

Prudhoe Town Survey 2018

A report on the local consultation
carried out between
17th May and 17th June 2018



*Prepared for Prudhoe Community Partnership by
Community Action Northumberland*

Cover photo: taken at Town Fair 2017 by Moira Wooldridge, community photographer.

Contents

1) Introduction.....	1
a) Background.....	1
b) Methodology.....	2
c) Questions asked.....	2
d) Response Rates and Reach.....	3
2) Responses.....	4
a) Services	4
b) Amenities	10
c) Shops and Town Centre.....	14
d) Employment	18
e) Transport.....	20
f) Housing.....	25
g) Living & Working in Prudhoe	27
h) Getting Involved	27
3) Summary Recommendations.....	28

1) Introduction

a) Background

This report presents the findings of a community consultation exercise carried out in Prudhoe in May and June 2018 which was led by Prudhoe Community Partnership with support from Community Action Northumberland.

Prudhoe Community Partnership (PCP) is an entirely community-led charity which aims to help Prudhoe to continue to be a friendly, vibrant and enterprising community for its residents, businesses and visitors. The Partnership has been leading projects in the town since the late 90s. Its biggest achievement to date has been raising the money to build and run the Spetchells Centre as a modern drop-in centre for a wide range of local services and community support. The partnership is led by a team of 12 trustees and has two part time members of staff.

Community Action Northumberland (CAN) is a registered charity which aims to support and help sustain rural communities in Northumberland by:

- promoting rural issues – providing and supporting a ‘rural voice’ to influence and tackle rural community issues
- Empowering organisations – supporting and developing local community groups and organisations.
- Supporting individuals – identifying, developing and managing projects to address the needs of rural communities.

CAN is one of 38 Rural Community Councils across England which operate as a network under the umbrella of our national body ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). RCCs are charitable local development agencies, working at county level, which lead, support and enable community initiatives, reaching 50,000 grassroots organisations.

CAN has provided support to Northumberland’s rural communities for more than 50 years and has extensive experience of facilitating consultation exercises which ensure local people are able to influence the development of initiatives which improve their lives.

PCP engaged CAN in November 2017 to help develop a consultation exercise which set out to achieve three main aims:

- to ensure PCP’s Business Plan reflects local priorities by sampling views from across the local community as to the most important issues facing the town
- to find out how people feel about living and working in Prudhoe. This will act as a baseline – allowing the Trust to assess how perceptions of the town change in response to future developments
- to encourage local people to get involved in the work of PCP and other community activities.

CAN’s role in this process was to:

- provide advice on methodology and good practice
- carry out the data inputting, thereby ensuring the responses stayed anonymous locally
- compile this report.

PCP appointed a trustee sub-committee to lead the process and take an active role throughout by

- providing the local knowledge to underpin the process
- promoting the survey to local people
- arranging circulation of the survey.
- meeting regularly with CAN to manage the process
- reporting on progress to the Board of Trustees.

b) Methodology

The methodology was carefully chosen bearing in mind that

- PCP wanted to acquire a meaningful sample of local opinions within a relatively limited timescale to provide direction for their business plan for the next 3 years.
- PCP is a relatively small local charity which relies heavily on the support of volunteer time, so tight control needed to be kept on the budget and staff time required.

It was therefore decided to use a straight forward survey as the main means of gathering data. Given the size of the local population (over 11,500 people), the costs of delivering to every household would have been prohibitive. Therefore, a wide range of distribution methods were used to ensure as many as people as possible had a chance to participate.

These included:

- o An on-line survey promoted through social media, and through a local newsletter
- o Handing out surveys at key community venues such as the Co-op, and the Spetchells Centre
- o Distributing through local community groups
- o Handing out surveys at local events such as the Town Fair.

c) Questions asked

The questions set reflected the three aims of the consultation exercise set out on page one:

- The core of the questionnaire consisted of questions which aimed to identify priorities for the Partnership's future Business Plan. These focused on 6 themes:
 - Services
 - Amenities
 - Shops
 - Jobs
 - Travel & Transport
 - Housing

In order to ensure that the survey was not too leading in nature, open questions were included in each section allowing people to comment in depth and to put forward their own ideas. There was also an 'Other section' to give respondents a chance to raise any other issues they felt had not been covered by these themes. However, in practice this section was used primarily to reiterate or expand upon comments made earlier in the questionnaire or to make additional suggestions on these themes. No issues were raised that did not relate to the above themes

The main body of this report is based on a detailed analysis of the responses to this section. In some cases, different people may have commented on the same issue under different themes – for instance a problem with poor road surfaces may have arisen both in the 'Services' section under 'road maintenance' and in 'Travel & Transport' under the question 'Are there any improvements that could be made to make it easier to walk, cycle or drive around Prudhoe?', and also in the 'Other' section. Where appropriate, these responses have been analysed together in one place, with a cross reference made in other sections. In some places additional information has been included in the report to give context to the feedback gathered – for instance where developments have occurred since the close of the survey, or where current government or local government policy may have an impact on the plan, or to identify partners who could be involved in developing solutions to issues raised.

- To find out how local people feel about the town, they were asked to give the town a star rating on a scale of 1 to 5, both as a place to live and as a place to work.

- A number of questions were scattered through the survey, asking people if they would be interested in volunteering opportunities related to the main 6 themes and in continuing to support and influence the work of PCP by joining as a member.

In addition, we asked people to answer a number of questions about themselves so that we could assess whether we were successfully reaching a wide cross-section of the community.

d) Response Rates and Reach.

In total 233 responses were received which represents approximately 2% of the local population (recorded at 11,675 in the 2011 census).

Respondents were asked to give some information about themselves and response rates were compared to the demographic information for Prudhoe Parish collected in the 2011 National Census so that we could assess how well each sector of the community were represented.

The responses showed that:

- 66.35%, (138) were Women, 31.25% (65) Men, and 5 preferred not to say. Whilst slightly more local residents are female (51.8%) than male (48.2%) this shows that men were rather less well represented than might have expected.
- 40% (82) of respondents were aged 65 or over, 58.5% (120) respondent were aged 16 – 64, and 1.46% (3) were under the age of 16. By comparison 15.9% of the local population are over 65, 65.1% are aged 16-64, and 19.1% aged under 16.

It is somewhat unsurprising that under 16s were poorly represented in this return, as other methods are more likely to engage young people, (ideally a follow-up exercise with young people might be desirable, particularly relating to what is on offer for young people locally). Similarly, there is often a higher proportional response rate to surveys from people of retirement age as there is a likelihood that those who are retired will have a little more time available and may be more actively engaged in the community activities at which the survey was promoted.

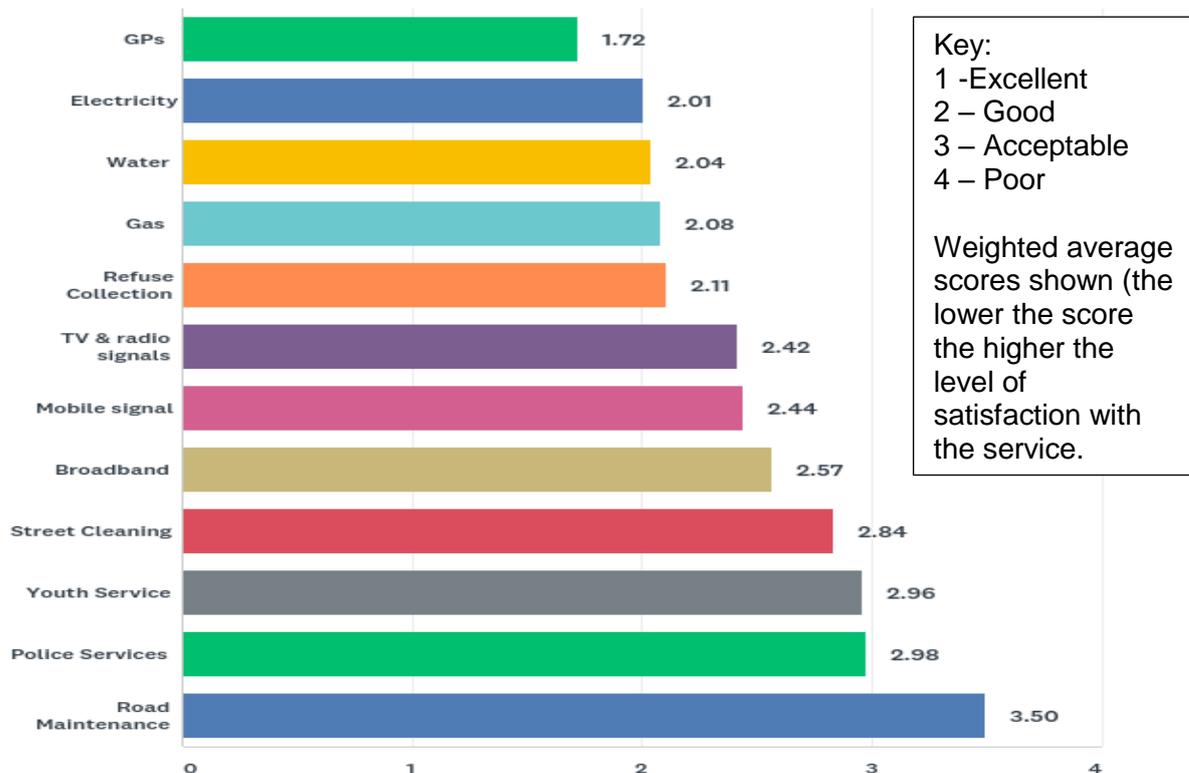
- 97.54% (190) of the respondents identified as 'white' whilst 2.46% (5) identified as being from other ethnic groups or of mixed race. This closely represents the ethnic spread within the local population which was recorded as 98.7% white in the national census. In terms of actual numbers, the census showed that 93 people identified themselves as being from ethnic groups other than white. 5 responses therefore represent a response rate of more than 5% which is more than double the response rate amongst the white population.

2) Responses

a) Services

i) How do you rate the following services in Prudhoe?

Answered by 231 people,



All but two of the local services considered were rated in the good to acceptable range.

The only service rated in the good to excellent range was **GP services**, and just 2 comments were received on this subject, both asking for longer opening hours into the evening.

The utilities, **electricity, gas and water** were all rated at very close to 2 or 'good'. Only 4 comments were made on utilities all related to water services – 1 person said the water pressure was low, another that the water was dirty, a third said the water had a bad taste and a fourth felt that the water rates are too high for those on limited incomes.

The **refuse collection** services was the next highest rated service with a score of 2.11 towards the top of the acceptable to good range.

There were a small number of complaints, with 2 people mentioning that bins left out on the pavement too long could cause difficulties for wheelchair users, whilst 3 people had experienced specific problems including bin men failing to empty their bins, leaving mess behind in their garden or putting bins back at the wrong house.

Suggestions for improvements included 2 asking for a more frequent service, 3 asking to be able to recycle more materials in their home bins, specifically glass and food waste, and 2 asking for better recycling facilities in general.

