



Listening Learning Leading

# **Low Emissions Strategy 2016**

## **COMPOSITE SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

**Residents views on the proposed low emissions strategy for South Oxfordshire**

**MARCH 2017**

## INTRODUCTION

Between February 2016 and November 2016, South Oxfordshire District sought the views of residents on a proposed low emissions strategy for the district. The strategy set out actions the council could take to improve air quality across the district and in Henley, Watlington and Wallingford where high levels of pollution had previously been identified.

This short report summarises the outcomes of all public engagement activities related to the proposed low emissions strategy. Detailed reports of earlier engagement activities are also available from the council's website: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say>

Activities included a district wide public survey, as well as additional surveys and drop-in events targeted at residents living in Henley, Wallingford and Watlington. These activities are detailed in the table below.

**Table 1: engagement methods**

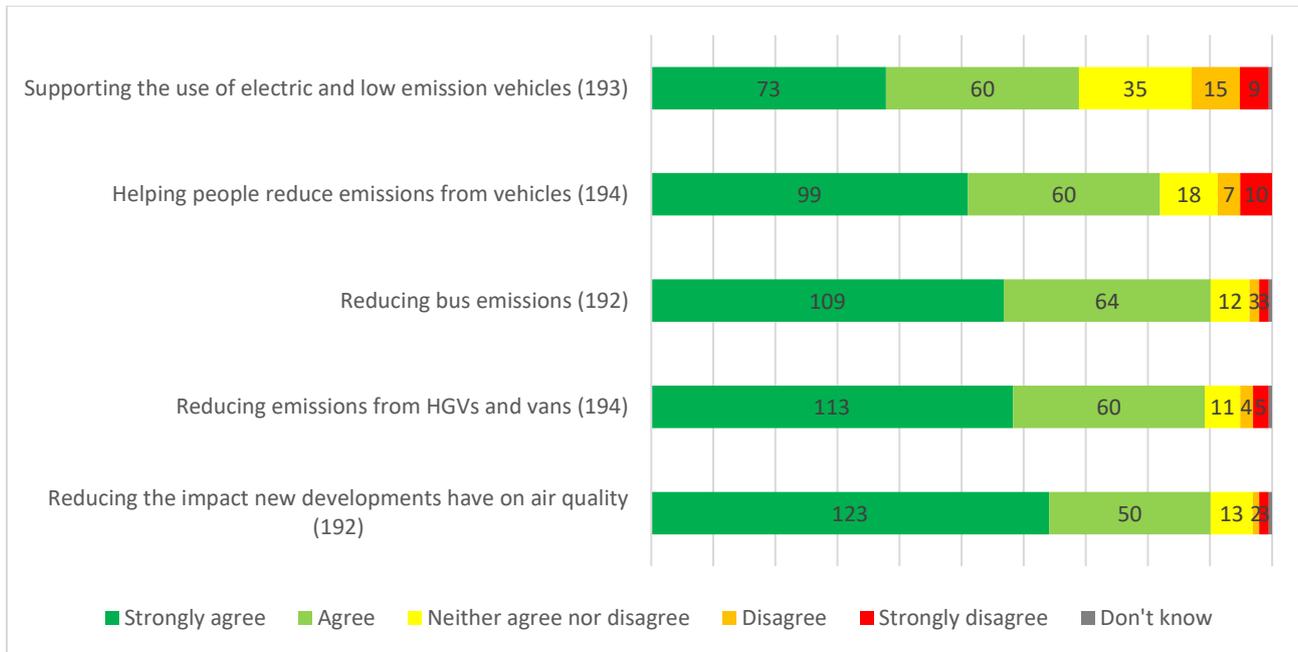
| Method   | Objective   | Who                   | When                  | No. Responses  |
|--|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| A district-wide online public consultation               | To gather feedback from residents across the district on all proposals in the strategy  | SODC                  | February – March 2016 | 217  |
| Local surveys of residents in Wallingford and Watlington | To provide additional opportunity for residents in these towns to provide additional feedback on actions proposed for their settlement  | M·E·L Research        | October 2016          | 127 sampled, doorstep interviews + 272 elective returns made online or at drop-in events |
| Local survey of residents in Henley                      | To provide additional opportunity for residents in this town to comment on whether they thought enough was being done to tackle air pollution in Henley ( <i>nb</i> no settlement specific proposals were included in the strategy) | M·E·L Research        | October 2016          | 175 sampled doorstep interviews + 55 elective returns made online or at drop-in events   |
| Drop-in events in Wallingford, Watlington and Henley     | To provide residents with additional opportunity to discuss the problem of air quality and the strategy with council officers   | SODC & M·E·L Research | October 2016          | N/A  |

