



# Flitwick Town Council

## Report to Town Council on 17<sup>th</sup> September: Results of Planning Survey

### Implications of recommendations

**Corporate Strategy:** There are no direct implications from this report

**Finance:** There are no direct financial implications from this report.

**Equality:** No equalities implications have been identified from what is discussed in this report.

**Environment:** There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

### Recommendations

None.

### Background

The Planning Improvement Working Group (PIWG) has been tasked with dealing with planning matters on behalf of the Town Council. To assist with this work, the PIWG undertook a survey of local residents to understand their views on planning matters in the town. This would also form part of an evidence base for any future work undertaken by the PIWG in relation to planning, especially in terms of identifying priorities.

This survey was undertaken online, and run from April to June this year. This survey was promoted online, as well as part of the Town Council's stand at the Village Hall on Friday's, receiving 144 responses. This report summarises the key findings and their implications for the PIWG, and the full anonymised results are shown in Appendix A.

### Main Findings

The results highlight a number of key findings that some in the PIWG would not consider to be surprising. Namely:

- Nearly all respondents think that Flitwick does not get the improvements that it needs as a consequence of development, with 72% of respondents strongly disagreeing
- While respondents are generally somewhat aware of what the Town Council's role in the planning system, they consider that the Town Council currently communicates poorly (39% considering the Town Council does not act on the planning concerns of residents very much and 15% Not at all)
- A somewhat mixed picture is presented when people were asked on how the Town Council responds to planning applications. While 26% said they were fairly satisfied, 29% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

What surprised the PIWG is the diversity of the views on planning matters. This included the following results.

- When asked if they would be happy to see new development if infrastructure improvements were made first, 51% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 44% who disagreed or strongly disagreed
- When asked if Flitwick should not accept any development under any circumstances, 40% said agree or strong agree, compared with 37% who disagreed or strong disagreed
- Participants would not build affordable housing at the expense of the green belt, with 60% disagreeing that affordable housing should be provided even if its at the expense of the green belt
- Walking, cycling, and public transport should be prioritised in new developments even if it inconveniences car drivers, with 60% agreeing to this statement

It should be noted that, as per the demographic data collected for the survey, proportionally more women and people aged 45 years old and over responded to this survey.

The comments revealed a variety of issues, concerns, and opportunities raised by the respondents. These can broadly be summarised as so:

- Concerns about inadequate infrastructure for the current town and future growth, notably doctors and transport networks
- There seemingly being no coherent plan for the development of Flitwick
- A feeling that planning is somewhat imposed on the town
- More infrastructure such as better public transport and maximising the use of the new bus interchange at the station
- Very strong sentiments against new development in the town



*Figure 1 - Word Cloud of commonly used terms in the text response to the survey*

## **Implications for the PIWG**

These results have a number of implications for the PIWG, which it could look to take forward in the future. A notable potential quick win is being better at communicating with residents on planning matters, and the role of the Town Council within that. This could be done online or in person.

The lack of a sense of ownership over the future of Flitwick when it comes to planning is noticeable in the survey results. The comments provided point to a lack of a coherent plan, which could partly explain the polarisation of attitudes towards development happening in the town revealed by the survey results. This matter has also concerned the PIWG in its involvement in the Local Plan engagement work, and exploration of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

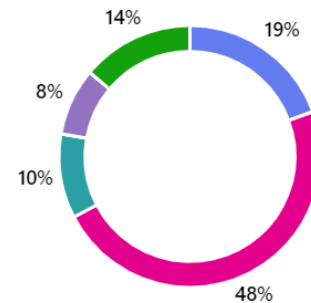
The survey results also don't give much in the way of indication on priorities for infrastructure improvements – apart from that all infrastructure needs improving. The PIWG will need to consider how it focuses its efforts on specific types of infrastructure in the future.

