

# Kingston on Soar Village/Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Update

We now have 50 responses to our survey which will be used to produce a draft plan. The following report is an overview of the strongest trends from the survey results.

## WHAT DO WE VALUE ABOUT LIVING HERE?

The residents of this parish clearly love our village.

The things people like the most about living in the neighbourhood of Kingston on Soar are the physical environment (23.8%), location (21.4%), the house in which they live (21.4%) and peace and quiet (19%). The thing that people like the least is the traffic (31%), followed by the lack of facilities for children (14.3%) and the inaccessibility of public transport (14.3%). 9.5% of respondents felt that there was nothing that they didn't like about living here!

Things that help to shape the character of our village were identified as the church (94.7%), the green including the trees and pump (94.7%), the listed houses in the village centre, the village hall and the surrounding countryside including Kingston Brook. People's comments reveal that we value these things highly and want to protect and preserve them. We like the buildings that mark our village as special and people named Long Row, Kingston Hall, Kingston Court, Church Farm, and Schoolhouse as examples. The open spaces and landscape surrounding the village emerged from the survey as crucial. These include Kingston Hall park and farmland, other farms in the neighbourhood and the fields. These were mentioned over and over again as features that make life in this neighbourhood so good. Several respondents mentioned the West Leake Hills and woods as features that they value highly. And the footpath network is widely used.

## PROBLEMS

The single biggest problem named by residents is traffic (31%) and we asked some follow-up questions about this. It seems that the problems are threefold. Firstly, residents expressed concern about the ways in which drivers conduct themselves: 88.2% of respondents noted problems with speeding traffic and 80.6% reported concerns about irresponsible driving. Named danger spots included West Leake Lane, Dark Lane, Station Road and New Kingston crossroads. Secondly, there is concern about the volume of traffic, especially during 'rush hours' (79.3%). The third issue concerns the nature of traffic – lorries (75%) and farm vehicles (51.9%) emerged as a nuisance. Lorries, it seems, fail to notice that they cannot fit under the railway bridge at the Kegworth end of the village until they are either stuck or almost stuck. This results in much noisome reversing. And people noted that while they value the farms and expect a certain amount of farm traffic, the contractors at harvest time drive very large vehicles very fast. 72% of respondents noted problems negotiating junctions, and the crossroads at New Kingston was most commonly cited as a danger point. 45% of respondents reported problems crossing the road, especially in the centre of Kingston on Soar village during rush hour. 68% of people found the cycle traffic a nuisance and the organised races were cited in particular.

Other negative aspects included litter (61.8%) and fly tipping (48.4%), especially along Station Road and West Leake Lane, although several people note that flytipping on West Leake Lane was a historical rather than a current problem. 47.1% of respondents are bothered by the noise of aircraft, although many people noted that it is very convenient to live so close to airport. Nobody identified a problem 'anti-social behaviour' as a problem experienced in our neighbourhood.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

We asked a series of questions about community activities. The most popular was the idea for a gardening club, which 25 individuals said they found interesting. 19 people liked the idea of a parent and toddler club, 20 of a youth club, 22 thought a community composting group was a good idea. Only two people said that they

were willing to organise any of these things – the steering group has their contact details and would be happy to facilitate a meeting, if anyone is interested.

Support for the idea of a good neighbour scheme, in which people would offer to collect shopping for senior citizens, offer lifts, do some dog walking or pet sitting, received support from 19 respondents. Nobody wanted to organise this. The notion of a 'lift share' scheme, in which people would travel to work or the shops together was only interesting to 3 people – and nobody wanted to organise it!

65.7% of respondents had attended events in the village hall. Most of these mentioned the fete and/or theatre as examples. People really liked the idea of having more film (84.6%), theatre (80%), and music or dance (80%) events in the village hall. 12 people liked the idea of a coffee bar, 6 thought a youth club would be good, and 4 liked the idea of a bridge club. 10 people liked the idea of a book club. Five people offered to organise these things and the steering group would be happy to put interested parties in touch with each other.

**Education:** There is a cluster of people who are interested in participating in educational experiences, including 8 people who like the idea of evening classes, 20 who would be interested adult education and 15 are interested in University of the Third Age courses.

**Sport and Exercise:** We asked a series of questions about sport and exercise. The only viable group that emerged from this were the 13 people who liked the idea of exercise classes (and some also said they'd like yoga or relaxation sessions). We don't have enough people interested in cricket or football to make up a team!

Other community activities that people felt important were the fete (14 people) and a wildlife or rambling group (13 people).

Only two people reported ever using the mobile library. Most respondents had never heard of it and most reported that they were out at work during the times it calls to the village. Perhaps if it came in the evenings, people would use it more?

We asked about village allotments – 10 people liked the idea, a children's play area (7 people liked this one, 20 didn't) and a community composting scheme (10 liked this). Four people said that they would be willing to join groups to establish any of these.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **The needs of current residents**

We asked a series of questions about the mobility of the population and sought to discover whether residents or their families require more accommodation in the neighbourhood. 100% responded negatively to the question 'Has any member of your family moved away from the village in the last 5 years through lack of suitable or affordable accommodation within the village?' This is clearly not a problem for residents of Kingston on Soar neighbourhood. Only 3 respondents said that members of their household were currently looking for alternative accommodation (91.4% responded 'no' to this question).

### **Residents' views on expansion and development**

There was a very strong response in the survey to the questions about development. Nobody supported expansion of the village beyond 20% of its current size. Indeed, only 2 people (5.6% of respondents said that they would be comfortable with a 20% increase in homes. 13 respondents (36.1%) said that a 10% increase would be acceptable. And 58.3% responded that they would like the size of the village to remain the same.

We asked, 'if you think there is a need for more housing, what form of tenure should it take?' Of the 29 respondents to this question, 44.8% said that there was no need for ANY new housing. The same proportion

(44.8%) said if new house were built in the area, they would prefer these to be owner-occupied. The other options secured the following support: shared ownership 27.6%, private rented 13.8%, housing association rented 17.2%, council rented 6.9%.

We asked, 'what kind of housing development would be most acceptable to you?' Of the 32 people who answered this question, 64.7% responded 'none at all'. Conversion of redundant buildings was acceptable to 89.3%; single dwellings in a controlled location were acceptable to 57.1%. Other options were not supported by a majority and the percentages are as follows: small groups of fewer than ten homes were acceptable to 34.8% and unacceptable to 43.4%, in-filling was acceptable to 39.1% and unacceptable to 43.4%. Developments of carefully designed groups of up to 50 homes, or more than 50 homes, or ad hoc developments were all regarded as unacceptable by 100% of respondents.

There was strong support for the principles that underpin conservation areas, namely that any development in the area should enhance and preserve its existing character (94.7%), that the special architectural and historical appearance of the village should be preserved (97.4%) and also that any planning applications should protect and enhance the character of the village (97.4%).

We asked about the development of businesses in the area. 69% of respondents said that they would not support a wind farm in the neighbourhood but 58.8% said that they would, in principle, support the erection of single windmill. There was significant opposition to the development of a small industrial site (opposed by 96.2%) and a 67.9% would oppose a small business site.

Our final question concerned people's perceptions of the most serious threats to our village. 71% felt that environmental threats were our strongest challenge. 38.7% opted for 'distance from services and facilities', 19.4% said 'economic problems'.

## **NEXT STEPS FOR THE STEERING GROUP**

1. Put the our findings into the form of a draft Neighbourhood Plan
2. Put interested parties in touch with each other, in order to facilitate more community events and/or activities.

The Steering Group

10<sup>th</sup> May 2013