

Blunham Neighbourhood Plan – Feedback to long form answers on Questionnaire (ChatGPT summary)

This summary was produced to give an overview of the feedback received – the full data will be referenced to provide evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan.

What factors mean you have stayed within the Parish of Blunham?

The comments reflect a strong sense of attachment and appreciation for the village of Blunham, with residents highlighting several key aspects of life there. Central themes include:

1. **Community Spirit:** Many comments emphasize the village's tight-knit, friendly atmosphere, where neighbors know each other and there's a strong sense of belonging. The variety of local events (e.g., Party in the Park, Christmas Fair, fireworks) contributes to this community feel.
2. **Rural Tranquility:** The peace and quiet of village life is a recurring sentiment, with many residents appreciating the slower pace and the natural surroundings, including walks along the river and green spaces. People value the countryside and the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities like swimming in the river or walking their dogs.
3. **Family Connections:** Many residents have deep family ties to the village, either having lived there for decades or having raised children in the area. Some mention the importance of being close to family, with several people noting that their relatives live in the village or nearby.
4. **Quality of Life:** The village's peacefulness, safety, and lack of crime are regularly highlighted. People enjoy the quieter life compared to urban areas, appreciating the low traffic and rural charm. However, some also note a slight increase in traffic and street lighting in recent years.
5. **Access to Amenities:** While Blunham is described as a small village, residents appreciate its good local facilities, including a school, a pub, a shop, and transport links, particularly to nearby towns and London. Some also appreciate the improvements made over time, like the refurbished pub and better local amenities.
6. **Longevity and Stability:** Many people express their long-term commitment to the village, having lived there for decades and feeling settled in their homes. The stability of village life, alongside affordable housing compared to larger towns or cities, makes it an attractive place to remain.
7. **Connection to Nature:** Blunham's proximity to the countryside, with its green spaces, walking routes, and wildlife, is frequently mentioned as a major reason for liking the village. The beauty of the surrounding landscape adds to the village's appeal.

In summary, Blunham is appreciated for its strong community ties, rural charm, family-friendly atmosphere, and peaceful lifestyle, with residents valuing both the quiet countryside setting and the convenience of local amenities and transport links.

What annual or regular community events have you attended in the last 12 months (please specify all events)?

The comments reveal a wide variety of community events and activities that residents of Blunham participate in, with a particular focus on church, village hall, and outdoor events. The most popular responses can be categorized as follows:

1. **Fireworks and Seasonal Celebrations:**
 - **Fireworks** (mentioned frequently, especially around Bonfire Night and New Year's Eve).
 - **Christmas Lights Switch On** and **Christmas Events** (e.g., Christmas fairs, Christmas carol services, and book sales).
 - **Rose Queen Fete**, a long-standing village tradition.
2. **Village Festivals and Social Gatherings:**
 - **Party in the Park**, a major community event that seems to be widely enjoyed.
 - **Bangers, Bells, and Beer**, a community fundraiser often involving church participation.

- **D-Day Celebrations** and other commemorative events such as **Remembrance Day** services.
- **Quiz Nights** (at the pub and church).
- 3. **Church and Religious Activities:**
 - **Church Services** and **Church Events** (e.g., book sales, Christmas fairs, fellowship gatherings, and coffee mornings).
 - **Church Community Cafe** and **Church Breakfasts**.
 - **Messy Church** and other youth-focused activities.
 - Regular church events like **Fellowship Club** and **Advent Coffee Mornings**.
- 4. **Outdoor and Sports Activities:**
 - **Cricket Matches** (often mentioned alongside other outdoor events like cricket at the playing field).
 - **Football** and **Youth Cricket**.
 - **Cinema at the Village Hall** and other local movie events.
 - **Gardening Club** and **Nature Walks** (linked to community gatherings).
- 5. **Village Hall and Social Clubs:**
 - **Village Hall Activities** (e.g., pilates, social coffee mornings, and monthly gatherings).
 - **Coffee Mornings** and **Monthly Coffee** at various venues, including the church and Old Rectory.
 - **Social Events at the Horseshoes Pub**, such as quizzes and singers.
- 6. **Other Community Gatherings:**
 - **Summer Afternoon Teas**, **Garden Parties**, and **Picnics in the Park**.
 - **Film Nights** and occasional **Community Cinema** screenings.
 - **School Events**, including PTA gatherings and special celebrations.

In summary, Blunham residents actively engage in a mix of seasonal, religious, and community-driven events, with an emphasis on family-friendly gatherings, church-based activities, and outdoor social occasions. Fireworks, Christmas celebrations, the Rose Queen Fete, and local sports remain some of the most popular activities.

