

Medstead Village Appraisal



Summer 2000

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Introduction

The value of a village appraisal to the local community has been proven in many parts of the country. Parish councils gain access to validated views of the community on many matters which deeply affect the village as a whole. An appraisal also forms a basis from which the Parish Council may proceed to a design statement, which sets out a blueprint for the future of the community.

In April 1999 the Parish Meeting was addressed by the chairman of the Hartley Wintney village appraisal committee and copies of their report were made available. Many were impressed by what had been achieved, but no decision was made to embark on an appraisal in this village.

In October 1999 a meeting called by the Parish Council was attended by people who wished to know more about appraisals and what might be done in Medstead. A small Appraisal Group was formed to investigate the potential and the problems.

The Parish Council funded the purchase of a software package designed for appraisals which offered a large menu of relevant questions from which a core questionnaire could be developed, customised, and added to, and which contained facilities for analysis of answers. Given this basis the Group decided to go ahead. When approached, East Hampshire District Council made start-up funding available and Medstead Parish Council offered additional funding to see the project through to printing and distribution of a final report.

While committed to short time scales, the Group did not foresee how long it would take to achieve a balanced questionnaire, to print it, and to organise a band of reliable distributors, who would not only deliver questionnaires to every household in Medstead but would also use every available artifice to recover as many completed questionnaires as possible. The questionnaires were eventually distributed in summer 2000, and by September data entry was under way.

No data entry specialists were available and the task had to be undertaken by three otherwise busy and unskilled Group members. With some relief this process was completed just before the end of 2000. The task of analysis began, providing the basis for this final report.

Questionnaires were delivered to 713 households, and 529 completed questionnaires were returned and analysed - a return rate of 74.2%. The number of respondents (over the age of 11) totalled 1150, an average of 2.17 per household. While not every respondent answered every question - not all were necessarily relevant to everyone - the results can be regarded as a valid representation of village opinion.

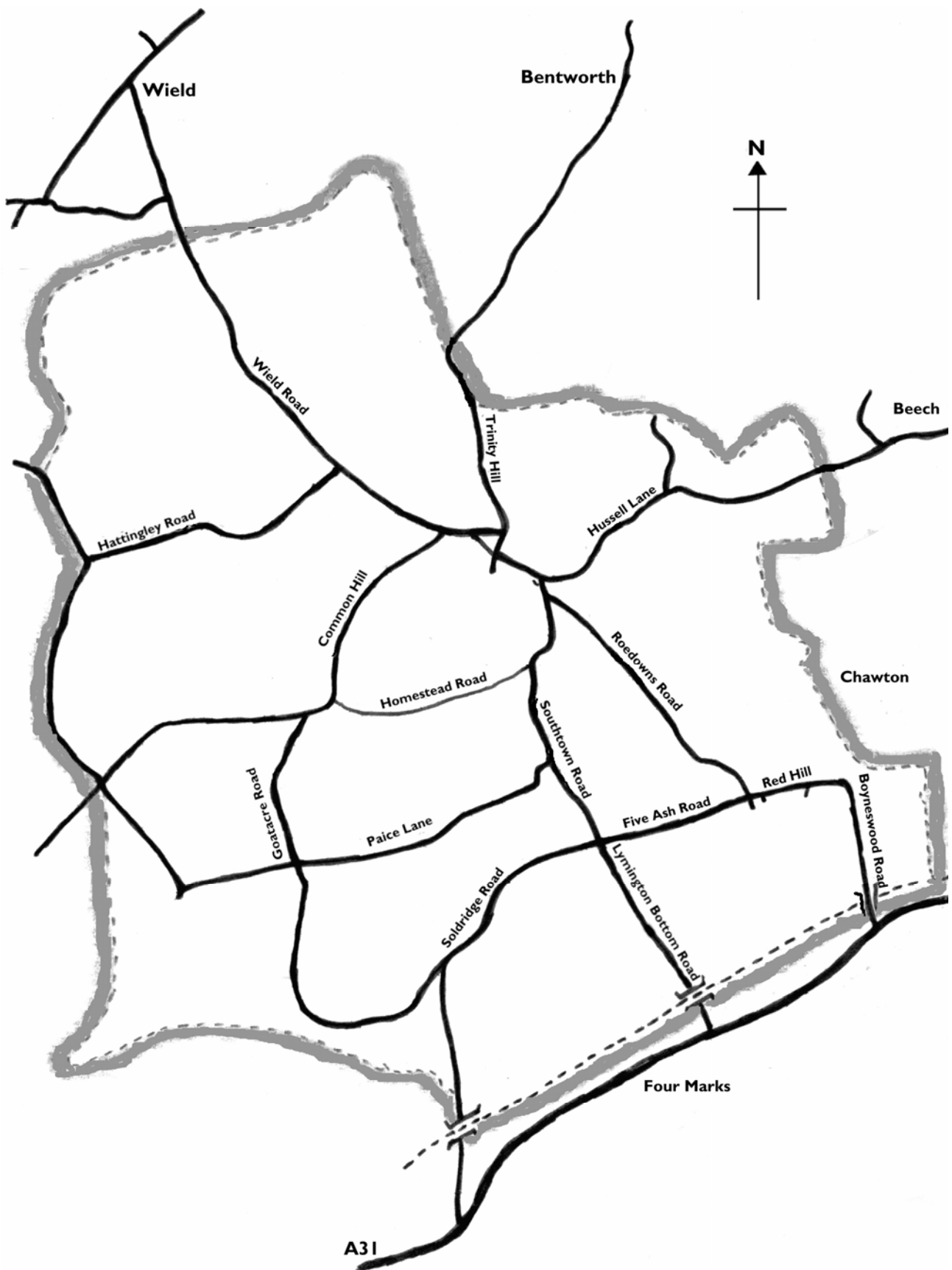
This project could not have been completed without the work of many helpers, acknowledged elsewhere, and in particular the sustained efforts of the Group members.

Ron Fischbacher

Chairman - Medstead Appraisal Group

21 March 2001

Medstead Parish Boundary



Medstead

Medstead is one of the highest villages in Hampshire, nearly 700 ft (210 metres) above sea level. There are magnificent views in all directions. The existence of tumuli indicate the village was occupied from around 1000 B.C. The Roman road from Winchester ran through Alresford and then on through the village and eastwards. The village was at that time on a road junction in the forest. The name of the village could either derive from the Saxon *maesteade*, meaning a clearing in the forest, or Midstead, a half way place between Winchester and Farnham.

The soil in this area is mainly chalk, overlaid with red clay. The village has no natural water and in former times water had to be collected daily from the valley. The few wells were about 300 ft deep.

As the motor car has become more widely available, Medstead has infilled. The colonial bungalows, built since 1900 on two acre plots, have been replaced with more modern homes with smaller gardens.

