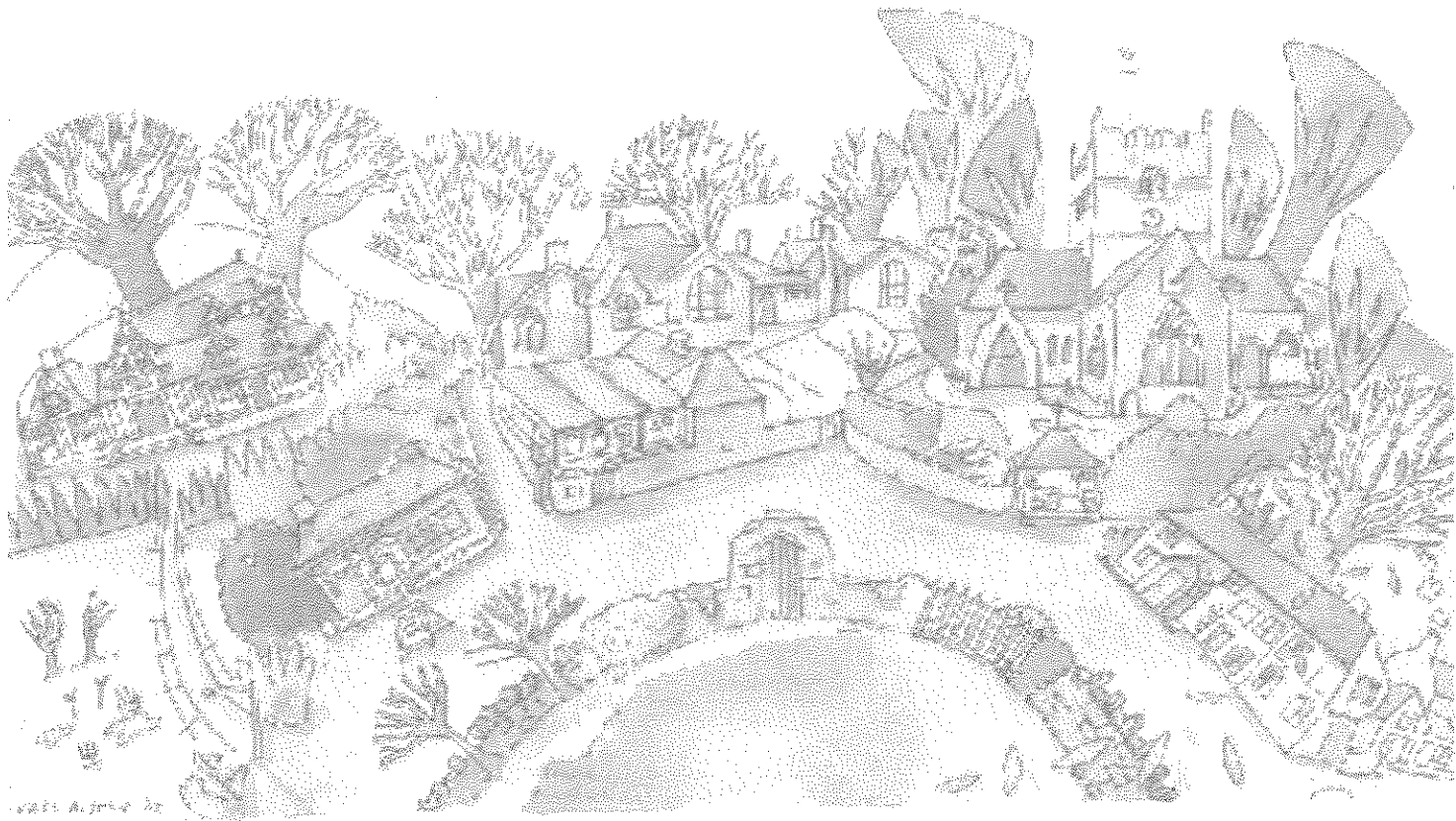


# WISTANSTOW

*a rural Parish in  
the district of South Shropshire  
in the County of Shropshire*



