

Northern End of Sutton Street Survey Consultation Report

March 2015

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1. Introduction

Sutton Council has secured £500k grant funding from Central Government to help revitalise the northern end of Sutton High Street, which includes the parade of shops between Benhill Avenue and Marshall's Road.

The council was keen to consult with people using the northern end of Sutton High Street so that their views could be considered and used to inform the intervention from the outset.

Retail Revival Ltd was contracted by Sally Blomfield, Area Renewal Programme Manager of Sutton Council LB, to deliver an on-street survey to interview a cross section of pedestrians from the section of high street between Marshall Road and Greenford Road.

200 people were interviewed between 8.30am and 4.30pm from Monday 16th to Saturday 21st March 2015 inclusive. This document outlines their responses.

1.1. The Methodology

The survey was designed by Sutton Council and had a mixture of 12 open and closed questions (appendix 1). Every person walking past the interviewers located at the northern end of Sutton High Street was invited to participate in the survey and people sitting on the public benches were also approached. This report details the views of the first 200 people that agreed to participate in the survey.

2. The Survey Results

Each question is listed below with a textual summary of the results. A bar graph provides a visual illustration of the full results for each question. Each bar graph measures the number (not percentage) of responses out of a sample of 200.

2.1. Where do you live? (Q1)

The first question asked people where they live in order to understand the travelling distance of visitors to this part of Sutton High Street.

67% had travelled from the London borough of Sutton, 24% from the three other London boroughs of Croydon, Kingston and Merton. Just 9% of respondents came from other towns in the UK including Birmingham and other countries including China.

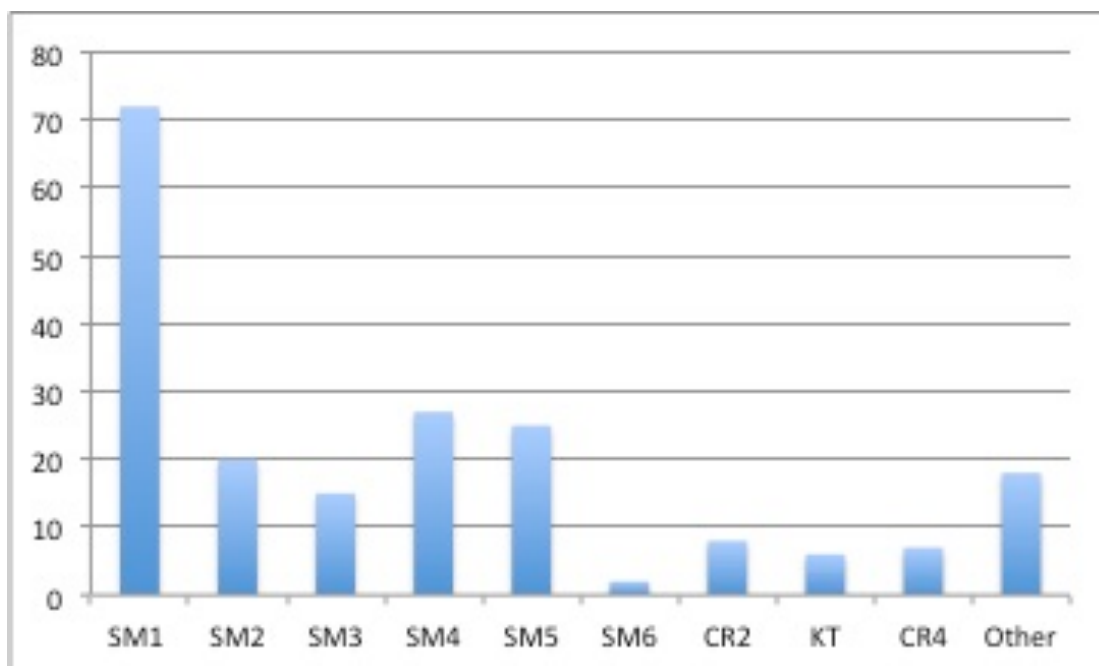


Figure 1: Responses for Question 1

2.2. Why have you come to the Northern end of Sutton High Street today? (Q2)

People were asked to identify their reason for visiting the area from a list of answers; they could give more than one reason or state another that was not listed.

77% of respondents were visiting the northern end of the high street for shopping. Anecdotal evidence identified that ASDA and Argos were the two key destination shops visited. Around 30% were meeting friends or passing through the area to another part of town. 25% of people had another reason for visiting the northern end of the high street; they were working, going to a playgroup or collecting or delivering to a business. Just 2% came to the area to visit the market.

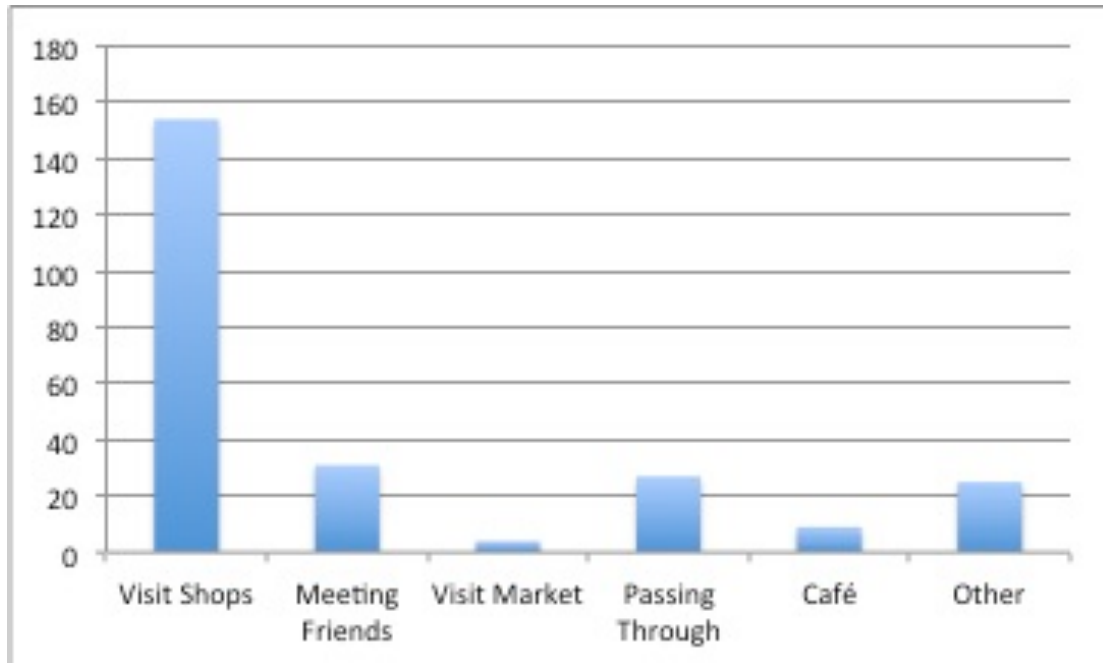


Figure 2: Responses for Question 2

2.3. How often do you visit the Northern end of Sutton High Street? (Q3)

51% visited the northern end of the high street weekly and 22% visited daily. The remaining people visited less frequently with 9% using the area less than once a month.