The boundaries of the present village are shown on the map. This is not a compact village - its boundaries stretch along a number of roads which radiate from its centre with intervening farmland. Medstead covers 4.5 square miles and has approximately 2000 inhabitants in some 720 households. It borders on the village of Four Marks, and some who live near the boundary are known to feel more akin to Four Marks, which has a shopping centre and doctor's surgery, than to Medstead.

Medstead has its own primary school, but older children have to travel to Alton or Alresford for secondary education. At the centre is the village green, with a sports pavilion replaced in 1991, and the large village hall. The pub, the Castle of Comfort, and St Andrew's church (Church of England), dating from Norman times, are at one end of the High Street, with the Church Hall (formerly the village primary school) and at the other end is the Convent of St Lucy (Roman Catholic). There is a general store and a hardware shop with post office in the High St. Moving south, towards Four Marks, one finds the United Reformed Church, a builders' merchant, a butcher, and a new Medstead surgery (opened in 2000).

Employment within the village is limited, so transport is clearly a topic of major importance. Train services at Alton and Basingstoke provide for longer distance commuters.

Have you looked at:

The *Medstead Web Site*, written and maintained by Tony Rogers, includes the Medstead Timeline. It can be accessed at <http://www.medstead.org.uk>

A Chronicle of Medstead, (1966) written by Lorents Rathbone is available through R & K Kimber.

Medstead Village 2000 by Violet Taylor is a contemporary portrait of the village, lavishly illustrated in colour, and can be viewed at the Hampshire Records Office in Winchester.

The *Medstead Times* - for local information, contact names and telephone numbers for clubs and societies, information about and reports from the Parish Council, and key dates.

Key Appraisal Statistics

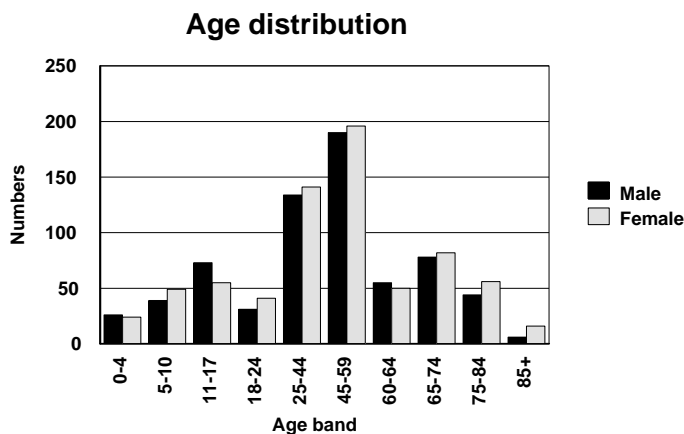
Households circulated	713
Completed questionnaires	529
Percentage return	74.2%
Numbers reported including children	1386
Average/household including children	2.62
Respondents over 11 years	1150
Average number of respondents/household	2.17

The Respondents

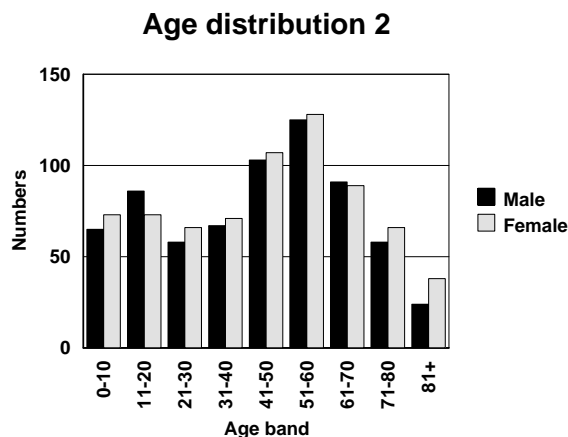
Of the 1150 respondents 556 were male and 594 female - a 48.3 % : 51.7% split.

Of the 1386 including children 676 were male and 710 were female.

The age distribution as determined from the questionnaire answers is shown in the chart below.



A more meaningful - though approximated - age distribution by decade may be derived as in the second chart.



Population Movement

The responses show that 374 people (32.5% of the total respondents) moved into the village within the last 10 years, with 248 (21.57%) of these arriving within the last five years. The figures show that population movement is on the increase, with twice as many moving into the village in the last 5 years as the previous 5 years. The figures also show that the pace of population movement has been steadily increasing over the last 50 years, from about 10 per year 50 years ago, to 25 per year 25 years ago to about 40 per year now.

There is no evidence in the figures to indicate that our village attracts a disproportionately large number of retired people. Indeed, on average, only 12% of those coming to live in Medstead over the last 5 years have been of retirement age. In the same period a significant number of 'newcomers' have been in the 25-44 age group (39.1%), with another 32.25% in the 45-59 group. This suggests that there is a continued need to provide appropriate facilities for people with families.

It can be confirmed that in the last 10 years the village has not been subjected to an invasion from north of Watford! Contrary to the impression frequently given in the media, there is no evidence in our survey to suggest that the village is anything other than a reservation for southern tribes. Only 33 (8.85%) of the 374 mentioned above came from the Midlands and north (including Wales & Scotland) with a further 10 coming from overseas. The largest contingent (164) came from elsewhere in Hampshire, a further 66 came from Surrey and the remainder were spread fairly evenly over most of the southern counties before coming to Medstead.

However, contrary to what might be expected, only 55 of the 248 have moved into the village because of work in the area, with another 56 moving in because of the availability of housing. By far the largest number have moved into the village for either the love of country life or the love of village life - 183. The figures also show that only a very small number (42) of people have lived in the village for the whole of their lives.

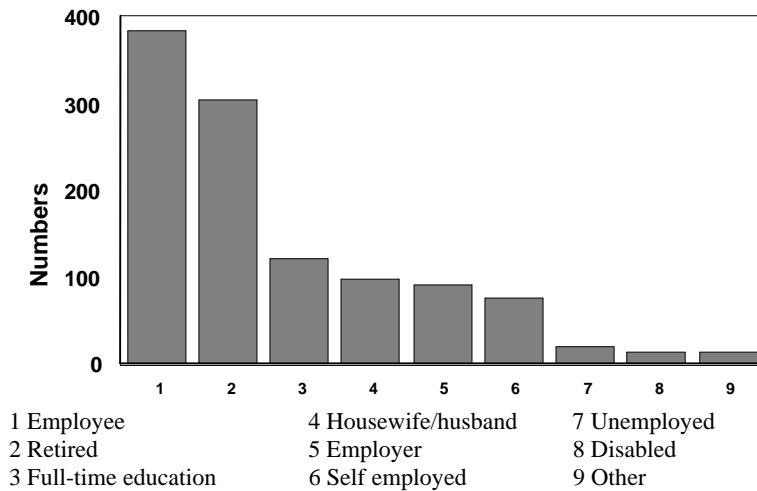


Employment

The employment pattern of respondents is best illustrated by the charts below.

