# Creating Headcorn's Neighbourhood Plan: What does the evidence say?

December 2013

# Housing? Development? What do Headcorn’s residents think?

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December 2013

# What are we trying to achieve?

- Looking to create a Neighbourhood Plan that will reflect the views and needs of residents and businesses in the parish over the next 20 years.
- Will need to conform generally to the existing National Planning Policy Framework and (if available) MBC’s Local Plan.
- Cannot conflict with MBC on strategic issues, such as the amount of development needed.
- But, hopefully can influence based on evidence.
- Clear need for good quality evidence – hence the surveys.

# Who completed the residents' survey?

- Important the results are representative.
- Had 797 survey responses, of which 204 were completed on paper (all of which were inputted into SurveyMonkey and then checked).
- This is over 27% of the eligible population. Estimate have responses from 38% of eligible households.
- 55% of respondents are female.
- Weighted towards the elderly:
  - 42% are over 65 years old and 70% are over 50; and
  - Only 9% are under 36 years old.
- 35% had been in the village less than 10 years.

# Who completed the residents' survey (continued)?

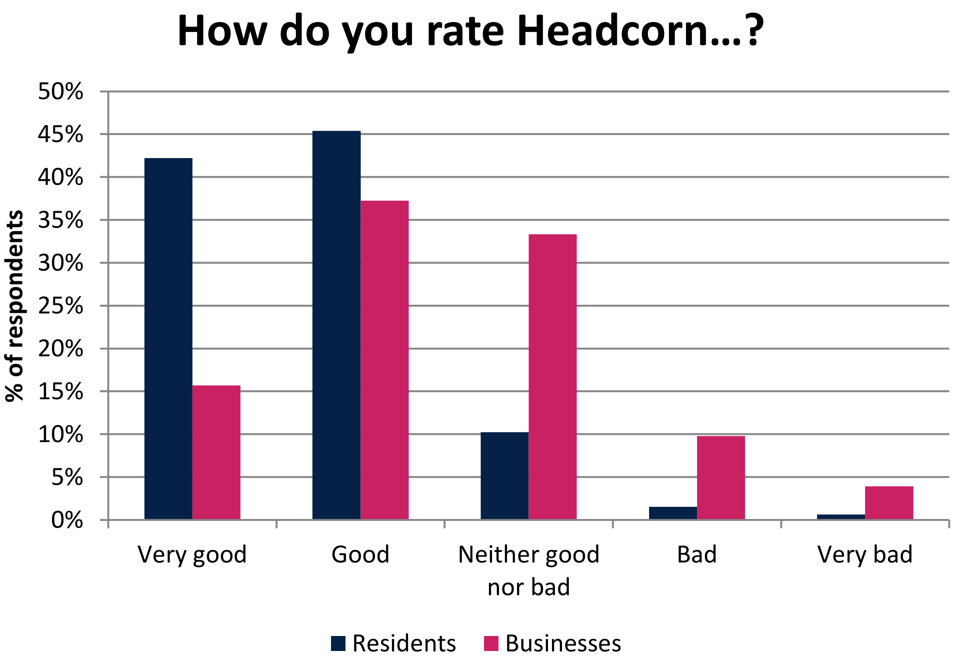
- Economic activity:
  - 11% are self employed;
  - 37% are either full-time (25%), or part-time (12%) employees;
  - 46% are retired; and
  - the rest are relatively evenly split across full-time students, unemployed and other.
- Housing tenure:
  - 86% are owner occupiers, with 0.3% with shared equity;
  - 6% privately rent and 3% rent from a Housing Association;
  - around 2.5% are in static mobiles (most on rented site); and
  - around 2.5% are in sheltered housing (about three quarters owner occupied)

# Who completed the residents' survey (continued)?

- 64% have no children living with them,
  - 2% have a baby living with them,
  - 7% have a child under 5,
  - 10% have a 5-11 year old,
  - 11% have a 12-16 year old,
  - 3% have a 17-18 year old,
  - 3% have a 19-21 year old, and
  - 9% have a child over 21 living with them.
- 7% have a child attending Headcorn primary school

# Taking stock of where we are…

- Average score for Headcorn as a place to live is 4.3 and as a place to do business is 3.5 (where 5 is very good and 1 is very bad).



# Taking stock of where we are…

What do we value most about living in Headcorn?

- Over 75% of respondents picked:
  - the High Street; and
  - Surrounded by beautiful countryside.
- Between 60-75% picked:
  - the Shops;
  - the Post Office;
  - Ability to get out to the countryside; and
  - the Sense of community.
- Between 50-60% picked:
  - Easy to commute.

# Taking stock of where we are…

What do we value most about living in Headcorn (continued)?

- Between 40-50% picked:
  - the Library;
  - good medical facilities; and
  - the sense of history.
- Other options picked by at least a quarter of respondents are:
  - the bank;
  - the primary school;
  - the pubs and restaurants;
  - close to family; and
  - church.
- Over 5% picked: the sports and leisure facilities; and the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Less than 5% picked good business opportunities.

# What does the survey tell us about our vision?

- The top three choices for how people would like Headcorn described in 20 years are:
  - Friendly (58%);
  - Rural (45%); and
  - Peaceful (37%).
- The bottom three choices were
  - Unchanged (11%);
  - Green (13); and
  - Vibrant (14%).
- The other options were: prosperous, affordable, beautiful, sustainable and traditional.

# What are the biggest opportunities from development?

- The 5 most popular are (picked by 30-50%):
  - Ensure good medical facilities;
  - Protection for the countryside;
  - Boost to local jobs and businesses;
  - Ensure good public transport links; and
  - Create a strong village identity.
- The 5 least important are:
  - Cheaper rents;
  - Boost to property values;
  - Land set aside for allotments;
  - Boost number of family homes; and
  - Opportunities for people to build their own homes.

# What are the biggest threats from development?

- Over 65% of people pick:

  **Lose sense of being a village**.

- Other key threats seen as:
  - Development more suitable for a town than a village;
  - Overstretched sewage system;
  - Increase in crime;
  - Overstretched local amenities;
  - Reduction in the amount of green space; and
  - Lack of parking.

# What are the biggest threats from development?

- The least worrying aspects of expansion were:
  - undermine local jobs and businesses;
  - increased rents;
  - reduced property values;
  - inadequate sports and leisure facilities;
  - expansion targeted at people on high incomes;
  - overcrowded trains and buses; and
  - harder to access care for the elderly.