## APPENDIX A – FULL RESULTS

1. How much would you say you are aware of local planning issues affecting Flitwick (e.g. plans for new housing)?

144 Responses

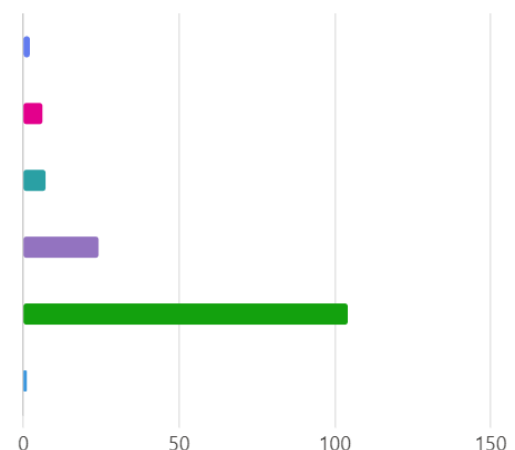
Very aware	28
Fairly aware	69
Neither aware nor unaware	15
Fairly unaware	12
Very unaware	20



2. What is your response to the following statement: "Flitwick generally gets all of what it needs in terms of improvements to local services from new developments"?

144 Responses

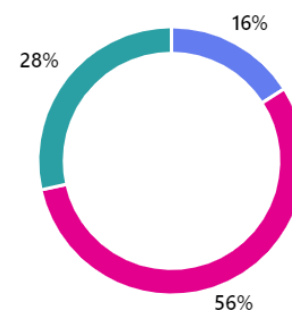
Strongly agree	2
Somewhat agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Somewhat disagree	24
Strongly disagree	104
Don't know	1



3. To what extent do you understand the role of the Town Council in the local planning process?

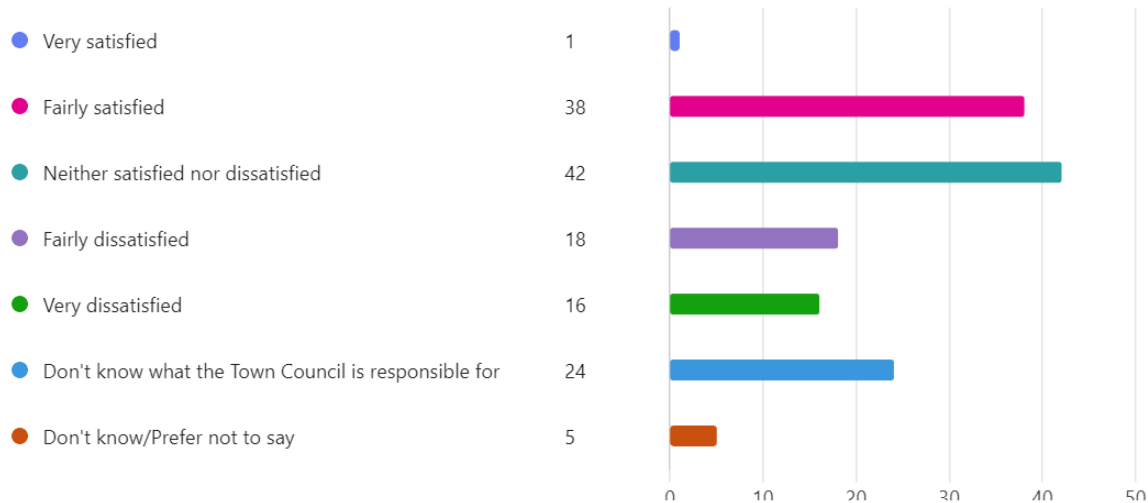
144 Responses

Fully Understand	23
Somewhat understand	80
Don't understand at all	41



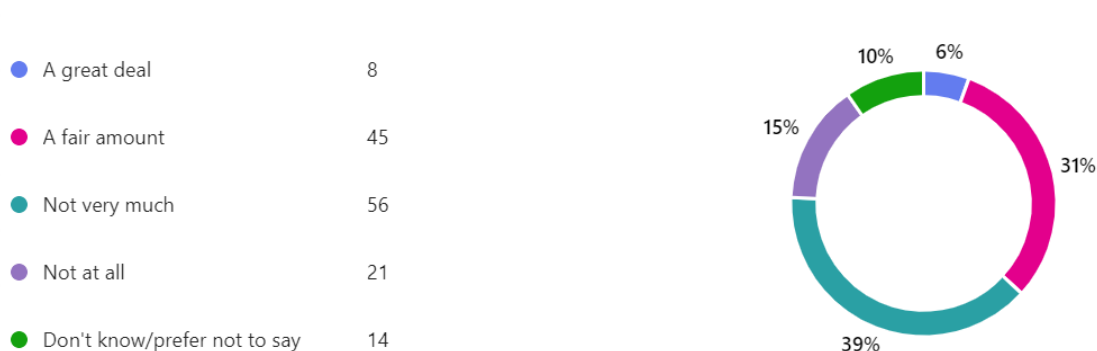
4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the way Flitwick Town Council responds to local planning applications?

