

# Bridgnorth Air Quality Action Plan

## Public Consultation Report

October 2024



# 1 Background and Methods

The Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) were developed following the establishment of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) near Shrewsbury's Railway Station and along Pound Street in Bridgnorth, due to nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels surpassing national standards.

The draft AQAPs include a summary of:

- The current air quality situation
- Sources of pollution
- An assessment of the reductions required
- Details of the key priorities and actions

The actions cover a range of areas such as traffic management, sustainable transport, public awareness, and planning policies. The draft AQAPs also provide an estimate of the cost and benefit of each proposed measure, as well as the expected timescale for achieving compliance with the air quality objectives.

The Bridgnorth draft AQAP considers a variety of potential measures for the future, such as removing zebra crossings in certain locations, variable messaging signs, and park and ride schemes. If the measures detailed in the action plan are implemented, it is predicted that the relevant objectives will be achieved by 2027. Without these measures being implemented, it is predicted that the objectives will be achieved by 2028.

Residents and businesses were invited to share their views on the proposed measures to improve air quality in Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth through an online consultation that included the plans for both towns. However, reporting on the survey results are separated by town. This present report focuses on the results pertaining to Bridgnorth's AQAP.

The online survey ran on the council's Get Involved pages from 31<sup>st</sup> July through 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and were publicised through Shropshire Council's newsroom. Quantitative results of the survey are displayed below where appropriate as figures. Qualitative responses were analysed for common themes, which are presented where appropriate in Tables, with examples illustrating the common themes anonymised and provided as quotes.

This report proceeds in the following sections:

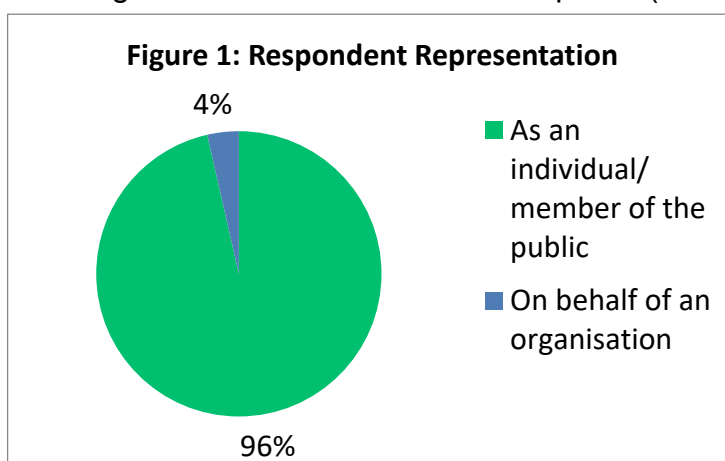
- **Section 1: Background and Methods** (this section) provides an overview of Shropshire Council's AQAPs, a summary of the specific actions for Bridgnorth, and a brief description of the methods employed in analysing the results of the consultation.
- **Section 2: Respondents** presents the number and types of responses to the consultation received from the online survey, as well as identifying demographic characteristics of respondents.

- **Section 3: Satisfaction with Plans** presents the results of respondents' reported satisfaction with the plans and details responses to open-ended question about what they like and don't like about the plans.
- **Section 4: Additional Feedback** discusses the analysis of feedback received on the impacts of the proposals for people with protected characteristics as well as alternative suggestions offered by respondents. It also contains summaries of the letters received in response to the consultation.
- **Section 5: Summary and Conclusion** provides brief summary and conclusion based on the overall analysis of the feedback received.

