Governance degree.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are invited as a member of a Town or Parish Council which is delivering (or has delivered) a neighbourhood plan in England. Any withdrawal or declination in participation does not and will not prejudice any further relationship with the researcher.

Participants may withdraw from this research at any time and for any reason. Once the report is concluded however, your response cannot be extracted and will be included in the final report; notably all information in the final report will be anonymised and neither you or your organisation will be identifiable from data produced in the report (see 'what happens to the information I provide' section for further information).

A consent form is further included and participation in the research assumes consent as outlined in the consent form.

What does the study / participation involve?

There are two stages of the research study:

Stage 1: A questionnaire asking questions about your experience of the neighbourhood plan process which should take **no longer than 5-10 minutes** to complete. It is an online questionnaire (paper copies available upon request), and participants will be asked if they would like to further contribute to the research by taking part in online interviews.

Stage 2: From those that consent to further participation, approximately 10 will be selected to participate in online interviews. This selection will seek to be a cross-section of those that have completed or working on neighbourhood plans in England and to offer a proportional representation of those completing neighbourhood plans.

The online interviews will take place remotely using Zoom (or a similar platform) and further details will be sent to you should you agree to participate in this part of the research.

What happens to the information I provide?

The information will be used as part of my research and dissertation evaluating the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans in England. Information will be held in strictest confidence and held on a

password protected database. This database is held on a cloud-protected server which is itself subject to strict access protocols, passwords and protection measures.

Any identifiable information you may give will be removed and anonymised, neither you nor your organisation will be identified in any public reports. No personal data will be shared with or provided to DMU without your express consent.

On conclusion of the research study, all personal information and data held will be permanently deleted.

A copy of the overall findings will be made publicly available (anticipated autumn 2023), and participants can receive a copy of the findings upon request (there is an option on the research questionnaire to request a copy of the research findings).

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

Advantages: You will support research into the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans in England.

Your participation will provide real experience and understanding of the neighbourhood planning, enabling the researcher to evaluate this and identify strengths and weaknesses in the current neighbourhood planning system. Your participation will further support and enable the researcher to complete their dissertation research.

Disadvantages: There are no known or identified risks in participation.

What if I have a query?

At any point of the process, before, during or after your participation, you can contact me to ask about any element of the research. My contact details are given below.

In the unlikely event you have cause to complain about the process, you may contact Dr James Derounian, Lead Tutor for the Module SLCC3004 "Community Governance Research Project" email: James.Derounian@slcc.co.uk

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities Ethics Committee.

And Finally

Should you choose to take part in this research, I would like to thank you in advance for your participation. Your honesty and candidness in responding to the questionnaire is greatly appreciated and will be used positively to inform research forming part of the dissertation evaluating the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England.

If you are not able to commit to being involved in this research at the present time, thank you for reading the attached documents and I would be happy to keep you informed of the research findings.

Lisa Courtney
Undergraduate Student at De Montfort University
Email: P17034671@my365.dmu.ac.uk

Research Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An evaluation into the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Planning in England

Name of Researcher: Lisa Courtney

To be read by all participants in the research programme

I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the research study at the start of the online study and the participant information sheet. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I also understand I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. I can decline to answer any particular question, or questions.

I am aware my data will be anonymised and stored. I agree to it being shared in a relevant archive in this form. I acknowledge and understand that parts of the data collected during the study may be reviewed by individuals from De Montfort University (perhaps as part of an audit control process) and I give permission for these individuals to view and have access to my responses.

I agree that non identifiable quotes may be published in articles, used in conference presentations, or used for standard academic purposes such as assessment but that my name or another personal identifying information or data will not be used. This same anonymity applies to my individual council or organisation.

If participating in stage two of the research project (online interviews), I agree to the interview being digitally audio and video recorded and that this information will be stored electronically on a password protected device with access by the researcher.

On the basis of the foregoing and having read all accompanying documentation in connection to this research, I agree to participate in this study.

The Effectiveness of Neighbourhood Planning in England

This is a research project which should take **no more than 5-10 minutes** to complete, and your response will help to inform research on the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England.

Thank you for taking part in this survey, your time and response is appreciated. Please complete the survey as an individual employee or Councillor of the Council (i.e., I am not seeking a corporate/Council response). Please only complete one submission per neighbourhood plan.

Further details about the survey are given below followed by the survey questions.

*** Indicates required question**

I. Email *

Purpose of the survey

The survey is aimed at those that are currently undertaking, or have concluded, a neighbourhood plan. Its purpose is to gather details from neighbourhood plan groups about their experience of the neighbourhood planning process in order to assess if neighbourhood plans are an effective part of the planning process in England.

If you have not started or completed a neighbourhood plan, please do not complete this survey.

What's in the survey?

The survey is in two sections.

The first section asks for factual information about your organisation, for example population, finances, location etc.

The second section asks you to specifically consider your experience of neighbourhood planning with an opportunity to add further narrative if required.

How will the information be used?

The responses will be reviewed and analysed to critique and form an opinion on the effectiveness of neighbourhood planning in England. Any identifiable information you may give will be removed and anonymised, neither you nor your organisation will be identified in any public reports.

All participants will be offered the opportunity to receive a copy of the research findings, this opportunity is contained at the end of the survey.

For further information, please see the [Participant information sheet](#)

By participating in the survey you give your consent in accordance with the consent statement: [Participant Consent Form](#)

Closing date

Please complete all responses by 30th May 2023

2. Your name *

3. Your role in the organisation *

4. Name of Town / Parish Council *

5. Population of your parish / town *

Mark only one oval.

Less than 1,000

1,000 to 5,000

5,000 to 15,000

15,000 plus

6. Average annual expenditure of Council (include precept and other income) *

Mark only one oval.

Less than £5,000

£5,000 to £20,000

£20,000 to £100,000

£100,000 to £250,000

£250,000 plus

7. Your location *

Mark only one oval.

North East

North West

North

Midlands

East

South East

South West

8. Please describe your area *

Mark only one oval.

- Rural
- Semi-rural
- Urban

9. Principal Authority Structure *

Mark only one oval.

- 2-tier system (ie County Council and District Council, exc Town/Parish Council)
- Unitary
- Other: _____

Questions about your neighbourhood plan experience

Please consider the following questions, answering as honestly and candidly as you can. All responses will be confidentially held, and responses will be anonymised in all public reports or findings.

10. When did you start your neighbourhood plan? *

Mark only one oval.

- Between 2011 to 2015
- From 2016 to 2020
- From 2021 onwards

11. Have you completed your neighbourhood plan? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, it has been adopted following a public referendum
- Yes, but it is awaiting either a public referendum or formal adoption by the Local Planning Authority
- Yes, it is with the Examiner who is reviewing it for a public referendum
- No, it is still a working document

12. When will your neighbourhood plan be completed? *

Mark only one oval.

- It is completed as per the question above
- Within the next year
- Within the next 12-24 months
- Other: _____

13. How long have you been working on the plan? *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than one year
 - 1-2 years
 - 2-5 years
 - 5 years plus
 - _____
- Other:

Community Engagement

This covers your interaction and communication with the local community

14. What engagement methods did you use? *
- (tick all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Social media (ie Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok)
- Town / Parish Council website
- A bespoke neighbourhood plan website
- Posters and leaflets
- Public forums
- Drop-in information sessions
- Road shows (includes market stalls)
- Other: _____

15. How frequently did you carry out these community engagement activities? *

Mark only one oval.

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Irregularly
- Other: _____

16. Approximately what percentage of your community fed ideas in the neighbourhood plan as it developed? (This number should include the total from initial concept to completion) *

Mark only one oval.

- 75% plus
- 50% - 74%
- 25% - 49%
- 10% to 24%
- Less than 10%

17. Are you content with the consultation programme and methods which you used? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

18. Please explain your answer above and please provide examples of your engagement methods or practices

19. Do you think your community was engaged in the neighbourhood plan process? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Not sure

20. Please explain your answer above

21. Barriers to engagement: Do you believe there were any barriers to the engagement process which hindered participation? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

22. If you experienced barriers to engagement, what do you think these were?

Check all that apply.

- Lack of trust (in the Council)
- Internet access / IT capability
- Disability or impairment
- Privacy concerns
- Location
- Consultation
- fatigue
- Lack of or misunderstanding of what a neighbourhood plan
- is Not a high priority for residents / Apathy
- Not applicable
- _____
- Other:

23. If your plan is completed, what do you think was the average age demographic * of respondents?

Mark only one oval.

- 25 and under
- 26 to 40
- 41 to 60
- 61 plus
- Unsure or not applicable

24. Would you have done anything differently regarding the community engagement process? (tick all that apply)

*

Check all that apply.

- Carry out more general consultation sessions
- Carry out more targeted consultation sessions (ie with specific age/demographic groups)
- Carry out less consultation
- Other: _____

25. Please add any further information or details about your experience of the consultation process

Support from the Local Planning Authority

Please think about the help and support you received from the Local Planning Authority

26. How would you rate the level of support from your Local Planning Authority? *

Mark only one oval.

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

27. Please explain your answer above

28. Did the Local Planning Authority actively encourage you to undertake a neighbourhood plan? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Not sure

29. Did the Local Planning Authority provide Officer help and support in the process? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Not sure

30. How did the Local Planning Authority support the neighbourhood plan process?

*

Check all that apply.

- Provision of general support, advice and guidance
- Provision of technical advice and support
- Help linking the neighbourhood plan with policies in the local plan
- Help linking the neighbourhood plan with national planning policies
- Their help was not beneficial
- Other: _____

31. Was this support a valuable addition to the neighbourhood plan process? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

32. Please explain your answer(s) above

Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan

Please think about and comment on the policies in your neighbourhood plan

33. Does your Local Authority have a current local plan? *
(ie, adopted in the last 4-5 years)

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other: _____

34. Did you have to change or remove policies in your neighbourhood plan to ensure compliance with the local plan or national planning policies? *

Check all that apply.

- Yes - to comply with the local plan
- Yes - to comply with the national plan
- No
- Unsure
- We are not yet at that stage of the process
- Other: _____

35. When were these changes made? *

Mark only one oval.

- As part of discussions with the Local Authority and before formal public consultation
- By the Planning Examiner as part of their review before referendum
- No changes were made
- Not applicable; we are not yet at that stage
- Other: _____

36. What policies were changed as a need to comply with the local plan and/or national planning policies and/or Examiner feedback *

Check all that apply.

- Site allocations
- Housing numbers
- Housing design or size
- Transport or parking related policies
- Arts and culture
- Schools or services policies (ie doctors, libraries) Open spaces / recreational land
- Environmental policies
- No policies were changed
- Not applicable
- Other: _____

37. Do you think your neighbourhood plan was compromised or weakened as a result of removing any policies? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable
- Other: _____

38. Please explain your answer above

39. If your plan has been adopted, have the policies been used and/or referenced by you or the Local Planning Authority in responding to planning applications? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable (as plan not yet adopted)

40. Based on your knowledge and experience of the process, would you recommend neighbourhood planning to others? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

41. Please explain your answer above

42. Would you recommend to your council and residents, completion of a revised neighbourhood plan (to refresh the existing)? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

43. Please explain your answer above

44. Further participation *

Please indicate below if you would be interested in further participation in this survey, which may include a short on-line interview, lasting approximately 20 minutes. Your continued help and support would be appreciated and would build upon the knowledge base for this research.

Mark only one oval.

- Y
- N

45. End of Survey

Thank you for your time and support in completing this survey. Your help and support is greatly appreciated.

Please indicate if you would like a summary of the survey responses (available approximately November 2023)

Mark only one oval.

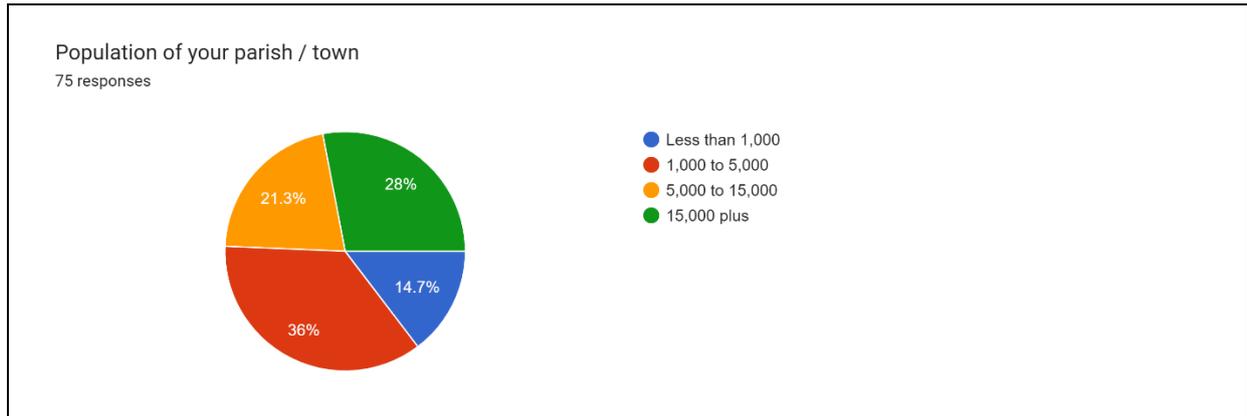
- Y
- N

Appendix H: Summary of data: all responses to survey

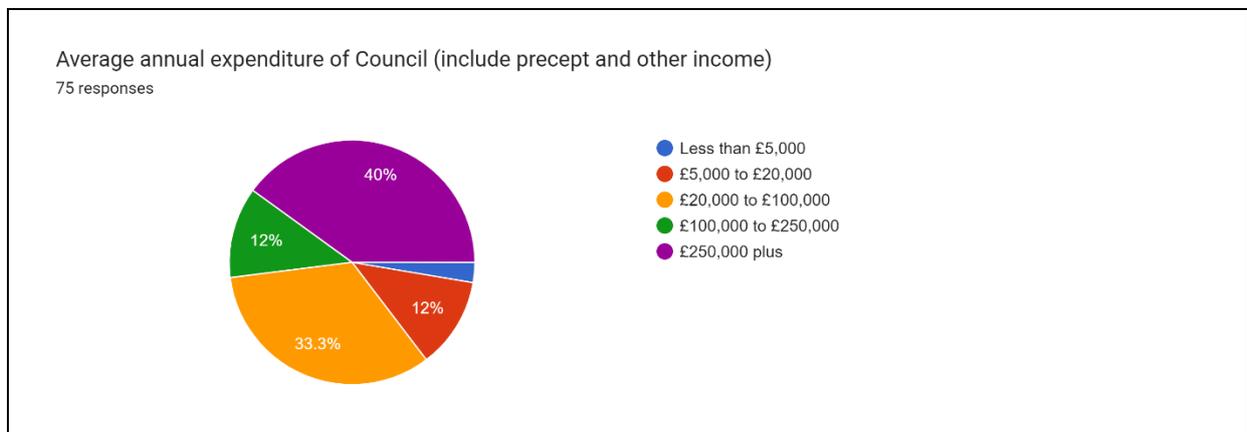
(this summary excludes questions 1-4 which may identify named individuals or councils. Where appropriate, some information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of responses)

