

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16th March 2009

Agenda item: 7

Wards: Merton Park, St Helier, Ravensbury, Cannon Hill, Lower Morden

Subject: Regeneration of Morden Town Centre

Lead officer: Sarah Tanburn, Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Diane Neil-Mills, Member for Regeneration

Forward Plan reference number: 721

Contact officer: Paul McGarry, Manager, Physical Regeneration

Recommendations:

- A. Cabinet note the responses to the moreMorden draft vision consultation, undertaken in September 2008.
 - B. Cabinet endorse the strategic vision for Morden.
 - C. Cabinet agrees to consult on three framework options (development scenarios) for Morden commencing in July 2009.
 - D. Cabinet note the options available to the Council to deliver regeneration in Morden and that the project group will come back to Cabinet in late 2009 with more detailed advice on these options.
 - E. Cabinet note the implications of the Economic Development Strategy (also presented to this Cabinet meeting) in the context of regenerating Morden.
 - F. Cabinet endorse the programme of complementary initiatives.
 - G. Cabinet note the next stages of the moreMorden project.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report considers the future regeneration of Morden Town Centre, following on from the moreMorden draft vision consultation in September 2008. It reports the outcome of the consultation, together with discussions with key stakeholders.
- 1.2. The report also proposes a strategy both to enhance and protect the current economic base and to position Morden for future investment through a series of complementary initiatives.
- 1.3. Linkages between the moreMorden project and Merton's emerging Economic Development Strategy are noted, highlighting the challenges facing Morden in the current economic climate.
- 1.4. The report also highlights the next stages of the moreMorden project including a further round of consultation focussing on development scenarios for the town and developing a masterplan and Area Action Plan as part of Merton's Local Development Framework.

2 DETAILS

Report on Community Engagement:

- 2.1. The draft vision for Morden underwent extensive public consultation in September 2008. The details of the consultation programme and analysis of responses are set out in the Report of Community Engagement, Appendix A to this report.

Vision for Morden:

- 2.2. In June 2008, Cabinet agreed on a draft vision for Morden, which was subject to public consultation in September 2008. 80% of respondents thought that the aims and objectives of the vision were right for Morden. (32% Strongly Agreed, 48% Agreed, 9% Neither agreed or disagreed. Only 8% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed)
- 2.3. Cabinet members are now asked to endorse the strategic high level vision for Morden as set out below.

Vision Aim:

- 2.4. Our aim is to change the perception of Morden, from somewhere people *have* to be, to a place people *want* to be.
- 2.5. This can be achieved by regenerating Morden to be a sustainable town centre, important transport node and through generating a renewed sense of civic pride.

Vision Objectives:

- 2.6.
- Re-define the role of the suburban centre, creating an economically sustainable and viable town centre for the future by building on Morden's assets.
 - Re-enforce Morden's leisure, cultural, educational and civic opportunities.
 - Improve the quantity, quality and mix of commercial, residential, retail uses.
 - Intensify development on underdeveloped sites by making more efficient use of land incorporating higher density housing and commercial opportunities that exploit Morden's excellent public transport links. Intensifying the centre also helps protect the character and distinctiveness of the adjacent suburban neighbourhoods.
 - Enhance the accessibility between the town centre and its suburban hinterland and open spaces. (This can be achieved by reducing severance caused by through traffic and greening Morden through tree planting and improved pedestrian route).
 - Achieve high quality urban design, architecture and public realm incorporating high quality spaces and streets with pedestrians as the priority.
 - Provide more opportunities for the community to meet, socialise and make better use of their town centre through provision of attractive, safe and accessible public spaces and community, social and leisure facilities.

Development Framework Options:

- 2.7. Morden Town Centre has significant capacity for growth and a major regeneration project provides opportunity to provide additional residential development that would not only revive the town centre but also contribute to the borough's housing targets. Merton's housing targets, as set by the Greater London Authority seek to deliver 5500 new homes between 2010-2026.
- 2.8. The moreMorden consultation in September 2008 asked the public's view on the scale of development that would be appropriate for Morden. Three key questions, relating to building heights, scale of development and density have informed three development scenarios that we hope to consult on further in summer 2009.
- 2.9. It is proposed that we consult on three broad development scenarios with differing quantum of development for commercial and residential uses. These scenarios will demonstrate how the vision's aims and objectives could be achieved through different scales of development, each with varying levels of benefit to the town. The development scenarios outlined below are set in response to Q18 and Q27 of the consultation where the majority of respondents were pro-development and suggested increasing capacity and building heights. Therefore development scenarios will focus on a range between 500-2000 dwellings
- 2.10. The development framework options comprise of:
- Low scale scenario: 500 residential units
 - Med scale scenario: 1250 residential units
 - High scale scenario: 2000 residential units
- 2.11. Quantum for commercial and community floorspace will be proportional to the level residential development and details would be determined at the masterplanning stage of the project.
- 2.12. Cabinet members are asked to consider these scenarios and approve the proposal to consult with the public on these development framework options. Each option may generate its own character and vision for Morden, which will be explored further in the next round of consultation and the masterplanning stage of the project. Following consultation, the preferred framework would form the basis for a masterplan and Area Action Plan in Merton's Local Development Framework. As the moreMorden project and the LDF evolve, consideration will be given to Morden's secondary retail parades and their function and interrelationship with the town centre.

Delivery and Development Strategy:

Development Delivery Vehicles

- 2.13. As planning authority and land-owner in Morden, the council has a significant opportunity in the regeneration process to:
- Manage the planning process through the creation of policies in the LDF and Morden Area Action Plan, and;

- To maximise its influence on delivery, through intelligent use of council assets and pro-active development management.
- 2.14. There are a number of development delivery options open to the council, ranging from the council becoming a 'master developer', who would sub-contract projects to the market or the council forming a development partnership or consortium.
- 2.15. The moreMorden project group seek approval to commission a study to examine options available to identify the risks and rewards related to different delivery strategies and vehicles. (Subject to the property and financial markets) This study will be in parallel to ongoing discussion with key stakeholders, in particular TfL.
- 2.16. Cabinet members are asked to agree to the procurement of external expertise regarding development delivery strategies. This can be funded by existing capital resources allocated to 'unlocking development potential in Morden town centre'. If approved, the project group will report back to Cabinet in late 2009 with more detailed advice.

Complementary Initiatives

- 2.17. A programme of complementary initiatives has been prepared to contribute to the enhancement of the town centre alongside development work towards its broader, more far reaching physical regeneration. These initiatives will be progressed over the next year and beyond.
- 2.18. The objectives of the complementary initiatives are to:
 - Upgrade the public realm and infrastructure
 - Instigate transport improvements and enhance connectivity
 - Provide a safe environment
 - Improve local shopping and other facilities
 - Support local enterprise and employment
 - Provide town centre management
 - Introduce a programme of community events
- 2.19. The initiatives can be grouped under four main headings, although some cut across more than one heading. It should be noted that much of the public realm in Morden is the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL).
- 2.20. Some initiatives have already been completed or are firmly planned for completion this financial year:
- 2.21. Public Realm
 - Enhancement to civic centre piazza including new street furniture, (bins and lamp columns) and pedestrian way-finding information funded from streetscene and public realm Capital.
 - Re-paving of Morden Court Parade (London Rd) funded by TfL.
- 2.22. Support to Local Enterprise

- One shop front improvement grant is currently being progressed funded by Capital.
- An interim town centre manager is now appointed and has organised Christmas carols and the Valentine's Day event.
- Promotional brochure to be produced including advertising by local businesses.
- The markets manager will seek to recruit new market stall holders.

2.23. Community Facilities and Programme of Events

- Community Toilets – discussions with local businesses indicate that 2 businesses are willing in principle to participate in the scheme and arrangements are being made to identify one more alongside the council. The contribution towards cleaning would be met from Revenue.
- Christmas carols with local schools.
- Valentine's Day event including sponsorship by local businesses.

2.24. Transport

- Living Streets survey completed and is informing the development of complementary initiatives.
- Freight loading initiative – leaflet distributed to local businesses locating waiting restrictions in the town centre to assist them with deliveries to shops, funded by TfL.
- Pedestrian signage to Morden Road Tram Stop now installed funded by TfL.
- Partial removal of guardrails along the main road approved and funded by TfL; assessment of scope for further removal in progress.
- Cycle parking – additional stands being provided to replace the guardrails funded by TfL.
- Loading scheme being developed for the alleyway in the Aberconway and Abbotsbury Roads area funded by TfL.
- Draft proposals to relocate stands for 1 – 2 bus services from Morden station being considered in discussion with TfL and London Buses.

2.25. The programme will include other initiatives for some of which additional funding will need to be identified, including;

Public Realm

2.26. Further improvements funded from Capital stemming from the second phase of Merton's Public Realm Strategy, which will provide conceptual streetscape designs for the borough's town centres.

Support to local enterprise

2.27. A borough-wide programme of business support is being developed. (see Economic Development Strategy report elsewhere on this agenda)

- 2.28. Further shop front improvement grants and offers of funding for the treatment of empty shops funded from Capital.

Community Facilities and Programme of Events

- 2.29. A programme will be organised aiming to increase footfall in the town centre including events in Morden Hall Park.

- 2.30. The possibility of securing funding for projects in the town centre by local artists will be explored.

Transport

- 2.31. Additional provision for cyclists will be considered.

- 2.32. Options to continue to address issues relating to the location of bus service stops and stands in the town centre will be developed.

- 2.33. Proposals to deal with the Morden gyratory system and other major streetscene improvements are being explored through the TfL STEP bid.

Economic Development Strategy:

- 2.34. Members should note the separate report being presented to this meeting on Merton's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and its links with the moreMorden project.

- 2.35. The EDS looks at Merton's town centres, their core offer and opportunities. It sets out some objectives for town centre economic development and either an outline action plan or point towards proposals already underway. The EDS objectives are intended to compliment the draft vision for Morden, which is slightly more focussed on physical regeneration.

- 2.36. Retail has a specific role in offering a unique attractiveness to our town centres. Currently, the retail spend in Morden is dominated by convenience shopping, particularly food shopping and serves only a very local population and some of the needs of commuters passing through the town. One of the challenges for Morden will be to build on those elements that support a unique presence, without assuming a major increase in retail sector in the current economic condition.

- 2.37. Morden attracts a high footfall within the vicinity of the Underground station; one third of these people do not contribute to the economy of Morden, simply using the town as a transport interchange.

- 2.38. Morden also under-performs compared to similar town centres (by size and location on the underground network) Research by Volterra in 2008 found low levels of small business, restaurant and a latent demand for leisure in Morden in comparison to centres in Ealing, Barnet and elsewhere in southwest London.

- 2.39. These challenges are recognised in the draft vision for Morden and significant work in the next stages of the moreMorden project is underway to maximise the opportunities available in Morden and to guide specific intervention aimed at regenerating the town centre.

moreMorden Project, Next Steps for 2009:

- 2.40. Endorse the vision for Morden (as requested in this paper) – March 2009
- 2.41. Engage external advice regarding delivery options to achieve successful regeneration of Morden. – Summer 2009
- 2.42. Consult on development scenarios – July-September 2009
- 2.43. Report back to Cabinet with a preferred development scenario and recommendations on development delivery options – early 2010.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The absence of an overarching regeneration strategy for Morden will mean there will be less co-ordination and consistency between LBM projects and no overall vision or consistent approach to any development proposals that may come forward. Without the regeneration strategy there will be less market interest in Morden and the council would continue to manage retail decline in the town centre.
- 3.2. The council would also be left with a growing property liability on the Abbotsbury triangle and the civic centre sites. Promotion of a regeneration strategy is consistent with the council's duty to pro-actively manage and increase the value of its property assets.
- 3.3. The public realm in Morden is operated and maintained by Transport for London and dominated by through traffic and bus layover infrastructure. This scenario would continue, as without a vision for Morden, the council has little leverage to negotiate public realm improvements with TfL. A regeneration strategy would also provide an opportunity to bid for additional funding from external sources.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. A consultation on the draft vision for Morden took place in September – October 2008. Details of the consultation can be found in Appendix A to this report.
- 4.2. A further consultation on three framework options (development scenarios) for Morden will commence in July 2009 subject to Cabinet approval, set out in recommendation C and paragraphs 2.9 – 2.12 of this report.
- 4.3. The Morden Town Centre Partnership has also been consulted in developing the approach and programme of complementary initiatives.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. If approved, it is proposed that a further round of public consultation will commence in July 2009, reporting back to cabinet early 2010 with detailed options for regenerating Morden.
- 5.2. If approved, The Council will seek external advice to inform development delivery mechanisms, to be reported back to Cabinet late 2009.
- 5.3. The Council will continue with a programme of complementary initiatives.
- 5.4. For details of the next stages of the moreMorden project please see paragraph 2.39 of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The resources required to proceed with the next stages of the moreMorden project include existing officer time in relation to undertaking the preparation and implementation of the consultation process as well as publicity and printing costs.
- 6.2. As the vision for Morden has no statutory planning status. There is no impact from endorsing the vision, on the Council's property interests.
- 6.3. Advice from external consultants may also be required and can be met utilising existing capital budgets allocated to 'Unlocking development potential in Morden town centre'
- 6.4. Revenue and capital funding is available for the projects included in the programme of complementary initiatives. In addition some projects have been funded by TfL to whom bids for further project funding will be submitted as proposals are developed.
- 6.5. The table below outlines current capital budget allocations for the project.

Area of Activity		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	Comments
Unlocking the Development of Morden Town Centre	Project management and other consultancy support, surveys and physical regeneration initiatives	£88,500	£370,000	£370,000	£370,000	Detail of spend to be determined (Dependant on endorsement of the Vision) Spend includes complementary initiatives, research on development delivery options, masterplan preparation and to leverage additional funding from TfL.

Public Realm						
	Enhancement to Civic Centre Piazza	£50,000	-	-	-	Funded from Facilities and Public Realm Capital.
	Street scene	There is a capital sum of £2m in 2008/09 for investment into the street scene on a Borough wide basis and an allocation of £200,000 will be made from this towards Morden. Schemes for Morden include street furniture enhancements (co-ordinated bins, lighting, pedestrian signage and maps in line with Merton's Public Realm Strategy) (Please note that most public realm in Morden is controlled by TFL)				
Support to local Enterprise						
	Shop front improvements	£5,000 (Tbd	Tbd	Tbd	Allocation from capital sum above
	Empty shop initiative		Tbd	Tbd	Tbd	Allocation from capital sum above
Transport						
	Living Streets survey and related work	£16,000	-	-	-	Funded from 08/09 Capital Funding for Morden.
	Morden Town Centre Highway Improvements	-	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	Funded from Transport Capital in conjunction with TfL.

6.6. The table below outlines the current revenue budget allocations for the project.

Area of Activity		08/09	09/10	10/11	Comments
Support to local enterprise					
	Business support and advice		Tbd – from LABGI	Tbd – from LABGI	Proposal in Economic Development Strategy to extend Mitcham Means Business
	Town Centre Management	£25,000 – part-time with Colliers Wood	Tbd	Tbd	See separate report on Economic Development Strategy
Safety	Ongoing mainstream revenue programme				
Community Facilities and Events					
	Community Toilet scheme	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	Proposed from LABGI allocation
	Programme of events	Ongoing	Tbd	Tbd	See separate report on Economic Development Strategy

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The proposals set out in this report are in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and relevant regulations and Government guidance.
- 7.2. Future elements of the wider regeneration programme (but not the endorsement of the vision or consultation being proposed in this paper) may be subject to formal EU tendering requirements. Even if there is no formal EU requirement to enter into a competitive process, the council may elect to follow a competitive process to select a third party with whom the council chooses to work. Details of such will be reported back to Cabinet and lead members as and when required.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. At this stage, in seeking endorsement of the vision for Morden and approval for further community engagement, there are no human rights or equalities implications. However in late 2009 as the vision and regeneration strategy is firmed up and an Area Action Plan is prepared as part of Merton's Local Development Framework, an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out, as a statutory requirement of the strategy.
- 8.2. With regard to community cohesion, consultation with residents and stakeholders supports the following key priority in the Merton Cohesion Strategy 2006-10: "providing opportunities for all our residents to become actively involved in their communities, creating a sense of ownership, feeling valued and increased social capital".

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no implications for the purposes of this report. As the moreMorden project moves forward to the masterplanning and Area Action Plan preparation, the plans will have regard to designing out crime.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. At this stage there is no business risk in seeking approval to share our ideas with the public at this stage of the project. However, as the regeneration strategy develops as an Area Action Plan there may be business risks relating to council property and planning blight. The details of any risk implications will be reported to the Members Working Group and appropriate Panels and Cabinet in due course (dates of which are set out in section 6 of this report).

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix A: Report of community engagement on the draft vision for Morden.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. The moreMorden draft vision consultation material is available to view or download from www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

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moreMorden

Report of community engagement on the draft vision for Morden town centre.

Undertaken September – October 2008.

Final Report for:

- Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Cabinet

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Introduction:

The London Borough of Merton is preparing a plan to regenerate Morden Town Centre over the next 15 years. In 2009, the council will be drawing up formal guidelines for the development of the town centre, known as an Area Action Plan (AAP). The AAP is a key planning document that will show the council's plans for buildings and their uses, streets, public spaces, green spaces, transport links and community facilities in Morden.

However, before the preparation of the AAP commences, the council have prepared a vision for Morden. The vision was drafted in summer 2008 and was made available for public consultation throughout September and October 2008. The purpose of the consultation was two-fold. Firstly, it was an opportunity for the council to gain an understanding of the public's perceptions of Morden and to establish a baseline of issues that local people feel need to be addressed to regenerate Morden. Secondly, the consultation was used to gauge public opinion on the draft vision in order to develop a shared, and agreed vision for Morden's future, which will be used to inform the detail of the AAP and also help the council identify a series of complementary initiatives that will deliver short-medium term improvements in the town centre.

The consultation was conceived as part of an ongoing programme of community engagement, designed to enable local people to engage with, understand and contribute to the vision for Morden and the wider moreMorden project.

Information set out in this report will not only inform the content of the Morden AAP but will form part of the project's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) when the Morden AAP is published and formally adopted by Merton Council.

Methodology / approach:

The consultation targeted the community in and around Morden Town Centre. This included local businesses, landowners and residents in the town centre as well as over 2000 households located on the periphery of the town centre (approximately within 500m / 5-8 min walk of the town centre). Additional consultees included local interest groups, residents groups, Community and Business forums, town centre users, commuters, civic centre staff, local ward Councillors and key Cabinet members.

