

West Hill Parish Council Resident Survey 2021

Results

Q1. Postcode – data not shared

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being Not Important and 5 being Extremely Important, what do you value about living in West Hill?

	1 Not important	2 Fairly unimportant	3 Neither important nor unimportant	4 Fairly important	5 Extremely important
The woodland character of the village	2%	2%	8%	23%	65%
Easy access to countryside and coast	1%	1%	5%	25%	68%
Proximity to Exeter	3%	6%	20%	50%	20%
The compact size of the village	8%	6%	12%	31%	43%
Low-density housing	2%	3%	7%	26%	61%
The people and local community	1%	4%	14%	35%	45%
Facilities (eg shop, garage, school etc)	0%	2%	10%	30%	58%
Clubs and organisations	5%	6%	26%	38%	25%

15 additional comments were added as “Other”. Examples of the types of comments are:

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
Rural Environment rural character of village access to countryside lack of noise separateness	Beauty and peaceful nature of the village and surrounding area is extremely important
Community	Church and community
Transport links	Proximity to sea, moors, railway, airport & privacy via low density & screening
Other	<p>A rec/ common ground is much needed in West hill for the children and as a community hub. A cafe or family pub/ coffee shop is needed too. High density of children but not enough on offer for them. Also a highly oversubscribed school yet considering developments / more houses? The village needs to look forward for the next generation.</p> <p>West Hill needs a place that everyone can meet ,have a drink and be part of this community. In 42 years of being in the village it has always been an issue. I know in the past people have looked into a venue for this, but it seemed nobody wanted it on their doorstep. But over the years this village has grown and I think it would help towards a more social village and making West Hill a proper village and not just a drive through as it has always been seen as.</p>

Q3. Bearing in mind that we must do all we can to meet any feasible future housing allocation from East Devon District Council, what is your preferred type of development? Please rank them from 1 being your preferred, to 4 being your least preferred.

	1 Preferred	2 Second preferred	3 Third preferred	4 Least preferred
A number of small infill-type developments	70%	12%	11%	7%
A mixture of small and medium-scale developments	18%	64%	17%	1%
Medium-scale development around the outskirts of the village	13%	20%	57%	10%
A single large-scale development	6%	1%	10%	84%

Q4. How important is it that the current gap between West Hill and Ottery St Mary is maintained?

Very important - the two should maintain their unique identities	71%
Slightly important	20%
Not important if the two settlements merge	9%

Q5 Are there any areas in West Hill which you consider should be protected from building development?

There were 130 comments submitted to this question (the most comments for any of the open-ended questions), of which examples are given below. It would be fair to say that respondents want the BUAB to be respected and highly value the green spaces within and around the village, the open views and woodland.

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
The area between West Hill and Ottery St Mary	The woodland patches off Elsdon and between the Broad Oaks. The fields between WH and Metcombe. The fields between WH and the Otter. Basically the built up area boundary should be respected.
The fields and woodland outside built up area/farmland	The small number of open fields with public footpaths as there is hardly any open space to enjoy
Oak Road + surrounds	Oak Road - those amazing trees should be protected at all costs
Woodland /Broadoak Plantation	Woods - alongside the road to Ottery St Mary - alongside Lower Broad Oak Road - Broad Oak plantation
Areas with valued views	Land to the east of Lower Broad Oak Road should remain undeveloped to protect the countryside views to East Hill. Land alongside the B3180 in order to protect the rural character of the village and to maintain a separation with other areas.
Areas with inadequate Infrastructure	Areas where the existing access and infrastructure cannot support the development.
High value ecosystems	Not specific areas but we should endeavour to preserve trees, hedgerows and areas where wildlife is prolific.

The whole of West Hill	Yes all of West Hill I think there has been enough building in the years we have lived here and some of it looks out of place
Other	Should aim to keep "green fingers" into the centre of the village so that housing is not all in a single mass

Q6 Which types of property would you prefer to see built in West Hill in the future? (tick all that apply)

Smaller homes for downsizing	75%
Low-cost starter homes	36%
Sheltered housing for elderly or disabled residents	42%
Affordable housing (social housing)	23%
Large family homes	45%
Flats	7%

Q7 Would you like to see new employment sites in the village - e.g. work/live units, office units, a business hub?

