

# **GILSLAND VILLAGE PLAN and ACTION PLAN Incorporating Waterhead, Thirlwall and Upper Denton**



**Prepared by The Gilsland Village Plan  
Steering Group**

**MARCH 2006**

## WHAT IS A PARISH PLAN?

Consultation and collaboration with rural communities has been one of the underlying principles of recent Government policy. Between March 2001 and March 2004, the Countryside Agency ran a demonstration project giving 1,000 rural communities the resources to produce a Parish Plan. The purpose of a Parish Plan is to set out a vision for how a community wants to develop and what actions the community believe need to be taken.

Gilsland, in collaboration with Brampton were two of the Parishes that undertook to produce a Plan. The Brampton Area Parish Plan was produced in June 2005 and covered the parishes of Brampton, Burtholme, Castle Carrock, Farlam, Hayton, Irthington, Nether Denton and Upper Denton in the county of Cumbria.

Based on information gained from surveys, locally based research and consultation with local groups and residents, the contents of this Parish Plan relate directly to Gilsland, Waterhead, Thirlwall and Upper Denton and is referred to as the Village Plan. In addition to reporting what the people of Gilsland think is needed for the future, this Plan is also action based and gives a clear direction in terms of what actions are going to be taken, with whom and by when.

View of Gilsland



## THE PARISH OF GILSLAND AND SURROUNDING AREAS



Willowford Roman Bridge Abutment

The village of Gilsland lies on the border between the counties of Cumbria and Northumberland, just off the main A69 road and roughly halfway between Carlisle and Hexham. As well as being in two counties, the village is governed by two District Councils and three Parish Councils, their boundaries being marked by the River Irthing and Poltross Burn.

To the north of the village is the RAF base at Spadeadam. The site is the only Electronic Warfare Tactics Range in the UK and was also used for the testing of the famous 'Blue Streak' rocket during the 1960's. The site still provides local employment; while the Spa Hotel, Gordon Graham Road Markings, along with tourism and agriculture provide jobs for many others. Gilsland has a population of around 400 and still boasts a village post office/general store as well as three pubs, a school and a village hall.

There are two suggestions for the derivation of the name 'Gilsland'. It may have originated from Gill, son of Beuth, who owned land before the arrival of the De Vaux family, Norman lords of Gilsland. Another explanation is that the name came from the local ravines or 'ghylls'.

Growth and development mainly took place during the Victorian period with the coming of Gilsland Spa and the Newcastle-Carlisle railway. The village was a thriving spa resort, with many guesthouses opening to accommodate visitors (many travelling by rail) who were attracted by the Spa's health giving qualities and the area's peace and tranquillity.

The famous poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott used the village as an inspiration for some of his work. At the age of 25 he visited Gilsland Spa, where he met his future wife, Mademoiselle Charpentier. He proposed to her on what is now known as the 'Popping Stone' in the Spa woods. The story goes that he gave to her purple pansies gathered on the Roman Wall and wrote a poem, 'To a Lady with Flowers from the Roman Wall' to mark the occasion. Other sources suggest that the poem was written for an earlier admirer.

The village of Gilsland has two churches. The Parish Church dates back to 1854 and is dedicated to St Mary Magdalene.



St Mary Magdalene Church

It was built by George Gill Mounsey of Carlisle and is located close to Gilsland Spa. The Methodist Church is found in the centre of the village and was built in 1869. Timothy Jackson, the local station master and Sunday school superintendent, had a large part to play in the opening of this church, which replaced an earlier facility located on the present site of Rose Bank. This small 'school-room' became inadequate for a congregation that varied according to the number of visitors to the village.

Within the village of Upper Denton, to the west of Gilsland, is another very small church. This Anglo Saxon building is believed to date back to around AD 887 and is one of the oldest parish churches in Britain. Built of Roman stones and still remarkably well preserved, it is now in private hands after its congregation dwindled. It was in use as a place of continuous worship for some eleven centuries.

Today, visitors are drawn to Gilsland for its Roman connections. Hadrian's Wall runs through the village with the Poltross Burn Milecastle being just five minutes walk from the main street. The Hadrian's Wall National Trail which opened in 2003 has helped to increase the number of visitors passing through the village. Birdoswald Roman Fort, one of the Wall's top attractions, is just two miles to the west.



Gilsland Spa

## CREATING THE VILLAGE PLAN – WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

The Parish Councils of Waterhead, Thirlwall and Upper Denton invited the residents of Gilsland to help them prepare a Village Plan. It was the first time that the three parishes of Gilsland joined together to produce a joint community analysis of what the village and people of Gilsland felt they wanted and needed. A public meeting was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and Participatory Appraisal was used to give all present the opportunity to contribute their opinions. The key question posed was: **'What do you think about living in this area?'**

The following responses were collected:

## POSITIVE ASPECTS OF LIVING IN THE AREA

(Those in **bold** represent the most frequently mentioned responses)

- **THE CHURCH AND CHAPEL**
- **THE VIEWS**
- **THE FRIENDLY PEOPLE**
- **THE POST OFFICE**
- **THE SHOP**
- **THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT**
- **THE SCENERY**
- **GILSLAND SHOW**

Other responses: Fresh air, social groups, the Newsletter, affordable housing, the Roman Wall, local walks, the history of the village, the Spa, the Village Hall, School, Youth Club, Library Van, Horse Show, Irthing Gorge, the wildlife, presence of red squirrels, Chapel coffee morning, over 60's events and Visitor Management signs.

## NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF LIVING IN THE AREA

(Those in **bold** represent the most frequently mentioned responses)

- **LITTER**
- **THE NEGLECTED PLAYGROUND**
- **THE BUS SHELTER**
- **CONGREGATING YOUTHS**
- **DECLINE IN THE BUS SERVICE**
- **THE CLOSING OF THE STATION**

Other responses: The fact there are three Parish Councils, the County split, parking, dog fouling, the quality of the street lighting, graffiti in the bus shelter, chewing gum, parking shortage, broken public seating, lack of facilities for teenagers, trains not stopping, rusting cars, need for restoration work to footpaths along the river and woods, vandalised visitor interpretation panels, rusting cars, lack of gas, lack of mobile phone reception, parking on pavements, branches left following Autumn hedge trimming.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004, a meeting was also held with members of the Youth Club and they were asked the same question: 'what do you think about living in this area?' The young people responded as follows:

## POSITIVE ASPECTS OF LIVING IN THE AREA

(following are all the responses elicited from the young people and therefore none are shown to be more preferential than others)

- The Countryside
- The Youth Club
- Peace
- The Post Office
- The Roman Wall
- The Spa Hotel
- The shop
- The pubs
- Walks, wildlife and the river
- Having good friends
- Gilsland Show
- The local school

## LESS POSITIVE ASPECTS OF LIVING IN THE AREA

- There's nothing to do
- No sport or sports club
- No transport
- No bike tracks
- A wrecked park
- Graffiti under the bridges
- The electric fences
- Lots of mud
- Wrecked bus shelter
- It's boring
- No zebra crossing at Gilsland School
- The rubbish\litter
- The dangerous roads

The group were then asked what they would like to see in the area, what improvements they thought could be made. The following are the ideas that came from the members of the Youth Club. In terms of this response, strong preferences were shown and these have been highlighted in bold.

## WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THESE THINGS IN THE AREA:

- SOMEWHERE TO PLAY FOOTBALL
- HORSE RIDING FACILITIES
- SKATEBOARD FACILITY
- QUAD BIKES

Other suggestions included: A fencing club, disco, sports club, an improvement to the play park through the provision of ramps, climbing frames, better swings, somewhere for teenagers to go, a bigger Gilsland Show, a bike track, more shops, a film facility, better school, a nature park, a gym club.

In terms of improvements to the area, the young people wanted people to put their litter in the bin and to live near a cleaner river.

## CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS SUGGESTED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING

### TRANSPORT

- Demolish the bus shelter
- Stagecoach and Arriva buses to agree on return tickets
- The railway station to be re-opened
- Improve transport links

### VILLAGE AMENITIES

- Village Hall to be used for a wider variety of activities for young people e.g. snooker tables, drinks
- A playing field to be provided for sporting activities for young people and a Youth Leader to be provided
- A permanent Drop In Centre to be provided
- The Village Hall to be used as a resource for all ages
- A Village Committee to be formed

### APPEARANCE

- Greater involvement of young people in improving the appearance of the Village
- Litter picking events
- The Play area to be improved
- A Swimming Pool to be funded through the Spa Hotel

- Clear Village of old cars, washing machines and general tidy up
- Increased seating, (possibly at the end of Half Shaft)
- Improved visitor parking
- Improvements to be made to Roman Way House

## EXTERNAL AGENCIES

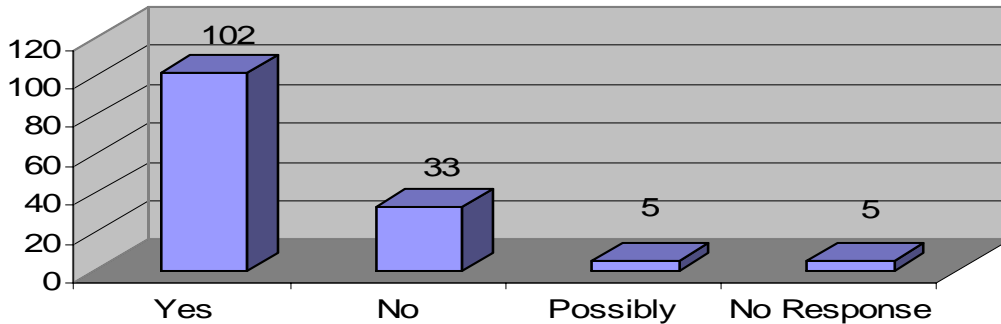
- The standard of rural policing to be improved
- A thirty mile speed limit to be imposed from the hill and from the Church
- Village trail leaflets to be provided free to visitors
- Access to Broadband

## A WIDER CONSULTATION

In addition to the two Public Meetings held in March, the Steering Group, led by David Murray, Upper Denton Parish Council and Village Plan Steering Group member, engaged in a wider consultation process which complemented the work undertaken for the Brampton Area Parish Plan. It was thought to be important that the people of Gilsland had the opportunity to make a specific contribution to the Village Plan. As a result the 'Gilsland Questionnaire - Supplementary Questions' sheet was devised and distributed.

