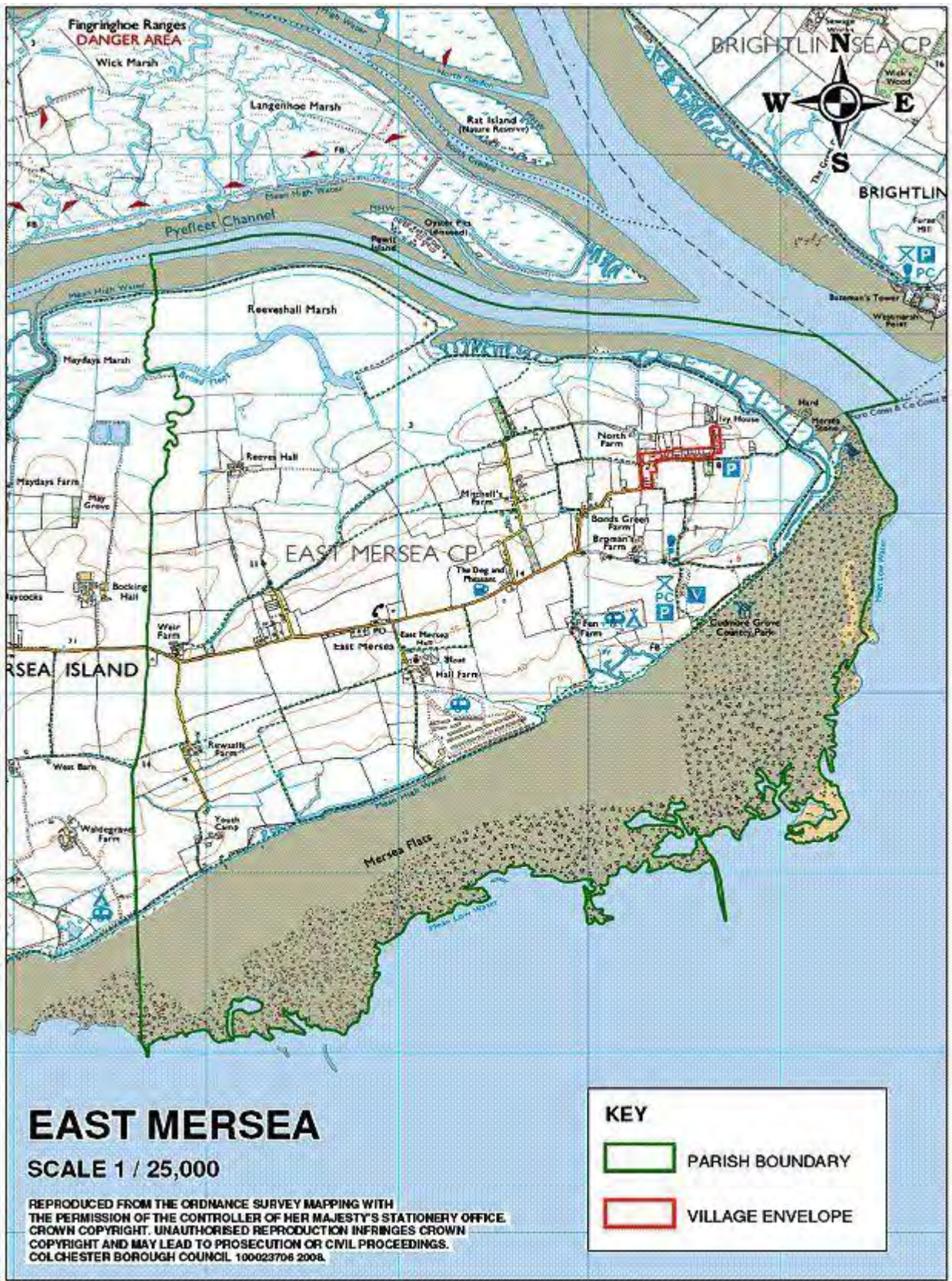




EAST MERSEA VILLAGE PLAN AND DESIGN STATEMENT



**PUBLISHED BY EAST MERSEA PARISH COUNCIL
ON BEHALF OF THE EAST MERSEA VILLAGE PLAN
AND DESIGN STATEMENT WORKING PARTY**



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This document and the following Appendices, which are not bound in this document, can be found on the East Mersea Parish Council website; <http://www.essexinfo.net/east-mersea-parish-council/>

APPENDIX 1 - East Mersea Village Questionnaire

APPENDIX 2 - East Mersea Village Questionnaire Results

APPENDIX 3 - East Mersea Business Survey Summary

APPENDIX 4 - RCCE Housing Needs in East Mersea Survey.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT?

A Village Design Statement describes the distinctive character of a village and the surrounding countryside. It delves back into the past to give a historical perspective showing how the community has evolved over the centuries. It describes the current environment, including the prevailing architectural styles in evidence and the traditional building materials typically used. It is also an opportunity for local people to influence the planning process within their own area.

Local character could easily be threatened by unsympathetic development. The East Mersea Village Design Statement therefore aims to raise awareness of what is special about this area, and at the same time gives parish residents a say in the future of their village by producing guidance on respecting these qualities. Providing these views now in this format is a way of ensuring that the voice of the local community is heard before rather than after any major planning decisions are taken that may affect the essential character of East Mersea. The Village Design Statement begins on Page 25.



Village Hall, Shop and Baring Gould Cottages

Why produce one for East Mersea?

This Village Design Statement is intended to ensure that future development and change within the parish are based on an understanding of the area's history and present character. It draws attention to what is special about the community, buildings and countryside to be found within the East Mersea parish boundaries.

How it was produced

All the residents and businesses of East Mersea were invited to contribute to the Design Statement through public meetings, workshops, and working groups. Survey forms were sent to every household and business. The statement beginning on Page 25 is a compilation of the many views expressed through the consultation process and has been written by the Design Statement team.

The Design Statement and the Planning Process

The purpose of this Design Statement is to guide future development in East Mersea Parish in a way that is specific to the settlement and the wishes of its community. It is structured to provide a set of descriptions of the features that have helped to shape the village in its past, and which are important today and will be in the future. Developers, architects and builders, owners and tenants of land and buildings in the Parish, as well by the Parish and Borough Councils when evaluating planning applications, should refer to these views of its residents.

The Village Plan

This design Statement is distinct from the East Mersea Village Plan, which is being developed in conjunction with the Design Statement. The Plan is set out at Page 35 and is an action plan addressing issues for the village for the future, to be recommended for adoption by East Mersea Parish Council for implementation.



HISTORY AND CHARACTER

The name Mersea is shown in earlier historic spellings as Meres-ig (895), mereseye (950), maeres-ige, meresai and Meresaia (1086). The name could be derived from the Saxon name Meres-eg, the island of the mere. 'Mere' denotes a pool.

Celtic Mersea

Mersea during Celtic times had a fairly stable population, living mainly but not entirely, by farming and fishing. Remains of Celtic salt workings have been found and pottery was also made in conjunction with the salt panning. It is believed that salt workings in East Mersea continued right up to late Tudor times as evidenced by the island's numerous 'red hills'. Mersea was at this time mainly wooded; Mountain Ash, Elder, Elm, Hazel and Willow flourished alongside more ancient tree varieties.

Roman Mersea

The Romans established a Colonia (settlement) for retired veterans on land near to Camulodunum, and for a long time this was their capital in Britain. The Roman general Suetonius defeated Boadicea, rebuilt Colonia and began to settle his men peaceably in the district. They soon discovered Mersea, which they connected to Colonia by a road.

Mersea represented more to the Romans than a mere observation post: they appreciated its pleasant and at that time well-wooded slopes. It became a kind of seaside resort for the wealthy citizens of Colonia. From remains that have been excavated it is apparent there must have been a considerable settlement on the island.

The Saxons, Danes and the Normans

No sooner had the Saxons begun to settle peaceably on Mersea than the Danes began their invasions. At first in 790 they raided just for booty but this incited them to conquest. In 878 by the pact of Chippenham made between King Alfred and Guthram, Essex and London became part of the Danelagh. The Danes used Essex more as a base for a settlement, so Mersea was of great value to them when they seized it in 893.

Mersea was not long left in peace; the Norman Invasion was the next event in its stormy history. The Normans quickly settled and it was under their direction that East Mersea Church was built. This was the beginning of a long period of peace and prosperity for the island. There are records of Meresai (East Mersea) in the Domesday Book, mentioning agriculture, woodland, sheep, swine and fisheries. The Parish was divided into two estates, East Mersea Manor and the smaller Bocking Hall.

Medieval

Whereas in terms of population size East Mersea was half that of West Mersea in 1327, by 1524 they were almost equal in size. Fishing became very important with fish weirs being installed in the channels around the island.



Oyster Fishery Today

Colchester Borough granted oyster dredging and fishing licences to East Mersea men in the 1560's. Colchester Corporation subsequently leased its oyster fishery to two East Mersea Mariners in 1683.

In 1540 a military emplacement called the Blockhouse was built at the East Mersea point to help safeguard the entrance to the Colne estuary.

During the siege of Colchester the parliamentary forces captured the Blockhouse and garrisoned the island. During this period they used the Church as a barracks and stables and did much damage to the windows and interior. The Blockhouse itself was maintained until at least 1651 but by 1768 it was in ruins, having been used for some time as a private dwelling.

The Twentieth Century

By 1901 the population of the village was 218, having fallen back from its high point of 331 in 1841. A golf course was started in 1901 when a nine-hole course was laid out and a clubhouse built. Several houses (known as the Dormy houses) were built for weekend golfing visitors. The course was closed during World War Two when the army took over the clubhouse as an Officer's Mess and Gun emplacements were built along the front up to and including what is now Cudmore Grove. The course and clubhouse (now Golf House) were finally sold as separate lots by auction in 1950.



Cudmore Grove Beach

Many defensive structures were built at East Mersea, both above and below ground, and these remained for a long time after the war. Most have now been demolished. An Admiralty owned underground structure still exists below the footpath at the end of Shop Lane and a Pill Box in good condition at Cudmore Grove. The remainder of the Cudmore Grove fortifications have been lost, along with much land, due to tidal erosion.



Cudmore Grove Pill Box

Since the early 1960s there has been a steady constant growth in the leisure industry with an expansion of the Camping and Caravanning business. There are now three major sites in East Mersea, Cooper's Beach, Fen Farm and Cosways. Coopers Beach is by far the largest with a summer population exceeding 3000 residents.



Cooper's Beach

Famous Residents

One of the most famous residents of East Mersea was the Reverend Baring-Gould who was the Rector and writer of several well-known hymns; novels and a series of volumes (16 in all) entitled the Lives of the Saints. Dr Harnack one of the first workers with X-rays (who eventually lost both his hands) and the politician Anthony Greenwood who became Lord Greenwood of Rossendale both lived in East Mersea for many years.

MAIN ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

East Mersea Parish Church

The parish church is dedicated to St Edmund King & Martyr a Saxon King of East Anglia. The earliest part of the church dates from the 12th Century with much being added later. The tower was built in the 15th Century and the turret surmounting it contained a beacon basket in which a bonfire could be kindled to warn inland areas of an enemy's approach.

The tower originally contained five bells but now there is only one survivor that was cast in 1439 by John Hille. The original medieval wooden frame that housed all five bells is still in existence but the surviving bell has been re-hung on modern metal beams (2010).



St Edmund King & Martyr

Internally much of the original interior was destroyed by parliamentarian troops during the Civil war when they used the church as a barracks and stables. The Jacobean Pulpit with iron hourglass holder and medieval early English stone font are noteworthy.

The church, adjacent hall and farm (about five acres in extent) were at one time all enclosed by a moat parts of which still remain.



15th Century Bell

Traditional Essex Buildings

East Mersea has many examples of traditional Essex two storey houses and agricultural buildings. Materials include :

Roofs – Thatch, slate, small clay tiles, pan tiles. Corrugated iron has replaced the original covering on some agricultural buildings.

Walls – Timber boarding, commonly white painted on houses and black pitch, paint or stain, on outbuildings and agricultural buildings. Red brick. Rendered and painted. Some pargetting, though this is probably not original.

Windows – Timber sliding sash and casement style. Some have been replaced with steel and UPVC casement style windows with varying results.



Bromans Farm – Grade 2 Listed

Jacobean, Georgian and Victorian Houses

We have some fine examples of old two and three storey houses including East Mersea Hall, Rewalls Farm, Reeves Hall and Bromans Farm. Materials include:

Roofs – Thatch, slate and small clay tiles.

Walls – Red brick. Rendered and painted.

Windows – Timber sliding sash and casement style.

