

**Report to Eydon Parish Council on
Eydon's Village Design Statement Questionnaire**

April 2010

Report on Eydon's Village Design Statement Questionnaire

Executive Summary

Information for this report was gathered from a survey carried out in Eydon in November 2009. A 79% response rate gives the report significant weight in carrying the views of parishioners.

This summary draws out the salient points from the questionnaire findings and follows the section headings. Items thought to be of particular relevance to the parish council are within the report on page 11.

Demographics: while Eydon has a maturing population it also has smaller households and a longer period of residency than shown in all previous surveys. 70% of people have lived here for more than five years and there are more households so this is a sustainable village not a diminishing one.

Landscape and settings: there is strong support across the village to maintain open space, communal areas and green land. 95% of respondents support preserving the setting of the church and its surroundings, the sports field and the village green. There is strong agreement also that Eydon must maintain its views from and approaching the village.

Building and Settlements: opinion is fairly consistent in that there is a majority of 2:1 against a need for more houses and the same against wanting more houses. It will be of interest to match this response with the outcomes of the housing needs survey carried out by SNC in January 2010. Should any new housing be allowed people feel strongly that it must be in keeping with the historical character of the village and have a capability for sustainable power generation.

Roads and traffic: car ownership continues to rise so that it is now equivalent to almost one for every adult. Also garages are being used for other purposes giving us double the number of cars being parked at the kerb side since 1992. Parking is a problem that must not be made worse by further development. 97% of people responding agree.

Services and amenities: electricity, water and sewage services are generally satisfactory but internet and mobile phone access is rated poorly. Does this adversely affect local businesses developing? However 65% of responses indicate they think Eydon could support a shop. This section also allowed respondents to raise any thing not included elsewhere. 14 mentioned the village hall, 9 the community and neighbourhood, 9 further development issues and 7 mentioned the Royal Oak pub.

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Report on Eydon's Village Design Statement Questionnaire

Introduction

This report details the findings of a survey carried out in Eydon as part of the process to develop a village design statement (VDS). It was funded by Eydon Parish Council whose members are the primary audience for this document but it is also being published electronically so that the results are made known to the whole parish.

The survey took the form of a questionnaire and was carried out by a sub-committee of the council charged with drawing up the VDS. The group took this opportunity to gather opinions and data wider than the VDS required in order to bring up to date some earlier demographic figures, and so show trends, and to provide prospective developers with an insight into what villagers would prefer – and therefore support – beyond the mandatory.

The VDS group is grateful to everyone who took part and has tried to express all the views fed back through the questionnaire. We value your opinions and believe everyone should be able to be part of decisions affecting Eydon, to the extent that we can actually influence any process.

The result from the all questionnaires along with all the additional comments made have been recorded and tabulated and are included here in Appendix 1. The details of the design and methodology of the questionnaire itself are given in Appendix 2, whilst the questionnaire, along with its covering letter and preceding publicity in Eydon Village News, are in Appendix 3.

Demographics

Response rate

Questionnaires were collected from 147 of the 175 households occupied at the time of the exercise, a gross collection rate of 84%. Nine of the forms were, for one reason or another (sometimes explained in great detail in an accompanying letter) blank, leaving 138 forms completed to a greater or lesser degree. This response rate - 79% of available village opinions - fully validates the results, meaning that the opinions expressed here can be taken as the true opinions of the village.

Village population

The first question asked households to list their makeup, broken down by gender and age. While not directly relevant to the VDS, this gives a useful statistical check on the answers given in the rest of the questionnaire, as well as providing a snapshot of the village. This is especially useful when compared with similar questions asked during the preparation of the village appraisal in 1992 and 1995 and from additional data from the census returns of 1991 and 2001. These additional values are included here as Appendix 4.

