

# Warminster Neighbourhood Plan

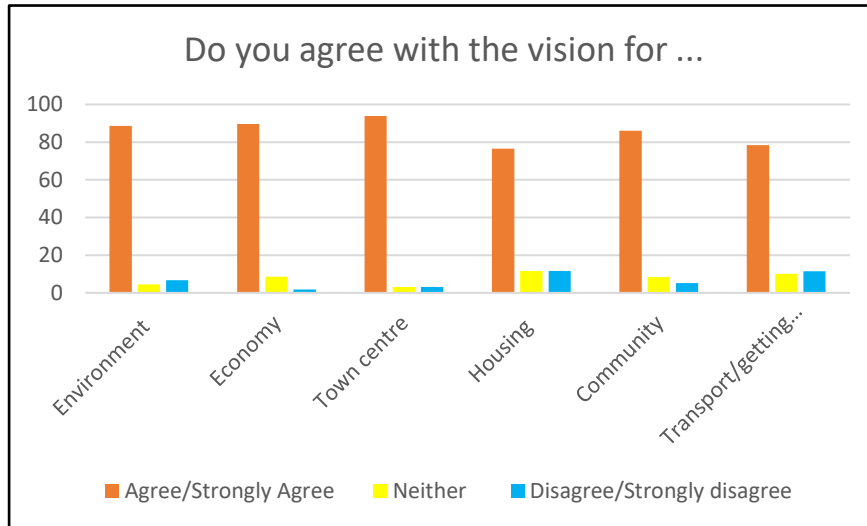
## **Informal Consultation - March 27<sup>th</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023**

A four-week public consultation period was held, whereby the local community and stakeholders could provide their feedback on the evidence gathered to date and contribute their thoughts on the draft neighbourhood plan including the potential visions, objectives and policies. To enable the feedback to be collated efficiently and effectively an overview and topic specific surveys were produced. The online surveys were hosted on the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan website and paper copies were available on request for those people who didn't have access to the internet. A total of 443 overview surveys were completed and an additional 897 topic specific surveys were submitted. The survey data was analysed and a summary of the feedback is detailed below. The information gathered from this first stage of consultation will be taken into consideration when drafting the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan.

## Overview Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 443

- Respondents - 67.7% are aged 45+, 89.8% live in Warminster and 60.5% do not work in Warminster.
- 73.8% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the draft vision for Warminster.
- The majority of respondents agreed with the draft overarching objectives.



- The individual draft environment, heritage and design objectives were agreed, ranging from 72.5% to 95.6%.
- Most people also agreed with the draft employment and town centre objectives.
- The vast majority of respondents agreed with the housing and community draft objectives.
- Between 70.5% and 83.45% agreed with the transport and getting around objectives.

Rather than try and number crunch all the feedback from the overview survey, the responses have been considered as themes. Responses have repeatedly identified the same problems and issues that the Neighbourhood Plan groups have identified.

**Scepticism** – there is a level of scepticism about the impact of a new Neighbourhood Plan. This is not people saying they don't like what is being proposed they just question whether in reality it will be delivered.

The WNP steering group understand these concerns and have grappled with the same issue. The steering group is clear about the limits of the Neighbourhood Plan but also clear about the benefits it will bring. It is hoped and expected that the new Neighbourhood Plan will be most effective when local people 'buy in' to its aims and policies and seek to get them implemented. These will hold good as aims and policies through different governments, legislation and the passage of time.

**New Development** - There is concern about new development, particularly the West Urban Extension. There is a fear that this will not integrate well with the existing town and that it will be 'off the shelf' developer designs unsympathetic to Warminster. While a few say there should be no further development, the vast majority want to see new housing for a balanced community and with 'affordable housing' that local people can afford.

These concerns are reflected in the importance given by the steering group to the Design Code Guidance and the evidence gathered by the Housing Needs Assessment.

**Facilities** - There is concern about the strain being placed on facilities by an increasing population. People already have difficulty accessing the doctors' surgery. There is a desire for another secondary School. Kingdown School is

seen as very large (1,600 plus pupils) and on the 'wrong side of town'.

While these aren't things the Neighbourhood Plan can solve, they need to be highlighted so those who can address them take the issues onboard.

**The Environment** - There is concern about the environment, from dark skies to biodiversity. People can't understand why new housing is being built that isn't powered by renewable energy. People are worried about flooding, building on flood plans and the impact of climate change. People wish to see sustainability at the heart of policies. They want to see nature protected and enhanced, by for example, the promotion of wildlife corridors.

These concerns are reflected in the importance given by the steering group to strong environmental policies.

**Green Spaces** - Green spaces are valued; Warminster Common, Warminster Community Orchard, Smallbrook Meadows and particularly the Lake Pleasure Grounds. There is a clear love of the beautiful countryside what surrounds Warminster. It is seen as an integral part of what makes Warminster a nice place to live and work.

These concerns are reflected in the importance given by the steering group to nominations for Local Green Space designation and the analysis of key views.

**Heritage** – There is a strong sense of pride in Warminster's heritage even amongst those who say the town has declined. The town centre is blighted by empty shops and people would like to see them used as shops or homes. They like the historic nature of the town but want to live a modern lifestyle.

