



NORTHLEACH

Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results

By Northleach with Eastington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
As presented to the Steering Group on 07 October 2014

Background

The Localism Act gives communities new powers to have a say in the future development of their local area, through the use of Neighbourhood Plans – a new type of planning document created by the community that guides and shapes future development in the local area.

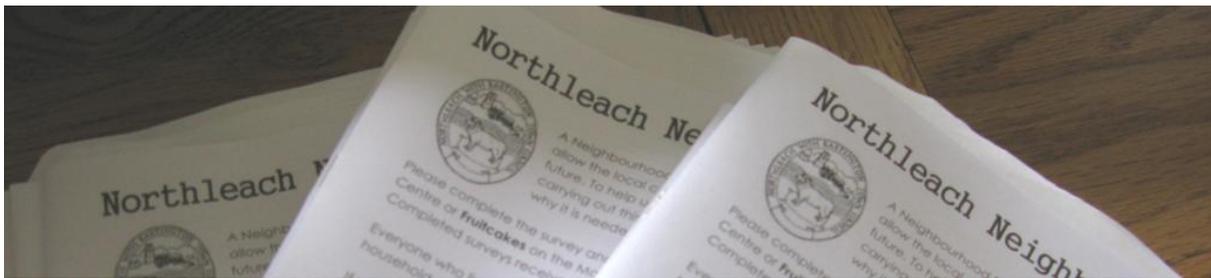


In October 2013, Northleach with Eastington Town Council decided to start preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. A Steering Group was formed to guide this process, made up of local residents, members of the Town Council, and led by the District Councillor.

In July/August 2014 a survey was carried out to find out the community's views on planning issues, and related matters. The results are presented here, and will be used to help the Steering Group develop draft policies for the Northleach with Eastington Neighbourhood Plan.

These results are also included in the State of the Parish Report, published in October 2014.

Acknowledgements



The survey was created by Chris Hancock and Pauline Rigby.

Liz Bourne from Towns Alive provided advice.

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A huge thanks to Stephen Ashby, Spencer Clarke, Laurie Colton, Tony Dale, Chris Hancock, Kirsten Kelsall, Jenny Moss and Pauline Rigby for survey distribution.

We are grateful to Blades/Fruitcakes in the Market Place, the Westwoods Centre, and Town Council Chair Victoria Hewer for hosting the collection boxes.

Town Clerk Cat Crompton and Admin Assistant Mary Cassidy were indispensable, as usual, in getting everyone and everything organised. They answered numerous queries and helped people complete their surveys. Thank you both!

Pauline Rigby, Jamie Hancock and Tom Hancock uploaded the data.

Results were analysed and written up by Pauline Rigby.

Finally, thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey.

Survey Distribution & Response

About 820 paper copies of the surveys were delivered, the majority by hand.

The survey could also be completed online via SurveyMonkey, which was restricted to one response per computer.

Residents were invited to complete the survey as an individual and to request further copies for other members of their household but with hindsight this may not have been clear. Some respondents plainly indicated that their single survey response represented the views of two people, while others may have submitted a household response, but not indicated this.

Over 300 responses were received. Of these, 60 were received via the Internet.

On a household basis, this represents a response rate of **38.1%** (313 out of 820 households), which is phenomenal. On a population basis, this represents a response rate of **22.2%** (313 out of 1409 adults age 16+ in the parish). The real response rate must lie somewhere between.

The vast majority of the respondents (**98.4%**) currently live in the parish (**Q1**). We also received responses from two people who lived in nearby villages but work in the parish, one second-home owner from Nottingham, and two from Australia – from people who had previously lived in Northleach, and still owned property in the town.

Most respondents are long-term residents of the parish: **81.8%** said they have lived in the parish for at least five years, and **62.9%** for at least 10 years.