Respondent Profile and Neighbourhood Plan Status

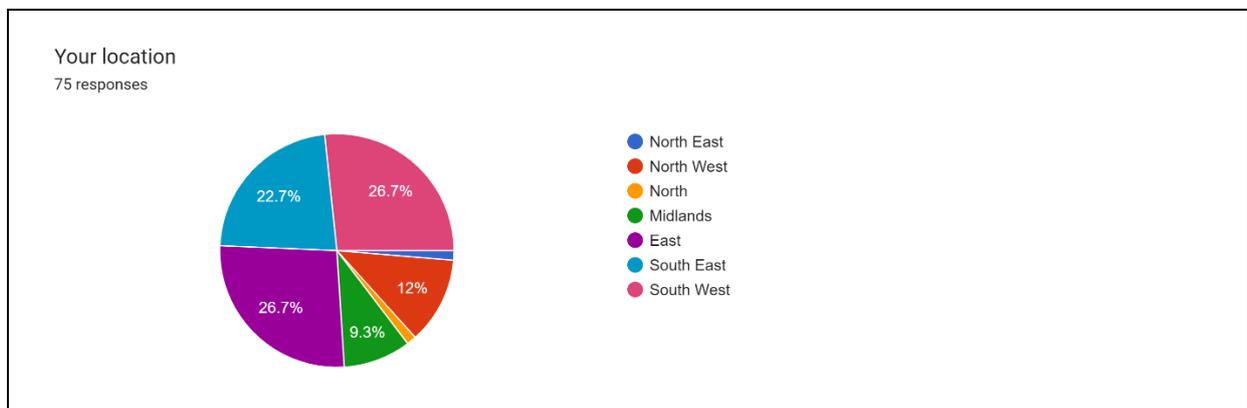
Question 5: Population of your town/parish



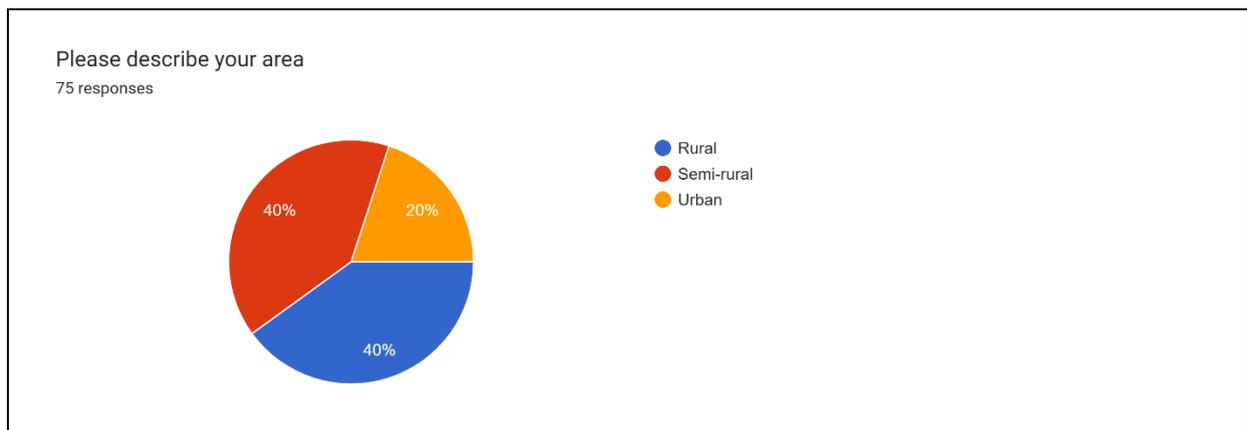
Question 6: Average annual expenditure of Council (include precept and income)



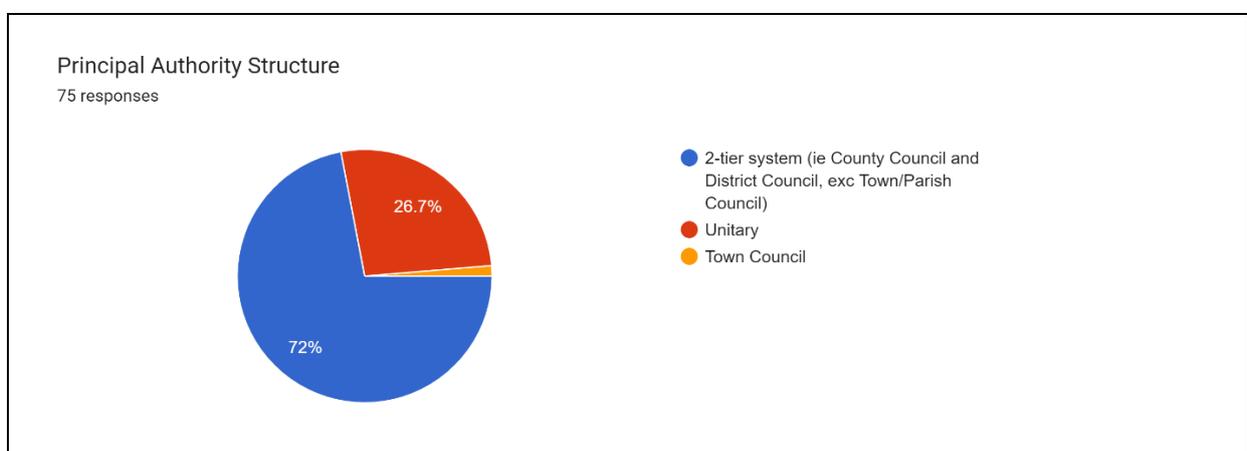
Question 7: Your location



Question 8: Please describe your area

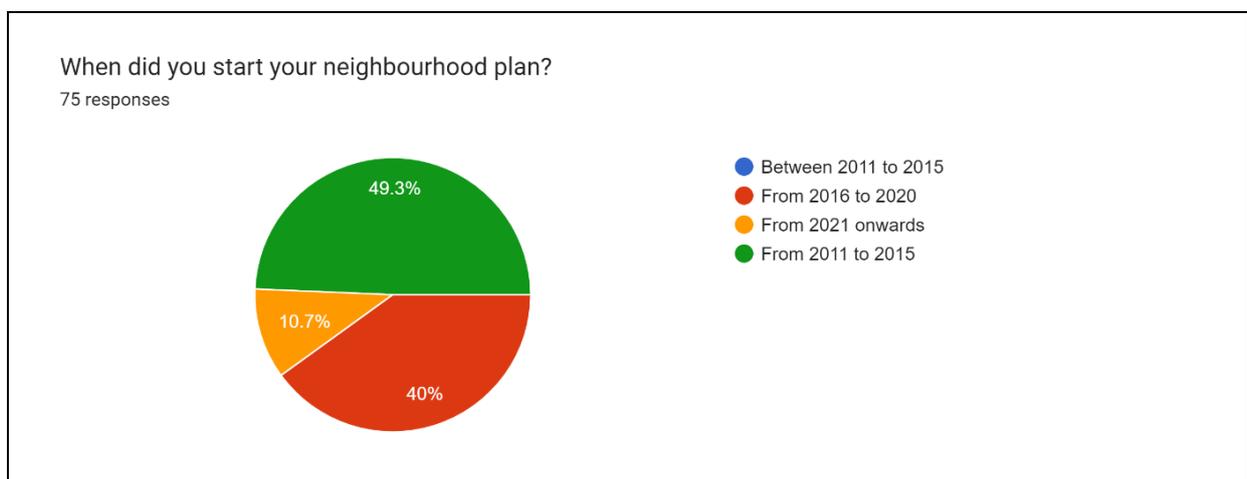


Question 9: Principal authority structure

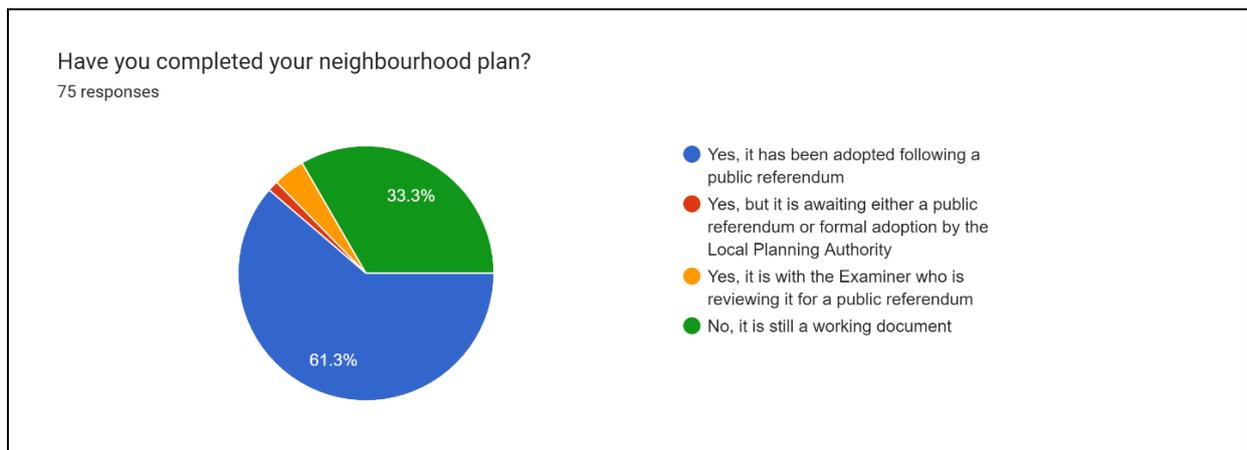


Questions about your neighbourhood plan experience

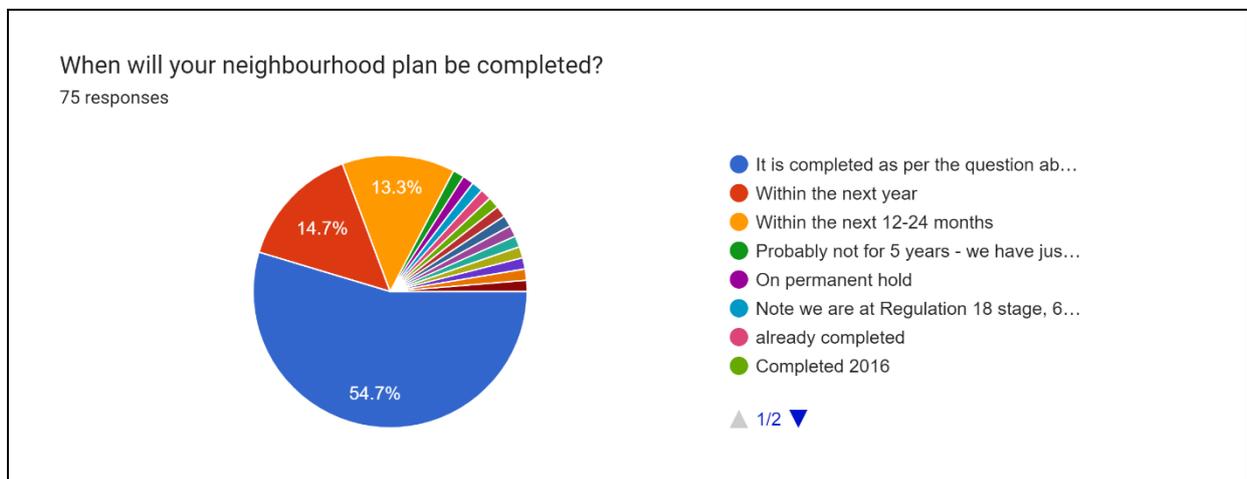
Question 10: When did you start your neighbourhood plan?



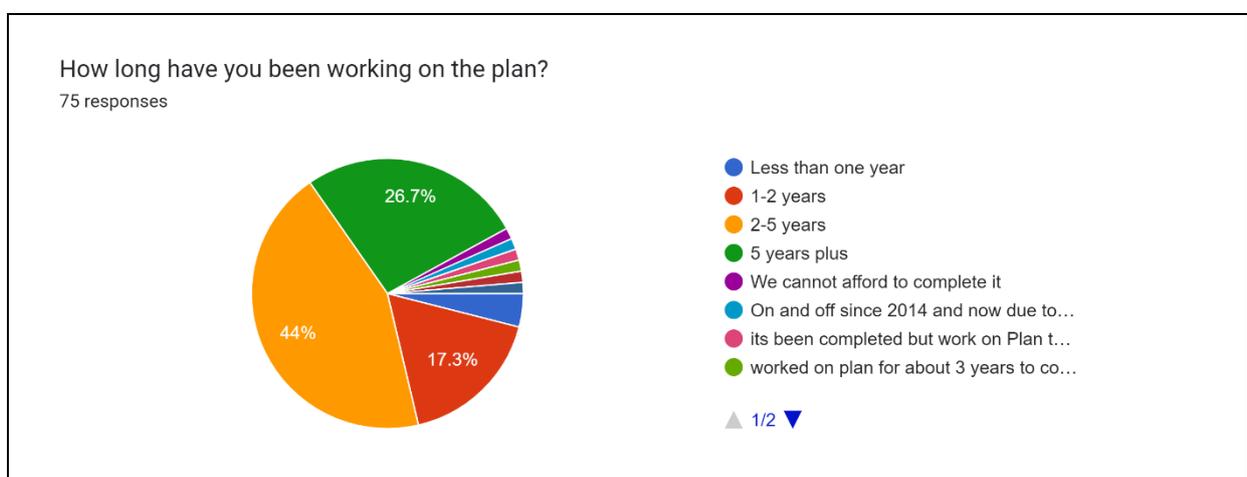
Question 11: Have you completed your neighbourhood plan?



Question 12: When will your neighbourhood plan be completed?

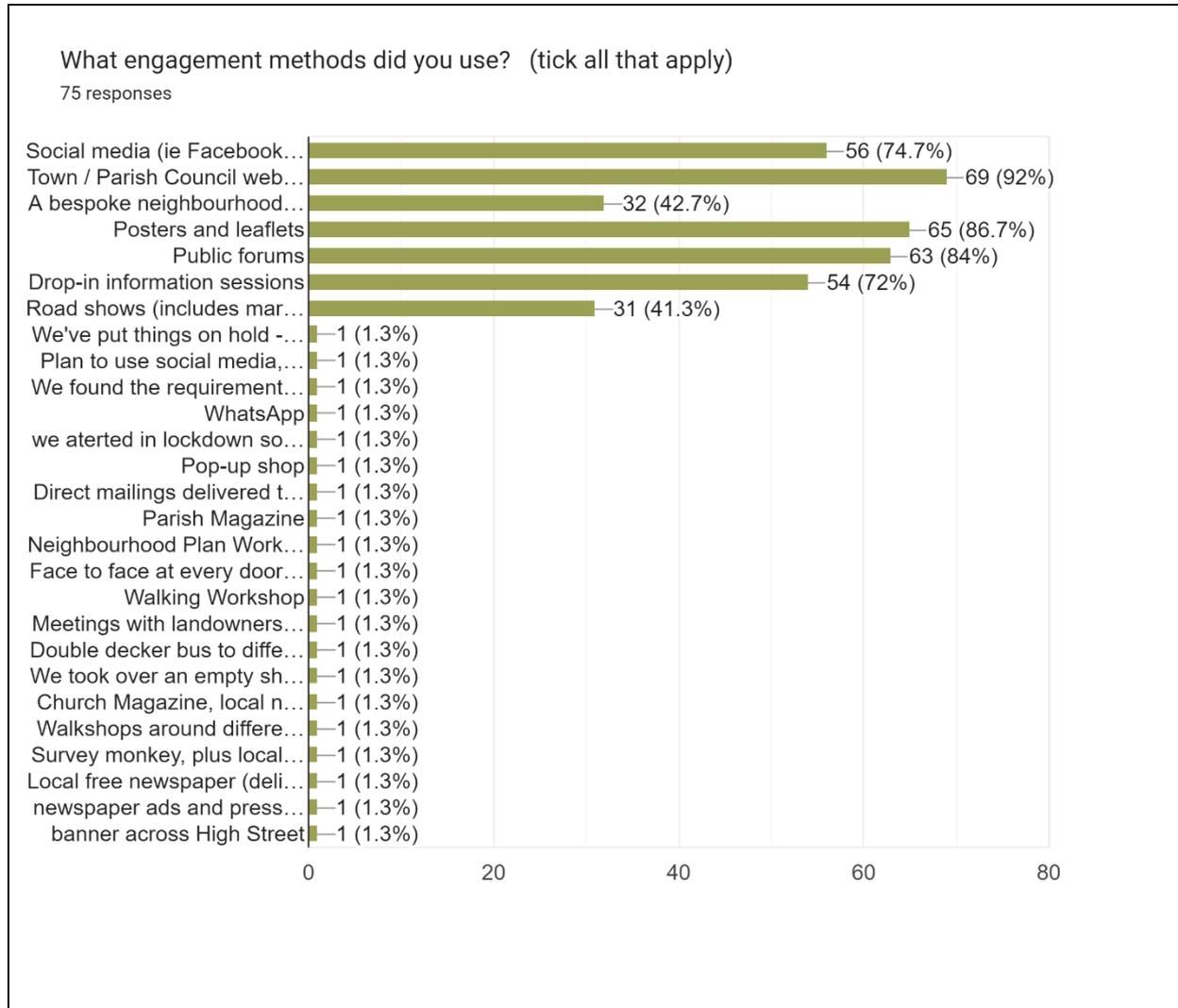


Question 13: How long have you been working on the plan?