# Mismatch between local housing need and supply?

| | Now | 1-5 years | 5-10 years |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Demand from in village** | 71-107 | | 212 |
| **Movers leaving village** | 25 | 75 | ?100 |
| **Deaths - elderly (>85)** | | | 60 |
| **Deaths - elderly (75-85)** | | | 120 |
| **Windfall** | | 75 | |

Results shown are for number of households.
Figures for elderly taken from 2011 census and adjusted for household size in survey. Assumes a 6% survival rate for those over 85 and a 25% survival rate for those over 75.
Windfall figures assume 30% of 95 expressing interest commit, then scale for village level.

- Maybe in very short run, but not clear beyond that.
- Possible external demand from friends and family of over 400 houses, but is this really realistic?
- Finally, no evidence from business survey that housing supply, or labour supply, is a constraint for business expansion.

# Estimating housing need

- Mismatch with results of estate agents' survey, as most looking for small properties.
  - 37% want a one bedroom home;
  - 39% want a two bedroom home;
  - 26% want a three bedroom home; and
  - Remainder want 4 bedrooms.
- Of the 41 wanting to move into a separate household:
  - 63% want a house to buy;
  - 15% want to rent from a Housing Association;
  - 10% want to rent privately; and
  - 12% want shared equity (part rent, part ownership).

# How much development do we want over the next 20 years?

- NB. This is ultimately set by Maidstone.
- Significant resistance to large scale development:
  - 58% want fewer than 150 houses;
  - 77% want fewer than 200 houses; and
  - 96% want fewer than 250 houses.

# How fast do we want to develop over the next 20 years?

- This is the question we didn't ask.

**Should there be a policy covering the maximum amount of development we want to see in any given year?**

# What sort of development do we want?

- **Small scale:**
  - 72% want individual developments to be no more than 20 houses.
- **Spread out:**
  - 78% want new houses to be spread across lots of different sites;
  - No individual location is seen as definitely not suitable for development.
- **Varied:**
  - 93% want new houses to have lots of different styles;
  - 97% want different sizes; and
  - Developments with varied designs is the third most popular choice for how to protect and enhance the built environment in Headcorn.
- **Fit in with the village:**
  - Over 50% want designs that respect the scale of the existing village landscape.

# What sort of development do we want?

- Over 50% want no development on floodplains.
- 66% want a single point of access onto the existing road system.
- However, mixed messages on plot size:
  - 62% prefer small affordable apartments and houses to large homes with big gardens; but
  - 52% prefer plots with large gardens to small plots;
  - Almost 25% ticked more outside space as something they would want, if they moved; and
  - Open green spaces and gardens in developments is the fourth most popular choice for how to protect and enhance the built environment in Headcorn.

# What sort of development do we want?

- Other key ways to improve the built environment seen as:
  - Improved flood prevention measures (33%);
  - Designs that take account of their Low Weald setting (33%);
  - Enhanced protection of the High Street (33%); and
  - Enhanced road safety measures (32%).
- On housing tenure:
  - 84% think priority should be given to homes to buy (at market prices);
  - around 45% think homes for key workers and shared equity homes are a priority;
  - around 35% think sheltered housing (either to buy or rent) are a priority;
  - around 25% think rental properties, or sites for people to build their own home are a priority; and
  - less than 5% feel static mobiles (either to buy or rent) should be a priority.

# Building in the countryside

- Over 90% think Headcorn should develop specific rules to govern new building in the wider countryside in the parish.
- On balance in favour of building in the countryside.
- Only 36% think the wider countryside in the parish is definitely not suitable for development.
- The key question is: what should the rules be?

# What should the rules include for building in the countryside?

**Should the maximum size of developments allowed in the countryside be the same as elsewhere in the parish?**

- **Or bigger?**
- **Or smaller?**

# Gypsies and travellers

- Provoked a lot of strong reactions, including concerns about fairness.
- Any policies will need to sit within national framework and be able to respond to local needs.
- No evidence from survey of existing need for additional provision of pitches.
- And clear resistance to any further significant expansion in provision.
- If expansion proves necessary, slight preference for it to be in a single development  (but not statistically significant).
- Over 70% against having a policy where permission for static mobile could be turned into bricks and mortar.

# Infrastructure - strengths

- Highest excellent ratings for:
  - Trains (45%)
  - Library (33%)
  - Range of shops (30%)
- Including those rating the service as OK, on balance positive results for:
  - Medical facilities
  - Footpaths in village
  - Litter bins
  - Under 11s playgrounds
  - Buses
  - Facilities for older people
  - Local primary school
  - Allotments
  - Old people's homes
  - Access for the disabled

# Infrastructure - weaknesses

- Facilities that more people rate as `bad' than anything else are:
  - Vehicle parking (46%)
  - Storm drainage and sewage (46%)
  - Adventure playgrounds (teenagers) (38%)
  - Facilities for young people (33%)
  - Bicycle parking facilities (30%)
  - Wildlife sanctuaries (23%)

- Other problem areas:
  - Broadband (41%)
  - Road safety (34%)
  - Public toilet facilities (31%)
  - Sports and leisure facilities (28%)