In total, we received 846 completed surveys but it's possible some people may have participated in more than one engagement activity.

## DISTRICT-WIDE PROPOSALS

In the first public consultation, there was broad support for all district-wide policies proposed in the draft strategy. All but one of these policies was supported by at least 80 per cent of respondents. People were less keen on supporting the use of electric vehicles however, but the majority (69 percent) were still in favour of this action.

**Figure 1: District-wide proposals agreement (district-wide survey)**



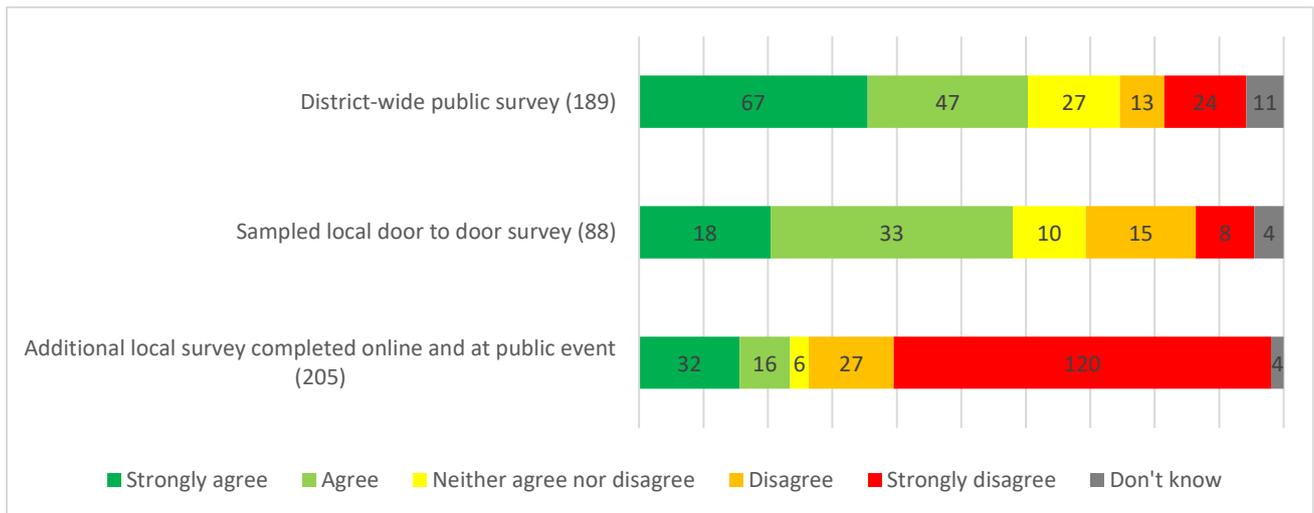
### Key issues

- A number of respondents expressed concern that there were no specific proposals for Henley set out in the strategy (see P10)
- There was concern that recently announced cuts to bus services would worsen the problem of air pollution in the district
- There were many supportive statements in favour of encouraging drivers to switch off car engines when stationary
- Many people said the council should encourage greater use of public transport, cycling and walking as alternatives to car use
- There were mixed views about electric cars. Respondents pointed out the need for more charging stations whilst other felt the costs of the technology are prohibitive
- Some respondents felt that more should be done to restrict HGV access to town centres
- Some people expressed concern that new housing development will always result in more air pollution

