

Inspired Living: A Design Code to enhance design in Northern Cambridge Neighbourhoods

Phase 2: Articulating the Vision and Emerging Principles of the Design Code
Survey Results v1 13/11/2023



Inspired living Design Code in-person Workshop 2: 18 October 2023, Meadows Community Centre

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Inspired Living is a design code pilot aimed at enhancing the standard of design in northern Cambridge, including areas of Arbury, King's Hedges and West Chesterton. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, working with Pollard Thomas Edwards architects, are collaborating with local communities in three phases on this project. As part of phase 1, we have sought to better understand the neighbourhood by hearing views of the community using our [online survey](#) and [interactive map](#), culminating with the first workshop at Meadows Community Centre on 27 September 2023. The results of the survey carried in phase 1 can be found [here](#), where we received 116 online submissions. 59 participants also made a total of 126 individual comments on the interactive area map.

As part of phase 2, and using the communities' priorities, feedback and our findings from phase 1, we have developed the design code based on five clear principles that start to articulate the vision and emerging principles for the area and help structure the design code. They have been chosen to address the issues of the area, priorities of the community, to be memorable and have a clear focus. Each principle proposes a range of aspects for which technical design guidance would be developed, showing how they can work together successfully to deliver attractive places.

As we begin to draft the design code, we sought to ask the community's views on the five principles using our [phase 2 online survey](#), supplemented by in-person surveys in the local area including the Community Centres, churches, Arbury Local Centre, together with collaborating with residents on a second workshop at the Meadows Community Centre on 18 October 2023.

Below is a summary of the phase 2 online and in-person survey results. We received a total of 140 submissions: 72 online surveys, 68 in-person surveys (15 full surveys and 53 short surveys). The short in-person survey included the first two questions of the full (online) survey, focusing on the support for the five principles. The online survey includes a broad mix of participants with a range of ages (above 20) and incomes. The in-person surveys in community centres and churches were focused on families, particularly women, mothers with children and minority ethnic groups. We would like to engage

