

SONNING COMMON COMMUNITY EVIDENCE

This comprises three sets of information which sought, in different ways and at different times, local community views on Sonning Common as it is now and as it might or should be:

1. **Community Survey:** This asked for comments on a wide range of issues so can be drawn upon to support each (and all) of the plan policies.
2. **Design Day:** This also asked for comments on a wide range of issues so can be drawn upon to support each (and all) of the plan policies.
3. **Facilities Survey:** This focused specifically on future sport, recreation and leisure provision.

1. COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2010 a Community Survey was undertaken to assess community views on a range of issues, several but not all planning-related. The responses are in summary form as follows.

The survey was distributed to **1800 homes** (i.e. more than just the parish) with a **78%** response rate.

TOP 3 Priorities

- Improve Village Centre/Environment
- Parking
- Pavements and Pathways

HOUSING

- 81% favour small housing developments on a number of sites
- 67% believe that a 40% mix of any new homes should be “affordable” ones.

VILLAGE CENTRE

- 82% believe the village centre needs to be re-modelled
- 70% say “plant some trees”
- A clear majority want to keep the raised flower-beds
- At least 50% say re-open the public toilets
- 35% want more frequent road repairs

PARKING

- 91% do not want to pay for parking
- 68% favour a ban on parking in Wood Lane
- 34% want enforced parking restrictions

ROAD SAFETY

- 68% want a zebra crossing on Wood Lane close to the shops
- 55% want footpaths in Reades Lane
- Hazardous roads: Wood Lane (20%), Grove Rd. (17%) and Kennylands Road (61%)

LAW AND ORDER: Top Priorities for police action:

- Inconsiderate parking (26%)
- Vandalism (19%)
- Anti-social behaviour (15%)
- 54% believe policing levels are poor or inadequate
- 45% are in Neighbourhood Watch and a further 22% keen to join
- Less than 20% have been the victims of a crime in the last 3 years

This relates to the 2011 Census figures as follows:

Dwellings:

- Sonning Common parish: 1,595
- Rotherfield Peppard parish: 678
- Kidmore End parish: 516.
- *Total: 2,789.*

Populations:

- Sonning Common parish: 3,784
- Rotherfield Peppard parish: 1,649
- Kidmore End parish: 1,302
- *Total: 6,735.*

Registered patients at Health Centre (as proxy for village centre use):

- 8,400

2. DESIGN DAY

This section includes all the 'raw', i.e. initial results from the Design Day held in April 2012 to which all local residents were invited. All text in italics, as here, is introduction and explanation, all plain text is typed-up notes or comments direct from participants.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

For this exercise, people were simply asked to note on post-its what they particularly liked or disliked about living in Sonning Common. Where there is a number after a comment that shows how many extra people made the same or very similar comment. Comments were also grouped roughly under headings (e.g. Community spirit).

LIKES

Community Spirit

- Sonning Common is a great place to live – near to the countryside for walks, The residents are very friendly and with the starting of (?) social interaction got a whole lot better
- Friendly village - 2
- Friendly people who smile
- Community spirit - 8
- Village has good community spirit – neighbours care about each other esp. the older residents

- A real village community feel but still good for amenities
- Community feeling remaining - 1
- FISH volunteers (?)
- Great people

Amenities

- Good amenities - 4
- Local facilities
- Town hall, fish and chip shop, playground, gymnastics club, co-op, Post Office
- Like the shops, the takeaways and the service from the Reading Buses; Like the full mobile phone and Broadband coverage.
- Location, local shops community
- Good facilities, all essential facilities, good bus service from Reading, rural atmosphere, nice community
- Lovely place to live – good schools and open spaces
- Good amenities for younger children
- Good facilities and rural character
- Health centre – 12
- Drs. Surgery, everything close at hand
- Dentist
- Chemists
- Near enough usually to walk
- Library - 6
- Shops - 11
- Self contained shops – butchers, bakery, newsagent, hardware, supermarket etc.
- (Good) schools - 8
- School, visits by ice cream van, parks, friends and social networks, character, amenities
- Village hall facility - 1
- Children's playground.
- Churches

Walking etc.

