We Are Colchester

Survey Report

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Introduction

As part of the ongoing 'town bid' proposal and recent launch of the partnership working group, it was decided to hold a small consultation to seek initial public opinion to establish how local people feel about Colchester in order to shape early direction of the project.

An online survey was designed and launched on Friday 7 February 2020, closing on Tuesday 3 March 2020.

The survey obtained 216 responses. The data has been analysed, categorised and presented below.

It should be noted that due to the survey mainly consisting of open-textbox questions, the answers have had to be themed in order to show common views, ideas and concerns.

Survey Findings

Q1. What does 'Colchester Town' mean to you?

Respondents were asked to describe what the words 'Colchester Town' mean to them. The answers to this question have been categorised to show common themes, feelings and concerns.

There were a variety of topics discussed, however some views were shared by many.

63 people expressed feelings of **'strong heritage and history'**, with many mentioning Colchester being 'Britain's first roman capital'.
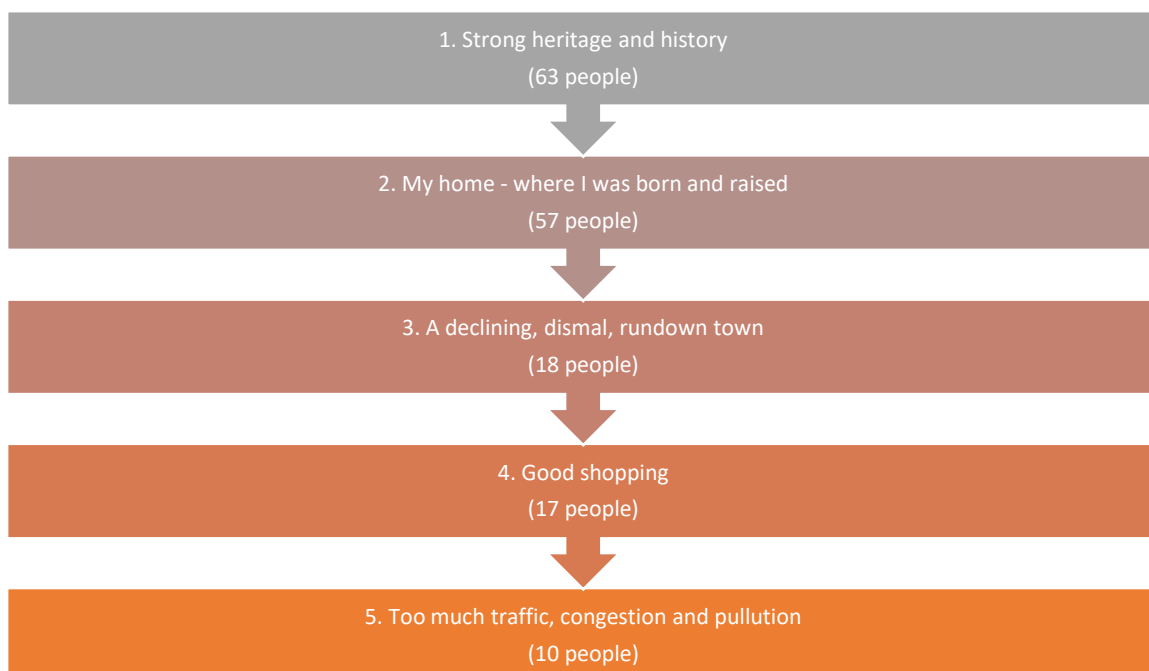
57 respondents stated that 'Colchester Town' means **'my home'**, with many individuals demonstrating a sense of belonging within Colchester.

18 people stated that for them 'Colchester Town' represents **'a declining, dismal and rundown town'**. Members of this group also mentioned concerns with crime, lack of investment and excessive development.

17 participants stated that they associate 'Colchester Town' with **'good shopping'**.

10 respondents discussed a connection between 'Colchester Town' and **'too much traffic, congestion and pollution'**.