# Addressing infrastructure weaknesses: vehicle parking

**What are the key issues we need to address?**

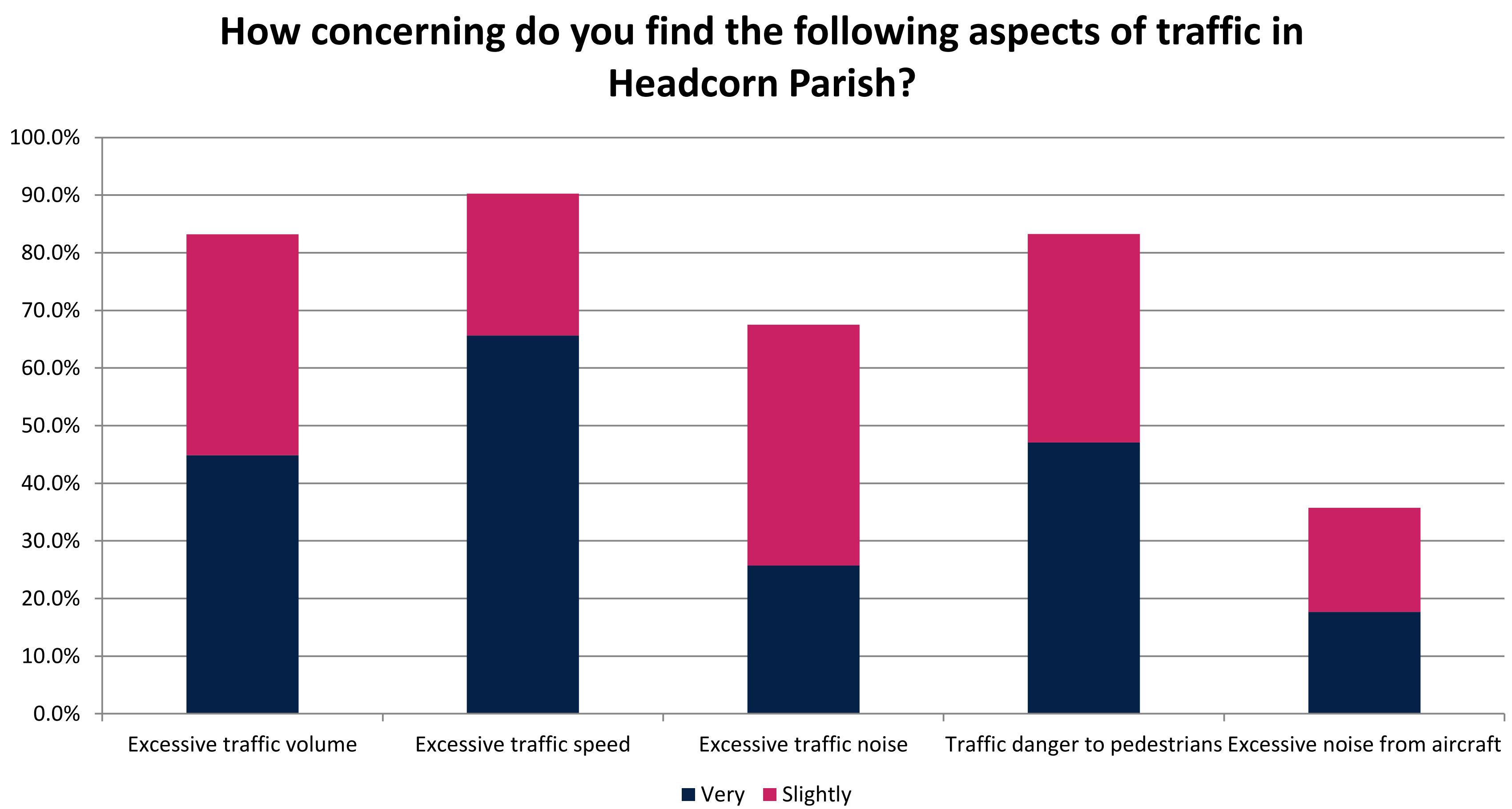
- **Availability of parking spaces?**
- **Cost of parking?**
- **Parking by commuters on residential roads?**

# Addressing infrastructure weaknesses: recreational activities

- Where is the best place for development to support recreational activities (eg children's play areas, outdoor gym equipment, skate parks etc):
  - 46% pick Hoggs Bridge Green
  - 26% pick Parsonage Meadow
  - 22% pick Days Green

- Of the `other' responses, several highlight the importance of having space for children to play within individual developments.

# Infrastructure – Traffic Issues



# Support for green initiatives

- Green issues are not front of mind for many. But support highest amongst those under 35.
- Only 22% pick `**sustainable**' as one of their top 3 for how they want the village described in 20 years.
- Only 24% pick `**high levels of energy conservation in buildings**' as a key way to promote the quality of the built environment.

# Support for green initiatives

- On specific options to encourage in the Neighbourhood Plan to protect the environment, **ACTIVE** support levels are:
  - Rainwater harvesting in developments (65%)
  - Rainwater harvesting for individual homes (62%)
  - Photovoltaic panels for individual homes (43%)
  - Use of farm slurry to generate power (25%)
  - Use of land for fuel production (24%)
  - Photovoltaic solar farms (22%)
  - Commercial wind turbines (11%)
  - Domestic wind turbines (9%)

Note – the wording of the question means that failure to tick the option should not be seen as opposition.

# Support for green initiatives

- Solar farms?
  - Definitely suitable?
  - Possibly suitable?
  - Definitely not suitable?
  - Don’t know

