

Northern Transport Voices: attitudes to rural mobility hubs

January 2025



About Transport for the North

Transport for the North is a statutory sub-national transport body, working with mayoral combined authorities, local transport authorities and other stakeholders across the North of England. We advise central government on the strategic ambitions and priorities for the region's transport system, and work with our partners to enable delivery of investment.

Our vision is that by 2050 the North of England will have become a thriving, socially inclusive region. Our communities, businesses and places will have benefitted from sustainable economic growth, improved health and wellbeing, and access to opportunities for all. This is to be achieved through a transformed zero emission, integrated, safe and sustainable transport system, that will enhance connectivity, resilience, and journey times for all users.

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Executive Summary

Transport for the North (TfN) has undertaken research about rural residents' attitudes to mobility hubs, using TfN's Northern Transport Voices online research community. The research comprised a survey which received 279 completed responses, and two focus group discussions which engaged with 13 participants in total. The research explored attitudes to a village-based mobility hub and a market town-based mobility hub. The respondents were a mix of residents of villages (also including hamlets and isolated dwellings) and market towns across the North of England.

Insights were gathered about why, how often, and by which transport mode respondents currently visit a nearby village and/or market town for their day-to-day needs, to understand current travel patterns and behaviours. Respondents were also asked about the transport services and wider facilities (such as retail, leisure, or health services) they would consider useful in a new mobility hub within that village or market town, the extent to which their travel behaviour might change if a mobility hub was developed there, and what the overall impact of a new mobility hub might be for the local community.



Demand for transport services and wider facilities at rural mobility hubs

- For both village-based and market town-based mobility hubs, bus stops, rail stations, and accessible walking or wheeling routes were generally seen as the most useful transport facilities, followed by taxi ranks, and Blue Badge parking facilities.
- Better bus services emerged as a very high priority for rural residents, with strong evidence of demand for more frequent, more reliable, and cheaper bus services.
- Other transport services considered useful for a mobility hub included demand-responsive transport services (particularly for village-based hubs) and park-and-ride facilities (particularly for town-based hubs).
- There was less evidence of demand for newer forms of transport services or solutions (such as EV car clubs, app-based rideshare services, drop-off/ kiss-and-ride points) and for cycling-related facilities (cycle parking, hire, or repair).
- The presence of staff was identified by some respondents as useful to provide information about various transport options.
- Wider community or commercial services that could also be provided at a mobility hub generally received high usefulness ratings across the board (and typically higher than the potential transport services that were described).
- A shop, cashpoint, post box, and toilets were considered potentially most useful for a village hub, while the most popular facilities to include in a market town hub were toilets, a health care centre, cashpoints, and post office.
- The provision of free wi-fi, mobile phone charging points, and parcel drop-off lockers were also seen as highly useful.

Potential impact of rural mobility hubs on residents' travel behaviours

- Residents' views have indicated that rural mobility hubs have significant potential to stimulate modal shift away from private car for onward journeys from a mobility hub to other destinations – particularly using bus and rail services (slightly less so using other solutions such as EV car clubs, car ride sharing, or (e-)bike hire).
- However, it was apparent that a proportion of residents would still expect to only be able to get from their home to a mobility hub using a private car and would require parking space at the hub, before going on to use one of the hub services for the onward journey to another destination.

Views on the potential impacts of a mobility hub for the community

Views on the potential impacts of a mobility hub in a village or town were mixed, but overall, more positive than negative. The main potential benefits identified were access to a greater choice of travel options (which was seen as particularly beneficial for the elderly, people with disabilities, and those who don't have access to a private car), better access to everyday services and economic and social opportunities, reduced loneliness and isolation, increased footfall by residents and visitors and revitalisation of the village/town centre, greater community cohesion, and environmental benefits from reduced car usage.

The main concerns were the potential ineffectiveness of the investment (in cases where the village or town is considered to already have everything it needs), the potential lack of usable space for development, potential negative impact on existing businesses, potential for increased traffic congestion, and the cost to the taxpayer.

There was strong consensus among rural residents that any development of a new mobility hub should be carried out in close collaboration with the local community, to ensure that there is suitable space for the development of a hub, that each hub is properly suited to local needs, it does not duplicate any existing services, and is not going to pose a commercial threat/competition to existing local businesses.

Other cross-cutting issues related to the development of new mobility hubs that were most important for residents were safety (i.e. the absence of crime and anti-social behaviour), accessibility for all passengers and wider users, a high level of integration between different services (including integrated ticketing where possible), a high level of reliability of services, and information provision (preferably provided in-person by members of staff where possible).

Conclusions and policy considerations

The evidence gathered through this research has shown that from a user perspective, mobility hubs in rural areas have a huge potential to positively transform residents' lives and their local community as a whole, if developed in a way that is sympathetic to the needs of each community and with the right level of support offered to enable residents to truly make the most of their new mobility hub.

Across urban areas, mobility hubs often develop organically around transport hubs where demand enables wider services to develop. In rural areas, with targeted support, a mobility hub can be a particularly impactful solution for serving the needs of rural communities. This is due to its potential to significantly improve integration between different transport modes while also providing much-needed services closer to residents' homes, with potentially significant impacts on reducing social exclusion, transport poverty, and forced car ownership.

The research has shown that at a mobility hub demand is likely to be greatest for bus and rail services, in combination with taxi ranks, DRT, and park-and-ride services. Newer forms of transport services or solutions (such as EV car clubs, e-bike hire, or app-based rideshare services) were less in demand, possibly due to unfamiliarity; if such services are to be provided within a hub, extensive marketing campaigns and/or financial incentives should be considered to stimulate demand.

Investment in a staffed information point (at least initially) could help increase uptake of different transport services within the hub, particularly ones that may be unfamiliar to residents. There may be potential for local volunteer organisations to assist with information provision by trained volunteers. A physical information point could be supplemented by a 'virtual hub' where information, advice, and booking options could be accessed digitally by those who are more comfortable with digital technology.

Hub developers should consider incorporating provision of wider services as part of a mobility hub (such as healthcare, banking, or retail) which is likely to pay off in terms of increased footfall around a hub, some of which may over time translate into greater uptake for transport services offering alternatives to the private car.

A significant share of respondents expressed a preference to access a mobility hub via private car, to then interchange with another mode. To discourage congestion, hub developers should consider how to improve options to reach a mobility hub by active travel, bus, or car sharing. Targeted marketing campaigns should be considered to promote these alternative travel options where possible. Large provision of car parking spaces should be avoided, whilst retaining access for Blue Badge holders, or as part of drop-off/kiss-and-ride or park-and-ride facilities.

As part of mobility hub design and development, attention should be given to ensuring high levels of safety, accessibility, service integration, service reliability, and information provision.

Hub developers should involve the local community in site allocation and co-design of a new mobility hub from the earliest stages of developing proposals. This will ensure that the community feels fully involved in all stages of development and can influence the location and services provided at the hub. This aims to increase uptake for services offered at the hub and a greater positive economic and social impact. Where possible, hub developers could look to repurpose any existing, unused space in the vicinity of existing transport facilities.

Further research and evidence building for rural mobility hubs, at a local, regional and/or national level, would help strengthen the case for mobility hub pilots and trials. It could focus on identifying options for funding and delivery, and how to bring together local government, private sector, and voluntary sector delivery partners.

Introduction

Northern Transport Voices

Northern Transport Voices is TfN's online research community, launched in January 2023, which brings together residents of the North of England to discuss topics relating to transport in our region. Members of the community are invited to engage in an ongoing programme of research activities, designed to provide new evidence on transport behaviours, needs, challenges, and opportunities in the North, to inform the development of transport policies and strategies. At the time of delivery of this research (November 2023 – February 2024), Northern Transport Voices had 600 members from across the North of England.

For more information about Northern Transport Voices, please visit:

www.transportforthenorth.com/strategy-and-evidence/economics-and-research/

Rural mobility hubs

TfN's "[Policy position statement: Rural Mobility](#)" (May 2022) set out TfN's proposed role in supporting improvements in rural mobility, including an action to undertake further research into rural mobility. The policy position statement identified several challenges that many of the North's rural areas are at risk from, including poor access to education and employment, health inequalities, and social isolation. Rural communities tend to have limited access to local services via active travel or by public transport, resulting in a high level of private car dependency to access everyday services, which for some residents may cause transport poverty and/or forced car ownership. In that context, a multimodal mobility hub can offer a solution to improve connectivity and access to everyday services in a rural area, particularly for residents with limited access to private car travel.

TfN's "[Policy position statement: Multimodal Hubs](#)" (March 2022) set out TfN's ambitions to support multimodal journeys, reflective of a growing policy focus on improving integration across transport modes. Better integration between active travel, local public transport networks (including bus and rail), and local and regional road networks is important for supporting smoother, more seamless end-to-end journeys for transport users, as well as for facilitating modal shift towards active travel, public transport journeys, and car sharing. Examples of a multimodal hub include a bus park and ride, or a bus and rail interchange. Multimodal hubs can provide access to a range of transport modes, while also providing urban realm improvements, catering to a wide range of local needs, and forming focal points for local communities.

TfN recognises the need for a flexible 'place-based' approach to supporting multimodal hubs. Those hubs which may be considered small on a broader scale are often significant for the surrounding rural area and have the potential to support and revitalise rural communities.

Following the development of [Rural Travel Case Studies](#) (August 2023) with Northern Transport Voices members, this research seeks to enhance the existing evidence base on the potential impact of multimodal mobility hubs in rural areas by exploring the perspective of rural residents towards mobility hubs, to identify broad recommendations for rural mobility hub development and design.

It is the local communities across the North who best understand the mobility challenges for their areas, as well as the potential solutions to these challenges. We believe through our Northern Transport Voices research community we can better reflect the views of residents within rural areas in future policy-making, whilst also improving TfN's own evidence base for rural mobility.

Research objectives and methodology

TfN set out to deliver research about the attitudes and perceptions of Northern residents living in rural areas towards rural mobility hubs. The research aimed to understand:

- The ways in which residents might use a mobility hub if one was developed in their area,
- the extent to which they might use different potential transport services and wider facilities offered at the hub,
- the extent to which residents' travel behaviours may change if a mobility hub was developed,
- residents' opinions on the potential wider impacts of a new mobility hub for the local community.

A mobility hub was described to research participants as a place which brings together different types of services or facilities (such as transport and community services) to improve access to key services for rural residents and visitors.

To explore the different potential uses and functions of a mobility hub based on population density of the local area, the research included consideration of mobility hubs in two distinct settings: a village-based hub (named Village Hub in this study) and a market town-based hub (Market Town Hub).

The research included a survey (running between November 2023 and February 2024) which achieved 279 completed responses, and two focus group discussions (which took place on 25 and 26 January 2024) with a total of 13 focus group participants. The survey was targeted at respondents who had previously self-defined as living in a rural area (typically when registering to join the Northern Transport Voices community).

When starting the survey, respondents were asked to identify the type of settlement they live in, choosing from the following options:

- Large city
- Small city
- Market town
- Village
- Hamlet
- Isolated dwelling

Survey respondents who selected 'Large city' or 'Small city' as their settlement type were routed out (excluded) from the survey at that point.

Survey respondents who selected 'Village', 'Hamlet' or 'Isolated Dwelling' as their settlement type were grouped together for the purposes of survey routing and data analysis (242 respondents in total across these three settlement types). These respondents were asked to read a 2-page document which describes Village Hubs in more detail. They were then asked to identify the name of a village they visit most often to access basic services (such as going to the shop or Post Office, to the village hall, or catching a bus for onward travel), followed by a series of questions designed to explore how and why they typically visit that village.

Next, they were asked to imagine that a Village Hub, as described previously, was being developed in this village, followed by a series of questions designed to explore their attitudes towards it.

Based on a rationale that residents of villages or smaller settlements would not be likely to have all of their everyday needs met by a Village Hub, and may also regularly access a Market Town Hub, these respondents were also asked to complete questions on Market Town Hubs (following a similar format as described previously). The set of questions relating to Market Town Hubs was almost identical to the questions relating to Village Hubs, with some small differences in the list of services and facilities that were described as potentially suitable for each type of Hub.

Survey respondents who selected 'Market Town' as their settlement type (37 respondents) were only presented with a Market Town Hub, and asked the questions relating to Market Town Hubs, based on the rationale that they would typically have most of their everyday needs met in the market town.

Participants for the focus groups were selected from a pool of volunteers who had completed the survey and indicated within the survey that they would be interested in taking part in a follow-up focus group discussion. Focus group participants were grouped according to the settlement type they indicated they live in within the survey. 6 participants who described their settlement type as Village (or smaller) took part in the focus group on 25 January, discussing Village Hubs, and 7 participants who described their settlement type as Market Town took part in the focus group on 26 January, discussing Market Town Hubs.

Research findings

Current patterns of travel to village and market town centres



Current patterns of travel to village and market town centres

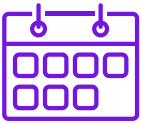
Key findings



Most respondents from villages lived within one mile of a village centre. Village residents typically travelled further distances to access market town centres.



Most respondents from market towns resided under two miles from the market town centre.



Most respondents from villages and market towns travelled to their local village or market town centre either every day or at least once per week.



Most village centres had a bus stop only, while market town centres were more commonly reported to have a bus and rail station.



The most popular modes of travel to a town centre for market town residents were walking or wheeling followed by private car travel.



Village and market town residents reported that they most often travel to the village or town centre for shopping, running errands or attending personal appointments and for health-related journeys.

Current patterns of travel to village and market town centres

Over two thirds (64%) of the respondents describing their settlement as 'village' (or smaller) lived one mile away from the village centre they said they visit most frequently to access basic services, and almost all (92%) lived under 5 miles from the village centre. Of these, a quarter of respondents travelled to the village centre every day and four fifths travelled to the village centre at least once per week. Of the respondents who lived in villages, over two thirds (67%) also lived within 5 miles of a market town and 63% reported that they travelled to their nearest market town every day or at least once per week. Respondents who lived in villages, typically travelled further to access their local market town than their local village centre; just over one quarter of village dwellers travelled between 5 and 10 miles to access a market town (Figure 2).

