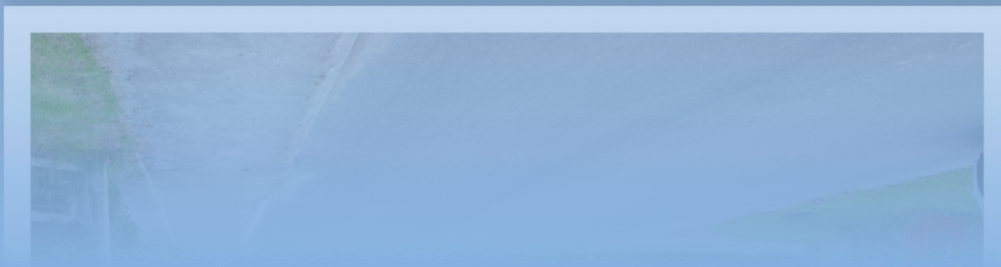


BERWICK ST JAMES

SURVEY REPORT 2012



Committee Members

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BERWICK ST JAMES SURVEY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to identify and record the findings of the survey, devised and produced earlier this year to capture the views of the residents of Berwick St James. The structure of the survey was to determine how the residents see the village at present, what they would like to see improved, and how they might like to see the village in the future. It focuses primarily on aspects of the village over which we may have some influence, both on a self-help basis and where appropriate, in conjunction with authorities that serve our community. As well as asking for direct replies to direct questions, the survey offered people the opportunity to put forward new ideas and suggestions that could for instance, improve general and individual security or enhance village life. The main survey was directed at village members aged 18 and over, and could be completed either individually or jointly as a household. The survey asked for numerical assessments, normally on a scale of 1 – 5, as well as written comments on aspects of the village to give us quantitative as well as qualitative data, and the results for the jointly completed returns were ‘weighted’ accordingly. The response rate was particularly high with just under 83% of the village population completing and returning the forms. Although a few of the responses were lighthearted and not of a serious nature, nearly all reflected a wide spectrum of opinions and concerns, held by the villagers to a lesser or greater degree. Furthermore, as we had hoped, most of the returns reflected a range of suggestions and ideas, many of which were excellent and deserve further examination. A separate and shorter Young Person’s Survey was also distributed to those aged between 11 and 17 to assess their views. (see Appendix A – Young People’s Survey Report).

A presentation will be arranged in early September before the next Village Meeting on 13 September to go through the findings of the Survey and gather feedback on this report. The aim will be to prioritise those actions and projects that the village believe are desired or necessary, and identify individuals or groups who are prepared to take on the responsibility of managing them.

The report is divided into 10 sections.

1. Brief Description & Demography

2. Amenities & Services

3. Village Information

4. Village Meetings

5. Safety, Security & Welfare

6. Village Environment

7. Areas of Expertise

8. Community Fund

9. Public Services and Amenities

10. Future Outlook for Berwick

BRIEF DESCRIPTION & DEMOGRAPHY

Berwick St James is a small village of 73 houses in total, and according to the most recent census, has a current population of 161 adults and children. Out of this number, 138 are adults of 18 and over. Age groups have been divided into 6 categories; 0-10, 11-17, 18-39, 40-64, 65-79 and 80+. Demographically, the highest

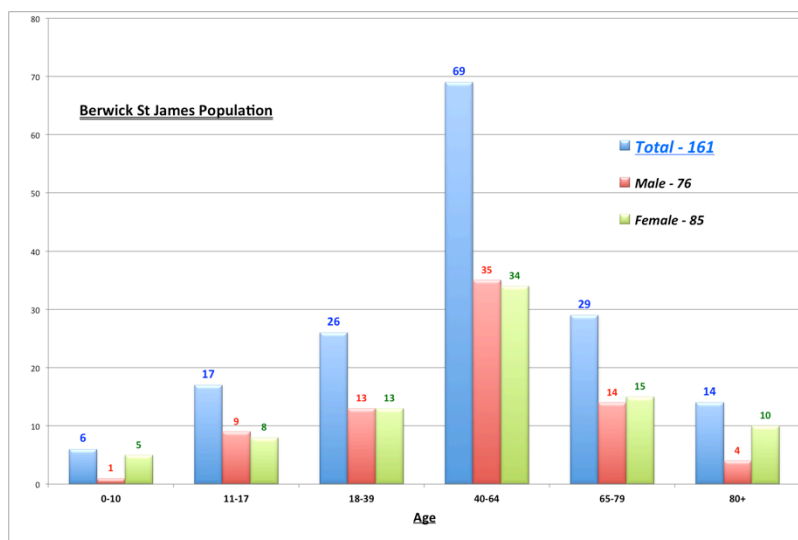


Fig - 1

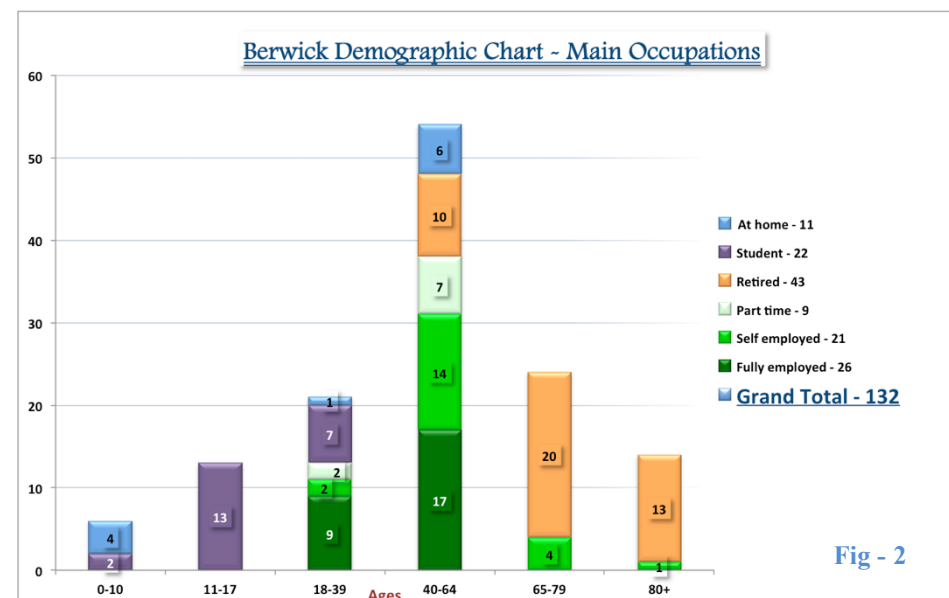
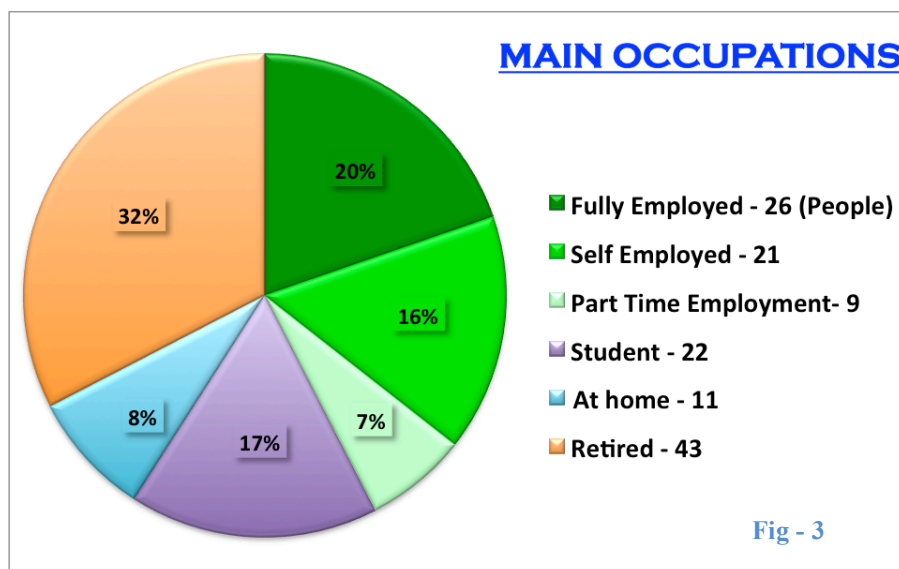


