

A parish plan for Toseland

A report from the Toseland Community Planning Steering Group, July 2010

Foreword

By 2009 it had become clear to Toseland Parish Council that the council was not in touch with the views of all villagers. In any community, there are always a small number who make their views known on particular issues or problems, while the majority are silent. It was agreed that the parish plan process could reveal valuable intelligence on residents' views on life in Toseland and their aspirations for their community. The parish council also acknowledged that the parish plan process could deliver useful demographic information, plus some insight into the living and working habits of Toseland residents which could inform the parish council's decisions on a broad range of issues.

In March 2009, Toseland Parish Council used a house-to-house flyer to ask for volunteers to sit on the Toseland Community Planning Steering Group (TCPSPG) and run the parish plan process. The parish council also began to enquire about possible sources of funding.

In April 2009 TCPSPG was formed and the officers appointed at a public meeting. The group has eight members, including two parish councillors and two young people (under 19 years of age). TCPSPG has a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer. It has received funding from Cambridgeshire ACRE.

Members of Toseland Community Planning Steering Group

Pat Dillon
Eliot Harman
Risa Harman
Heather Moffat, Secretary
Catherine Taylor, Chairman
Jeff Tossell, Treasurer
Sam Wallace
Sarah Wynn

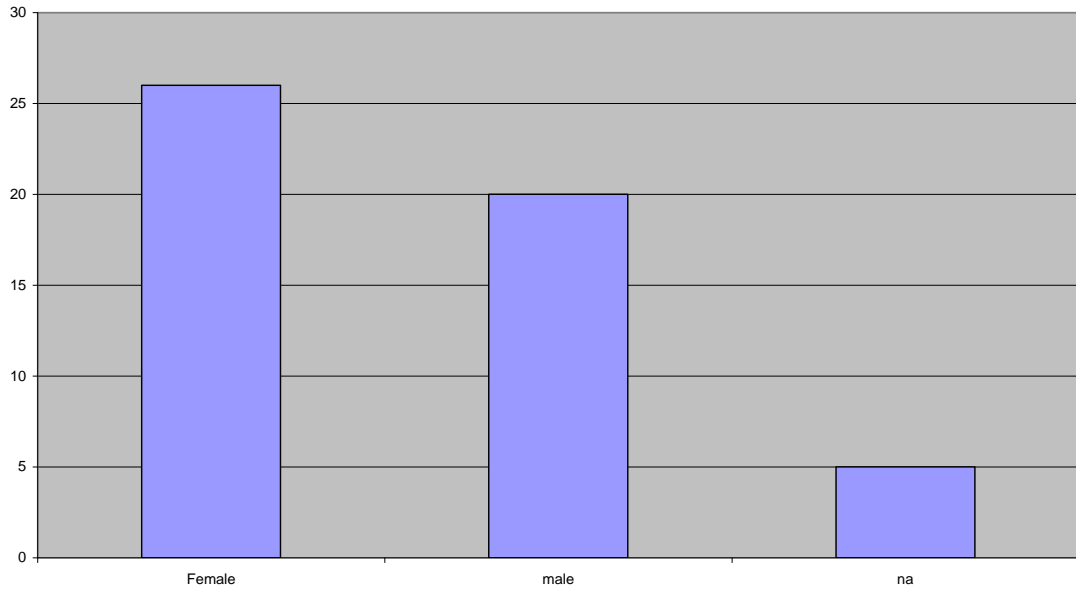
Introduction

Our community

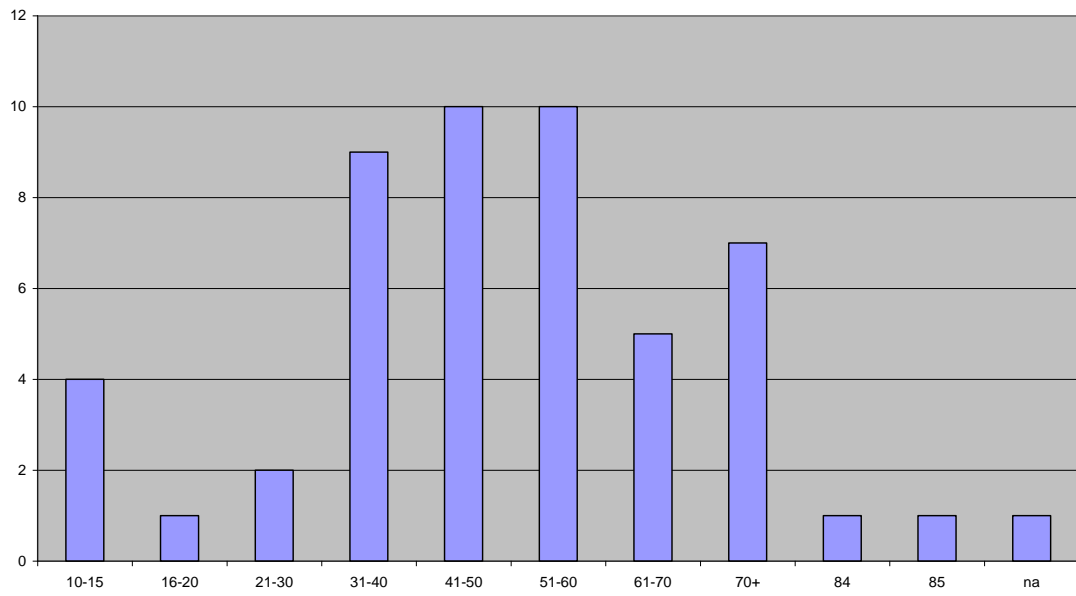
Toseland is small village of 39 houses with a population of about 90 people, including children and young people. Electors number about 70. The population is predominantly white British. We have a high proportion of elderly people, 12 children under 11 and six 11 to 18 year olds (July 2010).

The charts below show some demographic information collected in July 2010. The results labelled N/A indicate surveys completed on which that question was not answered.

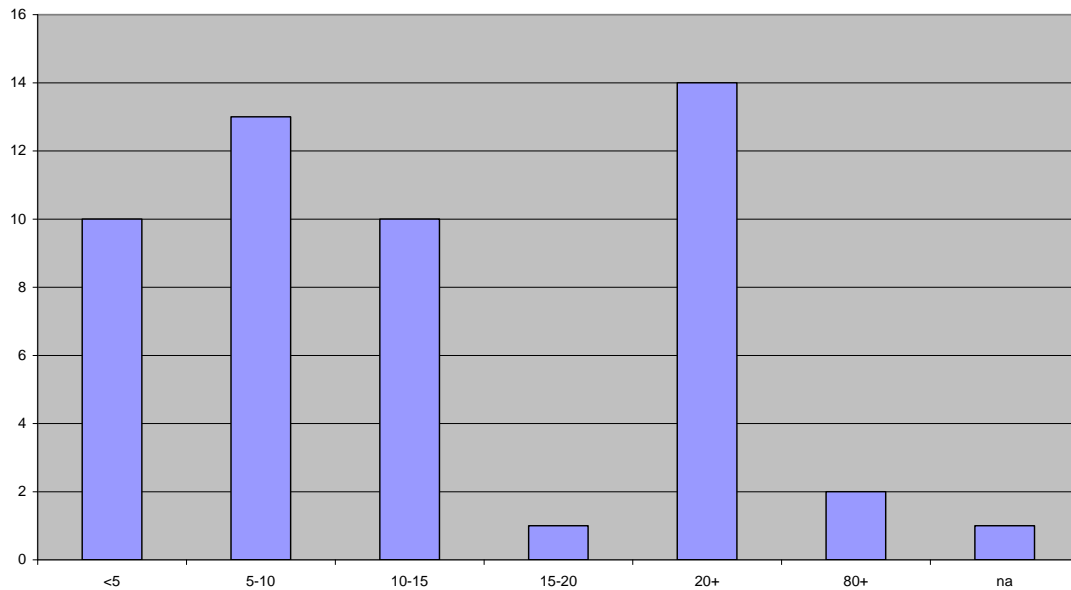
Gender



Age



How long have you lived in the village?