TV, Mobile and Broadband services all received ratings very close to the middle of the acceptable to good range. Comments received included 11 people asking for better broadband services, 8 saying that radio reception was poor, 5 that there is limited access to free view channels compared to other areas of the country, of which 2 suggested that overgrown trees were blocking the view, and 3 stated that mobile signals were poor.

Three services were rated in the lower part of the acceptable to good range with a score of between 2.8 & 3:

Street cleaning services were rated at 2.84 and 22 people made further comments on this subject, 12 of which were general comments that improvement is needed and 4 referred particularly to a need to keep drains clean and free from weeds to prevent associated problems. Other concerns included dog mess (2 comments), cleaning being hampered by badly parked cars (2 comments), and too much street furniture (1 person)

4 people identified particular locations where there is a perceived problem, namely Front St, The Halfway House area, Highfield Lane and Highfield School, and schools in general.

Ideas as to how the cleanliness of the streets could be improved included bins being emptied more often (raised by 4 people) provision of more waste bins including ones that would take dog waste (2), and organising litter picking events with children to encourage them to take pride in their environment (2).

Youth services – were included in this question receiving one of the lowest ratings. The next question in this section of the questionnaire (Q2)a)ii) asks about activities for young people in general, and responses to both questions will be considered together at that point in this report.

The Police Service received an average rating of 2.98 – just acceptable with 50 people taking the time to make additional comments.

37 people asked for a greater police presence in the town particularly to deal with problems such as antisocial behaviour (8 people) and traffic offences (5).

3 people identified specific locations where more police monitoring was wanted:

- 3 people identified areas where anti-social behaviour is a concern, which were Front St, the Co-op car park and the streets leading up to Berwick Grange. The theme of antisocial behaviour was also raised in response to a range of other questions (eg youth services, appearance of the town centre and other)
- 3 people identified areas where speeding was a concern which were together with other 20mph designated roads. 2 people raised concerns about illegal parking. Traffic issues will be explored in more depth in the travel and transport section as a larger number of comments on the issues were raised there.

There were also a number of suggestions as to how the police could be supported to deal with antisocial behaviour primarily installation of CCTV cameras in the co-op car park, and provision of better youth services and facilities as a preventative measure.

8 people also expressed dissatisfaction with the closure of the police station and relocation of the police service to the Spetchells Centre. 3 reasons were given for this: a perception that this made the police service less visible in the town (2 people), that the opening hours of the service had been reduced as the building is only open until 5.

(2 people), and that there is a lack of privacy in the building for people to be able to raise issues in confidence (1 person).

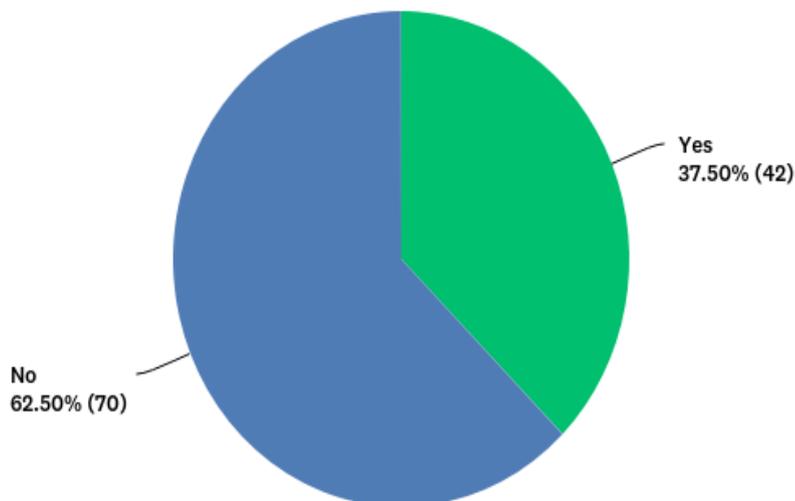
The lowest rated service was **Road maintenance**, being the only one rated as less than acceptable with a score of 3.5. Indeed 148 respondents (64% of those who answered the question) rated road maintenance as poor and 65 people felt strongly enough to add further comments on the subject. Of these 37 people referred to problems with potholes not being repaired, 2 people referred to problems with speed bumps deteriorating, 2 felt that roads are not properly repaired after being dug up for work on utilities, and 2 mentioned problems with poorly maintained and uneven footpaths and pavements.

Particular locations where problems were identified included Front St, Station Rd, Castle Rd, Park Lane, Adderlane Rd, and 'estate roads'.

Issues with road surfaces were also raised in response to various other questions in the survey including improving the town centre, travel and transport and other.

It is worth noting that this survey was carried out after a particularly bad winter and NCC carried out a programme of road repairs in the time between collecting answers and writing this report.

ii) Is there a good range of services & activities for young people?



When asked to rate the youth service as part of question 2)a)i) in this survey 187 people responded – rather fewer than answered regarding other services, which may be because fewer people have direct experience of the youth project. Of these 131 rated the service as acceptable or poor.

However, when asked in question 2 the slightly different question 'is there is a good range of services for young people?' 227 people responded of whom 115 people answered that they didn't know. Of the 112 people who expressed an opinion in this question 62.5% view said no – there is not a good range of services for young people.

It is difficult to assess why more people felt able to answer the specific question about the 'Youth Service' than about activities for young people in general. It may be that the Youth Service is seen by some as having a specific role in preventing anti-social behaviour, which appears to be perceived as a problem in the town (at least 12 people commented on antisocial behaviour most of whom also called for better youth services.

By contrast people may have seen the second question as being more focussed on the needs of young people and families themselves and may not have felt in a position to answer for these groups.

Whether or not that is the case, when drawing conclusions on this section it must be remembered that only three young people aged under the age of 16 responded to the survey. The need to consult young people themselves was also brought up by 4 people answering the survey.

Across these two questions more than 74 of comments were received, most simply calling for more / better funded services for young people.

8 stated that the main need was for older children (although this was defined variously as over 9, over 11, or over 12 years of age. No one raised any need for better support for younger children with several people commenting that Surestart is available together with a range of parent & toddler and play groups.

7 people emphasised the need to ensure that all services are **inclusive and accessible for all**. Some perceived barriers included, lack of wheelchair access, services being too expensive, lack of specific support for LGBT young people, and services being located in the wrong place (with a preference for services in the town centre, rather than at the Fuse or the East Centre). A further suggestion was better support for **outreach workers** to engage with young people.

16 people suggested that there is a need for a **wider range of leisure activities** for young people, which one person expressed as 'a more holistic approach – not just a youth service'. Some specific ideas put forward included social activities, sports groups, boxing, ice skating, games, IT, media, cycle maintenance, dancing, drama fairs.

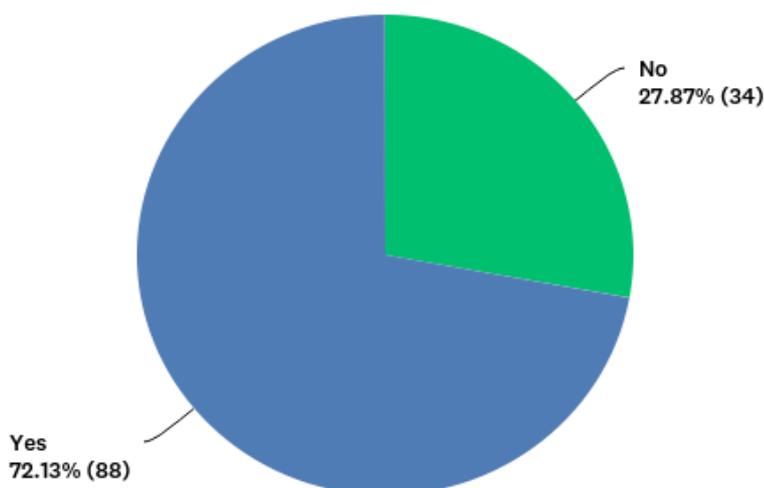
13 people suggested that more **safe and attractive places** should be provided for young people to meet up and socialise such as new or improved youth centres (8), café's (2), or better sporting facilities (4) including skate parks, a running track and ice rink.

2 people felt there is a need for better **careers advice and support for young people looking for work**.

2 suggested offering more **volunteering opportunities** for young people.

1 person suggested **life skills workshops** (eg parenting, cooking money, keeping fit etc

iii) Is there a good range of services and activities for older people?



227 people answered this question of whom 105 said they didn't know (presumably because they have no direct need or experience of these services). Of the 122 People who expressed an opinion, 72.13 % (88 people) felt there were a good range of services for older people in Prudhoe whilst 34 (27.8%) felt there were not. 35 people took the time to make further comments:

6 people stated that there are plenty of services for people citing U3A, Over-50s, teas and lunches run by churches, a wide range of groups clubs and activities, with the Spetchells Centre and Library being particularly mentioned. On the other hand, 3 people said there was nothing or not enough for older people. 3 people felt that the existing services and support need to be better advertised. Similarly, when it came to specific activities there were different levels of awareness. For instance, one respondent, a volunteer leader of 'Healthy Hearts Walks' talked about how membership has grown, whilst another respondent said there was a need for walking groups and other ways of keeping fit.

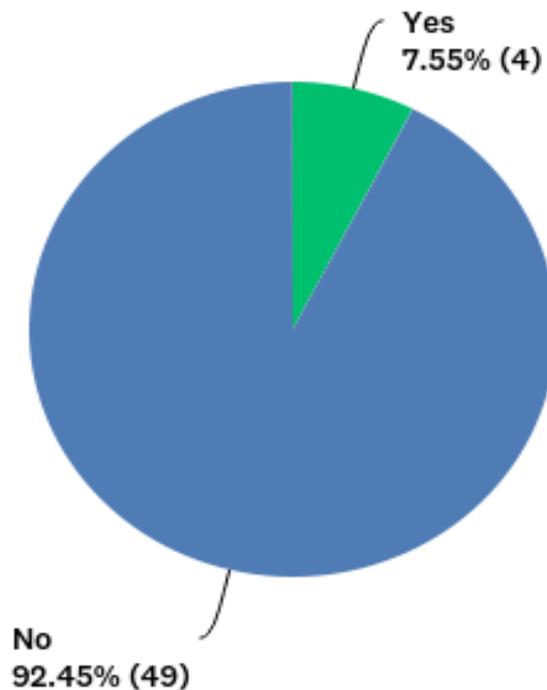
7 people suggested existing activities could be made more accessible, for instance by providing better transport (from West Wylam, Oaklands and 'housing estates' and to the Fuse) (5), providing more activities at the East Centre (2), providing support for disabled people and housebound people to ensure they have more social contact (3), improving access to cafes and restaurants so that older & disabled people can access everyday services (1), and providing evening as well as daytime activities to provide for people who are over 50 and still working (1).

5 people particularly talked about the need for better support for people with dementia and their carers, 3 of whom felt a Dementia Day service is needed.

Most comments related to the need for general social support with very few highlighting particular types of activities. One person asked for craft activities and one for more cross generational activities.

2 people expressed a concern that Home care/ health visiting, and other health services may be under threat.

iv) Is there a good range of services and activities for disabled people?