Fig - 2

percentage (43%) is aged between 40 and 64, and for those aged between 11 and 79 the spread of male and female is similar. For the Survey, 113 adults, or 82% of the village adult population responded. As well as indicating a healthy interest in the community in general by the villagers themselves, this high percentage rate ensures that the demographic curve of the respondents is

almost identical to the curve for the total village, as shown in Fig – 1 & 2. The pie graph in Fig – 3 illustrates the same six Main Occupations as indicated in Fig – 2 but in a different format, and shows more clearly the breakdown of the respondents' occupations as a percentage of the whole.



AMENITIES & SERVICES

Fourteen amenities or services were put forward for assessment in terms of value and usage by the village as follows. Percentage figures given are of those who answered the question. Gradings of 4 & 5 (most valued or most used) and 1 & 2 (least valued or least used) are grouped together. Of all of these, the Parish Magazine and The Boot Inn were the most valued and the Children's Play Area and Cricket Club the least. The assumption is that the low scores for the Children's Play Area probably stems from the fact that there are relatively few children below the age of 10 in Berwick, and the area itself is some distance uphill from the centre of the

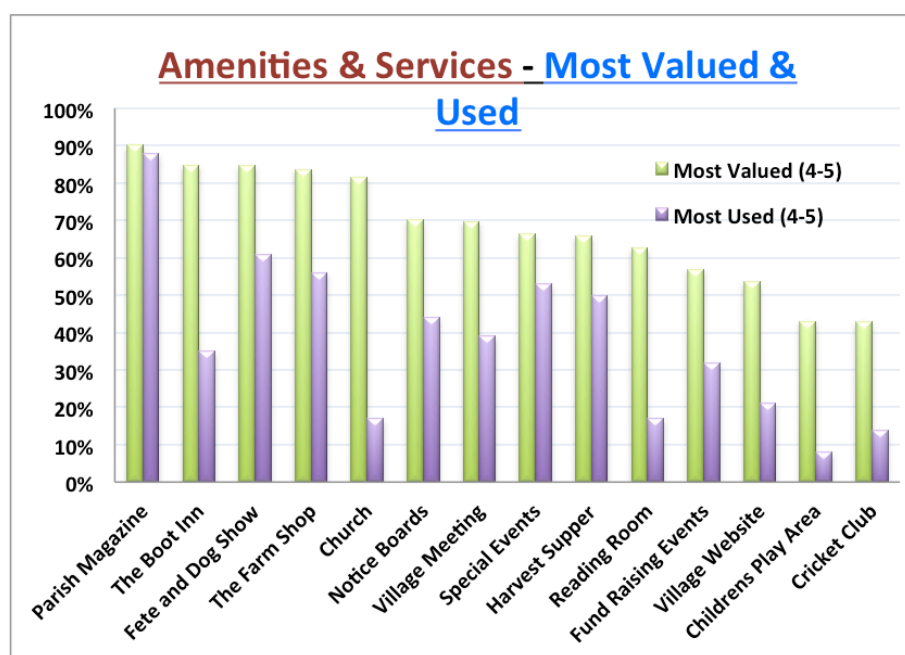


Fig - 4

village. The Cricket Club is also relatively remote (adjacent to the Play Area) and few villagers are actively involved. Several of the comments voiced the idea of organising more community activities to look after the buildings that belong to the village, such as the Church and Reading Room. However, the renovation of the latter has been

organised recently by the Reading Room Committee with the assistance of grants from the Council and the Lottery Fund and it is expected that the room will be used for a wider variety of activities in the future. Furthermore, considerable work is currently being carried out by the villagers themselves, irrespective of any interest in the game itself, to repair and restore the cricket pavilion which was in a poor state. In general, many of those who commented expressed a desire to become more involved in village activities, but were restricted by age or work commitments. The survey results indicated that the Farm Shop provided a valuable service but would be used more often if it carried a greater range of stock. The church, not used on a regular basis by most, was highly valued by the village, although a small minority stated that the building could be used for activities other than purely religious functions, such as children's playgroups and village meetings. Some people proposed that a church cleaning / clearing day could be arranged on a quarterly basis when everyone from the village could be invited to give a few hours to help clean inside the church or work in the churchyard. Finally, as there are presently few young people in the village under the age of 18 (23), a desire was expressed to widen the catchment area to increase community cohesion (a Till Valley Group was suggested) to provide a good foundation for a youth club and /or Saturday club for local children.

VILLAGE INFORMATION

In order to determine the preferred and most frequently used types of communication for keeping abreast of village events and affairs, the survey asked residents to grade 10 methods currently used. They were also asked which method they use at present and which would they prefer to use in the future. The Parish Magazine

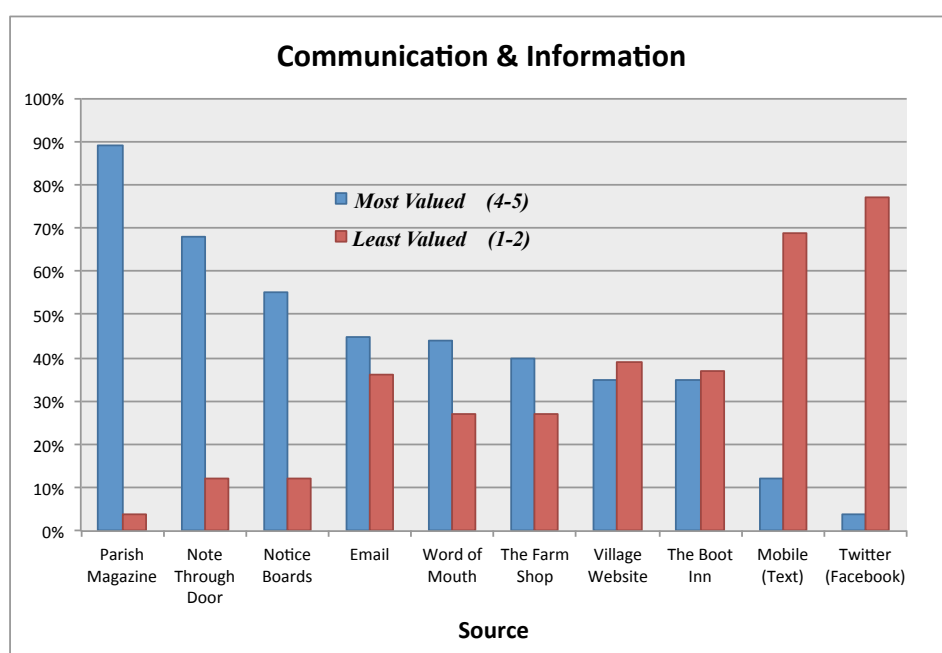


Fig - 5

was universally regarded as the most valued, the most used currently, and the most preferred for future use. Electronic means, such as mobile text messages and through Twitter / Facebook were the least favoured, although information via email was seen as more popular for future use than at present. Some concern was expressed that the village website and Social Media sites such as Facebook and Twitter could become forums for