Consultation process

The consultation process began in April 2009 with an open meeting to identify priority issues for local people and to agree the appointment of officers to the Toseland Community Planning Steering Group. We had a good discussion, but, with a turnout of only 11, it was agreed that we needed to give the rest of the community a chance to identify their key issues. A printed anonymous questionnaire was therefore devised and circulated to all adults and children aged 10 and over in June 2009, giving them the opportunity to comment on the issues raised at the meeting and to raise other key issues. It also gave them space for general comments. This survey had a 52% response rate and it confirmed that the issues identified at the meeting in April resonated with the majority of adults. These issues, in order of discussion, were:

- Speeding
- Traffic volumes
- Increasing number of large vehicles
- Pedestrian footway
- Street lighting – yes or no?
- Traffic calming – yes or no?
- Development – yes or no?
- Conservation
- Dog fouling
- Village design statement
- Footpaths / bridleways
- Drainage / ditch maintenance
- Public transport
- Services for / views of elderly residents
- Safety of Toseland crossroads and accidents at that location
- Speed limits
- Police visibility etc
- Neighbourhood Watch / Countryside Watch schemes
- Parking

The full survey questionnaire is attached at Appendix 1.

In order to collect the views of children under the age of 10, a drawing competition was developed for which children were asked to draw two pictures: one of aspects of life in Toseland that they liked and a second drawing showing something about Toseland that they disliked. There were prizes for all entrants and a first prize of a drawing set. There were five entries.

The drawing competition entries are attached at Appendix 5.

At an event in September 2009, the results of the first questionnaire and the drawing competition were discussed. This gave residents a further opportunity to raise new issues and also to hear the action that the parish council had already taken on issues such as speeding and dog fouling. Issues that were already being addressed, such as the safety of Toseland crossroads, were not included in the second questionnaire. Notes on the results of the first survey and the issues that TCPSG agreed not to consider in more depth are attached at Appendix 2.

The prizes for the drawing competition were also distributed at this event.

A second, more detailed anonymous questionnaire was then prepared to investigate in more depth the key issues highlighted by residents. It was agreed that this would be paper-based to make it accessible to everyone and that members of TCPSG would collect the surveys house by house and offer to complete the survey with anyone who needed help due to a visual impairment, or other issue. An address was provided for return of surveys so anonymity could be preserved if that was preferable to respondents and some did use this option. Responses were collated in December 2009. A total of 55 completed questionnaires were collected, which is equivalent to about 68% of the village population aged 10 and over. Most respondents were between 30 and 80 years old, which reflects the age distribution in the village. A quarter of respondents had lived in the village for more than 20 years.

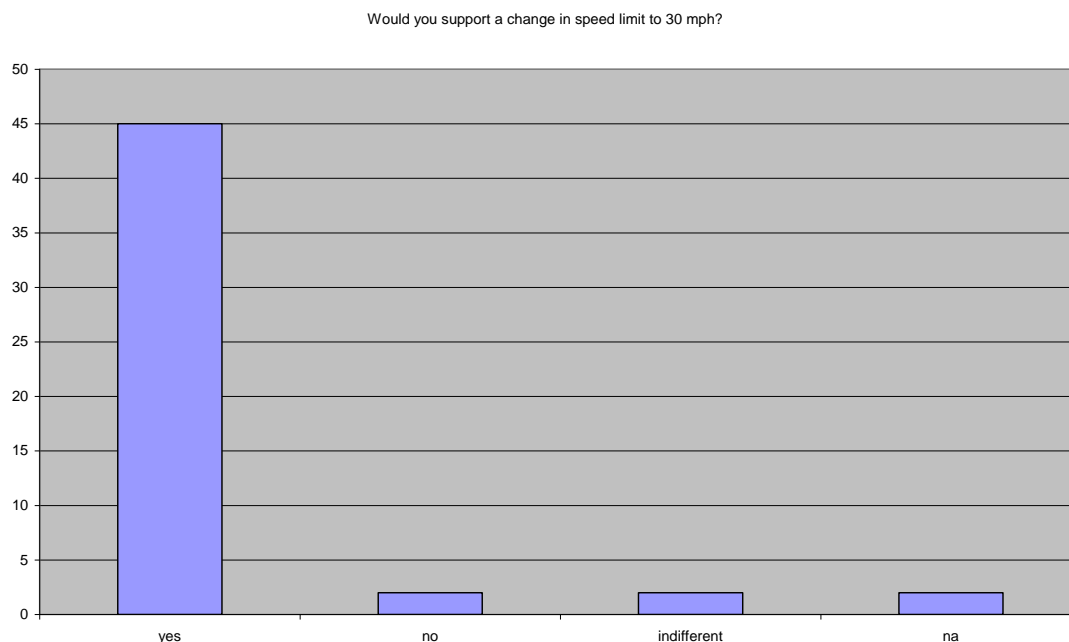
The full questionnaire for the second survey is attached at Appendix 3.

