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The household questionnaire was structured to gather information and views on 16 topics, and this report reflects that layout.

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Your Village - Your Voice

INTRODUCTION

Many communities want to take a more active role in improving the quality of life in their area than can be achieved solely through approaches to or by their parish councils. In order to do so they require accurate and up to date information on the opinions and aspirations of their fellow residents.

A Village Appraisal can obtain this information and is a tried and tested mechanism that has been used by residents of many towns and villages across the United Kingdom. As such it is a powerful and compelling tool with which to demonstrate the wishes of the local population.

Objective of the Appraisal

The objective is to provide an authoritative statement of what the people of the Rickinghalls and Botesdale think about their villages now and of their desires for the future of the villages. Armed with this information the appraisal aims to:

- Inform Parish, District and County Councils and other relevant bodies of the opinions of the residents on the issues that are important to them.
- Stimulate discussion within the community on the way the villages should develop.
- Form the basis of a Community Action Plan for both villages.
- Provide an invaluable "snapshot" of life in Botesdale and the Rickinghalls at the start of the millennium.

Inception

At a well-publicised public meeting in March 2001 there was overwhelming support for a Village Appraisal to be undertaken in Botesdale and the Rickinghalls. A Steering Group was formed, charged with producing a constitution, obtaining grant funding and setting up an organisation to carry out the Appraisal. The success of this Appraisal is due to the large number of volunteers who gave generously of their time and effort at all stages of the process.

Chronology

March 2001

Initial meeting

April - November 2001

Compiling and printing the Questionnaires

December 2001 - April 2002

Distribution and collection of questionnaires

February - August 2002

Data entry to the computer programmes

September 2002 - February 2003

Verification, validation and analysis of the data

January onwards 2003

Writing the reports, publishing and printing

All who contributed are grateful to Suffolk ACRE for their guidance and to the Countryside Agency and Parish Councils who gave financial support.



Methodology

Through the Countryside Agency the Steering Group obtained a computer programme devised by the Countryside and Community Research Unit and Gloucestershire Rural Community Council specifically for Village Appraisals. Although now somewhat dated it was used as the basis for our work.

Under the overall guidance of the Steering Group four volunteer teams were formed:

- Questionnaire Design and Production
- Questionnaire Distribution and Collection
- Data Processing and Input
- Analysis and Writing

The main Household Questionnaire contained 86 questions. It was decided at an early stage to supplement it with a Youth Questionnaire of 27 questions aimed at the younger people aged from 8 to 18 years.

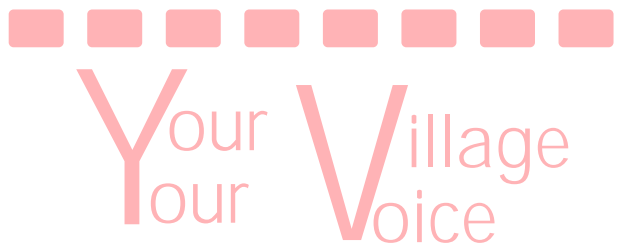
Questionnaires were delivered to 840 occupied households covering both villages and overall 561 were returned, 540 of which were completed, giving a highly significant response rate of 67 per cent. The main report narrates the responses to each major section of the questionnaires.

We have analysed the replies of 1012 individuals for the household questionnaire, and 102 youth questionnaires, and these results must therefore be considered to be an authoritative statement of the opinions and aspirations of the communities: furthermore, they are a valid basis for further action plans.

The Youth questionnaire was completed by 102 people between the ages of 8 and 18 years and asked 27 questions. These ranged from the distribution of age ranges within the five areas of the villages (Botesdale Village, Botesdale Outlying, Rickinghall Village, Rickinghall Outlying and Allwood Green), through education, security, leisure, and religion to an involvement in local government.

Full reports are being published to include the statistical data from both questionnaires published as annexes, together with the detailed comments that you added to your responses. These full reports are being made available to the groups and organisations that we are hoping to influence with our proposals for an action plan. The statistical data runs to almost 30 pages and the comments to 40, so cost considerations prevent us distributing the full report to every household, but copies will be available for reference, limited distribution, and on the villages websites.

(Rickinghall website address is <http://www.rickinghall.suffolk.gov.uk> and Botesdale website is under construction, www.botesdale.info)



The Way Forward

The production of the Village Appraisal is the end of the task of this Steering Group. The Group's findings and recommendations are contained in the final section of the report, with suggestions on which body should pursue them. However, if the Community Action Plan is to achieve its potential it will be vital to form another Group, dedicated to ensuring that the recommendations are so pursued, co-ordinating plans where necessary, and reporting overall progress back to the community.

Any comments on this report should be given to Michael Broom, Chairman of the Steering Group (01 379 898 860) or any other members of the committee. The best comment is, however, to become involved in the next stage!

