



At the Heart of the Vale - Our Plan for 2024-28

SUMMARY REPORT

A review of the feedback received to the proposed priority themes for the Vale of White Horse plan 2024 to 2028.

JULY 2024

If you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, email, Easy Read and alternative languages) please email jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422425.

Note: When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5. Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received.

To analyse the wide range of free text comments received, the comments have been coded and may not add up to 100%. These can be found in the tables under each theme.



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY	4
THEME 1: PROVIDING THE HOMES PEOPLE NEED	7
THEME 2: SUPPORTING CLIMATE AND NATURE RECOVERY	11
THEME 3: CREATING HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	18
HOW WE'LL GO ABOUT THIS	26
ANYTHING ELSE	29
FURTHER INFORMATION	30

The appendices are available to view in a separate document on our [previous consultations website page](#):

APPENDIX A – BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

APPENDIX B – SURVEY

APPENDIX C – ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

APPENDIX D - ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

APPENDIX E – FULL LIST OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the feedback received to the three priority themes in the 'At the Heart of the Vale' plan. It's very important to us that the plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of residents, businesses, and community groups. Therefore, we discussed these plans with our local communities to ensure we understood what they value and what areas they would like us to focus on. The plan is updated every four years and our current plan will be replaced by this one.

We ran a public engagement exercise and asked for feedback on the three priority themes that are being proposed to deliver the plan. A survey was open to all those living and working in Vale of White Horse. We asked for feedback on the following themes:

- Theme 1: Providing the homes people need,
- Theme 2: Supporting climate and nature recovery,
- Theme 3: Creating healthy, sustainable & inclusive communities.

The survey also asked questions about values and ways of working.

The engagement ran for four weeks between 16 April until 14 May 2024. In total 106 responses were received from a variety of residents, businesses, organisations and community groups, made up of 103 online submissions and 3 postal responses.

Key findings:

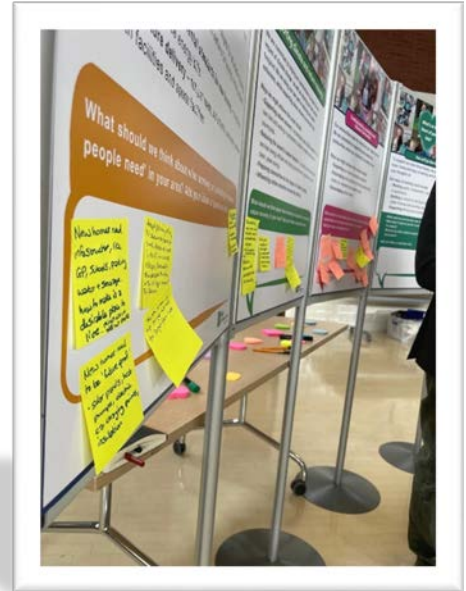
- **Theme 1: Providing the homes people need** – 64% of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.
- **Theme 2: Supporting climate and nature recovery** – 82% of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.
- **Theme 3: Creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities** – 73% of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.



ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

A total of 871 **emails** and 94 **letters** notified a wide range of stakeholders, including residents and business/organisations on the council's consultation database. The notification included a link to the survey and details on how to comment. **171** voluntary organisations and community groups representing seldom heard communities were also contacted. A copy of the engagement communication can be found at Appendix C.

A joint Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire community event was held for community groups and businesses/organisations on Thursday 18 April 2024 at Didcot Civic Hall. The session took place from 1:30 until 3pm and offered community groups and businesses the opportunity to share their views, this also included being able to write down their opinions on the exhibition boards displayed in the room. A British Sign Language Interpreter attended to support the session. 11 people attended the session and the feedback received can be viewed under each theme in this report.



A public drop-in event for residents was held at Didcot Civic Hall on the same day from 3:30pm until 5:30pm to give residents the opportunity to find out more on our upcoming plans for both districts and discuss their priorities with council officers. 11 members of the public attended.



Information boards about the priority themes and leaflets including a link to the survey were displayed at Abbey House and the Beacon for residents that may not have access to the internet or couldn't attend the drop-in event. A [virtual exhibition](#) was also available to view.

