

Shape the Future of Exmouth

Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan Community Questionnaire Report

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Shape the Future of Exmouth was a piece of community engagement work undertaken on behalf of Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group by Catalyst and funded by Exmouth Town Council and East Devon District Council.
- 1.2 Arrangements were made to deliver the survey to every household within Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan area as the first part of a comprehensive consultation exercise required to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the town.
- 1.3 Key findings identified from this process are:
 - I. Residents consider Exmouth to be a friendly, safe place to live and wish that to continue in to the future;
 - II. The natural environment is also highly valued by residents;
 - III. There is a balance to be struck from preserving Exmouth's history and heritage as a seaside town and for the town to become more forward thinking;
 - IV. Residents undertake a significant amount of their shopping within the town, but also believe the experience could be improved by smartening shopping areas and encouraging a greater diversity of shops;
 - V. Exeter is the shopping destination most commonly visited outside of Exmouth;
 - VI. Social services, public toilets, waste collection and employment opportunities could all be improved within the town;
 - VII. Exmouth seafront is considered a huge asset by residents and careful consideration to its future is required.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Exmouth Town Council is developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the whole area that the Town Council serves. The creation of a Neighbourhood Plan requires that everybody within the area has opportunity to engage with the process. To support Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (ENPSG) with this process, they engaged the services of Catalyst.

Catalyst and Devon Communities Together

- 2.2 Catalyst is the in-house consultancy service provided by Devon Communities Together.¹ Catalyst and Devon Communities Together has provided support to over 50 Town and Parish Councils, and neighbourhood plan steering groups working on Neighbourhood Plans across Devon.
- 2.3 Devon Communities Together supported a bid by East Devon District Council (EDDC) to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to access additional funding to undertake a number of pilot projects to improve the gathering of information by Neighbourhood Planning groups. The EDDC bid was successful and invitations were sought from communities within East Devon who were at the early stages of developing their Neighbourhood Plan to be involved. Exmouth fitted this category and presented an interesting test case due to the size of the community to be consulted.
- 2.4 Catalyst undertook the following work in partnership with ENPSG and was funded to do so by EDDC.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 2.5 Neighbourhood planning is part of the Government's agenda to help local communities play a much stronger role in the shaping of their area. For the first time, local people can create a plan that allows them to develop planning policies that reflect the priorities of their area and have real legal weight. The whole community then decides at a referendum whether the local authority should bring the plan into force. Neighbourhood Plans must focus on guiding development rather than stopping it and need to be in general conformity with national policy and local planning policies.
- 2.6 Further information about Neighbourhood Planning can be found on the following websites:
Make a plan, make a difference:
<http://www.neighbourhoodplanning.org/>
EDDC's Neighbourhood Planning support:

¹ www.devoncommunities.org.uk

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-and-community-plans/neighbourhood-plans/>

Exmouth Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan page:

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-and-community-plans/neighbourhood-plans/>

Methodology

- 2.7 An initial meeting was held between ENSPG and Catalyst to discuss the key topics for the questionnaire and how best to approach delivering a questionnaire to every household, allowing every resident to respond. At this time it was agreed that it would not be appropriate to consult on some key elements of the Neighbourhood Plan, such as housing and seafront at this early stage. This judgement was made to avoid the dominance of single issues. It was recognised that these are very important issues and agreed from the beginning that they would be included in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Inclusion would be initiated with a subsequent survey. Instead the focus of this initial questionnaire was to identify other themes important to the community that the Neighbourhood Plan may be able to address.
- 2.8 A questionnaire format was agreed that would allow every member of a household to respond, therefore ensuring as many residents who wanted to could undertake the questionnaire. ENSPG agreed to coordinate delivery of the questionnaire to every household within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 2.9 The key themes for the questionnaire were identified as:
- Understanding residents vision for the future of Exmouth and what current qualities they value most highly;
 - Understanding residents shopping habits and the impact on local transport links, both within the town and connection to other local conurbations;
 - Understanding residents' appreciation of local community facilities and any need for improvement.
- 2.10 Once questions had been developed addressing the identified key themes, an explanatory note was written by the Steering Group and the questionnaire formatted by a local graphic designer.
- 2.11 Arrangements were made for the survey to be delivered to every household within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Adverts were placed in the Exmouth Journal and Exmouth Herald for four successive weeks, on Facebook and at key locations around the town. In view

of reported non-deliveries, the original deadline was also extended by six weeks, and Councillors and other NPSG members hand-delivered surveys to problem addresses. Completed questionnaires could be returned to Exmouth Town Council's office, or to a selection of other collection points around the Neighbourhood Plan area. The questionnaire was also available online.

