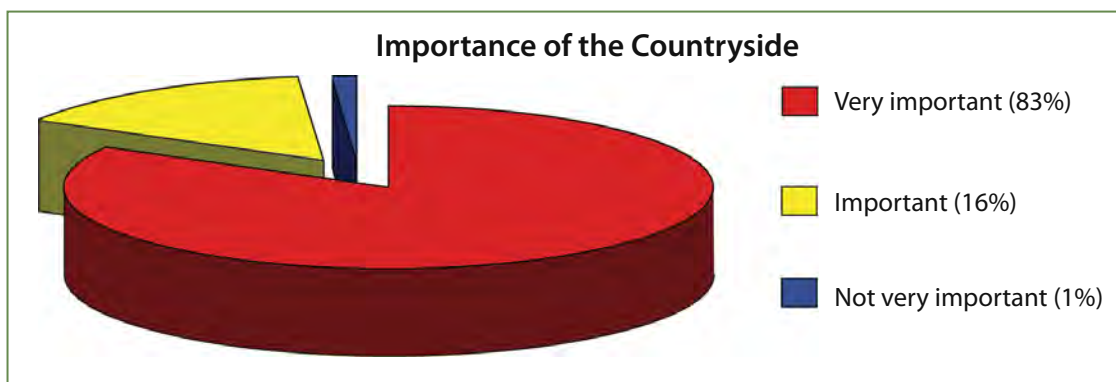


What People Value About Living in Thurnham



It is clear from our survey that Thurnham residents value the advantages they have in living in a mainly rural parish with good and easy access to shops and services. An overwhelming 99% said the countryside was important or very important to them. A mere 1% said it was not important.

Of eleven aspects of living in Thurnham we asked people to rank in importance, access to the countryside came first with 89% of respondents scoring it as important or very important. The other aspects of living in Thurnham on which we sought views were given the following priority:

Good community spirit	84%
Combination of an essentially rural atmosphere with easy access to urban services	83%
Good local schools	78%
Access to other public services	75%
Access to public transport	71%
Access to leisure facilities	68%
Access to key transport links	60%
Access to the coast	58%
Access to London	56%
Access to sporting facilities	54%

These results were reflected in the answers to our question about the importance people placed on a number of key issues. Well over 90% of respondents thought it of the highest importance to preserve the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that covers the entire parish north of the M20 and to preserve existing trees and hedgerows. These were closely followed by the

importance placed on encouraging the planting of new trees; the preserving and maintenance of the network of footpaths and bridleways; and the preservation of St Mary's church and other historic buildings and sites.

The importance of the countryside to Thurnham and the people's wish to see the essentially rural aspect of the parish retained were reflected in the answers given to our question about the kind of development they thought appropriate. Ninety six per cent of people were opposed to heavy industrial development and 86% were against any further expansion of light industrial use. Eighty one per cent opposed office development and 72% the introduction of new retail development. These very high figures are all the more significant in that they were given before the threats to Thurnham's future that became apparent earlier this year.

Against that the significance of farming to the parish was recognized with only 38% opposed to the development of agricultural buildings.

Although the parish does not have an identifiable centre in the same way as Lenham or Bearsted, people's sense of community and identity is high with 83% believing it is important or very important that the parish should retain its separate identity.

We also asked residents what they liked least about living in Thurnham. Their prime concerns focussed on the threat to the countryside from the seemingly inexorable march of development; traffic congestion, speeding and pollution; noise and light intrusion; on-street parking and the lack of suitable off-street parking facilities. Concerns were also expressed about the state of hedgerows, verges and bridlepaths; the increase in fly tipping, graffiti and litter, and the absence of a visible police presence. These issues are examined in more detail in other sections of this Plan.