



Listening Learning Leading



Sunday trading hours consultation

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on Sunday trading hours for larger shops

September 2015

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SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on Sunday trading hours for larger shops. Under proposals being made by government, the councils could be given powers to determine the hours that shops over 280 meters floor space could open.

The consultation sought to understand peoples' attitudes towards Sunday opening hours for larger shops as well as the impact that changes to these hours would have for residents, businesses and other stakeholders locally.

A short online survey was set up and promoted widely via the councils' website, a press release sent to local media contacts, social media and dedicated emails sent to the councils' residents' panels and local businesses. Responses could be submitted online, or by completing a paper form available on request.

451 people responded to the consultation, comprising; 396 residents, 37 businesses, five religious organisations, two business representative bodies and one charity.

We found that:

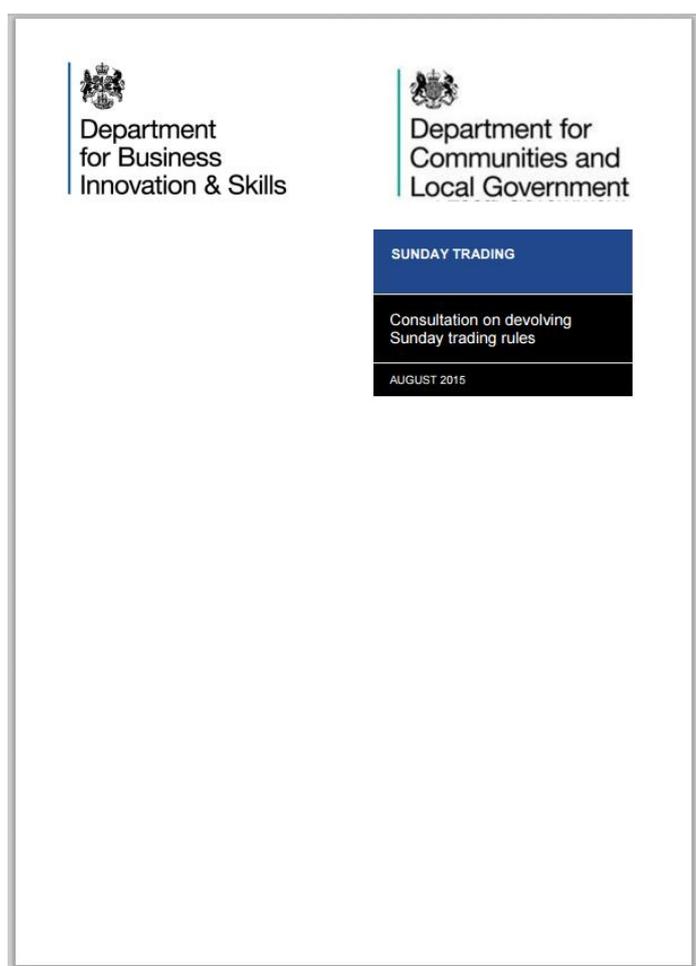
- 84 respondents (19 per cent) said reduce Sunday trading hours for larger shops, 165 (37 per cent) said keep them the same, 202 (45 per cent) said increase them.**
- The main reason respondents gave for wanting opening hours to be extended was to give them greater flexibility to shop when they want. 200 respondents (44 per cent) said this would be the case.**
- 103 respondents (23 per cent) said that extended opening hours would encourage them to shop more in their local town.**
- The biggest concern expressed was a view that Sundays should be a time for relaxation and not shopping. 61 people made statements along these lines, drawing attention to pressures that may be placed upon shop workers to work throughout the week and the impact this will have on the time they spend with family and friends.**

The councils have reviewed this feedback and used it as evidence to inform our own formal response to government. We expressed our support for the government's proposal to extend powers to local authorities to determine Sunday trading hours on the basis that these changes are welcomed by many residents and businesses in the districts.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

On 5 August 2015, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published details of a national consultation, seeking views on proposals to devolve Sunday trading rules to local areas¹. This could mean that local authorities are allowed to change current rules which prohibit larger shops (with more than 280 meters floor space) from opening for longer than six hours on Sundays between 10am and 6pm.

To inform the councils' response to the government's proposals, we decided to set up our own consultation to better understand the attitudes of local residents, business and other stakeholders on this issue. We felt this evidence would also help us to make a decision about Sunday trading rules should the councils be given powers to change these in the future.



