

# SOMERSHAM

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# PARISH PLAN

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## **Questionnaire Results Summary & Recommendations**



Community bodies to ensure that they open lines of communication between themselves and the police. (40, 47, 53, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70)

- Relevant planning authorities should be encouraged to note the community desire for parking to be provided off road and for a minimum of 3 cars per property built. (41)
- Notify planners of the demand for starter homes. (42)
- Planning authorities to note the community desire that housing should blend into the existing Village environment. (44)
- To review and reconsider the effectiveness of communication between the PC and the Village eg in *Voices*, web-site. (46)
- PC to contact CAB to discuss the possibility of establishing a presence in the village; possibly at the Community Information Centre. (51)
- PC to be encouraged to use *Voices* to publicise activities. (54)
- A Parish web-site is under construction at the time of writing. (55)
- FOSS, St. John's Church, to use figures in publicity where appropriate. (57)
- PC to publicise identified demand for coffee shop, book shop, gym swimming pool and banking facilities. (11, 59)
- Information to be provided and shared with both local surgeries. (60,61)
- PC to encourage better transport links to Hinchbrook Hospital. (62)
- PC to publicise/facilitate establishing either/or 'Good Neighbourhood Scheme' / Neighbourhood Watch. (63)
- PC to communicate information to Police re concerns indicated by questions 65–68.

#### **Somersham Parish Plan Steering Committee**

Mary Baker • Rev Chris Barter • David Chambers  
Steve Criswell • Richard Elen • Leona Graham-Elen  
Mike Evans (Treasurer) • Barbara Hoy (Correspondence Secretary)  
Andy Lee • Andrew Robertson (Chair)

## **Introduction**

Two years ago, the Parish Plan Steering Group was established, under the aegis of the Somersham Parish Council, to develop a Parish Plan for Somersham. The Plan was to be based on residents' views on the facilities available in the Parish, the local environment, and how residents would like to see things improved in the future.

To determine the views of residents on these and other issues, the Parish Plan Steering Group drew up a questionnaire, which was circulated to Somersham residents in 2005. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was quite extensive and detailed, a great many residents took the time to express their views and observations by completing it, and the members of the Steering Group would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who did so.

Some of the questions in the questionnaire were designed simply to provide anonymous, general demographic information to assist the Parish Council by giving a broad idea of the needs of Somersham residents. Many of the questions, however, were designed to gather your views on specific topics and issues that have arisen in Somersham or may arise in the future.

Based on your answers to all the questions, the Parish Council will be discussing a number of issues arising from them, to develop an Action Plan based on the Recommended Actions listed at the end of this document. From the results of discussions on the Action Plan, a draft Design Statement will be developed for public discussion, and this Statement, when agreed, will help guide Somersham Parish Council in their work to ensure, as far as possible, that the future of Somersham is one that is desired by the majority of residents, where it is within the purview of the Parish Council to act to bring this about. Questionnaire results will also, we hope, prove useful to the Parish Council and other local groups in bringing matters of importance to residents to the attention of local authorities and other external bodies.

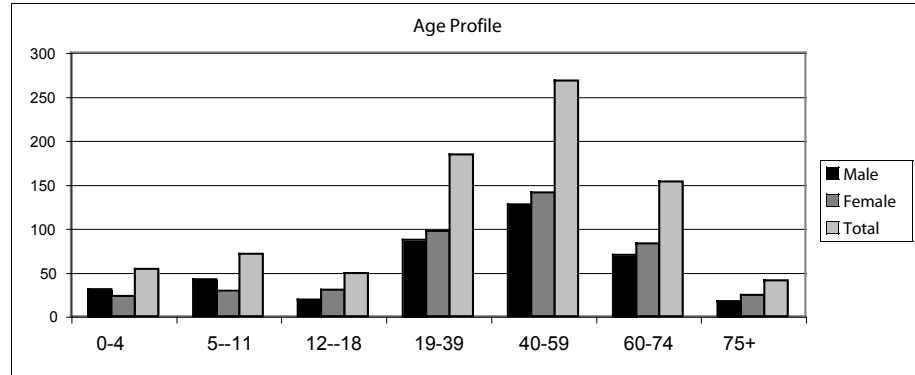
In the interests of gaining the most complete picture of residents' views possible, some of the questions offered options which may not be possible under local, regional or national planning and other regulations and guidelines, or are not financially viable. While the Parish Council will do its best to implement policies based as closely as is practical on the expressed wishes of Somersham residents, it would not, of course, be able to implement proposals that contravene these requirements. As a result the Parish Council, while it will do its best, cannot guarantee to be able to carry out any of the recommendations contained in this document, or the resulting Action Plan or Design Statement.

