



Results of survey by Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum

The evolving high street: the future of Hampstead's village centres

April 2021

Key points

Nearly a third of Hampstead residents are expecting to spend more time operating from home than they did before the Covid pandemic, according to the results of a survey by the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum.

Only 12% said they were likely to go back to full time work somewhere else when the effects of the pandemic have passed. Reflecting the high proportion of residents who have retired, more than half of respondents said they had already been operating from home and expected to continue doing so.

The survey carried out by the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum in April 2021 received well over 300 responses. The purpose was to assess whether the community will have changing needs from Hampstead's two village centres, in light of the Covid pandemic and the rapid pace of change, with some 20 shops and restaurants having departed since March 2020.

As a result of the shift to home working and online shopping, 59% of respondents believed that the community's needs in Hampstead village and South End Green would change. Among the things that respondents thought were missing from these centres were services to support home working, such as places for meeting and co-working, and office supply and IT shops.

Overall, residents viewed the pace of change on their high streets with equanimity. While 44% saw it as worrying, 30% were not worried or pleased and 26% were unsure.

A principal concern was the potential loss of small independent shops, which were seen as less able to pay high rents and rates than chains. However, it is worth noting that almost all the shops and restaurants that have closed in Hampstead since the March 2020 lockdown have been chain outlets, and that at least half of the new arrivals are freshly-established independent businesses.

Many residents viewed the departures of shops and restaurants, coupled with the arrival of new businesses, as a process of inevitable and healthy evolution.

The survey showed that by far the most serious concern of residents was heavy traffic, along with associated air pollution.

Asked to name three bad things about the village centres, over a third of respondents mentioned traffic, and a significant number were concerned about litter and uncollected rubbish. The balance between chain and independent shops was seen by many as skewed too far towards the former, with complaints that there were too many outlets that were similar to each other.

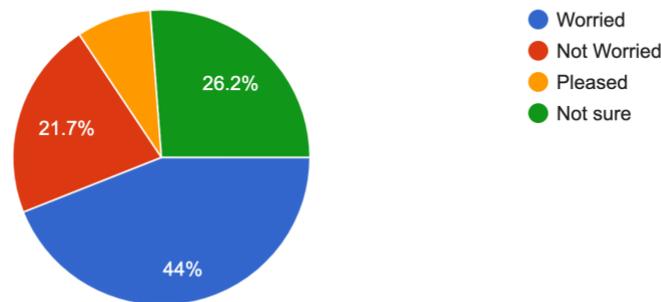
However, those concerned about imbalances in the retail offering were far outweighed by those who commented positively on the range of shops, cafés, restaurants, food stores and pubs in Hampstead. Residents commended the village atmosphere, the sense of community and belonging, as well as the beauty, charm, leafiness and historic heritage. They appreciated having, with easy walking distance, independent shops selling fresh produce. They liked the buzz and liveliness, the easy availability of public transport and the proximity of Hampstead Heath.

The answers showed that, in spite of concerns about the present state of Hampstead and the future, residents highly valued it as a place to live, and appreciated the wide range of goods and services available to them.

For the future, they wanted a greener Hampstead, with curbs on car use and more pedestrianised streets. As well as facilities to support home working, they wanted more spaces for community and cultural activities, and for sitting outside and meeting people. The idea of developing a shared vision for the future of the village centres was backed by 72% of respondents.

Survey results

Since the first lockdown began in March 2020, about twenty shops and restaurants in our village centres (Hampstead village and South End Green) h...How do you feel about this rapid rate of change?
332 responses



Reasons for answers:

Worried:

Themes:

Loss of small independent shops, arrival of big chains such as Sainsbury's; uncertainty about what will replace shops that have gone; new shops should be appropriate for Hampstead; too many empty shops; rents and rates are too high; loss of village character, risk of becoming like any other high street; too many bread/coffee shops; loss of useful, practical shops; sadness at loss of longstanding shops; concern about lack of consultation and voice in changes.

Selected comments:

"I am unsure about what types of businesses might fill the place of those that have closed. Many of the new things that have opened are beneficial to the community, but I worry about losing local businesses in place of large chains."

“We seem to be losing useful shops like dry cleaners and banks and getting more expensive bakeries and cafes.”

