

Helmdon Parish Survey 2025

Key Findings and Comparisons

This report offers an analysis of the results from the recent Helmdon Parish Plan Survey, drawing comparisons with the 2011 Parish Plan Refresh Report where relevant. The new survey collected data between March 2025 and May 2025.

The survey included questions covering various aspects of village life, from household demographics and housing opinions to transport, environment, amenities, community safety, and activities. There were 116 individual respondents to the 2025 from 75 households.

Age: 98.28% of respondents were over 11 years old. Looking at specific age groups for individual respondents, the largest group was 45-59 years old (46.15% of 104 respondents), followed by 60-64 (17.31%), 25-44 (14.42%), and 18-24 (14.42%). There were very few respondents under 18 in this section (7.69% were 11-15, 1.92% were 16-17).

Gender: Of 104 respondents, 47.12% were Male, 49.04% were Female, and 3.85% preferred not to say.

Household Size: The largest percentage of households had 2 people (31.87%), followed by 4 people (20.88%) and 3 people (16.48%). 91 households answered this question.

Length of Residence: A significant majority have lived in the village for a long time. 39.42% of 104 respondents have lived in the village for more than 20 years, and 33.65% for 11-20 years. Only 1.92% have lived here under 2 years.

Transport and Road Safety

Vehicle Ownership & Parking: Of 89 households, 43.04% have 2 total vehicles, and 27.85% have 1. Most cars are parked on a driveway (60.66% of 61 car responses), followed by on-street (36.07%) and garage (30.00% of 20 car responses). Vans, motorcycles, motorhomes/caravans, and off-road vehicles are less common.

Buses: 76.62% of 77 respondents think there should be more buses in general. Specifically, respondents expressed interest in more buses to Brackley (85.53% Occasionally/Regularly), Banbury (70.83%), Northampton (76.62%), and Milton Keynes (54.39%). The 2011 report also identified public transport, particularly inconvenient bus times, as an issue and a need to explore alternatives.

Village Minibus: 44.44% of 81 respondents would use a village minibus, and 17.65% of 68 respondents would consider being a volunteer driver. Several email addresses were provided by potential volunteer drivers. This aligns with the 2011 report's call to explore alternatives to traditional bus services.

Car-sharing: 15.19% of 79 respondents would participate in a car-sharing scheme for work journeys, and 6.58% of 76 would for shopping or leisure. The 2011 report noted support for a car share scheme but highlighted difficulties.

Transport for Medical Appointments: 28.00% of 75 respondents would be prepared to use their car to transport people to Brackley or Banbury for medical appointments, with fuel costs covered.

Road and Pavement Maintenance: 51.49% of 101 respondents felt road and pavement maintenance was of low or very low quality.

Welsh Lane (B4525) Safety: 35.96% of 89 respondents thought reducing the speed limit to 40mph would make the road safer. A larger percentage (64.04%) did not think it would. Many respondents provided comments, with frequent suggestions including:

- Installing a roundabout at the crossroads.
- Improving visibility by cutting hedges/grass verges.
- Better enforcement of speed limits.
- Using speed cameras or traffic lights.
- Addressing HGVs/lorries.
- Concerns about overtaking.
- Improving signage.

One respondent felt reducing the limit would increase overtaking risk. Another noted vehicles already don't adhere to the 50mph limit. Road safety, specifically the Welsh Lane crossroads, was frequently cited as the most important issue.

Village Danger Spots: 54.76% of 84 respondents felt speeding is a problem in the village. 37.31% identified other danger spots. Specific locations mentioned include the 'S' bend/corners by the Church, Wappenham Road (especially near the 30mph zone start, narrow section, and where lorries park), Station Road (speeding, parking issues near school), Church Street (blind bends, parking issues), the cross roads on the Welsh Lane, and outside the school (parking congestion, pedestrian crossing).

Road Safety Measures: Extending the 30mph limit (weighted average 2.58/5), a 20mph limit past the school (3.35/5), traffic calming (2.60/5), more warning signs (2.40/5), and toleration of street parking (2.55/5) were scored. The 20mph limit past the school was the most welcomed measure among those listed with a weighted average score.

