

Wood Green Voices

Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report explores the findings from the Wood Green Voices engagement process, which comprised:

- a series of ten workshops with Wood Green organisations, businesses and residents,
- a survey and drop-in sessions with Wood Green residents.

Looking across the findings, some clear messages emerge.

Wood Green today: residents' experiences

Community life: It was around this theme that workshop discussions were most weighted towards the positive. Wood Green's people and the diversity of its people were commonly described as assets. Participants talked about Wood Green as a place where different types of people lived alongside each other without any single group dominating and where, as a result, people from all sorts of backgrounds, faiths, cultures and nationalities could feel welcome.

Businesses: Participants overall saw Wood Green's status as a busy commercial centre, focused around retail and food, as an asset. There was most agreement around the point that it was convenient, providing so many shops and restaurants in close proximity. Participants referred to Wood Green's high footfall, its resilience, and the fact it drew customers from a wide area. Opinions differed about whether the *existing* range and quality of businesses and services in Wood Green was something to celebrate or something in need of improvement. Some praised the variety of shops, whilst others saw the retail offer as poor compared to other places. People were especially positive about independent businesses, seeing them as 'good for communities', more likely to retain money and other benefits within places and helping to make the area more interesting. Conversely, people often talked about the loss of big-name retailers like Marks and Spencer and Waterstones as detrimental to the quality and range on offer in Wood Green.

Public spaces: When participants were positive about public spaces in Wood Green, they were usually talking about parks and green space. They said these were important places for local people, providing opportunities to exercise, get some fresh air, relax and spend time with friends and family.

Overall, however, conversations about public spaces focused on negative experiences and the feeling that Wood Green was not a pleasant environment to spend time in. In most cases this related either to **cleanliness, maintenance, pollution or feelings of safety linked to anti-social behaviour (ASB) / crime**. These were all sentiments applied to parks and green spaces as well as to streets. Some participants talked about poor design of buildings and public spaces as exacerbating these problems, creating places that were unattractive and which lent themselves to being ill-used. Safety was especially seen as an issue after dark in central Wood Green, though potentially all day in some parks and green spaces. Safety was especially prominent in the workshops with young people.

The survey findings echoed these messages, with *Feeling unsafe and tackling ASB*, *Cleanliness of our streets* and *Better quality public spaces* ranking as the top three priorities out of ten options.

Leisure and culture: Participants in the community workshops talked about the positives of having two cinemas, and the presence of creative industries and organisations around the Cultural Quarter – in particular, The Chocolate Factory, with Blue House Yard also mentioned. Most striking about conversations around this theme, however, was how often participants used the word ‘potential’ and the feeling that leisure and culture was an area where Wood Green had some latent assets which were not being used effectively. In the creative sector workshop, participants talked a lot about the wealth of creative people and arts organisations in Wood Green being largely invisible to the wider community.

Travel and transport: Workshop participants and survey respondents tended to agree that thanks to the Piccadilly Line, the overground and multiple bus routes, public transport links were an important asset for Wood Green. Positivity about public transport connections was matched by negativity about traffic, however, especially along the High Road. People talked about the pollution that heavy traffic created; about the way in which this disincentivised walking and cycling; and about the impact this had on the character of Wood Green centre.

When low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) came up, there were different views as to whether these were part of the solution to reducing traffic or making the problems worse. That ‘*Supporting active travel*’ ranked last in the survey question about priorities perhaps reflects these different views – and some anxiety – about the implications of policies to deal with traffic.

Imagining a future Wood Green

The second half of the workshops asked participants to imagine the sort of future they wanted to see for Wood Green five years from now. In most cases a set of images was used to prompt discussion, with participants invited to select one image that particularly resonated with their vision for Wood Green. Survey respondents also shared their ideas for the future.

Public spaces: The future of public spaces in Wood Green – their appearance, character and use – dominated conversations during this segment of the workshops, and was also an important theme in the survey responses.

- **Bringing streets to life and bringing people together:** The images most frequently selected by participants to illustrate the future they wanted to see depicted attractive and sociable public spaces.
- **Spaces that forge new connections:** This theme of safe, animated and well-designed spaces having the potential to strengthen sense of community was a recurring one. Participants talked about places that encourage and enable people to get to know each other, that ‘nurture community’ and help people to ‘take part in where they live.’
- **Spaces that are well-designed, active and interesting:** Linked to this, the presence of activity – markets, events, play and performance – was the key

ingredient in the public spaces that some wanted to see, making public spaces more animated and interesting in ways.

- Some participants talked about the need for a more clearly definable ‘civic heart’ in Wood Green – a focal point that physically put people and events at the heart of Wood Green rather than the High Road being the area’s most distinguishing feature.
- **The greening of Wood Green:** For most participants, a more attractive and welcoming Wood Green implied a greener place with more trees and planting punctuating the streetscape

Businesses: For some workshop participant and survey respondents, the main ambition was for a more varied, distinctive and high quality shopping / eating out experience where independent businesses slotted in alongside big-name brands.

In the workshops, the idea of creating a more positive ‘eco-system’ of businesses and residents was a central theme, as was the potential for businesses to benefit from re-imagined streets and in turn to make those streets more interesting and attractive. Outdoor markets were often discussed as a potential vehicle for all of this. They painted a picture of a business mix that would:

- Bring colour, character and activity to the high street;
- Reflect, cater for and provide opportunities for Wood Green’s diverse communities;
- Help to connect Wood Green’s commercial area with its neighbourhoods.

Leisure and culture: A lot of comments from participants relating to leisure and culture heavily overlapped with those on the design and use of public space and how spaces could be ‘brought to life.’ Sports facilities and the potential for culture to connect into – and benefit – communities were also important strands of discussion.

- **Art, performance and events in public spaces:** Participants wanted to see live music in the street, open-air theatre and cinema (in parks or car parks, it was suggested), and street art and murals to inject colour and character into Wood Green’s buildings.
- **Leisure and sports facilities:** A swimming pool and leisure centre was the sports facility most often envisaged in a future Wood Green. Young people wanted to see a wider range of activities and facilities located in outdoor spaces.
- **Connecting communities with culture and creative opportunities:** Building on conversations about the place of culture and creativity in the life of Wood Green today, some participants wanted to see a future in which the arts were more visible, more accessible and beneficial to local people.

Traffic and transport: Across the workshops and survey responses, there is an ambition for a future Wood Green less dominated by traffic and where pedestrians and cyclists feel safer and more welcome. This was closely linked to ambitions for Wood Green to have more appealing public spaces attracting people to linger and suitable for socialising, for events and for outdoor activities. There was less consistency in views on how to achieve this – and the extent to which it should involve making cars less welcome.

Community life: Workshop participants talked about a future Wood Green where people were better connected to each other and to decision-makers; and where the opinions, ideas and energy of communities was better able to shape the place. This was a less prominent theme in the survey responses.

- **The community being more visible and feeling greater ownership:** Workshop participants contrasted Wood Green today – which they saw as heavily commercial and dominated by big businesses – with their vision of a future where local people were visible and engaged in shaping the character and identity of the place. For some that meant the business mix being more reflective of all Wood Green’s diversity and about local people being enabled to make, create and sell in their own area.
- **Community cohesion and integration:** Another theme discussed in relation to communities was encouraging more interaction between different types of residents and thus fostering more cohesion. This would result in a future Wood Green where different types of residents understood each other better, respected and accommodated each other.

How to make your future Wood Green a reality

The final part of most workshops asked participants to consider how their future Wood Green could be made into a reality. Several clear themes emerged.

- **Most prominent was the idea that the relationship between the council and communities would need to fundamentally shift.** This was about the council passing power to communities, involving local groups in decision-making and boosting resident voices – through formal or informal structures and ways of working.
- **It was also about the council changing how it works internally:** empowering and upskilling staff to work more closely and flexibly with residents; being more joined-up as an organisation so that different teams collaborate on Wood Green issues; being demonstrably more responsive to residents to build trust and confidence; and the council using its power to generate and deploy information, to communicate and to promote in ways that benefitted community organisations.
- **Finally, it was about the council using its power as a facilitator, convener and communicator** to bring partners together – with residents’ groups – to highlight good news stories, connect-up the assets (physical and otherwise) and to build momentum around practical action more quickly and to be better advocates for Wood Green’s local groups and businesses. Some spoke about a new social contract between the council, partner organisations and residents as the basis for a clearer understanding about what we can all expect from each other in Wood Green, and how to build-in a sense of reciprocity and collaboration.
- **Another key message was that residents would need to see tangible results** if they were going to believe things would be different, and that as long as residents remained frustrated and disheartened by ‘the basics’ – especially cleanliness – it would be difficult to engage people fully on more strategic, long-term challenges and ideas. In relation to the Wood Green Voices process specifically, participants frequently said that people would be deterred from getting more involved if they felt they hadn’t been heard this time.

Introduction

Background

In Summer 2022 Haringey Council commissioned research and engagement specialists Traverse to support them in the delivery of the Wood Green Voices engagement programme. The Traverse team worked with the council on the design of the programme and acted as independent facilitators for a series of 10 workshops conducted during November 2022. This report has been authored by Rob Francis, project director across both phases of the project and lead facilitator for all but 2 of the workshops, supported by Noel Martinez-Miranda.¹

Aims and objectives

Wood Green Voices aimed to give a range of local people the opportunity to have their say on Wood Green as it is today and their ambition for what it could be like in the future. The findings generated will help to inform an action plan for Wood Green, comprising some practical steps that can lead to improvements in the short term and some which can lay the foundations for longer term improvements.

Workshop participants were given the following rationale for the timing of Wood Green Voices:

Consultation and engagement about the area has happened before, but...

- 1) Things have changed for a lot of people in the last couple of years and it's a good time to take stock:
 - the pandemic changed working and travel patterns and changed how people are connecting with local green spaces, places and their community;
 - the cost-of-living crisis is now impacting the lives of residents, business owners and visitors further.
- 2) The council wants to widen the conversation and hear a broader range of voices than before;
- 3) The council is launching the Haringey Deal and Wood Green Voices is part of that re-setting of the relationship with communities;
- 4) The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has more information on issues such as air quality in Wood Green, which is known to be impacting the health of the local community.

¹ After 30 years in business, Traverse closed its doors on 5th December as the project team was about to begin the analysis and reporting phase of the project. To provide continuity in the final phase, members of the Traverse team were engaged in a freelance capacity to undertake the analysis and draft the project report.

Participants were also given the following brief introduction to the Haringey Deal:

- The Haringey Deal is the council’s commitment to a new way of working together with residents, businesses and communities
 - Listening better, sharing power and drawing on the passions and expertise of local people
 - Putting people at the heart of what the council does
- As the Haringey Deal launches, the Council wants to show what it means in practice – and Wood Green Voices is part of that

Summary of activities

Workshops

10 workshops were organised by Haringey Council and facilitated by the Traverse team across 2 weeks in November with an eleventh workshop in the first week of December. Workshops were held face-to-face at community venues and schools around Wood Green. The agenda was largely consistent across sessions with some variations to reflect the different participant groups and workshop duration, which ranged from one hour with primary school children to 2.5 hours. The main body of this report discusses the findings from these workshops.

COHORT	NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Community (residents associations, friends groups, faith groups, cultural associations, health and wellbeing groups)	4	53
Business	1	11
Arts and culture organisations	1	10
Service providers	1	17
Children and young people (users of Rising Green Youth Hub, students at Haringey Learning Partnership, pupils at Noel Park Primary School)	3	48
Ward councillors	1	7

Residents’ survey

A short survey was designed to mirror the main elements of the workshop agenda and to provide an opportunity for residents more widely to participate in the initial Wood Green Voices process. The survey was promoted online, through flyers and posters distributed locally and temporary display boards in the centre of Wood Green. Hard copies were made available at Wood Green Library and at the drop-in sessions. In total

166 people responded to the survey. Survey findings are discussed separately to workshop findings at the end of this report.

Drop-in sessions

Four public drop-in sessions were hosted by Haringey Council. These were promoted online, through flyers and posters distributed locally and temporary display boards in the centre of Wood Green. Engagement boards were designed to mirror the main elements of the workshop agenda and invited people to leave written responses on post-it notes. In total approximately 50 people attended the drop-in sessions and left written responses on the engagement boards. Findings from the drop-in sessions are covered alongside the survey findings at the end of this report.



Workshop with pupils at Noel Park Primary School

Limitations of this engagement phase

Designed and run at speed to allow the council to start shaping an action plan in early 2023, Wood Green Voices should be seen as a first phase in an ongoing process of listening to and working with local people in shaping the future of Wood Green. The community workshops did successfully bring together people from across Wood Green's neighbourhoods and diverse population, and some of these could be considered seldom-heard.

It should be borne in mind that workshop participants had existing connections to local organisations, however, and proactively *opted into* the process. Survey respondents and drop-in attendees also had to make a proactive effort to engage. Alternatively, a process of random sampling of residents (and use of incentive payments) would have resulted in a different profile of participation that a) would have reflected the area's demographics more closely – including age, ethnicity and socio-economic grade; would have reached those without existing connections to community groups and organisations; and would have included those less likely to engage in processes like this proactively. The council decided against this approach as it would have had time and cost implications, and would have reduced the opportunities for local groups and partner organisations to take part.

Wood Green today: residents' experiences

Introduction

In the first part of the workshops, participants were asked:

- what they saw as Wood Green's main assets – the aspects of local life that they liked, enjoyed or took pride in
- what most frustrated them about Wood Green – the aspects they don't like and the things that get them down
- what they feel has most potential in Wood Green but needs work

Table facilitators were asked to capture conversations under a set of six thematic headings, along with anything else that came up in their groups.

Community Life

'When you are in Wood Green, you feel alive... it's a place to go and meet people' (Community workshop)

'Wood Green might be edgy, but I love the community spirit.' (Community workshop)

'The best part of WG is basically the people.' (Primary School workshop)

It was the theme of Community Life where the responses were most weighted towards the positive. Several group discussions began with participants stating that Wood Green's greatest asset was its people or the diversity of its people. They talked about Wood Green as a place where different types of people lived alongside each other without any single group dominating and where, as a result, people from all sorts of backgrounds, faiths, cultures and nationalities could feel welcome.

'You have every culture you can think of. It's stimulating to meet people from lots of different backgrounds... It's educational. It allows you to be more tolerant of differences.' (Community workshop)

'It felt good to hear someone in the street speaking my language.' (Community workshop)

Views were more divergent on the question of whether people felt a strong sense of community spirit in Wood Green. Children in the primary school workshop had mixed experiences of people in their area, but were mostly positive.