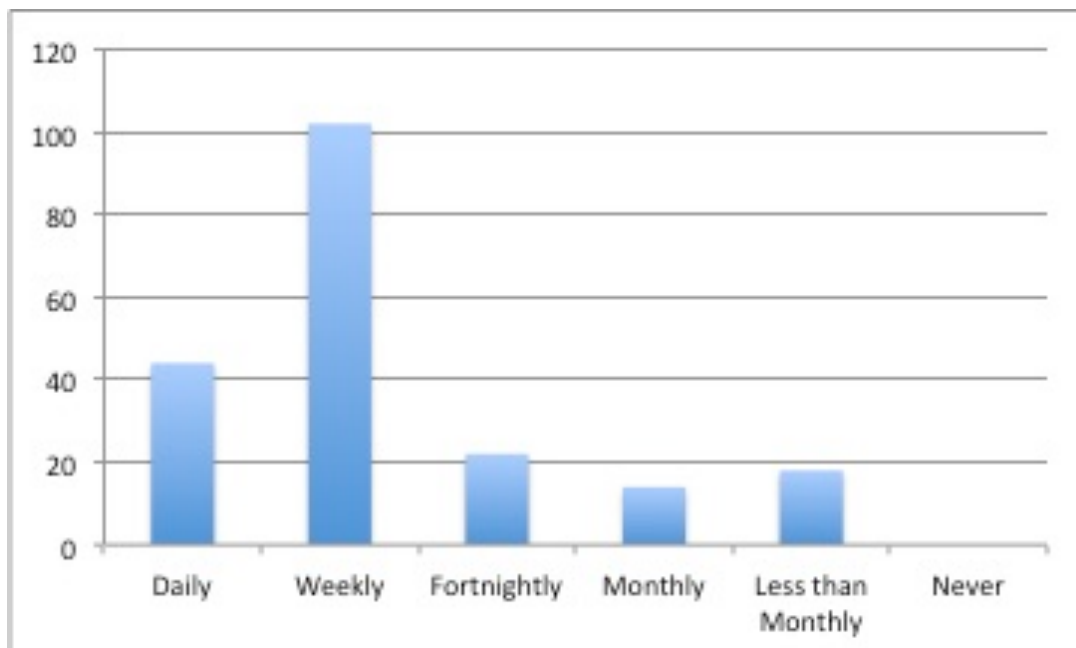


Figure 3: Responses to Question 3

2.4. Specific to ASDA car park users, do you link your shopping at ASDA with visiting other premises in the area? (Q4)

The survey intended to identify if the facility for two hours free parking in ASDA car park encouraged or enabled people to use the northern end of Sutton High Street for link visits to other shops and cafes.

63.5% of the people interviewed did not park in ASDA car park. Anecdotally the majority of respondents said that they had walked to the area or travelled by bus. 36.5% used ASDA car park and 22% said they linked their visit to other locations in the area 'always' or 'often'.

Anecdotally 5% said they used up their 2 hours in the car park and then left the town, when pressed they said they would do more linked shopping if the car park allowed them to stay longer.

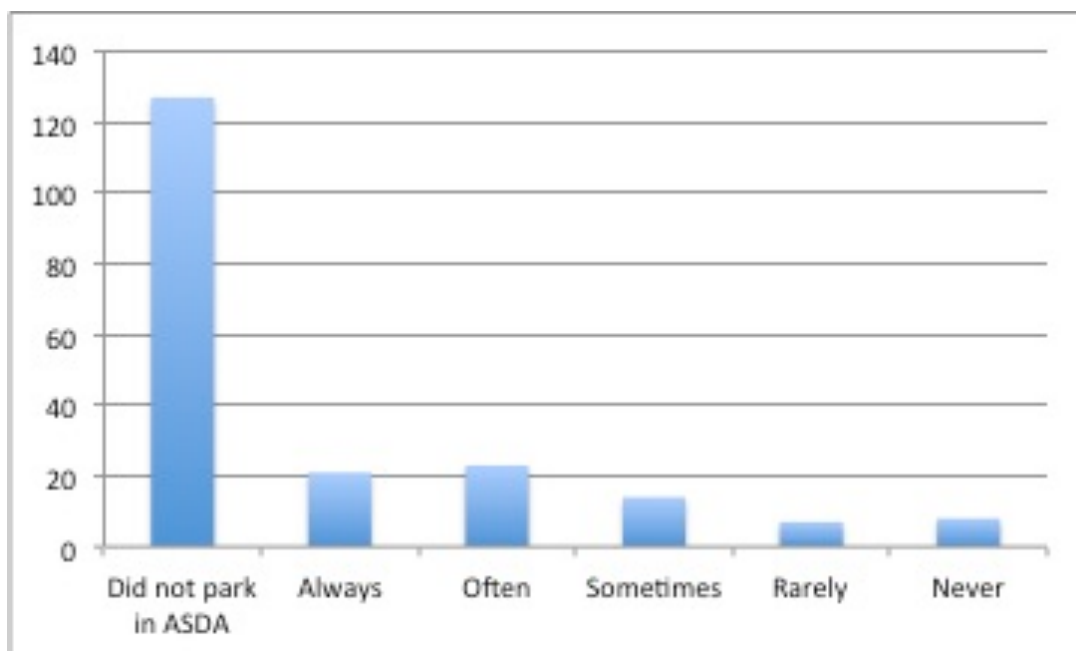


Figure 4: Responses to Question 4

2.5. On average, how much do you spend in the Northern end of Sutton High Street per visit? (Q5)

When asked about their average spend per visit to the northern end of Sutton High Street many provided anecdotal evidence that they primarily spent their money in one of two shops in that area of town, ASDA and Argos.

84.5% spent £50 or less on average per visit to the northern end of Sutton High Street. 35% spent between £11-£25 per visit 25.5% spent between £0-£10 and 24% between £26-£50. Only 1% spent over £100 on average per visit.



Figure 5: Responses to Question 5

2.6. How often do you buy anything from the market in the northern end of Sutton High Street? (Q6)

There is a market in the northern end of Sutton High Street. At least five stalls were present on each day of the survey; the market was larger on Friday and larger again on Saturday. The market was not a major attraction; 69.5% visit the market 'less than once a month' or 'never'. 12% visited the market 'weekly' or 'daily'.

