



Mid-Term Community Consultation, April-May 2023

Results and analysis

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1 CHAIR'S SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Neighbourhood planning is a legal right granted in the Localism Act 2011 which allows communities to shape their development by creating their own planning policies. To be clear right up front: *it cannot stop development*. Instead, it's about communities saying what they want and need from growth in their immediate area, protecting what's good, fixing what needs improving, and filling gaps in what's missing.

The process is entirely optional. We could, for example, let our existing and emerging Local Plans and Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Officers direct our future. But at a time of enormous change across our region – which, in the overall scheme of things, has barely begun – this would be a missed opportunity to add a level of granularity and local knowledge that can really make a difference to planning decisions.

Consequently, since Autumn 2021 a steering group of Stapleford and Great Shelford residents and parish councillors has been working to produce a combined Neighbourhood Plan (NP) on behalf of our parishes. This is a chance for the people who know and love our area to set out a positive, shared vision for how we want it to develop and to ensure that identified local needs are not overlooked in the rapid economic growth which our wider region has been targeted to deliver. Policies in our NP will ultimately have equal weight when assessing all planning decisions in our area to those in the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework. Highlights of our work to date are available at www.greatshelfordparishcouncil.gov.uk/sgsnplan.

On behalf of the steering group and Parish Councils, thank you to everyone who has put aside a few moments to think about our community's future and contribute towards our NP. As Chair, I am also indebted to the steering group for continuing to contribute their time and ideas towards this complex project; to the Clerks of Stapleford and Great Shelford Parish Councils; and to Rachel Hogger of Cambridgeshire ACRE for her technical support and advice.

As well as being accessible online at www.greatshelfordparishcouncil.gov.uk/sgsnplan, a hard copy of this report will be available to view at Great Shelford Library. Any comments can be sent to sgsnplan@gmail.com or to the Chair of the steering group, Jenny Flynn, at neighbourhood.planning@staplefordparishcouncil.gov.uk, or posted c/o Clerk, Great Shelford Parish Council, PO Box 1492, Cambridge, CB1 0YQ.

1.2 What we did

This report summarises and analyses the results of our NP's mid-term community consultation, conducted over a period of 6.5 weeks in April/May 2023. The consultation took the form of a survey of 27 questions, combining 'tick the box' and free-text responses, and was available to complete online or in hard copy. It sought to determine whether:

- the draft vision for our NP outlines, in broad terms, what residents and workers would like our villages to be like in 2040 at the end of the NP period
- the draft objectives adequately set out what needs doing to achieve this vision.

We also included other questions where it is helpful to understand how strongly people either agree or disagree with a particular issue or idea, such as local views worth protecting from development, priorities for new housing and attitudes towards community-led renewable energy schemes.



The sample collected (261) is roughly in line with that of our initial opinion survey in 2022, although this time we had a broader mix of participants in terms of village location, age and work status. The small sample size means that it cannot be assumed to be representative of the whole population of the two villages (and this is not a prerequisite of consultation in this instance), but the response is not insignificant, particularly given the length of the consultation paper and the range of topics it covered.

The steering group is comfortable that it gave residents adequate opportunities to participate if they wanted to, raising awareness of the consultation via a mix of pop-up displays, a permanent display at Great Shelford Library, multiple local social media posts, parish council announcements, banners in prominent places, posters, village magazine articles, handouts with URL and QR links to the survey, and direct contact with primary schools and nearly 60 clubs/societies/interest groups across both villages. We are grateful to the administrators and leaders of these organisations for disseminating details of the consultation amongst their members, and to Stapleford Granary for giving us display space over four days in April.



Figure 1: Neighbourhood plan display at Stapleford Granary, 14-17 April 2023

1.3 What we found

Key findings across all consultation topics were:

- 82% of respondents supported the draft vision statement
- support for all 10 draft objectives substantially outstripped any opposition
- if some elements of the NP have to be prioritised over others, objectives which seek to protect our rural setting and landscape, mitigate the effects of climate change, and improve community amenities and infrastructure were perceived to be most important
- three-quarters of respondents agreed with the principle of community-led renewable energy schemes in our area
- over 75% of respondents supported equal access to our countryside, meaning that new and improved routes into our countryside should, where practicable, be suitable for all forms of non-car use; however, path segregation may sometimes be required for safety reasons



- with respect to meeting housing needs, there is most support for adaptable homes, for affordable homes for people with strong local connections, and for more affordable housing options for older people
- there is little current support for community-led affordable housing schemes, such as rural exception sites, most likely because of local opposition to greenbelt development in general
- all areas of visually important open land were valued by consultation participants and a handful more were proposed for inclusion. Top of the poll were the Recreation Grounds and adjoining open green spaces within each village
- all 26 views presented in the consultation paper were considered 'very important' or 'important' to our area. Overall, views to and from high ground at Magog Down and/or Wandlebury Country Park were most valued
- Collier Field and Grange Field both attracted support for Local Green Space designation and respondents proposed a number of other green spaces for consideration
- all of the 'countryside frontages' which sweep into our built-up area are valued; that between properties on Gog Magog Way and Chalk Hill (Stapleford) gained most support, whilst pasture at De Freville Farm (Great Shelford) attracted least
- residents would prioritise active travel improvements to nearby recreational spaces, to local shops and to the City over those to schools, biomedical sites and links to the wider travel network
- existing active travel routes could be made to work harder by being upgraded, joining safely with other active travel routes, and hence attracting more users; the personal safety of vulnerable users also needs greater consideration
- respondents prioritised the following off-road routes for improvement and/or extension: the path alongside Haverhill Road from Stapleford village to Magog Down; a bridge over the River Cam at Great Shelford Rec; the Drift Track to the south-east of Haverhill Road, Stapleford.

The detail supporting our consultation's findings is presented in subsequent sections of this report and in a separate Appendix of free-text and verbal comments submitted via the consultation paper and at consultation events. The purpose of this information is not to dictate what the NP should cover or seek to protect, so much as to inform ongoing work. As such, 'food for thought' for the steering group is highlighted throughout.

Readers should note that some of the issues raised in our consultation, and many of the implications of them, are outside the scope of neighbourhood planning. They have, however, still been recorded for our Parish Councils' benefit.

1.4 What happens next

The outcomes of this consultation will now be combined with other information (such as local housing needs, our Landscape Character Assessment and Local Plan data) to create a sizeable evidence base. This, in turn, will inform the development of a set of planning policies to help us achieve our NP's vision and objectives. These policies are the most important outcomes of any NP because they form part of the statutory development plan against which planning applications are assessed.

In the final stages, the draft NP will be put out for consultation to various bodies and other stakeholders whose interests may be affected by the plan, such as the Environment Agency and Natural England. A revised plan is then submitted for independent examination. The examiner will consider whether the proposed NP meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements set out by law. If found satisfactory, the NP will return to Stapleford and Great Shelford for a community referendum. In this yes/no poll, residents and workers in our parishes will be asked 'Do you want



South Cambridgeshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Stapleford and Great Shelford to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?’ If more than 50% of voters say ‘yes’, then our NP will come into force. It is the NP steering group’s aim that the referendum takes place towards the end of 2024.

Stakeholder consultation, examination and community referendum are required by regulation and have minimum time periods attached to them; hence, they will occupy many months in 2024. All told, it is a long and complicated process, but it is worth it, because this is how we can change the place where we live – for the better.

