

# Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods Public Consultation Findings Report

Prepared by PLACED on behalf of  
Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board

July 2025



PLACED

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# Foreword from Chair

In Spring 2024, St Helens Borough Council was proud to secure **Plan for Neighbourhoods** status for Newton-le-Willows, unlocking £20 million in investment over the next ten years to support local priorities and tackle long-standing challenges. This will build on the momentum of the £20m Levelling Up Fund investment secured in 2023 for the regeneration of Earlestown Town Centre.

To oversee the development of the **Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Regeneration Plan**, we have created the **Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board** a diverse and dedicated group of local representatives from the community, businesses, sports clubs, third sector, faith groups, and public sector agencies, alongside the local MP and representatives from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and St Helens Borough Council. The Board has been entrusted with developing a **10-Year Neighbourhood Regeneration Plan** and a **4-Year Investment Plan**, and our approach is that this is rooted in meaningful engagement. We are committed to ensuring every resident can contribute to the future of their neighbourhood.

As the Chair of the Neighbourhood Board, I know that at the heart of every thriving community lies a shared vision—one that reflects the hopes, needs, and aspirations of its people. The **Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Regeneration Plan** will be a testament to our commitment to inclusive, transparent, and forward-thinking community development. The plan will mark a significant step in shaping the future of Newton-le-Willows, but for me it is not just a document; it is the start of a conversation—that invites every resident, business owner, and stakeholder to contribute their voice to the evolving story of Newton-le-Willows. It is only through conversations that we will build a stronger, more connected community that honours our heritage and embraces innovation to shape our future.

Today, we are publishing the **Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods Public Consultation Findings Report**, which sets out the consultation activity that has taken place between Monday 7th April and Sunday 18th May 2025 to ensure every voice is heard. We have ensured a geographical spread of consultation events across our communities, and we have utilised a range of communication methods to allow people to choose the way they want to be heard. For me, meaningful change begins with listening. That is why our **Engagement Strategy** was rooted in collaboration and respect for diverse perspectives. Whether it is enhancing public spaces, improving local services, or fostering a sense of belonging, your input will help guide decisions that affect us all.

The Neighbourhood Board will now use the output from the engagement with our communities to develop a **10-Year Neighbourhood Regeneration Plan** for the area, and we will outline our investment priorities for the 4-year period up to March 2030. Our investment priorities will align with the will of the community and provide a strong evidential case for change, to build a better and brighter future.

**Together, we can ensure that Newton-le-Willows remains not only a place to live, but a place to thrive.**



**Chris Hickey**  
Chair  
Newton-le-Willows Neighbourhood Board





# Introduction

St Helens Borough Council (SHBC) has been successful in securing Plan for Neighbourhoods funding for Newton-le-Willows. This funding will see £20m invested in the town, spread over the next 10 years. Formerly known as Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT), Plan for Neighbourhoods funding will enable the delivery of projects that address key issues facing residents and businesses in Newton-le-Willows across eight themes:

- Regeneration, High streets and Heritage
- Housing
- Work, Productivity and Skills
- Cohesion
- Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Safety and Security
- Education and Opportunity

Following the Autumn Budget, the Labour Government confirmed that the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme would be retained but reformed as a new regeneration programme. In March 2025, the Government published the Plan for Neighbourhoods prospectus, which set out the changes to the former Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. The updated programme includes the updated intervention themes (listed above) and three new strategic objectives – **Thriving Places, Stronger Communities, and Taking Back Control**.

A Neighbourhood Board of local representatives from the community, local businesses, sports clubs, the third sector, faith groups and public sector agencies was established in Newton-le-Willows to oversee the development and delivery of the Regeneration Plan and 4-Year Investment Plan, as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme. The Neighbourhood Board, alongside the Council, wanted to ensure local people could contribute to the plan and share challenges, opportunities, and ideas for the changes. Layer.Studio, Hatch Associates, and PLACED supported the Neighbourhood Board and Council in this process by delivering a comprehensive stakeholder and public engagement programme.

Prior to the delivery of PLACED's public engagement activities, an **Engagement Strategy** was established in March 2025 to inform and guide the engagement approach. PLACED, along with Layer.Studio and Hatch Associates, led an engagement strategy workshop on Wednesday 15th January 2025 at Newton-le-Willows Sports Club. This workshop enabled the Neighbourhood Board and SHBC to review the proposed engagement approach submitted as part of the tendering process, clarify expectations for engagement, and shape PLACED's engagement approach with local knowledge and insights. The engagement strategy that was established at this workshop informed the comprehensive public engagement programme that PLACED has delivered. There have been meetings and workshops with local groups, pop-ups and drop-in events, self-led engagement, and an interactive website where people could share their views.

These conversations that took place will help the Neighbourhood Board and Council to prioritise proposals that could have the greatest impact on the town, and to decide where funding should be invested.

This report provides an overview of the public engagement activities PLACED delivered for the Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative and outlines the key findings drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative data that were gathered.

## Engagement Promotion and Reach

Reach of **60,000**  
**8,000** flyers and **30** posters distributed  
**47,073** social media views / impressions

Developed in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Board and guided by an **Engagement Strategy**, promotion for PLACED's public engagement programme was comprehensive and aimed to build broad awareness of Plan for Neighbourhoods funding and engagement opportunities. With strong support from the Neighbourhood Board, SHBC, local councillors, and representatives from local businesses and community organisations, the consultation reached 60,000 people (this includes website views, promotional materials distributed, and social media impressions).

Promotion and reach were wide and involved various methods including flyers which were hand-delivered to businesses and organisations across the town and distributed more widely by board members; a press release; social media; an 'education piece' video explaining engagement opportunities; promotional materials distributed to board members to share with their constituents; and digital flyers distributed to local schools.

Throughout both the promotion and delivery phases, 8,000 flyers and 30 posters were distributed across the town. These were mainly distributed by PLACED, SHBC and Neighbourhood Board members, but also shared by local councillors, business owners and community organisations.

On Friday 11th April 2025, PLACED conducted a walk-around where they distributed 575 flyers and letters to local businesses and community organisations. During this walk-around, they also shared conversations with business owners and residents, which provided some early feedback. Below is an outline of how many flyers were distributed to different areas during PLACED's walk-around. The focus of this walk-around was key business and high street areas; therefore, numbers are higher for areas where a greater number of businesses exist and where there is a market and/or more of a high street offer.

- Earlestown: 265
- Sankey Valley Industrial Estate: 80
- Newton High Street: 150
- Wargrave: 80



In addition, SHBC distributed 133 letters and 200 self-led engagement materials. This included 70 businesses in Earlestown receiving a hand-delivered letter on Friday 9th May and 58 businesses on Newton High Street on Thursday 15th May 2025. 70 business newsletters that mentioned the consultation were distributed across Earlestown on Wednesday 30th April. The consultation was also mentioned in emails to residents signed up to the Council's resident newsletter on Friday 9th May and Friday 16th May.

Materials for self-led engagement were displayed at various locations including Newton Community Centre, Crownway Community Centre, Newton-le-Willows Health and Fitness Centre, Newton Community Hospital, Newton-le-Willows Library, Cross Lane Church, Tesco Superstore, and Heald Farm Court. SHBC also distributed self-led materials to hard-to-reach groups e.g. businesses, retirement homes, and the Muslim Community Centre.

As of Monday 2nd June 2025, the following is an outline of PLACED and the Council's social media statistics for posts on Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods:

**PLACED Social Media Statistics**

- Views / Impressions: 15,425
- Interactions / Engagement: 279

**SHBC Social Media Statistics**

- Views / Impressions: 31,648
- Interactions / Engagement: 745

**How did you find out about this consultation?**

Online respondents were asked how they found out about this consultation. The extent of social media reach is highlighted by 67.3% of those taking part in the online survey discovered the consultation through social media posts. Others had discovered the consultation by word of mouth, flyers, direct emails from the Council, newsletters, Facebook, local churches, councillors' pages, and the high street group chat.

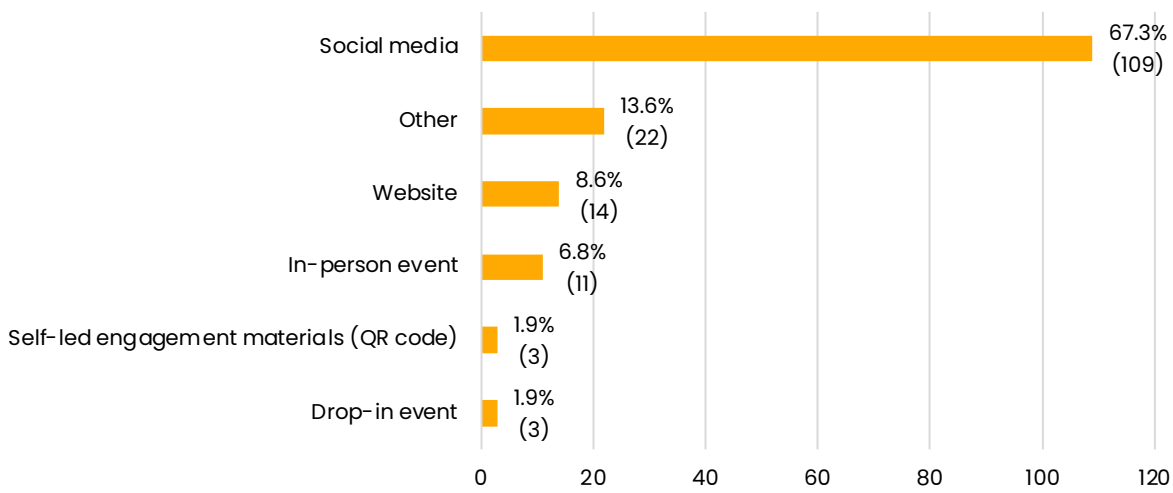


Figure 01. Responses to the question 'How did you find out about this consultation?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.





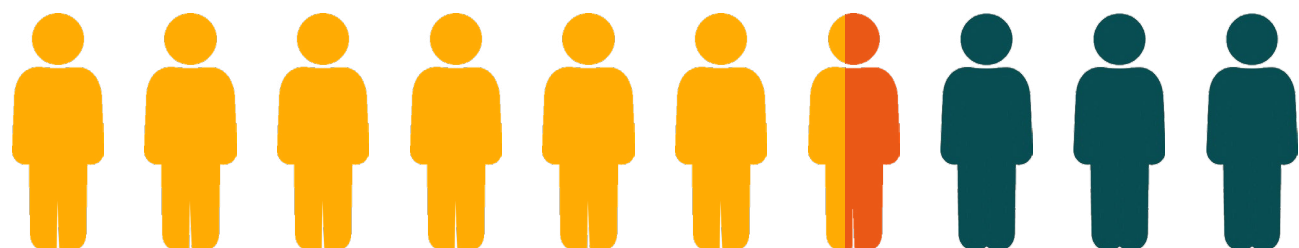
# Engagement Summary


## Engagement Opportunities



682

## People Engaged



 = People engaged at in-person events (433)

 = Young people engaged at workshops (39)

 = Individual online participants (199)

## Most Popular Investment Themes



# 10

## 433 people engaged at in-person events

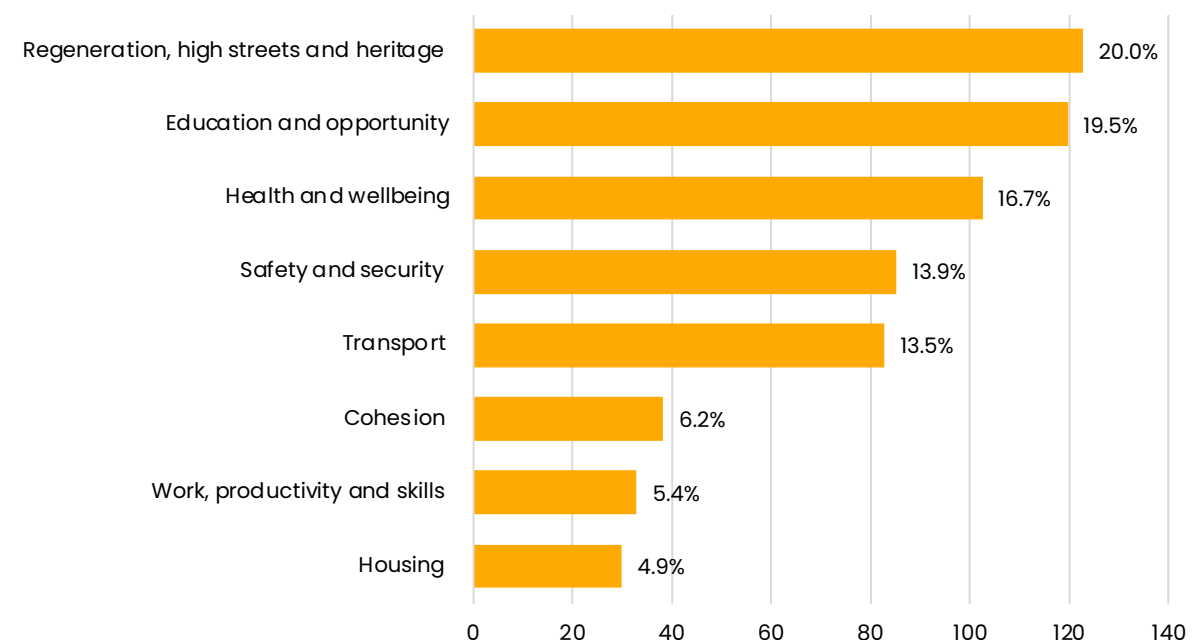
**199** online participants

### 39 young people engaged via school workshops

**60,000** people reached

## Key Findings

## % Investment Themes Overall



**In no more than three words, how would you like to describe Newton-le-Willows in the future?**



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# Engagement Overview

In total, PLACED and SHBC have engaged with 682 people via online engagement, in-person events, self-led engagement materials, school workshops, and email correspondence. This number indicates the number of people PLACED and SHBC engaged in substantial conversation or who properly participated in the activities delivered. It does not include those who only viewed PLACED's engagement materials in-person or online, or who were only engaged in shorter, fleeting conversations. In the context of this report, 'engagement' is defined as meaningful, quality conversation and participation.

This final number indicates that the consultation findings are statistically reliable and representative of the population. To achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error in Newton-le-Willows (a town with a resident population of 25,350 people), a sample size of 379 people is required. Having engaged 682 people overall, the findings presented in this report are therefore statistically reliable and representative.

Whilst significant effort has been made to reach a broad audience, including hard-to-reach groups through targeted consultation, it should be recognised that there will always be limitations in achieving a fully representative result when working within the constraints of budgets and wider programme timeframes. In addition to this, some audiences may not want to partake, and consultation fatigue can be a barrier. The key aim of this public engagement was to understand common themes and use this to supplement the knowledge and experience of SHBC, Neighbourhood Board and specialist consultants who are producing the Regeneration Plan and 4-Year Investment Plan, as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme.

PLACED's engagement for Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods took place for 6 weeks between Monday 7th April and Sunday 18th May 2025 and included the following:

## Online Engagement

*A dedicated online engagement platform to provide information on Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods and collate comments from the community via a survey, comments collection, and mapping tool.*

Monday 7th April – Sunday 18th May, Plan for Neighbourhoods Project Website, <https://placed.mysocialpinpoint.com/newton-le-willows-plan-neighbourhoods>

- **2,297 views** – the number of times people have viewed the platform
- **1,516 visits** – the number of times people have viewed the platform and clicked through the pages and features
- **199 participants** – the number of individual participants (noting individual IP addresses)
- **167 survey responses** – the number of individual survey responses (noting individual IP addresses)

## In-person Events

*These included pop-ups and drop-in events. Whilst pop-ups were visual, interactive displays at high footfall events and locations open to everyone, drop-in events were targeted towards specific groups (e.g., businesses, community, heritage and sports). All events were supported by staff from SHBC and PLACED Ambassadors.*

- Saturday 12th April, 10.00am – 4.00pm, The Pop-up Market (90 attendees)
- Wednesday 23rd April, 4.00pm – 7.00pm, St Peter's Church (21 attendees)
- Thursday 1st May, 11.00am – 2.00pm, Newton Community Centre (17 attendees)
- Sunday 4th May, 12.00pm – 5.00pm, High Street Markets (180 attendees)
- Tuesday 6th May, 2.00pm – 5.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Library (10 attendees)
- Friday 9th May, 5.00pm – 8.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Sports Club (66 attendees)

## Self-led Engagement

*Self-led engagement materials that were accessible at businesses and organisations across the town including A1 boards and postcards.*

- Monday 14th April – Monday 19th May, Various Locations across Newton-le-Willows (11 responses including self-led postcards and email responses)

A1 engagement boards to advertise the scheme, inclusive of a link and QR code to access the online platform, were displayed at various locations and for varying durations, across the 6-week period of consultation. Locations included Newton Community Centre, Crownway Community Centre, Newton-le-Willows Health and Fitness Centre, Newton Community Hospital, Newton-le-Willows Library, Cross Lane Church, Tesco Superstore, and Heald Farm Court.

In addition, SHBC distributed self-led postcards to hard-to-reach groups such as businesses, retirement homes, and the Muslim Community Centre. The responses received were largely from businesses and older residents.

## School Workshops

*Full-day structured workshops at local schools with groups of young people.*

- Tuesday 29th April, 9.45am – 3.00pm, Wargrave House School (26 students, years 7 – 11)
- Wednesday 7th May, 9.10am – 3.10pm, Hope Academy (13 students, years 7 – 8)

## Additional Council Engagement

*Targeted drop-ins to reach groups who experience barriers to attending consultation events or who are lesser-heard voices (e.g., elderly people and young people).*

- Thursday 15th May, 6.30pm – 9.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Sea Cadets (42 attendees, 27 of these being young people)
- Friday 16th May, 12.00pm – 1.20pm, Woods Court Sheltered Housing (7 attendees)



**Pop-up events**

- The Pop-up Market, Earlestown
- High Street Markets, Newton

**Drop-in events**

- St Peter's Church
- Newton Community Centre
- Newton-le-Willows Library
- Newton-le-Willows Sports Club

**School workshops**

- Wargrave House School
- Hope Academy

**Business Flyer locations**

- Earlestown Town Centre
- Sankey Valley Industrial Estate
- Newton High Street
- Wargrave
- Park Road South

**Council engagement**

- Newton-le-Willows Sea Cadets
- Woods Court Sheltered Housing

**A1 self-engagement boards**

- Newton Community Centre
- Crownway Community Centre
- Newton-le-Willows Health and Fitness Centre
- Newton Community Hospital
- Newton-le-Willows Library
- Cross Lane Church
- Tesco Superstore
- Heald Farm Court





# The key outcomes of PLACED’s engagement include:

## Regeneration and High Streets

Throughout all engagement outputs, participants identified Earlestown Town Centre as requiring urgent regeneration, with numerous comments suggesting that the area appears run down and unwelcoming. Many participants suggested that shop frontages need improvement and that there is an overabundance of vape shops, barbers, and takeaways. Participants proposed introducing greater retail diversity, with suggestions for independent cafés, clothing shops and quality dining establishments. It was also suggested that a more balanced investment was needed between Newton and Earlestown.