## PARISH PLAN

*a blue print for the future*

*The Parish Council & community of Wistanstow*

2003

# THE PARISH of WISTANSTOW

## The Vision - Mission Statement

**‘To ensure a better quality of life for everyone in the Parish of Wistanstow, with the active involvement of the community, for the community, so residents’ legitimate aspirations are fulfilled’.**

Improve community well-being

Use & share personal expertise to empower and achieve aspirations

Provide a better need based quality of life

Develop a local identity

Protect our environment and sustain our way of life

Provide for all within our communities without regard for creed, race, age, ability or gender, according to need, and ensure equitable access to all services and opportunities

Encourage community involvement, self help and participation

Provide learning for life and community enrichment opportunities

Allow all within the community to express their ambitions, needs and priorities, empower them to succeed.

The production of this Parish Plan has been supported by:



The Co-ordinator would like to thank all those who have helped and contributed to this project, including all residents of Parish who returned questionnaires and made comments.

Special thanks to: Blanche McCorkell, Roger Bolton-Smith, Rev. Paul Robson, David Gibbons, Jacqui Morrish, Jean Carless, Carol Morris, Mike Cheshire, Bob Milner, Sue Maddock, Graeme McCorkell, and Dot Mansell. Thanks to all Parish Council Members especially Edward Wood, Stewart Minton Beddoes and Eric Williams.

The assistance and counsel of Caroline Oakes of The Community Council of Shropshire and Liz Peel of the Countryside Agency is gratefully acknowledged.

## METHODOLOGY

The primary research was based on a written survey of 50 questions, many multi-response, under four basic categories; demographics, social and the future, transport & technology, and housing and community. A four option questionnaire was incorporated as an addendum within the whole, some two weeks after the original was despatched, because of information becoming available within the public domain which had not been known at the time of the questionnaire formulation exercise.

All local organisations and groups had an input in the questionnaire content, all being subject to a consultation exercise on Vital Villages Parish Plan initiative and its aims and objectives. The resulting Parish questionnaire was professionally designed incorporating all those elements raised by and of concern to the community groups, plus general market research demographics. Every precaution was taken to ensure impartiality and to avoid bias and leading questions.

The questionnaires were posted to all households, where more than one surname appeared on the electoral roll extra questionnaires were sent, with a return post paid envelope. Interactive forms were available on the web and hard copies at the community shop and village hall. Anonymity was guaranteed and all current best practice was observed, including incentives for completion and return of free tickets for the Queen's Golden Jubilee events and Jubilee mugs for all residents under 16 years.

Of the 272 households on the electoral roll surveyed, 223 completed and returned the questionnaire, giving an 82% response rate, which is high. The methods used to encourage completion were Parish notice boards exhortations, reminders in the 'Fortyniner', the local community newspaper delivered free to each household, and visits from a gallant band of volunteers. These visits also ascertained that there were 12 households with vulnerable elderly residents, 8 properties that were now short let holiday accommodation and 3 unoccupied, with a further 5 as second homes, from which no returns were possible. Therefore the statistical real response rate was 90%+. Of the about 10% which did not or would not respond, the traditional 'hard to reach' non participating elements; we would have liked to have reached this illusive 20 households and engaged them, but it was not cost effective nor, from a volunteers point of view, prudent to press the point. Obviously on such a small sample the missing 10% could be very important. The Co-ordinator now lists some of the comments that are printable, offered from this group when approached; 'mind your own bloody business', 'you are just a busybody newcomer', 'it went in the fire - that is what I thought of your papers', 'many of the questions I could not answer and others I will not answer', 'I am not giving that information - its personal', 'you are just a spy for the Council', and 'I am just not interested'.

Only those aspirations with overwhelming support have been incorporated in the Parish Action Plan, those in fact which the community highlighted for priority action. The draft action plan was approved for consultation by the Parish Council and has been distributed to all households in the Parish, the County & District Councils, all adjacent Town & Parish Councils, Craven Arms Partnership, Advantage West Midlands, Government Office for the West Midlands, County Councillors representing local wards and our local MP. This published Plan incorporates any, where possible, constructive comments received in the course of the consultation process.

