

# **WARD WALKS REPORT**

## **PADDOCK WOOD**

**July 2007 - PILOT**



**WARD WALK PILOT – JULY 2007  
PADDOCK WOOD**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Ward Walks pilot was carried out in Paddock Wood during July 2007. The programme enabled Council staff and Councillors to interact face to face with residents and learn about the key issues in this area. Information gathered from the interviews provided valuable information on how services could be improved, how residents felt about their local area and particular issues that were of concern at that time.

The Ward Walks programme was set up not just as another form of consultation but an opportunity to learn first hand what attention needs to be given to these areas and to inform services and partner agencies, where resources should be prioritised. There are a further three components to the programme in addition to the consultation; acknowledgement and response to urgent issues, reports for the Council, Town Council and relevant partner agencies, followed by community feedback events to inform residents of the key issues raised and provide the opportunity to discuss their issues in more detail with agencies who provide services in their area.

A total of 152 interviews were completed in Paddock Wood. A number of respondents, who did not wish to participate in the survey, also raised key issues. This report provides a clear but in depth overview of the results from this research and make recommendations where necessary.

## 2. AIMS OF THE PILOT

The Ward Walks programme set out to meet the following aims:

- To enhance engagement with local residents through a systematic process.
- Place Councillors at the frontline of engagement
- Provide an opportunity for face to face contact with local residents
- Learn about key issues at a localised level
- To act upon resident's immediate concerns and to inform long term policy development

As the list reveals, the initial focus of the programme was to engage with residents at a much more in depth level. The Local Government White Paper emphasised the need for local authorities to increase citizen engagement in order to shape the direction and delivery of services. Neighbourhood priorities should be used to inform services of how and where resources should be concentrated, to apply a bottom up approach to service delivery. The White paper also advocates the enhanced involvement of local communities to actively engage in their local services.

Therefore the design of the Ward Walks programme looked to develop a process of engaging with residents, which incorporated these aims. By setting up a model of interaction and response at this level, it laid the foundation for developing long-term policy, improvements in service delivery and more importantly customer satisfaction.

### 3. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.1 Location of ward walks

Paddock Wood was one of two areas chosen as part of the pilot programme, which represented an urban setting.

Paddock Wood is a commuter town located near the north border of the borough, with its nearest urban centre, being that of Tonbridge. Paddock Wood is split into two wards; Paddock Wood West and Paddock Wood East and has 3,184 households and 8,263 residents (Census 2001).

#### 3.2 Sampling

The Town Council helped to identify different areas of Paddock Wood that could be visited. The sample chosen selected roads in the centre and outskirts of the town and a varied range of housing from older properties to the more recent developments.

Five ward walk sessions were held in Paddock Wood. Interviewing took place at different times, to ensure that a good sample of residents were visited:

Location	Date	Time
Paddock Wood	Friday 13 July 2007	10 am – 2 pm
	Tuesday 17 July 2007	4 pm – 7.30pm
	Thursday 19 July 2007	4 pm – 7.30pm
	Friday 20 July 2007	1 pm – 5 pm
	Saturday 21 July 2007	10 am – 12noon

Figure 1: Date and times of ward walks

By holding ward walk sessions in the evening and at the weekend, it meant interviewers could reach residents that were out at work or occupied with young children during the week. This helped to approach a greater range of respondents.

#### 3.3 Interviews

The pilot sought to get Councillors and Council staff working together to interview residents. Council staff, Ward Members, and Town Councillors were invited to take part in the Ward Walks.

It was agreed before the programme started, that interviewing should be carried out in pairs, a Councillor with a member of staff or male with female where possible. This did occur, although there were times where two of the same gender had to interview together and the ratio of Council staff to Councillor was often higher.

In total, 38 Council staff took part in the pilot and the average number of sessions attended was two. Fifteen Councillors took part in both areas; five of which were Ward members, one Portfolio Holder and nine Parish/ Town Councillors. However Councillors only attended sessions in their local constituency.

The number of interviewers and the time and length of each ward walk session did have an impact on the number of interviews completed (see figure 2).

Date	Time of day/ Length of time	No. of pairs/ groups interviewing	No. of interviews completed
<b>Paddock Wood</b>			
Friday 13 July	Daytime – 4 hrs	7	41
Tuesday 17 July	Evening – 3.5 hrs	5	30
Thursday 19 July	Evening – 3.5 hrs	4	26
Friday 20 July	Daytime – 4 hrs	6	42
Saturday 21 July	Morning – 2 hrs	3	10
By phone		N/A	3

Figure 2: Interviews completed at each ward walk

The questionnaire was created in partnership with Ipsos MORI (research consultants) and focused on a number of issues relating to the resident's local area and services provided. Questions looked at the following:

- First attraction to area
- Best and worst things about the local area
- Rating how safe resident felt in their local area and level of crime
- Satisfaction with services and access to facilities
- Most important services provided and suggestions for improvements
- Source of information preferred when learning about local issues
- Level of community involvement in local area
- Urgent issues that need to be addressed
- Key issues in local area and opportunity to raise additional comments

### **3.4 Publicity**

Residents were informed that the Ward Walks were taking place through various forms of publicity. Residents living within the selected roads were hand delivered a postcard advertising the programme, of which approximately 800 were delivered in Paddock Wood. An article was placed in the Paddock Wood Courier newspaper and posters were put up on Town Council notice boards and at various shops and facilities in the area. A webpage was also designed for the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website, which listed the dates and provided a suggestions box to complete online. The Ward Walks design was eye catching and a number of residents commented on the promotion campaign. Interviewers also carried name badges during each ward walk and wore t-shirts, which clearly identified the purpose of their visit.

### **3.5 Process involved**

Councillors and Council staff were offered to attend training prior to the Ward Walks by Ipsos MORI. This training took place on Thursday 5 July 2007 and gave interviewers the chance to raise any concerns they had with the process, look at draft copies of the questionnaire and discuss practical issues, such as travel and emergency situations.

### **3.6 Analysis of results**

Data from the completed questionnaires were placed onto a database and responses were coded to assist with the analysis. Analysis was then carried out using analytical software (SPSS).

## 4. LEVEL OF RESPONSE

### 4.1 Interviews completed

Approximately 152 interviews were completed in Paddock Wood and some residents also raised key issues, thus only partially completing the survey. Around 800 postcards were delivered to households to advertise the programme in the selected sample area, which means the programme generated a 19.0% response rate.

This appears very low but is reasonable in the time given to carry out this type of consultation. A small number of residents were not interested, but there were also a large number who were not available during the designated times. A limited number of interviewers were available for two of the evening sessions and therefore not every property could be reached in the time given (figure 2). However properties were interviewed in each of the targeted roads, which produced an even sample across the area.

The detail and amount of information made available from this consultation provided an excellent basis for analysis on how residents feel about their local area.

### 4.2 Age and gender of respondents

Paddock Wood recorded a higher ratio of female to male respondents, with 41.9% of males and 58.1% of respondents being female (figure 3).

In Paddock Wood, interviews were completed by a significant spread of age groups; the majority aged between 25 and 75 years and over. The age groups interviewed most frequently were 40-59 (31.6%) and 60-74 years (29.7%) but there were also a greater proportion of 25-39 year olds interviewed, the majority of which were female.

