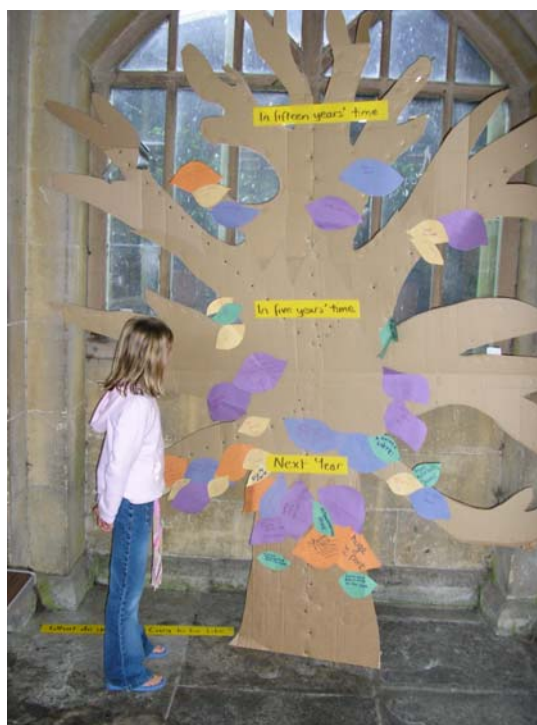


## Introduction

### The CanPlan Process:

CanPlan came into being in late 2004. It came out of a lot of work that a few interested residents put into winning a grant for Castle Cary and Ansford from the Countryside Agency under their Parish Plan scheme. This allowed for residents to undertake a major planning project for the future of our town.

Initially, a public meeting was held to bring together anyone from the town who was interested in having their say on the future. From that came a series of discussion groups and open discussion mornings at the Market House to gather all ideas and opinions. Then we asked every household for their ideas about the town and how it might develop.



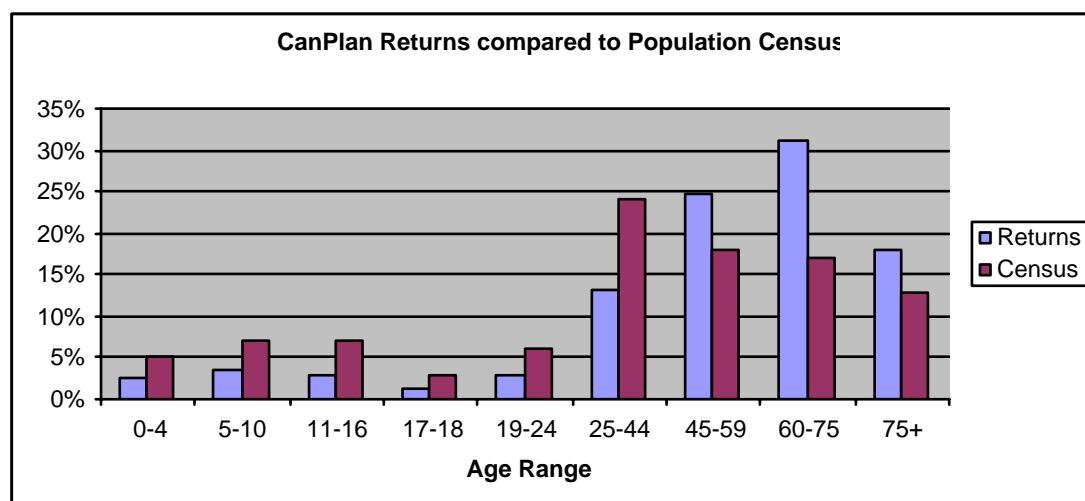
*"Ideas Tree" at the Market House*

From all those ideas and comments, we distilled the issues down to a questionnaire for every household, on what was important and what needs action, now or in the future

### The Response to the CanPlan Questionnaire:

This report is written by the CanPlan committee, exclusively reflecting the views and comments of the respondents to the CanPlan questionnaire. A complete report, with all comments made, and all statistics of every question in the questionnaire will be available in office at The Market House, and will be provided to all appropriate authorities.

There were 577 replies to the Questionnaire (out of a total population of about 3000), i.e. about 20%. We had replies from all age groups, although not perfectly representing the spread of residents from the last national census report:



We have split the ideas and comments into five areas: Housing; Transport; Leisure & Heritage; Commerce; Environment. Further issues are covered in a General Issues section.

A selection of comments that CanPlan received from residents during our work is included in this Report. They are illustrative of the wide range of opinions and thoughts of residents.

## Acknowledgements:

The first acknowledgement must be to all the respondents to our Surveys, nearly 600 people. Our town is full of caring people who took time to answer our questions.

The assistance of the two councils, Castle Cary Town Council and Ansford Parish Council has been invaluable. South Somerset District Council has been very helpful, and special thanks should go to Tim Cook, our Community Officer, who has been tireless in support of CanPlan, but has never tried to influence our views. It should be pointed out that CanPlan is totally independent of all authorities, and the views expressed in this Report are entirely an interpretation of residents' views. Thanks go to the committee of Caryford Hall for the use of the textile for the photograph on the cover of this Report.

Finally, thanks must go to all the kind people who have given their time to the project, from those who worked to win the initial grant, through to the current CanPlan committee and their helpers, who have been enthusiastic for the future of our town.