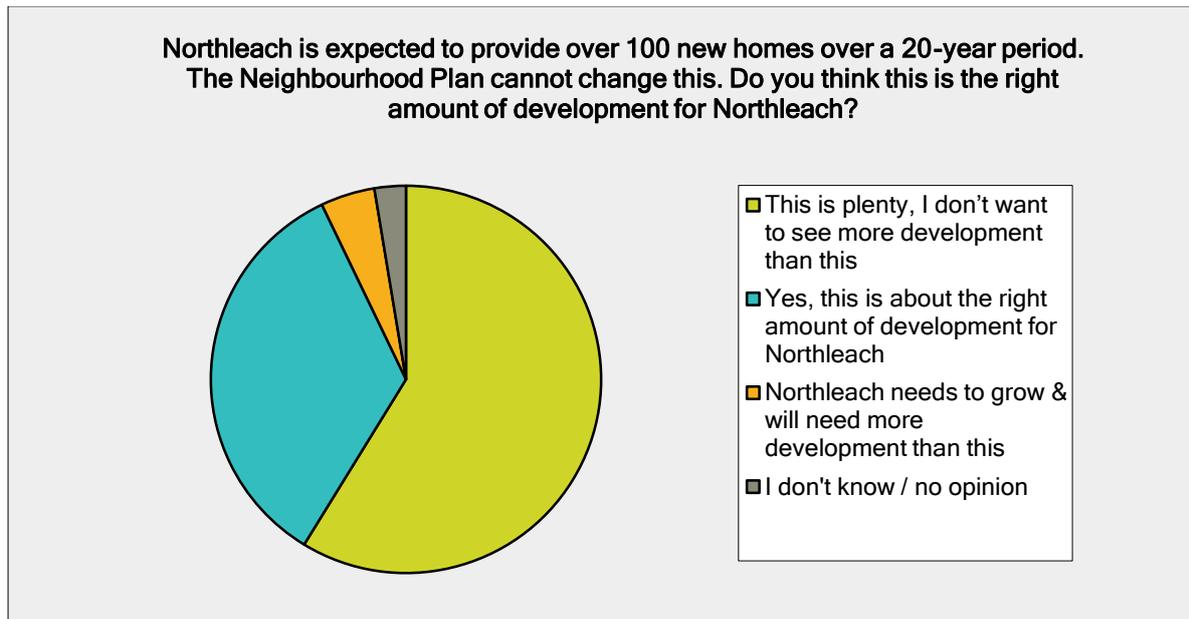
Classification data was collected to help us assess whether the survey had reached people from all backgrounds. All but 20 respondents completed this section.

There was a high response rate from retired people (**44.7%** of those who answered the question compared to 18.3% in the 2011 Census), and a lower-than-expected response rate from full-time employed persons (**27.3%** compared to 37.1% in the 2011 Census).

The youngest two age groups were under-represented: 16-25 years (**2.3%** of those who answered the question compared to 6.58% in the 2011 Census) and 26-35 years (**5.1%** compared to 23.5% in the 2011 Census).

The survey results that follow are reported as a percentage of those who answered the question. Response rates to individual questions generally exceeded 90%.

Numerical Results



The answer to **Q2** was abundantly clear: There is no mandate for more development over and above what has already been proposed. Only **5.9%** think Northleach needs more development than the 100 homes proposed, while **34.2%** think this is the right amount of development for the town. In fact, over half (**56.8%**) think this is plenty, and said they would not like to see more.

Concerns include the physical constraints on development land, the loss of rural character and landscape, lack of local employment and jobs, the loss of the close-knit community feel if the town grows too quickly, and worries that the infrastructure will not cope, especially schools, the overloaded sewage system and the busy main road.

Representative comments include:

"100 homes will fit well into the current physical shape of the town and hopefully existing businesses will thrive on the additional support from new residents."

