

# **RATTLESDEN PARISH PLAN REPORT**



*"Rattlesden is a complete village community with a blend of dwellings – only single 'infill' properties should be considered."*

*"We are concerned about the very large lorries being able to use roads up to Hightown Green to distribute and collect goods."*

*"Recycling and litter problems should be top priority."*

*"There's too little maintenance following winter damage."*

*"Not enough trees or hedges are being planted."*

*"No pathway from the old garage site to the Brewers Arms – very dangerous for pedestrians due to fast traffic."*

*"Rattlesden should have wheelie bins!"*

*"The little stream through the cemetery green used to flow very well but is now all clogged up."*

*"All planning applications should be carefully considered so as not to spoil the ambience and character of the village."*

*"The Council is always lax in keeping verges trimmed in early summer."*

*"Rattlesden is an area of considerable beauty and tranquillity and as such areas are becoming increasingly rare they should be preserved."*

*"Dog fouling is a problem on Upper Street between the church and the school."*

*"Everything is fine. I have no complaints."*

## **Rattlesden Parish Plan Committee members:**

Lynda Connell – Tel 736514

Pauline Baker (formerly Daly) – Tel 736914

Karl Feistner – Tel 736512

Robert Griggs – Tel 737212

Janet Sparke – Tel 736286

Carol Williamson – Tel 736362

Previous members:

Barbara Parker

Peter Knott

Jane Rayson

Our thanks go to:

The Countryside Agency for grant facilities

Suffolk ACRE for their initial help and guidance

Mrs Golding of Rattlesden School for organising the Children's Survey

Our own families for their help and tolerance.

January 2003

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the compilation of the replies we received to the Rattlesden Parish Plan Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed in July 2002 to all 324 households in the parish and we collected a total of 270, answered by 583 people aged over 11. The response rate was therefore 82%, a clear demonstration of Rattlesden's residents' wish to have a say in the future of their parish.

We also asked Rattlesden Primary School if they would like to produce a questionnaire for Rattlesden children only, and we are pleased to include their report in the back of this document.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY**

In March 2002 the Parish Council called a public meeting to discuss the fact that the District Council had declared Rattlesden to be a sustainable village. Considerable interest –indeed, alarm - was shown, not least because recently a contentious application for the erection of five large houses in the village centre had been approved by the Government Planning Inspectorate despite the best efforts of the Parish Council, the District Council and David Ruffley MP.

The meeting was attended by Stephen Andrews, Mid Suffolk District Council's Local Plan Manager, and Louise Wilby of Suffolk ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). Mr Andrews explained that the District Council had to produce a development plan (the Mid Suffolk Local Plan) for the area for the next 14 years. To aid them in preparing it, he was encouraging parishes to produce their own Parish Plan and Village Design Statement.

The objective of a Parish Plan is to provide the District Council with some guidance (perhaps even incentive) for changes that may take place in the parish over the coming years – changes that would be acceptable, or even requested, by its residents. A wide range of topics would be covered by such a survey: housing, the environment, sports and social facilities for example.

A Village Design Statement (as yet a future activity for the RPPG) is intended to give the District Council a clear idea of the type, size quantity and appearance of housing so they could bear this in mind when assessing planning applications for the parish. New housing should therefore meet with the approval of the majority of residents and would hopefully not only answer local needs but would also fit in and even enhance the character of the parish. We shall be preparing Rattlesden's Design Statement in 2003.

At a subsequent meeting, our committee of nine people- the Rattlesden Parish Plan Group- was formed from volunteers from the parish who undertook to create these two documents based upon the widest possible consultation within the parish.

The project was funded by the Countryside Agency, a government-funded body, and the Parish Council. 71 questions were selected from a specially designed computer package which has already been used by several other parishes in Suffolk. Advice and guidance from Suffolk ACRE helped us at the start, and the Parish Council left us very much to our own devices, although of course we sought their thoughts and approval of the final draft.

