



A Report on the Transport, Access and Amenities Consultation in Balfron 2015-2016

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1. Introduction

Balfron Community Council is frequently approached by members of the community about a range of issues relating to transport, access and amenities in the village. These include concerns over car parking, road safety, access to facilities and amenities, and the general quality of public spaces in the village. In response to these concerns we undertook a consultation with local residents to try to understand these issues and address their potential solutions.

This report explains the consultation process, provides a top-level analysis of the issues and concerns raised and suggests potential ways to address them.

2. Consultation Process

2.1. Balfron Bash (August 2015)

An initial discussion with local residents was undertaken as part of the Balfron Bash in August 2015. Balfron Community Council had a stall at the annual village fete to provide a forum for local residents to share their concerns about transport, access and amenities in Balfron, focusing particularly on issues affecting the village centre. The main concerns raised were car parking in Buchanan St (including the Co-op car park), the location of the bus depot in the centre of the village, excessive vehicle speeds, the need for more effective traffic calming and the lack of sufficient high quality spaces and amenities to support community activities.

2.2. Community Consultation (May / June 2016)

The next step in the consultation was carried out in May and June 2016 by engaging with the community more widely to identify the key issues and potential solutions in more detail. The consultation included:

- a) Direct engagement with community groups and local businesses/services
- b) A questionnaire survey of local residents and businesses/services
- c) A consultation event at Balfron High School on 18 June 2016

(a) Direct engagement with community groups and local businesses/services

17 Community groups and 37 local businesses and services were contacted directly to inform them of the consultation and invite them to discuss their concerns and ideas for solutions. This resulted in detailed discussions with the Balfron Scouts (28 children and 3 adults) and Jim Burns of the First Bus depot. An announcement about the consultation was also made at Balfron Church after one of the Sunday services.

(b) Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to capture the views of the local community more widely. This was available in hard copy via Balfron Library and online through the Community Council website, www.balfroncc.org.uk. The survey was publicised via direct engagement with the local community, the website and Facebook page, and a leaflet drop to all households in Balfron. A total of 125

responses were received, equating to roughly 7% of the total population of Balfron. 93% of respondents answered the survey as a local resident and 7% as a local business.

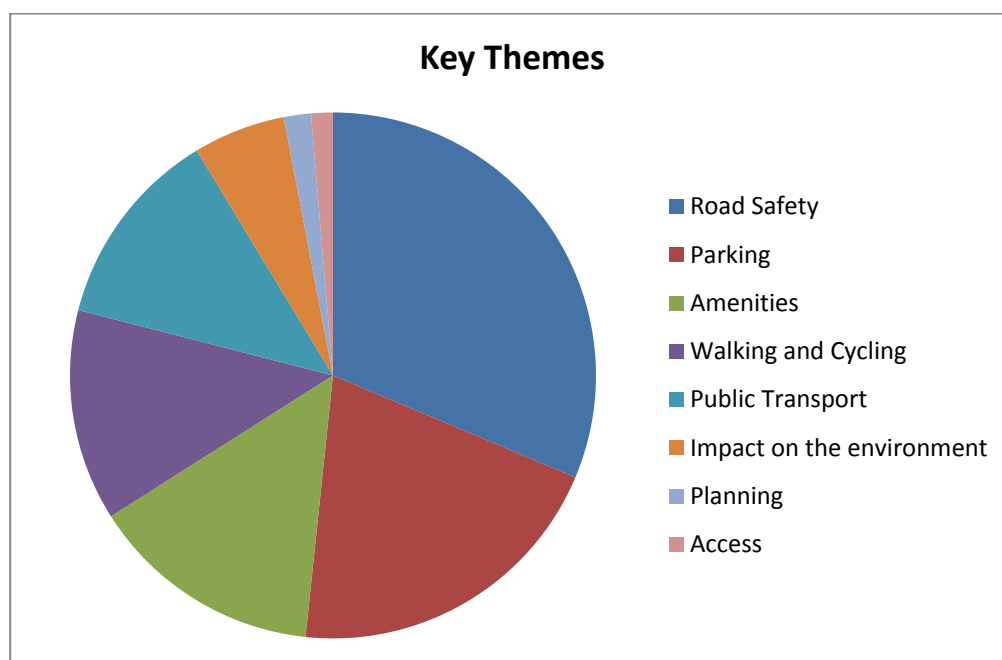
(c) Consultation event

A consultation event was held at Balfron High School on 18 June 2016. The event was widely advertised to the local community via social media, poster displays in the village, and a leaflet drop to households in Balfron. Thirty local residents attended to share their views on key issues and potential solutions.

3. Consultation Feedback: Issues and Concerns

3.1. Key Themes

Consultation responses were collated and analysed to identify the common themes that run through the various issues raised throughout the consultation process. The pie chart below illustrates proportionately the main themes that were raised.



Sample comments:

"The junction in front of the church is very unsafe to cross seeing as the cars are speeding there all the time and many kids live up there" [Scouts]

