

A photograph of a fountain at night, illuminated from below. The water jets are bright and create a misty spray. The fountain is set against a dark stone wall. The overall scene is dramatic and high-contrast.

Consultation on the proposed expansions of Great Oaks School and Vermont School

Full results summary

Data, Intelligence & Insight Team – August 2023



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Introduction and Methodology



Introduction

Southampton City Council undertook public consultation on the proposed expansions of Great Oaks School and Vermont School.

- The consultation took place between **06/06/2023 – 31/07/2023**.
- The aim of this consultation was to:
 - Communicate clearly to pupil, parents, residents and stakeholders the proposals for Great Oaks and Vermont School expansions.
 - Ensure any pupil, parent, resident, business or stakeholder who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have.
 - Allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objective in a different way.
- This report summarises the aims, principles, methodology and results of the public consultation. It provides a summary of the consultation responses both for the consideration of decision makers and any interested individuals and stakeholders.
- It is important to be mindful that a consultation is not a vote, it is an opportunity for stakeholders to express their views, concerns and alternatives to a proposal. This report outlines in detail the representations made during the consultation period so that decision makers can consider what has been said alongside other information.



Consultation principles

Southampton City Council is committed to consultations of the highest standard, which are meaningful and comply with *The Gunning Principles (considered to be the legal standard for consultations)*:

1. Proposals are still at a formative stage (a final decision has not yet been made)
2. There is sufficient information put forward in the proposals to allow 'intelligent consideration'
3. There is adequate time for consideration and response
4. Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made



Rules: The Gunning Principles

They were coined by Stephen Sedley QC in a court case in 1985 relating to a school closure consultation (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). Prior to this, very little consideration had been given to the laws of consultation. Sedley defined that a consultation is only legitimate when these four principles are met:

- 1. proposals are still at a formative stage**
A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers
 - 2. there is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration'**
The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response
 - 3. there is adequate time for consideration and response**
There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. There is no set timeframe for consultation,¹ despite the widely accepted twelve-week consultation period, as the length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation
 - 4. 'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made**
Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account
- These principles were reinforced in 2001 in the 'Coughlan Case (R v North and East Devon Health Authority ex parte Coughlan²), which involved a health authority closure and confirmed that they applied to all consultations, and then in a Supreme Court case in 2014 (R ex parte Moseley v LB Haringey³), which endorsed the legal standing of the four principles. Since then, the Gunning Principles have formed a strong legal foundation from which the legitimacy of public consultations is assessed, and are frequently referred to as a legal basis for judicial review decisions.⁴

¹ In some local authorities, their local voluntary Compact agreement with the third sector may specify the length of time they are required to consult for. However, in many cases, the Compact is either inactive or has been cancelled so the consultation timeframe is open to debate

² BAILII, England and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Decision) Decisions, Accessed: 13 December 2016.

³ BAILII, United Kingdom Supreme Court, Accessed: 13 December 2016

⁴ The information used to produce this document has been taken from the Law of Consultation training course provided by The Consultation Institute



Methodology and Promotion

- The agreed approach for this consultation was to use an online questionnaire as the main route for feedback. Questionnaires enable an appropriate amount of explanatory and supporting information to be included in a structured questionnaire, helping to ensure respondents are aware of the background and detail of the proposals.
- Respondents could also write letters or emails to provide feedback on the proposals. Emails or letters from stakeholders that contained consultation feedback were collated and analysed as a part of the overall consultation.
- The consultation was promoted in the following ways by:
 - In-person consultation sessions
 - Letters posted to local residents
 - Sending emails to stakeholder networks
 - Southampton City Council website and FAQs
 - Social media posts (including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Next Door – targeted at specific ward)
 - Southampton City Council e-bulletins (including City News, Community Partners and Your City Your Say)
 - Leaders video
- All questionnaire results have been analysed and presented in graphs within this report. Respondents were given opportunities throughout the questionnaire to provide written feedback on the proposals. In addition anyone could provide feedback in letters and emails. All written responses and questionnaire comments have been read and then assigned to categories based upon similar sentiment or theme. We have also endeavoured to outline all the unique points and suggestions gathered as a part of the consultation and so there are tables of quotes or summaries of these for each theme of comment.

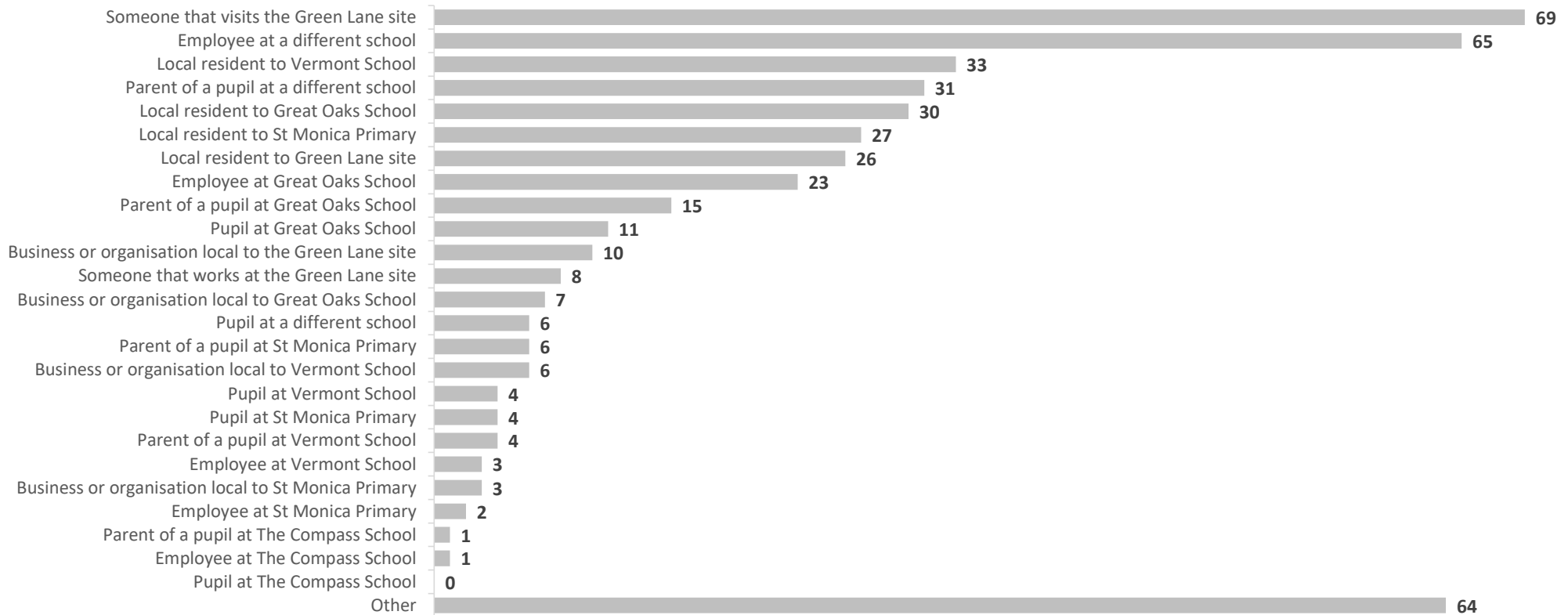


Who were the respondents?

Total respondents:

	Total number of responses
Questionnaire	355
Emails / letters	6
Total	361

Interest in the consultation:





Key findings



Key findings

In total, the consultation on the proposed expansions of Great Oaks School and Vermont School had 361 responses, and we heard from visitors, local residents, local businesses and organisations, employees, pupils and parents of sites affected, as well as wider city residents. The consultation aims were to communicate clearly the proposals for the Great Oaks and Vermont School expansions, and that any one who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so and raise any impacts the proposals may have. They were also able to propose alternative suggestions for consideration.

