



# Rushlake Green Leaf Poll shop survey

Findings and conclusions

November 2009

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**This document** presents the detailed conclusions of the ‘Leaf Poll’ survey, designed to gain insights into attitudes, spending patterns and expectations relating to the Rushlake Green village shop ‘The Stores’. The shop is now owned by Andrew Wickens, following the retirement of the Daws family in 2008. The Leaf Poll survey was conceived, designed and organised by a small group of local people, all of whom share an interest in helping to retain the village shop as an essential component of Rushlake Green village life. The survey was done entirely independently, but with the full support of the village shop team.

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**The purpose of the Leaf Poll survey** was to help the local shop satisfy local needs and to help stimulate local people to fully support and sustain the shop as a viable business.

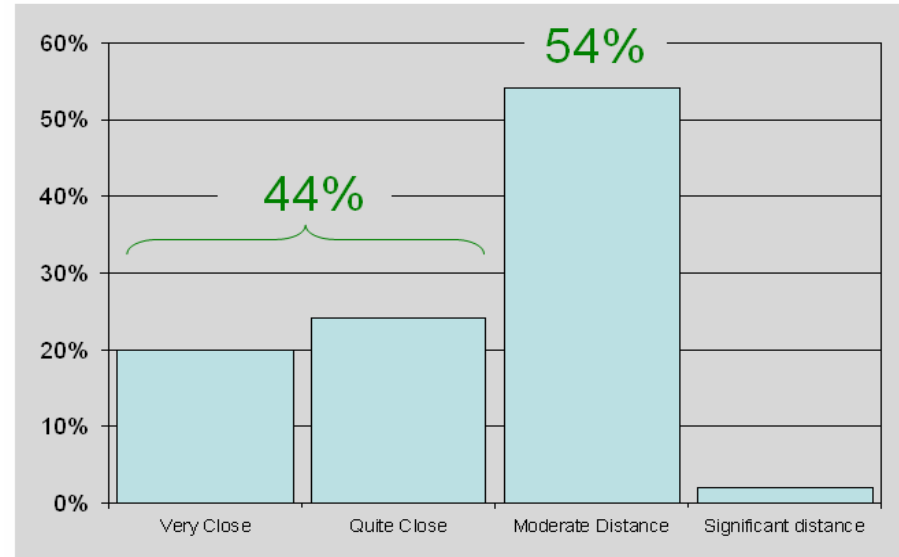
The background to this is that the shop had been under new ownership for around 9 months. The new owners had made some basic improvements such as simplifying the layout, rationalising the stock range and working to achieve fresher produce. However the longer-term ambitions for developing the shop and the accompanying residential units were, at this point, still at the planning stage.

This survey emerged from a sense that much of the passion and support generated from the 'save the shop' campaign had been dissipated and there was a danger that, without a more concerted local effort, the shop might not be able to achieve the level of business needed to ensure its long-term viability.

**The specific aim of the survey** therefore was to gather information and insights about:

- Who uses the shop
- What their current buying habits are
- How much more customers might spend if more satisfied  
(And which customers offer most scope for more business)
- What people like and dislike about what the shop offers
- What would encourage them to spend more

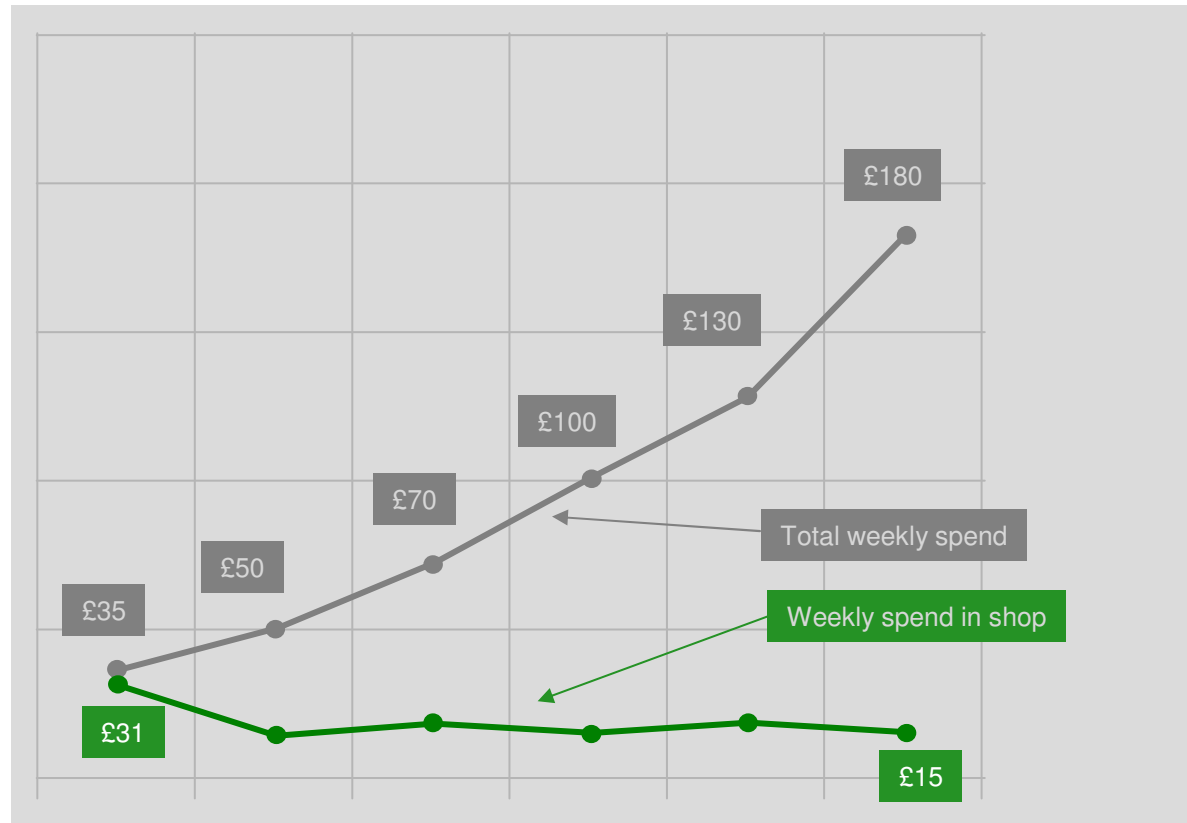
Most of the customers in the survey live relatively close to the shop. Very few more than a few minutes drive away and 44% within walking distance.

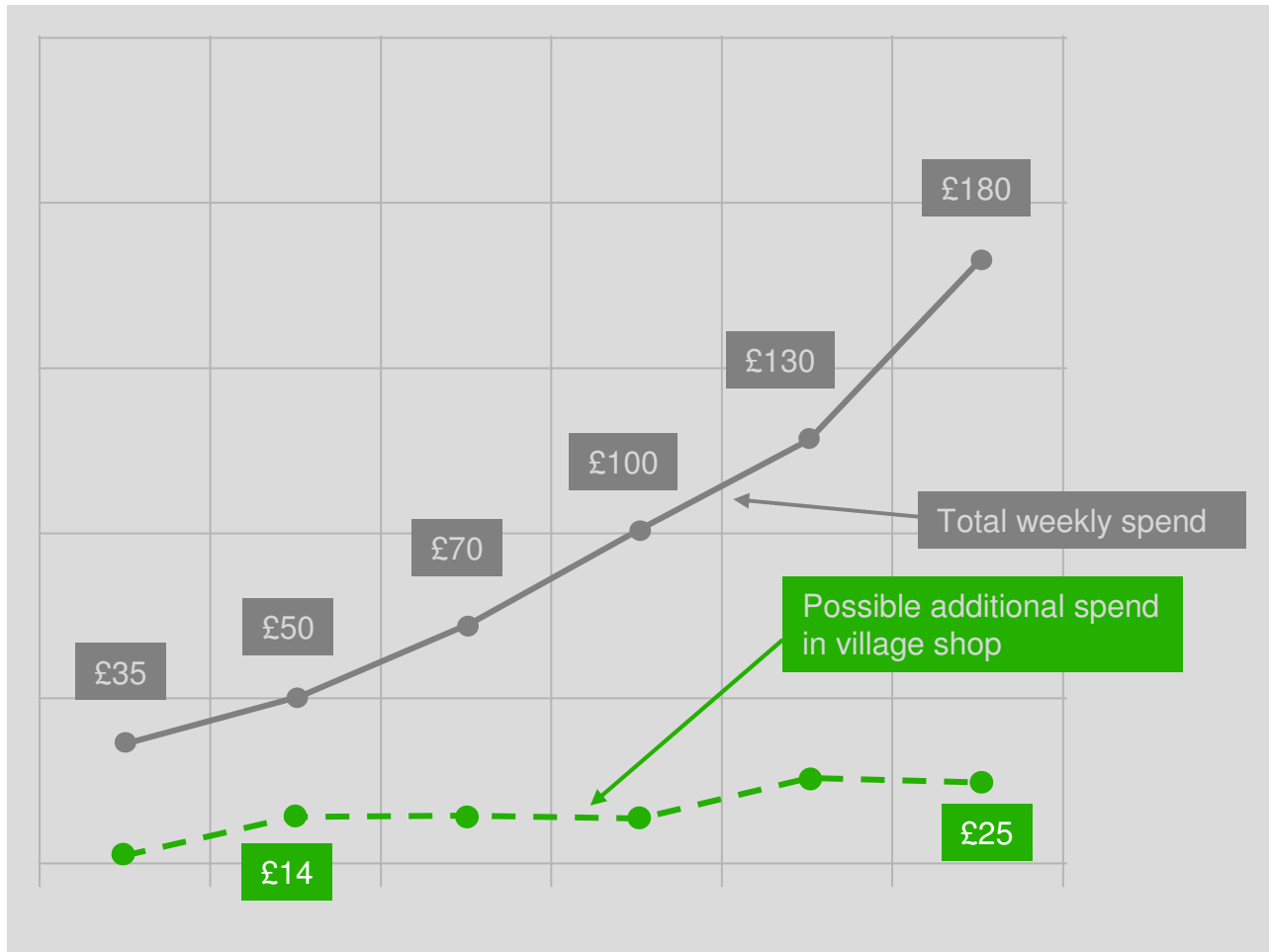


Customers of the shop vary enormously in their purchasing ability. Weekly total household shopping budgets range from around £35/week to over £180/week. There is also a range of households, from individuals and couples to large extended families.

One significant finding is that weekly spend in the shop tends, if anything, to decrease the more people have to spend on their weekly shop. Amongst those spending around £35/week in total, the spend in the shop is on average £31/week (86%). Whereas households spending an average £180/week spend only an average £15 in the shop – just 8% of their total spend.

So although customers are evenly spread across different levels of ability to spend, the actual spend in the shop does not increase proportionately.





High budget households currently spend the least. And when asked, they indicate the highest potential additional spend – but only if the shop does better at meeting their needs.

So high-spend households show the greatest potential for increased spend locally but getting them to spend more will depend on making The Stores a preferred option for them rather than an obligation.

