

Holt Neighbourhood Plan Review – Questionnaire Results and Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who completed the Holt Neighbourhood Plan Review questionnaire.

We received 238 responses, including around a dozen from local businesses, representing approximately a quarter of Holt households. The Holt Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has worked through almost 30,000 individual pieces of data, including questionnaire responses, rankings, selections and written comments.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand what residents value most about Holt, the issues they would like addressed, and their priorities for the future. The results will now help shape the updated Neighbourhood Plan.

Headline findings:

- Residents value Holt's green spaces, village character and strong community spirit above all else.
- Traffic, transport, flooding and healthcare emerged as the issues causing greatest concern.
- There is support for limited housing to meet local needs, provided growth is matched by infrastructure and protects Holt's green spaces and character.
- Residents want safer walking, cycling and public transport connections.
- Specific named Green Spaces, important views and village character remain priorities for protection.
- Community facilities are valued, but residents would like to see improvements for young people, sport and recreation.

What makes Holt special?

Residents were remarkably consistent about what they value most.

The most loved aspects of Holt were:

- Green spaces and countryside (88%)
- Village character and appearance (85%)
- Community spirit and village life (81%)

Good quality housing choice and local employment opportunities also scored highly.

Written comments highlighted the importance of community spirit, the village pubs, churches, The Courts, Wild Herb Café, footpaths, sports and play facilities, and Holt's unique combination of being both peaceful and well connected.

What concerns residents most?

Traffic emerged as the single biggest concern, followed by poor public transport, difficulty walking and cycling safely, overdevelopment and parking pressures.

Written comments repeatedly highlighted concerns about:

- Flooding and the village becoming cut off during severe weather.
- Road safety around the school and on narrow roads.
- Limited shopping and healthcare provision.
- Drainage and street maintenance issues.
- Accessibility problems for wheelchair and mobility users.
- Dog fouling.

A stronger Plan for the future

Perhaps one of the most important messages from the questionnaire was that residents are not asking for a completely different Neighbourhood Plan. Instead, they are asking for a stronger one.

Residents want a Plan that manages future development positively whilst protecting Holt's green spaces, important views and village character. They want growth to be matched by the infrastructure needed to support it, including healthcare, transport, roads, pavements and other community services.

Comments also highlighted the need to improve traffic safety, create safer walking and cycling routes, improve public transport connections and strengthen resilience to flooding.

There was strong support for protecting and enhancing community facilities, particularly for young people, sport and recreation, whilst ensuring the updated Plan remains practical, specific and capable of delivering real outcomes for the village.

In short, residents want a clearer and more effective Plan that protects what makes Holt special whilst helping shape its future.

Housing

Residents recognise the need for some future housing, but want it carefully managed and focused on local needs.

Around 62% of respondents supported either a very small amount of housing development or moderate growth including affordable homes, smaller dwellings and downsizing options for older residents. In a separate question, 77% said it was important or very important to provide a limited amount of new housing to meet local needs, including smaller dwellings for elderly people who wish to downsize, and for young single people, couples and families needing a first home, of which a significant proportion needs to be affordable.

At the same time, there was overwhelming support for protecting Holt's settlement boundary and green spaces (92%) and ensuring that any new housing reflects the village's character, scale and appearance (88%).

However, many residents expressed concern that local infrastructure is already under pressure. Around two-thirds of respondents felt existing infrastructure is struggling to meet current needs, particularly healthcare provision, public transport, roads, parking, pavements and cycle safety.

Taken together, the results suggest that residents are not opposed to future housing where it meets genuine local needs, but they want growth to be carefully managed, supported by infrastructure and delivered in a way that protects Holt's character and green spaces.

Transport

The questionnaire highlighted strong support for improving how people move around Holt and access neighbouring towns and services.

Walking is already an important part of daily life for many residents, with around 55% of respondents regularly walking around the village. However, concerns about road safety, narrow roads, missing pavements, crossing points and accessibility featured strongly throughout the survey.

There was also significant support for measures to improve traffic safety, with around 79% of respondents supporting one or more forms of traffic calming, including 20mph limits, vehicle-activated signs, HGV restrictions and other measures to reduce vehicle speeds.

Cycling remains relatively limited, but there was clear support for creating safer routes. When asked where a future cycle route should connect to, 82% of respondents chose Bradford on Avon, with just under half also supporting routes to Trowbridge and Melksham.

Residents also highlighted the need for better public transport and improved connections to neighbouring towns. Additional suggestions included reopening Holt railway station, improving accessibility through dropped kerbs and safer crossings, and expanding electric vehicle charging provision, including support for charging facilities at the Village Hall and additional provision at the Glove Factory.