The 138 households have a total population of 315, comprising of 159 men and 156 women, giving an average household size of 2.28. This shows a steady drop from 2.58 in 1995 and 2.60 in 1992, probably reflecting national trends. At 2.28 persons per household, the village population at the time of the questionnaire was probably about 424 persons (all 195 households less 9 empty x 2.28) compared with 420 in the 2001 and 425 in the 1991 censuses.

Looking at the breakdown in ages, 23% of the village is 21 or under, again a drop from the 26% of 1995 and 29% of 1992. This is matched by an increase in those over 45, resulting in the average age of the typical villager going up from 37 years and 3 months in 1992, to 38 years and 6 months in 1995 and 42 years and 10 months now.

Almost 1 in 4 is a single person household, whilst half are of just 2 persons. The largest households, of 5 persons, comprise only 3% of the total.

Village stability

Possibly reflecting the increasing average age of the village, people are staying longer with the average residency going up from 14 years and 2 months in 1992, to 18 years in 1995 then 18 years and 4 months now.

Your house

The question asking when your house was built reflects the spread of houses' ages in the village and shows that all parts of the village responded to the questionnaire.

Occupations

Probably reflecting the drop in under 21 year olds, the proportion in full time education has dropped from 20% in the 1990s to 15% now. Mirroring this, the percentage of retirees has moved in the opposite direction. The number of self-employed has gone from 14% up to 20%, again probably reflecting national trends. The number of unwaged eg housewives, carers etc has dropped from more than 10% in 1992 to just 3% now.

Travelling to work

As in 1992, just over 1 in 4 of the village work at home or elsewhere in the village. The number of employment opportunities within the village remains tiny at about 3%. Average distance travelled to work has increased slightly, going from 13.7 to 14.5 miles each way.

Landscapes and Setting

The open spaces in and around Eydon were shown to be of paramount importance to the residents. Questions relating to the preservation of the setting of the church and its surroundings and the communal open spaces in the village - the green and the sports field - are supported by more than 95% of respondents. A similar endorsement was given for the maintenance of footpaths, bridleways and verges as well as maintaining the rural character of existing views and approaches to the village.

Only 2% of respondents do not consider that residents/businesses should be encouraged to maintain and where applicable, replace trees and hedgerows which contribute to the amenity and landscape of the village.

While 70% feel that electrical and telephone wiring should be placed under ground, more than a fifth of responses did not offer a view on this subject. Among those who oppose the idea there were fears of damage to roads *“which are poorly/badly maintained anyway.”*

Buildings and Settlements

Needs and wants

The opening two questions asked respondents if they felt there was a **need** for more homes, and then did they actually **want** more homes. The answer to these questions together with others in this section will make an interesting comparison when the SNC Housing Needs Survey is published.

The responses indicate that by a majority of 2:1, residents stated that they disagree/strongly disagree that there is a need for more housing with, however, a sizable minority of 65 residents (24% of the total) expressing no opinion.

On the question of wanting more houses in the village, the number of ‘no opinions’ dropped to 16% (43 residents) but did not change the 2:1 majority who again disagree/strongly disagree. From analysis of all replies to this question, there is a consistent majority of 2:1 across all three age groups (22-45; 46-64; 65+) who disagree/strongly disagree with wanting more houses.

With hindsight, the question that followed, asking those who wanted more housing to state their preference as to where they should be built, should have been asked of all the village. As it stands, 25% of the 105 responses were from villagers who had said they did not want more houses in Eydon.

These replies indicate a tolerance to ‘infill on existing plots’ from 42 respondents with 43 accepting development of small estates (2 to 6 houses). But each of these last two groups only represents 15% of the total number (277) of responses to the questionnaire. Some qualifying comments added include (as well as *‘none of these’*) requirements *‘only if extremely carefully designed and meet criteria in Q16 [Editors note: about bulk and mass of a building] and Q23 ’ [Editors note: about adequate parking for new developments]; ‘must look like old village houses or wonderful fresh architecture’ and ‘must be within village envelope’.*

Building design

When asked “With any proposed new development the scale, density, mass, height, layout, architectural detailing etc.....it blends within the context etc of the village”, there is a massive majority of 255 (93% of responses) who agree/strongly agree, with 19 having no opinion and only 1 who disagrees. This could indicate that opinion moves strongly when building proposals and detail are more readily outlined rather than just a question in principle.