*First Choice means; a simple addition of the 1st choice and pro-rata - i.e. first passed the post.*

*Weighted means, a value on a sliding scale has been introduced where there was a request for priority ranking 1 - 10, and the overall placing determined by the highest score and pro-rata*

*% in some cases total more than 100%, this occurs because respondents have given multiple answers.*

The full results of the survey can be found on the world wide web ([www.wistanstow.org](http://www.wistanstow.org)) along with the questionnaire. A colour copy of the results is available from the Parish Plan Co-ordinator at £10 per copy post paid, on receipt of a cheque made payable to Wistanstow Parish Council.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Objective:

To build 12 housing units affordable by local people to rent, buy or shared equity in the next 3 to 10 years

### Short Term:

Identify sites which could be used for affordable housing which the community supports. Seek partner/s within South Shropshire Housing Partnership. Confirm that costs of units are affordable to 'locals'

### Medium Term:

Confirm housing need, number & type. Negotiate community gain, define local person. Confirm partner and support planning application

### Long Term:

Build affordable units and assess future need.

**HOW:** Through the South Shropshire Housing Partnership contribute to the provision of some of the 287 affordable homes required in the District. The survey has identified the need and type, so as long as the terms of exception site criteria, affordable in perpetuity and planning requirements are met with community support, there should be no reason why this community should not achieve this objective.

The greatest problem will be the identification and acquisition of suitable land. If current community owned land could be used, as supported by 50% of respondents, this identified need could be addressed.

**SUMMARY:** 174 supported affordable housing initiatives in the Parish with 26 against; 140 indicated that affordable housing was required for the young; 77 for the retired, 54 for the mature and only 11 for family units. As to tenure, 37 wished for shared equity and 40 to buy outright. Location for affordable housing; 81% favoured the village of Wistanstow, 31% Marshbrook, 26% Bushmoor & Cheney Longville; 18% Felhampton (see Methodology) Definition of local was overwhelmingly, at 155, 'living in parish' with 54 and 42 as 'has lived in parish, strong association with parish' and 31 'working in parish'. Fortyfive residents have left the Parish in the last five years, citing the reason as; employment 17; affordable housing 11 and further education 10.

## VILLAGE HALL

### Objective:

To bring the existing hall up to 21st century standards to meet the needs of the whole community

### Short Term:

Comment on plans & proposals for updating support & become involved in grant applications, fund raising and planning application, coupled with a robust business plan. Consider rebranding and name of Hall & revenue implications

### Medium Term:

Fund raising for equipment and fittings. Live with the inevitable disruption & confusion. Use and book the Hall for all your activities, functions & events

### Long term:

Build on the infrastructure provided, new groups/uses. Promote as prime community facility, hub of Parish

**HOW:** The management committee of the village hall are twelve months into a project to completely upgrade the hall by adding wings, at the stage end, which will house a new foyer, toilets, kitchen, storage and children's services along with facilities and access for users with disabilities. An architect, surveyor, QS along with a project manager and grant application adviser have been appointed to process the work. Local consultation and planning permission will be carried forward in Dec/Jan 2002/03. The existing hall will receive a facelift and redesign. Funding opportunities being explored are Vital Villages, DEFRA social fund, Objective 2 under rural regeneration and/or Market Town initiatives, The Lottery Heritage Fund and H.R. Greene Settlement Trust.

**SUMMARY:** The survey placed The Village Hall upgrading under 'priority action' 1st (as first passed the post) and 2nd when weighted. Under 'important issues facing the community' local services, the Village Hall being one of the foremost in this group, ranked 2nd (first passed the post) and 1st when weighted. Results on funding for increased 'local services' showed 86% supporting grant aid for upgrading the Village Hall but only 51% supported increases in the Parish Rate for 'local services' support, with 33.5% against such funding arrangements. The Parish Council has in the past given grant aid to the Village Hall and the vital services it provides for the whole community. The results from the survey show, very clearly, overwhelming local support for the Village Hall and the services it provides.

## CHILD CARE

### Objective:

Provide, equip and staff a child care facility for the children of this and adjacent parishes

### Short Term:

Support proposals for the new children's & young people facilities at the village hall site

### Medium Term:

Formation of day care, community nursery, parent and toddler club, pre/post school clubs & youth provision. Help with fund raising for equipment and formation of an acceptable business plan.

Train new staff to help with aspects of child care & youth provision.