These concerns are reflected in the importance given by the steering group to nominations for the non-designated heritage asset list and the desire to allow empty town centre shops to be converted to accommodation or brought back into use for business.

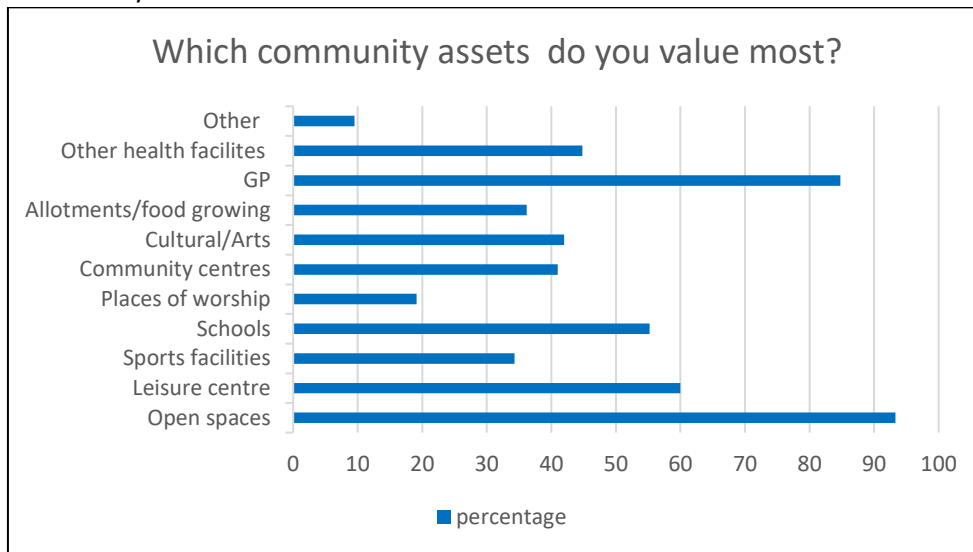
**Traffic** - There is frequent mention of traffic problems. There is an expectation these will be made worse by new development. Covid19 and lockdown drove people to walk and cycle more. There is a general recognition that there are no easy solutions to these problems due to the historic nature of the road layout in the town.

These concerns are reflected in the importance given by the steering group to the evolving Town Centre Master Plan.

## Community Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 105

- Community facilities not identified on the map include: the recycling centre, chiropodists and Warminster Community hub.

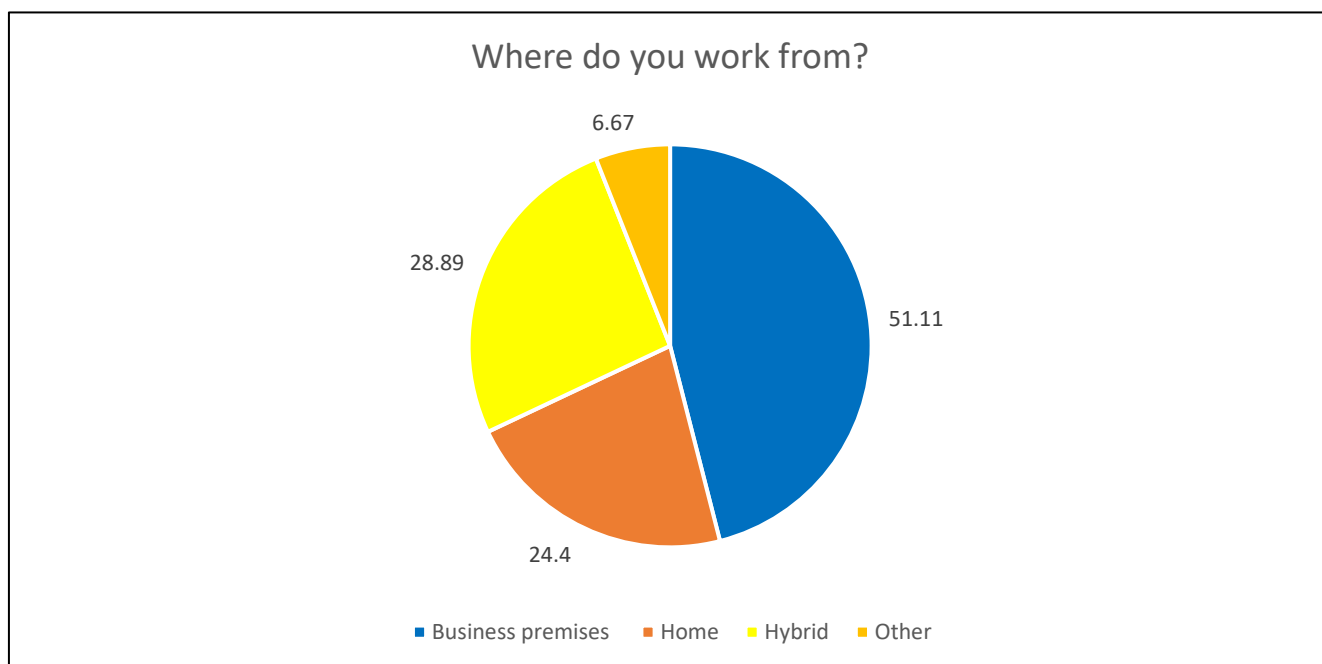
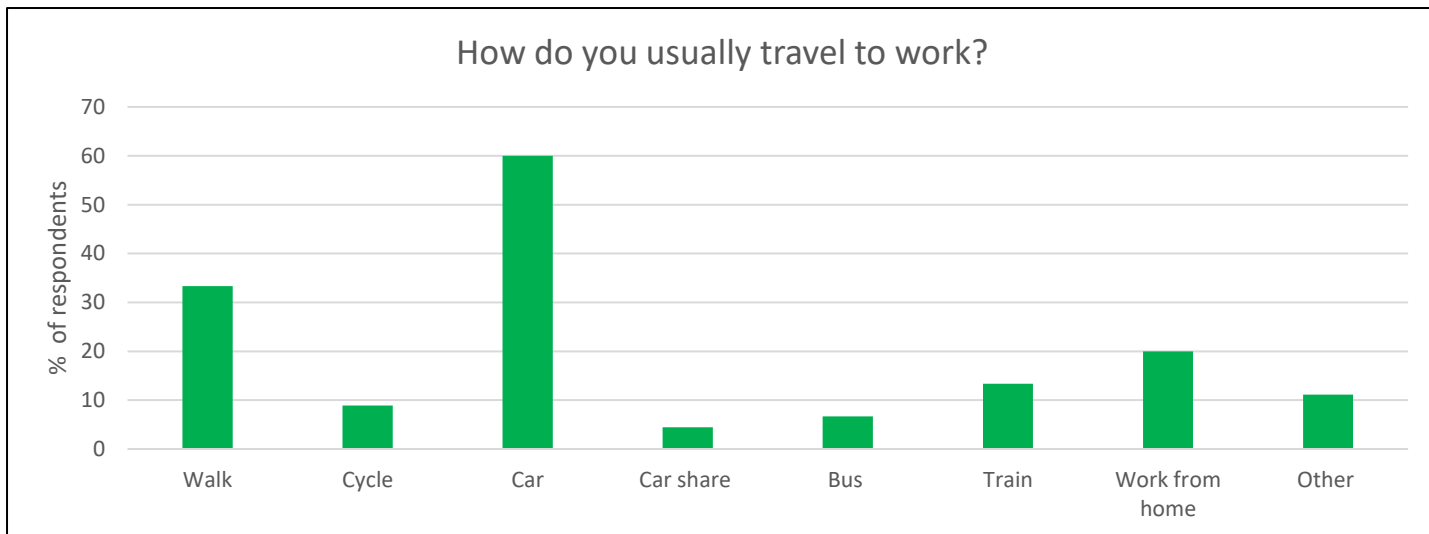