How far is the village you most visit from your home?

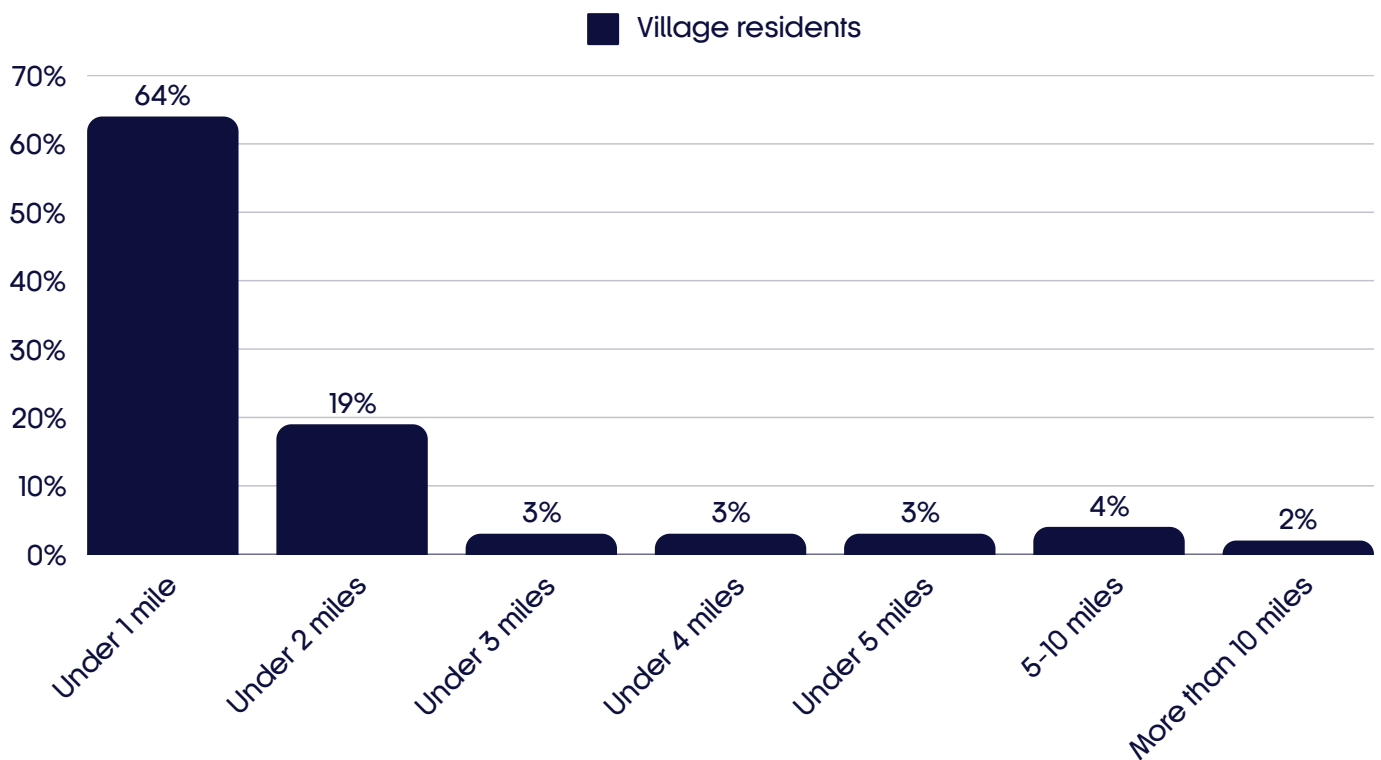


Figure 1

N = 242, respondents from villages were asked about a village near their home that they visit the most to access basic services

Out of the 37 respondents who were from a market town, over two fifths (43%) lived under 1 mile away from the town centre and almost all (95%) lived under 5 miles away. Of those who reside in a market town, over four fifths (81%) reported that they travel to the town centre every day or at least once per week.

How far is this town centre from your home?

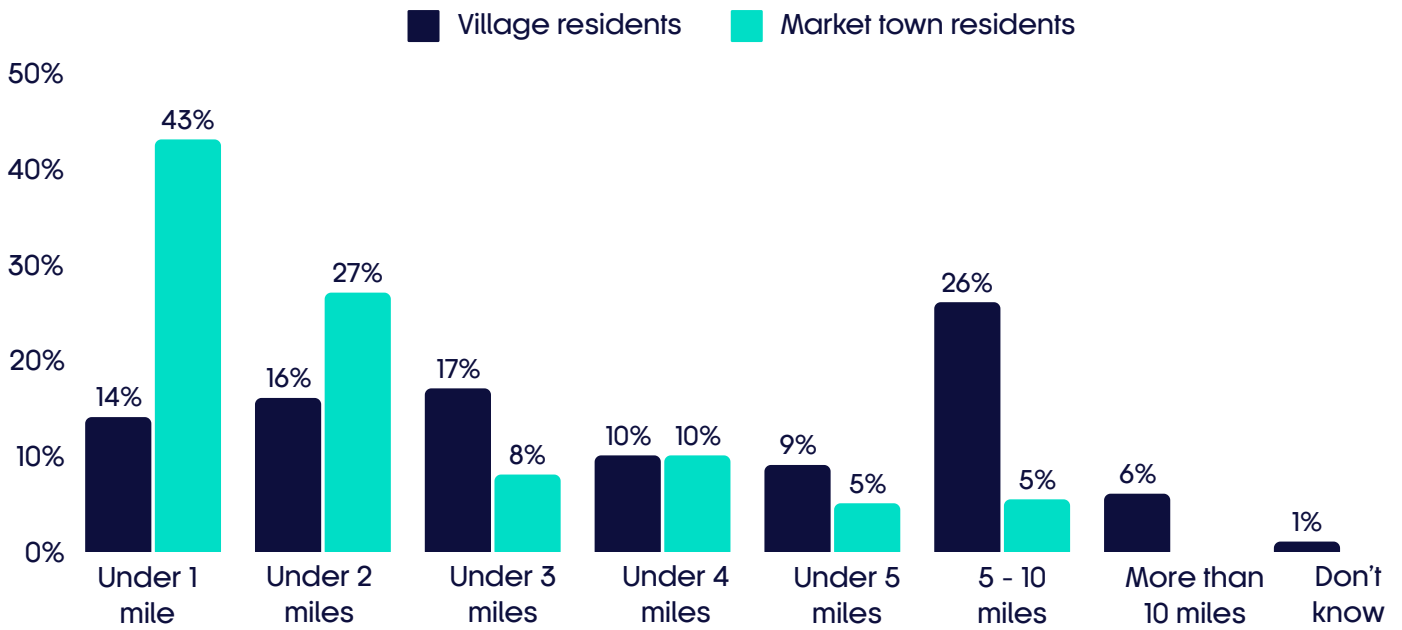


Figure 2

Villages N = 242, respondents from villages were asked about a Town near their home that they visit the most to access basic services. Towns N = 37, respondents from Market Towns were asked about a Town near their home that they visit most to access basic services

How often do you travel to your nearest village centre?

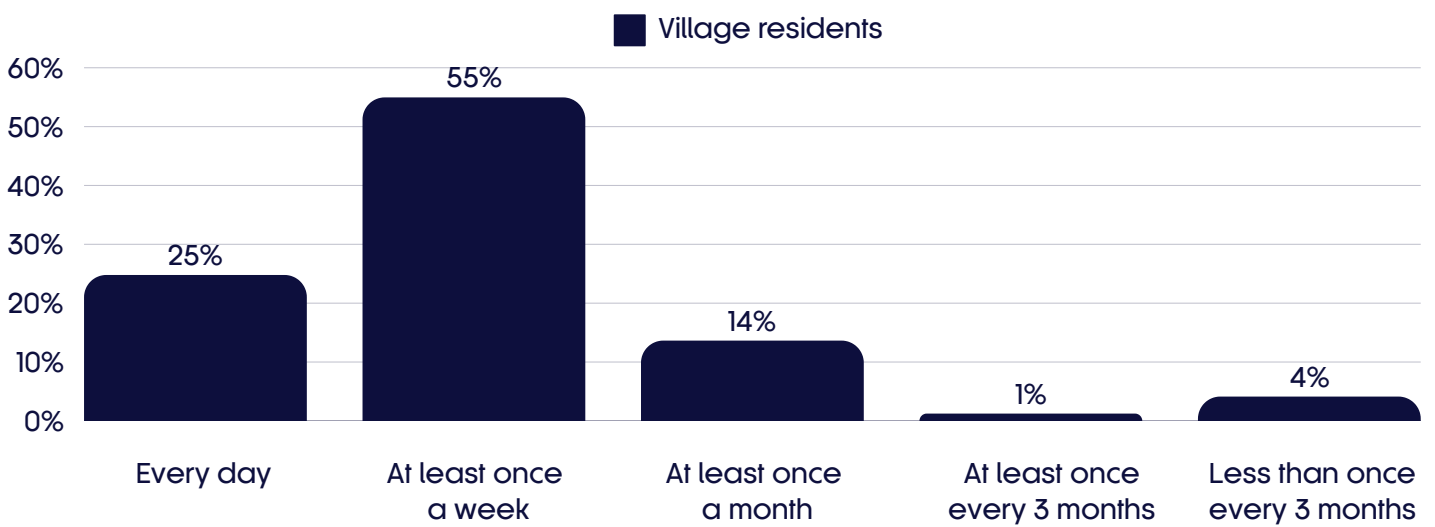


Figure 3

N = 242

How often do you travel to your nearest town centre?

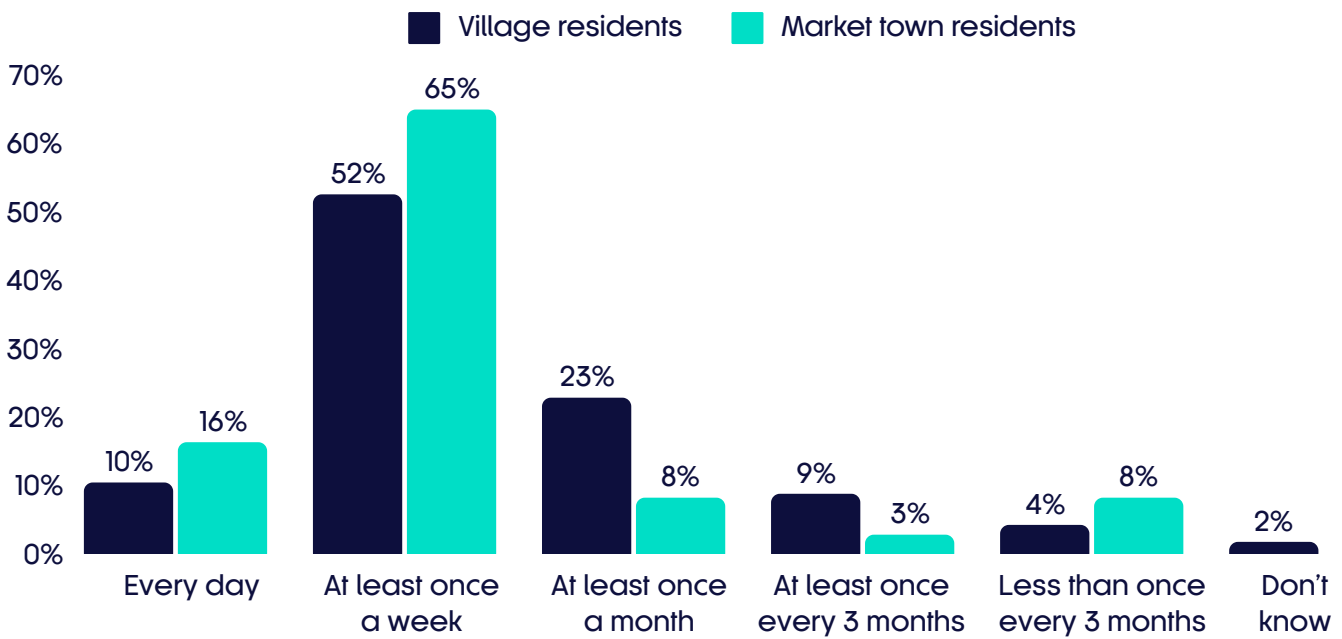


Figure 4
Villages N = 242, market towns N = 37

Which of the following, if any, does your village centre have?

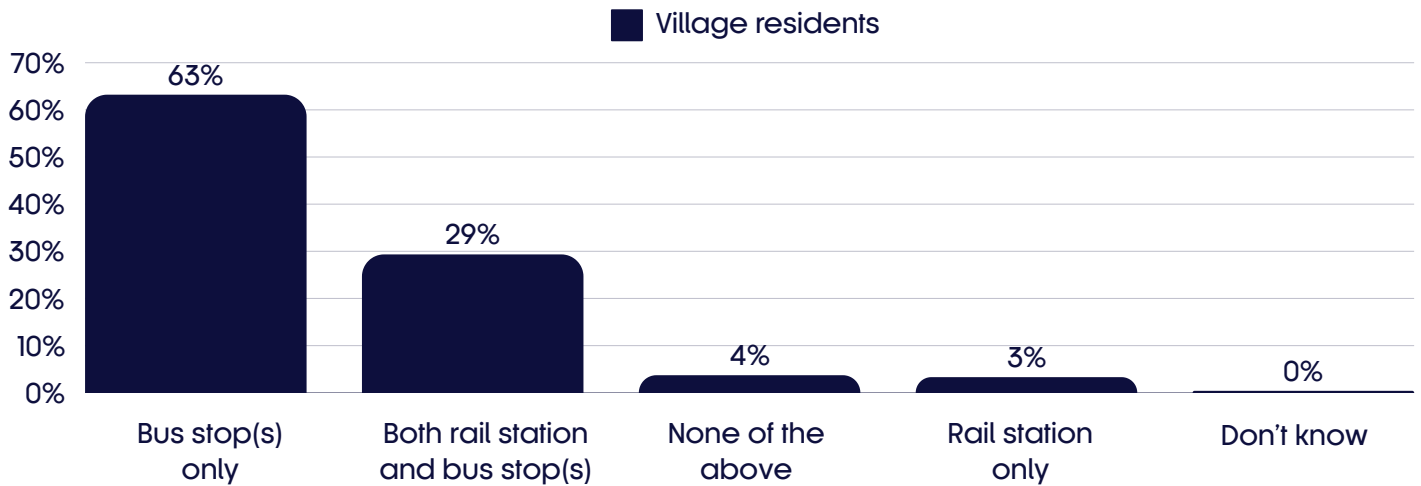


Figure 5
N = 242

Survey participants were also asked about existing travel facilities in their local village or town. Just over two thirds (63%) of village residents reported that they have bus stops and just under one third (29%) reported that they have access to both bus stops and rail stations in their local village centre. Most market town centres were reported to have both bus and rail stations (nearly two thirds of those who live in villages and travel to their local market town centre reported this, as did half of those who live in market towns). A smaller share of respondents reported that their nearest market town only had a bus or train station only (figure 5 and 6).

