

Love Willenhall – Summary of Responses to Engagement

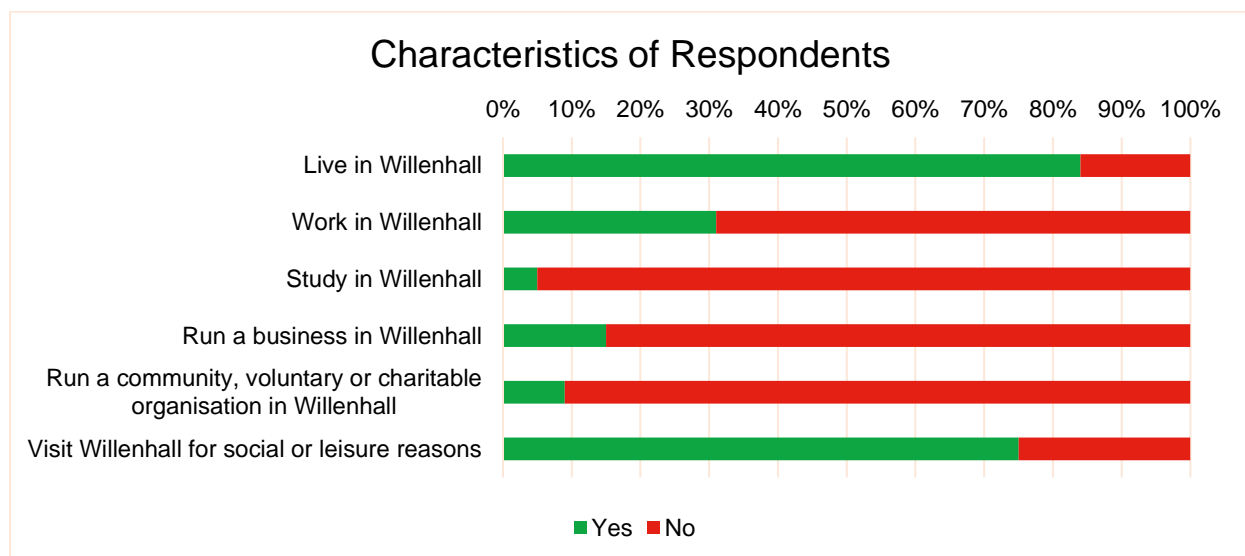
To help inform the development of the Willenhall Masterplan, public engagement was undertaken under the theme of ‘Love Willenhall’, designed to find out what local residents, businesses and community representatives think about Willenhall today and how they would like to see Willenhall in the future. The engagement exercise began on 14th February and initially ran until 7th March, although this was subsequently extended by an additional week to 14th March 2021. This note provides a summary of the responses made.

At-a-glance findings

- 170 responses to the online feedback form were received.
- Over 80% of respondents lived in Willenhall while around 30% worked in the town.
- When asked what things they loved about Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned Willenhall Memorial Park, the local people and community spirit, and the town’s history and heritage.
- When asked what things they would change about Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned better and more diverse retail, restoration or redevelopment of derelict buildings, better public transport, and reduced crime levels.
- Willenhall town centre and Morrisons were the most frequently visited places by respondents, with over 60% travelling to each at least weekly before the pandemic.
- When asked for three words that would best describe a future Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned words such as “cleaner”, “busier”, “vibrant”, and “safer”.

1.1 Summary of Respondents

- A breakdown of the characteristics of respondents in terms of their relationship with Willenhall is as follows:
 - 84% of respondents stated they live in Willenhall
 - 75% stated that they visit Willenhall for social, leisure or other reasons
 - 31% stated that they work in Willenhall
 - 15% stated that they operate or run a business / organisation in Willenhall
 - 9% stated that they run a community, voluntary or charitable organisation in Willenhall
 - 5% stated that they study or attend an educational setting in Willenhall