Publicity and promotion:

The council prepared a publicity and promotion strategy to ensure as many people as possible were aware of the moreMorden project and in particular, during the consultation period.

The consultation was promoted through a number of channels:

Internet:

The moreMorden web page was launched on the council's website in July 2008. The page included a project fact sheet, frequently asked questions (as raised at earlier public forums) and links to the Facebook forum, draft vision and online questionnaire.

Press:

Press releases were printed by the local Guardian, Post and Evening Standard as well as national publications that focussed on our use of social networking websites for engaging with the public. The local Guardian also printed 'Town Talk' article publicising the project as well as adverts.

The moreMorden project was publicised prior to the consultation period in the council's borough magazine, myMerton (August 2008 edition). MyMerton is distributed to 80,000 homes in the borough and a further 6000 are distributed to key points such as libraries, schools, community and leisure centres. A follow-up article was run during the consultation period to ensure a good response to the questionnaires (October 2008 edition)

Other publicity:

Merton civic centre featured as an attraction in the annual Open House weekend which promotes architecture and design in London by giving the people an opportunity to visit buildings not normally accessible to the public. We used the opportunity to promote the moreMorden consultations by having display panels in the civic centre foyer, accompanied by a display on the history of St Helier estate in Morden Library. Staff were also available to talk with visitors on the civic centre roof, outlining the vision for Morden.

Display panels were available to view in Morden Library for the duration of the consultation period and moreMorden banners were installed at the entrance to the civic centre to encourage participation in the project.

Morden also featured in the New London Architecture gallery's exhibit on London's Towns. Morden featured in a piece of conceptual work by the London Development Agency and Urhahn Urban Design practice to evaluate the potential for intensification in seven south London town centres.

The exhibition brochure can be downloaded at:

www.newlondonarchitecture.org/media/exhibitions/catalogues/LondonsTowns.pdf

Draft vision booklets and questionnaires were distributed at various locations at the start of the consultation campaign. Officers distributed material and were available to answer questions at the following locations and public meetings:

Leaflet distribution:

- Morden Underground Station
- Morden Hall Park
- Baitul Futuh Mosque
- Sainsbury's
- Open House Weekend
- Local shops

Public meetings:

- Morden Business Forum
- Morden Community Forum
- Morden Town Centre Partnership
- Merton Transport Group
- Merton Park Residents Association
- Morden Hall Parkside Residents

In addition to a wide publicity programme, letters were sent to the following people to inform them of the consultation.

- Landowners in the town centre.
- Residential properties (2000 homes within 400m of the town centre)
- Local resident associations and community groups.
- Local ward Councillors and the MP for Mitcham and Morden (this also included a project briefing pack)

Responses to the consultation:

Over the course of the six-week consultation period over 5000 draft vision booklets and questionnaires were distributed in the local community. Comments made at the staffed drop in sessions and at public meetings largely reflect the views subsequently expressed in the questionnaire and on the Facebook online forum.

220 questionnaires were completed and analysed.

This breaks down as:

- 64 Online questionnaires and;
- 156 Questionnaire booklets completed.
- 70 Comments posted on the moreMorden Facebook forum (and 185 people joined the Facebook group to contribute and be kept informed of the project progress).

The questionnaire sought views on key issues that affect Morden and build to create a vision for Morden. Questions were grouped in categories, each with an opportunity for additional comment:

- The draft vision
- Perceptions of Morden
- Development opportunities
- Transport and access
- Local economy and enterprise
- Living
- Sustainability
- Leisure
- Environment and public realm
- Short-term improvements

The consultation process identified the following results >>>

The Vision:

The vision for Morden seeks to change the perception of Morden, from somewhere people have to be, to a place people want to be.

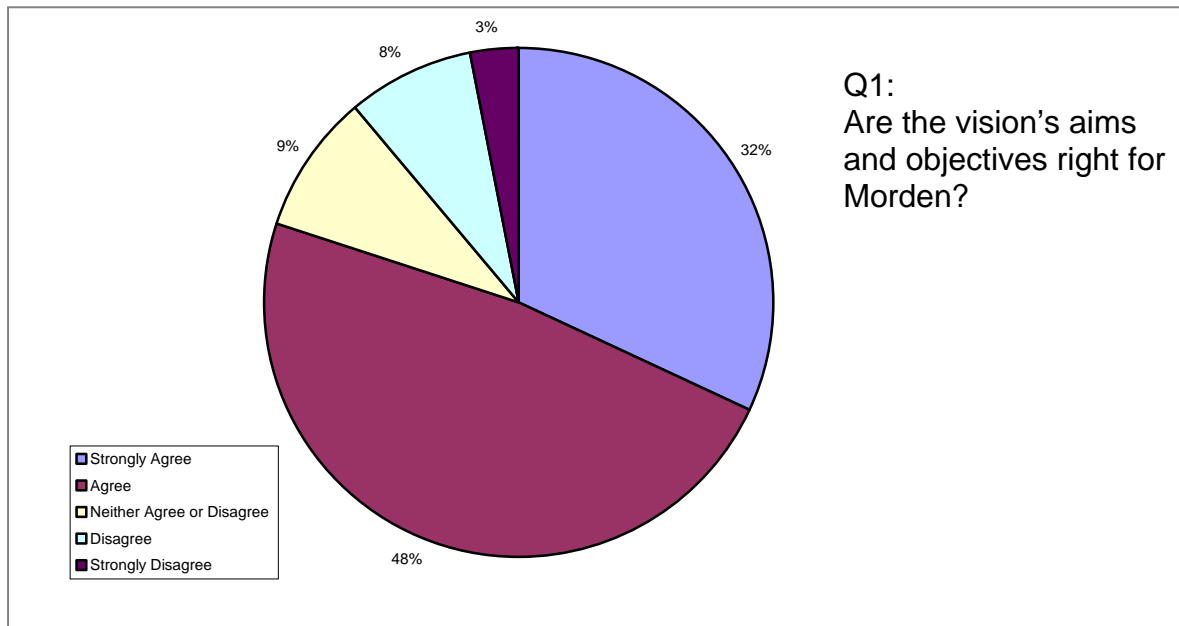
This could be achieved by regenerating Morden to be a sustainable town centre, important transport interchange and through generating a renewed sense of civic pride.

The objectives of the vision are to:

- Re-define the role of the suburban centre, creating an economically sustainable and viable town centre for the future by building on Morden's assets.
- Re-enforce Morden's leisure, cultural, educational and civic opportunities.
- Improve the quantity, quality and mix of commercial, residential, retail uses.
- Intensify development on underdeveloped sites by making more efficient use of land incorporating higher density housing and commercial opportunities that exploit Morden's excellent public transport links. Intensifying the centre also helps protect the character and distinctiveness of the adjacent suburban neighbourhoods.
- Enhance the accessibility between the town centre and its suburban hinterland and open spaces. This can be achieved by reducing severance caused by through traffic and greening Morden through tree planting and improved pedestrian routes.
- Achieve high quality urban design, architecture and public realm incorporating high quality spaces and streets with pedestrians as the priority.
- Provide more opportunities for the community to meet, socialise and make better use of their town centre through provision of attractive, safe and accessible public spaces and community, social and leisure facilities.

When asked whether the vision's aims and objectives were right for Morden, the vast majority of respondents were in support of the vision.

The vision:



80% of respondents indicated clear support for the vision, with 11% against the proposals. Those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed (and provided comments to substantiate their decision) stated the main reasons were against high density housing, in particular the perceived traffic and car parking impact and connotations of negative social issues associated with post-war examples of high-density housing. Other reasons included the possibility of land assembly (CPO) and impact on property values.

Some people chose to strongly disagree with the vision, based not on the vision or the consultation documents, but local press coverage regarding separate proposals for a soccer centre in Morden Park. A number of these respondents stated that their reason for opposing the vision was because they did not support the Morden Park proposals or developing any open space. This issue was unrelated to the moreMorden consultation; also the vision does not propose to develop any green spaces for built development. Therefore, misinterpretation of the vision booklet, coupled with local press coverage on a separate planning matter has skewed the vision consultation slightly with perhaps more negative feedback than may have otherwise been in support of the town centre proposals.

Many people have picked up that a balance must be struck between accommodating new development and retaining elements of Morden's suburban character and heritage. This level of fine-grain detail will be explored further as a masterplan is prepared. Overall, people support the vision and are aware of Morden's latent development potential; general feedback from public meetings have reflected this and also demonstrated a wide support for the council to drive forward positive change in the town.

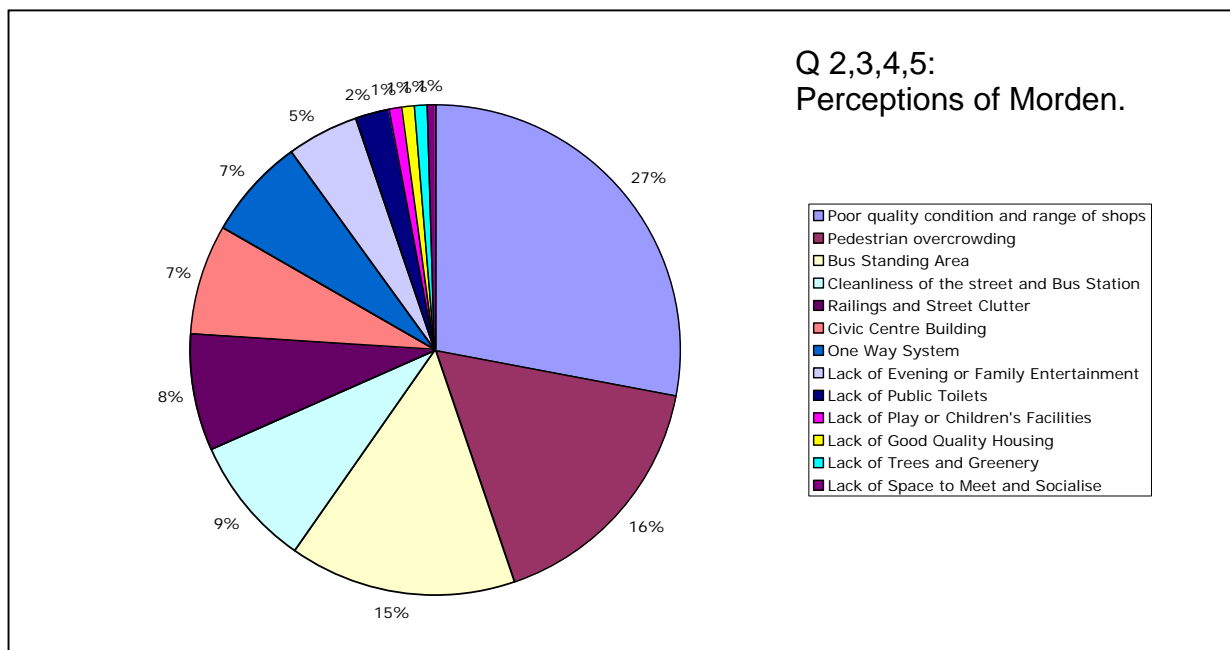
Perceptions of Morden:

We asked what people thought were the best, and the worst things about Morden.

Morden's positive attributes are considered to be the convenience and access to public transport and the good quality housing and suburban character of the surrounding areas. The area's parks, green spaces and leisure facilities are also well used and cherished. Morden Hall Park is the clear favourite with the people of Morden. Many wish to retain the calm and rural feel within the park, though there is also a recognition that the park tends to turn its back on the town centre and is often considered to be a separate entity, rather than be seen as part of Morden town centre's attractions. Some people commented that more children's play facilities in the park would encourage greater use and act as another attraction to the park.

For many, the wider neighbourhoods of Morden are desirable residential areas however, when it comes to the town centre itself, attitudes and perceptions of Morden change dramatically.

The chart below illustrates the main issues that affected people's perception of Morden Town Centre and what people thought required the most attention to improve the town centre.



Retail:

The economic study of Morden undertaken by Volterra in 2008 indicated that Morden is under performing when compared to other similar town centres across London. The reasons for this become apparent in people's perceptions of Morden where the biggest issue for respondents was the shopping offer in Morden.

For some, although the centre was convenient for local and day-to-day shopping, it does not have a sufficient range of shops that would encourage people to stay longer and spend more in the town centre. Most people found that although Morden has a lot of shops, there tends to be a repetition in the offer, with numerous outlets offering the same type of goods, for example newsagents, cafes, fast food outlets and in particular, many respondents commented on the 'pound shops'.

The range of shopping in Morden could be improved with the introduction of more comparison shopping for example, sportswear, ladies fashions and books. Currently most respondents said they'd travel to Sutton, Wimbledon or Colliers Wood for a wider shopping offer.

Many respondents suggested a range of chain stores they'd like to see in Morden, this included WH Smith, Waterstones, Starbucks, Marks and Spencer, Next, JD Sports and Primark amongst other. However the majority of respondents also said that they like the independent nature of Morden's High Street and felt that the town's unique selling point, and an important aspect of Morden's character is the fact that it isn't a 'cloned town'. This may prove to be beneficial to Morden in the current economic climate where major chain stores are bearing the brunt of the recession and closing stores nationwide. Morden has just experienced this with the loss of Woolworths, one of the town's original stores.

The concentration of independent retailers and services in Morden could prove useful if the current market as smaller independent businesses could be more resilient to change.

In response to respondent's aspirations to attract certain mainstream retailers, the council and local businesses should look beyond the brand names and consider that if Morden's uniqueness lies in the independent, non-cloned high street then perhaps Morden's regeneration strategy should be to attract and foster local businesses to provide the range and quality of goods and services that the suggested chain stores provide. For example, if people aspire to having a Waterstones, what this really boils down to is a demand for a good quality local bookstore.

A parallel concern with the range of shopping is the condition and physical appearance of many shops in the town centre. Put broadly, many people consider Morden's shops (interior and exterior) to be 'shabby', 'tacky' and 'rundown' which collectively suggest that the town centre is in demise and brings down the perception of the town. It should be stressed that these are

just perceptions. In reality the vacancy rates in Morden are relatively low however much could be done to change the physical appearance of Morden's shops through shopfront improvement grants and generating a unified look and character for Morden's shops.

Pedestrian environment:

16% of respondents thought that pedestrian overcrowding was an off-putting factor of the experience of Morden Town Centre. Specifically, people commented on the narrow pavement and congestion on London Road adjacent to the Underground Station and Boots. This also relates to the next major issue the impact of the bus standing area on the town. A further 15% of respondents felt that the first impression of Morden is very unwelcoming because of the impact of the standing busses outside the Underground Station. On one hand, the convenience of easy interchange between bus and Underground is welcomed by commuters. However the concentration of bus stops so close to the entrance to the station means that space for pedestrian movement is compromised. Conflict occurs between those waiting for buses and people passing through. The general experience is even more unpleasant for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs as the pavements are simply too narrow to accommodate the level of pedestrian activity outside the Underground station.

Conversely a vast amount of space outside the Underground Station is dedicated to stationary buses and driver layover facilities. The informal design of the bus station has changed little since the 1920s and the visual impact of the buses and guard rails / barriers make Morden appear 'cluttered', 'confusing' and makes moving around the centre difficult for pedestrians with regard to the location of road crossing points. People also commented that the bus stands (rather than bus stops) posed a problem regarding noise and their impact on air quality within the immediate vicinity of the Underground station.

Cleanliness of the streets, in particular the bus waiting area was regarded as a negative aspect of Morden and had an impact on people's first impressions, and general experience of the town centre. 9% of respondents felt that cleanliness, litter and the smell of take-away foods under the Morden station canopy were a problem. This problem is compounded by the lack of litterbins in the vicinity of the station, for security reasons and also that the majority of the streets in Morden are maintained by Transport for London and not the council.

Civic centre:

7% of respondents commented on the civic centre, more specifically the tower element of the building and its impact on the town centre. Most of those who commented felt that the building was out of character with the rest of Morden and was a blot on the landscape. Most criticism of the building related to 'tired', 'grey' and 'depressing' look of the building. Interestingly, not many people called for the demolition of the building. There seems to be a general

acceptance that the building is a landmark within the centre and serves its purpose well as the council offices. There is a general tone of negativity towards the building, from respondents, particularly regarding the run-down appearance of the side wings (especially the former Crown pub). This negativity relates to aesthetic and suggests that a refurbishment of the building would be positive in people’s perception of the building, and Morden in general.

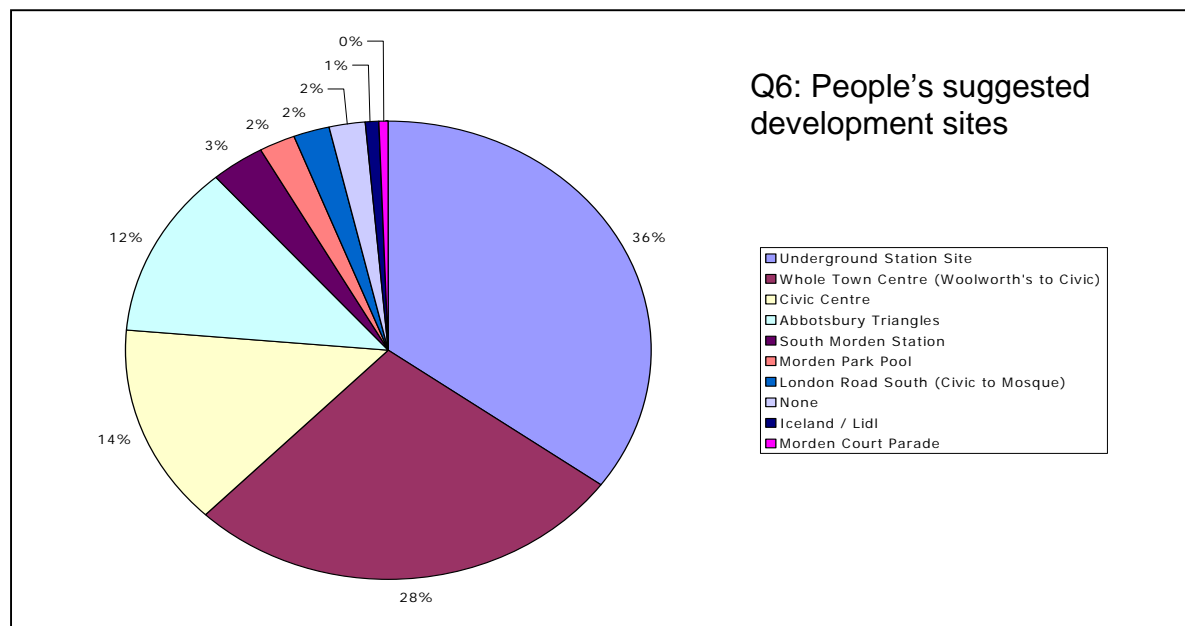
Development opportunities:

Public suggestions:

We asked people what sites or locations they’d like to see redeveloped in Morden. This was a separate question (Q6) to the suggested development sites (Q7) highlighted on the map (p8 of the vision booklet) and gave the public an opportunity to suggest their own preferred sites.

