

Wigan Business Land and Accommodation Survey 2015 - Summary Report

May 2016



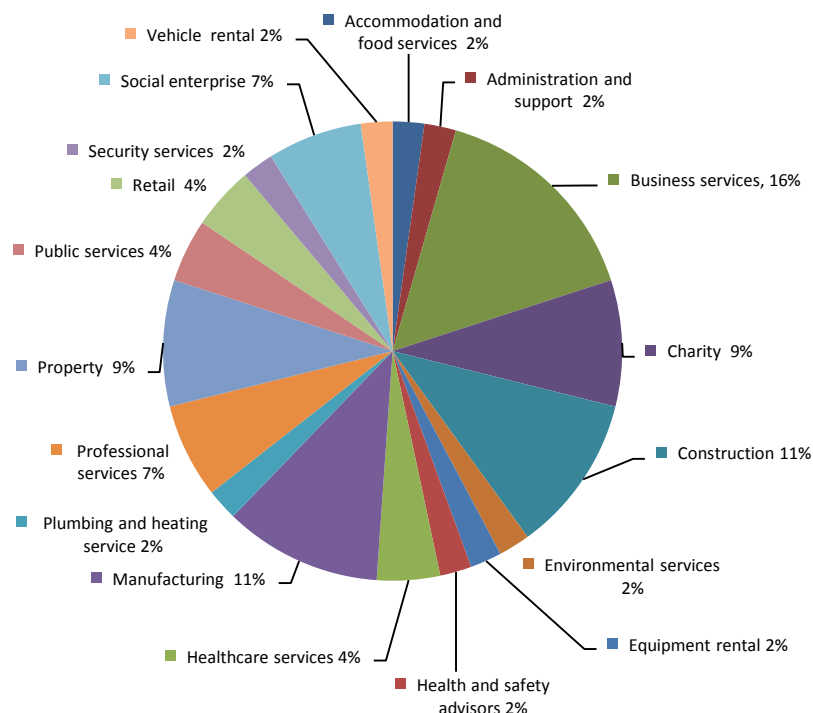
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Wigan Business Land and Accommodation Survey was launched at the Wigan Business Expo in October 2015. It was available to complete for nine weeks until 15 December 2015, which coincided with the consultation on the Initial Draft Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- 1.2 We emailed 1,116 people and organisations inviting them to complete the survey on the council's website, and sent regular reminder emails throughout the survey period. Despite this, only 44 organisations completed the survey. The survey questions are set out in Appendix 1 and the full results to each question are set out in Appendix 2 in chart form.
- 1.3 The purpose of the survey was to investigate, first hand, the accommodation and location needs of businesses and whether these needs are being met in Wigan. The results will feed into the 2016 Employment Land Review and will assist the council's Business Engagement Team.

2. ANALYSIS

Business Sectors

Figure 1: Survey respondents by business type



- 2.1 The 44 businesses that responded to the survey are across 18 different business typologies, as set out in Figure 1. 16% provide business services, followed by the construction and manufacturing sectors (11% each), charities and the property sector (9% each) and professional services and social enterprise businesses (7% each).

Location of Businesses

- 2.2 53% of the businesses are based in the borough but also operate from other locations outside of the borough; 33% are based in the borough only; and the remaining 14% are located outside of the borough.

Length of business operation

- 2.3 The majority of businesses that responded are well established with over half (55%) having operated for more than 10 years; and a further 16% for over 5 years. , Of the remainder, only 2% (one business) have operated for less than a year.

Business size

- 2.4 Just over half of the respondents are small businesses employing 1 – 10 people (51%). Of the remainder, 16% are businesses employing 26 - 50 people, 11% employing over 100 people, 9% employing 11 – 25 people and 4% employing 51 – 100 people.