This opinion was confirmed by the 230 residents (83%) who agree/strongly agree that when replacing doors, windows etc the size, material and style should be in context.

A question about ‘environmentally sustainable power generation’, shows that a ratio in the region of 4:1 was in favour of such projects with 39 residents offering no opinion. The comments do, however, add some caveats to that approval: *‘As long as not an eyesore’* and *‘Agree with sustainability but not wind turbines and other eyesores!’*.

Roads and transport

Having assessed the number of cars now in the village, this section sought views on parking and speeding within the village and asked for suggestions to address any problems. It also asked about the provision of off road parking for new developments.

Car ownership

Car ownership continues to rise, from 1.53 per household, (equivalent to 0.74 per adult) in 1992, to 1.78 per household, (0.93 per adult) now. This is not evenly spread, varying from 5 households without a car at all to 9 with 4 or more. Most of these (51%) are now kept on the drive, and there has been a drop in the number of cars stored in a garage from 76 in 1992 to 26 now. The survey demonstrated a 100% increase in the number of cars parked on the roadside from 35 in 1992 to 72 now. Consequently the issues surrounding roads and parking brought a good response to the questions posed.

Parking

Of the 279 responses, 82% agree or strongly agree that parking is a problem in the village with 97% agreeing or strongly agreeing that new properties should have adequate parking space. The developments on Preston Road already prompt the comment, *“probably difficult to deal with now, especially along Preston Capes Road - where are the cars from those new houses going?”* However other comments range from *“It’s a village, what can you do?”* and *“too late, too many houses have been built with inadequate parking”*.

Suggestions to remedy the problem include encouraging off road parking with communal facilities. The largest number of comments encompass similar feelings to the resident who suggested *"If land were available, would a village car park offer a solution, particularly if gated and at least part secure, for use of residents who could rent space?"* Other suggestions fall into the categories of permits; fines for people with off road parking who don't use it; car and parking sharing schemes; planning changes such as yellow lines around the junctions and *"Insist that existing garages are used. Do not grant planning permission for conversion of garages to houses"*

Speeding

The question of speeding brought a wider spread of opinion with 57% of the 277 responses agreeing there is a problem and 25% disagreeing (18% no opinion). Most are in favour of a reduced speed limit of 20mph (2: 1) and automatic warning signs on entry to the village (2.5:1), with provisos. *"Although we do not think speeding is a regular problem reducing the limit to 20mph is a good idea."* A significant number wanted no change: *"We do not believe road engineering of any sort really works and increases pollution"*. 81% are strongly against a one way system. Other solutions include educating drivers; using parked vehicles to act as a chicane; the use of speed cameras, both real and false, to persuade drivers to respect the speed limit (or face naming & shaming) and road changes. *"Change of priorities at junction of Hill View & Lime Avenue - Give Way"*

Of the 263 responses 90% strongly agree that any street furniture to inform of these schemes should reflect the character of the village *"No more sign; leave the roads alone - the village is not suburban"*.

Services and amenities

This section looked at utilities and services, both national eg broadband or bus services and local such as the need for a shop. It also invited comments, which were liberally offered, on the one thing that you value most about the village that you feel has not been included on the questionnaire. All these comments are laid out on pp11-12 of Appendix 1.

Buses

As a bus service is not something the village is used to having it is not surprising that the majority of people (62%) stated no interest in a service or that they do not use one. However 33% feel it is important and for 6% the bus service is essential, presumably the 5 households which Q18 has shown have no car. It will be interesting to see if this number of respondents actually uses the current service. Banbury was named as a priority destination for 81% of respondents followed by Daventry (61%) Northampton (38%) Towcester (22%) Brackley (20%) and Woodford (12%). Other destinations listed were in single figures.