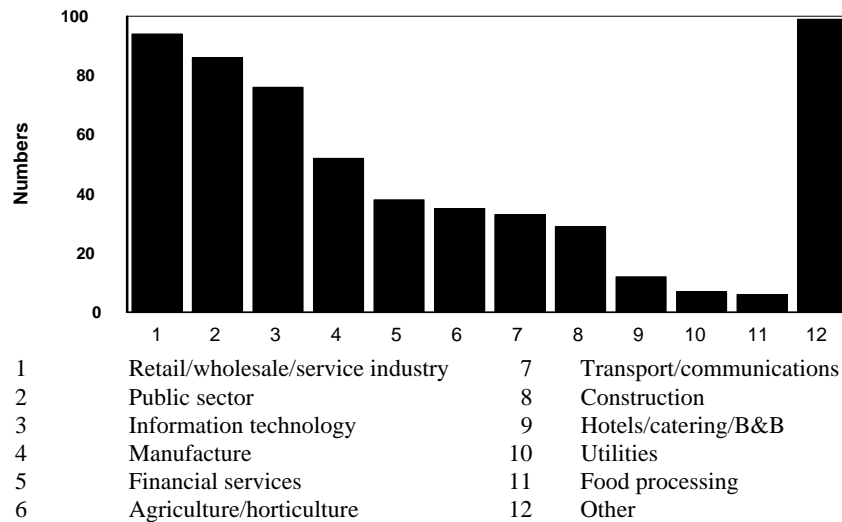
The majority are employees, though a significant proportion are self employed, either employing others or working on their own. Note the high proportion of those who are retired.

Employment pattern

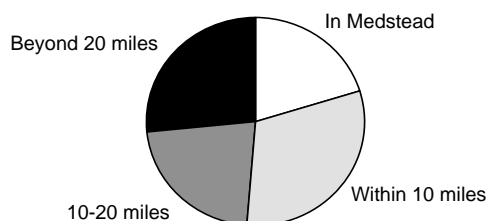


The field of employment is difficult to categorise effectively, but within the limits of the questionnaire the results are shown in the second chart. The growth of employment in information technology is reflected in its third place on the chart.

Field of employment

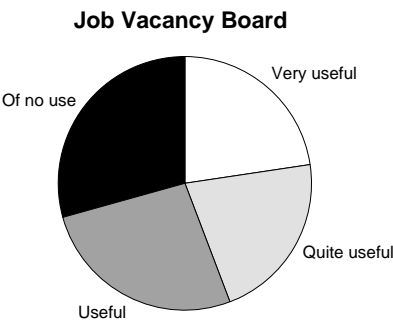
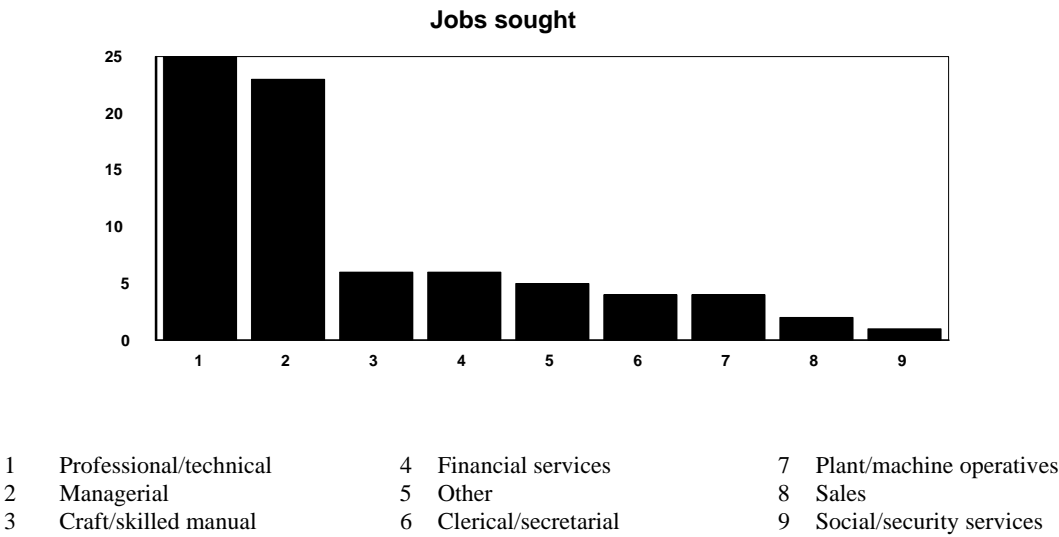


Work location



A significant proportion find employment within or near Medstead. The pie chart shows the work location.

Of those currently seeking employment the majority are looking for professional or managerial roles. The graph below shows the range of responses.



When asked about the potential usefulness of a job vacancy display board somewhere in the village, views were mixed as the pie chart shows but a majority thought it would be useful.

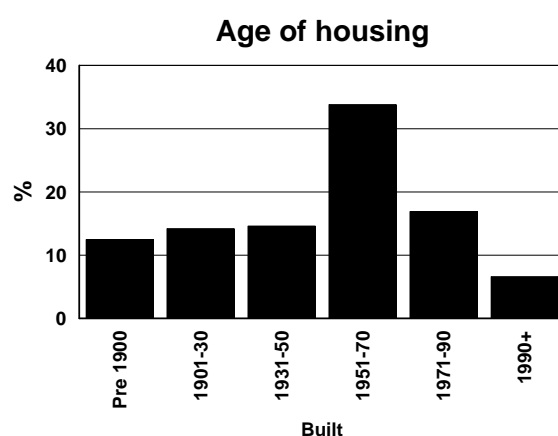


Housing and Development

The current situation:

To help interpret the data from the questionnaire it is useful to consider where people currently live and the housing which is available. From the responses received, the following picture can be built up.

Medstead is not a village of absentee owners. There were only 2 households for whom Medstead was not their primary residence. 13% of the dwellings were built pre-1900, 34% during the twenty year period 1951-1970, and 24% during the last thirty years. This means that well over half the properties were built in the last fifty years. The chart shows the age of housing - the post-war housing boom stands out clearly as the period of greatest expansion.