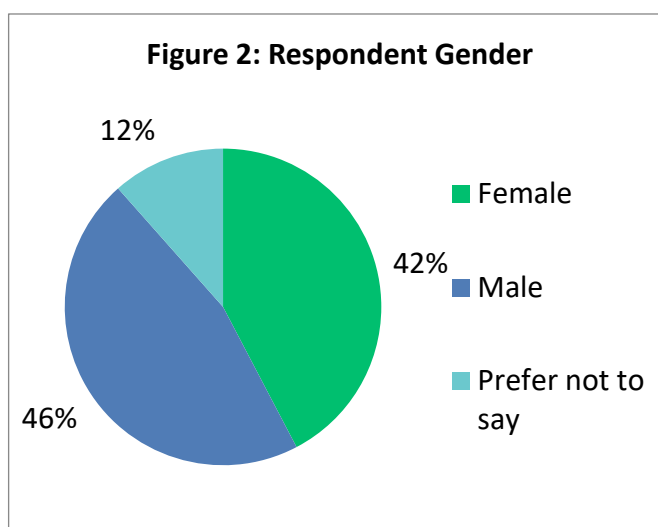
## 2 Respondents

Respondents were invited to answer questions about both the Shrewsbury and the Bridgnorth plans, and some chose to comment on both plans, so this section includes data on the demographic makeup of all survey responses. While 56 respondents answered the survey, only about 25 chose to answer the optional demographic questions. These questions are asked in order to gauge whether the survey reached a representative sample of the populations that will be affected by the proposals.

