

GOTHERINGTON COMMUNITY SURVEY 2026 FULL REPORT



Contents

1. Executive Summary

2. Methodology

3. Demographic Overview

4. Facility-by-Facility Analysis

4.1 Village Hall

4.2 Rex Rhodes Building

4.3 John Woolley Pavilion

4.4 Old Chapel

4.5 Freeman Field

4.6 Play Areas

4.7 Tennis Courts

5. Cross-Cutting Themes

5.1 Parking & Traffic

5.2 Provision for Teenagers

5.3 Support for Gotherington Primary School

5.4 Wildlife & Green Space

5.5 Community Garden / Allotments

5.6 Social Connection & Community Wellbeing

5.7 Mobile Phone Reception and Digital Connectivity

6. Recommendations

7. Conclusion

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gotherington continues to be a village with a strong sense of identity, community pride, and intergenerational connection. The 2026 Community Survey attracted 151 responses, representing a broad cross-section of residents—from long-standing villagers to young families, from active club members to those who simply enjoy the tranquillity of our green spaces.

Across all responses, one message is clear: **Gotherington is a wonderful place to live, and residents want to protect what makes it special while improving facilities for all.**

Residents consistently praised:

- The Old Chapel as a beautifully refurbished community asset.
- Freeman Field as the heart of village sport, recreation, and daily life.
- The Village Hall as a valued but ageing building in need of modernisation.
- The Rex Rhodes Building as both a vital sports hub and a major opportunity for redevelopment.
- The tennis courts as a high-quality facility with potential for extended use.
- The play areas as important but one of them in Freeman Field is overdue for renewal, especially for older children.

At the same time, residents expressed strong views on:

- Parking pressures, especially during events and match days.
- Provision for teenagers, which many feel is limited unless they play organised sport.
- Support for Gotherington Primary School, particularly the need for new play equipment.
- Protection of wildlife and green space, including dark skies, wildflower areas, and habitat creation.
- Interest in a community garden or allotments, even among those with their own gardens.

This report summarises the findings in a structured, accessible way, providing a clear evidence base for Parish Council planning and decision-making.

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was open to all residents and promoted through many village channels. Responses were collected online and automatically compiled into a dataset of complete submissions.



The survey included:

- Tick-box questions on facility use.
- Free-text questions on improvements, priorities, and ideas.
- Questions on wildlife, green space, and community gardening.

All free-text responses were coded into themes to identify common patterns and priorities.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Although the survey did not require detailed demographic data, the age-band selections and household descriptions reveal a clear profile of respondents.

3.1 Age Representation

The village's demographic mix is reflected strongly in the survey:

- **OLDER RESIDENTS (55–64 AND 65+)**

Older residents formed the largest demographic group in the survey, representing 46% of all respondents. This reflects Gotherington's strong retired and semi-retired population and explains the emphasis on wellbeing, accessibility, and community facilities suited to daytime use.

- **FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN (UNDER 18 + 35–44 / 45–54)**

Families made up a substantial proportion of responses, accounting for 38% of submissions. This group strongly influenced themes around play areas, school support, sports facilities, and safe walking routes.

- **YOUNG ADULTS (18–34)**

Young adults appeared less frequently as independent respondents, making up 8% of submissions, though many were represented within multi-age households. Their lower direct response rate is typical for rural surveys but still contributes to the overall demographic picture.

This creates a balanced but slightly older-leaning dataset, typical of rural communities.

3.2 HOUSEHOLD TYPES

Responses indicate:

- Many multi-generational households.
- A strong presence of school-age families.
- A substantial number of retired or semi-retired residents.

A smaller cohort of working-age adults without children, who often feel under-served by current facilities.

3.3 IMPLICATIONS

This demographic mix shapes the priorities expressed:

- Older residents emphasise mobility, benches, paths, and daytime activities.
- Families emphasise play areas, school support, sports facilities, and safe walking routes.
- Working-age adults highlight parking, traffic, and social spaces.

4. FACILITY-BY-FACILITY ANALYSIS

Each facility is presented with:

- Overall sentiment
- Strengths
- Issues raised
- Resident suggestions (where applicable)
- Implications for the Parish Council

4.1 VILLAGE HALL

OVERALL SENTIMENT

The Village Hall is viewed with affection and respect. It is seen as a historic, central, and well-used community asset, but one that is showing its age.



STRENGTHS

- Hosts a wide range of clubs, coffee mornings, and events.
- Considered welcoming and familiar.
- Holds emotional value for long-standing residents.