A village meeting was called in March 2010 to discuss the results of the second survey and to secure approval for actions proposed by TCPSG. Twelve residents attended and we had a good discussion. All the actions were agreed, although as many of the proposals needed funding by statutory bodies, it was accepted that success in all areas may not be possible.

The parish plan

This plan has been developed from the key concerns for villagers revealed by the two surveys of residents carried out in 2009.

Speeding



Speeding is a big concern for villagers. 82% of survey respondents would like to see the speed limit reduced to 30mph, although there was only low support for a change to 20mph.

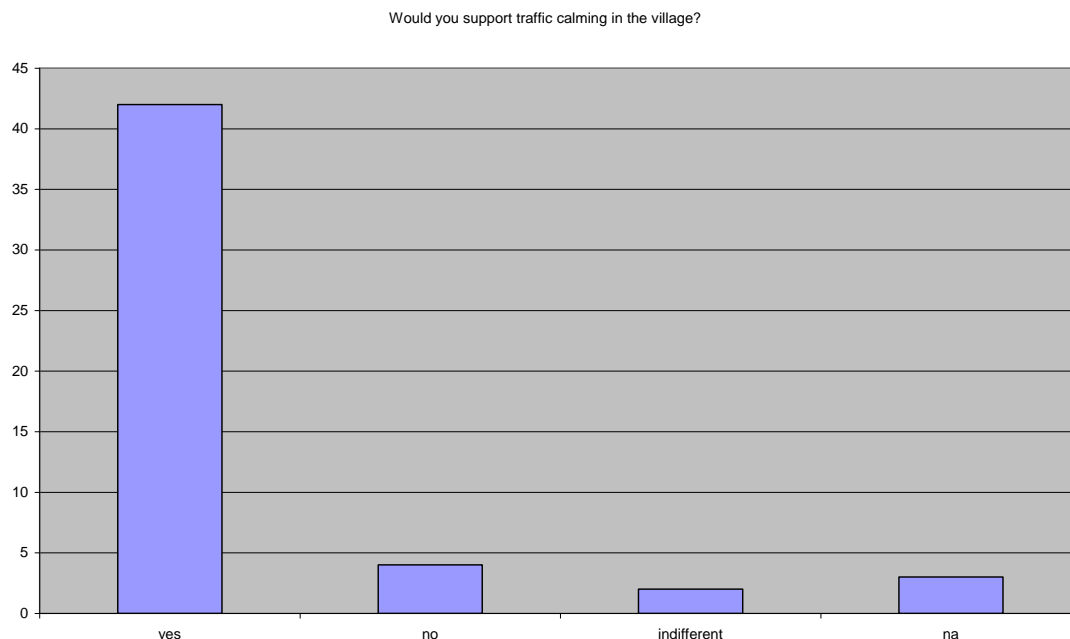
Recent action taken

Cambridgeshire County Council is currently reviewing all road speed limits and Toseland Parish Council has met with our County Councillor Richard West to express its concerns and lobby for a reduction in speed limit to 30mph. He has agreed to take this forward at county level. Cambridgeshire County Council is currently reviewing all speed limits on the county's roads.

Next steps

Toseland Parish Council has joined the Speedwatch initiative and Speedwatch volunteers will be trained soon.

