

# Online Survey For Tuxford Neighbourhood Plan

## DRAFT Initial findings

31<sup>st</sup> August, 2023

### 1.0 Introduction

Tuxford Town Council (TTC) was asked by Bassetlaw District Council (BDC) whether it was willing to take part in a pilot, supported by the Department of Levelling Up, for a new way to engage with the community and identify the community's priorities to feed into a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement (PS), which in turn will feed into the upcoming new Tuxford Neighbourhood Plan (TNP). BDC had secured the services of Helen Metcalf, who had participated in the previous Neighbourhood Plan in Tuxford, in 2015.

This engagement included two open-door events in the Parish church (the first attended by 32 families, the second by only four), which led to a decision to create an online questionnaire, which was written by TTC and agreed with BDC and then put online by TTC and promoted via posters around the town with QR codes and repeatedly via the TTC website and social media (TTC and Tuxford Chat, the community Facebook page). The moderators for Tuxford chat kindly agreed to keep the link to the questionnaires at the top of the feed for a period, which resulted in a strikingly higher response rate.

In the end, a total of four surveys was created. Three were very similar and addressed work and leisure time, likes, dislikes, overall views, what is good and what needs to be improved in the town. There were questions that were common to all and some specifics dealing with issues of interest to specific populations.

The last one was a single question on the future of Gilbert Avenue Playing field.

### 2.0 The Surveys - description

There was a survey for general residents, launched first. This asked about work, distance commuted, transport mode, and how people spent their leisure time; views (and use) of Tuxford's current infrastructure, key likes and dislikes (with an option for "no opinion") prioritised needs for what is missing, wider attitudes to Tuxford and what keeps people here. The general Resident survey garnered 274 responses – a remarkable achievement.

After some feedback, a second survey targeted at Senior Residents asked substantially the same questions but eliminated the work section. 61 Seniors responded to this survey (some were done on paper and the results input by volunteers). Again, this was considered an excellent participation. Notably, 41 respondents to the general Resident survey categorised themselves as "retired".

This meant that a total of 335 adult residents of Tuxford responded in total – 233 of working age and 102 retirees.

The survey on the future of Gilbert Avenue Playing Field (GAPF) asked whether residents wanted to keep it as a playing field and improve the facilities on it, or see it moved (and improved) to a different site. This was asked in the context of BDC defining it as "suitable for development" in the

Land Availability Assessment (LAA). This produced a total of 431 respondents, all but seven of whom wanted it to remain and be improved.

This rapid result impacted the then ongoing survey of the student population. Given the proximity of GAPF to Tuxford Academy, a setoff questions was inserted to ask about potential frequency of use of various proposed facility additions. Although this was only added part way through, 44 respondents indicated their preferences. Tuxford Primary fully engaged with the survey, using it as an IT learning and also ran a competition for the best ideas for proposed additional facility in Tuxford. The results of this are incorporated into this.

Despite promises, Tuxford Academy staff did not engage with or support the questionnaire – however despite this the overall response rate of 72 students gives a solid foundation to use for community development purposes.

For the three main questionnaires, the format was a set of questions with multiple options to respond to, and at the end of each question, a free text response to see whether anything important had been missed.

## **3.0 Survey Results**

### **3.1 GAPF Survey**

The overwhelming result in support of retaining (and improving) GAPF – 99% of 432 respondents wanted to keep the site where it is and improve it – requires no further analysis. No personal details (age, location) were requested in this survey – it was a “snap shot” which proved to be a very effective tool.

Accordingly, TTC has prioritised improving the facilities at GAPF in its current application under the Rural Infrastructure Fund application process. The choice of what to propose has, however been driven very much by the stated priorities of the student survey.

### **3.2 Demographic Information**

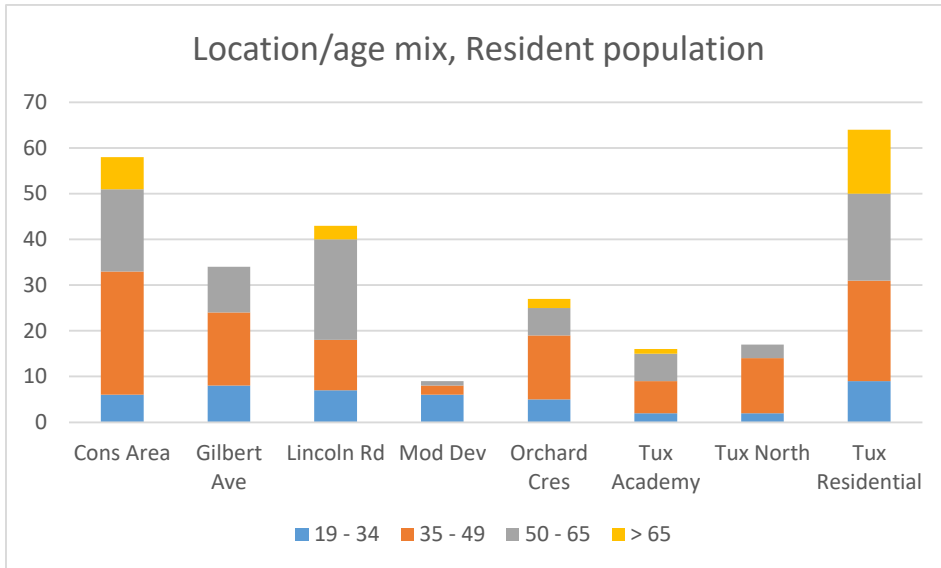
In agreement with BDC, TTC was careful to avoid collecting any personal information which would have enabled individual respondents to be identified. Therefore, the following was the only demographic information requested:

For the Resident survey and the Senior Resident Survey: Address (Street only)