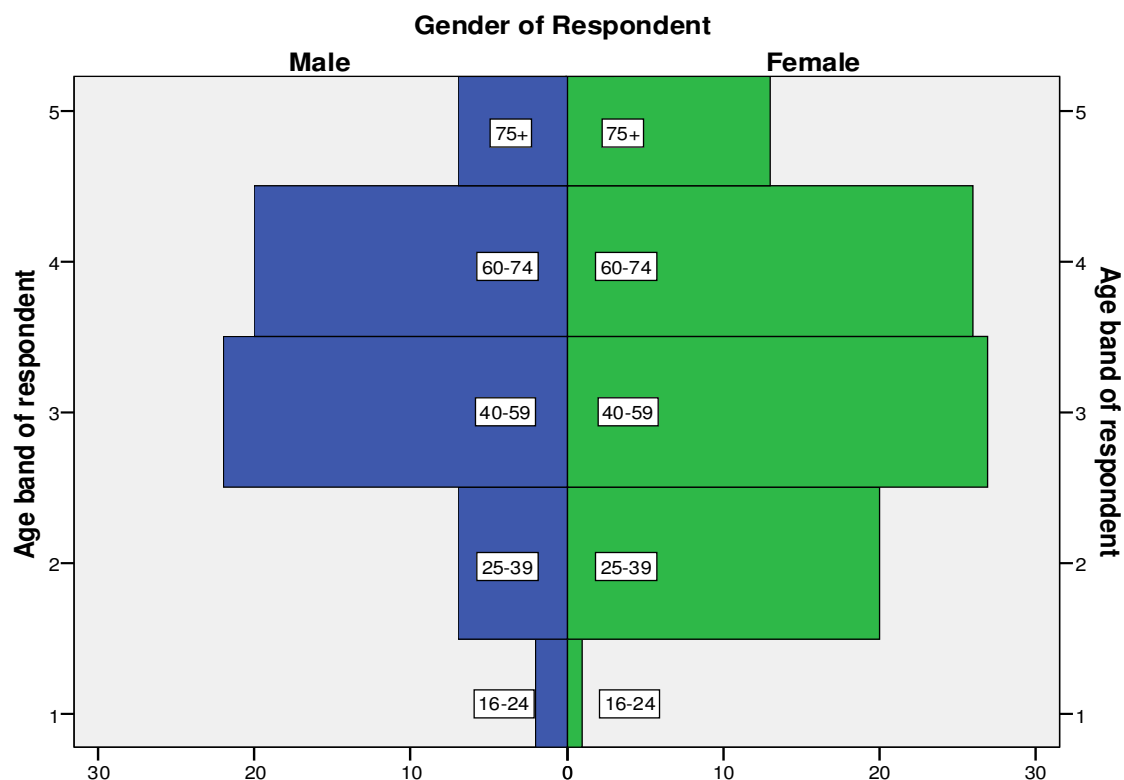


Figure 3: Spread of gender and age of respondents in Paddock Wood

### 4.3 Household composition

Interviews were completed with a relatively even range of households but the main two types of respondent were 'two parent families with children at least one under 18 years' (24.5%) and 'single adults 60 years or over (16.1%)'. Refer to figure 4 to see the overall comparison.

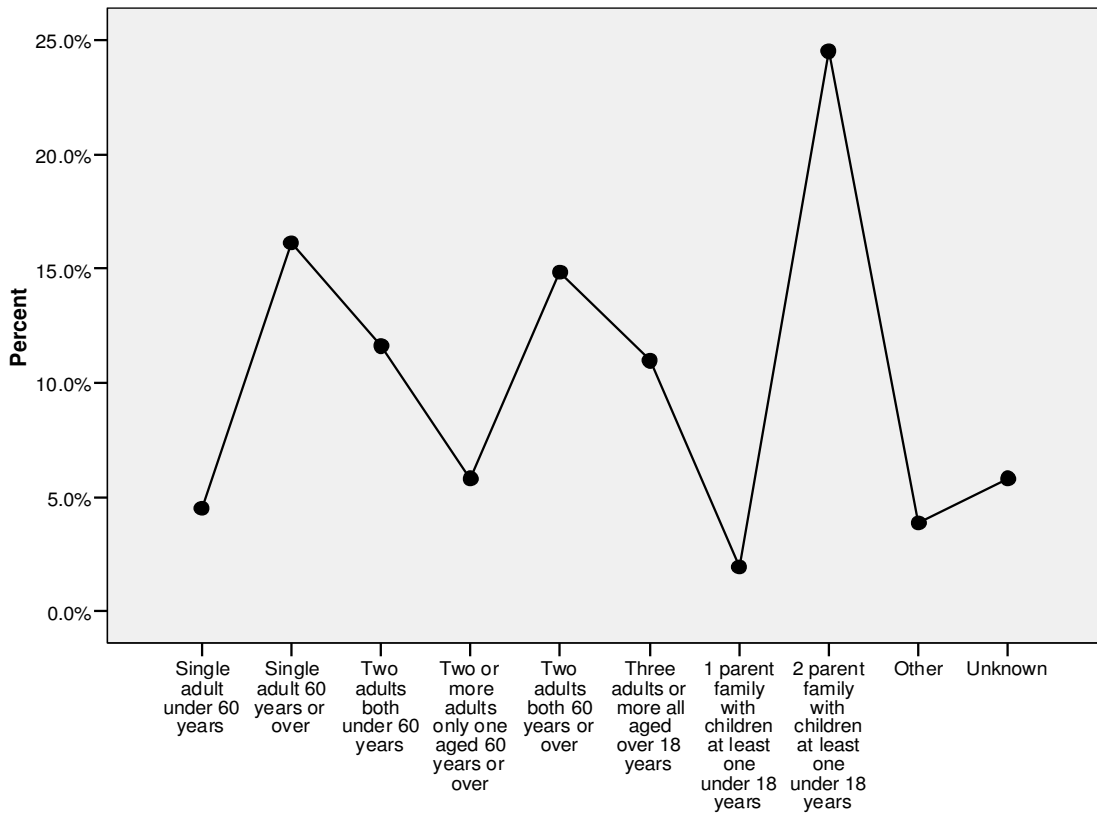


Figure 4: Household composition of respondents in Paddock Wood

#### 4.4 Household tenure

As figure 5 indicates, the majority of respondents in Paddock Wood were owner-occupiers (69.0%). About half of the respondents owned their property outright, which may have reflected the age groups interviewed in the pilot whereas 18.1% of respondents rented their property from a Housing Association.

Household tenure	Paddock Wood (%)
Own outright	45.8
Own with mortgage	23.2
Rent from housing association	18.1
Rent from private landlord	5.2
Other	0.6
Unknown	1.9
Total	5.2

Figure 5: Household tenure of respondents in Paddock Wood

#### 4.5 Ethnicity

The vast majority of respondents were White British (90.3%) and other than those respondents who did not declare their ethnicity, 4.4% of respondents were 'White Other', 'Mixed White and Black' or 'Black or Black British African.'

## 5. SATISFACTION WITH THE LOCAL AREA

### 5.1 Features that attracted residents to Paddock Wood

- 70% of respondents had lived in the Paddock Wood area for more than ten years.
- 17.5% of respondents had lived in the area for five years or less, of which nearly half had only lived there for less than one year.

This suggested that respondents tended to have good local knowledge and possibly stronger views on local issues.

The top three reasons for respondents locating to Paddock Wood are listed in figure 6, of which having family in the area played an important part.

Paddock Wood	
1	Family in area (22.6%)
2	Affordable housing available (20.0%)
3	Easy access to work/ education (13.0%)
3	Employment opportunities (13.0%)

Figure 6: Top three reasons for locating to Paddock Wood

There was some correlation between how long a household had lived in the area and their reason for locating there. The availability of affordable housing (both rented and owner –occupied) had been a longstanding attraction to Paddock Wood, but especially for those who moved to the area over 10 years ago. Having easy access to work or educational institution had also attracted residents to the area for up to sixty years, most likely due to the railway line. Furthermore the availability of public transport had been more of an attraction in the past ten years than before.

### 5.2 Best and worst things

The top two best things about living in the Paddock Wood area were:

- 1) Transport (39.4%)
- 2) Range of shops (16.8%)

There appeared to be no correlation between what respondents regarded as the best things in their local area and their initial reason for locating to the area.

The top two worst things about living in the Paddock Wood area were:

- 1) Other reasons (32.3%)
- 2) Traffic congestion (12.3%)

An additional 10.3% also regarded transport as one of the worst things about living in their area. The 'Other reasons' respondents referred to, included overflowing recycling bins, facilities for young people, speed and level of traffic and community safety.

