

Wantage Town Council Town Survey Report 2026

This report presents the findings of the Wantage Town Survey, which was conducted to gather residents' views, experiences, and priorities relating to life in Wantage.

The survey sought feedback on a wide range of topics, including local amenities, services, facilities, and the overall character of the town, with the aim of better understanding what matters most to those who live here.

The survey was open from September 2025 to January 2026 and received a total of 704 responses.

The results provide a valuable snapshot of residents' opinions and highlights both areas of satisfaction and opportunities for improvement.

The results set out in this report will help inform future decision-making, and discussions about the ongoing development of Wantage.

Respondent Profile

About the people who responded...

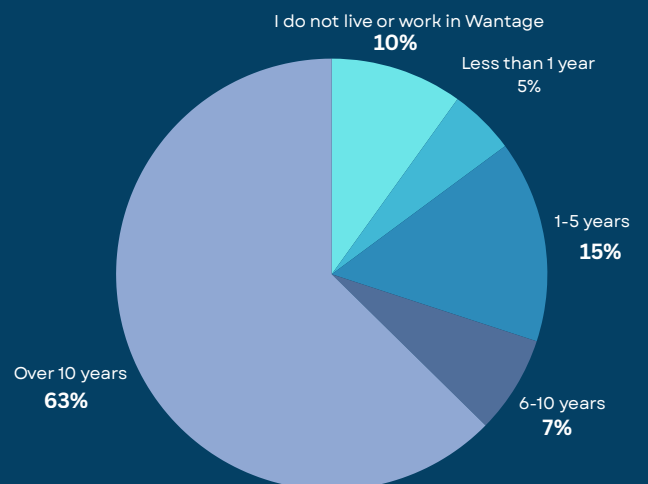
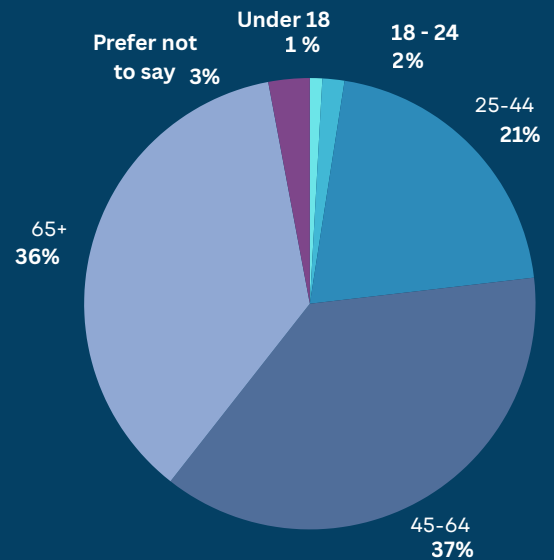
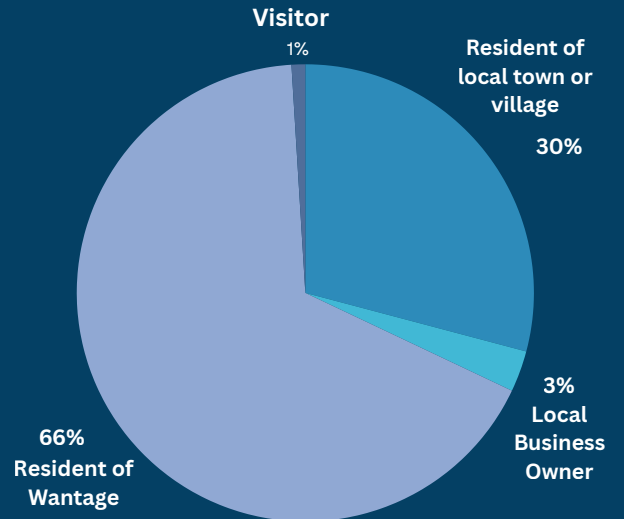




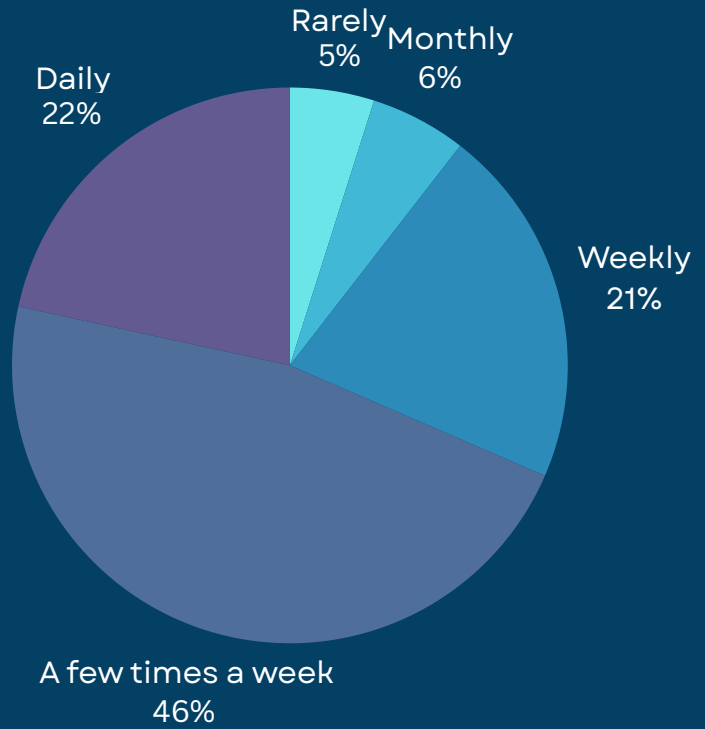
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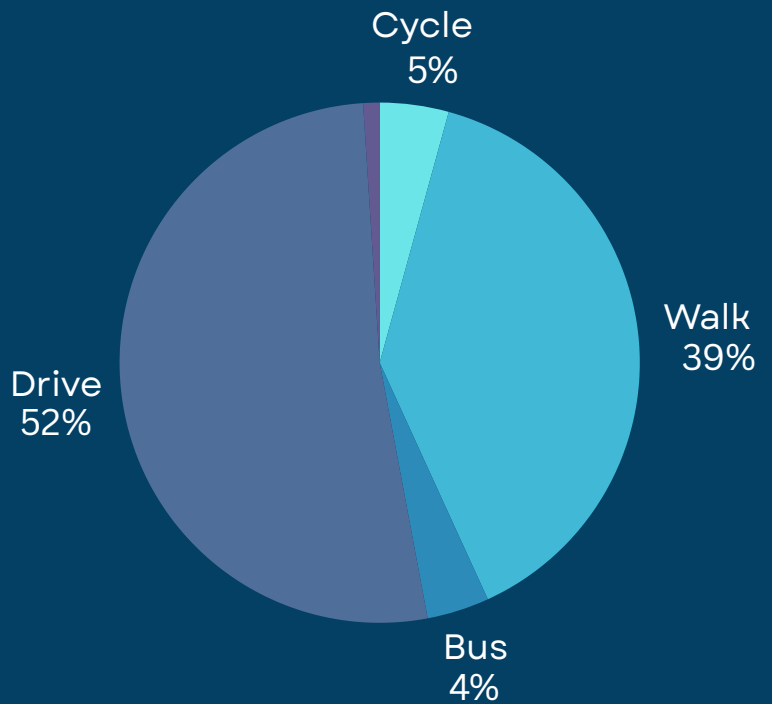
Visiting & shopping in Wantage

We asked people about their shopping habits and visits to Wantage – how often they come, how they travel, and where they usually park. The responses give a snapshot of how people get around and use the town, helping us understand patterns of movement and how Wantage serves the community.

How often do you visit Wantage Town Centre?



How do you usually travel to Wantage Town?



Most common places for shopping within Wantage:

Market Place

The most frequently mentioned shopping area. Respondents often specify it for general shopping, and market stalls.



Kings Park Retail Area

Nearly as popular as Market Place, sometimes preferred for larger retail chains and specialty shops.



Arbery Arcade

Mentioned less frequently than Market Place and Kings Park. Typically used for specific stores or smaller shopping needs.



Respondents were asked which areas of Wantage they are more likely to shop in.

The main areas mentioned were:



Waitrose / Sainsbury's / Supermarkets

Some respondents mentioned supermarkets specifically, often in combination with Market Place or Kings Park.