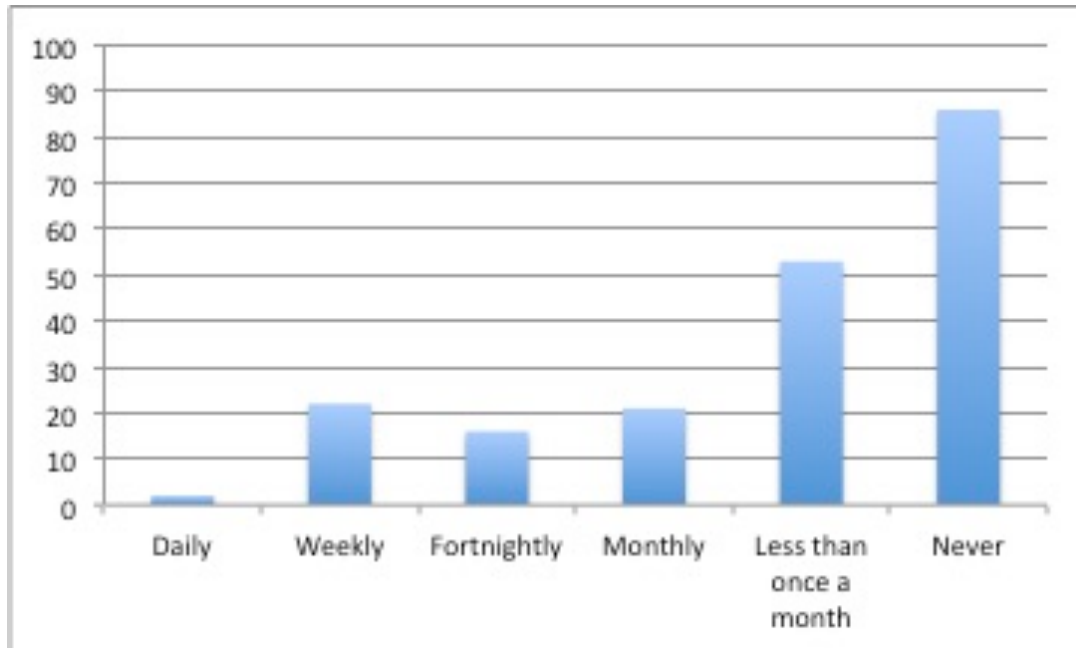


Figure 6: Responses to Question 6

2.7. What market stalls and products are not on offer in Sutton's market that you would hope to see? (Q7)

Some people found this a difficult question to answer, as they no longer use markets as part of their regular shopping pattern. 7.5% respondents said that they would never use a market, that they preferred to use cheaper shops instead, citing the shops 'Savers' and pound shops in general as preferred alternatives. They could not think of anything they would buy in the future from a market.

6% said they enjoyed the French and Christmas markets held in other parts of Sutton.

28.5% suggested types of market stalls that would entice them to use the market in the northern area of Sutton High Street in the future. Over half gave more than one answer, these included:

- More local products, organic products, artisan items and baked goods
- More fruit and vegetables
- More regular fish stalls
- Street food market including Afro Caribbean
- A regular antiques and vintage market
- Farmers market
- More clothing, more choice
- Flower stall like the one in Redhill
- Plants and gardening especially at this time of year
- Fresh butchers

- Household and kitchen items
- Teenage clothing, lower price point but more fashionable
- Tool and gadget stalls
- Sweets, broken biscuits and chocolate misshapes
- Pet stall with bird feed and feeders
- Bags and better quality clothing
- Make up and beauty products
- Children’s clothing and toys
- Crafts and hobby supplies
- Haberdashery, material and wool

11% said anecdotally that the look and feel of the market should be improved; some ideas included; ‘existing stalls should be improved not replaced’, ‘higher end’ and better quality stalls should join the existing market, ‘stalls look grungy and deserve better presentation’, new and colour co-ordinated stall covers would look nice and make them more likely to use the market in the future.

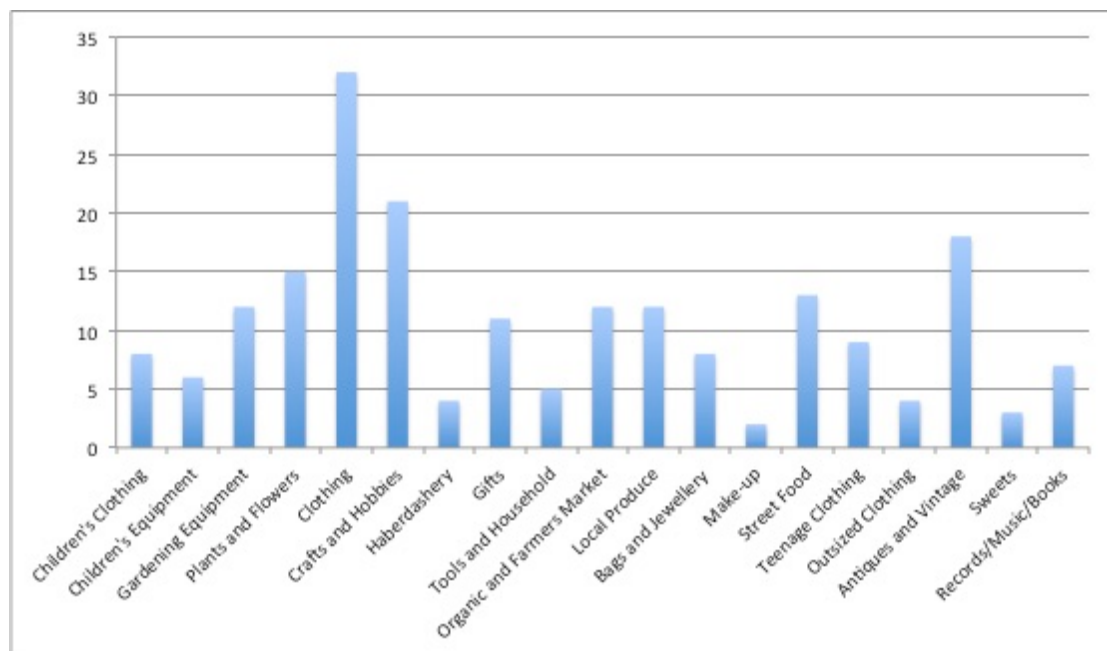


Figure 7: Responses to Question 7

2.8. On average, how much time do you spend in the Northern end of Sutton High Street per visit? (Q8)

In the week of the survey the interviewers noticed that unless they were going in and out of ASDA or Argos, the majority of people were walking through the

northern part of Sutton High Street without stopping or dwelling to look at shops or services. On three of the six days the weather was particularly windy and rainy a factor which might contribute to the lack of dwell time.

From those surveyed 23.5% spent under 15 minutes in the area and a further 22.5% spent under 30 minutes there. 32.5% spent between 31 minutes and an hour and 21.5% spent over one hour in the area.

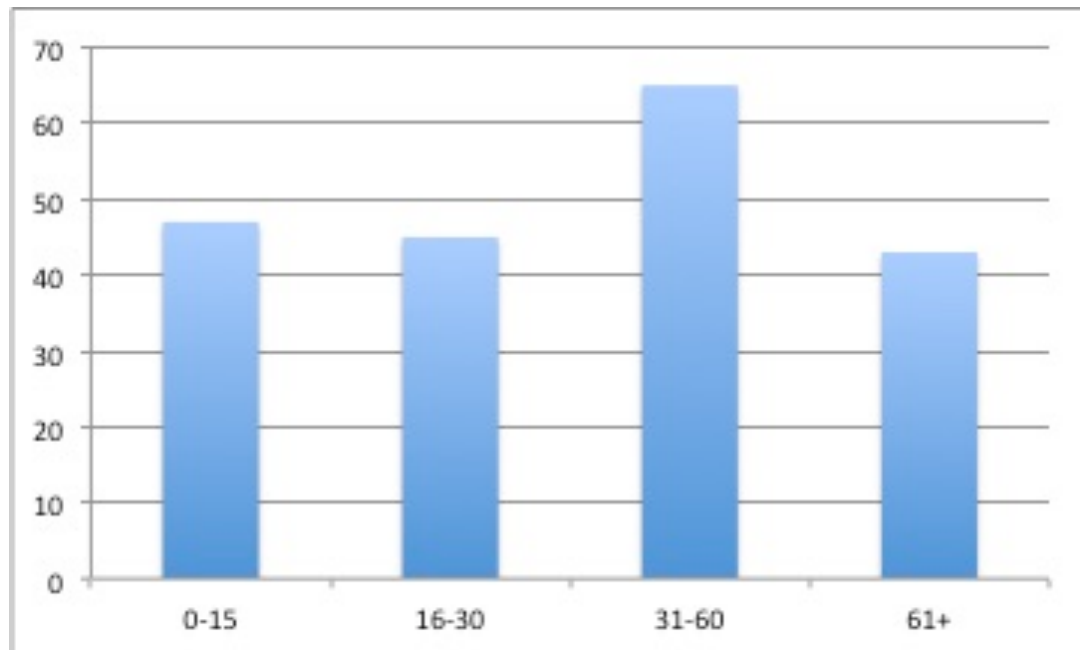


Figure 8: Responses to Question 8

2.9. On a scale of 1-5, how well does the northern end of Sutton meet your shopping needs? 1 = not at all, 5= completely (Q9)

When asked how well the area met their shopping needs the majority of respondents, again anecdotally, made it clear that they were referring to ASDA and Argos when answering this questions and not the rest of the area.

