

Date: 13 October 2021

For immediate publication

LARGEST EVER SURVEY SHOWS THAT MORE THAN 9 OUT OF 10 PEOPLE REJECT THE OX-CAM ARC

More than 90% of survey respondents across five counties of the 'Ox-Cam Arc' (Beds, Bucks, Cambs & Peterborough, Northants and Oxon) have told campaigners they reject government plans for the region.

The survey, launched in response to a government consultation, was created by campaigning groups led by the Stop the Arc (STARC) Group and Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS).

Unlike the government questionnaire, the alternative survey presented respondents with some of the difficult choices that lie ahead. It revealed overwhelming concerns about the government's growth targets for the area, as well as the incompatibility of growth ambitions for the Arc and the need to protect the environment.

'The government's consultation assumes acceptance of the Ox-Cam Arc, and merely asks questions about how it should be imposed on communities' said Prof. David Rogers of the Stop the Arc (STARC) campaign. 'It limits the ability to offer views on the need for the Arc, on levelling-up, on the desirability of building over the natural environment. We wanted a wider and fairer measure of people's views and feelings.'

The STARC/POETS survey trailed the launch of the government consultation by some time but received over 3,800 responses, 30% more than the official survey's online number, by the latter's closing date, 12th October. The alternative consultation sought people's views on a range of related issues, from the need for growth, and whether the Arc was the best place for that growth; people's priorities for the future; and how planning decisions should be made.

In answer to the question 'If there were a referendum today, would you vote for the Ox-Cam Arc?', 93% of people said 'No'; only 4% said 'Yes' and 3% were 'Don't know's. More than 90% said funding for improvements to nature should not be linked to development and 92% also said the government's proposals to develop the Arc and improve nature at the same time were probably or definitely impossible to achieve.

'These findings are unarguable,' said Nick Burton of Stop the Arc. 'They make it clear that claims of public support for the Arc are misleading. And they're powerful proof that the government has misjudged the public's willingness to accept passively the imposition of its unconvincing plans for massive and irreversible change.'

The alternative survey is supported by a number of other campaigning groups across the Arc. Commenting on these results....

Dr William Harrold of Cambridge Approaches said, 'This shocking survey result reveals that national and local governments have been planning the Ox-Cam Arc for years when fewer than 5% of the people actually want it. If people do not want the Arc, the business case for the Bedford to Cambridge section of the East West Railway needs urgent review.'

The **Smart Growth UK** Coordinator, **Jon Reeds**, said, 'We've long known the Arc was a threat to the environment and to levelling up. Now we can see it has virtually no support from local people either.'

Professor Tony Booth of Friends of the River Cam said, 'The Ox-Cam Arc proposals threaten our already struggling river system with hugely increased abstraction, pollution and encroachment from building and infrastructure. They are designed for the benefit of developers, investors and the Treasury and against the flourishing of the environment and the vast majority of residents in our area.'

Roger Carey, Chair of **Buckinghamshire Environment Action Group** said, 'The alternative survey shows the depth of feeling not just about the potential impact of the Arc proposals, but the way in which those proposals are being justified and delivered. People see the Arc as a democratic deficit leading to an environmental deficit – something you might expect in the Amazon basin, but not in the South-East of England.'

Wendy Blythe, Chair of the **Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations (FeCRA)**, said "The Ox-Cam Arc is one of a number of growth corridors affecting Cambridge. We would like to see the equivalent survey carried out for the other growth corridors – the UK Innovation Corridor– London Stansted Cambridge, the Cambridge Norwich Corridor and the Cambridge North of Peterborough Corridor. Most people in these Growth Arcs still have no idea about these plans. When they do, they are very concerned about their impacts."

Speaking on behalf of **Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS)**, **Noel Newson** said "POETS is highly critical of the framing of the government consultation on the Spatial Framework for the Arc. Issues which need addressing include the lack of democratic involvement in the NIC and central government promotion of the Arc; the inattention to the climate change, biodiversity and ecosystems crises; the vagueness of the boundaries of the so-called Arc; the inconsistency with effective levelling-up policies; and the boosterish role of major development interests in the promotion of the Arc. STARC's alternative consultation shows the overwhelming extent of public concern about the Arc proposals."

Lois Wright, Director, **CPRE Bedfordshire** comments "We have long known the strength of feeling against Ox-Cam in Bedfordshire and when given a fair and democratic way to comment, people clearly show they do not support this project. Politicians and decision makers must now start listening and take appropriate action."

Dr Alan James, chairman of **CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**, said "The Ox-Cam Arc is the worst possible solution to our housing crisis – and the slowest. Re-using empty homes and building on brownfield sites nationwide would be faster and emit less greenhouse gas. The Arc will also be a major risk to national food security. Induced climate change and water run-off will increase flood risk to the Fens where 31% of our vegetables are grown alongside other food crops. It will also cover large areas of highly productive farmland with buildings and infrastructure. In a country which

already imports c. 60% of its food, this is national madness. It is no wonder that sensible people have come out so strongly against it. They must be listened to.”

A spokesperson for **Need Not Greed Oxfordshire**, **David Young** said “There has been no proper assessment of the logic of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as a sub-region for ‘transformative growth’, and it is impossible to see how international obligations on Climate and Biodiversity and national obligations on levelling up can be anything other than seriously harmed by continuing this approach. The public are right to be concerned.”

Professor David Rogers of the **Stop the Arc** (STARC) Group said “The Ox-Cam Arc was identified for a high-growth future by Government diktat despite studies showing better locations for such developments elsewhere. Investing in the high-employment Arc denies such investment to other parts of the country and denies workers there the dignity of jobs in the places where they were born and grew up. It’s the wrong project, at the wrong time in the wrong place.”

Our alternative survey remains open at <https://tinyurl.com/5MinArcSurvey>

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Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO): David Young, comms@cpreoxon.org.uk 07392 769377
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Smart Growth UK (SGUK): Jon Reeds , j.reeds@btinternet.com website:
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Photo caption

When a COVID alert called-off a planned presentation in Parliament to MPs in September of this year, members of the Stop the Arc Group (STARC) met and interviewed MPs on a Westminster pavement instead. Upper photo, from the left Richard Fuller (Cons., NE Beds), Layla Moran (Lib-Dem, Oxford West and Abingdon) and Greg Smith (Cons. Buckingham). Lower photo, Anneliese Dodds (Lab. Oxford East) (for a short video of the event please visit <https://www.noexpressway.org/news-updates/2021/9/16/stop-the-arcs-parliamentary-pavement-protest>)

Notes for Editors:**The STARC Survey**

See pie-charts and histograms at the end of this document showing the results from our alternative survey. Summary findings are as follows:

- 70% of responders thought the government should look at other areas before going further with the Ox-Cam Arc. Only 4% thought that the Arc would benefit everyone and help 'level up' the country.
- 93% of responders 'disapprove (8%) or 'strongly disapprove' (85%) of the high levels of growth proposed for the Ox-Cam Arc. Only 3% 'strongly approve'.
- 92% of responders felt the Arc should grow at the national growth rate or lower. Only 4% felt it should grow at a higher rate.
- 92% of responders thought that it is 'probably..' or 'definitely impossible' to develop the Arc AND improve the environment at the same time.
- More than 90% of responders 'Agree..' or 'Strongly agree' that Government should provide funds to improve nature without any development strings attached.
- The top three priorities for responders were
 - 'Clean air, enough water and healthy rivers' (for 82% of responders),
 - 'Green spaces and thriving local nature' (80%), and
 - 'Climate change action' (71%).

