

Community Plan 2024

For the villages of Northington, Swarraton and Totford

Introduction

In 2013, Northington Parish Council conducted a survey on a number of key local topics such as broadband, housing, land use, parish amenities, footpaths, roads etc. The results were collated and written up in a Parish Plan, representing the views of residents of our three villages. The original document can be found on our website <http://northingtonparishcouncil.uk/parish-plan/>. It was also published, alongside other similar plans, on the City Council website.

More than a decade has passed since the original plan was written, and in 2024 the Parish Council has conducted a similar exercise in order to compare the results over time. Such documents are now called Community Plans and Winchester City Council describes them as follows:

A Community Plan:

- identifies local problems and opportunities
- sets out an achievable and long term vision for the future
- prepares a plan of action to achieve this vision

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/community/community-plans/>

Methodology

Two Parish Councillors undertook to design the consultation and draft an online Jotform questionnaire. The questions were based on the findings of the 2013 Parish Plan and revisited the eight key areas of interest, giving respondents an opportunity firstly, to assess their relevance today (ie “still relevant”, “somewhat relevant” or “not at all relevant”) and secondly, to add a longer comment if they wished. The consultation was sent out online in May 2024 and received a 30% response rate.

Proposed Timeframe

- March 2024 Launch Consultation ✓
- April/May Conduct Survey ✓
- Summer 2024 Results to be collated ✓
- Autumn 2024 NPC to analyse and prepare results ✓
- December 2024 Publish findings ✓

Parish Overview

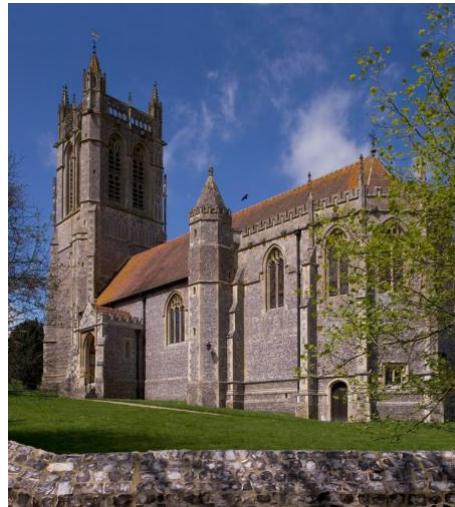
Northington, Swarraton and Totford are situated at the southern end of the Candover Valley. According to the 2021 census, there is a population of 255 living in 96 dwellings. Most of the residents of Northington are clustered in an area between the church and the village hall. The main population of Swarraton lies on either side of the B3046 and there are additional groups of houses in other locations such as Northington Down, Newhouse Farm and Grange Park.

The area of the Parish is extensive – about 3.5 miles by 2 miles. Working practices in the parish have changed slightly since 2013. Following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2022, working from home has become more widely accepted, however a number continue to commute to surrounding urban areas and London by car and train. The housing stock has not increased greatly for about 40 years though some houses have been rebuilt on existing plots and a number have been extended.

Northington has a Grade II* listed church and a village hall, which is used for various village activities, private events and a new nursery school. There is a public house at Totford and local commercial enterprises include The Grange Festival, small businesses and farms.



The Village Hall



The Church



The Grange

Although the more traditional village lifestyle has disappeared, there remains a strong community spirit as was demonstrated during the pandemic. Overall attendance of village events has dropped somewhat in the last decade but they still remain popular at certain times of year and the church has recently been used very successfully as a concert venue. Demographically the population remains varied with a mixture of retirees, empty nesters and families with young children. It is clear that the majority of residents enjoy their life in the village and see no reason for any major changes in the future.