Overall, most respondents were answering as individual members of the public (see **Figure 1**). Only two respondents indicated that they were answering the survey on behalf of organisations. Both of these respondents said that they were representing a business. One of the respondents represented a business in the Shrewsbury area, and the other did not indicate their location.

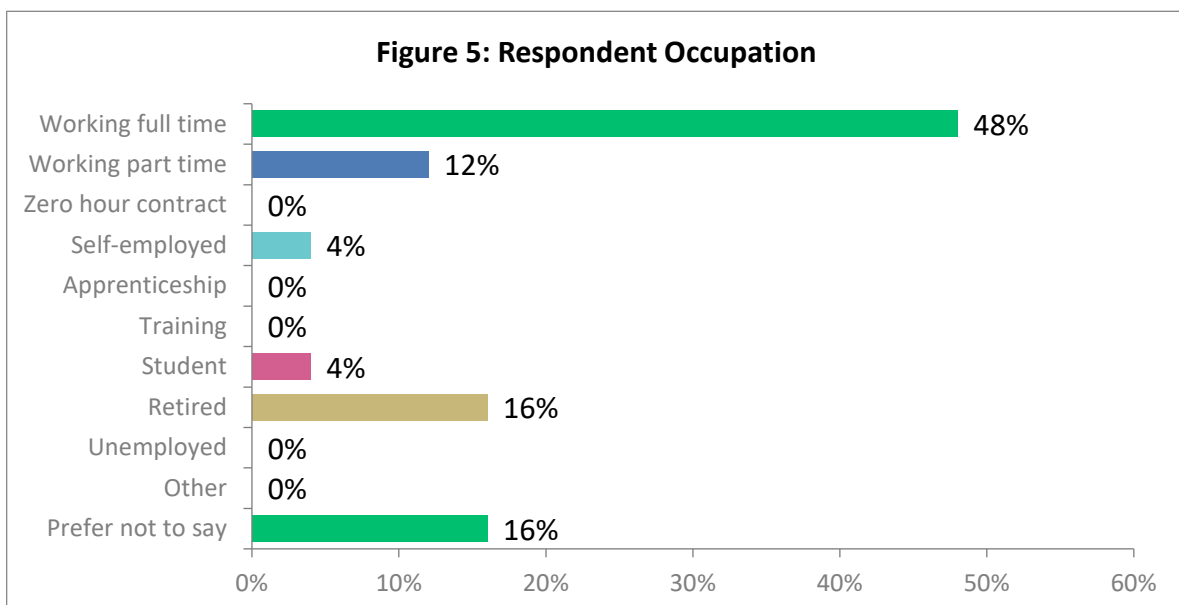
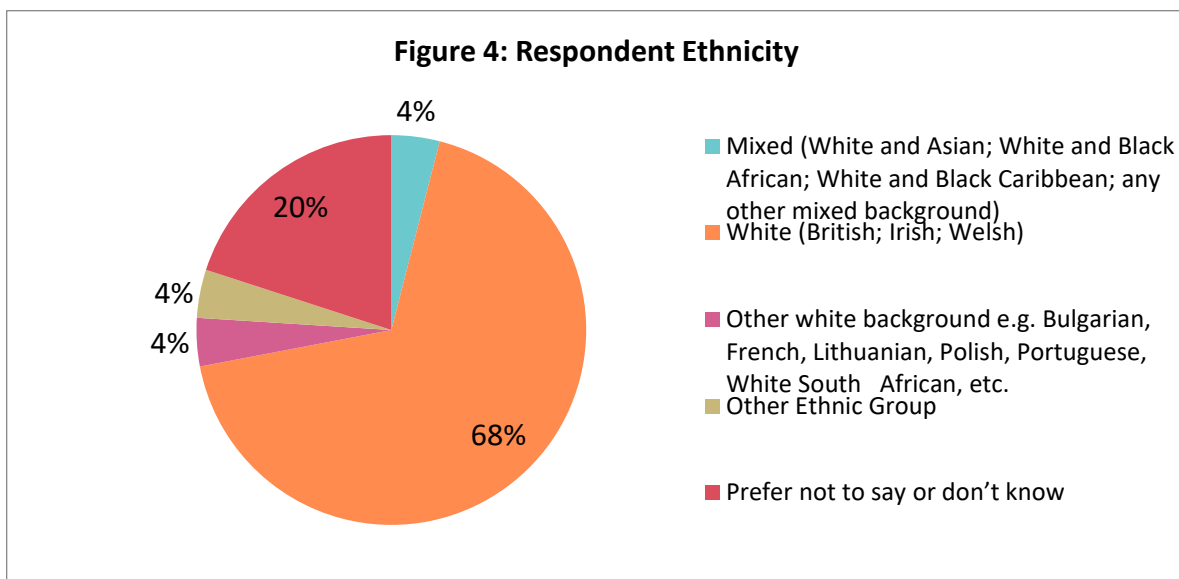
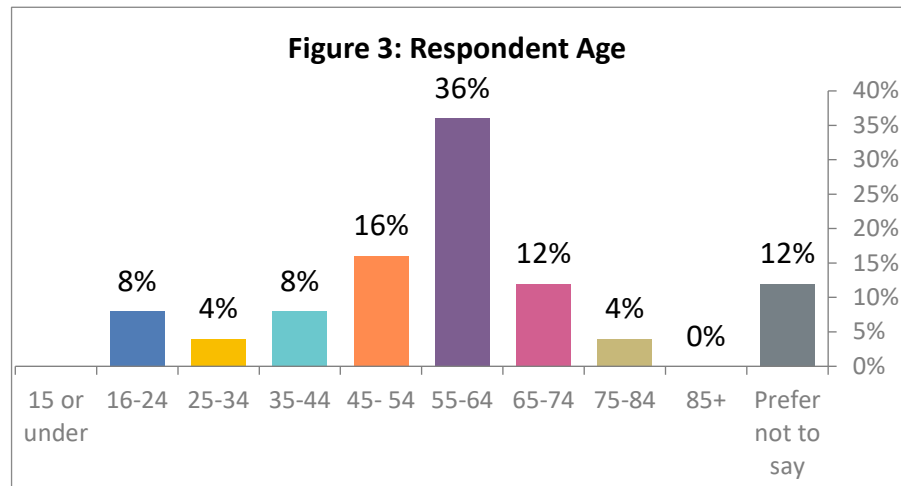


