

Survey '16

Queen Camel Views



A report on the views of Queen Camel residents about the Old School site, the Playing Field, housing provision, car parking and development.

Patrick Pender-Cudlip

for

Queen Camel Parish Council

November 2016

FOREWORD

In June 2016 Queen Camel Parish Council decided to canvass residents for their views on the future of the Old School site, the Playing Field, housing, car parking and development in the parish generally. The idea was to provide up to date information for the team working on the draft *Neighbourhood Plan* as well as the Parish Council and other authorities faced with decisions about possible future developments in Queen Camel. The aim of the survey was simply to find out the wishes of residents, not their viability, but the problem of funding was highlighted in a letter accompanying the questionnaires (p.4).

Each household in the parish received two single-sheet questionnaires: a *Summary questionnaire* requiring (mainly) 'tick box' responses and an *Open questionnaire* requiring written responses. Additional copies were made available via the village website and all residents were invited to respond individually by completing either questionnaire, or both.

This report summarises the views expressed in the 192 *Summary questionnaires* and 77 *Open questionnaires* which were completed and returned. The extent to which these responses are representative of Queen Camel opinion is for others to judge but there is an evaluation of the survey along with an account of its background and methodology in the Appendix on pp.18-20.

I would like to express my thanks to Tim Cook and South Somerset District Council for printing the questionnaires at very short notice and without charge, to Parish Councillors for distributing them to every household in the parish, to Rosemary Heath-Coleman and her colleagues on the *Community Plan Steering Group*, the *Planning and Development Group*, the *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group* and the *Communications Group* whose work greatly influenced the content and form of the questionnaires, and to the residents who took so much time and trouble completing them and in so doing contributed all the ideas in this report. Finally I want to thank my wife Jo whose idea of putting the *Summary questionnaire* on line made it accessible to many residents who might well not have responded otherwise.



P.P-C
November 2016

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The questionnaire letter (slightly abridged)

Queen Camel Parish Council

29th June, 2016

Dear Householder,

The Future of our village

A number of national, regional and local initiatives look likely to bring about significant change in Queen Camel:

- As a result of changes in national planning policy and greater emphasis on sustainable development and affordable housing, far more houses are being built in rural locations.
- Plans for almost 800 new homes in Mudford are well advanced.
- South Somerset District Council has plans for an additional 900 homes to be built in 'eligible' rural settlements over the next twelve years.
- Developers have built or obtained consent for over 40 new homes in Sparkford over the last three years and the planners are currently deciding whether to give permission for a further 48 homes on the old Haynes site.
- Rural settlements are considered 'eligible' for development if they have two or more of the following 'key facilities': shop, post office, pub, playing field/play area, village hall, health centre, church and school. **Queen Camel has all eight and so must be considered highly 'eligible'.**
- The twenty new affordable homes at Roman Way are all occupied.
- Countess Gytha School's move into brand new premises on the West Camel road has made it an even more attractive option for pupils and parents.
- The old school site and buildings are due to be sold off in July.

The most immediate challenge and opportunity is the sale of **the old school site**. There is no shortage of ideas about possible community uses but they all face the problem of funding because any scheme applying for grants must demonstrate its affordability and sustainability. **Buying, developing and maintaining a site with a Grade II Listed building, a substantial subterranean culvert and a history of flooding will pose a major challenge to whoever takes it on.** In the longer term **housing developments** could have an even bigger impact on Queen Camel, as could the development of **improved sporting and leisure facilities at the Playing Field**.

We would be very grateful if you could give us your views by filling in the **Summary Questionnaire** and **Open Questionnaire**, or at least one of them. You can complete an **online version of the Summary Questionnaire** if you prefer: you will find it on the Queen Camel website (<http://www.queen-camel.co.uk/>) where you will also find downloadable copies of both questionnaires. We hope that other members of your household will use one of these methods to complete their own copies of the questionnaire.

We cannot promise to achieve all that our residents want – we simply do not have the power or resources – but up to date, robust and reliable data on what our community wants will help us to formalize village plans and strengthen our hand in our dealings with the authorities. We would therefore be very grateful for your help.

John Brendon
Chairman

Overview - Statistical results: Summary and Open questionnaires

1. Summary Questionnaire

1. How would you like the Listed Victorian Schoolhouse to be used or developed in the future?

a	Community centre, meeting room, offices, parking	87	(45% of respondents in favour)
b	Church hall, meeting room, offices, car park	50	(26%)
c	Sold for business development	29	(15%)
d	Sold for residential development	59	(31%)
e	Other		

2. How would you like the other old school buildings and site to be used or developed in the future?

a	Community centre, meeting room, offices	35	(18% of respondents in favour)
b	Artisan workshops/small business units	94	(49%)
c	Public garden (by river, behind school hall)	83	(43%)
d	Public car park	48	(25%)
e	Sold for business development	17	(9%)
f	Sold for residential development	48	(25%)
g	Other		