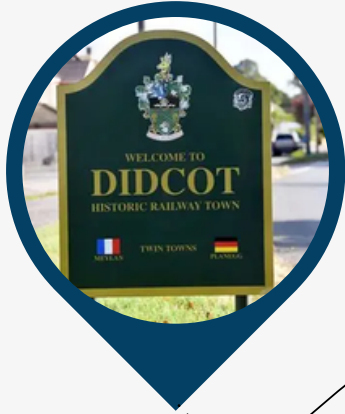
Online shopping

A few respondents noted using online options alongside physical shopping areas.

Where do people usually shop if not in Wantage?

Respondents mentioned a wide range of towns and cities they use for shopping. The most frequent locations were:

Didcot - Overwhelmingly the most common alternative for all types of shopping (groceries, clothes, household items).



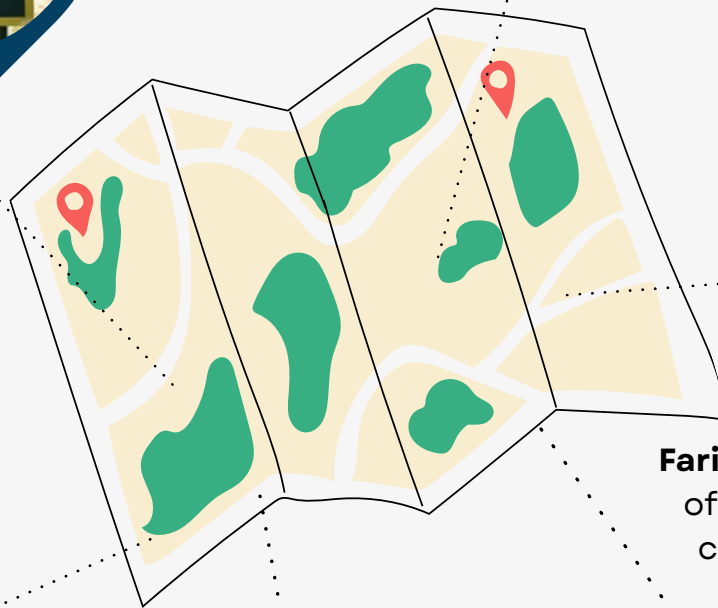
Newbury - also very popular for clothing, groceries, and general shopping.



Oxford - often for clothing, shoes, or specialty items not available locally.



Swindon - occasionally mentioned for larger retail or clothing.



Faringdon - smaller number of respondents, often for convenience shopping.



Abingdon - mainly groceries or occasional shopping trips.

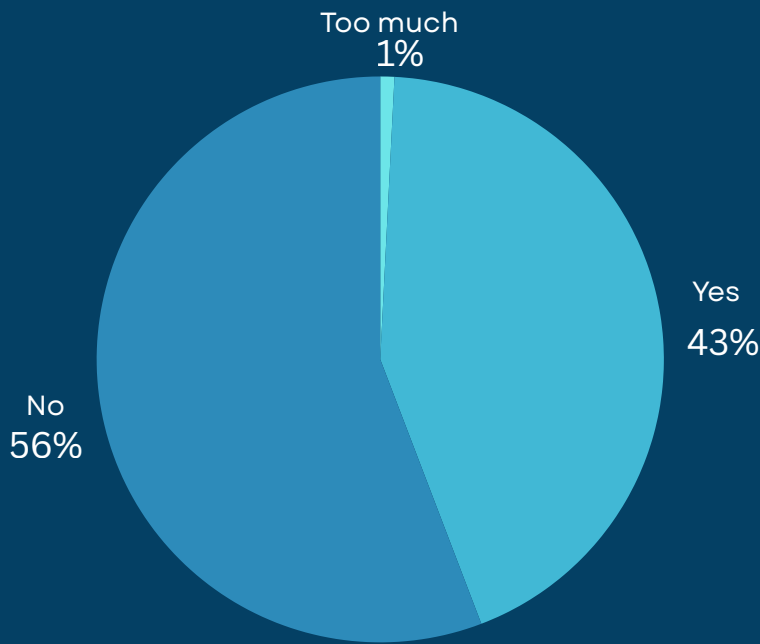


Online Shopping

Many respondents rely heavily on online shopping (Amazon, Ocado, Tesco home delivery, or general online stores) when items are unavailable locally.

Some respondents noted they try to shop locally first, but convenience and availability often push them online.

Do you think there is sufficient parking available in Wantage town centre?



Parking in Wantage Town

We asked people where they usually park when they drive to Wantage town. The responses highlight the most popular parking locations, which are listed below. This information helps us understand visitor habits and identify areas where parking facilities are most in demand.



Sainsburys Car Park

The most commonly mentioned, used for shopping or short visits.



Town Centre / Market Spaces

Used when spaces are available; sometimes for short visits.



The Beacon

Popular for shopping, appointments, and general town visits.



Waitrose Car Park

Frequently used for larger shopping trips.



Portway, Limborough Road

Occasional usage noted.

Reasons for Method of Travel to Wantage Town Centre

Survey responses highlight several key factors influencing how people travel to the town centre:



1. Proximity/Walking

Many respondents live within walking distance (often under 10–15 minutes). Walking is often chosen for convenience, exercise, health, and environmental reasons. Residents in the town centre or nearby villages commonly walk unless carrying heavy shopping.

2. Driving/Car use

Cars are primarily used when shopping trips involve heavy or bulk items. Driving is also chosen for speed, flexibility, convenience, and lack of reliable public transport. Some respondents cite mobility issues, disability, or health conditions as reasons for driving. Parking difficulties are noted, but residents still find cars practical for shopping and errands.



3. Bus/Public Transport

Bus use is limited due to infrequent service, inconvenient routes, and costs. Some residents rely on buses when walking or driving isn't feasible, particularly the elderly or those without cars.

4. Other Considerations

Safety, accessibility, and the ability to carry shopping are key factors. Cycling is occasionally used but limited by distance, safety concerns, and lack of secure bike parking. Convenience, time constraints, and weather influence the choice of travel for many respondents.



We asked people how often they visit Wantage town and for those who said 'never' or 'rarely,' we asked them to share the reasons why. From their feedback, three main themes emerged as the most common reasons for infrequent visits, which are highlighted and explored further below.



1. Parking Issues

Insufficient parking spaces, especially for disabled drivers (blue badge holders). Disabled bays often misused or relocated, making access difficult. Short time limits in car parks and difficulty finding available spaces. Traffic congestion and road closures exacerbate the problem.

2. Lack of Shop variety

Many respondents feel the town centre has too many charity shops, nail bars, hairdressers, Turkish barbers, coffee shops, and takeaways. Respondents felt there was limited options for clothing, shoes, or other high street brands.



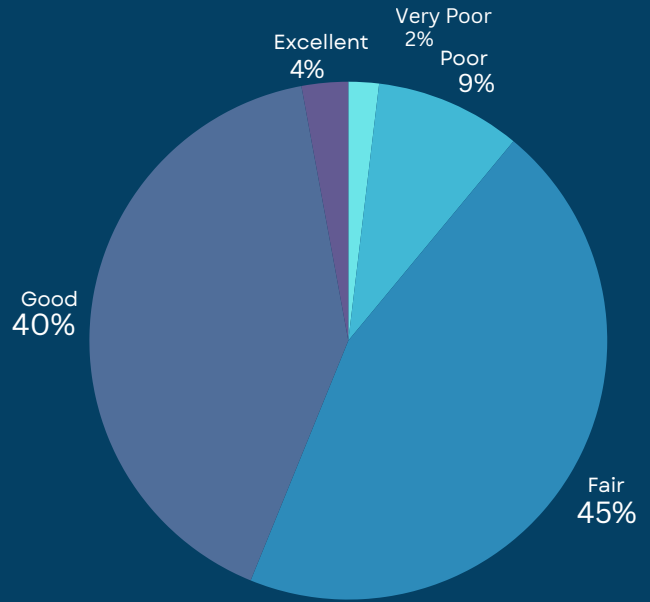
3. Accessibility and Mobility Challenges

Some visitors require wheelchairs or rollators and find pavements crowded or difficult to navigate. Anti-social behaviour and poor pedestrian access (blocked pavements, busy traffic) reduce accessibility for some residents.