- 2.12 In addition a consultation event took place within each Ward in the Neighbourhood Plan area during the consultation period. Additional information was gathered at these events (not covered within this report) and additional copies of the questionnaire were available to those in attendance.

3. Questionnaire Responses

Who Responded?

- 3.1 Exmouth has a population of 34432 in approximately 15373 households.²
- 3.2 In total 2126 individuals responded to the questionnaire, representing 6% of the town's population. 379 responded online and 1747 completed the paper questionnaire.
- 3.3 The first three questions asked for the postcode, ward and age of the respondent. This information is helpful in ensuring that the responses to the questionnaire are representative of the larger population.

Postcode

- 3.4 Question 1 asked for people's postcode. All the postcodes supplied are plotted on the map below.³



FIGURE 1

- 3.5 There is an acceptable spread of response across the residential areas of Exmouth.

² 2011 Census.

³ Please note that each point is centred on a postcode and no individual property can be identified by this map. There are also multiple responses from the same postcode so there are not 2126 dots plotted.

Ward

3.6 Question 2 asked for people's ward if known. The following pie chart shows the number of respondents from each ward.

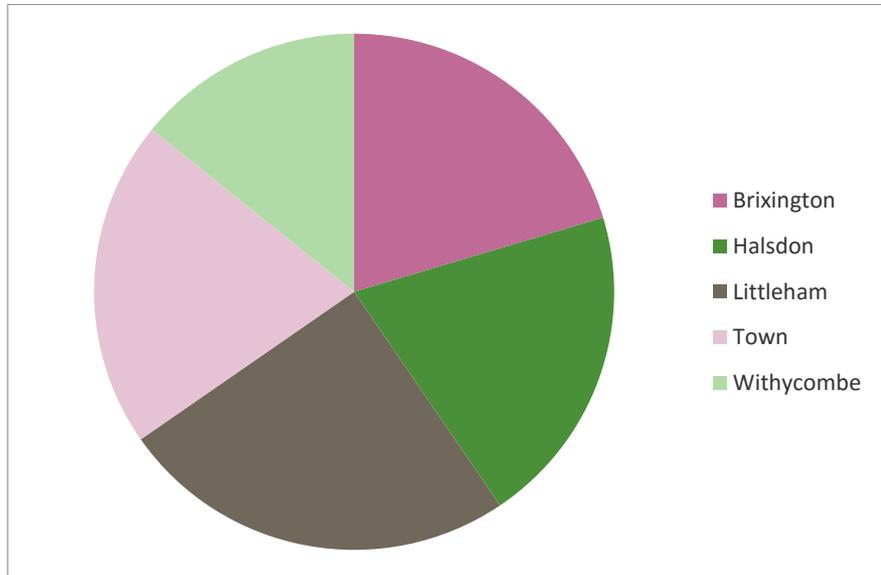


FIGURE 2

3.7 As percentages of the ward populations these represent:

Brixington	6.25%
Halsdon	5.82%
Littleham	6.70%
Town	5.67%
Withycombe	3.80%

FIGURE 3

Age

3.8 Question 3 asked for each respondent's age. The overall response is compared with those responding on paper, online and the 2011 Census age profile to see if responses are representative of the whole community.