'When you pass people in the street [in Noel Park] they smile at you.' (Primary School workshop)

Some participants talked positively about the connections they had in their neighbourhood, sometimes through residents' groups or informal networks they were part of. Others said that the high turnover of people in some types of housing made it more difficult to achieve or sustain that sense of community.

‘Parts of Wood Green are seen as “transitory” – people come and go, rather than come and stay. They come to shop, then they leave. They come to buy property, then they leave and rent it out. So, it’s harder to create a sense of community, as people aren’t rooted in the place.’ (Community workshop)

Market traders attending the business workshop said they no longer felt part of the community in the way they had in the past when they knew more of their customers.

A connected community?

Whilst some spoke positively about the connections between different parts of the community, others thought that those connections – between different cultures or between residents’ groups in different neighbourhoods – should be stronger. Greater collaboration between community groups around Wood Green could, some participants suggested, forge a greater sense of Wood Green as a town with an active, cohesive community.

Participation and involving residents

For some participants, a related point was a lack of connectivity between communities and the council, with a lack of communication and lack of opportunities for residents to input meaning that the true potential of community involvement in shaping plans and informing decisions was being missed.

‘It feels like things just happen, and that communities aren’t made aware and don’t have a chance to feed in and shape things before they happen.’ (Community workshop)

At least one group discussed the need to make more of the skills, energy and ideas within residents’ and friends’ groups in Wood Green, involving them in more strategic conversations about the future of their areas rather than valuing them only for their practical, grassroots work such as litter-picking. Another talked about the need to involve residents more in how local issues are tackled.

‘There are tensions between the different functions of services around anti-social behaviour – how far is it about enforcement vs. prevention?... The key thing is how residents are involved in these conversations and decisions – we normally present decisions as already taken. Residents aren’t aware of the process.’ (Services workshop)

Businesses

‘Everything is close at hand.’ (Community workshop)

Participants overall saw Wood Green’s status as a busy commercial centre, focused around retail and food, as an asset. There was most agreement around the point that it was convenient, providing so many shops and restaurants in close proximity. Participants referred to Wood Green’s high footfall, its resilience, and the fact it drew customers from a wide area.

Beyond that, however, there was less consensus. Opinions differed, for instance, about whether the *existing* range and quality of businesses and services in Wood Green was

something to celebrate or something in need of improvement. Some praised the variety of shops, whilst others saw the retail offer as poor compared to other places.

‘What we see with the shops reflects a sort of downgrading of the area.’ (Community workshop)

People value small independents: Participants were universally positive about the value of independent businesses in enhancing the experience of spending time in Wood Green, and when they singled-out businesses for praise they were almost always independents. The Green Rooms, Goodness Brewery and Blue House Yard were those most often mentioned.

For some, independents imply quality and personal service, whilst for others their value is more in their ability to reflect the diversity of the community, providing employment opportunities – and catering for – people of different backgrounds. Both sets of emphases see independents as contributing to character, individuality and sense of place. And in both cases, independents are seen as ‘good for communities’, more likely to retain money and other benefits within places.

This contrasted with what many saw as Wood Green’s dominant image as a place characterised by big multiples where the diversity of the local community was insufficiently reflected in retail experience people could expect. One participant gave the example of a programme supporting Kurdish women to leave the home and come together to make things. This had resulted in some starting their own successful businesses, but things like this were invisible to shoppers in Wood Green.

‘There is no representation of the community in the High Road. It’s all big businesses and phone shops.’ (Creative sector workshop)

Most participants were positive about the growth in the number of cafés and restaurants in Wood Green and were positive too about the range and quality (though some wanted to see wider choice). Again, people tended to emphasise the benefits of these being small businesses.

‘Like that they have so many independent coffee shops. It is nice to see friendly faces all the time – and the coffee is much better!’ (Community workshop)

A few people saw the growth of hospitality businesses in Wood Green as coming at the expense of retail, and reflecting a wider trend in the loss of quality retail.

The loss of big-name retailers

Whilst positive about small independents and eager to see more, people often talked about the loss of big-name retailers like Marks and Spencer and Waterstones as detrimental to the quality and range on offer in Wood Green.

‘I might be poor, but I don’t want to buy rubbish – I want to be able to get good clothes that will last.’ (Community workshop)

When it came to negative aspects of Wood Green’s businesses and services, betting shops came up most frequently. As well as reflecting feelings about the decline of the commercial offer, participants saw them as damaging to their communities. People were frustrated that more wasn’t being done – or that more could not be done within the law – to limit the growth in the number of betting shops.

Young people were mostly positive about the shopping and eating offer in Wood Green. They talked about the good range of shops where they could enjoy spending time with their friends, and the diversity of food businesses. They didn't always feel comfortable in those business premises, however – a message that marked out their perceptions and experiences from those of older participants. For some this was about not feeling welcome and being viewed as a potential problem, either by shop staff or security guards. They described being followed around shops by shop staff, for instance, only being allowed to enter in small groups, or being asked to leave straight away.

'Getting wanded down makes me feel like a criminal.' (Youth workshop – HLP)

For some, the greater concern was that they might face trouble from other young people. In one group this opened-up a conversation about whether they would feel reassured by a stronger security presence, or whether this would bring more unfair attention on all young people.

Public spaces

When participants were positive about public spaces in Wood Green, they were usually talking about parks and green space. They said these were important places for local people, providing opportunities to exercise, get some fresh air, relax and spend time with friends and family. Where people had noticed new planting – such as outside the library, or the parklet in Noel Park – they were positive about this and wanted to see more.

'Parks are one of our best assets.' (Community workshop)

'I like the parks because they are beautiful.' (Primary School workshop)

A few people also talked about Wood Green's historic built environment – its buildings and streets – as an asset.

'The architecture and the history is really exciting.' (Creative sector workshop)

Overall, however, conversations about public spaces focused on negative experiences and the feeling that Wood Green was not a pleasant environment to spend time in. In most cases this related either to cleanliness, maintenance, pollution or feelings of safety linked to anti-social behaviour / crime. These were all sentiments applied to parks and green spaces as well as to streets.

Cleanliness and maintenance: Participants were frustrated and demoralised by the volume of rubbish they saw around them in Wood Green. This was a combination of litter, fly-tipping and pavements that were too often dirty.

'Public spaces often don't feel cared for and there can be a lot of litter.' (Community workshop)

'There is gum on the play equipment and cigarette butts around the swings' (Primary school workshop)

This issue more than anything else got people down about the area and was identified as a problem by young people as much as by adults. In the youth workshops, some

participants said that vandalism and lack of cleanliness made them feel that people didn't respect or care for the place.

Some participants saw it as compounding other negative issues and feeding a downward spiral in how people treated and thought about Wood Green.

'There are lots of good people and good shops, but that's always being undermined... if a place looks like a slum more people will treat it like a slum.' (Community workshop)

These comments related mostly to streets but in some cases to parks and green spaces too.

'Parks feel like they are being run into the ground and they are not welcoming for young people.' (Community workshop)

The design of public realm: Whilst most conversations around this theme were focused on the day-to-day state of the local environment, some also talked about more permanent features of the public realm. The lack of 'green' in central Wood Green was a common strand in discussions. Participants talked about the centre of Wood Green feeling dominated by hard surfaces or by traffic which made it feel unwelcoming and unpleasant as a place to linger. The desire to 're-green Wood Green' came through as an especially powerful message in the second half of the workshops focused on the future.

As well as more greenery, participants across the workshops talked about wanting to inject brightness, light and colour into Wood Green – to address the 'gloominess' created by the 1970s buildings. Children and young people had a lot to say about the appearance of Wood Green today, prompted with a set of images (not used in the other workshops) from the local area. Several of these participants used words such as grey, dull and uninteresting when describing Wood Green's streetscape. They wanted to see more greenery and more colour – themes which, again, were explored further in the future-focused part of the discussions and explored later in this report.

'It's quite a grey area – if it was more colourful and with more greenery it would be a nicer place to live.' (Youth workshop – HLP)

'It looks dead now... it looked better in the past... more natural, and without the traffic' (Youth workshop – HLP – in response to two contrasting images of Gladstone Avenue in the early 20th Century and today).

The High Road was talked about as a physical barrier running through Wood Green which hindered movement for pedestrians, made it more difficult to see Wood Green as a unified place, and which cut-off people and facilities from each other.

'I try my best to get people there [the Cultural Quarter] from my community but because of the structure of the High Road, it's not accessible.' (Creative sector workshop)

Whilst negative feelings about parks tended to focus on how they were used and, as a consequence, safety, some participants highlighted lack of certain infrastructure – especially public toilets.

The way public spaces are used and abused: another set of conversations related to the way in which public spaces are made to feel by some of those who use them. This ranged from delivery bikes and A-boards cluttering up the area in front of the library to street begging and street drinking to drug dealing and other activity that led people to feel unsafe. People spoke sympathetically about those experiencing homelessness and

wanted them to receive more help, but also spoke about their presence in key locations – such as outside the tube station – as making Wood Green a less positive, inviting place to arrive.

Safety was especially seen as an issue after dark in central Wood Green, though potentially all day in some parks and green spaces.

‘I try to avoid Wood Green High Road... I feel apprehensive there, uneasy.’ (Community workshop)

‘I don’t feel safe to visit parks.’ (Community workshop)

Service providers talked at length about safety in public spaces as a major concern for local people, and the importance of teams working to address this – in particular the town centre policing team, street rangers linked to the business improvement district (BID) and Gang Advisors within Job Centre Plus. Some described how street-drinking outside the library undermines some service users’ feelings of safety, especially as many of those accessing services at the library are considered vulnerable.

‘Wood Green is not a safe place. You’re not safe anywhere.’ (Youth workshop)

Young people talked a lot about feeling unsafe around Wood Green. They referred to gang activity, drug use in public places and the grooming of young people. Some identified specific problems in specific locations – such as knife crime around Turnpike Lane Station, and crime / gang activity in parks. Some talked about the atmosphere being worse in Wood Green than other local centres they knew, though on the other hand thought there were fewer tensions than in Westfield because that attracted young people from a wider geography.

Across young people’s and adult workshops, participants talked about the nature of Wood Green’s physical environment as exacerbating feelings of unsafety – especially the alleyways leading off the High Road that were seen to lend themselves to crime and anti-social behaviour.

‘It can feel unsafe. Guys can whistle at you. There would be no one to support you if you needed help.’ (Youth workshop)

Primary school children also referred to crime and safety as impacting their or their parents’ feelings about Wood Green’s public spaces.

‘There are gangs at the shops, it makes me feel nervous.’ (Primary school workshop)

‘There are too many people drinking and taking drugs.’ (Primary school workshop)

‘My mum doesn’t like me going to the parks because of the incidents in Wood Green... the murders and stuff.’ (Primary school workshop)

Concerns and frustrations about crime didn’t always link to safety. For some participants, criminal or anti-social activity didn’t lead them to feel personally threatened but did add to a sense that Wood Green was unkempt and uninviting.

Alley ways, bad landlords, HMOs, drug dealing, dumping of rubbish in these places – it exaggerates the problems. (Community workshop)

Overall, then, participants painted a picture of several interlocking issues which together conspired to make Wood Green a less inviting, less pleasant, less positive environment than people want it to be. These were presented as issues that impacted on parks and green spaces, as well as streets, and which led people to feel different combinations of frustration, anger, despondency and unease about their safety.

Ownership

Across the workshops participants discussed the extent to which the community was reflected in – or felt a sense of ownership of – the commercial centre of Wood Green. The predominant feeling was that they were not, whether in terms of the use of space or the character and design of the public realm. The very commercial character of Wood Green’s High Road, centred around the shopping mall, was seen as leaving little room for social spaces that were non-commercial.

‘There are restaurants, the cinema, but do we promote the culture that is already here? Do we do what other boroughs do with the public realm celebrating the local culture?’ (Services workshop)

Leisure and culture

Thinking about the theme of leisure and culture, participants in the community workshops talked about the positives of having two cinemas, and the presence of creative industries and organisations around the Cultural Quarter – in particular, The Chocolate Factory, with Blue House Yard also mentioned.

‘There are lots of really good arts and crafts going on in Wood Green.’ (Community workshop)

Wood Green Library drew a combination of positive and negative comments. Some adults and children saw its range of services and activities as an asset, and felt it was a ‘quiet and peaceful’ place in contrast to the bustling High Road outside.

‘The library is nice because it is quiet and safe, and you can do different activities there.’ (Primary School workshop)

Service providers – some of whom delivered activities from the site – saw the library and its multifunctionality as a real asset in supporting local people, though thought there was more to do in maximising the benefits of services being co-located in the same building.

Some in the community workshops and the creative sector workshop did not like the way in which the building had absorbed so many different functions, however, and thought that it was no longer the calm, welcoming or cultural space it had been or should be.

‘Our library has been taken away from us.’ (Community workshop)

‘Customer services dominates the library and it’s not a space I feel is welcoming.’ (Creative sector workshop)

Some participants also spoke positively about the area’s sports facilities such as the basketball courts at Ducketts Common and the pitches at New River.

‘Sports pitches like Sky City Basketball Courts and the ones at Ducketts Common – people travel for those.’ (Community workshop)

‘My favourite place in Wood Green is New River because I like sport.’ (Primary School workshop)

Untapped potential

Most striking about conversations around this theme, however, was how often participants used the word ‘potential’ and the feeling that leisure and culture was an area where Wood Green had some latent assets which were not being used effectively.

In some workshops participants talked about community rooms and centres that were under-used, such as the one at Sky City, or facilities that could perform better for local people if they were better maintained. In some cases, they highlighted the problem of facilities being under-promoted and too little-known, and in some cases under-investment and lack of appreciation by the council.

‘The Community Hub has capacity for 200 people but is under-used.’ (Services workshop)

In the creative sector workshop, participants talked a lot about the wealth of creative people and arts organisations in Wood Green being largely invisible to the wider community, and the potential to make arts and creativity a much more central part of Wood Green’s identity and offer.

‘We have 185 artists, a theatre, 38 recording studios. [The Cultural Quarter] is the biggest secret in the area.’ (Creative sector workshop)

‘The N22 Open Studios event is the only time culture is accessible in Wood Green... if you’re not in the industry you don’t know about it. There’s an opportunity to highlight it locally.’ (Creative sector workshop)

Participants involved in the creative sector said they felt separated from the wider local community and unsupported by the council in positively impacting the community.