144 Responses



5. To what extent do you think the Town Council acts on the planning concerns of local residents?

144 Responses



6. Overall, how well do you think the Town Council keeps residents informed of local planning applications?

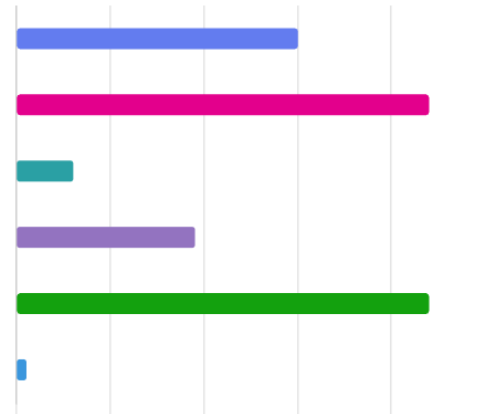
144 Responses



7. Read the statement and respond accordingly: I would be happy to accept more housing in Flitwick if improvements to key local services like Doctors, Dentists, Schools, and Transport were made first.

144 Responses

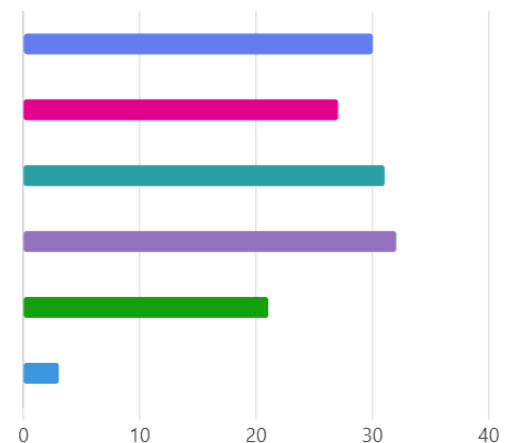
Strongly agree	30
Somewhat agree	44
Neither agree nor disagree	6
Somewhat disagree	19
Strongly disagree	44
Don't know / prefer not to say	1



8. Read the statement and respond accordingly: Flitwick should not have any additional housing or employment development under any circumstances.

144 Responses

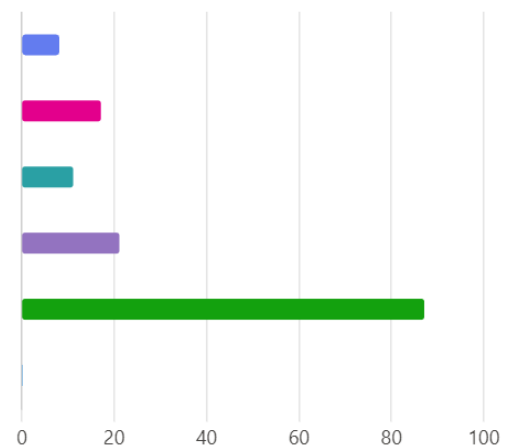
Strongly agree	30
Somewhat agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	31
Somewhat disagree	32
Strongly disagree	21
Don't know / prefer not to say	3



9. Read the statement and respond accordingly: The need for affordable housing locally should override the need to protect green field sites.

