



Marketing | Branding | Research

Calderdale Council LDF Workshop Report 3
Sowerby Bridge
April 2011

1 Context

The Development Strategy Team for Planning at Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council has commissioned this report to capture the third of ten creative consultations in Calderdale designed to explore the needs, aspirations and concerns of residents in relation to planning.

This report concerns the existing and desired quality of life of residents in Sowerby Bridge.

The written results from this consultation are thematic¹ and indicative of resident's experiences and aspirations in this area relating to planning. The report constitutes one element of a broad evidence base with which to inform the LDF Core Strategy.

2 Methodology

The workshop drew on Creative Problem Solving and Productive Thinking frameworks to promote active involvement and group decision-making from participants.

The workshop was framed within a 'quality of life' paradigm to encourage participants to reflect not just on planning issues but also on the real impacts of these issues on their lives and communities. The aim in doing so was to produce insights that have genuine relevance to both participants and the Planning Team.

The workshop was divided into four key areas of investigation:

- resident's current life/work context and impact on quality of life,
- aspirations for 20 years hence moving into their next life stage,
- what that imagined future would look and feel like to live in,
- specific positive actions the Planning Department could take to realise these aspirations.

The workshop concluded with a group discussion to further explore the themes and issues raised.

3 Participation

A total of 14 residents took part in the workshop. Not all participants completed the equalities sheet therefore totals below do not add up.

10 described themselves as 'White', 1 'Asian' and 1 'Mixed'.

The age breakdown was: <25 = 2; 25 to 39 = 2; 40 to 59 = 5; 60+ = 5.

There were 9 males and 5 females.

5 described themselves as having a disability.

¹ Some highly specific suggestions were made during the workshop and are outlined in detail in the appendix of this report.

4 Overview



Residents enjoy the area where they live and appear extremely frustrated at what they perceive as the untapped potential of Sowerby Bridge town.

They highly value the surrounding hills, moorlands, canals and waterways which are all within easy reach. They perceive their Pennine landscape as unique and precious. It appears to be the primary contributor to their quality of life and well being.

Residents are keen that it is preserved and kept free of development.

Residents regard Sowerby Bridge as a friendly and sociable place. They also think it delivers a poor quality 'small town experience' because of limited shopping, poor image, extremely high congestion and concomitant air and noise pollution.

One of their biggest aspirations for the town is to drastically reduce congestion. This would not only make the town a healthier place to live and work, but 'free up' the centre for pedestrians, cyclists and shoppers.

Participants perceive Sowerby Bridge as a town that has potentially much more to offer its residents and visitors. They would like to see diversification in the town's economies through a stronger day-time retail and leisure offer. They would also like the town's heritage to take centre stage: historic buildings cleaned up, attractive 'heritage' shop fronts, a heritage trail, more way marked walks leading out from the town, an improved canal-side leisure offer and a Tourist Information Centre.



The wharf is perceived as a crucial element in improving the look, feel and functionality of the town. Residents would like to see it house an open green space for sitting, congregating and hosting outdoor events. They want better use of the surrounding buildings, more leisure opportunities in the area and conducive retail outlets. They believe this would provide the vital focal point and open space residents and visitors need.

5 Key Findings

5:1 Positive quality of life

Residents of this area place high value on the moors, countryside, waterways, heritage and social ease of Sowerby Bridge.

- **Environment and countryside**

Residents regard Sowerby Bridge as a unique Pennine town with a unique Pennine landscape. They value proximity to the countryside; from the moors and woodlands to the canals and waterways and the wildlife that inhabit them all. It brings to their lives a sense of peace, well-being, calmness and relaxation. The countryside and waterways also provide easy access for walking and cycling, and thus escape from the built up areas in Sowerby Bridge.

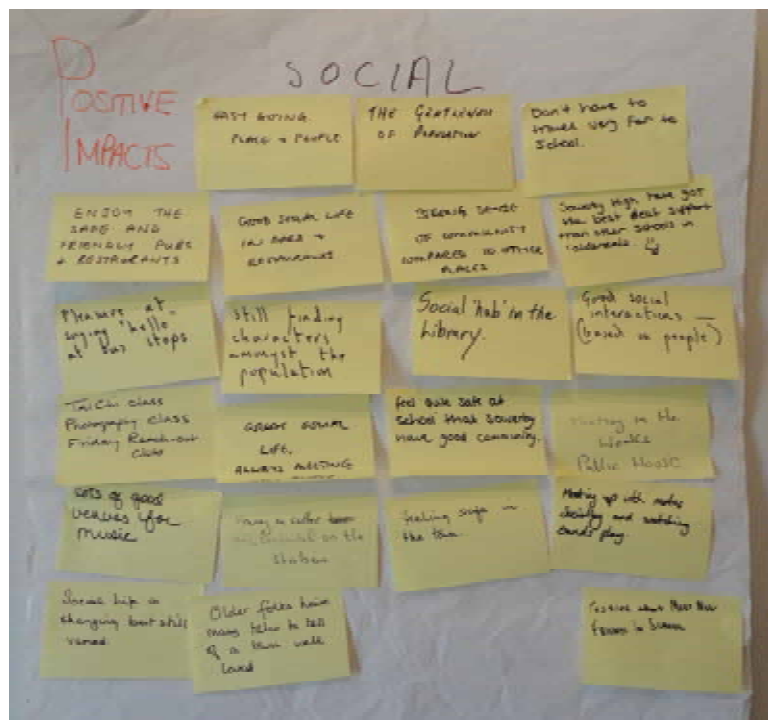
- **Buildings**

Residents appear acutely aware and proud of Sowerby Bridge's heritage; the character-ful and historic buildings, Victorian housing, traditional architecture and the history associated with the waterways. They also value the local and independent shops.



