

**GREAT NESS and LITTLE NESS
PARISH COUCIL**

**Housing Needs survey
November 2011**

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GREAT NESS & LITTLE NESS PARISH COUNCIL
Nesscliffe Housing Needs and Development Survey 2011
REPORT

1 Introduction

Shropshire Council is preparing a Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (SAMdev) which will set out the planning policies for Shropshire until 2026. The process is part of the new planning system being introduced by central government as part of its Localism Bill.

The Nesscliffe Housing Needs and Development Survey was conducted to provide an evidence base to assist the Great Ness and Little Ness Parish Council in its response to Shropshire Council in connection with SAMdev.

The Parish Council has recently agreed to request that Nesscliffe be classified as a community hub. The effect of reclassification would be to enable future housing and/or business development to ensure the sustainability of the community and its existing infrastructure. This survey seeks the views of parish residents on the extent of future development and where it should take place.

2 Aims and objectives

The aims of the survey were:-

- i) To identify foreseeable housing need amongst existing residents in the Parish.
- ii) To establish infrastructure priorities for Nesscliffe Village in the event of development.
- iii) To obtain views of residents on preferred areas for housing development in Nesscliffe Village.
- iv) To give residents an opportunity to express their views on other aspects of housing need and future development in the Parish.

3 Methodology

Between 2nd - 12th November 2011 a questionnaire, addressed to The Householder, was hand delivered by members of the Parish Council to every house in the Parish. 410 questionnaires were distributed in all. The questionnaire was accompanied by a map, adapted from one supplied by Shropshire Council, showing potential development sites within Nesscliffe Village. Copies of the questionnaire and of the map are attached as Appendices A and B.

A stamped addressed envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire and householders were asked to return their completed copy by 22nd November.

There was discussion about whether it was appropriate for *all* residents of the Parish to be consulted about potential development, even though such development, if it happens, will only take place in Nesscliffe Village. It was decided to consult all residents but to ask respondents for their area of residence. This will make it possible to look at results from Nesscliffe residents separately where appropriate.

Quantitative data was entered onto a Microsoft Access database and analysed using Access and Excel. Text data was transcribed in full and processed and summarised in Microsoft Word. Copies of the data files are available on request via the Parish Clerk.

4 The return

Of the 410 questionnaires distributed, 207 were completed and returned, an overall return of 50.5%. Residents in Hopton/Valeswood and Nesscliffe were the most diligent in returning their questionnaires, having a higher than average return, and Little Ness and Felton Butler (including Alderton & Wilcott Marsh) were the least diligent, returning only 36% and 17% respectively. This differential roughly reflects the geographical distance from the scene of any potential development.

5 Housing Need (Questions 2-7)

44 respondents (21% of the total return) stated that they, or a member of their family or household, need to move to alternative accommodation in this area within the next five years. These respondents were distributed over all areas of the parish, but those from Nesscliffe and Great Ness seem to have less need for alternative accommodation than those in some other parts of the parish (especially Kinton and Hopton/Valeswood). Numbers are low so it is not possible to draw firm conclusions on area, but the overall response indicates a significant if minority housing need in the parish.

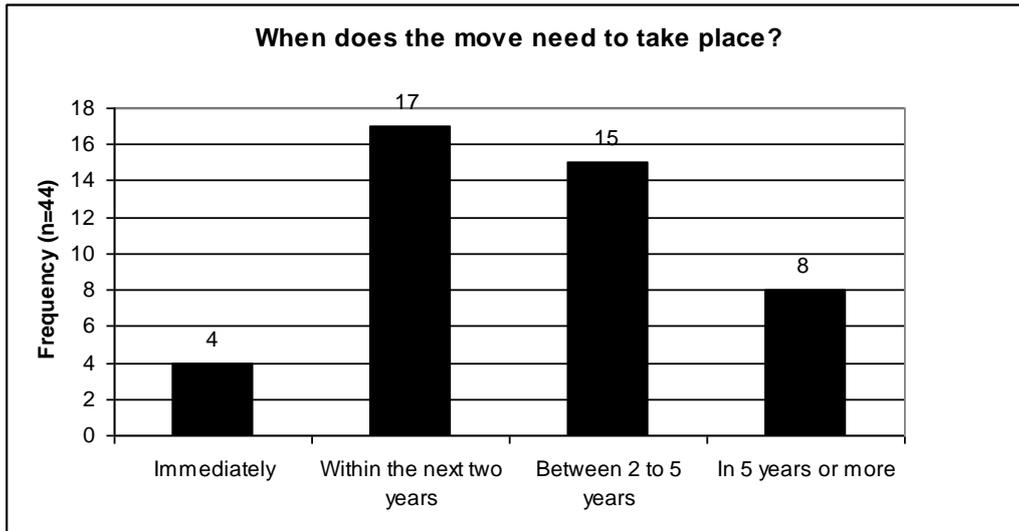
5.1 Reasons for needing to move (Question 4)