ISSUES RAISED

- Parking is the most frequently mentioned challenge.
- The interior is described as dated, with calls for:
 - New kitchen
 - Improved toilets
 - Better heating
 - More comfortable chairs

- Improved sound system
- Accessibility at the front entrance is difficult for wheelchairs and prams.

RESIDENT SUGGESTIONS

- Install solar panels to reduce running costs.
- Redecorate and modernise the interior.
- Improve accessibility and external appearance.
- Explore parking management solutions.

IMPLICATIONS

The Village Hall remains a cornerstone of community life. Investment should focus on internal refurbishment, accessibility, and energy efficiency, while recognising that parking expansion may require creative management rather than physical expansion.

4.2 REX RHODES BUILDING (RRB)

OVERALL SENTIMENT

The RRB is the most debated facility in the survey. It is simultaneously seen as:

- A vital base for football and cricket, and
- A major opportunity for redevelopment into a modern community hub.



STRENGTHS

- Essential for sports storage, changing, and club identity.
- Located in a prime position overlooking Freeman Field.

ISSUES RAISED

- Internally dated, cramped, and uninviting.
- Changing rooms and toilets are inadequate.
- Storage is unsafe (e.g., stacked chairs).
- Some fear that alternative uses (e.g., Men's Shed) could displace sports.

RESIDENT SUGGESTIONS

- Full redevelopment into a multi-use building with:
 - Café or social space
 - Decking or balcony overlooking the field
 - Flexible meeting rooms
 - Modern changing facilities
 - Better storage
 - Solar panels and energy-efficient design
- Maintain or enhance sports provision as a core function.

IMPLICATIONS

Any redevelopment must be co-designed with sports clubs, ensuring that children's and adult sport remain central while expanding community use.

4.3 JOHN WOOLLEY PAVILION

OVERALL SENTIMENT

Generally positive. The Pavilion is seen as fit for purpose, though modest improvements are needed.



STRENGTHS

- Good for small parties, sports use, and club meetings.
- Well located for cricket and football.

ISSUES RAISED

- Exterior wood needs treatment and maintenance.
- Heating could be more efficient and controllable.
- Limited outdoor seating in sunny areas.
- Some suggest outside toilets for events.

IMPLICATIONS

The Pavilion requires routine maintenance and small-scale improvements rather than major redevelopment.

4.4 OLD CHAPEL

OVERALL SENTIMENT

One of the most positively reviewed facilities in the entire survey.



STRENGTHS

- Beautifully refurbished.
- Excellent for cinema, meetings, clubs, and social events.
- Trustees praised for responsiveness and care.

ISSUES RAISED

- Desire for a larger cinema screen.
- More comfortable seating.
- Occasional parking concerns on Yew Tree Drive.

IMPLICATIONS

The Old Chapel is a model of successful refurbishment and can serve as a benchmark for other projects.

4.5 FREEMAN FIELD

OVERALL SENTIMENT

The heart of village life.



ISSUES RAISED

- Path surface deterioration
- Drainage problems
- Parking pressures

IMPLICATIONS

- Path resurfacing and parking management are high priorities.

4.6 Play Areas

OVERALL SENTIMENT

Freeman Field play area is valued.



ISSUES RAISED

- Poor surfacing
- Limited equipment for older children

IMPLICATIONS

A play strategy is needed to renew equipment and improve provision for older children and teens.

4.7 TENNIS COURTS

OVERALL SENTIMENT

High-quality facility with potential for greater use.



ISSUES RAISED

- Support for floodlighting
- Booking system not widely understood

IMPLICATIONS

Consider floodlighting and clearer communication.

5. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

5.1 PARKING AND TRAFFIC

Parking and traffic were among the most frequently raised concerns across the submissions. 41.7% of respondents highlighted difficulties around the Village Hall, Old Chapel, and especially Freeman Field during busy sports fixtures. Many described unsafe parking on bends and junctions, blocked pavements, and reduced visibility for pedestrians. Match-day congestion was a recurring issue, with some residents worried about access for emergency vehicles. 19.2% mentioned speeding through the village, with strong support for a 20mph limit and improved traffic calming. Overall, residents want a coordinated approach to parking management, safer road layouts, and clearer guidance for visitors and club users.