3. Would any of the following encourage you to make more use of the Playing Field ?

a	Provision of picnic area	57	(30% of respondents in favour)
b	Provision of a trim trail	39	(20%)
c	Upgrading the play park	74	(39%)
d	More car parking space	39	(20%)
e	More youth facilities	57	(30%)
f	Upgrading the pavilion	46	(24%)
g	Provision of a new pavilion	49	(26%)
h	Car boot sales	42	(22%)
i	Community events	78	(41%)
j	Organised leisure activities	44	(23%)
k	Other		

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>%Yes</u>	<u>%No</u>
4. Should more commercial (open market) housing be built in Queen Camel ?	65	118	34%	61%
5. Should more affordable housing be built in Queen Camel ?	102	80	53%	42%
6. Should more housing for older people be built in Queen Camel ?	93	87	52%	49%
7. Should QC have sheltered/residential accommodation for those needing support?	119	59	62%	31%
8. Is there a need for more off-street parking in Queen Camel ?	121	62	63%	32%
9. Would you prefer Queen Camel to stay much as it is without further development?	124	54	65%	28%

2. Responses by age

<u>Questionnaire</u>	<u><18</u>	<u>18-65</u>	<u>65+</u>	<u>Not stated</u>	<u>Total</u>
Summary questionnaire – paper	1/1%	30/33%	56/60%	6/6%	93
Summary questionnaire – online	24/24%	63/64%	12/12%	0	99
Summary questionnaire – TOTAL	25/13%	93/49%	68/35%	6/3%	192
Open questionnaire (see below)	4/5%	30/39%	42/55%	1/1%	77
TOTAL questionnaires	29/11%	123/45%	110/41%	7/3%	269

3. Open Questionnaire

1. The Old School – the Listed Victorian Schoolhouse

- A. 52% of respondents want to retain the Victorian Schoolhouse for Community use.
- B. 31% of respondents want the Victorian Schoolhouse sold for development.

2. The Old School – the rest of the site

- A. 73% of respondents want to retain the rest of Old School site for Community use.
- B. 25% of respondents want all or part of the Old School site sold for development, in most cases for mixed or private housing.

3. Development of the Playing Field

- A. Around 74% of respondents favour developing or upgrading the Playing Field and its facilities.
- B. 18% of respondents are opposed to the idea of developing the Playing Field, wanting to preserve its special atmosphere and believing that the facilities offered are sufficient.
- C. 8% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

4. Mixed Housing

- A. 54% of respondents are in favour of another housing development, with a mix of open market housing, affordable housing and housing for the elderly.
- B. 33% of respondents oppose further mixed housing development.
- C. 13% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

5. Affordable housing

- A. 47% of respondents favour the building of more Affordable housing.
- B. 26% of respondents are opposed to the building of more housing suitable for the elderly
- C. 27% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

6. Housing for the older people

- A. 43% of respondents favour the building of more housing suitable for older people.
- B. 31% of respondents are opposed to the building of more housing suitable for older people.
- C. 26% of respondents did not express a view on housing for older people.

7. Sheltered or residential accommodation for older or disabled people

- A. 40% of respondents favour building sheltered or residential accommodation.
- B. 27% of respondents oppose building sheltered or residential accommodation.
- C. 33% of respondents did not express a view on sheltered or residential accommodation

8. Off-street parking

- A. 60% of respondents support the provision of more off-street car parking.
- B. 15% of respondents oppose the provision of more off-street car parking.
- C. 12% of respondents gave more nuanced answers about off-street parking
- D. 13% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

9. To develop or not to develop?

- A. 34% of respondents support or accept the idea of more development.
- B. 10% of respondents would like to see an improvement in existing facilities.
- C. 40% of respondents oppose the idea of any more development.
- D. 16% of respondents expressed no view about this question.

QUESTION 1 The Old School – the Victorian Schoolhouse

A. 52% of respondents want to retain the Victorian Schoolhouse for Community use.

1. The following possible community uses for the old Schoolhouse are suggested:

- i. Adult Education or Training centre
- ii. Art or Exhibition centre, library, museum or visitor centre
- iii. Artisan or craft workshops
- iv. Business units or offices
- v. Café
- vi. Community centre, hall, meeting place, offices
- vii. Church hall or offices
- viii. Craft, gift or pet shop, shop for local produce or emporium
- ix. Dance studio
- x. Housing for young families or older people
- xi. Squash court
- xii. Visitor centre
- xiii. Youth centre, Scout and Guide room
- xiv. Keep available as 'overflow' for Countess Gytha School



2. The most popular choices by far are **Community centre, hall or meeting place**. Other popular choices are, in order, **café, visitor centre/museum/library, Church hall and offices**.
3. There were no questions about funding and few respondents make any reference to it but a few suggest selling **the site of the Memorial Hall for mixed housing**, including housing for older people, and using the proceeds to buy the Schoolhouse and turn it into a village or community hall.
4. Another respondent wrote: *“Not to be sold for residential or commercial use but for the community’s use. But who pays for the upkeep of the building?”*

B. 31% of respondents want the Victorian Schoolhouse sold for development.

1. Fear that if the Schoolhouse were retained for community use it would become a financial burden on the community appears to be the main reason why many respondents would prefer for it to be sold.
2. Most of the respondents who do favour selling the Schoolhouse would like to see it developed for



community use (see *Conclusion 1*, below)

residential use, either as a single dwelling or divided into flats, though some respondents are not concerned about the type of development.