The Dormy Houses

As part of a development in the 1930s a number of two storey houses and a golf club bungalow were built which now form a significant part of the eastern end of East Road. Other bungalows were built in other locations in a similar style. Materials include:

Roofs – Small clay tiles. As part of a development in the 1930s a number of houses and a golf club house were built which now form a significant part of the eastern end of East Road.

Walls – Rendered and painted, some red brick.

Windows – Metal casement. Some have been replaced with UPVC casement style windows with varying results.



Dormy House

Post War Period

Further infill housing, both two storey and bungalows, was constructed which introduced a further style, different but not unsympathetic with those that had preceded it. Materials include:

Roofs – Small clay tiles, larger concrete and clay interlocking tiles.

Walls – Red brick. Rendered and painted. Some timber boarding, commonly white painted or stained on houses and black on outbuildings and agricultural buildings.

Windows – Timber casement style. Some have been replaced with UPVC casement style windows with varying results.



Commercial and Agricultural

The leisure, agricultural and other commercial premises are largely very functional in their construction and style, though see New Essex Style below. Materials include:

Roofs – Corrugated asbestos cement sheeting, profiled metal sheeting, roofing felt.

Walls – Corrugated asbestos cement sheeting, profiled metal sheeting. Rendered and painted. Some timber boarding, commonly white painted or stained and black on outbuildings and agricultural buildings.

Windows – Timber and steel casement style.

New Essex Style

There are many examples of new mainly two storey buildings and extensive modernisations and extensions of older buildings in the “Essex Style” of houses and barns, including commercial buildings such as The Colchester Oysterage, Pittock Engineering, Mersea Vinyard and Ben’s Fish. Materials include:

Roofs – Thatch, slate, small clay tiles, pan tiles.

Walls – Timber boarding, commonly white painted or stained on houses and black on outbuildings and agricultural buildings. UPVC Boarding. Red brick. Rendered and painted. Some pargetting.

Windows – Timber and UPVC casement style.



Modern Houses

More recently modern single, two and three storey houses have been constructed which are variations upon the established themes and some one-offs, such as the “A Frame” in Shop Lane. Materials include:

Roofs – Slate, clay tiles and cedar shingles.

Walls – Timber boarding, white painted or stained on houses and black on outbuildings and agricultural buildings. UPVC Boarding. Red brick. Rendered and painted.

Windows – Timber and UPVC casement style.



Frontages

Most houses are set back with hedges, fences or brick walls. Most agricultural, leisure and commercial buildings are surrounded by hedges, fences or brick walls with timber or metal gates.

Sustainability

In recent years many buildings have been fitted with solar photo voltaic and hot water panels. We have two wind generators attached to houses. Some recent houses have been built to high sustainability standards with triple glazing, high levels of insulation and air-tightness. Many homes use wood burning stoves fuelled by local sustainable sources. There are examples of rainwater harvesting.



Conclusion

As the foregoing demonstrates there is no preponderant architectural style in East Mersea. We have a comfortable mix of architecture which is mutually sympathetic and in keeping with the surroundings.

See articles on Buildings in pages 25 and 34 for Planning Guidance.

LANDSCAPE AND SURROUNDINGS

Land Usage

Most of the land in East Mersea is agricultural but recreational use is also significant: holiday parks, country park and youth camp.

Crops

The agriculture in East Mersea has a distinctive split between intensive arable cropping and low input, traditional grassland on the north side of the parish.

- Wheat
- Oil seed rape
- Peas
- Beans
- Oats
- Sugar beet



There are a number of agri-environmental schemes practiced on the arable land most notable being grass field margins, areas (away from the public) of small bird seed plots and newly planted small parcels of woodland.

There is also a vineyard, smallholdings growing fruit and vegetables and a nursery and pick your own.

Livestock

Unlike many local parishes East Mersea still has a significant amount of livestock (although often not seen as they are located on the north side of the island which has limited public access).

The livestock include:

- A flock of rare-breed North Ronaldsway sheep.
- A commercial breeding flock of sheep
- A commercial suckler herd
- A number of cattle fattened from grass over the summer months
- A commercial pig breeding unit

There are also small numbers of chickens kept on smallholdings and horses kept in stables with paddocks.

Changes in Land Use

There has been a small decrease in livestock farming but a significant decrease in the growing of flowers for seed – once an important land use in East Mersea.



Some land has been turned over to recreational use most notably the Country Park (Cudmore Grove). There is pressure to allow further change from agriculture to recreation but this is likely to be limited under present planning policy.

Hedges and Verges

Despite some loss of hedgerows most fields still have hedges that are reasonably well kept. Road verges are adequately maintained, particularly adjacent to the holiday parks. Litter picking by local residents has helped to ease, but not cure, the litter problem.

Coast and Sea

Mersea Island is bordered on the south by the Blackwater Estuary, to the West by a complex of channels at West Mersea, to the north by the Strood and Pyfleet channels and to the East by the Colne Estuary that runs north up to Colchester.

East Mersea's southern coast is bordered by the Mersea Flats, an area of shallow water that partly dries at low tide to reveal a mixture of mud and gravel. Holiday parks are on this part of the coast and some visitors take to the water swimming or in a mixture of leisure craft including wet bikes and small boats for fishing.



Cudmore Grove Country Park is at the east of this coast; it is slightly elevated and has a gravel cliff, popular for visitors in search of fossils but subject to erosion and unstable.

Mersea Stone is at the easternmost point of the island, a gravel promontory that runs into the deep part of the River Colne opposite the port of Brightlingsea from which there is a summer ferry service. This is a popular destination for visitors both from land and sea. However the fast flowing and deep tidal stream must be treated with respect and is dangerous for swimmers and small boats.

The northern coast as it runs east from the Colne becomes the Pyfleet Channel, a safe anchorage for yachts and small craft. There are two private slipways for launching small craft, one north of Ivy House and the other adjacent to the Colchester Oysterage.

The seawalls provide a coastal footpath of about 10 miles around East Mersea and pedestrian access to the East Mersea seashore is best achieved from Cudmore Grove.



The coastal habitat is important for a wide range of wildlife including overwintering Brent Geese that visit the island in their thousands, often roosting in the fields adjacent to the Pyfleet Channel, and coastal birds such as Oyster Catchers, Cormorants, ducks and gulls.

These used to be important fishing grounds for fish and shellfish but these are much depleted. There are various varieties of reeds and salt loving plants such as samphire growing in the saltings.

There has been continuous erosion of the island particularly on the south coast where the mud, once consolidated by beds of eel-grass, is continuously being washed away. Sections of coastline, particularly near Cudmore Grove, have been undermined by wave action with old pill boxes and trees falling onto the beach. Brushwood polders were installed in the 1990's on the mud off Cudmore Grove to limit erosion without any success. The current rate of erosion of the park's saltmarsh could begin to threaten the adjacent seawall within the next few years.

Any proposal which might exacerbate coastal erosion in East Mersea should include measures to counter erosion.

ROADS AND BUILDINGS

East Mersea is a dispersed village set in agricultural land with diverse building types, styles and materials. Most buildings are houses with their associated out buildings, however there are also leisure industry, agricultural and other commercial buildings spread throughout East Mersea.

There are three main population areas. These are, from west to east, Rewsalls Lane/ Meeting Lane, Shop Lane and Ivy Lane. Each of these settlements incorporates part of East Road, which runs through the centre of the parish. It was once known as the 'High Road'.

Rewsalls Lane/East Road/Meeting Lane

Rewsalls Lane is sparsely populated with large detached houses with appropriately large gardens. The area contains a number of businesses including a vineyard and cafe, an engineering company and a fish supplier. It also contains the Essex County Council Outdoor Centre



D Pittock Engineering



Ben's Fish



Vineyard and Courtyard Café

The area around the junction of Meeting Lane with East Road contains a number of the village facilities including the Post Office and Village Hall, as well as the Country Kitchen Restaurant and Jarman's Nursery. The Parish Council has indicated a strong desire for a 30 mph speed limit for East Road, as a lot of road traffic tends to travel at high speed particularly along the lengthy straight section past the Village Hall.

The housing in this sub-area is predominately semi-detached; examples of this are Baring-Gould Cottages and Hall Farm Cottages in East Road, Hillside Cottages and Reeves Hall Cottages in Meeting Lane. Hall Farm and Reeves Hall Cottages were originally Tied Agricultural Cottages that have now passed into private ownership.

There are, however a small group of larger detached properties located on the northern side of East Road (immediately west of the junction with Meeting Lane). Both these and the semi-detached dwellings possess very generously sized gardens.



Reeves Hall Cottages



Jarman's Nursery



Village Hall, Shop and Country Kitchen



Baring-Gould Cottages



Hillside Cottages

Church Lane

Further eastward along East Road is Church Lane, down which are the historic St Edmund's Church and East Mersea Hall. Both of these are located in a rustic setting. Further south is Coopers Beech Caravan Park.



St Edmund's Church



East Mersea Hall



Cooper's Beach caravan Site

Shop Lane

A mixture of buildings straggles along Shop Lane. They range from attractive and more modest semi-detached houses at the southern end of the lane to more highly individual and architecturally interesting detached properties at its northern tip. In between, lie an assortment of bungalows, farmhouses and agricultural dwellings, as well as parcels of farmland and grazing land (e.g. for the use of horses). There are also areas of woodland at either end of the lane that covered by tree preservation orders (Manwood Grove being one).



Shop Lane

Next to the entrance to Shop lane from East Road is the Dog and Pheasant Public House. It serves food and is popular with locals and visitors to the island alike.



Dog & Pheasant

Ivy Lane/ East Road

The area of the village consisting of the eastern section of East Road and Ivy Lane constitutes the village envelope and contains a wide variety of individual house and bungalow designs. These are largely characterised by attractive and well-maintained gardens separated from the road by hedgerows. The settlement is positioned on high ground that slopes downward towards the sea wall.

A group of six pre-world war 2 dormy houses were built for golfers wishing to stay overnight after a day out on the local golf course. The old club house (Golf House) still exists although the golf course has long since gone.



The Dormy Houses

Many people make the popular walk from Ivy Lane down to, and along, the sea wall and the Country Park pass Golf House. This route is particularly well used by dog walkers. Fine views can be had of Brightlingsea, Colne Point and the River Colne and its estuary. The settlement and sea wall are largely separated from one another by grazing land.



The Golf House

The overall character of the village envelope is based upon the presence of a wide range of rural housing styles that are largely sited within spacious gardens.

ACCESS ROUTES AND TRAFFIC

Roads and Traffic

East Mersea has one main road, East Road, running through the village. From this a number of minor roads lead to residential, business and farming areas. East Road is generally of a reasonable width; however, it narrows in places. Side roads are generally narrow with few passing places. The surface of all roads in East Mersea suffers continuous deterioration but does not receive very regular maintenance.

The village has heavy motor traffic varying from cars with caravans to heavy goods vehicles. Traffic emanates from private residents, agriculture and business deliveries and large numbers of visitors to the holiday parks and attractions such as Cudmore Grove and local events such as horse shows. This level of traffic places a heavy strain on our limited road network.

Other traffic includes walkers, cyclists, pedestrians, horses and horse drawn carts that have to share the roads with motorists. This leads to a significant risk of accidents particularly on summer weekends when the roads are busy with visitors' cars and caravans. Much greater care and consideration is required of both parties.

Traffic Calming

Currently the only traffic calming measures are the speed limits of 40 mph generally on the island and 30 mph in some parts of the village. There are straight stretches of road, preceding and within the village, that lead to traffic travelling significantly faster than the 40 mph speed limit. Serious and fatal road accidents have occurred within the village in recent years.

Street Furniture

Traffic signage in the village is limited and frequently overgrown by hedgerows. The village needs appropriate road signs to encourage safe and considerate driving taking into account walkers, cyclists and horses.

Other signage e.g. advertising local leisure sites is inconsistent and poorly designed. There should be well designed and consistent signposting to local leisure sites and businesses.

There is minimal street lighting in the village. However given the rural nature of the area there is no demand for an increase in light pollution from additional street lights.

Parking

The only public parking in East Mersea is at Cudmore Grove, which is extensive when one takes into account the meadow which is used for overflow parking when needed. Visitors do park in other locations such as at the easternmost end of East Road which can be a nuisance and can cause obstruction.

Large and Heavy Vehicles

The main and sides roads of the village are used by large and heavy vehicle accessing farms, industrial businesses and caravan sites. Damage caused by this traffic, particularly on side roads has been and still is extensive.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Introduction

East Mersea is a rural community accessed by a single road and so the number and variation of businesses could surprise an enquirer.