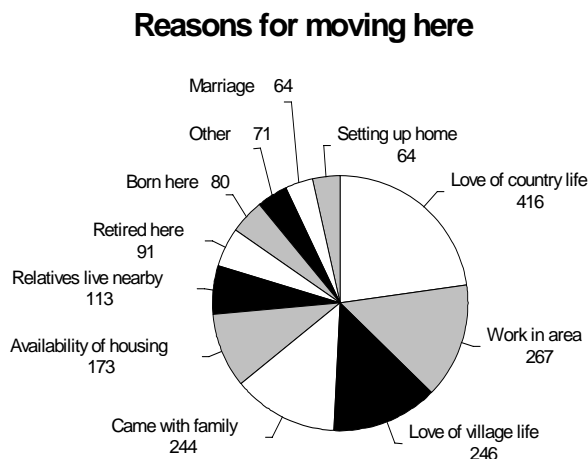
93% of houses/dwellings are owner occupied and 6% rented (mainly through Housing Associations). An exceedingly high proportion, 85%, are *detached* houses and bungalows. 13% are semi-detached houses and bungalows. It will not surprise local people to learn that 48% of these properties are bungalows.

Detached house	39.3%
Detached bungalow	46.1%
Semi-detached house	11.0%
Semi-detached bungalow	1.5%

When one considers the number of bedrooms available, one begins to get a better feel for the *size* of the dwellings. 1386 people distributed between 529 households have 1822 bedrooms. One may hypothesise that at least 40% of the bedrooms in the village are unoccupied. (The average number of bedrooms per house is 3.4.) This, coupled with the information in the next section, may help explain the answers to questions about the future accommodation needs, as perceived by respondents.

When asked why people came to live in Medstead, the replies were as shown:

No. of respondents: 1,071



The advent of mains gas in Medstead in 1988 transformed the pattern of household heating fuel with 54% of households now using gas, as against 33% using oil. However a significant segment of the village still awaits mains gas. Some 35% of households still use wood or solid fuel and 20% rely on electricity for primary or secondary heating. It is of interest to note that 6 households use solar power.

Looking forward

Three questions sought views on new housing and development. The first was very blunt:

Do you think Medstead can accommodate more new housing?

Yes	347	(34.9%)
No	634	(63.8%)
Don't know	13	(1.3%)

Only just over a third of respondents, therefore, believe Medstead *can* accommodate new housing. From comments at the end of the questionnaire, it is clear that there are concerns about the capacity of the infrastructure to support further development. The next question sought information on the kind of accommodation Medstead *needs*, and clearly even those who feel Medstead cannot accommodate more housing believe there are unmet needs which have to be considered:

What kind of accommodation do you think Medstead needs?

No. of respondents 936

No further homes are needed	392	(41.9%)
Homes for young people	399	(42.6%)
Small family homes	332	(35.5%)
Homes for single people	151	(16.1%)
Homes for people with disabilities	133	(14.2%)
Large family homes	76	(8.1%)
Other	50	(5.3%)
Executive homes	40	(4.3%)

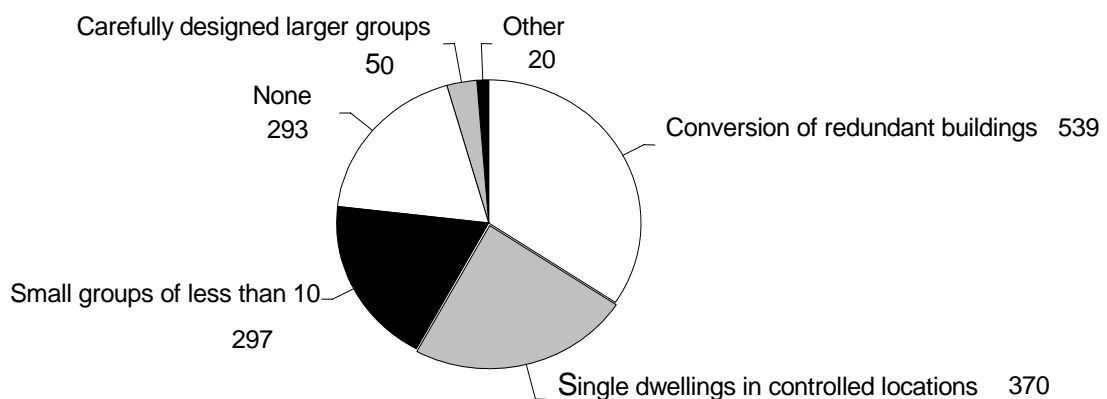
The written comments on this question reinforced and expanded on the picture given by the figures. There were 16 forms which spoke of the specific needs of the elderly. These referred to both private and residential accommodation, nursing homes, sheltered accommodation, affordable housing and

homes for rent, and small properties and flats. 15 forms included comments on the need for social housing to meet local needs, particularly those of young people. The language used betrayed strong feelings about local people being forced out of the area by high prices. There were comments which emphasised the need for small homes:

'division of large houses'
'we already have many large houses'
'we need cottages - in-fill - no estates'
'no more mansions: we need one-up-one down'

The final question asked respondents about the types of housing development which they considered would be acceptable:

Types of housing development



The comments largely supported the views already expressed. Three questionnaires referred specifically to the needs of the elderly. Nine referred to the need to look only at in-fill, small buildings, starter homes, the needs of local people, and replacing dilapidated bungalows.

59 forms included final comments which referred specifically to housing development. From some there is outright opposition:

'any further development of the village should be resisted'
'a lovely village to live in with a caring community - let's make sure it stays that way and is not spoilt by development'

There are concerns about the infrastructure and the ability of the village to sustain new growth:

'village not suitable for housing development due to lack of drainage, inadequate road system, other facilities, etc.'
'particularly worried about over-development of housing etc. while facilities, especially water and sewage and refuse collection are so limited. Yet will these limitations protect our village or be ignored?'

If there is to be development it should not be on a large scale or impinge on green field sites. Adapting redundant buildings and in-fill are the preferred methods.

‘major concern - green fields should not be developed’

‘loss of green field areas’

‘I fear them [Four Marks and Medstead] turning into one large urban sprawl with no green fields. This would destroy the village along with village life in general’

The theme of low-cost affordable housing for local people, for young and old, resurfaced in the final comments.

‘it is essential to provide some low cost small dwellings to restore the balance in the community and stop some local (young and old) people being driven away’

‘every small bungalow is replaced by a large house when it is sold. Thus the little man with his dog is replaced by a man with a 4-wheel drive and a horse box, leading to a change in village demography....’

There was a sense of resignation in some comments. People feel that both legislation and those taking planning decisions are out of touch with what is happening and its inappropriateness. Decisions are being taken with no reference to local views and needs.