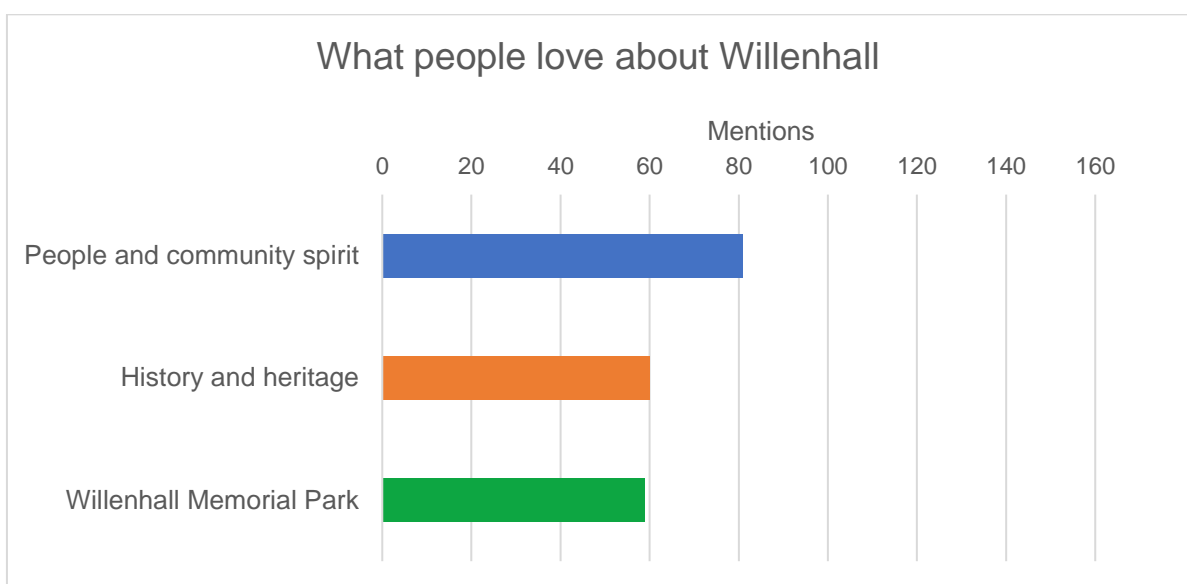
1.2 Willenhall Today

- Respondents were asked to describe three things they loved about Willenhall and three things they would like to change.
- In relation to what three things people **loved** about Willenhall, the most frequently mentioned things were:
 - People and community spirit (81 respondents (48%))
 - The town's history and heritage (60 respondents (35%))
 - Willenhall Memorial Park (59 respondents (35%))

“Friendly local people always happy to help”

“Small community of shops and organisations reflecting Black Country history”

“The buildings (although dilapidated) are lovely and need regenerating”

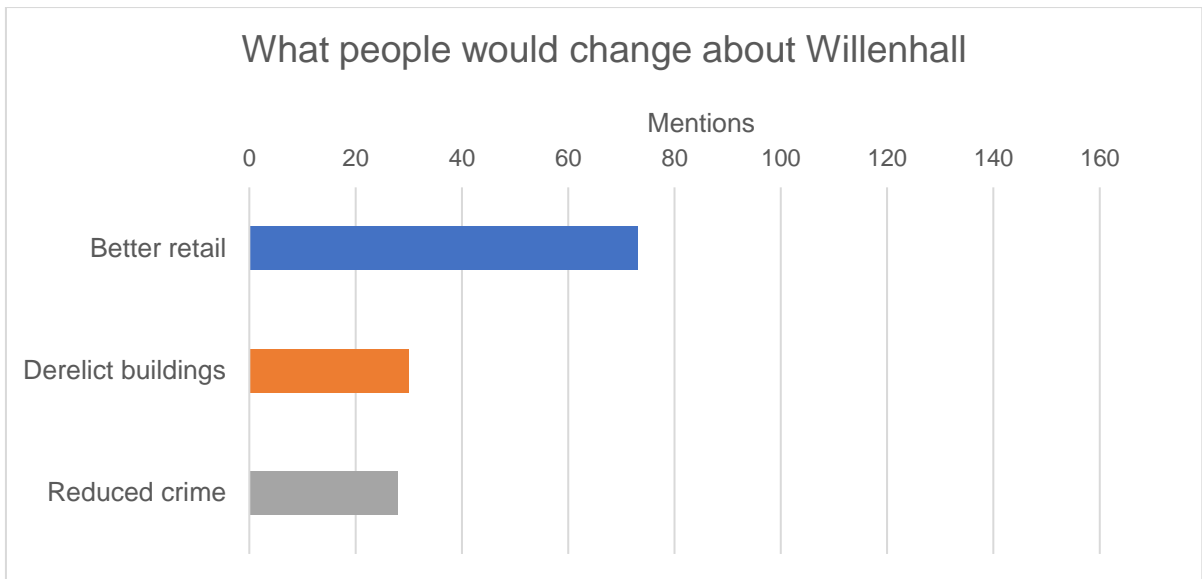


- When asked what three things people would **change** or **improve** about Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned:
 - Better retail with fewer closed shops, more attractive shop frontages, and more variety of shops (73 respondents (43%))
 - Restoration or redevelopment of derelict buildings (30 respondents (18%))
 - Reduced crime levels (28 respondents (16%))