A survey was conducted in January 2010 to analyse the number and types of businesses within the parish along with employment, both full and part time.



Cooper's Beach

Leisure Industry

East Mersea is a popular destination and so the predominant business is tourism.

There are three caravan sites – Coopers Beach, Fen Farm and Cosways.

Other tourist-linked businesses include Mersea Outdoors (which runs outdoor activities for young people); Cudmore Grove Country Park; Mersea Island vineyard; East Mersea Hall, (a wedding venue) and Ivy Farm (which is used by the Scouts and for people with special needs)

The parish has three restaurants, the Courtyard Café, the Country Kitchen, and the Dog and Pheasant pub, and a village shop.

Businesses

Due to its proximity to the sea an important type of business in East Mersea is that of fish supplies. Colchester Oyster Fisheries and Ben's Fish both specialize in supplying fresh fish to restaurants both locally and nationally with London being of particular importance.

East Mersea is a rural location and so as one would expect agriculture and horticulture remain significant businesses and account for the majority of the land area. As with the national trend the number of individual businesses has fallen in favour of fewer but larger businesses.

D Pittock Engineering is the only industrial business in East Mersea but remains a significant full time employer.

VILLAGE AMENITIES AND EVENTS

Village Shop and Post Office

This is Located in East Road, beside the Village Hall and close to the junction with Church Lane. It stocks a selection of groceries and fresh food, newspapers and magazine and various items for visitors from fishing gear to buckets and spades. Recently reinstated as a sub post office it is Open 7 days a week, 7.30 am to 5.00 pm.

Country Kitchen

This is next door to the Village shop. It serves breakfast lunches, teas and Sunday and evening dinners. Normal opening hours are – Monday to Friday 10.0 am to 3.00 pm, Saturday 9.00 am to 9.00 pm and Sunday 9.00 am to 3.00 pm.

Courtyard Café

This is situated at the Mersea Vineyard in East Mersea. It is open on Wednesday to Sunday, 10.30-4pm throughout the year. Seating is available both inside and out. Freshly made sandwiches, paninis, casseroles, pies and puddings. Real coffee and cakes a speciality, as well as local wines and beers.

Dog and Pheasant Public House

A wide range of wines, beers and spirits are served here with lunches and dinners.

“A traditional style pub with patterned carpets and hearty pub grub. The separate restaurant and large, pretty grassed beer garden attract the holiday crowd and day-tripping families, while the bar chummy camaraderie brings in a scattering of locals who hold court in the bar area.”
FancyaPint Review.



Dog and Pheasant

St Edmunds Church

St Edmund King and Martyr, East Mersea, Services take place at 9.30 am and 6.30 pm every Sunday. On Festival and special weekdays (e.g. Ash Wednesday) there is normally a 9.30 am service.

Cudmore Grove Country Park

Cudmore Grove is at the eastern end of Mersea Island with fine views across the Colne and Blackwater estuaries.

Here visitors walk the sea wall, explore the shore and watch for wildlife. Behind the sandy beach is an area of cliff top and grassland providing a tranquil open landscape for picnics, flying kites and other outdoor activities.

Opening Times

8.00 am until dusk, daily.

Parking

Pay and display; Cars: full day ticket £2; tax exempt vehicles - no charge; motorcycles - no charge; coaches - £15. Season tickets available.

Facilities

Bird Hide. Toilets. The information Room has recently been extended to offer refreshments at weekends and school holidays as well as housing displays and leaflets about the park.

Mersea Outdoors

The Mersea Centre is Essex Outdoors' largest outdoor centre. With approximately 62 acres of well maintained grass fields it can accommodate up to 350 visitors in tents and 104 in cabins.

Facilities include toilets and shower, a laundry room, dining rooms, a main hall equipped with music and a big screen cinema.

Mersea Centre for Outdoor Learning
Rewsalls Lane, East Mersea, CO5 8SX

Tel 01206 385598

info@merseaoutdoors.com

Mersea Rugby Club

A small friendly club, based at Mersea Outdoors in Rewsalls Lane, currently playing in London Division 3 North East.

Other amenities

At the three holiday parks there are activities such as:

Swimming

Golfing

Fishing

Club Entertainment

Coopers Beach, Church Lane – Wide range of facilities including accommodation in caravans and mobile homes, indoor and outdoor heated pools, café, bar and shop.

Fen Farm Caravan Site, Moore Lane – This is a quiet family run site close to sea and Country Park.

Cosway Park - The facilities on the park include: licensed clubhouse, heated swimming pool, tennis court, children's play area, boat launching and park, safe sandy beach.

Principal Village Events

Village Fete – held in aid of the Church and Village Hall on the first Saturday in August at East Mersea Hall. A strongly supported community event that has stalls providing local produce, second hand books and clothes, jewellery and games. Other attractions include a band and displays such as owls and pony rides.

The Mersea Island Food, Drink & Leisure Festival is a celebration of local food and drink, supports good causes and provides fun for all the family.

Mersea Island Ploughing Match – a biennial event, held weather permitting, on a suitable field in East or West Mersea. Attractions include heavy horse and vintage tractor ploughing, display of vintage agricultural machinery, local beers and food.

Art Shows – the island is home to quite a few artists and several display their work in East Mersea Village Hall during the Fete weekend.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Introduction

The landscape of the parish is predominantly rural with a mixture of arable fields, grazing marshes, hedgerows, copses and woodlands, seawalls, fleets, dykes, salt marshes, beaches and mudflats.

The importance of the coastal habitats for wildlife is reflected by the various designations on some of the land around the parish. All the adjacent mudflats that surround East Mersea, the salt marshes, beaches, most seawalls and dykes, as well as the grazing fields at the country park, are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and form part of the Colne Estuary National Nature Reserve.

In early 2000 all of this SSSI land became classified as a Special Protection Area, forming part of the Colne Estuary Special Protected Area (SPA) in the register of European sites under the Wild Birds Directive. The Colne Estuary is also a wetland of International Importance and qualifies as a special site under the Ramsar Convention for its numbers of wintering waders and wildfowl.

The Colne Estuary is also classified as a European Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive because of the importance of the coastal habitats.



East Mersea Flats

Cudmore Grove

Throughout the year a tremendous variety of wildlife can be found at Cudmore Grove Country Park, which is managed by Essex County Council. The importance of the country park for wildlife has led to it being designated a Local Wildlife Site.



Borrowdyke

Coast – The three coastal habitats include the beaches along the southern shore, the salt marshes and also the inter-tidal mudflats that lie adjacent to the parish.

Thousands of waders and wildfowl gather each winter around the coast for the rich feeding the estuary provides. Those found in nationally important numbers include shelduck, ringed plover, grey plover, sanderling, dunlin, black-tailed godwit and curlew. Many of the adjacent fields are important roost sites during high tide, offering some additional feeding as well as somewhere without disturbance.

Waders that have bred around the parish coast in recent years include avocet, oystercatcher, redshank, ringed plover and lapwing.

The salt marshes provide vital feeding as well as refuges at high tide for many birds. They also support a variety of specialised plants such as sea lavender, sea aster and sea purslane. Many are well established around the Essex coast but several are nationally scarce such as the shrubby sea-blite and the golden samphire. The biggest threat to the salt marshes is the rising sea level that not only means the loss of a valuable habitat but also a natural defence against the wave action in front of the seawalls too.

The ongoing coastal erosion has resulted in changes to the beaches at the country park, Fen Farm and near the Outdoor Centre. At some of these sites plants such as sea holly and sea bindweed have been washed away in recent years with no sign of them being able to re-establish themselves here again.

In the summer months the beaches where ringed plovers sometimes nest are popular with visitors, both local walkers and holidaymakers too.

The seawalls have become more important for wildlife as other adjacent land has become more intensively managed. Many plants are allowed to flower, attracting many butterflies such as meadow browns and skippers in summer as well as reptiles such as adders and common lizards. The longer grass supports small mammals, which in turn attract barn owls and kestrels to feed.



Seawall

WILDLIFE

The borrowdykes provide an important aquatic habitat for parish wildlife, offering food, nesting sites and somewhere to bathe. The reedbeds in the dykes are also important, supporting insects and birds such as the reed warbler. Scarce water voles can be found along many dykes and nearby ditches. Birds such as swans, mallard, dabchick, coot, moorhen and sometimes pochard and tufted duck breed along the park dyke most years. The only fishes found in the dykes are sticklebacks, the goby and a decreasing population of eels. Several species of dragonfly enjoy hunting insects along the dykes.



Borrowdyke Reedbeds

The coastal grazing marshes form a unique open landscape as well as being important for wildlife. Stretching from Reeves Hall towards Ivy Farm and round to the country park fields, as well as the Rewsalls marshes, these areas combine grassland, creeks and ditches. Thousands of wildfowl such as Brent geese, widgeon and teal feed here in the winter along with many species of waders. In the summer the fields become important breeding grounds for wildfowl and waders especially lapwing and redshank. Marsh harriers have become a regular sight throughout the year on the north side of the Island.

There are several ponds across the parish that support dragonflies, water voles, nesting swans, dabchicks, mallard etc as well as feeding for many other wildfowl. The pond at the country park is probably the richest in the parish for wildlife and visitors can enjoy this area whilst sitting in the hide.

Much of East Mersea is still arable which generally supports less wildlife than the areas of grassland. However in winter flocks of waders roost and feed in some fields, brent geese damage the winter wheat crops and occasionally flocks of small birds such as linnets and skylarks feed in young rape crops. Game cover strips alongside arable crops often support small flocks of finches and buntings. Skylarks can still be heard above most arable fields although corn buntings have nearly disappeared from the parish.

Many fields still have hedgerows around them although many were taken out during the 1970's and 1980's. The devastating effect of Dutch elm disease altered the landscape dramatically as many of the copses and hedgerows were dominated by elm. Most hedges still have elm surviving in them along with hawthorn and blackthorn. These hedges support many insects such as the hedge brown butterfly and birds such as yellowhammers and common whitethroats. Various landowners have also planted several new hedges.

There are various woodlands in the parish although Manwood Grove near Shop Lane appears to be the oldest and only natural one still surviving. This wood with its old oaks and dying elms still supports a rookery of 40+ nests each year, who squawk in the spring above the carpet of bluebells beneath them. There has been much planting of spinneys and copses across the parish over the last 20 years, which is already enhancing the landscape both visually and for wildlife. Tawny owl, sparrowhawks, woodpeckers, turtle doves along with warblers such as blackcaps and chiffchaffs depend on these woods. Pipistrelle bats can often be seen hawking close to these wooded areas in the summer.

A final wildlife feature of the parish includes the houses and their gardens. Each garden with its variety of flowers, shrubs and trees provides a valuable habitat for insects, reptiles, mammals and birds.

Many of these gardens form a valuable wildlife reserve along some of the lanes, where some species can pass through neighbouring gardens in their search for food or acting as sites of refuge. There are several ponds in the parish that are located either within gardens or close to the old original farmyards. These provide food for some species, nest sites for others as well places to bathe and drink.

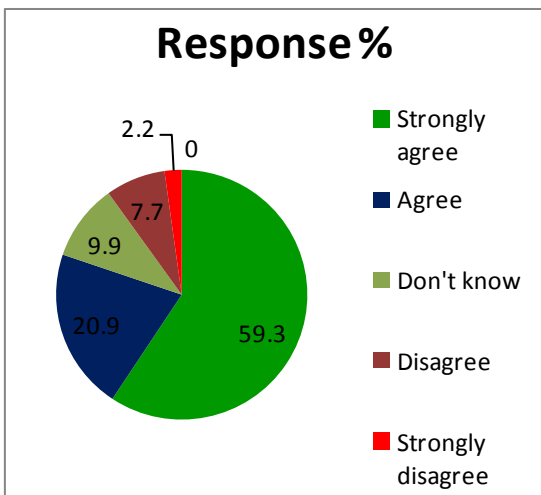
DESIGN STATEMENT

VILLAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following presents the significant findings from the Village Questionnaire related to the Design Statement under categories. Under each section is included our conclusions to be taken into account as Village Planning Guidance.

