

## REPORT ON THE SURVEY OF BUSINESS & SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



March 2017

**SID VALLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP**

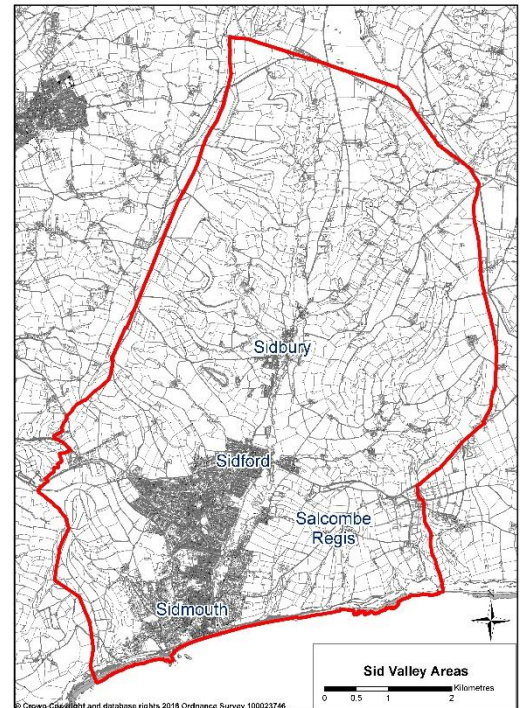
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# SECTION 1 OVERVIEW

## SID VALLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Boundary area agreed by the planning authority East Devon District Council includes the Sidmouth Town Council Wards of Salcombe Regis, Sidbury, Sidford, and Sidmouth.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The information provided by the questionnaire respondents alongside the administration, collation, analysis, comment and contributions that have gone into producing this report are gratefully acknowledged and are referenced below;

**Sidmouth Town Council** Chairman of the Council Jeff Turner and Councillors.

**The Town Clerk** Chris Holland

### **Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

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**Neighbourhood Plan Administrator** Tim Salt

**Photographic Credits** Peter Murphy and Nigel Dutt

# FOREWORD

This report reflects the views of 104 survey responses from Businesses and Special Interest Groups in the Sid Valley who together represent over 1600 employees and community group or association members. The object of this questionnaire was to try to understand the concerns and views of people who own, run and manage businesses and groups in the area, so that we can build on them in our subsequent work. By publishing the findings, we are seeking to share the results with the residents of the Sid Valley.

The messages contained in the report reinforce what people told us in the first Household survey but give a wider perspective of the importance of joining up our thinking so that we can balance the needs of the whole population. In this survey we heard again how valued the relationship between the natural coastal environment and the built environment is.

Whilst Respondents have commented and made suggestions about improvements to infrastructure and to establishing policies influencing development, some areas such parking and traffic management for example, are not within the remit of the NP.

This report can only reflect the views of those who responded. Our role is to continue to gather views and different perspectives and to review wider evidence of need to be able to develop policies which reflect evidence rather than opinion.

We have since completed a Children and Young People's survey and are analysing the results. All of this information will steer the development of our draft policies for our Neighbourhood Plan.

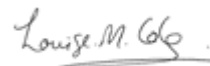
Our final consultation will again be targeted to residents of the Sid Valley to comment specifically on the Draft Policies and to identify any Community Actions that are important but which sit outside of statutory land use policies.

Our aim is to include everyone's views and we need your help to make that happen. We therefore reiterate our warm invitation for you to have your say on the future of the Sid Valley and to encourage friends and neighbours to do the same.

On behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, we would like to thank all those who took part in this consultation, for giving their time to share their views with us.



Deirdre Hounsom, Chair



Cllr. Louise Cole, Deputy Chair

Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

## SECTION 2 INTRODUCTION



The Business & Special Interests Group Survey (BSIG) ran for 6 weeks from 19th September until 31st October 2016. It followed on from the First Household Survey which took place earlier in the summer and asked residents for their views.

The Steering Group decision to conduct a BSIG was based on the need to continue to build our community evidence base from different perspectives. Community views will primarily form the basis for our Neighbourhood Plan land use policies, which will be scrutinized against wider evidence. Additionally the Neighbourhood Plan process helps to ensure we have a whole picture of community views and aspirations which may include non-land-related issues.

**The BSIG was designed to elicit the opinions of the businesses or organisations operating in the Sid Valley. We sought comments from businesses and other local organisations and associations about the current social, commercial and economic environment, and views on a future vision for Sidmouth and the Sid Valley.**

The context for the Neighbourhood Plan is land use planning, therefore it must be recognised that some of the comments will relate to Community Actions for inclusion in the non-statutory part of the plan, for the community to implement rather than as policies. In addition it should be noted that some comments relate to issues which are under the direction and control of various responsible authorities and therefore do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The BSIG is one of a series of consultation initiatives which include the following:

- First Household Questionnaire – June & July 2016
- Business & Special Interest Groups Survey – September & October 2016
- Children and Young People’s Survey – November/December 2016
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Household Questionnaire/Draft Policies Consultation April - Sept 2017

Once our draft plan has been inspected by East Devon District Council and an Independent Examiner, there will be a referendum for the people of the Sid Valley to vote on whether to ‘make’ the plan. The referendum itself will determine the outcome which will be a legal planning document which will influence future developments in the Sid Valley.



# LEGAL CONTEXT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS



## Localism Act 2011



### **LOCALISM AND COMMUNITIES**

Neighbourhood planning for communities was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans become part of the statutory process and the policies contained within them are then used in the determination of planning applications. It must be stressed that the policies produced cannot block development that is already part of the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like. Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place which is based on community consultation and evidence will help us to influence the type and nature of what is already in the Local Plan.

Additionally, it will ensure that any further development is acceptable to the people of the Sid Valley, is appropriate and meets their needs and aspirations.