3. A few respondents stress the importance of *‘sympathetic’* development but others appear to feel that this is already guaranteed by the Grade II Listing.

4. It is striking that a substantial number of those who favour selling off the Schoolhouse for development still want to retain the rest of the Old School site for

QUESTION 2 The Old School – the rest of the site

A. 73% of respondents want to retain the rest of Old School site for Community use.

1. The following possible community uses for the Old School site are suggested:

- i. Adult education or training
- ii. Artisan Workshops
- iii. Business units
- iv. Car park
- v. Community housing
- vi. Day nursery or pre-school
- vii. Public gardens
- viii. Recreation (eg café, gym, library, museum, shooting range, skate board park, squash court, swimming pool)
- ix. Youth centre, Scout and Guide room.



2. The top choices are **artisan workshops** and **business units**, together favoured by almost half of the respondents, and then (in order of popularity) **public gardens**, a **car park** and **community housing**.
3. One respondent suggests providing combined business and accommodation units.
4. A considerable number of respondents feel that the Victorian Schoolhouse should be kept but some or all of the other buildings should be demolished and the site landscaped and turned into public gardens.
5. Conversely others want to sell off the Schoolhouse but keep the rest of the site for community use.

B. 25% of respondents want all or part of the Old School site sold for development, in most cases for mixed or private housing. Selling part could help fund conversion of the rest for community use.

QUESTIONS 1 & 2 – The Old School site - summary and conclusions

1. A majority of respondents (52%) want to retain the Listed Victorian Schoolhouse in community hands but a much larger majority (73%) wants to retain the rest of the site. Given the Schoolhouse's iconic status the lower priority given to it might seem surprising but three possible reasons may be inferred:
 - i. For those who simply want it to be preserved for posterity, Listing may seem a sufficient guarantee.
 - ii. An old listed building, however precious, has far less scope as a community asset than a large plot of land alongside the river in the heart of the village.
 - iii. An old Listed building would be expensive to convert, upgrade and maintain, possibly imposing a significant financial burden on the community with the danger of becoming a derelict eyesore.
2. Although respondents were reminded that funding could be a problem they were only asked what they wanted, not what was feasible. This survey is not about the viability of any proposals.
3. Unsurprisingly therefore, few of those who want to retain the Schoolhouse or Old School site for the community mention funding explicitly though it may have been in the mind of some (see 1.iii, above).
4. However several respondents who advocate selling both the Schoolhouse and the rest of site give as their main reason the fear that otherwise they would or might become a burden on the community.
5. The favourite suggested use for the Schoolhouse is as a **Community centre or hall**.
6. The favourite uses for the Old School site are **small workshops** or **business units** and **public gardens**.
7. Most of those who want the Old School site sold to a developer would like to see it used for **housing** but in answers to other questions in the survey the Old School site is also suggested as a possible site for **car parking, housing for older people** and **affordable housing**.
8. Some want the Memorial Hall site sold for housing, probably for the elderly, with the funds raised being used to create a new village hall in the Victorian schoolhouse.

Vox Populi – some residents' views on the Old School site

QUESTION ONE – What should happen to the old Victorian Schoolhouse?

Put in a locally produced products store open every Saturday morning, but it will soon be back being used as a school because they haven't built the new one big enough.

Small business premises...add a buzz during the day and bring extra custom to the shop and pub.

A support base/centre for wounded ex-servicemen (my grandson's idea).

Pet shop because there are lots of animals in the village which means there would be lots of business.

It should be sold unless money can be found to buy and maintain it. It could be bought by the Church and used as Vicar's house + church/parish office, meeting room, etc. The character of the building should be maintained while it should be developed in some way so that it is still used, either as houses or offices.

Strictly preserved and the immediate environs landscaped/gardened by ANYONE prepared to pay and do it.

Has to be kept as Listed but either turned into an "overflow" for the new school which, if it isn't full already, soon will be. Or a pair of residential houses, but that will be more problematic because of the flooding issue.

The river should not just be regarded as a threat from flooding but if the area is developed for village use then some thought should be applied to maximising the view and beauty of the river. The Schoolhouse could be leased for restricted use – perhaps a café – and lease holders would create revenue for upkeep.

It should ideally be used to benefit of all the village. It might for example be considered as a replacement for the Memorial Hall, with that site sold for development as mixed housing/housing for the elderly.

It is unfair that any development burdens the community both financially and materially with support that detracts from other things needed by the community.

Get it moved to another part within Queen Camel.