Financial support came from two grants for which we are duly grateful; the original one from The Countryside Agency and a second from South Somerset District Council.

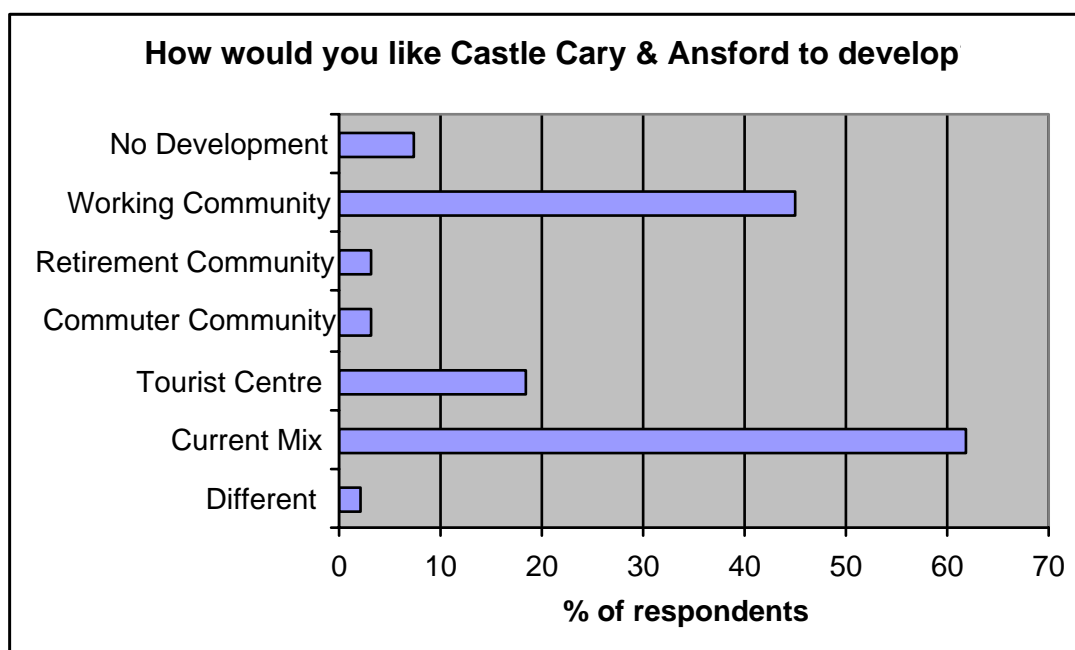
## General Issues

### The Most Important Feature of our Town:

During the 18 months of the CanPlan project, the single feature most remarked upon about our town has been its friendliness. It is not easy to plan for such a special quality, but it must be encouraged and protected at all costs.

### What Type of Town:

CanPlan comes after a period of controversy in the town over the development of the Torbay Road industrial site with the building of the Crown Pet Foods factory. Planning permission has been granted, and now it needs monitoring to ensure that it is satisfactorily absorbed within the infrastructure of the town. It may have had one other effect: there have been strong feelings expressed throughout the CanPlan process against big business coming to the town.



Very few respondents wanted to see no development whatsoever (7%). But, whilst we accept (or want) growth, we want a balanced community. When asked how the town should develop, the majority of people want it as the current mix of tourism, retirement and businesses, i.e. as a working community with a mixture of people, ages, incomes and lifestyles.

## Planning Procedures and Council Tax:

Over 58% of respondents rejected any suggestion that Council Tax be slightly raised to provide more money for the town. So the Councils must continue to work within tight budgets.

Over 50% of respondents thought that there was insufficient publicity given to planning matters.

This links to another general feature of the residents' response: most people are not against growth and development of our town. The community knows that change is inevitable, but would like more involvement and discussion on all development.

*This report is not prescriptive about any particular development. Anything may be considered, subject to better consultation than in the past, and an acknowledgement that residents should be able to say 'No' and not just acquiesce.*

## The Major Issues:

There are numerous issues that need action, and we have pointed them out in the main body of this report. However, there are six major issues, some of them for immediate action:

- *Turn the Market House into a comfortable, multi-use centre for all the community*
- *Help local young people provide more and better facilities and activities for themselves*
- *Make the flow of traffic through the town safer*
- *Resolve parking problems without charging for parking*
- *Provide affordable housing for young families*
- *Allow only small scale, appropriate industrial, retail and business development*
- *Maintain the quality of the local environment.*

CanPlan is very aware that the Councils are currently working on many of the issues that are raised by this report e.g. parking, the Market House, the Station footpath and facilities for young people. It is hoped that the CanPlan project, and the views expressed by the respondents, will support, facilitate and encourage the Councils in their efforts.