Top 5 Topics

1. Strong heritage and history
(63 people)

2. My home - where I was born and raised
(57 people)

3. A declining, dismal, rundown town
(18 people)

4. Good shopping
(17 people)

5. Too much traffic, congestion and pullution
(10 people)

Other Topics Discussed

Comments:	Number of mentions:
A great place to live/work/be	8
Strong culture	8
Roman history	7
A unique town with lots of potential	6
Just a name of a place	6
The castle	6
A hub for shopping and socialising	5
Garrison town	5
Empty shops	4
Poor infrastructure and too many new homes	4
Unloved and in need of repair	4
Vibrant area	4
A sad place / town with no future	3
Good parks and green spaces	3
Rapidly growing/changing town	3
A place to be pound of	2
An improving town	2
Castle park	2
Drug takers / Alcoholics	2
Good place to socialise	2
High crime	2
Jumbo	2
Limited and expensive parking	2
Old buildings being destroyed	2
Somewhere to be proud of	2
Too many nail bars and barbers	2
Untidy buildings	2
A bad mix of new and old	1
A bit rough around the edges	1
A centre for business	1
A cloned town	1
A friendly place	1
A place to spend the rest of my life	1
A town that has not achieved its potential	1
A welcoming place	1
Anti-social behaviour	1
Aspirational	1
Full of character	1
Good community	1
Good memories	1
Homeless people	1
I am ashamed of Colchester	1
Independent shops and restaurants	1
Integral part of my life	1
Late buses	1
Late night drinking	1

Lots of activities	1
Not a welcoming place	1
Nothing for kids to do	1
Once a proud place	1
Pleasant place to live	1
Poor high street	1
Somewhere I don't feel safe	1
Somewhere not worth visiting	1
Somewhere with potential	1
Too many charity shops	1
Traditional town	1
under-achieving town	1
Unique town centre	1
Unsafe at night	1
Vandalism	1

Q2. What makes Colchester Town a great place to live, work, visit or study?

Respondents were asked 'what makes Colchester a great place to live, work, visit or study.

In order to identify common themes, feelings and opinions, the answers to this question have been categorised below.

Colchester's 'historical importance' was the most common answer given (52 people). 'Good facilities' was the next most popular answer (31 people) and Colchester 'castle and park' was the third top answer given (28 people).

Top 5 comments

1. Historical importance

(52 people)

2. Good facilities

(31 people)

3. Castle and park

(28 people)

4. Good access by road and rail

(22 people)

5. Good parks and green spaces

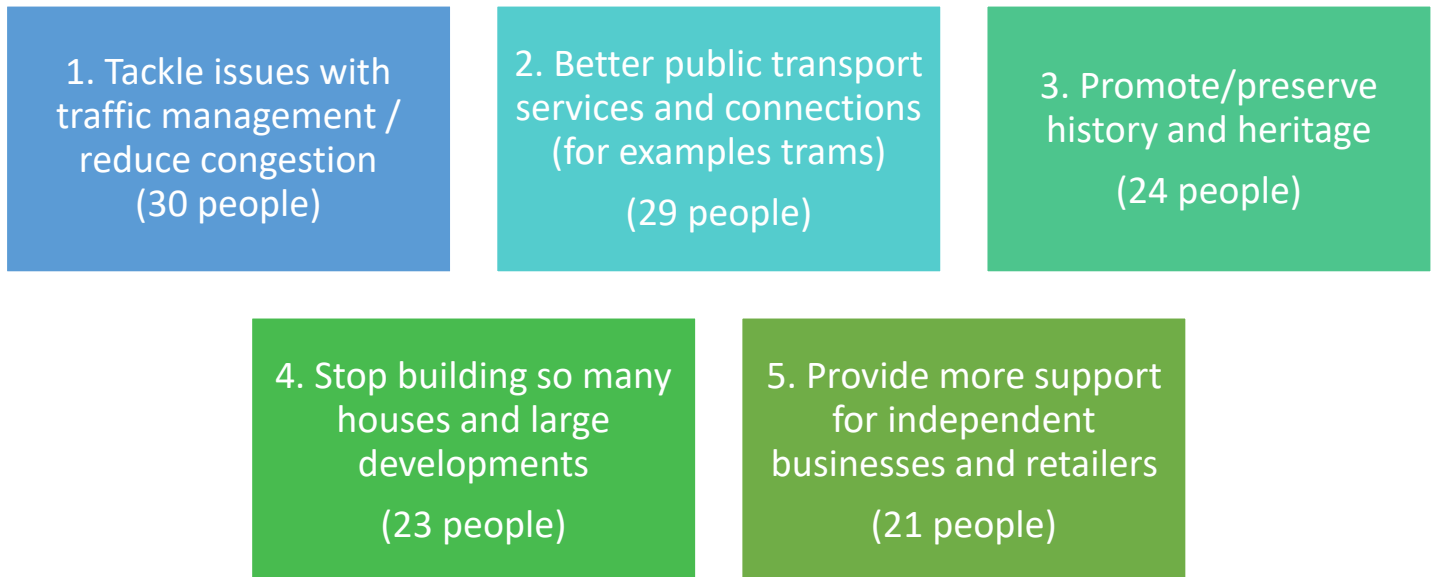(22 people)

