

# **BARTON MILLS PARISH PLAN**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS and ACTION PLAN**

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## Introduction

The Parish Council with support from the Countryside Agency took the decision in 2002 to prepare a Barton Mills Parish Plan.

A Steering Group was appointed with representatives from village residents and from the various organisations. The Steering Group members are:-

Glynn East	Chairman	Roger Higgins
James Bercovici	Plan Administrator	Frances Lewis
Robert Lewis	Treasurer	David Little
Pamela Boura		Steve Mullender
Sarah Crawford		Faith Rutterford
Marie Davis		Elsie Smart
Amin Harji		

Ongoing support was also provided by representatives of Suffolk ACRE.

The following report provides a summary of the results of the Plan Questionnaires.

208 completed Questionnaires were completed by 517 residents and returned out of 350 delivered, representing a response rate of about 60%. Although lower than the Steering Group's target response rate of 75%, it is considered that the findings can be used as representing a wide range of opinions within the Parish.

Of the 208 Questionnaires returned over 90% indicated homes that were owner occupied. The returns for private rented housing of 4.3% appear to be lower than thought by the Steering Group in recognition of the significant USAF population in the village. The lower figure is believed to be a consequence of the low return rate generally from American families.

The following points of interest are noted and drawn from the Questionnaires:-

- The demographic profile is similar to a typical rural Suffolk village with
  - 15.4% under 25
  - 27.4% in the age range 25-44
  - 37% in the age range 45-64
  - and
  - 20.2% above retirement age
- The response to the question about how long people have lived in the village reveals an apparent significant turnover of residents but equally a significant proportion of long term residents with
  - 30.3% resident for less than 5 year
  - 28.8% resident for between 6 and 15 years
  - 21.4% resident for between 16 and 25 years
  - and
  - 19.5% resident for longer than 26 years

People have apparently come to live in Barton Mills for a wide variety of reasons with perhaps the most important being represented by 25% coming for work related reasons. The Questionnaires also show that over 6% come to the village as part of the USAF service personnel or their families.

## **Housing and Development**

There was only very limited support for large scale housing developments in the village, but general support for small scale infill development in accordance with current planning policy. Of the 428 respondents to the question, 105 or 25.6% were opposed to any further development. It was widely considered that in any new development, small family homes were preferred.

The survey established that the community is equally divided as to whether commercial development providing employment should be encouraged in the Parish. There was only limited support for the provision of shops and leisure facilities and to a lesser extent, a hotel. There was little support for the provision of offices and light industry.

There is little support for the development of tourism opportunities although significant support for the increase in bed and breakfast facilities

The proposition that a Village Design Statement be prepared for future housing development received support from 76% of respondents.

**ACTION 1**            To prepare and publish a Village Design Statement in consultation with Forest Heath District Council Planning Department.

**ACTION 2**            Consult with the English Tourist Board with a view to encouraging the growth of bed and breakfast facilities.

## **Transport**

Not surprisingly, the car is the most popular means of transport to work (89%). Only 3.3% of residents use public transport for journeys to work whilst only 1.6% cycle and 4.2% walk to work.

Of the small number of residents who use public transport, i.e. 95, the reasons stated are for shopping, medical visits and social and leisure activities. The majority of respondents rated the bus service either reasonable or poor in relation to route, timetable reliability, cost, access for those with disabilities and bus stop location.

A comparison of the small number using the bus service against the general negative view of the bus service by a much larger of respondents would suggest that an improved service would attract more passengers.

The general opinion is that the taxi services provided are adequate for most people's needs.

Speeding traffic was perceived to be a danger in the village with 72% of residents wishing to see stricter enforcement of the existing speed limits. There was significant support for the introduction of more restrictive speed limits and the introduction of a traffic calming scheme.

In response to the question about the adequacy of the existing footways for people with disabilities or pushchair or wheel chair users, only 6% rated them as good whilst 70% rated them as reasonable or poor.

**ACTION 3** To discuss with the local Bus Company the possibility of identifying the transport needs within the village with a view to implementing improvements to the service.

**ACTION 4** To lobby Suffolk County Council to enhance road safety in the Parish including traffic calming and more restrictive speed limits.

**ACTION 5** To lobby Suffolk County Council to improve footways for people with disabilities and pushchair and wheelchair users.

## **Environmental Matters**

It is clear that the features of the countryside in and around Barton Mills are very important to residents of the Parish. The survey indicated widespread support for the protection, in particular, of the village green, the River Lark and in general the protection of hedges, ditches, walls and meadows.