In answer to the question 65.5% felt that the area met their shopping needs scoring between 3 and 5. 44.5% were disparaging about the ability for the northern end of the high street to meet their shopping needs scoring 1 or 2 for this question.

Some of the anecdotal responses were captured and included:

- 'I only come here for ASDA, I love it, I come all the way from Mitcham and spend loads here'
- 'There's nothing down here is there? Just ASDA and occasionally I use Argos'

- 'I use the café across the road but there aren't any other good shops down here'
- 'The market is a rip off, my friend bought a dress there for £35 and saw the same dress in Peacocks on the same day for £15'
- 'I hate using the market because they don't let you pick the fruit and veg yourself, they give you all the rubbish'
- 'I don't feel safe down this end of town, I pop into Argos and go right out again'
- 'This part of town is a dump, there is nothing down here'
- 'ASDA meets my shopping needs a 5, the rest of the area is a 1'

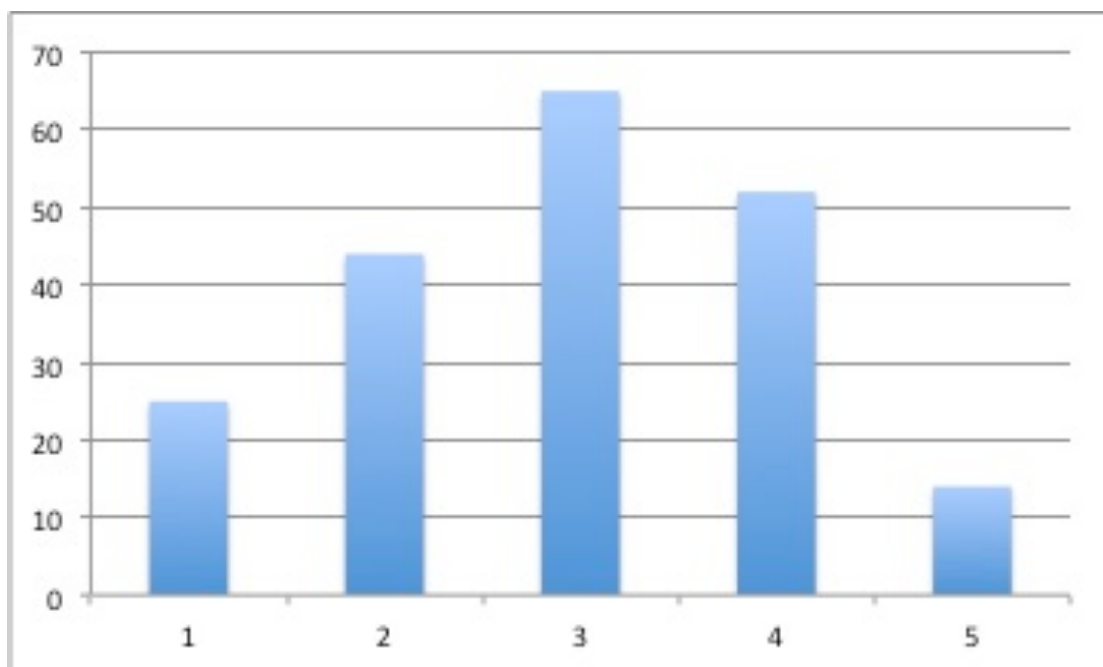


Figure 9: Responses to Question 9

2.10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the following features (appearance, cleanliness, customer service, ease of access, opening hours, price, quality of products and variety of products) of the shops in the northern end of Sutton High Street? 1 = very poor, 5 = excellent (Q10)

When rating the shops, respondents quantified their answers to the questions relating to opening hours, customer service, price, quality and variety by saying that their primary experience of shopping in the northern end of the high street was ASDA and Argos.

The appearance and cleanliness of the shops in the area were considered poor whereas the service, variety, quality and price offered in the shops was considered good to excellent: a summary of the results are listed below:

- 60% felt the appearance of the shops was poor or very poor (1-2)
- 47% felt the cleanliness of the shops was poor or very poor (1-2)
- 95% said the customer service was good to excellent (3-5)
- 90% felt the accessibility was good to excellent (3-5)
- 94.5% felt the opening hours were good to excellent (3-5)
- 91.5% felt the price of goods and services was good to excellent (3-5)
- 93% felt the quality of products was good to excellent (3-5)
- 87% felt the variety of products was good to excellent (3-5)

It can be concluded that appearance and cleanliness were judged visually by respondents standing on the street and looking at their immediate environment and the other factors were experienced first hand primarily in the two destination stores. It is therefore impossible to conclude that other shops and services, including the market, in the area offer excellent customer service, price, quality and variety.