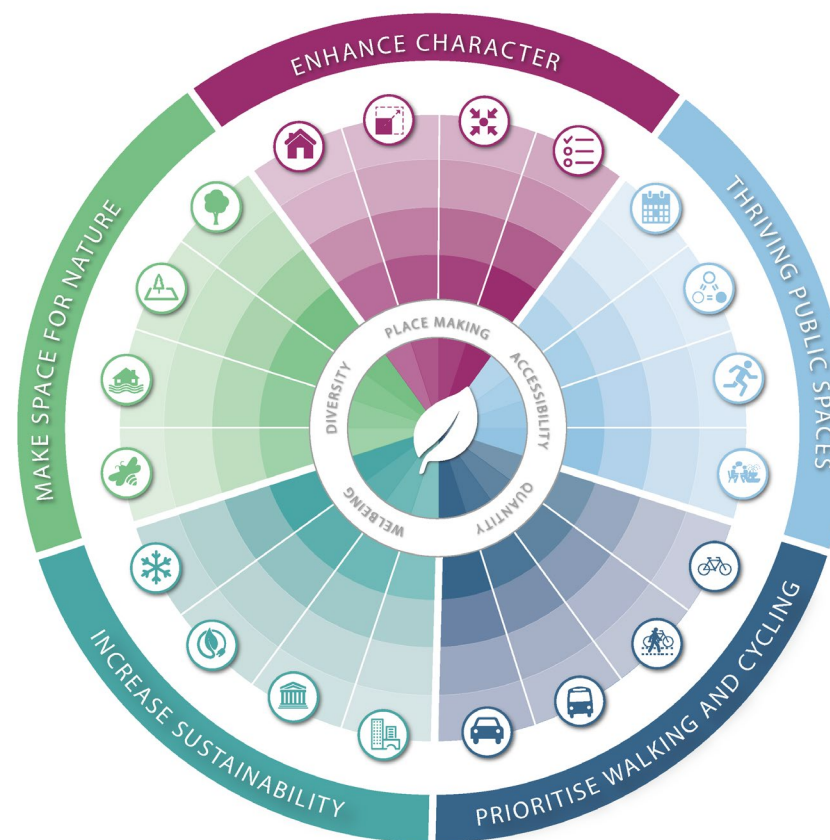


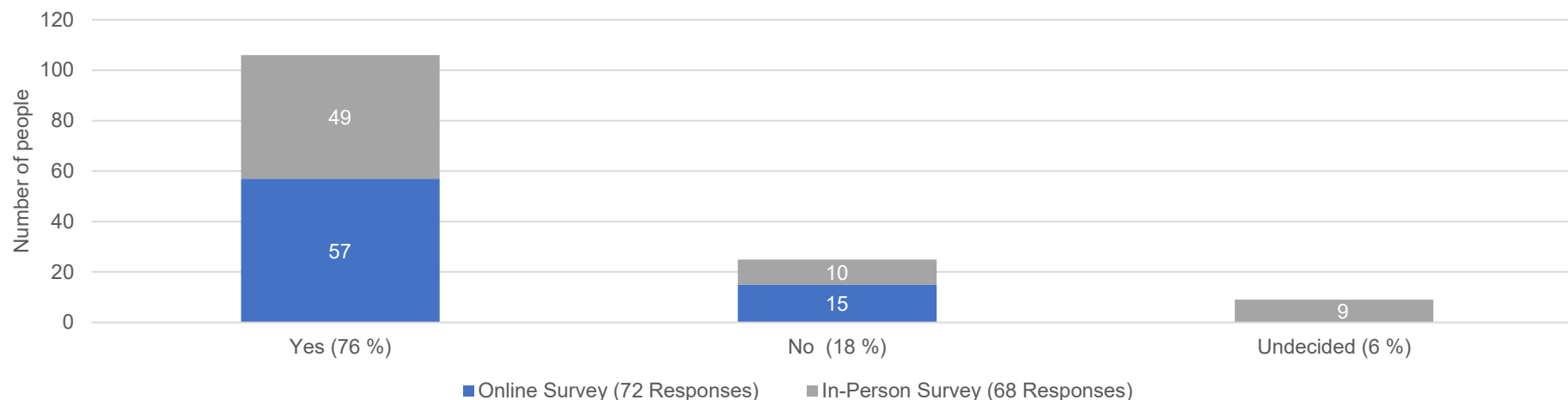
Figure 1. The Five Principles of the Design

further with young people and schools. The comments received from these interactions are being used to directly inform the design code and the next phases of our engagement.

Summary of the Results

The first part of the survey asked whether there was support for the five principles proposed and whether people felt that they had the potential to enhance the design of the neighbourhood. The second part of the survey focused on the detail aspects of each of the five principles in order to understand which aspect would make the biggest difference to the area.

Support for the five principles proposed for the Design Code



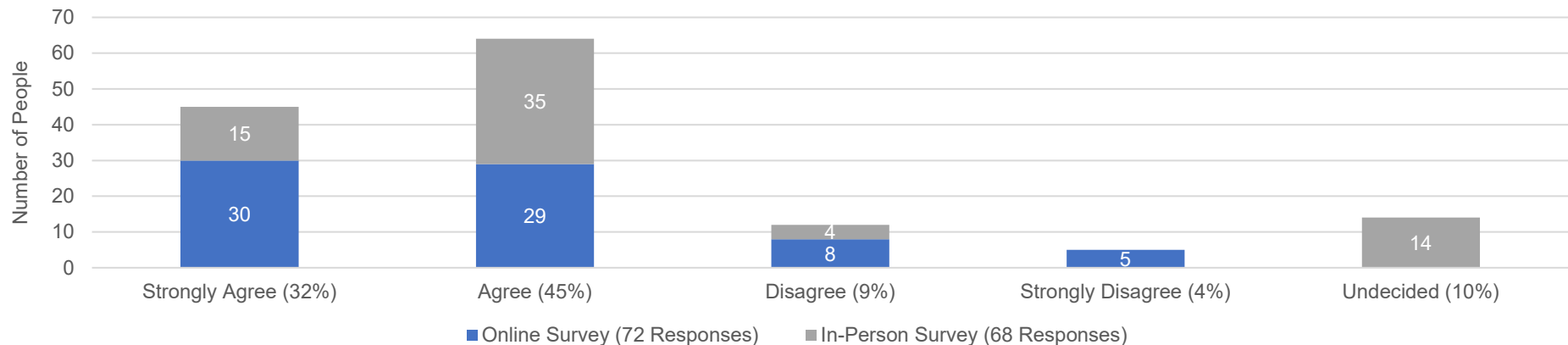
- **Support for the five principles proposed**

There was an overwhelming support for the five principles with 76 percent of online and in-person respondents supporting the principles proposed that helped address and prioritise the issues they felt were most important in phase 1. 18 percent did not support the principles whilst 6 percent (mainly in-person survey respondents) were undecided.

- **Potential for the five principles proposed to enhance design of the neighbourhood**

77 percent of online and in-person respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the five principles proposed had the potential to help enhance the design of the neighbourhood. 9 percent disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed with the five principles. 10 percent (mainly in-person respondents) were undecided.

