

CLAYGATE: THE WAY FORWARD

THE REPORT



Claygate Village Association
18 June 2024

The Claygate: The Way Forward Campaign

FOREWORD

by Steve Wells

What has happened in Claygate over the past year could only be described as a reassuring example of citizen power. Residents have been given the opportunity to voice what feels naturally right for the future of the place where they live. And the community has spoken.

There can be no doubt that there is an exceptionally powerful sense of community in Claygate: a huge commitment to ensuring the precious qualities of our village are preserved and enhanced and that the needs of everyone, especially those facing difficulties, are met.

The Claygate Village Association took responsibility for leading this coming together of residents. Our aim was to identify ideas and issues of relevance to the future health of the community. The process revealed the vitality of residents, their passion and their willingness to offer time, energy and expertise, all of which has made this exercise so successful and satisfying.

We set out to discover what makes Claygate such a special place and we found that a number of factors combine to make the village more than the sum of its parts: the Parade of shops, the old village, all the green spaces, its many clubs and societies, vibrant community events and good schools all of which contribute to the vitality of our village.

But, that's not to say there aren't threats. Residents raised concerns about overdevelopment, traffic congestion, car parking, loss of green spaces, lack of affordable housing and loss of the distinctive character of our village. Our report offers some suggestions about how these can be addressed.

Our aim is that this report will provide the basis for further discussions to create and secure the future for a united yet diverse Claygate.

Steve Wells
Chair, Claygate: The Way Forward



INTRODUCTION

This report is the culmination of a year-long project to discover what Claygate's residents want for the future of our village.

It stems from the outcry following the announcement of Elmbridge Borough Council's (EBC) plans for retail development on Torrington Lodge car park. This led to more than 1,000 people signing a petition calling for proper consultation.

In October 2023, EBC withdrew its plans and agreed to engage with the community and listen to the people of Claygate.

As a result, the Claygate Village Association (CVA), a non-political charity representing all residents, formed the Claygate: The Way Forward (CTWF) initiative. At a packed meeting of residents in November 2023, working groups were set up to explore six key areas:

Shops and Businesses	Transport and Parking	Housing
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Recreation	Environment

Within these key areas, the working groups generated ideas and recommendations based on the responses to a bespoke survey of Claygate residents.

The survey was undertaken between 4 March and 2 April 2024 and received over 1,600 responses. Approximately 25% of Claygate's adult population, completed this comprehensive survey. A detailed analysis of the data gathered was then carried out to test the hypotheses of the working groups. The full survey report can be found at Appendix A1.

It is important to note that both EBC and Claygate Parish Council (CPC) have welcomed and supported this consultation. The work was undertaken by CVA volunteers, all of whom care deeply about where they live. The CVA is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the character and amenities of Claygate.

This report details the conclusions drawn from the CTWF project and makes recommendations for future action. It aims to reflect the views of our residents and it is hoped it will lay the foundations for a constructive partnership between EBC, the CPC and the residents of Claygate.



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

WHO RESPONDED TO THE RESIDENTS' SURVEY?

1,614 people responded to the survey, 1,528 being Claygate residents (defined by the Ward boundaries) representing all areas of the village (Figure 1). There was good representation across all age groups, although younger respondents, 34 years old and under, were under-represented compared to Census data (ONS, 2021)¹. 38% of respondents indicated they were a family with children under 18 at home.

92% of respondents report visiting Claygate's shops at least once a week. The pharmacy, post office/newsagent, Co-op or Nisa Local, and cafes are visited most frequently, showing the same pattern as the Claygate Shops and Residents Survey carried out in 2014. Of the respondents visiting the shops, 75% of over 65s, 60% of 50-64s and 51% of under 50s use the post office/newsagent at least weekly. 40% of respondents visit cafes at least weekly, with commuters using cafes 2.3 times more often than non-commuters. 50% of respondents commute by train, however, only 6% now commute daily, whilst 40% commute between 1 and 3 times a week, suggesting a shift to hybrid working.