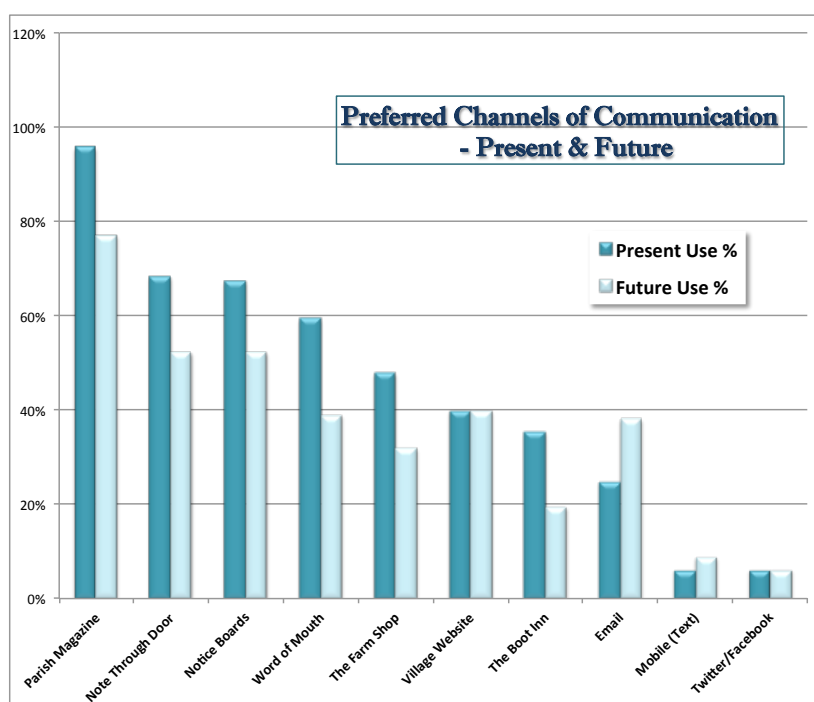


Fig - 6

unpleasant social comments if not strictly controlled. On a positive note, it was suggested that the Village Website could have an informal section where residents could provide details of recommended local businesses and individual contractors.

VILLAGE MEETINGS

The general running of the village is carried out at Village Meetings, where the residents of Berwick can voice their opinions and vote, as opposed to Parish Councils for larger settlements where the administration is carried out by a body of elected members. Compared to similarly

sized villages that hold Village Meetings, the number of villagers who are regularly present at Village Meetings in Berwick is relatively high, with some 25% of the adults responding to the survey able and willing to come to the meetings. However, for

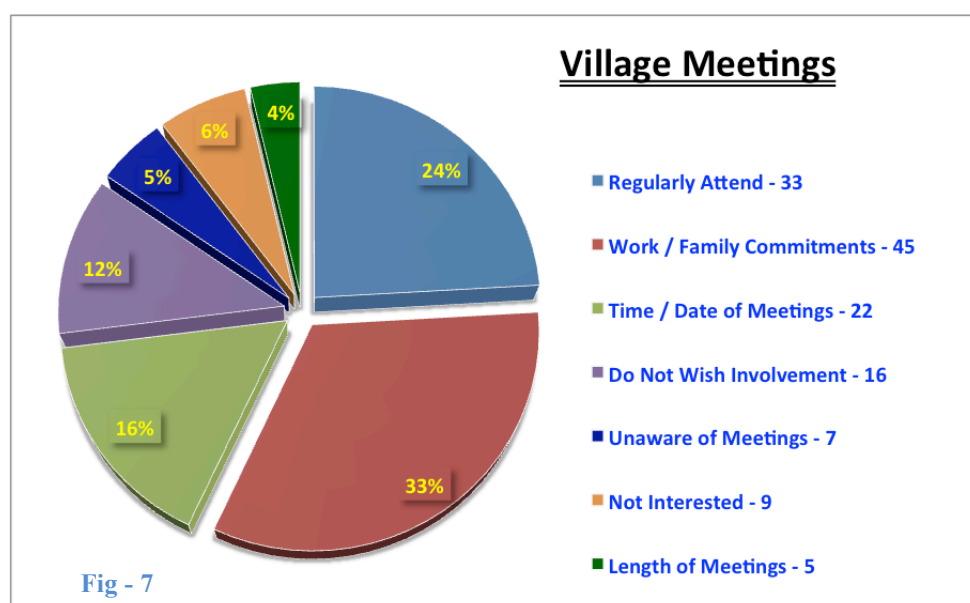
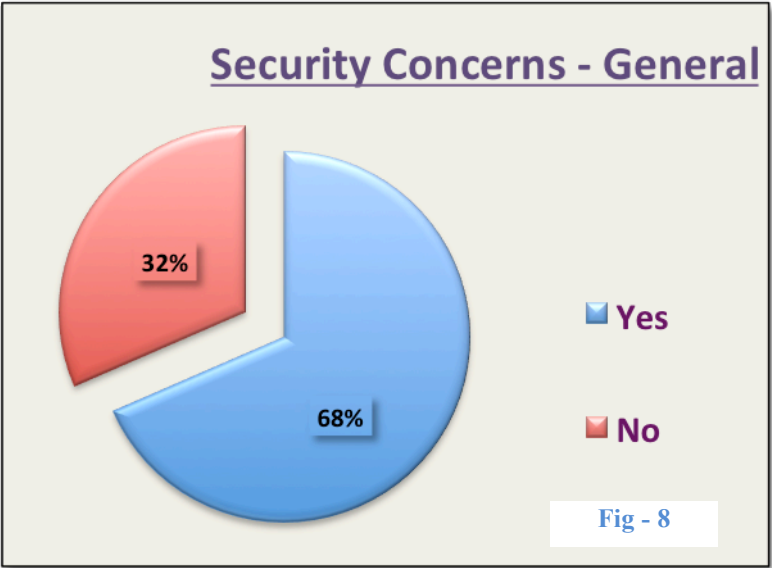