Which of the following, if any, does your town centre have?

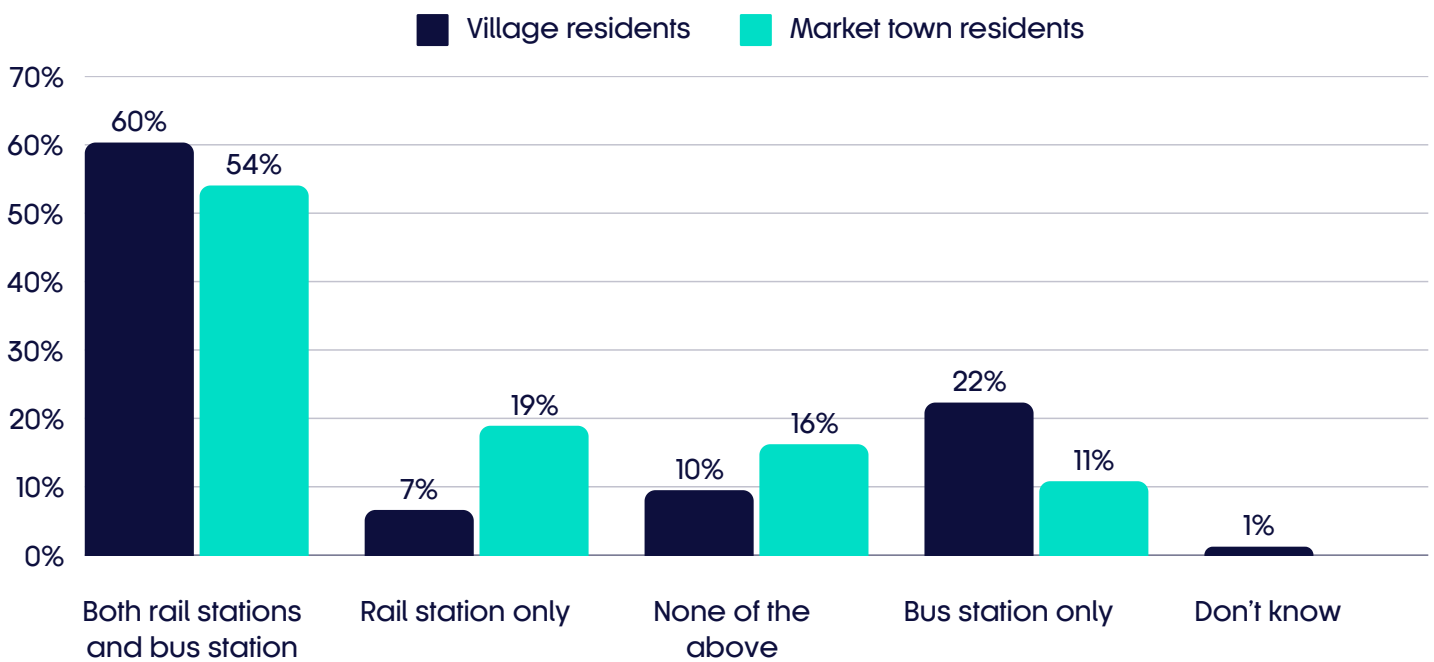


Figure 6

Villages N = 242, Market towns N = 37

Respondents were asked how they typically travel to their local village or market town centre. For respondents who reported living in a village, the most popular mode of travel was walking or wheeling to the local village centre, with over half of respondents (52%) using this mode of travel.

Respondents that lived closer to the village centre, used active travel more often; of those travelling under two miles to their local village centre, around two fifths reported that they 'Always' use methods of active travel (walking, wheeling or cycling). Of the village respondents who reported living between 2 and 5 miles from the village centre, over two fifths reported that they always used a car (as a driver or passenger) and just over ten per cent reported that they always use active travel to journey this distance.

When travelling to the local town centre fewer village-based respondents reported using active travel; just over one fifth (21%) of village-based respondents reported that they walk or wheel to their nearby town centre. Cycling rates were low for village residents accessing either their local village or town centre (figure 7).

How often, if at all, do you tend to use the following transport modes to travel to your nearest village centre?

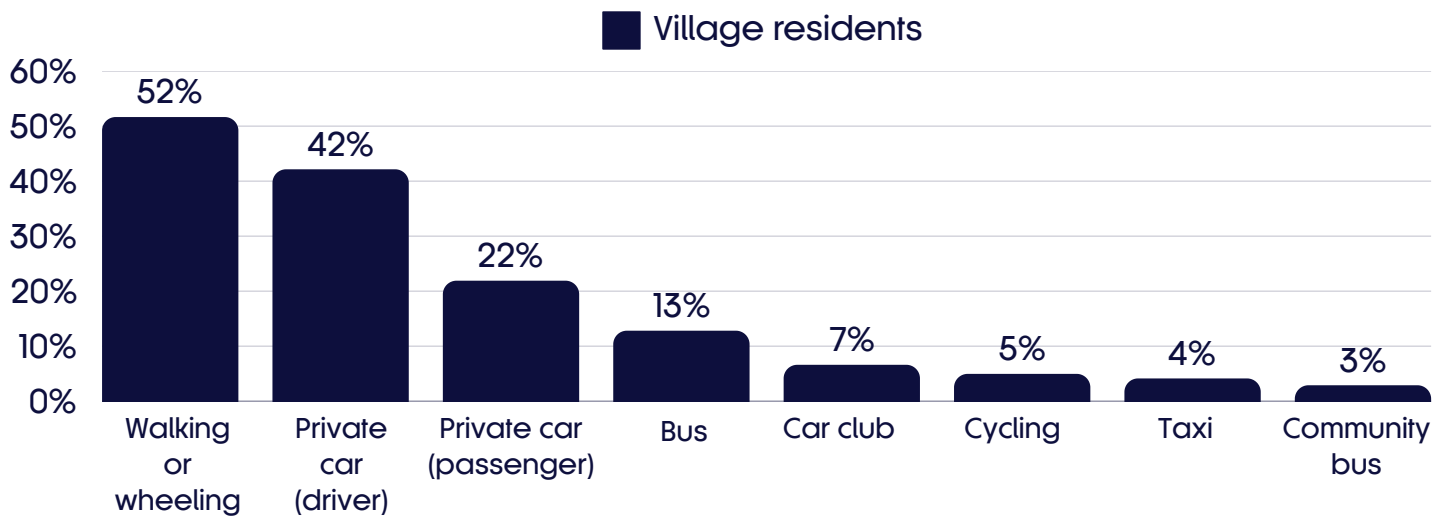


Figure 7

N = 242, the chart shows proportion of village respondents who reported using the specified modes 'always' or 'very often' to access their local village centre

Car travel was the second most popular choice for respondents from villages travelling to their local or nearest village centre. Over two fifths (42%) of respondents reported using this mode as a driver and over one fifth (23%) as a passenger 'always' or 'very often'. Bus use was low for respondents travelling to a local village centre, just over one tenth (12%) of village respondents reported using the bus 'always' or 'very often' and almost two thirds (59%) said that they never used the bus.

When village respondents travelled to their local market town, car travel was the most popular choice (62%, 'always' or 'very often' as a driver, 38% 'always' or 'very often' as a passenger), this was followed by bus travel, possibly owing to greater travel distances for village residents to access a local market town. Reported bus use was also low for villagers travelling to a local town centre, with just over one fifth (22%) of village respondents reporting to use the bus 'always' or 'very often' to access a town centre (figure 8); two fifths of respondents from villages reported that they never use the bus. Over four fifths of village respondents also reported that they never use car clubs or community buses and over two thirds (72%) reported that they never used taxis.

How often, if at all, do you tend to use the following transport modes to travel to your nearest town centre?

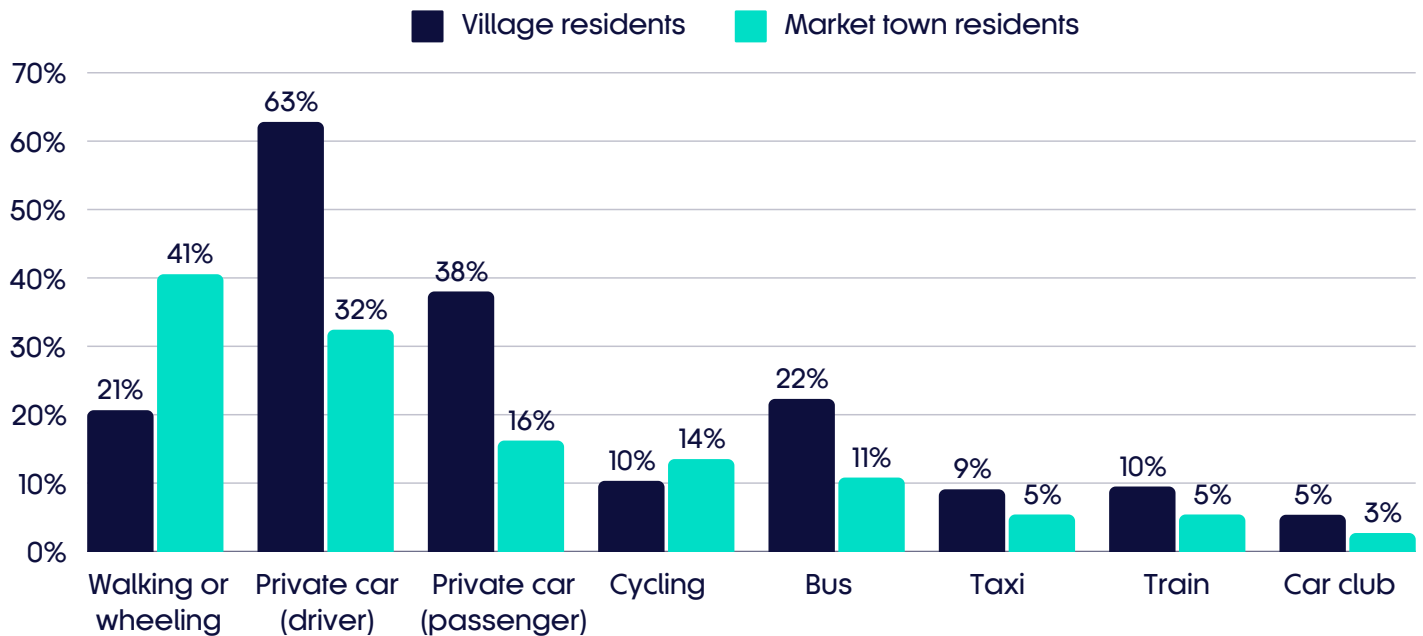


Figure 8

Villages N = 242, the chart shows the proportion of village respondents who reported using the specified travel modes 'always' or 'very often' to access their local market town centre

Towns N = 37, the chart shows the proportion of market town respondents who reported using the specified travel modes 'always' or 'very often' to access their local market town centre

For respondents from a market town, travelling to their local town centre, walking and wheeling was also the most frequently used mode of travel (41% of respondents from towns reported walking or wheeling 'always' or 'very often'). Driving was the second most popular mode of travel - around a third of respondents from towns reported driving to their local town centre and 16% reported being a passenger 'always' or 'very often'. Noting the smaller sample size of market town respondents, cycling was the next most popular mode choice for town dwellers, with 13% of this group choosing to cycle to their nearest town centre 'always' or 'very often'. Car clubs, taxis, and rail were the least popular choice of travel for respondents from both groups accessing the local market town (figure 8).