### **A STATUTORY PROCESS**

The Neighbourhood Planning process has a structure guided by the Department for Communities and Local Government which includes some compulsory steps which are managed by the local planning authority – in our case East Devon District Council. The Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is working on behalf of Sidmouth Town Council as the authoritative body for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group is made up of eight community members and three Sidmouth Town Councillors.

We are now more than half way through the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan for the Sid Valley. When we have done this, East Devon District Council, will organise both the independent examination of the plan and the community referendum that will be held to decide if the plan is brought into force. The referendum is an important step, allowing those that live in the neighbourhood area to decide whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan comes into effect.

The Neighbourhood Plan once made acquires statutory status, the opportunities both during the making of the plan and after, create an enabling environment for close cooperation between Sidmouth Town Council, Community Groups and EDDC and Devon County Council. Such cooperation upholds the principle of community involvement, formalised by the Localism Act, of which Neighbourhood Planning provides the statutory instrument to influence how the Local Plan is interpreted and enforced and to integrate the provisions of the Neighbourhood Plan accordingly.

# SECTION 3

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



***“WORKING TOGETHER”.***

***Red Arrows at Sidmouth, August 2016.***

The Business and Special Interest Groups Survey resulted in 104 survey responses representing over 1600 employees and members of community groups. 67% of those who completed this survey said they had not previously completed our first household survey, demonstrating that through targeting specific groups we are increasing community involvement in the consultation process.

These views from a different perspective offer further insight into what is highly valued and what is of most concern to the community. This helps us to further understand the development aspirations that are held and the challenges that are faced by employers, employees and those who provide a wide range of services and activities in the Sid Valley.

Importantly the information and analysis this provides, helps to guide the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plan policies when seen in conjunction with our other consultations and the evidence base we are researching. It also allows us to identify which areas can give rise to NP Policies and those which may become Community Actions.

Reflecting the target audience for this survey the majority of responses focused on Economic Resilience as a key issue, identifying our existing strengths and opportunities, balancing these with limitations and constraints which affect the ability to maintain and/or improve the business or group performance.

As with the First Household Survey, our analysis of responses to this Survey reveal and confirm the sense of interconnection between the different elements that make Sidmouth and the Sid Valley so special. These elements define our Seven Themes.

From the beauty of the natural environment, to the heritage and uniqueness of the built environment, the sense of a vibrant community with many successful and active organisations and finally, a thriving economic sector which provides revenue and stability for residents, businesses and tourists alike.

There is a sense that each relies on the others for its ongoing success, or survival. Each element is something to be cherished and cared for, not simply by leaving things as they are, but by careful, well thought through development.

This was a survey of businesses and other organisations rather than residents and unsurprisingly therefore housing was less significant in terms of responses than in the Household Survey. Businesses and groups did however, recognise the need for affordable housing, particularly to encourage younger families and to improve the diversity and age profile of the community.

While no specific views were overwhelmingly evident in any of our themes, the themes provided a useful framework against which the views expressed in the BSIG survey can be understood. What also emerges is a strong sense of interconnectedness across the themes. It is the interdependence between them that demonstrates the need for joined up thinking to meet the development needs of the whole community.

The concerns about the challenges we face as a community now and in the future were also similar but amplified by the Business and Special Interest Groups who responded, highlighting the particular need to sustain and improve the local economy through tourism. This was balanced with the need to promote and preserve the assets that exist in the community through quality, affordable and appropriate housing and development that will support the community to resist a down turn, avoid complacency and to maximise carefully the opportunities to enhance the Sid Valley.

THE HIGH AGE PROFILE CAN LEAD TO  
AGE BIAS AND LACK OF BALANCED  
REPRESENTATION IN THE NEEDS OF THE  
TOWN

BSIG Respondent

The central ideas arising from our analysis of the survey highlight the importance of place, identity and tourism to both the community and business fabric of the town and villages. Clearly there is a perceived need to ensure that development in the community is carefully balanced to meet the requirements of young people, families and older people if we are to ensure a vibrant sustainable economy, the right balance of housing and foster the identity of the Sid Valley so that it can meet the needs of all.

The key messages from our analysis demonstrate the connection between each theme and are summarised as:



**THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT** Any development and its appearance needs to be sensitive to the heritage and identity of the particular area in which it is situated.

**THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT** Our location is a key economic driver and should be reflected in our Identity. Protecting and preserving the built and natural landscape whilst permitting needed sensitive and appropriate development must include tackling cliff and coastal erosion.

**HOUSING** The current Local Plan aims to provide 'affordable' homes for all age groups to facilitate a balance between jobs and homes, as part of a 'balanced community' strategy. Respondents were very vocal in their views that more affordable housing should be built in the Sid Valley, to encourage a wider age spectrum of residents and enable their businesses to thrive.

**ECONOMIC RESILIENCE** Creating and promoting a unique area identity and highlighting our tourist attractiveness will support this. Encouraging an eclectic, discerning retail environment with an emphasis on quality which will maintain and increase footfall is important.

**COMMUNITY AND CULTURE** Developing a vibrant, cohesive and resilient community will create greater social interaction, involvement and interest in town affairs. Protecting our culture and sensitive diversification of it and cherishing our heritage will strengthen any development.

**TRANSPORT** Increasing the availability, improving location and cost of parking spaces and better traffic management, woven into the extension of cycle and walking pathways, and safer cycling routes; which could potentially increase our tourism offer.

**EASTERN TOWN REGENERATION** Most respondents felt that that area needs regeneration, both to enhance the run down appearance of the area and also to provide enhanced facilities for cultural, commercial and sporting activities. Regeneration offers potential for enhancing our tourist appeal and creating resource for the expansion of existing festivals and the creation of new ones. Regeneration however must be balanced with the need to preserve and promote heritage; quality architectural design and better connections, and the need to be respectful of our coastline were viewed as critical. Parking and public transport were seen as major issues.