Utilities

Utilities are viewed quite well with the electricity service being considered at least satisfactory by 72% of households and water/sewerage achieving a 73% satisfaction rating. At the other end of the scale internet access only managed 24% satisfaction and mobile phone coverage a poor 11% (perhaps with some being satisfied that mobile phones cannot shatter their peace!).

However lack of broadband and mobile phone coverage could be having a negative impact on people's ability to work from home. Half of people in work never do so from home and only 5% do so full time. Is our digital service at odds with policies for maintaining a rural economy and so a lever for change?

Indeed, 75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that, providing there is no adverse affect on the village, business developments should be encouraged.

Local resources

A number of questions were asked around what could be provided in Eydon from local sources. A large majority agree that a village shop is viable (176) with only 95 agreeing that the village is too small to support one. One person feels the "*pub should be encouraged to be a PO/depot for deliveries*". The need - or not - for more bins for dog droppings was more evenly matched with 149 for and 114 against but only 85 want more litter bins, 179 don't. More bench seating got the thumbs down with only 64 in favour and 193 against and more street lighting was only supported by 101 with 176 against.

And the final question....

More than a third of households answered the final question asking for what was valued most about the village that was not mentioned in the questionnaire. The 49 responses can be broken down into four main topic areas (plus another 13 comments covering a miscellany of topics). The largest subject group was the 14 comments about the village hall, all supporting it in its current position.

The next largest group, of 9 comments, value the sense of community and peace and quiet in the village, whilst another group of 9 comments, on development issues, mirror the responses to the questions on building in the village. The two comments urging further development are matched by four urging that development in the village be restrained.

A group of seven comments on the Royal Oak is mainly of praise, whilst the miscellaneous group covered everything from facilities for young people to the mobile shop, buses, bonfires and the appearance of the village.

Wider concerns

Several issues raised in the VDS questionnaire were outside its remit and would not be acceptable to SNC Planning Department as they (mainly) fall into development areas. However, they are a record of village opinions on these matters and in other village design statements (eg Long Buckby, Whilton etc) they are recorded as non-statutory 'Parish Preferences'. They are recorded here in the hope that developers will become aware of them and by trying to meet them, may find a more positive response from the village.

Further Development of the Village

By a ratio of 2 to 1, the village is against further development in Eydon. This opinion is constant across the age groups.

Size and location of any development

There is only limited support for any development and it should be either infill or small developments of 2-6 houses. There is no support for larger groups of houses or estates and there is anecdotal support for maintaining the village boundary. There is 96% support for preserving open spaces in the village.

Additional off-street parking

The village is isolated, with limited public transport, and very limited employment opportunities so car ownership, currently 1.77 cars per household, is higher than the national and regional average.

The age of the village, with its tight compact layout and almost urban housing density, means that space for on street parking is sometimes very limited.

A case study of recent housing developments within the village highlights the problems associated with designs that complied with the then national guidelines of 1.5 parking spaces per household (see Appendix 5 for details). This case study and the support from the VDS questionnaire for housing with sufficient off-street parking, supports the parish preference that all new housing in Eydon should have at least 2 off-street parking spaces per household.

Parking on verges

The case study also highlights the risk of damage to verges and to the services that run beneath, by vehicles driving or parking on them. This supports a VDS guideline that verges can't be used as overflow car parks on a regular basis without support (in form of buried plastic mesh etc) first.

Services

The village also expressed support for services and amenities that are outside the control of public bodies such as a village shop and the retention of the Royal Oak as a village amenity. 75% of the village also supports the encouragement of non-polluting (in its widest sense) businesses in Eydon.

There is general dissatisfaction with broadband and mobile phone coverage in the village. There is support for sustainable services, with the proviso that their provision can't be seen, which probably would apply to any new facilities needed to improve the communication infrastructure too.