- Building form, Style & Layout
- Housing
- Access routes, Traffic & Surroundings
- Local Business & Amenities
- Environment and Conservation

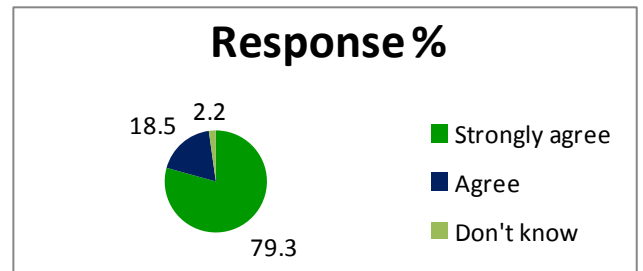
Questionnaire results :-



It is important that the village retain its current character as a rural community

- a very strong and clear response in favour

The existing community would be damaged by substantial expansion of the village



- a clear response in favour

BUILDING FORM, STYLE AND LAYOUT

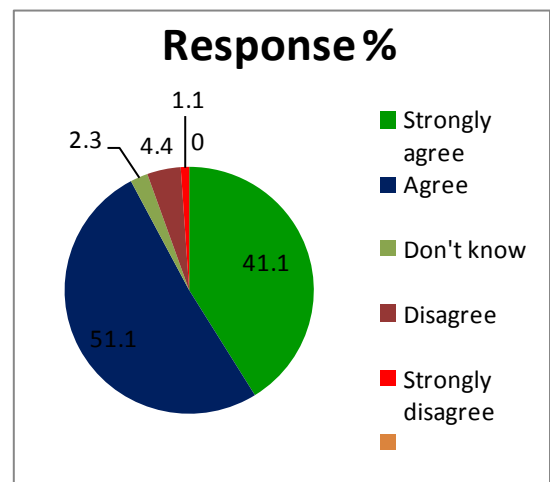
Questionnaire results :-

Only infill development sympathetic in scale and design to surrounding buildings should be allowed

Strongly Agree	34.8/%
Agree	30.4%
Don't Know	6.7%
Disagree	16.9%
Strongly disagree	11.2%

- a clear majority response in favour and a significant minority in disagreement.

Extensions to existing buildings should be allowed as long as they are in scale and design to surrounding buildings



- a clear response in favour.

We should allow redundant farm buildings to be converted into :-

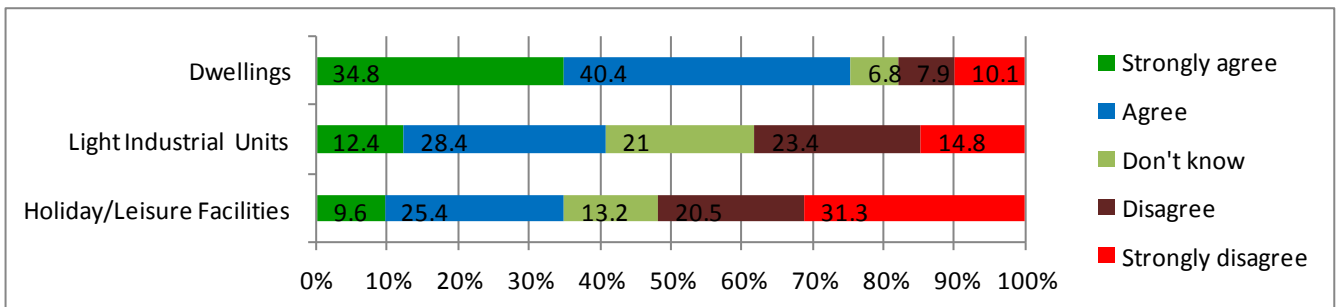
Dwellings

- a clear response in favour.

Light industrial units

- evenly divided opinions.

Holiday / leisure facilities



- a balance of opinion against.

Changes to houses using modern materials, such as UPVC, to replace traditional materials are acceptable as long as the style and character of the building is retained

Strongly Agree	34.9%
Agree	30.3%
Don't Know	6.7%
Disagree	16.9%
Strongly disagree	11.2%

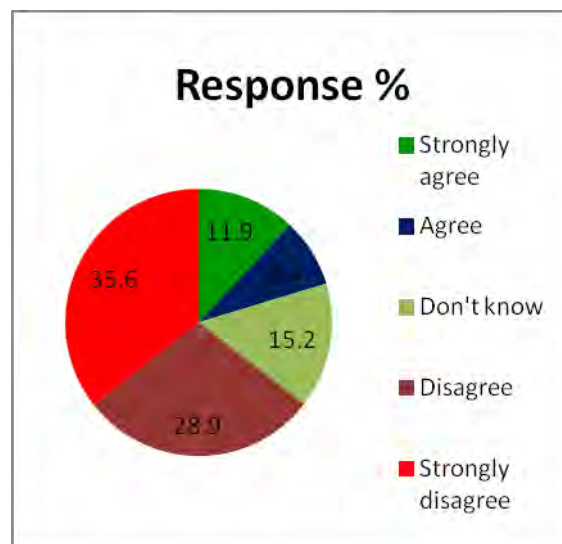
- a clear response in favour.

We need more housing in East Mersea

Strongly Agree	12.4%
Agree	31.5%
Don't Know	16.9%
Disagree	13.5%
Strongly disagree	25.7%

- no clear balance of opinion.

A member of our household / family needs alternative accommodation in the village



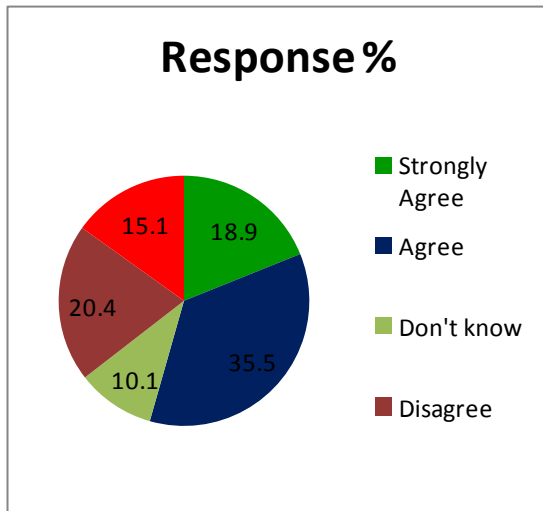
- a clear response against with a significant minority in favour.

I would support an affordable housing development near our home

Strongly Agree	10.2%
Agree	21.6%
Don't Know	18.2%
Disagree	18.2%
Strongly disagree	31.8%

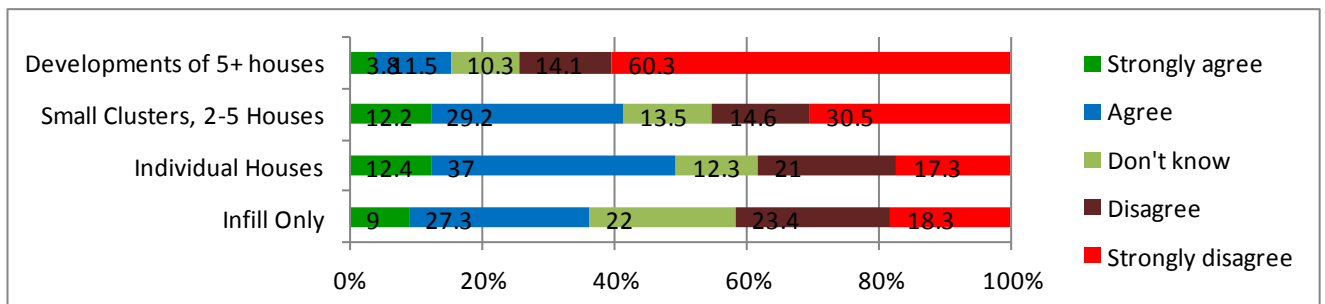
- a balanced response against with a significant minority in favour.

New housing should be allowed as :-
Replacement only



- a balanced response in favour with a significant minority against.

Developments



- a clear response against larger developments with a significant minority in favour.

The number of extra / new dwellings that East Mersea can absorb over a ten year period is :-

None

Strongly Agree	31.7%
Agree	10%
Don't Know	8.3%
Disagree	18.3%
Strongly disagree	31.7%

- no clear balance of opinion.

Over 25

Strongly Agree	7.2%
Agree	1.8%
Don't Know	7.2%
Disagree	12.8%
Strongly disagree	71%

- a clear response against.

The following types of housing should be allowed in East Mersea :-

First time buyers / low cost

- a balance response in favour (55%) with a significant minority against (40%).

Family housing

- a significant response in favour (73%) with a notable minority (13%) against.

Executive housing

- a majority against (55%) with a significant minority (24%) in favour.

Housing should be encouraged for :-

Existing residents or residents' families

- a balance response in favour (64.5%) with a significant minority against (25%).

Young people –

a balance response in favour (63%) with a significant minority (24%) against.

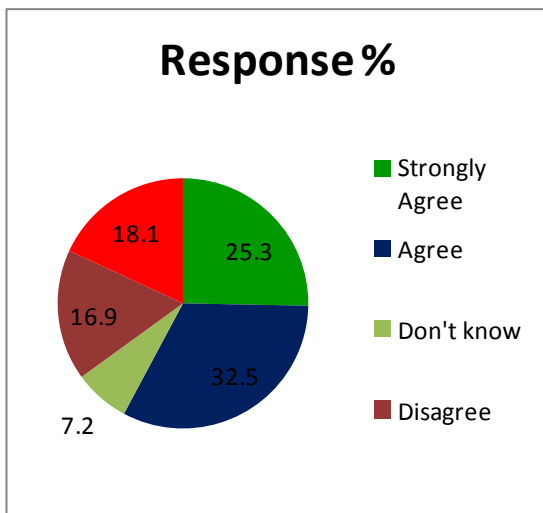
Families –

a balance response in favour (68%) with a significant minority against (18%).

Key professions such as teachers or nurses

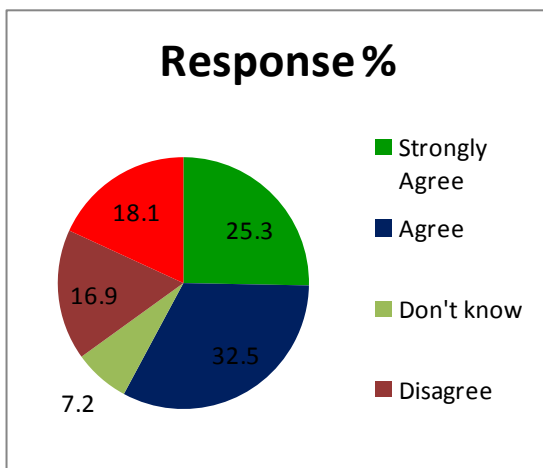
- a balance response in favour (47%) with a significant minority against (27%).

I would support some development in East Mersea if this enabled improvements to the village, such as cycle paths and new footpaths. This could be achieved through Section 106 Planning Gains whereby developers would agree to make improvements to the village as a condition of their receiving Planning Permission.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

I would oppose any further developments in East Mersea



- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

Conclusions :-

Residents clearly value very highly the current rural character of our village and would only accept change and development that respected and enhanced this character.

Changes to housing using modern materials, such as UVPC, to replace traditional materials are acceptable as long as the style and character of the building is retained.

Conversions of redundant farm buildings into dwellings should be allowed but not into holiday / leisure use.

There is no clear balance of opinion on housing except that any developments should be small. If there were to be any housing development Residents would be in favour of families, young people and key professionals and against executive housing.

There is a majority opinion in favour of a development for affordable housing.

BUILDINGS Addendum

Housing Survey 2010

Subsequent to the Village Design statement and Village Plan Survey the RCCE conducted a survey in 2010 to investigate the housing needs in East Mersea. Their report is included as an appendix to this Design Statement. Their findings included :-

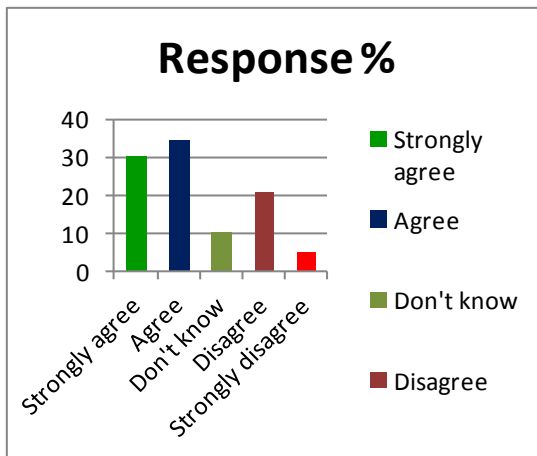
- Twenty seven (77%) households said that they would be in favour of a small amount of residential development in this parish which would help meet local needs for affordable housing. Eight (23%) households were not in favour.
- Eight forms were received and identified as having a need for affordable housing. Following general planning guidance this would lead to a recommendation of 4 units. Indications are that the need is for 1 x one bedroom, 2 x two bedroom and 1 x three bedroom recommended to serve not only the current needs of the community but provide suitable housing for the medium to longer term.

The Parish Council in meeting of 21 September 2010 resolved to support the Affordable Rural Housing Scheme in East Mersea.