# Support for green initiatives: How to encourage people to drive less

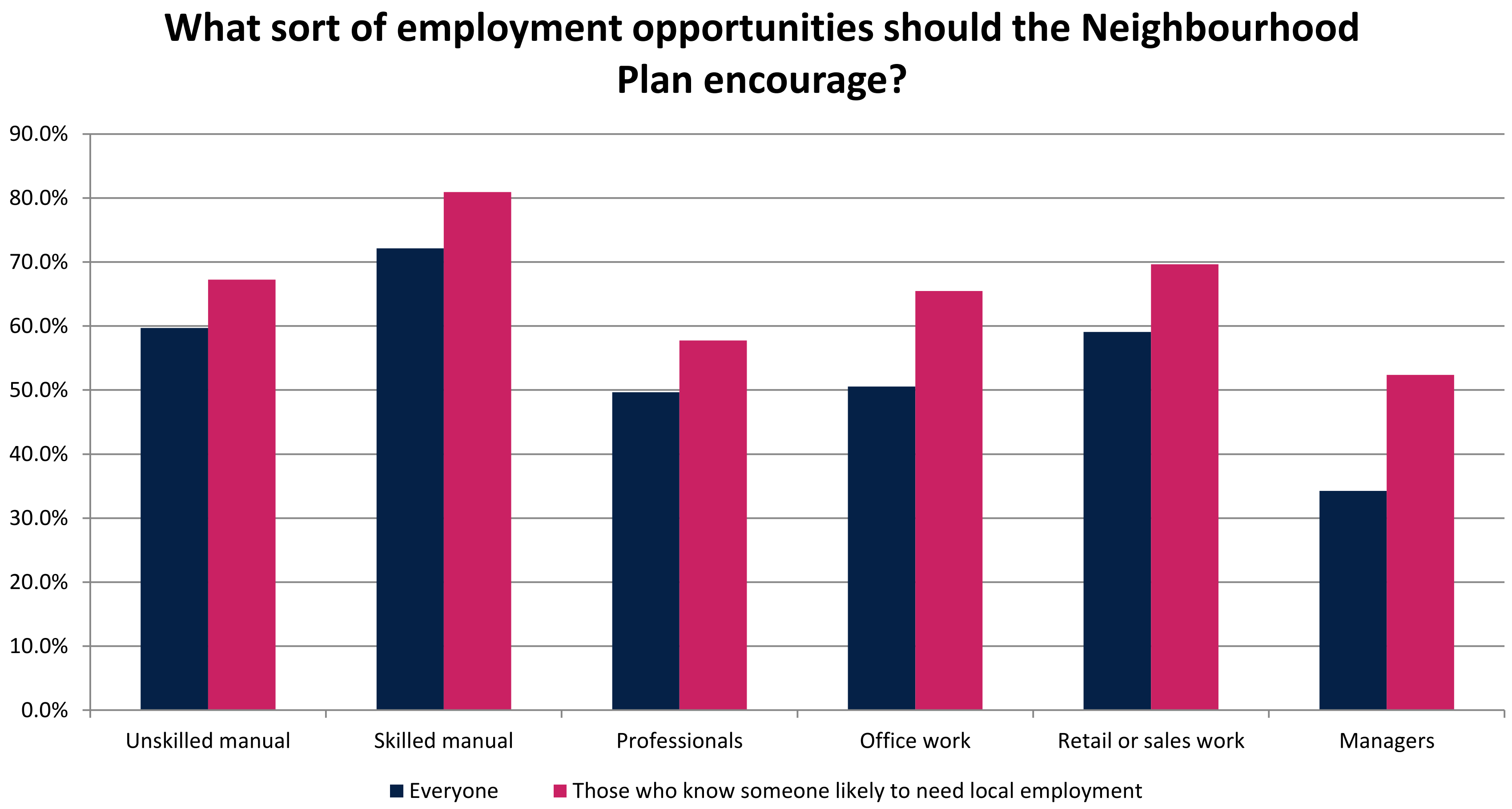
- Over 50% use a car at least once a day and 84% at least 2 or 3 times a week.
- Key ways to reduce personal car usage seen as:
  - **Reduce cost of alternatives: Keeping over 60s bus pass** (43% - most popular amongst medium car users); **cheaper rail** (35%); reduced cost of buses (24%).
  - **Improve existing alternatives: More frequent buses** (38%); more reliable buses (18%); buses to alternative destinations (15%).
  - **Making it easier to cycle:** more cycle ways (22% - especially popular amongst highest car users); better facilities for parking bicycles (19%).
  - **Making it easier to walk:** better provision of pavements (19%); more public footpaths (16%).
  - **Improve local facilities:** better range of shops (19%); better sports and leisure facilities (15%).
  - Few pick frequency and reliability of trains.
  - Better school buses only picked by 4% (but almost all high users).

NB. Workers more likely to use cars (even if work from home). Working in Headcorn does not reduce car usage: 59% of those working in Headcorn use a car at least once a day; and 90% at least 2 or 3 times a week.

# Supporting the local economy

- 65% think the Neighbourhood Plan should include the option of allocating more land to encourage employment opportunities.
- But very limited support (less than 10%) for allocating greenfield sites for employment use.
- 55% are opposed to allowing change of use from business to residential.
- Majority think we should be encouraging small businesses. Less than 10% want to encourage businesses employing more than 50 people.
- 19% know someone who is likely to need local employment in the next 5 years. Scaling up, this translates into over 300 jobs.

# Supporting the local economy: Type of employment



# Conclusions

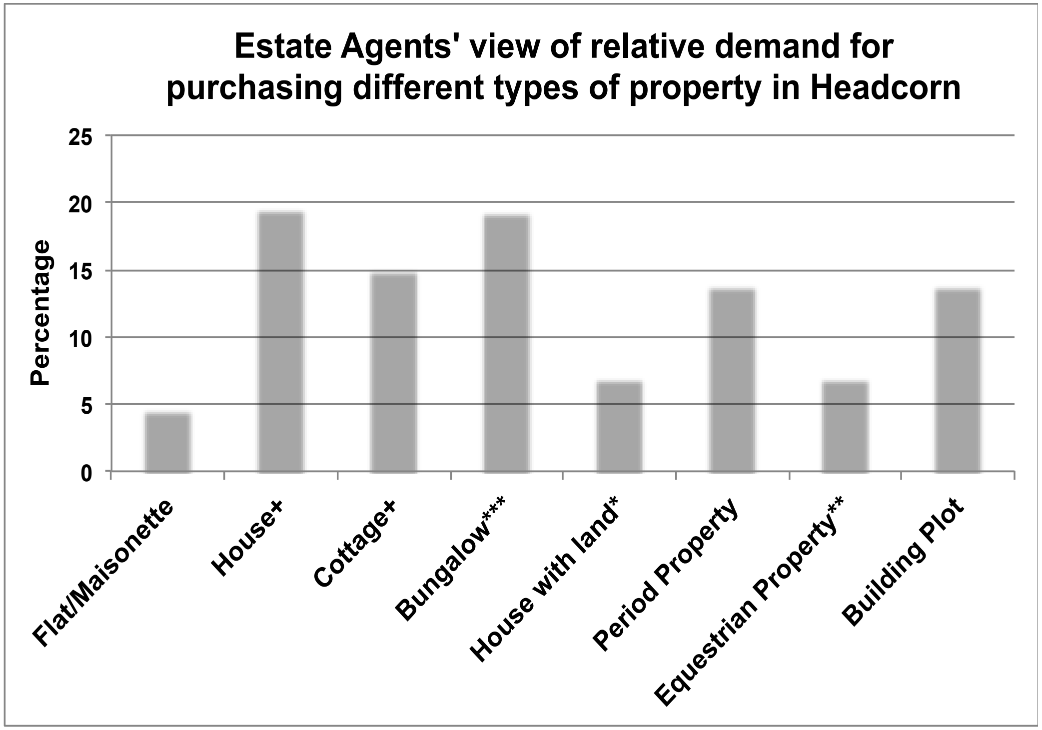
- Good response rate.
- Very important we don’t lose the sense of being a village.
- Clear preference that development should be small scale; varied; and spread out.
- Key areas to try and target to improve infrastructure include: parking; sewage and storm drainage system; broadband; adventure playgrounds; and road safety.
- No development should be allowed on floodplains.
- Want Headcorn specific rules for building in the countryside.