- I like that we can walk in the woods with our dogs
- I like the flowers and the footpaths and the Millennium field (should be more)
- Lots of walking places - 3
- I enjoy scooting and riding my bike around the village. Age 6
- You can ride your bike safely

Access

- Proximity to countryside - 6
- Fresh air and open space of nearby countryside
- Close to countryside, nice walks, good bus service to Reading and Henley
- Country feel but near good road communications
- Countryside access, facilities
- Rural setting, fields all around - 3
- Access to countryside/walks

- Proximity to AONB
- Great AONB, countryside and woodland
- Love the flowers in hedgerows along the Peppard road. (We need a footpath to Emmer Green (?))
- Heath and Watkins (?)

Size

- Size of community
- Size of the village

Trees etc

- Trees in street scene -1
- Lots of trees and surrounding open spaces
- Millennium Field on Kennylands Road (great unspoiled open space)
- New flower beds and spring flowers thanks to village gardeners

Things to do

- Variety and societies/activities and good community spirit
- The village singing group
- Variety of activities - 1
- Fun place
- Community events are fun - 1

Housing mix

- Mixed ages because of mixed housing
- Variety of mixed up housing - 1
- Wide variety of housing styles – many roads don't have two the same!

Village status

- Sonning Common is not a traditional village but a small suburb of Reading and Henley
- Very convenient for all shops /schools/transport/doctors/dentist/walking, but still a village so far
- Location
- Great wider economic area
- Everything needed available no need to leave village
- Excellent spirit and support

Parish Council

- A Parish Council who really cares and 'gets things moving' - 2
- Magazine and Parish Council

Transport

- Central position, easy to get to countryside and town, good amenities, bus service.
- Easy access to trains/London/most other routes – coast etc.
- Access to public transport, although could be better
- Good bus service to Reading - 4

Development

- We should encourage more development

Community Action

- Lovely work done by gardeners to enhance village - 2
- Community does its best to make village look attractive

And finally...

- Quiet and very pleasant place to live

DISLIKE

Parking

- Inconsiderate parking - 5
- Inconsiderate parking makes matters worse – haven't people got feet to walk more than a few feet?!
- Parking on footpaths - 2
- Lack of parking spaces - 6
- Car parking is difficult - 4
- Lorries parking in side roads obstructing traffic (ie. deliveries and dust carts)

Traffic

- Traffic - 3
- Congested main street - 1
- Inconsiderate driving - 1
- Too many cars using village, village getting too large
- Too car friendly
- Fast traffic on Kennylands Road - 1
- Traffic on Wood Lane
- One way traffic would be better
- No crossings Wood Lane and Grove Road
- There is no crossing near the school
- No school crossing - 1
- Children riding scooters on road in the dark – several near misses, not fair to motorists
- Scooters down the road
- Children with scooters running loose on roads in front of traffic
- Not pedestrian or cyclists friendly - 3
- Lack of adequate running/cycling routes going out of the village
- Lack of pavements on some roads - 1
- I wish there were footpaths along the Abbey Rugby Club road – it's dangerous
- Lack of pedestrian area in village centre

Transport

- Bus poor
- Poor bus service to Henley - 3
- Thames Travel buses need to improve their service to Henley and the rest of Oxfordshire
- Public transport too restricted in evenings, Reading and Henley - 2

- Lack of bus service to/from Reading in evening -1
- Would like it if bus timetable notices also displayed up to date fare information please

Road/Path Maintenance

- More street lighting
- The condition of the roads (Peppard Road). I am a cyclists and a pedestrian
- Potholes in roads - 3
- Fulford Way disgraceful – just try walking along on a wet/snowy day! - 1
- Drains overflowing - 1

Litter/Mess

- Litter - 2
- Not enough rubbish bins on roads
- Litter along roads and outside shops
- Litter in parks
- Dog poo - 3
- Dog poo encountered by my children

Facilities/Amenities

- Shop (Coop) is rubbish
- Lack of facilities in village centre
- Need a larger modern community hall - 1
- No village green - 1
- Unattractive village centre - 3
- Public areas in centre need to be improved – surfacing, layout
- Library under threat - 2
- Sports facilities would be good – use of school grounds?
- Lack of sports hall - 2
- Areas for youngsters needed in village, ie. evening coffee shop - 7
- Parks aren't that good, not much to do, need a skatepark
- Gents locked shut – help! (age 76)
- Can the village facilities provide for increase in population – I don't think so!

