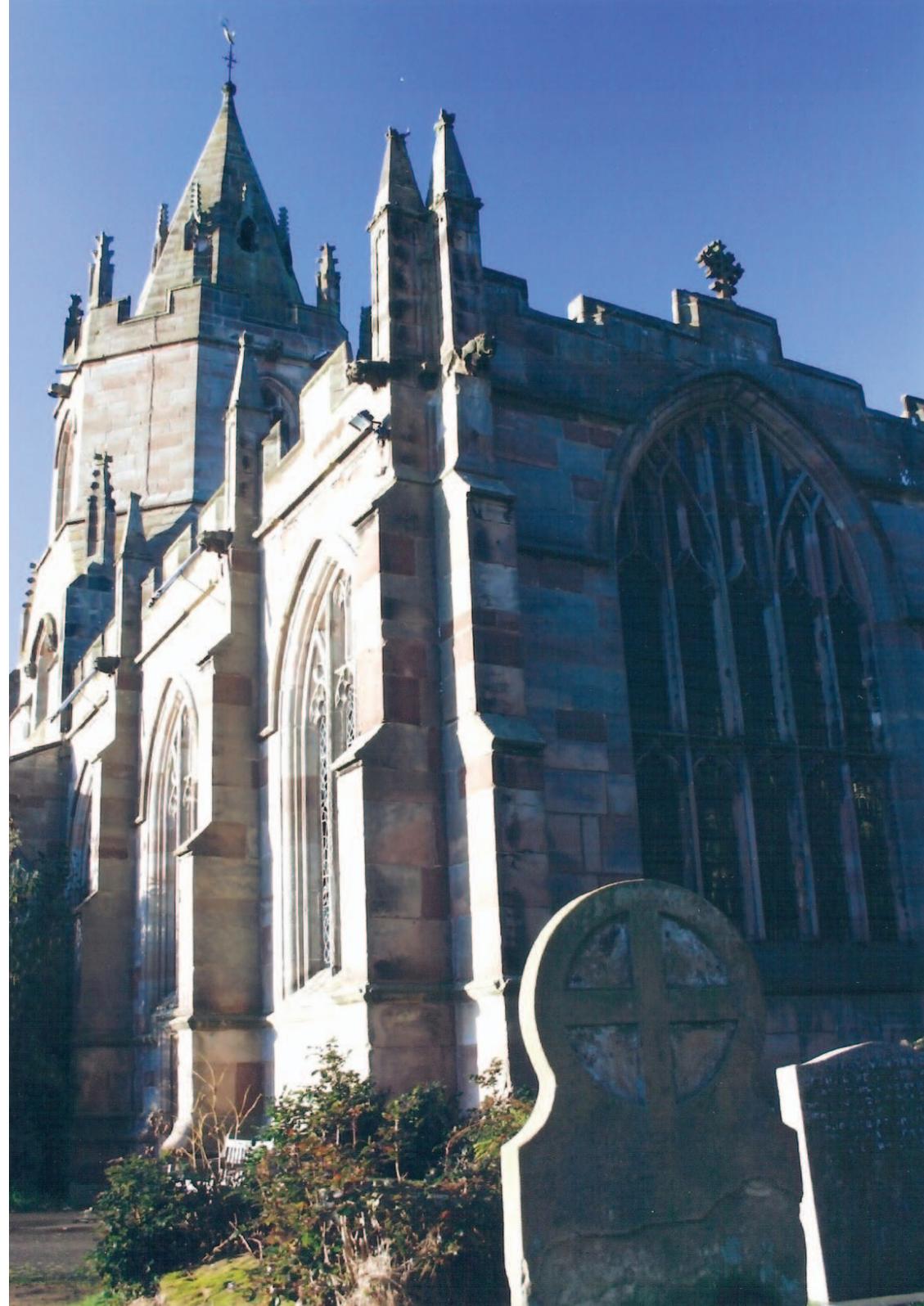