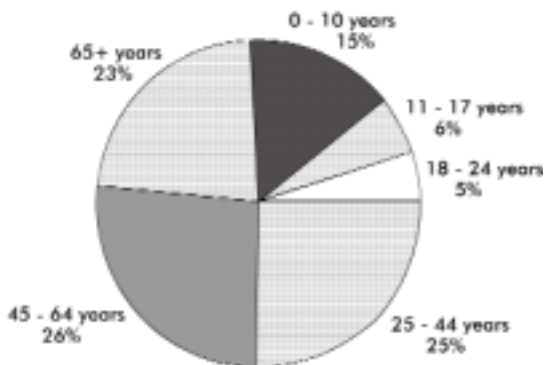




Population Profile

There were 1,297 people including children living in the 540 responding households. The population is fairly evenly split between the sexes with 50.5% male and 49.5% female.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RICKINGHALL & BOTESDALE



The age profile of the inhabitants of the combined villages, as reflected in the chart above, is well balanced. However, Botesdale village has a higher proportion of people over the age of 60 and the Rickinghalls a correspondingly greater proportion of younger inhabitants in the age range 18 to 60 years.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE VILLAGE ?



42% of respondents lived in Botesdale, 56% Rickinghall and 2% at Allwood Green. 54 people (11%) said they were born in the villages, slightly higher proportion in Rickinghall than in Botesdale.



Our Present Housing

Although only 1% of households registered their dwelling as a second home, there is evidence to suggest that this may be an underestimate as the questionnaire distribution team did encounter difficulty in securing responses from a number of households believed to be second homes. Despite this, it would be reasonable to assume that the villages do not have a significant number of 'week-enders'.

Some 17% of dwellings were rented with half of these from the Local Authority. The majority (82%) of dwellings were owner occupied with just 1% provided as part of employment.

167 properties (32%) were built before 1900, reflecting the history of the villages. This proportion is similar in the villages of Botesdale and the Rickinghalls. The next highest proportion of properties were built between 1981 and 1990 representing 23% of housing stock, and is consistent with the developments of Wheatfields and Ryders Way. Just over 18% of properties had been constructed in the period after 1991 which includes the completion of the Fairstead development and Church Meadow, one of the last housing developments built by Mid Suffolk District Council.

When people were asked why they moved to the area, this attracted an interesting range of



reasons with the most popular being "I liked the area" followed next by "to be in a more rural area". Although employment and retirement were also signalled as further reasons, it was interesting to note that the



Health Centre and the School were also important influencing factors in people moving to the villages. Over 9% of responses said they had moved here to set up their first home, reflecting the number of 'first time buyer' properties available within the two villages.

Education and Childcare

128 Households responded to the question on the number of children under 16 years attending childcare provisions or school, with information on 249 children. In this sample more children attended a playgroup than a state nursery, and 25 children (13%) were in private childcare or schooling. Of the parents who said they used cars for the school run, 73 had children at Play group, Nursery or Primary School, a total of 109 children out of a total of 153 children in those schools. Our sample included 13 children in State Nursery and 102 in State Primary, figures that are likely to relate to St Botolphs.

61 households reported on children 16 years and over with 8 in the sixth form, and the remainder fairly evenly divided between University, full-time and part-time training, and evening classes.

33 households told us that their children would like to take part in activities but were unable to, nearly half due to lack of choice or suitability, and most of the remainder due to the distance or lack of transport.

89 households would use a variety of proposed childcare facilities if they were to be provided. Top of the wish list was a holiday club, followed by an after-school club, with a smaller vote for a breakfast club.

There were 60 responses to the question of how additional childcare would help, with about half getting into, back to, or increasing hours of employment, and about a third planning to undertake training or study.



Employment and Economic Development

Whilst 39% of the respondents are employees, retired people form the second largest grouping at 34%, and 14% are self employed. The unwaged housewife or husband make up 9% of our sample.

435 people responded to the question on the nature of their business, and a very wide range of occupations is represented. Local Government and Public Sector jobs are jointly top of the list at 18%, with Retail and Service jobs. Agriculture and horticulture now only represent 5% of jobs.



Roads and transportation

Ownership and use of vehicles

787 individuals responded to the question of vehicle ownership and showed that 858 motor vehicles or motorcycles, and 307 pedal cycles, were kept in the total area of our report. The main use of motor vehicles, in order of importance, was leisure, shopping, transport to work and business trips. In addition 120 persons (15%) used their cars to take children to school. As the villages covered do not represent the full catchment area of the school, it is not surprising that there are complaints about the number of vehicles around at school opening and closing times.

Parking

737 people answered the question, with some people reporting more than one vehicle. 701 did not park on the road, 75 did, and only one admitted parking on the verge or pavement. Many people considered the vehicles parked on the road to be a nuisance. Suggested solutions ranged from prohibiting any parking on The Street to having a system that restricts parking to different sides of The Street on alternate days.

Use and usefulness of Public Transport

Buses are mostly used for shopping. The main complaints cover routes, timing and frequency. To meet the latter point, one suggestion was that smaller buses should be run more frequently. The criticisms on routes and timings came mainly from those who wished to use them to get to and from work in Bury St Edmunds, Diss and Norwich. The fact that buses did not go to Diss Railway station and were not linked to the train timetables was also a comment. The lack of buses to Ipswich, Stowmarket and Thetford was mentioned several times. The routes taken were adversely commented upon, particularly in the outlying areas and Allwood Green residents

complained of a total lack of service that made visits to the Health Centre particularly difficult.

A number of residents complained about a lack of bus shelters in Botesdale.