Other Comments Made

Comments	Number of mentions
Close to London	20
Close to coast	19
Compact town	17
Good schools/university	16
Friendly people	15
Independent shops and eateries	15
Close to countryside	14
Arts scene	10
A good selection of shops	9
Firstsite	8
Diversity	7
Good culture	7
Good places to eat and drink	7
Sense of community	7
Culture / vibrant town	6
Good employment opportunities	6
Mercury theatre	6
Lot going on	5
Good Accessibility	4
Safe town	4
Zoo	4
affordable housing	2
Attractive/beautiful town	2
Clean streets / well looked after	2
Military connections	2
Museums	2
Nightlife	2
Plenty of space	2
Rivers	2
Traditional market town	2
Good pedestrian access	1
Hidden gems	1
Support for residents	1

Q3. What could be done to make Colchester Town a better place over the next 20+ years?

Respondents were asked to suggest what they think could be done to make 'Colchester Town' a better place over the next 20+ years. The answers to this question have been categorised to show common ideas and suggestions.

Top 5 Suggestions

1. Tackle issues with traffic management / reduce congestion (30 people)	2. Better public transport services and connections (for examples trams) (29 people)	3. Promote/preserve history and heritage (24 people)
4. Stop building so many houses and large developments (23 people)	5. Provide more support for independent businesses and retailers (21 people)	

Other Common Suggestions Made

Suggestions	Number of mentions
Better variety of shops / better shopping experience	20
Clean-up the town centre, payments etc	19
Better town centre parking / new carparks	15
Improve infrastructure (health care, schools, jobs etc)	14
Build better road connections	12
Fix broken payments	12
Lower business rates to help smaller retailers	11
Protect and create more green spaces	11
Pedestrianize the high street	10
Better routes and access for cycling and pedestrians	9
Tackle issues with pollution and air quality	9
Cheaper carparking / free town centre carparking	8
Make it safer / Tackle crime / more policing	8
More outdoor events (concerts, sport events etc)	8
Tackle homelessness	8
Fill empty shops	7
Improve road infrastructure	7

Other Suggestions Made

Introduce traffic-free zones

Cheaper public transport services

Better road infrastructure

Improve town centre lighting

Plant more trees

A new bus station

Better access to and promotion of sustainable travel options

Better leisure facilities (e.g. new swimming pool)

Stop prioritising cars

Give it a good tidy-up

Better road management

Better street infrastructure (signage, seating etc)

Better tourist information / promotion of tourism opportunities

Dedicated market location

Free public transport services (including P&R)