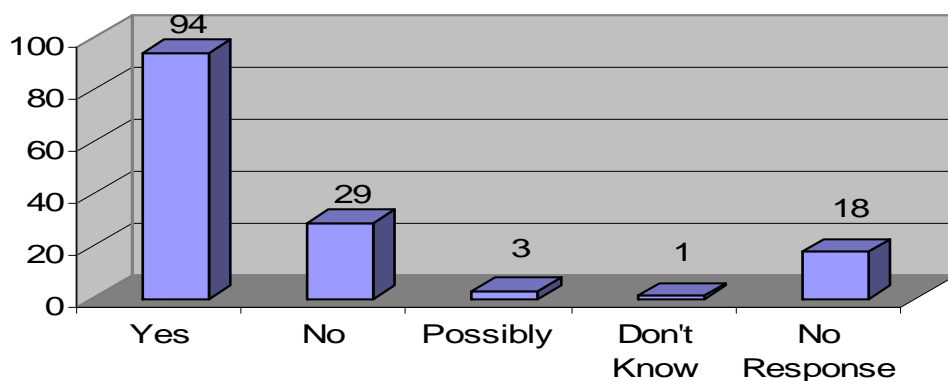
FINDINGS FROM THE GILSLAND QUESTIONNAIRE - SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

**1. Would you use the Gilsland Rail Station regularly if it re-opened?**



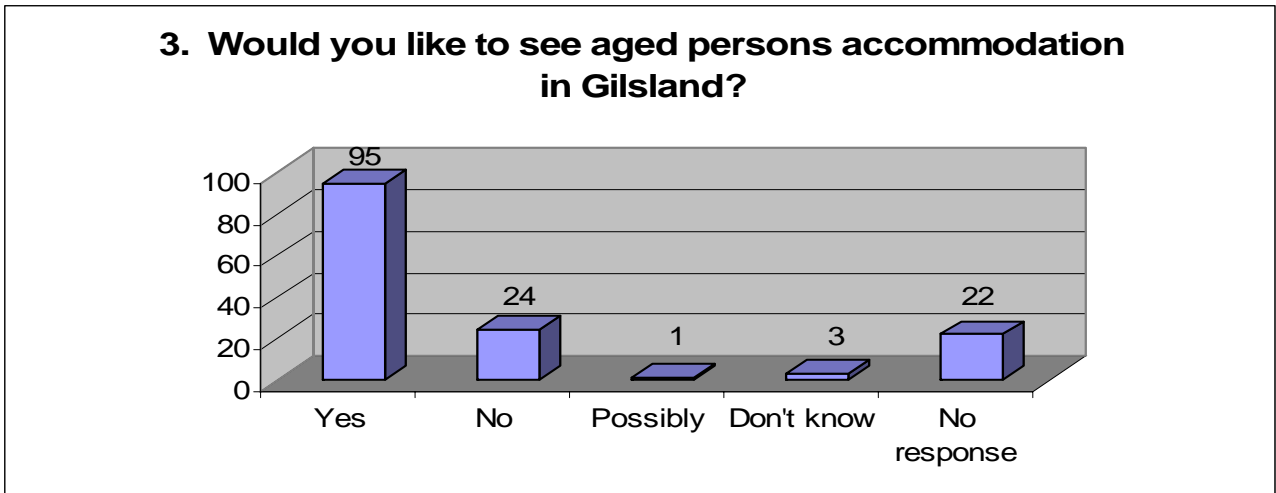
**COMMENTS:** Wide ranging from 'I would use if definitely, what a great idea' to not at all, I disagree with the idea'. For one person they had been waiting for this development for a long time. The most frequent comment suggested that people would use the train 'occasionally', 'especially if there were early and late trains - more than at present'.