Fig - 7

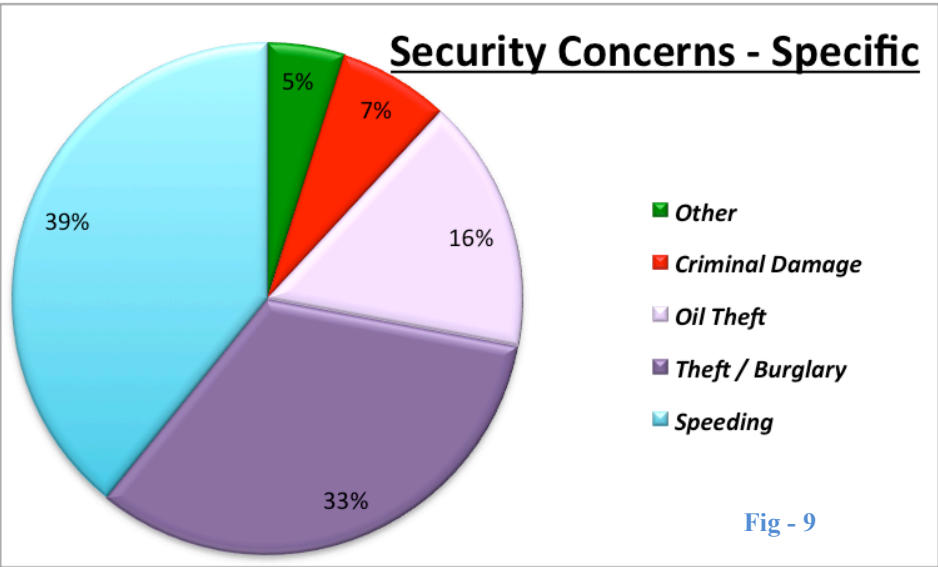
those who do not or cannot attend, a section was included in the survey form to note the various reasons for non-attendance. For 45 adults (34%), the reason for non-attendance was due to work or family commitments, and a further 22 (17%) due to the date or timings of the scheduled meetings. The various comments made suggested that those who were employed or who had young children were unable to make a start time of 6 o'clock, and suggested that the start of the meeting should be put back 1 -1 ½ hrs. However several of the elder residents were content with the present start time of 6pm, but felt that the meetings are too lengthy. It was also suggested that no more than four Village Meetings should be planned per year (apart from separate ad-hoc and Planning Meetings), with dates published well in advance.

SAFETY, SECURITY & WELFARE.

This section raised the greatest number of comments and concerns. Some 61% of the returned survey reports indicated a significant degree of concern about security within Berwick, several indicating that over the past few years, the respondent's own property had been the target of some form of theft or criminal damage.



The double theft of lead from the church roof in 2010 is assumed to have created the greatest damage and been the most expensive to replace, and has no doubt



heightened the awareness of the residents to this growing problem. However, it is of interest to note that not one person complained on the survey returns of either excess noise or anti-social behaviour, two problems that are common elsewhere.

The concerns of the village regarding safety & security were addressed under the headings of Speeding, Theft / Burglary, Oil Theft and Criminal Damage. Aspects not falling within these headings were listed as ‘Other’ (e.g. trespassing). If the combination of data for General Theft / Burglary (33%) and the Theft of Oil from domestic storage tanks (16%) are combined, almost 50% of the respondents cited theft as their major concern.

Neighbourhood Watch. A Neighbourhood Watch system is in place in Berwick, although many people were unaware of its existence in the village. Some 25% of the village population who currently did not belong to the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, would be interested in joining and a significant number overall indicated that the system needed some improvement. It was suggested that a small core of residents in the village should hold the telephone numbers of keyholders for other houses, who could be called when house alarms operated. Another

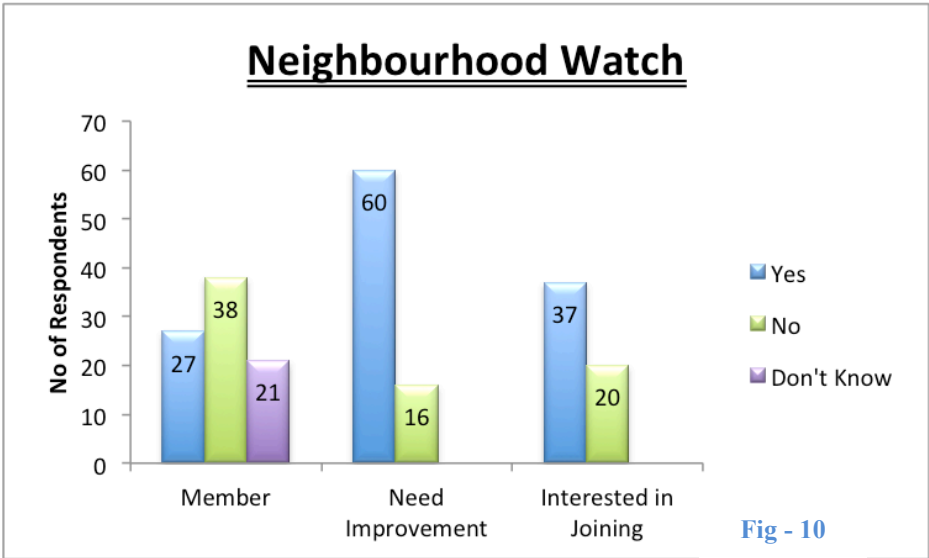


Fig - 10

suggestion was for cameras to be strategically positioned on the High Street to monitor the road. It was explained that the system was surprisingly cheap and effective both by day & night (without street lighting), and suggested that the cost of the systems should be equally

shared by the owners of the houses and the village overall.

Vehicle Speeding. Speeding through the village was also a major worry for many residents, with 39% of the respondents regarding it as a significant problem. The majority of the houses in Berwick lie along the main road through the village,



which connects the A303 and the A36 and domestic, farm, and ‘through’ traffic all contribute to the speeding problem. There were several suggestions and ideas voiced, both to curb the excess speed of some vehicles going through Berwick and to improve the general security in and around the village. An area of pink tarmac and lines across the road to emphasise the speed restriction points (30mph) at either end of the village was suggested. Another proposal was for white ‘gates’ on either side of the road at the 30mph speed limit points as shown in the picture to remind people they are entering a village. A number of other villages have adopted this idea, which has proved to be fairly effective.

Assistance. Although there were several responses from people who offered to help, there were only two responses that indicated that physical assistance was required, and then only on an occasional basis. However, several people requested assistance and advice on computer operation.

VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT

In this era of rapidly expanding villages and towns, people were asked to grade from 1 to 5 how they valued certain man-made and natural aspects of Berwick. Historic and Heritage Buildings, and The Village Street and Other Buildings were the 2 man-made subjects, and The River Till, Open Spaces and Natural Habitat, and Wildlife were the 3 natural aspects. With only one or two exceptions, all respondents highly valued all five of the aspects given. Although there were one or two who viewed the Reading Room as expensive to run, unsuitable for certain activities and generally surplus to village requirements, the significant majority (57%) were strongly in favour of the village remaining as it presently is, with many of those who have bought properties, deciding to live in Berwick St James mainly because of its small size, location and environmental attractiveness. However, most of the comments received under this topic referred to future development, which will be dealt with later in the report under ‘Future Outlook for Berwick’.

There was some interest in water & energy reduction. An offer was made to produce a strategy to target the collective reduction in the carbon footprint of the village. Others were concerned about the amount of water extraction by the Wessex Water Authority carried out in the Salisbury Plain area, and on how it affects water levels in the river Till. Collective domestic

fuel oil purchase was suggested to reduce costs.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE & ORGANISED ACTIVITIES

The survey asked if those who had a current area of expertise would be willing to volunteer to teach or help others within that particular field. A raft of personal expertise was offered, from belly dancing and fly tying, carpentry and basic mechanics, through to First Aid and various forms and levels of I.T. instruction and