Ideally a 'showcase' community building hosting a "Village and Rural Life museum", craft shop, other 'niche' retail outlets – to attract visitors but also be a hub for community focussed activity and pride-in-the-village.

Convert into smaller units and sell or rent to young people who struggle to get onto the property ladder or to older people who need to down-size.

Small business enterprise units: coffee shop, donated new or vgc gifts for sale, all profit to upkeep of building. Main hall held by artisan traders in small divided units selling crafts made by local people. Artists can display on walls and coffee shop. Local upholstery, picture framing in old class rooms?

As much as I dislike the term "artisan" in its modern usage the site would be ideal for "start up" tech business and – ok – artisan business. It would therefore continue its use for training and education. It could become the "silicon valley" of Queen Camel.

As Grade II listed it should be for residential. If not it will be another piece of history lost for ever.

I'd like to buy it as a single dwelling – although I need a lottery win to do so. I hope whoever buys it does it justice and it isn't turned into flats or the land used to develop further.

I feel it is far too much for the village to take on – drains, flooding, upkeep of a Grade II building. I feel it would be good if a developer bought for small business or flats etc.

If the old school was donated by a member of the Mildmay family, does the Council have the right to sell it?

QUESTION TWO – What should happen to the rest of the old school site?

A swimming pool so lots of children and parents can have a day out.

Something to encourage local enterprise, perhaps small affordable units for craft workshops, shops, tea room, small gym/fitness centre, small library (run by volunteers), equipment and lending library for carers, meeting rooms, ?museum/exhibition with changing themes run in conjunction with the school.

They should be demolished and the site developed for housing in keeping with the conservation area and ST5, ST6, EH1 & EH5 of NPPF. I do not believe proper control could be exercised over the site if used for other purposes. Where would the funding come from? Adjacent areas could be affected.

All other buildings should be demolished and site cleared for a small residential development incorporating the Listed Schoolhouse, ideally on the lines of a Retirement “Village”.

Use it for parking for church events. However it needs to be flattened. Or a village swimming pool for all to use with good size pool and facilities.

Starter areas for YP & others – artisan/small business, hot desk. Garden – with corner still dedicated to Lily, pupil who died following serious illness. To provide a focus for older residents.

The grassy area made into allotments and the other buildings into a Pre-school and Youth club for teenagers. A café and a butchers.

Other old building as local business units. Remainder of site as residential buildings, maybe bungalows suitable for the elderly. Not suitable for affordable family housing due to proximity of river and busy road.

Site should be retained to supplement “New School”. With heavy building programmes @ Mudford & Sparkford in addition to QC there will be many, many more children that should be entitled to local schooling especially with infants & primary level.

Swimming pool and squash court. Rifle/pistol range. Scouts/Guides meeting/training hall.

I don't believe there's anything that needs preserving! However I'd like to see the site used in some way, possibly as a mix of residential and community and business use. I don't think we need another community hall though.

Public garden perhaps maintained by the Horticultural Society with an anti-flood lake.

If not suitable for housing then perhaps as gardens for the Grade II listed building once converted into a home.

It would be lovely to have a garden down to river, trees, benches etc.

Finally, the most detailed response to Questions 1 & 2 of the Open Questionnaire:

Approach the following authorities with the proposition detailed below, accompanied by photographs and a site plan:

Yeovil Chamber of Commerce, Bristol Chamber of Commerce & University, Bath Chamber of Commerce & University, Taunton Bristol Chamber of Commerce

Proposition - **To assist in acquisition of existing educational establishment for purpose of providing a residential or daily base for Business meetings, Seminars, Company meetings, Training sessions, Team building sessions, Group discussions, Promotional displays, Exhibitions, Demonstrations.**

QUESTION 3 Development of the Playing Field

A. Around 74% of respondents favour developing or upgrading the Playing Field and its facilities.

1. 25% of respondents want the **pavilion** refurbished or replaced with several suggesting that a new, re-sited pavilion could be shared with the Tennis Club. A few are looking for something more ambitious, including a **swimming pool, gym, fitness centre, squash court, badminton court** and an **open air cinema**. One radical suggestion is worth quoting in full: *“A purpose built Sports Club that could contain facilities to rent privately for functions. It is a far more desirable setting than the current Memorial Hall and would attract more enquiries for both commercial and private use”*.
2. 22% want to see the **play park** upgraded, one of them describing it as *“very boring”*. One couple feel a **roundabout** and **slide** would help, adding that at present their grandchildren prefer going to the play park at Sparkford. Several ask for **fencing** and **benches**. One suggests planting a **screen of ornamental trees** which would make the site more attractive and protect the play park from the prevailing wind. If **benches** were provided too the play park could become very popular as a **recreational space** for family groups with small children.
3. 19% of respondents feel there should be much more provision for **young people** specifically, especially **older children** and **teenagers**, with one declaring, *“The PC and the PFC have failed the youth of the village”*. 12% (including several older people) want facilities for **skateboards** as at Marston Magna, and perhaps for **mountain bikes**, and there were requests for a **caged basket ball court** and a **buddy swing**.
4. The most requested sporting facilities for all ages are **swimming pool** (6%) as mentioned above and **trim trail** (5%), and other suggestions include an **astro turf court or field**, a **rounders pitch, rugby posts** and **mini golf** with a **putting green**.
5. Other facilities requested include more space for **parking cars** (10%), a **picnic area**, a place for **barbeques**, facilities for **car boot sales**, more **bins**, a **public lavatory**, a **wooded area** and a **fenced dog-walking area** – presumably against the day that the so-called ‘dog walking field’ is no longer available.

