

Hockley Village Centre Redevelopment

Resident Survey – October 2009

Background

In October 2008, Rochford District Council (RDC) issued a Core Strategy consultation paper with a proposed housing allocation across the district through to 2025, which indicated an unspecified number of additional houses in the Hockley Town Centre area.

In January 2009, RDC issued a Hockley Area Action Plan (HAAP) consultation paper showing six options for the future development of Hockley Town Centre, all of which included a significant number of new dwellings in the central area, primarily by redevelopment of Eldon Way Industrial Estate. The proposal contradicted the Core Strategy paper and led to considerable debate amongst local residents and traders. These proposals were overwhelmingly rejected (95%) in RDC's subsequent public consultation, albeit on a comparatively small number of responses.

In September 2009, RDC issued the final 'full council approved' Core Strategy consultation paper, which included redevelopment of Eldon Way and, for the first time, Foundry Industrial Estates, and proposed that all existing businesses would be relocated, mainly to greenbelt land at the airport, and the land utilised for mixed development, including commercial, leisure and community uses plus an estimated additional 150-200 residential dwellings. This proposal ignores the findings of the earlier public consultation and pre-empts the next HAAP consultation, which is not due before May 2010.

The Hockley Parish Plan (published October 2007), based on the views of residents, recommended that housing developments in the parish should not involve large housing estates or result in the loss of greenbelt and open spaces. The final Core Strategy submission contradicts the Parish Plan recommendation for Hockley.

Proposed Action by Local Resident Groups

In order to advise RDC of the views and desires of the residents of Hockley regarding Town Centre development, Hockley Residents Association (HRA), Hockley Parish Plan Group (HPPG) and Hockley Under Threat (HUT) worked together to undertake a survey, which was issued to all the households in Hockley. The survey content included reference to future development in terms of the central shopping areas, Eldon Way Industrial Estate, parking facilities, and traffic issues. The results of the survey have been analysed and issued to RDC prior to completion of the Core Strategy consultation period.

The publication of the results of the survey to RDC is in addition to individual responses to the Core Strategy from HRA, HPPG, HUT resident groups and local residents.

The survey results appear on the websites below:

Hockley Residents Association
www.hockleyresidents.co.uk

Hockley Parish Plan Group
www.hockleyparishplangroup.co.uk

Hockley Under Threat
www.hockleyunderthreat.com

Survey Analysis

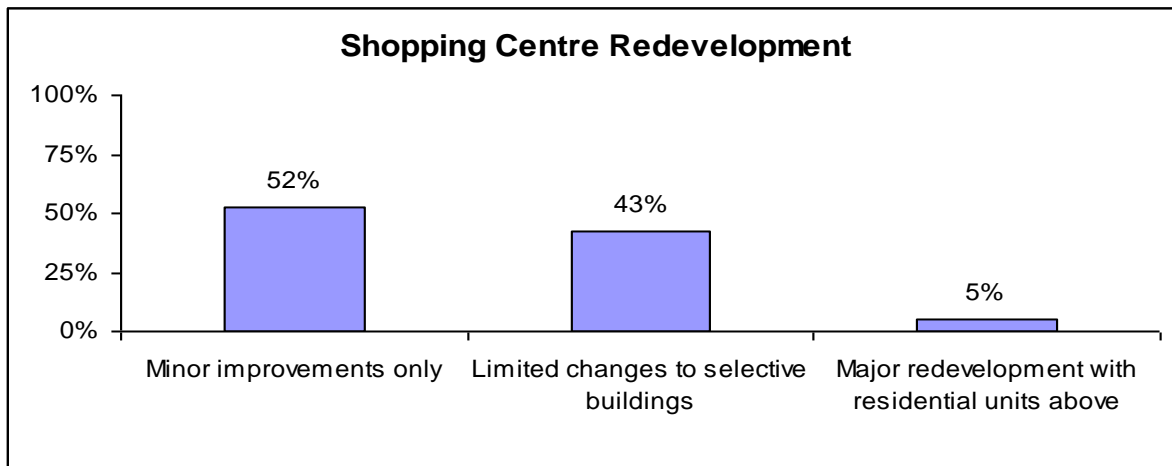
There were 972 responses to the survey (674 hand written + 298 on-line) from the 4,000 households in Hockley. The results of the survey, including some of the most repeated comments, are shown on the next three pages.

