

Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire Response Summary

This document presents a summary of the consultation undertaken in November and December 2020. It is broken down to reflect the structure of and responses to questions on this, covering the draft vision for Paddock Wood and areas of focus for the Neighbourhood Plan. It includes, in the appendix, copies of material made available during the consultation period.

1. Background

Between 2nd November 2020 and 21st December 2020¹ consultation on the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan was undertaken. The purpose of this was to ask whether the vision and topic or focus areas identified during earlier stages of the plan-making process remained a fair reflection of the community's aspirations for Paddock Wood or, if not, whether there were other challenges and issues to be addressed.

The consultation was advertised through a combination of a leaflet drop to every household in Paddock Wood, on posters displayed in community noticeboards around the town, on the Parish Council website and through social media networks. An electronic survey was made available for capturing responses. Alongside this a paper copy was also available. This could be downloaded from the Parish Council website or copies picked up from the Parish Council office or Barsleys department store in the town centre. Copies of the posters and accompanying survey are included in the appendix to this summary document.

The questionnaire contained seven questions. The first asked respondents to indicate how they felt about the Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan; whether they '*strongly agree*', '*agree*', '*neither agree nor disagree*', '*disagree*' or '*strongly disagree*' with this. Using the same format, the following six questions sought feedback on the individual focus areas; these being:

- **Focus Area A:** Revitalise the town centre
- **Focus Area B:** Protect and enhance green spaces
- **Focus Area C:** Promote high quality design and strengthen local heritage assets
- **Focus Area D:** Enhance existing sports and leisure facilities, and deliver new sports provision
- **Focus Area E:** Make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to move around
- **Focus Area F:** Deliver essential supporting infrastructure alongside new housing development

¹ The consultation period was originally due to run through November but was extended until late December to allow time for further responses, including from some households who did not receive information during the initial leaflet drop and were subsequently reissued with information.

For each question, respondents were given the chance to provide further comment. This allowed more variety and flexibility in their answers, providing the opportunity for respondents to explain why they had given their answer and what they might do differently.

In total, 367 people completed the survey, with an estimated completion rate of 77%. Of those responding, 76% were residents of Paddock Wood. In terms of age, 33% of respondents were over 65, with participation minimal amongst younger age groups. Just 6% of respondents were below the age of 36, with just 4 respondents between 18 and 25. 50% of respondents were female compared with 46% male.

The following sections unpack the responses for each question, outlining the overarching result before addressing themes that emerged from the comments sections.

2. The Vision

The vision for Paddock Wood set out on the consultation material was:

The character of Paddock Wood as a modern 21st Century rural market town will be maintained as new growth is sympathetically accommodated.

New residential and commercial development will be supported by appropriate essential infrastructure including highways and transport, flood prevention, defence and drainage, utilities, schools, health, public and social services.

There will be a wider range of facilities for the increased population to enable them to develop a sense of belonging to the town and its community.

Paddock Wood's existing sports and recreational facilities will be enhanced and expanded.

The built and natural heritage of Paddock Wood will be maintained and enhanced.

The specific needs of elderly, disabled and vulnerable people should be met in all future developments.

Design and planning measures will seek to ensure that all residents feel part of a united, well-supported community. To improve and expand the existing town centre through balanced development which includes all potential development sites.

The survey posed the following question:

How do you feel about the vision for Paddock Wood? If you think the Vision should be changed, what would you suggest it should say?