# Residential Estate Agent Survey
# November 2013

# Purpose and Methodology

- Objective
  - Provide a set of ‘industry participant’ views on what types and size of properties would be attractive to (potential) parishioners of Headcorn – to complement/cross-check the views of residents on this subject
- Methodology
  - Using a 13 questions as a script, approach a sample of Residential Estate agents operating in Headcorn Parish to seek their views on:
    - How Headcorn compares to other settlements in the area
    - The relative demand for purchasing properties in Headcorn, and what style, size and price range of properties does (and does not sell well)
    - The strength of demand for rental properties
    - What types/sizes of additional housing would sell well (and what would not)
  - Seven estate agents responded positively to an approach to take part in the survey: the three with premises in the Village and four others, two each in Tenterden and Cranbrook
  - An attempt was made to cross check the results from the survey with the properties on offer on two of the most popular websites
  - Health warnings:
    - Not all Agents were capable or willing to answer all questions completely
    - The sample is so small that the data cannot be seen as statistically sound. The results do, however, represent a solid set of qualitative answers/trends in response to the survey objectives

# Type of property in demand to be purchased




* This category tends to be sought outside the Village Boundary

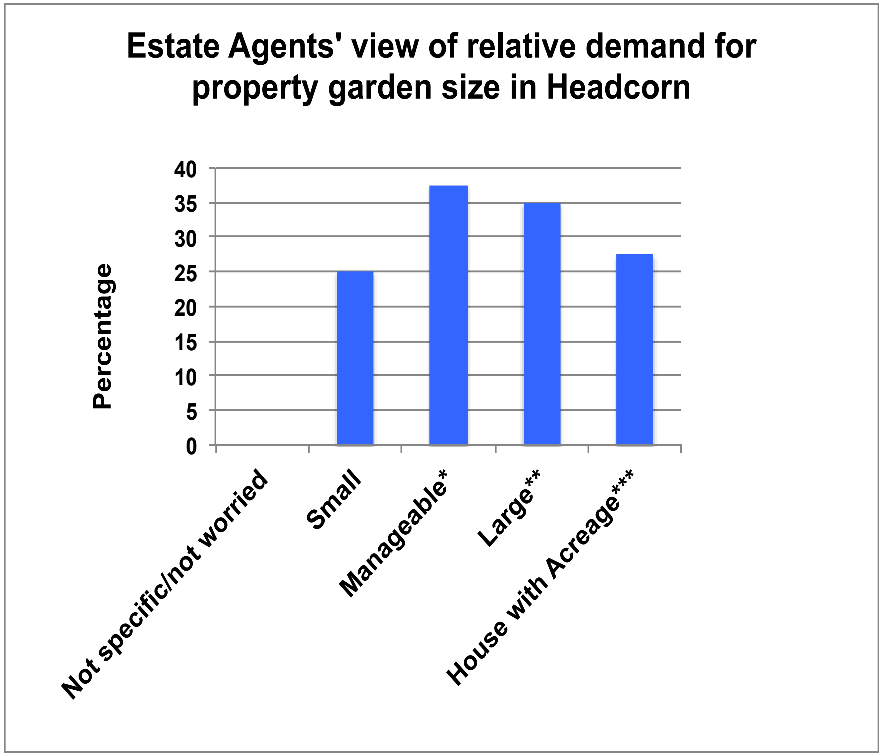
** Equestrian properties tend to be sought for/sold through specialist agents (3)

*** Shortage of bungalows - for downsizers, both from the village and potential incomers (3)

\+ Very much seen as one market within the Village Boundary

- Demand for type of property appears balanced with the exception that flats/maisonette and properties with (extensive) land are in much less demand other than for equestrian purposes.
- Bungalows were cited as being particularly in demand.
- There is a demand for building plots (but infill properties are difficult to sell)

# Type of property in demand to be purchased




* For 2 bedroom property 30ft garden and for 3 bedroom property 1/8 acre garden sought after (3)

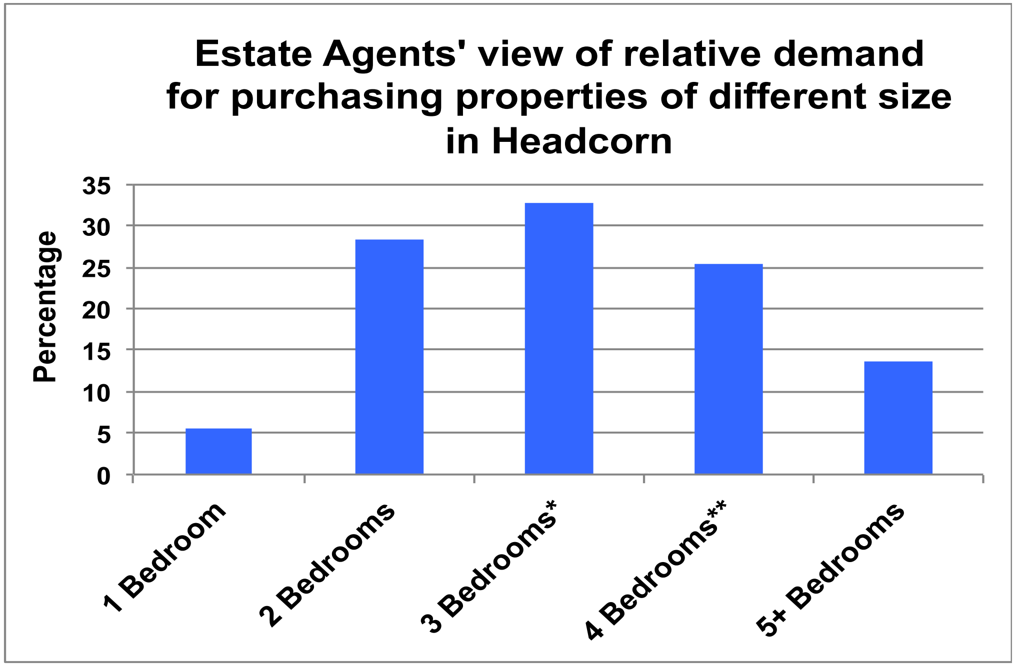
** Large = 1/4 acre - sought after for larger houses (3)

*** For houses above £500k - up to 1-2 acres that are manageable and secure (5)

\+ Boundary protection/security is an issue, especially for rural properties (7)

- Potential purchasers are clear upfront what size of plot they wish to buy.
- The demand for gardens size appears to be based on it being proportionate to the size of the property itself with the determining criteria being 'manageable' (for that size of property) and 'secure'.
- There is a lower demand these days for properties with acreage (above ca. 2 acres) other than for those wishing to have an equestrian facility of be a smallholder