- Open Spaces (town park, play grounds) and the GP surgery were the most valued assets. 58.8% of respondents use green spaces on a very frequent basis (every week).
- Community facilities that need improving include: swimming pool/leisure centre, elements of the park, scout hut.
- 60% of respondents indicated that Warminster needs more GP facilities and 30.5% stated that other healthcare facilities were needed.
- Facilities in need of improvement (58 responses)
  - Doctors' surgery (14)
  - Leisure centre (8)
  - Facilities for young people (not sports related) including scout hut (6)
  - NHS dentist (4)

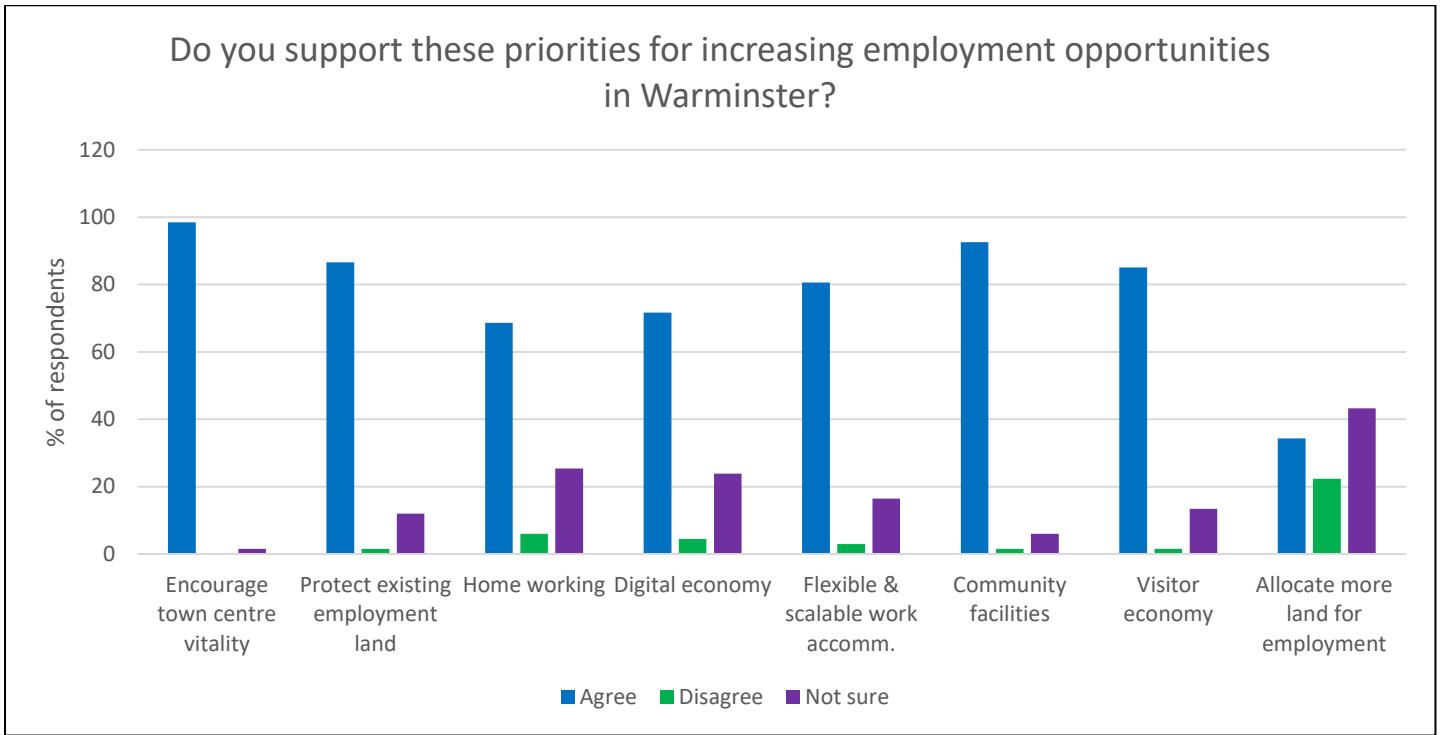
## Employment Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 73