For reasons of practicality, this booklet only summarises the Questionnaire answers. However, you can read the complete results analysis documents in the Library.

The Somersham Parish Plan Steering Group would like to thank everyone who assisted in developing the Questionnaire and the resulting documents; but most of all we would like to thank you, the residents of Somersham, for expressing your views and helping to produce an Action Plan and Design Statement that, we hope, will embody your hopes and aspirations for the future of our village.

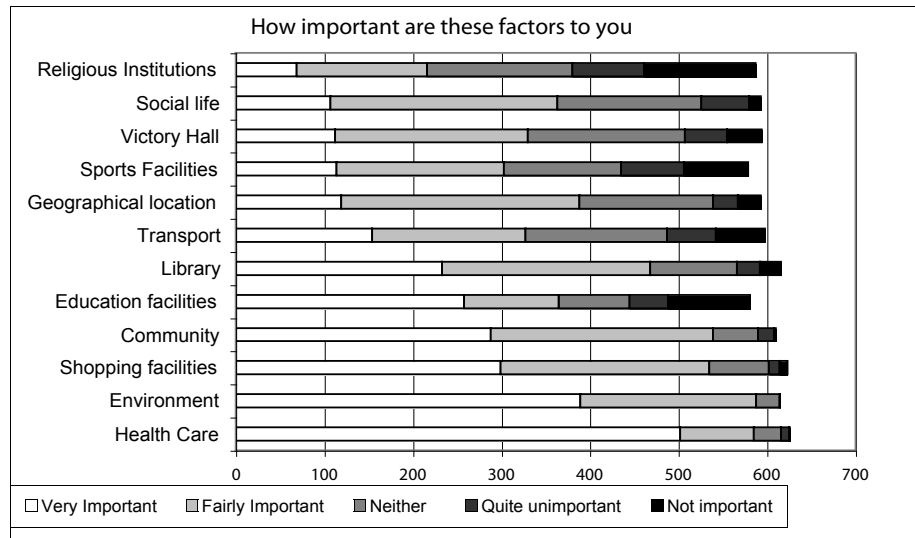
## Questionnaire Results & Analysis Summary

**Questions 1 & 2** asked about the gender and age groups of households. Over 30% of residents were in the 40-59 age group, with over 20% aged 19-39 and just under 20% aged 60-74. Women outnumbered men in all age groups from 12-18 up. Almost 45% of households included two people, with over 20% living alone and about 20% including four people or more.



**Question 3** asked how long residents had lived in Somersham. Over 15% had lived here all their lives, with the vast majority having lived here for 1-15 years. However, a sizeable portion had lived in Somersham for 16-25 years, and even more for 26-50.

**Question 4** asked how important a number of factors were to the local population. Easily considered the most important was health care, with the environment second. However, out of the areas that are within the purview of the Parish Council to administer, shopping facilities and the Library were seen as most important. Interestingly, the Victory Hall – which is not a Parish Council responsibility – came fairly low in people’s estimations, along with sports facilities and social life. Religious institutions came last.