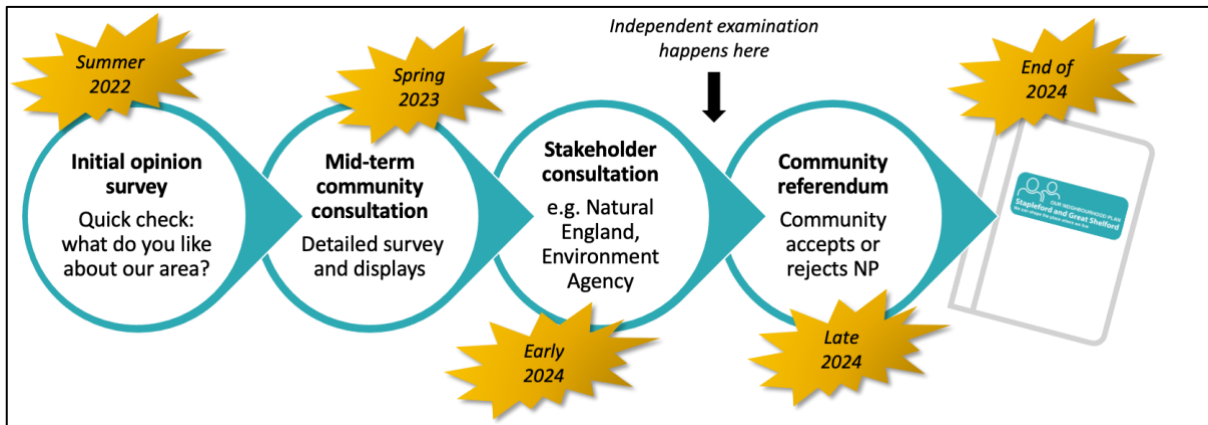


Figure 2: Community engagement is at the heart of our Neighbourhood Plan

Jenny Flynn

Chair, Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
June 2023



2 RESPONDENT OVERVIEW

A total of 261 members of the public participated in the consultation. Qualifying questions sought to clarify their age, residence and work status.

2.1 Where do participants live?

Respondents reside almost equally between Stapleford and Great Shelford. This is surprising given the larger population of Great Shelford relative to Stapleford but can possibly be explained by a similar degree of effort being put into consultation engagement efforts in both villages despite their difference in size. A brief mention of the consultation was also made at Stapleford's Annual Parish Meeting (APM), which was very well attended and could have boosted local responses (Great Shelford's APM took place before the consultation commenced).

2.2 Age range of participants

As the figure below shows, the largest response to the consultation came from the sector aged 66 to 75 years (25%).

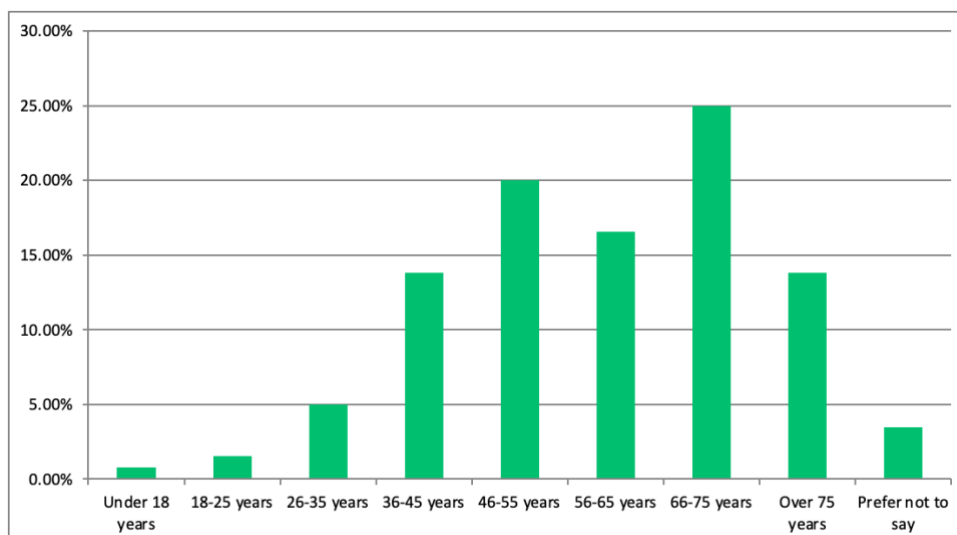


Figure 3: Consultation respondents by age

Overall, older age groups are overrepresented in the consultation relative to the combined populations of Stapleford and Great Shelford (as per Office for National Statistics 2021 census data). This may be because:

- it is easier to engage with older residents via their involvement in village clubs and societies than it is with working age residents who may have less time to participate in village activities due to work and family commitments
- older residents who have lived locally for longer may have accrued more knowledge and developed stronger opinions about their neighbourhood than younger residents with shorter tenure
- older residents are more likely to own their own property, with younger residents being more transient in rented properties and hence less committed to a future in the parishes.

Although the response from those age 26-45 years appears low (19%), it is not completely out of sync with the overall population structure of the combined parishes. ONS census data shows that 25-44 year olds accounted for 24% of our parishes' population in 2021.



The lack of response from young people is unremarkable considering the topic of the consultation and the complexity of some of the content.

2.3 Length of time lived in the neighbourhood

By far the largest group of consultation participants is those who have lived locally for 20+ years (see Table 1), so they were either born in the villages or moved here before or around the turn of the 21st Century. A review of the data shows that whilst older consultation participants have not exclusively lived in the villages for longest, there is unsurprisingly a degree of association between age and length of residence.

Answer Choices	Responses	
0-2 years	9.3%	24
3-5 years	10.9%	28
6-10 years	9.3%	24
11-15 years	18.6%	48
16-20 years	10.1%	26
>20 years	40.7%	105
I work in Stapleford/Great Shelford, I don't live here	1.2%	3
	Answered	258

Table 1: Length of time lived in the neighbourhood

2.4 Where do participants work?

Across both villages, an average of 61% of workers participating in the consultation stated that they 'sometimes work from home', with the proportion being slightly higher in Stapleford than Great Shelford. This level of hybrid working mirrors that revealed in our 2022 initial public opinion survey, and is in tune with national norms; in March 2022, the ONS published data showing that working from home is now part of 62% of workers' normal routine.

The proportion of workers employed by companies or organisations in our villages was small at 7%, reflecting the scarcity of employment opportunities in the villages.



3 RESPONSE DETAIL: DRAFT VISION AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Draft vision statement

Participants were presented with a draft vision statement for Stapleford and Great Shelford’s NP, developed by the steering group and reflecting residents’ planning-related priorities, as established in an initial opinion survey in 2022:

“In 2040, Stapleford and Great Shelford will be thriving, rural villages distinct from Cambridge, where people want to live, work, shop and play. We value and want to protect our landscape setting, improve its biodiversity and reduce our contribution to climate change. Reflecting this, modest new development, which is sensitively and sustainably designed, will focus on addressing identified housing needs within our community. Where appropriate, it will also support the creation of new amenities and infrastructure to meet the needs of our population. Part of this infrastructure will be a safe and sustainable travel network supporting everyday journeys and healthy recreation.”