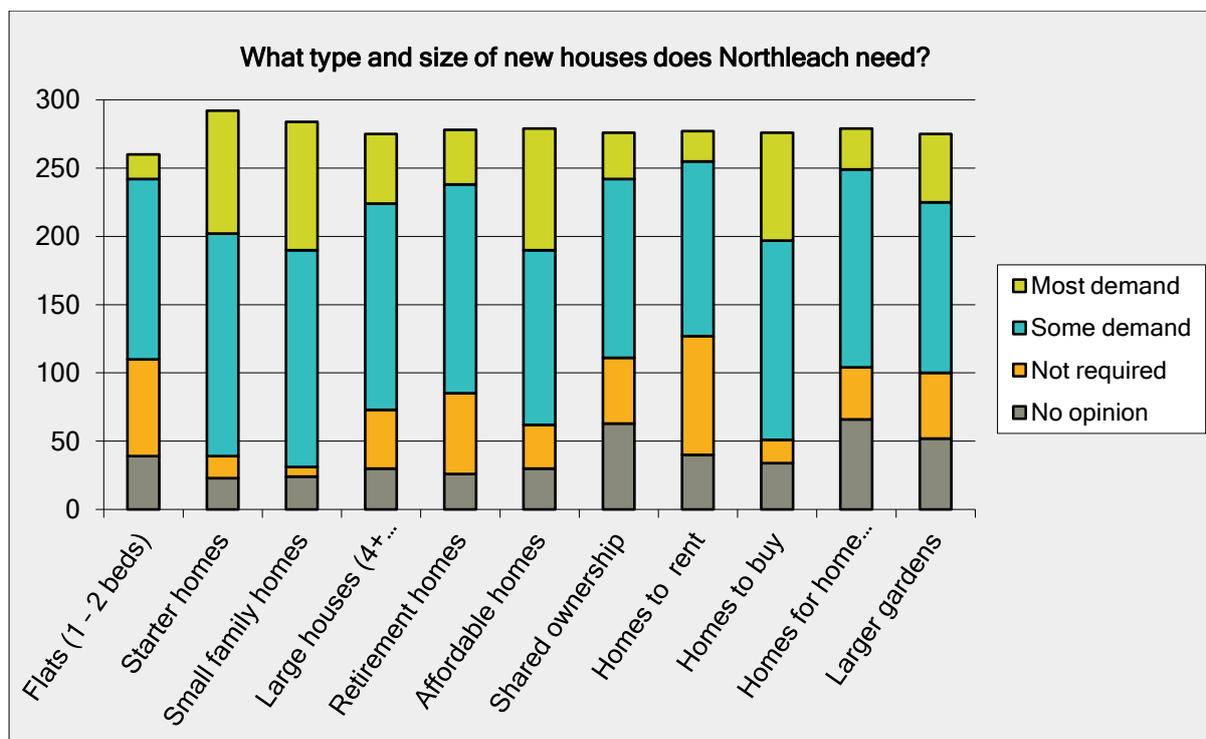
"Up to this number is both physically possible and socially necessary. More houses would over develop what is a small town where the physical constraints of the valley in which it is set have determined the linear form of the historic settlement. The other key parameter for sustainable development is employment, or the absence of suitable sites or expanding businesses. Northleach cannot become just a dormitory town for other areas."

"The limited infrastructure in the town; a zone with the risks of more flooding; plus the major problem more cars will cause; can the already hard pushed amenities cope?"

"Although technically a town, Northleach has the v. friendly feel of a village. Geographically it fits into the valley where it was originally founded perfectly – too much stretching will destroy the rural backdrop as well as the town centre due to increase in vehicles."

Q3 asked how and when these new homes should be built. The majority of respondents (**89.7%**) agree or strongly agree that development should be phased evenly across the 20 years. The majority (**87.1%**) agree or strongly agree that they would like to see small groups of houses spread across multiple sites.

When asked what type and size of houses would be appropriate in Northleach (**Q4**) there was a spread of opinion.