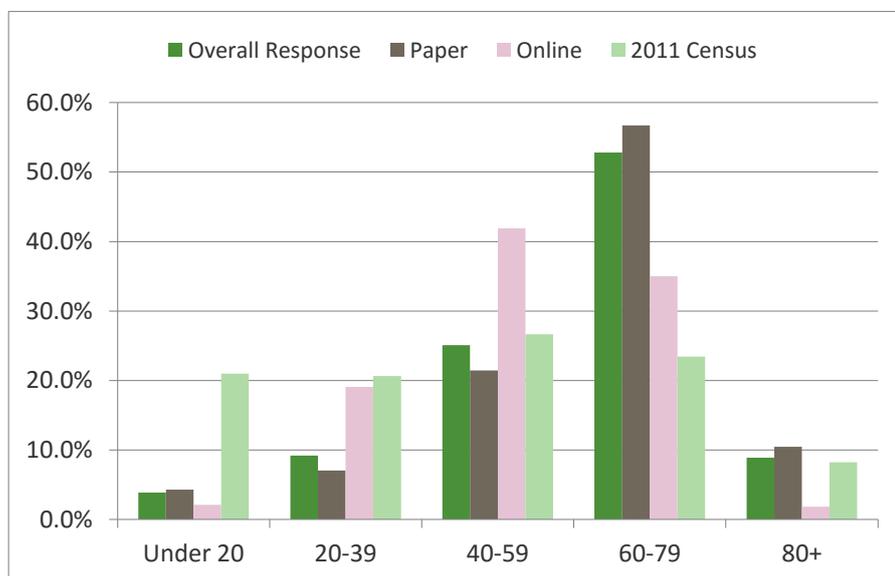


FIGURE 4

3.9 Overall younger people (under 40) are underrepresented (13% of responses, 41% of the population), and those aged 60-79 are overrepresented (53% of responses, 24% of the population).

3.10 Responses to the online questionnaire more closely represent the actual age-profile of the population. This was investigated to see if the responses online varied in any significant way from the overall response to a particular question. There was no significant variation to most questions; only an increase in preference for shopping online in response to Question 6, which is discussed later.

3.11 The steering group may wish to consider how in future those under 40 can be encouraged to engage in further consultation regarding the Neighbourhood Plan.

Demography of Respondents

3.12 The overall response rate of 6% is low. However, with a sample size of 34432 and a response rate of 2126 we can be statistically very confident that the results are representative.

3.13 However there is a potential for bias within the results as the age profile of respondents is older than that of the population. Responses from Withycombe Ward are also significantly lower than

for others. These potential biases are considered within the analysis that follows and discussed where appropriate.

Vision and Valued Qualities

Vision

- 3.14 Question 4 asked respondents to provide short statements on how they would like Exmouth to be described in 20 years' time. 9810 words in total were used in answering this question, which contained 1309 unique words. By collating these statements together, the following image highlights those themes most commonly commented on.
- 3.15 On the following page, figure 5, the size of the words is relative to how common that word was within the responses provided.

3.16 Responses to this question can be further analysed to consider how frequently individual words or multiple word-strings were used. The following table summarises the most common words or word-strings.

Single words	Two-words	Three-words	Four-words
Friendly	Seaside town	Traditional seaside town	Great/good place to live
Safe	Family friendly	For all ages	For young and old
Clean	Forward thinking	Not over-developed	Great place to visit
Vibrant	Holiday destination	Something for everyone	
Town	Good shops		

FIGURE 6

3.17 The purpose of this question was to help ENPSG identify key themes and aspirations from residents about the future of the town. By considering how they would like the town to be described in 20 years' time it was hoped that this question would provide material for ENPSG to formulate a vision statement for the Neighbourhood Plan. From these results a draft vision for ENPSG to consider has been formulated:

“Exmouth aims to be a friendly, welcoming, safe, clean and vibrant town, building on our traditional seaside heritage balanced with an aspiration to be forward thinking. We will enable all, young and old, to have a great place to live, work and visit.”

Valued Qualities

3.18 Question 5 asked respondents to rank seven qualities identified by ENPSG from one to seven, where one was the most important and seven the least.

3.19 The wording which explained how respondents should complete this question may not have been clear enough as 19% of respondents did not complete this question or completed it in an incorrect manner. However enough people were able to complete this question so that the responses are still within the bounds of a high confidence level. Because of how the online respondents were able to answer this question, all the online responses were completed accurately.