B. 18% of respondents are opposed to the idea of developing the Playing Field, wanting to preserve the special atmosphere and believing that the facilities offered are sufficient.

C. 8% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.



Get your tank on my lawn!

As well as being used regularly for cricket and football matches and practice, and as a place for children to play and grown-ups to take the air, the Playing Field has also been used for school fetes, the annual Tennis Club Tournament barbeque, the legendary Camel Paloozu and the memorable Millenium and Jubilee celebrations.

QUESTION 4 Mixed Housing

A. 54% of respondents are in favour of another housing development, with a mix of open market housing, affordable housing and housing for older people.

1. A few suggest roughly equal proportions of these three types of housing, or a higher proportion of housing for older people or affordable housing, but most do not specify any particular weighting.
2. Many note that a mix of housing types brings in a wider range of people.
3. Many point out that **balance** and a **broad social mix** are essential for a community to thrive, with people of different ages, from different backgrounds and with different means contributing in their different ways, complementing each other and creating a real sense of community.
4. Several note that thanks to its **wide range of facilities** Queen Camel is in a position to satisfy the needs of many different kinds of people.
5. Conversely others note that a socially diverse population is in a position to make greater use of those facilities, thereby contributing to the community's long term **sustainability**.
6. Many stress the importance of **family housing** as well as **starter homes, affordable housing** and **bungalows** suitable for older people. Others make the point that '**upper range**' and **self-build** housing would further contribute to the wealth of the community.
7. Some hope that **local families** and **individuals** will be given priority in housing. However many of those broadly in favour of housing development have reservations nonetheless:
8. Many emphasise that any development should be on a **small scale** lest Queen Camel lose its identity.
9. Similarly others suggest that any development should be **gradual**, perhaps spread out over 12 years or so, enabling the community to adapt to change rather than being overwhelmed by it.
10. Some who are not keen on housing development still want Queen Camel to put forward its own ideas for more housing, fearing that otherwise housing will simply be imposed on it by higher authority.
11. Several stress the vital importance of **infrastructure**, making the point that a larger population would require greater provision for **education, health care, waste disposal** etc., and **increased traffic**.

B. 33% of respondents oppose further mixed housing development.

1. Several make the point that Queen Camel lacks the **infrastructure** to accommodate further housing developments. The increase in **traffic** is the main concern, especially if the large housing development in Mudford (>700 homes) goes ahead, greatly increasing the traffic flow through the village.
2. Some simply feel that Queen Camel is quite big enough as it is; it is not a town but a village and does not need another housing development.
3. Others object to the idea of further encroachment into the surrounding countryside; if more houses are needed they should be situated within the built up area of the village.
4. Some express their opposition in a single word: **NO!**

C. 13% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

D. If there were to be more housing in Queen Camel, where would residents like it to be sited?

Most would favour any new housing development being sited to the **west** of the village, particularly along **West Camel road** but also possibly behind **South View, Roman Way, the Medical Centre**, beyond the **pavilion** on the Playing Field, or beyond **England's Mead**. A few respondents suggest building to the **east** of the village beyond **Mildmay Drive** and **Orchard Close**, up to Henshall brook.

'Pastures new? An aerial view of Queen Camel from the east (taken before the Medical Centre, Roman Way and the new school were built) showing possible sites for future housing developments in the meadows to the east of the village (foreground) and to the west along West Camel road (background).



Somewhere under the Rainbow? The Meadows to the east of Orchard Close and Mildmay Drive.

QUESTION 5 Affordable Housing

A. 47% of respondents favour the building of more Affordable housing.

1. Most of these respondents favour a **mix of houses for rent and houses for purchase**.
2. Many point out the importance of supplying houses for **young people** and **young families** who want to stay in the village but cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market.
3. Some point to **Roman Way's** full occupation as evidence of the need for more Affordable housing.

B. 26% of respondents oppose the building of more Affordable housing.

1. Most of these respondents feel that there is not a great demand for more Affordable housing from within Queen Camel itself.
2. Two of these respondents say they would accept more Affordable housing only if this was the 'price' of consent for more market housing – an interesting corollary of the frequently heard claim that market housing developments are only acceptable if they include some provision of Affordable housing.
3. The argument that providing more housing for the elderly might simply 'suck in' more people from outside (see 6.B.3, below) could be applied to Affordable housing too.