The most popular candidate for redevelopment was the Underground Station site. Although most people like the original art-deco façade of the station, the majority of people, 36% felt that the office block above, and the car parking areas to the rear of the station presented the main redevelopment opportunity in Morden.

28% of respondents felt that the entire town centre should be redeveloped. This question was open ended, rather than a tick-box option, therefore respondents were free to write what they felt appropriate. On further analysis of this response, it becomes clear that most people’s perception of ‘the entire centre’, ‘the whole high street’ or ‘all of it’ is primarily concentrated on the retail frontages of London Road between Woolworths and the civic centre. For the purposes of this report, we have defined the response of ‘whole town centre’ as London Road between the Morden Hall roundabout and the civic centre one-way system.

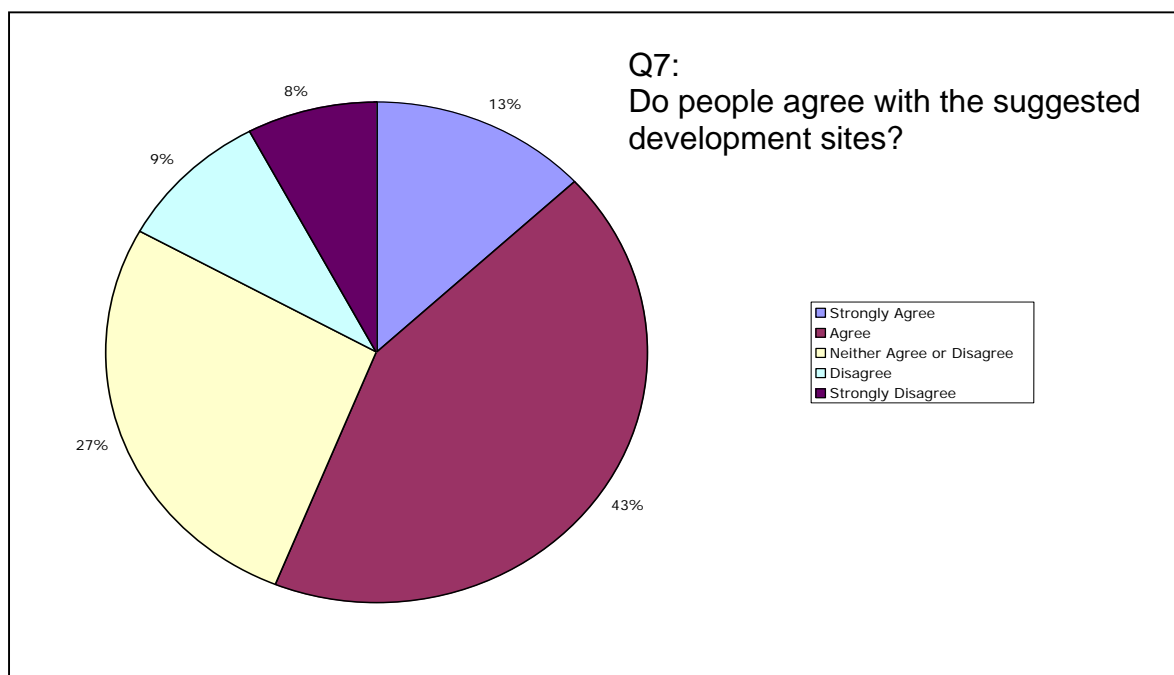


Similar to the perceptions of Morden, 14% of people felt that the civic centre was an appropriate opportunity for redevelopment, However unlike the perceptions section of the questionnaire, no-one qualified their response with regard to how the site may be redeveloped and for what purpose. 2% of respondents felt that no sites in Morden should be redeveloped. Presumably these respondents are happy with the existing built environment in Morden or are simply against any redevelopment options.

Overall, the development sites that people have put forward correspond to the key development sites put forward by the council in the draft vision. The main development opportunities are centred around the Underground Station and the general central retail area of Morden.

Proposed sites:

The draft vision booklet highlighted a number of development opportunities in Morden, stretching from the main town centre area, to Morden Hall Road, London Road and to Morden South Station. We asked if people agreed with the suggested sites and proposed uses as indicated on pages 8 and 9 of the draft vision booklet.



56% of respondents were positive towards the suggested development sites (with 13% strongly agreeing and 43% in agreement). 17% of respondents disagreed with the proposed sites. Naturally, some of these responses were from those who's property forms part of one of the suggested sites. This response is understandable as the vision is currently strategic, rather than detailed and is only intended to establish a baseline opinion on development

options in Morden. This highlights that further, targeted engagement with landowners will be required if/when more detailed proposals are developed. Of those who were opposed to the proposed sites, most were concerned at the impact of more development on car parking and 'loss of community spirit'. Others felt that development should be more 'spread out' in order to 'protect character' of the area.

27% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed sites. It is difficult to determine why this may be as there was little justification for this response. For some, the clarity of the map was an issue, with some people thinking that there were proposals to build in Morden Hall Park. This is not the case, however some text, and in particular, the arrows were unclear in the printed booklets, but clear on the web version.

Overall there is general support for the proposed sites, however there is a large proportion of those either against, or undecided. The council must not overlook this. It is clear that this issue will require more detailed consideration in the next stage of the project to allow the public to give a more qualified and informed response to proposals.

What parts of Morden would you keep?:

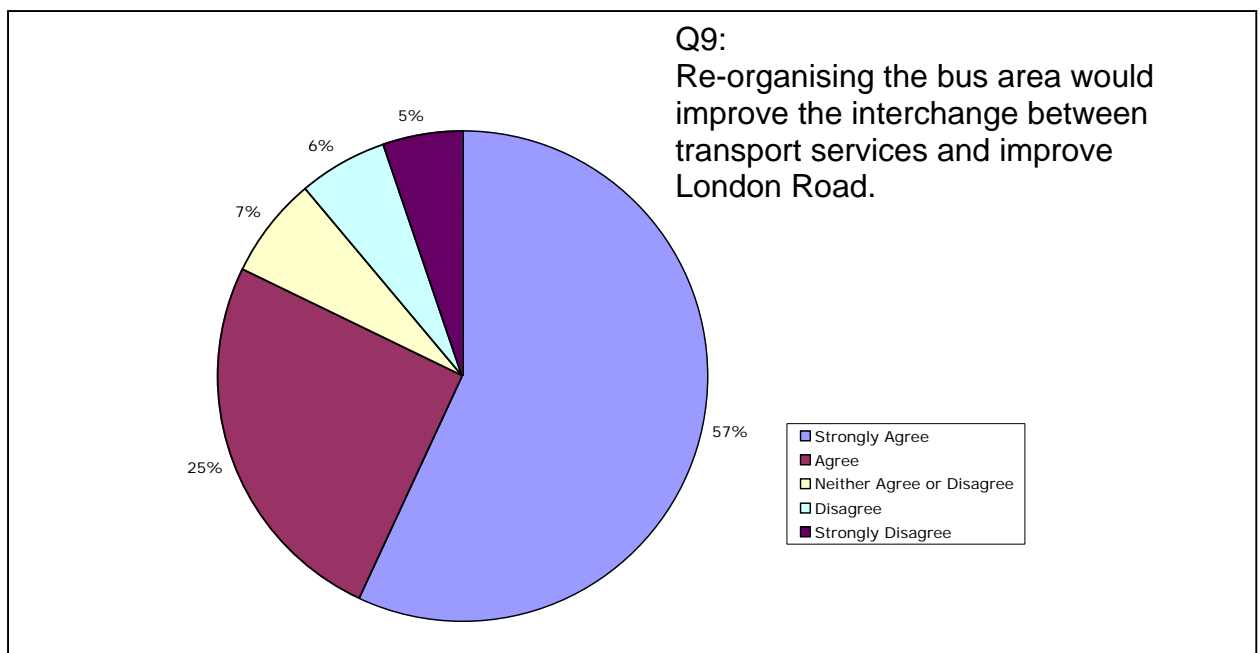
In Q8 we asked what parts of Morden would people like to keep for the future. Overwhelmingly the response was to retain, protect and enhance the local parks and green spaces. The moreMorden vision always intended to protect open spaces, in favour of redeveloping existing sites within the town centre. In particular, Morden Hall Park was the public's favourite asset in Morden. People also said that they'd keep the leisure centre and library facilities.

With regards to the town centre, the only building people wanted to keep was the original 1926 Charles Holden façade of Morden Underground Station. In general, people liked the 1920s mix of art deco and mock-tudor buildings on London Road South. Responses to this question link back to Q6, where there is little preference for retaining much of the buildings or architectural style within the main town centre itself, with the exception of the Underground Station, most of what people wish to retain in Morden is located on the periphery of the central retail area.

Transport and access:

Transport is an integral part of Morden and was the town's catalyst for development in the late 1920s. The public transport interchange is a major draw for people but the impact of through traffic and the informal design of the interchange between buses and the Underground station are equally a detriment to the quality of the physical environment and the experience of Morden as a place.

We asked if people thought that re-organising the bus area outside Morden Station would help improve the interchange between transport services and would improve the look and feel of London Road.



A significant number of people supported the principle with 82% agreeing/strongly agreeing to a redesign of the bus area. Those who were either neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed (18%) all gave similar reasons to justify their views. Mostly, people felt that the convenience of the exiting interchange worked well, despite the poor quality environment.

Having all the public transport in one place is regarded as positive amongst all respondents, although there was agreement amongst the overcrowding on the pavement and the general environment at bus stops was unpleasant and that a tidy and refresh of the bus area was needed.

Commuters suggested that better transport information, such as electronic bus time indicators would improve the bus station. Making better use of Morden South station as a public transport interchange was also suggested.

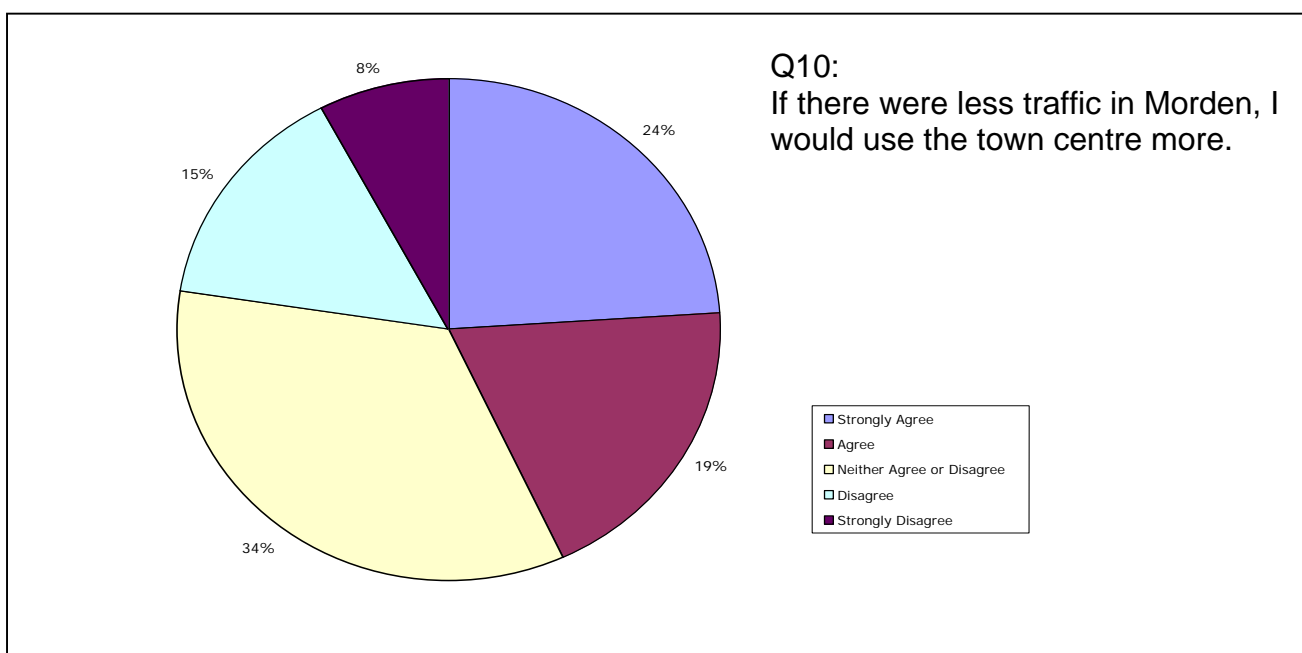
Respondents who were neutral stated that they'd rather see detailed proposals to comment on. In general there is consensus that the bus stops should remain near the underground, however the bus standing facilities could be relocated elsewhere and that bus stops could be spread out slightly, but remain within a short distance of the Underground Station.

Respondents who supported a re-organisation focus their comments on the general environment, such as lack of seating, the visual and audible impact of standing busses, associated crash barriers, pedestrian guard rails and inconvenient crossings to other bus stops. Some people suggested wider-reaching proposals such as relocating the bus station above the Underground Station in a similar arrangement to Hammersmith Station.

There is some agreement that a major overhaul of a scale similar to the 'super cool' Vauxhall Cross bus interchange would not be suitable for Morden as it would dominate the town centre more than the existing situation. In addition to these comments, people have highlighted that the original Underground Station façade should become more of a feature in the town, and not be obstructed by 'huge bus stops'. Supporters of a re-design of the space commented that the area outside the Underground Station should be more of 'a town centre space' rather than a 'bus garage'. This corresponds to initial perceptions of Morden in Q2 as this is often the first impression of Morden, and for commuters perhaps the only area of Morden that is used or seen.

Traffic:

Linked to reorganising the bus standing area and the general public realm in the town centre, we asked if people thought that they'd use Morden town centre more if there were less through-traffic.



The response to this question is particularly interesting as there is a fairly even mix of opinion amongst respondents according to the 'tick box' results. However, analysis of the associated comments reveal a different story.

Across the board most people stated that traffic was not the issue that prevents them from using Morden town centre. Relating to people's perceptions of Morden in Q2 it would appear that the retail offer and general environment in the town centre that puts people off. One third of people who visit Morden only use the town as a transport interchange, therefore regardless of traffic, they simply don't use the facilities in the town.

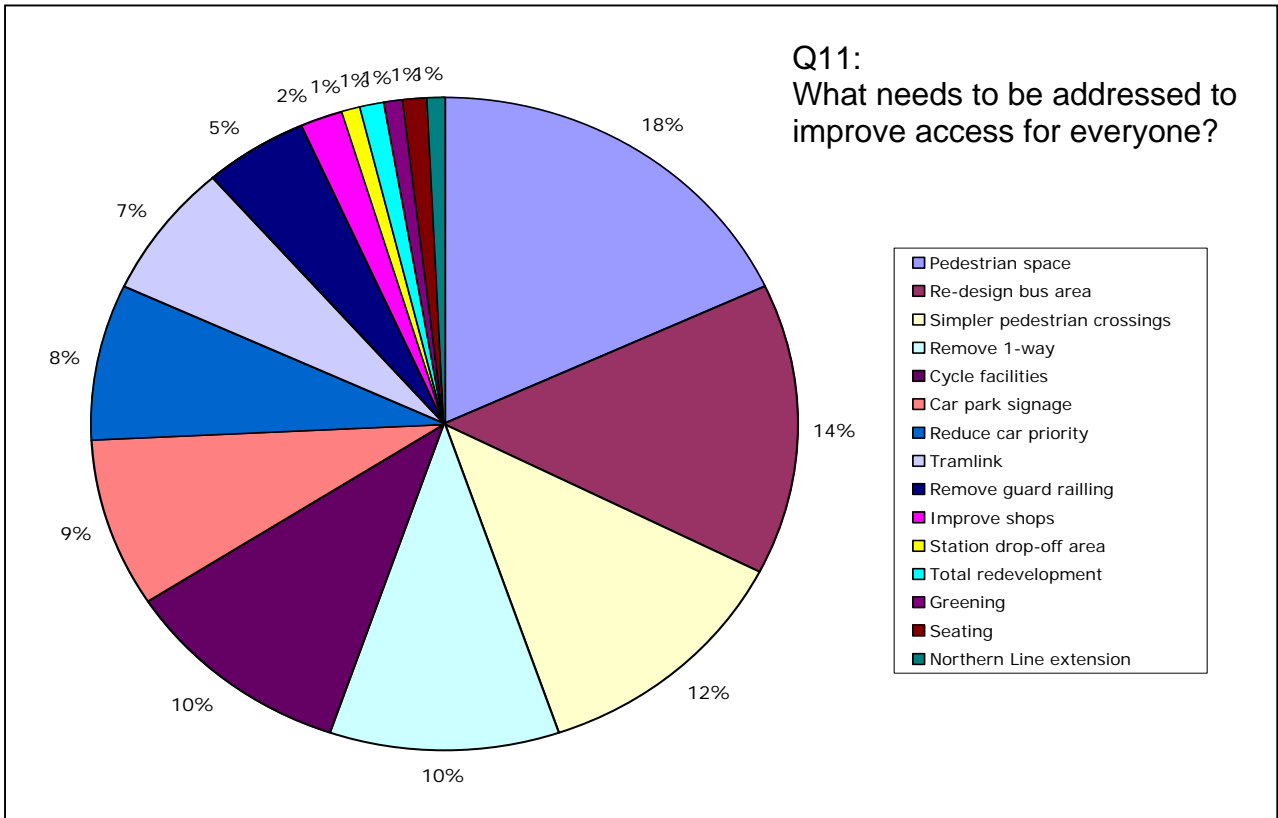
There is concern that pedestrianisation would be harmful to the town centre. This topic was misinterpreted in the local press and had led to many comments on the issue. The few people who supported pedestrianisation stated that it would only work if the range of shopping improved, otherwise the town centre would be 'dead'. The vision for Morden doesn't propose pedestrianisation, but simply a re-balancing of road space to meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists as well as road users.