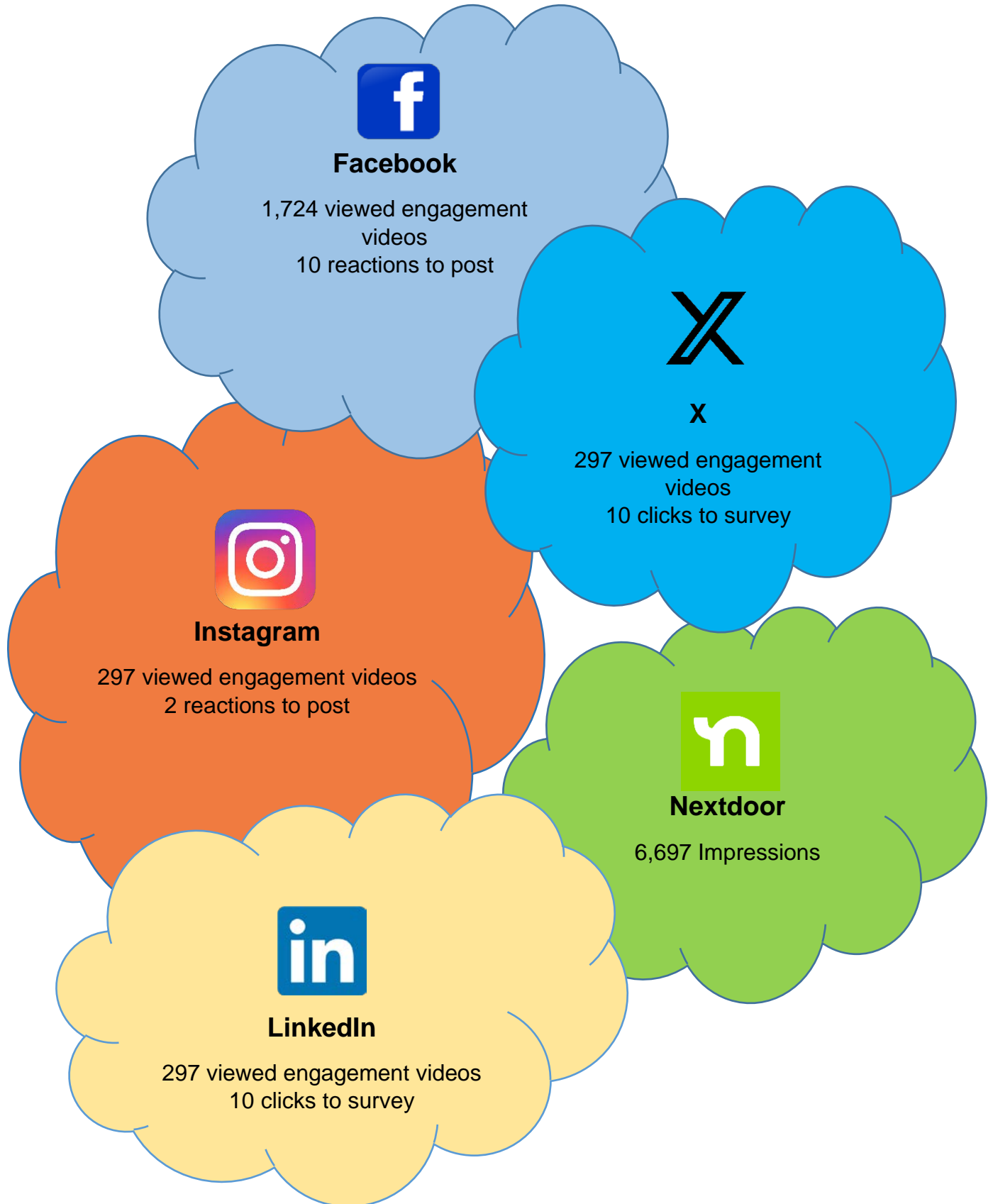
Information packs were issued to local councillors to provide them with the materials to help encourage communities to take part in the consultation. The information packs included an overview about the consultation, paper comment

forms for residents that may be digitally excluded, postcards and posters to display in community facilities to help spread the word.

Paper copies of the poster and postcards were displayed in all libraires to help promote engagement.

Residents aged 18 to 25 had the opportunity to win a £25 high street voucher if they provided their feedback to the online survey.

Social media campaigns ran throughout the consultation period across the following channels: X, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and LinkedIn. The statistics are provided below.



Reporting methodology

At the Heart of the Vale - Our Plan for 2024-28, July 2024

A summary of the comments to the consultation is included in this report. Any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify anyone has been redacted and will not be shared or published in the report. Further information on data protection is available in our general consultation's [privacy statement on our website](#).

The following postcode 'B3 1' has been excluded from the postcode map in appendix D as it is invalid. The total number of postcodes plotted are 98 out of 99.

Some spelling, grammatical and punctual errors in the original comments raised were corrected in the main body of this report; a full list of unedited comments can be found in Appendix E.

THEME 1: PROVIDING THE HOMES PEOPLE NEED

All our residents deserve a place they can call home and we aim to make this a key focus of everything we do at the council. We have already begun work on a separate plan to contribute towards this objective known as our Joint Local Plan - you may have taken part in a detailed consultation on it earlier this year.

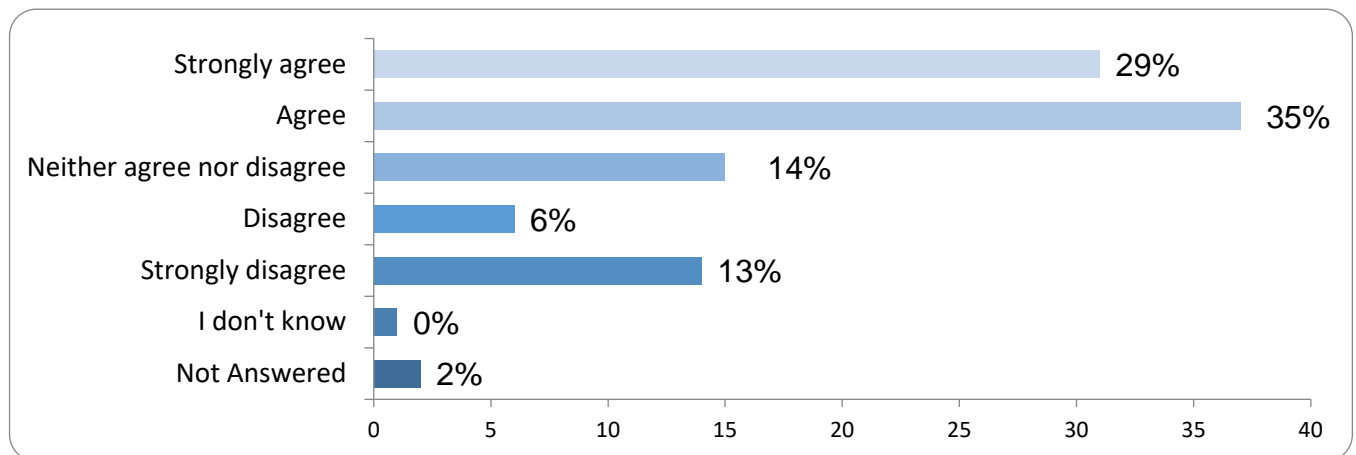


We will set planning policies to achieve more genuinely affordable housing and high environmental standards. We will seek to ensure this is matched with the infrastructure needed to support these new homes – not just roads, but schools, community centres, health facilities and sports facilities.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- The delivery of new homes - with higher targets for affordable housing.
- Secure a wide housing mix and options for buying, renting and shared ownership.
- Setting high environmental standards for new housing to help the climate and reduce energy bills.
- Infrastructure delivery – not just roads, but schools, community centres, health facilities and sports facilities.

We asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that "providing the homes people need" should be included as a theme in our plan. 64% expressed agreement, with 35% stating they strongly agree and 29% selecting agree, whilst 19% disagree, 13% indicating they strongly disagree and 6% selecting disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that "Providing the homes people need" should be included as a theme in our plan?

72 comments were received in relation to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

Nearly half of all the comments (46%) highlighted the existing infrastructure deficit (roads, schools, GPs etc) within the Vale. They requested that meaningful action was taken to address the problems being faced by current residents before any new housing was built. Further, if additional development was to occur, then amenities, services and facilities must be delivered simultaneously.

38% of comments stated that the Vale was already overdeveloped. In addition to the aforementioned issues surrounding the provision of infrastructure, concerns were raised about the loss of green spaces, the destruction of wildlife habitats and the urbanisation of rural areas. 25% of comments highlighted the topic of affordability. The comments emphasised that more needed to be done to ensure that people (especially those from the local area and/or earning average salaries) were able to purchase homes within the district. Concerns were raised that many of the recent housing developments within the Vale did not cater for existing residents.

18% of comments stressed the importance of achieving an appropriate housing mix within the district. They wanted to see the provision of more starter homes and the increased use of different tenure structures (shared ownership, social housing etc). Some comments expressed disappointment about the seeming dominance of identikit homes across many housing sites in the Vale.

What matters most to you under this theme?

88 comments were received in relation to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

38% of comments raised the issue of infrastructure including existing issues related to the provision of school places and GP surgeries etc, as well as specifically commenting on the pressures being placed on the district's roads. Other comments stressed the need for this infrastructure deficit to be alleviated as a matter of urgency – ideally before any major new housing developments were delivered. If new homes are to be built, some respondents emphasised the importance of the concurrent provision of schools, GP surgeries etc.

Just over a quarter of comments (26%) highlighted the topic of affordability. They wanted to see the increased provision of genuinely affordable houses – preferably for local residents. Comments expressed concern that people were unable to get on the housing ladder, were being priced out of the area or being forced into expensive, sub-optimal private rented accommodation.

An equal number of comments (26%) mentioned the issue of the Vale's housing mix. Respondents wanted to see different types and tenures of housing being offered across the district. Calls were made for the increased provision of social housing and a move away from the plethora of non-descript boxes that seemingly dominate many developments.

23% of comments cited the importance of green spaces and the countryside, wanting to see increased protection for these areas. Concerns were also raised that many fields and other green spaces were being lost to development.

22% of comments raised the topic of sustainability and environmental standards. If housing was to be delivered in the district, they wanted to see homes that were built to the highest specification and all new homes should be low/zero carbon, well insulated, with solar panels and/or heat pumps as standard. In addition, developments should provide green, natural spaces and be designed to allow wildlife to flourish.

13% of the comments highlighted the importance of creating communities. They wanted to see more done to foster a sense of place, with greater degrees of interaction between residents.

What should we think about when working on 'providing the homes people need' in your area?

93 comments were received in relation to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

46% of the comments stated that the council should be thinking about infrastructure when working on “providing the homes people need”. They highlighted the need for improved roads, more dentists and doctors, new schools and community facilities etc. and emphasised that these needed to be co-delivered alongside any new housing developments. They also stressed the importance of addressing the existing infrastructure deficit before any more homes were built.