Pavement Use Difficulty: 32.94% of 85 respondents found pavements difficult to use. Reasons included broken surfaces (34.62% of 78 responses), sideways slope (32.47% of 77), vehicles parked on pavements making pedestrians walk in the road (38.96% of 77), and not enough dropped kerbs (17.14% of 70). This links to the 2011 report's mention of monitoring pavements and comments in Q60 about pavement maintenance.

School Parking Danger: 80.43% of 89 respondents strongly agreed or agreed that car parking outside the school causes danger to pedestrians and other road users. This echoes concerns raised in comments in Q62 and Q71.

Housing and Development

Village Framework: 48.54% of 103 respondents thought it would be unacceptable to enlarge the Village Framework. 33.01% thought it would be acceptable.

More Homes: 49.02% of 102 respondents thought there should not be more homes built in Helmdon. 39.22% thought there should be. This aligns with the 2011 findings where over 80%

were against large scale development. The 2011 report used this information to reaffirm the Parish Council's planning policy.

Type of Housing (if more built): Of the 45 respondents who thought more housing should be built, the most needed types identified were smaller homes (1-2 bedrooms, 73.91% of 23 responses for 5-10 homes needed) and bungalows for the elderly (83.87% of 31 responses for 5-10 needed). Warden controlled housing for the elderly also saw significant support (90.00% of 20 responses for 5-10 needed).

Rented Accommodation: 57.89% of 95 respondents felt there was no need for more rented accommodation. 25.26% felt there was a need.

Amenities and Facilities

Internet Access: 98.88% of 89 households have internet access from a device at home. The primary access method is via a broadband telephone line (76.67% of 90 responses), with Tove Valley Broadband also used by a notable percentage (22.22%). 4G/5G Mobile is used by 13.33%. The 2011 report stated broadband was available but identified a need for increased speeds, with some households and businesses struggling. Interest in high-speed fibre broadband is high in the new survey: 45.16% would definitely use it, and 36.56% probably would. Only 5.75% would very unlikely or unlikely use it. Improving internet speed was mentioned as a most important issue or additional comment by some respondents.

Post Office: 96.81% of 94 respondents were aware of the Post Office facility in Helmdon. 58.89% use it. 47.62% would use it if it were open on a different day, and 47.62% if open at different times. The 2011 report welcomed the reopening of the visiting post office but noted some seemed unaware. Awareness seems very high in the new survey.

Other Facility Usage: The Fat Landlord PH is used regularly (20.21%) or sometimes (64.89%) by a large proportion of respondents. The mobile butcher is used regularly (17.58%) or sometimes (21.98%). The Fish & Chip Van is used sometimes (47.78%). The milkman is used regularly (19.78%) or sometimes (2.20%). The scrap man is rarely used.

Youth Facilities: Only 1 respondent answered the specific questions for under 18s (Q10-Q17). This individual wanted an adventure playground, more play equipment, a sand pit, a swimming pool, would maybe join a youth club, would join a holiday club, and liked the park and countryside best.

Regarding the need for a dedicated building for young people, 28.74% of 87 respondents said Yes, 28.74% said No, and 42.53% had no opinion.

On the need for youth clubs, a weighted average suggests "Good idea but I wouldn't help out" was the most common sentiment across age groups. Specifically, for 11-15 year olds, 19.72% thought it a good idea and would join, while 63.38% thought it a good idea but wouldn't join. 5.63% thought there was no need. 11.27% would be willing to help out. Several email addresses were provided by potential volunteers.

For holiday clubs, 19.18% would use a holiday club for 6-10 year olds, and 16.90% would use one for 11-16 year olds. The majority (63.01% and 59.15% respectively) thought it was a good idea but wouldn't use it. 13.70% and 21.13% respectively felt there was no need.

Regarding teenagers' needs, 47.62% agreed there should be organised trips/days out, 56.92% agreed there is a need for a part-time paid youth worker, and 78.79% agreed more volunteers are needed.

Suggestions for under 18s included a youth worker to gather young people's input, sports and gaming get togethers, daytime school holiday activities, baby groups, a table tennis club at the school, using the school building outside school hours, improving cycle paths, and village parties/barn dances. Some feel as much as possible should be done for teenagers. The 2011 report stated that no youth issues were identified during that refresh, which contrasts with the significant discussion around youth needs and activities in the new survey. However, the 2011 report did mention the junior rugby team idea not getting off the ground.