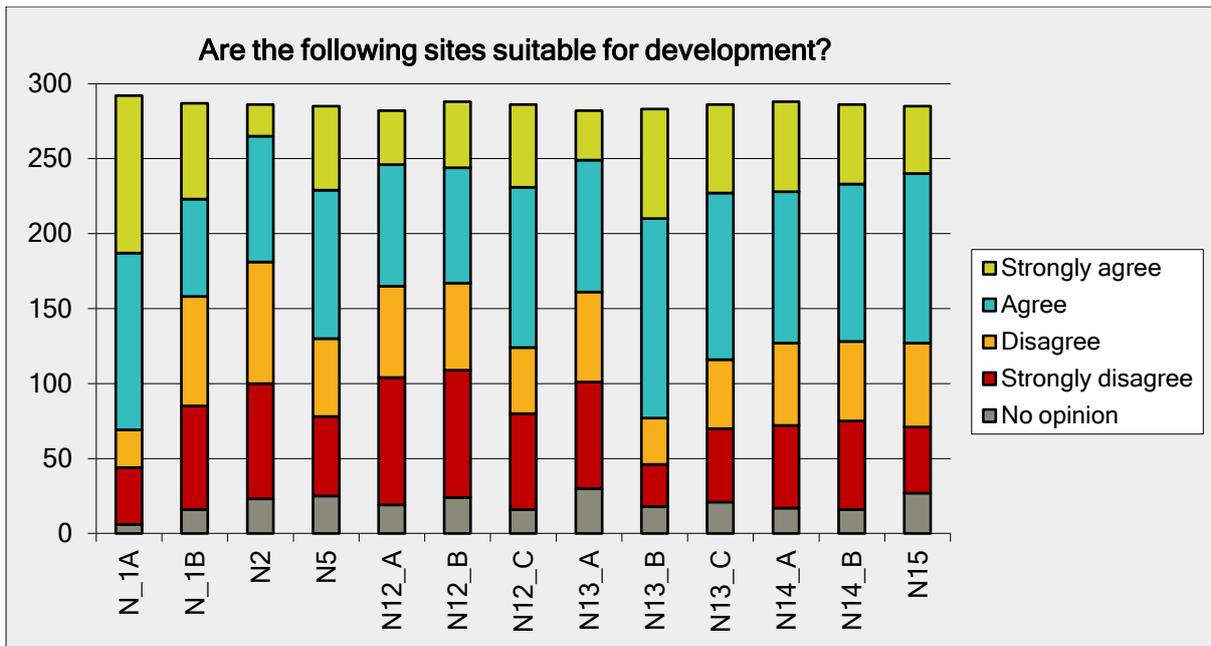
In terms of tenure, respondents thought there would be most demand for homes to buy on the open market: **81.5%** thought there would be at least some demand. **77.8%** of respondents thought there would be at least some need for affordable homes. In contrast **31.4%** of respondents thought there would be no demand for rented accommodation (open market).

In terms of house size, respondents thought there would be most demand for starter homes and small 3-bedroom family homes with **86.6%** said there would be at least some demand for starter homes, and **89.0%** said there would be at least some demand for small family homes.

Q4 also asked whether there was demand for homes suitable for home working, and found that **62.5%** of respondents thought there is at least some demand.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (**63.6%**) also thought there is some or more demand for larger gardens for family properties.

Q5 asked where new housing development should go, with respondents being asked about the suitability of specific sites from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). A list of sites in the SHLAA is available at Annex B.



The most popular site was N1_A, which is the field off Bassett Road. **76.1%** of respondents agree or strongly agree that it is suitable for development. Only **13%** strongly disagree.

The least favoured site for development is N2, Land opposite Northleach Primary School. **55.2%** of respondents think the site is unsuitable. Only **7.3%** strongly agree that it is suitable.

Q6 asked how new homes would impact on services and infrastructure.

Superfast broadband was the infrastructure need most commonly identified as a current need. **80.8%** of residents think this is something we need now, even without new development. The telephone exchange only supports ADSL Max with download speeds up to 8Mbps.

Parking was also clearly identified as a current issue with **73.4%** of respondents saying we need more now, even without new development. Many of the old properties do not have any off-road parking, and there is limited parking in the town centre for visitors.

Road capacity was the third most commonly identified infrastructure need: **43.5%** of respondents said we need more now, and a further **33.4%** said we will need more with new development. There are known problems with traffic flow along the main road.

Better utility services were requested now by **41.7%** of respondents. A further **46.2%** think more utilities will be required to support new development. There is no mains gas in the town and reports of problems with the foul drainage system are common.

Finally, bus services were identified as a significant current need with **37.1%** of respondents saying that we needed more bus services now. A further **42.2%** said new development would mean an increase in demand for bus services.

Respondents were generally happy with the current level of provision for shops and services; however, **55.5%** felt new development would increase the need for local shops, and **41.1%** felt that new development would increase demand for pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Education and health service provision will also need to increase as a result of new development. Although only **14.4%** of respondents felt we needed more health services now, **55.8%** said more health services would be required to support new development. **57.5%** of respondents said we would need more primary school provision to support new development, and **44.4%** said we would need more nursery/pre-school provision.