The reasons given for needing to move are summarised in the table below and are self explanatory. Several respondents gave more than one reason. For instance, the one who needed to be closer to employment, also wanted to buy his/her own house and to be nearer to family/friends for support purposes.

Reasons for needing to move (n=44)	Frequency
Smaller accommodation	16
To set up separate household unit	12
Cheaper accommodation	9
To be closer to family/friends for support purposes	8
Larger accommodation	5
Physically adapted accommodation	3
To be closer to bus route and amenities	3
To be closer to employment	1
Buy own house	1

5.2 When does the move need to take place? (Question 5)

Of the respondents needing to move in the foreseeable future, the largest group hope to do so within two years (21 of 44) and the majority (36 of 44) within five years. Answers to Question 5 are summarised in the chart below.



5.3 What type of accommodation is needed? (Question 3)

Several respondents ticked more than one type of accommodation, including all those ticking 'flat' and/or 'supported/sheltered housing'. Responses about type of accommodation needed are summarised in the table below and, again, are self explanatory:

Type of accommodation	Frequency
House	29
Bungalow	17
Flat	3
Supported/sheltered housing	4
'Affordable'	2
'Starter home'	1
House with annexe	1

5.4 Minimum number of bedrooms needed (Question 6)

Most of the 44 respondents hoping to move needed 2 or 3 bedrooms in their new accommodation. Some gave more than one choice.

No. of bedrooms	Frequency
One bedroom/bedsit	3
Two bedrooms	25
Three bedrooms	16
Four or more bedrooms	4

5.5 What type of tenure is needed/preferred? (Question 7)

Most of the 44 respondents needing to move hoped to buy on the open market. Thirteen respondents ticked multiple options. These tended to be of a comparable type e.g. three respondents ticked all of 'Housing Association rented', 'Shared ownership' and 'affordable rent' - all types of affordable housing. Alternatives to an open market purchase tended to be 'Build your own' or 'Private rented'. All responses to Question 7 are summarised below:

Tenure	frequency
Buying on the open market	26
Housing Association rented*	10
Affordable rent*	7
Build your own' single plot (Exception site)	7
Shared ownership (part buy/part rent)*	5
Private rented	4
Discounted open market sale*	3
No reply	1

