Sustainable Transport Survey

Survey results: feedback from our community

May 2021

Hertfordshire

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

BE BOLD

Watford Borough Council Sustainable Transport Strategy Survey Summary

Contents

For more information on this report, please contact: communications@watford.gov.uk

1. Introduction

1.1. The Sustainable Transport Strategy

1.1.1. Transport in Watford faces multiple challenges with respect to its impact on climate change, public health, air quality, economic growth and prosperity, and community vitality, which are all priority issues for Watford Borough Council (WBC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). To meet these aspirations, the new Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) for Watford needs to be bold and forward looking with a transformational, coherent, long term programme for change based on effective sustainable transport infrastructure. It will encourage, and enable, the uptake of sustainable and active travel, in the interests of maintaining the attractiveness and vitality of the town as a place to live, work and visit and thus help meet the Council Plan 2020-24 ambitions of a thriving, diverse and creative town that is healthy and happy. Furthermore, it is a critical part of the town achieving its goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

1.1.2. Given the importance of the strategy, it is vital that the people who live, work and spend time in Watford contribute to its development. For this reason, WBC and HCC ran an early engagement exercise at the onset of the strategy development to gain insight and input from Watford residents, businesses and visitors. This took the form of an online questionnaire covering how people choose to travel, why they make travel decisions and what they believe to be the issues and priorities for travel within and in or out of Watford.

1.2. Purpose of this report

1.2.1. This report provides a summary of the responses received and views shared via the questionnaire.

1.2.2. The report is broken down into the following sections:

- Notification and Advertisement
- Comment on the nature and number of responses
- Summary of the Responses by Topic
- Conclusions and Next Steps

1.2.3. It is important to note that this is a summary of feedback responses from the consultation and does not reflect any decisions made by Watford Borough Council at this point in time.

2. Notification and Advertisement

2.1. The Sustainable Transport Strategy Survey ran online, hosted at on the WBC website, throughout the month of December 2020.

2.2. It was promoted via the WBC and HCC social media feeds, as well as being distributed via WBC email mailing lists.

3. Response and Feedback

3.1. Level of Response and Types of Respondents

3.1.1. The online survey was completed by 484 respondents. Most of the questions received more than 300 responses, with an average of 365 answers per question.

3.1.2. The survey was split, with a different set of questions for those responding as individuals compared to those of responding on behalf of a business. 79% of respondents were Watford residents, 10% were Watford visitors and 6% worked, but didn't live, in Watford. Only nine respondents represented businesses, less than 2% of the total.

3.1.3. 40% of respondents were 55 years old or more, with 7% being more than 75 years old. 28% of respondents were between 35 and 54 years old, and 9% were less than 35 years old (only 1% were less than 25 years old).

3.1.4. Overall, 15% of respondents declared some form of disability, and genders were equally represented among the respondents.

3.1.5. 62% of respondents worked part- or full-time, and 28% were retired. There were on average 1.23 children recorded in the respondents' households.

3.2. Scope of responses

3.2.1. The very low number of business responses to the survey cannot be considered a representative sample size, and whilst these have been read and considered by Council officers, this report focuses only on the individual responses. The response from businesses was not unexpected given the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic and the time of year. The project team recognise that the concerns of local businesses need to be considered in the final strategy and the councils will use established forums to test the emerging themes as they develop, providing a further opportunity for business to share their views.

3.2.2. The majority of questions were closed, meaning respondents could only chose from fixed set of possible responses. Several closed questions proposed an "Other" option where the respondents could type in their answer. Three questions were open-ended (questions 5, 8, 26). The answers were analysed though a coding process, which assigned 2 or 3 levels of meaning to each sentiment expressed in the answers. Each sentiment was coded separately, resulting in a greater number of sentiments than responses.

3.2.3. The summary of responses section of this report groups the questions by theme, meaning that the order does not exactly reflect the order in which they were asked.

4. Summary of Responses by Residents

4.1. The Impact of Covid-19 on Journeys

4.1.1. The first section of the questionnaire aimed to understand the impacts the Covid-19 pandemic has had on travel patterns. The first two questions (2 and 3) were related specifically to the modes of transport, while questions 4 and 5 related to the respondents' perceived long-lasting changes to their travel patterns.

4.1.2. In questions 2 and 3, the respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they used various modes of transport, as *Never, Occasionally* or *Frequently.* The questions and options were:

Q2*: Thinking about before the Covid-19 pandemic hit (i.e. before March 2020), how often did you use the following ways to get out and about in Watford?* (434 answers)

Q3*: And since the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, how often did you use the following ways to get out and about in Watford?* (432 answers)

- *Walk*
- *Cycle*
- *Bus*
- *Rail / Underground*
- *Car / van (as a driver, without passengers)*
- *Car / van (as a driver, with passengers)*
- *Car / van (as a passenger)*
- *Car club / hire car*
- *Taxi (including companies such as Uber)*
- *Motorcycle / Moped*
- *Other*

4.1.3. The answers for the *Frequently* option are illustrated Figure 1. The various "car" options have been aggregated. Walking was the most frequently reported mode of transport, followed by driving. The share of respondents driving frequently noticeably decreased following the pandemic (47% to 31%), likely reflecting the reduced amount of travelling during this period.

4.1.4. Public transport use (bus and train) has also decreased significantly with the pandemic. Frequent users have dropped from 13% to 5% for buses and from 22% to 4% for trains. In the same way, the number of respondents indicating they *never* use public transport increased (46% to 70% for trains, and 54% to 78% for buses). This change in habits is likely to be due to health and sanitary reasons, remote working, and the overall fewer trips made during the pandemic.

4.1.5. The share of respondents frequently walking and cycling has increased, but less than might have been expected (56% to 59% and 15% to 18% respectively). It should be noted that number of people who reported cycling regularly is much higher than that recorded by either the 2011 census or HCC's County Travel Survey 2018.

4.1.6. These answers point towards an overall decrease in "frequent" travel, slightly compensated by small increases in walking and cycling. Lockdowns, health and sanitary reasons and remote working are thought to be the main reasons.
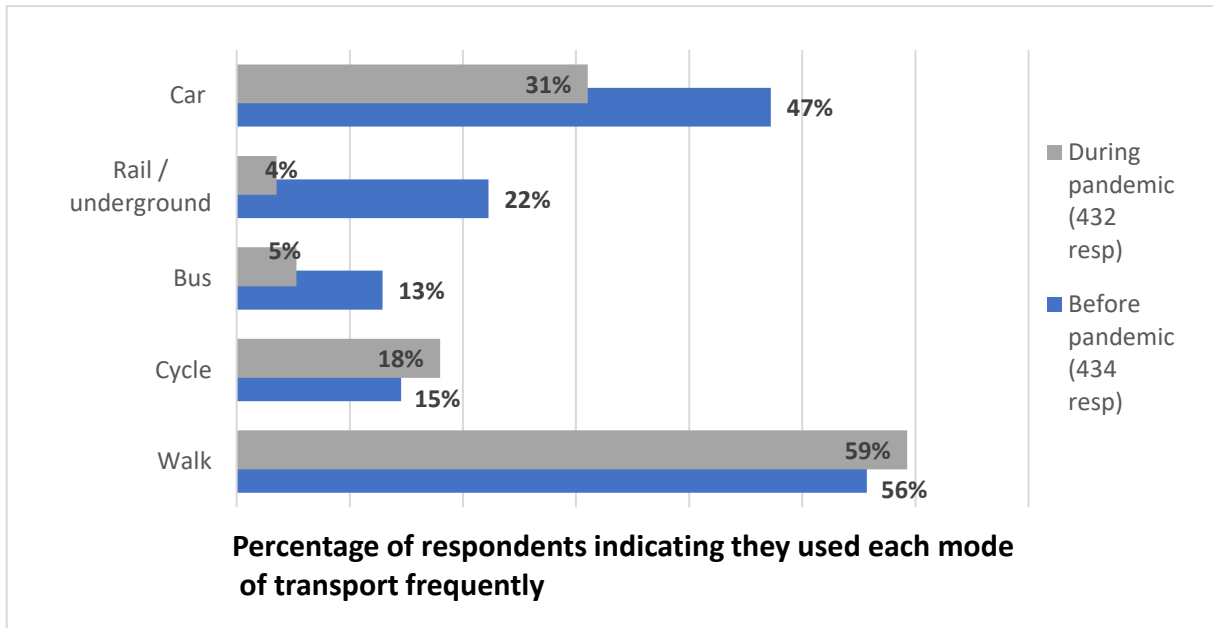

Percentage of respondents indicating they used each mode of transport frequently

Figure 1 - Comparison of questions 2 and 3 answers on travel habits before and during the Covid-19 pandemic

4.1.7. Question 4 asked: *Do you think Covid-19 has permanently changed the way you travel?* The possible answers were *Yes, No* and *Not Sure.* The respondents were then asked *What do you think will be the main difference, if any, to the way you travel once we are finally through the Covid-19 restrictions?* In question 5, which left the answers open.

4.1.8. The Q4 answers are shown Figure 2. Almost 60% of the respondents to question 4 (433 answers) believed they would return to pre-Covid-19 travel behaviour when restrictions were over. Only 22% thought the impact of Covid-19 on their travel habits would be

Do you think Covid-19 has permanently changed the way you travel?