Potential for the five principles proposed to enhance the Neighbourhoods



The second part of the survey captures the communities top five priorities/aspects within each principle that will make the biggest difference and are listed as follows:

Principle 1- Making space for nature

- Managing existing trees and planting more
- Improving access and safety of green spaces
- Retaining green roadside verges
- Promoting sustainable urban drainage – storing and absorbing rainwater run-off
- Encouraging hedgerows/planting in appropriate locations

Principle 2- Prioritise walking and cycling

- Segregated footways and cycle paths
- Prioritising key pedestrian and cycle routes that are legible, safe and connect homes to key destinations.
- Cycle locking stands near shops
- Routes with lighting and visibility from surrounding homes
- More better crossing points and speed reduction near shops and schools

Principle 3- Thriving public spaces

- Comfortable spaces to sit outside (e.g. cafes and outdoor activities)
- Spaces for older children and teenagers
- Spaces and facilities that are convenient and easy to get to

- Areas to play near family homes for younger children
- More local involvement (e.g. community gardening/orchards)

Principle 4- Enhance character:

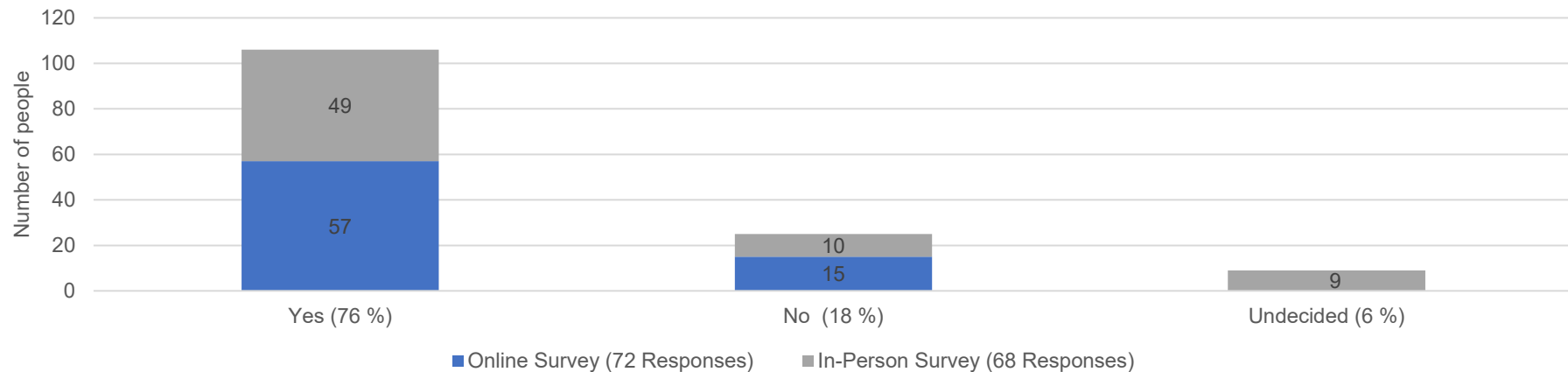
- Taking opportunities to improve quality of building design
- Maintaining a mix of homes for different generations, including homes for older people
- Opportunities for repair/reuse/recycle cafes and other facilities lacking in the area
- Improve natural surveillance by facing entrances and windows onto streets and green spaces
- Maintaining or enhancing character that is formed by buildings set within landscape

Principle 5- Increase sustainability

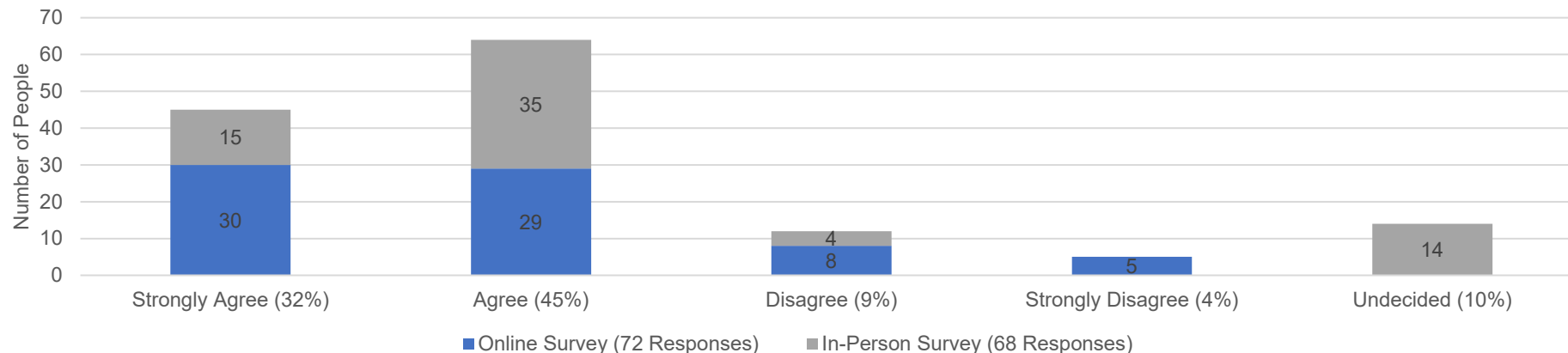
- Locating solar/photovoltaic panels
- Considerations on external insulation and cladding
- Promoting green planted roofs for new buildings
- Natural ventilation and 'dual aspect' homes
- Solar shading and overheating