What’s lacking?

Some participants thought Wood Green’s leisure offer was lacking compared to other local centres. When participants offered-up ideas for what was missing, a leisure centre with a swimming pool was the most often-mentioned facility in the community workshops. A big theme in the primary school workshop was cultural venues, events and activities. The children talked about Wood Green being ‘all about shopping’ and suggested there should be something like a museum or a gallery, along with more activities.

‘When you walk around all you can do is buy stuff – why can’t we have other things to do?’ (Primary school workshop)

Comments (from adults and young people themselves) focused on a lack of activities for young people and spaces for young people. Sometimes the issue of cost was highlighted, and sometimes the poor condition of those facilities that did exist such as basketball courts.

Young people were positive about Rising Green, describing it as welcoming, friendly and safe. They said that some of their peers were scared to use it, however, because they were concerned about gang activity in the area.

Participants in the creative sector workshop raised access to space – and affordable space – as a barrier to sustaining Wood Green’s cultural and creative organisations

‘A lot of space is claiming to be creative space, but really it’s just office stuff. There are no practical creative spaces to work in. I had no choice but to leave the area.’ (Creative sector workshop)

Travel

Across the workshops, participants agreed that thanks to the Piccadilly Line, the overground and multiple bus routes, public transport links were an important asset for Wood Green.

‘Wood Green is a transport hub, it’s accessible and well connected.’ (Community workshop)

The level of positivity about public transport connections was matched by negativity about traffic, especially along the High Road. People talked about the pollution that heavy traffic created; about the way in which this disincentivised walking and cycling; and about the impact this had on the character of Wood Green centre. Cyclists in particular talked about their negative experiences of travelling through Wood Green, and the need for better cycling infrastructure that would help them to feel safer. A few people were aware that Wood Green experiences the worst air pollution in the borough.

‘Traffic pollution from the High Road is a real problem. There are narrow paths for walkers and cyclists, resulting in a number of near misses. We need proper provision for cyclists.’ (Community workshop)

On the whole, participants thought Wood Green would benefit from reduced traffic on the roads, more use of public transport and better infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. Participants envisaged this as reducing pollution, improving the look and feel of Wood Green and making it more ‘people-centred’.

‘If there are fewer cars, it would be easier and more pleasant to have more outdoor seating.’ (Community workshop)

Primary school children talked about the traffic being ‘horrible’ and referred both to the local impacts they experienced and their concerns about climate change.

‘It’s not sustainable... walking is the way more sensible thing to do.’ (Primary school workshop)

‘Sometimes it is so noisy I can’t even hear my mum when we’re walking.’ (Primary school workshop)

When low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) came up, there were different views as to whether these were part of the solution to reducing traffic or making the problems worse. Some, for instance, talked about needing to find a ‘middle ground’ that did not result in roads becoming gridlocked, or that did not disadvantage people who had to drive through necessity. Some were in favour of LTNs but questioned the approach that

had been taken around Wood Green. Others thought the traffic problems in Wood Green were so bad that only radical responses such as LTNs would help to change things.

In at least one of the community workshops and in the business workshop, a few participants talked about the lack of night-time parking in Wood Green centre as detrimental to developing a more thriving night-time economy.

'Vehicles get parking tickets after 6.30pm because drivers automatically assume that the parking is free after this time, as is common in a lot of other areas.' (Business workshop)

Creating a heat map

Working in their table groups, workshop participants were asked to pinpoint places they felt positive or negative about on a large map of Wood Green. To help them think about this, they were prompted to consider:

- places they enjoyed, which made them feel good about the area, or which they would show visitors; and
- places they didn't enjoy, which made them feel down about the area, or which they would avoid showing visitors.

The image below is a composite of the marked-up maps created across the workshops. It does not show every single location highlighted, but those which featured most prominently.

- Red signifies spaces seen as negative and blue those seen as positive.
- The size of the coloured circle reflects frequency of mentions.
- Hatched circles indicate a mix of positive and negative comments.

The findings from the mapping exercise closely reflect those from the preceding discussions about Wood Green's assets and features that people wanted to see improve.

Most often mentioned as positive spaces were parks, specific businesses and specific community facilities. Again, reflecting the preceding group discussions, several places appeared in both the positive and the negative categories.

Buildings, businesses and community facilities: Where participants highlighted specific buildings these were usually tagged as positive places. These were places that participants thought contributed something different to Wood Green, giving it character and providing something different to the mainstream commercial offer of the High Road. SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) stand out here, with the Cultural Quarter and Blue House Yard featuring, along with restaurants, cafes and bars such as Oita/The Green Rooms, Goodness Brewery and Café Corso; the green grocers' stalls in the High Road, and community assets such as the Community Hub and Wolves Lane.

'Oita has a relaxed, arty vibe.'

'The market stall in the High Road brings some colour.'

On the map as in the discussions, Wood Green Library attracted mixed reactions, with some tagging it as a place that made them feel good and others the opposite. In those

few cases where specific businesses were highlighted as negative in their impact – such as the cluster of betting shops on Lordship Lane – this was usually because their presence was seen to be detrimental to the immediate surroundings, with implications for the way people felt about the area.

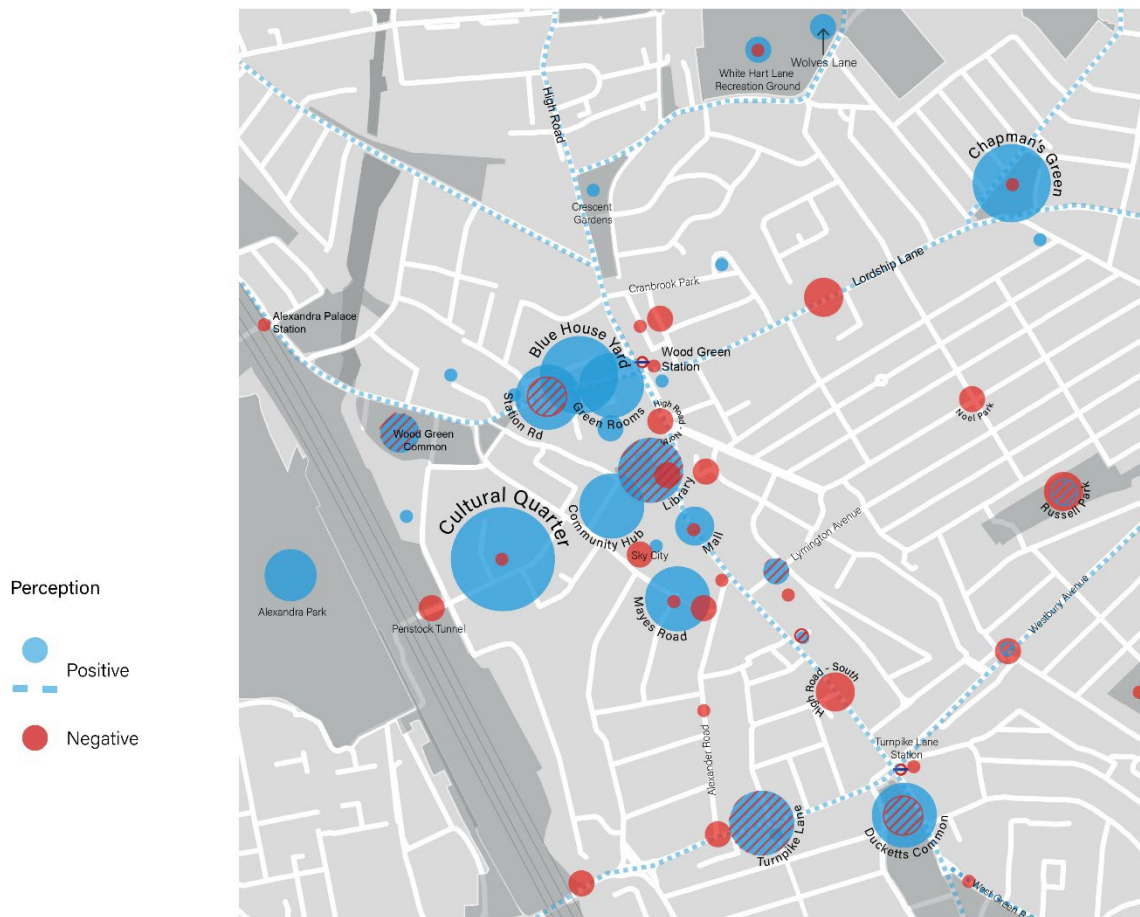


Fig 2. Positive and Negative Wood Green hotspots based on mapping exercises during engagement workshop. People were asked the locations they liked/disliked.

Parks and green spaces: The value participants placed on parks and green spaces was reflected in their prominence amongst the positive places identified. Their positivity was linked to them being attractive, open, reinvigorating and calming. Some people also identified them as locations of positive community activity, from the neighbours planting up an old cattle trough to groups or improving their parks.

Most also attracted negative responses as well, however, usually relating to the unease people felt in those places (due to anti-social behaviour and safety fears) or a sense that the spaces were not clean or well enough maintained. Divergence of opinion was most evident in relation to Ducketts Common, which some spoke positively about – referring to recent improvements – whilst others avoided it. Russell Park was unusual in attracting mostly negative responses.

‘The space around George Meehan House is uplifting.’

'Ducketts Common has life – people come at 7am to practise basketball... all year round it's well-used.'

Ducketts Common and Chapman's Green are full of people smoking and drinking – it's an asset for them, but for older people and women it is threatening. How to manage the tensions between different social groups using the same space?'

Public realm: Streets and walkways were mostly tagged as negative spaces – various points on the High Road, Lymington Avenue, the area in front of the library and Turnpike Lane. Gateway or 'threshold' areas around the periphery of the area were amongst those to attract a lot of negative responses: Penstock Tunnel, Hornsey Road bridge, Westbury Avenue underpass and Lordship Lane. That negativity was linked to participants' views of these places as dirty, gloomy, uninviting or even intimidating. There were particular concerns about safety at night; street clutter (e.g. delivery mopeds and A-boards outside library); general cleanliness and anti-social behaviour. The residential streets off the High Road were also highlighted as unpleasant due to problems with litter and fly-tipping, including Alexandra Road, several areas of Noel Park and Berners Road.

The stairs by the entrance to the cinema, and by the station. Young people hang out there... because it's safe to hang out in places where there are lots of people and ways out... but fights happen there.

Cars park in the streets near and parallel to the High Road and there's lots of fly tipping on those streets too.

Looking across the maps that groups created and the conversations they generated, we can see that positive spaces often had these characteristics:

- Attractive and inviting;
- Clean and well-maintained;
- Open spaces where people feel safe;
- Spaces that facilitate a sense of community, of people coming together and social cohesion;
- Distinctive places, contributing to local character and identity.

Conversely, negative spaces are often associated with these characteristics:

- Unattractive and uninviting;
- Dirty (e.g. litter and fly-tipping) and poorly maintained;
- Dark, gloomy, 'hostile' spaces where people feel unsafe;
- Associated with anti-social behaviour;
- Noisy and polluted.

Imagining a future Wood Green

The second half of the workshops asked participants to imagine the sort of future they wanted to see for Wood Green five years from now. In most cases a set of images was used to prompt discussion, with participants invited to select one image that particularly resonated with their vision for Wood Green.

The look and feel residents want for a future Wood Green

'I'm imagining a place that's moving through time – it has a sense of history and that's visible and celebrated; it's a place that has developed over time and is still developing, and that I feel part of that... it would be a place that feels more personalised, thought-through, designed *for people*.' (Community workshop)



Fig.3-6 Examples of images selected by workshop participants as they imagined a future Wood Green

Public spaces

The future of public spaces in Wood Green – their appearance, character and use – dominated conversations during this segment of the workshops.

This at least in part reflected the nature of the stimulus images that were shared with groups. But is also reflected the way in which conversations about public space were threaded through all the other main themes. Future **business** mix was relevant because of the potential for markets and cafes to bring public spaces to life and make them more appealing to spend time in. **Leisure and culture** were relevant because live performance, street art and children's play came up as ways in which public spaces could be made more engaging and attractive. **Travel** was relevant because for many people, the usability of public space and the character of that environment would require a reduction in traffic and more 'people friendly' streets. Finally, **community life** was relevant because improved public spaces were seen as integral to bringing local people together and building connections.

Bringing streets to life and bringing people together

The images most frequently selected by participants to illustrate the future they wanted to see depicted attractive and sociable public spaces. In explaining their choices, they highlighted their interest in places to relax and meet others, often emphasising how people from different age groups would be able to enjoy the space in flexible ways which didn't encroach on each other. For some, this multi-generational and 'co-owned' public space was what mattered most.

'People need to remain the centre of plans to design the public realm otherwise they get demoted to less importance – we could actually make it worse if we don't do this... we need to ensure varied and equitable representation in the [design] process.' (service providers)

Spaces that forge new connections: This theme of safe, animated and well-designed spaces having the potential to strengthen sense of community was a recurring one. Participants talked about places that encourage and enable people to get to know each other, that 'nurture community' and help people to 'take part in where they live.'

'Common spaces create relationships.' (Community workshop)

'A lot of the work that needs to happen is about building communities – that can come through the built environment by providing the underlying structure.' (Creative sector workshop)

Spaces that are well-designed, active and interesting: Linked to this, the presence of activity – markets, events, play and performance – was the key ingredient in the public spaces that some wanted to see, making public spaces more animated and interesting in ways.

'More community events so people feel better connected to one another, such as markets that bring together different cultures.' (Community workshop)

Participants envisaged spaces made attractive through the inclusion of trees and plants, fountains and public art or seating areas, laid out along well-designed streets and pavements that give pedestrians more space. Some participants envisaged entirely new

public spaces that would create areas to dwell which would lend themselves to events and where people would naturally congregate. Specific locations that were suggested included:

- The alleyways off the High Road: making these more inviting and more characterful, hosting markets and other events;
- Outside the tube stations: bringing people out onto a plaza rather than a main road ‘to make you feel more welcome when you get there’
- Outside the library: reconfiguring this area to make it more attractive

Parks were also discussed as places that could host more community events if they were cleaner and felt safer.

Some participants talked about the need for a more clearly definable ‘civic heart’ in Wood Green – a focal point that physically put people and events at the heart of Wood Green rather than the High Road being the area’s most distinguishing feature. Such a place, those participants argued, would help to bridge the east-west divide in Wood Green.

