

Gilston Village 7, Stage 1 Consultation Report

Introduction

This report considers the feedback during the first round of the Gilston Area Village 7 Masterplan and Design Code consultation. The report summarises the consultation process, consultation events which have taken place including three public exhibitions and two pop-up events, and key responses.

Key themes emerged through the feedback, both verbal and written, from these events. These were: **transport, ecology and infrastructure**. There was also engagement around other areas such as character, but these three themes were significantly more common.

Attendees at our events gave feedback and engaged on specific details of the proposals within these themes. More detail is provided by event and by feedback method throughout this report.

While there was support for much of what the proposals have to offer, and indeed some who are keen to see the plans delivered more promptly, there are also areas where attendees identified changes they would like to see.

Overall engagement

The public events were well-attended and the Village 7 website has seen fair traffic, particularly around the time when leaflets were delivered. We have had a total of 97 written engagements from residents in the form of six feedback forms, five emails and 86 completed sign-in slips.

In total, we had 121 people through the door at the three public exhibition events to date. Many others have had conversations with the team in Harlow during the two pop-up events in the Harvey Centre.

Virtual engagement has been strong, with 22 people signed up to join the webinar on the day it was held, and 30 signed up by the time the webinar started. Ultimately 21 residents joined the webinar session with eight team members on the call.

Advertising

The consultation was advertised directly and indirectly to maximise awareness and engagement. Advertising included:

- An invitation leaflet was sent to more than 6,311 addresses around the Village 7 site
- Use of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) social media channels
- Direct letters to councillors
- Direct letters to dozens of stakeholder groups
- 496 direct invitation letters to addresses in and around Hunsdon

Engagement with Community, Business and Political Stakeholders

An extensive list of stakeholders have been engaged as part of the first round of consultation. Taylor Wimpey invited a wide range of community, business and political stakeholders, including 74 which received an invitation to meet by post, and a further 59 by email.

Of these, no community organisations or businesses responded to the request to meet (except Harlow College – see below). An expression of interest was received from councillors on both Harlow and East Herts councils. Taylor Wimpey will aim to secure a meeting with these councillors in 2024 ahead of the public Round 2 events should availability permit.

Taylor Wimpey will also approach community, business and political stakeholders again as part of the Round 2 engagement.

Harlow College

Taylor Wimpey has been engaging with Harlow College directly for some time. The consultation provides an opportunity to enhance the ongoing dialogue to provide workshops and pop-ups at the College itself. A date could not be agreed for the first round of workshop in Part 1 of the consultation, but they are likely to take place before the official start of Part 2 of the consultation.

In addition, Taylor Wimpey is discussing taking on work experience and apprentices from the College.

Public Exhibition and Workshop 1 – Saturday 28 October

The event consisted of a traditional public exhibition made up of information boards and technical experts on hand to answer questions. In addition, a rolling workshop session was held which allowed visitors to sit down with the design team and debate the masterplan in detail.

39 people attended this event, with 33 of those attending completing a sign-in slip and 24 signing up for email updates. We received only one item of written feedback at this session from a resident at Pye Corner who was concerned about construction traffic.

Much of the feedback at this session was verbal, with an engaged and informed group joining the session workshop, which took place over three hours.

Verbal Feedback

Attendees provided their feedback on a wide range of elements verbally, both directly to members of the project team in the room, and as a group at the workshop table.

Transport was a key theme with local residents keen to discuss the proposed redirection of Church Lane around the Village Centre, particularly with consideration to the regular use of sugar beet trucks and other farm traffic in the area. Residents sought reassurance that these vehicles had been considered as part of the planned redirection.

Attendees were very interested in the **sustainable travel plans** promoted for Village 7. Residents in the surrounding area were interested in the provision of **traffic calming** within and beyond the village, new bus routes and where these would lead, the availability of **car hire**, the **cycle routes** on offer, and **electric vehicle infrastructure**. Many of these are part of the existing proposals, and queries on other areas of transport, such as on-street parking and car traffic on Church Lane would support the aim for a 60% modal shift towards sustainable modes, although attendees were keen to hear more information on how this would be achieved in practice.

Workshop attendees asked questions around placemaking, including the **location of retail space, massing of buildings** at the Village Centre, and ensuring variety throughout the village. The issues raised around placemaking are largely ones which have been addressed in the Outline Consent, with retail space planned around the Village Centre close to the Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC) Hub, traffic slowed on Church Lane which will make the surrounding spaces more pleasant to live, work and visit, and a varied approach to village character throughout the proposed character areas in both massing and design. Attendees did also express a preference for **lower buildings** close to the heritage barns on the site and questioned the need for five storey buildings in a village context.

On the subject of landscape, residents were keen to promote the **heritage** of the site, both as a facility for **food production** and as hunting grounds of **Henry VIII**. There were many comments on retaining some food production on site, particularly with involvement of the school and the orchard next to the historic barns, and some attendees suggesting fruit or nut-bearing trees to line streets.

Another issue raised by attendees of the workshop was the **size of the sports facilities** on offer. Some felt that these were too large and not needed. Given the scope of the wider Strategic Landscape Masterplan (SLMP) area, these facilities would operate as regional assets rather than strictly local ones. Attendees also queried **coach parking** locations and capacity in order to facilitate formal organised sports at these facilities.

Concern was raised about some elements of delivery, with residents being unsure whether the **link to Roydon Station** would be delivered, and that sustainable transport could be delivered too late and result in car-dependent habits being established early. Parish Councillors from the HEGNP area expressed a wish to be involved in the monitoring committee process to ensure that the proposed modal shift is deliverable.

Some attendees were concerned that no session had been planned in Hunsdon Village Hall. In response to this, the team opened discussions with the Village Hall on availability in November. A session was subsequently confirmed for mid-November and advertised to local residents in Hunsdon.

Attendees expressed that the workshop format provided a very positive way for Taylor Wimpey to engage and thanked the workshop team for their open approach.

Public Exhibition and Workshop 2 – Tuesday 31 October

41 people attended this event, which took the same format as Exhibition and Workshop 1. 26 of those attending completed a sign-in slip and 20 signing up for email updates. The sign-in figure is slightly lower as we did not ask return visitors from the 28/10 session to complete another slip.

Written feedback was stronger at this session, with five forms being submitted on the day. The response from feedback forms will be analysed in more depth later in this report.

As at the 28/10 session, verbal feedback was plentiful, mostly around transport elements of the scheme and particularly through the workshop process.

Verbal Feedback

Attendees at the second public exhibition repeated some points made at the first, with some of the group having attended both sessions.

Transport was the most discussed theme again, with attendees expressing interest in traffic flow towards Hunsdon and car parking around the proposed allotments. Attendees were once again interested in the proposals for sustainable transport, particularly on funding for transport infrastructure and whether this was agreed, cycle connections between Village 7 and surrounding villages, particularly Hunsdon, and electric vehicle charging points. Attendees again mentioned the management of HGVs, noting that there are existing issues with them on Church Lane.

Some attendees noted that crossroads are currently proposed in Village 7 and suggested that these be offset from each other to offer a more rural street design.

Attendees were also interested in the **design of new homes** and how these could be varied, which supports existing proposals for varied character areas. There was resistance to some materials, with distaste expressed for bright orange tiles or bricks and overall uniformity. Attendees suggested conditions being put in place to prevent solar panels from being installed and altering the carefully considered design. Some attendees suggested taking design inspiration from Church Langley.

Around delivery, attendees were keen to hear more information on phasing and timeline for each element to be delivered.

