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South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

Alveston Hill pedestrian and cyclist improvements

Consultation feedback report

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Executive summary

This consultation survey attracted a good response rate. Overall, there was majority support for all the measures included within the proposals; the new segregated cycleway and footpath, improvements to pedestrian crossings and the relocation of a bus stop.

There was also good evidence from those who responded that safety is a concern on this particular route and the improvements are considered necessary in encouraging more people to cycle and walk more.

However, support was far from unanimous and significant numbers of people hold very strong views opposing the proposals. The most opposed are people who live directly on the routes impacted, who are concerned about potential personal impact for them, but many others (especially drivers) have questioned the costs and benefits of such a large investment in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure when people have many other transport priorities.

The designs are generally supported, except for the proposed changes at the junction with Down Road, where potential issues with congestion and safety are raised. In line with this feedback, consideration should be given as to whether this is indeed the best solution in this location.

Next steps

The consultation has shown generally strong support for the designs, but this report and the accompanying map of comments show specific areas where local people have asked the council to review proposals to ensure the optimal solution is put forward.

The project team will consider the feedback provided through this consultation exercise and identify opportunities to improve the scheme by evaluating potential improvements and enhancements and addressing potential concerns. A separate design response document will summarise the findings of this exercise.

Background

South Gloucestershire Council has been awarded government funding from the West of England Combined Authority to invest in improved facilities for cyclists, pedestrians and bus users. This money can only be used for measures which support the government strategy to make it easier, safer and more pleasant to use active and sustainable travel options and therefore make it more feasible for people to switch away from their cars.

Proposals have been put forward to provide better options to connect Thornbury with Alveston using active travel measures and also linking up with wider proposed measures travelling towards Aztec West and Bristol.

This consultation relates to the on-road proposals, but the final connection into Thornbury is proposed as an off-road route, which would be subject to separate consultation through the planning process.

The consultation

The consultation ran from 6 November until 18 December 2023.

An online Common Place site was created to provide information about the proposals so that people could provide informed feedback. Respondents could provide feedback either via an online survey on this site or by completing a paper survey response. To raise awareness and give interested parties plenty of opportunity to provide feedback, the consultation was widely promoted through various channels including:

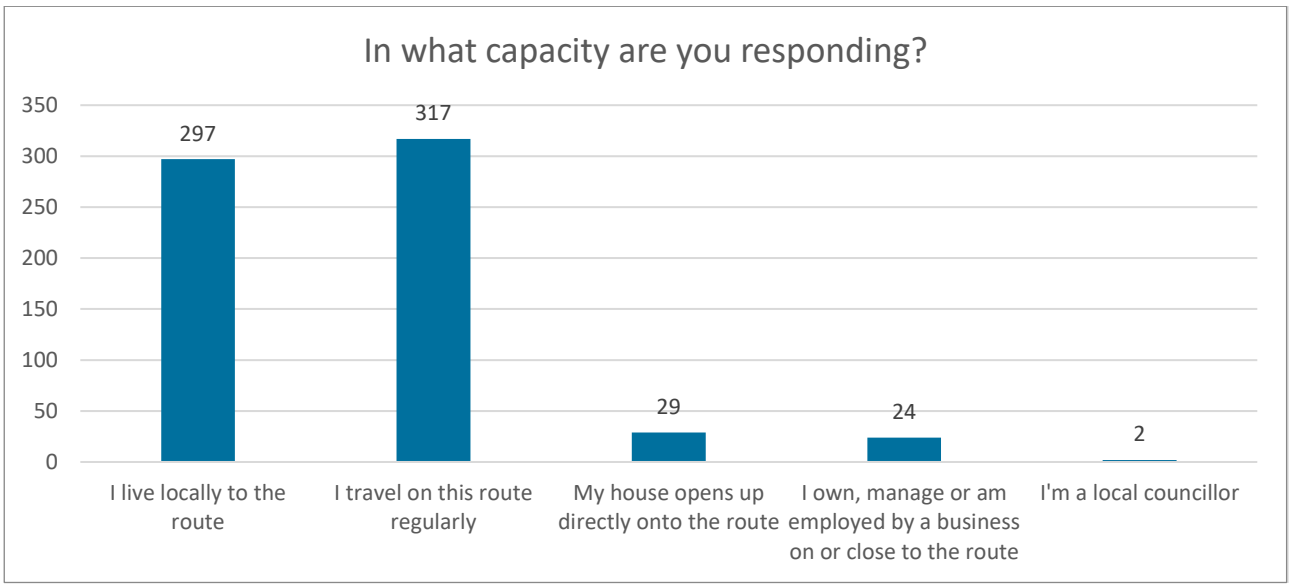
- an email to stakeholders such as town and parish councils, schools and travel groups,
- a letter drop to local business and residential addresses,
- regular promotion on social media, and
- featured in the council's resident and business newsletters.

During the consultation period, in-person events in local venues were held as well as online events. The purpose of these events was primarily to allow people the opportunity to ask questions about the proposals and so feedback has not been reported here – instead people were directed to the consultation to share their views.

Given the links with the proposed A38 scheme, feedback was collected together for both schemes, but respondents were asked which scheme they were providing feedback on and this report does not include feedback from those who were only providing feedback on the proposals for the A38.

Survey respondents

In total, 486 people responded to the consultation.



Most people responded to the consultation because they either live locally or travel on the proposed routes. We also received responses from 29 people who live directly on the route.

A more detailed summary of survey respondents is provided in the appendices to this report.

Views on different aspects of the proposals

Through the consultation we sought feedback on the different aspects of the scheme which are designed to make active travel easier and more appealing: improvements to pedestrian crossings, the new segregated cycleway and footpath, and improvements to bus stops.

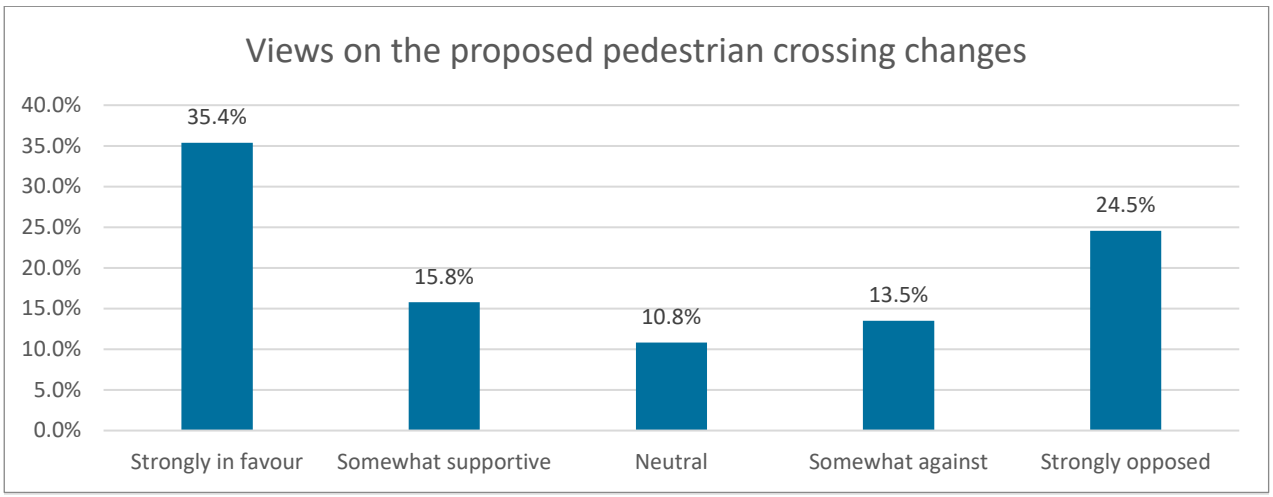
For each of the measures, the survey asked two questions:

1. To what extent people were in favour or opposed to the changes, and
2. Why they held that view.

Across every measure, people who opposed changes were much more likely to provide a response to the second question, explaining their opposition and many respondents provided lengthy responses setting out their concerns. To demonstrate the full range of different perspectives expressed, this report highlights each of these concerns in order that the project team and decision-makers can fully consider potential issues.

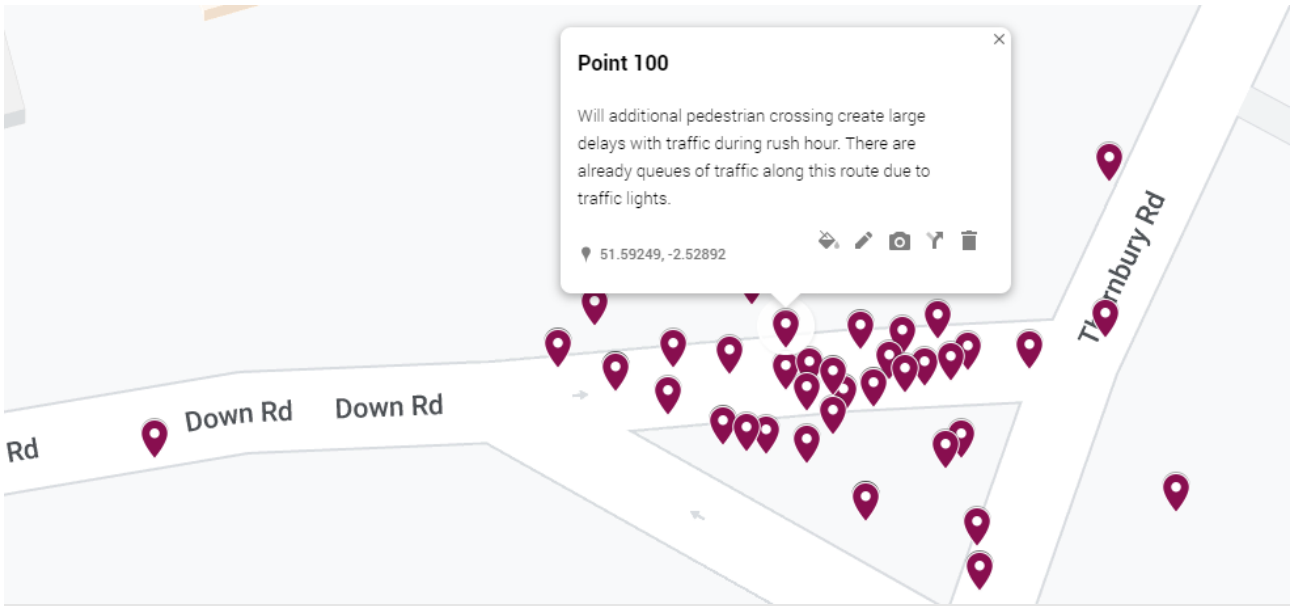
Pedestrian crossing improvements

Respondents are supportive of the changes to pedestrian crossings, with 51.1% supportive and 38.1% opposed to the changes.