Traffic calming

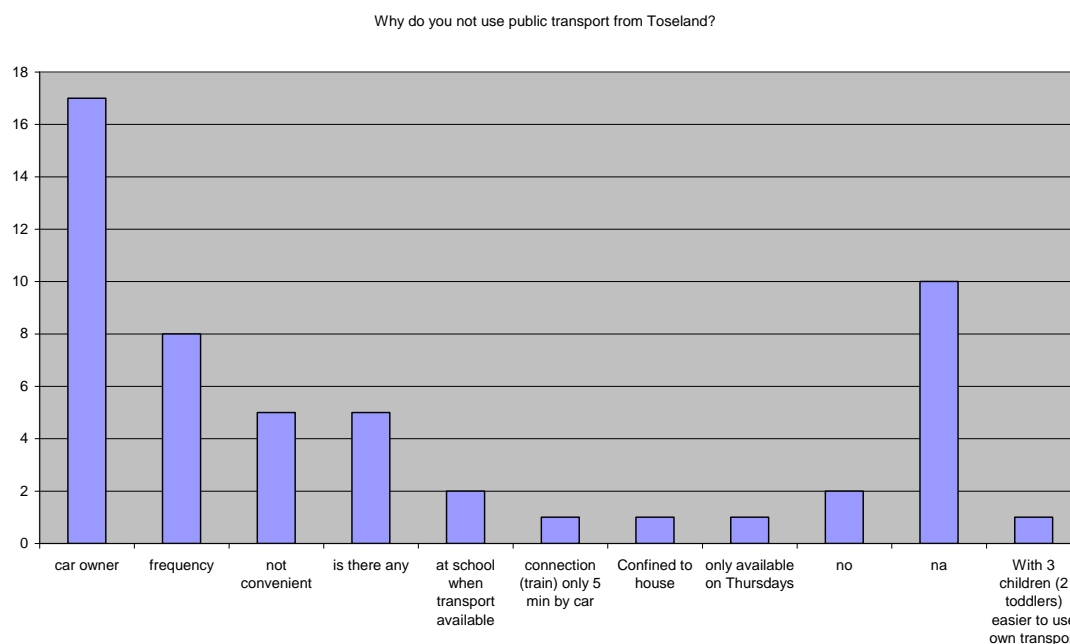


Most people were in favour of traffic calming, with chicanes being the most popular option. Cambridgeshire Council Council currently has no budget for traffic calming measures, but the Steering Group will ask the parish council to consider options. Traffic calming would require street lighting and this would be an additional cost to council tax payers in the village.

Recent action taken

In an effort to remove pedestrians from the danger of speeding traffic, the parish council is pushing for a footway through part of the village.

Public transport



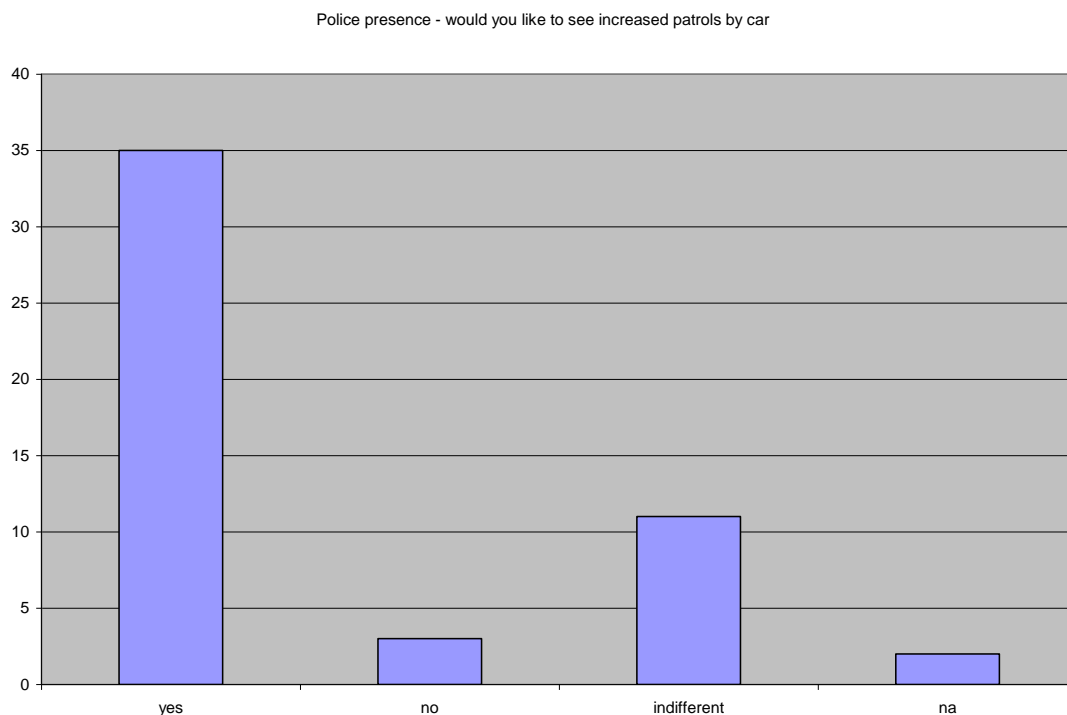
Most people in Toseland do not use public transport to get to work or to the shops. Some residents expressed an interest in a weekly bus service and in a