ACCESS ROUTES, TRAFFIC & SURROUNDINGS

Questionnaire results :-

The traffic on the roads in East Mersea is dangerous



- a strong response in agreement with a significant minority against.

Measures must be taken to reduce the speed and calm the traffic on East Mersea roads such as –

Fixed speed cameras

Strongly Agree	6.8%
Agree	9.6%
Don't Know	8.1%
Disagree	36.4%
Strongly disagree	39.1%

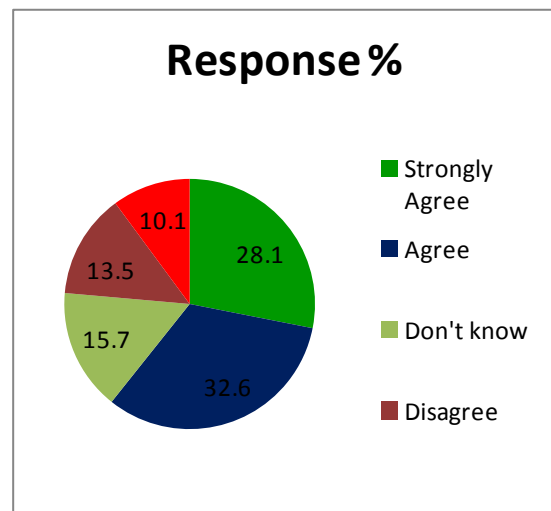
- a strong response against with a minority in favour.

Traffic calming measures

Strongly Agree	23.1%
Agree	30.8%
Don't Know	10.3%
Disagree	19.2%
Strongly disagree	16.6%

- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

There are major danger spots on the roads in East Mersea



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

There should be more passing places and appropriate road signs on our narrow roads

- a balance response in favour (54.6%) with a significant minority against (37.2%).

Roadside ditching and drains need to be improved or better maintained to reduce flooding

- a strong response in favour (74.5%) with a notable minority against (14.5%).

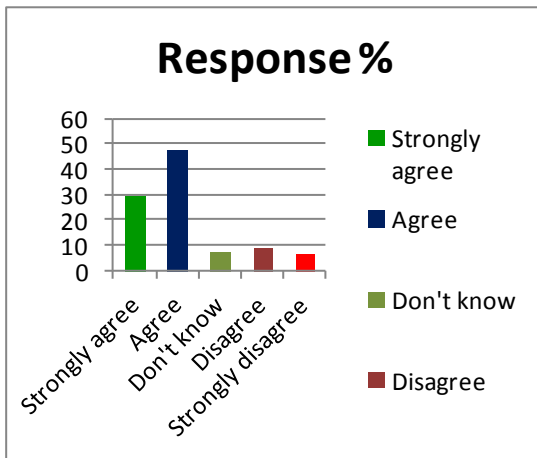
There should be more designated parking for visitors

- a balanced response against (67%) with a significant minority in favour (22%).

There should be more street lighting

- a balanced response against (77%) with a significant minority in favour (13%).

There should be well designed and consistent signposting to local leisure sites and businesses



-
a clear response in favour.

Footpaths should be well signposted and there should be maps at key locations showing footpaths and places of interest

Strongly Agree	46.7%
Agree	44.6%
Don't Know	2.2%
Disagree	6.5%
Strongly disagree	0%

- a clear response in favour.

East Mersea footpaths should be improved

- a clear response in favour (81.5%).

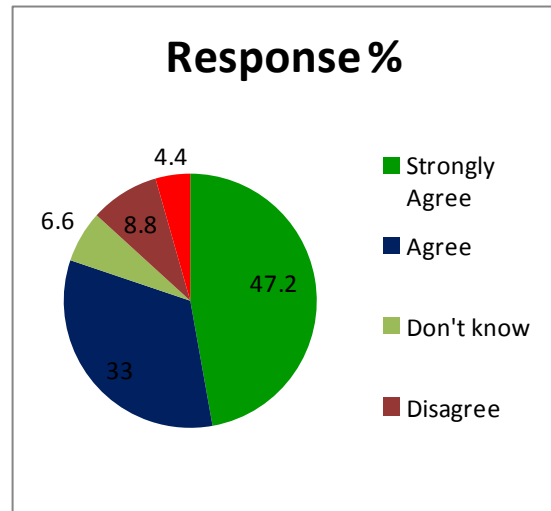
Hedgerows should be well maintained and replanted where missing or damaged

- a clear response in favour (95.7%).

Projects that create natural habitats for wildlife should be encouraged

- a very strong and clear response in favour (96.7%).

Road signs should be provided to encourage safe and considerate driving taking into account walkers, cyclists and horses



- a clear response in favour.

There should be better access to the sea for :-

Wet bikes / jet skis

- a clear response against (75%).

Sailing dinghies

- a balance of opinion in favour (51%).

Motor boats

- a balance of opinion against (54%).

Walkers

- a balance of opinion in favour (67%).

Conclusions :-

There is a general feeling that traffic is a danger and that measures such as speed cameras and traffic calming should be adopted.

Many residents are in favour of more passing places and better drainage and are against more visitor parking and street lighting.

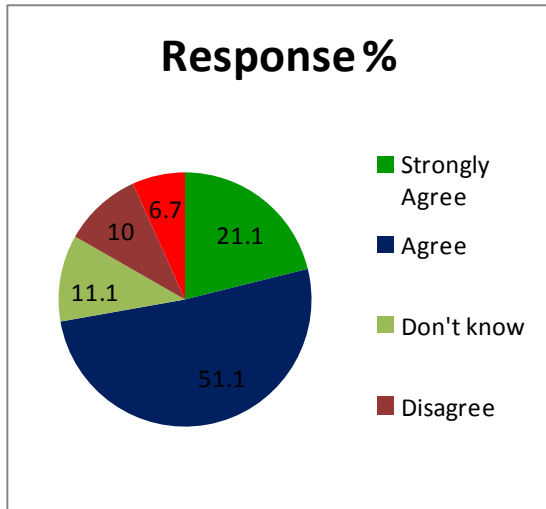
Residents would clearly like to see improvements in our signposting, footpaths, hedgerows and wildlife habitats.

They would also like to see better access for sailing and walkers but not wet bikes and motor boats.

LOCAL BUSINESS & AMENITIES

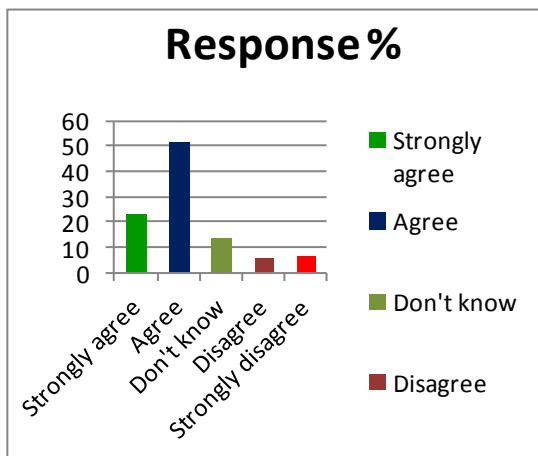
Questionnaire results :-

Local business development should be encouraged as long as it does not detract from the peaceful rural character of the village



- a clear response in favour.

Agricultural diversification schemes should be encouraged where they do not adversely effect private residents



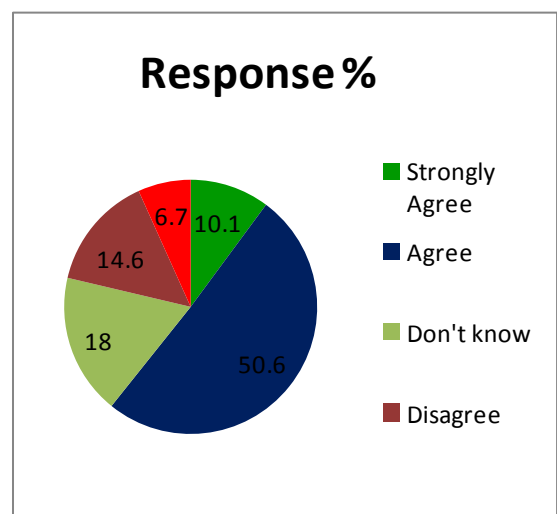
- a clear response in favour.

We should allow expansion of the existing tourism / holiday / leisure sites.

Strongly Agree	7.6%
Agree	5.4%
Don't Know	10.9%
Disagree	39.1%
Strongly disagree	37%

- a clear response against.

Business expansion should only be encouraged where it will provide employment opportunities for local people



- a clear response in favour with a significant minority against.

Amenities such as the village shop and pub should be preserved

Strongly Agree	60.9%
Agree	37.0%
Don't Know	2.1%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

- a very strong and clear response in favour.

Business Survey :-

Total number of jobs in East Mersea is 226 of which 46% are full time and 54% are part time. Of the total number of employees, 14% live in East Mersea, 30% live in West Mersea and 56% live off the Island. The proportion living off the Island might be disproportionately high due to the large number of part time employees employed by Mersea Outdoors and Coopers Beach.

Tourism and leisure is the main employer in East Mersea (58%) followed by industrial (14%), fish supplies (13.7%) restaurant, shops & pub (9.3%) and agriculture & horticulture (5%).

All businesses that had facilities such as a swimming pool, restaurant, bar etc when asked said they are willing to let local people use such facilities (but at a charge). East Mersea has a lot of potential facilities such as a number of bars and restaurants, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, football pitch, netball etc. The area also has a number of educational and environmental attractions such as Mersea Outdoors, Cudmore Grove, Ivy Farm Jarmans Nursery.

All businesses surveyed were environmentally aware and had environmental policies especially recycling. Two out of the three caravan sites had David Bellamy conservation awards.

All businesses were asked what they would like included in the Village plan with regards to business. The most common replies were:

Better working relationships between businesses in order to support each other.

Better promotion of East Mersea, reopening the post office and more sympathetic planning allowing expansion of businesses.

Conclusions :-

There is an active and valued business sector in our community which residents would like to encourage as long as the peaceful rural character of the village is maintained.

There are common aims in preserving village amenities and the environment and common opportunities in increased use of the facilities that local businesses can offer.

Residents are very strongly in favour of preserving the amenities we have such as the village shop and pub. There is support for events at the Village Hall along with a feeling that residents need better information on events, particularly in the Courier and on the village website.

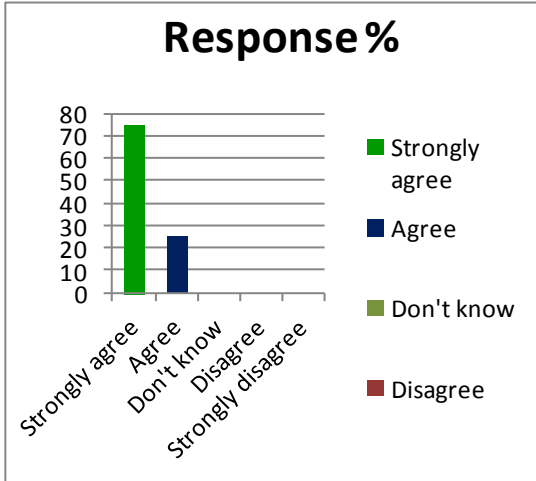
As long as we are able to preserve and encourage the amenities that we have the village is not badly served. In fact there are more amenities available in the holiday parks and Mersea Outdoors than many villagers are probably aware of, which reinforces the need for improved communication to residents and others.

The Village Plan section of the questionnaire addressed the Village Amenities, the general conclusion of which is given following, full details and proposals will be given in the Village Plan document.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Questionnaire results :-

The existing environment and wildlife are very important and must be conserved



- a very strong and clear response in favour.

All new developments on East Mersea should have the minimum possible carbon footprint

Strongly Agree	62.4%
Agree	29.4%
Don't Know	2.4%
Disagree	5.8%
Strongly disagree	0%

- a very strong and clear response in favour.

Environmental improvements to homes and businesses should be encouraged and be made a requirement of permission to alter or extend a property

Strongly Agree	37.6%
Agree	40.0%
Don't Know	11.8%
Disagree	9.4%
Strongly disagree	1.2%

- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

There should be no discharge of waste from Bradwell power station

- a balance response in favour (67.4%) with a significant minority against (20.2%).

Street lighting / flood lighting of properties in East Mersea should be restricted to reduce light pollution

- a balanced response in favour (73.4%) with a minority against (12.2%)

Conclusions :-

All of our consultations have demonstrated the very high importance residents put on our environment and wildlife and therefore all development in East Mersea should take this into account.

Developments should have a minimum impact on the environment and environmental improvements to existing properties should be encouraged.