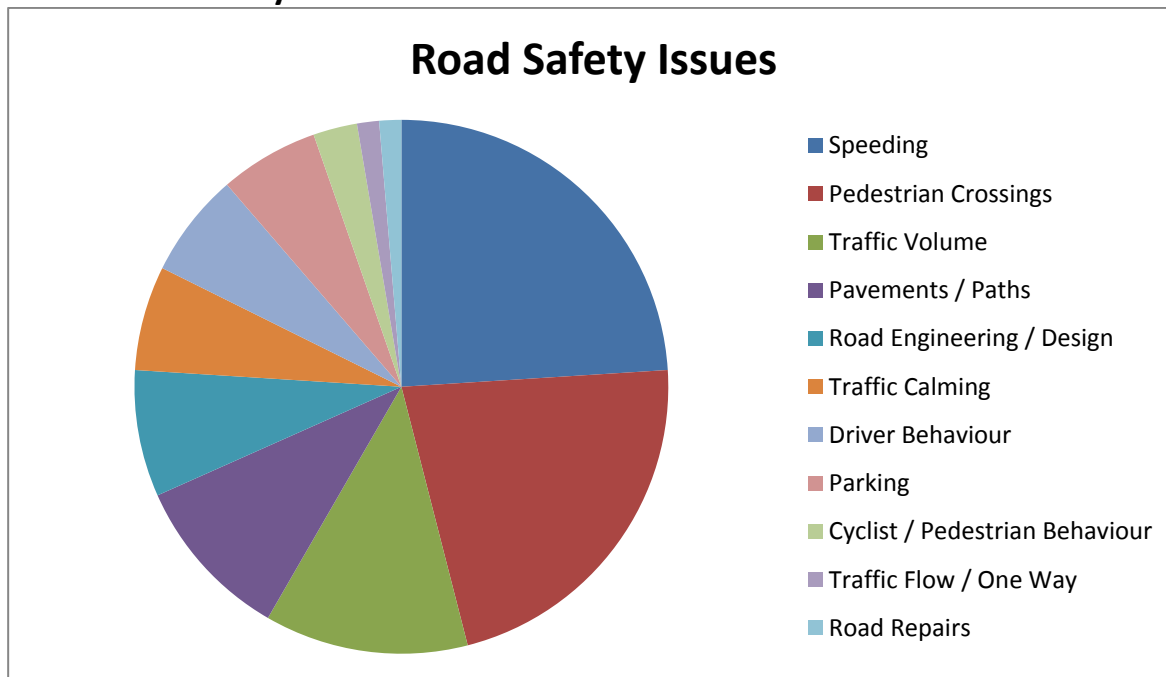
"More cycle paths in and around Balfron" [Scouts]

"There is now inadequate parking as surrounding villages have to use shops & amenities in Balfron. Additional new build brings more cars to." [Survey]

"Lack of joined-up thinking - houses built in rural areas without public transport access." [Event]

Further analysis was carried out to provide a more detailed understanding of the kinds of issues that have been raised under each of these main themes.

3.1.1. Road Safety Issues



Key road safety issues:

- **Speeding**, in particular at all four entrance points to the village, on Buchanan Street and along Dunmore Street.
- Lack of safe **pedestrian crossings** at key points within the village such as The Clachan or the middle section of Buchanan Street (near the Library or near the McIntock Hall).
- **Increase in Traffic Volume** due to village expansion and Balfron increasingly functioning as a hub for services and shops for residents of neighbouring villages. This can lead to congestion (e.g. at the Dunmore Street/Buchanan Street junction or around the schools).

Sample comments:

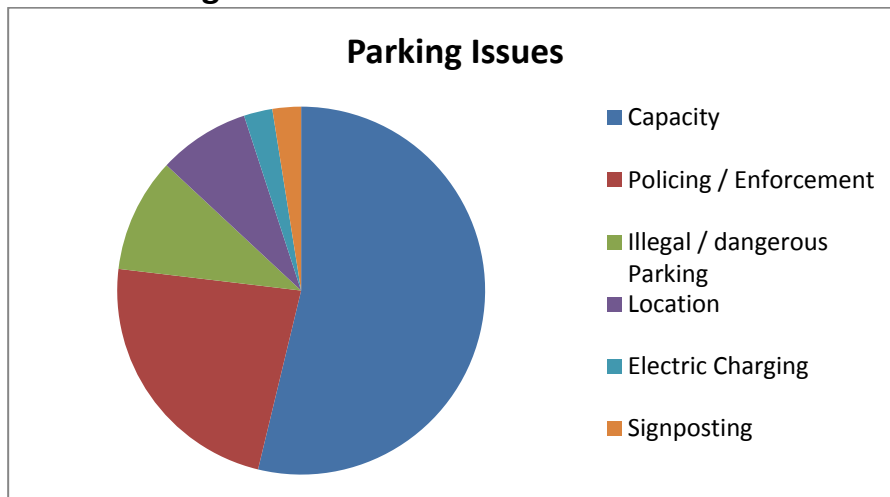
"I'd feel safer if people kept to the speed limits driving in and out of Balfron." [Survey]

"Buses going down Cotton St turning into Buchanan St mount the kerb due to too much traffic – cars parked all the way along the shops making it difficult for the bus drivers to go round the corner." [Scouts]

"As amenities, shops etc close in Killearn and as there are no amenities/shops/banks etc in Fintry [or] Drymen, the residents are coming to Balfron. The village is struggling to cope both in terms of road infrastructure & facilities." [Survey]

"Cars still travelling too quickly. Need to think about changes to improve the situation." [Event]

3.1.2. Parking Issues



Key parking issues:

- The lack of sufficient **capacity**, mainly but not exclusively at the Coop car park.
- The lack of effective **policing / enforcement** of parking regulations in Balfron.
- The impact of **illegal and dangerous parking**, e.g. forcing pedestrians on to the road because pavements are blocked.

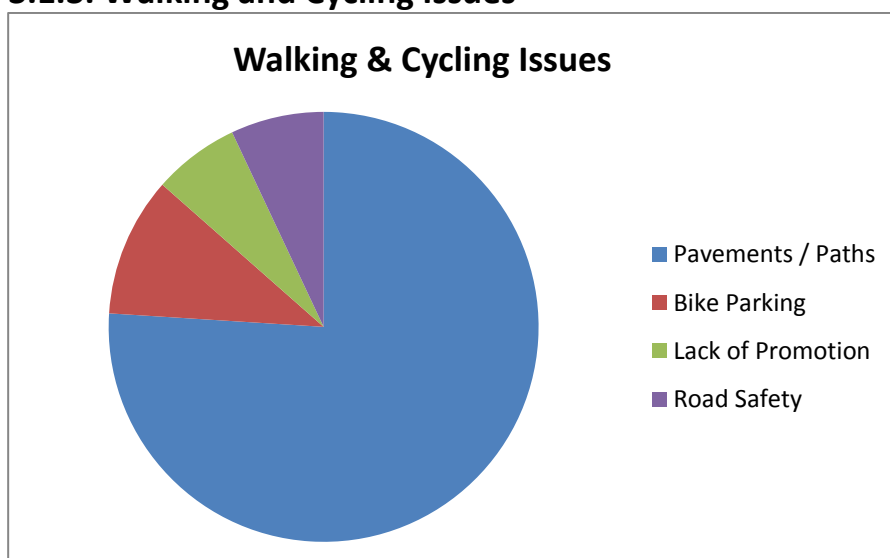
Sample comments:

"Parking at the Co-op should be adequate however it seems to be being used as long term parking - often with damaged cars/vehicles." [Survey]

"Bad parking which means I need to take the pram on the road." [Survey]

"Too many cars parking. Too many disabled spaces (not being used by disabled people)." [Event]

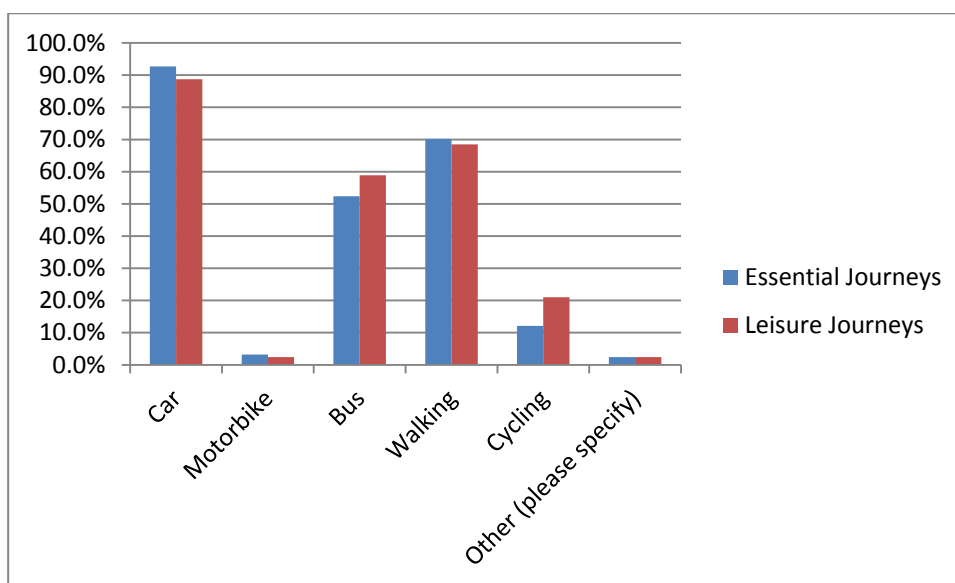
3.1.3. Walking and Cycling Issues



Key walking and cycling issues:

- Overwhelmingly, issues raised about walking and cycling related to the lack of safe, well maintained and attractive **paths** in and around Balfron for walking and cycling. This also includes concerns over the lack of **pavements** in certain areas and the poor state of repair of some pavements in the village.
- The lack of other infrastructure such as bike parking and the need for more effective promotion of existing paths was also mentioned.
- Responses show that while **car use** is high for both essential (commuting or shopping journeys) and leisure journeys, **walking** is also a frequently used mode of transport, both for essential and leisure journeys. Bus use and cycling were noticeably more frequently mentioned for undertaking leisure rather than essential journeys.

The breakdown of modes of transport used for essential and leisure journeys is as follows:

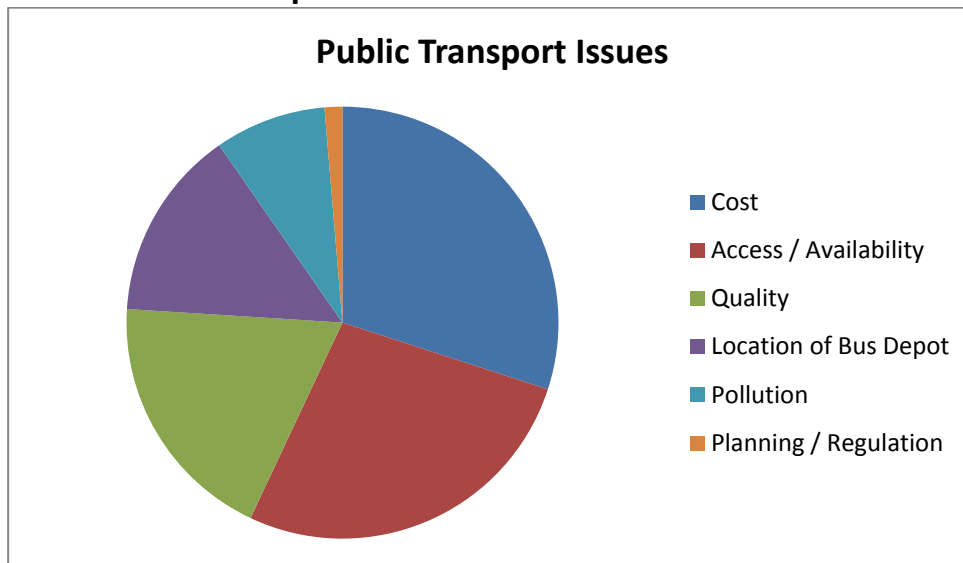


Sample comments:

"Endrick bridge has no public footpath for if you want to go to Killearn or along river footpath."
[Scouts]

"I wish there was cycle lanes for me to scoot" [Scouts]

3.1.4. Public Transport Issues



Key public transport issues:

- In the main, **cost** was mentioned as the key issue for public transport. This also includes the perceived lack of more flexible and competitive ticketing options.
- The **lack of services** to a wider range of destinations and the lack of connections / poor timetabling were also raised frequently.
- The **poor quality** of the rolling stock was highlighted.