29.6% of respondents said that there was a current need for after-school and holiday care for children, while a further **35.1%** of respondents said that such a need would arise as a result of new development. In fact there is no after-school/holiday provision, and the nursery in Bourton on the Water closed recently. Only **4.5%** of respondents saw no need for such provision. The rest (**30.9%**) had no opinion, possibly because they did not have a personal need.

Some need was identified for children's play areas (**29.9%** of respondents said we need more now, **44.4%** said we will need more with new development); sports facilities (**29.6%** said we need more now **38.8%** said we need more with new development); and allotments (**29.2%** said we need more now and **32.2%** said we will need more with new development).

Community Halls were not thought to be required: **71.6%** of respondents said we will not need any more of these, even with new development. The town is well served, with community facilities at the Cotswold Hall and the Westwoods Centre, and rooms to hire in the Old Prison.

Other infrastructure needs identified were:

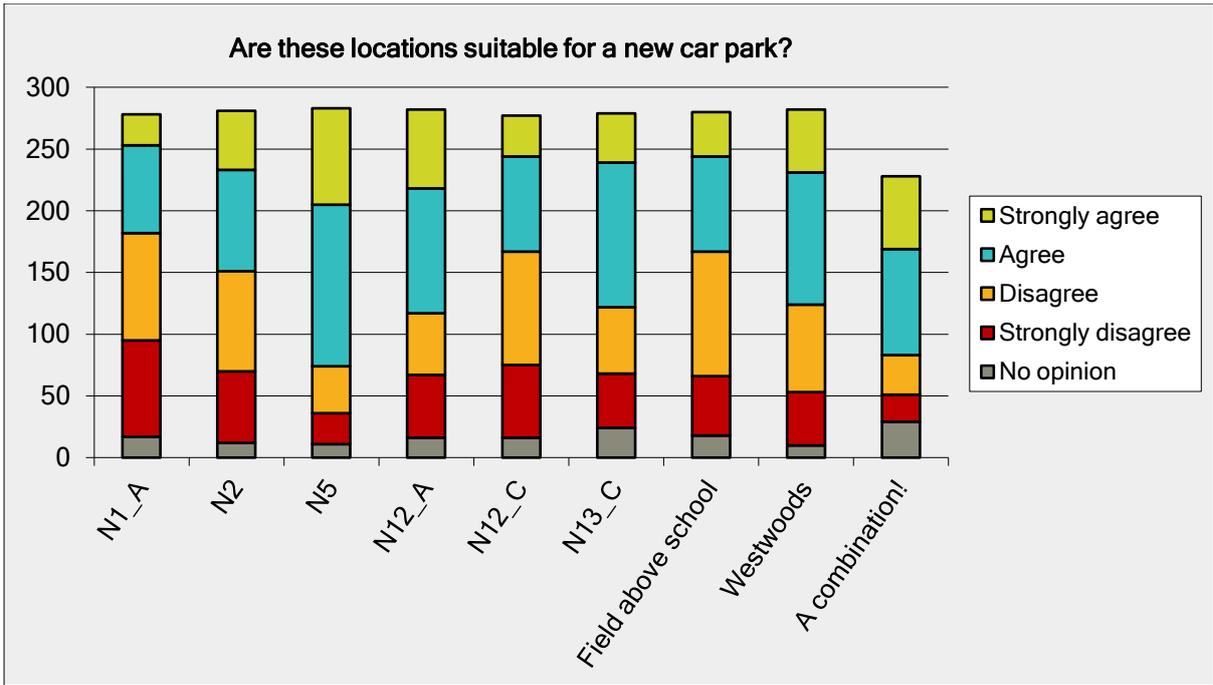
- Mobile coverage (12)
- Parking (5) – even though this was already covered by the question!
- Emergency services improvements (5)
- Mains gas (4)

Also suggested were bank cash point (2), pedestrian crossings (2), dentist (2), day centre for the elderly (1) sports centre (1), access to the A40 from the Farmington Road, and better footpath connections around the town (1).