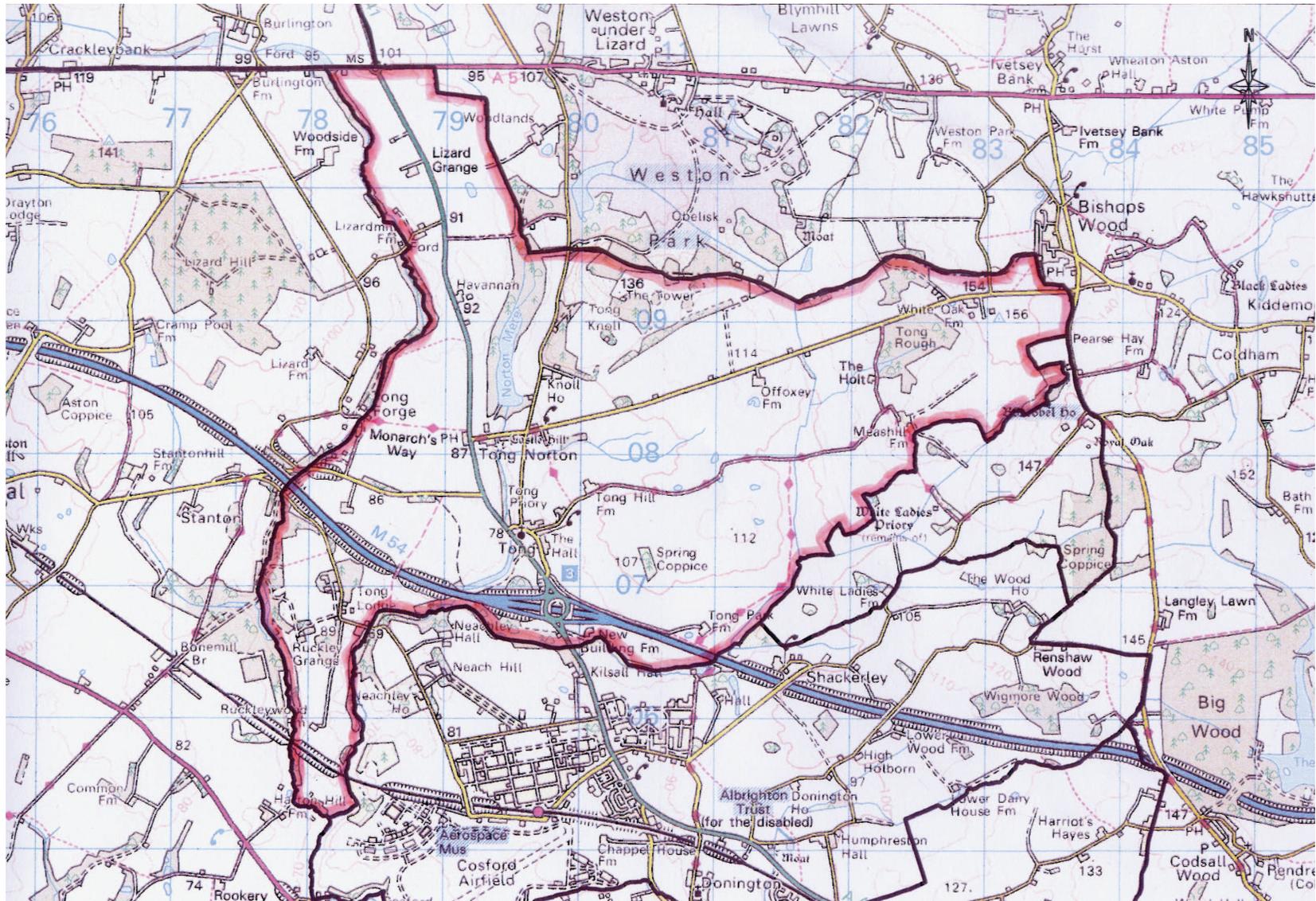