### 5.3 Raising children

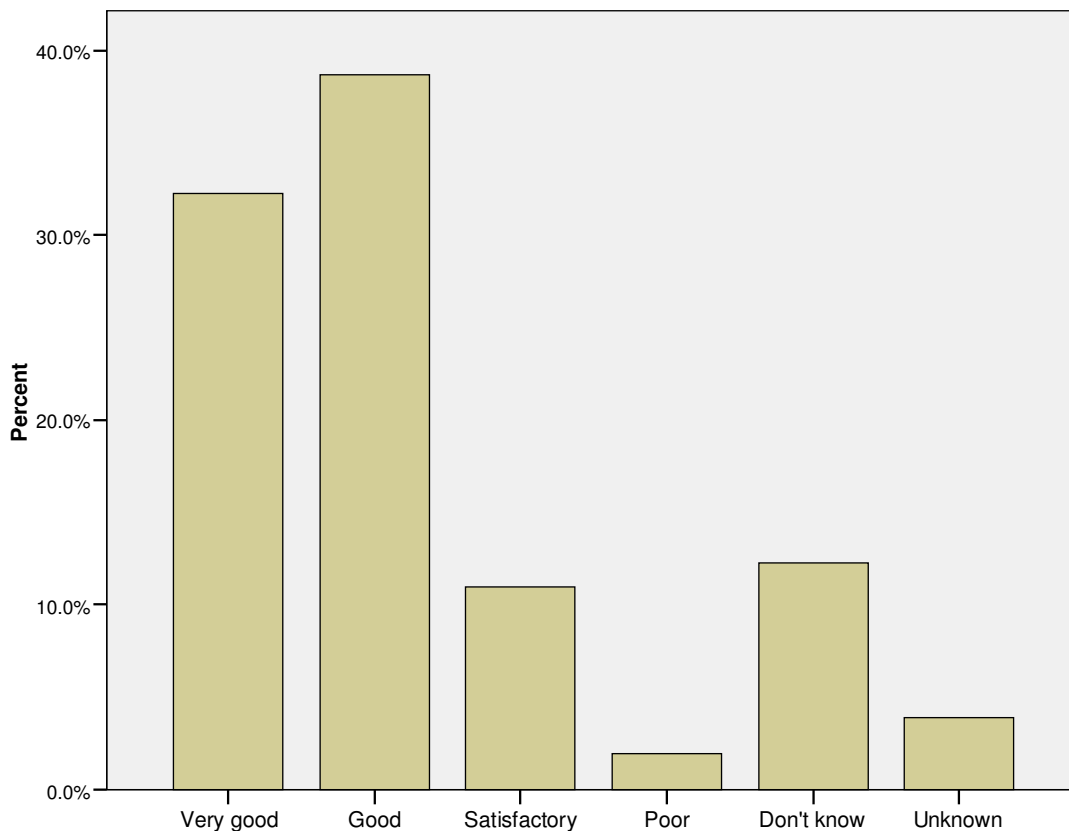


Figure 7: Rating the local area as a place to raise children

Paddock Wood was rated as a good place to raise children (see figure 7):

- 38.7% rated the area as 'good' and a further 32.3% rated the area as 'very good.'
- However a small number of respondents were unable to answer this question, as they did not have children.

Approximately half of the respondents who rated Paddock Wood as a 'Good' place to raise children had also lived in the area between 11 and 40 years.

- 42.0% of respondents in Paddock Wood who rated the area as 'Very good' thought transport was one of the best things about living there.
- A further 14% regarded schools as one of the best things.

### 5.4 Place to live

Respondents in Paddock Wood were satisfied with their local area as a place to live (figure 8):

- 88.4% felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'

Out of those who were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied,' 89.6% raised no key issues about their area as a place to live.

The response to this question provides a similar response to that given by residents who took part in the BVPI General survey 2006/07 whereby 84.0% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with their local area as a place to live.

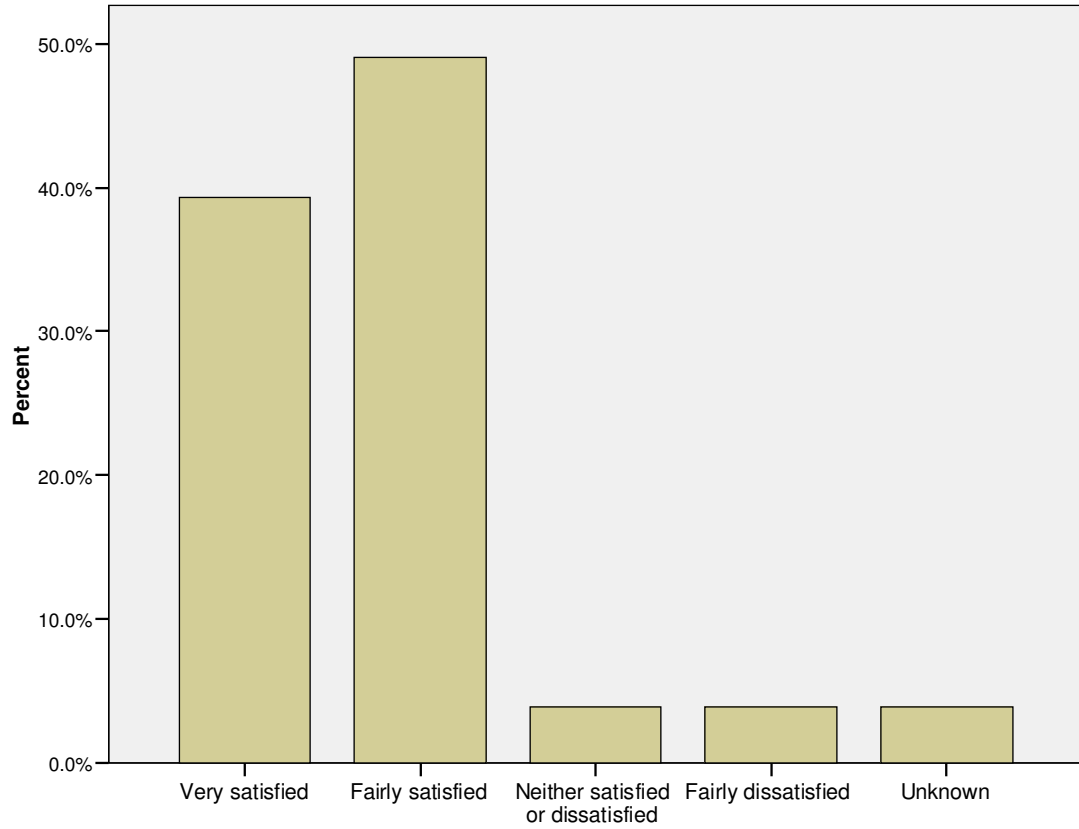


Figure 8: Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live

## 6. SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED

### 6.1 Key issues and important services

#### **Top five issues raised in the Paddock Wood area:**

- Refuse and recycling (empty recycling facilities/ bring site more often)
- Facilities for young people (and swimming pool)
- Car parking (commuters versus residents)
- Traffic calming and road maintenance
- Need for police presence and community safety

#### **Top five services that need improving in the Paddock Wood:**

- Recycling facilities
- Leisure/recreation facilities
- Refuse collection
- Parking
- Other

#### **Top three services regarded as most important:**

- Refuse collection
- Street cleaning
- Parks and open spaces

## 6.2 Road maintenance, street cleaning and traffic calming

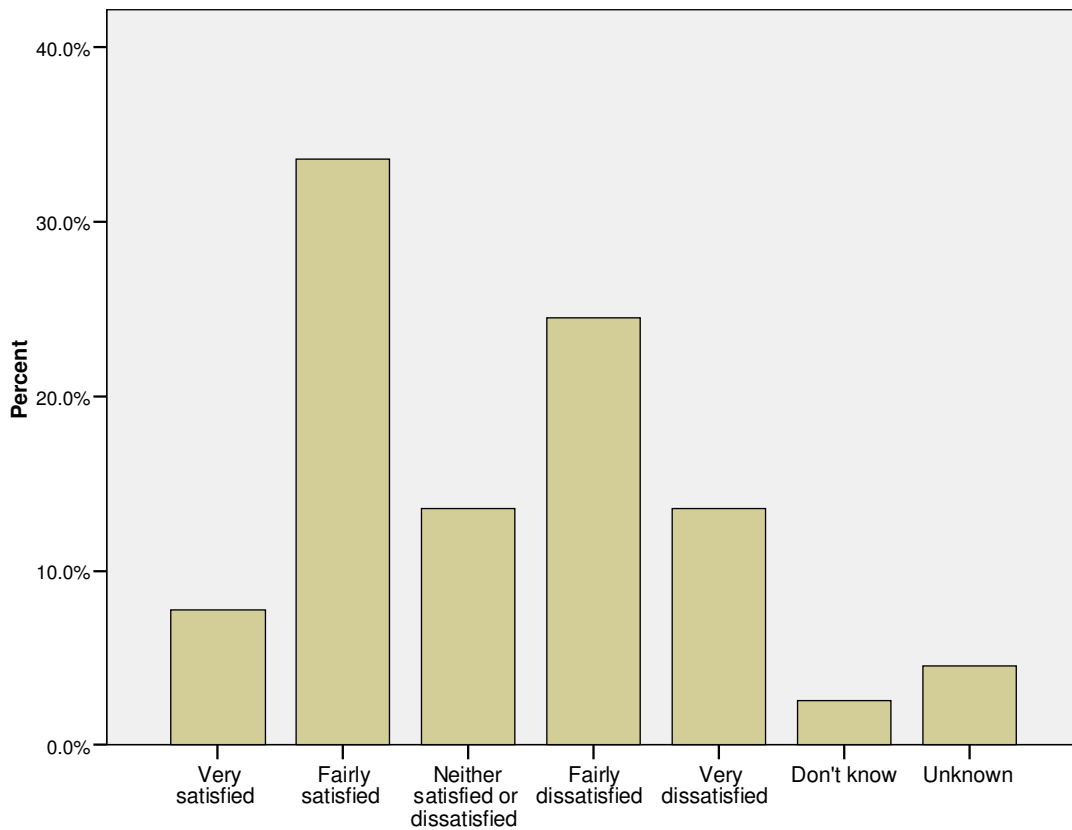


Figure 9: Satisfaction with road maintenance

One third of respondents in Paddock Wood felt 'fairly satisfied' with road maintenance. However 24.5% of respondents were 'fairly dissatisfied' with the service provided. Issues such as potholes and general maintenance of the roads caused dissatisfaction in the rural areas, whereas continuous road works formed part of the negative response in the town itself.