Overall, residents want safer, more accessible and more sustainable transport options, both within Holt and to surrounding communities.

Commerce

Commerce and economic development ranked lower than issues such as traffic, housing, transport and green spaces when residents were asked to identify their overall priorities for the future. However, when asked directly, 73% of respondents considered it important or very important to build on existing commercial activity and create opportunities for employment.

Residents particularly highlighted:

- Completing the regeneration of The Tannery.
- Supporting the Glove Factory and other established local businesses.
- Retaining industrial and commercial premises rather than losing them to housing.
- Providing modest additional retail and workspace opportunities, such as improvements to the village shop, a farm shop, deli, bakery, pop-up businesses and flexible workspace.

Many comments emphasised the importance of maintaining Holt's character as a village rather than allowing it to evolve into a small town.

Farming and agriculture were also seen as important to Holt's future, with 82% of respondents describing them as important or very important. Comments highlighted not only the role of farming in food production, but also the importance of protecting farmland, supporting rural employment and maintaining the landscape character that helps define Holt and its surrounding countryside.

Environment and green spaces

Green spaces emerged as the most valued aspect of Holt, with 88% of respondents identifying them as one of the things they most appreciate about the village.

Residents highlighted the importance of both the wider countryside and the green spaces within the village itself. The most frequently referenced green spaces included the Glove Factory fields, the Recreation Ground and the fields bounded by the Courts, extending towards St Katharine's Church and by Station Road and The Star.

Protecting important views was also a recurring theme throughout the questionnaire. Residents particularly valued views from the top of Holt Manor field back across Holt, and out to Great Chalfield and the surrounding countryside.

Flooding emerged as a significant concern. Many respondents described the impact of flooding on daily life, including disruption to travel, access to services and the village becoming isolated during severe weather events. Around one in five respondents reported that flooding had affected their commute or regular journeys.

Views on solar energy development were mixed. Whilst around one in five respondents were neutral, unsure or expressed conditional support, approximately four times as many respondents felt the local area had already done enough to accommodate solar provision than felt additional solar development may still be needed.

Overall, residents placed a high value on protecting Holt's green spaces, important views, wildlife, watercourses and village character, whilst improving resilience to flooding and other environmental challenges.

Community facilities

The questionnaire confirmed that community facilities remain one of Holt's great strengths.

Around two-thirds of respondents described themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with the village's outdoor sports and leisure facilities, reflecting the importance residents place on the Recreation Ground, sports clubs, play areas and wider community amenities.

However, residents also identified opportunities to build on what already works well.

Comments highlighted a desire for improved facilities for older children and teenagers, including skate and BMX facilities, alongside wider improvements such as:

- Outdoor gym equipment.
- Improved play areas.
- Better sports courts and associated facilities.
- Enhanced provision around the Little Parks and Melksham Road end of the village.

There was also strong support for new or refurbished shared sports pavilion facilities to support football, bowls, tennis, pickleball and wider community use.

Access to healthcare emerged as one of the most significant issues raised anywhere in the questionnaire. Nearly half of respondents reported difficulties accessing the health services they need, making healthcare one of the most frequently raised concerns after traffic and transport.

Many written comments highlighted concerns about GP and dental provision, together with worries about whether healthcare capacity will keep pace with future growth.

Community allotments also received strong support. Whilst not among the highest overall relative priorities identified by residents, 77% of respondents said they would support the provision of community allotments in Holt and 73% considered encouraging allotments to be an important objective for the updated Plan. Many respondents saw allotments as a positive opportunity to support wellbeing, social interaction, local food growing and sustainability.

Taken together, the results suggest that residents value Holt's existing community facilities highly but want to see them enhanced and expanded to meet future needs.

Who responded?

Most respondents (89%) live within Holt Parish. Responses were received from households of all sizes and from a broad range of age groups, providing a balanced picture of community views and priorities across the parish.

What happens next?

The questionnaire is not the end of the process – it is the beginning of the next stage.

The Steering Group will now use the results to help prepare an updated Neighbourhood Plan for discussion with Wiltshire Council. Further community consultation will take place as the draft Plan develops.

The aim is for residents to have the opportunity to vote on the updated Plan through a local referendum, with a new "made" Neighbourhood Plan in place by the end of 2027.

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot solve every problem overnight. However, it gives the community a powerful voice in shaping Holt's future and influencing planning decisions that affect the village.

Finally, thank you to everyone who completed the questionnaire, to the volunteer members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and to everyone who attended the public presentation and discussion.

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