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/devolving-sunday-trading-rules>

CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

We put together a short survey asking for peoples' attitudes towards Sunday trading hours for larger shops and the impact extending these hours might have for people and businesses locally. The survey was designed so that anyone – residents, business or other types of organisation could respond. **Appendix A** shows the questions we used.

We published the survey online on 12 August 2015 for a period of four weeks. To draw attention to the consultation, we published details on the front page of the councils' websites, produced a press release that was circulated to local media and made announcements via social media. We also sent dedicated letters and emails to members of the councils residents' panels², SouthOxBiz³ and Vale4Business⁴. In response to interest in the topic, Matthew Barber, Leader of Vale of White Horse District also talked about the consultation during an interview with Radio Oxford.

To make sure the consultation was accessible to those unable to complete the survey online, we made paper copies available on request and also took responses over the phone.

The consultation was conducted in compliance with the councils' Customer Engagement Charter⁵ which sets out our commitments for engaging residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups in the design and delivery of services.

² <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/citizens-panel>
<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/citizens-panel>

³ <http://www.southoxbiz.co.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.vale4business.com/>

⁵ <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/our-commitments-engaging-customers>
<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/our-commitments-engaging-customers>

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Response

451 people responded to the consultation. This comprised 396 residents, 37 businesses, five religious organisations, two business representatives and one charity. The remaining respondents identified themselves as 'other'.

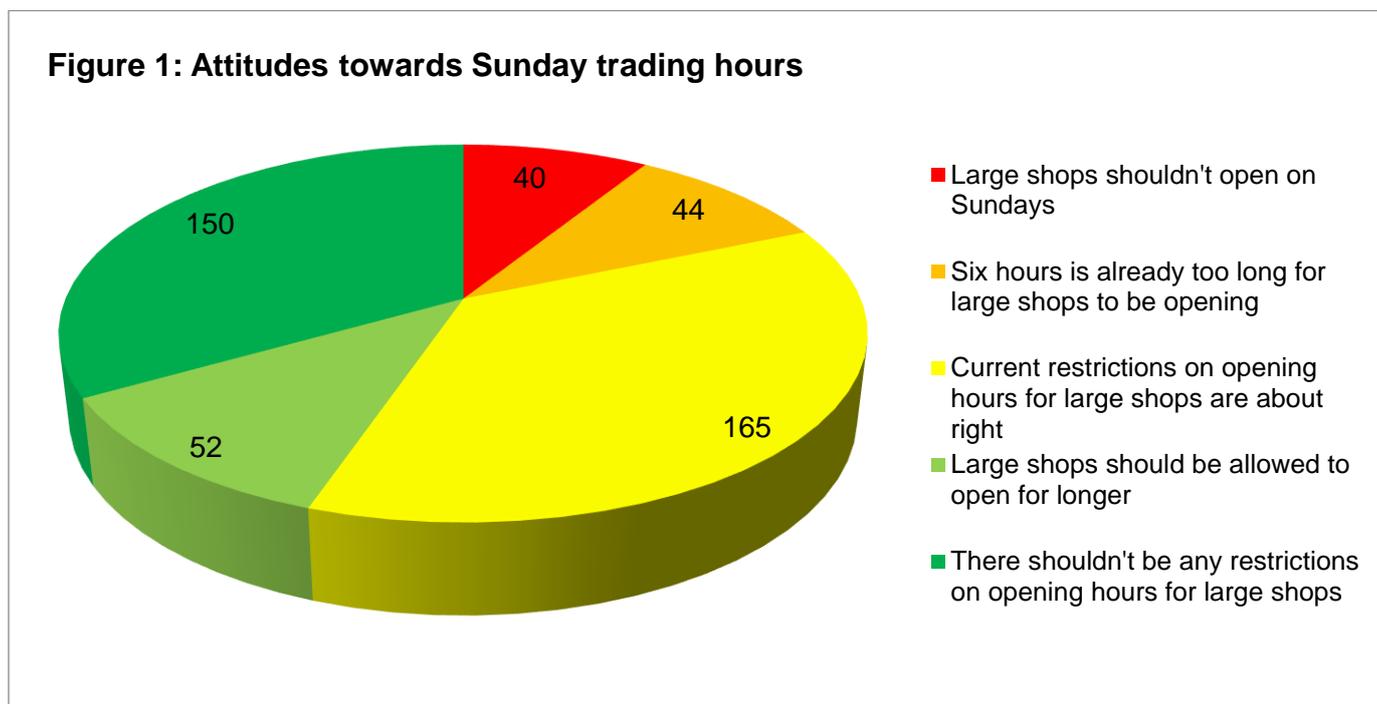
284 responses were made by respondents from South Oxfordshire; 167 from the Vale.

