

South Harrow research summary

In October and November 2002 MORI conducted a survey of 1,014 South Harrow residents on behalf of Harrow Council. The survey took place as the South Harrow “New Harrow Project” was about to begin. The survey measured residents’ views on the South Harrow area, the Council, local services and facilities, community safety and community participation. It also measured suggestions for improvements to the area.

Three focus groups were conducted prior to the survey to scope residents’ and Council staff views on the area. These provided valuable insights into the salient issues and reinforced the Council’s view that improving the physical environment of the area was a priority.

In May 2003, a follow-up study was conducted. This was to assess whether residents had noticed a change on the streets of South Harrow and whether their views had changed in the last six months.

In the initial survey, MORI obtained consent to follow up the research from 521 residents. Of these, 449 gave us their telephone number. The May survey was able to follow up (with a reduced version of the original interview focusing on the street scene services) 207 of these residents by telephone.

Two further focus groups were also conducted - one with members of one of the original groups, recruited by telephone, and one group of participants “freshly” recruited face-to-face in home.

This summary will examine any differences between the 2002 and 2003 studies. It should be noted that, in general:

- People have become more positive about the street scene in South Harrow
- This has not necessarily translated into a more positive assessment of the Council

There are a number of possible explanations for this:

- The recent rise in Council Tax in Harrow is very fresh in residents’ minds, and it is not unusual to see this colouring views on the Council, and raise questions about value for money

But the Council Tax is so tremendously high and I read in the Harrow Observer that they’re not satisfied with putting

*this up, they are now going to put everybody's hands up
because the house prices have gone up*

Focus group one participant

- The focus group discussions uncovered some underlying causes of discontent, not directly related to Council services. These issues affect residents' quality of life, and therefore affect deep-seated values that will not change over the short time that this project has been in effect:
 - Community safety: residents perceive the numbers of young people hanging around in South Harrow to be growing. This, and anti-social behaviour associated with people coming out of pubs at closing hour is making some residents feel their area is becoming unsafe
 - A sense that the area is declining generally: this relates to community spirit (which is still thought to exist, but is apparent in a much less overt way than in the past) and the urban environment. Participants link anti-social behaviour to a lack of facilities to young people, and also draw a less direct link between this and the physical condition of the area.

The 2003 survey – satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction with the local area have remained fairly static:

- In 2002, 65% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied. Six months later, this proportion has risen marginally to 67%
- In 2002, 18% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied with their local area. In 2003, 21% of respondents are either very or fairly dissatisfied

Those attending the focus groups were asked which words sprang to mind when thinking of South Harrow – positive responses include:

Best part of London, it's healthy and leafy

Focus group one participant

*The parks – we've got plenty of parks and they are nice
and clean*

Focus group two participant

*I like having local shops...I always try to use those rather
than the big supermarkets, it's a shame that they seem to
be disappearing though*

Focus group two participant

It looks so much better too; we should re-name it Pinner!

Focus group one participant

I was thinking of moving from the area, but I can't think of anywhere better than here to live

Focus group one participant

Its well linked transport-wise, you can get about very easily from here

Focus group one participant

Negative responses included:

There's too much change – we've got constant change around here, as soon as they've [the Council] finished one thing, they want to start all over again

Focus group two participant

It doesn't feel safe, there's always loads of kids hanging around, especially around the train station [South Harrow] – I won't walk around there on my own [at night] anymore.

Focus group two participant

There's no community spirit any more; people don't seem to care as much

Focus group one participant

It's too Councilly – there's a lot of estates

Focus group two participant

On balance, however, those in the groups feel that South Harrow is a good place to live, although the younger participants are most likely to be critical.

The Council

The survey shows that satisfaction levels in the way the Council is running the borough have fallen slightly, while levels of dissatisfaction have remained fairly constant:

- In 2002, 57% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the Council. Six months later, this proportion has fallen to 52%
- In 2002, 19% of respondents were very or fairly dissatisfied with the Council. In 2003, 21% of respondents are very or fairly dissatisfied

It should be noted, however, that since the New Harrow Project began, people are more ready to link improvements in the area to the Council.

In 2003, 48% of residents agree that the Council is “making the area a better place to live”. This compares to 42% in 2002 and is accounted for by a significant rise in the proportion saying they strongly agree (rising from 4% to 15%).

Similarly, people are more likely to feel that the Council keeps them well informed now than in 2002 – half of all residents now feel that this is the case:

- In 2003, 10% of residents feel that the Council keeps them very well informed. In 2002, the figure was 5%
- In 2003, 40% feel that the Council keeps them fairly well informed. This has risen from 33% in 2002

The New Harrow Project

Most of the issues discussed in the following sections are clearly related to the implementation of the New Harrow Project. It is significant to find that while in 2002 only a quarter of respondents (25%) were aware of the Project prior to interview, six months later this had risen to over half (52%).