Appearance

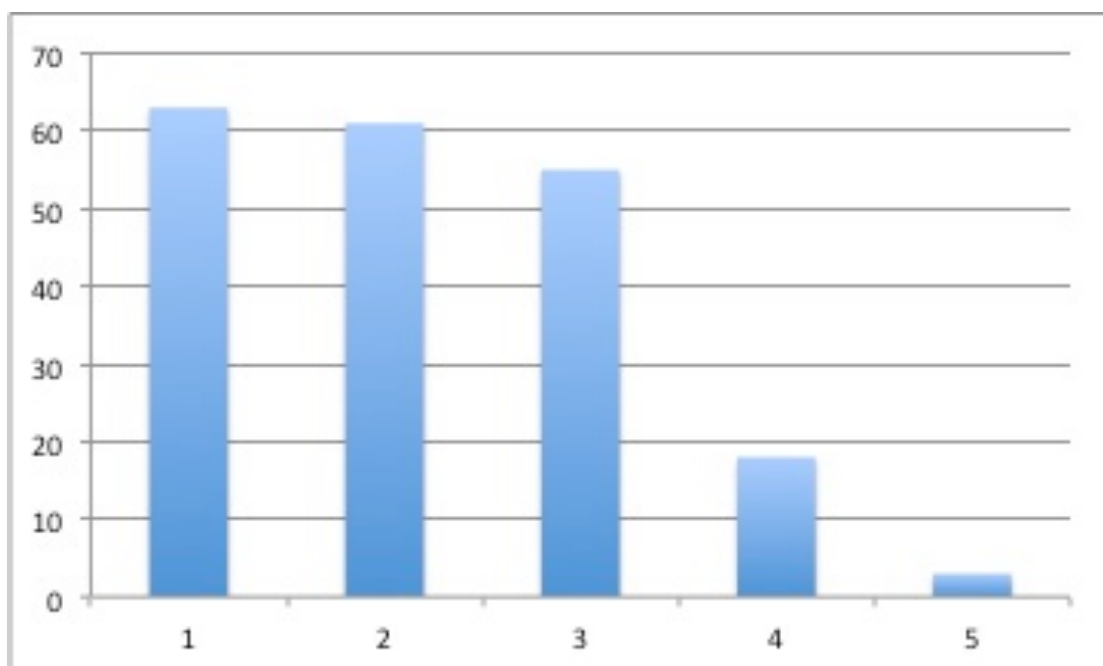


Figure 10: Responses to Question 10a

Cleanliness

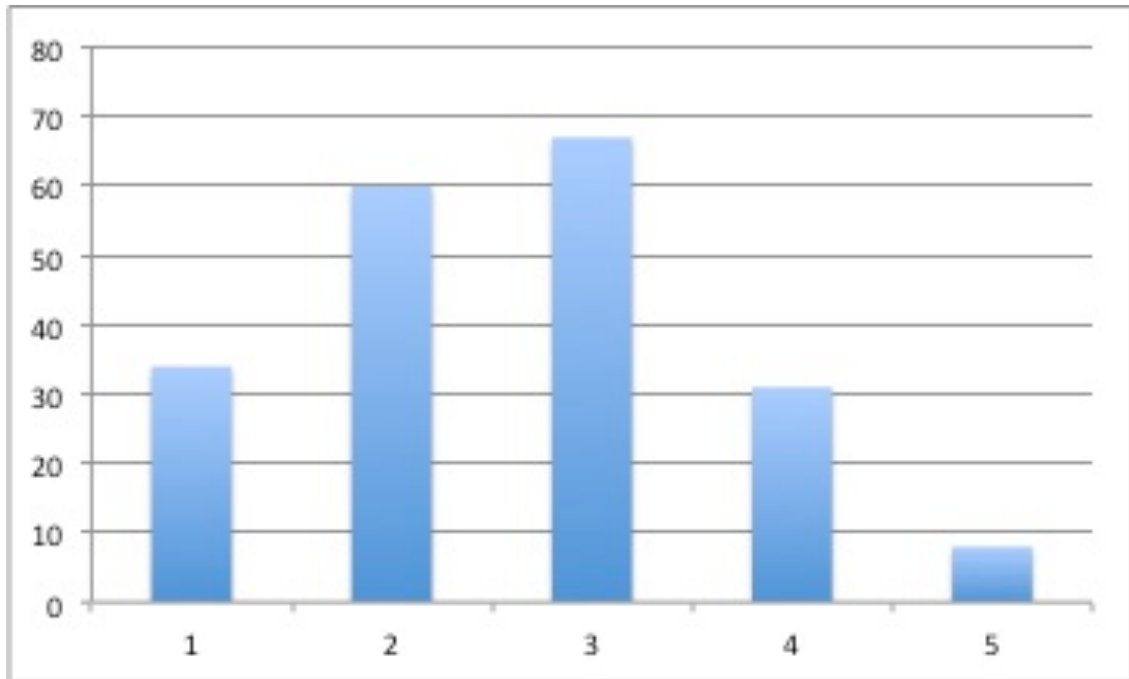


Figure 11: Responses to Question 10b

Customer Service

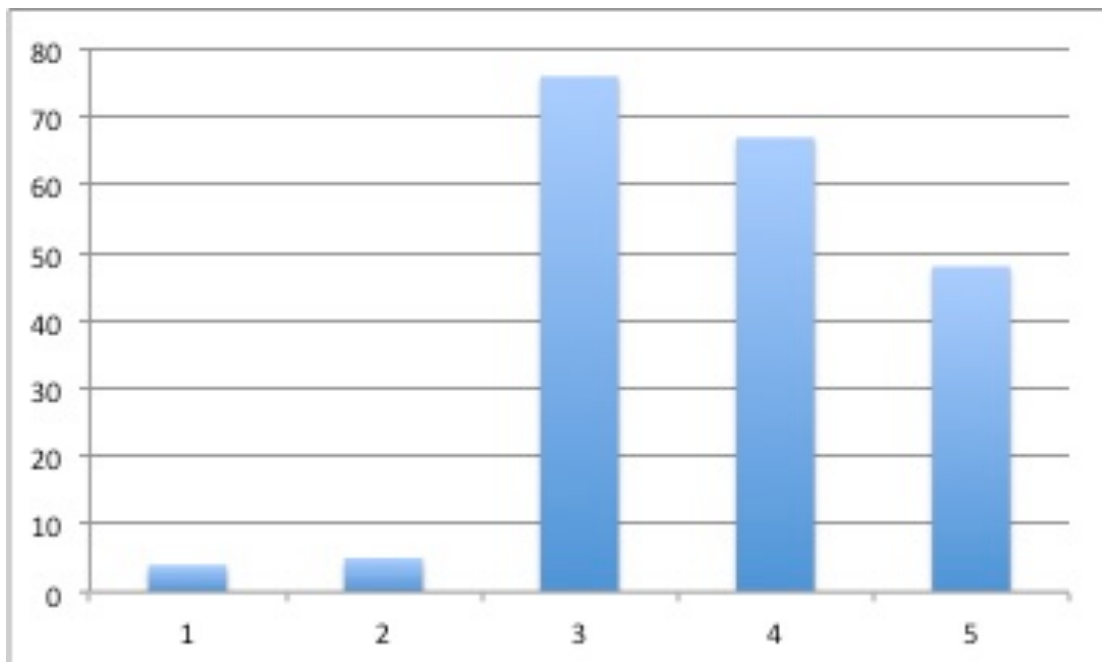


Figure 12: Responses to Question 10c

Ease of Access

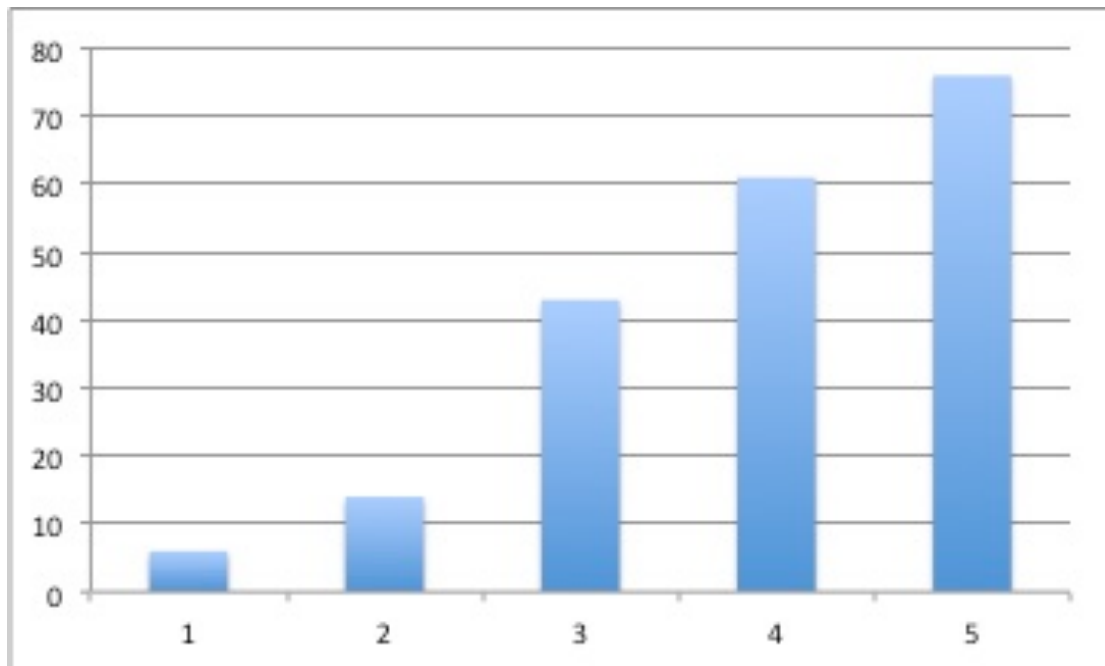


Figure 13: Answers to Question 10d

Opening Hours

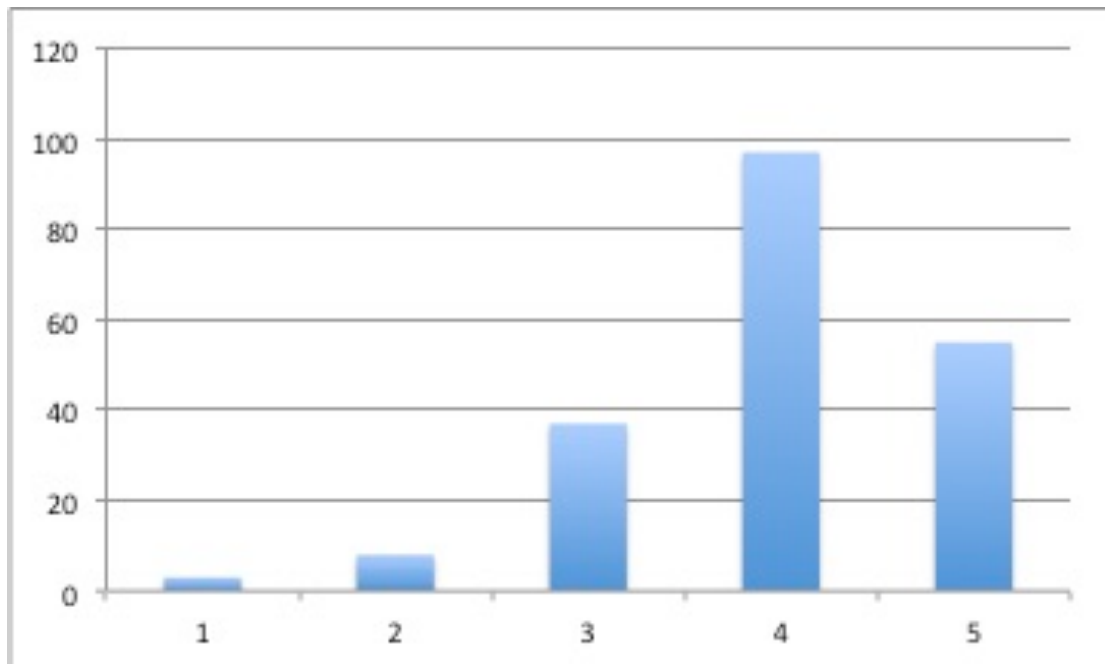


Figure 14: Responses to Question 10e

Price

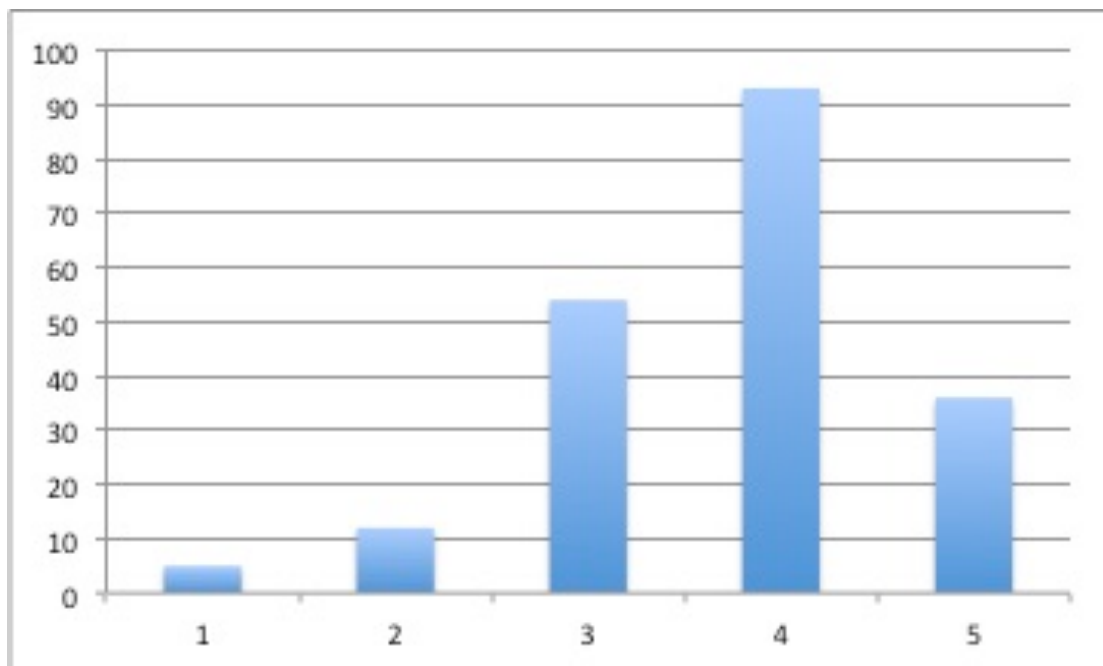


Figure 15: Responses to Question 10f

Quality of Products

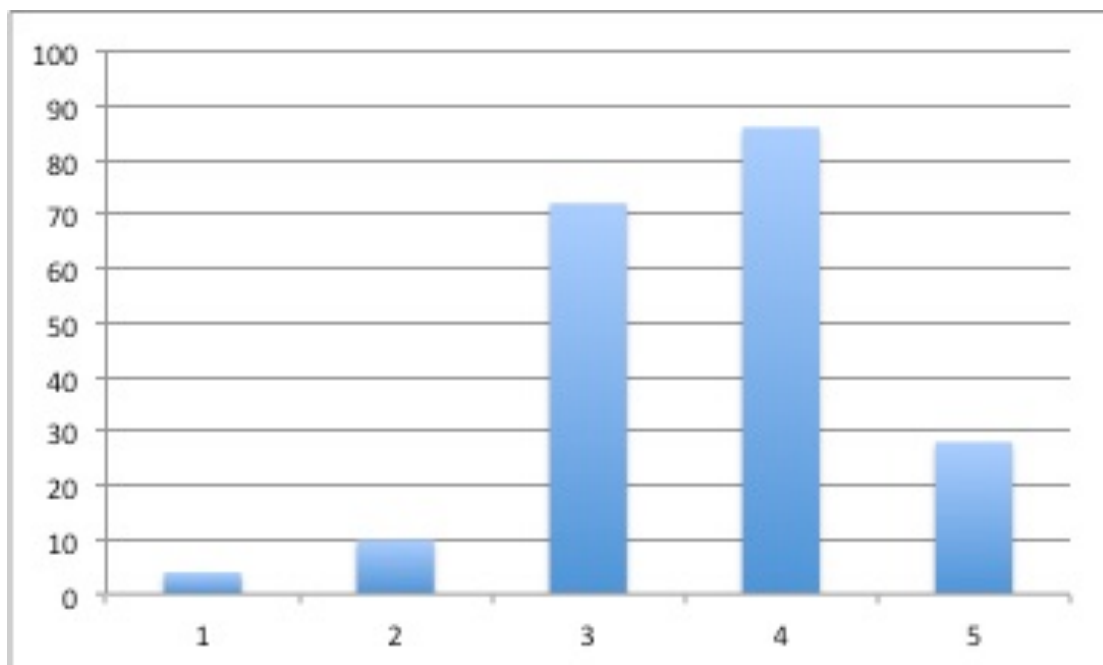


Figure 16: Responses to Question 10g

Variety of Products

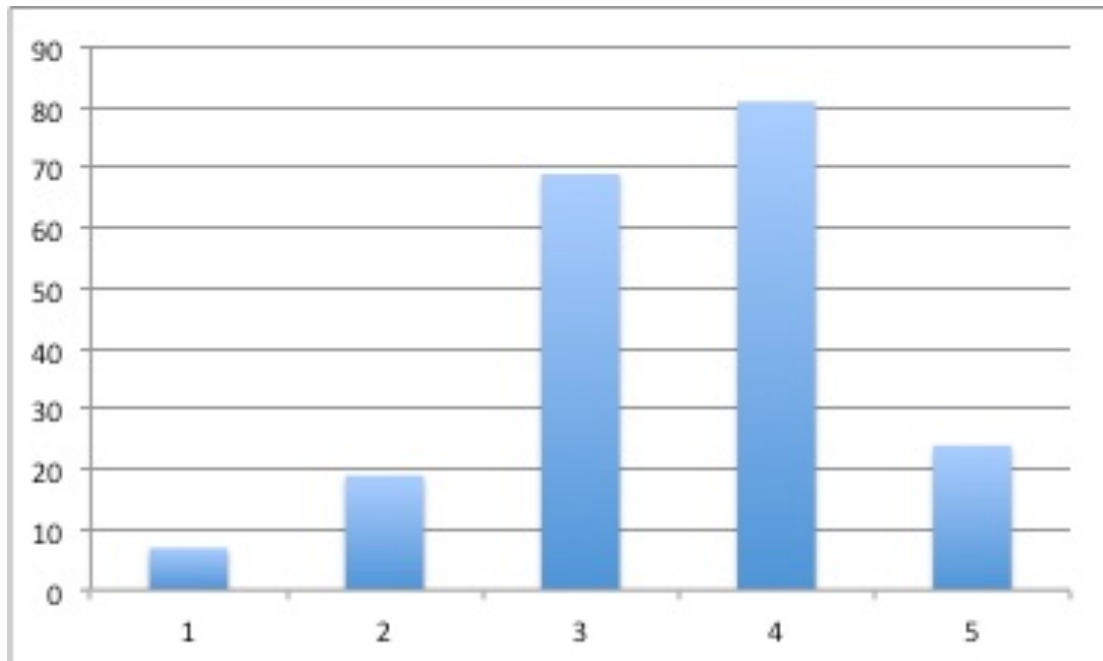


Figure 17: Responses to Question 10h

2.11. If you could make one change to the Northern end of Sutton High Street to make it look and feel better what would it be? (Q11)

People were asked to identify one single change to the northern end of Sutton High Street to make it look and feel better from a short list of answers; they could also state another that was not listed.

46% said that they would improve the shop fronts in the area and 23.5% said they would like to see better street furniture and street trees and signage improvements.