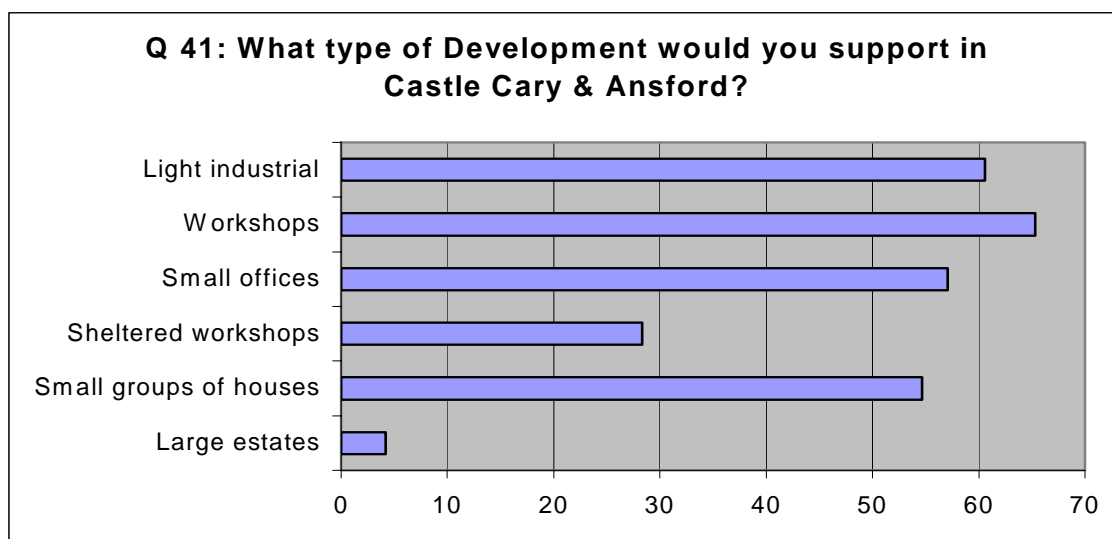
## Commerce

### Where people work:

It is very noticeable that a very large majority (85%) of respondents work within 15 miles of Castle Cary. In fact, the majority work within the community or within 5 miles of it. Very few appear to work in Bristol, Bath, Taunton or London. Therefore a healthy employment market within the town is needed and to be encouraged.

### Type of Development:

There is very large support for local small business development and small scale light industry and workshops. Approximately 60% of respondents said that they would support the development of new light industry, workshops and small offices. All of which would add further local employment opportunities.



There is very strong opposition to major industrial companies or large scale office facilities coming to the town. Over 50% of respondents said 'definitely not' to a large industrial company coming to the town, and 35% opposed any large office company coming in. By comparison, the next biggest objection was to Retail development where only 5% objected. So, any such development should be discouraged.

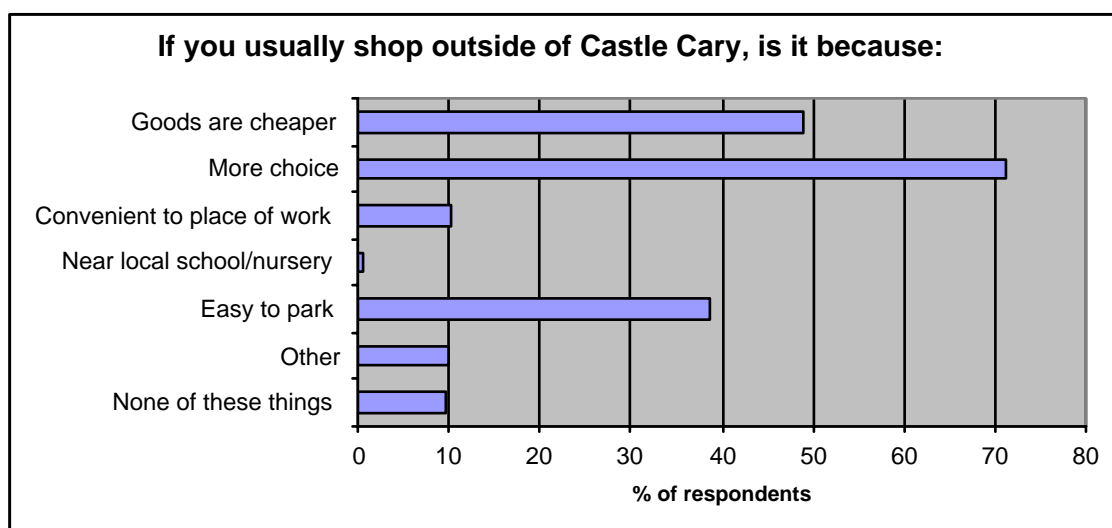
Retail also is seen to be very important. The Castle Cary shops are an essential part of the commercial life of the town.

## Shops & Services:

Nearly 90% of respondents used the local shops at least weekly and, of these, over 40% use them daily.

In general, 68% of respondents said that the range of shopping facilities in the town is good and an additional 28% said they were reasonable. Only 3% said they were poor.

Reasons for not shopping in the town were (in order of importance) choice, price and ease of parking. Parking is a problem that needs urgent action, as has been noted elsewhere in this report. Delay in improving this situation may be detrimental to the shops of the town.



Only 11% of respondents felt that an out of town supermarket would be of benefit to the community. Numerous comments were received opposing the idea of a large supermarket coming close to the town.

The Post Office is very important to respondents, with over 60% using it weekly, and nearly everybody seems to use it at least sometimes.

The Take Away food shops are popular, with 33% of respondents using them on at least a monthly basis, and under 23% saying that they never use them.