For some, **accessibility and inclusivity** were important principles. That meant pedestrian areas that were disabled-friendly, benches for older people to rest, along with public toilets and places to fill up water bottles.

‘The car dictates everything, can we centre residents?’ (Community workshop)

The greening of Wood Green

‘I chose this image [of skaters] as it has some greenery, and it shows older people sharing the space with younger people – co-existing, enjoying the space.’ (Community workshop)

For most participants, a more attractive and welcoming Wood Green implied a greener place with more trees and planting punctuating the streetscape. Many were drawn to images of public spaces elsewhere where greenery was a prominent feature. Suggestions included:

- More street trees, planters and pocket parks to make public spaces more attractive, to create shade and habit, and to improve air quality;
- Green walls on the sides of large buildings such as the bus garage (though some pointed out one existing green wall has not been maintained);
- More semi-wild spaces (and less mowing) to support wildflowers and wildlife and creating / restoring wetland areas;
- Edible gardens, window boxes and spaces for growing on and around residential buildings – especially new developments where there is more opportunity to influence;
- Opening-up the New River in Nightingale Gardens.

Businesses

When participants imagined businesses in a future Wood Green, they spoke most about businesses that would bring colour, character and activity to the high street; that would reflect, cater for and provide opportunities for Wood Green’s diverse communities; and

that would help to connect Wood Green's commercial area with its neighbourhoods. This idea of creating a more positive 'eco-system' of businesses and residents was a central theme.

Some also talked about attracting (or attracting back) big name retailers, and some recognised this would be an uphill struggle as shopping habits and high streets continued to change.

Markets

A lot of the discussions about future business in Wood Green fused with those about the desire for more attractive, well-designed, well-maintained and pedestrian-friendly public spaces. The potential for businesses to benefit from re-imagined streets and in turn to make those streets more interesting and attractive was a strong theme.

Outdoor markets commonly featured. Across the workshops – from primary school children upwards – participants imagined markets selling street food, fresh fruit and vegetables and non-food goods. They referenced popular markets in other areas, such as Chatsworth Road and Broadway Market, or more locally the popularity of Myddelton Road's regular market events.

Markets were seen as having the potential to bring diverse communities together and to create a stronger sense of local ownership over the commercial part of Wood Green which, it was often said, feels dominated by big chains and which acts as a thoroughfare rather than a place to linger. Lymington Avenue was mentioned a few times as an appropriate location for this.

Nurturing small businesses and building a stronger economic 'eco-system'

'It's too commercial in Wood Green – we need more community businesses.' (Community workshop)

Closely connected to the interest in markets was a desire that future Wood Green be more supportive of and characterised by a diversity of small businesses. This could involve investing in entrepreneurship skills so that people from across the community can be part of this sea change, and so that more of the money spent in Wood Green can circulate through the community. A couple of participants talked about fostering the 'eco-system' or 'ecology' of the local economy.

'90% of businesses in the area are SMEs but there is no diversity – it's all phone shops – and this is what the area is known for. The infrastructure should help small businesses come to the forefront because it seems like it's all big businesses right now.' (Creative sector workshop)

'Wood Green needs to promote a more 'local ecology' that makes it work for local people – not just for the big retailers.' (Community workshop)

Markets were seen as one tool in supporting local entrepreneurship as the set-up costs are relatively low, and use of vacant space for pop-up shops and exhibition space for local artists was also suggested.

‘We need more creative and collaborative “meanwhile” use of vacant buildings, [organised] between the council and community groups.’ (Community workshop)

Seeing the population reflected in Wood Green’s businesses

Another overlapping theme around business was that the business mix in Wood Green and what it offered customers should better reflect the cultural mix of the population, so that the commercial area of Wood Green becomes a more positive representation of – and an extension of – its communities, celebrating what makes this place different. That was seen as having economic and social benefits, taking what so many had identified as an asset in the earlier discussions – a diverse population – and making more of this asset in terms of economic prosperity, jobs and the experience of local / visiting customers.

More responsible businesses and connected into community

The final part of participants’ vision around business related to the responsibilities of businesses to the surrounding communities. This covered responsibilities such as food outlets dealing with litter and doing more recycling, and the forging of links between businesses and community organisations so that more businesses are proactive in supporting locally-run events and projects.

Whilst this applied to small and bigger businesses alike, some participants focused in particular on the desire for big retailers to contribute more to Wood Green.

‘Mr. Primark doesn’t see us or listen to us. How do we get them to work with us and take responsibility in the community? Haringey [Council] just rolls over.’ (Creative sector workshop)

A local centre or attracting visitors?

Participants had different views on whether Wood Green in the future should focus on serving its local population primarily – i.e. those within walking distance – or aspire to attract visitors from further afield. For some, a successful business offer was necessarily one that would be a draw to people from a wide area – even tourists – and any high street that was doing well should expect to do this. For others, a high street that aimed to bring in customers from elsewhere was less likely to be responsive to its residents and more likely to behave in ways – or attract others to behave in ways – that were detrimental to local people. This could include attracting high numbers of car-based customers that clogged up the roads, for instance, or focusing on goods that generated more waste and had a worse environmental impact.

Leisure and culture

Art, performance and events in public spaces

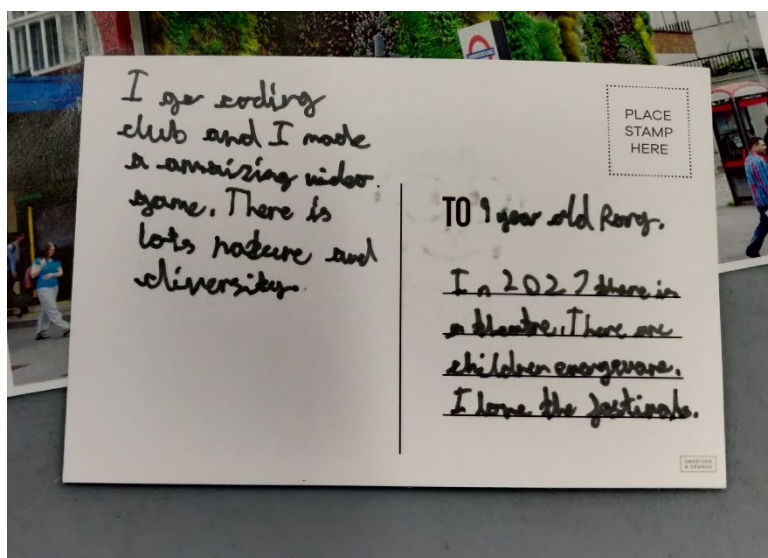
A lot of comments from participants relating to leisure and culture heavily overlapped with those on the design and use of public space discussed above. Images from elsewhere of people enjoying arts-related activities were popular, and many people wanted to see this replicated in Wood Green. This included live music in the street, open-air theatre and cinema (in parks or car parks, it was suggested), and street art and murals to inject colour and character into Wood Green's buildings.

'Why don't we turn underused spaces into performances spaces like outside the Vue Cinema, or car parks for events or theatre?' (Community workshop)

Some participants imagined events bringing public spaces to life, bringing residents together and bringing visitors from outside the area.

'We could have a Wood Green Festival that has street food, dancing and other things to do.' (Primary School workshop)

Others suggested that art and heritage trails could help to foster a stronger local identity, celebrating local culture for instance, or places and people from the area's past.



"I go to coding club and I made an amazing video game.

There is lots [of] nature and diversity.

In 2027 there is a theatre. There are children everywhere. I love the festivals."

Fig. 7 One pupil's 'postcard from the future', Noel Park Primary workshop

Leisure and sports facilities

A swimming pool and leisure centre was the sports facility most often envisaged in a future Wood Green. Some participants were aware of this as an idea that had been circulating for several years. A variation on this was the desire for a lido at Ducketts Common. Some groups talked about where a pool and leisure centre should be located, some believing it should be in central Wood Green where it would be most accessible and where it could complement the retail and hospitality offer, whilst others did not agree that it needed such a prominent location.

Young people wanted to see a wider range of activities and facilities located in outdoor spaces – more basketball courts, ping pong tables and space for other sports and activities. Specifically, young people talked about making more use of the Rising Green

youth hub. They saw it as a big asset for the area and wanted to see it develop its reach and its facilities:

‘I want it to be a space where it can be a safe sanctuary for 50-100 young people.’ (Young people’s workshop)

Connecting communities with culture and creative opportunities

Building on conversations about the place of culture and creativity in the life of Wood Green today, some participants wanted to see a future in which the arts were more visible, more accessible and beneficial to local people. That could include more affordable spaces for creative activity; venues that bring makers / artists together with residents; and opportunities for creative residents to perform, sell and exhibit in their community.

A few participants suggested the library site could be reconfigured – and as some saw it, reclaimed – as a centre for cultural activity in a highly visible location.

‘The library could be a hub for exploring cultural diaspora of the area.’ (Community workshop)

Travel

More pedestrian and cycle friendly

Many participants imagine a future Wood Green where pedestrians and cyclists feel safer and more welcome. This was closely linked to ambitions for Wood Green to have more appealing public spaces attracting people to linger and suitable for socialising, for events and for outdoor activities.

‘Most people who live here are getting around the immediate area by walking – so in the future I’m imagining a town centre and routes into it that support those who walk, making it better for them... in the 21st Century we shouldn’t have a town centre dominated by traffic.’ (Community workshop)

‘The top of Alexandra Road and Caxton Passage – these are nodal and should be more social spaces.’ (Community workshop)

Few participants challenged this idea of the future, but there was less agreement about how it could be achieved in practice. Some suggested full pedestrianisation of the High Road, but others questioned how feasible this would be considering it is a main arterial route. More suggested making the High Road one way, or prioritising buses whilst making it less attractive for cars. Most common was the suggestion to reduce the space given over to vehicular traffic and maximising space for cyclists and pedestrians. Restricting times for deliveries was also suggested.

‘[I imagine it being] less traffic-dominated and more pleasant to walk. Whatever is possible re the routing of traffic, at least starting by getting cars off the pavements.’ (Community workshop)

Public transport

For some participants, discouraging cars required improved public transport. Improvements could mean connectivity – making it easier to move east to west, for

instance, or bringing people into Wood Green from housing estates less well-served by existing bus routes – or lowering costs.

Community Life

The community being more visible and feeling greater ownership

Thinking about the place of communities in the Wood Green of the future, a recurring theme was visibility and ownership. In several conversations, participants contrasted Wood Green today – which they saw as heavily commercial and dominated by big businesses – with their vision of a future where local people were visible and engaged in shaping the character and identity of the place.

'I want to see the multicultural nature of Wood Green reflected in the fabric of the place – food events, celebration events... seeing the culture of the place in the street and how it's used.' (Community workshop)

As explored earlier in this section, ideas around **visibility and ownership** came through in relation to businesses, public space, and leisure and culture. Participants talked about the business mix being more reflective of all Wood Green's diversity and about local people being enabled to make, create and sell in their own area. They talked about public spaces and facilities that nurture more social interaction, that bring neighbours together and put people – not shopping or traffic – at the heart of Wood Green. And they talked about events, venues and arts trails that put the stories, talents and interests of local people centre stage.

Representatives of local residents' groups talked about a future Wood Green where they were supported to be more impactful in their neighbourhoods and – some suggested – across the area as a whole by being **better connected to each other**. This linking-up of existing community action was seen as another potential component in creating more resident ownership and presence in Wood Green.

Some participants connected ideas around sense of ownership with more people being invested in – and taking better care of – their surroundings. The future Wood Green they wanted to see would be a place where residents and businesses feel a **greater collective responsibility** for their local environment, rooted in stronger participation in how that environment was designed and maintained. This, they suggested, could help reduce anti-social behaviour. Several group discussions considered the need for young people to be involved in shaping change, helping to design spaces for themselves and the wider community.

'People value their area when they feel their area values them.' (Community workshop)

Discussions about enabling residents to feel more ownership of their area fed into follow-up discussions about how to grow resident participation, covered in the next section of this report.

In some cases, participants referred to encouraging and enabling more literal community ownership of physical spaces as a way to put people at the heart of Wood Green and reconnect residents to the place as active citizens rather than customers. The potential community ownership of the former Jolly Angler pub was given as one example.

Community cohesion and integration

Another theme discussed in relation to communities was encouraging more interaction between different types of residents and thus fostering more cohesion. This would result in a future Wood Green where different types of residents understood each other better, respected and accommodated each other. The emphasis here was most commonly on different age groups, with participants in the service provider, creative sector and community workshops talking about the need for places and events that were inter-generational, fostering connections and respect between younger and older residents.

'We need more intergenerational stuff, making this a place that works for young and old people. Facilities can encourage this – physical spaces, projects where older people share skills.' (Service providers)

Some envisaged increasing challenges as more affluent people moved into Wood Green, and the risk that different parts of the population would end up living very separate and disconnected lives.



Figs 8-10: Participants at the community workshops share their images

Figs 11-12: Example outputs from primary school workshops

How to make your future Wood Green a reality

Introduction

'I feel this today could be the beginning of something, but it has to go somewhere, something has to happen because of it.' (Community workshop)

The final part of most workshops asked participants to consider how their future Wood Green could be made into a reality. Several clear themes emerged.

Most prominent was the idea that the relationship between the council and communities would need to fundamentally shift. This was about the council passing power to communities, involving local groups in decision-making and boosting resident voices – through formal or informal structures and ways of working.

It was also about the council changing how it works internally: empowering and upskilling staff to work more closely and flexibly with residents; being more joined-up as an organisation so that different teams collaborate on Wood Green issues; being demonstrably more responsive to residents to build trust and confidence; and the council using its power to generate and deploy information, to communicate and to promote in ways that benefitted community organisations.

Finally, it was about the council using its power as a facilitator, convener and communicator to bring partners together – with residents' groups – to highlight good news stories, connect-up the assets (physical and otherwise) and to build momentum around practical action more quickly and to be better advocates for Wood Green's local groups and businesses. Some spoke about a new social contract between the council, partner organisations and residents as the basis for a clearer understanding about what we can all expect from each other in Wood Green, and how to build-in a sense of reciprocity and collaboration.

Another key message was that residents would need to see tangible results if they were going to believe things would be different, and that as long as residents remained frustrated and disheartened by 'the basics' – especially cleanliness – it would be difficult to engage people fully on more strategic, long-term challenges and ideas. In relation to the Wood Green Voices process specifically, participants frequently said that people would be deterred from getting more involved if they felt they hadn't heard this time.