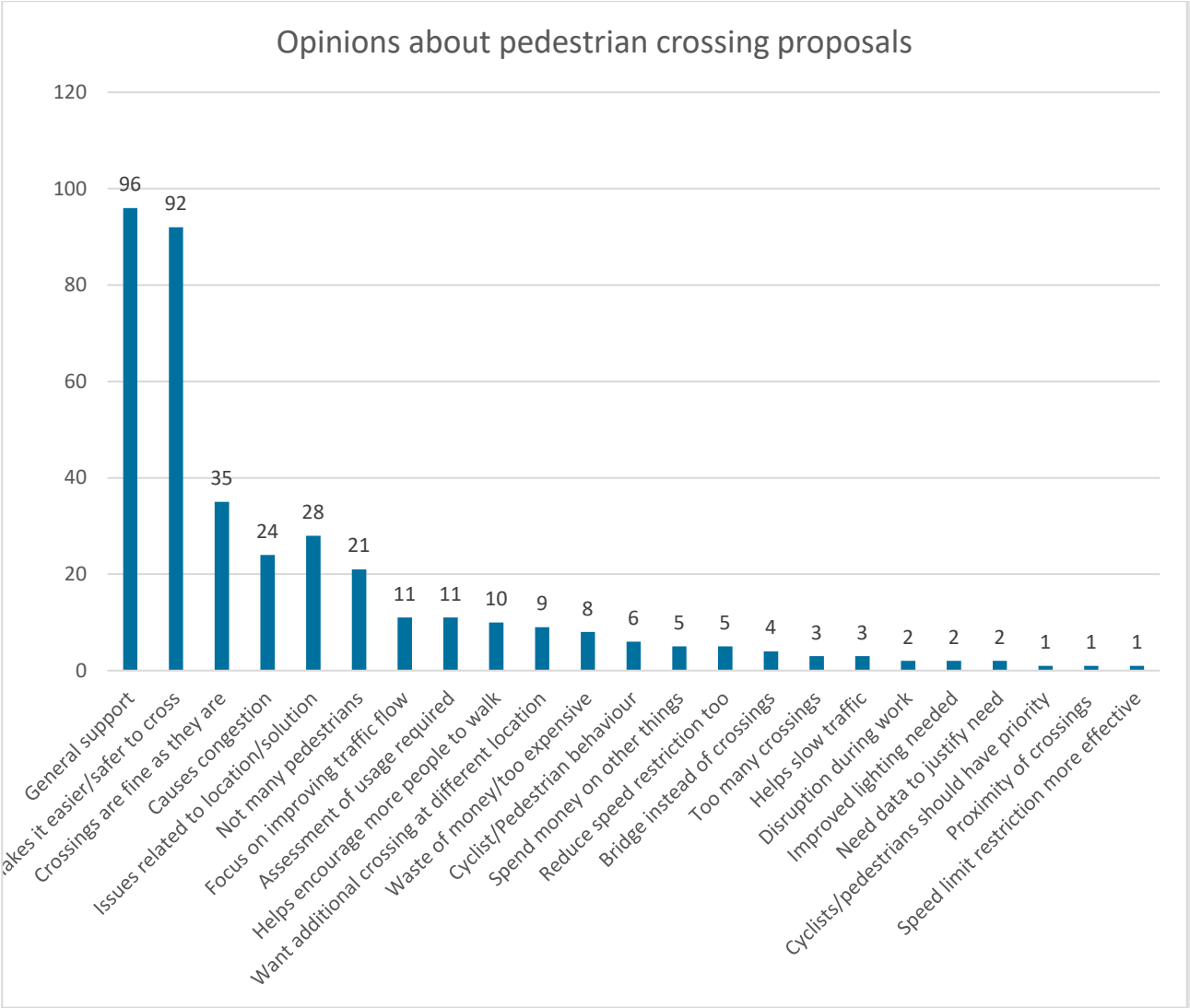


Digging deeper into the data provides a more nuanced view of this result. Specifically, the consultation allowed people to mark on a map the locations of any specific concerns they had. Plotting all the comments onto a map together, showed large numbers of people concerned about the proposals for the junction at Down Road, which would see a new crossing introduced closer to the junction and removal of the left-hand filter lane.

People's concerns are two-fold, primarily that the changes will increase delays, but secondly that the volume of traffic using this junction will lead to accidents if vehicles need to stop to allow cyclists or pedestrians to cross.



A link to the full map of comments is provided later in this report.



Another question asked respondents why they were either supportive or opposed to the changes to pedestrian crossings. The most common comments either expressed general support for the changes or highlighted the benefits to pedestrians in improving safety or making it easier to cross the road.

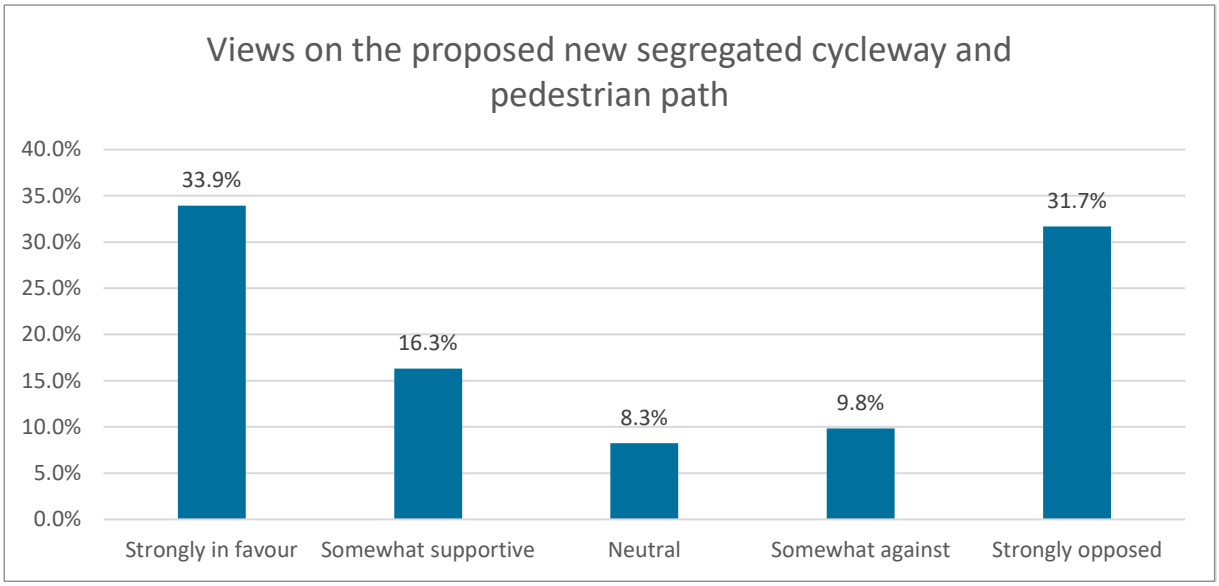
The most common reasons for people's opposition either specifically mentioned the Down Road junction, related to potential delays and congestion for motorists or were from people who felt the existing crossings worked adequately.

Looking at relative support/opposition to the proposals amongst different groups, the only segment of respondents who were opposed to the proposals were people who live directly on the route of the cycleway. The feedback of this group is discussed later in the report.

The survey asked people about their employment status and across the survey, part-time workers, people on zero hours contracts, students and the unemployed were far more in favour of these measures than retired or full-time employees. Lower income groups are less likely to have access to a private vehicle and it may be that this support is due to greater reliance on public transport amongst these demographic groups.

New segregated cycle and pedestrian path

Opinions on the proposed cycleway are strongly held, but fairly evenly split, with the majority (50.2%) of respondents in favour (41.5% are opposed).



The group who was most supportive of the measures are people who told us they cycled. 80% of those who said they cycled regularly or from time to time want the proposals to go ahead, with the most positive group those who only currently cycle from time to time, suggesting the current lack of facilities is a significant deterrent for potential cyclists.

Those approaching or just reaching retirement age were also very supportive of the cycleway, with 70.8% of those aged between 60 and 69 in favour and only 23.1% against the proposal, making them the most supportive demographic group. Men are more supportive of the new lanes than women, but both sexes have net favourability.