Detailed Survey Results

Support for the five principles proposed for the Design Code



Potential for the five principles proposed to enhance the design of the neighbourhood



The citizens' responses to the 'Phase 2: Articulating the vision and emerging principles of the design code' project reveal a variety of responses and suggestions. A recurring theme is the need for sustainable development, with several respondents emphasising the importance of environmental considerations in urban planning.

Many citizens also expressed the need for continued maintenance and improvement of public spaces, roads, and pavements. The importance of aesthetics and cleanliness in public spaces was also highlighted.

Accessibility and inclusivity were other key themes. Several respondents stressed the need to consider the needs of disabled people, the elderly, and those who rely on mobility scooters.

The principle of prioritising walking and cycling was generally supported, but some respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impact on motorists. Several respondents also highlighted the need for effective public transport systems.

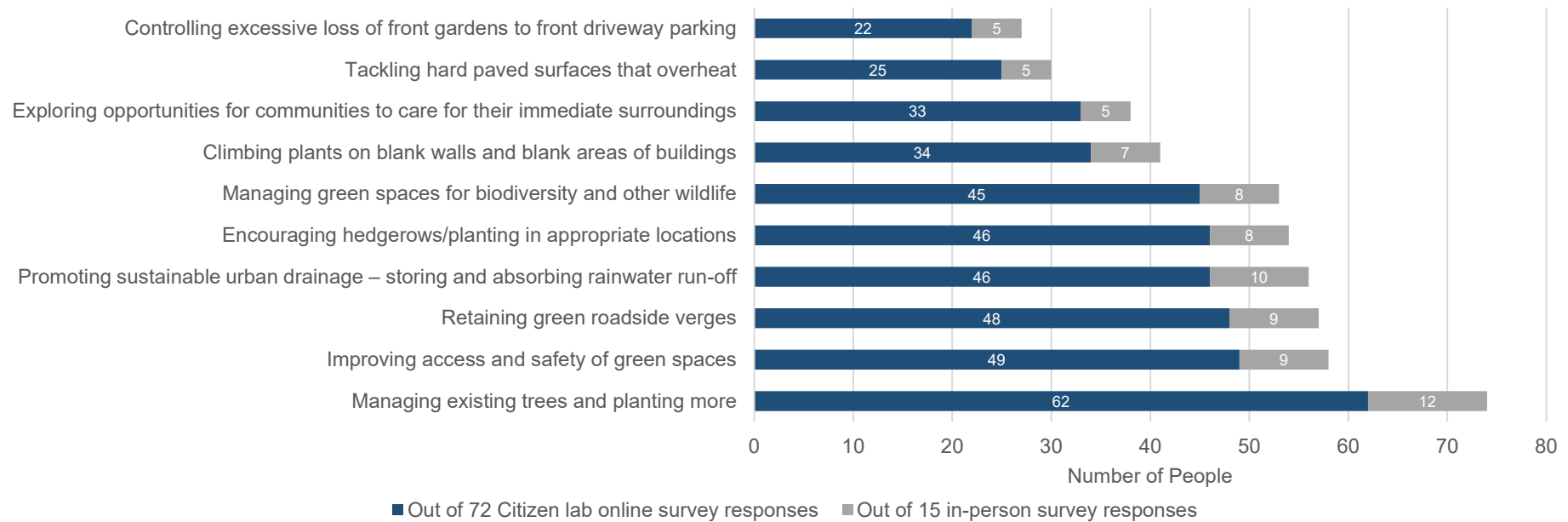
The need for community involvement in planning and development was also emphasised. Finally, some respondents expressed scepticism about the feasibility of the proposed principles, citing past experiences of unfulfilled promises.