The biggest single response to the question of what was valued most about the village that had not been included in the questionnaire was support for Eydon Village Hall, the majority of this explicitly stating in its present position.

Matters arising relevant to the parish council

There are a number of issues arising from the responses to the questionnaire that we feel should be drawn to the attention of the parish council. Some of these can be seen as supporting current council policies; others suggest initiatives that the council might wish to consider, while others seek support in their submissions to district and county councils or other authorities.

The demographics show that the village population is steady at about 424, whilst the parish council's economic base is rising from 191 households in 2001, 195 in 2009 to 199 in 2010. Facilities for young people must still be seen as important, despite the proportional drop from 1 in 4 in 1992 to 1 in 5 now. Facilities for older villagers may also need to be considered as the number of over 65s has gone from 1 in 8 in 1992 to 1 in 5 now.

Support for current parish council policies

The overwhelming wish to maintain the current approaches to the village and the open spaces, such as that next to the church, offer the Parish Council a clear indication of the views of residents when considering planning applications. It would also indicate that the Parish Council should enjoy support in initiatives such as organising the annual litter pick and village clear up. The support given to the Eydon sports field and the endeavours to register the village green also appears to reflect the public view.

Similarly, the value given to the footpaths and the bridleways would suggest that the voluntary post of Footpath Warden is valued. The strength of conservation concerns indicate that the parish council should continue to support and monitor tree preservation orders.

The results show that a large percentage of residents do not want any expansion of the village. There is also a large majority of the view that any new development "should reflect, the scale, density, mass, height, layout, materials, architectural detailing, access and landscape to ensure that it blends well within the context of its surroundings within the village". The notion that "environmentally sustainable power generation should be encouraged..." is also supported.

On existing buildings there is strong support that “when replacing windows, doors etc the scale, size, materials and style should match the architectural and historic character of the village”.

Respondents are greatly concerned with parking problems and are against the conversion of garages and car parking spaces to other uses. The parish council has a good deal of public opinion to inform it when considering its comments to SNC on planning applications.

There is no support for an increase in street lighting, bench seating or litter bins, all the direct responsibility of parish council, while more dog bins attracted only slight support (4 to 3).

Issues for parish council consideration

Car parking is perceived as such a major problem in the village that in addition to the aversion to the conversion of garages to other uses (see above) a number of suggestions were made including the acquisition of a field. The parish council may wish to explore some of these ideas.

Various schemes were suggested to tackle the agreed problem with speeding through the village including dropping the speed limit to 20 mph; automatic speed notification signs on entry to the village and speed traps, amongst others. The parish council may wish explore these possibilities further with the relevant authority.

Support for parish council dealing with other authorities

It was shown that bus services were essential for 6% of village and important to a further 33%. It may need parish council pressure to retain and improve existing services.

There is also a demand for improved internet and mobile phone services. Perhaps the parish council could explore ways of relating these inadequacies to others within the advocated national policies for home-based working.

Other Matters

Fourteen people took the opportunity afforded by question 33 to state their views concerning the situation of village hall. The parish council might like to pass on this information to the village hall committee and potential developers.

A number of other issues were raised including the provision of additional allotments and safe access to the sports field. Parish councillors might like to look at these to see if there are matters that they feel should be taken on board.

Conclusions

The report gives the results of a survey of all of the village in connection with the writing of a VDS for Eydon, and will feed into the next draft of the VDS.

For the first time quantifiable data is available rather than anecdotes and hearsay; also this is the first time the PC been provided with useable information from residents.

Authorship

This report, and the questionnaire on which it is based, is the work of the Village Design Statement Group, a sub-committee of Eydon Parish Council. Its members are Rosie Blachard¹, Tim Burns, John Bushell², Mick Hawes¹, Kevin Lodge, Sue Russell¹ and Robert Taylor.

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