433 resp
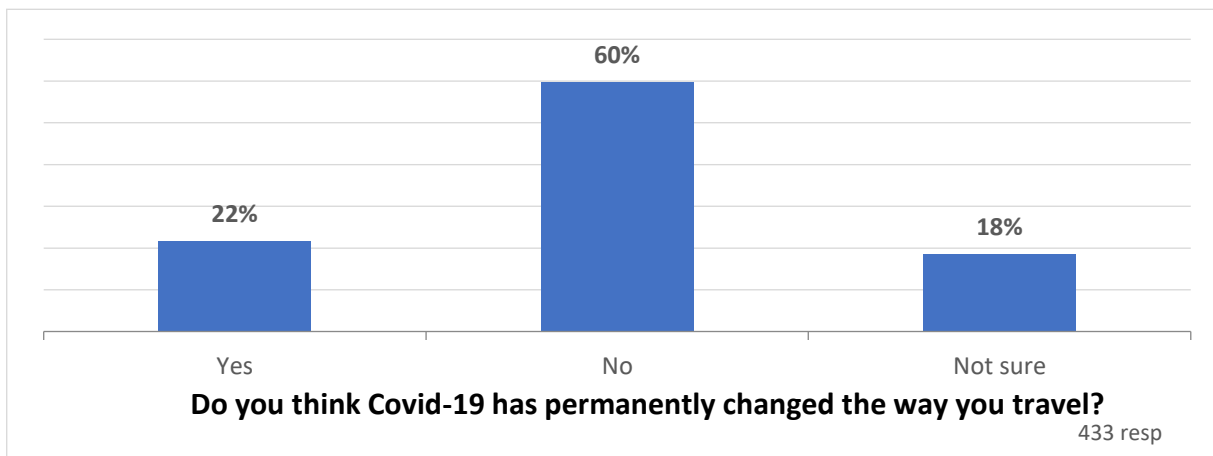
permanent.

Figure 2 - Answers from question 4 on the respondents' perception of the impacts of covid-19 on their travel habits

4.1.9. The results from question 5, which was an open-ended question with 379 recorded answers, show that among the respondents anticipating a permanent change, 4% foresee a change in destination, 15% a change in frequency of travel, and 81% a change in mode of travel. The answers were coded into 476 separate sentiments.

4.1.10. Most of the answers referencing a change in destination cite "less travel into Watford" or "less travel outside Watford" as the main sentiment (75%). The reasons invoked are remote working, health and safety concerns and the decreased need to travel for amenities (due to local stores, online deliveries, or the closure of some High Street stores).

"I won't travel into Watford as much because there is nothing there that I can't get from other areas that are just as local to me e.g cinema, restaurants, shops"

"Now that I have experienced and got used to not commuting while still working efficiently from home, I will not commute into Watford every day. Maybe once or twice a week."

"Very wary about travelling at busy times, even after we are through."

4.1.11. Among the answers foreseeing a change in frequency, 95% anticipate decreased travel after the pandemic. 80% of these sentiments cite remote working as the main reason for this forecast.

"I will travel less frequently... whilst I hope and expect to go back to the office I think it will be a combination of home and office working"

4.1.12. More than 40% of the answers anticipating a change in mode after Covid-19 reference increased walking or cycling. However, many comments were made on the lack of cycling infrastructure, which discourage some would-be cyclists. In addition, there are similar proportions of comments foreseeing both increased and reduced car use (11% vs 9%), and similarly increased and reduced public transport use (15% vs 20%). Remote working and health and safety concerns are once again cited as the main motivations.

"I'd cycle more but only if it were safer. With cars returning I'd be scared to cycle between Bushey Village & Watford due to the Arches one way being fast and dangerous"

"Bike. I forgot how much I enjoy it and actually how much better it can be than the car for certain journeys"

"Convenient public transport (bus) permitting, I shall occasionally try to get bus into town instead of driving."

"The main difference will be that we will probably walk more in comparison with the time prior to Covid 19. However for longer journeys we will probably use the car whereas previously we might have considered train or underground, because of the risk of catching the virus."

4.1.13. 13% of sentiments were not directly related to the question. The respondents mostly expressed concerns with the public transport and cycling infrastructure. These sentiments are dealt with further in subsequent questions.

> **Lessons for the STS:**
>
> - The most frequently used mode of transport reported was walking, its importance will be reflected in the priorities of the strategy.
>
> - COVID-19 will lead to some changes in travel behaviour, but the strategy will take into account that many people expect to return to their previous behaviour unless the transport offer is changed.

4.2. Main Transportation Modes

4.2.1. Questions 10 through 13 and 18 through 21 asked what transportation modes respondents used for most journeys. They were split by mode (walking, cycling, bus and driving), and into two questions, the second aiming to understand the reasons behind the respondents' habits.

Walking

4.2.2. Question 10 asked *Do you currently walk for most regular journeys?* The respondents who chose *No* were asked *What are the main reasons why you don't walk for more journeys?*. The answer options are shown Figure 3.

4.2.3. 46% of respondents (397 answers) indicated walking for most journeys. The distribution of the Q11 responses is presented Figure 3 and shows the selected reasons for not walking more of the 54% having answered *No* to Q10 (213 answers).

4.2.4. Apart from practicality issues (time, need to carry heavy items), the most cited reasons for not walking more centred around issues relating to the urban environment. Safety, quality of footpaths and pavements, pollution and traffic noise, and difficulty crossing roads were particularly cited as barriers to walking. Notably, only 16% of respondents don't want to walk any more than they currently do, suggesting there is a general willingness among respondents to walk more, were conditions more favourable.

4.2.5. 37% of respondents added an additional explanation to the proposed answers. Most of them related to the distance travelled being too great to walk. Some additional answers mentioned age, disability or physical impairment as a reason, and a few mentioned safety concerns due to cyclists travelling on pavements or footpaths.
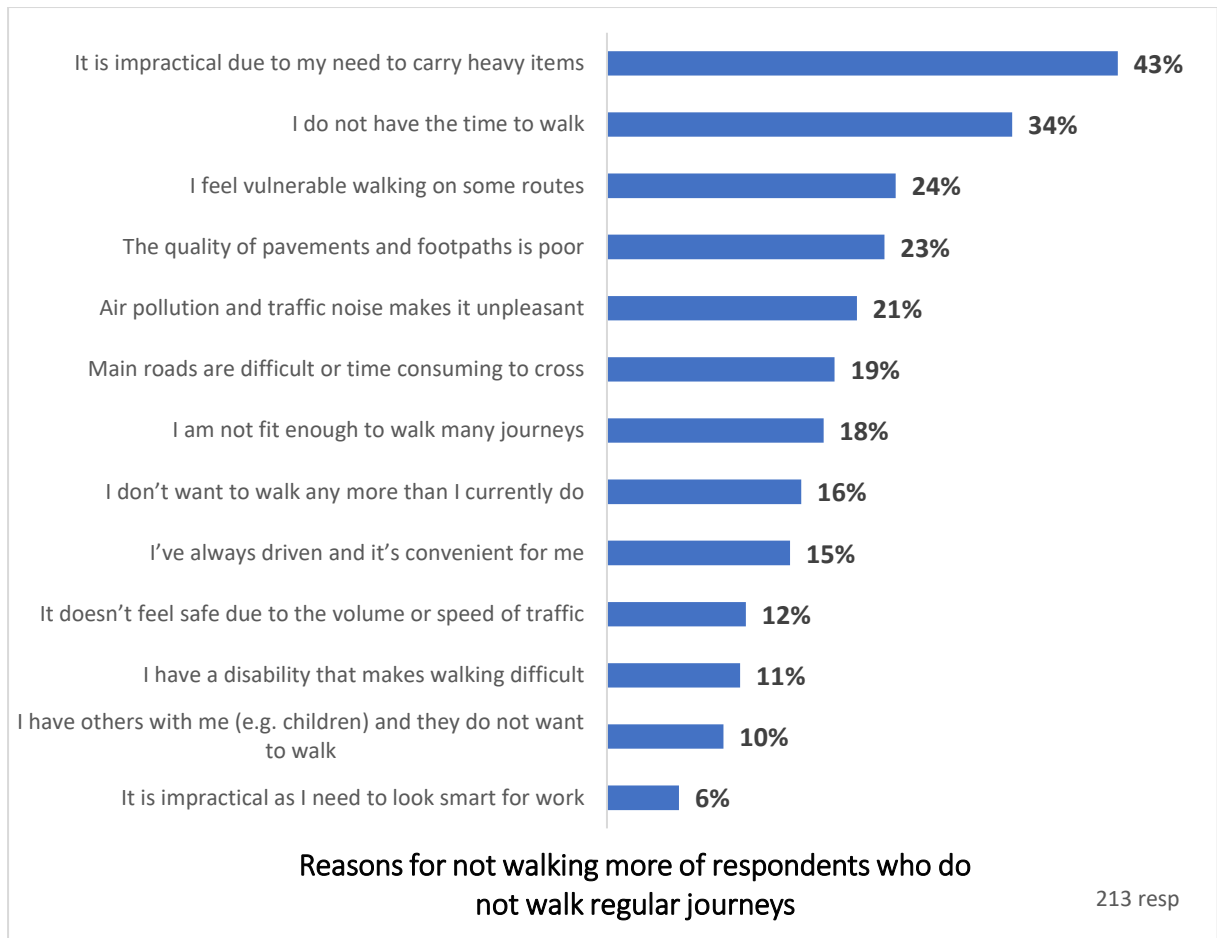
It is impractical due to my need to carry heavy items — **43%**
I do not have the time to walk — **34%**
I feel vulnerable walking on some routes — **24%**
The quality of pavements and footpaths is poor — **23%**
Air pollution and traffic noise makes it unpleasant — **21%**
Main roads are difficult or time consuming to cross — **19%**
I am not fit enough to walk many journeys — **18%**
I don't want to walk any more than I currently do — **16%**
I've always driven and it's convenient for me — **15%**
It doesn't feel safe due to the volume or speed of traffic — **12%**
I have a disability that makes walking difficult — **11%**
I have others with me (e.g. children) and they do not want to walk — **10%**
It is impractical as I need to look smart for work — **6%**

Reasons for not walking more of respondents who do not walk regular journeys

213 resp

Figure 3 - Answers for question 11 on the respondents' reasons for not walking more frequently

Cycling

4.2.6.   Question 12 asked *Do you currently cycle for most regular journeys?* The respondents who chose *No* were asked *What are the main reasons why you don't cycle for more journeys?*. The answer options are shown Figure 4.

