

Listen to the public first

Analysis of public attitudes to new housing development and how individuals want to be engaged

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If we are to plan better places, deliver new housing and create thriving communities it is imperative that we – as development professionals – seek to engage as many local people as possible in the plan making, design and application process.

How this can best be achieved is a growing challenge for our industry. As a planning consultancy with a UK-wide presence, we were keen to work with JBP to commission this research, and build upon similar questions we polled as part of our shortlisted Wolfson Economics Prize entry in 2014, as well as our wider understanding of practice on projects of all scales.

By polling a cross section of the UK's population on general development matters, their experience of engaging with the planning system, and questioning their appetite to be involved in delivering change in their communities, there is a clear picture emerging.

It is for example, heartening to see that the perception of need has grown significantly since our review in 2014, as has the opportunity that housing delivery has to tackle homelessness and affordability within our communities.

There is also a clear desire to engage in the system at some level. As an industry however, we need to consider how we can collectively respond to the perceived 'lack of influence' in the decision-making process which is clearly a major barrier to people becoming actively involved. Helpfully this new research provides us with a few pointers and we look forward to driving the discussion more widely as to how.

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What the public think

Analysis by Paul Smith
JBP Head of Research and Strategy

The Capital Club commissioned a nationally representative survey of 1,031 people across the UK by pollster Survation to find out what they think about;

- New housing and what they want for the future.
- The planning process and who is engaged in it.
- How they would like to be engaged about future housing in their area.

There are five key findings.

1) People like to have a say but are not often not asked

The most striking outcome is that while

- only 23% ever recall being asked by “government or Council to give their view on housing or planning needs in their area.”
- 64% would be interested in having a say in the future development in their local area.

2) If you are older, wealthier and a homeowner, you are more likely to formally comment on a planning proposal

28% of people said they had at some point formally written in support or opposition to a planning proposal.

However there is a clear lean in who had expressed a view according to age, income and home ownership. Of the 28% who had been formally engaged in the planning system:

- 44.8% of over 75 years old had engaged.
- 34.7% of those earning over £40,000 (top income quartile) had engaged.
- They were also, crucially, three times as likely to be a home owner.

3) People want more housing and the reason is concerns about affordability

74% of people agreed with the statement “I think that more homes need to be built in the UK”.

People’s views are driven by concerns about a lack of affordable options:

- 63% of people want more affordable housing in their area ‘based on local needs’..
- 42% are concerned about being able to afford future accommodation in their area.

Support for all these questions is higher amongst those who are younger, on lower and average incomes and less likely to own their own home.

Revealingly 30% of people who own their own home said they were “concerned about whether the next generation of their family will be able to afford their own home” showing that the concern is widespread even amongst those best positioned in the housing market.

4) But have conflicting views

When asked to score their view on the effect of more housing in their area on a scale of 1- 10 with 10 being strongly agree, the two top answers that people scored strong agreement (7-10) on were:

- 57% strongly agreed it would promote a strain on amenities, such as transport or schools.
- 51% strongly agreed it would help reduce homelessness.

The detail of this research reveals a complex web of views about development that are capable of being mobilised for and against more housing development depending on the arguments put.

5) 84% want to be asked first

84% of respondents thought it was important that *“before making decisions on housing and planning development the government and local authorities seek out views from broad representative samples of the local population”*.

The challenge for government, councils and the development industry could not be clearer. Seeking an informed view of a representative group of people and making sure that all local views are heard is an important first step in mobilising support for providing the housing that people need and want.

Conclusion

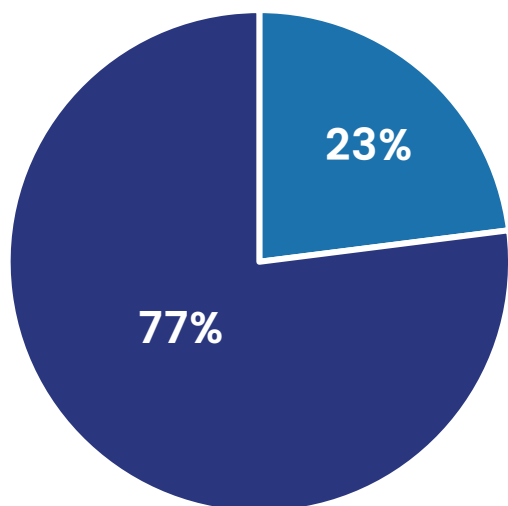
The current planning system is the exact opposite of what people want. A planning proposal is made or an application is lodged and then the public are granted an opportunity to throw rocks at it – if they know about it. Our survey shows that those who do throw the rocks are not representative of the population at large.