Reasons for travel to the village centre



Figure 9
N = 242

Reasons for travel to the town centre

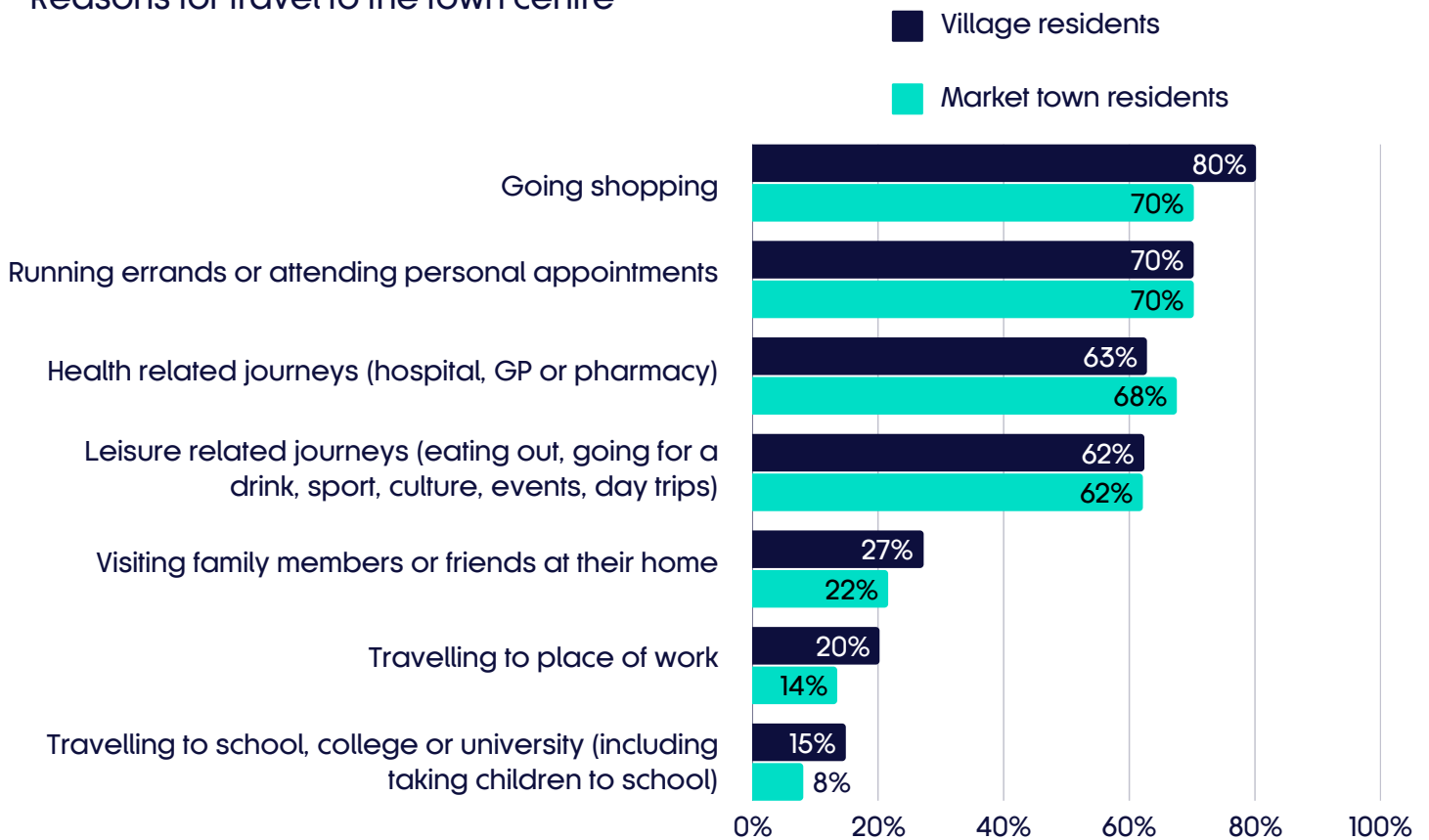


Figure 10
Villages N = 242, market town N = 37

Respondents were asked about the reasons why they travel to their local village centre or town centre, as well as the purpose of journeys where they travel via the village or town centre on to another destination. The most popular reasons for respondents to travel to local village and town centres were to shop, to run errands, and for health-related journeys such as visiting the GP (figure 9 and 10).

Although this was consistent across village and town centres, a greater proportion of respondents from villages said that they would access a town centre for these reasons, versus a village centre. Respondents from both villages and towns were less likely to travel to, or travel via, the village or town centre for work or school trips. Looking at the main reasons why respondents travel via their local village or town to then go on to a destination further beyond, these types of journeys were typically leisure related journeys.



Research findings

Perceived usefulness of potential village and market town hub features

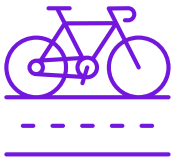


Perceived usefulness of potential village and market town hub features

Key findings



Survey participants were asked about the most useful transport facilities if a village or town hub was to be developed nearby. The top three facilities for both village and town hubs that respondents considered 'extremely useful' or 'very useful' were a bus stop, a train station and accessible walking and wheeling facilities.



Survey respondents were asked how often they might use each of the suggested travel facilities if they were available in a new travel hub. Responses from village residents were consistent with their previous answers, most would use accessible walking or wheeling facilities 'very often' or 'sometimes', respondents had already reported that this was the most popular travel choice to access a village centre.



Accessible walking or wheeling facilities were also high on the list for respondents from market towns, with over two thirds reporting they would use these 'very often' or 'sometimes'. Like for villagers, market town residents would use walking and wheeling routes followed by train and bus stations, although town dwellers demonstrated slightly more demand for train stations versus bus stops.



Survey participants were also asked for their opinion on the usefulness of other potential facilities in village and town hubs. The most popular facilities to include in a market town hub were toilets, a health care centre, a cash point, a shop or convenience store and a café would be among the most useful services in a market town hub.



Survey participants were also asked to select the three most important features to implement in a village or town hub. The top three most important to implement were consistent across both groups for village hubs and for market town hubs, these included: safety measures and prevention of anti-social behaviour, cheaper buses and more frequent buses.

Perceived usefulness of potential village and market town hub features

Survey participants were asked about the potentially most useful transport facilities to them, if a village or town hub was to be developed nearby. The top three facilities for both village and town hubs that respondents considered 'extremely useful' or 'very useful' were a bus stop, a train station and accessible walking and wheeling facilities (figure 11 & 12). This was despite reported bus and train use being relatively low, showing there is likely to be a level of unmet demand for bus and rail services.

Two fifths of village respondents also reported that a taxi rank would be a useful facility to include in a village hub. A taxi rank was also seen as an important feature of a town hub for both village and town dwellers. This is despite taxis being one of the least common travel modes for survey respondents; perhaps owing to less accessible or centralised existing taxi services.

If a Village Hub was being developed in your nearest village, how useful would each of these potential transport services be to you? (Percentage of respondents from villages who answered 'extremely useful' or 'very useful')

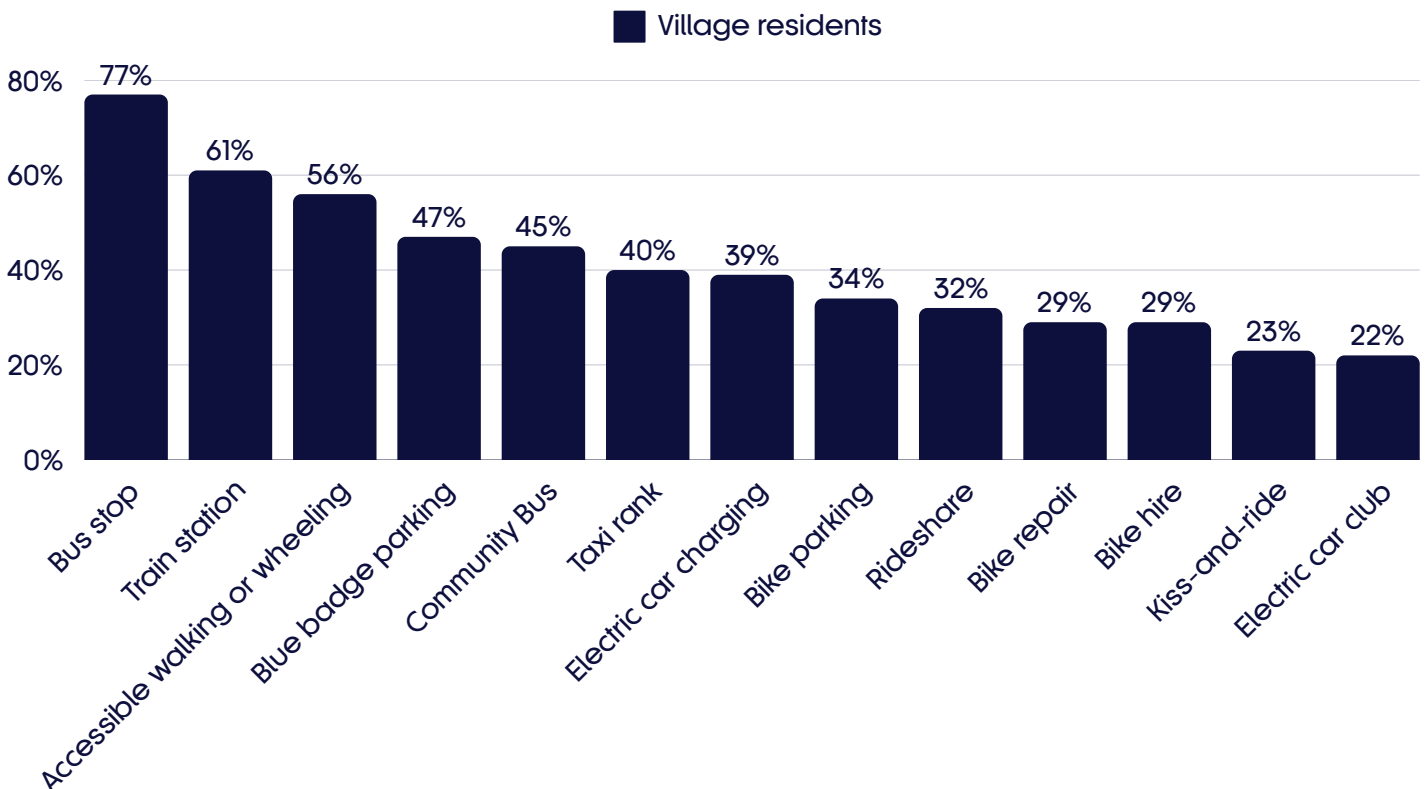


Figure 11, N = 242, percentage of village residents who reported services to be 'Extremely useful' or 'Very useful'.

Blue Badge parking was also a popular facility to include in both village and town hubs. Around half of respondents from villages reported that this would be a useful feature of both a village and town hub, and over one third (38%) of respondents from market towns agreed that this would be a useful feature of a town hub. This finding was consistent with car travel being amongst the most reported travel modes to access village and town centres.

If a Market Hub was being developed in your nearest town, how useful would potential transport services be to you? (Percentage of respondents that answered 'Extremely useful' or 'very useful')

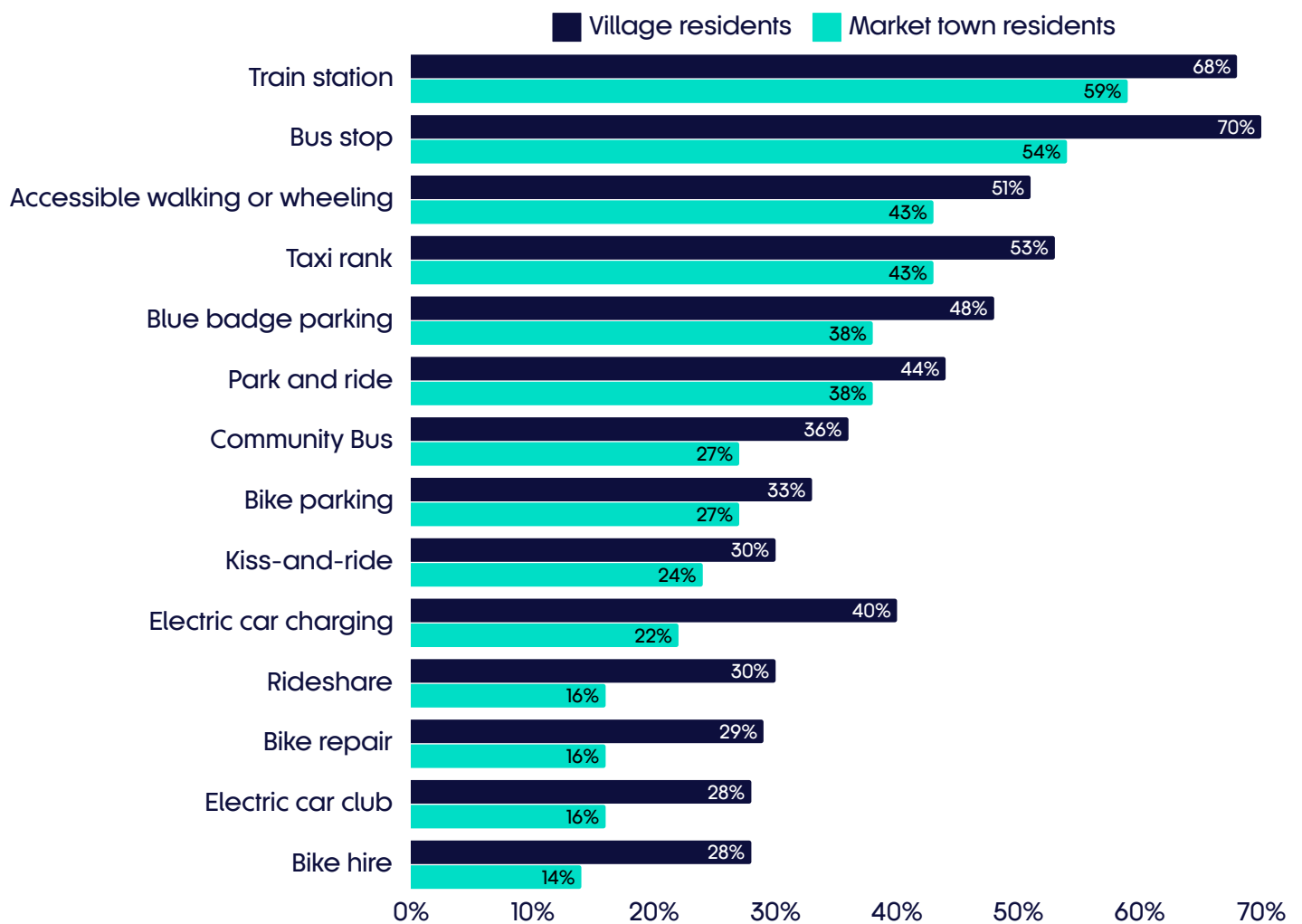


Figure 12

Villages N = 242, market towns N = 37, percentage of village or market town residents who reported the services to be 'extremely useful' or 'very useful'

Survey respondents were then asked how often they might use each of the suggested travel facilities if they were available in a new travel hub. Responses from village respondents were consistent with their previous answers, most (71%) would use accessible walking or wheeling facilities 'very often' or 'sometimes' (figure 13). Respondents had already reported that this was the most popular travel choice to access a village centre, with over half of respondents from villages reporting that they walked or wheeled to their local village centre.