The banks and building society agencies in the town are used by nearly 40% on at least a weekly basis, and a further 22% use them on a monthly basis. The cash machines are used at least weekly by 50% of respondents, and never used by only 16%.

# Housing

## Introduction:

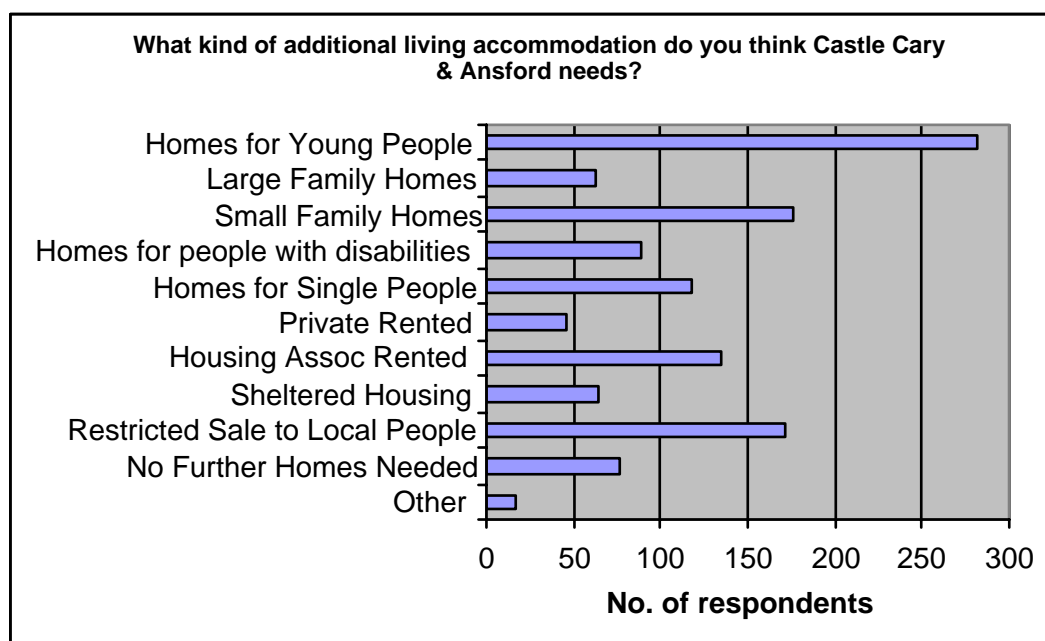
In tribute to the community, the most frequently stated reason for living here (and contrary to the common assumption that it is 'retirement') was the 'Love of Small Town Life', and it is reasonable to assume that residents would regret any development that would be detrimental to their most important reason for living here.

## Types of Housing Development:

The survey showed that few residents (16%) believe that no further homes are required. But there is a majority of people who believe that demand should be satisfied by development of small groups of houses (55%) whereas only 4% of respondents felt that large housing estates would be appropriate. This would support the current style of housing development of in-fill and small groups.

## Types of Housing:

The responses to, "What kind of additional living accommodation do you think Castle Cary & Ansford needs?" give some real insight to our requirements.



By far the biggest perceived need is for homes for young people, closely followed by small family housing. If that is taken into account with the support for housing association rented homes, then it is easy to see that the demand is for smaller, more affordable homes. The low demand for private rented accommodation is surprising in this context, but maybe reflects a belief in home ownership and its association with a real stake in the community. However, it should be noted that for those who are seeking a home, 22% are needing local authority/housing association, and that cannot be ignored.

There is unsurprising support for homes that maybe associated with retirement and the elderly (i.e. homes for people with disabilities; homes for single people and sheltered housing).

#### **Local People:**

The support for restricted housing sales in favour of local people is strong. Any moves to enable that would obviously have strong support.

#### **Residents' Parking:**

11% of respondents park their cars on the roadside overnight. Resident parking, especially in the Town Centre, needs to be considered in future planning applications for dwellings.

#### ***Some suggested actions:***

- *A policy of continuing to in-fill in small developments should be continued.*
- *A policy of encouraging development for small family homes, affordable homes and homes for single people should be implemented. Planning permission for larger houses should be made more difficult to obtain.*

# Traffic Issues

## Introduction

Traffic and parking issues in Castle Cary and Ansford are obviously a major concern for the local residents of all ages.

Of the 315 comments received 26% related to traffic or parking issues.

### Breakdown of the perceived causes of traffic problems.

67% General congestion

53% Heavy goods vehicles

42% Insufficient parking places.

## Parking

11% of respondents park their cars on the roadside. This needs to be considered in future planning applications for dwellings with no designated parking area.

The majority of respondents think that parking facilities in Castle Cary are reasonable, but the comments show a lot of concern about inconsiderate parking.



*Congestion in Fore Street*

*& vehicles parked in yellow line area*

44% think that Castle Cary should have a designated traffic warden.

*(Note: The community is promised more Police support officers in the area in the near future. Parking will not be their only responsibility and other duties will, at times, take priority.)*

## Road Safety:

Speeding: 8 areas have been identified as 'danger spots' by the survey.