‘very little faith in the planners to ensure the village is not overloaded with additional housing / horticultural / industrial development’

‘the planners are out of touch allowing too many executive homes and extensions to be built’

‘imposition of extra housing following Government policy for Hampshire’

One cannot escape the conclusion that housing and further development are the subject of much concern. There is a strong feeling that there should be no new housing and that every effort should be made to protect what is now here. There is a fear of urbanisation which would result in the character of the village being subject to significant change. This is balanced and tempered with an understanding that nothing can remain totally unchanged and that the present housing stock does not meet the needs of local people. It is clearly seen to be unbalanced. There are too many large homes and an acute shortage of small homes, built to accommodate and address the needs of local people, young and old. Those needs include affordability and provision for those with disability. Perhaps two final comments represent the views of many:

‘a community cannot be kept unchanged over a period of time. It is important that Medstead moves forward keeping the correct balance between rural village life and providing job opportunities and suitable housing where possible within the community. It would be nice from our point of view to say no more houses, but that is not sensible or realistic. The difficulty is to strike the right balance’

‘Medstead has survived for 1000 years on its ability to adapt to change. It must adapt to the 21st century... If this is properly controlled, Medstead will still be a great place to live in’

This Appraisal clearly identifies significant shortages and needs (the same as were identified in the 1980s by the Medstead Housing Group questionnaire).

[The challenge, then, is for the District Council (the decision making body in planning matters) to be able to listen to and be guided by local views, including those expressed through the Parish Council. The difficulty is that whilst central Government can direct housing development in so far as saying how many new homes are needed, it does not direct what sort of homes and how big these should be. The District Council currently has no power to dictate the type of dwelling. That is currently still very much in the hands of the developers.]



Roads & Highways

The subject of roads and road usage, in a village which has seen substantial increase in road traffic in recent years, inevitably raised a great deal of comment. The weight of traffic, the condition of the roads, concerns about speeding, danger spots, and the difficulties for pedestrians were all highlighted.

Much of the traffic is necessarily village-generated since 90% of respondents indicated that their primary means of transport is the car. Nevertheless there is a strongly expressed view that the village is being used as a rat-run between the A31 and Basingstoke - possibly exacerbated by a recent lengthy closure of the A339 Alton-Basingstoke road for resurfacing.

The condition of the roads comes under clear criticism. Of respondents to the question, 30% rated road maintenance as poor, while 35% labelled it unacceptable. Only 1% felt it was good. There was much criticism of the process of repairing potholes, which are rife throughout the village. When they are dealt with the repair is so poor that the problem recurs after a very short time. This is seen as a money wasting procedure.

The problem of very large lorries on the rural roads of the village looms as large as ever, with much complaint both about their speed and the damage they cause to the roads.

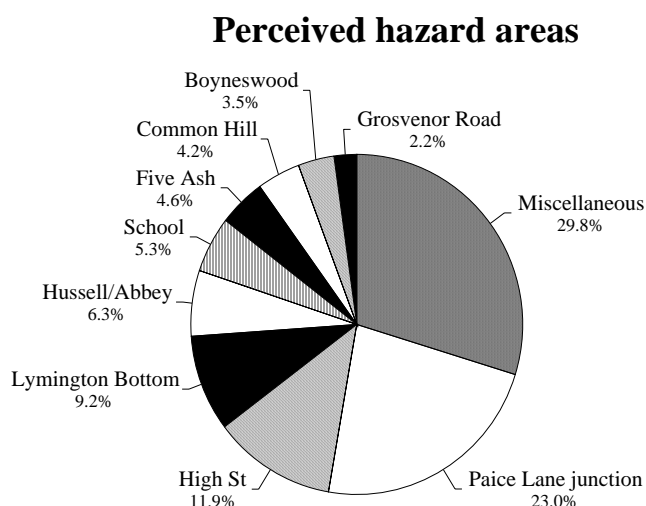
Speeding traffic is seen as a problem in Medstead by 79%, with only 20% untroubled by speed. It is worth noting however that whenever the police are involved in speed checks in the village they invariably comment that the great majority of offenders are village residents.

When asked what *measures to control speeding* would be supported responses were as follows:

Extension of the speed limit	51%
Traffic calming (humps, pinch points, etc.)	47%
Children at play signs	34%
More road warning signs	42%
None of these	13%

(Note that respondents could vote for more than one measure.)

Three-quarters of all respondents said that there are major danger spots on Medstead roads. Of these 57% were specific about the location of these danger spots. The pie chart shows the approximate distribution of perceived hazard locations.



The most clearly identified cause for

concern is the double bend and junction where Southtown Road and Paice Lane meet. Congestion in the High Street and around the Greenstile cross-roads ranks next. Concerns about Lymington Bottom relate mostly to speeding, though some worries are expressed about the road narrowing at the railway bridge. Five Ash cross-roads was seen by many as a danger spot.

In Hussell Lane the bend at the Redwood Lane junction is widely seen as hazardous, while the lack of footpaths for pedestrians in what is a busy but narrow road is seen as a discouragement to children walking to school here and elsewhere, leading to further use of cars.

The difficulty of finding somewhere to park in the vicinity of the school engenders congestion there at peak times, and speed in Roedowns Road and Boyneswood Road merited significant comment.

One issue which we had not foreseen came through very clearly in the comments on the returns. Clearly the impact of the horse on our roads is of considerable concern. On the one hand, there are those who feel that it is becoming unsafe to ride, that other road users are inconsiderate, and that a generally negative attitude towards horses prevails. Take for example:

‘many horses are kept in and around Medstead but there is a general attitude that they are a nuisance. Horses are environmentally friendly, provide a great deal of pleasure to many people, and provide local employment’

Others feel very differently. Some riders are thought to be officious and there are those who propose that young children should be banned from riding without supervision. The number of horse boxes on the roads and the congestion they cause is clearly an irritation:

‘one Wednesday 56 horse boxes/trailers went through the High St between 9 a.m. and 12 noon’

Public Transport

Despite the fact that 90% of the 1,075 respondents to the question indicated the car as their “most usual means of transport”, it is clear from the responses to another question (nearly half the respondents, 47.5%) and the comments made at the end of the questionnaire that many people would use public transport if offered suitable services at suitable times.

Which of the following is your major means of transport?

Car	90%
Bus	6.2%
Bike	2.4%
Train	1.2%
Coach	0.1%
Dial-a-ride	0%

Many people feel that public transport in the village is currently inadequate, failing to meet the needs of the local population. Neither bus companies nor the subsidising authority appear to make serious attempts to consult the people they expect to use their services when organising transport to and from villages, reinforcing a view that needs are not understood or recognised.

Would you like to see any improvements in the bus service with regard to:?

Routes	49.6%
Timetable	62.9%
Cost	63.6%
Reliability	42.8%
Bus stop location	28.5%
Access for those with disabilities	33.1%
No opinion	0.5%

When asked for suggestions for improvement to the bus service, half the respondents felt that consideration should be given to the routes used. Suggestions included proposals for services to Four Marks, Alresford and Winchester. At the moment people feel limited to access to Farnham and Guildford, by having to go initially to Alton.