With regard to the scheme post-delivery, questions emerged again on the **travel review panel** which would determine next steps if the 60% modal shift is not met. Attendees were interested in how the panel may engage with local people to establish how travel arrangements could be changed. There was demand also for more clarity on how any issues in the surrounding villages or SLMP would be resolved, and whether this would fall under Taylor Wimpey or Places for People.

Public Webinar – Thursday 2 November

21 members of the public attended the webinar, with almost all remaining for the entire Question and Answer session too. A full recording of this session is now available on the Village 7 website.

We received 15 questions during the webinar from five of the attendees. Placed into broad topics these can be summarised as follows:

Type	Questions
Car travel	2
Ecology	2
Employment	2
Character	2
Local Services	3
Timeline	2
Not applicable	2

Questions were grouped and asked to the relevant member of the project team. The most popular question topic was around **local services**, with residents interested in the delivery of the school, plans for healthcare provision and more broadly how all homes in the wider Gilston Area will be covered by public services and infrastructure to minimise the impact on existing communities.

Other questions emerged on employment sources and village character, which were addressed by the character areas and planned employment land and what it could include.

Questions around ecology were each on planned biodiversity enhancements and the protection of existing woodland from incursion, particularly around the sports pitches to the north of the site.

At the end of the session members of the public expressed their thanks to the team and commented that the session had been useful.

Public Exhibition and Workshop 3 – 15 November

Following feedback requesting a supplementary exhibition at Hunsdon Village Hall which was received from residents and Parish Councillors at the initial two exhibition events at Eastwick and Gilston Village Hall, Taylor Wimpey hosted a third public exhibition at Hunsdon Village Hall on 15 November.

Of a total of 41 attendees, 26 sign-in slips were completed, suggesting that over half were attending a Round 1 exhibition for the first time.

Verbal feedback

Verbal feedback at this event was limited more to conversations with individual members of the team as the format of the event did not lend itself as well to a workshop being held. Nevertheless, verbal feedback was recorded at this third and final session for Round 1.

Much of the feedback was in keeping with that which was given at the previous two sessions. Hunsdon residents expressed **concern at the redirection of Church Lane** and any additional time this may add on to car journeys to the A414 and Harlow, or whether it would be

appropriate for **HGVs and farm vehicles in the Village Centre**. Given the likelihood of additional journeys via the A414, some attendees sought clarification on whether the **improved Church Lane junction would be signalised** to enhance safety.

While the notion of a bus route serving the Gilston Area was well-received, many residents were concerned about its longevity after the route via Hunsdon was redirected or cancelled. Some requested that this new **bus route could call at Hunsdon** at some point in its trip.

Discussion around bus routes fit into a broader discussion about the connectivity of Hunsdon, with some attendees suggesting that Hunsdon should benefit from the proposed **cycle infrastructure being extended to connect Hunsdon** to the proposed Village 7 and Gilston Area.

Clarity was requested on some other elements of the proposed active travel infrastructure, including the plans for a **cycle link to Roydon Station**, and any enhancements for **footpaths along the River Stort**.

Others were concerned about any pressure Village 7 may place on existing services. Some of these concerns were abated when discussing the new infrastructure Village 7 would provide and contribute towards.

Attendees engaged with the theme of character and land use, with further concern about the proposed **five storeys at the Village Centre** and whether this suited the character of a village. Some attendees did feel that the village character was enhanced by the retention of the listed barn and its proposed use.

More detail was requested on how **car trips from Hunsdon to the proposed Primary School** could be avoided, and how sustainable trips to school can be encouraged more broadly. Attendees were supportive of the location of the school.

The Reverend of St Dunstan's Church commented that the current graveyard has capacity for a further 20 years of demand. As Village 7 is proposed within the Hunsdon boundary, concern was raised about this capacity for the 1,500 new homes. **Additional graveyard capacity** from Village 7 or the SLMP area was sought.

Public Pop-Ups – 15 & 16 November

To seek the views of those who may not engage with more traditional forms of engagement such as public exhibitions, two public pop-up events were arranged in areas of high footfall at the Harvey Centre in Central Harlow. These were not advertised beforehand, seeking to reach those who would pass by on the day.

These events involved leaflets and feedback forms for the purpose of engaging this group who may be short on time but a new demographic to the consultation. They were successful in this aim, with passers-by ranging from sixth formers from Harlow College to parents and retirees, some of whom had heard about the Gilston Area plans already.

The written feedback from these events is summarised in a later section of this report, and verbal feedback is summarised below.

Verbal feedback

Many of those who gave verbal feedback felt negatively about the current state of Harlow and its area. They expressed strong feelings about **perceived decline in the town**, with several

refusing to engage with the consultation for that reason. This fed into a feeling that around Harlow nothing will genuinely change, and that projects such as Village 7 and their benefits will ultimately not be delivered.

This is congruous with the identified risk of consultation fatigue, whereby residents in the area feel that much has been promised over the past 10-20 years and little has been delivered so far. As a result, some who spoke to us were **keen for delivery to come sooner**, and they expressed frustration that the wider plans for Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, including Village 7, are taking so long.

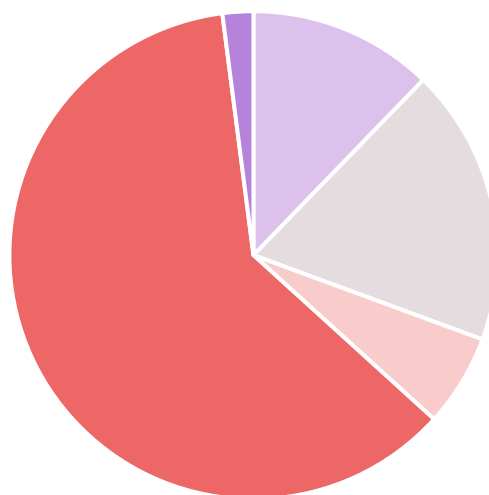
Plenty of passers by did stop to speak with the team and expressed further views. Many were keen to hear more about the infrastructure that Village 7 would deliver directly, or that it would contribute towards in Villages 1-6. There was particular focus on **healthcare, dentistry, education and traffic on the A414**.

Many people were **positive about the sustainable transport** plans when given verbal detail. There was however a scepticism towards this element of the plans from two perspectives; some felt that these elements were bound to be scrapped or scaled back after the Harlow section of the Sustainable Transport Corridor was seen to be rolled back, and others felt that the sustainable transport plans would not reduce the car traffic from Village 7.

Overview of written feedback

Overall we have received 48 items of written feedback to date, with 12 being full-length feedback forms and 30 shortform ones. These date between 17 October and 16 November. The single most popular mode of feedback has been written feedback forms either returned during the events or by freepost, correspondence via the Village 7 email, info@village7.co.uk, was the second most popular method.