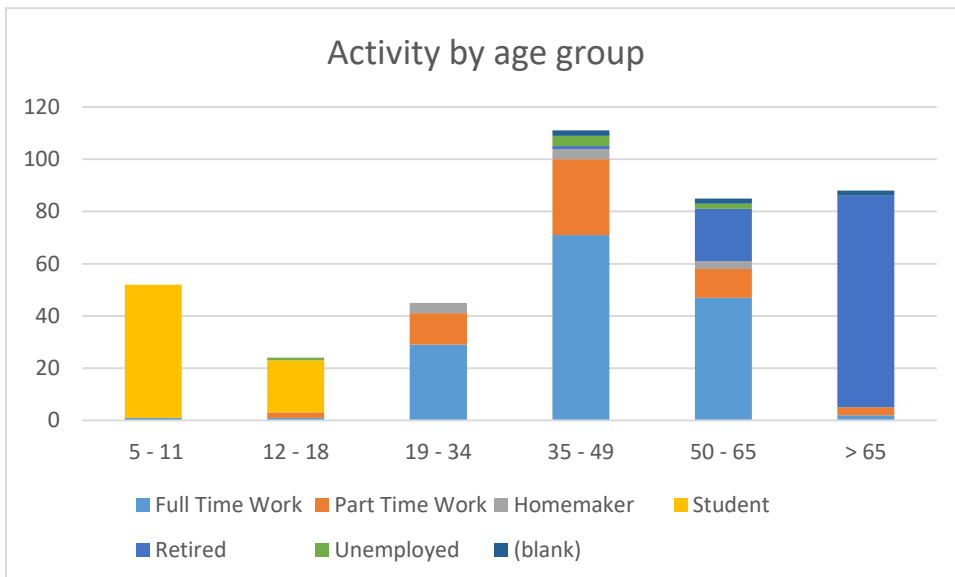
For the Resident survey: Age

For the student survey: only age, how long the respondent has lived locally, and whether the respondent lived in Tuxford or how far away (three distance ranges).

For the adult population, the respondent mix by area of Tuxford was as the graph below: The area names broadly correspond to the sub-areas defined in the Tuxford Design Codes document. The key point is that all areas are represented.



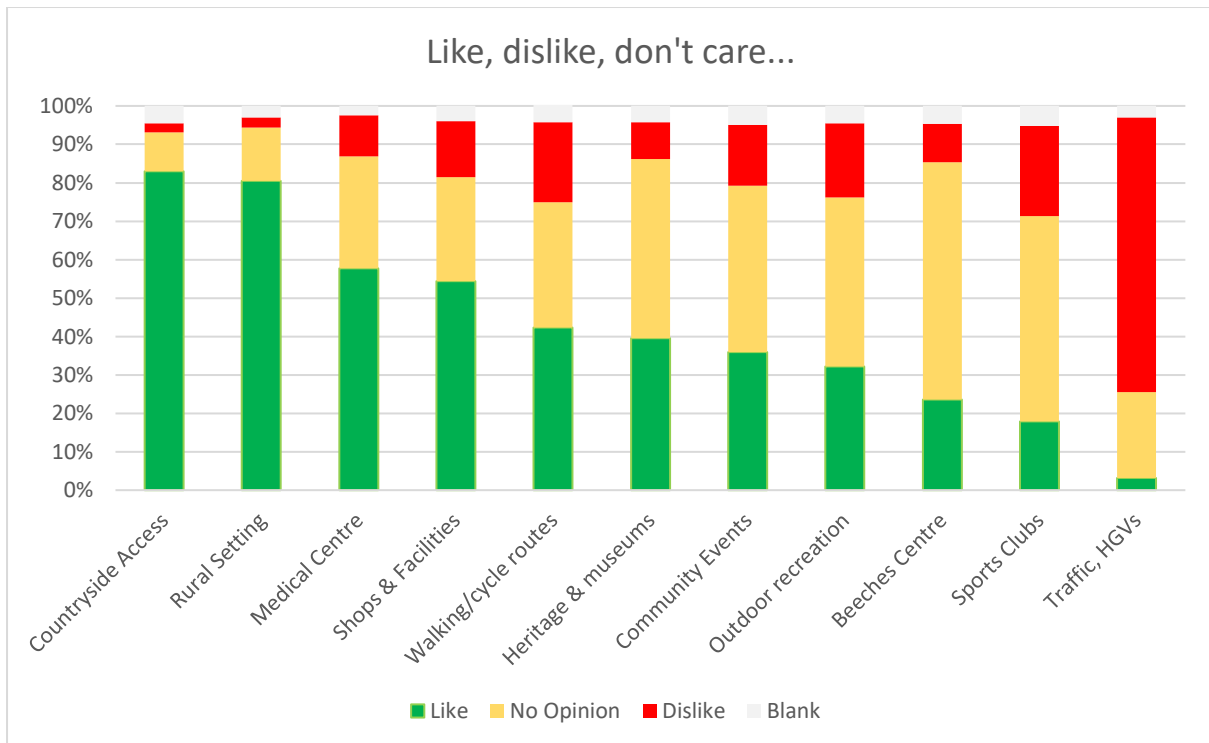
In terms of declared activity, when plotted by age group, are shown in the graph below:



### 3.3 What matters; likes and dislikes

One section of all three questionnaires covered this topic in an identical way. Respondents were invited to say whether they liked, disliked, or had no opinion on some key community facilities and issues. These were chosen as being identified previously of importance.

The consolidated response is presented below ordered by “most liked” to “Most disliked” with some comments.



Access to the countryside and the rural setting were the two most liked attributes of Tuxford across the whole responding population. Traffic and HGVs was the most disliked, with over 70% response. The Medical Centre was third most important, closely followed by Shops and facilities.

The lack of sports clubs and outdoor recreation facilities as well as limited walking/cycling routes is clear in the relatively low positive response – often the “dislike” in this section was supported by comments of the “what sports facilities?” type.

Another way of looking at this information is the proportion of “no opinion” – what might be described as “don’t care”. Countryside Access and Rural setting were not only the two most positive but the two with the lowest “don’t care” ratio, closely followed by Traffic and HGVs, with a strong dislike response.