- Road maintenance was considered an important service mostly by respondents' aged 40 and over.
- Two thirds of respondents in Paddock Wood who suggested improving road maintenance were male.
- Household tenure had no impact on satisfaction with road maintenance.

### Level of satisfaction with street cleaning

Respondents in Paddock Wood regarded street cleaning as one of the most important services.

Nearly 50% of respondents in Paddock Wood felt 'fairly satisfied' with street cleaning and a further 20% were 'very satisfied' (figure 10).

- 80% of those who suggested improving the street cleaning service in Paddock Wood were female.

There was no correlation between the length of time a respondent lived in the area and regarding street cleaning as an important service. This suggests that the service has maintained the same current standard for a period of time.

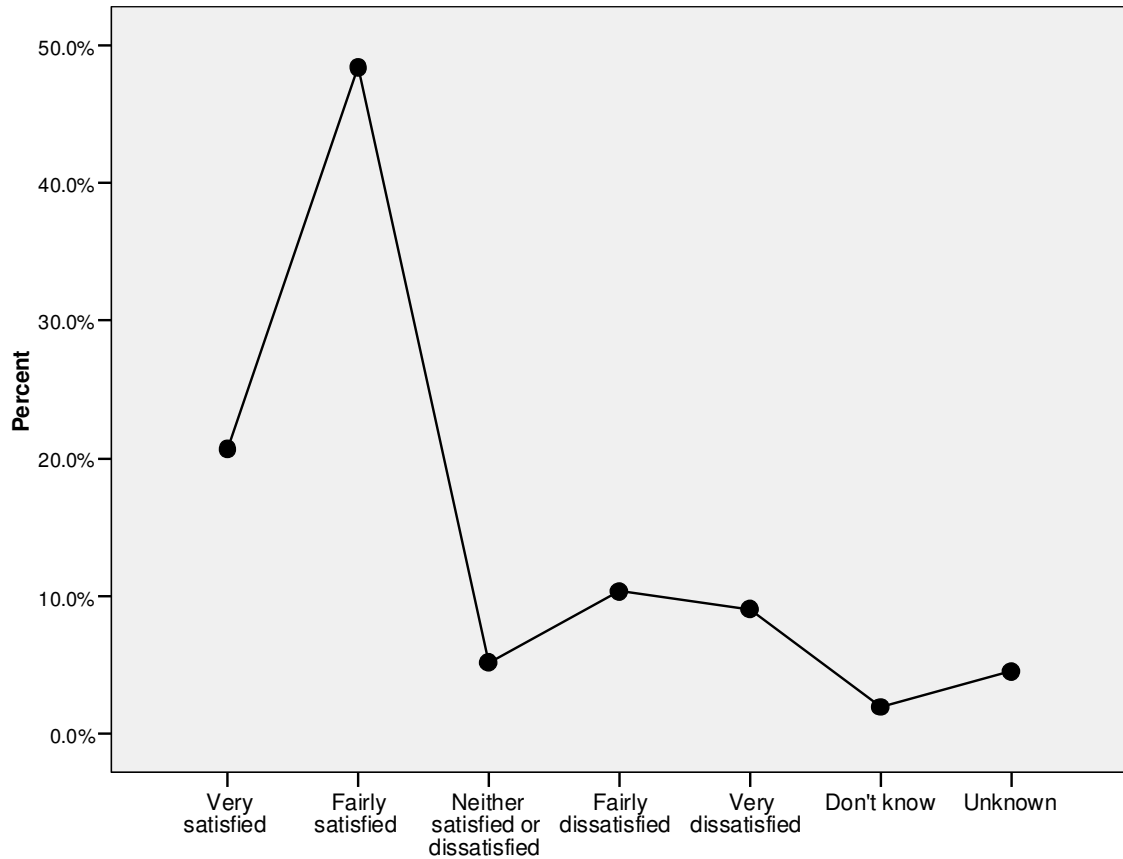


Figure 10: Satisfaction with street cleaning

### Traffic calming

Traffic calming was regarded as one of the top five issues in Paddock Wood. In Paddock Wood, traffic-calming measures were thought to be required on specific roads; for example Old Kent Road and Warrington Road. Respondents also requested to make improvements to Commercial Road by making it pedestrianised or a one-way system.

- An equal proportion of male and female respondents in Paddock Wood, suggested traffic calming should be improved.
- 87.5% of those who raised traffic calming as a key issue in Paddock Wood were owner-occupiers.
- There was no correlation between the length of time that respondents had lived in their area and the issue of traffic calming.

### **6.3 Public transport**

Public transport was not regarded as one of the most important issues in Paddock Wood but did pose different views from respondents.

Split views were recorded on the public transport services available; respondents were 'very satisfied' with the rail service but 'fairly dissatisfied' with the bus service.

- 58.1% of respondents were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with public transport.
- Out of the 39.4% of respondents in Paddock Wood that regarded Transport as one of the best things in the area, over 75% had lived there for more than ten years.

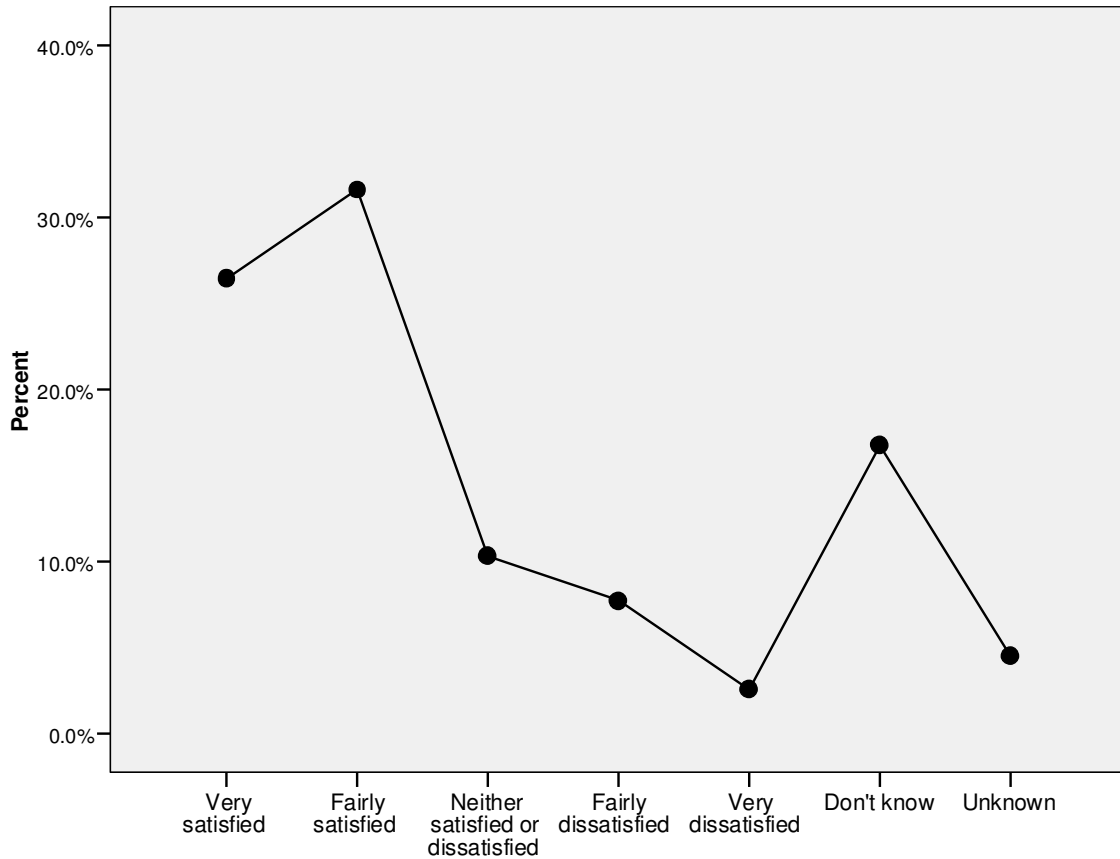


Figure 11: Satisfaction with access to public transport

- 75% of respondents in Paddock Wood who regarded Public transport as an important service, were female.
- Respondents from various household tenure regarded public transport as an important service in the area.

#### 6.4 Parking issues

Parking was regarded as one of the top five issues in Paddock Wood and was also regarded as a service that needed improving.