Meeting Venue: Only 8.60% strongly agreed or agreed that Helmdon needs another meeting venue. 80.43% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of comments stated that existing venues (Reading Room, Church, Pub, School Hall) are sufficient. Issues raised about current venues included lack of parking and limited capacity/space at the Reading Room, as well as no outside space there. The recent refurbishment/improvement of the Reading Room was mentioned positively. This directly echoes the 2011 discussion about a Village Meeting Place, where considerable work was done but difficulties were found, particularly relating to extending the Sports Club pavilion.

Community-run Shop: When asked what they would consider being part of from the 2024 survey ideas, 40.70% of 86 respondents said yes to creating a community-run shop. 32.56% said no, and 26.74% maybe. Several email addresses were provided by those willing to help. The village shop was also frequently mentioned as the single most important issue or in additional comments.

Environment and Footpaths

Awareness of Environmental Designations: Awareness varies. The Jubilee Community Wood has the highest awareness (88.30% aware), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (49.46%), Local Wildlife Site (LWS) (43.62%), and a conservation area for the school (20.43%).

Willingness to Help: Respondents expressed willingness to help with an annual litter clearing day (33.33% of 39 responses), a wildlife and environment survey (33.33%), setting up a Helmdon Wildlife & Conservation Group (28.21%), maintaining public footpaths (17.95%), protecting wildlife habitats (15.38%), maintaining the church grounds (15.38%), and surveying trees (5.13%). Many email addresses were provided. The 2011 report highlighted that 183 respondents found the environment important and 27 people gave their names to be contacted about an environmental group, identifying a clear need to re-establish a local wildlife group. The new survey shows continued willingness to support environmental and maintenance activities.

Disturbances: Traffic noise (56.76% concerned) and unpleasant smells (40.54%) were the most frequent disturbances mentioned by 74 respondents. Visual eyesores (30.14%), noise at unsociable hours (24.73%), smoke pollution from garden bonfires (23.66%), smoke pollution from farm or other bonfires (29.03%), and light pollution (24.73%) were also concerns.

Desired Village Improvements: Removing litter (weighted average 3.68/5), more litter bins around the village (3.53/5), clearing the brook (3.37/5), planting more hedges (3.10/5), and creating a village pond (2.91/5) were welcomed measures, all receiving positive weighted average scores above 2.5.

Recycling: Beyond glass, paper, plastics, residents would like to recycle small electricals (73.61% of 72 respondents), metals (40.28%), clothing/shoes (20.83%), fridges/washing machines/freezers etc (16.67%), children's toys (6.94%), soil/compost (15.07%), and bricks/rubble/stone (10.96%).

Footpaths/Bridleways: Of 73 respondents, the most common difficulties found were mud/water (52.05%), nettles, brambles and high weeds (46.58%), high stiles/unsafe stiles (31.51%), poorly marked along route (30.14%), farm animals (19.18%), uncontrolled dogs (16.44%), crops across path (15.07%), locked gates (13.70%), barbed wire (10.96%), and footpaths being poorly signposted from the road (9.59%). Some comments mentioned dog poo, electric fences across paths, and stiles that are not dog friendly.

Path Improvements: Improved access (20.29% desired), kissing gates (40.58%), improved surfacing (26.09%), more vegetation clearance (55.07%), more local paths (24.64%), more footpaths (18.84%), more bridleways (15.94%), and a map showing paths and a guide to interesting walks/rides (43.48%) were desired improvements. Comments suggested more white waymark pointers, better advertising/availability of maps, a map/history board on The Green, enforcement against landowners blocking paths, and better signposting. Maintaining footpaths was also a popular activity residents would consider being part of (32.56% yes, 34.12% maybe).

Off-road path to Brackley: 55.17% of 87 respondents were very likely or likely to use an off-road path for walking and cycling between Helmdon and Brackley. Only 14.95% were unlikely or very unlikely. This strong support aligns with the "lot of support" noted in the 2011 report for a cycle route, which was proposed but faced landowner cooperation issues. The cycleway was also mentioned as the most important issue by some.

