

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation

Final: Version 1

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Report produced on 01 February 2021 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

Executive summary and conclusions

Between 23 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 Cheshire East Council consulted on various options for future Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision in the borough. The results of which will be used to inform the future design and procurement process of a new provider of the service.

The options presented were based on an independent review commissioned by the Council to assess alternative service scenarios, as the current contract comes to an end within the next 3 years. The options presented as part of the consultation were:

- **Remain with current service:** Replacement of Congleton site
- **Alternative service: Scenario 4:** Closure of Congleton & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 3:** Closure of Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 2:** Closure of Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 1:** Closure of Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton

Support was greatest for the option '**Remain with current service**' (59% overall, tend to or strongly support), with opposition increasing in each alternative scenario where a HWRC site was being proposed to close (65% overall, tend to or strongly oppose '**Scenario 4**' increasing to 97% for '**Scenario 1**'). Generally, in each scenario opposition was greatest with the HWRC users whose nearest site was identified, apart from '**Scenario 1**' where opposition was strong across all HWRC users.

The impact of each option, upon stakeholders, followed a similar pattern to that noted above with '**Remain with current service**' reported as having the least impact (51% overall, fairly or very low impact). For '**Scenario 4**', 53% overall, stated that it would have a fairly or very high impact on them personally, increasing to 95% for '**Scenario 1**'. The likely impact again was generally reported as being greatest by those HWRC users whose nearest site(s) were identified as potentially being closed.

74% of respondents stated that they would be willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a HWRC site, 24% would be willing to travel 10 to 20 minutes. With the current service it seems that many respondents reside within a 10-minute drive time to their nearest HWRC. However, this would not be the case for many respondents in several of the alternative scenarios.

Within the survey respondents were asked to provide any comments / considerations we may need to be aware of as part of this review. The top themes emerging from the comments were around the environmental impacts closing sites may cause for example, concern about fly tipping, carbon footprint, pollution and congestion, misuse of kerbside bin collections and reduction in recycling rates. Other concerns included the increased time / cost it would take to travel to an alternate site including an increased difficulty for those of an older age/ the disabled and increase in demand due to new houses being built. Some suggestions and general comments were also received. Section 3 of this report provides further insight into the main concerns under each main theme respondents had about closure of HWRC sites.

The Research and Consultation team recommend that the findings in this report are reviewed and considered alongside any other evidence whilst making a decision.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

Between 23 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 Cheshire East Council consulted on various options for future Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision in the borough.

The options presented were based on an independent review commissioned by the Council to assess alternative service scenarios as the current contract comes to an end within the next 3 years. The full review conducted is available on the [Cheshire East Website](#).

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was mainly held online (due to the current Covid-19 restrictions) with paper versions being available on request. It was promoted to:

- HWRC Users, via posters at all Cheshire East Council HWRC sites
- The general public, via the council webpage, social media sites and through a press release.

The consultation picked up a lot of interest and was mentioned in numerous news articles. In total, 10,208 consultation responses were received, including:

- 10,173 online survey responses
- 4 paper survey responses
- 31 email responses

We are also aware of 1 petition on change.org 'Save our Congleton Recycling Centre' this petition is currently still ongoing, at the time of writing this report it has received around 1,900 signatures.

A breakdown of demographics for the online & paper survey can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Section 1 – Current use of HWRC sites

As part of the, survey respondents were asked how often approximately, in a typical 12-month period, do they visit each of the current HWRC sites within Cheshire East. This question was asked to gain an insight into respondent usage and doesn't reflect actual usage of the sites in a typical 12-month period.

