

Analysis Report- BHCC community consultation on LGR options

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

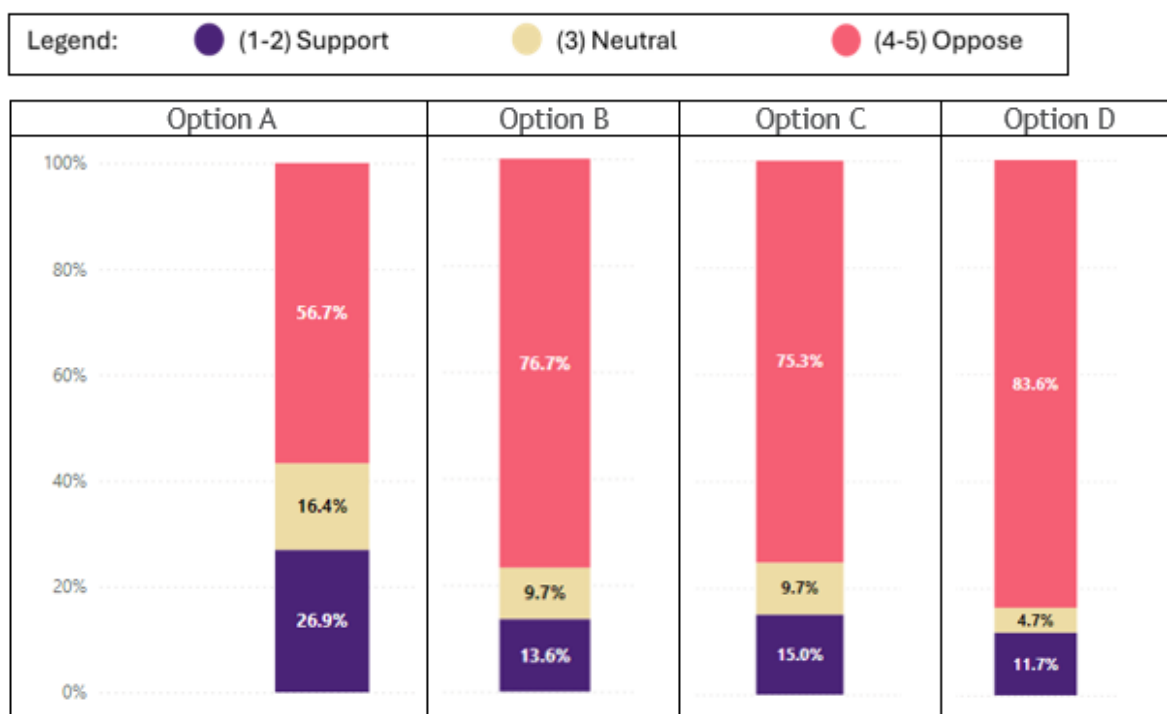
Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) published a community consultation, inviting responses to a public survey that closed on 25th August 2025. The principal subject of the survey were proposals developed by the council under the Local Government Reform process that requires proposals to be submitted to Ministry of Communities Homes & Local Government (MHCLG) on 26th September 2025.

The Options

The council set out four options for respondents to consider and comment on:

- Option A - BHCC merging with the wards of East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven
- Option B - BHCC merging with the wards of East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Kingston
- Option C - BHCC merging with the wards of East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Newhaven
- Option D - BHCC merging with the wards of East Saltdean, Peacehaven, Newhaven and Kingston

While none of the options had an overall positive level of support, at the highest level of analysis Option A was the most supported across all respondents.



Wider Themes from the Analysis

The community's feedback through this survey reveals a complex picture: a mixture of caution, scepticism, misunderstanding (of the process currently underway) but also hope. While some respondents see reorganisation as a chance to create a stronger, more capable council, many view it with concern and distrust. The overarching sentiment appears to be

that change must be justified clearly and designed carefully to avoid eroding local identity, worsening services, or concentrating power in Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) in relation to communities or areas that have differing characteristics.

At the heart of respondents' concerns seems to be two key issues: representation and trust. People are concerned about financial viability (i.e. debt inheritance and council tax harmonisation) and want to know that resources will be shared fairly, their voices will continue to matter, and that decision-making will not become more remote. Linked to this is a strong sense of identity and place, particularly from respondents in more rural areas with strong parish and village attachment, where historic ties to Lewes and East Sussex appear to be deeply felt. Any successful reorganisation involving or impacting these areas will need to recognise, respect and act on these identities and issues.

Service quality is another clear theme. There appears to be a perception that Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) is not always delivering on its current responsibilities, and this seems to undermine confidence in its ability to take on more. Respondents are particularly concerned about vulnerable groups (e.g. children with SEND, families and adults needing care), infrastructure capacity (e.g. waste, congestion on the A259 corridor), and the protection of green spaces. At the same time, some see the proposals as an opportunity for a larger council to attract investment and act decisively to deliver improvements, but only if a clear plan for service delivery and infrastructure investment is communicated.

Understanding of, and trust in, the process itself must be established and carefully supported. There was confusion about whether people could stay with existing councils, and calls for clearer information. Some participants feel the consultation has been rushed or biased, which risks alienating the very communities whose support will be needed. It is clear that many respondents were unaware that the severe constraints of both the timeline for the process imposed by central government, as well as the guidance from MHCLG on the nature and extent of the engagement, have materially impacted on the council's ability to undertake a more meaningful process.

Finally, the balance of respondents to the survey is a potentially important consideration when reviewing the outcomes, themes and insight shared in this report. There was a significantly higher number of responses from non-residents of BHCC, including a material proportion from outside the areas proposed for merging within the survey, who may not have current or accurate awareness of service performance. There also appears to have been an impactful anti-Brighton campaign in the surrounding areas and we may see the influence of this in some of the responses. While all responses to the survey have been given equal weight in this analysis, it is possible that some of the perspectives included in the analysis have been influenced by the statistical make-up of the responses.

2. Background

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) published a community consultation, inviting responses to a public survey that closed on 25th August 2025. BHCC consulted on four options (A, B, C and D shown below), all involving merging with wards to the east of the city currently under the administration of the two-tier council area (East Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council).

These options were based on the feedback and evidence they learned from community engagement that was conducted in April 2025 and supported by service, financial and demographic data gathered in the intervening period.

Option A: strengthening the eastern edge

This option includes East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven, with an estimated population of 301,130.



Option B: extending to the eastern downs

This option includes East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Kingston, with an estimated population of 303,117.



Option C: uniting the coastal corridor

This option includes East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Newhaven, with an estimated population of 313,955.



Option D: coast and downs partnership

This option includes East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven, Newhaven and Kingston, with an estimated population of 315,942.



This report sets out the principles, approach, plan and results of analysis carried out on the data received through this online consultation. It has been completed by Ignite Consulting Ltd, who are supporting BHCC with their submission to the government.

2.1 Summary of the survey

The survey consists of 23 optional questions. Respondents were led through the survey questions in the following order but were able to skip questions and return to them later if they wished.

Section	Question number	Response structure	Data type
About you	1. How are you primarily responding?	Select one	Quantitative
	2. What is your full postcode?	Free text	Quantitative
What matters to you	3. Which of the following Brighton & Hove services have you used in the last 12 months?	Select multiple	Quantitative
	4. Do you use similar services in other areas?	Select one	Quantitative
	5. If change does happen and your areas becomes part of a merged larger council, what would be most important to protect or preserve?	Free text	Qualitative
	6. What concerns, if any, do you have about how local councils will change through reorganisation?	Free text	Qualitative
Your views on the proposed option A	7. To what extent do you support or oppose option A: strengthening the eastern edge	Score from 1-5	Quantitative
	8. What are your main reasons for your answer?	Free text	Qualitative
Your views on the proposed option B	9. To what extent do you support or oppose option B: extending to the eastern downs	Score from 1-5	Quantitative
	10. What are your main reasons for your answer?	Free text	Qualitative
Your views on the proposed option C	11. To what extent do you support or oppose option C: uniting the costal corridor	Score from 1-5	Quantitative
	12. What are your main reasons for your answer?	Free text	Qualitative
Your views on the proposed option D	13. To what extent do you support or oppose option D: Coast and Downs Partnership	Score from 1-5	Quantitative
	14. What are your main reasons for your answer?	Free text	Qualitative
Further Comments	15. Do you have any final comments about how Brighton & Hove should be organised in future, or about any of the proposals you've seen?	Free text	Qualitative
Equalities monitoring questions	16. Do you want to answer the following equalities monitoring questions?	Yes / No	Quantitative
	17. What is your age?	Select one	Quantitative
	18. What best describes your gender?	Select one (free text option if you select 'other')	Quantitative

	19. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?	Select one	Quantitative
	20. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?	Select one (free text option if you select 'other')	Quantitative
	21. How would you describe your ethnic origin?	Select one (free text option if you select 'other')	Quantitative
	22. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?	Select one	Quantitative
	23. Please select your health condition, illness or disability from the list below	Select one (free text option if you select 'other')	Quantitative

3. Approach and methodology summary

This section summarises the methodology with the full methodology found in the Appendix (section 2 Full methodology).

3.1 Aims and objectives for the analysis:

- To determine the level of public support for Options A, B, C and D
- To understand the nuance of support for each option and what this tells us about the strengths and challenges of each option
- To identify if support varies by geographic area (wards using first part of postcode) or demographic group (e.g. age range)
- To gather information that will support the implementation of Local Government reorganisation (LGR) i.e. what services are people concerned about, how do they use services, what misconceptions will need to be addressed by communications
- To ensure that there is fair and wide representation in the responses (about you, equalities monitoring).

3.2 Data handling procedures:

Data handling procedures covered rules around anonymisation of data, data security, data cleansing and the tools that were used to support analysis with their justification. The full data handling procedures are set out in Appendix (section 2.1 Data handling procedures). All procedures were carried out in line with the UK GDPR principles of lawfulness, fairness, accuracy, purpose limitation, data minimisation, integrity and confidentiality, and accountability. Data was processed under a signed Data Processing Agreement (DPA), with secure storage and access limited to authorised project staff.

3.3 Analysis methodology:

The analysis will be guided by three core principles:

1. Transparency, meaning every decision from data cleaning to statistical analysis will be documented and fully justifiable
2. Objectivity, ensuring the methodology is designed to reveal what the data shows rather than support any pre-determined outcome
3. Reproducibility, so that an independent analyst could take the raw data and accompanying documentation and exactly replicate the final results.