3.1.1 Agree or disagree?

The majority of residents supported the draft vision statement, as Table 2 shows. Over 82% either agreed or strongly agreed with it.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	38.0%	92
Agree	44.2%	107
Neutral/no opinion	12.8%	31
Disagree	5.0%	12
Strongly disagree	0.8%	2
	Answered	244

Table 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft vision for our NP?

3.1.2 Food for thought

Participants were given an option to provide additional free-text comments about how the draft vision could be improved. A number of general themes/questions about the vision statement emerged which the steering group may wish to consider:

- protecting our greenbelt could be made more explicit; it serves as both a ‘green lung’ and physical gap from Greater Cambridge
- general reference to ‘sustainable travel’ has caused some confusion; what this refers to could be clearer, e.g. there is support for buses but not for Greater Cambridge Partnership’s proposed busway
- concern about the ageing demographic of our villages and whether the NP can support a thriving community for all ages
- travel elements should meet the needs of our community, not just those travelling from further afield
- the phrase ‘modest development’ could be open to (mis-)interpretation
- is a more explicit commitment to affordable/social housing required?
- should the vision put the needs of our community first and those of development second?
- can the NP support more and better local shops?

It should be noted that not all free-text comments were directly relevant to the question: some were addressed in subsequent questions in the consultation paper; some were outside the scope of neighbourhood planning; and some reiterated a response already collated in Table 2 above. All have



been recorded in the Appendix to this report. General observations of potential significance to the NP, but not necessarily to the draft vision, are:

- infrastructure improvements should precede development
- carbon emissions: be specific about plans to reduce them; consider an explicit carbon zero goal
- the impact of new development (construction and abstraction) on local aquifers
- link the NP to the Cambridge Nature Network
- consider the impact of growth on amenities, e.g. schools, GP surgeries and shops.

Some of these issues are already part of the NP's body of work, whilst others will need to be considered. Several will already be addressed by planning policy (in the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework) so cannot be reiterated in our NP, the role of which is instead to fill any policy gaps from a local perspective.

Several comments were made about Greater Cambridge Partnership's proposed CSET busway through greenbelt in our parishes; others more generally alluded to 'large scale infrastructure projects'; and there was one explicit mention of East West Rail. Although our completed NP may indirectly be able to influence aspects of these, national infrastructure projects are outside the scope of neighbourhood planning for several reasons:

1. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are subject to different decision-making processes
2. NPs can only influence planning applications for developments arising inside their plan areas, and these NSIPs emanate outside our patch, pass through it and continue beyond
3. at the time of writing, planning permission has not been obtained for the CSET busway and there is no firm indication when that might happen. Awaiting this would significantly delay work on our NP and leave our parishes vulnerable to development from other sources
4. a route alignment for East West Rail has only just been announced but the detail is many months away from being determined. Consultation in 2024 will precede any development consent order. Awaiting this would significantly delay the NP.

3.2 Draft objectives

The consultation paper presented 10 draft objectives and information to aid their understanding. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with each, and to identify up to five of the draft objectives as highest priority for our NP area. The 10 draft objectives as presented at consultation are summarised in Table 3.



No.	Draft objective	
1	HOUSING NEEDS	New residential development proposals will contribute to addressing existing and future housing needs in Stapleford and Great Shelford in terms of affordability, size, accessibility and tenure.
2	THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	New development will be designed to a high standard and in its built form will reinforce the distinctive rural look, feel and quality of the two villages.
3	CLIMATE CHANGE	New development will be designed to be (a) compatible with, and belong in, a net zero emissions future, and (b) resilient to the effects of climate change.
4	BIODIVERSITY	We will protect and enhance specific features and sites of ecological value identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for our Plan area. More broadly, we will deliver biodiversity enhancements at all development sites within the Plan area.
5	OUR RURAL SETTING AND LANDSCAPE	New development will actively minimise its impact on the landscape character of the Plan area, recognising the value of long views and vistas into and out of the rural setting of the villages, the open spaces within it and, critically, the separation of the villages from the urbanised Greater Cambridge area.
6	COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	We will ensure that development addresses its associated demands on, and existing shortfalls in, our community's amenity and infrastructure needs, specifically in healthcare, primary school education, transport, open spaces and play spaces.
7	ACTIVE TRAVEL	Residents travelling in and out of the Plan area, and people travelling through the Plan area, will find it increasingly easier to choose sustainable means to reach their destinations, whether for work or leisure purposes. The safety of non-motorised users will be prioritised over the needs of motorised users throughout the Plan area.
8	MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF TRAFFIC MOVEMENT	The adverse effects of increased road traffic movements from new development on our community's quality of life (and apparent in, for example, air pollution, noise, vibration, road safety, accessibility and street scene environment) will be identified and appropriately mitigated.
9	COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS	Existing routes for non-motorised users into the much-valued countryside in our Plan area will be protected and maintained. New routes for non-motorised users from our villages into our countryside will be opened up.
10	COUNTRYSIDE ENHANCEMENT	The Countryside Enhancement Strategy set out in the Landscape Character Assessment for the Plan area will be implemented. These landscape, biodiversity and public access improvements will complement the existing landscape character of the area and protect and enhance the setting of Cambridge.

Table 3: The Neighbourhood Plan's 10 draft objectives



Agree or disagree?

The distribution of sentiment across the set of draft objectives is illustrated in Figure 4.

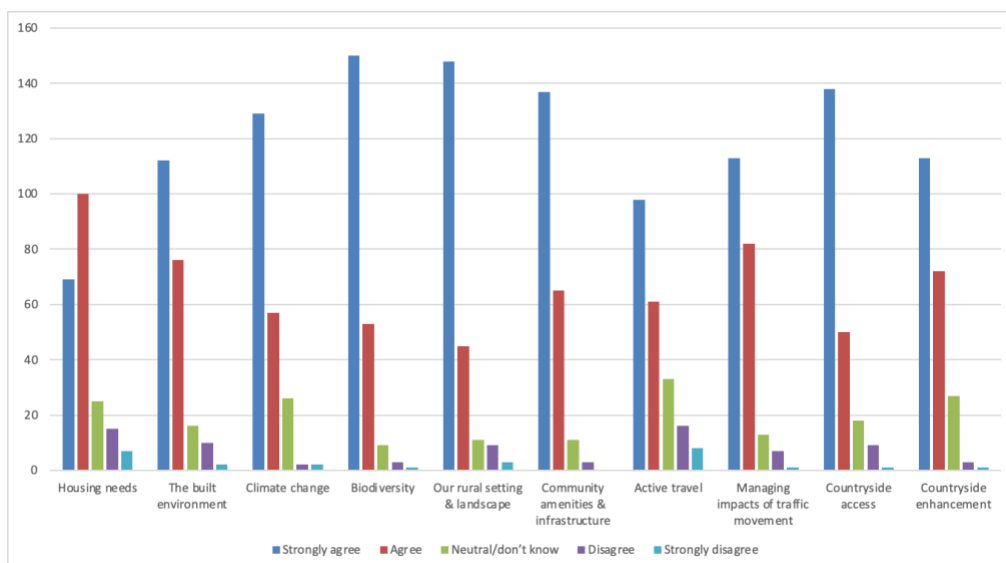


Figure 4: Variation in respondents' degree of support for each of 10 draft objectives (absolute numbers)

Table 4 combines 'strongly agree' with 'agree', and 'disagree' with 'strongly disagree' responses to give a more generalised view of where support lies, ranked from most to least.