Traffic hazards in the Villages

Three main hazards were noted by many of the contributors. The entrances to the villages, off the A143 onto Bury Road in Rickingham and the junction of Hall Lane (B1113 to Redgrave) with Diss Road and The Street at the east end of Botesdale. The third set of dangerous areas reported was the protuberances into The Street at the junctions with Chapel Lane and Garden House Lane together with the constriction put over the crest of the hill near the Post Office. You commented that at certain times of the year, drivers going in a westerly direction along The Street can easily be blinded by the sun at this point.

Many individuals commented on the danger of being rammed from behind when slowing down on the A143 to turn into Bury Road, Rickingham. The provision of a 'slip road' or 'deceleration lane' was widely recommended. You told us that this should be engineered to avoid the present sharp turn with an adverse camber that is probably a contributory cause for the frequent





demolition of the road signs at that site. There is strong support for the restoration of the previous priorities that existed at the junction of the Diss Road, Botesdale and Hall Lane to Redgrave. It was also suggested that this could easily be achieved by putting a mini roundabout at the junction. There was almost universal rejection of the idea that any of the trees on the B1113 should be cut down in the interests of safety.

It was pointed out that cars parked close to turnings onto The Street seriously restrict the vision of those exiting these turnings to an extent that it is dangerous. Two further junctions were noted as being dangerous: the crossings of the A143 between Rectory Hill and the B1113, and that where Townhouse Lane and Calkewood Lane meet at the boundary between Rickinghall and Wattisfield.



Speeding

Speeding in the villages is seen as a serious problem with considerable support (53%) for the enforcement of the speed limits. There is also significant support for reducing the speed limit in places and for extending the areas covered particularly along the Hinderclay Road.

Pavements

The pavements, where they existed, in the villages were generally thought to be adequate but there was considerable dislike of the loose chippings that had been spread shortly before the survey was made. The lack of pavements along Back Hills, Cherry Tree Lane, The Drift, Rectory Hill and Water Lane is considered to be dangerous especially by those walking children to school. There were suggestions that because of the lack of a pavement The Drift should be made One Way. It was also suggested that Bridewell and Chapel Lanes should be made One Way.

Street Lighting

There was general agreement that street lighting in Rickinghall should be improved and in particular that that along Water Lane was inadequate. There was a lot of support for further 'under-grounding' of cables.

Cycling

There is a perception that cycling along The Street in both Botesdale and Rickinghall is dangerous. This deters some parents from taking or allowing their children to go to school by bicycle. No practical solutions that would reduce the risk, apart from a dedicated cycle track, were offered. The safety of cyclists moving along The Streets needs further examination.





Housing Opinions and Preferences

The Housing section of the appraisal contained 7 questions. The first question was deliberately aimed at identifying if people believed there was any *need* for more accommodation.

The response was :

Choice	Percentage
No opinion/don't know	36%
No need for any further accommodation	14%
Restricted sale to local people	13%
Housing Association rented	10%
Sheltered Housing	9%
Owner Occupied	6%
Private rented	5%
Other	7%
Total	100%

However when people were subsequently asked whether they *wanted* any more housing in the villages and the collective response here was 36% answering yes and 64% answering no. There was however a marked difference in the opinions between the two villages with Rickinghall residents more equally divided whereas Botesdale residents citing a stronger opinion against more housing.

Of the people who were in favour of more housing, they did express strong preferences on the appropriate type:

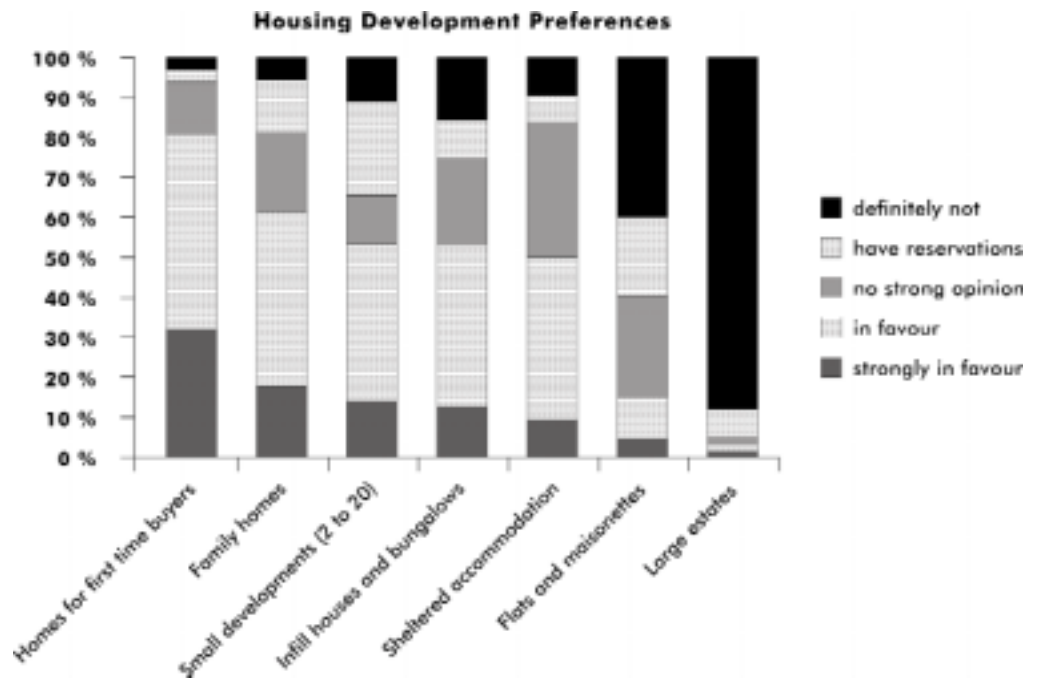
- Over 81% were either in favour or strongly in favour of housing for first time buyers.
- More than 95% had reservations or were definitely against the building of large estates of more than 20 houses.