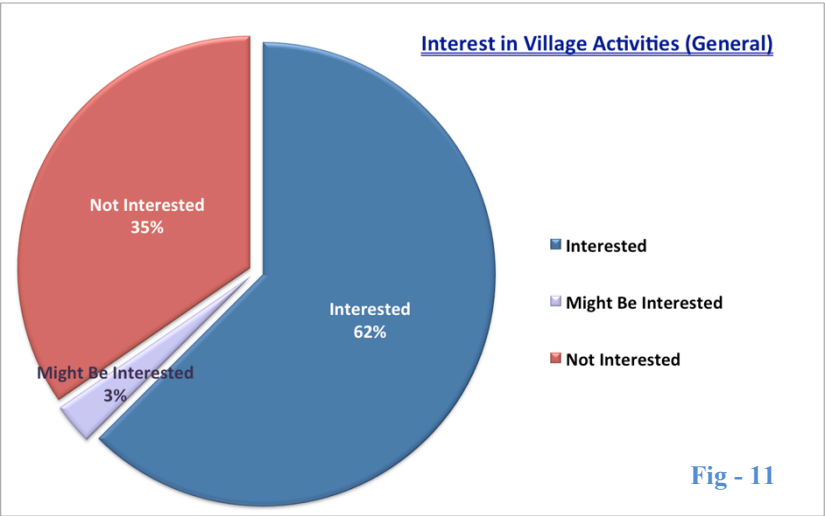


Fig - 11

assistance. (see Annex A). The survey went on to ask whether people were interested in various activities that could be held in the village, what specific activities would interest them, and whether they would be willing to help organise them. Just under two thirds of the responses received (62%) indicated that they would be interested in attending a selection of arranged activities, half of which were willing to be involved in the organisation of them (Fig- 11). However, of these a significant percentage (44%) preferred not to commit themselves, indicating that for the relevant event they might wish to be involved in the organisation (Fig- 12)

Activities. Some 20 activities were suggested, the most popular of which was ‘Film Nights’, with 42 people (27% of returns) in favour of starting up a regular film night, although for this event, not

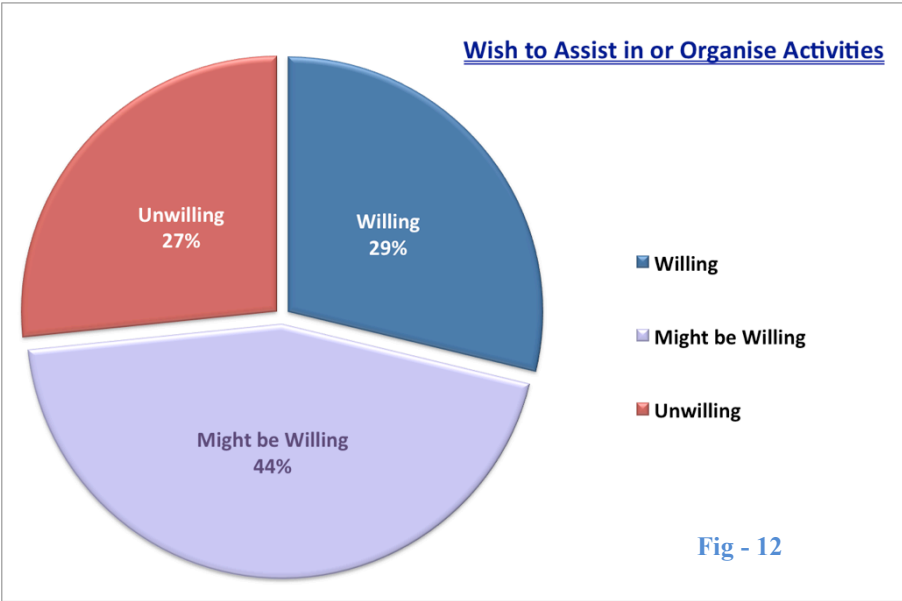
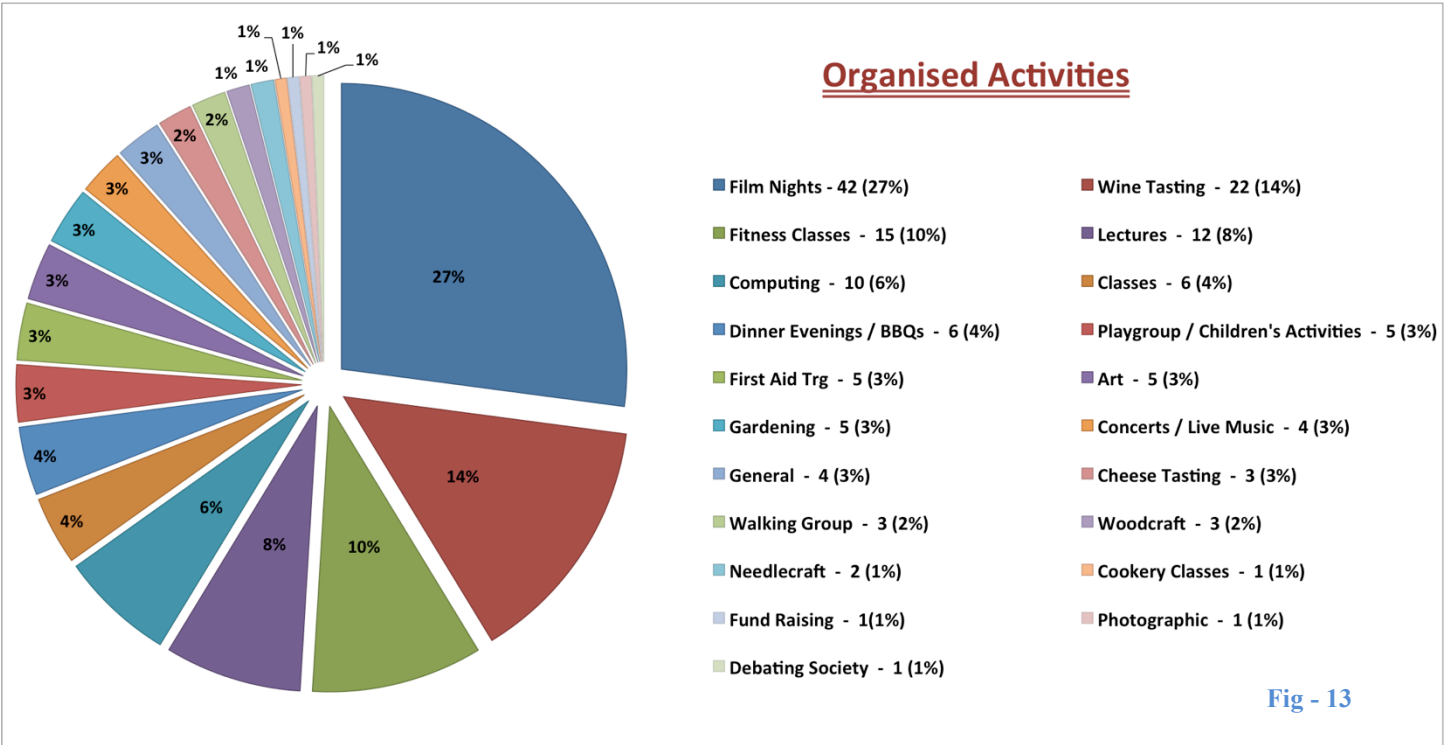


Fig - 12

everyone regarded the Reading Room as the most suitable and appropriate venue. Wine Tasting was also a popular suggestion, with Fitness Classes, Lectures and Computer tuition all

having around a dozen people interested in attending such activities. Fig - 13 gives the full breakdown of the activities that were proposed, together with the number of people who suggested them.