Passing power to communities

'We need the community to be the client – to invert the way things work now.' (Community workshop)

Many participants talked about local people needing to be at the heart of shaping change – from generating ideas to informing decisions to co-creating the results. Where participants had spoken positively about Wood Green’s resident-led groups, they often saw these as central to shaping a positive future and wanted to see them supported to achieve more impact. That could mean more resources for projects and activities to improve neighbourhoods, or it could – more fundamentally – mean giving those groups more power to influence and shape the work of the council and other bigger organisations in their areas. A few participants commented that the council needed to see the potential of these groups – and through them, residents more widely – to support local life in more strategic ways.

‘There are so many great initiatives going on, but they don’t get anywhere because of lack of support from the council. People could be allowed to pitch to the council for support. For example drug intervention services. this could really help the area.’
(Creative sector workshop)

‘There are lots of people working really hard in communities – residents’ groups, friends’ groups attached to parks and so on – they already care, they’re already mobilised, but mostly around the ground level activity like litter picks. The council needs to involve them in the more strategic work too. There are lots of people in Wood Green with additional skills we could be using.’ (Community workshop)

Practical suggestions:

- The council working with local groups to convene an annual ‘summit’ to discuss cross-neighbourhood issues and ideas with strategic partners, or more regular forums that brought together stakeholders along the same lines.
- Organising regular walkabouts to discuss potential new development and change, involving more residents and in a more engaging format than a formal meeting or through online consultation portals.
- Co-creating a ‘social covenant’ that the council, partners and community groups sign up to, signifying their commitment to working in certain ways and shaping Wood Green together based on transparency, accountability and reciprocity.
- Encouraging people to start resident associations, to come together for events that are positive not just against things they don’t like.
- Introducing different ways of engaging people in decision-making, such as a citizens assembly on public space.
- The council providing training for residents and local groups to help mobilise communities and give them confidence to take action in their area.

Changing how the council works internally

Some participants talked about the relationships between the council and local organisations as feeling transactional and believed that a future Wood Green that gets the most out of its assets – and delivers most for its residents – will need the council to change how it operates.

One expression of this, discussed in the service providers workshop, would be council staff feeling more empowered and better prepared to forge links into the community and work more flexibly to make good things happen. In other workshops, participants cited

examples of the council missing opportunities that residents had highlighted, or of community action that had had felt impeded rather than enabled by the council.

‘We were told by the council that we can’t plant fruit trees [at our community garden] as if someone has an allergy and picks the fruit and eats it, we could be liable.’ (Community workshop)

Another expression of the council improving its internal culture and systems would be for teams to be better informed and joined up around each other’s plans. Some participants with experience of local community projects talked about the need for more joined-up design and planning by different parts of the council.

‘When you can successfully get them together around a project it can work, and that gets community groups and residents more engaged and positive. But it can be an uphill struggle to get different parts of the council on the same page and it shouldn’t be the job of outside people to make that happen.’ (Community workshop)

The council as connector, convenor and communicator

‘We have a good framework in Wood Green, everything is already there, we just need to connect it.’ (Community workshop)

A lot of what participants envisaged as driving the future of Wood Green was about collaboration and collective effort that reached across organisations and neighbourhoods. Most saw a role for the council here, but a different one to that of traditional service provider.

The council as connector and convenor: using its power to bring organisations together to plan, work with communities and deliver in more joined-up ways. It could play a convening role, for instance, in helping to link-up Wood Green’s resident groups and hyper-local networks to create a pan-Wood Green ‘forum’ of resident-led organisations which, together, could lead in creating that sense of ownership discussed in the workshops. It could also help players across the local system to support each other and communities in positive activity – for instance, encouraging or incentivising businesses to support festivals and cultural events in financial and other ways.

The council as communicator: more proactive and two-way communication between the council and communities, inviting residents to be involved in shaping ideas right from the start. More proactive and varied communication methods, it was said, could reach communities more deeply and effectively. Some conversations about communication also referred to the potential for the council to share information with local groups to make more of its data, or to bring together different types of local intelligence to help stakeholders across the system to deploy resources more effectively. Participants in the service providers workshop drew parallels here with social prescribing and multi-disciplinary teams in health and social care where partners pooled data to improve their collective impact. They also suggested exploring a community budget model for Wood Green.

‘I’d like to see a synthesising of official information and roles with local intelligence.’ (service providers workshop)

The council as advocate for the place and what makes it distinctive

In the business and creative sector workshops in particular, participants wanted to see the council more visibly promoting, enabling and advocating for small enterprises and organisations that make Wood Green distinctive and which recycle wealth and skills in then local community. A few suggested that procurement processes were a barrier to the council being able to support local businesses and local businesses being able to take advantage of council opportunities.

‘We need the council to... speak up for us and say what we are doing as smaller organisations is of value to the council and its whole community.’ (Creative sector workshop)

‘If the 96% of Haringey businesses are micro-SMEs and SMEs then perhaps we need to support smaller businesses to help them grow so they can in turn support the community.’ (Business workshop)

Linked to this, some participants suggested the council should be more proactive in helping to shift the narrative about Wood Green, highlighting the positive stories from community groups that can make residents prouder of where they live.

Findings from the survey and drop-in sessions

Introduction

This section summarises the data from the survey and drop-in sessions that complemented the Wood Green Voices workshops. Some observations on the achieved sample, analysis and reporting and are included below by way of introduction.

Survey

The survey received 166 responses. The demographic data of the respondents is described in more detail in the appendices.

The sample was self-selecting, and participants could choose freely which questions to answer. In addition, it is important to note that this is **not a representative sample**. In particular, white people were over-represented compared to other ethnicities and older people (especially aged 60-74) were over-represented whilst those under 29 were under-represented. The survey findings should not be interpreted as representative of the whole population of Wood Green, therefore. Survey responses were coded using broad themes. Comments addressing similar topics were reported on under the same themes. Verbatim quotes are used throughout to illustrate the key points.

Quantifications of open text data are not particularly meaningful, as the sample is not representative of the Wood Green population. However, on certain sections, the report narrative includes a quantifier, to convey the weight or frequency of a specific point. Quantifiers refer to survey responses only, and not to drop-in session data. In addition, under each sub-section, themes are reported on by frequency. This is to say that themes that were more commonly raised appear first in the narrative.

Quantifiers were used as follows:

- “A few” – 10 or less respondents
- “Some” – 10 to 83 respondents
- “Most” – 83 or more respondents

Drop-in sessions

At the drop-in sessions visitors were invited to complete paper copies of the survey, or to add comments to a series of information boards using post-it notes. Prompt questions on the information boards broadly reflected those in the survey and are therefore reported here along with the survey findings. Quotes from drop-in sessions are also used to illustrate key points.

What residents appreciate about Wood Green today

Diversity, identity and community life

Diversity in and around Wood Green and within the local community was a common theme among residents' responses to the survey. Some respondents praised that the area is multicultural and attracts a diverse mix of people, which enriches its community life and makes it more welcoming to visitors and newcomers. Respondents referred to diversity in a broad sense, including positive remarks about the variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds represented in the population, as well as to having a harmonious community life that included people from multiple social groups.

“Wood Green is a vibrant area and a melting pot of varying cultures and ethnicities. It's somewhere where no one would feel out of place or like they don't belong, it has something for everybody” – Survey respondent

The appreciation of a multicultural town centre was also linked to residents' **perception of Wood Green as a vibrant and dynamic area.** Some enjoyed that Wood Green felt 'busy', 'bustling' and 'buzzing' and that it was visited by many for its commercial and entertainment offer.

In addition, a few respondents also valued that the area had a distinct identity and a strong sense of community, supported by the activities of residents' groups. A few others also mentioned that the area felt safe.

Location and transport

Respondents commented positively on Wood Green's location and the **availability of transport links.** Some responses referred to the convenience of being able to easily access Central London and other areas from Wood Green, either by car or using public transport. In particular, residents appreciated having easy and frequent access to tube and bus services, and also to rail.

“Excellent transport routes to central London, and other parts of London.” – Survey respondent

In addition, a few respondents mentioned that the main amenities were within walking distance, and that the area is friendly for pedestrians. A few others commented positively on the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

Shops, eateries and other commercial spaces

Most respondents mentioned having easy access to shops and commercial spaces, as well as restaurants and coffee shops as a key benefit of living in or visiting the Wood Green area.

When asked what they considered a positive aspect of Wood Green, some respondents highlighted the **quality of the shops and the convenience of having access to large commercial spaces, such as the Mall, but also to a variety of smaller, independent shops.**

“The diverse retail offer is brilliant, good mix of chain shops and some independent [ones].” – Survey respondent

Similarly, some respondents reported enjoying the **restaurants, pubs, eateries and cafes** in the area. They highlighted the quality, number and range of places that locals could eat at – from fast food chains to more upmarket restaurants – and the diversity of cuisines represented in the Wood Green's food and drink offer.

References to specific shops, eateries and commercial spaces

The Shopping Centre, the shops on the High Road and the outdoor market stalls were most frequently brought up in survey responses as **commercial spaces** that respondents enjoyed visiting.

Similarly, some highlighted **restaurants, cafes and eateries** that they considered to be nice places in Wood Green. A few emphasised that they enjoyed the fact that many of the eateries were independent and that they represented a wide range of cuisines.

Restaurants such as Oita in the Green Rooms and the Turkish restaurants on the High Road, and pubs such as the Goodness Brewery, were most often reported as favourites. Residents also mentioned:

- The Prince
- The Westbury
- The Starting Gate by Alexandra Palace
- The Toll Gate
- Gurmani
- Napoli Grill
- Penang
- Bean & Brew
- Kennelly's Tapas Bar
- Ciros Italian Restaurant
- Il Bebo
- Fatisa
- JRC Global Buffet
- Chai Walla
- Ezra's Kitchen
- Cafe Corso
- Karamel
- Cafe Roj

Access to cultural spaces

Some respondents also appreciated having **access to a good cultural offer**. Most frequently, they mentioned the convenience of being close to cinemas, but also to other spaces and venues that host cultural events, such as the cultural quarter, Alexandra Palace, the Blue House Yard and the Green Rooms. For a few other respondents, having access to gyms was also a positive about the area.

References to specific cultural spaces

Some respondents also referred to a specific **cultural spaces and venues** that they enjoyed or felt proud of. The Blue House Yard was mentioned most frequently, followed by the local cinemas. Residents also mentioned The Chocolate Factory, the cultural quarter and local art studios.

Parks and green spaces

Respondents felt positively about the many green spaces that are available in and around the Wood Green area. Some of the survey responses show that residents

saw parks and open spaces as an important element of the local environment, and reflected on the role these spaces play in balancing out the urban feel and busy life of the town centre. They frequently referred to Alexandra Palace and Park as one of the favourite green spaces near Wood Green, but also mentioned many others, such as at Noel Park and Wood Green Common.

“There is a great range of open spaces very close to Wood Green Centre (...) so the place has a good urban feel with a sense of a story, but this is balanced by openness close at hand.” – Survey respondent

References to specific parks and green spaces

When asked what places in Wood Green made them feel positive about the area, most frequently, respondents thought of Alexandra Palace and Park.

Some also felt positively about other **parks and green spaces** in the area. They welcomed improvements and developments that would make parks and open spaces more enjoyable, and felt positively about having spaces where they could sit and relax, walk and practice sporting activities, or take their kids for some playground time. The several references to green spaces that residents like in the area included:

- Wood Green Common
- Ducketts Common Alexandra Park
- Lordship Recreation Ground
- Belmont Recreation Ground
- Clarendon Park
- Russel Park
- Noel Park
- Downhills Park
- Nightingale Gardens
- Parkland Walk
- Highgate Woods
- Trinity Gardens
- Avenue Gardens
- Chapman’s Green
- Crescent Gardens

Other positive comments

Some respondents also praised the area’s architecture, referring to the mix of styles, the beauty of the buildings’ facades, and the decorations in public spaces, such as the tube stations or the areas surrounding the library.

Regarding public services, some respondents liked the fact that Wood Green has a library and good schools, or commented positively on the council services in the area or the work of the councillors in general. A few other respondents were pleased with the new housing developments in the area and hoped these would support the need for social housing.

Other places residents felt positively about

Respondents also commented positively on the **Wood Green Library**. Some of them mentioned it as a place they felt proud of, other praised its aesthetic value, and others referred to its central position within the area and its potential to bring the community together.

“[I feel positively about] the library (which tries really hard to encourage a cross-section of the community, and the customer services centre which works REALLY hard)” – Survey respondent

Some respondents mentioned other buildings and areas that they enjoyed because of their look or style. They referred to churches and places of worship, historic and listed buildings, and areas with murals and street art in general. They also listed specific places such as:

- Alexandra Palace
- The Civic Centre
- George Meehan House,
- New development by Wood Green Common/Clarendon
- Noel Park Estate
- Turnpike Lane and Wood Green stations
- Park Road Pool

One respondent mentioned New River Sport and Fitness as a place they felt positively about.

What could be made better about Wood Green

Transport and traffic

Regarding **high levels of traffic** in the Wood Green area, some survey respondents raised this issue of as one of the main local problems and called for it to be solved as soon as possible. They also discussed specific areas where traffic is a problem, such as the High Road, Park Road, the roads around Westbury Avenue, the intersection around Wood Green Station, and the street by Belmont Junior School.

Some respondents highlighted that the local traffic problem had been aggravated since the **implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods**, partly due to the diversion linked to the closure of smaller roads. Some of them called for the reversion of the scheme altogether.

Among other issues that residents raised as having a negative impact on the levels of traffic are:

- the increase in the number of car and bike/moped users,
- the location of bus stops,
- poor traffic planning,
- roads in poor condition, and
- ongoing road works.

Some respondents highlighted that the high levels of traffic have added to their journey times and increased the levels of noise and air pollution in the area. A few of them

commented that noise and traffic negatively impacted the feel of the local area and made it less enjoyable.

“Too much traffic diverted onto nearby roads from introduction of LTNs which causes way more traffic than usual, gridlock on some days that take hours to clear. The so-called rush-hour is no longer limited to the hours we were historically used to, it has leaked over in last couple of months. All this traffic WILL contribute to people's health but not in a positive way. The LTN's need to be reversed.” – Survey respondent

Respondents also referred to **challenges for pedestrians**. Some of them shared concerns about the poor condition of the pavements, the lack of appropriate street lighting, the scarcity of pedestrian-friendly areas and paths, and the risks these issues entailed for those who chose to walk in the local area. Similarly, a few respondents mentioned that the **local area was not cycle-friendly**, that the number of cycling lanes was limited and in poor condition, and that the use of cycling lanes was difficult in face of the high level of traffic.