Q7 asked specifically about potential sites for a new car park.

The most popular choice of site was **N5**, Ambulance & Fire Station. **73.9%** of respondents thought the site would be suitable as a car park. In fact, the front of this site is already used as a pick-up/drop-off zone for coaches, and there is a car park to the rear, although it belongs to GCC and is not currently available for general public use.

The second most popular choice of site for a car park was **N12_A**, land to the rear of Antelope Paddock. **58.5%** of respondents thought it would be a suitable site for a car park, while **25.8%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this choice.



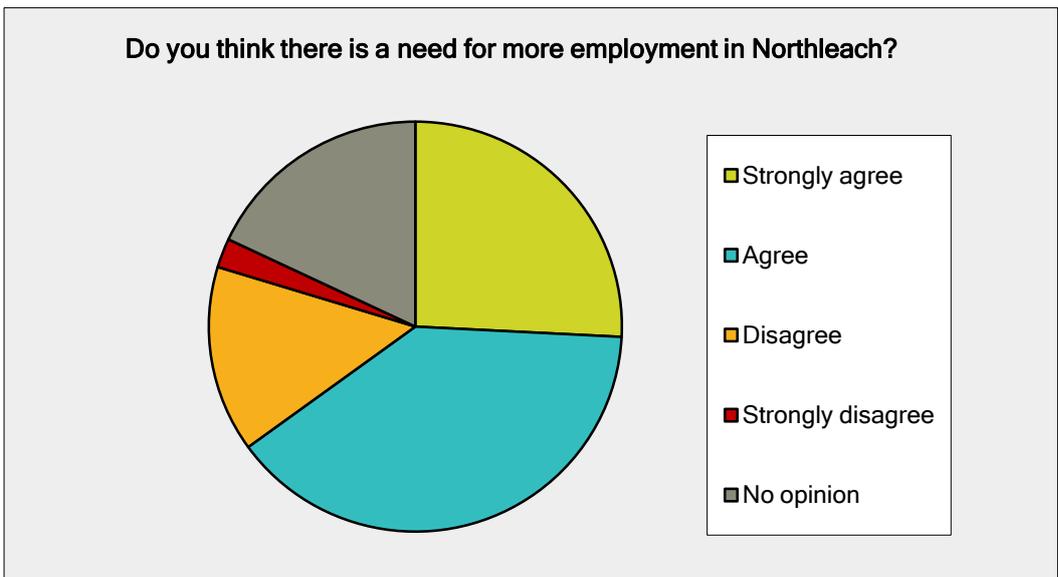
N13_C, Land by Old Coalyard Farm also emerged as an option. More than half of respondents (**56.3%**) agreed or strongly agreed that this was a suitable location for a car park.

The least popular site for a car park was **N1_A**, land off Bassett Road. Just **8.9%** strongly agreed that this was a suitable location, while **59.3%** disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (**63.6%**) thought that more than one car park would be required to solve parking problems in the town.

Alternative locations suggested: Farmington Road at N15 and N17 (4); and the Old Prison (3).

Q8 asked about employment.