Vermont School Expansion to St Monica Infant Site and Bay Road Proposals

The majority of respondents (84%) agreed with the proposed expansion of Vermont School, and this goes up to 91% from parents and pupils from school sites affected. Almost 3 quarters of respondents (74%) agreed with the proposed relocation of Vermont School. This goes up to 86% from parents and pupils from school sites affected, and goes down to 48% from local residents from sites affected. The most commented upon theme for this proposal was 'Concerns and suggestions – new site location near busy road compared to Vermont School / will need traffic management' (12 respondents).

Great Oaks School expansion on Vermont Close Proposals

The majority of respondents (82%) agreed with the proposed expansion of Great Oaks School on Vermont Close. This goes up to 96% from employees from both school sites affected and other schools. This goes down to 51% from local residents from sites affected. The most commented upon theme for this proposal was 'Concerns around traffic / parking nearby' (27 respondents).

Great Oaks School expansion on Green Lane Proposals

The majority of respondents (64%) agreed with proposals to expand Great Oaks School on Green Lane, and this went up to 95% from parents and pupils from school sites affected. Over a quarter of respondents (29%) disagreed with proposals to expand Great Oaks School on Green Lane, and this went up to 76% from respondents who visits or works at the Green Lane site. The most commented upon theme for this proposal was 'Concerns / suggestions around reducing community space (including at Testlands and City Farm)' (60 respondents).



Proposed changes



The questionnaire outlined the following background information:

Background:

There is an urgent need to increase the number of special school places in Southampton, due to an increase in need and demand.

Following a Strategic review of special educational needs and disability (SEND) in 2017-18, there was a recommendation to expand and reconfigure specialist provision within the City. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by the SEND and Corporate Estate and Assets Teams, initially on consulting with stakeholders on potential options for expansion, followed by the development of detailed plans and feasibility studies.

An initial high-level appraisal presented costs outside the envelope of financial budgets available, so several reworked proposals were developed in consultation with the schools in scope, within the programme, and these have progressed to feasibility studies to more closely identify the potential for reconfiguration and expansion.

The March 2023 cabinet report set out the proposal to provide an additional 278 spaces with the City of Southampton. Great Oaks School reached capacity in September 2021 and as such temporary classrooms were delivered in 2022 on the two Great Oaks School Sites, 20 spaces at Green Lane and 50 spaces on the Vermont Close site, to meet increasing demand and to mitigate the high cost of out-of-city placements.



The questionnaire outlined the following proposals:

Vermont School expansion and relocation:

Vermont School is currently a 50-place special school for primary-aged pupils with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The proposed relocation will be onto the St Monica infant school site, Sholing. Its existing Victorian building will be heavily refurbished with some existing buildings being demolished and a new two-storey building is to be constructed with landscaping works. A drop-off loop and other SEND requirements will be implemented.

It is anticipated that the proposed enlargement and relocation of accommodation will be completed in an estimated period of the summer of 2026. From this date, it is planned to provide 26 additional places to the relocated site. These will be added to a final overall capacity of 76 places. This will provide additional accommodation for providing support for pupils with complex learning needs where there is an increased need in this area of the city.

This forms part of a wider programme of proposed works whereby the local authority are also seeking to expand Great Oaks Special School. It is proposed that there is a new build on the existing Vermont School site, to accommodate an additional 150 places for secondary aged pupils with complex learning need.

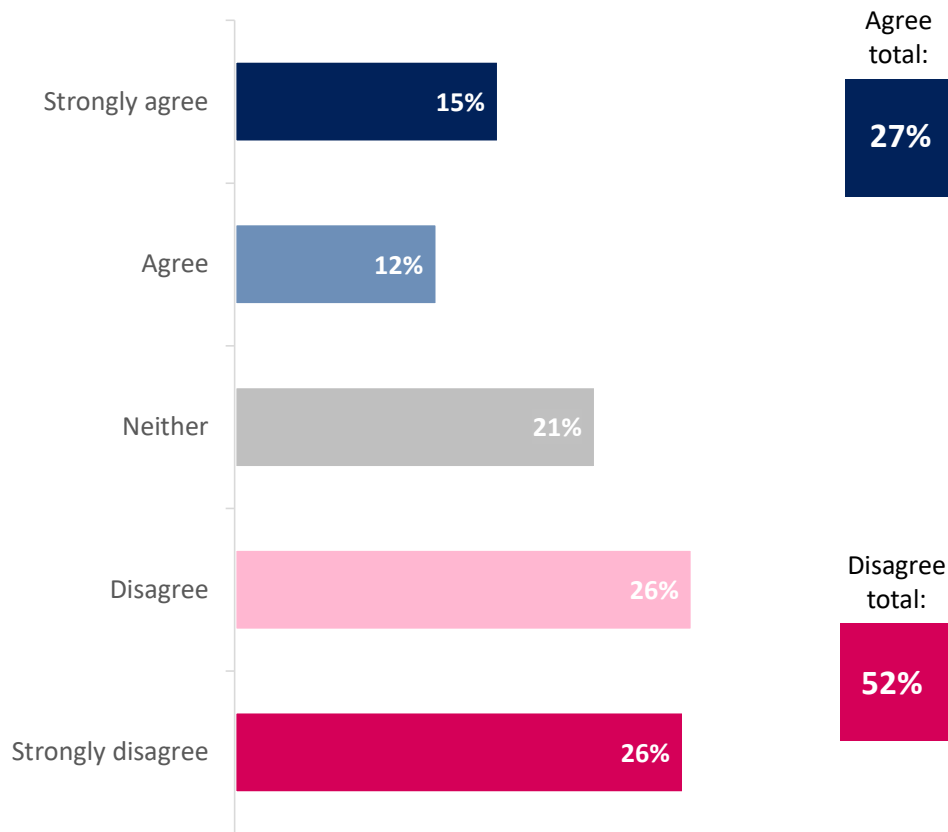




Current Vermont School building

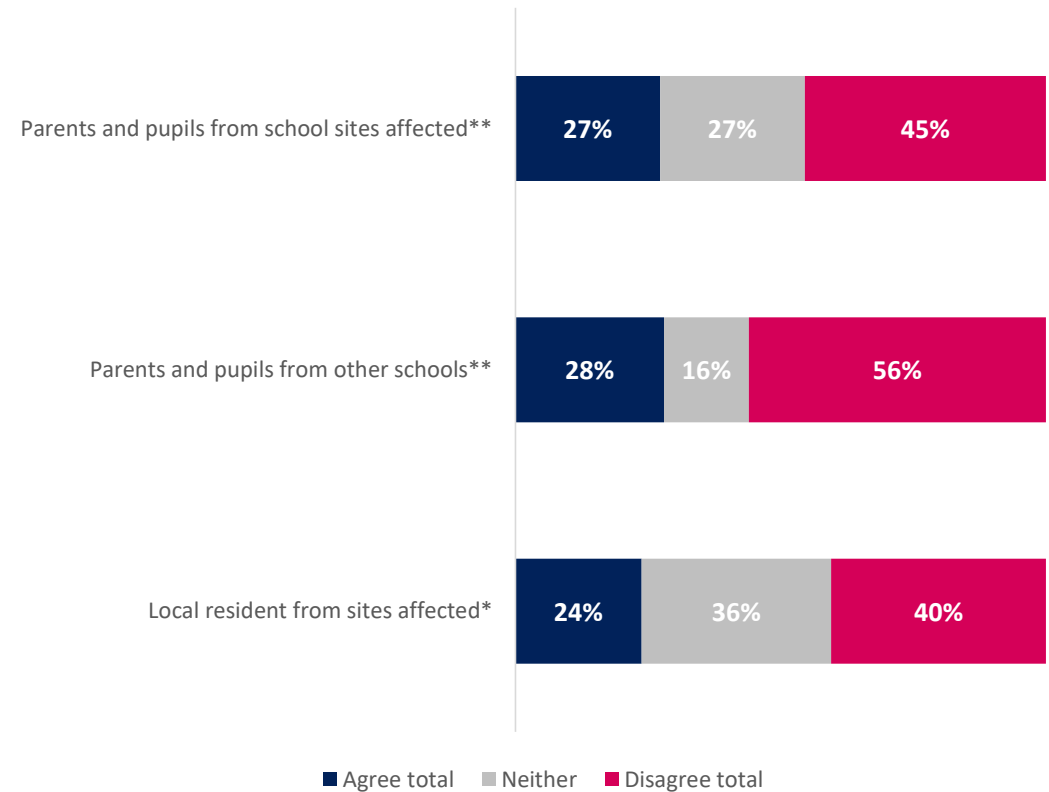
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current building is adequate for Vermont School pupils?