Over half of respondents from villages also reported that they would use a bus stop or train station 'very often' or 'sometimes'. These were the two facilities that survey respondents voted to be the most useful facilities of a village hub, although fewer (13%) reported that they currently use the bus to access their local village centre.

If a Village Hub was being developed in the village you mentioned earlier, how often would you use each of these potential transport services? (Percentage of village respondents that answered 'very often' or 'sometimes')

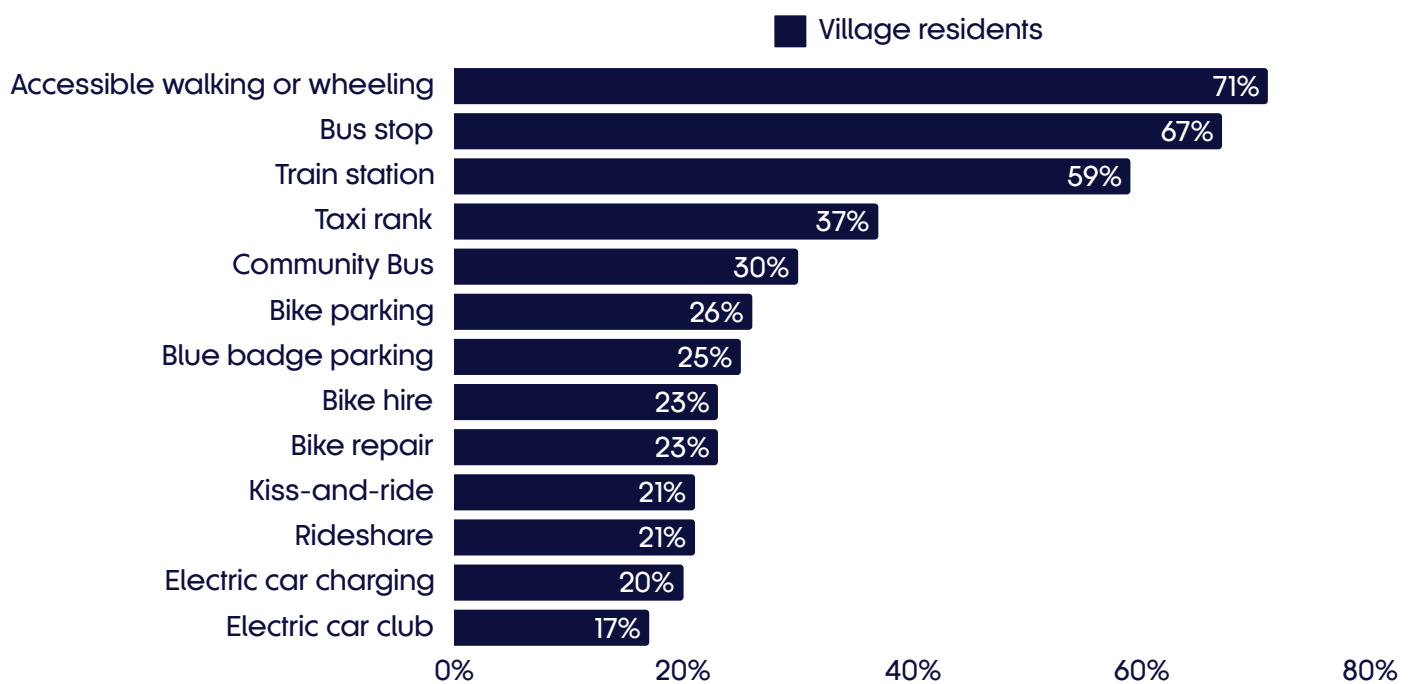


Figure 13

N = 242, percentage of village respondents that answered 'very often' or 'sometimes'

Respondents from villages were also asked how often they would use these facilities if they were provided in a town hub. Bus and rail services were the most commonly selected facilities, with over two thirds of respondents reporting they would use these 'very often' or 'sometimes' (figure 14). These were followed by accessible walking and wheeling facilities. Reported bus use was higher for respondents from villages accessing their local town than their local village, with over one fifth (22%) of respondents reporting that they use a bus service 'always' or 'very often' to access their local town centre, compared to 13% for bus travel to their village centre. A greater proportion of respondents travel further distances to access a town centre, which supports the case that bus and train stations are useful facilities to include in a town hub and could potentially replace some car journeys; private car journeys were the most common travel mode for village residents accessing their local town centre, yet only a small percentage (9.5%) of village respondents reported using a train 'always' or 'very often' (figure 8).

If a Market Town Hub was being developed in the town you mentioned earlier, how often would you use each of these potential transport services? (Percentage of village and market town respondents that answered 'very often' or 'sometimes')

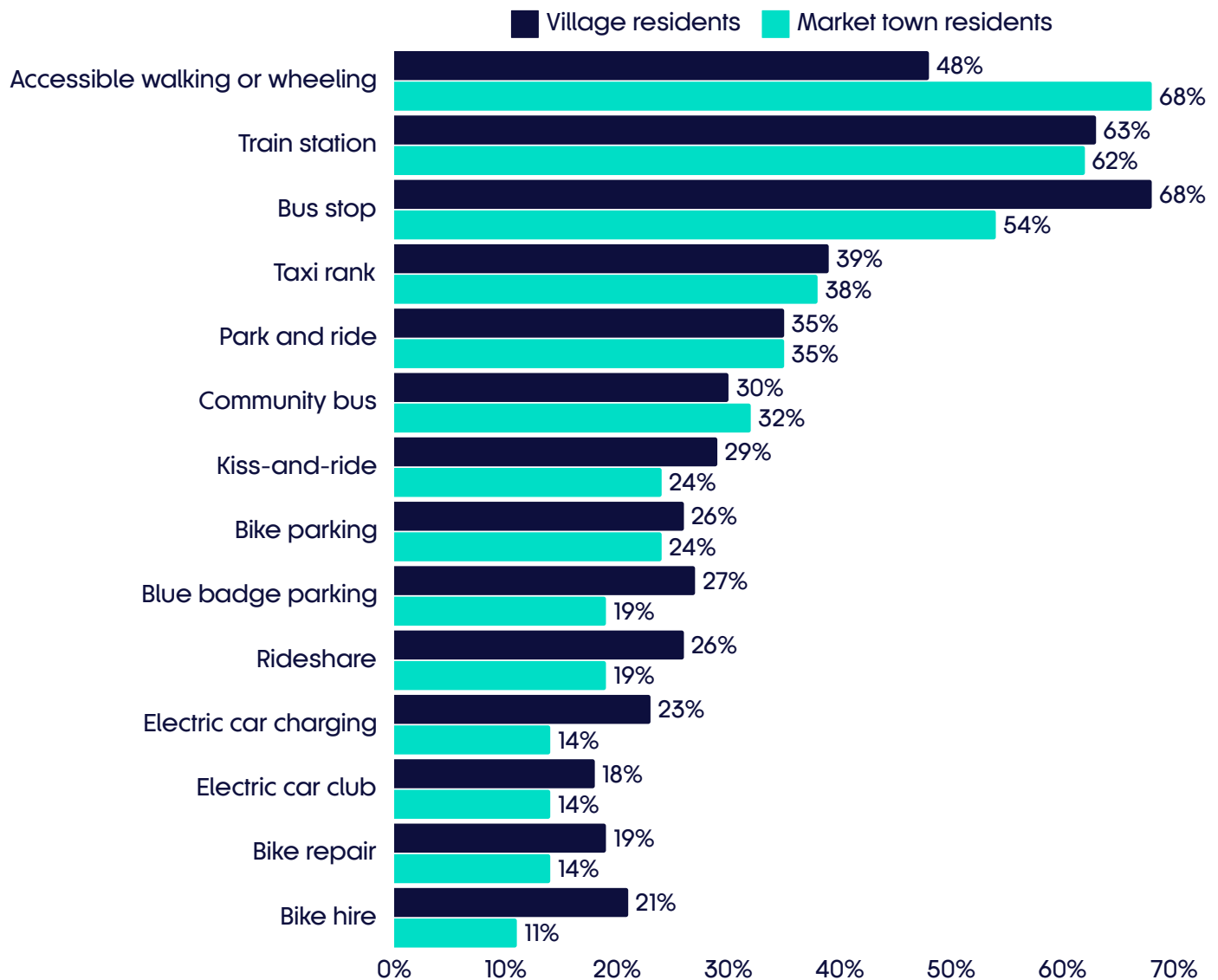


Figure 14

villages N = 242, market towns N = 37 percentage of village or market town respondents who reported that they would use the services 'very often' or 'sometimes'.

Accessible walking or wheeling facilities were also high on the list for respondents from market towns, with over two thirds reporting they would use these provisions 'very often' or 'sometimes' (figure 14). Like for village hubs, this was followed by train and bus stations, although those from a town hub would get greater use from train stations versus bus stops. Almost two fifths (38%) of those from towns also reported that they would use a taxi rank if it was provided in a town hub, despite reported taxi use being relatively low (5%) amongst respondents from market towns.

Generally, in the North residents of rural communities travel further to access basic services ([Analysis of Rural Mobility Across Northern England: Summary Report, TfN 2025](#)). Survey participants were therefore asked for their opinion on the usefulness of other potential facilities in village and town hubs. Overall, respondents thought that most of the listed facilities would be useful to them (figures 15 and 16).

The most popular facilities to include in a market town hub were toilets, a health care centre, a cashpoint, and post office. Those residing in villages reported that in addition to toilets and a cash point, a shop or convenience store and a café would be among the most useful services in a market town hub. Although respondents from villages access their village centre to shop and run errands, a greater proportion travel to their local town hub to carry out these activities (80% and 70% respectively, figure 10).

'If a Village Hub was being developed in the village you mentioned earlier, how useful would each of these potential other facilities and services be to you? (Percentage of village respondents who answered 'extremely useful' or 'very useful')

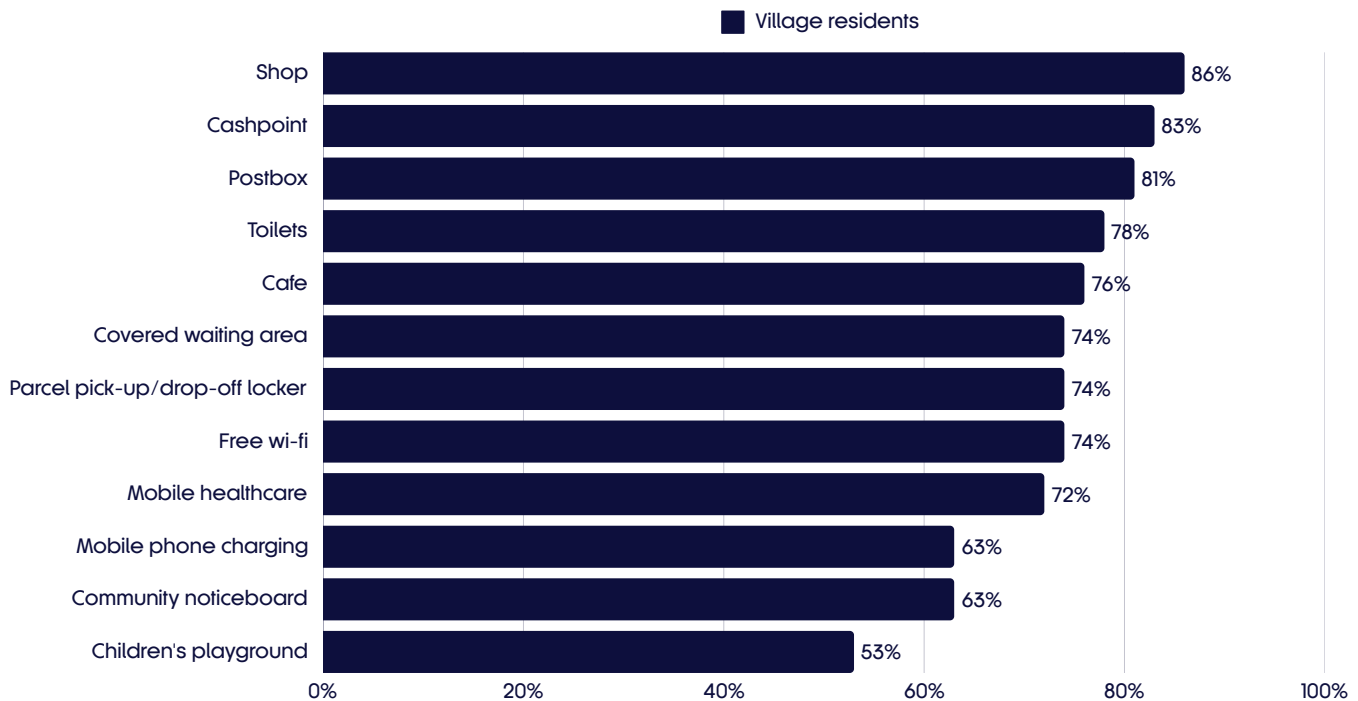


Figure 15
N = 242, percentage of village residents who reported services to be 'extremely useful' or 'very useful'.