- **Social facilities**

Sowerby Bridge is seen as a good place to meet with friends and lead an active social life. There are many bars and restaurants as well as a new sports centre and swimming pool. The result is – for some – a great social life.



- **People**

Residents value the friendly, easy-going nature of Sowerby Bridge people which creates a sense of community and safety.

- **Transport**

Sowerby Bridge benefits from good road and rail links to other cities.

5:2 Quality of life concerns

Residents have many concerns about the town: the lack of an open space or focal point, the narrow economy Sowerby Bridge appears to be catering for, the impact of traffic on health and commerce, and the impact of development and neglect on the heritage image of the town.

- **Amenities and shopping**

Residents are unhappy with the proliferation of take aways, taxi cab offices, 'tatty' utilitarian shops and fashion shops in the town which do not adequately support a thriving day-time economy for residents or visitors. Some choose to shop elsewhere because there isn't anything they want in the town apart from food supplies from Tesco's. The growth of bars and restaurants encourages a growing night-time economy, but this is perceived to undermine the image and safety of the town through drunken behaviour and – together with the take-aways – increased litter and debris. There are also a number of empty shops which makes the town look deserted and unappealing.

"I've lived in Sowerby Bridge for 6 years and I don't think I've spent any money in a shop in Sowerby because there's nothing there I want. The daily shopping I do in the supermarkets and there's nothing that will make me want to come to the little shops."

"The concentration on the night-time economy – all the people are just coming in and drinking, in the streets ... that's not the sort of thing we want to see if we live here and it tips the balance ... Sowerby has got so much more than that. Why does it just have to be rowdy bars? *"Let's have another bar because it's vibrant!"* To me it's intimidating."

Residents are also concerned that their Councillors do not live locally and do not understand local concerns. As a result, perceived bad planning decisions have been made in the past which have given rise to a lack of confidence in the planning processes.

"The Council pass inappropriate development that we know isn't the right thing for near the wharf. A chicken and chip shop – we don't know whether that has been passed or not – right near the lock statue ... you'll end up with more debris, more litter ... the council don't really listen and don't know what kind of trouble that's going to cause. I don't want polystyrene things thrown in the lock ... planning sometimes has no teeth."

- **Lack of open spaces**

Residents are frustrated at the lack of open spaces in the town for people to sit, congregate and socialise. No use is made of the riversides or the open areas along the valley which they regard as untapped potential.

"It's a mixture of the mills that have been converted and the old buildings and it's all dirt. I don't like to see that garage and adjoining buildings (wharf area) ... I'd like to see a park there."

- **Traffic**

Congestion and volume of traffic is a big concern. They perceive Sowerby Bridge as a constant traffic jam – a dangerous place for cyclists, a difficult place to park and a stressful place to drive. The through road divides the town in two which makes it difficult to cross and enjoy the shops that are on offer on either side because of constant heavy traffic. In

addition there is the associated air pollution, related health problems and noise pollution. In their view, the town is not a place where people can sit out in their gardens or outside cafes enjoying the world go by.

“I think the issue with shops is that there are lots of small shops and some very beautiful buildings and they could be done up and converted into some very nice shops. However, the down side is they’re on both sides of a very busy road ... in Hebden Bridge there is a pedestrian shopping area that is separate to the road ... unless we do something about that busy traffic I wouldn’t shop in Sowerby Bridge. It’s not an attractive place to shop because there are just trucks and cars zooming up and down. Pollution is terrible. You don’t want to sit outside with all the lorries coming past.”

“There is more heavy haulage in Sowerby per square metre than in other town in West Yorkshire.”

- **Housing**

Residents are concerned about the impact of poorly designed new builds on the image of the town as well as encroachment into green spaces and riverbanks. Not only do these block views but they are out of keeping with the heritage of the town. Meanwhile, historic buildings are neglected and falling into disrepair. There are also a number of unfinished developments further eroding the town’s image.

In the subsequent discussion there was much debate about the impact of housing and economic development on the town. In their view a night-time economy attracts a narrow demographic with negative impacts on the town’s image and sense of safety. Sowerby Bridge’s convenient location attracts young professionals to the area who commute to Leeds and Manchester to work – reducing Sowerby Bridge to a dormitory town. Neither of these support a thriving daytime community or economy.

In addition, continued low cost housing development attracts a lower social demographic to the area increasing the number of betting shops, takeaways and ‘tatty shops’, further eroding the town’s image.

In their view, investment in an enhanced daytime economy (commercial and leisure) would cater for both residents and tourists – making Sowerby Bridge an increasingly attractive place to live and visit.

“What do you want Sowerby to be? Is to be self-contained place that Sowerby people live and work in and don’t move out from or is it to be a sort of residential area feeding Manchester and Leeds? Because what is required in the centre is going to be vastly different depending on those two things.”

“Are you going to put nothing but houses and just essential bits of shops because most people won’t be here during the day? , What about the night life in Sowerby which brings people in for the leisure activities? They’re different types of economies so until you’ve decided which one you want delivering it’s a bit difficult to know what to plan.”

“It’s the low income housing they’re building. They’re not bringing people in that have got more money to spend. It’s all cheap town housing.”

- **Railway Station**

Users of the train service say the railway station is lacking in basic facilities such as a waiting room and ticket office. They feel unsafe using the station at night. Residents would also like more TransPennine trains stopping at the station.

- **Image**

As mentioned earlier, residents are concerned about the poor image of Sowerby Bridge because of poor conservation, inappropriate development and a night-time economy which makes the town noisy, messy and unsafe. There is also frustration that the wharf area houses inappropriate shops and businesses when it could offer a much needed community and tourist focal point. Residents perceive Sowerby Bridge as a town with huge untapped potential in terms of its heritage and tourism offer – offers which could greatly enhance its image and bring in much needed visitors and associated commerce.