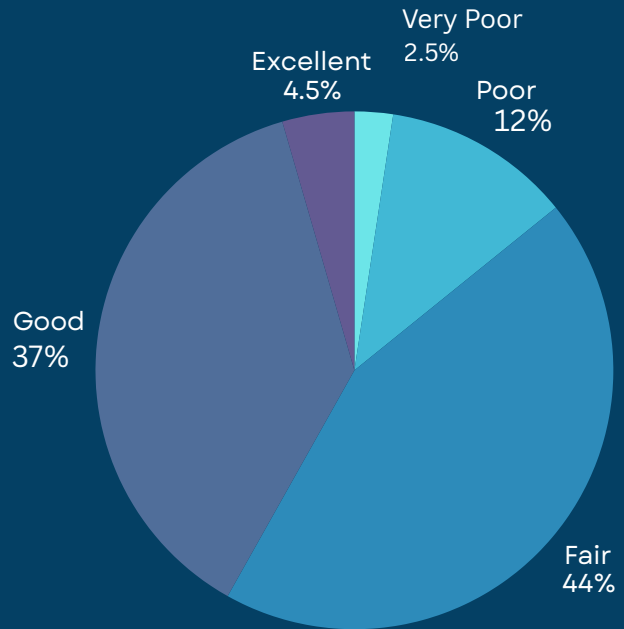
Council Services & Town Facilities

We asked people about their use of local council services and town facilities. The responses give a picture of how these services are used and valued, helping to guide improvements and make the town's facilities work better for everyone.

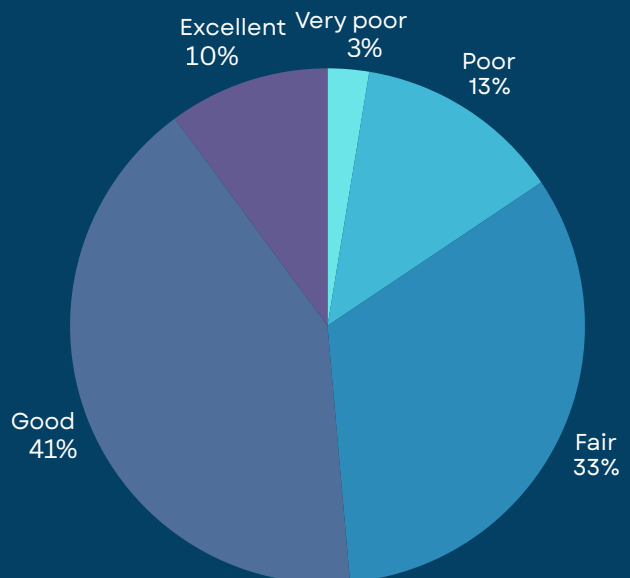
Bus Shelters and Street Furniture



Community Noticeboards



Market Place (appearance and usability)



Suggestions for amenities that are missing or could be improved in Wantage?

The survey responses show a wide range of views on amenities in Wantage, with recurring themes around parking, retail, leisure, and accessibility.

1. Parking and Traffic

More parking is needed, particularly in the Market Place, The Beacon, and near the town centre. Disabled/Blue Badge spaces are insufficient or poorly located.

Issues with short-term parking, illegal parking, and lack of enforcement are frequently mentioned. Suggestions include multi-storey car parks and better pedestrianisation of the Market Place.



2. Retail and Shops

Strong demand for a greater variety of shops: clothing (men's, women's, children's), shoes, butchers, toy shops, DIY/hardware stores. Concerns about the excess of charity shops, coffee shops, hairdressers, nail bars, and fast food outlets, limiting useful retail options. Need for independent retailers and high street chains to increase footfall and choice.

3. Leisure, Sport, and Entertainment

Leisure facilities (sports centre, swimming pool) are considered outdated and insufficient.

Desire for cinema, bowling, theatre, soft play areas, skate park, outdoor gym, and activities for teenagers. Improvement to parks, playgrounds, and toddler-friendly areas requested.



4. Accessibility and Safety

Improved footpaths, pavements, and crossings, especially near Betjeman Park, Mill Street, and the town centre. Better wheelchair and disabled access from car parks into town. Calls for cycle lanes, pedestrian areas, and traffic calming to make the town safer for all.

5. Transport and Public Services

Improved bus services, particularly direct routes to Didcot, Milton Park, John Radcliffe Hospital, and Harwell. Need for a train station and better connections for commuters. Requests for bus shelters, benches, lighting, and electronic timetable displays.



6. Community, Aesthetics, and Amenities

Desire for more benches, seating areas, greenery, and street improvements (paving, planting, cleanliness). Better signage, notice boards, and information on town council services, events, and facilities. Calls for more restaurants, cafés, and outdoor seating, and improved advertising of events. General concerns about market place aesthetics, litter, and the dominance of traffic over social and retail spaces.

7. Healthcare and Essential Services

Requests for medical facilities, including improved NHS access and re-opening A&E at Wantage Hospital. Some respondents noted limited bank availability and post office services.



Overall Insight:

Parking and retail variety are the most frequently mentioned issues. Leisure and social facilities for all ages, especially teenagers and elderly, are lacking. Accessibility and safety improvements are needed for pedestrians, cyclists, and disabled users. Enhancing Market Place aesthetics and outdoor spaces could make Wantage more attractive for residents and visitors.

Suggestions for Improving the Market Place (Western End)

Survey responses reveal diverse views, but several clear themes emerge regarding how the Market Place could be enhanced:



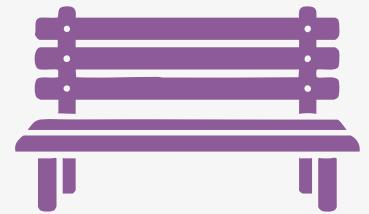
1. Pedestrianisation and Traffic Management

Strong support for full or partial pedestrianisation, particularly in the western end, to make the area safer, more attractive, and suitable for outdoor seating, markets, and events. Suggestions include restricting general traffic, maintaining limited access for deliveries, buses, and taxis, and improving pedestrian/cycle links.

Some respondents prefer retaining traffic and parking to support local businesses, highlighting the need for a balanced approach.

2. Seating, Social Spaces, and Greenery

Requests for more public seating, benches, covered areas, and tables not tied to cafes. Desire for increased greenery, planters, trees, and visual improvements to create a welcoming, community-friendly environment. Proposals for dedicated areas for markets, performances, music events, and outdoor social activities.



3. Retail and Commercial Improvements

Calls for a wider variety of shops, including independent stores, clothing, shoes, and high-quality cafés/restaurants. Concerns about too many takeaways, vape shops, hair/nail salons, and poorly maintained shop fronts. Support for pop-up shops and flexible market stalls to encourage local businesses.

4. Surface, Accessibility, and Safety

Need for resurfacing pavements and roads, leveling cobbles, and improving accessibility for wheelchairs, prams, and mobility scooters. Requests for better lighting, CCTV, and safer crossings. Importance of maintaining pedestrian access without obstruction from café furniture or vehicles.



5. Parking, Deliveries, and Services

Suggestions for more disabled parking and organized loading/unloading zones for businesses. Mixed opinions on general car parking: some want it reduced to expand pedestrian space, others emphasize its importance for shop accessibility.

Proposals for better signage and clearer layout of taxis, buses, and delivery access.

Overall Insight:

Pedestrianisation, public seating, greenery, and flexible use for events are the most commonly supported improvements. Retail diversity, shopfront aesthetics, and café culture are seen as vital for attracting visitors.

Residents' Views on making Wantage a more vibrant town

Residents highlighted a mix of practical, cultural, and community-focused improvements to enhance the town's vibrancy and quality of life. The responses reflect a desire for better infrastructure, diverse local businesses, and engaging community spaces.



1. Retail and Business

Increase the variety and quality of shops, including clothing, shoes, greengrocers, butchers, and other essential retailers. Encourage independent and small businesses, including pop-up shops, while reducing the prevalence of nail bars, Turkish barbers, and charity shops.

Lower commercial rents and offer business incentives to fill empty premises and attract new businesses. Attract larger retailers to occupy vacant units to meet local demand and reduce the need to travel to other towns. Improve visibility and promotion of local businesses and services to residents.

2. Restaurants, Cafes, and Leisure

Expand restaurant, café, bar, and cinema options, particularly those open longer hours and offering diverse cuisines. Support cultural and entertainment venues, including live music, theatre at the Beacon, outdoor performances, and arts events. Create community hubs in empty shops for art, exhibitions, workshops, or youth activities. Encourage leisure facilities for all ages, including youth-friendly spaces, a modern leisure centre, skate parks, and water-based activities.