C. 27% of respondents did not express a view on Affordable housing, in many cases indicating that they would need more evidence - for example a **needs survey** – to be able to express an informed opinion.

QUESTION 6 Housing for older people

NB This question was poorly phrased and as a result some answers were ambiguous. In such cases their meaning has been inferred.

A. 43% of respondents favour the building of more housing suitable for older people.

1. They feel there is a need for more **bungalows** or **garden flats** to cater for older residents who want to stay in Queen Camel, close to their family and friends, but can find nowhere suitable to live.
2. Most of these respondents want such properties to be available both to **purchase** and to **rent**.

B. 31% of respondents are opposed to the building of more housing suitable for older people.

1. They consider that existing provision, including **Cleaveside Close** and **Old Farm Court**, is sufficient.
2. Several also note that some of the bungalows in **Cleaveside Close** (which were designed to house older people) are now housing people of working age, and that what used to be the Warden's house is being used as family accommodation. They cannot see the point of building more housing for older people when existing housing for older people is being put to other uses, whatever the reason.
3. Some point out that if more bungalows for older people are built they will not stand empty: if no one local requires one when it becomes empty it will be occupied by someone from outside instead. If many people are 'sucked in' from other areas in this way, increased provision of housing for older people would not necessarily benefit local people as much as envisaged.

C. 26% of respondents did not express a view on housing for older people, in many cases indicating that they would need more evidence - for example a **needs survey** – to be able to express an informed opinion.

QUESTION 7 Sheltered or residential accommodation

A. 40% of respondents favour building sheltered or residential accommodation.

1. All these respondents stress how important it is for all residents, but especially older people, to be able to stay close to family and friends throughout life rather than being forced to move away in order to obtain proper care.
2. One respondent suggests that Queen Camel could become a 'pioneer' village for older people, with sheltered accommodation supervised by a warden, an activity centre, a Council owned nursing home and wheelchair-friendly buses and taxis.
3. Another suggests that facilities for older people should be made available only to local people because otherwise older people would be drawn in from other areas and Queen Camel might turn into a 'retirement village' (cf.5.B.3, above).

B. 27% of respondents oppose building sheltered or residential accommodation.

1. Some point out that in recent years the Resident Warden's position at Cleaveside Close was abolished, then the part-time Warden's role was abolished, then the amount of support offered to Cleaveside residents was reduced and now Cleaveside Close is no longer reserved for older people. With existing sheltered accommodation downgraded in this way it might be considered perverse to build more sheltered accommodation.
2. As implied above, the provision of sheltered accommodation might draw in older people from outside the area rather than increasing provision for local people.

C. 33% of respondents did not express a view on sheltered or residential accommodation, in many cases indicating that they would need more evidence - for example a **needs survey** – to be able to express an informed opinion.

QUESTION 8 Off-street car parking

A. 60% of respondents support the provision of more off-street car parking.

1. Many respondents consider parking on the High Street a major problem, causing delays, traffic jams and, at times, danger to other road users including cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians.
2. Some note that parking restrictions are widely ignored and never policed.
3. Some suggest that parking on the High Street should be banned altogether.
4. One respondent notes the problems caused when cars parked on the main road up to Sparkford in front of Hill View obstruct the free flow of traffic.
5. Many suggest that the Old School site could be used as a car park.
6. Some suggest that a larger car park could be included in any development of the Playing Field.

B. 15% of respondents oppose the provision of more off-street car parking, mainly on the grounds that cars parked along the High Street slow down the traffic making it less dangerous.

C. 12% of respondents gave more nuanced answers about off-street parking including:

1. It all depends on how parking works out at the new school and
2. it also depends on how many new houses are built and
3. However many car parks there are, most people will park outside their homes if they possibly can!

D. 13% either did not express any opinion or else said they were not sure or did not know.

QUESTION 9 To develop or not to develop?*

* One respondent objected to this question being asked at all on the grounds that maintaining the status quo "is not an option". This is to misunderstand the purpose of this survey which was simply to find out what the people of Queen Camel want, not what others say they can and cannot have.

Some respondents used this question to rehearse answers to previous questions, especially Question 4, but many answers were so various and wide ranging that no summary can do them full justice.

A. 34% of respondents support or accept the idea of more development.

1. Most of these respondents regard change as inevitable and want to make the best of it.
2. Some see development as a positive good, taking the view that a village is like a living organism and must either grow or die. One couple moved from an area where development was concentrated on just four towns and the surrounding villages were drained of life as a result: they would hate to see something similar happening to Queen Camel.
3. Others point out that Queen Camel has many residents who came from elsewhere and have contributed to the community's prosperity and well-being: it would be perverse to deny others the same opportunity. One suggests that attracting more diversity, youth, energy and money into the community is the key to a healthy future and that therefore it is vital to develop more and better facilities for young people.
4. Many stress that any development must be **gradual** and **proportionate**, with small groups of houses of varying types and architectural styles, some using local stone, so that the character, variety and balance of the village is preserved.
5. Many also stress the importance of developing the **infrastructure** - roads, drains, sewerage, water supply, schools, medical services etc - to match any increase in housing and traffic. More specific suggestions include an **expansion of the school** and the building of a **bypass**.
6. Some would site new developments on the periphery of the village so as to preserve the character of the centre while others favour the use of 'brownfield' sites and infilling so as to limit ribbon development, prevent urban 'sprawl' and preserve the surrounding countryside.