Make better use of existing older buildings

Make more of the arts culture

More independent retailers

Remove bus lanes

Sort out Queens Street

An indoor market

Better youth service / bring back youth clubs

Electric buses

Litter-picking / behaviour change

Make it a more attractive place to visits

More independent businesses

Reduce the number of restaurants

Sort out St Botolph's Priory / make It into a proper attraction

Stop people moving in from outside the area

Tackle anti-social behaviour

Tackle drug issues

Tackle issues with begging

25m is not enough

A new country park

A new visitor centre

Better community support services

Better planning of developments

Better school transport

Better us of outdoor spaces

Better use of Castle Park

Better use of renewable energy

Build a southern ring road

Build a splash park in castle park

Create a culture centre

Create a self-guided town centre tour

Create more family attractions

Create more jobs

Deal with social inequalities

Develop the Hythe area

Do something with Jumbo

Edible food gardens/orchards

Electric cycle hire

Evening shopping

Fix Kingsway

Fix potholes

Improve air quality

Improve town centre toilets

Install a roof over Priory Walk, Lion-yard, Culver Square

Knockdown eyesores

Learn from Chelmsford

Less housebuilding / stop building large developments

Make Middlewick a nature reserve

Make shop keeps look after their properties

Make sustainability and the climate a priority

Make the town more attractive at night

Make town centre more accessible

More affordable housing

More community facilities

More nightlife

More youth activities and services

No buses on high street

No more statues

No more student accommodation

Promote more national events

Protect cultural areas

Reduce development

Reduce housing

Regenerate the High Street

Restore the old bus park

Return Colchester's small town market vibe

Revamp Queens Street

Set land aside for employment use

Sort out the old cinema

Spruce-up St John's carpark

Stop Alumno plans

Stop being so anti-car

Stop taxis idling on the high street

Stop the rapid growth

Tackle street drinking

Q4a. If you had to use three words that were POSITIVE to summarise Colchester Town, what words would you use?

Top 3 Positive Words Used

Historic	Culture	Friendly
106 people	20 people	19 people

Other Frequently Used Positive Words

Words	Number of mentions	Words	Number of mentions
Parks	17	Attractive	7
Castle	14	Romans	7
Interesting	13	Shopping	7
Home	12	Green	6
Vibrant	11	Lively	6
Beautiful	10	Safe	6
Diverse	9	Varied	6
Heritage	9	Accessible	5
Potential	9	Walkable	5
Arts	8	Clean	4
Eateries	8	Compact	4
Welcoming	8	Growing	4
Community	6	Independent	4
countryside	6		

More Positive Words Used

Activities		Electric		Lots		Respect
Affluent		Engaging		Lovely		Rich
Alive	Climate	Energy	Huge	Medium	Personal	Ruins
alternative	Cobbled	Entertainment	Improving	Mercury	Picturesque	Scenic
amazing	Colourful	Established	Inclusiveness	Military	Pleasant	Sea
Ancient	Connections	Events	Individual	Multicultural	Positive	Small
Architecture	Convenient	Evolving	Intimate	Natural	Power	Social
Aspirational	Cosmopolitan	Expanding	Jobs	Nero	Pretty	Space
Big	Creative	Facilities	Leafy	Nice	Progressing	Spirit
Boadicea	Curzon	Family	Leisure	Okay	Prominent	Sporting
Bright	Cute	Fantastic	Library	Open	Prosperous	Support
Buildings	Daylight	Fascinating	Lion	Opportunities	Quality	Theatre
Bustling	Desirable	Fenwick	liveable	Outdoors	Quiet	Thriving
Busy	Different	Fascinating	liveable	Parking	Quirky	Transport
Buzzing	Distinct	Good	Local	Passion	Redevelopment	Unique
Character	Education	Great	London	Paths	Reinvented	University
Charming		Happy		Peaceful		Villages
City		Honest		People		Vintage

Q4b. If you had to use three words that were NEGATIVE to summarise Colchester Town, what words would you use?