## Appendix: Recommended Actions

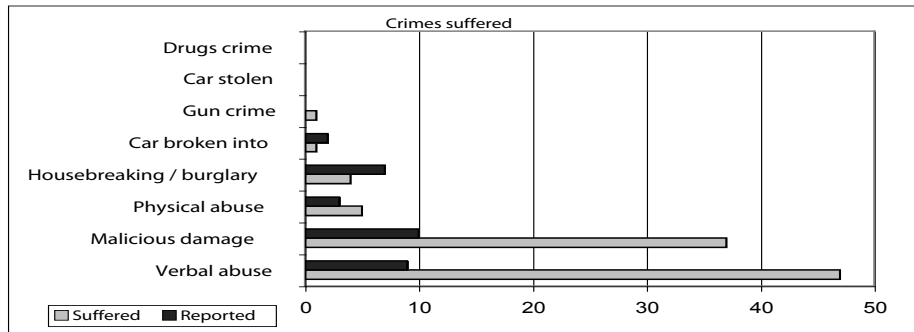
The following recommended actions to be taken by the Parish Council have been drawn up as a result of analysis of the Questionnaire Results provided in this booklet. In several cases, the actions suggested concern issues that are sole or joint responsibilities with either county, district or even Government, and are to be handled accordingly (for example, questions 13/32, 14, 22-3, 28, 34, 41, 54 and 55). The relevant questions are indicated, where appropriate, in brackets after the recommended action. If you have any additional comments or suggestions, we recommend that you bring them to the attention of the Parish Council at a Council meeting.

- Parish Council ('PC') to raise awareness of parish support for shopping facilities, library and sense of community. (4)
- Review opportunities to encourage small business development within the village. Review existing facilities and grants and consider moves to encourage further development. (12)
- Review possibilities to increase number of cycleways in village and surrounding area. Look at existing routes and those that have been under consideration/discussion over past 5 years. What can be done to bring more to fruition. (13,32)
- Consider the possibility of earmarking parking spaces for short term rather than long term use in order to promote local businesses. (14)
- Parish council to consider promotion of idea of car pooling; possibly on web-site. (16)
- Review opportunities to link Somersham into public transport network. Lobby at District and County level for improved facilities and connections to Huntingdon and new Tram service into Cambridge. (17,18)
- PC to review current speed reduction methods and consider other measures. (22,23)
- Parish Council to liaise with police to ensure existing traffic restrictions and regulations are more rigorously enforced. (26)
- Look for opportunities to extend public footpath and pavement network and to establish a cycle track. Review joint bid opportunities at Parish Council and the possibility of a FP link to Pidley. (21,28)
- PC to consider establishing more litter bins. (34)
- PC to investigate wind-generation schemes available and their feasibility. Long term project. (39)
- PC to review and implement CCTV cameras in key locations as soon as possible;

Somersham (Q64), only a little over 6% feel somewhat or extremely unsafe. However, several people (almost half) had never seen a police officer in the village (Q65), although quite a few (30%) had seen one around once a month. Similarly, out of 282 respondents, over 100 (38%), when asked whether they were satisfied with police responsiveness (Q68) responded with only 'OK'; 45% were 'quite' or 'extremely' dissatisfied. Under 18% were either 'extremely' or 'quite' satisfied.

Of the 188 respondents who had reported a crime to the police (Q66), only 23 reported themselves as 'extremely satisfied' with police handling, while 37 were 'quite satisfied' and 56 were only 'OK'. 41, meanwhile, were 'quite dissatisfied' with police handling of the event and 31 said they were 'extremely dissatisfied': these figures will be passed to the police.

Over the previous year, the most prevalent problem suffered by residents (Q67) was verbal abuse (47 out of 95) with malicious damage suffered by 37 people. In most cases, however, these issues were not reported.



Over 97% of respondents felt that there is a problem with vandalism in Somersham (Q69), with the area around Victory Hall and the playing fields being considered the worst affected. Other problem locations included around the lake, St. John's Church, near the High Street pubs and in the Church St. recycling collection point.

The final question, Question 70, asked which of a range of measures residents would support, and which they would be prepared to pay for via an increase in Council Tax. In particular, there was support for a greater police presence and for CCTV cameras, and also support for Community Police Support Officers.