“The face of Hampstead has changed. When we moved here in 1978 it was a village - original, independent shops and had character. Due to landlords’ greed the quality of Hampstead is now run of the mill and the specialness and individuality has disappeared. I would like us to aspire to something like Marylebone High Street... It's not that I don't like change - just standards to be maintained and Hampstead to become the delightful village it once was.”

“I am particularly worried that small shops (especially food shops) that have been providing an excellent service for years, if not decades, and have been a godsend to many of us during the pandemic by offering deliveries, will not be able to survive in this rapidly changing environment where larger outlets (e.g. the planned new Sainsbury's) may well appear.”

“Worried that independent shops will be replaced by chains and the area will lose its character.”

“I am concerned about the type of stores. Why can they not be curated, like in Marylebone High Street to protect the culture and history of Hampstead?”

“The community does not seem to have any reliable way to learn of planned changes in advance or be given timely opportunity to respond to them.”

Not sure:

Themes:

Depends on what replaces them; too early to tell.

Selected comments:

“I'm sad that two of my favourite retailers, Gap and Jigsaw, have left and there are few affordable places I can shop for clothes in Hampstead so now I'll have to leave the area to do so. I welcome new and interesting shops which are accessible and useful.”

“The demise of the traditional high street has been coming for years and the pandemic has simply accelerated the process. However, if we are to attract new, exciting outlets there has to be realism concerning rents. Property owners (and I believe Camden to be a major owner) will have to accept lower rents and offer more flexible leases. This might be unpalatable but is surely better than having empty properties.”

“I regret losing shops and restaurants that I regard as part of my support system and feel sorry for their owners who, presumably, had no intention of closing if it hadn't been for Covid.”

Not worried/pleased:

Themes:

Change is inevitable, part of a cycle, Hampstead will continue to thrive; means Hampstead is moving with the times; rapid re-letting is a positive sign; change is refreshing.

Selected comments:

“Change is inevitable and the pandemic was unprecedented. What is more important is what happens next - we need to rethink the future of community and communal spaces like the High Street.”

“The pandemic has sped up the closure of unsuccessful businesses hopefully making way for shops and businesses we may actually use.”

“The pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on shops and restaurants. So in that sense I am not worried as we will come through this and life may well return to normal. In addition, more people may be spending more working days at home than in the City or West End, so are likely to use their local shops and restaurants more frequently.”

“It's sad to see old places go, but also exciting to see changes and new business.”

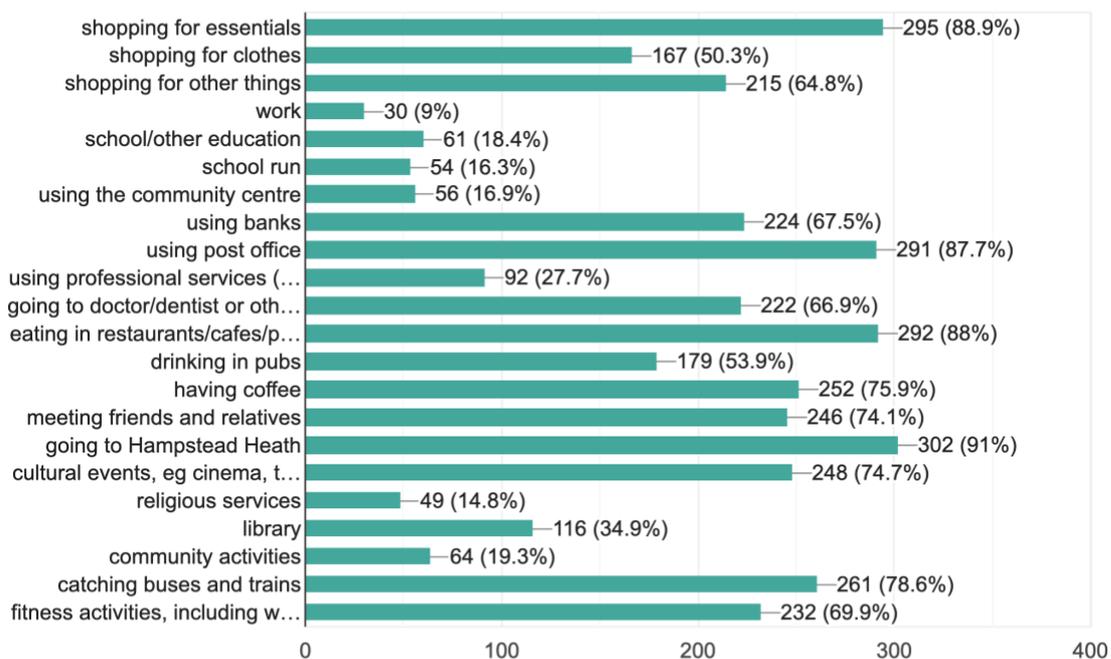
“It's sad, but perhaps those places were in trouble prior the pandemic. I hope that they will be replaced by young sustainable brands.”