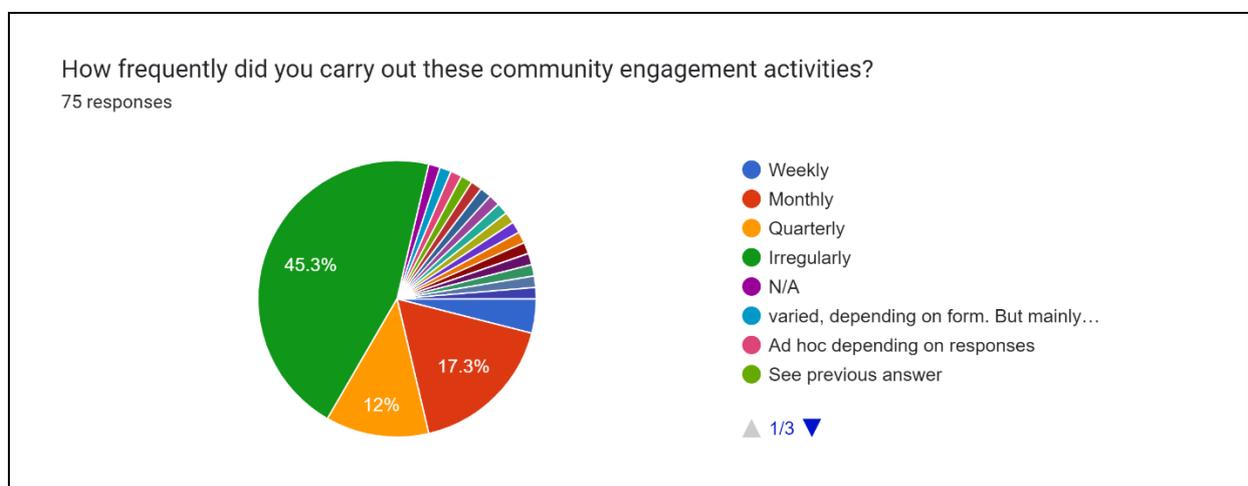


Questions about community engagement

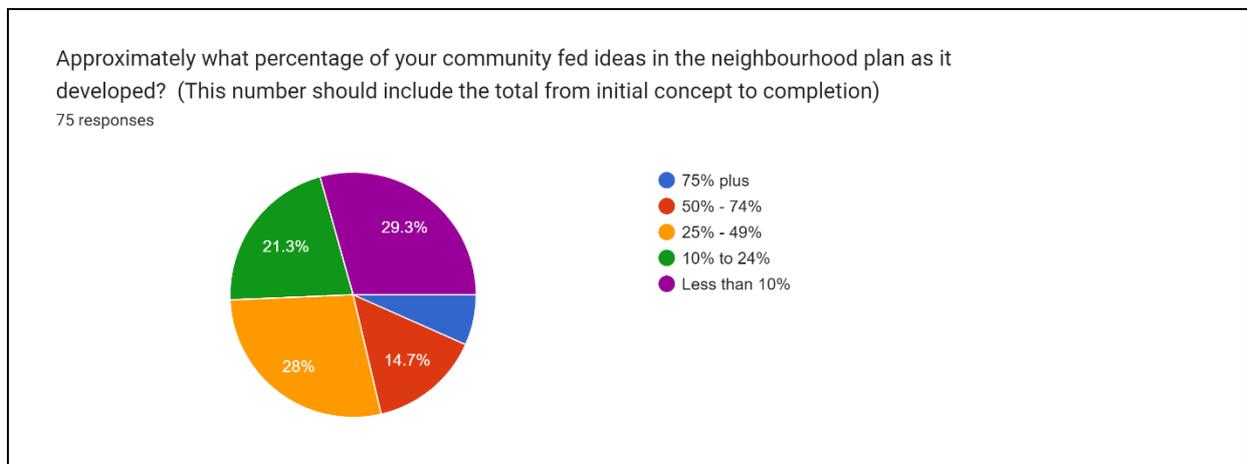
Question14: What engagement methods did you use?



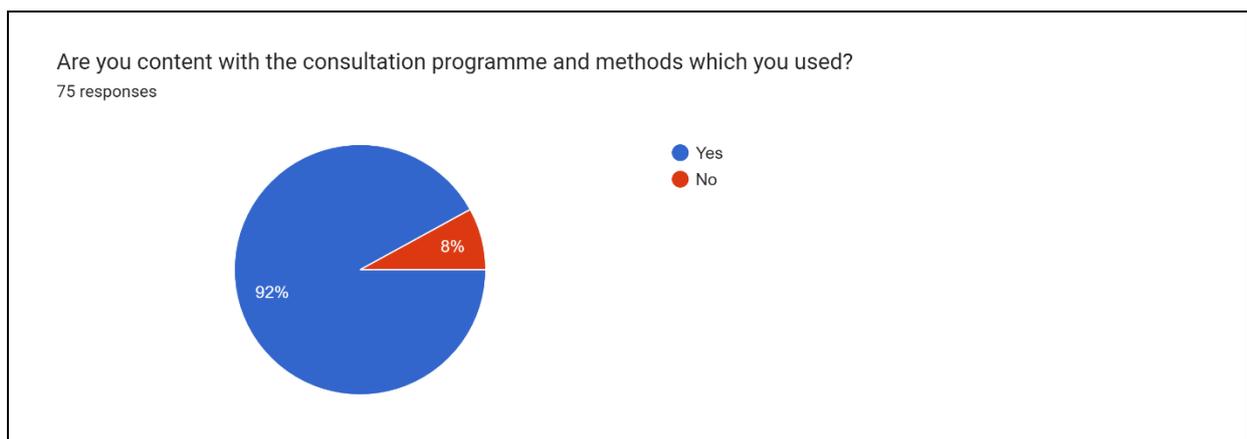
Question 15: How frequently did you carry out these engagement activities?



Question 16: Approximately what percentage of your community fed ideas into the neighbourhood plan as it developed? (This number should include the total from initial concept to completion)



Question 17: Are you content with the consultation programme and methods which you used?



Question 18: Please explain your answer above and please provide examples of your engagement methods or practices

We did formal surveys (hand delivered to every door), online surveys and drop in events at our monthly market. We did a school session with 6th form students too to test if they had different priorities. Whilst our % is low (overall) we gave plenty of opportunity and had a good quality of engagement.

Newsletter

Market stalls, drop in sessions, posters, leaflets, live website allowing for comments to be made

Our plan has struggled to get off the ground having had three "launches". In the first iteration it seemed like consultants led the consultation sessions and reached pre-

determined conclusions rather than the conclusions of attendees. Latterly we have planned for consultation sessions but not carried out any.

I am unable to answer, as wasn't employed at the time.

It was led by residents and Parish Councillors

Not a lot of residents attended the drop in sessions but those that did were satisfied with the process

See previous answer

We have used a variety of comms. methods. We had hoped for more engagement but we feel 50% is good

Full engagement post-Covid with villagers at public events, drop-in days, leaflet drops, posters and reports in [REDACTED] magazine quarterly

Regular meetings, Weekend engagement for Reg 14

In addition to the on-line avenues and those listed above, our Community Engagement Officer targeted specific groups such as charities, elderly groups and youth groups/schools. These involved drop-in sessions and visits to the groups' usual meetings.

Public drop in sessions as well as information on the Parish Council Website and updates at Parish Council and Village meetings.

Because of the extended duration of the preparation of the NP, Social Media was not as widely accepted, especially by the team who started the NP, as it is now. When we revised the plan we will include Social Media as part of our consultation as we have found that for communicating other things it has a high response rate.

Household surveys, Survey monkey on website, Neighbourhood Plan surveys to all households, Exhibits, Presentations at Annual Parish Meetings

As above we used mostly online methods for the consultation- no drop in events until the plan was almost complete, but we provided regular updates and opportunities for feedback through a range of methods

The neighbourhood plan was agreed with a 29% turn out at the referendum. Councillors and residents alike refer to it in relation to planning when consulted on planning matters locally.

Commonplace have helped us a lot

Realistically, achieving between 25 and 49% of engagement is actually fairly good. We made sure that consultations were carried out both weekdays and evenings and at weekends to accommodate all who wished to become involved.

We were quite content it would have been great to have a higher percentage but this reflects the apathy shown by people generally

Used Household, Business and Youth Surveys which had a high return rate.

Community survey (paper or online), engagement with local primary and secondary schools, plus community consultation events

In order to get the idea of NPs out to the community we regularly posted about what we were doing, what different planning terms meant ie S106, Affordable housing, how education and healthcare are funded through S106 etc and also passed on other events happening in the village. At roadshows at various village events such as the Music Festival and Church fetes we had a variety of means to capture information from the community- quick surveys, post it notes, votes etc. Surveys could be completed on line or via paper copies, We engaged with school children and teens through planning activities. We had events for business owners for their needs.

The Committee followed the timeframes for consultation as laid out in the legislation

A mix of methods were used including roadshow events; public meetings; and consultation.

The information captured has been valuable but we need to provide further opportunities online to add to that already captured in person.

Engagement is difficult, interest is low, in-person consultation seemed to work best

We have consistently had good engagement both with the original plan and the review

Lack of local involvement and general disinterest by much of the population despite a number of initiatives prompted by the Parish Council.

Informal polls on various options

Most work and consultation was done during Covid so mainly online, local press and when allowed a stall at our local market

We delivered by hand using volunteers detailed information and questionnaires throughout the process

We felt that we needed face to face with certain elements of the consultation as people sometimes need a little more explanation .Also it gave people chance to ask questions and gain a sense of ownership in the plan.

The other elements worked well alongside the face to face.

Very little more could be done and less than 10% was anticipated from contact with other Councils

Engagement is good, walking workshop takes in the NP area and picks up residents on route who give feedback as we go

We have an effective Parish council who work hard for the neighbourhood.

Numerous questionnaires on various topics issued culminating in an individual questionnaire, which had a 73.3% return rate. This level of return, coupled with responses gathered from public meetings and the earlier topical questionnaires and personal contact, meant that the Working Group was satisfied that the findings were authoritative.

hand delivered material to every household in the Parish

I was not the Clerk at the time of the consultation of the neighbourhood Plan so therefore unable to answer some questions. I am answering these questions from information acquired through meetings and reading past minutes.

We use a wide mix of media to try to reach everyone in the parish

Engagement was analysed and structured to try to include disparate areas, different age ranges, different timings to address working days etc. Included local organisations, schools, business clubs. Used postcard feedback, dots against policies at drop in, surveys etc, stalls at events in the town, local radio

Examples of engagement methods: stalls at local events, fetes etc.; drop in events at local halls; workshops; flyers; posters; website; facebook page; engagement events with local groups and organisations; displays in shop windows; we took over an empty shop for a month. There was nothing more we could have done - we were consent with the consultation process.

Before my time as Clerk

Content with some of it. We use town council website, NDP consultation platform (Commonplace) and face to face at farmers market and different venues in town. We purposefully try to ensure those without computers have some means of engaging with process, although we could always do more if more resources available. Variety of methods does work and highlights the NDP/the review. We usually get good level of interest/engagement. However we have really struggled to get younger people to engage (under 25's). We are looking to engage directly with schools/colleges/youth grps but limited resources (time, staff, money) make this challenging and potentially not very effective.

A Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) was formed which includes Parish Councillors and volunteer residents. A new website specific to the NPG was created which residents were encouraged to subscribe to for regular updates, regular public events were held, these were publicised by hand delivered leaflets to every house. The monthly Parish Newsletter regularly included an update on progress with the Plan, the Newsletter is hand delivered to every household in the Parish.

The process involved setting up a steering group that oversaw a number of working groups looking at housing, transport, business, the environment and comprised of volunteers from within the village of around 50 persons. Draft plans were advertised and village events and via the local parish news in addition the questionnaires and two housing and resident surveys.

We tried presentations, posters, talks, details on websites, emails.

In 2012/13 the village consulted on and produced a Community Led Plan. An awful lot of work went into it and there was a lot of community engagement. Unfortunately the Parish Council did not pick up this work and run with it so when the Neighbourhood Plan group got going in 2018 those that had worked on the CLP were not interested and there has been

general apathy in the village. We have held 4 drop-in sessions, had a stall at the summer fete, publicised all meetings on the Parish Council website and Facebook page, feedback progress at every Parish Council meeting, and publish updates in the monthly Church magazine. Posters for all drop-in sessions were put up round the village and on the Parish Council notice board.

By saying yes, I am simply saying that, overall, I was content. We used a consultant & ran 3 major surveys, covering housing, peoples' level of contentment with [REDACTED] with details of their main dislikes, a few specialist surveys, eg. of employers, estate agents & of the local wildlife.

We were content with all the methods we used as indicated above. It was felt that the methods used enabled us to reach out to all age groups in the local community, as evidenced by the 94% yes vote for the plan.

We tried to contact all members of the local community, keep them informed at every stage and offered one to one sessions if required

Drop in events, work shops, leaflets door to door, surveys sent by post.

We surveyed the whole town using paper/online forms with a good response rate. We also held several drop in sessions on specific issues which were well attended.

As you can see above we used a variety of comms methods at all the key stages of developing the plan within the funding we had available.

I can email you our complete list. We used lots of methods to engage various communities, the communities, however, didn't always want to be engaged, there is a high level of apathy.

I can send you a statement of our community involvement but councillors and officers attended events from post it sessions to discussion forums to engagement in local schools and we achieved a high level of response to a very complicated survey. Happy to share further information. It is difficult to assess the number of people involved with an electorate of 30,000!