Normally a Parish Plan takes at least a year to produce, but as the District Council had told us that they would be starting work on their own Local Plan in December 2002, we only had eight

months in which to produce something that would be of use to them. A skeleton version of what you have before you now was sent to Stephen Andrews at the end of November and he has also now received a copy like this one.

Time will tell how effective this project has been. Whilst we are making a start on the Village Design Project (and seeking new members of our committee) we shall be keeping a close eye on developments in the parish and ask you to do the same. It is up to the community at large to help us to monitor progress. We shall keep the parish informed of any developments through the Revelations. Please contact us if you are concerned about any of the matters addressed in this Parish Plan.

## ***INTERPRETING THE RESULTS***

We wanted to make the results as clear as possible and decided that numbers would be better than percentages.

Please note that we have shown the number of responses (either from households or individuals) to each question. You need to bear in mind that some of the questions allowed more than one answer so numbers may add up to more than the total number of respondents. We have not shown all the answers to all the questions asked as some yielded inconclusive results and the end product would have been long-winded and dull. A full set of the answers has been sent to the Parish and District Councils and is available upon request to any member of the Rattlesden Parish Plan Group.

## ***SOME BASIC STATISTICS***

Number of households covered by the questionnaire: 324

Number returned:

Village centre:	98
Top Road/Windyridge:	73
PoyStreet:	22
Hightown Green/Brettenham Road:	25
Other:	52

Total: 270

Number of people in total (includes children) 666

Total number of actual respondents: 583

Male:	280
Female	303

11-15	30
16-17	17
18-24	39
25-44	164
45-59	175
60-64	37
65-74	73
75-84	41
85+	7

Of the households who replied, the following numbers live in these types of property:

Detached house:	114
Semi-detached:	78
Terraced:	16
Bungalow:	50
Sheltered housing with warden:	3
Purpose-built for elderly/disabled:	1
Mobile home/caravan:	1
Other:	3
No details given:	4



## HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

Our most important planning issue is housing, so we separated it from other planning matters. Your responses show that most people have strong opinions and many residents think along the same lines: only 56 people think that large houses are required, and only 37 think that large scale development would be acceptable. This means that the District Council's Planning Department can have a clear idea of the sort of development that most residents want to see in the parish.

### *We asked you to tell us what you think about:*

The amount and type of recently-built houses;

The sort of housing that Rattlesden now needs – how much, what sort, and what would be the most acceptable?

We also asked questions about your own property and any particular housing needs, so the District Council could get a clearer picture of the parish's households.

**Your replies:**

Of the 270 households which responded to the questionnaire, only one stated that its dwelling was NOT the main residence;

- 15 households/individuals currently need alternative accommodation,
- 12 of these are unable to move because of property prices.
- 13 out of the 22 individuals who moved out of their household in the last year went to live independently.

**Opinions on housing development in the last ten years:**

*(Number of respondents: 523)*

- 257 people think the houses built were too expensive;
- 189 think they are too big;
- 157 say that the number of new houses built is about right
- 148 think that too many new houses have been built.

*"More care should be taken not to detract from houses in situ i.e. cottages in Birds Green will be overshadowed, overlooked and devalued by the new development."*

**At the prospect of more houses:**

*(Number of respondents: 518)*

- 214 think Rattlesden could accommodate more homes. BUT
- 243 think not.
- 302 think that any new housing would spoil the environment.

*"I feel very strongly that Rattlesden should remain as it is – a village of beauty and character."*

**What type of housing does Rattlesden need?**

*(Number of respondents: 508)*

- 56 people think we need more large family homes.
- 306 people think Rattlesden needs more homes for young people and
- 253 think that small family homes are needed but
- 134 think Rattlesden does not require any new homes.