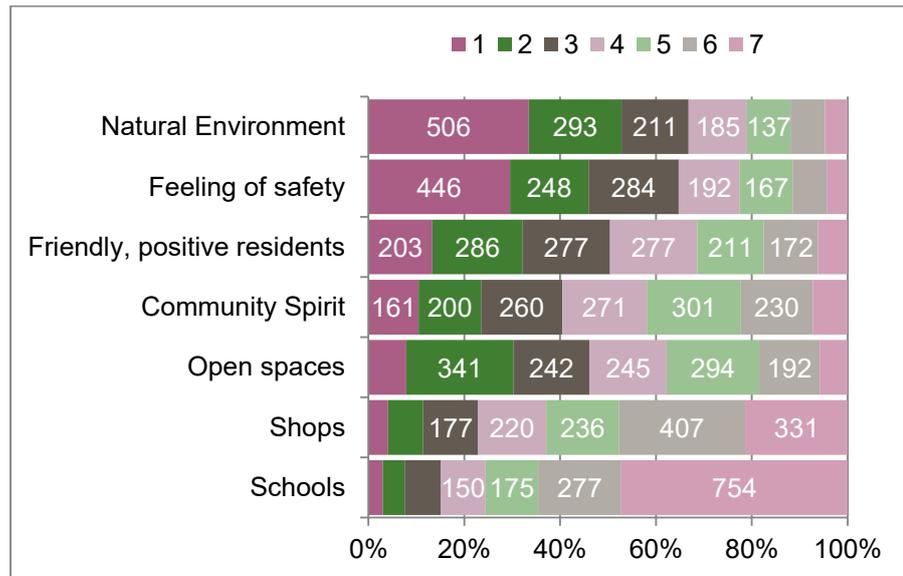


FIGURE 7

3.20 The 'Natural Environment' and 'Feeling of safety' are clearly the two most valued qualities, being considered within the top 2 by 53% and 46% of respondents respectively.