These plans are always down to a small group of proactive people but other come to the vote later just to participate

We did not progress the plan as we considered it too expensive

We know from long experience that the public only engages when they are angry about something, so a low level of engagement is a good sign

We have used 7 'Community Link' groups to reflect the differing communities across the Parish, Parish wide postal questionnaires and a number of EXPO's

it will always be a minority interested and the process is not over yet

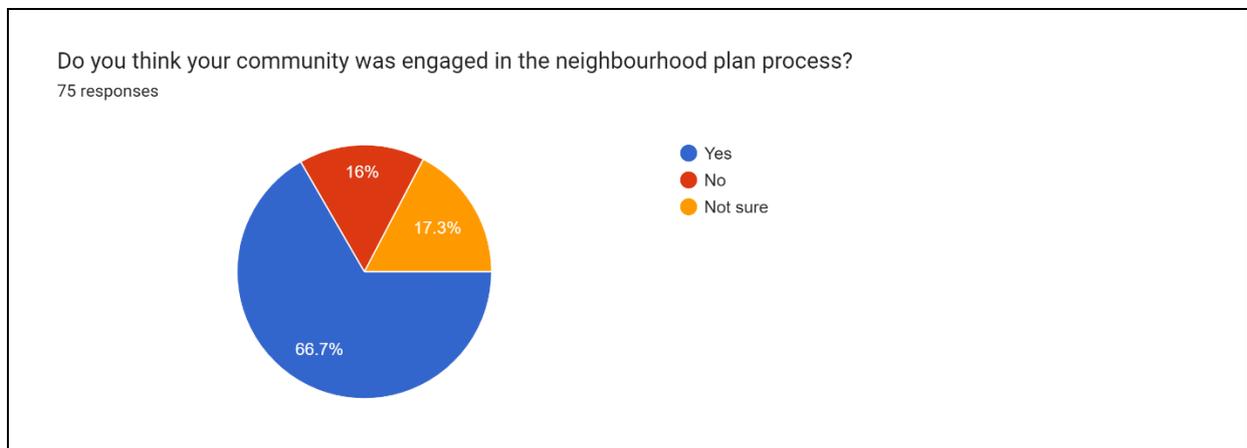
We started in 2013, at the time we did a fairly standard consultation, drop in's on our website etc. We now have a Comms Team and would definitely do things differently. I can provide a copy of our consultation statement if that will help.

We discussed the Neighbourhood Plan in every issue of our quarterly magazine delivered by hand to every household. We held open consultation sessions, we used community forums and social media to get the concepts across. The public bought into the Neighbourhood Plan Version 1, which actually suggested building 3 x as many homes as the Core Strategy. We are now working on our third version of our neighbourhood plan. The most successful policy in plan one related to capture of s106 funding.

We have a consultation plan that I can send to you if you wish

On Line survey with paper alternative. Also circulated in local free magazine

Question 19: Do you think your community was engaged in the neighbourhood plan process?



Question 20: Please explain your answer above

Our plan was very much community led, we had a community lead for each theme who led that theme with support from a councillor and a wider community working group. We probably had around 30 residents actively involved in developing the plan.

the working group was formed of members of the community who supported preparation of the plan and consultation days were carried out

Our plan has struggled to get off the ground having had three "launches". In the first iteration it seemed like consultants led the consultation sessions and reached pre-determined conclusions rather than the conclusions of attendees. Latterly we have planned for consultation sessions but not carried out any.

I am unable to answer, as wasn't employed at the time.

We had quite a good response rate to questionnaires

Lots of people in the Parish don't understand the basic democratic system but those that do understand how useful the Neighbourhood Plan is

See previous answer

Some are but these are the people who get involved in many things. It is hard to reach young people

Lots of ideas, views and positive help

Really hard to get any engagement for anything

There was definite engagement, but it could have been better. There was plenty push information from us but little pull from the general public except for a few pressure groups. However, when you consider the level of interest in local elections, we achieved a similar level of interest. Most people are just too busy with their day to day lives to engage in such matters.

We are a small Village of c150 people and most people have had some sort of engagement in the process. Our surveys regularly got over 50% response rates.

A small number were interested but the vast majority were uninterested in the neighbourhood plan process

The community had many opportunities to engage with the team. The low response rate was due to a general feeling that the plan would not make any difference. [REDACTED] increased 100% during the plan period, 50% of which was due to windfall development.

The assumption that it would increase houses being built in the parish

41 % turnout when no other election taking place. 94% in favour.

Generally i think we managed to get information out AND to get some useful insight into the issues of most concern to residents (not all of which were within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan)

29% voter turnout for a neighbourhood plan, given elections for Government are frequently on 21% locally is a good result.

I've only been in this role 1 year

By mailing every household the opportunity for engagement was available for every interested party. If people chose not to become involved that was their choice.

Those that wanted to be were, and we had a great diversity of people that were engaged.

As above the Questionnaires had good returns, also varied background of people on the steering group

A good proportion of the community contributed their thoughts and ideas

We generally had 45% of surveys returned from eligible villagers.

The Committee always advertised consultation events and all events were open to all

Residents prefer to engage in immediate problems and do not think long-term and have little concern for more abstract matters.

Lack of engagement/understanding/willingness to get involved

A good response rate

As answered to the question above.

The Community stayed with the concept of the Plan despite several hitches and a long process

We had good feedback at all the consultation stages

The community was engaged to a point but a limited section were uninterested. We had a significant number of volunteers who were willing to help.

We had as much as 67% return in the surveys .Also ,when we sent letters round asking for help in certain areas we had a good turnout.

Because of the response

There has been a good percentage of response to consultations and surveys, articles in the newsletters and agenda item on every parish meeting

Only a small minority of the public ever want to get involved with a project.

See response earlier - all indications were of positive contact

This will improve when we circulate the draft plan

From the minutes, it appears that the community was engaged.

Generally only get a strong response if they don't like options!

There will always be people who "did not know that it was happening." We tried a wide variety of routes to get to people, did activities which they could participate in, not just paper surveys. Those with interest but not councillors were on the steering group. Specific areas of interest had specific meetings/ data collation. 82% of voters said yes in referendum

There is a lot of apathy in the town and consultation fatigue. Residents don't see the point - they don't have any confidence in the system.

From what I have heard it went well

Yes, as indicated in previous answer a proportion has been engaged, however there are still gaps in engagement. There is also an uncertainty/lack of knowledge as to issues the NDP can address and even the boundary of the NDP area. We receive lots of comments from parts of the parish which aren't within the NDP boundary. So there's a lot of confusion out there. Possibly exacerbated by 2-tier (i.e. non-unitary) administrative system

Our events were very well attended and residents were enthusiastic

The neighbourhood plan process is not the most pressing issue on most people minds and the time frames is set over a number of years to complete so as expected what started with many people wanting to have their say and to get engage soon dropped off over time and finally came down to the dedicated few.

There is despair about our ability to influence planning decisions.

Despite all the advertising and promotion of the events we have had very little attendance at our drop-in events, and very few responses to our online survey.

Again, a yes / no answer is not useful. If the number of voters in the referendum is regarded as a good sign of involvement, then there was a good level of engagement. But, over the years of the process, the level ebbed & flowed, inevitably

See Above

Very positive feedback which has carried forward to the current review/modification of the plan

Good response to surveys sent to each household. Good attendance at drop in events.

Those with strong views were more engaged.

We believe in any organisation such as a parish or district council, there is only a minority of residents sufficiently involved to take a close interest in local planning matters. As such we are content with the numbers who took part.

The community were offered varied engagement opportunities but apathy played a big part. I would have liked more engagement.

There was a community forum representing residents associations across the town. We achieved a high level of response and a good turnout in the referendum despite the difficulties for a larger town.

Didn't see enough of this

Was not progressed

The steering group was made up of some of the more vocal members of the community rather than the usual selection of councillors

We have had strong community involvement throughout the process

it will always be a minority interested and the process is not over yet

Due to the relatively low turnout for the referendum. And other than the usual suspects it was difficult to get people engaged

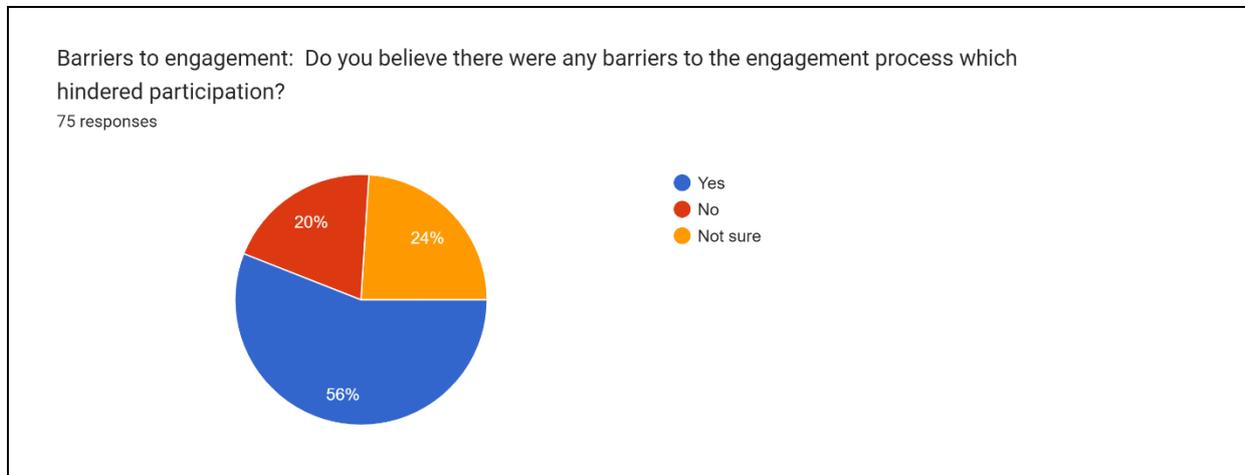
As above.

As above

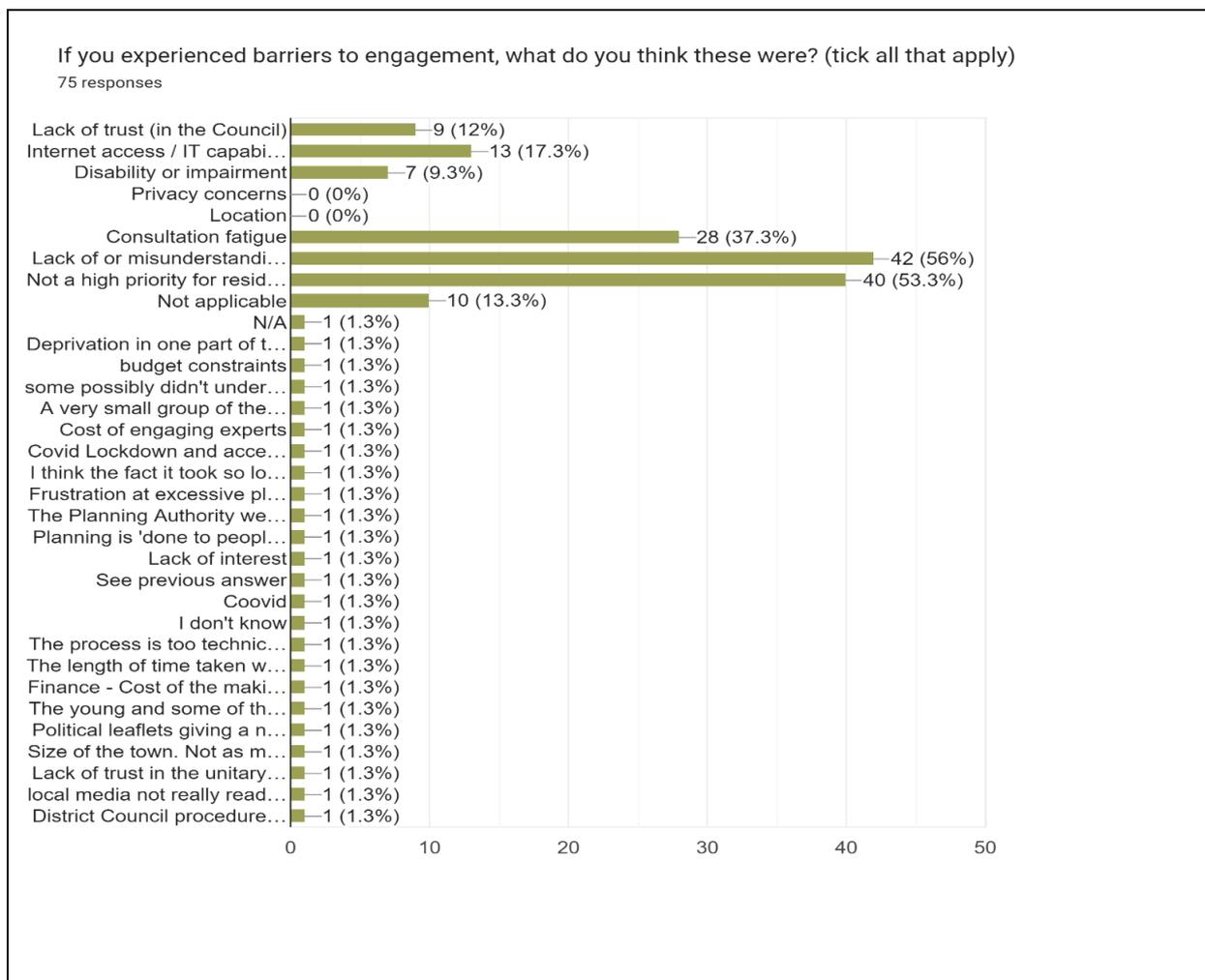
As yet not many volunteers in the process.

We made every effort to engage all sectors of the community including those not normally involved in local politics e.g. local Bangladesh community, visiting senior schools.

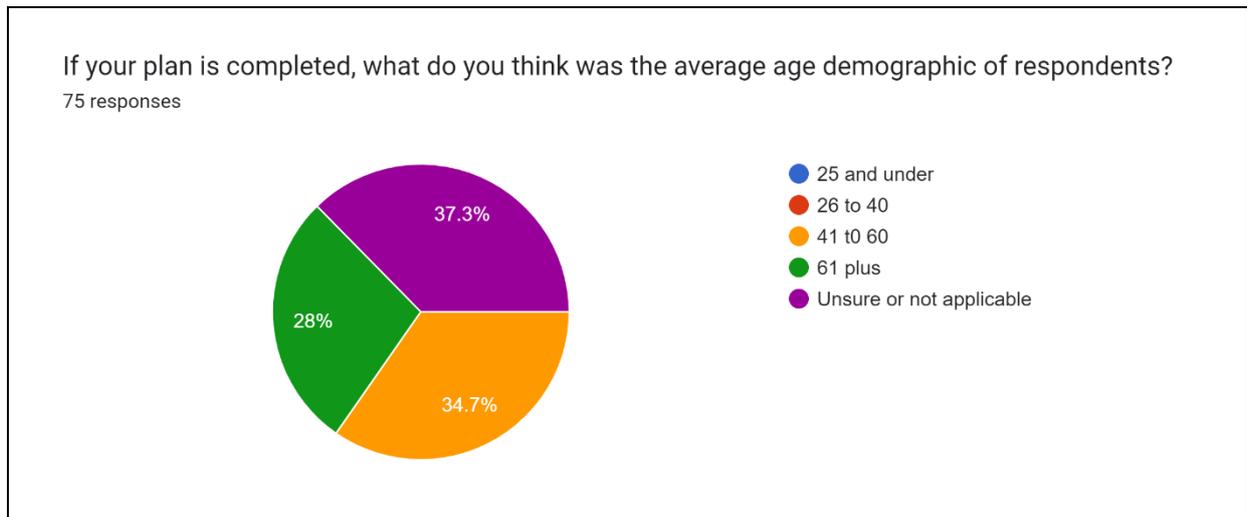
Question 21: Barrier to engagement: Do you believe there were any barriers to the engagement process which hindered participation?