*"Rattlesden is one of the few picturesque, quiet villages which still boasts a wealth of very old original dwellings and features. Let's not spoil this or the surrounding countryside by modernising or overcrowding. Save Rattlesden and similar villages for those who already live here and respect the countryside."*

***Is there a need for different types of accommodation in Rattlesden?***

*(Number of respondents: 467)*

- 169 think that restricted sales to local people are needed;
- 176 think that low-cost accommodation is needed;
- 169 people think that there is a need for local authority / Housing Association rented accommodation.
- 117 people think that there is no need for any new accommodation.

*"It is absolutely essential that more houses like Roman Rise are built here because if we lose all our youngsters because they can't afford the houses, the village will die."*

***What sort of accommodation does Rattlesden need?***

*(Number of respondents: 481)*

- 179 people think that more cottages are needed,
- 171 think more semi-detached buildings are needed,
- 124 consider bungalows are needed, BUT
- 136 think no more houses are required.
- 176 think low-cost sale accommodation is needed,
- 169 consider that there is a need for Local Authority / Housing Association rented accommodation,
- 169 think we need properties with sale restricted to local people,
- 110 people say that we need more owner-occupied houses.

***What sort of developments are considered suitable?***

*(Number of respondents: 497)*

- 264 people think conversion of redundant buildings,
- 235 think small groups of less than ten houses,
- 37 people consider carefully designed larger groups would be acceptable.

*"Limited new housing is required but it should be compulsory to use traditional materials and construction so as not to lose the character of the village any more."*

## **CONCLUSION**

Many people think that recent developments are too big and too expensive, and not enough starter homes have been built. The most popular forms of future housing are small groups of 8 – 10, semi-detached, cottages or bungalows. Very few people want large estates or large houses. Most popular is the conversion of redundant buildings. There is an obvious interest in low-cost housing to locals-only sales. Many residents would prefer to see no development at all.

## **ACTION**

### ***The parish council will be urged to***

Encourage cheaper housing especially for sale to local people and young families;

Make Suffolk ACRE's Housing Enablement Officer aware of the interest shown in Housing Association and local authority rented accommodation,

Firmly discourage more large, executive-style development,

Ensure that the MSDC is more sensitive to the style of new housing, especially in the village's conservation area,

Support a Village Design Project to research in greater depth the types, styles and potential locations that residents would consider acceptable.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

Are you interested in helping to prepare the Village Design Statement? Please complete and return the enclosed form.

*"There should be more opportunity to express opinion on design detail for proposed new houses i.e .what characterises houses in the village, and what traits should be essential in new developments."*





## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

How do we want to see our parish develop? It cannot stay exactly as it is, although many of us would like that. The Parish Plan can give the District Council a fair idea of how we would most (and least) like things to change. It also presents us with a way to let the planners know if we are happy with the way planning applications are publicised and implemented.

### ***Regarding business development in the parish,***

*(Number of respondents: 583))*

- 105 are in favour of tourist development in Rattlesden but
- 224 have reservations or were against such development.
- 234 people want small business development but
- 123 do not, or have reservations.
- 137 like or strongly approve of more small scale industrial workshops,
- 196 have reservations about this and
- 107 say a definite "No" to this idea.
- 226 people want to see more jobs created in the parish whilst
- 35 have reservations about this and
- 58 do not want to see more jobs in the parish.

## **CONCLUSION**

It seems that we want to keep the natural attractions of the parish to ourselves rather than share them with tourists! Small business development is the most popular category although many people have reservations about this too. The least popular idea is small-scale industrial workshops.

## **ACTION**

### ***The Parish Council will be asked to***

Take note of these findings when considering planning applications;

Ensure that the district council does likewise.

### ***Regarding the planning process itself:***

*(Number of respondents: 502)*

135 people think that there is sufficient publicity given to planning applications affecting Rattlesden but

249 people said that publicity was insufficient.

*(Number of respondents: 488)*

6 people are totally satisfied with the way the planning system is implemented here and

86 are quite satisfied but

215 people are quite or very dissatisfied with the way the planning system is implemented in Rattlesden.