The responses also provide the rationale for developing conversations around tourism, particularly pointing to proactive engagement with the Tourism and Economy Committee of Sidmouth Town Council. There is a strong sense of desire for constructive engagement from the Business and Special Interest Groups community with both Sidmouth Town Council and EDDC.



FORMATION FLYING

The Red Arrows, Sidmouth 2016

# SECTION 4 PROCESS

## 4.1 THE 'SEVEN THEMES' PRINCIPLE

From the collation of the data in the First Household Survey, it was clear that seven “themes” underlay all the responses. These seven key themes are listed below, and it can be seen that they include all topics and developments of community interest. Accordingly, have used them to analyse responses for this BSIG and their importance is so evident that we intend basing all our subsequent work on an identical framework. We will also identify areas for further research and consultations to develop our Neighbourhood Plan policies and Community Action priorities using this Theme framework.

1. Built Environment	
* Sustainable development	* Brownfield sites
* Historic streets and heritage buildings	* Energy efficiency
* Built-up area boundaries	* Renewable energy
* Public places and townscape assets	* Commercial developments
* Design and local distinctiveness	
2. Natural Environment	
* World Heritage coastline and AONB landscape	* Pollution
* Coastal protection (beach management and flood prevention)	* Litter and vandalism
* Ecological (bio) diversity	* Climate change
3. Housing	
* Local housing needs	* Infrastructure (utilities)
* Affordable housing	* Waste recycling
* Windfall development	* Second homes
* Residential conversions	
4. Economic Resilience	
* New employment land	* Tourism
* Higher wage economy	* Agriculture
* Retail	* Creative industries and upskilling
5. Community and Culture	
* Health and well-being	* Leisure facilities and recreation spaces
* Balanced community	* Safe town and crime prevention
* Culture and entertainment	* Young people
6. Transport	
* Road safety	* Traffic congestion
* Pedestrian access to town spaces	* Parking
* Footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways	* Public transport
7. Eastern Town Regeneration	

## 4.2 HOW THE SURVEY WAS CARRIED OUT

The BSIG survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) was based on the approach used in the First Household Questionnaire, avoiding leading or closed questions and asking for opinion and feedback on a similar range of questions, broadly seeking to identify:

- our strengths
- actual or potential threats to our environment or communities
- opportunities presenting potential economic and environmental improvements

The BSIG survey was made available online to over 400 Sid Valley businesses and special interest groups, using “Survey Monkey” software as the online survey platform. A downloadable version of the Survey was available from the Neighbourhood Plan website. Contact was made and maintained by email using qualified email addresses supplied by database specialist Experian, which listed local organisations who had given permission to be contacted for market research. Members of the Steering Group conducted further research to complement the contact list, and a final list was compiled for the initial contact and subsequent follow ups.

Awareness raising of the BSIG Survey was supported for its duration by articles published in the Sidmouth Herald including a full page spread, a High-Street banner promotion, and group presentations. A flyer was printed, and members of the Steering Group delivered them personally to a substantial number of hotels, businesses, associations, clubs and groups in Sidmouth town centre, satellite retail areas, trading estates, and in Sidford, Sidbury and Salcombe Regis.

## 4.3 ANALYSIS AND REPORT PREPARATION

We received 104 responses to the survey, which represents a response rate of around 22% of contacted organisations.

Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts and opinions in eight free-text questions. With narrative style responses, it is impossible to capture exactly what each respondent has said. We employed a common thematic analysis methodology for narrative responses. Using a worksheet and based on the 7 Themes that emerged during our First Household Questionnaire, a count was kept of the number of times the theme or response was mentioned. These worksheets were collated by the administrator and the totals of the responses were recorded in an Excel database – a report of which is in Appendix 2. This report details the number of responses received for each question and a percentage for that response based on the total number of responses received for that question. It also identifies which of the 7 Themes the response relates to.

The main body of this report follows in Section 5 comprising analysis of the BSIG survey question responses against each thematic area. Section 6 contains analysis of the statistical data we collected.

# SECTION 5

## NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Analysis was carried out by the Steering Group Theme Teams (Appendix 3) and collated by the report writing team, providing a scrutiny and checking process to ensure consistency and accuracy.

The following analysis is based on aggregate data collated from responses to survey Questions 14 to 23 (Appendix 1) which sought largely narrative answers. These questions were designed to gain an insight into the advantages and disadvantages experienced by businesses and groups in the Sid Valley. These questions invited comment about how and what development could enhance the economic and social conditions for businesses and groups in the next 15 years.

### 5.1 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



SIDMOUTH FROM THE SEA.

Many Businesses and other organisations noted the important part that the Built Environment plays in the economic and cultural life of the Sid Valley. There was a recognition that our quality Built Environment must be protected.

Any development and its appearance needs to be sensitive to the heritage and identity of the particular area in which it is situated.

The balancing act between on the one hand protecting the Built Environment while on the other, permitting development was recognised as difficult.

This can be summarised by the need to recognise the importance of the heritage and uniqueness of the Built Environment to the culture and economy of the Sid Valley while also recognising the need for suitably designed and sensitive controlled development.

I SEE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR LOW  
IMPACT BUSINESS, AS LONG AS AUTHORITIES  
DO NOT ALLOW THE AREA TO LOSE ITS HEART  
BY ALLOWING LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT  
(HOUSING OR INDUSTRIAL/RETAIL)

BSIG Respondent

Many respondents felt the need for small start-up units, with shared and communal facilities; no positive views were expressed that the planned Sidford Employment Site was suitable for this.

There was a view that the current footprint of the built-up area boundary could accommodate the planned development of small start-up businesses in existing areas, (Alexandria Estate, or the proposed Eastern Town development).

A concern was an apparent lack of larger premises in which to expand. In Q16, which asked about limitations or constraints, 14% of respondents, including businesses, voluntary organisations and a school, identified that they were currently based in inadequate premises or facilities and that the built up nature of the town and perceived planning restrictions prevented them from expansion or moving into larger premises.