When people were asked to rank their attitudes to small estates of between 2 and 20 houses, the results were more divided with 53% either in favour or strongly in favour compared to 35% with reservations or definitely opposed.

24 households signalled through the appraisal process that they needed to move. Of the 24, 10 households gave 'to achieve independence' as the most important factor whereas 4 were looking for a smaller home



The chart here summarizes the preferences :



There was no noticeable preference of choices between the two villages.

compared to 3 seeking a larger home. 15 wanted a house whereas 7 wanted a bungalow.

The appraisal provided people with the opportunity to comment on issues that were important to them. Not surprisingly, there was significant number of consistent views on housing development. The common themes to be drawn out are:

- Concern that more housing will place even greater pressure on the School and Health Centre that are already operating at capacity
- More housing development will spoil the character and community feel of the villages
- Further house building will lead to more traffic and therefore parking problems and congestion.

A selection of comments relating to development:

"I am concerned that the village has grown considerably over the last 5 years. The school is overflowing and there is the danger of losing the 'village appeal' which drew me here in the first place."

"We would like our daughters to attend St Botolphs but the school is already full."

"I think we should be more reserved in what's allowed to be built. WHY turn the village into a town? With more houses come more cars, usually 2 per home. WHY build a bypass?"

"Having lived in the village for over 70 years one wonders what has happened to our Village Street. It seems to be nothing but a CAR PARK."

"The village needs to be kept growing but carefully; we need to have enough local employment to encourage the youngsters to stay."



Emergency and other Services

Crime

It was significant that although high numbers of respondents said they were concerned about different crimes, for example: Vandalism (497), Burglary (490), Theft (399) and Rowdy Behaviour (271), in fact during the last *three* years the numbers who actually suffered such crimes were considerably less - Vandalism (92), Burglary (38), Theft (46) and Rowdy Behaviour (97). Age ranges and gender of those concerned about crime closely matched the overall population. Disturbingly, of the 325 crimes said to have been suffered, 117 were not reported to the police. 14 of the crimes were not reported for fear of a revenge attack. No-one said they did not know how to report a crime.

Policing Forum and Neighbourhood Watch

Nearly 70% of the 832 respondents claimed never to have heard of the Policing Forums held by the Police Authority, and of those who knew about them 12% said they did not know they could attend or what they were about and 10% were not interested.

Although 51% of respondents said they knew where the Neighbourhood Watch notices are posted, the same percentage reported they did not know how to contact their Watch Co-ordinator. This information is printed at the bottom of all the Neighbourhood Watch notices. There was a significant difference between the villages with 63% of respondents from Botesdale knowing the details but only 38% from Rickinghall.

Refuse Collection and Recycling

Less than 5% considered the refuse collection to be poor although a large number asked that wheelie bins be provided to keep rats and other animals out of the refuse that was awaiting collection. It was also suggested that collection should be made on the same day throughout the two villages to avoid rubbish containers appearing on the streets over several days.

Street cleaning was generally considered to be satisfactory with less than 5% rating it poor. There were however many complaints of street fouling by dogs.

Recycling is used extensively although a fair number of people take their recyclable items to Diss or Bury St Edmunds as there are no containers in Rickinghall for plastics and frequently the containers for other items are perceived to be overfull. A number of people professed not to know about either the Rickinghall or the Brome sites.

Lack of transportation deterred a number of Botesdale residents, particularly the elderly, from recycling any items. It was suggested that the refuse collection service should include separated items for recycling and that another recycling centre be set up in Botesdale.

The question on garden waste showed that 60% of us compost our garden rubbish, a third take it to Brome recycling centre, a similar number burn it and the remainder put it with the household waste. Several commented on needing a skip, others use recycling at Thetford, Stowmarket or Snetterton, and one honest soul admitted to tipping it over the fence.

Health and Social Services

Although 830 people answered parts of the question, a number did not express an opinion, presumably through not having experience of the service. Of those who expressed an opinion 96% were satisfied or very satisfied with the doctors and 99% with the district nurse or practice nurse. A significant number of those who recorded an opinion asked for more Chiropody and Physiotherapy to be made available. There was a number of complaints about delays in getting appointments with the doctors, some about appointments outside working hours, and concerns voiced that the Health Centre would become even more overloaded if there were to be any further

developments that increased the population of its catchment area.

Although 25 of the 32 people who expressed an opinion were satisfied or very satisfied with maternity care, seven were dissatisfied.

Requests for other medical services to be made available at the Health Centre ranged from: 18 for dentists, nine for opticians, seven for X-ray facilities and one for a gynaecologist. There were 19 requests for alternative medical facilities covering acupuncture, reflexology and a chiropractor.

