

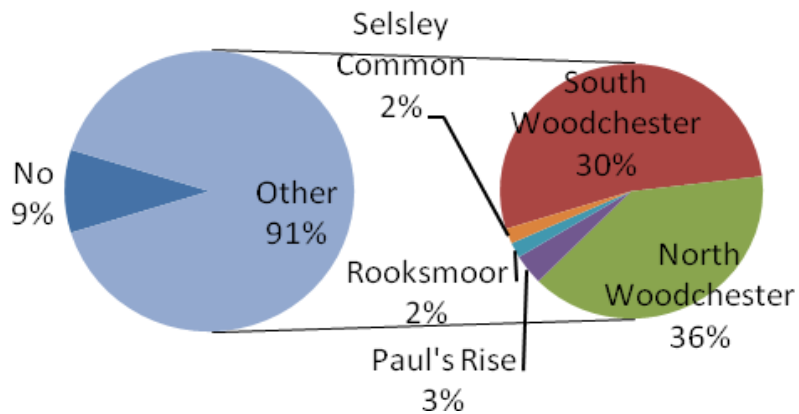
# WOODCHESTER VDS SURVEY

## Survey Summary

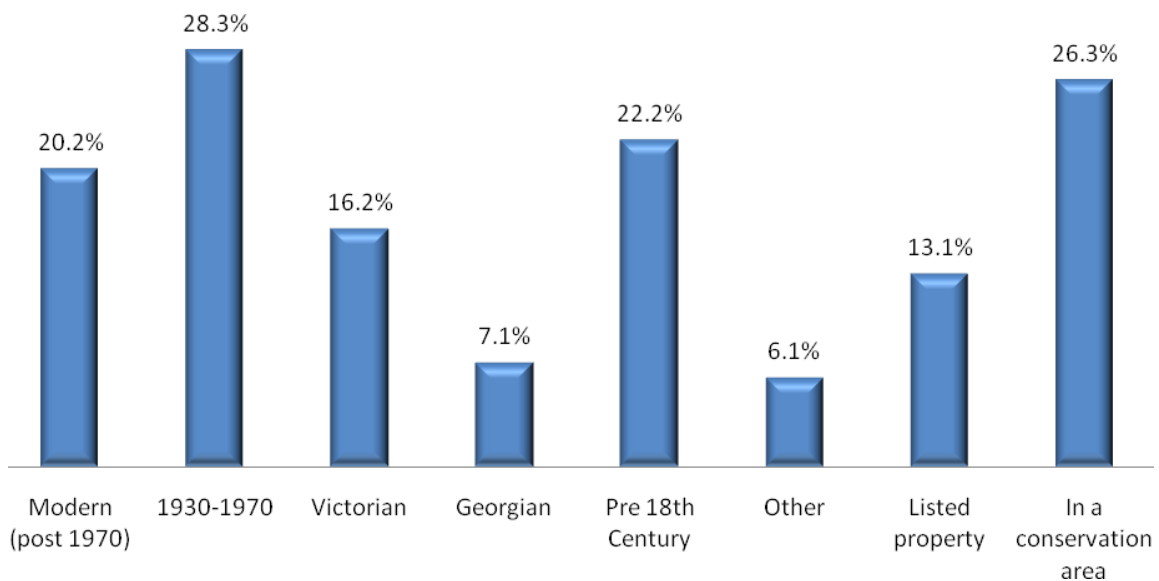
There were 105 online responses to the survey and 16 paper copies collected, these have been analysed in the summary below.

### Questions 1 to 6: Living and working in Woodchester

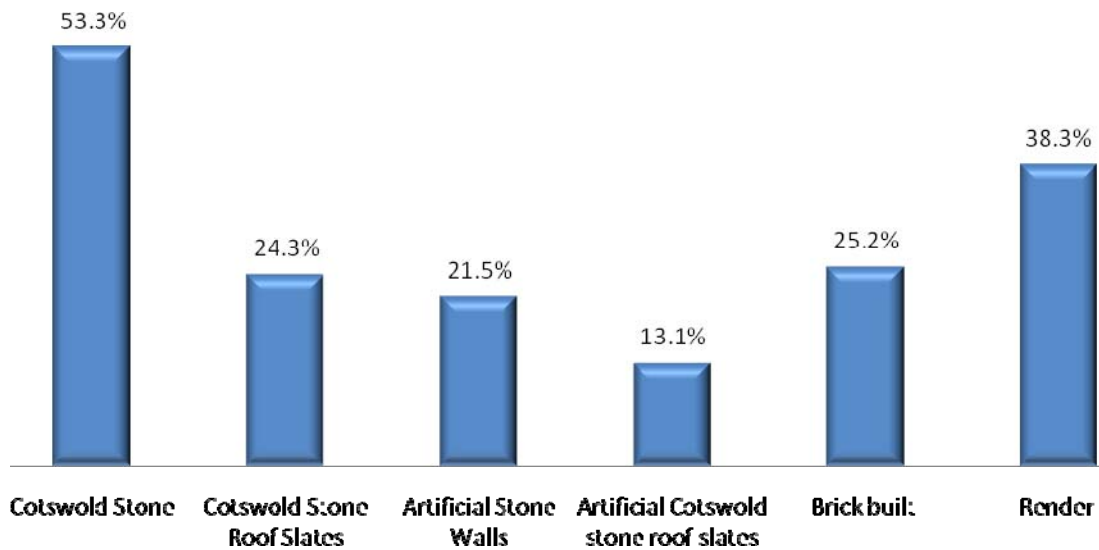
Question 1 and 2: Do you live in Woodchester and where?



