

## **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY**

**Report to MRG – 12 December 2002**

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### **1. Purpose of the Report**

To advise MRG of the most current public consultation exercises that could provide useful information to help better inform the hypotheses.

### **2. Background**

2.1 The Review has not commissioned any specific consultation at this stage, however there are a number of recent surveys that provide helpful information and context.

2.2 In **June 2000** a telephone survey of 500 residents was carried out by MORI on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council's Environment Department. The survey was designed to cover residents' priorities for the Environment Department and the questionnaire included the following issues:

- usage of different means of transport and services provided by the Environment Department
- ratings and salience of various aspects of services provided by the Environment Department
  - roads, pavement and cycleways
  - road safety and transport
  - aspects of the local environment
  - the Council's planning for the future of the environment

2.3 In **July 2000**, MORI carried out further research with six focus groups at three different locations with members of the Hertfordshire Citizens' Panel. All participants were recruited by telephone and the programme was designed to ensure that a cross-section of residents had the opportunity to have their say. In each location, people were recruited from across the local district to ensure a mix of urban and rural dwellers.

2.4 The research was designed to follow up the telephone survey conducted in June 2002 and explore, in depth, the most salient issues from the survey. Specific issues covered by the group discussions were:

- Pavement maintenance
- Road maintenance
- Providing better bus and rail services
- Providing information on local bus and rail services

- Planning for future development in Hertfordshire
- Planning for roads and traffic
- Planning for mineral extraction
- Involving local people in protecting the environment
- Encouraging people to enjoy and look after the countryside.

### **3. Findings**

3.1 The following examples indicate some of the key issues arising from the two surveys and focus groups:

- Planning for future development was rated as an important issue by over 8 in 10 residents (source – MORI telephone survey – June 2002)
- Planning for roads and traffic was rated by 9 out of 10 residents as important – (MORI – June 2002).
- There seems to be a possible confusion over the role and responsibilities of the Council and it's relationship with Government legislation. This could explain the extent of some of the public's dissatisfaction with the local implementation of planning for future development (MORI June 2002). This is however, consistent with other areas of the country that MORI has surveyed (MORI – July 2000)
- People find it hard to distinguish between the role and responsibilities of the District and County Councils. They tend not to separate countywide strategic planning from small scale planning issues (MORI Focus group July 2000).
- The county needs to be more proactive in contacting groups of people who are interested in the environment and to some extent are actually prepared to do something about it themselves (MORI – July 2000).

### **4. Other Sources of Information**

4.1 **Two further public opinion surveys** have just been completed during **November 2002**. The first survey, on behalf of the Environment Department Strategic Sub-board, is intended to inform the Environment Business Planning process and picked up views on:

- Satisfaction with roads – maintenance
- Transport trends – congestion
- Public transport
- Road safety

4.2 This took the form of 500 telephone interviews and will be further developed through four focus groups during **January 2003**.

4.3 The second public opinion survey was linked to the pre-deposit stage of the Structure Plan and was undertaken in two parts:

1. a telephone survey of 1000 residents (completed 22<sup>nd</sup> November)
2. four focus group activities (completed between the 18th-24th November)

In both exercises the interviewees' general attitudes towards development was explored including:

- Key issues in local area
- Attitudes to development
- Feedback on the Structure Plan document
- Affordable housing
- Sustainable development

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 Six key issues have been highlighted from both of these surveys which relate closely to those outlined in the previous surveys in June/July 2000 .

These are outlined below:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>%Rating as Major/minor issue</b>	<b>% Rating as Major issue</b>	<b>Other related comments</b>
Lack of affordable housing	85%	57%	29% highlighted the need for cheaper homes
Road congestion	83-85%	53-58%	Main generators seen as: School run (75%) Work journey (70%) Parked cars (47%)
Loss of greenbelt land	65%	36%	59% strongly supported HCC delay in use of greenfield sites until 2006
Condition of roads	84%	40%	57% were satisfied with current state of roads
Speeding Traffic	86%	52%	61% wanted more speed cameras
Public Transport	58-60%	31-36%	Cheaper (49%) and more frequent (53%) buses sited as key issues

- 5.2 Residents seem to be unclear about how much control the County Council had in relation to development, although only 17% had seen the “planning now for Hertfordshire’s future” document.
- 5.3 Communication was again a key issue, particularly as:
- 76% never visit website in last year
  - 37% felt informed of alternate methods of travel
  - 40% felt informed at Rights of Ways
  - 47% felt informed of local bus services
- 5.4 However, it should be noted that although these figures appear to be a little low, a success rate of this level with any information campaign not using national media is extremely good.

## **6. Future Work**

- 6.1 Taking into account the timescales for the latest public opinion surveys, MORI will provide a final report on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2002 which will bring together all of the key issues related to the public opinion surveys outlined above. It would also bring in extra data collected during the Minerals Plan consultation undertaken in 2001 and a recent national transportation survey undertaken by the County Surveyors Society in 2002.
- 6.2 All of this information could then feed directly into the next stage of the BV review. Any shortfalls identified in this data could then be addressed through additions to the proposed focus groups in January 2003.