## Education and Opportunity

Participants frequently commented on there not being enough school spaces and the need for better provision for children and young people with special educational needs. The lack of a college or Sixth Form in the area was also noted, and local young people flagged that transport to nearby colleges is costly. Participants felt that there are insufficient youth activities and facilities available, with many linking this to anti-social behaviour issues in the area. Several participants proposed establishing youth centres or clubs and suggested that all-weather sports facilities and improved community spaces would benefit the area.

## Health and Wellbeing

Healthcare accessibility was identified as a significant concern, with participants expressing frustration about difficulties accessing GP appointments and the shortage of NHS dental services. Mental health support was highlighted as requiring investment, particularly support for young people. Connecting to regeneration and high streets, participants praised existing green spaces but highlighted the need to protect and preserve these spaces, noting their value to health and wellbeing.

## Safety and Security

Participants frequently mentioned anti-social behaviour issues, particularly involving young people on scrambler bikes and quad bikes, with some participants reporting feeling unsafe. Drug-related activity was highlighted as a concern by some participants, particularly in the Vulcan area, with participants suggesting this contributed to feelings of insecurity. Night-time safety in Earlestown was mentioned by participants as problematic, especially around the high street area. Some participants recommended community policing presence would be beneficial, with others proposing additional CCTV coverage in parks and public areas.

## Transport and Infrastructure

Parking difficulties were consistently reported on Newton High Street, around Earlestown Market, and at train stations. Many participants expressed concerns about heavy goods vehicle traffic on Newton High Street, suggesting this created safety hazards. Several participants said that the reliability and frequency of public transport services could be improved, and also the accessibility of the town’s train stations. Infrastructure maintenance concerns were also flagged, with mention of poor road surfaces and potholes.

# Demographics

Those who attended in-person events were from a range of backgrounds but were largely from Newton-le-Willows and nearby areas, or were residents who recently moved into the area. Some participants, however, disclosed themselves as having businesses in the area or as people who regularly visit or travel through Newton-le-Willows. The data collected from online survey respondents was supportive of this, as 87.3% were from the local area.

The people who attended in-person engagement events included local people, those from nearby areas, and residents who had recently moved into the area. Attendees also included members of the Neighbourhood Board, councillors, business owners, market traders and representatives from local community organisations. The members of the public engaged included families, young people and elderly people as well as people with disabilities. Online respondents were asked demographic questions at the end of the survey delivered as part of the project website. Below is a summary of key statistics:

## What age category are you in?

A small majority of respondents were aged 55–64 (22.4%). Participants aged 24 and under had engaged the least with the survey (3%).

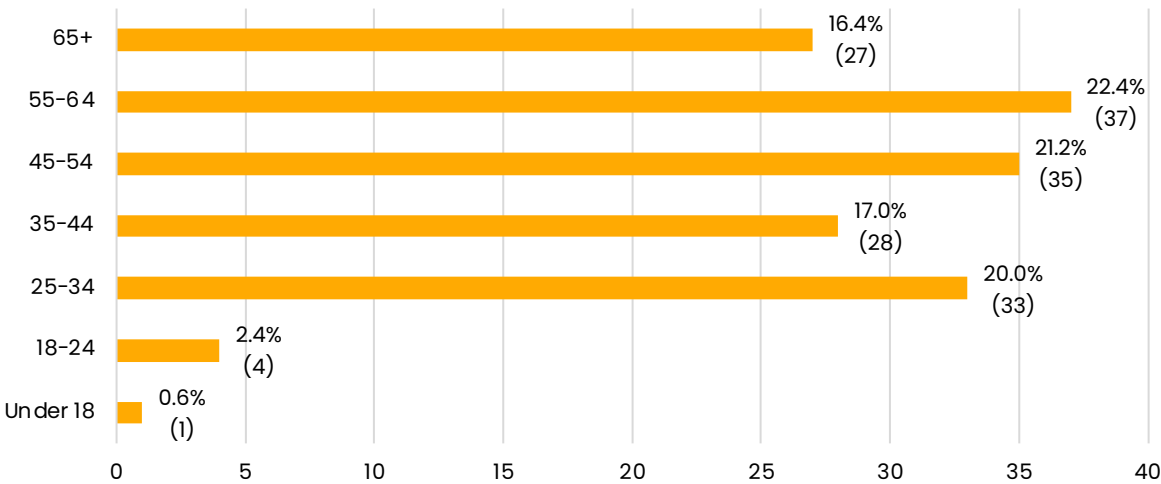


Figure 02. Responses to the question 'What age category are you in?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

## Ethnic Background

93.5% of respondents identified as 'White British'. The remaining participants comprised individuals from 'Any Other White Background' (1.3%) and 'Mixed Ethnic Background (White and Asian)' (1.3%). 3.9% of respondents preferred not to disclose their ethnic background.

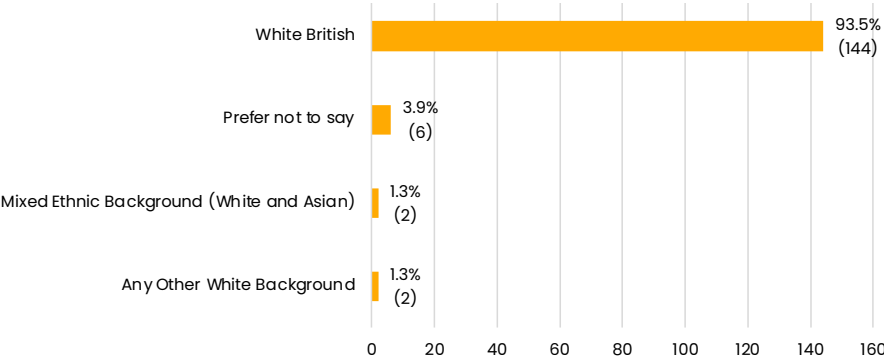


Figure 03. Responses to the question 'What is your ethnic background?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

Gender

56.9% of participants identified as female and 38.3% as male. 4.8% preferred not to say or did not disclose.

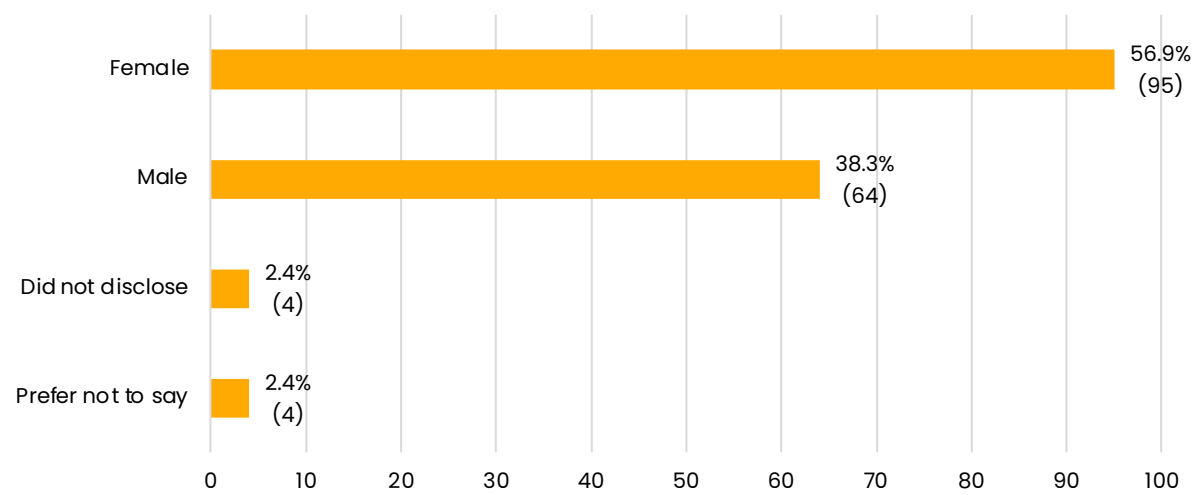


Figure 04. Responses to the question 'How do you identify your gender?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

What is your connection to the area?

The majority of respondents said they live in the area (87.3%), with 74% residing in WA12 postcodes. The rest of the survey respondents said they live nearby, own businesses in the area, visit or travel through the area, or are former residents.

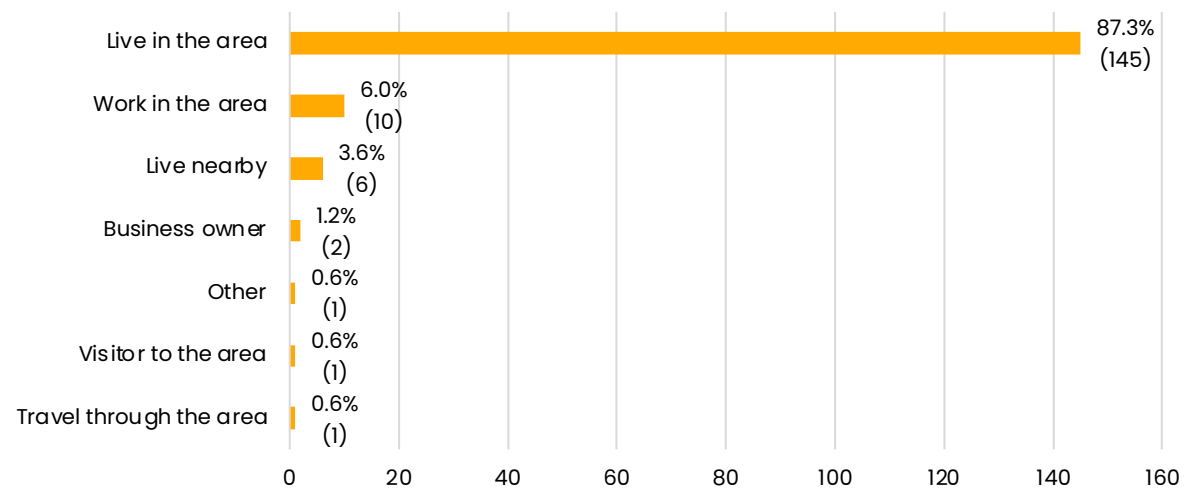


Figure 05. Responses to the question 'What is your connection to the area?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

Findings

The following are the key themes and comments received from the public engagement. It is important to acknowledge that the findings represent the views of only those who participated. Due to differing opinions amongst members of the public, contradictions and factual inaccuracies may be present in the findings, and it is recognised that this is the nature of public consultation. It must also be noted that participants may not have engaged with every question that was presented, whether online or at in-person events. As a result, responses to each question may not be entirely representative of the views of all the 682 people engaged during the consultation process. All engagement questions and themes were signed off by SHBC and the Neighbourhood Board before delivery.

Online Engagement

PLACED conducted engagement online with an interactive website dedicated to the Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods, which featured a survey and several comment spaces: <https://placed.mysocialpinpoint.com/newton-le-willows-plan-neighbourhoods>

Online engagement ran for 6 weeks (Monday 7th April – Sunday 18th May 2025). Participation figures are as follows:

- 2,297 number of views
- 1,516 visits
- 242 number of contributions in total (survey responses and comments)
- 199 participants
- 167 survey responses

Survey Responses

Question 1: What is special or unique about Newton-le-Willows?

Heritage and History

Survey respondents consistently highlighted the town’s railway heritage and industrial past, noting the town’s pioneering role in railway development. Others noted the historical importance of the Sankey Canal and the Nine Arches Viaduct. Some respondents suggested that the town’s history, dating back to the Domesday Book, contributes to its unique character, whilst others felt that its heritage needs better preservation and commemoration for future generations.

Community Spirit and Social Cohesion

Respondents said Newton-le-Willows has a friendly, community-minded atmosphere where residents support one another. Several respondents mentioned specific community initiatives, including Business for Youth and veterans’ groups, suggesting these contribute to social cohesion across different demographics. Survey respondents frequently praised community events such as Easter and Halloween trails along the High Street, as they reinforce community spirit and bring people together.



Transport Links and Strategic Location

Newton-le-Willows Train Station was frequently mentioned as providing convenient commuter links to major cities such as Liverpool and Manchester. Many respondents highlighted the town’s proximity to major motorways.

Green Spaces and Natural Environment

Many highlighted the Sankey Valley, the canal walkways, and local parks as important recreational assets. Several respondents mentioned Willow Park and Newton Brook as valued green spaces. Others mentioned the countryside setting and the balance between rural and urban characteristics as appealing.

Market and Traditional Commerce

Earlestown Market was mentioned by several survey respondents as a distinctive feature, with some suggesting it contributes to the town’s traditional market town character. Some respondents noted Market Square and the surrounding buildings as historically significant features. However, respondents did recognise that the market area requires investment and improvement to reach its full potential.

Question 2: On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being ‘very poor’ and 5 being ‘very good’, how would you rate the existing buildings and public spaces in Newton-le-Willows?

Most survey respondents (47% / 77 respondents) gave existing buildings and public spaces in Newton-le-Willows a rating of ‘3’, which was a neutral response. Only 1.8% (3 respondents) gave existing buildings and public spaces a rating of ‘5’, meaning ‘very good’.

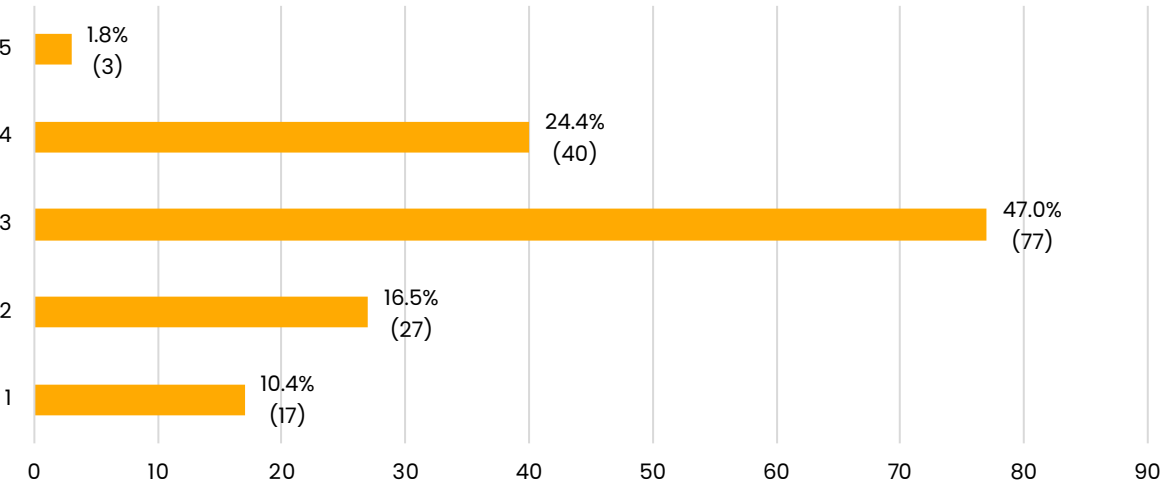


Figure 06. Responses to the question ‘On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being ‘very poor’ and 5 being ‘very good’, how would you rate existing buildings and public spaces in Newton-le-Willows?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

Contrast Between Newton and Earlestown

Survey respondents consistently highlighted the contrast between Newton High Street and Earlestown Town Centre. They described Newton High Street as well-maintained, thriving, and attractive, with no empty properties and independent businesses. By contrast, multiple respondents characterised Earlestown as run-down, depressing, and uninviting. Many respondents reported concerns about Earlestown’s retail environment, with several noting an overabundance of barbers and vape shops.

Building Conditions

Respondents mentioned recent buildings collapsing, including a corner shop that creates a visible eyesore. Market Street, Bridge Street, and Earle Street were mentioned as areas with buildings in poor condition.

Heritage Building Preservation

Some respondents expressed appreciation for historic buildings such as Earlestown Town Hall, The Griffin, St Peter’s Church, and the Nine Arches Sankey Viaduct. It was felt that these heritage assets could attract visitors but currently lack promotion and/or investment. Several respondents felt that historic buildings are being left to deteriorate despite their potential significance to the community.

Transport Infrastructure

Several survey respondents flagged the condition of train stations, with many noting that Earlestown Station requires significant investment and improved facilities. Some respondents raised concerns about heavy goods vehicle traffic in residential areas and on Newton High Street, with several noting that this creates safety concerns for families with young children.

Public Spaces and Parks

Some survey respondents mentioned that play equipment in various parks, such as The Dingle, is outdated or non-functional. Some respondents felt that green spaces are being lost to housing development. Many respondents commented on litter problems affecting public spaces, despite adequate bin provision.

Community Buildings and Services

Survey respondents praised community facilities such as the library, family hub, and community centres, although some suggested these buildings were underused. Many respondents commented positively on ongoing renovations to the Town Hall, viewing this as an example of appropriate heritage preservation. Several people noted that public toilets require renovation and that there are limited large indoor community spaces available.



**Question 3: On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being 'very poor' and 5 being 'very good', how would you rate existing services and infrastructure in Newton-le-Willows?**

A small majority of respondents (38.4% / 61 respondents) gave existing services and infrastructure a rating of '3', which was a neutral response. Only 6.3% (10 respondents) gave a rating of '5', meaning 'very good'.