Many respondents felt that traffic flows relatively smoothly through Morden for most of the day, with some delays at peak hours. Conversely people thought that ease of pedestrian flows was a bigger problem in the town centre. Overcrowded pavements have been commented on at various points of the questionnaire.

In general, the level of traffic passing through Morden doesn't cause much concern to people, however the disproportionate amount of road space compared to footways and the way traffic flows through the town (ie the one way system that encourages traffic to flow faster) needs to be reconsidered.

Improving access:

We asked people to suggest ways in which access to Morden could be improved. Responses include wider access to Morden, for example connections to Wimbledon but generally results focussed on more localised issues such as the location of pedestrian crossings and the reducing the dominance of traffic in the centre.



The biggest issue for Morden is the lack of space for pedestrians. This focuses mainly on congestion around Morden Underground station but also picks up on the lack of a central pedestrian space like a ‘town square’ or civic space to congregate, hold events or simply sit and spend time. Although the Civic Centre has seating outside the site is considered to be an ‘island’ cut-off from the main town centre area.

Linked to the pedestrian experience in Morden, a re-design of the bus standing area is high on the list. 14% of people want to see the area reused as a civic space or focal point in the centre.

Access from one side of London Road to another and to the civic centre is difficult due to inconvenient crossing locations and complicated staggered crossings. The dominance of guard railings is also a major issue, removal of which could be achieved if crossing points were simplified with ‘sheep pen’ crossings replaced with more direct routes.

10% of respondents thought that removal of the one-way system would be beneficial in terms of re-connecting the civic centre ‘island’ to the rest of the town centre. Removal of the one way system was also considered to simplify traffic routes through Morden and possibly reduce the car dominance in the town centre.

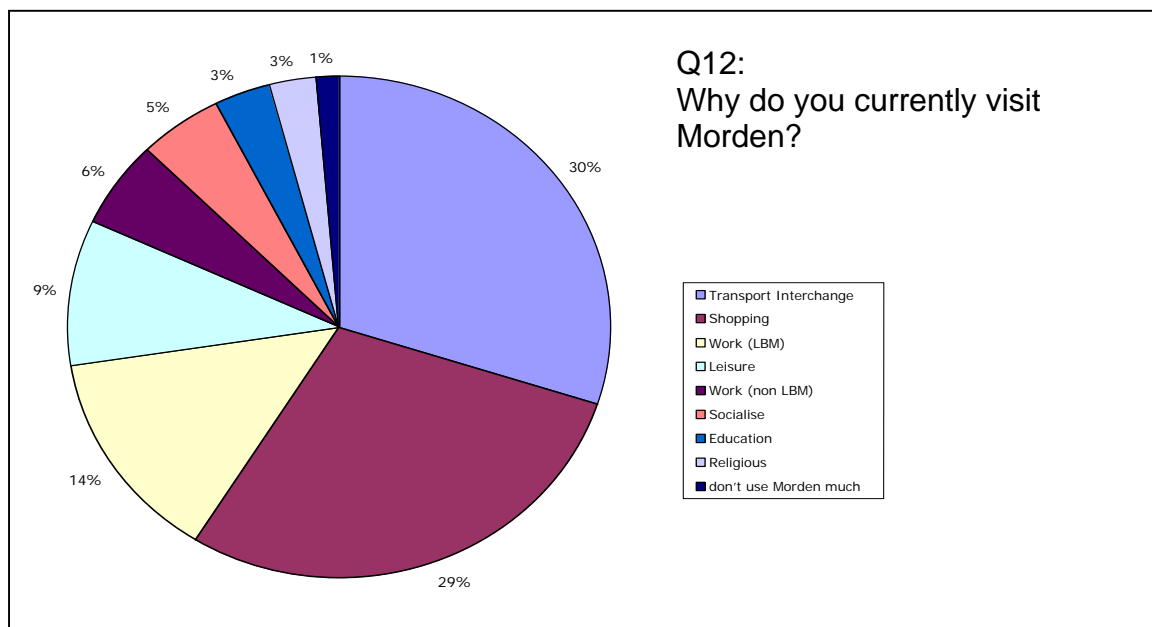
A further 10% of people suggested that an undercover cycle parking facility in Morden Underground station would be a useful addition to the public transport interchange. Cycle lanes and more on street cycle parking were also suggested to improve access.

Better car park signage would improve access in Morden. There was consensus that ‘Morden seems to have enough car parking spaces’ for current requirements, however the car parks are often under utilised and that signage may improve the use of existing car parks.

Finally, although Morden has good public transport links, the addition of a tram link extension would be welcomed, particularly to improve access between Morden and Wimbledon, which was considered to be poor. An extension of the Northern Line to Morden South utilising the depot lines was also suggested to create an alternative transport interchange.

Local economy and enterprise:

To get a profile of the general visitors to Morden town centre we asked why people currently use Morden and also what would encourage them to use Morden more often.



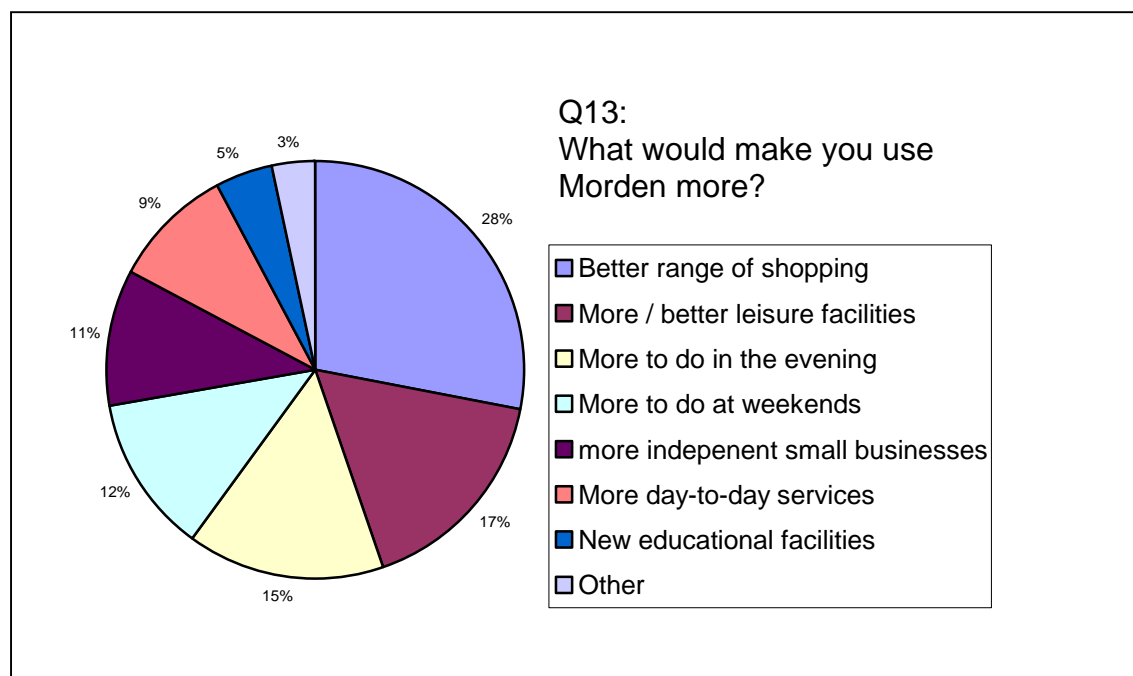
Responses to this question paint a clear picture of why Morden is underperforming economically as a town centre. The majority of people who visit / use Morden use the town as a transport interchange between bus services and London Underground. Morden Underground station’s patronage is approximately 10,000 passengers per day. This does not include those interchanging between bus services. Potentially 30% of Morden’s customer base and footfall are simply not making use of the town centre and contribute little to the local economy. To some extent, the ease of interchange between

modes of transport is a detriment to the town centre as the existing scenario does not encourage people to walk past shops or stay in the centre. The economic regeneration of Morden will need to focus on capturing the potential spend of commuters which could have an impact on the retail offer in Morden, perhaps with a focus on convenience shopping at peak hours.

Almost one third of those who answered do use Morden for shopping. An earlier study by Living Streets (conducted in 2008 for the moreMorden project) also reflects these findings. The Living Streets report provides greater detail regarding retailing in Morden, stating that most shoppers in Morden actually walk to the centre and shop mainly in Sainsburys, Lidl and Iceland. This suggests that Morden is convenient for the local, older population to walk into the centre for day-to-day groceries. Reading the results of this consultation and the Living Streets audit suggests that the wider local population (eg. Cannon Hill / Merton Park / Lower Morden) who choose to shop by car, are more likely to travel to Colliers Wood, Sutton or Wimbledon for food shopping and comparison shopping. Whereas Morden provides for a more localised catchment, such as Merton Park, St Helier and Ravensbury which are within approximately 10-15 min walk, focusing on food retail, banking and general day-to-day needs.

Increasing patronage in Morden:

We asked what would make people choose to use Morden town centre more often in future.



The majority of people (28%) felt that they'd use Morden if the range of shopping were better. This corresponds well with Q2: where people's perceptions of Morden were negative in relation to the range and quality of the

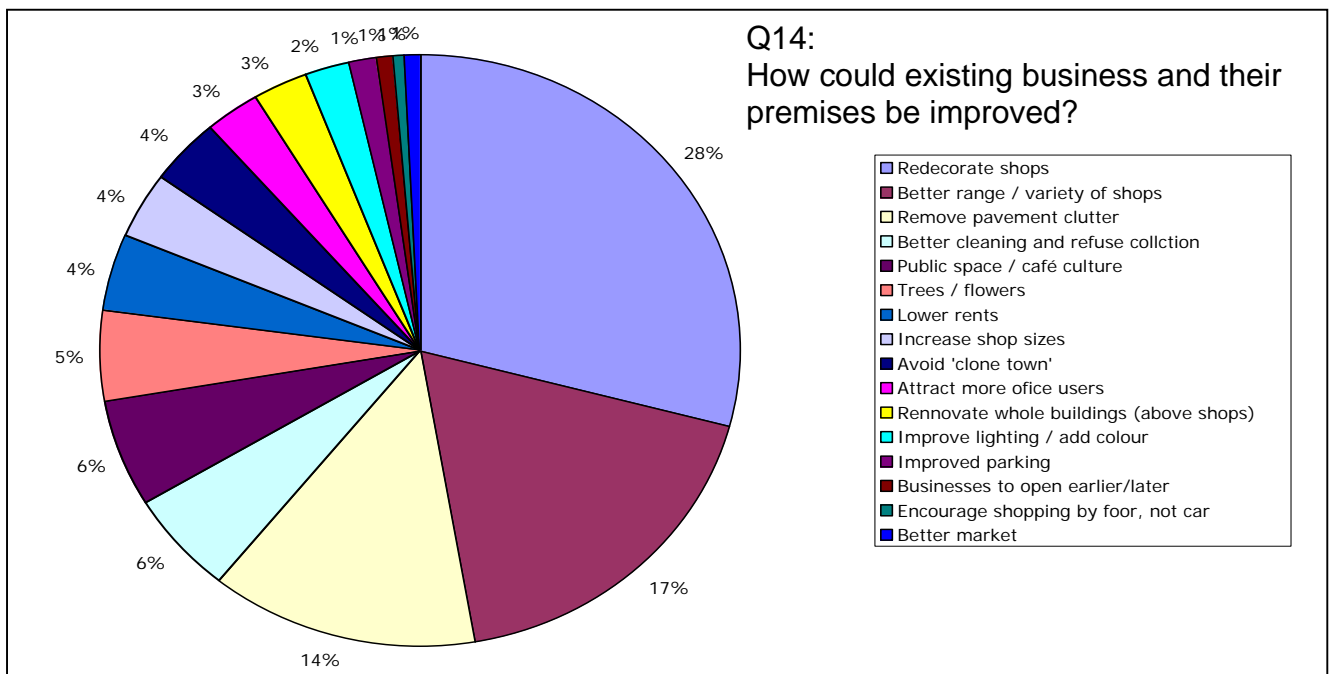
town's retail offer. 'quality independent shops bring diversity and a buzz to a place. Something to please everyone - all the time'.

Leisure was also high on people's agenda, with 17% of respondents wanting improved sporting, recreation and leisure facilities and a further 15% seeking better evening entertainment opportunities. Significantly, the desire for a cinema in Morden featured highly in the evening entertainment category, as did better quality restaurants and bars. Many people suggested chain restaurants although around the same number of people preferred the independent nature of Morden's restaurant offer, although again, sought better quality restaurants. A family leisure offer was also prominent in the responses with people suggesting a community cub-type facility and children's indoor soft play facilities. This could attract more families and younger people making visits to Morden more unique rather than relying solely on retail.

Linked to attracting increased footfall to Morden, we asked how people felt that existing businesses and their premises could be improved.

Improving local businesses:

To ensure that the existing business community is strengthened and supported during the regeneration process, we asked people how they feel local businesses could be improved to meet their needs more effectively.



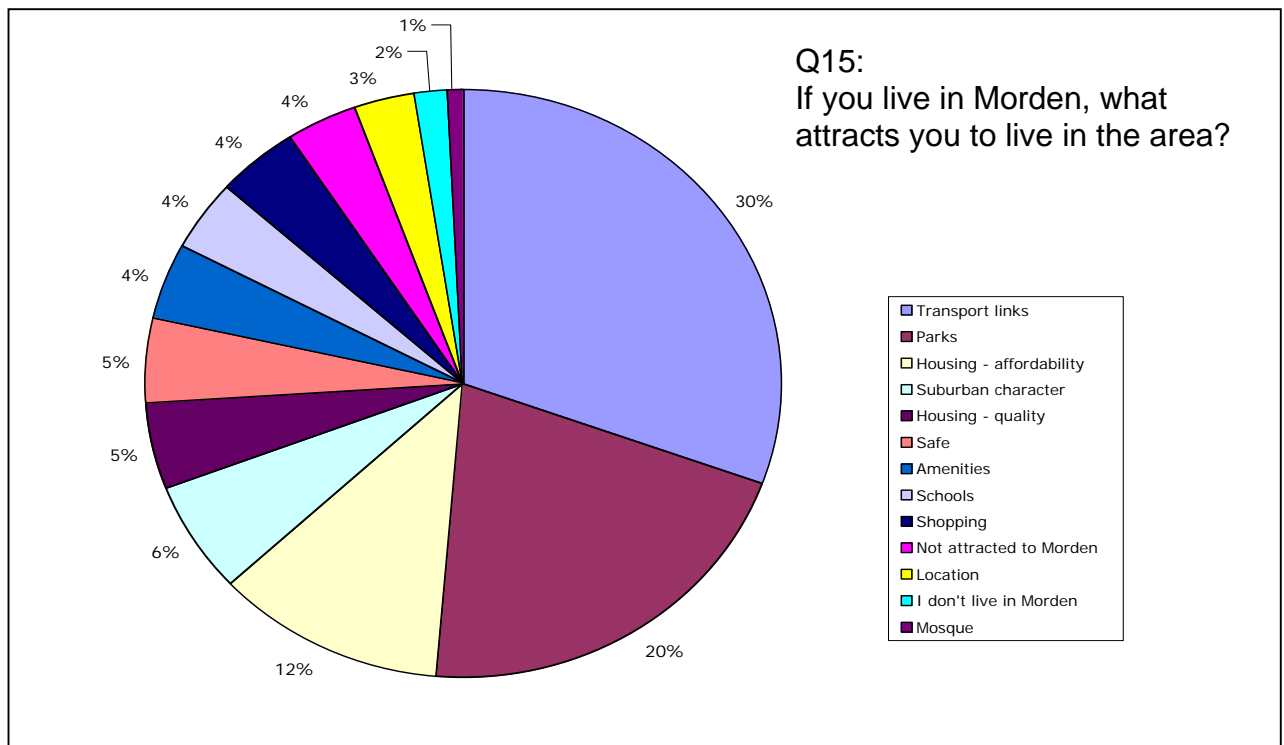
Shopping was the main issue in relation to improving businesses in Morden with 28% of respondents stating that shopfronts were dated and in need of modernisation. The interior of a lot of stores (both chains and independents) was also mentioned as being shabby, downmarket and dated, again, people

calling for refurbishment. A further 17% of people said that the range of shops in Morden needs to be improved to offer better range of products and in general, a more 'upmarket' feel to the town. Attracting chain stores was mentioned as a way of improving Morden although more people (4%) stated that the independent offer was preferable to 'cloned towns' however many of the independents needed to improve their stores.

The other major issue relates to the general public realm. Respondents wanted to see tighter controls on shops that display their goods on the pavement. 14% of respondents felt this was a problem. This corresponds to the issues with overcrowding on the pavements outside the Underground Station where often these stores are located adjacent to bus stops. The lack of public space in Morden was an issue and suggestions of creating a space or piazza to encourage 'café culture' and activity in Morden town centre.

Living:

We asked those who currently live in and around Morden, what attracts them to live in the area. Not surprisingly, the main attractions are similar to those which people liked best about Morden in Q3 and the attributes that people wished to retain in Q8.