Question 3: How would you describe the style of your house?

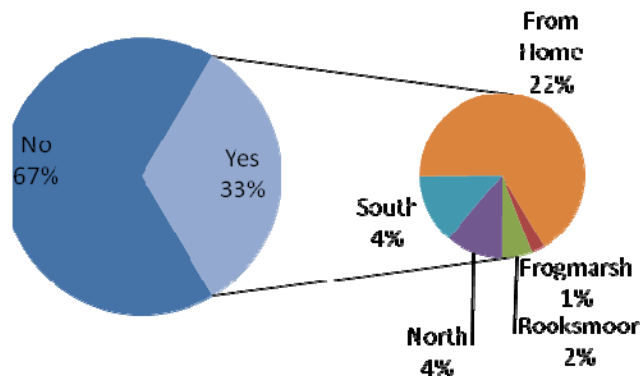


Question 4: Which of the following would be applicable to your house?



**Question 5 and 6: Working in Woodchester**

Question 5 and 6: Do you work in Woodchester, if so where?



**Question 7: Please tell us what you like and or dislike about local features, facilities and places in Woodchester.**

**Comment:**

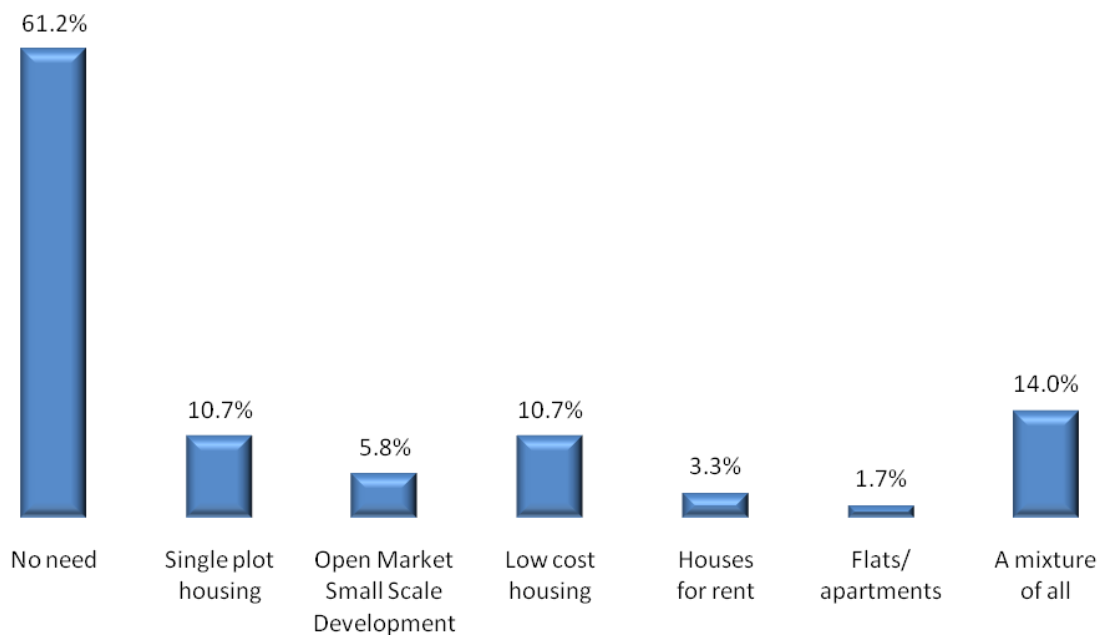
The main theme that links discussions on the quality of life in Woodchester is 'Strength through Diversity'. Likes included the setting of the two halves of the village, with a mix of historic Cotswold stone and modern reconstituted stone or brick buildings, in a lovely open valley with far reaching views of woods, fields and pasture. The village is a thriving one with a good mix of

population, excellent schools, two interesting Victorian churches, three pubs and a post office. Many residents live and work in the village and this stops Woodchester from becoming merely a dormitory or commuter village. The historical aspects (e.g. the Roman Pavement and Woodchester Mansion) are important but don't make the place 'touristy'.

The dislikes are principally two. First the run down and neglected nature of some the historic properties in the village, as well as dilapidated industrial areas. Second, that bugbear of all Cotswold villages, traffic with rat running and speeding traffic through the village and the A46 the main concerns. Other concerns were lack of a children's play area, overgrown hedges and verges and poor quality road surfaces. The density of some of the more modern housing developments was raised by some respondents but this conflicts with those who accept the need for more, especially low cost, housing in the village (See Question 9)