“Better shopping area - something similar to Bentley Bridge to replace the shops / empty premises on Market Place and Stafford Street”

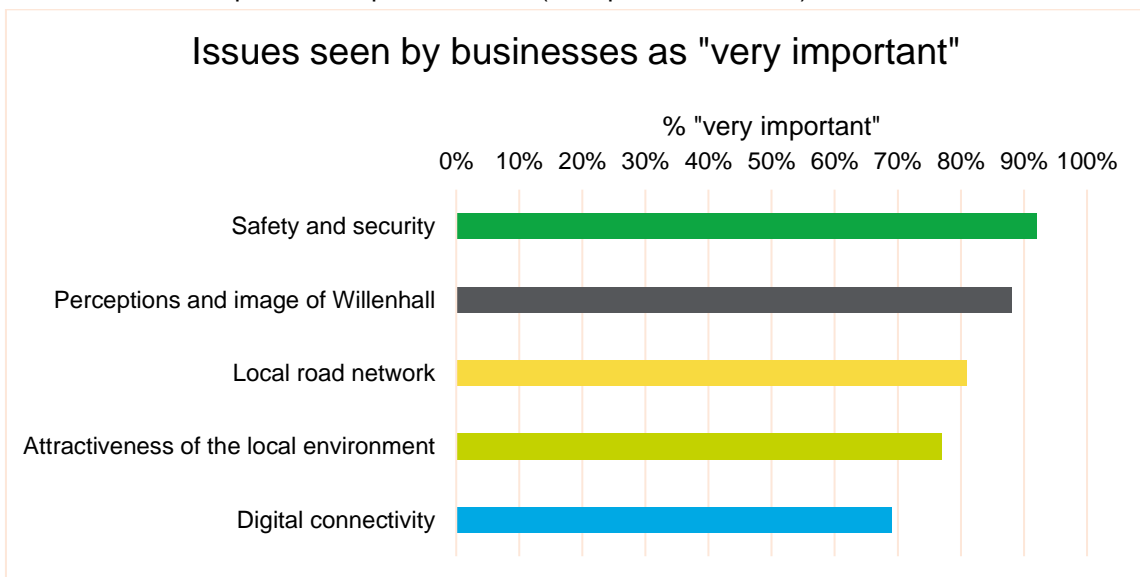
“I would like to see Legges old factory demolished along with the old Dainties shop in Stafford Street. Maybe build some new homes with a little green area”

“I'd like to see a wider range of businesses in the town centre, and those businesses obliged to keep their property in a tidy and environmentally sympathetic manner”



1.3 Issues for Businesses

- Among the 26 respondents who stated that they operate a business in Willenhall, the following were seen as “very important” by people:
 - Safety and security (92% of respondents (24 people))
 - Perceptions and image of Willenhall generally (88% of respondents (23 people))
 - Local road network (81% of respondents (21 people))
 - Attractiveness of the local environment (77% of respondents (20 people))
 - Digital connectivity (69% of respondents (18 respondents))
- When asked what their top three priorities would be for improving Willenhall as ‘a place to do business’, most frequent responses related to:
 - Better safety and security (12 respondents – 46%)
 - Better and more varied retail offer (10 respondents – 38%)
 - Better road and public transport networks (8 respondents – 31%)