Convenience, access to Post Office services and helpfulness of staff are important factors encouraging people to shop locally, as is a sense of loyalty to The Stores. The Stores scored very highly on current levels of Service, Loyalty, Convenience and Friendliness. So these are clearly areas where The Stores is succeeding in encouraging local custom.

The dominant reasons for people shopping outside the village are Choice, Price and Product Quality. This preference for more choice is not surprising when you compare a tiny local shop with some of the large supermarkets in the area. The fact that price is an important is also predictable, particularly in the current climate where many people are feeling the pinch. But the fact that quality is also a factor is more of an issue. 63% thought product quality was a very important factor in shopping outside the village and altogether 93% saw this as important in some way. And although only 10% thought The Stores was actually "poor" for quality, only 22% thought The Stores "very good" for quality.

## Reasons to shop locally

86% said The Stores are "very good" at offering **friendliness** and 81% said they're "very good" for **Service**

## Reasons to shop elsewhere

Many people choose to shop outside the village to get a better choice of products

93% say **quality** is an important reason for shopping outside the village

The survey showed that Price difference was one of the factors encouraging people to shop in nearby supermarkets. Clearly a small local shop can never match the discount prices offered by supermarket chains such as Morrisons. But in reality, the actual difference in prices overall is not as great as it seems.

We took a random selection of 80 products (from all categories) and compared prices between The Stores and the Heathfield Co-op. Across the 80 products, the average saving in the supermarket, compared with The Stores, was surprisingly only 6.5%. The saving would therefore be around £3.20 on a £50 shop. But the fuel cost of taking an average car to Heathfield and back could be around £2.50. So a shop of less than £39 could actually be cheaper if done locally, and a shop of just £10 could cost nearly £1.30 extra, in real terms, in the Supermarket.

So the indications are that, whilst we may notice that some things are a lot pricier in our local shop, some other things are less than in the supermarkets and most things are only a bit more expensive.

The price difference between The Stores and a Supermarket such as the Coop is just **6.5%**

On a £50 shop, you'd save just **£3.20** on your bill.

Allowing for fuel costs, a shop of less than £39 could **cost less in The Stores**

In real terms, a shop of £10 could cost you **an extra £1.30** in the supermarket.

Clearly the whole way in which we shop has changed enormously since the days when shops like Daws Stores were the main source for groceries and household products (as well as tailoring and dress making at one time!). And its not reasonable to expect people to turn back the clock now. So for many people, the supermarket provides the breadth of range they want for their main weekly shop.

But while a village store can never compete with supermarkets on breadth of choice, they could score over a supermarket by offering 'choices' that accurately reflect local needs. In this respect the Stores has an advantage over supermarkets in that it is much closer to its customers and, if willing to listen, has the ability to know much more about what people want to buy. In some areas, such as offering local products, a small store can also cope much better with variations in supply, provided of course that customers are also willing to accept this trade-off.

So while supermarkets offer a huge range of goods, The Stores could, in some areas, offer a better choice.

The Stores has an advantage over supermarkets in that **it is much closer to its customers** and, if willing to listen, has the ability to know much more about they want to buy.

While supermarkets offer a huge range of goods, **The Stores could, in some areas, offer a better choice.**

Quality is a very subjective judgement and will mean different things to different customers. But getting to understand what customers mean by wanting better quality could be an important ingredient in appealing to the ‘higher-spend’ households that we have identified as having the greatest potential to spend more in the stores.

On one level, having known and trusted brands could be a way of improving the ‘quality’ available. While Happy Shopper products will always be essential for those on tight budgets, many customers will only buy if they can get a brand whose quality they know and trust. For higher-spend customers quality-value is more important than pure price

Improved ‘quality’ could also be achieved by offering a good-quality choices in areas such as cheese, deli, wine, meats and bread. There is the sense that just a few really good products, even at premium prices, would make The Stores more attractive to the more discerning customers.

63% thought product quality was a very important factor in shopping outside the village and altogether 93% saw this as important in some way. Although only 10% thought The Stores was “poor” for quality, only 22% thought The Stores “very good” for quality.

Customers rated The Stores poorly for cold meats and frozen food. There appears to be an appetite for more better quality products in these areas. Frozen food could include some quality (locally supplied) meats.

The Stores could also try to find a source of premium quality 'locally-made' frozen or chilled meals. Customers mentioned that they currently buy these from as far a field as Kudos in Ripe n- perhaps there is the potential to become a local distributor.

A recurring theme was the desire for a better deli offering. This is one area where The Stores could respond to local needs. And customers for this are likely to be more interested in quality than price.

Customers want an improved choice of:

Cold Meats,  
Frozen Food,

Chilled &  
Ready-meals,

Delicatessen

A better choice of wines was a frequent request. And while The Stores cannot compete with supermarkets for range, they could offer just a few really good wines for discerning customers. Mention was also made of the considerable 'local wine expertise' that could be called upon for advice and recommendation – and possibly for supply.

Organics was another area with a strong demand for improvement. This was echoed in the individual comments where people asked for more organic fruit, veg, meat and dairy products. There is also scope to stock more organic basics such as organic tinned beans & soup, ketchup, sugar, stock, honey etc.

Many people also requested more local products. We are aware of the fact that Andy has made efforts to achieve this and many local products are already stocked. But there are also many local producers, such as Sussex Farm Sausages that already have a strong following through farmers markets and would do well in The Stores.

The shop could also do more to highlight both local and organic products – even a simple coloured sticker system would do a lot to help.

Customers want an improved choice of:

Alcohol.

Organic products

More local produce.

Many people requested more flexible opening hours. Suggestions included Sunday morning and late night opening – perhaps on Thursdays, to coincide with the chip van. There was also the feeling that many people, particularly week-enders, would prefer the shop to stay open all day, and even late, on Saturdays. offset the extra staff costs of Sunday opening.

There were also many requests for improvements to the shop layout. And whilst every effort should be made to retain the traditional feel of the shop, a degree of modernisation may be required to achieve a layout where customers can easily find products and where products can be logically arranged in clear categories.

Another frequent request was for tables outside, for coffee, although this may be limited to the warm months of the year, and only trying it out would prove whether the demand would really be there.

Customers want improvements in:

Opening hours

Shop layout

### **Help us to know what's available**

To make it easier for more people to do more of their basic shopping locally, The Stores could do more to help people find what's on offer. Some simple signage might help. And perhaps The Stores could produce a list of regularly stocked lines which people could use as a checklist when planning their local shopping.

### **Make more of the local advantage**

Many people in the Poll expressed desire to see more local products in The Stores. Perhaps The Stores could do more to source local products (such as sausages, cheese, bacon, yoghurt). They might also consider a coloured sticker system, to highlight the Local Products already stocked.

### **Go more organic**

Lots of people asked for more organic products where possible. It should be possible to expand the range of organic basics, from trusted brands such as Heinz organic beans, ketchup, soup etc. And as with local products, a clearer labelling of Organics (as in supermarkets) would be helpful for those interested.

### **A few very good quality choices, done well**

The survey showed that people want a better offer in areas such as Cold Meats, Chilled meals, Delicatessen and Wine. For customers with discerning tastes, a few things done well would be better than 'fancy' products that miss the mark. And we have local expertise, such as wine professionals and connoisseurs, who would be happy to give advice.

### **Staying faithful to loyal customers**

Whilst doing more to attract high-spend locals, The Stores also needs to continue to offer a good range of basic products in both trusted brands and where appropriate in value brands such as Happy Shopper.

### **Open at more convenient times**

One consistent theme in the survey was the request for The Stores to be open at more convenient times. Sunday morning opening – even for a few hours, was most often suggested. Saturday afternoon could also make The Stores more accessible for weekenders, more used to all-weekend trading hours. One interesting idea was that The Stores could stay open on Thursday evening to coincide with the trade for the Fish Van.

### **Back to basics**

The survey reveals that a large percentage of people just don't spend much money in the shop currently, even though everyone seems keen to keep a shop in the village. One way to spend more is to make up a list of basics, such as cornflakes, tea, baked beans, sugar etc, that we can try always to buy in The Stores. If they don't stock the trusted brands we are used to we should let them know.

### **Avoid false economies**

Village shop customers should also not be put off by fears about cost. As we found in our 'Basket Test' prices in the Co-op, for example, are only 6.5% lower on average compared to The Stores, and savings often offset by the cost of getting to supermarkets further a field.

### **Explore**

Another way to increase our spend is to take a bit of time really exploring what The Stores has to offer – there are already many really great products hidden within the shelves.

### **Say what we want**

We could perhaps get better at telling the staff in The Stores about what we we'd like to see added to the range. Katie keeps a list of requests but perhaps there could also be some suggestion cards available. If you have a favourite product – a type of bread or a jar of brilliant olives – take it in, show the counter team, and they will see what they can do to respond

### **Give honest feedback**

We also need to be better at giving feedback – positive and negative. When The Stores team try out new things, such as a new bread or a new dairy range, they need our feedback to know whether they're getting it right. Just not buying things if they're missing the mark doesn't get our message across

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- Methods used
- Questions & results
- Potential improvements identified
- Full list of verbatim comments
- One page summary of conclusions

The basis was a 14 question survey which asked people to respond to questions about the shop. Most of the questions were tick box to agree or disagree with statements or to rate particular aspects of the shop's services and products. The printed copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand to local addresses and made available at the shop and other relevant locations. The survey was also made available to do online or to download and print. The survey questions were designed to be suitable for repeating in 6 to 12 months.

As might be expected, **the response rate** was lower than that achieved for the 'save the shop' survey in the previous year. However the 65 completed surveys represents just under 10% of the estimated 750 relevant local households so can therefore be taken to be reasonably representative. The questionnaires received included many verbatim comments and ideas, from suggested products and services to wider comments about the shop and its future.