“Rapid rate of closure means rapid rates of new businesses opening. Good for the economy.”

“The closures are sad. But the quick replacement is a good sign... The character of the neighbourhood doesn't seem to be mutating despite these changes... and many longstanding local & independent businesses look to be weathering the pandemic.”

As residents, we use our village centres (Hampstead Village and South End Green) for multiple purposes. How did you use them before the pandemic? Tick all that apply and add others if you wish.

332 responses



Additional uses:

Hair/beauty
 Vets
 Viewing historic buildings/area
 Tailor/alterations
 Sitting in café to work
 Art/art supplies

Name three good things about our village centres

111 Range of shops/variety/useful/quality/inc quirky
 92 Cafes/restaurants/food outlets/outdoor dining/café society
 78 Village atmosphere/character/friendly/sense of community/personal relats/mix/belonging
 66 Beautiful place/architecture/charm/leafiness/attractive/clean/green/historic/trees
 61 Independent/local/small shops/stalls
 45 Convenience/all in one place/local
 35 Essential shops (butcher, fishmonger/greengrocer/fresh produce) (also barber, dry cleaner)
 31 Walkability/nice place to walk through/wide pavements
 27 Transport links
 26 Pubs
 25 Buzz/lively/vibrant/enjoyment/busy/vibe
 19 Gateway to Heath
 18 Bakeries
 18 Bookshops
 17 Cinema/entertainment/culture
 13 Post office
 12 Community centre/resources/market
 10 Hardware stores
 8 Places to meet (good social space)
 8 Fishmonger
 7 Banks/building societies
 6 Waterstone's
 6 Clothing shops
 5 Marks & Spencer
 4 Chemists
 4 Butcher
 4 Library

Name three bad things about our village centres

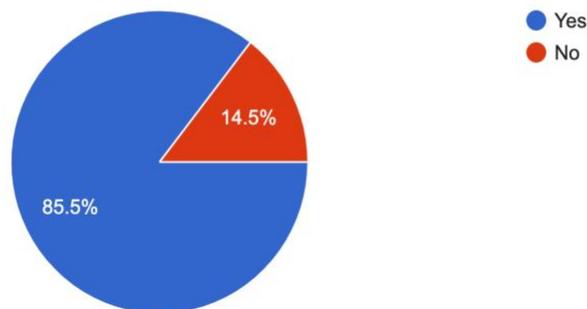
117 Traffic/congestion
 44 Too many chain stores/not enough small independent shops
 42 Lack of variety in shopping/too many similar/not enough basic/useful shops
 36 Litter/lack of bins/rubbish not collected
 27 Lack of high-quality restaurants
 26 Too many estate agents
 26 Shops too expensive
 26 Empty shops/shop closures

- 25 Too many bakeries
 - 24 Too many (expensive/fashion) clothes shops
 - 14 Rents/rates too high – means only high-end stores
 - 23 Too many coffee shops
 - 22 Lack of parking/too expensive/including disabled
 - 18 Crowds (especially around creperies)
 - 17 Pollution/air quality
 - 14 School run
 - 12 Lack of alternatives to Tesco
 - 10 Tesco
 - 10 Noise
 - 9 Too many visitors
 - 8 Too many phone shops
 - 7 Too many delivery bikes
 - 7 Not enough outdoor dining
 - 7 Not enough men's clothes shops/shops for men/sports/shoes
 - 7 Narrow pavements (mainly at SEG)
 - 6 Not enough banks
 - 6 Dog poo
 - 5 No cycle lanes
 - 5 Trucks unloading eg Tesco
 - 4 Not enough independent/'every day'/neighbourhood restaurants
 - 4 Street crime
 - 4 Homeless people
 - 4 Not enough shops for vegetarians/organic
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Since the pandemic, have you...?