There are mixed levels of awareness of the project among focus group attendants; those who had been involved in the 2002 research have considerable knowledge of the project (beyond issues covered in the research), whereas the ‘fresh’ group are aware of the clean-up process in their area, but are less likely to be aware of the scope of the Project (one thought it was limited to the main roads) or link it to the Council.

All members of the groups agree that cleaning the area has been a priority for some time, and that considerable efforts had been noted in the community. Particularly, they have noticed:

- Litter bins on the high street
- Recycling bins (brown bins and green boxes)
- Street cleaning
- Cycle lanes

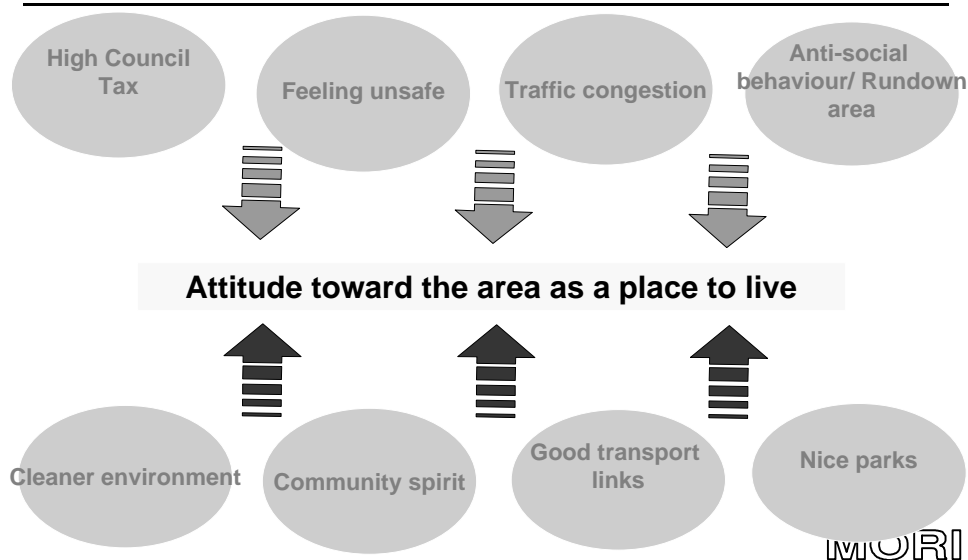
In the survey, a slightly higher proportion agree than disagree that the Project has made a positive difference to their lives; 45% agree and 40% disagree with the following statement:

“The Project has made no difference to me personally”

Expanding on this, the focus group discussions revealed that in order for changes in the area to positively impact on residents’ lives several key elements require attention:

- Community safety
- The physical environment
- Traffic management
- Community spirit.

Influences on quality of life



Participants agree that improving the appearance of the area is a good starting point, and there is evidence of a subconscious link between the state of an environment and community safety. When asked what might be causing the perceived upturn in antisocial behaviour (specifically young people hanging around and intimidating locals), one participant told us that the area is “so rundown”.

The qualitative research also uncovered a link in residents’ minds between the environment and the community – they feel that the people of South Harrow have a role to play in maintaining the area and that a greater sense of community cohesion would lead to an increased sense of responsibility toward the environment.

Now that I've come along to this meeting [the focus group] and met people in the area, I feel even less likely to drop litter. Maybe other people would feel the same

There is much greater agreement in the survey that the Project has affected the area than the individual. Over two in three residents (68%) strongly agree or tend to agree with the following statement, while only 21% tend to disagree or disagree strongly with it:

“The Project has done a good job in cleaning up this area”

Local services

As the following table of survey results shows, there has been a marked rise in the levels of satisfaction across a whole range of services. Of fifteen issues which people were asked about, only two – civic amenity sites and traffic congestion – did not see an increase in the proportions which were either very or fairly satisfied with them. Five services saw rises in satisfaction of over 10%:

- Street cleaning, the key element of the New Harrow Project, scored the highest increase in satisfaction levels: in 2002, 43% were either very or fairly satisfied with this service. Six months later, this figure has risen to 75%;
- Street tree maintenance saw the second greatest improvement, rising from 48% to 62%;
- This was followed by pavement maintenance and environmental services (rising from 34% to 47%, and 40% to 53% respectively) and then the provision of tree maintenance (rising from 44% to 56%).