### Long Term:

Help and encourage the development of a community centre for the needs of the Parish's children & young people.

**HOW:** The village hall has an active Wistanstow under 5's group, made up of 123 group, parents & toddlers group and Wistanstow play group who use the hall 3 full days and 2 half day per week. Its activities are heavily curtailed by lack of proper toilet and storage provision. Some of these problems may /will be alleviated by the hall upgrading work but there is no space or time available for childcare activities. To address this objective a new purpose built and dedicated building is required within the village hall site. Funding for this may come from DEFRA, Programme 2, Market Towns Initiative or from a planning gain deal on affordable housing.

**SUMMARY:** The survey found that the Parish has over 140 under 16 year olds including 30 under 5's. It also showed that the provision of services for the young indicated that over 55% said they were inadequate. No adequate child care facilities are available in the Parish nor is there any youth provision or activities. Under 'important issues' childcare, within local services, was second under 1st choice and 1st when weighted, and childcare, under 'priority action' was third at 1st choice and 2nd when weighted. For working parents and carers, the provision of good day childcare, pre & post school facilities is of top priority. This is not just an issue for Wistanstow but one for the District as a whole.

## OPEN SPACE

### Objective:

Acquisition and development of rural open space to support the school, sports, children's play, and to provide a general community resource both for this Parish and adjacent Parishes.

### Short Term:

Identify land that could be acquired for rural public open space and obtain planning permission.

### Medium Term:

Public consultation and identify funding opportunities, acquire land and define maintenance costs.

### Long Term:

Develop and landscape the site or sites. Promote scheduling of the Grove Parkland by English Heritage as locally important landscape. Join with the Craven Arms Partnership/Town Council to purchase and develop the Grove Parkland.

**HOW:** There are a number of funding streams available at present for the provision/ purchase, design and landscaping of open space. The provision of rural open space is one of the priorities in the South Shropshire District Council draft development plan. The most promising is the Countryside Agency Doorstep Greens scheme which will fund consultation, project feasibility and project planning, purchase, design and layout.

Two possible suitable sites have been identified during the survey period, land between the Wistanstow village centre, opposite the school and the village hall, and the orchard site to the old rectory. To carry any application forward requires a willing seller and a valuation by the District Valuer.

### SUMMARY:

Open space scored under 'priority action' fourth as 1st Choice and 8th as weighted, under 'important issues' it was 9th as 1st choice and 8th weighted. This Parish has no real open space provision apart from an under 5's playground and small football pitch at the village hall and the informal use of the hall's grounds in general. Wistanstow school is in a similar position with inadequate playground provision and very little green field space apart from the small area at the rear of the community shop at the forge. With an under-16 resident population of 140 some real open/play space is required urgently.

## SCHOOL

### Objective:

Ensure that Wistanstow retains its School

### Short Term:

Maximum community involvement and fund raising. Help provide amenities essential for a healthy school i.e. play/sports space, safe environment etc.

### Medium Term:

Provide the environment and support necessary for a successful school where teachers wish to work & parents want their children to attend, where possible accommodating any disabilities

### Long Term:

Work to ensure the value of small community schools is fully understood for parents, children and the general community

**HOW:** The education portfolio rests with the County Council with little political involvement of the Parish or District Councils. Residents of this Parish must ensure that their elected County representatives fully understand the school's importance to this community and at the time for election mandates this point is highlighted. All school fund raising activities should be encouraged and supported by all in this Parish and every care taken to encourage and assist the Head Teacher, his staff and the School Governors. Community should try to provide additional hard play space. ( see open space)

**SUMMARY:** The school scored first place under 'important issues', fourth when weighted. It is of primary concern to residents with children attending the school and for those with preschool age children. The school is seen as a benchmark of 'village' status and what cements a community, in the same vein as the pub, shop, post office does. The school roll is buoyant and the County reports they have invested in significant improvements recently and are confident that the future of the school is secure as far as one can sensibly look. However it must be borne in mind that the site has no room for expansion, it is full and requires investment. The Craven Ams school is in an almost similar situation and with a large number of new homes planned in the Town where are the children to be schooled?

## JOB CREATION

### Objective:

Promote and encourage the conditions that will allow new jobs to be created in the Parish particularly those of above local average earnings to encourage the return of young residents who have completed higher education.

