

Burlescombe Parish Housing and Development Survey results

Introduction

A survey was undertaken between 18 September and 4 October to understand residents' views on housing, development and infrastructure in the parish and to inform preparation of a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement for Burlescombe Parish.

Responses received	50
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Executive summary

The strongest message from residents is that infrastructure must come before housing development. Respondents overwhelmingly support improvements to roads, drainage, healthcare, broadband and transport before additional housing is built. Many are concerned that existing services are already under pressure.

Views on whether more housing is needed are mixed. While some residents support additional housing, particularly affordable homes for younger people and homes for older residents, a significant number oppose further development.

When it comes to what features are essential in any new houses that are built, parking is by far and away the most consistent ask. Garden/outdoor space and energy-efficient design are also requested by the vast majority, alongside community facilities/infrastructure.

Residents strongly support protecting the parish's rural character, biodiversity and green spaces. There is concern about inappropriate development and a preference for smaller-scale schemes that respect local character.

The evidence suggests that support exists for carefully managed development that meets local needs rather than large-scale growth.

Key results	
Primarily travel by private vehicle	96%
Support infrastructure improvements before housing	92%+
Support protection of rural character	88%+
Support protection of nature and biodiversity	86%+

Key findings by theme

1. Housing growth

Residents are divided on whether more housing is needed.

Many respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that more homes are needed, while others agreed that there is a need for additional housing. The results suggest no clear mandate for significant housing growth.

However, where housing is supported, residents consistently favour:

- Affordable homes for local people
- Smaller homes for younger residents

- Homes suitable for older people wishing to downsize
- Development that reflects local needs rather than speculative market housing
- Several comments specifically raised concerns that younger people are being priced out of the parish and that affordable homes should be prioritised.

“Affordable housing for the younger generation that live in the parish! We are being pushed out because house prices are too much for us to be able to get on the property ladder”

“I think always having a good balance of benefit for the wider community alongside new developments is a must; we should not outright refuse development but use it as a platform to improve our local amenity areas.”

Conclusion: Residents are not calling for significant housing expansion. However, there is support for limited development where it provides affordable housing and homes that meet local needs.

2. Infrastructure

Almost all respondents agreed that any increase in housing should be accompanied by improvements to infrastructure. The most frequently requested improvements were:

Theme	Percentage of respondents who selected
Better transport links	78%
Water supply/drainage improvements	54%
Improved broadband	54%
Community facilities	44%
Affordable homes	46%
Homes for older residents	40%
Employment opportunities	40%
Increased parking provision	34%
Smaller homes	26%
Heritage building regeneration	24%
Better design of new homes	22%

“How can future development even be considered without improving our water quality in our rivers and streams... Improving the horrendous road networks, and regular public transport services.”

“Need to improve access to the NHS, specifically dentists, and other basic needs in the area before more building occurs.”

“I'm not against small amounts of development if carried out appropriately. Any new housing needs to take into account the capacity of local services such as schools and doctors.”

Conclusion: Infrastructure is the parish's highest priority and should be treated as a prerequisite for future development.

3. Design, rural character and heritage

The survey shows that residents place greatest importance on practical, everyday housing needs. Parking was by far the most frequently selected feature, reflecting the rural nature of the parish and the fact that most residents rely on private vehicles for daily travel.

The results suggest that residents want homes that are practical, affordable to run, and well connected to essential services. Sustainability features such as solar panels and water-saving systems were also important to more than half of respondents, indicating support for environmentally responsible development.

Feature	% of respondents selecting
Parking	84%
Garden/outdoor space	78%
Access to healthcare	72%
Energy-efficient design	72%
Access to public transport	68%
Access to schools	66%
Sustainability features	58%
Air-conditioning/cooling	32%
EV charging point	34%
Space to work from home	20%
Wheelchair accessibility	20%

Residents strongly support ensuring that development reflects the parish's rural character. Residents were also concerned with the quality and durability of construction.

Comments reveal concerns about:

- Generic housing estates
- Poor design quality
- Inadequate parking
- Overdevelopment
- Loss of local distinctiveness

"No more vast tracts of generic looking houses! Restore historic buildings. Any new buildings to incorporate architectural elements native to the local area and history."

"New housing developments tend to be awful looking mismatched buildings with not enough suitable off road parking."

Conclusion: Future development should include sufficient parking, in light of the rural nature of the community and poor public transport. The preference would be for small-scale, well-designed and sympathetic projects.

4. Environment and green spaces

Protection of nature received very strong support in the survey. Many respondents specifically stated that greenfield development should be limited and that existing countryside should be protected. Residents consistently emphasised:

- Protection of wildlife
- Preservation of countryside
- Retention of agricultural land
- Protection of green spaces
- Biodiversity enhancement

“I think we need to protect our green spaces and wildlife and limit development in the area.”

“I think the current green spaces and agricultural areas should remain as they are and not be built on.”

Conclusion: Environmental protection should be a central requirement of any development, and greenfield sites should be protected as much as possible.

5. Transport

The survey demonstrates overwhelming reliance on private vehicles.

- 96% respondents mainly travel by private vehicle.
- No respondents reported public transport as their primary means of travel.

Residents identified the most important transport improvements as:

- Better bus services
- More frequent public transport
- Safer walking routes
- Safer cycling routes

Conclusion: The parish remains highly car-dependent and future planning should recognise this reality whilst supporting improved alternatives.

6. Local economy and business

Local business owners who participated highlighted issues including:

- Broadband reliability
- Infrastructure provision
- Recruitment difficulties
- Support for local investment and enterprise

Business respondents generally supported development where it strengthens local services and infrastructure.

Conclusion: Local business would benefit from increased facilities and infrastructure.