**2. Would you like to see affordable housing in Gilsland if an appropriate site could be identified?**

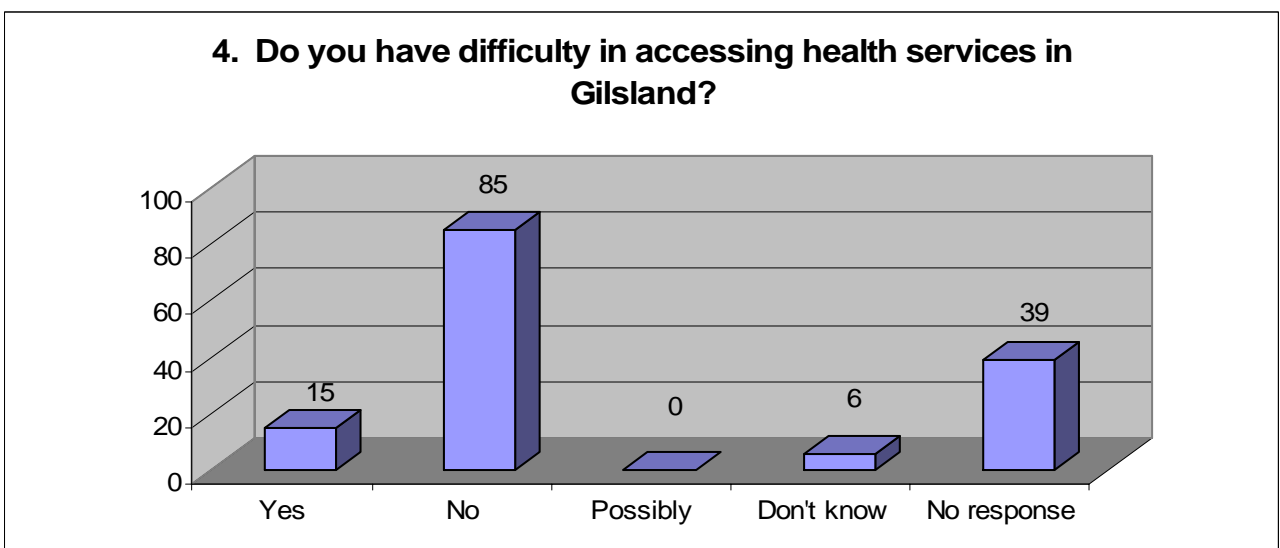


**COMMENTS:** shared comment: 'priority needs to be given to low cost housing to enable people to stay in the village'. There were significant differences of thought about whether or not the housing needed to be provided by the Council.

Although numerically smaller, those who expressed a 'no' answer felt very strongly that there should be no further development within Gilsland as it was thought that it could have a negative impact on the quality of life and undermine the very reasons why people had moved or continue to live within Gilsland.



**COMMENTS:** shared comment: 'yes, but only if there is a demonstrable need'  
A number of questions were raised about what kind of accommodation this might be - for example sheltered, residential or something different.



For those who gave a 'no' response, it appeared to be predominately because they have access to personal transport.

### If so, what difficulties?

'There is a problem with waiting for prescription drugs at Haltwhistle Chemist for example.' 'There are not enough buses to Brampton.' 'Unable to access Gilsland - lack of bus service'. 'There is no village surgery'. 'Brampton surgery is not flexible enough with appointments'. 'Transport is a problem'. 'Surgery days and times a problem'. 'Having to rely on buses'. 'Transport difficulties and once a week surgery isn't sufficient and frequent cancellations are frustrating'.

**Suggestions:** 'Surgery in village hall should be twice a week', 'GP's might consider outreach surgery with practice nurses perhaps'?

### OTHER COMMENTS:

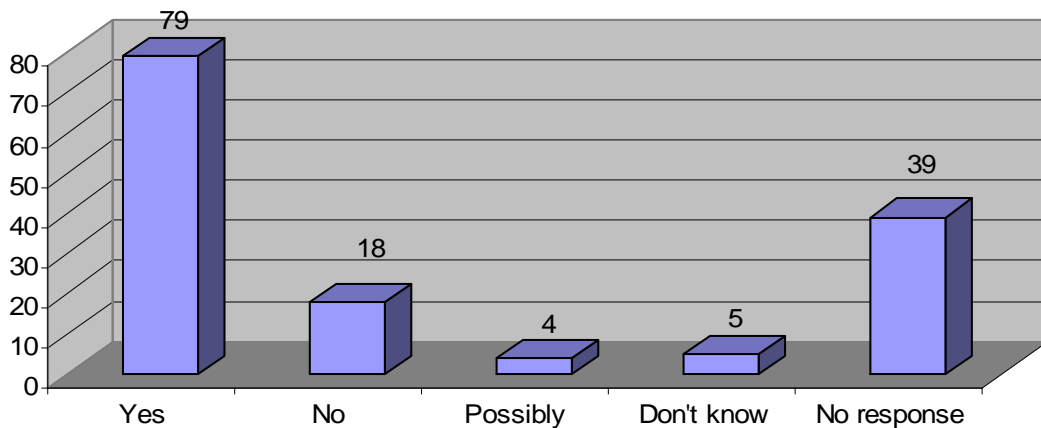
What Health Services?



**COMMENTS:** Shared comment: Definitely

Other comments indicated that people thought there already were re-cycling facilities in Gilsland, for some there were issues regarding mess.