Principle 1 - Make space for nature

The code will provide design guidance for access to and conserving green space, tree planting, hedge planting, and sustainable urban drainage to absorb rainwater within natural planted areas.

Principle 1 - Make Space for Nature: Aspects that will make the biggest difference



The citizens' responses on this principle reveal a strong emphasis on biodiversity, green spaces, and environmental sustainability. A recurring theme is the need for more trees and greenery, with several respondents suggesting the planting of fruit trees, trees planted specifically for providing shade in the summer and the creation of more green spaces, micro parks on spare land pockets and mini woodland areas at parks. The idea of planting trees along roads to improve air quality and provide natural cooling was proposed and more planting and biodiversity at Nuns Way Park and Pulley Park was suggested.

The importance of maintaining biodiversity was highlighted, with suggestions for leaving tree stumps as habitats for wildlife, promoting urban wildlife, and creating hedgehog highways. However, some respondents expressed concern about the balance between biodiversity and aesthetics, arguing that some green spaces are currently unattractive and poorly maintained.

Accessibility was another key issue, with calls for inclusive disabled access and the maintenance of clear paths and pavements. Some respondents suggested that untidy green spaces can encourage littering and fly-tipping and called for these areas to be kept neat.

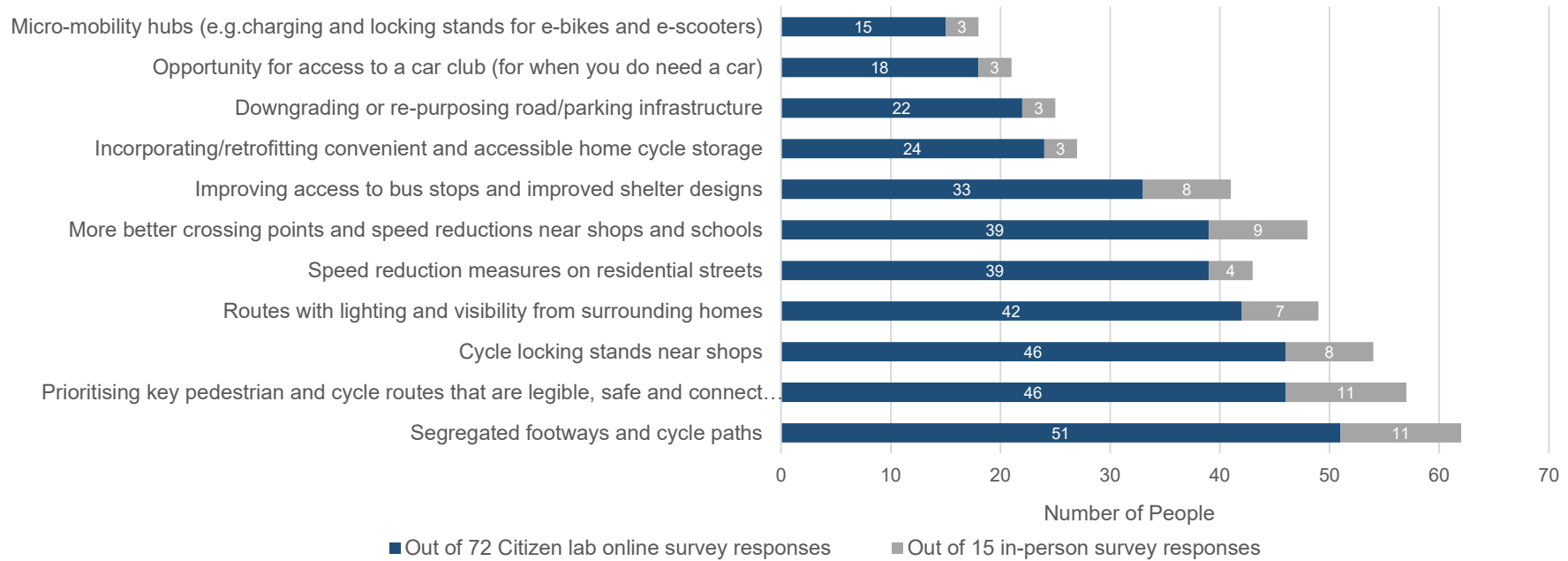
The idea of allotments and food growing was mentioned by several respondents, as was the need for play areas. Other suggestions included limiting the use of pesticides; ensuring green waste collection; hedgehog highways; planting pollinator public gardens, grass grid permeable parking spaces to enable drainage and avoid flooding; water storage (e.g. near or under playing fields and parkland with solar/wind powered sprinkler or other watering systems) for public green spaces; and providing wooden seating in public spaces.