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

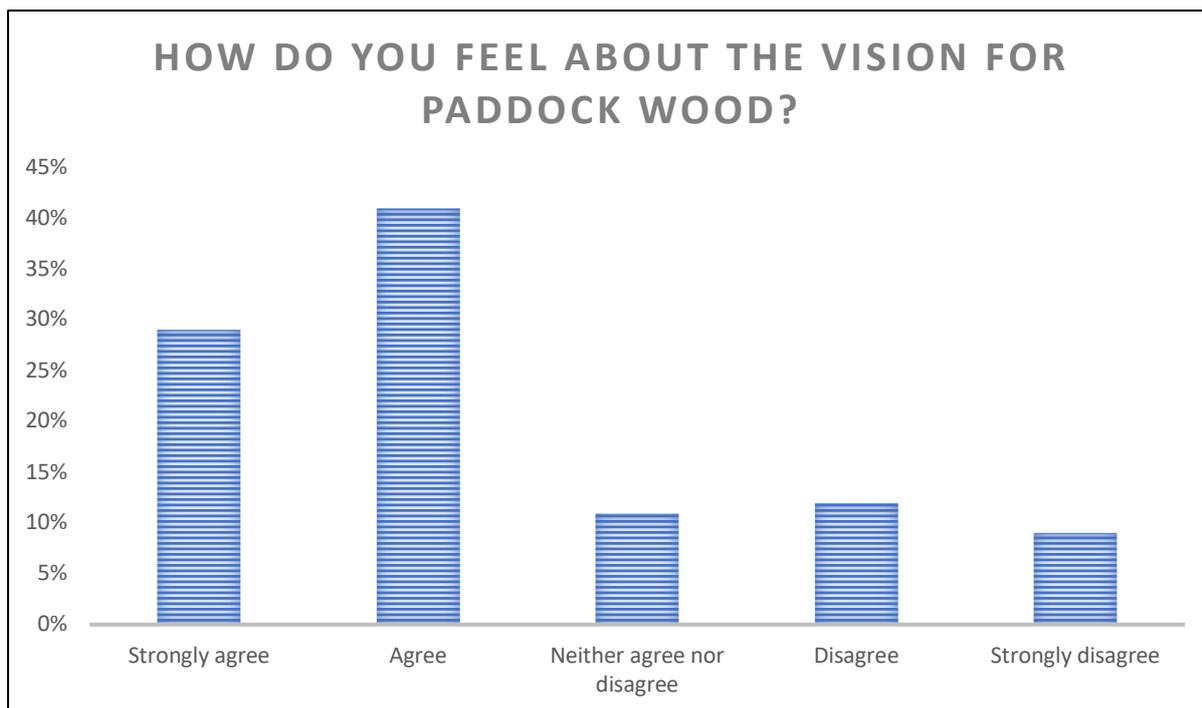


Figure 1: Bar chart showing results from question 1

Respondents were positive about the Vision for Paddock Wood, with 29% indicating that they *strongly agree* with the vision and a further 41% selecting *agree* (so, 70% in total agreeing to the vision). The small proportion who *disagree* or *strongly disagree* are predominantly concerned with the level of residential development being built in and around Paddock Wood. Growth is not being proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan, nor can it reject development growth proposed in the Local Plan; this is therefore not something the Neighbourhood Plan can address. Tied to this is the recognition that existing infrastructure and facilities cannot cope with expected future growth. One respondent felt that the *“balance of development is already out of kilter with the environment, biodiversity, facilities and infrastructure.”*

Several respondents highlighted that addressing climate change was a notable omission from the Vision, when it should in fact be the *“main focus”* and that Paddock Wood should be an example of an *“environmentally aware community”*.

A number of other issues were raised as elements that could be added or built upon in the vision. These included the preservation of wildlife, how Paddock Wood might adapt to the *“new normal”* that is the Coronavirus Pandemic by providing support for greater numbers working from home and addressing increasing pressures on parking in the town centre.

3. Focus Area A: Revitalise the town centre

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- Promote a healthy mix of commercial and cultural activities in the town centre
- Improve the quality of public and civic spaces in the town centre.
- Support new opportunities for provision of homes in the town centre.

The following question was posed for all focus areas:

How do you feel about this as an area of focus for the Plan? Do you have any comments or suggestions about this area of focus? Responses are summarised in the chart below.

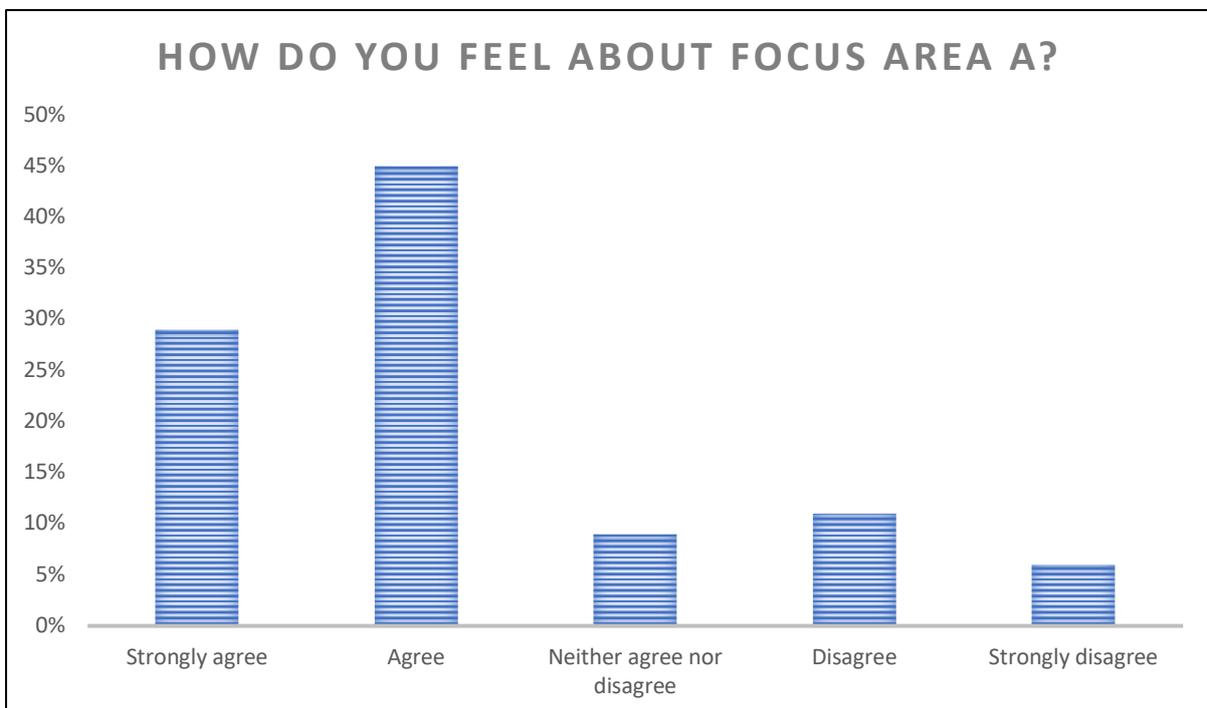


Figure 2: Bar chart showing results from question 2

Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) either *agree* or *strongly agree* with the aspirations outlined in Focus Area A, with largely positive comments around the opportunity to turn the town centre into “a modern, attractive centre that residents and people from outside the community will enjoy visiting”. There is consensus support about the need to improve facilities, provide greater opportunity for social interaction and addressing anti-social behaviour.