Less than 7% of respondents had difficulty in getting to medical, dental or hospital appointments. However those in outlying parts who did not have their own transportation did have problems. Over 80% of those expressing an opinion thought there was a need for a "Good Neighbour Scheme" which some believe currently exists. There were complaints

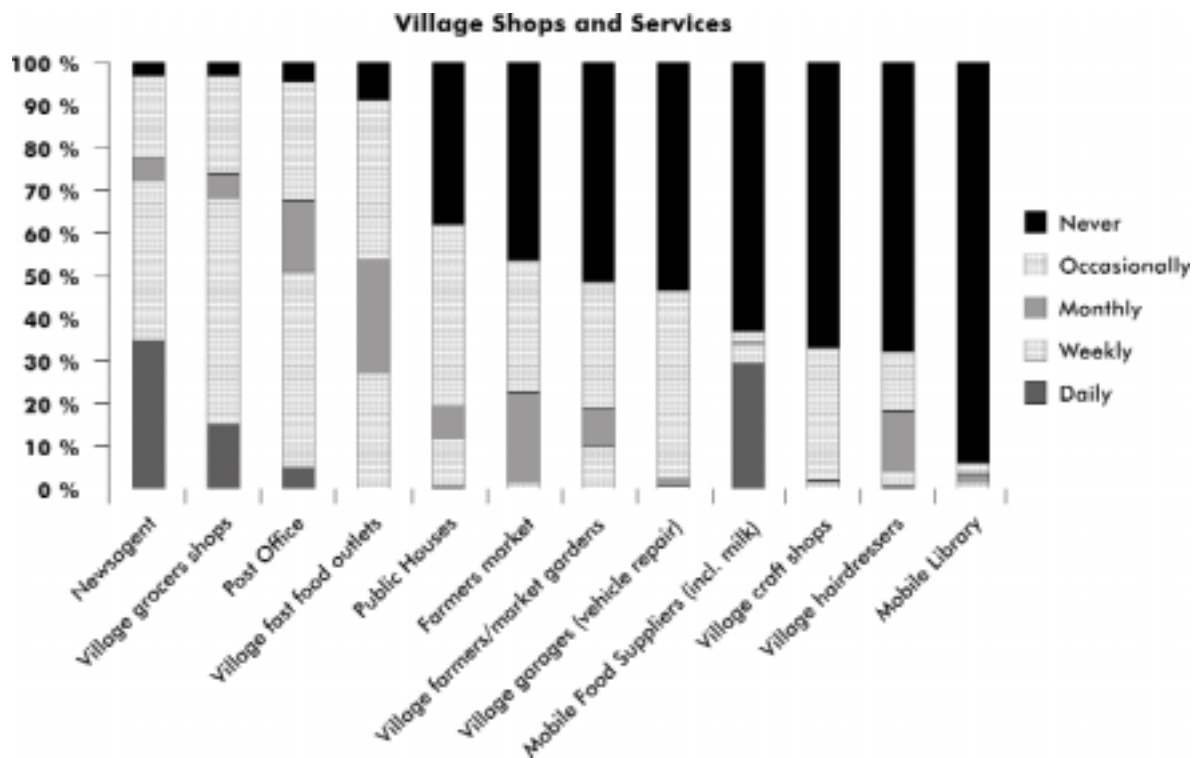
about the inadequate car parking facilities at the West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds.

Use of Village Shops and Services

The most frequently used facilities in the villages were the Post Office, the Newsagent, the Grocers shops and the Fast Food suppliers with less than 5% saying they never used these facilities.

Half of you had no problems shopping in the villages, but over a third found cars parked on the pavement a problem. One in eight had problems negotiating steps or with pushchair or wheelchair access, and some wanted additional seating in the shops and on The Street.

The following chart shows the frequency of use of village shops and services, but of course some of them do not open or visit every day or even every week.





Your Village Your Voice

Sport and Leisure

356 people responded to the question on additional sports activities with one in three voting for either badminton or yoga. One in four of the replies voted for billiards or snooker, and one in five wanted a tennis club. There was also some interest in martial arts, table tennis, athletics, volleyball and skittles. Of the comments on other choices, swimming, a gym, and keep-fit or aerobics were popular. Should we be planning for a sports barn?



Playing Fields

There was a general consensus that Botesdale Playing Field needs more maintenance and equipment to make it more attractive to use. More frequent grass cutting, and keeping it clean and tidy were priorities. Several people commented that it was not safe for young children.

In contrast, Rickinghall Playing Field collected a few bouquets - even some "excellent". However,

there is also believed to be room for improvement with a big vote for a skate-board facility, and more, or cleaner, toddler swings, more litter bins, more seating and more floodlighting. There was also a request for access to toilets.

Organisations

312 people told us that they belonged to at least one of the village organisations listed, and a dozen belonged to five. Of those who wanted to join a group but felt unable to do so one in three thought they were the wrong age group, one in five had no-one to go with, and a similar number found the opening times inconvenient. Many people commented that they had no spare time for such things, a common theme to several questions.

Village Halls

Both Village Halls scored very highly for satisfaction, although the limited car parking and access at Botesdale was criticised by several. The access to, and particularly from, the car park was considered dangerous - a comment also made in the section on traffic hazards.

When asked what new social clubs and activities you would attend, evening classes (art and computing in particular) were probably the most popular, but your interests ranged from sea fishing and sailing (on Redgrave lake?), through line dancing, bridge or whist, film shows and crafts to food and drink and wine classes.