## WALLINGFORD BRIDGE

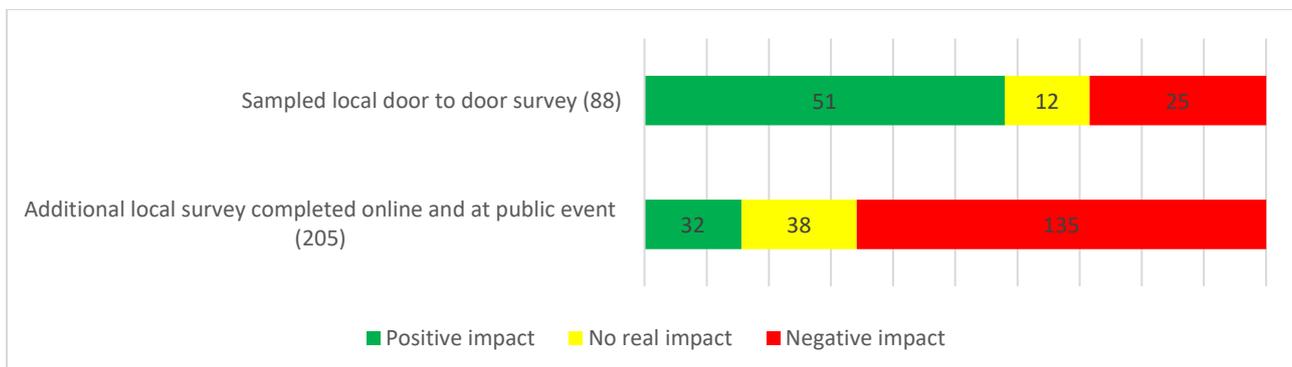
In the initial district-wide consultation, there was majority support for the proposal to restrict vehicular access to Wallingford bridge. When fieldworkers spoke to people living in streets likely to be affected by the change, there was a similar level of support, albeit slightly more disagreed (one in four). It was only when other residents living in the town were provided with an opportunity to complete surveys either online or at our drop-in event that many people (72 per cent) said they disagreed with the proposal. This could be due to mounting awareness and campaigning against the proposal by some groups.

**Figure 2: Wallingford bridge proposal agreement (all surveys)**



When local residents were asked about the impact this proposal would have on them, most people living in the streets identified by the council (58 per cent) said it would have a positive impact. But in the surveys completed online and at our event, the majority (65 per cent) thought it would have a negative impact.