## 6. Would you like dog-litter bins to be established in Gilsland?



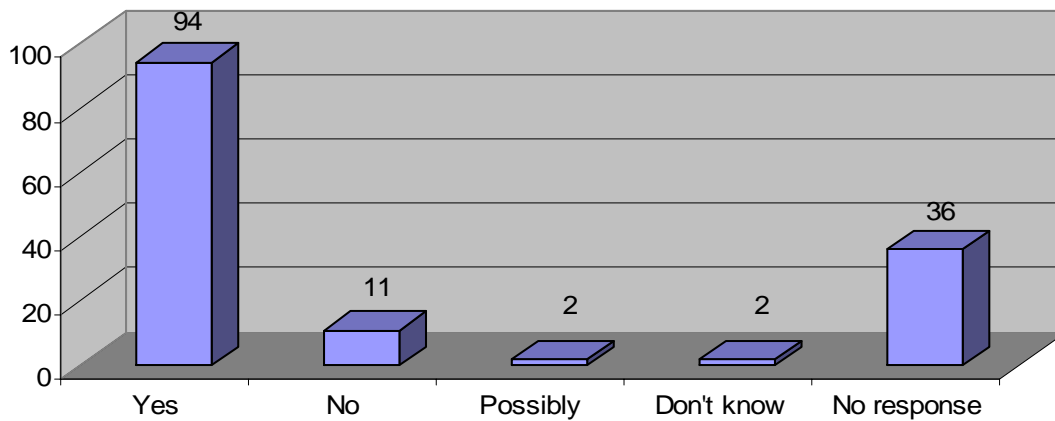
### If so, where would you like them situated?

Most frequent comment: 'At the home of the dog owner', failing that:

- By the Bus shelter,
- Anywhere up Rosehill, Bittlestones, Poltross
- By the School
- In the car park next to the School
- Along all known footpaths
- On the road to the Spa
- In the grounds of Gilsland Spa Hotel
- On the path by the river
- In the main village area
- At either end of Village Street
- Between Samson and the Post Office
- Down the lane near the Post Office
- Opposite the Post Office
- By the recreation ground
- Near the Church
- Along the stepping stones, across Mumps Hall Bridge
- The Post box below Howard House
- From the Chapel to the Garth
- Near to the Wall Walk to Willowford or the Car Park.

**OTHER COMMENTS:** Shared comments indicated concern about the frequency with which the bins would be emptied and a suggestion that action needs to be taken against dog owners who do not clean up their dogs mess.

### 7. Would you like extra litter bins in Gilsland?

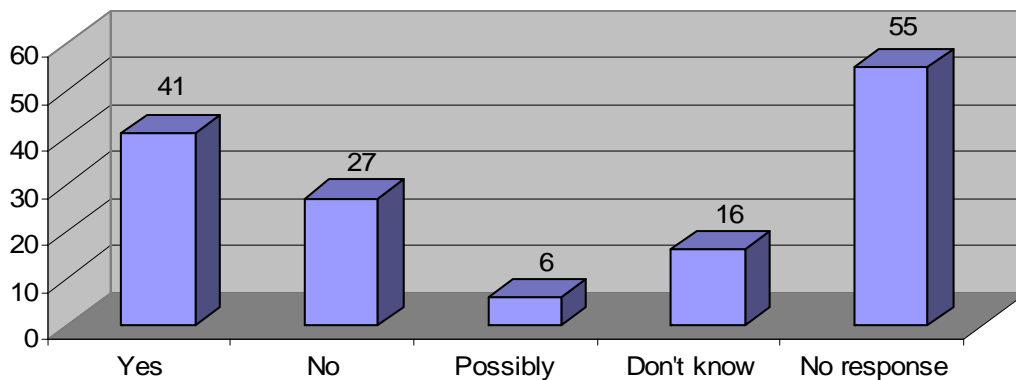


#### COMMENTS:

**Shared comment:** 'Litter problem is due to behaviour; 'children should be encouraged to engage in 'litter picks' and be trained not to drop litter'

**OTHER COMMENTS:** Litter bins were thought to be even more necessary now that Hadrian's Walk is operating. It was also thought that existing bins needed to be improved and emptied properly and one person would love to have wheelie bins and garden waste wheelie bins similar to those that have been introduced in other areas.

### 8. Should there be more activities for the elderly, such as organised trips or aluncheon club?



**If yes, what would you recommend?**

**More trips e.g:**

- Day trips to Alnwick Gardens
- Visits to York, Bournemouth, Gardening Shows, Newcastle Metro Centre
- Music nights in Scotland, Glasgow and Edinburgh

**A luncheon club:**

- perhaps once a week at Gilsland Spa,
- once a fortnight or once a month in the Village Hall