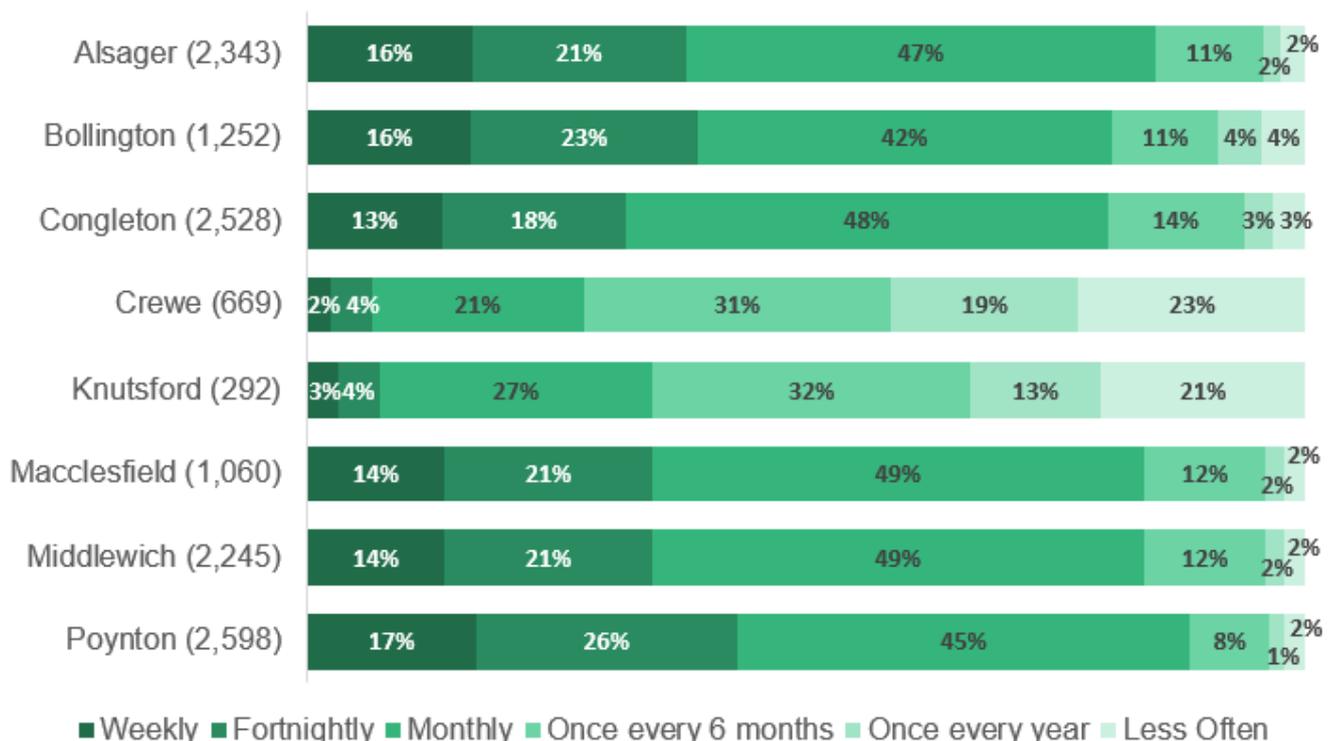
Figure1 shows the breakdown of results, excluding those who stated never. For most of the HWRC site's respondents represent frequent users - typically visiting monthly or more often:

- Alsager, 85% typically visit monthly or more often
- Bollington, 81% typically visit monthly or more often
- Congleton, 80% typically visit monthly or more often
- Macclesfield, 84% typically visit monthly or more often
- Middlewich, 84% typically visit monthly or more often
- Poynton, 88% typically visit monthly or more often

For Crewe and Knutsford HWRC sites however, respondents represented less frequent users visiting once every 6 months or less often:

- Crewe, 72% typically visit once every 6 months or less often
- Knutsford, 65% typically visit once every 6 months or less often

Figure 1: How often respondents visit Cheshire East HWRC sites in a typical 12-month period (excluding those who stated never)



Many respondents (83%) had visited only one Cheshire East HWRC site within a typical 12-month period, 16% had visited two different sites and 5% had visited more than two different sites.

Table 1 below, provides further insight into respondent distribution per HWRC site. Users of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRCs represent around one quarter of the overall response per site. Bollington HWRC users represent 12% of the overall response.

Please note that percentages won't add up to 100 as respondents could indicate that they used more than one HWRC site.

Table 1: User count by HWRC and Percentage of total response

HWRC Site	User Count	Percentage of total respondents
Alsager	2,343	23%
Bollington	1,252	12%
Congleton	2,528	25%
Crewe	669	7%
Knutsford	292	3%
Macclesfield	1,060	10%
Middlewich	2,245	22%
Poynton	2,598	26%
Total Respondents	10,177	

Within section 2 of the report, the results are shown overall and are also broken down by site users (excludes those who stated that they had never visited for each HWRC site).

Section 2 – The options

Respondents were presented with a table providing a summary of the impacts of each option being considered by the Council as part of the review. A further document giving more detail on the impacts of the options was also provided along with a link to the full independent review document.

The options presented were: -

- **Remain with current service:** Replacement of Congleton site
- **Alternative service: Scenario 4:** Closure of Congleton & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 3:** Closure of Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 2:** Closure of Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 1:** Closure of Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton

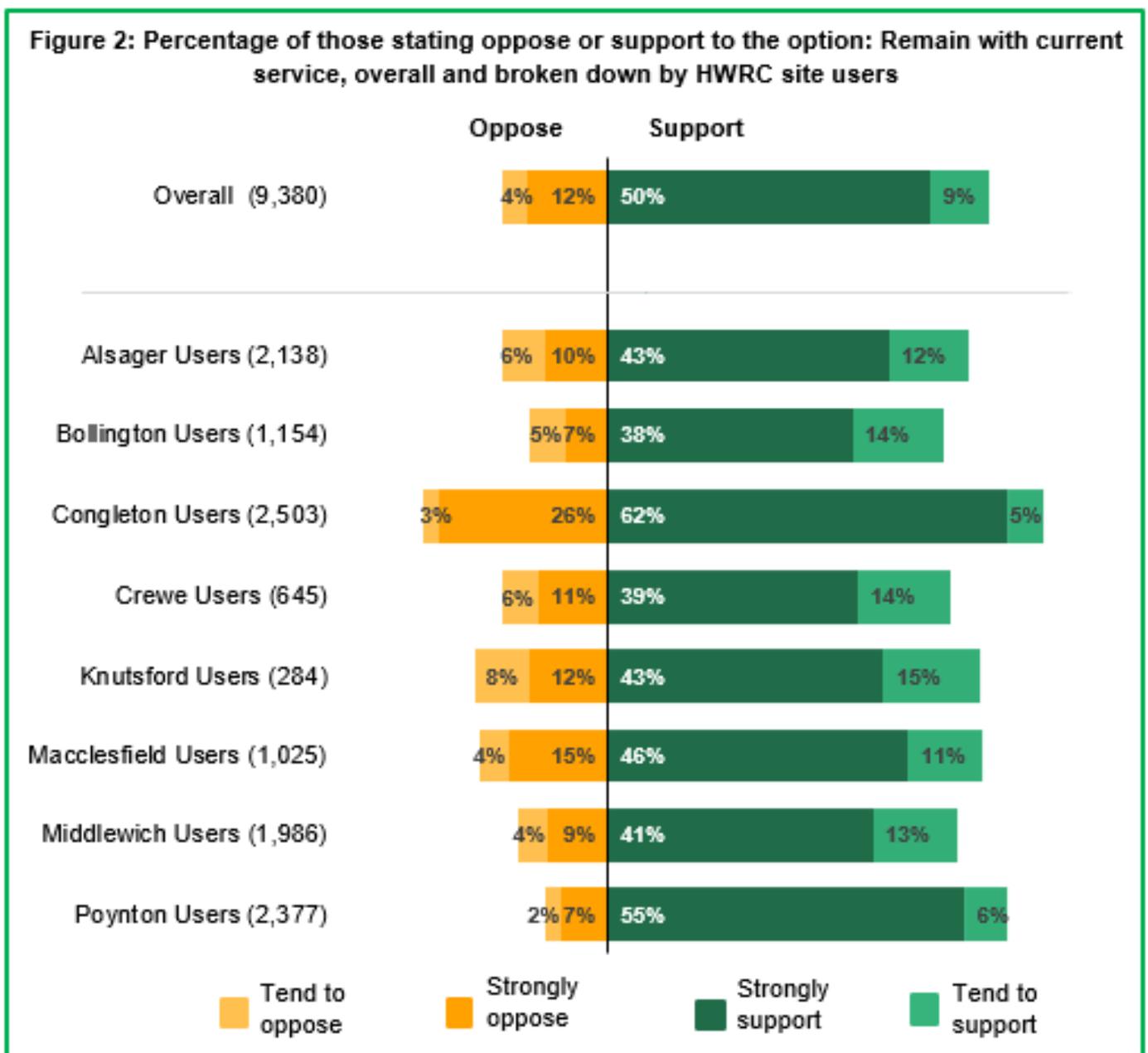
After respondents were asked to review the information, they were asked how strongly they supported or opposed each option as well as what impact each option would have on them personally. The rest of this section reports on the results received for each option in turn.

Please note that 'users' excludes those who stated that they had never visited for each HWRC site.