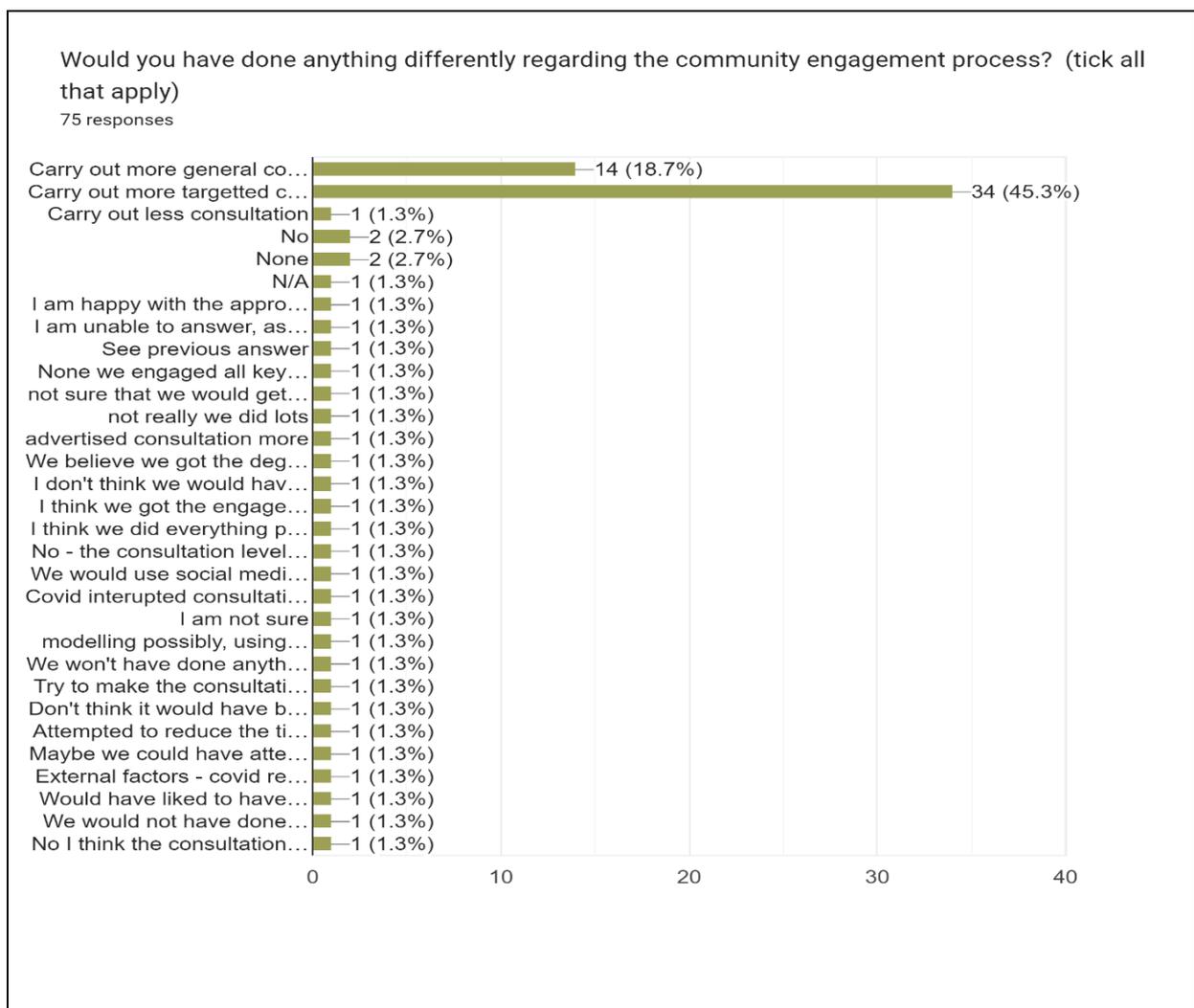
Question 22: If you experienced barriers to engagement, what do you think these were? (tick all that apply)



Question 23: If your plan is completed, what do you think was the average age demographic of respondents?



Question 24: Would you have done anything differently regarding the community engagement process? (tick all that apply)



Question 25: Please add any further information or details about your experience of the consultation process

N/A

I am unable to answer, as wasn't employed at the time.

It seemed overly bureaucratic at times

Very difficult getting enough people to form the working group

Covid lockdown hampered our ability to get to see people to explain the process and where we were in that journey.

Maybe engaged with the school and youth club a little more, Scouts, FC, Cricket Club etc.

People were apathetic during the NDP review, but once we incorporated a parking survey we got lots of feedback!

We believe we got the degree of consultation about right. We made sure to engage with older residents (through care homes etc.) , completed young persons surveys and included the schools (both private and state)

Very few residents understand the planning process, added to that the lack of 'affordable housing' that any given new development would produce and that any market housing is for the most part unaffordable for locals is a real issue, as we're within commuting distance of London. Not surprisingly there was and still is a lot of apathy and cynicism to the process and planning in general.

We should have put more resource into this.

Consultation is very resource intensive

n.a

Same point that consultation was limited by Covid

We had excellent support from Community Action and also from Planning .The Neighbourhood grant department were also excellent with giving us extra support from AECOM.

We had some opposition from a nearby industry which caused us problems but we stuck it out and with determination got it done .

Would like the percentage of responses to be higher

You can lead a horse to water

see our NDP Appendices on [REDACTED] (initial consultation as well as reg 14

Consultation takes time and is a long, expensive process. As a small town council resources simply cannot stretch to do the desired level of consultation and then the

analysis/application of feedback into policy development. Often town councillors are unfamiliar with NDP, especially if they weren't around when it was originally written.

We tried to keep our residents informed and engaged with the development of the plan. If we had tried to do more I suspect residents would have felt overwhelmed

The residents were engaged throughout the process. We had good turnouts at all consultations, and good responses to questionnaire. At the referendum, there was a 45% turn out, with 87% voting in favour. NP has been in place for 4 years, and as the SWDP is in preparation, and expected to go for approval this year, we are considering a review/update committee to be considered for action once the new Parish Council is in post.

The final ballot for the NP was relatively high but its hard work to keep everyone involved.

Greater input by District Council to publicise the neighbourhood plan.

We found it extremely difficult to get people engaged in the Neighbourhood Plan and suspect it is lack of information or knowledge of the benefits it will bring to the village. We did have 20 people attend one meeting but that was because they thought it was responsible for the allocation of 2 sites in the consultation for the LPA Local Plan. We then had 100 people attend the next Parish Council meeting for exactly the same reason. Most people are not interested in planning until it affects them directly.

It was a draining experience. No council should consider having a plan until it has explored all the issues - funds, volunteers, especially volunteers with some knowledge of housing, planning etc., community groups it can link into the process...

In general it worked well but there was a lack of understanding of the planning process and the role of the NP in that process

Should have targeted local schools and young people for their views and opinions.

We provided many opportunities but the response was disappointing

The cost for a parish Council in undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan can be significant. There are now better engagement tools available and these may help with getting views from younger people in particular (under 30). One of the key issues was people are struggling for time to balance family life, work with getting involved locally. There is also an issue of not appreciating the impact future development can have on the area. Some people engage to limit future development (eg of greenfield sites), other have a view that as much housing as possible is need to ensure their children can continue to live in the area they grew up.

It is often not needed. If done as a way of increasing the CIL funding to 25% why not make all principal authorities hand over the full amount like they do in [REDACTED]

The plan has been genuinely community led and used a wide range of creative consultation methods

it doesn't carry any weight on issue of substance

Very difficult to get people interested. People wanted to know what is happening now, not think about a long term plan for the future.

Our consultation were successful resulting in a positive vote in our referendum.

it reaped its rewards in the responses to Local Plan and NDP responses

Questions about support form the Local Planning Authority

Question 26: How would you rate the level of support from your Local Planning Authority?



Question 27: Please explain your answer above

██████████ was good. what the new Unitary ██████████ will be like is anyone's guess.

Initial reluctance, changed when government gave them more support

Fairly good support in answering our queries, most work was carried out by ourselves

I haven't seen any support for the process from the LPA since I started in mid 2018.

The principal authority was enthusiastic about NPs and had a dedicated team to support parishes with this.

They were there to assist when we needed it.

We had several sessions and useful advise from the Borough Councils officer

See previous answers

They have engaged with us at each stage and are willing to assist at every step

Not engaged other than to get parish boundary map approved

Really felt talked down and not listened to at points by the local planning manager

The LPA just did what they had to but that is down to lack of resources rather than lack of interest.

They were available to answer questions but it was sometimes bureaucratic at times

We had dedicated people available to assist, review and make recommendations.

Supported us all the way and had a great relationship with members of the [REDACTED] Planning Policy team

Very slow at every stage. Not very experienced with Neighbourhood Plans, never proactive in sharing ideas or offering support.

We adopted a neighbourhood plan before our district council had finalised and ratified the local plan. Our plan was referred to by the district authority in its local plan.

We had to keep our parking survey short because County were starting theirs so we couldn't overlap

Our District Council [REDACTED] provided outstanding support both in terms of financial assistance and the availability of dedicated Officers. Indeed, we would not have achieved the positive results that we did without the encouragement and help of specific Officers.

Initially they were not sure of the process, us and our consultants had to dispel the myths they had. The planning officers felt that this was a bunch of amateurs who would be telling them what to do. Once we had the referendum on board they realised it may happen so ran their own in-house sessions on the plan, but the parish council were not involved, although we did offer.

We used an experienced consultant who was very familiar with the local planning processes.

They [REDACTED] provide through the RCCE as much advice and training as we required. I appreciate that not all councils provide such input or only via an in-house planning officer who might not be available as much as an NP group needs.

[REDACTED] needed to be pushed to provide support and responses to questions

They did what was necessary.

No resources available

Short of staff. Not a priority.

Local authority interested and provided guidance and assistance with public consultation meetings

Dedicated NP officer accessible for advice and guidance

Always responsive and supportive

They were always available to meet and advise

Our Plan was the first to be made in [REDACTED] after the two pilot plans, so it was a learning curve for ourselves and the local authority

Not very impressed with the officer engagement as they appeared to have other priorities

Inadequate support in planning and formulating Plan.

Our support came from a planning consultant. LPA had already done fine-grained site allocations which limited the scope of a neighbourhood plan.

[REDACTED] were supportive throughout and carried out their parts of the process as and when required

They usually respond quickly to queries, but sometimes you can sense a political block

Initially we were told we must wait until the Local Plan was updated. If we had done that we would still be waiting. [REDACTED] staff and consultants were more knowledgeable than the Local Planning Authority staff and several times had to demonstrate why something could be done. Their review of the first draft plan largely focussed on correcting spelling mistakes. However, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] they were very helpful.

Little advice or guidance

No financial support or consultant support

Our appointed liaison officer was not particularly forthcoming. I have previously worked on a NDP in another town and although it's in the same LA area, the difference in the calibre of help was very noticeable

Good support although personnel has changed throughout

they are not engaged in the process

We were a front runner, so the process was new to all of us, they also had limited capacity

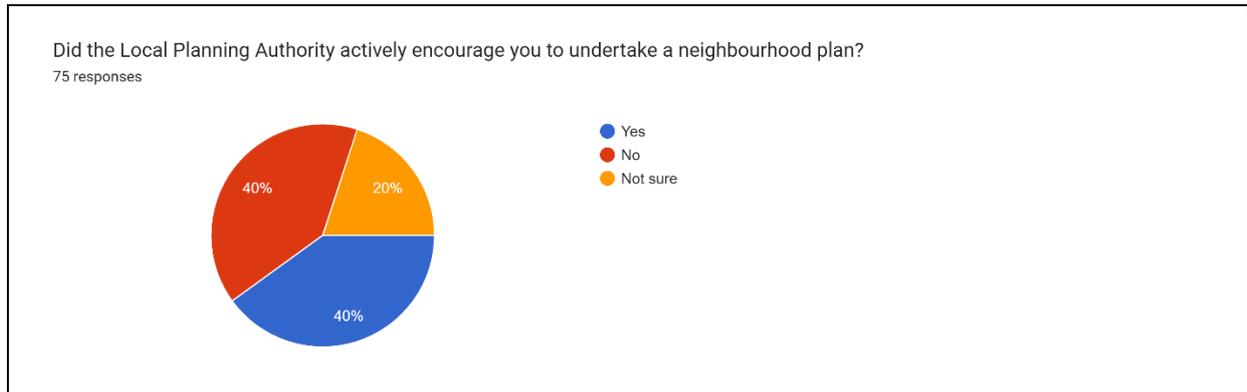
Did not attend all neighbourhood plan meetings. Failure to understand the basic principles of our Neighbourhood Plan V3.

We had total engagement and support, including over and above requirements

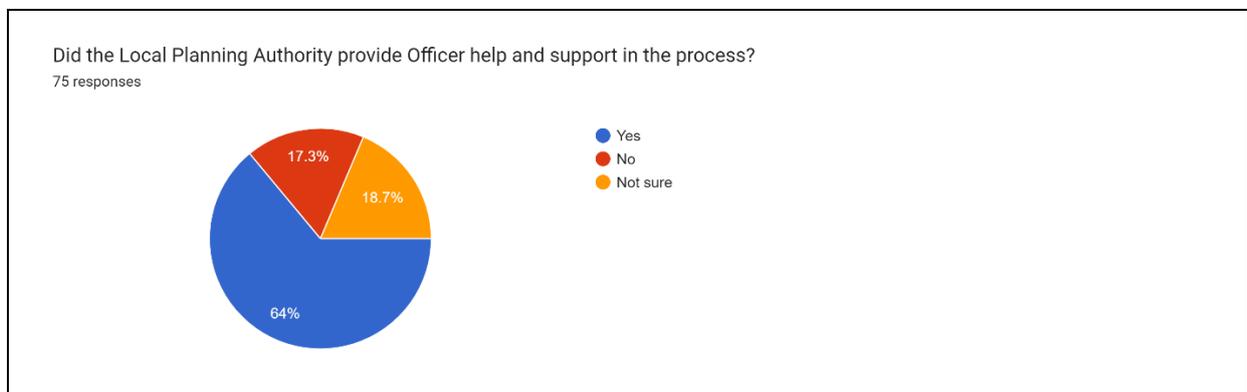
Slow response and advice. Design guide took much longer to produce than expected. Staff shortages at [REDACTED]

It was their first NDP and learning together were some delays, hopefully for the next community NDP it will be easier.

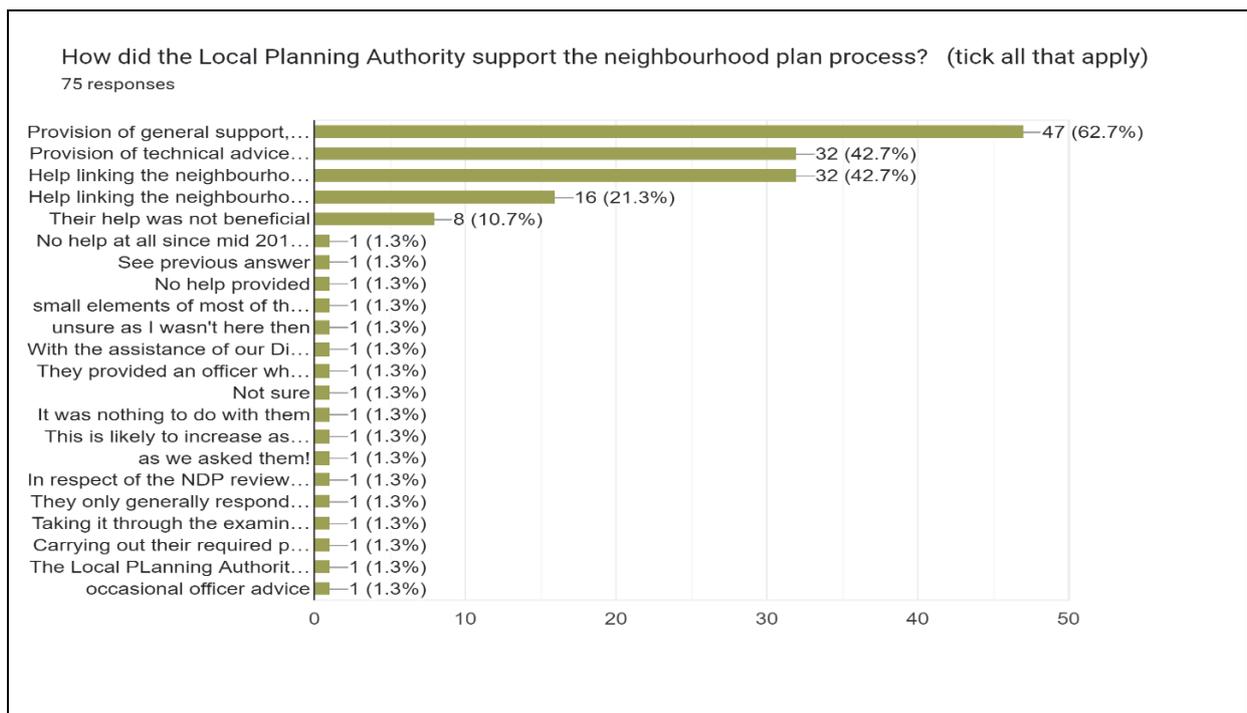
Question 28: did the Local Planning Authority actively encourage you to undertake a neighbourhood plan?