6.5% were very disparaging about the wooden benches near Waterstone's in Sutton. They felt they were ugly and dangerous. 2% felt that trees were very expensive and unnecessary.

Just 3.5% of those interviewed wanted to see some public art installed in the northern end of the high street. 2% hated the carved animal art in other parts of Sutton and 7% said that public art was a 'waste of public money'.

6% of respondents believed that recent changes to the area have been unsuccessful; comments included:

- ‘They tried to make it look nice and put these flowerpots in, they look alright but people just come and move them all around the street and chuck their litter in them’
- ‘They spent all that money on putting in the new pavements, but the stones are so uneven, I trip up all the time and my friend fell over one of the slabs’
- ‘The new pavements were lovely but look at all the gum on them, if people aren’t going to look after the area then the money should go back or be given to the homeless or something’
- ‘There is no point in spending money without giving the place a big clean up first’
- ‘Art might look nice but are they going to show us what the designs are before going ahead?’

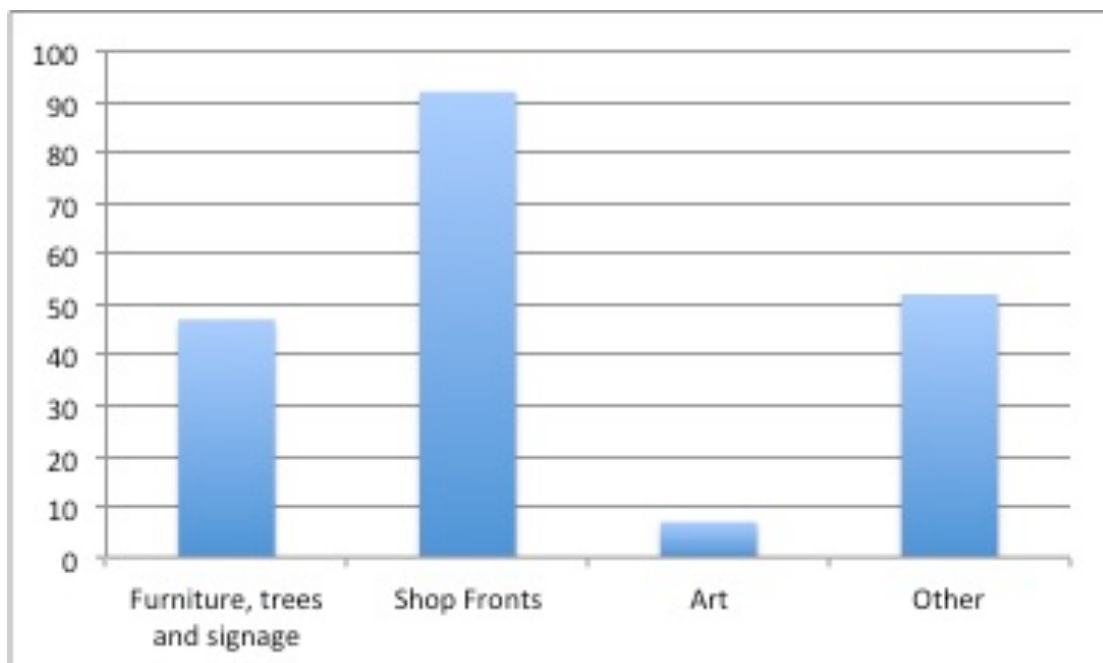


Figure 18: Responses to Question 11

52 Respondents (26%) provided other responses or suggestions to make positive changes to the northern end of Sutton high Street, these included:

- Fix the flowerpots to the floor as they keep being moved, especially during the weekend; the flowerpots are filled with rubbish, can any future improvements design out littering? (5 respondents)
- Give back the money rather than spending good money after bad, give it to the NHS or the Homeless instead (6)
- Find new uses for empty shops, suggested uses included pop-up shops, indoor markets, event spaces, attract new independents and bring in a youth or community centre (7)

- Remove the weeds from the upper floors of the shops which hang out over the road (2)
- Paint the shop shutters with art or remove them altogether and dress the widows of vacant shops with art from schools (2)
- Remove the market altogether (1)
- Put new well designed canvases on the market stalls so they look consistent (3)
- Improve the pavements (6)
- Add more green space (1)
- Add children's play equipment (3)
- Sort out the chewing gum issue on the paving (6)
- More street lighting to make it feel safer at night (1)
- Give the money back, it is wasted down here (9)

2.12. What would attract you to visit the Northern end of Sutton High Street more? (Q12)

People were asked to identify from a short list what would attract them to the northern end of Sutton High Street more, they could select multiple responses and they could also state another that was not listed.