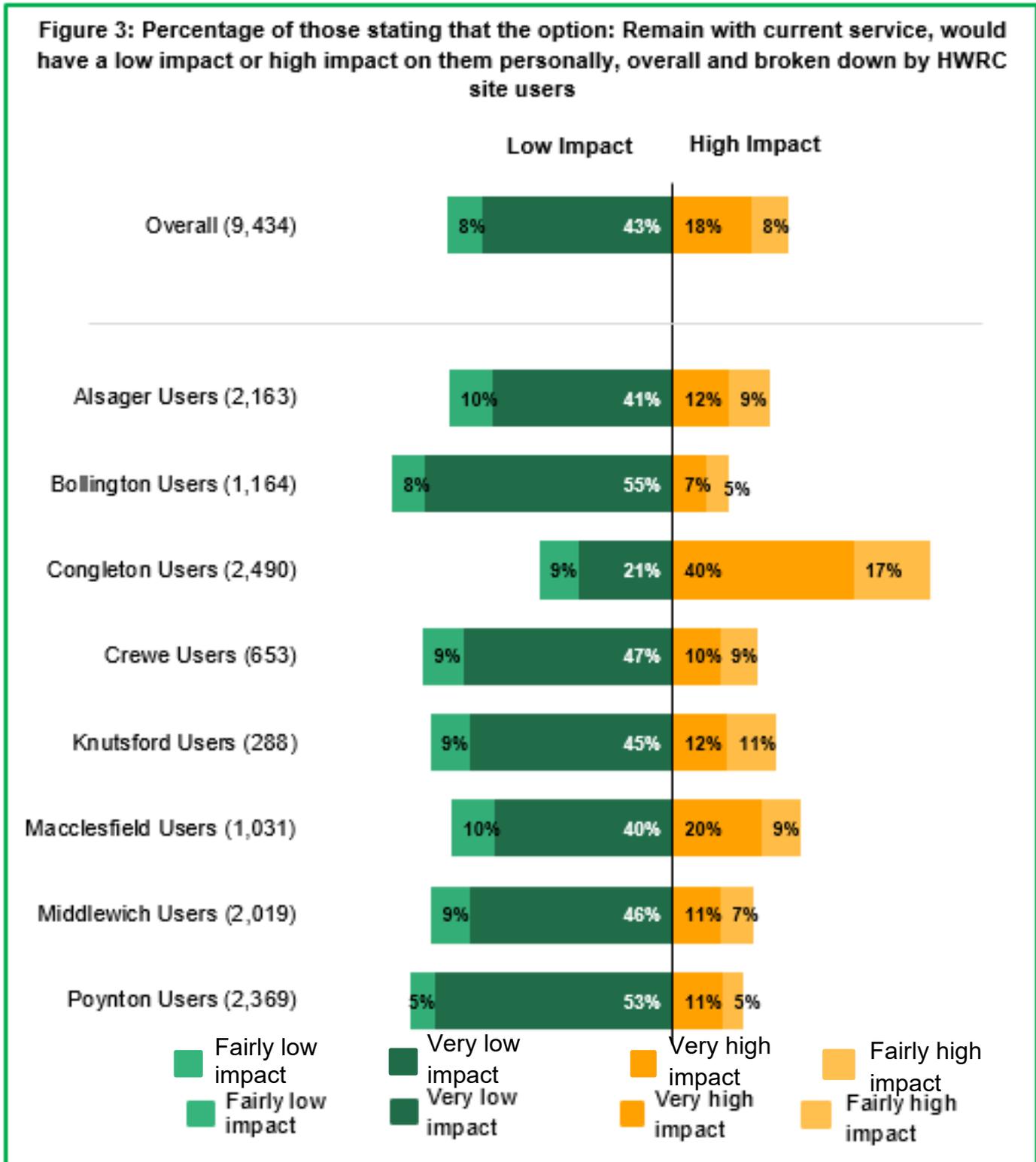
Remain with current service

Under this option, Congleton HWRC site would need to be replaced, in order to maintain current levels of service. The current site is not owned by the Council and a long-term lease of this land has not been able to be secured.

Over one half of all respondents (59%) stated that they strongly or tend to support this option overall. Congleton HWRC site users were more likely to strongly support this option compared to other site users (62% strongly support). Correspondingly, they were also more likely to strongly oppose this option (26% strongly oppose). This perhaps represents those who do not want the site to be replaced or to change location and would rather it remain where it is. Figure 2 shows the percentage of those that stated oppose or support broken down by each HWRC site users. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on Figure 2) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