B. 10% of respondents would like to see an improvement in existing facilities rather than larger scale development or expansion.

1. Many would like a larger village shop with more parking - possibly relocated to what is now the Memorial Hall - especially if more houses are built and the population increases.
2. Other ideas put forward by respondents (and not described elsewhere in this report) include:
 - Improved paths, bridleways and byways for the benefit of pedestrians, users of pushchairs and wheelchairs, cyclists and horse-riders.
 - Flashing speed-indicator lights to slow down traffic on the High Street.
 - Bus shelters by the church and shop, a bench near the shop and improved signage.
 - More trees, a wild garden, a wooded area and an environmental area.
 - A second entrance to the Playing Field from the Glebe.
 - A heritage centre displaying the recently unearthed Roman mosaics.
 - A homeless centre, perhaps on the Old School site, a wind farm and a car service centre.

3. Many are concerned about how improvements to the A303 might affect Queen Camel:
 - One suggests a traffic survey on the High Street to monitor changes in flow and density.
 - Another suggests extending the 20 mph speed limit the length of the High Street and up to the school and also extending the 30mph speed limit up Sparkford hill.
 - Other suggestions include speed cameras in the High Street and a ban on all HGVs.

C. 40% of respondents strongly oppose the idea of any more development.

1. Many believe that the combination of excellent facilities with a village atmosphere is what gives Queen Camel its character; they fear that further development or expansion would destroy that character, making the village feel more like a small town.
2. Others point out that with the planned urban extension in Mudford and another substantial housing development in Sparkford, further development in Queen Camel would increase the risk of urban sprawl all along the A359 between Yeovil and the A303.
3. In the *Summary Questionnaire* Question 9 was phrased in simple binary form - "Would you prefer Queen Camel to stay much as it is, without further development?" – to which 65% of respondents answered "Yes!". This suggests that most respondents would prefer Queen Camel to stay the same but many who recognise that change and development is inevitable want to make the most of it rather than simply set their faces against it (see also 9.A,1, above).

D. 16% of respondents expressed no view about this question.

In conclusion, a glimpse of what we still have...



APPENDIX

1. Background to Survey '16

This survey is the latest and least in a long line of investigations into Queen Camel, the mother of them all being the **Community Plan (2005)**. With its six person steering group, army of volunteers and 24-page questionnaire taken round to every household in the parish it took two years to complete but its 30 tables, 40 photographs and 59 pages tell you everything you might want to know about Queen Camel and more besides. Its major legacy was the setting up of Parish Groups and it was one of these, the *Planning and Development Group (PDG)*, which produced the **Development Plan (2009)**. These two plans and the work of the Parish Council and its Parish Groups so impressed South Somerset District Council (SSDC) that Queen Camel was invited to become a 'Frontrunner' parish and allocated up to £20k. in government funding to try out the neighbourhood planning measures introduced by the *Localism Act (2011)*. The PDG morphed into the *Frontrunner Group* which, after much labour, produced a draft **Neighbourhood Plan** at the end of 2014. The plan focusses on 'spatial' planning (infrastructure, buildings etc) so it is narrower in scope than the *Community Plan* but it carries more clout - and if adopted its 100 odd pages will be binding on SSDC planners. However in November 2015 the Parish Council put the *Neighbourhood Plan* on hold and accepted an offer from the *Communications Group* to draft a questionnaire as the first stage in a scheduled ten-year review of the 2005 *Community Plan*.

By the time the draft questionnaire was presented to the Parish Council six months later the Council's priorities were shifting, partly in response to changing circumstances: the national housing shortage has made it easier than previously for developers to obtain planning consent to build in rural areas. In our part of the world villages are considered 'eligible' for development if they have two or more out of eight 'key facilities' - shop, post office, pub, playing field/play area, village hall, health centre, church and school – and since Queen Camel possesses every single one of these facilities plus an excellent bus service is not just 'eligible' but *highly* eligible. The large housing developments planned for Mudford and Sparkford show that change is coming willy-nilly so the Parish Council asked the *Frontrunner Group* to resume work on the *Neighbourhood Plan* which would give the parish greater influence over planning decisions. In the meantime an even more urgent matter had come to the fore: Countess Gytha School was moving to new premises and the old school site would be up for grabs.