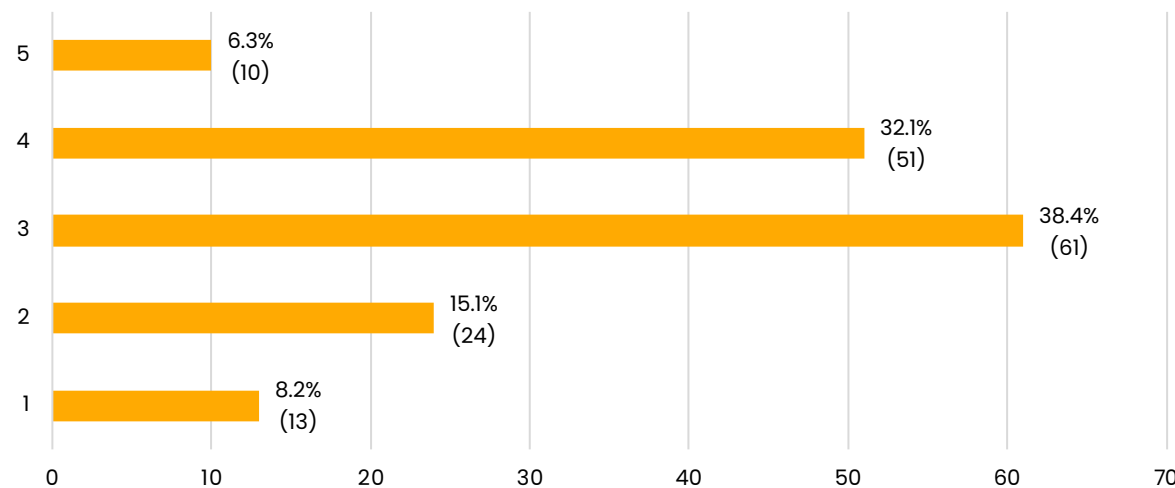


Figure 07. Responses to the question 'On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being 'very poor' and 5 being 'very good', how would you rate existing services and infrastructure in Newton-le-Willows? Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**Health Services and Appointment Access**

Survey respondents reported significant difficulties accessing GP appointments, with many suggesting the current provision is inadequate for the town's growing population. Some respondents suggested that GP surgeries are over-subscribed, with many claiming that appointments are predominantly with substitute doctors. Several people also said they were unable to register with local NHS dentists, forcing them to seek private treatment or travel significant distances for care. Respondents praised Newton Community Hospital, with many commenting positively on the quality of care provided. However, some respondents said that equipment such as X-ray machines needs to be updated.

**Train Services and Accessibility**

Respondents frequently praised the town's rail links. However, many respondents flagged frequent cancellations and delays. Some respondents suggested that train frequency is inadequate, particularly the single hourly service to Liverpool, which is felt to be insufficient for daily commuters. Many respondents highlighted significant accessibility issues at Earlestown Train Station, with several suggesting that disabled access is poor or non-existent.

**Bus Services**

Survey respondents provided mixed feedback about bus services, with some praising connections to Warrington and others criticising service frequency and reliability. Several respondents noted that bus services have been reduced, with some reporting that routes that previously ran every 20-30 minutes now operate hourly. Many people said that bus fares to neighbouring towns were expensive. Some respondents suggested that evening services are limited, affecting access to entertainment and employment opportunities.

**School Capacity**

Several respondents raised concerns about school capacity, with some suggesting that nurseries, primary schools, and secondary schools are over-subscribed. Respondents suggested that school spaces are becoming increasingly difficult to secure for local families, and some respondents felt that the approved development off Mill Lane could make these pressures worse.

**Youth Services and Facilities**

Respondents called for youth clubs to be reinstated, suggesting that there are no activities for young people in the evenings. Respondents said youth workers should be deployed in parks to engage teenagers and provide positive activities.

**Population Growth Without Service Expansion**

Many respondents said that the town has experienced significant population growth over the past 20 years without adequate investment in healthcare, education, or transport infrastructure. Several respondents noted that Newton-le-Willows has accommodated the majority of new housing in the borough, yet services have not expanded proportionally.

**Question 4: What do you think are the key challenges for Newton-le-Willows?**

**Traffic and Transport Infrastructure**

Survey respondents consistently highlighted concerns about heavy goods vehicles passing through Newton-le-Willows, particularly along Newton High Street and the A49. Many reported that the volume of lorries creates safety hazards near schools and residential areas, with some suggesting that businesses should be encouraged to relocate to Parkside to reduce this burden. Some respondents' views were that the proposed Parkside development could increase congestion and air pollution.

**Parking Challenges**

Survey respondents frequently cited parking difficulties as a significant concern, particularly on Newton High Street and around Earlestown. Several said that commuters using train stations exacerbate parking problems throughout residential areas. A few respondents suggested that new housing developments should include adequate parking provision. Some noted that whilst Earlestown currently benefits from easier parking compared to Newton, the planned regeneration needs careful consideration of adequate parking provision to ensure viability for the town.

**Earlestown Regeneration and Development**

Many described Earlestown as run-down and requiring modernisation to match Newton's standards. Some suggested that Earlestown needs to become a destination rather than simply receiving regeneration funding; it must have events and attractions to encourage visitors. Respondents suggested that this is crucial for attracting footfall. Several people felt that Earlestown needs diverse commercial offerings beyond the current predominance of takeaways, barber shops, and beauty services.



### **Anti-Social Behaviour and Young People**

Many survey respondents mentioned issues with young people on scrambler bikes and quad bikes, which make some people feel unsafe, particularly women walking alone at night. Respondents frequently suggested that insufficient activities for young people contribute to anti-social behaviour. Drug-related activity was mentioned by several respondents. Incidents of vandalism were raised, and some said that green spaces feel unsafe during evening hours due to intimidating groups. Some respondents suggested that increased police presence and better youth services could help address these challenges.

### **Economic Disparities and Housing**

Respondents observed disparities between different areas within Newton-le-Willows, particularly between Newton and Earlestown. Several respondents suggested that this economic divide creates challenges for community cohesion. Some noted that the influx of commuters has pushed house prices beyond the reach of local young people, creating affordability issues for those wishing to remain in the area. Respondents expressed concerns about the pace and scale of housing development, particularly regarding infrastructure capacity. Many reported that schools, healthcare facilities, and roads were already struggling to cope with existing populations before additional housing was constructed. Some respondents suggested that too much green space is being lost to development, affecting the area's character and resident wellbeing.

### **Healthcare and Essential Services**

Many respondents mentioned difficulties accessing GP appointments and the shortage of NHS dental services. Some noted that the growing population required expanded healthcare facilities, with suggestions for new GP surgeries and pharmacy services, particularly in Earlestown. Respondents also mentioned the need for improved services for families with children who have special educational needs.

### **Question 5: What do you think are key opportunities for Newton-le-Willows?**

#### **Earlestown Regeneration and Development**

Many respondents said that the planned investment could transform the area and bring it up to the standards of Newton High Street. Several respondents suggested that shop front improvement schemes could make Earlestown more inviting and create a worthwhile destination for visitors. Some noted that regeneration presented opportunities for new businesses to establish themselves and diversify the current retail offerings. Others said that Earlestown should establish a business-focused group to work alongside the Council.

#### **Heritage and Historical Assets**

Respondents praised the area's rich railway heritage as an underutilised opportunity. Many felt the town's historical significance could be better promoted to attract visitors. Several respondents suggested developing heritage attractions such as museums, visitor centres, or repurposing the old station building as a café and exhibition space. Some noted that the upcoming 200th anniversary of the world's first intercity railway line presented a particular opportunity for celebration and tourism development.

### **Transport Links and Strategic Location**

Survey respondents highlighted the area's strategic position between Liverpool, Manchester, Warrington, and other major centres, suggesting this makes it attractive for both residents and businesses. Some suggested that the area's proximity to motorways, combined with rail links, could create opportunities for freight and logistics operations such as the Parkside development.

### **Youth Services and Community Facilities**

Survey respondents identified significant opportunities to improve provision for young people in Newton-le-Willows. Many suggested that youth zones similar to those in Warrington or Wigan could address current gaps in services and help reduce anti-social behaviour. Several respondents commented on the potential for improved sports facilities, including scooter tracks, bike pump tracks, and all-weather sporting facilities.

### **Market Square and Community Events**

Respondents suggested that Market Square could be used more for community events and markets, potentially following successful models from other towns such as Altrincham. Several respondents suggested that updating the market and attracting diverse traders could create a destination that draws visitors by train from Manchester and Liverpool. Some noted that proper promotion and advertising of market events, including signage for commuters, could increase footfall. Some respondents felt that community events and activities could help bridge the divide between Newton and Earlestown, creating a more unified sense of place and shared identity.

### **Question 6: Are any challenges and opportunities you have identified location-specific?**

*This question involved an interactive map of Newton-le-Willows. Survey respondents could place pins on specific locations to identify challenges and opportunities.*

#### **Earlestown Market Street**

Numerous concerns were raised about the condition of buildings along Market Street, with respondents describing the area as uninviting and in poor condition. Many survey respondents suggested implementing a shop front scheme to improve the appearance of storefronts, with some recommending painted murals on metal shutters to enhance the visual appeal of businesses when they are closed. Several respondents noted collapsed and dangerous buildings. Market Square was identified as requiring better utilisation, with some respondents reporting that it functions as a car park when not in use for market days.

#### **Bridge Street and Gable Street**

Shopfronts were identified as needing refurbishment, with suggestions to improve the road network through grants and enforcement measures.

#### **Sankey Street**

This street was described as having many heavy goods vehicles and speeding cars. Road maintenance was described as poor, and comments suggested introducing a bike track.



**Earlestown Train Station**

Earlestown Train Station was identified by numerous survey respondents as requiring significant improvements, particularly regarding accessibility. Specific suggestions included modernising facilities, improving services, adding lift access, and converting the wasteland into allotments or the old waiting room into a café. Survey respondents said they preferred Newton-le-Willows Train Station, and they tend to avoid using Earlestown Train Station due to perceptions of inadequate parking provision and limited connections.

**Newton-le-Willows High Street**

Several improvement suggestions were made for this area, including wider pavements, attractive street lighting, and space for outdoor café seating. Some respondents recommended investment in the street scene to make it more accessible, inclusive and protected from the traffic of Parkside, with specific reference to adopting a design approach like Poynton.

**The Sankey Canal and Viaduct**

Sankey Viaduct was highlighted as an underutilised asset, with respondents suggesting the area could be made into an outdoor classroom.

**St John Street**

The playground area was reported as dirty and unmaintained. St Johns the Baptist Church on this street was described as a valuable community asset providing numerous services, including worship, children’s activities, a playgroup, a food bank, and support groups. Respondents noted that the church requires repairs, kitchen and toilet upgrades, garden maintenance, and pest control.

**Wargrave Road**

Survey respondents noted inadequate signage about the bridge on this road and identified traffic issues. Some respondents reported bad parking along the entire length of the road, causing problems for through traffic.

**Earle Street**

Buildings were identified as requiring attention, including collapsed structures. The Rams Head pub was reported to have been empty for years, and it was felt that these buildings create a poor impression at the main gateway into town.

**Oxford Street**

This area was described as run-down, uninviting and attracting a lot of anti-social behaviour as a result. Respondents suggested improving the shopfronts and buildings to complement the new market square.

**Cross Lane**

Anti-social behaviour was reported at this location.

**Pipit Avenue and Frawley Avenue**

Survey respondents reported that the play area is often dirty, has broken and missing equipment, and is poorly maintained. It was reported that Frawley Avenue has become a hub for anti-social behaviour.

**Mercer Street**

Residential parking restrictions were suggested for this location.

**Victoria Road**

The road was described as ‘pothole-ridden’.

**Rob Lane and Southworth Road**

These locations were identified as frequent sites for fly-tipping and littering.

**Tutor Bank Drive**

Anti-social behaviour was reported in Mesnes Park at night.

**Common Road**

Quad bikes and scramblers are reportedly driving through the estate at least once a week.

**Castle Hill**

Respondents reported water pollution issues at this location, with concerns about impacts on both health and wildlife.

**Parkside Road**

Some respondents’ views were that the Parkside development could have a negative impact on the environment, whilst others said it created job opportunities.

**Lancaster Close**

A spate of arson attacks by young people was reported at this location.

**Pennington Drive**

Survey respondents highlighted the potential to link up green and blue open spaces across the town for cycling and walking, with suggestions for waymarked or colour-coded routes of varying lengths. Some respondents recommended restoring the canal by digging it out and linking up in-water sections from Penkford Bridge to Havannah Flash.

**Park Road North**

The children’s play area in Mesnes Park was described as requiring an upgrade and maintenance.



**Question 7: What difference would you like this funding to make in the town? What changes would you like to see as a result?**

**Regeneration and High Streets**

Survey respondents frequently emphasised the urgent need for regeneration in Earlestown, with many suggesting that the area appeared run-down and required significant investment to restore it to its former glory. Others suggested that Newton High Street, whilst already well-developed, could benefit from continued support to maintain its thriving character.

**Safety and Policing**

Respondents said that more visible policing is needed, particularly in Earlestown, with some suggesting that community police officers should patrol on foot or by bicycle. Several comments flagged anti-social behaviour and drug-related issues, particularly around Earlestown Train Station and town centre areas. Survey respondents felt that improved CCTV, better lighting in pedestrian areas, and neighbourhood watch schemes could create safer streets.

**Transport and Connectivity**

Transport improvements featured prominently in responses, with many commenting on the need for better public transport links and connectivity. Several highlighted accessibility improvements at Earlestown Train Station. Some people said that bus services required improvement to provide better links to surrounding areas, including Warrington, Wigan, and Leigh. Others suggested that cycling infrastructure should be enhanced with connections developed between the Sankey Valley Trail, High Street, and Earlestown to promote active travel and reduce traffic congestion.

**Facilities for Young People**

Many respondents highlighted the lack of facilities and activities for young people, particularly those aged 12–17. Several respondents suggested that youth clubs and activity centres should be established. Others felt that outdoor recreational facilities, such as a Mucky Mountains area for off-road biking, could provide positive activities for young people. Some respondents commented that youth workers should be employed to engage with young people in parks such as Mesnes Park and Willow Park, whilst others suggested that IT, maths, and literacy programmes could help young people develop job-ready skills.

**Accessibility**

Several respondents highlighted accessibility challenges, particularly for wheelchair users navigating the town’s pavements. Some commented that shop and café access needs improvement, with people noting that sloped and patchy pavements make wheelchair navigation difficult. Others proposed that facilities should be designed to accommodate people with mobility issues, with suggestions that limited car parking spaces create significant challenges for people with severe walking difficulties.

**Healthcare and Community Services**

Respondents suggested that more GP surgeries and dental practices are required. Some people felt that mental health services should be enhanced, particularly for young people. Others suggested that community-based wellbeing activities could support residents’ health and social connections. Some respondents felt that public toilets should be provided as basic community infrastructure.

**Question 8: Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?**

Whilst responses were mixed overall, reflecting that all the investment themes could be considered as priority areas, a small majority of online respondents (16.8%) said they would most like to see investment in ‘Regeneration, high streets and heritage’. Only 8.5% wanted to see the ‘Housing’ investment theme prioritised.

Note that the results in the graph below are only presented as percentages, as this question featured in the survey as a ranking question. Results for this question were therefore worked out as weighted averages and have been presented as percentages in the graph below for ease of reading.

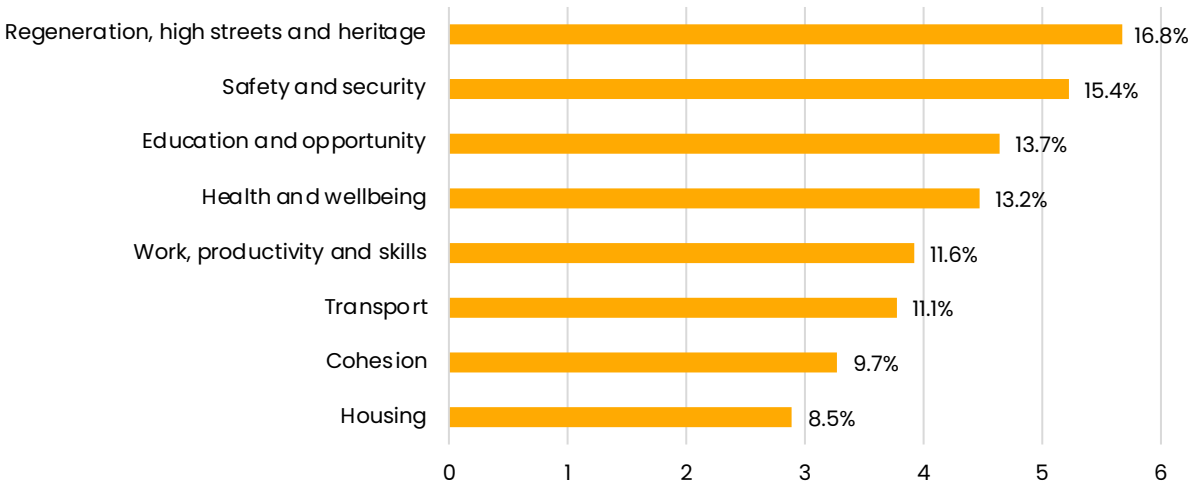


Figure 08. Responses to the question ‘Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes.



**Question 9: What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?**

‘High street development’ was the most popular option (12.6% / 107 votes), followed by ‘Creating and improving green spaces’ (11.7% / 99 votes). ‘Digital infrastructure for community facilities’ was the least popular (4% / 34 votes).