Overall:



Base respondents: 197

Breakdowns:



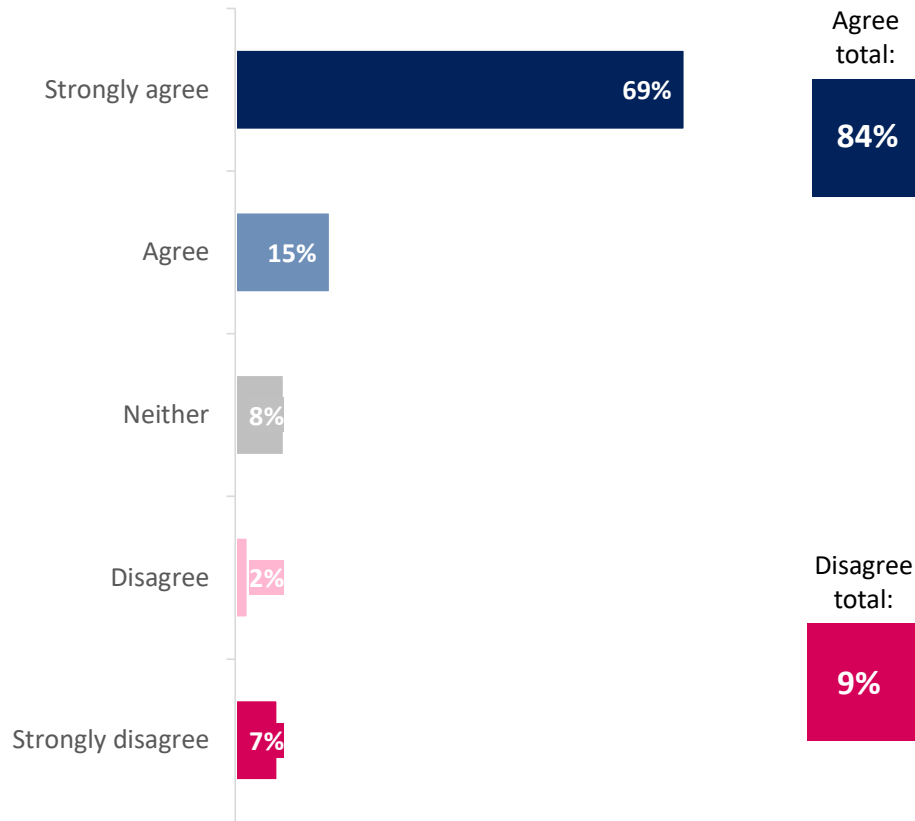
*Small sample – less than 50
**Small sample – less than 30



Proposed expansion of Vermont School

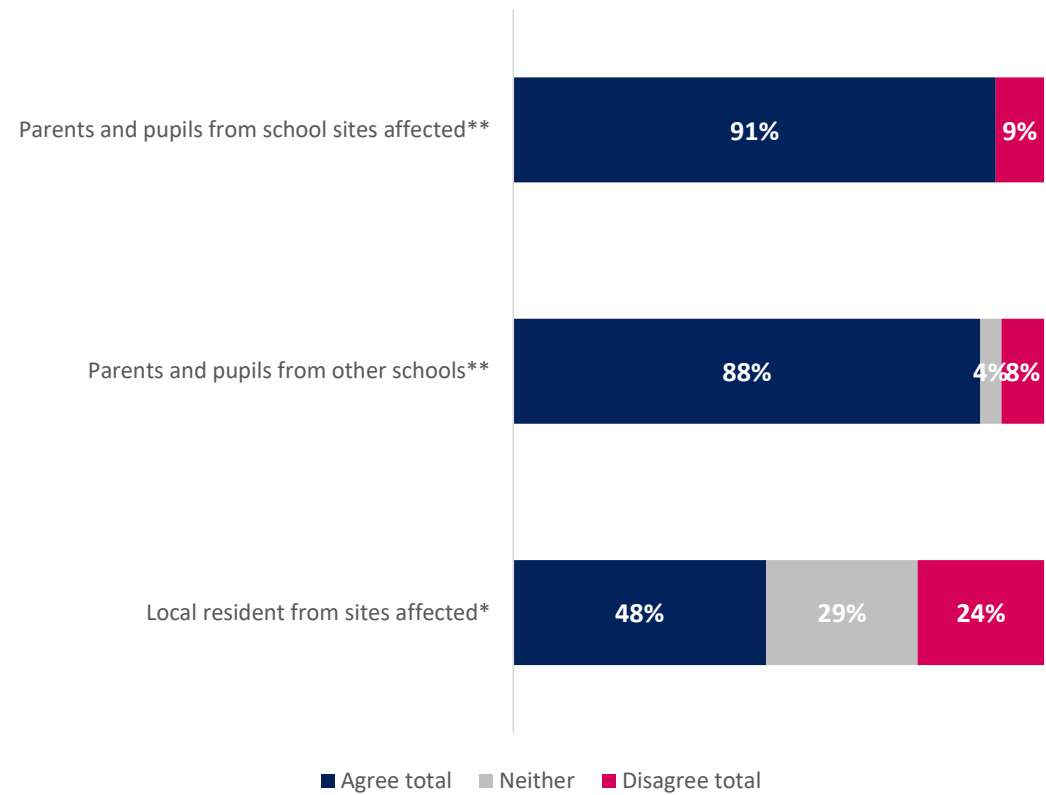
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed expansion of Vermont School?

Overall:



Base respondents: 198

Breakdowns:



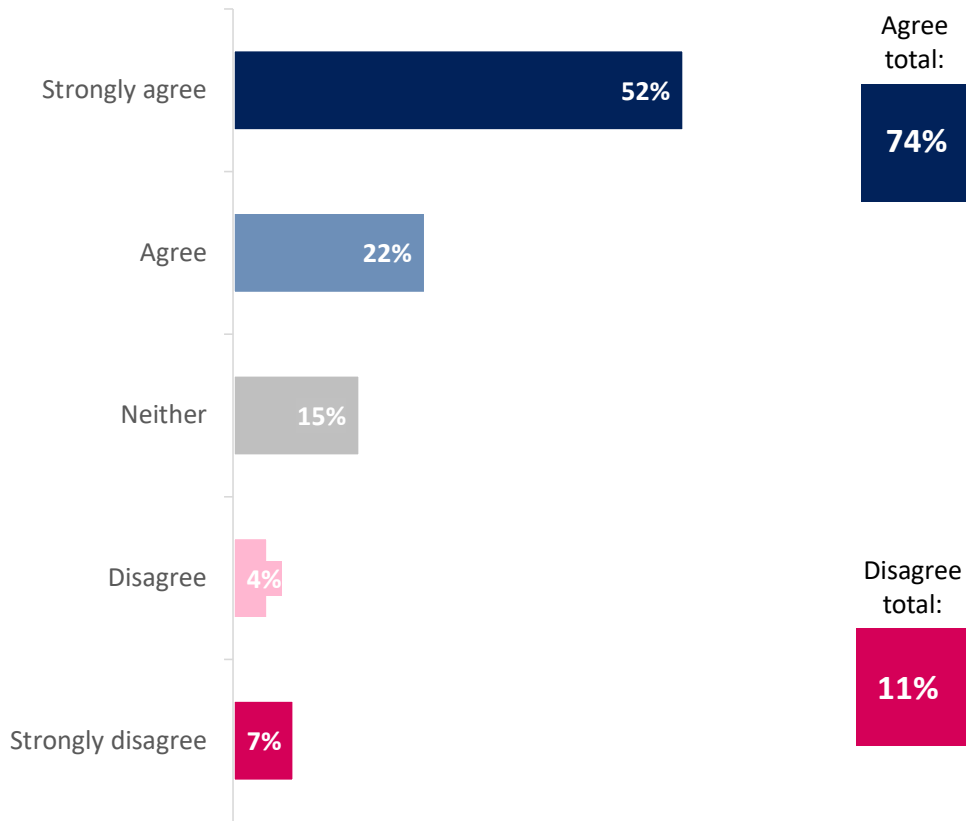
*Small sample – less than 50
 **Small sample – less than 30