Some more detail on what the public said

People would like to have a say but are not asked

People would like to have a say but are not asked

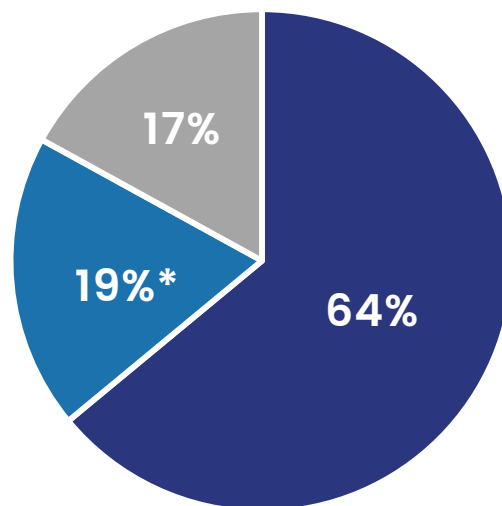
Q. Thinking about your personal experience, have you ever been formally asked by either the government or local council to give your personal views on housing or planning needs in your local area?



YES

NO

Q. Would you consider yourself interested in having a say in the future planning / development of your local area?



I am interested in having a say in future planning / development in my area

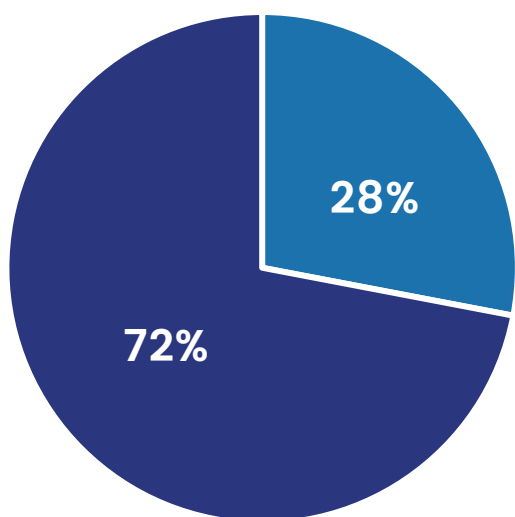
I am not interested in having a say in future planning / development in my area

Don't know

*40% of not interested respondents gave their reason as they thought their views not be listened to

Who participates in planning?

Q. When plans are proposed for new houses being built, the public may write in to formally support or oppose an application. Have you ever formally written in support or opposition to any planning proposal?

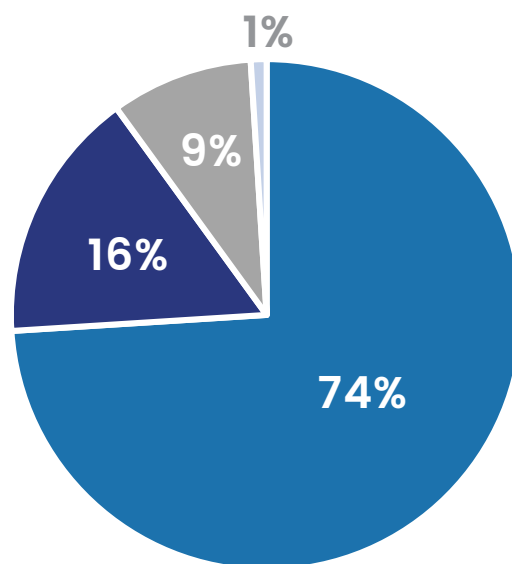


■ YES ■ NO

Older people, people who own houses and people in the top income quartile are overrepresented in the those who had responded Yes.

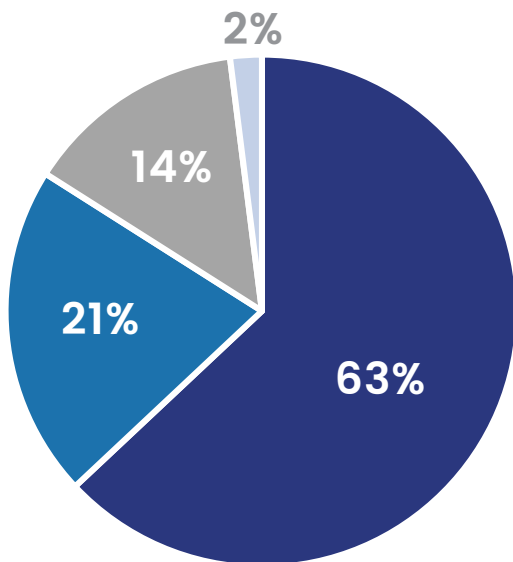
Why do people want more housing?