“Sowerby Bridge is become no different to other little towns full of charity shops and take-aways. There’s thousands of towns like that.”

“There are so many natural features in Sowerby Bridge we should be able to capitalise on those. We’ve got the Calder river. We’ve got the Rochdale canal. We’ve got the Pennines. The wharf.”

“If we keep building houses, building houses, building houses we lose what’s special about the area now ... there’ll be nothing different about the area so we may as well be living in Leeds.”

“We could have a mini Hebden Bridge down there.”

“We’ve got a feature that Hebden Bridge haven’t – why should they have a canal centre when we’ve got the wharf? “

“As it stands now Sowerby Bridge is a tourist attraction and we talk to people from Burnley, Blackburn, Fixby, Scarborough ... they’re coming here so if we do something more to attract them, tell them the stories ... then you’ll draw people to it. It’s already started. It’s already there. It’s not as if you’re plucking it out of thin air.”

5:3 Community Aspirations

Residents themed their key aspirations into 10 core headings. When invited to vote on which they believed were the most important to their quality of life the results, in descending order, were:

- Environment,
- Transport,
- Political and Social activity,
- Education,
- Leisure,
- Shops,
- Building,
- Cleanliness,
- Pollution,
- Miscellaneous.

All the findings are in the appendix. This section only includes areas that relate to planning.

- **Environment**

High on their list of aspirations is that the neighbouring countryside, moorland, canals, riversides and their wildlife be protected for future generations. They want building development curbed in these areas to preserve green spaces and to maintain the separateness and individual identity of the villages and towns. They also want proactive management of the environment by creating attractive canal side and riverside walks and a green open space in the town where people can sit, relax and congregate.

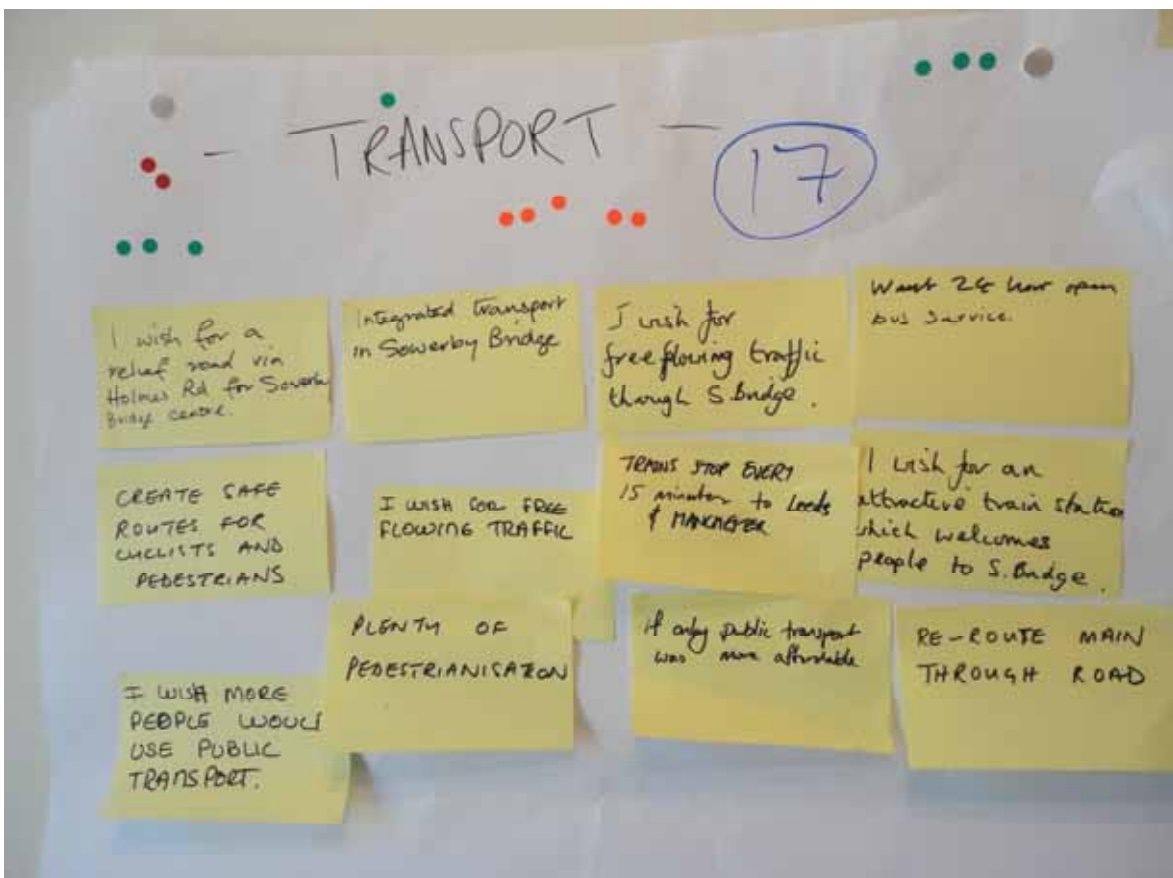
- **Cleanliness and pollution**

Residents wish for a town free of debris from the take-aways and pubs. They wish for cleaned-up buildings, clean pavements, clean parks and clean air.

- **Building**

Residents want more care and attention paid to the town's old and historic buildings; protecting, cleaning and renovating them to preserve and celebrate the town's history. They would also like to see the shops cleaned and tidied up. They want derelict buildings to be demolished to create attractive green areas and for new builds to be of a higher quality.