The top three are -

- Wagon and Horses/ Cary Hill 64%
- Primary School area 57%
- South Cary 53%

*(Note: It is understood that both Castle Cary and Ansford Councils have asked for a flashing 30 sign. Additionally, following a recent appeal in the newsletter it is hoped to get a voluntary speed monitoring scheme (Speedwatch) up and running.)*

## Pedestrians

35% feel we should have more pedestrian crossings.

Areas suggested were -

- Ansford Hill where the station footpath ends
- Fire Station
- Two Swans Public House.

## Footpaths

The state of the footpath which runs from Station to the town came in for much criticism. A recent photograph substantiates the comments. The surface is poor and the verges overgrown



*Station Footpath*

## Other facts and figures -

- 20% would like to see more street lights.
- 52% felt that the pavements are at least adequate for users of wheelchairs and pushchairs
- A number of comments showed concern about lorries mounting the footpaths.

## Form of Transport:

### Private Transport

Cycling: 43% had no opinion on facilities for cyclists.

36% felt we should have more cycle paths.

Cars: 94% use their cars for leisure

83% for shopping

34% for transport to work.

### Public Transport

Sadly the majority of respondents never use public transport.

Very few had problems with access to medical related facilities.

Specific requests in the comments included:

- Evening transport to Yeovil
- Direct bus service to Wells
- Better facilities for the disabled at the station.



*Disabled access to & from platforms 2 & 3*

### *Some suggested actions:*

- *Pass on the comments about public transport to the bus companies and to Network Rail.*
- *Ask traders to come to an agreement about delivery times.*
- *For all the appropriate authorities to agree a thorough review of the current parking arrangements to achieve appropriate parking and better traffic flow. Subsequently, to enact and enforce any necessary parking restrictions.*
- *It is apparent that the current parking capacity in the Town Centre is inadequate. Therefore a strategy to provide substantially more parking spaces is required.*

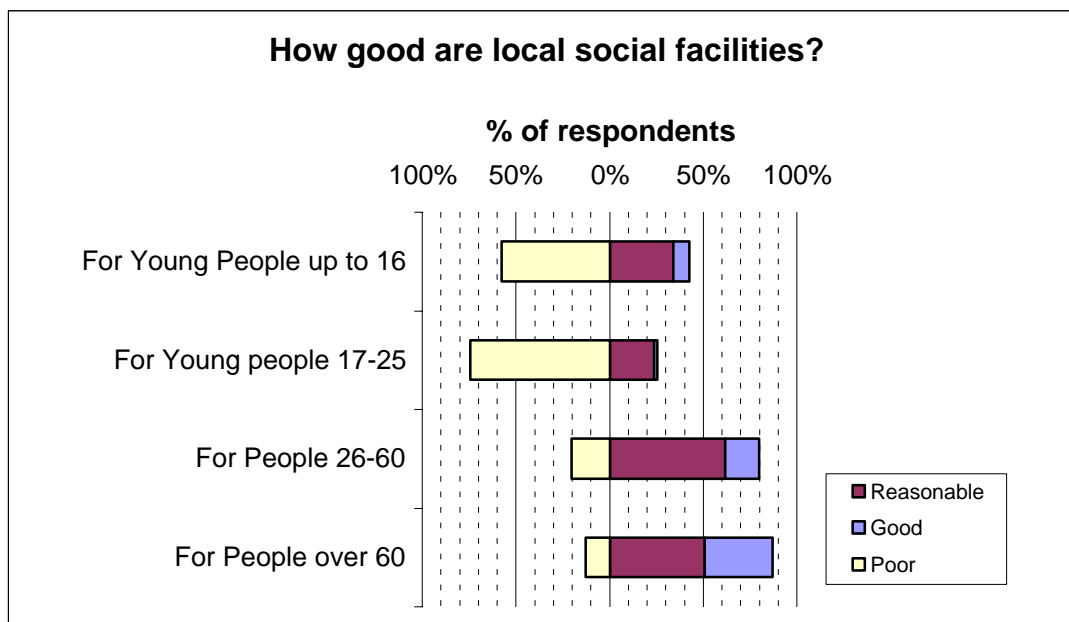
# Leisure and Heritage

## Introduction:

Respondents felt that living in Cary contributed to their quality of life - 79% ranked the friendliness of the town as its most important aspect and 31% had moved to Cary because they “love small town life”. 16 respondents felt strongly enough to add a specific comment to this effect, but qualified in two instances by a fear that it might not continue as such.

## Facilities for teenagers and young adults

Leisure interests are often age related, and we might expect the imbalance in the area’s age profile (and in the respondents) to result in an emphasis on the need for activities for older people. However in general older respondents seem to have thought beyond the needs of their own age range.



The need for better local social facilities for teenagers and young adults was very strongly expressed, whilst facilities for older people were generally considered adequate or good (see graph).

82% of respondents expressed an opinion on the desirability of a young people’s drop-in centre, and of these 92% said one was needed. Enthusiasm for a skateboard park was almost as great, 76% of the 73% having a view being in favour.



*Skateboarder from scrap!*

Individual comments reflected the same sentiment: 11 people commented specifically on the need for facilities for teenagers and young adults. Of these two related the provision of more facilities as possibly resulting in reduced vandalism. One person suggested a separate survey focussing on young people, and another said the formation of a Youth Parish Council for Cary and Ansford might be advantageous. Three people commented on the need for more sports facilities for

teenagers and young adults.