Principle 2 - Prioritise walking and cycling

The code will promote creating a safe joined-up network for walking and cycling that can be combined with green space and nature.

Principle 2 - Prioritise Walking and Cycling: Aspects that will make the biggest difference



The majority of the responses from the citizens on this principle revolve around the need for better cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Many respondents emphasised the importance of creating walking and cycling routes that are well-connected, safe, and prioritised over car traffic.

There were also concerns about the management of e-scooters and the need for their proper use and storage. Some respondents suggested the need for better lighting on pavements and cycle routes, especially in darker areas, barriers on pavements are removed, the provision of more cut throughs and signposting, separate paths for cycles/walking and more pedestrian crossings.

A significant number of respondents expressed concerns about the potential reduction of parking and the perceived anti-car sentiment. They argued that cars are still necessary for many people and that reducing parking could create further problems.

There were also calls for better maintenance of existing infrastructure, such as fixing potholes on pathways, gritting and provision of grit boxes in winter and improving the quality of cycle paths.

Finally, some respondents highlighted the need for measures to reduce bike theft, the provision of more cycle and mobility vehicle locking storage facilities and charging points and the need for better public transport information. There was a suggestion for making walking more interesting for children and adults: with coloured lines and stepping stones.

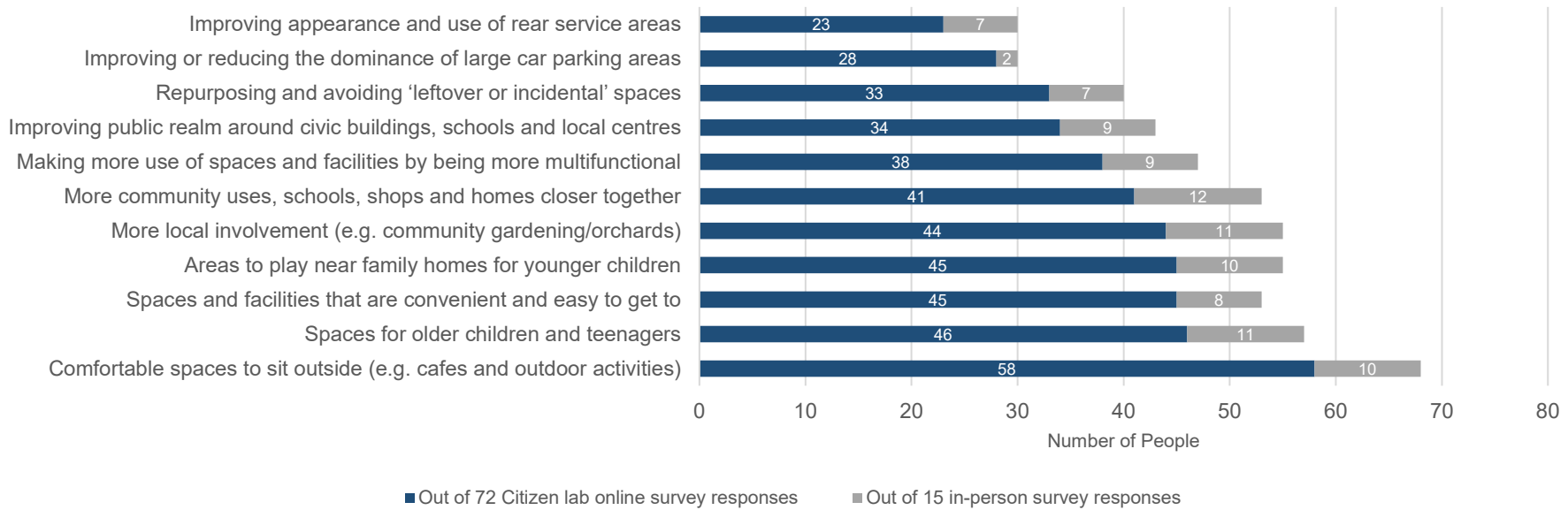


Image credit: Pollard Thomas Edwards

Principle 3 - Thriving public spaces

The code will provide guidance for well-integrated public spaces and local community facilities next to homes that can help to support businesses and bring people together.

Principle 3- Thriving Public Spaces: Aspects that would make the biggest difference



Citizens have proposed a variety of ideas and suggestions on this principle. A recurring theme is the need for more inclusive and diverse spaces. Several respondents highlighted the need for spaces that cater to different demographics, including older children, teenagers, and people without children.