This balancing act between on the one hand protecting the built and natural environment while on the other, helping organisations to grow, was specifically referred to in Q23 where 11% of responses referred to the negative aspects of the Sidford Employment site while 5% referred to the importance of the site in providing the opportunity for businesses to grow.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy, which, although the lowest priority for respondents, should be considered in terms of the sustainable development of the Valley.





THE RIVER SID, SOUTH OF TWO BRIDGES ROAD, SIDFORD.

The location of the Sid Valley in beautiful countryside, an AONB and the Jurassic coastline was a recurrent theme throughout the eight questions. It was given as a major reason to locate the organisation in the Sid Valley, a reason for the organisation's existence and as a driver of the local economy in attracting residents and tourists.

The natural beauty of our land and seascapes together with our World Heritage coastline ensures the ongoing success of our tourism, and attracts both people and businesses to live and work in our towns.

### PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

Respondents were concerned that the valley's heritage, beauty and character be preserved, particularly by preventing 'settlement creep' and residential and commercial developments in land designated as being within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Developments which are not in keeping with their natural surroundings are seen as having an adverse effect on the community and the local economy.

Mention was made of the work of the Sidmouth Arboretum's environmental awareness and education, maintaining a healthy tree cover with new planting schemes, and the need to maintain verges and hedges.

Cliff erosion and a perceived lack of progress with the Beach Management Plan elicited concern, with erosion seen as an ongoing threat to:

- the Eastern Town,
- the Coastal Path, and our local section of the Jurassic Coast.
- Tourist development
- Water sports and marine activities.

FOR OUR BUSINESS WHICH IS DEPENDENT UPON TOURISM IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT IT STILL REMAINS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO VISIT AND NOTIONS OF EXPANSIVE DEVELOPMENT RUIN THAT VIEW FOR VISITING PEOPLE. THOSE PEOPLE WILL STAY AT HOME OR VISIT OTHER COASTAL SPOTS IF THE AREA IS SPOILT WITH ANY OVER DEVELOPMENT.

BSIG Respondent

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Looking beyond the immediate need to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change some mention was made of the need to explore renewable energy community solutions such as electric bikes, and solar energy for example. Tree and native hedges and wildflower planting were also highlighted as important to preserve the natural environment. The idea of creating green energy using hydro-energy from the River Sid was mentioned.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Concerns were expressed about encroachment on AONB land, and the potentially adverse environmental impact of the Sidford Employment Site. Developments should be sympathetic to and in harmony with the landscape, and reflect an eco-friendly aesthetic. New housing should, where land permits, be situated with walking distance of the town(s).

## **COMMUNITY AND CULTURE**

Respondents noted the vitally essential role of recreation spaces (parks, playing fields, allotments) within the community, and expressed concerns for the potential loss of green space at Knowle Park.

The role recreational activities play as part of Health, Wellbeing and Preventative Health Care was noted throughout, with reference to established water sports and safe cycling routes. Beach and Sea user organisations in particular noted the risks of not tackling beach management and coastal erosion; failure to address these problems could result in their activities ceasing.

Positive aspects for developments at Eastern Town were seen as offering expansion of current leisure activities, particularly with an improved slipway, whilst fears were expressed for a loss of our sea heritage and risks faced by current tenants.

## **TRANSPORT**

Mentions were made of creating a green transport policy, the extension of existing walking and cycling pathways, and the creation of new ones. Traffic levels and seasonal congestion were seen as issues needing to be addressed.



RURAL IDYLL, SIDBURY.

As mentioned earlier we noted that Housing featured less prominently in respondents answers because of the focus on economic resilience and given the nature of the survey target audience. When asked about improvements which might enhance the economic and social environment in the Sid Valley in the next 15 years however, Q17, (making housing more affordable to encourage younger families and to improve the diversity and age profile of the community), was the 3rd most popular answer with 7% of respondents mentioning it.

### **Threat to AONB land**

There are fears about the '*encroachment on AONB land*' – and yet a proposed additional site partially on AONB land at Sidbury appeared in the Local Plan land, and an application to develop the site was duly submitted. Concerns that new housing should not lead to overdevelopment echoed the threat perceived of losing AONB land to building.

### **Infrastructure**

There are fears that infrastructure, (communications, water, sewerage, power and flooding protection) may not exist to support new house building.

Whilst not strictly a housing issue, the lack of availability or broadband/superfast broadband in large areas of the Sid Valley towns is seen to be a problem. Improved broadband was considered by between 4% and 9% of respondents to be slow and in need of improvement.

### **Editor's Note:**

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group commissioned a Housing Needs Survey in January 2017 which will assess any need for housing greater than that stipulated as a minimum in the Local Plan, particularly focusing on Affordable Housing.



CROWDS AWAIT THE RED ARROWS.  
SIDMOUTH 2016.

***“Economic Resilience is concerned with the reducing the vulnerabilities of economies to crises, and strengthening their capacity to both absorb and overcome severe shocks and supporting strong growth.”<sup>1</sup>***

Reflecting the target respondents for the survey, factors relating to Economic Resilience were mentioned in each of the 7 key themes revealing an intrinsic interconnection between them. Some respondents were concerned with the need to preserve our natural and architectural assets and our history, whilst others acknowledged changes in the wider market and a need to respond to those changes in a positive manner.

The local economy, tourism with a long season, local customers and visitors with more disposable income, good independent shops and fewer national chains was mentioned by 32% of respondents as an advantage of being located in the Sid Valley. Another 22% mentioned the location in a beautiful and unique environment as being beneficial to their operation.

Low wages, lack of employment opportunities, an economy dominated by minimum wage jobs and difficulty in recruiting workers with required skills was mentioned by respondents throughout the survey.