Regarding public transport services, a few residents lamented that the bus services were unreliable and for some, unaffordable.

Shops, eateries and other commercial spaces

Another concern expressed by some respondents was the **low quality and range of shops and commercial venues available**. They commented negatively on the proliferation of “cheap” shops and outlets and on the many empty commercial spaces in the local area. They reflected that this has given the area, and the High Street in particular, a neglected and unattractive feel, and that the shops do not cater to different strata of consumers in the local area.

“The high road has a poor variety of shops. They are all pound shops, casinos and tatty furniture shops” – Survey respondent

When asked what particular places they felt negatively about, some respondents also mentioned the Mall or Shopping Centre, while a few others mentioned local betting shops. Similarly, some residents criticised the quality of the restaurants in the local area, and regretted the proliferation of fast-food outlets. A few respondents also raised concerns about the proliferation of massage parlours, as they considered these venues to be covers for illegal activities.

Cleanliness and appearance of public spaces

Some residents raised issues around the cleanliness of the street and public places, problems with littering, and poor waste collection and recycling services. They commented that many local areas feel dirty, including main roads and the High Street, the areas around Turnpike Lane and Wood Green stations, public buildings, and public facilities such as bus stops and seating areas. They added that there are problems with overflowing bins, littering and fly tipping and emphasised the need for better street cleaning and waste collection services to mitigate this situation.

“[Several] Wood Green areas are quite dirty. Unfortunately, many people show no respect for the environment and recycling collection” – Survey respondent

The look and feel of buildings and public spaces was also a cause for concern among some respondents. They commented that certain areas, in particular the High Street, are in disrepair and have a depressing look, or that their look is outdated or unappealing. Buildings such as the Shopping Centre and the Council buildings near Watsons Road were described as particularly unsightly.

“The High Street (...) feels dirty, polluted, crowded and sad.” – Survey respondent

Safety

Concerns about people feeling safe in their local area were raised by some respondents. They felt that certain local areas did not feel safe to walk in at night, particularly for women. This was linked to the presence of antisocial behaviour and intimidating gatherings of men, and presumed gang, drug dealing and other criminal activity. Respondents were concerned about the role that some businesses play in enabling this behaviours in and around their premises.

“The areas around Wood Green Tube and Turnpike Lane tube are blighted by drug dealing and a lot of begging. The two Wetherspoon pubs encourage anti-social behaviour.” – Survey respondent

Public Services

A few respondents raised concerns about some of the public services for local residents. These respondents were concerned that the council was too focused on the Tottenham area to the detriment of Wood Green, and the support services for residents in need were lacking.

“I get the feeling that the Council is only interested in Tottenham and we just don't count.” – Survey respondent

Respondents were also concerned about the prevalence of homelessness in Wood Green, which was mentioned on both survey responses and during drop-in sessions. A few of them questioned the lack of support systems for vulnerable people living in homelessness, including the lack of temporary housing and community spaces. They also commented on the potential impact that homelessness can have on the safety of local residents and in promoting anti-social behaviour, and highlighted a few specific areas that they felt were most impacted, for example, around Wood Green Library.

A similar number of respondents noted the lack of police presence in the local area, while a few others pointed out the low efficacy of Council services and issues accessing out-of-hours services.

“People begging – some people year in, year out. Are they getting help? What is the support?” – Drop-in session participant

One respondent was concerned about education services and racial segregation in local schools, and called for the Council to monitor diversity and teaching in local schools.

Engagement with residents

A few respondents also had concerns about the level of engagement between the Council and local residents and their involvement in decision-making. Concerns included the following points:

- Ineffectiveness of the Council in providing coherent responses to local demands in the past, despite several consultations taking place
- Irresponsiveness of local Councillors
- Council meetings feeling performative instead of deliberative
- Lack of diversity and representation among councillors negatively impacts inclusive practices for decision-making
- Planning permission consultations letters have arrived too late
- Low support for voluntary groups, and volunteers experiencing apathy from council departments and staff
- Problems using the Council's website mobile version
- This survey being biased

“Let the people have a bigger say on how their lives are run, this is because the councillors are only in it for themselves and not for the people” – Survey respondent

“It should be easier to find out what's going on, opportunities to get involved. Best promoted in public space, rather than email or online.” – Drop-in session participant

Housing and new development

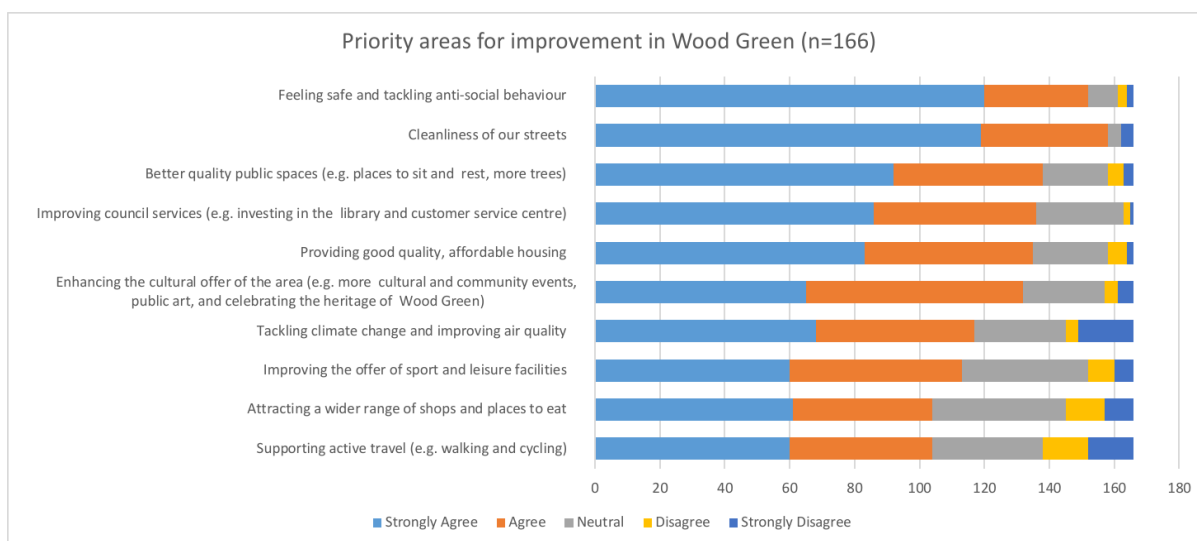
Respondents were also concerned about housing. Some of them commented on the bad quality of housing in the local area, as well as the lack of social housing. They also reflected on the negative impact of the housing crisis, gentrification and the proliferation of HMOs on the community.

“The lack of social housing is a big concern - again, I know that Haringey has limited land, but all the new builds major on private sales.” – Survey respondent

Moreover, a few respondents were concerned about major building developments, as they felt they could be too impactful on the townscape and not blend in adequately.

Priorities for improvement in the Wood Green area

Respondents were asked what issues they believed needed more attention in order to improve the Wood Green area. Improving the cleanliness of streets and feeling safe and tackling anti-social behaviour had the most support as priorities among the surveyed residents. Attracting a wider range of shops and eateries and supporting active travel were considered as priorities by the least number of respondents. The chart below summarises residents' responses to the question 'Which of the following issues do you think need the most attention to improve Wood Green?' where respondents could choose an answer on a scale from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'.



Other proposed priorities

Respondents also suggested other priorities for the Wood Green area. Most of the suggestions were focused on managing traffic and improving the area's commercial offer and public services. The suggestions are summarised below.

Proposed priorities around transport and traffic	
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing overall traffic/Better traffic management • Reducing traffic of bikes and mopeds • Stopping bikes and mopeds congregating or parking on the pavement • Stopping vehicles travelling at more than 20mph • Reducing rat runs • Cleaning and repairing roads • Deterring car use
LTNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reverting the implementation of LTNs • Extending the implementation of LTN to all of Haringey
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving public transport • Improving integration across public transport services
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating parking • Re-designing parking on main roads to facilitate the creation of bus lanes • Improving parking for residents with disabilities • Allowing short term parking for those with limited mobility • Reducing parking fines
Cycling and walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving conditions for walking and cycling, such as restoring pavements and adding street lighting • Considering alternatives to cycling and walking for people with disabilities

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting women's journeys/commute in the local area
Proposed priorities about shops, eateries and cultural venues	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing/attracting higher quality shops Attracting bigger, more upmarket shops, such as M&S Increasing the number of shops Attracting more independent shops Developing better quality restaurants and cafes Demolishing the Mall and repurpose the space
Proposed priorities about public services	
Police/Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing police presence/availability of officers Tackling anti-social behaviour Achieving safer streets
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploying youth workers Improving services and opportunities for young people
Cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving cleanliness of public places Increasing CCTV surveillance to tackle fly-tipping
Health and care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing care facilities for the elderly Improving health services, in particular for people with disability, on the autistic spectrum and from the LGBT community.
Council Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving communication with residents Making council communications more accessible (translation, plain English, face to face, non-digital options) Improving the 'free speech' area to make it more conversational and varied Running community events Supporting volunteering initiatives
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving quality of housing Offering affordable housing Reducing over-crowding
Community Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating spaces for community interaction/community centres Creating facilities for families/ Children's centre Creating community spaces for learning (English, art, computer courses) Creating projects/spaces for young people (youth centres)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing homelessness Supporting asylum seekers and refugees Improving public services in general Improving the Council's customer and support services Building swimming pools/leisure centres Beautification of the local area Promoting social investment in the local people and area

Residents' vision for the future of Wood Green

Survey respondents were asked what they would like to see and feel around Wood Green five years from now. In line with the themes they raised as areas for improvement in Wood Green, respondents most frequently reflected on the commercial offer they would

like to see, and explained what shops, restaurants, cafes and amenities they would enjoy. In many cases they also commented on the state of traffic and the cleanliness of the streets and public spaces. The following scenarios capture the key points raised by residents.

Less traffic and clean air

Respondents envisioned a Wood Green with little or no traffic, where there are fewer cars in favour of public transport, cycling and walking. They imagined safer cycling routes and walking paths for public use. The car traffic that remains is better distributed across the whole area and flows well, with residents being able to access all areas by car if needed. Delivery bikes and mopeds have designated spaces to park, and this is consistently enforced. Some roads and spaces might be pedestrianised temporarily or permanently, and community events could be hosted in those spaces. This leads to a calmer locality with less noise and car pollution.

A vibrant, more upmarket Wood Green

Respondents envisaged Wood Green with a vibrant and diverse commercial offer. This might involve upgrading or repurposing the shopping centre to host a more varied range of retailers, including more upmarket shops, or perhaps to be used differently altogether. In this version of the future, independent, characterful cafes and higher-end restaurants populate the High Street. Complementing the busiest commercial areas where there might be well-known, high-quality retailer brands, there are also smaller, alternative, calmer spaces where residents can enjoy a more relaxed shopping or food and drink experience. Weekend markets in some of the main public spaces allow smaller businesses to bring their goods to the community as well as bringing residents together.

Residents also have a choice of leisure centres, gyms and pools to enjoy. Murals, public art and plenty of artistic spaces highlight the cultural character of Wood Green, enriching visitors and residents' experience of the local area.

Residents feel proud of how the area looks and feels. Iconic buildings are restored, others are updated and refreshed to improve the townscape, with new buildings would be well-designed to add a modern feel to Wood Green.

Greener, cleaner, safer

Respondents imagine a future Wood Green where there are more trees, parks and green open spaces. Green spaces are attractive and well-designed, and both residents and the council would taking ownership of their upkeep and maintenance. These spaces are inviting and accessible for a range of people, with plenty of seating and including play areas for children. Walking and cycling paths are lined with trees and other planting.

Streets, buildings and parks are cleaned regularly. Plenty of litter bins make it easier for people to keep places clean and there is an efficient, effective waste management system. Businesses and residents take ownership of their immediate surroundings and ensure that they remain clean and tidy.

Wood Green feels safe to all members of the community, including women, children and older people, during both the daytime and the evening. Anti-social behaviour is addressed through a combination of more police presence in the area, more quality employment, and social support programmes. There is less gambling, drug use and

criminal activity. There are also strategies to make housing affordable, and programmes to support homeless people.

Other suggestions for the future of Wood Green

Suggestions about the Council

More and better engagement with local residents

Some respondents agreed that the main vehicle to build the described future Wood Green was more and better engagement with residents. Residents want the engagement to be meaningful and, receive clear answers to their feedback and see concrete changes. They referred to past experiences where they did not feel heard, and did not see any actions occur as a result of their feedback.

“There’s a feeling that the council always does what it wants regardless of whether residents agree and there have been numerous occasions when consultation results have been ignored. (...) Just because [the Council] has advertised something on Twitter or stuck it on a lamppost (...), that doesn’t mean residents will have taken in the message. You have to be better at reaching people, (...) listening to them and, crucially, ‘showing’ that you’ve listened to them.” – Survey respondent

Below are some of the ways in which residents feel the council could engage them more effectively:

- More frequent surveys
- Public consultations, debates, resident forums and community meetings
- Joint working groups for key issues
- Involving a wider section of the public
 - Empowering/facilitating the actions of community groups and involving them in decision-making
 - Including businesses in decision-making
 - Including landlord and landowners in development plans
 - More engagement with specific ethnic groups, e.g., Goan Community
- More direct engagement of councillors with the public, including voluntary groups and tenants associations
- Enforcing the statutory planning framework
- Making communications more accessible
- Incentivising participation in engagement and feedback
- Ensuring the Council website and app are functional and accessible
- Ensuring discussions are transparent, open and honest

Functioning of the Council

In addition, a few residents also commented on the **functioning of the council**. Respondents highlighted the importance that the Council follows through with their plans, and placed emphasis on being consistent with what has been agreed with residents. They also suggested that the Council should fund or help find funding for public initiatives that can help achieve desired results, and that the Council should find ways to work more efficiently.

Respondents wanted to see more and better leadership from the Council. They suggested that councillors and other council staff should be more involved in the community and experience the locality first hand, so they could make decisions more tempered to the reality of residents. In addition, residents wanted the Council's approach to enforcement to be compassionate, and not punitive.

