



LONG ASHTON PARISH PLAN

www.longashtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Address for correspondence:

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Date 30th November 2007

Planning Policy Team
North Somerset Council
Somerset House
Oxford Street
Weston super Mare
BS23 1TG

RE: Core Strategy Consultation

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing to give comments on the Core Strategy consultation from the evidence of the Long Ashton Parish Plan survey. We believe it is very important that you are aware of the results of this properly conducted and comprehensive consultation.

The Parish Plan is in the process of being drawn up. After a series of public meetings throughout 2005 and 2006, in November and December 2006, questionnaires were delivered to every household in Long Ashton parish. 1256 responses were received and have been collated. In many cases these responses represent more than one view as only one survey per household was delivered. In addition, 385 responses were received from young people under the age of 20 to a separate questionnaire.

Many respondents also made individual comments and feedback, so as well as statistics we have a clear picture of residents concerns in the form of qualitative data.

The first section of the questionnaire related to possible development of dwellings in and around the parish.

Green Belt

- 99.4% of respondents want to keep the green belt around the village.

1125 strongly agree, 105 agree.

This represents an overwhelming objection to the fundamental principles set out in the Core Strategy that the green belt around the village should be lifted.

Administration

- 98.7% want Long Ashton to remain administratively separate from Bristol. 1202 responses.

Reasons and village needs

The reasons for the clear resistance to the South-West Bristol extension are evident from the concerns of the residents as set out in the rest of this submission. If indeed there is a future development in or around Long Ashton, these same factors must be addressed as a clear priority. In summary, the village needs identified in the survey are:

- highway improvements to relieve the major traffic congestion into Bristol
- much better public transport
- youth facilities
- additional retail outlets

- additional small business opportunities
- improved social care for the elderly and housebound

Traffic Impact

- 80.6% of respondents are already concerned about the speed of traffic through the village.

It is clear from the qualitative responses that traffic volume and congestion is already a major concern in the village. These concerns would only increase if more traffic were introduced to the area because of development and expansion.

Transport and Road Safety

- 56.3% of respondents are already prevented from using public transport because of high fares.
- 48% of young people surveyed felt restricted in what they do because public transport is expensive and infrequent.

Overall there is considerable dissatisfaction with existing public transport.

- 61.7% of adults and 77.5% of young people would walk more if roads and pavements were safer.
- 69.7% of adults think there should be additional crossings on the main road.
- 74.1% of young people would walk more if there were more pedestrian crossings.

Community Facilities

The questionnaire was sent out at a time when 350 homes on the former Research Station site were already being built. Even at that time there was genuine concern regarding the threat to the community and community spirit even with a development of that size. Any proposal for 9,000 homes in the area would amplify those concerns many times over.

Specific concerns regarding the lack of facilities for a community of this size are outlined as follows:

- 98.3% agree that the community centre and sports pitches are important to the village.
- 62.6% are in favour of a skate park in the village.
- 79.4% of adults and 84.8% of young people are in favour of an indoor climbing wall.
- 93.3% of adults and 86.8% of young people are in favour of a junior football pitch.
- 92.6% of adults are in favour of a table tennis club.
- 85.9% of adults are in favour of a café in the centre of the village.
- 69% of adults are in favour of a one-stop shop resource centre.
- 82% of adults are in favour of a seating area.
- 60.4% of adults are in favour of having allotments.
- 90.5% of adults and 69.8% of young people want the Youth Club open more than twice a week.
- 77.3% of adults and 75.7% of young people want a purpose built Youth Club.
- 97.1% of adults and 86% of young people want more organised activities for young people, e.g. sports coaching.
- 74.1% of adults want additional equipped playgrounds.
- 77.8% of adults and 69.6% of young people want a new scout hut.
- 65.9% of young people believe there is not enough to do in the village.

As to which youth activities should be provided, there was good support for ideas such as:

- Drop in youth café
- Film club
- Art and music workshops

- Drama group

Schooling

Comments were made regarding the problems of lack of enough school places in the village because of the recent house building; also the cost of public transport to secondary schools was raised. No detailed questions were in the survey on this topic as it is outside the scope of influence of the Parish Council over the next 5 years.

From a consultation meeting with parents, it was felt that much better facilities would be here if there were a secondary school in the village and some views were expressed calling for an investigation into the possibility of locating a secondary school in the village.

Social Care

- 320 people believe that transport for people who are housebound is not adequate.
- 249 people believe there is not enough suitable accommodation for people with limited mobility.
- 237 people believe that services for disabled or permanently sick people are not adequate.
- 168 people believe that clubs and activities for older people are not adequate.

We believe it is important these issues are addressed when there is that number of people concerned.

Affordable Housing

- 290 people or family members have experienced problems in affording to buy or rent a home in Long Ashton.
- 293 of respondents had family or friends move away from Long Ashton because they could not afford to buy or rent a home here.

If there is to be a housing development then affordable housing must be addressed.

Business and Economy

- 98.6% of respondents wanted existing businesses and shops to be retained.
- 70.9% wanted more sites for businesses and shops.

Many comments were made in addition to the survey wanting more and better shops for a village of this size, so any development should provide this opportunity.

Conclusion

It should be clear from the issues raised that the Parish Plan survey produced considerable information and need this to be inputted to the strategic thinking behind the SPD – Core Strategy for the area. In particular we should like the following points considered;

1. As a village we support the need for additional transport and commuting infrastructure improvements.
2. The majority of residents are concerned at the loss of Green Belt protection raised in some of the options being consulted upon and this is especially pertinent given the lack of facilities already available.
3. We understand that any major development will be expected to mitigate such impacts on local communities under the 5.106 procedure and would draw your attention to the village needs identified in the survey;
 - schooling
 - entertainment/youth facilities
 - highways improvements

- additional retail needs
 - additional small business opportunities
4. The reasons for the clear resistance to the South-West Bristol extension are evident from the concerns of the residents as set out in the rest of this submission. If indeed there is a future development in or around Long Ashton these same factors must be addressed as a clear priority.
 5. It is clear from the qualitative responses that traffic volume and congestion is already a major concern in the village. These concerns would only increase if more traffic were introduced to the area because of development and expansion.
 6. The questionnaire was sent out at a time when 350 homes on the former Research Station site were already being built. Even at that time there was genuine concern regarding the threat to the community and community spirit even with a development of that size. Any proposal for 9,000 homes in the area would amplify those concerns many times over.

These are the views of 1256 households so must be taken into account in any democratic consultation. An overwhelming majority feel strongly that they want to keep the Green belt round the village. From this consultation, it is evident that there is no understanding of the reason why 9,000 homes should be placed in this part of North Somerset. If these proposals are to continue, you must attempt to explain why these homes should be here.

If development does take place however, it is vital that residents' concerns about the infrastructure are met and the needs of a community of this size are addressed.

We attach some of the comments made by respondents about the Green Belt, transport and other concerns.

Yours faithfully,

For and on behalf of the Long Ashton Parish Plan Steering Group.

Comments attached.