The importance of preserving and enhancing natural spaces was also frequently mentioned. Some citizens suggested that certain areas should be left "unpurposed" and wild for biodiversity and water runoff, while others emphasised the need to protect existing habitats. The idea of incorporating biodiversity into every decision was also proposed.

Several respondents expressed the need for additional local amenities and services, such as shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants, outdoor gyms as well as community centres. The need for more local involvement in decision-making and management of resources was also highlighted.

Safety and antisocial behaviour were also raised as issues, with suggestions for better enforcement against antisocial behaviour and prompt attention to derelict sites. The need for comfortable and accessible seating was also mentioned.

In terms of specific amenities, suggestions included the inclusion of churches and religious centres in civic spaces; the provision of allotments, equipment (tool libraries), toilets and water fountain; more lighting, flowers, bushes and dog litter bin on streets; and the addition of info/map boards and recycling bins at key locations.

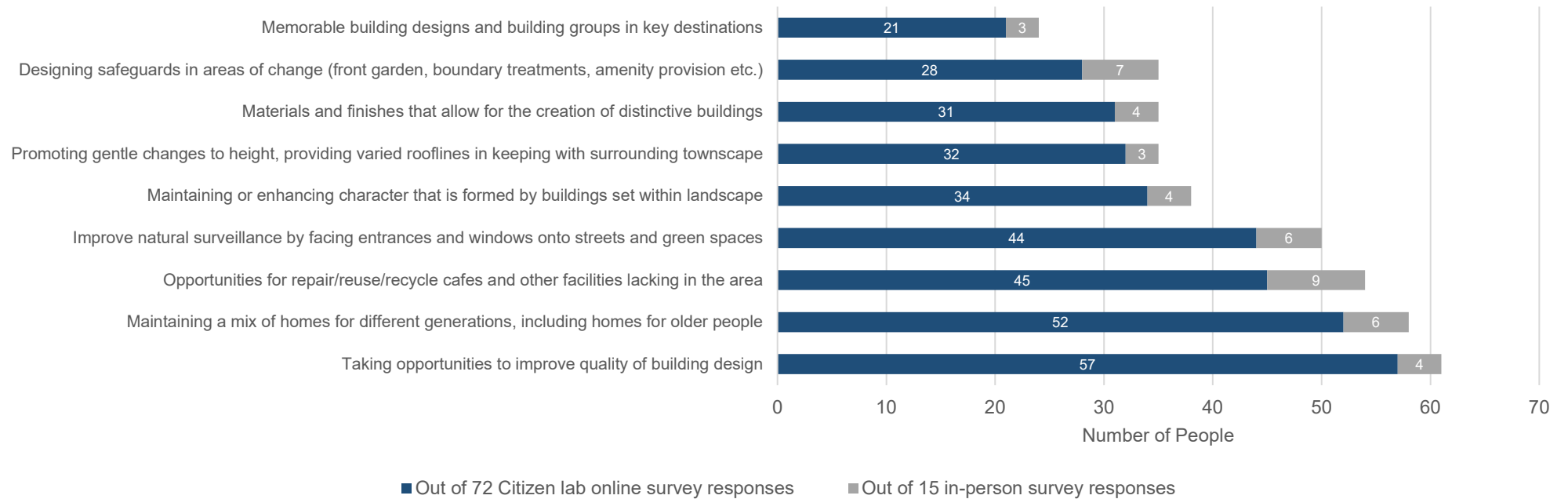
The need for cultural events, shared working spaces and after school activities was also mentioned. More things to do in public spaces, including physical activities, was suggested. The need for St Albans Way recreation ground needs to have more play equipment and renewing the Kings Hedges Pulley Park to meet the different age group's needs was also mentioned.



Principle 4 – Enhance character

The code will promote strengthening the green and leafy character of the area, maintaining gentle scale, and providing a mix of homes suitable for different generations.

Principle 4 -Enhance Character: Aspects that would make the biggest difference



The citizens' responses reveal a few key trends.

Firstly, there is a strong sentiment against the construction of buildings that are "distinctive and memorable" for the wrong reasons. Many respondents expressed concern about the recent trend of constructing modern buildings that do not fit with their surroundings and are considered low quality and not user-friendly. They argue that buildings should be compatible in terms of design and materials rather than being distinctive. There was also a concern about tall buildings that are domineering.

Secondly, there is a call for more green spaces and communal areas. Respondents suggested that these areas should be equipped with enough seats for parents to watch their children or for elderly people to rest. They also proposed the provision of more shared communal indoor and outdoor spaces, such as guest accommodation, allotments, gardens, pubs, and community centres.

