

## **Objection to the Community Engagement Report**

I wasn't living in Tattenhall when the community engagement project was carried out and consequently, I read the report with interest, especially as it purports to represent the response of the residents to the develop plan. I submit that from a consultation and evidence perspective, there are several significant weaknesses in the report particularly around the representativeness of the survey and the strength of the conclusions that are drawn from it and therefore I believe *that the overall results are suspect and compromised and should be withdrawn, and another more thorough exercise be carried out with a more detailed analysis of the results.*

As I understand it participation in the exercise was voluntary through a town meeting, a drop-n event, an online survey with paper copies uploaded later, this means respondents chose whether to participate. People with strong views—particularly negative views—are much more likely to respond than people who are neutral. That doesn't invalidate the results, but it does mean conclusions should be expressed more cautiously, instead of saying “residents oppose” it would be more accurate to say that “survey respondents expressed opposition”.

The consultation received 192 responses, representing approximately 10% of the parish population. While this constitutes a substantial level of engagement for a voluntary consultation, responses were self-selecting and therefore may not be fully representative of the demographic profile or views of the wider community. The findings should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the opinions of respondents rather than the parish population as a whole."

### **The report assumes representativeness without demonstrating it.**

This is probably the biggest methodological weakness; the report repeatedly makes statements such as:

- "Residents express a clear and consistent message..."
- "Scenario 3 is almost universally rejected by residents..."

Yet nowhere does it explain whether the respondents are representative of the wider parish.

For example, it does not report:

- age profile
- gender
- where respondents live within the parish
- length of residence
- whether respondents own or rent
- whether younger adults were represented
- whether businesses participated
- whether responses were weighted

Without this information, it is impossible to know whether:

- younger residents were underrepresented
- older residents dominated responses
- people most opposed to development were more motivated to respond (self-selection bias)

A sample can be large yet still be unrepresentative.

### **No confidence intervals or statistical analysis**

Although this is primarily a qualitative report, it presents quite definitive conclusions.

For example:

"Scenario 2 is widely seen as the least bad option."

Yet the report doesn't show:

- percentages
- vote counts
- margins between scenarios
- statistical confidence

Without these data, readers cannot judge how strong the preferences actually were.

### **Heavy interpretation by the authors**

The summaries read more like policy conclusions than neutral consultation outputs.

For example:

"Residents express a clear and consistent message..."

"There is broad consensus..."

"Scenario 3 is almost universally rejected..."

These are interpretations.

A stronger approach would have been to report:

- percentage agreeing
- percentage disagreeing
- number of comments mentioning each issue
- illustrative quotations

rather than broad narrative statements.

### **Frequency of themes isn't reported**

The report identifies themes such as:

- flooding
- traffic
- GP capacity
- loss of character

but never indicates how common each concern was.

For example:

- Did 170 respondents mention flooding?
- Or only 25?

Those are very different findings.

### **Possible duplication of responses**

The methodology does not explain whether safeguards existed to prevent:

- multiple online submissions
- duplicate paper responses
- households submitting several responses

This doesn't necessarily mean duplication occurred, but good consultation reports usually explain how data quality was managed.

### **Lack of demographic transparency**

A consultation should normally include a section such as:

## Characteristic Respondents Parish

Age                    x%                    x%

Gender                x%                    x%

Ward/location x%                    x%

Nothing similar appears here.

Consequently, readers cannot judge whether the sample reflects the wider community.

### **Language is stronger than the evidence supports**

Phrases including

- "almost universally"
- "clear consensus"
- "widely recognised"
- "strong opposition"

are quite assertive.

Since only around **10% of the population** responded, these statements arguably overreach.

A more evidence-based wording would be:

"Among respondents to the consultation, opposition was strong..."

That is a subtle but important distinction.

### **Is 192 responses enough?**

From a statistical perspective, **yes—potentially**.

For a population of **2,000**, a random sample of around **190–325** people is often sufficient to estimate population opinions with a margin of error of roughly **±5–7%**, depending on the confidence level.

***However, that assumes a random sample.***

This survey was **not random**; it was voluntary.

Because of self-selection bias, the usual statistical margins of error do not apply. Therefore, while the number of responses is substantial, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the views of **those who chose to participate**, not necessarily the entire population.