The report, together with a blank copy of the questionnaire, has been issued to, amongst others:

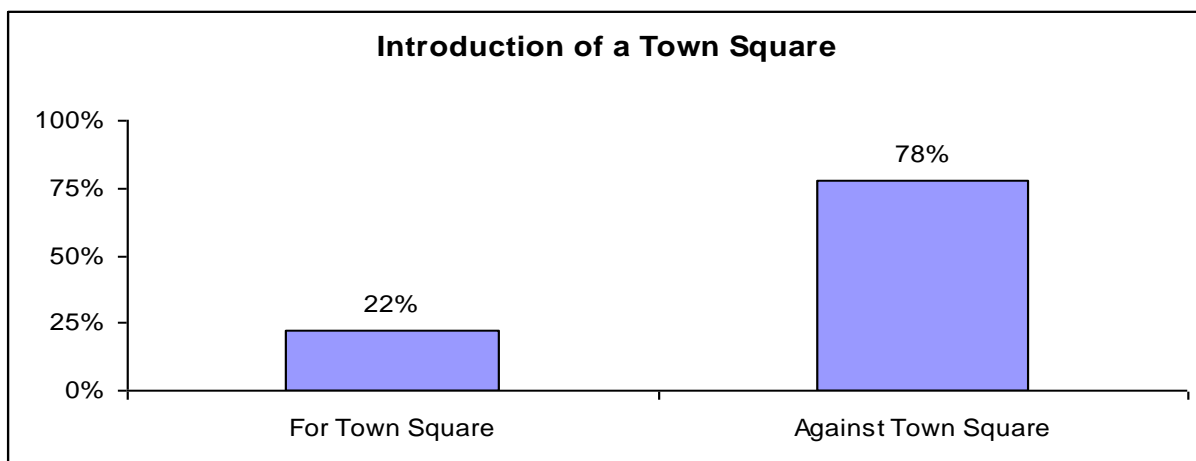
Mark Francois
Rochford District Council
Essex County Council
Hockley Parish Council
Hawkevell Parish Council

Note - The survey was developed as an open and unbiased questionnaire for the purpose of informing district and parish councils of the views of Hockley residents regarding future development.

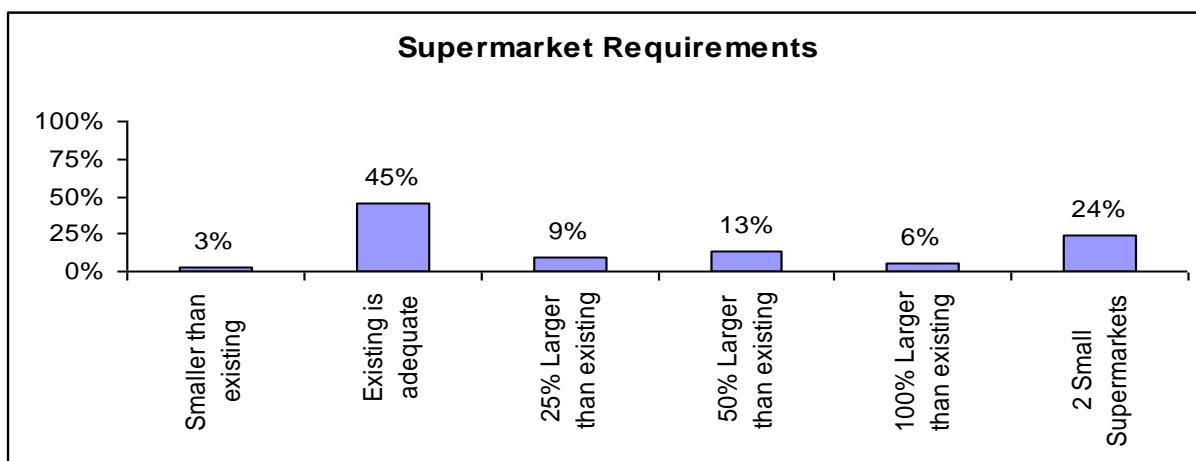
Village Centre Shopping Areas



- There is an overwhelming preference for minor improvements only (such as cleaner pavements with seating areas to relax and chat) or limited changes to selective buildings (such as tidier shop fronts). There is very little support for major redevelopment.
- Council or business incentives are needed to encourage the replacement of empty premises by a range of traditional specialised village type shops and not more takeaways, cafes, estate agents and charity shops.