At the other end of the “no opinion” ranking is the Beeches Centre and Sports Clubs. Comments to these can be summarised as “where is the Beeches Centre?” and “What sports clubs?”.

There were a total of 108 written comments in all to this set of questions. Topics were diverse, with about half reinforcing preferences declared. Key topics not covered include lack of parking, lack of a “feeling of community” and poor quality of pedestrian facilities. The loss of shopping facilities in the last few months was cited frequently.

A full set of all comments made is attached as an appendix (to be done in final report)

### 3.3.1 Key findings from this set of questions.

- The topics presented covered the majority of the issues on which the community felt strongly, one way or another
- Countryside access and rural location must be enhanced and preserved; this must be considered the highest priority for the Neighbourhood Plan

- Traffic and HGVs is the most disliked issue and needs to be addressed; this is an issue identified time and time again in the past, going back decades, and even though it is beyond the traditional remit of a Neighbourhood Plan, we consider it cannot be excluded
- The lack of sports facilities and especially outdoor recreation is a critical issue for all the community
- The Beeches is not seen as serving the role of a Village Hall, even though it is capable of it. The Neighbourhood Plan must consider how best to make maximum use of this asset (note: TTC and BDC are in discussion about the Tuxford community taking this over)
- Parking – recognised as a key issue for Tuxford as a Local Service Centre and for visitors, is an issue for some residents as well

### **3.4 What is used, What is missing**

Each respondent was asked how often they make use of identified current facilities within Tuxford, and also what they currently go elsewhere to use. The objective of this set of questions was to identify what works, what needs improvement and, as and when CIL\* funding from future development arises, what should it be spent on for maximum local benefit. A set of potential future facilities was presented and respondents asked to prioritise these.

\* CIL –or Community Infrastructure Levy, is charged on most new residential and commercial development and is the principal source of funding for any future new facilities. With an active NP, Tuxford will capture a greater proportion of this funding for local use.

As with all questions, there was a free text field for comments.

In this set of questions, the Student population was asked different questions, reflecting their expected different interests. this population was also asked for specific feedback on what (subject to funding) should go onto GAPF. This evidence was used to support the Expression of Interest, and will be used to support the full application, under the Rural Infrastructure Fund.

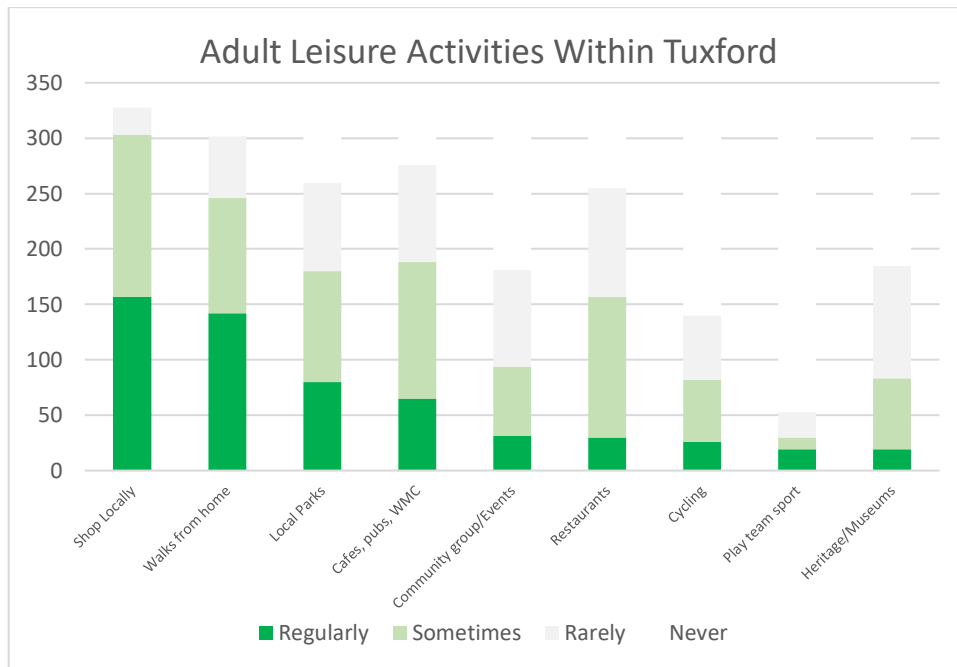
#### **3.4.1 Adult Leisure Activities Within Tuxford**

Sorted by highest number of regular practitioners, the survey responses were as on the graph below. This is the consolidated input from Resident and Senior Resident sets. The importance of the local retail offering is clear – and it is therefore extremely worrying to see the recent decline in retail facilities, which requires consideration. It may well be that some of the former services were addressing a larger geographical community.

The second rank activity, walking from home, is consistent with the importance of access to the countryside and the rural setting. There were many comments about the rather poor quality, condition and availability of footpaths in and around Tuxford.

The third, enjoying local parks, is (from comments) particularly linked with taking children and grandchildren to the park and the need to make a step-change in the facilities for young children is already well understood.