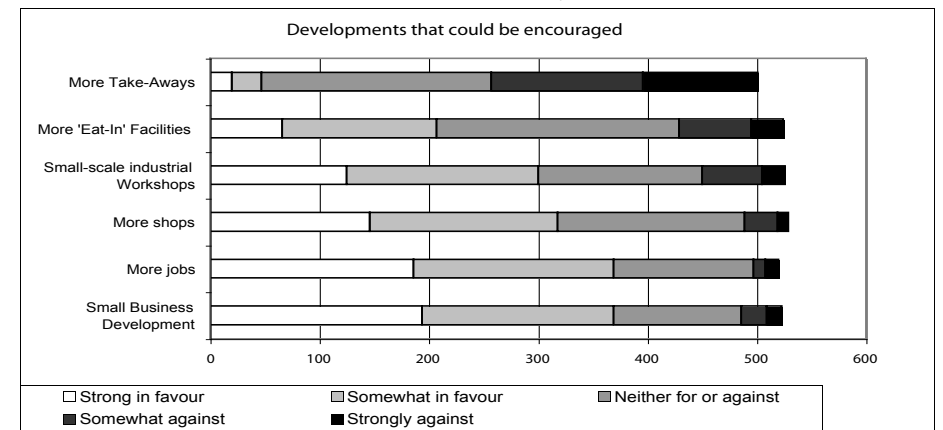
Question 5 asked whether residents owned their own homes, rented them, or otherwise. Almost 90% of Somersham residents own their own homes, with only a little over 7% renting. Meanwhile, Question 6 asked how many bedrooms resident's dwelling had: almost 50% had three, with almost 30% having four and over 15% with two. Question 7 asked residents to indicate what Council tax Band their home came under: almost 35% did not answer this question, but of those who did, most were in Bands D (23%) and C (18%).

Question 8 asked why household members had moved away from Somersham during the past 10 years. Most had done so to enter further education (30%) and similar numbers (around 30%) had left to join a partner or take up employment elsewhere. Lack of affordable housing was cited by 10%.

Question 9 asked about employment, and indicated that almost half of residents were employees. Only 1.5% indicated they were unemployed, which is better than the Huntingdonshire average of over 2%. Over 20% were retired, and 16% were in full-time education. Over 10% were self-employed, including 2% who employed others.

Question 10 was a detailed section asking how often residents used the existing village facilities. General Stores led those amenities used daily, with bakeries, recycling and the Post Office all some distance behind. Of those used frequently, however, the recycling facilities were the most popular, leading the chemists, Post Office and General Stores. Other facilities used frequently include the Library and the Doctor's Surgeries. Question 11 elaborated on these answers by asking residents to write in the additional facilities they would like to see in the village and how often they would be used. Most popular additional facility would be a swimming pool/gym/health club, favoured by 40%. Next was access to financial facilities (e.g. a bank) with 17% and thirdly was a Café or Tea Shop with 13% response. Other responses included Florist (now newly opened) and a Police Station.

In Question 12, we asked what types of development should be encouraged in the village. Small business development was regarded as the most important thing to be encouraged, along with more shops and the jobs that both would bring to Somersham. Residents were least in favour of additional take-aways:



As one might expect, of vehicles used by Somersham residents, cars (at over 60%) were the most popular; according to **Question 13**. However, bicycles were also extremely popular; at over 30%. **Question 14** asked about car parking in Somersham, and here virtually nobody thought there should be less. Residents were fairly evenly divided, however, on whether there should be more parking for visitors or residents, or whether it was about right – except when it came to parking for shopping, where about two thirds of residents thought there should be more.

In a write-in question, **Question 15** asked about how residents got to and from a range of activities. As expected, Car was the most popular (at 66%) followed by Walk (at 27%). Walking was a popular mode for local shopping and for an evening out in the village. Bus was used for 3% of journeys exceeding car usage for the journey to and from school, but not as popular as walking.

