

st albans city vision

City-wide survey



In Autumn 2008 a city-wide survey was carried out in St Albans as part of the consultation process for the St Albans City Vision. The aim of the survey was to gather a sample of opinion on a wide range of planning-related issues which would be reflective of St Albans' demographic profile. The survey was sent out to 11,000 local residents aged 16 and above, and responses were received from just under 3,000. Roughly equal numbers of responses were received from four different age groups: 16 -34, 35 – 44, 44 – 60 and 60 +, although with slightly more responses from older groups (60+) and slightly fewer from younger residents (16 – 34).

A summary of broad responses to each question is set out overleaf.

I. What do you think about St Albans? (please tick)

- I like it, it serves all my needs
- I like it, but it could be improved
- I don't like it
- Other

Findings

The vast majority of respondents (96%) felt very positive about their home city, although 71% felt that there was room for improvement. While only 1% said that they disliked the City, negative responses were more often tabulated as written comment. These focussed broadly on three things: the quality and cleanliness of the public realm; discontent with the City's offer (there were several requests for a cinema and for more facilities for young people, and for an improved range and quality of shopping).



2. What are St Albans' greatest assets? (grade from 1-5, 5 being best)

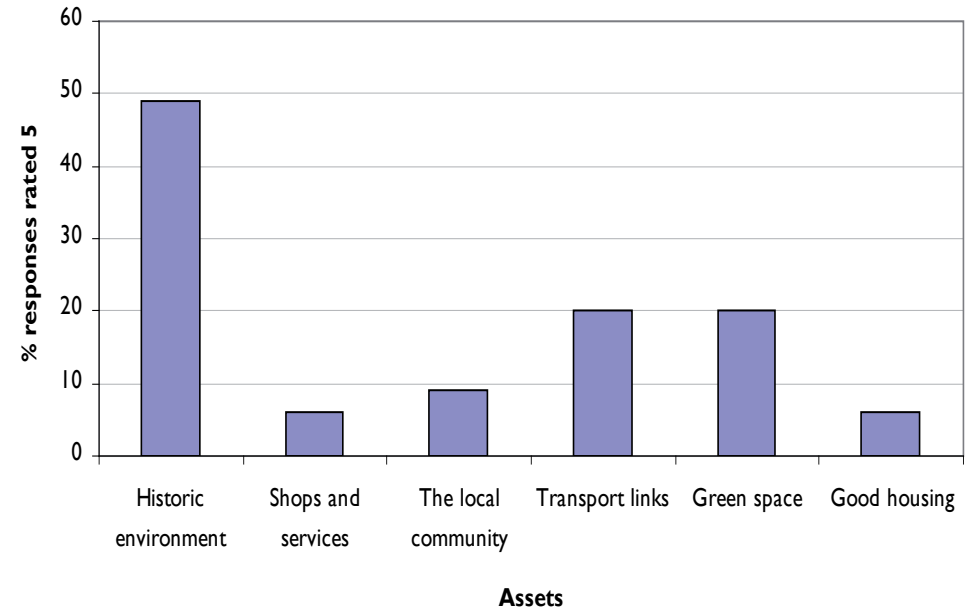
- Historic environment
- The local community
- Green space
- Other
- Shops and services
- Transport links
- Good housing

Findings

The historic environment came out as St Albans' most valued asset by far, with 70% of respondents rating it at either 4 or 5 (where 5 was best). Green space and transport links were also identified as strengths. There was, however, a more ambivalent response regarding shops and services, housing and the local community.

In addition, schools and the market were specifically mentioned by many as assets, and, to a lesser extent, other features such as the City's compact form, its proximity to London, its pubs and music scene, the Cathedral and Verulamium Park.

Q.2 What are St Albans' greatest assets - percentage responses rated 5 (best)



3. What are St Albans' greatest weaknesses? (grade from 1-5, 5 being worst)

- Local buildings
- Leisure facilities
- Public spaces
- Other
- Shops and services
- Transport links
- Poor housing

Findings

Leisure facilities were identified to be St Albans' greatest weakness. Within the extra comments section, traffic congestion was the number one issue, identified by over 130 people, followed by the lack of a cinema (over 50) and parking (over 30). The condition of local roads and the public realm were also perceived to be weaknesses. Several comments related to provision of leisure facilities and schools.