Thirdly, there is a desire for more mixed-density buildings with different purposes. However, there is also a concern about the increase in housing density, with some respondents arguing that this leads to congestion and a decrease in green spaces. For reasons of safety, a closer integration of homes, businesses, cafes and public spaces that attract activities and keeps the area busy rather than just residential only areas were suggested.

Lastly, there is a call for more citizen involvement in the approval of building designs. Some respondents suggested that the people who live in the areas should be the ones to define "character".

In terms of energy usage and sustainability, some respondents suggested the need for design safeguards to improve energy usage and to ensure that air source heat pumps do not annoy neighbours. There were also calls for energy retrofitting.

Overall, the responses indicate a desire for more citizen involvement in the design process, a focus on compatibility with surroundings rather than distinctiveness, the provision of more green and communal spaces, better lit and better maintained streets lined with trees, more small shops in Arbury / Kings Hedges and a community café and a consideration of energy usage and sustainability in building designs.

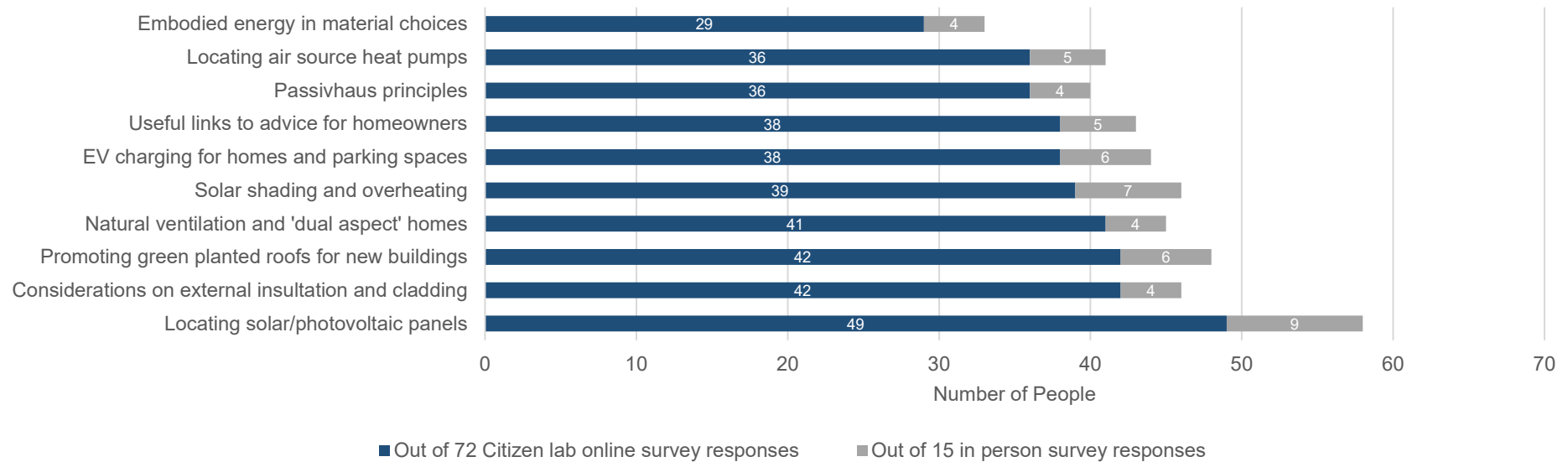


Image credit: Pollard Thomas Edwards

Principle 5 – Increase sustainability

The code will promote access to public transport and provide sustainability guidance for new buildings, as well as the improvement of existing ones.

Principle 5- Increase Sustainability: Aspects that will make the biggest difference



The responses from the citizens on principle 5 reveal a strong interest in sustainable energy solutions. The most frequently mentioned ideas revolve around the use of heat pumps, particularly ground source heat pumps and air source heat pumps and their installation at a wider (street/community) level.

There is also a strong emphasis on the use of solar panels, suggestions of encouraging (even subsidising) solar panels on existing roof space, and the need for careful planning in their installation to maximise their efficiency. Some respondents also suggested the use of district heating to improve efficiency.

In addition to these, there were suggestions for innovative ways to conserve energy, such as using natural water flows and the use of natural cooling from tree cover or colour choice for roads and roofs to stop heat islands; forming community electric car clubs; external insulation of homes.

There were also calls for financial support for homeowners installing sustainable energy sources, and for the council to facilitate bulk buying of sustainable energy equipment.

However, some respondents expressed confusion about the terminology used in the survey, suggesting a need for clearer communication about the proposed measures.