- **Transport**



The volume of traffic through the town is a real concern for residents. In order to address this they desperately want some kind of relief road or bypass. This would reduce traffic flow and congestion - making it safer for both pedestrians and cyclists - improve the air quality in the town and reduce noise pollution. In addition, residents would like a more attractive and welcoming train station and improved bus service.

“They need The Royal to come down and the long chimney and put an island in there which will help to sort the traffic out a bit, and it will look open.”

- **Leisure**

Residents would like increased leisure opportunities: more locally way marked footpaths, canal side leisure activities, an open green space in town, public art and sculpture and more free amenities for young people.

There is also a palpable need for the town to develop a daytime leisure economy by encouraging tourism. Suggestions include providing a Tourist Information Centre near the wharf, supporting the development of visitor accommodation in the town, developing the riverside walk in town and encouraging a more mixed and attractive economy in the centre (see ‘Shops’ below). There is also a desire to better connect the main ‘drag’ with West Street.

“We need to create a touristy Sowerby Bridge down by The Moorings. That’s where it needs to be.”

“We need a youth hostel to bring in small groups ... we’ve no accommodation for visitors.”

“West Street end is neglected ... but there’s potentially lovely walks down the river.”

- **Shops**

Residents want Sowerby Bridge’s commercial centre to be revitalised. Suggestions included cleaning up the shops, incentivising occupation of empty units and supporting the diversification of retail to include independent shops.

- **Endgame**

It is important to this group that Sowerby Bridge repositions itself as a thriving visitor attraction with a vibrant local economy – much the same as Hebden Bridge.

In 20 years time, residents want to feel proud of Sowerby Bridge because it has preserved and celebrated its local heritage (especially the historic buildings and waterways features), protected the local countryside, moorland and waterways for all to enjoy, created a green open space in the town as a focal point and place where events can take place, and is clean and congestion free.

They want Sowerby Bridge to be a magnet for shoppers and tourists with a vibrant town centre full of characterful shops and lots of things to see and do. They also want a healthier, safer life through a reduction in traffic and more leisure opportunities in the surrounding green spaces (such as way marked walks and riverside leisure amenities).

- **Image / Tourism**

KEEP	ADD
Independent real ale pubs	<p>More to attract visitors</p> <p>Demand co-ordinated shop fronts on street runs</p> <p>More litter bins and fine signs</p> <p>More CCTV to deter vandalism</p> <p>Litter bins and dog poo bins</p> <p>More cobblestone features</p> <p>More diverse eating places</p> <p>Public art</p> <p>A new history trail around town</p> <p>Open up the riverside for walks</p> <p>A bandstand by the wharf to hear brass bands</p> <p>Add responsibility for take-aways to clean round the area in front and surrounding their shops</p> <p>Use the space around The Moorings for leisure facilities</p>
LOSE/STOP	CHANGE
<p>Dirt on buildings</p> <p>Close take-aways in town centre</p> <p>Drug dealers driving around streets</p> <p>Dirt on streets</p> <p>Loutish behaviour</p> <p>Drinking on streets like Manchester</p> <p>Licensed premises customers from littering areas around the canals with glasses, bottles and smoking debris</p>	

- **Buildings / Development**

KEEP	ADD
<p>Old Fire Station Council building</p> <p>Small town feel</p> <p>Open space by Jolly Sailor</p> <p>Swimming pool and library</p>	<p>Parking</p>
LOSE/STOP	CHANGE
<p>GenR8 as council partners for their inappropriate designs and misleading so-called consultations to local residents</p> <p>The crazy idea to build on the Copley Valley flood plain</p> <p>Stop inappropriate 3-storey massed rows of urban townhouses directly tow-path side at Sterne Mills</p> <p>Stop the building of poor quality homes</p>	<p>The car park in front of The Moorings into a canal side town square</p> <p>The use of old buildings as apartments</p> <p>Change planning law so that positive improvement is imposed on those owning sub-standard or low quality / ill-maintained buildings</p>

- **Countryside and Green Spaces**

KEEP	ADD
<p>Green spaces</p> <p>Balance between urban and rural</p> <p>Special areas special</p> <p>Wildlife areas and fishing havens</p> <p>Gardens and green space</p> <p>A wide area by the waterway free of buildings</p>	<p>Easier access to Calder River</p>

Nature corridor between Sowerby Bridge and Copley Allotments Keep the conservation area looking like one	
LOSE/STOP	CHANGE

- **Transport / Traffic**

KEEP	ADD
	<p>More frequent stopping trains</p> <p>20mph speed limit by Tuel Lane school and all schools</p> <p>Cameras at traffic lights</p> <p>A new relief road</p> <p>Cycle paths so that there is no excuse for riding on pavements</p> <p>Better public transport</p> <p>A scheme to allow traffic to flow easier</p> <p>Ticket office and waiting room to the train station</p>
LOSE/STOP	CHANGE
<p>Cars parking on pavements and make it safer for pedestrians</p> <p>Fast driving speeds</p> <p>The buildings at the bottom of West Street to change the traffic flow</p>	<p>Re-route traffic via a bypass</p> <p>The way traffic clogs up Sowerby Bridge when the motorway has a pile-up</p> <p>Open up the railway arch tunnel on Holmes Road to allow lorries to bypass Sowerby Bridge town centre</p>