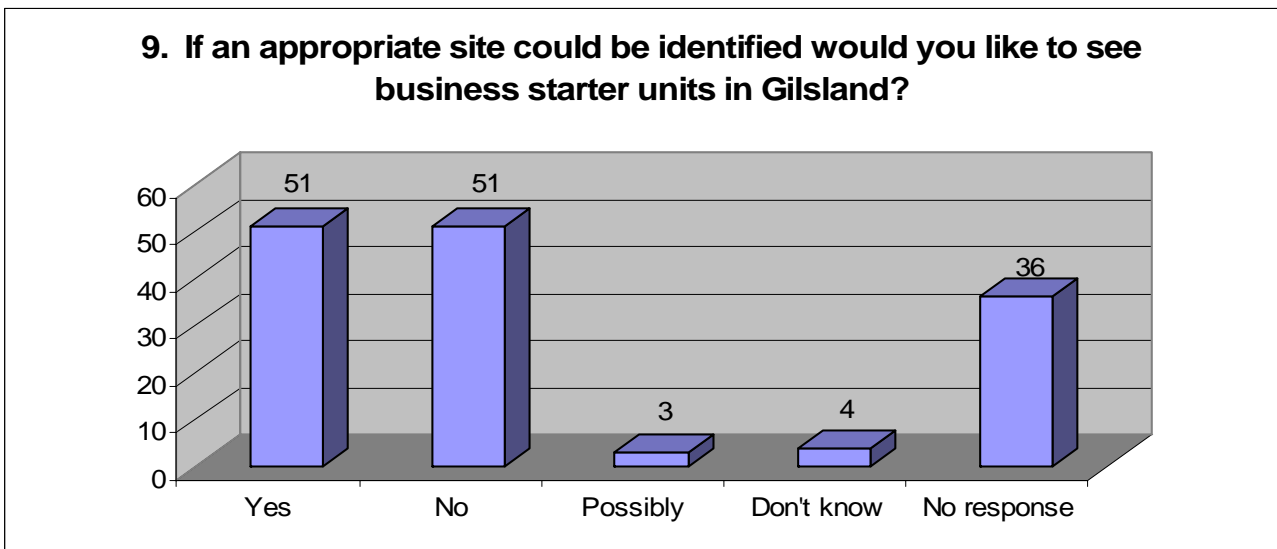
**Other suggestions:**

- swimming sessions for older people
- the Over 60's could be expanded
- We need a local day care centre in the Village Hall with care staff which could incorporate trips etc but also which could provide relief for carers.
- Village Hall could be used to provide facilities for older people from all three parishes, on a joint basis.

**COMMENTS:** shared comment: 'You need to ask older people what, if anything is required\desired'.

**OTHER COMMENTS:** The over 60's already provide a summer trip and a Xmas lunch. We need to be investing in the young people; older people are able to organise their own activities and do so on a regular basis.

What about the under 60's?



**COMMENTS:** Shared comment: If anything more is created it needs to be for the use of local people and to create employment. One example was given of someone who runs their own business from the Village and who employs many local people. For others, a successful Business Unit would mean that transport links would need to be improved.

## 10. What do you like about living here?

Number of mentions in questionnaire:

The peace and quiet	50
Living in a rural setting	45
The people	38
Scenery and views	24
Sense of community	11
Access to walks	10
Clean air	8
Low crime rate	6
It's a good place to bring up children	5
The Post Office,	5
The wildlife,	4
Sense of history	4
Ease of access to other places	4
Close to family and friends	3
Pubs	3
Sense of space	3
The shop	2
The size of the Village	2

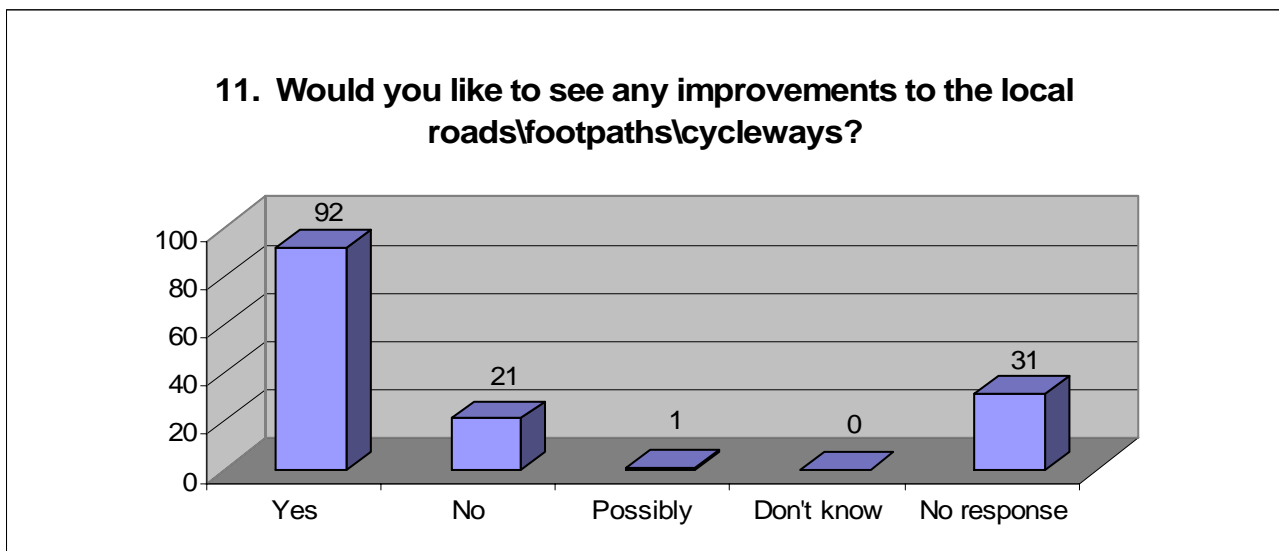
Mentioned once in the questionnaire

- There are no Business Units
- The local School
- The Health Centre at Haltwhistle,
- The Gilsland Magazine
- Clubs and activities at the Village Hall
- Potential for business with Roman Wall footpath
- The weather
- Spectacular skies and sunsets
- Living near a site of Special Scientific Interest
- Gilsland Spa Hotel
- The Church
- The pace of life - or lack of it!