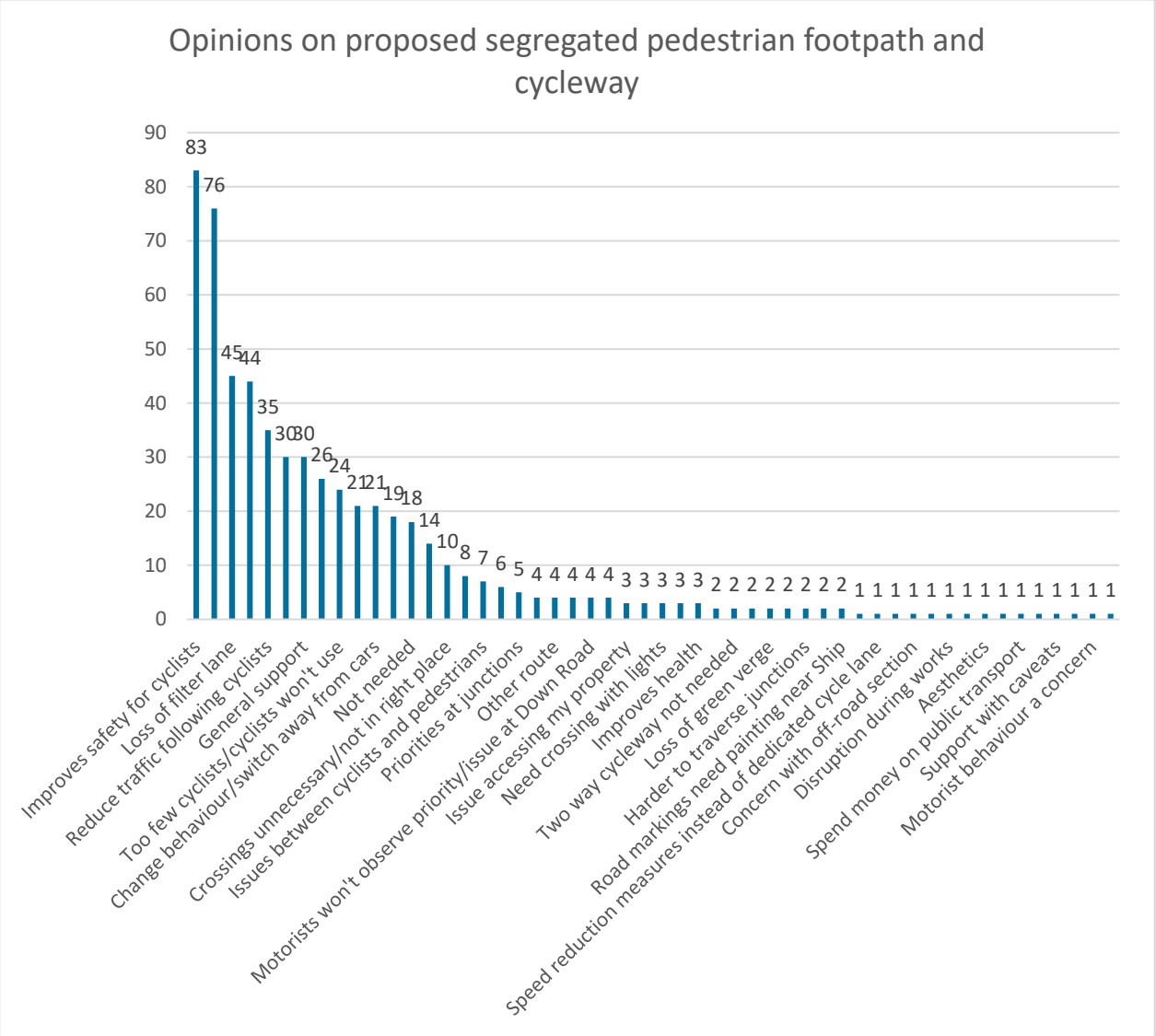
As with the pedestrian improvements, the group who were most opposed to this change were those who live on the route of the paths. Older retirees and people with a disability were more likely to be against the proposals, which may indicate that those who believe they personally might not benefit from improved cycle facilities are therefore less likely to support it. Relatively few 19-29 year-olds completed the survey, but this group also were more likely to be opposed, but it is important to note that this is only a handful of individuals, so may not be a representative view.

Considering why people support the proposals, safety comes out strongly in the commentary. Both cyclists and motorists highlight current issues with vehicles stuck behind slow-moving cyclists travelling up the steep hill, with many reported incidents of unsafe overtaking, either leaving too little space for cyclists or moving into the opposite lane on narrow carriageways with blind bends. Many motorists welcomed this change which would improve safety and speed up journeys currently hampered by slow-moving cyclists.

"The current provision for pedestrians and cyclists between Alveston and Thornbury is awful. For cyclists coming up the hill they hold up the traffic and face aggression and dangerous overtaking from motorists. A separate cycle lane (and improved footway) is essential."

"Steep hill not suitable to most people to switch to cycling so active travel benefits will not be achieved."

Potential cyclists told us they would not consider travelling this route currently, but having a dedicated track would make this a possibility - either for themselves or for their children/family.



As for the reasons people were opposed to the changes, comfortably the most commonly cited reason was that it was linked to the proposal to remove the filter lane from Down Road, which people were concerned would lead to increased congestion, particularly at

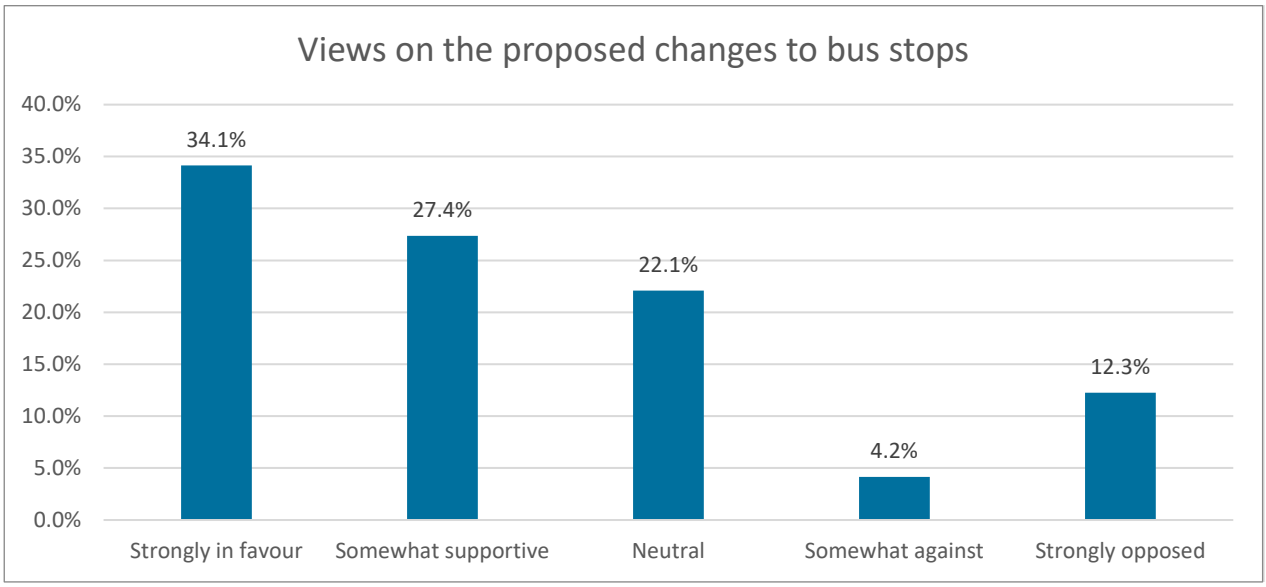
school drop-off and pickup times. Others questioned the need for dedicated space for cyclists, saying they would not consider cycling and that the steep hill would probably deter others.