However, there were conflicting opinions around whether to ‘support new opportunities for provision of homes in the town centre’, with some respondents expressing concern that this will hinder the expansion of community facilities and the retail offering and detract from the town centre “buzz”. This was the overriding sentiment expressed by those who disagreed with this Focus Area, with one respondent noting that “whilst concentrating on making the most of facilities is admirable and modernisation will be inevitable, new housing and overpopulation is not the answer.” However, delivery of one does not necessarily preclude the other: mixed-use development in the town centre could deliver both new homes and community facilities.

4. Focus Area B: Protect and enhance green spaces

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- Strengthen areas of local biodiversity
- Identify important local green spaces for future protection.
- New development should respect the setting of Paddock Wood.

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

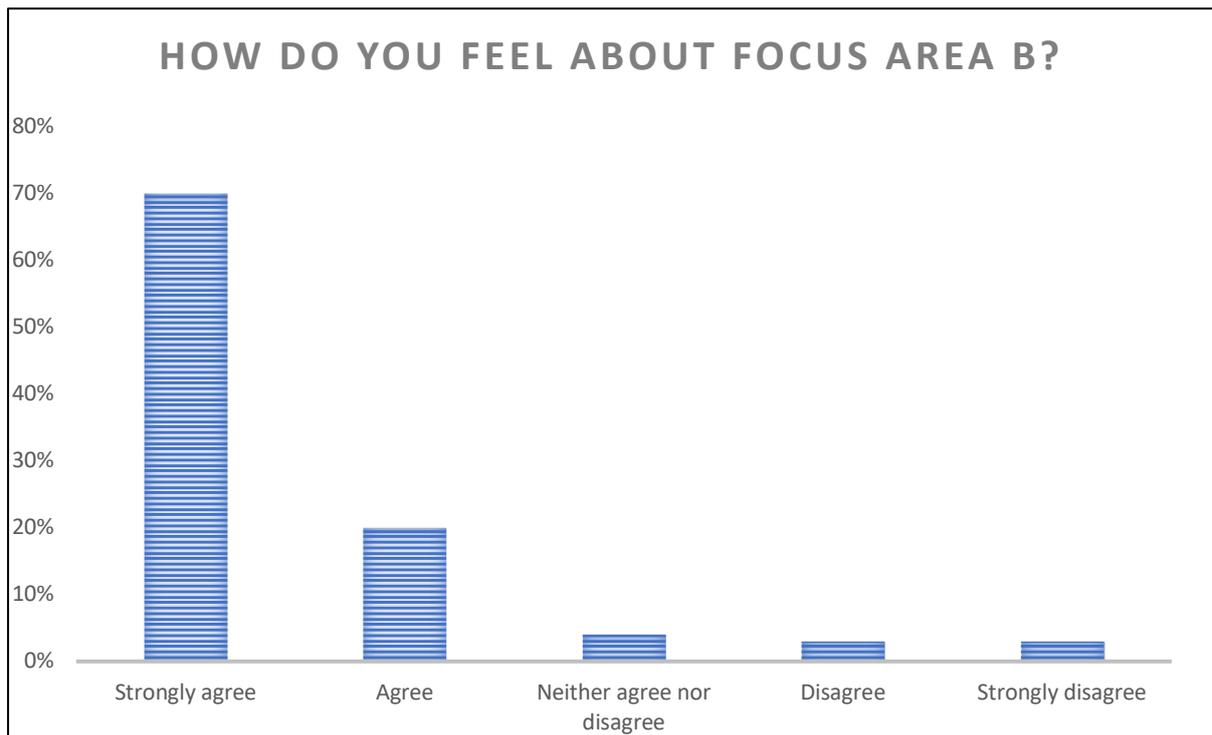


Figure 3: Bar chart showing results from question 3

This focus area received resounding support, with 70% of respondents selecting *strongly agree* and a further 20% selecting *agree*. Just 6% of respondents *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. Protecting green spaces, trees, hedgerows and the open countryside is considered hugely important by the majority of respondents, with many concerned that Paddock Wood is losing all that it has left.

In terms of those providing further comment, most focused on the leisure and recreational benefits of green spaces as opposed to their wildlife and biodiversity value. Indeed, the proposed community centre facility to be built on the Memorial Playing Field is a recurring issue in this context. While many recognise the need for a new community centre, respondents repeatedly point out that it should not be built on existing green space. However, the proposals for the centre are likely to be determined ahead of the Neighbourhood Plan being made, limiting scope for the Plan to influence this.

5. Focus Area C: Promote high quality design and strengthen local heritage assets

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- New development should maintain and enhance the character of Paddock Wood
- Historic buildings and structures should be preserved and enhanced