Recruitment and apprenticeships

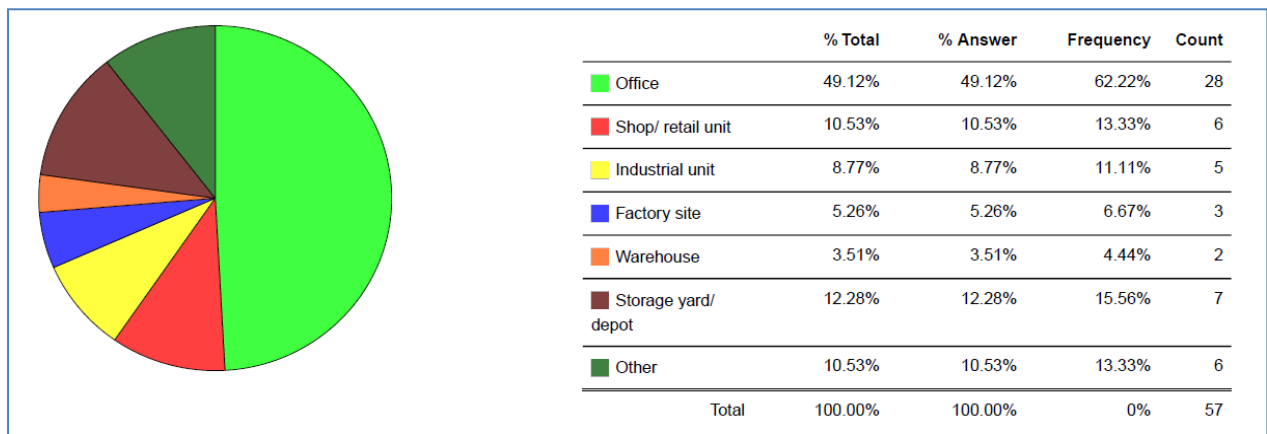
- 2.5 One-third of the businesses employ apprentices. Three quarters state they have positions that they find difficult to recruit staff for, including:

- Administration staff
- Security officers
- HGV drivers
- Café staff
- Surveyors
- General maintenance staff
- Volunteers
- Qualified tree climbers.

Existing accommodation

- 2.6 Figure 2 shows that half of the businesses who responded operate from offices, with the remainder split amongst a variety of other accommodation types.

Figure 2: Current businesses accommodation



Location and accommodation needs

- 2.7 Question 14 asked businesses to list their five most important location and accommodation factors. As shown in Figure 3, on-site car parking was the most frequent response, followed by value for money accommodation, access to a motorway, fast broadband and being located near to suppliers and customers. At the other end of the scale, no respondent listed access to an airport, access to rail freight and large-scale sites. This however, is unsurprising given that very few large businesses responded to the survey, as is the case with oven-ready sites that was only listed once.
- 2.8 Figures 4, 5 and 6 break down the overall results for Question 14 into the five most important location and accommodation factors for businesses based in offices, industrial premises (industrial units, factories, warehouses and storage yards / depots) and shops /retail units. For office based and industrial premises based businesses, the five most important factors are the same as the overall trend, with slight differences in ordering. Businesses operating in shop/ retail units identified room to expand on site and high specification accommodation within the top five factors, at the expense of access to the motorway and fast broadband, which would reflect the nature and location of retail businesses.