229 people answered this question, the vast majority saying they didn't know. Just 53 people expressed an opinion of whom 92.5% answered 'no'. 34 people went on to make further comments.

21 of these comments raised issues about physical accessibility in the town. In particular 10 people mentioned poor access to shops and public buildings, 5 mentioned that pavements are blocked by street furniture, bins and illegally parked cars, 2 mentioned uneven pavements, 2 a lack of dropped kerbs and 1 a lack of footpaths in Eastwood Parks. 3 people called for more disabled parking bays. Accessibility issues are a recurring theme throughout the survey being raised in relationship to services for young people and older people, accessing shops, improving the town centre, traffic and transport and other

3 people asked for better provision of information for people living with disabilities, 1 of whom specifically mentioned that there is no local access to face-to-face appointments with CAB or social services which can be a problem for people with issues such as speech problems, hearing problems, learning disabilities and dementia.

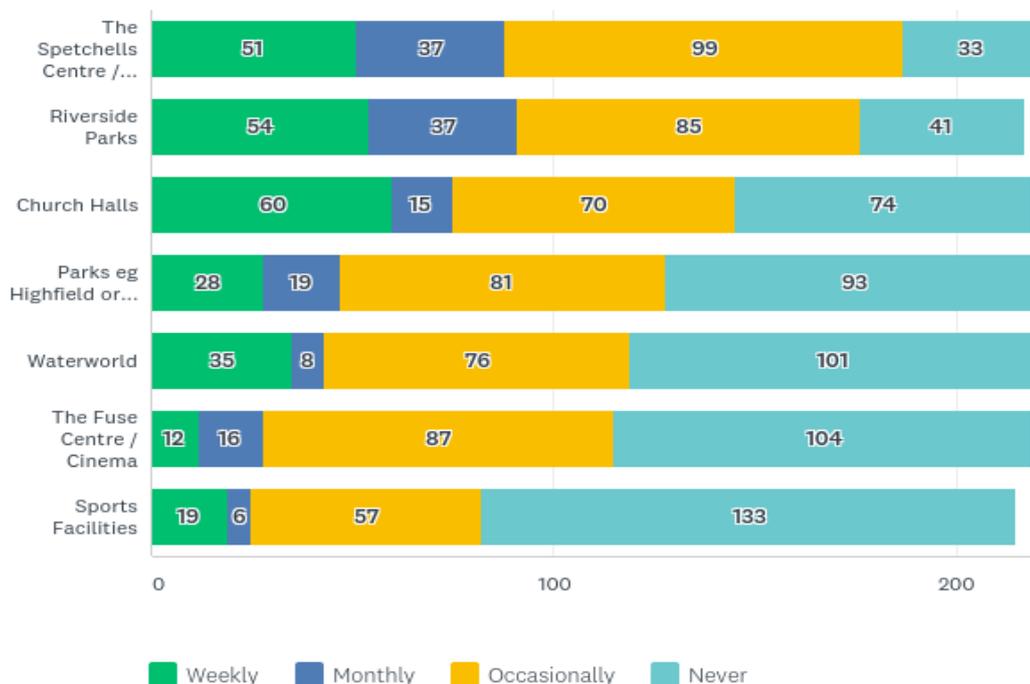
The only other comments were all put forward by just one person. These included a call for more activities for disabled children, subsidised sports activities, and a voluntary home visiting services.

1 person praised the services offered at the Oakland Centre.

b) Amenities

i) How often do you use the following amenities?

224 people answered this question with 98 making additional comments.



The facilities most used by respondents are the Spetchells Centre/ Library, Riverside Park and Church Halls, with 75 people or more using each of these once a month or more. By contrast fewer than 40 people used the Fuse and sports facilities (other than Waterworld) on a monthly or more frequent basis. Waterworld and the range of other parks in the town fared slightly better being used monthly or more by 43 and 47 people respectively.

30 people made further comments about **Waterworld**:

18 people felt that the facilities here are too expensive, both for working people and for those receiving concessions and particularly for larger families. There was a request for concessionary rates for students aged 21 or over, and for older people.

8 people commented on the range of activities available. 4 of these called for a greater variety of classes, and 3 for better timings of classes – particularly more evening classes and times when men can swim during the day. 1 person suggested there should be some local consultation to make sure the range of activities met local preferences.

7 people commented that the facilities were shabby, dirty or poorly maintained, with parts of the building particularly mentioned including the toilets & changing rooms, soft play and the pool. Two people also called for CCTV cameras outside to discourage vandalism, particularly of the play area.

Just 2 people made comments on the staffing levels, suggesting the gym is understaffed and that some staff might benefit from additional training.

1 person commented 'Waterworld should take down all the signs stopping you doing anything at all. it gives such a bad impression.'

On a more positive note, one person felt the facilities at Waterworld are good and another felt that better advertising of existing activities would improve uptake.

20 responses related to the **Fuse** of which:

8 felt that accessibility was an issue with the building being too far out from the town centre and being poorly serviced by public transport.

5 asked for films to be shown more often and 3 asked for more films tailored to the needs of different groups, particularly children's films and 'something from the "silver screen" for the elderly'.

2 people suggested that some work needs to be done to raise awareness of the Fuse, 1 saying they had never seen any information about it, and another saying they were unaware of its existence.

1 person asked for the opening hours of the centre to be extended and another for the café to be opened more often.

12 People made further comments about **Riverside Country Park**:

9 asked for the café to be reopened, 1 of whom also suggested public toilets are needed

4 commented that the area is dirty or poorly maintained with 3 particularly mention dog mess as an issue and 1 suggesting more bins for dog waste should be provided.

1 also mentioned that some dog owners do not keep their dogs under control.

2 people commented that this area is a great natural asset, whilst 1 felt it is dark and uninviting.

NB: Since the survey was carried out, work has been carried out to enhance the Riverside and a franchising process is underway to enable the re-opening of the café.

8 Comments were received regarding **other parks and green spaces**:

3 asked for play facilities for young children at Castlefields Park / Estate

1 asked for covered / indoor tennis facilities at Eastwood Park, and another for tennis facilities (no location specified).

1 asked for the creation of 'a safer entrance to Highfield Park'

1 asked for the reopening of the path through the hospital site to improve access to Stanley Burn Woods.

1 asked for renovation of the parks.

7 comments were received about the **library**,

2 of these were compliments, praising the helpful staff and calling for the budget to be increased as 'the library is a key resource particularly for the young and older people.'

2 people called for more activities for children, specifically story time and song time for age groups such as babies and under-5s.

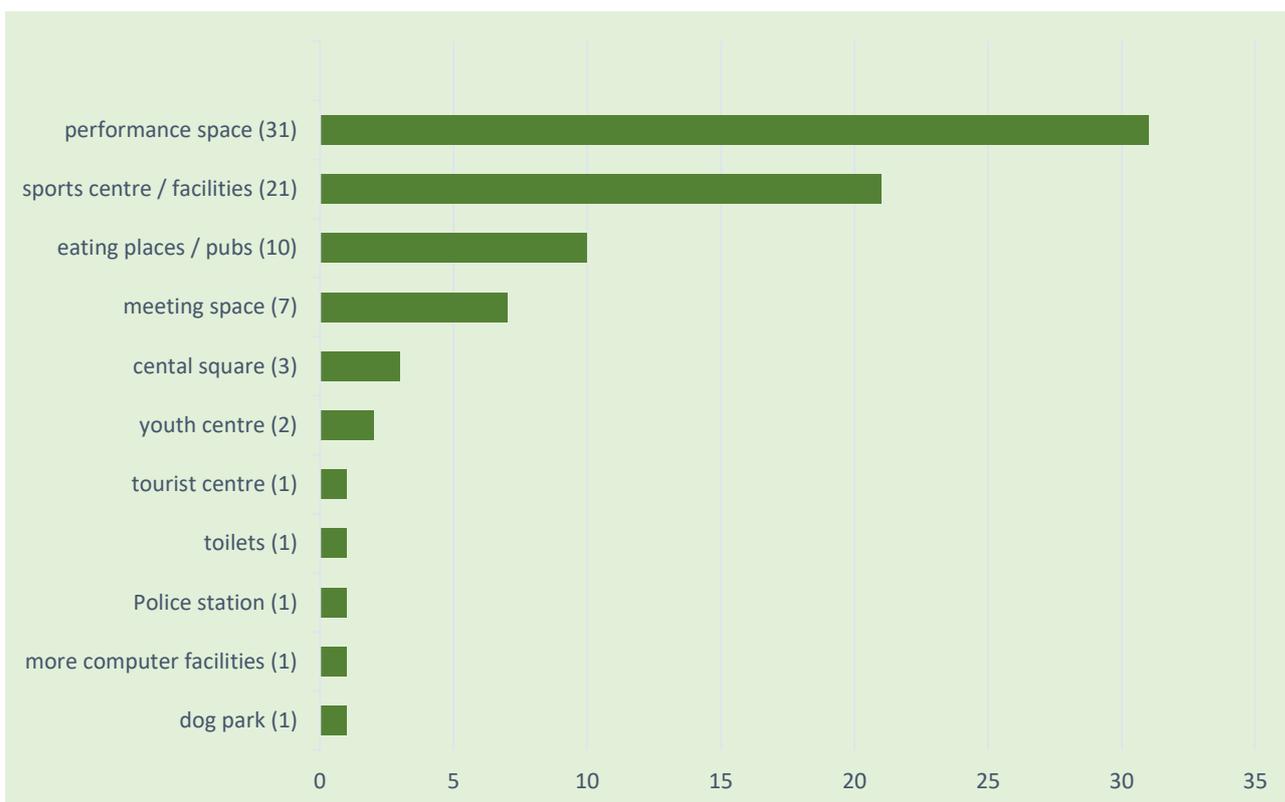
1 person asked for extended opening hours, especially at weekends, and another asked for a wider range of books.

1 person called for information services that have been moved to Hexham to be brought back to the library.

1 person highlighted the value of church groups, and several people mentioned other facilities that they use including the Middle School for community activities (1), Scout Hut (1), the Miners Hall (1), and footpaths/bridleways & roads for walking and cycling (1).

Several people made more general comments on how use of facilities in general could be improved which echo responses in other parts of the survey, ie: better transport & disabled access (&), more awareness raising (4), reducing costs (3) and tackling antisocial behaviour (1), more sports activities for older people (3) and more for young people (2).

ii) Are any new amenities needed in Prudhoe? (eg an arts centre/ theatre, sports centre etc). Please make your suggestions here



99 comments were received in this section – many were general in nature or related more closely to other sections of the survey (eg shops or activities for older people or young people). Only the responses relating to specific amenities that people felt are needed in the Town are shown in the chart and discussed here:

The idea of a **theatre / performance space / music venue** was supported by 31 people, whilst 7 asked for an arts centre that would also incorporate studio space and exhibition space for visual arts. Several people suggested upgrading existing facilities to accommodate such spaces including the Fuse, Jehovah’s Church, the Methodist Hall, Ferndene, and the High School. 1 person felt that such a centre wouldn’t be well enough used to be practical, and another suggested pop up theatre events. 2 highlighted the need for such a facility to be central.