- 89.3% of respondents live in Warminster.



- 6 people indicated they would benefit from regular, occasional or ad-hoc access to a local serviced business centre.

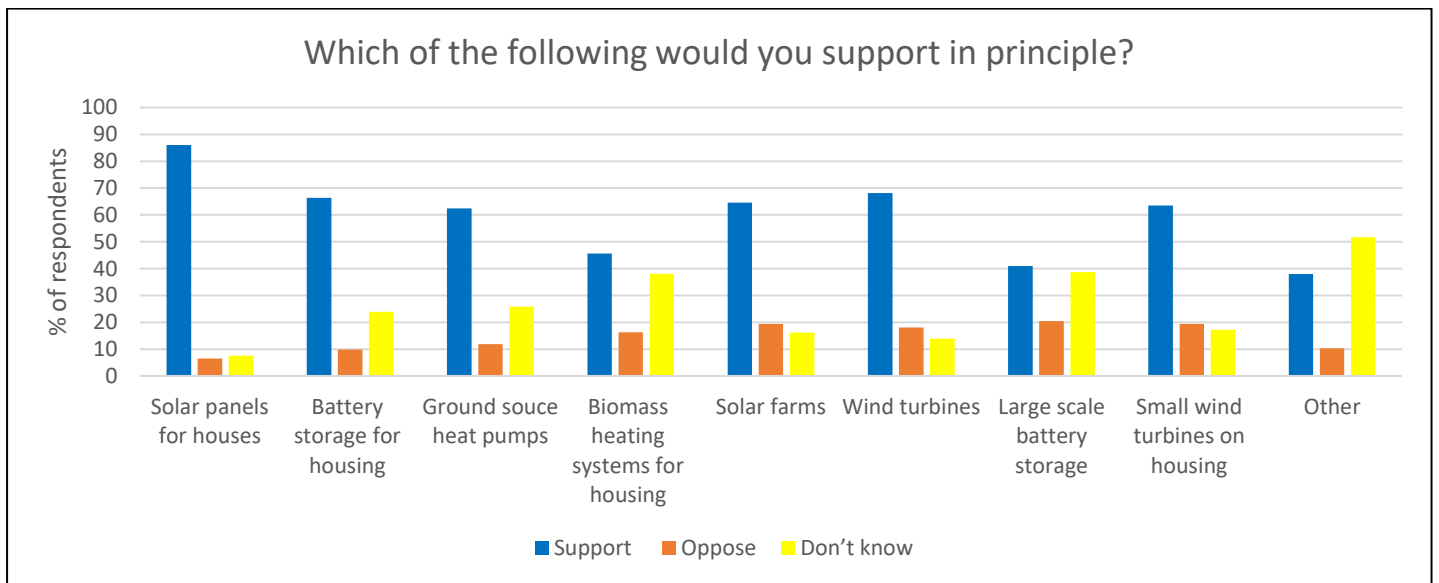


- Other comments on employment (18 responses)
  - More support needed for startup/small businesses esp. Low rent small units. Support conversion of empty shops (5)
  - Need for skilled/well paid/'decent' jobs (3)
  - Support for homeworking (2)

## Environment and Design Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 94

- The majority of respondents strongly agree/agree with the following:
  - the idea of creating and joining up natural green spaces, habitats and wildlife corridors across the town to link wildlife to the wider area (86.17%).
  - new development should maintain the number of trees in town (94.7%)
  - all new development should contribute to reducing the effects of climate change, flooding and other extreme weather, as well as loss of wildlife and habitats (95.8%)
  - new buildings should incorporate features and material which will reduce carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency (93.6%)
  - the neighbourhood plan should support measures to increase energy efficiency of existing buildings as well as traditional and historic buildings (90.42%).
  - support the development of renewable energy generation in Warminster as long as it does not create excessive traffic, noise and smell or affect the views or character of the landscape (87.23%).

