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# Ulgham Village Survey 2025

The full survey results including graphs are available to view on our website: <https://ulgham.org/>. An electronic copy can be requested by emailing [ulghamparishcouncil@outlook.com](mailto:ulghamparishcouncil@outlook.com).

To ensure the survey can be easily printed and shared, it has been condensed into a manageable number of pages. A summary of the key findings is provided below.

**173 - surveys distributed - 89 - responses were received - 51% response rate**

## **Demographics:**

1. 70% of households consist of 2 adults - 20% are single occupancy.
2. 61% Retired - 34% Employed/Self employed.
3. 87% of respondents are aged 51 years and over, with 44% aged over 70 years of age.
4. 93% of households reported that no children under the age of 18 live in their household.
5. 60% of households have lived at their current address for more than 10 years.
6. 22.5% indicated that they had considered relocating. The primary reasons would be:  
Downsizing - Moving closer to family - Moving closer to facilities

## **Communicating with the Parish Council:**

1. The majority of respondents reported the newsletter (48%). Others: Noticeboard (17%) - Website (13%) - Facebook (12%) - attend monthly meeting (10%)
2. Regarding a dedicated Facebook page: 60% No versus 40% Yes

## **Attendance at Community facilities:**

### **1. Women's Institute Hall:**

Weekly: 12% - > once per week: 6% - Monthly: 25% - Occasionally: 39.5% - Never: 28%.

### **2. St John the Baptist Church:**

Weekly: 7% - Occasionally: 27% - Never: 66%.

### **3. Children's play area/park:**

**Weekly 16% - Monthly 10% - Occasionally 31% - Never 43%**

### **4. Cricket Club:**

Only one respondent reported weekly attendance.

Occasionally: 17% - Never 55% - 28% for social events only

### **5. Tennis court:**

6% of respondents report occasional use with 94% stating they never use the facility.

## **Library services:**

A majority of respondents (63%) consider the provision of a mobile library service in the village to be important. However 76% reported they do not currently use any public library services. Among those who do use a library, 20% identified Morpeth library as library of choice.

### **Volunteering in the village:**

The largest proportion of volunteers are involved with Ulgham Village Association (30 residents). In addition, 11 residents participate in litter picking activities and 6 volunteer within the Meadows.

When asked to **identify additional activities, facilities or services** for the village, 40 responses were received. These related to the following themes:

1. Tennis Court - concerns regarding the poor and potentially unsafe surface. There was suggestions that the space be improved and possibly adapted for multiple use?
2. Pub - Strong and consistent support for reopening The Forge Inn as a community-focused facility. This is discussed in more detail later.
3. Shop - There was particular interest in establishing a small, locally focused shop. Suggestions included a farmers' shop or local produce outlet, with one response proposing the inclusion of Post Office services.
4. Allotment - Survey responses indicate support for the provision of community allotments. It was suggested that incorporating an orchard could provide an additional asset benefitting the whole village.
5. Play area - Respondents highlighted the need for dogs to be kept on leads within the play area. Addition suggestions included the introduction of a youth club and provisions for toddlers.
6. Rendezvous - It was suggested that Rendezvous could open once a month on a Saturday morning to enable working residents and school-aged families to attend.

### **Health Care:**

The majority of residents (94%) report that they do not experience difficulty in travelling to or attending medical appointments. However 25 respondents identified challenges, which include:

- Reliance on lifts, or the use of taxis for hospital appointments, particularly during periods of treatment
- Public transport can be unreliable or impractical
- Taxi costs can be expensive.
- Driving not always feasible when feeling unwell
- Car parks often full, adding further stress to appointments
- Difficulty accessing services due to booking systems and digital technology
- Frustration with services that appear unconnected

- One resident suggested exploring whether a community-based transport support scheme could be developed to assist in residents attending medical appointments, taxis can be unreliable. Even limited support to ensure residents can reach appointments was identified as potentially beneficial.

### **Housing in the Village:**

A majority of respondents (62%) indicated that no further development is needed within the village, while 23% were unsure.

Among those who felt that additional housing is required, the types of housing identified as most needed were:

- Affordable houses to purchase, the most strongly supported option (40%)
- Bungalows, the second most popular choice (28%)

### **Schools:**

The findings suggest that families are largely satisfied with school placement, but that private car travel is the predominant mode of commuting:

### **The Forge Inn:**

Multiple responses were permitted. The findings indicate that a community-focused solution is strongly preferred

- (19%) Large Pub/Restaurant
- (47%) Community Pub/Cafe/Shop
- (30%) Split site - approximately maintaining 50%
- (4%) All housing

Summary of Comments (22 responses):

Respondents felt that The Forge Inn is the main issue within the village. Concerns were raised regarding its neglected appearance and the ongoing stalemate surrounding its future, the prolonged delay is harmful to the village. Support to UCBS and the Parish Council to continue leading efforts to retain The Forge Inn as a community asset. One respondent suggested considering formal listing to protect the history of one of the oldest buildings within the village.