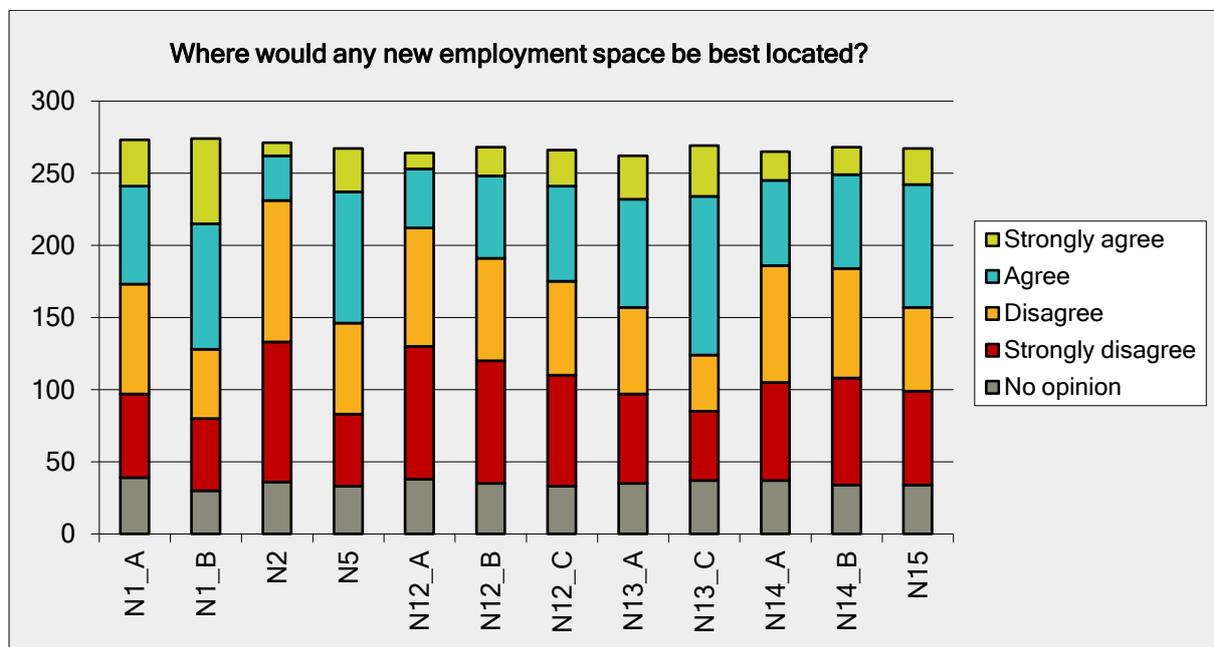


The majority of respondents (**65.0%**) think there is a need for more employment in Northleach. However, a significant number (**18.0%**) were unsure.

Nearly two thirds (**65.7%**) said there was at least some need for small employment buildings with up to 50 employees, while more than two thirds (**69.3%**) said that larger employment buildings with more than 50 employees were not required.

When asked what type of employment buildings are needed, three quarters of respondents (**75.5%**) identified at least some need for more shops and services, and few respondents (**12.8%**) disagreed.

16.1% of respondents said there was most need for an office business centre, while **41.0%** said there was some need. **15.6%** of respondents said workshops and storage were most needed, while **43.8%** said there was some need.



In terms of where such employment space might be located, there were only a couple of options where more than half of respondents considered the location to be suitable.

One of these was N13_C, which is next to existing light industrial areas at Old Coalyard Farm and the Ferrari garage (but it also contains the Jubilee Row lime trees). **53.9%** of respondents agree or strongly agree that it is suitable.

The other option was N1_B, the field near the sewage treatment plant (also frames the eastern approach to the town). **53.1%** of respondents agree or strongly agree with this choice.

The least favoured location for employment land was N2. **71.9%** of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that it is suitable. N12_A, which lies behind Antelope Paddock, was also not considered suitable for employment land by **65.9%** of respondents.

Other suggested locations for employment land included the Fosseyway near Loving's garage and Far Peak (which are just outside the parish boundary); Mustoes Yard off Farmington Road, redundant farm buildings outside the town or Swindon!

Views & Green Spaces

We asked which views and green spaces should be protected (Q11).

The church was the commonly given as an answer (80 mentions in 251 responses). Respondents said the both church and its immediate surroundings – the cemetery, glebe field and Wellings – should be protected, as well as long views of the church from further afield. The church provides an “iconic” first view of the town on approaching from roads or fields.

Also mentioned as worthy of protection were:

- Skyline views from all around
- Views on approach to the town
- Playing field and meadows (26)
- The river Leach all along its length, upstream and downstream of the town
- Fields south of the river up to Helen's ditch
- Woodlands above Fortey Road (11)
- Buildings in the historic core of the town.

Some typical comments:

“All the views around the east end ... as this is beautiful ancient countryside, still with signs of an old ford through the river. It is such a valuable asset to all the residents who can walk out into this very English landscape and enjoy the wildlife e.g. egrets on the river, plovers, skylarks. It makes a gorgeous entrance to the town.”

“I like that the town can't be seen from the A40, it protects the view of the Cotswolds as well as that of the town. I also like the woodlands that we have, it would be a shame to lose these patches of woodland since we have so many nesting birds - and I love that Red Kites have moved in!”

