

The Acton Burnell Group



Image by Lucy Purvis

Parish Plan 2013

Introduction

It is now some eight years since the Parish Plan was developed by the community and adopted by the Parish Council and the majority of actions identified in the last Plan have been achieved. During this period a number of things have occurred – Shropshire Council has had to reduce expenditure, Concord College has expanded and agriculture has had to adapt to a changing marketplace. All of these things affect our villages and the Parish Council felt that it was necessary to update the Parish Plan to reflect these new conditions. Early in 2012 a group of residents from all four parishes formed the Parish Plan Steering Group and one of the first actions was to devise and circulate a questionnaire which sought to explore how residents felt about a number of issues. A tea party was held at the Village Hall at which the views of the senior members of our community were sought. The young people who attended the Jubilee event at Concord College were asked to complete a questionnaire and the Concord College students also completed a survey to establish their thoughts on the environment in which they live temporarily.

The 2012 questionnaire asked many of the same questions as the survey in 2002 and it is interesting to compare some of the statistics. The earlier survey identified around 12% of the population as being aged 60+: in 2012 the percentage had risen to 25%. The 2002 survey identified speed of traffic as being a concern to 67% of respondents. In the latest survey, whilst traffic speed was still of concern to the majority of respondents, the volume of traffic and the noise and vibration associated with it had become a major concern for residents, particularly in Pitchford.

The 2004 Plan identified a number of action points. The Village Hall Management Committee has carried out various improvements identified in the Plan. The very successful Village Views which was launched in November 2003 as a result of the Plan is produced on a quarterly basis and distributed to all residents. Most importantly, the Parish Council has pursued introduction of 30 mph speed limits in Acton Burnell and Pitchford and these are due to be implemented in the first half of 2013.

General

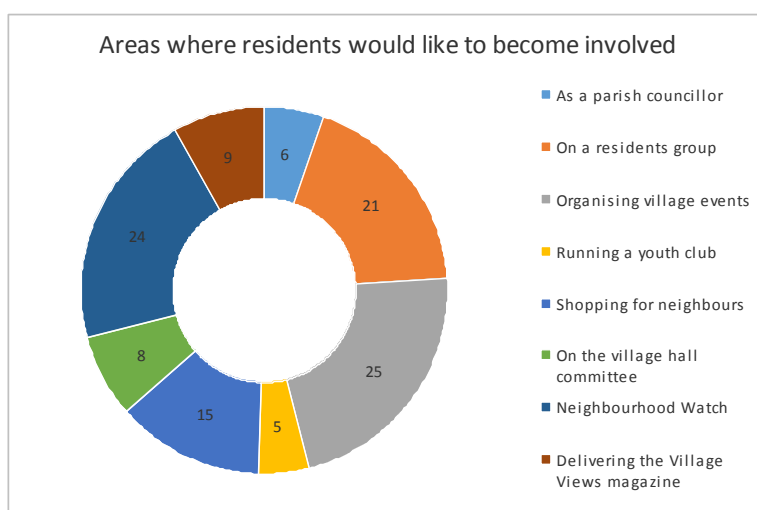
All residents over the age of 18 received the questionnaire last autumn and 48% of these were returned to the Community Council for analysis. The response rate in 2004 was 54%.

Age group	Number and % of respondents
18-25	15 (7.2%)
26-40	25 (12.1%)
41-65	113 (54.6%)
65-79	41 (19.6%)
80 +	13 (6.3%)

A high number of residents have lived in the Parishes for over 10 years (64%) which demonstrates a fairly settled community (40% have lived here for over 21years). Just over 62% of respondents own their own homes.

87.5% of respondents were either employed or retired with a low number unemployed (1.9%).