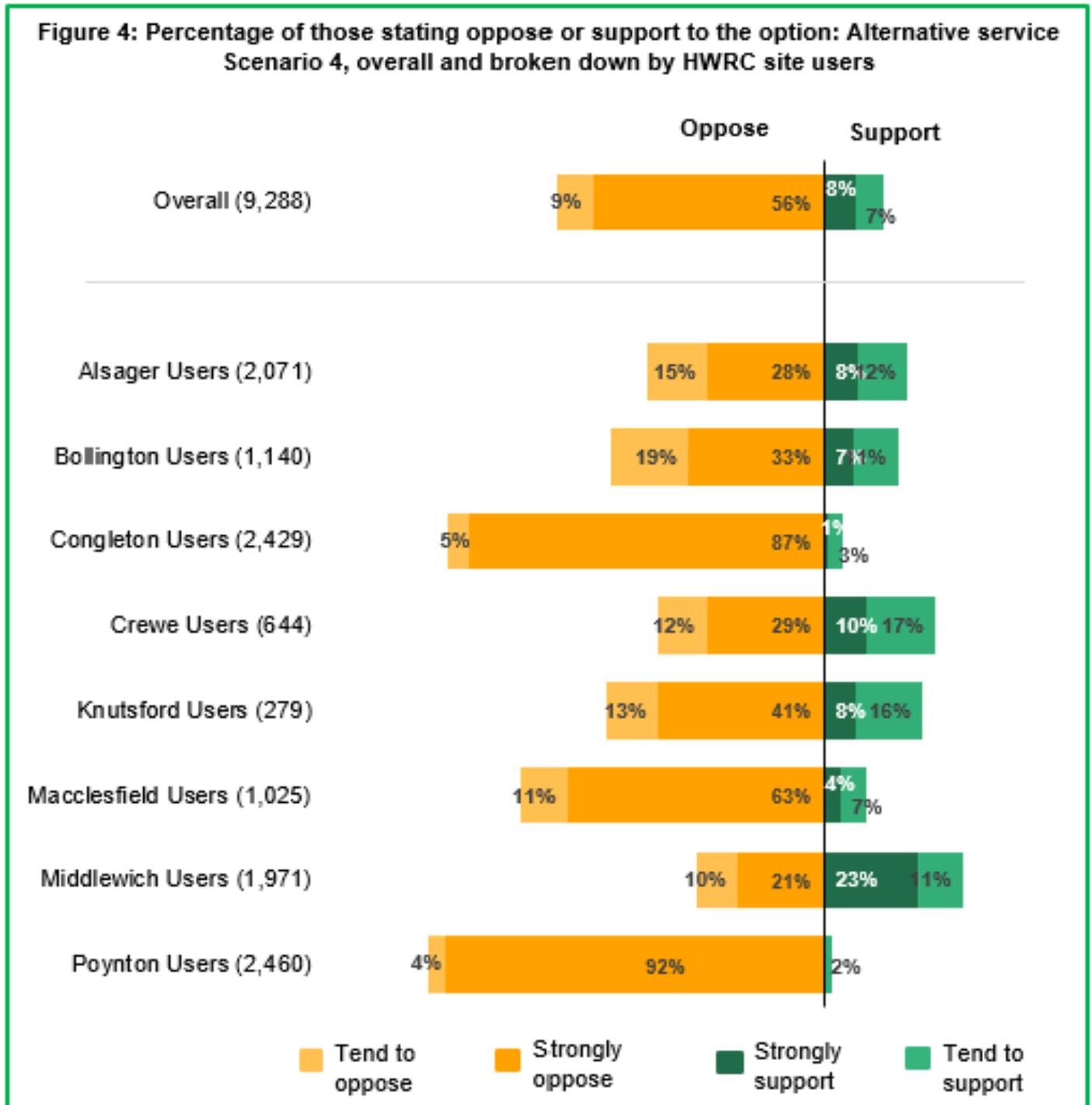


Just over one half of all respondents (51%) stated that this option would have a fairly or very low impact on them personally. Even though Congleton HWRC users were more likely to support this option they were also more likely to state that this option would impact them personally (58% very or fairly high impact compared to 26% Cheshire East overall). This probably reflects those who may feel that a replacement site / change in location to the current site would impact them and their current use.