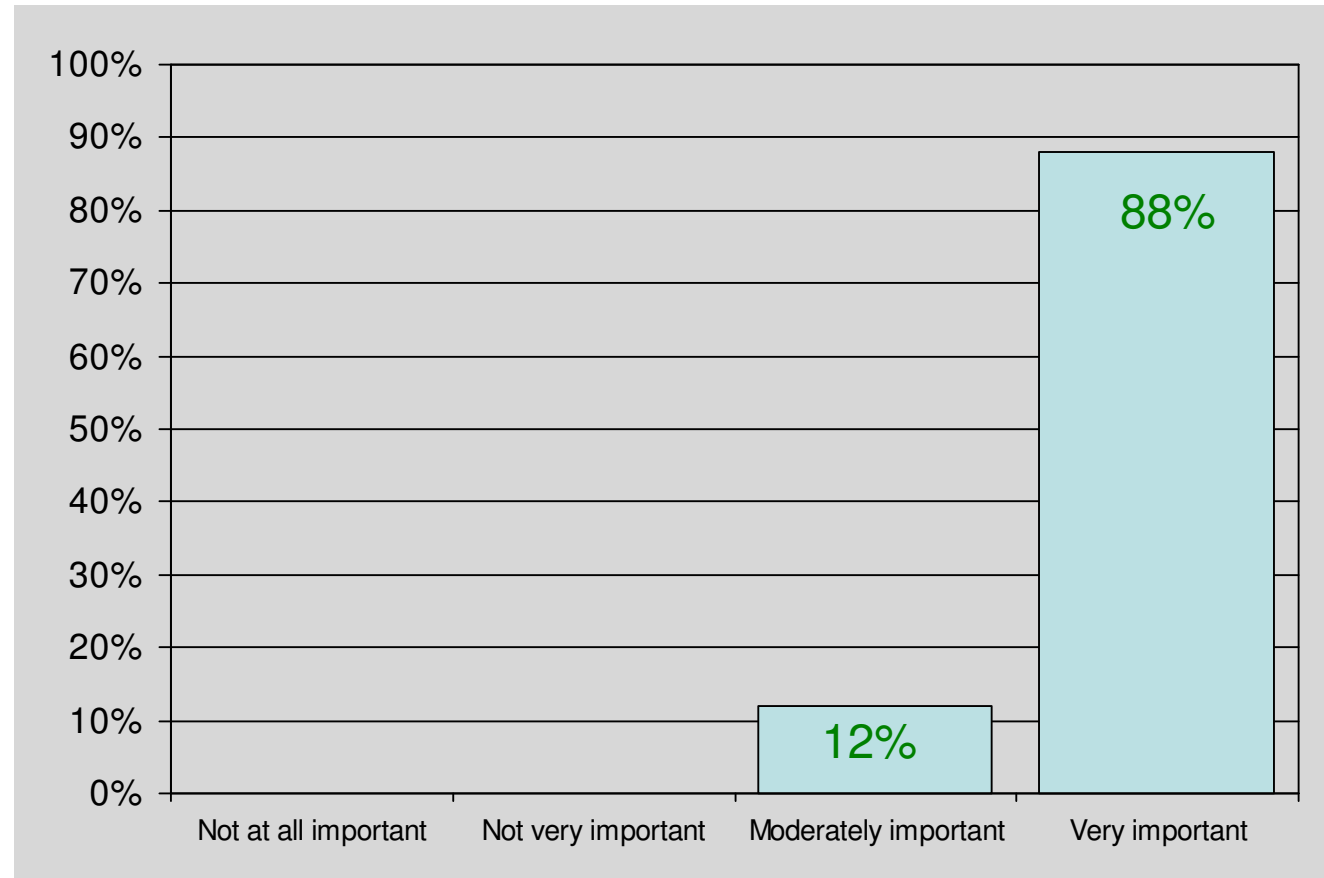
The principle **limitation of the survey** was that only people with an interest in the shop were likely to respond. So the survey does not fully reflect the views and motivations of the many people who may never use the shop at all. However, the responses we did receive would appear to represent a good cross section of customers from different types of household and with different levels of weekly total spend on shopping.

**The method of getting the message out** is to provide an easy to digest summary of the survey results and conclusions via the 'Village Leaf' newsletter online and through hard copies made widely available. The full report is also available as a download from the website and in hard copy on request. The report, plus copies of all comments received, will also be presented to Andy Wickens and his shop team.

All those who responded to the survey feel that the shop is important to the village.

88% feel it is very important – a level consistent with the earlier poll when the shop was under threat of closure.

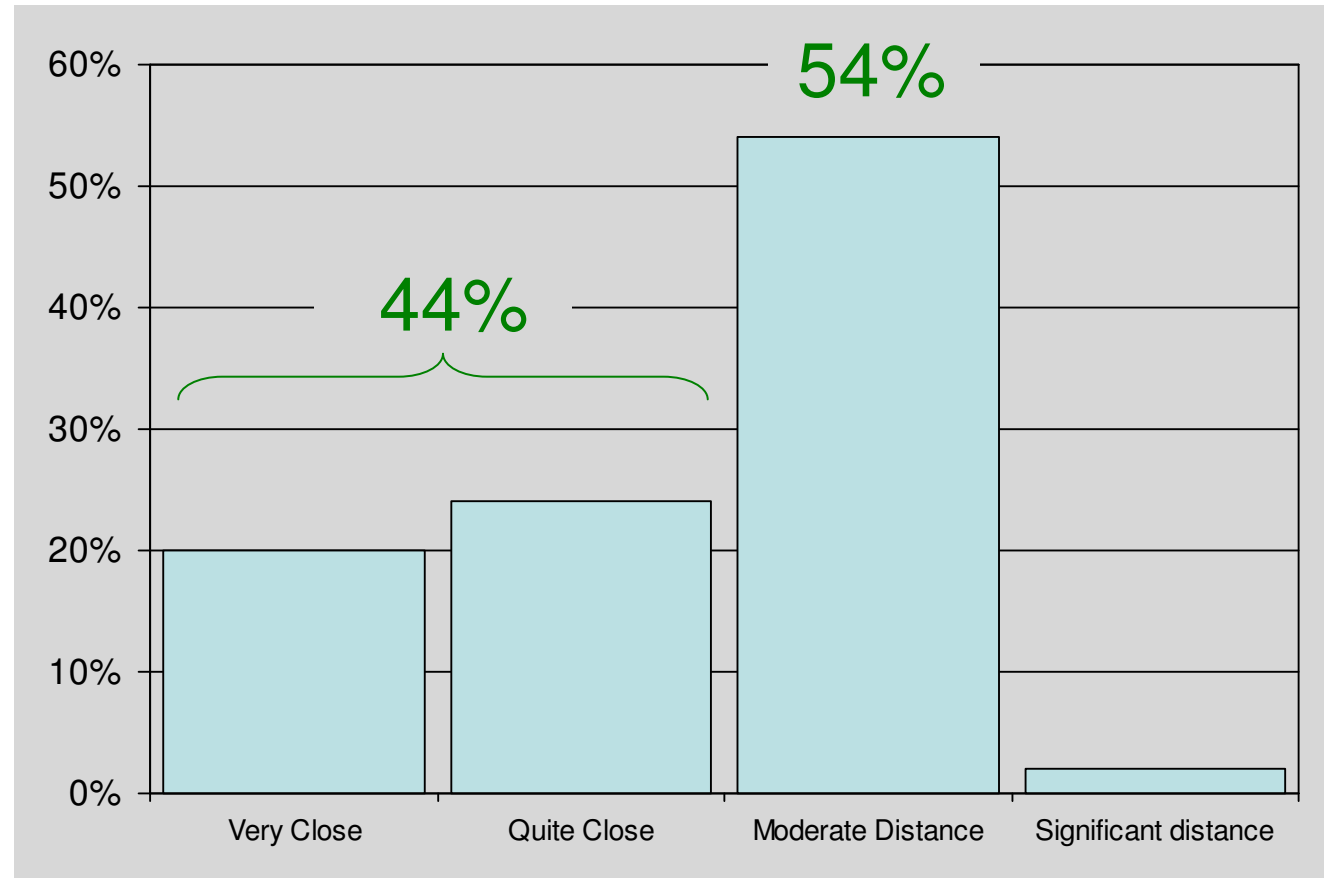
However, as can be shown later, this concern is not always translated into commitment to adequate spending in the shop.



44% of respondents live very close or quite close (2-5 mins walk) from The Stores

But more than 50% of respondents live some distance from the shop (up to 5 mins drive)

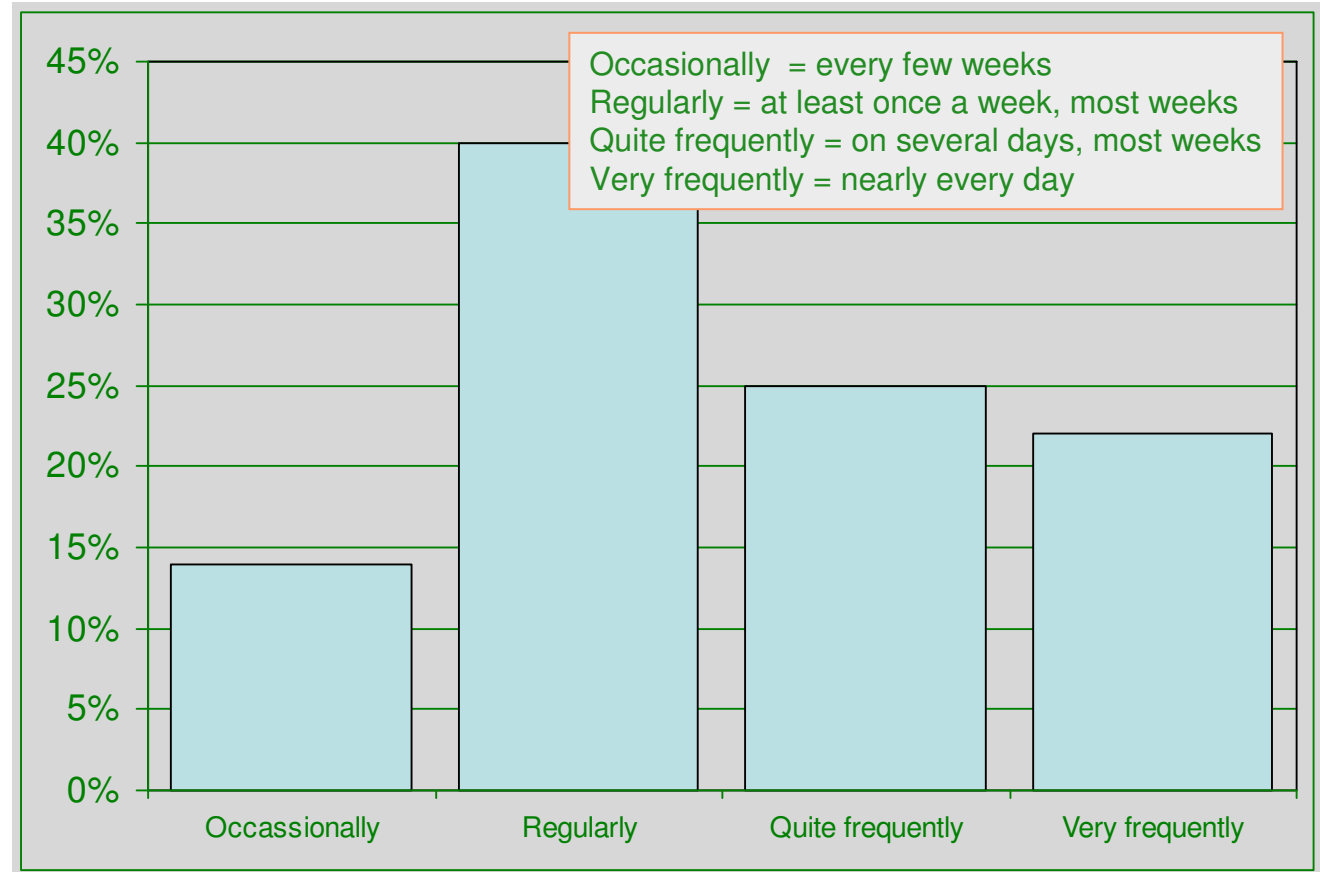
This indicates that many people, who live away from the centre of the village, still feel very much part of it and want to support the shop.