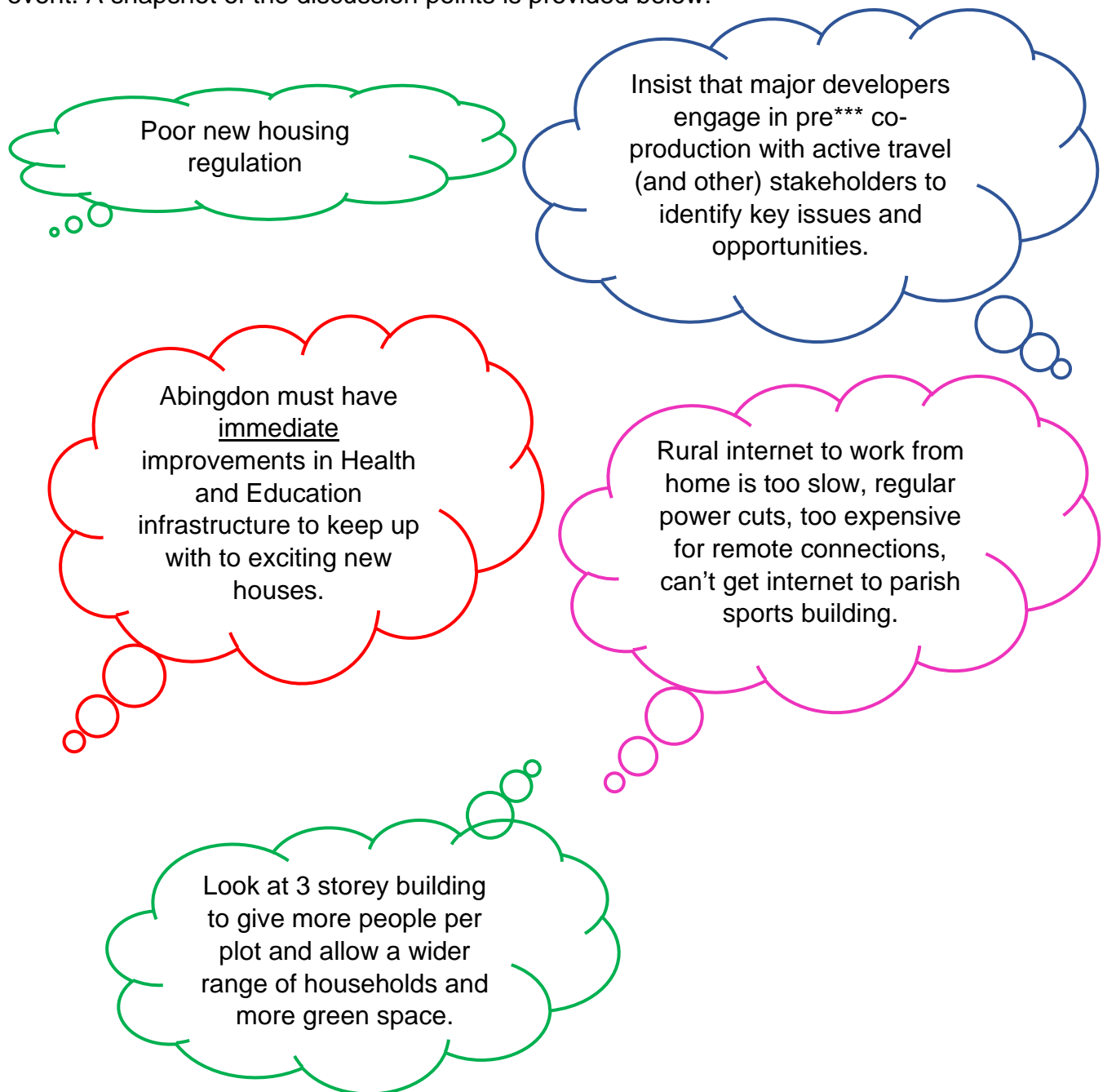
38% of comments suggested that the Vale should be considering the housing mix. They wanted to see a greater variety of properties being offered across the district, with preferences being expressed for both starter homes and accommodation for older people. Furthermore, participants wished to see the increased use of different types of tenure (social housing, shared ownership etc).

Just under a third of the comments received (31%) highlighted the importance of affordability. The comments mentioned wanting to see more genuinely, affordable homes being provided for people across the district. Concerns were expressed that the current housing situation was pricing young people, key workers and low-paid employees out of the district.

29% of the comments emphasised the significance of the climate and the environment. People wanted to see homes that were low/zero carbon, were well-insulated with solar panels and/or heat pumps as standard. They should also have gardens and/or be close to accessible green spaces. Further, new developments should be wildlife friendly, be well-connected to important amenities and facilities and should not infringe on the countryside.

Just over a quarter of the comments (26%) proposed that the Vale should be thinking about existing residents. In addition to highlighting the existing infrastructure deficit, feedback expressed the opinion that the council did not pay enough attention to their views and/or did not adequately involve them in planning decisions.

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 1 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points is provided below.



THEME 2: SUPPORTING CLIMATE AND NATURE RECOVERY

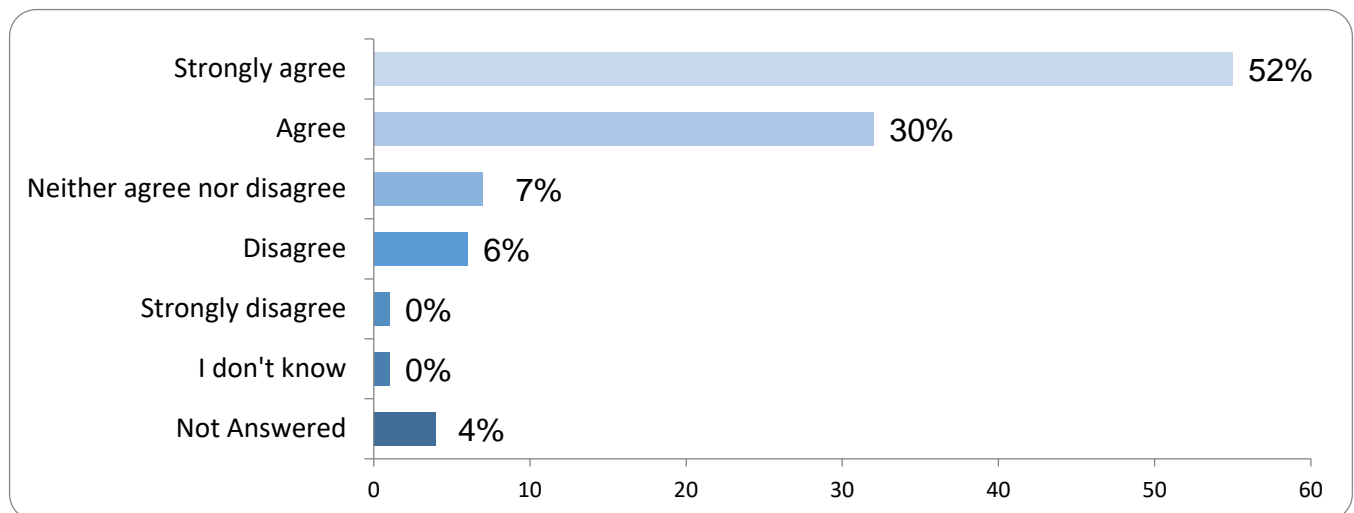
We are committed to helping our communities to prepare for the impact of climate change, as well as reducing our own carbon footprint and our own part in reducing our carbon emissions, while supporting nature recovery across the Vale.



Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Supporting nature recovery - by developing new wildlife habitats on our own land and working in partnership to deliver a healthy and diverse countryside.
- Reducing the council's carbon footprint - by making our buildings and services energy efficient and taking opportunities to generate our own clean green energy.
- Preparing communities for the impact of climate change.
- Influencing carbon reduction across the district.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that "Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability" should be included as a theme in our plan and 82% agreed, which includes 52% that strongly agree and 30% that agree, while 6% disagree with this statement.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that "Supporting climate and nature recovery" should be included as a theme in our plan?

There were 86 comments received in response to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The most frequently received comment highlighted the importance of protecting the green and blue environment (15%), giving nature and people access to open space.

13% of comments stated supporting climate and nature recovery should be a priority.

For some, the focus was on development and how construction has an impact on climate and nature recovery. 9% suggested we should stop development and build less houses – particularly on green space and removing hedgerows.

Means of transportation was another key point included within comments. Several mentioned the importance of active travel (5%), in particular the need for appropriate infrastructure and user safety.

5% noted the need for improved public transport.

Comments were also made on the need to take action (5%) and use active language and be specific about what action the Vale will take.

Some comments mention the need for cost analysis (5%), suggesting the costs of projects do not outweigh the impact, and it should not be ‘green at all costs’.

A further 5% of comments noted that climate and nature recovery is not a priority and the Vale’s focus should be on other areas.

Comments on transportation also raised the point that there is a reliance on private cars (3%), due to practicality for families and the Vale being a rural district.

Retrofitting (3%) was another issue included within comments - of council owned buildings and supporting residents to retrofit their own properties.

Comments also raised that everyone needs to do their bit to support climate and nature recovery (3%).

Other comments can be seen in the table below.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Protect green/blue space	13
Should be a priority	11
Stop development	8
Active travel	4
Improved public transport	4
Take action - active language and specific plans	4
Cost analysis	4
Not a priority	4
Reliance on private cars	3
Retrofitting	3
Everyone needs to do their bit	3
Working together	2
Developers should do more	2
Protect and engage with farmers	2
Renewable energy	2
Flood prevention	2
Tree planting	2
Carbon reduction	2
Grass cutting – cut grass more	1
Grass cutting – provide comms on why grass is not cut	1
Utility companies should clean up our waterways	1

Encourage Electric Vehicles	1
Rural community so green space is not a major issue	1
20 mph speed limit	1
Issues from climate change will get worse	1
Supporting HIF1 is supporting urbanisation on green belt and floodplain	1
Little understanding of how fast the climate is deteriorating	1
Corporate plan should not exceed the scope of the document	1
I don't know	1
Total	86

What matters most to you under this theme?

104 comments were received to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The most frequently received comments included the importance of protecting and restoring wildlife and habitats (18%) and around the importance of the green, blue and open space in the Vale (16%).

8% of comments stated we need to Influence change - from residents and businesses in the Vale to really support climate and nature recovery.

6% commented that carbon reduction matters most.

Others (8%) specified that regulations matter most – the majority agree with the use of regulations, but one highlighted the need to be realistic with their impact on the global picture.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Protecting and restoring wildlife/ habitats	19
Green, blue and open space	17
Influence change	8
Carbon reduction	6
Regulations	6 5 for and 1 against the use of regulations
Preparing for the impacts of climate change	5
Sustainability	5
Tree planting	4
Community engagement	3
Planning and development management	3
Renewable energy	3
Active travel	3
Public transport	3
Reliance on private cars	2
Infrastructure	2
Lead by example	2

Recycling	2
Taxes	2
All of it	2
Community centres	1
Costs	1
Flooding	1
Littering	1
Shouldn't be its own theme	1
Be realistic	1
Retrofitting	1
Waste reduction	1
River pollution	1
Other	3
Total	104

What should we think about when working on 'supporting climate and nature recovery' in your area?

153 comments were received to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The most frequently mentioned comments were about green, blue and open space (15%) when working on supporting climate and nature recovery.

The next was planning and development (13%) whether that be through policies on the requirement for solar panels or the location of new housing developments.

7% mentioned we should stop building on green space.

Transport and travel (7%) was included in several comments, making commuting more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Wildlife and nature (6%) was commented on as being something we should think about.

Education (5%) was another issues raised with educate residents about the impact of the climate crisis, and how they can make a difference in their own lives.

Some focussed on active travel (5%) and others on public transport (4%).

For some, sustainable construction and retrofitting (4%), is what we should think about.

Renewable energy (4%) was also included as something we should think about, both in terms of the generation of energy, and using the energy generated.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Green, blue and open space	23
Planning and development	20
Stop building on green space	10
Transport and travel	10
Wildlife and nature	9
Education	8
Active travel	8
Public transport	6
Sustainable construction and retrofitting	6
Renewable energy	6
Planting trees	5
Working with local groups	4
Realistic	3
Industry and agriculture	3
Wildflowers	2
Less grass cutting	2
Cost analysis	2
Reduce, reuse, recycle	2
Funding	2
Council owned land	2
Food production	2
Drainage	2
Not a priority	2
Avoid big renewable energy schemes	2
Commitment to action	2
Partnership	1
Electric vehicles and charging infrastructure	1
Fly tipping	1
Regulation	1
Lead by example	1
Copy successful examples	1
River pollution	1
Concern/ distress	1
Food waste	1
Support	1
Total	153

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 2 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points is provided below.

Build for the future – all new houses should be “green” – solar panels, charging points for EVs etc.

Incentives for private landlords to be green – better epc – insulation / solar etc

Talk to other councils about coordinated removal of free parking – this is just subsidising care use but best removed all together.

Providing the infrastructure to make it happen e.g community compost or aerobic digestion, electric car charging points etc.