Figure 3: Most important location and accommodation needs for businesses

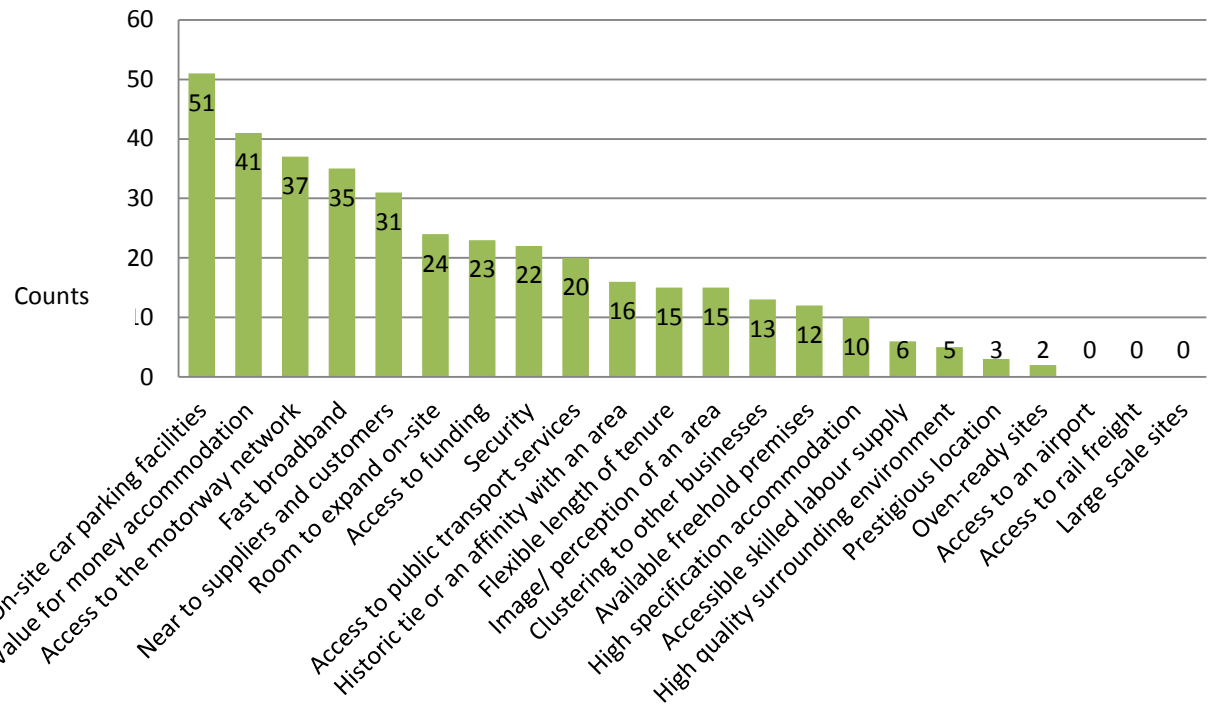


Figure 4: Most important location and accommodation needs for office based businesses

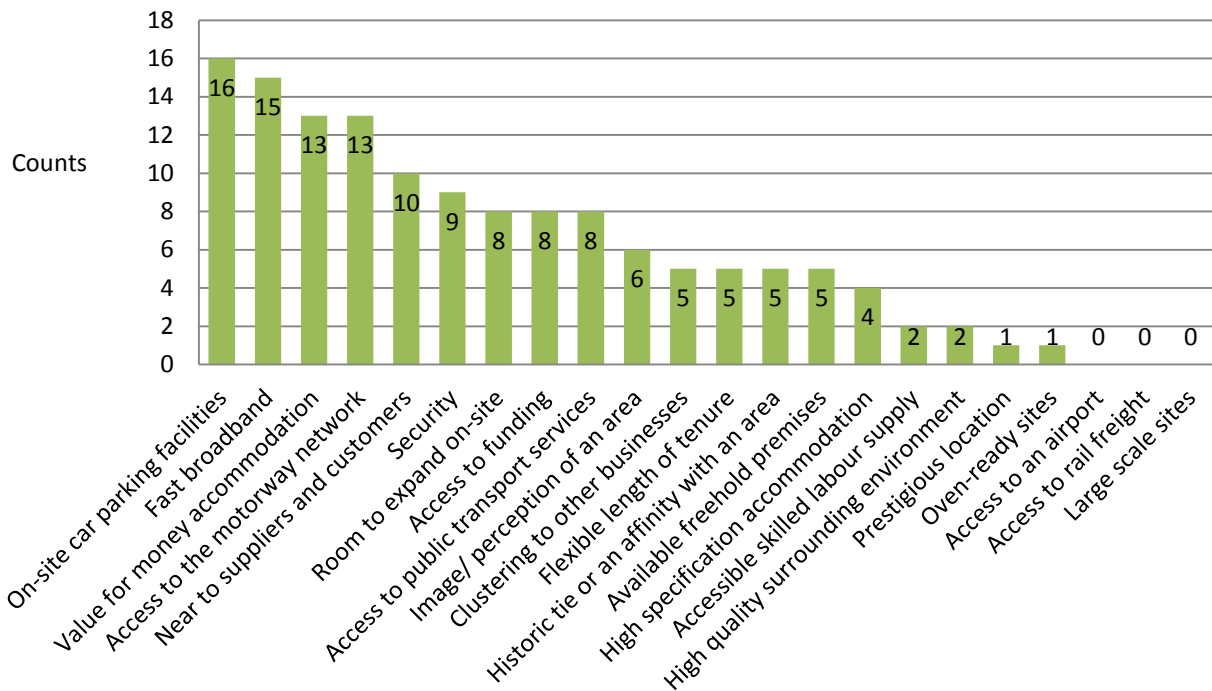


Figure 5: Most important location and accommodation needs for industrial based businesses