Very close	= within 2 minutes walk
Quite close	= 2-5 minutes walk
Moderate distance	= up to 5 minutes drive away
Significant distance	= more than 5 minutes drive away

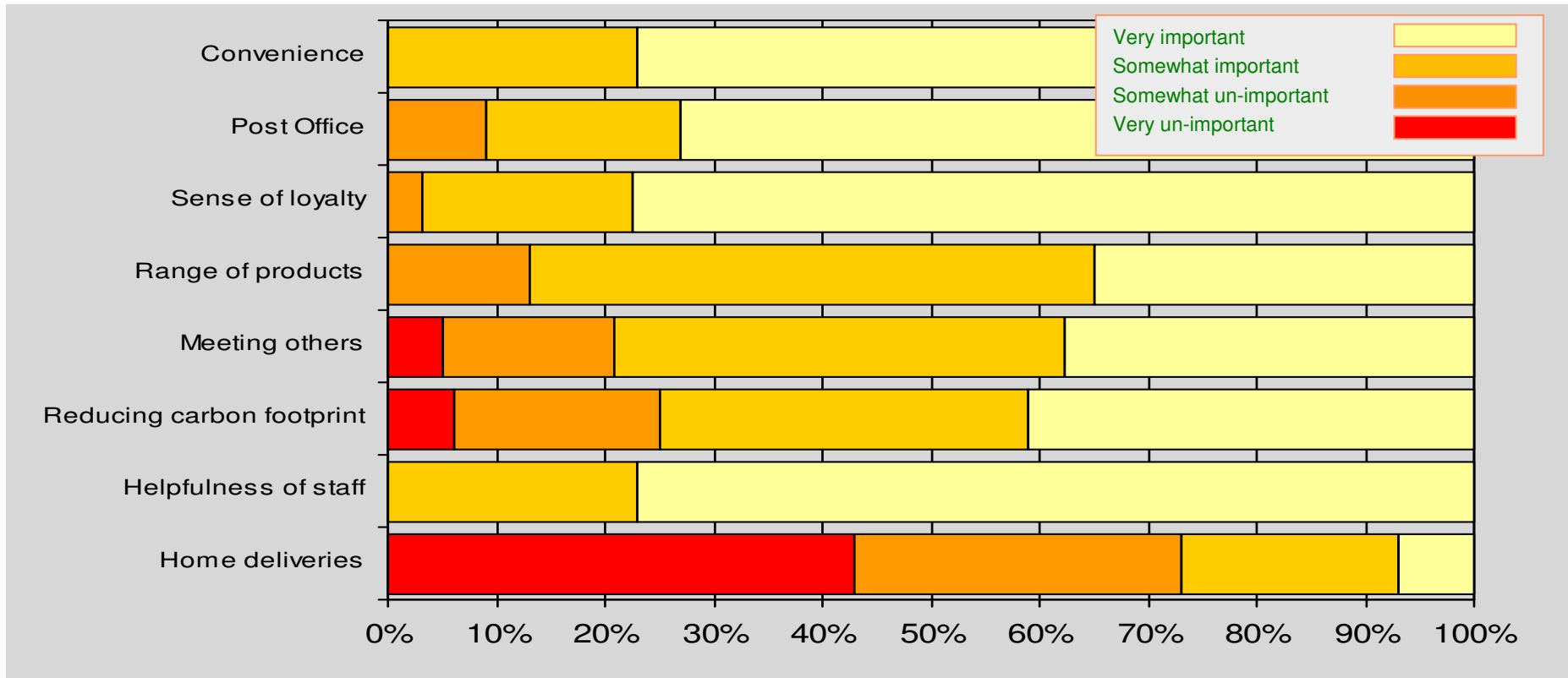
The majority of respondents to the survey shop in The Stores at least once a week and nearly half shop there more than once a week. This indicates that most people know the shop well and make it a regular part of their shopping routine.

One objective should be to encourage those who currently visit The Stores occasionally to shop there more often – preferably every week. They are likely to include higher spending households.

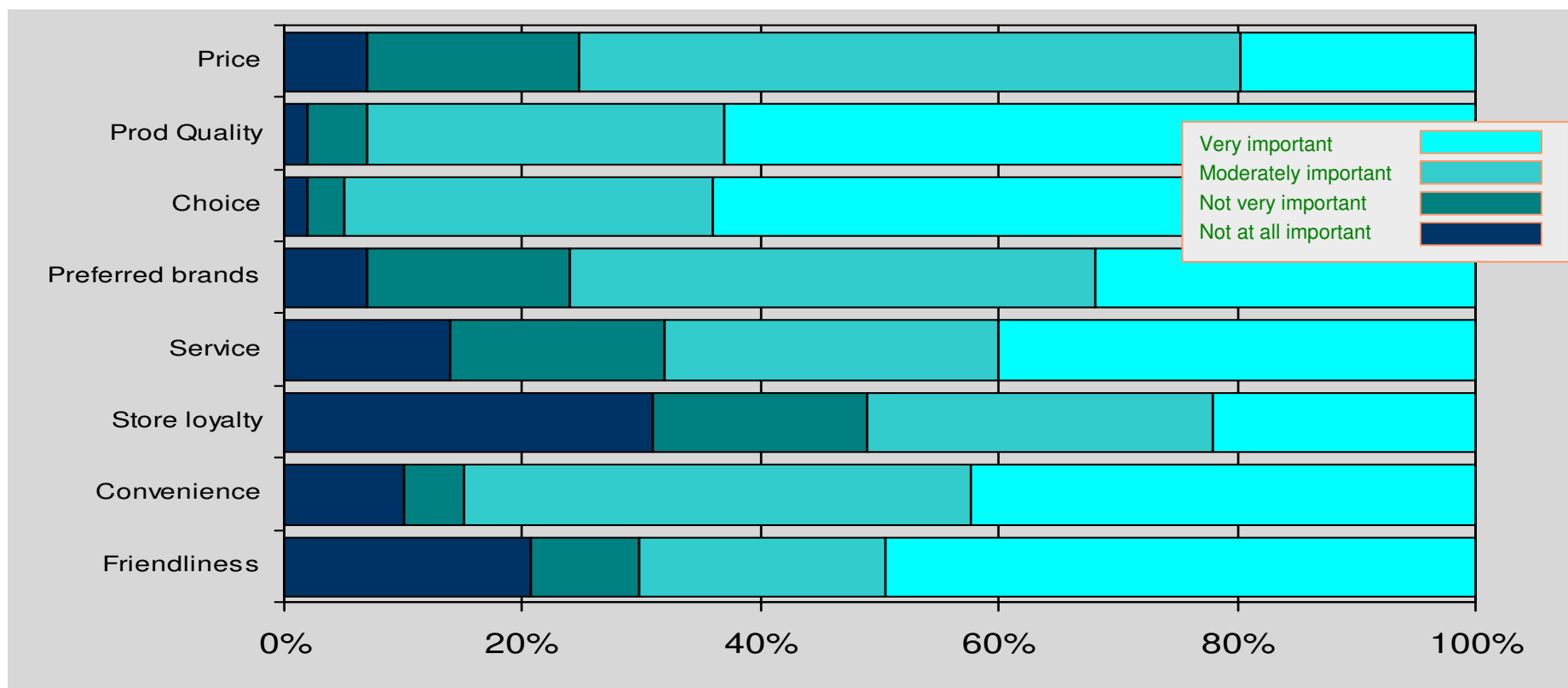


Convenience, access to Post Office services and helpfulness of staff are important factors encouraging people to shop locally, as is a sense of loyalty to The Stores. Overall 87% thought that the range of products was either somewhat or very important. This could be interpreted as indicating that getting the range right for the local market is pretty important in attracting trade.

*91% of customers still see the Post Office services as an important factor in encouraging them to use the shop.*



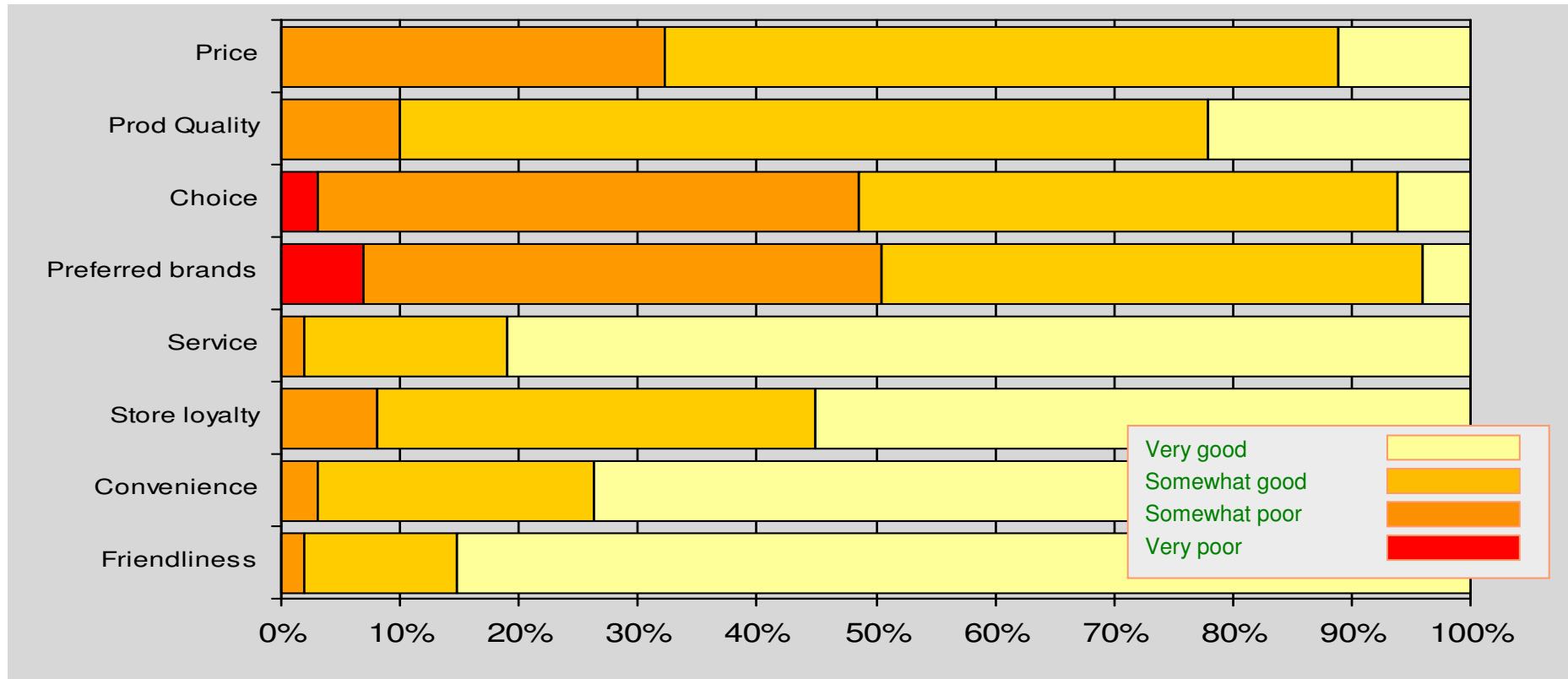
Question: How important is each of these factors in encouraging you to do your weekly shopping outside the village, in supermarkets and other nearby shops?



The two dominant reasons for people shopping outside the village are Product Quality and Choice. More important than price.