3.3.1 Quantitative methodology

Data reconciliation and validation

Survey data was reconciled through a structured process. Response counts were manually verified in Excel and cross-checked in Power BI by both volume and unique ID. This ensured no missing or duplicated records. Two small discrepancies were identified in Q5 and Q6 (178 records in total, less than 1% of the dataset), but these did not affect the overall analysis.

Building the data model

A new Power BI file was created linking the golden dataset with external ONS geography

files. Qualitative datasets for Q5, Q6, and the option questions were appended to create a consolidated dataset. Unique respondent IDs linked qualitative and survey data, and postcodes were mapped to wards and Local Authority Districts.

Preparing variables for analysis

Several calculated fields and tables were developed to standardise and structure the data. These included grouping age into ONS categories, mapping resident vs non-resident status, categorising option scores (support, neutral, oppose), and restructuring service usage and health condition responses for analysis.

Geospatial mapping and visualisation

Icon Map Pro was used to present ward-level variations in support, neutrality, and opposition for each option. Maps applied the agreed colour scheme and ward boundaries to ensure clear and consistent visualisation.

Completeness and representation

All 2,307 responses were included in the analysis. Blank responses were not excluded but grouped as “Not Stated” to ensure full representation. Visuals therefore reflected the complete dataset.

These steps ensured that the quantitative analysis was transparent, reliable, and fully representative of the consultation data.

The full quantitative methodology is provided in Appendix (section 2.2 Methodology - Quantitative analysis).

3.3.2 Qualitative methodology

The qualitative analysis was designed to be as rigorous as possible within the project constraints of limited time and high volume: 7 qualitative questions × 2,307 responses (≈16,149 free text answers). To maximise validity and reliability at this scale, the work was structured at three levels. Rigour covered the processes followed to ensure validity and reliability, aligned with Braun and Clarke’s framework and applied consistently across teams. Analysis referred to the systematic coding and theming of every answer conducted line by line. Nuance and narratives meant identifying the richness beyond counts through the creation of “hypotheses for the narratives”.

Inductive vs deductive

The analysis combined deductive and inductive approaches. Draft codes were created using MHCLG criteria for Local Government reorganisation, a PESTLE framework, and an early cut of responses, but these were treated as provisional. New codes were introduced inductively where the data required, ensuring findings reflected what respondents actually said.

Code generation and refinement

AI was used once for an initial categorisation against the draft framework, with all outputs manually reviewed line by line. Analysts refined definitions through regular discussions and sample checks, updating the code lists to capture meaning accurately. Flexibility was maintained so that codes could differ between question sets if required. Due to time pressures, full double-coding of all responses was not possible, though consistency was safeguarded through team calibration.

Systematic line-by-line coding

Analysis was carried out by two teams: one focused on option-based responses and the other on stand-alone questions. Every response was read line by line, with multiple codes applied where necessary to retain richness. For option-based questions, codes were also labelled positive or negative in relation to the option.

Narrative construction and validation

Analysts recorded notes of emerging nuance during coding, which were developed into hypotheses for narratives. Draft narratives were tested in team discussions, with analysts challenging each other and using evidence such as frequency counts and quotes to decide which clusters of notes should become narratives. These drafts were then tested against the raw data and refined into final narratives. Narratives were drawn only from the data, with less common points not elevated, and Q15 was reviewed for new insights rather than fully coded. This process ensured that the narratives reported were firmly grounded in the data and transparently connected back to the original responses.

Cross-checks for validity and reliability

In addition, several safeguards were built in to strengthen validity and reliability:

- **Controlled use of AI:** AI assisted only with initial categorisation; all coding decisions were checked manually against agreed definitions.
- **Team separation and naming:** the options team and the stand-alone questions team ensured consistent application within each dataset.
- **Line by line manual coding:** every response was individually assessed; multiple codes captured richness.
- **Golden copy and working copies:** an untouched master dataset was preserved; all preparation occurred on duplicates.
- **Inclusive coding rule:** non-responses were not coded; otherwise, all answers were retained. No flagging or exclusion of 'outliers' or 'contradictory' responses.
- **Cross-team sample checks:** each team reviewed a subset of the other team's coding to test consistency.
- **Consistency with flexibility:** reliability was checked through discussions, sample reviews, and cross-team comparison; definitions sometimes differed between questions to avoid forcing responses into codes that did not fit.
- **Ongoing calibration:** frequent team discussions supported consistent interpretation and reduced subjectivity.
- **Iterative refinement:** codes and themes were updated as the data required; nothing was forced to fit the initial framework.
- **Narratives and counts compared:** narratives were checked against code frequencies across all seven questions to confirm alignment between qualitative insight and quantitative counts.
- **Traceability:** every narrative and summary links back through themes and codes to the original responses.

- **Respect for question intent:** during final consolidation, common ground was noted without erasing question-specific differences.

This combination of deductive structure, inductive openness, controlled AI use, systematic human checking, and explicit traceability was chosen to maximise validity and reliability while preserving the authenticity and richness of respondents' views.

The full qualitative methodology is provided in Appendix, section 2.3 (Methodology - Qualitative Analysis).

3.3.3 Integration of Qualitative coding with the survey dataset

Once qualitative coding was complete, the coded responses were systematically re-integrated with the survey data to enable triangulation and deeper insight. This process ensured that themes and codes could be analysed not only in isolation but also in relation to response scores and respondent demographics. In total, over 16,000 coded lines were linked back to 2,307 response records.

A key technical challenge was to “flatten” the coded responses into a single row per respondent, allowing direct alignment with the survey data. This was achieved through the unique ID field, which was present in both the golden dataset and the coded qualitative dataset supplied to analysts. Flattening ensured that multiple codes per respondent could be aggregated and represented consistently, without losing the richness of the survey data.

The full integration of the quantitative and qualitative data methodology is provided in Appendix, section 2.4 (Methodology - Integration of qualitative coding with the survey dataset).

3.4 Assumptions and Limitations

There were a number of assumptions that were made throughout the analysis and limitations due to both the structure of the survey itself and the process of analysis. These are summarised below and the full discussion of limitations, including how they were managed, is provided in Appendix, section 2.5 (Assumptions and limitations).

Structure of the survey

1. Duplicate submissions

The survey only captures the primary relationship of the responder with the council and the city. Duplicate submissions may be submitted from individuals skewing the results.

2. Optional questions

All questions are optional resulting in an incomplete data set, threshold for accepting incomplete responses was therefore low and all responses were considered.

3. Human error in answering questions

For example, misreading scale, changing your relationship lens as you complete the survey (e.g. from a resident to a council member of staff)

Analysis

4. Time constraints, team-based division of labour

The volume of responses and tight timetable limited the extent of double-coding across all questions. Work was divided between two teams, which supported consistency within each stream but meant no single analyst reviewed the entire dataset. Question 15 (“Further comments”) was read line by line to capture new insights but not fully coded, so quantitative comparisons are limited.

5. Bias / human margin for error or inconsistency

As with all qualitative analysis, interpretation involves subjectivity. Steps such as line-by-line coding, sample reviews, team discussions, and final consolidation reduced individual bias, but they cannot eliminate it entirely. Minor differences in interpretation may also occur if repeated by another team.

6. Deductive method

The coding began with a deductive framework based on MHCLG criteria for Local Government reorganisation, PESTLE, and early responses. While this provided structure, it may have shaped initial thinking before inductive refinement was applied.

7. Use of AI tooling

An AI tool was used once for an initial organising pass to manage scale. All responses were subsequently reviewed manually, but the involvement of AI still introduces some risk of misclassification compared with wholly manual coding.

8. Loss of detailed nuance through narrative construction and summarising

Narratives were designed to reflect the most common and important issues, meaning points raised by only a small number of respondents were not elevated. This ensured findings represented broader patterns but reduced visibility of minority perspectives.

Safeguards such as line-by-line coding, cross-team discussion, iterative refinement, and explicit traceability reduced risks and increased reliability. However, these measures did

not eliminate the limitations, which should still be considered when interpreting the findings.

Data handling procedures

Potential limitations in data handling

1. Duplicate submissions retained

- By design, duplicates were not identified or removed, since respondents may have multiple roles.
- Limitation: this may slightly inflate counts if some individuals submitted multiple times without disclosing separate perspectives.

2. Incomplete responses included

- All partial responses were retained.
- Limitation: some analyses may be based on smaller denominators, which could affect comparability across questions.

3. Nonsensical or protest data retained

- Inclusive coding meant no subjective exclusions.
- Limitation: while this avoided bias, it may reduce precision where irrelevant entries were included in counts.

4. Discrepancies in reconciliation (Q5 and Q6)

- Around 178 records were not fully reconciled.
- Limitation: this could marginally affect demographic linkage or coding completeness, though not overall patterns.

5. Manual processes

- Some checks (Excel filtering, manual coding) involved human handling.
- Limitation: introduces a small margin for human error, despite audit trail and validation.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographic data

The survey was published online as part of a month-long public engagement exercise aimed at the local community within Brighton & Hove (B&H). A total of 2283 online responses and 24 physical responses were received.

Question 1 asked respondents what their relationship with the council was and how they were responding to the survey. The spread of responses is shown below, with the highest proportion of responses from non-residents of Brighton & Hove.

Question 1 - Relationship with the council	Number of responses	% of total responses
Resident of BHCC	717	31%
Non-resident of BHCC	1344	58%
Council employee, public sector stakeholder, local business, local charity or voluntary organisation	132	6%
No answer / other selected	114	5%
Total	2307	100%

Question 2 asked respondents to provide their postcode and this data was used to more accurately map all responses into three categories:

1. Residents - wards within Brighton & Hove
2. Non-residents - wards outside of Brighton & Hove
3. Unknown - where no postcode was provided or partially provided and we were unable to map the location to a ward.

This mapping has been used to triangulate and segment responses to other questions throughout this analysis, wherever the data is split by residents and non-residents.

A series of equalities questions (Q15 - Q23) were asked as part of the survey to capture the demographics around age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability of respondents. This data is provided in the Appendix section 1.1.2 (About you and demographic data).

4.2 Service usage and what matters to respondents

Questions 3 and 4 asked respondents about the services that they use both in Brighton & Hove and in other areas. A summary of responses is provided below as well as pie charts later in this section.