# Size of property in demand to be purchased

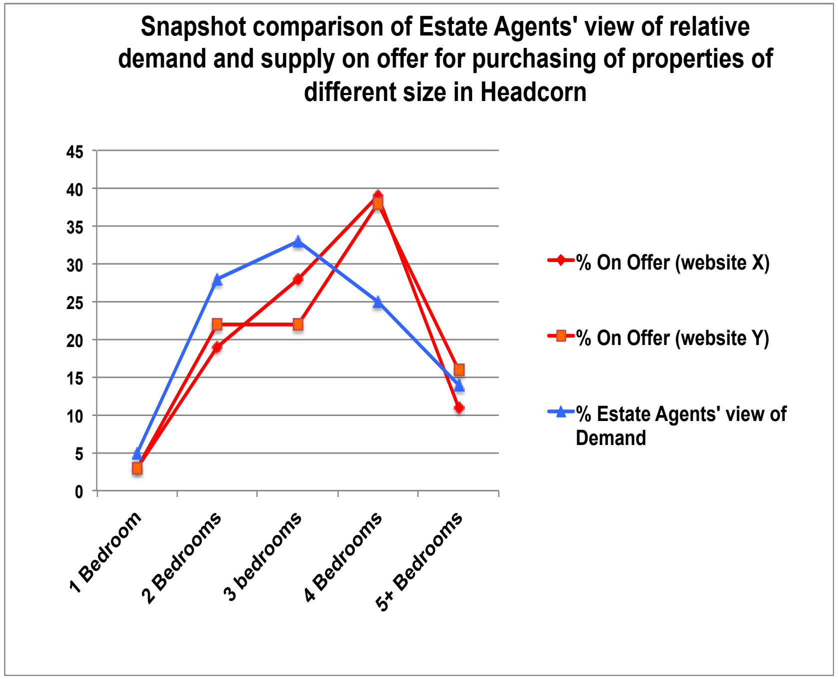


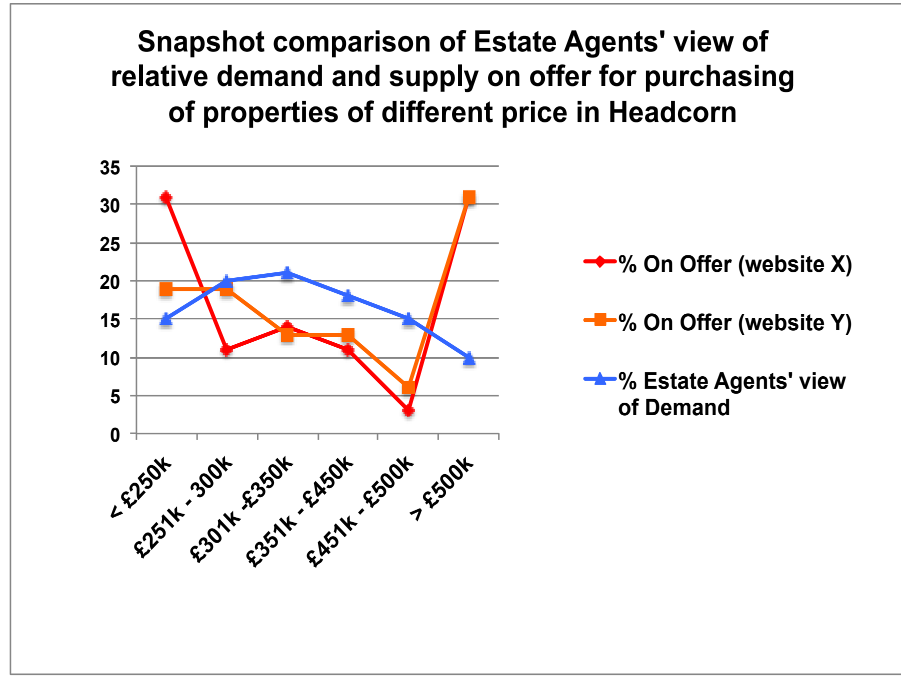

* 3 Full bedrooms most sought after (1000+ sqft rather than 800 sqft properties) (1)

** Shortage of 4 bedroom houses (1)

- The overall relative demand data indicates there to be a relatively high demand across the range of 2-4 bedroom properties, with 3 bedroom properties in highest demand, and demand tailing off for properties with 5+ bedrooms
- There is much less demand for 1 bedroom accommodation

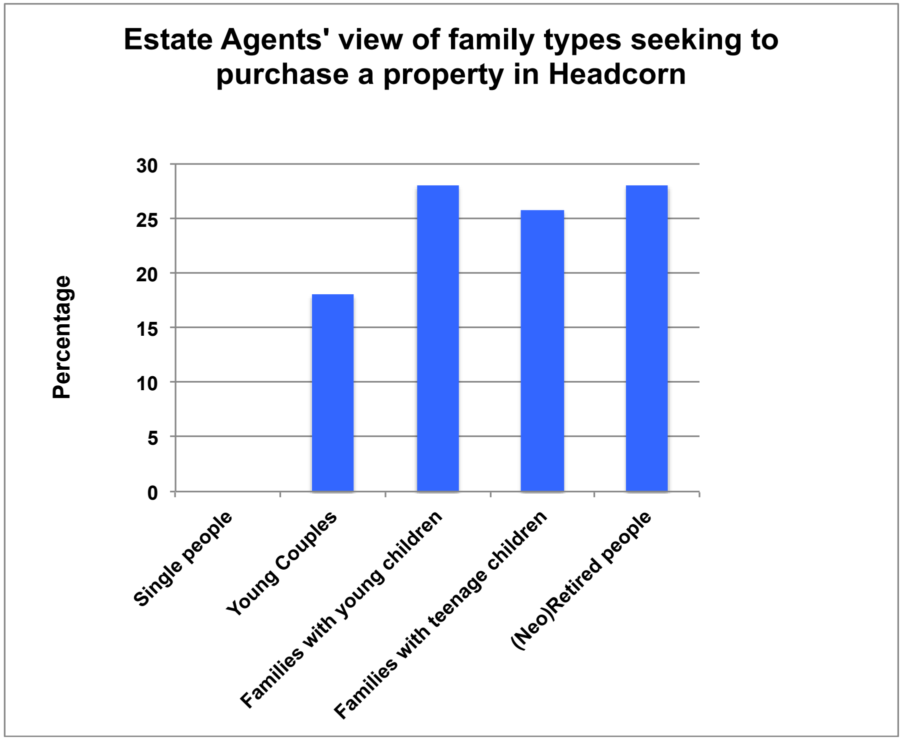
# Snapshot comparison of Estate Agents' view of relative demand and the supply on offer for the purchasing of properties in Headcorn