Shopping Locations

3.21 Question 6 asked where respondents were most likely to shop for various items.

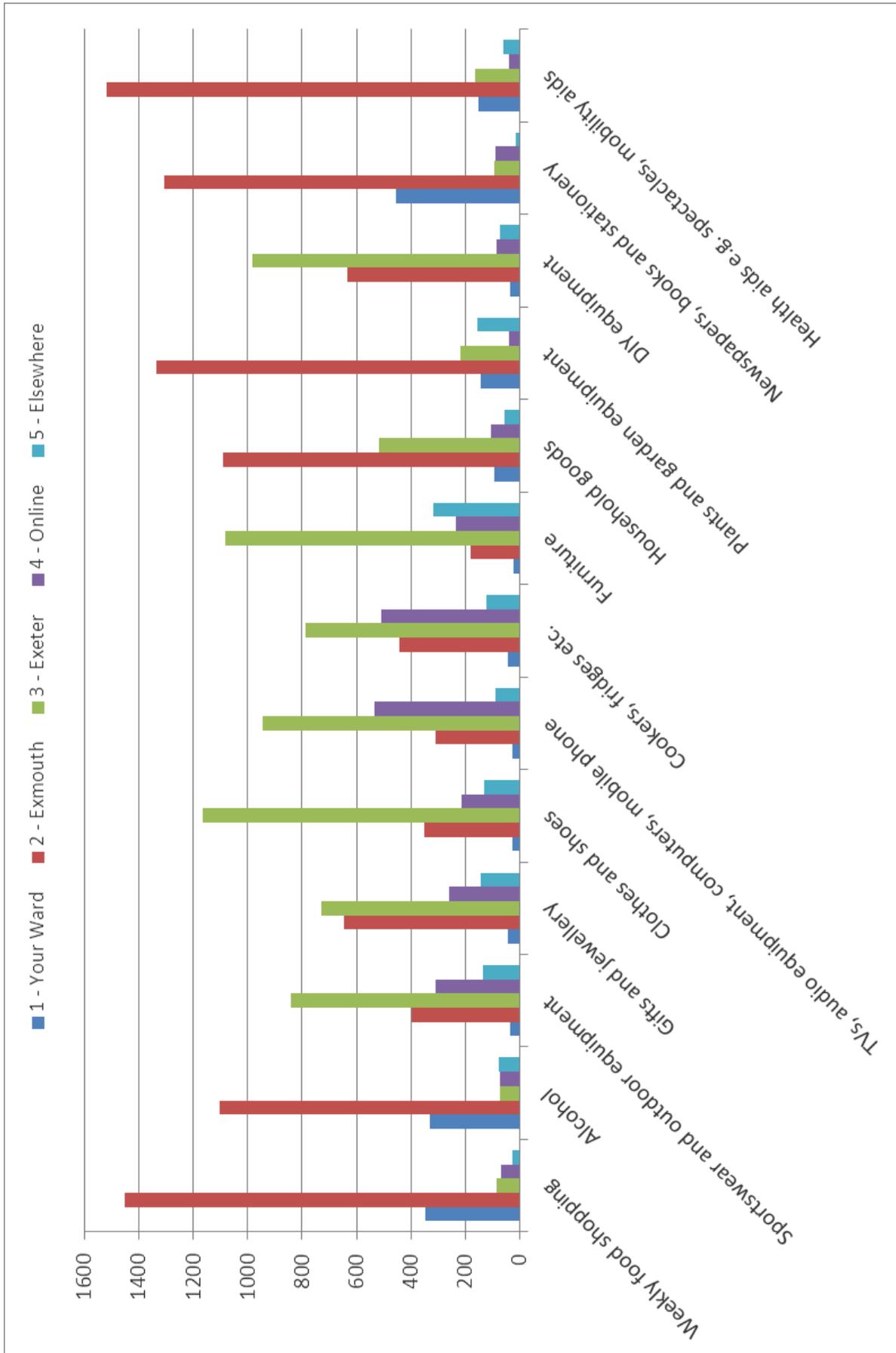


FIGURE 8

3.22 Most respondents undertake their shopping in Exmouth or Exeter; one-or-other being the primary shopping location for all the items considered. The following table shows which items were principally shopped for in each location:

Exmouth:	Exeter:
Weekly food shopping	Sportswear and outdoor equipment
Alcohol	Gifts and Jewellery
Household goods	Clothes and Shoes
Plants and garden equipment	TVs, audio equipment, computers, mobile phone
Newspapers, books and stationary	Cookers, fridges etc.
Health aids	Furniture
	DIY equipment

FIGURE 9

3.23 There is a national trend toward increased online shopping, particularly for certain items.⁴ This trend is reflected in the Exmouth respondents; for those under 40, over 50% would purchase 'TVs, audio equipment, computers, mobile phones' online and almost 50% would purchase 'cookers, fridges etc.' online. Online retail is estimated to grow by 14.9% in 2016 and continue to grow in to the future putting additional strain on local retailers.

⁴ Online Retailing: Britain, Europe, US and Canada 2016; *Centre for Retail Research* <http://www.retailresearch.org/onlineretailing.php>

Local Facilities

3.24 Questions 7 and 8 asked respondents about local services and facilities. Question 7 listed a range of facilities, services and opportunities and asked respondents to rate these from excellent to inadequate.

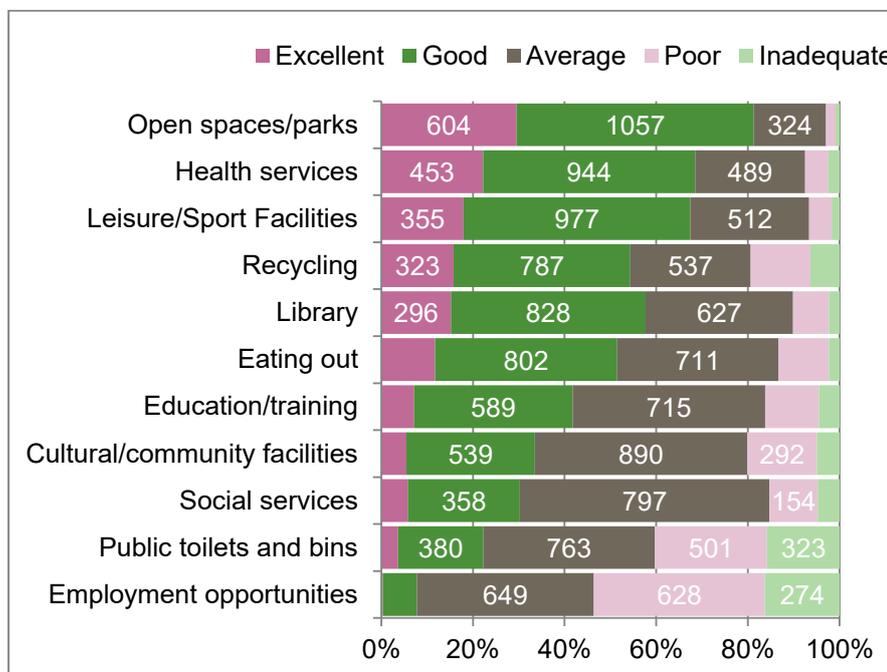


FIGURE 10

3.25 The overall picture is that most services and facilities are at least average, and over half of those listed were considered 'good' or 'excellent'.