When considering what could be done to improve the environment, the most important needs identified included litter removal, the protection of trees, the management of roadside verges, the reduction of the impact of traffic through noise and parking of footways, the improvement of access across the River Lark by improving the footbridges, keeping hedges tidy and improving access to rights of way. There was support for the recycling programme recently introduced to protect the local environment. It was also perceived that improved public transport and car sharing would enhance the local environment.

In response to the question about keeping Barton Mills clean and tidy, 40% supported the idea of paying for a Village Litter Warden or Road Sweeper. Similarly 36% of residents supported the idea of 'Spring Cleaning Day'.

**ACTION 6** To establish and improve existing working relations with other organisations to establish plans and procedures to ensure the protection of the village green, the River Lark, hedges, ditches, walls and meadows.

**ACTION 7** To lobby the Suffolk County Council to improve verge and hedges maintenance.

**ACTION 8** To consider the employment of a Village Litter Warden or Road Sweeper to keep the village clean and tidy.

## **Church and Chapel**

Respectively, 78 and 16 people described themselves as active members of St Mary's Church and the Baptist Chapel.

The Parish Questionnaire identified that the Church is an important primarily as an historic building and as a focal point for the community. Over 100 residents identified the Church as very important for Sunday worship, weddings, funerals and baptisms.

There is widespread support for the current practice of the Parochial Church Council of using the Church for concerts and meetings. The use of the Church for other activities also received support.

**ACTION 9**            To offer support to the St Mary's Parochial Church Council to develop the use of the church building for wider community activities.

## **Employment and Education**

As expected, the unemployment rate in Barton Mills is very low: of those responding less than 1% said they were unemployed.

It is interesting to note that of those in employment, almost 60% work locally either in Barton Mills (13%), in Mildenhall (15%) or within 10 miles of the village (29%).

There is a significant body of opinion in the village that indicated that they needed childcare facilities ranging from the provision facilities of the pre-school age group to the provision of after school clubs and some form of holiday play scheme.

70 people thought that Barton Mills needed adult education classes.

**ACTION 10** To provide a parish forum to explore the needs for childcare facilities and establish initial recommended courses of action.

**ACTION 11** To liaise with the Suffolk County Council Adult Education Service with a view to exploring the development of a wider range of classes.

## **Village Facilities**

The children's playground facilities on the village green were considered either good or reasonable by 230 people (62% of respondents) but there was little support for the Skateboard Park. Only 34 people were in favour of the full-sized ramp and a further 57 in favour of a scaled down version.

Although there was a wide range of both sporting and social activities identified and interest shown in the returned Questionnaires, the numbers for each was low. However, there was sufficient interest in the forming of an Art Club, a Gardening Club, a Music Society, a Rambling Club and a Wine Tasting Society to make these initiatives worth pursuing.

Generally people were able to make full use of the public venues in Barton Mills without difficulty. There was considerable support for the development and improvement of the Village Hall.

The Barton Miller is received by each household in the village with the vast majority of residents regularly reading it and considering it to be a good publication. There is a widely held view however that the Barton Miller should include more articles on leisure, the arts, sport, local news, local events and Parish Council proceedings.

- ACTION 12** To encourage the formation of new hobby and leisure clubs and organisations by holding an introductory event in the Village Hall.
- ACTION 13** To support the Village Hall Management Committee in the improvement and development of the hall's facilities and long term viability.
- ACTION 14** To encourage greater community involvement in the submission of articles for the Barton Miller.



## **Community Services**

There is evidence that a small number of people in the village experience difficulties in collecting medical prescriptions.

Most people rated the delivery of the emergency services and hospital transport as reasonable or good. However, respectively 24 and 46 people using the service rated the police emergency response and general services as poor. Over 75% of the responses considered that a greater police presence was needed in the village and almost 60% thought improved street lighting was required.

149 people believed there was a need for a 'good neighbour' support scheme in the village which would perhaps formalise the existing support networks.

- ACTION 15** To compile a list of volunteers willing to collect medical prescriptions. (Also see ACTION 17)
- ACTION 16** To present a copy of the Action Plan to the local Police and establish a liaison link to discuss ongoing matters.
- ACTION 17** To consider organising a Good Neighbour Scheme and ask the St Mary's Parochial Church Council to formalise the existing village support network.

## **Retail Facilities**

Although there is evidence that people would like to support local shops, most are used to purchase 'last minute' items and generally people identify greater choice and cheaper goods as reasons for shopping outside the immediate area.

There is support for a village shop or community shop with 42% of respondents stating that they would use such a shop on a weekly basis.

The postal services were considered to be reasonable or good in relation to location of boxes, sizes of boxes and times of collections and the post office is a vital village asset offering a wide range of services.

**ACTION 18**            To explore the feasibility of establishing a village or community shop.

**ACTION 19**            To encourage the continued use of local retail services including the Post Office.