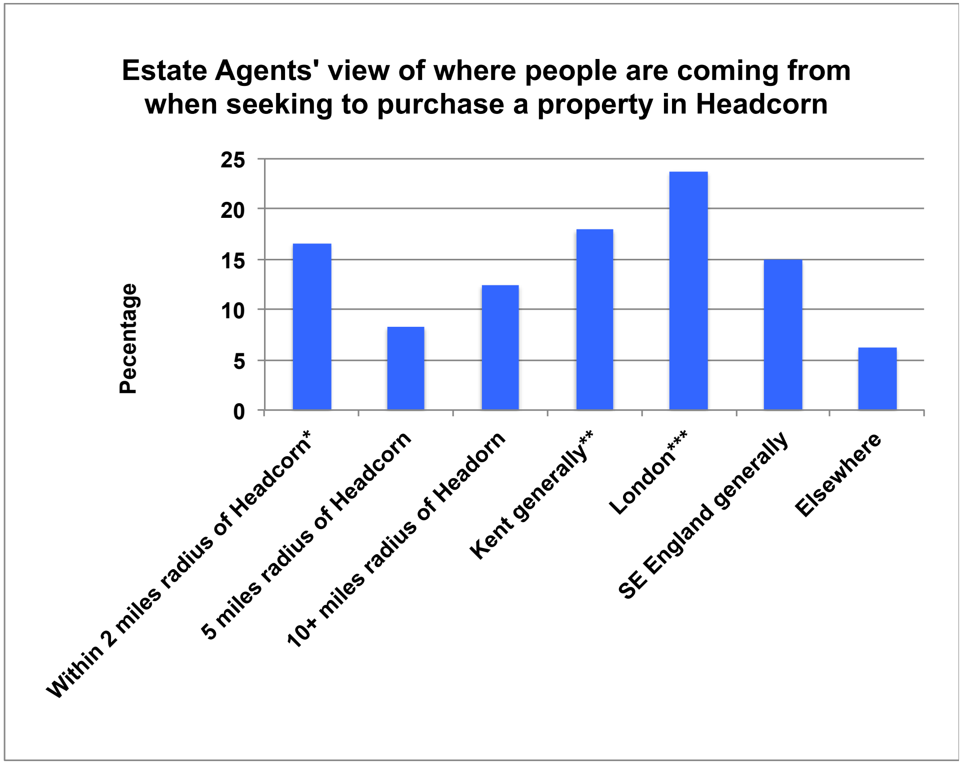

- Taken together, there is reasonable alignment of supply and demand when property size (number of bedrooms) is used as a measure
- The snapshot supply/demand balance for 4 bedroom properties is not consistent with the estate agents' view that there is a shortage of this size of property.
- The overall relative demand data indicates there to be a relatively high demand for properties across the price range of £250,001 - £500,000, with a slightly higher demand £300-350,000. Relative demand tapers off outside this range.
- 'Supply' is relatively much stronger than 'demand' for low cost (<£250,000) and high cost (>£500,000) properties.

# About potential purchasers




- Three quarters of all potential purchasers are established family units
- Virtually no single people are approaching estate agents with a view to purchasing a property in Headcorn
- There is a material relative demand from young couples seeking to purchase accommodation in Headcorn, and taken together with the relative house size demand distribution, it would suggest that such young couples are looking for 2-3 bedroom properties, presumably with a view to starting a family.

# About potential purchasers



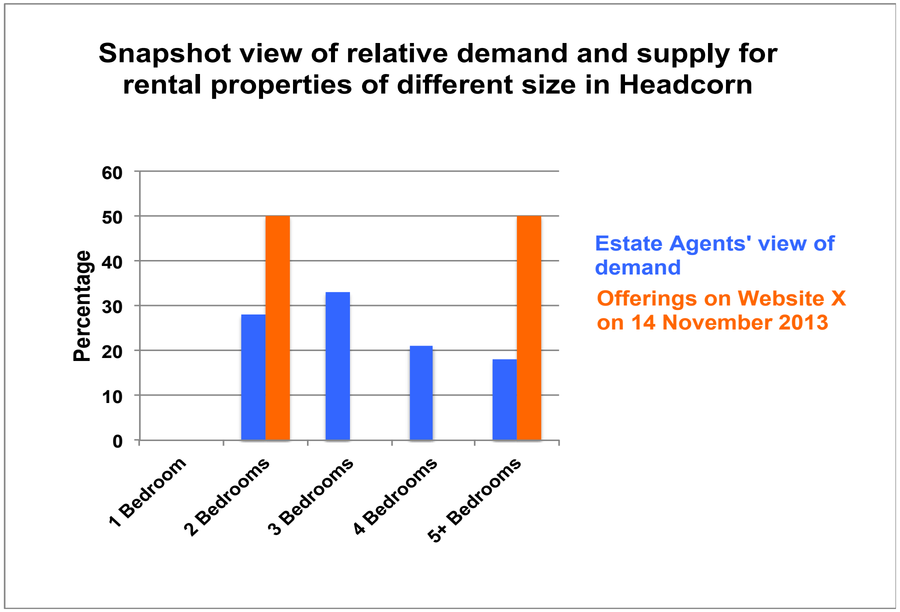

* (Neo) Retirees (3)

