



SUMMARY of Sept 2004 Community Survey Results

Phase 1 of the Parish Plan process 'The Consultation' is now complete and over the last nine months the three sectors of our community – residents, businesses and local organisations – have been given an opportunity to air their views on the future of Knebworth through meetings, the 2004 Community Survey and other questionnaires. Many thanks to all who responded and to the dedicated team of volunteers who have helped to input all the data and thousands of comments and ideas.

We will be presenting a full report of the results at our

OPEN MORNING on Saturday 26th Feb 9am-12pm at the Parish Centre

Please do come in for a chat. Copies will also be available from the library and Village News and on our website www.knebworthparishplan.org from 19th February. Meanwhile a summary of the results is set out below.

Phase 2 will involve setting up Focus Groups to draw some conclusions from all the data and then carry out feasibility studies on some of the key issues and ideas. However, with so many options to consider, **we really need some more volunteers!** If you would like to get involved please do come along to the Open Morning or call Linda Brookes on 01438 812168 to find out more. If you have already volunteered your services, many thanks and we will be in touch shortly.

In all, we received 592 completed Community Surveys, representing a 17% response from Knebworth and 18.5% from Old Knebworth - disappointing in some respects but more than we were expecting and good for this type of exercise. The pattern of response was well spread across the whole parish. (33 local organisations and 8 businesses completed a separate questionnaire the results of which are not included here.) All age groups showed a slightly higher return rate for females.

Age group	14-17yrs	18-25yrs	26-40yrs	41-60yrs	61+ yrs
Response	1%	2%	22%	40%	35%

▪ **Community ▪ Communication ▪ Heritage ▪**

92% of you value a sense of community and 84% think that community events are important with lots of suggestions for events and even some volunteers to help organise them! Voluntary groups are a vital part of our community and valued by 70% but interestingly 26% had no opinion on this question. There is high praise for Parish News (83% satisfied) but a feeling that it should be distributed more widely. Only 57% find that there is sufficient Knebworth news in Local Papers and the village website (www.knebworth.org) is only familiar to 24%. The contribution to the community from our churches (75%), the library (88%) and Knebworth House (70%) is valued by the large majority although the written comments include numerous ideas for improving the library service and links with Knebworth House.

▪ **Local Services ▪ Schools ▪ Sport and Leisure ▪**

Village shops (99%), Doctors' (97%) and Post Office (99%) are important to virtually all residents, playing an essential part in the parish community. Primary and nursery school provision is satisfactory (lots of positive comments) but only 10% are satisfied with secondary school provision. However, village opinion is split (36% for and 36% against) on whether there should be a secondary school within the parish. The lack of provision of leisure/sport facilities for teenagers is considered a key issue with only 13% satisfied. Again there are lots of ideas on how these could be improved.

▪ Care ▪ Crime and Policing ▪

A relatively low number (52%) are satisfied with General Medical Services, the most common comment being about the difficulty in getting a doctors appointment. 28% of you must be very healthy as you have no opinion about medical services! Care for the elderly (61% of those who have an opinion are satisfied) and disabled (49% satisfied) could be improved. The subject of Crime and Policing prompted a high number of written comments (373), many requesting the return of a village bobby. A large majority are in favour of alcohol restrictions (70%), CCTV (82%) and more police visibility (96%).

▪ Character ▪ Countryside ▪

94% of you value the countryside as a reason for living in Knebworth and this is also reflected in the written comments which express concern about possible development of the land between Knebworth and Stevenage. Perhaps part of the reason for such a healthy population can be attributed to the high numbers who use the countryside for leisure pursuits (valued by 79%) and use the public rights of way (valued by 78%). Many of you also consider that certain buildings (72%), the general character of the villages (86%) and architectural styles (74%) are worthy of protection. However, numerous comments suggest that the appearance of the High Street and the area around the station need to be improved.

▪ Traffic ▪ Parking ▪ Transport ▪

These questions prompted a very high level of written comments (1526) with many suggestions for improving traffic flow and parking provision and concerns about the effect of Chas Lowes. 60% of you consider speeding and road/pedestrian safety to be significant problems and 84% are very concerned about traffic congestion. Parking is a major issue for the village - 72% would like to have more parking spaces and 66% would support more parking restrictions. There are mixed views about the benefits of Residents Parking Zones (54% in favour) and the majority (61%) are against parking charges. Most of you who have an opinion are satisfied with transport services but over 60% do not have an opinion on bus services. 75% are satisfied with the rail service but many are not happy with the condition of the station (80% in favour of refurbishment). Disabled access is also highlighted as a problem.

▪ Housing ▪ Planning and Development ▪

Opinion is divided on whether land on the village edges should be used for affordable housing (45% supportive and 48% against) and 61% are against the use of greenfield sites for other types of housing. There is some support for the principle of allowing limited development in return for funds to carry out village improvements (50% in favour, 32% against and 18% No Opinion). There is considerable goodwill for keeping the Chas Lowe business within the parish and 72% favour the use of a greenfield site to accommodate a new yard. There is also support for the redevelopment of Lowe's yard (61% in favour) and many suggestions for what the site could be used for including a village square/green, housing, mixed retail/restaurant around a plaza, car parking and a new health centre. However, 23% fear that the loss of Lowe's yard would have dire consequences for the village. 52% would support the use of a greenfield site for new sporting facilities - a small leisure centre with badminton courts being one suggestion. The most common response to the bypass question was – we already have one, it's called the A1! However, 40% support the idea of a bypass although 42% are not in favour.

▪ General Comments ▪

Over 300 of you took the trouble to expand on your views and we are still analysing these comments. The majority relate to traffic and parking, Lowe's yard, policing, street/verge maintenance and concerns about North Herts District Council spending being concentrated on the larger towns. All your comments and suggestions are being recorded and will be passed on to the relevant authorities and used in the next phase of the Parish Plan process.