3. Community and Public Spaces

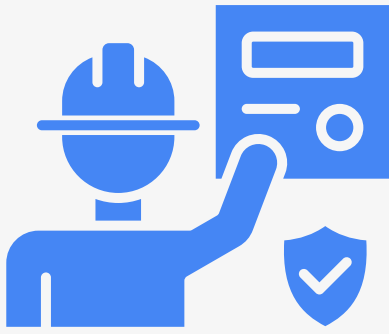
More pedestrianised areas and landscaping in the Market Place, with seating, greenery, and outdoor dining. Improve parks, public seating, and open spaces to create welcoming areas for socialising and community events. Continue festivals, markets, and seasonal events, including pop-up markets and interactive activities for families and young people. Celebrate cultural diversity and inclusivity, removing offensive symbols and fostering a welcoming environment.



4. Transport and Accessibility

Improve parking, including free or extended hours, multi-storey options, and park-and-ride schemes to support shoppers and visitors. Enhance pedestrian and wheelchair accessibility, including drop curbs, pavements, and safe walking routes. Better bus links and transport infrastructure, connecting new housing estates, surrounding villages, and nearby towns. Consider traffic management to reduce congestion in the town centre.





5. Safety and Maintenance

6. Investment and Long-Term Vision

Encourage private and public investment in infrastructure, shops, leisure, and cultural facilities to support a growing population. Focus on sustainable vibrancy, balancing Wantage's historic market town character with modern amenities and lifestyle improvements. Promote collaboration between Wantage and Grove councils to integrate new communities and encourage residents to engage locally.



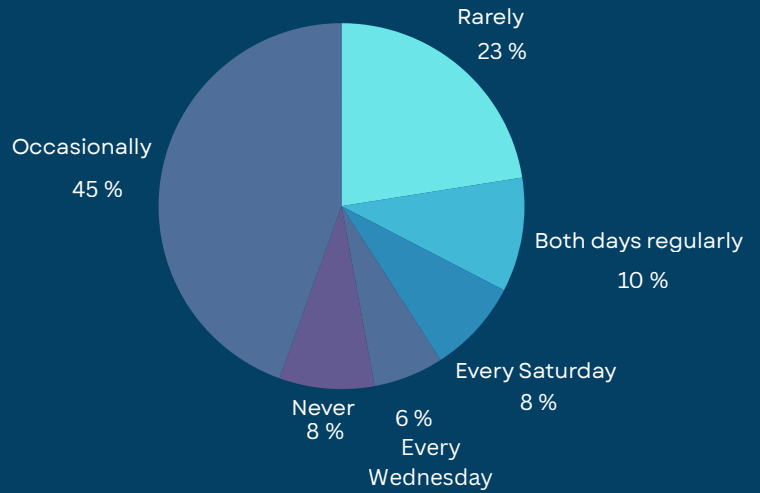
Overall Insight:

Residents see vibrancy as more than aesthetics: it is about enhancing lifestyle, accessibility, and social engagement while maintaining Wantage's character. Practical investments in shops, leisure, events, accessibility, and safety are seen as key to attracting visitors, retaining residents, and supporting a sustainable, lively town centre.

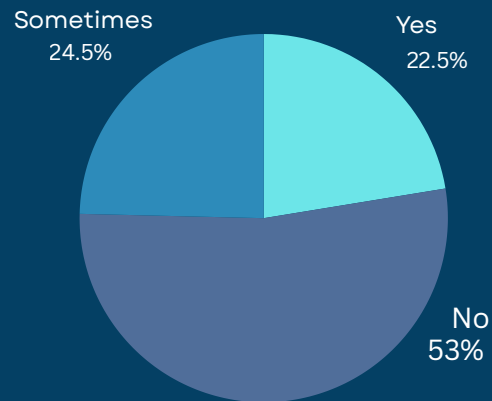
Markets

The survey also explored how respondents engage with the market, including how often they visit and whether the market is their main reason for coming into the town centre. The results provide insight into patterns of use, helping to show the market's role in attracting visitors, supporting footfall, and contributing to the wider vitality of the town centre.

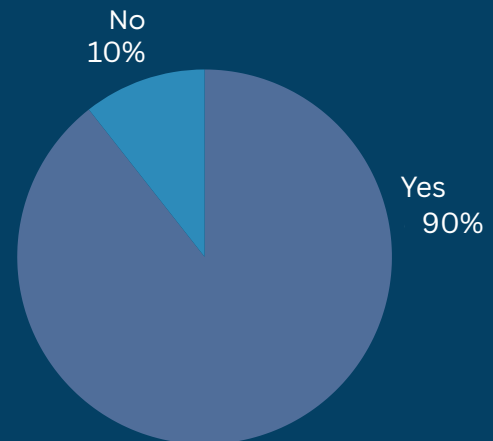
How often do you visit the Wantage markets?



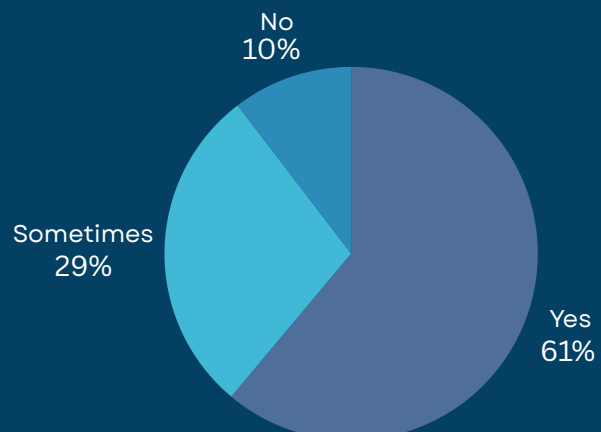
Do you come into Town specifically for the Market?



Would you be happy to have other events, (i.e. antiques market) taking place simultaneously in the west end on market days?



When visiting the market, do you also shop at other businesses in the Market Place?

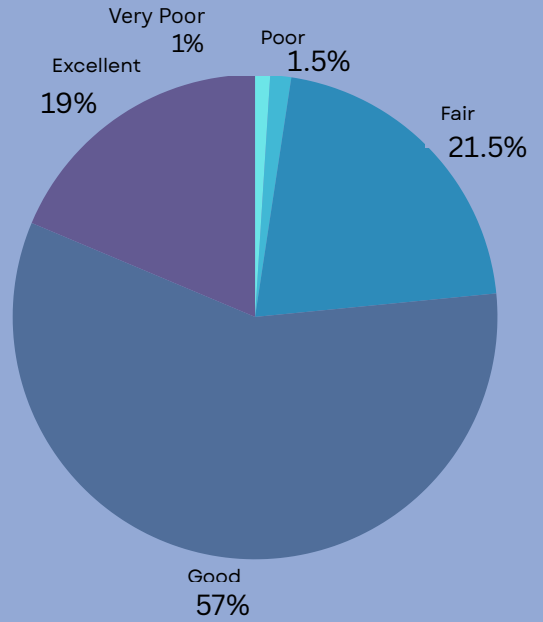


Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the market, including pricing, atmosphere, variety of stalls etc.

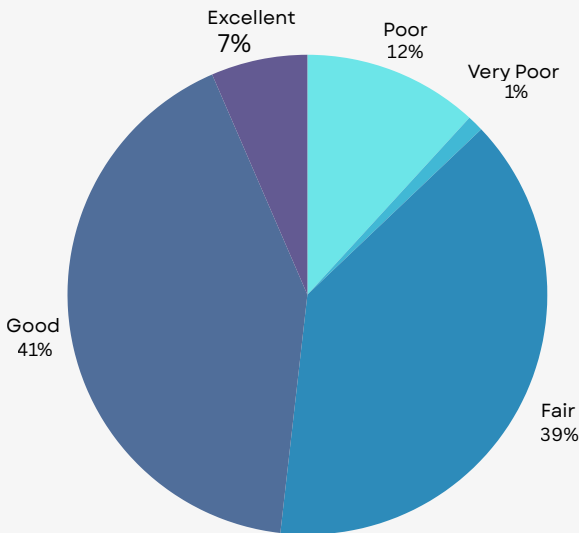
The graphs on this page summarise how respondents evaluated each area, highlighting levels of satisfaction as well as where opinions were more mixed.