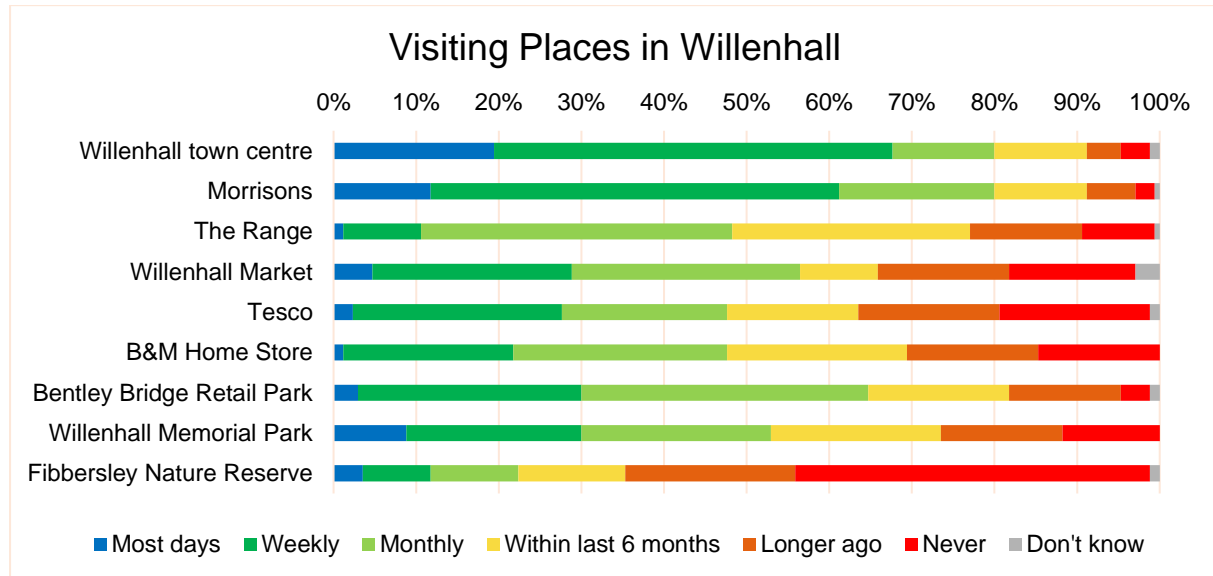
“Improve transport links, train station needs to be built ‘as soon as’”

“High street shops, local shops with higher standards of items for sale. Regeneration, so people feel they could use the town all times during the week safely.”

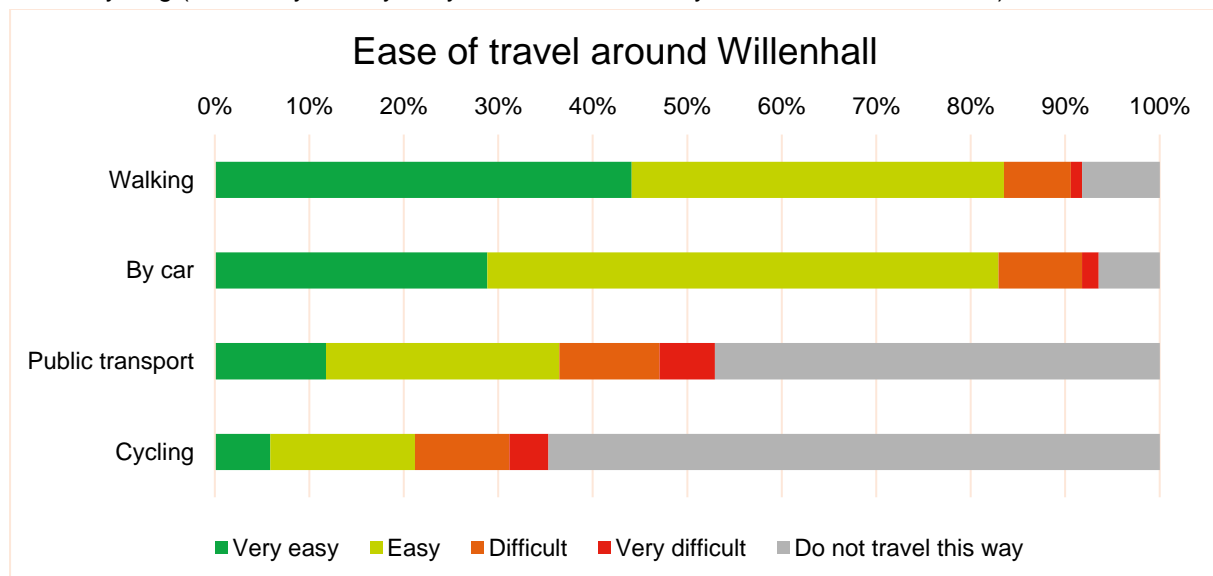
1.4 Places to Go in Willenhall

People were asked how frequently they visited specific locations and areas within Willenhall. The figure below illustrates the results. The findings show that the most commonly visited places by respondents in Willenhall are:

- Willenhall town centre (19% daily; 67% at least weekly; 79% at least monthly)
- Morrisons (12% daily; 61% at least weekly; 80% at least monthly)
- Willenhall Memorial Park (9% daily; 30% at least weekly; 53% at least monthly)
- Willenhall Market (5% daily; 29% at least weekly; 57% at least monthly)
- Fibbersley Nature Reserve (4% daily; 12% at least weekly; 23% at least monthly)
- Bentley Bridge Retail Park (3% daily; 30% at least weekly; 65% at least monthly)



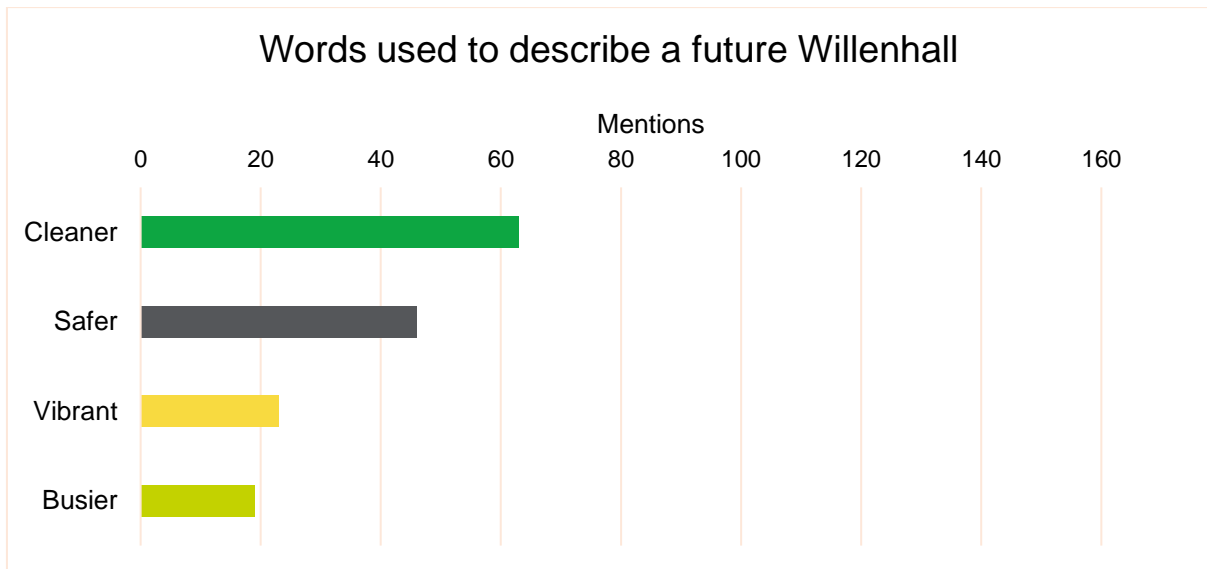
- For most of the places listed, at least 70% of respondents stated that they travelled by car. This was more evenly split between car and walking for visits to Willenhall town centre and Willenhall Market. Respondents described ease of travel in and around Willenhall as follows:
 - Walking (83% easy or very easy; 8% difficult or very difficult; 8% do not use)
 - Driving (83% easy or very easy; 11% difficult or very difficult; 6% do not use)
 - Public transport (37% easy or very easy; 17% difficult or very difficult; 47% do not use)
 - Cycling (21% easy or very easy; 14% difficult or very difficult; 65% do not use)



