

Appendix 3: Consultation responses and changes made to draft Tree and Woodland Strategy and Action Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council's draft Tree and Woodland Strategy, including a draft Action Plan, was approved for consultation by the Sustainability Advisory Group on 4 July 2019.
- 1.2 A public consultation was carried out between 7 August and 19 July 2019. An online questionnaire was advertised through a range of media by the Council's Communications Team. Paper copies of the Strategy and questionnaire were distributed to all public libraries in Wolverhampton. Emails were sent to key partners inviting them to respond.
- 1.3 89 responses to the consultation were received as outlined in Table 1 below:

Response method	No. of responses	Comments
Questionnaire – on-line	67	Including Woodland Trust + Wildside Activity Centre
Questionnaire - paper via libraries	15	
Telephone	1	Possible duplication of 1 online response
Email	3	Including West Midlands Friends of the Earth + Whitmore Reans Connect
letter	1	
Letter via email	2	Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust +Natural England
Total Responses	89	

Table 1: Summary of consultation responses

- 1.4 As is outlined in the table, 67 questionnaires were completed on-line, another 15 questionnaires were completed in libraries with another seven responses received via telephone, email or letter. Analysis of the 82 questionnaire responses is presented in Table 2 and of the remaining seven responses separately in Table 3, along with proposed responses and changes made to the Strategy.
- 1.5 The one telephone caller made comments identical to those in one of the on-line responses, so it is possible that they are counted twice; this does not, however, affect the overall conclusions or recommended changes.

1.6 The following organisations identified themselves in responses:

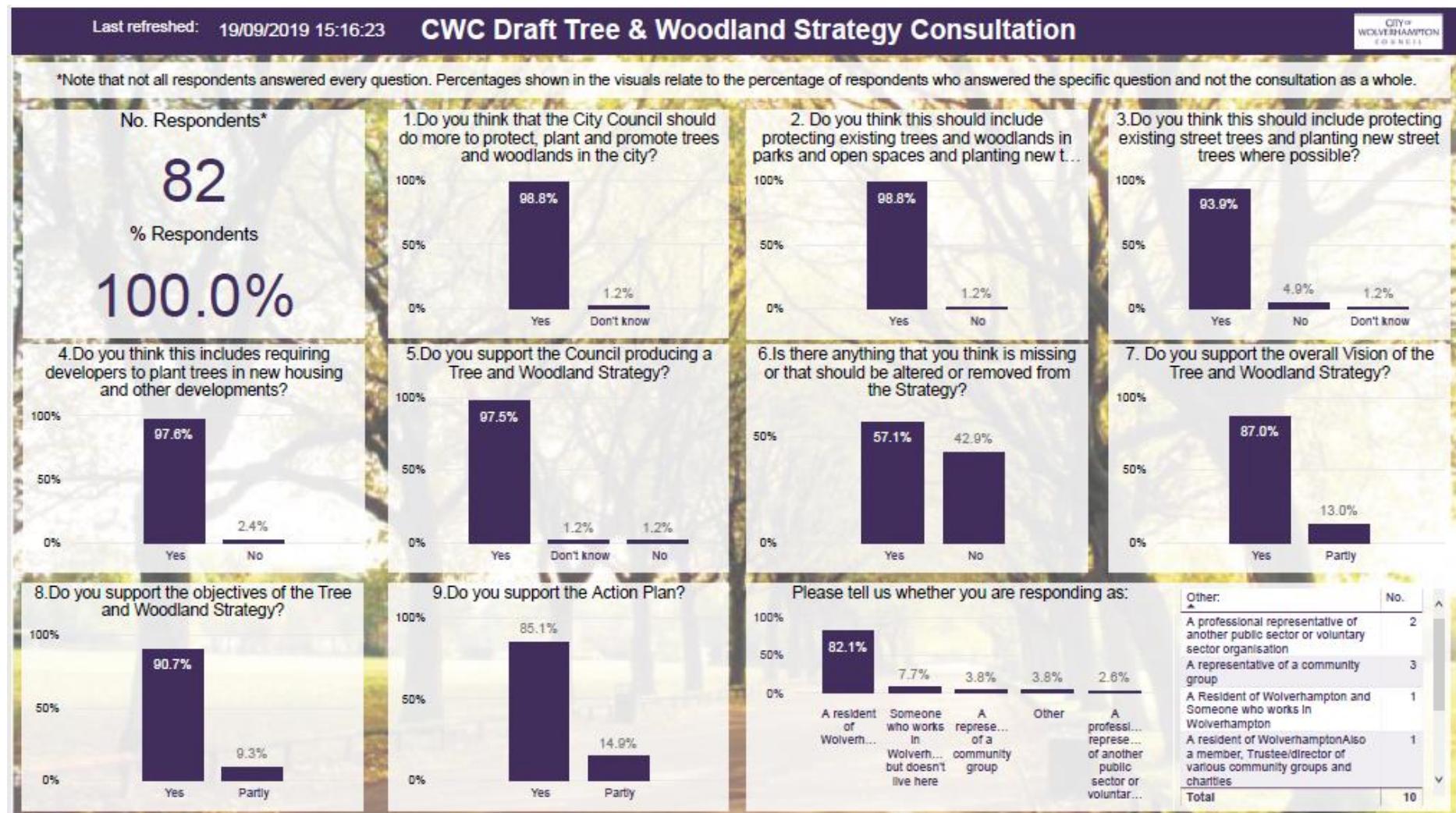
- Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust
- Friends of Alder Coppice
- Natural England
- West Midlands Friends of the Earth
- Whitmore Reans Connect
- Wildside Activity Centre
- Woodland Trust