Draft objective	Strongly agree/agree	Neutral/no opinion	Disagree/strongly disagree	Relative support (where 1 is greatest)
Biodiversity	203	9	4	1
Community amenities and infrastructure	202	11	3	2
Managing the impacts of traffic movement	195	13	8	3
Our rural setting and landscape	193	11	12	4
The built environment	188	16	12	5=
Countryside access	188	18	10	5=
Climate change	186	26	4	7
Countryside enhancement	185	27	4	8
Housing needs	169	25	22	9
Active travel	159	33	24	10
			Answered	216

Table 4: General support for the draft objectives, from most to least

There is no need to over-complicate interpretation of the data:

- overall, respondents were far more positive than negative towards all of the draft objectives, which implies that there is a role for all of them in our NP
- biodiversity protection and enhancement, and the need for development to address existing and future shortfalls in local amenities and infrastructure, gained strongest support
- improving active travel and addressing housing needs attracted comparatively less support
- opinions were most polarised about active travel and housing needs, but most united about community amenities and infrastructure.



3.2.1 Prioritising the draft objectives

To inform any trade-offs that may have to be made between what our NP covers and how quickly it can be completed, respondents were asked to nominate a maximum of five draft objectives as being most important to our NP area. Having stripped away the need to review the draft objectives with any filter other than ‘are they the most important to our NP area’, results here (see Table 5) were slightly different from when participants were asked about the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with each objective, presumably because:

- personal opinions differ from what is considered best for the NP plan area as a whole
- respondents were being asked to differentiate between objectives for which they have already expressed support.

Priority (where 1 is highest)	Draft objective	Participants prioritising (no.)	Participants prioritising (%)
1	Our rural setting and landscape	127	58.8
2	Climate change	109	50.5
3	Community amenities and infrastructure	105	48.6
4	Biodiversity	94	43.5
5	Managing the impacts of traffic movement	87	40.3
6	Housing needs	73	33.8
7	Countryside access	71	32.9
8	Active travel	69	31.9
9	The built environment	65	30.1
10	Countryside enhancement	64	29.6
		Answered	216

Table 5: Prioritised draft objectives

In the event of a trade-off, our data suggest that respondents would prefer to prioritise protecting our rural setting and landscape, mitigating the effects of climate change, and improvements to community amenities and infrastructure over active travel, new building design and countryside enhancement strategies. Reassuringly, the same categories were prioritised by visitors to our NP pop-up events who annotated our display boards.

It should be noted that the NP steering group will need to consider other factors if a trade-off in NP content is required. For example, objectives which are less important but easy to meet might be prioritised over those which are more complicated and of medium significance. Ultimately, the goal is to produce a NP which has utility within the near-term. There is little point in having an all-singing-all-dancing NP which takes years to complete and is unavailable until the current period of high growth is over. NPs can be expanded and updated over time so, if an objective is deprioritised now, it can still be addressed in the future.

3.2.2 Food for thought

Free-text comments about the draft objectives may help to explain some of the motivations behind respondents’ preferences. General themes arising from these comments have, therefore, been summarised under relevant headings in Table 6 for the NP steering group to consider. Note that not all draft objectives attracted comments; not all comments were directly relevant to the question; and some were outside the scope of neighbourhood planning. All have been recorded in the Appendix to this report.



Issue	General themes
Active travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion exists between active and sustainable travel • Non-motorised users need more routes, not just improved safety • The NP should not pit motorists and non-motorists against each other • Ensure that prioritising/improving active travel does not cause new problems to emerge, e.g. make driving around our village even more difficult than it already is • Minor discrepancy in wording between the active travel draft objective on p10 and p15 of consultation paper (NB: the one on p15 is the correct version)
Sustainable travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is support for sustainable travel but not for the GCP's busway • Better public transport is needed, including more regular train services
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving existing highways (e.g. lighting, prioritisation, better paths and cycleways) in/around our villages could do a lot to improve traffic problems, without the need for more expensive interventions
Biodiversity/environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the NP set some specific targets/goals around biodiversity issues? • Link relevant objectives in the NP to the Cambridge Nature Network • Water shortages – how can these be dealt with by the NP or are they already covered in existing planning policy? • No explicit mention of greenbelt protection
Countryside access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping existing paths clear of vegetation and clean is one way to immediately improve countryside access
Housing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General support amongst respondents for affordable housing • Can the NP support inter-generational living?
Built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How specific can the NP be about appropriate height, density and bulk of new development?
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Great Shelford really rural any more?

Table 6: General themes of free-text comments relating to the draft objectives

3.3 Community-led renewable energy schemes

Consultation participants were asked to describe their attitudes towards the principle of community-led renewable energy schemes within our area, with Gamlingay's (S. Cambs.) community wind turbine given as an example. As Table 7 shows, three-quarters of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this principle.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	41.6%	87
Agree	33.0%	69
Neutral/no opinion	19.1%	40
Disagree	4.8%	10
Strongly disagree	1.9%	4
	Answered	210

Table 7: Attitudes towards the principle of community-led renewable energy schemes in our area

Free-text comments, summarised below (and recorded individually in the Appendix as they were originally submitted), add colour to the overall picture and should be reflected upon by the NP steering group:

- a range of renewable energy schemes should be considered, e.g. wind turbines, community-wide solar energy purchasing, and a suggestion to look at Swaffham Prior's Heat Network (a mix of air source and ground source heat pumps with the capacity to supply 1.7MW of heat to 300 homes since 2022)
- can the NP support solar panels on community buildings, e.g. schools?
- reduced domestic energy bills are a clear incentive for support, so the economic benefits must be made clear



- concerns that wind turbines should not impact wildlife, create noise pollution or block countryside views
- concerns about solar arrays on agricultural land
- collaborating with neighbouring villages might increase cost-benefits
- a great way to reduce carbon emissions
- one offer of assistance from a resident who works in this field, and another from someone willing to give their time after retirement to support this idea.

3.4 Equality of access to our countryside

The consultation paper proposed that, where practicable, new and improved routes into our countryside should be suitable for all forms of non-car use (on foot, on wheels, on a horse), recognising that path segregation may be required to make this safe. 'Practicable' was defined as land being suitable, funds being available, and the new/improved route linking with other accessible routes to expand the accessible network.

The distribution of responses is illustrated in Figure 5. Of note:

- around 10 times as many people support rather than oppose equal access for both existing and new routes into our countryside
- there is consensus in support for equal access whether routes already exist or are new
 - over 80% of respondents strongly agree or agree with equal access as it applies to existing routes
 - 75% strongly agree or agree with equal access as it applies to new routes.