If a Market Town Hub was being developed in the market town you mentioned earlier, how useful would each of these potential other facilities and services be to you? (Percentage of village and market town respondents who answered 'extremely useful' or 'very useful')

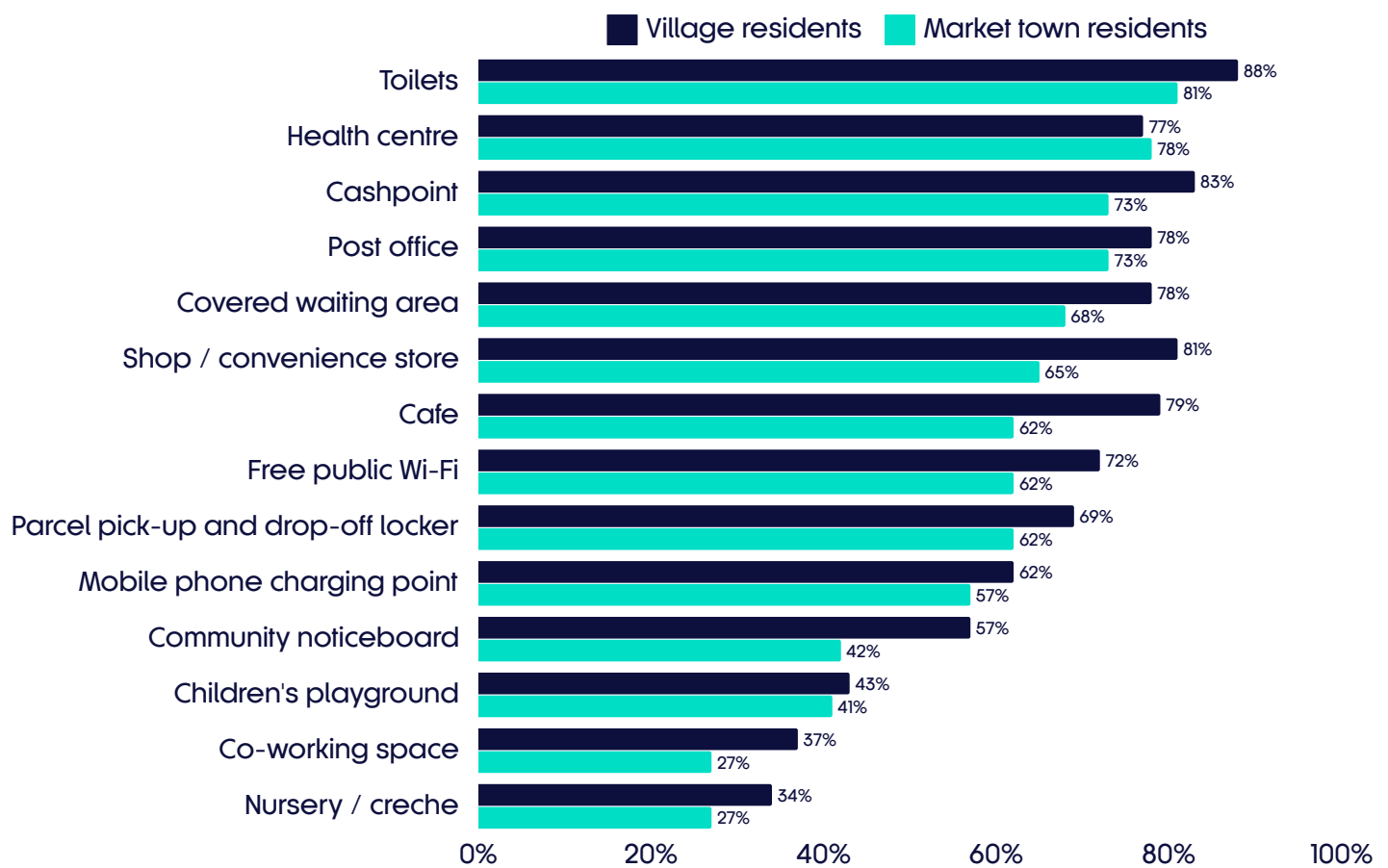


Figure 16

villages N = 242, market towns N = 37, percentage of village or market town residents that described the facilities as 'extremely useful' or 'very useful'.

Survey participants from both villages and market towns also thought that free public WiFi would also be a useful service to include in a village or town hub, with over two thirds of both groups reporting that this service would be 'Extremely useful' or 'Very useful'. A service such as this would potentially help to facilitate access to public transport RTI (Real Time Information) and help to improve other services on offer in a village or town hub, for example with online shopping, 'click and collect' orders, and banking services.

Survey participants were also asked if there were any other facilities that had not been mentioned that they would like to see in a village or town hub. Responses for a village hub included facilities that would help improve the safety and security in a village, including more police presence in the area, security lights, shelters, CCTV, and a neighbourhood watch scheme. Respondents also said healthcare facilities such as a pharmacy and dentist would be useful to have in a village hub. Accessible public toilets with baby changing areas were also mentioned as a useful facility.

Other facilities mentioned included banks and post offices. Some respondents mentioned facilities that would benefit the local community such as a space for community services for example book exchanges, plant or produce sales, and coffee shops. Some respondents mentioned more specific travel improvements they would like to see, such as a ticket office, buses that run longer into the night, and parking for those who park and ride.

Answers were similar for facilities that survey respondents would like to see in a town hub. An increased police presence was a common suggestion, as well as basic services such as a bank, post office and library. Some respondents also mentioned services for the wider community such as a notice board and social facilities. Similar to a village hub, one respondent mentioned they would also like to see buses that run later into the night, past 10pm.

Survey participants were then asked to select the three most important features to implement in a village or town hub, from a short list of options provided. The top three most important to implement were consistent across both groups for village hubs and for market town hubs, these included: safety measures and prevention of anti-social behaviour, cheaper buses and more frequent buses (figure 17 & 18). Digital RTI (Real Time Information) was voted an important feature by around two fifths of village respondents for a village hub, and it was also the next most important feature of a town hub for both village- and town-based respondents.

Which of the following features would be the most important to implement, in your view, if a Village Hub was being developed in this village centre? Please select 3 features you consider most important (percentage of respondents from a village)

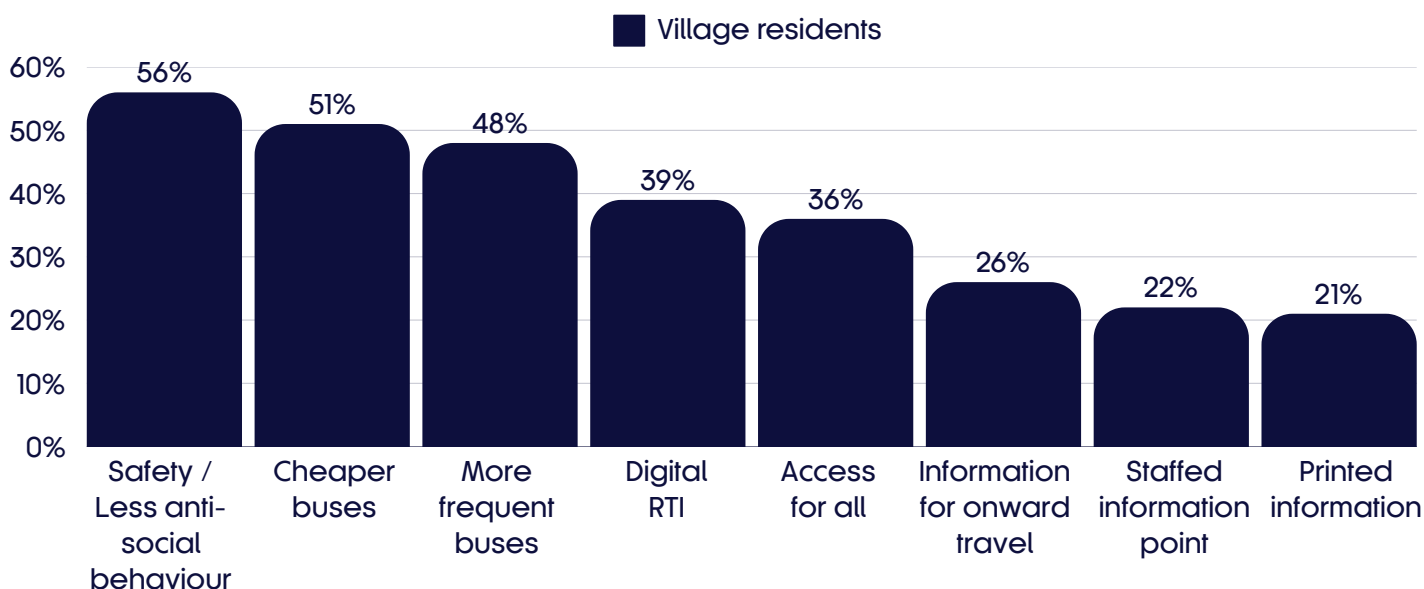


Figure 17

Villages N = 242, market towns N = 37, Percentage of village residents who voted for each implementation.

Which of the following features would be the most important to implement, in your view, if a Market Town Hub was being developed in this town centre? Please select 3 features you consider most important (percentage of respondents from a village or market town)

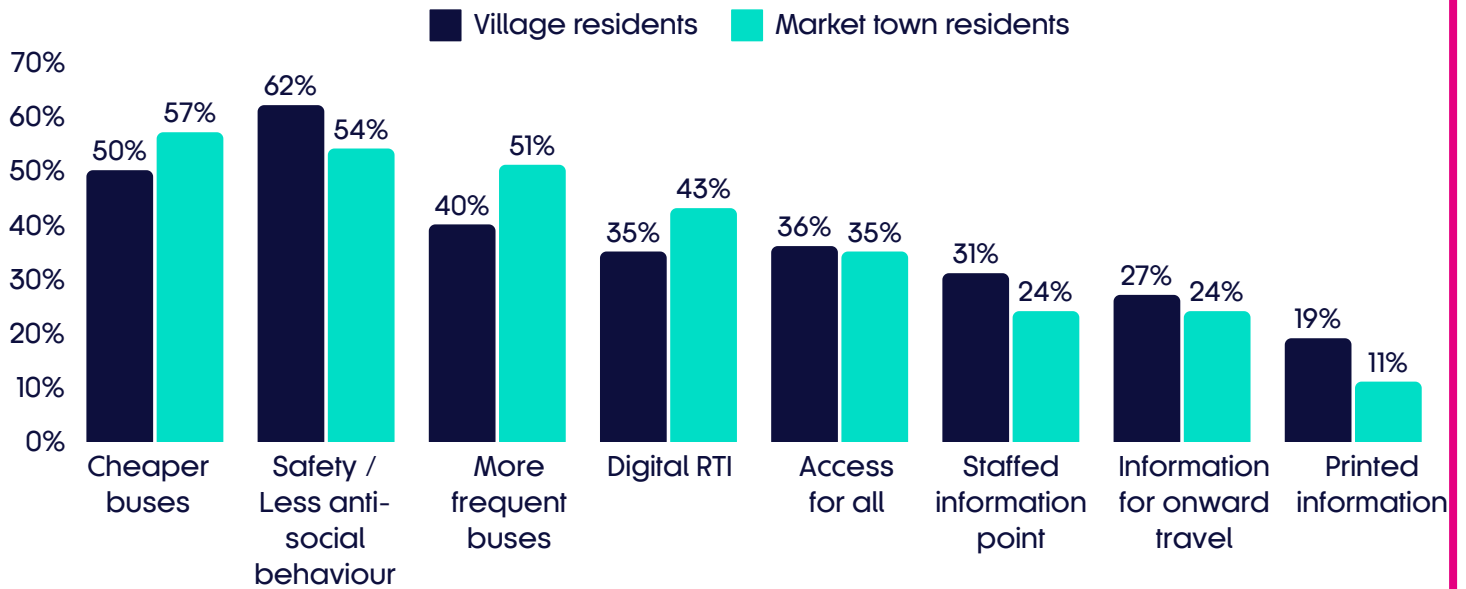


Figure 18

villages N = 242, market towns N = 37

Percentage of village or market town residents who voted for each implementation.

Research findings

Potential impacts of village and market town hubs on travel behaviours



Potential impacts of village and market town hubs on travel behaviours

Key findings



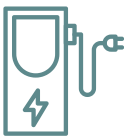
Overall, a village or town hub has the potential to encourage residents to make onward journeys using public transport and would increase travel options. Over half of respondents from villages and just under half of respondents from towns agreed or strongly agreed that a village or town hub would encourage them to make more onward journeys from the village or town using bus or rail services.



Most village respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that having a village hub would increase travel options, and over two thirds agreed that having a village hub available would make it easier for them to access opportunities in the village or beyond.



Over half of respondents from market towns agreed (or strongly agreed) that having a market town hub would increase access to opportunities either in the town or further afield, and over two fifths agreed (or strongly agreed) that a town hub would increase their options for travelling around their local area.



A smaller share of respondents from villages and towns agreed that having EV charge points available in a village or town hub might make them more likely to charge their existing electric vehicle using a hub charge point or to get an electric vehicle if they don't already have one.



Some respondents expect that private car travel will still have a place when it comes to getting to a village or town hub. Around one third of respondents from villages and over two fifths of respondents from towns reported that they would need to access a village hub via private car and would therefore require a parking space.

Potential impacts of village and market town hubs on travel behaviours

As well as voting for cheaper and more frequent buses as some of the most important features to implement in a village or town hub, over half of the respondents from villages, and just under half of the respondents from towns agreed or strongly agreed that a village or town hub would encourage them to make more onward journeys from the village or town using bus or rail services (figure 19 & 20).