Those who live on the route had more practical concerns, raising issues with access to their property, disruption during work and potential damage to trees and greenery. Some asked whether an alternative route might be considered.

A couple of more experienced cyclists, although supportive of the principles of the scheme, questioned the need for a downhill track where the differential in speed between cyclists and motorists is negligible.

Changes to bus stop

Most respondents are supportive of proposed changes to the bus stop (61.5% in favour, 16.5% opposed).



The above results show the responses from people who were either responding just to the Alveston Hill scheme or commenting on both these proposals and the changes to the A38.

As more significant changes to bus infrastructure are proposed within the A38 scheme, for completeness, the figures for those who only commented on the Alveston Hill scheme are also provided below. These results are not significantly different from the above.

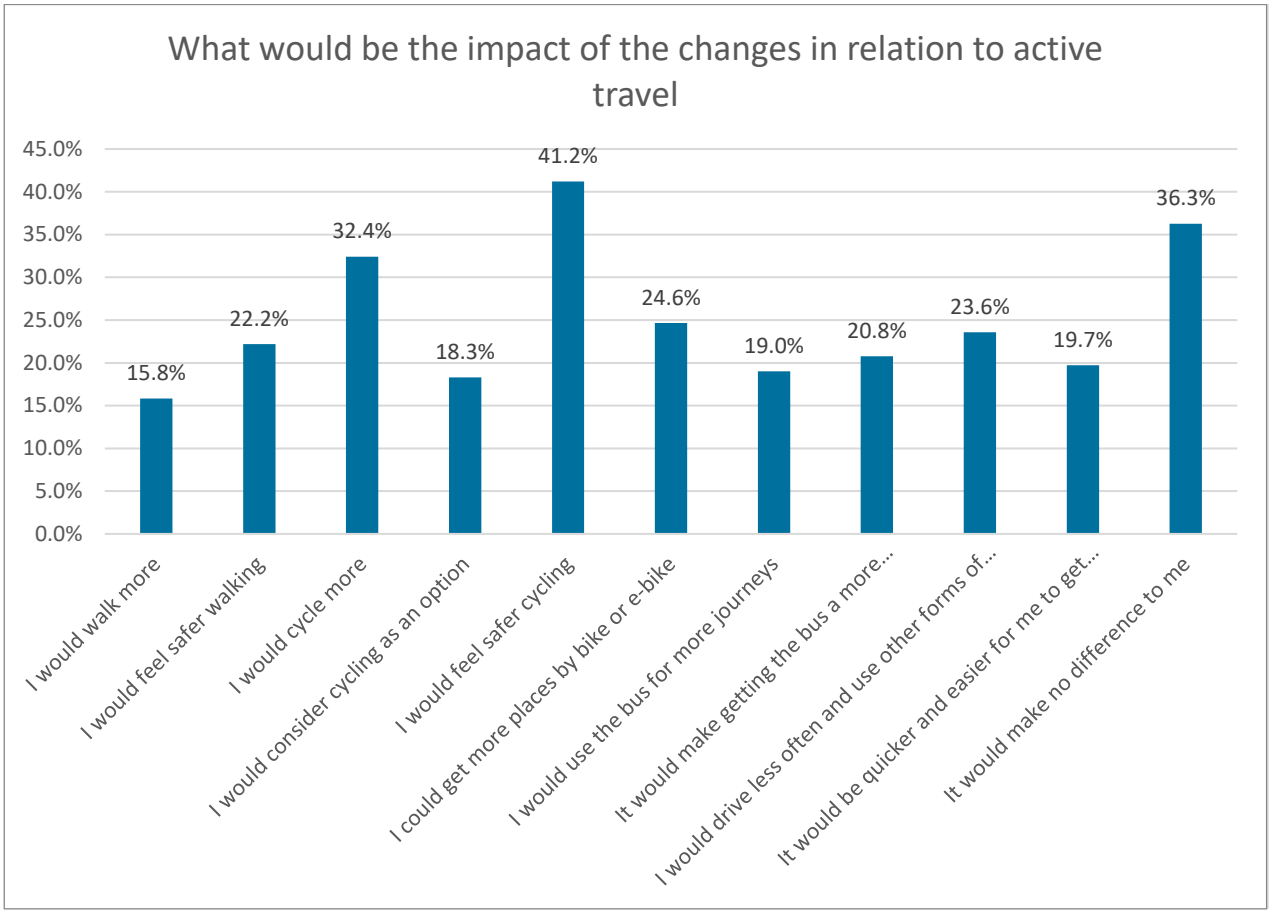
Strongly in favour	30.5%
Somewhat supportive	32.2%
Neutral	23.7%
Somewhat against	3.4%
Strongly opposed	10.2%

In their commentary, most people welcomed the changes as an opportunity to make travelling by bus more appealing and therefore encourage more bus travellers. However, a similar number of people were sceptical about how much impact these changes might have given the removal of, and unreliability of, local bus services, which made it difficult for

people to travel to the places they wanted to by public transport. In this context, some saw this as unnecessary expense.

Impacts – changes in travel behaviour

This question was intended to gain a better understanding of the likely positive impacts of the changes in terms of the overall ambition of the proposals to provide options and make it easier and safer for people to travel in different ways to the car.



Safety concerns are cited regularly in surveys as one of the main deterrents to people cycling. Over 40% of respondents reported that these changes would make them feel safer cycling. From these results, it would appear that the proposals would make a greater difference for those who already cycle in enabling them to cycle for more journeys, with 32.4% of respondents saying they would cycle more, 24.6% saying these changes would open up more places to cycle travel and 18.3% of non-cyclists believing that with improved facilities, cycling became a viable option.

"Really pleased to see these excellent proposals. Many areas in UK, and abroad, already have such schemes - great to see S Glos moving in this direction. I travel on local roads most days and would love to switch to my bike."

"South Gloucestershire council should think about all residents not just the small number who may cycle along this route."

The potential changes for walking and bus travel are less significant. Just over 22% of respondents felt the measures would make walking safer and 15.8% would walk more. 19% of people said they would use the bus for more journeys (though many people caveated this by saying that this assumed there were bus services for them to use). Overall, 23.6% of people said they would drive less often and use other forms of transport.

36.3% of respondents said they would make no difference to their travel behaviour and many used this as an opportunity to share their feedback on how they might be negatively impacted by the changes. This feedback is very similar to what was captured in the subsequent question which asked people about what concerns they had about the scheme, which is summarised in the next section of this report.

Other suggestions

The purpose of consultation into schemes like this is to firstly gather the perspectives of a broad cross section of local people to assess relative support for proposals and secondly to use their local knowledge in support of in-depth technical assessment work to identify the most appropriate improvements. This section focuses on suggestions made within the consultation commentary asking about people's concerns and their final comments.