Also as one might imagine, most people travel alone in their car going to and from work (90%, in fact), with little evidence of car-pooling of any kind, according to **Question 16** – although of course there is no encouragement to do so. Nearly 90% of respondents did not use public transport either; according to **Question 17**. Over half indicated that the problem was inconvenient times, while nearly as many simply felt services were not frequent enough; however in this question, in which respondents could give as many reasons as applied, over a third of those who didn't use public transport blamed a lack of evening return services and a similar number of responses suggested that services went to the wrong places. Would this usage pattern change if services were improved? **Question 18** asked about this, and established that about a third of respondents would still never use public transport: but of the two thirds who would, almost half would use it at least once a month and nearly as many – 30% – at least once a week. Over ten per cent would use public transport every day if services were improved. **Question 19** asked residents to indicate where they would like public transport services to take them. Cambridge was the most popular destination (30% of responses) closely followed by Huntingdon, Huntingdon railway station and Hinchingsbrooke hospital (combined 28% response). Other popular destinations included Peterborough, St. Ives and, to a lesser extent, Ely, Norwich, Hunstanton and Kettering also attracted votes.

**Questions 20 and 21** asked if residents were satisfied with the state of the roadside pavements in Somersham – over half were – and whether there should be additional pavements. Continuation of the pavement along St. Ives Road to the Windmill Restaurant was the most popular choice, with some wanting this extended all the way to Pidley.

The village did not feel in general that existing traffic speed reduction measures were effective: only 42% thought they were, according to **Question 22**. The following question asked what additional measures people would like to see. A variety of measures were mentioned including speed cameras, speed humps (particularly outside Parkhall School), 20mph speed restrictions outside Parkhall School, and some road narrowing. A large number of responses also called for better enforcement of the existing speed limits.

**Question 24** asked if people felt the lorry ban in Somersham is sufficiently enforced, and again over half (56%) felt it was not, though it is possible that many residents do not know that deliveries and Cornwell's (who are based in the village) and agricultural vehicles are exempt from the 7.5 tonne weight limit. We also asked if the lorry ban should

On the subject of information services in Somersham, **Question 51** established an overwhelming need for a Citizen's Advice Bureau, with over half suggesting they would use it if available. 22% would use Social Security/Benefits advice services and 14% would use an Employment Office.

Most people agreed that there was plenty of information about events in Somersham (**Question 52**), residents learning about events (**Question 53**) by a number of means more or less equally – word of mouth, *Somersham Voices* (the most popular, at almost a quarter), other area newspapers, signs and the (Parish-owned) noticeboards, and leaflets delivered through the door. Only 0.3% learned about local events on-line.

*Somersham Voices* was the most popular local publication (**Q54**), with most people reading every issue and very few never reading it. Second was the *Town Crier*, shortly behind that the *Hunts Post* and behind that the *Weekly News*.

While few people currently get their information on-line, almost three quarters would visit a web site giving information about what's happening in and around the village (**Q55**). In fact a Parish web site is under construction at the time of writing. Most people (86%) thought there were enough Royal Mail post boxes in Somersham (**Q56**).

Out of a fairly exhaustive list of Somersham-based organisations (**Q57**), the most popular was the Friends of Somersham Library.

**Question 58** asked residents to write in what additional activities or organisations they would participate in if they were available. Again the gym/swimming pool was most popular (56% of those who wrote with additional suggestions). Other additional activities suggested included a rambling club, dance classes and a drama group.

**Question 59** asked residents which of a list of facilities they would use if they existed in the village. Most popular were a bookshop (280 votes) and a coffee shop (257) – perhaps someone would like to open a business combining the two? – and although it might be unlikely to succeed financially, a gymnasium was suggested by 241 votes.

**Question 60** asked about the use of services over the past year, and as one might expect the local doctor's surgeries were the most popular (303, the vast majority NHS), over 90% of residents having their doctor's surgery in the village (**Q61**). The quality of the services was also generally rated highly, with few complaints in most cases.

Some essential services were regarded as difficult to get to (**Q62**), notably the hospital (31.5%) and dental services (27%). Opticians were also a problem (12.6%). A dental service is now being introduced in Somersham, which will hopefully alleviate this problem. In most of the other cases, additional bus services are required.