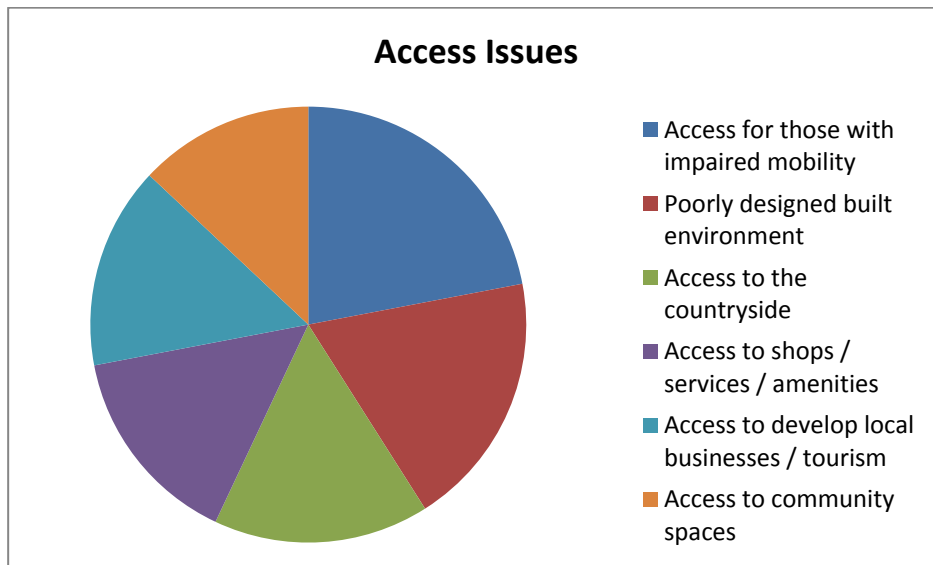
Sample comments:

"Bus service does not coordinate properly with trains from Milngavie. Price of bus fares. Age and quality of buses, boneshakers." [Survey]

"If the bus service was improved I might consider using it to get to work. At present the 5.30am ish bus wouldn't get me to work on time at 7am - a 35 minute car journey!!!" [Survey]

"Lack of joined-up thinking - houses built in rural areas without public transport access." [Event]

3.1.5. Access Issues



Key access issues:

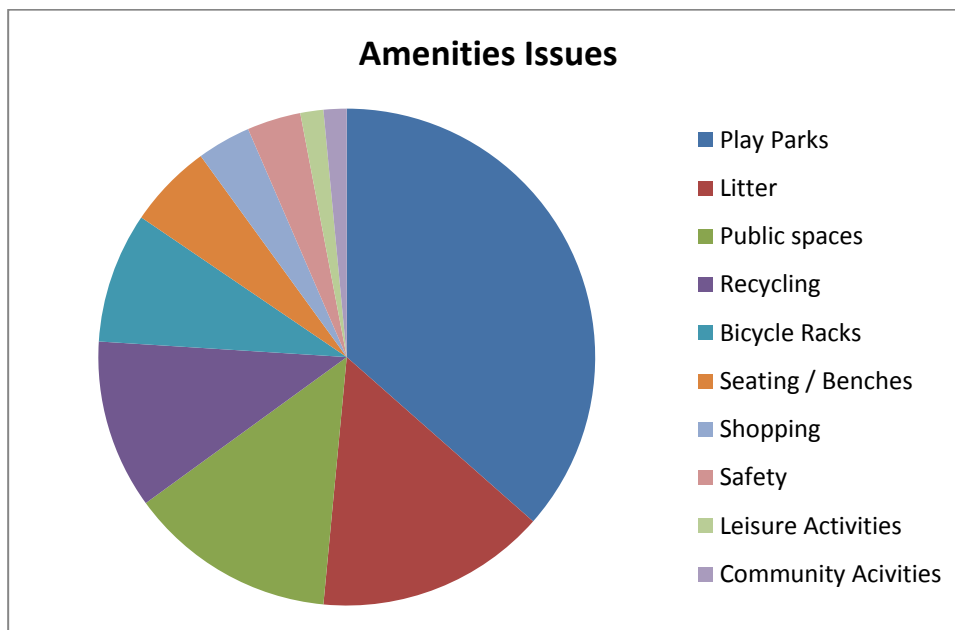
- **Poor access for those with impaired mobility**, highlighting the need for more investment in lowered kerbs around the village or raised borders at bus stops.
- Concerns regarding the overall **design of the built environment** in Balfron and the lack of joined-up thinking in developing the village infrastructure.
- **Access to the surrounding countryside** due to a lack of suitable paths and connectivity.

Sample comments:

"Kerbs can be difficult with pram so imagine it is hard for those with mobility issues too - would help to lower certain kerbs e.g. at electrical shop at junction of Dunmore St and Bankers Brae." [Survey]

"Plenty of regeneration models across Europe which avoid loading villages and towns with signs, speed bumps and pinch points. Instead there's opportunities to plan holistically and work collectively to create a cooperative and inclusive environment." [Survey]

3.1.6. Amenities Issues



Key amenities issues:

- The single biggest issue raised was the lack of high quality play facilities, both in terms of the facilities available at current play parks (mostly in Donaldson Park) and the need for more play facilities in other parts of the village.
- Littering and dog fouling were also raised
- The availability of well maintained and attractive public spaces

Sample comments:

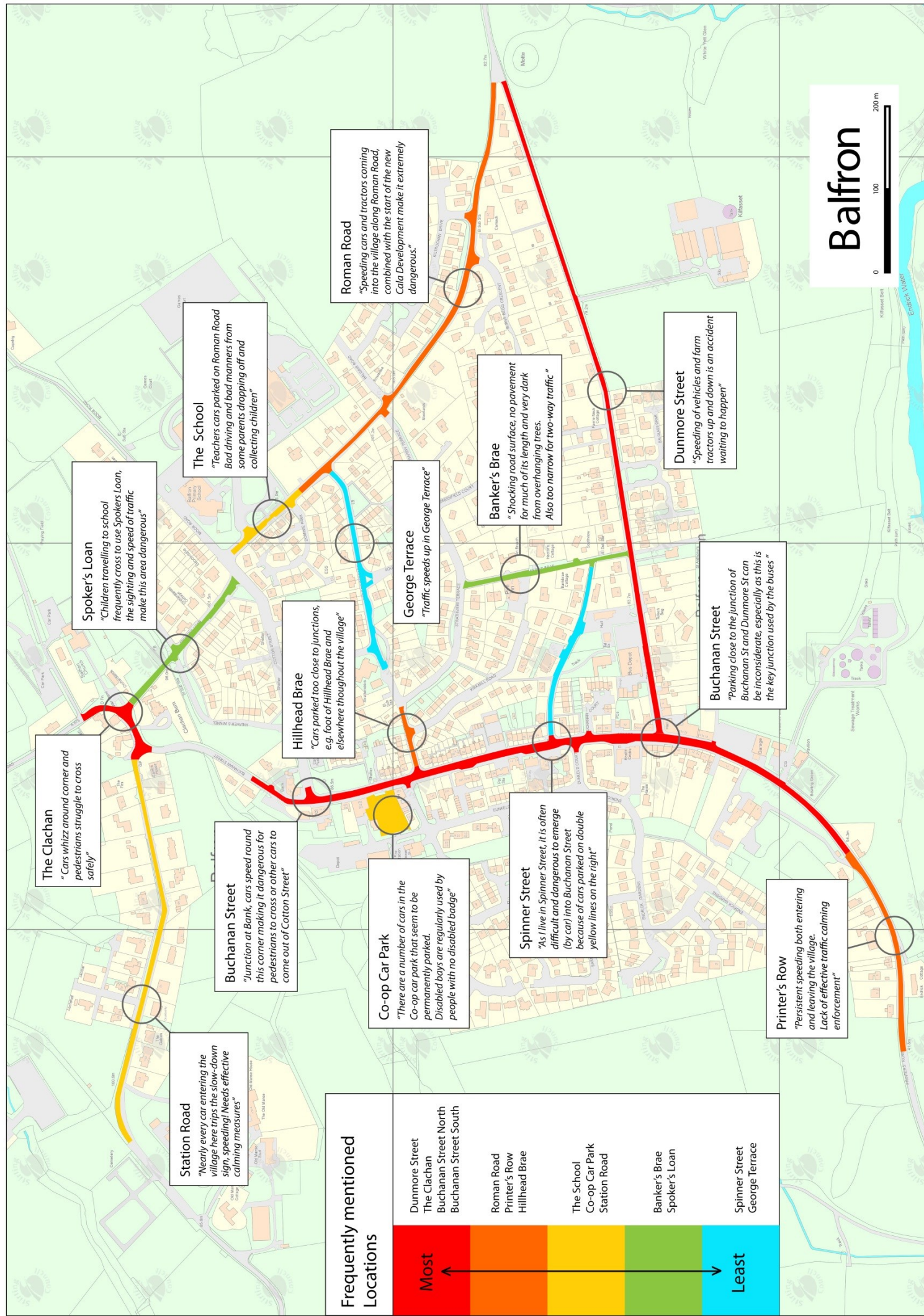
"More play equipment at the park." [Scouts]

"Would like to ensure that trees and greenery are retained in village and more planted to enhance general look and feel of village." [Survey]

"Overall visual amenity of the village centre is poor, needs more colour, plants, more textured and different surfaces, make it more of a place for people, not cars. Better use of open spaces (e.g. outside library and Tontine corner) to give a feel of an inviting civic space." [Survey]