Proportion of respondents from villages that strongly agreed or agreed with the statements presented

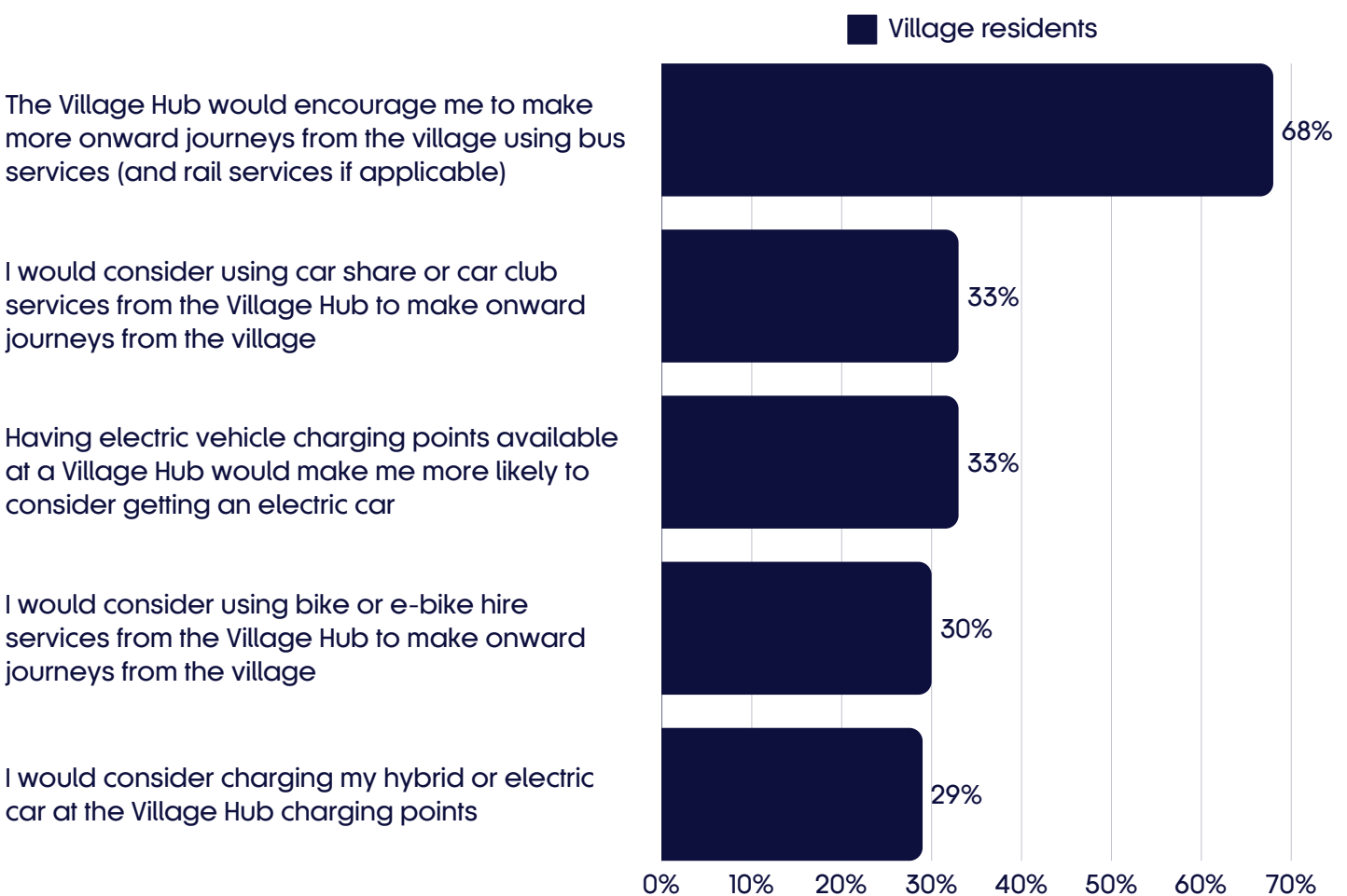


Figure 19
N - 242

Meanwhile, a smaller share (between a quarter and one third of village respondents) agreed that having EV charge points available in a village or town hub might make them more likely to charge their existing electric vehicle using a hub charge point, or to get an electric vehicle if they don't already have one. A somewhat smaller proportion of respondents from towns agreed that EV charging facilities within a town hub would encourage them to get an electric vehicle or charge it in a town hub.

Proportions of respondents from villages and market towns that strongly agree or agree with the statement presented

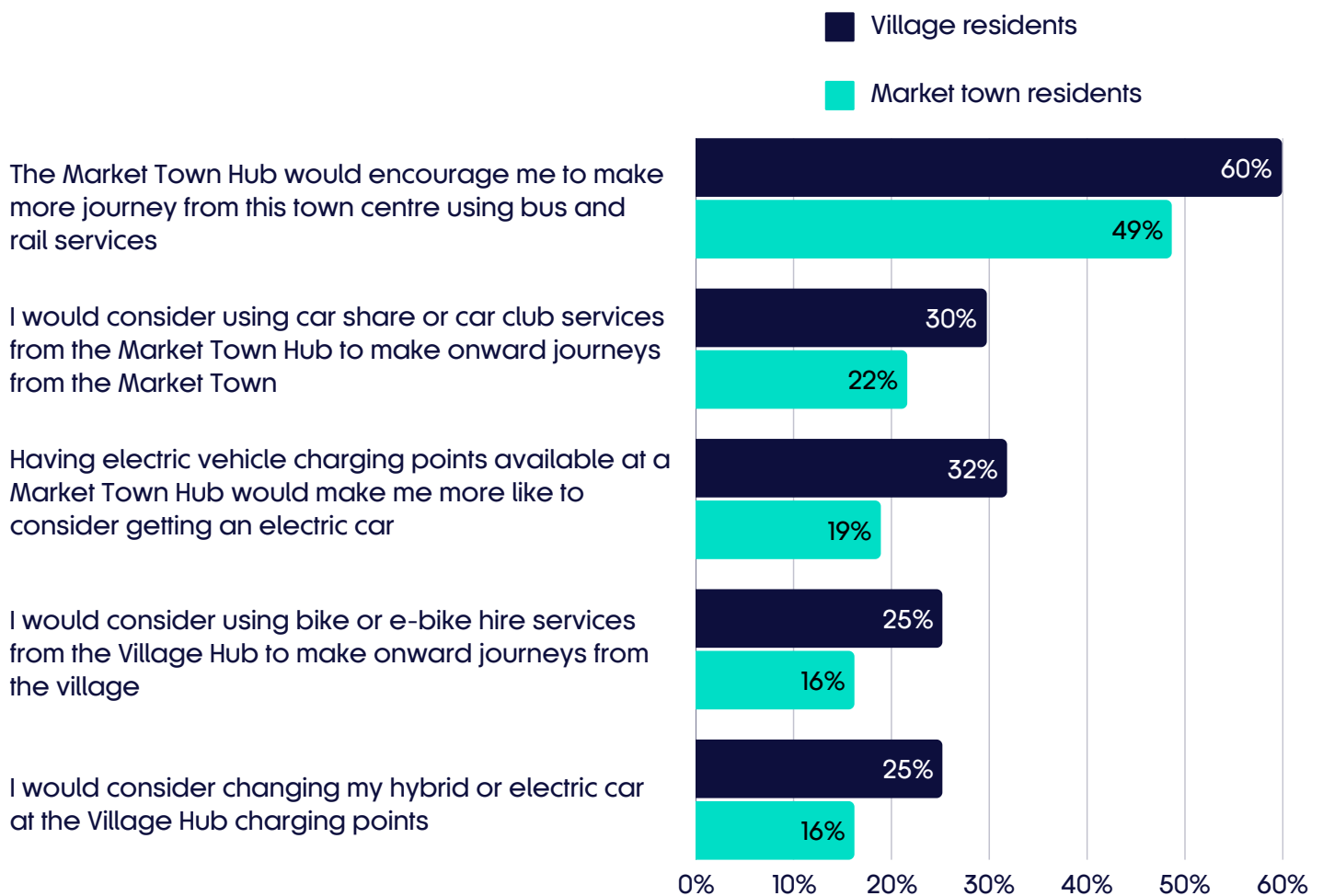


Figure 20

villages N = 242, market towns N = 37

Overall, rural residents in England tend to travel greater distances across all modes (around 6,500 miles per year) compared to urban dwellers, and 90% of these journeys are taken by car, demonstrating high car dependency ([Analysis of Rural Mobility Across Northern England: Summary Report, TfN 2025](#)). Almost four fifths (77%) of village respondents in our survey agreed (or strongly agreed) that having a village hub would increase travel options (figure 21). This finding was consistent with the responses to earlier questions throughout the survey. Most respondents from villages used car travel regularly to access local villages and towns, although public transport options were voted some of the most useful facilities to include in a hub (and those that would gain the most use). Around two thirds of respondents from villages also agreed that a village or town hub would encourage them to make more onward journeys using public transport.

However, a proportion of respondents expect that private car travel will still have a place when it comes to getting to a village or town hub. Over one third (36%) of respondents from villages reported that they would need to access a village hub via private car and would therefore require a parking space, and almost two-thirds reported that they would only be able to access a town hub by car and would need a parking space (figures 21 and 22).

Proportion of respondents from villages that strongly agreed or agreed with the statements presented

I would typically get to the Village Hub by one or more of these modes of travel: walking, wheeling, cycling, getting a lift, getting a taxi or using an on-demand form of travel (Dial a Ride, community minibus)

Having a Village Hub available in this village centre would increase my options for ways of travelling around my local area and beyond

Having a Village Hub available in this village centre would make it easier for me to access opportunities, either in the village or further beyond (e.g. jobs, education, healthcare, shopping, leisure, visiting family and friends).

I would typically only be able to get to a Village Hub by private car, and would need parking space

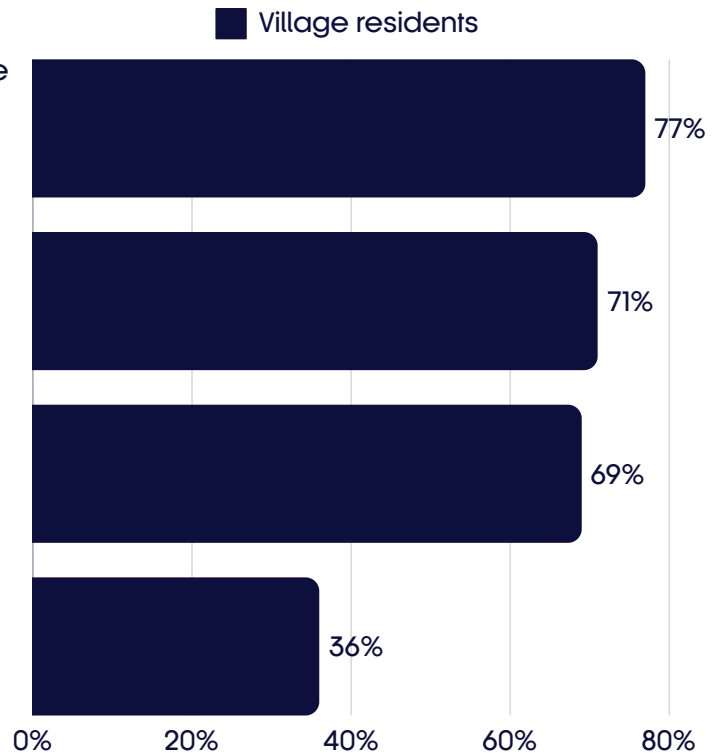


Figure 21
N - 242

Proportions of respondents from villages or market towns that strongly agree or agree with the statement presented

Having a Market Town Hub available in this town centre would make it easier for me to to access opportunities, either in the town or further beyond (e.g. jobs, education healthcare, shopping, leisure, visiting family and friends)

I would typically get to the Market Town Hub by one or more of these modes of travel: walking, wheeling, cycling, getting a lift, getting a taxi, or using an on-demand form of travel (Dial a Ride, community minibus)

I would typically only be able to get to a Market Town Hub by private car, and would need parking space

Having a Market Town Hub available in this town centre would increase my options for ways of travelling around my local area and beyond

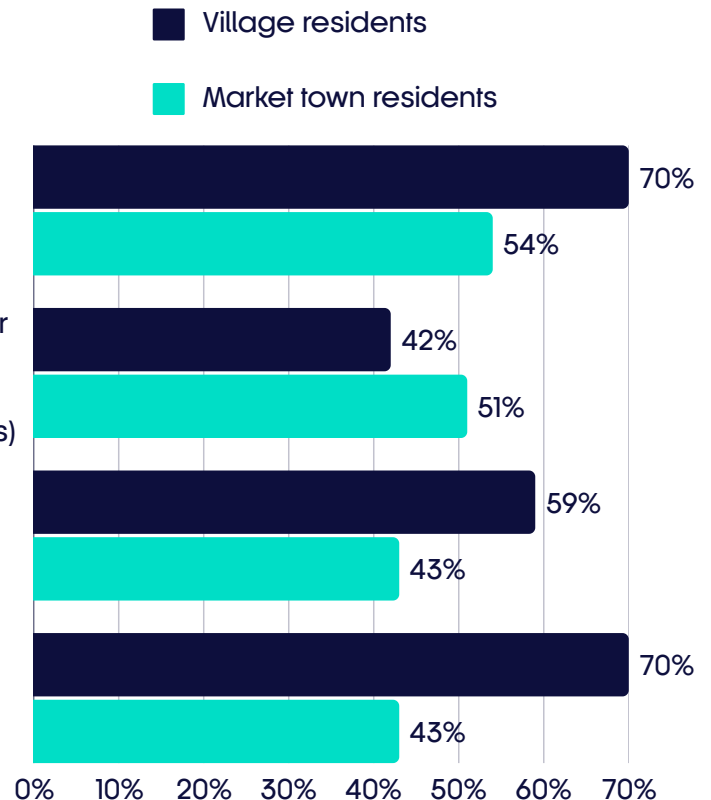


Figure 22
villages N = 242, market towns N = 37

Over half (54%) of respondents from market towns agreed or strongly agreed that having a market town hub would increase access to opportunities either in the town or further afield, and over two fifths (43%) agreed or strongly agreed that a town hub would increase their options for travelling around their local area (figure 22). Most town-based respondents travel outside of the town to access work and education, and around half of market town respondents travel via the town centre to go further afield to access leisure facilities and shops. A town hub would have potential to facilitate these journeys and improve accessibility and connectivity for town residents to jobs, education, shopping and leisure.

Over two fifths (43%) of town-based respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would only be able to access a town hub by private car and would therefore need a parking space. This was consistent with the finding that after walking and wheeling, driving was the most popular travel choice to access town centres for market town residents.