What facilities are missing from the village such as green spaces, allotments, youth facilities etc? Please specify all.

The feedback highlights a range of facilities that are either missing or could be improved in the village. Key themes include:

1. **Eating and Social Spaces:**
 - Several people mentioned a desire for a **café, restaurant, or pub** that serves food regularly, as there is currently no central place to eat out.
 - Others suggested a **coffee shop or community health café** as an ideal addition for socializing and community gatherings.
2. **Public Services:**
 - The **Post Office** was mentioned frequently, with many seeing it as a priority for the village.
 - A **Doctors' surgery** and better **public transport** (especially to Bedford) were also common requests, as well as a more reliable **bus service** and **taxi services**.
 - A **Police station** and **adequate street lighting** were mentioned for safety, especially in dark areas of the village.
3. **Youth and Community Facilities:**
 - There was a call for **youth facilities**, including a **youth club, teenager activities**, and spaces like a **scouts or brownies group**.
 - Others also wanted more recreational areas for all ages, such as **green spaces, allotments, and picnic benches**.
 - Concerns about the loss of **Teddybears playgroup** and the need for activities for younger children were also mentioned.
4. **Parking and Traffic Management:**
 - **Car parking** for the school run and at the **Village Hall** (to prevent high street congestion) was raised.

- There were calls for more **off-road parking** (e.g., at the north end of Station Road) and traffic-calming measures, particularly on busy roads like **Station Road** and **High Street**. Some suggested adding **speed cameras** or **zebra crossings** for safety.
- 5. **Green Spaces and Nature:**
 - Many noted the loss of **green spaces** due to new housing developments and expressed concerns about the impact on the village's natural environment. There were calls for more **public green areas**, such as a central **village green**, or **woodland areas** that can serve as a community focus.
 - A number of people suggested converting available land into **allotments (mentioned 26 times)** or **parks**.
- 6. **Other Requests:**
 - **Improved lighting, more sports facilities**, and a **library bus** were additional suggestions.
 - Some mentioned **pétanque** as a potential recreational activity and raised concerns about the loss of open space to residential housing.

Overall, the feedback reflects a desire for a balance between new development and maintaining the village's sense of community, nature, and convenience, with a particular emphasis on improving services for families, youth, and social gatherings.

This is a summary of the responses if people had concerns about environmental issues facing Blunham

The feedback highlights widespread concerns among residents about the impact of ongoing development in Blunham, particularly in relation to flooding, pollution, loss of wildlife habitats, and the degradation of rural life. Here are the key points:

1. **Flooding:** Flooding is a major issue, especially in certain areas like the High Street and Grange Road. Many residents report increasing frequency and severity of flooding, exacerbated by insufficient drainage and developments that reduce natural flood management areas. There are concerns that new housing developments will worsen this problem.
2. **Water Pollution:** Water pollution, especially in the River Ivel and other local waterways, is a significant concern, particularly for those who enjoy activities like river swimming. Residents worry that increased development, coupled with inadequate sewage and drainage systems, will worsen water quality.
3. **Loss of Wildlife and Green Spaces:** Many feel that the destruction of trees, hedges, and nature walks to make way for new housing is detrimental to biodiversity and the rural character of the village. There are fears that this loss will reduce the village's appeal and negatively impact both the environment and quality of life.
4. **Traffic and Air Pollution:** The increase in traffic due to new development is causing congestion, noise, and air pollution. Blunham is increasingly used as a shortcut for traffic, which has led to concerns about safety, particularly near schools, and health impacts due to poor air quality.
5. **Quality of Life:** There is a strong desire to preserve Blunham's rural identity, which many residents moved to the village to enjoy. There is a sense that the village is losing its character as it becomes more built-up, and that further development would harm both the environment and the well-being of its residents.
6. **Infrastructure and Drainage:** Many residents express frustration over inadequate infrastructure, including sewage systems, drainage, and flood defenses. The strain on existing infrastructure due to new developments is a common concern.
7. **Climate Change:** Residents are concerned about the impact of climate change, particularly in relation to flooding, water management, and biodiversity. They stress the importance of managing green spaces and habitats to support wildlife and maintain the village's rural environment.
8. **Social Housing and Development:** There is a call for more social housing but a strong belief that current developments do not address these needs adequately. Concerns are raised that developments seem driven by builder profit rather than community benefit.