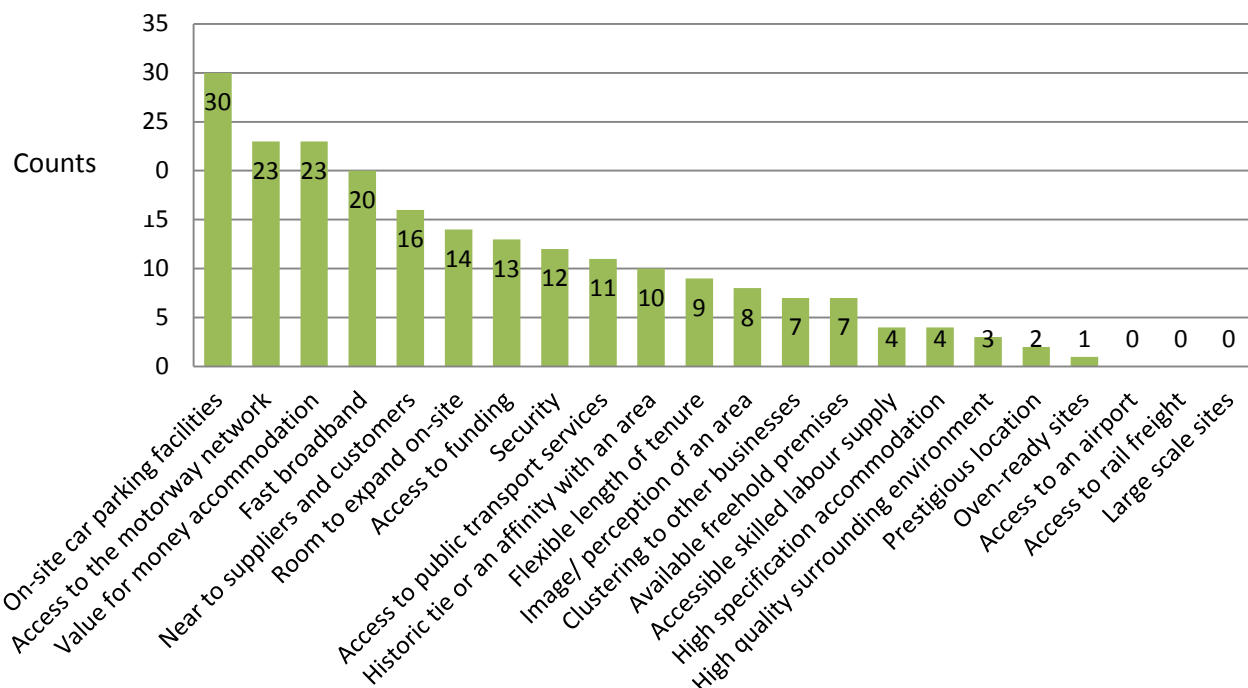
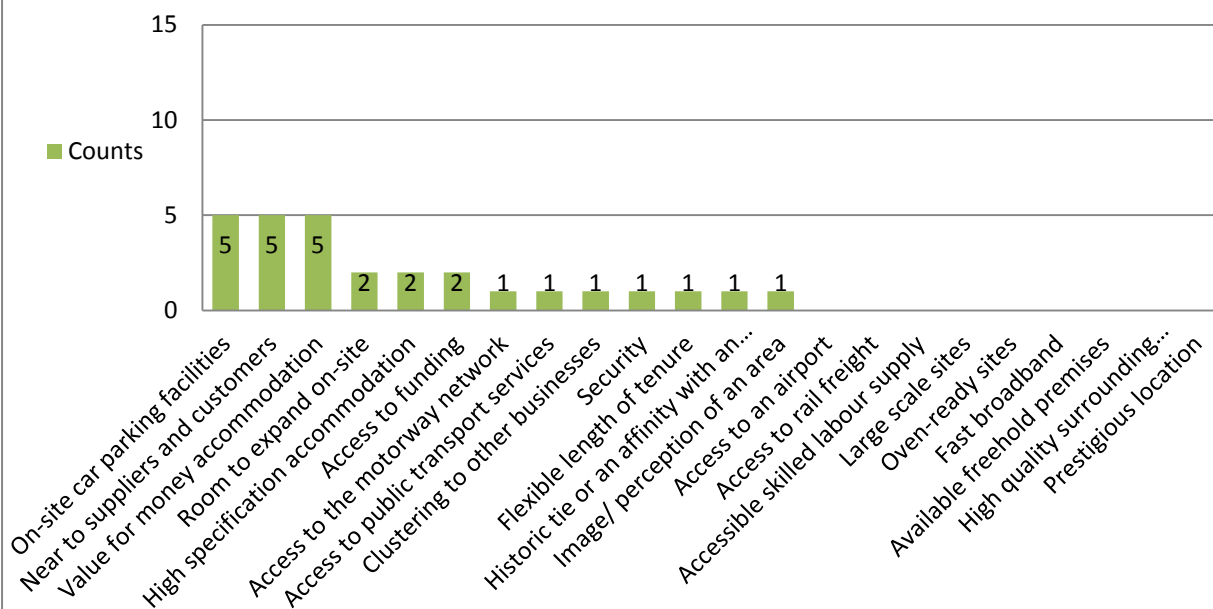