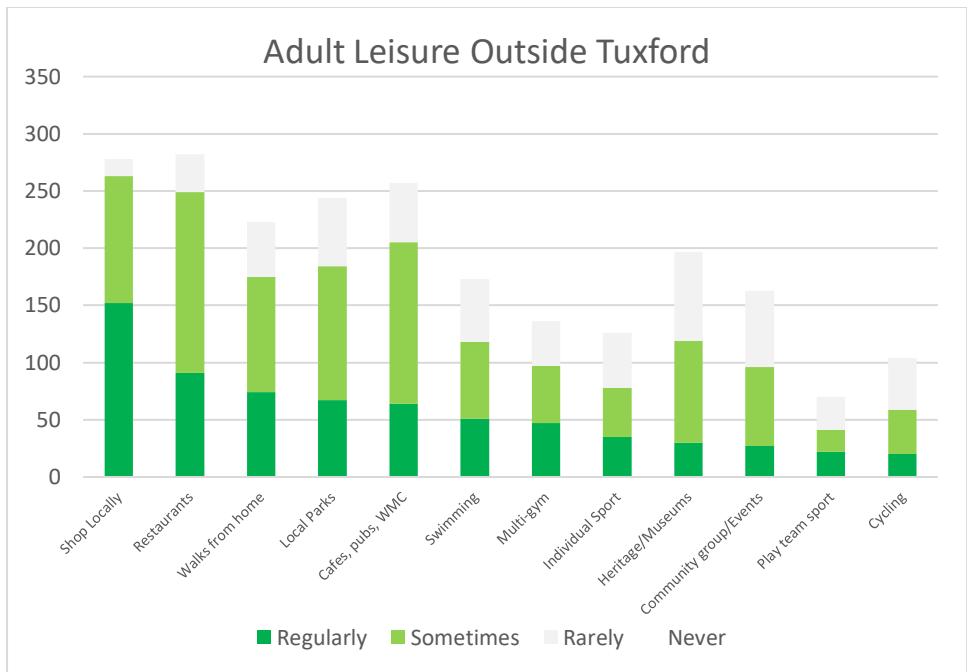
Group activities (Cafes, pubs, WMC, Community group/events and Restaurants and Eating out are all more in the “sometimes” rather than “regularly” category of use. It is tempting to consider this may reflect the current economic situation and the need to reduce social spending (though some, such as Community groups and events are mainly free). We note below the equivalent graph for activities carried out beyond Tuxford below, which we include in order to evaluate suppressed demand. Note also that Heritage and Museums are not a large part of regular activities – they are very important to the visitor economy and tourism, but by their nature, are not routine activities, absent special events or exhibitions to act as a draw.



### 3.4.2 Adult Leisure Activities beyond Tuxford

This set of questions as included in order to understand the potential for various specific improvements, subject to funding being available, within Tuxford. It is most visible in the gap analysis which follows. Note that various activities which are unavailable within Tuxford have been added to this question set.

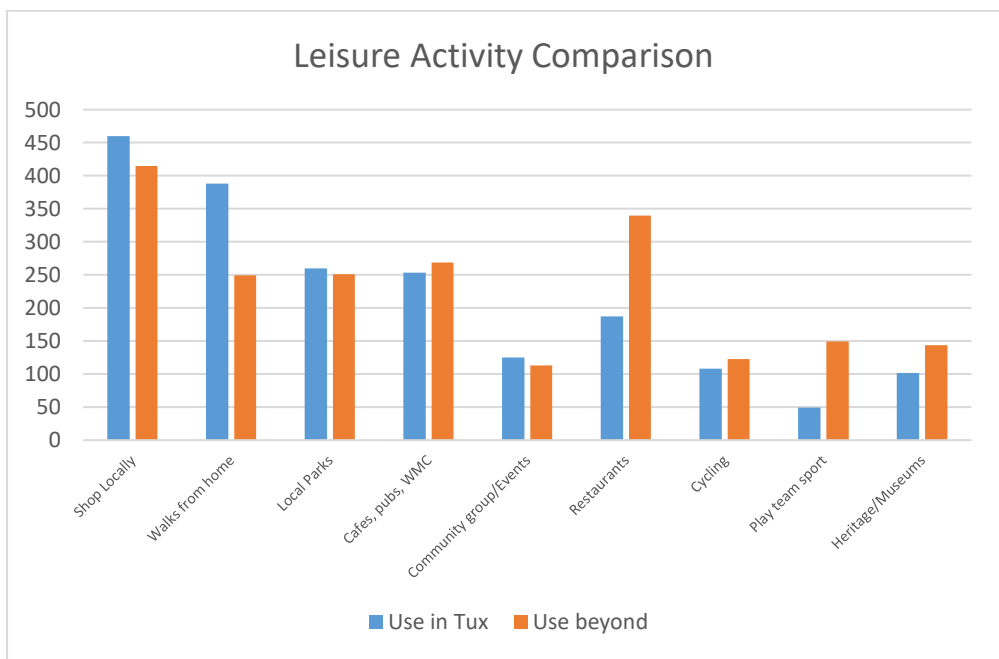
Key activities regularly enjoyed outside of Tuxford include shopping, restaurants/eating out and walking and local parks. The free field comments tended to be focussed on either eating out or swimming/gym. Interestingly, there is a good correlation between those people who swim outside Tuxford at present and who suggest a pool in Tuxford.



### 3.4.3 Gap analysis – Adult Leisure

A comparison of each viable activity is plotted in the graph below, derived from the above two datasets by weighting “regular” use by a factor of two and adding “sometimes” to it. Rarely is ignored.

This produces the result below, which is in the same order as the “regular” ranking of leisure activities within Tuxford. For this reason, the specific activities unavailable within Tuxford have not been included.