Lack of opportunity to expand premises has already been mentioned in this analysis but was seen by 14% of respondents as a constraint on their organisation – both businesses and community groups.

Concern was expressed over the need for positive collaboration between EDDC and the Sid Valley community to ensure that the potential for growth through harnessing the assets of the Sid Valley is in line with the town’s residential needs and tourist potential.

There was recognition that on the one hand the Sid Valley is relying on charm and reputation to sustain the future, and that at the same time ideas for growth and economic diversity are evident.

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<sup>1</sup> Manda Brookman (CoaST – One Planet Tourism): ‘The Art of Resilience...and Being Positively Deviant’  
Amanda Brookman, speaker Devon Maritime Forum Winter17 Conference  
‘Selling the Seaside: Opportunities and Challenges for Marine and Coastal Tourism in South West England’  
Report on Business and Special Interest Groups Survey

Comments promoting the advantages in planning for a diversification of the demographic profile of the Sid Valley, developing tourism potential, and attracting new types of inwards investment were numerous.

The following four categories summarise the concerns and aspirations shared by respondents:

### **Tourism**

Overall the importance of Tourism was seen to be the 'life blood of the local economy'.

This prominent view elicited the following positive solutions to resolving some of the challenges faced:

- Develop a Vision/Identity for Sid Valley; Define Target Markets; Create a Marketing Strategy
- Create unique visitor experiences based on existing and new appeals
- Cap the total of coffee/charity shops in the town centre to retain space for independent shops.
- Adopt a Philosophy of Excellence, targeting both affluent residents and visitors as well as more artisan offerings. The Brighton Lanes environment has been noted as a highly successful attraction which might influence planning considerations in future years.
- Significant loss of accommodation in recent years is noted, and further loss through hotel/residential conversions is viewed as having a potentially adverse long-term effect on the economy

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR  
INDEPENDENT SHOPS AND  
SMALL BUSINESSES TO BE  
SUPPORTED AS MUCH AS IS  
POSSIBLE AS THESE ARE THE  
LIFEBLOOD OF THE AREA  
WHICH IS, IN LARGE EXTENT,  
DEPENDENT UPON TOURISM.

BSIG Respondent

### **Inwards Investment**

- Promote our strong work-life balance to attract entrepreneurs and families
- Promote the affluence of the residential and visitor profiles to attract up-market, eclectic shops/restaurants which would diversify the retail experience and guard against the risk of becoming a 'Clone Town'.

### **Infrastructure**

- Encourage rapid development of a fibre optic and mobile communications infrastructure to encompass key residential and business areas.
- Consider the provision of specialist, flexible space buildings for use by hi-tech/internet businesses and micro-manufacturing industries.
- Create a Business Centre or Virtual Hub to foster and nurture startups and small businesses
- Mention was made of the need for larger warehousing/storage space and larger retail shops



- Revitalise satellite retail areas threatened with economic decline such as Woolbrook, Temple Street; and Sidford; improve local parking and resources.
- Review parking for tourists and visitors to replace lost spaces;
- Avoid out of town developments which could reduce footfall in the town centre.

## **Employment**

- This topic is intrinsically linked with other themes which consider the need to attract and provide homes for families and young people, and the needs of inwards commuters.
- Longer term, a need is seen to link educational courses on offer to fulfil existing job profiles and those emerging in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, both in the Sid Valley and in neighbouring towns/Exeter.
- There was a suggestion that better links established between Sidmouth College and local businesses could provide a gateway to better skilling of school leavers and the creation of higher paid jobs through vocational training.



SINGING AT SIDMOUTH SEA FEST ON THE HAM, 2016.

The Community and Culture theme includes consideration of the requirements of Young People, Health Care and Well-Being, and is concerned with:

- Moving towards a balanced community/demographic
- Culture and entertainment
- Leisure facilities and recreation spaces
- Safety and crime prevention

In Q14 52% of respondents said they located their business or organisation in the valley because of the quality of life and 48% said their choice of location was based on community, culture or economic reasons.

Like the First Household Survey many respondents (29%) commented on the perceived safety of the location, the quality of life and, for the non-business operations, established voluntary organisations with committed volunteers, many of whom were retired professionals with reasonable disposable income.

The main concerns noted were about the unbalanced community and lack of diversity brought about in the main by an influx of better off retired people, a relatively low-wage economy in the retail or service sector, lack of better opportunities for younger people and a property and rental market that made it difficult for young people and families to afford to live in the locality. There was a general consensus in Q18 from 19% of respondents that improving opportunities for young people as already described above and having more affordable housing would help to re-balance this situation.

In Q20 7% of respondents talked about leisure activities which improved the health and wellbeing of the community, attracted visitors and improved the age profile and diversity of the area by attracting people not otherwise perceived as target residents or tourists through activities such as water sports including the sailing club, the gig club and surfing and kayaking. Protecting the coastal path was seen as a particularly important due to the connection it provides for the community and visitors to the rest

of the Jurassic coast. In addition, the area has many established sports clubs, from croquet, tennis and cricket to football and rugby, appealing to people of all ages and providing an essential part in the fabric of the community. Finally, healthcare and health provision in a community dominated by an older, retired population, was mentioned by 7% of respondents in Q20 who considered that retaining hospital provision in the town was essential, particularly since domiciliary care is not adequately provided for. Also mentioned was the need for provision of preventative healthcare to ensure the wellbeing of the community. Concern was expressed about future developments, including the ongoing planning proposal for the Knowle, which would add to the existing strain on health and social care.

## **Population and Community**

Sidmouth is a prosperous town with a strong and cohesive sense of community with over 400 clubs and associations. People rally to discuss and influence major issues facing both town and environment; for example, the Knowle, and the Sidford Employment Site.