Tree planting and nature recovery activates need to be sustainable and long term. Don't just plan things are leave them to die.

Balance nature and residents need for housing.

Look at existing Nature Recovery Partnerships e.g Long Mead Nature Recovery – meadow restoration – largely volunteer leg, hugely community embedded – very successful

Review expenditure, costs and saving for fewer streetlights – low energy time etc

The community event session also included a chance for community groups and businesses/organisations to share their thoughts or expand on the points included on the exhibition boards. A snapshot of the discussion points is provided below.

- What can we do to support (not do) community action.
- Just remove the barriers – the enthusiasm is there.
- We don't need large scale solutions to everything – lean on local experts.
- Community led climate and sustainability group do work.
- Community enablement teams to support.
- Unconstituted local groups have the enthusiasm and expertise.
- There is only so much a district council can do – green spaces are largely T&P (town and parish) – enable them to undertake ecological assessment so they can achieve what we all want.
- Celebrating and encouraging people to take part in what we do.
- Helping and encouraging people to replicate existing good work.



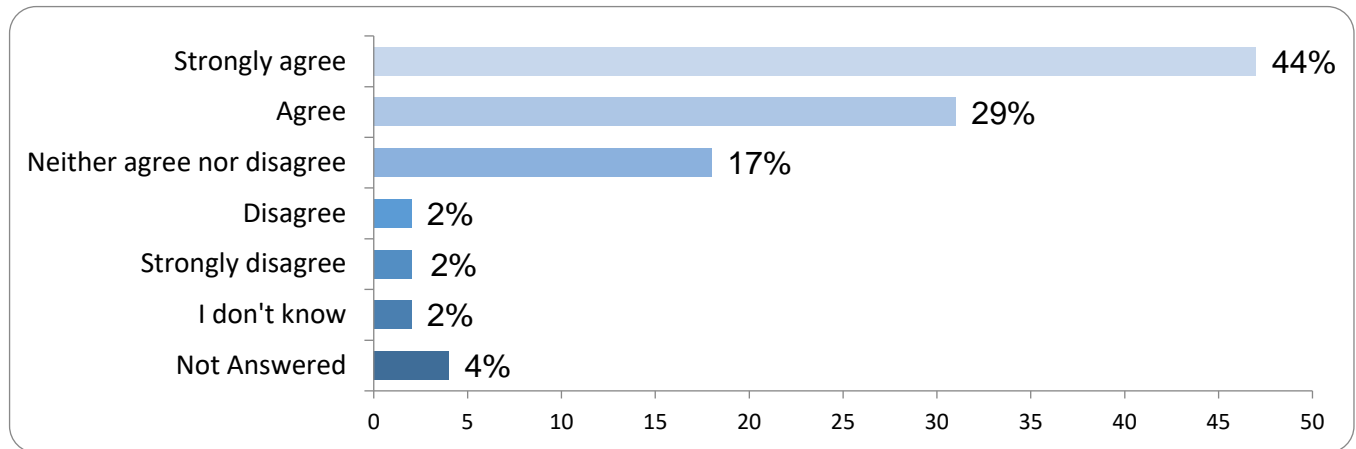
THEME 3: CREATING HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Our communities mean far more than just "where we live". We are committed to supporting and sustaining communities where our residents live healthy lives.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Supporting our most vulnerable residents.
- Encouraging and sustaining thriving communities where our residents live healthy lives.
- Encouraging active travel.

The survey asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that "creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities" should be included as a theme in our plan. 73% agree with this theme with 44% stating they strongly agree and 29% selecting they agree, whilst 4% disagree with 2% stating they strongly disagree 2% that disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities' should be included as a theme in our plan?

56 comments were received to this question.

20% of the comments were in relation to healthy communities (important/ saves resources). Some of the comments received were:

- *Healthy communities take less from the national budget in health care.*
- *Healthy communities will use fewer resources.*

18% of comments mentioned the need for inclusion within the community (required/lack of it/improvement required). Comments received included:

- *our communities are increasingly split by the wealth divide, prompting alienation and in some cases antisocial behaviour. If everyone can feel part of the community, and can find a way of contributing there is a much better chance of the community facing future challenges (e.g. climate change) successfully.*
- *It's very important that people feel involved in their local area and everyone should be included.*

14% raised points around community infrastructure (lack of it/improvement required/benefits of having it). For instance:

- *better access to sports clubs and better funding for children*
- *we have witnessed first hand the value that community centres give to local interest groups as well as providing access for their community to national groups. These provide many of the headline benefits if this theme but seem to be below the radar for the council.*

11% of comments were in relation to active travel, highlighting the need to encourage the initiative, whilst other comments felt improvements are required to make it a success, and it's not a solution for all. Comments included:

- *Active travel is great, but, more thought needs to be given as to how it's achieved. By way of example, the recent clearing to full width foot and cycle paths around Abingdon has made a big difference to accessibility and is very visible.*
- *The only way to cope with future climate impacts is to pull together. Encouraging active travel and generally active communities is vital for all.*

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Healthy communities (important/ saves resources)	11
Inclusion within the community (required/lack of it/improvement required)	10
Community infrastructure (lack of it/improvement quired/benefits of having it)	8
Active travel (encourage/improvements required/not a solution for all)	6
Other	5
Communities develop organically	3
Consideration of this theme is required	3
Active travel (encourage/improvements required/not a solution for all)	2
Community engagement with marginalised communities	2
Improve housing options	2
Focus on improving infrastructure	1

Engagement and support for communities/ marginalised communities	1
Improve travel options (bus routes/more frequent/ expand)	1
No comment	1
Positively prepared, well-evidenced and sound JLP should be a key objective of the Corporate Plan	1
Total	57

What matters most to you under this theme?