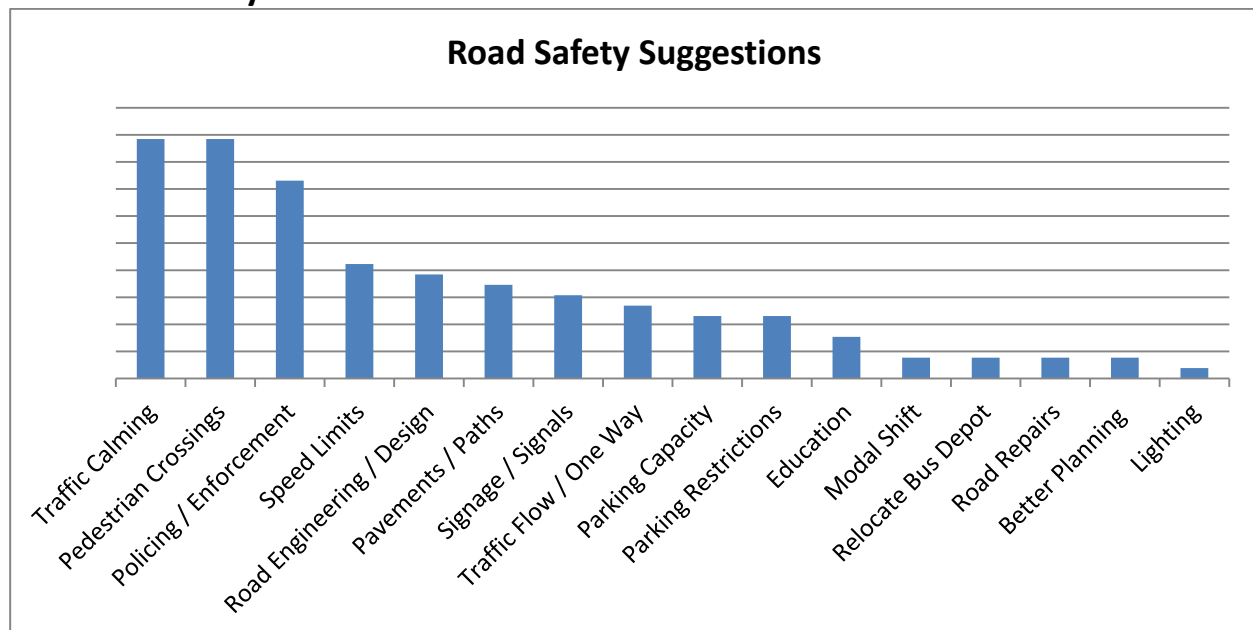
3.2. Key Locations

The most frequently mentioned location was **Buchanan Street**. However, as a number of very specific issues were raised about the top of Buchanan Street (from the shops to the junction with Cotton Street) the top of Buchanan Street and the rest of Buchanan Street have been recorded separately. Other key locations include **Dunmore Street**, **The Clachan**, **Roman Road** and **Printer's Row**. The map below shows the top 10 locations in Balfron, colour coded based on how frequently they were raised.



4. Consultation Feedback: Potential Solutions

4.1. Road Safety



Consultation responses suggest that tackling road safety issues in Balforn should be done in the main through investment in effective **traffic calming** measures; more **safe pedestrian crossings**; and increased **policing and enforcement** action. Calls for **reduced speed limits** at the entrances and throughout Balforn, and suggestions to look more creatively at using different approaches to **road design and layout** to naturally provide a safer environment also featured highly in the responses. The need for more **pavements / safe paths** for pedestrians and cyclists also emerged as a strong theme.

Sample comments:

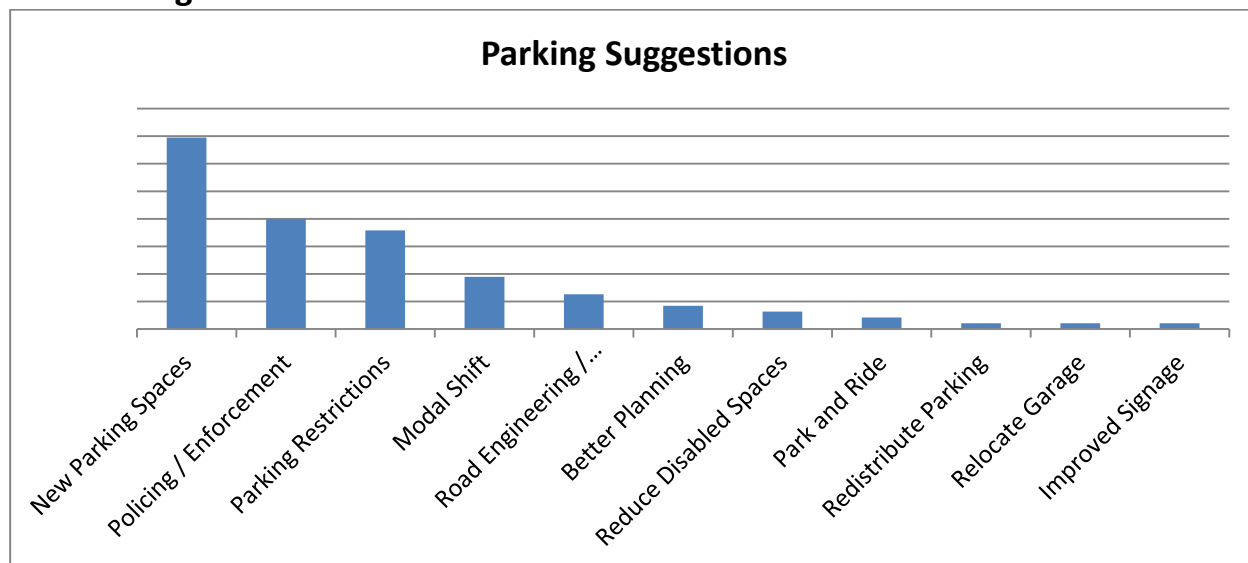
"Introduce another pedestrian crossing at the lower part of the village." [Survey]

"Re-design and traffic calming measures. Raploch is a prime example of where traffic calming measures have been successful." [Survey]

"20mph restriction throughout whole village." [Survey]

"Put an area in front of Coop/bank etc that is marked as 'pedestrianised' but still allows cars through - slowly." [Event]

4.2. Parking



Increasing car **parking capacity** was the most frequently cited solution to parking issues. Calls for more **policing and parking enforcement** were also made by a large number of respondents, as well as for introducing **parking restrictions** to manage parking better (e.g. residents permits, customer only parking or time limited parking in key locations like the Coop car park or along Buchanan St).

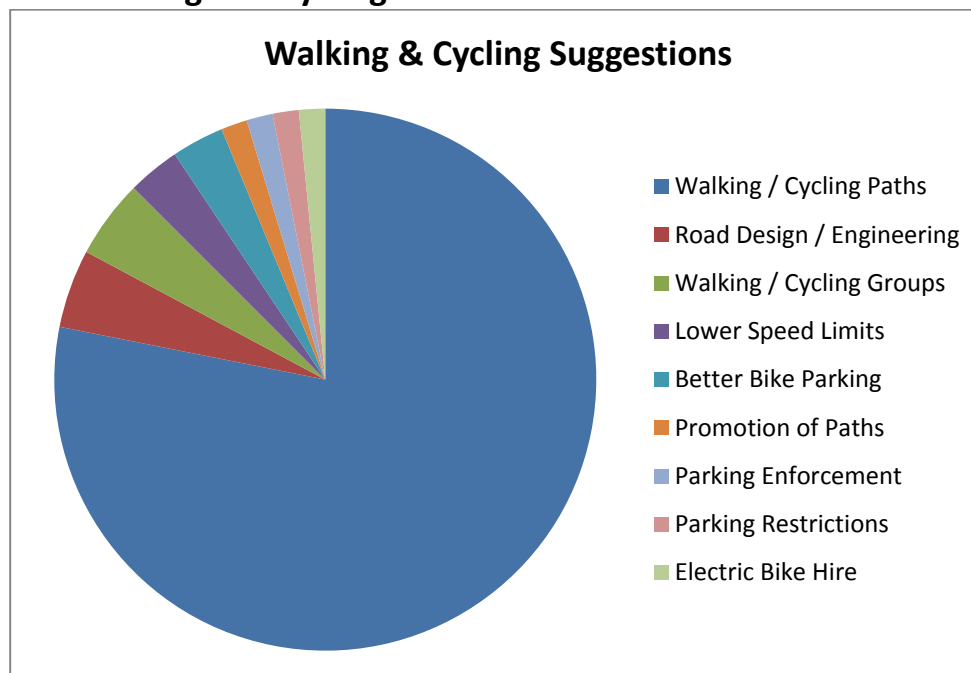
Sample comments:

“Redesign Buchanan street with angled parking bays.”