Top 3 Negative Words Used

Traffic	Dirty	Congested
37 people	36 people	31 people
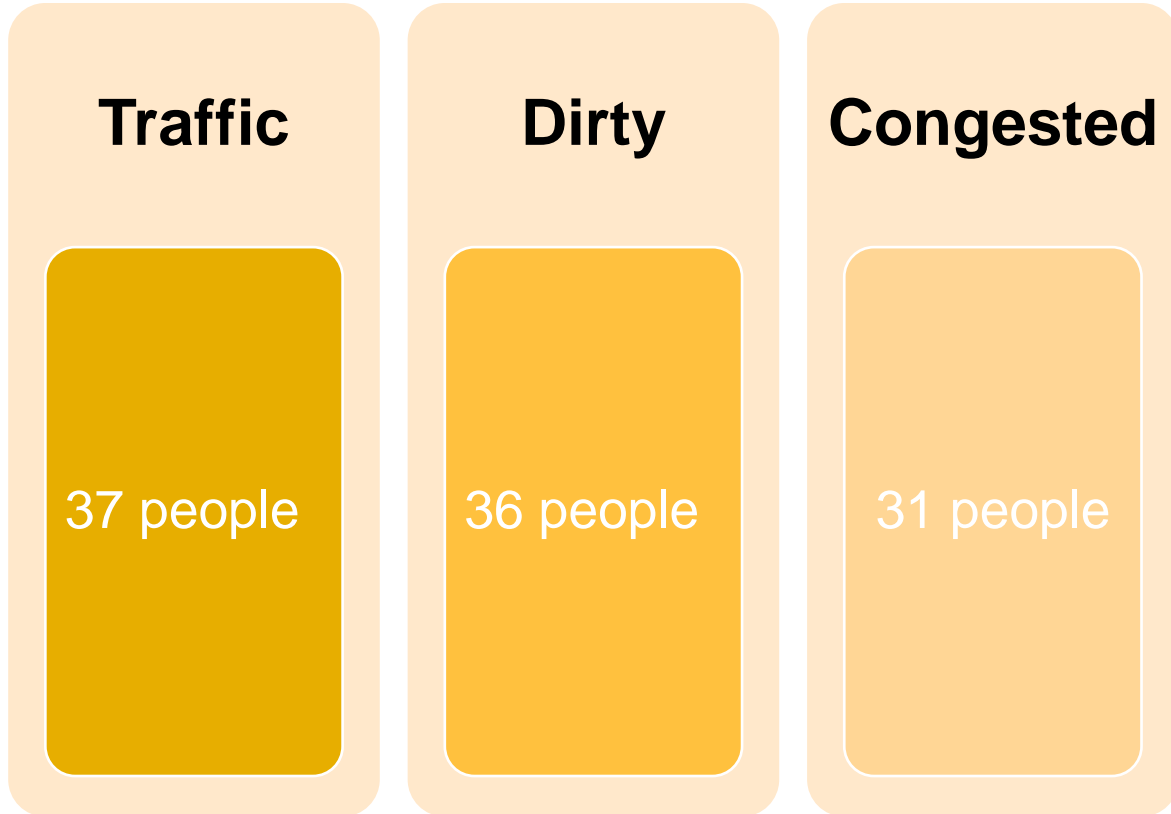
Other Frequently Used Negative Words

Words	Number of mentions	Words	Number of mentions
Rundown	19	Badly planned	5
Homelessness	12	Developments	5
Polluted	12	Expensive	5
Overcrowded	10	Grubby	5
Begging	7	Neglected	5
Crime	7	Over-developed	5
Empty	7	Unsafe	5
Drugs	6	Unwelcoming	5