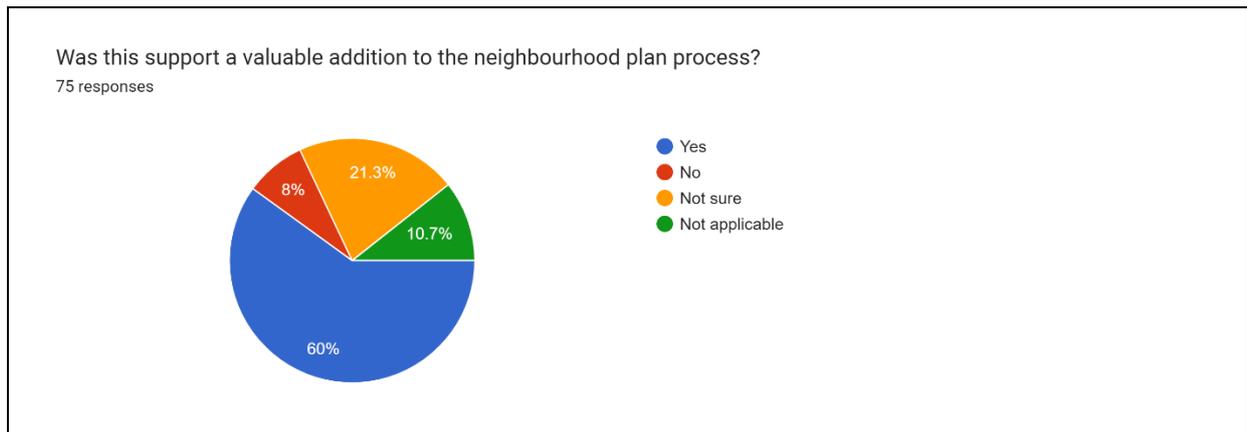
Question 29: Did the Local Planning Authority provide officer help and support in the process?



Question 30: How did the Local Planning Authority support the neighbourhood plan process? (tick all that apply)



Question 31: Was this support a valuable addition to the neighbourhood plan process?



Question 32: Please explain your answer(s) above

I am unable to answer, as wasn't employed at the time.

I believe we would have achieved a similar result without their help

It help make sure the Plan went through without any legal or technical issues

See previous answer

They were very approachable

We used Aecom and usual funding for plans with professional planning consultant

It was helpful to get a technical check at certain stages so as to give the plan the best chance of getting through external scrutiny.

It helped develop the early stages of the plan

Definitely they read through our drafts, linked us with other PC's going through the same process and when others had found issues at different stages they could advise us how to avoid those issues.

We couldn't have proceeded without the LPA and they provided some specific input and access to external support at times, but in general we haven't felt as if we were getting support.

I was not the clerk in role at the time so was not party to the development and ratification process.

unsure as I wasn't here then

Because our District Councils own Local Plan is do out of date it was not possible to link policies in our neighbourhood plan with policies in the local plan but hopefully the reverse will now happen and the new Local Plan will reflect our (and other communities) Neighbourhood Plan.

Not really except it was someone we could push for things like getting a referendum date etc

As with most groups we lacked experience in drafting a Neighbourhood Plan and the stages of development, supporting material etc so the experience of the planning team was useful.

The majority of our contact was via RCCE who then had direct access [REDACTED] planning officer responsible for NP's (although I could go to him directly) [REDACTED]

The process needed District involvement to be compliant

Professional advice received was invaluable

For a seaside tourist town with a population approaching [REDACTED] the process is relatively complex

It was very valuable as it got the planning authority engaged and aware of the plan before it went to them for review

They gave good advice

We had some technical skills on our team but where we needed more they helped, providing us with maps we couldn't access was also helpful.

We are sharing our draft policy options and themes & objectives with the LPA and they are consulting us on [REDACTED] Area Appraisal Management Plan

We want to ensure our drafts documents align with the LPA emerging Local Plan

We manage our own business

Advice was always relevant and helpful

Not during Covid, but was useful initially

Sorry, cannot comment.

Clarification of the process was key. Very difficult on first occasion, given regs.

I don't know

It was helpful but wouldn't describe it as valuable.

The local authority was more concerned that the plan did not contradict the district plan. This meant many of the policies in the plan are more "woolly" than we wanted

No one on the PC or the volunteers had any Town planning experience so we made many mistakes but the Planning officer did point these out.

Good advice on plan policies.

It was useful to know that there was someone who had the knowledge and experience to answer even the most stupid of questions when needed.

A weak yes. We relied much more on our consultant, really. There was of course much council involvement when plans for the referendum were being made, but it was chaotic & involved unreasonably tight deadlines

Only when pressed did we get a response and it was not always helpful or positive

Felt that developing a neighbourhood plan was a threat to district planners questioning their policies and potentially upsetting where they wished to develop houses.

Neighbourhood Plans have to be in conformity with the local plan, so cannot do one with support from the local planning authority, they need to give their views on your plan.

We used an independent consultancy for support and advice rather than [REDACTED]

It has been helpful to know a named contact

Yes [REDACTED] we could not have gone through that easily. Clarification of policies and ratification of documents and evidence provided by the Town Council was essential. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Our independent technical support were SUPERB (if expensive) and I'm not sure the LA could have delivered the same level of expertise

Technical and general advice has helped shape policy content and wording

it helped on a few specific issues

Helped with the wording of policies

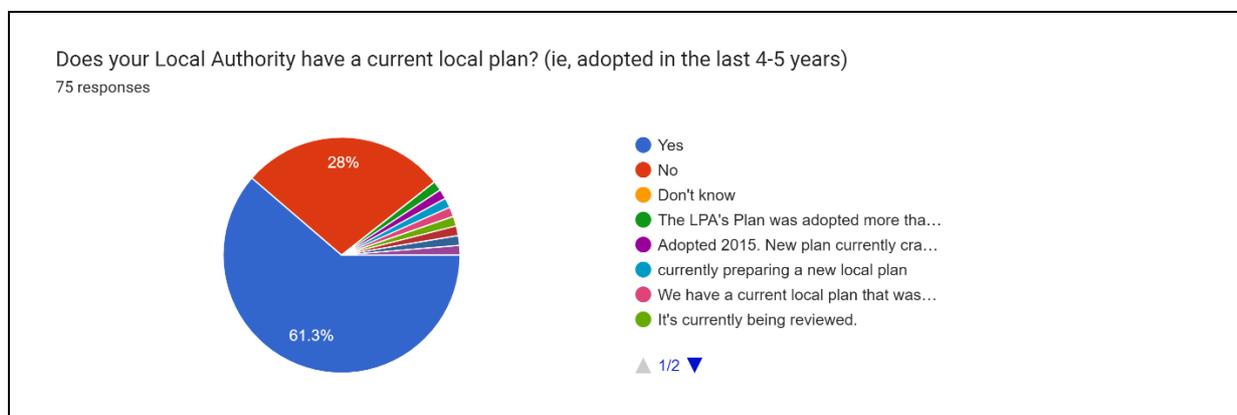
Apart from raising questions which demonstrated their lack of understanding, they did not aid the process in any way.

Guidance on likely areas for development and general advice on producing the plan.

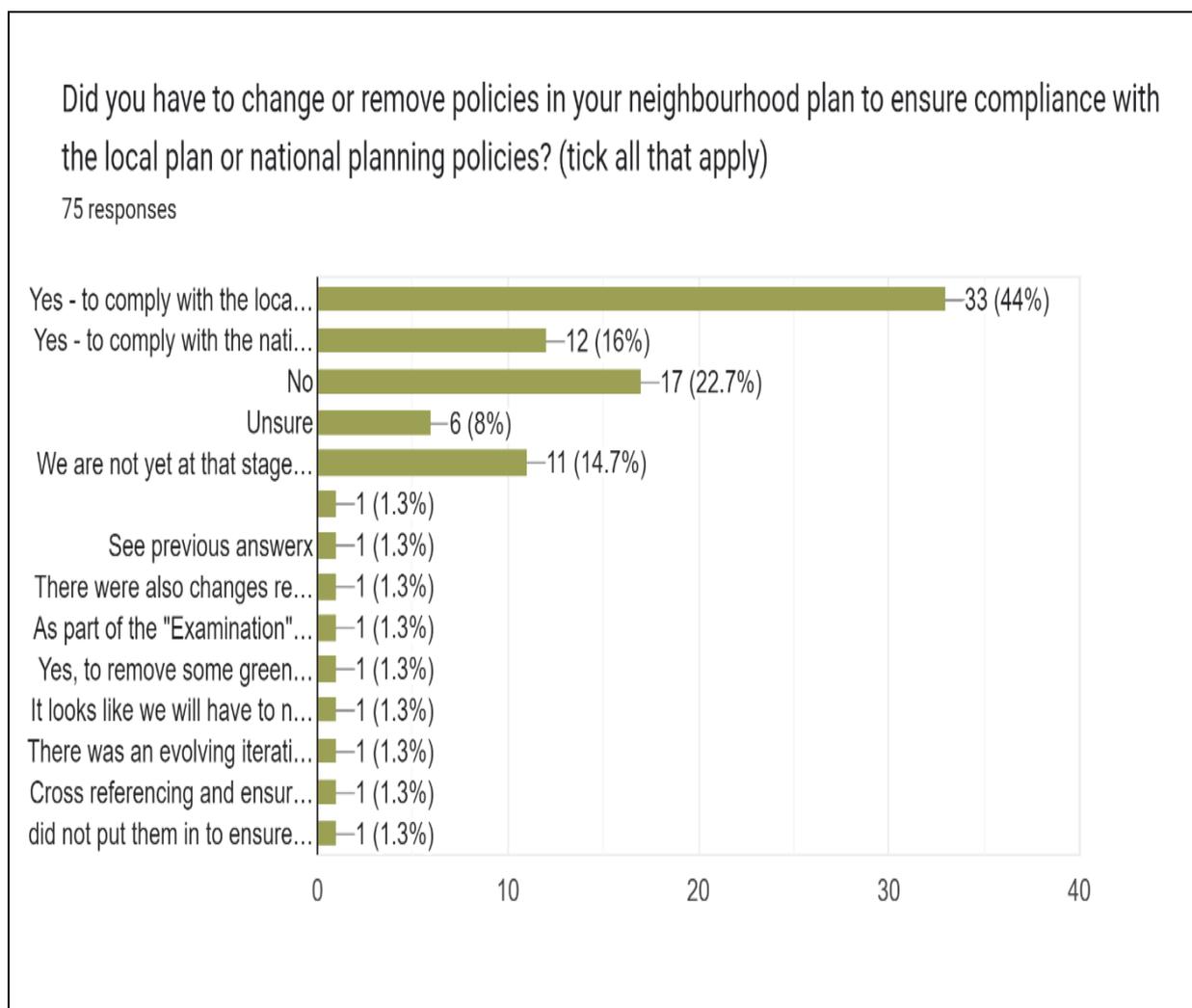
the technical aspects were helpful to ensure it passed inspector easily.

Questions about policies in the neighbourhood plan

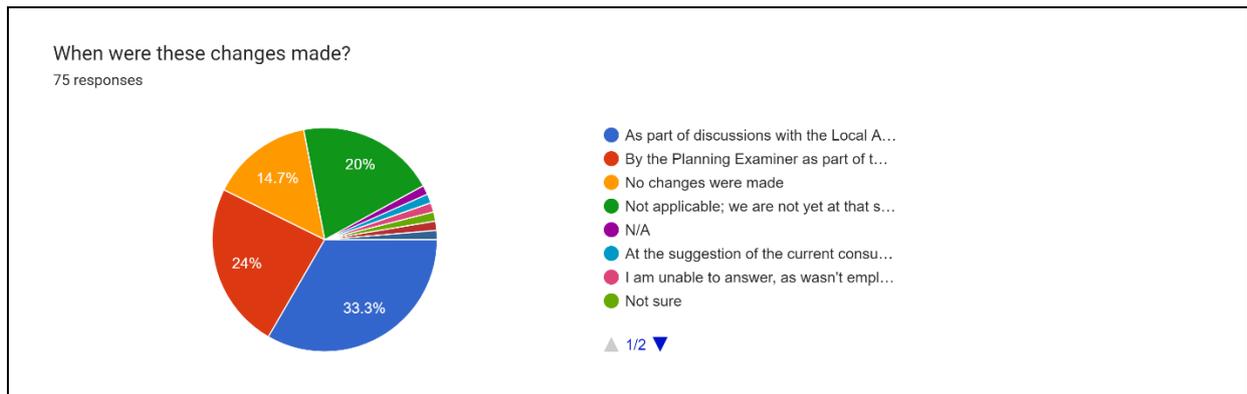
Question 33: Does your Local Authority have a current local plan? (ie adopted in the last 4-5 years)