**types of affordable housing*

5.6 Summary of housing need

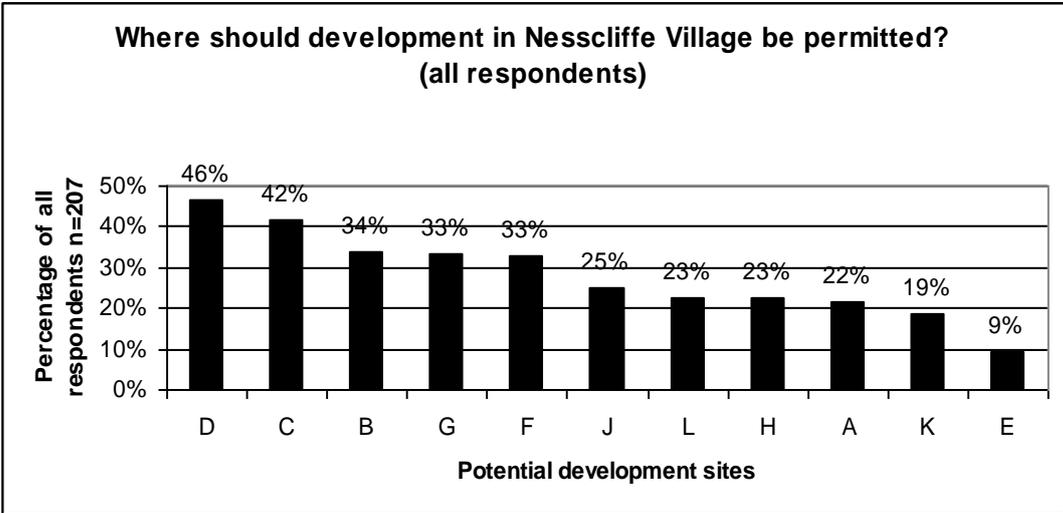
- 5.6.1 A significant minority of respondents (21%) said that they, or a member of their household, needed to move to alternative accommodation in this area now or within the next five years.
- 5.6.2 The main reasons for needing to move were to take smaller accommodation, and/or to set up a separate household unit. The need for cheaper accommodation and to be nearer to family or friends for support purposes were also significant factors. The need for physically adapted living space was only given by one respondent as the sole reason for moving. A small minority (5 of 44) needed larger accommodation.
- 5.6.3 The greatest need is for two (and to a lesser extent three) bedroomed houses and bungalows. Four respondents need the accommodation to be supported/sheltered.
- 5.6.4 Buying on the open market is the preferred option for over half (26 of 44) of the group, several of whom would also consider 'Build your own' plots. A similar number (25 of 44) chose some form of affordable housing, either rented or owned.
- 5.6.5 Affordability was an important factor for many of those needing to move.

6 Future development in Nesscliffe Village (Questions 8-10)

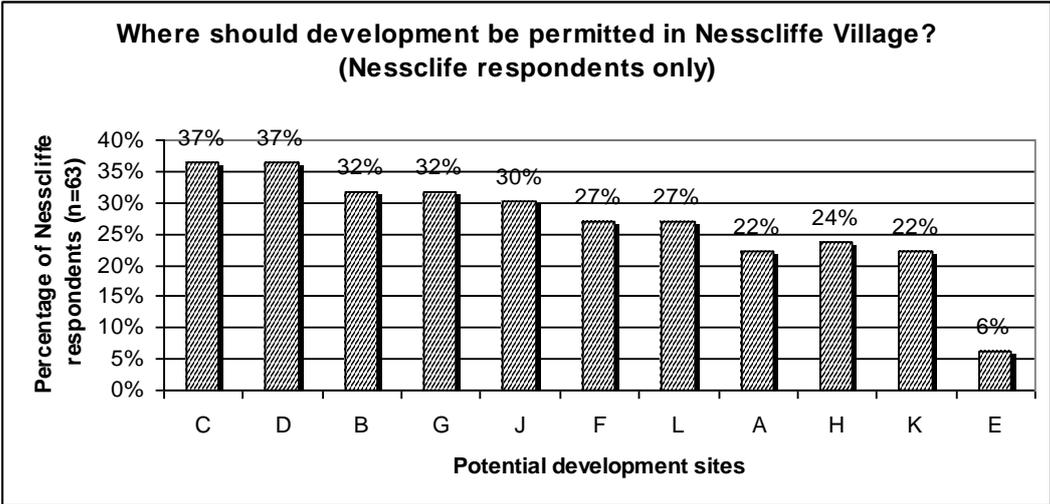
6.1 Potential sites for housing development (Question 8)

Residents were asked to indicate where they think housing development should be permitted by selecting from a choice of 11 potential sites in Nesscliffe Village. The map they were given showing the sites is reproduced as Appendix B to this document. 169 of the 207 respondents (82%) ticked at least one site giving a total of 638 choices.

These choices are shown graphically below. The figure on each column represents the percentage of all survey respondents who chose that site e.g. 46% of the 207 respondents thought that development should be permitted on Site D, but only 9% thought Site E should be built on. No one site attracted a tick from more than 46% of respondents.