Mode of Feedback



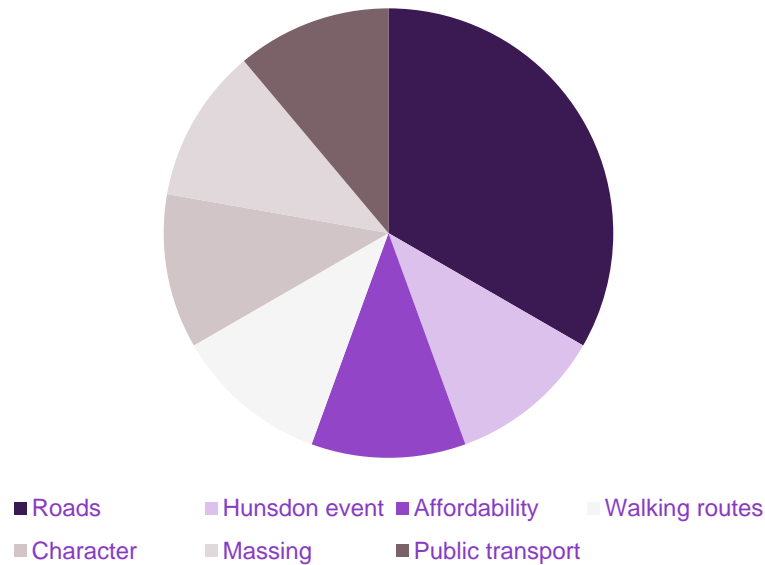
■ Email ■ Feedback form (written) ■ Feedback form (online) ■ Shortform feedback form ■ Other

Email

Of the six emails received, four included concerns on transport with two having a focus on roads, one on footways and one on sustainable transport. The remaining two emails concerned

the Hunsdon event and affordability. 1 of 5 also included concern about the village character and massing around the Village Centre.

Topics raised via email



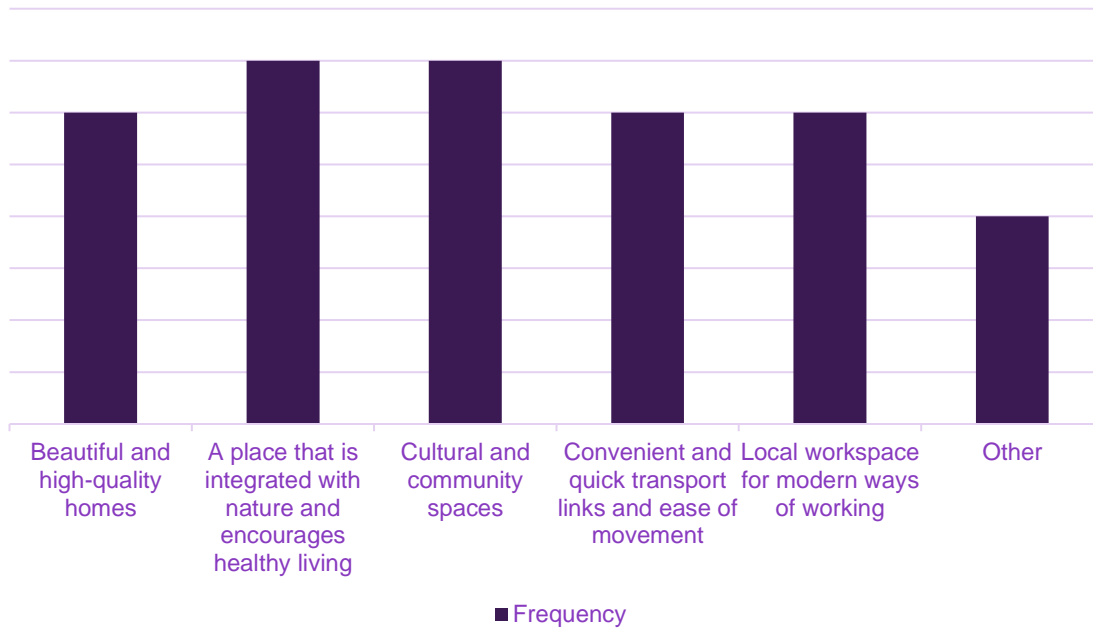
Full-length Feedback Forms

The response received via the feedback forms completed online or in-person at one of our events or pop-ups can be summarised as below. Included below are the responses to both long-form feedback forms, which were available at the exhibition events and intended for those who had time to give detailed feedback.

Question 1 – Elements necessary to create a sense of identity at Village 7

Options:

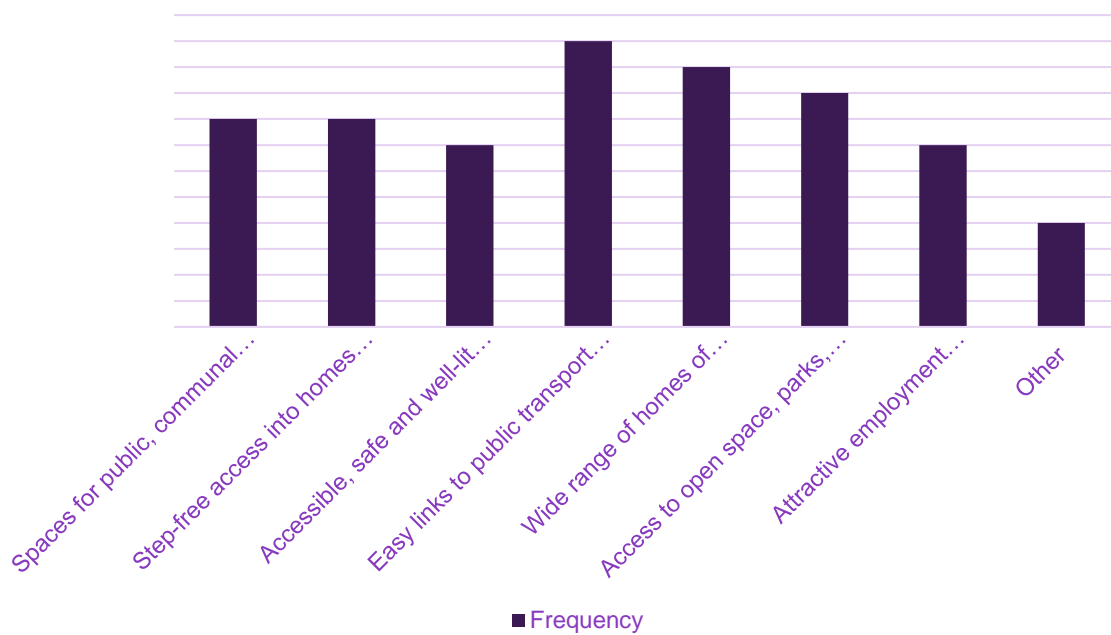
- Beautiful and high-quality homes
- Convenient and quick transport links and ease of movement
- A place that is highly integrated with nature and encourages healthy living
- Local workspace for modern ways of working
- Cultural and community spaces
- Other (Given: disabled access, affordable homes)



Question 2 – Which of the following features will make Village 7 a more welcoming and friendly place to live?

Options:

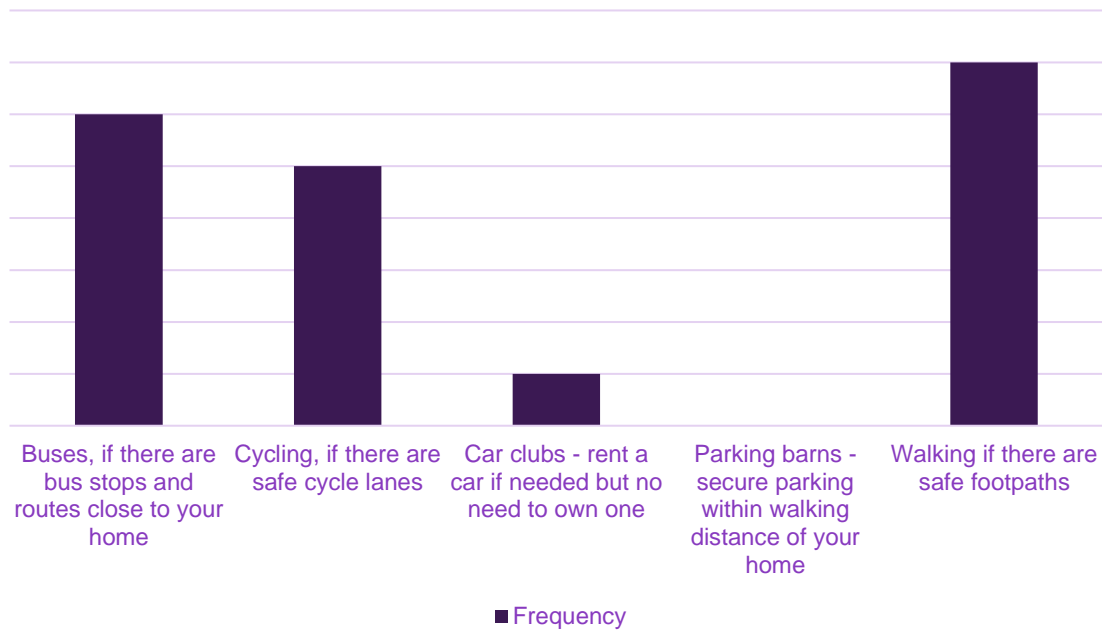
- Spaces for public, communal and cultural events
- Wide range of homes of different sizes and types
- Step-free access into homes and buildings
- Accessible safe, and well-lit walking and cycling routes
- Access to open space, parks, the countryside and nature
- Easy links to public transport and amenities
- Attractive employment accommodation to meet modern needs
- Other



Question 3 – How likely are you to use the following sustainable types of transportation?

Options:

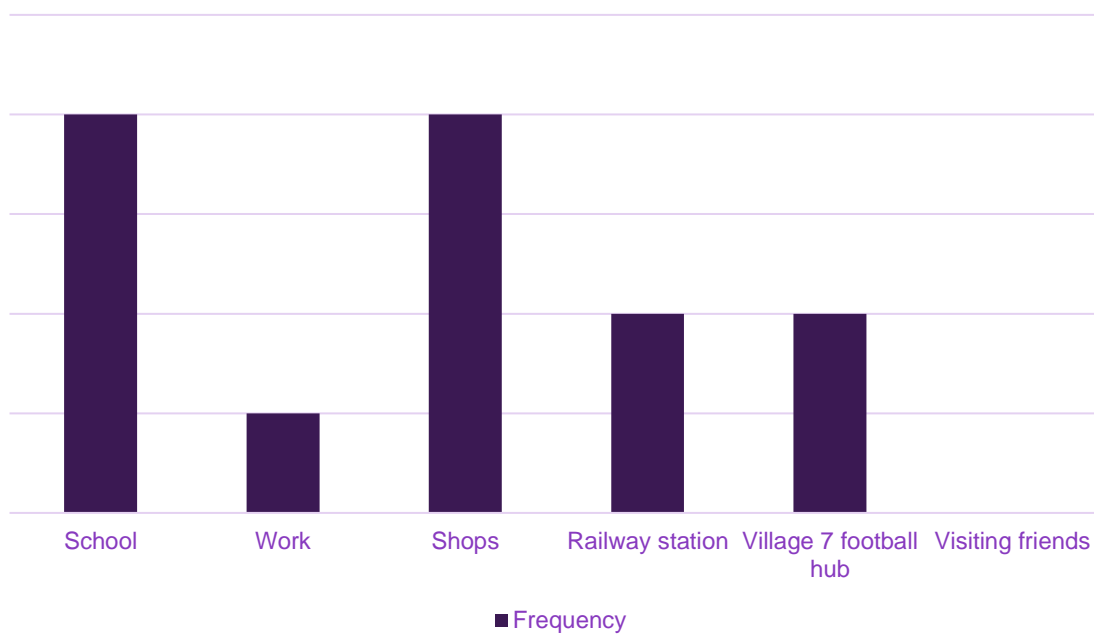
- Buses, if there are bus stops and routes close to your home
- Car clubs - rent a car if needed, but you don't need to own one
- Walking if there are safe footpaths
- Cycling if there are safe cycle lanes
- Parking barns - secure parking within walking distance of your home



Question 4 – Do you think the Village 7 Masterplan encourages the use of sustainable modes for travelling from one’s home in Village 7 to the following destinations?

Options:

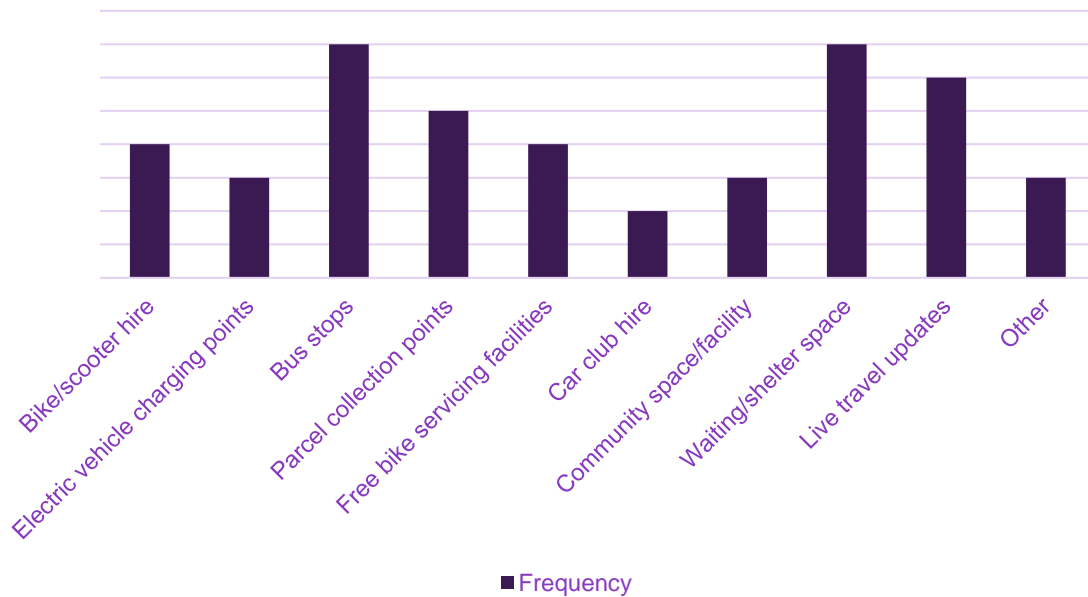
- School
- Work
- Shops
- Railway station
- Village 7 football hub
- Visiting friends
- Write in ('It is well connected internally but lack of certainty on wider connections')



**Question 5 – What features would you like to see in the Sustainable Transport Corridor
Mobility Hub?**

Options:

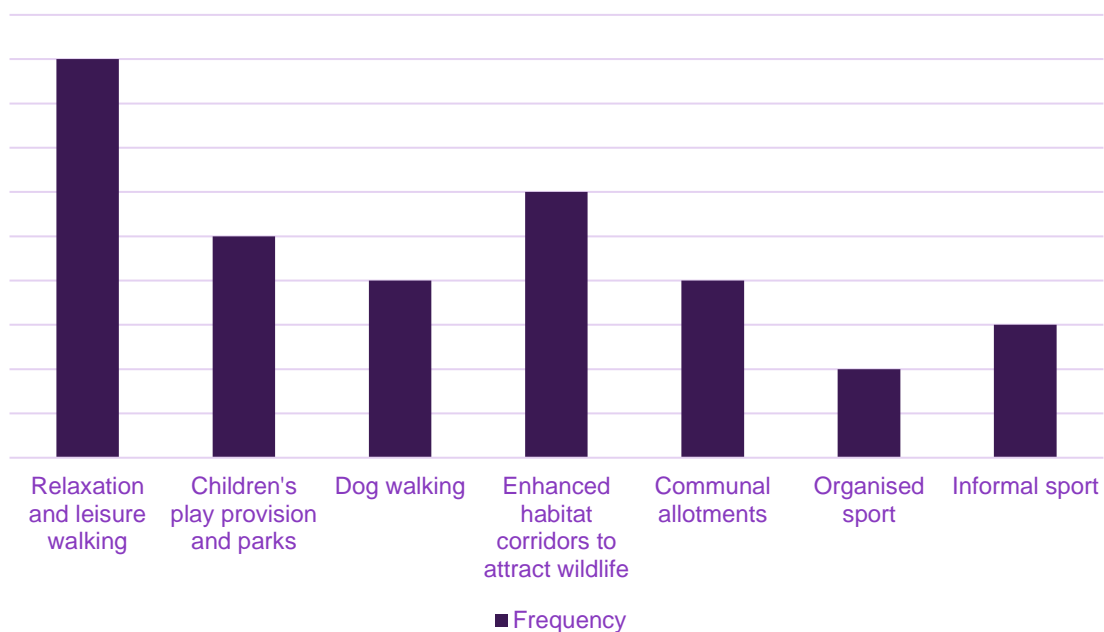
- Bike/Scooter Hire
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Bus stops
- Parcel collection points
- Free bike servicing facilities
- Car club hire
- Community space/facility
- Waiting/shelter space
- Live travel updates/travel information



Question 6 – How would you most likely use the public open spaces and landscape routes within and around Village 7?

Options:

- Relaxation and leisure walking
- Dog walking
- Organised sport e.g football
- Informal sport e.g running, outdoor gym
- Children's play provision and parks
- Enhanced habitat corridors to attract wildlife
- Communal allotments



Question 7 – Are there any other spaces or features you would like to see and why?

Written answer

Key themes:

- Community gardens
- Engagement with local and national wildlife organisations on wildlife promotion
- Relocation and consideration of hospital

Question 8 – Do you think you would use the public walking routes through and around the Gilston Area or follow the proposed heritage trail?

Written answer

Key themes:

- For dog walking
- If they provide a natural experience
- Of those who responded to this question, all were affirmative

Question 9 – Are there any other elements that we could add to the walking routes of Village 7 which would help make them more attractive? (Such as information panels about the landscape and wildlife, heritage features, help points, or animal habitats such as wetlands or insect hotels)

Written answer

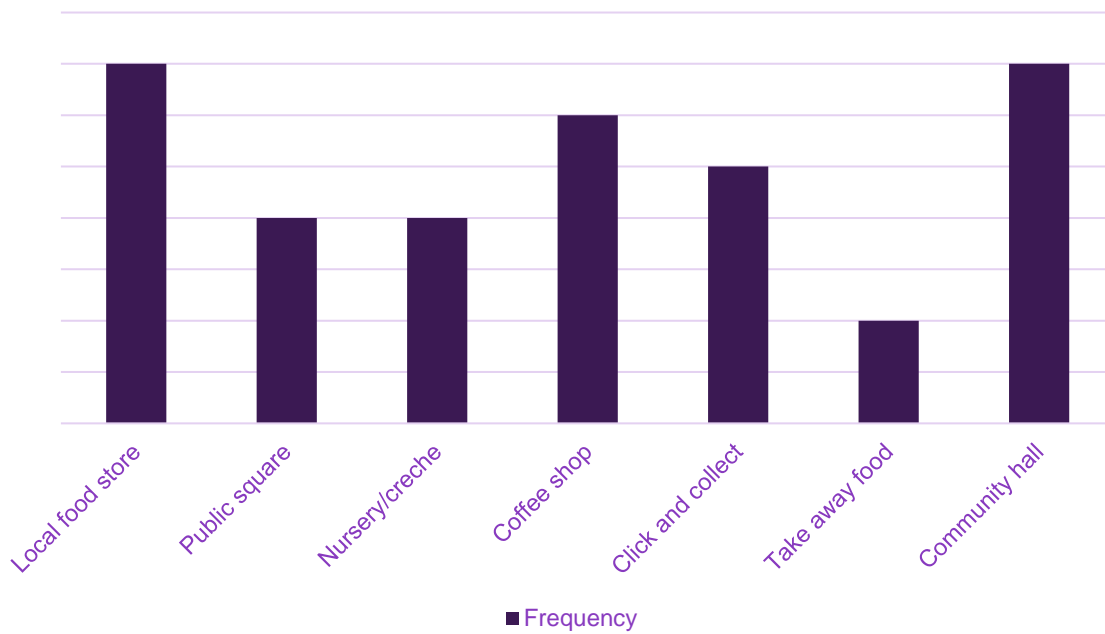
Key themes:

- Public transport links
- All of the above if sealed against the weather
- Dog litter bins

Question 10 – What sort of shops and services would you like to see in the centre of Village 7?

Options:

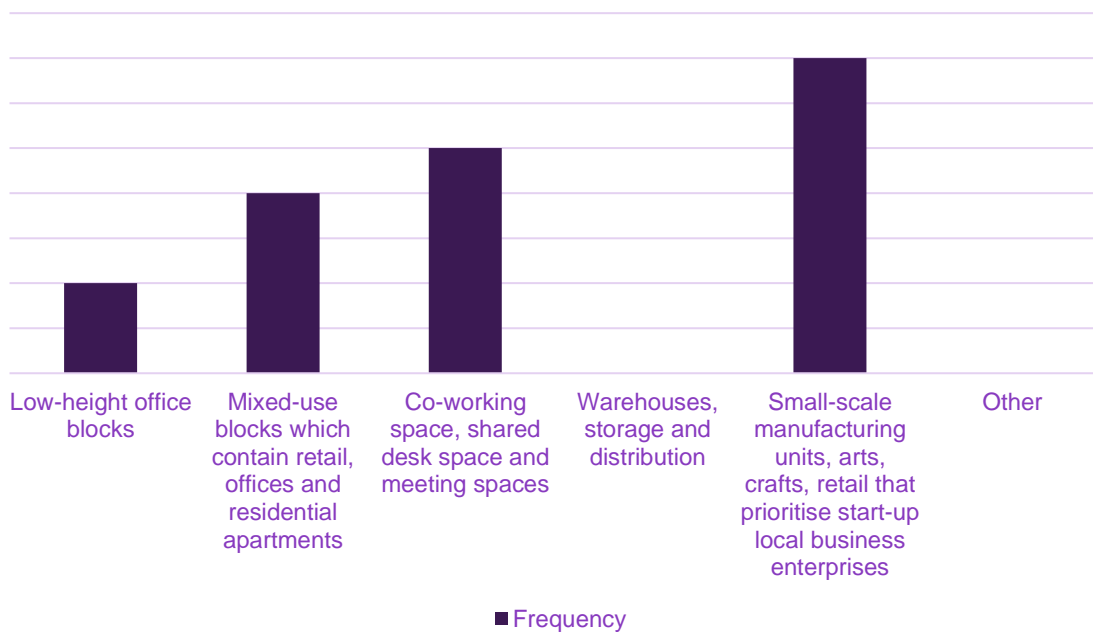
- Local food store
- Public square
- Nursery/creche
- Coffee shop
- Click and collect
- Take away food
- Community hall
- Retail shops
- Work/employment space
- Other



Question 11 – What type of work and employment spaces would you like to see close to your home?