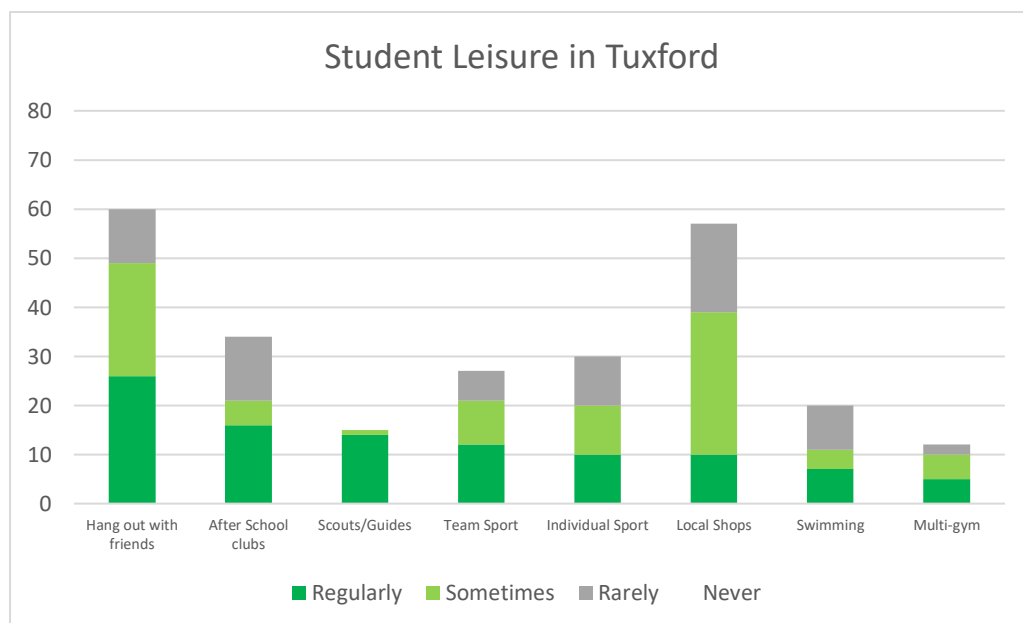
Many categories are similar, indicating that, for example, Community groups and events are similarly popular amongst a proportion of the population, who are willing to travel to them (particular interest groups, for example). Given the lack of facilities for individual sport within Tuxford (excluding cycling, separated out), shows an unmet demand for facilities. Of these, gym and swimming are the most popular (from both comments and the answers to the “outside Tuxford questions”). We are proposing to add outdoor gym facilities to GAPF via the Rural Infrastructure fund.

The clear, fixable, unmet need is for restaurants within Tuxford. There were several comments about the pubs being somewhat unwelcoming but the most obvious easy win for local businesses is to create restaurants for evening use.

### 3.4.4 Student Population Priorities

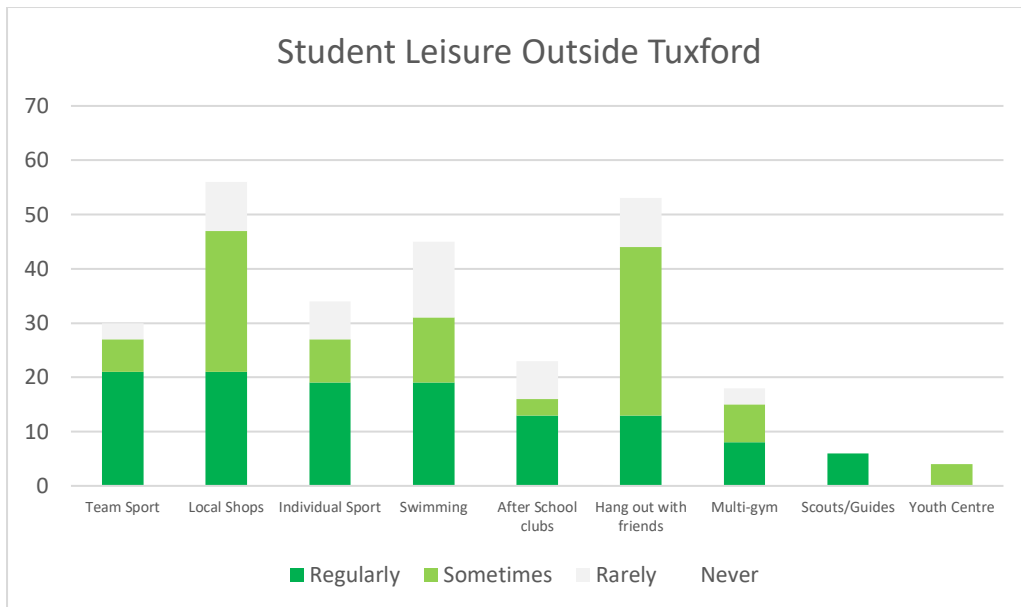
The student population was provided with a somewhat different (but overlapping) set of options, and, as always, a free text field. In terms of identifying what students would like to see, the Primary Academy ran a competition, whose results are attached, for the best new facility idea. The result of this was that a swimming pool was the most popular, followed by a cycle track.

Of this survey result set, the results using the same use categories are as below, for activities within Tuxford. This is plotted by descending “regular” order, though clearly if all active categories were considered, local shops would be a close second to “hang out with friends”. It is worth noting that the activities in and outside of Tuxford were set the same; remarkably, a proportion of the students claim to swim and/or go to the gym in Tuxford already!

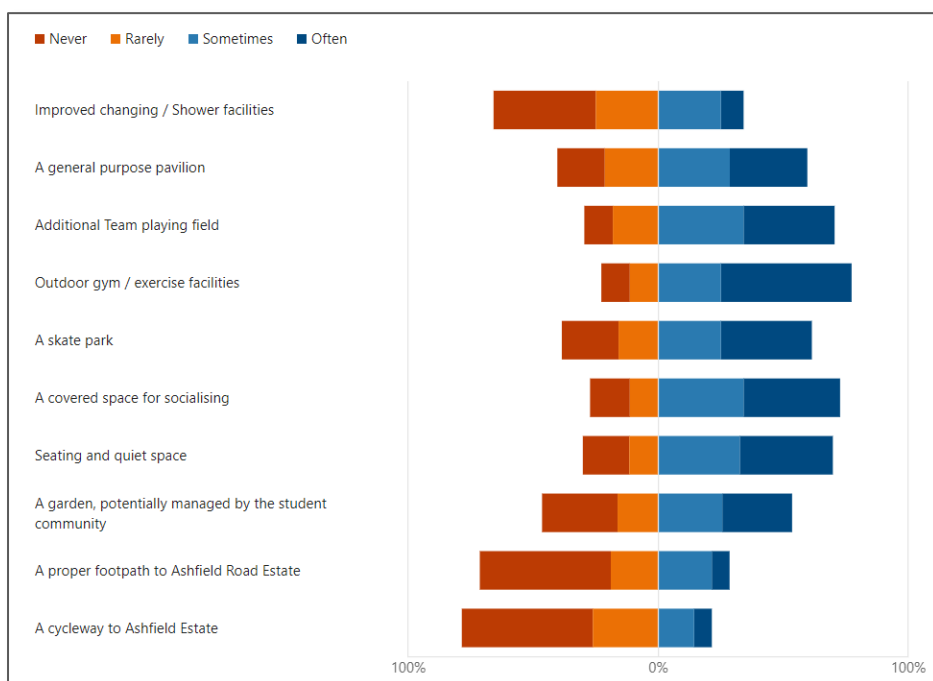


When this set is compared with the “outside Tuxford” set, in the graph below, some observations are possible. Team sports is the most popular regular activity, but both Local shops and Hang out with friends are highest if the “sometimes” classification is added. The relatively high importance of “individual sport” and “swimming” is also clear.