Together, these results provide insight into what is working well at the market and where there may be opportunities for improvement.

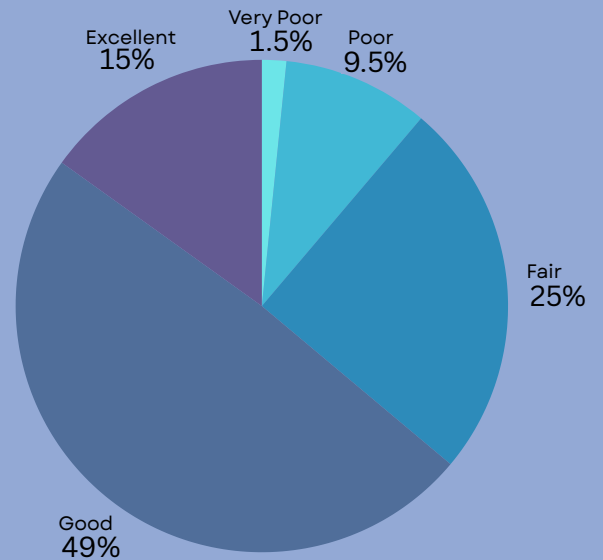
Quality of products



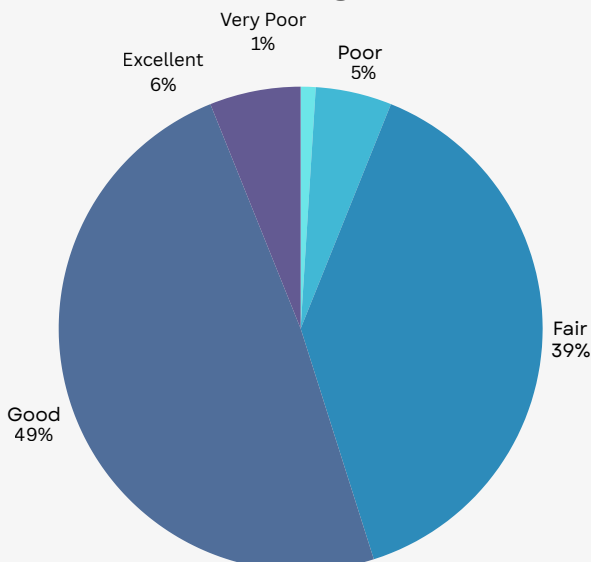
Variety of stalls



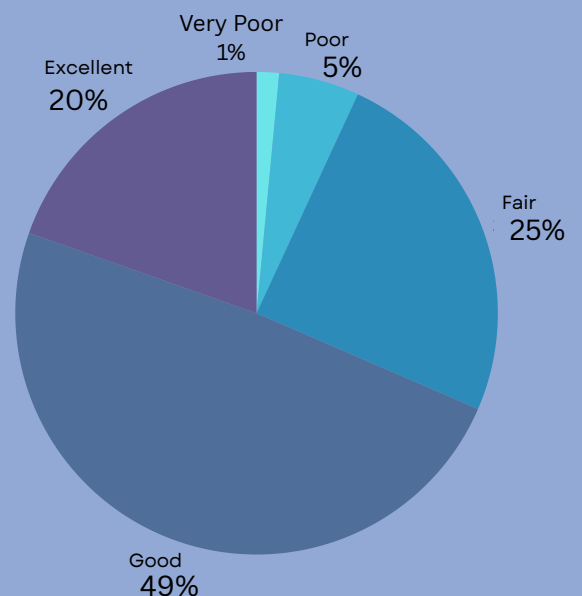
Accessibility and Location



Pricing



Market atmosphere and community feel



Suggestions for Market Improvements

Respondents offered a variety of suggestions, which can be grouped into several main themes:



1. Timing and Opening Hours

Many people find Wednesday markets inconvenient due to work commitments; Saturday markets are preferred.

Suggestions include longer opening hours, especially into the afternoon (past 2 pm), and occasional evening markets to accommodate working visitors. Some recommend Sunday markets to increase accessibility and footfall.



2. Layout and Pedestrianisation

Frequent recommendation to pedestrianise the Market Place, fully or partially, to allow more stalls, better flow, and safer access, especially for children, pushchairs, and wheelchair users.

Better stall layout for busy areas (e.g., fruit and veg) to reduce congestion.

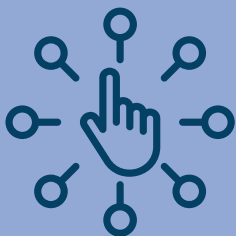
Use of west end and other areas for additional stalls, pop-ups, or themed markets.



3. Parking and Accessibility

Parking is a common concern; respondents felt that traders often occupy spaces intended for shoppers. Suggestions include temporary customer parking permits, free/longer parking nearby, and better management of blue badge/disabled access.

Some propose moving the market closer to larger parking areas or using alternative pedestrian-friendly spaces.



4. Variety and Stalls

Desire for more variety of stalls, including hot food trucks, artisan foods, crafts, clothing, shoes, and practical goods.

Some suggest themed or specialist markets (cheese, flowers, antiques, farmers' markets, multicultural, seasonal festivals).

Rotating or guest traders could increase diversity and attract more visitors.



5. Facilities and Experience

Requests for seating areas, covered stalls, and spaces for visitors to eat/drink. Better signage, maps, and publicity for weekly and special markets. Cleaner spaces, less litter, and improved stall presentation for a more welcoming atmosphere.



6. Other Observations

Cost of stalls for traders is considered high; reducing fees could attract more vendors.

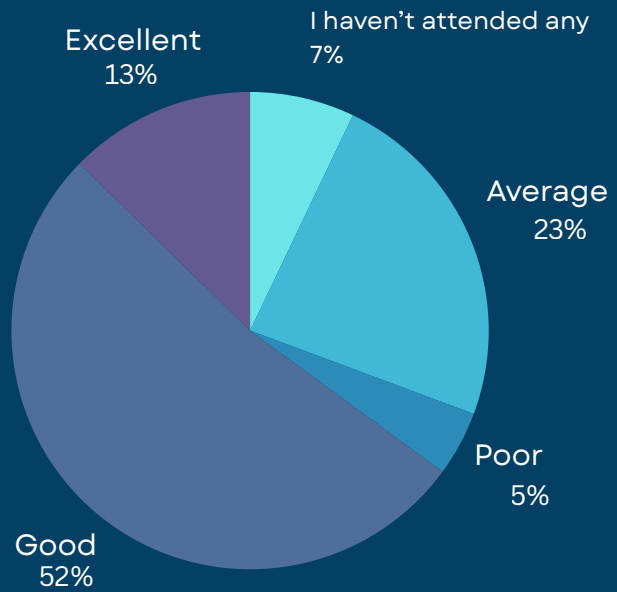
Some support minor road closures during markets for safety, traffic control, and enhanced visitor experience.

Emphasis on supporting local producers and seasonal products, especially food.

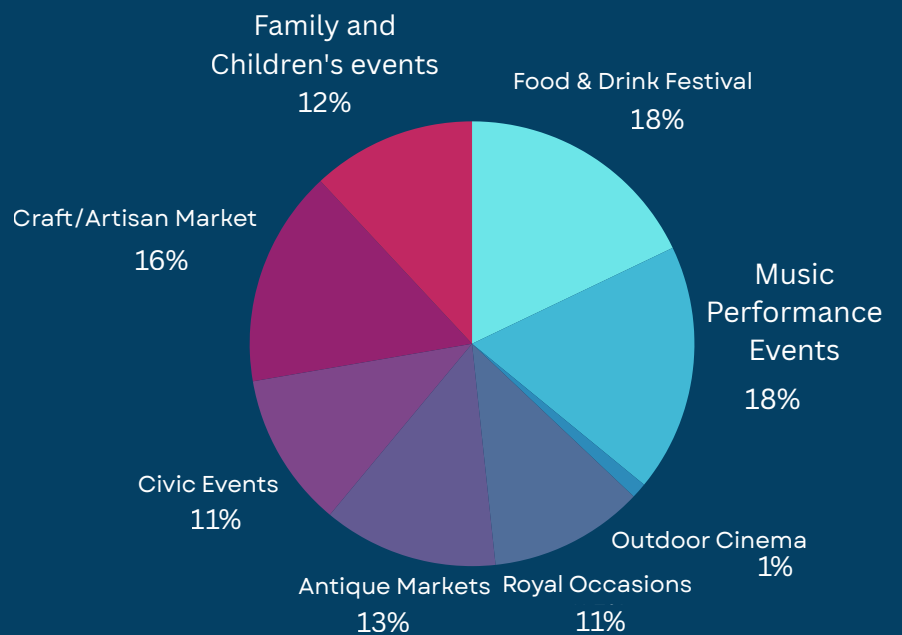
Events

We asked people about how they take part in local events – how often they go and whether the events are the main reason they visit certain places. The answers give a snapshot of how events bring people together, and attract visitors.