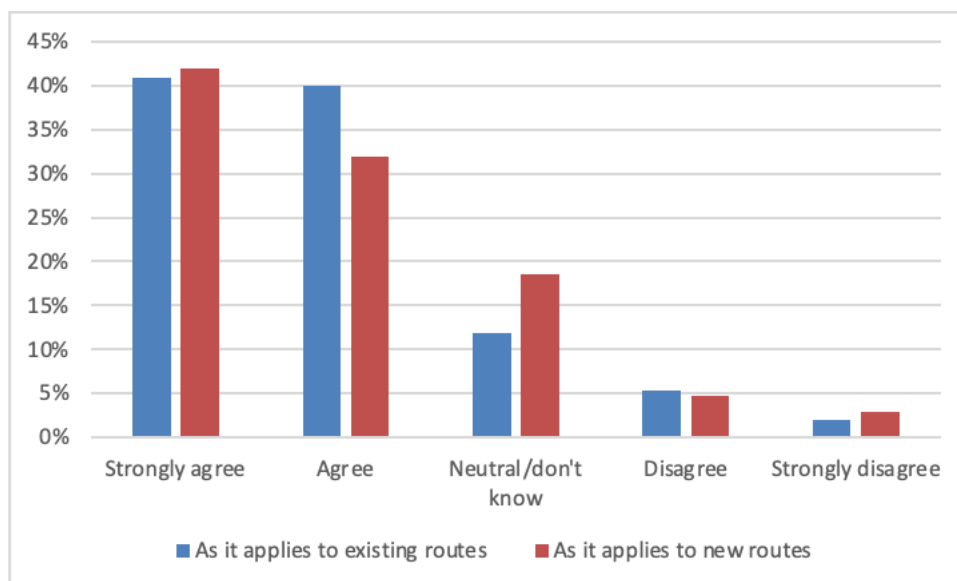


Figure 5: Comparative variation in support for improved equality of countryside access

Free-text comments at times highlighted caveats or gaps in the general findings displayed above.

The NP steering group may wish to consider the following:

- perceived safety concerns with shared use paths, particularly where cyclists and equestrians mix with walkers and dogs (this issue attracted most comments)
- if we can improve access to our countryside, people will visit and value it more
- should investment in new routes/equality of access to those routes be pro rated according to the number of users, e.g. new bridle paths are expensive in terms of land purchase or segregation relative to the small number of equestrian users
- what about runners' needs for circuits that are safe and easy on the foot?



- 'improvements' should minimise disturbing the natural environment and exclude tarmac; there are enough tarmacked surfaces already for those who prefer hard surfaces
- new routes do not have to link to existing ones; a new standalone public right of way can be a catalyst for further routes in the future
- safety (with respect to lighting and user segregation) may be a better objective than equality
- ensure that carriage-rider rights are included when considering 'equal access'.



4 RESPONSE DETAIL: THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN'S EVIDENCE BASE

The consultation invited comments on extracts from the NP's evidence base across the following areas:

1. our Housing Needs Assessment
2. areas of visually important open land
3. locally valued views
4. green spaces which could be given special 'Local Green Space' designation and protection
5. valued 'countryside frontages'
6. active travel routes
7. routes into our countryside.

The evidence base was also on display at various consultation events in April and May 2023, with members of the NP steering group on hand for discussion and to note comments. Where relevant, verbal feedback is incorporated into this write-up.

4.1 Housing needs

The NP steering group commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (grant funded by Locality) for our parishes from government contractor AECOM. This identified several ways in which new development could address housing needs in Stapleford and Great Shelford. Consultation participants were asked to rate their perceived importance of each to our NP area. Figure 6 summarises outcomes, combining 'strongly agree' with 'agree' responses, and 'disagree' with 'strongly disagree'. On average, 23% of respondents to this question were neutral or had no opinion about each option, so it is inappropriate to be any more forensic with the data.



Figure 6: Radar chart showing variation in support for strategies to meet local housing needs



The radar chart suggests that:

- there is most support for adaptable homes, for affordable¹ homes for people with strong local connections, and for more affordable housing options for older people
- overall, there is more support for, than opposition to, every strategy, with the exception of community-led alternatives to developer-driven affordable housing.

The first of these findings may partly reflect the predominance of older respondents in the consultation. For example, more adaptable homes might mean that older people could live more independently for longer in the same property or move in with younger family members whose homes could be modified to accommodate them. More affordable homes for people with strong local connections could appeal to older residents who would like their children and grandchildren to be able to reside locally. And more affordable housing options could give older residents greater flexibility to downsize or move to sheltered accommodation over time.

These are only inferences though and it's worth noting a comment from a *working-age* consultation participant: "...only two out of nine employees [at a Great Shelford business] live in the village, due in part to extremely high rental and purchase prices, meaning transport costs take up a chunk of their income."

The lack of support for community-led solutions to affordable housing is almost certainly more nuanced than it initially appears. A common free-text concern expressed throughout the consultation is development of the greenbelt which surrounds our villages. It is quite possible that, if the strategy described here as "If developers do not provide sufficient affordable housing, the community could consider alternatives, e.g. 'rural exception sites' could supply small numbers of affordable houses on greenbelt land" had used a different example of community-led schemes instead of one involving greenbelt, a different range of attitudes towards this option might have been received. Instead, we may have inadvertently fuelled a local fire of discontent and led respondents towards a particular answer.

That almost one-quarter of respondents were neutral or had no opinion on any housing strategy is not really a surprise for two main reasons:

1. although a brief explanation of each strategy to address local housing needs was given in the consultation paper, it is an inherently complex topic and it is reasonable to assume that most respondents were previously largely unfamiliar with it
2. the question may not have direct applicability to most consultation respondents
 - a. we know from our Housing Needs Assessment that 69% of households in Stapleford and Great Shelford owned their own home in 2021
 - b. more generally, home ownership increases with age, with 36% of those aged over 65 in England owning their own homes (Statista, 2022²)
 - c. the older demographic was overrepresented in our consultation.

On balance, making our Housing Needs Assessment data available for public consumption was a worthwhile exercise but chart data should be interpreted with caution. The NP steering group may wish to (a) make more information available prior to referendum, and (b) pay particular heed to free-text comments. General issues and good ideas generated in this way are summarised below:

- developers should be held to a minimum 'affordable housing' contribution and it should be on-site, not elsewhere

¹ There are various definitions of 'affordable housing' but the one used by local planning authorities is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (revised July 2021): "housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)".

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/321065/uk-england-home-owners-age-groups/>



- support for mixed development, seamlessly integrating all types/sizes of accommodation
- consider mobile homes as part of the housing mix, e.g. Waverley Park
- encourage conversion of larger properties to 1- and 2-bed apartments (e.g. grants to housing associations)
- 'affordable' housing in our area is still out of reach for many people
- irrespective of whether housing is for the open market or not, it should all be high quality, not overly dense and have access to outdoor space
- can a support structure be put in place to help older people to downsize, something which many find very daunting?
- mixed attitudes towards reserving a proportion of affordable housing for people with local connections; 'new blood' can make a community more sustainable over time
- the status of affordable/social housing should be irrevocable
- general lack of support for greenbelt development.

4.2 Visually important open land

Visually important open land is undeveloped or open land within or on the edge of our settlements which contributes to the form, character or setting of our area. Development of this land would fundamentally alter our landscape setting, perhaps by reducing space between settlements or increasing the sense of urbanisation within our villages.

Consultation participants were asked to review a list, photos and map of nine areas of visually important open land and assess their value to our NP area. The range of responses is illustrated in Figure 7, ordered from most to least important.