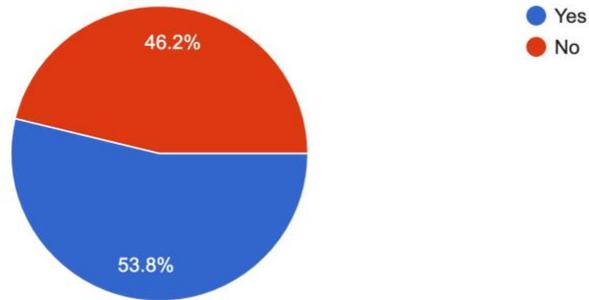
Shopped more online

331 responses



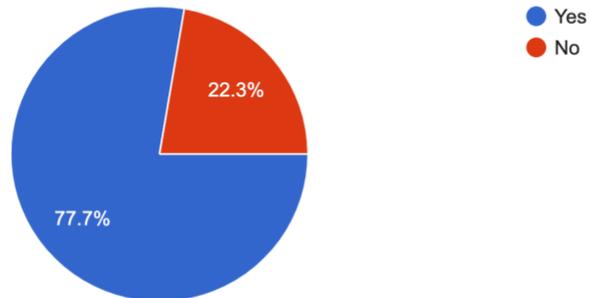
Used take-away services more

329 responses



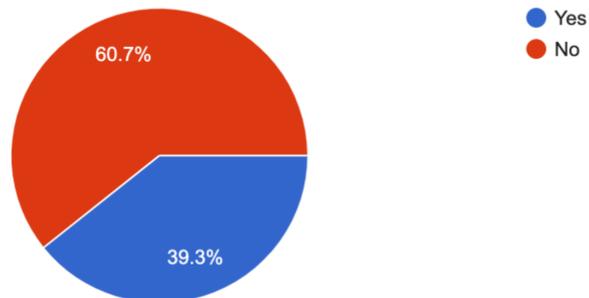
Shopped more locally rather than further away?

327 responses



Has your consumption of goods and services changed in other ways?

326 responses

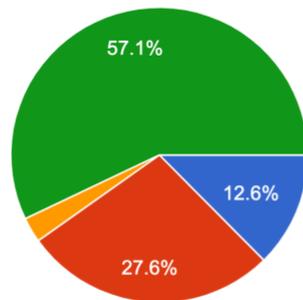


Changed in what ways?

Spending less, reduced clothes shopping, not going to supermarkets, moved online, got deliveries, cooked at home more, buying more eco-conscious products, no leisure spending, no impulse buying, buying more fresh produce locally, eating more healthily.

Many people have been working or studying from home during the pandemic. What will happen afterwards? When the pandemic is over, do you expect to go back to doing that? Which description best fits you?

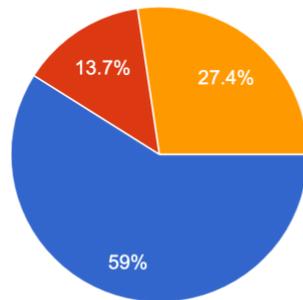
254 responses



- I was working mainly from an office or was at school/college, and I'm likely to go back to doing that.
- I was working/studying at an office/school/college, but now I expect to operate from home for a significant period.
- I was working/studying at an office/school/college but now I expect to operate from home.
- I was already operating mainly from home and I expect to continue doing that.

Do you think the changes to our living and working customs will alter what we as a community need and want to see in our local village centres (Hampstead village and South End Green)?

329 responses



- Yes
- No
- Don't know

What's missing?