Results for Nesscliffe respondents only, show a similar pattern to the results for all respondents, with the same preference for sites at the north west end of the village, particularly C and D between the old A5 and the bypass. However, Nesscliffe respondents show less enthusiasm for development with a slightly lower response rate. Only 37% of Nesscliffe respondents thought even the most popular sites (C and D) should be developed. Preferences of Nesscliffe respondents only are shown in the graph below:



In addition to making choices for possible development sites, many respondents chose to make comments about their choices in terms which indicate strong feelings amongst some individuals. At least 30 stated that – for environmental and visual reasons - no development should be allowed at all on the sites adjoining Nesscliffe Hill, namely site E, and to a lesser extent, sites K and L. Traffic congestion along Hopton Lane and around the school were also cited as reasons against developing E and A. Access along narrow lanes was mentioned in relation to H and J, and a general need to protect the countryside and the natural environment was a major issue for many.

Several respondents pointed out that site A is the village playing field and that it needs to be protected as a valuable amenity:

“Strongly object to development of site A because this is a play area & open space regularly used and would be a great loss to the village” (ID23Nesscliffe)

This respondent from Hopton/Valeswood goes further:

“We would object very strongly to any development of the recreation field at A and of greenfield sites B, C +E” (ID45)

6.2 Alternative development sites (Question 8)

Respondents were asked to suggest alternative sites suitable for housing development. Several did so and their suggestions are summarised in the table below:

Other suggestions for development sites	
Wilcot	7
Infill first before greenfield sites	5
Nesscliffe Army Camp	3
Wilcot Marsh	1
Valeswood/Little Ness	1
Holyhead Rd, Prill to Wolfshead	1
Derelict house opposite K & L	1
Opposite village garage	1
Water Tower Wilcot	1

Several respondents questioned the emphasis on development only in Nesscliffe Village and suggested a better approach would be limited infill in all parts of the parish.

“Much more use of infill areas in the rural areas to single dwellings we do not need housing estates” (ID 104 Little Ness)

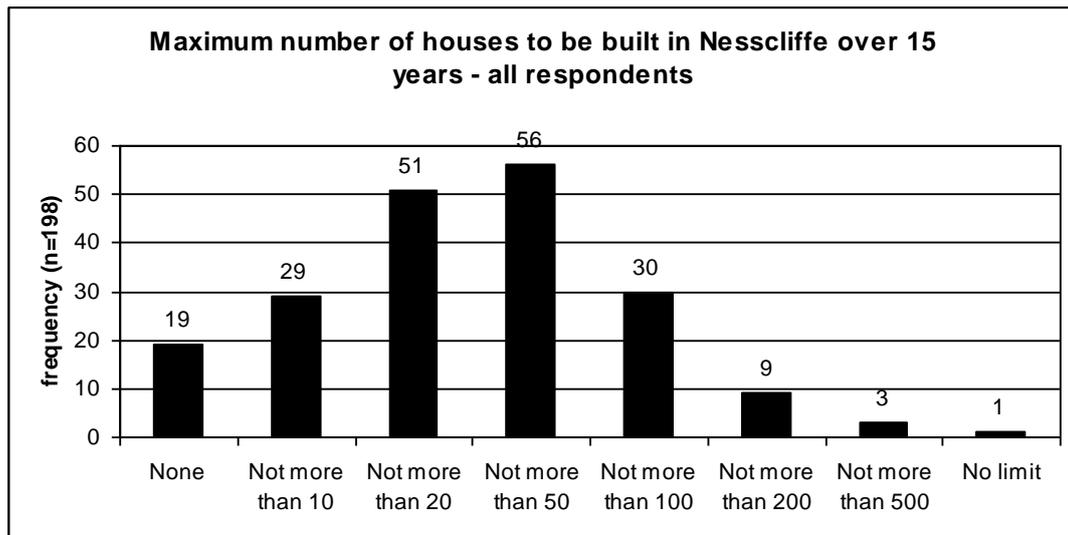
“Modest development as well as any appropriate infilling will be OK” (ID140 Kinton)

“Development of individual plots in surrounding Hamlets should be considered, not simply bulk development in Nesscliffe” (ID16Hopton/Valeswood)