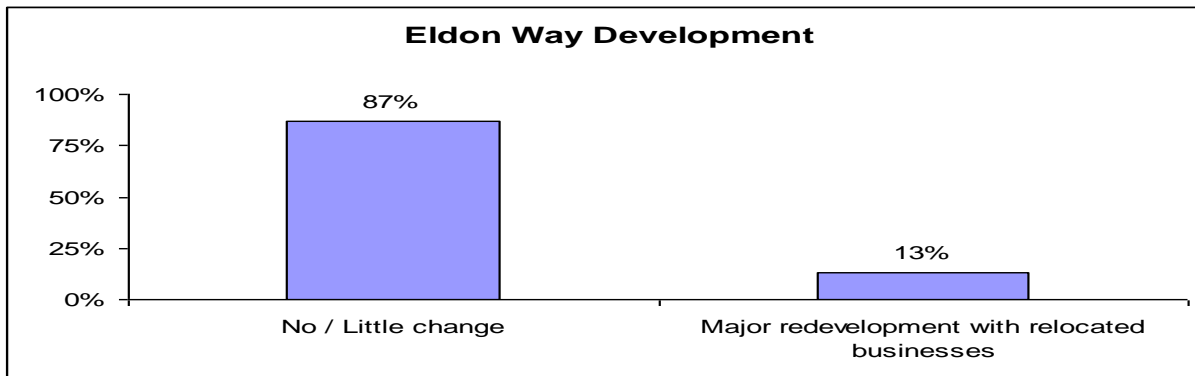


- There is only minority support for the introduction of a town square in Hockley.

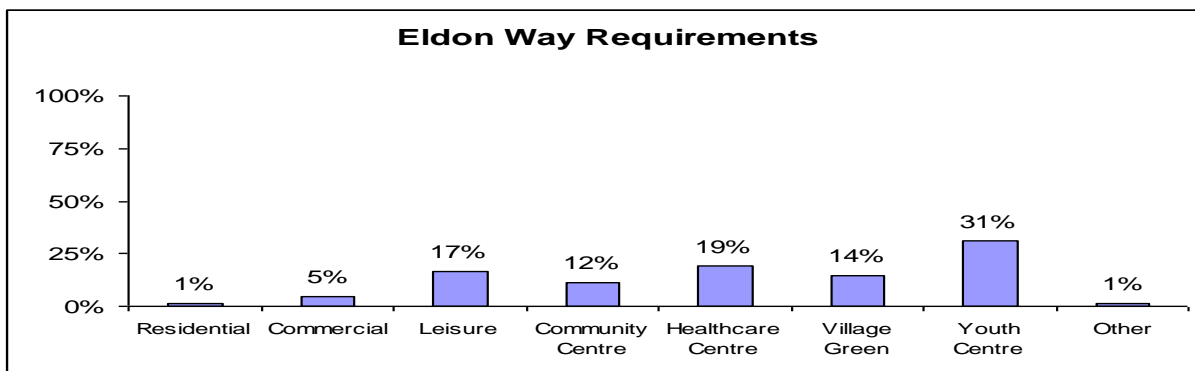


- The preferred option is to retain a supermarket of similar size to the existing Co-op (Somerfield). However, there is significant support for two small supermarkets as an option.
- There is very little support for a large supermarket due to the adverse effect on small local businesses, increased traffic and inadequate parking spaces.

Eldon Way Industrial Estate

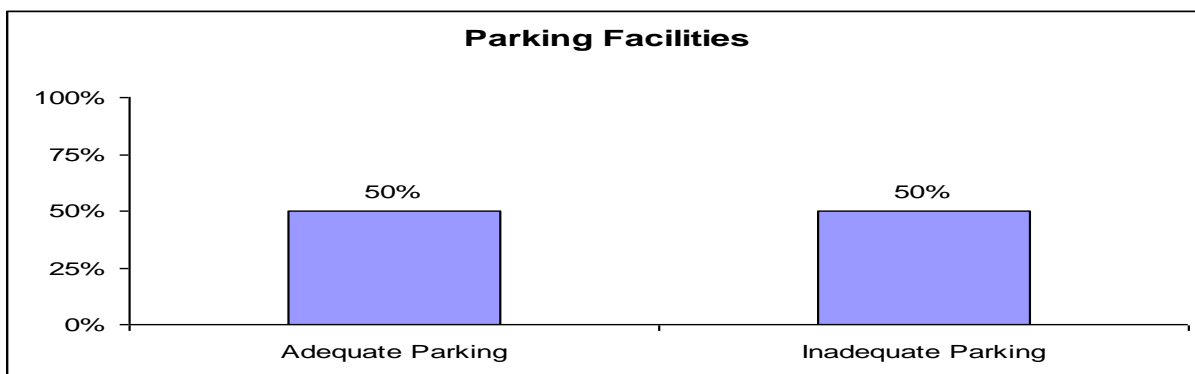


- There is very little support for relocation of existing businesses to greenbelt land and major redevelopment of Eldon Way Industrial Estate.
- Roads would not be able to cope with the additional traffic both during construction and after completion of development.