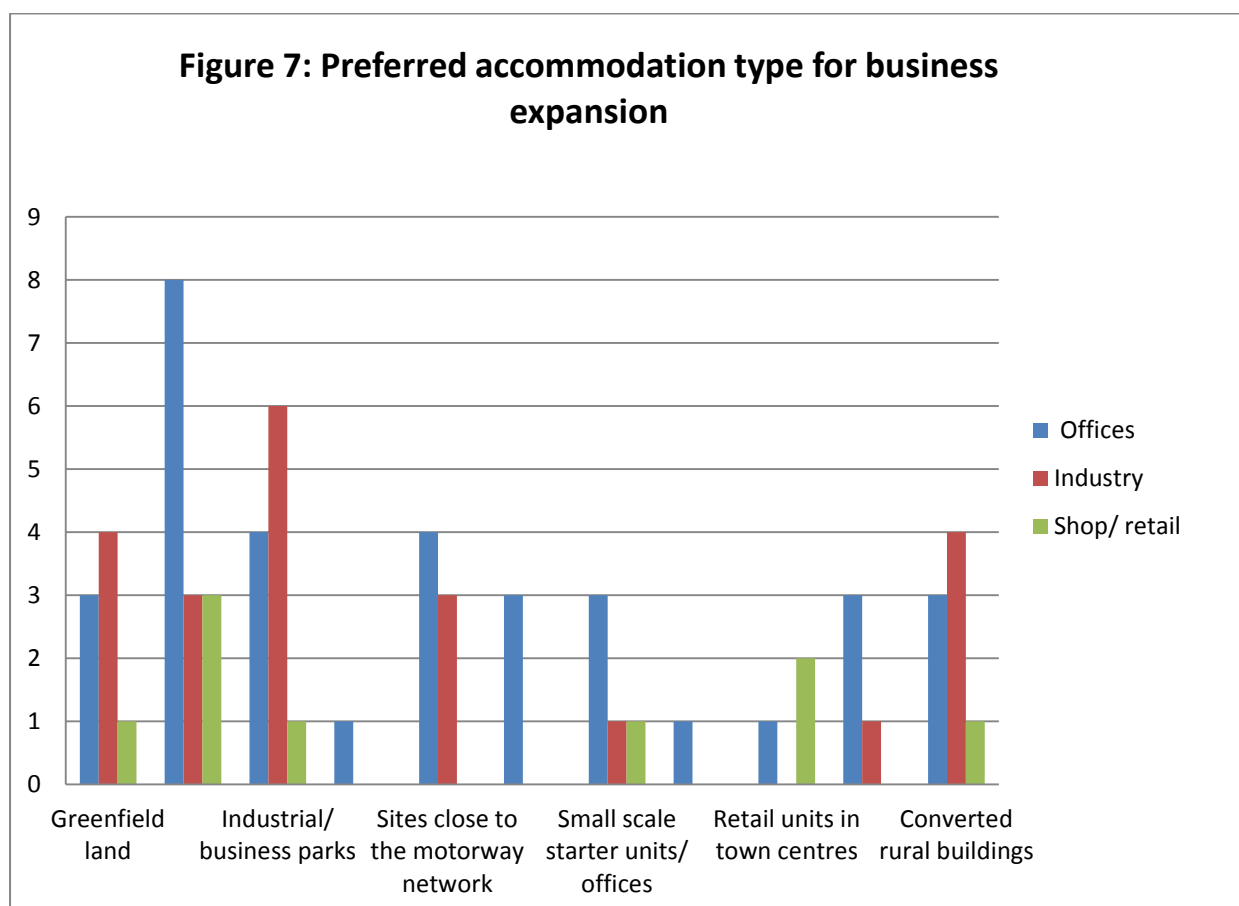