144 Responses

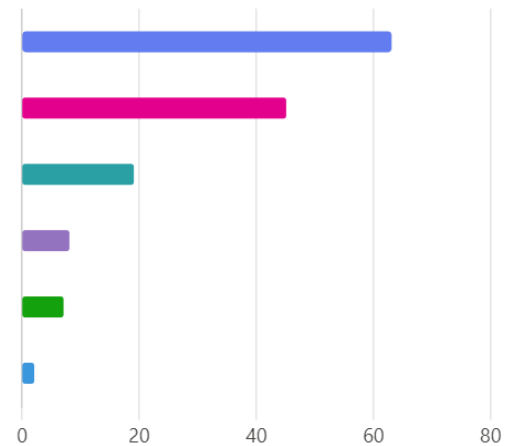
Strongly agree	8
Somewhat agree	17
Neither agree nor disagree	11
Somewhat disagree	21
Strongly disagree	87
Don't know / Prefer not to say	0



10. Read the statement and respond accordingly: Any new housing sites should prioritise reducing carbon emissions and boosting local habitats and wildlife ahead other things.

144 Responses

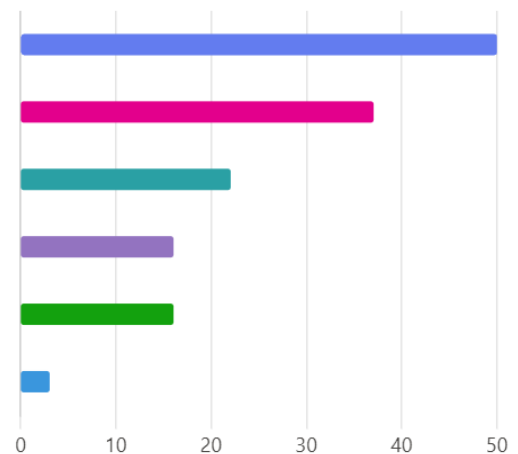
Strongly agree	63
Somewhat agree	45
Neither agree nor disagree	19
Somewhat disagree	8
Strongly disagree	7
Don't know / Prefer not to say	2



11. Read the statement and respond accordingly: Walking, cycling, and public transport should be prioritised in new developments, even if it inconveniences car drivers (e.g. walking and cycling...

144 Responses

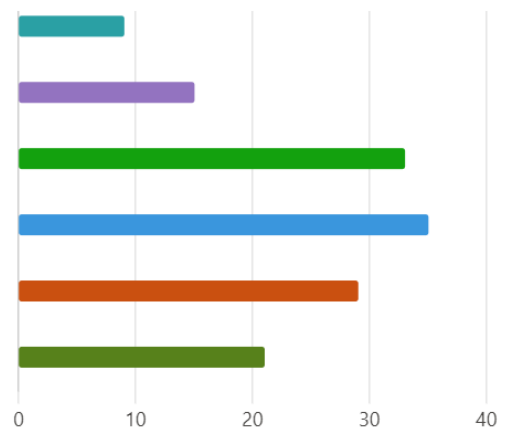
Strongly agree	50
Somewhat agree	37
Neither agree nor disagree	22
Somewhat disagree	16
Strongly disagree	16
Don't know / Prefer not to say	3



14. What age group do you fit into from the following?

142 Responses

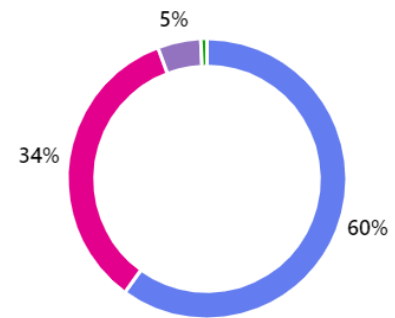
25 - 34	9
35 - 44	15
45 - 54	33
55 - 64	35
65 - 74	29
Over 75	21



## 15. How would you describe your gender?

140 Responses

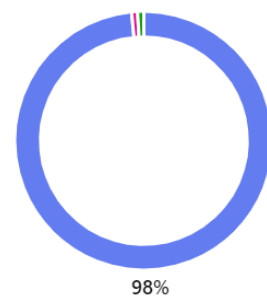
Woman	84
Man	48
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	7
Other	1



## 16. What is your ethnic background? Choose from one option from the 5 sections below that best describes your ethnic group or background. White

132 Responses

English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	130
Irish	1
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
Roma	0
Other	1



## Are there any other comments that you would like Flitwick Town Council Planning Improvement Working Group to be aware of?