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

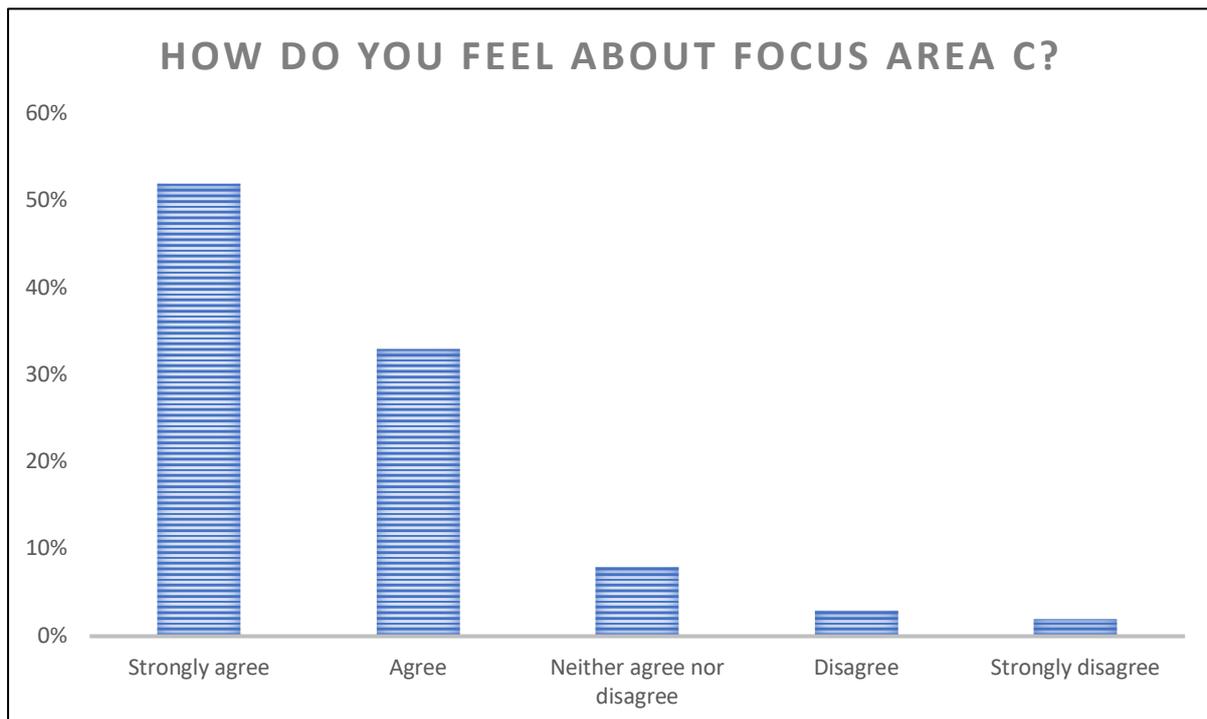


Figure 4: Bar chart showing results from question 4

52% of respondents *strongly agree* with the aspirations laid out in focus area C, with a further 33% selecting *agree*. Respondents expressed support for protecting the town's existing Victorian heritage – *"It's vital we keep the character and history of our town, and any new development must echo this"*. However, several also noted that few heritage assets remained, and that recent development had not enhanced Paddock Wood's character.

Where possible, people are keen to see improvements made to existing assets such as the Wesley Centre, the Old Chapel, buildings on Badsell Road, old shop fronts in the town centre and buildings on Commercial Road. One respondent commented that *"without this focus [area], Paddock Wood will just be another non descriptive urban sprawl...Make the centre a destination in its own right not just a "district of Tonbridge" overspill."* Meanwhile, several respondents expressed a desire for the Town Council to work closely with developers during the planning process to ensure that development respected and enhanced its existing character.

6. Focus Area D: Enhance existing sports and leisure facilities, and deliver new sports provision.

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- Support delivery of new hub for outdoor team sports
- Improve and expand provision of facilities at the Putlands Sports & Leisure Centre

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

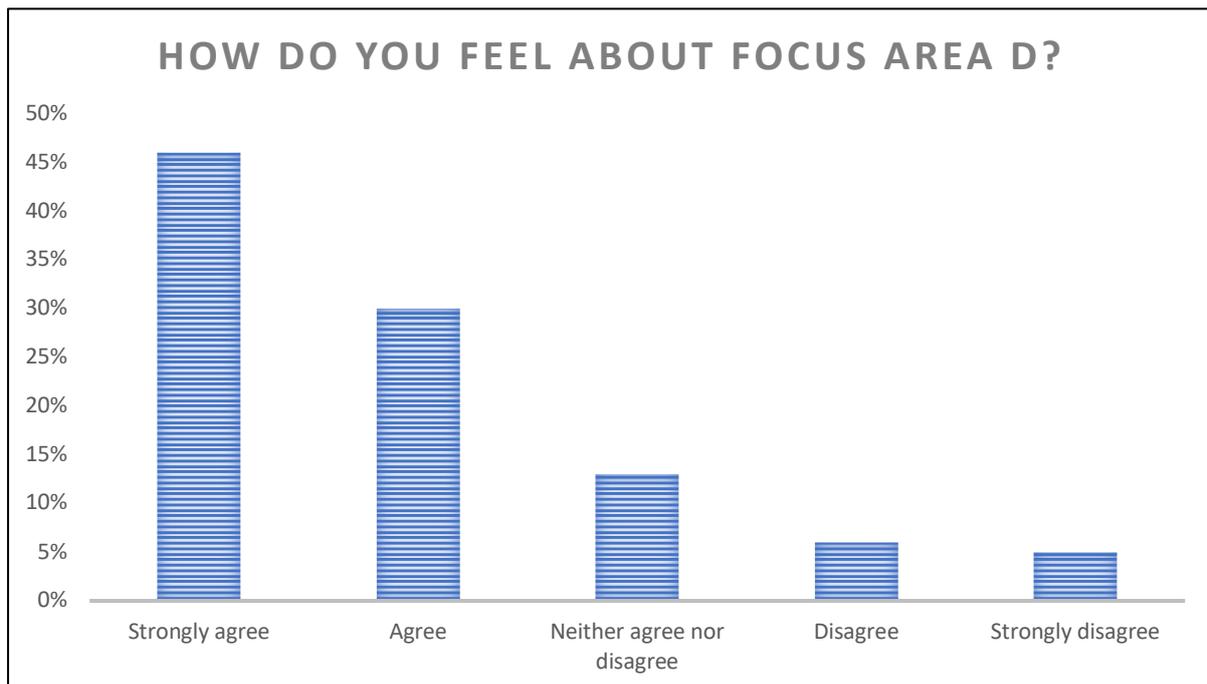


Figure 5: Bar chart showing results from question 5

Like previous focus areas, there is strong support for focus area D, though it has a slightly higher proportion of *disagree* and *strongly disagree* than focus areas B and C. This is largely due to concerns about a rumoured location for the sports hub – “*North of the town over the railway bridge*” – which is in an area susceptible to flooding. The Neighbourhood Plan has not, at this point, proposed a location for the sports hub. Any future location identified would take into account flood risk.