4.2.7.   15% of respondents (396 answers) indicated cycling for most journeys. The distribution of the Q13 responses is presented Figure 4 and shows the selected reasons for not cycling more of the 85% having answered *No* to Q12 (334 answers).
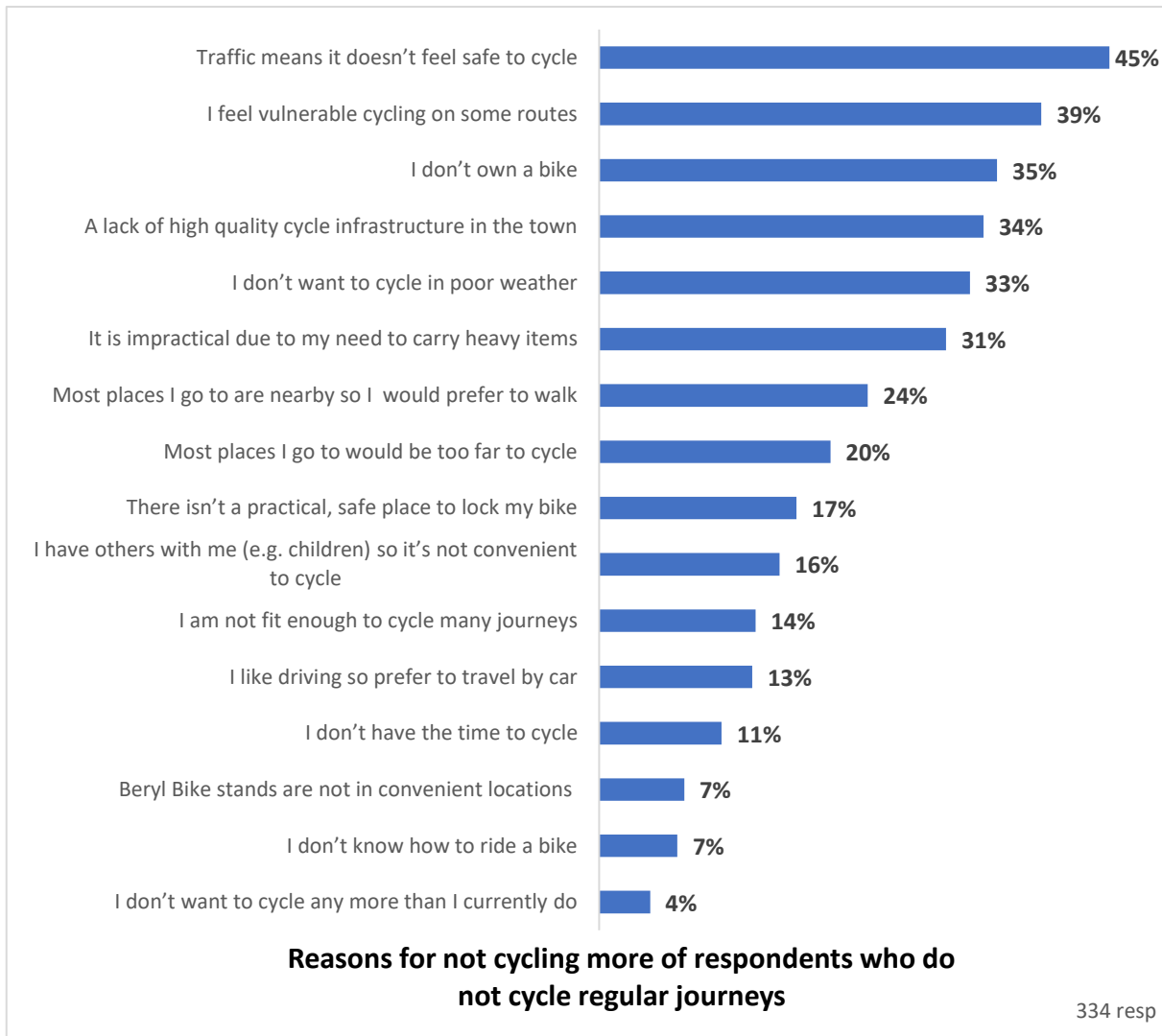
**Reasons for not cycling more of respondents who do
not cycle regular journeys**

Traffic means it doesn't feel safe to cycle — **45%**
I feel vulnerable cycling on some routes — **39%**
I don't own a bike — **35%**
A lack of high quality cycle infrastructure in the town — **34%**
I don't want to cycle in poor weather — **33%**
It is impractical due to my need to carry heavy items — **31%**
Most places I go to are nearby so I would prefer to walk — **24%**
Most places I go to would be too far to cycle — **20%**
There isn't a practical, safe place to lock my bike — **17%**
I have others with me (e.g. children) so it's not convenient to cycle — **16%**
I am not fit enough to cycle many journeys — **14%**
I like driving so prefer to travel by car — **13%**
I don't have the time to cycle — **11%**
Beryl Bike stands are not in convenient locations — **7%**
I don't know how to ride a bike — **7%**
I don't want to cycle any more than I currently do — **4%**

334 resp

Figure 4 - Answers for question 13 on the respondents' reasons for not cycling more frequently

4.2.8. Notably, less than 5% of respondents showed no interest in cycling more. Safety was cited as one of the biggest concerns, along with absence of appropriate infrastructure and lack of a bike. That 35% of respondents reported not having a bike as a reason for not cycling suggests a significant market for Watford's bike-share scheme, Beryl Bikes. The additional suggestions written in the *Other* category did not add options that were not in the original list.

Bus

4.2.9. Question 18 asked *Do you currently take the bus for most regular journeys?* The respondents who chose *No* were asked *What are the main reasons why you don't take the bus more often?* The answer options are shown Figure 5.

4.2.10. 11% of respondents (392 answers) indicated taking the bus for most journeys. The distribution of the Q19 responses is presented Figure 5 and shows the selected reasons for not taking the bus more of the 89% having answered *No* to Q18 (348 answers).
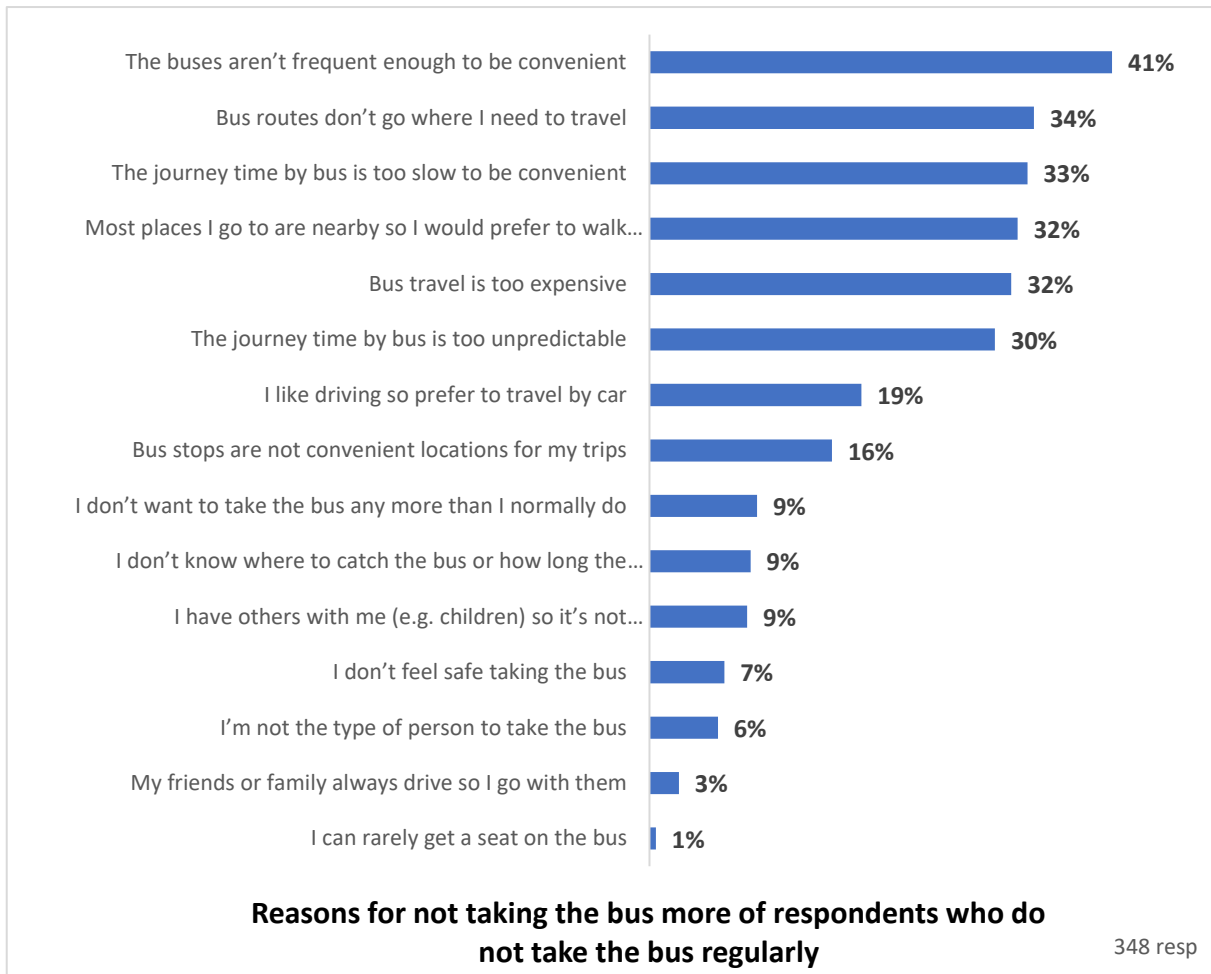
Reasons for not taking the bus more of respondents who do not take the bus regularly

348 resp

Figure 5 - Answers for question 19 on the respondents' reasons for not taking the bus more frequently

4.2.11.   Quality of service is the principal reason people don't use the bus more, with frequency, speed, lack of routes, lack of reliability, and cost of buses all frequently cited. The additional comments added in the *Other* section emphasized the concerns over reliability, the too high costs and the absence of night services. A number of comments were made citing Covid-19 as the reason for not taking the bus.

Driving

4.2.12.   Question 20 asked *Do you currently drive for most regular journeys?* The respondents who chose *Yes* were asked *What would be the main things that would encourage you to travel by car less?*. The answer options are shown Figure 6.