Yes – 26%

No – 74%

Q8 West Hill is outside the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Would you be in favour of the Parish Council lobbying for the AONB to be extended to include the village? (Development is much more strictly controlled inside AONBs, and there is emphasis on conserving landscape characteristics. However there is no guarantee that we will succeed)

Yes – 83%

No – 17%

Q9 Asked respondents to provide their email address if they wished to be kept up to date with Local Plan developments. 60 email addresses were provided.

Q10 How important is it for the Parish Council to:

	Very important	Slightly important	Not important
Engage with developers if it means being able to create new footpaths to link areas of the village	75%	17%	8%
Engage with developers if it enables us to create new community spaces/recreation areas	77%	15%	8%
Lobby for improved transport links for non-drivers	74%	17%	9%

Q11 How important are the following facilities to you/your family/the village?

	1 Not Important	2 Fairly unimportant	3 Neutral	4 Fairly Important	5 Extremely Important
Local shop for necessities	3%	3%	7%	30%	57%
Local post office	2%	1%	5%	24%	70%
Access to medical facilities at Ottery St Mary	1%	2%	4%	13%	79%
Village hall	4%	5%	23%	24%	46%
Children's play park	10%	7%	19%	25%	41%
Primary school in the village	7%	3%	18%	14%	59%
Pre-school in the village	9%	3%	24%	16%	50%
Church	17%	3%	25%	20%	35%
British Legion club	10%	5%	27%	27%	32%
Garage for fuel and repairs	3%	3%	14%	33%	47%
Services like dentist, hairdresser, beautician	8%	7%	19%	35%	32%
Bus service	5%	1%	10%	24%	61%
Broadoak plantation (Woodland Trust woods)	1%	1%	12%	21%	65%
Public rights of way for walking	2%	1%	7%	21%	71%
Clubs and organisations for socialising	2%	3%	27%	32%	35%

Q12 The Parish Council has been seeking land within the village for use as recreation space. Unfortunately we have had no success, as available plots tend to be sold for development. Do you think we should continue our search?

Yes – 82%
No – 18%

The followup question encouraged respondents to add comments. 45 comments were provided. Most comments were positive but the negative comments included worries that a communal space would be “taken over” by youths, or used exclusively by dog walkers. Other respondents offered advice on potential available land, or ways in which money could be raised for the purchase. Several expressed surprise that the community had no access to the School field.

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
General positive comments	Absolutely - this should be the number 1 priority. There is serious under provision of recreation space in the village which is to its detriment

Alternative suggestions	Much prefer you to concentrate on safe access to existing open areas eg footpaths/enforced speed limits to OSM, the Commons, the River etc. There is plenty of space around but the priority of motorists is a problem.
Funding	Perhaps a fundraiser to raise money to purchase a field, for example, to be able to compete with developer prices.
Suggested locations	What about the fields north of Oak Road?
Use of School field	Is there any possibility of an agreement with the school to use the field at weekends and in the holidays? It's a huge, flat, green space in the middle of the village that is unused outside of school hours. It seems like a waste of an excellent resource
Part of development offset	Use this as a bargaining tool for agreeing with selected future larger developments on the village outskirts.
Negative comments	Most people have gardens so a rec space would just create a noisy environment for those living next to it and encourage gatherings that may not please all in the vicinity. Enough screaming kids and barking dogs already

Q13 What sort of recreation/open space would you like? (tick all that apply)

Sports pitch/playing field	56%
Informal recreation space/play areas/adult outdoor gym	51%
Nature reserve	58%
Space for a youth shelter	32%

Q14 How included do you feel in our community?

I have enough contact with people and help when needed	75%
I am fine most of the time but more contact would be nice	20%
I feel excluded and alone most of the time	5%

Q15 Generally, how safe do you feel in our community?

	1 Not safe at all	2 Fairly safe	3 I don't worry about my safety in West Hill
At night	2%	32%	66%
During the day	1%	16%	83%

Q16 Followed up by asking residents if there is anything that would make them feel safer

54 people left comments, of which around a third mentioned poor driving standards, speeding vehicles, heavy vehicles and a general lack of care by drivers driving through the village (acknowledging that some of them live here). A roughly equal proportion mentioned the lack of footpaths and street lighting and said that more paths/lights would help. A similar proportion also

said that they would like to see a more obvious police presence, and some said that they did not know how to contact the police if they needed to.