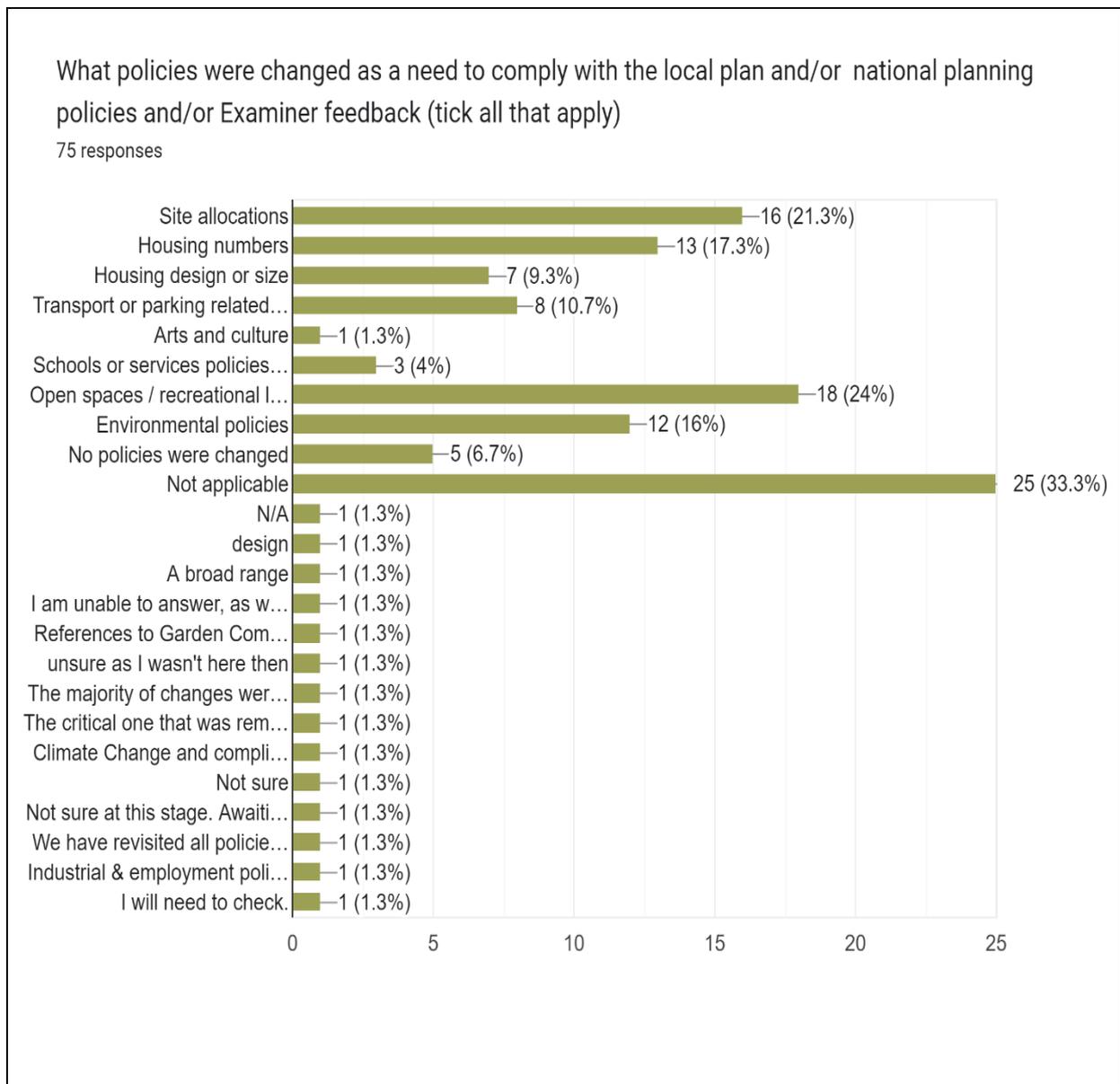
Question 34: Did you have to change or remove policies in your neighbourhood plan to ensure compliance with the local plan or national planning policies (tick all that apply)



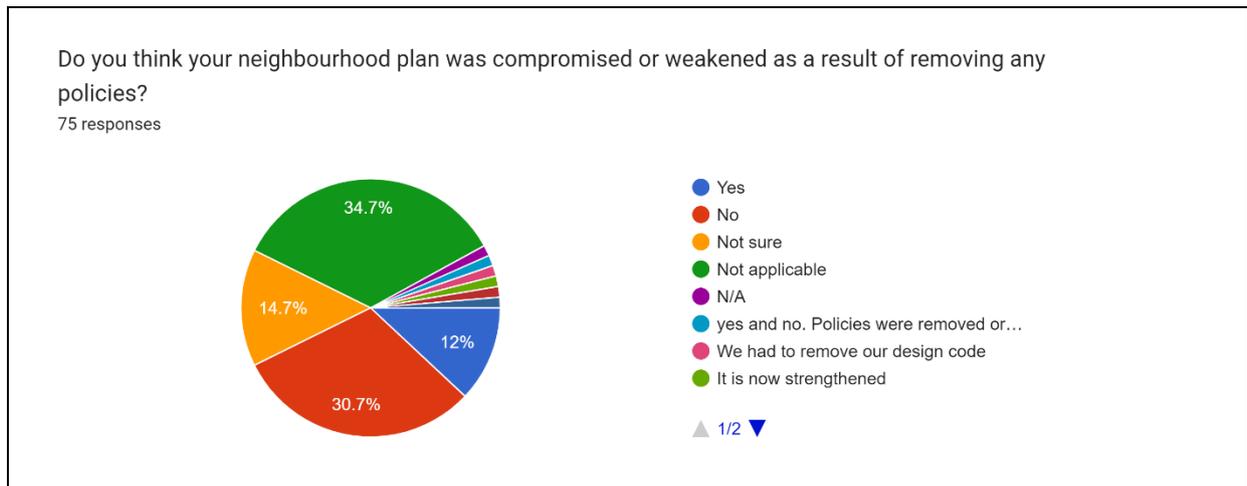
Question 35: When were these changes made?



Question 36: What policies were changed as a need to comply with the local plan and/or national planning policies and/or Examiner feedback? (tick all that apply)



Question 37: Do you think your neighbourhood plan was compromised or weakened as a result of removing any policies?



Question 38: Please explain your answer above

n/a

it was repetitive, wordy, and confused. The draft we were working on was from 2017 and was not a good document. Policies were removed and a complete rewrite is underway.

I am unable to answer, as wasn't employed at the time.

It was completed on time and within budget

We never changed any policies

See previous answers

The planning authority thought it was too much detail

It removed some of the wishes of the residents.

We had hoped that our plan would conserve and enhance the rural nature of our community but the changes have weakened some of the policies intended to do this.

We would have liked more environmentally friendly design, electric points for cars, solar panels on roofs etc, but as [redacted] didn't have the planning policies for that (or rather government) these had to become Community Aspirations rather than Planning Policies which was a shame as developers just tend to only do what they have to do.

Issues relate to the [redacted] which may not be started in our Parish until after the current Plan period, yet we needed to make the changes now.

unsure as I wasn't here then

As stated previously, the changes were related to language and terminology to ensure clarity and compliance rather than policy changes so if anything the final Plan was strengthened.

Some of the extra safeguards we wanted to put in place such as properties for older people to downsize to were removed. This was specifically asked for by the local residents [REDACTED] has a high number of large properties, but the planning authority has a lack of these large properties in the borough.

Experienced reviewer comments enhanced the plan

It protected the plan area from substantial speculative development

Central Government refused to enforce climate change mitigation measures which will impact future generations

NP evolved at the same time and rate as the LP

Policy slightly weaker.

The amendments were more technical than substantial

There were only minor changes proposed as we had been engaging from an early stage

Our plan was strengthened

The changes were minor .

We are only just at the stage of updating the plan following Reg 14 consultation

We are self determined

New Local Plan increased number of houses allocated to this Parish, which led to revisions, including allocating new areas for development. Uncertain how this will play out ...

Sorry, cannot comment.

where [REDACTED] noted some sites were active, though they did not have planning permission at the time we were dissuaded from their inclusion as options

We did not remove any policies but we were required to make changes which means they are less stringent with more opportunity for the policy to be dismissed

We wanted a NP to protect us from unwanted and unnecessary development, that didn't happen.

Advice made the NP compatible with the local plan.

Our plan was made before the Local Plan albeit we need take into account the emerging policies as far as possible and practicable

Policies were reworded rather than deleted.

I need to review the nuances and which ones happened at which stage. The first review was essentially to add housing numbers when the Borough allocation increased.

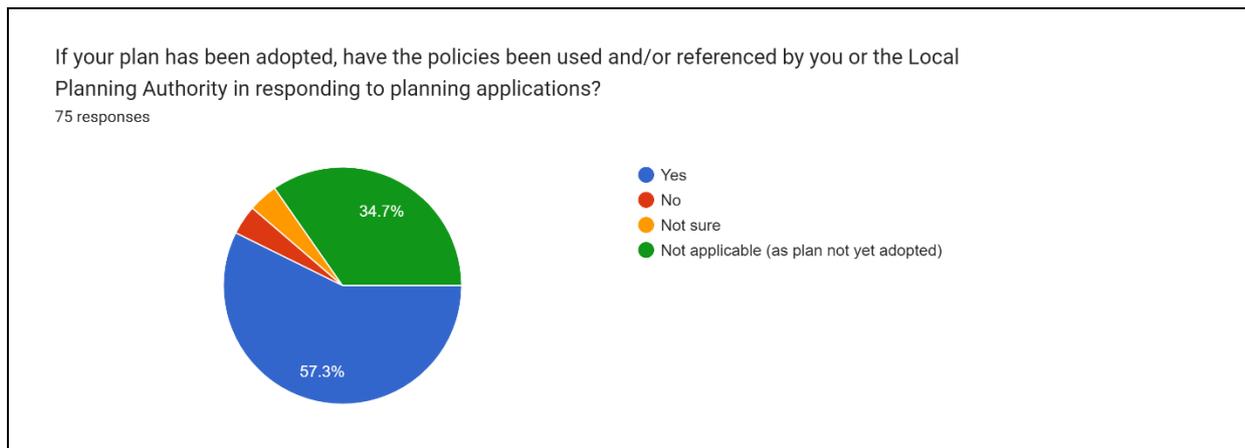
the process is what it is

We wanted to include a policy that required additional tree planting for new developments, we were told to remove this by the inspector.

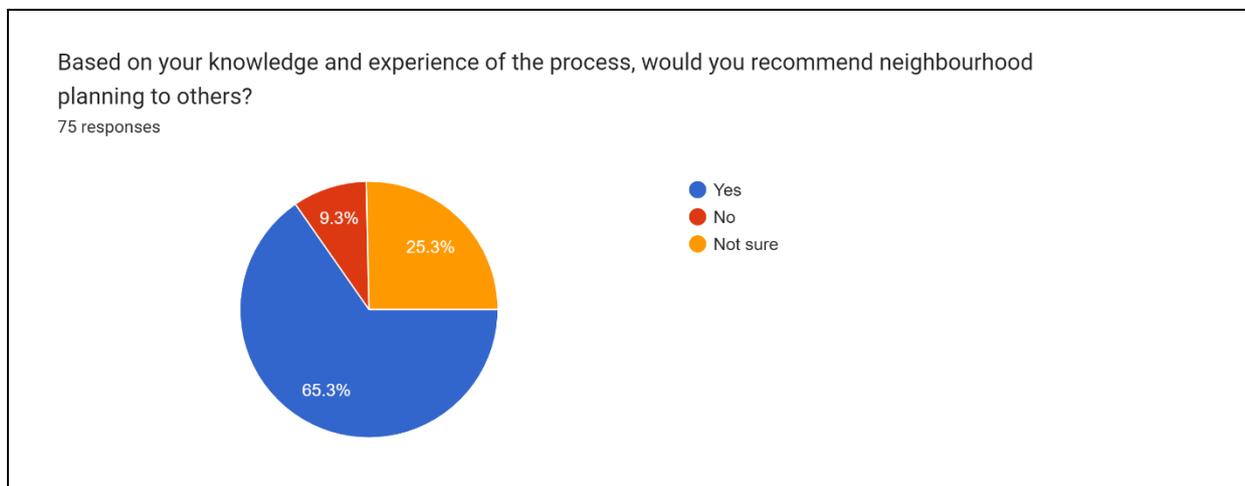
We received ongoing advice from the planning authority regarding compliance with local and national policies.

site allocations and density numbers being removed was a disappointment for some

Question 39: If your plan has been adopted, have the policies been used and/or referenced by you or the Local Planning Authority in responding to planning applications?



Question 40: Based on your knowledge and experience of the process, would you recommend neighbourhood planning to others?



Question 41: Please explain your answer above

Our policies are being used to have an impact on planning decisions.

There were financial benefits in addition to planning ones

Particularly in our area because [REDACTED]

Having an active and up to date plan provides additional security throughout the planning process, ensuring local voices are considered. However, updating and upgrading the plan regularly is essential (we are undertaking a renewal of the original plan now).

If for no other reason it engages with residents

Very useful for objecting to certain planning applications

See previous answers

But get a good consultant!

Worthwhile to meet all villagers, understand their actual wants & needs - thoroughly enjoyable.

Very long and complicated

It allows for a more local level knowledge and feel to be added to planning applications when being considered by applicants & the LPA when assessing applications.

It adds another layer of planning protection to a small local community and provides a recorded voice of what is important to the residents.

The NP process is long, time consuming and expensive. Where there are communities that are already protected by other factors e.g. AONB, Conservation area etc, where they are very small or where they have no further land available for development, I would not recommend an NP as I am not sure that the return would be worth the investment. However, in general I would recommend an NP.

An awful lot of work for what seemed like a very small core of people, but it is great to see the NP being quoted in Planning decision now [REDACTED]

It's too soon to see the long term impact, but the process, although hard at time, has been helpful and improved cohesion and community/ council relations.

In defining the demographic, the existing housing stock, the style and quantity of development to meet the need of residents, as well as the pressures on the existing infrastructure, the settlement boundary and the area within all combine to develop a strategic vision for the local rural area.

It's an important step in making progress within an area

We have seen unwanted applications refused (or dismissed at Appeal) due to conflict with our Neighbourhood Plan. The only problem for us now is that because our District Councils Local Plan is considered to be "out of date" and our Neighbourhood Plan was fully "Made"

over two years ago, coupled with our District Council not being able to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, our Neighbourhood Plan is sometimes dismissed under the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 11 and 14.

It is a great way of engaging with your community, it also brings planning local

Reference to our design checklist enable a better dialogue with a developer who proposed standard designs without reference to the local characteristics of our community.

It was a lot of work and proved quite divisive within the community at times. The Neighbourhood Plan has been cited in planning decisions by some planning officers, but not consistently. The Local Plan is currently out of date and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan (also having been made more than two years ago) carries very little weight and has not helped recently when the 'tilted balance' has resulted in two large scale planning applications being granted on appeal, even when those same sites have been refused previously. On a positive note, the Neighbourhood Plan did give the Parish Council some direction in terms of what the community considers important when it comes to reviewing and commenting upon planning applications and we do benefit from a 25% share of CIL.

References to the NP process have waxed and waned recently in the NPPF. The fact that ours was [REDACTED] goes to show that NP's are thought of as a threat by developers though. There is a lot of work to make them adoptable and I wonder whether a more robust Village Design Statement is more applicable for some parishes than a NP, especially those that are unlikely to be faced with significant amounts of development within a plan period.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I don't think it will survive as a 'village' into the next plan period.

The Neighbourhood Plan holds limited weight particularly when District takes planning decisions and often ignores the N Plan

The work is extensive, we have seen input and volunteers supporting the process come and go. In reality will the planning officers truly place as much focus on these neighbourhood plans as they should for the work that has been involved.

Depends very strongly on the local needs and existing infrastructure. One of my councils has just completed its plan and it is a necessary thing. Another, larger council is still thinking about it. Having been involved in two NPs already and aware of the potential benefits, i am struggling to find a reason why the larger council should undertake the work.

Long winded process - unsure of what the end result will achieve

Good way of engaging in shaping development.

Having a Design Code is a distinct strength in responding to householder applications

Having allocations in the LP duplicated in the NP but until national policies are amended the strength of NP policies and allocations will be undermined if the District lacks a 5 year housing supply (as in our case)

Yes, but it's a lot of work and requires a small very committed team

They provide local people with a voice although the power of NP is very limited. The process brought people together and focused residents attention on development issues.

If you want to be in a position to have some control over what might happen to where you live its the only thing to do. It's the most legal document a lay person can provide to support its residents.

Nothing will change if there are no more plans put forward

It is relevant for a Parish Council to have their own Neighbourhood Plan to allow the parish council to have more of a say in planning applications using their adopted policies and have influence on new homes design to ensure quality developments. Also they are a good opportunity for S106 and IL agreements which come from the wishes of the community and to negotiate better education and health facilities

It's a them and us situation. Sometimes they listen, sometimes they are scared because they fear a planning application refusal will cost the money

Helps to determine what happens on your patch

If it proves to form an active part of the planning process. As [REDACTED] had a shortfall in their 5 year land supply, it would appear that almost any planning applications were granted in the last few years. Their own policies have not been consistently followed within this Parish - particularly around the number of houses which the Parish has provided.