Options:

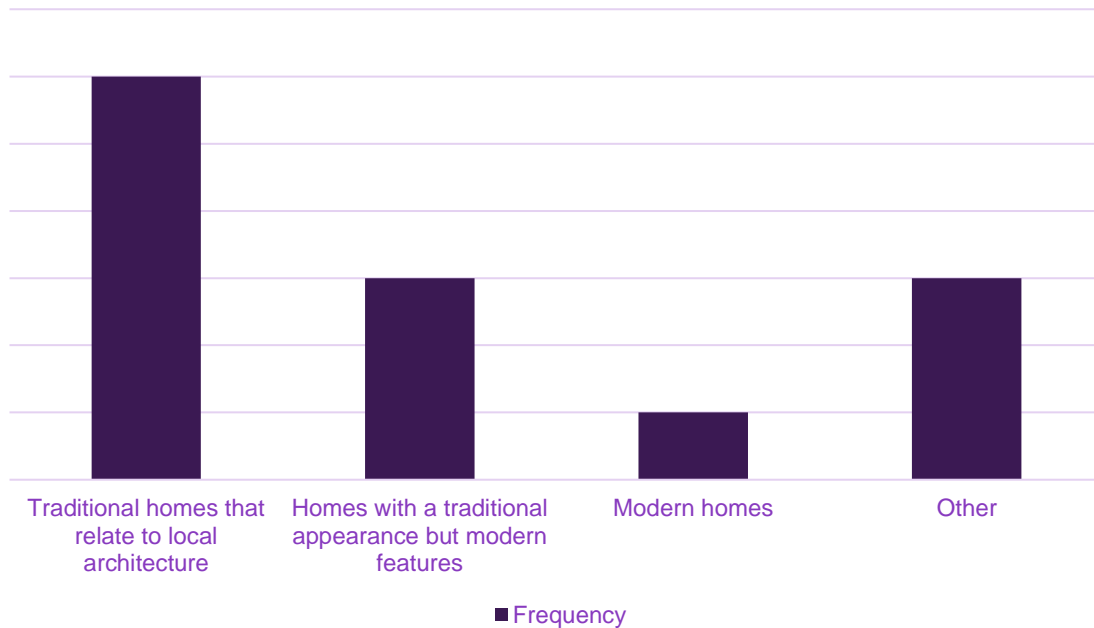
- Low-height office blocks
- Co-working space, shared desk space and meeting spaces
- Mixed-use blocks which contain retail, offices and residential apartments
- Warehouses, storage and distribution
- Small-scale manufacturing units, arts, crafts, retail that prioritise start-up local business enterprises
- Other (A mix throughout the village)



Question 12 – What type of appearance would you like the homes to have in Village 7?

Options:

- Traditional homes that relate to local architecture
- Homes with a traditional appearance but modern features
- Modern homes
- Other (Low-rise apartments for affordable/fair rent/social housing)



Question 13 – What character area would you most like to live in at Village 7 and why?

What appeals to you about that character area and what would you like to see in that character area? Written answer

Key themes:

- Village Centre with varied set-backs, character, and materials. Live ground floors. Suggestion to subsidise a local shop during the first phase to engrain sustainable practices early.
- Prefer to live in homes which are light, well-insulated and have modern amenities
- Suggestion to include local landmarks that are not homes or offices, eg. Clocktower, sculptures, etc.

Question 14 – Homes in Village 7 will be easily adaptable and flexible to respond to the changing needs of their users. For example, they will have additional space to accommodate change, such as the need to work from home. They will also be accessible and will take into consideration the needs of different users and their health as they age. What other measures can we include to make sure that residents can use their homes throughout their lifespan and for generations to come? This could include ground-floor bedrooms, open plan kitchens, etc. Written answer

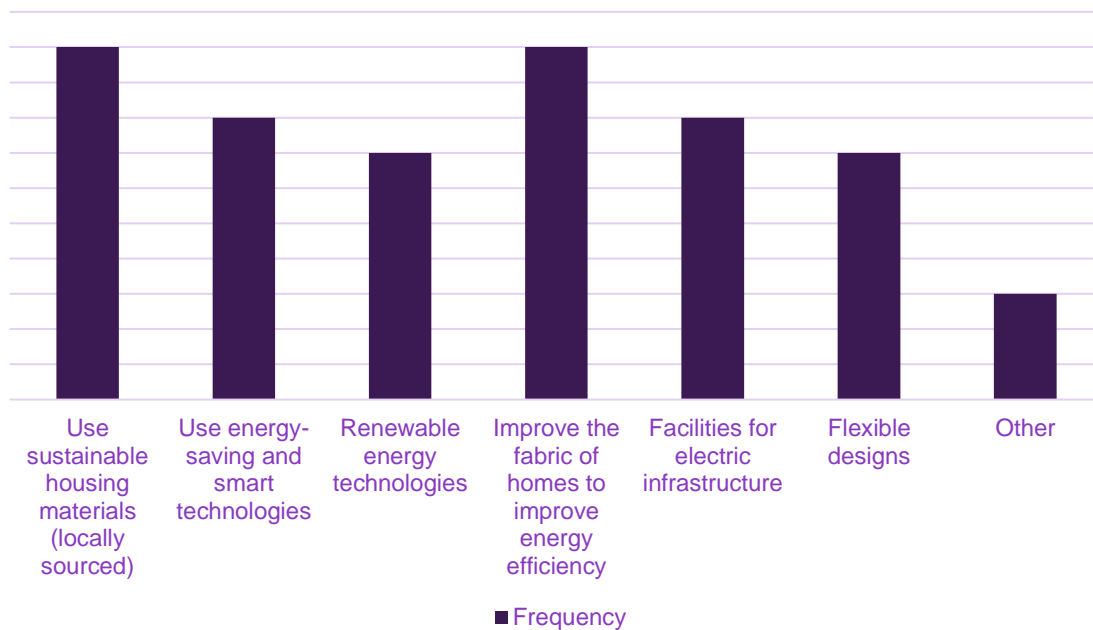
Key themes:

- Supportive of ground floor kitchens and toilets, would like more information on varied garden spaces, wide doors for wheelchairs and appropriate turning circles.
- Suggestion to guard against residents own alterations which may lessen this quality of the homes.
- Query on provision for care homes and nursing homes.
- Suggestion for 'gentle density' to reduce land take.

Question 15 – How do you think we can address and respond to climate change through the design and delivery of Village 7?