We asked if Rickinghall Veteran Car and Motorcycle Rally should continue after the 25th anniversary in 2002 and 85% of those responding said "yes". Unfortunately we now know that this enthusiasm did not convert into volunteers, and the event will not be held this year. There may be a lesson here that support shown in the survey does not easily convert into the committee work that is necessary for activities to take place.



The Word Gets Around

Indeed it does, but how?

We asked you how you obtained information about what was going on in the villages and we compared your answers with where you live. It is hardly surprising that residents of the Rickinghalls read the notice boards in those villages, and the residents of Botesdale those in Botesdale. However, the important sources of information were those in the centre of the villages. Even so quite a few of you said you did not know about a number of activities that go on in the villages or how to contact the organiser. A cut-out and keep telephone list was published with the appraisal. Most were returned to the collector with the questionnaire. The information is published annually in the Botesdale Bugle and the Rickinghall News.

The Parish Magazine was the most successful vehicle for spreading information, about twice as useful as the next which was the newsagent's shop. This was slightly better than the next sources which were the newspapers, both local and the freebie and the notice board in the Post Office. After these outlets came a series of notice boards in a line through the villages from the Botesdale Village Hall in the East to that at the Hinderclay Road junction: on a rough comparative scale they had the drawing power of about one-eighth of the Parish Magazine.

Conclusion - the conclusion is obvious. If you want the word to get around, or to read it, go for the Parish Magazine.

Local Government

The Parish Councils

The Parish Council (PC) is the first tier body in local government and the most accessible. It consists of people elected by you, those you know, your friends and your neighbours or the man or woman who lives just down the street. These are the people who

are the first you may talk to if you have a problem with local government and the councillors who may represent your views to other government bodies.



We asked you a series of questions to see how important the Parish Council was to you and how involved with it you were. The analysis showed that eight out of ten people had never attended a PC meeting and that six out of ten did not know where the Parish Councils published their decisions and activities. Such information, about the Rickinghalls PC at least, is included in the parish magazine. Comparing villages we found that slightly more people in Botesdale were aware of their Parish Council's work than in the Rickinghalls.

We tried to find out why you did not attend Parish Council meetings and found that approximately three out of every ten were just not interested and two in ten did not know it was a public meeting. Another two said that meetings were held at an inconvenient time and three more didn't have the time anyway, reflecting the problems of the working age group. Looking a little closer it was clear that those few who did attend were of the older age groups.

Parish Councils, of course, levy tax upon the villagers. This, part of the Council Tax, is spent by the PCs in running their village and Council. The sum per household is not great, perhaps, but half of you had no idea how the money was spent. About





four out of ten were content, slightly more so in the Rickinghalls, and one in every ten was dissatisfied.

If the Councils can tax the villages, one must ask if the residents felt that the PCs were sufficiently aware of local needs, concerns and feelings before spending the money, (at least before this appraisal was carried out). About half of those who answered had no opinion! Of the remainder and in both villages about two-thirds of people thought they were sufficiently aware.

These responses were not repeated when the same question was posed about the District and County Councils and the Police Authority. Some 50% per cent had no opinion! Only two out of ten had confidence in the District Council and only a little more than one in ten in the County Council and the Police Authority.



So, if the general view was that the PCs did know what the village's aspirations were, would the taxpayers pay a higher impost to fund projects identified in this survey? "No", said two thirds of you. "Yes", said one third, with a few more in the Rickinghalls prepared to pay more.

Should the PCs try to obtain more open spaces for the villages' recreation? Botesdale thought so, with a majority of 4 to 3: the Rickinghalls agreed by a margin of 5 to 4.

Overall, it is apparent that the Parish Councils, as they now exist, generate little interest in their activities and have little obvious impact on the lives of the villages. We therefore asked you if you would prefer a different arrangement - one larger PC for the three villages or three separate small PCs. Of the 824 responses, almost half - 48% - would wish there to be no change. Only slightly fewer - 44% - would prefer one larger council. There was no significant difference of opinion between the villages.

Conclusions - Despite their local identity and representative function, the Parish Councils have little impact on the lives of the villagers: most residents are uninterested or say they have no time to attend the meetings. If, after this appraisal, the PCs are to continue to represent village opinion, they must broaden their appeal, generate interest, publicise the good they do and recruit, especially the younger villagers, to their ranks.

Religion In The Community

We feel that your religious beliefs are a private matter and we asked no questions about them. We did ask, however, about the significance and importance of the several churches and chapels in the villages and the impact of religious groups. We noted that of the 890 respondents only about one in five was an active member of church or chapel within or without the villages.

Of those who answered, only one person in four believes the churches and chapels important as places of regular worship, and this view was spread across the age grouping from 25 to 85 years, but held more by the older age group. Rather more than four out of ten people considered them important for baptisms, weddings and funerals - "bred, wed and dead" - but these mainly fell into a narrower age group, from 25 to 60 years.

Slightly fewer than four out of ten, saw the places of worship as focal points in the community: the same number merely as historic buildings. Three out of ten people told us in this question that they did not think these places held any significance at all.

We next sought your views on the contribution made to the community by those residents who were actively involved in the various religious groups and 706 of you gave an answer. Most people - and these fell into the 25 to 65 age group - saw a significant worth; two-thirds told us that they provided guidance and two thirds believed that these groups contributed significantly to community affairs. About four out of ten, and here the age group extended into the elderly, said they helped to maintain and teach higher standard of conduct. However, a few people, only about one in fifteen, said that these groups made no contribution at all.