Overall, the feedback reflects a strong desire to protect Blunham's rural charm, its natural spaces, and the well-being of its residents, while voicing concerns about the consequences of further development, pollution, and infrastructure strain.

This was the feedback when residents were concerned about the impact on the Parish Council of East/West Rail, possible Tempsford Station, A428 Black Cat development, Universal Studios, gravel extraction and the expansion of Sandy, Great Barford and Tempsford.

The feedback revolves around concerns about traffic, development, and the potential loss of Blunham's rural identity. Key points include:

1. **Increased Traffic:** Residents are highly concerned about the growing volume of traffic, particularly heavy lorries and cars using Blunham as a shortcut, especially when the A1 is closed. This results in dangerous driving, speeding, and congestion, with traffic becoming a serious safety issue, particularly around the school and residential areas. Many fear that new developments, both local and in surrounding towns, will exacerbate these problems.
2. **Loss of Village Character:** There is a strong desire to maintain Blunham's identity as a small, peaceful village. Many worry that increased development will cause the village to lose its rural charm, turning it into a larger town. The expansion of neighboring areas, particularly Sandy and Tempsford, is seen as a threat to Blunham's unique character, with concerns that it will eventually merge into these towns.
3. **Safety Concerns:** The increasing traffic, particularly from heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and fast drivers, is raising concerns about pedestrian and road safety. Narrow roads and a lack of enforcement of speed limits make it hazardous for residents, particularly children and animals. There is also a desire for better traffic control, such as speed cameras or electronic enforcement.
4. **Environmental Impact:** The loss of green space, increased air and noise pollution, and potential damage to local infrastructure (such as the twin bridges) are key environmental concerns. Residents worry that ongoing development will lead to the destruction of the countryside, negatively affecting both wildlife and the quality of life in the village.
5. **Infrastructure Strain:** There is concern about the lack of adequate infrastructure to cope with the increasing population and traffic. Issues like an overloaded drainage system and poor road conditions are highlighted, and residents worry that further development will stretch these systems to their limits.
6. **Disruption from Large Projects:** The ongoing Black Cat development, the potential East-West Rail link, and other large-scale projects in surrounding areas are causing uncertainty and disruption. Many residents feel these developments will bring more traffic, noise, and pollution to the village.
7. **Quality of Life:** Overall, residents are worried that continued growth and increased traffic will severely impact their quality of life. They value the quiet, rural environment and fear that future development will erode this, leading to a loss of community, increased crime, and the potential transformation of Blunham into a more urbanized area.

In summary, the feedback expresses a strong desire to protect Blunham's rural character, address traffic and safety issues, and prevent overdevelopment that could negatively impact the village's environment and residents' quality of life. There is a clear call for better infrastructure and traffic management to mitigate the impact of future growth.

Thinking about the next 10 years, what can you see will be positive about living in the Parish of Blunham?

The feedback on Blunham's future over the next 10 years reveals a strong desire to preserve its rural, village character while managing the pressures of growth and change. Key themes include:

1. **Preservation of Village Character:** Many residents hope that Blunham will maintain its current small, friendly, and community-focused atmosphere, resisting the transformation into an urbanized area. There is concern that it could become more suburban, especially as neighboring towns expand. Some fear it will lose its identity if it becomes engulfed by surrounding developments like Sandy or Tempsford.

2. **Community and Social Life:** A consistent theme is the importance of retaining the strong sense of community that exists in the village. People value the village's supportive atmosphere, volunteer-run activities, and local events. There's hope for continued community spirit, with some expressing concerns about the aging volunteer base and the need for younger people to get involved.
3. **Traffic and Infrastructure:** Many residents are worried about the impact of increased traffic, particularly from new housing developments, and the inability of the existing infrastructure to cope. There is a call for better traffic enforcement and limited development to avoid overwhelming the village. Some feel that Blunham's infrastructure, including roads and public transport, must improve to meet the needs of the growing population.
4. **Development and Housing:** The majority of respondents wish to see minimal further housing development. There's a desire for affordable housing, especially for younger families and the elderly, but concerns that too much new housing could transform Blunham into a housing estate or suburb. Many would like to see a balance between growth and the preservation of green space.
5. **Green Spaces and Environment:** The preservation of Blunham's natural beauty, countryside feel, and green spaces is important to many. Residents value local amenities like river walks and footpaths and want these areas to remain accessible as the village evolves.
6. **Facilities and Amenities:** There's an interest in expanding village amenities to support the growing population, such as a better public transport system, more local shops, and facilities for all age groups. Some hope for new community spaces like a coffee shop or expansion of the school.
7. **Quality of Life:** Many residents hope Blunham will remain a peaceful, quiet, and relatively safe place to live, with a low crime rate and good local facilities. There's a desire for the village to remain a desirable place to live, with its rural charm intact.
8. **Concerns About Overdevelopment:** Some express concern that continued development will strain resources and compromise the quality of life. They fear the village could lose its rural appeal and become a less desirable place to live if it becomes overdeveloped and overrun with traffic.