### Short Term:

Encourage, help and assist all new community ventures.  
Suggest amendments to the Local Plan to allow redundant farm buildings to be converted for work/live activities.

### Medium Term:

Promote the value of working and living here. Establish a resources centre with the latest IT equipment.

### Long Term:

With partners develop the environment for new investment.

**HOW:** The County Council employs a creative industries research and sector development officer who is looking to objective 2 funding to support local employment and new business opportunities. The District Council also have a number of initiatives including partnership with South Shropshire Tourism Association & Shropshire Tourism Ltd to encourage and develop this sector.

The Parish Council has already proposed amendment to the first draft of the Local Plan to enable redundant farm and other buildings to be developed for a mix of business and home activities. The Community Council for Shropshire has access to grant funding for community use IT equipment.

**SUMMARY:** Job Creation scored 4th as 1st choice in 'priority action' and 5th when weighted. 58% of respondents wished for new employment opportunities in the Parish, equally split at 38% for full and part time employment. Community action at 109 was seen as the best new employment possibility, with tourism 104, agriculture/horticulture (in the form of farm shops, organic production etc.) at 97 and crafts activity 87. With recorded 55 residents working from home, this work/live employment opportunity should be encouraged and developed as it would offer; better opportunities & pay to local people, enrich the local community and may offer a use for redundant farm and other buildings in the Parish, as well as providing a very attractive and desirable place to live. Tourism has provided the sustainable employment growth elsewhere in South Shropshire and could provide opportunities in this Parish, but pay tends to be low apart from businesses at the top end of the market. Discourage provision of basic skill/pay employment.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Objective:

Attract and protect full & part time employment.

### Short Term:

Assist & encourage the community to create employment, help local businesses to promote themselves and the Parish.

### Medium Term:

Promote the Parish as a desirable, friendly & cost effective place to establish new businesses and work, particularly to Tourism, Arts & Crafts and IT start up businesses.

### Long Term:

Encourage & assist entrepreneurs to set up here with special emphasis on IT, Tourism and Arts & Crafts activities.

### HOW:

In partnership with County and District Councils promote the positive advantages of business development in this Parish and the availability of a suitable and well motivated and trained work force.

Use every opportunity to extol the benefits of this Parish, in particular its suitability for Tourism, arts/ crafts and IT businesses.

Press for 'broad band' infrastructure to be available in the Parish.

Establish a business friendly approach at all levels within the community.

### SUMMARY:

Employment was 5th under 'important issues' 1st choice, 3rd when weighted and 4th and 5th respectively under 'priority action'. At present, of those that responded to the survey that worked locally 24 were in the agricultural sector, 55 work from home, 22 in tourism and 10 in the IT sector. The retired but with some work sector was 26 and the fully retired 43 with a recorded 29 not in work.. There are 19 farmers in the Parish with 5 employees, it is not envisaged that this sector will expand in the foreseeable future. See job creation for further information.

## RURAL TRANSPORT

### Objective:

Find ways to mitigate the damaging effects of car use. Inform and educate senior authorities of the essential elements of car use in the Parish

### Short Term:

With partners, seek a public transport policy that will allow residents not to use their cars at the present level

### Medium Term:

Join with other rural parishes in a transport initiative to introduce community transport for shopping etc.

### Long Term:

Promote less polluting transport within a sustainable framework of mixed transport provision

### HOW:

Seek partners, like Craven Arms Partnership, to introduce community transport into major shopping centres or rail heads. Join with other rural Parishes to access Parish Transport Grant and the Rural Transport Partnership funds. Encourage car sharing and pooling arrangements. Engage local elected members in the dissemination of the essential factors in car usage in rural areas and that this use should not be penalised. Seek aid to promote and introduce less polluting modes of transport. Promote initiatives to Government to introduce tax breaks or concessions for the essential use in rural areas of private transport when no public facilities are available

**SUMMARY:** On private transport over 90% agreed that this was essential in the Parish, 68% could not get to work or shop without it, and 71% felt that the Government/Local Authorities should help rural drivers in some way. Respondents agreed that more public transport was required, 62%, with only 15% agreeing that there was adequate provision. 66% recorded that public transport was not available when or where needed. As to alternative transport, 46% had none, 25.5% had a bike, 22.4% used a bus and 13% had a friend to help. Private transport use was 80% for shopping, 68% leisure, 60% doctor/hospital, 50% to work, 45% for work, and 19% for the school run. Numbers of cars/vans; 40% had access to 2 vehicles, 27% to 1, 23% to 3 and 3% to 4. Nearly 60% of residents were not aware of the County's car use policies and 40% disagreed with their present policy.