Satisfaction with local services in South Harrow 2003(2002)

	Very/fairly satisfied	Very/fairly dissatisfied	Net satisfaction
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	%	%	%
Street cleaning	75(43)	17(40)	+58(+3)
Refuse collection	78(74)	12(14)	+66(+60)
Recycling banks	59(53)	15(12)	+44(+41)
Green Box scheme	64(57)	19(14)	+45(+43)
Civic amenity sites	50(50)	11(11)	+39(+39)
Environmental services	53(40)	15(13)	+38(+27)
Road maintenance	43(41)	39(38)	+4(+3)
Pavement maintenance	47(34)	34(45)	+13(-11)
Shopping facilities	79(74)	19(13)	+60(+61)

Street lighting	74(70)	10(19)	+64(+51)
Street furniture	53(45)	22(18)	+31(+27)
Traffic congestion	20(20)	57(55)	-37(-35)
Traffic management	32(23)	43(48)	-11(-25)
Street tree maintenance	62(48)	15(18)	+47(+30)
Provision of tree maintenance	56(44)	12(15)	+44(+29)

Source: MORI

It is also possible to examine 'net satisfaction levels'. This is the difference between the proportions which are very/fairly satisfied and very/fairly dissatisfied.

Such an analysis shows that:

- Street cleaning had the greatest change in net satisfaction, rising from +3% to +58%;
- The next greatest improvement was for pavement maintenance, rising from -11% to +13%. This was the only service which moved from a negative to a positive net satisfaction rating;
- The remaining 'top five' services (street tree maintenance, environmental services and the provision of tree maintenance) also saw strong improvements;
- Two further services saw significant improvements in net satisfaction. Traffic management rose from -25% to -11% and street lighting rose from +51% to +64%;
- Two services saw falls in net satisfaction, which fell from +61% to +60% for shopping facilities and from -35% to -37% for traffic congestion.

Qualitative insight into views on these services shows that residents are pleased with the efforts made, but stress the need for the Council to work with the public to maintain the cleanliness.

It's up to us isn't it really? Now that the place is cleaned up, we need to keep it that way, because from what I see people haven't changed, they are still chucking litter on the streets and dumping rubbish

Focus group two participant

You still get these idiots that just don't seem to be aware of what the Council is doing – they just drop [their litter]. Why don't we educate our children in schools for a start?

Focus group one participant

In some ways, its got a bit worse – now that people have seen the Council making the effort, they are dumping stuff [kitchen appliances etc] in the [private service] roads because they think the Council will just come and take it away

Focus group one participant

Discussion in the groups on recycling shows that residents appreciate the provision of these facilities (brown bins, green boxes) and they agree in principle that recycling is important. However, there is also sensitivity to Council spending (heightened by recent increases in Council Tax) and a minority feels that more consultation on this issue could have saved money.

I've got this great big brown bin in my little garden and I'm never going to be able to fill it. Nobody asked me if I wanted one – the Council could have saved so much money if they had allocated these bins where they were actually needed.

Focus group two participant

All of those in the groups have noticed the additional bins in the area, although not all were aware that provision extended into residential streets (some believed that they were only provided on main roads).

The 2003 survey – changes in last six months

Respondents were asked whether they felt that South Harrow had got better, worse or stayed the same as an area over the last six months:

- 45% feel it had got better or much better;
- 39% feel it had stayed the same;
- 15% feel it had got worse or much worse.

Those who feel that South Harrow had got better were asked what they thought had got better. There was one clear theme which most people cite – 82% feel that the streets are cleaner or brighter. As the following table shows, there were over a dozen other issues that were mentioned by up to one in seven people.

The improving situation in South Harrow

<i>Base: All who think the area has got better</i>	<i>(n=98)</i>
The streets are cleaner/brighter	82%
Better maintenance of roads	14%
More flowers/Cut grass/Neater hedges	11%
Maintenance has improved	6%
Crime rate is down/Better police presence	6%
Better amenities/facilities	4%
Improving traffic congestion	3%
Better refuse collection service	3%
Introduced cycle lanes/paths	2%
Local parks have improved	2%
Better public transport	2%
Better car parking facilities	2%
Better street lighting	2%
Other	12%

NB These are spontaneous responses

Source: MORI

Findings from the focus groups bear this out – all agree that the area is much cleaner than it used to be.

Since they've done the South Harrow campaign, South Harrow itself has become cleaner

Focus group one participant

It's clean and tidy. I've seen the roads where there used to be lots of litter and everything which I don't see anymore. On my street I see people coming to clean the streets...spraying the weeds and everything. These are things I've noticed which in the past I never did.

Focus group two participant

Similarly, those who felt that South Harrow had got worse were asked what they thought had got worse. There was much less consensus as to deterioration than improvement, with half a dozen issues being cited by at least one in seven people. It should be noted that the following table only relates to 34 people's responses.