Options:

- Use sustainable housing materials (locally sourced)
- Improve the fabric of homes and buildings to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills
- Use energy-saving and smart technologies, such as smart lighting, app-controlled heating and water, etc.
- Facilities for electric infrastructure, such as charging points for cars, electric buses, etc.
- Renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels, community heating, air source heat pumps, etc.
- Flexible designs that can adapt in the future
- Other



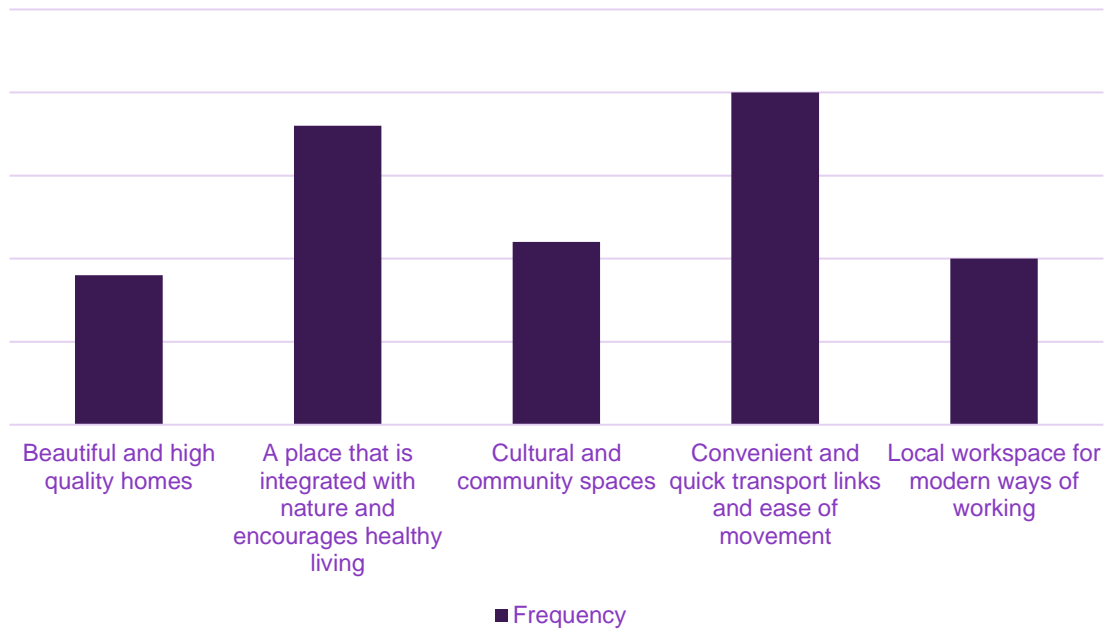
Shortform feedback forms

The feedback forms were adjusted to allow for written feedback at the two pop-up events held at the Harvey Centre in Harlow. These forms were far shorter, owing to this method seeking to engage passers-by who would have less time to complete a full form. Responses on these forms are summarised as follows:

Question 1 – What do you think makes a great place?

Options:

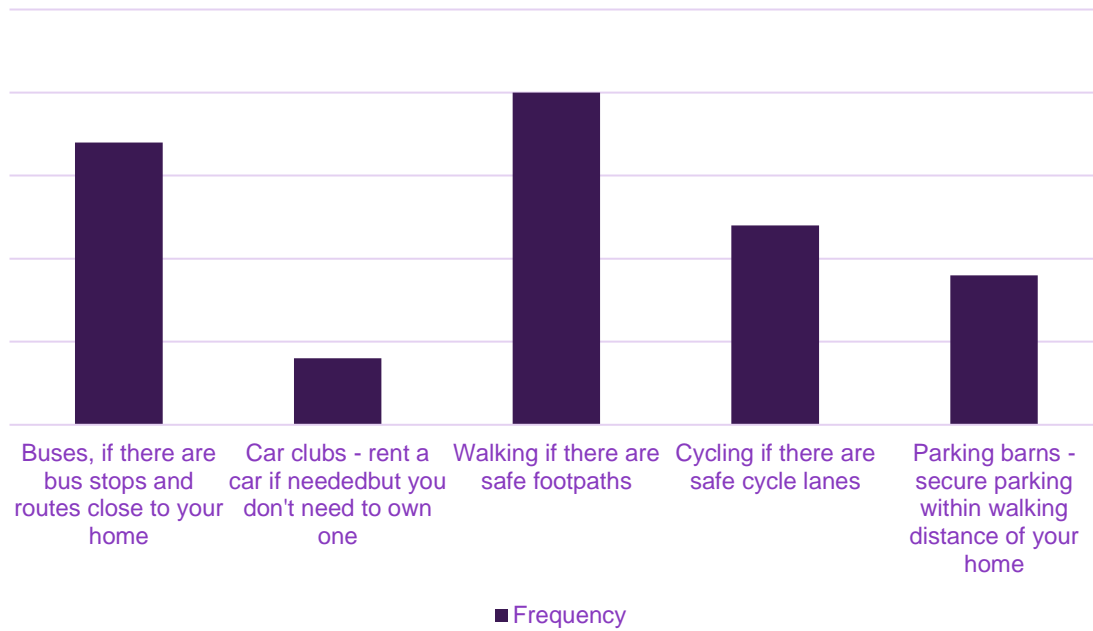
- Beautiful and high quality homes
- A place that is integrated with nature and encourages healthy living
- Cultural and community spaces
- Convenient and quick transport links and ease of movement
- Local workspace for modern ways of working



Question 2 – How likely are you to use the following sustainable types of transportation?

Options:

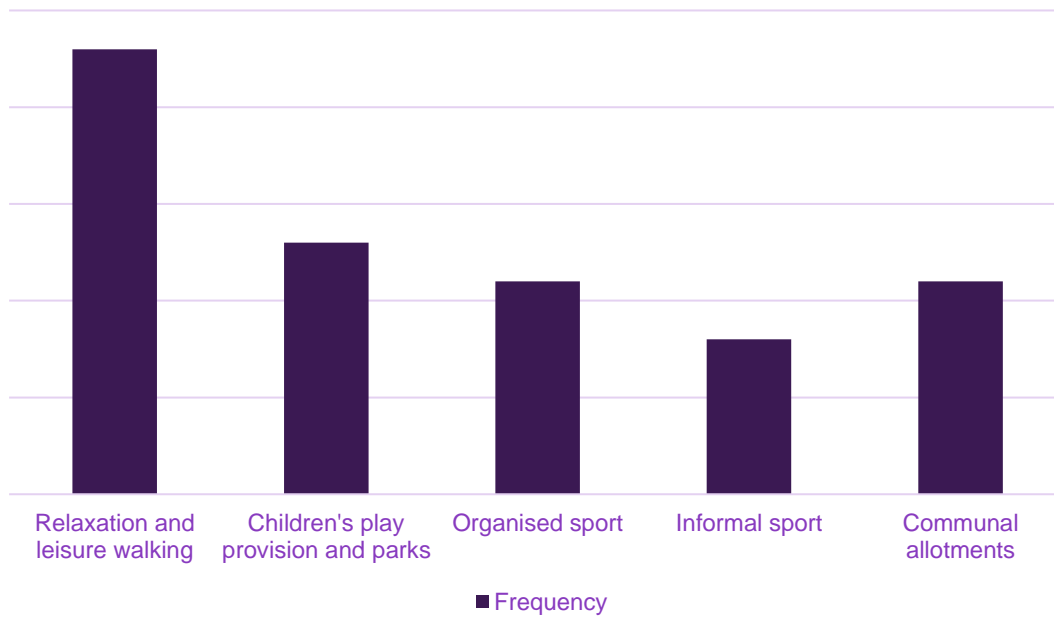
- Buses, if there are bus stops and routes close to your home
- Car clubs – rent a car if needed, but you don't need to own one
- Walking if there are safe footpaths
- Cycling if there are safe cycle lanes
- Parking barns – secure parking within walking distance of your home



Question 3 – How would you most likely use the public open spaces and landscape routes within and around Village 7?