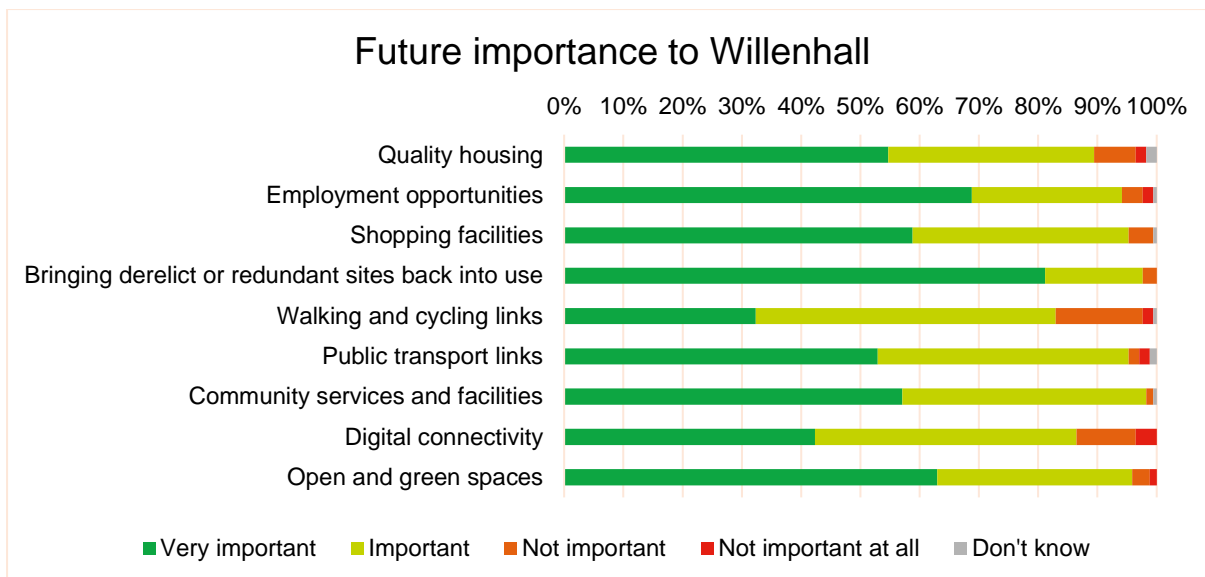
- When asked about areas or routes where walking or cycling could be improved, residents frequently mentioned:
 - Canal towpaths (20 respondents)
 - Town centre walking between Morrisons and the retail core (15 respondents)
 - Fibbersley Nature Reserve (8 respondents)

1.5 Priorities for Willenhall

- Respondents were asked to provide three words that for them best described a future Willenhall. The most commonly mentioned words were:
 - Cleaner (63 respondents (37%))
 - Safer (46 respondents (27%))
 - Vibrant (23 respondents (14%))
 - Busier (19 respondents (11%))



- Respondents were asked to categorise a number of issues according to level of importance. The figure below illustrates the results. The following issues are ranked in terms of proportion of residents who described them as “very important”:
 - Bringing derelict or redundant sites back into use (81% of respondents)
 - Access to a range of employment opportunities (69% of respondents)
 - Variety of open and green spaces (63% of respondents)
 - Shopping facilities (59% of respondents)
 - Community services and facilities (57% of respondents)



1.6 Other Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments in relation to Willenhall. Below is a selection of comments that are most representative of those made.

In relation to derelict buildings:

'the main thing for Willenhall is returning abandoned, closed spaces and shops, factories etc to public use'

'Redevelopment of run down industrial areas, into affordable housing to attract people to move into the area rather than out of it'

'Compulsory purchase orders on derelict sites, money spent on the buildings in market place, toilets, good cafes/restaurants, benches up near the clock area'

'have seen a lot of changes regarding developments but they have not all be good, infact most changes have been the closure of business's in the town and surrounding areas where buildings have lay untouched now for years.'

In relation to community pride:

'Willenhall has always been "Home" to me, just want to see it rejuvenated'

'I want Willenhall to be a safe, thriving, happy place to live and work. I want to be proud to show off Willenhall as my home town'

The people are the town's strength. Need to tap in to that.

'Willenhall is a lovely place to live, I've lived here for most of my life. There's so much that could be done with the town and surrounding to encourage people to live here and spend their money here.'

'Willenhall is a beautiful place that needs to see itself as such. Tidy up the area, rebuild the old and tatty places and bring some life back into the place. Invest in our young people and get them involved in the place they love in.'

In relation to heritage:

'Any improvements must also keep the town in line with it's history and traditions'

'It needs updating without losing its character'

'there are beautiful buildings around Willenhall going to rack and ruin'

In relation to crime and safety:

'Crime has increased to such a degree that people don't feel safe in the town and have lost their pride in the area. That said, there is potential here to bring it back a vibrant community and help people make the most of living and working in the locale'

'Willenhall is a good town, but I don't feel safe here'