More respondents identified as male than female, though 12% preferred not to provide their gender (see **Figure 2**). Though "Other (e.g. prefer to self-describe)" was offered as an option, no respondents identified in this way.



The ages reported by respondents (only 25 answered this question) were fairly well distributed, with the largest percentage of respondents between 55-64 years old (see **Figure 3, below**).

Most respondents answering the demographic questions indicated that they are of White (British; Irish; Welsh) ethnicity, though three respondents said they were from different ethnic backgrounds (see Figure 4).



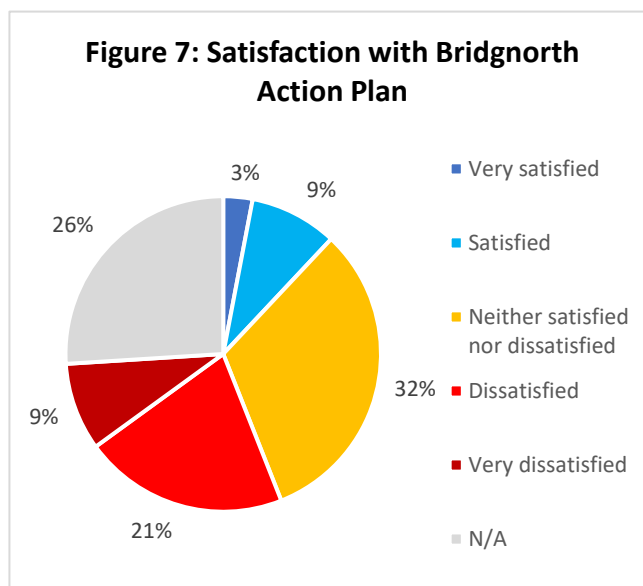
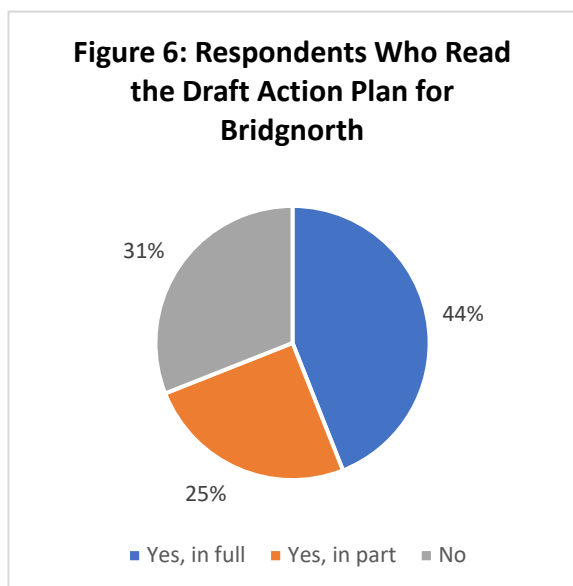
A majority of respondents answering the demographic questions indicated that they are working either full-time or part-time (see Figure 5), which is consistent with the average respondent age range reported in Figure 3.

In terms of responses from people with other protected characteristics, three respondents indicated that they have a long-term disability or illness, one indicated that they are a family member of a serving member of the armed forces, and six respondents indicated that they are Christian, while the remaining respondents indicated that they are of no religion or preferred not to say.

Overall, it is necessary to say that the response rate for this survey was low in comparison with the populations of the large towns to which the action plans pertain. However, it seems that the length of the consultation and the promotion of the consultation were adequate so that those interested in the plans had the opportunity to have their say in the time and manner provided to them. The demographic representation therefore appears to be sufficient for the purposes of representing the public interest in these plans.

### 3 Satisfaction with Plans

Most respondents (69%) said that they had read the Bridgnorth AQAP in part or in full (see Figure 6).



Satisfaction with the Bridgnorth AQAP was mixed(see Figure 7). Only 12% of survey respondents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the plan, while 30% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The largest percentage of respondents answering this question said that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the plan.

Respondents were next asked to provide detailed comments on what they liked about the proposals for Bridgnorth, what they didn't like, and to make suggestions about what could be improved. 12 respondents left comments about what they "liked" about the proposals, though six of these responses were simply to say that they did not have anything they liked about the plans.

The following comments represent what people said they **liked** about the proposals:

- “That there is one.”
- “Electric busses.”
- “Suggestion to use electric busses.”
- “Park and ride is a good idea.”
- “The focus on reducing traffic congestion.”
- “I agree that the traffic pollution needs to be reduced. I would support limiting HGV access to certain times.”

16 respondents left detailed feedback about what they **didn't like** about the proposals for Bridgnorth. These have been grouped thematically below.

The largest concern, raised by seven respondents, was around the **safety risks of reducing pedestrian crossings**. These comments included, for example:

- “Unhappy with comments regarding removing pedestrian crossings from Pound Street area. Many school children use these and also there are elderly people living close by in sheltered housing who also use the crossings.”
- “The proposal to remove pedestrian crossings is dangerous due to the high number of school children who use these crossings at busy times every day, and the presence of two sheltered schemes within a few metres of the crossings, meaning that a large number of elderly residents also rely on the safety that the crossing points provide.”
- “Removing either zebra crossing is a crazy idea. Where are people supposed to cross? You want less people driving and you take away the routes into town. I live close to town and if I can't safely cross on foot then I'll be more likely to pop into town in the car. Also, cycling and pedestrian route in Whitburn street?!? How do the pedestrians and cyclists safely get to that point?”
- “Removal of pedestrian crossings is dangerous and won't encourage people to walk or allow their children to walk to school etc.”
- “I am a regularly user of both pedestrian crossings on Pound Street and Whitburn Street and I'm really dismayed that you would consider removing these. Whilst I understand why as they slow down traffic and therefore contribute to pollution why would you seek to punish pedestrians who don't cause the pollution?... I think you would find they would just try to cross there anyway and therefore increase the potential for accidents.”