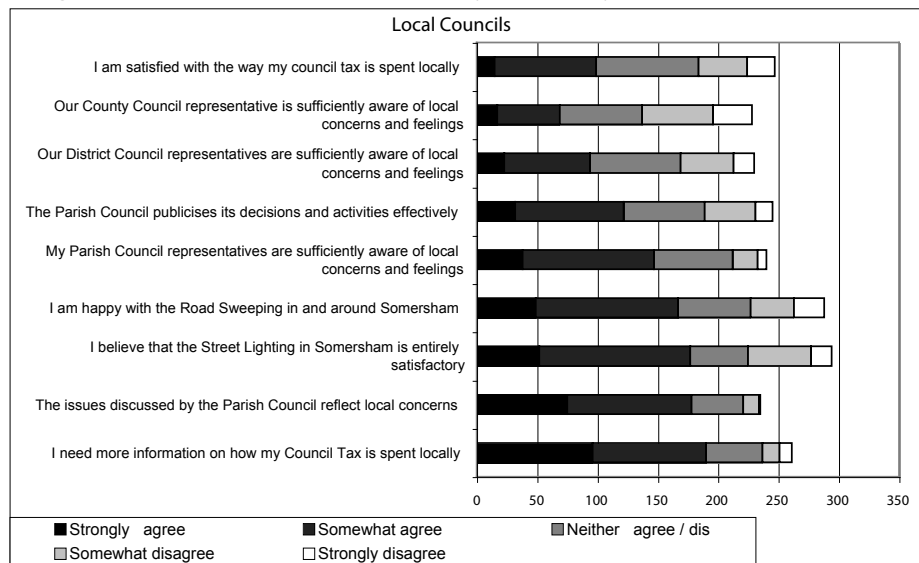
Most people felt that an organised "good neighbour" scheme and a Neighbourhood Watch scheme were needed (**Q63**) – and not only that, most of those said they would help!

Thankfully, the majority (over 78%) of residents feel extremely safe or quite safe in

**Question 44** (see chart above) asked respondents how much they agreed with a set of statements about the design of future housing development. Summarising the three most popular options, it was felt that new housing should be varied and should blend in - reflecting the mixed character of older housing, varying in style within each development, and merging into the countryside rather than there being a sharp separation.

The next section covered Local Government and led off with **Question 45**, which asked about attitudes to the Parish Council. It found that under a third had ever attended a Council meeting, and only a quarter had ever written to the Parish Council. However, most people (65%) were aware that there was a public forum at each meeting and over half (57%) knew that the Parish Council Minutes were available at the Library.

**Question 46** asked about local councils. There was a general feeling that people needed more information on how their Council Tax is spent locally. In addition there was a general view that the Parish Council did not publicise its decisions and activities effectively enough. And although it could be said that respondents were broadly of the opinion that Parish Council representatives were sufficiently aware of local concerns and feelings, this was less the case with the County Council representative.



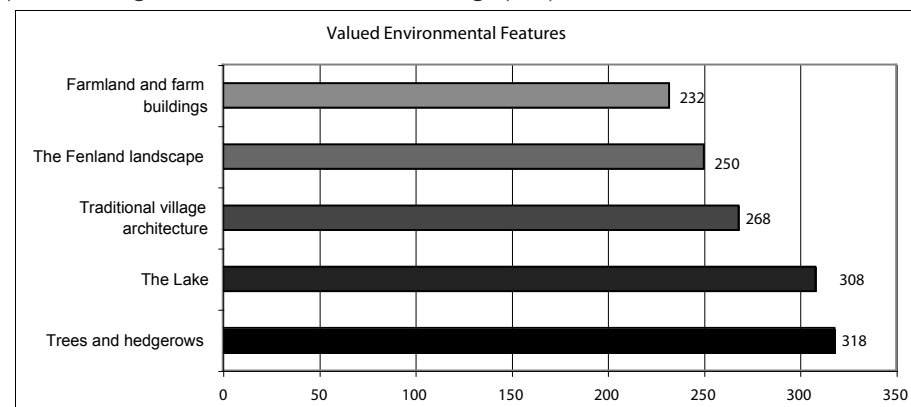
**Question 47** asked how the Parish Council should prioritise spending, and Crime Prevention was the clear leader here – a subject that is also addressed later. Parish-owned amenity areas came next, followed by the Village Hall/Community Centre, Youth Services and children’s play space equipment.