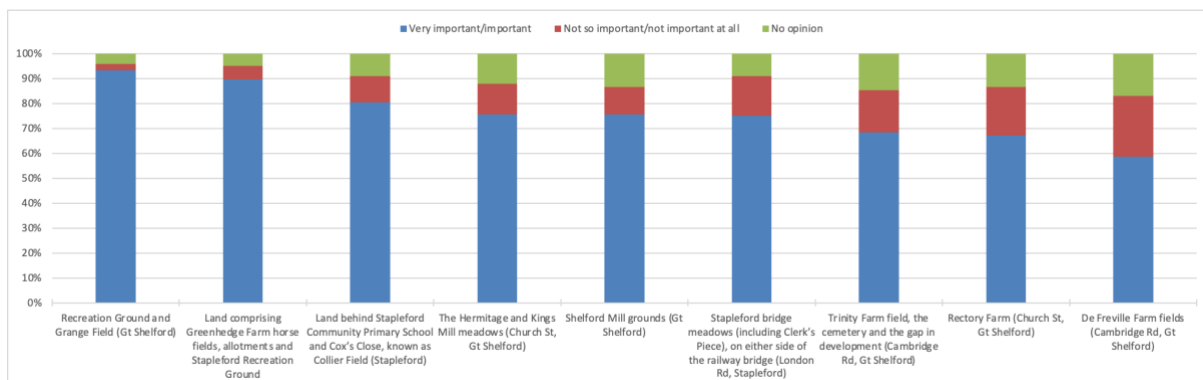


Figure 7: Perceived value of visually important open land to our NP area

All nine areas of visually important land are valued by consultation participants, but some more so than others. Top of the poll are the Recreation Grounds and adjoining open green spaces within each village. The Recreation Grounds are owned by their respective Parish Councils and readily accessible to the public, with the contiguous lands being in private ownership and inaccessible. Trinity Farm field, Rectory Farm and De Freville fields are considered comparatively less valuable areas of visually important open land.

Results could be influenced by the relative split of respondents between the two villages, although this is more likely to indicate greater familiarity with them than inherent bias against a neighbouring village. In any case, there are no limits to the number of tracts of visually important open land that our NP can seek to protect from development, so there is no benefit to bias. This applies to all similar questions and responses.



Participants were asked if any areas of visually important land had been omitted and all free-text responses are reported in the Appendix, precisely as submitted. The majority of these relate to spaces which do not meet the definition of visually important open land given in the consultation paper. They will instead be taken into consideration in more appropriate sections of this report. In planning terms, visually important open land is not the same as valued views; notably, it must be *within or on the edge* of our settlements.

There was some convergence of opinions about additional areas of visually important open land which could be included in the NP:

- west of White Hill, which could be impacted by East West Rail
- bounded by Hinton Way, Mingle Lane and Stapleford Cemetery, which is proposed for residential development in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan
- between Stapleford Granary and Magog Down, to the east of Haverhill Road.

The NP steering group may also wish to explore the following:

- land behind the Slaughter House on Church St, Stapleford
- 6 acres of land owned by Great Shelford Parochial Charities between the new alms houses at More's Meadow and the end of The Hectare, bounded by residential development/gardens and Hobson's Brook, and currently used as allotments and a community orchard
- how expansive can an area of visually important open land be, e.g. could it incorporate the expanse of arable land bounded by Hinton Way, Mingle Lane and the new countryside park? If so, other large tracts must also be considered
- land around Stapleford Cemetery helps to maintain visual separation between Stapleford and Great Shelford.

4.3 Locally valued views

A view is a sight of a landscape from a place which is accessible to the majority of people. It does not have to be nationally or regionally significant to justify its protection in our NP, just significant to our community. Consultation participants were presented with a list, photos and a map of 26 vantage points and associated views whose loss might detract from our sense of place, and asked to rate their individual importance to our NP area. Their feedback suggests that:

- views to and from high ground at Magog Down and/or Wandlebury Country Park are considered most important
- overall, all 26 views are considered 'very important' or 'important' to our NP area, although some are more valued than others
- 11 of 26 views were rated 'very important' or 'important' by 75% or more of respondents.

Rather than just listing the most valued views here, we have attempted to identify commonalities amongst outcomes, as shown in Table 8.



Relative value	Typical characteristics	Specific vantage points/views
Most valued views from outside the settled area of our parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ground vantage points • Multi-directional • Long views over open arable fields towards high ground • Regionally and locally significant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Magog Down and Gog Magog Hills (within Wandlebury Country Park), overlooking the City and arable land towards Stapleford • From various points along the track behind Stapleford Granary, looking across open arable land towards Magog Down • Jenny's Path, Gt Shelford – views over river, meadows and open arable fields • High point on Granham's Rd – views to City, Gog Magog Hills and Magog Down
Most valued views from within the settled area of our parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-directional • Taking in river/water meadows • Long views across open arable fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junction of Bridge St/Church St in Gt Shelford – meadow and river views • Across Gt Shelford Rec towards River Cam • Stapleford Cemetery – expansive views across open arable fields • Gap between 41 Gog Magog Way and Chalk Hill – expansive views across open arable fields
Least valued views from anywhere within our parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less well known • More out of the way • More likely to be experienced when passing by rather than as a destination in themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stone Hill allotments – views across open arable fields • Junction of Cherry Hinton Rd/Wort's Causeway – views across open arable fields towards Beechwood • More's Meadow – views across open arable fields and railway towards Nine Wells and White Hill • Views across De Freville Farm and Trinity House pasture/arable land from Cambridge Road, Gt Shelford

Table 8: Characteristics and locations of views considered most and least important to our NP area

Free-text comments gave broad support to the importance of many views into and out of our area, noting that they are both a feature of our relatively flat and open landscape and of benefit to our well-being. One general area was mentioned more than any other: views to Magog Down and the wider Gog Magog Hills from various points within Stapleford Parish, and views north from Magog Down towards Cambridge and west towards Stapleford. Arguably, these are significant not just to our NP area, but also to the wider South Cambridgeshire landscape and setting of Cambridge City. However, whilst the view of the City from the high point at Magog Down is protected by existing planning policy, views in other directions are not, and neither are views towards this high point from surrounding lower lying land.

The NP steering group may wish to consider the inclusion of a handful of other locally valued views for protection:

- the view over the hedgerow between 109 and 173 Hinton Way, looking NW over arable fields towards Granham's Road and beyond to the biomedical campus
- scanning SE to NW from the high point of the new countryside park linking Hinton Way and Haverhill Road
- scanning SW to N across Shelford Rugby Club playing fields in the direction of Trumpington from the end of Westfield Road
- views of White Hill and glimpses beyond, looking SE from (a) the northern extension of the DNA path, across Ninewells Nature Reserve, and (b) within Ninewells Nature Reserve



- double-check the extent of open, publicly accessible views scanning NE to SW on the undeveloped SE side of Hinton Way.

One respondent noted the night sky as a ‘view’ worthy of protection. We are pleased to say that plans are in place to include a ‘dark skies’ policy in our NP, they just were not part of the consultation.

4.4 ‘Local Green Space’ designations

Local Green Space (LGS) designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to our community. The consultation paper proposed two green spaces for LGS designation and asked respondents to rate their importance to our NP area. Both Collier Field in Stapleford and Grange Field in Great Shelford attracted significant support, with 84% and 78% of respondents, respectively, rating them as ‘very important’ or ‘important’.