<i>Question 3 - Which of the following Brighton & Hove services have you used in the last 12 months?</i>	% of respondents who use each service, by demographic		
	All	B&H Residents	Non-residents
Bus or transport network	33%	28%	39%
Children's or youth services	2%	3%	2%
Council housing or homelessness advice	2%	2%	1%
Libraries or cultural venues	16%	21%	11%
Mental health support in schools	1%	1%	1%
Parks and seafront	25%	27%	21%
Public health like health checks or vaccinations	13%	17%	9%
None of the above	7%	0%	15%

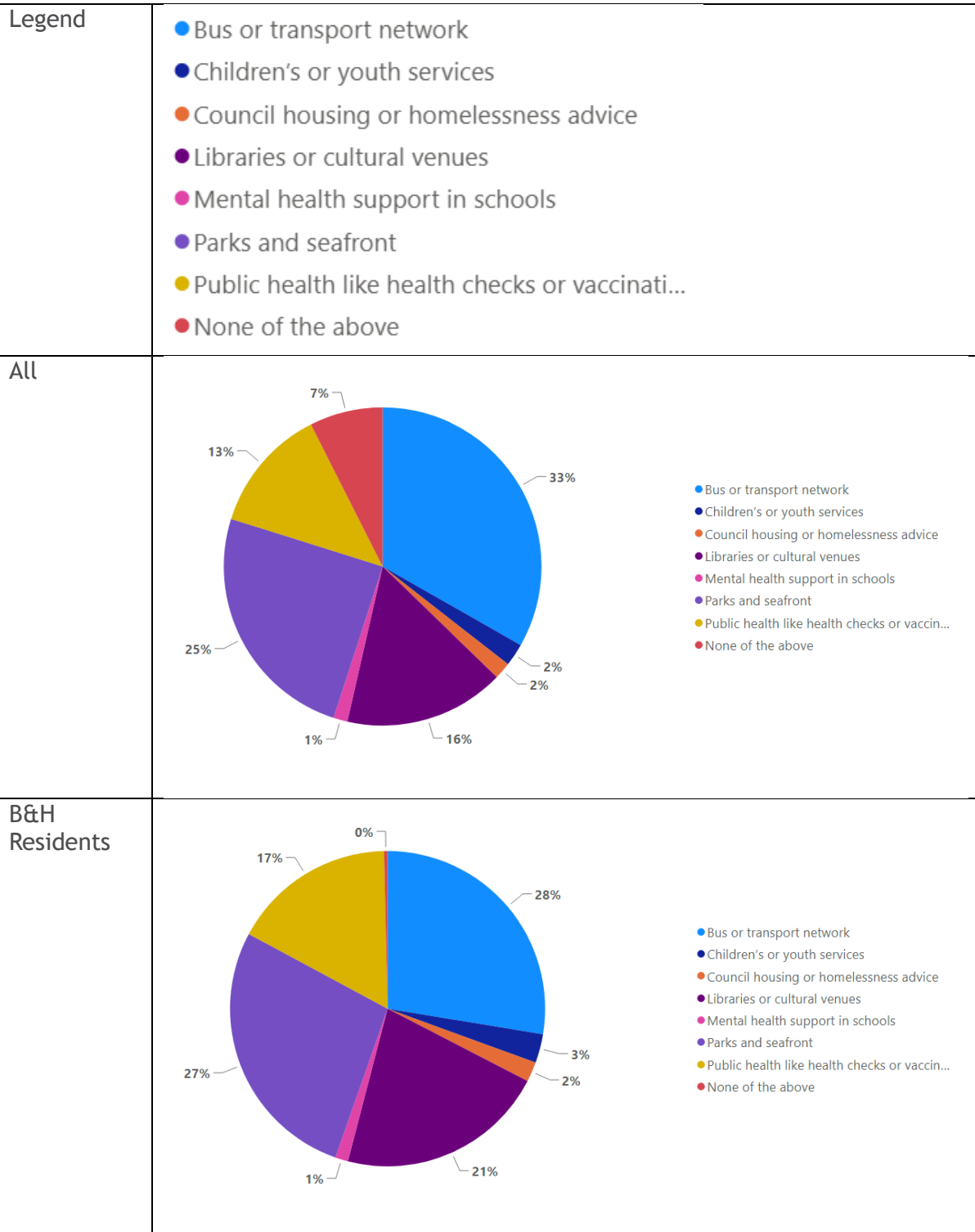
Respondents highlighted frequent use of Brighton & Hove's transport network and outdoor spaces, particularly the parks and seafront. Local residents reported drawing on a wider range of services, including parks, the seafront, libraries, cultural venues, and public health provision, while non-residents tended to focus mainly on transport and outdoor amenities. A larger proportion of non-residents stated they did not use any of the services listed.

<i>Question 4 - Do you use similar services in other areas?</i>	Response, by demographic		
	All	B&H Residents	Non-residents
Yes	49%	17%	69%
No	27%	65%	9%
Not stated	21%	16%	19%
Don't know / not sure	3%	3%	2%

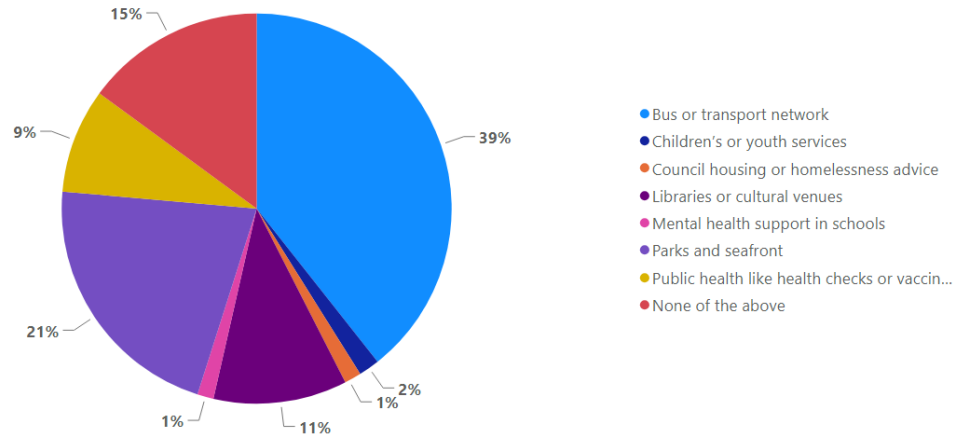
When asked about using similar services in other areas, Brighton & Hove residents generally indicated that they rely mainly on local provision, with few looking elsewhere. In contrast, non-residents were much more likely to make use of equivalent services in their own or other locations.

Overall, the findings suggest that residents and non-residents interact with Brighton & Hove services in very different ways. Local residents depend on a broad range of services within the city and are less inclined to seek alternatives elsewhere. Non-residents, on the other hand, mainly use transport and outdoor amenities when visiting, while continuing to access most other services in their own areas. This highlights Brighton & Hove's role as both a provider of essential services for its residents and a gateway destination for visitors, with transport and public spaces acting as the primary points of connection.

Question 3 - Which of the following Brighton & Hove services have you used in the last 12 months?



Non-B&H residents

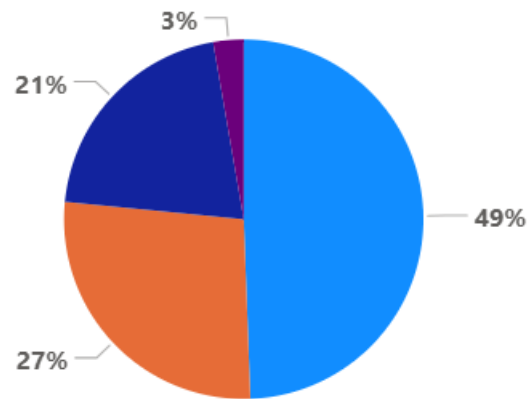


Question 4 - Do you use similar services in other areas?

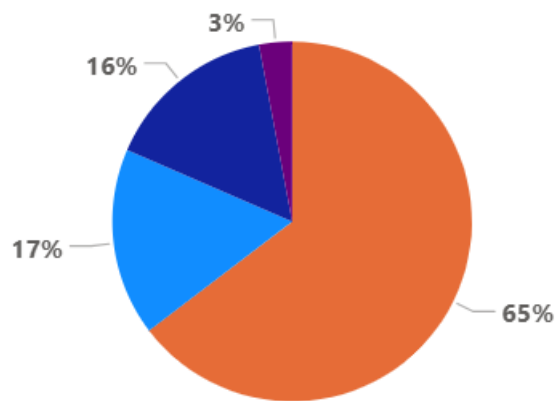
Legend

● Yes ● No ● Not Stated ● Don't know / not sure

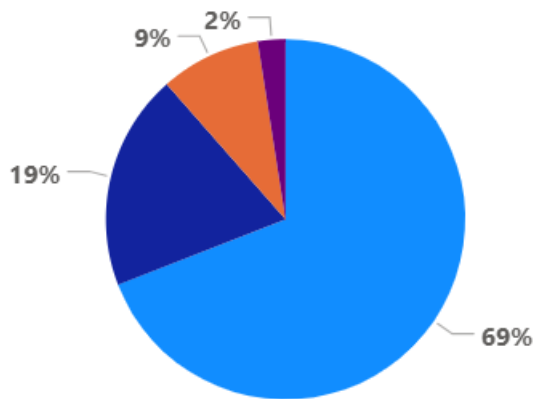
All



B&H Residents



Non-B&H residents



Questions 5 and 6 asked respondents broader, open questions about what mattered most to them - the things they want to preserve and protect and the things they are concerned about through reorganisation. Respondents answered with free text which was coded to count how many times key topics were mentioned. This is shown in the tables below. Section 4.4 provides the narrative that sits alongside this thematic analysis, drawing out nuances of the comments.

Question 5 - If change does happen and your areas becomes part of a merged larger council, what would be most important to protect or preserve?

Table below shows count of number of times each code was mentioned across all responses.