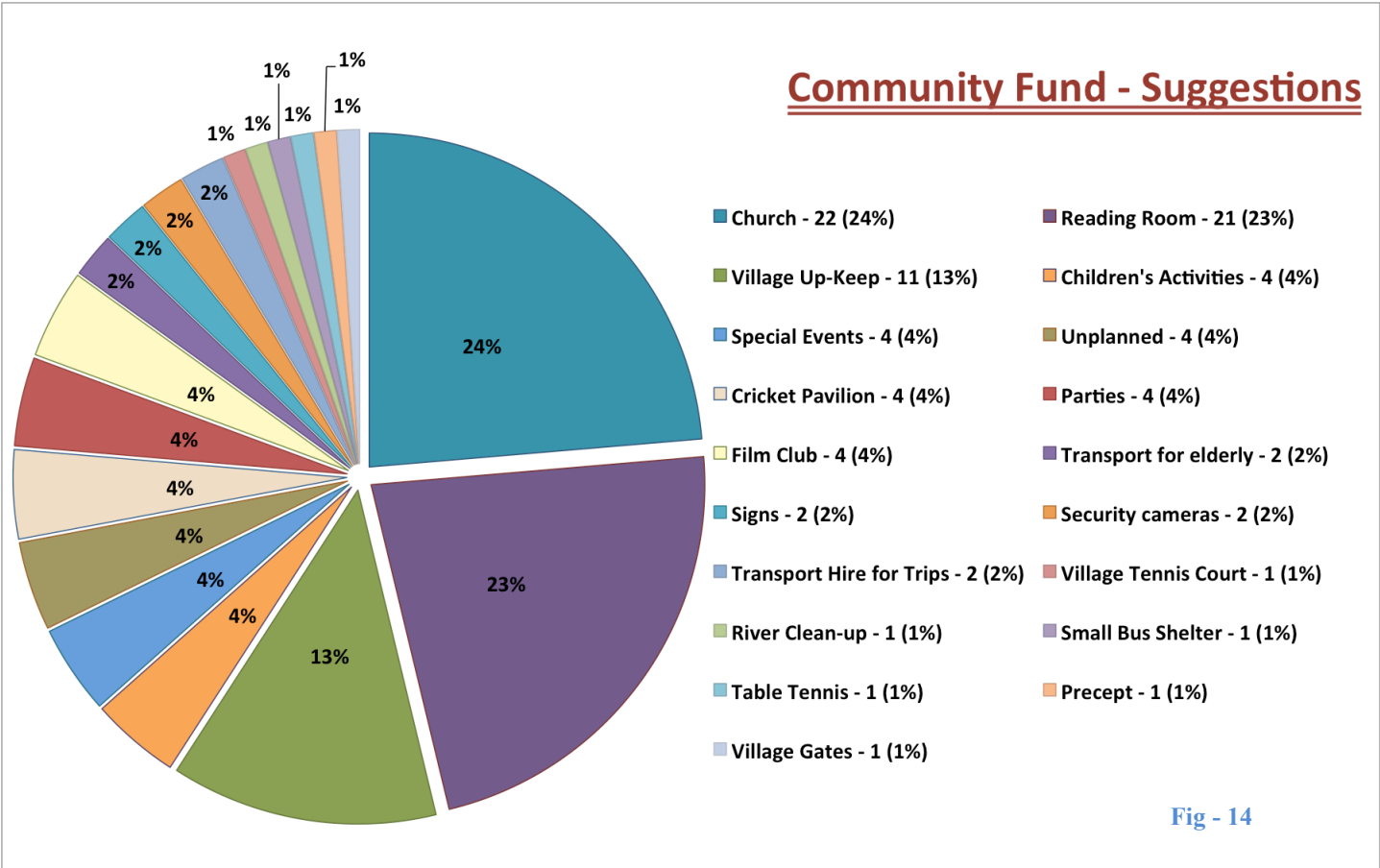


COMMUNITY FUND

The organisers of the 2008 village fete and dog show suggested to the Village Meeting that a village marquee and plastic ducks should be purchased and that the rental from the marquee should be placed in a separate fund. For the 2009 Fete and Dog show the village meeting decided that a percentage of the profit from the event would be placed in what became known as the Community Fund for whatever purpose the village decided at a village meeting. At around this time discussions took place concerning the possible move of the village playground to a more accessible location and the Pumpkin Runs were set up in 2009 and 2010 with the primary aim of raising funds for this project, should it come to fruition. However the move of the playground did not happen. To date monies have been voted by the village meeting to assist the refurbishment of the Village War Memorial (£377), for the church (£1200), and for the Reading Room (£500). It also underwrote the funding of the Jubilee party. The state of the fund on 1st August 2012 was approximately £2700.

The major concern in general was how the money in this fund now and in the future should be

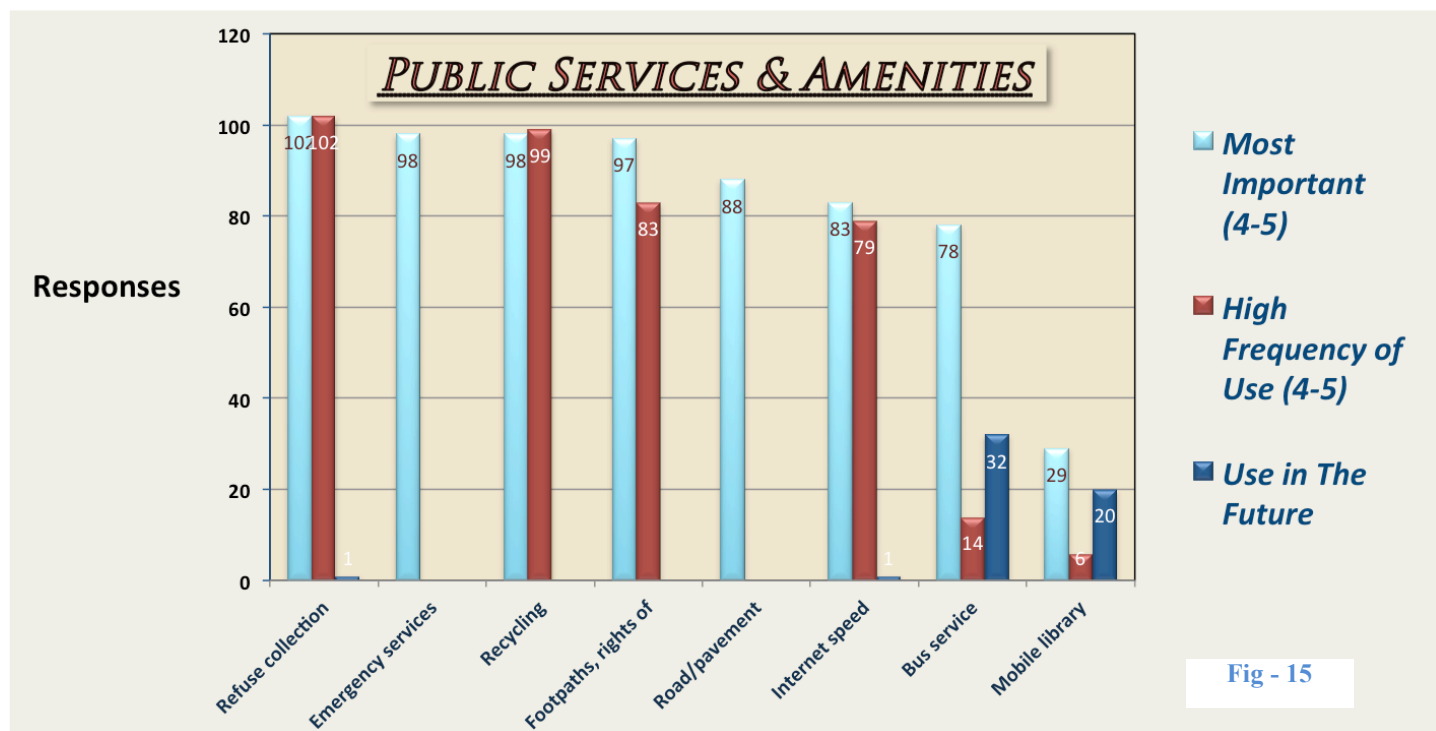
spent. The survey asked for suggestions and a number of different ideas were put forward, some respondents submitting more than one. Just under half of the suggestions received (47%) indicated a desire for the funds to go to the church or Reading Room, or both (Fig – 14). The next most popular suggestion was for the money to be spent on the General Enhancement of the Village (13%), followed by Children’s Activities, Special Events, Social Functions and Organised Activities. There were several original ideas, such as financial assistance for security cameras, an additional bus shelter opposite The Boot and village ‘gates’ (see Safety, Security & Welfare section).