As these online questionnaires were beginning to come in, the question of GAPF came up and the near-unanimous response on keeping it (and improving the facilities there). An additional section on the questionnaire was added to identify priorities on this. The question was “if it were available on Gilbert Avenue, how often would you use ...). The results are as below:



The concept of an Outdoor Gym was the most popular closely followed by covered space for socialising and an additional playing field. Seating and quiet space was also very popular.

This has been taken on board (together with the Primary school response of a cycleway, which, whilst not the most popular (which was a swimming pool), but is achievable.

### 3.4.5 Key Findings from Leisure Priorities

- The topics presented in the questions addressed most of the priorities and preferences within the community.
- Free text responses tended to re-inforce or expand the main response rather than add new needs
- Local retail is a key activity and there is clearly further work to do to identify what sort of shops would be of interest
- There are some needs which may reasonably be met relatively easily and others which require considerable thought and further analysis:
  - Local restaurants are a clear unmet need among the adult community
  - Walking is a key activity and improvements to, and connections between, the current footpath set would be both achievable and very popular
  - Gym facilities are a popular demand from all of the community. The application for funding for an outdoor gym on GAPF will help to clarify the real demand
  - A space for student age populations to hang with friends is a key need, again, this will be part of the funding application for GAPF
  - Swimming is a main activity for which people move outside of Tuxford. However, whilst a “dry” sports/gym facility could be a long term goal, the maintenance on a swimming pool would mean significant further analysis would need to be done.
  -

### **3.5 Sustaining Tuxford. Why do people stay?**

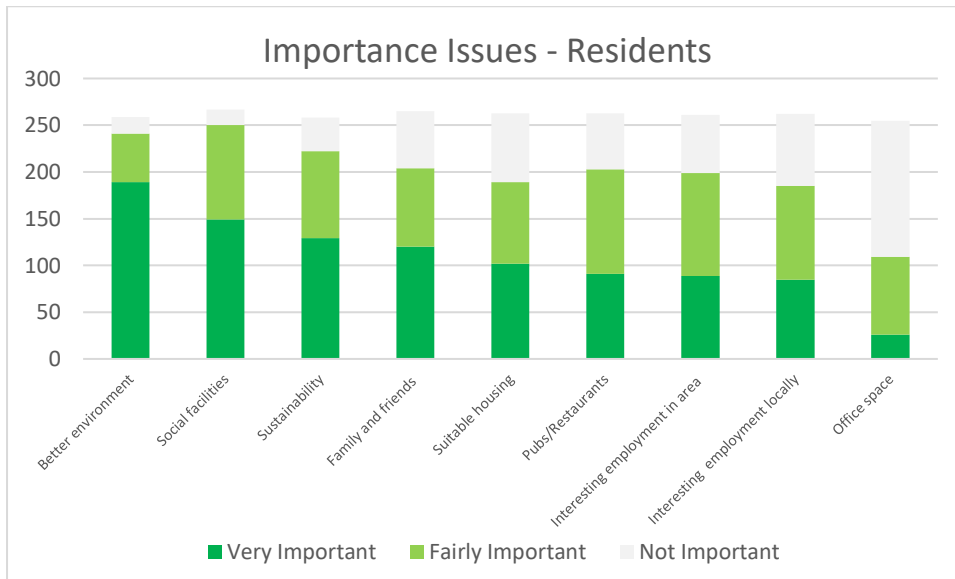
A section of all questionnaires concerned what is important to the residents and what makes them stay (or would make them want to stay as adults, for the student population). This is a broader-brush set of questions, and as usual a set of reasoned categories was included, with the options linked to “how important” rather than “how often”, reflecting the more general nature of the question. A free text option for comments was included. One question that was not asked was “sense of community”, because it is difficult to define what is meant. It does not imply that it is not important – it is a theme included in several of the free text comments.

It is worth looking at each of the three populations separately for this. The full description of categories was:

- Being near family and friends
- Social facilities; shops, parks, community spaces
- Evening; pubs, restaurants
- Housing (but the context clearly meant “suitable for you”)
- Business/office space
- Interesting/rewarding employment in the immediate area
- Interesting/rewarding employment in the wider area
- Better environment; clean air, countryside access, good outdoor spaces
- Sustainability; e.g. clean energy, CO2 neutral