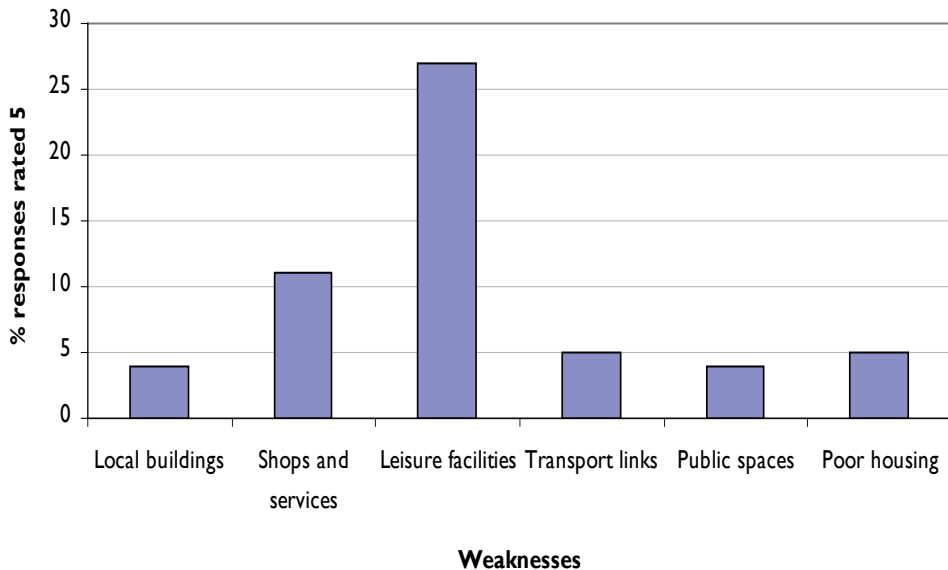
4. What are St Albans' greatest priorities in terms of transport? (grade from 1-5, 5 being most important)

- Trains
- Cycling provision
- Parking
- Other
- Local buses
- Congestion
- Pedestrian links

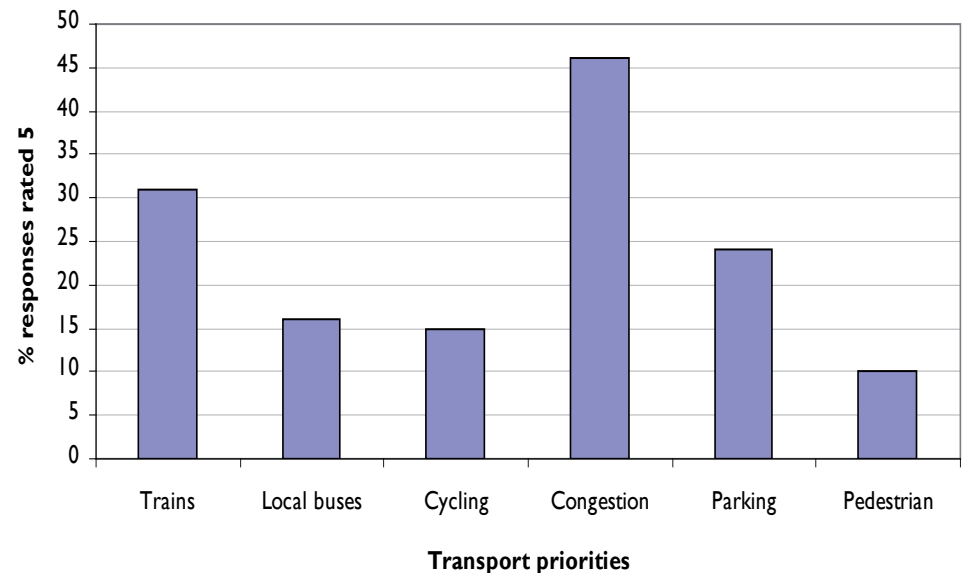
Findings

Echoing issues identified in Question 3 (St Albans' greatest weaknesses), congestion was perceived to be the single biggest transport issue. This was followed by trains and parking. Residents used the extra comments section to raise additional transport issues, particularly the poor condition of local roads, and to suggest transport improvements. Of these, park and ride was the most popular, but improved signalling and congestion charging were also recommended. In addition, there were several calls for sustainable transport improvements – provision of cycle ways, support for electric cars and greener buses.