APPENDIX: RAW DATA

1 What residents love about their area

Environment & countryside	Transport	People	Social facilities	Buildings
I love the proximity of the countryside	Good train service	The people who live here	Rush bearing Festival	Character Victorian properties
I love the surrounding countryside	Cheap Metro train	The young people and their ideas for the town	Great little pubs, restaurants, places to meet	Lots of historic buildings
I can walk to work through woodland	Good rail links to the cities	I like the neighbours (the ones I've met so far)	Youth clubs nearby	The traditional style houses
The canals	Good access to major cities	Friendly people	Social	I love the look of the houses in Sowerby Bridge (traditional houses)
Canals and waterways are a real, unique feature	Easy access by road and rail to lots of other places along valley and beyond	A very homely area	Free use of computers in library	Independent shops
I love the sound of the weir and birdsong	The access to roads and motorways	Friendly strangers	Excellent new sports centre and swimming pool	Local shops
Water water everywhere – canal and river	Cheap(ish) petrol and the wedding cars	Family living in area	Scarecrow Festival Trail	The library and staff
The geese on the river		Friendly lock keepers	Just a great place to be	I love Sowerby Bridge High School
Local walks		Small civil structure, so easy to get to know and work with e.g. Council officers	Groups for over 50s	
Quintessential Pennine settlement, with urban heritage set in close proximity to hills and countryside		'Totally locally' has its base here	Real ale pubs	
Looking at views from houses, see fields (rural) quiet, calm the surrounding areas for countryside and moors		Still fairly safe	Indian restaurants	
Nearness to the moors			I love restaurants and bars	
Easy access to the hills for walking			Swimming pool availability	
Wildlife – deer and kingfisher			Free use of computers in library	
I like the nearness of the countryside			Tourist potential to be built on	
I love the weather				
I really appreciate the closeness of				

Environment & countryside	Transport	People	Social facilities	Buildings
<p>countryside to town</p> <p>Only a short distance along canals in each direction to get out of urban environment</p> <p>The varying scenery</p> <p>Canal barges – very colourful</p> <p>I love the views</p> <p>Tuel Lane Deep Lock – the deepest on an inland waterway in Britain</p>				

2 Associated positive impacts

Well-being feeling	Recreation	Social
<p>Feelings of history all around</p> <p>Proud of local heritage</p> <p>Connection with ancestors lives</p> <p>Tidy, peaceful</p> <p>Being able to walk to the shops</p> <p>No 'dark satanic mills'</p> <p>Compact</p> <p>Problem free – safe, health facilities available, adequate basic facilities</p> <p>Excitement of possibility to release Sowerby potential</p>	<p>Sense of 'escape' and relaxation along the canals</p> <p>From my front room I can see fields, farms and trees – very relaxing. Great to walk on the tops and blow away the cobwebs</p> <p>Ryburn Valley is a treasure.</p> <p>Rochdale Canal in summer.</p> <p>Enjoyment of walking along the canals to the shops</p> <p>Open countryside an escape from hemmed-in quality of tightly stacked housing</p> <p>Uplifting spirits when walking in surrounding</p> <p>Love convenience of places to walk in natural surroundings</p> <p>Nice view of canal and countryside</p> <p>Just today I walked along the canal to SB town centre – excellent!</p> <p>Enjoy cycling around SB (but not through it!)</p> <p>Sight of windmills on the moors</p> <p>River Calder can change from serene to scary after a heavy rain</p> <p>The views of SB from Warley</p> <p>The canals provide lots of entertainment for all ages</p> <p>Access to whole new 'boating world' – a new environment and opportunities</p>	<p>Enjoy the safe and friendly pubs and restaurants</p> <p>Pleasure at saying 'hello' at bus stops</p> <p>Tai Chi class</p> <p>Photography class</p> <p>Friday Reach-Out Club</p> <p>Lots of good venues for music</p> <p>Good social life in bars and restaurants</p> <p>Still finding characters among the population</p> <p>Great social life, always meeting new people</p> <p>Having a coffee and a sandwich at the station</p> <p>Older folks have many tales to tell of a town well loved</p> <p>Strong sense of community compared to other places</p> <p>Social 'hub' in the library</p> <p>Feel quite safe at school</p> <p>Sowerby has a good community</p> <p>Feeling safe in the town</p> <p>Don't have to travel very far to school</p> <p>Sowerby High have got the best Deaf support than other schools in Calderdale</p> <p>Good social interactions (based on the people)</p> <p>Meeting in The Works public house</p>

Well-being feeling	Recreation	Social
	<p>Pleased to be able to walk on the hillsides</p> <p>Good to see some greenery outside of town environment which has little in way of soft landscaping and trees.</p>	<p>Meeting up with mates socially and watching bands play</p> <p>Positive about meeting new friends at school</p> <p>The gentleness of the population</p> <p>Easy going place and people</p> <p>Social life is changing but still varied</p>