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
Improved driving, address speeding vehicles, address heavy vehicles	Driving standards of some people are appalling. Big cars and small lanes make it dangerous for both other car drivers and pedestrians. Speeding is a problem not necessarily exceeding the speed limit but going faster than the road conditions dictate. Can residents be encouraged to wear bright clothes/ reflective tabards when walking at night to make them more visible.
More police presence, patrols, contact with police	It would be lovely to see and have more local police just around but even if you go to the local police in OSM there is very rarely anyone there or response when you need them.
More footpaths, street lighting	Delicate balance but probably better lighting and footpaths in certain areas however I do "enjoy" the lack of light pollution.
Bring in CCTV	Given the very well defined entry and exit points to West Hill, the community would benefit from recorded CCTV at each entry / exit point - perhaps on a 72 hour storage loop. Any break ins or other incidents then has a reference point for checking vehicles and narrowing down the search. If this became widely known, then I suggest that the number of burglaries would decline / not increase. The technology is there to do it quite easily these days. A modern version of the system at Moorlands. This would be a long term benefit to a safer community.
Other	Mirror at the end of Elsdon Lane meeting West Hill Road to be able to make the Corner not blind any longer. Addition of traffic control along West hill road end near Elsdon lane- perhaps a crossing to allow children across safely. Too many speeding cars makes me concerned for my children Addition of cycle lane and crossing to encourage children to cycle to school

Q17 How much of a problem do you think the following are in West Hill? (Some of these are the responsibility of external agencies but we can lobby on residents' behalf)

	This is definitely a problem in West Hill	I think this is an issue but not a big problem at the moment	I do not believe this is a problem in West Hill	Don't know/no opinion
Illegal drug use	4%	18%	39%	39%
Litter/fly tipping	16%	48%	30%	6%
Crime	3%	26%	55%	17%
Antisocial behaviour	5%	28%	54%	12%
Dog fouling	23%	46%	25%	6%
Lack of youth facilities	45%	22%	9%	24%
Lack of community spirit	15%	30%	45%	10%

Respondents could follow up with comments if they wished. 33 comments were submitted. Common complaints were a shortage of dog waste bins; homeowners' lack of consideration for neighbours by not trimming hedges, running noisy garden machinery or creating light pollution from garden lights; road safety (the "triangle" junction, inconsiderate parking, speeding); antisocial behaviour in the shop car park and litter. Commenters also expressed a wish for a better shop and a village "hub" (somewhere to meet socially eg a cafe).

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
Dog waste/fouling	Dog fouling is one of the major problems here in the village. My children have stood in this numerous times when walking through piles of leaves along School Lane. There are no way near enough dog poo bins in ratio to those who own dogs in the village. The bins are always over spilling and my 2 year old daughter pulled a dog poo bag out of the bin the other day not realising what it was as it was so over spilling. It's unsightly to have bins (which aren't even dog poop bins), over spilling like that. And it's hazardous to young children.
Hedges/verges, homeowner responsibility, machinery noise	There is a problem with homeowners not keeping hedges trimmed, verges clear, not clearing leaves or blowing them into the road. Blocks drains. Cut, Collect, Compost!
Road safety, parking, speeding, footpaths	A big problem is safe access from all three roads in West Hill onto the B 3180. I cannot believe that it would cost a great deal to remove the triangle at the end of West Hill Road so the village has at least one safe exit point from the village. I am no expert but this work should surely cost no more than £50,000 - a mere pittance in relation to the loss of a loved one !
Shop, facilities	I wish the local MColls was a Coop or similar as not enough items / often out of stock and does not appear efficiently run - staff are very good - they deserve better.
Antisocial behaviour, litter	Antisocial behaviour can be a real issue around Beech Park/shop car park in the evenings
Social contact, village hub	Apart from village hall, RBL and church there is no where to meet people. Those listed are restrictive as to how and when can meet. I don't want as a single lady to go to RBL. The village hall doesn't have activities for me. Need a cafe/ coffee shop at McColls.
Other	The items shown as not big problems are annoyances which the village would be better without but are not major issues
Positive feedback	I have found the Westhill Council extremely responsive and helpful with any issues or problems I have encountered and for this I am very grateful. It is lovely to be listened to. Also the help during the pandemic was amazing.