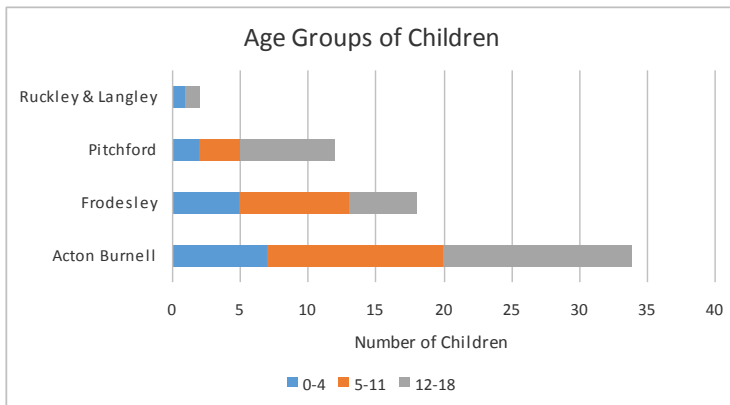
As far as community involvement is concerned, only a small number of respondents would be interested in being a Parish Councillor (8.8%) or running a Youth Club (7.4%). However, people were more enthusiastic about taking part in, or being on, a residents group (30.9%), shopping for neighbours (22.1%) and being involved in Neighbourhood Watch. There is enthusiasm for supporting community events.



In 2004 when the last Parish Plan was written only about 12% of the population of the Parish were retired. That figure has now risen to 25% and, as this is a fairly stable community with a high proportion of home owners, this percentage will inevitably rise in the coming years.

Education, Children and Young Residents

The data produced by the questionnaire identified 66 children. Of these 15 were pre-school with 7 living in Acton Burnell and 5 in Frodesley and three from other parishes.



There were 24 children attending primary schools again around half from Acton Burnell and a third from Frodesley. There were 27 children of secondary/college age around half from Acton Burnell, and a quarter from Pitchford.

There are no primary schools within our parishes. According to Shropshire Council's catchment areas, children from Frodesley should attend Longnor School, with children from the other three parishes attending Church Preen School. Similarly, there are no secondary schools and, in line with Shropshire Council's policy, those in Frodesley should attend Church Stretton School, with the other three parishes attending William Brookes School in Much Wenlock. In reality parental choice determines which schools children actually attend.

We did not survey which schools the children in our parish actually attended.

Although not surveyed most young people use the bus service to travel to Shrewsbury for further education. The Young People's Questionnaire identified 2 who used the bus for college with a further 15 thinking they will need it in the future.

The most significant issue is that young people mainly travel to activities by private transport and, generally, would not support activities in the Parish, with the exception of using a play area if one was available.

We have an independent boarding school, Concord College, which provides bursaries for local students as well as supporting the community and providing jobs.

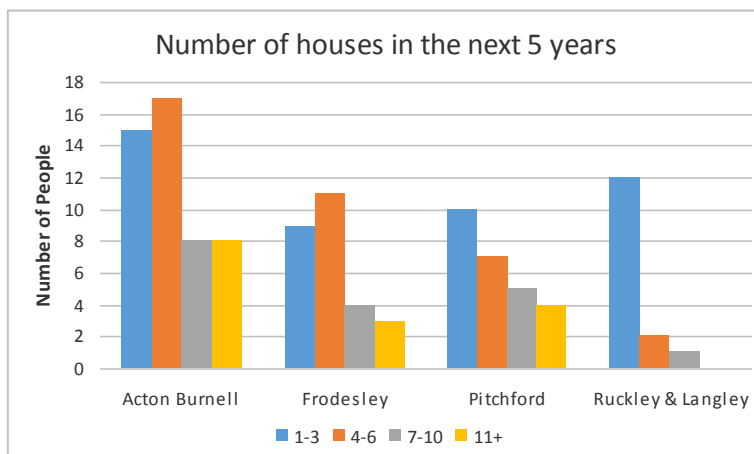
Housing

The 2004 Parish Plan came to the conclusion that any further market value development was not appropriate. The current planning designation for the Parish is Countryside which means that development is not considered appropriate.

Currently almost 56% of respondents support some housing development in the area with 29% against. It is important to note that the question contained the proviso that any future development should not affect the character of the villages nor disadvantage the existing residents. There was considerable variation in the statistics in the four parishes with almost equal numbers for and against in one parish and 79% for compared to 5.3% against at the other end of the scale in another parish.