4.2.13.   56% of respondents (389 answers) indicated driving for most journeys. The distribution of the Q19 responses is presented in Figure 6 and shows the selected motivations for opting to drive less of those having answered *Yes* to Q20 (219 answers).

4.2.14.   The most significant barrier to driving less identified by the respondents is clearly the lack of attractive public transport options (3 of the 4 most cited options). In particular, the respondents indicated they would drive less if public transport were quicker, more reliable, less expensive and more widespread. The need for efficient and fast alternatives to the car is also emphasized. The answers also show a reluctance to drive less, with 26% of respondents noted that they would not wish to reduce their car use at all.
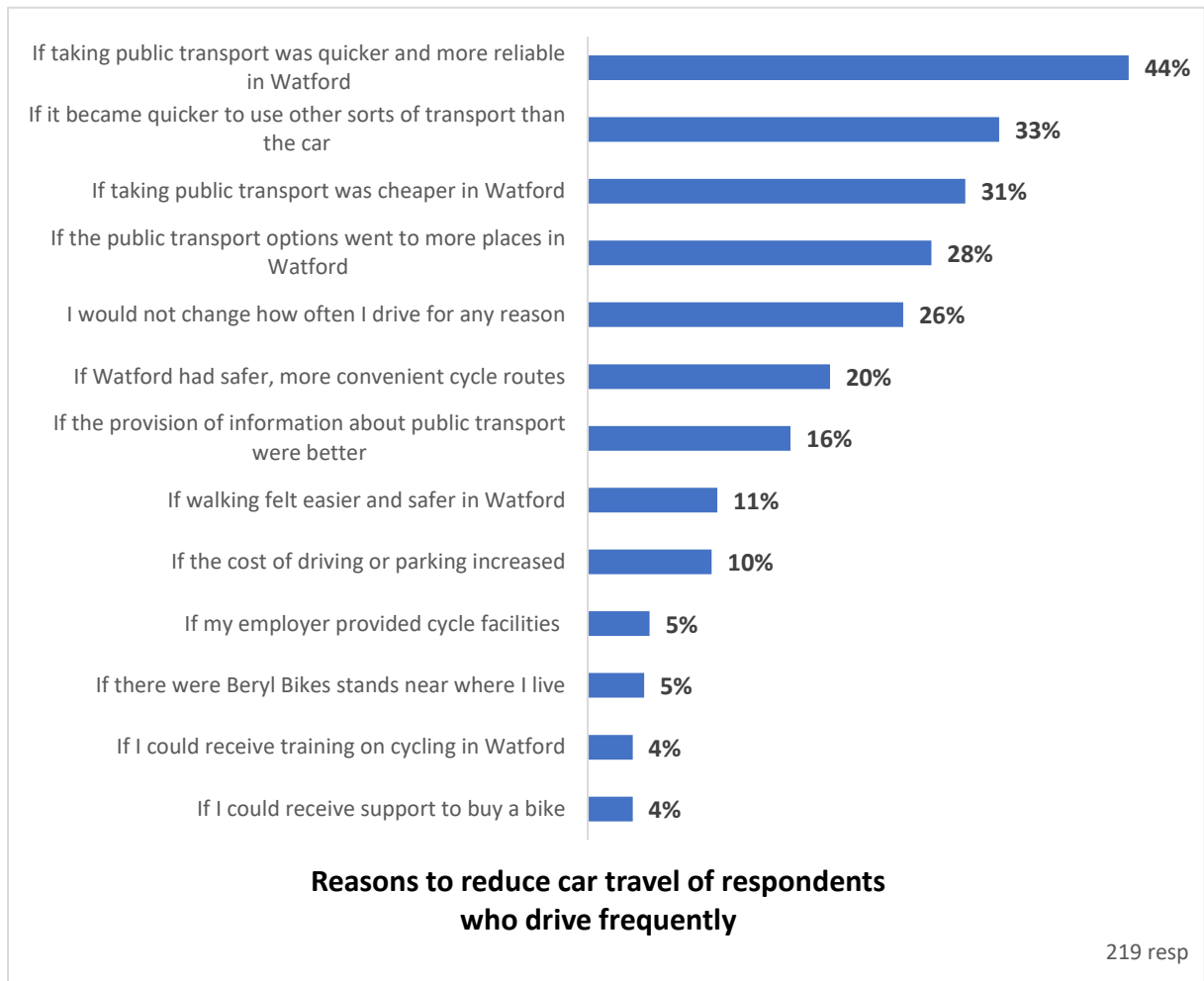
Reasons to reduce car travel of respondents who drive frequently

If taking public transport was quicker and more reliable in Watford	44%
If it became quicker to use other sorts of transport than the car	33%
If taking public transport was cheaper in Watford	31%
If the public transport options went to more places in Watford	28%
I would not change how often I drive for any reason	26%
If Watford had safer, more convenient cycle routes	20%
If the provision of information about public transport were better	16%
If walking felt easier and safer in Watford	11%
If the cost of driving or parking increased	10%
If my employer provided cycle facilities	5%
If there were Beryl Bikes stands near where I live	5%
If I could receive training on cycling in Watford	4%
If I could receive support to buy a bike	4%

219 resp

Figure 6 - Answers for question 21 on the respondents' potential motivations to drive less

4.2.15. The results from this section reveal a strong willingness by respondents to walk, cycle and take the bus more often, hindered by the lack of reliable and safe infrastructure, and also lack of access to a bike in the case of cycling. In contrast, another significant part of respondents appears unwilling to decrease their car use under any circumstances, showing two diverging trends in respondents' motivations and wishes.

Lessons for the STS:

- There is a clear willingness to travel by more sustainable modes, but this is mostly being held back by the existing infrastructure. If the strategy is lead to more people walking and cycling in Watford it needs to deliver improved infrastructure to overcome the current perception of danger and inconvenience associated to these modes.

- Similarly, if people are to be encouraged onto public transport, speed and reliability are the key areas for improvement, followed by cost. Implementing measures that achieve these goals should therefore be a focus for the strategy, as they would also be the key factors in encouraging people to drive less.

4.3. Beryl Bikes and TravelWatford App

4.3.1. This set of questions aimed to understand respondents' opinions on two services implemented in Watford, the Beryl Bike Scheme and the travelWatford app.

4.3.2. Four questions were asked on Beryl Bikes. The first question (Q14) asked the respondents whether they had used the scheme (*Yes, frequently; Yes, occasionally; Yes, but only once or twice; No*). The respondents having answered a variant of *Yes* were directed towards questions 15 and 16.

4.3.3. Questions 15 asked *For what type of trips have you used the Beryl Bikes?* The answer options were:

- *Part of commute to school / place of work*
- *Leisure i.e. purely for the enjoyment of cycling*
- *Going to / from shopping, eating out etc.*
- *To visit friends*
- *Other (Please write in)*

4.3.4. Question 16 asked the respondents to *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know* to the following statements:

- *It is easy to sign up on the app*
- *It is easy to find a bike*
- *It is easy to unlock a bike*
- *It is easy to find a place to lock a bike at the end of my ride*
- *It is easy to lock a bike at the end of my ride*
- *Using the scheme is affordable*
- *Using Beryl Bikes means I am using a car for fewer journeys*
- *Using Beryl Bikes means I am walking fewer journeys*

4.3.5. 90% of the respondents to question 14 (393 answers) had never used a Beryl Bike, and only 2 respondents indicated using them frequently. There were 20 answers to questions 15 and 16. Most of those respondents that had used Beryl Bikes did so for leisure, and agreed that using the scheme was easy. However, less than half of the respondents agreed that using Beryl Bikes would change their overall travel habits, in terms of walking and car use.

4.3.6. Question 17, addressed to all respondents who had did not use Beryl Bikes frequently, asked *What are the main reasons you have not used the Beryl Bike Scheme at all / more?.* The answer options are shown Figure 7.

4.3.7. The answers show that a preference for their personal bike was the main reason that respondents did not use the scheme. The "Other" answer gathered comments citing Covid-19, or an unwillingness or inability to cycle as a reason. Overall, it seems that a preference for alternative modes or a fear of cycling were more significant factors than issues with the scheme itself.
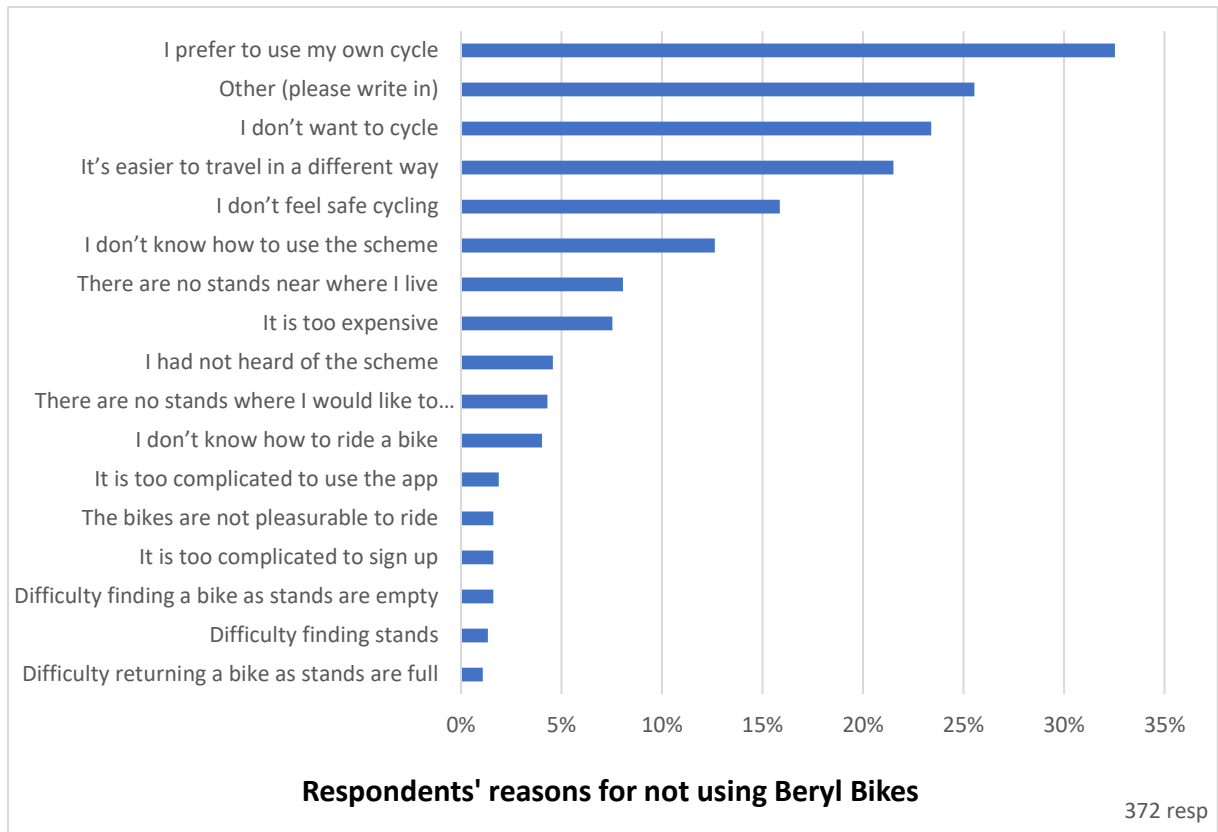
Respondents' reasons for not using Beryl Bikes