**Questions 48–50** provided a picture of residents’ internet access capability in the village, with the vast majority on dial-up (30%) or broadband (25%) at home and only 10% with no access at all. Over a quarter of those without broadband expected to have it within the year; the remainder not intending to invest in it. Only 13% of respondents used the internet access capability in the Library.

be extended down The Bank (Chatteris Road). Although this is not currently practical, we felt that it would provide a useful insight: nearly 60% would like to see this if it was possible, suggesting that there is a definite desire to further limit the passage of heavy traffic through the village.

In addition, residents were asked to suggest any additional road safety measures they would like to see. Most popular choice was better enforcement of existing parking restrictions, particularly along the High Street. Some residents requested traffic lights at the Cross, and some wanted the zebra crossings replaced by pelican crossings.

In a question where residents were able to indicate all the options that applied, **Question 27** asked what people valued in the local environment. Trees and hedgerows in general were very popular; as was the Lake (with 318 and 308 responses respectively), but traditional village architecture (268) and the fen landscape in general (250) were also praised along with farmland and farm buildings (232).



**Questions 28 and 29** asked about use of the public footpaths (as opposed to pavements or bridleways) in and around Somersham. Over 85% of residents used them, and almost 70% would like to see more of them. Not so with bridleways, according to **Questions 30 and 31**: under 5% of residents rode horses on the existing bridleway and 65% did not feel the need for more.

**Question 32** asked if residents would like to see a cycle track: almost 70% did, and in text answers suggested that such a track should go to St. Ives (35% of responses), Chatteris (24% of responses) and Pidley (14%).

**Question 33** asked if residents would like to see Somersham’s grass verges cut more often. A little over half (53%) thought they should; but timing is also a factor here.

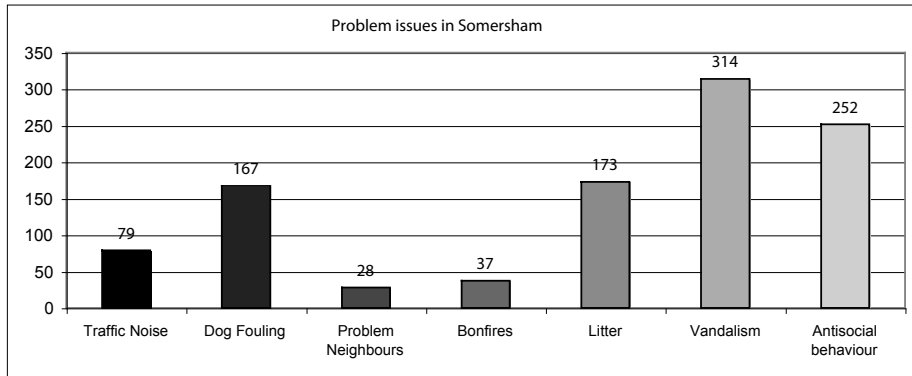
**Question 34** asked whether more litter bins should be provided – a function of the Parish Council when they are on Parish property and HDC when located in the streets and car parks. Almost three quarters (74.4%) of respondents thought that they should; 66% of residents also wanted additional litter-picking staff in Somersham (**Q35**).