The bottom three were

- 'Jobs for everyone' (15%),
- 'Economic growth' (9%) and
- 'Mobility: quick travel' (6%)
- 89% of responders felt their priorities for the future are 'Partly..' or 'Completely incompatible' with the Government's ambitions for the Arc. Only 5% felt their priorities were 'Mostly' or 'Very compatible'
- More than 65% of responders want decisions about the future to be made as locally as possible (by elected representatives, or referenda). Fewer than 3% wanted such decisions taken by unelected Growth Boards or Local Enterprise Partnerships; and fewer than 1% wanted them taken by those who will profit from Arc developments (businesses, land-owners, property developers and Universities).
- If there were a referendum today, more than 93% of responders would vote 'No' to the Ox-Cam Arc, 4% would vote 'Yes' and 3% are 'Don't know's.

The Ox-Cam Arc

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a proposal from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for a new 'Silicon Valley' between Oxford and Cambridge. The plan, supported by

consortia of planners and developers, proposes creation of more than 1 million new jobs, and the houses and infrastructure that will go with those jobs, across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire by 2050.

The Stop the Arc Group (STARC)

Stop the Arc (as the No Expressway Group) campaigned against the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway when the full implications of the Expressway's part in Ox-Cam Arc development became clear to the general public in 2017/18. The Expressway was finally cancelled in March of this year, but all the other parts of the Ox-Cam Arc plans remain in place and in play.

Now, the **Stop The Arc** Group campaigns to:

- challenge the concept of the Arc as an economic entity or as a basis for planning,
- scrap the target of up to one million new houses by 2050,
- promote a fully electrified East West Rail for both passengers and freight,
- preserve and enhance the natural environment, and
- involve local people in deciding their future through genuine consultation.

Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS)

POETS is a group of senior planning, environment and transport professional and academics focussed primarily on planning and transport in Oxfordshire. We believe that the Covid-19 pandemic, along with the climate emergency and inequalities affecting life chances represent a unique set of challenges. We wish to see national and local policies which provide the best possible environment in which future generations can thrive.

SURVEY RESULTS (next pages)

On the following pages you will find full details of the survey results as a series of graphs. Responses to each of the 11 questions are given in two formats; a pie-chart and a histogram. The full text of the questions asked are given with each result, together with the percentage responses (the actual number of responses can be read off from the histograms). The strongest responses are in bold font in the pie-charts. A second version of the Question 6 histogram is also included with only the 'headline' responses; this may be useful for some publications. For questions involving multiple choices (e.g. 'pick up to five') the percentages are those of the number of respondents not the number of responses (hence do not sum to 100%).

A total of 3843 people responded to our alternative survey and most people answered most questions (the fewest were 3782 responses to Question 1).

For comparison, only 2933 responders were recorded on the official government consultation by 11.45 p.m. on 12th October 2021 (the official closing time/date).

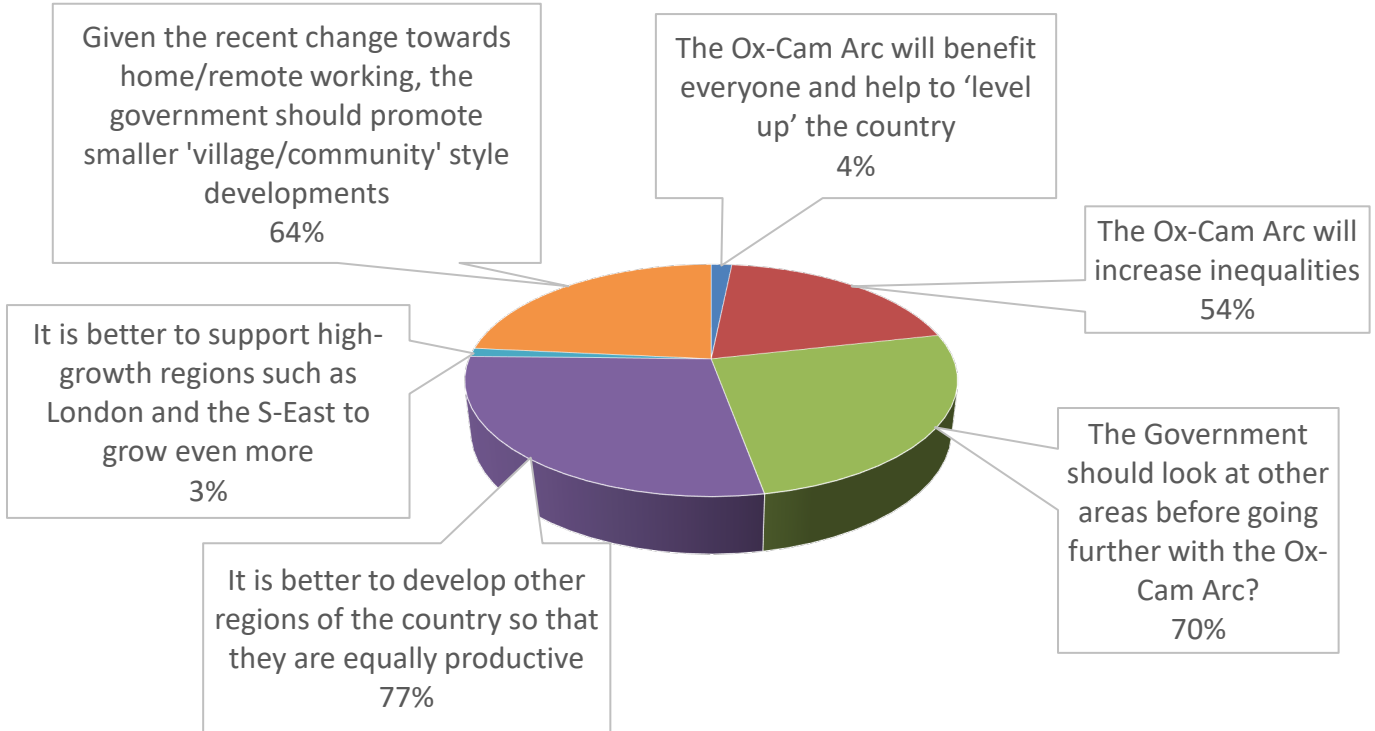
Editors etc. are welcome to use the photographs, information or any figures in this document in any way. Please credit the Stop the Arc Group if you do so and reference <https://stopthearc.org>

More details and analysis will appear later, on the Stop the Arc and other websites.