372 resp

Figure 7 - Answers to question 17 asking for the respondents' reasons for not using Beryl Bikes

4.3.8. Three questions aimed to gather the respondents' opinions on the travelWatford app. Question 22 (389 respondents) asked the respondents to indicate how often they used the app:

- *I use it frequently (once a week) to plan journeys*
- *I use it occasionally (monthly) to plan journeys*
- *I have downloaded it but rarely, or never, use it*
- *I have heard of it, but have not used it*
- *I have never heard of it*

4.3.9. The respondents who had used the app were then asked to *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know* to the following statements:

- *It is easy to use the app*
- *I use the app to choose a mode of transport for my journeys*
- *I use the app to find out how long journeys will take*
- *I use the app to find out timetable information*
- *I use the app to find live travel information*
- *I use the app to understand the environmental impact of my journeys*
- *I like having information about the calories burnt on my journeys*
- *I like having information about the environmental impact of my journeys*
- *I am using different modes of transport because of the information provided by the app*

4.3.10. Finally, the respondents were asked why they had not used the travelWatford app more. The answer options are shown Figure 8.

14

4.3.11. Half of the respondents had never heard of the travelWatford app, and another 46% never use it, despite having heard of, or downloaded, it. The main reason cited by the respondents is a preference for another app. The respondents having chosen *Other* to question 24 cite knowing Watford well or technological issues or uncertainty as reasons for not using the app. Question 23, asking about the app users' experience, had only 10 respondents, so the results were not conclusive.
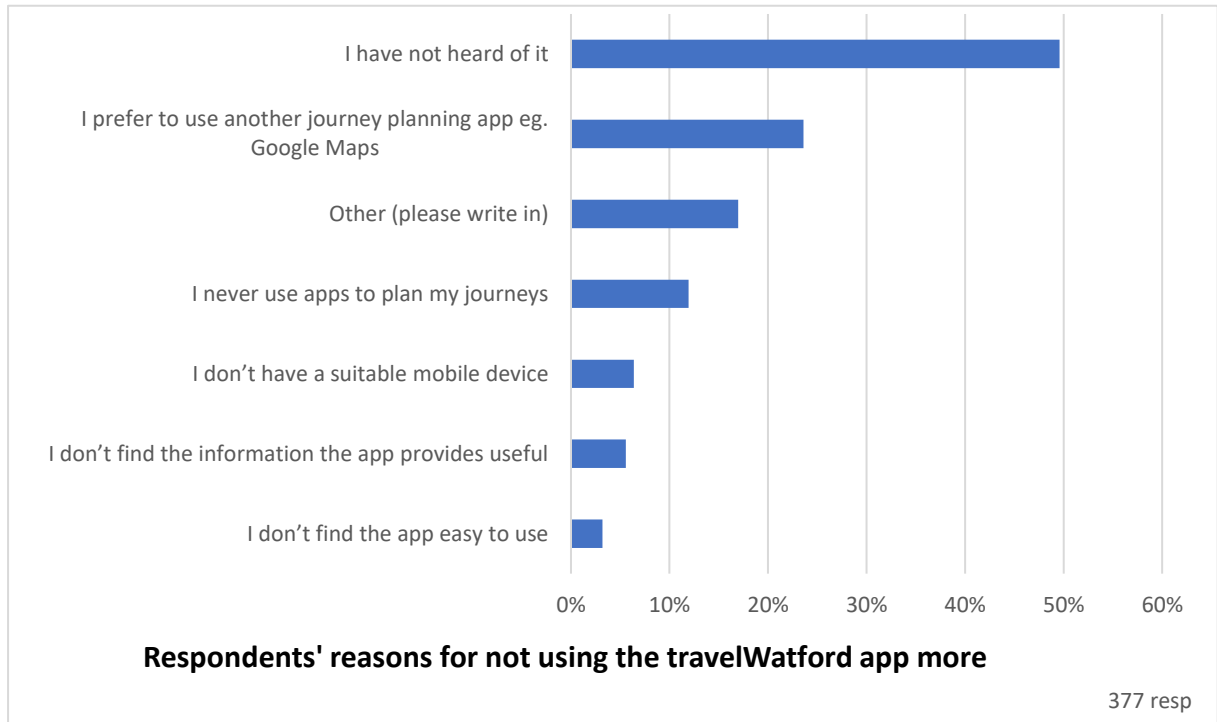

Figure 8 - Answers to question 24 asking the respondents' reasons for not using the travelWatford app more

> **Lessons for the STS:**
>
> - Excluding responses from people who were not interested in using the Beryl Bikes, safety was the primary reason for people not using the scheme, the strategy should reflect this through a priority of improving cycle infrastructure.
>
> - travelWatford is currently not well recognised and is competing with other major travel planning apps, the strategy will need to consider how it can provide a unique offer for people in Watford.

4.4. Travelling in and around Watford Q6 + Q7 + Q8

4.4.1. Questions 6 through 8 of the questionnaire gathered respondents' opinions on travel in and around Watford, before the Covid-19 pandemic. Question 6 measured satisfaction levels on transport issues such as congestion, safety or information accessibility. Question 7 centred around transportation modes, while question 8 was an open-ended question looking into respondents' main difficulties with travel. For questions 6 and 7, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements as: *Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree Nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / Not Applicable to Me.*

4.4.2. Q6 asked *Thinking about before the Covid-19 restrictions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about travelling in and around Watford?* The statements are shown Figure 9.

4.4.3. There were 410 recorded answers for question 6. The responses, represented Figure 9, show that peak period travel is seen as a main travel issue for the respondents. They seem satisfied with safety, information availability and the predictability of journey times. The answers are more split on the duration of travel, where the fraction of satisfied respondents is similar to that of unsatisfied respondents.

4.4.4. Analysis of the answers shows that Watford residents are more likely to find travelling around Watford easier than non-residents, who tend to disagree more. People who walk frequently find travelling around Watford more difficult than other modes users. This verifies the results from Q11, where the respondents identified the lack of appropriate infrastructure as one of the main barriers to walking more.
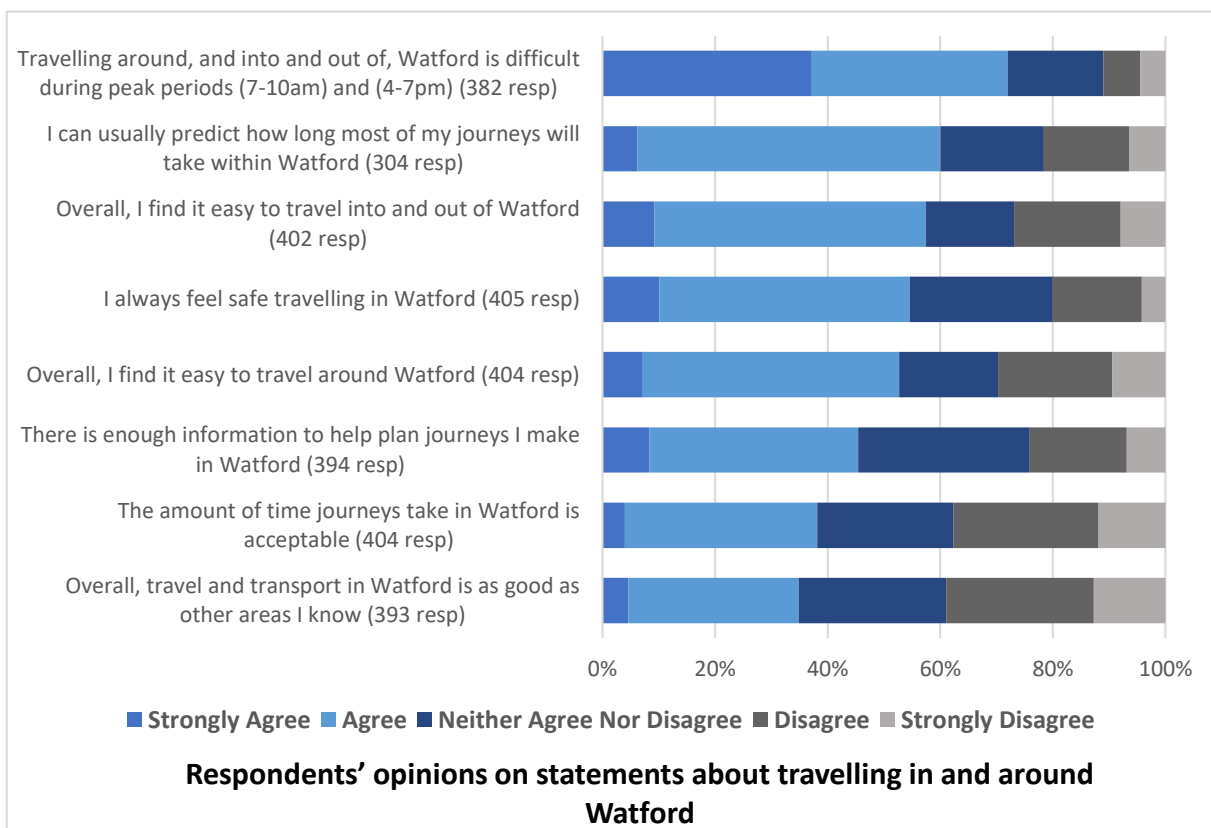

Figure 9 - Answers to question 6 on the respondents' opinions on statements about travelling in and around Watford

4.4.5. Question 7 asked *And thinking about before the Covid-19 restrictions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about travelling in and around Watford by specific modes of transport?* The proposed statements are shown Figure 10.