'dial-a-ride' taxi or minibus service on to St Neots. This is contradictory in that we have a weekly bus service that is only used regularly by about two residents. Most people seem to shop for food and other items in St Neots.

Next steps

The Steering Group will now explore availability of 'dial-a-ride' options.

Police visibility

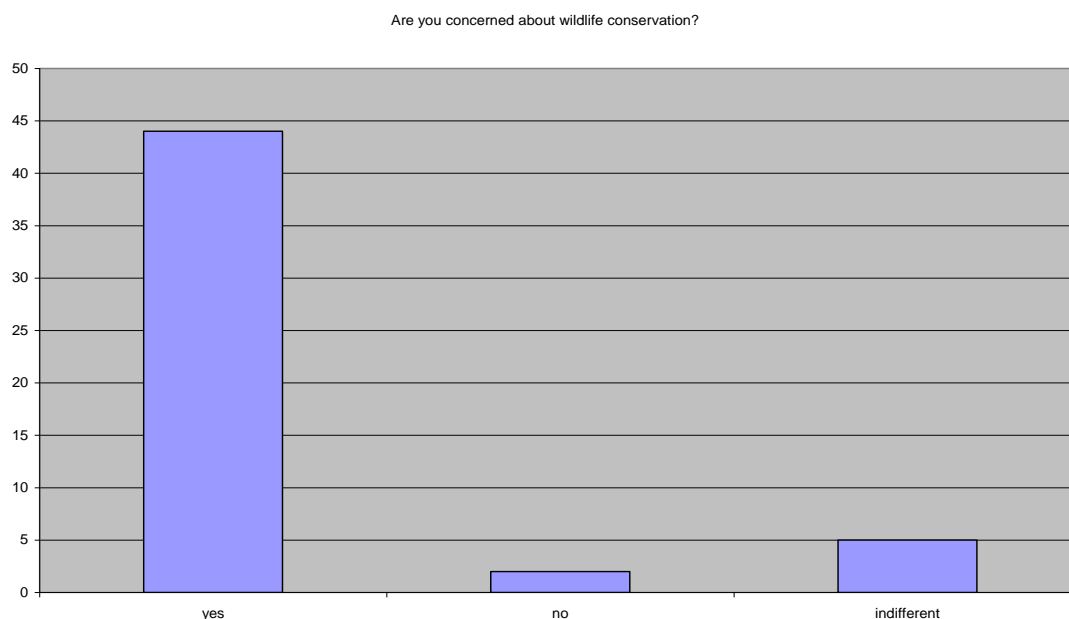


Many residents said they would like to see increased police patrols and increased speed monitoring. Unfortunately constabularies are now facing severe cuts in budgets so an increased police presence in the villages may not be considered a priority.

Next steps

The Steering Group will liaise with the parish council to express residents' concerns to the police.

Wildlife conservation



A lot of survey respondents were concerned about wildlife conservation. The Steering Group has recruited a volunteer wildlife officer for the village, Berni Hunt.