Given the number of people who responded to the consultation, we can be 95 per cent confident that the results presented in this report are within a margin of error of +/-5 per cent.

Attitudes towards Sunday trading hours

We asked people about their attitudes towards Sunday trading hours for larger shops; whether they should be open for more or less time.

84 respondents (18 per cent) said reduce Sunday trading hours for larger shops, 165 (37 per cent) said keep them the same, 202 (45 per cent) said increase them (**Figure 1**). There were no significant differences of attitudes between respondents in South Oxfordshire and the Vale.



Looking at the responses of businesses and business representative bodies only; eight (21 per cent) said reduce Sunday trading hours for larger shops, 16 (41 per cent) said keep them the same, 15 (38 per cent) said increase them.

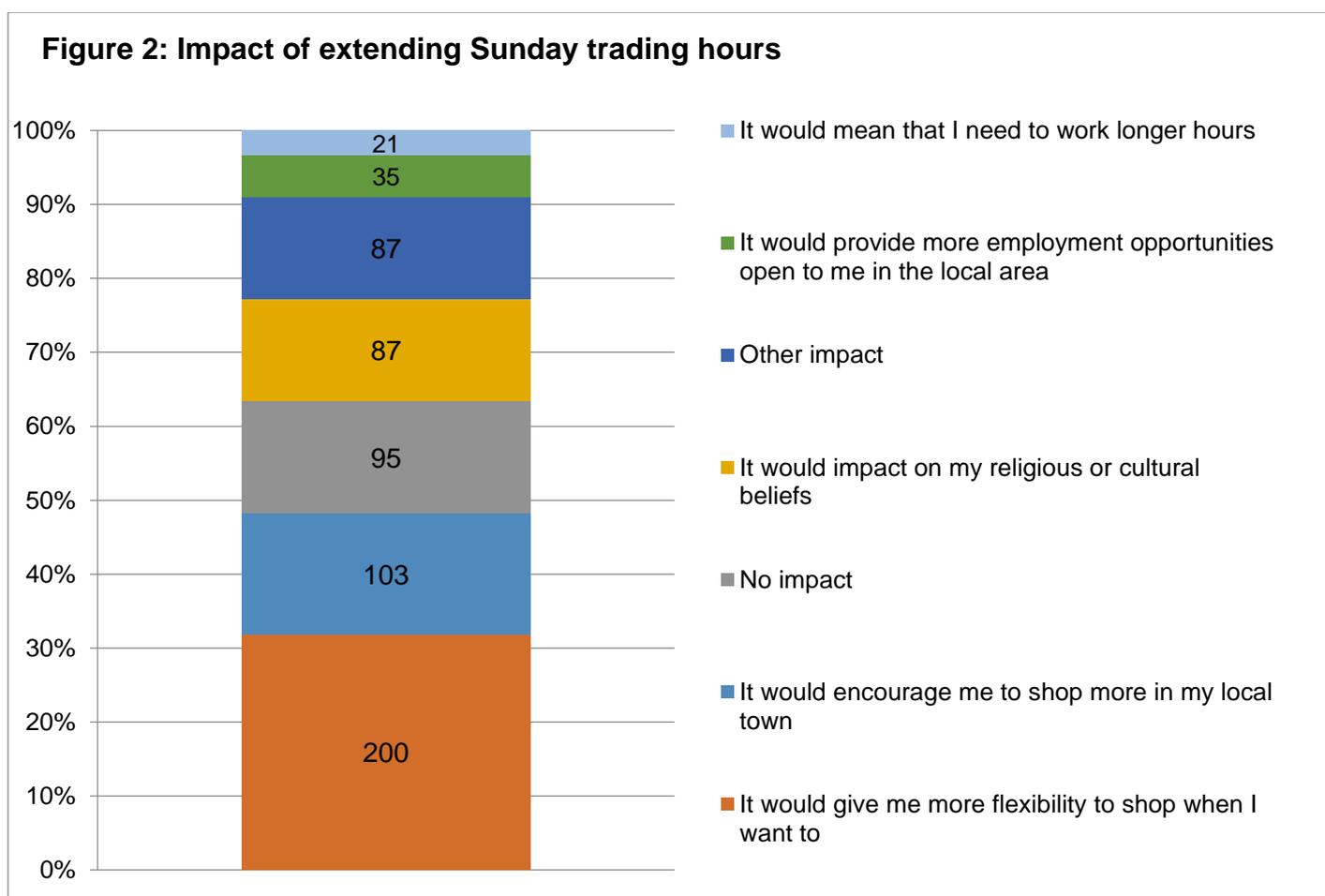
One religious organisation said reduce Sunday trading hours, three said keep them the same, one said increase them.