ID	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Keep the character and history of the town and surrounding area. Improve the infrastructure and traffic. Don't build more houses without doing that first.
2	anonymous	The need for services (ie doctors, dentist) should be kept in line with the number of people / houses coming into the area.
3	anonymous	The group is a good idea to be mix of councillors and residents.
4	anonymous	Stop all housing estates ad we do not have schools doctors to supply. Stop taking money from the builders as sweeteners we pay 5 per cent more council tax. Star putting Flitwick residents first
5	anonymous	Walk ways



ID	Name	Responses
6	anonymous	No communication on social media except for Heather and a focus on Flitwick. If people aren't only how do you target them?? Too many old people developments that don't bring any benefit to the town. Old people need care, they are not out and about spending money supporting local shops. No bus routes that go anywhere decent or run on time.
7	anonymous	No mention here of longterm empty properties. There must be many which are currently in private ownership. Can you bring them back into a usable state for low cost rentals?
8	anonymous	Residents need access to green fields in Flitwick to support mental wellbeing. Overdevelopment should not be allowed.
9	anonymous	Putting planning conditions in place and hold developers to them. Eg...if the condition for more houses is the provision of a new surgery/play area, make the developer build the surgery/play area first before allowing development to progress.
10	anonymous	It just seems to me council members are not really in touch with the local people and never have been. No planning permission should be given for new housing without all things mentioned here are improved. Obviously why are they ever allowed to build any living accommodation without its own power supply (solar panels) If the government wants to bring in electric cars why does it not insist on them having their own power source.
11	anonymous	FTC should push CBC into building council houses and not developers percentage of social housing, Its a mockery and money making scheme and not beneficial to local people who cannot get on the private housing ladder. The transport hub at Flitwick rail station is a complete waste of money no buses can use it. Why not try a mini bus CBC and FTC need people in power to do things for the residents and not for themselves just because they can. Fix the pot holes every where in CBC and FTC and theres more !!!!!
12	anonymous	The bus interchange should be maximised to its fullist use because it is not at the moment therfore was a waste of money.
13	anonymous	We have heavily congested roads at many times during the day which cannot be solved and will only be made worse by more housing. Steppingley Road and the High Street are already hazardous to cyclists and pedestrians and so any further development to the northern en of Flitwick should be avoided at all costs. The road network cannot be improved.
14	anonymous	As an interested observer, it appears there is no overall plan for Flitwick, rather a hotch-potch of ideas, none of which fit together. The transport hub opposite Tesco is a very good example of this - a decent idea, badly executed. Any planning for increased housing must include improvements in town infrastructure e.g. another doctors surgery and alternative access route other than the double roundabout at the station.
15	anonymous	Flitwick is perceived as the poor neighbour to ampthill where the y have nicer pubs cafes and restaurants so people From Flitwick generally go there
16	anonymous	I would like to know how you can call Flitwick a town. Without a bank or a post office. This really impacts upon non-drivers and small businesses

ID	Name	Responses
17	anonymous	Stop building. Improve NHS services first
18	anonymous	Making sure the village hall is looked after, as this area is the hub, the coffee mornings on Fridays is the place to be, meeting friends etc.,
19	anonymous	Need a bank and a post office
20	anonymous	More cycle lanes and buses, please!
21	anonymous	Any further development in Flitwick must have ring fenced funding to provide much needed amenities like doctors, dentists & schools. This must be a legally binding agreement before any planning permission is granted
22	anonymous	A new planning permission has been submitted to build on the field on Steppingley road. The whole area is being overbuilt already. And the dwelling built are never affordable. Please stop it.
23	anonymous	Stop other councils buying up affordable housing that is built here. Leave them for the locals!
24	anonymous	The statements above are difficult to answer as it very much depends on the site, housing type and infrastructure improvements. Planning is always a compromise. The absence of a neighbourhood plan has not helped the situation in Flitwick as building has been done piecemeal with no vision. Whilst much of this cannot be changed there does need to be a vision and plan for the future of Flitwick.
25	anonymous	Focus on high street and local Amenity improvement/investment
26	anonymous	No more house development. No more care homes.
27	anonymous	The number of potholes in the village need urgent attention. Parking needs to be look at especially outside the Costa coffee shop.
28	anonymous	lift at the station has to be a priority
29	anonymous	The current roads are already too busy, not fit for purpose and with the prospect of more development e.g. Marston Moretain, Westoning and Stewartby on top of a local Aldi, crematorium, care home on Steppingley Road and insufficient parking already at Flitwick Station grid-lock is fast approaching.
30	anonymous	It seems to be a case of 'shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted!!!' There is no center to this town - no sense of community and too much pressure on the already over-subscribed local schools, health services and road networks.
31	anonymous	Too little too late. We need to stop over-developing this what once a 'village' now a sprawling town with no infrastructure or centre.
32	anonymous	The council have been very slow to consider this ridiculous amount of over-development. I've lived here for 44 years and never witnessed such unregulated building as i'm currently seeing.