**Figure 3: Wallingford bridge proposal perceived impact (local surveys)**



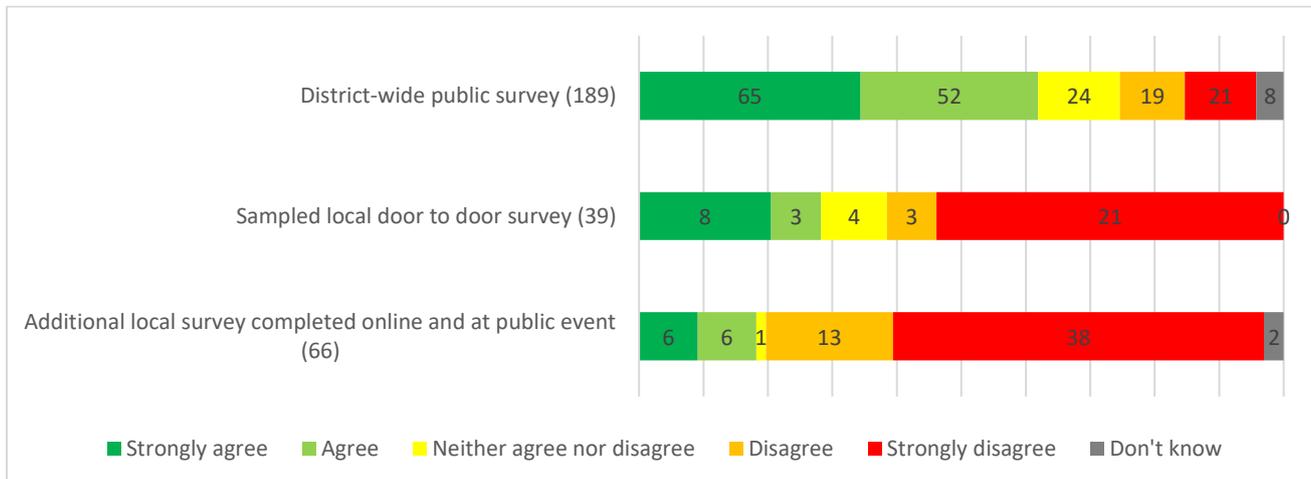
**Key issues**

- Those in favour of restricting access to the bridge felt it would reduce traffic in the town and improve air quality
- However, these positive comments were outweighed by views that restricting access to the bridge may cause congestion elsewhere; something that came out of both the public and local surveys
- Some people felt that this proposal would have a detrimental impact on local businesses
- A few people said they were concerned about disruption to their usual journeys around town

**WATLINGTON TRAFFIC FLOW**

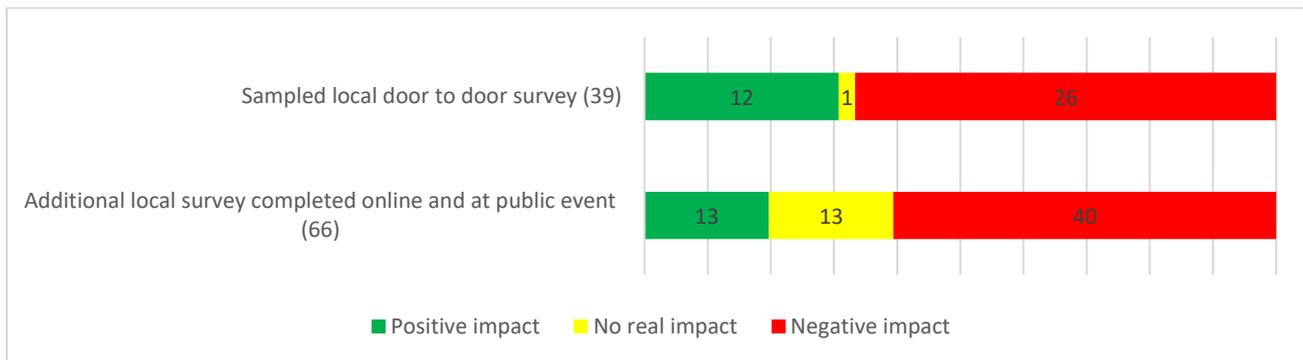
A similar pattern of support can be seen for the proposal to improve the flow of traffic through Watlington. Again, in the initial district-wide consultation there was majority support for the proposal (61 per cent). But when we undertook a survey of people living in affected streets, and when we spoke to people at the drop-in event, there appears to be significant resistance to the proposal. Again this viewpoint may have been influenced by local groups campaigning against the proposal at this time.

*Figure 4: Watlington traffic flow proposal agreement (all surveys)*



Disagreement with this proposal appears to be driven by a view that it would have a negative impact on the settlement. The majority of respondents said it would have a negative impact in both the sampled door to door and elective surveys.

Figure 5: Watlington traffic flow proposal perceived impact (local surveys)