4.4.6. In total 404 respondents answered to at least one statement. The precise numbers per statement and the answers are presented Figure 10. Generally, respondents were satisfied with walking infrastructure. They were less convinced by the public transport offer, shown as expensive and difficult to use. The results were more marked with cycling, where most respondents felt it was neither easy nor safe, especially for children.

4.4.7. The 'sufficient car parking provision' statement split opinions, with similar proportions of respondents agreeing and disagreeing. Frequent drivers were found to be much less likely

to strongly agree with this statement than frequent cyclists, and much more likely to strongly disagree.
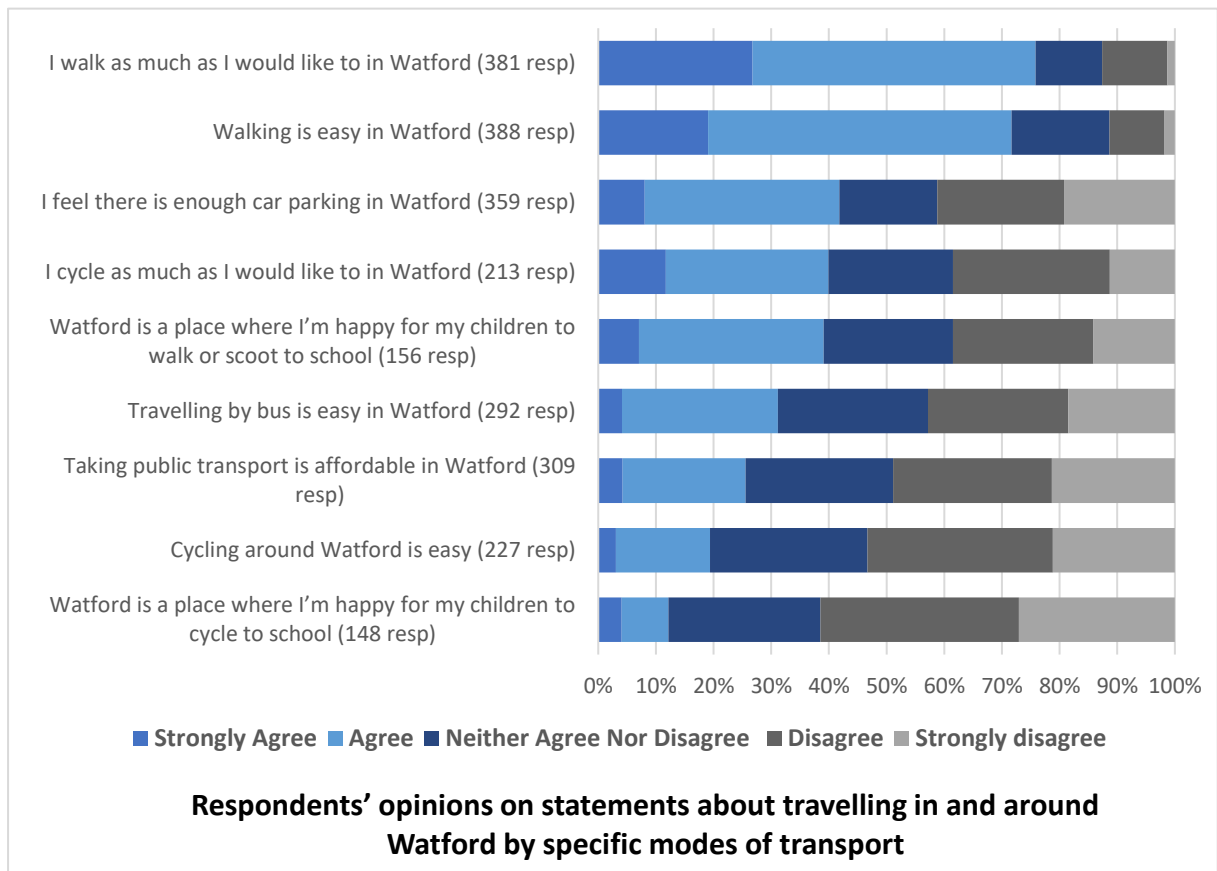

Respondents' opinions on statements about travelling in and around Watford by specific modes of transport

Figure 10 - Answers to question 7 on the respondents' opinions on statements about travelling by specific modes of transport

4.4.8.   Finally, question 8, an open-ended question, asked *What do you think is the most significant transport issue in Watford? Please think about before Covid-19 rather than how things are at the moment?* There were 370 recorded answers, coded into 584 separate sentiments.

4.4.9.   The most important area of concern identified in the responses was the road infrastructure (37% of sentiments), followed by Public Transport (28%), Cycling (15%), Car Use (9%), and Walking (4%).

4.4.10. Close to 50% of the comments made on the road infrastructure were linked to congestion, especially during peak hours. A further 16% cited poor road infrastructure as a concern, while 12% mentioned there were too many vehicles on the roads.

"The huge increase in the number of new builds (commercial, office and residential) has hugely increased traffic and the Victorian roads cannot cope."

"Badly designed road layouts increase traffic jams and pollution"

4.4.11. The issues linked to public transport were found to reflect those identified in question 18. The cost, frequency, reliability, lack of information and overall lack of public transport were all identified in the respondents' responses.

"The buses here are always late, infrequent, expensive and they don't always stop for you, even if they are empty!"

4.4.12. More than 60% of the sentiments related to cycling cite the lack of safe routes as their main concern, while a further 20% related to the overall quality of the routes, and 5% the lack of cycle parking. The bulk of the sentiments are thus about the lack of safe and appropriate cycle infrastructure, verifying the trend identified in question 10. Some sentiments also identified cyclists riding on pavements and footpaths as a concerning issue.

"Lack of safe cycling routes (…) It takes me 12 mins to cycle into town (…) but I risk my life 3 or 4 times each trip"

"The roads (& footways) are not sufficiently cycle & pedestrian friendly. Wider pavements, cycle lanes, 20 mph speed limits, traffic-light controlled crossings need to be made for pedestrian/cyclist preference."

"Too many cars there. Roads are frightening to cross. Cycling is frightening. Town centre is great for walking and cycling (…) but there are not enough bike racks."

4.4.13. 62% of sentiments relating directly to cars mentioned the cost and lack of parking as the main cause for concern. The remainder of the sentiments cited driver behaviour (including parking on pavements) as an issue.

"Lack of affordable car parking (…) I am using Watford less to shop"

4.4.14. There were few comments overall made on walking, but most of these (close to 70%) deplored the lack of safe walking routes; the rest mentioned quality of footpaths.

"Watford has always valued, prioritised and provided for car drivers above pedestrians. Pedestrians (…) have countless sets of traffic lights to go relatively short distances."

> **Lessons for the STS:**
> - Peak time travel is seen as a particular concern, the strategy will need to consider how best to alleviate issues during peak periods.
> - Tackling congestion is seen as the main priority for people in Watford, and the strategy will need to address this.
> - As already highlighted, enhanced infrastructure will be key for encouraging people to cycle and walk more as well as creating a more reliable and quicker bus network.

4.5. Sustainable Transport, Climate Change and Behaviour Change

4.5.1. This section covered respondents' views on sustainable transport, their priorities for Watford and personal motivations. Respondents were asked to choose *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree* or *Don't Know* as an answer to the question *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?* The statements are shown Figure 11.

4.5.2. While most of the respondents agree that a switch to more sustainable modes by the town's population would improve the town's liveability (68%) and that this is needed to

mitigate climate change (69%), they are a bit more hesitant when it comes to specific, individualised statements. 56% of respondents agree the roads should prioritise alternative modes to the car, and 51% agree that improvements in the public transport and cycle infrastructure would encourage them to use their cars less.