Research findings

Potential impacts of village and market town hubs for the community



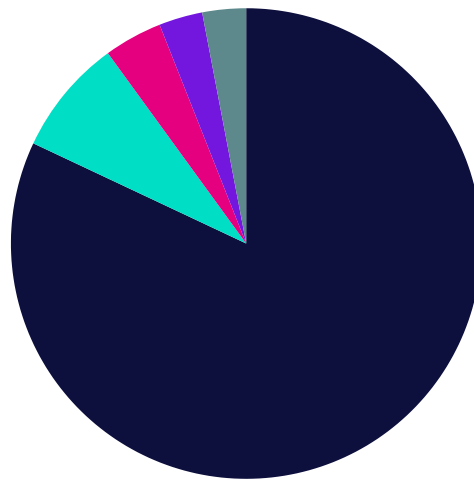
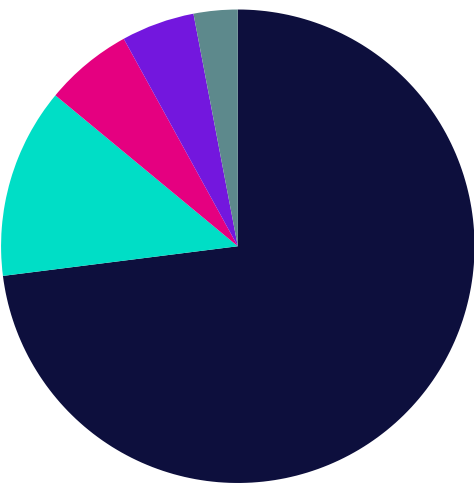
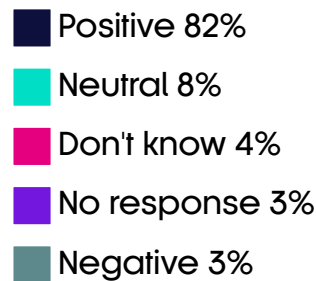
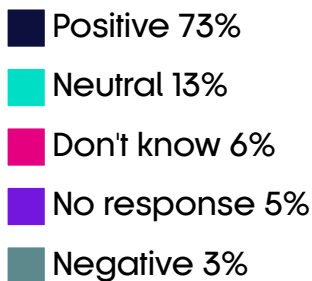
Potential impacts of village and market town hubs for the community

Survey participants were also asked to describe in their own words the potential greatest impacts of developing a village or town hub, in their opinion, and the extent to which having a mobility hub would make a difference to their own journeys or to the village or town as a whole.

Participants were allowed to leave more than one comment. In total there were 318 comments left from village and market town residents about the impacts of a Market Town Hub and 355 comments from village residents about the impacts of a Village Hub. Overall, the sentiment of most responses was positive, showing that the impact of a village or town hub would be good for most respondents and their communities.

Sentiments of responses for a Market Town Hub

Sentiments of responses for Village Hubs



Impact of a hub on market towns

The survey participants expressed mixed opinions on the impact of a market town hub, with some praising the potential community benefits, while others focusing on accessibility and convenience.

Many participants recognise the hub's potential to provide better and more convenient public transportation options for residents, particularly the elderly and disabled.

“It would make travel much easier for wheelchair users, and hopefully more affordable and convenient. If you have a motorised wheelchair, you generally need a specialist taxi. That’s expensive, especially when you’re more likely to be on benefits.” (Survey participant, market town)

“Better public transport on the whole” (Survey participant, market town)

Participants also noted that a transport hub might help connect them with other places, possibly further afield.

“It would give myself and fellow residents the opportunity to travel further afield”. (Survey participant)

Some respondents believe that the development could revitalise their town by attracting visitors, creating jobs, and increasing footfall in local shops.

This would revitalise my town. It would be a much nicer place to live in, have far greater facilities and more employment options.” (Survey participant, market town)

“It would benefit the businesses in the town with more people visiting and give people who live on their own a chance to get out for the day.” (Survey participant, market town)

“Would bring the town alive again” (Survey participant, market town)

A few participants expressed concerns about the financial implications of the hub, questioning whether it would be worth the investment in terms of benefit to the community.

“Negative impact and would ruin Market Towns, plus the cost would be on the consumer through the council tax or some other means - Not needed in any places just another waste of the taxpayers’ money” (Survey participant, market town)

“Higher prices and higher rents which wouldn’t help the community at all, it would end up only really benefiting those who already own” (Survey participant, market town)

However, participants also noted the positive economic benefits of a town hub.

‘Would encourage investment to the area [and] attract more people’ (Survey participant, market town)

Several participants mention the potential environmental benefits of reduced car usage, and the opportunity for social interaction and cohesion within the community.

It would reduce reliance on private cars and give options to those who don't drive. It would be more environmentally sustainable and would encourage economic development.” (Survey participant, market town)

“It would make more people walk or cycle, so improve air pollution.” (Survey participant, market town)

Impact of a hub on villages

Survey participants expressed mixed opinions about the impact of a Village Hub, highlighting potential benefits and concerns in the community, though overall feedback was positive.

Like the impact of town hubs, many see the opportunity for improved accessibility, particularly for elderly and disabled residents, as well as increased public transport options for non-drivers.

“It would help elderly people to travel more.” (survey participant, village)

“Enable those that are not as mobile to get out and about within the village.”
(survey participant, village)

“For those without transport of their own or access to something it would be a godsend.” (survey participant, village)

Another benefit mentioned by participants was ease of travel for families and young people if the hub was to improve public transport options.

“Would be able to use public transport and get into town easier. Kids would be able to get the bus home instead of having to wait for a car to collect them.” (survey participant, village)

“Young families with children and the elderly who have no form of transport, and playgrounds for the children, very helpful.” (survey participant, village)

Some participants mention the potential for fostering community connections, social activities, and economic development by supporting local businesses.

“This would encourage further human interaction and bonding with people that can form better relationships.” (survey participant, village)

“Increased sense of community and liven up the village.” (survey participant, village)

“It might bring more people to the village to shop, knowing they could then journey on.” (survey participant, village)

Like with a town hub, participants also mentioned the potential to be better connected to other places, and also reduce isolation.

It would connect people in a rural area a lot more. It would help me feel less isolated. (survey participant, village)

“Make the village and villagers more connected to the outside world.” (survey participant, village)

Concerns included space limitations, possible negative impacts on existing businesses, increased traffic, and potential misuse of facilities.

“It would persuade me to visit the village more often. On the other hand, the occupants of the village are averse to big changes, which this would be, and I believe they would oppose it due to traffic and overcrowding issues.” (survey participant, village)

“Nothing like this idea would fit into this village, there's not enough space for it to happen.” (survey participant, village)

A few individuals believe a Village Hub wouldn't have much of an impact on their personal lives, expressing contentment with the current state of their village.

“It would be pointless. The village already has health and toilet facilities, plenty of parking, a convenience store, Post Office, three pubs and a cafe in easy walking distance of the centre. A better bus service through the village (it ran hourly pre-pandemic) would make it possible to get to when the weather is unsuitable for walking, but even now ridership of the remaining service is tiny, except for the school-time services.” (survey participant, village)

“We already have most of the ideas.” (survey participant, village)

Research findings

Findings from qualitative focus groups



Findings from qualitative focus groups

In addition to the survey, insights were also gathered via two qualitative focus group discussions, with 13 participants in total across the two groups. The focus group discussions echoed many of the themes that later emerged from the main survey findings. While the discussion groups were organised based on whether participants resided in villages or market towns, with participants from the same settlement type grouped together, many of the frequently mentioned themes could be applicable to a village-based and a town-based hub.

Rural residents want to see cheaper, more frequent, and more integrated bus services

As seen in the survey, focus group participants expressed a lot of demand for better bus services as a key element of a mobility hub. Existing bus services in rural areas were seen as too infrequent, poorly integrated, and not running late enough into the evening, although participants did highlight that the introduction of the £2 single fare price cap had helped with bus usage. Examples were also mentioned of Demand Responsive Transport services which had been useful, but then stopped operating, and of community transport/ volunteer-based services which had dried up when the cost of petrol increased during the cost-of-living crisis. Participants talked about the social isolation that often befalls those who cannot afford to use a private car in a rural area, leading to feelings of being imprisoned at home. One participant observed that in many rural areas “you see tractors more than you see buses”.

Participants therefore emphasised that bus services run as part of a mobility hub should be more regular, run later into the evening, and be better integrated with other local bus services (particularly to allow for easier travel between villages, in a non-radial way). Participants also felt that rail services, park-and-ride services, demand-responsive transport (DRT) services, and taxi ranks would also be useful aspects of a mobility hub, where possible. There were comments regarding some existing park-and-ride services and demand-responsive transport services which participants thought were useful but were not being advertised well enough.

It was remarked that some rural areas suffer from a lot of traffic congestion due to second homes and Airbnb's, and that a greater choice of public transport options within a mobility hub could go some way towards alleviating that.

Residents value the role of a mobility hub in providing access to everyday services

The potential role of a mobility hub in providing other everyday services was also seen as useful by focus group participants – demand was greatest for banking hubs, Post Offices, shops, cafés, parcel lockers, and community-oriented services (such as noticeboards, or places to meet and connect with others). Other services that participants highlighted as potentially useful as part of a mobility hub included maps of the local area, first aid points/ defibrillators/ emergency telephone, recycling facilities, and printing & scanning equipment (including for parcel labels, if co-located with a parcel drop-off locker). With the provision of wider services, including retail and leisure, a hub could become a destination in its own right.

Residents feel the provision of information and advice, alongside good accessibility, reliability and integration of services, will be key to a mobility hub being successful

Having staff present at a mobility hub to provide information, help and advice about different transport options and wider services available was also seen as an important aspect of developing a hub (and something that could be particularly beneficial for visitors to the area). In addition, it was recognised that some elderly residents of rural areas may be digitally excluded, and that it would be important to provide alternatives to digital booking methods (or staff to provide support with engaging with digital processes or services). Other aspects of a mobility hub that were seen as important were accessibility of services provided, the reliability of services provided, and integration of ticketing between different transport services wherever possible.

Residents view the potential impact of mobility hubs as largely positive for individuals and the local community, as long as the community is closely involved in the hub's development

The North's rural population is notably older than its urban population, and some groups of rural residents are at risk of transport-related social exclusion, particularly those who lack private car access ([Analysis of Rural Mobility Across Northern England: Summary Report, TfN 2025](#)). Feedback from the focus groups showed that participants felt that the potential impact of a new mobility hub at an individual level may be highest for those who are elderly, vulnerable, isolated, on a low income, or lacking access to a private car. Overall, the potential impact of a mobility hub on a community as a whole was generally seen as positive, helping to meet residents' needs, as well as potentially attracting more visitors.

One potential limitation to rural mobility hubs was the view of some participants that there would simply not be enough suitable unused space, particularly in village settings, to develop this type of mobility hub. It was suggested that in those situations, it may be useful to consider redeveloping an existing space to serve as a hub (such as a village hall, church hall, market hall, or library that may have closed down).

There was a general consensus among participants that the community aspect of a mobility hub would be very important, and that it is vital that the local community is closely involved in all stages of development of a mobility hub, to ensure that the hub is as effective as possible at meeting the needs of the community. As noted by one of the participants, “in a small village, the community is everything”. Each hub should be bespoke to the local area, and its design and development should be supported by a thorough public consultation. The involvement of the local community in hub design would help ensure that the new services offered at a hub would complement, rather than compete with, those services which already exist in the locality.

Conclusions & Policy Considerations

The evidence gathered through this research has shown that from a user perspective, mobility hubs in rural areas have a huge potential to positively transform residents' lives and their local community as a whole, if developed in a way that is sympathetic to the needs of each community and with the right level of support offered to enable residents to truly make the most of their new mobility hub.

Across urban areas, mobility hubs often develop organically around transport hubs where demand enables wider services to develop. In rural areas, with targeted support, a mobility hub can be a particularly impactful solution for serving the needs of rural communities. This is due to its potential to significantly improve integration between different transport modes while also providing much-needed services closer to residents' homes, with potentially significant impacts on reducing social exclusion, transport poverty, and forced car ownership.

Policy considerations

- The research has shown that at a mobility hub demand is likely to be greatest for bus and rail services, in combination with taxi ranks, DRT, and park-and-ride services. Newer forms of transport services or solutions (such as EV car clubs, e-bike hire, or app-based rideshare services) were less in demand, possibly due to unfamiliarity; if such services are to be provided within a hub, extensive marketing campaigns and/or financial incentives should be considered to stimulate demand.
- Investment in a staffed information point (at least initially) could help increase uptake of different transport services within the hub, particularly ones that may be unfamiliar to residents. There may be potential for local volunteer organisations to assist with information provision by trained volunteers. A physical information point could be supplemented by a 'virtual hub' where information, advice, and booking options could be accessed digitally by those who are more comfortable with digital technology.
- Hub developers should consider incorporating provision of wider services as part of a mobility hub (such as healthcare, banking, or retail) which is likely to pay off in terms of increased footfall around a hub, some of which may over time translate into greater uptake for transport services offering alternatives to the private car.

- A significant share of respondents expressed a preference to access a mobility hub via private car, to then interchange with another mode. To discourage increased congestion, hub developers should consider how to improve options to reach a mobility hub by active travel, bus, or car sharing. Targeted marketing campaigns should be considered to promote these alternative travel options where possible. Large provision of car parking spaces should be avoided, whilst retaining access for Blue Badge holders, or as part of drop-off/kiss-and-ride or park-and-ride facilities.
- As part of mobility hub design and development, attention should be given to ensuring high levels of safety, accessibility, service integration, service reliability, and information provision.
- Hub developers should involve the local community in site allocation and co-design of a new mobility hub from the earliest stages of developing proposals. This will ensure that the community feels fully involved in all stages of development and can influence the location and services provided at the hub. This aims to increase uptake for services offered at the hub and a greater positive economic and social impact. Where possible, hub developers could look to repurpose any existing, unused space in the vicinity of existing transport facilities.
- Further research and evidence building for rural mobility hubs, at a local, regional and/or national level, would help strengthen the case for mobility hub pilots and trials. It could focus on identifying options for funding and delivery, and how to bring together local government, private sector, and voluntary sector delivery partners.

For further information on our research,
evidence and analytical findings, please
email research@transportforthenorth.com