Housing Provision

- Need more bungalows for the elderly - 3
- Need for small houses for single people
- Not enough cheaper houses with decent outdoor spaces – why don't developers allow first time buyers space to park 2 cars and grow some veg in the garden?
- Not enough new houses – struggle for first time buyers
- More attractive small new houses (less expensive)
- (Too) expensive
- Need more affordable housing

Development Generally

- Suburban feel
- Expansion of village - 1

- Potential for Sonning Common to become a town – or close to it
- Dislike constant demands for houses and attacks by Reading
- Have tight controls of developers removing small properties and building blocks of flats out of keeping with our village
- Need to build more on good design features – Character Assessment
- No high density development
- No more huge houses
- Rows of houses with no gardens

Others

- Concreting over front gardens and destruction of hedges
- No fibre/cable broadband
- I do object to the amount of Council Tax – we do not have pavements/lighting in Bird in Hand area

MEMORY MAPS

People attending the Design Day were asked to do 'Memory Maps' of the village, showing however much they wished in whatever way they wished. 17 maps were done. The note below shows how many maps showed specific roads, landmarks, facilities etc. If no number shown, there was only one mention.

Roads Shown

- Wood Lane - 15
- Peppard Road - 10
- Kennylands Road - 5
- Grove Road - 5
- Woodlands Road - 3
- Beech Rise
- Newfield Road
- Sedgewell Road
- Shiplake Bottom
- Hazelmoor Lane
- Hazel Gardens
- Reades Lane

Facilities Shown

- Health Centre - 11
- Primary School - 10
- Shops - 9 (and see below)
- Pubs (various) - 9
- Secondary School - 6
- Dentist - 6
- Post Office - 6
- Library - 5
- Coop - 5

- Garage on Peppard Road 5
- (Total mention of shops: 29)
- Village Hall - 4
- Catholic Church - 3
- CofE Church - 2
- Doctors - 3
- Police Station - 2
- Chemist - 2
- Bank - 2
- Indian restaurant - 2
- Florist - 2
- Gym - 2
- Playground - 2
- Hardware shop
- Fish and chip shop
- Barbers
- Newsagents
- Butcher
- Garage on Reades Lane
- Care Home
- Brownies' hut
- Kidmore End school

Wider Environment Shown

- Woods - 6
- Millennium Field - 5
- Bus stops - 5
- Herb farm - 4
- Playing fields - 3
- Footpaths - 2
- AONB
- Tennis courts
- Old milking parlour
- Trees
- Car park by hall
- Named fields
- Sewage works
- Countryside

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE IN SONNING COMMON?

For this exercise, people were asked to note down their reasons for moving to Sonning Common. Comments have been grouped, all are noted here.

Countryside/Amenities

- For the country environment
- Amenities/countryside – rural location
- Rural surroundings, good health centre, did not want to live in a town, like country walks and village atmosphere.
- Sense of community with lovely countryside
- Good amenities, close to countryside and community feel
- Had most amenities for a rural (semi) life
- Originally from the Borocourt Hospital Estate in Kingswood Common, schooled in Stoke Row, hated the isolation and total lack of amenities and cultural diversity so chose here.
- Busy village centre, good shopping facilities
- It is a village with many good facilities – health centre/shops/services including good bus service apart from evenings/ surrounded by attractive countryside/community spirit

Location/Size

- Village size not too big.
- Location of village and size (1968), stayed because of village community feeling and location