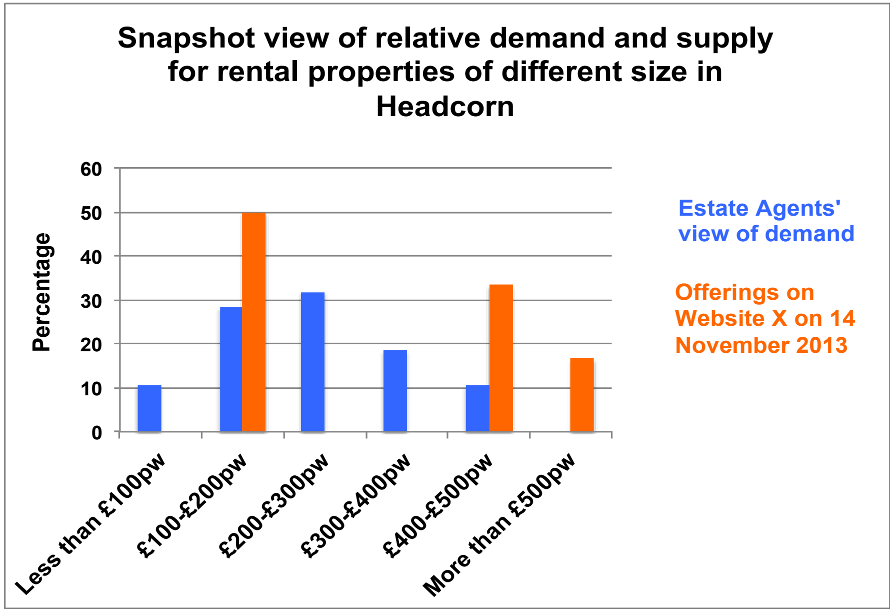
** From along the fast line (4)

*** Down pricing (4)

- There is a material demand from people already living very locally/within Headcorn itself – neo-retirees and downsizers/upsizers
- Most demand is from people 'down pricing' – along the Kent Coast mainline

# Rental Properties




- There is a very strong, and growing, market in Headcorn for rental properties.
- 2-3 bedroom properties are most in demand at ca. £200pw with some 3-4 bedroom properties sought after at the higher rental ranges.
- There is a sharp cut off in interest at about £185-£200pw.
- Houses in the price range £200k-£250k are in demand for buy-to-lets
- There is a growing tendency to rent while looking for a property to purchase in the area.
- The snapshot supply data indicated a greater proportion of ‘large’ (5+ bedroom) and more expensive properties than was in demand.

# Key Messages

On the village itself:

- Headcorn is viewed as an attractive, small community to live in with a ‘village feel’ to it but, in reality, is more than a true rural village having:
  - an attractive (conservation area) and compact centre
  - good shopping for day-to-day needs (especially PO and mini supermarket - but has one of almost everything)
  - good amenities for week-to-week needs
  - an active village society centred around the Village Hall etc.
  - a Mainline station.
- Headcorn has a reputation of having a Gypsy &Traveller issue and this impacts negatively the attractiveness of its rural properties.

# Key Messages

On what is in demand to purchase and what isn't:

- New housing with manageable gardens of up to 1/4 acre and with secure boundary are in great demand, as are houses with 2-4 Bedrooms with up to 1/2 acre - especially in the £250k-£350/400k price range.
- Developments above 30 houses are viewed by potential buyers as 'estates' and are not as attractive as smaller developments.
- Off road parking is very important and properties must have parking for at least 2 cars per household
- Houses on 'estates' (> ca. 30-40 houses) are much more difficult to sell.
- Three storey housing is not in demand/difficult to sell.

# Key Messages

On renting in Headcorn:

- There is a very strong, and growing, market in Headcorn for rental properties.
- 2-3 bedroom properties are most in demand at ca. £200pw with some 3-4 bedroom properties sought after at the higher rental ranges.
- There is a sharp cut off in interest at about £185-£200pw.
- Houses in the price range £200k-£250k are in demand for buy-to-lets.

# Key Messages

On developments:

- Mixed affordable and private ownership developments are not viewed by potential buyers as attractive as privately-owned only developments.
- Careful thought needs to be given on how best to provide the limited demand for affordable housing within MBC Policies.
- The universal application of the mixed ownership development concept is not necessarily seen as the approach that best meets the aspirations of all stakeholders.
- There was a view expressed that 3-4 developments of 20-30 houses each, of mixed size (2-4 Bedrooms) and of varied external visual character in a local village style with manageable gardens and each development having a single access to an established road, would be very attractive to potential buyers of property in Headcorn.

# Traffic Survey Results

- **Firstly a very big "THANK YOU" to the overall Team of some 35 Volunteers who variously helped to compile our Traffic Survey.**
- **Many willingly getting up to man the 6am – 8am slots.**
- **Without your help this survey would just not have been possible! Thank You again.**
- **A full list of Volunteers will appear by way of acknowledgement as an appendix to the final Neighbourhood Plan.**

# Background to Traffic Survey

- The Survey was carried out variously over two separate weeks during June and July, based on mid week days (Tuesdays and Thursdays)
- Morning, evening & where appropriate mid afternoon "peak times" were recorded.
- Main junctions at either end of the Village were surveyed together with additional important locations in the village centre.

## Some *headline* facts and figures

*** Average of 309 vehicles per hour enter village during "morning peak – 06.00 – 10.00. from Biddenden/Tenterden direction. This peaks between 07.00 – 08.00 at 449 vehicles an hour.**

*** At same times average 317 vehicles per hour leave village via High Street/North Street peaking between 07.00 – 08.00 at 389 vehicles per hour**

- **Twice the number of vehicles arrive at Station from East (i.e. Biddenden/Tenterden than from West (i.e. Village Centre ).**
- **Consistently at peak times between 40%-50% of vehicles arriving at Station are dropping off passengers.**
- **During morning peak 08.00 – 9.00 the Kings Road/Lenham Road/Ulcombe Road/Forge Lane Junction has 346 vehicle movements.**

# So, what happens next?

- Of necessity the facts and figures given today are but a brief snapshot of the full results.
- The Traffic Survey Results to date comprise of some 16 Tables.
- Much of the information is quite technical, noting vehicle types, direction of flow and deviation.  Many tables needing to be read in conjunction with other tables.
- The main purpose of the Traffic Survey is to give us the important information that will be needed when we come to draft Plan Policies early next year.

# Next steps

- Once we have talked to residents; businesses; MBC; and the Parish Council about what the results show, the next step will be to take the results and to shape them into draft policies.
- We are also asking providers of some key local services (such as the primary school and medical centre) to provide an assessment of existing and future capacity constraints and how to address them.
- Will then do another round of meetings to discuss policy proposals.
- The results will then be written up into a draft Neighbourhood Plan.

# Next steps (continued)

- Will then run a formal consultation on the draft plan – all can submit views.
- The draft Neighbourhood Plan will be revised in the light of consultation responses (as appropriate) and then submitted to MBC.
- Subject to MBC approval the plan will then be submitted to examination.
- Once any changes suggested by the examiner are incorporated, it can then go to referendum.
- It is expected that the referendum will take place in 2015.
- All in all involves about 4 to 6 months work spread over the next 18 months.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