The overwhelming majority strongly oppose redevelopment of the site for housing with residents expressing the view that losing the pub would represent a serious and irreversible loss, fundamentally changing the nature of the village in a negative way. However, the need for improved communication and clearer updates regarding progress were highlighted.

### **Crime:**

A small proportion of residents (7%) reported having been a victim of crime in Ulgham within the past 12 months.

Including: Deliberate damage to property - poaching - anti-social behaviour.

### **Speeding in the village:**

A majority of residents (67%) confirmed that they have concerns regarding vehicles speeding within the village. Comment and suggested recommendations from 54 responses were:

- Concerns were raised about the speed and noise of police and other emergency vehicles travelling through the village, particularly overnight between 10pm and 6am.
- A suggestion for the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing place to enable residents to cross the road more safely
- Parking outside the WI Hall was described as problematic and potentially dangerous, with one resident proposing a parking restriction outside the W I Hall.
- Additional signage at both ends of the village was suggested, asking drivers to slow down, highlighting the presence of red squirrels in the area and children playing
- Ulgham Grange specific:
  - Introduction of a 40mph buffer zone into Ulgham Grange from the A1068 and Linton Road.
  - Concerns that a high number of large lorries travel through Ulgham Grange

Traffic calming suggestions, in order of frequency of requests, residents proposed: Chicane - Reduce speed limit to 20mph - Speed bumps - Speed camera - Road narrowing as in Longhirst - Community speed watch scheme - Rumble strips.

One resident explicitly opposed the use of speed bumps whilst another suggested that they can be ineffective, as they encourage acceleration between humps, resulting in increased noise levels. One respondent felt that additional traffic calming measures are unnecessary and could potentially contribute to accidents, referencing experiences in Longhirst.

### **Footpaths and rights of way:**

The majority of residents rated the condition of public footpaths and rights of way as 'fair' (41%), with 21% describing them as 'poor'. A total of 49 responses were received, highlighting the following issues:

#### **Footpaths**

Many footpaths are too narrow due to overgrown hedges and vegetation encroaching beyond property boundaries, forcing pedestrians onto the road. Narrow and obstructed paths make access difficult for wheelchair users and reduce visibility at junctions and

corners. Uneven surfaces, raised kerbs, loose or cracked paving stones and fallen leaves create additional trip and slip hazards, particularly on the Croft Estate.

### **Rights of Way**

Many rights of way are poorly signed, overgrown, or otherwise inaccessible, making routes unclear and discouraging use. Walkers, particularly newcomers, may feel uncertain about straying onto private land. Several traditional footpaths appear to have fallen out of use or been lost over time due to lack of maintenance and enforcement.

### **Parking:**

Parking issues vary across the village. For properties located off the main road, parking is less of a problem. However for properties directly on the B1337, parking is more problematic. Numerous residents specifically highlighted parking outside the WI Hall as a concern, particularly during events.

### **Local Bus service:**

Among residents who use the local bus service, 82% reported being happy with the service.

Mobile applications used are: Arriva - Google maps - [bustimes.org](http://bustimes.org) - trackmybus - [bus.org](http://bus.org)

Views on the bus service are mixed. Some residents value the service for its affordability, weekend operation, and early morning and late-night coverage, however there is no service through Ulgham Grange.

Concerns raised include:

- Buses are infrequent and sometimes unreliable, with cancellations, late running, or occasional early departures causing missed services.
- Frequency of one bus per hour is inconvenient for regular users.
- Real-time information can be difficult to access or use effectively.

### **Street lighting:**

A total of 26 responses were received, highlighting the following issues and observations:

- Overall, lighting is perceived as low-level and too widely spaced, providing inadequate illumination for walking after dark.
- Several street lights, particularly along the main road are obstructed by overgrown trees and hedges, reducing their effectiveness.
- Since the introduction of LED lights, sections of the main road are poorly illuminated, making walking around the village at night hazardous.
- Ulgham Grange currently has no street lighting, with residents advising of the need to carry torches at night.
- One resident felt there was 'too much lighting' in their area of the village.

- Suggestions were made for more environmentally focused lighting, such as downlight, to preserve dark skies while maintaining safety.

### **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging in the village:**

Residents' views on EV charging in the village were mixed:

47% were against - 17% in favour - 36% were unsure.

Among those supportive, the most commonly suggested locations were, The Forge Inn and playing field car park. Some residents questioned the overall value of installing EV charging points, citing factors such as limited parking availability, high installation costs, safety concerns, environmental impacts, and the availability of charging elsewhere.