Map of the civic parish of Northington, Swarraton and Totford



Consultation Findings

Key areas of interest	Our 2024 findings	NPC Current Position
<p>Protection of Important Buildings</p> <p>Is the protection of important buildings still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 97% Rank 1/8 Still/somewhat relevant 100%</p>	<p>Findings of the 2024 consultation show that there is still strong support amongst respondents for the preservation of our important buildings. The “significant national importance” of St John’s Church and The Grange is mentioned, as is our “civic responsibility” to protect these “vital” assets. The Village Hall, the Grange and the Church are all mentioned a number of times as is the War Memorial in the Church carpark and The Grange Festival (no longer Grange Park Opera). “Relevance”, “value” and “community engagement” are all considered to be important as well as fundraising and maintenance .</p> <p>The church has undergone considerable internal and external renovation over the last 10 years run by a small group of local volunteers and largely funded largely by grants and local support. A small number of respondents express concern about the survival and funding of the Village Hall.</p>	<p>The Parish Council, the Village Hall Committee and the Parochial Church Council have a keen interest in ensuring the long-term future of the important buildings in the Parish.</p>
<p>Roads and Footpaths</p> <p>Are roads and footpaths still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 87% rank 2/8 Still/somewhat relevant 100%</p>	<p>Problems in 2024 are similar to those highlighted in 2013, but possibly worse. Almost all respondents who commented express serious concern at the perceived increased speed of vehicles through our villages, and the lack of consideration for pedestrians and the very real risk of harm. It is particularly dangerous where visibility is poor eg turning off the B3046 into the village and walking into The Grange via the main entrance. One respondent suggests painted footpaths as seen in other areas. Many respondents request safe walkways between key points in the villages such as the school drop offs, the Village Hall, The Grange and The Woolpack Inn.</p> <p>Much mention is made of the importance of the 30mph speed limit and some suggest speed bumps, speed sensors or chicanes to improve its observation plus its extension along the B3046 rather than just in the village itself. Heavy vehicles, cars, motorbikes and even fast cyclists are all mentioned as having an impact. Potholes and pedestrians are mentioned as hazards for drivers.</p> <p>NB the issue of road safety (or lack of) is also mentioned in responses to “Open Spaces and Play Areas” and “Transport”.</p>	<p>The Parish Council will continue to work for the introduction of wider 30 mph speed limits to include the dangerous bend at the entrance to the Grange, and to work for measures (including speed reminder technology) to curb speeding traffic throughout the villages, but particularly on Kite’s Hill and Stratton Lane.</p>

<p>Renewable Energy projects</p> <p>Are renewable energy projects still relevant topics?</p> <p>Still relevant 81% rank 3/8 Still/somewhat relevant 97%</p>	<p>Opinions are almost unchanged since the 2013 survey which stated that: “Our younger residents are strongly in favour of the concept of renewable energy projects”. However, several residents have serious reservations on the grounds that wind turbines can seriously spoil the environment. There is now a minority of respondents who believe that the use of renewable energy sources is now so important as to be embraced at almost any cost, regardless of “aesthetic impact or concerns”. Problems with the current SSEN supply appear to have exacerbated this.</p> <p>A large number acknowledges renewable energy as a very important issue for the Parish Council and agrees that if deemed necessary, solar panels on domestic or industrial roofs are preferable to ground installations. Wind turbines are almost universally disliked, particularly within sight of the parish.</p>	<p>The Parish Council will support renewable energy projects which do not unduly impact the special nature of our villages rural setting.</p>
<p>Broadband</p> <p>Is Broadband still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 73% rank 4/8 Still/somewhat relevant = 80%</p>	<p>Respondents’ comments suggest that broadband speeds now vary considerably depending on distance from the cabinet, located on the B3046 just outside Swarraton. Descriptions of the current broadband provision range from “better than it used to be”, “speeds are good” and “pretty reliable” “the max available”, to “flaky” “speed remains low”, “inadequate”, “poor” and “a total nightmare”. Poorly served households, particularly of those working from home, have sought independent solutions such as Starlink and other satellite options which are often expensive.</p> <p>The pressing needs of residents running business of all sizes and working and studying from home post pandemic, have raised expectations of broadband and the current provision is felt to be inadequate in the 21st Century. The associated commercial unattractiveness of the villages is also an issue. Many respondents request that fibre is connected to all our households as a matter of urgency. Mention is made of a possible financial contribution by residents.</p> <p>According to Ofcom, 97% of UK premises currently have a superfast, fibre broadband connection available to them. There is a sense of being left behind in our rural community and it is clear that this should remain an important topic on our Community Plan 2024. The problem is exacerbated by the increasingly frequent power outages experienced in our area. Poor mobile signal and the lack of 5G are also mentioned.</p>	<p>The Parish Council’s vision is for fast and reliable broadband right across the Parish and it will continue to press service providers, the City and County Councils for a quicker and more meaningful response to these needs.</p> <p>NPC will also push for 5G provision from the mobile networks.</p>