3.26 One trend to highlight is the dichotomy between health and social services. Health services were considered 'Excellent' or 'Good' by 69% of respondents, but Social Services were considered less than 'Good' by 70%, although a significant number of people, 60%, consider Social Services to be average.

3.27 Employment opportunities were considered 'Poor' or 'Inadequate' by 54% of respondents. A further 39% consider employment opportunities to be 'Average'. Only 8% of those under 60 considered employment opportunities to be 'excellent' or 'good'.

3.28 The term 'Employment opportunities' could be interpreted in a number of ways: either there aren't many jobs available, or, there aren't the sort of opportunities available (too high skilled, low skilled, low waged, seasonal etc.) people are looking for.

3.29 Looking at data available regarding Exmouth it would suggest it is the type of employment available, rather than the lack of

employment that is why respondents consider employment opportunities 'Poor' and 'Inadequate'. The percentage of unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance) claimants has been consistently 1% lower than the national average for the ten years up to 2013.⁵ All people receiving 'out of work benefits' is also lower in Exmouth than nationally.

3.30 However it is perhaps the types of job that people are concerned with. Below is a graph of the types of employment and the percentage employed within each type from the Census 2011 compared with the England average.⁶ Of course because somebody is resident and employed in a particular category of work does not mean they undertake that work within the town. However it is interesting to see where Exmouth residents' employment categories diverge from the national average.