In summary, Blunham's residents generally want to see the village retain its small-town, community-focused feel while managing the pressures of growth. They are concerned about maintaining the balance between development and preserving the environment, amenities, and the village atmosphere. There is also a strong desire for traffic management, better infrastructure, and a focus on affordable housing for a diverse population.

This is the feedback to question 24.

We are at the early stages of engagement for the Neighbourhood Plan and there will be further opportunities to share your views. However, if there is anything you feel we have missed in this initial survey please fill in the box below.

Impact of East-West Rail and Tempsford Station on Blunham:

- **Mixed Views on East-West Rail:** Some residents see East-West Rail and the new Tempsford Station as potentially beneficial, offering improved transport links and economic opportunities. However, others worry that the growth in transport links could turn Blunham into a commuter village, losing its rural character and becoming a satellite of Tempsford or Sandy.

Growth of Housing in the Tempsford Area:

- **Concerns Over Overdevelopment:** There is significant opposition to further housing developments. Residents feel that Blunham is already experiencing problems with overcrowding, increased traffic, and inadequate infrastructure. Many are concerned that new housing will exacerbate these issues, particularly with parking, crime, and public services.
- **Impact on Crime:** There are growing concerns about crime, particularly burglaries and anti-social behavior, which residents feel is linked to new developments. Some have experienced crime personally and worry that the parish is not doing enough to address safety.

Infrastructure and Services:

- **Public Transport Issues:** The lack of reliable public transport is a major concern, with many residents feeling that the village is becoming increasingly car-dependent. There is a call for more bus routes, especially for young people who don't drive.
- **Healthcare and Amenities:** The village lacks key services like a GP surgery, dental practice, and accessible facilities. The demand for better healthcare and amenities is high, and there is a push for more infrastructure to support new housing.
- **Traffic and Safety:** Traffic management is a significant concern. Residents complain about heavy traffic, unsafe roads, and large trucks using the village as a shortcut. There are worries about the safety of children crossing roads, and suggestions for improved traffic calming measures.

Impact of Housing Growth on Village Life:

- **Social Integration:** There are concerns about the integration of new and old residents. The village is becoming fragmented, with new developments not connecting well with the older parts of Blunham. Some suggest that a business hub or a relocated village hall could help improve community cohesion.
- **Affordable Housing:** Many residents are calling for more affordable housing, particularly for younger generations and the elderly. There is also a request for more diverse housing options like bungalows or mobile homes to accommodate different demographics.

Environmental and Infrastructure Concerns:

- **Environmental Impact:** Some residents suggest conducting thorough assessments of Blunham's wildlife before approving new developments. There is concern about the environmental consequences of more building and the loss of green space.
- **Flooding and Infrastructure Issues:** Persistent flooding problems, particularly around the junction of High Street and Tempsford Road, are a significant concern. Residents feel that the infrastructure is not keeping up with the pace of development, and government promises for infrastructure improvements before housing construction are often unmet.

General Concerns and Suggestions:

- **Parking and Public Spaces:** Parking, especially around the school, is a major issue, and residents are calling for better parking solutions in new developments. There is also a suggestion to install more dog waste bins and benches for the elderly.
- **Crime and Safety:** There is a strong desire to improve the neighborhood watch scheme and address the rising crime rate. Many feel unsafe in the village and are frustrated by the lack of action to reduce crime.
- **Village Character:** Several respondents express concern that Blunham is losing its identity as a rural village due to overdevelopment. Some feel that promises of affordable housing have not been kept, and the village is being "pillaged" by developers.

Conclusion:

Overall, the feedback reflects a strong opposition to overdevelopment in Blunham and a desire for more controlled growth that includes improvements to infrastructure, services, and community safety. While East-West Rail and Tempsford Station are seen as potentially beneficial, the rapid expansion of housing is widely regarded as problematic, especially without adequate planning for transportation, healthcare, and crime management. The A1 is seen as a potential barrier to Blunham becoming a satellite village of Tempsford, but only if infrastructure issues are properly addressed. The village's character is a key concern, and many feel that development should be balanced to preserve its rural nature while accommodating necessary growth.