4.5.3. Only 32% agree of respondents believed that they personally needed to change their travel behaviour, and 36% disagreed. The respondents thus seem to agree with the concept of switching to sustainable travel behaviour in principle, but are more reluctant when it comes to personal change.
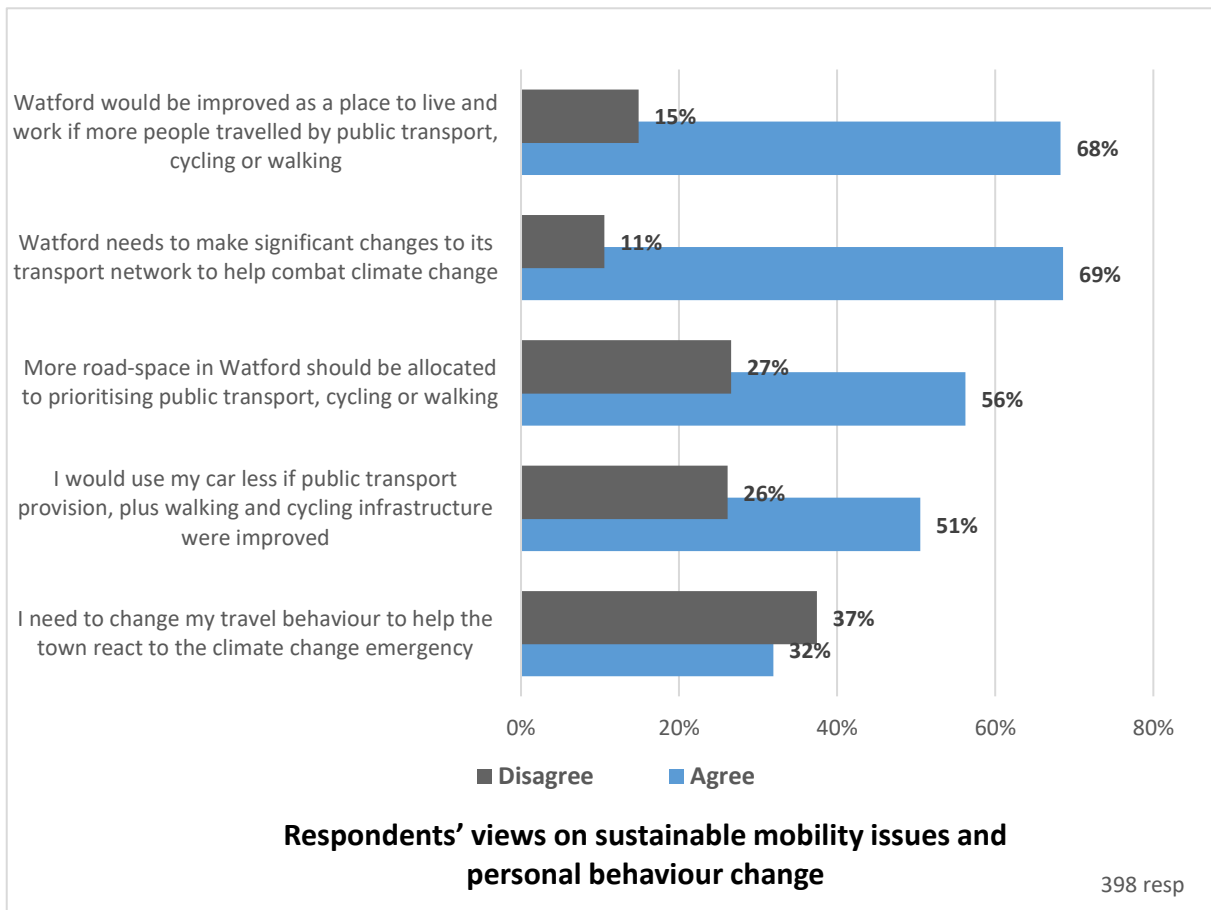

Figure 11 - Answers to question 9 on the respondents' views on sustainable mobility issues

4.5.4. A more in-depth analysis of the answers showed that agreement with the need for sustainable modes and behaviour change decreases with age: 38% of 35 – 54 year-old respondents agree that they need to change their personal travel behaviour, against 15%

Lessons for the STS:

- There is majority support for the idea that Watford's transport network needs to be more sustainable, thus backing the need for the development of the strategy.

- There is also a narrow majority in favour of both reallocating road space to sustainable modes and people who would switch away from car travel should this occur, similarly supporting the aims of the strategy.

- There is a reluctance to personally change travel behaviour, so the strategy will focus on ensuring the options chosen are attractive to people in Watford and supported by effective communications.

of 75-or-more-years-old respondents. In the same way, frequent drivers are much less likely to strongly agree that sustainable measures are required than frequent cyclists (22% against 70%), and are as willing to change their travel behaviour as frequent users of other modes, which already are sustainable travel modes.

4.6. The Respondents' Priorities for the STS

4.6.1. The final set of three questions (25, 26 and 27) aimed to understand respondents' priorities with respect to transport and travel in Watford, in particular regarding their wishes for the Sustainable Transport Strategy.

4.6.2. Question 25 asked the respondents to select the three statements they felt were the most important to them, in terms of transport and travel in Watford, from the list shown Figure 12.

4.6.3. The results presented in Figure 12, do not show a marked preference from the respondents (the preferred statement was chosen by only 35% of respondents). Decreasing congestion appears to be the most important priority for the respondents, a concern which was already expressed in the results from questions 6 and 8.

4.6.4. Confirming the trend which appeared in several previous questions, improving travel facilities (road maintenance, cycle and pedestrian facilities) is also noted as being important to the respondents, joined with global climate change considerations. Notably, the statements concerning specific climate change actions (prioritising sustainable modes, electric vehicles) garner less support than the more general statements.

4.6.5. A cross-analysis of the results showed that decreasing congestion is a priority for all age groups, but the youngest (less than 34 years old) appear more concerned about climate change issues (confirming the results from Q9), whilst those working are most likely to want improved cycle facilities and the oldest group prioritise public transport accessibility.
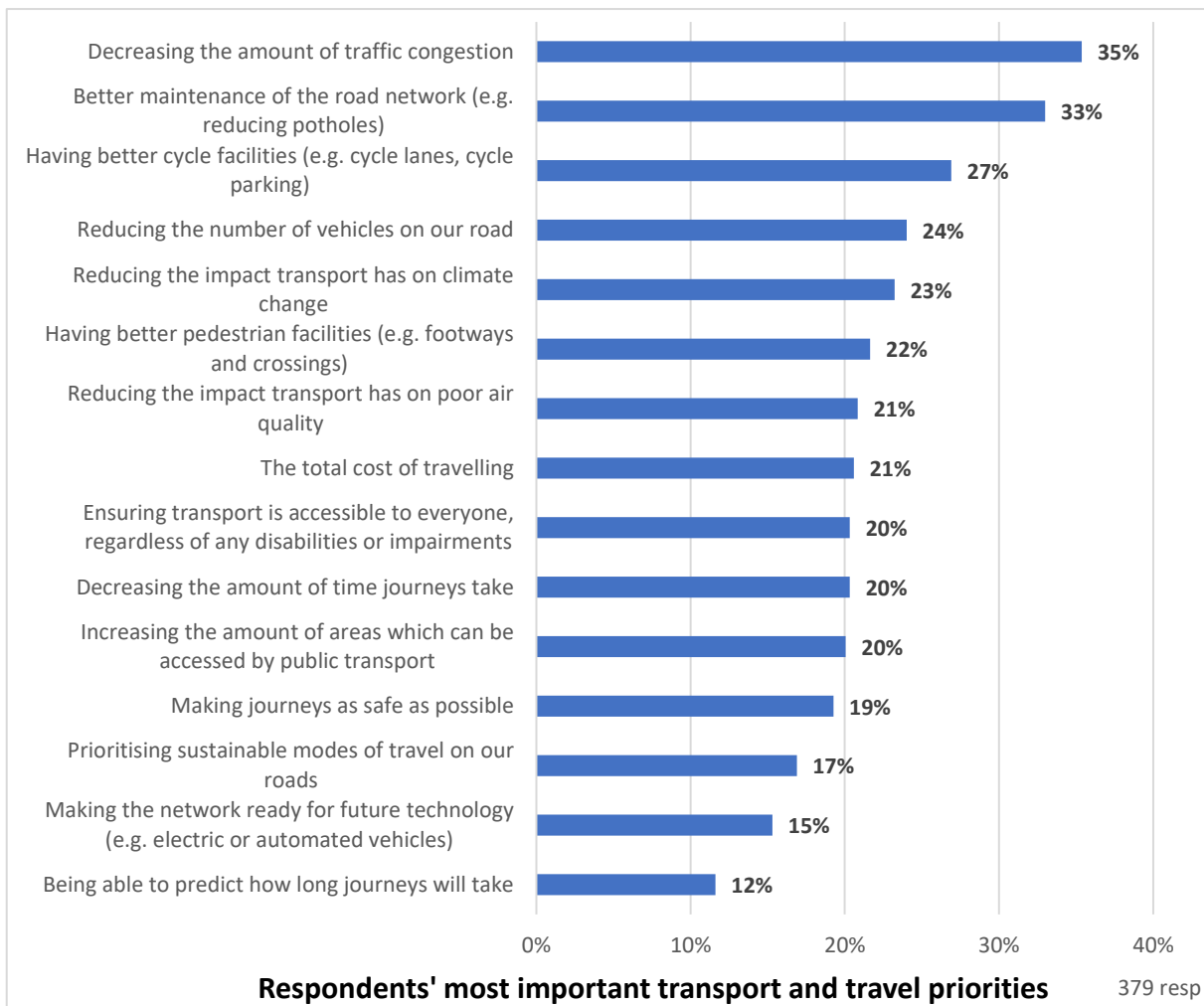
Figure 12 - Answers to question 25 on the respondents' most important transport and travel priorities

4.6.6. Question 26 followed question 25, aiming to understand the respondents' ideas for the STS, asking *What do you think should be the main priority for the Sustainable Transport Strategy?* The question was open-ended.

4.6.7. The results to question 26 were gathered by theme. The most important priority identified by the respondents is public transport, gathering 29% of the sentiments made by the respondents. It is followed by cycling (21% of comments), car use (20% of comments), road infrastructure (12% of comments), walking (10% of comments), and climate change (8% of comments). The question received 274 answers, which were coded into 405 separate sentiments.

4.6.8. As in previous sections, the sentiments identifying public transport as their priority for the STS were centred around the need for improved reliability, frequency, reach and cost. Many respondents cited that an improved public transport offer would help decrease car use and thus congestion, and improve air quality.

"A decent, reliable cost-effective bus service would surely help take cars off the road"

"There will always be people who need to drive, but we have a system where everyone needs to drive. If the buses were better, less people will need to use their cars."

4.6.9. The comments centred around cycling once again cite the need to focus on the improvement of the infrastructure as a priority for the STS: safer routes, segregated lanes, improved connectivity of the routes, and overall improved quality of the routes were all identified in the respondents' answers. As for the public transport comments, many respondents strongly felt that improving the cycle network would encourage modal shift from cars to more sustainable alternatives.

"Delivery of a high quality network of walking and cycling routes to enable the broadest range of people to make a shift from car-based travel to active travel modes."

"Connecting where people live to the main cycle networks ... we live within 500m of main cycle routes but safely getting to them is difficult as the roads are small and double parked and congested and the paths have no cycling signs ..."