All	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Political	Service	Total
	Service performance					626	626
	Local identity/community/culture	610					610
	Trust in BHCC/competence				298		298
	Opposition to expansion			263			263
	Parks/green space/coastline					258	258
	Transport/traffic					246	246
	Representation				192		192
	Health and care					149	149
	Housing delivery targets		143				143
	Education					119	119
	Waste					111	111
	Access/distance to services					108	108
	Financial efficiency/value for money		81				81
	Tax/council tax		50				50
	Employment/economic growth		49				49
	Infrastructure		43				43
	Least disruption/status quo			39			39
	Support for expansion			27			27
	Social needs of demographic	7					7
	Not enough benefits/info			6			6
	Funding/resources required		5				5
	Ability to meet community needs					4	4
	Offers alternative			3			3
	Deprivation	2					2
	Total	619	371	338	490	1621	3439

B&H Residents	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Political	Service	Total
	Service performance					213	213
	Local identity/community/culture	190					190
	Trust in BHCC/competence				78		78
	Transport/traffic					76	76
	Representation				62		62
	Health and care					59	59
	Parks/green space/coastline					54	54
	Opposition to expansion			51			51
	Access/distance to services					36	36
	Financial efficiency/value for money		36				36
	Housing delivery targets		36				36
	Education					31	31
	Waste					21	21
	Employment/economic growth		17				17
	Support for expansion			17			17
	Infrastructure		13				13
	Least disruption/status quo			13			13
	Tax/council tax		8				8
	Social needs of demographic	4					4
	Offers alternative			3			3
	Ability to meet community needs					1	1
	Not enough benefits/info			1			1
	Total	194	110	85	140	491	1020
Non-B&H Residents	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Political	Service	Total
	Local identity/community/culture	345					345
	Service performance					317	317
	Trust in BHCC/competence				188		188
	Opposition to expansion			172			172
	Parks/green space/coastline					168	168
	Transport/traffic					131	131
	Representation				112		112
	Housing delivery targets		82				82
	Waste					78	78
	Education					73	73
	Health and care					71	71
	Access/distance to services					59	59
	Financial efficiency/value for money		36				36
	Tax/council tax		34				34
	Employment/economic growth		26				26
	Infrastructure		26				26
	Least disruption/status quo			19			19
	Support for expansion			8			8
	Funding/resources required		5				5
	Not enough benefits/info			3			3
	Ability to meet community needs					2	2
	Deprivation	1					1
	Social needs of demographic	1					1
	Total	347	209	202	300	899	1957

Question 6 - What concerns, if any, do you have about how local councils will change through reorganisation?

Table below shows count of number of times each code was mentioned across all responses.

All	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Geography & Environment	Political	Service	Total
	Representation and accountability to communities					521		521
	Service performance and workforce issues						366	366
	Trust and competence in Brighton's leadership					338		338
	Identity, culture, and politics	248						248
	Ability to meet community needs						204	204
	Financial costs, efficiency, and value for money		183					183
	Funding, resources, and cuts		127					127
	Pressure on existing services						92	92
	Housing and buildings development		83				1	84
	Area too big				81			81
	Support/no concerns for reorganisation			68				68
	Council tax and charges		66					66
	Waste						63	63
	Transport/traffic						61	61
	Employment/economic growth		56					56
	Environmental impact				51			51
	Lack of benefits and information			43				43
	Social needs and vulnerable groups	39						39
	Boundaries				36			36
	Opposition to expansion			33				33
	Access/distance to services						30	30
	Infrastructure		29					29
	Offers alternative			29				29
	Area too small				22			22
	Least disruption/ Status quo			18				18
	Deprivation	17						17
	Education						16	16
	Housing						16	16
	Health and care						15	15
	Total	304	545	208	191	863	869	2980
B&H Resident s	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Geography & Environment	Political	Service	Total
	Representation and accountability to communities					129		129
	Service performance and workforce issues						115	115
	Trust and competence in Brighton's leadership					63		63
	Funding, resources, and cuts		59					59
	Identity, culture, and politics	54						54
	Pressure on existing services						50	50
	Support/no concerns for reorganisation			50				50
	Financial costs, efficiency, and value for money		47					47
	Employment/economic growth		26					26
	Ability to meet community needs						25	25
	Area too big				25			25
	Lack of benefits and information			17				17
	Social needs and vulnerable groups	16						16
	Council tax and charges		14					14
	Access/distance to services						11	11
	Housing and buildings development		10				1	11
	Offers alternative			10				10
	Waste						10	10
	Boundaries				9			9
	Area too small				7			7
	Environmental impact				7			7
	Deprivation	6						6
	Opposition to expansion			6				6
	Health and care						5	5
	Infrastructure		4					4
	Least disruption/ Status quo			4				4
	Transport/traffic						4	4
	As/all above			2			1	3
	Education						2	2
	Total	76	160	90	49	192	227	794

Non-B&H Resident S	Code	Civic pride	Economic	Expansion proposals	Geography & Environment	Political	Service	Total
	Representation and accountability to communities					323		323
	Trust and competence in Brighton's leadership					218		218
	Service performance and workforce issues						205	205
	Identity, culture, and politics	170						170
	Ability to meet community needs						157	157
	Financial costs, efficiency, and value for money		106					106
	Housing and buildings development		62					62
	Transport/traffic					47		47
	Waste					46		46
	Area too big				42			42
	Council tax and charges		41					41
	Funding, resources, and cuts		41					41
	Environmental impact				38			38
	Boundaries				23			23
	Opposition to expansion			23				23
	Pressure on existing services					22		22
	Employment/economic growth		21					21
	Infrastructure		21					21
	Lack of benefits and information			20				20
	Social needs and vulnerable groups	20						20
	Access/distance to services						16	16
	Offers alternative			15				15
	Education						13	13
	Support/no concerns for reorganisation			13				13
	Area too small				12			12
	Housing						12	12
	Least disruption/ Status quo			11				11
	As/all above			7				7
	Deprivation	6						6
	Total	196	293	93	115	545	524	1766

4.3 Options

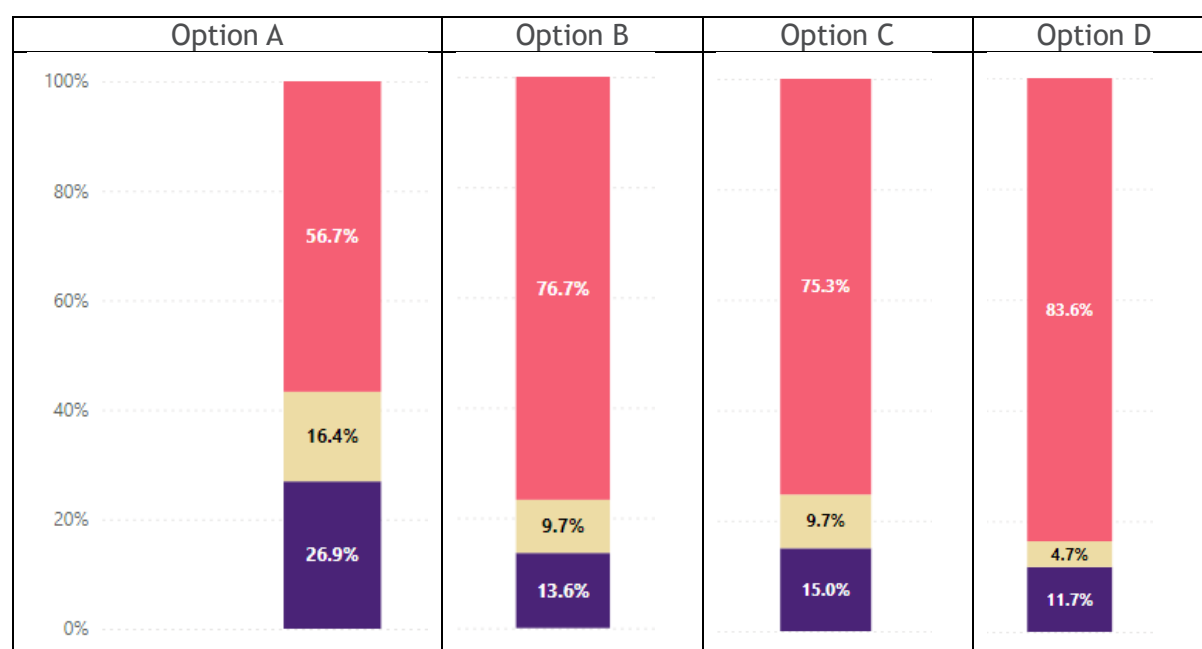
Questions 7-14 asked respondents for their opinions on four options for expansion (options A, B, C and D shown in section 2 of this report).

Questions 7, 9, 11 and 13 asked respondents to score the extent to which the support or oppose each option using a scale of: 1 (Strongly support) - 5 (Strongly oppose). For the purposes of presenting this data, we have assumed that a score of 1 or 2 demonstrates support, a score of 3 is neutral, and a score of 4 or 5 demonstrates opposition.

A colour legend has been applied to all charts which show this data:

Legend:	● (1-2) Support	● (3) Neutral	● (4-5) Oppose
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Below is the summary of the scores given to each option by the full set of respondents. Whilst the majority of respondents are in opposition to all options, you can see that option A had the most support and option D has the least support overall.



By using the data collected around post codes of respondents, we have also broken down the spread of support vs opposition by Brighton & Hove residents and non-resident groups and shown on maps, the average score of respondents within different wards.

There are limitations to the data presented in maps or split by grouping of resident / non-resident. Whilst 90% of respondents provided a postcode, 6% of responses were invalid or incomplete so the data that is presented by ward (maps) and resident / non-resident categories only represents 83.5% of total responses. There were also a minority number of respondents from wards outside the map area shown in this report which will not be seen on the maps. It is also important to remember that the maps show spread of responses and the average score by ward, and does not account for density of responses i.e. if there is a single respondent from a ward, their score will determine the average score for that

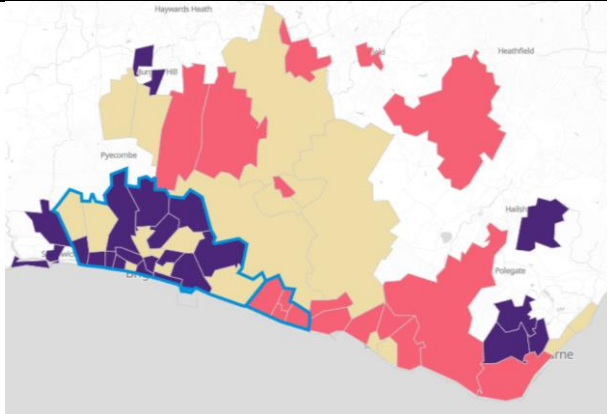
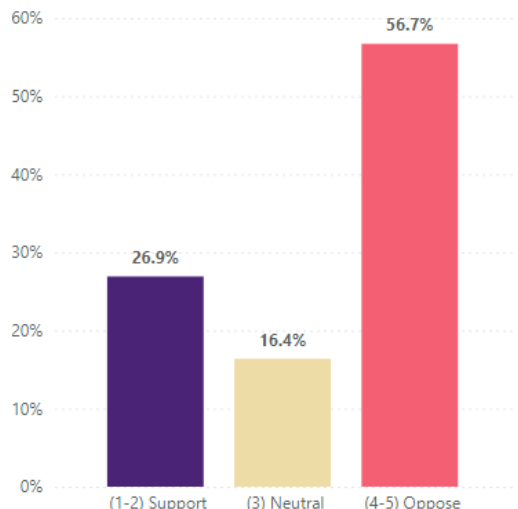
entire ward. See the table below for an overview of the number of responses captured from each Local Authority (as the list of wards would be an exhaustive list).