6.3 Maximum number of houses to be built in Nesscliffe Village over 15 years (Question 10)

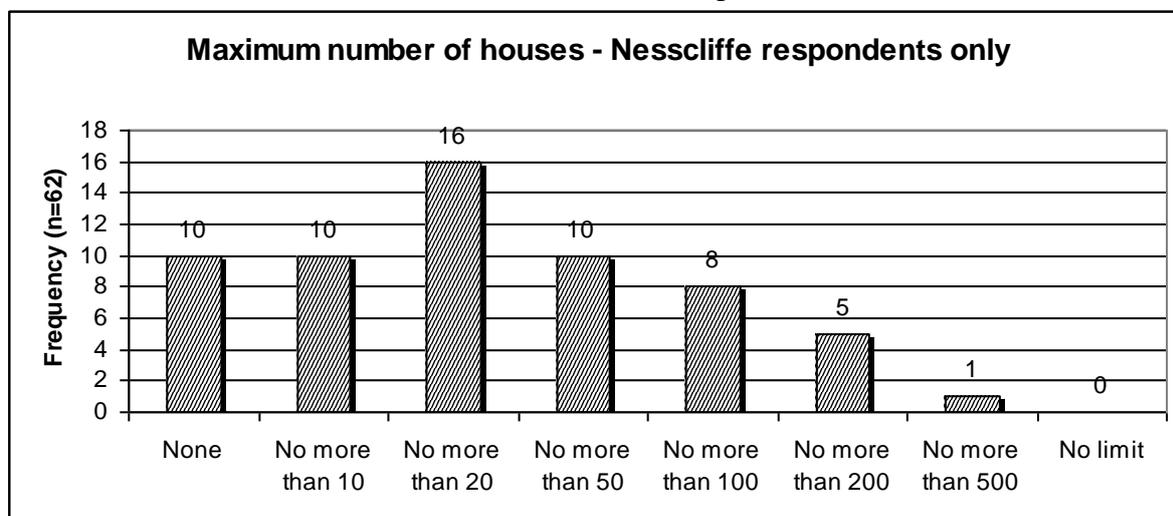
Respondents were asked to choose from a set of options ranging from 'None' to 'No limit' to indicate the maximum number of houses they thought should be built in Nesscliffe Village in the period until 2026. Answers are reported for the whole return (n=207) and for respondents from Nesscliffe only (n=63).

198 respondents answered this question and their responses are shown in the chart below.



Almost 90% of respondents were in favour of some development, but strictly limited. Nearly half thought there should be no more than 20 houses built over 15 years, and three quarters thought the limit should be 50 or less. Only 13 respondents (6%) thought more than 100 houses should be permitted.

The results for Nesscliffe respondents only, shows a similar pattern to the whole group but with a preference towards fewer houses. A greater proportion of Nesscliffe residents (10 out of 63) thought there should be no development at all, and two thirds thought there should be 20 houses or less. As with the whole group, three quarters of respondents thought there should be 'Not more than 50'. Results for Nesscliffe respondents are shown below:



6.4 Additional facilities/infrastructure (Question 9)

In the event of housing development taking place in Nesscliffe Village, respondents were asked what additional facilities/infrastructure they would like to see in the area. Examples were given of ‘hardstanding play area’, ‘speed cameras’ and ‘pedestrian crossing’. The answers tended to focus on the given examples, but many respondents also came up with their own suggestions. All responses are summarised below:-

Additional facilities/infrastructure requirements	
<i>Prompted infrastructure requirements</i>	
Hardstanding play area/additional play facilities	26
Speed cameras	25
Pedestrian crossing (near Three Pigeons, bus stop, school bus drop off point)	38
<i>Additional suggestions (not in any order of priority)</i>	
Retain/improve/enlarge shop and PO	
Parking areas for school, busstop, The Crescent and visitors to Nesscliffe Hill	
Traffic control including flashing speed indicators, speed bumps and 20mph limit	
Additional infrastructure provided at school to meet increase in pupil numbers	
Improved footpath between Nesscliffe and Wilcot	
Doctor’s surgery/clinic	
Retain/improve existing bus service to include evening/Sunday services	
Facilities for young people including 5 aside football pitch, skateboard/bike park	
Improve pavements/footpaths for pedestrians	
Improvements to street lighting	
Adequate/extended sewage system	
Paths and facilities for cyclists	
Increased local employment opportunities	
Access to service station on the bypass	
Village Hall/meeting room in the village	
Improved broadband (to encourage home working)	
Improved parish noticeboards	
Tennis court	
Better policing	