Proposed relocation of Vermont School

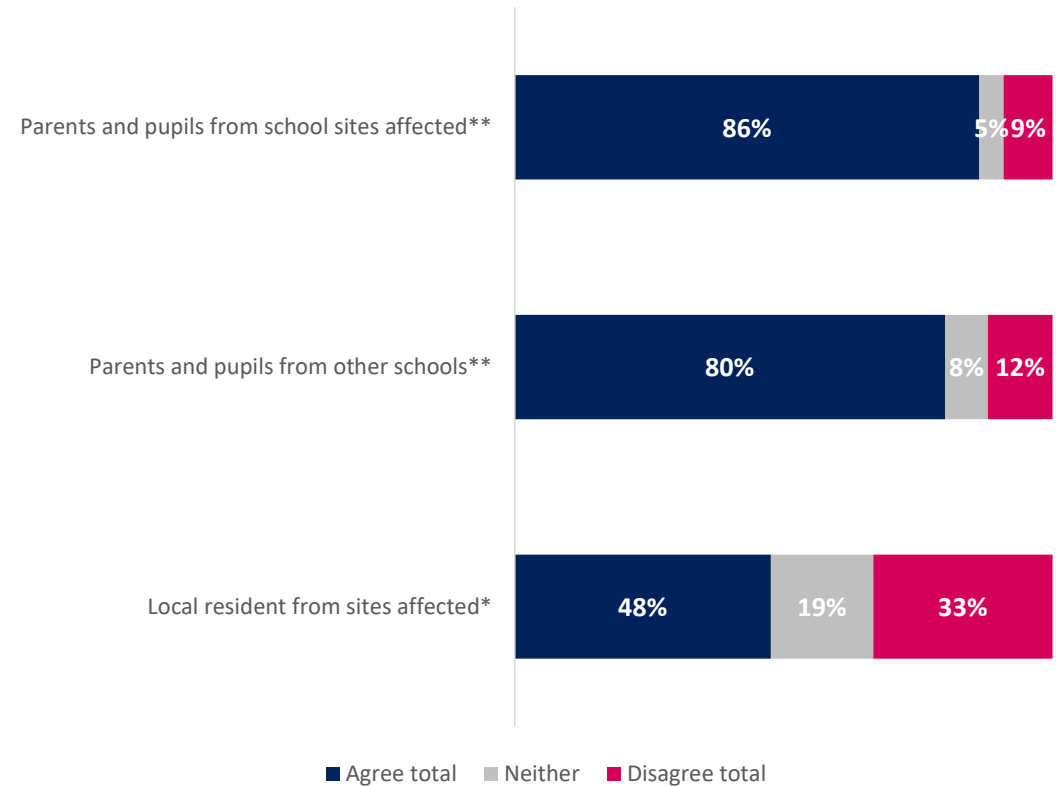
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed relocation of Vermont School?

Overall:



Base respondents: 198

Breakdowns:



*Small sample – less than 50
**Small sample – less than 30



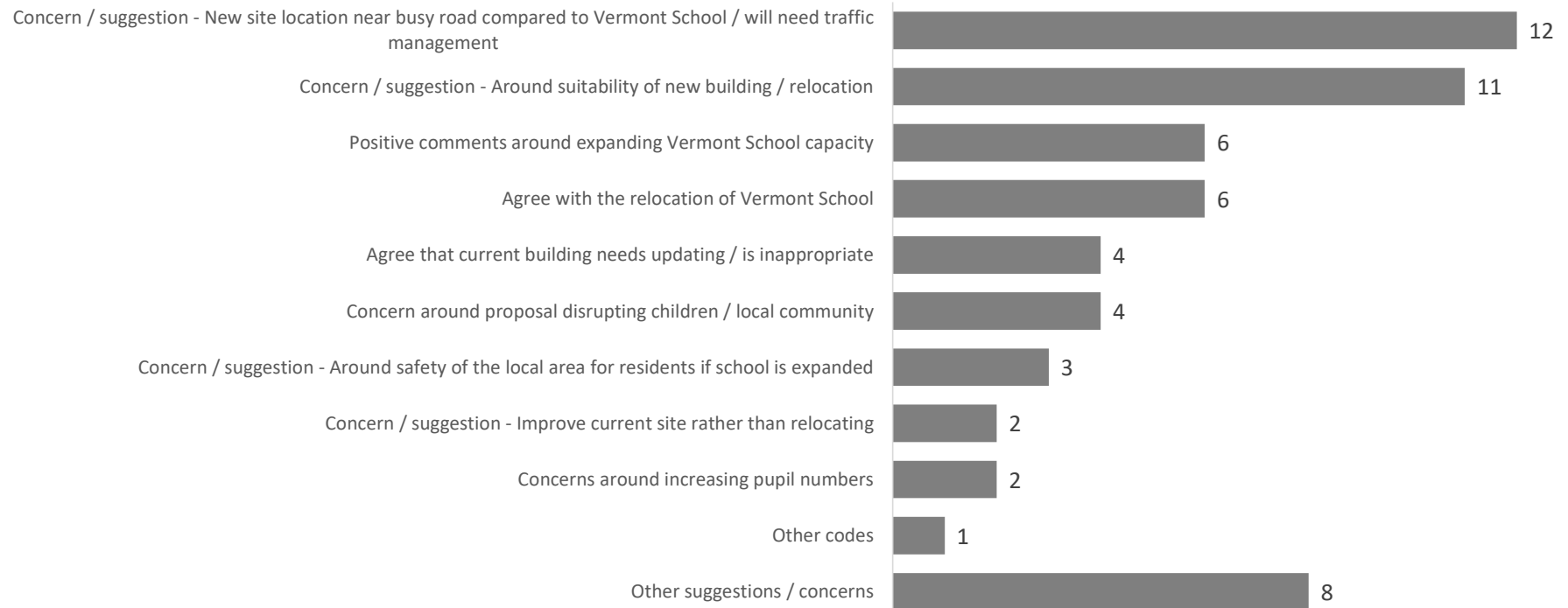
Vermont School Proposals – Free text responses.

Within the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their own free text comments. Any email or letter responses were also analysed alongside free-text responses in the questionnaire.

The following graphs show the total number of respondents by each theme of comment.

These graphs are in respondent count, rather than percentage.

Comments, impacts, suggests or alternatives:





Great Oaks School expansion on Vermont Close Proposals

The questionnaire outlined the following proposals:

Great Oaks School expansion on Vermont Close:

Great Oaks School is currently a 325-place secondary special school for 11-18 year-old pupils with Complex Needs, with 252 pupils at Great Oaks Vermont Close, 68 pupils at Great Oaks Green Lane and 5 pupils at Bugle House. The City Council is proposing to increase the capacity of the school with 150 places additional places through a phased increase over the coming three years onto a neighbouring site, Vermont School, Bassett.