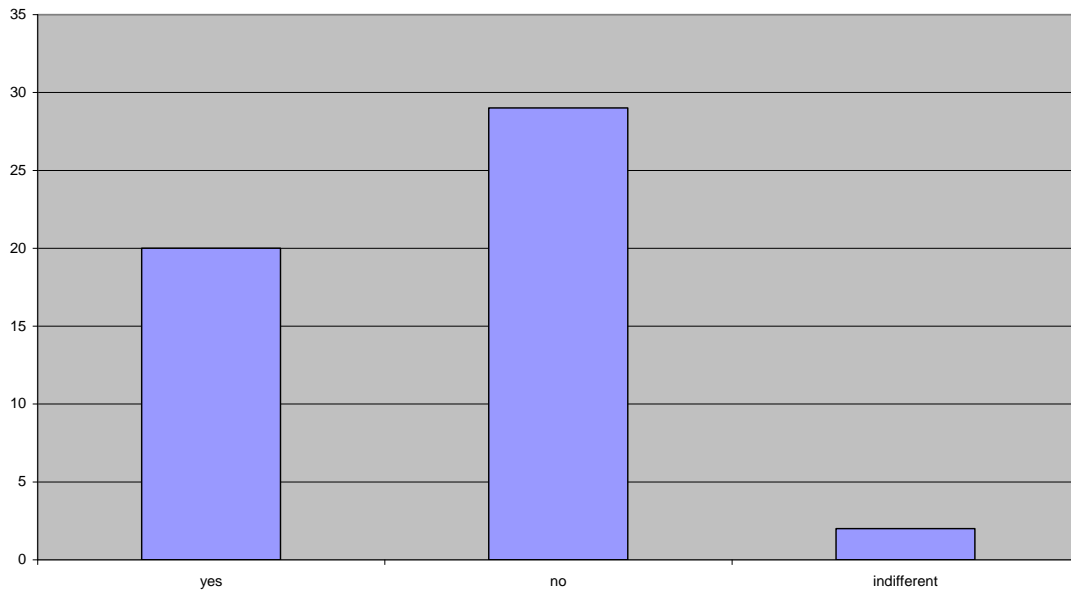
Next steps

TCPSPG will liaise with the parish council to consider how the wildlife officer can assist residents' with wildlife conservation and to help him make links with relevant statutory bodies.

Conservation of the environment

Most residents were in favour of conserving the local landscape and the tranquillity we now enjoy in Toseland. People also want to conserve the village environment, although some were also happy to see a level of development in the village - both development of some green spaces and the reuse of derelict buildings. More than half of those who responded said they would not be happy to see new houses built in Toseland, although most said they would support the conversion of existing buildings, such as barns, to residential use.

Would you be happy to see new houses built in Toseland?

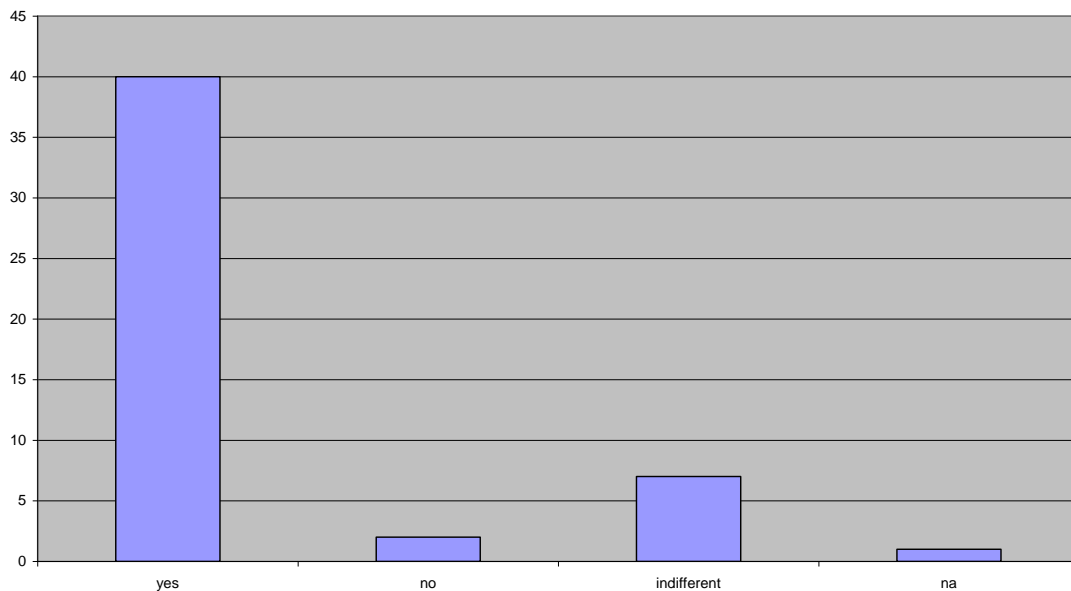


Next steps

The Steering Group is proposing that, with advice from Huntingdonshire District Council, a Village Design Statement be produced to inform and guide any future development proposals for the village. Village Design Statements that meet criteria issued by the local planning authority become 'material' considerations in the planning process.