1.7 One of the requests from the Sustainability Advisory Group was that the housing sector be involved but regrettably, despite being contacted and invited to comment, no responses from either housebuilders or housing associations were identified in the responses.

2.0 Analysis of Responses

2.1 An overview of the questionnaire responses, both online and paper is shown in Figure 1 below. As can be seen, 99% of respondents supported the Council doing more to protect and promote trees and woodland and to plant trees in parks and open spaces (Qs 1 & 2). 94% supported the protection and planting of street trees (Q4) and 98% supported both trees being provided in new developments and the Council producing a Tree and Woodland Strategy (Qs 3 & 5). 87% supported the overall Vision (Q7), 91% the Objectives (Q8) and 85% the Action Plan (Q9) with the remaining respondents supporting them partly; none totally disagreed.

Figure 1: Overview of Questionnaire Responses



- 2.2 57% of respondents thought that changes should be made to the Strategy and these were reflected in individual comments. Comments from organisations and the public were overwhelmingly supportive of the Strategy and of protecting and providing more trees in the City. Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust made the most substantive comments, followed by Natural England and West Midlands Friends of the Earth who both endorsed the Wildlife Trust's comments as part of their own. Many of the comments from the general public supported the same themes.
- 2.3 A number of changes to the Strategy and Action Plan have been made as a result of these comments as well as in light of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency. The most significant of these changes are:
- Reference to the Council's Climate Emergency declaration and greater prominence given to the importance of trees and woodland in mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Introduction of an ambition to increase tree cover across the City and to set targets for this, including in the Objectives and Action Plan
 - Stronger reference to replacing trees that are removed, to developing a programme of tree planting and seeking funding for this in the Action Plan
 - Addition of references to hedgerows to recognise that they provide many of the same benefits as trees and woodlands
 - Greater reference to biodiversity, including in the Vision
 - Addition of references to the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area, the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and its proposal to develop a Nature Recovery Network
 - Stronger references to partnership working and the potential it offers to plan and deliver green infrastructure, including trees, including in the Objectives
 - Section 5 of the strategy has been strengthened to give stronger reference to the use and enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders (also referenced in Action 1.13) (public comments only)

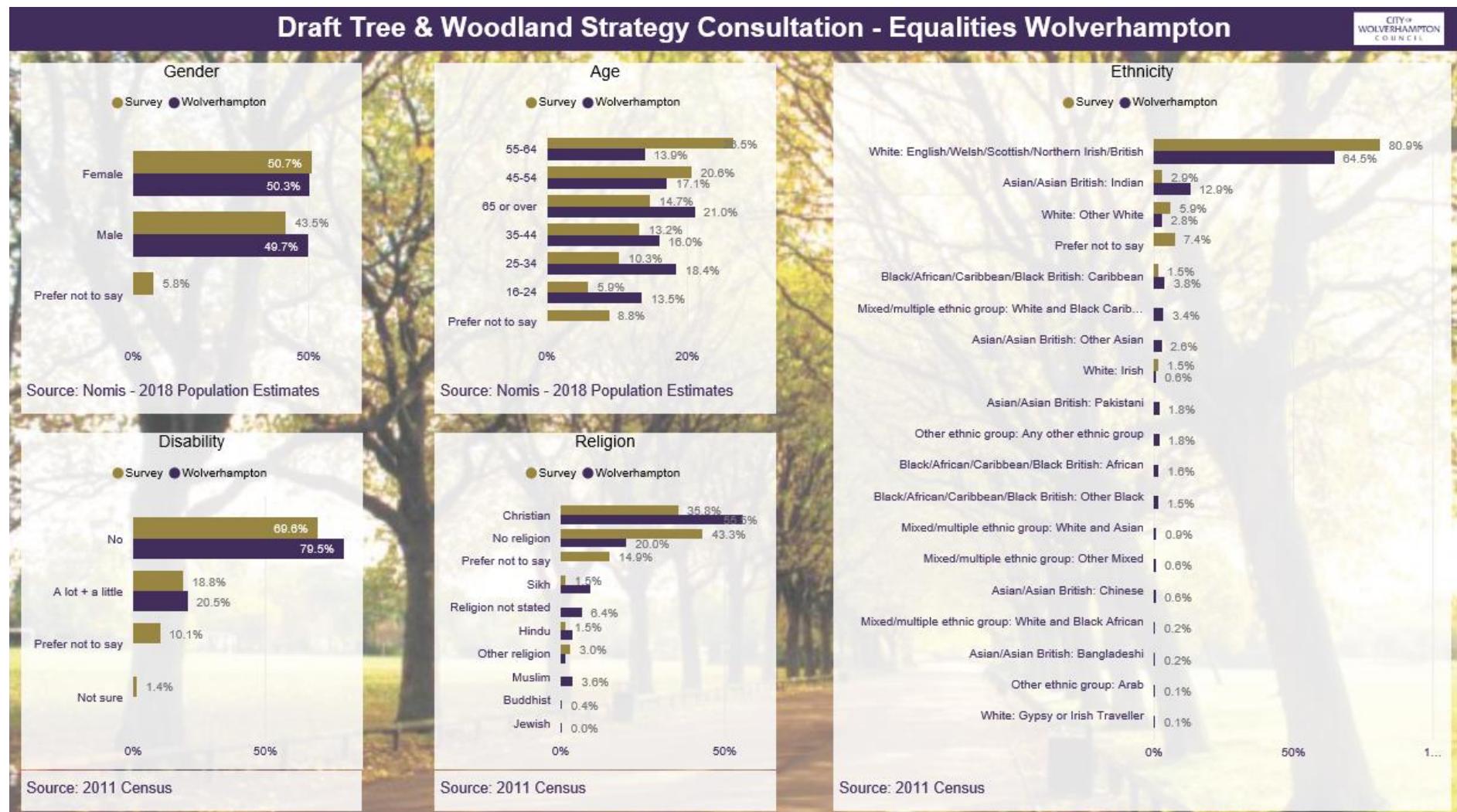
- 2.4 The most significant public comments which have not resulted in changes are:
- Strong objections to the proposal to remove trees to extend the car park in Bantock Park, the consultation on which was taking place at the same time (eight comments) (outside the scope of the Strategy). One objector quoted Joni Mitchell (Big Yellow Taxi, 1970):
*'They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
They took all the trees
Put 'em in a tree museum...'*
 - That development should take place on brownfield land rather than green belt/ greenfield sites (four comments) (outside the scope of the Strategy)