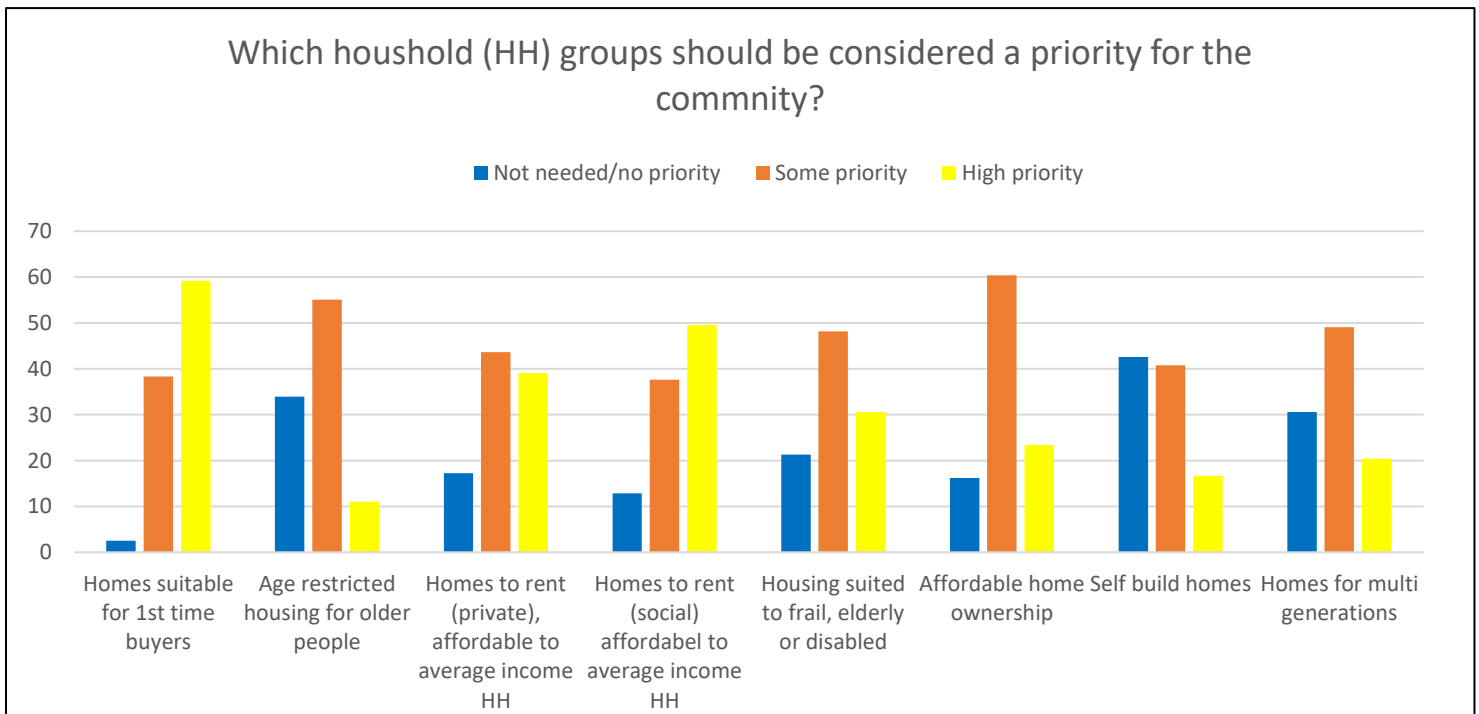
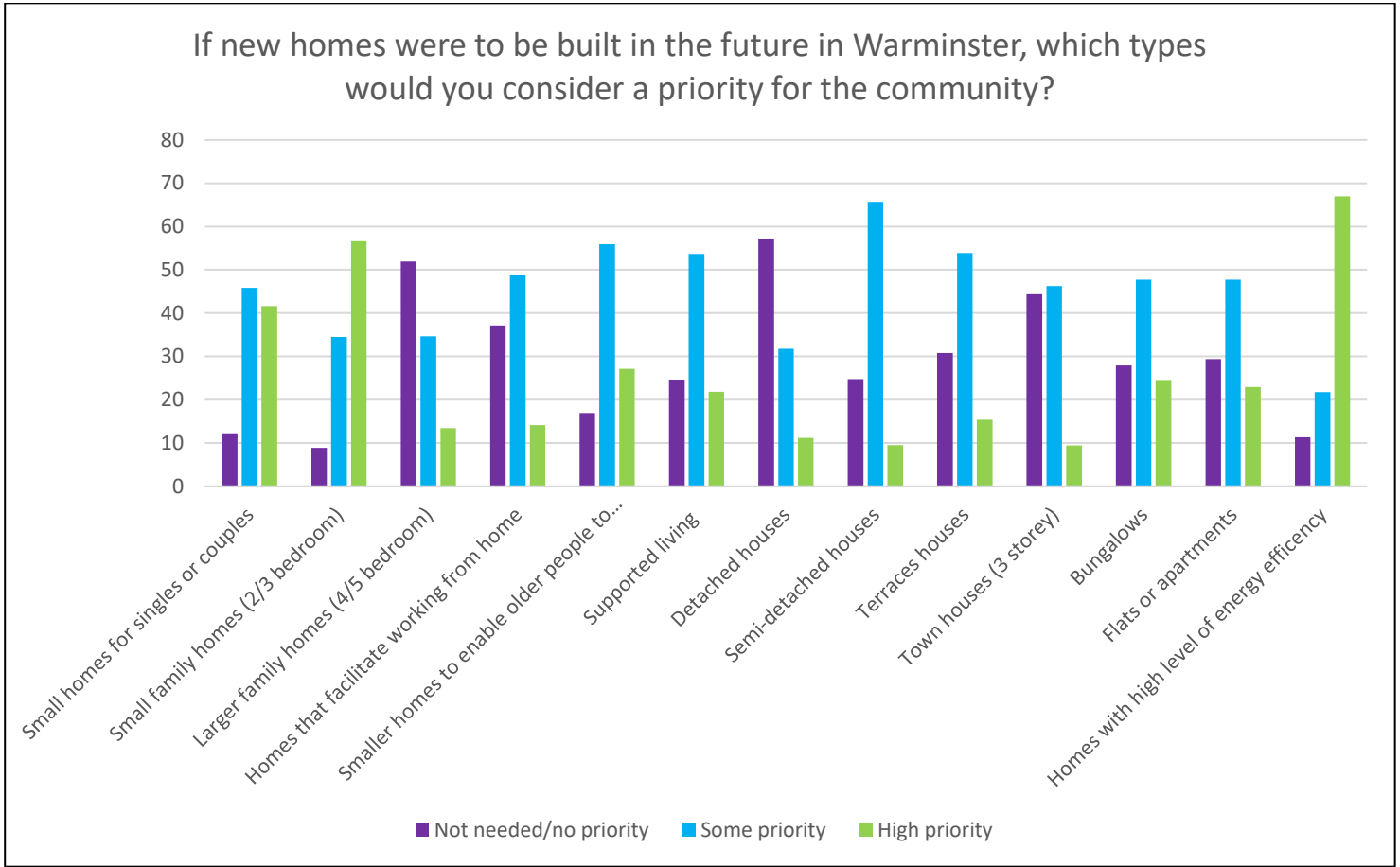