‘public transport could not get me to and from work at times needed’

‘if public transport were of better quality and frequency I would happily use it’

‘I would use it to go to work if it was viable’

Nearly two thirds of respondents feel that timetables need to be improved. Many people think that smaller, more frequent buses would be better used than the current services. A common complaint is that an earlier service to Basingstoke is needed for those who need to be at work by 8.00 a.m., and later evening services are also required. An early service to Alresford and Winchester for those going to school and work there has also been suggested. Timetables at the various stopping points in the village, not just the centre, have also been requested.

Buses that provide a good connection with trains at Alton station were also asked for. A quick look at the timetables reveals that most buses miss the train by up to 10 minutes - not a situation likely to encourage the use of public transport and reduce the number of cars on the road.

'tiny buses running much more frequently would be used - once people could depend on them - there's always an inertia factor'

'more frequent but smaller buses'

The cost of using public transport is another cause for concern. For public transport to be better used it needs to be cost-effective for the user.



The Environment

General comment:

The fear of creeping urbanisation is very apparent in the responses which relate to the environment of the village. There is a recognition of the difficulty of balancing the concept of the countryside and a rural community with the services and expectations of the 21st century. There are several comments, some quite blunt, about “townies” wanting to live in the country but to tame and sanitise it once they have moved in. The analysis does not always make it easy to quantify these views, but they are clearly strongly felt.

962 people responded to the question:

What do you think should be done to protect and enhance the local environment of the village?

Recycling	638	66%
Improve footways	93	62%
Improved public transport	555	58%
Reduce traffic	421	44%
Energy saving	375	39%
More employment locally	285	30%
Street lighting in centre	234	24%
Advice on healthier life styles	134	14%
Car sharing	132	14%

The many written comments supporting this question have been taken into account in relevant sections of the report.

The rural setting:

1,248 people responded to the question:

How important are the following features of the surrounding countryside to you?

	Very Important	Important	Total
Woods	757	188	945 (76%)
Footpaths/bridleways	718	205	923 (74%)
Hedges	713	235	938 (75%)
Green fields	706	233	939 (75%)
Village Green	688	245	933 (75%)
Ponds	499	317	816 (65%)
Farm buildings	325	381	706 (57%)

Answers thus reinforced the impression that the rural setting of the village is of crucial importance to the majority.

When asked what should be done to improve the environment, there was more variety in the answers:

No. of respondents 1248

	Very Important	Worth doing	Not necessary
Look after woodlands	581	279	17
Preserve single trees	444	286	54
Keep hedges short & tidy	360	321	151
Restore village pond	307	373	129
Plant more trees	237	333	212
Plant bulbs & flowers	228	425	169
Let hedges grow naturally	144	192	318
Cut down some trees	26	101	556

Trees and woodlands are clearly valued and, if there should be any question of a village project, it is worth noting that 54% of respondents thought it worth restoring the pond. There were 66 written comments to this question alone. Most are reflected in the paragraphs which follow or in other parts of the report. However, the following should be recorded:

'involve young people and educate them to enjoy and play in the countryside'

'old fashioned land management'

'protect wild flowers. Only cut the road verges where the sight lines are important'

Footpaths and pavements:

There was one specific question about footpaths and bridleways, asking respondents to note any difficulties they had experienced in using them. Of the 830 people who answered:

Mud/water	480	58%
Bushes/nettles/brambles	459	55%
Restricted access/uncut hedges	259	31%
Inadequate signing	170	21%
Crops across path	115	14%
Other	110	13%
Difficult stiles	97	12%
Barbed wire	82	10%
Farm animals	70	8%
No difficulty experienced	189	23%

One may assume that mud and water will be a feature of footpaths and many argue that this is what living in the country is all about. However, written comments include 7 questionnaires referring to horses, and 6 referring to motorbikes and 4-wheel drive vehicles and their impact on footpaths. The suggestion is that some inappropriate use has contributed to the poor state of the paths.



Elsewhere, where there are comments on footpaths, the word seems to be used as an alternative to pavement. While no questions were asked about the provision of pavements, it is evident from the number of written comments that there is considerable concern about the lack of provision. This is,

in many cases, linked to concerns about the speed and density of traffic and the poor state of the roads.

There are suggestions for pavements throughout the village centre and to the school, as well as along all main routes within Medstead. This provision, it is asserted, would reduce the number of car journeys and thus have an additional beneficial effect. Lymington Bottom Road is singled out for comment on several forms, as are Roedowns Rd, Hussell Lane and South Town Rd. These proposals are inevitably linked to considerations of safety, and avoidance of use of the car.

Hedges:

Although retaining hedges and keeping them in good shape appears important through the answers to the questions on the environment, the number of comments and the strength of feeling underpinning them was a little surprising.

For some the responsibility for cutting back hedges - and verges - is that of the District Council, for others it is that of the owners. Either way, the lack of maintenance leads to an unsafe situation, it is argued, with drivers unable to see clearly and traffic, horse and bicycle riders, and pedestrians all being forced out into the middle of the road in places.

Significant features & landmarks:

The Village Green is seen as an important focal point. There were several requests that the Green be better maintained, particularly on the football side, round the edges and near the 'pond'. More than once the suggestion that the scrub areas be cut away and shrubs or trees planted was mooted, possibly by use of a task force. More benches round the Green and making more of the 'pond' also figured. Indeed the pond gave rise to quite a few comments.

'every village within 5 miles has a pond with water and ducks. Where is ours?'

There were some queries about where the village pond is to be found (for some it is on the Green, for others at the Lymington Bottom / Five Ash corner....) but not inconsiderable interest in seeing the area on the Green improved and planted. It should be noted that we understand there to be more than 20 ponds in Medstead, many not well known.

The Village Hall figured little, apart from three comments about replacing the orange panels with something more in tune with the times and less intrusive. There was one expression of concern about the operation of an emergency exit: this was immediately passed on to the Hall Management Committee.

The Cemetery & Graveyard:

It is difficult to be sure whether those who refer to the Graveyard wish to speak about the Cemetery or the graveyard adjoining St. Andrew's church. There were a few comments and they reflected a concern that neither is sufficiently well maintained and that there should be better parking facilities for the Cemetery.

The High Street:

The High St and roads around St Andrew's church are seen as the centre of Medstead. It is a source of regret to some that this area is not as tidy or as well kept as they think the centre should be.

There are suggestions that the triangle between Castle St/Church Lane should be cleaned up and cars not allowed to park on it (though we understand it to be privately owned), that some properties in the area should be decorated as they detract from the majority, that the High St/Green Stiles corner is too often an eyesore, and that there could be improvements to the bus shelter to make it more attractive. There is considerable acknowledgement that there is a parking problem, exacerbated during St Andrew's church services.

Medstead Church of England Primary School:

The school figured in responses as it generates parking problems; this was seen as contributing to the dangers for those who walk to and from school. Other references to the school concerned the number of pupil places available if extra housing were to be developed.