A number of respondents raised issues regarding the availability of parking in Paddock Wood. Commuters and shoppers were using residential roads for parking through the weekdays, which caused congestion and difficulties for local residents to park.

- An equal ratio of male to female respondents in Paddock Wood suggested that improvements should be made to the current parking situation.
- 81% of respondents, who suggested that parking needed improving, were owner-occupiers. This could be due to the location of congestion and parking issues.
- There was no correlation between the length of time respondents had lived in the area and reference to parking as a key issue, which suggests it has been a long term problem.

Particular roads that raised parking as an issue and are experiencing issues between resident and commuter parking are detailed in figure 12.

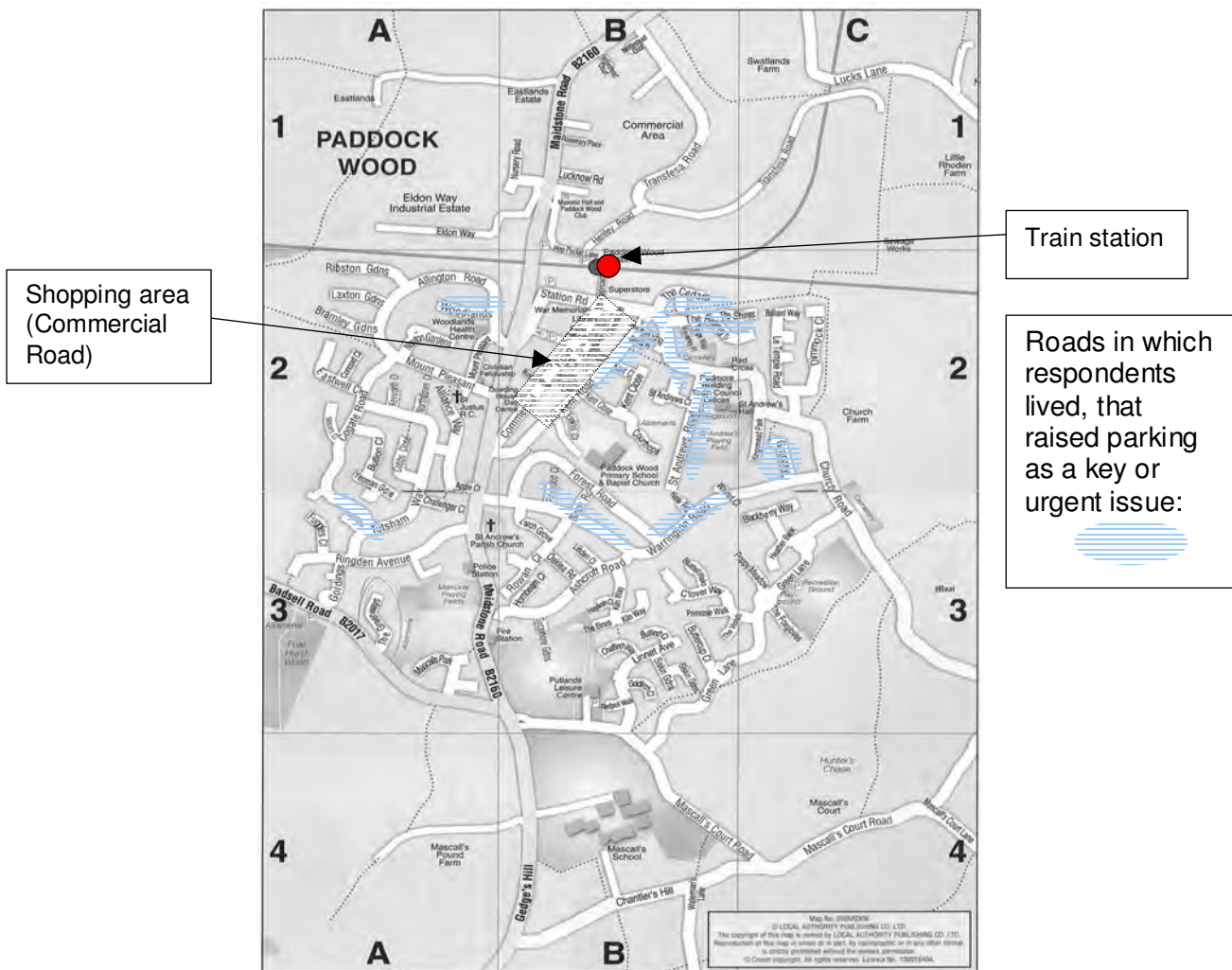


Figure 12: Map representing location of respondents who raised parking as an issue

### 6.5 Refuse collection and recycling facilities

Refuse collection and recycling facilities were regarded as one of the top five issues in Paddock Wood. Refuse collection was also regarded as one of the services that was most important to respondents. A number of respondents made particular suggestions as to how the refuse collection and current recycling facilities could be improved.

- Local recycling facilities are always **overflowing**- empty more often
- Provide **weekly** refuse collection
- Improve recycling **doorstep collection** – plastics/ cans and style of bins.

Residents from varying household tenure regarded the current state of refuse collection and recycling facilities as a key issue in their local area.

- 51.6% of respondents from Paddock Wood thought refuse collection was an important service.
- 20.6% of respondents in Paddock Wood suggested that improvements should be made to the recycling facilities.

## 6.6 Leisure and Recreation

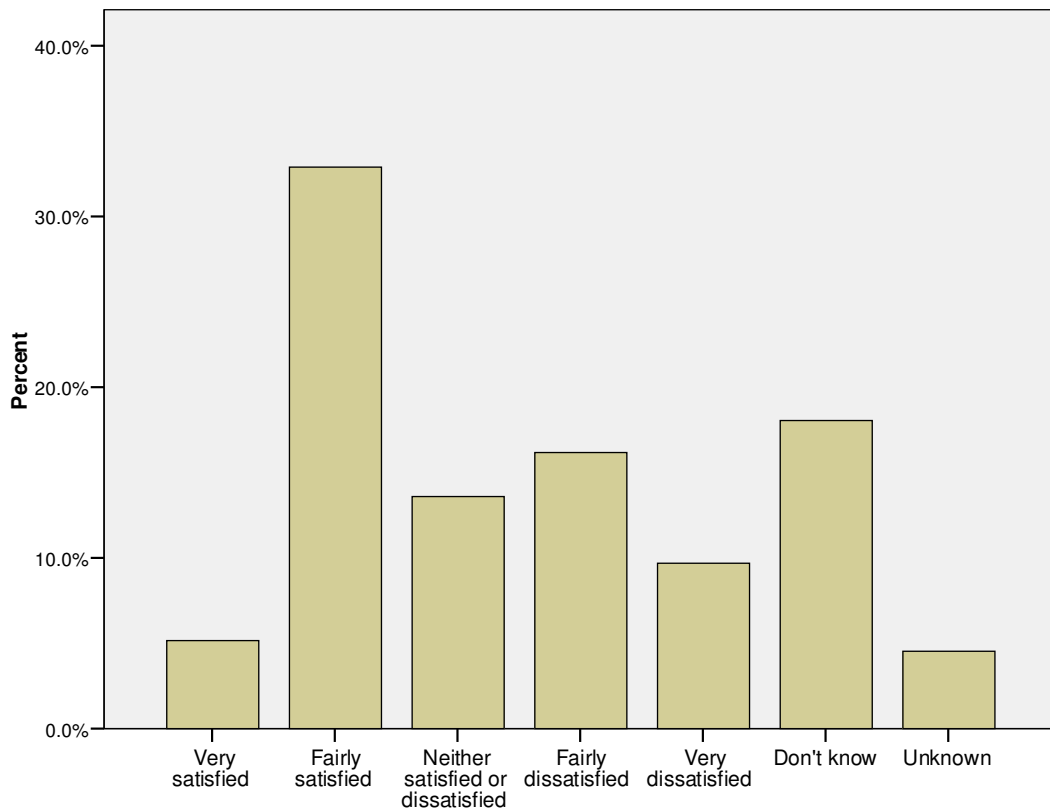


Figure 13: Satisfaction with cultural and recreation facilities

As figure 13 indicates, there was quite a difference of opinion regarding leisure and recreation facilities in the area; 38.1% of respondents in Paddock Wood were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with local facilities.

- 20.6% suggested improvements should be made in Paddock Wood. The majority of improvements were requests that the availability of and access to leisure and recreation facilities should be improved for young people.
- 13.5% regarded leisure and recreation as a key issue in Paddock Wood

Respondents were also reasonably satisfied with parks and open spaces (figure 14); 74.2% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.' Parks and open spaces were also regarded as one of the top three important services in the Paddock Wood area.

- 16.1% of respondents in Paddock Wood thought the parks and open spaces were one of the best things about the area.
- 45.0% of Paddock Wood respondents who thought parks and open spaces were an important service were from a one or two parent family.