Our alternative survey remains open at <https://tinyurl.com/5MinArcSurvey>

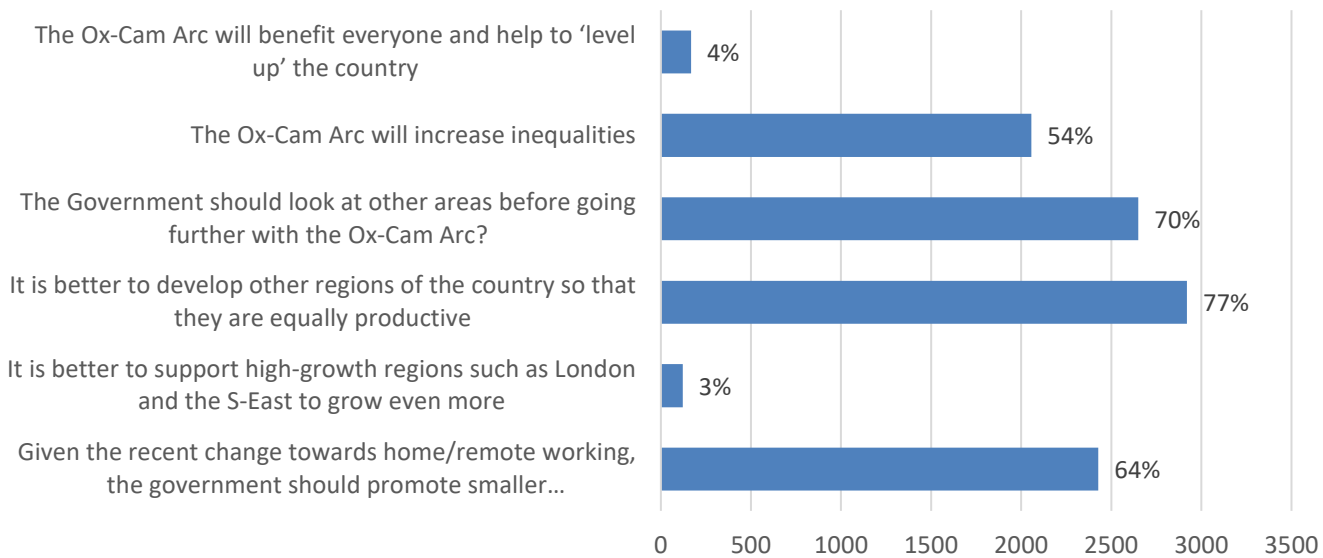
1) NATIONAL VISION AND LEVELLING-UP. If we're going to have high growth 'Arcs', where should they be? The UK is the most unequal country in Europe, and inequality has increased in recent years. Government argues that we must develop the Arc area because it makes a major contribution to the UK economy whilst other regions do not, and that development will 'level up' areas within the Arc. But independent studies have found that growth is at least as justified, profitable and sustainable in other parts of the country as it is in the Ox-Cam Arc. None of these was considered by the Government. Do you feel that (tick as many as you like)."

1. NATIONAL VISION AND LEVELLING-UP



N.B. multiple choice answers. %s are those of the total number of respondents, not responses

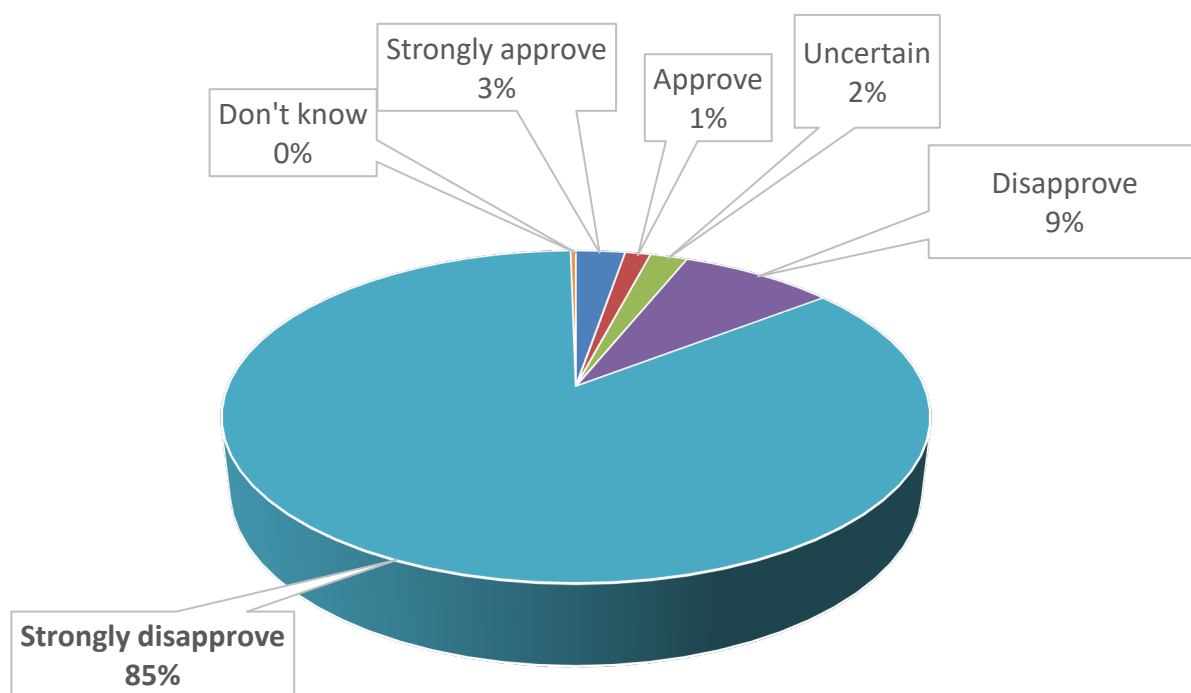
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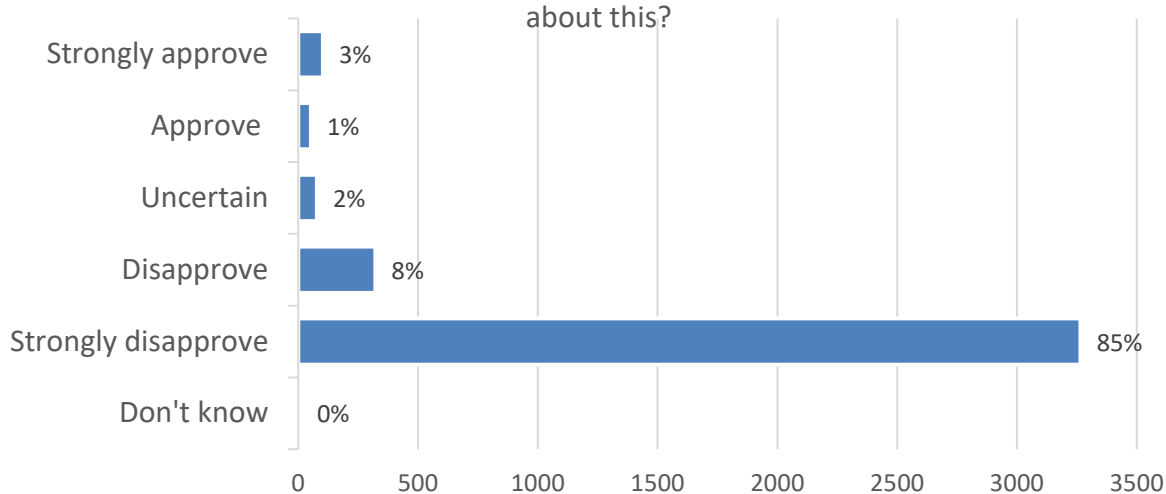
2. GROWTH LEVELS AND LOCATION

Think of the house-building and growth in your area at present. Government plans would double this rate of growth for the next 30 years. How do you feel about this?