### **Dogs in our village:**

- A total of 37% of households own at least one dog. Among dog-owning households, the majority (85%) feel that the village provides sufficient and appropriate space to exercise their dogs. Whilst there are many footpaths around the village, dogs often need to be kept on leads, limiting their exercise. Residents highlighted a need for safe, enclosed areas where dogs would be exercised off-lead responsibly.
- Views on the provision of additional dog waste bins were more evenly split, with 45% supporting additional bins versus 55% not feeling they were necessary. Respondents suggested several locations for additional bins including: Village centre and main paths - near the church / cemetery - Manor Court - The Croft - Ulgham Lane - Entrance to the meadows, at the top of steps - Ulgham Park Farm Lane (Lower Lyn?), at the end of the tarmac lane, at the top of the hill, village end of the road, further up toward opencast, near the ford.
- Reinstating the dog bin at the top of Park Road was also suggested as the current position presents a hazard to users.

### **When asked “What do you value most about our village?”:**

A total of 83 responses were received. Residents overwhelmingly highlighted the strong community spirit and sense of belonging within Ulgham. The friendliness of neighbours, willingness to help one another and the way villages come together in times of need were frequently mentioned. Community groups and local activities were also valued as important contributors to village life.

Ulgham was described as a small, safe and welcoming village, appreciating its quiet and peaceful atmosphere, rural character, and low levels of crime. The village was described as ‘pretty’ and a pleasant place to live, with open spaces, wildlife, dark skies and a strong sense of freedom and space all noted as significant positives.

Its location was also considered a major advantage, Residents value the proximity to nearby towns and cities, including Morpeth, Alnwick, Ashington and Newcastle, whilst still maintaining a quiet and scenic environment. Easy access to countryside, walking routes and the coast, alongside convenient transport links, including the A1 and public transport services.

Overall, responses reflect a strong sense of pride in the village environment and public space, and a desire to preserve the qualities that make Ulgham distinctive: its community spirit, rural setting and opportunities for social activities without being overdeveloped.

Other Comments from 43 responses:

The following additional comments were received. Points already covered elsewhere have not been repeated.

### **The Forge Inn**

Was described as a great miss and a local convenience store was suggested as a valuable addition. Residents expressed the need for a timely resolution and encouraged UCBS to keep its website up-to-date, it was also noted that signs at both ends of the village are looking 'tatty' and in need of attention.

### **Residential development:**

It was suggested that the village currently lacks the facilities to support an increase in population that would come with additional housing. Others are not entirely opposed to limited development, however one resident stated 'definitely NOT at The Forge public house'.

### **Ulgham Lane:**

Concerns were raised regarding the poor condition of Ulgham Lane. It was suggested that either the South Croft developer or the local council should ensure the lane is properly reinstated following completion of the new-build housing.

### **Local Bus Service:**

A more regular bus service - for example, every half hour, would be welcomed. Improvements to the cleanliness and upkeep of the bus shelter were also suggested.

### **Ulgham Grange:**

It was highlighted that Ulgham Grange is sometimes overlooked in village matters. Key concerns include:

- Traffic - Large vehicles use the lane as a short cut to Widdrington Station. The ford can become slippery, creating hazards for pedestrians, cyclists, motorbikes and horse riders. Tree clearance at the ford was suggested to help with line of sight both ways. Grass at the junction with the main road near the church requires cutting, particularly in summer to increase visibility.
- Youth Provision - There are currently six residents under 18 year olds living in Ulgham Grange, yet there are no regular clubs or activities beyond occasional events such as the duck race.
- Winter safety - The lane is not routinely gritted. Although two salt boxes are located beside the ford, there is no provision beyond this point. There are roughly 20 properties that rely on this lane for access - whilst occasional grit spreading has taken place, they are deemed insufficient.

### **Schools**

- The village has seen a significant reduction in families with school-aged children, which appears to be due to limited school places and lack of transport options. The current school boundaries should be reviewed, and the provision of school transport reconsidered by NCC.
- It should also be clarified that children with Morpeth addresses can follow the natural progression to Morpeth schools (first, middle, and high), as this is currently unclear.
- Greater access to Morpeth schools could bring more young families to the village

### **Meadows:**

Whilst many residents support The Meadows, one resident questioned whether it represents appropriate use of parishioner's council tax money. Concerns were also raised about limited accessibility for both people and machinery and that overgrown undergrowth may reduce visibility, creating potential risks for people and dogs.

### **Additional issues raised:**

- Highway signage not collected after completion of works, left to litter the verge
- Concerns regarding roaming goats and clarity over parish council responsibility
- Consideration of silent fireworks to reduce distress to animals
- Number of poachers, youths on motorbikes, perceived limited police presence
- Trees with preservation orders should be regularly inspected and maintained to reduce risks in adverse weather
- There is concern about the lack of full-fibre broadband rollout to some parts of the village. Particularly in light of the planned copper line switch off in January 2027. There is concern that a rushed rollout could result in unsightly telegraph poles being utilised opposed to underground ducting.