TONG
PARISH PLAN
2009





A MAP OF THE PARISH

TONG PARISH PLAN



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Nick Smith



John Farmer

In August 2006 the Parish Plan Committee was set up at the request of the Parish Council.

The purpose of the group was to find out what people in the Parish feel about the Parish, their concerns and the matters they feel should be resolved. The Parish Council wanted this information to give them a clear basis for their planning and to provide the evidence needed to persuade Local Government that there was a real desire to address the issues.

Funding was obtained through DEFRA, and they were also very good in advising, guiding, analysing and generally being helpful.

Thanks are due to everyone who took the time to complete the questionnaire, to attend meetings, and to make their feelings known.

Special thanks to the Plan Committee : Gerry Bew, Sylvia Hulme, who would have been delighted to see the Plan come to fruition, Christine Madeley, Paul Mason, John McAlle, who is responsible for the wonderful photographs, Rhona Murfin, Lesley Stokes and Rachael Winyard.

We now all need to work with the Parish Council to turn our wish list into a reality. Volunteers are needed. No matter how little the amount of time you can give - it all helps. Please look at the Action Plan and see whom to contact on the Parish Council regarding your pet project.

As we go forward, things will evolve : compromises may have to be made and new priorities will emerge. We promise to keep you informed - do try to keep us informed too.

John Farmer, Parish Plan Committee
Nick Smith, Parish Council

ABOUT TONG

Every parish likes to think of itself as special, but Tong's history, culture and character really do make ours unique.

Once an almost entirely agricultural community, the parish of Tong covers an area of some 12 square kilometres on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border. The M54 and the A41 Trunk Road run through the parish, and Junction 3 of the M54 lies at its southern boundary.

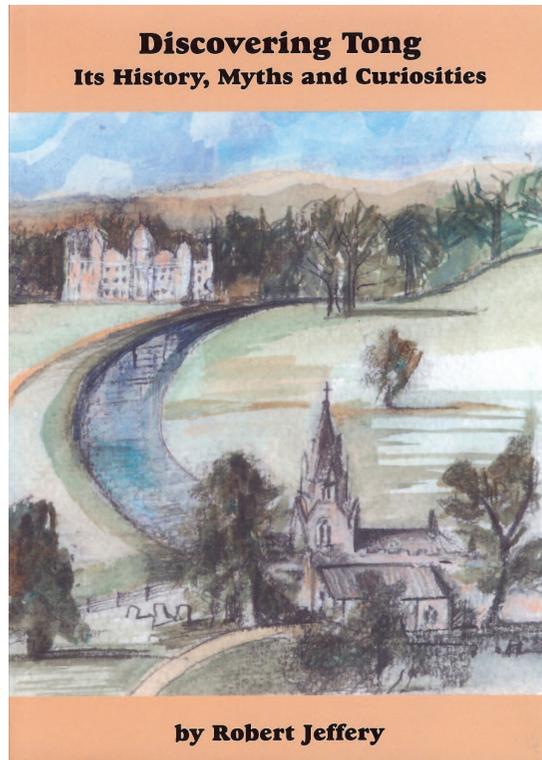
A population of just over two hundred people live in just over a hundred houses. Most of the parishioners live in the two hamlets of Tong and Tong Norton, but there are significant numbers of houses at Neachley, along the Offoxey Road and on both sides of the A41.

For its size, our parish has considerable facilities: a renowned Parish Church and a well-utilised Parish Hall in Tong, together with a public house and a petrol filling station on the A41 at Tong Norton. The regular bus service operating between Wellington and Wolverhampton stops in Tong village.

Most local services and facilities, however, are in nearby Albrighton and in the small town of Shifnal 3 miles to the west. Important sections of the Monarch's Way long-distance footpath run through the area as well as a number of smaller footpaths which reach into all corners of the parish.

For many years Tong was dominated by Tong Castle, and its owners - since 1854 the Earls of Bradford - have always been the biggest landowners and were until recently the largest employer in the parish.

*'the peace of the
countryside without
the remoteness'*



Much has been written about the area, most recently Robert Jeffery's 'Discovering Tong: Its History, Myths and Curiosities' (www.discoveringtong.org) which gives a vibrant account of our history.

Despite the changes in the parish, particularly over the past thirty years, Tong remains essentially rural and its residents place great value on that rural character. There is a strong sense of identity with the parish which should grow and develop if our Plan can deliver the improvements that parishioners are asking for.

A PARISH PLAN - WHY?

Preparing a Parish Plan is a chance to explore grass-root feelings and attitudes in the community and formalise the findings.

This will enable our Parish Council to speak with greater authority to outside agencies such as Shropshire Council,

confident that their voice really is attuned to current local opinion.

... AND HOW?

In August 2006 Tong Parish Council invited parishioners to take the lead in preparing a Parish Plan. The councillors recognised that the Parish Plan Group should be independent of the Parish Council, that its Chairperson should not be on the Parish Council and its members should mainly be non-councillors.

The parish was nominally divided into 4 parts - Tong, Tong Norton, East of the A41 and West of the A41 - so that the results could be differentiated.