Five respondents expressed **concerns about how the plan addressed traffic in the town**. For example:

- “The comment is made that drivers circulate Bridgnorth looking for parking, maybe that is where you should put your efforts - how about providing more parking and making it more affordable since most people in Bridgnorth are paid low wages. Many vehicles are forced to pass through congested areas as there is no alternative when they exit the A442 from Telford.”
- “It looks at too small an area. You need to consider where the traffic that is concentrated in that area is coming from and where it is going to see if you can encourage alternative routes. e.g. traffic to Highley, Cleobury Mortimer and Daniel's Mill are sign posted through low town and across the bridge. They

could be redirected along the bypass, turn left onto Ludlow Rd and sign posted from there

- There needs to be a traffic census to see the breakdown in types of traffic
- What analysis has taken place of traffic flow. The biggest flow should have right of way and turn the roundabout at top of Pound Street into a proper junction. That will probably be the flow coming up Pound Street either to turn right or left having priority this reducing the queuing on the hill.
- Rerouting of Oldbury wells traffic, ridiculously expensive and moves the problem elsewhere. alternative parking at SVR needs exploring.

One respondent made a point about the plan's **incorporation of park and ride**:

- "I feel that the reintroduction of a park and ride scheme wouldn't work around here, there was already one prior that has been shut down for years. Instead, promotion of the current buses that run throughout the town would be more beneficial."

Finally, four respondents expressed more **general concerns about the plan and its potential impacts on residents**:

- "Make it difficult to visit this small town most people will not bother."
- "It looks to me that a lot of time and money has been wasted preparing the document. It's a lot of bureaucratic rigmarole to come to the conclusion that few of the proposed measures would improve air quality in Bridgnorth due to the topography of the place."
- "Need to think about elderly and disabled."
- "The plan appears to put 'businesses' as more important than inhabitants. It also neglects the fact that the area involved is an official CONSERVATION AREA."

## 4 Additional Feedback

Additional questions were asked of survey respondents that were designed to gather feedback on the plans that would help decision makers to consider things they might not have taken into account in the plans. The first of these questions was aimed at the potential impacts of the plans on people and groups with protected characteristics as defined by the [2010 Equality Act](#), which include things such as age, sex, and disability.

### Equalities Impacts

As part of the development of the action plan and consultation process, Shropshire Council carried out an Equalities, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA). The ESHIA is to ensure that people of different protected characteristic groups are not adversely impacted by any changes delivered as a result of implementation. Issues of diversity and equality and health are important aspects of how the council delivers its work, and an increasing area of focus with costs of living increases. For this reason, respondents were asked to review the ESHIA and to provide any comments they had about the action plans' impacts on people and groups with protected characteristics.

13 responses to this question were provided in total, and not all of these responses pertained to Bridgnorth. A few responses to this question rejected the need for there to be a focus on the impacts for people with protected characteristics.

Those responses pertaining to Bridgnorth or all Shropshire residents primarily focused on the impacts of the proposed action plans on those with disabilities, ill health, or the elderly. A few comments left in this section were actually more relevant to the “alternative suggestions” question, and so these responses are included further below.

The common theme among these responses was to **emphasise the need for measures to take into account accessibility and mobility** as part of the plans. These comments were as follows:

- “Elderly pedestrians and children would be adversely affected by the removal of pedestrian crossings. Disabled residents who have no option but to access the town centre by car could be adversely affected by punitive measures against cars in the area, unless exempted somehow.”
- “These plans will disadvantage several groups and there is a high risk they will not deliver the desired improvement. I have an elderly friend with incontinence, the current bus station and toilets are essential for her but when this is demolished she will struggle to find somewhere to relieve herself when she gets off the bus. She also struggles walking up hills and the new plans may make some areas of town a lot harder for her to access. She is losing her eyesight and having the bus station under the railway bridge will make it much more dangerous for her to cross. Workers on low wages and those with a degree of mobility issues who do not qualify for blue badges will suffer from the increased parking charges, particularly with the extended charging hours.”
- “My daughter’s health is impacted by car travellers- the towns should be car free.”
- “Exceptions to any town centre traffic reductions must include blue badge holders so they have equal access to their town. This needs to be 24/7.”
- “Older and disabled are being ignored, businesses seem not to matter. The country has thrown away all our manufacturing now we want to throw away our towns as a place to work WHY?”