“The skyline on north and south fringes of the town should not be punctuated by development creeping over the horizon”.

“We should preserve the feeling of an old market town set as a jewel in surrounding countryside.”

“As Northleach develops so views will be lost and new ones arise but what is more important is the type, architecture and material used in developments to keep the area an AONB.”

Improvements to Northleach

Q12 asked what respondents what parts of Northleach were most in need of improvement.

The most common theme in the responses was traffic and parking, particularly on West End (parking had 65 mentions in 242 responses; traffic flow had 30 mentions). For example:

"Parking along the main road causes a lot of disruption to the flow of traffic. If they have to close the A40 bypass e.g. accident, it would be grid lock."

"Parking facilities are dire at present and urgently needs attention, particularly in the East End (on the corner) and by the Wheatsheaf where drivers take no heed of the double yellow lines – it would be very difficult to get an emergency vehicle through sometimes."

Another commonly identified location in need of improvement was The Market Place (55 mentions). Respondents commented that it "needs to be smartened up", "all looking rather rundown", "needs a face lift", and that "there is little for a tourist to buy or do."

The amount of concrete and tarmac, was lamented, "restore green to a green", said one respondent. The distribution of the survey coincided with the installation of a fake "green" in the Market Place for the filming of a drama series – some residents said they wanted it to stay!

Respondents gave quite detailed comments about the Market Place:

"Market Place: A disgrace and indicative of no local pride; poorly maintained, litter, rough cut grass, awful tubs of flowers, awful crocus in spring. Bench needs painting. Area outside Cotswold Stores filthy and flower tubs a further disgrace."

"Market place needs re-working to remove as much modern clutter, poor design and traffic as possible. Short term parking with longer term facilities elsewhere would allow improved layout, introduction of outdoor space for local business and greenery."

The fire and ambulance station building was also singled out as being in need of improvement. It was described by one respondent as a "cubist accident" that is "wholly out of keeping with the AONB and unsympathetic to the town and view of the church".

Other areas in need of improvement were:

- dilapidated buildings, notably Dover House on the junction with Farmington Road (26)
- the childrens' playground (25)
- sewage/foul drainage system/flooding (23)
- the derelict tennis courts next to Westwoods Surgery (15)
- run-down streets around Fortey Road/Mays Crescent (10)
- the Post Office (6)
- the sports pavilion (3)

Residents were invited to leave any additional comments and some are worth repeating.

On the lack of local employment:

"My chief concern about the building of more housing is the lack of employment in Northleach & the poor public transport early and late in the day. I am aware that there are unemployed members of the community wanting to work, unable to afford a car and unable to take work which involves 'unsociable' hours because of transport problems."

The valley location and avoiding ribbon development:

"Parking in the town centre is inadequate and roadside parking along the main route through the town is a constant obstruction to the flow of traffic. Making the town LONGER by building beyond Bassett Road and Nostle road will compound this issue because people will use their cars to come into town. Making the town BROADER by building at the back of existing housing might encourage people to WALK the shorter distance into town (and the shorter distance to the school)."

On unimaginative suburban building styles:

"I hope we can avoid – developments on however large or small a site – of 'identikit' houses that we see, for example, in the new development off the Burford Road in Cirencester - imitation Cotswold stone, very small windows etc. Let's try for some variety – different sizes of genuine stone, some stucco, large windows, some large gardens and good landscaping. Such more imaginative developments might help to shed Northleach's reputation as the Cinderella of the Cotswolds."

Observations on high house prices and second homes:

"Northleach is a beautiful Cotswold town but is fast becoming a town snapped up by rich people, many buying houses for second homes, thus pushing property prices sky high. The poor families who have lived here for generations are being pushed out due to these high prices and changing the community spirit. It's not fair... we (wanting to get on the property ladder) don't stand a chance!"

Wild card proposals:

"I think it would be a good idea to create a road from Bettenson Rise (next to the fire station) through to Northleach Primary School, with a car park at the rear of the church with housing off this road. This will help to reduce the amount of vehicles travelling through the centre of Northleach..."

ENDS