

Happy Birthday Harlow Questionnaire Summary and Report

Summary

On 2nd September 2007, Harlow Council launched a six week consultation as part of a front loading exercise that would help form part of the evidence base for the Harlow Local Development Framework (LDF). The Consultation was based on two questionnaires and was linked with the celebrations of Harlow's 60th anniversary. The "Happy Birthday Harlow" (Appendix 2) questionnaire featured eight questions broadly covering many areas that will either be dealt with in the emerging LDF.

The LDF process, in contrast to the old Local Plan process, requires authorities to first engage with the community to understand the issues that are affecting local residents, which may be relevant to the LDF process. The aim of the questionnaire, therefore was to understand which issues are prevalent among Harlow's residents that may be used to inform the early stages of the LDF.

The questionnaire was made into an interactive web form and also made available for download on the Harlow Council website. 17,000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed around the town by being included in the weekly delivery of the Harlow Herald Newspaper for one week at the outset of the Consultation process. Multiple copies of the questionnaire were also made available at all Harlow libraries, health centres, neighbourhood centres and public buildings including the civic centre. A further 2,000 questionnaires were sent to the LDF consultation database, which is made up of identified hard to reach groups, residents and community groups, regional and national bodies and local businesses. In total 20,000 questionnaires were sent out across the district.

Approximately 300 responses to this single questionnaire were received back, 200 of the second questionnaire were received, totalling approximately 500 responses to this single consultation exercise. In comparison to the last questionnaire consultation exercise, which received 42 responses, the number of respondents rose by over 8% (243 responses).

The questionnaire was reasonably spread across the district and beyond. Within Harlow the responses received came from a broad spread of postcodes. The Stop Harlow North campaign group featured a link to the website version of the questionnaire on their own website www.stopharlownorth.com, with an encouragement to visitors of the website to fill the questionnaire in. There were, therefore, also a significant number of responses from the area north of Harlow.

Question 1. What are the best things about Harlow and what aspects do you feel need improvement/ change?

Due to the nature of this question the amount of different responses was very high however the three responses that were indicated as the best things in Harlow were; Green Spaces, Shopping and the Location/Design of Harlow. The term Green Spaces has been used as a collective term for the different responses that were given on in this response, including; Green Areas, Green Belt, Green Lungs, Green Fields etc. Shopping, as can be seen from the aspects of Harlow that residents feel need improvement or change, has split opinion, this data has been further analysed in the full report (Appendix 1). The aspects of the town that residents felt needed improvement or change were; Shopping, Transport Infrastructure, Residential Parking. The transport Infrastructure usually means the congestions and traffic problems. Residential parking is a response that was echoed in other questions and also the transport questionnaire.

Question 2. Harlow will be growing, what housing issues do we need to address?

The responses to question 2 gave an insight into a particular mindset apparent in Harlow that hasn't been obvious from the responses to any other question. Two responses were repeated an equal number of times were Affordable Housing and Housing for Harlow Residents. Housing for Harlow residents covers the phrase but also calls for preferential housing to be

given to 'British' people, over immigrants, particularly Eastern European immigrants. Both responses gained over 12% of all responses to this question, which shows the importance placed on these issues for local residents, other responses included; First time buyers, Council/ Social Housing, Infrastructure and Transport Infrastructure. These responses have been further analysed in the light of postcode and age range.

Question 3. Where should new homes be built?

The responses to this question have really fallen into two categories; specific and non-specific. Taking the latter category first, most responses stated that any new development should only take place on Brownfield sites. Also that "Green Spaces" should not be built on or be developed in any way, however, exactly what is meant by "Green Spaces" changes in definition depending on who is responding and where they are responding from. In terms of responses giving specific sites or areas, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that new houses should be located in Harlow North, which gained approximately 10% of responses. It is clear from the responses that there is generally a good understanding about where "Harlow North", as a site, is located. Also from the respondents from within Harlow's boundaries that Harlow North is seen as positively as a site for future development for Harlow. Respondents also replied to state that Harlow East, Harlow South and Harlow West were also positive locations for future development, however it is worth noting that these sites were often mentioned with another site, this means that respondents felt these sites could be part of a solution, where as Harlow North is seen by many as the solution itself.

Question 4. What types of job will benefit local people?

The phrasing of this question may have affected the responses to this question, because the tone of the question asks what jobs would benefit local people now, as opposed to what types of jobs would local people aspire to have. Or rather what types of industries would local people like to work in. Most responses (almost 20%) called for a broad variety of job types to be available in the district. The response for a specific job type that gained the most responses was Manufacturing which gained 10% of the responses to this question. One of the surprising findings to come out of this question was that there were few if any responses calling for professional positions, such as financial, IT, academic or scientific positions.

Question 5. How can we make the most of our Green Spaces?

The top four responses to this question were 'Don't build on them', 'Protect them', 'Preserve them and keep them clean and tidy' and 'Maintain them'. The responses together could collectively be categorised as 'Preserve and Maintain them' which together account for over 50% of the responses to this question. This shows the level of support and how importantly the "Green Spaces" are viewed and treasured in Harlow by local residents. There are issues regarding what is meant by 'Green Space' from some of the responses, as phrases like; Green Belt, Green Wedge, Green Lungs, Green Fields etc. are all used, but have been collectively termed as 'Green Space'.

Question 6. How can we improve the transport network in Harlow?

The responses to this question matched that of the Harlow LDF Transport Questionnaire (see Appendix 3). Respondents feel that a Bypass would be the best way to improve the transport network in Harlow. This relates to a general fear that is expressed within the questionnaires through the responses to a number of questions over the congestion on Harlow's roads and what affect further development will have upon that congestion. One set of responses that link road congestion and the bus service calls for road widening and also the removal of bus lanes. There are also calls for various types of improvements on the bus service, the majority of responses regarding buses relating to the Frequency and reliability of the bus service through the town. However, there are also responses calling for the routes and times of buses to be rethought. One of the key points in these responses relates to buses linking their routes and times with work shift patterns.

Question 7. What do you want Harlow to be like in 10 years time?

The broad and various types of responses that were received to this question have meant that it is difficult to break the responses down in to percentages and statistics, because each percentage would be so low that it would appear worthless. The three most repeated responses were Greener, Cleaner and Safer, which almost echoes the Council strapline.

Question 8. What can be done to improve the quality of life in Harlow?

The responses to this question were also so varied that it also difficult to replay the information in statistical form as the percentages would be so low, even for the most commonly repeated questions, that the data would appear worthless. The most popular response to this question was for 'more Police on the beat'.

The responses to all of these questions have been analysed in greater detail in appendix 1.

Using the most common responses from each question, the results of the questionnaire could be summed up in the following statement:

Local residents like the **Green Spaces** most about Harlow, want **Affordable Housing** located in **Harlow North** with employment opportunities in the **Manufacturing** industry. Residents want to see the green spaces **Preserved** and **Maintained** with a **Bypass** built to improve Harlow's transport network. In ten years time residents want Harlow to be **Greener, Cleaner** and **Safer** and feel that the quality of life in Harlow can be improved by having more **Police on the beat**.