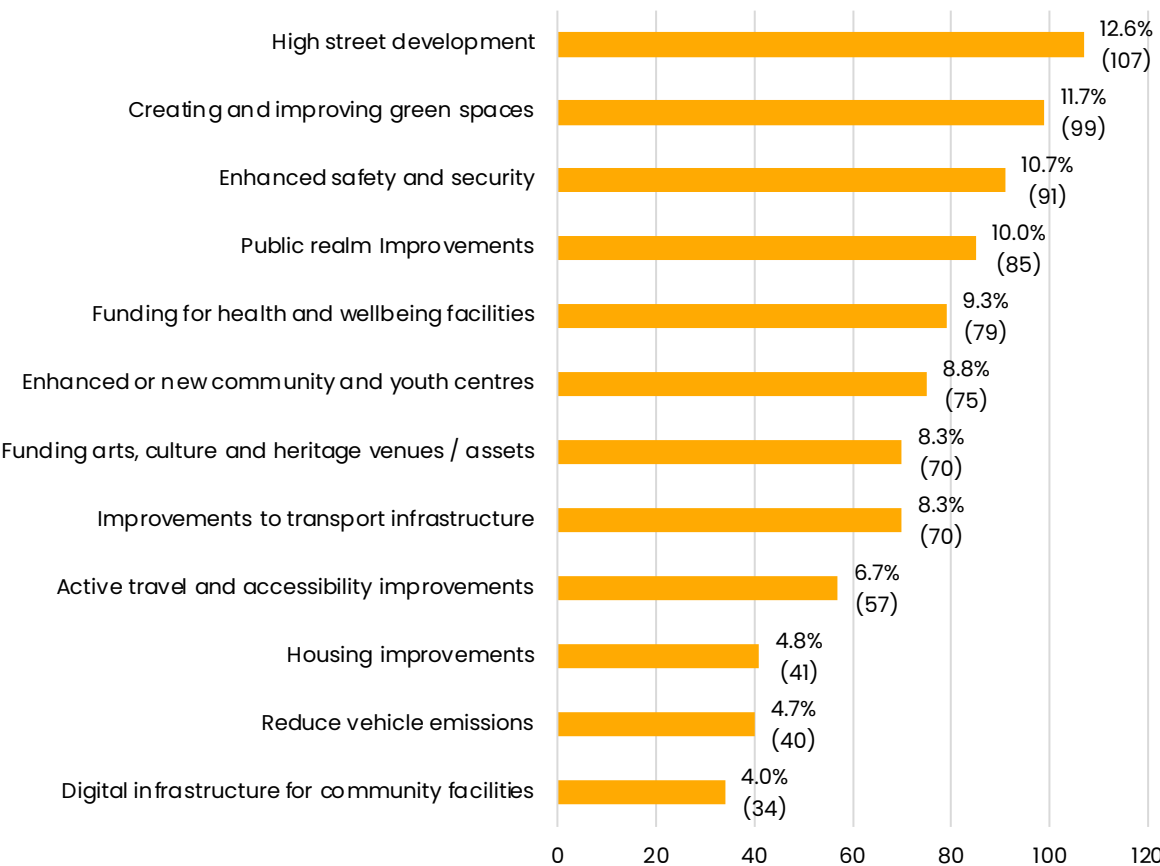


Figure 09. Responses to the question ‘What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**Question 10: Are there any existing buildings, public spaces or development projects you think could benefit from further funding or investment?**

**Parks and Green Spaces**

In conjunction with the focus above on regeneration and high streets, respondents indicated preferences for regeneration projects that enhance existing green spaces. Multiple survey respondents suggested that Mesnes Park would benefit from enhanced facilities, particularly children’s play areas and the playground adjacent to the bandstand. Some felt that the Rangers hut could be developed into a community café, whilst others suggested that the Dingle area off Earle Street needs maintenance and could be developed into a nature space.

**Sports and Leisure Facilities**

Survey respondents suggested that Newton Health and Fitness Centre experienced high demand from surrounding areas, including Golborne, Ashton, and Haydock, resulting in oversubscribed classes. Respondents felt that facility expansion would better serve community needs.

**Churches and Community Buildings**

Multiple respondents suggested that local churches, including St Peter’s, St John’s, All Saints,

and Emmanuel, require investment to maintain their community functions. Some respondents reported that these buildings need electrical upgrades, heating systems, and structural repairs to continue serving community events and faith activities.

**New Youth Spaces**

Several respondents felt that the old building on Alder Street could serve as a youth facility with community groups providing management support.

**Transport Infrastructure**

Comments indicated both train stations require investment in waiting room facilities, toilet provisions, and lift access to cross railway lines. Others felt that improved signage and marketing at Newton-le-Willows station would enhance the town’s gateway presentation.

**The Rams Head Public House**

Respondents consistently identified The Rams Head as requiring attention, with many suggesting it had become an eyesore within the community. Some respondents felt this historic building represented an important community asset that could be restored for public benefit.

**Question 11: What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?**

‘Crime prevention initiatives’ was the most popular option (13.7% / 108 votes), whilst ‘Support for disabled people in the workplace’ and ‘Enhanced support for arts, culture and heritage’ both received the lowest number of votes (6.1% / 48 votes).

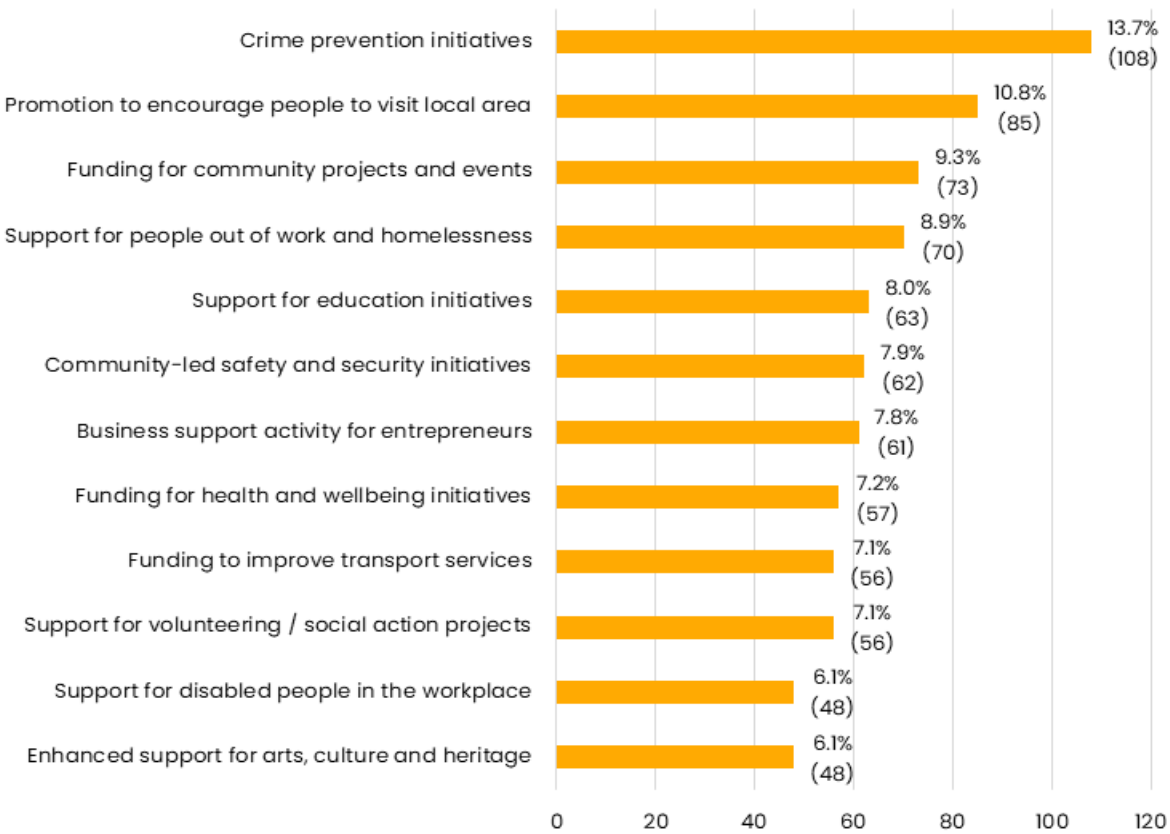


Figure 10. Responses to the question ‘What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.



## Existing Community Facilities

## Healthcare and Wellbeing Services

## Existing Sports Facilities

## Heritage and Tourism

**Question 13: In no more than three words, how would you like to describe Newton-le-Willows in the future?**



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## Community Consultation

## Funding Priorities and Implementation

## Infrastructure and development concerns

## Comment Spaces

The following is a summary of the contributions PLACED received on these comment areas.

## Public Infrastructure and Maintenance

## Green Spaces and Recreation

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of play areas at both Willow Park and Mesnes Park was identified as a priority by multiple participants. Several participants suggested maintaining football posts on public fields to encourage young people’s recreational activities, whilst others recommended creating a running track around St Aelred’s old school field to promote fitness.

**Town Development**

Several participants expressed opposition to building on green belt land. Regarding town character, some participants suggested reintroducing Georgian windows to Newton-le-Willows High Street and replacing shop window fronts accordingly to enhance its historical character. The regeneration of Earlestown Market was recommended by several participants, who suggested more modern, attractive stalls and potentially the addition of an indoor area. Some participants suggested that improved Earlestown-branded signage could help direct people toward areas of interest. Some participants envisioned that Newton-le-Willows could provide skilled jobs and apprenticeships. Others suggested repurposing part of Sankey Valley industrial estate to introduce quality office blocks.

**Youth Services and Wellbeing**

Participants expressed strong support for Newton Boys and Girls Club, believing it enhances health and wellbeing services for young people. Some participants suggested that a preventative approach through health and wellbeing-focused youth work programmes in Earlestown and Newton would be more effective than later interventions.

**Education Provision**

Concerns were raised by some participants regarding school capacity on the east side of Newton. Some participants reported difficulties securing places despite regular church attendance. This situation was reported to result in increased car journeys for school drop-offs, which participants felt had negative environmental impacts. Some participants suggested amending the admissions policy to prioritise children living closest to the school.

**Parking**

Some participants suggested that a multi-storey car park in Earlestown would be essential to accommodate forthcoming regeneration plans. Parking at train stations was also perceived to be insufficient, with suggestions that it is creating parking problems in residential areas. Participants recommended implementing traffic orders or charges for station overspill parking.

**Heritage Preserves**

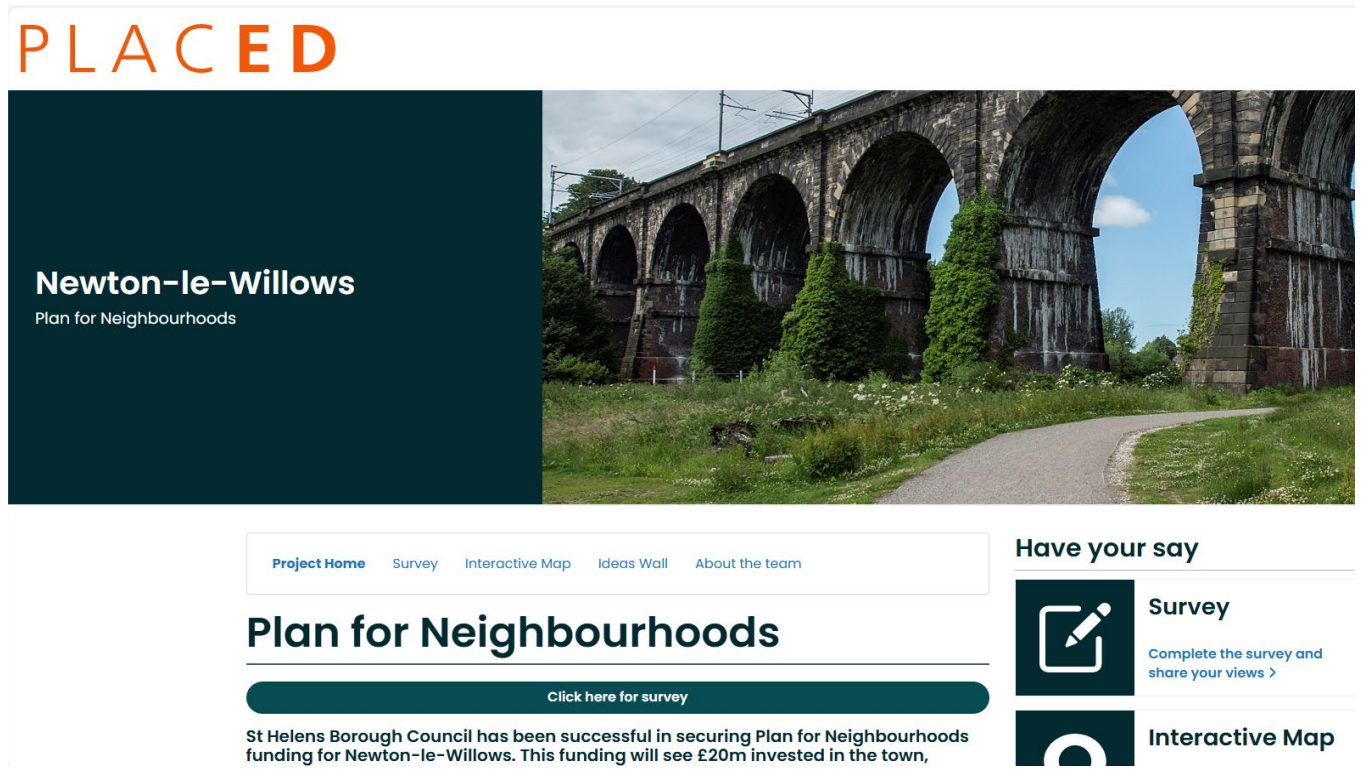
Several participants expressed interest in heritage preservation, with some suggesting restoration of forgotten heritage sites to create a ‘cobbled way of nostalgia’ and others advocating for the promotion of the town’s industrial history as part of wider regional heritage initiatives. Participants highlighted their appreciation for Vulcan Village’s industrial heritage, noting how the historical importance of the area remains evident, still to this day.

**Transportation and Infrastructure**

Traffic management was highlighted as a significant concern by many participants, with particular emphasis on limiting heavy goods vehicle traffic through Newton High Street. Several participants suggested that this would enhance air quality in the area. Some participants recommended implementing traffic calming measures such as kerb buildouts and additional pedestrian crossings at locations such The Kirkfield and the walkway to the station. Improved walking routes from Earlestown Market and train station were suggested by some participants, along with better linked-up bus facilities. Crow Lane West was described as having numerous potholes and lacking maintenance.

**Safety and Security**

Participants recommended improved security measures, including new security cameras in certain areas and 24/7 security around pedestrianised zones. Safety concerns were raised regarding Crow Lane East, with participants sharing that crossing the road was challenging and potentially hazardous, with frequent red-light violations and speeding vehicles. Participants noted a lack of speed limit signs or ‘slow down’ warnings.





# In-person Events

PLACED’s in-person events included 2x ‘pop-ups’, which were public events open to all, and 4x ‘drop-ins’, which were shorter events that targeted specific local groups (e.g., businesses, community, heritage, and sports). To ensure footfall, pop-up events took place alongside existing events such as The Pop Up market in Earlestown and High Street Markets. Event locations and targeted audiences for these events were selected by SHBC and the Neighbourhood Board.

## Pop-up Events

- Saturday 12th April, 10.00am – 4.00pm, The Pop-up Market (90 attendees)
- Sunday 4th May, 12.00pm – 5.00pm, High Street Markets (180 attendees)

## Drop-in Events

- Wednesday 23rd April, 4.00pm – 7.00pm, St Peter’s Church (21 attendees)
- Thursday 1st May, 11.00am–2.00pm, Newton Community Centre (17 attendees)
- Tuesday 6th May, 2.00pm – 5.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Library (10 attendees)
- Friday 9th May, 5.00pm – 8.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Sports Club (66 attendees)

## Additional Council Engagement

- Thursday 15th May, 6.30pm – 9.00pm, Newton-le-Willows Sea Cadets (42 attendees, 27 of these being young people)
- Friday 16th May, 12.00pm – 1.20pm, Woods Court Sheltered Housing (7 attendees)

It must be noted that more people than the above were made aware of the Plan for Neighbourhoods scheme, as additional flyers were distributed during events, and there were members of the public who read the information boards but did not actively participate.



The following is a summary of the key findings from PLACED’s in-person events.

## Question 1: What makes Newton-le-Willows special or unique?

### Community Spirit and Identity

Participants said that there is a strong sense of community across Newton and Earlestown, with several highlighting the pleasant community atmosphere. Those engaged felt that community investment should be a priority in making Newton-le-Willows a great place to live. Some participants said they loved the community feel of the town and wanted to preserve it amongst the upcoming changes. Others felt that the community spaces in Earlestown were excellent but could benefit from additional support.

### Markets and Local Economy

It was suggested that the market is a key feature of Earlestown, with many participants identifying that it serves as an important social hub. Some participants said that they specifically moved to the area because of the market. Others felt that Newton-le-Willows has an entrepreneurial character as there are many independent businesses on Newton High Street.

### Heritage and Recreation

The rich heritage of Newton-le-Willows was highlighted as a key asset, with specific mentions of Vulcan Village and the former Vulcan Foundry and Locomotive Works. Participants appreciated the green spaces and walking opportunities in the area. It was suggested that the skate park is a valuable resource for young people.

### Transport Links and Location

It was widely recognised that transport links in Newton-le-Willows were good, with many people highlighting Newton-le-Willows Train Station as a key asset to the town. Some participants felt the area has great potential due to its location, but this is not being fully realised. Others commented positively on recent improvements to Newton-le-Willows Train Station, suggesting these changes have contributed significantly to the area's appeal.

### Areas for Improvement

Whilst PLACED had asked here about the strengths and assets of the town, some participants were critical, flagging that Earlestown Town Centre is ‘dead’ outside of market days. Participants suggested promoting a more active night-time economy and keeping shops open later than 3-4 pm so that the town does not look like ‘shutter city’. There were concerns raised about drug and shoplifting incidents happening in broad daylight, and participants reported issues with rubbish and maintenance in certain areas, particularly Wargrave.



**Question 2: Are there any existing assets in Newton-le-Willows that could be enhanced or developed with further funding or investment?**

**Existing Community Centres**

Participants suggested that Crownway Community Centre needs further investment and support, particularly the food bank at the centre. Some participants mentioned Newton Community Centre as a valuable asset to the community that deserves more support.

**Transport and Accessibility**

Participants felt that the accessibility of both Earlestown Train Station and Newton-le-Willows Train Station could be enhanced with further investment. It was flagged that lifts are frequently out of order at Newton-le-Willows Train Station, and parking is limited. Some participants also felt that bus services need improvement.

**Business and Economic Development**

It was suggested that co-working spaces for entrepreneurs could be created to support the local economy. Some participants had the perspective that more should be done to ‘look after market traders’, with concerns expressed about the future. Others said that the high street could benefit from a more diverse range of shops, such as clothes and shoe shops.

**Enhancing Green Spaces**

Participants noted that the play equipment at The Dingle could be improved with additional funding. It was suggested that more parks could be developed, along with better play equipment for areas frequented by families with babies. Others felt the Sankey Canal could be further developed for fishing. Some participants suggested that existing sports facilities and play equipment need enhancement.

**Cultural Events and Activities**

Participants felt that Newton Music Festival is an asset that deserves more support and recommended more activities and services for young people.