The council is also proposing to increase the capacity on their Green Lane site – further information can be found here below in Proposal 3. This will give a proposed final overall capacity of 500 places at Great Oaks School across their school sites.

This will include the demolition of the existing Vermont School building. It is proposed to replace this with a brand new two-storey building. The proposed works will be developed in a phased way that enables Vermont School to continue to use its existing building until its new school is ready, whilst also enabling Great Oaks to occupy parts of its new building from the earliest possible time. It is anticipated that building works would be completed on this site in autumn 2026.

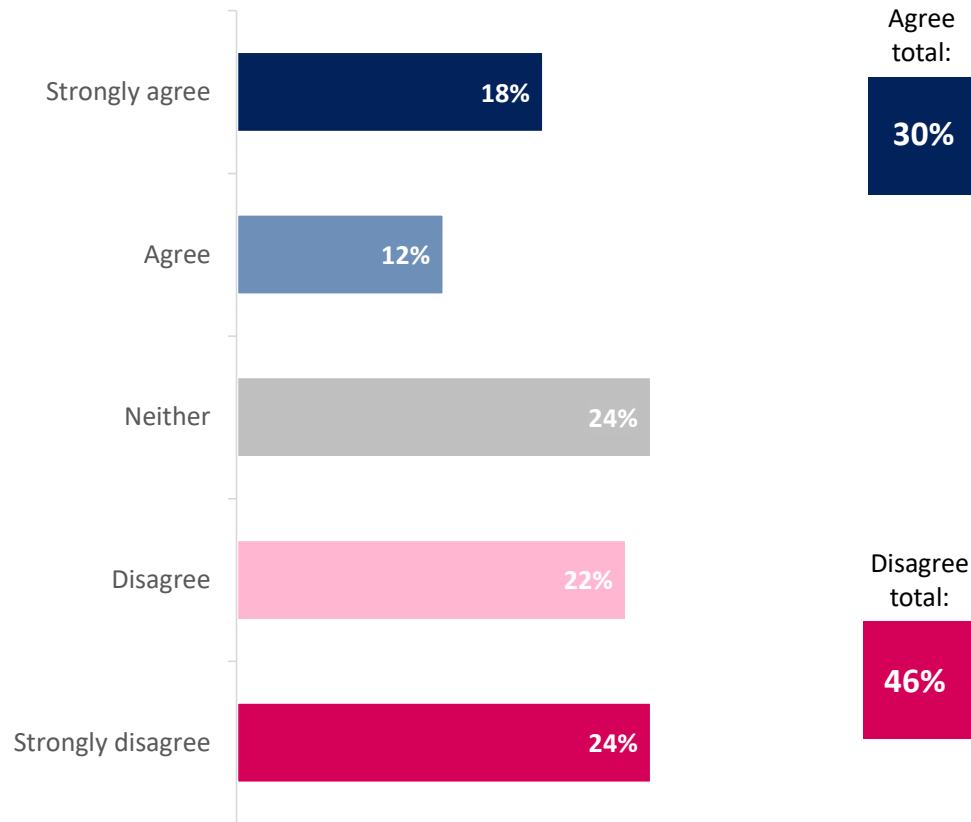




Current Great Oaks building

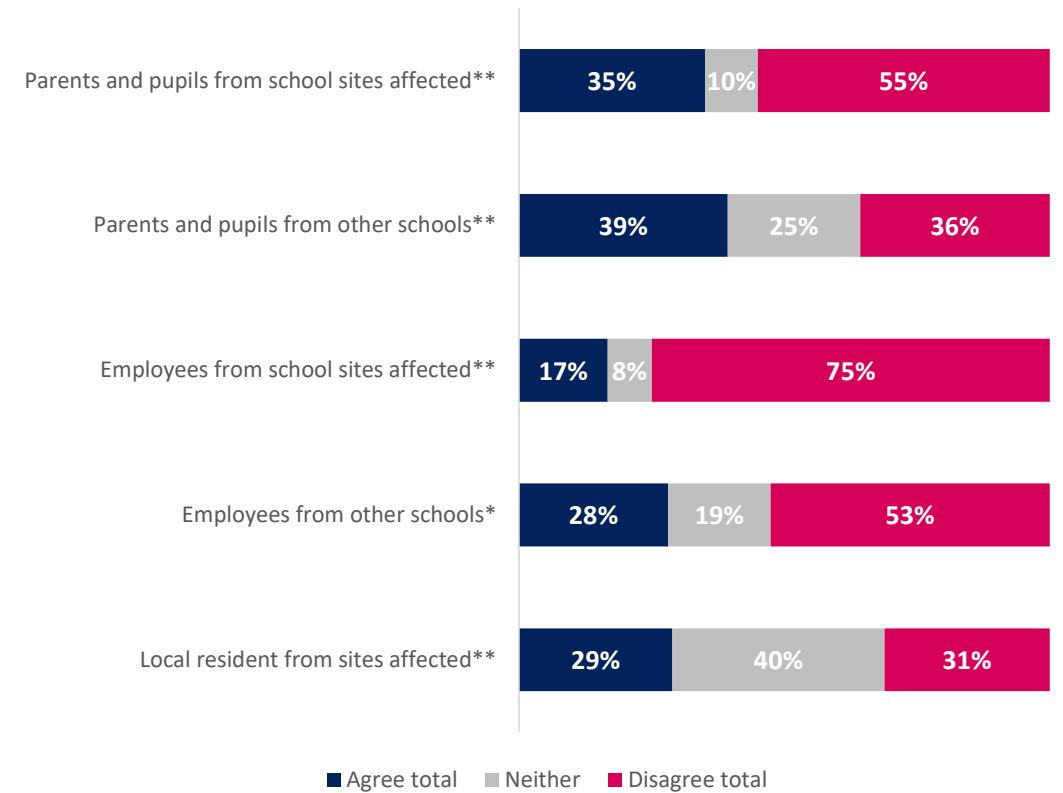
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current building is adequate for Great Oaks School pupils?

Overall:



Base respondents: 209

Breakdowns:



*Small sample – less than 50
**Small sample – less than 30

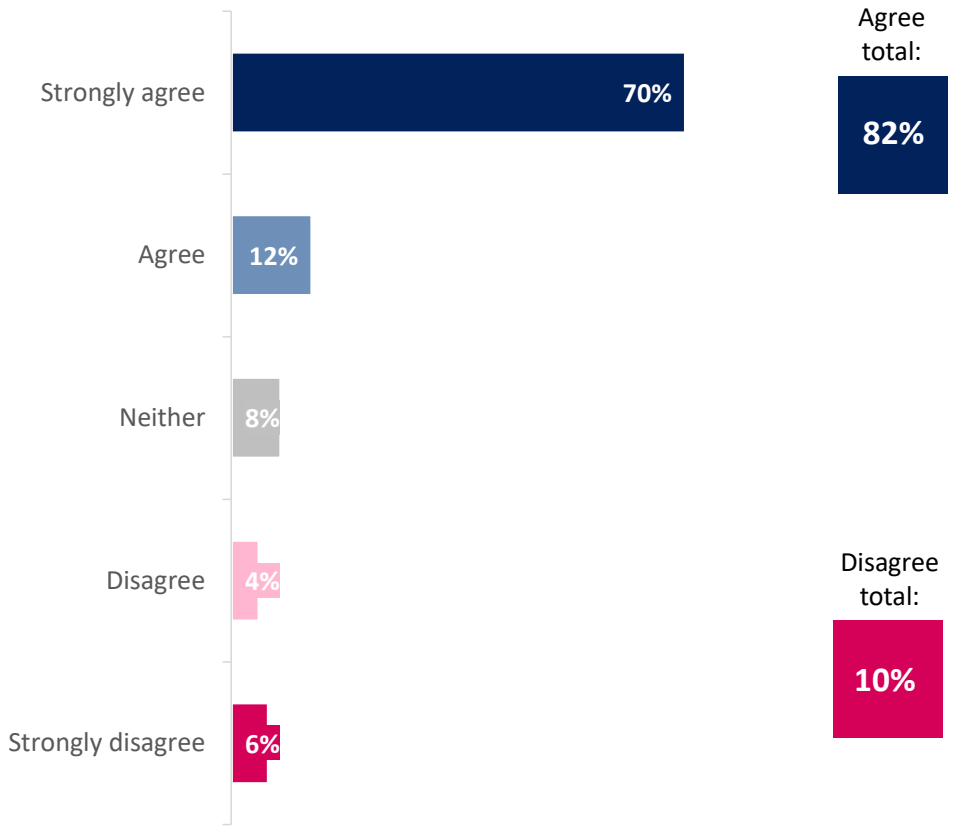


Proposed expansion of Great Oaks School on Vermont Close

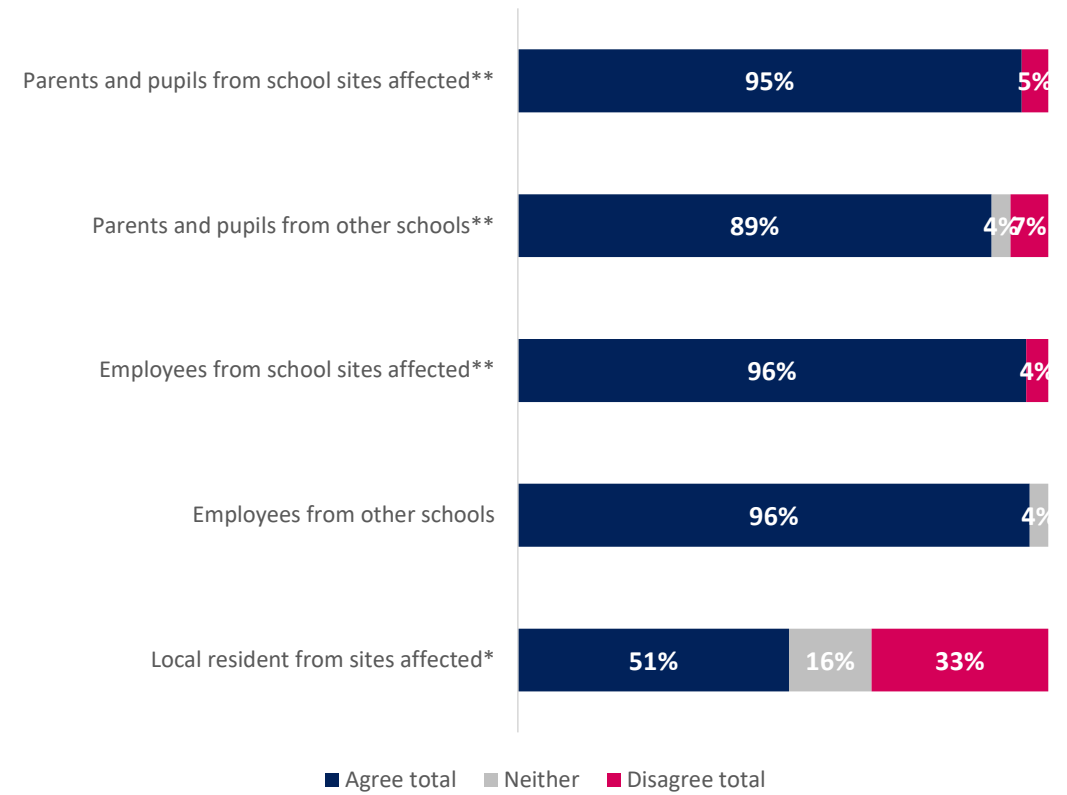


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed expansion of Great Oaks School on Vermont Close?

Overall:



Breakdowns:



Base respondents: 209

*Small sample – less than 50
 **Small sample – less than 30



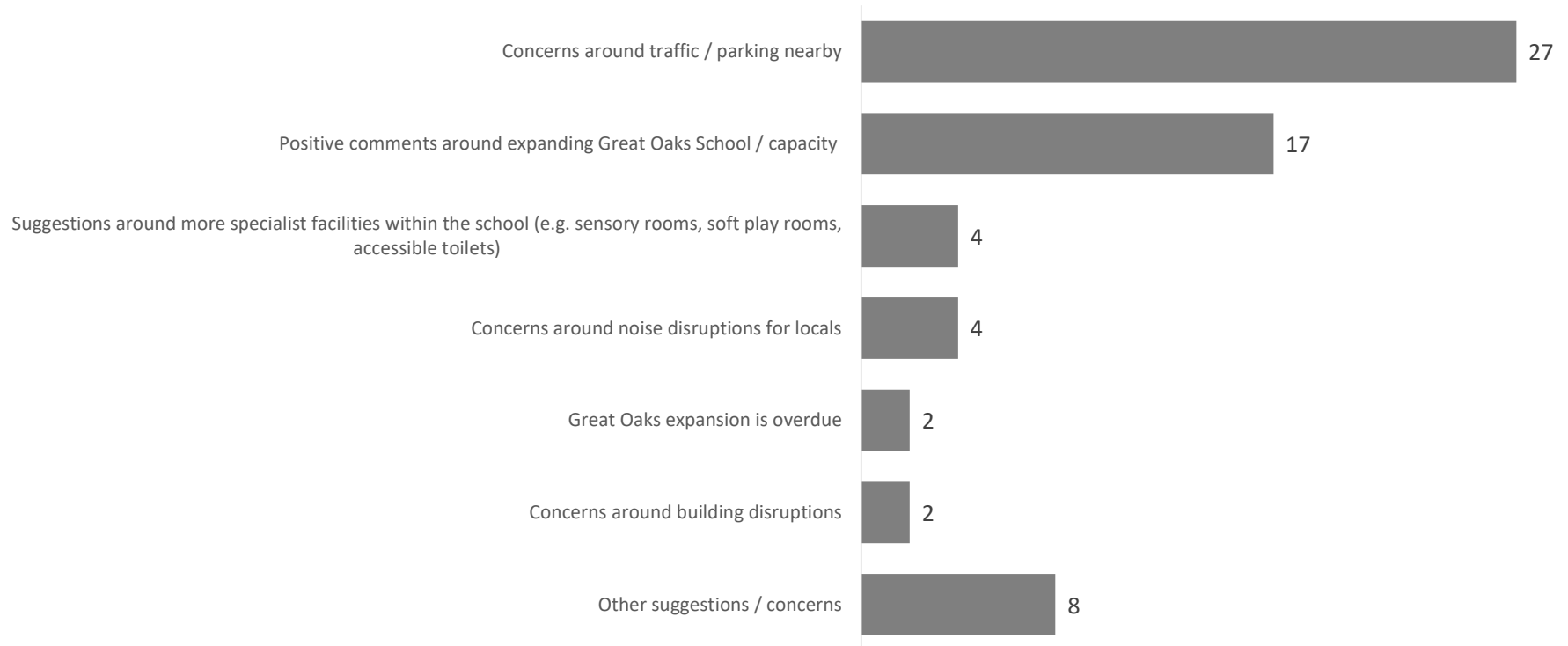
Great Oaks expansion on Vermont Close – Free text responses.

Within the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their own free text comments. Any email or letter responses were also analysed alongside free-text responses in the questionnaire.

The following graphs show the total number of respondents by each theme of comment.

These graphs are in respondent count, rather than percentage.

Comments, impacts, suggests or alternatives:





Great Oaks School expansion on Green Lane Proposals

The questionnaire outlined the following proposals:

Great Oaks School expansion on Green Lane:

Great Oaks School is currently a 325-place secondary special school for 11-18 year-olds pupils with Complex Needs, with 252 pupils at Great Oaks Vermont Close, 68 pupils at Great Oaks Green Lane and five pupils at Bugle House. The council is proposing to increase the capacity of the current Green Lane Great Oaks satellite site at Green Lane, Redbridge, with an additional 27 places.