Q.3 What are St Albans' greatest weaknesses - percentage of responses rated 5 (worst)



Q.4 What are St Albans' greatest priorities in terms of transport - % responses rated grade 5 (greatest priority)



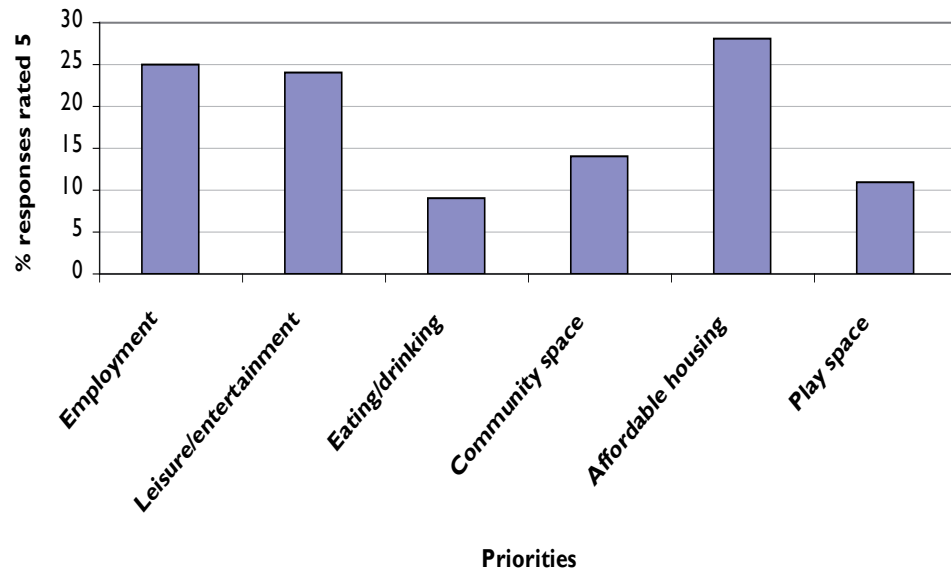
5. What are St Albans' greatest priorities in terms of facilities for local people? (grade from 1-5, 5 being most important)

- Employment
- Leisure/entertainment
- Eating/drinking
- Other
- Community space
- Affordable housing
- Play space

Findings

Provision of affordable housing was rated as the most important local facility to provide, followed closely by employment and leisure facilities. However, the extra comments section also revealed demand for better provision of community facilities, including schools (27 responses), health care, incorporating hospitals and an A and E department (18 responses), a cinema (40 responses) and facilities for youth and the elderly (over 20). Mention was also made of shopping, hotels, restaurants, entertainment, public realm improvements (St Peters Street, green spaces) and parking.

Q.5 What are St Albans' greatest priorities in terms of facilities for local people - percentage of responses rated 5 (most important)



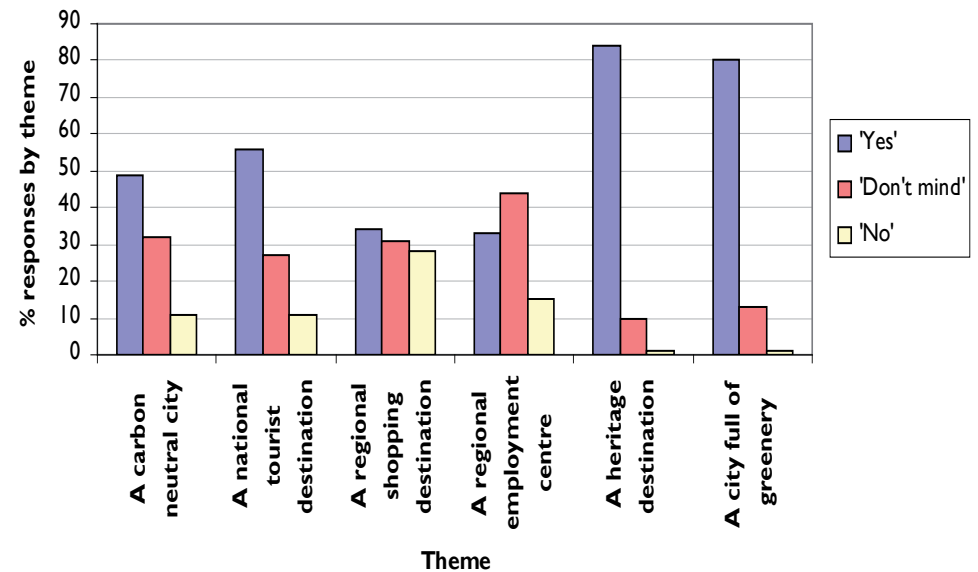
6. Which of the following themes should be part of the vision for St Albans? (Yes / Don't mind / No)