181 people expressed no opinion.

*"Planning conditions are not often checked by the planning authority for compliance."*

## **CONCLUSION**

Methods of publicising and implementing planning applications are clearly unsatisfactory to residents.

## **ACTION**

The Parish Council has told the Parish Plan Group that copies of planning applications are now kept in the village shop for anyone to look at. We will ask them to advertise this fact more widely in the future.

The actual implementation of planning applications is up to the District Council. These figures are very disturbing and show that there is a fundamental problem with the way people think the planning system is implemented. This must be addressed and resolved by the District Council.

# ROADS AND FLOODING

Our roads are mostly narrow, twisty and without footways. They need to take farm and industrial traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders as well as the cars that most residents depend on for transport. All these different types of transport have different needs, and somehow, the County Council has to find a way to make our roads safe and efficient for everyone.

The questions we chose aimed to find out if there were any collective opinions that might help the County Council to satisfy our requirements.

We included flooding along with roads because we already know which parts suffer from flooding, but we wanted to find out how much of a problem it is for people who have to drive through the affected areas.

## **What you ask for:**

*Out of 481 respondents:*

- 373 people want restrictions on large lorries in Rattlesden,
- 139 want more warning signs,
- 185 want traffic calming measures,
- 156 want the 30 mph limit extended.

*"With the speed of cars along the Stowmarket Road and through the village, it's impossible to walk without spending some time in the hedgerows."*

*Out of 583 respondents:*

- 242 people think the roads are in good or reasonable condition but
- 243 think they are poor.
- 213 people think that roadside care and street cleaning are good/reasonable
- 193 consider roadside care and street cleaning are poor
- 192 think that the snow clearance is good/reasonable but
- 190 think it is poor.

## **Regarding flooding,**

*Out of 270 households,*

- 8 households have many problems,
- 80 households have a few problems.

*"The road (towards Woolpit) floods regularly and in winter it freezes over making it lethal"*

*"Putting up flood warning signs is no solution."*

## **CONCLUSION**

Heavy traffic is obviously a huge problem in the parish that must not be ignored by the District or County Council. The condition of the roads – due in part to the heavy traffic they carry – is seen as unsatisfactory. The amount of people who want traffic calming measures cannot be ignored.

## **ACTION**

The parish council is already discussing traffic calming measures with the County Council. They have also been campaigning vigorously for improvements to the road and drainage in the Francis Farm area for four years!

### **They will also be asked to:**

Ask the District Council and surrounding authorities (underlined) to ensure that any new or enlarging industry will NOT bring about any increase in heavy traffic through this parish. Particular care should be taken over any further development on the airfield site,

Encourage the County Council to consider alternative routes for the heavy traffic using our road system as a through route;

Ask the County Council to consider traffic calming measures and further speed restrictions as suggested by respondents. The safer Rattlesden's residents feel on the roads, the more likely they may be to walk or cycle;

Insist that the County Council improve the quality of road surfaces and verges as a matter of urgency, particularly where flooding, frost and heavy traffic regularly cause damage.

## **TRANSPORT**

This being a rural parish, most families presumably depend on private transport to get them about. We needed to check that this is true. We also asked how many of us would use a community bus, and how would people like to see the existing bus service improve? The questionnaire was compiled and returned before the new Chambers' bus service to Stowmarket and Bury came into being.

### **You told us:**

419 cars are kept by 270 households in Rattlesden.

There are 223 bicycles.

*Out of 529 people,*

483 depend on the car as their major means of transport.

*Out of 517 people,*

213 said they would use a community bus although

304 said they would not.

*Out of 503 people,*

208 said they would like to see an improvement in bus timetables and

176 said they would like to see an improvement in bus routes.

230 people had no opinion.

There were plenty of suggestions for community bus routes, the most popular villages to connect with being Woolpit and Felsham.