**Question 3: Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?**

‘Regeneration, high streets and heritage’ received the highest number of votes (21.3% / 115 votes), shortly followed by ‘Education and Opportunity’ (18.5% / 100 votes). ‘Work, productivity and skills’ and ‘Housing’ received the lowest number of votes, with 5% / 27 votes respectively.

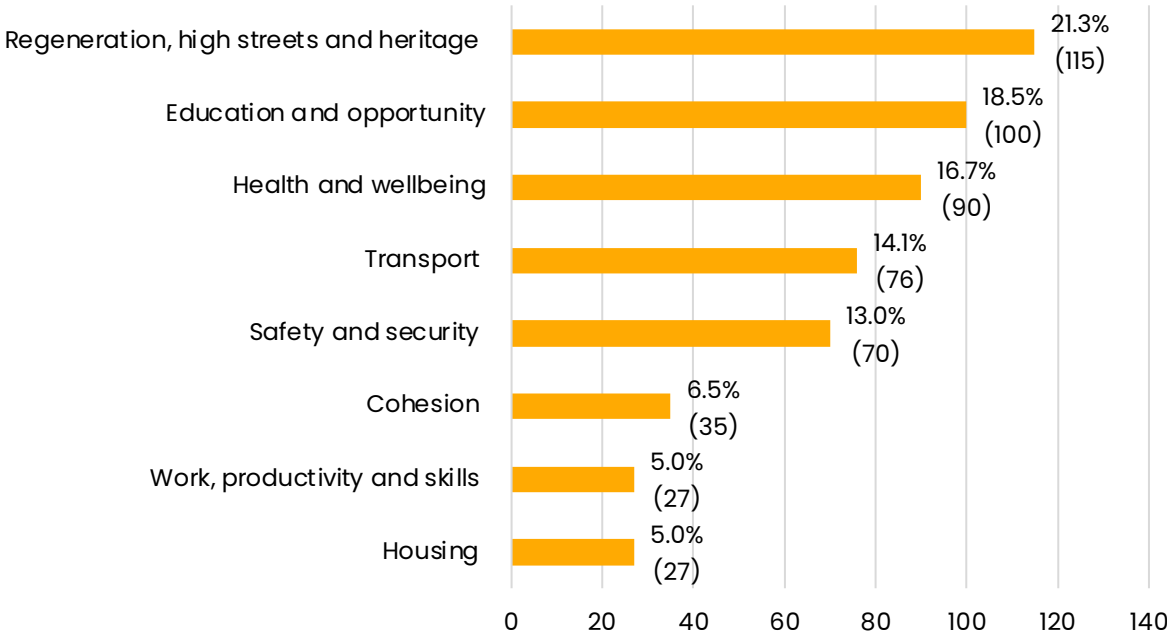


Figure 12. Responses to the question ‘Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage**

Participants expressed concerns about the condition of some areas, particularly in Earlestown. They suggested that Earlestown Town Centre needs urgent investment and regeneration, with many commenting that shop fronts appear unsightly and the area looks very run down. Several attendees recommended introducing spaces for gathering and socialising in Earlestown, with suggestions for more cafés. Participants flagged that there is a poor diversity of shops in Earlestown and wished to see a range of stores with independent businesses thriving in the area.

Respondents expressed their desire to see accelerated delivery of the regeneration of Earlestown as a catalyst for growth. Some attendees reported that market traders are concerned development plans could make rent less affordable. There were multiple suggestions that Warrington Market and Baltic Market serve as good examples for Earlestown’s development, as well as Newton High Street.



**Education and Opportunity**

Educational provision was mentioned by several participants, with some noting there are not enough school spaces to meet demand. Support for students with special educational needs, both in school and in accessible community spaces, was highlighted. After-school activities were suggested as important additions to educational opportunities. Some participants expressed a desire for better provision for young people aged 15–18 years. Some participants suggested incorporating a library into the town hall to make it more central.

**Health and Wellbeing**

Healthcare accessibility was a significant concern for participants, with many expressing a desire for more health services in the local area. Mental health support in Earlestown was highlighted as an area requiring investment. Participants also suggested that healthier food choices in high street areas would be beneficial. Sports and leisure facilities were frequently mentioned, with some attendees suggesting that the swimming pool in Newton-le-Willows is outdated in terms of modern standards. There were calls for more weather-proof football and rugby pitches, with participants suggesting that the current facilities do not cater to different seasons or accessibility needs.

**Transport**

Transport concerns featured prominently in feedback, with public transport reliability and frequency being major issues. Many attendees said that bus and train services are not regular enough, with some noting a reduction in services over time. Train services between Manchester and Liverpool were highlighted as needing improvement, with several participants requesting more frequent services. Some attendees suggested better transport links could enhance employment opportunities by connecting residents to jobs in nearby locations. There were also suggestions for better signposting for cyclists.

Parking emerged as a significant concern across multiple locations. Participants noted issues with parking in Earlestown around the market and stations. The car park at Newton-le-Willows Train Station was reported to be full by 7:20 am, with suggestions for a multi-storey car park to address capacity issues. Some participants proposed residents-only parking around train stations and markets, whilst others suggested that more disabled parking spaces are needed. Several attendees flagged the need for improved links to Wargrave and Vulcan Park.

**Safety and Security**

Crime and security concerns were raised, specifically mentioning issues in Earlestown. Several attendees suggested increasing community policing presence and introducing more traffic calming measures. Participants also flagged the need for safer pedestrian crossings and better road user behaviour, with some concerns about drivers using mobile phones whilst driving.

**Cohesion**

Participants expressed concerns that the community was not as ‘tight-knit’ as it once was. Several attendees noted a perceived division within the town, particularly between the Newton and Earlestown areas. There were suggestions for more community activities, with some participants specifically mentioning a desire for women-only clubs where people could socialise and talk.

**Work, Productivity and Skills**

Employment opportunities were highlighted as a crucial area for investment, with participants noting that many people are living in the town but commuting to cities like Liverpool and Manchester for work. Several attendees suggested that improved local employment opportunities could help retain people in the area, particularly young professionals.

Work experience and placements for young people were mentioned frequently, with participants suggesting these could help build skills and provide pathways to employment. Business support for existing businesses was also suggested, along with education opportunities outside of traditional schooling. A few participants suggested attracting high-value employment sectors by improving digital infrastructure, supporting green tech SMEs, and expanding vocational training aligned to modern industries.

**Housing**

Attendees called for more affordable housing to be developed. The need for more Council housing was mentioned by multiple participants. Some attendees expressed interest in the provision of housing for specific demographics, including young people and single people. Several attendees commented on the need for additional services to support growing housing developments, noting that infrastructure is not expanding alongside new housing.



**Question 4: What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?**

‘High street development’ received the highest number of votes (19.4% / 104 votes), whilst ‘Funding for digital infrastructure for community facilities’ received the lowest (2.6% / 14 votes).

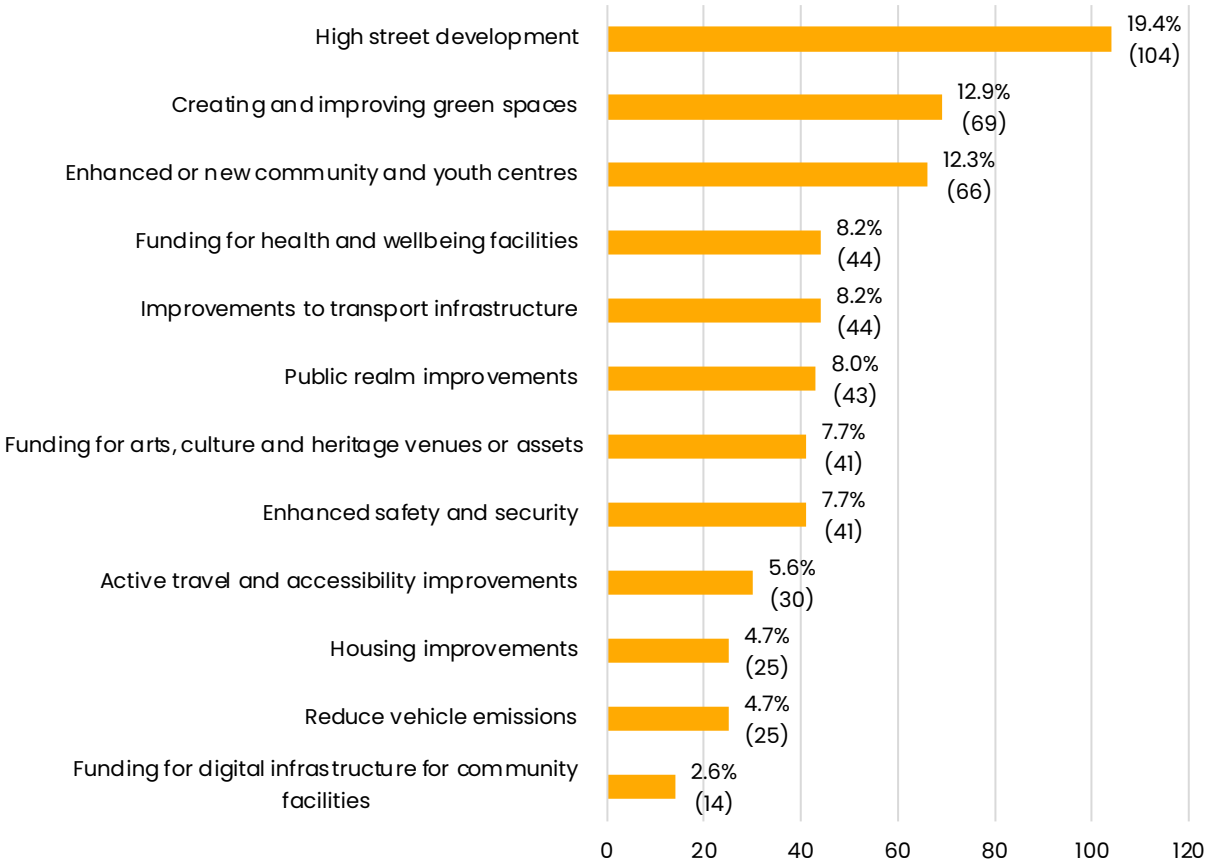


Figure 13. Responses to the question ‘What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**High Street Development**

Earlestown Town Centre regeneration emerged as a significant priority, with numerous participants expressing concern about its current state. Attendees suggested that the Town Centre appears unwelcoming, with many commenting on its poor appearance, shop frontages, and cleanliness concerns. It was recognised, however, that the area needs investment beyond physical improvements. The diversity of retail offerings was flagged, with participants noting an overabundance of vape shops, hairdressers, takeaways and nail bars. Several attendees expressed a desire for more variety, particularly mentioning the absence of clothing and shoe shops in Earlestown. There were suggestions for a mixture of established retail names alongside independent businesses, with some participants having the opinion that potential rent increases could negatively impact local traders.

Several attendees drew comparisons with other regeneration projects, with one participant suggesting Earlestown should follow the example of Birkenhead’s high street improvements with its enhancements to shop frontages. The appearance of local pubs was mentioned as potentially deterring visitors to the area. Some participants suggested developing the night-time economy, with requests for more bars in the area. Participants expressed a preference

for supporting independent shops rather than attracting large chain stores to the high street.

The market area in Earlestown received specific attention, with participants requesting greater investment in this space. Accessibility was highlighted as an issue, with some attendees reporting difficulty moving around the market area. The potential for a food court within the market was suggested. There were concerns expressed about how parking at Earlestown Market might be affected by regeneration plans. Worries about increasing shop rents and their impact on the market were noted.

**Green Spaces and Environment**

The preservation and maintenance of green spaces had been important to many participants, with some specifically requesting that these areas receive better upkeep. Environmental concerns included suggestions for more tree planting, creating water sources for insects, and encouraging wildlife. One participant proposed extending the Mersey Forest to Parkside, suggesting this would help capture emissions from the M6. Concerns about litter and fly-tipping were raised, and there were requests for better recycling facilities. Accessible entrances to parks were requested, along with designated dog parks with railings to prevent dogs from entering children’s play areas.

**Community Spaces**

A modern community centre offering activities for all ages was proposed by several participants. The potential for a multi-use centre incorporating education, heritage and community facilities was highlighted. A proposal was also made for ‘The Hive 2.0’ by Earlestown Football Club, envisioned as a youth centre with kitchen and café facilities targeting under-represented groups. The proposal included operating 7 days a week and fostering relationships with surrounding fitness clubs. Other participants suggested more all-weather sports pitches to encourage physical activity throughout the year.

**Transport and Infrastructure**

Accessibility challenges were frequently mentioned, particularly regarding Earlestown Train Station, which multiple participants identified as not being accessible. Some attendees who used wheelchairs or electric scooters specifically commented on difficulty navigating Earlestown. The space between platforms at Earlestown Train Station was described as feeling unsafe due to its length. The train stations in the town were described by participants as assets contributing to outward migration but not helping with retention.

Transport connections were highlighted as problematic in certain areas, with participants noting a lack of bus services between specific locations, such as the route to Ashton Road. The link from Ashton-in-Makerfield was specifically identified as poor. Several attendees suggested implementing one-way road systems to alleviate traffic problems, as congestion was noted. The presence of heavy goods vehicles and lorries on Newton High Street was described as creating noise pollution and congestion, with multiple participants voting in agreement with comments about removing these vehicles from Newton High Street.



Traffic congestion was mentioned as an issue, with suggestions to link up roads near the library to help alleviate this problem. Walking routes were highlighted as requiring improvement by some attendees. Education for cyclists on how to use available services was proposed to enhance road safety and promote active travel. Road surface quality received significant attention, with comments flagging poor road surfaces, potholes and uneven pedestrian pathways.

**Parking and Traffic Infrastructure**

Participants noted difficulties with parking at Newton High Street, at Earlestown Town Centre (particularly on market days), near schools, and at transport hubs like Newton-le-Willows Train Station. Narrow roads and excessive on-street parking were highlighted as contributing to the problem. The inadequacy of electric vehicle charging infrastructure was mentioned by several participants. Some attendees reported that they could not charge their electric vehicles in Newton as the charging points were not strong enough. Others noted that electric vehicle charging at Newton-le-Willows Train Station was too limited. Kerbside charging for electric vehicles was recommended by some participants.

**Heritage Preservation**

Some attendees suggested creating dedicated spaces to showcase the history of the town, with Earlestown proposed as a potential location for a local museum or display. The heritage of Vulcan Village was specifically mentioned as deserving attention, and a heritage education café was proposed. The maintenance of architectural heritage was mentioned, with suggestions for uniformity in windows and extensions to align with local character.



**Question 5: What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?**

‘Funding for community projects and events’ received the highest number of votes (15.1% / 81 votes), closely followed by ‘Crime prevention initiatives’ (13.5% / 72 votes). ‘Business support activity for entrepreneurs’ received the lowest number of votes (2.8% / 15 votes).

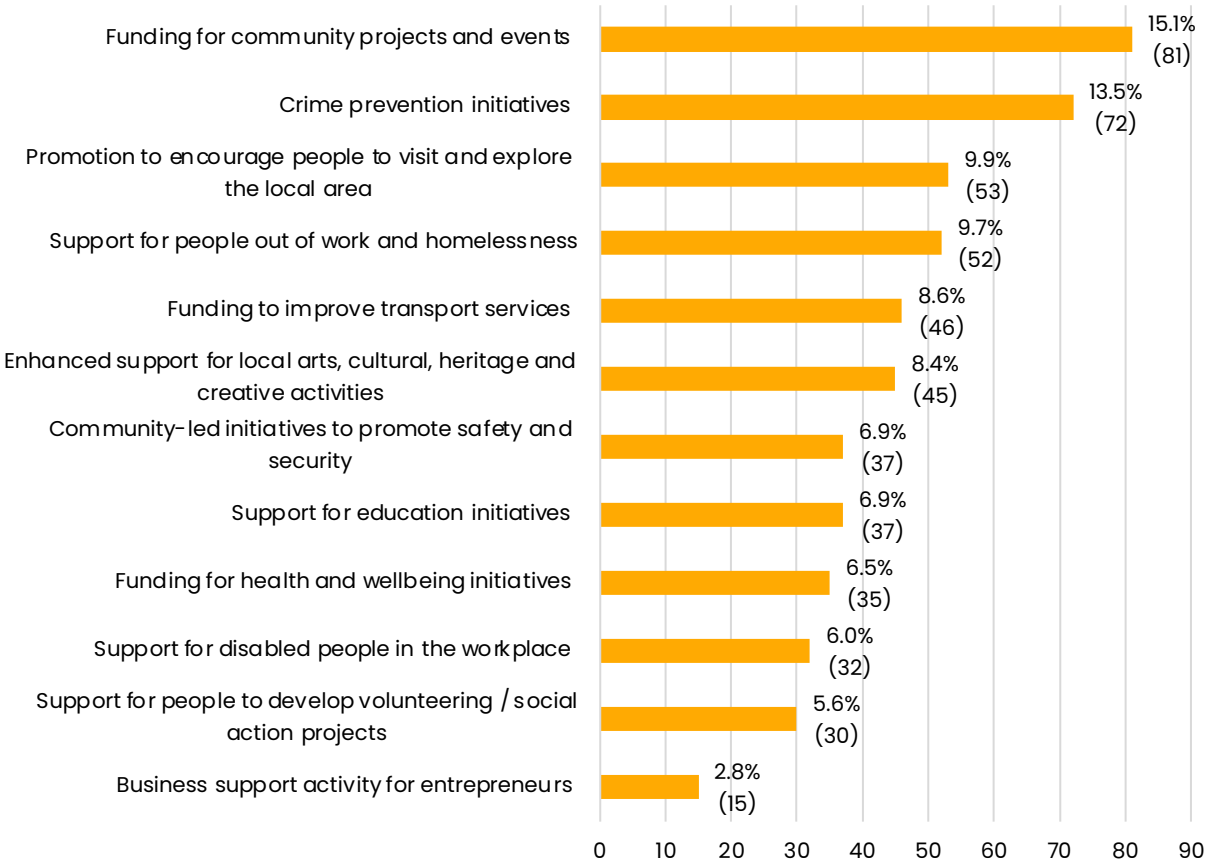


Figure 14. Responses to the question ‘What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**Community Cohesion and Activities**

Participants suggested that community projects, especially in the Wargrave area, could help foster a sense of shared purpose. Support groups for people of all ages were proposed as beneficial to community wellbeing. Some attendees suggested that a space employing young people with special educational needs would be beneficial to the community.