There are strong links to the international community – through tourism, the Sea Fest, Folk Week, St John’s School, the International School,

The community is balanced in that people wish to cherish our heritage but equally to make progress in the interests of younger people. Some respondents observed a need for a sensitive, controlled development of the community; with a population demographic seen as in need of diversification. Others disagreed and felt the community was in balance. Within these differences there is however, a perceived need however to attract a younger age group who choose to live, work or have a business here. The child-care offering that exists is seen as very important, permitting parents with young children to work, balancing employment and services that support people to work therefore is seen as a factor for consideration alongside future development.

The town is generally affluent, offers a safe environment with a high quality of life, and for those who choose to live here, an enviable work/life balance, however for those in low paid employment housing is unaffordable.

## **Employment**

More employment opportunities must be created for young people of working age with their needs recognised in planning. It was noted that few jobs exist which pay over the living wage. Some businesses are unable to recruit people with needed skills. Respondents noted that ‘green working’ or working from home could be promoted, and provision made for startup premises and virtual or physical business hubs to facilitate a young and entrepreneurial economy.

Promoting the Sid Valley as a great place to live and work to bring benefits to the community and attract visitors was referred to in many responses. Respondents raised place identity and character repeatedly. What the area is known for was a thread running throughout the responses which gave a variety of central points about how to develop the identity of the Sid Valley to support the creation of

WITH RESPECT TO THE SOCIAL  
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH, THE  
PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE AND HEALTH  
FACILITIES IS IMPORTANT

BSIG Respondent

employment. The points included: develop unique and eclectic identity; encourage independent traders, avoid cheapening the quality reputation, improve leisure facilities to attract visitors and encourage initiatives which would develop the area as a year round tourist destination by developing a cultural Festival identity.

A general positive sense was reflected about the emergence of the festivals in the area which are diverse in focus and have growing appeal to both local people and visitors. The Science Festival for example is seen as complementing education particularly promoting the STEM topics (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and their interaction with music, comedy and drama, whilst specific interest groups such as the Sailing Club develops and delivers nationally accredited Royal Yachting Association courses and plans to create opportunities for those with special requirements. Recognition for the contribution to the community and economy that such events make was highlighted.

### **Housing, Education, Health Care.**

These factors taken together seem to indicate a need for new affordable/family-friendly housing, which carefully considers the relationship between availability of housing and the economy. Expansion of health care provision and school/college places to maintain their economic viability, and facilities for younger people to socialize and enjoy sports and activities were emphasised. Current health service provision should be at least maintained, and if possible improved.

### **Culture and Entertainment**

Several respondents noted the potential benefits of a community hub encouraging the sharing of ideas and resources in the Valley. Mention was also made of the lack of evening eating establishments.

### **Leisure and Recreation**

The variety and quality of sea/coastal based activities were seen to positively create an important hub which connects local people with their location; for example, Sidmouth Sailing Club, Sidmouth Gig Clubb, Sidmouth Lifeboat and the Surf Life Saving club. Sports were seen as part of the fabric of the area's cultural offer with outdoor sports, seen as high quality in terms of numbers attending and their benefits. But it was highlighted that all are affected by weather during the winter when teams may be unable to train or play. This affects people from age 7 upwards. Decent floodlit 3 or 4 G pitches that all sports could share would benefit all clubs in the valley.

Comments about Port Royal highlighted concern about the potential loss of heritage, the importance of addressing the needs of existing tenants and clubs, the need to expand current leisure facilities (swimming pool) to include gym, studio & performance space. Responses reiterated how it could be maximized as a community hub for festivals & other community events, used to create space for theatre/music/the arts, and leisure spaces and continue to support sea based sports and leisure activities.



THE VELO BEGINS IN SIDMOUTH, 2015.

## Parking

Given that 69% of respondents were businesses and the majority of those were in the retail, hospitality or tourism sector, it's no surprise that parking was a big issue, the main complaints being the lack of spaces, on-street parking reduced through no-waiting restrictions and lack of spaces in designated car parks.

There is concern about the limited parking for locals, day visitors and tourists and the relatively high charges compared with neighbouring towns, all of which are detrimental to business and tourism. There is support for affordable or free car parks, a multi storey car park and for a Park and Ride interchange. Park and Change is considered to be of benefit to Exeter rather than to the Sid Valley. Woolbrook Road is identified as an area whose retailers would benefit from improvements to promote them as satellite retail areas.

WE GET A LOT OF BUSINESS FROM PEOPLE WALKING THE COAST PATH, A FEW HAVE MENTIONED THAT THE PATH THEY WOULD USUALLY WALK HAS BEEN CLOSED DUE TO CLIFF EROSION, IF THIS CONTINUES THE WALKERS WILL GO ELSEWHERE

BSIG Respondent

## Traffic

Heavy traffic and seasonal congestion, particularly during major events, have a negative impact on some local businesses and a Lifeboat launch can be constrained by traffic on the esplanade. Better local traffic management would be of benefit at these peak times. Heavy and large vehicles are seen as damaging to pavements and infrastructure. Traffic calming is supported and 'green transport' should be encouraged.



## **Cycling and Walking**

Improving and extending existing cycle paths and pedestrian provision was considered important by around 5% of respondents. Creating a link from Sidford to Sidbury is seen as important, as is a 'green route' cycle link from the Byes to the Esplanade. There is also support for a cycle track, perhaps involving the old railway line route to link with neighbouring towns and cycle ways. The Sid Valley should become a 'cycling and walking' destination, protecting the environment, providing attractions for tourists and day visitors and increasing economic and social viability.

## **Pedestrians**

There is a perceived lack of safe pedestrian areas in some parts of the town centre. Woolbrook Road is not safe for pedestrians.

## **Sea Traffic/Visiting from the Sea**

A number of suggestions about increasing visitors from the sea and enabling improved access to the sea included; a jetty, harbour and pier are all suggested to facilitate seaborne traffic, increase visitor numbers and therefore revenues. A harbour or jetty or slipway would enable the lifeboat to be launched on the east end of the beach nearer to the lifeboat station.