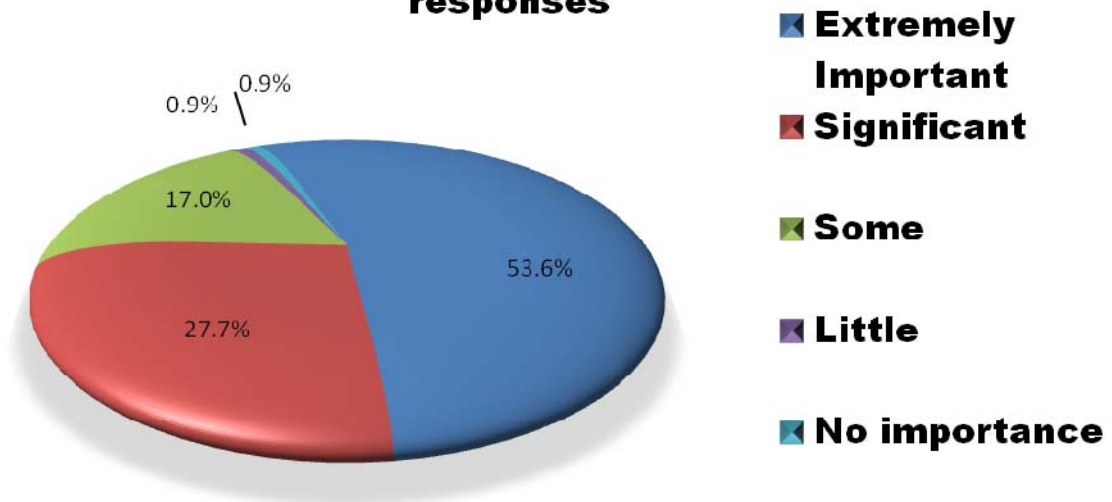
### Questions 8 to 13: Housing in Woodchester

Questions 8 and 9: Do you think that there is a need for more houses in Woodchester? If so what types?

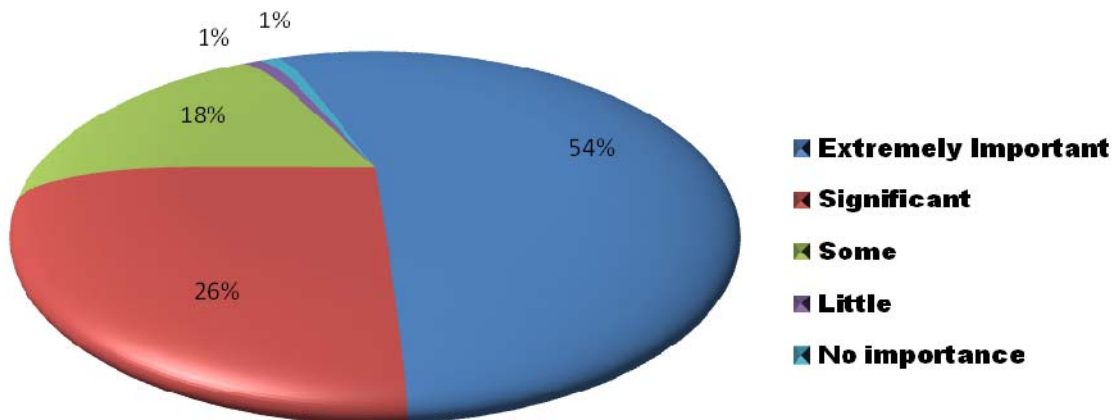


Question 10: In new buildings and extensions, how important is it to build in keeping with the immediate environment and local style of architecture?

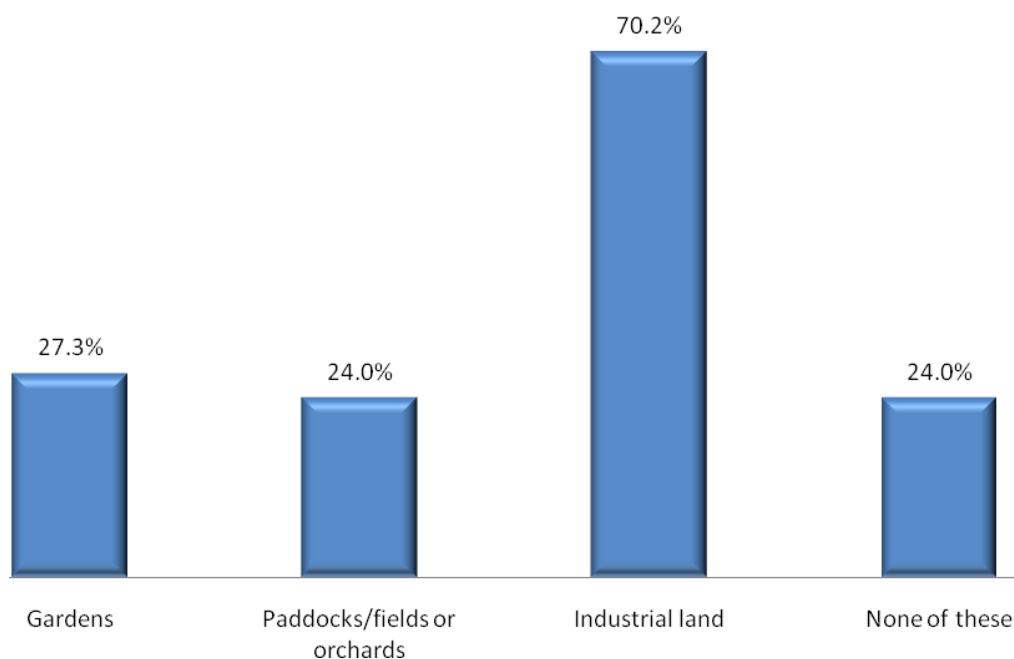
### Importance of building in keeping with environment and local architecture - All responses



### Importance of building in keeping with environment and local architecture - Residents



Question 12: Should development be permitted on the following?