- Other comments Green Space (33 responses):
  - Concerns about green space lost or under threat from more housing (16)
  - Green space seen as very important (6)
  - Praise for the town park (6)
  - Need for more green space and/or to join it up via wildlife corridors (5)
- Other comments Biodiversity (36 responses):
  - The need for more trees and wildlife corridors and protecting biodiversity (10)
  - Protection for dark skies/reduce light pollution (7)
  - More footpaths and cycle paths (2)
  - Toads (2)
- Other comments Climate Change, Energy and Building Design
  - Pro renewable energy on all new builds (7)
  - A desire for help with retrofitting of existing building (6)
  - Concern about flooding (4)
  - Anti the idea of doing anything on climate change (3)

# Housing Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 125

- 92.8% of respondents live in Warminster.





- Other comments on housing (46 responses)
  - The need for affordable housing, both to rent and to buy and to be truly “affordable” (15)
  - The need for infrastructure – particularly doctors (10)
  - Build on brownfield sites and empty shops before building on fields (6)

## Town Centre & Shopping Survey - Summary

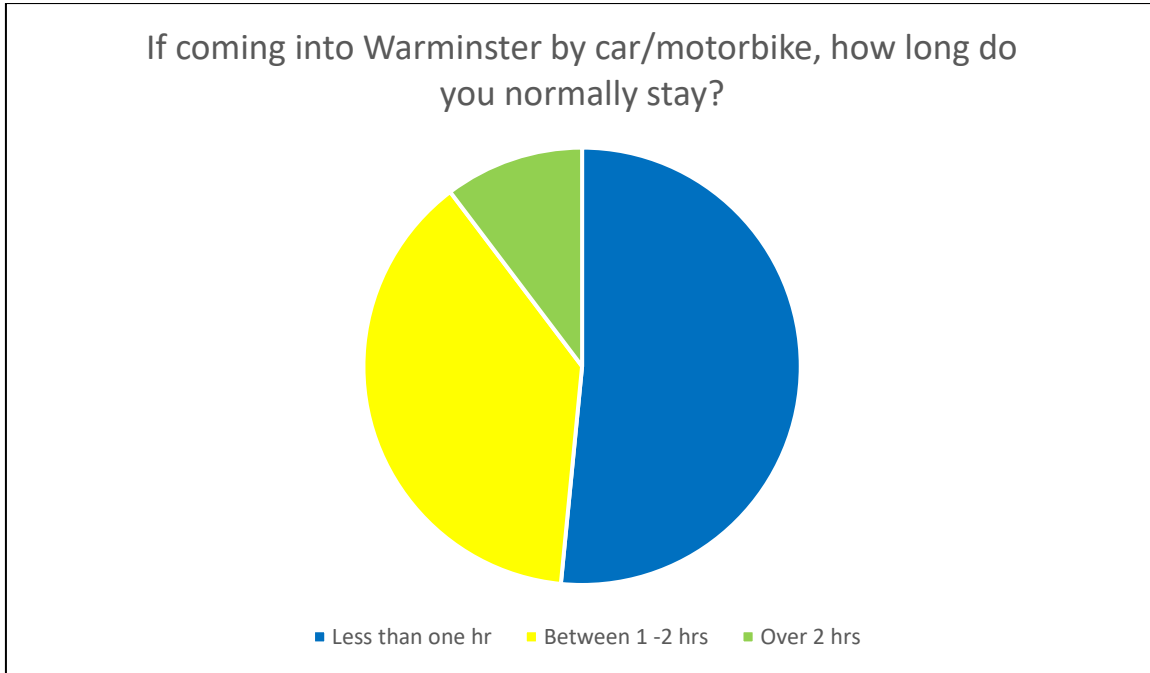
Number of surveys completed: 215

- 91.2% of respondents live in Warminster.
- Of the respondents that don't normally buy their groceries in Warminster, 39.8% stated they buy them online (60.24% buy from another town outside of Warminster).
- 40.4% of respondents if going out to eat/socialise tend to go to other towns or cities.