	Number and % of respondents	Frodesley	Pitchford	Acton Burnell	Ruckley & Langley
Yes	114 (55.9%)	25 (42.4%)	28 (51.9%)	46 (63.9%)	15 (78.9%)
No	59 (28.9%)	24 (40.7%)	17 (31.5%)	17 (23.6%)	1 (5.3%)
Don't know	31 (15.2%)	10 (16.9%)	9 (16.7%)	9 (12.5%)	3 (15.8%)

In the next 5 years, almost 40% of respondents would like to see small developments with 1-3 houses, with 32% wanting between 4-6 houses in the same period.



Of those that replied nearly 80% would like to see some low cost housing or housing with low rents.

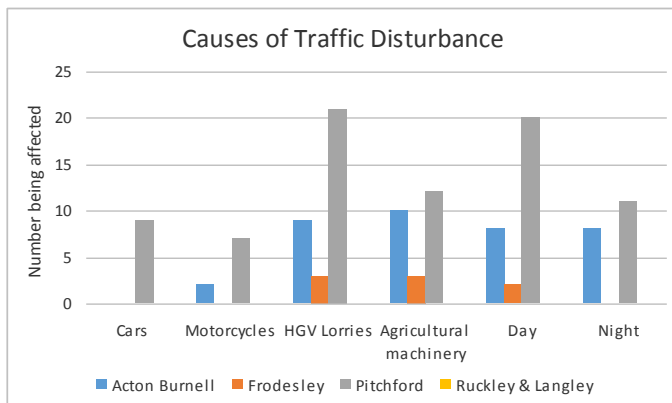
Traffic

Our under 18 survey showed that road safety is a priority for our young people. Traffic going too quickly through their village was a major concern, and when asked how they would make the roads safer they suggested footpaths near the roads, speed restrictions, and street lighting. Some young people feel unable to travel to the village hall in Pitchford because the road is unsafe.

Our survey of older residents revealed similar concerns about traffic speed.

Our survey also indicated a widespread desire to reduce traffic speed. There was strong support for a 30 mph speed limit in the villages. At the time of writing this Plan it is

understood that 30 mph limits are to be implemented in Acton Burnell and Pitchford. The road between Pitchford and Acton Burnell is perceived as being particularly dangerous, and if facilities are to be enhanced in either of these villages then there will need to be a safe connecting route for pedestrians and cyclists.



Traffic noise and vibration were also a concern in Pitchford, both during the day and at night, with HGV's and agricultural machinery being the main causes. Acton Burnell was similarly affected.

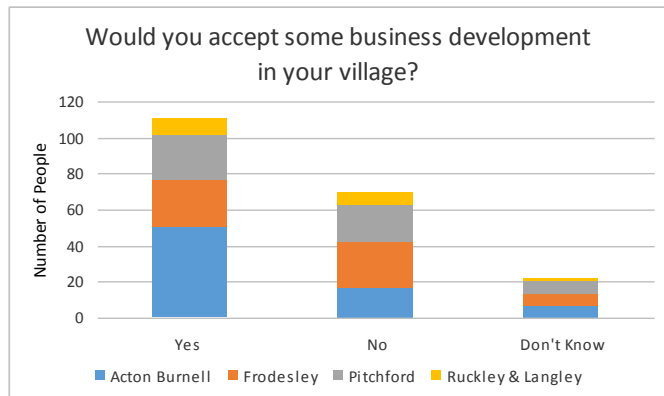
There was also support for cycle paths and for footpaths/bridleways avoiding the roads. Roadside parking was mentioned as a problem in Acton Burnell. Although the road through Acton Burnell and Pitchford to the A458 is gritted, more than 50% of respondents thought that there should be better gritting of the roads in winter.

Business

There are several existing businesses in the villages providing opportunities for employment, focus to the communities and helping to define the character of the villages and the surrounding countryside. These businesses range from farming to haulage and include the post office in Acton Burnell and the hunting and fishing on the Acton Burnell Estate. The largest employer in the villages is Concord College, England's premier international boarding and day school for girls and boys aged 13-19. It currently educates 460 students and employs over 220 staff, 60 of whom live within 5 miles of Acton Burnell. There are therefore several ways in which business is currently flourishing and helping to support the local economy.