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I think that more homes need to be built in the UK?"



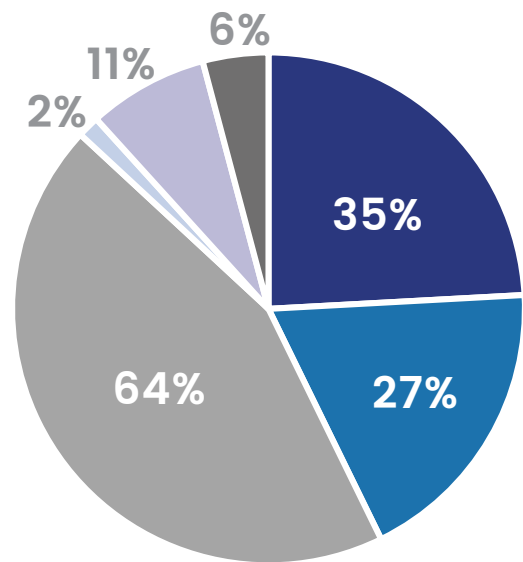
■ Total agree
■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Total disagree
■ Don't know

Q. Thinking about your own personal circumstances and the area in which you live, to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements? “More affordable homes should be built in my area that are based on local community needs”.



- Total agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Total disagree
- Don't know

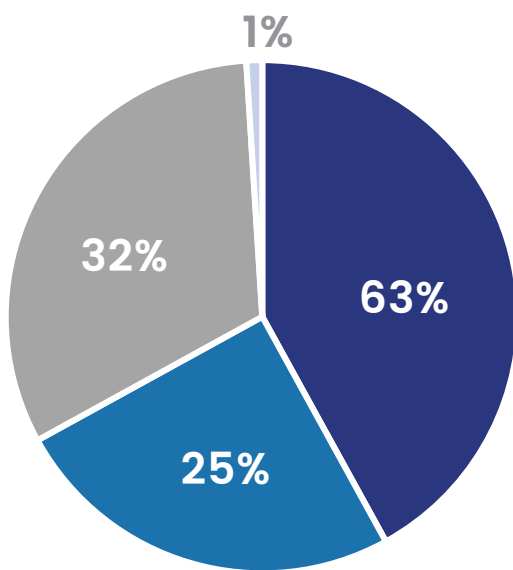
Q. If new homes were to be built in your local area, which of the following do you think they should be? Please select all that apply.



- New homes to buy at market price
- New homes to rent at market price
- New affordable housing
- Other type of home
- I would prefer no new homes to be built
- Don't know

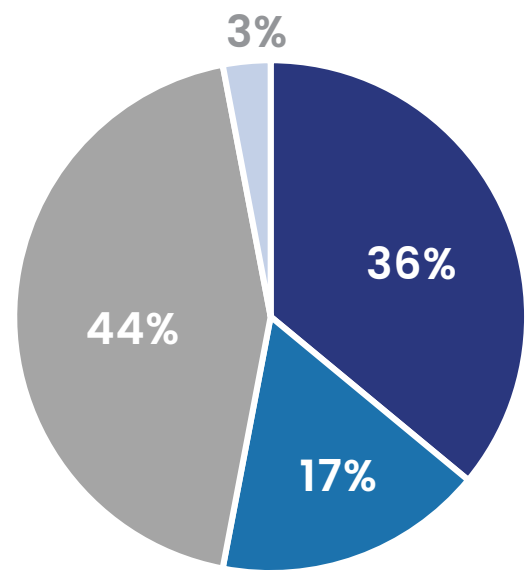
People could choose as many options as they like.

Q. How concerned are you about being able to afford future accommodation in your area?



- Total concerned
- Neither concerned nor unconcerned
- Total not concerned
- Don't know

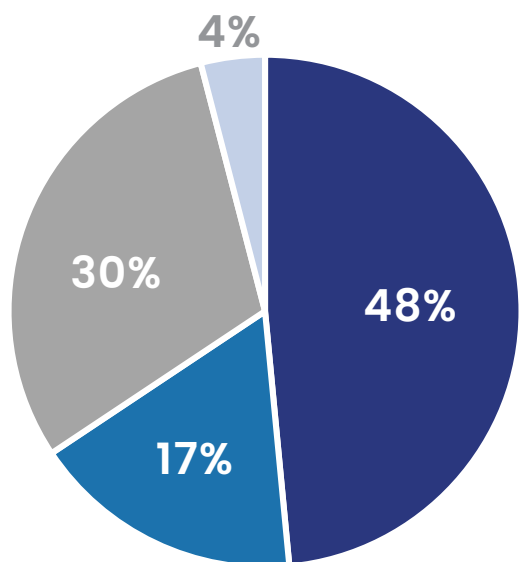
Q. To what extent do you think it's likely or unlikely you will own your own home in the future?