“Encouraging reduced use of cars within the village itself e.g. more folk routinely walking for shopping, to school, to doctors/dentists etc.”

“3h stay limit in car park.” [Event]

4.3. Walking and Cycling



Overwhelmingly, respondents saw investment in safe and attractive **walking and cycling paths** – including both the creation of new paths and better maintenance and promotion of existing paths – as the key solution to improving walking and cycling in Balfron.

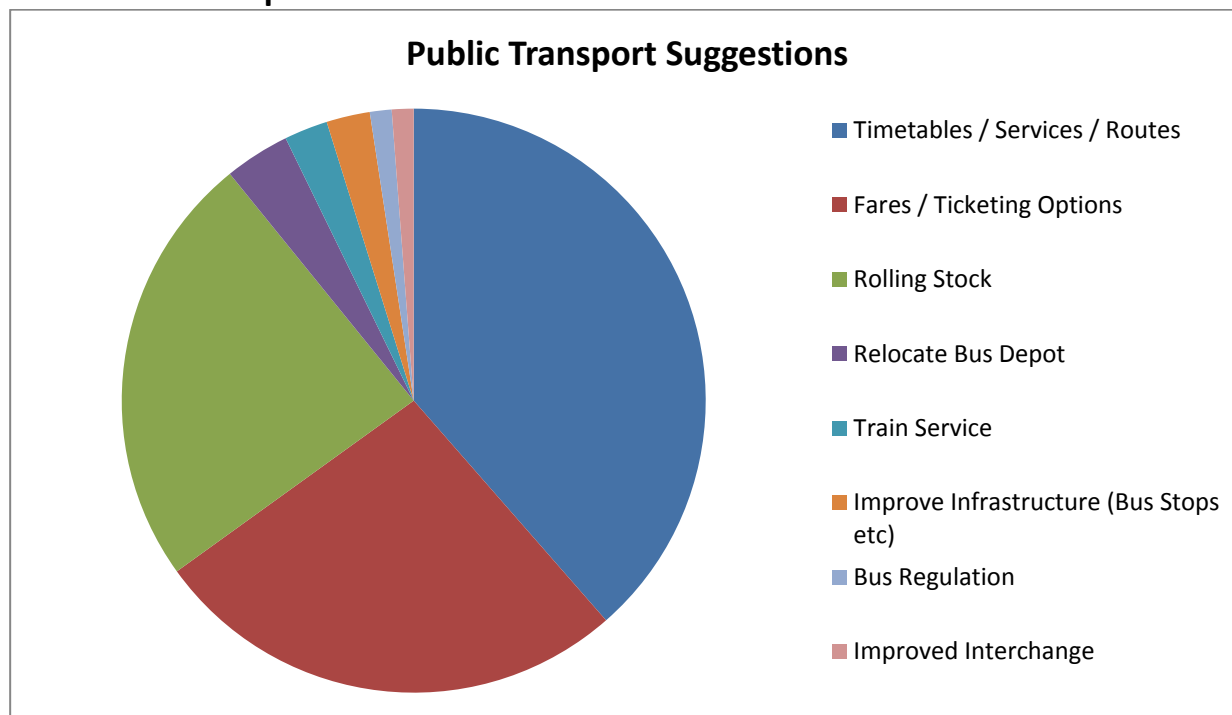
Sample comments:

“Better paths that are not always like a swamp in bad weather.” [Survey]

“Better walking and cycling infrastructure: off road routes around the village and connecting to other established routes, links to neighbouring villages, into national parks etc., cycle paths in the village.” [Survey]

“Creation of shared space on Buchanan Street making it safer, cleaner and kinder to all. Invest in Cycle lanes as a minimum.” [Survey]

4.4. Public Transport



Suggestions to improve public transport provision for Balfron focussed predominantly on better **timetabling and routes**, **reduced fares** and more (low cost) **ticketing options**, as well as the **quality of the vehicles**.