ID	Name	Responses
33	anonymous	The council should have done this before CBC developments were allowed in such an ad-hoc manner in recent years.
34	anonymous	The local council should ensure any 'public' amenities included within developments are maintained by the council and that the costs are not put upon the shoulders of those moving into the new estates. It seems rather ludicrous that home certain home owners pay for the upkeep of facilities open to all town dwellers to use, this is the purpose of local taxes.
35	anonymous	Most of us residents moved her because it was a rural town. If houses keep being added you change the heart of the town.
36	anonymous	No mow May is a joke and makes Flitwick look totally unkempt Cemetery is a disgrace Pathways are dangerous due to wait high stinging nettles and weeds Larger dog poo bins required in more locations Why is there no longer a litter picker person
37	anonymous	Abandon no mow May town looks unkempt and Cemetery is a disgrace Footpaths overgrown with wait high nettles and weeds Bigger and better dog poo bins
38	anonymous	N/A
39	anonymous	We have useless public transport - buses don't really work for commuters - not enough parking at Flitwick station yet you're building more houses (the supposed 'improvements' did nothing to actually improve the station for anyone other than maybe the odd bus driver) . No doctors or dentists - and the footpaths don't join up - just end in nothing and you have to walk along main roads to get anywhere. I understand we need more homes - but until you sort out the infrastructure then you can't build more.
40	anonymous	Get a proper high street with shops.
41	anonymous	There seems to be no will to maintain adequately what is already here, things are deteriorating already, both in upkeep, traffic volumes, access to green spaces, and the sense of wellbeing that we have enjoyed here, is vanishing fast.
42	anonymous	The infrastructure around is not sufficient for the current population, so will break down under further construction. Roads are full of potholes, traffic is often at a standstill around the town, parking on verges and footpaths. Doctors and dentists are oversubscribed. The town looks a mess due to overgrown verges and footpaths, graffiti on the bridge etc. If we can't keep up with the current population how can we have more development in the town.
43	anonymous	There is a need for more retail diversity and greater choice of places to eat(not takeaways). Also a need for traffic improvements but not another fiasco like the new transport hub.
44	anonymous	A lot of people don't understand Flitwick council's role in planning is as a consultee rather than decision maker. Everyone's house was someone else's open land or view once yet it seems once people buy a house they forget this and object to everything. Flitwick council should publicise the use of section 106 funding in the town.