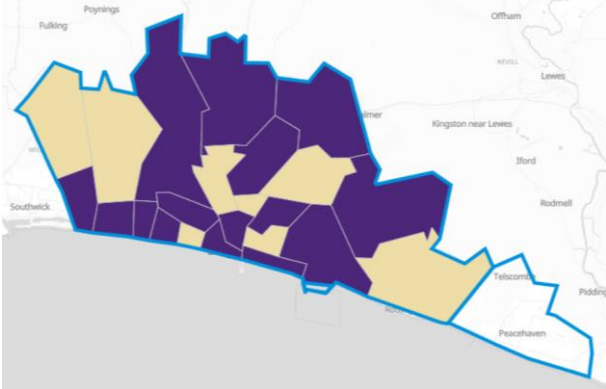
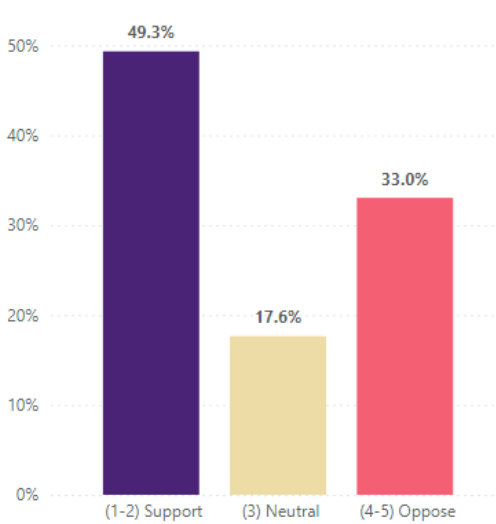
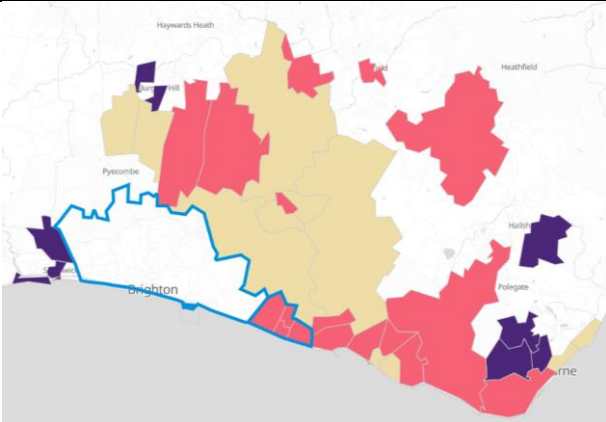
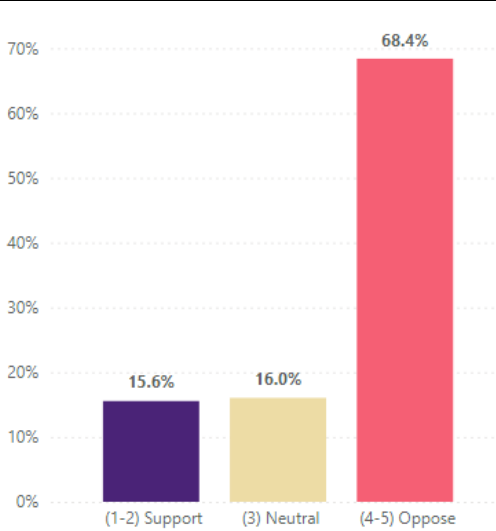
Local Authority	# Responses	% of Total
Lewes	1219	53%
Brighton and Hove	676	29%
Not Stated	230	10%
Postcode invalid/incomplete	149	6%
Mid Sussex	7	0%
Eastbourne	6	0%
Wealden	6	0%
Adur	5	0%
Worthing	4	0%
Chichester	2	0%
Hastings	1	0%
Rother	1	0%
Wandsworth	1	0%
Total	2307	100%

In addition to the quantitative data, questions 8, 10, 12 and 14 asked respondents to provide a reason for their score. The free text answers to these questions were coded in order to count how many times key topics were mentioned and look for common themes. Key data around the most common topics mentioned (by resident/non-resident demographic and by supporters/opposers to the options) is presented here alongside the scoring data. Exclusions from the lists are: topics that are mentioned fewer than 10 times or the topic code 'no clear reasoning'. Further narrative around the common themes and nuances is given in section 4.4.

Question 7 and 8 - To what extent do you support or oppose option A: strengthening the eastern edge. Provide your reasons.

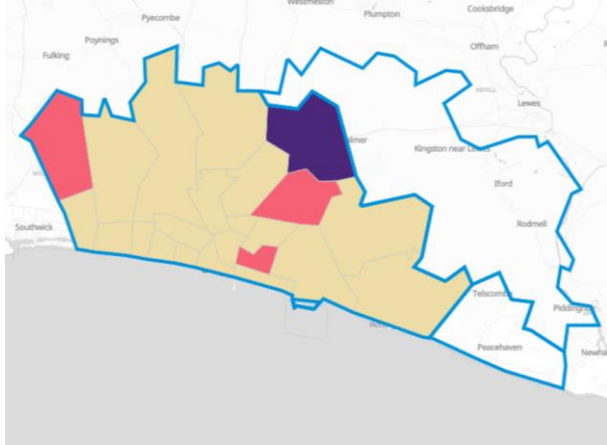
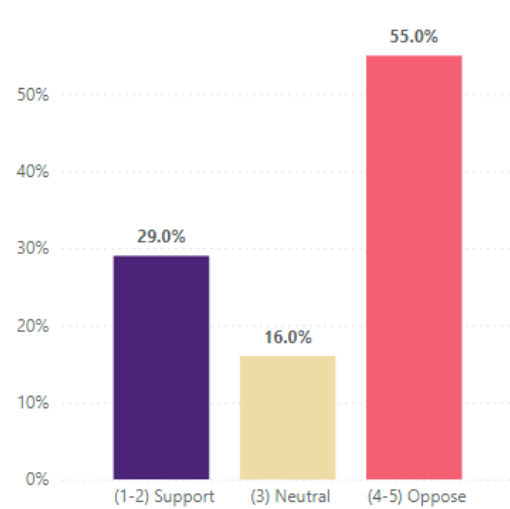
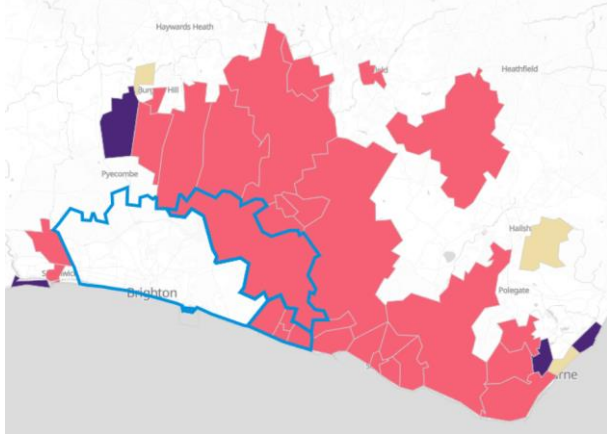
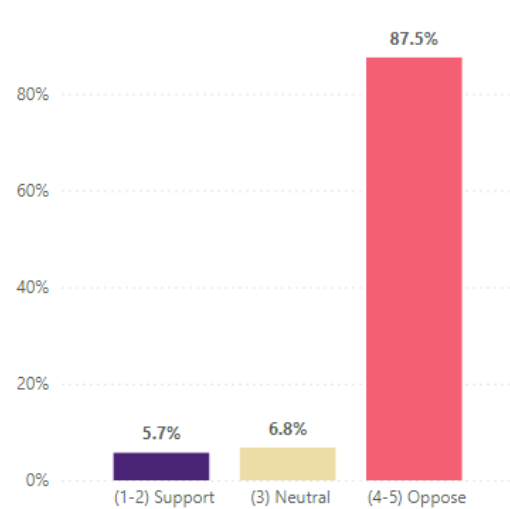
Legend: (1-2) Support (3) Neutral (4-5) Oppose

OPTION A	Map showing average score by ward	Average option scores	Key topics from comments (# comments)								
All respondents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Option</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>26.9%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>16.4%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>56.7%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Option	Percentage	(1-2) Support	26.9%	(3) Neutral	16.4%	(4-5) Oppose	56.7%	Top 5 overall: - Local identity and brand (343) - General opposition (145) - Area too big (134) - Trust in BHCC, competence (120) - Area too small (102)
Option	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	26.9%										
(3) Neutral	16.4%										
(4-5) Oppose	56.7%										