20 People wanted to see better **Sports facilities**, either developing new facilities or improving existing ones. 9 people wanted a new or larger sports centre in a central location whilst 1 person felt the community could not sustain such a development and there were several suggestions of facilities that could be better used or extended included Prudhoe Youth Club Football Club pitches, the Pavilion, facilities at Prudhoe Community High School, and the tennis courts at East Wood Park. Specific sports facilities that people wanted included tennis courts (5), football pitches (2), netball courts (1), cricket pitches (1), a running track (1) and an alternative gym (1).

A number of people wanted better facilities for socialising and relaxing:

10 people asked for more **cafes/ restaurants & pubs**, in particular ‘upmarket’ or ‘inviting’ pubs & restaurants’ similar to those in Corbridge & Hexham, a café at the Riverside Park (2), an accessible café with no stairs, a café suitable for young people to hang out such as McDonalds or an Ice cream parlour (2) and a café at the walled garden (1).

7 people asked for a **community centre** in a central location, whilst 3 suggested larger meeting rooms such as a conference room in a hotel to cater for larger events and parties (2 people) or provide affordable space for groups to meet (1). 1 person suggested a community centre would benefit older people looking for opportunities to socialise

3 people suggested that Prudhoe needs a **central square** to strengthen the identity of the town and give a space to relax, although 1 of these acknowledged that this might be difficult to achieve.

2 people suggested a youth Centre

A range of other one-off suggestions were received including a tourist centre, dog park, police station, public toilet and zebra crossing on South Rd.

c) Shops and Town Centre

i) *Do you think there is a good range of shops in Prudhoe? If no, what other types of shops would you like to see open in the town?*

223 People expressed an opinion of whom 166 (72%) said no – there is not a good enough range of shops and 166 people made further comments.

38 people made comments about wanting a greater variety of shops – many of whom expressed a perception that there are too many takeaways (9), hairdressers (6), charity shops (4) and estate agents (2). Amongst these comments are a number expressing a desire for Front St to be regenerated to become more of a destination for people to visit and to provide more higher quality goods as the following quotes illustrate:

‘We live in the Beautiful Tyne Valley apparently a Premier Inn to be built at the bottom of Castlefields. We have a Castle, a few minutes’ drive from the river to the high street which should be a place visitors enjoy a coffee and cake feeling relaxed and happy and somewhere they would be happy to visit again’

‘Prudhoe is great for basic needs and bargains. I wonder if with the expanding population and higher cost homes being built we might sustain a greater diversity of shops, to attract more people to shop in the town.’

‘could be become more of a market town with more quality shops’

In total 241 suggestions of new shops were received, as summarised here:



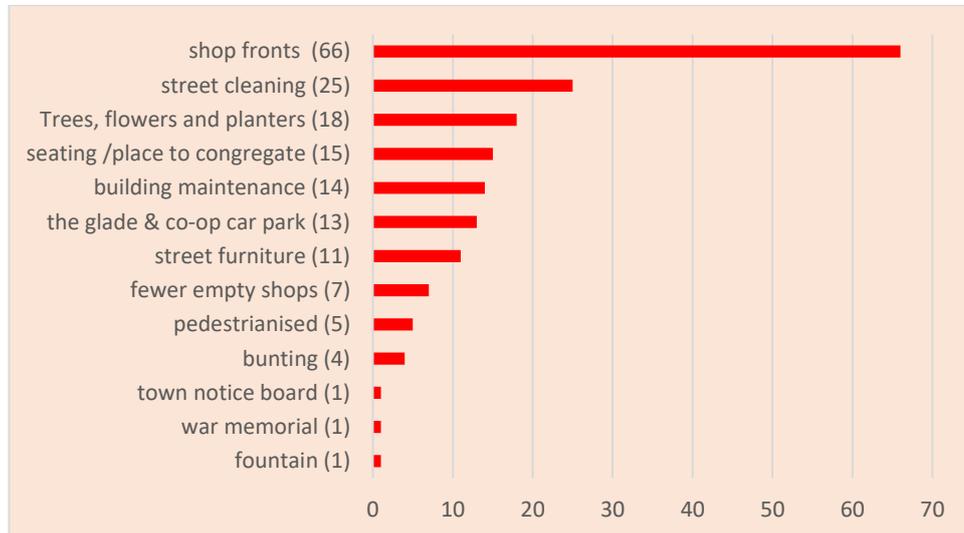
The vast majority (168) of these requested another supermarket and a range of independent food shops such as butchers, bakers, fishmongers, delis etc, with many people commenting that the Co-op has a monopoly and is too expensive. There was also a strong desire for clothing and shoe shops (27 people), department stores and high street chains such as Marks & Spencer, TK Maxx, Argos and WH Smiths (13 people) and stationery and book shops (10). A range of other ideas were each supported by between 1 and 4 people.

ii) *Do you think the appearance of Front St and the Town Centre could be improved?*

218 People expressed an opinion, 83% of whom said yes, the town centre could be improved, and 145 people made further comments. Some of these related more closely

to other sections of this report (eg antisocial behaviour and illegal parking, road surfaces, types of shops etc) and are dealt with elsewhere

24 were fairly general in nature calling for a general revamp of the town centre which was described as dated, uninviting and in need of cleaning and refurbishment. However, a number of more specific themes emerged which are summarised here:



There was a very strong feeling that **shop fronts** need to be improved, which was expressed by 66 people. Some suggestions as to what could be done included repainting, improving signage, modernising the look of some shops, agreeing a colour scheme to give Front St a co-ordinated look, encouraging all shop owners to have hanging baskets, keep their windows clean, and provide more colourful window displays. One person said:

‘We were very impressed by the effort made to host the start of a stage of the Tour of Britain, especially the amazing efforts by the shop owners to compete for the best window display.’

It was suggested that there may be ways of incentivising shop owners to make similar efforts in the future - eg further best shop display competitions and providing grants for refurbishments.

A further 13 people asked for **better general maintenance of the buildings** in the town centre (not specifically shops), complaining of crumbling buildings, and that no attention is paid to the upper parts of buildings.

11 people asked for shopkeepers to reduce the amount of **street furniture** outside their premises as this is seen as untidy, and a nuisance for people trying to get past with wheelchairs or pushchairs – an issue that was raised in other sections of the survey too. 2 or 3 people asked that traders take responsibility for keeping the street immediately outside their premises clean and free of litter. This linked closely to the second highest issue in this section – a need to keep **the streets clean and free from litter** (25 people). Another suggestion as to how to achieve this was to provide more bins for rubbish.

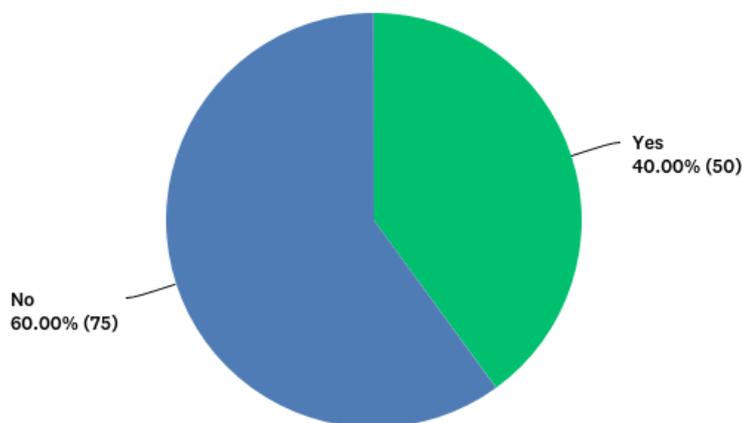
18 people called for more planting of **trees, flowers and planters**, with several praising the existing planters and flower displays in the town. 4 people also commented on the attractiveness of the **bunting** that is put out for special occasions and calling for more use of similar displays.

15 people mentioned a need for more **seating areas** or **places for people to congregate** and spend time relaxing. The comments related both to the needs of older and disabled people to take rests whilst out, and also to a desire to create a

welcoming atmosphere which would benefit local people and encourage more visitors to come to the town. Another 13 specifically commented that the Glade and Co-op car park area could be developed to meet this need with improvements suggested including providing seating, flower displays, grassing the area over, and providing dropped kerbs to the road to make it more accessible and making it into a space where outdoor meetings could be held. 5 people also suggested a pedestrianised area at the town centre (an idea which is explored in more detail later in this report). 3 people suggested features that could be incorporated into the town centre ie: a war memorial, a fountain and a town noticeboard.

Several people highlighted other areas which need attention including the East Centre, Legion Car Park, bus stop next to Lloyds Bank, the old police station and the Badger.

iii) Is there good access to the shops for wheelchair users and parents?



125 People expressed an opinion of whom 60% felt that access to shops is not good. 60 people made further comments.

The responses suggested that getting into shops can be a real problem. 17 people commented that many shops have **steps** and do not currently offer aids such as ramps or handrails to help people negotiate these. Doors can also prove to be a barrier and 8 people asked for wider entrances or automatic doors. Furthermore, the problems don't end at the door - 11 people highlighted that there is not enough space to move around in many shops. 2 people also mentioned difficulties accessing local eating places as many are accessed by stairs.

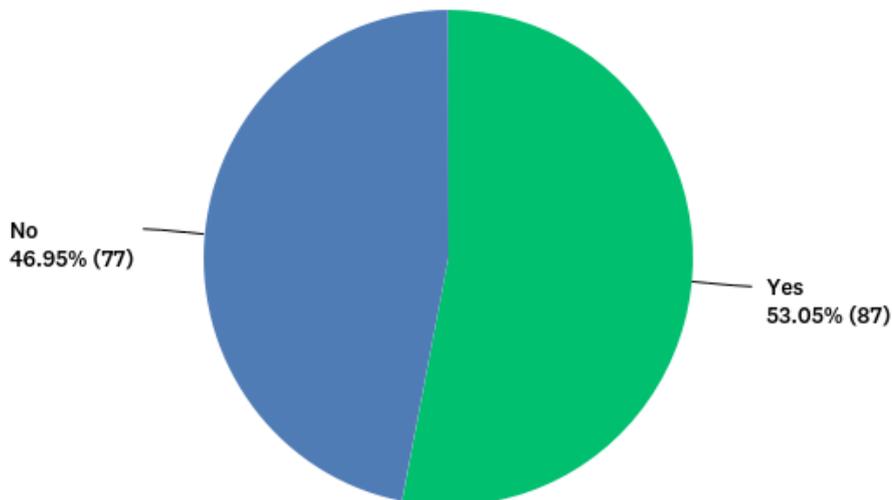
There was recognition that these access problems vary from shop to shop (15 people) and that there may be difficulties in addressing the problems due to the age and size of the buildings (6). However, 2 people noted that there is a legal duty to provide disabled access and asked that this should be better enforced.