## **Public Transport**

Buses are supported and recognised as important to the business community. The local hopper should be promoted and well sign-posted with some respondents suggesting that the Hopper service should be expanded beyond its current summer operation.



SIDMOUTH'S HERITAGE AT  
PORT ROYAL

In response to Q 22, Eastern Town Regeneration was rated as having a great potential impact on businesses, organisations and groups. Community assets and facilities were mentioned by 61% of respondents when asked to tick those topics that have the most impact on them in Q19, Eastern Town Regeneration featured as third highest.

The possible impacts of regeneration were viewed as potentially positive or negative depending on the nature of the redevelopment itself, highlighting the importance respondents felt in getting it 'right' for the community.

Many respondents said that Eastern Town Regeneration had the potential to bring positive benefits to the town but also had the potential risk of loss of heritage, a failure to address the needs of tenants and a lack of trust in EDDC that it would handle the project sensitively or to the benefit of the community.

A number of respondents talked about the potential opportunities that the regeneration presented through mixed use community spaces that would benefit residents and visitors. Ideas included the expansion of current leisure facilities in the Ham to include a bigger swimming pool, gym and studio.

PORT ROYAL REDEVELOPMENT COULD BE A  
FANTASTIC ADVANTAGE BUT WE DON'T KNOW THE  
OUTCOMES.

BSiG Respondent

Others talked about the possibility of creating a performance space and making it a community hub for festivals and other community events.

It was felt that the quality of design and construction of this area was very important.

There was also a suggestion that any Eastern Town regeneration could be done in such a way as to reflect the historic pathways through this area.

Parking issues and road congestion, both already mentioned in the analysis, also related to the challenges facing Port Royal and related solutions which include improving and incorporating walkways and cycle ways.

## SECTION 6

# INFORMATION GATHERING ANALYSIS

The BSIG survey questions 1 to 13 referenced below for ease, were designed to understand the make-up of respondents, the following information was gathered as a result of the responses:

**Q 1.** Have you previously returned the first Household Questionnaire as a resident of the Sid Valley? Please indicate below, (to assist us with our data analysis) and complete this questionnaire from the perspective of your business, association or group.

Total number of responses was 104.

c. 67% of respondents had not completed the first Household Questionnaire suggesting that the exercise was valuable in collecting new views.

**Q 2.** To help us analyse your views, we need some information about your Business, Organisation or Group

Total number of responses was 102.

We asked for postcodes to ensure responses were from the plan area, only 1 response was not showing an EX10 postcode.

**Q 3.** Name of Business, Organisation or Group

Total number of survey responses was 104. 101 respondents provided the name of their organisation, 3 remained anonymous. This enabled us to identify if the respondent was on the mailing list purchased from Experian and whether it was a business (72, 69%) or an association, club or other type of organisation (32, 31%).

Of the 104 respondents, 50 (48%) were on the Experian list and 51 (49%) were not. As previously mentioned, 3 (1%) remained anonymous and therefore it is not possible to say if they had originated from the Experian list.

Names are not published here for data protection.

**Q 4. Contact Name and position in Business, Organisation or Group (optional)**

Total number of responses was 85.

Names are not published here for data protection.

We encouraged respondents to discuss the questions first with their wider stakeholders, members, volunteers and users and to respond by the decision maker/s of the responding organization. Most common positions of respondents were Owner/Proprietor, Director, Sole Trader, Head of Department, Chair, Trustee.

**Q 5. Contact Details (optional)**

Total number of responses was 73.

Not published here for data protection.

**Q 6. Which of the following best describes the principal activity of your Business, Organisation or Group?**

90 (87%) respondents used a multiple choice selection to identify the principle activity of their organization.

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| c.16% | Retail accounted for the most numerous responses   |
| c.12% | Hotels & Accommodation   |
| c.7%  | Community Services, Education, Food & Beverage and Sports jointly  |
| c.6%  | Construction, machinery and Homes, Entertainment and Leisure, Health Care & Pharmaceuticals and Non Profit jointly |
| c.4%  | Leisure  |
| c.3%  | Volunteering /Charitable Services jointly  |

Retail and Consumer Durables and Hotels and Accommodation were the most frequently represented reflecting the nature of the economy for the area.

**Q 7. Type of Business, Organisation or Group:**

Total number of responses was 104.

In % order highest to lowest the types of respondents were;

- |       |                 |
|-------|-----------------|
| c.22% | Private Company |
|-------|-----------------|

c.19%	Sole Trader
c.17%	Charity
c.17%	Other
c. 12%	Partnership
c. 7%	Home base business
c. 5%	PLC

Given that the combined % of Sole Traders and Home Based business that may give a clue as to the focus on the need for small business space and provision of networking hub facilities and the need to improve broadband.

**Q 8. Time in Business / Years established:**

Total number of responses was 99.

c. 53%	20 years +
c. 18%	10 – 15 years
c. 11%	3-5 years
C. 9%	6-10 years
c. 8%	0-2 years

Overwhelmingly returns were from more established businesses, this may reflect the nature of overall business in Sidmouth, the main economic hub, or possibly suggest that newer businesses either connect less through the means we used or are not registered with the database we used.

**Q 9. Number of Employees:**

Total number of responses was 87. Responses highest to lowest numbers of employers were;

c. 49%	2 – 10 employees
c. 15%	Sole Trader
c. 14%	11 – 49 employees
c. 13%	1 employee
c. 9%	50+ employees

These responses were in line with the size of the economic area and nature of business, organization or group and as in Q. 8 mirrors the fact that the area is largely made up of micro and small enterprises. Using a conservative estimate based on the lowest possible number of employees in the range, this suggests a combined workforce of around 629 people represented through these responses.



**Q 10.** Number of Employees who are resident in Sid Valley: 0 1 2 - 10 11 - 49 50+

Total number of Responses was 84.