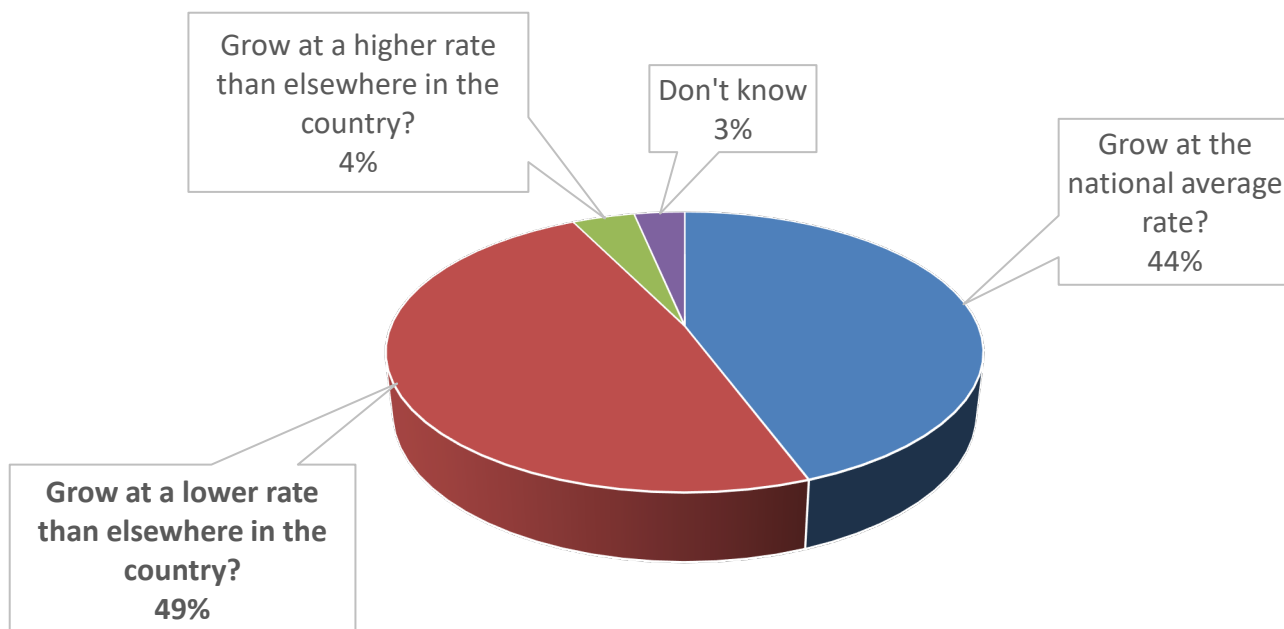
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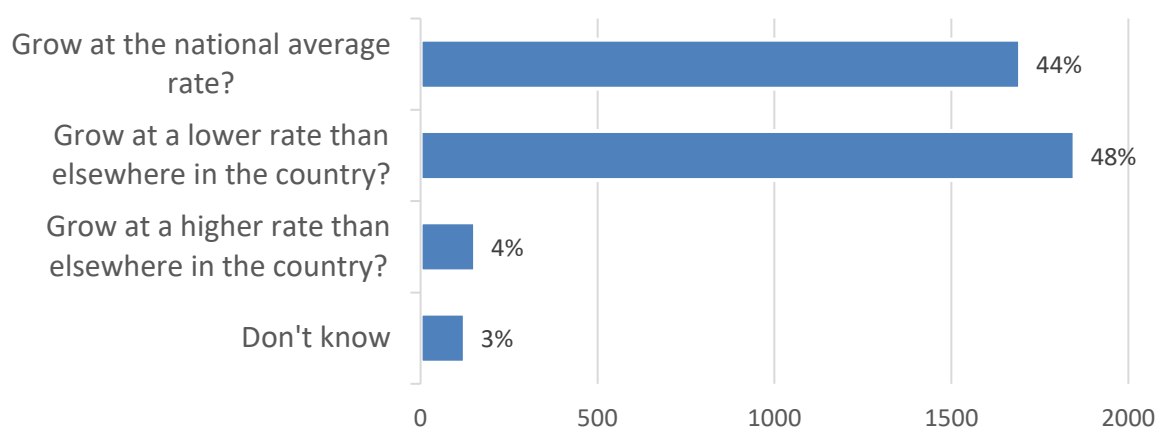
3. GROWTH LEVELS AND LOCATION

Government plans would put one quarter (26%) of all the growth in England to 2050 into the Ox-Cam Arc. The Arc is less than one tenth (9%) of the country's total area. Do you think that the five counties in the Arc should.....



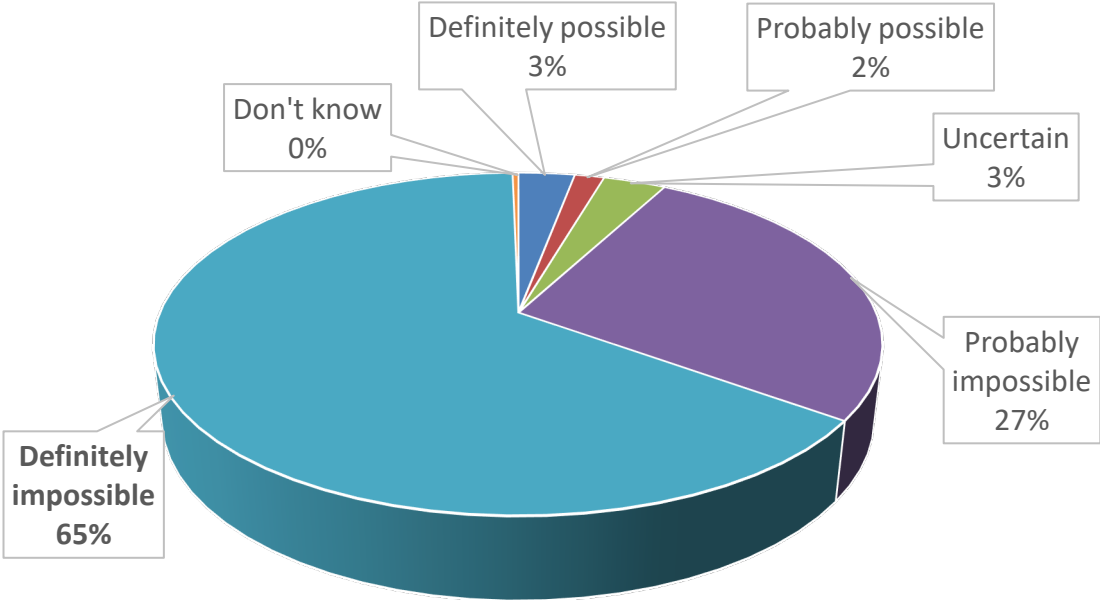
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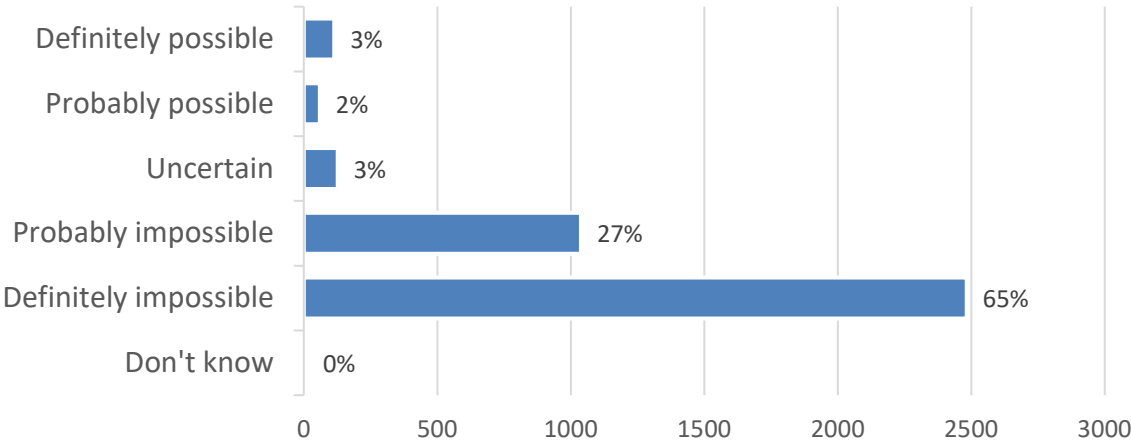
4) ENVIRONMENT

