

# THE WIVENHOE TRADE SURVEY

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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Questionnaires were sent out at the end of April 1996 by the Wivenhoe Town Council to each of the 3,000 households in Wivenhoe seeking views of residents about local shops and businesses. Each questionnaire could be completed by more than one person; 546 were returned giving the opinions of 509 men and 596 women. We were very pleased with this response rate of just over 18% indicating a level of concern and commitment by those living in Wivenhoe for the place in which they live.

The ages of people responding were as follows:

11-16	17-21	22-39	40-59	60-64	65-74	75+
81	50	225	392	95	150	110
7%	5%	20%	36%	9%	14%	10%

It is interesting to note that 25% who completed the questionnaire were over 65, confirming suspicions of an ageing population here. Whilst the views of 1,104 people were expressed, the total number of people living in the households represented by this survey was 1,253, of which 143 were children under the age of 11 years.

Amongst the respondents, 25% of people visited a local newsagent daily and weekly by the majority. 27% of all people went to a food shop each day, although in the Lower Village this percentage was 49%, reflecting perhaps that the average age of residents is much higher there. Only 6% of people claimed never to visit any local food retailers.

64% of people used the local shops for 'top up' shopping, and presumably this meant primarily the food retailers. One implication of this is that a third of those responding either used, or were dependent upon, local shops for their main shopping.

90% of people visited one or other of our two Post Offices, demonstrating that they clearly fulfil a need.

The fact that we have 5 hairdressers in Wivenhoe is surprising to some people, believing that there cannot be enough business to go round, but only half the people used them.

Just under half the people appeared to use the services of our two garages (46%), where only one sells petrol, and half of those admitting using them only very rarely. Only 14% of people overall visited weekly or less, with 60% of people at the top end of Wivenhoe claiming never to use a local garage at all.

With regard to banking, almost everybody banks outside of Wivenhoe, with 79 people (7%) using the Co-Op bank, 100 (9%) the Post Office Giro and just 14 using the building society in one of the Wivenhoe estate agents. From the general comments which were made, many people regretted the loss of the local branch of Barclays and would welcome an improvement in banking facilities.

With regard to shopping facilities overall, only 24% of people thought that shopping facilities were good; 60% thought they were reasonable and 11% poor. Those living in the Lower Village were most appreciative with 39% rating shops as good, whilst those living in the areas either side of The Avenue appeared the most critical, perhaps reflecting that they are the furthest away from the shops and also lack any sense of 'village atmosphere'.

Trade seemed to be fairly evenly distributed around Wivenhoe with 24% using Vine Drive shops, 21% at The Cross, with just over half of Wivenhoe using the Co-Op and the Lower Village.

Shops, other than food retailers and the newsagents, appeared to have scattered custom, possibly due to the wide variety of services available. Not surprisingly, those living nearest to Colchester used Wivenhoe shops less than those living closer to the river.

Interestingly, 66% of respondents generally liked the idea of supporting local shops. This figure was 90% for people living in the Lower Village. A third of all people also liked the idea of the social contact which local shops gave them. 56% of people used local shops out of convenience and a third saw a saving in transport costs. Only 135 of people didn't have their own transport and we should note that 43 people had difficulty getting to local shops, presumably from age or infirmity.

Whilst the majority of people may own a car, if it is used by the working partner to go to their place of work, this may well leave the partner at home with children and no transport, unless they are lucky enough to own a second car.



Perhaps surprisingly, only half the people (49%) thought items were cheaper outside of Wivenhoe, but not surprisingly 83% thought that there was greater choice elsewhere.

The questionnaire sought views on what other types of shop might be useful. The response to this section was as follows:

	TOTAL	%		TOTAL	%
Florist	472	48	Pet foods/ accessories	243	25
Wool/Haberdashery	367	37	Shoe repairs	528	54
Boat Chandler	78	8	DIY	567	58
Craft Shop	301	31	Jeweller/Jewellery repairs	205	21

Regarding the Wivenhoe At Your Service directory, 63% used it, with some 10% believing they used it frequently, and almost half of those using it, at least on an occasional basis. 39% of people used one or more of the professional / technical / specialist services listed in the booklet.

60% of people appeared to know that they could obtain cash from some local shops when you buy with a credit card or cheque.

We also asked for information about the use of other facilities in Wivenhoe. The results of these questions are given below:

	TOTAL	%
Wivenhoe Library	566	53
Playing Fields / Woods	685	64
Quay Area	793	75
Riverside Walks	732	69
Children's Play Areas	257	24
Pubs	661	62
Restaurants / Take-aways	651	61

## **Conclusions**

It is good to note that the majority of all people in Wivenhoe like the idea of supporting local shops and businesses, and clearly there are many people in our community who depend upon them. It is good to note as well that many people also did not feel that prices were generally more expensive than in shops outside of Wivenhoe although clearly one can point to specific examples of price non-competitiveness, especially where used as loss leaders to attract custom.

Some comments were written onto the survey forms. Some people were critical of the way they were treated by local shops although the majority were complimentary about the quality of service. There were however several

comments about the hours of opening, particularly lunch-time closing by some shops, which might be considered.

Many people would like to see a chemist in Lower Wivenhoe, some a baker at the top; many people rue the loss of the wool / haberdashers shop. Many would also like to be able to buy small DIY items in Wivenhoe. Some people expressed the need for a Cafe / Tea Shop, especially during the summer months.

The fact that a lot of people who live at the top of Wivenhoe do not use many of the facilities at the bottom end needs to be considered further. Certainly there is a slight feeling of ignorance about what goods and services are available. This needs to be addressed by local shops and businesses somehow raising their profile further.

Surprisingly perhaps, comparatively few people mentioned parking as an issue although it is widely felt and recognised that there is need for improvement.

There were a number of critical comments about the Quay, the appearance of shops and indeed of Wivenhoe generally, where we could all do more to improve the impressions these give to people.

A number of people commented favourably on the questionnaire itself as a demonstration that something was being done to redress the potential for further loss of shops and businesses. Hopefully this survey has in itself made people more conscious about the need to use local shops for them to survive. Hopefully it will also give ideas to existing traders as to how they might better serve our local community, in which many people depend greatly upon them for their own quality of life. And perhaps through generating a greater vitality in our precious community, we might see new people set up in business here.

One person wrote on their survey form ' Wivenhoe is a great place to live'. I think this expresses the view of many people living here. I hope too that we can make it an even better place in which to live.

Cllr Peter Hill  
Chairman, Project 2000  
Wivenhoe Town Council

September 1996