**Community Safety and Policing**

Several attendees wished to see enhanced community policing across the area. The Vulcan area was singled out as feeling unsafe by some attendees, with drug-related issues cited as a contributing factor. Night-time safety in Earlestown was mentioned as a concern, particularly around the Town Centre area at night. Anti-social behaviour was reported as problematic in specific locations, with Mesnes Park mentioned in relation to incidents involving young people. Some participants suggested that providing more activities for young people could help address anti-social behaviour.

Several participants requested increased CCTV coverage, specifically suggesting cameras in parks, whilst others suggested more local police patrols. Improved lighting was suggested

for walking routes and between platforms at Earlestown Train Station to enhance safety. Better traffic crossings were also mentioned, with specific reference to the area around Mesnes Park tunnel and Vulcan crossing.

### **Heritage and Culture**

The town's heritage was frequently mentioned as an underutilised asset, with participants commenting that regeneration needs to be made of local history and heritage. A heritage centre and museum were proposed to preserve and showcase local history, with mentions of celebrating the heritage associated with the railway. Some participants suggested that cultural events, including theatre performances, could enhance the local cultural offering. Greater arts representation was requested by some participants, with specific suggestions including drama and theatre clubs.

### **Youth Provision and Activities**

The need for improved youth engagement opportunities was a recurring theme in the feedback. Sports activities were highlighted as potentially beneficial for this demographic. The lack of activities and facilities for young people was frequently mentioned, with some participants highlighting that engaging young people requires the right type of activities to be effective. Provision for children and young people with special educational needs was mentioned by multiple participants as requiring attention. Environmental activities were proposed for engaging young people, with gardening specifically mentioned as an opportunity to utilise the green spaces in the area.

### **Communication and Promotion**

Improved communication about local activities and events was suggested by several participants, highlighting a perceived gap in information sharing. A community notice board displaying 'what's on' information was proposed as a practical solution.

**Question 6: What are the key challenges for Newton-le-Willows, and what could possible solutions look like?**

### **6a. Safety and Security**

#### **Challenges**

Several participants raised concerns about safety with reports of anti-social behaviour, crime and young people causing disruption. There were mentions of shoplifting and drug dealing on the streets. Comments also mentioned road safety and signage being ignored, especially around Earlestown Town Centre, which some suggested created a hazardous environment for pedestrians and drivers. There were also mentions of anti-social behaviour occurring in and around St James Park (presumed as St Johns Park from post-it notes).

#### **Solutions**

Suggestions included improved police presence, targeted interventions for anti-social behaviour and enforcement of traffic regulations. Some participants felt enhanced engagement and investment in young people, such as youth employment or youth centres could be a preventative measure.

### **6b. Education and Opportunity**

#### **Challenges**

Participants expressed concerns about young people becoming disengaged, with reports that some spend excessive time indoors on their phones consuming harmful content.

#### **Solutions**

Suggestions included youth-focused initiatives and outreach activities to encourage young people to be more active and spend time outdoors.

### **6c. Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage**

#### **Challenges**

Several participants mentioned the decline of Earlestown Town Centre, particularly the market area. Others mentioned that the lack of basic amenities, such as benches along Crow Lane East and Cross Lane, makes the high street inaccessible, especially for those with mobility difficulties.

#### **Solutions**

Participants recommended investment in local businesses, improvements to shop front appearances, and the installation of public seating, particularly on Crow Lane East, to encourage footfall and make the area more welcoming.

### **6d. Transport**

#### **Challenges**

Accessibility issues at Earlestown Train Station were raised, highlighting the absence of step-free access and a general lack of support for assisted mobility options. Concerns about limited rail services through Earlestown and Newton-le-Willows were also raised, with suggestions that service frequency and reliability should be addressed through dialogues with Merseytravel and Northern. Parking was another consistent issue, with comments about insufficient spaces both on and off market days in Earlestown. Several participants flagged Newton High Street as difficult to cross.

#### **Solutions**

Suggestions included improved station accessibility through the addition of lifts, increased coordination with transport operators to enhance rail services, better support for inclusive mobility, and a review of parking provisions, including permits and designated disabled parking spaces. A safer crossing with lights for Newton High Street was also suggested.

### **6e. Health and Wellbeing**

#### **Challenges**

Participants commented on gaps in health-related support, particularly for new mothers experiencing postnatal depression. Other concerns included limited access to GP services. There was also a desire to see more initiatives that promote health and wellbeing across age groups and under-represented communities.

#### **Solutions**

It was suggested that support groups for new parents be introduced and access to healthcare services be improved. Participants felt that investments should be made in facilities that encourage participation in wellbeing activities among young people and marginalised groups.



**Question 7: What difference would you like this funding to make?**

Participants were asked to vote for the impacts they would most like to see as a result of Plan for Neighbourhoods funding by voting with counters.

‘High street improvements and regeneration’ received the highest number of votes (28.4% / 48 votes). ‘Improved perceived / experienced accessibility’ and ‘Better access to education, training and skills’ were the most unpopular options, receiving only 5.3% / 9 votes respectively.

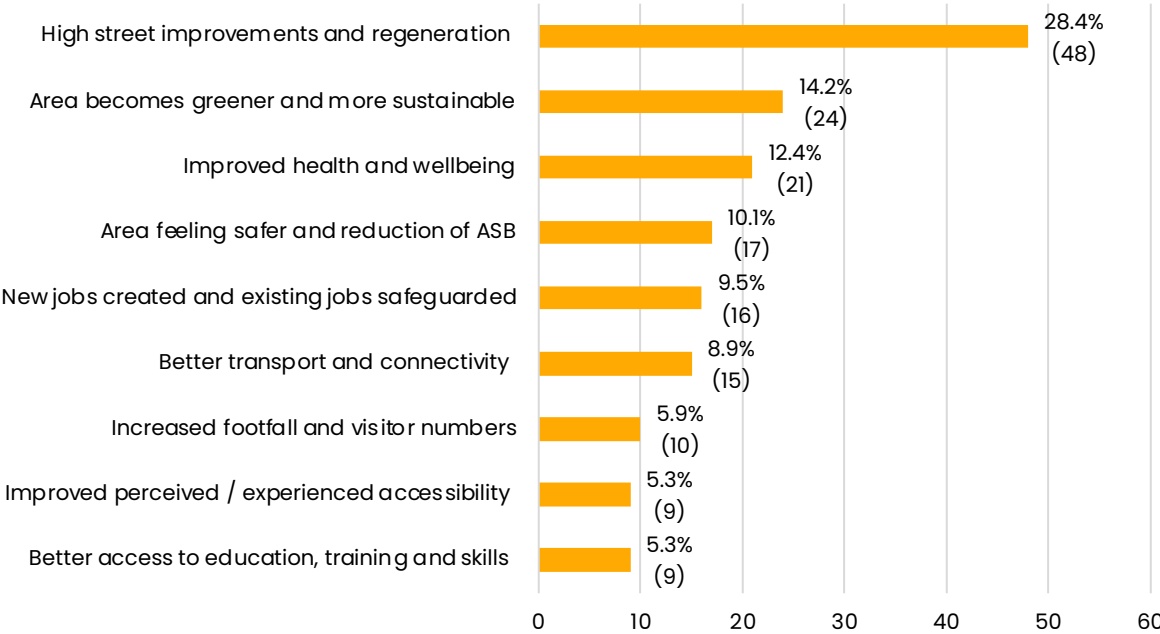


Figure 15. Responses to the question ‘What difference would you like this funding to make?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

**Question 8: How would you like to describe Newton-le-Willows in the future?**

**Investment in Earlestown**

A key aspiration of residents is that future investment should focus on Earlestown and other deprived areas. Many participants commented that Earlestown Market needed significant investment, whilst others felt that events and markets could enhance footfall in the area. Some participants suggested introducing co-working spaces to support small businesses.

**Youth Facilities**

Participants wished for the town to become more attractive to young people in the future. Participants suggested that better youth provision during school holidays is needed. Facilities for young people were suggested, such as clubs and sports clubs.

**Safety and Policing**

Participants expressed aspirations for a safer town, particularly in the evenings and at night. Concerns were raised about anti-social behaviour and empty properties being used for drugs. It was suggested that increased police visibility was needed to address anti-social behaviour issues.

**Transport and Infrastructure**

Improved transport and infrastructure sit firmly at the heart of residents’ aspirations. Some participants commented on the possibility of introducing tram links. Others felt that more parking is needed in Earlestown Town Centre. A significant number of participants reported accessibility issues at Earlestown Train Station, with multiple comments specifically mentioning the need for a lift. Others suggested that road surfaces need improvement and maintenance.

It was suggested that heavy goods vehicles should be redirected away from Newton High Street, with several participants commenting on the need for a lorry-free high street. Some participants suggested making Birley Street a one-way system. Others felt that speed reduction measures were needed on Newton High Street and Church Street.

**Place Identity**

Some participants felt that Earlestown should be independent from St Helens and Newton-le-Willows, maintaining its own identity. Others envisioned Newton-le-Willows as a place with a vibrant and celebrated history, with specific mention of the Sankey Canal Society.





# Self-led Engagement

AI engagement boards to advertise the scheme, inclusive of a link and QR code to access the online platform, were displayed at various locations and for varying durations, across the 6-week period of consultation. Locations included Newton Community Centre, Crownway Community Centre, Newton-le-Willows Health and Fitness Centre, Newton Community Hospital, Newton-le-Willows Library, Cross Lane Church, Tesco Superstore, and Heald Farm Court.

In addition, SHBC distributed self-led postcards to hard-to-reach groups such as businesses, retirement homes, and the Muslim Community Centre. The responses received were largely from businesses and older residents. Below is a summary of the key findings from the responses PLACED received.

## Town Centre’s Visual Appeal

Multiple respondents identified the uninviting appearance of Earlestown Town Centre as a significant challenge, with some perceptions that vacant shops and neglected frontages deter people from visiting the area. Some respondents suggested that offering grants to new and existing businesses could boost their commercial potential and attract customers. Several respondents said that clothing shops were needed to diversify the retail offering.

## Business Support

Respondents from the business community reported specific challenges affecting trade viability. The perspective of some participants was that parking restrictions around Newton High Street are preventing customers from accessing businesses. Others suggested that the old St Aelreds car park could be better utilised for local businesses rather than solely for markets and events.

## Public Transport and Rail Links

Respondents felt that the town’s heritage and excellent rail links to Manchester and Liverpool require better promotion to attract residents, visitors, and investment. Others felt that investing in marketing campaigns would highlight the area’s commuter appeal and transport advantages. Some respondents reported concerns about excessive speeding, particularly on Crow Lane and the High Street, suggesting that speed cameras would address safety issues. Others felt that parking solutions were needed to support local businesses whilst managing traffic flow effectively.

## Promotion of the Town

Respondents suggested that Newton-le-Willows’ unique heritage and historic charm are not being promoted effectively to attract residents, visitors, and potential investors. Some respondents felt that creating campaigns and signage could establish the town as an attractive place to live, work, and invest. Others thought that highlighting the area’s commuter appeal would enhance its residential attractiveness.

## Accessibility

Respondents reported accessibility concerns affecting elderly residents and those with limited mobility. Some participants noted that several elderly people have fallen on uneven footpath surfaces near local businesses, suggesting that resurfacing works are needed alongside improved car parking provision. Some respondents emphasised that accessibility for disabled people should be prioritised in any development or improvement schemes, ensuring that infrastructure improvements serve all community members effectively.





## School Workshops

To capture the youth voice in Newton-le-Willows, school workshops were delivered at Hope Academy and local SEND school Wargrave House.

- Tuesday 29th April, 9.45am – 3.00pm, Wargrave House School (26 students, years 7–11)
- Wednesday 7th May, 9.10am – 3.10pm, Hope Academy (13 students, years 7–8)

SHBC delivered some additional youth engagement at Newton-le-Willows Sea Cadets on Thursday 15th May (6.30pm – 9.00pm), where they spoke to 42 attendees, 27 of these being young people. The young people at this drop-in reported safety as a key issue and wanted to see enhanced public transport links.

PLACED's school workshops took place over a full school day and engaged groups of young people in a range of discussion-based and creative activities relating to Plan for Neighbourhoods funding. The workshops started with discussions about opportunities and challenges, and concluded with an activity in which students made collage posters of Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes. The following is a summary of the key findings from PLACED's school workshops. Please note that the findings from both workshops have been combined below. Where findings are specific to one workshop, this is mentioned in the text.

### Activity 1: Site Analysis

*School workshops started with site analysis. Students were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to their experience of Newton-le-Willows.*

#### 1a. What makes Newton-le-Willows special?

##### Newton High Street

Newton High Street was viewed positively, with cafés and pubs mentioned as valued local amenities that contribute to the area's character. The young people were particularly fond of the local and independent businesses on Newton High Street and the attractive shop frontages and public realm. In contrast, Earlestown Town Centre was felt to be deprived.

##### Community and Heritage

The young people engaged felt strongly that the people and community spirit of Newton-le-Willows make it special and characterise its sense of place. Several comments highlighted community organisations such as the library and religious establishments, and many of the young people said that their school is what makes the area special to them. The young people also felt that Newton-le-Willows has a rich heritage and history that makes it unique.

##### Transport Connectivity

Despite transport to nearby colleges being identified as a key challenge, many of the young people also recognised good transport links as a distinctive feature of Newton-le-Willows.

##### Natural Environment

The natural environment was valued by the young people, with comments appreciating green spaces and the variety of wildlife. Mesnes Park was viewed as a key local asset.

#### Question 2b. What is missing in your local area?

##### Regeneration and Environment

The young people expressed concerns about the condition of Earlestown Town Centre. Earlestown was described as being dirty, and there were perceptions that the area lacks independent businesses. Many commented on the need for general environmental improvements, including cleaner parks, tidier alleyways, better street lighting, and addressing litter issues throughout the area. Several young people mentioned the need for more bins and litter pickers. There were multiple requests for more green spaces, tree planting and wildlife habitats, including bug hotels and bird habitats, as well as eco-friendly options to reduce plastic waste.

##### Education and Employability

A key challenge identified by students at Hope Academy was the lack of further education opportunities in Newton-le-Willows, which creates significant barriers to higher education. Numerous young people noted the absence of a Sixth Form or college in the area and suggested starting a Sixth Form at Hope Academy, as the nearest college is quite a distance away. The young people also flagged that transport to nearby colleges can be costly.

The young people engaged noted that, whilst there were lots of primary schools, there were not many secondary schools in the area. Career development opportunities were also identified as lacking, with the young people mentioning a lack of apprenticeships and pathways to higher education in the local area. The lack of job opportunities for young people was also repeatedly mentioned.

##### Safety and Youth Provision

Many of the young people in both workshops flagged safety and security issues. The young people spoke of negative experiences with teenagers and anti-social behaviour, sharing that they have experienced feeling unsafe when walking home from school. It was felt that greater provision of activities for young people and safe youth spaces could help counter these issues.

##### Retail and Leisure

Comments indicated that Newton-le-Willows currently had a limited range of shops, with the young people calling for more independent shops, clothing shops, and specialist outlets such as anime and game shops. Certain types of food and drink establishments were frequently mentioned as missing, with requests for more bakeries, American restaurants, and cafés. Entertainment facilities like a cinema, trampoline park, rock climbing, soft play centre, and a museum were mentioned.

##### Infrastructure

Parking was raised as an issue by some young people. Road infrastructure improvements were mentioned, with the young people noting potholes and disruptive roadworks. Sufficient traffic safety measures, such as more traffic lights, zebra crossings, and more traffic control, were also identified as missing.

## Question 1c. What challenges do you face as young people living in Newton-le-Willows?

### Transport

Transport emerged as a significant challenge for young people in Newton-le-Willows, particularly regarding access to education. Many of the young people at Hope Academy reported difficulties and high costs associated with travelling to college and university, with several mentioning the expense of daily travel. The absence of a local college in Newton-le-Willows was repeatedly highlighted as problematic, forcing young people to travel considerable distances for further education. The young people suggested that bus timetables needed redoing and that more bus stops are required to improve local transportation options.

Road safety was a major concern, with numerous young people mentioning difficulties crossing roads, particularly High Street. Many suggested the need for more traffic lights, zebra crossings, and better traffic control generally. Some of the young people proposed more creative solutions, such as pedestrian tunnels to improve road safety. Several young people commented on the poor condition of road surfaces and mentioned roadworks as an issue. There were also calls for safer cycle lanes, with perceptions that dangerous cycle lanes are barriers to cycling in the area.

### Safety and Security

Safety and security were recurring themes throughout both workshops, particularly at Wargrave House. The young people frequently mentioned feeling unsafe in certain areas, particularly at night and in Earlestown. Several young people shared concerns about people hanging around in gangs and expressed unease about older youths intimidating younger ones. The young people suggested a need for increased security measures, particularly in schools and public areas such as McDonald's. Some comments mentioned concerns about crime, vandalism, and graffiti affecting the community.

### Education and Opportunity

A prominent concern was the lack of higher education facilities in Newton-le-Willows. Numerous young people noted the absence of a college in the area, forcing young people to travel elsewhere for further education. Some suggested restarting the Sixth Form at Hope Academy, as the nearest college was quite far away. Employment opportunities for young people were frequently mentioned, with the young people expressing a desire for jobs for younger people to earn money, particularly for those aged 13-16 years. Several young people said that there should be more career guidance, with comments indicating a desire for better vocational support and pathways to employment.

### Retail and Youth Spaces

Many of the young people expressed frustration with high prices in local shops, with concerns about affordability for young people. The young people felt there were insufficient safe and secure places for them to socialise and pursue interests, with requests for more places to meet up with friends.

### Health and Wellbeing

Several young people noted a need for better health services generally. They commented on the need to improve parks, particularly Mesnes Park, and to create cleaner outdoor spaces with functioning public toilets.

## Activity 2: Challenges and Solutions

*In groups, the students were asked to pick their top 3 challenges out of those they had identified in the previous activity and devise possible solutions.*

### 2a. Education

#### Challenges

The young people expressed significant concerns about the absence of colleges and Sixth Forms in Newton-le-Willows. Many noted that young people currently face long journeys to reach the nearest college, with some commenting that the closest university is a 25-minute drive away.