- c. 46% 2 – 10 employees resident in Sid Valley
- c. 21% 1 employee resident in Sid Valley
- c. 15% 0 employees resident in Sid Valley
- c. 12% 11-49 employees resident in Sid Valley
- c. 6% 50+ employees resident in Sid Valley

This breakdown of numbers similarly correlates to Q 9 in that over 600 local employees who contribute to the local economy and are members of the local community.

**Q 11.** Number of Volunteers:

Total number of Responses was 79. In order of responses highest to lowest;

- c. 57% 0
- c. 24% 50
- c. 9% 11-49
- c. 6% 2-10
- c. 4% 1

Using a conservative estimate based on the lowest possible number of volunteers in the range, this suggests a combined volunteer group of around 1040 people – again all members of the Sid Valley community

**Q 12.** Who are your target customers / clients / members?

Total number of responses was 84.

- c.62% Local Shoppers (living within Sid Valley)
- c.31% Tourists, visitors, outside Sid Valley
- c.7% Internet/online

The responses give a valuable insight into both the importance of local customers and therefore of the related issues such as transport and parking and the potential impact of higher numbers of visitors and the shared challenges. This could be said to be reinforcing the notion that if development of the area is right for the residents in the community it will be right for the visitors to the community and therefore balance is key.

**Q 13. About your Business, Organisation or Group:**

Total number of responses was 99.

c.86%	Local (Sid Valley)
c.14%	Branch of a national/regional

This question revealed that by far, the majority of respondents (85, 86%) were local, independent businesses or organisations with the remainder (14, 14%) identifying themselves as a branch of a national/regional organisation or group. This endorses the validity of the survey, in that it was predominantly interested in the views of organisations whose owners, members and employees would be members of the Sid Valley community.

## SECTION 7

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS



Sunset at Sidmouth

Respondents were unanimous – we live in an extraordinary part of the UK, with a history and landscape we must cherish not only for ourselves and visitors who are the engine of our economy, but for future generations. Alongside this, those who responded also appreciated the challenge to maintain the balance between appropriate development to progress and thrive with the preservation and protection of our natural and existing assets.

Keeping it unchanged is the ambition of some; and therein lies potential danger to much of what makes us special – our hotels, our eclectic shops, our people, our activities, our collective energies. This survey reiterated the messages we heard in the first household survey; that without doubt every aspect of life in the Sid Valley is interconnected and therefore interdependent, working together to sustain our people, our lands, and our prosperity.

The redevelopment of Port Royal as a proposed development within the Local Plan is seen as having key potential to deliver the benefits that will help to secure long term social and economic success to the area. But protection and promotion of the heritage, environment and coastal activities of the area for both community and visitors are critical to that success.

Should one of the topics listed in our seven key themes begin to decline, there is an inherent risk that another theme may begin a related decline. For instance, should we lose some of our hotels to apartments, our retailers might not survive the winter months, or at all. Should more of our homes be sold as second homes and be empty much of the year, there will be less footfall in our retail areas, and less spending in our town. Without the charming streets and cafes, tourists will be fewer; they might simply pay a short visit to see our coastline and move on. And conversely, if balanced development takes place that is appropriate, needed, and meets the needs of the whole community then it will have positive benefits to each of the thematic areas.

This survey and its predecessors confirm that a housing policy is required which caters for the current population, encourages young people to stay and attracts new families and workers to the area. We've established that preserving heritage and environment and diversifying the tourist offer to attract visitors are key to both preservation and progress.

Some of these requirements are land based issues and can therefore form part of our Policies. Other results cannot. These will be incorporated as Community Actions which will serve to guide how our communities develop and thrive in the coming years.

## NEXT STEPS

The Steering Group is currently analysing the results of our Young People's survey and is due to report on this part of the whole community consultation in March 2017.

The analysis report of the First Household questionnaire, this report and the report of the Young People's survey together with ongoing research of other evidence, including a Housing Needs Survey, combined will inform our draft policies which residents will have an opportunity to examine and comment on over the next 3-6 months. All of which leads to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which the community will have a further opportunity to comment on before it goes to a referendum.



**JOINED UP THINKING.**

Red Arrows, Sidmouth 2016.

More information about Neighbourhood Planning can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan page of Sidmouth Town Council website at <http://www.sidmouth.gov.uk/index.php/neighbourhood-plan>

**You can follow our progress or contact us via the following:**



Search: "Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan"



@sidvalleyplan



[neighbourhood@sidmouth.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhood@sidmouth.gov.uk)

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Or write to us at Sidmouth Town Council, Woolcombe House, Woolcombe Lane, Sidmouth, EX10 9BB

# SECTION 8 APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### **Business and Special Interest Groups Survey**

Attached as a separate document

## APPENDIX 2

### **BSIG Excel Data Analysis Report**

Attached as a separate document

## APPENDIX 3

### **Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Theme Teams**

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#### REPORT WRITING

**Team Members:** *Richard Thurlow, Peter Murphy, Councillor Louise Cole, Tim Salt*

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#### THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

**Theme Team Members:** *Richard Thurlow, Jeremy Woodward, Graham Cooper, Creating Excellence*

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#### THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

**Theme Team Members:** *Councillor Ian McKenzie-Edwards, Graham Cooper, Jeremy Woodward*

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#### HOUSING

**Theme Team Members:** *Councillor Michael Earthy, Richard Thurlow, Jeremy Woodward, Creating Excellence*

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#### ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

**Theme Team Members:** *Peter Murphy, Jeremy Woodward, Jonathan Davey*

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#### COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

**Theme Team Members:** *Deirdre Hounsom, Andie Miles*

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#### TRANSPORT

**Theme Team Members:** *Claire Russell, Peter Murphy*

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#### EASTERN TOWN REGENERATION

**Theme Team Members:** *Richard Thurlow, Jeremy Woodward, Graham Cooper, Creating Excellence*