An extensive questionnaire was designed and circulated to every parishioner over the age of 10; it achieved an excellent response rate of nearly 60% and produced a wealth of anecdotal and statistical evidence. This was collated and analysed.

...AND WHAT FOR?

The information gives us a clearer picture of how our community sees itself, what issues concern us, and what priorities we have for change and improvement.

Of course opinion is not unanimous on all issues, but we can gauge those areas which are most important to local people.

Ideally, the Plan will lead to the formation or resuscitation of Action Groups to deal with our issues in a way that will complement the Parish Council's work - groups such as Neighbourhood Watch and Tong Tidy.

This Plan and its repercussions should be the start of a long-term and ongoing dialogue on how Tong, our community, develops.

WHAT YOU SAID

At the end of the questionnaire residents were asked to list, in order of importance, the five key issues the Plan should address.

The resulting analysis needs to be read in conjunction with the rest of the report rather than in isolation - there was a lower response rate than in previous sections as answer fatigue had obviously set in! However these answers clearly reflected feedback from previous sections so we feel confident in basing our list of priorities on them.

We should also stress that the outcomes and priorities are parish-wide.

Nonetheless, some localised problems - such as RAF Cosford traffic in Neachley, lack of pavements at Tong Norton, poor bus services to parts of the area, and lorries parking in Tong - while they may not affect the community as a whole, still need to be addressed.

'I came to the parish to belong to a community in a rural area'



'too busy to get involved'

YOUR PRIORITIES

A total of 81 respondents set a first priority, 70 a second, 49 a third, 44 a fourth and 36 a fifth.

We awarded 5 points for a 1st priority, 4 for a 2nd, 3 for a 3rd, 2 for a 4th and 1 for a 5th to produce this schedule. The weighted scores clearly show the significance of each issue.

	PRIORITY	SCORE
1	Traffic calming	204
2	Collecting litter & preventing fly-tipping	175
3	Improving community spirit	70
4	Improving rubbish collection and re-cycling	63
5	Reducing parking problems	57
6	Preserving our rural atmosphere & restricting future development	49
7	Improving road & pavement repairs	42
8	Building new pavements & footpaths	39
9	Funding Church repairs & maintenance, encouraging attendance	33
10	Improving security	29
11	Building additional housing	22
12	Maintaining & improving the bus service	14
13	Building a children's playground and facilities	12
14	Requesting improvements to The Bell	11
15	Maintaining & improving the Millennium Pond	9
16	Establishing a No Through Road in Tong	9
17	Street lighting	8
18	Creating employment opportunities	6
19	Improving broadband provision	6
20	Providing a gas supply	5
21	Increasing powers to Parish Council	5
22	Improving sewage system	4
23	Improving Parish Flyer	4

THE FINDINGS IN DETAIL

DEMOGRAPHICS

Tong parish has a disproportionately middle-aged population - 68% of the 114 respondents are older than 45 and 41% are over 60. Only 15 responding households have children younger than 10.

61% of people have lived in the parish for more than 11 years.

Very little new housing has been built in the last 5 years, yet 26% have moved into Tong during this time, a greater migration rate than might have been anticipated.

Only 12% of respondents have always lived here, so most of our population are 'incomers' moving to Tong for a variety of social and business reasons. Once here, people like living in the parish.

Over 81% of respondents expect to be living in Tong in 5 years and 72% feel a part of the community. Yet only 22% want to be more involved in what goes on.

HOUSING

The current Bridgnorth Local Plan, which runs until 2011, does not provide for the building of any additional houses in our parish apart from the conversion of existing buildings or new houses required for agricultural workers.

We asked 'would you like to see more houses built in the parish?' 110 parishioners responded, with a compelling majority of 69% saying that they don't want more houses.

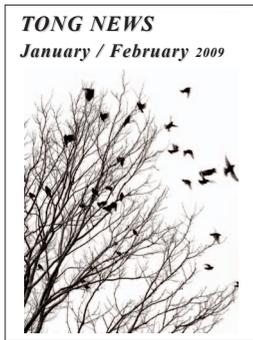
Nearly three-quarters of those people who were in favour of new housing wanted private homes.

'In the past 25 years, four of my family have left the parish because there were no houses to rent in the village'



'No, no, no, to any new housing'

‘It would be good if more people contributed to the newsletter’



‘If I thought that you would have the opportunity to speak on certain issues - and be listened to - I would become more involved’

HOUSING (CONTINUED)

While less than 10% reported that members of their household had left the parish in the last two years, there was some evidence that people would have stayed had they been able.