### Comments: (on Questions 8 to 13)

The need for more housing in the Village divides opinion. Two thirds of respondents don't want any, or else only very limited, housing development but one third accept the need for development on selected sites. Those favoured are brownfield or existing industrial sites such as the old Fenwicks site in Station Road. Building on paddocks or orchards was strongly opposed but views were divided on in-fill development on larger gardens. The general feeling was that each case should be judged on its own merits.

As to the type of housing, just under half (47%) were in favour of a mixture of housing types with one third each in favour of low cost or single plot housing. Whatever the type of housing 80% of residents felt that it was important to ensure that any new building was in keeping with the local style of construction in stone (or reconstituted stone) in a modern interpretation of the 'Cotswold' style.

### Quotes:

"Appropriate infill would not fundamentally alter the character of the village. The retention of open spaces is essential to retain the charm of Woodchester".

"Each case should be treated on an individual basis without a blanket policy."

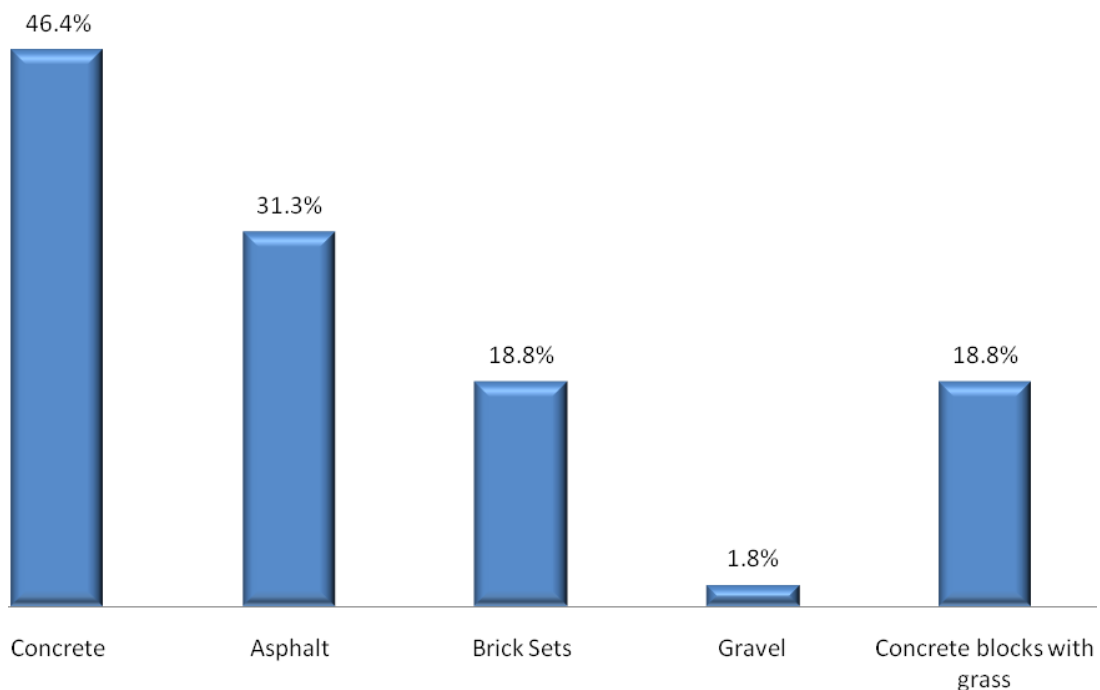
"Orchards are now a priority habitat and important for biodiversity-they should not be built on."

"I would like to see Woodchester invite architects to build housing that fits into the space available in such a way that the buildings are well regarded for beauty, carbon footprint and lead the way in 21st century living. The village should not be allowed to stagnate."

"The existing green spaces are extremely important and losing any would completely change the character of the village."

"Dense, 'urban-style' development has historically been a typical part of the Cotswold scene and, in many cases, can add to its charm. Handled carefully there is no reason why it cannot continue to do so."

**Questions 14 and 15: Where people have driveways created or substantially repaired, should they consider NOT using any of the following materials?**



**Comment:**

The opinion expressed by three quarters of all respondents was that wherever possible concrete and asphalt should not be used for driveways. Hard materials are non-porous and create run off and drainage problems particularly on sloping ground. For that reason gravel was the most favoured material. It was, however, agreed that much depended on the house and its setting. As a rule the visual impact of driveways should be minimal and the material selected should, wherever possible, blend in with its surroundings

**Quotes:**

"If it is a private driveway, I don't see it matters - we can't control everything!"

"Different materials are appropriate for different sites. The topography and surroundings have to be taken into account"

"Concrete drives are unsightly especially as they age. The temptation is to repair in patches giving an unaesthetic appearance"

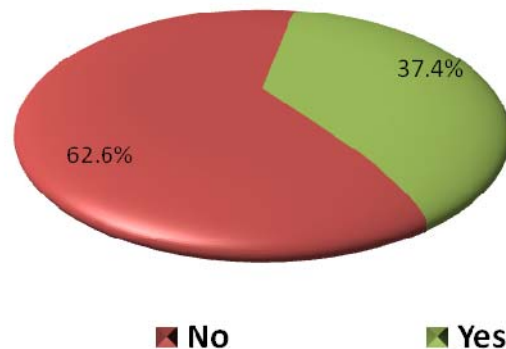
"Use of concrete, asphalt and brick sets contribute to the suburbanisation of the village which should be resisted."