6.5 Summary of findings on future development in Nesscliffe Village

6.5.1 90% of all respondents ticked at least one site where they thought development should be permitted in Nesscliffe Village. The response rate was lower for respondents who live in Nesscliffe.

- 6.5.2 Preferred sites for development were those at the west end of the village between the road and the bypass, namely D and C. This was the case for the whole group and for Nesscliffe respondents only, although the latter group were generally less enthusiastic about development anywhere.
- 6.5.3 There were strong objections to development on certain sites, particularly site A, which is the village playing field, and E, K and L which border Nesscliffe Hill. Other objections were to sites on narrow lanes or those bordering open countryside.
- 6.5.4 Nearly half of all respondents (48%) thought that – over 15 years - there should be either no development at all, or no more than 20 houses. Three quarters thought the limit should be 50 or less. Respondents living in Nesscliffe showed a preference for fewer houses overall, with two thirds thinking there should be a maximum of 20 houses or less built in the period up to 2026.
- 6.5.5 Some respondents suggested alternative sites for development in the parish. Wilcot was the most popular (seven suggestions) and several people suggested there should be a policy of infill throughout the parish before green field sites are considered. Other suggestions included parts of the Army Camp.
- 6.5.6 There were numerous suggestions for additional facilities and infrastructure in the area. The given suggestions of speed control, hardstanding play area, and pedestrian crossing were well supported. A further list of desirable or improved amenities was suggested. High amongst the latter are parking areas in the village, support for the Village Shop, and the bus service

7 Additional comments on housing need and development (Question 11)

93 of the 207 respondents chose to add text comments to their questionnaires giving their views about local housing and future development. Some wrote several pages of articulate and considered text. This indicates a strength of feeling which is not easily summarised or collapsed into numerical terms. An attempt at a balanced summary of the main themes is given here, but a document containing the full text is available by request from the Parish Clerk. Where quotations are used they are selected as far as possible to be representative of wider views expressed.

7.1 Village identity

It has already been said that most respondents recognised the need for the village to grow, but some were concerned about loss of identity as a rural village. One Nesscliffe resident wrote:

“The village has a unique feeling of community which should be preserved at all costs. For those of us who are lucky enough to live and raise our children in the parish it would be a great shame to overpopulate the area.” (ID83 Nesscliffe)

“We feel that there should not be too big a development of Nesscliffe so that it loses its rural village character” (ID158 Kinton)

“...there are plenty of small towns but we are losing villages rapidly” (ID169 Great Ness)

7.2 Natural environment

Many respondents were concerned about protecting the natural environment of Nesscliffe Hill. Typical comments were:

“No housing on the Hill side of the village- the preservation of the hill is the main distinguished characteristic of the village scene” (ID170 Gt Ness)

“It would be a pity to put housing developments immediately adjacent to Nesscliffe Hill. People come from miles away to walk on the hill and enjoy the views. And I’m sure they would not wish to view people’s back gardens” (ID139 Little Ness)

“No development should be allowed on the Nesscliffe Hill side of the road. If I thought this might happen I would object” (ID200Wilcot)

7.3 Affordable housing

Although no question was asked about the *type* of housing parishioners would like to see built (this was well established in the Parish Plan 2004 and the Parish Plan Review 2010) it is apparent from the survey that it is a major concern for many. Over 30 respondents spontaneously wrote of the need for ‘affordable’ housing for local people. This was seen by many as a way of encouraging young families who will support the school and other village amenities to move into the village, or to stay in the area. Some respondents resent the large houses which have been built in Nesscliffe since the bypass was opened:

“..larger houses, already there, are not sending their children to local school”(ID201Wilcot)

“Need affordable starter homes and 3 + 4 bed + semidetached, detached but affordable, unlike those in Nesscliffe along the old A5. Need to encourage families for school and community life to ensure village continues to attract new people” (ID5Wilcot)

“Too many large detached houses are being built. We need to attract young families to the area to keep school viable” (ID137Kinton)

“Starter houses (2 Bedroomed) and retirement properties (2 bedroomed bungalows) should be built as well as modest (3/4 bedroom) houses that are affordable. Not large executive type homes” (ID26Wilcot)

“Need for affordable dwellings for retired members of the community and some for young couples starting on the housing ladder”(ID126 Gt Ness)

One resident of Hopton/Valeswood described the situation from the point of view of a local resident in need of affordable housing:

“I have a family of 3 children and I am renting a 2 bedroom house. There is not enough housing, we don’t want to move from Nesscliffe but we won’t have much choice. Three children sharing one room is a nightmare: the house is also becoming expensive” (ID27)

This is the view of a respondent from Wilcot:

“We need affordable rent for our young ones who have grown up in the village and wish to stay but cannot afford to buy” (ID31)

Although many respondents were clearly concerned about affordable housing, the view was not unanimous. Here is the view of one of a small minority:

“already a high proportion of such homes. Private houses only” (ID162 Nesscliffe)

Several more think a mix of housing is important *“Village needs a balance” (ID157 Hopton)*

7.4 Employment

A further concern for some (strongly expressed) was the need to ensure secure local employment before any further house building is considered at all:

“No building other than industrial. Work guaranteed within 10 miles for all existing occupiers, over the age of 16 to be in productive work ... before consideration of any further building to be considered” (ID180 Nesscliffe)

“Before any further development takes place it should be clearly established that there is a need for such housing (e.g. job opportunities in the locality)” (ID4 Nesscliffe)

“Build houses where there is infrastructure in place i.e. towns and cities where there is also employment” (ID63 Hopton/Valeswood)

“Facilities for employment are virtually nil in the two parish areas so that commuting to and from work would add a ‘carbon footprint’” (ID211 Gt Ness)

One respondent suggested the way forward is to encourage homeworking:

“Approach of encouraging small home-based businesses should be used to ensure sustainability of the parish, reduced travel etc. If people are working at home in the day they will also be more likely to use local facilities in the day, such as the shop etc. e.g. using the post office for business use etc” (ID186 Nesscliffe)

7.5 Traffic

The large number of respondents who think speed control measures and a pedestrian crossing should be introduced into Nesscliffe Village (see section 6.4 above) implies a concern with danger from traffic. Others referred to noise from the bypass, traffic along narrow lanes, congestion around the school, lorries through the village, and the need to improve provision for cyclists and pedestrians: all quality of life issues related to traffic. One Nesscliffe resident summed it all up:

“You must make sure Nesscliffe is not used as a racetrack as it is now. And we get noise from two roads – it used to be one. Need to take lorries from the village – the bypass was built for them” (ID204Nesscliffe)

7.6 Local facilities

It has already been shown that most respondents support some limited development in Nesscliffe. For many this is seen as a means of protecting local facilities. The most frequently mentioned of these were the shop/Post Office, and the school, both of which are evidently highly valued:

“A shop/ P.O is very important. A bus service is vital. Also school – also pub. In other words a proper village” (ID61 Little Ness)

“I think housing should progress sooner rather than later to help keep local amenities alive and vibrant” (ID195Nesscliffe)

7.7 A note of caution

In spite of the general support for limited development, some feel strongly there is danger of exploitation of the environment and irreparable loss:

“Nesscliffe is a nice village – don’t ruin it with large scale housing developments” (ID18 Nesscliffe)

“Only a few people will gain from the development of Nesscliffe the majority will lose from the loss of a small community and the social problems that will arise from such development. We need to realise the importance of what we have because when it is gone it will be lost forever there is no going back” (ID169 Gt Ness)

“Why is there a need to destroy the green belt around this village, except for the greed of the farmer selling the land and the greed of the property developers, stop! Think! Listen! Don’t destroy the wildlife and the look of our village” (ID41Nesscliffe)

This cynicism about motives for development crept into many of the text comments:

“I think some people have already pushed boundaries as to where they have built. No need to spoil a lovely area because of greed” (ID79Wilcot)

7.8 Parish Plan

Cynicism about development was also apparent in comments made by some respondents about the process of the survey itself. They pointed out that there have already been two recent public consultation exercises soliciting views of parish residents on development issues: the Parish Plan 2004, and the Parish Plan Review 2010, both of which returned very similar results. Some respondents questioned the need for a further exercise of this sort:-

“we did a housing plan etc about 4 yrs ago, why again?” (ID201Wilcot)

“although a great deal of work was conducted last year to review the ‘Nesses Parish Plan and Community Strategy 2004’ ... it would appear that the plan itself has not actually been updated. Once again it appears that the concerns and ideas so recently put forward by residents have been ignored” (ID 146 Nesscliffe)

Several residents who had not returned their questionnaires expressed a similar view when challenged on their failure to take part in the survey. At least three separate non responders told the researcher that they had not completed their questionnaire because – from previous experience – they believed it to be a pointless exercise: ‘they’ would not take any notice anyway. It seems there are some residents who have no confidence that their participation will have any effect on what happens in their community.

8 Conclusions

The response to this survey has been sufficiently comprehensive and vigorous to give a clear guide on housing need in the parish (see sections 5.6 above), and on residents’ views on the location, scale and nature of housing development they are willing to see in Nesscliffe Village (see 6.5). In addition a working list of additional infrastructure requirements has been compiled (see para 6.4). Although the focus is different from earlier consultation exercises, there is a strikingly high correspondence between the current findings and the relevant parts of the Parish Plan 2004 and of the Parish Plan Review 2010.

The points of similarity are:

- Most respondents are in favour of some development in order to protect and maintain local services, particularly the school, shop and bus services. However, there is a strong feeling that development needs to be strictly controlled to protect the character of the village as an essentially rural area.

- The majority view of respondents is clearly that “in the future, houses built in the parishes should be small family homes, preferably controlled in terms of affordability, for local people”. The quotation is from the Parish Plan Community Strategy 2004, but it captures completely the wishes of the majority of respondents to this current survey.
- The local housing need identified in this survey (para 5.6) also corresponds with the majority view expressed above i.e. the main need is for two or three bedroomed houses or bungalows, with cost being a factor for most respondents needing accommodation.
- Local residents are fiercely protective of the unique natural environment of Nesscliffe Hill and its surroundings. This was a finding of the Parish Plan, and of the Review and again is stated uncompromisingly in this survey. Most respondents do not wish to see any building development on the areas adjoining Nesscliffe Hill, and many have very strong objections.
- The impact of traffic on quality of life in the parish continues to be a major preoccupation of many respondents, as it was for those who took part in the Parish Plan, and the Parish Plan Review. A Quiet Lanes policy was recommended in the Parish Plan and further demanded in the Parish Plan review but the problems persist.
- In order to reduce commuting by car, a major finding of the Parish Plan was the need to encourage local employment opportunities and home working, and to ensure public transport services meet the needs of those travelling to work. The same issues were raised once more by respondents to this survey.

The way forward is for some of these recurring themes and concerns to be addressed.

Marion Kuipers
Tom Evans
2-Dec-11

9 Researcher's note

This is the third public consultation exercise in this parish in less than ten years. Asking a large number of people for their views is inevitably going to result in a diversity of opinions and concerns. In spite of this, there is a remarkable consistency in the response to these exercises with the same issues predominating each time. The main ones are outlined in the paragraphs above.

In this latest survey there is a distinct and inescapable note of cynicism about the value of local consultation exercises like this one (see section 7.8). If localism is to be a reality some way has to be found to show residents that their views – when expressed – will be considered, even if they cannot always be acted on. Where a clearly expressed majority view is not acted upon, explanations for failure to do so must be transparent and public. In addition, accountability needs to be unambiguously accepted at the appropriate level (e.g. parish or county). The results of this survey provide an opportunity to restore faith in local democratic procedures.

MEK