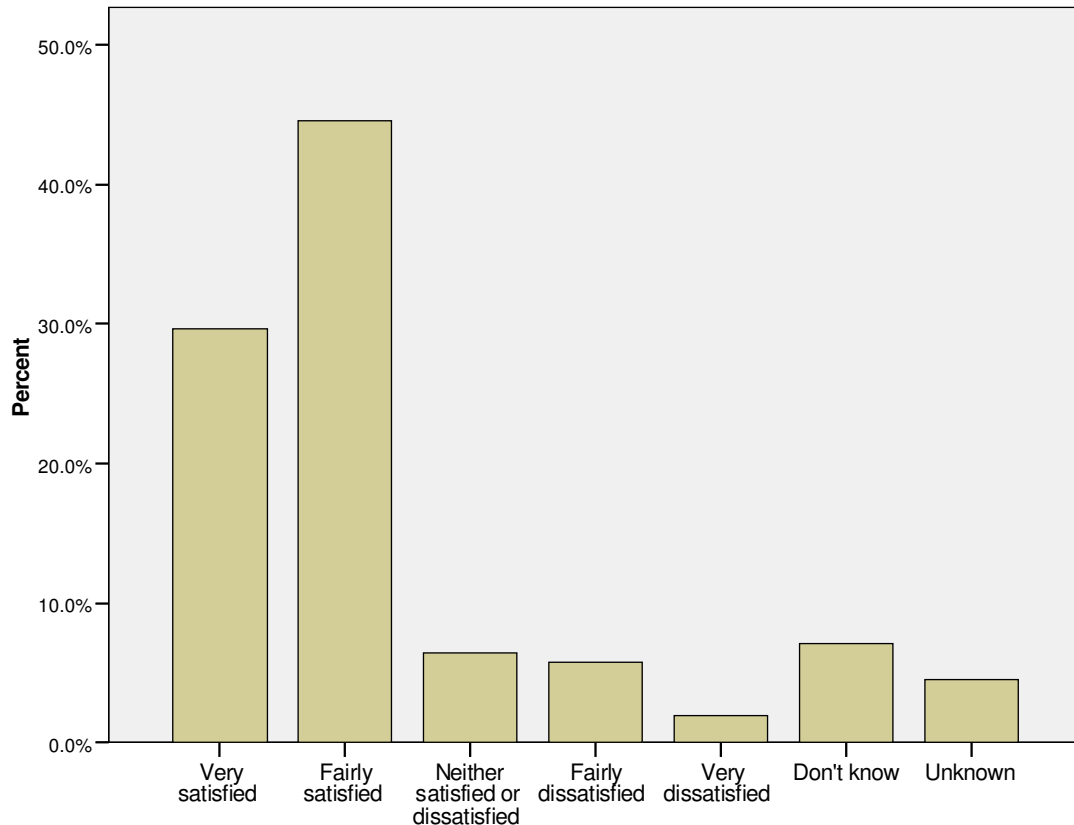


Figure 14: Satisfaction with parks and open spaces

## 6.7 Community Safety

The need for police presence and community safety was regarded as one of the top five issues in Paddock Wood.

### Rating how safe respondents felt

When asked how safe respondents felt in their local area, the majority of respondents felt 'fairly safe.'

- 76.8% felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' in Paddock Wood.

The respondents in Paddock Wood that felt 'a bit unsafe' or 'very unsafe' were located in particular areas of the town; predominantly Allington Road, Old Kent Road and St. Andrews Road.

### Level of crime

Respondents were also asked whether they considered any change to have occurred in the level of crime in the past year. Around half of respondents thought that the level of crime had stayed the same (41.3%), refer to figure 15.

One quarter of respondents in Paddock Wood were not sure whether there had been any change in the level of crime. This suggests that a number of respondents were not sure what type of crime this question referred to.

- 77.8% of respondents who felt a little more crime had occurred in the past year, still felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe.'

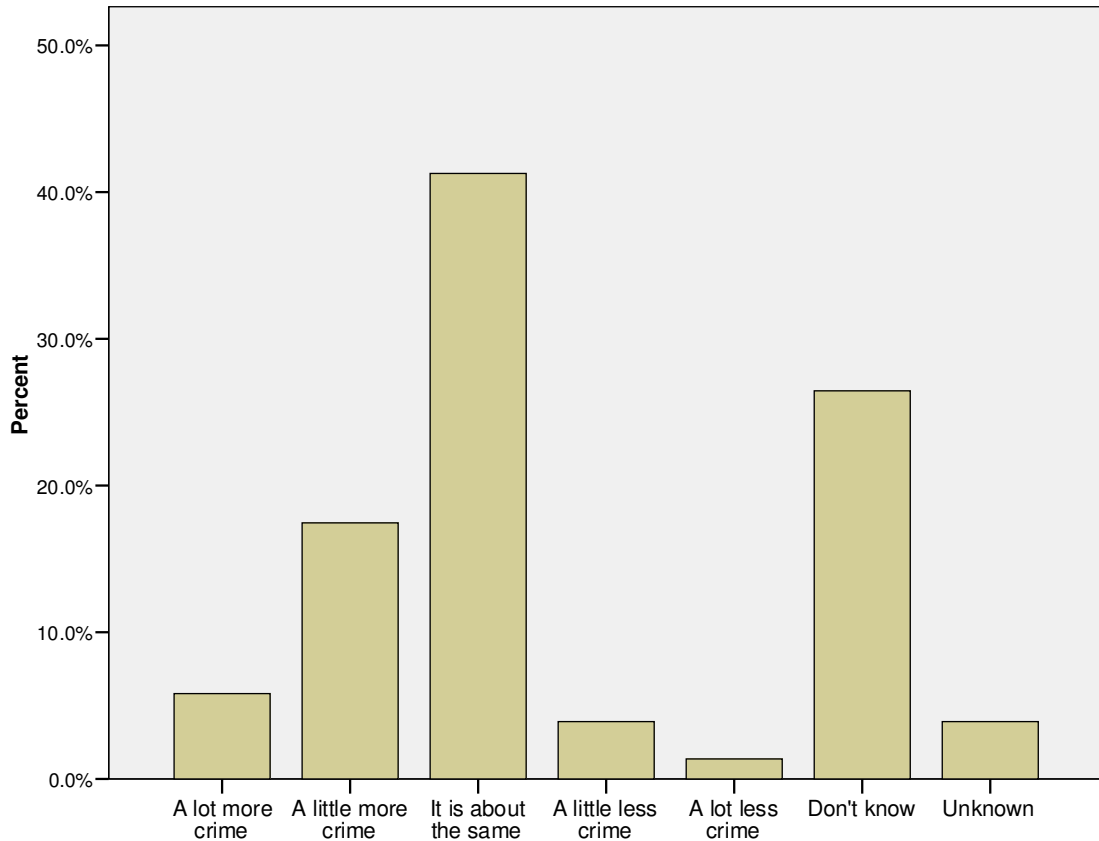


Figure 15: Has level of crime changed in past year?

Out of those who believed that the safety and crime rates were one of the worst things in the Paddock Wood area and also thought that the Police were an important service, predominantly owned their property outright. 88.9% of these respondents were White British and had lived in the area for over 10 years.

- 3.5% of respondents in Paddock Wood thought that police presence and community safety was an urgent issue.
- 4.9% raised this subject as a key issue for Paddock Wood.

In general respondents from varying household composition, raised the need for police presence and issues relating to community safety. 75.0% of those who raised this as a key issue were also female and therefore possibly more aware of criminal activity in their area.

### 6.8 Health Services

Respondents from Paddock Wood were very satisfied with current access to GP services (see figure 16):

- 85.8% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'

This could be explained by the recent development of the Woodlands Health Centre in Paddock Wood.

In fact 9.4% of respondents regarded Health services as one of the best things about the Paddock Wood area (see figure 17).

- 69.7% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with access to all health services.