3 Resident's concerns about their area

Amenities & Shopping	Open spaces	Traffic	Image	Housing	Transport
<p>Too many takeaways</p> <p>No cinema</p> <p>Too many empty shops</p> <p>Horrible new market – too small with 'greasy Joes Café' on main street</p> <p>Monopoly by Tesco's – the worst of the big 4 supermarkets</p> <p>Need more modern shops in town (Primark etc)</p> <p>Too many eating houses</p> <p>No community arts spaces</p> <p>Market no good for people in wheelchairs and with prams</p> <p>Not enough Deaf awareness in Sowerby and other public services</p> <p>Little investment in the potential of Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Too much emphasis on night-time economy instead of daytime amenity</p>	<p>Parks isolated from town centre</p> <p>Lack of open space for sitting in centre</p> <p>Town needs more open space in the centre</p> <p>Allan Park not recognised</p> <p>Neglected playing fields</p> <p>No square or central space as a focal point for the town</p> <p>River is wasted</p> <p>Unappreciated conservation area</p> <p>Under-used and badly presented (potential) open areas along valley</p>	<p>Standstill traffic</p> <p>Traffic, noise, dirt and fumes</p> <p>Very poor air quality at Bolton Brow (AQM area)</p> <p>Pollution on main roads from cars queuing</p> <p>Dangerous for cyclists</p> <p>Not enough local parking for terrace houses</p> <p>Cars parked on pavements</p> <p>Major thru' route for vehicles</p> <p>Bikes ridden on footpaths</p> <p>Sowerby Bridge is a constant traffic jam</p> <p>Loads of traffic in Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Parking for pool and doctor's is bad</p> <p>Worried about pot holes in roads</p> <p>Nowhere to park</p> <p>Traffic doesn't flow as well as it could</p>	<p>'Poor relation' status vis-à-vis Halifax, Hebden, Tod</p> <p>Town split into 2 areas</p> <p>Dog poo!</p> <p>Too many groups standing outside pubs late at night</p> <p>Industrial areas are scruffy</p> <p>West Street left out of town area</p> <p>Too much mess after weekend revels</p> <p>Lack of litter bins increases amount of rubbish</p> <p>Frustration at tatty marina area where it could be great</p> <p>We risk losing tourism by over-development</p> <p>Old and scruffy industrial buildings</p> <p>Market in evening is a magnet for vandalism</p> <p>Drugs, street-drinking and cannabis culture</p> <p>Ugly 60s buildings –</p>	<p>High rise flats out of price</p> <p>Poorly built new properties with bad design</p> <p>Little amenity by way of open space and unattractive to families</p> <p>The growth in population</p> <p>Too many new housing developments planned</p> <p>Unfinished building projects</p> <p>Increase cost of housing due to incomers</p> <p>Need to make old buildings safe; don't knock them down but mend them and paint them</p> <p>Houses on Tuel Lane still empty</p> <p>Chapel Conversion Bolton Brow unfinished</p> <p>Badly designed new builds don't fit in</p> <p>Developments are started and then left unfinished</p>	<p>Pedestrian access to railway station</p> <p>Lack of ticket office in railway station</p> <p>No waiting room in railway station</p> <p>Not enough trains stopping for the size of town</p> <p>Northern Rail</p> <p>Not enough stopping trains</p>

Amenities & Shopping	Open spaces	Traffic	Image	Housing	Transport
<p>Nowhere near centre, north or west of town for bored youth to go</p> <p>The lack of facilities in the future</p> <p>Dearth of daytime amenities and facilities e.g. shops, built tourist attractions, open spaces in centre</p> <p>Utilitarian shopping rather than pleasant venues</p>		I'm concerned about traffic	<p>flats & maisonettes – blocking views and blighting appearance of the area</p> <p>I'm concerned about the powerlessness local people feel about too much development</p> <p>Historical buildings which are empty and unused and need to be used</p> <p>The main street and main buildings are tired and dusty</p> <p>Health related premises (chemists, dentists, GPs) are low quality and not professional</p> <p>Council neglect of civic buildings</p>		

4 Associated negative impacts

Buildings	Planning decisions	Traffic	Air Quality
<p>Urban sprawl will lead to Sowerby Bridge centre becoming like a ghost town</p> <p>Ugly buildings like the flats spoil potentially lovely views, as does much of the new building e.g. Burnley Rd</p> <p>Upset that the old council buildings and fire station have been left unused for so long</p> <p>Unloved buildings make it look scruffy which encourages drugs etc.</p> <p>Low quality of new build housing will have a long term effect on this historic town – disappointed</p> <p>Too many houses built in</p>	<p>The people making big decisions do not live in Sowerby and do not intend to hang around</p> <p>WCVR money has been spent mainly in Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd</p> <p>Local councillors do not live in Sowerby Bridge and do not understand problems</p> <p>I get angry at the council not listening to local citizens</p> <p>I feel desperately concerned and worried at potentially disastrous planning decisions which will / do erode my amenity</p>	<p>The constant stream of traffic is debilitating</p> <p>Tesco sited to cause traffic congestion</p> <p>More traffic means more pollution</p> <p>Heavy traffic makes me avoid Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Too much traffic can lead to stress</p> <p>I feel very vulnerable cycling though Sowerby bridge</p> <p>High volumes of traffic = high volumes of noise</p> <p>I tailor travel times to avoid congestion</p> <p>No comprehensive plan for local travel</p>	<p>Air quality can be poor because of traffic flow</p> <p>Air quality bad at peak times when walking through main street</p> <p>Pollution causes health problems</p> <p>Poor air quality can lead to or increase respiratory illness</p> <p>Can't sit in a beer garden or outside café in summer due to air pollution</p>

Buildings	Planning decisions	Traffic	Air Quality
<p>large gardens – looking squashed</p> <p>Historically, I don't feel Sowerby Bridge has been listened to or involved in things – so pervasive feeling of resignation to things being done better</p> <p>Empty new-build houses on my road have attracted drug-dealing, as not overlooked</p> <p>Empty shops need to be made use of and not left to look like a deserted area</p> <p>Many areas look so dirty and squalid, and never cleaned, that I probably wouldn't want to retire so near to the centre</p> <p>I feel embarrassed about the amount of litter on the streets</p> <p>Brow Chapel makes town look uncared for as we enter</p> <p>I feel unhappy about our historical buildings being neglected</p> <p>Scruffy buildings make me feel drab</p>		<p>Feeling unsafe on pavement from cyclists and parked cars</p> <p>Bad traffic always makes me late</p> <p>Don't sit, drink coffee, people watch</p> <p>Travel to Halifax/Hebden is easier and so used more than popping around Sowerby</p>	
Shops	Lack	Safety	Misc
<p>I much prefer to shop in other towns as the choice here is so limited</p> <p>Take-aways sited on double yellow lines causing traffic congestion</p> <p>Mainly fashion shops</p> <p>Argue (with spouse) about whether Lidl image is worse than Tesco and why can't shop at a 'Waitrose'</p> <p>Shops are good for young folk. Older folk have to shop elsewhere</p>	<p>Feeling sad that we're not making the best of what we've got</p> <p>Access to great rivers is poor = untapped potential</p> <p>Feeling of untapped potential to work with environmental attractions</p> <p>Unable to walk ROUND Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Travel to Hebden for walk round town (better quality place)</p> <p>I feel unhappy that the nature of the world is a low priority</p> <p>Every service needs more disability awareness</p>	<p>The 'night-time economy' and street-drinking can feel intimidating</p> <p>Avoid certain areas late weekend nights</p> <p>Feeling threatened by drunken groups outside late opening pubs and clubs</p> <p>Poor looking environment encourages poor behaviour</p> <p>Train station doesn't make me feel safe at night because of lack of facilities</p>	<p>Poor approach to train station</p> <p>Not attractive to incoming ventures</p> <p>Anger (at bankers) reawakened by Bank HQ</p>