More Negative Words Used

Abandoned		Inaccessible		
Aggressive		Incohesive		
Alcohol		Inequalities		
Anti-social behaviour		Isolating		
Awful	Diminishing	Late-bars	Poor roads	
Barbers	Dishevelled	Litter	Poor transport	Tardy
Barracks	Disjointed	Loos	Potholes	Teenagers
Bitty	Dismal	Messy	Poverty	Tired
Bland	Disorganised	Military	Provincial	Tramps
busy	Dispersed	Mish-mash	Racism	Ugly
Carpark costs	Divided	Misled	Restrictive	Underappreciated
Cars	Down-market	Mismanaged	Roadworks	Underdeveloped
Chain stores	Downtrodden	Nail bars	Rough	Underused
Cold	Drunkenness	Negative people	Rowdy	Unemployment
Confusing	Dull	No cohesion	Sad	Unfriendly
Corrupt	Empty shops	Not future-proofed	Scary	Unhappy
Council-apathy	Failing	Outdated	Scruffy	Uninspiring
Cramped	Fighting	Overbuilt	Security	Uninviting
Crowded	Fragmented	Overlooked	Shabby	Unkempt
Cultureless	Frustrating	Over-populated	Soulless	Unloved
Dangerous	Full-up	Overpriced	Sparse	Unoriginal
Dark	Gridlocked	Parking	strained	Untidy
Dead	Grimy	Pessimistic	Students	Visionless
Decaying	Grotty	Phone shops	Tacky	
Declining		Poor		
Destruction		Poor infrastructure		
Difficult		Poor-lighting		

Demographic Profile

Below is a brief demographic profile of those individuals who completed the 'We Are Colchester' survey.
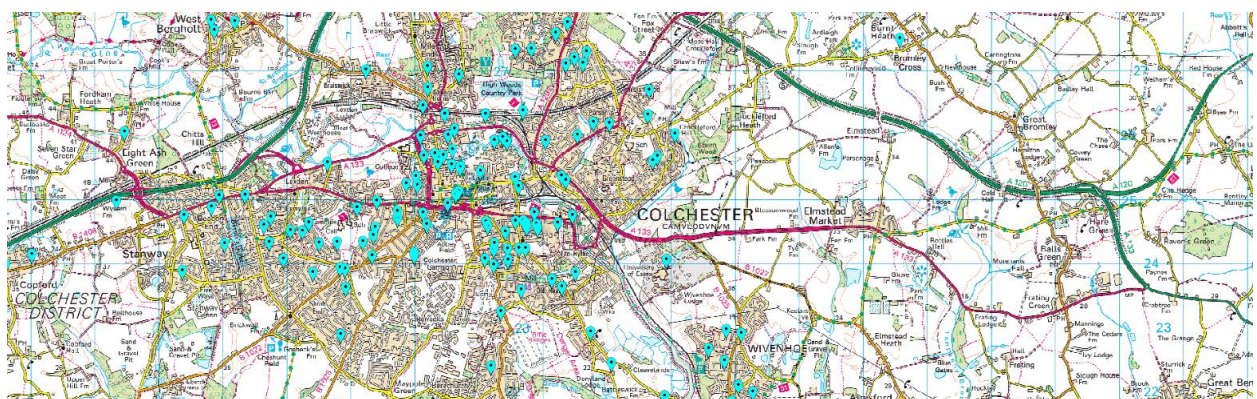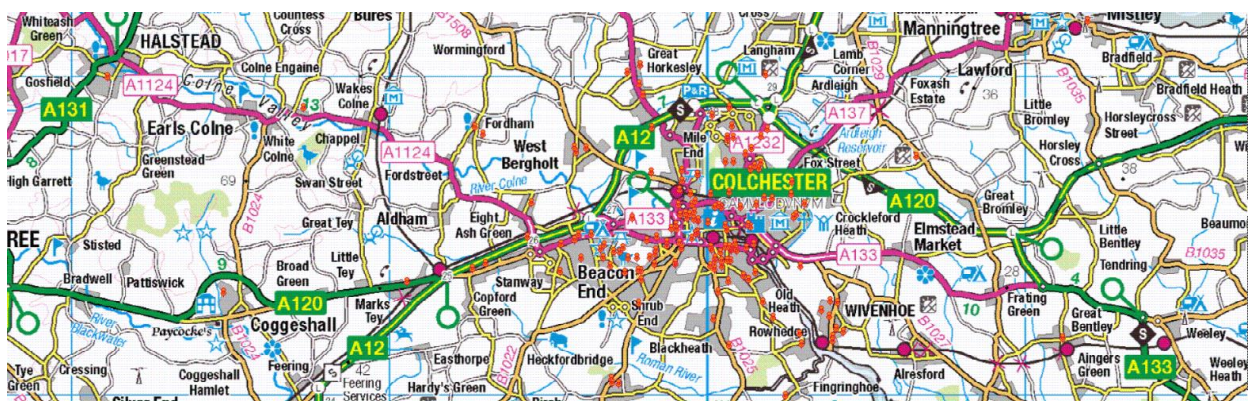
When looking at the address locations of respondents, it was clear that most people came from postcodes in and around Colchester. The most common postcodes were CO1, CO2, CO3, CO4, CO5, CO6 and CO7. However, there were also respondents from Harwich, Manningtree, Witham, Maldon, Sudbury, Clacton, Ipswich, and Halstead.