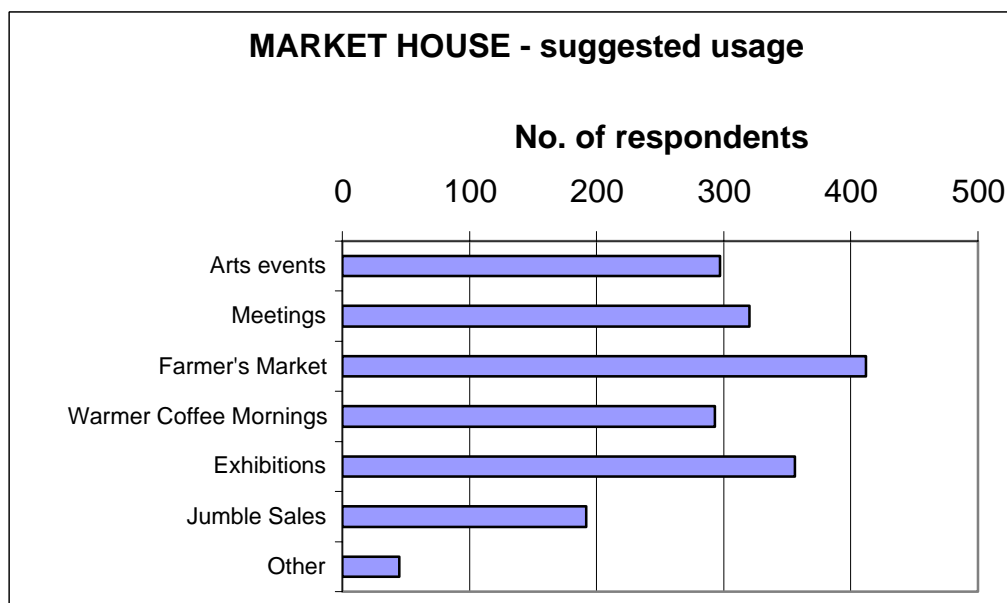
Of the 75% of respondents who gave an opinion, 84% felt the facilities provided by the children's play park were reasonable to good.

### ***Some suggested actions:***

- *Continue to support young people and local organisations in their search for venues and funding for a skateboard park and/or a drop-in centre, or for lateral-thinking alternatives to these.*
- *Plans for the future - ensure that use of the Market House, arts events, increased provision of local playing fields, etc are inclusive of young people's needs.*
- *Create a venue for young people in the town to meet and socialise.*
- *Encourage and support the creation of a Youth Parish Council to give young people a greater voice.*

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## The Market House



There was near universal enthusiasm for the increased use of the Market House. Many people ticked every box and a few gave additional suggestions.

36% of respondents felt the Museum could be improved; this is probably a reflection of the general agreement that the Market House needs developing into a more comfortable venue.

### *Ongoing actions for the community:*

- *CanPlan understands that Castle Cary Town Council is currently working with South Somerset District Council (which owns the Market House) on an exciting plan to rehabilitate the building, including toilets, a lift, and glassing over the Shambles, to make a more comfortable, accessible building. The results of the CanPlan survey strongly endorse this proposed action. Details of the draft plans will be ready and available to see at a Market House Coffee Morning scheduled for Saturday 2 September.*

## The Library

Of the 94% of respondents expressing an opinion, over 80% felt that the library was an important or very important facility. Five specific comments included the suggestions that it needs more computers and that it should include the information centre. People were clearly interested in finding out what is going to happen to the library.

### ***A suggested action:***

- *The local community would like Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council to keep it informed about progress with plans for the new library on Millbrook Car Park.*

## **The Arts**

31% of respondents felt that an Arts Centre would improve Castle Cary, but it was fairly low on their list of priorities. However 36% would welcome an annual music/arts festival and 59% would like to see more arts events at the Market House. There were two comments requesting films.

Arising in part out of the CanPlan initiative, CaryLive arts group is now actively promoting music and performance. It includes young people in its focus. Current plans are for a mini-festival in August, in conjunction with All Saints Church, and further Take Art! events.

## **Sport and general outdoor pursuits.**

Two respondents, in their comments, gave specific praise for the new Fitness & Leisure Centre, but three said more emphasis was needed on young people's needs. Four respondents regretted the demise of the swimming pool. (No specific questions were asked regarding swimming or sports, as a major campaign to save the former failed to produce an effective public response in its favour, and the new Fitness & Leisure Centre was assumed to meet the area's sporting needs.)

Recreational areas and local open spaces were considered reasonable to good by over 80% of respondents. 28% felt there should be more footpaths.