A village store can never compete with supermarkets on breadth of choice, but could provide equivalent or better quality in many areas. A village store could also score over a supermarket by offering 'choices' that accurately reflect local needs – for example by offering locally sourced products.

93% say quality is an important reason for shopping outside the village

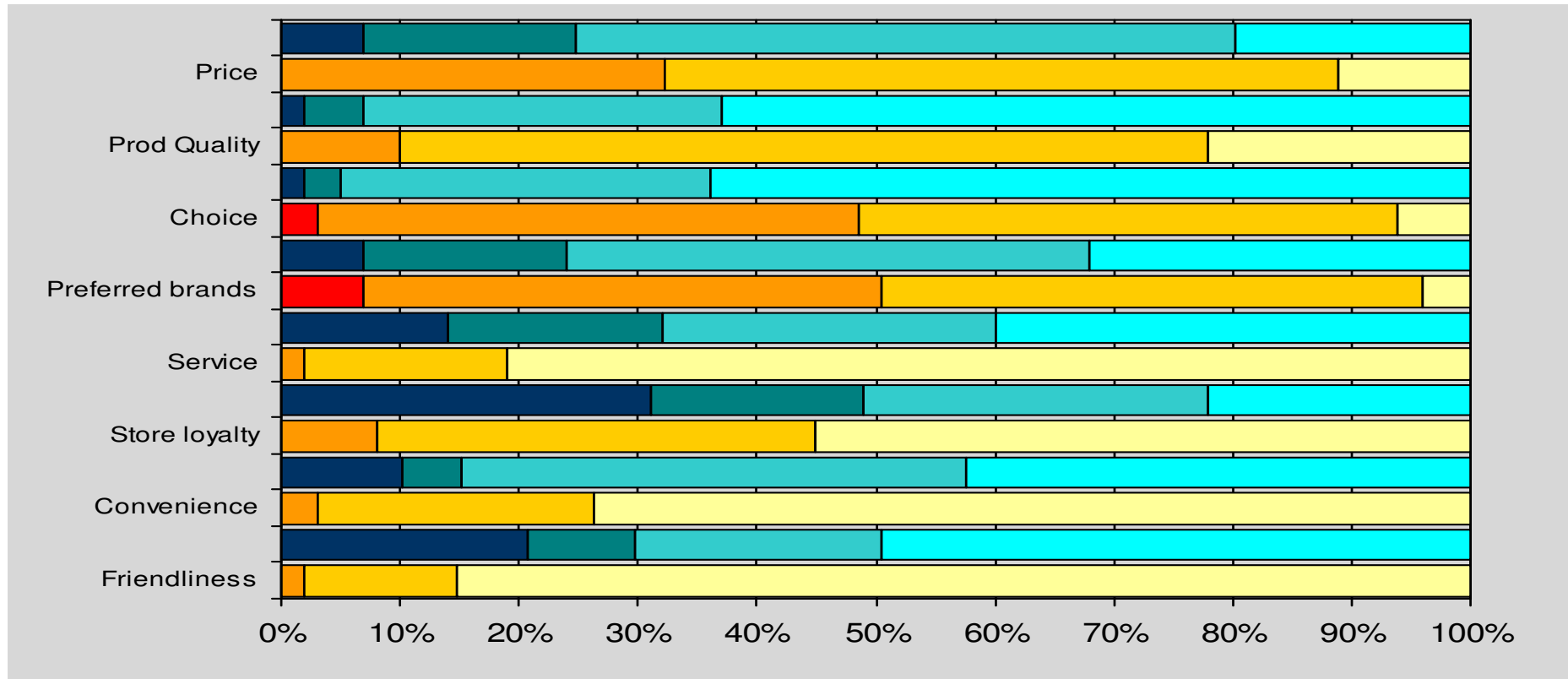


The Stores scored very high on current levels of Service, Loyalty, Convenience and Friendliness.

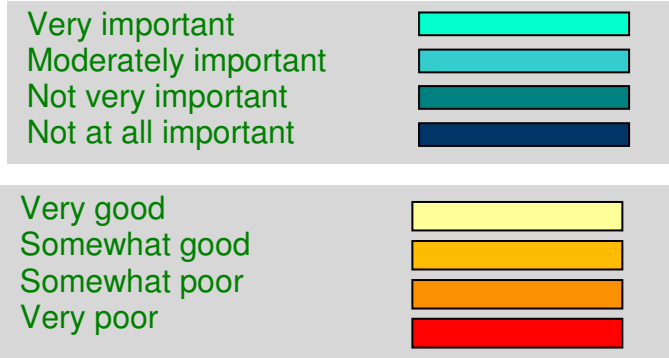
The main areas for improvement would appear to be Price (only 11% see the shop as good on this), product quality and particularly Choice and Preferred brands.

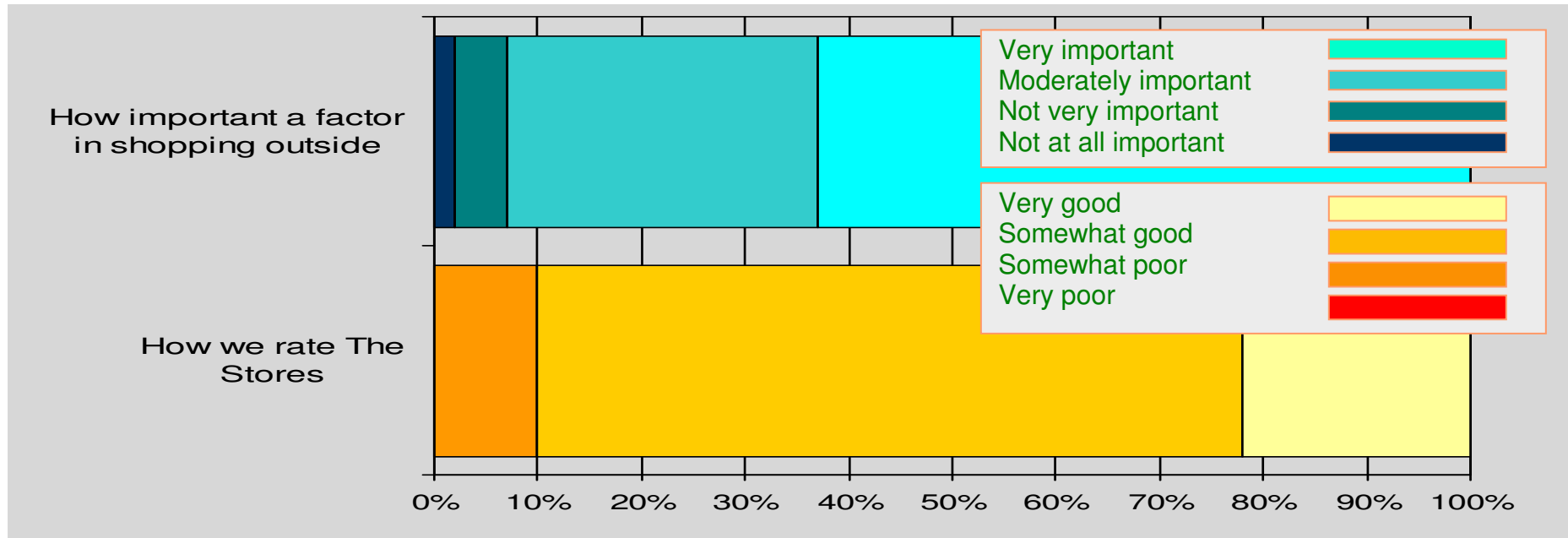
Improving price perception might be hard, but achieving better levels of quality, choice and brand selection should be possible.

An impressive 86% said The Stores are very good in offering friendliness and 81% said they're very good for Service



The areas where improving the shop would seem most productive (and achievable) in encouraging people to shop in the village rather than outside, appear to be Product Quality and Preferred Brands. It might also be possible to improve people's perceptions of better 'Choice' by meeting specific preferences, such as those identified later in this survey.



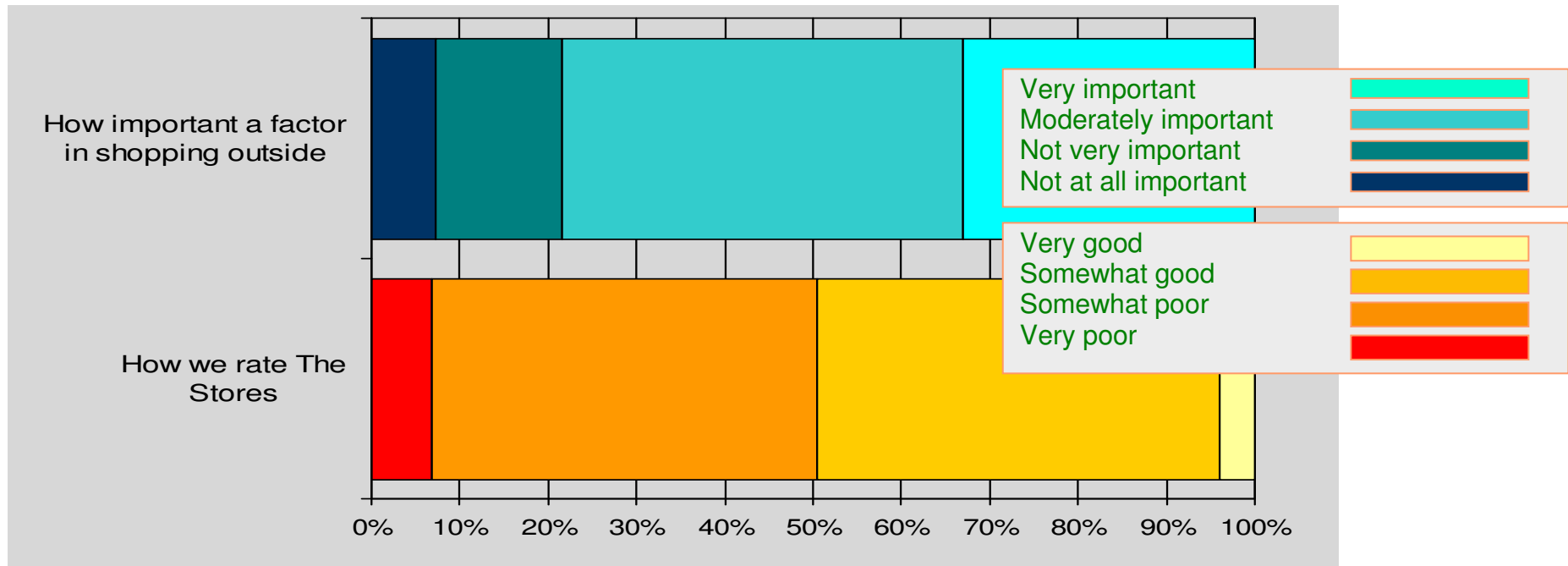


Overall 93% felt Product Quality was important as a factor in shopping outside the village. 63% saw it as very important.

Yet although 68% thought the Stores somewhat good in this area, yet only 22% saw The Stores as Very Good in this area.

The indications are that the customers most able to afford to spend more in the shop are those most sensitive to quality issues.