Those who agree with the aspirations expressed strong support for improving leisure facilities in Paddock Wood, with many raising the need for a swimming pool in the town – “*Teaching children to swim is a huge frustration if you live in Paddock Wood. In 2020, we have to travel to Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge or Maidstone to teach our children to swim - a life skill in my opinion.*” Other facilities that are raised as either lacking or in need of enhancing include football pitches for all age groups, a publicly accessible “*running path*” around the outside of Putlands fields, more affordable facilities such as free tennis and basketball courts, floodlights for outdoor facilities so they can be used for longer in winter, improved drainage across facilities and the expansion of the gym in Putlands.

One respondent expressed frustration that sports facilities across Paddock Wood are “*fragmented*” and called for greater cohesion to provide a more comprehensive offering.

7. Focus Area E: Make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to move around.

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- Make walking and cycling routes well connected, safe, convenient and comfortable for all to use.
- Improve access to the countryside and important local facilities, including the station and town centre.
- Support improved bus routes.

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

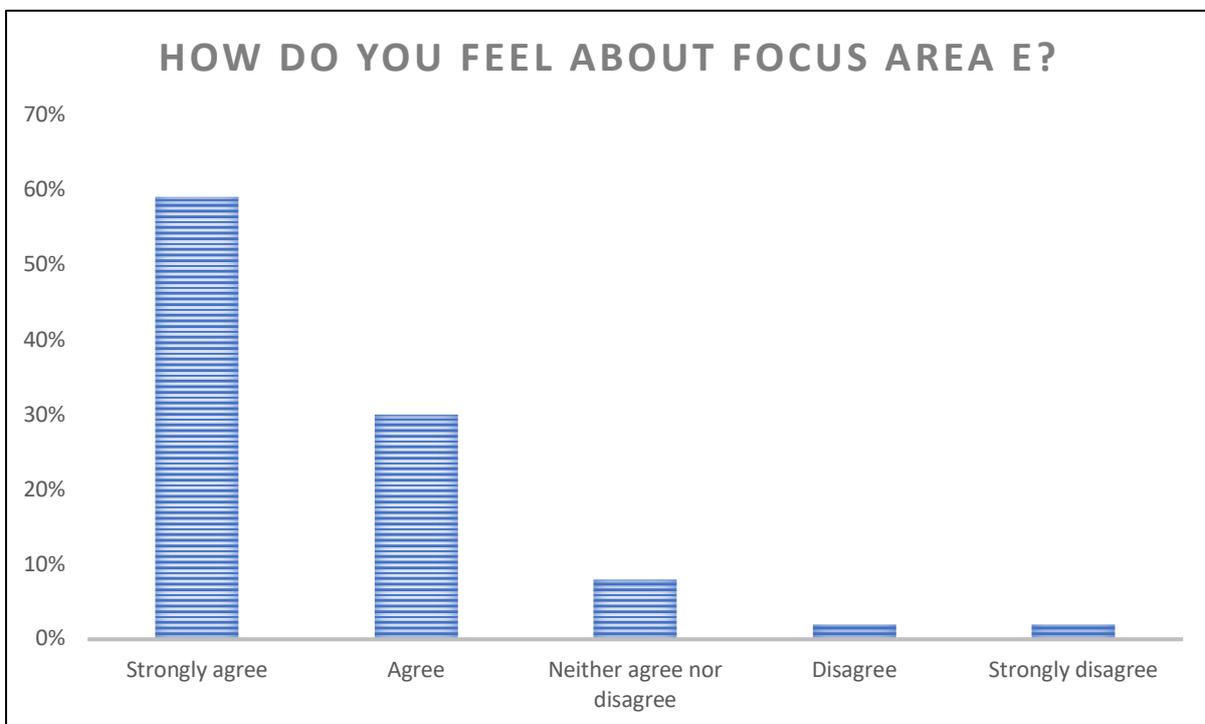


Figure 6: Bar chart showing results from question 6

Aspirations for improved mobility across Paddock Wood received strong support, with nearly 90% of respondents either selecting *agree* or *strongly agree* for this focus area. It is seen as particularly important in the context of more development coming forward, with respondents expressing concern at existing high congestion levels and the impact further development would have on this. Many respondents raised the need for new and improved walking and cycling routes to give residents an alternative to driving when commuting or traveling to and from school – this sentiment is widely considered a solution to traffic in the town centre. New bus routes are also supported, with one respondent noting that “*improved & increased bus services are vital if those in power wish to encourage the population to leave their cars at home*”.

Many respondents suggested specific schemes and interventions they feel would improve the transport network. These include: Improvement of the pavement between the Badsell Road traffic lights along Maidstone Road; a footpath along Maidstone Road; opening up the Hop Pickers Line as a multi-user non-vehicular route; and Commercial Road being made one way from the junction of Maidstone Road in the direction of the station. A lack of parking, forcing people to park on pavements, is also an issue that many raised as something that should be included within this focus area.