Of 56 respondents only a fifth would consider moving into the almshouses in later life: most felt that they lacked facilities.

Our questionnaire produced many further thought-provoking comments about housing but a clear majority don't want any more residential development.

COMMUNICATIONS

It was important to find out whether people felt they knew what was going on in the parish, and what might be done to improve communication. Over 98% of households receive the Tong newsletter

and 87% of parishioners felt that they are kept informed of what goes on in the parish. Readership of Tong News is an astonishing 97%.

Just over half of respondents never look at the parish notice boards despite 89% thinking that there are enough boards and that they're in the right places.

Nearly 70% of people have Internet access at home and half of the parish expressed an interest in seeing parish news and the Parish Plan on the Internet. But when asked how they preferred to access parish news, a clear two-thirds prefer to read the newsletter.

The high degree to which people feel that they're in touch is primarily down to Tong News. However there was some dissatisfaction over lack of information regarding Parish Council business and Parish Hall Committee and Parochial Church Council meetings.

Nearly 85% of respondents don't attend parish meetings and 40% claimed it's because they don't know they're happening.

We should

- *establish a parish website to make more current information readily accessible*

PARISH HALL

The comments on the Hall were mostly positive - 'a wonderful facility' and 'a great facility that is really well-used'. While only 11% of parishioners have hired the Parish Hall in the past two years, 33% feel that they may do so in the future.

Lots of people responded with ideas for community activities they would like to see happening in the Hall.

A recurring theme was a village party, emphasising both that our parishioners want to socialise with each other, and the significance of the Hall as a community asset.

There were some suggestions about the management of the Hall, that it should be merged with the Parish Council or augmented by new members.

One problem raised is that parking is difficult when there's an event at the Hall, and residents' access is sometimes impeded.

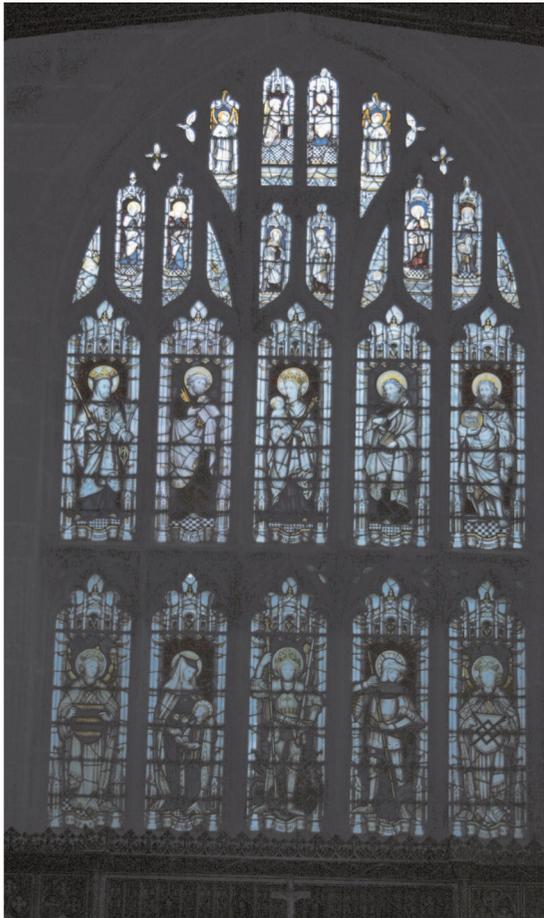
We should

- *identify individuals to drive additional activities including meetings and parties*

'a wonderful facility which if lost could never be replaced'



'We have only just found the Hall is available for us!'



'Church people don't realise there are those who, though they don't worship there, do appreciate the building's historical importance and are willing to help maintain it'

TONG CHURCH

Our Parish Church is famous as well as beautiful.

While only 12% of parishioners worship there regularly, another 43% claim to be 'occasional' worshippers. And though 62% of people don't intend to use the Church for family weddings or christenings, nearly half wish to be buried in the churchyard!

A clear majority - 63% - felt the parish should contribute towards repairs to the structure of the church and the upkeep of the churchyard.

An even greater number - 68% - would like to see the Parish Council and the community support church-related improvements such as a permanent floodlighting system for the Church.