- a) A carbon neutral city
- c) A regional shopping destination
- e) A heritage destination
- b) A national tourist destination
- d) A regional employment centre
- f) A city full of greenery

Findings

Residents felt that the vision for St Albans should be sure to emphasise and promote, above all, the City's strengths and potential as a heritage destination and a green City. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the synergies between these themes, there was also considerable support for a carbon neutral City, and for St Albans as a national tourist destination.

Q.6 Which of the following themes should be part of the vision for St Albans - percentage of 'yes', 'no' and 'don't mind' responses by theme



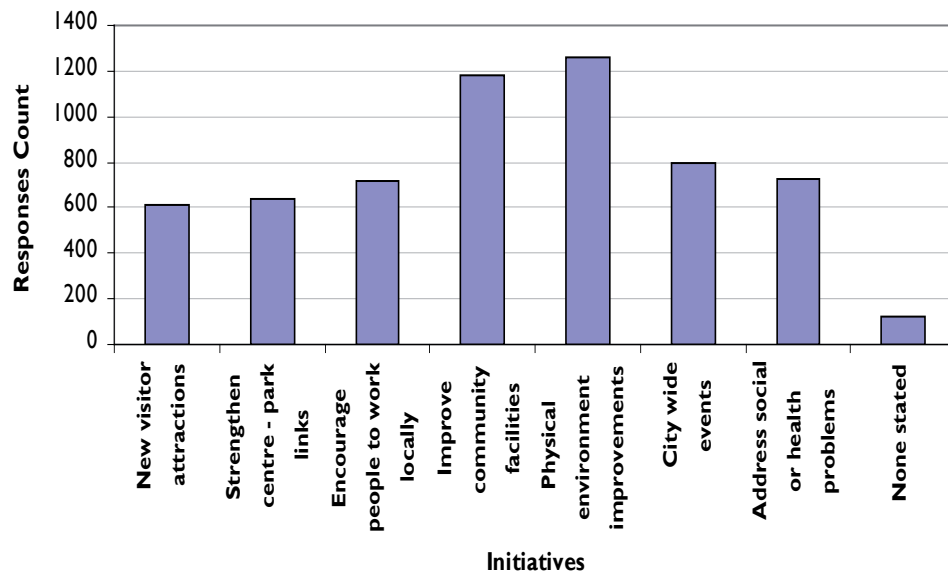
7. What initiatives do you think could help to raise civic pride in St Albans? (please tick up to 3 choices)

- Strengthen links between the centre and the park
- Promote new visitor attractions
- Improve the physical environment in the centre
- Encourage people to work locally
- Initiatives to address social or health problems
- Promote city wide events in the future
- Improve community facilities in the city

Findings

Physical environment improvements and better access to community facilities were considered by residents to be the most effective ways of raising civic pride in St Albans. However, there was broad support for all of the measures suggested.

Q.7 What initiatives do you think could to raise civic pride in St Albans - no. responses



8. What 3 things do you think would most improve life in St Albans?

Findings

This question elicited a large response. Of these, there were over 90 comments relating to cycle provision, mostly regarding safety, better access, both within St Albans, and linking to surrounding settlements. Other sustainable transport improvements were suggested – ensuring that there were fewer or no cars in the centre and providing better pedestrian routes.

A considerable portion of comments related to planning and the need for overarching vision, better strategic planning to provide for future requirements, and the need for higher standards of architectural quality. Residents were also keen to see improvements to the public environment, street lighting, parks, St Peters Street and town centre spaces.

Entertainment and leisure facilities were suggested as important improvements; a concert hall, restaurants and sports facilities, and in general it was felt that more events would help to bring the community together (30+ responses). However, at the same time, there was strong feeling against about the impact of the current evening economy, with over 70 responses asking for better control of bars, pubs and nightclubs (70+).

Local services emerged as an issue, particularly waste collection and recycling, and there were common calls for City wide carbon neutrality, support for local employment and protection of heritage and green spaces.