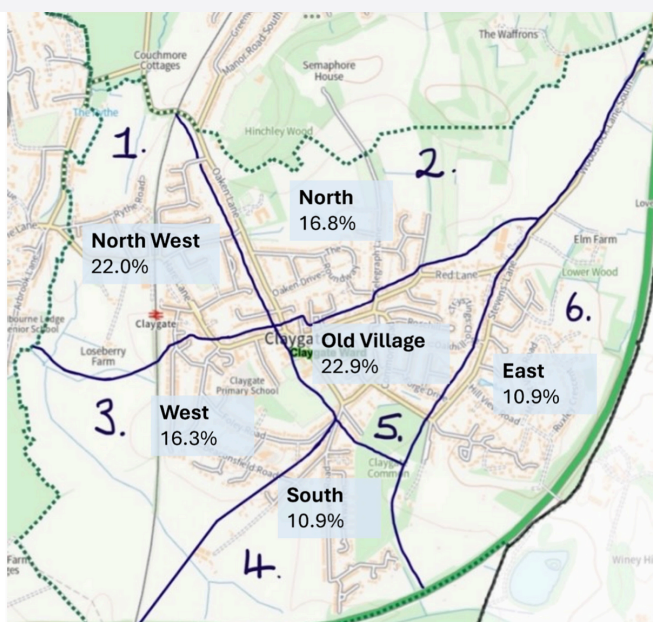


Figure 1. Respondents by area with area boundaries.

The survey showed that respondents have significant long-term concerns about the distinctive character of Claygate being spoiled, loss of the village's sense of community, loss of green spaces and about over-development.

Our analysis found an association between these concerns that may suggest that respondents think of Claygate's distinctive character as relating to both its physical environment and its felt community.

New developments should both be in keeping with the character of the village and foster and enhance its sense of community.

1. Office for National Statistics (2021)

2. For Claygate Shops and Residents Survey, 2014, report please contact Gary State via the Claygate Village Association



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Generally, there is strong support for housing development on village brownfield sites (73%).

Where land is available for development 42% of respondents felt that mixed-use development should be prioritised with a further 27% prioritising recreation and leisure facilities and 23% prioritising housing.

When asked what type of housing should be built, 68% were in favour of private housing with 1-3 bedrooms (currently, most new housing in Claygate has four or more bedrooms); 57% were in favour of affordable housing; 32% in favour of social housing (e.g Housing Association owned) and 30% rental housing.

Respondents across all age groups were overwhelmingly in favour of new developments having a net gain on natural habitats and biodiversity.

OPINIONS ON THE USE OF TORRINGTON LODGE CAR PARK (TLCP)

The survey revealed many suggestions for the use of TLCP. The most popular proposed use was a fitness centre (45%). This was driven by the under 50s and supported by people who don't already use a gym (63% of under 50s). 45% of respondents wanted to keep TLCP wholly or partially as a car park; 7% felt that TLCP should remain exclusively for car parking.

Respondents could select all that apply, allowing for support for a mixture of uses. Support for housing being built on the site was as follows: 35% support for affordable or social housing, 33% for private housing with 1 to 3 bedrooms, 18% for rental housing and 10% for temporary housing.

33% selected "Health Centre" ranking this option 5th. (For details of all option rankings see Table 9, Appendix A1.)

31% of respondents supported a supermarket on TLCP. 26% supported small business units and 26% pop-up shops.

However, age groups differed dramatically in their views for TLCP. Full results can be seen from Table 9 in the CVA Final Survey Report (Appendix A1).





SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

OPINIONS REGARDING AN ADDITIONAL SUPERMARKET

Overall, the respondents of the survey were against having an additional supermarket in the village. However, the under 50s age group were more likely to be in favour. There were very strong opinions on both sides and people made use of the extremes of the scale (see Figure 1).

Those most against the idea of an additional supermarket were also those most concerned about over-development, congestion and loss of the village's character.

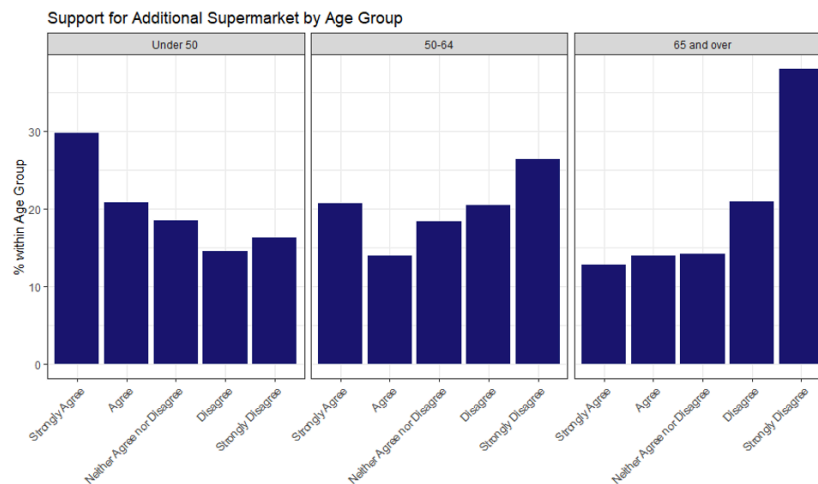


Figure 1 Support for an Additional Supermarket by Age Group

When asked what shops residents did want in the village, a supermarket and specifically M&S were predictably prominent as these had been previously proposed. Other supermarkets mentioned included Waitrose, Tesco and Aldi (see also Figure 3.).