54% said they would like to see improved shops and cafes in the area; these included large high street brands including Lidl and Gap, and a 'decent' coffee chain. Others requested nicer independent shops and shops selling 'different things'. Some people wanted to see more shops but felt the town had enough coffee shops and cafes already.

29.5% felt that activities and events would attract them to the area. Different themes were suggested including children and family orientated events, a classic car show, craft events, music and performances and 'costumed characters like they have in Bluewater'.

29% wanted to see more frequent markets and 25% wanted improved markets.

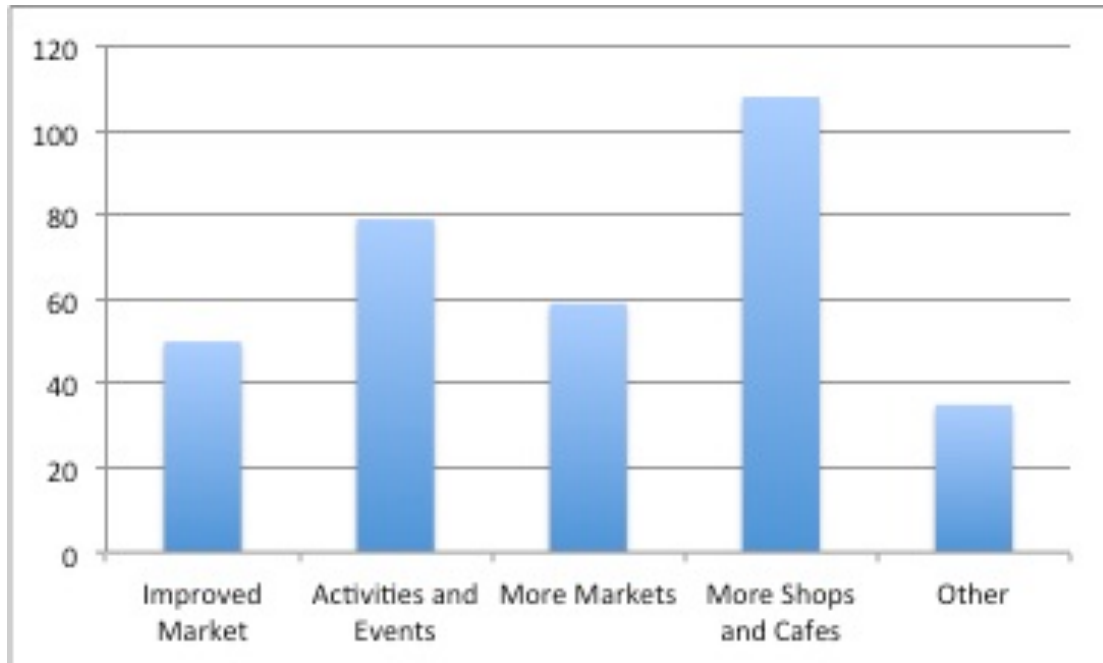


Figure 19: Responses to Question 12

17.5% (35) of respondents suggested other changes that would attract them to the northern end of Sutton High Street, the main themes of their feedback included:

- Free public transport (1)
- Extension of shuttle to northern end of high street (1)
- Post Office (3)
- Quality Christmas lights (3)
- More community police (1)
- More variety, less functional services and shops (11)
- Improved quality of the whole area (8)
- Activity, music, dance, performances, Covent Garden style busking
- Outdoor café area (2)
- Soft play centre (2)
- Farmers markets and quality markets (1)
- Clean and tidy the whole area (2)

3. Conclusion

The majority of people interviewed for this survey were using this area of the town to shop in one of two destination stores, ASDA and Argos, both of which provide the respondents with the price, quality and variety of products needed to satisfy their shopping needs.

The majority of respondents lived in the London borough of Sutton, they were not driving their car to the area, they were travelling daily or weekly, primarily to shop and were spending less than one hour in the area and spending less than £50 per visit.

The appearance and cleanliness of the area and the remaining shops, services and market within it were seen to be poor. Dwell time is minimal and people anecdotally felt that this part of town was the 'poor relation' to the retail centre of Sutton.

While some of the respondents felt that the money would be wasted if it was used to improve the northern area of Sutton, the majority felt that it should be spent to improve the shop fronts and animate the vacant shops with new uses.

Many people do not use the market in its current state but there was some appetite for market improvements by adding new stalls, creating event based markets and by improving the look and feel of the current market stalls.

Although street furniture, trees and signage would be welcomed by some people, they were also opposed to previous designs of street furniture and art in other parts of Sutton; thus the design and practicality of this particular intervention should be informed by further consultation.

There was a desire for the area to become family orientated, ideas included children's play equipment, more children's events and activities and more market stalls selling well-priced children's clothes, toys and equipment.

4. Appendix 1: Copy of the Consultation Survey

Northern End of Sutton High Street User Survey

Sutton Council has been awarded money by Central Government to revitalise the northern end of Sutton High Street (the parade of shops between Benhill Avenue and Marshall's Road). We would like to consult with users before any changes are designed to understand how you use and what you feel about this part of Sutton High Street.

1. Where do you live? (Please tick and state post code)

London Borough of Sutton (Post code: _____)

Elsewhere in London (Post code: _____)

Other (please specify): _____

2. Why have you come to the northern end of Sutton High Street today? (Please tick – can be more than one)

To visit shops To visit the market Going to a cafe/restaurant/bar

Meeting friends Just passing through

Other (please specify): _____

3. How often do you visit the northern end of Sutton High Street? (Please tick)

Daily Weekly Fortnightly

Monthly Less than once a month Never

4. Specific to Asda car park users, do you link your shopping at Asda with visiting other premises in the area? (Please tick)

Did not park at Asda Always Often

Sometimes Rarely Never

5. On average, how much do you spend in the northern end of Sutton High Street per visit? (Please tick)

£0 – £10 £11 - £25 £26 – 50

£51 - £100 £101+

6. How often do you buy anything at the market in the northern end of Sutton High Street? (Please tick)

Daily Weekly Fortnightly

—

—

—

Monthly Less than once a month Never

7. What market stalls and products are not on offer in Sutton's market that you would hope to see?

Answer: _____

8. On average, how much time do you spend in the northern end of Sutton High Street per visit? (Please tick)

0 – 15 mins 16- 30 mins 31 – 60 mins
 61 mins+

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well does the northern end of Sutton High Street meet your shopping needs? (Please circle, 1 = Not at all, 5 = Completely)

1 2 3 4 5

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the following features of the shops in the northern end of Sutton High Street? (Please circle, 1 = Very poor, 5 = Excellent)

Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
Customer Service	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of access (i.e. getting here)	1	2	3	4	5
Opening hours	1	2	3	4	5
Price	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of products	1	2	3	4	5
Variety of products	1	2	3	4	5

11. If you could make one change to the northern end of Sutton High Street to make it look and feel better what would it be? (Please tick only one)

Better street furniture and street trees/signage improvements Shop front improvements

Art features

Other (please specify): _____

12. What would attract you to visit the northern end of Sutton High Street more? (Please tick)

Improved market offer More frequent markets

—
 Activities and events

—
 More shops/cafes

Other (please specify): _____

Why? _____

If you would like to be involved with the development of the project please provide us with your email address:

Email address: _____

Thank you.