All life depends on the environment. Government says we can have a high rate of development and improve our environment at the same time, making our natural places much better. Do you think this is possible?



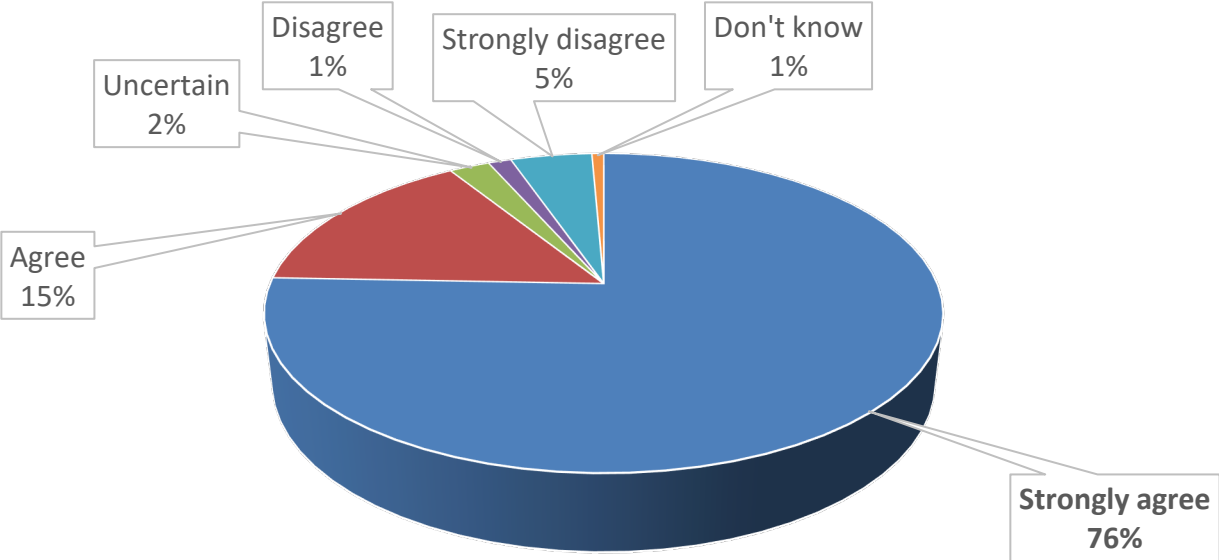
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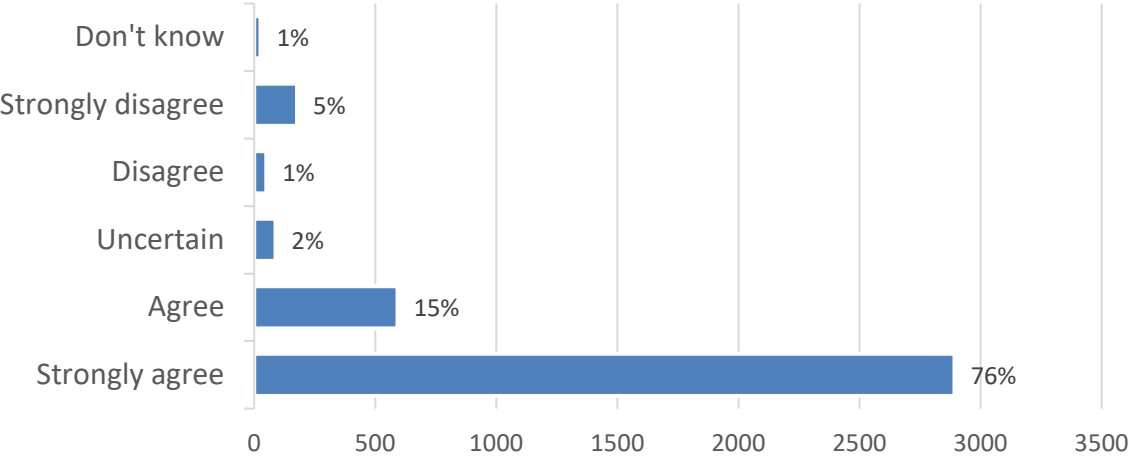
5) ENVIRONMENT

Developers will only provide funding to improve nature if they are given planning permission to build on part of it. Do you think that central and local government should improve nature without any development strings attached?