A deli and a hardware shop were also popular choices with more than 130 mentions each (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Word cloud summarising responses to the question 'What other shops and businesses would you like to see in the village?' (responses mentioned 10 or more times)



Figure 3 demonstrates the diversity of people's wishes for additional shops in the village, with 127 unique suggestions³.

A small minority of respondents stated in free-text responses that they wanted “bigger” shops, and of these 2 out of 3 wanted a bigger supermarket than the Co-op. One respondent added, “Hard to do a family shop for a week at Co-op”. While this is a very small sub-group of respondents (fewer than 2%) this example illustrates a need to understand and manage expectations of any new development, particularly an additional supermarket.



Figure 3: Word cloud summarising responses to the 'other shops and businesses that respondents would like (responses mentioned less than 10 times)

Respondents were significantly in favour of a village market with the caveat that the market should not compete with existing shops, with the strongest support from the under 50s.

3. Although 1,528 residents responded to the survey, not all responded to the free text questions, therefore, these figures are a number of people making the same suggestion rather than % of the sample



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

TRANSPORT

TRAVEL WITHIN THE VILLAGE

More people walk regularly⁴ in the village than drive. However, 58% of respondents indicated that they regularly used their car or van. 26% reported using the K3 bus regularly for transport within the village.

Respondents were significantly more likely to say they were trying to reduce their car use for exercise (72%) and environmental reasons (49%) than for saving money (32%). Patterns were the same across more frequent and less frequent drivers.

Only 13% of respondents said they cycle regularly within the village. Barriers to cycling were reported as lack of road maintenance and safety concerns, notably potholes and poor road maintenance (64%), traffic speed (26%), parked cars (22%), lack of cycling routes (19%), narrow roads (16%), and dangerous junctions (13%) as well as limited bike parking/storage facilities (23%) and theft/vandalism of bikes (21%).

The K3 bus is well-loved and well-used by all age groups. In free-text, respondents suggested adjusting the bus route to make it more accessible within the village, particularly to Coverts Road and Holroyd Road, and improving its frequency and connections with other transport.

PARKING

When visiting the shops or station, most respondents currently park on the Parade (60%), Albany Crescent and Gordon Road (43%) rather than using TLCP (18%) or the station car park (13%). 50% of respondents said on-street parking is a problem in Claygate.

78% said that they would use the village car parks more if the first period was free. 12% of respondents stated in free-text responses that free parking would encourage them to shop more in the village. However, it is not possible to make a direct link between free parking provision and shopping behaviour without a trial.





SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

CONCERNS ABOUT TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND SPEEDING

Respondents said that congestion in the village is a significant concern. Also, 43% of respondents said speeding was a concern. However, where congestion is reduced, speeding may increase, therefore, further research is needed to understand traffic flow.

There is significant support for the introduction of some kind of speed control measures to be introduced. Overall, 81% of respondents supported at least one of the speed control measures listed. Preferred measures were reduced speed limits on certain roads (39%) or a blanket speed limit across the village (31%) and vehicle-activated signs (34%).



“Friends where I lived before said I was foolish to retire so far away, but very soon we met all our neighbours, we now know so many people, Saturday mornings are a treat, visiting the Parade, it’s such a tonic to meet people and a remedy for loneliness.”



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND LEISURE

The need for improved provision of healthcare services in the village was raised by respondents, who reported problems accessing GP and dental services. A need for a community health centre and NHS dentist were also raised, plus the need to re-establish a second pharmacy.

There is a desire for more meeting places offering wellbeing support for both young and older people and suggestions were made to broaden the services of the Claygate Centre for the Community. There was also broad support for improving mental health services and establishing a Warm hub.

Free-text responses emphasised the community focus of the respondents with suggestions for community hubs and more community events, plus opportunities to connect with others and more support for lonely people.

Some respondents mentioned that stronger community feeling, including expanding or increasing pavement cafes, would encourage them to do more of their shopping in Claygate.

COMMUNITY PUB AND SUPPORT HUB



There was strong support for a community pub and a particular desire for community connection initiatives with a community support hub (providing cost of living support, debt advice, community fridge, foodbank support, etc).

Respondents across the village were in favour of the community pub overall, with support being greatest in the Coverts Road area.

Emerging idea:

The potential purchase and refurbishment of the Winning Horse pub by the recently established Claygate Community Benefit Society (CCBS) to create a multifunctional venue for the local community.