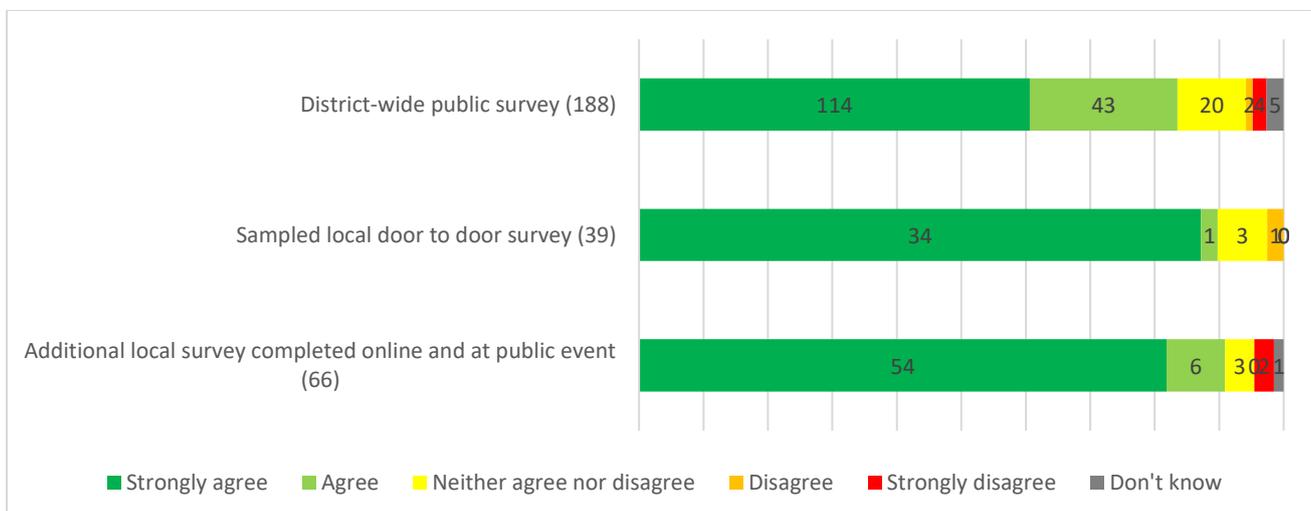
**Key issues**

- Those in favour of the proposal welcomed the possibility of easing traffic congestion on the main streets; Couching Street, Shirburn Street and Brook Street
- But the large majority of comments were about concerns that traffic speed would increase, posing a safety risk for residents
- Others were worried about reducing parking capacity and recommendations were made to find alternative parking for residents on the affected streets
- Some people felt the proposal might actually increase traffic in the settlement as the route may become more popular

**WATLINGTON HGV WEIGHT RESTRICTION**

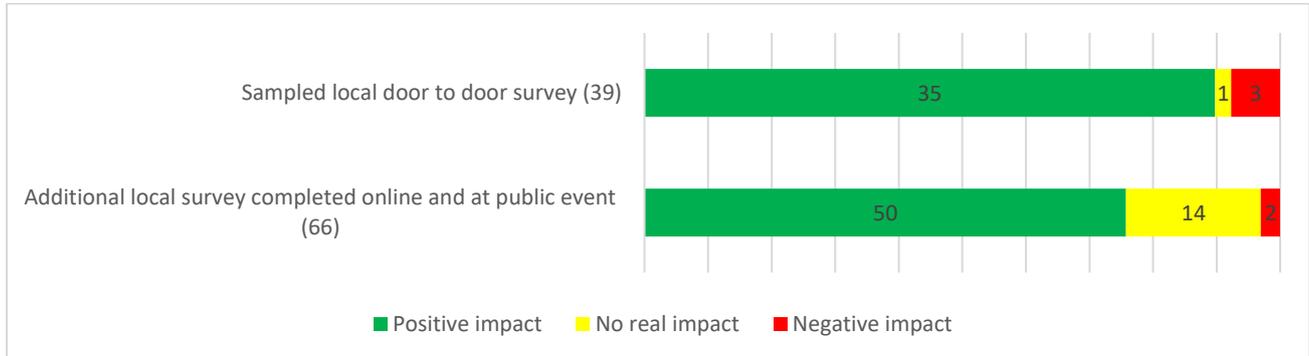
Enforcing the HGV weight limit has much more support than the proposal to improve the traffic flow in Watlington. 84 per cent of respondents to the public survey agreed with this action, increasing to approximately 90 per cent in the sampled door to door survey and additional local survey.

Figure 6: Watlington HGV proposal agreement (all surveys)



Corresponding with this strong level of agreement, most people said that better enforcement of the HGV weight limit would have a positive impact on them. Only five people said it would have a negative impact.