"Drainage is important-gravel drives can handle a considerable amount of water"

"Gravel looks far more in keeping and weathers well, but it must have some form of edging to prevent migration on to pavements and roadways."

"I do not regard driveways as a major issue in the built environment and see no reason for automatic exclusions".

**Question 16 and 17: Is the visual aspect of energy conservation/generation measures more important than the economic/ecological benefits?**



**Comment:**

It is of interest that in an era when we are all being encouraged to be environmentally aware, 63% of respondents felt that the visual aspects of energy conservation were more important than the economic/environmental benefits. However while there was a general acceptance that every effort should be made by both individuals and communities to conserve energy and minimize waste, it was important to take a responsible view as to where and how to position renewable sources. For example a single wind turbine supplying power to the village might be more acceptable and effective than multiple small roof mounted turbines on individual houses. It was felt that applications to install inappropriate or unsightly installations, especially on listed buildings or in a conservation area, should be resisted by planning committees.

## Quotes:

"Windmills and other generating mechanisms are critical to our future. There must be a balance of good, low visual siting and economic/ecological benefits"

"Energy production is a priority issue for social and economic reasons and should not be affected by minor visual concerns."

"There might be areas of conflict as regards listed buildings where rash/ill informed decisions may be taken in mis-guided attempts to conserve energy at the cost of the historical fabric of the structure."

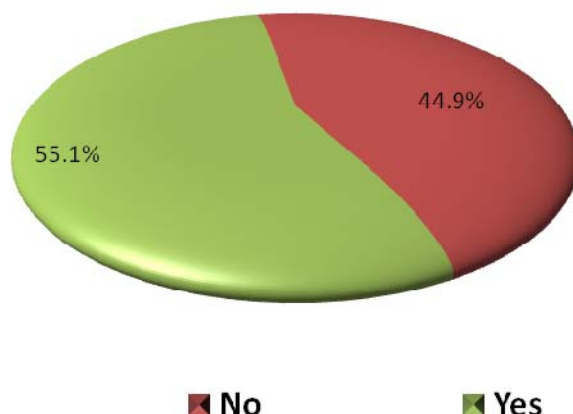
"Each application should be considered on its own merits and a decision based on the scale of impact of those that are immediately affected. Restrictions that seem to favour one point of view over another only serve to divide communities"

"We should not be afraid to make the changes which our age requires, though, of course, as sensitively as possible. This is an organic landscape, not a museum."

"Modern or naturally energy efficient materials may not always look the part but this is okay if they have a substantial environmental benefit and are sympathetically done- however we want to avoid 'greenwash' tokenistic efforts that then become an eyesore".

"If every house in Woodchester was fitted with solar panels, windmills and modern double glazed doors and windows, the main character of the village would be destroyed- there are villages with more modern housing that can accommodate this".

## Questions 18 and 19: Do you think Woodchester needs more traffic control measures?



### Comment

It is surprising, given the obvious dangers to residents and the adverse effects of noise, pollution and congestion generated by traffic in our village streets, that 45% of respondents to the survey were against more traffic controls. Perhaps this is in recognition of the fact that introducing and policing effective traffic control measures in Woodchester is fraught with difficulties. Nevertheless there was continuing concern in five main areas namely:

- The speed of traffic on the A46 and poor sight lines where roads from the village join the main road.
- The need for some form of controlled pedestrian crossing of the A 46 by the Bottle Green Factory or alternatively a pedestrian underpass using the cycle track.
- Parked vehicles causing obstruction in the High Street, South Woodchester and Selsley Road, North Woodchester.
- The need for a universal speed limit of 20mph throughout the village.
- The introduction of traffic calming measures to slow down rat-running traffic from Selsley Common to the A46.

### Quotes:

"Woodchester should look to France for their approach to laying out roads and pavements in villages where attractive designs and materials such as cobbles naturally slow vehicles and create areas that encourage pedestrians."

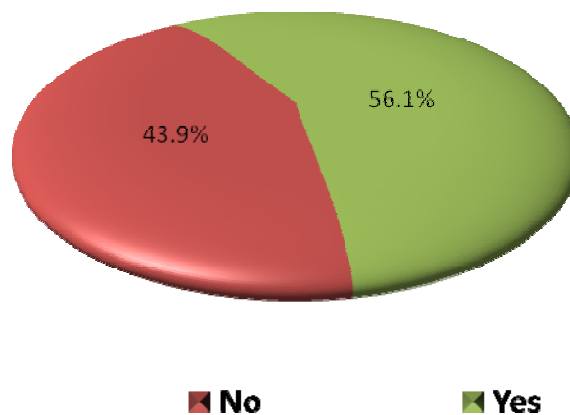
"....parked cars can sensibly reduce traffic speed"

"We need people to use Selsley Road to boost trade in the shop, post office and pub. However there must be some way of reducing the speed at which some of them travel when using it as a cut through"

"You can't actually drive safely through the village because people park so inconsiderately..."