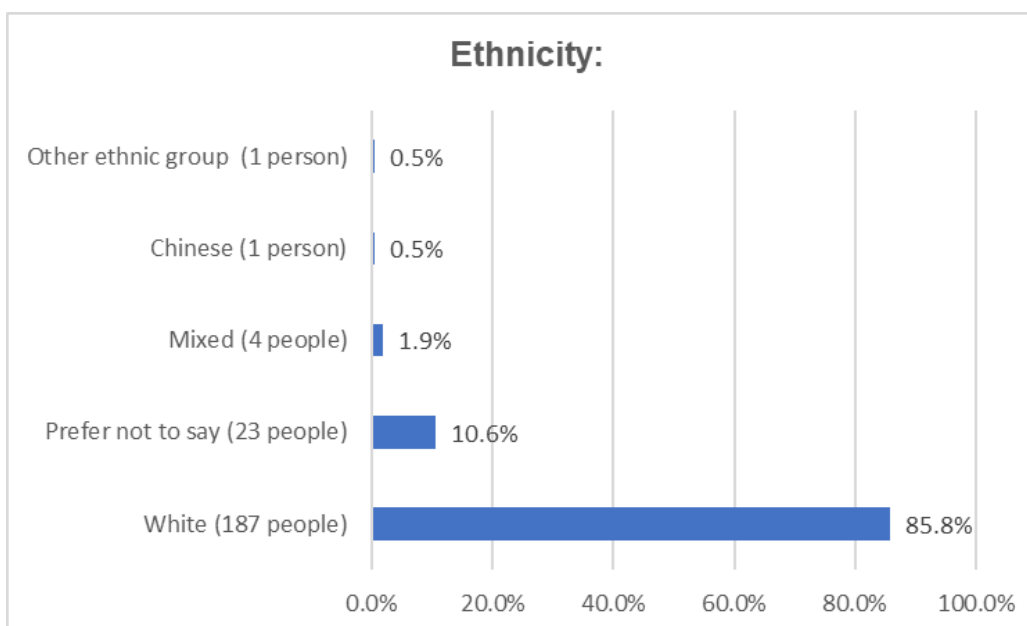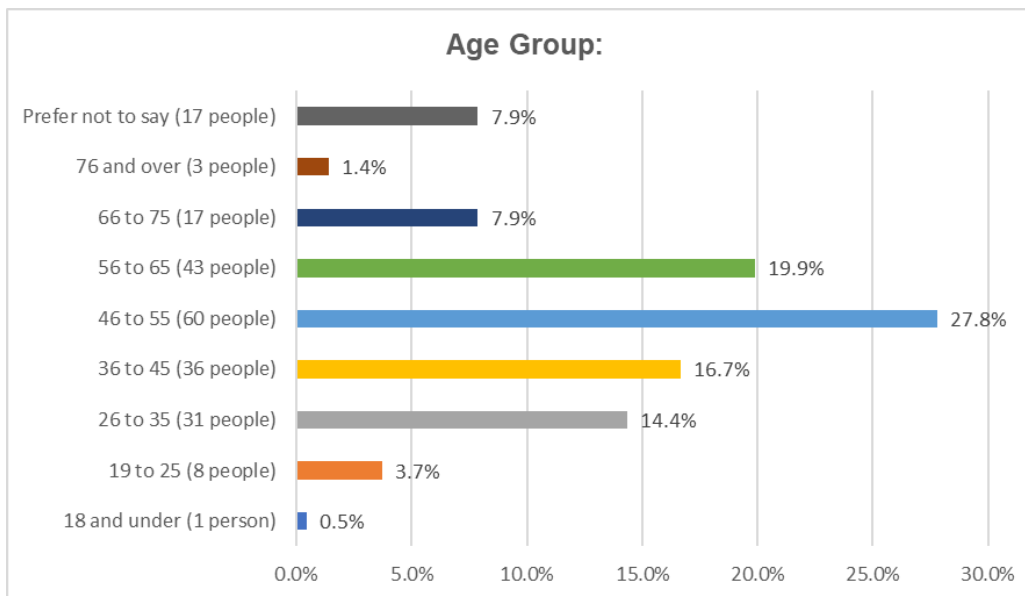The majority (62%) of respondents were 'female', 31% were 'male' and 6.9% selected 'prefer not to say'.