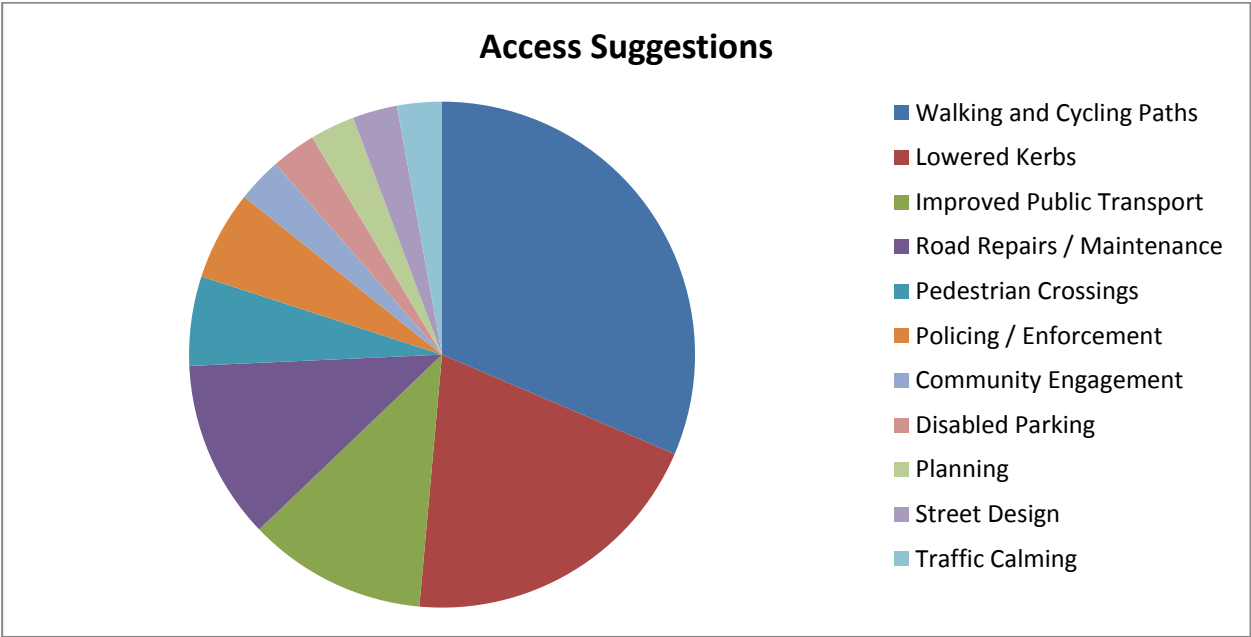
Sample comments:

"Better bus provision - better quality buses, better connection times to trains, more frequent service." [Survey]

"Many buses have ridiculous routes. For example to get to Glasgow for 9am I got 7.30am bus and it was still not at bus station by 9.15am. Alternative is taking bus then train but then pay twice and train bus not synched on way back." [Survey]

"Public transport is too expensive and doesn't run often enough. I would rather use public transport to get to work, but it is cheaper to take my car. Perhaps cheaper tickets and smaller buses could improve that." [Survey]

4.5. Access



Suggested solutions to improve access largely focussed on improving **walking and cycling paths**, in particular with a view to accessing the countryside, and more use of **lowered kerbs** in the village, as well as improved **public transport** links.

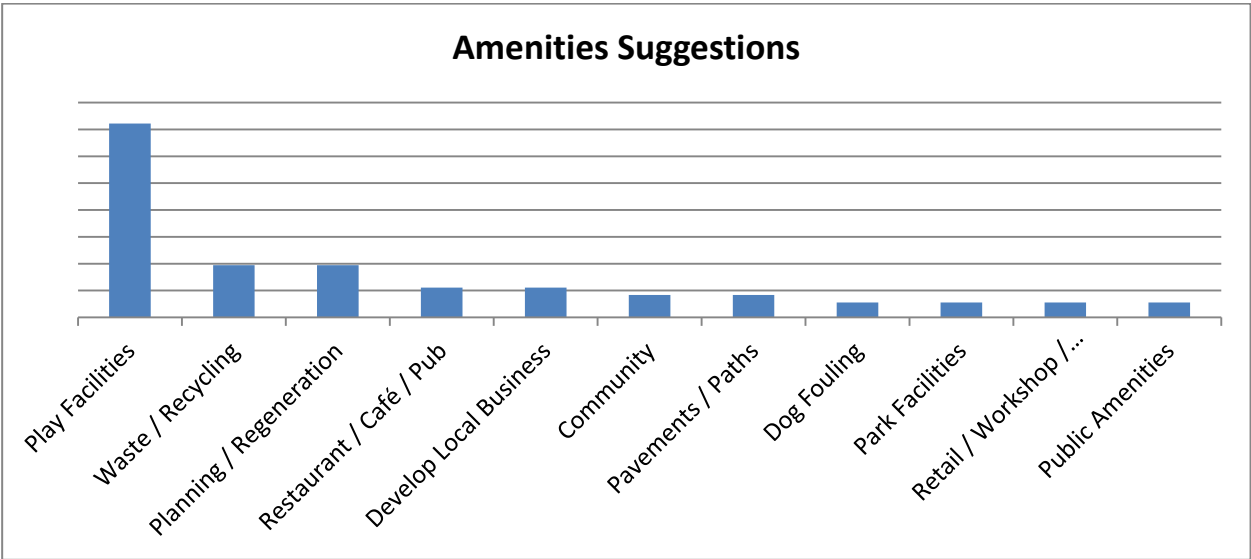
Sample comments:

“Less kerbstones, or at least more access from pavement to road (for mobility scooters or wheelchairs).

Improve walkways and cycle routes. Better Waymarking. Better engineering/design.” [Survey]

“Better river bank walks or circular route along river from road bridge to old metal bridge along both banks.” [Survey]

4.6. Amenities



A large number of suggestions were made to improve **play facilities**. Other solutions looked at **waste and recycling** and better use of **planning and regeneration** to develop more effective, joined-up approaches to improving the village.

Sample comments:

“A playpark should be built nearer the centre. Among the new houses on Donaldson Way the playpark could be widened and improved.” [Survey]

“I think you should put more or new equipment in Balfron Park.” [Scouts]

“There is a lack of flat, open space in center of village for things like farmers market - could space opposite co-op/shops be developed?” [Survey]

5. The Way Forward to a Better Space for Living

Balfron Community Council is committed to improving the environment of the village to make it a better and safer place for all who live, work, shop and play here. The evidence provided by this consultation points the way forward on a number of important issues. We are now working, in conjunction with Stirling Council, to create a holistic approach to improvements that avoids piecemeal and arbitrary developments. These need to be spelled out and costed, and an achievable timetable established. Once that work has been completed, we shall come back to the community of Balfron with our specific proposals for the future.

6. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the consultation in so many ways, but in particular to the excellent and dedicated work of Carsten Mandt, Graham Rose, Craig Potter and Tim Cullen in analysing the data and compiling this report.