### **Alternative Suggestions**

Survey respondents were also asked to provide open-ended comments on any alternative suggestions to the action plans for Bridgnorth that they would like to offer. 15 individuals provided responses to this question, and few of the comments left in the equalities question are also included here, as they offered some alternative suggestions as well. The following comments represent excerpts from these responses and are roughly grouped according to some of the themes that emerged in the analysis of the full responses to this question.

The largest number of respondents answering this question (nine) suggested **improving public transportation or addressing high traffic volume in other ways**. For example:

- “Electric buses and park and ride in low town and at Tasley.”



- “As diesel cars and LGVs are the highest contributors to the problem by far, how about a congestion charge-style zone where these vehicles are required to pay a small amount (£1?) to traverse the AQMA. Cost is often a good deterrent. The provision of good, regular, cheap park and ride services in electric vehicles should be pursued., and in fact an electric town circular (free, ideally! Or at least very very cheap) that properly covers much of the town, so that shoppers carrying heavy loads can genuinely get close to their homes with their burdens and therefore feel they can leave the car at home.”
- “LORRIES USE POUND STREET AS A SHORT CUT. THEY MUST USE THE BYPASS - THAT IS WHY IT WAS CONSTRUCTED - POUND STREET MUST BE NO HGVS.”
- “Find a way of taking more traffic from the A442 to the A458 without having to go through the congested town centre. I also believe you should look at cleaner buses and consider how much air pollution may be due to homes still using solid fuels as there are a lot of residential properties in Bridgnorth.”
- “Make Pound Street one way. Limit deliveries to early / late hours. Invest in proper park and ride.”
- “Well, heavy traffic needs to use the bypass, especially lorries and be kept out of the town. It will also prolong the life of the historic bridge. Public transport needs to be robust and attractive. It is ridiculous that anyone from the West Midlands wanting to stay beyond 5pm has to use a car because of the early finish of the bus services. Most of the town events take place on a Sunday when there is no alternative to the car.”
- “Ban large vehicles coming into Bridgnorth over the bridge, make them use the bypass and Ludlow road.”
- “There are no Level 3 rapid EV chargers in the SY park and ride sites. 7kW charges are not the answer.”
- “20mph limit and kerbs dropped to create traffic calmed, shared road space with small central refuges in place of any closed pedestrian crossings.”

Three respondents suggested **increasing pedestrianisation of the town centre**. For example:

- “Pedestrianise, except for access...Improve active travel infrastructure.”
- “Pedestrianisation of areas were possible. Bridgnorth is very unpleasant for pedestrians because of the traffic especially on a Saturday. More encouragement for people to use bicycles and to walk into town and to schools. Stop town events involving cars i.e. Italian Car event and Vintage tractor event ( red diesel) Tourism should not be over encouraged, traffic at weekends is unsustainable, loud and unpleasant.”
- “I feel the implementation of partial pedestrianisation of the high street would be beneficial to aid in the air quality as many vehicles use it as a race track or do multiple laps which does severely reduce air quality and causes noise pollution.
- People need to be directed to use the bypass more rather than travelling through low town and up Pound Street.”

Three respondents used this space to make **more general critiques** about the plans. For example:

- “Cancel the objectives and allow people to visit the town easily and allow people to earn a living in the town.”
- “The monitoring tables indicate that air quality has improved year on year. So maybe do nothing.”
- “Do you want a town where people can earn a living or an example of how to close town businesses down.”

### **Additional Survey Feedback**

As is common practice with consultations, survey respondents were offered the opportunity to provide “any other comments” they wished to make about the strategies. 11 respondents provided comments in this space. Some of these responses were general to the actions plans for both Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth, and some were clearly specific to one town or the other.

Those respondents with **specific things to say about Bridgnorth** said:

- “Schoolchildren (Oldbury Wells) and elderly (Talbot Court) use Pound Street - just walking - not all are car-driven!”
- “Put a slip road on the bypass to the school so that traffic does not have to use Pound Street.”
- “Reduce use of cars by: Park and Ride in both Low town and Tasley. Improve the local 101 service so that is more inclusive of other areas within Bridgnorth including Tasley, Ludlow Rd and Oldbury Wells School area.”