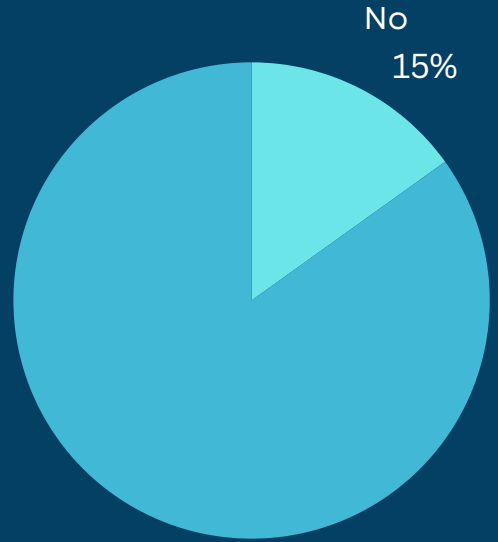
How would you rate events in the town overall?



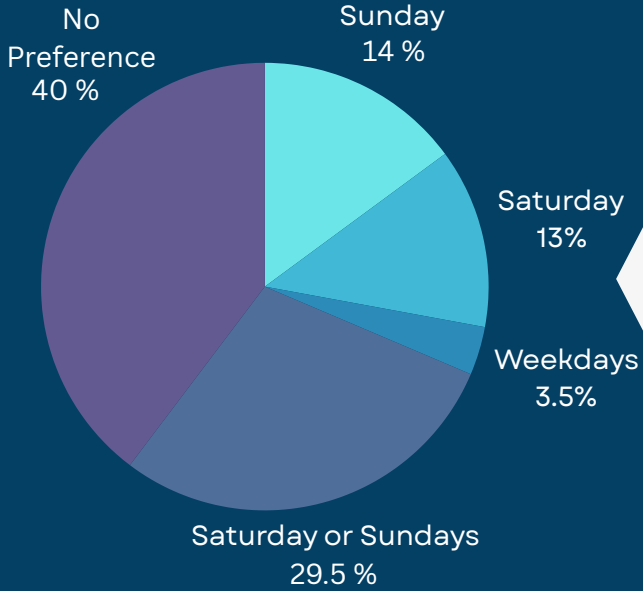
What events would you like to see in Wantage?



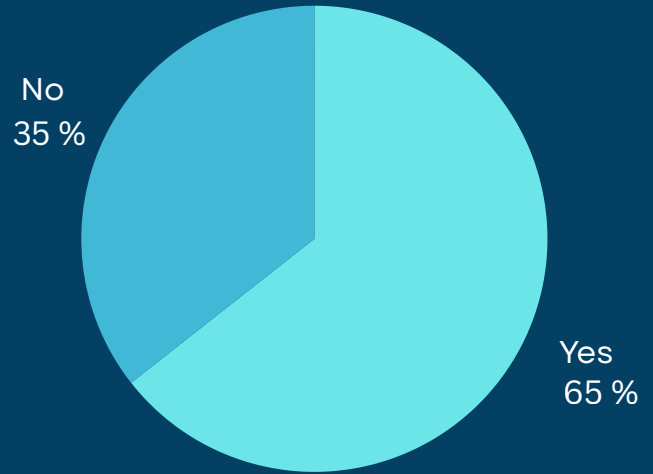
Have you attended any Wantage events in the last year?



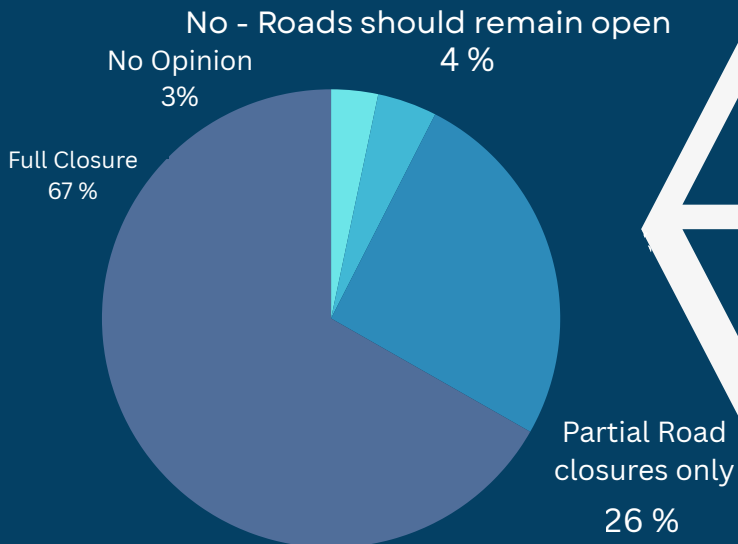
What day would you prefer events to be held on?



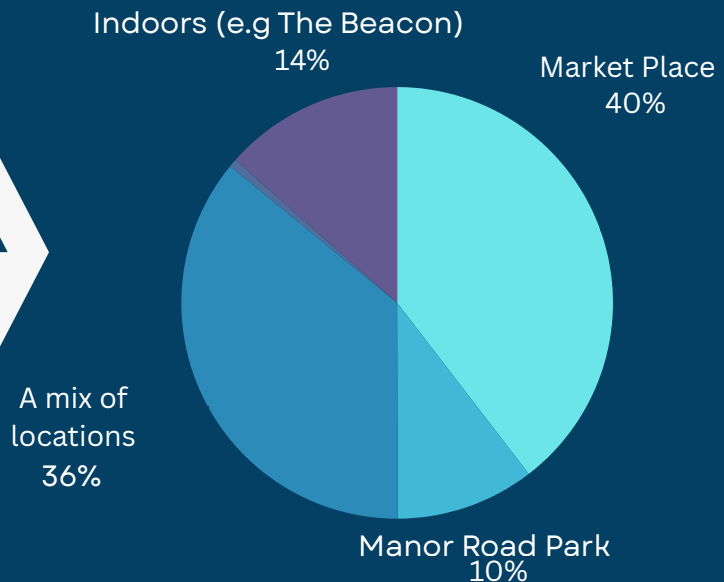
Were you aware that the Town Council incurs significant costs for events? (e.g road closures)



Do you support road closures for events held in the town Centre?



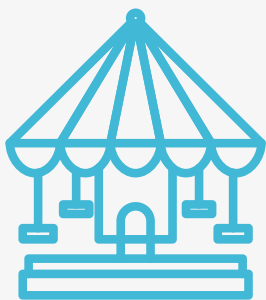
Where do you want events held?



Feedback on Current Event Activities

Overall, respondents expressed broad support for the range of activities offered, particularly those aimed at children and families such as face painting, costumed characters, vintage games, music, and community performances. Many felt these activities add atmosphere, support community identity, and make events welcoming.

However, several recurring concerns and suggestions emerged:

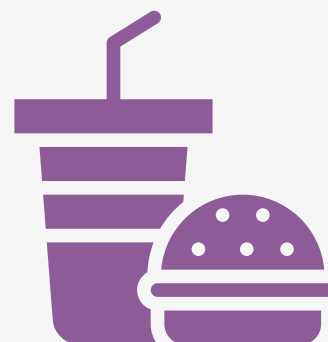


1. Funfairs and Fairground Rides

One of the most common criticisms. Described as too noisy, expensive, repetitive, intrusive, and messy, with concerns about litter, diesel fumes, loss of parking, and pressure on family budgets. Some respondents felt funfairs are unsuitable for the town centre and suggested relocating them (e.g. to Manor Park) or replacing them with traditional, quieter fair stalls (coconut shies, roll-a-ball, tombolas).