Conclusions on Religions - The churches, chapels and the activities associated with them are important to about one fifth of the villagers. They are valued for the formal services they perform and they do provide some historic or focal point. The members of religious groups associated with these places of worship are seen by those who answered as providing some moral guidance in the community and making a significant contribution to village life.

Local Environment

We asked you what should be done to protect and enhance the local environment and you were only too happy to share your thoughts - three closely typed pages of comments in total. Most of the comments related to earlier topics: no major housing developments; develop only within the capability of the Health Centre, the School and other services; better parking



provisions; traffic and speeding controls; better facilities and activities for youngsters; encourage small businesses; provide wheelie bins; improve the footpaths; but most of all don't over develop.

The question of how to keep the village clean and tidy elicited several responses that it was satisfactory. Bearing in mind that the survey was performed soon after the footpath resurfacing it was not surprising to find a strong vote for more path sweeping services, and consistently with the replies on dog fouling, enforcement of the by-laws got 50% of the vote.

Dog fouling produces strong feelings and two thirds of you wanted more 'dog mess bins', and the same number wanted to enforce the system of fines. Not surprisingly the dog walkers wanted the bins and those who don't exercise dogs off their own property wanted more fines.

Less than half the respondents thought that the local roads, lanes, bridleways and paths needed improvement, but those that did gave us plenty of comments, from the need for footpaths on some roads in the villages, to the condition of the rural public footpaths. Just about every road in the villages got a comment of some improvement needed: flooding, potholes, resurfacing, grass and hedge cutting. Updated information on the local footpaths, including circular walks, would be welcomed.



General

The last question in the household questionnaire asked if there was anything we had missed and offered you space to comment further on earlier topics. You took advantage of this offer to give us your views on almost everything to do with village life - a total of five pages of closely packed typescript which contains such a fascinating insight into details of the village that we have included it in the appendix to the full report. Copies are being made available to the local organisations that will be stakeholders in any future Parish Plan, and a copy will be available on the village website. (Rickinghall website address is <http://www.rickinghall.suffolk.gov.uk> and the Botesdale website is under construction.) We included a response sheet to be completed for volunteering to help with setting up childcare facilities in the village, a Good Neighbour Scheme, or the Car Rally, or for further information about Neighbourhood Watch. 12 completed forms were returned and passed to the relevant groups.



Summary of the results of the Youth Questionnaire

The summary of the data extracted from the villages' youth questionnaires is presented in three sections:

- General and Educational
- Facilities and Leisure
- Suggested Recommendations

The number of completed questionnaires indicates that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the young people of the villages felt that this was a good opportunity to express their views.

General and Educational

The data shows that there is a roughly equal mix of the sexes in the villages with a fairly even distribution of ages, including a very small percentage of the disabled. Most of the respondents are attending various full time educational establishments. As expected, most of the younger children study in Botesdale and the older children at Eye.

The questionnaire was able to confirm a strong correlation between age and the number of hours worked. Four respondents worked full-time, nine part-time (average seven hours per week), and three worked during the holiday periods.

The questions on the means of transport used by the youth of the villages for work or educational purposes were answered as expected. Most use the school bus with the family car or walking as the next most popular.

40 individuals registered an interest in taking a vocational training opportunity, now or at some stage in the future, with Information Technology and Computing related development being the most popular option.





Two thirds of young people felt quite safe in the villages. However some answers showed concern about safety in particular areas such as those that do not have sufficient lighting. Rickingham and Botesdale playing fields and Cherry Tree Lane were cited. Many were concerned about the hazards posed by the volume and speed of traffic through the villages. Although many of the young people had a practical and cautionary attitude to these concerns, (e.g. taking a mobile phone out with them, or going out in pairs), a large percentage chose not to go out after dark.

Facilities and Leisure

The responses indicate that young people do make the most of the recreational and leisure facilities in the villages, but do have suggestions for improvements.

The most popular facilities in the villages are the playing fields, with Rickingham Children's play area contributing greatly. The tennis courts are popular, but there does seem to be some difficulty with regard to gaining access.

A small proportion of the young people of the villages attended leisure activities offered by the local churches. The Friday Club would seem to be the most popular and was attended most regularly. The Brownies are a popular attraction. The response showed that information about these facilities could be made more readily available.

Almost 50% Of the young people questioned, attended a variety of activities outside the villages, mainly associated with education and sport. Occasionally, facilities outside the villages were used such as visits to the cinema, swimming, bowling and roller-skating.

Suggested Recommendations

The young people of the villages voiced a number of recommendations through the questionnaire.

Improvements in safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and the disabled were suggested, and are echoed in the household questionnaire.

The need for more information about the facilities available for the young people of the villages is needed, perhaps through a youth magazine or youth section in the parish magazine. Improvements in the existing facilities called for, in particular, a skateboard park on one of the playing fields, improvements to Botesdale Playing Field, and an indoor leisure facility that is available during the winter months, such as a youth club or just a place to hang out. Such provision would reduce the need for young people to travel outside the villages for their leisure entertainment.

The enthusiasm for a Youth Council for the villages is highlighted by the 48% of the young people who responded positively to this suggestion, indicating that our young people feel that their opinions should be more clearly heard than now.