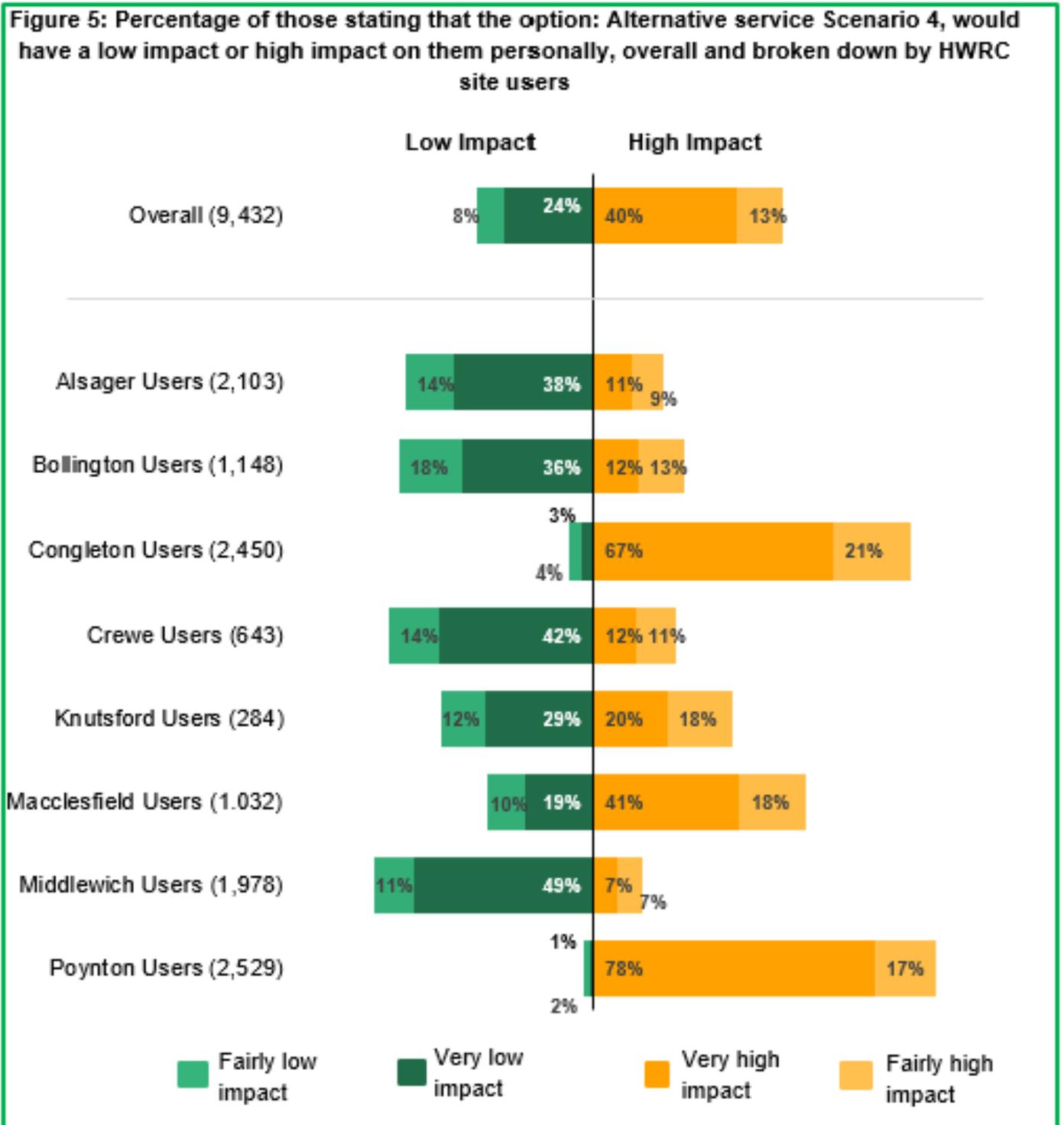


Alternative service: Scenario 4

Most respondents opposed this option, with 65% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Both Congleton and Poynton HWRC would close in this scenario, unsurprisingly users of these sites were more likely to oppose this option, compared to the other HWRC site users (92% and 96% oppose respectively). The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 4) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.



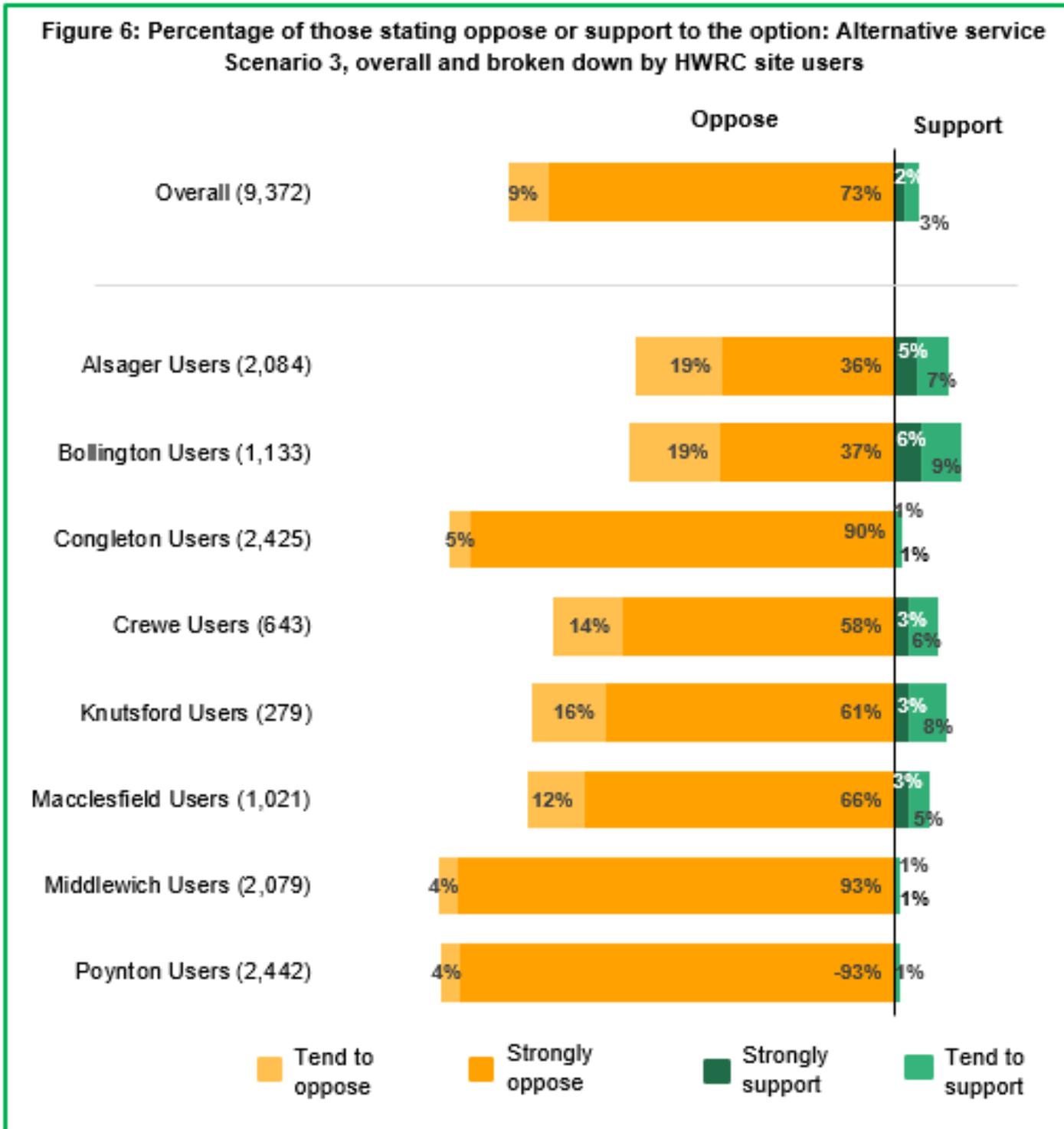
Just over one half of all respondents (53%) stated that this option would have a fairly or very high impact on them personally. Congleton and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would personally impact them (88% and 95% respectively). Macclesfield HWRC users reported a slightly greater impact compared with the other remaining HWRC users, 59% feeling that this scenario would impact them (see figure 5). This might represent those with a concern that closing Poynton HWRC would mean that this would result in a greater use of the Macclesfield HWRC site as the next closest site.