**Figure 7: Watlington HGV proposal perceived impact (local surveys)**



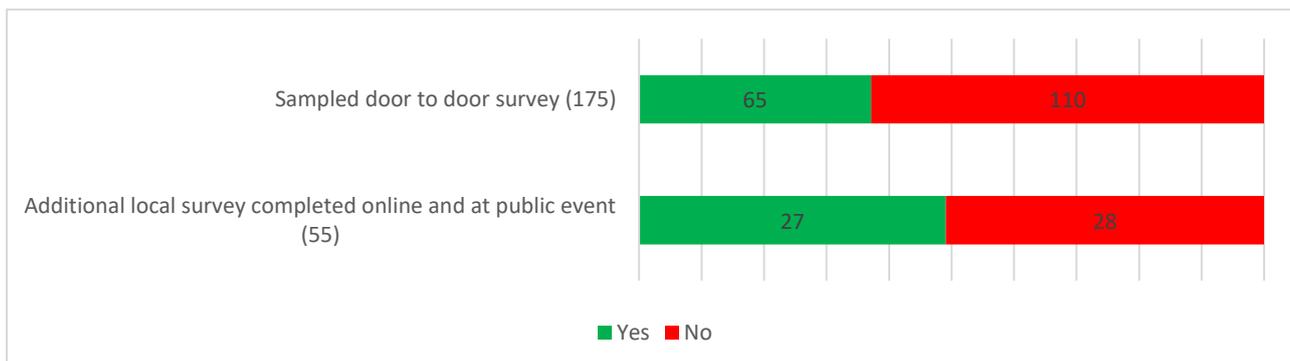
**Key issues**

- Most comments were supportive of the proposal stating that enforcement of the weight restriction should be happening anyway
- Some people felt that better enforcement would result in improved traffic flow through the settlement and improve safety
- A number of people said that enforcement could be improved by using ANPR cameras
- Of the few people who disagreed, they questioned whether there are alternative routes for HGVs

## HENLEY MEASURES

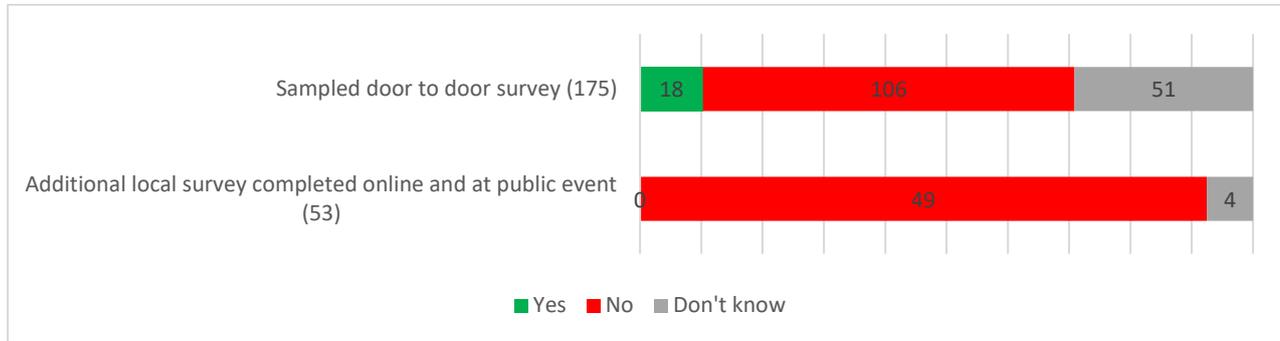
Surveys undertaken in Henley revealed that the majority of residents in Henley are not aware of the measures the council is already taking to improve air quality in the town. This may be why concerns were raised about the lack of specific proposals for Henley in the low emissions strategy.

**Figure 8: Awareness of existing measures in Henley (local surveys)**



When the actions already being undertaken by the council were explained to respondents, the overwhelming majority remained unconvinced enough was being done to tackle the problem of air quality in the town. Only in the door to door survey, one in ten people had confidence in the work that's being done.

**Figure 9: Enough is being done in Henley agreement (local surveys)**



**Key issues**

- Many of the people surveyed felt that more could be done to improve air quality in Henley. Suggestions included, providing alternative 'greener' forms of transport, restricting access to HGVs and building another bridge or a bypass
- A number of people referred to problems with congestion in specific streets, including Reading Road, Greys Road and Duke Street