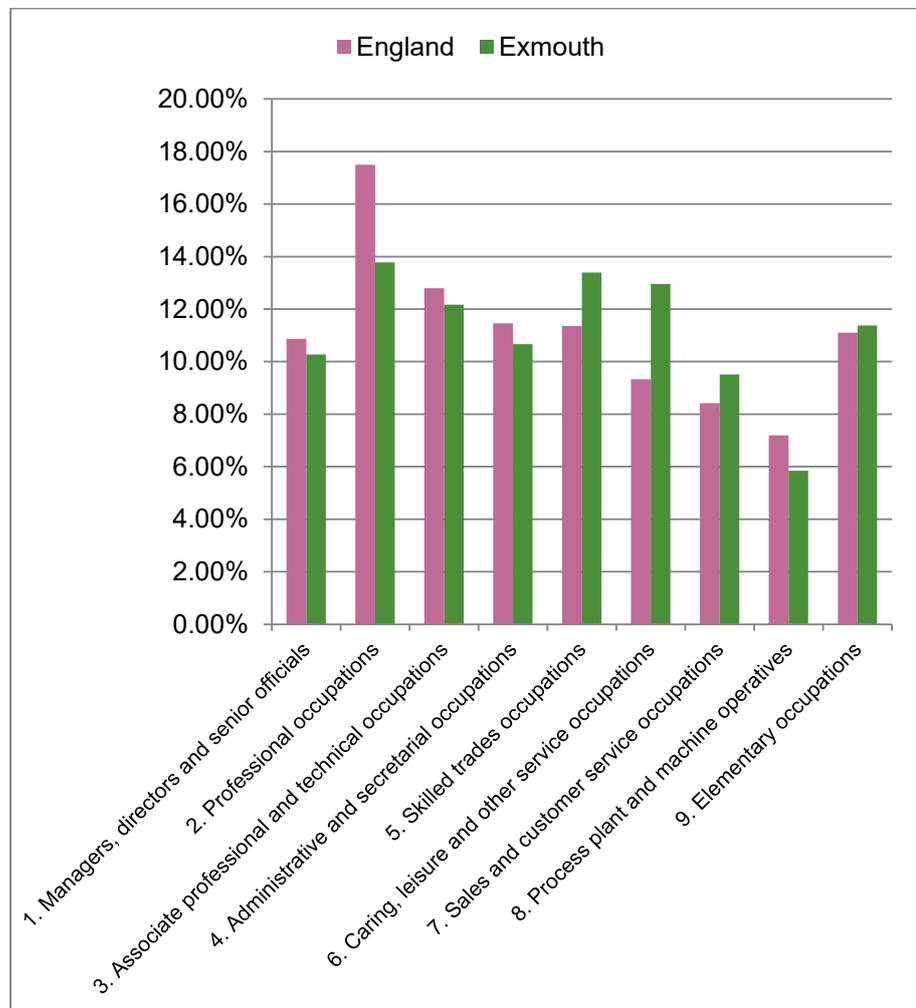


FIGURE 11

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions data, Feb 2013.

⁶ Census 2011, table KS608EW.

- 3.31 This may be helpful in guiding the type of employment opportunity ENPSG may wish to encourage through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.32 Question 8 asked for respondents to provide a comment on any services or facilities they considered in question 7 to be 'poor' or 'inadequate'.
- 3.33 The most common theme commented upon was a strong desire to see more, better and cleaner public toilets, particularly at the seafront.
- 3.34 People's comments regarding bins and recycling focussed mostly on a desire to see more recycled, particularly cardboard, and for more regular collections, particularly from public bins.
- 3.35 Finally the comments around poor or inadequate employment opportunity lend weight to the analysis above. People concerned about the type of employment opportunities available wished to see this improved. Furthermore there were many comments about the number of young people moving away to access better employment opportunities elsewhere.

Travel

- 3.36 Question 9 asked about various transport related issues. Respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

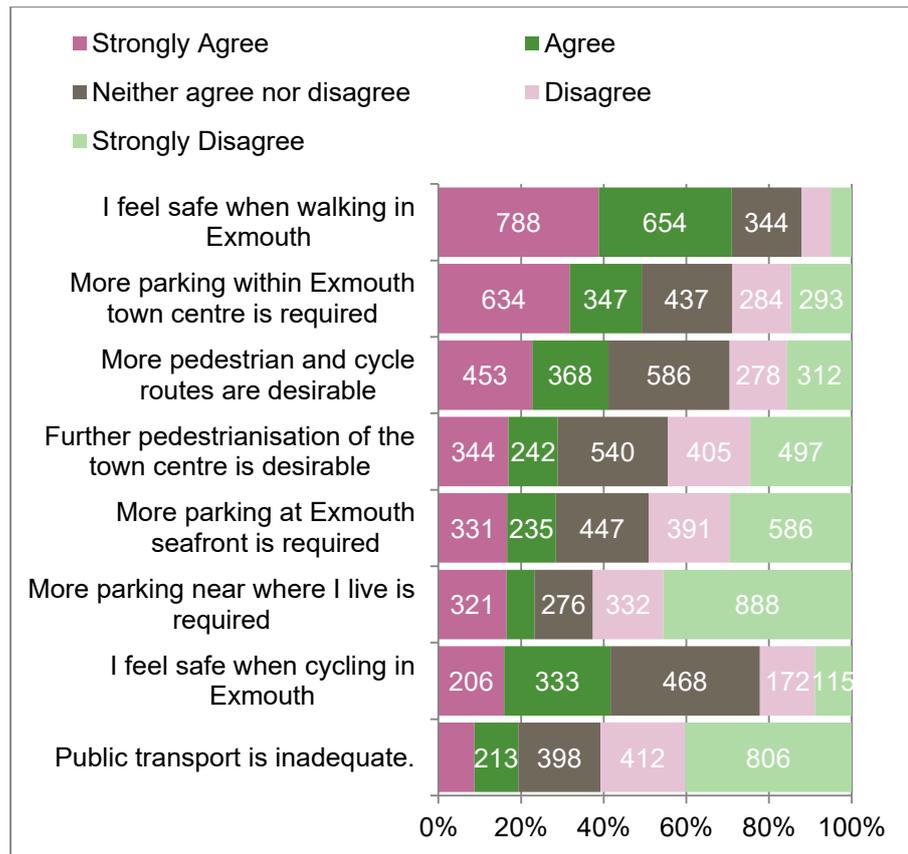


FIGURE 12

- 3.37 Respondents generally feel safe walking around Exmouth and there is no strong desire to see further pedestrianisation of the town centre.
- 3.38 The overall picture suggests more parking is required in the Town Centre, a mixed response regarding parking at the seafront but no more in residential areas near where respondents live. However looking at the responses by each ward 51% of respondents from Town ward 'Strongly agree' or 'Agreed' that more parking was required where they live. The question isn't sufficiently nuanced to determine whether this is parking for residents or visitors, but is something ENPSG may wish to follow up.
- 3.39 The majority of respondents have 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement Public transport is inadequate. There is little divergence from across the Wards.