A small number of people also mentioned issues in the external environment around the shops which included, narrow or uneven pavements with a lack of dropped kerbs (6 people), too much clutter on pavements (3), inappropriately sited bus stops with poor facilities for people waiting for the bus (2), a need for wider parking spaces (1) and better road crossings (1).

NB Access issues were also raised by 21 people answering the question about services for disabled people and by. It is also worth noting that 6 of the responses specifically mentioned difficulties pushing children in buggies. Access issues also feature significantly in the traffic and transport section.

iv) Would a pedestrian precinct on Front St be a good idea?

164 people expressed an opinion.



Opinions were divided on this issue (53% for and 47% against) and 88 people made further comments. 14 of these were people emphasising their view that this would be a **good idea** for Prudhoe, many saying they thought it would provide a welcoming centre to the town and would be a safe environment for children. On the other hand, 5 people emphasised their view that it would be a **bad idea** saying it would be expensive, unused, and detrimental for local people. There were also 14 responses indicating a **qualified yes**, depending on, the extent and location of the site and how well the project is planned, and 8 who stated that they thought it would be **impractical**.

There were also a number of specific issues raised:

24 people expressed concerns as to how such a development would impact **traffic flow** through the town. It was felt that local people might face longer journeys to get around the town, visitors to the town might have to be diverted adversely affecting footfall for existing and new businesses, and that there might be safety issues with children needing to cross busier roads (depending on how traffic was rerouted).

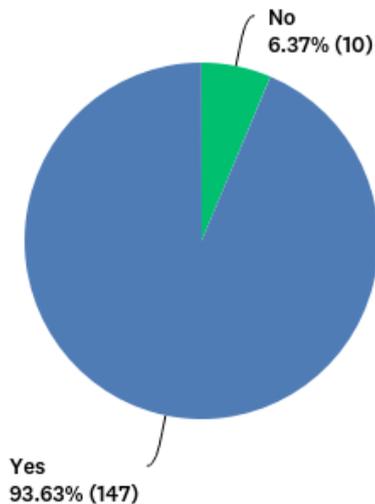
18 people raised concerns about **parking and access** for cars or buses, pointing out that good access would be necessary to ensure good use of the pedestrianised area, to provide for disabled people, and also to allow for deliveries to shop premises.

7 people suggested that such an area could become a focus for **antisocial behaviour**. 3 people referred to the fact that there is already a small pedestrianised area at the glade suggesting lessons could be learned from reviewing the impact on the town of this area and that it might be worth focusing on improving the Glade rather than undertaking a larger scale project.

d) Employment

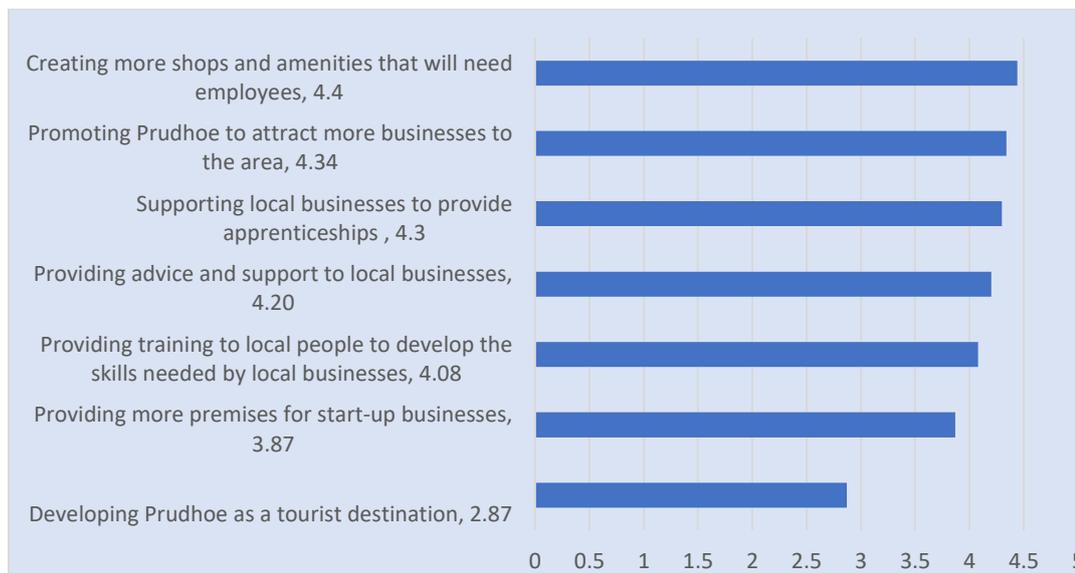
The 2011 census showed that Prudhoe was within the 20-30% most deprived percentiles in England with regard to employment, making it one of the 3 most deprived areas with regard to employment in West Northumberland. Figures from August 2012 showed that 648 residents (5.5% of the population) within the parish were claiming out of work benefits at that time. Employment rates have probably increased recently but this section sought opinions as to whether more could be done locally to address unemployment.

i) Do you think there is a need to create more jobs in Prudhoe?



157 people expressed an opinion on this subject of whom almost 94% felt there is a need to create more jobs in Prudhoe.

ii) If yes, which of the following steps do you think would help (ranked in importance from 1-7 with 7 being most important):



Key

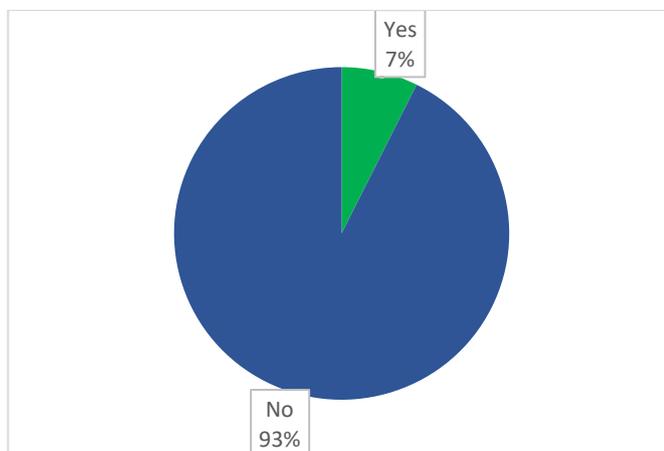
These answers are ranked in importance on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is the lowest possible rating, and 7 is the highest possible rating.

No one heading stood out as being strongly preferred with most ratings clustered around the middle range between 3.87 & 4.4.

Developing Prudhoe as a tourist destination was rated significantly lower than the other options as a potential way of improving employment opportunities in the town, although 2 comments were received that supported this idea suggesting that providing a good B&B or Premier Inn, and organising events such as a beer festival, music festival etc could encourage people to stay here as a base to explore the area, and support employment.

A small number of other comments were received: 2 people felt that a town the size of Prudhoe should be able to offer more employment opportunities. 2 people suggesting that businesses could be helped by **reducing business rates** and introducing measures to **support home working**. 1 pointed out that a **long-term plan** of up to 10 years may be needed to address employment issues, and another emphasised the need to support employers to develop good quality jobs (ie compliant with employment law and offering appropriate contracts).

iii) Would you benefit from help with looking for employment?

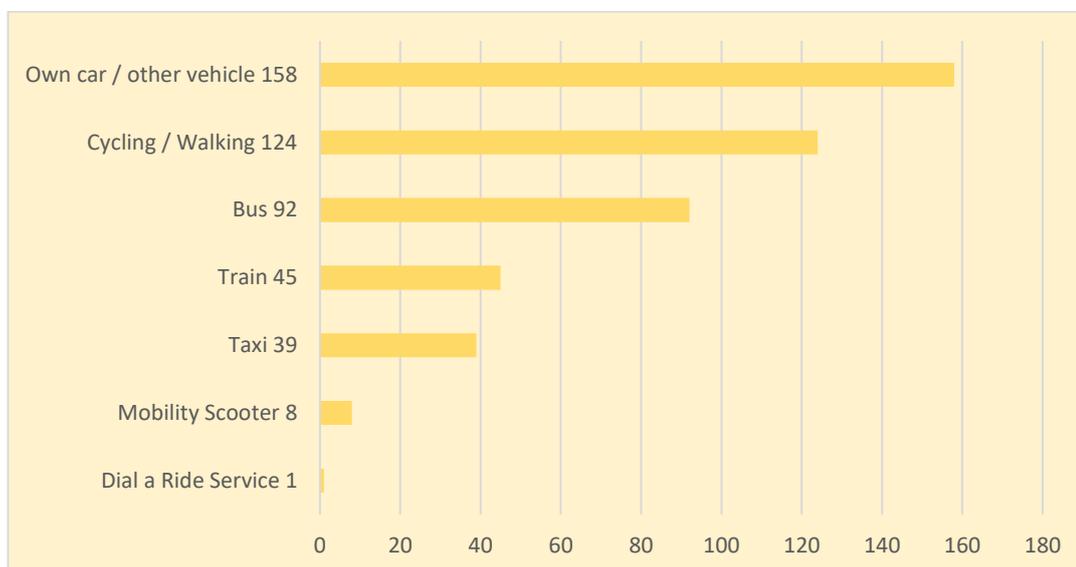


203 people responded of whom 15 people replied that they would benefit from help to find employment. 2 people also expressed an opinion that young people would benefit from this type of support when answering the section on Youth services.

e) Travel and Transport

i) *What forms of transport do you regularly use to get around locally?*

215 people answered this question and respondents were asked to tick all the options which they use.



This question provides important context for the rest of the transport section. The community transport officer at Northumberland County Council reports that in her experience, there is often a perception that transport issues are greater than is actually the case, with people often expressing concerns they have for neighbours, and anxieties about what will happen to them if they are no longer able to drive.

73.5% (158) of respondents use their own vehicle (which is in line with the 2011 National Census findings that just over 72% of Prudhoe households own a vehicle). This means that 26.5% of respondents (57 people) are dependent on other forms of transport. The needs of these people might be seen as a priority and the survey went on to ask if there are any local destinations that they can't currently access. Just 11 people told us of local journeys that were not possible including services in Low Prudhoe & on Princess Way, to the High St to access shops and connect to bus services, to access activities for older people at the Manors and Prudhoe Club and to access other local facilities including parks and the Castle. 6 also expressed difficulties travelling outside the town to destinations in Northumberland and Tyneside.

Only one person stated that they use the existing dial-a-ride service (run by Adapt) which is designed to support people who cannot access public transport by picking people up from their own homes to travel to Hexham, which would suggest that there may be a need to promote this service better. However only one respondent expressed a need / desire to travel to Hexham which may indicate that the service may be better used if other destinations were offered.