5.2 PROVISION FOR TEENAGERS

31.1% of responses thought that Gotherington offers very limited provision for teenagers, particularly those not involved in organised sport. Many residents commented that while younger children are well served by play areas and families benefit from sports clubs, older children often have “nothing to do” and few informal places to meet. Suggestions included a youth club, a multi-use games area, a 3G pitch, basketball hoops, and more adventurous play equipment. Respondents emphasised the importance of creating safe, social, and engaging spaces for teens, helping them feel included and reducing the need to travel elsewhere.

5.3 SUPPORT FOR GOTHERINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

14.56% of responses voiced support for Gotherington Primary School — with 7.94% highlighting the need to replace unsafe play equipment. Although the latter was raised by a modest number of respondents, the comments were highly consistent and expressed with notable urgency. Residents described the equipment as unsafe, outdated, or unusable, and several emphasised the importance of ensuring children have access to safe, stimulating outdoor play. Together, these comments form a focused and well-defined theme that highlights a shared desire to invest in young people’s wellbeing and development.

5.4 WILDLIFE, GREEN SPACE, AND DARK SKIES

37.08% of respondents placed exceptionally high value on Gotherington's wildlife, green spaces, and dark-sky environment. Many expressed concern about the impact of new development on habitats, hedgerows, and biodiversity. Suggestions included creating wildflower meadows, installing bird, bat, owl and swift boxes, planting more trees, and reducing mowing to support pollinators. Protecting dark skies was also important, with residents urging caution around new lighting on paths or buildings. People described wildlife as "vital", "precious", and "part of what makes the village special". The overall message is clear: residents want to preserve and enhance the natural environment for future generations.

5.5 COMMUNITY GARDEN / ALLOTMENTS

25.8% of respondents, across all age groups, were interested in a community garden or allotment. Even residents who said they would not personally use an allotment felt it would be a valuable addition to village life. Many saw it as an opportunity for food growing, social connection, education, and environmental improvement. Suggestions included incorporating wildlife-friendly features such as ponds, fruit trees, and wildflower areas. Some proposed potential locations near Manor Lane or new developments. Respondents felt a community garden could bring people together, support sustainability, and provide a shared space for learning and wellbeing. Overall, enthusiasm for the idea was strong.

5.6 SOCIAL CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

11.25% of respondents raised concerns about social isolation and expressed strong support for exploring a Men's Shed as a practical, community-based solution. Comments varied in emphasis: some highlighted loneliness after retirement, others described a lack of daytime activities, and several noted that older men in particular would benefit from purposeful, hands-on projects. While not all respondents used the

term “Men’s Shed”, many described needs that align closely with the model. Taken together, these comments form a meaningful and well-supported theme focused on improving social connection, wellbeing, and community participation for residents who may otherwise feel isolated.

5.7 MOBILE PHONE RECEPTION AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Mobile phone reception emerged as a significant concern, with 42% of respondents reporting patchy or unreliable signal in parts of the village. A further 18% described experiencing complete drop-outs, particularly indoors or on certain networks. Residents highlighted the practical impact of poor connectivity on working from home, school communication, and the ability to make reliable emergency calls. For older residents, weak signal can heighten feelings of isolation and reduce confidence in reaching help when needed. For families and working-age adults, it disrupts daily routines, affects safety, and undermines digital reliability. Several respondents suggested that the Parish Council engage with network providers, explore community-level signal-boosting options, and ensure digital connectivity is considered in future planning discussions. Overall, residents view improved mobile reception as essential modern infrastructure that supports wellbeing, safety, and village resilience.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Village Hall refurbishment.
2. Rex Rhodes Building redevelopment.
3. Freeman Field path resurfacing.
4. Play area renewal.
5. Parking and traffic management plan.
6. Support for school play equipment.
7. Wildlife and green space strategy.
8. Explore community garden / allotments.
9. Support initiatives that reduce social isolation, such as a Men's Shed, provided sports provision is protected.
10. Collaborate with network providers and others to address the unreliable mobile reception that compromises village safety and connectivity.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2026 survey paints a clear and positive picture of a village that is proud of its facilities, deeply connected to its green spaces, and committed to improving life for all generations. Residents value what Gotherington already offers, from its well-used community buildings to its much-loved natural environment, but they also recognise important opportunities to invest in the future. Priorities include modernising key facilities, enhancing outdoor spaces, improving provision for young people, and strengthening protection for wildlife, habitats, and dark skies. The survey also highlights the importance of ensuring that future development supports the character and wellbeing of the village. Taken together, these findings provide a strong, evidence-based foundation for Parish Council planning and decision-making over the coming years. They reflect a community that cares deeply about its surroundings and is ready to work collaboratively to ensure Gotherington continues to thrive.