Local impact of extending Sunday trading hours

We also asked people about the impact that extending Sunday trading hours for larger shops would have for them. Respondents were asked to tick statements that applied to them, as well as providing an opportunity to make additional comments.

Figure 2 shows that the biggest impact of extending Sunday trading hours for larger shops would be offering people greater flexibility to shop when they want. 200 respondents (44 per cent) identified with this statement. Relatedly, 103 respondents (23 per cent) said that extended opening hours would encourage them to shop more in their local town.

In contrast, 87 respondents (19 per cent) said that extending opening hours for larger shops would impact upon their religious or cultural beliefs. They all said that current trading hours should be either kept the same or reduced.



Looking at business respondents only, four said increasing Sunday trading hours for larger shops would have positive impact upon them whilst six said it would not. Similarly, two said it would increase their footfall whilst three said it would likely reduce it.

Detailed comments

100 people made additional comments expressing their view on the impact that extending opening hours for larger shops might have locally. **Figure 3** shows the distribution of these comments.

Comment type	Frequency
Sundays should be a day for relaxation, not shopping	61
Extended opening hours would take business away from smaller shops	18
Traffic congestion may increase on Sundays	14
Conflict with religious or cultural views	5
Students may benefit from increased employment opportunities at weekends	4
Will increase usage of town centres	3
Shop workers will find it difficult to arrange childcare	2

Sundays should be a day for relaxation, not shopping

The biggest concern expressed was a view that Sundays should be a time for relaxation and not shopping. 61 people made statements along these lines, often drawing attention to the pressures that will likely be placed upon shop workers to work throughout the week and the impact this may have on their ability to spend time with family and friends.

It is good to have one day a week that is at a more relaxed pace (309)

It's nice to experience a quieter day at the weekend (97)

I feel very strongly that at least one day a week should be available for family activities and that a drive to commercialise Sundays will have a negative effect on this. It will also have a very negative effect on the lives of shop workers who will be obliged to work on Sundays which is often the only time they have appreciate life. (263)

I believe that families should have at least Sunday to enjoy their lives and family together instead of trailing around shops on a weekly excursion (442)

It would mean less time at home with the family [...] Even if a family member is working current hours we can arrange a family meal together (268)

Extended opening hours would take business away from smaller shops

18 respondents were concerned that extended opening hours for larger shops would take business away from smaller shops, often in the town centre. Two people said this could reduce consumer choice rather than increase it.

It may have a negative impact on small businesses (132)

I believe that if larger shops were allowed to open for longer on Sundays, then this would have a very negative effect on smaller shops and in many cases they would cease trading. This would have a very negative effect on me and a lot of people who would not have so much choice about where they shopped. Not everyone can travel to these large shops and not everyone wants to. (357)

Allowing longer hours would make it almost impossible for small independent businesses to compete. They simply would not be able to work the hours required (398)

It would impact detrimentally on local convenience stores which benefit from the limited opening hours on Sundays. Such stores can exist on a knife edge already and may then close down, removing a valuable resource in local communities for the less able who cannot easily travel to the larger stores at any time of the day or week (43)

Traffic congestion may increase on Sundays

Another concern expressed by 14 people (most of whom lived in Botley) was that traffic congestion could increase on Sundays. A further two people added that limited public transport during Sunday mornings and evenings would exacerbate this.