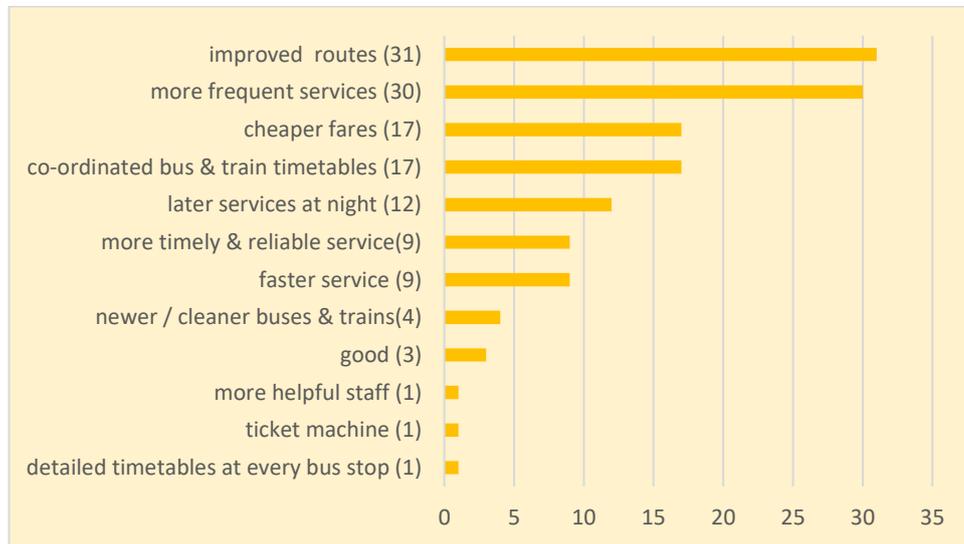
Only one person raised an issue about disabled access to public transport asking that it should be possible to take mobility scooters as well as wheelchairs on board.

ii) Are there any changes that could be made to the bus and train services which would improve your experience of using them, or encourage you to use them more often?

This question aims to identify ways of improving the services for those who are dependent on them and to encourage more people to choose public transport as an alternative to driving.

It is evident from the chart on page 20 that some people who own their own car also choose to use public transport at times (eg 92 people use buses even though only 57 do not have their own car). Encouraging people to continue to use or start to use public transport more often would have benefits both for the environment and to make existing services more sustainable.

Of the 195 people who expressed an opinion on this question 52% (102) said yes, there are steps that could be taken which would achieve these aims with 101 giving further details which are summarised in the chart below



There were 58 comments regarding the **frequency and timing of services** with 29 people called for more frequent bus services, primarily to serve the outlying areas of the town – many asking for an hourly service. 12 people asked for later bus and train services back from Newcastle in the evenings. 2 people asked for more weekend services, and 1 for more early morning services. 1 person said ‘my elderly mother can’t get home after 2.30: all trains busy with school runs.’ 17 people called for better co-ordination between the timetables for trains and buses, 6 of whom complained that buses leave the interchange just before the trains arrive.

31 people asked for **improved bus routes**. Of these, 26 were calling for a revised **shuttle bus service**, and 5 wanted reinstatement of No 10 & No 604 bus routes. A wide range of locations in both Lower and Upper Prudhoe that could benefit from a better service were mentioned including Park Lane, South Rd, Castlefields, Riverside, Wylam Oaklands, across the Tyne, the Rail station, Prudhoe Bank and the Fuse. The remaining 5 comments related to the Newcastle & Hexham services: 3 suggesting pick up points on the estates, 1 a stop at Blaydon and 1 a stop at Newburn Riverside Business Area.

17 people called for **cheaper fares**, 2 of whom commented that driving is cheaper than public transport. Only 4 more detailed answers on this subject were received namely: 1 calling for subsidies on local bus routes, 1 asking that free bus passes be available

from the age of 60 and 1 asking for concessions for students over the age of 21, and 1 for cheaper single fares.

9 people called for more **reliable services** of whom 4 complained that services often run late and 1 that there are frequent breakdowns.

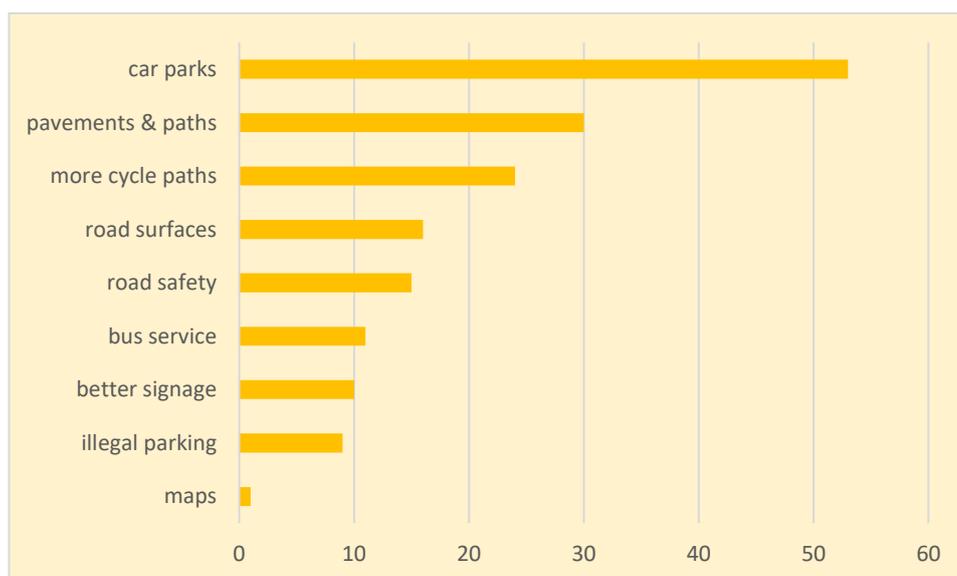
9 people called for **faster services** to Newcastle & Hexham, particularly express buses with fewer stops.

There were a small number of complaints that old tatty and dirty buses (2) and trains (2) are used on routes to Prudhoe, 1 of whom also requested buses with better wifi services. 1 person felt that the bus companies and drivers could be more helpful, and another called for better timetable information at every bus stop. 1 person asked that the ticket machine at Prudhoe station be reinstated.

It is also worth noting that 3 people expressed an opinion that existing bus services are good or excellent.

iii) Are there any improvements that could be made to make it easier to walk, cycle or drive around Prudhoe?

189 People expressed an opinion of whom 132 (almost 70%) felt that improvements could be made. Issues raised are summarised below:



The issue most often raised in this section was that of parking with 53 people calling for **more / better car parks** and 9 calling for a clampdown on **illegal parking**. Locations identified where parking could be extended included the Legion Car Park (3 people), Town Centre (2), Station (2) and Castle (1). Measures that could be taken to improve existing parking provision included repairing surfaces – particularly in the Legion car park (3), providing more disabled & parent & child spaces (3) and clamping down on businesses (eg garages, funeral service and police) using spaces other than those designated for their use (2). Illegal parking blocks access both for pedestrians and for cars and buses. 3 people mentioned specific locations where this is a particular problem, namely Edgewell Rd, West Rd and the junction between Victoria Terrace and Front St.

16 people reiterated issues that were raised under services regarding maintenance of road surfaces, but in this section, there was a greater focus on maintenance of paths

and pavements (29 people) and roads (16). Most of these related to uneven pavements which are seen as a hazard particularly for people with poor vision or mobility problems. 6 people felt that pavements need cleaning more often to deal with issues such as dog mess and broken glass, 2 asked for relocation of obstacles from the middle of pavements (namely flower tubs and lamp posts), 2 asked for wider pavements, and 1 asked for more dropped kerbs so support users of wheelchairs and buggies.

There was a strong interest in better support for cyclists and pedestrians with 24 people asking for more cycle paths and lanes to improve safety for both groups, 2 people asking for more walking routes, and one asking for more cycle parking facilities.

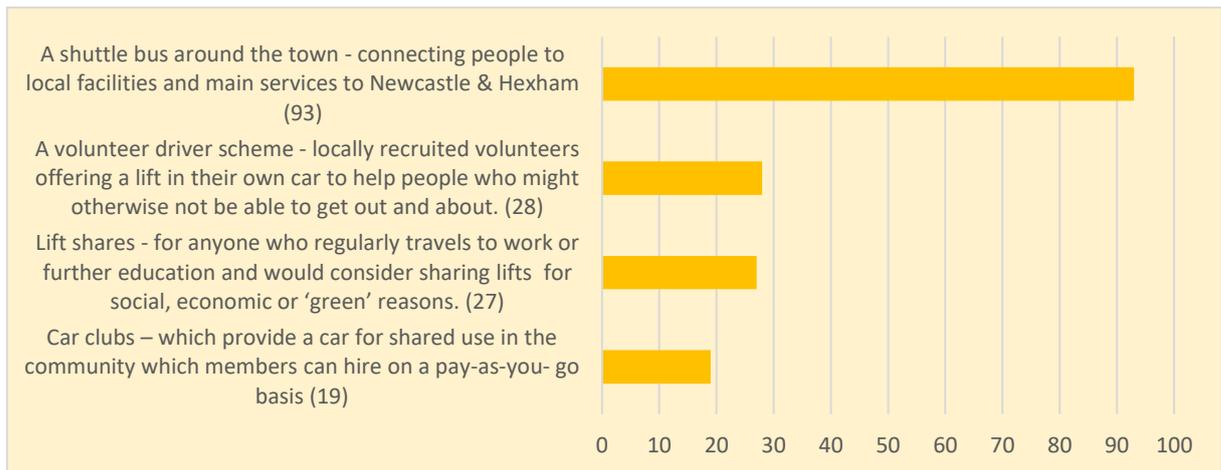
16 people raised issues about traffic management and road safety in this section and 4 people did so in other sections. A range of traffic control measures that might help were identified including better traffic lights, crossings, one-way systems, speed limits etc. Measures suggested at particular sites included sorting out the traffic lights on Front St, installing zebra crossings at St Matthews Hall and near West School, a one-way system through South Rd and Oaklands, reduced speed limits on South Rd up to Humbles Wood, better street lights from Castlefields to the Castle, and a slip road for the Crawcrook turning off the Main Rd. Other areas identified as having a speeding problem were: Errington Place, West Rd, New Ridley Rd, South Rd and Highfield school

10 people asked for better signage to help people find their way around the town, including 4 people asking for signs for visitors to the town to help find places of interest, 2 asking for better signs to direct people to car parks, 1 asking for installation of a town map and 1 asking for existing road signs to be kept clean and unobscured by overgrown hedges and trees.

7 people pointed out that many issues for those travelling around Prudhoe are related to the hilly environment and little can be done to address this (although 3 + people suggested escalators or moving pavements).

iv) Would you consider using any of the following community led transport services to travel locally?

It may be difficult to influence commercial transport providers to increase services if there is no guarantee that services will be profitable, and the County Council's budget for subsidising services is limited. This section therefore asked if a community led / charitable service would be an acceptable alternative. Respondents were asked to indicate which of a number of community-led options they would consider, and 112 people confirmed they would use community services (compared to 195 people who felt public services could be improved). The preferred options are summarised in the chart below:



93 people (83%) said they would consider using a shuttle bus making this by far the most popular option. However about 25% of the respondents were also interested in both a volunteer driver scheme or a lift share, and 17% (19 people) in joining a car club.

