

EAST BOLDON FORUM; CONSULTATION EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE JUNE 2019

CONCLUSIONS

77 people completed the EBF June 2019 consultation event questionnaire and these conclusions focus on the 5 main question areas: 1. Community Wellbeing; 2. Local Economy; 3. Built & Historic Environment, 4. Transport & Movement; 5. Flooding & Sustainable Drainage.

The approach has been to treat each of the above areas as a separate entity, summarising the main responses to questions, concerns raised and where indicated, improvements or actions. A more detailed analysis and summary of each question area preceded and informed these conclusions and included additional individual responses, framed under emergent 'key headings', with the approximate number of responses noted at the side of each. As such these papers provide much greater depth and are addenda to conclusions.

It should be noted that respondents often provided more than 1 comment per question. Extracts of individual comments have been included in italics as further supporting evidence.

What is evident throughout the questionnaire is that the people of East Boldon are passionate about the place that they live in (evidenced in the statistics and responses). The message is clear, they want to be involved in and so influence any potential developments, but they also highlight that current issues facing the village, in particular traffic congestion and parking problems, should be tackled now and not just be a part of future planning policies. Above all they want to retain the nature, character and distinctiveness of their village by protecting and enhancing their greatest assets in both the natural and built environments. ***'The village is a great place to live. Don't spoil it'.***

1. COMMUNITY WELLBEING

The main consensus of opinion (largest proportion of YES responses) relates to village life - **'I feel happy and part of village life and the community'** (100%), the most prominent reason, simply put is, *'the village feel'*, being part of a warm, friendly and welcoming village community. People are also **passionate about the retention of the schools**, especially the junior school and its educational purpose (95% & 94% respectively), which is seen to be an essential aspect of village life and as such a highly valued community asset. *'No schools...no village'*. Central to its prominence is its location and close proximity to another 'green' village asset, Grange Park. Some concerns were raised about new developments and perceived negative impact on the village *'Less development as it's eating up the resources which made EB a unique place to live'* and traffic - speed, volume, safety and parking. Suggested actions include; a village notice board; more events to bring the community together; a community area and parking improvements around Station Road.

There was less consensus in the other 3 questions, particularly in relation to recreation and sporting opportunities, whilst just over half (55%) stated YES, there are plenty of opportunities for all ages and abilities, many of the responses do not concur that there are plenty, nor enough for all age groups, in particular for the elderly, disabled and youth/teens. Access, including transport for the former two and a dedicated space for the latter were suggested improvements.

69% agree that there is adequate provision for their family's health needs, citing in particular (and highly rating) the local pharmacy and 'good' doctors, although there are some concerns about the additional pressure to facilities that new housing might bring. The main concern is difficulty in accessing the doctor's surgery, particularly for the elderly, due to its relocation to Boldon Colliery, a suggestion is for the set up a part time or 'travelling' surgery.

Many people (74%) agree that there are enough opportunities to develop spiritual wellbeing within the 3 existing EB churches and other community groups, although most comments relate to religious aspects. The main concern is falling church congregations, some suggestions for improvement are the introduction of a multi-faith centre, enhancement to the front of St. George's church to make it more appealing, better usage of church halls to bring the village together and greater co-ordination/wider advertising of what is available in the village.

2. LOCAL ECONOMY

Consensus of opinion (largest proportion of YES responses) relates to the **use of shops or services in East Boldon** (100%). 62% feel there is no problem in accessing the shops, but 28 responses cite parking as having a major negative impact, in particular due to the lack of parking places and effect of long stay metro users. *“Since I live close to the Station Road shops there is no problem in accessing these, however parking is a nightmare on our road, this is a universal problem for residents as well as shops.”*

Some responses state there is a good range and balance of shops, more comment that there are too many of a particular type, especially hairdressers, but the main responses highlight the desire for more independent shops that sell fresh produce for people to be able to ‘shop local’, in particular a green grocers and bakery.

The majority of respondents (97%) agree that Station Terrace shops are an asset and should be safeguarded and over half (58%) agree that other shops/premises should be protected, especially those on Front Street and other (unspecified) small businesses. The main reason is that they fulfil a community need, *‘they are a place to meet and exchange views and support the elderly’*, the Post Office is specifically mentioned.

Whilst a large proportion of respondents (73%) agree that Cleadon Lane Industrial Estate should be retained in whole or part for employment purposes, the majority (82%) agree that land should be used for other functions if it can't be re-let for employment purposes. Over half the additional responses flag the use of brown field sites such as O'Brien's, for residential purposes (in order to protect the green belt), or use as a car park, although a cautionary note is added that providing additional places may attract more people to park. Some responses relate to the relocation of noisy businesses that rely on lorries to other premises outside the village.

3. BUILT & HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The main consensus of opinion (largest proportion of YES responses) **relates to the wishes and involvement of residents in the process of master planning**, 94% agree that where a large development is planned of more than 10 units, the principles set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and the wishes of the residents should be met through a process of master planning and community involvement. Followed by - 92% agreement that housing should be sensitive to the architectural character of East Boldon, reflect the materials & styles, be of the highest design quality, visually attractive and appropriate to character and local distinctiveness of the area.