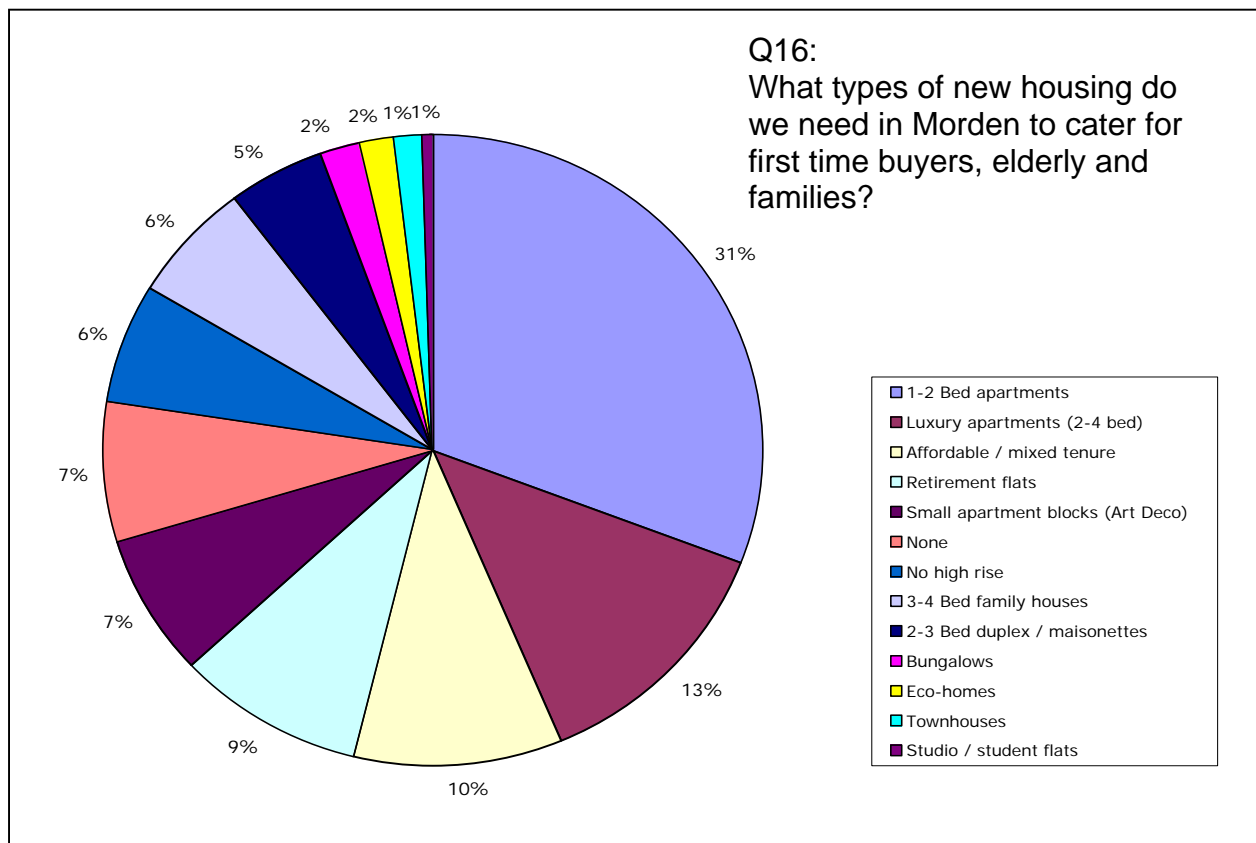
The main reason people are attracted to Morden to live is the transport links, mostly toward central London, though some people also thought the area had good access to the M23/M3 and Surrey. 20% of residents live in Morden for the area's parks and open spaces. Morden Hall Park and the river Wandle

featured significantly in the responses compared to Morden Park, Ravensbury Park or Mostyn Gardens.

The housing stock in Morden is also a major attraction, homes in Morden are good value for money with regard to size, garden space and access to transport in comparison to neighbouring areas, most notably, Wimbledon. The leafy suburban characteristics of Morden’s residential areas is seen as attraction and in many comments, was linked to feeling that the neighbourhoods were safe. This contrasts with Q29, where many people didn’t think Morden was a safe place to be. This response suggests that people feel safe in the neighbourhoods surrounding Morden town centre, but feel less safe (especially at night) in the town centre.

New housing:

When asked to consider the types of new housing that would be needed in Morden to cater for first time buyers, the elderly and families, the preference was for a range of apartments in the town centre, with some housing on the periphery of the town centre



The main preference (31%) is to develop 1-2 bed apartments in the town centre to provide a balance to the large family homes that dominate the area. There is an appetite for a mix of apartment types. 13% of people advocate the development of 'stylish' 'luxury' apartments, with some suggesting signature architecture from well-known architects – all with the aim of changing the look and perception of Morden town centre and to attract new residents with higher disposable income to boost the local economy. There is also a need to ensure that a mix of tenures is provided. 10% of respondents specifically mentioned more key-worker, rented and shared equity properties to ensure that Morden remained affordable to existing residents.

Apartments were also supported by people recognising that older people may wish to downsize from larger family homes, but still enjoy the amenities of the town centre nearby. 9% of respondents suggested providing sheltered housing on the periphery of the town centre, or incorporated into secured entry apartment developments within the town centre.

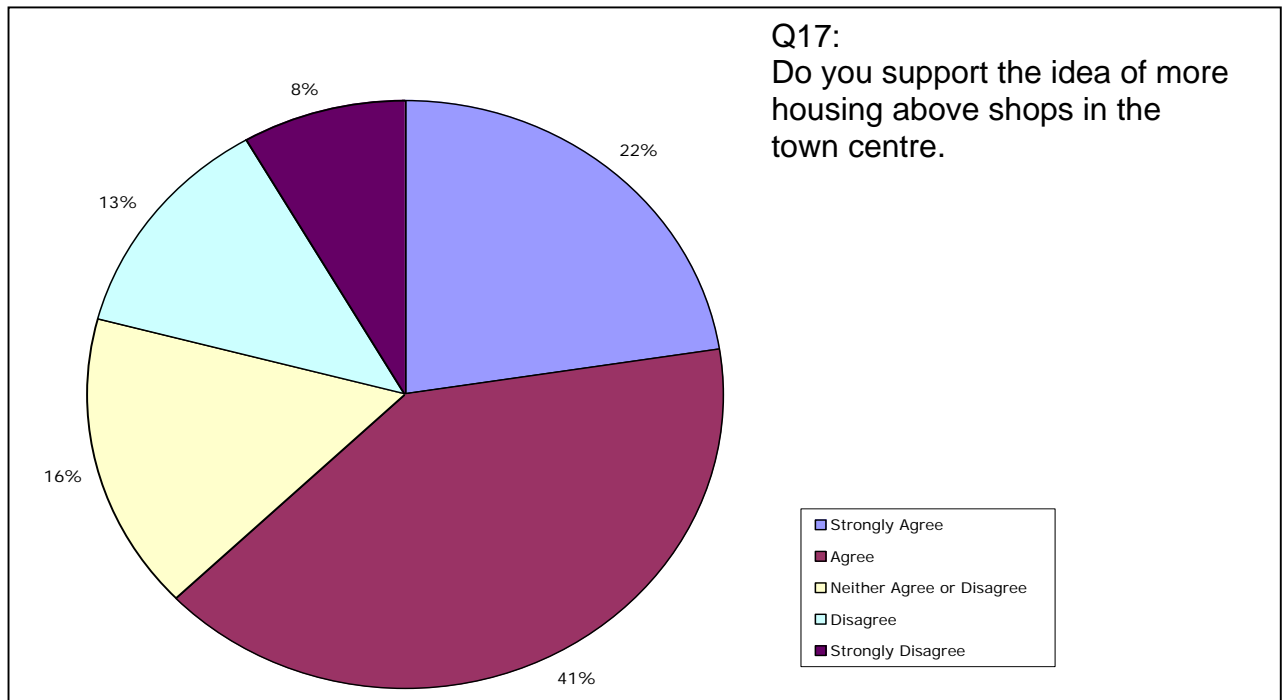
7% of people felt that no new housing was needed and that Morden was already 'full'. A further 6% stated concern that 'high density' housing would lead to 'social problems'. This perception cannot be substantiated as there is no direct link between density and social issues. Although the general reference could indicate that we should learn from mistakes made in 1960s and 1970s higher density housing schemes.

There was support for smaller scale apartment developments such as the Grosvenor House art deco apartment block on London Road. It was felt that this scale would be in keeping with the suburban characteristics of the area.

A general theme cutting across all suggested house types is the availability of outdoor amenity space, especially gardens for family sized accommodation. Roof terraces, balconies and communal garden areas for apartments were also mentioned. Garden space is an important suburban characteristic, especially front gardens. These considerations will be important at the masterplanning phase when the challenge will be to develop Morden whilst respecting the suburban characteristics of the area.

Housing above shops:

Linked to the suggested development sites in Q6-7, we asked whether people supported the concept of developing more housing above shops in the town centre. This question is also intended to provide more detail from Q18 regarding where apartments could be accommodated in the town centre.



In general the response is positive with 63% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. A further 16% neither agreed or disagreed. There were few comments to add to these selections, mainly that flats above shops was a good use of otherwise wasted space.

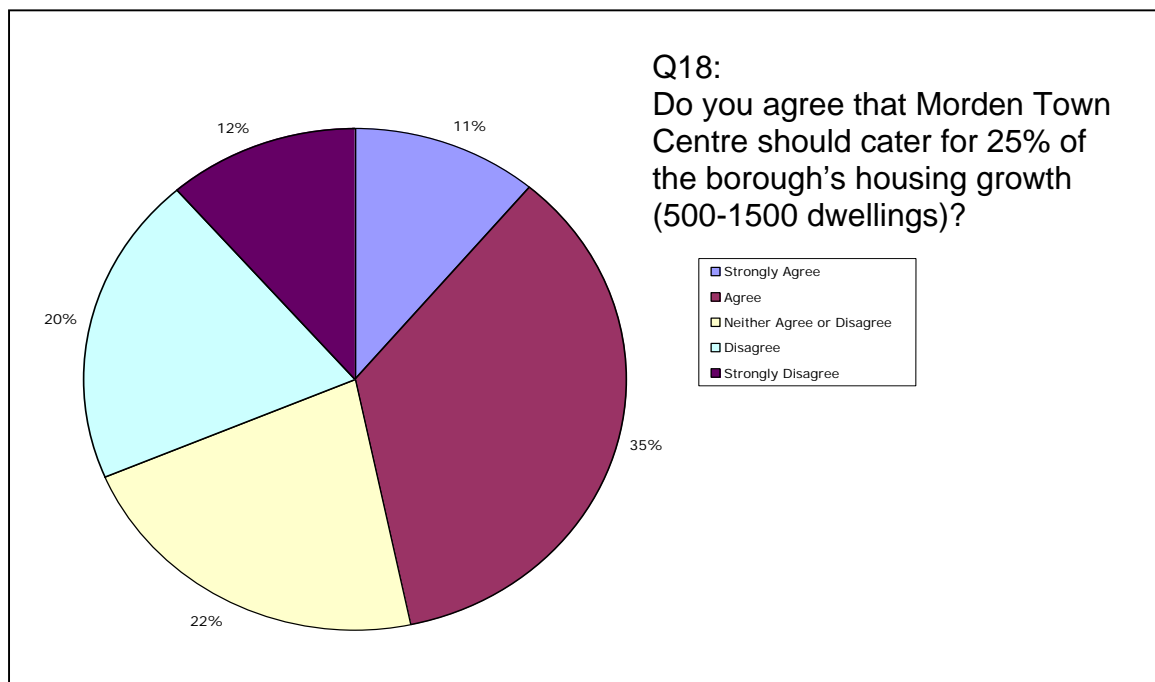
Those against the concept questioned whether anyone would want to live in Morden town centre due to the current traffic and noise. However, the point of regenerating the town centre is to make it a more pleasant environment for people to live, work and shop. Similar to Q16, some respondents did not support any new housing, believing that Morden was either 'fine as it is or 'already too overcrowded'.

Other concerns centred on increased residential car parking and increased traffic from new developments. These issues have come up elsewhere in the consultation. Depending on the scope of the regeneration plan, there may be opportunities to develop basement car parking or provide car-free development. These details are usually reserved for the masterplanning stage of a project.

Architectural quality of new development, or modification is a concern shared by those who agreed and disagreed with the idea of flats above shops. Design quality has to be excellent if we want to attract people and businesses to Morden, in turn improving the town centre for all residents.

Housing growth and density:

In tandem with developing above shops, and making more efficient use of development sites, there is scope to accommodate a significant amount of housing growth in Morden town centre and surrounding area. We suggested that Morden has capacity for anything between 500 – 1500 additional homes – this is around 25% of the borough’s housing targets for 2010-2025. We asked if people agreed that Morden should cater for this level of growth.



46% percent of respondents were in support of this concept, where 11% strongly agreed and 35% agreed. 32% were against the idea (20% disagree and 12% strongly disagree). Although almost half of respondents supported the principle, a large proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (22%). Analysis of the comments offered to qualify this response suggest that people would rather have more detail in order to gain an appreciation of how this level of growth would look in Morden. Some found it difficult to visualise how 500-1500 units might look and were unsure of impact upon the character and scale of Morden town centre. This is understandable at this stage of the project, which acts as a strategic overview. The response provided here will inform the next stage of the project where people will be offered a series of development options outlining how different scales of development could be used to deliver the vision.

Those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed were asked where housing growth should be accommodated in the borough (assuming they thought that Morden was an unsuitable location). Surprisingly only three people, out of 220 respondents suggested alternatives, namely Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Rosehill (which is actually in the London Borough of Sutton).

Many other comments in opposition to growth did not offer an alternative, but mainly focussed concern on protecting greenspaces, the impact of increased residential car parking and the impact on local services such as schools should the population increase. Detailed concerns such as these can only be quantified and dealt with at a detailed masterplan stage.

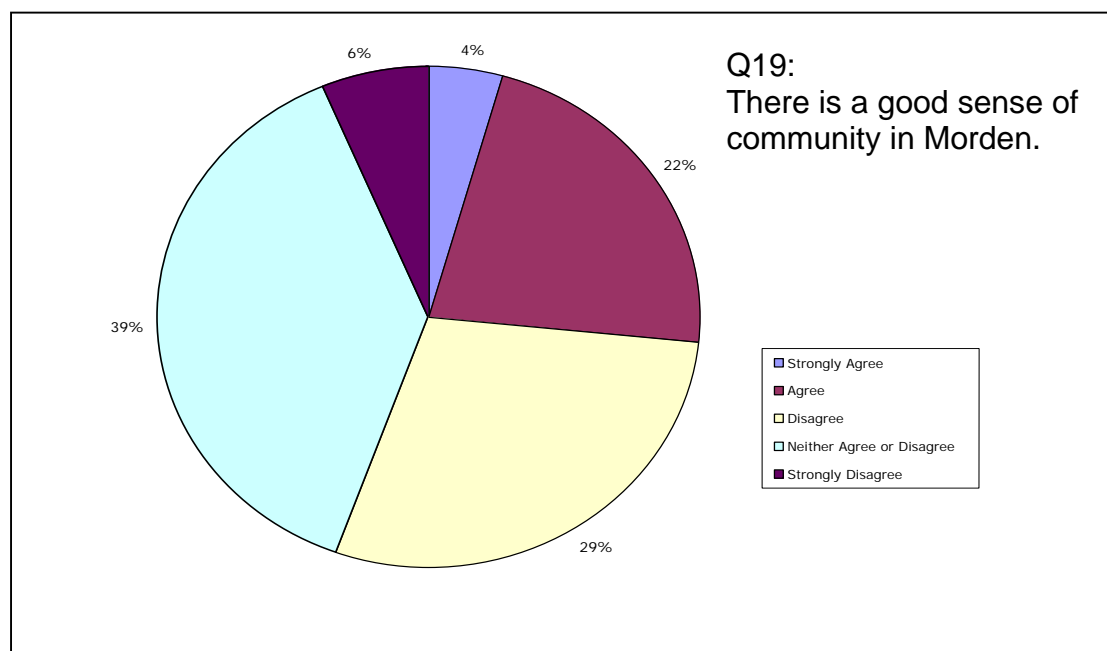
The group who neither agreed or disagreed commented that ‘Morden should contribute to, but not solely cater for growth’ and that there should be more focus on ‘architectural quality rather than housing targets’. Some suggested that growth be accommodated on ‘brownfield sites’ though didn’t offer any specific examples of locations. London Road South and South Morden Station were suggested as suitable locations for growth, but people felt that growth would only work if there was ‘dramatic’ improvement to the town centre itself, otherwise people may be ‘put off’ from moving into central Morden.

Overall this question presented a mixed bag of opinions, most of the issues raised are suited to the next stage of the project as development scenarios are tested and considered. Regarding housing targets, the council is challenged with striking a realistic balance between the views of residents and accommodating a boroughwide housing growth target of 5550 dwellings by 2025. This will be set out in the council’s emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), however the moreMorden project will contribute to part of this growth.

This question also links to Q27: Block heights, which again gives an indication of the local appetite for the scale of any redevelopment.

Community:

We asked if people thought there was a good sense of community in Morden and how Morden could better provide for its community needs.



Only 26% of respondents felt that Morden has a good sense of community, where 4% strongly agreed and 22% agreed. Where people felt positive towards Morden's sense of community.

Morden is 'family orientated with pockets of ethnic groups' reflecting the growing diversity of the area. Morden is also good because it 'caters for average families' and the typical suburban lifestyle, where 'very few places in London still do this'. Others agreed that a sense of community existed in pockets around Morden, but less so in the town centre itself.

One possible reason for this result is that Morden is not often considered to be 'one town' but rather a series of suburbs that back onto the centre. Again linked to perceptions of Morden in Q2-5 there would appear to be a sense of community related to distinct residential neighbourhoods such as Cannon Hill, St Helier, and Merton Park but not in relation to Morden as a whole. 'Morden is made of parts which do not group together even though the areas are neighbouring each other'.

Individual neighbourhoods of Morden are well represented by residents associations, community groups and attendance at the Morden Community Forum. In general, the town centre is only represented by a small residents association and the local business / town centre forum. The wider area is rarely regarded as a whole town in the way that say Wimbledon or Mitcham are. This could just be a historical perception based on the geography of the area where Morden town centre is isolated from the wider neighbourhoods by railways and the parks. Only Merton Park and to some extent St Helier actually adjoin the town centre.

39% of people were neutral on this question whilst 35% felt Morden lacked a sense of community (29% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed).