4.6.10. Among the sentiments focusing on car use, over half (56%) agreed on the need to reduce car travel. Some other comments emphasised the need for less polluting vehicles, and more charging points for electric vehicles. A few comments, however, cited the continued need for cars and additional parking.

"More electric charging points across town to encourage move to electric vehicles"

"Stop cars dominating the roads. Prioritise other modes of transport and road use."

"Cut down on car use. Electric cars might reduce air pollution but they still represent danger, congestion, pavement parking, and conversion of front gardens to hard standing."

4.6.11. Improving traffic flow and decreasing congestion was the main theme of the sentiments on road infrastructure, followed by the need to improve road maintenance. This also confirms the findings of the previous sections. As opposed to the sentiments on public transport, cycling, and even car use, many of the sentiments on the road infrastructure disliked restrictions placed on car use.

"Allowing all traffic to flow properly will reduce pollution. Accepting that car use will not diminish. Creating road schemes that don't take into account ALL forms of transport antagonise the public."

"Stop blaming road vehicles for the state of traffic congestion; the roads themselves need to be better maintained and reduce speed humps which cause exhaust fumes."

"Keeping transport moving, introducing improved bus stops to allow vehicles to pass, less traffic lights, less speed humps, less one-way systems, no bus lanes."

4.6.12. The sentiments made on walking mention the importance of the quality of the infrastructure, in terms of safety, network and maintenance; many lament the supremacy of cars in the streets of Watford.

"Get people walking - that means paying attention to repairing footpaths and preventing trips and falls."

"Maybe by making places accessible on foot. Sometimes I still get the impression that places are built for cars only. (…) some areas north of there are pretty much cars only."

"Creating more well-lit and safe cycle lanes and walking routes. Streetlights on all night so it's safe when I travel to work in the dark"

4.6.13. Finally, a number of sentiments thought climate change as a whole should be the priority of the STS. Most of these focused on the importance or reducing emissions, but some were more globally about the need to tackle climate change in all its aspects.

4.6.14. Some other sentiments stand out in this analysis: some respondents have pointed out that reluctance to change behaviour would be one of the biggest barriers to implementing sustainable transport schemes, and this has been verified in some sections of this questionnaire (especially question 9). Other sentiments have expressed the opinion that the only action that would provoke this behaviour change would be making it more inconvenient to drive, and thus improving the cost, reach, safety and efficiency of car alternatives.

"Persuading Watford residents of the need for change (to combat climate change & improve air quality) is going to be a major challenge"

"Making it more inconvenient to drive than to travel by other methods. This will make cycling and walking safer which then encourages more people to do it"

"If it becomes clear that cycling or walking is the most convenient and quick method of travel, people will opt for those instead of driving. So long as it's easier to sit in a car to cover any distance, congestion will remain an issue in Watford"

4.6.15. While most of the sentiments were in favour of the STS and the need to push for sustainable travel, the comments do show that some car users would still like to see their needs prioritised. There was a significant number of comments pointing out that many people had no choice but to use their cars: whether because of age, disability or some other physical impairments, or even people who are not Watford residents and need to access the town. Some respondents emphasized the fact that putting barriers on car use in Watford could increase inequalities, and that the modal shift should not be executed without considering the issue of accessibility.

"Stop penalising car drivers, be practical as people need cars and not building enough parking spaces won't stop people needing cars."

"Watford is a beautiful area, those lucky enough to both live and work here have the luxury of walking and cycling. Other's do not and fairly and logically choose to use a car if that's an option. Stop forcing the green issue."

"Your current policy of forcing cycling/ public transport (…) will create inequality."

"Building flats with no parking doesn't remove vehicles unless you have a sustainable transport strategy that will cater for those folks."

4.6.16. The final question of this questionnaire, Q27, asked the respondents to measure the importance of six potential STS objectives as *Very Important, Important, Not Important, Not At All Important*, and *Not Sure*. The listed objectives are shown Figure 13.

4.6.17. The six statements received similar responses, with a total of 379 respondents. The results for the *Very Important* level are presented Figure 13, and confirm the findings from

question 25, which found that decreasing congestion was perceived as the most important issue among respondents. It is followed by the statement on accessibility, a notion which was present in question 25 among the older age group, and came up in the answers to question 26 as well.

4.6.18. The results are overall quite interesting, as the least selected option regards the need to create *high quality, easy to use travel options*, while in previous questions and sections, the respondents emphasized the need for efficient, safe and reliable transport infrastructures for public transport, cycling and walking.
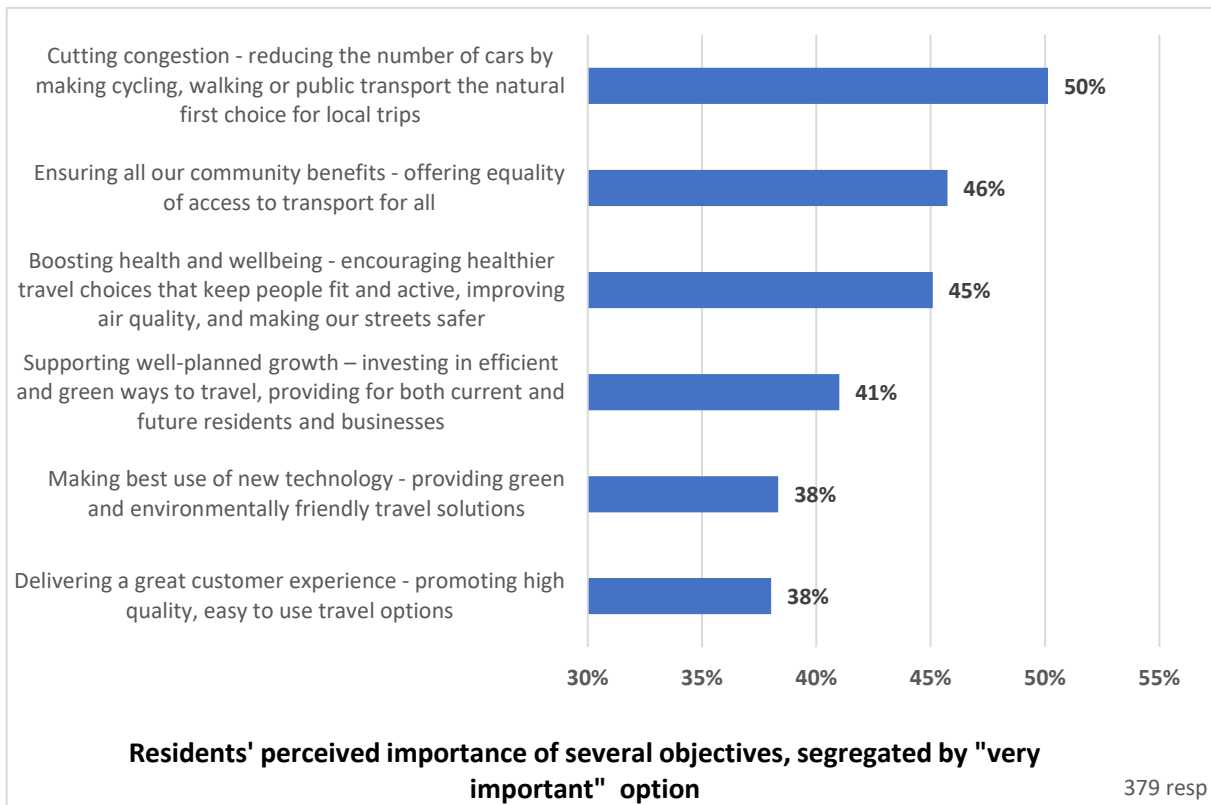

Residents' perceived importance of several objectives, segregated by "very important" option

379 resp

Figure 13 - Answers to question 27 on the residents' most important objectives for Watford

Lessons for the STS:

- Reducing traffic congestion is a clear priority for those who responded and should be reflected in the strategy.

- Respondents generally felt that schemes that encourage sustainable travel rather than punishing car users would be better received, and thus this 'carrot' rather than 'stick' approach should be adopted where possible.

- Driving is important to many people, and there isn't always an alternative, the needs of such users should not be disregarded.

- There is clear desire for the strategy to be holistic, and tie into wider policy measures such as car-lite development.

- The proposed objective of the strategy were supported by those who responded.

4.7. Summary of findings

4.7.1. Over half of respondents do not imagine the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on travel to be permanent. Those who do, anticipate travelling less, walking and cycling more, and adapting their car and public transport use to the new remote working and health and safety context.

4.7.2. One of the main issues and priorities regarding transport and travel in Watford identified in this questionnaire is the need for improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport, that would in particular be safe, efficient, connected and reliable. The frequently expressed sentiment was that were these conditions met, the respondents would feel more inclined to reduce their car use.

4.7.3. Congestion and peak time travel is also perceived to be a serious issue, reflecting the needs of car users. Some respondents link this issue to poor road maintenance, or the installation of unnecessary cycle tracks and bus lanes. Other respondents would wish to tackle this issue by decreasing the total amount of vehicles on the roads.

4.7.4. The respondents seem aware of the need to improve sustainable travel and its benefits for the town and climate change, and seem willing to walk, cycle or take the bus more. However, despite their request for improved car alternatives, most appear to be generally reluctant to change their personal behaviour to help the town tackle climate change. This suggests that climate change is not the main motivation behind the respondents' desire for alternative modes of transport.

4.7.5. The unwillingness to commit to behaviour change is particularly true among frequent drivers, most of whom feel that the car is their only viable mode of transport. A number of respondents also accentuate the need for improved accessibility to alternative modes before considering changing their behaviour.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

5.1. The responses to this questionnaire as seen as a key part of the evidence base for the ongoing development of the Sustainable Transport Strategy. The comments received and opinions expressed will be used to develop and choose between alternative options in developing the strategy. They will help to ensure the draft strategy reflects the needs and desires of those who live, work and visit Watford.

5.2. A draft Sustainable Transport Strategy will be released in summer 2021 for consultation, providing a further opportunity for people to shape the form of transport for the future in Watford.