## **ACTION**

**The Parish Council will be asked to**

Explore the idea of a community bus. All the routes you suggested will be passed on to them.

Inform local bus companies of the findings of this survey.

Arrange parish-wide publicity of present timetables through the Revelations.



## **ENVIRONMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE**

Presumably most people who choose to live here enjoy being in the countryside. We wanted to make sure of this and to find out which aspects of the environment people care about most.

*Out of 514 respondents,*

452 people think the quality of the countryside in the parish is important or very important.

All the landscape features were voted by a majority of people to be in need in protection but notably

*Out of 476 respondents,*

419 people think hedges need protecting,

408 think rivers need protecting.

403 think groups of trees need protecting.

393 think open spaces need protecting.

***In terms of improving the environment,***

*(Number of respondents: 583)*

252 think it is very important to look after woodlands,

220 think it is not necessary to cut down some trees,

220 think it is very important to preserve trees in special places.

*"If you are a walker, especially an elderly one, various hedges need to be trimmed back!"*

Only 15 people consider wild flowers, birds and wild animals as NOT very important to the surrounding countryside.

***Regarding our footpaths,***

*(583 respondents)*

383 know where they are,

320 think they are well signposted,

254 can use them without difficulty,

92 said they would be willing to help maintain them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Clearly most of us love our surroundings and want to keep them natural, safe and attractive and many of us would like to be more involved with rural maintenance.

## **ACTION**

***We will suggest to the Parish Council:***

That they join Suffolk Wildlife who could advise on grants management of wildlife sites etc,

Take notice of the importance people attach to the quality of our countryside when reviewing any planning applications,

Ensure that the MSDC and higher authorities do likewise,

Pass on the details of those volunteering to maintain footpaths to the County Council Footpaths Department.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

See the accompanying form if you wish to help maintain our footpaths network, or clean our river or ponds.

# LOCAL COUNCILS

As the Rattlesden Parish Plan came about as a direct result from the encouragement of the Parish and District Councils, we thought they would also like to know what you think of them and their methods. Most of our questions related to the parish council as it is most directly concerned with Rattlesden.

The questionnaire was compiled and returned before the latest editions of Mid-Suffolk Messenger and About Suffolk were received in the parish

## **Regarding the parish council:**

*(Number of respondents: 511)*

154 people have attended a parish council meeting at some time but

357 people have not.

*Of 464 respondents,*

222 people think the parish council publishes its activities well or reasonably well although

230 say they do so badly.

*Of 583 respondents,*

236 believe that the parish council is very or quite aware of local feelings and concerns but

101 think they are not.

136 people express no opinion.

*Of 500 respondents,*

354 say that they do not know how the parish council spends its funds but

10 people are very satisfied by their spending,

87 are quite satisfied and

41 are quite /very dissatisfied.

*"An informative village newsletter would be a good idea, with regular reports from all organisations, especially the Parish Council."*

## **As for the district and county councils:**

*(583 respondents)*

170 people feel that the District Council is sufficiently aware of local concerns and feelings;

147 feel that they are not sufficiently aware.

143 people express no opinion.

91 people are fully or quite satisfied with the County Council.

197 people feel that the County Council is not sufficiently aware of local concerns;

170 people express no opinion.

*Of 488 respondents,*

215 express degrees of dissatisfaction on the way the planning system is implemented in the parish (District Council's concern).

## **CONCLUSION**

This report should be a wake up call to our three local authorities.

Although the Parish Council's figures are reasonable, they could certainly be improved. The parish council should be the first port of call for anyone concerned with local matters. These figures show that not enough people are aware of how useful this council can be to us all. It is directly financed by Rattlesden's Council Tax payers and yet a high number of residents do not know how this money is spent.

It is natural that the larger and more distant the council, the less contact individuals would have with them. All the same, these figures suggest that there is a general discontent with all our councils, a feeling that people want to make more contact with the relevant authorities if they have a problem. How many of us know the name of our County Councillor?