Q18 Which of the following do you think would make a positive difference to West Hill? These could be facilitated by the Council but managed by working groups consisting of residents. (tick all that apply)

Protecting the woodland character and looking after our trees	77%
Establish a new annual village event (could be a celebration or sports-based or whatever residents want)	42%
Develop a climate change action plan for the village	35%
Establish a First Responders group	36%
Encourage more walking	50%
Install an additional defibrillator	34%

Q19 asked for volunteers to provide email addresses to help with some community activities. 16 email addresses were provided, with either specific or general offers of help.

Q20 Please tell us how satisfied you are with your broadband, if you have it. Your connection might be fibre to the nearest cabinet (most common), or fibre to your home (less common)

I have broadband and the speed is adequate for my needs	51%
I have broadband but I wish it was faster	49%
I do not have broadband but might consider it in the future	0%
I do not have broadband and am not interested in getting it	1%

Q21 How do you find out about what's happening in West Hill? (tick all that apply)

The Messenger magazine from St Michael's Church	77%
Facebook - What's On In West Hill or the Parish Council Facebook page	54%
Twitter - the Parish Council Twitter feed	2%
Noticeboards next to McColls/village hall/bus shelter	44%
Parish Council website (www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk)	21%
West Hill Primary School or Pre-school parent communications	15%
Word of mouth	49%

An "other" option asked respondents to specify any other ways. Alternative methods not already listed were:

Ottery Gazette, emails from the Parish Council, the Parish Council newsletter, West Hill Women's Group.

It is interesting that the emails and newsletter from WHPC were thought of as ways to find out what is happening in West Hill, since they are used by WHPC to communicate our work, rather than as a general village newsletter.

Q22 We would like to evaluate the ways in which we communicate with residents. Which of the following are you aware of or have used? (tick all that apply)

The Parish Council website (www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk)	55%
Our Twitter feed (@WestHillPC)	5%
Our Facebook page (West Hill Parish Council)	33%
Our quarterly printed newsletter delivered door to door	87%
Our email mailing list which residents can sign up for	19%

Q23 invited residents to join the Parish Council email mailing list if they were not already subscribed. 50 email addresses were provided.

Q24 was a voluntary demographic question about age, to ensure the survey had reached a range of residents.

Age profile of survey respondents compared to the population of West Hill per Census data:

	Survey respondents (n=190)	Population estimate per Census (2021 data not yet released)
Under 19	1%	22%
20-49	29%	20%
50-69	45%	31%
70+	25%	27%

20 respondents declined to answer.

Q25 was a final comment box for any additional thoughts residents might have had before submitting their questionnaire.

57 comments were received. Many comments were related to traffic issues – speeding, inconsiderate parking, safety of pedestrians. A large proportion of the comments were about protecting the village from development and urbanisation. The issue of a village “hub”, cafe or restaurant was mentioned again.

Common Theme	Example comment(s)
Public transport	I would like to see better public transport to connect the outer areas of the village. If you have to get in the car for the bus stop, then you carry on in the car.
Neighbours, noise, bonfires	Would like action taken about noise - e.g. industrial leaf-blowers and chainsaws - and bonfires. These are both very antisocial.
Highways/traffic	I love living in the village and everything it has to offer. The only issue I have is with people using the village as a commuter route and the whole village not having a lower speed limit.
Dog waste bins/litter bins/bin collections	I really do feel that more litter bins and dog waste bins would really help these two issues.
Development/village character	We spent ages defining the built up boundary for planning purposes to prevent speculators slapping builds on fields so what's the point if Planners don't read the rules. WHPC doing it's best but outside influences still try it on at EDDC Planning full and delegated powers meetings.
Village hub/social activities/facilities inc. cycle/foot path to Ottery	It would be lovely to have a pub / restaurant in walking distance It would be amazing to have a foot / cycle path to Ottery
Woodland	Greatest concern that we retain as much of our natural woodland as possible.
Broadband/telephone	Whilst appreciating the advantages of life in West Hill, there are areas that are seriously disadvantaged by unreliable and inadequate broadband and mobile phone services.
Other	I would like the council to lobby for West Hill to become a “Dark” village . The lighting in the roads off Higher Broad Oak is useless as

	the moment you come out if the roads it is pitch black. The orange lights are uneconomic. There is light pollution
Positive feedback	Generally, the Parish Council is doing a good job