Proposals for a Community Action Plan

The appraisal has identified some areas of concern that we want to take forward for further development. We have listed these in the following table identifying the issue, what apparently needs to be done, who should be the leading organisation and any partnering organisations required.

Community Action Plan

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead Organisation</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1	Education and Childcare			
1.1	Provision of additional childcare (Q 12,13)	Improve provision of childcare for school age children: Holiday Club, After School Club, Breakfast Club	Parish Councils	St Botolphs School Suffolk ACRE
2	Roads and Transportation			
2.1	Parking problems (1)	Ensure that future development proposals include adequate allowance for car ownership	Parish Councils District Council	
2.2	Parking problems (2)	Consider car parking provision within the villages	Parish Councils Suffolk County Council	District Council
2.3	Public Transport inadequacies for travel to work	Provide evidence of need from Village Appraisal to Public Transport Authority	CAP Steering Group	Suffolk County Council
2.4	Bus Shelters	Consider the provision of bus shelters	Parish Councils	Bus Companies
2.5	There are a number of traffic hazards, and perceived solutions, that require specialist assessment	Establish a local working group to reduce traffic hazards	Parish Councils Suffolk CC	Police Authority
2.6	Risk posed by speeding vehicles	Establish a local working group to improve road safety	Parish Councils	Police Authority Neighbourhood Watch
2.7	Risk posed by parked vehicles	Establish a local working group to improve road safety	Parish Councils	District Council





<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead Organisation</i>	<i>Partner</i>
5	Health and Social Services			
	Request for Good Neighbour scheme (including transport to Health Centre or Hospital etc.)	Canvas for support within the community for organisers for a Good Neighbour scheme	Friends of the Health Centre	Red Cross District Council
6	Sport and Leisure			
6.1	Lack of facilities or organisation for new popular activities	Formation of a joint body to develop new Sports and Social activities in the villages	Parish Councils	Village Hall Management Committees District Council
6.2	Botesdale Playing Field needs improvement	Improve maintenance and enhance facilities	Botesdale Parish Council	District Council Youth Council (if formed)
6.3	Botesdale Village Hall car parking perceived to be inadequate and hazardous	Investigate possibilities for increased car parking and safer entrance	Botesdale VHMC	Botesdale Parish Council Suffolk County Council LEA
7	Local Government			
7.1	The role and work of the Parish Councils is largely unknown	More publicity; direct contact with the public; timely publication of PC proceedings and decisions. Use of focal points of Parish Magazine and Post Office	Parish Councils	Press representatives
7.2	The public has little involvement with the PCs	Direct encouragement to attend meetings or surgeries. Recruitment of younger villagers. Review of meeting times and dates.	Parish Councils	
7.3	Perception that MSDC and SCC and Police Authority are largely unaware of residents problems	Constituency surgeries; presentations; closer personal contacts	MSDC SCC Suffolk Police Authority	Parish Councils
8	Local Environment			
8.1	Dog fouling	Provide 'dog mess bins' if an emptying service can be provided	Parish Councils	District Council
8.2	Perceived lack of information on local amenities	Produce Gazetteer once a year and make copies available to newcomers	Parish Councils	





<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead Organisation</i>	<i>Partner</i>
9	Youth Survey			
9.1	Lack of facilities and activities for youth	Provide more facilities for youth. Provide a meeting room and more information about current and proposed activities and facilities.	Parish Councils	Youth workers Church groups
9.2	Lack of facilities and activities for youth	Investigate the setting up of a youth council or consultation group	Parish Councils	Youth workers Church groups
9.3	Lack of facilities and activities for youth	Provide a Skateboard area and installation	Rickingham VHMC	Grant Providers Parish Councils
9.4	No public transport from Bury after evening events	Investigate provision of transport service to and from Bury St Edmunds or other local towns	Parish Councils	Other local councils
10	Distribution of Full Report			
10.1		Distribute report to Lead Organisations, Partners, and other local organisations contributing to the questionnaire.	Community Action Plan Steering Group	Parish Councils Internet Web Sites

There are five annexes to this summary that are available to the organisations that either commissioned the appraisal, have been partners in it, or will be involved in the Community Action Plan.

1. *Household Questionnaire - Basic Data*
2. *Household Questionnaire - Detailed Comments*
3. *Youth Questionnaire - Basic Data*
4. *Youth Questionnaire - Detailed Comments*
5. *Project Report - Organisational Aspects*





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The village appraisal summary report, was designed and set by Penny Morgan from Cat-media and printed by 321 Printers in Ipswich.

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And lastly - The success of an appraisal depends totally on the information received. The community of Botesdale, the Rickinghalls and Allwood Green responded with a wealth of information.

Thanks to you all.





Notes:



A sample of your comments on life in our Villages

"Car owners who have room elsewhere should not park on the road"

"Young people cannot afford the prices of houses here"

"Why is the village being turned into a car park?"

"More activities for the whole village!"



"I like living here very much"

"We are grateful for being included as we feel a bit left out here at Allwood Green"

"Waiting times at the Health Centre are too long"

"Unfortunately St Botolphs School is full"

"A well covered questionnaire"

"Why turn the village into a town?"

"The service we get for our council tax is atrocious"

"There is insufficient Police presence in the villages"