A majority of residents do not want waste discharge from any new power station at Bradwell and want a reduction in light pollution.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a resume of the conclusions of our questionnaire results as directly applicable to planning matters.

General

The rural character of East Mersea must be protected and maintained through the prevention of substantial new development in the village.

Building Form, Style and Layout

New development, infill, extension and restoration proposals should be sympathetic to the scale, design, layout and character of the existing residential areas in which they are being built in East Mersea.

Development of redundant farm buildings should be supported, where Cochester Borough Council planning requirements are met and where it is appropriate bearing in mind location and adjacent properties, into business premises that encourage local employment or into dwellings.

The use of modern materials such as PVC to replace traditional materials in older properties is acceptable as long as the style and character of the building is retained.

New housing development should be small scale and restricted to infill, single dwellings (replacement or new). Proposals for family housing and affordable housing schemes to meet local needs would generally be supported in the village, subject to further consultation as necessary.

Access Routes, Traffic & Surroundings

Developments should not be allowed that significantly increases the level of traffic on East Mersea's narrow roads

Developments should incorporate, as applicable, well designed and consistent signposting to local leisure sites 9999and businesses, and maintenance and improvement of footpaths and hedgerows.

Developments should seek to protect existing hedgerows or include new hedgerow planting to help maintain the rural character of East Mersea and provide new wildlife habitats in the village

Local Business & Amenities

Local business developments that do not detract from the peaceful rural character of East Mersea should be supported

Agricultural diversification schemes should be allowed where they do not adversely affect private residents.

East Mersea residents generally feel that the development of any new or expansion of the existing tourism / holiday / leisure sites should not be allowed, therefore careful consideration must be given to any such proposals, bearing in mind local residents opinions, conservation of the rural and local environment and the adverse effects of any such developments.

Appropriate business expansion should be encouraged particularly where it provides employment opportunities that support the local economy and community in East Mersea.

Existing community facilities in East Mersea such as the village shop and pub should be protected. Development proposals that threaten the viability of key local amenities in the village should not be allowed.

Environment and Conservation

Development proposals that include habitat improvement and creation proposals to help protect East Mersea's wildlife and biodiversity should be supported. Proposals that threaten existing wildlife habitats in and around East Mersea should not be allowed.

All new developments on East Mersea should have the minimum reasonably possible carbon footprint and generate the minimum pollution. Environmental improvements to homes and businesses should be encouraged and be made a requirement of permission to develop, alter or extend a property.

All development proposals should include measures to reduce flooding in East Mersea

Street and flood lighting included in development proposals must be required to minimise light pollution.

THE VILLAGE PLAN

GENERAL

The Village Plan is an action plan addressing issues for the village for the future, based on the opinions of residents, to be recommended for adoption by East Mersea Parish Council for implementation.

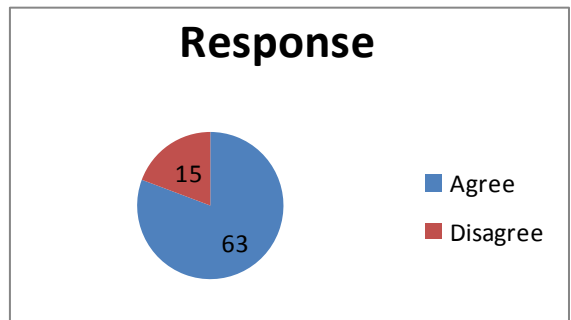
The Plan addresses the following issues –

- Village amenities and events
- Transport
- Services and supplies
- Environment
- Security
- Education and youth issues
- Business
- Housing

Under each of these headings we give the significant questionnaire results, full details of which can be seen in Appendix 1 East Mersea Village Questionnaire Results. Following this we set out proposals derived from these results that the Village Plan Steering Group have developed to take forward to the Parish Council, along with commentary on developments in the Village that have been taking place recently that relate to these issues.

VILLAGE AMENITIES AND EVENTS

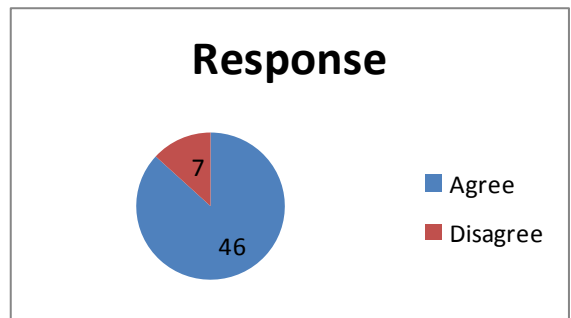
Questionnaire Results:-



1 I use / attend events at the Village Hall.

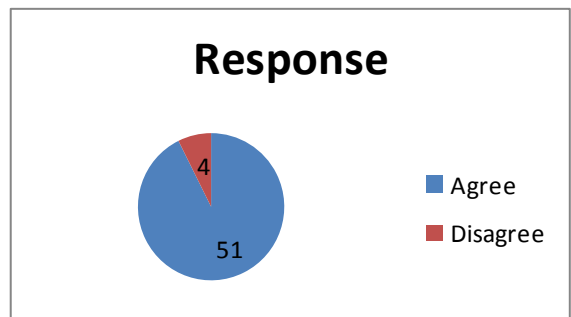
- a balanced response in favour with a significant minority against

2 There should be more events in the Village Hall.



- a clear response in favour

5 We need better information about what is happening in the village.

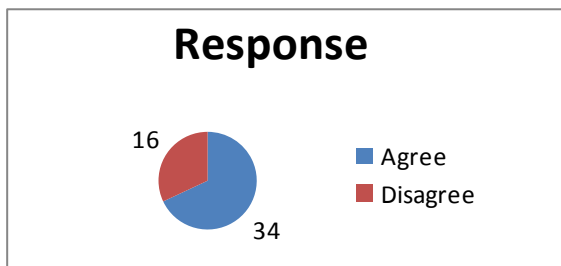


- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

I would like to be able to find information about village events and news in:

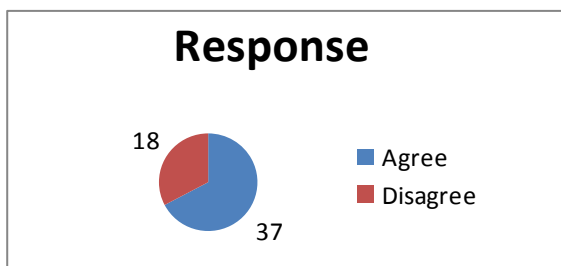
	Agree	Disagree
6 The Courier	76	2
- a clear response in favour		
7 The Community News	51	3
- a clear response in favour		
8 Essex Gazette	24	24
- no clear balance of opinion		
9 Local Radio	23	25
- no clear balance of opinion		
10 Parish Council Notice Boards	63	5
- a clear response in favour		
11 West Mersea Library	36	14
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against		
12 The Mica Centre	29	16
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against		
13 The Village website	51	5
- a clear response in favour		

14 We should arrange for a monthly surgery at the Village Hall dealing with local council, legal and consumer advice issues.



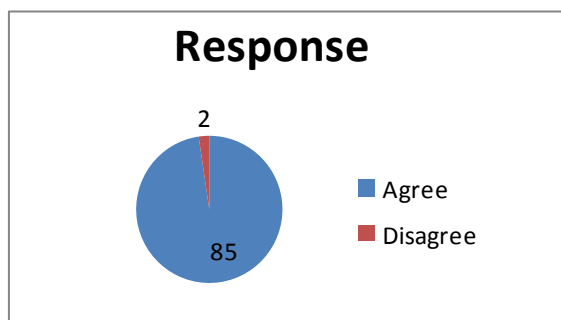
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

17 We need better information about sports and recreational facilities that are available in the village and local area.



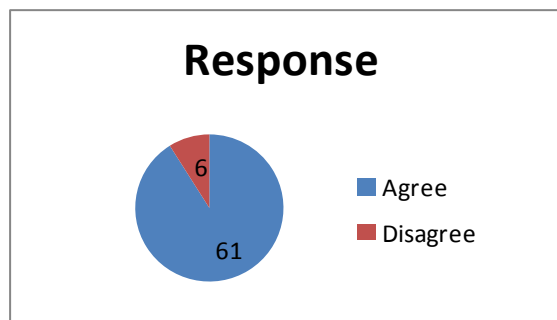
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

18 We need to support the village shop.



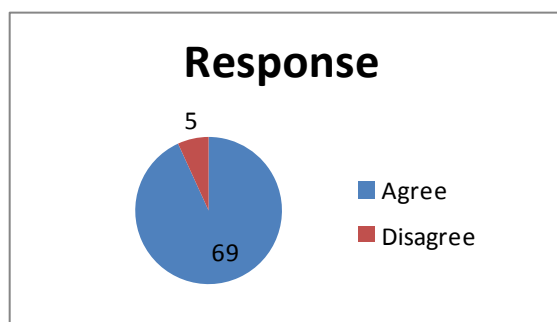
- a very strong and clear response in favour.

19 We need to support the church.



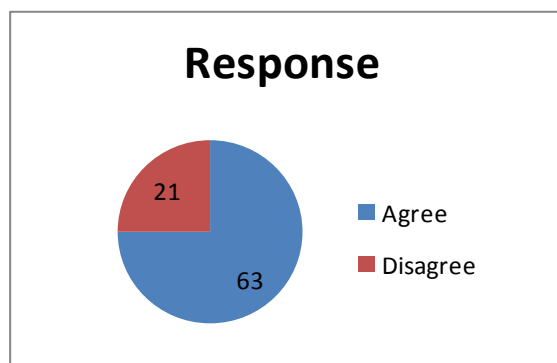
- a very strong and clear response in favour.

20 We need to support the pub.



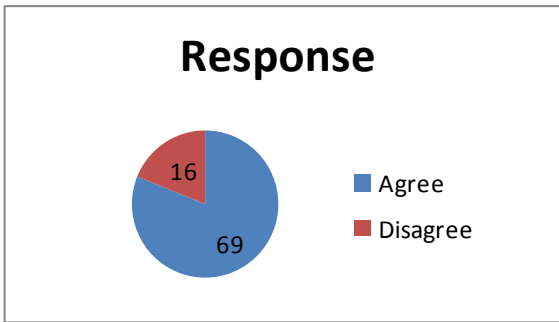
- a clear response in favour.

21 I regularly use Cudmore Grove Country Park



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

22 Charges for parking at Cudmore Grove Country Park should be reduced for East Mersea residents.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

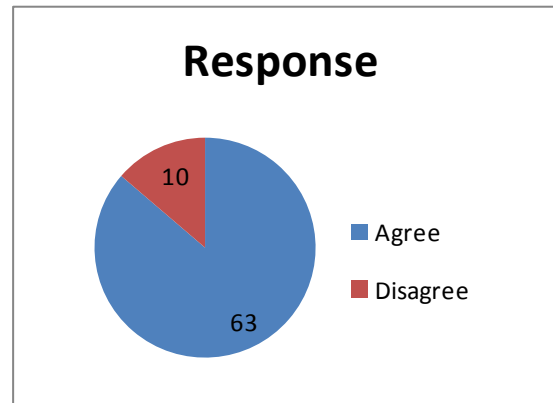
Comments

- Residents think that there should be more events in the Village Hall. There could be a further consultation with village residents to identify the type of events that would be of interest. The proposal in the question on monthly advice surgeries (Qu. 14) got some support (i.e. 34) it could be included in the consultation. There still remains the question of who would organise and get involved in such events, this is not the type of thing Parish Councils undertake and the Village Hall Committee is not an organiser of events.