- 67% of people feel that Warminster is a safe and welcoming place in the evening.
- What type of services/businesses are missing in Warminster? (152 responses)
  - Shoe Shop (71)
  - Clothes shop (68)
  - Men's cloths Shop (34)
  - Wine bar/restaurant (23)
  - Banks (17)
  - Major retailers (14)
  - Bookshop (13)
  - Greengrocer (11)
  - Toyshop (9)
- Other comments about the local economy and town centre (102 responses)
  - Parking charges (21)
  - Number of empty shops (19)
  - Too many charity shops/hairdressers/etc (14)
  - No 3 High Street scaffolding (14)
  - More independent shops/be more like Frome (10)
  - More restaurants (8)
  - Town centre not attractive – too much traffic, consider pedestrianisation/reducing traffic (7)
  - There were a number of comments saying that Warminster had a good offer or undersold itself or underperformed. There was recognition of the somewhat disjointed shopping areas, the attraction of the Lake Pleasure Grounds, support for repurposing empty buildings.

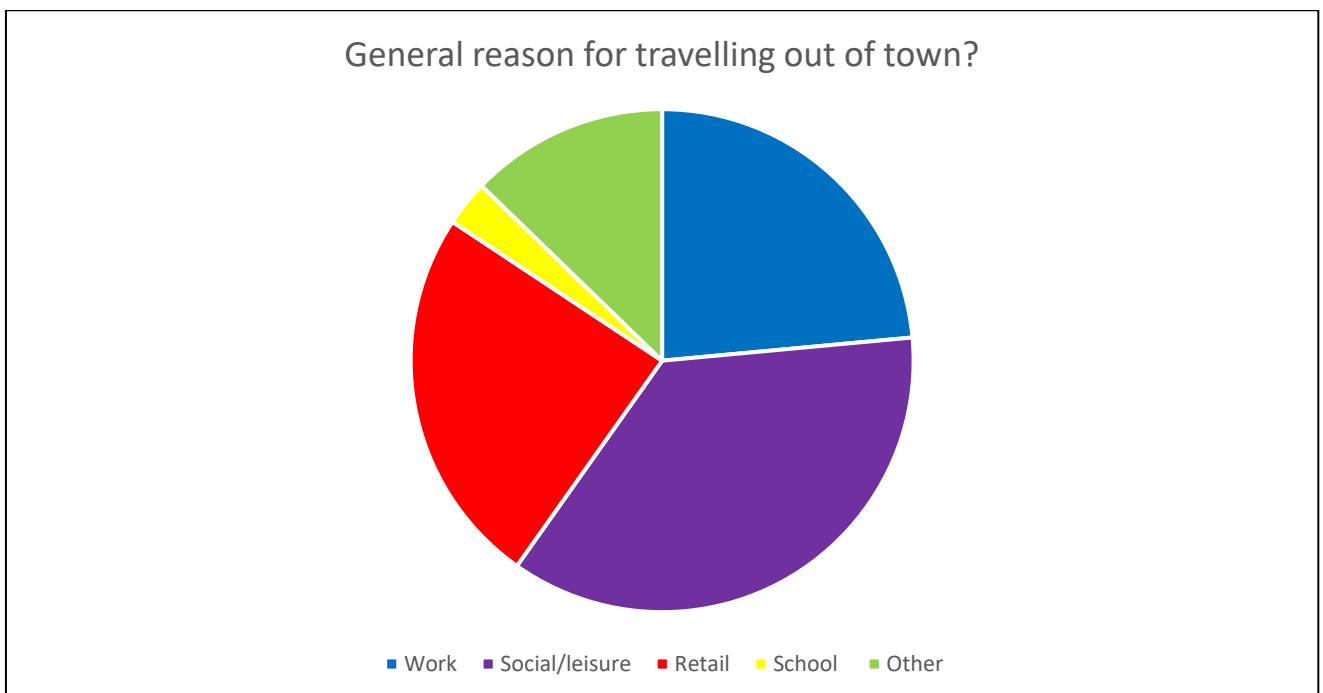
## Transport and Getting Around Survey - Summary

Number of surveys completed: 103

- 96% of respondents live in Warminster.
- 73.8% of respondents were not aware of all the cycle routes identified on the map, however 70% of respondents were aware of the footpaths and walking routes detailed on the map.
- The most common way to travel into Warminster is car/motorbike (52.4%) followed by walking (48.5%). Only 8.7% respondents cycle into the town centre.