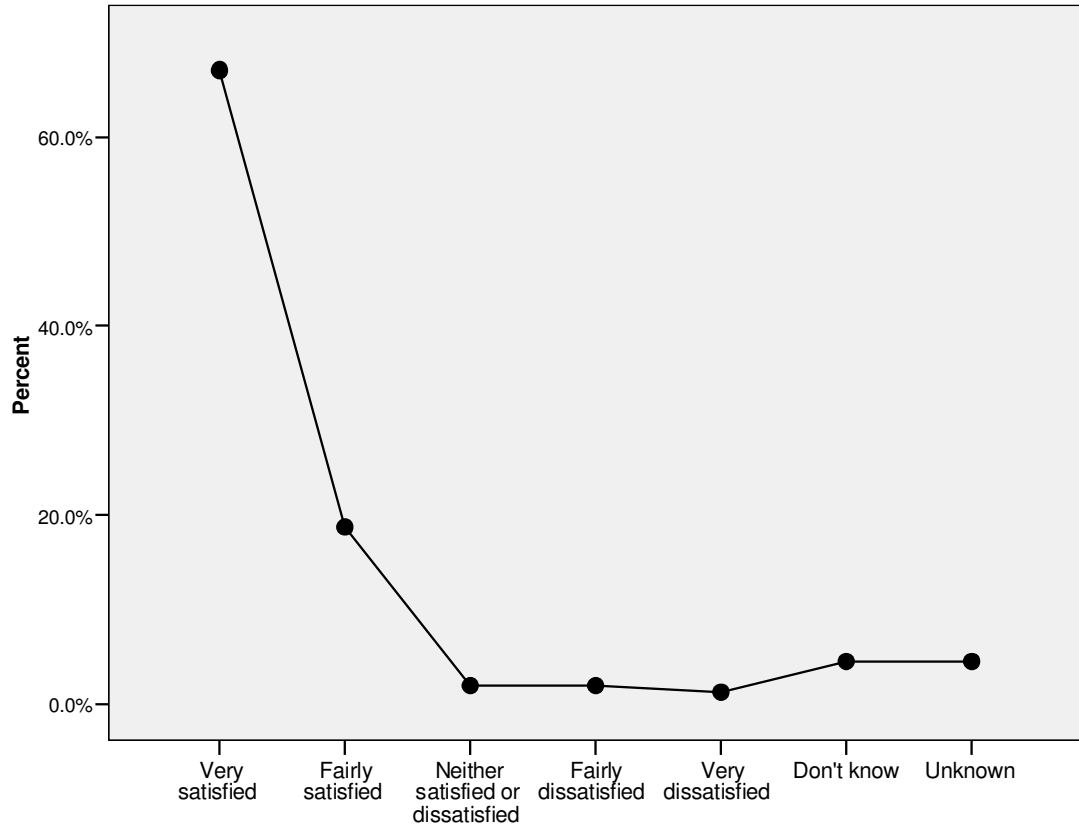


Figure 16: Satisfaction with access to GP services

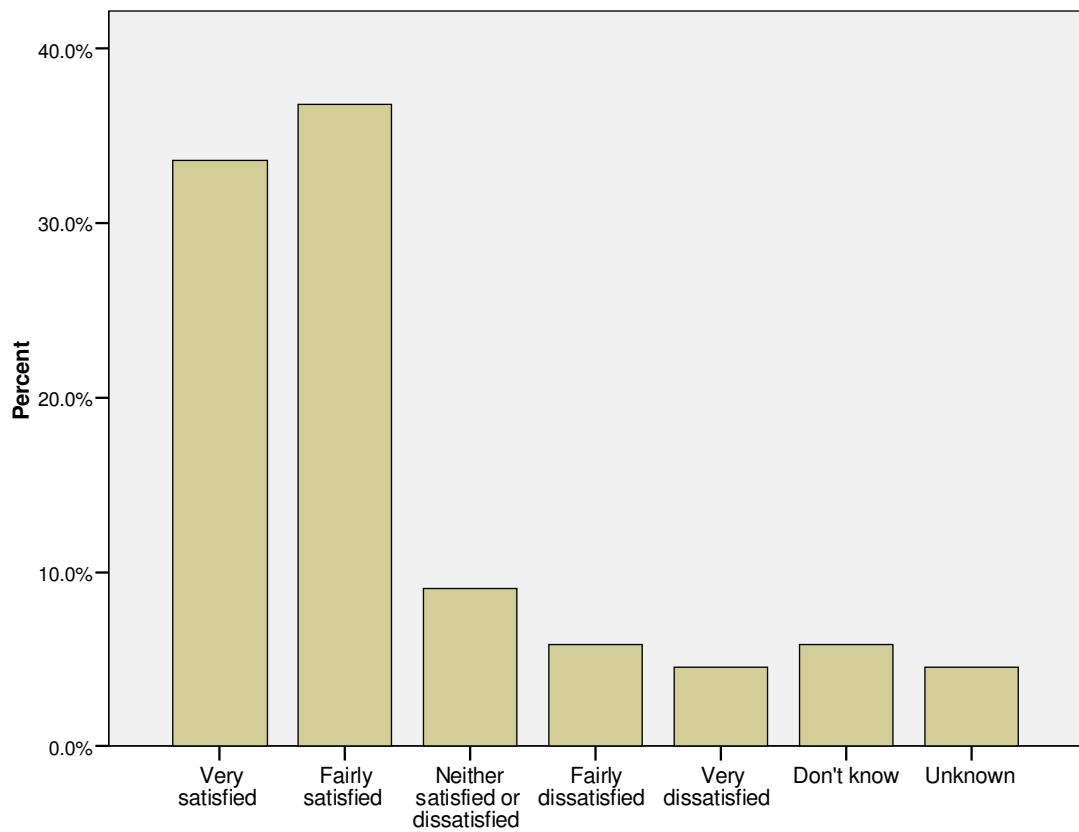


Figure 17: Satisfaction with access to all health services

### 6.9 Education

Respondents were generally satisfied with access to good schools in the Paddock Wood area (figure 18):

- 57.4% of Paddock Wood respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with access to good schools.

When respondents were asked what services they thought were most important in their local area, 3.2% stated education.

- Only 14.6% of Paddock Wood respondents thought Schools were one of the best things about living in the area.

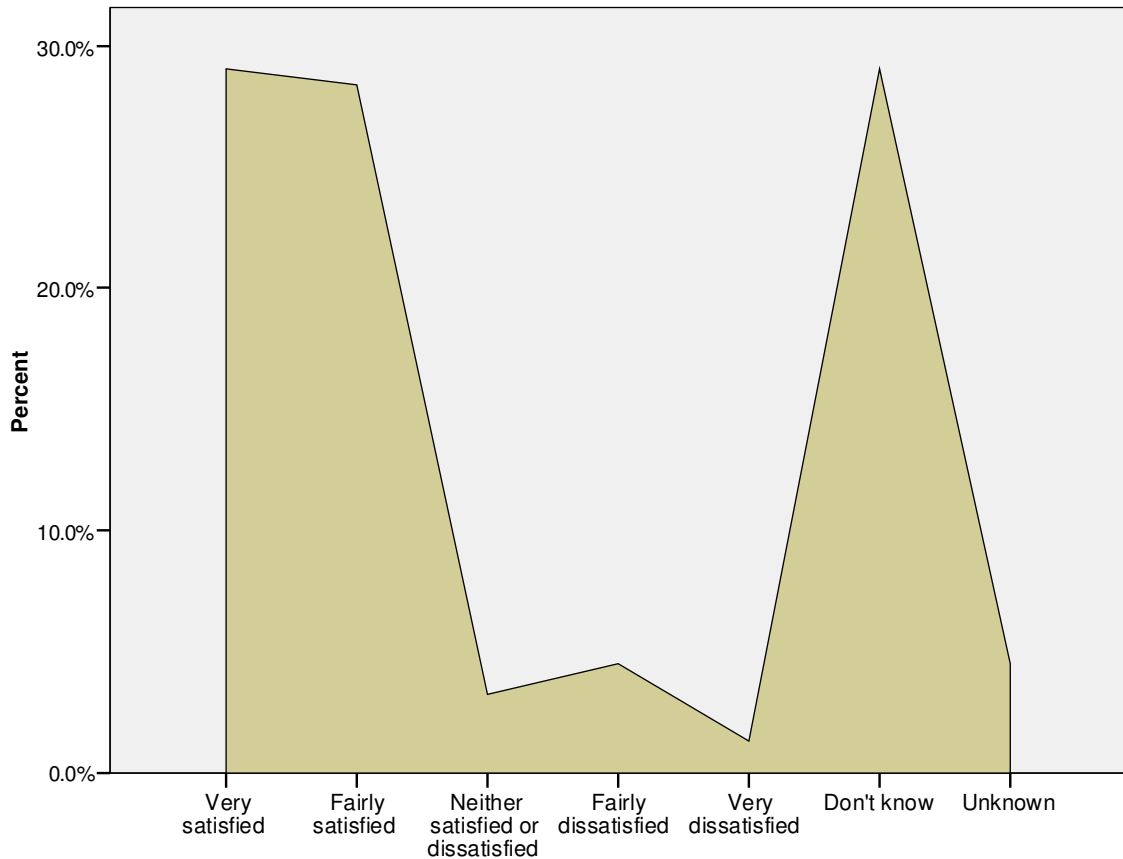


Figure 18: Satisfaction with access to good schools

### 6.10 Planning and Development issues

A number of respondents discussed the impact of planning and development in their local area.