"At least 15 children are risking their lives every day trying to cross the A46 to the bus stop by the Bottle Green Factory on their way to school.....A child will be killed here if nothing is done"

**Questions 20 and 21: Would you like to see more public parking being made available, if so where?**



**Comment**

As with traffic in the village generally, this is an emotive issue but it is of interest that 44% of respondents didn't want any more public parking spaces to be provided-and 19% of these live in South Woodchester where the problem is most acute. Trying to provide more parking space is an almost impossible problem to address due to limited space and the shortage/cost of land in both North and South Woodchester. Potential sites suggested were below the Ram and opposite the Royal Oak (the latter site is currently the subject of a planning application) or by taking a portion of land from Villa Field and/or the Piano Factory. Industrial land at Station Road and the South Woodchester Amenity land were also mentioned. Whether residents and visitors would actually be prepared to park their cars far from their homes was, however, a moot point!

**Quotes:**

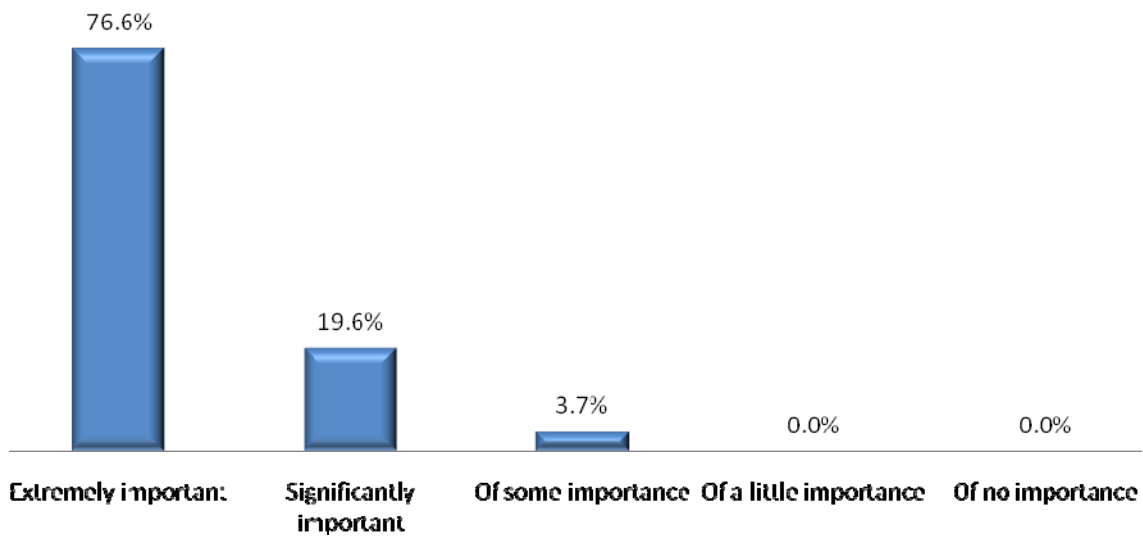
"Where? Aye, there's the rub. There is very little land available for parking in North or South Woodchester. In the South, possibly by the Ram. In the North by more constructive use of the Old Piano factory site. Acquiring other land would be costly and run into planning difficulties. Charging residents/visitors to use sites would prove unpopular and difficult to police."

"It would help if people who have garages actually kept their cars in them!"

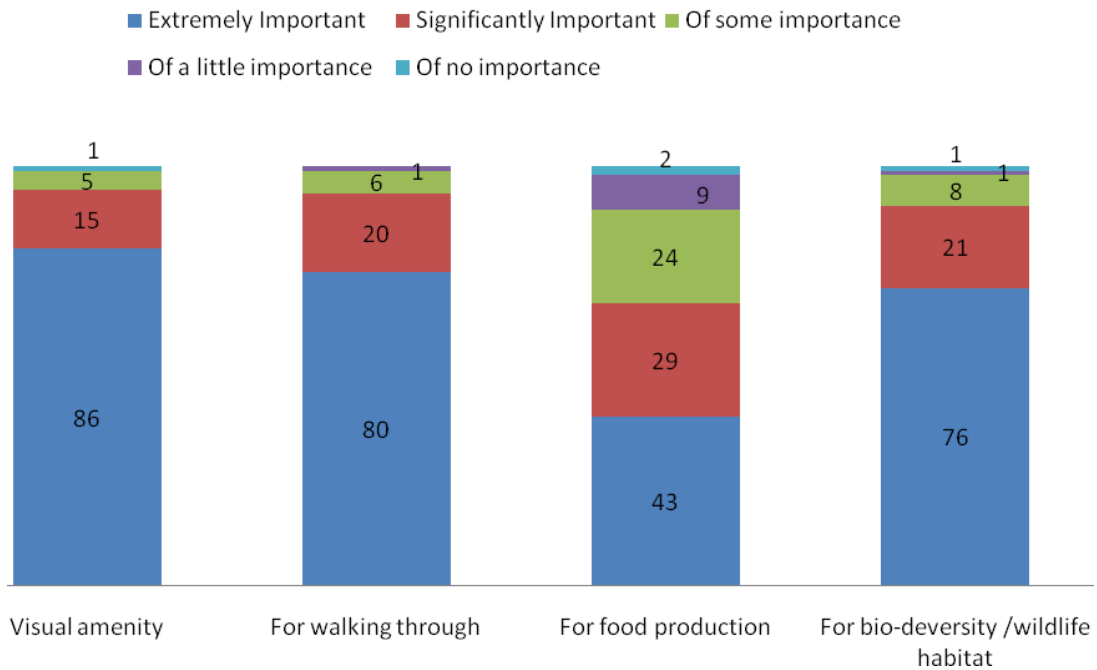
"It would be nice to have designated parking for parents bringing and collecting their children to the school, but the only place would be the Church green which would be awful"

