

## Village Survey, Area: East

### Within the village

Households participated	10
Households declined	0
Adults in participating households	21
Children in those households	3
Visiting children	4
Willing trustees	0
Willing managers/organisers	3

**The survey:** My surveys were only conducted within the village. Mostly, people were happy to discuss ideas and to offer comment on the list of questions we had compiled. I left questionnaires at 2 properties where I was unsuccessful at catching people in and received their forms independently afterwards.

**Receptiveness:** The people I spoke to were interested in completing the survey and happy to chat through ideas. A few mentioned that there had been some community involvement in the past within the village – the Leek Club, The Feathers and the village show/barrel-rolling etc. were cited as evidence of successful previous events. Mention was made of fireworks which happened at one time and there was some reference to the pub not being as community minded/focused as it used to be and that, therefore, the pub had ceased to be a place to meet/socialise as locals weren't encouraged to use it for that purpose. There was a general feeling of interest in ideas for more community involvement but people were keen to stress that we had managed without any real facilities and so could continue to do so.

**A village hall?** This certainly generated discussion. It was more popular than the idea of a play area, in terms of usefulness to the whole village. Several people said they would definitely use a hall should there be one built and 2 residents said they would organise and run clubs/events there. 2 other residents said they would certainly be involved in raising funds and would support the establishment of a hall but I didn't interview anyone who would be interested in actually helping run it in the future or help as a trustee for example. Several residents offered ideas as to the kind of hall we could establish and others were helpful in suggesting what kind of events/clubs etc. could be offered. Every household I spoke to asked about where it would be built, with there being some doubt as to the possibility of finding a site that would not be contentious, and how much it would cost. 3 households expressed doubt that it could be financially viable and that we would struggle, as a community, to find anyone willing to commit to the running, upkeep and the staffing of a committee/board to run it. Some said they felt that it would be an asset to the village, with some viewing it as an enormous burden on the village. Concerns were voiced regarding its long-term future and what would happen if it did not succeed. Others were concerned that there could be rifts in the village regarding the place it could be built and any land that could be secured with it to have a play area or other outside facilities. Many were worried that it would not be kept nice without a lot

of money spent. Generally, I felt that most people weren't passionately for or against the idea of a hall – if it was there they might use it; if it didn't materialise it was no loss.

**Outdoor play area:** Residents' views on this were mixed. Some felt it was important to have somewhere safe for children to play, kick a football around, mix with other children. The images we had with us for this purpose proved interesting talking points and 4 households, with either their own, or visiting children to consider, were keen for this to be established. They did recognise the need for somewhere to wash hands, use the toilet etc. and almost all said that it would be useful to have the village hall and play area sited together for this, and other reasons. The other 6 did not think we needed anything like a play area as there were not enough children in the village and that it would not be used sufficiently to warrant the costs. Those in favour were interested in a natural environment for the play area, sustainability was mentioned twice, with green credentials for a hall and play area to be next to each other – to share facilities such as toilets and water/kitchen – an important point. One resident said they would be interested in a quiet place with benches/seats in the village, with maybe a sensory garden etc. planted which could be used by visitors and residents, in or near a play area. The idea of a library in a phone box/shed was popular with all households I interviewed but this was acknowledged to not being much help in meeting others in our community. Almost everyone asked about health and safety regarding a play area, the worry over 'undesirables' as one resident said, coming to hang around a play area was mentioned; others worried it could be a bit of a headache for the village in terms of maintenance.

**Other potential developments:** As mentioned above, somewhere to walk the dog, play football and sit and enjoy the quiet were mentioned. The micro library was popular with all who saw the photo ideas, as was the idea of boules/petanque with 2 households. 3 residents mentioned the idea of sharing transport to ensure we are not isolated, with 1 suggestion of a community transport initiative mooted. A couple of households mentioned re-establishing village events like a carol singing/mulled wine evening, fireworks, a proper village show in a marquee etc. and it seemed clear people would like one-off events a few times a year, rather than the regularity of a hall/play area with the perceived difficulties that would go with them.

**Overview and conclusions:** The households I interviewed were interested in the idea of hall/play area but not in the establishment, running or maintenance of either. The majority of the residents I spoke to were lukewarm in terms of having a hall and, as most of those I spoke to were older residents, a play area was low on their wish-list. Many felt that there wasn't much chance of it happening and that this was just what happens in a village like ours, which is rural and without public transport/shop etc. People weren't unhappy that there are no facilities, and weren't really interested in that status quo changing, and several people mentioned they wouldn't go to the pub to partake of a social event for a variety of reasons.

**Recommendations:** From speaking to a range of people, I don't think that finding the support and enthusiasm needed for such a project as a hall would be easy. That said, it would maybe only take a few committed people to get it up and running and then, maybe, others would come on-board then? Certainly, some households said they would help fundraise and support its establishment. A play area would be easier to get going and that might tempt residents to become involved further? A definite move forward might be to run a few events somewhere, so that more villagers can meet and socialise; that may make a difference and open up a few more possibilities? I got the impression that should something be organised, there would be plenty of willing attendees but the majority I spoke to did not want the burden/or have the time to join a group/committee to start something themselves.