## GOVERNANCE

### Objective:

That elected bodies be more effective in their work, be transparent, communicate more and take note of their electors' wishes

### Short Term:

Promote greater openness in decision making at all levels. Produce a quarterly Parish newsletter. Acquire quality status. Resist reduction or removal of present services provided by other Agencies without agreement.

### Medium Term:

Encourage greater use of the web for information and consultation. Transfer some powers from District to Parish level.

### Long Term:

Ensure any restructuring of local governance is debated openly and all agencies are elected freely by the people.

**HOW:** Parish Council to apply for quality status which involves, amongst others a commitment to; election of members; training and qualification for the Parish Clerk; audited Parish accounts and at least a quarterly information newsletter to all parishioners. Parish Council to encourage more openness and transparency on the decision making process at County and District levels and more accountability of elected members to their constituents. To press for a fuller explanation and release of information when senior Authorities are about to make decisions at odds with local opinion, democratically reached.

### SUMMARY:

Over 60% of residents were satisfied with the performance of the Parish Council against 33% that were dissatisfied, as to the District Council, 31% satisfied but 38% dissatisfied. The County Council scored 23% satisfied to 42% dissatisfied. Advantage West Midlands and the Regional Development Agency recorded a 70% 'who' return. 77% would like to see more decisions made locally, with 75% supporting transfer of some decision making to the Parish. A Parish Council newsletter was supported by 75% of respondents, overwhelmingly ahead of any other information dissemination method

## LOCAL SERVICES

### Objective:

Ensure the fabric of the community continues by the ongoing success of the Parish's services, farms & businesses (Church, community shop, pubs, etc.) Services delivered by other agencies should not be reduced or removed without local debate and majority consent.

### Short Term:

Community support, attendance & use of the Parish's services and businesses, even if this means positive bias or discrimination.

### Medium Term:

Promotion and help to remain viable, encouraging more voluntary assistance in non profit making activities and encourage job creation. Press for free/subsidised Broad Band availability for the Parish and its businesses.

### Long Term:

Encourage more community activities, particularly with job creation opportunities, and start up of new, for profit, businesses.

### HOW:

This is really a question for the community in general, they must use and support local businesses, amenities, bodies & infrastructure even if this means spending a little more on them. Unit costs will be more as the market is small but in the long run it must be beneficial to the community to have available local businesses and tradespeople.

The Parish Council will try to offer support, encouragement and if possible help. It will try to positively discriminate when placing orders or tendering for any work, services or products and encourage other authorities to do likewise.

### SUMMARY:

Respondents to the survey recorded local services under 'important issues' as their second highest priority, and when weighted it was first. All elements of local services were judged very important and of high priority in the survey as they make up the very fabric of life within this community. Success has been forthcoming recently with the shop at the forge, village design statement, millennium, golden jubilee celebrations, expansion at the Wood brewery, positive involvement of Britpart and the rebuilding of Jewsons.



## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Objective:

To resist any process to designate any green field site within the Parish for any major development industrial use.

### Short/ Medium Term:

Promote use of existing designated free brown field sites at The Grove for industrial use and employment. Object to the Local Development Plan if the draft already published is amended.

### Long Term:

Develop, with our neighbours, a suitable and sustainable industrial development strategy for rural communities.

**HOW:** The Parish Council have already objected to the amendment to the draft local plan to allow green field sites to be used for industrial use and after the overwhelming support at two public meetings, this will continue. The Parish Council has also given evidence to South Shropshire District Council Joint Committees Public Inquiry on Industrial Development Land as well as presenting the results of the Parish survey. The Parish Council will formally object up to the appeal stage if the draft Local Plan at the 2nd deposit stage is amended with regard to greenfield sites.