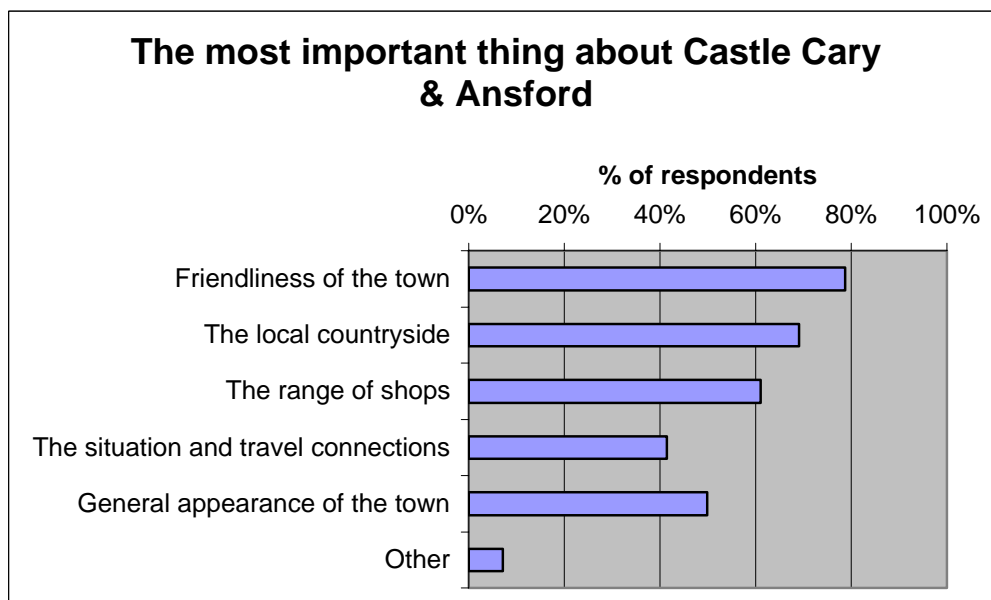
## **General Community Facilities and Amenities**

The community facilities offered by Castle Cary Primary School were considered important to very important by 63% of the 89% who expressed an opinion. For Ansford School the figures were a little higher - 95% gave an opinion, of which 78% felt the facilities offered were important to very important.

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# The Environment

## Introduction:



The environment in which Ansford and Castle Cary are set is of great importance to the residents. The local countryside is rated second only to the friendliness of the town by 69% of the people who expressed a concern, 64% of the total respondents.

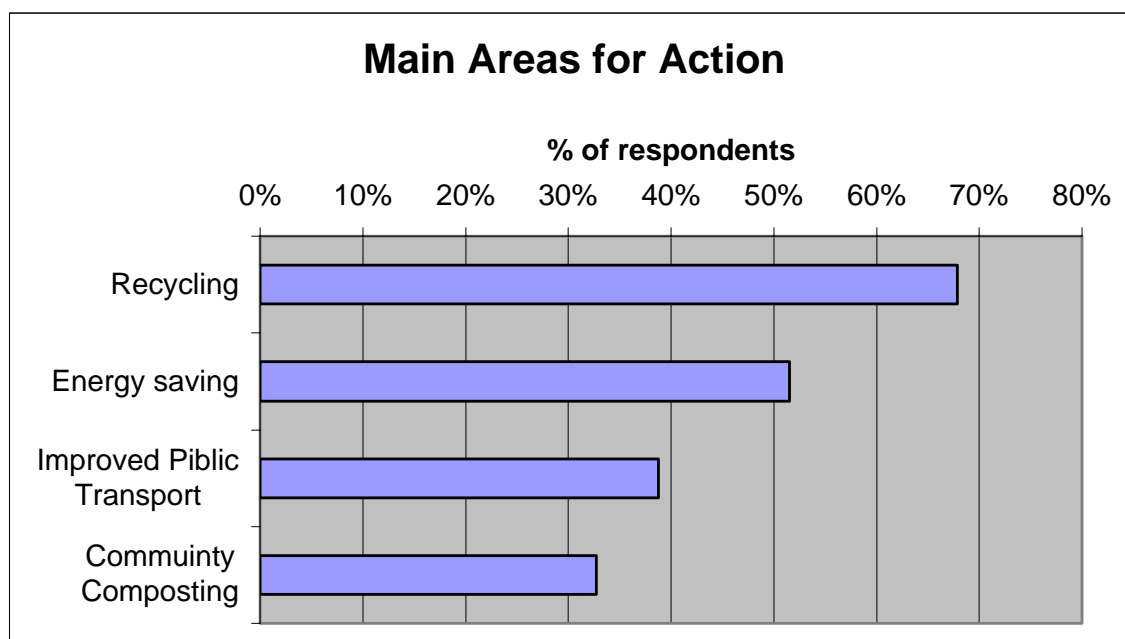
The younger people also express that concern.

It manifests itself in a number of ways

- Support for methods of protecting and enhancing the environment
- Desire to maintain the aspects of a rural community, woodland, farm buildings and drove roads
- Concern about pollution by light, noise, smell.
- Worries about the effect, seen and unseen, of the waste processing plant at Dimmer.

A measure of the care shown for the town is that 96% of respondents said the general appearance of the town centre was reasonable to good. However, 38% would like more flowers and tubs, and more seating.

## Protecting and Enhancing the Environment:



### Recycling

Recycling was seen to be the key issue with 68% of the people. This is a subject for all ages; the 5-10 year olds rate it as highly as their grandparents (65%), if not quite as high as their parents (79%).

### Community Composting

This appears to be an issue for the younger folk, 45% of 5-10 year olds and 38% of their parents show some interest. Thanks to co-operation between Carymoor and the Primary School, the children are now showing us the way forward.