"We do not want to see more concrete/asphalt covering green areas and car owners don't like walking"

**Question 22: How would you rate the open spaces in the village?**



**Question 23: How would you rate the surrounding fields and agricultural land?**

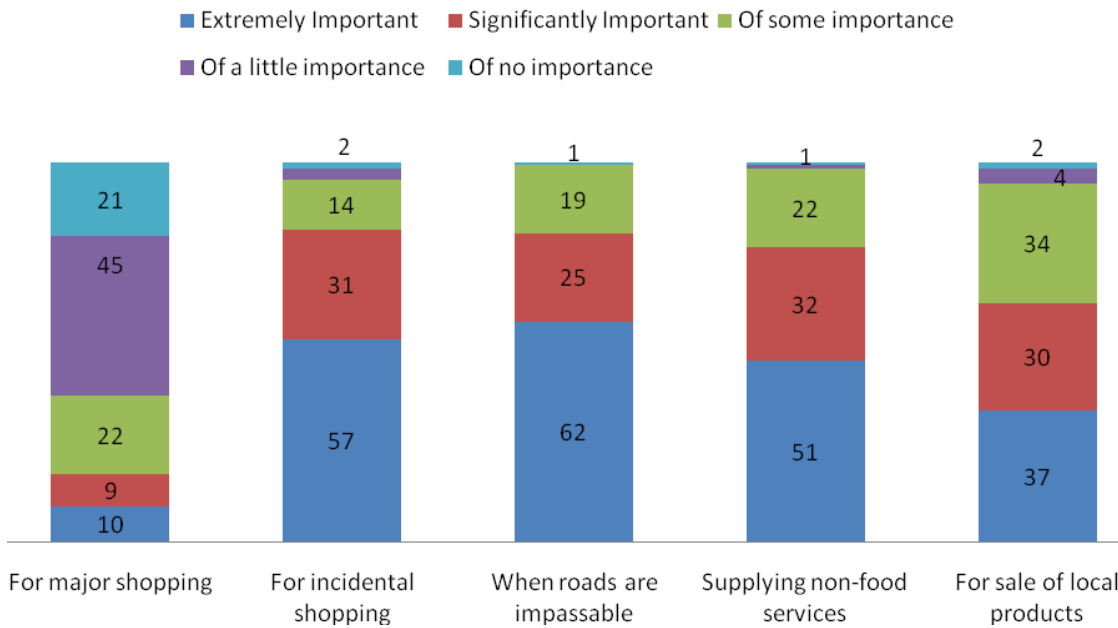


**Comment:**

Understandably visual amenity and access by public footpath to the woods, fields and pastures of the village are regarded as extremely important to the residents and they also rate biodiversity and wildlife habitat of equal importance. It is however surprising in a predominantly agricultural area that while two thirds rate food production as very important, 22.4 % think it only of some importance and 10.3% of little or no importance.

Of the eleven people who felt that use of agricultural land in the parish was of no importance for food production, three saw a need for more housing in the village but eight did not.

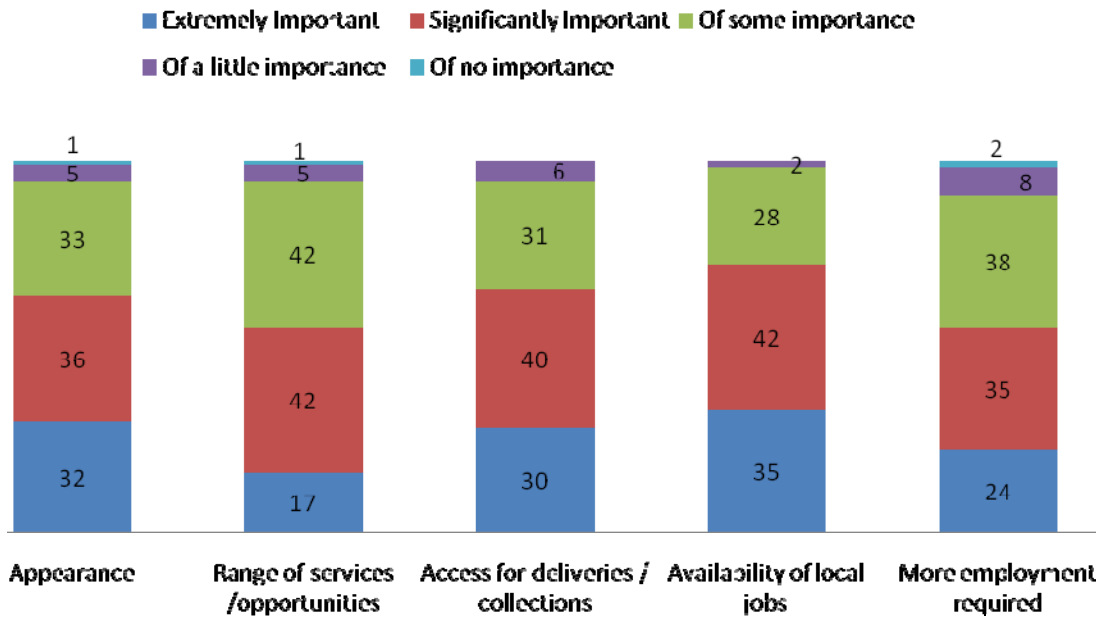
**Question 24: How important is the village shop and post office in North Woodchester?**