Community

- Great community spirit, lots of volunteers for most things, village community

Work

- Local employment
- Work

Mixture of Above

- Moved here in 1968. Chose here rather than other areas Woodley, Farley etc). House prices was an obvious factor. Wanted a village life – don't want it bigger or spoilt. Dislike the possibility of increase in cars and traffic, plus amenities just about serve the present population. Don't change Sonning Common from the village status it has now
- Came to Sonning Common in 1942 with my parents to escape the bombing in Kent. Have lived here all my life, seen some changes, some good, some bad.
- Chosen after looking at all villages around. Got granny flat with large garden

- Good schools, close enough to London, pleasant environment, lively community and friendly people
- Good location for work, access to countryside, right house at right price (to rent – we can't afford to)

Other

- Did exchange of houses

TRAFFIC WORKSHOP

During the day a workshop was held with a small number of local people about traffic and movement around the village. This was led by Geoff Haslam of the Localism Network. What follows is his notes so all are in italics.

Introduction

There was a short introduction to the theory of 'walkable neighbourhoods', including the concept of permeability, block size, and 5 and 10 minute walking isographs. Attendees were invited to indicate their travel routes from home to the village facilities and to wider destinations. They were then invited to mark up plans showing the above and any issues that they perceived on these routes. The results were plotted on a village map including the key destinations and the issues. There were initial discussions about the type of solution that may be possible to address some issues.

Issues included:

- *Narrow pavements and alleyways*
- *Condition of the pavements, gutters and road paving*
- *Busy roads and perceived danger for pedestrians and cyclists (Kennylands Road and particularly Peppard Road)*
- *Parking for shoppers using the centre*
- *Limited accessibility through the village due to narrow pavements and alleyways.*
- *Adults dropping off children at the primary school (many come from other villages, beyond walking or cycling distance)*
- *The bus service, lack of shelters, frequency, short day, and routing*
- *The work identified two 'centres'; one on Wood Lane; the other on Peppard Road. Both benefit from users coming from outlying villages. The Peppard Road Petrol Station, car showroom, bank, etc. benefit from passing traffic. One of the participants drew the 5 and 10 minute walk limits on the village map.*

Suggestions:

1. *It was agreed that the area in front of the Village Hall, the location of many of the shops, would benefit from a redesign; this may include the improvement of pavements running up to it, and measures to increase pedestrian priority incrementally towards the centre.*
2. *A pavement and cycle track to be added to Peppard Road to facilitate movement around the village and create a cycle commuting opportunity into Reading.*
3. *The parents association at Sonning Common Primary School are keen to address the issue of danger generated by children being dropped off and picked up by car. A potential solution could follow similar principles to those suggested for the village centre.*

3. COMMUNITY SURVEY OF SPORT AND RECREATION ASPIRATIONS

In 2014 the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group issued a survey questionnaire about sport and recreation provision, entitled 'On Your Bike', to local residents via the Parish Newsletter. 128 responses were received. The results are summarised below.

Are more facilities needed?

	Yes	No	Inconclusive
Do you agree that Sonning Common's NDP should include provision for new sports/exercise facilities?	127	1	0

Which new facilities would you like to have?

	Yes	No	Inconclusive
Indoor sports hall with exercise gym	111	10	7
Asphalt multi-purpose games area	111	4	13
Outdoor pitches (cricket, football)	93	12	23
Jogging track	68	31	29

What other facilities would you like to have? (Summary only)

Swimming Pool 25m	25	Trim trail	1
Cycle Lanes (around village/on Peppard Road/to Chiltern Edge/to Gallowstree)	6	Dog walking area (with toilets)	1
Skatepark	5	Grass area with picnic tables	1
Tennis Court (all year round use/indoor/dome)	4	Indoor Youth Club for teenagers	1
Climbing wall (indoor)	3	Walking / recreational area on SON 1	1
Outdoor gym	2	Bobsleigh	1
Cycle area for children	2	Ice Rink	1
Recreational facilities at the Millennium Green end of village	2	Golf	1
Water Area for children (25m)	1	Mini golf	1
Enough parking for these facilities	1	Go Kart	1
Indoor sports hall with gym	1	All weather pitch	1
Astropitches	1	Amenity space – plain grassed area	1
Velodrome	1		1