In the survey, the question was asked whether there was support for business development in the villages as long as it did not 'affect the character of your village'. In summary the survey revealed more than half of residents (55%) would accept some business development in the area, while 34.2% were not in favour and 10.9% were undecided. The villages varied somewhat in the attitudes revealed in the survey. In Acton Burnell the figure

in favour of development was higher (69.9%). The figures in Pitchford (48.1%) and Ruckley and Langley (52.6%) were lower but indicated that more residents were in favour of business development than against it. By contrast, in Frodesley there were more residents opposed to business development (44.8%) than in favour of it (43.1%).



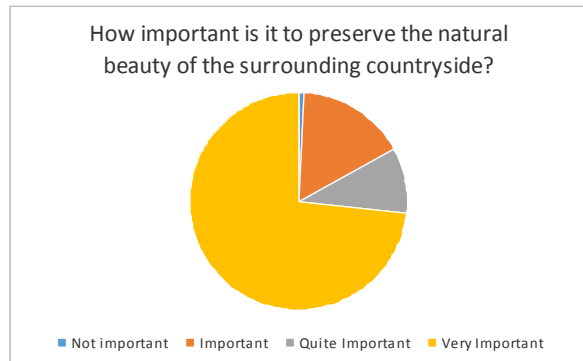
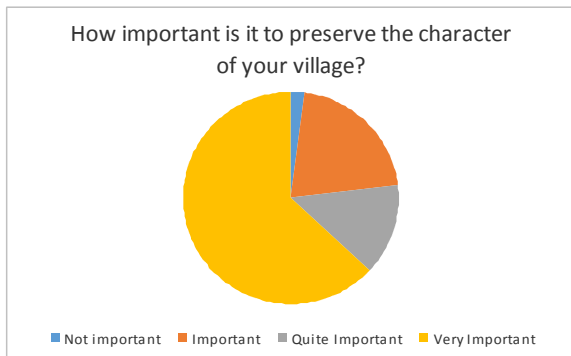
In response to a second question, in all the villages the majority of respondents indicated that if small business units were to be developed, it should be one or two units.

As far as the future is concerned, there appears to be a general agreement that a small amount of business development might be desirable in the next five years. The exception to this is in Frodesley according to the views expressed in the survey. In order for the rural communities to remain vibrant there is a need for employment and for small businesses to have the opportunity to be established if they are viable. It would generally appear that such development would be welcomed in the future. It is also hoped that the existing businesses will continue to develop and to flourish as well as having the flexibility to adapt to the inevitably changing market conditions in the years to come

Environment

There was a broad consensus of views on this subject. A large majority (89%) of respondents believed that preserving the natural beauty of the countryside was important or very important. Similarly, support for maintaining the character of the villages was deemed to be important or very important by 84% of respondents. Younger people also valued the attractiveness and peaceful nature of the area.

There were a number of comments concerning the need to be mindful of the fact that this is an agricultural area and that farming is the most widespread and important commercial activity in this part of Shropshire.



There was quite significant support for an improved network of cycle paths, footpaths and bridleways avoiding the roads.

Health and the Elderly

The majority of respondents to the survey are registered with either the Much Wenlock/Cressage (69) or Bayston Hill/Dorrington (7) surgeries with a further 41 registered with the Church Stretton practice. 24.6% of respondents said that they had difficulty in making an appointment at the Much Wenlock/Cressage surgeries but this was not a problem with the other practices.

There was very limited interest in suggestions for a weekly drop-off point for prescribed medicines or mobile clinics.