The council is also proposing to expand onto a new location at Vermont Close – further information can be found here above in Proposal 2. This will give a proposed final overall capacity of 500 places at Great Oaks School across their school sites.

It is proposed to reduce the space currently occupied by Testlands Hub in order to increase classroom capacity, as well as installing crucial specialist spaces and a food hall and kitchen. This will enrich the pupils experience at this site. The works are predicted to conclude on this site in the summer of 2025. This will give a final overall capacity of 95 places at Great Oaks School.

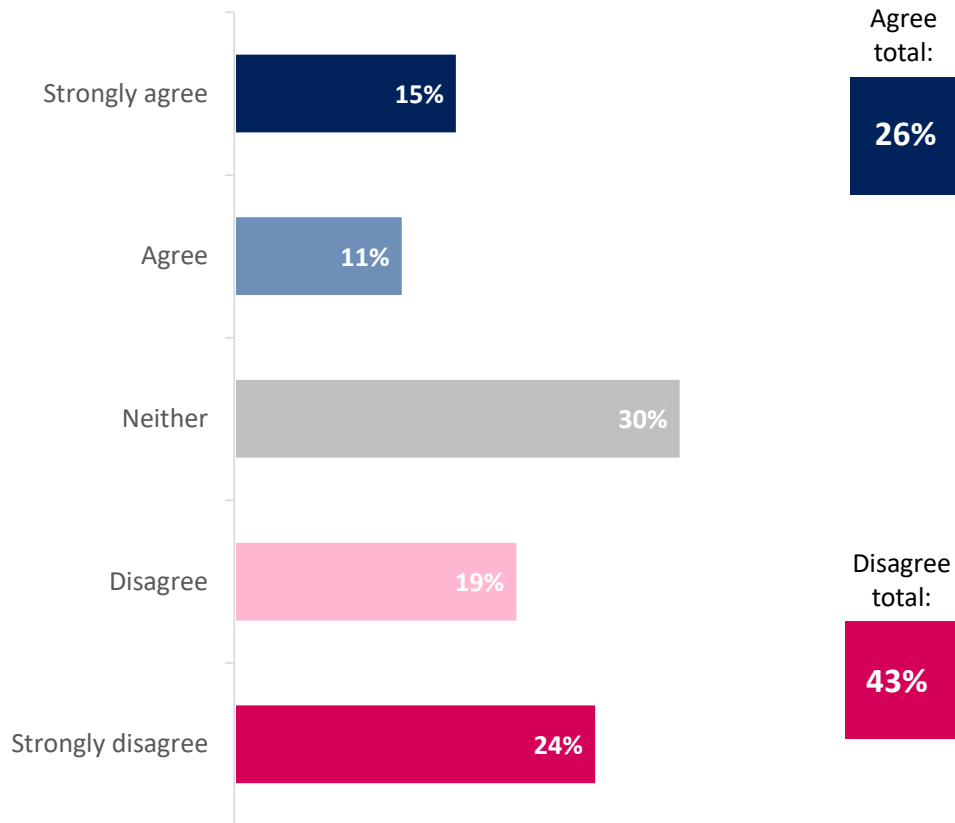




Current Great Oaks building

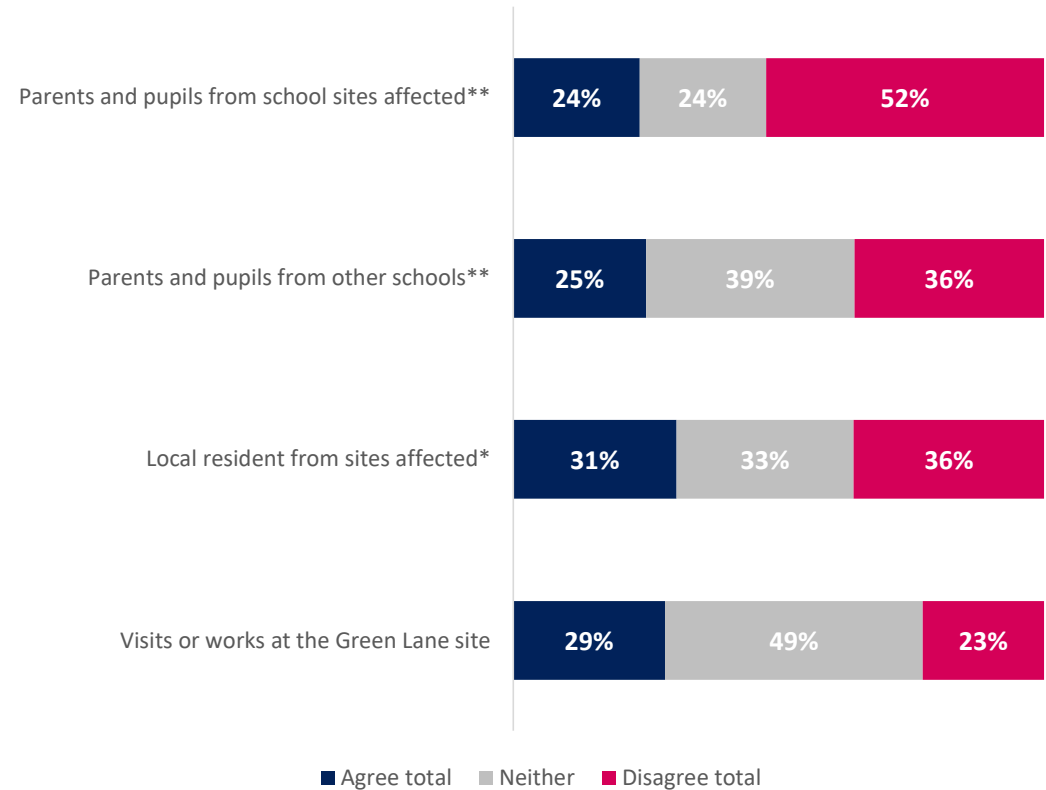
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current building is adequate for Great Oaks School pupils?

Overall:



Base respondents: 246

Breakdowns:



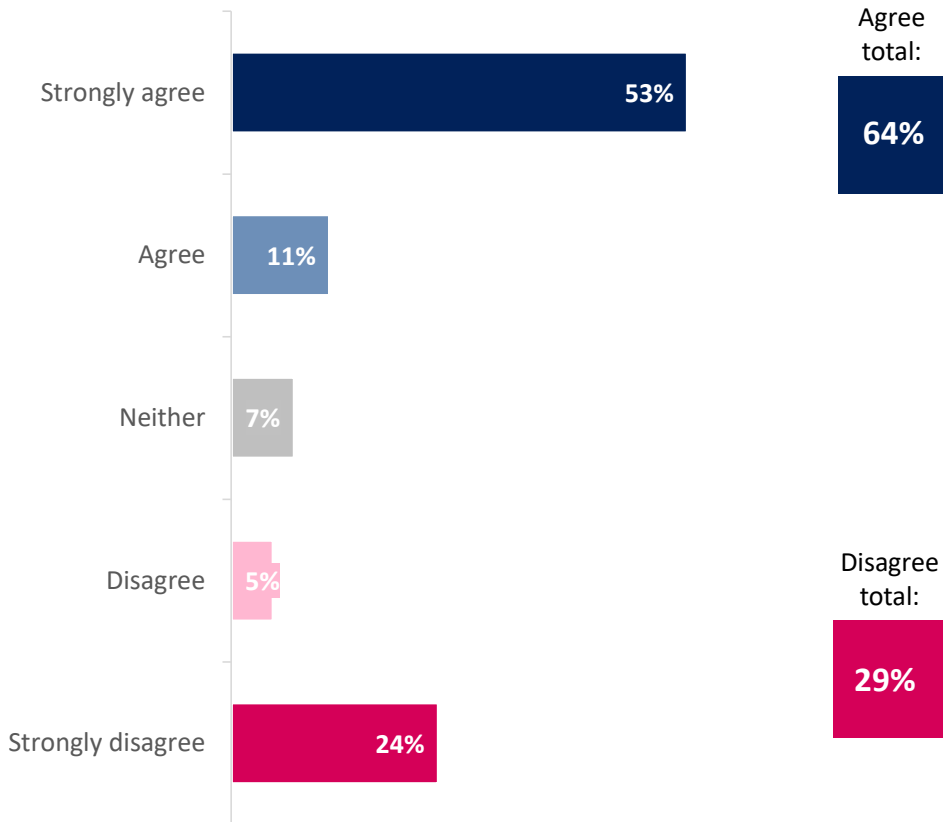
*Small sample – less than 50
**Small sample – less than 30