**Comment:**

Woodchester has already lost one shop and post office, so it is good to see that villagers strongly support the remaining shop/post office for incidental shopping, the supply of non food services and sale of local products. The latter is an area which could well be expanded and might attract more local custom as well as passing trade.

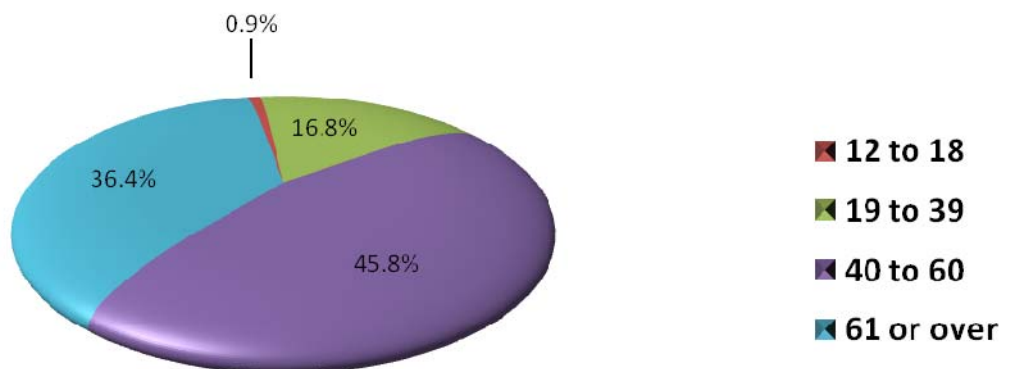
**Question 25: How important are the employment opportunities and industrial estates?**



**Comment:**

One of the strengths in Woodchester is seen in the number of local residents who both live and work in the village. Two thirds of respondents regard the availability of a range of local jobs as important to the viability of village life, though an equal number expressed concern over the run down appearance of so many of our industrial estates.

**Question 26: Can you provide some indication of your age, please?**



**Question 27: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about Woodchester and its quality of design and buildings? For example, if you had to choose one building that really captures 'Woodchester' for you, which one would it be?**

**Comments:**

Woodchester's unique character lies in its diverse mix of vernacular stone buildings of differing periods and styles, its narrow High Street, grand houses of the 17th-19th century standing in their own grounds or parks, industrial and mill sites and a hotch potch of Victorian, pre and post Second World War developments, all set in the enclosed woods and pastures of the Nailsworth valley. In sum, Woodchester may not have the unity and obvious touristy attractiveness of many typical Cotswold villages, however its strength lies in combination of the familiar and the unusual, the diversity of character, fabulous views, historical features such as the Roman Pavement and Woodchester Park, the village's association with the woollen industry of the 18th century and the sense of continuity provided by modern industries sited in older mill buildings.

No one building easily sums up Woodchester for its residents but for most the essence lies either in South Woodchester's narrow winding High Street, or in the grand houses such as Atcombe Park, Woodchester House, Southfield Mill House and the Priory. A strong claim can also be made for the village's two Victorian High Gothic Churches, the Convent of the Poor Clares, or for the industrial buildings such as Frogmarsh Mill and the converted Teazle Tower. Although they resemble other Cotswold inns, the two ancient pubs, 'The Ram' and 'The Royal Oak', among the oldest buildings in the village, sum up much of the best in Woodchester.

**Quotes:**

"The village has a nice mix of buildings of different styles from the 16th -20th centuries and lacks the architectural unity of some other Cotswold villages but that is part of its charm. Development of closely packed modern seventies style housing in North Woodchester is a bit monotonous, so there's a need to develop sites like Rooksmoor Mills or Station Road in a style that respects the industrial/mill buildings to be found elsewhere in the Stroud Valleys."

"Woodchester is a product of its history and industry and this is reflected in its layout, architecture and landscape. The high quality of the workmanship of traditional buildings is no accident and I think this has to be acknowledged when any proposals are put forward for further developments or extensions to existing buildings to avoid damaging this visual and skills heritage"

"We need to preserve the quality of buildings in the village and the green spaces in between and not allow people to develop and build houses in back gardens. However where some houses have been bought for rental, development/speculation, and/or are not lived in, they have been neglected or left to deteriorate-this should surely not be allowed."

"Woodchester is a very nice place to live because of the diversity of buildings. We have a mix of Cotswold stone, brick and render. We have large handsome houses, small cottages, two fine very good looking churches and a very successful and well run village hall. The factories and businesses fit very well into the landscape."

"Walking through the Parish offers great diversity of character, fabulous views and many historical features. All of these need preserving especially the use and retention of local stone and building styles."

"South Woodchester High Street is so beautiful and encaptures all of 18th century England. I love it!"