TRANSPORT

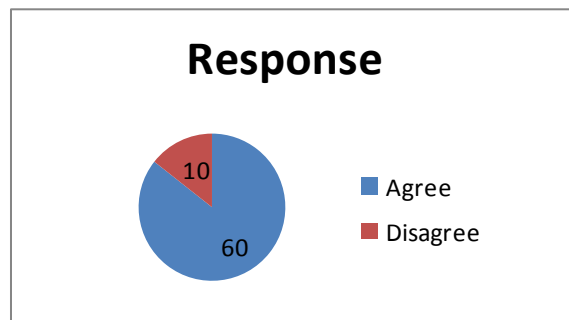
Questionnaire Results:-

27 There should be better public transport in East Mersea.



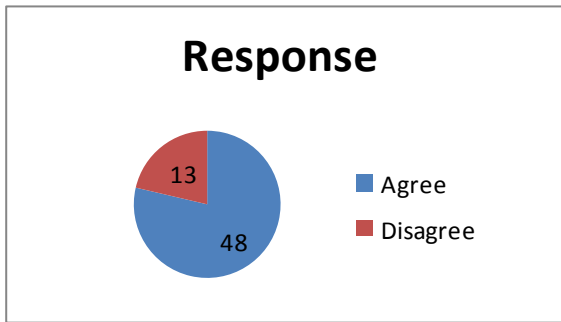
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

28 We need better transport access to the Doctor's Surgery / pharmacy / hospital.



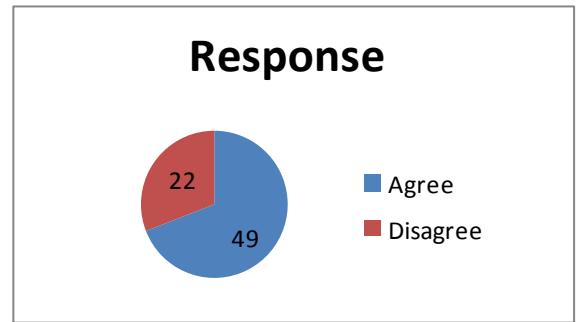
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

29 We need better transport access to school / college.



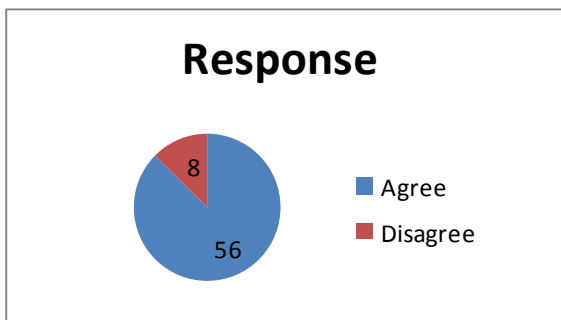
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

33 East Mersea roads are not adequately maintained.



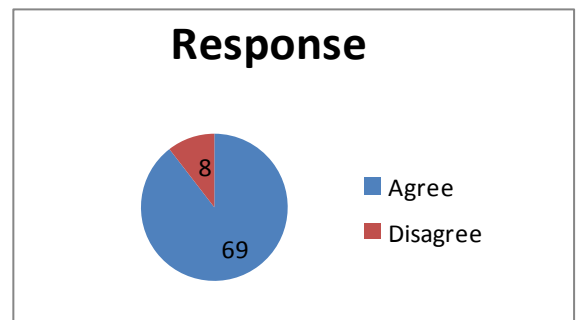
- a majority response in favour with a significant minority against.

30 The Community Bus should be made more available for any East Mersea resident to use.



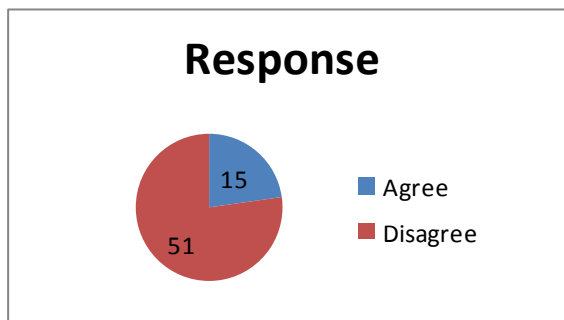
- a clear response in favour.

35 There should be a safe cycle and pedestrian path to link East and West Mersea.



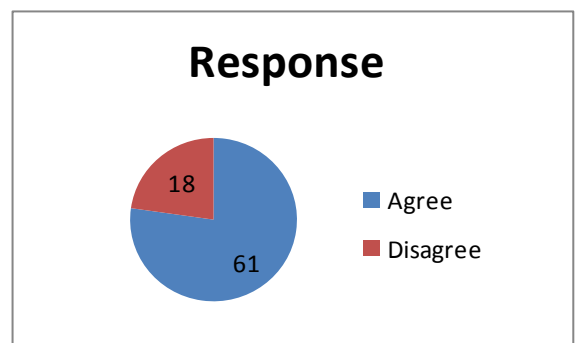
- a clear response in favour.

32 East Mersea roads are not sufficiently gritted in winter.



- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

36 There should be a cycle and pedestrian path round the whole island.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

Comments

- A petition was circulated by residents in 2011 seeking to reduce speed limits on our narrow lanes which got some 80 signatures – see statement following.

Speed limits should be reduced in built up areas of the village and in the narrow single track lanes attracted over 80 signatures. At present we have 40 mph throughout the village and 30 mph from Bonds Green through to Ivy Lane.

- Proposed speed limits – 30 mph from Snow Hill, on entering the village until past Glebe House entrance and Church Lane. This proposal would cover entrances to Meeting Lane, the Pick Your Own farm and village shop/restaurant forecourts and entrances, and Church Lane.
- Proposed 20 mph limit to be made for Meeting Lane, Church Lane, Shop Lane and Bromans Lane.

Current state of proposals: Councillor Kevin Bentley has had discussions with the Highways authority and a site visit has taken place. The Parish Council has endorsed these proposals.

Final comment: It is considered essential that these new limits are introduced as soon as possible to prevent pedestrians and others being involved in an accident.

Cyclists: More people are being encouraged to cycle; there are no cycle paths anywhere in the village and speeding motorists also present a danger here.

- This issue should form part of the Transport Study and specific proposal should be adopted by the Parish Council and recommended to Colchester Council for implementation.
- The Parish Council tells us that Essex County Council will try and progress the 30mph speed limit in East Mersea

The issue of the cycle path is to be taken up with West Mersea Council to see if they are in agreement. Current consultations indicate that there may be some support for this proposal from local landowners, particularly the holiday parks and caravan sites, as this may form an additional attraction to their visitors. Leisure cycling, as opposed to simply getting from A to B, is usually much more interesting when a different route can be taken for a return journey. A second cycle route between East and West Mersea would improve things greatly for both residents and visitors.

Colchester Borough Council have suggested we contact West Mersea Town Council with a view to forming a cycle path partnership which may make funding easier to obtain when it becomes available.

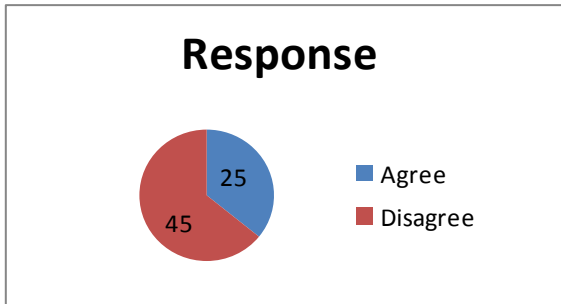
There is the possibility of obtaining a grant from National England Coastal Access Route and it would be worth looking into this.

We need to agree a preferred cycle route to the West Mersea boundary, contact the landowners to see if they are prepared to accept the route and if accepted contact CBC who will look into the possibility of a legal adoption as a cycle way. West Mersea need to do the same within their boundary and the whole scheme then costed and grants sought from all possible sources.

SERVICES AND SUPPLIES

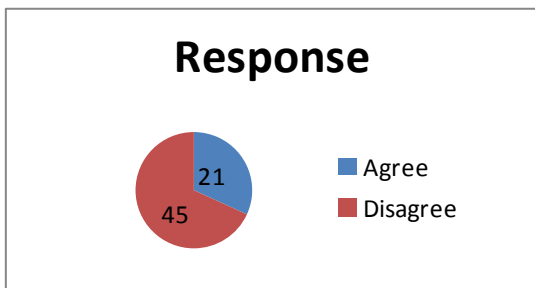
Questionnaire Results -

37 The local electricity supply is unreliable / insufficient.



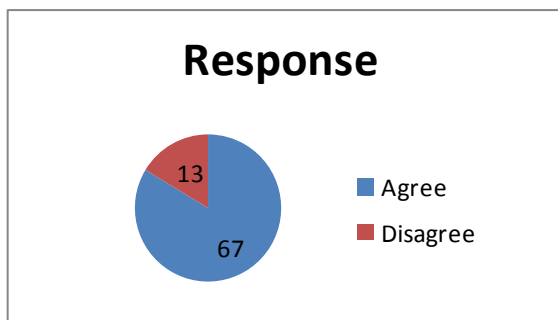
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

38 The water pressure in East Mersea is insufficient.



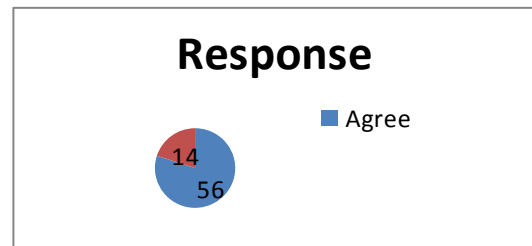
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

39 The telephone system and internet connection in East Mersea is inadequate.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

40 The mobile phone connection in East Mersea is inadequate.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

Comments:-

There have been letters in the local press and recent complaints from residents on the internet issue which adds to the importance of the council pursuing this issue.

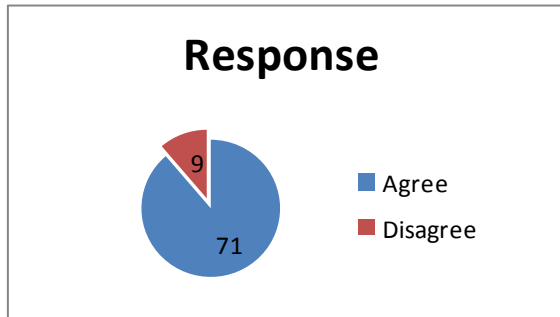
Since there is little chance of small Parishes like East Mersea obtaining a fast Broadband speed in the near future. DEFRA have set aside £20m pounds to enable the rural parishes, like East Mersea to obtain superfast Broadband within the next few years. This fund is being allocated mid 2012 and Essex County Council, RCCE and Essex Association of Local Councils have formed a group to organise the distribution of the proportion of that funding appropriate to Essex and to receive expressions of interest from qualifying Parish Councils. At our last Parish Council meeting it was agreed that an expression of East Mersea's interest in this scheme be given to that Group

At the April 2012 Parish Council meeting a presentation was given by Gary Disley from BuzCom, which is an innovative communications company supplying Fibre WIFI Broadband Network in the East of England. The system; with its guaranteed, broadband speed and monthly costs, was of considerable interest and the details will be sent to every East Mersea household by the Parish Council.

ENVIRONMENT

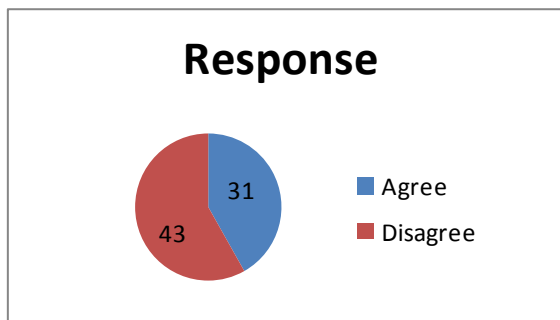
Questionnaire Results:-

42 Houses and business in East Mersea should be encouraged to reduce their energy use and impact on the environment.



- a clear response in favour with a significant minority against.

43 We need better facilities / collection services for waste recycling.



- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

Comments:-

The Village Design Statement questionnaire results also get some very strong feedback from residents including:-

The existing environment and wildlife are very important and must be conserved - a very strong and clear response in favour.

All new developments on East Mersea should have the minimum possible carbon footprint - a very strong and clear response in favour.

Environmental improvements to homes and businesses should be encouraged and be made a requirement of permission to alter or extend a property - a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

There should be no discharge of waste from Bradwell power station - a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

Street lighting / flood lighting of properties in East Mersea should be restricted to reduce light pollution - a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

- The Village Design Statement has also addressed this issue – see page 22.
- All of our consultations have demonstrated the very high importance residents put on our environment and wildlife and therefore all development in East Mersea should take this into account.
- Developments should have a minimum impact on the environment and environmental improvements to existing properties should be encouraged.
- A majority of residents do not want waste discharge from any new power station at Bradwell and want a reduction in light pollution.

LITTER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Local Authority is responsible for the removal of rubbish that is deposited on the roads and footpaths of East Mersea whereas landowners are responsible for the removal of rubbish deposited on their land. Local Authority input is infrequent and unlikely to improve.

The appearance of its own neighbourhood is a reflection of the standards set by its residents. Although it is a commonly held view that “outsiders and visitors” are the main source of litter, this is unproven; but if true, is also an area in which the local community can exert a strong influence.