## **ACTION**

The Parish Council ask us to mention that there is always an opportunity for the public to speak at their monthly meetings. From January 2003 a report of each meeting will appear in the Revelations. Plans are also under way for a parish website which will help to increase local knowledge regarding their activities.

### ***We shall also urge the Parish Council to:***

Raise the profile of their organisation by utilising the facilities and help available through the Suffolk Association of Local Councils;

Consider holding monthly surgeries in a public place e.g. the shop premises or village hall – in conjunction with a member of the district or county councils;

Ensure that their notices on the village hall and shop notice boards are regularly updated, and that people are aware of the new board adjacent to the bus shelter;

Inform the District and County Councils of the need for improvement in communication from themselves.

It is up to us all to read through the Mid Suffolk Messenger and About Suffolk when we receive it. These publications are a simple, easy and cost-effective way to contact everyone. Some of the information they contain may be useful now or in the future.





## COMMUNICATIONS

We wanted to see how many people had poor TV, radio and telephone reception. Equally important is communication through our parish magazine, the Rattlesden Revelations. As well as being our church magazine, this is our main source of information on local events, and its distributors aim at 100 % coverage.

### ***Regarding the Revelations,***

*(504 respondents)*

- 11 people say they do not receive it,
- 13 people don't know if they do or not but
- 480 people confirm that they do.

Of 511 respondents,

- 350 consider the information in the Revelations is good/reasonable, but
- 112 think they do not.

*"Our main way of keeping up to date is through the Revelations –would it be possible to expand it? I'd be happy to help."*

Many of us have reception difficulties.

*Of 583 respondents:*

- 312 have difficulty with mobile phones,
- 163 with TV reception,
- 107 with radio reception.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Revelations is essentially our church magazine, but it also contains a wealth of local information and is obviously a very useful and effective means of communication. With its efficient and regular distribution, it offers us all the chance to know what's going on and to advertise our own parish events. The more information it contains, the more useful it will be to us all.

Reception coverage for telephones, television and radio affects many of us in the river valley, and will be difficult to remedy. The important thing here is that the relevant authorities are at least aware of the situation, otherwise, they are hardly likely to want to improve matters.

## **ACTION**

Anyone not receiving the Revelations: please telephone Carole Gooderham on Rattlesden 736631: she will be pleased to ensure you regularly receive a copy. Make sure you advertise your own events in the Revelations, and read it regularly!

The parish council's plans for a parish website are already under way, which will add a whole new dimension to the communication of parish matters and will doubtless reach an entirely new audience as well as being of interest to the existing one.

The parish council will be asked to contact the relevant authorities about reception problems.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

If you would like to help with the production of the Revelations, either by submitting articles or distributing it once a month, please complete the form accompanying this report.

## **EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS**

We have a primary school in the heart of our parish, how many of us think it is important? We also have playgroups and nursery school: do we want more than this? How much local interest is there in evening classes being held here?

### ***What you told us:***

*(526 respondents)*

487 people think that the school is important/very important to the community.

In relation to Rattlesden's needs for educational facilities:

*(369 respondents)*

200 want a holiday playscheme,

195 want education evening classes,

65 want more registered childminders,

198 would like after-school clubs.

There was strong support for the existing playgroup and nursery school.

## **CONCLUSION**

Clearly most of us regard the school as very important to the community. There is a clear interest in a holiday playscheme, and evening classes could provide an extra interest for us all.

## **ACTION**

**The parish council will be asked to**

Convey the relevant statistics to the various groups concerned e.g. playgroup, nursery etc, so that they have a clear idea of local support,

Consider how current facilities could be enhanced with local authority help,

Organise a meeting for any interested people so they may explore the possibilities of starting evening classes locally.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

If you are interested in any of the above, either to take part, teach or organise, please complete the enclosed form. Evening classes could only be considered if enough people are genuinely interested in a similar range of subjects. Please let us know your interests.