8. Focus Area F: Deliver essential supporting infrastructure alongside new housing development

The consultation material summarised this focus areas as seeking to:

- Provision of new homes should meet local housing needs and include new affordable homes
- New housing should contribute to the delivery of new schools and healthcare
- New development should respond to climate change, manage and mitigate flood risk

Responses are summarised in the chart below.

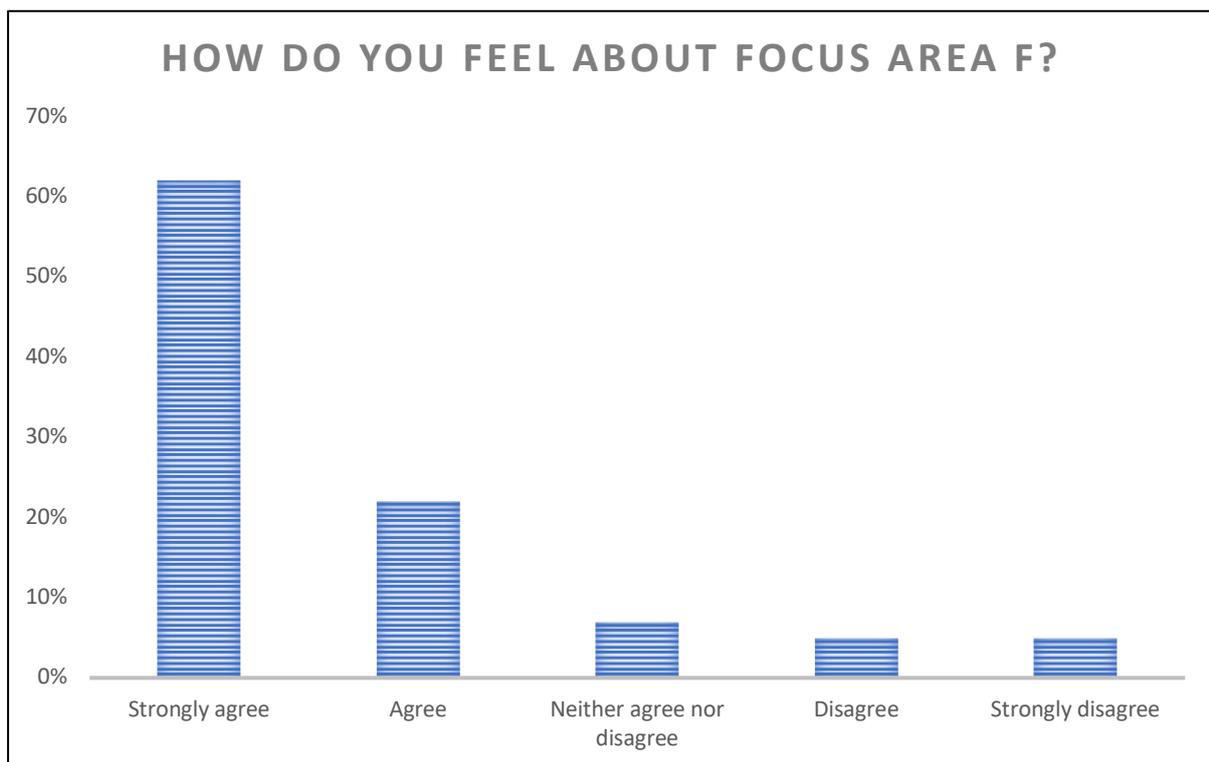


Figure 7: Bar chart showing results from question 7

The final focus area also receives significant support, with 62% of respondents strongly agreeing with the aspirations laid out and a further 22% *agreeing*. In particular, addressing flooding issues, wait times at the GP surgery and a perceived lack of school places in the town are raised as areas of importance. There is general concern about whether the existing infrastructure can support new development, while others noted that any new development and additional infrastructure should not be at the expense of green space.

Those that disagree with the focus area largely do so because of a disagreement with any new development. Aspirations for affordable housing and a climate change response are resoundingly met with support.

9. Conclusion

It is clear from the above that the focus areas identified for the Neighbourhood Plan are well supported and appropriate, addressing many of the concerns held by the public. Those that disagree do so on the grounds that these things haven't been done sooner or are dissatisfied with the prospect of any development at all – very rarely was a focus area deemed unimportant or not relevant for Paddock Wood. This reflects the extensive consultation efforts that were made during the early stages of work on the Neighbourhood Plan and feedback from this. Despite the pause in progress on the Plan, the survey responses ratify its focus and provide a strong foundation for ongoing work on the Plan.

A final question was put to respondents – *Are there any other topics, issues or opportunities that should be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan?* – to give them an open-ended opportunity to identify any gaps. Areas identified that weren't previously covered in earlier questions include: Celebrating and protecting 19th century railway heritage; protecting existing businesses in Paddock Wood; addressing air and light pollution; providing activities for teenagers in the town; the need for a greater police presence; the need for electric car charging points; aspiration for a fruit and veg market; more civic activities planning i.e. summer carnival and litter in public spaces

Though not covered in the vision or overarching focus areas, many of these ideas are included within the draft version of the Plan previously prepared and can be given emphasis as work on updating the Plan takes place. This also includes updating and amending the vision to give greater emphasise to climate change matters.