The Parish Council wanted to canvass the views of residents so that it could respond to these developments appropriately. Thanks to the *Community, Development* and draft *Neighbourhood Plans* a great deal of data has been collected over the last 13 years but views change as circumstances change and time passes - and in any case every new challenge throws up useful new ideas. The draft questionnaire prepared by the *Communications Group* would bring in an enormous amount of new information on every aspect of Queen Camel life but the Council's main priority had become finding out what residents thought about just a few key matters: the old school site, the playing field, housing, car parking and the future of the parish. And it needed the answers fast, especially when the County Council revealed its plans to sell off the old school site to the highest bidder as soon as it possibly could. The Parish Council therefore commissioned **Survey '16**.

Compared to its magisterial precursors **Survey '16** is a meagre thing. It is not even a plan - the clue is in the name - and it does not pretend to know what Queen Camel needs, just what some residents say they want. Instead of a questionnaire booklet it used just two single-sheet questionnaires, each with essentially the same questions but formatted differently. No experts or committees were consulted so it took just four weeks for the questionnaires to be designed, approved, printed, distributed, completed and returned in sufficient numbers (c.140) for interim results to be reported back to the Parish Council and the community.

2. Methodology: how Survey '16 was carried out

The design and execution of **Survey '16** was largely determined by its limited ambition, the need for speed and a determination to keep things as simple as possible. With 'tick boxes' and just nine questions it only took a minute or two to complete *Summary questionnaire*, on paper or on line, which suited those who did not have the time or inclination to complete a wordier questionnaire. Since most of the data could be expressed and processed arithmetically it was not difficult to produce statistical results within hours of the questionnaires being returned. Written answers to the nine questions in the *Open questionnaire* would take longer to complete and much longer to analyse but they gave respondents a chance to explore the questions in greater depth and put forward ideas of their own. The two questionnaires were designed to be complementary.

Although each household in the parish was given just one copy of each questionnaire all household members were invited to take part by visiting the Parish website where copies of the *Open questionnaire* could be downloaded and the *Summary questionnaire* could be completed on line. 140 copies of the *Summary questionnaire* were completed in time for interim results to be presented to the Parish Council on 11th July and by the time the survey closed on 31st July a total of 192 *Summary questionnaires* and 77 *Open questionnaires* had been completed. An interim report published on 11th August summarised *Open questionnaire* responses about the Old School site and *Survey '16* contains summaries of responses to all of the questions.



3. Evaluation: how credible is Survey '16?

Recent events on both sides of the Atlantic have undermined public confidence in surveys of public opinion and the statistics in **Survey '16** should be treated with particular caution.

- The questionnaires were not numbered or individually identifiable and there were no formal controls over their distribution so it was possible for an individual to submit multiple questionnaires.
- With both questionnaires available on the village website it was possible for non-residents to take part.
- The total number of respondents is unknown. It is clear that many of those who completed the *Open questionnaire* also completed the *Summary questionnaire*, as requested and in other cases a single questionnaire was completed by two or more people together. Residents without internet access (and with no family or neighbours to help) may have had difficulty getting hold of extra copies of the questionnaire. The 269 questionnaires submitted (192 *Summary*, 77 *Open*) may have been completed by less than a quarter of Queen Camel's population of c.1,000 souls.
- Because time and resources were limited the survey had little advance publicity and respondents received less guidance than in a more carefully managed survey so the answers may be less considered.
- Respondents were asked what they wanted, not what was practicable or affordable, so the findings are more like a wish list than a programme for action. For example respondents were *not* asked whether they were prepared to pay (directly or through their Council tax) to acquire the Old School site for the community (Questions 1 & 2) whereas they *were* asked if they would like to see Queen Camel remain "more or less as it is" (Question 9) even though national planning policy makes this most unlikely.
- Respondents asked for their own ideas in answering the *Open questionnaire* may have been influenced, unconsciously, by the options listed in Questions 1, 2 & 3 of the *Summary questionnaire*.

However despite these reservations **Survey '16** seems broadly credible and was probably a useful exercise:

- Notwithstanding over-excited reports that the online *Summary questionnaire* had 'gone viral' the number and nature of the responses suggests that most respondents were Queen Camel residents.
- Although there is digital, textual and graphological evidence that some individuals submitted more than one copy of each questionnaire the scale of this was not sufficient to influence the results significantly.
- *Summary questionnaire* results sampled on three successive dates (11th, 17th and 31st July) were very similar which suggests that there was no concerted attempt to rig the results.
- Responses to the *Summary questionnaire* and *Open questionnaire* were for the most part broadly consistent except for Questions 4 and 9 - where the discrepancies were themselves informative.
- As in any survey the voices of the silent majority are by definition unheard but the ideas expressed by respondents contain so many various and often opposing views that they seem more likely to represent the thoughts of residents as a whole rather than the convictions of a small opinionated group.
- As well as attracting responses from digitally savvy younger people the online *Summary questionnaire* encouraged residents of all ages to visit the website - a habit that old-fashioned residents would do well to develop if Queen Camel is to keep in touch with a rapidly changing world.

In summary, Survey '16 should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive and its statistical findings should be treated with caution, but subject to these qualifications it seems a fair representation of what many Queen Camel residents think and feel about the future of their parish.