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

GREEN SPACES & RECREATION

There is great concern among respondents about losing our green spaces, and a very strong level of disagreement with development on the Green Belt (86%).

Claygate's green spaces are very popular, with 67% of respondents reporting to use them daily or two to three times a week, with the most popular activity across all age groups being walking (92%). Recreational facilities are also well used by respondents with higher use among younger age groups. The children's playground at the Recreation Ground has been used by over half of respondents. There was good support for more community gardens (58%).



There is support across the age ranges for a fitness centre / gym / outdoor gym in Claygate.

The survey highlighted the clear connection between physical and mental wellbeing, with respondents stressing the need for affordable and accessible exercise opportunities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Answers to questions about engaging in actions to benefit the environment suggest that there is an overall desire to live more sustainably. 82% of respondents reported avoiding using single-use packaging, 42% using refillable containers and 55% choosing chemical-free cleaning products. However, there is scope to promote the sustainable and eco-conscious shopping opportunities that are already present in the village and to develop a more comprehensive offer across retailers.

Respondents to the survey were keen to engage with environmental conservation: 67% are growing plants that are bee and insect friendly, 44% are planting British native species and 51% regularly pick up rubbish. Respondents reported making efforts to reduce car travel for environmental and health purposes.

THE WAY FORWARD: OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORT AND PARKING

- Conduct a twelve-month trial of 1-hour free parking in Torrington Lodge and Hare Lane car parks, with local shops and businesses monitoring any effect on footfall (Action: EBC)
- Improve signage to car parks and information on parking charges to encourage their use (Action: EBC; Network Rail)
- Maintain our regular K3 bus service and consult Transport for London (TfL) on its routing to increase accessibility to more of the Claygate community (Action: CPC; TfL)
- Consider road safety improvements such as targeted speed reduction measures that accord with Surrey County Council's (SCC) 'Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy 2024-25' (Action: SCC)
- Review barriers to cycling and walking in the village. Identify improvements to road maintenance and cycling infrastructure that would reduce car use (Action: EBC; SCC).

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

- Protect Claygate's green spaces and Green Belt (Action: EBC; CPC)
- Encourage the development of 1 and 2-bedroom housing units, including flats close to the village centre (Action: EBC; CPC).
- Encourage the development of our brownfield sites for small 1-3 bed housing with additional opportunities for public car parking (Action: PA Housing; Crown Estates; EBC).
- Ensure all new developments in Claygate implement 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (Action: EBC)

"Moving to Claygate we made more friends in the first year than in thirteen years in Esher; there is this general feeling of openness."

THE WAY FORWARD: OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SHOPS AND BUSINESSES

- Make more use of pavement areas by restaurants, cafes and pubs to increase the sense of community (Action: EBC; CPC).
- Establish and support a new Village Business Initiative⁵. Implement a marketing strategy and collective website to promote Claygate, including shops, businesses and activities, as an attractive retail and lifestyle destination (Action: Shops and Businesses Group; CPC).
- Introduce a regular village market to supplement our local shops and encourage more visitors (Action: Shops and Businesses Group; CCBS).

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND LEISURE

- Maintain our existing health & wellbeing services and improve communication about what is available (Action: EBC; SCC; CPC; CCBS; Capelfield and other health and wellbeing services).
- Maintain the services at the Claygate Centre for the Community to meet the needs of our residents (Action: EBC).
- Enhance and extend provision of health and wellbeing services for those who are socially isolated, have poor physical or mental health and their carers or those who struggle with the high cost of living (Action: EBC; SCC; CPC; CCBS; Capelfield and other health and wellbeing services).
- Establish a community support hub incorporating a warm hub and access to emergency food support (Action: CPC; CCBS).
- Seek to enhance existing wellbeing and leisure facilities (EBC; CPC; CVA; Claygate Recreation Ground Trust; Environment Group).

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Keep residents informed about local availability of sustainable and environmentally friendly products (Action: EBC; CPC; CCBS; Environment Group; Shops and Businesses Group).
- Promote local walks and environmental awareness (Action: EBC countryside team; CPC; Environment Group).
- Research setting up, funding and maintaining community gardens (Action: CPC; Environment Group).

5. For more information on this retail focused initiative please refer to the Shops and Businesses Working Group Report (Appendix B1.)

THE WAY FORWARD: FURTHER RESEARCH

Following the results of the Claygate Residents' Survey (2024), we recommend three important areas needing further research.