Free-text comments gave people an opportunity to identify other locally valued green spaces which could be considered for LGS designation. According to the National Planning Policy Framework, this designation should only be used where a green space is:

1. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
2. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife
3. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Cross-referencing this definition against respondents’ proposals identifies the following green spaces as worthy of investigation by the NP steering group:

- Stapleford village pond, previously part of a public green of some 30 acres until enclosure in 1814 and now located on private land at the corner of Bury and Haverhill Roads. This is listed as a Village Amenity Area in the current Local Plan (policy NH/11) but may need re-protecting in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan
- horse pasture surrounding Greenhedge Farm, Stapleford
- Villedômer Garden and land owned by Stapleford Parish Council behind the Slaughterhouse on Church St, Stapleford
- allotments, community garden and orchard on land owned by Great Shelford Parochial Charities behind The Hectare
- meadow behind houses at junction of Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, Great Shelford
- horse pasture bounded by Granham’s Lane, the DNA path and Macauley Avenue housing, Great Shelford.

There were several mentions of Stapleford allotments, but these already enjoy greenbelt protection and, as such, are unlikely to gain any additional benefits from LGS designation.

4.5 Countryside frontages

‘Countryside frontages’ are where land with a strong countryside character penetrates or sweeps into our built-up area or acts as an important rural break between two close, but separate, built-up areas. The consultation sought to understand attitudes towards the importance of seven such frontages to our NP area and found that:

- all frontages gained considerably more support than opposition
- there is most support for the broad expanse of arable land penetrating the built-up area between 41 Gog Magog Way and properties at Chalk Hill, Stapleford, with 81% of respondents considering it to be ‘very important’ or ‘important’



- there is least support for pasture at De Freville Farm which fills the development gap between the railway bridge and De Freville Manor on Cambridge Rd, Great Shelford, with 62% of respondents considering it either ‘very important’ or ‘important’.

The range of responses is summarised in Table 9.

Countryside frontage	Very important/ important	Not important/not at all important	No opinion
Stapleford – broad expanse of arable land penetrating the built-up area between nos. 41 Gog Magog Way and properties at Chalk Hill	81.1%	9.2%	9.8%
Gt Shelford – mature roadside trees fronting White Hill Farm and Nine Wells House/White Hill House on Granham’s Rd	74.4%	10.4%	15.2%
Gt Shelford – where Kings Mill meadows and the Hermitage separate the built-up areas of Gt and Lt Shelford	71.3%	9.8%	18.9%
Stapleford – arable land sweeping into the built-up area in gap between nos. 27 and 31 Mingle Lane	71.3%	17.7%	11.0%
Gt Shelford – pasture/arable land (Trinity Farm) and cemetery filling gap in development, Cambridge Rd	67.1%	13.4%	19.5%
Gt Shelford – where Rectory Farm penetrates the streetscape on Church St	67.1%	14.6%	18.3%
Gt Shelford – pasture (De Freville Farm) filling gap in development between railway bridge and De Freville Manor, Cambridge Rd	62.2%	17.7%	20.1%
		Answered	163

Table 9: Comparative perceived importance of countryside frontages within the NP area

Participants were asked if any other countryside frontages had been missed from consideration and their free-text responses are recorded in the Appendix to this report exactly as submitted. Several locations were proposed; not all fit the definition of a countryside frontage but some may merit further investigation by the NP steering group, specifically:

- arable land filling the gap between housing on Gog Magog Way and Haverhill Road, Stapleford
- horse pasture at Greenhedge Farm, Stapleford, an island of green space bounded by housing on Gog Magog Way, Bar Lane and Haverhill Road
- water meadows at the entrance to Stapleford Granary on Bury Road, Stapleford.

4.6 Active travel routes

‘Active travel’, defined in the consultation paper with reference to *Cambridgeshire’s Active Travel Strategy*³, refers to journeys on foot, cycle or other ‘wheeled’ modes of active travel (e.g. mobility scooter, wheelchair, pushchair, cycle freight), although other non-motorised users may also use the network. It aims to reduce reliance on private cars, particularly for short journeys and by single passengers, and to reduce congestion and our carbon footprint.

Participants were presented with a map of the current active travel network and asked, in the context of general movements of traffic and people around our NP area, which local pre-defined destinations they would like served by improvements to active travel over the period to 2040. Their priorities are summarised in Table 10.

³ Adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council in March 2023.



Priority	Local destinations	Relative support
1	Open spaces (Recreation Grounds, Wandlebury Park, Magog Down, new countryside park off Haverhill Rd)	17%
2	Shops, GP practice and other amenities clustered around Woollards Lane and High St, Gt Shelford	16%
3	Additional routes to Cambridge City	13%
4	Local primary schools	9%
5	Park & Ride at Trumpington and Babraham	9%
6	Shelford Station	8%
7	Whittlesford Station	7%
8	Additional routes to Sawston Village College	6%
9	Better links from our main residential areas to Linton & Sawston Greenways and the proposed CSET busway corridor	6%
10	Additional routes to healthcare and employment facilities at Cambridge Biomedical Campus	4%
11	Additional routes to Sawston shops and amenities	3%
12	Additional routes to employment at Babraham Research Park	2%
	Total number of votes	455

Table 10: Prioritised local destinations served by an expanding active travel network

Results suggest that consultation respondents would prioritise active travel improvements to nearby recreational spaces, to local shops and to the City over schools, biomedical sites and links to the wider travel network. We wondered whether this could reflect the influence of the older demographic on outcomes so further segmented the data by respondent age as a proxy for work status: <25 years, 26-65 years (i.e. most likely to be of working age) and >65 years (generally retired). Such analysis is only indicative because representation varied greatly between age groups and the <25 age category was particularly small. Nonetheless, as Figure 8 shows, future active travel priorities appear to align irrespective of age/work status. We can further suggest that support for additional active travel routes to Cambridge City is greatest amongst working age residents. Intuitively, this makes sense.

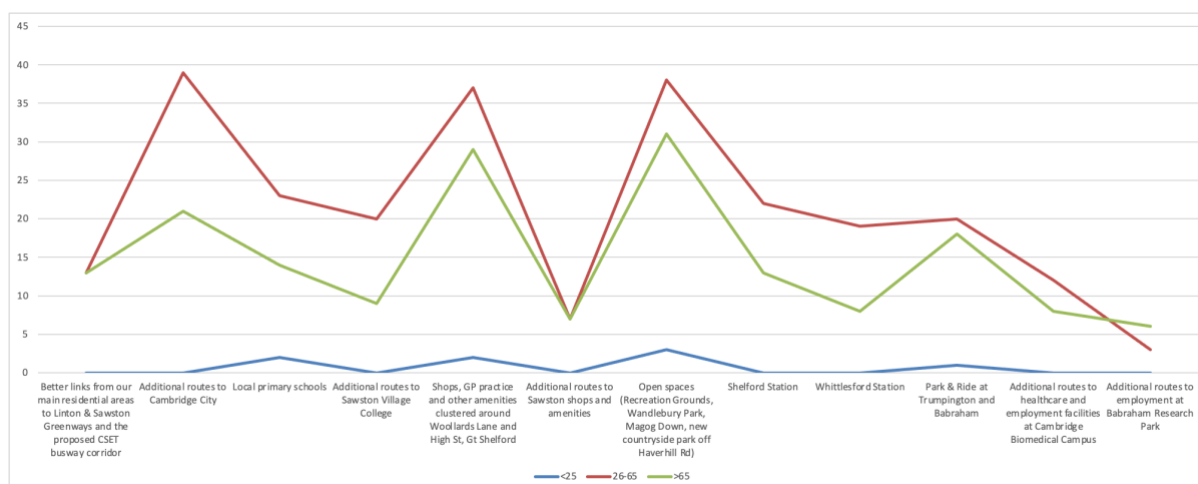


Figure 8: Prioritised local destinations served by an expanding active travel network, split by age

Respondents were invited to comment on any additional local destinations which should be prioritised in an expanding active travel network and these are collated in their own words in the Appendix. Relatively few comments were received, and some conflated active travel with sustainable travel and hence commented on buses/busway proposals, but one theme did emerge which the NP steering group may wish to consider: new active travel routes may not actually be



needed. Instead, existing ones could be made to work harder by being upgraded, joining safely with other active travel routes and hence attracting more users.