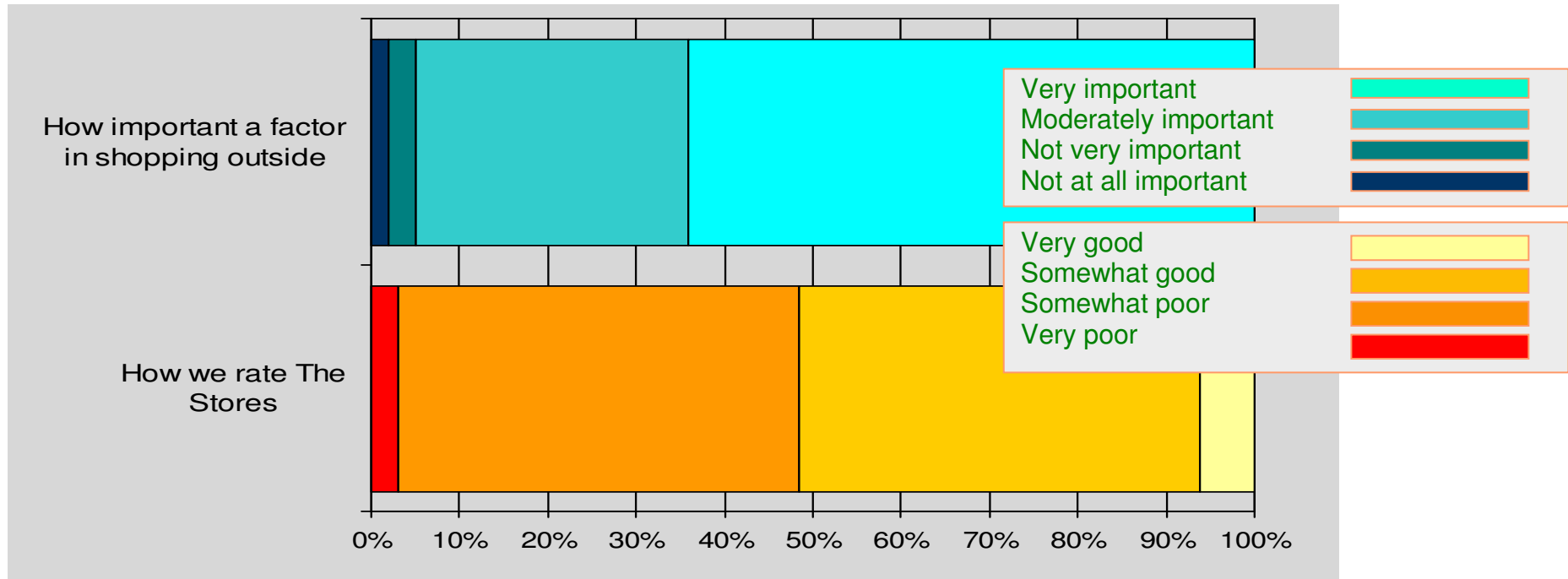
It should be possible to encourage these people to shop more by identifying the critical product areas where more discerning customers will recognise genuine quality. Such areas might include fine wines, fresh bread and delicatessen products.



32% saw finding preferred brands as a very important factor in shopping outside the village and a further 44% thought it somewhat important.

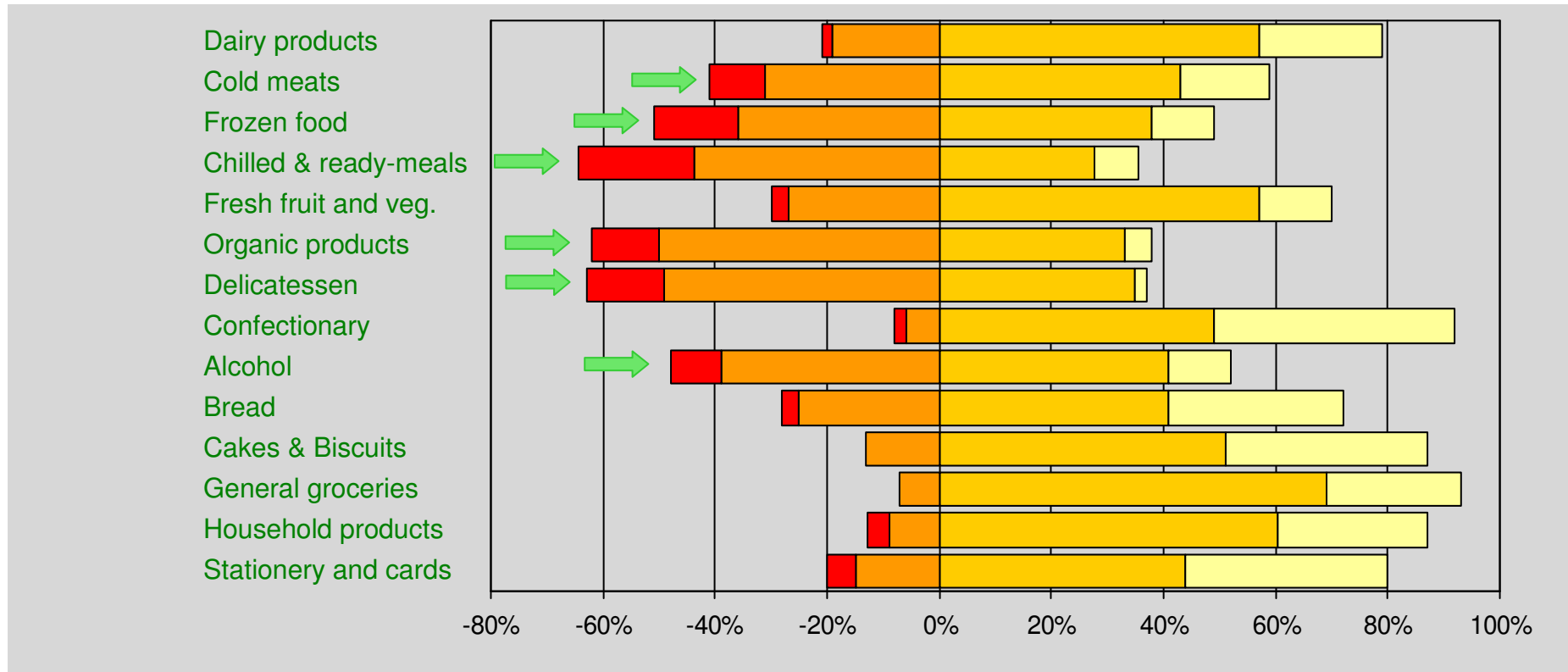
Yet over 1/2 of customers felt that the shop was very poor or somewhat poor in this area.

Local stores often stock 'budget' brands of popular items. With household products this may not be a problem, but with food brands the more discerning customers may be discouraged if they cannot find quality brands that they can buy elsewhere.



64% felt choice was a very important as a factor in shopping outside the village. Clearly, in shopping in supermarkets, people have access to a range of products that could never be achieved locally but a local shop could offer 'choices' that match local demands.

Only 6% saw The Stores as Very Good in this area, indicating significant scope for improvement through what is offered.



Best performing areas seem to be Dairy Products, Fruit and Veg, General Groceries, Bread, Cakes & Biscuits, Household Products, Stationery and Confectionary. Areas with most potential for improvement appear to be: **Cold Meats, Frozen Food, Chilled & Ready-meals, Organic products, Delicatessen and Alcohol.**

Improving the offer in the areas could address the issues of poor 'choice' identified previously.

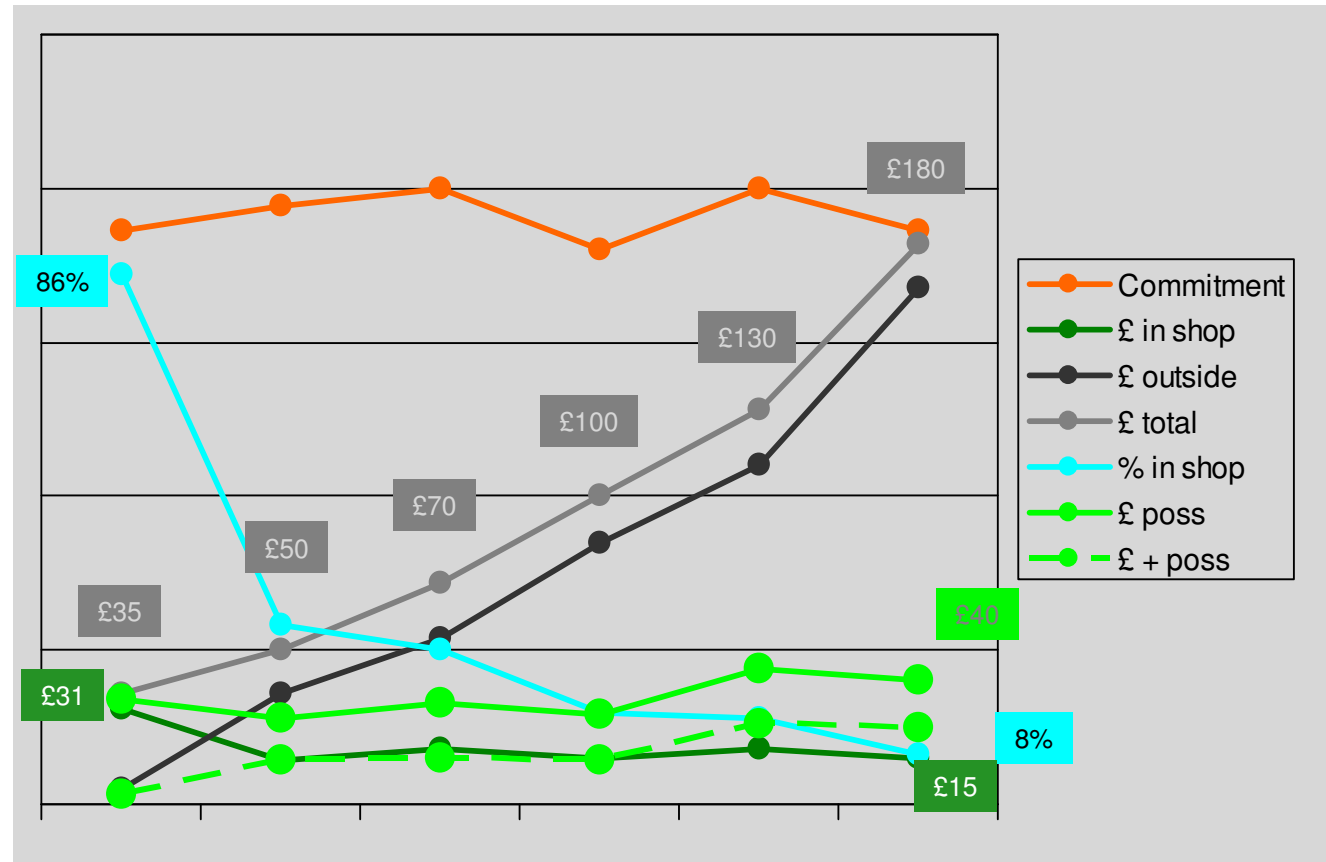


We took all the responses in the survey and divided them into 6 equal bands, in ascending order of weekly total spend on the household shop. The lowest weekly spend was around £35, whereas the highest band spent an average £180 a week.