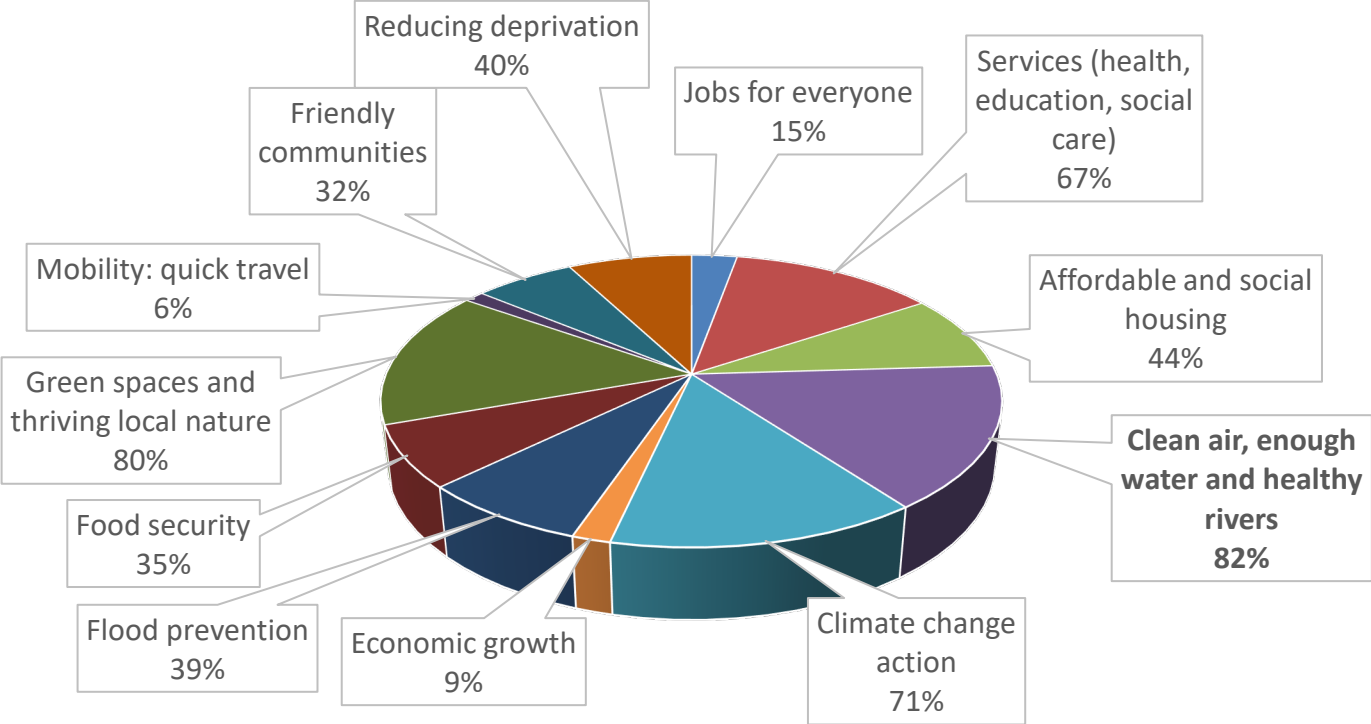
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6) DEMOCRACY

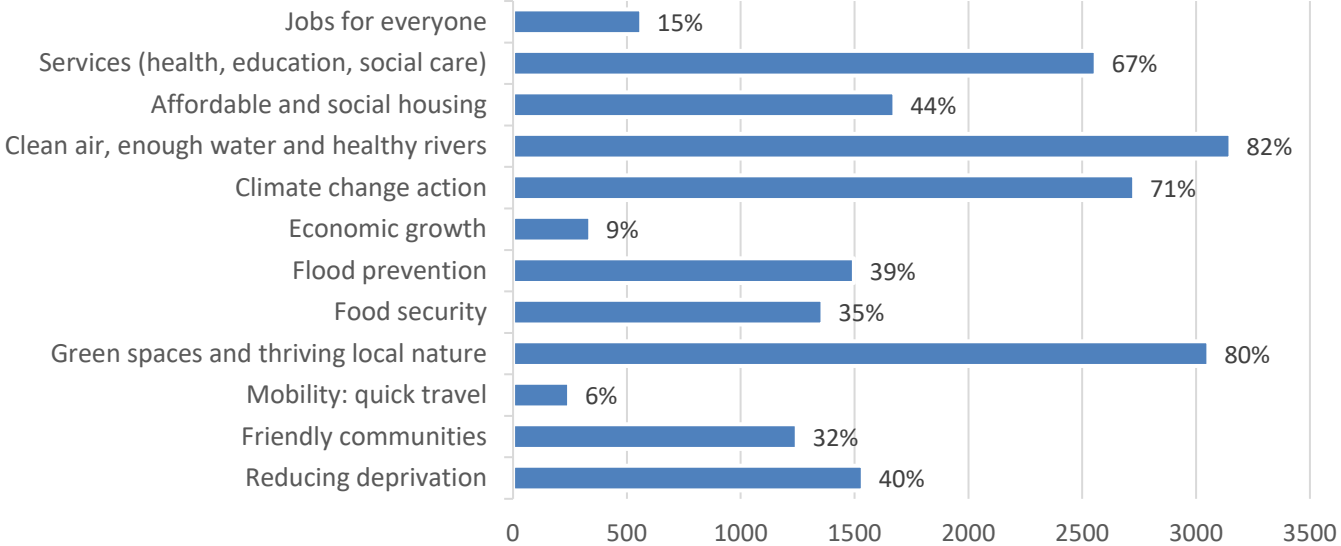
Growth deals with the Government commit Local Authorities to very high levels of development but do not provide all the funding required for this growth. What are the top priorities, for you and for future generations?



N.B. multiple choice answers. %s are those of the total number of respondents, not responses

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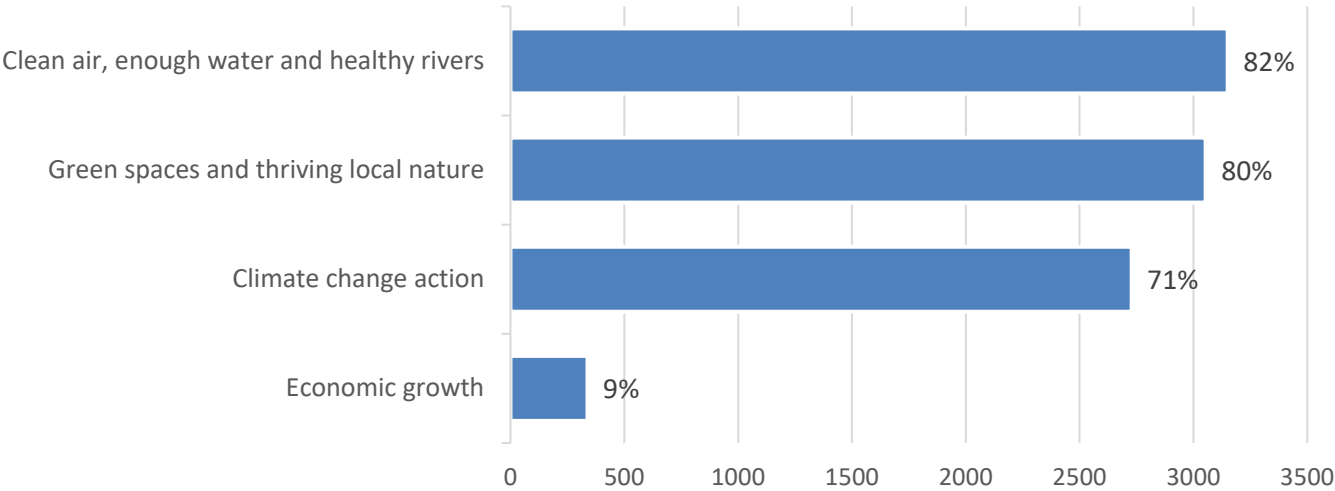
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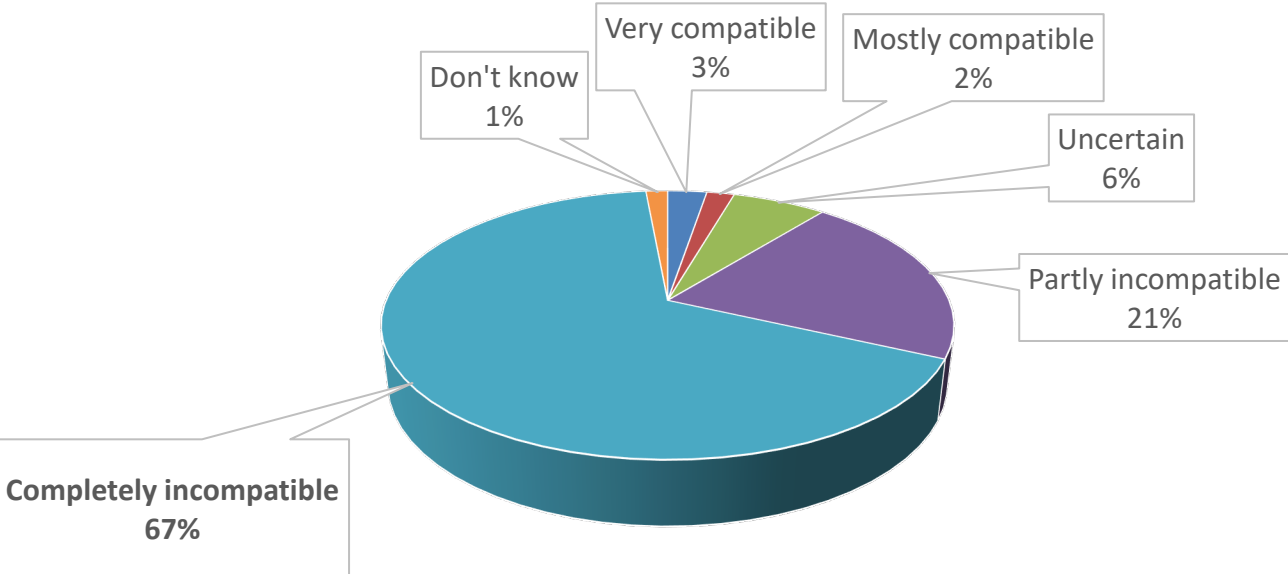
What are the top priorities for the five counties, for you and for future generations?