PUBLIC SERVICES & AMENITIES

The residents were asked to grade from 1 to 5 the importance to the individual a selection of Public Services and Amenities and how often did they use them. They were also asked if they did not at present use them, did they consider that they might use any of these services in the future. The graph itself reflects the scores attributed to the various services that are 4 or above (Fig –15). As expected from the 113 adult responses received, about 90% regarded Refuse

Collection and Recycling as highly important, both as services and frequency of usage. When the survey questionnaire was distributed, the change to the General Refuse collection from weekly to fortnightly was impending and did cause some concern. Since then the revised system has been implemented, but so far with no problems reported, the bi-weekly collection seems to be working. The Emergency Services and Road / Pavement Maintenance were similarly rated, but no Frequency of Use was requested on the questionnaire. The standard of Pavement & Road Maintenance was regarded by some as adequate at best and generally poor. Comments received indicated that the Council did not address the problem of weed prevention on pavements and road guttering, the roads were infrequently swept, and road drainage in 2 or 3 locations in the village was inadequate during periods of heavy rain. These are all problems that will need to be addressed in the future. Footpaths / Rights of Way in and around the village were generally viewed as high in importance and frequency of use. Maintenance of the styles and footpaths is frequently necessary, and to that effect, the ‘kissing gate’ on the road leading up to the A303 is in the process of being repaired.



In general in Berwick St James, the broadband speed is very slow, (in some houses below 1Mgb), and well below the national average. Just under 75% of the respondents highly rated the internet service in importance and frequency of use. However, the majority of the comments written in this section were directed at the poor internet speed in both reception and transmission.

The Bus Service was highly regarded as a service (69%) but relatively poorly used (12%). However, this latter percentage may be misleading, as those who have children who use the bus service might not have indicated this fact in their own individual survey returns. All the comments regarding this service were aimed mainly at the timing, as the service stops too early in the evening for many people to use it to return from work, and there is no service on Sundays. A higher proportion claimed they would use it if the bus service ran later in the evening. Furthermore, 28% of the respondents indicated that although they don't at present, they might use the service in the future.

Only 25% of the respondents regarded the Mobile Library as important and much less (5%) actually made regular use of it. Eighteen per cent said they might make use of the facility in the future. The Mobile Library's future is uncertain, as the Wiltshire Council see the service as a potential source for cutbacks.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR BERWICK

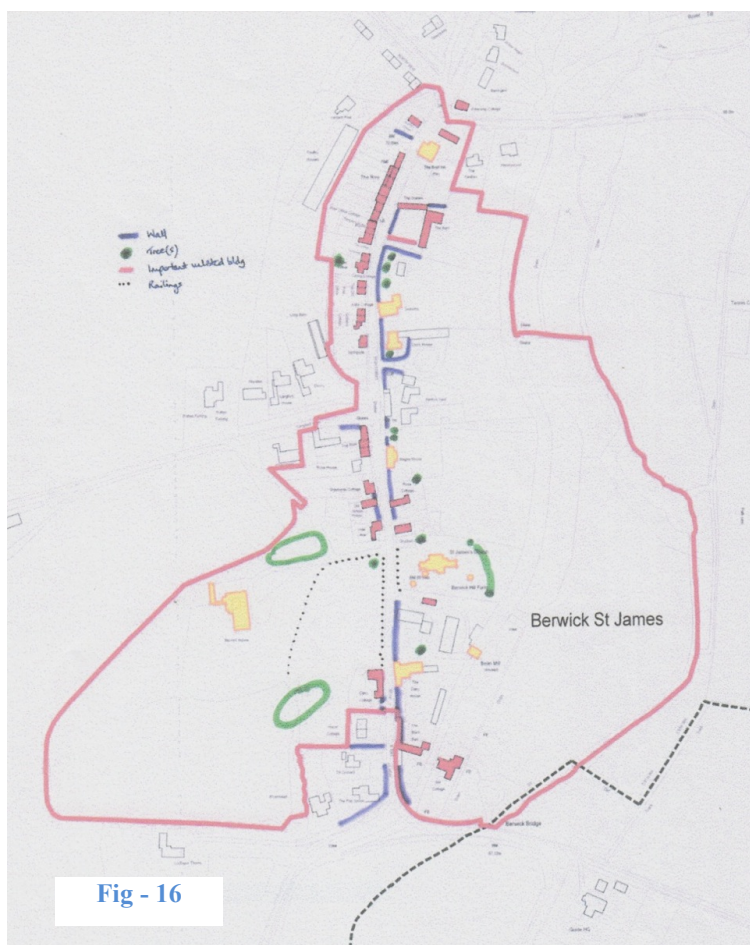


Fig - 16

Berwick St James is a small, very old Wiltshire village dating back before the Domesday Book was written in 1086, with farming origins that continue to this day. Unlike the vast majority of centres of population throughout England, both big and small, the size of this village has not changed significantly over several hundred years. Although a few new houses have been built in the late 20th and early 21st century in selected and individual plots, the total number of houses in Berwick (73) has remained very much the same, and the village has not changed significantly in size. The village lies within a Conservation Area (Fig –

16) and much of the river Till which runs alongside the village, is marked as a Site of Special

Scientific Interest (SSSI). Presently, almost exactly two thirds of the properties in the village are owner-occupied.

Under the Wiltshire Core Strategy program, the Wiltshire Council classes Berwick St James as a ‘Small Village’. Within this core strategy, the settlement boundaries for all small villages have been removed. However, before any development within any small village is approved, the following criteria imposed by the Council is to be met;

- a. The existing character and form of the village is respected
- b. The village is not elongated, or any development imposed on sensitive landscape areas
- c. Existing sporadic loose knit areas of development related to the village are not consolidated.