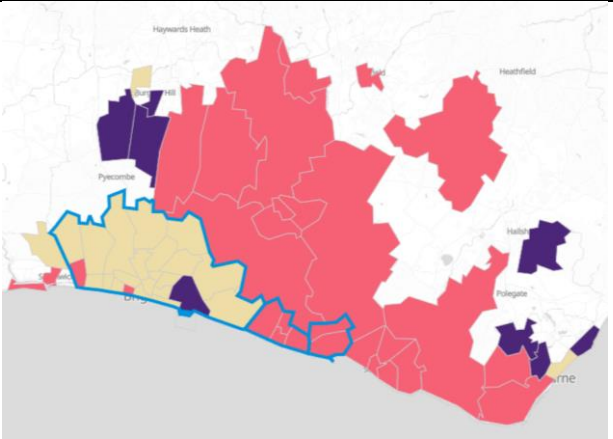
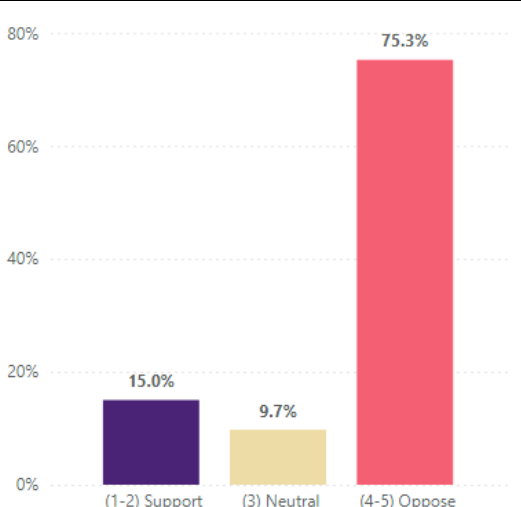
B&H residents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>49.3%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>17.6%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>33.0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	49.3%	(3) Neutral	17.6%	(4-5) Oppose	33.0%	Top 5 for supporters: - Local identity and brand (51) - General support (41) - Area too small (33) - Least disruption, status quo (33) - Boundaries (16) Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (29) - Area too small (23) - Trust in BHCC, competence (23) - Area too big (22) - General opposition (20)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	49.3%										
(3) Neutral	17.6%										
(4-5) Oppose	33.0%										
Non-B&H residents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>15.6%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>16.0%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>68.4%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	15.6%	(3) Neutral	16.0%	(4-5) Oppose	68.4%	Top 5 for supporters: - Local identity and brand (31) - General support (26) Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (161) - General opposition (89) - Area too big (76) - Trust in BHCC, competence (75) - Service performance (40)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	15.6%										
(3) Neutral	16.0%										
(4-5) Oppose	68.4%										
Conclusion	Option A had the most support of the four options										

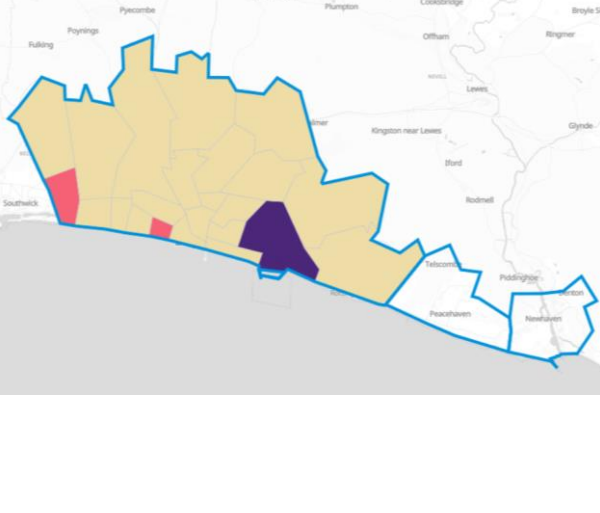
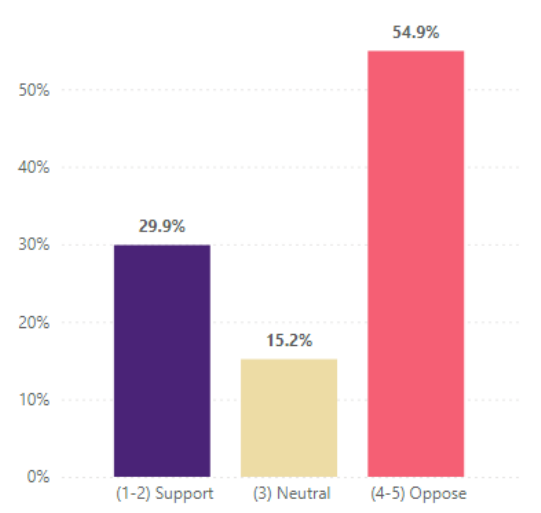
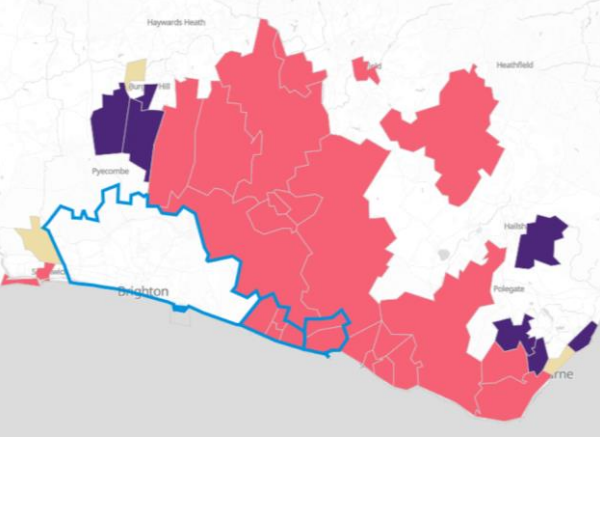
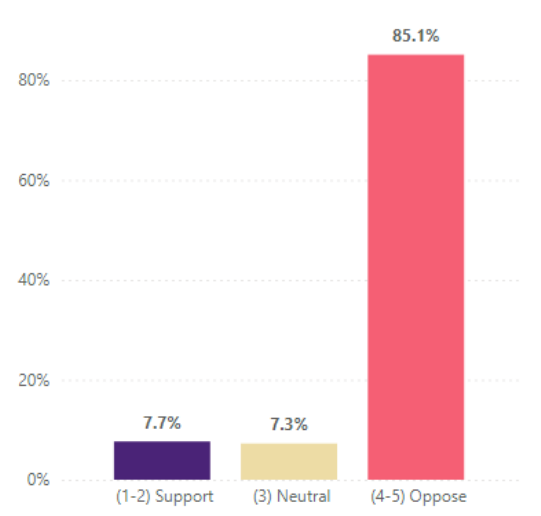
	• Brighton & Hove residents made up the majority of this with more in favour than opposing (this is the only option for which this is the case). However, Residents of the proposed expansion areas were opposed to the proposal • Local identity was the key topic as for the entire qualitative data set but there were a high number of comments about the positive links between Brighton and the expansion area (East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven) and reuniting Saltdean • Supporters had mixed views about the new area being the right size (causing the least disruption and retaining natural links) or not being ambitious enough to warrant the upheaval • The majority of opposition came from non-residents of Brighton & Hove and the average scores of those respondents from within the expansion areas were in opposition. Key concerns were around BHCC's ability to maintain and deliver a high level of service to the new areas, or new areas becoming subsumed in a larger area and losing their identity or being deprioritised.
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Question 9 and 10 - To what extent do you support or oppose option B: extending to the eastern downs. Provide your reasons.			
Legend: ● (1-2) Support ● (3) Neutral ● (4-5) Oppose			
OPTION B	Map showing average score by ward	Average option scores	Key topics from comments (# comments)
All respondents			

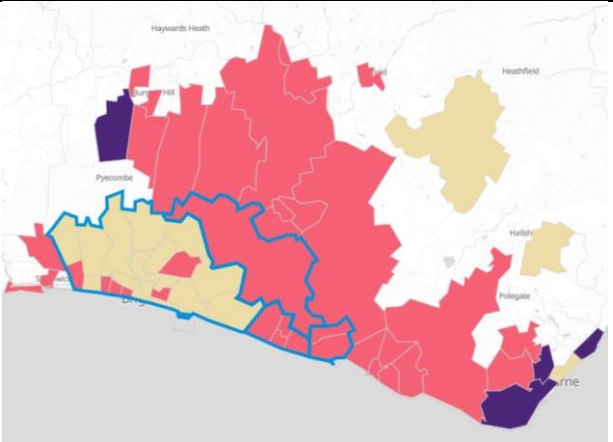
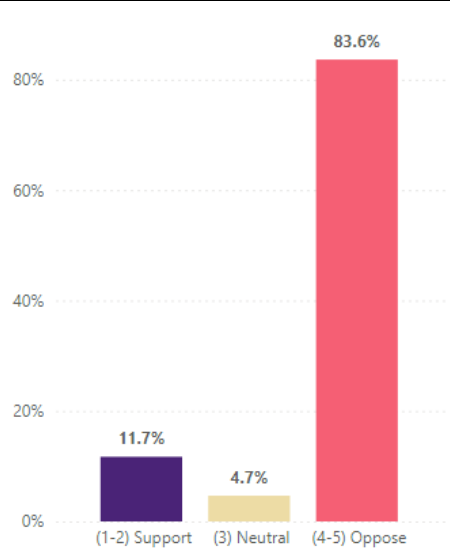
B&H residents		 <table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>29.0%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>16.0%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>55.0%</td></tr></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	29.0%	(3) Neutral	16.0%	(4-5) Oppose	55.0%	Top 5 for supporters: - Local identity and brand (19) - General support (18) - Area too small (14) - Area too big (11) - Boundaries (11) Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (75) - Area too big (73) - General opposition (31) - Trust in BHCC, competence (23) - Service performance (19)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	29.0%										
(3) Neutral	16.0%										
(4-5) Oppose	55.0%										
Non-B&H residents		 <table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>5.7%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>6.8%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>87.5%</td></tr></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	5.7%	(3) Neutral	6.8%	(4-5) Oppose	87.5%	Top 5 for supporters: - No topics mentioned 10+ times Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (285) - Area too big (140) - General opposition (115) - Trust in BHCC, competence (82) - Service performance (57)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	5.7%										
(3) Neutral	6.8%										
(4-5) Oppose	87.5%										
Conclusion	- Option B was opposed in the majority with a small portion of supporters who were mainly Brighton & Hove residents. Note that scores for Option B were very closely aligned to scores for Option C - Residents of the proposed expansion areas were opposed to the proposal										