The largest age groups represented were '46 to 55 years' (27.8%), '56 to 65 years' (9.9%) and '36 to 45 years' (16.7%).

85.8% of respondents recorded themselves as being 'white'. The remainder were split between 'mixed' (1.9%), 'Chinese' (0.5%), 'other ethnic group' (0.5%) and 'prefer not to say' (10.6%).

Postcodes:

Gender:

Category	Percentage
Female = 134 people	62.0%
Male = 67 people	31.0%
Prefer not to say = 15 people	6.9%

Age Group:

Category	Percentage
Prefer not to say (17 people)	7.9%
76 and over (3 people)	1.4%
66 to 75 (17 people)	7.9%
56 to 65 (43 people)	19.9%
46 to 55 (60 people)	27.8%
36 to 45 (36 people)	16.7%
26 to 35 (31 people)	14.4%
19 to 25 (8 people)	3.7%
18 and under (1 person)	0.5%

Ethnicity:

Category	Percentage
Other ethnic group (1 person)	0.5%
Chinese (1 person)	0.5%
Mixed (4 people)	1.9%
Prefer not to say (23 people)	10.6%
White (187 people)	85.8%

Recommendations

Based on the above findings I have made some initial recommendations for areas that could be explored further. These are only my initial thoughts based on the knowledge I have gained from reading through the comments. However, there are a lot of other issues, concerns and ideas that have been raised which will also need consideration.

There were also various topics raised that were not necessarily in scope for this project, for example:

- Volume of housing development in Colchester
- Road infrastructure
- Public transport improvements
- Crime levels and policing
- Healthcare

History
Look at how Colchester's historical importance can be incorporated into the 'town bid project'. It is clear from the survey results that many residents are passionate about the town's history and connection with the Romans. Can more be done to promote and celebrate Colchester's history…

Traffic
Investigate how the project can help tackle issues with congestion and traffic flow through the town centre. Traffic, congestion and the idea of pedestrianization were mentioned throughout the survey.

Independent Retailers
Look a providing additional support for independent retailers. Throughout the survey there was a lot of support for independent retailers, with many respondents stating a dislike of chain-stores and the current mix of retail stores available within Colchester. Another suggestion that was frequently raised in connect to this was 'revising business rates'.