N.B. multiple choice answers. %s are those of the total number of respondents, not responses.

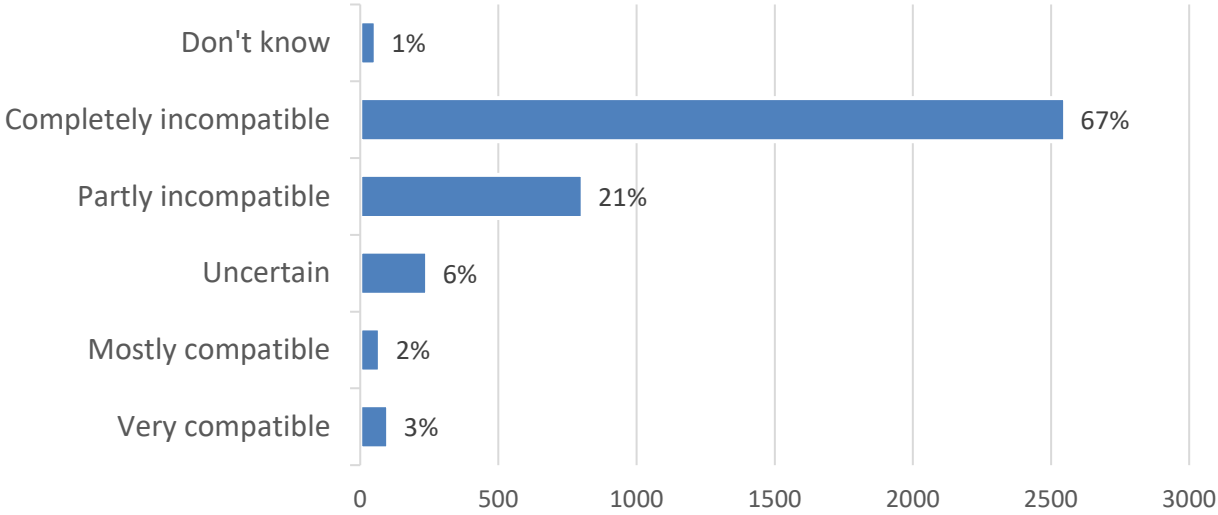
7) DEMOCRACY

Do you believe that your priorities are compatible with government's aspirations for the Arc?



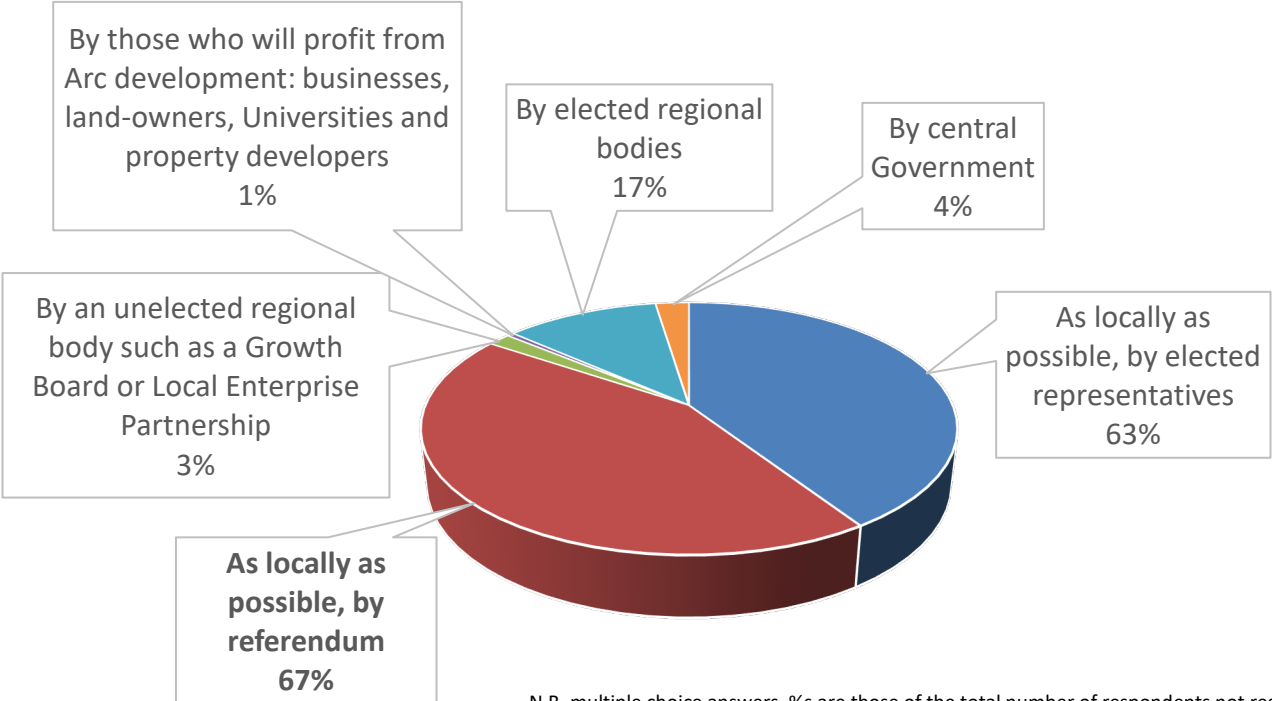
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8) DEMOCRACY