5 Wishes for the future

<p>Environment</p>	<p>Leave moorland alone</p> <p>Restore all dry stone walls</p> <p>I wish for protection for the wildlife</p> <p>Create a protected wildlife area on the canal and river</p> <p>For more wildlife living and thriving</p> <p>I wish Copley Valley would be left alone</p> <p>I wish West Street area was as nice as The Moorings</p> <p>The river was sunny and bubbling with attractive walkways</p> <p>I wish the countryside to be protected</p> <p>I'd like some nature to be left for our children</p> <p>Don't join up the towns and villages with ribbon development</p> <p>It would be nice if there were some green fields left</p> <p>I would love for the Linear Park concept (Rochdale Canal) to be extended along the Calder and Hebble so that it is protected from ugly, tall, urban housing all along the towpath</p> <p>I wish for places to sit in the town centre with flowers, trees and grass</p> <p>Protect Norland Moor, Warley Moor and moorland above Sowerby from building developments</p> <p>The Lock Hill Mills site by Tuel Tunnel to become a 'town green' with Jolly Sailor a heritage visitor centre and tea rooms</p> <p>I wish my cemetery plot was looking good</p>
<p>Cleanliness and pollution</p>	<p>Clean air</p> <p>I wish for clean streets</p> <p>Clean dirty old buildings</p> <p>Clean, safe pavements</p> <p>Clean, safe parks</p>
<p>Building</p>	<p>Demolish derelict buildings and use the space for safe and attractive leisure parks</p> <p>I'd like our historic buildings to be protected and loved</p> <p>Ensure new build housing is of a high quality</p> <p>Main street was full of little shops with 'heritage' shop fronts</p> <p>Renovate old buildings to a high standard</p> <p>The history of the town told in the buildings to be saved</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>I wish for a relief road via Holmes Rd for Sowerby Bridge centre</p> <p>Create safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians</p> <p>I wish more public would use public transport</p> <p>I wish for free flowing traffic</p> <p>I wish for free flowing traffic through Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Want 24hour bus service</p> <p>I wish for an attractive train station which welcomes people to Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Trains stop every 15 mins to Leeds & Manchester</p> <p>Plenty of pedestrianisation</p> <p>Re-route main through road</p>
<p>Leisure</p>	<p>I wish for a network of locally way marked footpaths</p> <p>Sowerby Bridge to have a much needed Tourist Information Centre near the Wharf</p> <p>Leisure activities on canals</p> <p>Ensure pub culture does not mimic Halifax</p> <p>A safe, easily accessible open space</p> <p>Install public art and sculpture</p> <p>I wish for lots of local free amenities for young people to use</p> <p>Royal family holidayed here</p>

Shops etc	<p>Make Sowerby Bridge a foodie's paradise</p> <p>Quality advice service units in town</p> <p>Empty and dirty shops to be revitalised - not turned into take-aways and radio cab offices</p> <p>24 hour shops and restaurants</p>
Political and social activity	<p>Councillors who live in Sowerby Bridge and care about the place</p> <p>A locally elected council</p> <p>I wish the council would listen</p> <p>If only we had the money to put this town good again</p> <p>Councillors and MP had more visible surgeries in town</p> <p>Full employment</p> <p>Shorter working hours and bigger pint pots!</p>
Education and young people	<p>Schools to be places of excellence</p> <p>Schools open to whole use by the community</p> <p>Rishworth school was like Eton</p> <p>BSL lessons in school and BSL cafes</p> <p>I wish for local jobs for my grandchildren</p> <p>Posher schools and better quality schools</p> <p>Local history taught in schools</p>
Misc	<p>People aspired to live here</p> <p>Social inter-racial inter-faith discussion groups</p> <p>Wi-Fi reception was superb</p> <p>There to be lots more employment opportunities e.g. through tourism, not just provision for light industries</p>

6 Perceived impacts on wishes on quality of life

Feeling	<p>Proud</p> <p>Safe</p> <p>Proud to live here</p> <p>Empowered</p> <p>Clean air in my lungs</p> <p>Happy to live in Sowerby Bridge with its beautiful surroundings</p> <p>Proud to show my town off to visitors and publicise its attractions to all</p> <p>Contented, safe and part of the world</p> <p>Feeling unthreatened by thoughtless drivers</p> <p>A sense of work well done and proud to be here</p> <p>I will be feeling calm because my wishes will have been listened to</p> <p>Healthier and happier in clean air</p> <p>I will be feeling happy that my grandchildren have local jobs and facilities</p> <p>Thanks to global warming - sunburnt</p>
Thinking/Saying	<p>Retiring here was the best decision I made</p> <p>Come and live in Sowerby Bridge!</p> <p>Isn't it quiet in Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Amen</p> <p>I will be telling my family what a wonderful place I live in</p> <p>Come and spend time in Sowerby Bridge, it's a great place</p> <p>These electric buses are quiet</p> <p>To my grand children, 'the fools once planned to cover this in concrete'</p> <p>I love Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>I will be thinking this is the best place on the planet</p> <p>Speaking to more people who are just as happy as me</p>