Considering firstly the overall general comments and as we have already seen, majority support was in favour of the changes outlined in this scheme. There were many comments about the necessity of schemes like these to make more environmentally friendly alternatives to the car more attractive to help people make the switch away from private vehicles for more journeys.

Indeed, some respondents wanted the proposals to go further. Some respondents felt that cycling needed further support, with new (less disjointed) cycle routes and better maintenance of existing infrastructure to open up more places to travel by bike. Others talked about proposals like this as being only one piece of the jigsaw.

"We want more pedestrians, cyclists and public transport - fewer private cars. Also think ahead about self-driving cars. What infrastructure/road layout changes will be required (maybe 10 years from now)."

"Please stop the war on motorists, stop making the roads worse. The council's job is to make improvements. I rarely see projects by the council deliver this and yet Council tax and road tax continues to rise each year!"

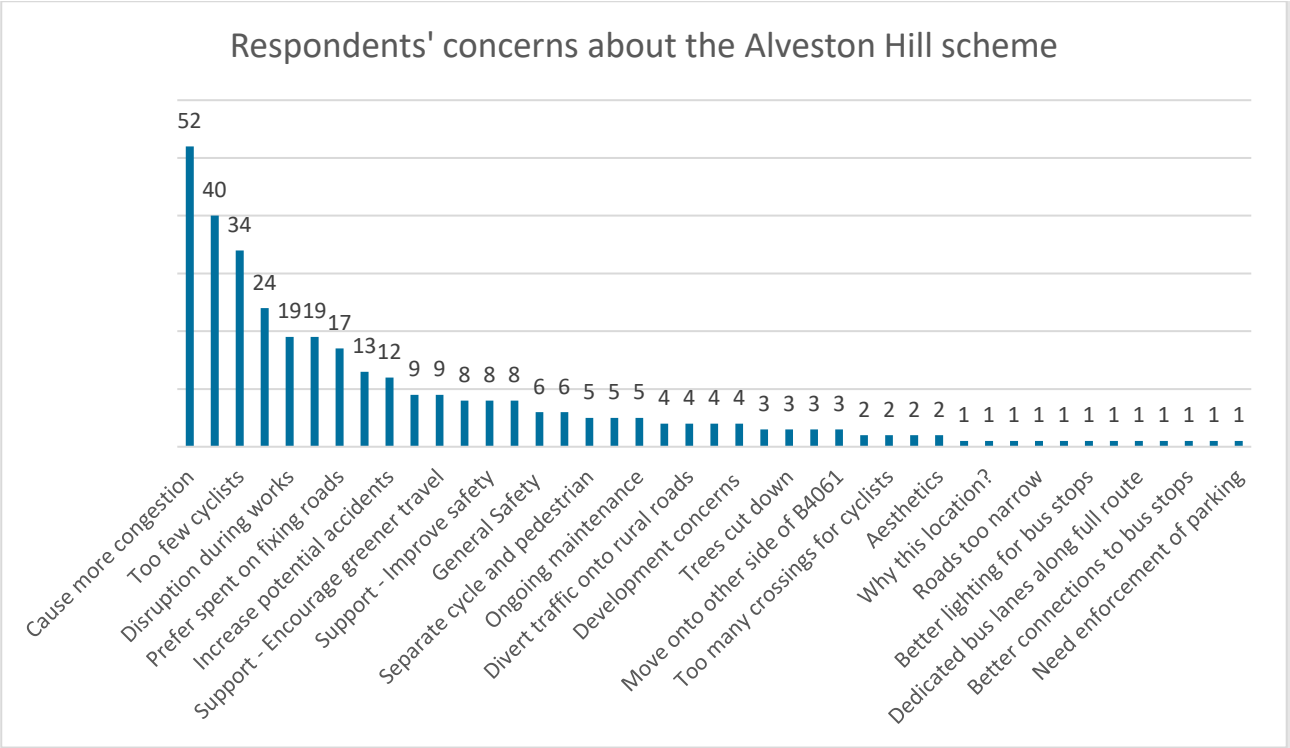
They felt what was needed was more joined up thinking and significant investment in a more holistic public transport network, including measures to make public transport a more appealing proposition, whilst supporting those who need to continue to drive. Different people put different emphasis on measures including:

- Reinstating bus routes which connect up local villages and take people where they want to go (Southmead hospital, Cribbs, Bristol),
- More frequent and reliable bus services,
- More comprehensive bus lanes,
- Reducing public transport fares,
- A mass transit system e.g. trams, light rail or underground,
- Increased investment in road maintenance,
- A park and ride scheme for Thornbury.

However, there are strongly held views on both sides of the argument and many people were extremely vocal in their opposition, both at in-person events, in correspondence with the project team and in the feedback provided through the consultation survey. The primary concerns can be roughly grouped under two headings:

- People opposed to measures focused on cyclists and pedestrians, which may lead to disruption, delays and congestion for those who either can't or don't want to consider alternatives to the car,
- Questions about the relative merit of money spent on active travel schemes in relation to what else funding could have been spent on (although it is important to note that this particular funding can only be spent on active travel measures).

The concerns expressed in response to this question are summarised in the following chart.



These frustrations are exacerbated by what people see as a lack of planning and investment in other transport alternatives and priorities. Concerns raised include:

- Bus routes being cut and services becoming increasingly infrequent and unreliable,
- Deteriorating road surfaces and potholes,
- Congestion and delays on roads,
- Perceived unnecessary ‘meddling’ with road layouts, junctions and speed limits,
- Housing development without supporting infrastructure,
- Lack of pre-planning about future transport needs.

Practical considerations and suggestions

Other than the potential issues at Down Road, respondents had few concerns about the design of the scheme. Some people felt the road was too narrow to accommodate the changes safely and environmental concerns due to the loss of grass verge and a worry that trees might be damaged or lost during construction were a concern for a handful of respondents. Issues related to specific locations are highlighted in this map for consideration by the engineers working on the plans for these proposals.

Some cyclists said they would prefer a design which included no shared use paths, no need to cross the road and which ensured priority for them throughout.

Finally, as with the question about positive impacts for active travel, some respondents ‘hijacked’ this question and told us they were in favour of the proposals and their only concern was that the scheme would not be progressed.

Comments about consultation

The council is regularly accused of not listening to local people and people commented through the consultation that they didn’t think it mattered what they said, and that decisions have already been made. This report, which will be shared with decision-makers and the

project's funders to help them make the decision on next steps, will also be published in full, giving respondents the chance to see what others have said.

Groups who are most likely to be supportive or opposed

Further analysis of the data showed that there was majority support for the proposals amongst most demographic groups, but there were some groups who were more likely to be supportive/opposed to the proposals than others.

There was strong support for the proposals amongst all age groups, except for the youngest (19-29) and the eldest (over 80). The most positive age group are those aged 60-69, and the falling cost of electric bikes may open up cycling to even more people in the future.