Additional Comments

- 3.40 Finally, question 10 asked for any additional comments. 1299 people took the opportunity to provide further information.
- 3.41 The most common topic raised was the seafront, mentioned by approximately 41% of respondents. The main theme of these

comments was about preserving the character of the area, or asking why this topic wasn't covered elsewhere within the questionnaire.

3.42 Other topics that were mentioned with regularity were:

- Parking, mentioned by 27% of respondents. This covered a variety of locations and approaches to charging for parking.
- Improvements to the town centre were mentioned by 22% of respondents. This was closely linked to comments about 'shops' mentioned by 21%. The most common theme coming through from these comments was a desire to see more high quality independent shops within the town, and fewer charity shops. There was a general desire to see the town centre smartened up and to become more attractive to both outlets and shoppers.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 This questionnaire has provided an opportunity for all residents of Exmouth to engage with the Neighbourhood Plan process from the outset. The responses rate was high enough for ENPSG to have a high degree of confidence in the responses. However the age profile of respondents means there is a strong bias toward older members of the community and ENPSG may need to consider to how to engage younger (under 40) members of the community more comprehensively.
- 4.2 There were three themes this questionnaire addressed:
- Understanding residents' vision for the future of Exmouth and what current qualities they value most highly;
 - Understanding residents' shopping habits and the impact on local transport links, both within the town and connection to other local conurbations;
 - Understanding residents' appreciation of local community facilities and any need for improvement.

Understanding residents' vision for the future of Exmouth and what current qualities they value most highly

- 4.3 Responses to this questionnaire have given some clear indication as to the vision for the future and current qualities of highest value. Based on responses to the questionnaire a draft vision has been constructed for ENPSG to consider:

“Exmouth aims to be a friendly, welcoming, safe, clean and vibrant town, building on our traditional seaside heritage balanced with an aspiration to be forward thinking. We will enable all, young and old, to have a great place to live, work and visit.”

- 4.4 In addition key qualities such as the natural environment, a feeling of safety and sense of community are highly valued and should be protected and enhance through any future development

Understanding residents' shopping habits and the impact on local transport links, both within the town and connection to other local conurbations

- 4.5 The majority of residents undertake their shopping within Exmouth or Exeter.

- 4.6 Younger people are likely to undertake more of their shopping online, particularly electrical and larger household goods. This is a trend that is likely to continue and the amount of shopping online is forecast to continue to expand.
- 4.7 There is also a desire to see the shopping experience within Exmouth improved by smartening the town centre, repairing pavements etc. In particular more local independent retailers should be encouraged. There is a strong desire for more parking within the town centre, both from residents across the Neighbourhood Plan area, and particularly those within the town centre.

Understanding residents' appreciation of local community facilities and any need for improvement

- 4.8 The majority of services and facilities listed within this questionnaire were considered to be excellent or good by respondents. However three areas in particular may need further consideration by ENPSG.
- 4.9 Firstly social services were considered poor, particularly compared to health services. The reasons for this are not clearly articulated by respondents, so further investigation is needed to see if this something that can be addressed directly in a spatial planning document such as a Neighbourhood Plan, or something the Town Council may wish to look at more broadly.
- 4.10 Secondly public toilets, particularly at the seafront, and rubbish collections, particularly from public bins, could be improved. In addition there is a desire for more recycling.
- 4.11 Thirdly employment opportunities of the sort wanted by local residents within the area are considered to be lacking.
- 4.12 Finally, there were many comments made about preserving and enhancing the seafront. It was noted at the outset of this process that this would be a key area for ENPSG to address within the plan. The many comments made on this topic highlight its importance to the local community.