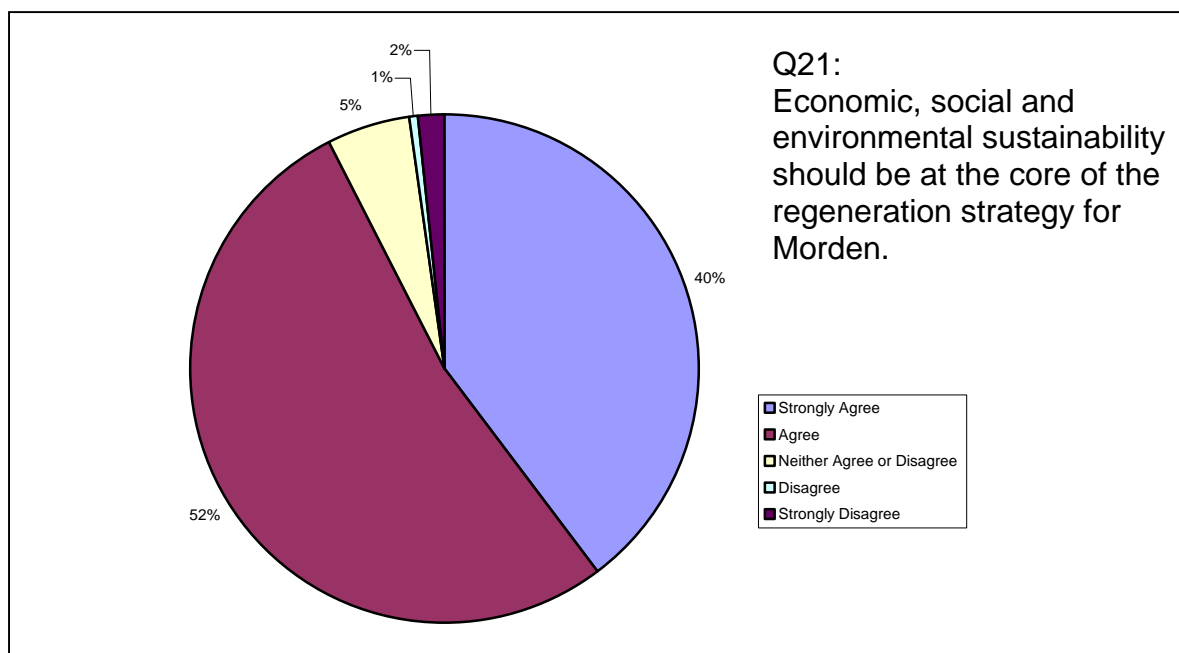
The main reason for disagreeing relate very well with the vision's aims and objectives. People felt that 'the atmosphere in the town centre does not feel very community spirited - people seem to be there because they have to be not because they want to be'. Others stated that the lack of decent pubs/nightlife and depressing visual aspect of the environment have an adverse affect on the sense of community. People only want to pass through Morden'.

A lack of entertainment, social facilities and community infrastructure contribute to the negative perceptions of Morden. Many commented that Morden doesn't have a public space where people can simply meet, sit, chat and spend time in. A number of respondents stated that the removal of the Post Office from Aberconway Road, and latterly the main retail centre has contributed to a downturn in the sense of community. Some people suggested that they were 'embarrassed to say they were from Morden' - again this links very strongly to Q2, people's perceptions of the town.

Community needs:

With regard to community needs in Q21, many people suggested that a wider range of sports clubs, social clubs (particularly for older people) and meeting places would help develop a sense of community in Morden. Despite the civic centre having a presence in the town centre, some people felt that there were not enough community spaces, such as meeting rooms or halls that groups could utilise. Lack of 'urban' space for events in the town centre was also seen as an issue affecting a sense of community and civic pride in Morden.

Sustainability:



The vast majority of people (92%) believe that the key principles of sustainability should be at the core of the regeneration strategy for Morden. Comments provided to substantiate views suggest that there is a general preference towards environmental sustainability, particularly in the case of protecting natural habitat, green spaces and production of renewable energy.

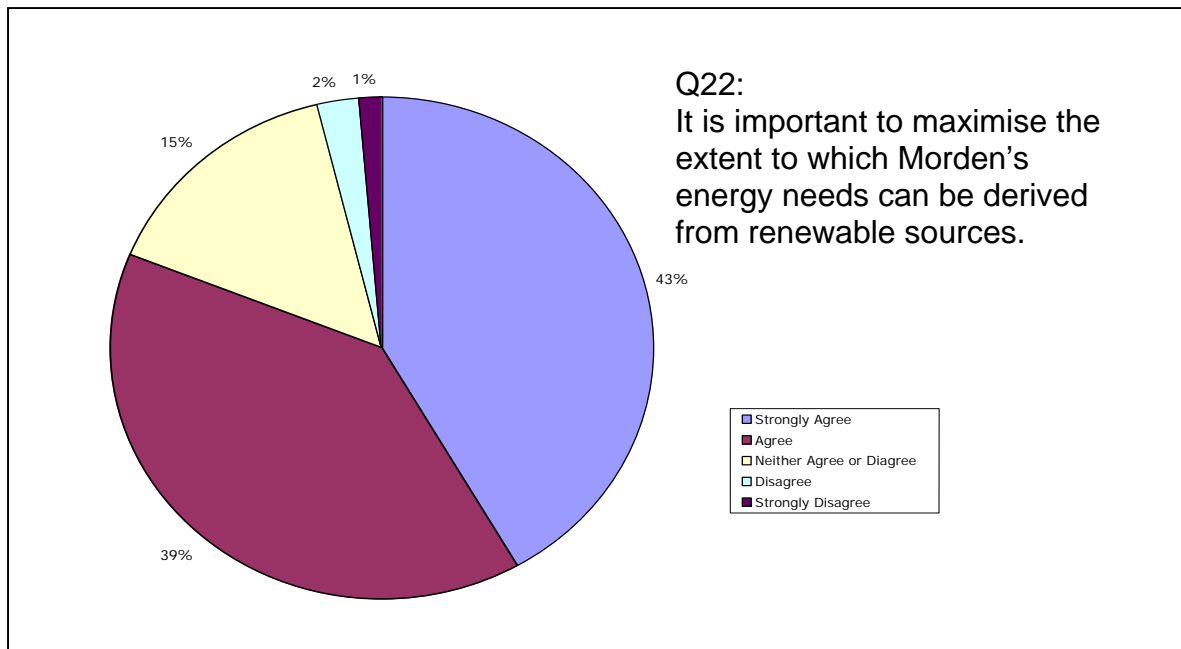
Economic sustainability featured somewhat in regard to the retail offer in Morden and the condition of some premises. This links back to the initial recognition in the draft vision, that Morden needs more footfall and to re-capture spend from commuters to sustain facilities now and for the future.

The reasons stated for most of the negative response (8%) relate to a lack of information and understanding about the concepts of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Better explanations and clarity will be worked into the next stages of consultation in the moreMorden project.

Responses to this question give a clear indication as to how the council should position Morden's regeneration programme. The development of Morden town centre should be guided by a strategy founded on 'evidence based environmental and urban design'. There is an acceptance that the credit crunch provides an opportunity for the council to work up a robust plan for Morden. An observation made by one respondent states, 'It has been clear from other cities where they have used evidence-based design that although it has been more expensive in the planning phase it has paid off plenti-fold afterwards'.

Renewable energy:

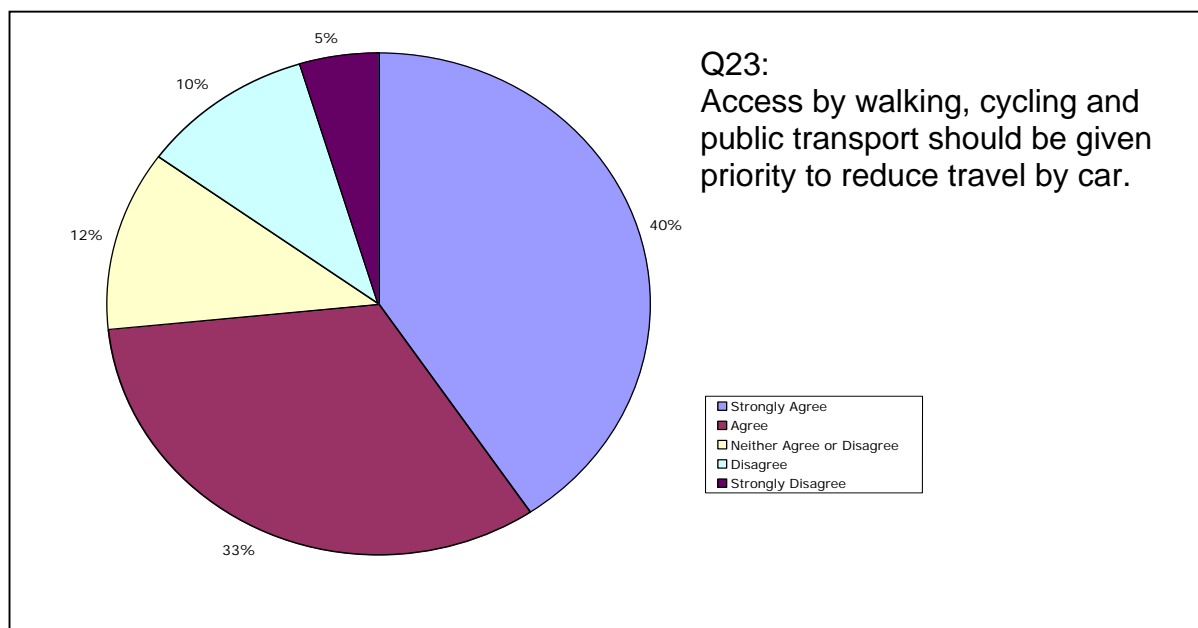
We asked if people thought it was important to maximise the extent to which Morden's energy needs can be derived from renewable sources. This concept could apply to any redevelopment proposals or be retro-fitted to existing properties.



There is overwhelming support for the provision of more renewable energy sources to meet Morden's demand in future. 82% of respondents supported the concept. 15% were neutral, often stating that more information about the subject would be required to allow for a more informed response. The vision is intended to determine strategic objectives for Morden and it is clear that a detailed energy strategy will be needed to accompany the town's regeneration strategy. Respondents who disagreed (3%) noted that the issue is of 'national concern' and did not believe that promoting renewables in Morden would have much impact. Other comments related to the effectiveness of wind turbines, but supported solar panels to meet some energy needs.

Reducing car travel:

Morden has an excellent range of public transport facilities and improvements are planned to make better provision for cycling and walking in and around the town. Exploiting these transport choices presents an opportunity to reduce dependence on car travel for local shopping needs. We asked whether people supported this as a concept for regenerating Morden and improving the public realm.



73% of respondents were supportive of the concept. There is a strong desire to make more provision for cyclists in Morden, ranging from more cycle lanes, cycle parking and making better use of Morden Underground station as an interchange for cycling and public transport. Whilst many supported reducing the need to make journeys by car, there is also a recognition that Morden will still need to provide adequate car parking for shoppers, residents and the possibility of promoting Morden as a park and ride location. However it was also noted that a problem in Morden is not necessarily the number of car parking spaces available at present, but the disproportionate use of some car parks. For example Sainbury's car park is often full, yet the long-term upper deck and Kendor Car Park are underused. There was support for the introduction of shared space in parts of the town centre and a general reduction of the traffic impact in the immediate vicinity of the Underground Station. A strategic transport plan, including car parking provision is expected to be prepared as part of the Morden Area Action Plan.

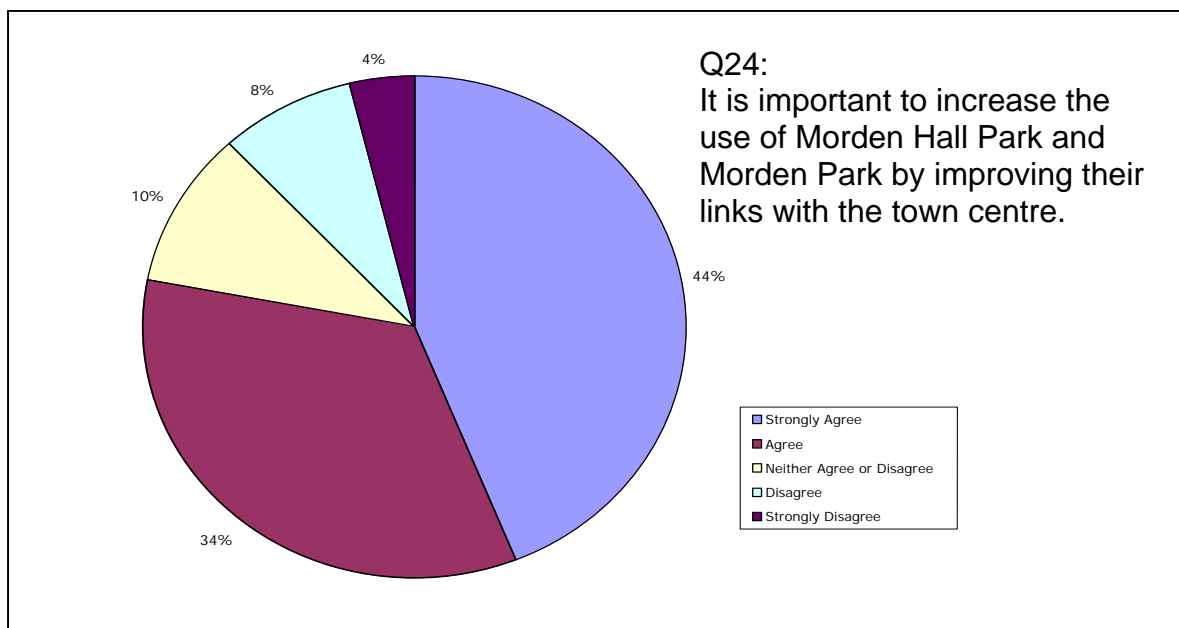
15% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the concept suggested that more short-term car parking would be needed to support shops and services in the town. On the periphery of the town centre, many people claimed that cars were necessary for the school run, due to time constraints and personal work-life balance.

In general, although using public transport is regarded as positive for the benefit of the environment, some argue that cars are still necessary in the suburbs and that they must still be accommodated for in Morden. Improving existing transport provision and investing in the quality of interchange facilities may change this perception, offering better choice and alternatives to the car in future.

Leisure:

One of the key objectives of the vision is to ‘green’ Morden to make the town centre more visually and environmentally attractive but also to provide a green corridor between the town’s two major open spaces, Morden Park and Morden Hall Park. In most public engagement meetings there was also a recognition that Morden Hall Park should be conceived as part of Morden town centre’s offer, rather than being ‘cut-off’ visually from the town centre.

We asked if people felt it was important to increase the use of Morden’s parks by improving the links with the town’s retail core.



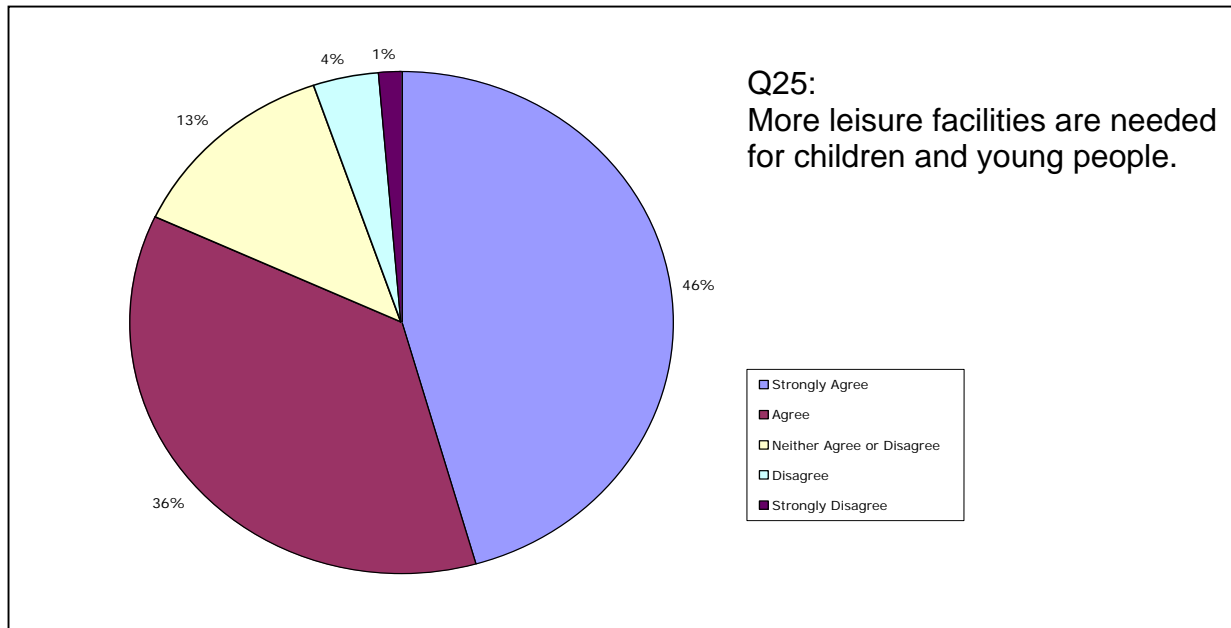
78% of people agreed that the connections between the town centre and parks, particularly Morden Hall Park could be improved. Most people felt that the footpaths were good enough and in general the links weren’t too problematic, but better signage and simpler road crossings at park entrances would improve the situation. Concurrent with Q2; Many believe that Morden’s Parks are a real asset to the town and that ‘these beautiful parks should be enjoyed more’.

12% of respondents did not support the concept, a minority stating that increased use of the parks may lead to an ‘increase in anti-social behaviour’ and felt this may have an impact on the quality of the parks.

In general, those who were neutral or disagreed with the statement suggested that the existing connections and use of the parks were fine as they are.

Leisure for young people:

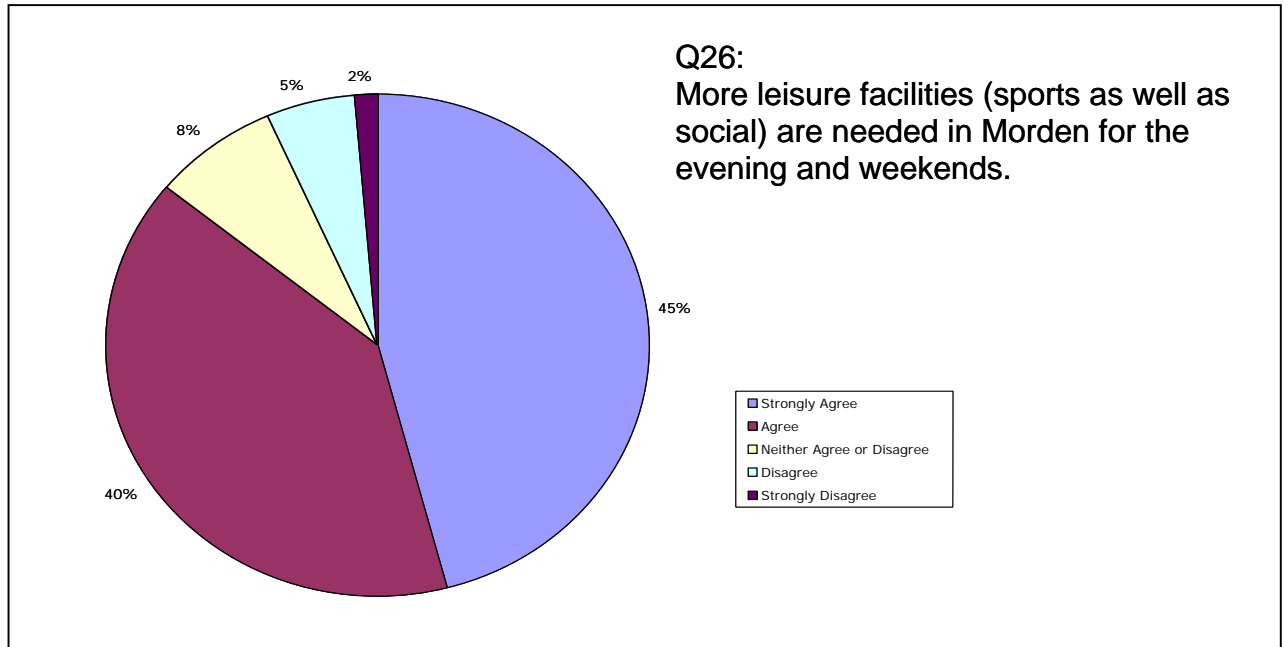
We asked whether people agreed that more leisure facilities were needed for children and young people.