There is clearly real pride, loyalty and commitment to the Church.

Although the vast majority of local people are not regular worshippers, there is a strong affinity with the place and a wish that the community take some responsibility for maintaining it.

TONG FLOWER FESTIVAL

Nearly 80% felt that there should be a regular Tong Flower Festival although only 42% declared that they'd be prepared to join an organising committee.

Not surprisingly, given the warm feeling towards the Church, 88% of respondents felt that the proceeds of a Flower Festival should go towards maintaining the building or projects associated with it.

TONG FILLING STATION

Over 75% of residents claim to use the filling station, with a high proportion (45%) shopping there as well as buying fuel.

Nearly two pages of comments about the filling station revealed numerous concerns - high prices ; the frequency with which fuel runs out ; litter ; highway safety - but there is a strong sense that the station provides a valuable community asset.

THE BELL INN

The Bell enjoys less local usage than the filling station - just over half the residents say they use the pub - but nevertheless it drew 85 comments and suggestions, ranging from people who are non-users or opposed to pubs and drinking (7) to some who are happy with the pub as it is (5).

The great majority of the comments were from current or past users, and were negative. People felt that The Bell was unattractive, offered a poor choice of food, lacked investment and had in the past suffered from too many changes in management.

Yet there is substantial support for The Bell as a local facility, particularly as a venue for eating and meeting rather than as a drinking venue.

Happily since opinion was canvassed, the new manager has addressed some of these complaints and the brewery has submitted plans for refurbishment.

LOCAL SERVICES

We asked people how satisfied they were with services provided by our District and County Councils. While people were not overjoyed with our roads and refuse collection, there was not the widespread dissatisfaction that might have been expected



‘The pub, like the Hall, should be a great asset to the parish but the majority of people don't use it. The brewery should be asking why.’



LITTER

Almost 90% said that litter and fly tipping were a concern to them and it's obvious from the comments that these problems are widespread.

While there was strong support for more litter bins (62%), particularly along the A41 and in the lay-bys, people realised that more bins alone won't solve the problem.

A majority of 82% felt that parish funds could be used to employ someone to collect litter, and nearly half (47%) said they would join a Tidy Tong Group.

considering people's priorities in the final section where many people looked for improvements.

More than 70% felt that rubbish collection could be improved. Most people who commented called for weekly collections and better recycling facilities.

Although overall half of residents thought that we didn't need new pavements, a greater proportion in Tong Norton (56%) and the area west of the A41 (66%) felt that we did.

Only 29% of people supported petitioning for a gas supply.

We should

- *press Shropshire Council to improve services*
- *investigate providing a parish service for recycling, particularly of plastics and cardboard*
- *investigate funding a periodic collection for disposal of large items such as sofas or fridges*

We should

- *set up and monitor a voluntary group to pick up litter locally*
- *if necessary use parish funds for paid litter collection*

TRAFFIC

A massive 84% of respondents are concerned about fast-moving traffic. While many are worried about speeds on the A41, most complaints were about excessive speed on the minor roads through the parish - Newport Road, Friars Lane, Offoxey Road and Neachley Lane.

Over 85% would support moves to reduce traffic speed and, while other options were offered, the greatest support was for a 30mph limit and its enforcement.

Almost three-quarters of parishioners supported parking restrictions on Newport Road near the M54 roundabout, with feeling being much stronger in Tong itself.

Although nearly 60% felt that the parking of HGVs and vans on the roads in the parish wasn't a problem, the subject attracted nearly four pages of comments.



The significant increase in traffic in Neachley Lane since the opening of the Cold War Museum has had little impact on the rest of the parish - yet it's a very real worry for people living there.

Similarly, Church and Parish Hall events and the increase in parking at the Almshouses cause real problems on Newport Road and Hubball Lane.

'This lane is a fatality waiting to happen'

'dangerously fast'

'The speed limit should be reduced to - at most - 30mph'

'parking is a real issue'



‘A great local amenity with good events, and a considerate management’

We should.....

- *develop a parish-wide traffic policy*
- *press for 30mph speed limits on Neachley Lane, Newport Road in Tong, Offoxey Road between The Bell and Shaw Lane, Friars Lane for 500m both sides of the cross-roads with Offoxey Road and their enforcement*
- *support Shropshire Council's moves to calm traffic on the A41*
- *press for the completion of pavements in Tong Norton on the Offoxey Road between The Bell and Shaw Lane*

WESTON PARK

Our question about the impact of events at Weston Park provoked three pages of comments.