Taken together, such a high level of interest in and support for **Recycling** and **Community Composting** would suggest that this is an area where a more cohesive policy could be effective. Why does the door-to-door recycling vehicle only accept newspaper and cans? Why does glass and plastic have to be taken to the bins in the car park? Why does cardboard have to be taken to the Dimmer tip? Why is compostable material collected from houses in Mendip area and processed in our area at Dimmer, when it is not for us?

## Energy

Energy Saving is also highly rated, by a wide age range of people. Whether that would support a wind-farm on Lodge Hill may be doubtful.

## Pollution by Dogs

There was no question asked about dog mess, but fifteen respondents commented about pollution by dogs. Almost all the comments referred to pollution of the areas where children play, namely the football pitches and playground.

### Dog Mess:

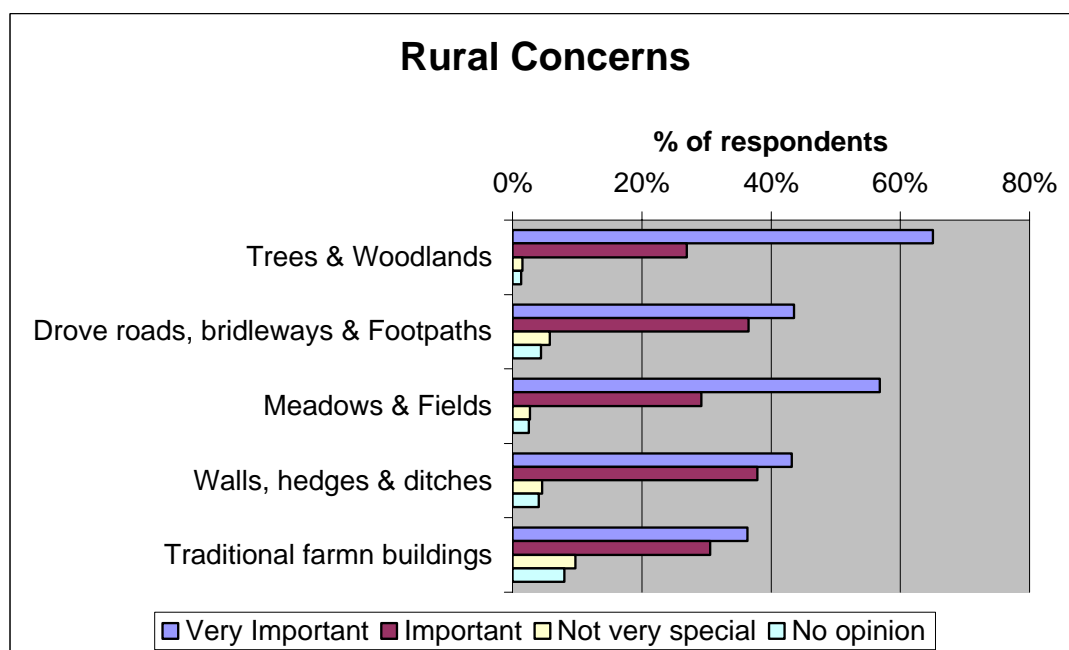
"... is very big problem - are there more dogs than people?!"

"Dog mess at playing field and South Cary is dreadful."

"Dog litter on football pitch at Maggs Lane."

## Maintaining the Rural Environment:

The rural features of the surrounding area are clearly important to people. Whether this reflects a nostalgia for the countryside as it was, or whether it reflects concern for the related environmental factors cannot be deduced from the questionnaire.



Maintaining woodlands is good both for the scenery and for wildlife. Maintaining walls, hedges and ditches enhances the views, is good for wildlife and also stops flooding. Given the concern shown for other issues to do with man's effect on the environment, these views should be kept in mind when changes of land use and building purpose are being considered.

### **Litter:**

Litter was an issue for two thirds of the respondents. Particular black-spots are Horse Pond, Station Road, playing fields, Maggs Lane in vicinity of Ansford School.

### **Waste Processing Plant at Dimmer:**

The survey reveals widespread concern about the effect of having the largest waste processing plant in Somerset so close to this community and particularly down-wind under the prevailing wind direction. Typically, 60% of adults are concerned about air quality and about smells. The fact that the wind is carrying an obnoxious smell is often undeniable.



*Dimmer viewed from Victoria Park*

Whether it is also carrying particulate emissions noxious to people, animals or plant life is not clear.

There is also concern about the future ownership, management and priorities of the plant. .

### ***Some Suggested Actions:***

- *Help local councils to put pressure on Environment Agency and other appropriate authorities to monitor light, noise, particulate and smell pollution, particularly in relation to waste treatment plant*
- *Dovetail the results of this survey with those of other parishes in the area and involve other people/schools etc. in future planning.*
- *Enforce the regulations about dog mess*
- *Install more public seating and flower tubs*

## A Random Selection of 'other' Comments

"Horse pond should be a more attractive feature."

Good place to live ... will need to change ...cannot/should not stand still, but change should be gradual

"Farmer's Market."

"Should Ansford parish Council and Castle Cary Town Council

"We need better Toilet

"Find a use for the Red Cross building."

"Rented housing must be

"We really need skate park, youth drop-in centre and more facilities specifically for young people."

"What is happening with the Library?"