A few respondents had more things to say about **public transportation or traffic**. For example:

- “The problem is a reliance on the private car.”
- “More buses to remote areas!”
- “[The plans] have totally ignored the contribution of emissions by diesel trains.”

Some respondents used this space to **criticise the council, the plans, or the consultation**. For example:

- “It seems that without significant investment the problem will not be solved. This feels like it is being done on the cheap.”
- “Business will be harmed by the higher parking charges and longer charging hours as they will find it hard to hire staff. I am disappointed you paid these consultants as they have basic numerical errors in their data tables.”
- “Cancel all.”
- “A lot of highly paid bureaucrats were involved.”

### **Feedback from Letters**

Five detailed letters were sent in response to the consultation, and all letters have been sent to the service area in full. Two of these letters were specific to the Bridgnorth plan, and two of the letters discussed both plans. These four letters are summarised below. One additional letter was specific to the Shrewsbury plan, and it is discussed in the Shrewsbury consultation report.

Two letters commented on both plans. The first came from **Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth**, which for obvious reasons took more time in responding to the Shrewsbury plan than the Bridgnorth plan. Details of this group's responses to the Shrewsbury plan are contained in the Shrewsbury consultation report and are not included here. However, the group did have this to say about the Bridgnorth plan:

- “Too little and likely to be further diluted. Traffic Regulation orders to restrict HGV and LGV's have been used effectively elsewhere to specify delivery times and keep them out during peak hours. There doesn't seem to be an intention to challenge the view that business would be detrimentally affected. They make up 10% of vehicles. Removal of Zebra crossings - presumably originally put there because needed for safety reasons – we agree with residents. Re-creating risks to pedestrians should not even be considered.”

The final letter received with comments on the Bridgnorth AQAP was written on behalf of the **Environment Agency**. The letter contained several observations about both plans. General observations about the plans, and those observations specific to the Bridgnorth plan are included below. Those specific to the Shrewsbury plan can be found in the Shrewsbury consultation report. Overall, the agency seems to support the plans' focus on NO<sub>2</sub> emissions in particular, and the inclusion of park and ride and sustainable transport methods as part of the plans.

Observations from the Environment Agency:

- “We like that there are a wide-ranging set of measures already in place to address NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, and that there is a suite of measures planned, with funding sources identified, to bring further reductions in NO<sub>2</sub>.”
- “We note that you are committed to improving air quality in Shropshire to improve health. We note that 4.4% of deaths across Shropshire were attributed to particulate air pollution in 2022.”
- “The Bridgnorth AQMA was declared in 2005 for the exceedance of annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> because of congestion associated with unitary authority roads and less than 150 people are living within the AQMA.”
- “We note that you mention there is a decreasing trend from 2018-2022 in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations within the Shrewsbury & Bridgnorth AQMAs.”
- “You mention that ... a 32.6% reduction in NO<sub>x</sub> emissions are required within the Bridgnorth AQMA.”
- “You also aim to promote sustainable transport and encourage the usage of Park and Ride schemes to further reduce traffic within the AQMAs.”
- “It is encouraging to see that consideration within the planning stage of developments and policies focusing on sustainable transport methods are promoted for developments which are expected to generate significant traffic levels.”

## 5 Summary and Conclusion

56 respondents participated in the consultation on both the Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth Air Quality Action Plans, with most answering as individuals or members of the public. A few detailed letters of response were also received and summarised above.

Overall satisfaction with the Bridgnorth AQAP was mixed. Only 12% of respondents were satisfied with the plans, while 30% were dissatisfied with them, and 32% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Positive feedback on the plan included an appreciation of plans for electric buses and the possibility of a park and ride scheme. Concerns raised about the plans focused largely on the adequacy of traffic management measures and on the safety risk of removing pedestrian crossings, especially for more vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and children.

Very many thanks are extended to the individuals and organisations that took the time to respond to this consultation and to provide often very detailed and extremely thoughtful feedback. The feedback will be taken into consideration by the Environmental Protection Team before the plan is presented for final approval.

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Analysis and reporting by:  
Feedback and Insight Team, Communications and Engagement, Resources  
Shropshire Council  
Email: [TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk)

Shropshire Council Lead Department: Environmental Protection



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