The majority of residents are very positive and particularly appreciate the financial support that the V festival gives to the community - as well as the free tickets! There's a feeling that V is well run - unlike the Game Fair.

Most people (66%) were not concerned by any extra traffic generated; unsurprisingly, its impact is more keenly noticed by those living around Tong Norton and on the A41.

We should.....

- *maintain involvement with Weston's management and bring pressure to lessen the impact of the Game Fair.*

FOOTPATHS

Nearly 60% of residents use the right-of-way footpaths in the parish and most of those (64%) do so without problems. But there was some concern about overhanging hedges, paths made difficult to use because of traffic and

horse damage, and stiles being blocked.

There were calls for more tree-planting alongside footpaths, and for more new paths to be made available under Countryside Stewardship Schemes.

It's clear that there's widespread support for keeping and improving the rights of way in the Parish.

We should

- *press those responsible to act to rectify complaints of obstruction of footpaths*

TRANSPORT

As might be expected in a rural parish, we are extremely dependent on our cars. Although only 15% of people use the bus service, two-thirds of residents think the service should pass through Tong Norton.

A more frequent service might make residents more inclined to use the bus, but there is a sense that little would persuade us to give up our cars.

However, we must remember the vital importance of the service to the minority of residents who don't have their own transport.

Although many people (64%) are aware of the Parish Flyer, only 6% have ever used it. Many who have considered using the service felt it was too expensive, or simply prefer to use their own car.

We should

- *request that the Bus Operator extends the service through Tong Norton*



'All areas in the parish suffer from poor quality and badly maintained pavements'

‘The incidence of fly-tipping has dramatically increased’

‘Rubbish collection should be once a week’

‘I see litter on the verges. It's now cleared by volunteer help - Kitty, Cath and others, thank you’

SECURITY

Of 42 comments on the question 'What are the issues within the Parish that affect your sense of personal security?' less than a third replied that they had no issues, or that they felt secure in the Parish.

There is very clear support for a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, with 81% saying they would support a scheme and 70% saying they would be prepared to assist in its revival.

Burglary or theft from dwellings or cars concerned most respondents, and some commented on feeling vulnerable due to traffic generated by local events at Weston Park and Cosford.

Some complained that they'd never seen Police patrols in the parish. Some commented on the lack of street lighting, although others didn't want lighting.

We should

- *ask the Parish Council for a meeting with Police advisors and interested residents with a view to setting up Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the Parish*

BUSINESS AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Nearly 60% of residents don't want to see more business/work opportunities in the parish, with some commenting that such developments could detract from Tong's bucolic charm.

There was no great appetite for increased facilities from people already running businesses, and only 26% of respondents would be interested in contributing to a parish skills network.

SELF-HELP

There was considerable support for the self-help options we included in the questionnaire.

Fifteen people said they'd like a service for collecting shopping and picking up prescriptions, with 39 people saying they'd be happy to provide such a service.

Next most popular - both in numbers requesting (8) and numbers willing (16) to help - was providing free transport to Albrighton and Shifnal.

Less popular, but still requested and supported, were baby-sitting, weeding of pavements, and maintaining the Millennium Pool.

We should

- *network actively to establish a Tong Self-Help group*



YOUNG PEOPLE

We had 12 respondents between the ages of 10 and 15 who all said they enjoyed living in Tong. They thought that the safe, rural nature of the parish was the best thing about living here.

Nine responded to the question 'What's bad about living in Tong', a third of whom said 'nothing'. Some, however, were worried about traffic and a lack of facilities or things to do.

Seven of the twelve would like somewhere local, other than their homes, to meet their friends after school, with a playground the most popular suggestion.

We also asked parents of children under 10 for their thoughts, and fifteen replied. Only one felt that there was a need for pre-school activities in the parish but eight were keen to see a children's play area, with Church Field being much the most favoured location.



TONG FLOWER FESTIVAL 2008

SO FAR

The process of actually producing this Plan has been immensely time-consuming. However, while it has been going on we have not been idle.

ALREADY

- The key people involved at The Bell, the Parish Hall, the Church and Tong News have been given all 'their' data to act on
- Everyone in the parish has been sent a draft of the document to read and respond to
- A number of appeals have been made in Tong News to try to move constructive suggestions forward
- Members of the Parish Council have been identified willing to lead on each priority, to recruit to their groups and to drive things ahead

PRACTICALLY....