Options:

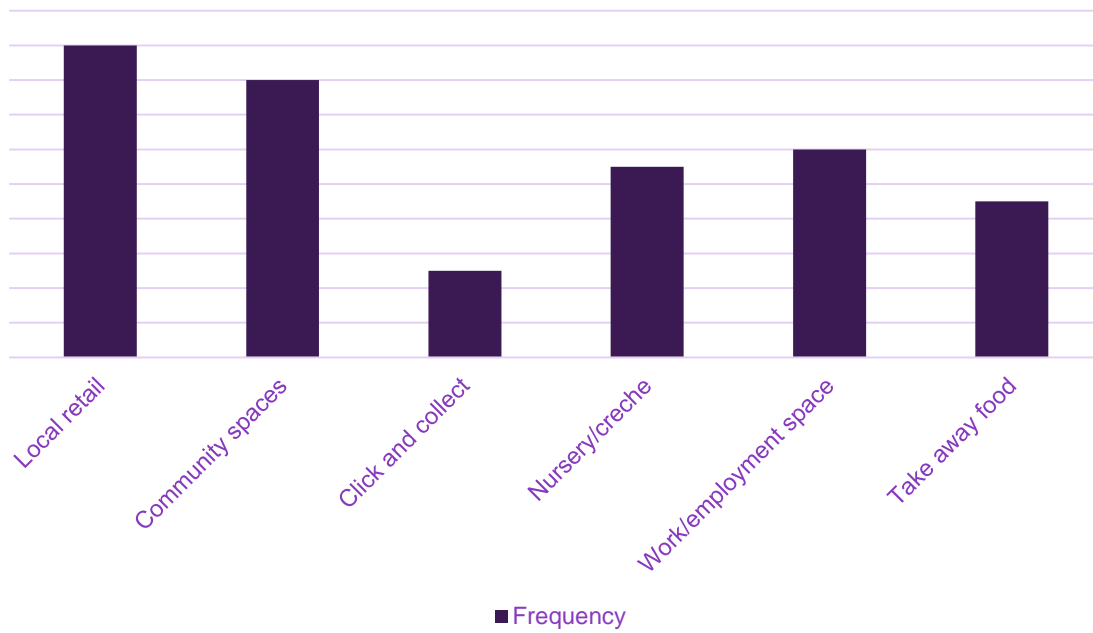
- Relaxation and leisure walking
- Children's play provision and parks
- Organised sport
- Informal sport
- Communal allotments



Question 4 – What sort of shops and services would you use in Village 7?

Options:

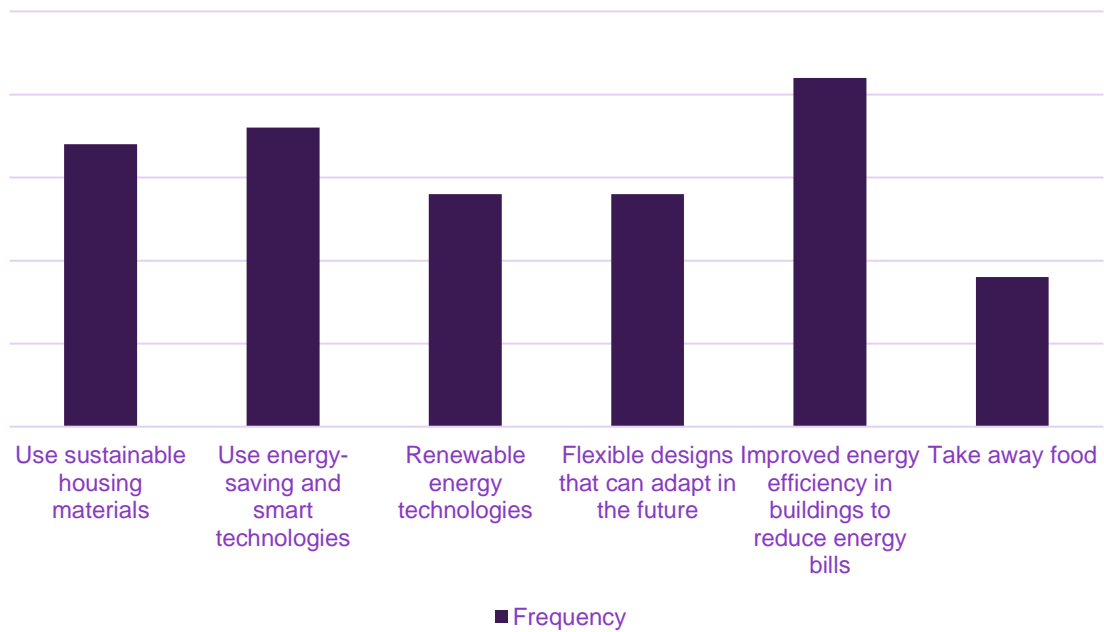
- Local retail
- Community spaces
- Click and collect
- Nursery/creche
- Work/employment space
- Take away food



Question 5 – How do you think we can address and respond to climate change through the design and delivery of Village 7?

Options:

- Use sustainable housing materials
- Use energy-saving and smart technologies
- Renewable energy technologies
- Flexible designs that can adapt in the future
- Improved energy efficiency in buildings to reduce energy bills



Other written feedback

One other item of written feedback was received at the 28 October exhibition. This was written on the back of an envelope rather than a formal form and simply concerned construction traffic avoiding the use of Pye Corner before the Eastern Stort Crossing is established.

Conclusions

Feedback received during the Round 1 consultation to date has been constructive and residents have engaged positively with the consultation process. The overarching theme of feedback in this round has been around transport, with secondary themes around ecology and character also emerging.

Transport

Attendees of the exhibitions were particularly focused on transport. The level of engagement and the enquiries around this issue has not been unusual for a scheme of this size and scope. A key thread emerging on transport was the strategy to slow car traffic in the centre of Village 7, where residents from Hunsdon in particular were concerned about the **navigability for HGVs** which currently use Church Lane.

Other elements of feedback were clear, especially the **support for walking and cycling infrastructure**, with feedback encouraging a broader use of cycle infrastructure, including some who requested a **cycle route to Hunsdon** be considered.

Many of those who gave feedback felt that Village 7 had **good internal connections** which will bring residents closer to essential amenities and onward transport links. More detail was however requested on the **wider movement context** for Village 7.

Ecology and Landscape

Some respondents were particularly concerned about both bringing the new and existing community closer to nature and simultaneously the **protection of habitats from visitors**. While the proposed network of walking routes, parks and trails will bring new and existing residents closer to nature, feedback suggested that woodland would need to be protected from incursion.

Attendees at the public exhibition events were also keen to see more emphasis on **local food production** on some open spaces on the site, with mention going to the orchards, and food-bearing trees being accessible.

Character

There was broad **support for a varied character** at Village 7, which would be provided by the proposed character areas. Feedback received did make suggestions for materials to avoid, with a preference expressed towards **quieter, more muted tones** rather than brighter materials for bricks and roof tiles.

Some expressed **concern around massing**, particularly around the proposed 5 storeys around the Village Centre. While one respondent suggested that this massing should be moved to the 'wings' of Village 7, and another respondent suggested moving this massing away from the historic barns on site, there was no clear preference among those who responded.

Overwhelmingly, respondents did prefer more **traditional forms of architecture**, which would lend support to the styles proposed around the Western Character Area.

In summary, there was support to be found for much of what Village 7 has on offer, with supportive comments on sustainability, active travel and traditional character on the feedback forms received. In some areas, more information was needed and these elements could benefit from being fleshed out further in the second round of consultation, such as the review panel if a 60% modal shift is not achieved, wider movement context, HGV accessibility through the Village Centre, A414/Church Lane junction improvements, and ecological protection. Suggestions around the topics of character, ecology, further cycle connectivity, and integrating food production into the landscape proposals may warrant consideration in response to this feedback. This will guide engagement around stage two of the consultation process.