Signage:

There were several suggestions for improving the appearance of the village by better - or repaired - signs. It was hoped that the old style of sign would be looked after and that signs could be co-ordinated (as in some nearby villages). One suggestion would make a feature of a village sign:

'suggest new more attractive signs for the village; also suggest a central village sign / seat incorporating the traditions of the village e.g. Norfolk and Kent. Also bulb planting / flower beds'

Street lighting:

This was a good example of the struggle referred to in the introduction to this section!

'we definitely do not want street lighting. It's supposed to be a village'

'I would like the village to stay rural but would welcome street lighting'

While there is clearly some support for lighting through the centre of the village, there were no comments in favour of extending it further.

Refuse, litter and nuisances:

Litter is not seen as a problem in the village, with the possible exception of on roadside verges. However, there was an indication that litter bins on the Green need emptying more frequently and there were several, very pointed, comments about the unacceptable level of dog faeces on the Green and on footpaths. There was also reference to the need to clear rubbish, i.e. old cars, from properties.

Recycling is of considerable interest to local people and there are suggestions that collections (here and from behind the shops in Four Marks) should be more frequent. There were adverse and forthright comments about the proposal to collect refuse fortnightly, rather than weekly; this was seen as a health hazard.

People used the opportunity afforded by the questionnaire to record their worries about various nuisances which must have an impact on their area. There were several comments about the intrusive and unpleasant effects of bonfires, and two specifically about overuse of the facility to deposit human sludge on some fields.

Mains drainage:

Nine forms referred to mains drainage in the “Finally...” Section. It was seen as a very high priority by some. There was some suggestion, however, that its provision would lead to significant increases in the numbers of new houses.

And finally...

‘it would be good to provide a visual focus at the heart of the village, apart from the church and the pub. A good duck pond with seats nearby would be a good option’

Services

Overview:

The survey sought views about *the standard of the following environmental services*:

No. of respondents 1,248

Positive			Negative		
<i>Good</i>	<i>Reasonable</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>
51%	20%	Telephone	Road maintenance	30%	35%
49%	18%	Mains water supply	Winter weather	29%	19%
42%	29%	Refuse collection	Roadside care	23%	10%
42%	27%	Mains electricity	TV reception	13%	5%
45%	8%	Mains gas supply	Radio reception	10%	1%
31%	34%	Radio reception	Mains water	9%	2%
23%	36%	TV reception	Mains electricity	6%	1%
10%	32%	Roadside care	Refuse collection	5%	1%
4%	22%	Winter weather service	Telephone	4%	1%
1%	12%	Road maintenance	Mains gas	3%	1%

The most striking aspect of these replies was the significant condemnation of the standard of road maintenance. The vast majority of people will say that this is not a surprise. A look at the minutes of the Parish Council meetings will reveal that councillors and members of the public raise questions about road problems and related matters with monotonous regularity.

These replies will be made known as appropriate to the service providers by the Appraisal Group.

Shops, retailers and venues:

One question revealed a steady use of the Handy Stores, Medstead Hardware and Read's the Butchers, but more strikingly that about half the respondents never use the Village Hall.

Postal services:

A wide variety of opinion was expressed. Some feel that the current delivery service is very poor, inaccurate, infrequent and late. Others feel that they have an excellent service, including collection from the house. The size of post boxes is a cause for concern; it is thought that too many will not take A4 envelopes. A tendency for some to use post offices other than the local one was detected. However, one comment left us baffled:

'snails eat the post over the weekend'

How do they know?



Play, recreational and social facilities:

Significant numbers of people chose not to answer questions on social and sports facilities, and this should be borne in mind when considering related issues.

Are children's play facilities adequate in Medstead?

Yes	246
No	394

Interestingly, it is the 17 - 25 year age group which is considered to be the least well catered for.

What are your views on the local social facilities for:?

	Good	Reasonable	Poor
Children upto 16	72	256	239
Young people 17 - 25	27	166	353
People 25 - 60	160	373	72
People over 60	227	322	39

Medstead is extremely well provided with sporting facilities, indeed it is suggested that many villages are envious of the provision. We do not feel that the question on sports interests elicited sufficient detail and accuracy to give a reliable picture of take up of sport locally. We suggest that this could be attempted through the Sports Club or by a survey of local organisations organised by the Parish Council. However, it is clear that significant numbers of people are involved in sport and, in addition to those listed in the question, the following were mentioned by respondents:

swimming	52	squash	15
golf	42	rugby	14
horse riding	28	cycling	13
gym	23		

31 other activities were mentioned

Obviously many do not take place here because it is unrealistic to expect there to be facilities locally. Paragliding, yachting, Formula 1 and motor racing, for example, are very specialist interests. It is worth noting, however, that there was no request for additional sporting facilities from this section.

Medstead Times:

Much information and news can be gained from the Medstead Times, published monthly by the Village Hall Management Committee.

Do you receive the Medstead Times? Yes 347 No 176

There were many comments about the publication. These have been analysed under the following headings: distribution issues, production issues, design and layout, satisfied customers, dissatisfied customers, content, suggestions for articles, and have been passed to the Editor and Manager.

Local Administration

There was an undisguised attempt to encourage participation in this question!

***Have you ever attended the Annual Parish Meeting
which is open to all the electors of the Parish?***

Yes	211
No	830

For the many who have not yet enjoyed this event it is perhaps worth noting that there are usually about 40 people present, and the meeting is held in April.

There are clearly concerns about the way planning applications are publicised and the system implemented. This has also been reflected in the section on Housing and Development. The decision making authority is the District Council and the Parish Council has only an advisory role.

Do you think sufficient publicity is given to planning applications which affect Medstead?

Yes	324	35%
No	577	63%
No opinion	20	2%

The further removed from Medstead, the less the local authority is deemed to be aware of local concerns and feelings.

***Do you feel your elected representatives are sufficiently aware
of local concerns and feelings?***

	Fully aware	Quite aware	Not aware
Parish Council	216	335	134
District Council	50	422	189
County Council	19	285	339

Conclusions & Footnote

At the end of the questionnaire there was an opportunity for people to record any concerns they had which they had not been able to express elsewhere. It was very obvious that two subjects dominated: roads / traffic /safety and housing /development. These have been reported on in some detail in the main body of the report.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that to live in Medstead means that access to a car, if not car ownership, is essential. This brings a range of associated issues and concerns about road safety and maintenance, and traffic density. It is equally clear that the vast majority of those living here value and seek those aspects of life which are variously described as rural and caring. While there is a very clear lobby for maintaining the village as it is and ensuring that the countryside and the facilities are protected against urbanisation and over-development, there is a recognition that too many local people are being disadvantaged, if not pushed out, by an inadequate stock of small homes and poor public transport services.