A Tong website is being costed
The Parish Hall Committee has increased its membership
More events are being planned
Notices posted to deter people from parking up Hubball Lane have had a positive effect

A new Appeal for the Church has been launched

The Bell's Manager has made encouraging progress to improve the pub

A mirror has been placed on Tong Norton crossroads

BUT

Appeals for help and support through Tong News have not attracted any support and in order to make progress your involvement is vital.

SO PLEASE

Look at the Parish Action Plan over the page, decide where you will help and contact the lead councillor or key person to volunteer your support.

USEFUL CONTACTS

COMMUNITY	Lesley Stokes	01952 850248
LITTER, REFUSE, RE-CYCLING	David Dixon	01952 850441
PARISH HALL	Ali Hunt	01902 374009
PARKING, SECURITY	Gerry Bew	01902 373965
THE BELL INN	Sarah Parker	01952 850210
TONG CHURCH	John Hall	01902 372622
TONG FILLING STATION	Mr Ali	01952 850388
TONG NEWS	Rhona Murfin	01952 850395
TRAFFIC, ROADS	Nick Smith	01952 850220

TONG PARISH ACTION PLAN

Issue	Action	Partners with Parish Council	Parish Council Lead	Timeframe for comment	Resources
TRAFFIC CALMING	Reduce speed in Tong & Tong Norton residential areas to 30 mph or less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Shropshire Council * Albrighton Road Safety Group 	Nick Smith	June 2009	<p>Shropshire Council funding according to scheme priority</p> <p>Additional funding from Parish funds if required</p>
LITTER	<p>Organise regular litter collections in conjunction with Shropshire Council</p> <p>Identify prime causes and seek ways to eradicate them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Shropshire Council * People Against Litter * Tong Tidy Group 	David Dixon	Immediate	Local Community Parish Council funding of any essential equipment. Local farmers - hedge trimming
IMPROVING COMMUNITY SPIRIT	Find ways to involve people in working together to help each other improve the quality of our village life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tong Parish Hall Committee * Tong Parochial Church Council * Tong News * The Bell Inn * Bradford Estate 	Lesley Stokes	On-going	Parish Hall Tong News; Roseclaim Parish funds; RAF Cosford Bradford Estate; Weston Park
RUBBISH COLLECTION & RE-CYCLING	<p>Lobby for weekly collections</p> <p>Seek ways to provide re-cycling facilities locally</p> <p>Organise skips/lorries for collection of bulky items on a planned basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Shropshire Council * Tong Tidy Group 	David Dixon	Immediate	Parish funds Shropshire Council grants RAF Cosford

TONG PARISH ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Issue	Action	Partners with Parish Council	Parish Council Lead	Timeframe for comment	Resources
PARKING	Find suitable areas for parking in Tong Discourage people from parking in areas which cause problems	* Shropshire Council * Tong Parochial Church Council * Tong Parish Hall Committee * Bradford Estate	Gerry Bew	Immediate	Shropshire Council Parish funds Bradford Estate
PRESERVING OUR RURAL ATMOSPHERE	Monitor local and national proposals which could impact on the Parish and its way of life Monitor footpaths	* Shropshire Council * Council for the Preservation of Rural England * DEFRA * Albrighton Footpath Group * Bradford Estate * Ramblers Association	John Watts	On-going	Shropshire Council Parish funds Public subscription
IMPROVING ROADS & PAVEMENTS. BUILDING NEW WHERE NECESSARY	Identify road & pavement requirements in the Parish, and obtain details of when remedial/build work is scheduled	* Shropshire Council	Nick Smith	Dec 2009	Parish funds Shropshire Council Public subscription
FUNDING CHURCH REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	Seek ways in which the Parish & the Parish Council can legitimately contribute to the cost of church maintenance	* Tong Parochial Church Council * English Heritage * Lichfield Diocese	David Dixon	On-going	Tong PCC Tong 600 Parish funds
IMPROVING SECURITY IN THE PARISH	Support action to make the Parish safer and restart Neighbourhood Watch schemes	* Police * Albrighton Neighbourhood Watch * Rural Watch	Gerry Bew	June 2009	Shropshire Council grants Parish funds