- Protection of existing trees and those in new developments (11 comments) (already covered by Action 1.13)
 - Lack of ambition/ firm commitments to increase tree cover and undertake planting schemes (the Council has limited resources and there is currently no budget identified for implementing the Action Plan)
 - Need for community involvement (already included in Action Plan)
- 2.5 Apart from a number of comments which were sceptical about the Council's genuine commitment to protecting trees, some accompanied by anecdotes about removal of individual trees, there were two additional responses which raised issues about trees. One cited problems for elderly residents in wet autumn conditions caused by deciduous trees, presumably referring to leaf fall. The other stated that trees should not be planted in residential areas and should be removed as 'they cause a mess, are not maintained properly and block the drains'. Neither of these comments is considered a reason to alter the approach contained in the Strategy or any of the Actions.
- 2.6 Several comments about the consultation process itself complained about the lack of publicity about the consultation process. The approach outlined is explained above in paragraph 2.1.
- 2.7 Of the 15 paper questionnaire respondents, 12 (80%) were residents of Wolverhampton, two representatives of community groups and one did not answer. Of the on-line responses, 54 (82%) were residents, six (8%) worked but do not live in the City and another three were representatives of community, voluntary or public sector organisations.

3.0 Equalities Analysis

- 3.1 An overview of the equalities responses from the completed questionnaires, both online and paper is shown in Figure 2 below, compared to a breakdown from the Wolverhampton population.
- 3.2 Taking account of differences due to those who did not answer the questions, this shows that there were slightly more female respondents and significantly fewer respondents with a disability than in the Wolverhampton population. It also shows that the proportion of respondents over 45 years old was higher than for the Wolverhampton adult population as a whole. Regarding religion, a far higher percentage of respondents stated 'no religion' than for the population as a whole with fewer Christians and significantly fewer other faiths represented. 80.9% of respondents were White British compared to 64.5% of the Wolverhampton population as a whole, 5.9% 'Other White' (Compared to 2.8% in Wolverhampton) and 1.5% White Irish (compared to 0.6%). Other ethnic groups were under-represented in the responses, including Asian/ Asian British (2.9% of respondents compared to 12.9% of the Wolverhampton population).

Figure 2: Equalities Analysis of Questionnaire Responses



- 3.3 The detailed questionnaire comments illustrated in Table 2 and outlined above, along with the proposed responses, have been subject to an equalities analysis. No difference in issues raised by respondents of different gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age have been identified, apart from one respondent with a disability raising an issue about access for those with impairments, which was already covered in the Action Plan. Given the profile of returns it is noted however that there were no ethnic minority women, LGBT or disabled respondents.
- 3.4 In conclusion, it has not been possible to identify any equalities issues arising from the consultation and the approach taken in the Tree and Woodland Strategy, apart from the need to ensure areas of woodland are designed to be accessible to those with mobility issues. Respondents were, however, disproportionately White British, able-bodied, over 45 years old and with no religion.