**Question 36** indicated that almost 90% of residents used the recycling facility off

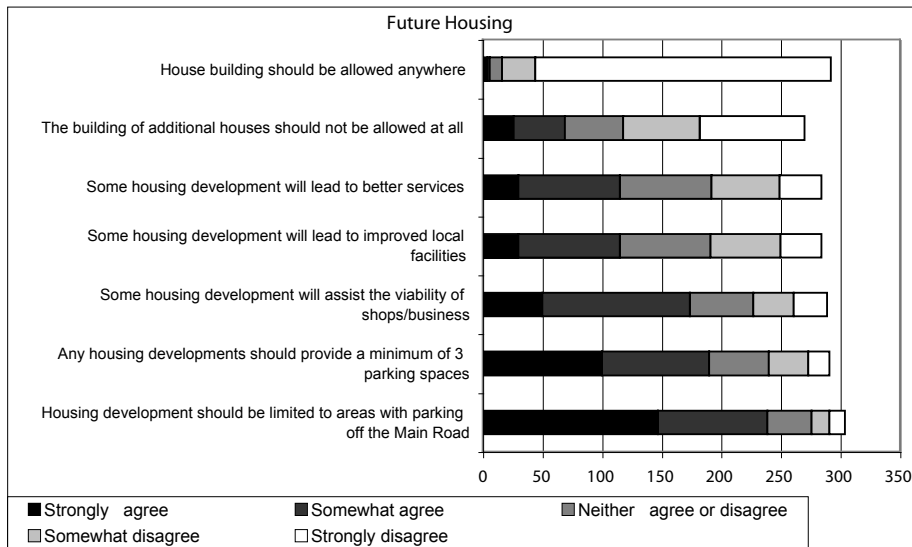
Church Street (it also figured highly in amenities that people use a lot, covered earlier), and a slightly smaller number knew that it generates funds for the village. Rather fewer than half the residents, however (46.5%) felt we needed additional recycling locations – perhaps due to the introduction of wheelie bins.

In an interesting answer to a topical question in the region, over two thirds (68.5%) of residents would support the installation of a sensitively-planned wind farm near Somersham, if the profits went to the village (**Question 39**), suggesting that a wind farm that was owned by the community would meet with approval, but not necessarily if it were a private operation giving no benefit to Somersham.

In **Question 40**, residents identified the issues that they see as a problem in Somersham. Vandalism led the field with almost 30%, followed by antisocial behaviour with 24%. Litter (16.5%) and dog fouling (16%) were also seen as issues, while only 2.7% and 3.5% respectively had trouble with neighbours and bonfires.

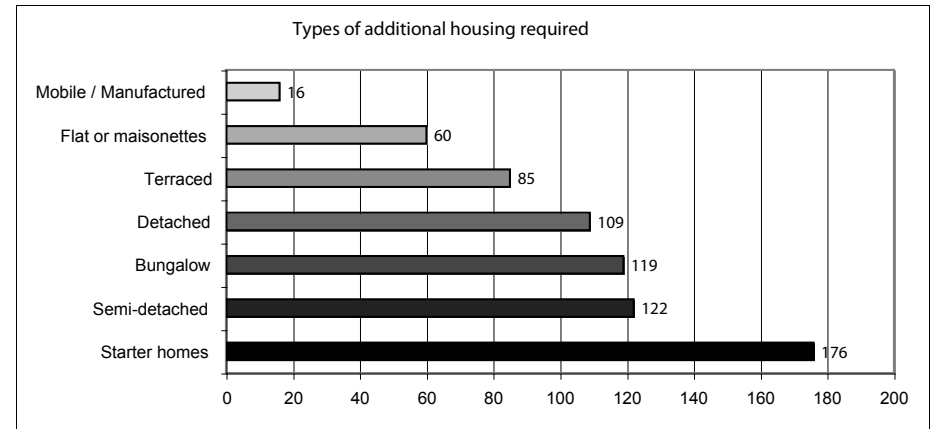


Questions on Housing were led off by **Question 41**, which asked residents how much they agreed with a series of statements on future housing development:



The two options that are in fact impossible under current planning regulations were also the most opposed: only six respondents felt that house building should be allowed anywhere, while 152 either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the proposition that no new housing should be allowed at all. The argument that housing development should be limited to areas with parking off the main road was the most popular, and in addition a significant majority felt that any housing developments should provide a minimum of three parking spaces. There was also fairly wide support for the view that some housing development would assist the viability of shops and businesses. See the graphic below for a more detailed breakdown.

There was considerable support for the building of additional starter homes, according to **Question 42**. There was also support for other housing types as shown graphically below. However, 99 respondents did not complete this question.



The majority of respondents felt that new housing should be owner-occupied, with the popularity of other options as shown below, in answer to **Question 43**.