Future Development. The question was asked whether people wanted to see any sort of development in the village in the future, and if so, what sort of development. Of the 113 completed surveys returned, 64 of the respondents (57%) expressed the specific view that there should be no more

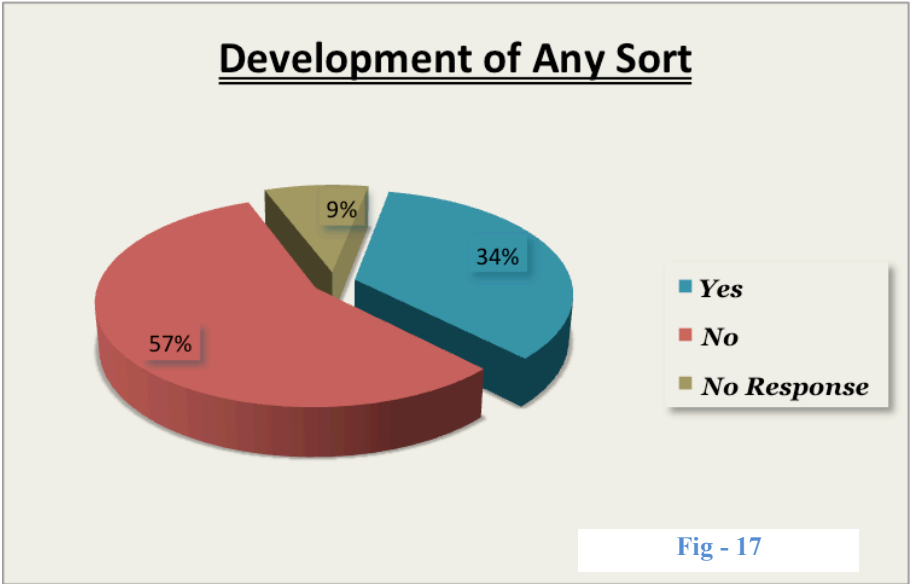


Fig - 17

development of any sort in Berwick, and the village to remain as it presently is (Fig –17).

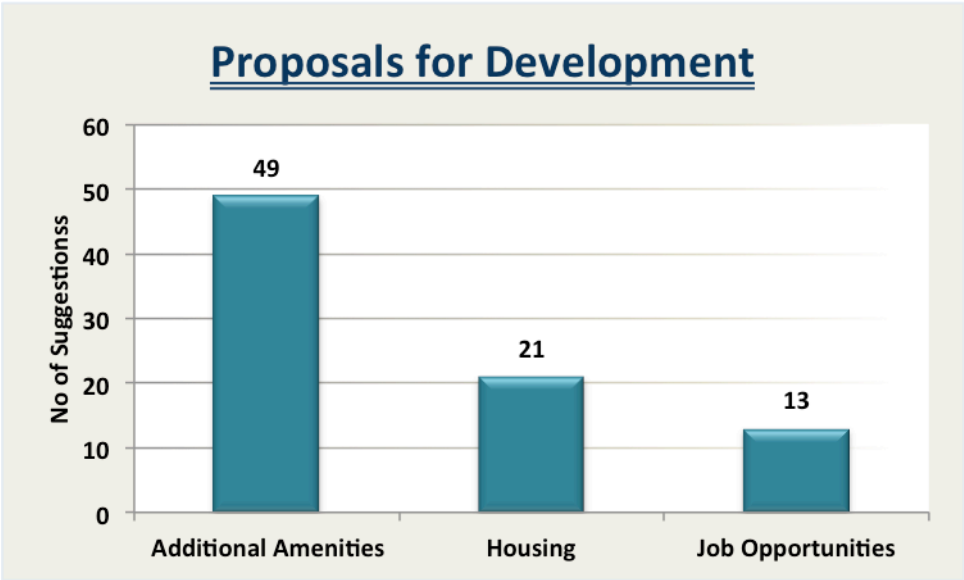
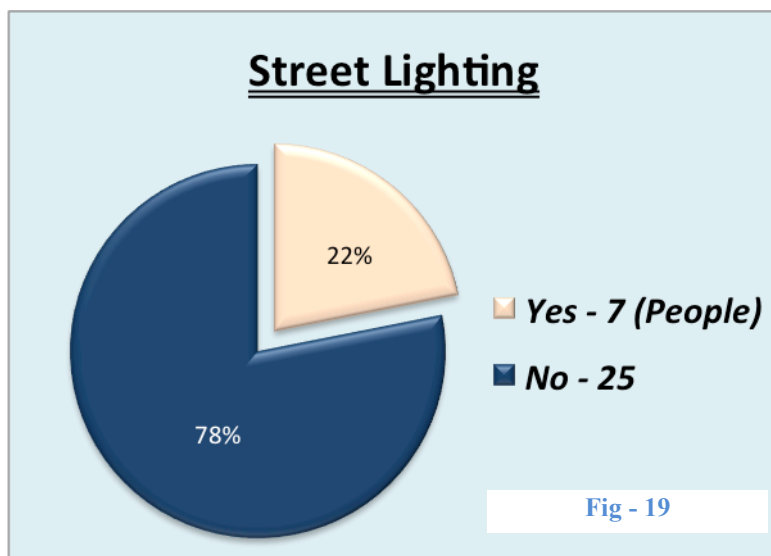


Fig - 18

With 9% of the returns leaving this question unanswered, the remaining 39 respondents (34%) wanted to see development in areas such as additional amenities, job opportunities and housing (Fig –18). Proposals for additional amenities covered a wide

spectrum of ideas that included suggestions to improve the usage of existing facilities such as the Reading Room and Farm Shop, and new ideas, such as a ‘Till Valley Youth Group’ for children and young people. Of the 21 respondents who would like to see some measure of village expansion, almost all of them qualified their comments by stating that any development should be limited (maximum of 4-5 houses), in-keeping with the character of the village, unobtrusively sited, and generally affordable for young people wishing to remain in the area. Some suggested that preference should be given to converting or expanding existing buildings, or using previously developed land where possible. Finally, a significant comment that appeared frequently in the Improvements, Changes or Additions part of the Future Outlook for Berwick section concerned street lighting, a subject that has been hotly debated in the past, but was not included as a subject in the survey questionnaire. Thirty two respondents (28%) made comments for or against the installation of street lighting, of which over 75% were against the idea (Fig - 19).



THE NEXT STEP

For those ideas that will require financial assistance from village funds or external sources, interested parties should get together to examine the costs and feasibility of the idea and be prepared to present their proposals at a Village Meeting to obtain the approval of the village. Existing and proposed systems such as Neighbourhood Watch and Speedwatch require volunteers to set up and organise them. There also was considerable interest in increasing the number and variety of activities in the Reading Room. Again, these ideas will only come to fruition if people are prepared to take on the responsibility of arranging and running them. After consultation with the village through the Village Meetings, the Village Chairman will liaise with Wiltshire Council to address the aspects that are the Council’s responsibility, such as road drainage, weed control, grass cutting and general maintenance, all of which were

commented on adversely in several of the returns. Those who require assistance with computers will be put in touch with others who may be able to help. The time and (hopefully) the length of Village Meetings will be put back by an hour and shortened respectively in line with several respondents' requests. Finally, for the next 10 years, it is understood that Wiltshire Council have no plans to start any housing development projects in Berwick St James. Berwick is classed as a 'Small' village with limited assets, and in line with their policy over the past few years, consideration by the Council will be given only for requests to expand existing properties or construct single or a very limited number of houses that are in keeping with this village.

CONCLUSION

The Purpose of the Village Survey was to gather in as many of the thoughts, ideas and concerns of the residents of Berwick St James as possible under specific headings and topics. For a small country village, the potential influence on policy decisions by national government and county council by a community of this size is obviously very small; however the major objective of the survey was to identify those aspects over which the residents wished to see a change (or otherwise), and take what action we can to address those aspects. The belief is that the results of this survey will give the village a mandate to tighten security, improve communication within the village, increase the diversity of activities and enhance the quality of service from the Council. Above all, the data received should give us all a better understanding of the preferences and requirements of the residents of this village as a whole.