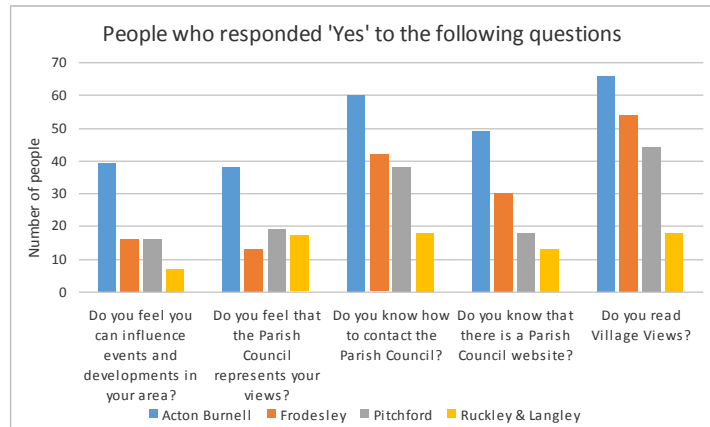
26% of the total survey respondents were aged 65 years plus. (Frodesley 6, Pitchford 11, Acton Burnell and Acton Pigott 14, Ruckley and Langley 5). It is likely that the difficulties with accessing their GP surgery or collecting prescriptions reported by a small number of respondents are more to do with mobility issues than the service provided by the respective surgeries.

It is clear from the data collected that some of the elderly need improved access to medical facilities, particularly the Cressage and Much Wenlock and Bayston Hill and Dorrington practices. Some need assistance with transport to medical appointments and to collect prescriptions.

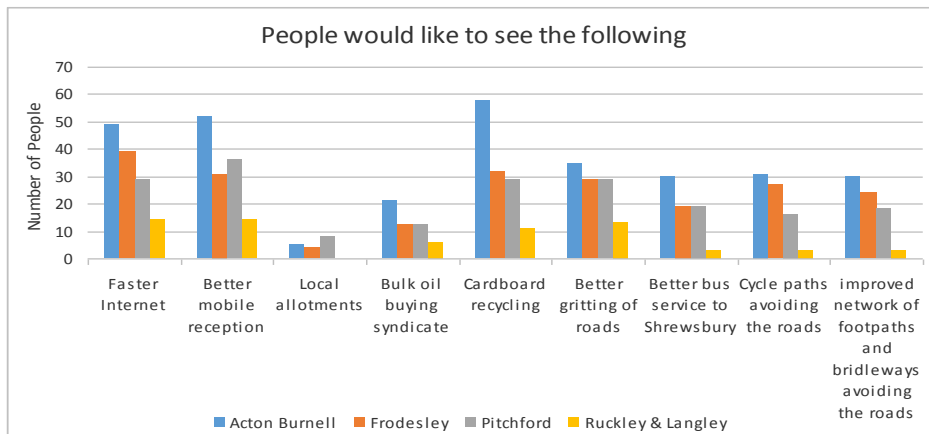
Communications

Village Views is read by 89.5% of respondents and is obviously a valuable tool for disseminating information and keep everyone in touch with local events.

One interesting fact which emerged from this section is that respondents in Pitchford and Frodesley were more negative about influencing events and developments and the Parish Council than those in Acton Burnell. There were varying levels of awareness of the Parish Council website where once again Acton Burnell had a higher level of awareness.



The questionnaire asked residents to assess how important a number of topics were to them. Faster internet connection and better mobile phone signals were the most important issues. The demand for better broadband is likely to escalate especially if there is any increase in business activity in the Parish.