"A few cyclists may well be happy with the proposals, but the vast majority of residents face having their environment irrevocably ruined."

"Please bring this to fruition as soon as possible - I want it in place before I retire having cycled these roads and endured some very nasty driving behaviour for the past 17 years."

People whose properties open out directly onto the route were the most negative of any segment of respondents. This group were more likely to be opposed to all aspects of the proposals.

Net support (opposition) to proposals	Live on route	Others	Difference of opinion between groups
Pedestrian improvements	-21.40%	16.10%	37.5%
New cycleway	-32.10%	11.90%	44.0%
Bus stop facilities	11.10%	50.80%	39.7%

Considering the comments raised by this group, a range of issues were raised including:

- Difficulty accessing properties,
- Proximity of changes to boundary walls and concern about aesthetics,
- Environmental impact of reduction of green verge and associated effects on water run-off/air quality,
- Cost of moving streetlights and other utilities infrastructure and potential light pollution issues,
- Less space for bins when put out for collection.

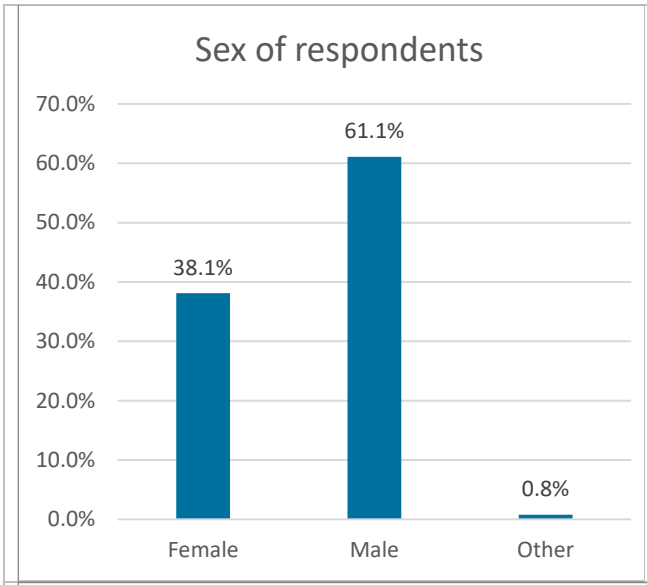
It is important to understand the perspectives of those who would potentially be most directly impacted. The project team should consider if there is anything about these specific proposals which would disproportionately adversely impact specific people and within plans consider opportunities to mitigate and minimise potential disruption.

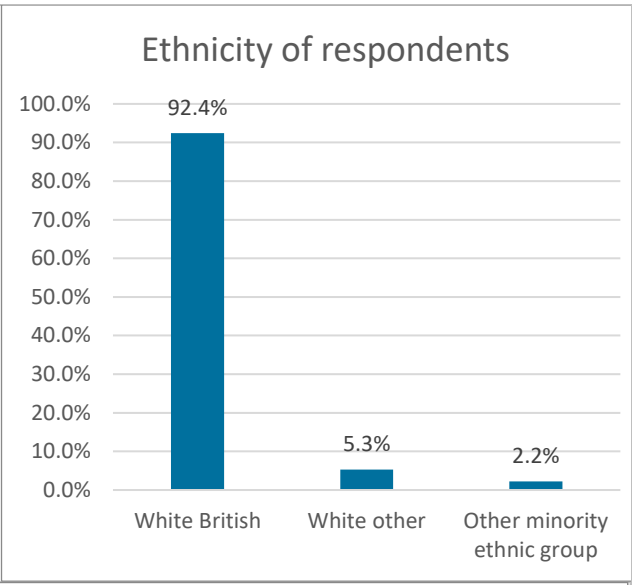
Disabled people were sceptical about the benefits of a new segregated pedestrian footpath and cycleway and were more negative than non-disabled respondents about improvements to pedestrian crossings and bus stops. Improving accessibility is one of the primary aims of these proposals, but it would appear that disabled people either do not believe that enough is being done to support their needs or that they would like money to be spent on other priorities.

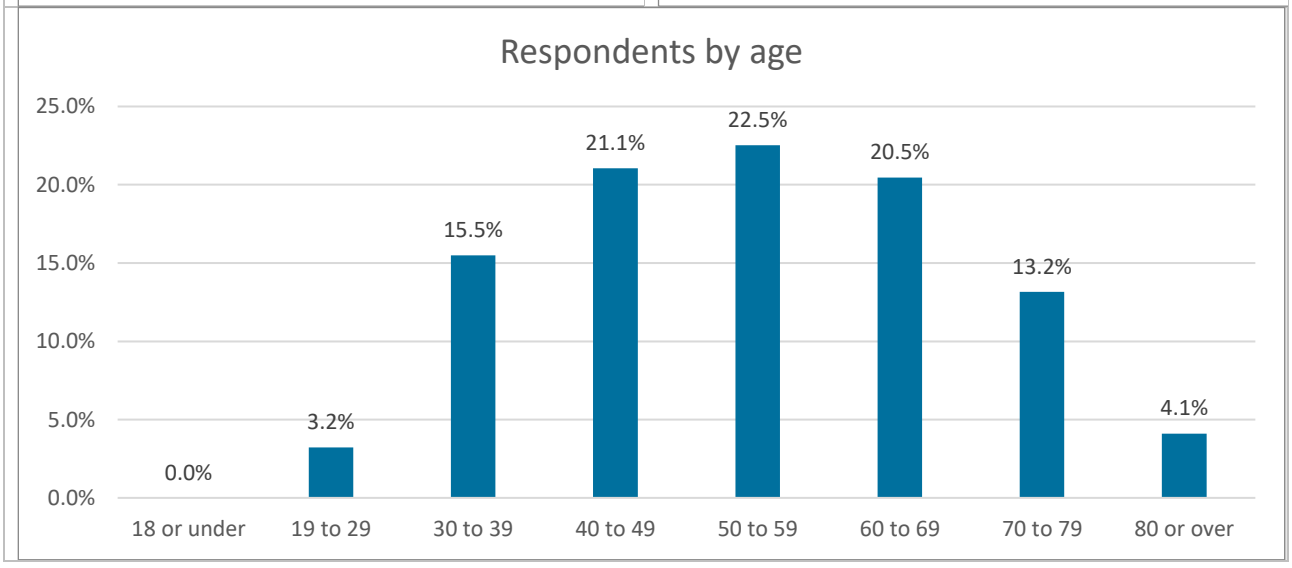
Dissatisfaction amongst disabled people is something which has been seen across multiple consultations and surveys (both in South Gloucestershire and nationally) and further investigation is required to understand if this group have specific concerns with this scheme or if this is part of a more general trend.