2. Over-commercialisation and Repetition

Frequent comments about too many food and drink stalls, often selling the same items. Requests for more variety, better quality, more affordable options, and fewer “tat” or low-quality products. Desire for artisan markets, crafts, antiques, and local traders, with stronger support for local businesses, charities, and schools.



3. Balance of Activities by Age Group

Strong perception that events are mainly aimed at younger children. Many asked for more activities for teenagers and adults, such as:

Interactive games and competitions

Live and varied music

Workshops, tastings, and cultural displays

Older respondents often noted activities were “not for them” but were still supportive of their inclusion.

4. Animals and Novel Attractions

Animal attractions (e.g. donkeys, birds, petting zoos) were frequently praised for their broad appeal, though some expressed welfare concerns.

Novel features like fake snow, parades, bubble displays, and vintage games were highlighted positively.



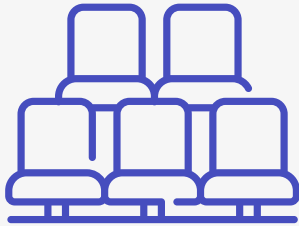
Overall Insight:

While the activities are generally well received, respondents would like to see less reliance on commercial funfairs and repetitive food stalls, and a stronger focus on quality, variety, local identity, heritage, and activities for a wider age range, particularly teenagers and adults.

Feedback on Improving Future Events

Respondents identified several key factors that would make future events more enjoyable, with strong consistency across responses.

The most frequently mentioned priorities were:



1. Better seating and accessibility:

A major theme, particularly for older people, disabled attendees, and families. Requests included more seating, sheltered areas, accessible toilets, wheelchair access, and better consideration of mobility needs.

2. Parking, transport, and access:

Many highlighted difficulties with parking (especially for disabled users), road closures, and limited public transport. Suggestions included temporary parking solutions, extended parking times, improved bus services, and better traffic management.



3. Advertising and communication:

Respondents asked for posters, banners and signage in the town centre. They were keen for there to be more offline advertising.

4. Greater variety and higher quality:

Many felt events can feel repetitive, with the same stalls and activities. Suggestions included: More artisan, craft, antiques, and local business stalls, Fewer food and alcohol vendors, Higher-quality performers and stalls.



5. More for adults, teenagers, and young people:

Events were seen as heavily focused on young children, with calls for:

- More live music and cultural events
- Activities for teenagers and young adults

6. Music and atmosphere:

Live music was popular, but respondents asked for better sound balance, more seating near stages, and a wider range of musical styles. Excessive noise was a concern for some.



Overall Insight:

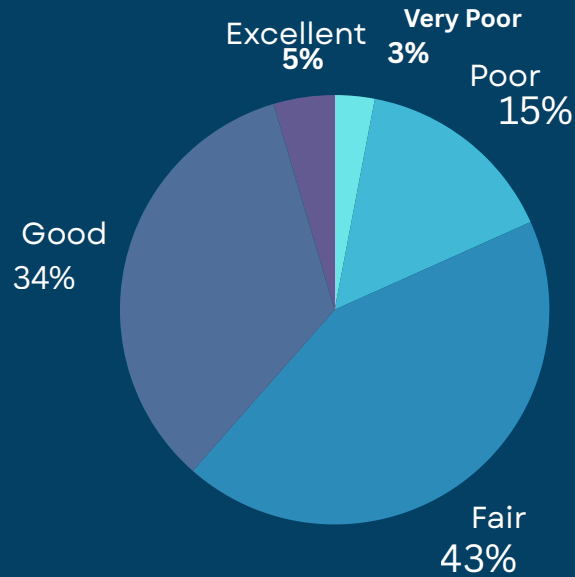
Future events would be more enjoyable with better accessibility, seating, parking, clearer promotion, greater variety and quality, and a stronger balance between family-focused and adult-focused activities, while making fuller use of local spaces and local talent.

Communications

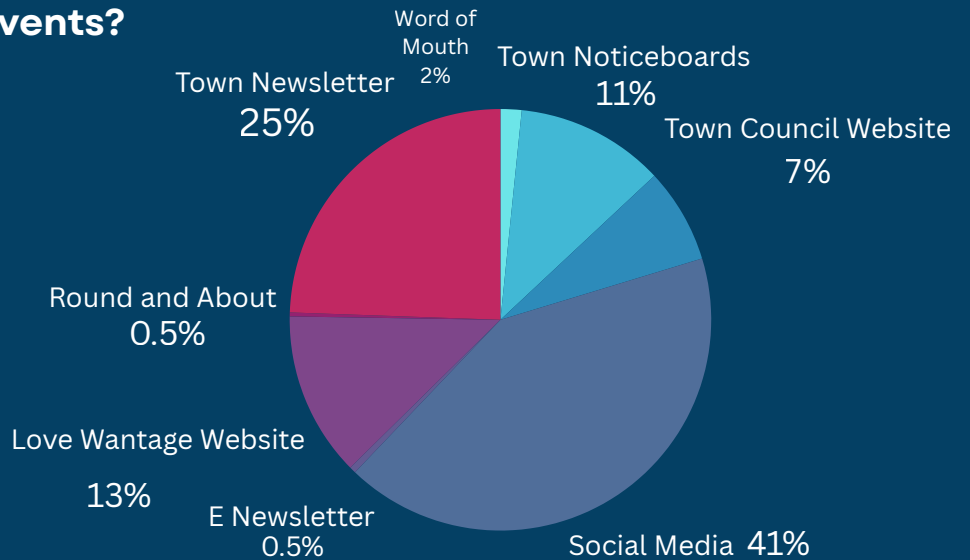
We asked people about how they hear about news and updates, and which ways of getting information work best for them.

The responses give a clear picture of how the community prefers to stay informed, helping us share news more effectively and keep everyone in the loop.

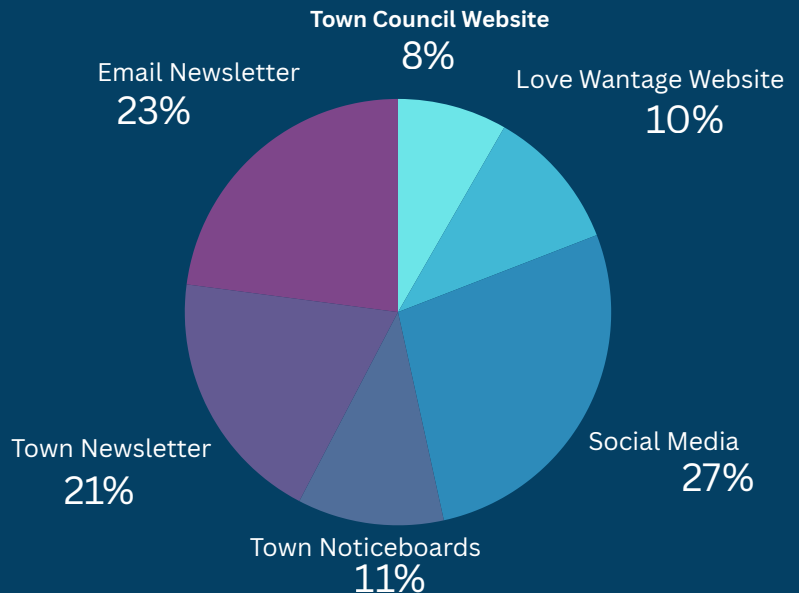
How would you rate Wantage Town Council's current communication with residents?



How do you currently hear about local news and events?



Going forward how would you prefer to receive updates from the Town Council?



Improving Communication with Residents

Survey responses show a strong and consistent call for clearer, more regular, and more inclusive communication from Wantage Town Council, using a mix of digital and non-digital methods.



Key themes include:

1. Greater use of email newsletters:

Email is seen as one of the most effective ways to stay informed. Respondents value a clear and easy sign-up process, with detailed and useful content.



2. Improved social media use:

Many support increased use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, community groups), However, there is strong concern about excluding residents who do not use social media.



3. Better promotion of events:

Respondents suggested posters in shop windows, banners on roundabouts and in the town centre, flyers, and working with local schools, and community groups to share information.



4. Inclusive communication for all residents:

There is a clear need to reach older residents, those without internet access, and people with mobility issues. Printed newsletters, leaflets, noticeboards, and visible signage around town remain important.