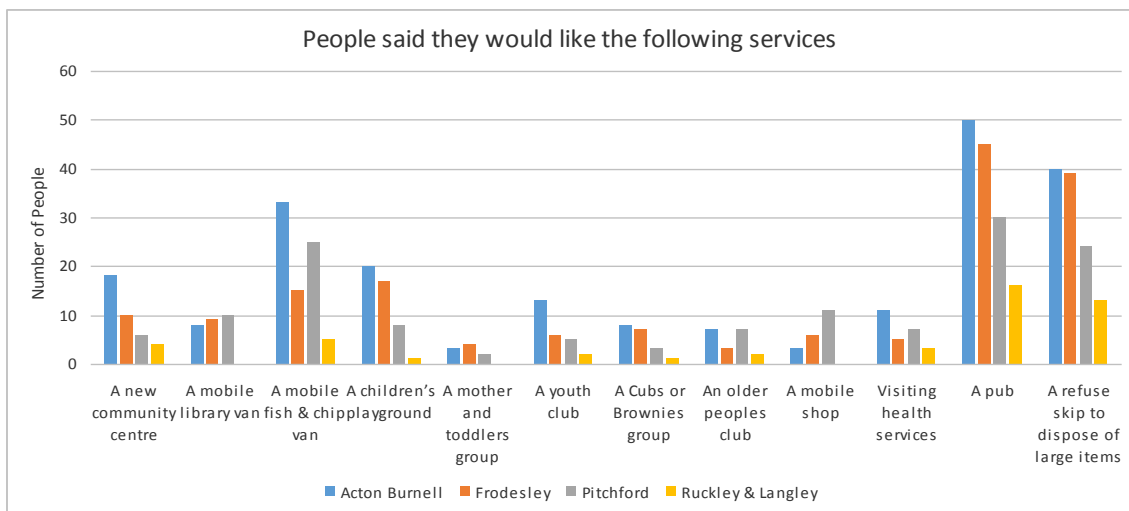
Services, Amenities and Facilities

The number of people answering these questions was lower than those responding to other questions. Such small numbers make it difficult to identify strong feelings.

Note – the response rate is based on the number of people answering the questions and not the number of questionnaires returned, so numbers rather than percentages are used where possible.

Information about usage of the village hall, shop, library, church and bus service are treated with caution due to how the answers were analysed with potentially a higher number falling as “never” and more consultation is suggested in this area.

Two areas have a reasonable response with 141 people wanting to see a pub, and 116 people wanting the occasional refuse skip to dispose of large items.



27 people were keen to use the mobile library but at present only seven people, mostly in Acton Burnell used it. There were comments asking if the library could make stops additional to Acton Burnell.

A majority of respondents thought that cardboard recycling would be beneficial.

A mobile fish and chip shop received support from 78 people.

There was a much lower response rate (less than 50%) to other suggestions.

Respondents value the convenience of the village shop, with the ability to buy goods locally and access post office facilities. 158 people use the shop at least once per month, with the highest usage in Acton Burnell. People are realistic about the amount the shop can stock and its opening times. It is seen as a place where information can be exchanged and Rose is highly regarded.

Village hall use is variable and depends on events held, with 13 people indicating that they used it monthly.

The churches are attended regularly but this attendance is outweighed by those who do not go; there were mixed views about how the church could further develop the community but these were not conclusive.

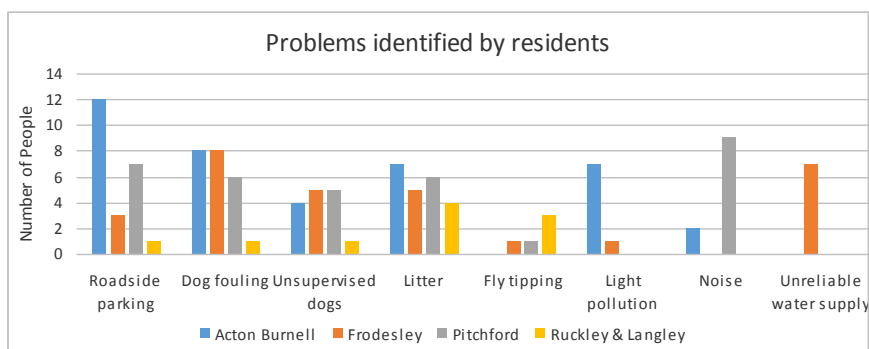
The local bus service is used infrequently. Comments were related to lack of knowledge about the service.

Overall there was appreciation of the benefits that Concord College brought, but comments about accessing sports facilities were noted.

139 people were keen to see a directory of services created and made available to local residents.

There was a mixed response to the question about one thing people would like to improve their village; there was support for a playground or community area, with 46 people supporting this. Improved road maintenance and pub where people could meet were two other areas.