A large proportion (87%) also agree that large scale development should be divided into smaller character areas to encourage more distinctive, diverse and individual design solutions.

The additional comments mainly reaffirm the above, particularly reinforcing that any new development must reflect and enhance the character of and styles in the village. *‘The essence of the village needs to be retained by sympathetic new housing.’ ‘East Boldon is historically of mixed size and design and this is one of its qualities.’* Also, that it should include a mix of affordable houses and that landscaping should be part of the process. *‘New housing must be sympathetically designed with high quality landscaping, green spaces, footpaths, cycleways’.*

There is some reference to land usage, all against use of the green belt for any housing *‘there is no need for any new housing in East Boldon’.*

44% provided responses to the question about any improvement/enhancement or additional protection of any sites needed. The majority of comments fall under a heading ‘Protect/Enhance’ and relate to all green spaces/green belt/woodlands and areas supporting wild life several *‘the green environment is vital for mental health and wellbeing’- ‘protect the green belt and build only on existing brownfield sites.’* There are 17 specific green spaces named for special protection and enhancement including the BC25B, the Golf Club course, bridleways, cycle paths and footpaths. Several responses note that the frontage of St. George's Church, including the fence, is unkempt, looks derelict and detracts from the area.

A couple of 'Concerns' relate to fly tipping in green lanes and lack of maintenance of pavements and gutters which present a trip hazard. Seven individual 'Eyesores' are identified namely - empty industrial sites; dilapidated house next to Stadium garage; certain shops fronts and signage; BT telephone exchange extension; United Reform Church extension; former Suzuki Garage (could be re-purposed as extra Metro car park) and Army camp graffiti. (The unkempt frontage of St. George's has been included under the 'Protect and Enhance heading).

4. TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

There is full consensus 99% (1 nil response) that **public transport and the implications of traffic congestion, noise & air quality etc should be taken into account when considering new development proposals.**

This question attracted strong comments about the current high levels of concern about road safety, levels of traffic and the negative impact that this is having on the village and in relation to this impact on health, wellbeing and safety. *'Traffic and parking are horrific now'. 'Pollution and congestion are a blight on all of our lives.* The need to protect the environment is flagged as a way to help combat increased pollution. Parking is also seen to have a detrimental effect on the village, requires new arrangements and a new metro station. Current transport links need to be improved via an enhanced bus service, with direct links to Newcastle and South Shields, also by the provision of a village 'metro' shuttle bus. Infra-structure should be considered alongside any new development and be a major consideration in determining housing numbers. *'The current infra-structure is already under massive pressure - road noise, volume and speed of traffic, air quality, light pollution, parking are all at crisis point. Additional housing will only add to these problems'.*

Similarly, there is full consensus (99%,1% nil response), that the Forum should seek to ensure that road safety issues are addressed as part of new development proposals. Although the number of responses was limited (25%) a concern relates to the need for safe crossing places. The main measures for improvements include: the introduction of road restrictions (20 MPH speed limit and speed bumps) and time limited parking for non-residents. *'The village is already struggling with traffic and there have been many accidents'.* A whole scale traffic survey and review is needed.

96% agree that to help reduce the reliance on cars etc and improve leisure opportunities, use of bridleways, cycle paths and footpaths should be protected, improved and extended. To encourage greater use the 'ways' need: better maintenance and improved accessibility for all; to be built into new housing plans and linked to existing routes; the promotion and advertising of routes (e.g. via notice boards); better signage.

66% agree that the Forum should press the case for the Metro systems extension to the new IAMP and Nissan site, the main reasons for this are to use public transport to reduce traffic and pollution and improvement of employment opportunities for locals. However there is also resistance, responses state: there is a need to improve the current public transport system and metro parking first before any extension is made; that there should be links to other destinations; 'what is the point?' – it has nothing to do with east Boldon...it depends on the unknown success of IMA/Nissan.

5. FLOODING & SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE

There is 100% agreement that any **development should be subject to strict controls** which ensure that watercourses and the underlying ground water conditions are not adversely affected, and appropriate flood risk assessments are undertaken. 36% agree that they have been affected by flooding, or are aware of flooding issues within the Forum, responses highlight the main areas as South Lane, South Lane fields and Moor Lane. Other issues are blocked drains outside houses (e.g. Station Road, Beckenham and Natley Avenues) and flooded gardens. Regular maintenance of drains, clearing debris was suggested as a potential solution to the issue of drainage. Two further concerns are that the impact of climate change and predicted higher rainfall will require more stringent flood risk assessment measures and risk to the 'Burn' if housing is allowed in the area. 2 responses note that new building could help solve drainage issues as was the case at 'The Willows'.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

27% provided additional responses, mainly comments that largely reflect those made earlier in the questionnaire including: retention of the greenbelt, maintaining the character of the village, parking problems (especially near the metro) and impact of new housing on infra-structure. Some respondents are appreciative of an active EBNF and the time and commitment given. *'An active forum essential to retain the character of the village'*. A new suggestion is that EBNF should form the basis of a single community group for all other interested groups.