DON'T KNOW: 2  
NO RESPONSE: 30

## OTHER COMMENTS

- 'I was born in Gilsland and have spent most of my life living in the area and my family and friends live in the area which is a pleasant and nice place to live'.
- 'It has plenty of freedom, so you can go about your business with ease.'
- 'I like the fact that everyday seems like a Sunday'.
- 'Very happy here, would like to see the village grow, rather than decline like so many have'.
- 'Love it, adore living here'.
- 'Don't change the peace and quiet, it's fine'.
- 'It's a very good place to live in except for the abusive\offensive youths'.
- Lack of street lighting seen as a positive



If so, what would recommend?

### DRAINS AND DYKES:

- Doing something about the flooding between here and Greenhead
- Need drainage to avoid flooding
- Need to see to the drainage on Rosehill
- Drains and dykes up Half Shaft

### FOOTPATHS AND VERGES:

- Regular maintenance to footpaths e.g grass verges
- Grass verges to be kept cut and tidy, especially the path to the school, very over grown with soil and plants
- Need wider footpaths for prams
- Footpath along the river needs tidying up
- Regular maintenance of bridleways

- Areas to ride horses along the Wall
- The steps down to the Playground are too steep, path could be gravelled
- Path by the river needs gravel – too much dog dirt
- Wider footpath on the main road
- Upgrading of and regular maintenance of roads, footpaths and cycling ways. These also need to be kept open for all to use. There are some footpaths\rights of way that are difficult to access, particularly Crammel Linn to the Spa
- More footpaths
- Farmers could do more to keep footpaths clear
- Poltross and the riverside need improving
- Hedge trimming on the narrow road to Long Byre
- No footpaths along the roads and dangerous in the tourist season
- Improve lighting
- Footpath to Greenhead and Gilsland is on the road, not cross country
- Footpath\cycle path needs to be created between Gilsland and Greenhead
- Make sure the walks and paths are well signposted and access is available to all; must not be overgrown with bushes and weeds. Good places for dog litter bins

## PARKING

- A parking area to be created near the school for local and visitor use
- More parking in the centre of the Village, near amenities
- No parking on Village Bank, opposite Bridge Inn and Rosehill Road end
- Need improved parking
- Take the parked cars off the road near the PO
- Stop illegal parking
- Double yellow lines from the old Co-op to Post Office



Mumps Hall Bridge

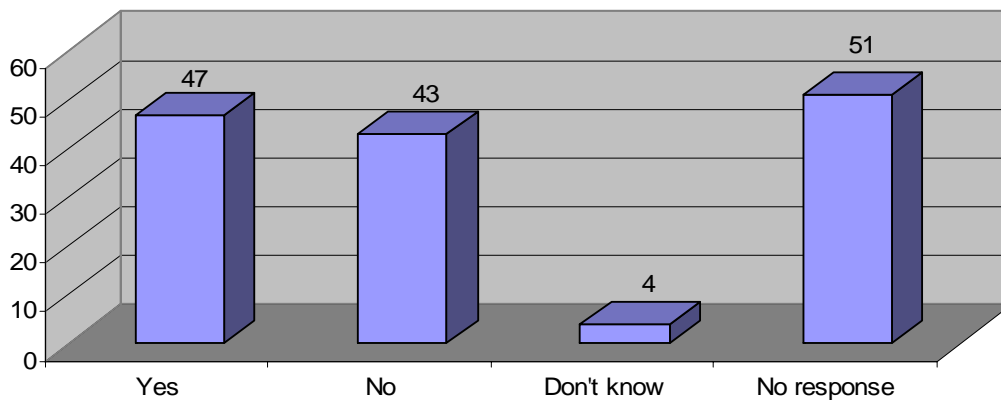
## ROADS AND SPEED LIMITS

- The unadopted roads in the Village to be properly surfaced
- Repair the cattle grids
- The roads are good but vehicles travel too fast. Signs are needed to indicate these are rural roads and there is a need to slow down
- Speed limit on road to Greenhead should be 20 mph – makes it safer for walkers and cyclists
- More speed restriction signs
- Speed limit signs to be more prominent
- Speed bumps near the school and PO
- Speed\traffic calming on Rosehill and in the Main Street
- Speed limits need enforcing mainly on the way out to Brampton
- Extended 30 mph to go beyond the Spa Hotel
- Speed limit on the road to Spadeadam
- Cycle routes other than Reivers to be developed and maps etc. to be made available in the PO
- Roadside gullies need cleaning more often to stop flooding, especially at Orchard House bend
- The roads are too narrow to accommodate buses
- The road to Longbyre needs improving
- Improve the Gilsland, Greenhead road – often has flooding and potholes and is generally in a poor state
- We need white lines
- The cast iron signpost to be repainted
- Improve the B6318 between Long Byre and Gilsland
- Main road needs resurfacing (especially near the Garden Centre).
- Creation of a cycle path through the village (or at least cyclist warning signs)
- Better access from the outlying communities to Gilsland, it's dangerous to walk from Longbyre.