Of particular note here is how the Neighbourhood Plan might respond to Covid-19 given that previous consultation sessions and the draft plan were completed prior to the pandemic. Covid-19 has changed the way we move, work, shop and socialise, and some of the emerging trends may persist beyond the pandemic. The Neighbourhood Plan, through its draft policies, already responds to some of these trends in a sustainable manner, for example through promoting local community facilities, better connectivity and vibrant town centres; however, the Neighbourhood Plan should acknowledge the implications of the pandemic and outline how it will help Paddock Wood adapt to the future.

10. Appendix 1: The Questionnaire



YOUR PADDOCK WOOD, YOUR PLAN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is also available online via the Council website:
<https://paddockwood-tc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>. We encourage you to complete this online, where you can also view supporting material.

Paddock Wood Town Council has set up a Steering Group of Councillors and residents to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan which will help to shape future change. It is important that this Neighbourhood Plan reflects your ambitions and views. This questionnaire aims to gather your views on areas of focus for the Plan. These are based on comments made at previous consultation events run by the Steering Group.

Please have a look at the supporting material and then tell us how you feel about each focus area and question posed. You may also return this questionnaire to the Paddock Wood Town Council office (The Podmore Building, St Andrews Field, St Andrews Road, Paddock Wood, TN12 6HT) or the collection point in Barsley's Department Store.

Please return by **30th November 2020**. Thank you!

This Neighbourhood Plan is set in the context of new growth being proposed for Paddock Wood in the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. It is important to note that the Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used as a means to stop new homebuilding but it can influence the design and quality of new homes, and seek to bring the benefits of growth back to Paddock Wood.

Our emerging vision is for growth to reflect the character of Paddock Wood as a modern 21st Century rural market town, where development is supported by new infrastructure and facilities for all ages, where the built and natural heritage is maintained and enhanced, and where all feel part of a united, well-supported community.

THE VISION

1) Please tell us about the proposed vision for Paddock Wood:

1a. How do you feel about the vision for Paddock Wood? (tick only one)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1b. If you think the vision should be changed what would you suggest it should say?					

AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE PLAN

2) Please tell us how you feel about the main areas of focus to be addressed in the Plan:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2a. Revitalise the Town Centre					
2b. Protect and enhance green space					
2c. Promote high quality design and strengthen local heritage assets					
2d. Enhance existing sports and leisure facilities, and deliver new sports provision					
2e. Make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to move around					
2f. Deliver essential supporting infrastructure alongside new housing development					

3) Do you have any comments or suggestions about any of the areas of focus?

3a. Revitalise the Town Centre	
3b. Protect and enhance green space	
3c. Promote high quality design and strengthen local heritage assets	
3d. Enhance existing sports and leisure facilities, and deliver new sports provision	
3e. Make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to move around	
3f. Deliver essential supporting infrastructure alongside new housing development	

4) Are there any other topics, issues or opportunities that should be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan?

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

5a) Are you (please tick all that apply):

A resident of Paddock Wood	
An employee in Paddock Wood	
A business or organisation in Paddock Wood	
Visiting Paddock Wood	
Other (please state)	

5b) How old are you (please only tick one):

Under 18	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65	Would rather not say
----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------	----------------------

5c) Are you:

Male	Female	Would rather not say
------	--------	----------------------

KEEP IN TOUCH

6) If you would like to be kept updated on the Neighbourhood Plan please provide your email address:

DATA PROTECTION

Data is being collected by Troy Planning and Design on behalf on the Town Council. Data in this questionnaire will be analysed to inform the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan. Anonymous data may be shared as evidence that the Plan reflects the aspirations of the community. Email addresses will only be used as stated and will not be shared with third parties. If you wish your data to be removed or to change your contact preferences please email: info@troyplanning.com. Please see our privacy and data retention terms at: <https://troyplanning.com>

11. Appendix 2: Consultation Posters



Between 2015 and 2018 Paddock Wood Town Council made concerted efforts to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, led by a Steering Group comprising Town Councillors and residents of Paddock Wood.

Neighbourhood Plans are a powerful opportunity for the community to have their say and make a difference in the town. They can establish planning policies that shape and influence future growth and development.

But a Neighbourhood Plan can be about more than planning policies. It can also establish what improvements are required across the town, including new infrastructure.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is preparing a new Local Plan. This proposes major new growth around Paddock Wood. The Steering Group has considered the implications of this.

The Neighbourhood Plan cannot change the scale of growth in the Local Plan, but it can help shape what this new growth will look like and how it will benefit existing and new residents and businesses.

The Steering Group is therefore recommencing work on the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan and would like to know if the ideas and opinions previously expressed remain relevant, so that we can shape a Plan that speaks for the whole community.

It is important to note that the Neighbourhood Plan is not the same as the emerging Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. The Local Plan presents the strategic policy direction and scale of future growth likely in Paddock Wood, but the Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to develop this further in response to local challenges, to help shape future change for the better of all.

Many communities all across the country have been preparing Neighbourhood Plans. This is an exciting opportunity to influence change in Paddock Wood. Please tell us what you think.



Housing in Paddock Wood

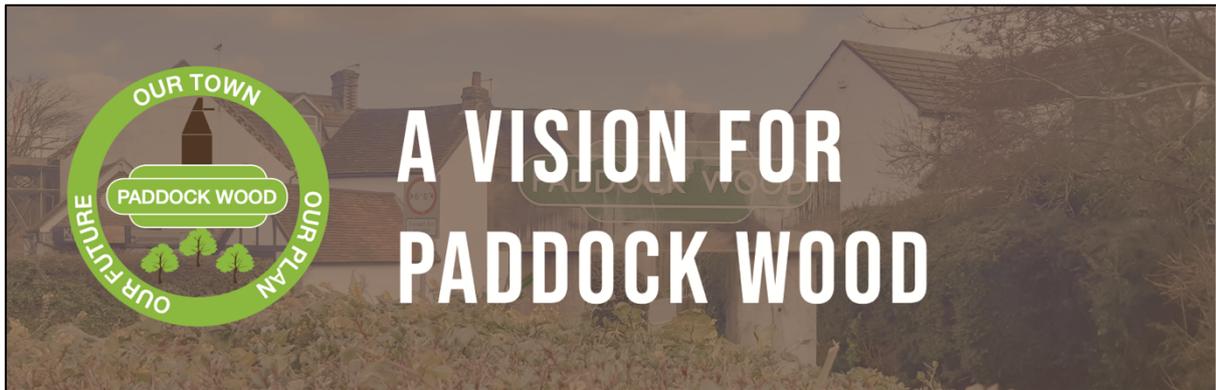


The Town Centre

To find out more about the Plan please visit the Town Council website:
<http://paddockwood-tc.gov.uk>

To leave your comments on the emerging ideas please use the SurveyMonkey questionnaire:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LJCRV37





Green Space



Housing in Paddock Wood



Paddock Wood Station



Town Centre

The Steering Group ran a series of consultation events and 'drop-ins' during 2016 and 2017. A vision was drafted and a series of priority areas identified that formed the basis of a first draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The Tunbridge Wells Local Plan now proposes delivery of 4,000 new homes around Paddock Wood. In light of this, does the vision previously drafted for Paddock Wood remain relevant? Do you agree with it? Should it be amended? The Vision is:

The character of Paddock Wood as a modern 21st Century rural market town will be maintained as new growth is sympathetically accommodated.

New residential and commercial development will be supported by appropriate essential infrastructure including highways and transport, flood prevention, defence and drainage, utilities, schools, health, public and social services.

There will be a wider range of facilities for the increased population to enable them to develop a sense of belonging to the town and its community.

Paddock Wood's existing sports and recreational facilities will be enhanced and expanded.

The built and natural heritage of Paddock Wood will be maintained and enhanced.

The specific needs of elderly, disabled and vulnerable people should be met in all future developments.

Design and planning measures will seek to ensure that all residents feel part of a united, well-supported community.

To improve and expand the existing town centre through balanced development which includes all potential development sites.

To find out more about the Plan please visit the Town Council website:
<http://paddockwood-tc.gov.uk>

To leave your comments on the emerging ideas please use the SurveyMonkey questionnaire:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LJCRV37





AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE PLAN

The focus areas outlined below form the basis of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

- Do you agree that these are still the key areas of focus for the Plan?
- Would you add to these?
- Are any of the topics more important than others?



1. REVITALISE THE TOWN CENTRE

- Promote a healthy mix of commercial and cultural activities in the town centre
- Improve the quality of public and civic spaces in the town centre
- Support new opportunities for provision of homes in the town centre



2. PROTECT AND ENHANCE GREEN SPACE

- Strengthen areas of local bio-diversity and natural habitats
- Identify important local green spaces for future protection
- New development should respect the setting of Paddock Wood



3. PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY DESIGN AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS

- New development should maintain and enhance the character of Paddock Wood
- Historic buildings and structures should be preserved and enhanced



4. ENHANCE EXISTING SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES, AND DELIVER NEW SPORTS PROVISION

- Support delivery of new hub for outdoor team sports
- Improve and expand the provision of facilities at the Putlands Sports & Leisure Centre



5. MAKE IT SAFER AND EASIER FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES TO MOVE AROUND

- Make walking and cycling routes well connected, safe, convenient and comfortable for all to use
- Improve access to the countryside and important local facilities, including the station and town centre
- Support improved bus routes



6. DELIVER ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE ALONGSIDE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- Provision of new homes should meet local housing needs and include new affordable homes
- New housing should contribute to the delivery of new schools and healthcare
- New development should respond to climate change, manage and mitigate flood risk, including that from surface water drainage



Icons made by FlatIcon: www.flaticon.com

To find out more about the Plan please visit the Town Council website:
<http://paddockwood-tc.gov.uk>

To leave your comments on the emerging ideas please use the SurveyMonkey questionnaire:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LJCRV37





Previous Consultation. Image source: FERIA Urbanism

YOUR VIEWS WILL HELP SHAPE THE PLAN

The Neighbourhood Plan is a Plan for the community by the community.

Do you agree with the suggested focus of the Plan? Do you have any other ideas or suggestions? Do you have any burning issues or ideas not covered? Please let us know.

We will use your comments to identify possible projects and important planning policies for Paddock Wood. We will then seek further feedback on these before the Neighbourhood Plan is submitted for examination.



Previous Consultation. Image source: FERIA Urbanism

NEXT STEPS

We will continue to work with you to shape the Neighbourhood Plan for Paddock Wood. It will eventually be subject to examination and referendum, where everyone of voting age living in Paddock Wood will have a chance to vote on whether the Plan should come into force.

If more than 50% of people who turn out to vote are in favour of the Plan it can then be used to inform and determine planning applications.

To find out more about the Plan please visit the Town Council website:
<http://paddockwood-tc.gov.uk>

To leave your comments on the emerging ideas please use the SurveyMonkey questionnaire:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LJCRV37