**SUMMARY:** This issue and the question of relocation of industry to the Parish was the subject of the addendum questionnaire with the results being made available in advance of the main body of results and two public meetings. Industrial use of any green field sites in the Parish results are; 80% against with 15% for, with a similar percentage for relocation to the Parish of the abattoir 84% and 15%, waste disposal/transfer station 87% against and 11% in agreement, and digester for putrescible waste 89% against and 8% for. On the specific relocation of businesses to the Parish 60% were against with 38% for; general industry 75% and 16%, and for building key worker housing 66% against and 29 in support.

## ROADS

### Objective:

Obtain sustainable appropriately funded programme of maintenance and improvement to the Parish's roads including speed restrictions at vulnerable locations particularly where children play.

### HOW:

The County Council comments that Wistanstow is within the area subject to rural settlement speed limit review along with 149 others over the next 3/4 financial years. Progress will depend on a number of factors.

Parish Council will endeavour to report all maintenance and other issues to the appropriate authority and keep up pressure to ensure the objective receives ongoing action and funding.

### SUMMARY:

The survey produced the following results, as 1st choice speeding and maintenance were joint first, with width 3rd, pavements 4th, anti-social behaviour 5th, with lighting and signs 6th & 7th. When weighted the order was maintenance, speeding, width, pavements and lighting joint 5th and anti-social behaviour 7th.

**The Parish Council will review this Action Plan annually and update as required.**

Wistanstow Parish is unusually large, 5,231 acres/2117 hectares, with twelve settlements, made up of several villages and lots of hamlets, comprising 272 households and 700 parishioners.

Its main settlement, Wistanstow village, has a primary school, village hall, pub/brewery and a community shop with a bus service connecting the village and a further three settlements with its far larger neighbours Craven Arms and Church Stretton.

The Parish lies between the Longmynd (NT), Wenlock Edge (NT), Church Stretton and Ludlow. The Parish is more or less split by the Roman Road running from Wroxeter to Hereford, and many of its settlements are along this Roman road.

This is odd, most old villages avoided Roman Roads, the people who came along them were bad news - tax collectors, invaders, unemployed soldiers and riff-raff.

The modern A49 and the main Shrewsbury to Hereford & central Wales railway line clip the Parish, but its mainly rural character and activities predominate, although tourism and work/live have a small foothold.

The name Wistanstow supposedly means St. Wistan's holy place - he was said to have been a member of the Mercian royal family horribly murdered here by his cousin around 849 AD.

An alternative explanation could come from 'wig stan stowe' which, we are told, means idol stone holy place.

Wistanstow is 'home' to The Wood Brewery, brewers of fine Shropshire beers which can be sampled at the renowned 'Plough Inn', Britpark, main suppliers of spare parts for Land Rovers, and 'The Traveller Rest Inn', on the A49.

The very attractive and interesting villages and hamlets are 'home' to a number of local craftsmen & women, including a funerary artist, cabinet maker, dolls house furniture, framing, armillary sundials and fine antique & objets d'art restoration.

We have a cohort size (500 men) Roman fort just south of Wistanstow village and three Roman marching camps nearby, do not forget this was the frontier with Wales in the 1st Century AD. There is a fine moated site near Upper Barn and a castle near Cheney Longville (not accessible).

In addition our villages and hamlets of Whittington & Cwm Head, Marshbrook, Leamore Common, Wettle, Bushmoor, Felhampton, Affcot, Woolston, Cheney Longville and Wistanstow, invoke the very spirit of real English countryside, that just invites closer acquaintance, we have 3 lost villages in the Parish - Clev, Quartine and Wilfrescotta.

These were all active 1000 years ago but have now disappeared.

Most of the Parish's villages and hamlets are smaller now than they were a hundred years ago, with a very considerable reduction in population.

Our present Holy Trinity Parish Church in Wistanstow was mostly built c.1190, but is of Saxon foundation. The Victorian restorers gave the church the usual going over in 1895, but we still get a mention in *The Building of England - Shropshire* - by Pevsner. The Parish also has a second church, St. Michael and All Angels at Cwm Head, it may not have the historical interest to visitors of Holy Trinity, but she is a haven of peace and tranquility, as with all of the Parish's hamlets, villages and byways.