

Analysis of the Public Consultation Process in Regard to Ballot Returns for the Proposal of a DPPO Covering a Specified Area of Sawbridgeworth

Inspector Christopher Hunt, Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Team commissioned this analysis.

Data collection

A period of eight weeks, through to 31st August 2010 was set for completion and return of the ballot forms facilitating a public consultation for the DPPO. 2021 forms were circulated directly in hard copy, 1772 to residential properties and 249 to business. 200 ballot forms were returned, and a further 11 completed online via East Herts Council website.

The consultation area was researched and targeted at residents and businesses within the boundary of the proposed DPPO. To ensure the returns were representative of this, forms were posted directly to residential and business within the area, and 'drop boxes' for the completed returns installed within 4 premises in the town centre. The forms were also available for completion online. This analysis considers only those forms returned in the original format to reflect this local consultation. This ensured that data comparison was clear and unambiguous, with like for like comparisons.

Data Analysis

The analysis has been presented in a simple reduction to percentages where possible. The source data is held at Bishop's Stortford Police Station. The analysed data is held in electronic form on a spreadsheet. A summary of the analysis results in graphical form can be found in Annex 1. A tabular summary is in Annex 2.

A synopsis of comments falling within the subjective sections of the ballot forms is included within Annex 3.

Results

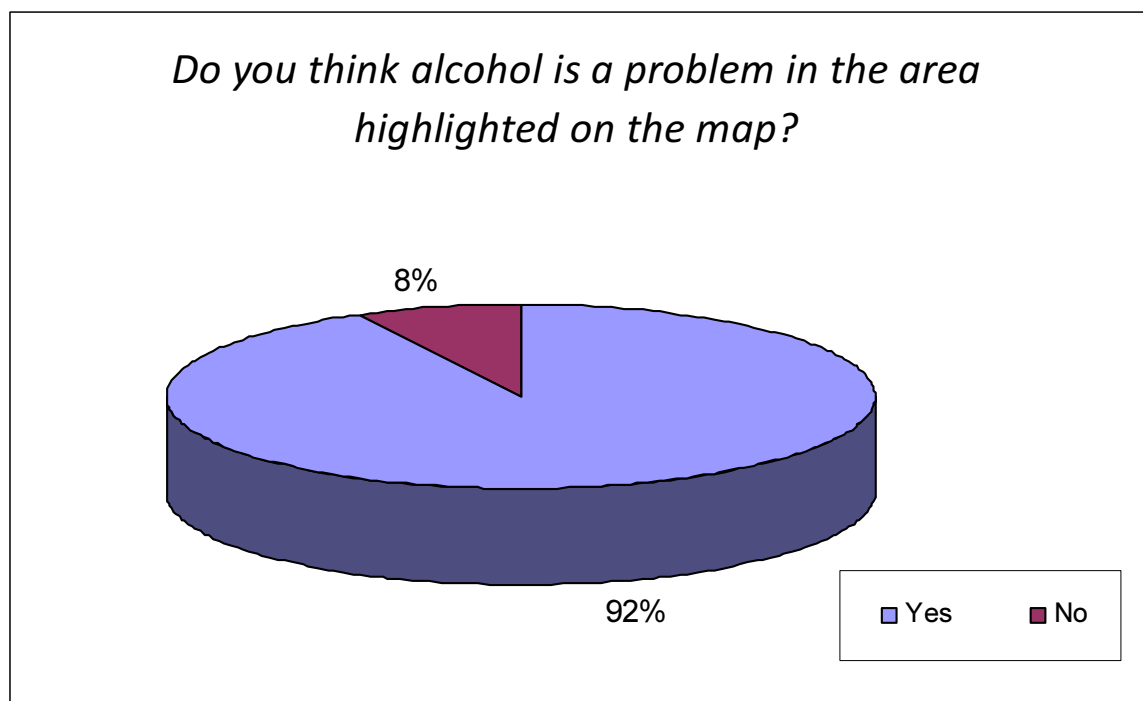
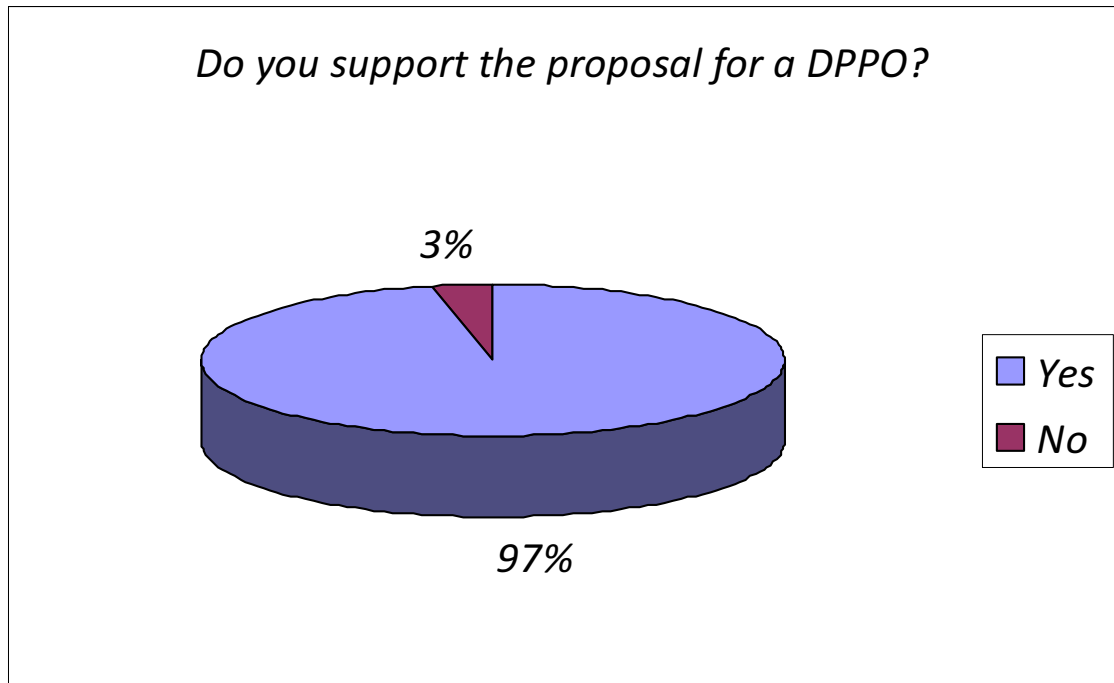
The primary response, 'Do you support the proposal' returned a clear and significant positive response of 96%, with 3% not supporting the proposal and 1% not responding. Of the 3% (7 respondents) not supporting the DPPO comments included they did not feel it necessary, that police should use existing powers to address the issues, drinking will continue to take place in the pubs, and that it is a minority who cause problems.