A visitor to a pop-up display whose child had been threatened and their bike stolen on the DNA path also made a passionate plea for better safety on active travel routes. Her highly valid point is that the bar for what constitutes ‘safe’ should be set at the level of the most vulnerable users, such as children and females travelling alone in the dark. Unless this happens, active travel uptake will always be compromised and favour a less vulnerable demographic (e.g. adult males).

4.7 Routes into our countryside

Our NP aims to protect and improve existing Public Rights of Way, and to identify aspirational routes into our countryside which new development could help to bring forward. Consultation participants were presented with descriptions and a map of eight aspirational routes and asked to prioritise three for the benefit of residents and visitors. A total of 455 such votes were cast and outcomes are summarised in Table 11, with routes listed from highest to lowest priority. All routes gained some support and the three attracting the most are discussed below.

Priority	Route description	Relative support
1	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING ROUTE: Improvements to path alongside Haverhill Rd between A1307 and Stapleford village, making it suitable for all non-motorised users. This would better link the village to Magog Down and Wandlebury Park, and link to routes through the new countryside park between Haverhill Rd and Hinton Way.	23%
2	NEW ROUTE: Bridge across River Cam at Gt Shelford Recreation Ground, traversing west along riverside to Lt Shelford Recreation Ground. Opens up several opportunities for onward travel, including a loop back along Bridge Lane/Church St to the starting point.	20%
3	EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING ROUTE: Drift track SE of Haverhill Rd, Stapleford: extend this track further SE with spurs coming off NE to link with existing routes at Villedômer Wood and Vestey Wood at Magog Down. Onward travel could then go N to Wandlebury Park or S to link with the Granary track in Stapleford, eventually looping back to the start point.	18%
4	EXTENSION TO EXISTING ROUTE: Extension of existing path SE from Granham’s Rd, crossing over Hinton Way and onwards to Haverhill Rd near entrance to Magog Down car park. Onward travel could then link with routes 3, 4 & 5, and with Magog Down and Wandlebury Park.	13%
5	EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING ROUTE: Jenny’s Path, Church St, Gt Shelford: ‘offshoots’ added (a) across rear of Shelford Rugby Club to Stonehill Rd allotments, and (b) across to Gt Shelford cemetery to create new circuitous route options	13%
6	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING ROUTE: Improvements to existing path looping N around White Hill Farm to create multi-user route with entry/exit points off Granham’s Rd.	5%
7	IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING ROUTE: Safety and multi-user improvements to route along Wort’s Causeway. Onward travel to the SE could connect with the Roman Rd and then to Linton Greenway via existing byways.	4%
8	NEW ‘CONNECTOR’ BETWEEN EXISTING ROUTES: Extension of existing path around White Hill Farm to the NE along Granham’s Rd, crossing over the A1307 and skirting the NW boundary of Newbury Farm to the junction with Wort’s Causeway. Onward travel options include transferring to Linton Greenway at the A1307 or connecting with the Roman Rd.	4%
	Total number of votes	455

Table 11: Prioritised routes into our NP area’s countryside



The preceding section of this report has already highlighted residents' desire to improve active travel routes to local open spaces, and this is echoed again here. The **path alongside Haverhill Road** is the primary means of off-road access from the settled part of the NP area to Magog Down and Wandlebury Country Park, and soon also to the new countryside park attached to Rangeford's retirement care village. It is generally agreed to be in poor condition (uneven, muddy, overgrown and narrow). An absence of street lighting and road markings and a fast speed limit (60mph) for much of its length further reduce the safety of the path and road for active travel. These problems have been noted by Stapleford Parish Council on more than one occasion in consultation responses to proposed upgrades by Greater Cambridge Partnership to the junction of Haverhill Road and the A1307.

The Parish Council understands that the GCP now supports reducing the speed limit along most of Haverhill Road outside the village to 40mph and upgrading the path surface in preparation for a new off-road busway and accompanying bus stop. At the time of writing, the busway does not have planning permission and no further details of a permanent traffic regulation order or active travel upgrades are available.

One consultation respondent made a very valid point in free-text comments: the new retirement care village and countryside park accessed via Haverhill Road will make this road busier, noisier and more polluted. Sensitive planning, such as greater separation of motorised traffic from the active travel path, will be required to encourage people to use the route in sustainable ways.

Despite the presence of the River Cam/Granta in the NP area, public access to it is extremely limited because much of its route is through private land. **Bridging the River Cam** at the southern edge of Stapleford Rec would have several benefits, such as opening up new routes for leisure, and reducing congestion and parking on Church St by providing an alternative and safe route to the primary school.

The **Drift Track to the SE of Haverhill Road** is a private carriage and drift road, historically a route for Stapleford residents and droving grazing animals. In its current form, it is a 'there and back' track with no official links to any other off-road routes. Despite this, it is frequently used by walkers, dog walkers, runners and equestrians. Responsibility for its upkeep lies with its landowner (the Diocese of Ely), whose land agent is Carter Jonas. The agent has previously intimated that the Board of the Diocese would not stand in the way of the Drift Track becoming a bridleway, but that the Board was not prepared to pay for this. The tenant farmer is not believed to back a change in status.

Given the clear support for extending the Drift Track in the NP consultation, Stapleford Parish Council may wish to consider reinstating discussions with Carter Jonas, with a view to having the Drift Track recorded on the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way in Cambridgeshire. This would incur some time and cost (e.g. to establish an appropriate access and maintenance agreement) but it might be a productive first step towards securing wider future access by demonstrating opportunities to link the Drift Track to other Public Rights of Way⁴. Several such opportunities are presented in the NP's consultation paper.

The final question of the consultation invited participants to comment on any important countryside routes which could be considered in our NP work and these are recorded verbatim in the Appendix. The NP steering group may wish to note the following:

- as with active travel routes, would it be wiser to make existing off-road routes work better (e.g. by improving their construction and maintenance) than add more?

⁴ Anyone wishing to act upon information about the Drift Track should first verify it themselves.



- many of the routes do not welcome equestrians; provision for carriage drivers should be considered on par with access for cargo bikes and carts, which are often motorised
- a new route over the River Cam in Great Shelford could connect to the Sawston Greenway and an existing path from Dernford Water to Whittlesford Road
- a new route from the track beyond Stapleford Granary at the crossing point of the River Granta, to Vestey Wood at Magog Down
- allied with this, link the path extending from Rowley Lane (Sawston) to the Drift Track on Haverhill Road and Magog Down.