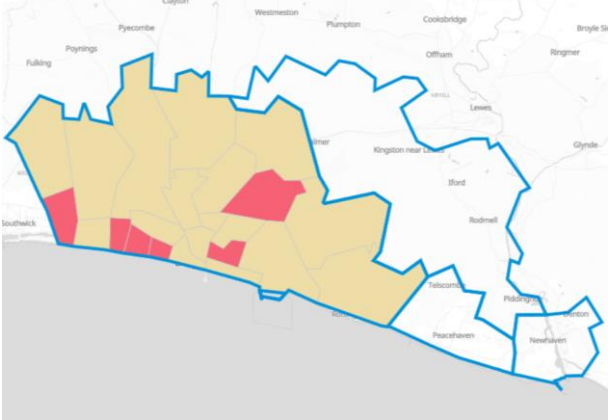
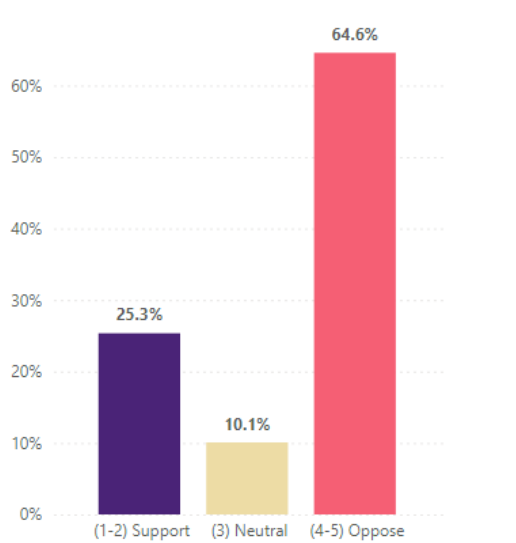
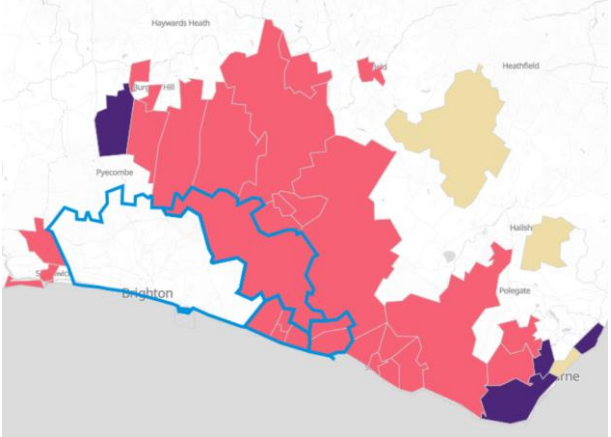
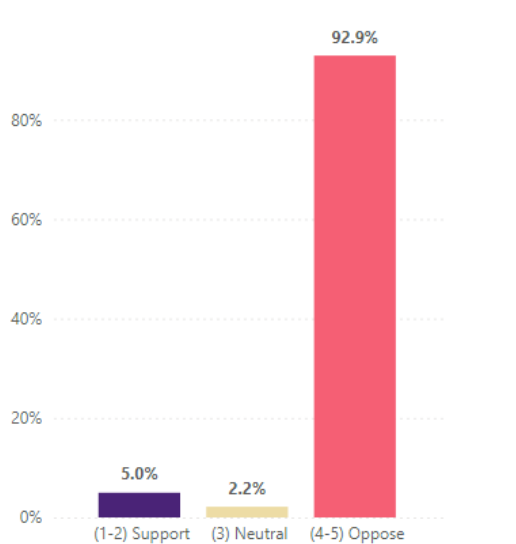
	• Opposers argued that the area is too big and there is a lack of shared identity between the city, coastal and rural areas included • There was a concern that service performance would be impacted with BHCC not able to meet the needs of these new and different communities due to a lack of ability, experience and resources • Opposers shared concerns about the natural areas within the expansion areas being used for housing and development and demonstrated distrust in BHCC's motives for the expansion • Supporters noted that a large area was necessary in order to deliver impactful change
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Question 11 and 12 - To what extent do you support or oppose option C: uniting the coastal corridor. Provide your reasons.											
Legend: (1-2) Support (3) Neutral (4-5) Oppose											
OPTION C	Map showing average score by ward	Average option scores	Key topics from comments (# comments)								
All respondents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Option Score</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>15.0%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>9.7%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>75.3%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Option Score	Percentage	(1-2) Support	15.0%	(3) Neutral	9.7%	(4-5) Oppose	75.3%	Top 5 overall: - Local identity and brand (457) - Area too big (250) - General opposition (189) - Trust in BHCC, competence (125) - Service performance (101)
Option Score	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	15.0%										
(3) Neutral	9.7%										
(4-5) Oppose	75.3%										

B&H residents		 <table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>29.9%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>15.2%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>54.9%</td></tr></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	29.9%	(3) Neutral	15.2%	(4-5) Oppose	54.9%	Top 5 for supporters: - Local identity and brand (27) - Transport / traffic (18) - General support (17) - Boundaries (10) - Connecting services (10) Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (84) - Area too big (56) - General opposition (35) - Trust in BHCC, competence (18) - Service performance (18)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	29.9%										
(3) Neutral	15.2%										
(4-5) Oppose	54.9%										
Non-B&H residents		 <table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>7.7%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>7.3%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>85.1%</td></tr></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	7.7%	(3) Neutral	7.3%	(4-5) Oppose	85.1%	Top 5 for supporters: - Local identity and brand (16) Top 5 for opposers: - Local identity and brand (265) - Area too big (137) - General opposition (110) - Trust in BHCC, competence (89) - Service performance (51)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	7.7%										
(3) Neutral	7.3%										
(4-5) Oppose	85.1%										
Conclusion	- Option C was opposed in the majority with a small portion of supporters who were mainly Brighton & Hove residents. Note that scores for Option C were very closely aligned to scores for Option B - Residents of the proposed expansion areas were opposed to the proposal										

	• Opposers argued that the area is too big to maintain service levels across the whole footprint as the council would be serving too many people with distinct social needs • Responders also challenged whether the size of the area would stretch services thin and showed concern that service performance would dip from current levels for the existing residents • Supporters noted the common identity and needs of coastal areas in the proposed expansion area and the opportunities for connecting services along the coast
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Question 13 and 14 - To what extent do you support or oppose option D: coast and downs partnership, Provide your reasons.											
Legend: (1-2) Support (3) Neutral (4-5) Oppose											
OPTION D	Map showing average score by ward	Average option scores	Key topics from comments (# comments)								
All respondents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Option Score</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>11.7%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>4.7%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>83.6%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Option Score	Percentage	(1-2) Support	11.7%	(3) Neutral	4.7%	(4-5) Oppose	83.6%	Top 5 overall: - Local identity and brand (420) - Area too big (390) - General opposition (218) - Trust in BHCC, competence (125) - Service performance (108)
Option Score	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	11.7%										
(3) Neutral	4.7%										
(4-5) Oppose	83.6%										

B&H residents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>25.3%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>10.1%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>64.6%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	25.3%	(3) Neutral	10.1%	(4-5) Oppose	64.6%	Top 5 for supporters: • General support (32) • Local identity and brand (15) • Financial efficiency, value for money (12) • Area right size (11) • Transport / traffic (11) Top 5 for opposers: • Area too big (120) • Local identity and brand (69) • General opposition (49) • Service performance (26) • Trust in BHCC, competence (20)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	25.3%										
(3) Neutral	10.1%										
(4-5) Oppose	64.6%										
Non-B&H residents		 <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>(1-2) Support</td><td>5.0%</td></tr><tr><td>(3) Neutral</td><td>2.2%</td></tr><tr><td>(4-5) Oppose</td><td>92.9%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	(1-2) Support	5.0%	(3) Neutral	2.2%	(4-5) Oppose	92.9%	Top 5 for supporters: • <i>No topics mentioned 10+ times</i> Top 5 for opposers: • Local identity and brand (268) • Area too big (188) • General opposition (124) • Trust in BHCC, competence (85) • Service performance (55)
Response	Percentage										
(1-2) Support	5.0%										
(3) Neutral	2.2%										
(4-5) Oppose	92.9%										
Conclusion	• Option D had the least support overall, across both resident and non-resident groups										

	• Residents of the proposed expansion areas were opposed to the proposal • The key reasons cited were that the expansion area is too big and lacks cohesive identity across the city and rural communities within it • There were concerns about the ability of a single council to meet the differing needs of these communities and landscapes from experience, ability and funding points of view • Opposers shared concerns about the natural areas within the expansion areas being used for housing and development and demonstrated distrust in BHCC's motives for the expansion • The small number of supporters were mainly Brighton & Hove residents (though note that the map shows the average scores only and so shows that the Brighton & Hove area is neutral overall) who commented on opportunities to connect and deliver improved services over a larger footprint, taking full advantage of the potential for financial efficiencies through reorganisation.
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4.4 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis of the comments in the qualitative, open text, questions was carried out using the codes given to each response as a starting point. The full methodology for how this was carried out is explained in section 3.3.2 and the Appendix (section 2.3 Methodology - Qualitative analysis).

Resulting narratives were developed with detailed nuance and justification included. These are included fully in the Appendix (section 1.2 Narrative from qualitative analysis), and the summaries are provided in tables below to demonstrate the spread and sources of this information. These have been grouped into a set of themes and sub-themes (see table below) to make them more digestible but there are overlaps between the themes and narratives from each of the questions which reflects the amount of repetition that came through from respondents when completing the survey.