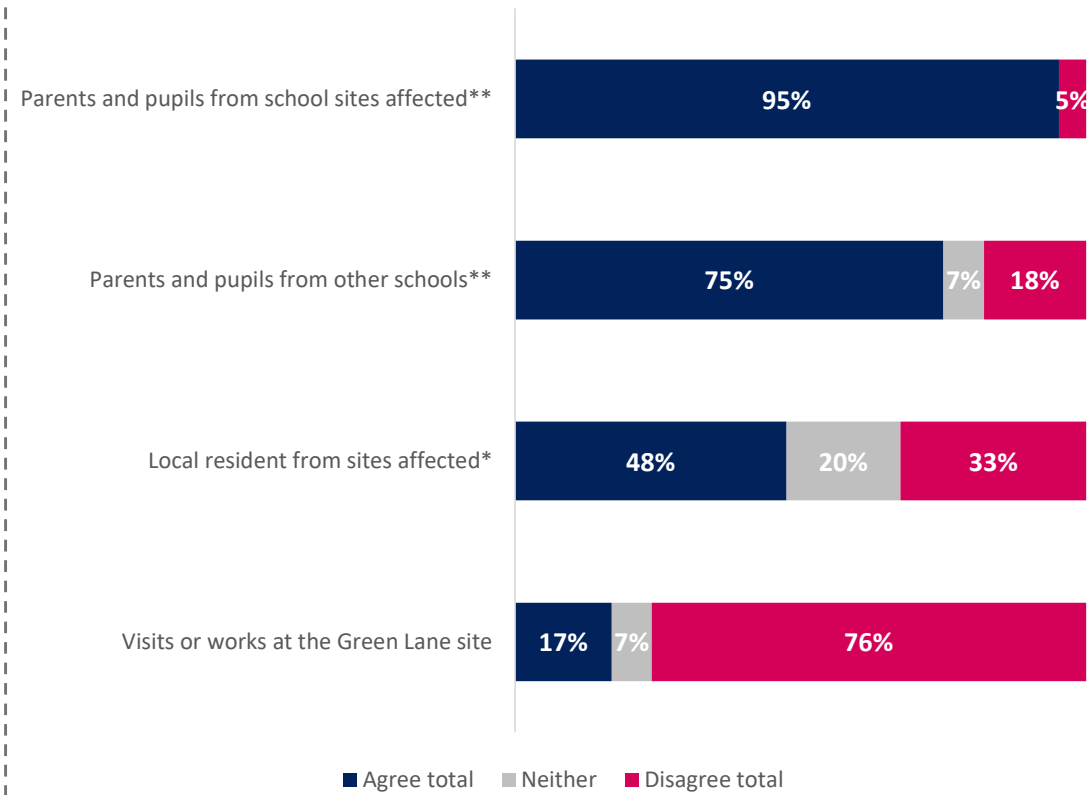
Proposed expansion of Great Oaks School on Green Lane

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed expansion of Great Oaks School on Green Lane?

Overall:



Breakdowns:



■ Agree total ■ Neither ■ Disagree total

Base respondents: 247

*Small sample – less than 50
**Small sample – less than 30



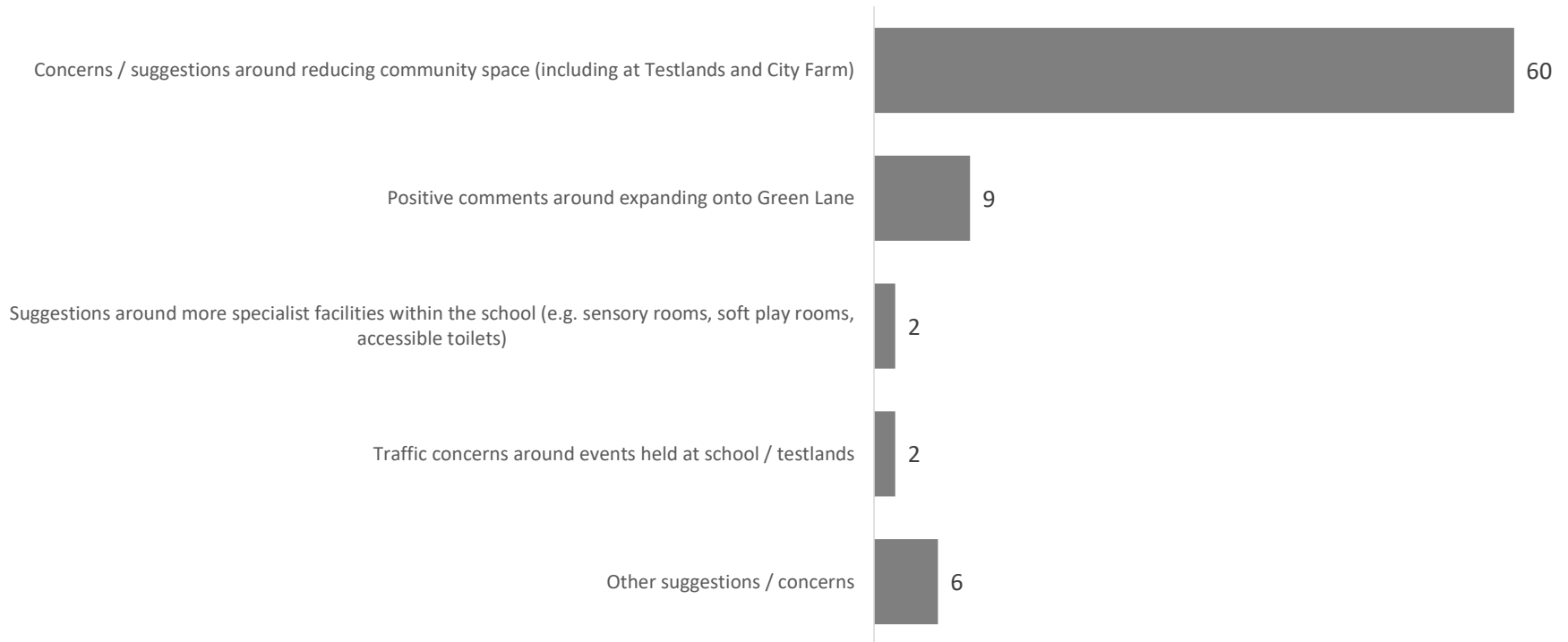
Great Oaks expansion on Green Lane – Free text responses.

Within the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their own free text comments. Any email or letter responses were also analysed alongside free-text responses in the questionnaire.

The following graphs show the total number of respondents by each theme of comment.

These graphs are in respondent count, rather than percentage.

Comments, impacts, suggests or alternatives:





General SEND provisions / overall comments – Free text responses.

Within the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their own free text comments. Any email or letter responses were also analysed alongside free-text responses in the questionnaire.

The following graphs show the total number of respondents by each theme of comment.

These graphs are in respondent count, rather than percentage.

Comments, impacts, suggests or alternatives:

