

**Your Parish
Your Community
Your Plan**



Alkham Community-Led Parish Plan

2023 Analysis



Alkham Parish Council aimed to produce the finished Alkham Community-Led Parish Plan as a document reflecting the views and aspirations of our whole community.

The Alkham Steering Group are proud to produce this plan and would like to thank those who have helped along the way and the residents whose comments and contributions made it all possible.

We aspire for this guide to aid the development of village life over the next few years and trust that it will be monitored closely in years to come to ensure that the community's views are taken into account by those charged with implementing the plan.

We'd like to encourage you to read this plan and take an active interest in its outcomes.

Alkham Parish Council resolved on the 3rd of July 2017 to prepare a Community-Led Parish Plan (CLPP) for the Alkham Parish. The plan aimed to identify the local community's vision of changes to the area in the coming years to be community-led and reflect the needs of the Alkham community and surrounding parish countryside.

The plan's development has been led by the Parish Council (PC) via an advisory committee and The Planning Team, which includes volunteers from the community. The Planning Team directly reports to the PC with their recommendations for discussion and resolution.

The Planning Team ensured sufficient local interest and commitment from residents willing to help develop the plan. This meant the community needed to be kept fully informed and involved from the start. With this prime need in mind and the importance of the plan outcomes affecting Alkham Village and its residents' future, a Community Plan launch day event was held in the village hall at the beginning of September 2018.

This event allowed the local community to come and record their views and opinions on important issues. The results from the day aided The Planning Team in identifying the needs and concerns of the local community and helped incorporate such identified needs into a follow-up questionnaire. Therefore, the tabulated results from this questionnaire provided the evidence to formulate this community-led plan.

Why was it decided that we need a Community-Led Parish Plan?

Because the plan can:

- Help shape a future that you, the community, want to see.
- Reflect the views of all sections of the community, not just a few, and include people who traditionally do not involve themselves in Parish affairs.
- Help unite diverse community groups and individuals, breaking down barriers to work towards a common goal.
- Give local people a voice to make decisions affecting their future.

What will our Community-Led Parish Plan deliver?

- **Relevance.** Because it will be produced by the community at a local level, thereby representing diverse viewpoints from those wanting to become actively involved in the decision-making process.
- **A holistic viewpoint** will help set out a collective vision, not only allowing the community to decide what is important to them now – but also to consider issues that may affect the community in the future.
- **A statement** illuminating how the community wishes to develop shortly. A living document reflecting the collective views of the community, complete with an action plan identifying the practical steps to help the community achieve its vision of the future for Alkham and its parishioners.

Traffic

On the 1st of October 1926, Dover and Elham Rural District Councils resolved that Alkham Valley Road be a main road and, as such, classified as the B2060. In length, Dover R.D.C covered 4.40 miles, and Elham R.D.C covered 1.41 miles.

In 1991, due to the opening of the A20 extension, Alkham Valley Road was declassified as an unclassified road intended only for local traffic use. However, it is now viewed by KCC Highways as an important busy distributor route linking the A2 and A20.

With ever-increasing traffic use over recent years, raising concerns about road safety and degradation of the rural environment and AONB, Alkham Parish Council set up a Traffic Action Group (T.A.G.) to gauge public opinion on the matter.

Parish Questionnaire and surveys

- The first T.A.G. public questionnaire was distributed in April 2017
- Respondent feedback on the questionnaire attracted 204 responses
- The second T.A.G. public questionnaire was distributed in January 2018.

Full data for the questionnaires and surveys can be obtained from the T.A.G. Report, which is published separately from this plan on the Alkham Parish Council website.

Assessment

Upon receipt of the finalized T.A.G. Report in 2018, the parish council resolved to disband TAG and formed a Traffic Implementation Group (T.I.G.). This group was set up as an advisory working party with the remit to regularly report back to APC its findings and recommendations relating to the T.A.G. priority recommendations for traffic calming within the village.

After a year of no response from KCC Highways to PC correspondence, representations were made to our then MP and to the Minister for Transport. The outcome was that KKC Highways were directed to work with APC by the Minister with the remit towards setting up a Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) to help identify local traffic and highway concerns, complete with outline funding delivery options. With this option in place, the TIG team was disbanded in March 2020, and future traffic matters were taken back for resolution within APC.

The Alkham HIP is reviewed annually and now also incorporates Alkham Speedwatch feedback. Alkham PC and Speedwatch work together to deliver safer roads on behalf of the Alkham communities.

Alkham Speedwatch provides regular traffic reports back to APC for discussion and publishing on the APC website. An associated Truckwatch scheme has been set up, yet requires volunteers to activate.

Full details of the HIP, the associated highway matters history, and reports are published on the APC website and are regularly updated under the 'Highways' heading.

Commitment Assessment:

APC undertakes regular monitoring review actions relating to Alkham road safety and traffic management for and on behalf of its parishioners. APC works collaboratively with other key stakeholders, seeking their help and support towards delivering the best possible traffic management solutions towards resolving Alkham community traffic challenges and concerns.



Conservation & Environment

The Parish of Alkham is entirely contained within the East Kent Downs AONB.

The parish is currently guided by the 2014 -2019 Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty Management Plan, with a vision to 2034. KCC, DDC, Parish Councils, and many local groups and organizations fully support the guidance in this plan.

‘In 2034... the vision is that the qualities and distinctive features of the Kent Downs AONB, the dramatic south-facing scarp, secluded dry valleys, network of tiny lanes, isolated farmsteads, churches and oasts, orchards, dramatic cliffs, the ancient woodlands and delicate chalk grassland along with the ancient, remote and tranquil qualities, are valued, secured and strengthened. ‘

The ‘Statutory Duty of Regard’ for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provides the basis for work on this topic. Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, a statutory duty is placed upon all public bodies to regard the purposes of the AONB designation in their functions and operations.

Part of Alkham is also designated as a Conservation Area for its ‘special and architectural and historic interest’ requiring it to be protected as an area of special merit.

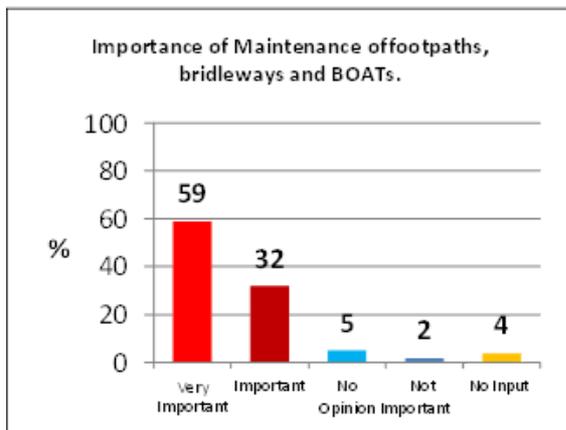
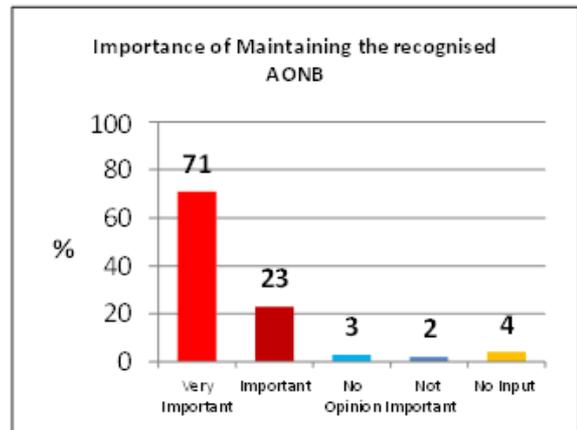
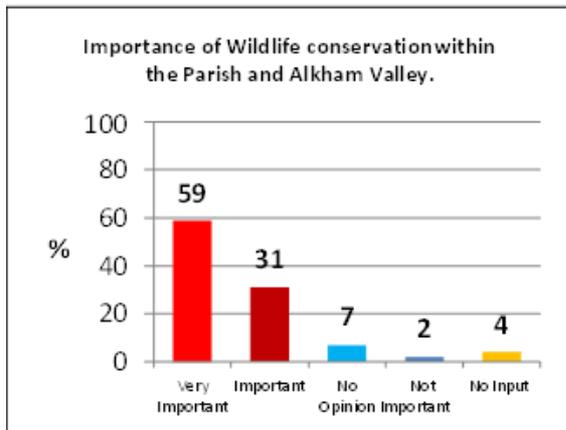
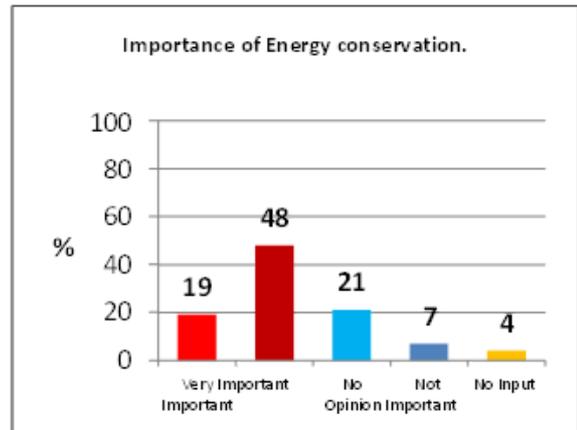
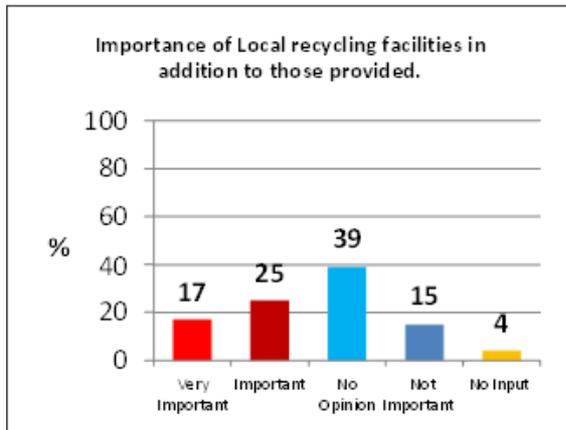
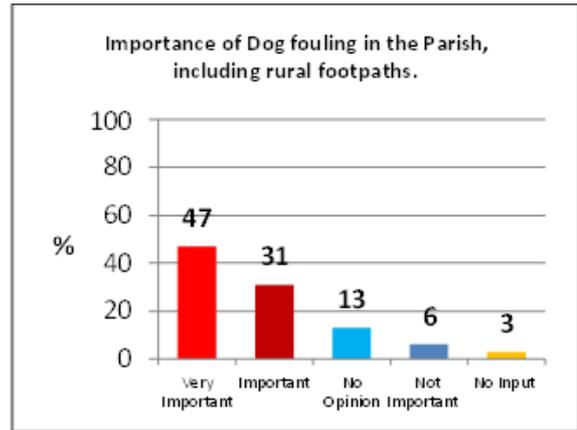
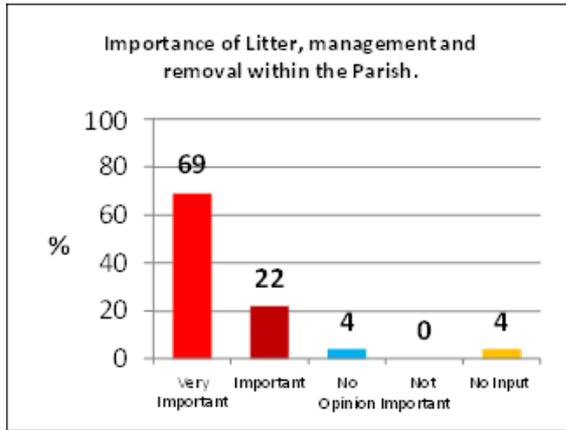
Several sites in the village are designated as Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI), a formal conservation designation. Usually, it describes an area of particular interest to science due to rare species of fauna or flora it contains or even important geological or physiological features that may lie in its boundaries.

We are indebted to Tracey Prince for producing a first-stage Alkham Environmental Audit reference report.

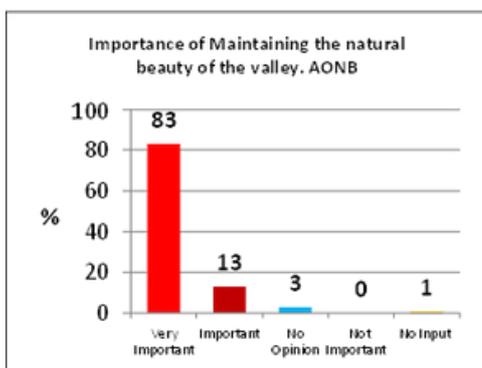
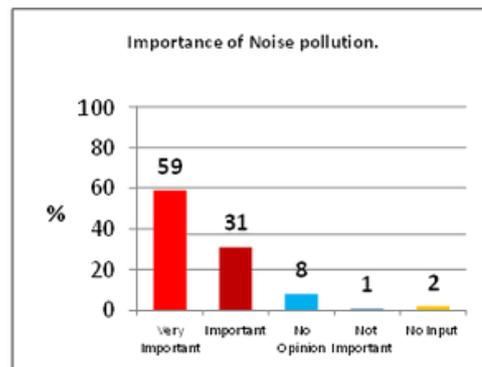
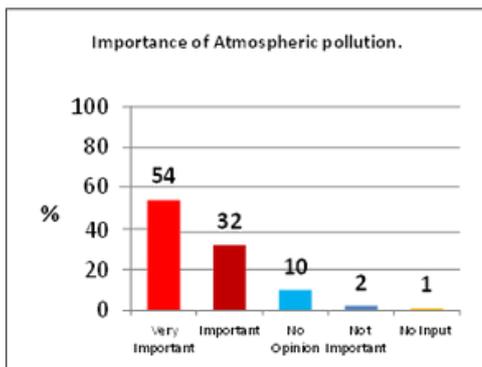
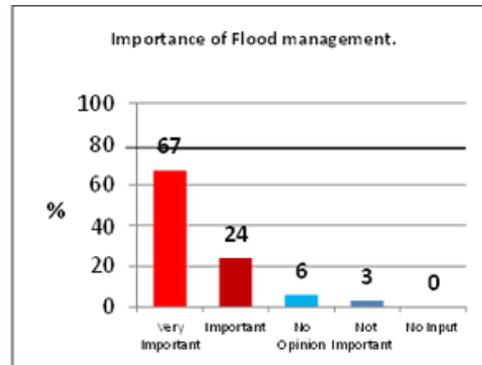
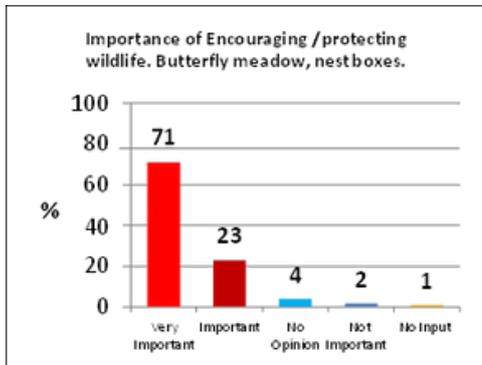
Assessment

Respondents are very aware of our environment and the importance of conservation. They are concerned about pollution levels from multiple sources, including noise pollution, atmospheric pollution, light pollution, protection of the AONB, illegal building development, loss of wildlife, litter, high traffic volumes, and speeding and crop spraying. Flood management was also considered important.

Q1. Conservation



Q9. Conservation



Housing & Community Buildings

Alkham has been subject to only one major private housing building development:

Newlyn's Meadow, starting in 1988, with a further eighteen houses added during 1992- 1995. The development is located in the village centre and built on land purchased from a local farmer. A limited council/housing association development was constructed in Short Lane in 1953 (Glebelands), and tenants and prospective owners are subject to occupancy and purchase caveats. Another limited housing association development was built at the top of Short Lane, with tenants participating in rent and purchase options.

Over the years, ad hoc planning applications have been made by individuals to build single new homes and extend or improve housing within the Parish boundaries via the local district council planning process. Alkham Parish Council receives copies of planning applications that might affect the ward from Dover District Council, the local planning authority. The Parish Council reviews applications and returns feedback comments to the local planning authority.

Moreover, the Alkham Village Hall plays a vital role in the community. It is a facility used frequently by parishioners and the public for various functions. A village hall committee manages it, a financially independent charity.

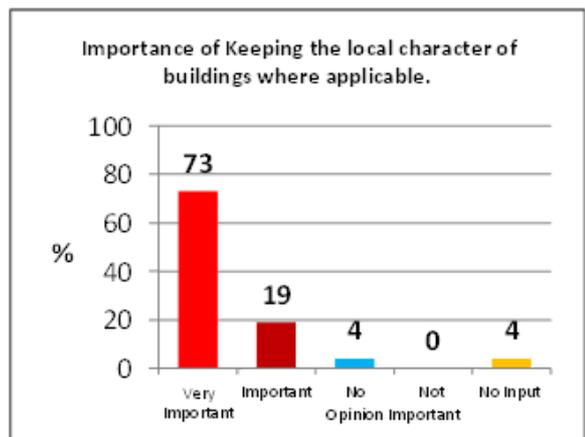
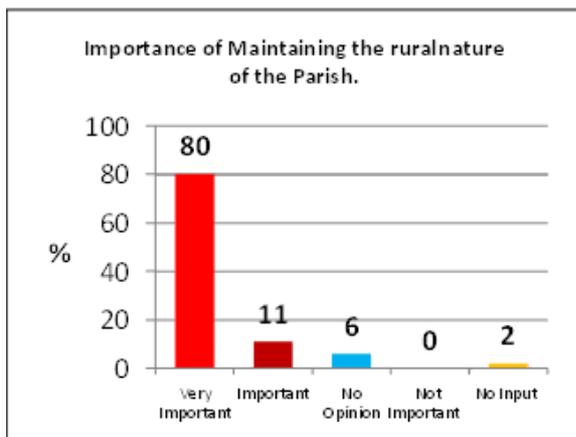
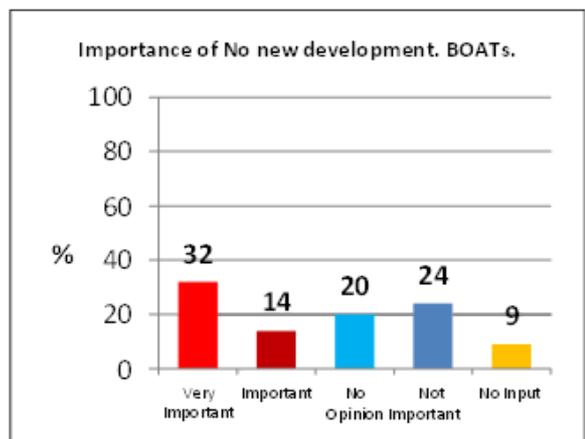
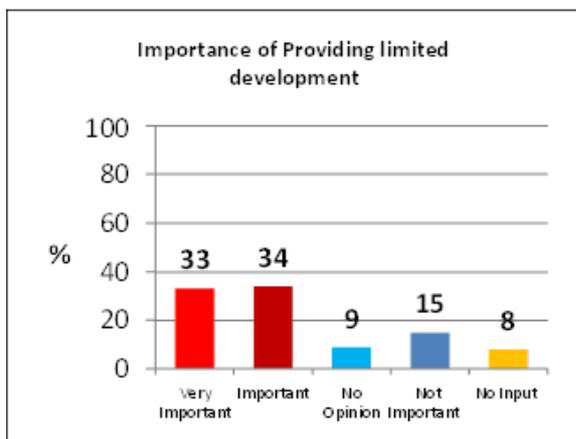
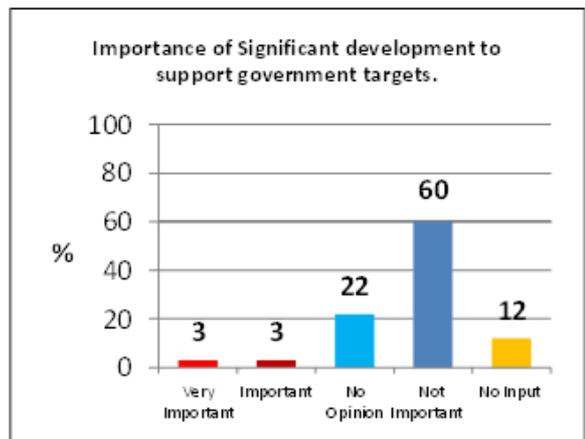
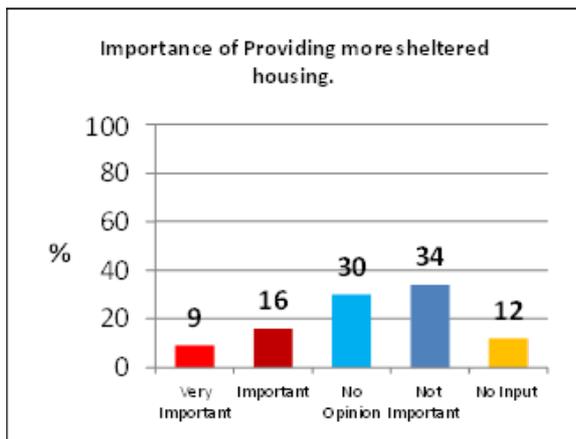
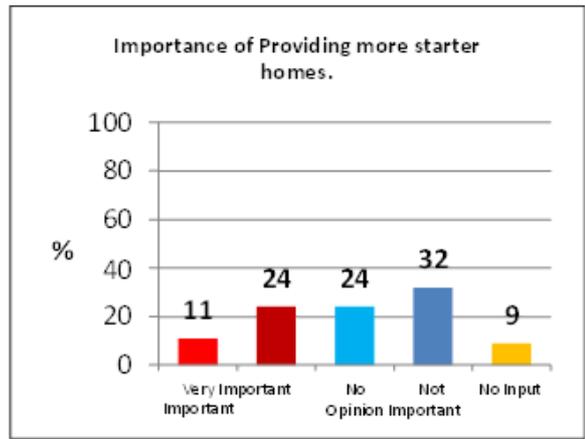
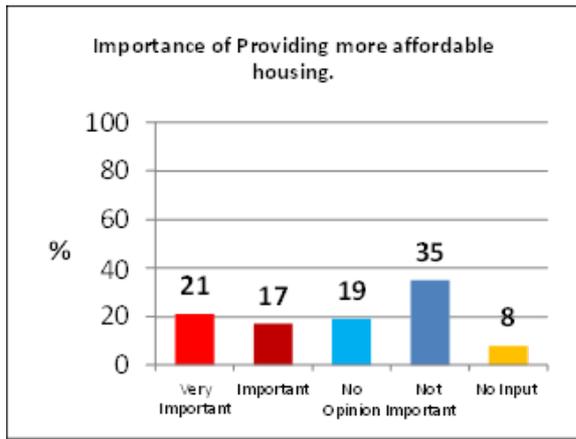
St. Anthony Church is the church for the benefice of Alkham, Capel and Hougham. The church's day-to-day expenses are the responsibility of the churchgoers. The Friends of St. Anthony's, established in March 2009, was set up to enable parishioners of all denominations to support the preservation of the church and encourage the community's involvement with the church. There is an ongoing need to support our local church during these challenging times of declining congregations.

The Marquis of Granby, located in the centre of Alkham Village, is the only remaining licensed public house. Originating from the 19th Century, the original building was built in 1810 and has undergone many refurbishments. It has quickly become a popular community hub hosting village quizzes and gatherings like the annual Christmas tree light-up ceremony. Additionally, it has hosted the book club, WI, and several community group meetings.

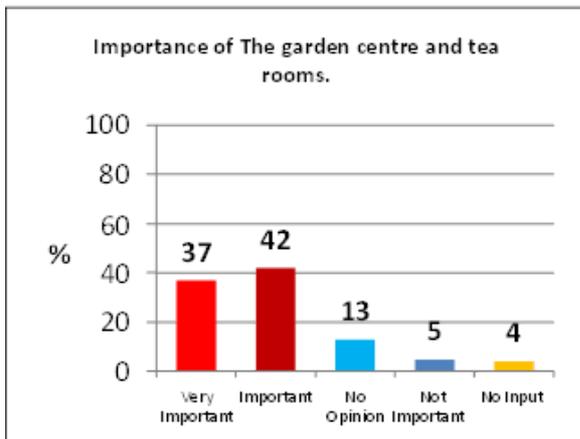
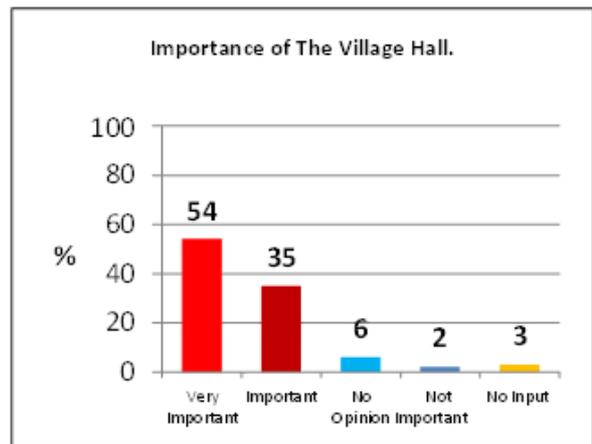
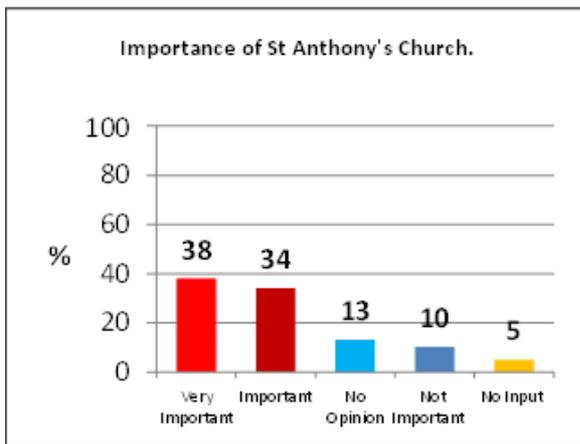
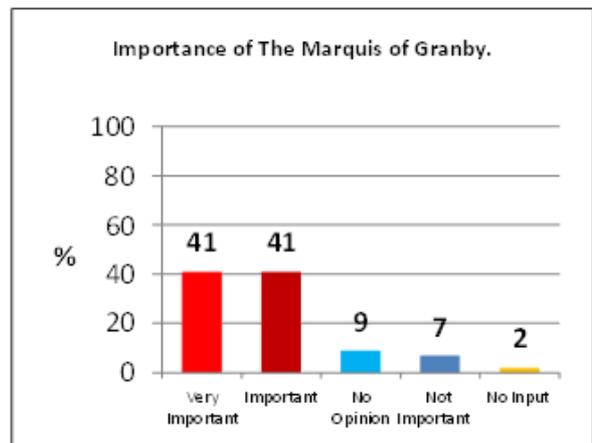
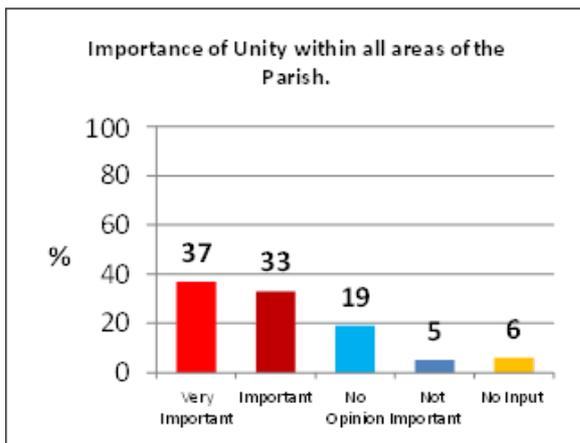
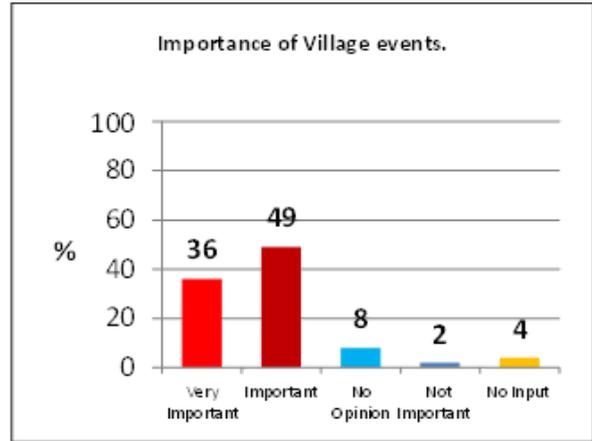
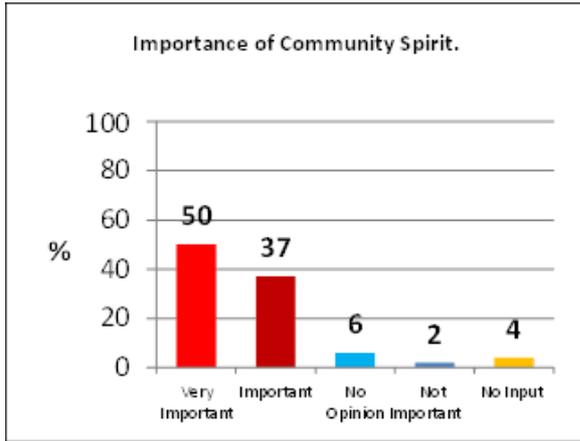
Assessment

Regarding housing, respondents thought providing limited development was important, although the numbers needed to support current Government House Building Targets. Half of the respondents supported a mixture of affordable and starter homes but felt, if possible, a need to conform to the local character of buildings or village design. The community expects the Parish Council to scrutinise planning applications and enforce subsequent decisions by DDC Planning. Building materials and designs should be carefully considered for new buildings and extensions on planning proposals to ensure that the rural visual nature of Parish development within the AONB is appropriate.

Housing & Development



Q3. Community & Community Buildings



Local Governance

Alkham has had a parish council for many years. It is a corporate body and a legal entity separate from its members. The commission council has powers granted by Parliament, including the authority to raise money through taxation via the parish precept; it also has a range of powers to spend public money.

It is the first tier of local government and is an elected body. The other tiers include Dover District Council and Kent County Council, known as principal councils or authorities, and have many legal duties to deliver services.

Alkham Parish Council (APC) plays a vital and essential part in representing the interests of the community they serve and helping, where able, improve the quality of life and the local environment. The parish council can influence other decision-makers and partner with higher-tier bodies to help deliver services to meet local needs and make a difference.

The function of the Alkham Parish Council is to represent the interests of the whole community. Councillors have a responsibility to attend meetings when summoned to do so and to represent the entire electorate.

APC must hold at least four meetings per year, one of which must be the Annual meeting of the Council. Meetings are open to the public and press; Dover District and Kent County Council ward representatives can attend.

Representations from the public are allowed fifteen minutes before the opening of the formal meeting. Individuals may speak for up to three minutes on agenda items or at the discretion of the Chairman – the minute book is closed.

APC has established a council website for communication and village documentation. Residents are encouraged to raise any matters of concern by correspondence via the Parish Clerk.

The APC website provides full details regarding overall council work, details of current councillors, vacancies available, scheduled meetings, agendas, etc., as well as providing an excellent video outlining councillor work.

Assessment:

- APC councillors are subject to the Nolan Principles of good governance and conduct in public office. APC has adopted a code of conduct that aligns with the NOLAN Principles.
- APC must do what the law requires it to do.
- APC may do only what the law says it may do.
- APC cannot do anything unless permitted by legislation.

APC has the power to provide and maintain certain facilities within the Parish.

APC currently provides:

- Good communications via dedicated council website and reports.
- Good consultation where an action change impacts the community.
- Good financial transparency.
- Opportunity to work in partnership with local clubs and community groups.
- A service of openness and approachability.

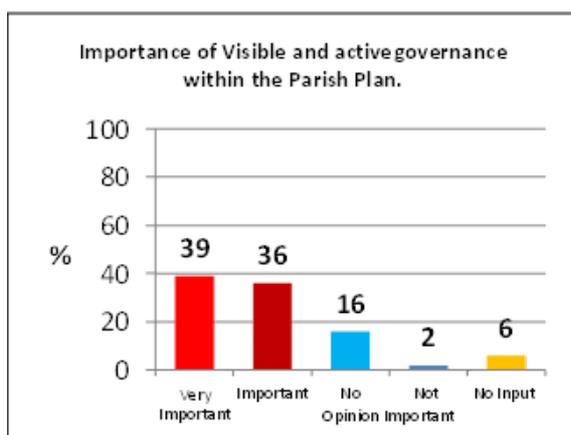
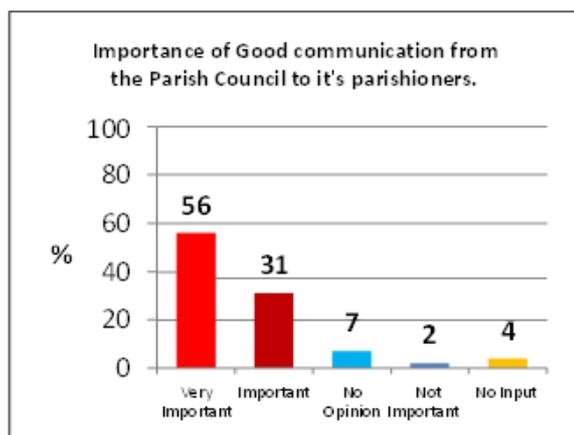
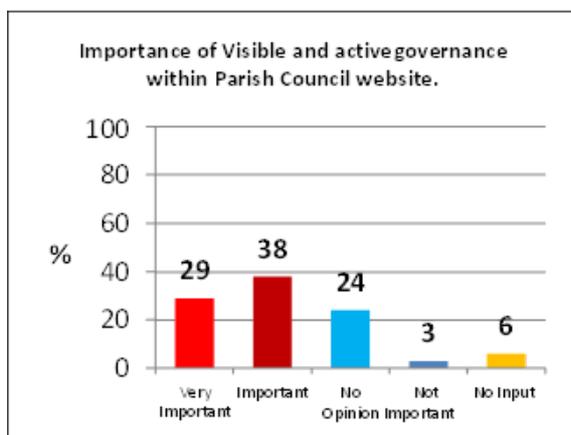
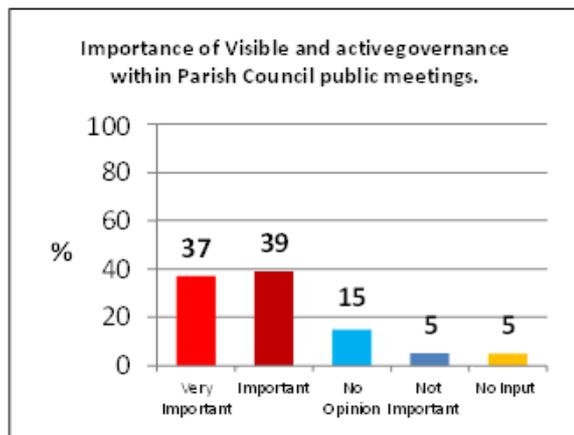
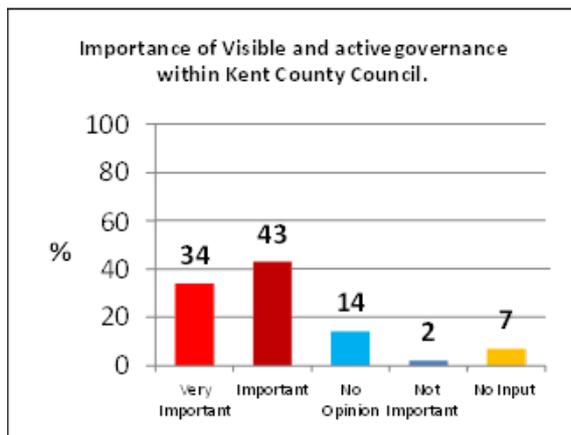
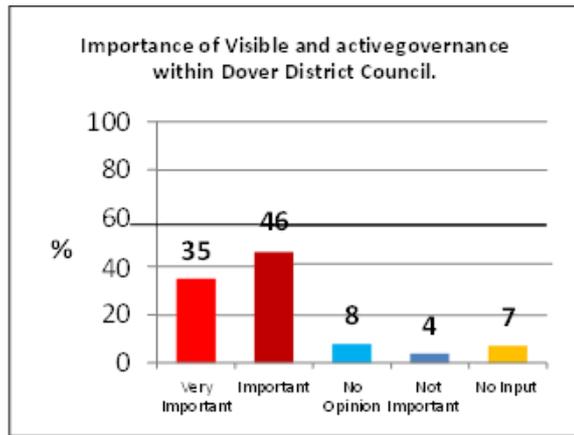
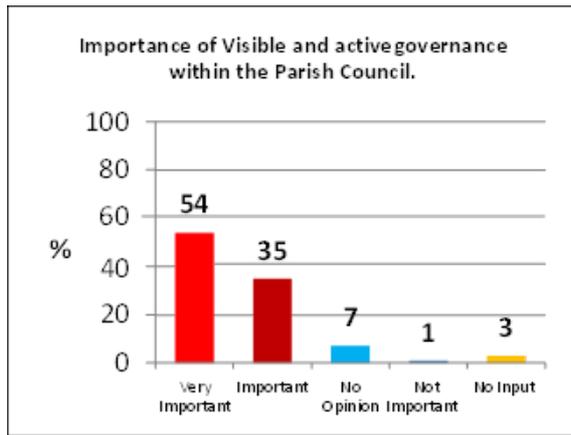
APC continues to:

- Work collaboratively to represent the interests of the whole community.
- Build better relationships with other adjacent Parish Councils, Dover District Council and Kent County Councillors.
- Network and share success.

The overarching aim is to seek continuous improvement in all aspects of APC work and delivery of responsibilities within a due care and attention framework.



Q4. Local Governance



Health & Social Care

A significant proportion of the 650 adults living in Alkham are elderly or retired and require regular, easy access to medical facilities such as their GP Surgeries. Some residents do not have access to private transport and rely heavily on public transport. The recent changes to bus timetables have created difficulties for some residents due to the extended travel time now necessary to get to GPs and hospital appointments.

Because of the current layout of Alkham Village and the location of bus stops, some villagers are concerned for their personal safety, particularly the dangers of crossing or walking without pavements along parts of the Alkham Valley Road. This is especially a problem for those with disabilities such as impaired hearing or eyesight or limited mobility.

Assessment:

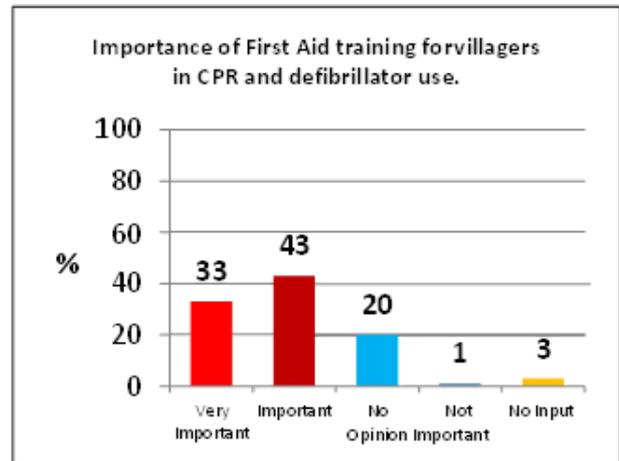
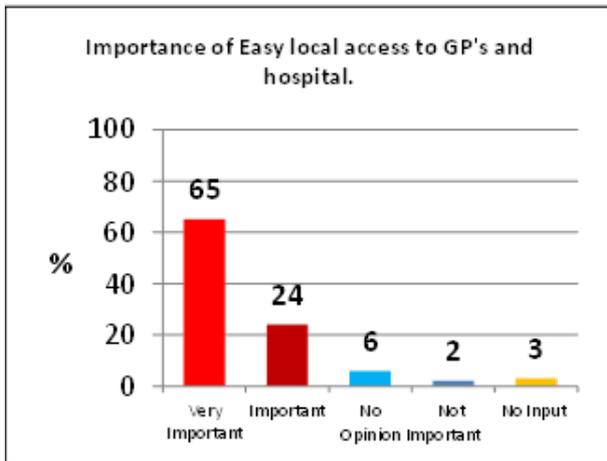
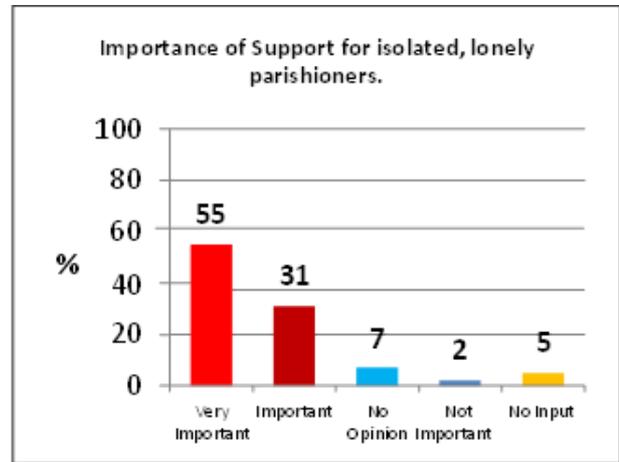
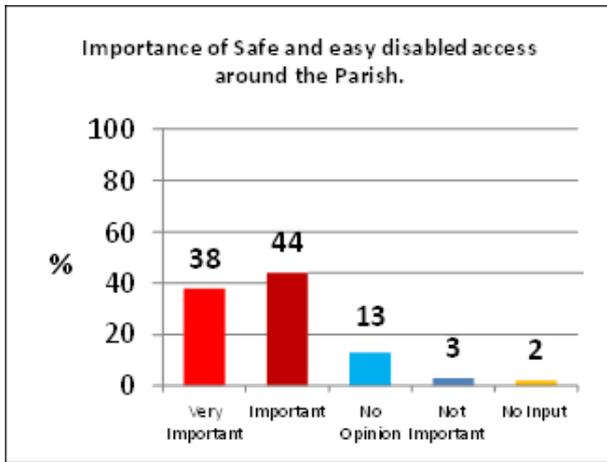
The villagers of Alkham are well known for their neighbourliness and support of the elderly and disabled.

The highest priority is the lack of safety when walking along Alkham Valley Road. Access to the Marquis of Granby, Garden Centre, and Village Hall from the Western half of the village is satisfactory. However, the need for a safe pavement near Slip Lane connecting the Marquis and East / West halves of the village is a major concern among villagers. Comments have also been reported concerning the lack of safe access from the village to the Village Green at the children's play area end.

The Village Hall Committee has instituted a monthly 'Tea and Chat' afternoon and monthly Film Night, which has become a very successful outing for elderly villagers, and it continues to expand.

Of the 41 responders to the questionnaire question regarding volunteering, about half put themselves forward to support the elderly and infirm.

Q5. Health & Social Care



Young & Old

A wide variety of people live in Alkham and Ewell Minnis.

All ages, young and old, some within family settings, and some living alone. Some go to work; others are retired, spending more time at home. They have different needs from village life, but they should all be considered within the Alkham Parish Plan.

History:

Alkham Parish Council is there to look after both the fabric of the village and the community.

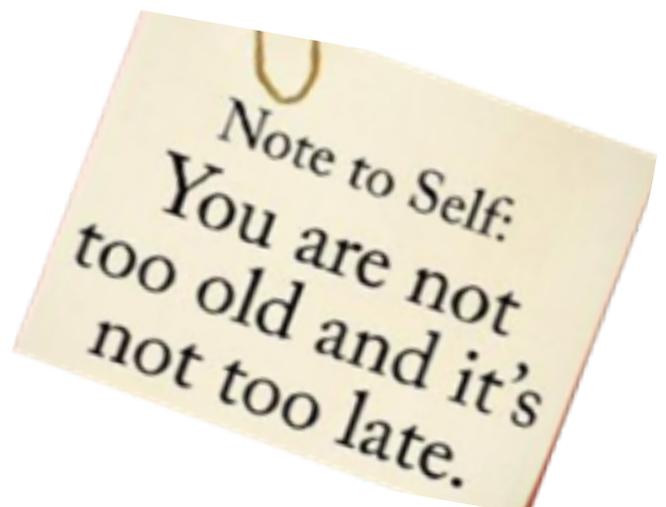
The Parish Council has recently fenced the Village Green playground from the main road, which is perceived to get busier and more dangerous each year.

The playground equipment is safety-checked regularly.

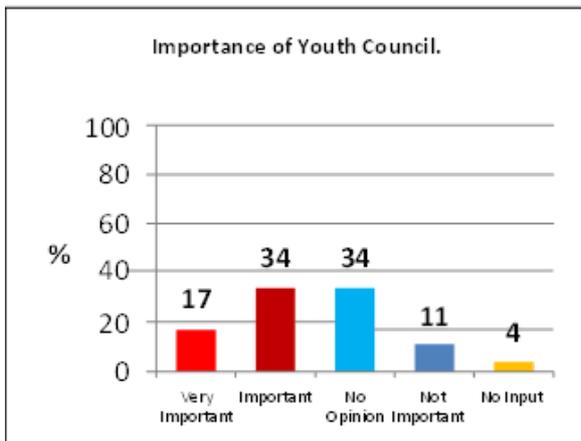
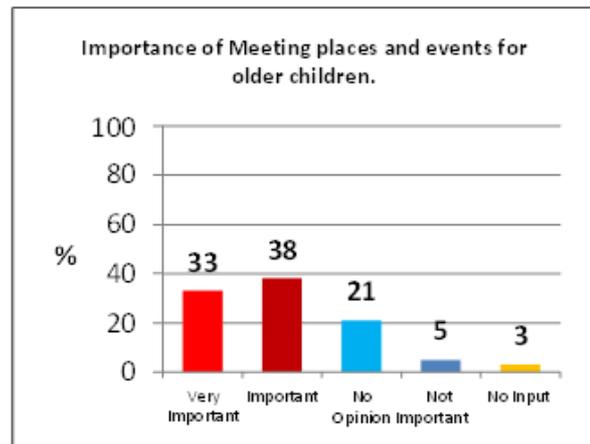
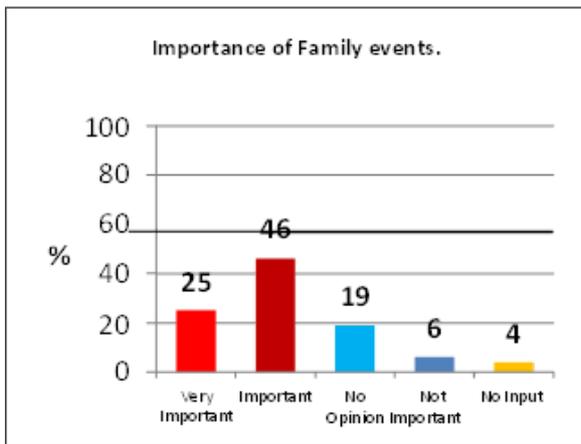
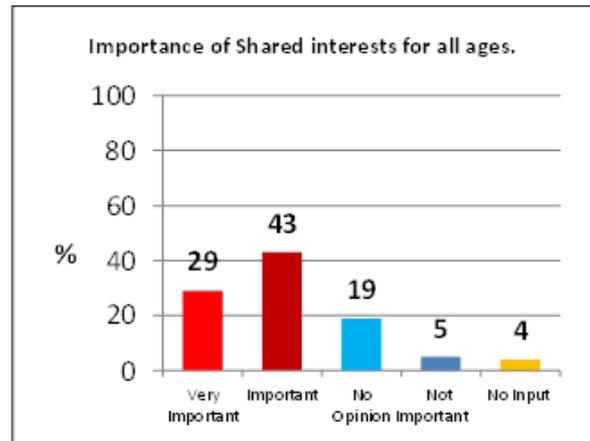
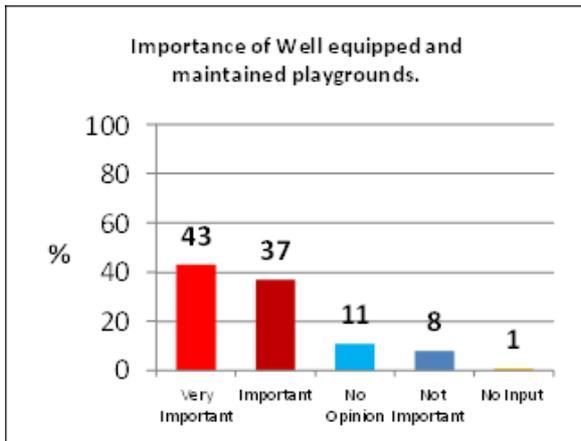
| <i>Alkham Resident Age Group Population</i> | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------|
| <u>Year</u> | Aged Under 15 | Aged 16 to 64 | Aged over 65 | Total |
| 1841 | 263 | 301 | 30 | 594 |
| 1981 | 108 | 333 | 119 | 560 |
| 2000 | "across 233 Households" | | | 607 |

Assessment:

The usual community cross-section response indicators show those who don't want to be disturbed and those who need more activities for themselves, their family, and possibly their neighbours and friends.



Q6. Young & Old



Sports & Recreation

There are no formal, organised sporting activities in Alkham, but the village green is well-maintained and can be used for various sporting activities.

The Alkham Cricket Club was established in 1839, although records show that cricket matches were played in the 1740's. The club has gone into hibernation over the past few years. Several meetings have recently been held to encourage its re-awakening, and the cricket pavilion has been refurbished.

The small football pitch is occasionally used and has floodlight facilities.

The children's play area is well-used, particularly in the summer months, and a fence has been erected shielding the area from the Alkham Valley Road.

There are a variety of recreational clubs and activities in the Village Hall, which is widely used. The very active Village Hall Committee has created an excellent venue for regular meetings and private functions. In recent years, a monthly Film Night showing recently released films and a monthly Tea and Chat afternoon has been introduced.

An annual quiz night is also well attended.

The Women's Institute meets regularly.

Keep Fit and Pilates classes are well attended.

Other activities include, but are not limited to, art classes, metal detecting, The Astronomical Society, and a bird club.

The Alkham Village Garden Talk Club hold meetings at member's houses monthly and continues to thrive, as does the Book Club.

The Alkham Village Fete, currently held bi-annually, uses the Village Hall and Green and attracts large numbers of visitors.

A Youth Club ran successfully for about five years, providing sports and facilities from 1998 to 2004 and was well attended, but sadly, adult support and the number of village children declined.

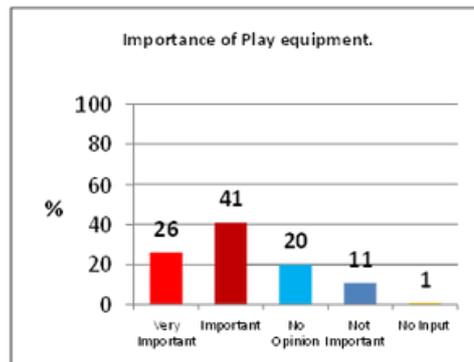
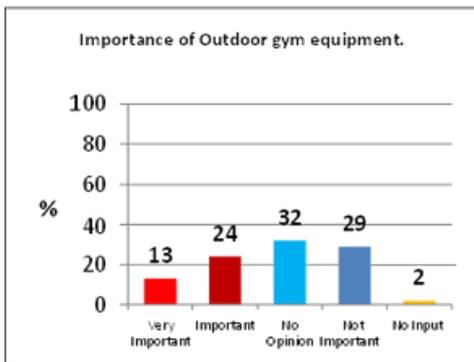
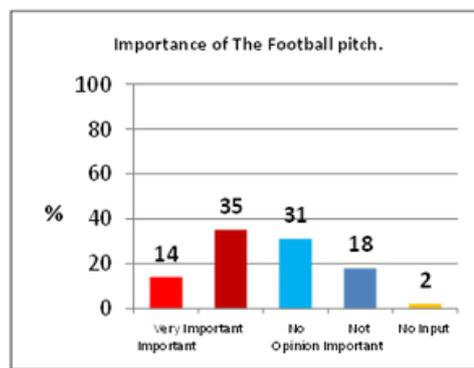
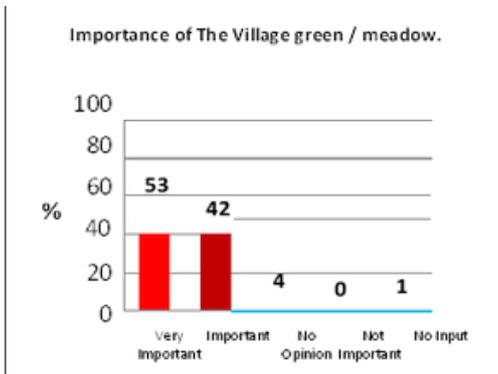
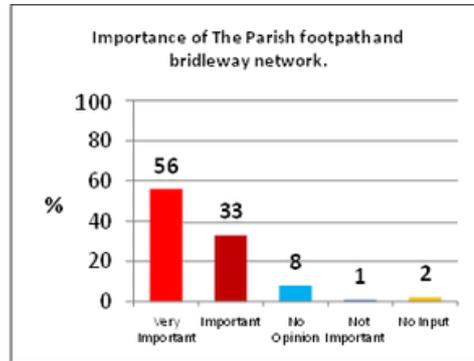
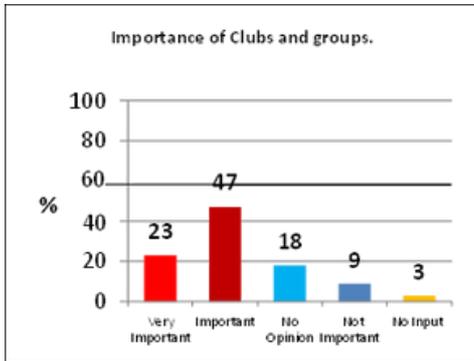
The Marquis of Granby has once again become a regular meeting place for the locals and holds a monthly Quiz Night.

The St. Anthony's Church bell ringers also practice weekly and welcome all newcomers.

There is very little organised sporting activity in the village and not much enthusiasm to change this. The historic Cricket Club is having discussions regarding it starting up again. The football pitch is well kept and remains available, but organised football has yet to take place since the demise of the Youth Club. The Village Hall Committee are very active and, as mentioned above, encourages a variety of recreational activities.



Q7. Sport & Recreation



Village Fete and Family Fun Day



Economy, Business and Employment

The parish has a population of approximately 700. Little is known about the true value of the economy of Alkham parish today; certainly, the vast proportion of working residents do not work within the valley.

There is a significant and recognisable community of self-employed and small company owners engaged in the building and service industry trades, with many living in rural properties outside the main Alkham village development.

Identified employment within the parish includes the Marquis of Granby, Alkham Valley Garden Centre and Tack shop, Hogbrook Riding Centre, Pimlico Vineyard, Sladden Farm Shop, Greenhill Glamping, stables, and Luxury B&B farmhouses. Farming is the main visible economy, but little is known about the number of people employed; much of the fieldwork appears to be completed by outside contractors with modern high-capacity equipment.

Assessment:

In response to our local economy, our community recognised the importance of local employment opportunities and business.

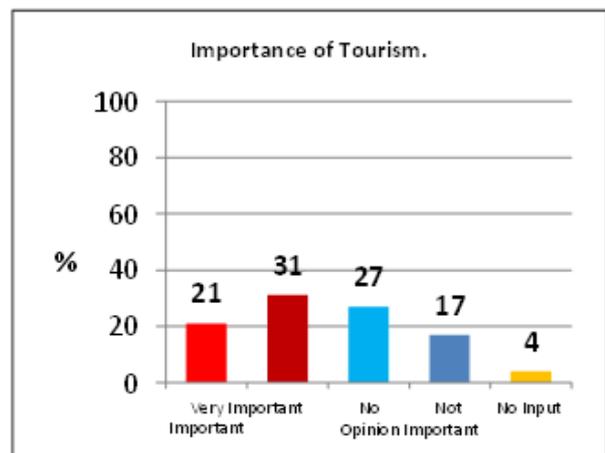
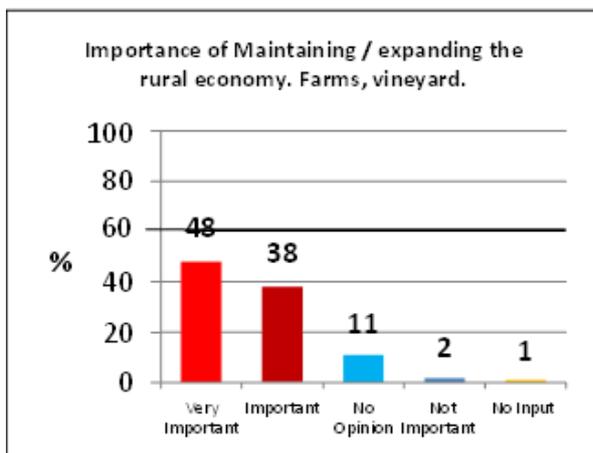
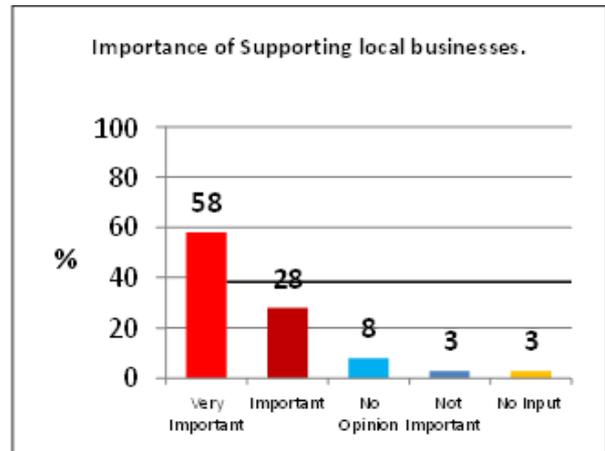
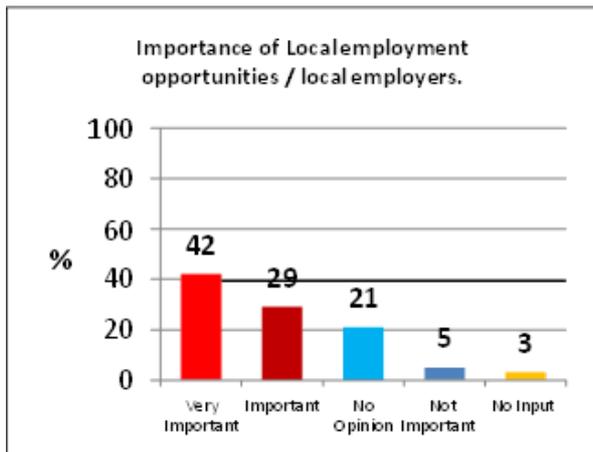
Visitors are considered an integral part of commercial activity in the Alkham Valley, but the Planning Teams' impression is that parishioners do not want the valley overwhelmed with tourists and traffic, preferring to encourage the use of the natural beauty and extensive network of footpaths, bridleways, and BOATS.

Farmers and employers were not asked to comment as a business, only as individuals.

The Planning Team feel that it would be appropriate to comment on any business or employment initiatives with detailed discussions and inclusion of local or potential employers.

A separate working group including local and potential employers, facilitated by volunteers, is the best way forward.

Q8. Economy, Business & Economy



Roads & Infrastructure

Much work has already been done in maintaining Pimlico Way ER185 and ER25, and the Bull Run ER122 BOATs (Byway Open to All Traffic). More recently, emergency temporary closures have taken place during the winter months due to safety concerns arising from the condition of said byways.

Assessment:

There is a strong public opinion with regard to public rights of way, and their misuse, with over 90% of respondents saying this is important to them.

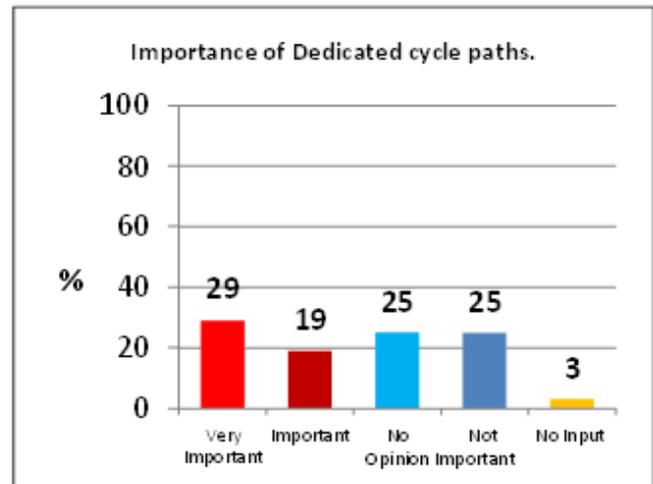
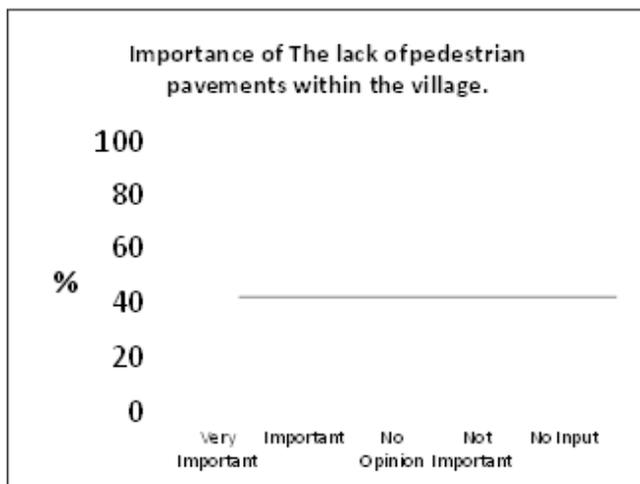
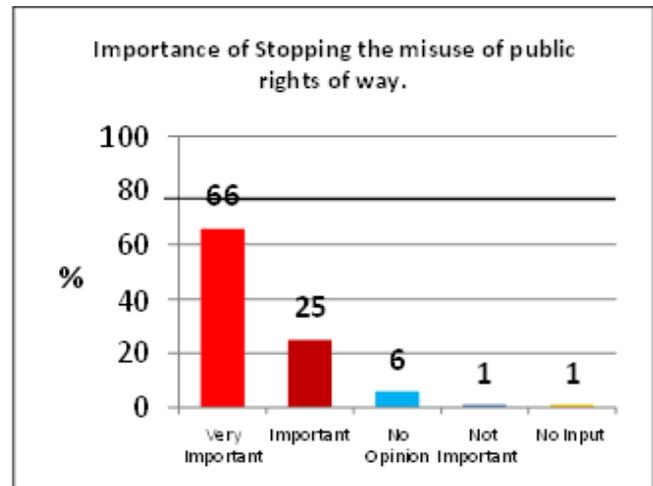
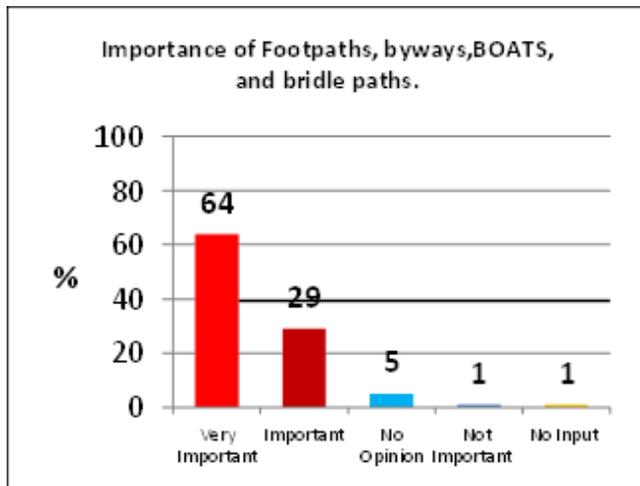
With 44% of respondents being over 65 years old, the lack of pedestrian pavements is a problem, as just over 70% of those answering agreed. Comments were also made about the lack of safe crossing points.

Types of path

There are four types of path and you can use different paths for different activities. They are signposted from the roadside, with markers along the route. You should always keep to the marked route.

- Footpaths** are marked with yellow arrows
Only walkers can use footpaths
- Bridleways** are marked with blue arrows
Walkers, horse riders and cyclists can use bridleways
- Restricted byways** are marked with burgundy arrows
Walkers, horse riders, cyclists and horse and cart can use bridleways. Cars and motorcycles are not allowed
- Byways** are marked with red arrows
Walkers, horse riders, cyclists, car users, motorcyclists and horse and cart can all use byways

Q10. Roads & Infrastructure



Public Transport

Alkham and Ewell Minnis are in the middle of the very beautiful Alkham Valley. But there is also an abundant community outside of Alkham. It is necessary for work, school, shopping, and travelling to Dover, Folkestone, or further afield. Commuting to London has increased since the introduction of the High-Speed Rail service.

However, not everyone living in the Parish can drive or has access to a car.

History:

In 1799, Edward Hasted, in his Survey of the County of Kent, said that Alkham was “very much unknown and unfrequented...and that it was much pleasanter to view at a distance, than to travel over, the roads being intolerably bad.”

In 1884, there was the suggestion of a rail link through the valley from Folkestone to Temple Ewell. That didn't happen...

Assessment:

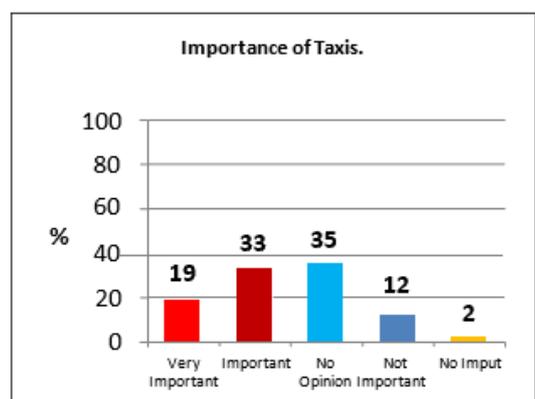
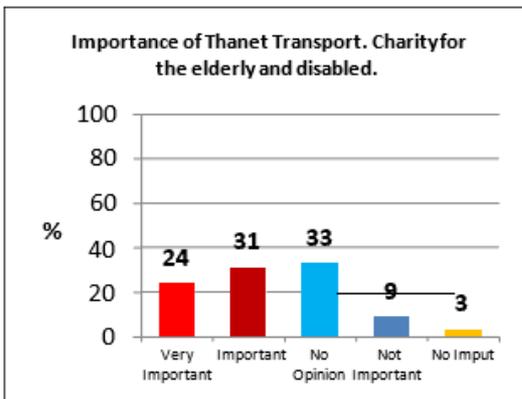
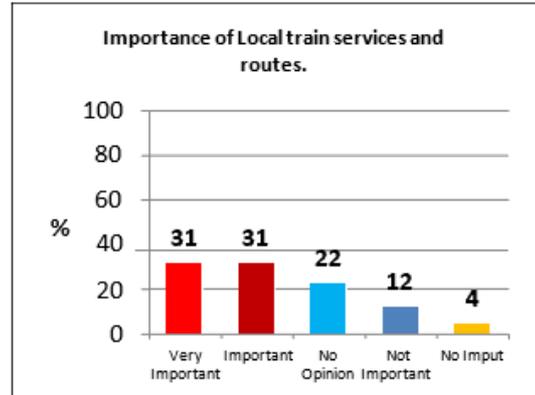
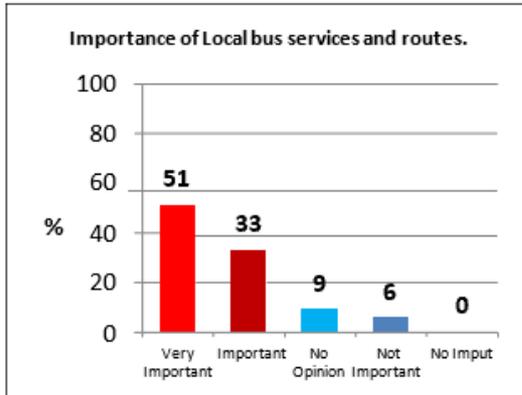
There is a functional public transport service, but there is room for improvement, and some of the latest changes have not been for the better with public service underfunding challenges post-COVID.