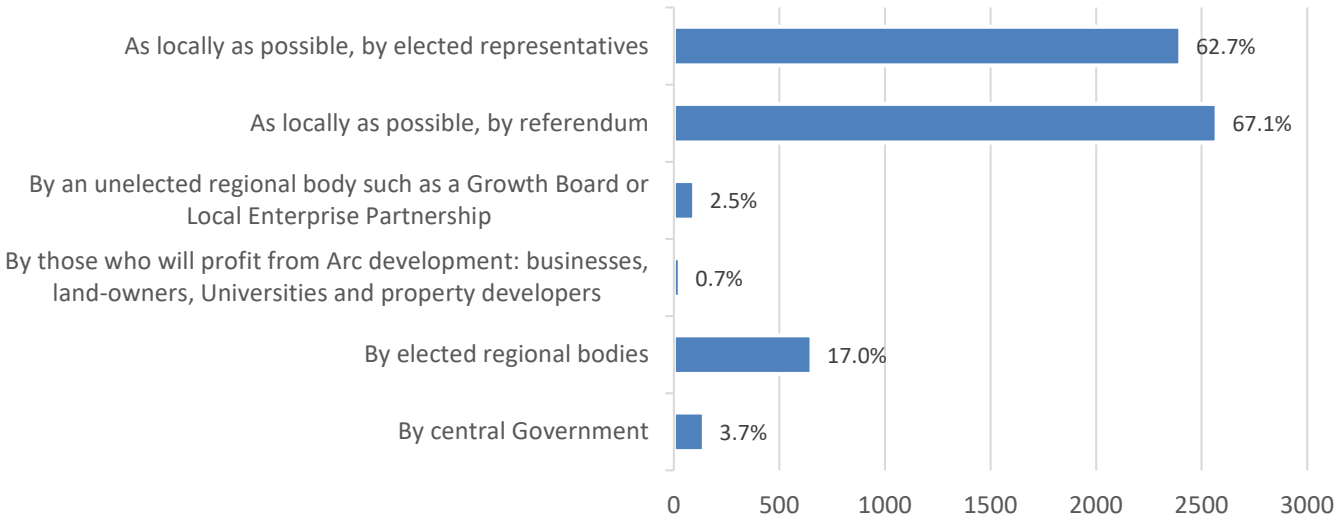
Decisions that are going to change completely the character of an area, for ever, should be made ...(tick one or more).



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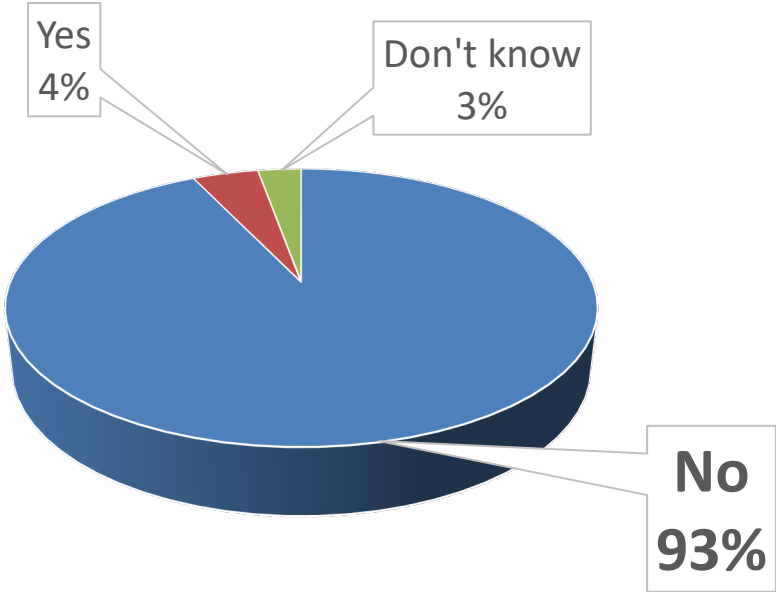
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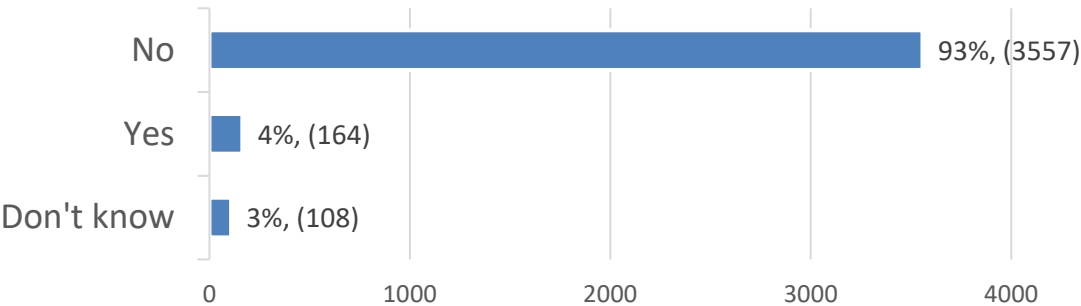
9) DEMOCRACY

If there were a referendum today, would you vote for the Ox-Cam Arc?



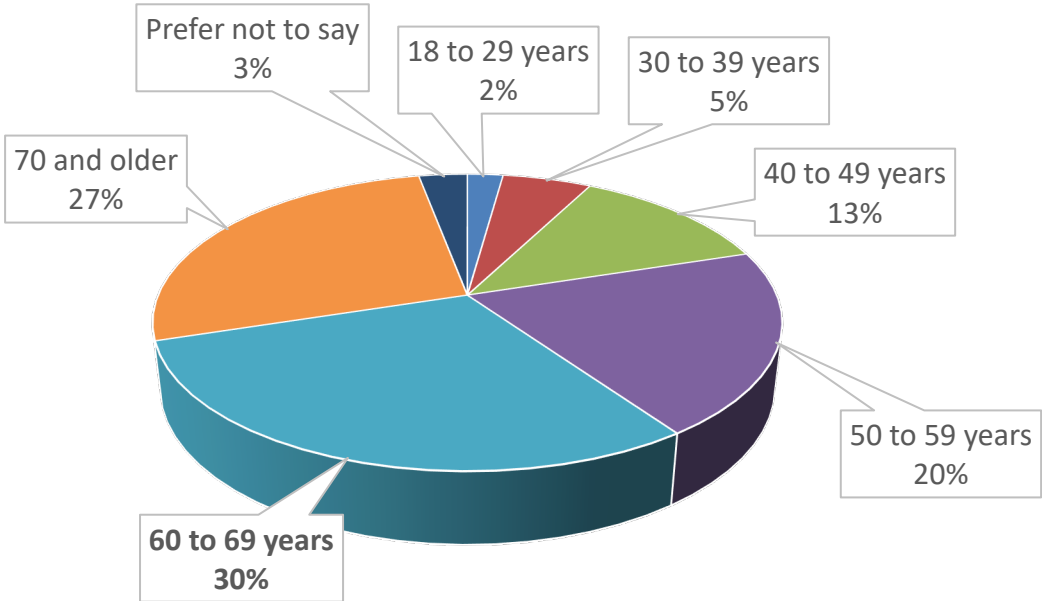
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10) YOUR AGE

We ask this to help us understand how responses differ between age groups



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