

## CHOICES FOR CHANGE

Choices for Change (“Choices”) was a consultation initiative, the outcomes from which are expected to assist the Steering Group in developing the policies that will be the cornerstone of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Choices consisted of a series of options on which views were sought. They were not proposals and the views expressed in response forms did not constitute “votes”. In due course the proposals that are developed will be incorporated into the draft Neighbourhood Plan which, if approved by the Parish Council, will be submitted to South Hams District Council (SHDC) and the residents of the parish will then have the opportunity to vote in favour or against in a referendum organised by SHDC and funded by the government.

The areas shown for possible housing development, and the routes of possible road links, were indicative only – that is, aimed at assessing public reaction to the concepts involved rather than putting forward specific plans.

More than two hundred and sixty response forms were received, representing more than 450% of households, and more than half if second homes and absences of permanent residents are allowed for.

Many of the comments made by respondents have been listed and are being published (as **What You Said**) along with a complete list of responses to the 55 options (**Choices Responses**).

The household survey returns will be analysed by the Evidence Base working party and will help provide vital information about the parish and the need for development.

All new contact information has been logged and e-mail addresses added to the Neighbourhood Plan e-mail database, to enable news about the progress of the Plan to reach as wide an audience as possible. **Documents will also be posted on the parish website, [www.stokefleming.org](http://www.stokefleming.org) as PDF files and can be downloaded from there. If necessary people will be able to request copies by e-mail from [admin@stokefleming.org](mailto:admin@stokefleming.org).**

All contact names have been entered in the Prize Draw.

The responses to the Choices consultation document will be considered by the Steering Group at its next meeting, on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

# Responses

## Housing

On the key issues of housing and roads opinions were more divided than in other issues.

Stoke Fleming, like every other area in the country, has to comply with national and local area (SHDC) policy on planning and the provision of new homes. If the development at West Dart, 95% of which is within the boundary of Stoke Fleming parish, goes ahead that should enable the parish to satisfy the requirement for housing to meet “external” need and enable it to focus on local need and organic growth. However, although that development is expected to go ahead we are not able to assume that it will.

Of the seven areas identified as possible sites for future development, none achieved an overall majority, through the differences between those “For” and those “Against” are in some cases not great and the “Don’t Knows” potentially could alter the balance.

Some people favour development in the School Road – Venn Lane area, together with associated road improvements. Others would rather see development along the A379, avoiding the need for new roads and any increase in congestion in the heart of the village.

Respondents voted narrowly against development on the areas covered by the first four options (Areas A – E) – the margins between For and Against ranging from 11 to 20 (39-41% For and 45-47% Against).

Respondents were more strongly against housing in Areas F and G, where the margins between For and Against were 42 and 43 respectively. However, it was evident that many who voted Against development in the Venn Lane area voted For development on F and/or G. Similarly, many who voted Against development on F and/or G voted in favour of it in A – E.

Although only 27 respondents voted against protecting the seaward side of the A379, 89 people voted in favour of development at F and 79 in favour of G. Some of those entered the caveat “except at F” or “except at G” when voting to protect the seaward side of the main road.

A proportion of respondents were more or less against any form of development in the village, and some were in favour of affordable housing for local people only.

Some respondents who expressed a wish for affordable housing did not make allowance for the fact that affordable homes very often a need to be part of a wider development that also includes “open market” as developers otherwise would not be interested in building on the land in question.

There was general acceptance of the concept of infill, self-build and small-scale rural development.

## Protected areas

There was overwhelming support for the principle of protecting certain areas, and it was evident that some of those who voted against protection did so only because they had misread the question and thought they were voting for protection.

## Commercial development

By a margin of 97 to 77 respondents were in favour of small commercial units, and by a wider margin in favour of converting unused premises for business use and creating live/work units. In these categories there was a high number of “Don’t Know/Care” responses.

## Roads

Despite there being a majority against development in areas A – E, there was majority support for the three possible link roads that were predicated on development taking place in those areas. Though 98 people were in favour of housing on A,B,D and E, 141 people wished for the road that housing might make possible.

There were 240 votes in favour of linking Venn Lane to the A379, and 189 against. Some favoured Route 2, some Route 3 and some were happy about either.

By a majority of 114 to 85 people were against widening the rural areas of Venn Lane, but there was wide support for the other measures in this category – though there were 94 “Don’t Know/Cares” on the question of a lane separator at Ravensbourne Lane.

The greatest support was for flood prevention measures outside the Post Office (194 votes) and in rural areas (199).

## Parking

By 167 votes to 17, with 67 undecided, there was support for the creation of extra car parking at Mill Lane, but not for resident’s-only paid-for spaces.

## Pavements and footpaths

All of the proposed measures had strong support, with tree surgery on the Birdwalk topping the poll.

Completion of the Coast Path came a close second.

## Public Transport

An all-year Sunday bus service was supported by 182 people, with just four against but 64 “Don’t Know/Cares”.

## Community

With 193 voting in favour the provision of health services narrowly came ahead of new classrooms at the school (180 in favour), with only 10 and 5 respectively voting against. Exactly half of those who responded favoured the creation of a new open space being created.

## Environment

There was strong support for measures to protect the environment and against ones that might damage it.

By 132 to 24 people were in favour of a green burial site and by 176 to 33 supported a waste recycling facility.

## Infrastructure

A total of 569 votes were cast in favour of better mobile and broadband, with only 35 cast against.

## Footnote

In order to avoid any misconceptions that may exist about the Neighbourhood Plan the Steering Group wishes to make it clear that it is intended to establish what development may or may not be allowed and, if it may be allowed, where and under what conditions. Decisions about where development will NOT be permitted are potentially more important than the nomination of areas where it will be considered.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not an action plan. If it is approved and comes into force development will not necessarily follow, and even if it does would be likely to take place over a prolonged period. The Plan is intended to cover change that may take place over 20 or more years.

Areas A-E are land which has already been offered for development by the landowner. Areas F and G are not.

Even where development is permitted in a particular area it could not happen unless the person who owns the land in question is willing to sell it, a developer wishes to build on it, and a planning application has been submitted and after examination been approved in the normal manner. The Plan would not provide an automatic “green light” for development, even in approved areas.