The vast majority of respondents agreed (82%) that more leisure facilities were needed for younger people. Youth clubs, soft play areas, children’s play areas and free outdoor sporting facilities were all suggested. In general there was support to invest and improve existing facilities and suggestions that proposals for Morden Park may be able to provide a better range of activities for young people. The neutral and negative comments (18%) were not necessarily against the idea, but commented that leisure facilities for older people would also be welcomed. The condition of Morden Park Pools was noted, adding that refurbishment or replacement would be welcomed. Respondents also commented on facilities within new housing developments, particularly apartment blocks, where the needs for outdoor family space should be considered.

Leisure facilities for evening and weekend:

For adult age groups we also asked if more leisure facilities (sporting as well as social) were needed in Morden, particularly in the evenings and weekends.



85% of respondents felt that Morden needed better leisure facilities at evening and weekends. Most respondents called for better gym, swimming and outdoor sporting facilities. Often people stated that Morden already has a lot of facilities to offer, but they are in need of refurbishment or replacement, with particular reference to Morden Park Pool and pavilions in Morden Park. A skate park was suggested, though with no specific location in mind. It was also noted that council run facilities offer value for families, who would not be able to afford private gyms or health clubs, but again, the need to improve the council's facilities was raised.

Many felt that Morden could support a better variety of evening activities, most notably a Cinema. A better range and quality of bars and restaurants (but not necessarily more) was seen as aspiration for Morden and that it could contribute to the evening economy.

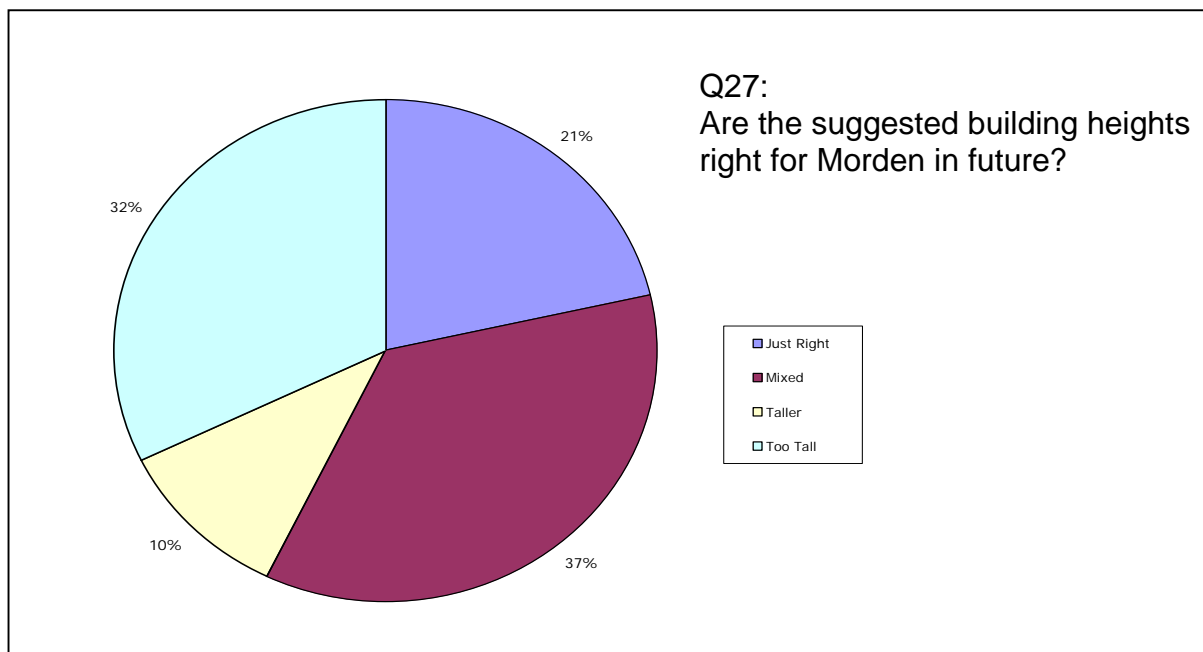
There is concern that any increase in pubs or the introduction of nightclubs may bring a rise in crime and anti-social behaviour. This perception is common amongst older respondents, although some families also expressed concern in public meetings.

It should be noted that with regard to public houses, four have shut down in Morden in the past 18 months (Wetherspoons, The Crown/Escape nightclub and Morden Hall) and only two pubs remain in the town centre (Ganleys and the Abbott). As the moreMorden project moves forward, further research into the evening economy should have regard to the crime rates in Morden associated with licensed premises in this period. Figures from the

Metropolitan Police suggest that Morden residents have a high fear of crime, or perception of crime, although in reality Morden has relatively low crime rates. Merton as a whole is one of the safest in London. This issue may also relate to the negative perception of Morden town centre, where the appearance and feel of the centre can have a negative impact on people's perception of safety.

Environment and public realm:

In considering how the built environment in Morden town centre could look in 15 years time, we asked people whether the suggested building heights for the development sites on p8-9 of the vision booklet were right for Morden.



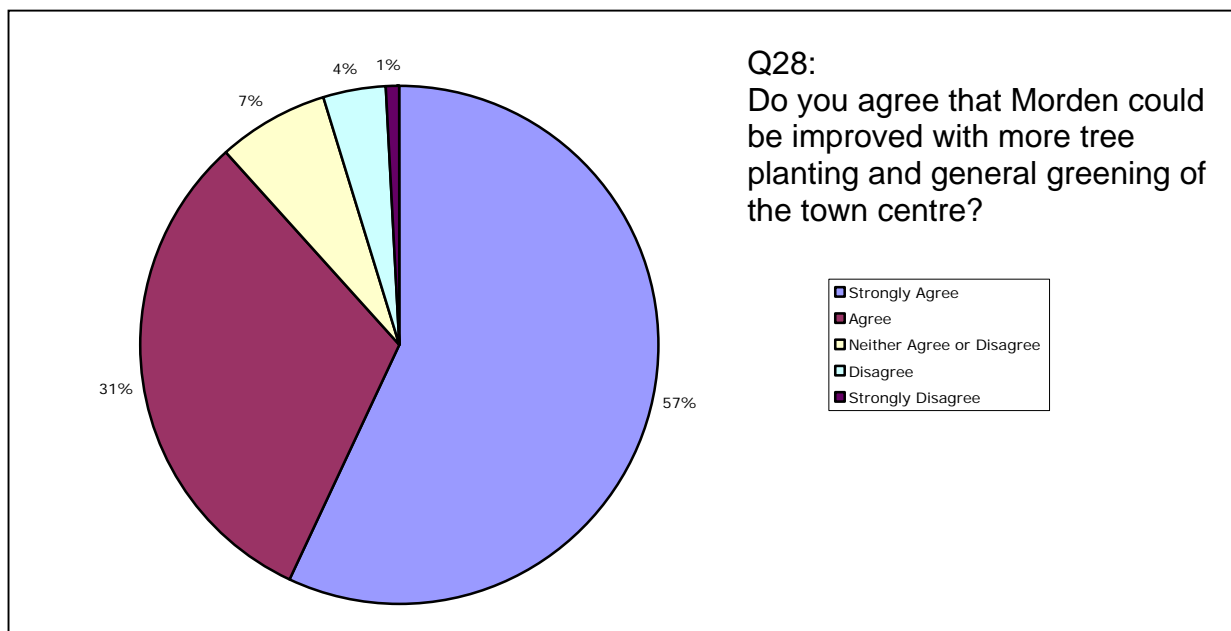
Overall 68% of people were positive towards the proposals, with 32% against the suggested heights. The proposed heights ranged from 4-6 storeys in general in the town centre area, with up to 8 storeys facing Morden Hall Park. 21% of people thought this was the right approach. A further 10% of respondents felt that Morden had the capacity, and would benefit from developing at a larger scale, advocating that buildings should be taller, particularly if they provided a positive landmark by well known architects.

The majority of responses favoured a mixed approach. In the consultation this was defined as generally 3-4 storey blocks with some tower elements to make up the required density and to provide local landmarks in appropriate locations. This option provides scope for more flexibility across the town centre and goes some way to retaining suburban characteristics in parts of the centre.

With regard to Morden Hall Park there was general support for the concept of higher buildings facing the parkland, but also equal amounts of concern about the impact upon the ‘rural’ views from within the park and how the concept may alter the suburban feel of Morden. Again, the mixed approach may alleviate these concerns but will have to be tested in the detailed masterplan stage of the project and through closer engagement with landowners.

Tree planting:

Greening Morden town centre is one way of changing the visual appearance and perception of the place. We asked if people agreed that more trees would improve the town centre.

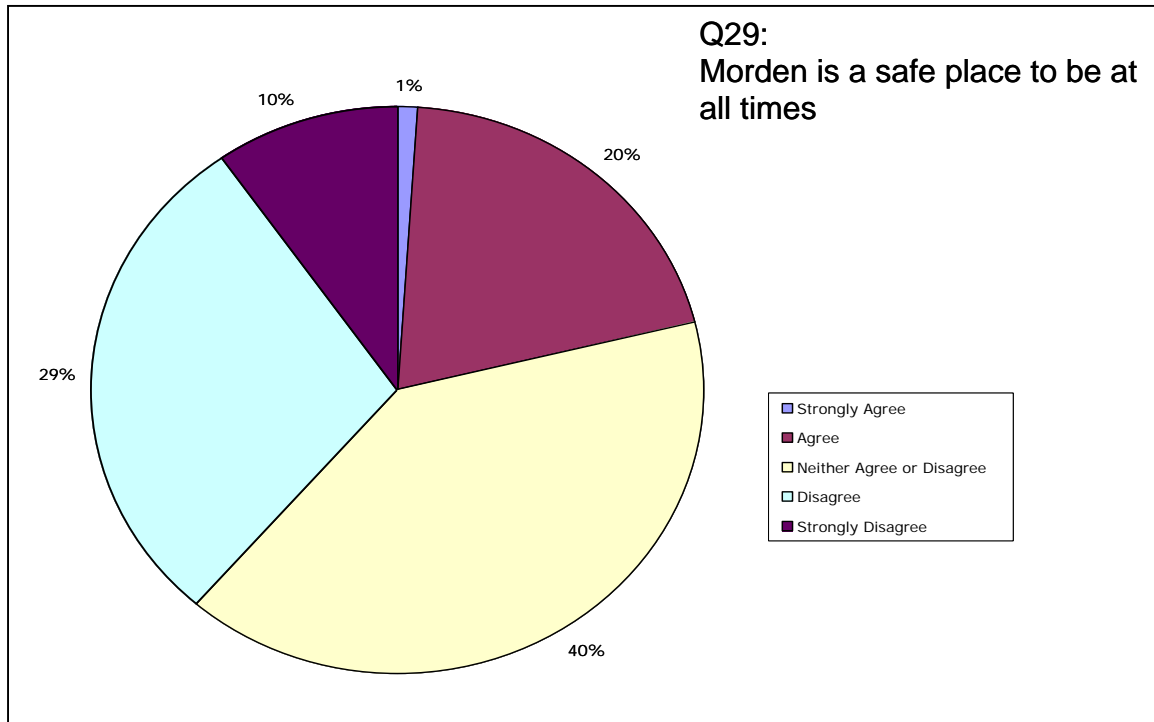


The majority of respondents felt that trees would be a positive addition to the town centre ‘softening’ the town’s harsh appearance. There is a preference for street trees, rather than temporary planters, mainly in reflection to the poor condition of the existing planters in the town centre and their tendency to be used as litter bins.

Those who disagreed felt that Morden was surrounded by beautiful green spaces, but did not explain why the town centre shouldn’t also be greener. It is noted that greening the town centre will not change the perception of Morden alone, but should be considered as part of a wider programme of town centre improvements.

Safety:

To determine how people feel about using Morden and spending time in the town centre, we asked if people they felt Morden was a safe place to be at all times.



There is a general perception that Morden is not a safe place to be, with 30% of people disagreeing and only 21% stating that Morden is a safe place to be. A large proportion of respondents (40%) neither agreed or disagreed.

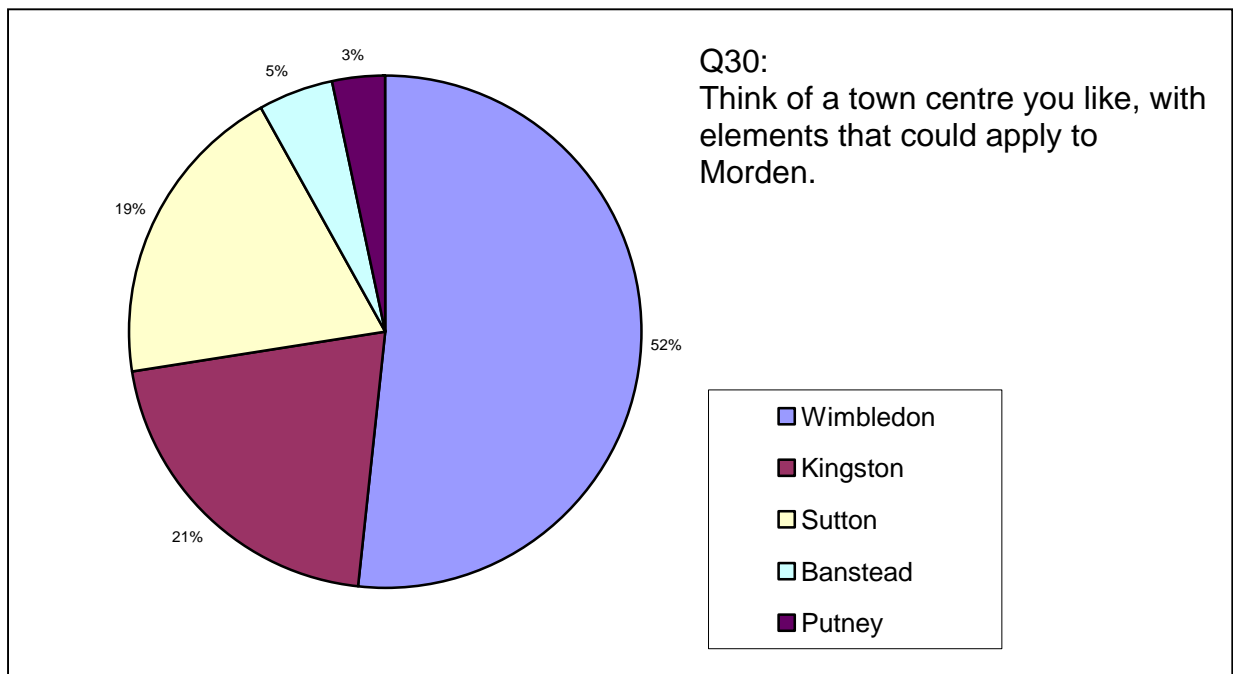
People who agreed Morden felt safe praised the presence of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in the neighbourhood and felt that they contributed to the sense of community in Morden and that Morden possessed a 'friendly family feel'. It is unclear if these comments relate to the town centre or the residential neighbourhoods beyond. People who felt Morden wasn't safe stated that the main reason was the 'uninviting' night time environment in the town centre. Women feel particularly vulnerable using the underground or waiting for buses at night, more so as there are less people present in the evenings. Some suggested the presence of an official TfL taxi rank adjacent to the Underground station may add to the perception of safety in the centre. Dark alleyways, particularly between the town centre and Merton Park (parallel to Windermere Avenue and to the rear of the Underground Station) are said to feel unsafe due to poor lighting and a lack of surveillance.

It is worth noting that in Q13, some people stated that they didn't support an evening economy in the future for Morden because of 'an increase in anti-social behaviour' and noise. But on the other hand, a lively town centre, with the right mix of activities and more people can feel safer, due to a change in perception of the place.

Many respondents stated that Morden appears unsafe at night partly due to groups of youths congregating in the town centre. In the absence of any detailed statistics of reported incidents it is difficult to tell if this is a real problem in terms of anti-social behaviour, or if it is a perception from a particular sector of the community. In preparing a masterplan for Morden the council will work with the Metropolitan Police and Safer Merton to 'design out crime' to promote a safer evening environment in the town.

Comparable centres and aspirations for Morden:

We asked people to name a town centre that they enjoy visiting and to explain the attraction and consider if it would apply to Morden.



We have taken the top five suggestions and ranked them by popularity. Wimbledon came out on top with many people liking Wimbledon Town Centre's range of shops, the piazza and the Village's choice of bars and restaurants. Wimbledon Village was also noted for achieving a fine balance between a vibrant 'buzzing' centre with good shops, bars and restaurants, but still managed to retain some village 'charm' and character.

Kingston and Sutton were second favourites, noted for their range of shops, pedestrianised high streets and evening entertainment. Smaller centres in southwest London also featured heavily, most notably Banstead and Putney. Banstead, like Wimbledon Village was liked for the 'village' atmosphere whilst Putney was noted for its good range of shops, bars and restaurants.

In total 23 town centres were listed, the remainder are noted below: Battersea, Reigate, Redhill, Worcester Park, Wallington, Raynes Park, Carshalton, Richmond, Easrlsfield, Crystal Palace, New Malden, Colliers Wood (Tandem Centre), Cheam, Blackheath, Clapham (High Street / Common / Old Town and Clapham Junction), Ewell and Fulham Broadway.