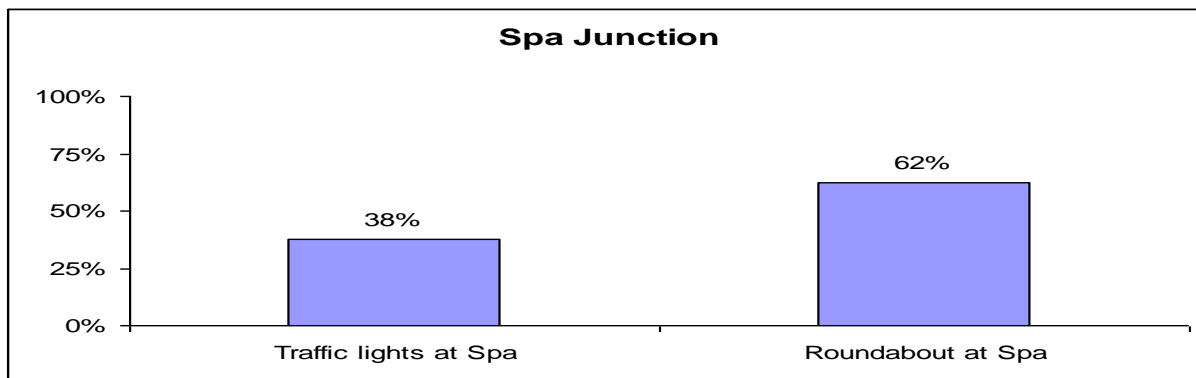
- If redevelopment of Eldon Way was to go ahead, the preferred option for a new facility in Hockley is clearly a Youth Centre, followed in ranking order by a Healthcare Centre, Leisure facilities, a Village Green, a new Community Centre (current Community Centre remote from village centre), and commercial units.
- There is almost zero support for residential properties in Eldon Way. This is consistent with Hockley Parish Plan where residents stated there should be no further housing development in Hockley due to lack of space and related infrastructure, and any enforced development must not include large housing estates or lead to the loss of greenbelt and open spaces.

Parking Facilities



- Equally divided views as to whether there is adequate parking or not in Hockley.
- Main concerns are that the public car park is too far from the shops, and that short term parking should be free to support local businesses and traders, and discourage residents from shopping outside of the village at large stores nearby that provide free on-site parking and a full range of items to purchase.
- Local shopkeepers are understood to be in favour of additional, free parking.

Traffic Flow Issues



- The majority of responses suggest that a roundabout supports a better flow of traffic, and that traffic lights would lead to bunching, creating worse congestion further down line.
- There is a major concern that traffic related to proposed future housing developments in Hockley and neighbouring parishes will create gridlock at the Spa roundabout.
- One of the main causes of congestion is the use of Hockley as a through route to Chelmsford, Rochford and Southend Districts. The ultimate solution is the construction of a bypass, possibly incorporating Hockley Lower Road, but would be an expensive option.
- Other proposed less expensive proposals include a one way system, an enlarged Spa roundabout, lay-bys at all bus stops, herringbone parking in Spa Road, and a better bus service to reduce the number of cars.
- Much congestion and bunching of traffic at peak times is caused by the number of pedestrians as much as the volume of traffic. Proposed solutions include re-location of pedestrian crossings away from the roundabout (especially outside Potters) or replacement with pelican crossings.

General Comments

- The village atmosphere and character of Hockley must be retained
- Hockley must remain as a village and not grow into a small town
- Infrastructure in terms of schools, healthcare, leisure facilities, and particularly road networks, must be in place before any future development

Conclusions and Next Steps

Whilst residents are generally supportive of enhancing the village centre, there is very little support for major redevelopment as proposed by RDC's HAAP. Also, any development will need to be supported by appropriate improvements in the infrastructure, particularly roads.

The three groups (HRA, HPPG & HUT) will now work with all interested parties (e.g local traders, Hockley Parish Council, Rochford District Council) to produce a design brief to facilitate production of the next version of the HAAP.

Given the very clear feedback from residents in this survey, as well as RDC's own HAAP public consultation, we hope that the next version of HAAP will reflect the findings and facilitate much needed enhancements, but not major redevelopment, in the village centre.

November 2009