Key themes	Sub themes
Key theme 1: General feedback	• Alternative views • Representation and voice
Key theme 2: Sense of place	• Boundaries • Social, cultural and political identity
Key theme 3: Service	• Access to services • Delivery of services
Key theme 4: Trust and confidence in BHCC	• Housing and development • Reputation and competence • Finance

4.4.1 Key theme 1: General feedback

Sub-theme - Alternative Views

Some respondents suggested alternatives beyond the current proposals, such as dissolving Brighton back into East Sussex, creating a pan-Sussex or coastal mayoral authority, or even splitting Brighton and Hove. Others opposed expansion altogether, citing fears over identity loss, increased taxes, and further pressure on infrastructure. There was also debate over the direction of growth, with many arguing that expansion westwards toward Adur, Shoreham, or Worthing made more sense than eastwards. Opinions were divided on scale: some felt the proposals were too limited to justify disruption, while others argued that a Sussex-wide approach would be more ambitious and effective.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Alternative structures: Calls for Brighton dissolution, pan-Sussex, or coastal mayoral unitary.	Q15
Opposition to expansion: Concerns include the strain on local infrastructure, loss of historical and cultural ties, environmental impact, and financial implications	Q5
Alternative options: Respondents question eastward expansion, suggesting westward partnerships instead.	Q6
Alternative options: Suggestions for alternative expansion direction (westward), or coastal corridor approach. Preference to remain with current authorities.	Q7,9,11,13

Ambition: Concerns that expansion too small (not worth the upheaval, might just absorb areas without generating benefits) or not bold enough to drive regional change.	Q7,9,11,13
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Sub-theme - Representation and Community Voice

A consistent concern was the lack of clear information about what reorganisation would achieve, leading many to see it as a takeover rather than a partnership. There was confusion around the process with many raising a preference to remain with existing councils. While some respondents saw potential for improved democracy, more feared that their voice would be diluted and their needs overlooked under a larger council dominated by Brighton. Representation, accountability, and fairness were recurring themes, with questions about whether resources would be shared equitably. Respondents wanted evidence that they would see tangible benefits and guarantees that local decision-making would not be lost.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Lack of benefits and information: Unclear benefits, poor communication, fears reorganisation resembles a takeover.	Q6
Voice and influence: Many respondents express concerns that merging councils will dilute their local identity and representation. They fear that their voices will be drowned out by the priorities of a larger, urban-focused council, making it difficult for local people to influence decisions that directly affect their lives.	Q5
Representation and accountability: Smaller communities fear losing voice, transparency, genuine engagement and fair representation.	Q6
Benefits: Perceived lack of benefits and risks for communities in expansion areas (housing development, investment focused on Brighton & Hove). Opportunities mentioned (transport, regeneration). More information requested.	Q7,9,11,13
Community voice and representation: Perceptions that communities in expansion areas have not properly been consulted and may be absorbed against their wishes, their voice weakened within a larger city-led council.	Q7,9,11,13

4.4.2 Key theme 2: Sense of place

Sub-theme - Boundaries

Many respondents questioned the logic behind the proposed boundaries, describing them as arbitrary or politically motivated. There were calls for “natural” boundaries that respect geography, transport links, and community ties. An alternative westward expansion or the coastal corridor was seen by some as logical, but others felt rural and inland areas did not belong in a Brighton-led authority.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Boundary logic: Calls for more natural boundaries, concerns around splitting communities and fracturing local identity and service use. Mixed views on coastal corridor alignment.	Q7,9,11,13

Sub-theme - Social, Cultural and Political Identity

Identity was a strong theme, with strong parish and village attachment from rural communities, and particular concerns about losing historic and cultural ties to Lewes and East Sussex. Many feared being “subsumed” by a larger urban authority with concerns that this would dilute their community spirit, heritage, and political identity. Some Brighton residents also expressed anxiety that their city’s distinct culture could be weakened by merging with neighbouring areas.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Identity loss: Kingston/Ouse Valley resist transfer, citing historic Lewes ties.	Q15
Community: Concern that a larger council will prioritise urban areas over rural areas leading to loss of community spirit	Q5
Cultural: Residents are proud of their cultural heritage and diversity in Brighton & Hove	Q5
Local identity: Strong feeling around losing individual area’s unique identity and the differences that exist	Q5
Identity, culture, and politics: Merger threatens cultural traditions and political balance across areas.	Q6
Identity: Challenges around community identity (urban vs smaller villages) and historical fit (historic county lines, cultural ties) for expansion areas with Brighton & Hove, suggesting these fit better with Lewes or East Sussex councils. Limited support for where extension feels logical and natural (A).	Q7,9,11,13

4.4.3 Key theme 3: Services

Sub-theme - Access to Services

Transport and congestion (e.g. the A259 corridor) were major worries, with fears that a larger council would exacerbate existing issues without major infrastructure improvements. Concerns were also raised about waste, education access, especially for rural families, and the potential loss of valued parks and green spaces.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Transport dependency: Coastal change requires A259 solutions or worsened congestion.	Q15
Education. Access to education and distance from schools is a concern if the council footprint is stretched.	Q5
Parks/greenspace. Residents value their green space for recreation and environmental reasons.	Q5
Traffic/transport. Residents rely on existing services for daily commuting and access to services	Q5
Access to services and education: Residents fear longer travel distances, especially impacting vulnerable groups.	Q6

Sub-theme - Delivery of Services

Respondents expressed doubts about Brighton & Hove City Council’s ability to maintain or improve services under a larger and more complex authority. There were fears that vulnerable populations would be most affected (i.e. impact on children with SEND and families and adults needing care), that rural needs would be ignored, and that existing

infrastructure could not cope with further demand. Respondents raised the importance that services continue to be delivered competently and locally. A minority saw an opportunity for a larger council to deliver regeneration and major projects.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Lewes split risk: Breaking district disrupts schools, SEND, and care pathways.	Q15
Vulnerable at risk: Reorganisation feared to harm families, disabled people, and services.	Q15
Health and care. Concern that the merger will negatively impact the quality and availability of healthcare provision	Q5
Waste. Differing views on quality of service and concern about decline in service provision that exists	Q5
Customer service and communication: Reorganisation risks faceless council, worsening accessibility and resident engagement.	Q6
Rural needs and local knowledge: Brighton unlikely to understand or deliver rural community needs.	Q6
Service performance and workforce pressures: Concerns over job losses, overstretched staff, declining local services.	Q6
Infrastructure: Concern over investment in infrastructure needed. Debate over whether key infrastructure (e.g. Newhaven Port) would strengthen or harm development. Some opportunity to deliver regional infrastructure projects.	Q7,9,11,13
Too big: Challenges of a single council managing large expansion (diverse mix of communities and geographies), pressure on infrastructure, stretching services thin and reducing access to 'local' services.	Q7,9,11,13
Transport and parking: Concerns raised around pressure on existing road networks, traffic and parking. Perception of poor public transport links to Brighton vs Lewes.	Q7,9,11,13

4.4.4 Key theme 4: Trust and confidence in BHCC

Sub-theme - Housing and Development

Development pressures were a significant worry. Respondents feared that merging would open their areas to more housing development, reduce green space, and import social challenges from the city.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Economic fallout: Fears of Brighton expansion undermining Peacehaven, Newhaven, and tourism.	Q15
Housing development. Concerns about excessive development, preservation of green spaces, maintaining local identity and services, ensuring affordable housing, and addressing the strain on infrastructure and services	Q5
Social needs: Many comments express concerns about being negatively impacted by issues around homelessness and antisocial behaviour.	Q6

Housing, development, and environment: Concerns about rural overdevelopment, green space loss, antisocial behaviour.	Q6
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Sub-theme - Reputation and Competence

Trust in BHCC was low, with many respondents' citing a perception of poor financial management and service delivery as reasons to oppose expansion. It is worth noting that a disproportionate number of respondents were from outside the B&H area and so may not have an accurate level of awareness of BHCC's current service provision. The consultation process was also criticised as rushed and biased, reinforcing suspicion that decisions were already made. Some saw the eastward focus as politically driven.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Flawed consultation: Process criticised as biased, inaccessible, rushed, and manipulative.	Q15
Trust & confidence: General sense of distrust towards BHCC. Criticism of BHCC's service management (bins, housing, public transport, social care) and fears that expansion is driven by financial or political motives (perception of 'land grabbing').	Q7,9,11,13
Political motives: Eastward focus viewed as Labour's ideological land grab.	Q15
Vanity project: Boundary changes seen as costly distractions from local priorities.	Q15
Trust in BHCC. Concern exists around the Council's poor financial management and decision-making	Q5
Trust and competence of Brighton leadership: Brighton seen as mismanaged, untrustworthy, incapable of fair leadership.	Q6
Service performance: Concerns about BHCC ability to service rural, coastal and village needs (communities and environmental) citing perceived weak service performance, comparison with existing councils and potential for unequal resources for new areas.	Q7,9,11,13

Sub-theme - Financial Concerns

Financial worries were common, with anxiety around inheriting Brighton's debt, council tax harmonisation, and the possibility of unfair resource distribution. Many respondents wanted to see robust financial modelling before supporting any change.

Summary of points from qualitative data	Source question
Economic fallout: Fears of Brighton expansion undermining Peacehaven, Newhaven, and tourism.	Q15
Housing development. Concerns about excessive development, preservation of green spaces, maintaining local identity and services, ensuring affordable housing, and addressing the strain on infrastructure and services	Q5
Housing, development, and environment: Concerns about rural overdevelopment, green space loss, antisocial behaviour.	Q6

5. Recommendations

A key objective for this community consultation was to gather information that will support the implementation of Local Government reorganisation (LGR) plans and as such the following recommendations have been made as a conclusion of the analysis carried out.

The recommendations and next steps set out in this report should be considered within the specific context of Brighton & Hove City Council. They sit alongside the council's existing objectives, policies, projects, and resources and it is likely that many of the issues raised through the consultation are already be recognised by the council, with steps taken or planned to address them.

The ability to act on recommendations, and to use the findings to support the implementation of LGR, will depend on the council's wider context, priorities, and capacity. The evidence provides insight into which services residents are most concerned about, how people use them, and what misconceptions may need to be addressed through communications, but it is for the council to determine how best to respond within its circumstances.

Recommendations for next steps

1. **Communicate the Local Government Reform process, objectives and timetable** - Explain the framework and directions from central government and the constraints within which the council is operating.
2. **Communicate a clear case for change** - Explain how reorganisation can positively impact communities, residents and businesses and how benefits will be shared fairly across communities.
3. **Clarify boundaries and direction of growth** - Provide transparent reasoning for chosen areas, address perceptions of political bias, and explain why alternatives were ruled out.
4. **Protect local identity and representation** - Consider governance mechanisms such as area committees or parish involvement to safeguard local voices and maintain accountability.
5. **Commit to service continuity and improvement** - Share concrete plans for maintaining and enhancing key services, with specific guarantees for rural areas and vulnerable groups.
6. **Address transport and infrastructure concerns** - Link reorganisation to investment in transport, education, and community infrastructure, with clear timelines and funding commitments.

7. **Rebuild trust through better engagement** - Design a more inclusive, participatory process with two-way dialogue, accessible information, and visible responsiveness to feedback.
8. **Provide financial transparency** - Publish financial modelling, show how debt will be managed, and commit to fair resource allocation and council tax stability.
9. **Safeguard green spaces and manage development** - Set out how housing growth will be balanced with infrastructure and how local character and open spaces will be protected.
10. **Demonstrate early wins** - Deliver visible improvements in key services before or alongside reorganisation to build credibility and confidence.