



**CRITIQUE OF EALING COUNCIL'S
SHAPING EALING SURVEY SUMMARY/EXTENDED SUMMARY**
26 October 2022

Ealing Council recently published two summaries of the results of its *Shaping Ealing* survey: one an extended version of the other. A reading of the two documents raises a number of concerns as outlined below.

1. Questionnaire issues

The *Shaping Ealing* survey was positioned as an opportunity for Ealing people to have their say as input to the new Local Plan. The selection of statements that respondents were asked to evaluate is therefore strange for a number of reasons:

- A glaring omission is any statement on development. In the Ealing Residents' Associations' *The State of Ealing* survey, the amount of development overall and the scale of development on individual sites were the issues that most respondents were most unhappy about. Given that the built environment is a direct responsibility of the Council, a key component of the Local Plan and consistently controversial, it seems odd for the Council to have omitted statements about it from the survey.
- Conversely, three of the statements (Qs 11, 12 and 14) ask how people feel about their area ('I feel welcome here'; 'I have a sense of belonging here' and 'People from different backgrounds get on well together'). These may describe outcomes that the Council aspires to, but they do not provide insight into how these outcomes might be achieved, which is more relevant to the stated aims of the survey.
- One or two statements conflate multiple issues, making it difficult to know what people are responding to. For example, 'The walking and cycling routes here are safe and attractive' contains four different elements; 'Parks and open spaces here are pleasant, clean and safe' contains up to five different elements. 'There is a good range of affordable homes to rent or buy' conflates two very different types of tenure.

2. Data issues

- The reports provide demographic profiles of the samples, with breakdowns by a number of variables including age, ethnicity etc. Each of these would be expected to total 100%, so why does Chart 1: 'Where people live or spend their time' (p11 of the summary; p6 of the extended summary) only total 95%, and Chart 3: 'Ethnicity of respondents' (p12 of the summary) and Chart 2 (p7 of the extended summary) 98%.

- The extended report includes summaries of the quantitative statements analysed by demographic group (though not ethnicity) (pp7-8). Unfortunately, the summaries are very selective, and the report does not provide the full figures from which they are derived.
- The survey attempts to cover residents and other stakeholders, who may have a different perspective on what they are being asked. No analysis is made of the differences in responses between residents and other groups.
- The extended report includes profiles of each of the seven towns covered by the survey. This includes a number of variables for which it would help to have definitions for a lay audience: bad/very bad health, low-income households, type of work (what is low pay? How is 'knowledge intensive' defined?), business growth, median house price, median earnings, price/earnings ratio.
- On P27 of the extended summary, a single pie chart covers two statements ('I feel that the air I breathe is clean' and 'There is a good range of shops and leisure facilities'). Why is this, and how should the chart be interpreted?

3. Interpretation/reporting issues

- Findings are sometimes reported inaccurately. For example:
 - The demographics shown are percentage shares of the total sample (e.g. p7 of the extended summary: women made up a slightly greater share of the sample than men) not 'females had a slightly higher response rate than men'.
 - Not enough care is taken to use the actual statement when reporting the findings, e.g. the commentary in the extended report says that 'The biggest dissatisfaction is with the availability of affordable homes' (p13) or in the section on Ealing 'There are two themes that scored very negatively for Ealing, these are affordable homes....' (p25). The actual statement that respondents were asked to say how they felt about the statement: 'There is a good range of affordable homes to rent or buy.' The meaning of this is rather different.
- What the charts show is sometimes not reflected accurately in the accompanying commentary. For example:
 - Views about the borough (p6 of the summary report) do not correctly reflect the data on p7. In terms of what they feel most happy about, public transport got a better balance of opinion than people from different backgrounds getting on well together. In terms of what is most concerning, the way their area is changing and air quality were substantially more negatively viewed in terms of balance of opinion than feeling safe or good local jobs, and the safety and attractiveness of walking and cycling routes was not mentioned as a negative despite the balance of opinion on that statement being worse than for feeling safe.
 - In Chapter 2 of the extended report dealing with the results at borough level, the statement on parks and open spaces is omitted as receiving a positive response, despite the balance of opinion being almost as strong as for having a sense of belonging. Similar distortions in the interpretation of responses to the quantitative statements are evident in the individual town summaries in Chapter 3, notably Acton, Ealing, Greenford, Hanwell and Perivale.

This is very important as many people will rely on the commentary for their understanding of the data, so it needs to be an accurate reflection of what is in the charts.

4. Analysis of qualitative questions

The two open-ended questions in the survey generated huge numbers of responses, and it is good to have a quantitative analysis of these. However, the analysis raises a few concerns:

- Where sub-themes are grouped under summary headings, e.g. Transport, the sub-theme totals add up to the summary total in all cases except for Green and outdoor spaces. In this case the summary total is substantially smaller (3,053) than the sum of the sub-themes (3,630). This must be wrong.
- The combinations of items within the sub-themes and the summary headings do not always have an obvious relationship with one another. For example:
 - Traffic and access (p8). What does access mean in this context?
 - Why are leisure activities lumped together with jobs? Why is range of shops lumped together with jobs? (p8)
 - Why are health and education lumped together? (p8)
 - Why are noise, safety and cleanliness lumped together (p8) but then replaced with noise, the environment and cleanliness on p9?
- None of the statements quantified people's attitudes to development. Why not? Despite this, there were more than 3,053 spontaneous mentions of these topics across the two open-ended questions – more than for many of the other themes, which had been part of the closed statement questions. Why is there no mention of this finding in the broader analysis?
- Given the large number of mentions, why is there no sub-theme analysis of Architecture, design and over development?

5. Survey and reporting bias

It is concerning that both the summary and the extended summary are not pure reports of the data, and that no conclusions (as opposed to summaries) are drawn from the data alone. Rather both reports use the data to support the Council's current plan, which lays the survey open to the accusation of being a box-ticking exercise, particularly in the context of issues of questionnaire design, partially inaccurate reporting and sometimes faulty interpretation as described in the previous sections.