ID	Name	Responses
45	anonymous	Flitwick has had too much building recently... crematorium, senior living village, new houses. Green areas and farm land should be protected for mental wellbeing of current residents and food production. We need more dentists, doctors, facilities such as decent independent restaurants instead of houses, take aways etc
46	anonymous	Close Flitwick station so the over development stops! The disruption caused by the building of the senior residents village has been enough to deal with! We have endured misery and inconvenience for THREE summers now! You need to sit back and wait to see how this development will fit in once opened. I'm waiting for the first toilet to flush to see where the waste ends up! Hopefully not in my garden. Enough is enough. A 3 storey building on the original flyers is now a 5 storey building! How can we trust any future development that is proposed! The 8 biggest house builders are being investigated by the CMA for price fixing, and unfair management contracts to consumers. You should familiarise yourselves with the case, Persimmon being one of them.
47	anonymous	Dont claim affordable housing if it is only a small/minimal portion of a large development. If you want to build affordable housing it should be the majority of the development
48	anonymous	The state of the pavements re wheelchairs and obstacles for the blind
49	anonymous	When will the lifts be installed at Flitwick Station. This should be a top priority. More frequent bus services. Urgent priority for another Doctors surgery
50	anonymous	What is happening for the lift at Flitwick Station. At present many people arte prevented from using it
51	anonymous	Please build more schools and doctors
52	anonymous	Member of flag
53	anonymous	I am aware there is a need for affordable housing but it should not be to the detriment of local towns and villages. Flitwick has had a lot of building recently 9Steppingley Gardens) I am not opposed to brown field sites of which the bigger towns have. We want to live in a small town not a big One. If we moved because of it it would achieve nothing so maybe thats where the new developments should be.
54	anonymous	Perhaps it would be possible to find out what the local people need and want. Top of everyones list would be another Doctors Surgery before anymore people move to Flitwick
55	anonymous	Roadside footpaths, which I understand are the CBC responsibility, are in a poor state, especially the road from Manor Park to the cricket ground is dangerous and I would CBC would be sued if a person was injured when using this path. Is there a law as to width of a pavement?
56	anonymous	Flitwick has already been over developed with housing. The threat of ruining what green space is left makes it a much less desirable place to live for residents that have lived here for a long time. Please do not allow the development on the field off Steppingley road where many of the current residents like to walk. This is very precious.

ID	Name	Responses
57	anonymous	Yes, get the grass cut more often, Flitwick looks horrendous having only 6 cuts per summer.
58	anonymous	I think your questions are very strangely worded and I don't think will generate a balanced view of people's opinions.
59	anonymous	The biggest problem in flitwick is that there has never ever been any forethought. Just throw the houses up without any proper planning. Flitwick is a mess Too many houses and people and nothing to back it up. Also so overdeveloped. Enough is enough
60	anonymous	The infrastructure around flitwick needs to be improved and upgraded before new housing development can take place. Roads, doctors surgery, dentist and disabled access to the train station.
61	anonymous	The infrastructure in Flitwick cannot cope with the current demand and population, let alone adding more future developments into the mix. Over developing an area takes away the very reason that the majority chose to settle there in the first place. You can't expect to turn what was a small quaint village, into a new large town, buy just adding 'houses'. The people that want to live in a town expect facilities and amenities. We are not a town. We are a village with too many houses.
62	anonymous	Understanding what affordable housing means and how this would support younger local residents who wish to stay in the area. Understand who the over 55s housing is really aimed at, many 55-60 year olds will still have children at home. Look at the impact of recent and current developments on Flitwick and take this into consideration. Understand that local schools are at capacity with no ability to extend and therefore new housing is not viable.
63	anonymous	Get the grass cut by people who can do it properly no more social housing and keep the fields green
64	anonymous	You cannot answer question8 as additional housing and employment development are two very different things.
65	anonymous	Yes they need to protect our woodland, fields and wildlife. Ensure more medical services. Stop clogging up local roads. Crematorium traffic will be 5 miles an hour on Dunstable and Steppingly Roads. Listen to the community.
66	anonymous	I understand that GPs are funded per registered patient, and that older people use GPs more than young families, so we need to make sure more young people stay in, or move to flitwick to offset the 40% over 50. I don't want any more of our high street to close or become a takeaway either, so we need more people to sustain them.
67	anonymous	Flitwick has had to many new buildings spoiling the surroundings
68	anonymous	Improve traffic congestion

ID	Name	Responses
69	anonymous	<p>You need to engage earlier in the planning process. You cannot only engage once an application has been submitted on an allocated site and then get people riled up. There is a whole local plan process which you should be engaging with. You also need to consider that there is a strong need for housing for younger people and that should be considered not just the view of the older generation who do not consider this - the younger generation will be less likely to engage with you.</p>
70	anonymous	<p>New buildings are inevitable however there used to be rules about how close towns and villages could be to each other. Flitwick is now separated from Amptill only by a roundabout, the recent development of Westoning is now encroaching on the west part of Flitwick and Manor Park. The proposed development opposite the leisure centre is getting nearer to Steppingley. If no restrictive measures are taken this will be one big urban area encompassing Flitwick and all local villages without any additional amenities or infrastructure.</p>