On a negative note, dog fouling and litter seemed to be a cause for concern across the parish along with barking dogs. In Frodesley the water pressure is low and unreliable.



Action Points

Education

- The Parish Council should oppose any threat of closure of either of the two primary schools

Housing

- The Parish Council should undertake further consultation to determine the precise nature and need for development in the villages.
- Following this the Parish Council may need to facilitate the identification of suitable sites for potential development during the next five years.

Traffic

- 30 mph speed limits should be introduced in Acton Burnell and Pitchford
- The Parish Council should continue to oppose any future planning applications which would have the effect of significantly increasing traffic in Acton Burnell, Pitchford and Frodesley.
- A footpath/cycle path should be created between Pitchford and Acton Burnell
- Gritting of the busier roads off the main highway should be considered during the winter
- Consideration should be given to restricting parking in Acton Burnell adjacent to the crossroads

Environment

- Footpath access to the Acton Burnell estate should be sought
- Existing paths and bridleways should be maintained and improved where possible.

Health and the Elderly

- Regular information from local practices should be circulated with parish newsletters, and displayed in surgeries, shops and anywhere residents might have the opportunity to absorb information.

Communications

- The Parish Council should continue to support the publication of Village Views
- The Parish Council website should be brought up to date and maintained on a regular basis. Some form of 'Comments' or 'Contact Us' facility would possibly help residents to feel more connected to the Parish Council.
- The Parish Council should continue to support Shropshire Council's campaign for faster broadband.

Children and young respondents

- The Parish Council should consider the provision of a children's play area.

Elderly

- A weekly drop off service for medicines should be investigated.
- Shropshire RCC should be consulted about mobile shops and a fish and chip van.
- Improved transport links to Shrewsbury.
- A senior social group.

Services, amenities and facilities

- Explore possibility of creating a directory of services and consider how it would be accessed.
- Provide more information about the bus service
- Approach Shropshire Council about the possibility of more mobile library stops.

- Approach Shropshire Council about the possibility of a large waste collection.
- Note to go into Village Views reminding people to 'pick up after their dogs' and to be aware that their dogs may be causing a nuisance by barking.
- Explore the possibility of a cardboard collection skip at Pitchford Village Hall perhaps on a quarterly basis

Aspirations

- A compulsory 20 mph speed limit in Frodesley.
- A pub
- Mobile clinics for doctors and nurses.
- Improved water supply in Frodesley.

Concord College

The students at Concord College are an important part of the community in our Parishes, as a result it was decided to include them in the survey. A modified, shorter, version was presented to them to complete. Of the 460 students presently attending Concord, 369 students responded of which 60 were local, day students. An analysis of their main views follows.

The majority of the students live on the main campus but others live in smaller boarding houses in the villages of Acton Burnell and Acton Pigott.

On local services, very few used the local church (although a significant number attend churches in Shrewsbury), Pitchford Village Hall or the mobile library, which was to be expected. A small number (11) used the local bus service to town with the vast majority (316) regularly using the college coach to Shrewsbury on a Wednesday and Friday. The Post Office and Shop are well used by respondents (332) with some as many as 5 times per week. Taxis to and from Shrewsbury were used by 230 respondents, on average 3 times per month.

A large percentage of the students thought the conservation of the village character was important, the majority of those saying it was not important to them living on the campus. When asked what they valued most about the shop and Post Office, a lot of students said it was close and convenient with food and sweets being the most popular purchases. Telephone top up service, good prices, the postal service, the friendliness of the staff and being able to withdraw money from their bank were also important.

The question regarding extra services showed a number (152) were in favour of a fish and chip van, mobile shop (124), youth club (76), community centre (63). Others included a doughnut shop, coffee shop, snack machine, ice cream van, ATM, Chinese take-away and a pub!

Things that are very important to the students include cardboard recycling, improved cycle paths and bridleways, conservation status for the village and more help for the elderly and house bound. Larger numbers considered better gritting of roads in winter to be important but the overwhelming requests were for a faster internet connection and improved mobile phone reception.