64 comments were received to this question and a summary of the most frequently mentioned topics are provided below.

31% of the comments received focused on the health and wellbeing of communities, more specifically, in relation to the need of activities and healthy eating.

26% expressed the need for inclusivity, accessibility and support within communities by *supporting the vulnerable*, providing *access for all*, *respect for everyone* and *being fully inclusive*.

9% mentioned infrastructure (lack of it/improvements required) within the districts. Some comments related to the need for infrastructure related to new build developments, whilst others mentioned the need for cycling infrastructure.

Another 8% of comments were in relation to transport, more specifically ensuring communities have *safe, innovative and sustainable transportation options* and that *developments should be fully integrated with the public transport plan*.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Health and wellbeing of communities	20
Inclusivity and accessibility within communities/support	17
Infrastructure (lack of it/improvements required)	6
Transport	5
Other	4
No comments	3
Active travel	2
Healthcare provision	2
Effective use of resources	2
Green Spaces	2
A Joint Local Plan that fully considers the districts housing needs	1
Cutting carbon	1
Clear plan to tackle the needs and challenges within the districts	1
Integrated planning	1
Sort Abbey Meadows Swimming Pool	1
Strengthen theme before asking for comments	1
Structured approach in line with government guidelines	1
Everything included within this theme	1
Suggested wording for theme	1

Continue to bring council services in house	1
Total	73

What should we think about when working on 'creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities' in your area?

64 comments were received to this question and a summary of the most frequently mentioned topics are provided below.

31% of comments were linked to local services and facilities (access and support required), more specifically around the need for sports and leisure facilities within communities that are accessible and affordable. A snapshot of the comments included:

- *Access to affordable leisure fitness facilities to create community with health first (self help) ethos)*
- *Activities that bring people together, facilities that make this possible.*

9% included references to active travel (required/improvements needed), some talked about the need for it, whilst others included improvements that are required to make the initiative successful. For example, by *providing safe routes to school and encouraging people of all ages to be as active as possible and maintain social connections* and by *reducing all speed limits to max of 40mph to make active travel safer.*

Another 9% raised points in relation to having consideration for housing developments by *spreading them out within the vale as a small add on to villages and hamlets so you do not spoil the feel of the community you wish to preserve.*

A further 9% would like the council to think about open spaces/ green spaces (required and protect existing) when considering this theme. Comments included:

- *Open spaces to offer free and welcoming places to suit a range of different ages and interests.*
- *Ensure sufficient green spaces with sports facilities.*

Other comments focused on the need to support public transport, but it needs to be reliable (8%), community engagement and communications via the council (8%) and a further 8% stated the council need to think about the needs of the community, by 'giving the people what they want and giving *ordinary people a voice.*

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comment	Number of comments
Local services and facilities (access and support required)	20
Active travel (required/improvements needed)	6
Consideration for housing developments	6
Open spaces/ green spaces (required and protect existing)	6
Support public transport/needs to be reliable	5
Improve community engagement and communications	5
The needs of the community	5
Support for communities and businesses	4
Reaching out to seldom heard and marginalised communities	4
Inclusion	4
More healthcare provision	4
Cross working with local services, groups and T&P's	3
Consideration for hidden disabilities	2
No comments	2
Provision for young people	2
Lessons learned from other organisations	2
Other	2
Theme isn't clear enough	1
Focus on the current issues	1
A sound JLP should be a key objective of the Corporate Plan	1
Anti-social behaviour	1
Schemes to facilitate energy efficiency improvements	1
Help prevent digital exclusion	1
Change to current approach	1
Doughnut Economics model	1
Total	90

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 3 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points is provided below.

Advocate for parishes – be their mouthpieces

Develop some sort of friends helping friends / good neighbours scheme.

How to integrate refugees, military communities and older residents and young renters – maybe facilities they all need

Dog ownership has dramatically increased during lockdown and WFH. We need more infrastructure – bins and dog parks and suitable resources

We see the issues in the community, but local group / parishes feel powerless to affect

We need to encourage people to look after their own area – don't litter, don't park on verges or vandalise, and help look after people in need near them

Awareness raising - education

Challenges in communities with diverse communities

Promote retail in town centres.

Challenges for small communities getting infrastructure and services in proportionate to community size

Active travel – improve safe access to principal bus routes eg need to cross the A420 prevents easy access to sindon to oxford buss

Infrastructure needs to keep pace with growth – especially GPs and Leisure

We need to consider structural barriers to access e.g transport – this is often a big limiting factor. Even when people can get a places for a service they are unable to get their

Youth groups for rural communities

Regenerate some of the developed areas e.g Regfolds (I cant read this) Way shops in Abingdon

What can communities do to request infrastructure and services

Youth facilities for small villagers. There is nothing for them to do currentl resulting is loitering, frustrating locals, dropping litter and damaging bus shelters

Youngsters are alienated – we have seen a decrease of facilities, a decrease of youth clubs. Young people seem hated and cant take part in our society.

Working with local community hub groups to provide heath and wellbeing

Huge campaign for discrimination for trans communities

How do you create community hubs

The community event session also included an opportunity for community groups and businesses/organisations to openly share their thoughts or expand on the points included on the exhibition boards. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

- Support is needed at the hyper local level.
- The council needs to amplify local voices.
- Align all grants to corporate objectives.
- Micro grants are critical and have a big impact.
- Small councillor funds are very valuable.
- Map community network channels.
- Amplify local businesses in council communications.

HOW WE'LL GO ABOUT THIS

To support our main three themes, we have set out some values and ways of working which we asked for our residents thought on:

- Working openly, transparently, responsibly and in partnership.
- Building a council for the future by maintaining stable finances and providing value for money.
- Supporting thriving local businesses

Working openly, transparently, responsibly and in partnership. What should we do to be more open and transparent?