<p>Transport</p> <p>Is transport still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 68% rank 5=/8</p> <p>Still/somewhat relevant 89%</p>	<p>Some respondents to the consultation feel that public transport in this area is “important”, “very important”, an “attractive proposition” or “would be immensely helpful”, particularly for non-drivers, the elderly or families with children getting to and from school. However others feel they would be unlikely to use a bus service and consider it “irrelevant” in these villages as people would be unlikely to move here if they depended on public transport. Lack of funding and infrequency are felt to be negative factors.</p> <p>Suggestions of cycle paths and bookable community taxis were made. A few respondents mentioned environmental concerns and the need for “greener transport methods”.</p>	<p>The Parish Council will seek to keep this issue on the agenda.</p>
<p>New Housing</p> <p>Is new housing still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 68% rank 5=/8</p> <p>Still/somewhat relevant 94%</p>	<p>The majority of respondents believe that a small amount of affordable housing on brown or infill sites within the parish would be a positive development. However it is thought to be extremely unlikely to actually happen in a parish with such limited transport and infrastructure and where the market trends are towards redeveloping smaller dwellings into larger less affordable properties.</p> <p>Many feel that anything more than one or two dwellings would be “out of the question”, have a negative impact on the “rural atmosphere” or “place undue strain” on the community. A significant minority however remains fully opposed and does “not agree that the area requires affordable housing”.</p>	<p>Applications for private dwelling houses on new plots are likely to be unwelcome because of the danger of compromise of the rural nature of the environment. In this regard, the Parish Council takes seriously its new responsibilities under the Localism Act 2011.</p>
<p>Development of derelict and unused buildings</p> <p>Is the development of derelict and unused buildings still a relevant topic?</p> <p>Still relevant 61% rank 7/8</p> <p>Still/somewhat relevant 100%</p>	<p>With an increase in the possibility of working from home post pandemic, the vast majority of responses demonstrate a greater acceptance of the pragmatic redevelopment of derelict and unused buildings for small business use, as well as well-considered residential development.</p> <p>However it is felt that very careful attention must always be paid to the impact on local resources and infrastructure and all applications considered on a case by case basis. A minority feels that any business development and associated infrastructure would be unwelcome in our rural setting.</p>	<p>The Parish Council recognises the need to support small business and the shift in remote and hybrid working.</p> <p>In particular NPC recognises the part that the sympathetic redevelopment of derelict and unused buildings can play in supporting this.</p>

<p>Open Spaces and Play Areas</p> <p>Are open spaces and play areas still relevant topics?</p> <p>Still relevant 52% rank 8/8</p> <p>Still/somewhat relevant 87%</p>	<p>It is acknowledged by many respondents that most properties in the village do benefit from private gardens but many feel that children would also enjoy the facilities “usually available in a playground”. The Village Hall field is viewed by many as an obvious place for a small play area but opinion is divided between those who would welcome this as an attractive asset which would be “good for the community”, “a meeting place”, “a marketable .. venue” and a possible enhancement for the new toddler group, and those who would prefer to keep it purely as a community asset for “parking or barbecuing” and a space for external events which bring income to the Village Hall.</p> <p>Cost, maintenance and the liability of playground facilities are also flagged as issues, as are the need for planning and community engagement before any changes are made. Mention is made of the possible lack of use or waste of such an amenity once set up and that there are already facilities in Alresford and at The Woolpack. There is also perceived potential for anti-social behaviour in a playground.</p>	<p>The Parish Council will keep this issue on the agenda.</p>
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Strong feelings have been expressed in the course of our consultation for the protection of views in our rural area. These are some examples:



Grange Park from Festival Drive



Church of St John the Evangelist



The Candover Brook



The Churchyard



The Watermeadows



The Grange

New Key Area for 2024

New key areas for 2024	In answer to the open ended question at the end of the 2024 consultation: “Please tell us about any other issues you feel we should be examining for the 2024 Parish Plan”, respondents raised the following which can be put into three broad categories:	
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Southern Water’s plans in the area • Resilience of the electricity supply/pressure on SSEN • Candover Brook – abstraction and pollution • Possible charity/university research project to survey/replace septic tanks in properties along the Candover Valley 	<p>The Parish Council will keep this issue on the agenda and will engage with utility companies or agencies when there is opportunity to improve services or reduce negative impacts for residents.</p> <p>In particular NPC will push SSEN for the provision of far greater resilience to the electricity network.</p>
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV charging stations in the church or village hall car park to raise funds 	The Parish Council will seek to keep this issue on the agenda.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage community engagement/host a community meeting with a keynote speaker • Ask local secondary schools to nominate a pupil ambassador to engage in local affairs • Quality of place/quality of life • Litter, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour awareness 	The Parish Council will continue to support all measures that bring our community together and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Action Plan

Action Plan - In 2024 the Parish Council agrees to:

1	Continue to work for the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit to include the dangerous bend at the entrance to the Grange.
2	Press service providers, the City and County Councils to provide a fast and reliable broadband service across the Parish, together with 5G provision from the mobile networks.
3	Work for measures (including speed reminder technology) to curb speeding traffic throughout the villages, but particularly on Kite's Hill and Stratton Lane.
4	In line with residents' opinion, encourage the re-use of redundant and under used buildings for residential and/or commercial use.
5	Discourage development threatening the particular character of the villages of Northington, Swarraton and Totford in the outstanding environment of the Candover Valley.
6	Push SSEN for the provision of far greater resilience to the electricity network.