These responses suggest that it may be worth considering implementing some or all of these options. Providing a shuttle-bus would be the most complicated option as this would entail identifying the right organisation to deliver the service, acquiring operator licenses, possibly finding significant funding to purchase and insure vehicles, employ staff and cover running costs, finding parking facilities etc. It may be possible to work with one of the larger Community Transport providers in the county (ie Adapt or NEED). More in depth evidence of need may be needed before implementing this solution.

Providing a volunteer driver scheme would be relatively inexpensive and easy to manage but would need careful management to ensure that a reliable service is provided, safeguarding policies and procedures are addressed, and volunteers and beneficiaries are effectively supported.

A shared lift scheme may be as simple as promoting a social media platform for people to make private arrangements between themselves. It may be possible to minimise the issues in setting up a car club by working in partnership with an existing car club company such as Co-wheels (which already operates schemes within Northumberland).

f) Housing

Community Action Northumberland is experienced in supporting local communities to carry out housing needs assessments and has links with other initiatives across the country working in this field. Our experience is that unless detailed questions are asked, the responses may be misleading as people will often answer as to what they think other people may need, or what they feel they may need in the future, rather than focusing on their own (and their family's) current need.

In order to ensure this survey could distinguish between perceived and actual need, two basic questions were asked:

i) Do you think there is a need for more social housing for local residents in Prudhoe?'

156 people expressed an opinion of whom 111 (75%) said yes, there is a need.

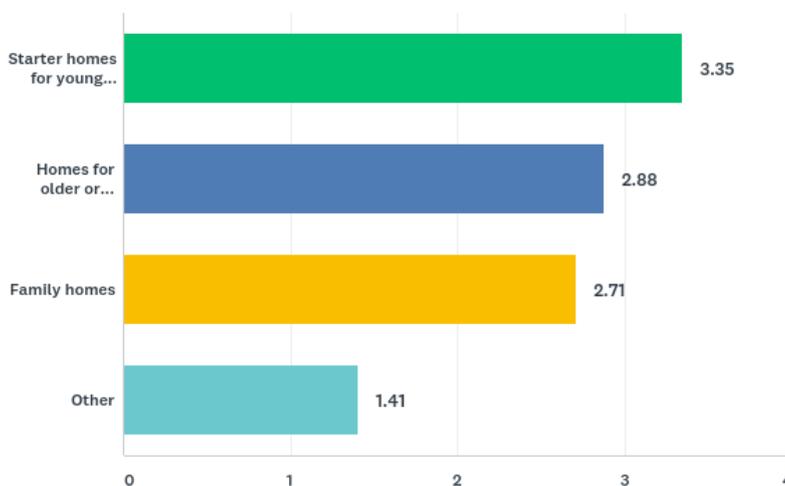
ii) Is there anyone currently living in your household who would benefit from moving to a new affordable home?'

206 people answered this question of whom only 27 said that a member of their household would benefit from additional social housing.

This section then carried on to ask some more detailed questions:

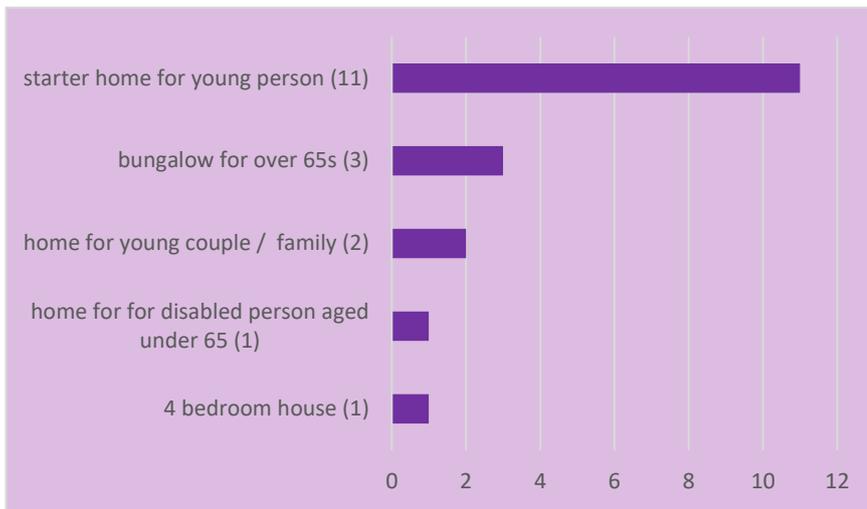
iii) Which of the following types of housing should be a priority?'

People were asked to rank these choices and were given the option to identify another alternative. A weighted average ranking was calculated with 4 being the highest ranking that could be achieved and 1 being the lowest. 115 people answered.



When asked to give details of the 'other' types of homes required,

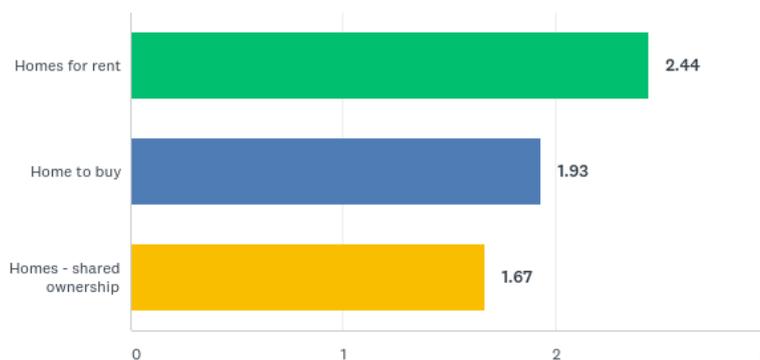
- 7 suggested that 1 & 2 bedroomed flats / bungalows which would be suitable both for older people needing a retirement home or young people starting out.
- 2 suggested a care home or sheltered accommodation
- 1 suggested large houses with big rooms and a garden
- 1 suggested crisis housing for young people.



The general perception expressed in the survey is the greatest need is for homes for young people but that the needs of older people and families are not far behind, however the actual results (albeit from a very small sample) suggest that the actual level of need amongst young people account for a much higher proportion of total need. Given that the survey appeared to reach older people more successfully than younger people, and that 66% of respondents lived in households with 2 or less people, there is a possibility that the gap in need is even higher than these results would suggest.

iv) Which of the following should be a priority?

People were asked to rank these options and were given the option to identify another option. A weighted average ranking was calculated with 4 being the highest ranking that could be achieved and 1 being the lowest. 167 people answered:



Of the 18 people who said that a member of their household would benefit from a new home, 6 said they were in a position to buy or were saving up to buy, 2 specified that they would have no choice but to rent and the others did not specify.

A number of other comments were received as follows:

7 people emphasised that any new housing should be 'really' affordable. It was felt that homes identified as 'affordable' at existing developments such as Cottier Grange Highfield and Humbles Wood are 'too expensive for the average person'.

5 people felt no more building should be allowed, as there have been a number of recent developments. In several places in the survey people also raised a concern that development of infrastructure has not kept pace with housing development

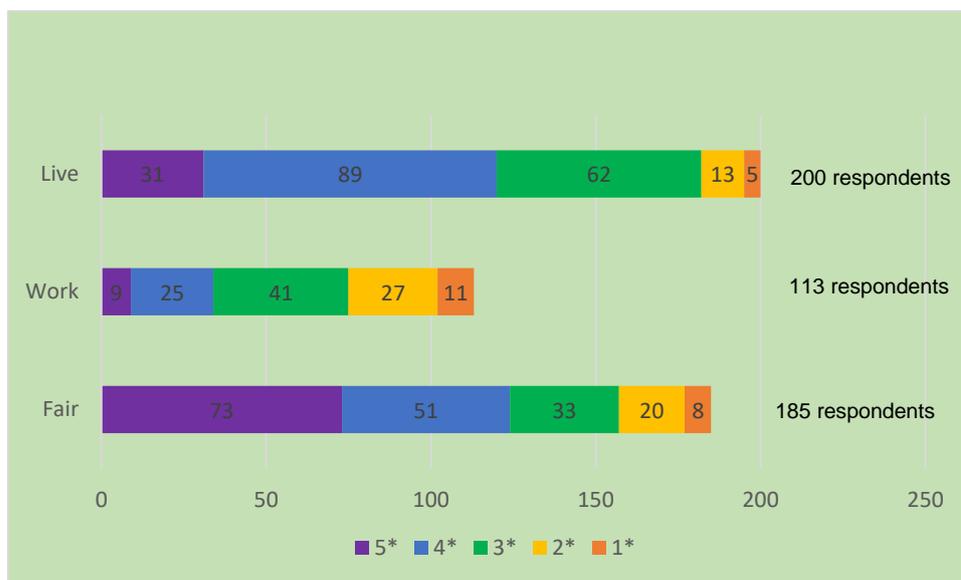
1 person asked that Help to Buy schemes should be made available.

g) Living & Working in Prudhoe

This section was designed to find out how people feel about living and working in Prudhoe. The question we asked was: **'Weighing everything up, how would you rate Prudhoe a) as a place to live and b) as a place to work'**. People were asked to give the town a rating of up to 5 stars.

In addition, people were offered a chance to give Prudhoe an overall star rating by dropping a token into an appropriate box. (This exercise didn't differentiate between 'as a place to work' and as a place to live).

The responses to these questions were as follows:



It is very pleasing to note that

60% of people rated Prudhoe as a 4-star or 5-star place to live, with 91% rating the town at 3* or above as a place to live.

30% of people rated the town at 4 star or above as a place to work with more than 66% giving a rating of 3 star or above. (Although it is worth noting that only 42 people who completed the survey told us that they work in Prudhoe).

56% of people at the Fair rated Prudhoe as a 4-star or 5-star town with 83% rating it at 3-star or over.

h) Community Involvement

Throughout the survey we asked people if they would be interested in becoming involved in supporting their local community through voluntary work. The answers showed a pleasing level of interest in volunteering with:

- 33 people interested in volunteering to support young/ old or disabled people
- 18 interested volunteering to run local amenities
- 17 interested in volunteering to support unemployed people
- 9 interested in becoming volunteer drivers to support those with limited access to transport.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to express an interest in becoming a member of Prudhoe Community Partnership in order to continue to influence local community development and 53 people provided their contact details in order to take up this opportunity.

In total 80 people (33% of respondents) were interested in continuing to support their local community, many willing to consider more than one role.

3) Conclusion and Priorities

Overall, the survey gave a very positive picture of Prudhoe as a community with:

- 91% of respondents rating the town as a 3* place to live and 60% rating it at 4* or more
- 66% of respondents rating the town as a 3* place to work and 30% rating it at 4* or more
- 33% of respondents were interested in staying involved in supporting their community through becoming members of Prudhoe Community Partnership and /or taking on a range of voluntary roles.