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

- Specific age-related expectations and needs of residents about future developments, including any potential additional retail offerings and leisure facilities (Action: EBC; CPC).
- Potential mixed uses for Torrington Lodge Car Park, including retention of some car parking, affordable accommodation units, small/start-up business/retail units, a small gym, and a Health Centre (Action: EBC; CPC).

TRAFFIC

- Consult residents about on-street parking, traffic congestion and speeding and any ensuing recommendations (Action: SCC; CPC).

RETAIL

- Conduct a survey of shop and business owners with a view to forming a Village Business Initiative⁶ (Action: CPC; Shops and Businesses Group).

"Thank you to everyone who helped my dad when he fell in The Parade today. I am forever grateful that I grew up in and that they live in such a caring place.

Once you have lived in Claygate, you cannot help but love it forever"

6. For more information on this retail focused initiative please refer to the Shops and Businesses Working Group Report (Appendix B1.)

EMERGING IDEAS

During the CTWF initiative, a number of ideas emerged from the working groups, supported by the survey's findings. These include:

- A proposal for the community purchase of The Winning Horse pub to transform it into a multi-functional community venue (CCBS).
- A proposal for the development of affordable housing on Foxwarren and Holroyd Road Garages area (CPC; EBC).
- Two suggestions for the development of TLCP: a proposition with two-story terrace houses and a low-rise development of flats with mixed residential units and a second, more tentative design with mixed residential units, a small gym and small business units/pop-up shops around a piazza with underground car parking - see Appendix C3 and C4 (CPC; EBC).
- A regular village market which is not in direct competition with the current offers driving footfall to the Parade (CCBS)
- An outdoor fitness facility, possibly an outdoor gym or 'trim trail' (Claygate Recreation Ground Trust).
- Improvement/development of infrastructure specifically to encourage cycling within the village (relevant local councils)
- Development of a community garden (CPC Environment with CVA Environment Group).
- Development of a collective website for Claygate - 'This is Claygate' (Action: CPC).



CONCLUSION

Claygate has shown itself to be a vibrant village with a powerful sense of community. Claygate: The Way Forward, with its comprehensive survey, has demonstrated the impressive engagement of Claygate's residents. With more than 25% of adults (16 years +) responding to this direct consultation, without any political agenda, the community has made its voice heard.

Residents are particularly concerned about the over-development of the built environment. They want to ensure all new developments are in keeping with Claygate's distinctive character and supported by the appropriate infrastructure. Mixed developments are preferable, on brownfield sites only – Claygate's Green Belt and green spaces are sacrosanct.

Whilst residents are divided on the need for additional shops, there was strong support for making better use of available sites for development. Popular options for the underused Torrington Lodge car park are: a mixture of small private housing units and affordable/social housing, together with car parking and possibly a fitness centre, while a community hub, a village market, an outdoor gym and more community gardens would all enhance village life.

Ease of travel in the village and beyond is important to residents. Better parking options for the shops - including a trial of 1-hour free parking in car parks, measures to reduce congestion and speeding and improved infrastructure for cycling are key recommendations.

Residents are clear that any new development must be in keeping with the character of the village, implement 20% biodiversity net gain and consider both the environmental impact, infrastructure demand and traffic congestion resulting from additional visitors and residents.

Many of the issues highlighted in this report are the responsibility of Elmbridge Borough Council who will be consulting formally with Claygate's residents as part of its wider Placemaking Initiative. Others, particularly those concerned with transport are covered by SCC in collaboration with EBC.

Finally, the CVA Trustees are delighted that Claygate Parish Council is supportive of the work reported here and is ready to discuss taking forward the report's recommendations as appropriate.

The CVA looks forward to supporting the Parish Council to ensure our village continues to thrive in the years ahead.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCBS Claygate Community Benefit Society

CPC Claygate Parish Council

CTWF Claygate: The Way Forward

CVA Claygate Village Association

EBC Elmbridge Borough Council

SCC Surrey County Council

TfL Transport for London

TLCP Torrington Lodge Car Park

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Final Report of the Analysis of data from the Claygate Residents' Survey 2024

A1 Claygate Village Association Survey Results, report by Johanna Meyer

A2 The survey questions

A3 Frequencies and simple analyses

APPENDIX B

Individual Working Group reports

B1 Shops and Businesses

B2 Housing

B3 Transport and Parking

B4 Health and Wellbeing

B5 Recreation and Leisure

B6 Environment

APPENDIX C

Emerging Ideas

C1 The Winning Horse project

C2 Foxwarren Garages Residential plan

C3 TLCP Feasibility Study Residential Use

C4 TLCP Sketch for mixed use

REPORT PREPARED BY

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Claygate Village Association is a non-political charity (No. 284181) and all residents are members