Overall Insight:

Residents want to better understand what the Town Council does, who councillors are, and how to engage. Requests include clearer reporting of both successes and challenges, quicker responses to emails, and more direct engagement through pop-up stalls, open meetings, and community presence.

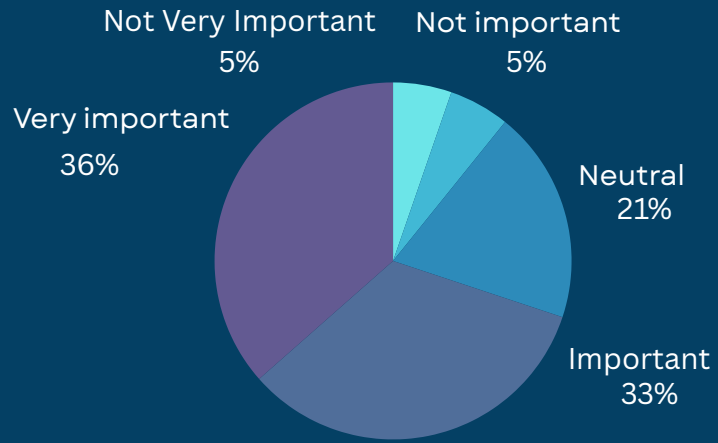


Climate & Environment

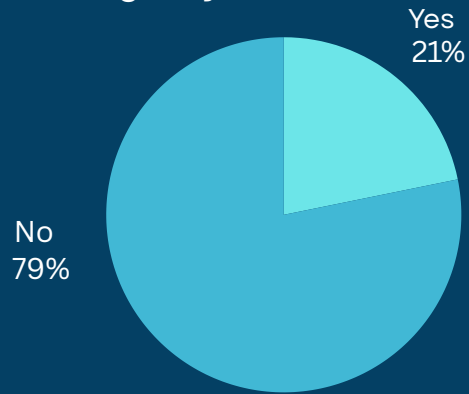
We asked a series of questions to better understand people's views, concerns, and priorities about Climate Emergency.

The pie charts below show a visual breakdown of the responses we received, illustrating how opinions and levels of agreement vary across each question.

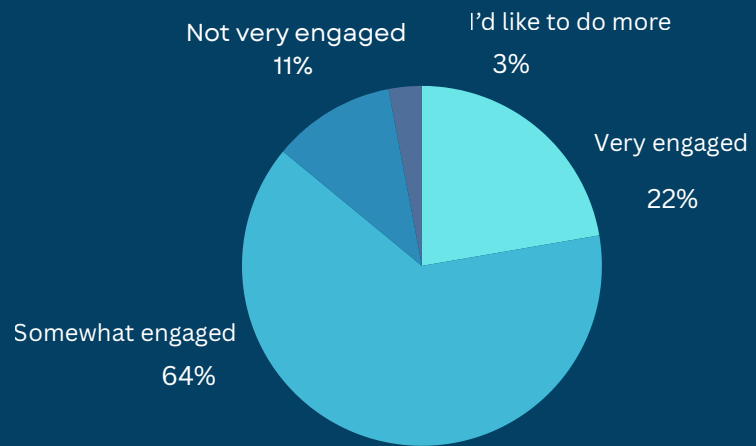
How important is it to you that Wantage Town Council takes action on environmental issues?



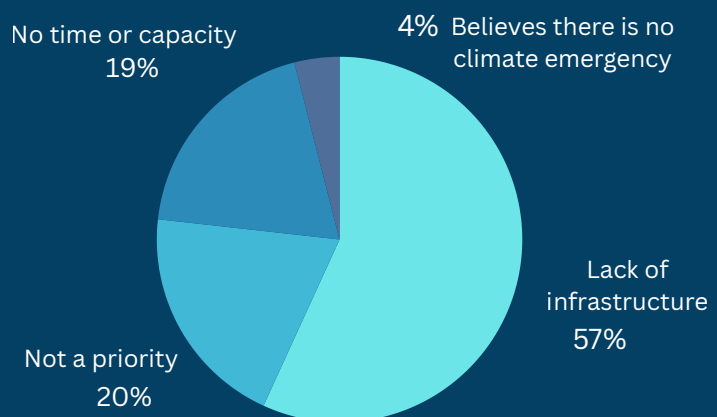
Did you know Wantage Town Council has declared a climate emergency?



How would you describe your own household's interest in reducing its environmental impact?



What barriers prevent you or your household from making greener choices



Summary – Supporting Local Environmental Improvement

Survey responses show strong interest in practical, visible environmental improvements, alongside divided views on climate policy and priorities. While many residents support environmental action, others feel it should be low-cost, locally focused, and balanced against issues such as cost of living, traffic, and healthcare.

Most frequently raised themes include:

1. Cleanliness, Litter, and Maintenance



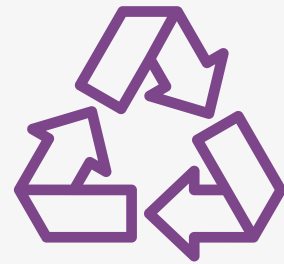
This was the most consistent area of agreement. Residents want:

- Reduced litter and plastic waste, with more bins and more frequent emptying
- Better enforcement against littering and dog fouling
- Cleaner streets, footpaths, drains, signage, bus stops, and public spaces
- Regular maintenance of waterways (especially Letcombe Brook) to reduce flooding

2. Recycling and Waste Reduction

Strong demand for:

- More public recycling bins in the town centre (including clothes, batteries, soft plastics, bottles, and coffee cups)
- Clearer information on what can be recycled and where
- Simpler, more consistent recycling facilities



3. Transport, Traffic, and Active Travel



Many respondents support:

- Improved public transport (more frequent and direct bus services to Didcot, Oxford, JR Hospital, villages)
- Safer, better-connected walking and cycling routes
- Reduced through-traffic in the town centre and Market Place

However, views were polarised:

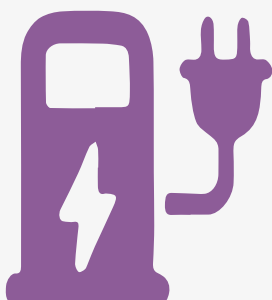
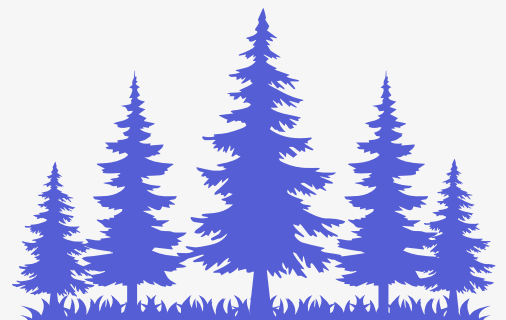
Some strongly support pedestrianisation, lower speed limits, and car reduction

Others oppose restrictions on drivers, 20mph limits, or measures perceived as “anti-car”

4. Trees, Green Spaces, and Biodiversity

Widely supported actions include:

- Tree planting and protection of existing mature trees
- Better management of green spaces, wildflower verges, and habitats
- Wildlife-friendly measures (hedgehog routes, bat/swift boxes, pollinator planting)
- Preventing building on flood plains and protecting green corridors



5. Renewable Energy and EV Infrastructure

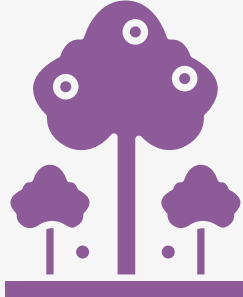
Many residents support:

- More EV charging points (including rapid chargers and on-street options)
- Solar panels on public buildings and new developments
- Grants or advice to help residents improve home energy efficiency

6. Community Involvement and Education

Suggestions include:

- Community litter picks, repair cafés, and local environmental projects
- Working with schools, charities, and groups such as Sustainable Wantage and the Letcombe Brook Project
- Clear communication about what the council is doing and how residents can help



7. Food and community projects:

Interest in community gardens, surplus food redistribution, local food growing, orchards, and sustainability education, particularly for children and schools.

8. Partnership working:

Many respondents highlighted the importance of working with Sustainable Wantage and other local groups, rather than duplicating efforts.



A significant minority:

Do not view environmental action as a priority, Are sceptical of climate emergency declarations,

Want spending kept proportionate and focused on practical local benefits, Stress the need to balance environmental goals with accessibility, affordability, and support for local businesses.