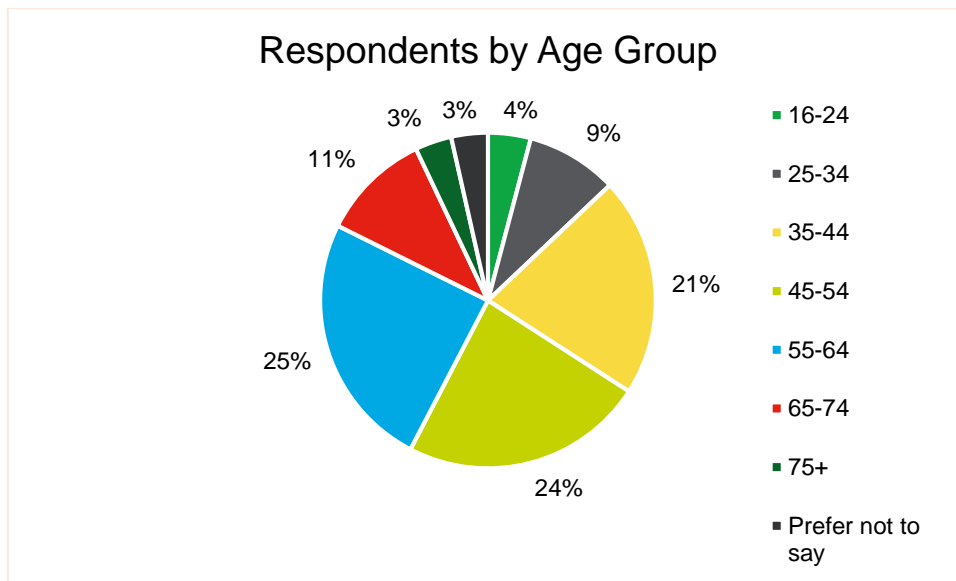
In relation to specific issues:

'There have been new housing developments but nowhere near enough for an area like Willenhall and its great location'

The park is a huge asset but feels so cut off from the town centre.

1.7 Demographic Profile

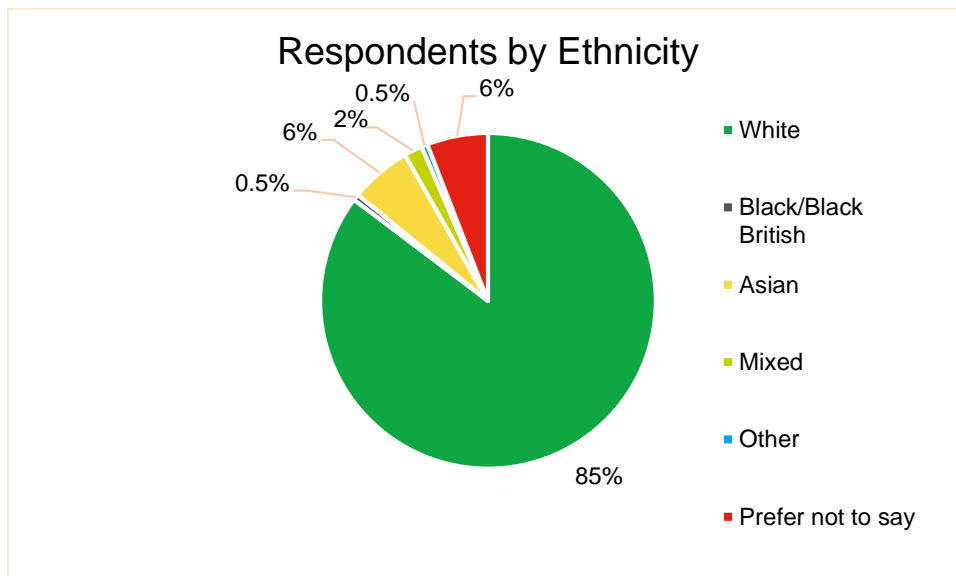
The profile of respondents in terms of age structure is shown in the figures below. The figure shows that 70% of respondents were aged between 35-64.



A higher proportion of respondents were female than male (53% and 45% respectively).

Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) stated that they had physical or mental health problems.

The majority of respondents were from a white ethnic background (85%). The figure below shows the ethnic background across all respondents.



1.8 School Surveys

Two further surveys were designed in order to seek feedback from primary and secondary school aged children about their thoughts of Willenhall as a place and what they might like to change in the town in the future. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and school closures, the surveys were publicised through school newsletters rather than carried out with children themselves in school.

Unfortunately no completed surveys were returned from the secondary school survey.

Six surveys were returned from the primary school survey. When asked what they loved about Willenhall, responses focused around school, home and friends and family. When asked what they might like to change about Willenhall the following responses were received:

- More bins especially for dog mess
- Better parks and more policemen
- The bus services aren't always regular which impacts on getting to school on time
- I want it to be safer
- More police presence and street cleaning in the estates