TABLE 1

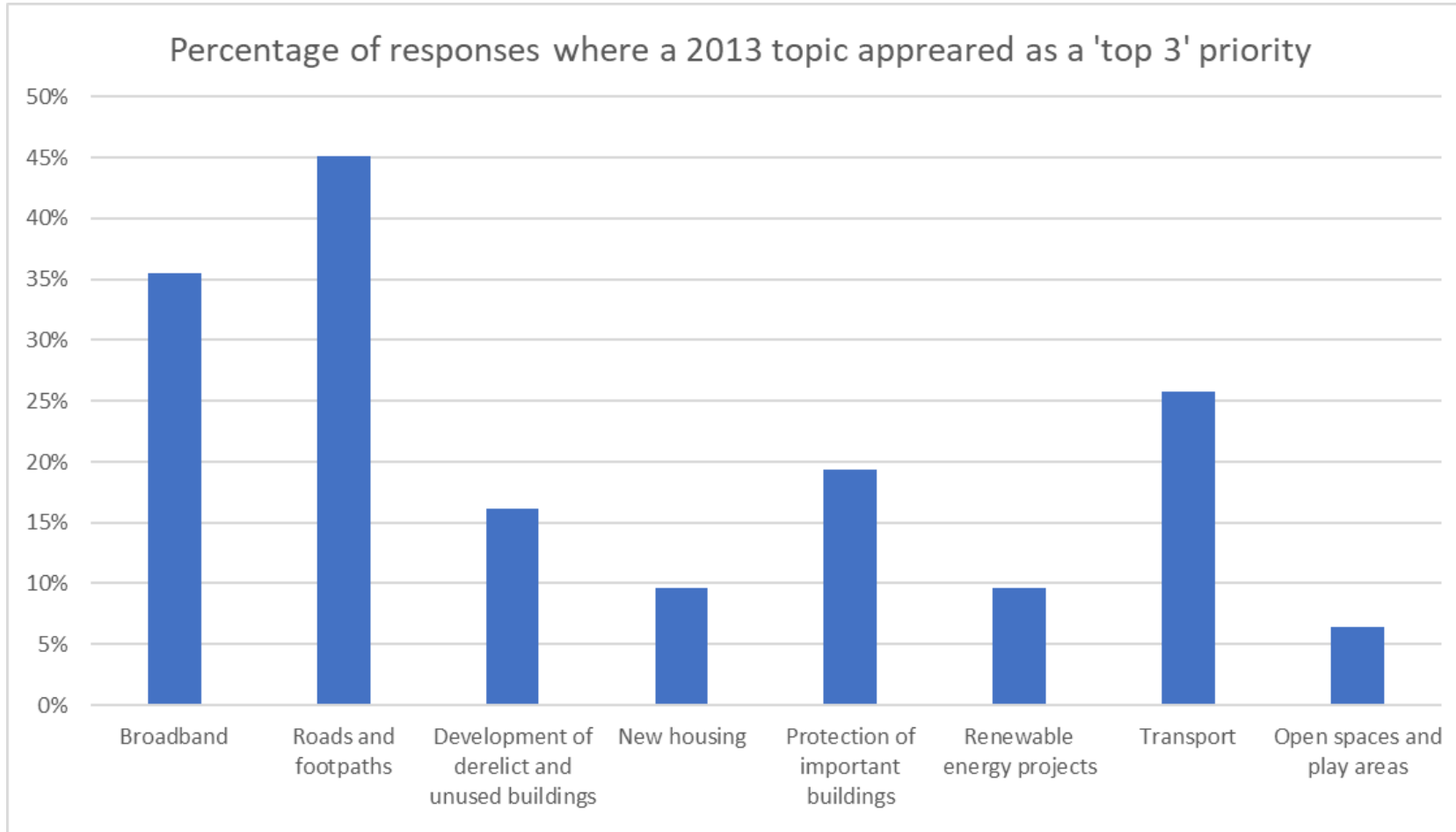


TABLE 2