## **LOCAL SERVICES**

Questions were chosen especially to tell the service providers of our requirements and what we think of the quality of services received. We sought your views on health care, policing, refuse collection, water and electricity supplies as well as the post office and village shop.

## **HEALTH**

*(583 respondents)*

309 people rate the service provided by doctors as good and

84 as reasonable with only

5 saying it was poor.

The low numbers in answer to how people rate services such as district nurse, ambulance, health visitor, maternity care etc reflects the low number of people in the parish who require these services. Only 51 people, less than 10% of respondents, have a health problem that affects their day to day living. However, their replies are important:

- 50 people believe the District Nurse service is good or reasonable and  
23 people think the health visitor service is good or reasonable. However,  
5 feel it is poor.  
3 people of the 33 who have used the ambulance service think it is poor,  
2 people –of 24 users – think the maternity care service is poor,  
5 people out of 25 users feel the chiropody service is poor.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

*(583 respondents)*

- 451 people think the refuse collection service is good/reasonable,  
193 people think that roadside care and street cleaning is poor,  
190 think that the winter weather service is poor.

*Out of 513 respondents,*

- 242 people think the police coverage is poor  
119 think it is reasonable/good.  
152 people express no opinion.

*"We could do with better recycling facilities - somewhere for cans, paper and plastic."*

*Could the police cope with the rise in crime that would occur with a significant population increase?"*

## **THE SHOP AND POST OFFICE**

*Of 519 respondents,*

- 507 people believe the post office is an essential part of the community and

*Out of 474 respondents,*

- 450 use it for postal services,  
118 people use it for pensions and allowances,  
78 people use it for banking,  
96 people use it for their travel requirements,  
108 for information leaflets and  
152 for other services.

*Out of 515 respondents,*

196 people use the village shop on a weekly basis and

206 use it occasionally.

*Of 583 respondents,*

1 person thinks the service is poor but

338 think it is good and

75 think it is reasonable.

The majority of respondents think that prices and choice are reasonable and the opening hours are good.

## **CONCLUSION**

We all know the saying "Use it or lose it" as regards post offices. The same holds true of the shop, which clearly has a solid core of regular users, but can always do with more customers. Both the shop and post office could suffer badly when the new system of paying benefits comes into being. People may not realise that they can continue to collect their money as usual if they wish and hopefully do some of their shopping at the same time.

## **ACTION**

This is very much up to residents: if the post office and shop are well supported, they stand a better chance of surviving.

These figures will be passed on to all interested organisations.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

If you would like to work in the village shop for two or three hours per week, please complete the enclosed form.



## SPORTS AND SOCIAL FACILITIES

With a church, a chapel, two pubs and seventeen clubs and organisations, there is every opportunity for residents to socialise. A sense of community, especially in a rural area with many remote houses, is presumably a good thing. The more chances offered to get together, the more enjoyable life in a quiet rural parish can be. We asked: what more do you want?

### ***You said:***

A wide range of interest is expressed in new sports clubs/activities:

*(294 respondents)*

132 for keep fit,

121 for tennis,

100 for yoga,

*Out of 471 respondents,*

277 people feel that we need a new purpose built venue for sports and social functions although

194 think we do not.

Many people suggested in writing that the pavilion should be upgraded or rebuilt.

*Out of 42 respondents who said they would be prepared to help with leisure activities in Rattlesden,*

27 said they would help with a summer playscheme,

16 with an after-school club,

7 with uniformed organizations,

18 with a youth club.

*Out of 583 respondents,*

164 people believe that social facilities for children up to the age of 16 are poor and

180 people feel that these facilities are poor for the 17 – 25 age group.