Crime and Community Safety

Crime/Anti-social Behaviour Concerns: Of 74 respondents, the top concerns were house burglary (66.22%), theft from outbuildings (50.00%), theft from the garden (41.89%), theft from motor vehicles (40.54%), theft of motor vehicles (56.76%), vandalism (30.14%), drunkenness (20.55%), graffiti (10.96%), and drugs (8.11%). Theft of motor vehicles appears to be the most significant concern among these specific categories.

Needed Measures: Of 93 respondents, the most popular measures desired were education of dog owners (31.58%), provision of more dog litter bins (30.69%), enforcement of byelaws (29.47%), and putting up notices (24.21%) regarding dog fouling. Regarding other measures, CCTV (street cameras) was popular (29.03%) as were a greater police presence (24.73%) and better consultation between local police and local people (23.66%). 29.03% supported greater participation in the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, although only 53.26% of respondents were aware there is one. Comments included specific suggestions for a 20-mph speed limit, CCTV with signage, addressing litter (especially from lorries), concerns about organised burglary/vehicle theft from outside the area due to low policing levels, and cameras on roads into the village.

Communication and Information

Sources of Village Information: The most frequently used sources were leaflets dropped through doors (80.43% of 92 responses), the village noticeboards (56.52%), and the village Facebook pages (46.74%). The parish council website and the Reading Room website were used by a smaller percentage regularly or sometimes. "Word of mouth" was also frequently

mentioned in "other" responses. The 2011 report noted that some respondents were unaware of existing activities and amenities, highlighting a need for more publicity. The 2011 action plan included producing a new quarterly village newsletter in a punchier format. The new survey indicates that traditional methods (leaflets, noticeboards) and Facebook are the primary ways residents receive information.

Other Feedback

Most Important Issue: The top issues highlighted in open comments included road safety (especially the Welsh Lane crossroads and speeding), transport (buses, cycle/walking path to Brackley), the need for a village shop, footpath maintenance, pavement/road quality, housing (need for more appropriate types, concerns about overdevelopment), litter/dog fouling, and facilities/activities for young people.

Anything We Missed: Additional comments covered a range of topics, including positive remarks about Helmdon being a wonderful place with friendly people and flourishing community groups, suggestions for a village gym/workout sessions/running club, concerns about noise from aircraft, a joint oil delivery scheme, parking restrictions (especially near junctions and the school), disappointment about the school/Acorns merger not progressing, suggestion to merge Facebook groups, concerns about tree loss, feedback on village signage, critique of the Sports Field pavilion and suggestion for a cricket pitch/pavilion, noting the importance of the pub, opposition to a 20mph limit and specific warning signs, need for better managed green spaces and communication of ideas, concern about overbuilding/preserving rural character, lack of public transport and its impact on older non-drivers, flooding on Station Road, traffic calming and road markings, the danger of using Radstone Road as an HS2 diversion, positive feedback on the fireworks evening and suggestion for a run event, general sentiment that the village has declined in recent years, and comment on the comprehensive nature of the survey.

Comparisons and Key Themes

Comparing the new survey results with the 2011 refresh report highlights some persistent issues and new concerns, as well as areas where previous actions may have had an impact:

Road Safety: This remains a top concern, particularly the Welsh Lane crossroads and speeding within the village. While the 2011 report noted a lack of a leader for a Road Safety Group, the new survey shows specific and widespread concerns, with common suggestions like roundabouts and enforcement. Parking issues, especially at the school, are also a significant safety concern.

Transport: The desire for improved public transport (buses, minibus) remains evident. The 2011 report noted inconvenient bus times and a need to explore alternatives, which is reflected in the interest in a minibus in the new survey.

Cycleway to Brackley: Support for this idea remains high in the new survey, as it was in 2011.

Housing and Development: Residents continue to largely oppose large-scale development and are protective of the Village Framework. There is support for smaller homes and housing for the elderly if building does occur.

Village Shop: The desire for a village shop is a prominent issue in the new survey, frequently cited as a most important issue, contrasting with the lack of volunteers to work on the idea noted in 2011. There is now expressed willingness to help.

Youth Facilities: Unlike the 2011 refresh which found "no youth issues", the new survey reveals significant discussion and perceived needs for activities and facilities for young people, particularly teenagers. The lack of specific under-18 respondents in the general survey questions makes the detailed responses from the single younger respondent and the opinions of the wider community on youth needs particularly important.