Those with very limited budgets typically do the majority (86%) of their weekly shopping in the Stores (£31.00).

However, as budgets increase, spending in the shop if anything decreases. People with a weekly of budget of £180, spend only £15 in the shop – that’s just 8% of their total spend.

So although everyone scores 90-100% on how important they feel the store is to the village, not everyone appears motivated to spend locally in proportion to their ability to spend.



High-spend households show the greatest potential for increased spend but getting them to spend more will depend on making the Stores a preferred option for them rather than an obligation.

It is clear that some of the better off do already actively support local shops, but tend to choose specialists such as butchers, bakers, cheese shops and specialist Deli's. To appeal this group the Stores needs to provide something unique within the local mix.

The indications are there is a segment of the community that feel that it would be useful to be able to rely on The Stores for good quality ready-meals and frozen food. A significant number of customers said the Stores was 'poor' in meeting their needs in this area.

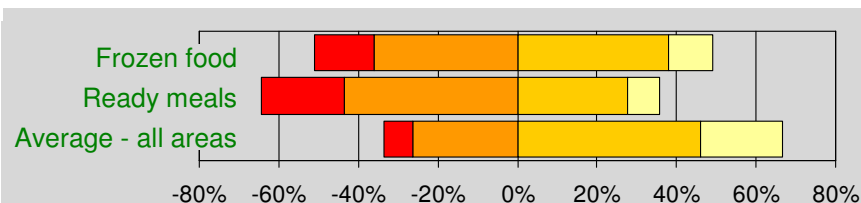
The Stores could try to find a source of premium quality 'locally-made' frozen or chilled meals. For example "Boeuf Stroganoff or Chicken Korma" These 'foody' products have proved successful in other local small outlets such as the Deli in Heathfield and the customers for these products are likely to be those more interested in quality than price.

At the same time, the Stores should continue to stock basic, modestly-priced frozen foods for people on limited budgets.

*What people asked for:*

*"We regularly buy good quality frozen meals from Kudos (in Ripe) or from the Cook Shop or from the Deli in Heathfield. If such meals were available, we would buy from the (Rushlake Green) shop"*

- *" . . . home-made type good frozen meals"*
- *" . . . pizza"*
- *" . . . quality frozen pre-cooked food"*
- *" . . . cook/Weald Smokery"*
- *" . . . selection of frozen goods"*
- *" . . . quality chilled foods (eg Burwash village shop)"*
- *" . . . microwave to heat up pasties, sausage rolls for passing trade and for workmen . . ."*



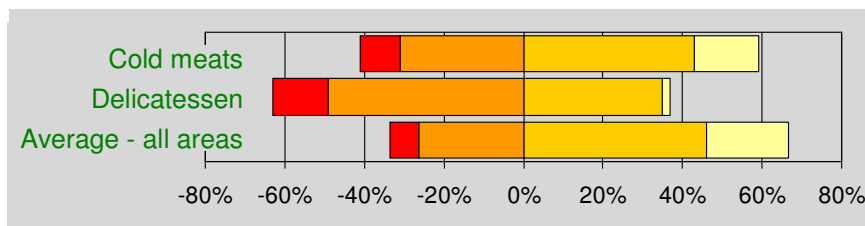
*In particular 44% thought ready-meals somewhat poor and 21% very poor. Just under half also thought the stores was poor with frozen food.*

People were, on the whole, reasonably happy with the cold meats offered although there seems still to be scope for improvement here. However, deli products was the area where the overall feedback about the current offering was the most negative. And improving the deli offering was also a recurring theme in the comments received.

Bearing in mind that deli products are likely to appeal more to the higher spending households, creating an improvement in this area could be an important ingredient in encouraging those who can afford it most to use the shop more. This will only work if local customers support the idea, but it might be worth trialling with a focus on the weekend trade, when second-homers and commuters are most around.

*What people asked for:*

- “. . . a deli counter
- “. . . vegetarian produce
- “. . . quorn, cauldron products
- “. . . salami/ olives etc, mixed nuts etc
- “. . . deli products - dips, pates etc.
- “. . . bigger delicatessen eg olives/salamis
- “. . . quality smoked foods  
(Wealden smokery)
- “. . . cold meats, not vacuum packed
- “. . . chicken or turkey as good as the ham
- “. . . fresh small meats
- “. . . smoked fish
- “. . . quiche and pies - savoury and dessert
- “. . . deli salads



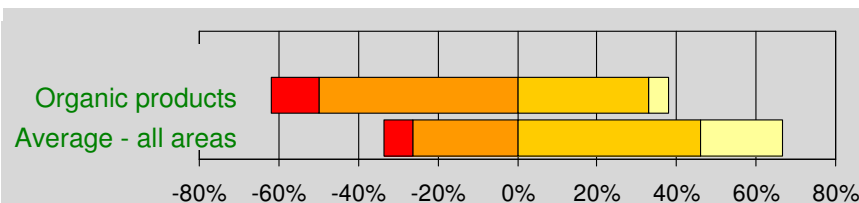
Overall this area was seen as being below average for this store. 59% thought cold meats were generally good. But more than 60% thought the deli offering poor in some way with 15% feeling it was very poor.

The shop currently offers very few organic products and this was another area with a strong demand for improvement. This was echoed in the individual comments where people asked for more organic fruit, veg and dairy products. This was tied-in closely with the demand for more locally produced products across all categories (see separate piece)

The increasing number of people coping with allergies, such as lactose intolerance, would appear to be behind the requests for more soya-based products such as non-dairy milk and spreads. There was also at least one request for more veggie solutions such as quorn sausages.

*What people asked for:*

- “. . . local fresh produce, organic even better”
- “. . . good organic locally produced fruit and veg”
- “. . . more organic fruit and veg . . .”
- “. . . more free range produce”
- “. . . veg identified as local and/or organic”
- “. . . more local/organic produce”
- “. . . organic milk”
- “. . . organic butter”
- “. . . organic tea”
- “. . . organic bread flour for home baking”



*62% felt that the organic offering was poor. This was the highest 'negative' score in the survey of specific products offered by the shop. Eco and veggie products were not amongst the categories surveyed.*

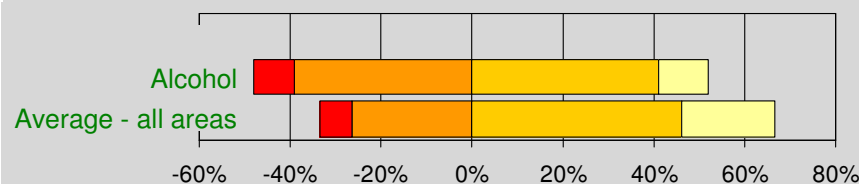
Although around half of those surveyed thought the stores was good (or very good) in meeting their needs for alcohol products, a significant number demanded an improvement. A recurring theme in the comments was a demand for better quality selection of wines.

Bearing in mind the wide range of spending power amongst customers, its is fair to assume that a significant number would like to see some good quality wines offered, even if this means a premium price.

This is a good example of how the Stores needs to cater for both ends of the market. Perhaps 2 or three really good wines, matched with two or three fantastic value basic wines. The same with spirits for example say a Single Malt balanced with a budget brand whisky.

*What people asked for:*

- “. . . *More interesting wine*”
- “. . . *better wine range*”
- “. . . *wider variety of wines*  
– *ask local expertise*”
- “. . . *a better selection of wines*”
- “. . . *cheaper Whisky*”
- “. . . *better range of wine*”
- “. . . *better wine selection*”
- “. . . *a broader selection of wines and beers (local?)*”
- “. . . *How about a well priced good quality own- label wine? It might become the in-thing to purchase to show loyalty to the shop!* “



*62% felt that the organic offering was poor. This was the highest 'negative' score in the survey of specific products offered by the shop. Eco and veggie products were not amongst the categories surveyed.*

Although the rating for bread was better than average for the store, this area also attracted the highest number of individual comments.

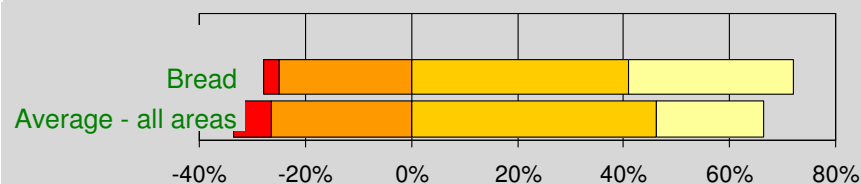
The requests included specialist breads such as croissants, French loaves, rye bread and continental bread. This was supported by the suggestion that the shop should have small oven, as adopted by many local shops.

There was also the suggestion that this wider range of breads might prove more popular at weekends.

As with other areas, it would be important to attract new custom without putting off the established demand for more traditional, and economically-priced basic loaves.

What people asked for:

- "... better range of bread
- "... local fresh bread
- "... wider variety of breads
- "... pitta bread - brown.
- "... selection of different breads
- "... wider bread selection
- "... fresh croissants
- "... rye bread . . . soda bread
- "... range of bread and rolls from bakery
- "... fresh French bread
- "... really fresh bread / more choice
- "... continental type bread
- "... more exciting bread especially at weekends
- "... fresh bread and cakes (especially at weekends)



*72% felt that the Stores was good at responding to their needs for bread products. 31% thought the store's offer was 'very good' in this area.*

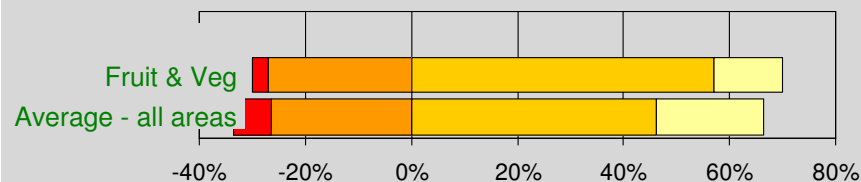
The overall feedback on fruit and veg was pretty positive. This is significant because we know there had previously been a lot of concern about the freshness and choice in this area.

However there were a lot of comments requesting more locally produced products, including fruit, veg, meat, eggs and alcohol such as wine, cider and beer. The Stores does actually stock quite a few local products but perhaps this needs better signalling. In the area of fruit and veg, the feeling seems to be that a local shop should also make a feature of stocking and promoting local fresh produce whenever possible.

Clearly however, there will be cost issues here as in other areas, so a balance will always need to be achieved.

What people asked for:

- “. . . more locally sourced goods”
- “. . . more local produce ”
- “. . . local produce for sale ”
- “. . . locally grown fruit and veg ”
- “. . . locally sourced/ produced ”  
eg: meat, eggs, fish cheese ”
- “. . . more local fresh produce ”
- “. . . more local produce ”
- “. . . more local beer and cider ”
- “. . . more local meat in the freezer ”  
eg identified as local and/or organic ”
- “. . . more local/organic produce ”
- “. . . more locally grown veg and fruit ”
- “. . . local veg and fruit if available ”
- “. . . local treats - jam/cheese/fish ”



*There were no specific questions in the survey about local produce.*

Many people added requests for more flexible opening hours. In particular there seemed to be a desire for Sunday morning and late night opening. One interesting suggestion was the idea that the Stores should stay open late on Thursdays, to coincide with the chip van which attracts quite a following.