It is neither possible nor appropriate in this report to include every comment and idea. We have tried to give an indication of the range of views expressed under each of the main headings of the report. We think it worth mentioning here two areas, not referred to specifically elsewhere, where people may see some value in pursuing the ideas further. The first is about enhancing the appearance of the village. There are suggestions for planting bulbs and shrubs, for more benches on the green, for upgrading the centre of the village, and for cleaning road signs. The second concerns the exploitation of the potential of the Internet, seen as a means of conveying and sharing information. It is suggested that the shop(s) or Village Hall could be an access point.

There are people who in cogent and reflective ways have recognised both the importance of taking an overview, and also the responsibility and accountability of decision makers. These extracts from “And finally...” will give an idea:

‘improve co-ordination of developing community facilities such as cricket, bowls and tennis pavilions, church and village halls, to avoid dissipation of resources that means all facilities are average and none is excellent’

‘we may like to have amenities which it is not wise to have for various reasons’

‘we need to work to ensure a true sense of community and responsibility is shared by all residents.’

Once the data from the questionnaires had been entered, members of the Appraisal Group went through every form again and logged all comments, suggestions and ideas which had been written by respondents. In addition to those questions requiring a textual response, a further 29 pages of comment were collected.

Readers may find it helpful to know that the 17 pages of comments arising from the '*and Finally*' section of the questionnaires were ultimately arranged under the following headings:

- Roads (3 pages)
- Public transport (1 page)
- Horses (1 page)
- Housing & development (2 pages)
- Areas suggested for improvement and tidying
- Street lighting
- Provision for people with disabilities
- Refuse, litter & nuisance
- Boundaries, fringes & a sense of belonging
- Pavements & footpaths: getting around safely
- Mains drainage
- Shops and services: current and wanted
- The Cemetery & Graveyard
- Village Hall, the Green & Pavilion
- Hedges & roadsides
- Parking
- Provision for social needs
- Signage
- Policing
- Local administration & taking the overview
- Watercress Line
- Medstead Primary School
- St. Andrew's Church
- Jenny Green Lane
- Miscellaneous & lengthy, complex comments.

The Appraisal Group has passed on to relevant people and bodies comments which are specific and beyond the scope of this general report. A copy of all the comments is being given to the Parish Council, in order to give councillors further insight into the views of local people.

Were we to carry out this exercise again it would be useful to link the responses to the area of the village in which the respondent lives.

The Appraisal Group wishes to express its very warm thanks to the many people who took the trouble to complete the questionnaire. The percentage return is certainly statistically sound and the degree of thoughtfulness in the replies a tribute to local residents. We hope that through this exercise people may have become even more aware of the many facilities and assets which we enjoy and that participation in special events and the use of local services will be further increased. Our motivation was to offer a service through which information and ideas could be made available for further work. We trust that the base line thus established and the analysis undertaken will provide the Parish Council with the necessary foundation to commission a Village Design Statement. We commend the report to you.

Medstead. 1 March 2001

Acknowledgements

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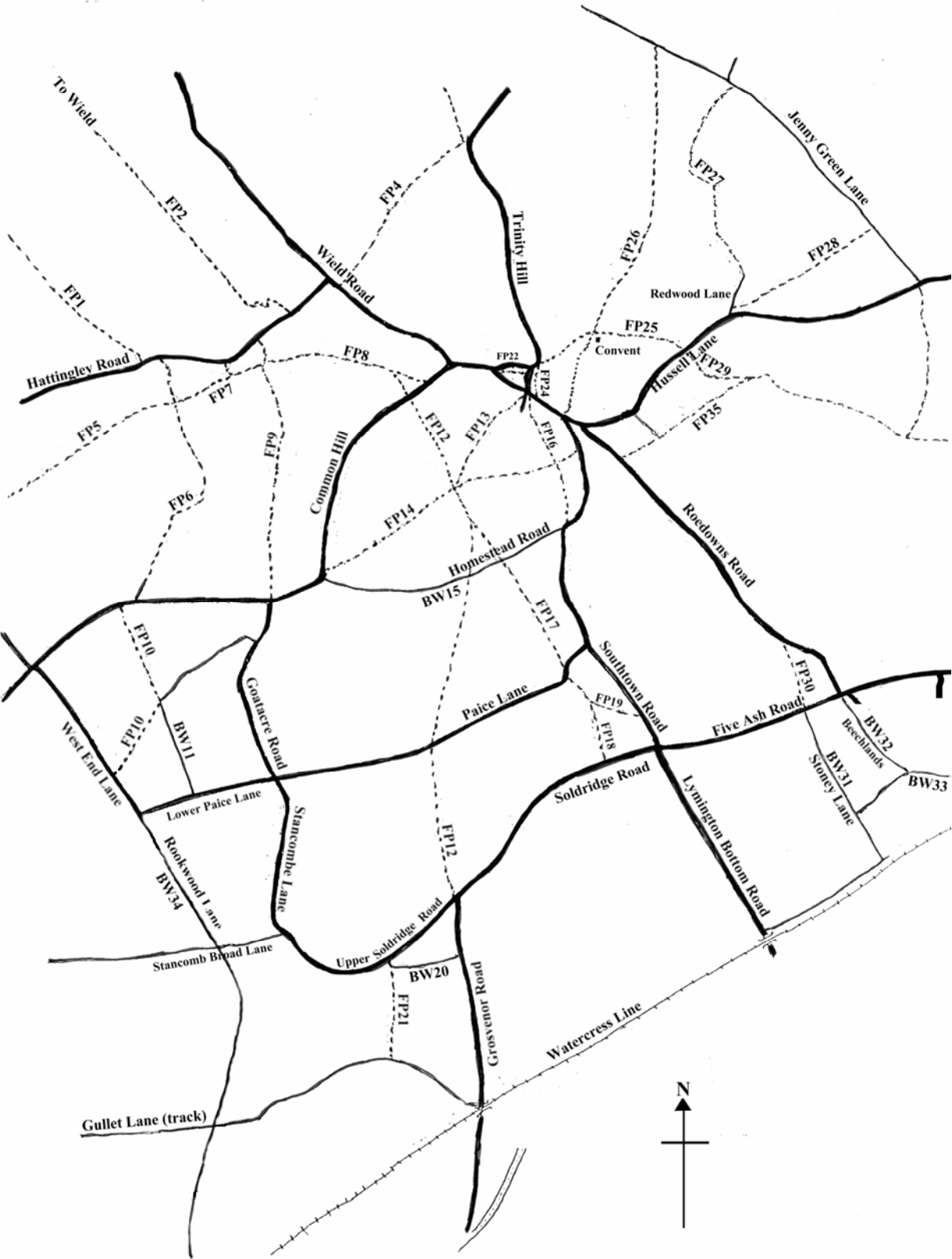
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St Andrew's Church

Footpath Map



Notes