The worsening situation in South Harrow

Base: All who think the area has got worse (n=34)

The people/place has changed/Dodgy people/Not safe	42%
General maintenance	29%
Collection of litter/rubbish	29%
Crime/Street crime	29%
Vandalism	16%
Car crime/Abandoned/dumped/untaxed cars	15%
More/heavy traffic/Noise/Congestion	12%
Drug problem/users/crime	11%
Overpopulated/too many immigrants	9%
Car parking clogging roads	8%
State of the roads	7%
Poor council planning and coordination	7%
Number of take-aways has increased	4%
Poor policing	4%
Other	12%

NB These are spontaneous responses

Source: MORI

Cleanliness

More specifically, respondents were all asked what they felt about the cleanliness of South Harrow. The main area for improvement between 2002 and 2003 was that of litter on the Northold Road. In 2002, 31% felt that this was a serious problem and it came first out of a list of 14 issues on this measure.

Six months later, only 14% see this as a serious problem and it has slid down the table to 10th place. There was a similar positive change at the other end of the scale – in 2002, 20% felt that litter on the high street was not a problem. By 2003, this has risen to 37%. A number of other points should also be highlighted:

- In 2002, 26% saw litter on their own street as a serious problem, while 27% felt it was not a problem. By 2003, these figures have changed to 17% and 45% respectively;
- Although only 5% cite weeds and grass verge maintenance as a serious problem in 2003, this issue saw the largest increase in the proportion that now feel it is not a problem. In 2002, 56% felt this way. Six months later, this has risen to 76%.

Respondents do feel, however, that seven of the 14 issues have become more serious over the last six months. These are:

- Abandoned vehicles (rising from 23% to 37% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 37% to 31% as 'not a problem');
- Dog fouling (rising from 20% to 33% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 40% to 38% as 'not a problem');
- Rats (rising from 11% to 21% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 62% to 58% as 'not a problem');
- Graffiti (rising from 14% to 24% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 42% to 41% as 'not a problem');
- Condition of bus stops (rising from 13% to 22% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 52% to 48% as 'not a problem');
- Pigeon droppings (rising from 12% to 19% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 60% to 51% as 'not a problem');
- Condition of tube stations (rising from 7% to 12% as 'a serious problem', and falling from 58% to 49% as 'not a problem').

Another issue – that of drains and flooding – is seen by 15% as a serious problem in 2003 (compared to 10% in 2002), although the proportion feeling that it is not a problem has in fact risen from 53% to 60%.

The 2003 survey – priorities

Finally, as the following table demonstrates, respondents identify well over two dozen possible areas for improvement. The issues raised are not all directly comparable to 2002 as spontaneous responses were recorded, but there are a number of key areas where comparisons can be made:

- In 2002, 15% of respondents felt that the street cleaning was an important issue. Six months later, it still is, cited by 17%;
- In 2002, 10% felt that more needed to be done in terms of traffic control. This has risen slightly to 14% in 2003;
- The proportion wanting more leisure and sports facilities for young people more than doubled, rising from 7% to 16%.
- The proportion wanting more parking facilities fell from 13% to 8%.

Making South Harrow a better place to live

	2003	2002 comparison (where available)
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	%	%
More police presence/Reduce vandalism/street crime	26	-
Clean up litter on the streets	17	15
Community/sports/youth club facilities	16	7
Deal with traffic congestion/Traffic control	14	10
Encourage community feeling/communication	11	-
More/improve shops/cafes/restaurants/markets	10	5
Better street lighting/Safer at night	9	8
Collection of junk/abandoned cars/recyclables	8	-
More parking facilities	8	13
Tidy up the town/Urban cosmetics	8	-
Road/pavement maintenance	8	6
Places for children to play	8	4
Deal with/less parking on the street	7	-
Better public transport	7	7
Improve/more parks	6	3
More CCTV cameras	5	3
Development of certain areas	5	-
Improve council maintenance on estates	4	-
Dog fouling pavements/parks	4	1
Improve schools/education	4	4
Introduce resident parking	3	-
More awareness of environmental issues	3	-
More/empty rubbish/litter bins	2	-
Fewer immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers	2	<0.5
Deal with drugs/alcohol/Antisocial issues	2	2
Lower council taxes	2	<0.5
More/better housing	2	1
Libraries/cinemas/theatres	2	2
Cut back on take-aways	1	2
Other	4	-

Source: MORI

Focus group respondents were asked to encapsulate their priorities for the continued improvement of the area, the top issues emerging are:

- community safety and policing
- the provision of activities and facilities for young people
- cleaning and maintaining the area
- educating children and the public on the importance of keeping the area clean
- enforcing cleanliness.