The Government's push for more private electric vehicles in rural areas is challenging, particularly as the needed accompanying support infrastructure is far from completed nor adequate in meeting needs in the near future.

The provision of good bus, train, and taxi services is considered important amongst residents.

Unfortunately, the Thanet Charity Transport scheme is now not available.

Q10. Public Transport



Heritage

Heritage can mean different things to different people. It can be anything from the past that is valued in the community that can be passed on to future generations.

This includes:

- Oral history
- Cultural traditions
- Nature
- Natural and designed landscapes
- Community archaeology
- Historic buildings, monuments and environments
- Collections in museums, libraries or archives
- Histories of people and communities

History:

St Anthony's Church, listed in 1962, is the only Grade I listed building in Alkham. There are, however, a further 24 buildings and sites given Grade II listing, which includes eight headstones in the churchyard.

The first documented travellers moved to Ewell Minnis in 1901, which is 6 or 7 generations back from today's families. This makes them one of the longest-living families in Alkham parish. They settled in this area because of the woods, where they gathered hazel to make pegs and primrose baskets for trading in Folkestone. They travelled the summer months working on farms and returned for the winter.

In the 1970s, most travellers stopped moving away and settled into houses and static homes. However, their hearts and their heritage still lie in their trailers of the past.
(For more information, please see Appendix.)

Local amateur historians have published a book giving historical information.

A brief history of Alkham Parish, the publication (Lees, Humphreys and Wimsett, 1983, 2017), Local groups include The Alkham Valley Historic Research Group (alkhamarchaeology.co.uk).

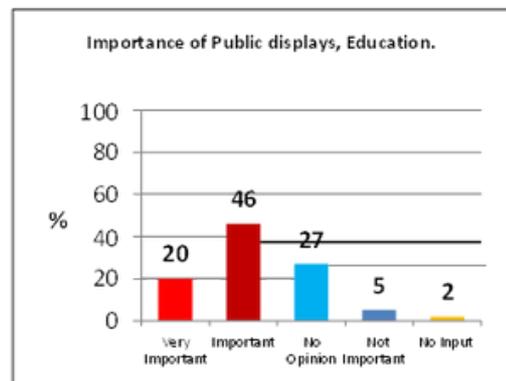
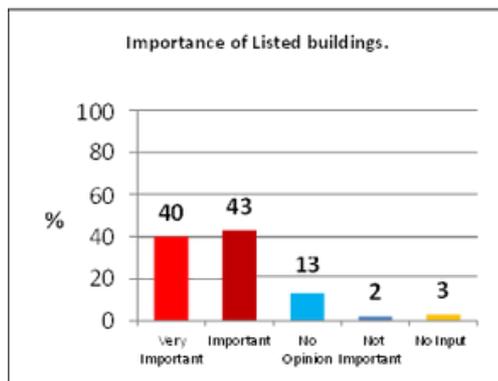
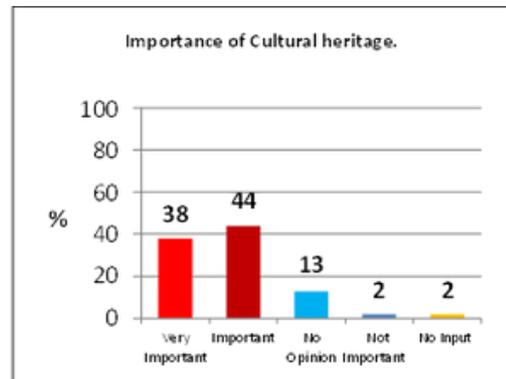
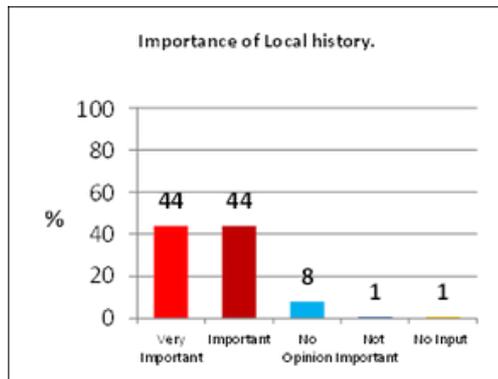
Assessment:

The public response shows that the majority feel the importance of our past and understand that it should not be forgotten but remembered and maintained.

Alkham Home Guard during World War II



Q12. Heritage



Appendix

Glossary of Terms

| | |
|------------|---|
| AONB | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| AVR | Alkham Valley Road |
| AVS | Alkham Valley Society |
| BOAT | Byway Open to All Traffic |
| BR | British Rail |
| CLPP | Community Led Parish Plan |
| DDC | Dover District Council |
| HIP | Highway Improvement Plan |
| KALC | Kent Association of Local Councils |
| KCC | Kent County Council |
| Lorrywatch | Monitoring Scheme run by KCC |
| PC | Parish Council |
| PCSO | Police Community Support Officer |
| PROW | Public Rights of Way |
| RaFAT | Roads and Footway Asset Team |
| Speedwatch | Road Safety Initiative run by Kent Police |
| SUSTRANS | Sustainable Transport – a Walking and Cycling Charity |
| TAG | Traffic Action Group |
| TIG | Traffic Implementation Group |

Appendix

Heritage: The Travellers of Ewell Minnis by Lorraine Beaney

I am writing about the Heritage of Gypsy Travellers living at Ewell Minnis with the help of my husband and sister-in-law, who lived here growing up.

So, the first documented Travellers moved here in 1901, 6 or 7 generations back. It was said that they settled here because of the woods, to gather hazel wood to make pegs and primrose baskets.

My family moved to Ewell Minnis in 1961 and really enjoyed living in a travelling community; I can remember as a child being enchanted by the Gypsy way of life, never dreamt that I would marry one and have children with a Gypsy Heritage and end up owning my own beautiful Gypsy Bow Top Wagon.

So, my memories only go back as far as my children's great-grandmother, Lydia Roberts and how she would push a pram full of flowers down Wolverton Hill to catch the bus to Folkestone. The bus driver would get the pram into the boot at the back of the bus. She would sell her flowers usually outside Bobbys, as it was then, and also knocked on doors to sell them; she was known to the local bakers calling in on her way back to the bus after selling all her flowers, primrose baskets etc., to get bread and cakes for the grandchildren that weren't sold that day, and then get the bus home again, and face the long walk back up the hill to get home, my father often gave her lift.

But the travellers were here long before my memories.

Amongst the first Travellers here were Showman, who pulled their Wagons on common ground at the top of the Minnis (now MOD land); word got around, and more Gypsy Travellers arrived, my children's ancestors. They soon started to settle here on a more permanent basis, travelling during the summer months from farm to farm, doing hop training, fruit and potato picking, hop picking, and returning for the winter.

Granny Lydia Roberts was born in prison after her very heavily pregnant mother was sent to prison for hitting a police officer who had told them to back up and move on when asking for more time as they were cooking the Children's food on the outside fire, the police officer kicked all the cooking out of the pot, so Granny Lydia's mother hit him, and who can blame her. She was sent to prison for 28 days, where Granny Lydia was born. So gradually, travellers (as they preferred to be called) bought ground, sometimes with some kind of dwelling on, and settled down for the winter.

We know that most of Granny Lydia's children went to Alkham school, who, if were still alive today, would be in their early nineties. She has one remaining daughter alive, now 70, who also attended Alkham school. As Granny Lydia's children married, five of them settled near each other here in Ewell Minnis, bringing up their children, who all attended Alkham School.

The eldest of Granny Lydia's children, Selina Beaney, my mother-in-law's children, all attended Alkham school during the winter, moving away in the Summer. They stopped moving away in the early 1970s, settling into houses and Static Homes, having been driven from the roads, but have always preferred their trailers, as they call them; it's their heritage. People will say they are not travellers, maybe they don't travel anymore, but they have Gypsy blood in their veins; it's not just a way of life, it's a culture and a lovely one at that. And I couldn't be prouder of the fact that my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have Gypsy blood in their veins.

To date, eighteen properties on the Minnis are owned by Granny Lydia and Grandad Henry Roberts, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. So, the travellers have been one of the longest-living families to live at Ewell Minnis.

We have recently found a closely related relative on the Beaney side, living in Alkham, that we never knew existed, moving here from Sittingbourne.



A Gypsy bow-topped wagon, 'trailer'.