Ideas and themes identified that were not reiterations of previous answers

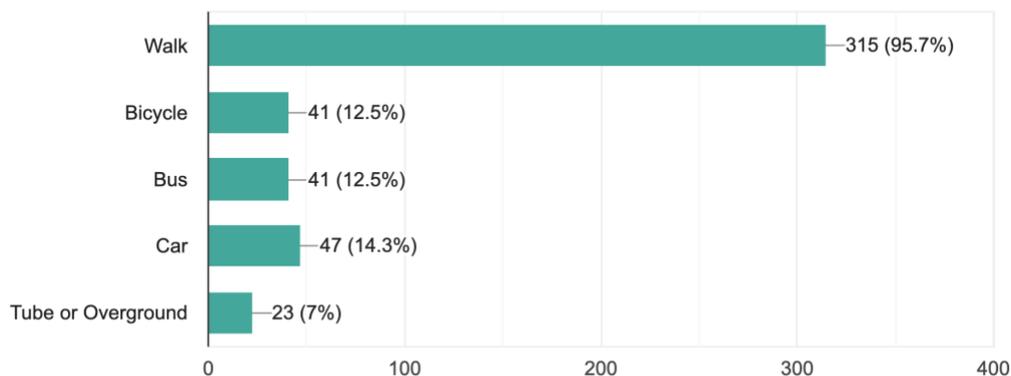
- 1) **Greener Hampstead:** Restrict car usage, especially at weekends; make area more walkable with more benches, pedestrian crossings; mainly pedestrian High St/Heath St; efforts to improve area for pedestrians/cyclists; new approach to traffic management, limiting car use and reclaiming communal spaces; move the bus parking area (SEG); close High St at weekends and have a market; restrict polluting cars; drive smaller cars and have kids walk to school; electric charging stations; pedestrian areas; 'a street environment that prioritises pedestrians and users of public transport'; implementation of 'Vision for South End Green' as in HNP; but also: abolish cycle lanes as they make traffic jams worse and add to pollution.
- 2) **Services to support home working:** better internet, flexible workspaces, office supplies and IT shops, printing capabilities; co-working areas; cafes where you can work; fibre internet; more reliable broadband; members club/working space like Soho House; space for community activities/services to avoid isolation if working at home; police station

could be used for this; community hub where home-working people can work if they choose or for networking/workshops, with priority for residents and discounts in local shops.

- 3) **Lower rents/rates** (strong theme); penalise landlords for leaving shops empty; rent controls; change of approach from landlords as in Marylebone
- 4) **Spaces to sit outside** eg Oriel Place; streateries;
- 5) **Dialogue:** Dialogue/better communication between stakeholders eg Camden, landlords, residents, businesses; more affordable commercial and residential space; ‘Camden keeps consulting and only listens to what works for their initial plans’;
- 6) **Community:** ‘We need a community that cares for each other and is considerate of the needs of others’; more community meeting places/spaces; community centre in SEG; public assets such as library and art gallery; more literary/artistic events; invest in community centre and library; street fairs; community support for needy /vulnerable /elderly /disabled, like the volunteer groups for Covid; ‘shop owners need to be more personally involved in the wellbeing of the village and improving the area as a way to enhance their own businesses.’ ‘A place where people can read/study/sit/talk...’ with lectures and talks, where local people can hire a space to give a talk or run an event [affordably]. Artists could have some of the place... [Plus] Hampstead Tech Masterclasses and a support service [offering] digital home support.’
- 7) **Places for young people:** Youth clubs/areas suitable for young activities eg skateboards etc; ‘a healthy community space for older kids (teens and tweens)’;

How do you get to Hampstead village and/or South End Green?

329 responses



How could Hampstead’s travel options be improved?

Many people think Hampstead is well served by public transport

Buses: A bus from Hampstead to central London; more frequent buses; improve 46/268 buses;

better info especially about buses; all-day bus to Muswell Hill; a bus from Hampstead to Belsize Park; smaller, more frequent buses; local hopper/shuttle buses; more school buses to reduce school run; bus from Spaniards to Hampstead; better bus link to Highgate;

Bikes: More electric bikes; Santander/Lime bikes in Hampstead; more bike storage/sheds; allow e-scooters; no charge for motorbike parking; more cycle lanes/remove cycle lanes

Tube: Reinstate 24-hour tube at weekends

Cars: Reduce/remove them (strong theme); close streets around schools; more electric charging points; more disincentives to car travel, especially larger ones; allow only local traffic; make low traffic neighbourhood; ban heavy trucks

Would you be in favour of the creation of a shared vision among residents and businesses, working as much as possible with Camden and landlords, t...future of Hampstead village and South End Green?
324 responses