Investment

Some respondents also highlighted the need for **investment** from different sources, and the importance of investing in the right areas. They mentioned the importance of securing sufficient funding from the Government or large corporate sponsorships, given the scale of the changes needed in the community. They also suggested that private businesses should be given more opportunities to invest in the local area, and that Council Tax collected in Wood Green should be invested in the area. In terms of where the investment should be focused, residents mentioned:

- community development
- youth and education
- updating the high street shops
- tax reductions or incentives to attract and support businesses
- improving waste collection
- parks and green spaces
- cultural activities and institutions

Conclusions

Main messages from across the findings

Wood Green's main assets are seen to be the diversity of the population, the convenience of access to shops, services and public transport, and cherished green spaces. Views on the business offer are mixed, with some people praising the variety and others wishing it was better. And whilst people are positive about Wood Green's diversity, some don't see it as well-reflected or celebrated as it could be in Wood Green's commercial or cultural offer. People are positive about the work of local community groups bringing residents together to make neighbourhoods and parks better, and some imagine those groups could achieve more with enhanced support and forums that give them a stronger voice – and role – in more strategic issues.

Some big, long-standing issues continue to anger and frustrate residents and make it difficult for them to be positive about where they live. A clear message from the workshops and the survey is that **safety fears (especially after dark) and lack of cleanliness** undermine positivity and pride in Wood Green, and are priorities for action. People often experience Wood Green's public realm in negative ways because of these factors, and because of more permanent features of the built environment – grey, dark, uninviting spaces and streets that are dominated by traffic.

Looking to the future, participants overall want to see a Wood Green that is visibly more people-friendly and people-powered. Responses paint a picture of somewhere that is:

- Cleaner, more attractive and more inviting as a place to spend time – a colourful, lively and social place that encourages neighbours to gather and which, alongside the big retail offer, reflects the diversity, the culture and talents of Wood Green's communities.
- Green by nature as well as by name, with trees and planting creating a more pleasant environment.
- More like a town centre and less like a thoroughfare, where traffic is less able to dominate, where air quality is improved and where public spaces are brought to life in a variety of ways and appealing to all sorts of people.
- Using art and creativity help to give the place an identity that everyone can take pride in, where more local people feel the benefits of the creative individuals, organisations and activities on their doorstep.
- Inviting and enabling local people to shape their area, working alongside a council that is better at engaging with its residents, bringing partners together on big issues and ideas, and using its power to connect, convene and advocate.

Topics to explore further

The findings also highlight areas where there is less clarity in the type of local future people want to see, or alternative versions of the future which may benefit from more focused, informed deliberation with local people, perhaps using scenarios to help them picture the pros and cons of each. These include:

Business mix: there are different opinions on how appealing Wood Green’s shopping offer is currently, and what would improve it. When some people express a desire for ‘better shops’ they are referring to big name stores like Marks and Spencers, others to small independent businesses, and some to both. A more nuanced discussion about realistic potential high street futures for Wood Green could consider comparable data on footfall, population profile and business types from other areas, as well as nationwide high street trends.

Local centre vs metropolitan centre: For some participants, a successful Wood Green would be a destination drawing in visitors from a wide area. For others, a successful Wood Green would be more tailored to serving a local population. As a metropolitan centre and the busiest high street in North London, Wood Green already serves a significant non-local customer base, so what would be the implications of planning for a future offer more focused on its residents? Exploring this from different perspectives will be important in helping to frame better-informed discussions on this.

Non-commercial experiences on the high street - culture, community and the role of Wood Green library: There are strong differences of opinion about the functions currently served by the library. This, coupled with ambitions for a greater cultural and community presence in the centre of Wood Green, poses a question about what future role the library building could play. Should it continue to develop as an accessible hub for public services (alongside its traditional role), or should it develop as more of a cultural hub that houses – for instance – art, heritage exhibition space and maker spaces?

Traffic: the negative impact of traffic on public spaces in Wood Green was a prominent theme in workshops discussions, yet ‘supporting active travel’ was ranked last out of ten potential priority areas for survey respondents, perhaps reflecting concerns amongst some respondents that this implied support for LTNs. The findings highlight different views on the causes of heavy traffic and the possible solutions. Further engagement on this would benefit from exploration of realistic options, perhaps drawing on examples from comparable places, and data on the likely implications for different stakeholders.

Turning ideas into actions

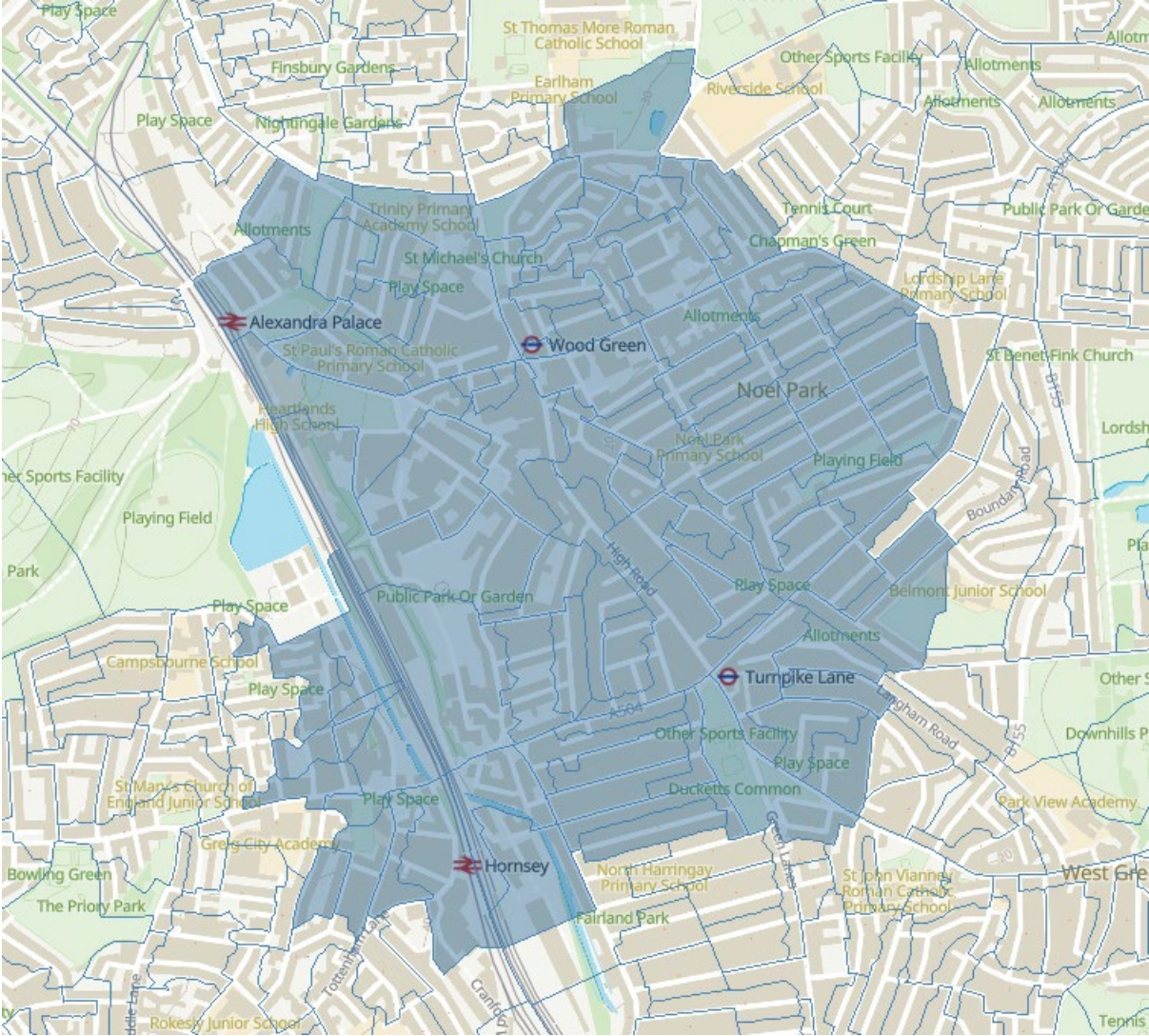
It will be important for people to see that their input is leading to practical actions, from those that can be realised in the short term (often referred to as ‘quick wins’) to those that will need to be progressed over the medium and longer term.

That said, it will be important that this report is not used only to generate a list of potential projects for the council to ‘deliver’. We would urge the council and its partners to reflect on participants’ suggestions around *how* to create the futures that have been shared through this work. The findings invite us to explore the question of ‘how’ as much as ‘what’ – to ask how the council and other stakeholders can rethink how they engage and involve; how they communicate; how they can facilitate, enable, convene and advocate as well as deliver in the more traditional way.

Across the UK, councils are rethinking their roles and, as part of that process, re-contracting with their partners and citizens. Wood Green Voices – and the development of the Haringey Deal more widely – provides an important opportunity for Haringey Council to continue on that same journey.

Appendices

Where 2021 Census data was available for the Wood Green population (see map for defined area) at the time of analysis, this has been included to allow for comparison between the profile of survey respondents and the local population. This defined area approximately covers the locations where public flyers advertising Wood Green Voices were distributed.

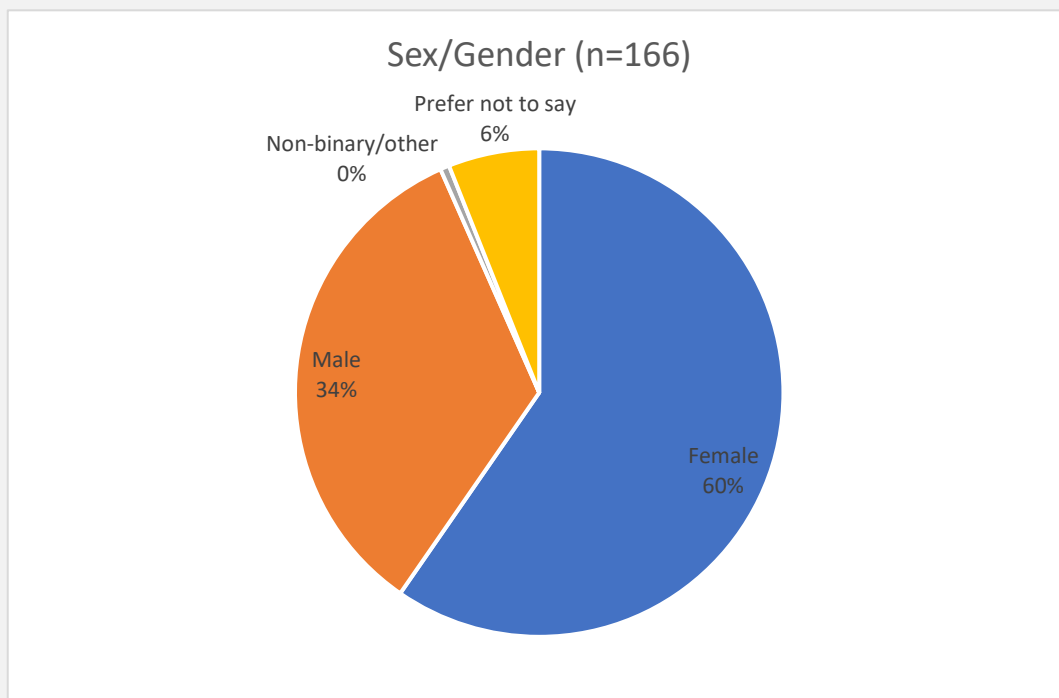


Survey Demographics

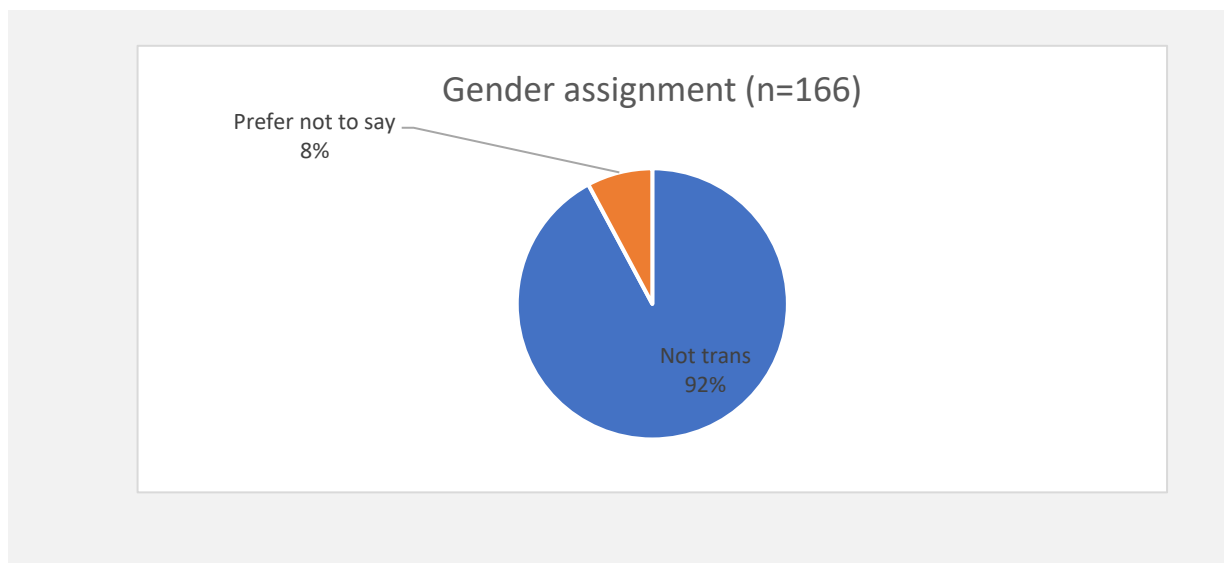
Sex/Gender - Please tick the box that best describes you

Women were over-represented in the survey, compared to the Wood Green population.

	Survey sample	Wood Green population (source: Census 2021)
Female	60%	51.3%
Male	34%	48.7%
Non-binary/other	-	-
Prefer not to say	6%	-



Trans/Cis – Do you consider yourself to be trans?



Age – How old are you?

Young people under 29 were under-represented in the survey and people aged 60-74 over-represented, compared to the Wood Green population.