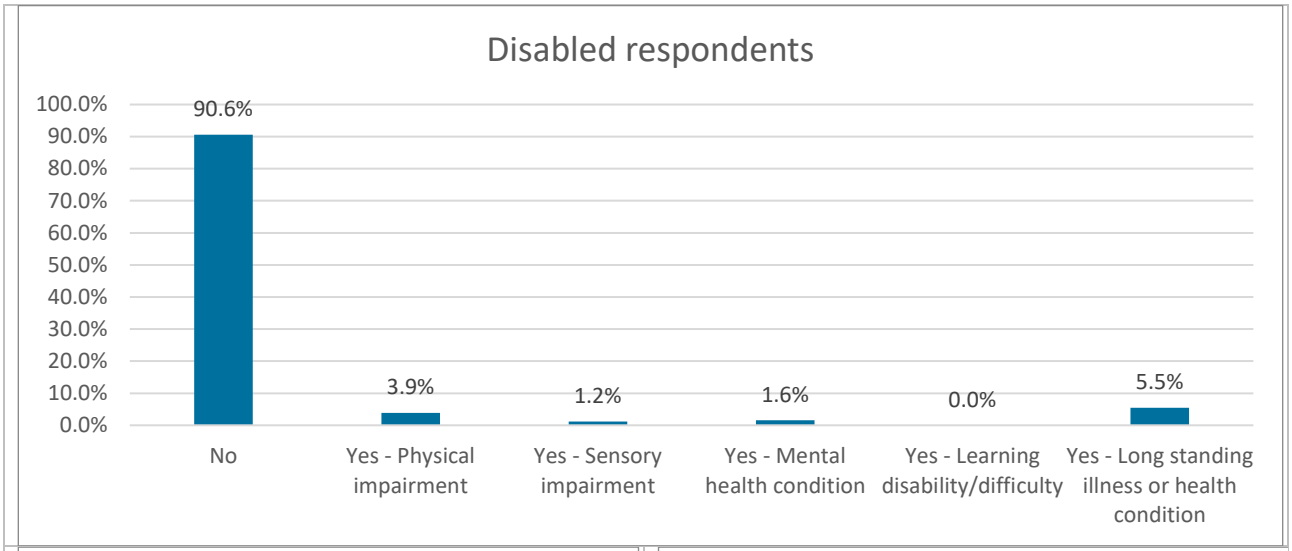
Appendix: Survey respondents

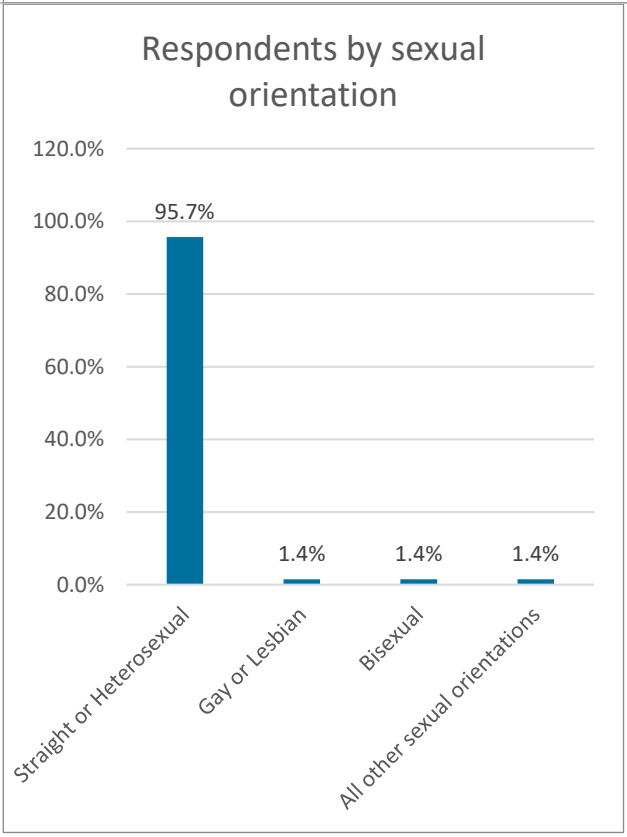
The survey sample is reasonably representative of the local population. The exceptions to this are that men would appear to be significantly over-represented and younger people (aged under 30) are under-represented.

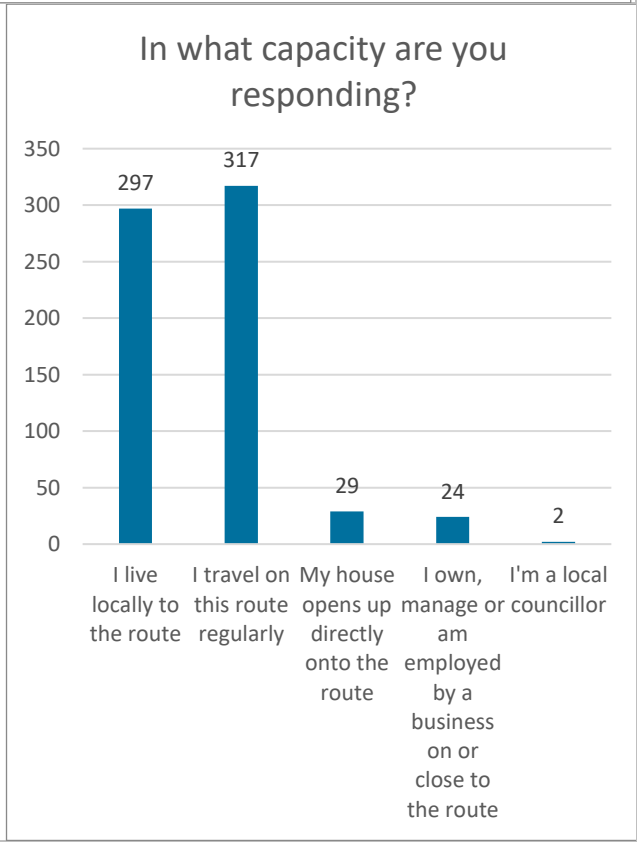







Disabled respondents
100.0%
90.0%
80.0%
70.0%
60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
90.6%
3.9%
1.2%
1.6%
0.0%
5.5%
No
Yes - Physical impairment
Yes - Sensory impairment
Yes - Mental health condition
Yes - Learning disability/difficulty
Yes - Long standing illness or health condition


Respondents by sexual orientation
120.0%
100.0%
80.0%
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
95.7%
1.4%
1.4%
1.4%
Straight or Heterosexual
Gay or Lesbian
Bisexual
All other sexual orientations


In what capacity are you responding?
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
297
317
29
24
2
I live locally to the route
I travel on this route regularly
My house opens up directly onto the route
I own, manage or am employed by a business on or close to the route
I'm a local councillor