One thought might be that customers might be able to cope with one early closing day (eg Wednesday) to offset the extra staff costs of Sunday opening.

What people asked for:

- “. . . longer opening hours ”
- “. . . Sunday am opening + Sunday paper ”
- “. . . Sunday morning opening ”
- “. . . open Sunday morning say 9 to 11.30 ”
- “. . . open longer hours ”
- “. . . more flexible hours: opening until 7.30pm”
- “. . . improved opening hours ”
- “. . . extended hours opening
- “. . . late night- Thursday ( to coincide with chip van) ”
- “. . . post office open every day ”
- “. . . later closing at the weekend ”
- “. . . Sunday am open ”

Customers identified a number of additional services that would be useful and would attract people to The Stores.

Many people suggested the idea of tables outside or a coffee shop. There were also many requests for improvements to the shop layout and functionality.

In the area of shop layout, a choice will need to be made. Whilst many people are hugely attached to the 'old world' feel of the shop, the reality is that we have all become used to a more accessible walk-through layout where we find it easier to find things. Successful local shops, such as the Spar have benefited from a more modern layout and a degree of modernisation may be the key to The Store's longer term sustainability.

### **Additional services**

Services such as second hand books, national lottery, photocopying and acting as an agent for dry-cleaning and shoe repairs etc. would be invaluable for local customers without transport.

### **Shop layout , appearance & format**

“Attractive shop windows that are changed regularly

“More effort on the outside appearance

“Better display

“Couple of tables outside

“Why not do tea/coffee on sunny days – outside

“Store layout expanded / improved

“More accessible layout of shop

“More shopping/shelf space

### **Frozen Food & ready meals**

'home made' type good frozen meals  
Frozen meals  
Pizza  
Quality frozen pre-cooked food (Cook/Weald Smokery  
Selection of frozen goods  
quality chilled foods ( eg at Burwash village shop  
Dark chocolate ice cream

### **Dairy**

Activa yoghurts  
Selection of cheeses  
Better range of cheeses  
Mozarella cheese  
Wider Cheese selection  
Unsalted butter  
Activa yoghourt (Pro-biotic)  
Mullers pro-biotic yogurt drinks

### **Meat**

Fresh meat  
Fresh meat (Local)

### **Cold meats / Deli**

Bigger delicatessen eg olives/salamis  
Vegetarian produce - quorn, cauldron products  
Good quality ham  
Cold meats, not vacuum packed  
Delicatessen food (continental)  
Local meats, fresh and/or frozen  
Chilled or frozen meat  
Anchovies.  
Deli products - Dips, pates etc.  
Selection of deli foods  
Wider Deli, Salami/ olives etc, mixed nuts etc  
Wider delicatessen  
Fresh small meats  
Quality smoked foods (Wealden smokery)  
A deli counter  
Chicken or turkey of as good a quality as ham  
Smoked fish  
Quiche and pies - savoury and dessert  
More deli selections  
Deli salads

### **Organic/Free range**

Local fresh produce (organic, even better)  
Good organic locally produced fruit and veg  
More organic fruit and veg  
Supporting local producers  
More free range produce  
Veg identified as local and/or organic  
More local/organic produce  
Organic milk  
Organic butter  
Organic tea  
Organic Bread Flour for home baking

### **Veg and allergenic**

Vegetarian sausages  
Soya milk  
Vegetarian produce - quorn, cauldron products

### **Green**

Ecover products or similar  
Eco products for cleaning

### **Bread**

Better range of bread  
better bakery items  
Local fresh bread  
A wider variety of breads  
Pitta bread - brown.  
Selection of different breads  
Wider Bread selection  
Fresh croissants  
Rye bread  
Home made cakes and pies  
Soda bread  
Range of bread and rolls from bakery  
Fresh French bread  
Bakery goods  
Really fresh bread / more choice  
Continental type bread  
more exciting bread especially at weekends  
fresh bread and cakes (especially at week ends)  
cakes bakery etc  
More variety in good bread

### **Groceries & non-food**

Rock salt (in winter)  
Bird seed and nuts  
Fresh pasta  
Tofu Flavoured  
microwave popcorn, multi pack 2 finger Kit Kats.  
crisp multi-packs  
Larger bottles of sauce (Worcester etc)  
Cat food pouches (Whiskers)  
Home made preserves  
Alpen (no added sugar)  
Small tins of spaghetti  
Home made products (Jam etc)  
Wholemeal bread flour  
Smoked Tofu  
Nesquik banana milkshake mix  
Organic Bread Flour for home baking  
Better biscuits  
better range of hair products.  
a broader selection of tobaccos and cigarettes  
More tasteful cards

### **Alcohol / Drinks**

More interesting wine  
Better wine range  
Wider variety of wines – ask local expertise  
A better selection of wines  
Cheaper Whiskey  
Better range of wine  
Better wine selection  
A broader selection of wines and beers (local?)  
  
How about a well priced good quality own label wine? It might become the in-thing to purchase to show loyalty to the shop!  
  
Smoothies

### **Additional services**

Video Rental  
Second hand books  
lottery machine  
delivery of papers outside of village  
Local newspaper deliveries  
Cash dispenser  
A small microwave oven to heat up e.g. pasties, sausage rolls for passing trade and for workmen temporarily in the village might prove popular  
  
Food basket for guests/tourists  
A copier  
Agent for dry-cleaning, shoe repair etc

### **Local produce**

More locally sourced goods  
More local produce  
More local produce  
Local produce  
Local produce for sale  
Locally grown fruit and veg  
Locally sourced/ produced  
eg: meat, eggs, fish cheese  
More local fresh produce  
More local produce  
More local beer and cider  
More local meat in the freezer  
Veg identified as local and/or organic  
More local/organic produce  
More locally grown veg and fruit  
Local veg and fruit if available  
Local treats - jam/cheese/fish

### **Money saving / Affordability**

Special offers

Special offers of the week

More offers re products nearing sell by date

More offers re perishables nearing sell by date  
off cuts, ham etc

Keep prices as low as possible

Cheaper Whiskey.

Can they sell beer in crates eg 10 or 12 packs?

If prices came down I would spend lots more each  
week!

I think the shop is becoming a bit too fancy and not  
thinking about people on a fixed income.

### **Shop layout , appearance & format**

Attractive shop windows that are changed regularly

More effort on the outside appearance

The outside of the shop could do with a coat of  
paint and the sign needs sorting out

Make-over or some internal decoration

Better display

A couple of tables outside for coffee + cakes?

Why not do tea/coffee on sunny days – outside

Store layout expanded / improved

More accessible layout of shop

More shopping/shelf space

Coffee shop.

### **General improvements**

A micro bakery -- fresh bread and rolls  
Own bakery see what Speight does in Chapel Pl,  
Unbridle Wells  
Welcome to our shop party / free samples / promos  
Deliveries / online ordering  
Extended ranges, i.e. Mayfield grocers  
Ordering consistency (keep running out of items)  
Depth of range of products  
Relevant range - not just tins & packets  
Less fancy items (eg little jars of sweets)  
Out of date goods MUST be removed from shelves.  
The shop is very important. I think it does need to  
expand its range esp. ready meals at the  
weekend, also selling local produce would be  
great

### **Opening hours**

Longer opening hours  
Sunday am opening + Sunday paper  
Sunday morning opening  
Open Sunday morning say 9 to 11.30  
Open longer hours  
More flexible hours - opening until 7.30pm  
Improved opening hours  
Extended hours opening  
Late night- Thursday ( to coincide with chip van)  
Post office open every day  
Later closing at the weekend  
Sunday am open

First of all I would like to say that the new owners are very friendly. However, I personally do not think that they have made the most of the information/advice given in last year's survey and that is a pity. As hard as we try to buy in the shop, we do not find what we usually buy. We shop in RG out of loyalty rather than desire and that is a shame. This is because, the choice and quality have not improved significantly. Only yesterday, I went to buy some fresh orange juice but was shown long life stuff. We have stopped buying ham because the quality is not as good as previously. We usually buy organic fruit and veg but this is not available. We regularly buy some good quality frozen meals from Kudos (in Ripe) or from the Cook Shop or from the deli in Heathfield. If such meals were available from the shop, we would buy from the shop. I like the idea that they have had to introduce some other items such as the baskets. It is a shame that they don't use the other shop window more creatively. Whereas it is accepted that the choice will be limited due to space why not introduce regular specials that would run for only one week or one month, such as local wine specials local cheese and meat local art and crafts ( especially around Christmas time for the latter) there are many talented local artist, gardeners, cooks, why not advertise for their services/goods to sell in the shop. Some items could be sold on a sell or return basis. Advertising could attract more customers. This could be done outside the shop on a free standing advertising blackboard and through a short newsletter inserted in newspapers and also available on the counter. Why not enroll the free help of the villagers?

If the shop moves further away from the old fashioned brands like Spam, expanded enough to give a little more choice, adopted a concession from i.e. The Weald Smokery or Cook (Battle) of food quality frozen / sealed & chilled food, cheese etc. and had a better range of fresh veg and fruit, we would happily do most of our shopping there. Why not have a good range of exciting wines and spirits too, but they must be at prices that are not "emergency purchase" only!

I think the owners have made it a brighter fresher shop- great work! Thanks

Although what I have indicated as a wish list is actually quite diverse and therefore difficult to sustain from a business point of view it might be an idea to co-exist on the premises with a local farms or butchers wishing to have a local outlet. Most of these types of enterprises seem to thrive if a "farm shop" combined with other types of outlet. eg. local bakery, horticultural plants, small specialised 'gift' section ( increase the offering of the post office side of it.) etc

I think its great that the shop is still going, however running a shop like the STORES is a way of life and not a way of making a quick return on an investment. The Flats if ever built must be retained with the Stores to enable the future retention of the shop and should not be viewed independently. A lot of good will has been shown to the Wickens and it would be a shame if that is eroded.

Fantastic opportunity to make the shop a really fashionable and buzzy place to buy

I think that the Stores has greatly improved, making it a friendly and helpful place to shop. I think that the range of goods is fair but obviously space is at a premium. Perhaps there could be an incentive to having a standing order ? Maybe a list of offers that are on - for up coming weeks or get a free weekly raffle ticket for each purchase over 10.00 for a bottle of wine ..... more information if groceries are local or where meat/cheese etc from.

### **Who uses the shop**

A lot of people are close to the village

44% within walking distance

Household spending on weekly shop ranges from £35/wk to £180/wk

### **What are their current buying habits**

Of those surveyed:

86% use the shop at least once a week

Modest income households spend up to 86% of weekly budget in the shop

The proportion of weekly budget spent in the shop drops, as the budget increases. Only 8% at upper end.

### **What they like and dislike about it**

Like: Service, convenience, friendliness

Dislike: Price, Choice and Brands available.

Not fully happy with quality.

### **What would attract more business**

Improved choice of: Cold Meats, Frozen Food, Chilled & Ready-meals, Delicatessen and Alcohol.

More local produce.

More organic products.

More convenient opening hours.

Some extra services.