I would worry about the continuous flow of traffic to Didcot. (424)

I live in a small village which is used as a rat run by people driving to the nearest town for work. The traffic has steadily increased over the years and since Sunday trading was introduced it is just as bad as during the week. There is no respite from the noise and traffic. An increase in shopping hours would make this even worse - right into Sunday evening, just like the rest of the week. Please can we have at least one day of relative calm (400)

It would make traffic in our area much worse meaning that there would be no days in the week when the traffic was lighter and the roads free of delivery lorries and vans. Sparse Sunday bus timetables would not encourage shoppers to go by bus (443)

Conflict with religious or cultural views

Five people chose to outline why extending opening hours would conflict with their religious or cultural beliefs.

Sunday is still a sacred day and this should be respected (286)

Sundays [are] an opportunity to go to church and spend time with friends and family (406)

Religious organisations should have no say about Sunday trading laws; superstition is no basis for special treatment (152)

Students may benefit from increased employment opportunities at weekends

Four people felt that students may benefit from having increased opportunities to work at weekends to sustain the cost of studying, however one person was worried this could affect their ability to complete assignments.

It would give students the opportunity to work longer hours and earn more money (338)

Will increase usage of town centres

Only three people described how extending Sunday trading hours would increase their usage of town centres.

I would shop less online and more locally (276)

I would probably spend more locally rather than shopping online (121)

Shop workers will find it difficult to arrange childcare

Two people expressed a concern that shop workers may find it difficult to arrange childcare on Sunday mornings and evenings.

I would like to state there is not enough childcare provision now without increasing pressures on it and parents – costs etc (51)

HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

The councils have reviewed feedback detailed in this report and used this as evidence to inform our own formal response to the national consultation run by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS).

In our response to government we expressed our support for the principle of allowing all local authorities to determine Sunday trading hours in their area, whether taken up or not. We did this on the basis that extended opening hours for larger shops would be welcomed by the majority of residents in the districts and could benefit some businesses.

It should be noted that no decision has been taken by the councils to extend Sunday trading hours nor do we have the powers to do this until legislation is passed by government.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about proposals being made by government to allow local authorities to decide Sunday trading hours, please see the governments' website in the first instance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-areas-get-their-say-on-sunday-trading>

For information about the consultation run by the councils or the results presented in this report, please contact:

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phillip.vincent@southandvale.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Your views on Sunday trading hours

New proposals are being made by government which would give local councils the flexibility to decide what times shops can open on Sundays. The expectation is that opening hours would be extended in most places.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils would like to hear your views on this topic.

Your response to this survey will help the councils understand whether there is an appetite for extending Sunday trading hours for larger shops and the impact this might have for residents, businesses and shop workers. We will use this information to inform the councils' response to government and decide whether to extend Sunday trading hours in the future, should we be granted powers to do this.

YOUR VIEWS

Currently large shops (over 280 square metres) are only allowed to open for up to six hours on Sundays between 10am and 6pm.

There are no restrictions on Sunday opening for smaller shops.

1. Do you think...

- Large shops shouldn't open on Sundays
- Six hours is already too long for large shops to be open
- Current restrictions on opening hours for large shops are about right
- Large shops should be allowed to open for longer
- There shouldn't be any restrictions on opening hours for large shops

Proposals being put forward by government may allow local authorities to determine longer Sunday opening hours for large shops in their area.

2. If this were to happen and opening hours extended for large shops in South and Vale, how would this affect you?

- It would encourage me to shop more in my local town
- It would give me more flexibility to shop when I want to
- It would impact on my religious/ cultural beliefs
- It would have a positive impact on my business
- It would have a negative impact on my business
- It would increase footfall to my business
- It would reduce footfall to my business
- It would provide more employment opportunities to me in the local area
- It would mean that I need to work longer hours
- No impact
- Other impact

3. If you answered 'other impact', please describe

ABOUT YOU

4. Which of the following best describes you as a respondent?

- Business representative organisation/ trade body
- Charity or social enterprise
- Individual
- Large business (over 250 staff)
- Medium business (50-249 staff)
- Small business (10-49 staff)
- Micro business (up to 9 staff)
- Religious organisation
- Trade union or staff association
- Other _____

5. And where do you live/ work?

- Abingdon
- Botley
- Didcot
- Faringdon
- Henley
- Thame
- Wallingford
- Wantage and Grove
- Other South
- Other Vale

Thank you for completing this survey

Please return to:

Economic Development, South and Vale District Councils, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park,
OX14 4SB