## COMMENTS:

'We think the roads, footpaths, cycle routes are good'

## 12. Would you like to see more public benches in the village?



### Comments

- We have plenty of benches – maintenance is the problem
- Repair the ones we have got
- Make sure they are vandal proof
- Placement
  - Bus stop area
  - School area/footpath to Willowford Bridge
  - Post Office
  - Roman Wall sites to save the wall being subjected to extra weight
  - Half Shaft Lane (on walk up to Spa)
  - River walk
  - At letterbox near Howard House
  - Opposite Irthing Park
  - Where an open view can be enjoyed
  - Not in playground – attracts groups of youths
  - At intervals on all roads out of the village as there used to be – many old benches hidden in undergrowth
  - Reinstate seat at Reservoir beyond Lawn Top Farm
  - Remove broken bench from turnoff to Birdoswald
- Include flowerbeds with benches

## GILSLAND ACTION PLAN - MARCH 2006

Following examination and discussion of the findings from the joint community analysis and the Gilsland Supplementary Questionnaire, the Gilsland Village Plan Steering Group met in February 2006 to agree the priority actions to be taken forward during the next twelve to eighteen months. These priority actions are outlined below.

What action is needed?	Who will be contacted?	When and how will the action be taken?
<p><b>TRANSPORT:</b> A Steering Group will be set up to look at the possibility of opening Gilsland Railway Station.</p> <p>The Group will be drawn from local parishes along with enthusiastic, experienced people from a wider area, who are dedicated and keen to help in the future development of Gilsland Village and the neighbouring communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardon Mill Transport Group</li> <li>• Rail Track</li> <li>• Sustran,</li> <li>• Tyne Valley Transport</li> <li>• Hadrian's Wall Tourism Group</li> <li>• Hadrian's Wall National Trail</li> <li>• National Parks</li> <li>• Northern Rail</li> <li>• Network Rail</li> <li>• Cumbria County Council</li> <li>• Northumberland County Council</li> <li>• Local property owners</li> <li>• Local Parish Councils, City and County Councillors</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHEN:</b> As soon as possible  <b>HOW:</b> Experience from the Bardon Mill Transport Group will help to identify the next course of action and interested parties can then be brought together</p>
<p><b>AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OLDER PERSONS ACCOMMODATION:</b> A local housing needs survey will be requested.</p>	<p>Northumberland County Council</p>	<p><b>WHEN:</b> As soon as possible  <b>HOW:</b> Meetings will be held with the Planning Departments of Tynedale and Carlisle Councils to identify the needs and possible future developments within and close to Gilsland Village</p>
<p><b>RECYCLING:</b> The three Parish Councils will explore possible sites and types of recycling that would be used by the residents and local communities</p>	<p>Tynedale County Council and Cumbria County Council</p>	<p><b>WHEN:</b> 2006-2007  <b>HOW:</b> A joint parish meeting will identify the best position for the facilities without overlapping across the Northumbria\Cumbria border</p>

<b>DOG FOULING:</b> The Parish Councils will investigate displaying more signs and disposal facilities.	The Parish Councils	<b>WHEN:</b> 2006/2007 <b>HOW:</b> With help and advice provided by City Councils and neighbourhood forums
<b>LITTER BINS:</b> The Parish Councils will look at sites to put extra bins	City and County Councils	<b>WHEN:</b> 2006 <b>HOW:</b> Consultation with adjoining parishes on sites close to parish borders
<b>PEOPLE OVER 60:</b> More events will be encouraged, for example trips, luncheon clubs. Services, such as Doctors, Dentists and Home Care will be more closely monitored.	The Local Committee Age Concern The Parish Councils	<b>WHEN:</b> 2006 <b>HOW:</b> The Parish Councils to be more involved in older peoples' lives within the community
<b>ROAD IMPROVEMENTS:</b> The Parish Council members will advise Clerks of any defects, problems, for example white lines, cats eyes and accident hot spots.	The Highways Department	<b>WHEN:</b> Annually <b>HOW:</b> An annual report will go to the Highways Department. This will take the form of an inventory of damage and repair programmes and accidents and will be made available for Highway Departments to discuss. There will be regular meeting reports to the Parish Councils.
<b>VILLAGE SEATS:</b> Work is already in hand	Parish Councils	<b>WHEN:</b> The Parish Councils already have this item in hand.
<b>ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:</b> Youth Club Leaders and Helpers will look at extending youth club activities on a more regular basis.	Youth Club and Local Schools	<b>WHEN:</b> Spring 2006 and then continual monitoring. <b>HOW:</b> Options to include facilities at Gilsland School and to include more trips to popular venues.

## GILSLAND VILLAGE PLAN STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

- Rachel Wilde
- Gwyneth Wilde
- Alistair Bibby
- Diane Gerard
- Juan Guerrero
- Patricia Smith
- David Keen
- Sue Maughan
- David Murray
- Les Howe
- Brian Barker
- Christine Dixon
- Gordon Graham

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thanks have to go to Christine Dixon, Juan Guerrero and David Murray for their invaluable help in the early stages of preparing this Plan. Also particular thanks to Juan for supplying the text and photographs included in the Plan.