Figure 6: Most important location and accommodation needs for shop/ retail businesses



Business expansion

2.9 60% of respondents stated they would need larger accommodation in the future, with the remainder stating their requirements for business space are unlikely to change. Figure 7 compares the type of accommodation that businesses stated would best meet their needs for expansion split between businesses operating from offices, industrial premises and shops/retail units.



2.10 Businesses operating from offices cited well connected sites in the urban area as the most preferred accommodation type, with sites close to the motorway network and industrial/business parks also featuring highly. Industrial / businesses parks were the most preferred accommodation type for businesses operating from industrial premises, with Greenfield land and converted rural buildings also featuring highly. The shop/retail businesses prefer well connected sites in the urban area and units in town centres.

2.11 Overall, well connected sites in the urban area, sites close to the motorway network and industrial/business parks were the most preferred.

Wigan Borough

2.12 One quarter of the businesses who responded believe Wigan Borough cannot meet their land and accommodation needs. The main reasons for this, taken from the list in Question

21, are: not enough on-site car parking; poor value for money accommodation; slow broadband; and no funding available.

2.13 17 respondents provided comments on other location and accommodation factors, which inhibit the successful operation of their business. Their comments included:

- Not enough car parking
- Expensive premises and no funding available
- Neighbouring businesses having an adverse impact on amenity
- Concerns about adjacent property falling into disrepair and its impact on business image
- Traffic congestion and travel times
- Accommodation is not disabled friendly
- Insecure tenancy from future plans for site redevelopment.

2.14 31 businesses stated that they would be happy to be contacted by the council's Business Engagement Team to discuss their accommodation and location needs.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Overall, on-site car parking facilities; value for money accommodation; access to a motorway; fast broadband; and sites near to suppliers and customers appear to be the most important location and accommodation factors for businesses that responded to the survey. These factors are also important for businesses expansion, in addition to sites on greenfield land and business/industrial parks; and sites that are well connected in the urban area. Town centre locations and high specification premises are also important for shops and other retail businesses.

3.2 Whilst the majority of businesses who responded believe that their accommodation and land needs can be met in Wigan Borough, the survey concurs with the findings of the Draft Employment Land Review that we need to provide a range of employment sites of the right quality and in the right locations to attract and retain businesses in the borough. To that end, the Initial Draft of the Wigan Allocations and Development Management Local Plan provides an appropriate level of policy protection for existing employment areas, unless robust evidence is provided that demonstrates it is no longer appropriate, and allocates a number of sites for employment development in the urban areas, some on greenfield sites and close to major transport routes, such as the A580 East Lancashire Road, which links the M6 and the M60.

3.3 Fewer businesses completed the survey than anticipated, which is a caveat. Nevertheless, it is useful to understand the location and accommodation needs of those businesses that did respond.

3.4 The Employment Land Review will be updated to note the results of the survey.