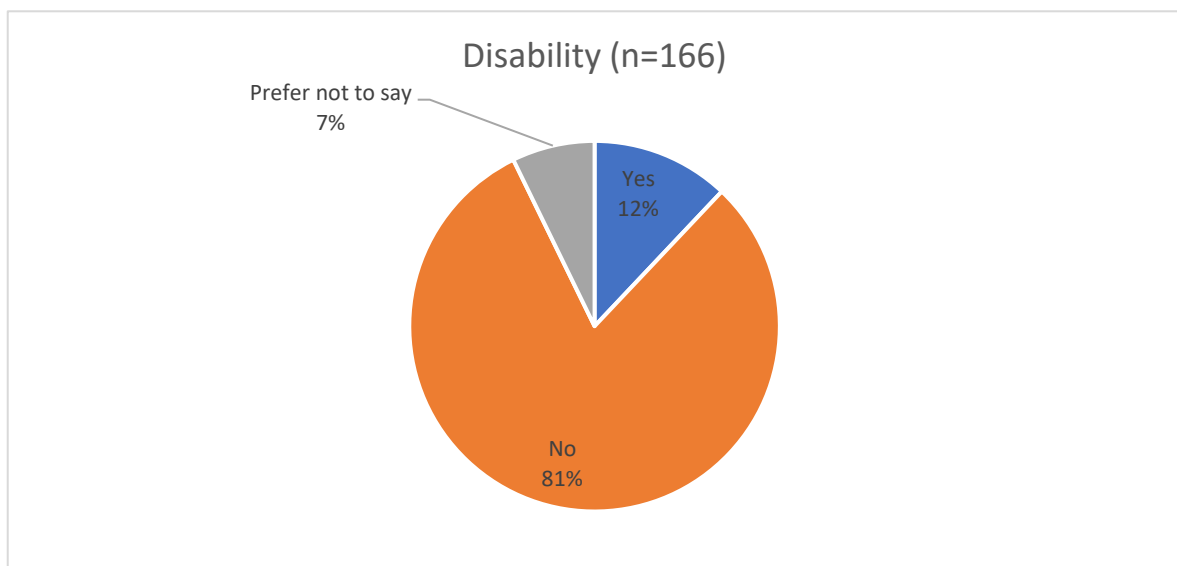
	Survey sample (%)	Wood Green population aged 20+ source: Census 2021 (%)
17-29*	9	22
30-39	25	27.6
49-49	19	18.9
50-59	18	16
60-74	19	11
75+	5	4.9
Prefer not to say	11	-

*note that this combines survey age categorisations 17-21 and 22-29, whilst census data relates to 20-29, so comparability of data in this line is imperfect

Disability – Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

The percentage of respondents who said they had a disability reflected the wider population data relatively closely.

Has a disability / classed as disabled under Equalities Act	Survey sample (%)	Wood Green population source: Census 2021 (%)
Yes	12	14.3
No	81	85.7
Prefer not to say	7	-

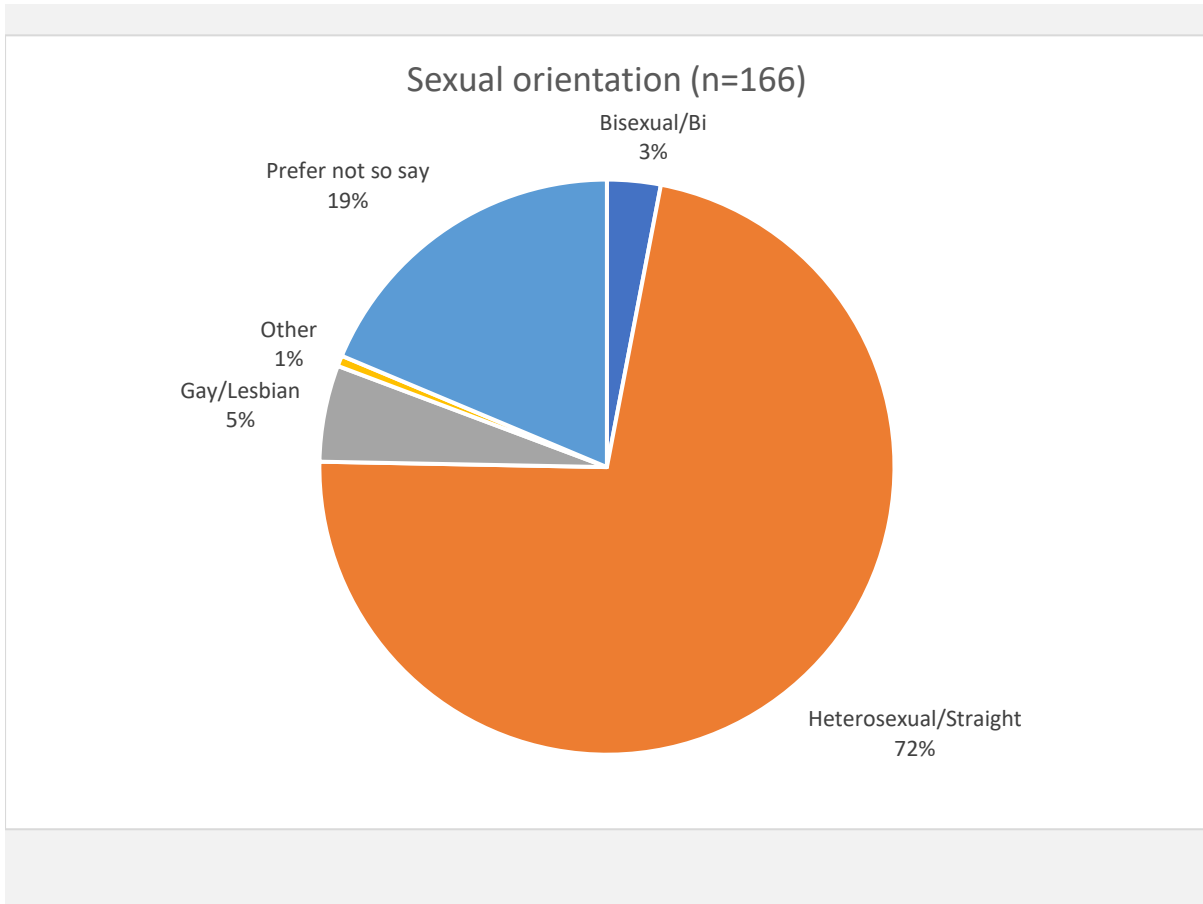


Ethnicity – How would you describe your ethnicity?

White people were over-represented in the survey sample and other groups were under-represented, compared to the Wood Green population.

Survey sample		Wood Green population source: 2021 Census	
White	76	White	55.9
Black	10	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	15.9
Asian	6	Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh	11.1
Mixed	4	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	6.9
Other	4		10.2

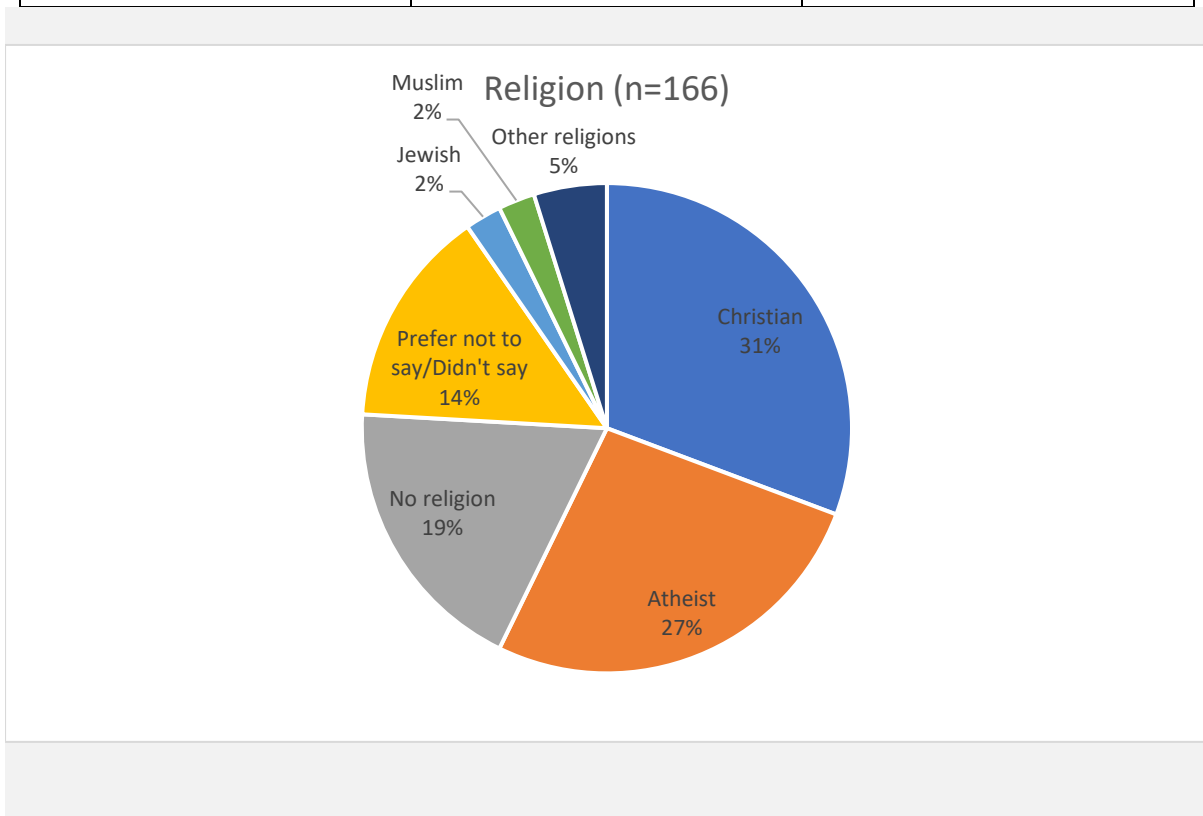
Sexual Orientation – Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?



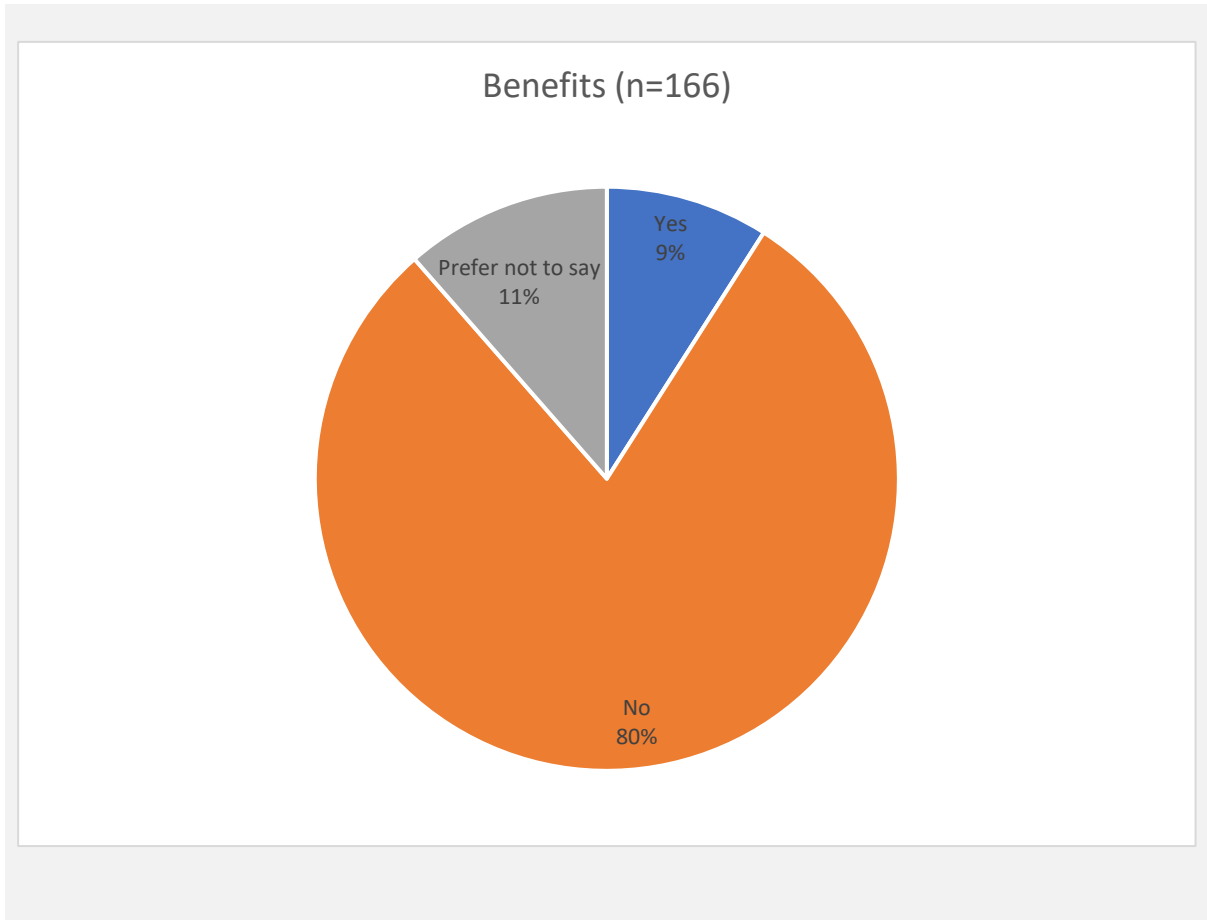
Religion - How would you describe your religion or belief?

People who described themselves as atheist or having no religion were over-represented in the survey compared to the Wood Green population. People with a religion were under-represented, especially Muslims.

	Survey sample (%)	Wood Green population source: 2021 Census (%)
Christian	31	39.6
Atheist / no religion	46	30.4
Muslim	2	15
Jewish	2	0.6
Other religions	5	6.1
Prefer not to say / did not respond	14	8.3



Benefits – Do you receive universal credit or any means tested benefits?



Nationality – How do you describe your national identity? Tick all that apply (n=159)

	Total	African/ Australian	Australian	Bangladeshi	Black British	Bolivian	British	Bulgarian	Canadian	Chinese	Colombian	Cypriot	English	European	French	German	Ghanaian	Hong	Indian	Iran	Irish	Italian	Jamaican	Lithuania	New	Polish	Scottish	Somali	Spanish	Turkish	Ukrainian	United	Welsh	
African/ West African	2	2																																
Australian	0																																	
Bangladeshi	1			1																														
Black British	1				1																													
Bolivian	1					1																												
British	7 4		3				58		1	1		1	3		1	1					1	1	2					1						
Bulgarian	3							3																										
Canadian	0																																	
Chinese	2									2																								
Colombian	1										1																							
Cypriot	1											1																						
English	2 9												29																					
European	1													1																				
French	1														1																			
German	0																																	
Ghanaian	2																2																	
Hong Konger	1																	1																
Indian	3																		3															
Iran	1																			1														