	<p>I will be telling my grandchildren how good it is they have this town to live in</p> <p>There is appropriate low-level housing with good garden space for me to retire locally, away from steps and hills</p>
Doing	<p>Sitting in the new park by Lock 2 off Wharf Street at Lock Hill Mills, having a cup of tea and enjoying the views</p> <p>Chatting, wining, dining</p> <p>I will be meeting old friends in a vibrant town centre</p> <p>Getting up and walking to work</p> <p>I will be living here instead of retiring elsewhere</p> <p>Living in a bungalow by the river</p> <p>I will be using the train instead of driving</p> <p>More activities in Sowerby Bridge as it is better than it has ever been</p> <p>Enjoying the countryside, cycling and walking</p> <p>Travelling on a proper quality bus service to The Works for a pint</p> <p>Working in the new Tourist Information Centre, proud of Sowerby Bridge as truly the Gateway to the South Pennines</p> <p>Spending more time shopping in the new clean centre</p> <p>Talk to more people</p> <p>Use the park and leisure facilities more</p> <p>Happily doing what I do now – walking along the river untroubled by high rises</p> <p>Continuing to walk to Copley along the tree-lined, sunny towpath with views of the Norland hills</p> <p>Enjoying a main street with minimum traffic</p> <p>Eating in a 3 star Michelin restaurant</p> <p>I'll be spending time in a clean environment</p>
Seeing	<p>Norland hillside through clean air</p> <p>Nice buildings, a river bank, bustling marina, character-full shops</p> <p>The local green environment and paved areas and sculptures</p> <p>More clean buildings more happy contented people</p> <p>Clean streets with no more cans, bottles, cigarette packets and fag ends</p> <p>Having an open space in the town centre for events</p> <p>No fewer green field than now</p> <p>Great local foods at the farmer's market</p> <p>Clean streets, jam free roads, historic buildings restored to a high quality</p> <p>I'll be seeing lovely farmland from my riverside walk</p> <p>Flowers and wildlife</p> <p>Seeing a play in the new town square</p> <p>Seeing public art and water features</p>

7 Suggested positive actions

KEEP	<p>All the green spaces in Sowerby Bridge and surrounding areas</p> <p>The balance of urban and rural areas</p> <p>The Old Fire Station council building</p> <p>Keep the small town feel</p> <p>The open space by The Jolly Sailor</p> <p>The special areas special</p> <p>Wildlife havens and fishing areas e.g. dams</p> <p>A wide area along the waterways free of buildings</p> <p>Nature corridor between Sowerby Bridge and Copley</p> <p>Allotments</p> <p>Independent real ale pubs</p>
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	<p>The gardens and green spaces, swimming pool and library</p> <p>Keep the conservation area looking like one</p>
LOSE/STOP	<p>Lose the dirt from the buildings</p> <p>GenR8 as council partners for their inappropriate designs and misleading so-called consultations to local residents</p> <p>Close the takeaways in the town centre</p> <p>Lose drug dealers driving around the streets</p> <p>Lose the dirt on the street</p> <p>Stop cars parking on pavements and make it safer for pedestrians</p> <p>Councillors living elsewhere</p> <p>Lose the loutish behaviour</p> <p>Drinking on the streets like in Manchester</p> <p>Lose fast driving speeds</p> <p>The crazy idea to build on Copley Valley flood plain</p> <p>Licensed premises customers from littering the areas around the canals with glasses, bottles and smoking debris</p> <p>The buildings at the bottom of West Street to change the traffic flow</p> <p>Stop inappropriate 3-storey massed rows of urban townhouses directly tow-path side at Sterne Mills</p> <p>Stop the building of poor quality homes</p>
CHANGE	<p>Re-route traffic via a bypass</p> <p>The ward structure to a more logical one, to include Sowerby, Norland and Warley within Sowerby Bridge</p> <p>Change the way traffic clogs up Sowerby Bridge when the motorway has a pile-up</p> <p>Change the car park in front of The Moorings into a canal side town square</p> <p>Change the use of old buildings as apartments</p> <p>Demand co-ordinated shop frontages on street runs</p> <p>Change planning law so that positive improvement is imposed on those owning sub-standard or low quality / ill-maintained buildings</p> <p>Open up the railway arch tunnel on Holmes Road to allow lorries to bypass Sowerby Bridge town centre</p> <p>Drive up education standards</p>
ADD	<p>More to attract visitors - not drive them away</p> <p>More litter bins and fine signs - plus more litter wardens to enforce these</p> <p>More parking</p> <p>More frequent stopping trains</p> <p>Easier access to Calder River</p> <p>20mph speed limit by Tuel Lane school and all of the schools</p> <p>More CCTV to deter vandalism</p> <p>Litter bins and dog poo bins</p> <p>Add cameras to traffic lights</p> <p>Add a new relief road</p> <p>Cycle paths so that there is no excuse for riding on pavements</p> <p>Put in more cobblestone features</p> <p>More diverse eating places (variety)</p> <p>Better public transport</p> <p>Sustainable energy systems</p> <p>Accountability to planning system</p> <p>Public art</p> <p>A new history trail around town</p> <p>Open up the riverside for walks</p>

	<p>Detailed specifications for development</p> <p>A bandstand by the wharf to hear brass bands</p> <p>Add responsibility for take-aways to clean round the area in front and surrounding their shops</p> <p>A scheme to allow traffic to flow easier</p> <p>Use the space around The Moorings for leisure facilities</p> <p>A green energy source to the Calder</p> <p>Micro-generation of electricity by use of the river</p> <p>Ticket office and waiting room to the train station</p>
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