*Out of 294 respondents,*

36 people ask for a youth club and

*Out of 369 respondents,*

200 people request a holiday playscheme,

198 would like after school clubs,

154 people would or already support the nursery school and

169 people would or already do support the local playgroup.

*"More items in the play area and more social facilities."*

## **CONCLUSION**

Although the numbers seem relatively small, the most important group to help here is teenagers, as there is very little to offer them in the parish at present. There is also quite an interest in more sports activities for adults. It seems that our existing 17 clubs do not answer all our needs!

## **ACTION**

***The parish council will be urged to***

Help to initiate a youth club scheme or similar;

Encourage all local clubs and societies to advertise frequently and clearly on our noticeboards and in the Revelations.

## **+++VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY+++**

Please complete the form accompanying this report if you wish to assist with any of the suggested schemes.

The Community Council is in the process of seeking to replace the pavilion with assistance from the Football Association and the District Council. It will be available for use by local clubs and societies.

## **OTHER COMMENTS**

*All comments have been compiled according to subject, and handed over to the Parish Council. Please do not think that your comment has been disregarded if it has not appeared in this report.*

We received many written comments about a perennial parish problem:

### ***DOG FOULING***

Despite the Dog-Fouling of Lands Act which enables the District Council to prosecute the owner of any dog seen fouling any publicly owned place, this is still a common nuisance.

*"The amount of dog fouling in the streets is totally unacceptable."*

The Parish Council is well aware of the problem, in all likelihood caused by dogs on the loose rather than on the lead.

People who live in areas with a dog-fouling problem are urged to be vigilant. If you see a dog fouling ANY PUBLIC PLACE and can identify either the dog or its owner, please record the details: the owner's name, description of the dog, and the date, time and place of the incident. Then report it to:

The District Council Dog Warden, Mrs Linda Cooper on 01449 727153, who will take the necessary measures. ***All calls are treated in confidence and your name will not be mentioned to anyone concerned.***





## THE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The average age of the participants was seven and a half years, with 20 girls and 18 boys replying.

15 children walk to school, 14 go by car and 9 travel by bus.

13 children do not take part in out-of-school activities, mostly because they are too young, a few because they don't like the range of activities and one ten-year old because there are no later buses to Rattlesden from his/her school.

26 out of the 38 respondents have most of their friends living in the village, and almost all of them go to the same school.

Children attend a highly varied range of activities both within school and the village, as well as outside. The most popular activities in school are cricket, swimming (outside the village), tennis, football and netball. Popular activities within the village include church activities, cycling and roller-skating. Children travel outside the village to participate in Rainbow guides, tennis, swimming, horse-riding, cricket and cycling, with swimming being pursued by 28 out of the 38 children.

Almost all of the children travel out of the village by car, plus a few use the bus or walk and cycle. A third of the children would use an improved bus service.

The dangers highlighted around the village are mostly related to an increase in traffic, especially around the Lower road area near the Baptist Chapel and the junction with Rising Sun Hill, but the road at Birds Green corner is also mentioned. Other dangers noted are the building site, the pavement outside the Five Bells pub and the river.

Children's suggestions for improving the village hall include improving the décor and lighting, enlarging it, running more children's clubs such as dance and skateboarding, having comfortable chairs, being able to play in the garden and upstairs, having some toys and holding more public events and meetings there.

There are a lot of suggestions as to how to improve the playing field area and these include:

- Swings
- Nets at the back of goal posts
- Cricket nets
- A cycle park
- A skate park
- A climbing frame or slide
- A bigger play area
- A tennis/netball/basketball court
- Benches
- A swimming pool.

Repairing the concrete bridge, fencing off the river and adding benches were also mentioned.

Things the children thought would need to change if new houses were to be built in the village include:

Shops  
Enlarged school building  
Speed bumps or cameras to quell the traffic  
A bigger village hall  
Remove the old garage  
More clubs  
Litterbins  
Streetlights  
Horse-riding  
Library and  
An ice-cream parlour.