It is a tool for developers and Councils.

It's a lot of work!!

[REDACTED] has become the key source for comments to [REDACTED] re applications, to Inspectorate at appeal and have been cited by both in their decisions. Also gives a framework when coming up for review, and shows changes

The process is long and time consuming and requires a lot of work from volunteers. Whilst NP policies are often referred to by the LPA, because we don't have a 5 year housing land supply and our NP is over 2 years old (with no housing allocation) it has no weight. An area in [REDACTED] allocated for sports pitches in the NP has just been granted permission for 80 homes - this was extremely disappointing and makes you question whether all the hard work was worth it.

It enhances planning responses and is another tool to be used

Cost , Time and Limited benefit from NDP

NP is a valuable process and can help local communities highlight what they do/don't want. However, it is a lengthy, complicated and usually expensive process. Communities should not underestimate the effort involved. They also need to manage their expectations of what a NDP can include and achieve. The LPA wont always give due regard to it! They also need a plan to ensure the young, elderly, those without a computer are fully included. The 'usual

suspects' will always get involved - extra effort is required to ensure greater diversity and interest in developing/reviewing a NDP.

In assessing a substantial development of 10,000 houses the LA has referred to the plan policies but then simply dismissed them as insignificant as the benefit of approving the outline plan application is greater. This is despite moving from the promised 7 villages to 7 urban neighbourhoods - as acknowledged by the lead officer

The village has some input over style, number of houses etc and shows housing need, once the detailed document is in the public domain so inappropriate speculative developers are more controllable

A lot of hard work and you need to devote a lot of you spare time

Yes, but with a greater and more considered input from the LPA. I would prefer all plans (both local and neighbourhood) to be rolling plans updated annually, rather than every five or so years.

It is a lengthy, complicated and time consuming process, not to be undertaken lightly or without trepidation!

A guarded yes. My provisos have been set out earlier

It empowers the local community and informs them about the planning process and its importance for the future of their community.

Provides a long term strategy for the Parish Council to follow, where there was no strategy before.

Higher share of CIL to parishes with a Neighbourhood Plan.

Since adoption we have become aware of instances where the DC can override the plan e.g. in allowing planning applications outside the development boundaries. The adopted plan is not as effective as we had expected

I don't believe the future of neighbourhood planning is secure and the government keep referencing changes (and have yet to materialise)

I say yes, but with some big caveats. 1) The system is so skewed in favour of developers that even if you allocate more housing numbers than required, they can still win permissions for large schemes on unsupported sites and are choosing greenfield over brownfield because it is cheaper. 2) the ability of developers to argue that schemes are not affordable (ie they can't make a guaranteed profit of 25%) means that they do not deliver the required community mitigation. Developers are using many loopholes to avoid paying Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, and affordable housing (eg in one case subsequently arguing at appeal that the affordable element should be removed despite the fact that this was the main reason why the scheme was permitted in the first place). They are also now building out sites for eg 2 story houses to pay a lower CIL level then using permitted development to add a third storey once the construction commences. Permitted

development has also led to some unintended consequences (eg changing use (with or without permission (!) of land to storage and then applying for housing development on it.

Yes, but definitely bring in professional support early on

Although it has been an elongated process the Neighbourhood Plan provides a vehicle to address localised issues.

depending on the circumstances and what they wish to achieve

It has help defend inappropriate development at appeal, by protecting a valuable landscape

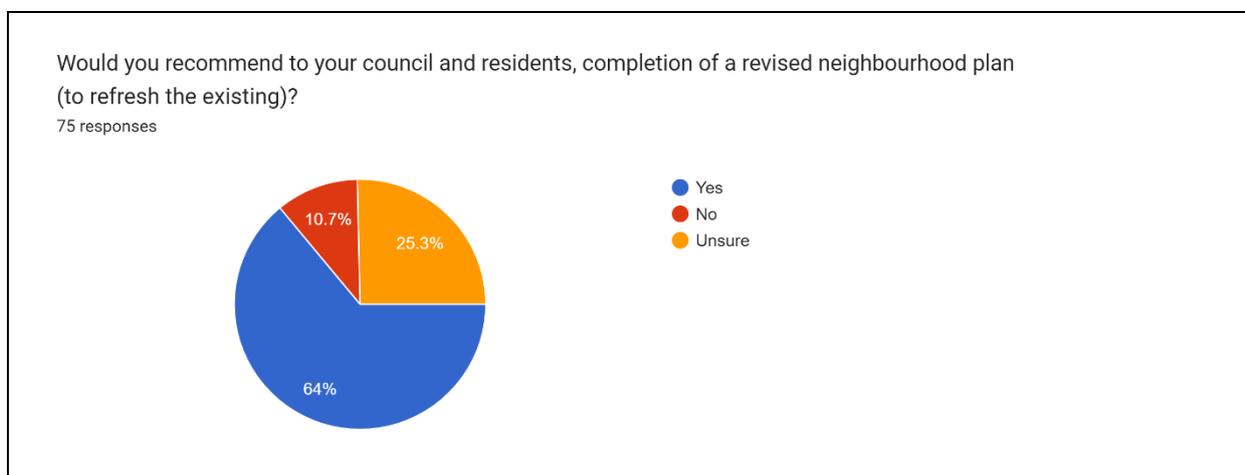
People fail to understand the real value of a neighbourhood plan. It ensures that when you are on an s106 regime, you can get the appropriate developer funding by spelling this out in your policies. We are now moving into unchartered territory, and designating areas for Biodiversity offsetting. Our Neighbourhood plan will also help to protect open amenity space. We were also able to create a comprehensive development with its own primary school within walking distance, and a local shopping area. None of this would have been possible without a neighbourhood plan.

As well as the documented benefits the team involved in developing the plan became far more knowledgeable about planning policies for our area and some of the background work that had in the past been carried out.

It provides the community to obtain views of the residents and provides an opportunity for involvement and should in future if legislation changes have greater effect on future development.

it has worked well for the community particularly in absence of Local Plan

Question 42: Would you recommend to your council and residents, completion of a revised neighbourhood plan (to refresh the existing)?



Question 43: Please explain your answer above

With the benefit of hindsight, I can see areas we would want to strengthen policies based on planning decisions we disagree with.

When the need arises it will be useful to have an update NP to ensure the future needs of the town are reflected

Ensuring the plan reflects changes to policy (local and national) and the changing face of society more generally (e.g. communications infrastructure).

Because things change and planning needs move on

Need to keep up with the changing environment

See previous answers

It has to be updated or it holds no weight

The first NDP contains quite broad policies as it was about being strategic across the parish. A revised plan will look at what was successful & what was not so. It will also allow the revised plan to be more focussed on need, such as public transport; sustainability & required infrastructure.

We have only just produced it and it is still relevant.

The NP needs to keep up with the NPPF and the local planning authority plans. Otherwise it becomes invalid.

We have just started making tentative steps to do this now.

too soon to know.

It was adopted in 2021 just as I began in role. It is too new to need revision.

We have an 'NDP Review' every 5 years set in place

As stated above, because our District Councils Local Plan is considered to be "out of date" and our Neighbourhood Plan was fully "Made" over two years ago, it is losing some of its planning "weight" during planning application considerations.

Yes at some point in time it needs to be refreshed to ensure it is relevant

We should review our NP when the Joint Local Plan is issued and the currently allocated sites are developed.

It is hard to know from the pros and cons above whether - other than on a monetary basis in terms of the larger share of CIL received - the work that goes into the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan is worth it, for the limited protection that it gives, particularly when it is so reliant upon the existence of an up to date Local Plan.

The first NP was undertaken by a completely independent group of villagers (myself included) with barely any input from the parish councillors at the time. I only became a Cllr

to ensure it got past reg 18 and onto referendum. The group of volunteers have since disbanded. Any revisions would be undertaken [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I get to hear some horror stories of issues with Aecom, adopted NP's being ignored by LPAs and internal frictions.

Neighbourhood Plan is not considered seriously when District takes decisions

Times and issues change and a review is necessary

It depends what changes have taken place in the local area as to whether a revision is required.

Nothing lasts forever

We have found that ours needed quite a few changes including extending the boundary.

Updating the policies and refreshing the allocations will give it more status and weight in the balance imposed by the NPPF

Too early to say as the plan was only finally adopted early this year

Not yet. The plan is reviewed regularly by the PC and will possibly be redrawn in three years time.

In order to move with the times it will need to be refreshed .

That would definitely result in consultation fatigue

Our plan is not complete so it will be refreshed and as it's best by the time it is adopted

Unsure! Hindsight is a great thing.

There is an obligation to revise Plans to keep them dynamic and relevant

It depends on whether it will be adhered to.

Time consuming for a small rural parish council.

Once it's done it makes sense not to let it lapse

Has to be kept dynamic and in general conformity. Also we annually monitor the NDP and report back at the Annual Assembly.

We are currently revising our NP to hold back un-wanted development - not the purpose of a NP I know!

This process is underway

Cost , Time and Limited benefit from NDP

We're currently doing this and its clear some of the policies need updating 7 years on and other policies need to be included.

We have asked the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, to Call In the 2 Outline Planning Applications (OPA) because the LA has ignored our Neighbourhood Plan. The policies are not

clear enough allowing the LA to pass the OPAs despite the OPAs ignoring our policies on landscaping, infrastructure, etc. A revised plan would, hopefully, have more clarity

The [REDACTED] is being updated (Covid etc. put a major brake on it) and it is updated later than anticipated. It is necessary that the NP reflects any changes, otherwise the value of the NP can be challenged. We already have had this, as the plan is over 3 years old, and as there was no 'current' up to date [REDACTED], it was said a specific objection from the Parish Council need no longer be considered,

Under the present government rule NP could be remove. what going to replace them not sure at this time but unless you keep up to date with planning polices you will get unwanted development.

We are under pressure from developers and need to identify appropriate site allocations.

It would depend on the level of commitment from Councillors. If there weren't many willing to help then I wouldn't be willing to support it.

such plans get dated, so either sections need revision or, if there have been great changes locally affecting the plans, a new plan has to be undertaken.

To try and include valid polices that were removed by the Examiner. Also it needs to be revised to include [REDACTED] parish boundary changes

We are modifying our plan as a result of changes to both Local Plan [REDACTED] and the NPPF

Inevitably change will occur particularly at national policy level, necessitating review of the Plan.

To keep the plan relevant

To attempt to shore up the weaknesses identified above

We don't have an agreed plan yet so unsure about a refresh

We need to keep the Neighbourhood Plan up to date, prevent coalescence between communities and maintain features valued by the local community. We also need to be able to demonstrate local community support for or against speculative development. If you do a follow up interview, one of my colleagues who has been closely involved would be happy to assist.

Our plan will only guarantee a 2 year land supply - the LA don't have a 5 year land supply as above - ours is a refresh

Our plan was adopted in 2016, a lot has changed since then, particularly in terms of sustainability, and lots of new development

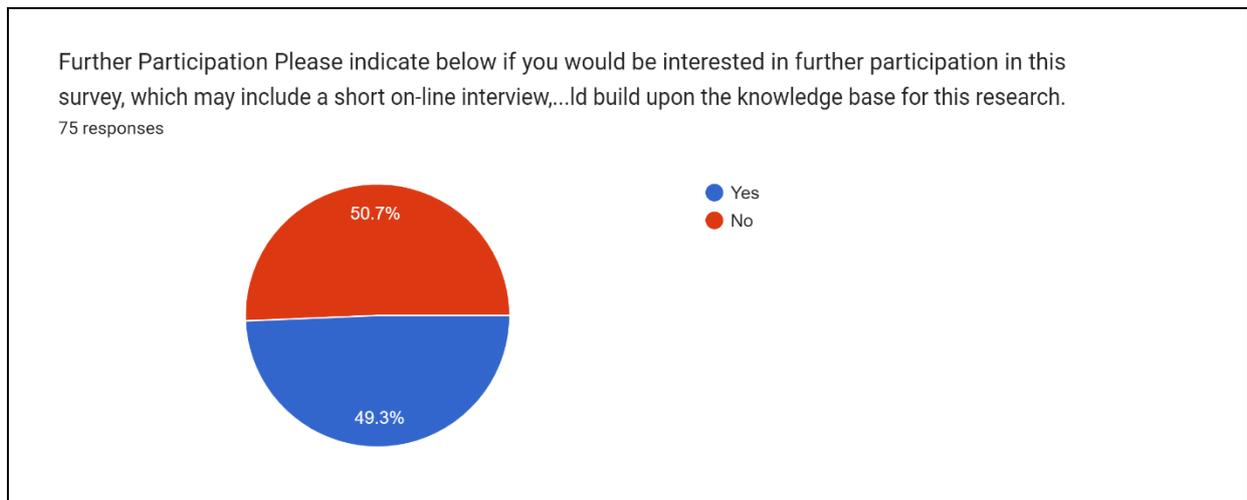
We already have completed Neighbourhood Plan V2 and are working on Neighbourhood Plan V3.

We have revised the plan once and will look in a couple of years to consider a second revision. Our revised plan is better than the original and completely up to date.

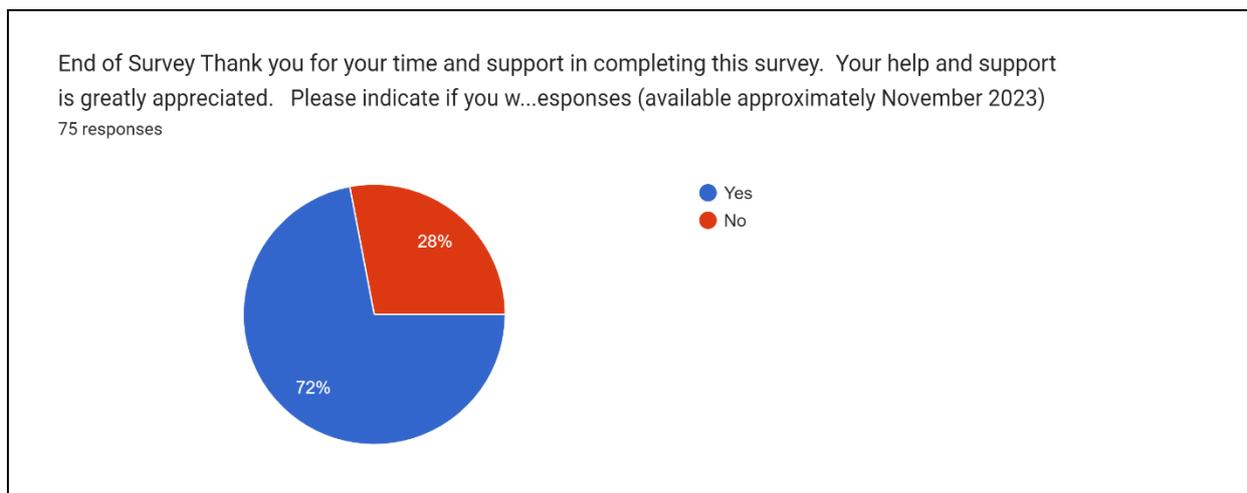
Currently in preparation

we plan to revise and strengthen once the Local Plan is adopted

Question 44: Further Participation: Please indicate below if you would be interested in further participation in this survey, which may include a short on-line interview, lasting approximately 20 minutes. Your continued help and support would be appreciated and would build upon the knowledge base for this research.



Question 45: End of Survey. Thank you for your time and support in completing this survey. Your help and support is greatly appreciated. Please indicate if you would like a summary of the survey responses (available approximately November 2023)



Due to formatting issues in the use of Google Forms, the full question does not print when summarising data into a pie chart (as evidenced in questions 44 and 45 above). To remedy this, the researcher has restated every question in full above each pie chart.