Short-term improvements:

We asked people to suggest some short-term improvements that could be delivered to improve Morden. Feedback from this section of the questionnaire, as well as input from Morden Business Forum and Town Centre Partnership has informed a programme of complementary initiatives to be implemented as the regeneration project develops.

Complementary initiatives are prepared to contribute to the enhancement of the town centre alongside development work towards its broader, more far reaching physical regeneration. These initiatives will be progressed over the next year and beyond.

The objectives of the complementary initiatives are to:

- Upgrade the public realm and infrastructure;
- Instigate transport improvements and enhance connectivity;
- Provide a safe environment;
- Improve local shopping and other facilities;
- Support local enterprise and employment;
- Provide town centre management;
- Introduce a programme of community events.

The initiatives can be grouped under four main headings, although some cut across more than one heading. It should be noted that much of the public realm in Morden is the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL).

Some initiatives have already been completed or are firmly planned for completion in financial year 2008/09.

Public Realm

- Enhancement to the civic centre piazza in 2009 includes new planting, new street furniture, (bins and lamp columns) and pedestrian way-finding information funded by the council.
- Re-paving of Morden Court Parade (London Road) funded by TfL.

Support to local enterprise

- Shopfront improvement grants are available to local businesses.
- An interim town centre manager is now appointed and has organised Christmas carols and the Valentine's Day event.

- A promotional brochure is to be produced including advertising by local businesses.
- The council's markets manager will seek to recruit new market stall holders for Abbotsbury Road Market.

Community facilities and programme of events

- Community Toilets programme – discussions with local businesses indicate that two businesses are willing in principle to participate, allowing the public to use their facilities.
- Christmas carols with local schools.
- Valentine's Day and Christmas events programme including sponsorship by local businesses.

Transport

- Living Streets survey completed and is informing the development of complementary initiatives and council/TfL highway works in and around Morden.
- Freight loading initiative – leaflet distributed to local businesses locating waiting restrictions in the town centre to assist them with deliveries to shops, funded by TfL.
- Pedestrian signage between the town centre and Morden Road Tram stop now installed, funded by TfL.
- Partial removal of guardrails along London Road is now approved and funded by TfL; assessment of scope for further removals is in progress.
- Cycle parking – additional stands are being provided to replace some guard-railings on London Road, Crown Lane and Aberconway Road, funded by TfL.
- Delivery and loading scheme being developed for the alleyway between Aberconway and Abbotsbury Roads, funded by TfL.
- Draft proposals to relocate stands for 1-2 bus services from Morden Underground station being considered in discussion with TfL and London Buses.

The programme will include other initiatives for some of which additional funding will need to be identified, including;

Public realm

Further improvements funded by the council, stemming from the second phase of Merton's Public Realm Strategy, which will provide conceptual streetscape designs for the borough's town centres.

Support to local enterprise

An Economic Development Strategy is being prepared to provide a borough-wide programme of business support.

Further shop front improvement grants and offers of funding for the treatment of empty shops is available from the council.

Community facilities and programme of events

A programme will be organised aiming to increase footfall in the town centre including events in Morden Hall Park.

The possibility of securing funding for projects in the town centre by local artists will be explored.

Transport

Additional provision for cyclists at Morden Underground station will be considered with TfL.

Options to continue to address issues relating to the location of bus service stops and stands in the town centre will be developed as part of an overall transport strategy for the town centre.

Facebook forum:

Merton Council was one of the first local authorities in the UK to use social networking sites as a way of reaching the wider community as part of the moreMorden consultations. The Facebook page was publicised on the council's website and through press releases which were printed by the local and national press, raising the profile of the moreMorden project.

The group attracted 185 members and generated 70 comments, all very similar to the comments received via the official questionnaires noted in this report.

Comments made on the Facebook forum can be viewed at the following web page: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=31200181762

Demographics – who responded to the consultation?

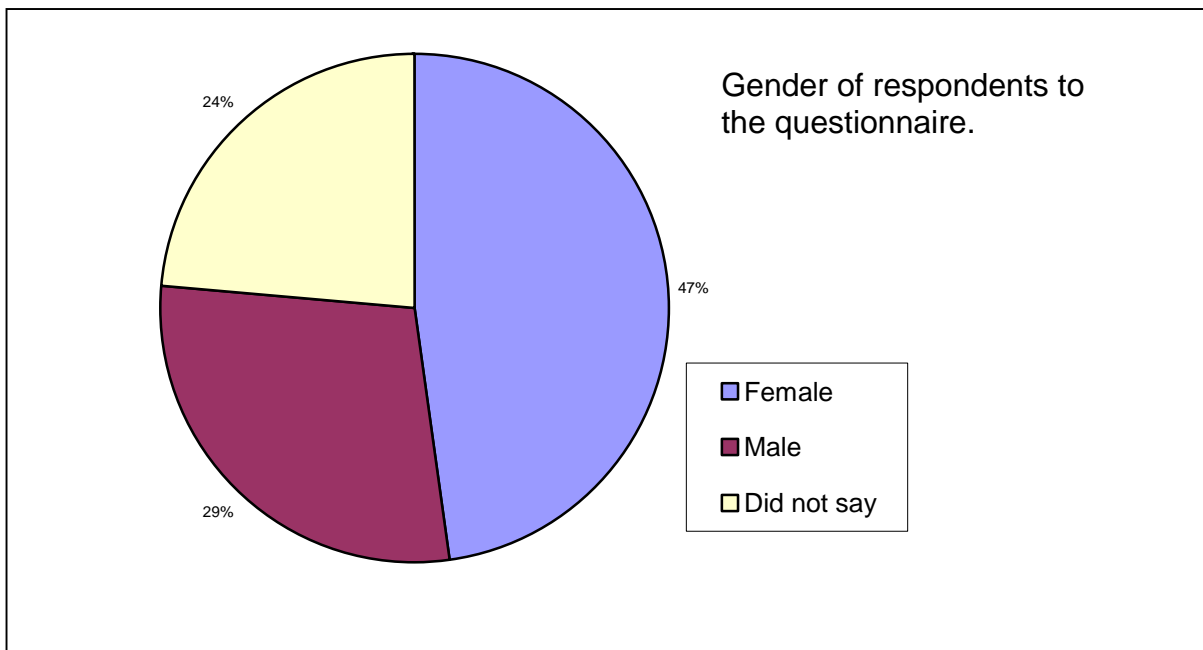
To help the council improve its services, we gather information for equal opportunities and monitoring purposes.

The results below help us paint a picture about the range of people living in, or interested in the regeneration of Morden and will allow the council to tailor future consultations and identify hard to reach groups.

Gender:

220 people responded to the consultation, including local interest groups, who account for some of the 24% who did not indicate any specific gender.

Overall there was a greater response from females than males, with 47% of respondents being female and 23% male.

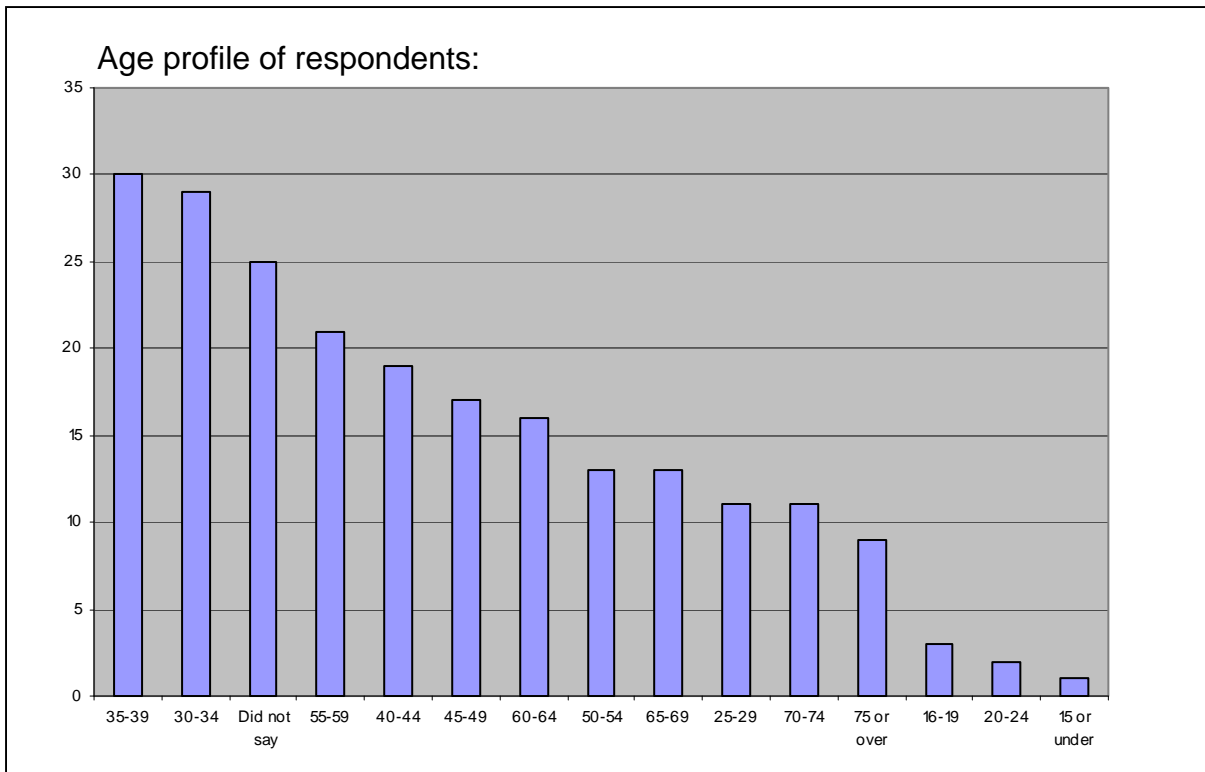


Age Groups:

The most common age range of respondents is 30-39 followed by 55-59 and then the 40-50 age range. 25 people did not want to state their age.

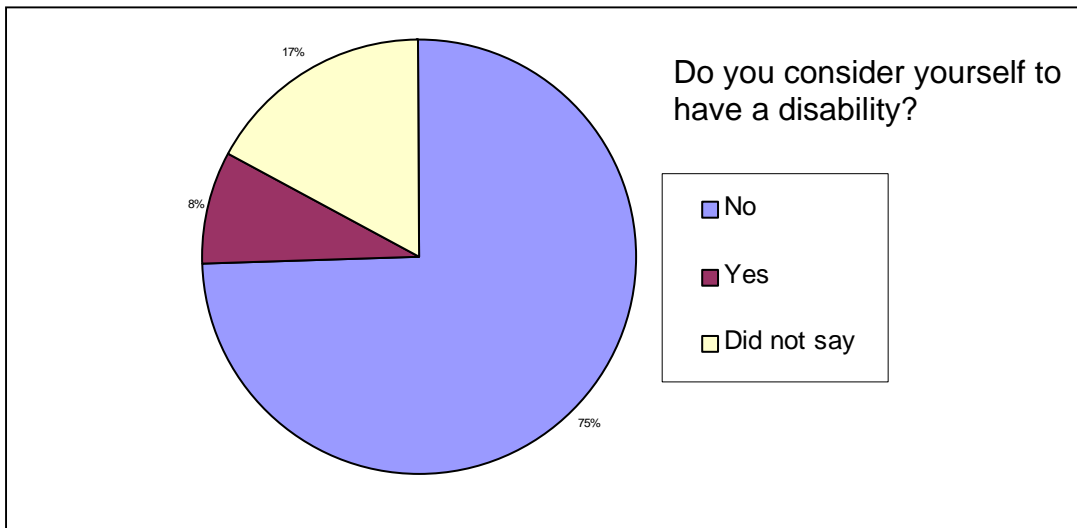
The dominant age ranges are commensurate with Morden's profile as a typical, family orientated suburb, corresponding to the age of people you'd expect to find in medium-large family housing that dominates the wider Morden area.

The most underrepresented age group is under 24s. This is not uncommon in consultations however as the moreMorden project is seeking to develop a 15-20 year plan for the town, the views of younger generations are critical. This research suggests that more effective ways of engaging young people will be required at the next round of consultations.



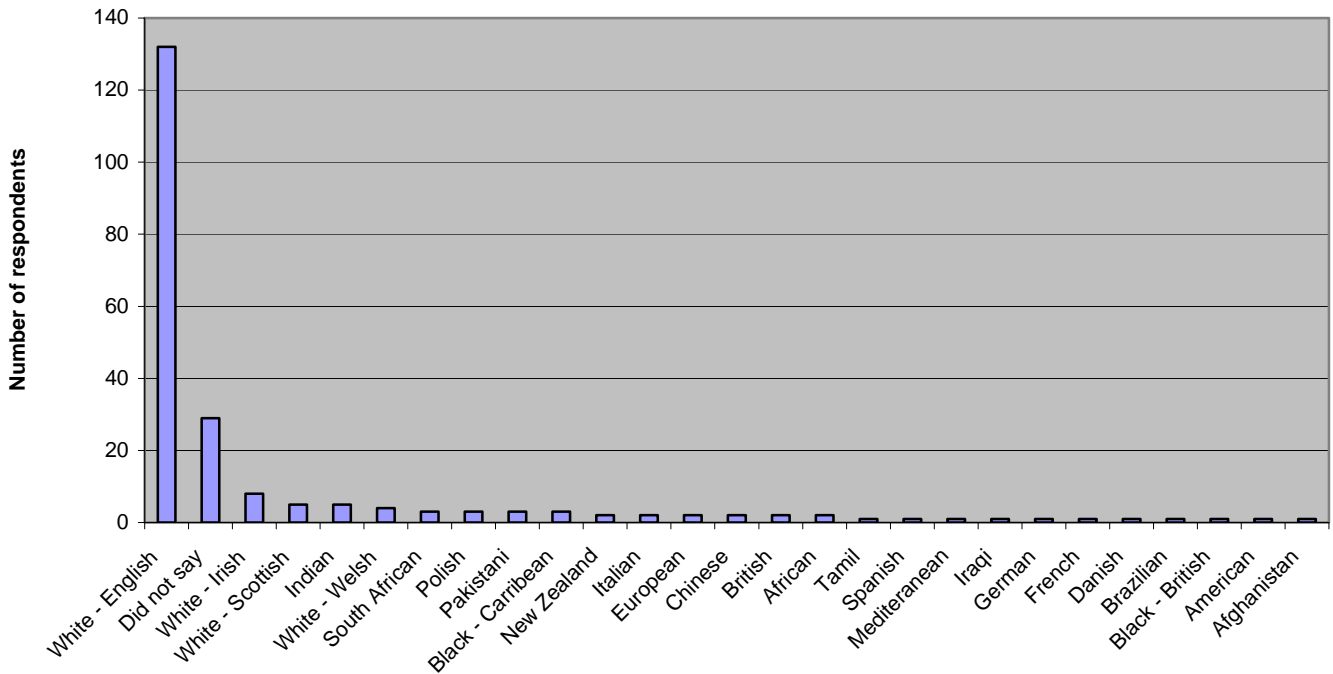
Disabilities:

We asked if people considered themselves to have a disability. This is important as it impacts on how we re-design streets, spaces and buildings to ensure that they are safe, attractive and easy to use for all. Three quarters of respondents had no disability whilst 8% considered themselves as having a disability.



Ethnic background:

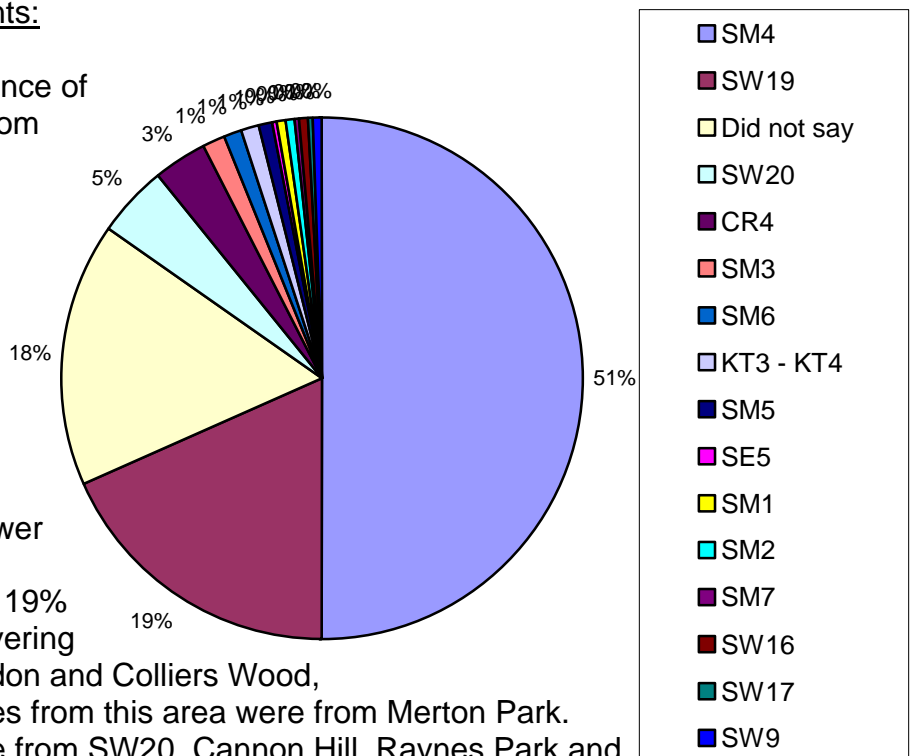
To gain an insight to the diversity of Morden we asked respondents to describe their ethnic background. The vast majority of respondents are White-English (60%), followed by Irish, Scottish, Indian and Welsh. 29 respondents (approximately 15%) chose not to disclose their ethnicity.



Location of respondents:

To determine the balance of responses received from particular neighbourhoods in Morden, the chart adjacent shows which postcode areas each respondent is from.

Just over half the responses came from the SM4 area, which includes St Helier, Lower Morden and parts of Cannon Hill. A further 19% came from SW19, covering Merton Park, Wimbledon and Colliers Wood, though most responses from this area were from Merton Park. 5% of responses were from SW20, Cannon Hill, Raynes Park and Wimbledon Chase whilst another 3% represented CR4, covering Ravensbury.



Next steps for the more Morden project:

The next stages of the moreMorden project will be to formally endorse the vision for Morden at Cabinet on 16 March 2009. The council will then generate three development scenarios to test a range of ways that the vision could be achieved physically. It is proposed to consult on these options in summer 2009. The results of the next stage of consultation will provide the council with a preferred development option, which will form the basis for an Area Action Plan for Morden.