The Village Plan would wish to address these issues by initiatives that could include the following:

- Motivate residents and businesses to take ownership of the problem.
- Seek more involvement from the Local Authority in the clearance of litter from roads, paths and roadside ditches.
- Encourage volunteers to participate in regular “litter picks.”
- Encourage holiday sites and other venues to educate visitors about the community litter free environment.
- Take proactive action to ensure prosecutions occur for littering, especially deliberate acts of dumping.
- Obtain support and sponsorship from local businesses.

Maritime Conservation Area

Currently the government is considering establishing a number of Maritime Conservation Areas including parts of the Thames Estuary.

Currently the Parish Council does not support Mersea Island becoming part such a conservation area as they felt this could be too restrictive in the future.

Sustainability

The Parish Council should publicise ways in which residents can reduce their energy use and impact on the environment. This could include an advice meeting at the Village Hall where residents could speak to experts to get advice and help.

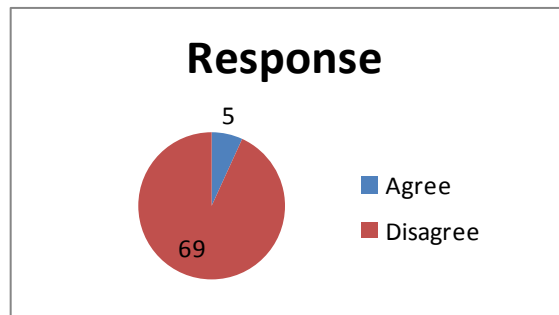
It is recognised that residents, both private and business, would benefit from more information and help on the options that exist for improving the sustainability of homes and business premises. The current situation can be very confusing and impartial advice is not readily available.

SECURITY

Questionnaire Results:-

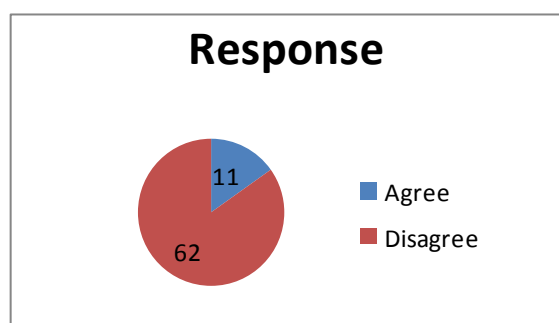
I have been affected by the following in East Mersea –

44 personal intimidation



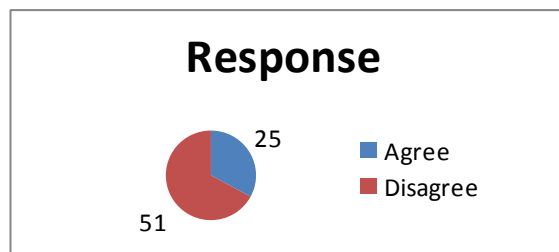
- a balance response against with a minority in favour.

45 anti social behaviour



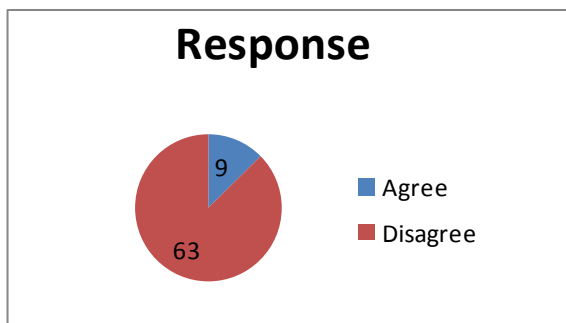
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

46 theft / burglary



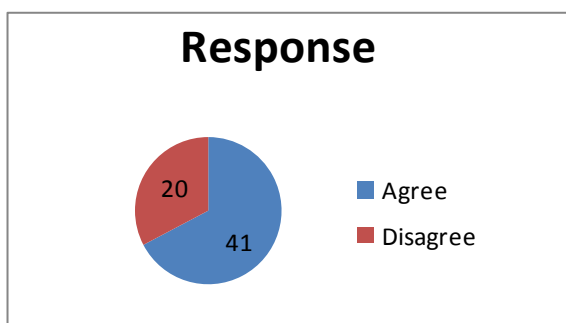
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

47 vandalism / damage to my property



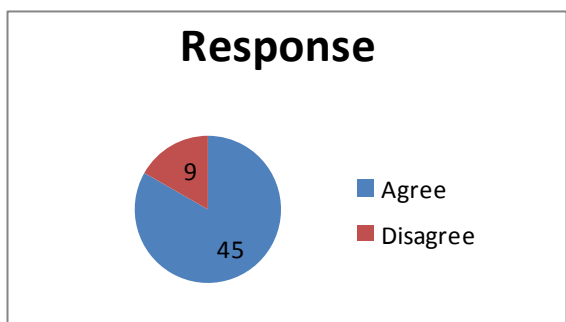
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

49 There is a need for increased policing in East Mersea.



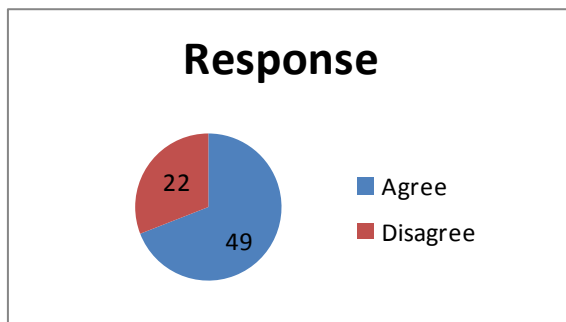
- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

50 We need a good neighbour type scheme in East Mersea.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

51 Criminal / antisocial behaviour is not a problem in East Mersea.



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

Comments:-

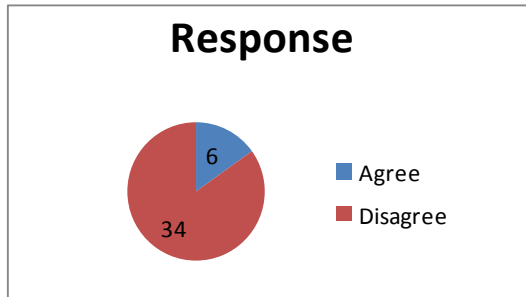
Whilst there was no perception of significant crime problems in East Mersea when the village questionnaire was circulated there have since been a number of local thefts of items and heating fuel.

The security and well being of the local community is an important part of the Village Plan since it is fundamental to the enjoyment by local residents of their environment. At the present time only informal links occur between neighbours and others, that aids the security of their homes, businesses and other premises. Knowledge of incidents of criminal activity are very limited within this relatively sparsely populated village and currently no formal network exists to inform residents of the occurrence of crimes and to enable them to take the necessary proactive actions to minimise the risk to themselves and their property.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH ISSUES

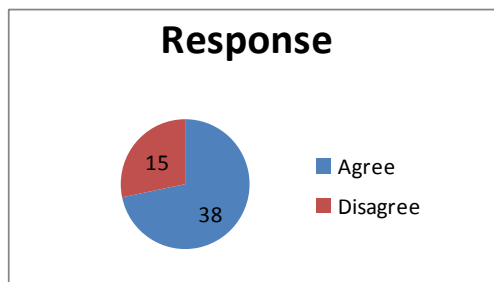
Questionnaire Results:-

52 A member of my family has had a problem getting a place at the school or college of their choice.



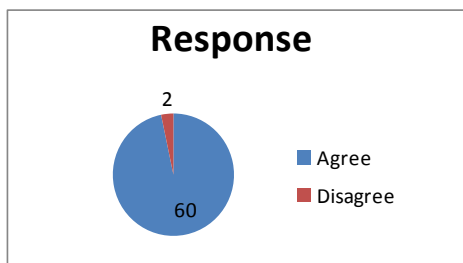
- a balance response against with a significant minority in favour.

53 There should be more facilities for youth in East Mersea



- a balance response in favour with a significant minority against.

56 Mersea Outdoors should make facilities and activities available for East Mersea young people.



- a clear response in favour.

Comments:-

As stated previously we need to improve local communication on the resources that are available and carry out a further consultation with local residents, particularly our young people, on what events and additional facilities they would like to see.

OTHER ISSUES

Business –

Results of Business Survey

All businesses when asked that had facilities such as swimming pool, restaurant, bar etc are willing to let local people use such facilities (but at a charge).

East Mersea has a lot of potential facilities such as a number of bars and restaurants, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, football pitch, netball etc. The area also has a number of educational and environmental attractions such as Mersea Outdoors, Cudmore Grove, Ivy Farm and Jarman's Nursery.

All businesses surveyed were environmentally aware and had environmental policies especially recycling. Two out of the three caravan sites had a David Bellamy award.

All businesses were asked what they would like to be included in the Village plan with regards to business. The most common replies were: Better working relationships between businesses in order to support each other; better promotion of East Mersea, reopening the post office and more sympathetic planning allowing expansion of businesses

See Appendix 2 Summary of Business Survey Results

VILLAGE PLAN PROPOSALS

This is a resume of the proposals from the Village Plan report incorporating elements from the Village Design Statement which are deemed to be Village Plan matters. These proposals have been adopted and will be implemented by The East Mersea parish Council (EMPC).

Village Amenities and Events

Residents think that there should be more events in the Village Hall. There should be a further consultation to identify the type of events that would be of interest including monthly advice surgeries and to identify potential organisers of such events.

The Parish Council should strongly support current village facilities such as the shop, church, pub and village hall.

Transport and Traffic

EMPC get Colchester Council to carry out a Transport Study to look into the public transport available to East Mersea Resident and the condition and safety of our roads.

We should reduce the speed limit to 30mph or less on our narrow lanes.

Establish a Cycle Path Partnership with CBC and West Mersea Town Council to develop safe cycling routes on Mersea Island.

Ensure that there is well designed and consistent signposting to local leisure sites and businesses

Services and Supplies

The Parish Council should make representations to internet and mobile phone providers to improve their services and seek other interested parties who would support such improvements.

Environment

All of our consultations have demonstrated the very high importance residents put on our environment and wildlife and therefore all development in East Mersea should take this into account. This is incorporated in the Village Design Statement Planning Recommendation which EMPC fully supports.

We should communicate the wishes of our residents who do not want waste discharge from any new power station at Bradwell to all relevant authorities.

We should encourage reduction in light pollution from homes and business in East Mersea.

EMPC to should publicise ways in which residents can reduce their energy use and impact on the environment, including a meeting at the Village Hall where residents could speak to experts to get advice and help.

We should seek ways to improve our footpaths and hedgerows.

EMPC to investigate ways to improve our litter situation by initiatives including:

Motivate residents and businesses to take ownership of the problem.

Seek more involvement from the Local Authority in the clearance of litter from roads, paths and roadside ditches.

Encourage volunteers to participate in regular "litter picks."

Encourage holiday sites and other venues to educate visitors about the community litter free environment.

Take proactive action to ensure prosecutions occur for littering, especially deliberate acts of dumping.

Obtain support and sponsorship from local businesses.

Security

We propose a more formal but voluntary structure to security issues by the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The aims of such a scheme would be determined by its membership but could include:

Improved communication of criminal events to residents

Availability of crime prevention advice to all residents.

Publicity to visitors of Neighbourhood Watch status

The use of technology to monitor road movements.

Regular liaison meetings with Essex Police

Supporting the reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour

Acknowledgements to all those who provided help and assistance are carried on the back page of this publication.

Education and Youth Issues

We need to improve local communication on the resources that are available and carry out a further consultation with local residents, particularly our young people, on what events and additional facilities they would like to see.

Business

The Parish Council should publicise facilities available to residents from local businesses

The Colchester Chamber of Commerce should be approached to investigate how they could assist with improving working relationships between businesses and promotion of businesses in East Mersea

Housing

EMPC should continue with the proposed housing scheme taking into account the conclusions set out in the - Design Statement.

The Parish Council should publicise details of these proposals to residents as soon as they become available and carry out further consultation deemed appropriate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this East Mersea Village Plan and Design Statement we have had a great deal of valuable participation and assistance.

Our thanks to -

All those Private and Business Residents who responded to the Village Plan and Village Design Statement Questionnaires.

All businesses who responded to our business questionnaire

All those villagers who attended and participated in our meetings.

Margaret Lawford at Fen Farm Caravan Site for help in printing this document.

Particular thanks go to the members of our Village Design Statement Working Group:

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David Sunnucks Peter Jones
Peter Inson Rob Sidgwick
Angela Payne Peter Mann
David Bullock Ruth Dence
Heather Corbett

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The Rural Community Council of Essex

East Mersea Parish Council

Paul Merson

Our thanks for the support that we have received from –

The Rural Community Council of Essex

Colchester Borough Council

East Mersea Parish Council

West Mersea Town Council

Harry Sharp

Chairman of the East Mersea Village Plan Steering Group