- The main reason preventing people from walking/cycling into Warminster is that they need to carry heavy items (64.8%), followed by time taken to walk cycle (26.8%) and weather (25.4%).
- 99% of respondents travel out of Warminster, of which 83.3% travel by car/motorbike. 57.5% travel out of Warminster more than once a week and 12.8% travel out daily.



- Congestion hotspots (82 responses)
  - East Street/Market Place/Station Road/Waitrose (32)
  - West Street/ Victoria Road/ Vicarage Street (28)
  - Town Centre/High Street/ Top of Weymouth Street (21)
  - Warminster School/ Church Street/ Bath Road/ Obelisk (18)
  - Kingdown School/ Woodcock Road school pickup time/ School pick-up times/ Woodcock Road (14)
  - Other areas - Imber Road (4)/Portway (3)/Fore Street (3)/Fairfield Road/One Stop (3)/Silver Street (2)  
/Copheap Lane (2)

## Local Green Space Survey – Summary

The analysis of the local green space survey was undertaken by Place Studio.

Number of surveys completed: 182

- There was a good spread of respondents across the town, as well some from the wider area.
- Green space is clearly important to the community who expressed a wide range of reasons for valuing green spaces.
- The responses give the Steering Group evidence of what makes these spaces ‘demonstrably special’ which is key criteria that must be met in order for these spaces to be designated as Local Green Spaces which gives protection from development equal to green belt. One green space had comments to suggest it was not thought of as special – Barley Close. This will therefore need to be reviewed for inclusion in the Plan.
- Warminster Town Park was by far the most popular green space with 128 people indicating that they know and value the green space, with many people highlighting the recreational value of the park which was widely agreed to be “a huge asset to the town” and one person summed it up as “a green heart to the town”. The accessibility of the park for people who are disabled was also commented upon as a particular asset.
- As well as the large central Town Park, other green spaces across the town are also highly valued such as Warminster Common which was identified by one respondent as “on our side of town” demonstrating the importance for green spaces near-by. Food growing spaces such as Bradley Road Community Garden were also highly important and “well-used and loved.”
- Local recreational areas, such as Grovelands, the Portway Fields and Fore Street green space are also seen as critical in terms of the flood management.
- The role of green spaces was also considered important to address the issue of biodiversity decline, as well as the importance of the spaces for people’s mental health and well-being.
- A member of Get Wiltshire Walking also highlighted the interconnectedness of these areas which can be linked into short walks of an hour to an hour and a half, and others highlighted the Portway area in particular as a space which “provides a green traffic-free corridor through the town”.
- Folly Lane Rehobath, which is already a designated Local Green Space, had the support of just over 50% of respondents. Just over 19% of respondents set out their reasons why they do not support the designation.
- There were also suggestions for practical improvements to the space which the Town Council could investigate.

Landowner consultation has also been taking place at the same time as this community survey. Responses from landowners will be reviewed together with the feedback from the community to reach the final decision on the Local Green Spaces that will go forward for proposed designation in the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Field Work Feedback

The most interesting and unexpected finding from the 'pop-up' sessions was the number of people from outside Warminster who used the town.

Typically, these fell into three groups:

- **Villagers**

Those from the villages that surround Warminster. The parishes of Bishopstrow, Boyton, Brixton Deverill, Chapmanslade, Chitterne, Codford, Corsley, Heytesbury, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Knook, Longbridge Deverill, Maiden Bradley with Yarnfield, Norton Bavant, Sherrington, Stockton, Sutton Veny, Upton Lovell, Upton Scudamore.

These should look naturally to the town but it is not a given that that is the case.

- **Shoppers**

Those who have come from other nearby towns – typically Westbury, Salisbury and Trowbridge. People also came from Frome (Somerset) and Gillingham (Dorset) and Mere (Wilts).

For example there were many people who said they came from Westbury because:

- There is no bank in Westbury
- They have come to the fresh fruit and vegetable stall in Three Horseshoes Walk
- Lack of choice of supermarkets in Westbury (only Morrisons, Lidl and Aldi)
- Few DIY/home Improvement/range of industrial estate retailers/shops in Westbury

Even though Westbury and Frome are seen as strong shopping centres from a Warminster viewpoint, the same applies in reverse.

There are those who visit because of specific stores – Waitrose has its own demographic as has Iceland. There was also a recognition of the good range of shops.

- **Visitors**

People on holiday in or near Warminster or Longleat (Center Parcs). A lot of people use the town park which has many free facilities and is used as a meet up place for families.

It is also a destination in its own right. For example, skateboarders will travel miles to use the park. People with young children love the free splashpad, locals like to show visiting friends and relatives around the park. Anecdotally people travel for up to 90 minutes to visit the park.

Facilities such as the Athenaeum (theatre), night clubs and Warminster Sports Centre are expected to draw people in from outside Warminster.

A lot of young people use the railway station to get to and from school/college.

All of which have implications for how traffic moves in the town, parking provision and the need to acknowledge the contribution non-residents make to the vitality of the town centre.