Some Paddock Wood residents discussed buildings that required renovation. Also, a number of respondents discussed the need to provide the infrastructure prior to developing more housing. Many felt that the current infrastructure was not adequate to support any more development in this area.

- 9.7% regarded planning and development as a key issue in Paddock Wood.

## 7. CROSS – CUTTING ISSUES

### 7.1 Customer service

#### Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

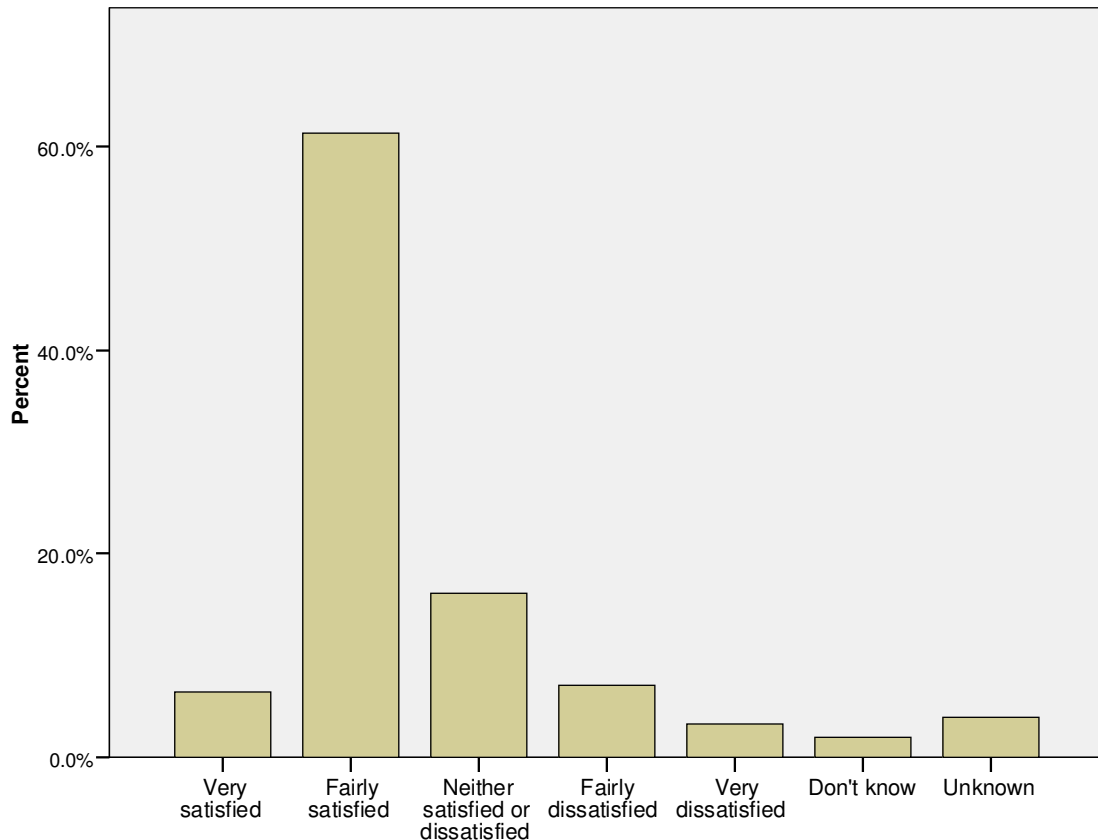


Figure 19: Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

- Two thirds of respondents in Paddock Wood were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way the Borough Council runs things.

This level of response is similar to that of the BVPI General Survey 2006/07, when 62% of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way the Council runs things.

#### How well does the Council keep you informed

Paddock Wood respondents (22.6%) felt that the Council provided limited information. However a reasonable proportion of respondents in the area were satisfied with how the Council keeps them informed:

- 49.7% felt 'very well' or 'fairly well' informed in Paddock Wood.

#### Contacting the Council

Approximately 52.9% of respondents had made contact with the Borough Council in the past year.

The methods these respondents used to contact the Council are listed in figure 20. As the table represents, nearly three quarters of those respondents who contacted the Council, used the telephone as means of contact. This shows that is still by far the most popular method of dealing with enquiries.

Method of contact used	Paddock Wood (%)
In person	7.1
By phone	71.8
By letter	8.2
By email	8.2
Through a Councillor	1.2
Through someone else	1.2
Through Council website	1.2
Other	1.2
Total	100.0

Figure 20: What method respondents used when contacting the Council

### Preferred sources of information used to obtain information

Respondents were able to identify three sources of information that they preferred to use to learn about local issues.

Top three preferred sources in Paddock Wood were:

- Local Newspapers - 65.8% of respondents
- Council newsletter (iLOCAL or parish magazine) - 33.5% of respondents
- Electronic sources e.g. website and email - 25.2% of respondents

57.7% of respondents in Paddock Wood that preferred using the Council newsletter, felt 'very well' or 'fairly well informed.' 43% of respondents who preferred using the local paper in Paddock Wood, felt the Council gave them a limited amount of information or did not tell residents much at all.

## **7.2 Young People**

Respondents in Paddock Wood regarded facilities for young people as the fourth most important service and this subject also appeared within the top five issues.

A number of respondents referred to the need for more activities for young people and facilities in which to do this.

Also those respondents who raised leisure and recreation facilities as an issue were often discussing facilities for young people. In particular, Paddock Wood respondents discussed the plans for the Swimming pool and Running track.

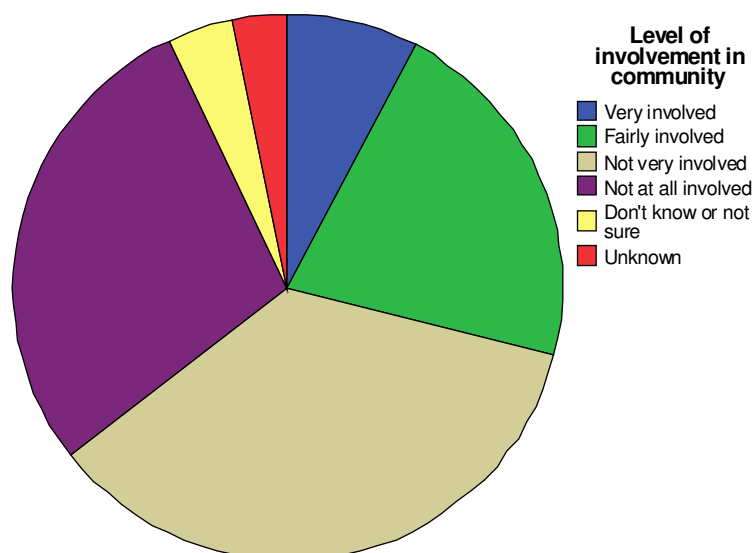
## **7.3 Community Involvement**

### Community Centre

A number of respondents referred to the need for a community centre or facility in which to carry out activities and to assist in improving community involvement.

- 4.5% thought that community centres were an important service in Paddock Wood.
- The need for a community centre in Paddock Wood was raised by an even distribution of respondents from varying household tenure.

## Level of involvement



- Only 29.0% felt 'very involved' or 'fairly involved' in Paddock Wood.
- In actual fact, 63.9% of respondents were 'not very involved' or 'not at all involved.'
- 83.3% of Paddock Wood respondents who felt very involved had lived in the area for 11 years or more.
- However, three quarters of those who were 'not very involved' or 'not at all involved' in Paddock Wood had also lived in the area for 11 years or more.
- 34.5% of those who were 'not very involved' in Paddock Wood were from one or two parent families with children (possibly work and home commitments affected their availability).
- There was an even distribution of the age of respondents who felt 'fairly involved' in Paddock Wood.
- Respondents from ethnic groups other than White British felt either 'fairly involved' or 'not very involved' in Paddock Wood.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Overall, respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live and to raise children. Respondents were predominantly attracted to the area through family but other issues also drew them to these areas such as easy access to work. The main five issues raised in Paddock Wood were; refuse and recycling, traffic calming and road maintenance, facilities for young people, the need for increased police presence and car parking.

The majority of respondents felt fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things and fairly well informed about the services it provides. However this pilot shows that there is still room for improvement as a proportion of respondents reported that the Council gives a limited amount of information. Many respondents thought there was a need for an improved community centre to help improve the low level of community involvement.

The pilot successfully met the aims set within the project plan. Both Councillors and Council staff were involved in the pilot and interviews were successfully completed across a spread of roads in the area. To conclude, some of the positive comments made by residents are detailed below.

- *'Good that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council doing a survey'*
- *'Ward Walks – very good, it encourages interaction.'*
- *'Need more ward walks about what people think'*
- *'This sort of consultation is excellent. It lets you get your point of view across'*
- *'Ward walk card is very eye catching!'*