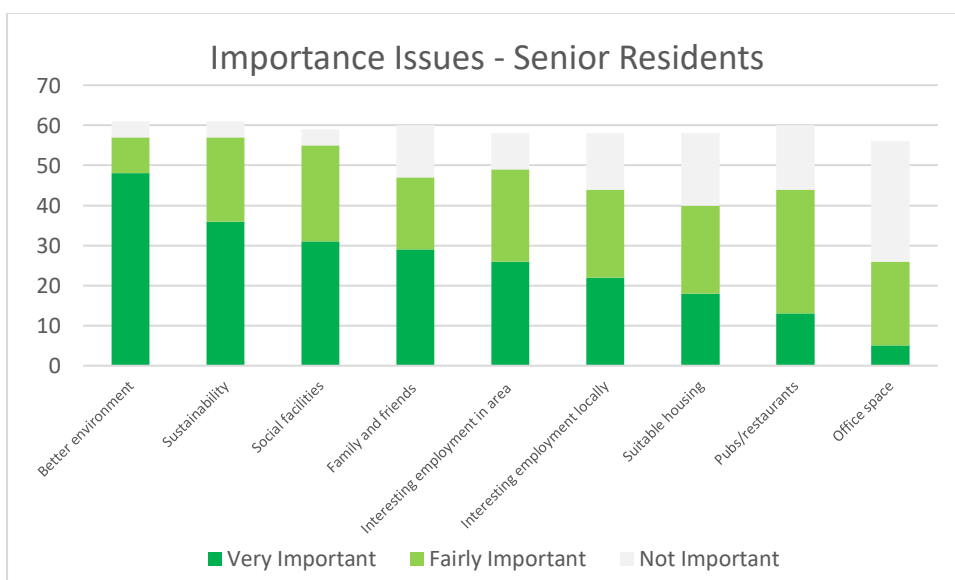
Note that the student set included “Business/incubator space” instead of Business/office and did not include the three last questions, due to an error in transcribing. This was not any attempt to suggest these categories are not of interest to students (they may well have been the most important).

### 3.5.1 Residents Population



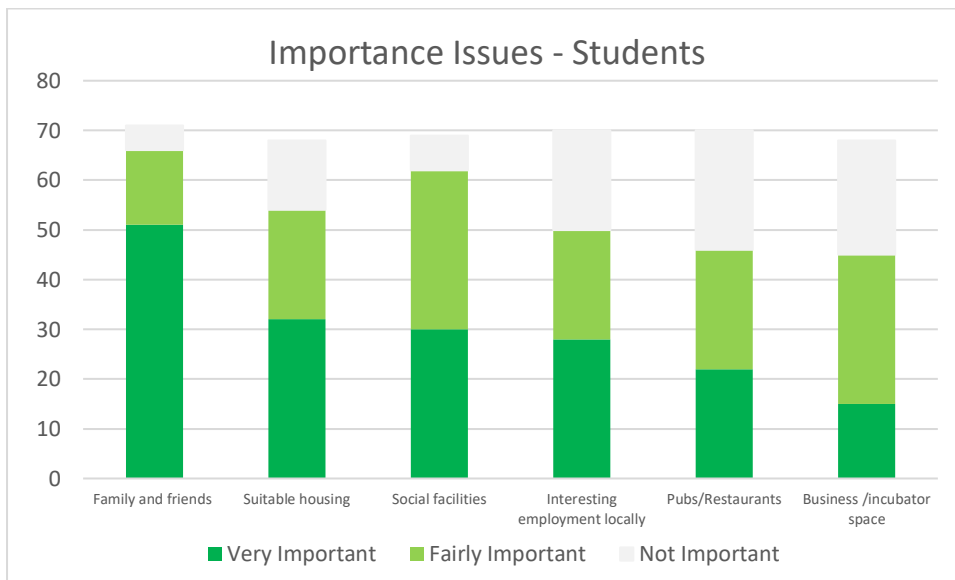
Better environment comes top – this is consistent with the dislike of HGV/traffic and access to countryside/rural setting responses above. Social facilities comes next, and being sustainable and close to family and friends are very close. Suitably housing is almost the same level but as would be expected, if people are residents. They already have a house, though they might be thinking about moving locally, so that housing availability and choice is not to be ignored.

### 3.5.2 Senior Population



The top four categories are the same as for the general resident population, although with a swap between sustainability and social facilities. However, interesting employment, locally or in the area comes above suitable housing. Since this is a population which is retired, this is interesting; it may well reflect more a concern for the next generations' opportunities (and therefore willingness to stay local as adults) than for their own benefit. Note that housing availability is lower down, indicating the availability of suitable housing for this population is not an issue. Note that pubs and restaurants is very low; perhaps the senior population are feeling the pinch in the current environment and are not that worried about and evening out.

### 3.5.3 Student population

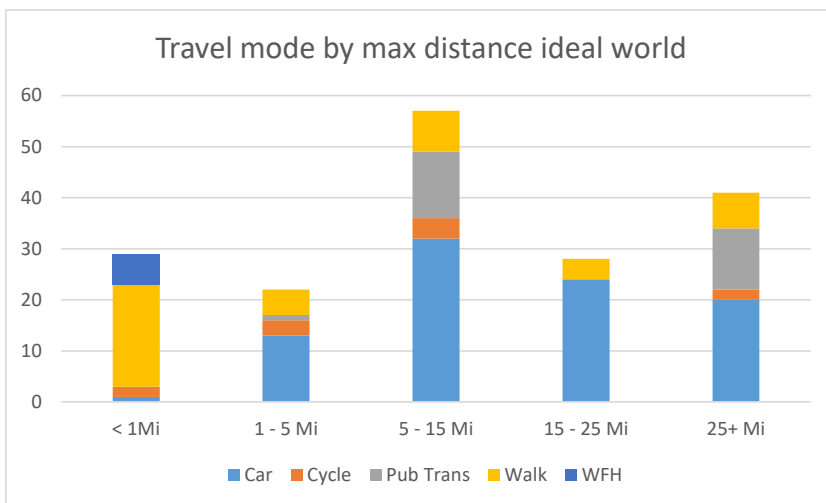
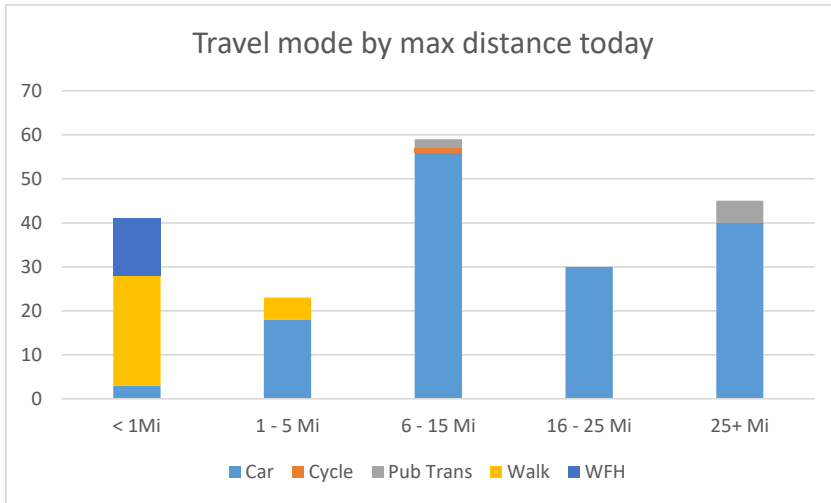