76 comments were received in relation to this question.

41% of comments raised the matter of public/local involvement. They believed that the council should be doing more to involve residents and community groups in their work. Furthermore, these interactions should have a meaningful impact on the deliberations and decisions of the council.

They stated that the Vale could be working to ensure that the views of local people and organisations were listened too – there were suggestions that formal groups and bodies should be created/established to facilitate this process. Respondents proposed that the council could do more to keep residents informed. Potential suggestions included the greater use of social media platforms, the production of newsletters (with a specific focus on local areas) and the use of parish council notice boards.

Related to the issues of improving communication, 13% of comments also raised the issue of how the council engages with residents. They wished to see the Vale provide more opportunities for face-to-face interactions between officers, councillors and the local population. They also wanted to see these events be held across the district (not just in the major population centres) and at times where people with work/family commitments could attend.

Comments also focused on the issue of transparency. Just over a quarter of comments (26%) wished to see the council provide more information to residents. 10% of the comments received specifically focused on the issue of being able to clearly see where the council is spending money.

Interlinked to the topic of transparency, 16% of comments raised the matter of measuring progress/performance. They argued that the council could do more to show what it was doing and whether it was achieving its objectives/goals. Requests were made for information to be published on the council's website – possibly alongside comparable or benchmarking data.

How we'll go about this. Building a council for the future by maintaining stable finances and providing value for money.

80 comments were received in relation to this question.

40% of comments highlighted the need for the Vale to be cost-effective in the services and activities that it provides. They were concerned that the council was not using money effectively and wanted reassurance that it was being spent wisely and on things that made a real difference. It was also suggested that the Vale take a longer-term strategic approach in this area.

34% of comments raised the issue of waste. They believed that the council should focus on providing the services that really matter to residents (waste, planning etc) rather than what they regarded as additional or unnecessary activities. Respondents were keen to highlight that ultimately it is taxpayers' money that the council is spending and therefore it should be used on the priorities of residents.

23% of comments emphasised the need for openness and accountability when it comes to the council's finances. They recommended that the Vale should do more to inform residents about how and where money was being spent. It was suggested that this could potentially also allow for more informed financial decisions to be made.

15% raised the issue of council tax in their feedback to this question. While most suggested that it should be kept as low as possible, a minority (4 comments) hinted that they would be willing to pay higher rates in order to ensure that the council could continue to provide high-quality services.

10% of comments raised the issue of increased efficiency in their responses. They wanted to see the council review its processes and services to ensure that they continue to provide value for money.

Supporting thriving local businesses. What do you think a district council could do to support local businesses?

74 comments were received in relation to this question.

31% of comments raised the issue of business rates and rent. They believed that, where possible, the council should keep these at a reasonable level (or be reduced) in order to incentivise businesses within the district.

22% highlighted the need for improved transport links and infrastructure within the district. Comments suggested that more could be done to provide secure active travel routes between residential areas, town centres and employment sites. Furthermore, they believed more should be done to improve the public transport network. This, they argued, would allow more people to access employment opportunities and to visit local town centres.

Related to the issue of transport, 14% of comments mentioned the issue of parking and how changes in this area could support local businesses. Feedback mentioned wanting the council to provide free parking (for at least a couple of hours) to encourage people into town centres.

Just under a fifth of contributors (19%) suggested that the Vale should be doing more to help local businesses through its own activities. In order to help the economy, they wanted to see the council use suppliers based within the district and to encourage others to shop local.

Furthermore, they wanted the Vale to highlight the importance of a distinct, vibrant and diverse local economy.

19% of comments also emphasised the importance of reviving the district's town centres. They believed that the Vale should be doing more to encourage visits to Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon and suggested that the council should be looking to make our town centres more attractive places, where people want to spend time. Proposals included increasing the number and diversity of shops, making central areas more walkable and improving the overall offer of the town centres (more amenities, leisure opportunities etc).

The community event session also included a chance for community groups and businesses/organisations to openly share their thoughts or expand on the points included on the exhibition boards. A snapshot of the discussion points mentioned is provided below.

- Work with local Town/Parishes re: land ownership and management to rationalise playgrounds, parking and footpaths.
- Encourage business back into the town centre.
- Sort the district boundary out between Harwell and Didcot.
- Employ a local town centre and tourist manager (or grant others to do this) to link effectively with businesses.
- Experiment with encouraging people in 'Town Hall' meetings or Citizens Assemblies on single major issues – people are better behaved in real life than on social media.
- Produce a one-page infographic about what south and vale DC has delivered in the year.

ANYTHING ELSE

If you have any additional comments, please provide them below.

39 comments were received in relation to this question.

Over a quarter of comments (28%) highlighted the issue of accountability. They did not believe that there were mechanisms in place to scrutinise the Vale and/or assumed that their opinions would be ignored. Respondents also wanted to see the council deliver on its aims and objectives – they wanted to see tangible action being taken that residents could see/feel.

15% of comments raised concerns about the Vale's town centres. They were concerned about the lack of shops/facilities and wanted to see action be taken to revive our high streets. People also bemoaned the decline in the distinctiveness of the district's retail offering.

13% of comments mentioned the need for Vale to communicate more effectively with residents. They suggested that the council needed to do more to engage with people through newsletters, surveys etc.

10% of comments raised the importance of climate change and the environment. They wanted to see firm action being taken on delivering tangible projects/schemes which would help to reduce carbon emissions, improve the environment and help nature recovery.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information about this consultation and the results presented in this report, or you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, email, Easy Read and alternative languages) please contact:

Consultation and Community Engagement Team

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 422 425

jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk

To enquire about the council's work on the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan, please contact:

Insight and Policy Team

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 422 422

END.