85% stated that over the last 12 months they witnessed alcohol related anti-social behaviour within Sawbridgeworth. This is arguably a significant quality of life issue for residents and businesses. 39% of respondents stated that they had witnessed ASB outside their homes, and a further 63% within their neighbourhood. Only 11% responded they had witnessed outside a business or licensed area, and just 1% stated that they had witnessed ASB outside or inside their own licensed area or business premises. This would suggest that that ASB is occurring on the streets and public areas of Sawbridgeworth, rather than within the supervised business or licensed areas. It should be noted that some respondents selected more than one location for where they had witnessed the ASB.

Respondents were asked to select from categories what type of ASB they had witnessed within the last twelve months, it should again be noted that several respondents selected more than one answer. 74% recorded noise as a problem, with 21% urination and 48% refuse. These have direct links to unsupervised alcohol consumption in the street rather than within licensed premises where toilet facilities are provided and noise and refuse is controlled.

In regards to crimes, 38% of respondents selected vandalism as something they had witnessed, and a further 7% stating graffiti. This is significant to the policing of the town and there is an opportunity for intelligence to be gained from persons reporting these offences. Research confirms these offences are often alcohol related. The powers enabled by the DPPO would assist the police to take preventative action based information direct from the public. These offences are often committed some distance from off and on licensed premises where causal links are not established.

Annex One: Graphical Representation of Selected Data



Annex Two: Summary of Responses

Number of Ballots Questionnaires handed out (1772 Residential, 249 Business)	2021	
Number of Ballot Questionnaires returned	200	10%
Number of online responses	11	
Ballot Questions		
	Total	%
Have you seen any alcohol related anti-social behaviour in Sawbridgeworth in the last 12 months YES	180	85
Have you seen any alcohol related anti-social behaviour in Sawbridgeworth in the last 12 months NO	31	15
Where have you witnessed the ASB?:		
	Total	%
Outside your business premises/licensed area	23	11
Inside your business premises/licensed area	2	1
Outside your home	82	39
Within your neighbourhood	132	63
Another location	51	24
What type of ASB did you witness?		
	Total	%
Vandalism	80	38
Noise	157	74
Refuse	103	48
Graffiti	15	7
Urination	45	21
Harassment	18	9
Verbal Abuse	51	24
Other	21	10
Do you think drinking in the street is a problem in the area highlighted on the map YES		
	195	92
Do you think drinking in the street is a problem in the area highlighted on the map NO		
	16	8
Do you support the proposal for a Designated Place Order - YES		
	202	96
Do you support the proposal for a Designated Place Order - NO		
	7	3

Annex Three: Selected Comments Endorsed Upon the Returned Ballot Forms

- **The May bank holidays, with all day drinking and an influx of people from outside Sawbridgeworth results in the worst anti-social behaviour each year**
- **Glasses and beer bottles just thrown or left on pavements. Refuse thrown about. Areas where people have been sick.**
- **Living near to the River, we get lots of rubbish e.g. cans, plastic bottles, take away cartons. Males in particular urinating along the tow path, gangs congregating outside the train station.**
- **Although I don't think it goes far enough. Drinking in a public area should be a criminal offence.**
- **Noise and shouting early hours Fridays and Saturdays after licensed premises shut in the town.**
- **I think it should also include Sawbridgeworth Station and Station Road.**
- **Group of adults, drinking outside the post office in Bell Street physically and verbally abusing each other.**
- **Well Done! Needs action now!**
- **As an old age pensioner I am frightened to walk the streets of Sawbridgeworth at night so I have never come across any problems, only heard about them but I think DPPO is a great idea!**
- **After hours foul language most Friday, Saturday and B/Holiday evenings – invariably alcohol induced following lengthy drinking sessions.**
- **Many thanks for your efforts (Bell Mead Resident).**
- **But it needs to be enforced by regular patrols.**
- **Intimidating use of a public area next to Post Box. Three adults regularly sit and drink in that area – not a good example to our children and a blight on our community.**
- **But you need sufficient resources allocated to deal with the problem and the resources need to be deployed at the 'right time of the day'.**
- **Since I don't go out much at night I haven't witnessed any of the above, BUT I see the after effects of drinking in the streets and footpaths in the mornings, especially on a Sunday around the Bell Street area.**
- **Drunk man asleep in graveyard.**
- **Alcoholics who congregate there (Bell Street) at all times of the days, which is a poor reflection on Sawbridgeworth.**
- **Fighting in the street, no longer do we look forward to Bank Holidays or May Fair because it gets even worse, shocking in fact.**