As noted above, the categories of environment, sustainability and wider interesting employment were unfortunately truncated; it is reasonable to expect environment and sustainability would be a major concern for this population. There may be an opportunity to engage with Tuxford Academy and update this dataset in the near future.

As it stands, family and friends is top, followed by availability of suitable housing, social facilities and interesting local employment. None of this is surprising but it is useful to see it proven this way.

### 3.6 Travel and Commuting

A set of questions solicited input on how people get to work (or school) today and how they would like to commute in an ideal world. The results, presented as a function of distance travelled, are plotted below, firstly for today and secondly in an ideal world. Show mode of transport used across all age categories.

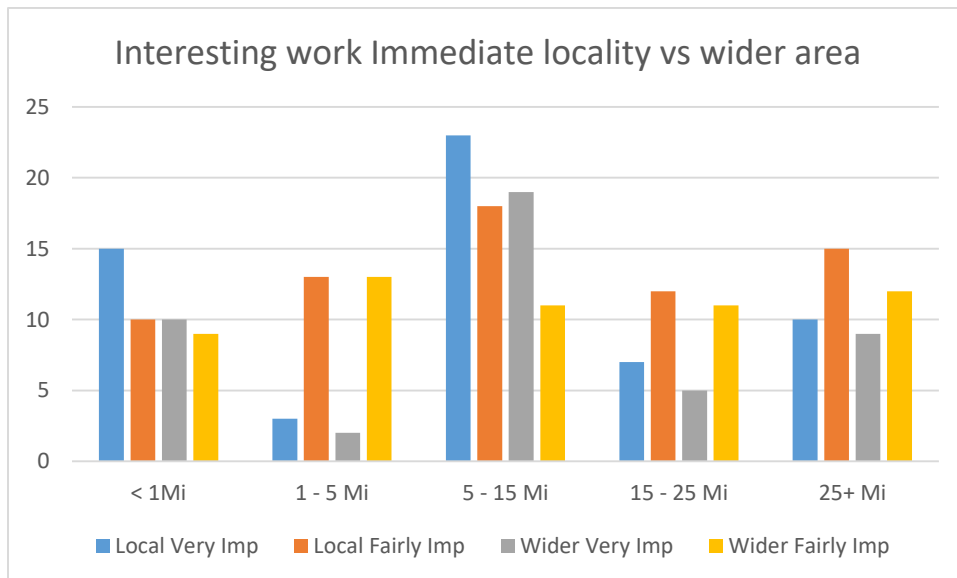


However, when we look at the student population, it is notable (yet to be turned into a graph) that no-one cycles to school; more investigation is required but discussions with parents implies concern over safety on the road, especially along Lincoln Road.

In terms of finding interesting and/or rewarding work, both student and working age resident populations were asked about this. The results, for these two populations, but separated by commuting distance, were as below. The question text separated between “in and around Tuxford” as “Locally” and “within Bassetlaw area” as “wider”.

The underlying question – how important is securing interesting work to your choosing to stay in Tuxford? was a middle ranking response in all three population groups (including Seniors, surprisingly – but they may have been thinking of the next generation) if “Very Important” and “Fairly important” are both considered. In all cases, the availability of interesting jobs in and around Tuxford was of greater import than jobs in the wider Bassetlaw area. Given the relatively high proportion of people who currently do fairly lengthy commutes, this is not surprising.

In all cases, it is important to note that the availability of suitable housing was a higher priority as a reason to stay in Tuxford than local employment. However, both clearly need to be taken into consideration in making the plan.



#### 4.0 Conclusions so far

This online survey garnered a very strong response, with around 14% of Tuxford's total population responding. It therefore provides a significant evidence base for input to the Neighbourhood Plan. A separate day with the students at Tuxford Academy would be very beneficial and this will be pursued before a final report is issued.

On the whole, people are clearly positive about Tuxford and – recognising there are challenges – are keen to see Tuxford improve, rather than go elsewhere, which is a positive outcome. The importance of local retail – and therefore the issue of the high street hollowing out as is happening currently – was clear before but it starkly proven by this survey. The issue of housing availability – especially for singles/couples and future young families is a key consideration, but growth and Tuxford must be properly planned and not compromise either the rural setting or constrain access to the countryside and local walking/footpaths: these should be improved and added to as an urgent consideration.

Tuxford's lack of sports facilities and high quality outdoor space is a very clear issue, and the HGV and traffic levels are the most significant negative. There is a general sense in the comments that lack of facilities for young people is a major concern and the immediate need is to find a way to generate some social space. The intention is to explore this more with Tuxford Academy's support.

The availability of interesting employment within Tuxford is also apparent. Some people commute significant distances at present and it seems (but we need to check and confirm this) that the people who commute a fair way are most interested in securing a job in or closer to Tuxford.

Parking – not a specific question, by design – came up as an issue, even for this target population of Tuxford Residents. Given that Tuxford is the designated Local Service Centre for quite a range of outlying villages, parking is likely to be more of an issue than we see.

The need to keep – and improve - GAPF is universal whilst the student population have been very clear that outdoor gym and social space are the top two priorities. A cycleway (is the top achievable preference for the younger population and this will also be started as part of Rural Infrastructure funding applications