Meeting Venue: The consensus amongst those that responded remains that the existing venues are generally sufficient, particularly following improvements to the Reading Room. Parking continues to be a key issue related to the venue.

Environment and Footpaths: The importance of the environment and countryside access remains high. Willingness to volunteer for environmental activities and footpath maintenance persists, despite the Footpaths Group having been active since 2004. Difficulties on paths, such as mud, weeds, and stiles, are still prevalent concerns.

Communication: The reliance on traditional methods and Facebook for village information suggests the need for improved publicity or a regular newsletter, an action identified in the 2011 report.

Internet: While broadband availability was confirmed in 2011, the new survey indicates a strong desire for faster, high-speed fibre broadband.

Summary

In summary, the new Helmdon Parish Plan Survey provides an updated snapshot of resident opinions and priorities. It highlights persistent concerns related to road safety and transport, reaffirms community views on housing development, shows a renewed and strong desire for a village shop, reveals previously understated concerns about youth facilities, and confirms ongoing interest in environmental protection and footpath improvements. The data also points to specific areas for improvement in communication and internet infrastructure.

Action Plan

This action plan highlights the issues that were of greatest concern or that received the most support in the recent survey, drawing comparisons and additional context from the 2011 Parish Plan refresh where relevant.

1? Road Safety and Transport Issues

- Parish Highways Representative to continue to report road and pavement maintenance issues but to also raise awareness of FixMyStreet and encourage all residents to use it.
- Access data from the Speed Indicator Device (SID) on Station Road.
- Consider whether to rejoin Community Speed Watch.
- Consider 20mph zone near school.
- Work with school on parking at drop off and pick up; consider provision of volunteer parking wardens. Explore potential for off-street drop off.
- Continue to lobby for implementation of 40mph zone on the Welsh Lane (B4525) and encourage regular enforcement actions (mobile speed cameras).
- Explore or formally rule out crossroads junction improvements.
- Implement parking restrictions or markings in problem areas, especially near the school and junctions.
- Promote awareness of the Ability bus service and continue to lobby for scheduled bus routes for Helmdon, particularly to Brackley.
- Explore the possibility of a village minibus using volunteer drivers.
- Promote a car-share scheme to transport people for medical appointments in Brackley or Banbury.

2? Footpaths, Bridleways, and Cycling

- Organise more vegetation clearance working parties on paths.
- Where possible, install kissing gates instead of stiles.
- Have the footpath maps reprinted and made more widely available.
- Create a Project Group to progress the off-road path for walking and cycling between Helmdon and Brackley, as listed in the West Northamptonshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- Consider the possibility of creating a volunteer-run Village Maintenance Group to carry out all open space and public realm maintenance.

3? Village Amenities and Activities

- Create a Project Group to explore the issues and options for creating a new village shop for Helmdon.
- Consider the provision of a part time youth worker to meet the need for youth clubs, youth activities, holiday clubs, and events/outings.
- Explore ways to enhance existing sports and play facilities, such as improving access to the football pitches for juniors, a village gym, and working with the Helmdon Sports & Social Club to improve the sports field and pavilion.

4? Environment and Community Well-being

- Re-establish an environment group and organise related activities, such as conducting a wildlife and environment survey and protecting wildlife habitats.
- Continue with the annual litter clearing day.
- Repeat the Community Recycling Event held in 2024.
- Explore providing additional dog poo bins.

5? Connectivity & Communications

- Encourage and promote Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) high-speed fibre broadband initiatives.
- Consider rationalising various Facebook pages and groups.
- Consider creating a WhatsApp community.
- Consider reinstating a hard-copy traditional newsletter for the village.

6? Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

- Continue to appoint a Police Liaison Representative and increase provision of community safety information to the community.
- Encourage residents to sign up to Northamptonshire Talking.
- Promote greater participation in the Helmdon Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- Investigate ANPR cameras and/or CCTV on roads into the village.

7? Housing and Development

- Maintain the policy of protecting the Village Framework with exception sites being considered only for affordable housing schemes and/or community facilities.
- Where more housing is built, support smaller homes (1-2 bedrooms) and bungalows for the elderly as well as larger family homes (3+ bedrooms).