As expected, very few students said they were troubled by traffic noise. A small number said they would like traffic speed reduced locally but more were not concerned about this. It must be recalled that the vast majority of the students live away from the main road through the village. A small number mentioned fly-tipping, unsupervised dogs, dog fouling, light pollution and litter as being a problem..

When asked what one thing would improve living in the area, apart from those highlighted above such as phone reception and internet speed, some suggestions were: more street lights, more shops, removal of mud from the road, the shop to open on Wednesdays, a mobile Chinese takeaway and a hairdresser.

The things the students liked most about living in this area included: the night sky, tranquillity, lovely atmosphere, it is cosy, the quaint and historical features, it is peaceful and serene, no pollution, beautiful scenery and the friendliness of local people.



Image by Francis Davies

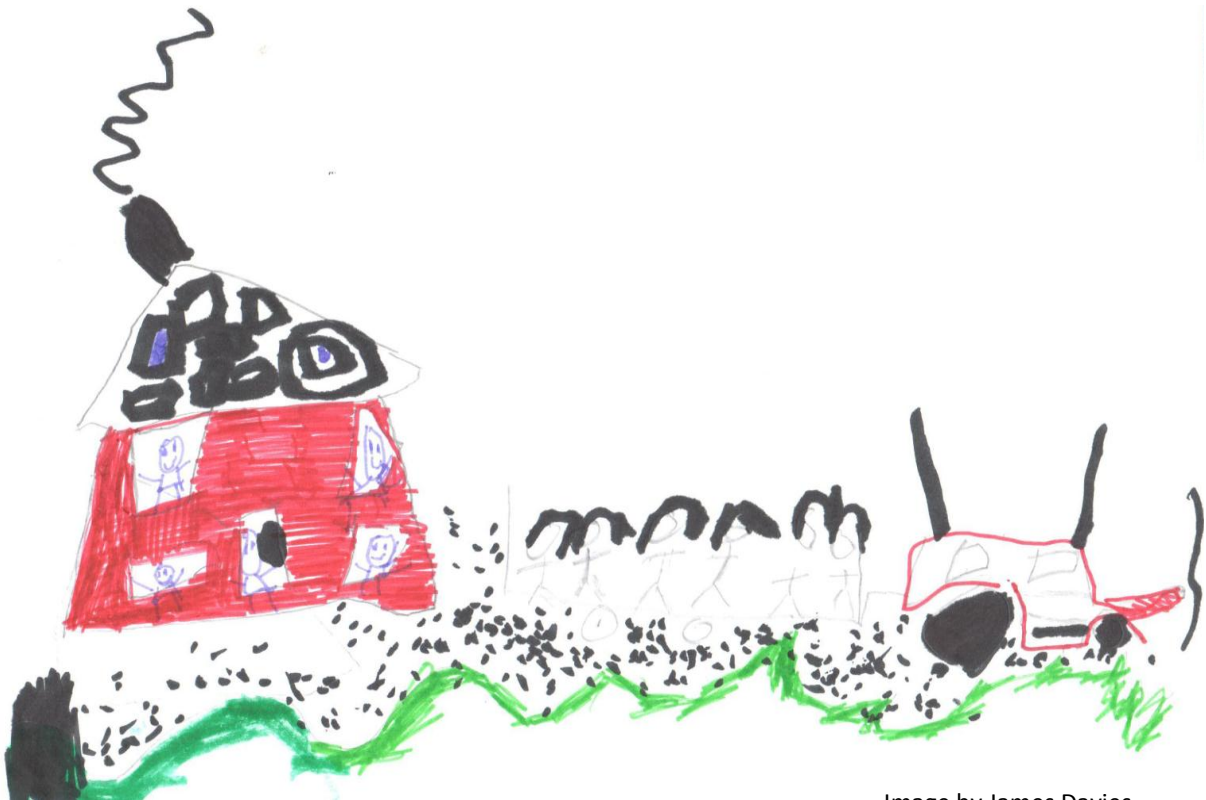


Image by James Davies

Produced By Acton Burnell Parish Plan Steering Committee 2013