- Total likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Total unlikely
- Don't know

Base: Respondents who do not own their own house.

Q. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that the next generation of your family will be able to afford to own their own home in the future?



- Total likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Total unlikely
- Don't know

Base: Respondents who own their own house.

The conflicting views of the public

Q. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not at all likely” and 10 means “very likely”, how likely do you think it is that each of the following would occur as a result of more homes being built in the UK?

	0-3	4-6	7-10	Mean score
It would make housing more affordable	16%	34%	50%	6.20
It would have a negative impact on the environment	18%	41%	41%	5.87
It would make it more difficult for towns to retain their character	16%	37%	47%	6.05
It would put a strain on amenities, such as transport or schools	13%	31%	57%	6.64
It would reduce homelessness	20%	30%	51%	6.22
It would create more environmentally sustainable homes	14%	39%	47%	6.15
It would create nicer places to live	17%	43%	40%	5.83

Views of decision makers

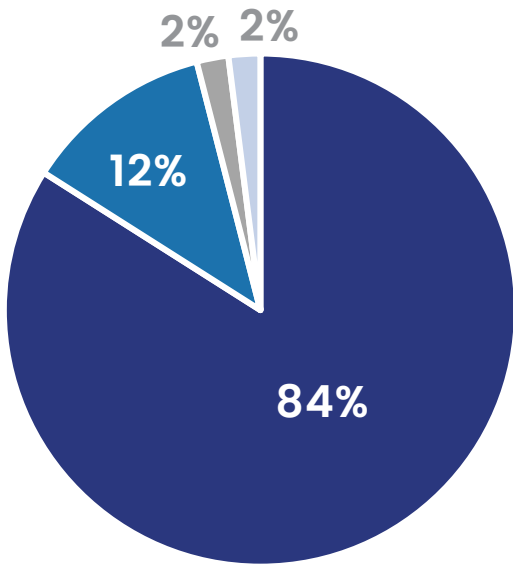
Q. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “don’t trust at all” and 5 means “trust a lot”, to what extent would you trust each of the following in making formal decisions about how local housing and development is provided in your local area?

	1-2	3	4-5	Mean score
Local councillors	38%	32%	30%	2.82
Members of Parliament	48%	32%	20%	2.53
Government ministers	49%	30%	21%	2.53
Planning officials	34%	37%	29%	2.87

Local councillors were trusted more than national politicians but planning officials are regarded as the most trustworthy.

Seeking peoples views first

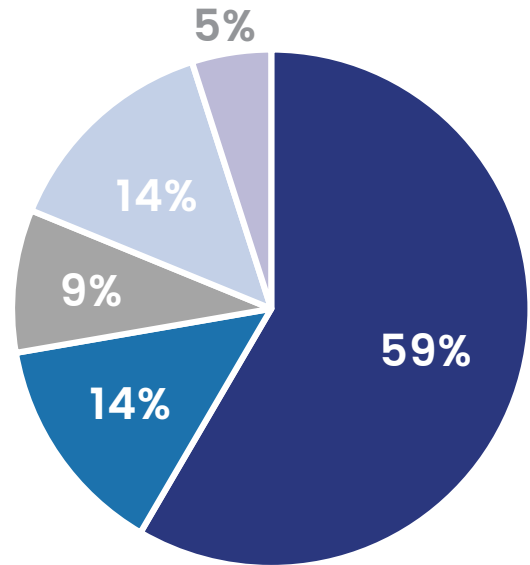
Q. Before making decisions on housing and planning development, how important is it that the government and local authorities seek out views from broad representative samples of the local population?



- Total important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Total not important
- Don't know

How do people want to be contacted

Q. What would be the best way for local planning / development information to be shared with you?



- Letter
- Newspapers/notice
- TV
- Social Media
- Other

Base: Respondents more inclined to get involved with local planning / development.

For further information about this research or joining the Capital Club contact:

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