#### Solutions

The young people proposed building a local college with A-level subjects and apprenticeship opportunities. Others recommended establishing better-connected and more affordable transport links to nearby colleges. Some of the young people specifically suggested that any new educational facilities should be designed with modern, eco-friendly features.

### 2b. Employment Opportunities

#### Challenges

Several young people specifically noted the challenges faced by young people aged 13-16 in finding suitable employment. The lack of local apprenticeship opportunities was also mentioned as an obstacle to career development.

#### Solutions

Some of the young people recommended creating safe working environments specifically appropriate for younger people. Several young people proposed community initiatives, such as litter-picking projects that could offer work experience whilst also providing free meals as incentives. There were also suggestions about developing 'eco jobs' with rewards for volunteers to help both young people and the environment.

### 2c. Transport

#### Challenges

The high cost of public transport emerged as a significant barrier for young people, particularly those attending college. The limited frequency of bus services was also felt to be problematic.

#### Solutions

The young people suggested implementing subsidised bus passes for students aged 16-24, with some proposing a £5 annual pass to reduce costs. Others recommended increasing the number of buses and providing free passes for those under 21 who are in education. Making public transport more affordable and accessible for young people was a key priority.



2d. Road Safety

Challenges

Concerns about road safety were raised by multiple young people, particularly regarding the difficulty of crossing roads safely in certain areas. The general safety of roads for drivers and pedestrians was felt as needing improvement.

Solutions

Suggestions included installing pedestrian crossings and underpasses to facilitate safer crossing and implementing lower speed limits to improve safety. Increased education for children about road safety was also suggested as a preventive measure. Some of the young people suggested increased police presence and CCTV installation to improve safety.

2e. Youth Facilities and Activities

Challenges

Many of the young people mentioned the lack of appropriate places for young people to socialise, noting that this often results in groups gathering in parks or shops. Several mentioned the limited availability of recreational services and wellbeing facilities for young people. Some of the young people linked this lack of activities to increased boredom and potentially dangerous behaviours.

Solutions

There were numerous suggestions for creating dedicated youth spaces, including community centres with organised activities, wellbeing clubs, and evening youth zones. Some of the young people proposed facilities such as gaming consoles, computers, music equipment, pool tables and exercise equipment. Others suggested establishing safe centres for young people to help keep them off the streets and away from drug use. The young people recommended implementing a recreational grants scheme to fund these initiatives.

Activity 3: Voting Activities

At Hope Academy, the students were shown the same precedent posters that were presented at PLACED’s in-person engagement events and were asked to vote for their top priorities. At Wargrave House, SEND students were engaged in a more accessible activity that required them to rank project ideas. The quantitative data below only represents the views of students at Hope Academy. A written summary of the findings from the activity at Wargrave House is presented under the graphs below.

3a. Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?

‘Education and opportunity’ received the highest number of votes (37.5% / 15 votes), whilst ‘Cohesion’ and ‘Housing’ both received no votes (0%) from the students.

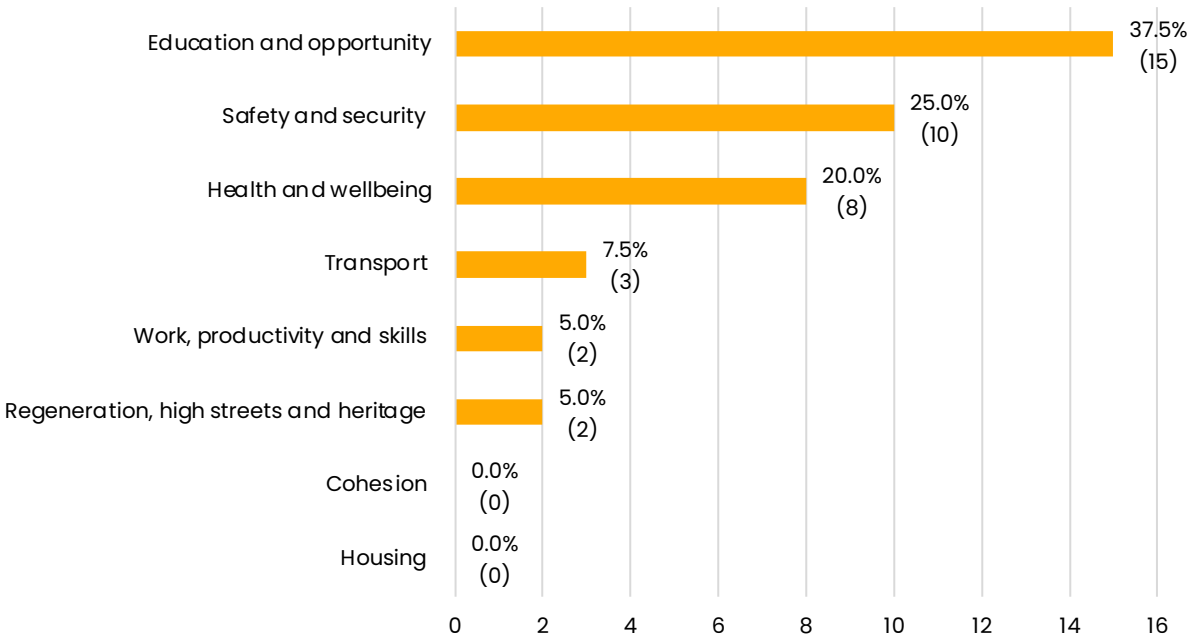


Figure 16. Responses to the question ‘Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses. This graph only represents the views of the students engaged at Hope Academy.

Question 3b. What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?

‘Enhanced security and safety’ and ‘Creating and improving green spaces’ both received the highest number of votes with 17.9% / 7 votes respectively, closely followed by ‘Funding for health and wellbeing facilities’ (15.4% / 6 votes). ‘Funding for digital infrastructure for community facilities’, ‘Housing improvements’, Enhanced or new community and youth centres’, and ‘Public realm improvements’ each received 2.6% / 1 vote respectively.

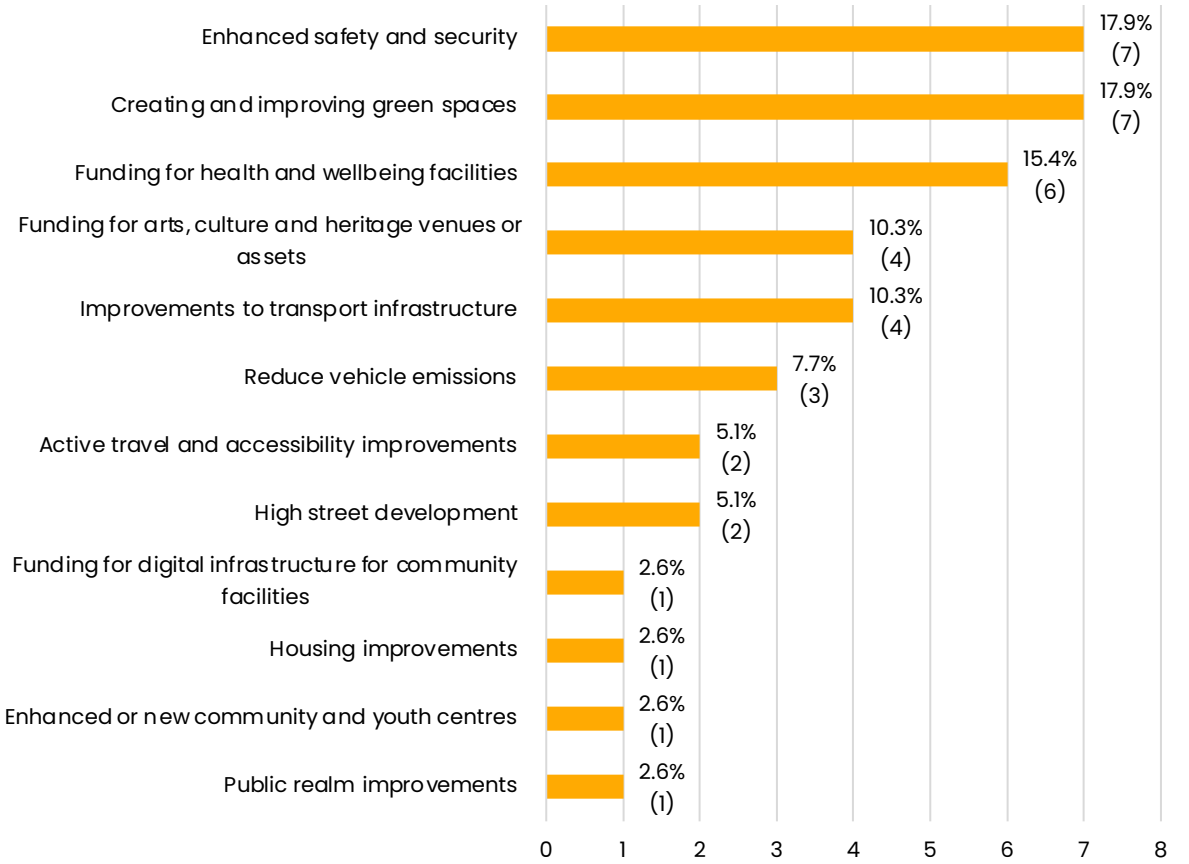


Figure 17. Responses to the question ‘What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses. This graph only represents the views of the students engaged at Hope Academy.



**Question 3c. What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?**

‘Funding to improve transport services’ received the highest number of votes (21.4% / 9 votes), whilst ‘Support for people to develop volunteering / social action projects’ received no votes (0%) from the students.

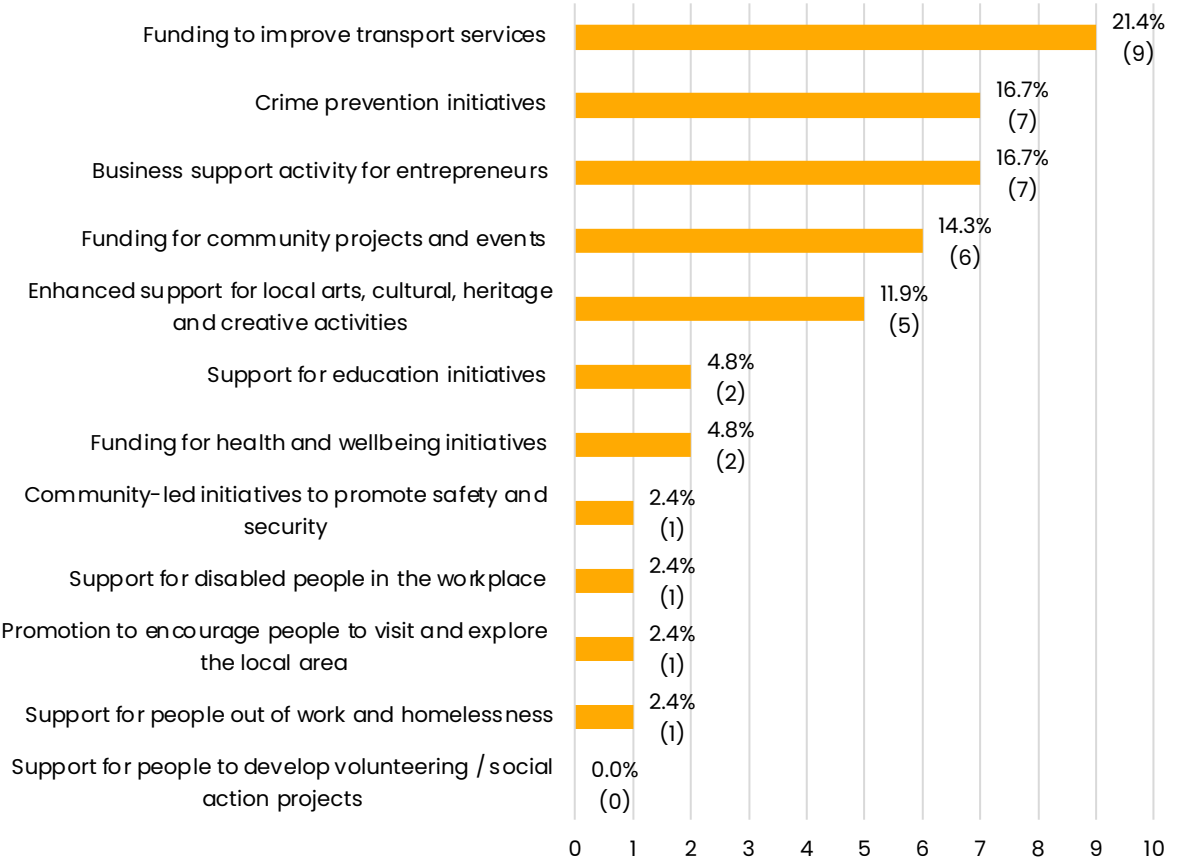


Figure 18. Responses to the question ‘What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses. This graph only represents the views of the students engaged at Hope Academy.

**Wargrave House – Investments Themes and Projects**

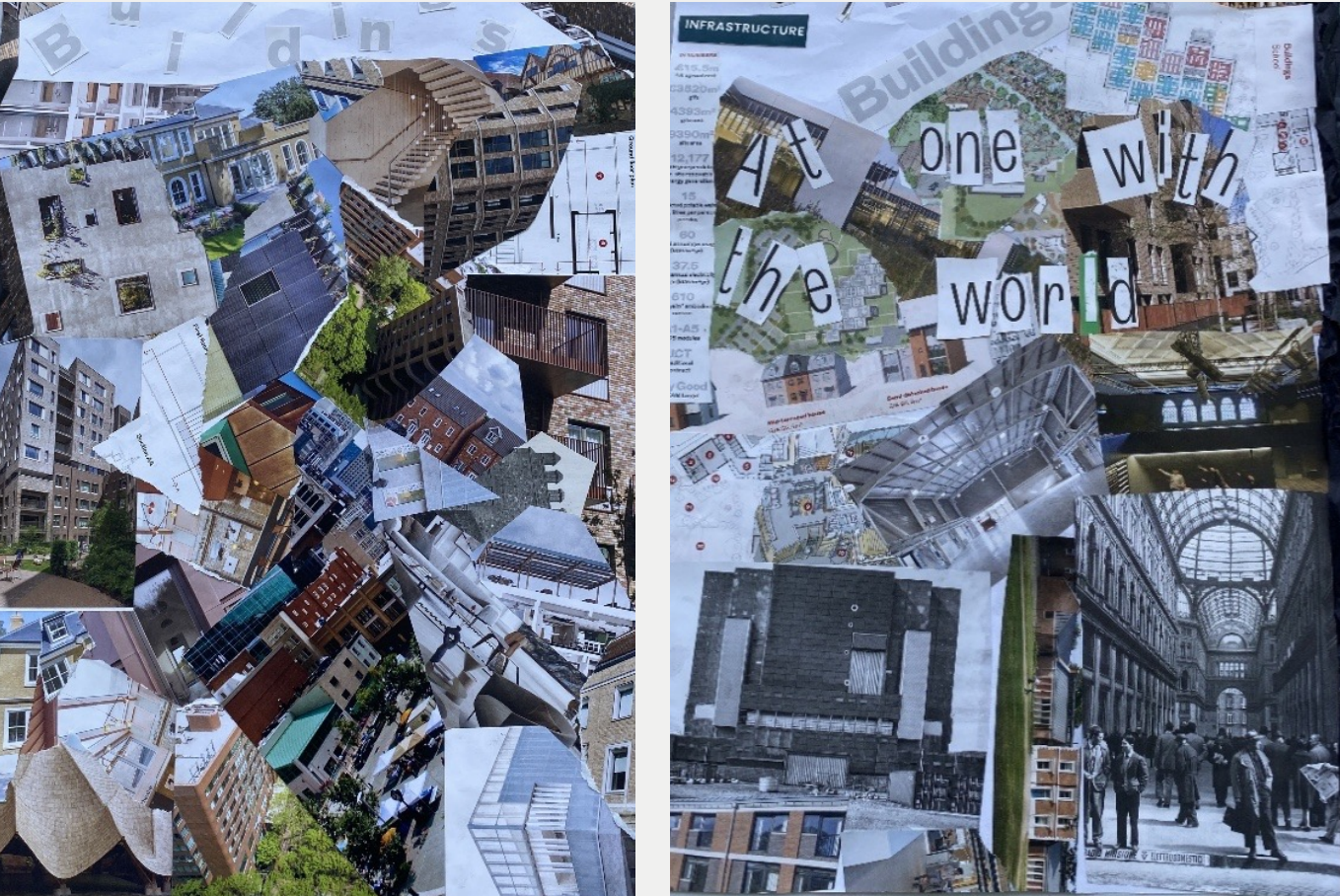
Students at Wargrave House prioritised **better support for those facing unemployment and homelessness**, and also improved **inclusion for disabled people in the workplace**. This contrasted to students at Hope Academy, who indicated these options should be less of a priority (as shown in the graph above). Students at Wargrave House also called for stronger community-led initiatives that engage and support young people, **enhancing safety and security**. They highlighted the need for **better transport infrastructure** and **increased funding for arts, culture, and heritage venues**, as well as **health and wellbeing facilities** to support community needs.

**Activity 4: Collages**

At the end of PLACED’s workshops at Hope Academy and Wargrave House, the young people were asked to create collages of the one Plan for Neighbourhoods investment theme they would most like to see prioritised. Working in groups, the young people were required to reflect in their collages the challenges and ideas they had identified earlier in the workshop.

**Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage**

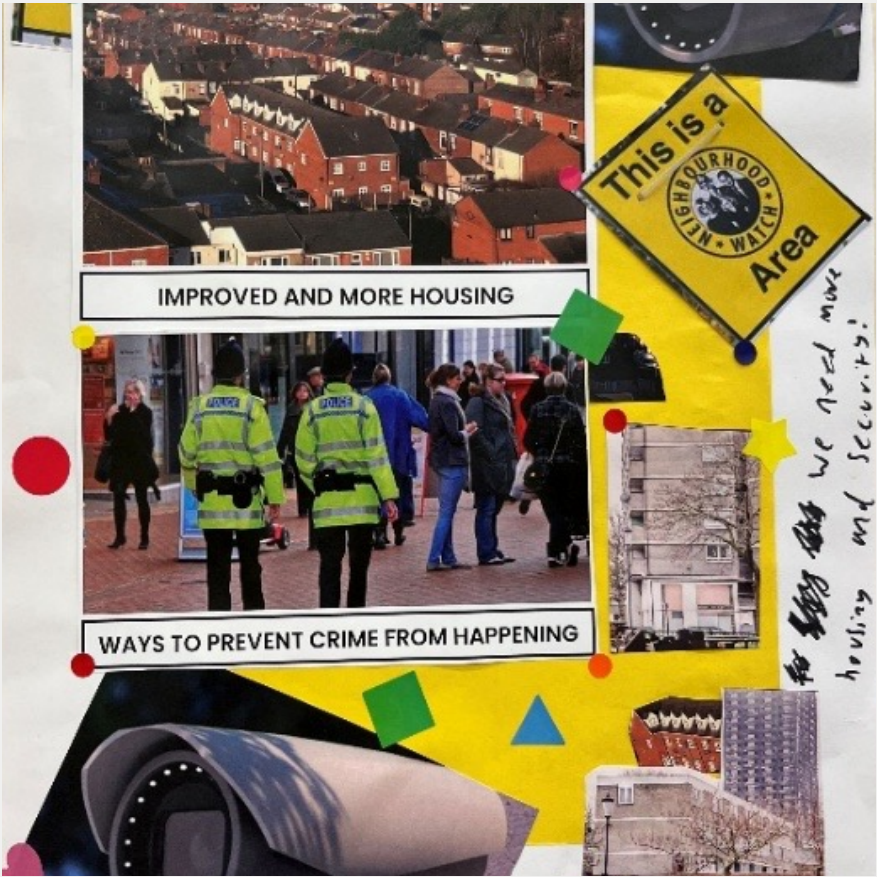
Groups who chose the ‘Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage’ theme aspired for vibrant high street environments with essential services and facilities. Their proposals emphasised the importance of buildings that harmonise with nature alongside pedestrian-friendly streets with ample seating and greenery. The young people suggested a high street and town centre with community hubs, police stations, youth zones, healthcare facilities, and shops. They highlighted the importance of cultural spaces with suggestions for museums and preservation of historical sites, alongside safety concerns addressed through increased police presence.





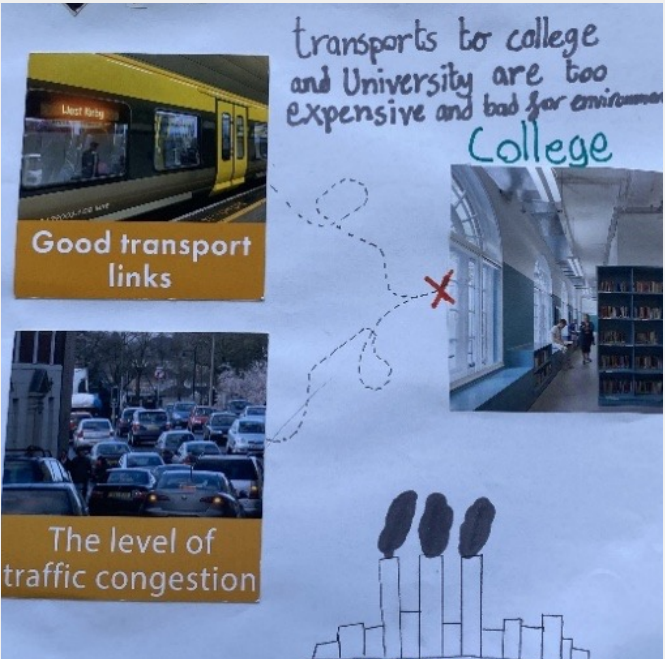
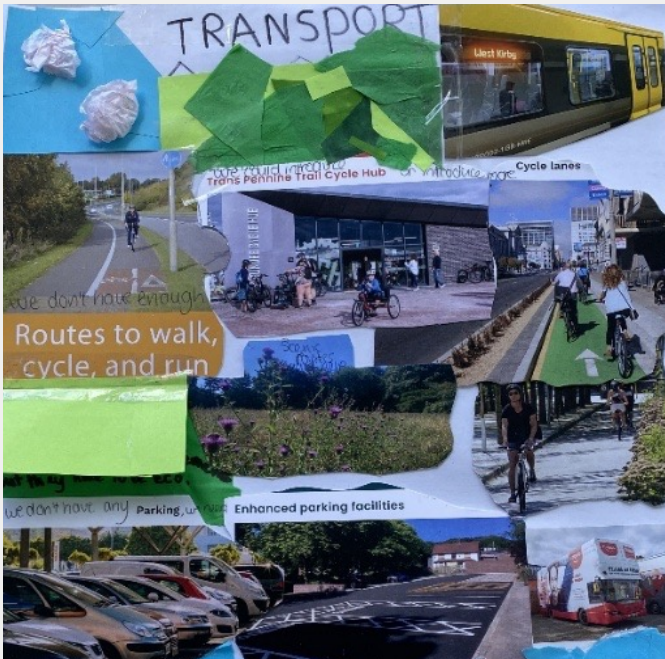
# Safety and Security

Groups who chose this theme highlighted the importance of child safety with images of families and children, whilst suggesting increased surveillance through CCTV cameras and better lighting in public areas. The prominence of police imagery, including officers on patrol and police vehicles, suggested that young people valued visible policing. Notably, all of the collages relating to this investment theme were created by students at Wargrave House.



# Transport

Groups who chose the 'Transport' theme highlighted safer and more accessible routes for walking, cycling, and running, as well as improved parking facilities. They highlighted the need to reduce traffic congestion and pollution, particularly in shared community spaces. They also called for more affordable and environmentally friendly transport options to educational institutions, flagging again the lack of accessible transport links to nearby colleges.



# Health and Wellbeing

The young people who chose this investment theme envisioned a town with more welcoming green spaces that support health and wellbeing. Their vision includes safe, natural environments where people can relax, connect with others, and enjoy the benefits of nature.







# % Investment Themes and Project Votes Overall

The following graphs show the total votes for each investment theme and project votes overall. All the votes collected throughout the engagement process (online, in-person, self-led and school workshops) have been combined in the graphs below.

## % Investment Themes Overall

The 'Regeneration, high streets and heritage' investment theme received the highest percentage of votes overall (20%), closely followed by 'Education and opportunity' (19.5%). 'Housing' was the investment theme with the lowest percentage of votes overall (4.9%).

Note that results here are only presented as percentages, as results for online came from a ranking question, which resulted in weighted averages. For ease of reading, these overall results have been presented as percentages only.

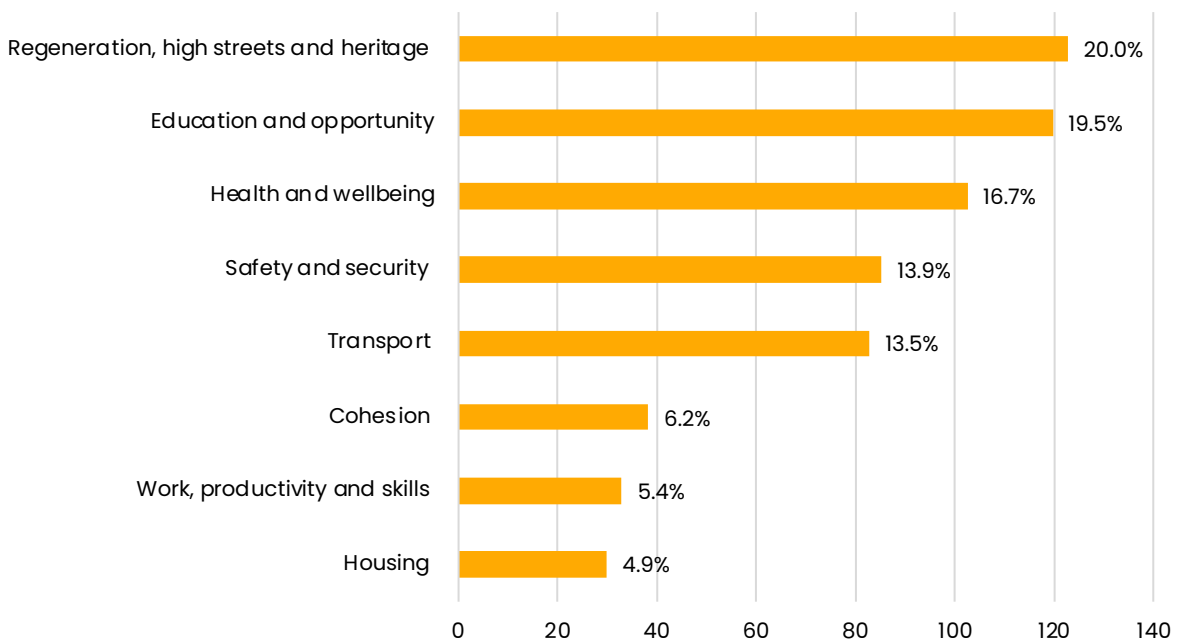


Figure 19. Responses to the question 'Out of the eight Plan for Neighbourhoods investment themes, where would you most like to see investment?' Responses are labelled as percentage of votes.



Project Votes Overall

Those who engaged in the consultation process were asked for their priorities for potential project ideas. These place and people projects were linked to capital and revenue projects as aligned to the funding allocation. Those engaged were made aware that this was not an exhaustive list but was used to spark conversation and to steer priorities.

Place Projects

‘High street development’ was the ‘place project’ with the highest number of votes overall (14.9% / 213 votes), followed by ‘Creating and improving green spaces’ (12.2% / 175 votes). ‘Funding for digital infrastructure for community facilities’ received the lowest number of votes overall (3.4% / 49 votes).

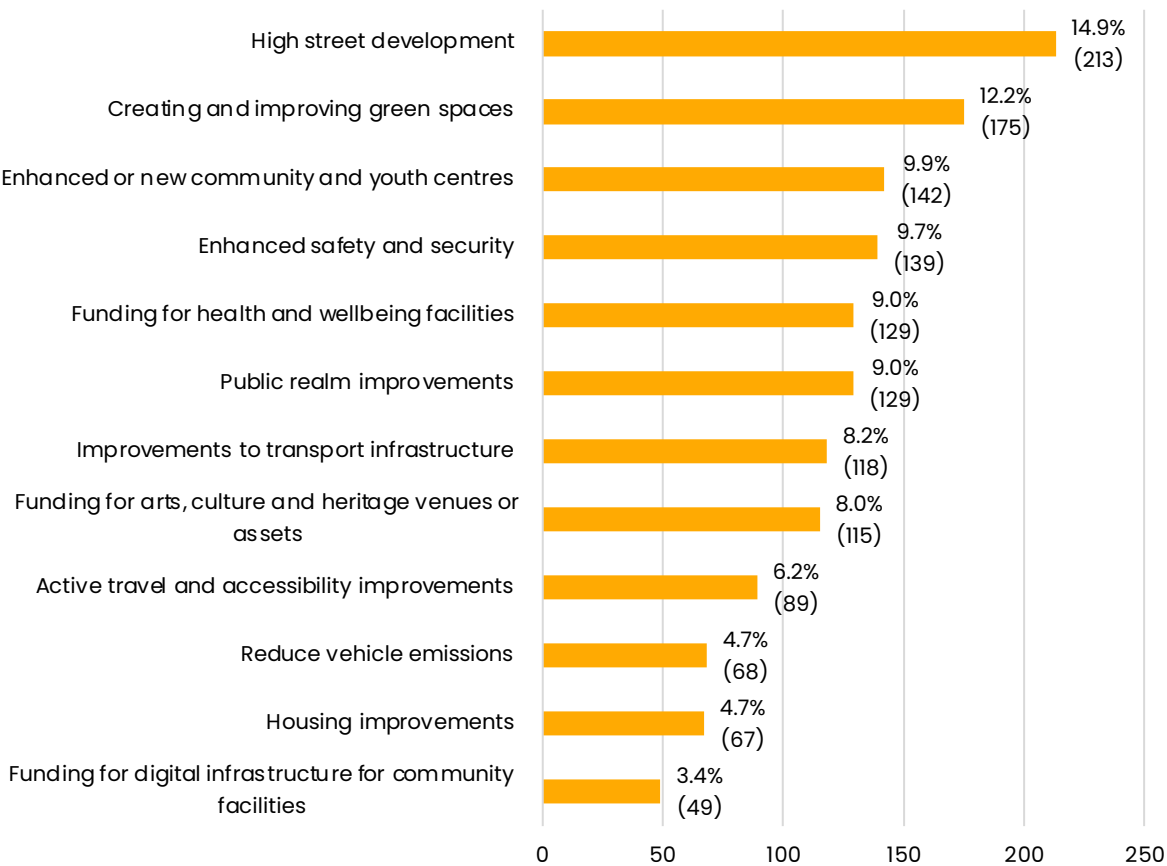


Figure 20. Responses to the question ‘What sort of place projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.

People Projects

‘Crime prevention initiatives’ received the highest number of votes overall (13.7% / 187 votes), followed by ‘Funding for community projects and events’ (11.7% / 160 votes). ‘Support for disabled people in the workplace’ (5.9% / 81 votes) and ‘Business support activity for entrepreneurs’ (6.1% / 83 votes) received the lowest number of votes overall.

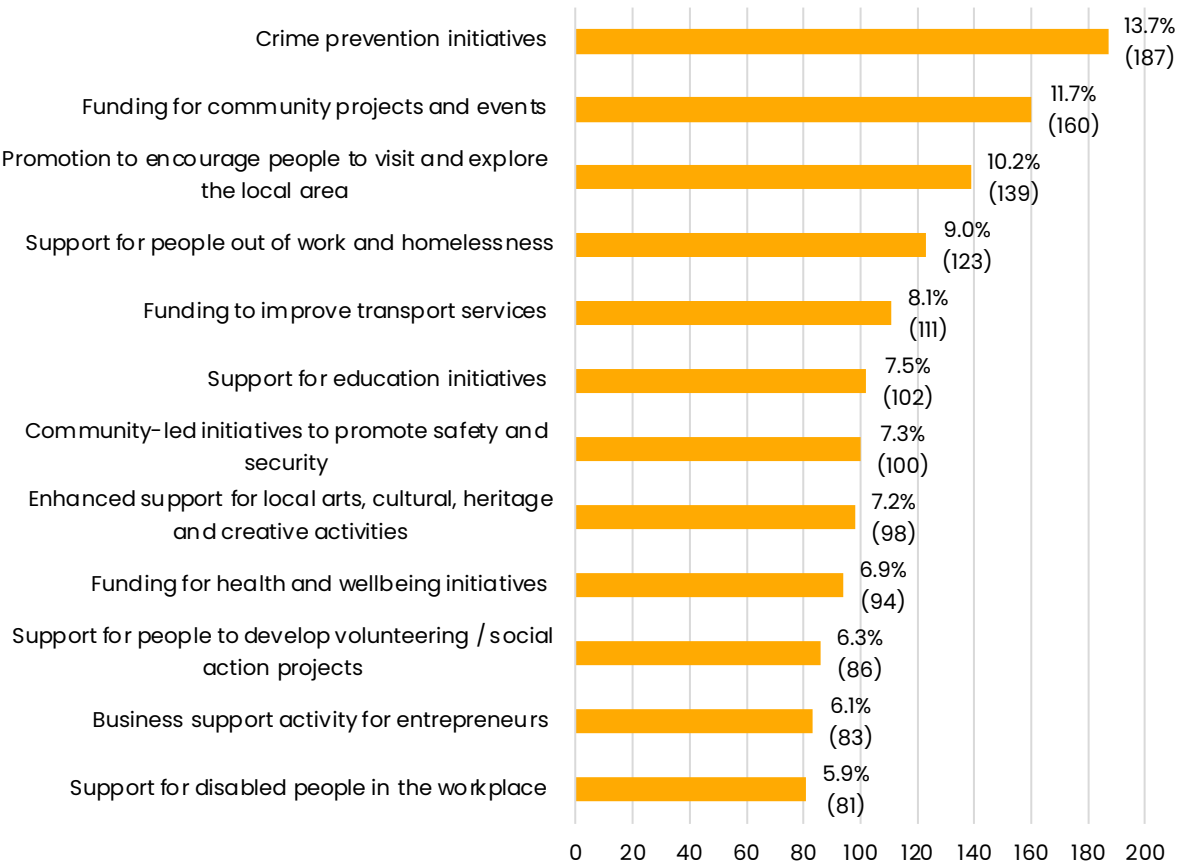


Figure 21. Responses to the question ‘What sort of people projects would you like to see prioritised?’ Responses are labelled as percentage of votes and number of responses.





# Conclusion

**The public engagement delivered as part of Newton-le-Willows Plan for Neighbourhoods has provided valuable insights into resident and stakeholder concerns, aspirations, and priorities.**

682 people were engaged via online engagement, in-person events, self-led engagement materials, school workshops, and email correspondence. To achieve a representative sample in a town like Newton-le-Willows, which has a resident population of 25,350, a sample size of 379 people is required. The findings presented in this report can therefore be taken as statistically reliable and representative of the population. Through extensive consultation across online platforms, in-person events, school workshops, and targeted outreach to under-represented groups, local people and stakeholders have highlighted a range of pressing issues, from the regeneration of Earlestown Town Centre to the importance of addressing transport challenges and enhancing youth provision.

Throughout all engagement activities, a dominant theme was the desire for regeneration in Earlestown, with participants consistently expressing concerns about its run-down appearance, shop frontages, and lack of retail diversity. Transport and infrastructure emerged as another key priority, with participants highlighting parking issues at Newton High Street, Earlestown market area, and train stations, alongside concerns about heavy goods vehicle traffic creating congestion and safety hazards. The findings have highlighted significant gaps in education and youth provision, with participants flagging the lack of a college in the town and suggesting that insufficient activities and facilities for young people are contributing to anti-social behaviour. Health was another key theme, with participants noting issues with accessing GP appointments and many highlighting the links between regeneration, green spaces and wellbeing.

Response to the engagement delivered was positive, with residents, business owners and other local stakeholders keen to see projects delivered that regenerate Earlestown Town Centre, increase youth provision and opportunities, and create a safer place to live for all. These aspirations for change, however, coincide with hopes for future funding to preserve and enhance existing assets such as the town's rich heritage offer and valued community spaces. These public engagement findings have helped to shape the Newton-le-Willows Strategic Case for Change and Vision produced by Layer.Studio and Hatch Associates, ultimately informing the Neighbourhood Board's production of a Regeneration Plan and 4-Year Investment Plan.





# LISTENING TO LESS HEARD VOICES AND DELIVERING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

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