Many respondents to the survey took the time not only to answer the straight forward questions, but also to provide a huge range of detailed comments, providing a wealth of insights and ideas about the issues that are important to the local community. Based on the analysis of these comments, a number of priorities have emerged under each of the 6 themes covered, which will be invaluable in supporting PCP to develop its business plan for the next 3 to 5 years. These are listed below. However, these should be seen as a starting point only. In deciding what actions to take forward it will be essential to take a number of other factors into consideration:

- Some of the highest priorities brought forward may be complex to implement, will require partnership working and acquisition of significant funding and could take considerable time to implement. Conversely there may be issues raised that are of lower priority but that can be addressed relatively easily and inexpensively. It may be desirable to identify a range of short-term, medium term and long-term actions that can be taken to ensure that local people see immediate outcomes from the survey whilst awaiting progress on some of the bigger issues.
- There may also be cases where the desired outcome identified by respondents to the survey may not prove possible in practice (for instance it is unlikely that the decision to close the local police station can be reversed). However, other approaches may be identified that can achieve progress towards addressing the underlying issue.
- Progress may have been made on some of the issues since sending out the survey.
- This report is based on the views of a fairly small percentage of local residents and some groups may be under-represented (for instance young people). It may be necessary to undertake further consultation focussed on particular issues and/ or tailored to reach particular groups of beneficiaries before committing time and resources to taking some of the ideas forward.

It may be useful to form working groups to look at each of the 6 themes in more detail and to take actions forward. These could be comprised of PCP trustees, representatives of other partners who could contribute to achieving desired outcomes, and respondents to the survey who have expressed an interest in continuing to be involved in the PCP and voluntary activities.

Some thoughts on how these factors may affect implementation are made alongside the themes below

a) Services

i) Maintenance of roads and pavements / street cleaning.

Responsibility for road maintenance lies primarily with the county council and budgetary considerations may affect how quickly issues can be addressed. Some work has already been carried out over the Summer period. The PCP's role may include gathering more detailed information about locations that are of concern, liaising with the local county councillor, highways department and town council to prioritise work and keep local people informed about progress

ii) Location of the Police Station at the Spetchells Centre

The decision to close the Police station was made because the way services are delivered has changed over the years, with the implementation of technological support, meaning fewer support staff were located in local police station which was largely empty and expensive to run. The police report that there have been advantages in moving into the Spetchells over and above budgetary considerations – eg, people feel more comfortable speaking to the police in this less formal environment and being co-located with and other community organisations facilitates collaborative approaches. Contrary to the perception expressed in the survey, there has been no change in opening hours associated with the move. PCP's role may be in facilitating better communication with the public about the impact of the move, disseminating information about how to access the service, and exploring the possibility of providing better access to space for confidential conversations.

iii) Antisocial Behaviour

Crime figures for Prudhoe published on <https://crime-statistics.co.uk/postcode/ne42%205dl> confirm that anti-social behaviour is one of the most prevalent crimes in the area with for instance 18 incidents recorded in July 2018. However, compared with other parts of the county, and the country these rates are relatively low. Given current budgetary constraints faced by the police it is unlikely that these levels are sufficient to justify higher levels of policing. The PCPs role may be to liaise with the police and NCC's Community Safety Team, support local people in understanding how to report issues, and exploring community approaches such as developing Neighbourhood Watch schemes, or helping to engage young people in positive activities. Advice on how to report anti-social behaviour and contact details for the Community Safety Team are available at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Neighbourhood.aspx>

iv) Youth Services

Improving Youth Services for children aged 10 and over emerged as a high priority both to improve the life of young people, and as a way of addressing antisocial behaviour issues. However, there was little consensus about the best actions to take, and the response rates from young people were very low. The NCC is currently embarking on a review of formal youth services in the area which may provide an opportunity to have an impact in this area. It is recommended that further consultation should be carried out with young people themselves working in partnership with other organisations such as schools, the local youth service, and other VCS organisations working with young people. Details of Northumberland Youth Service are available at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Young/Northumberland-Youth-Services/Northumberland-youth-service.aspx#northumberlandyouthservice>
CAN may be able to provide information regarding good practice in consulting young people.

v) Services for people with Dementia

Services for older and disabled people in general did not emerge as a major concern. However, a small number of people expressed a need for more support for people with dementia and their carers was raised. PCP could work in partnership with organisations such as NCC, The Town Council, The Alzheimer's Society and other VCS organisations. It may also be worth finding out more about the Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities>

b) Amenities

i) Arts Venues

There was significant interest in developing venues for arts activities including a theatre, cinema, venue for live music, exhibition space and artists studios. However, views were divided as to whether these should be provided by improving existing facilities, making better use of the Fuse Centre, or developing a dedicated building in the town centre. PCP may consider undertaking a feasibility study to develop a new venue, working in partnership with existing venues and arts activities to promote awareness and co-ordinate a plan to develop facilities. Measures to improve transport around the town may also have an impact here, particularly in improving access to the Fuse.

ii) Sports Facilities

Interest in developing sports facilities was somewhat lower than the interest in arts venues, but there was still an area of significant concern. Again, views were divided as to whether to develop a new venue, or whether needs could be met by improving existing provision. It may be difficult to access funding for a new building given the existence of Waterworld in an area relatively well serviced by buses, and it may be better to look at whether the issues raised about this facility can be addressed. Active Northumberland are currently reviewing their service provision and looking at ways to ensure that Waterworld is inclusive to as many people as possible, although difficult in the times of cuts to public services.

PCP may consider co-ordinating a partnership with Waterworld / Active Northumberland, local parks, school facilities and a variety of local sports clubs, to develop existing facilities and promote awareness of what is available. A significant issue is the cost of activities, and PCP may want to campaign on this particular issue.

iii) Community Centre / large meeting space

Several people addressed a need for this, but once again views were divided as to whether a new building was required, or an existing one could be developed. PCP may want to explore this further in partnership with the Town Council and the other venues mentioned.

c) Shops & Town Centre

i) Improving shop fronts

There was a strong demand for improved shopfronts. PCP may wish to work in partnership with the Town Council, Northumberland County Council and the local business community to explore options. NCC has recently created new posts whose role is to work with Towns which may provide a real opportunity (contact details not yet published). Measures worth considering include providing grants or other incentives to shop holders, running 'best shop front' competitions, encouraging pop-up shops or community activities in any vacant

premises, or allowing community organisations to use empty shop fronts to display information.

ii) Creating a more welcoming Town Centre.

Ideas varied from improving existing areas such as the Glade with flower displays, trees, seating and creating a space for outside meetings, to creating a more extensive pedestrianised area. There was no strong consensus as to whether the latter would be desirable or feasible. If PCP wish explore the pedestrianisation idea it may be worth considering undertaking a neighbourhood plan for the town as a first step. Some shorter-term measures may be possible.

iii) Improved range of shops

There was a strong demand for a better range of shops – especially a second supermarket, a range of small food shops and clothing and shoe shops, and also attracting more well-known high street chains. The planned development on the Bypass may address this issue to some extent. PCP may want to work in partnership with the Town Council, County Council and business community and landlords of commercial premises to identify measures which could be taken to attract shops to the area.

iv) Access for Wheelchairs and Pushchairs

There is a significant problem in accessing many shops and cafes due to stepped entrances, narrow doorways and a lack of space inside. Some of these issues are difficult to address as many buildings are old and difficult to adapt. However, there are steps that could be taken, such as encouraging shops to have portable ramps that can be deployed on request, providing seating inside shops for older people with mobility issues, offering shop-owners training to understand the needs of disabled people such as those with dementia. PCP might wish to consider working with the town council, business community and disability organisations to identify a way forward. It may be possible to offer access audits to shops to help identify possible steps that can be taken. Gateshead Access Panel is able to carry out such audits, or train local people to carry out audits themselves, see <http://www.access-gateshead.org.uk/>.

There are also access issues in the outside environment which could be relatively easily addressed such as removing street furniture and improving pavements.

d) Employment

i) Creating Job Opportunities

There was a strong feeling that more should be done to create employment opportunities within Prudhoe, but no strong consensus on the best measures to take.

PCP may want to explore the issue further and could consider doing this in partnership with / consulting the business community (to identify measures that would support businesses to set up in the town), Hexham and Blaydon Job Centre (to identify level and type of need amongst unemployed people), training organisations, such as NEAS/ the Fuse Centre, Northumberland College and VCs organisations that deliver employability services.

ii) Support/ Advice for Job seekers

There was a small demand for support for people to find work, particularly young people. Support services already exist in the town, including Prudhoe Rural Employment Hub delivering the Bridge Project which is run by CAN at the Spetchells Centre, and the CAP job club, and at the Fuse. Tailored support for young people may be available through schools and the youth service. Local vacancies are also regularly posted on the Prudhoe

Matters website. These services may be sufficient for current need, but PCP may have a role in raising awareness of the availability of the service.

e) Traffic & Transport

i) Parking Issues

Many people raised issues regarding difficulty finding parking spaces, poor surfaces to car parks and illegal parking. In the short-term PCP may want to work with the County Council and landowners to agree a programme of repairs to car park surfaces, and with the Police to identify ways in which the community can support them with addressing parking issues. Longer-term, it may be possible to develop new parking facilities. However, this may need to be considered as part of a wider development plan for the Town, taking into account other developments such as that planned at the Bypass, any new housing, or to take forward the idea of pedestrianizing the town centre.

ii) Shuttle bus / community transport schemes

Many people raised the need for more transport services around the town to access facilities and link with bus and train services to other towns. The preferred option would be a shuttle bus operating on a regular basis throughout the day. A commercial transport provider would only consider if it could be made profitable and it is likely that NCC subsidies would be necessary. It is unlikely that this would be forthcoming in the current financial climate and much stronger evidence of need would be required. PCP may wish to consider implementing community transport alternatives such as provision of a volunteer driver scheme or arranging shared taxi services. Potential partners may be existing community transport providers or taxi firms. In the survey 9 people indicated an interest in volunteering as drivers.

iii) Better co-ordination of Bus and Train Services

This could be a complex issue to address, requiring partnership working between a number of transport providers and Northumberland County Councils. Changes in service timetables may also have a knock-on effect on services to neighbouring towns and connections to ongoing services from Newcastle and Carlisle. PCP could have a role in ensuring these issues are given due consideration and keeping the public informed about the practical issues.

iv) Better facilities for cyclists

There is a demand for more cycle lanes, cycle paths and cycle parking facilities. Improving cycle facilities would fit well with sustainable transport strategies and support may be available from partners including Sustrans and Northumberland County Council. Taking this issue forward would require working in partnership with the Planning Department, and landowners and to be planned in the context of other developments in the town. Grants may be available to support installation of cycle parking facilities.

f) Social Housing

There has been significant housing development in the town in recent years, and some small-scale developments are being planned including supported living flats at the site of the old police station. Respondents to the survey expressed concerns that future development should be limited, any that took place should focus on local needs and be 'really affordable.'

A small demand for more social housing was identified through the survey, with the highest level of need appearing to be for starter homes for young people. However more evidence would be needed to support any further development.

The current policy environment is supportive to housing development with funding available from the Homes and Communities Agency via Northumberland County Council. Community Action Northumberland is able to provide support and advice to communities wishing to develop their own housing projects through 'Communities CAN' a community led housing hub for instance helping with carrying out housing needs assessments which will provide robust evidence needed to achieve planning permission and access grants. Stocks field Community Association has been successful in developing community led housing schemes and would be able to offer support.