The future of St Michael's Church

Do you feel that it is important to keep St Michael's Church open?

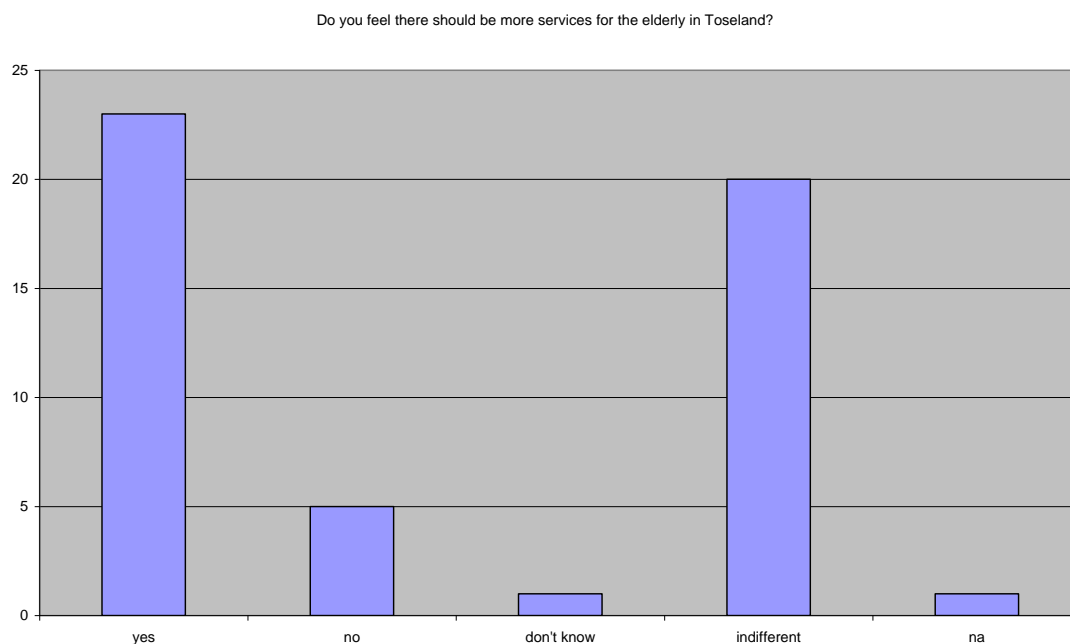


The vast majority want to keep St Michael's church open, both as a place of worship and for alternative uses such as a community café and meetings venue. Currently there are no plans to close the church, but it is important that villagers use it as much as possible to ensure its future viability.

Toseland Parish Council hires St Michael's for council meetings and local events and will continue to promote its use. TCPSG has also hired the church for its meetings and events.

Services for the elderly

This question produced a very mixed response. Most people said they would like to see more services for the elderly, although they would not use those services themselves. It is unlikely that services to the elderly can be provided in Toseland itself, as the level of demand would not be high enough, but there are services in neighbouring villages.



Next steps

The Steering Group proposes to improve access to information about services and to the services themselves, perhaps via community transport.

The full set of results charts from the second residents' survey is attached at Appendix 4.

Looking ahead

Toseland Community Planning Steering Group will formally present its findings and proposals to Toseland Parish Council in September 2010. A parish plan action committee will then be formed to take forward any actions outside the remit of the parish council. The committee will report to the village and to Toseland Parish Council at intervals to be agreed with the parish council.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire used in first survey of Toseland residents – June 2009

Appendix 2

Notes on the results of the first survey – June 2009

Appendix 3

Questionnaire used in second survey of Toseland residents – October 2009

Appendix 4

Full set of charts detailing the results of the second survey – October 2009

Appendix 5

Drawing competition entries from children aged 9 and under – August 2009

For more information on the Toseland parish plan and the research process, contact:

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