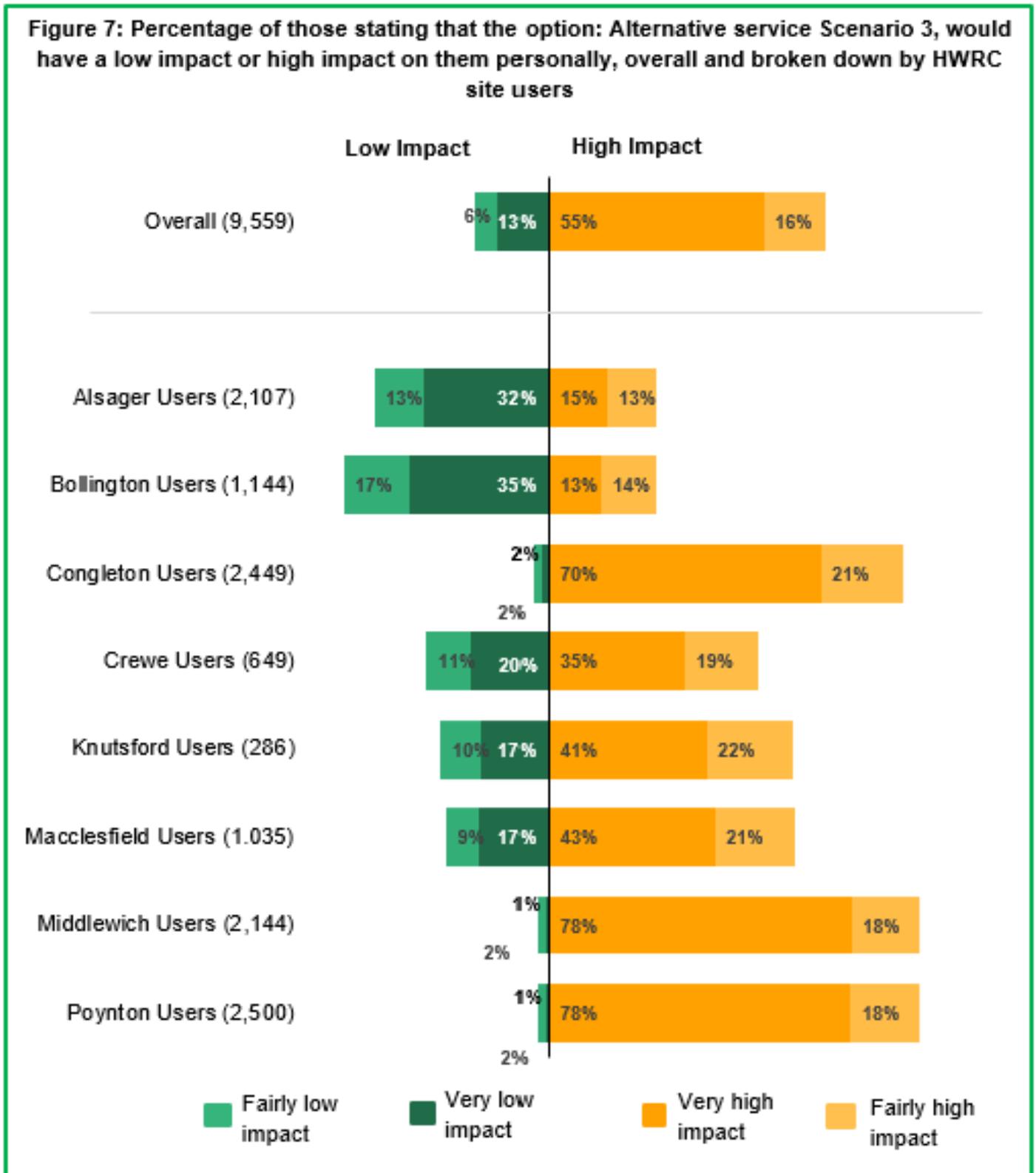
Alternative service: Scenario 3

A high majority of respondents opposed this option, with 82% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC sites would close in this scenario. Again, it's the users of those sites at risk who show the greatest opposition compared to other HWRC site users (95%, 97% and 97% respectively) as shown in figure 6. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 6) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 6: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 3, overall and broken down by HWRC site users



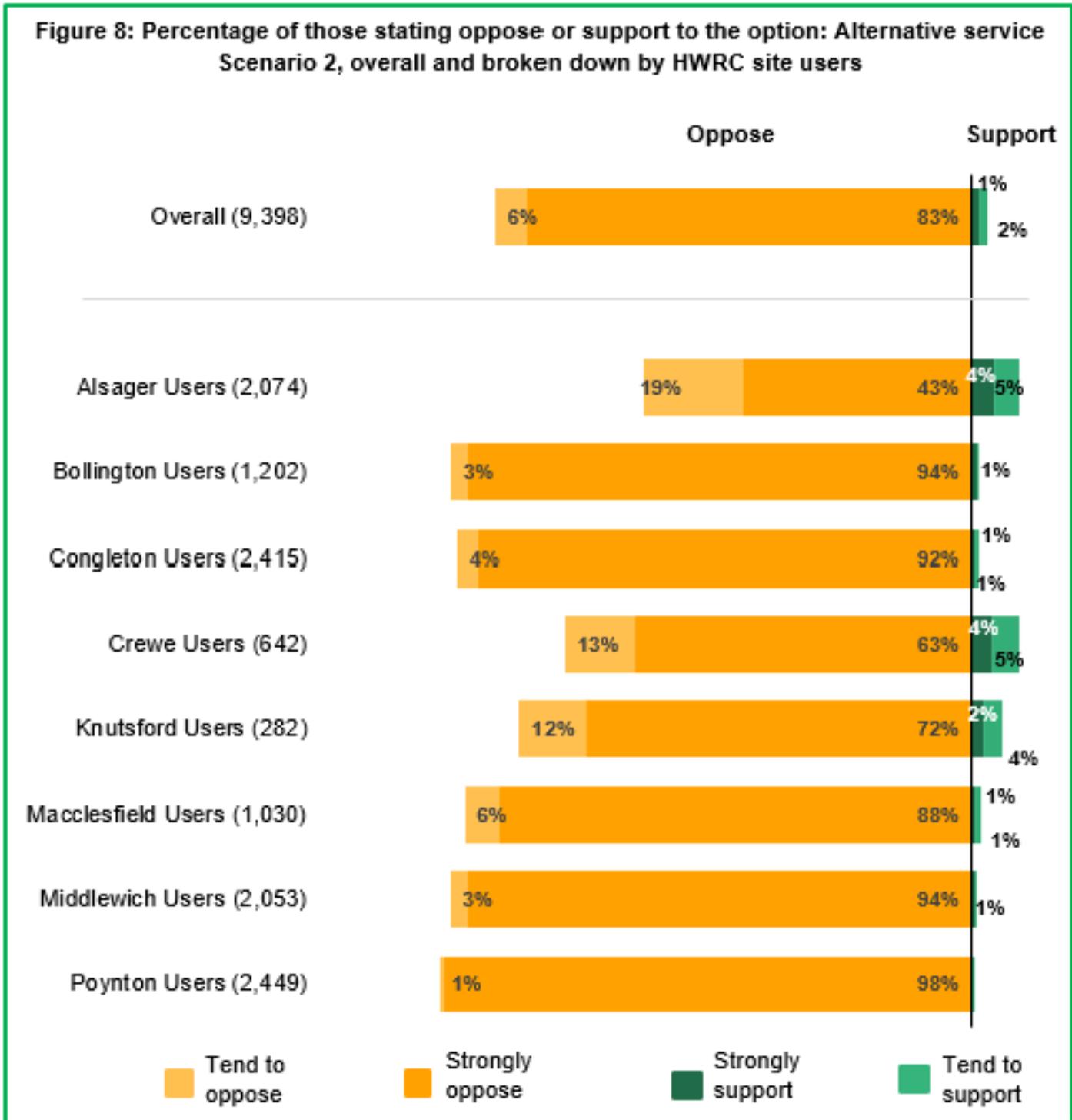
Overall, 71% stated that this option would impact them personally. Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would personally impact them (91%, 96% and 95% respectively).



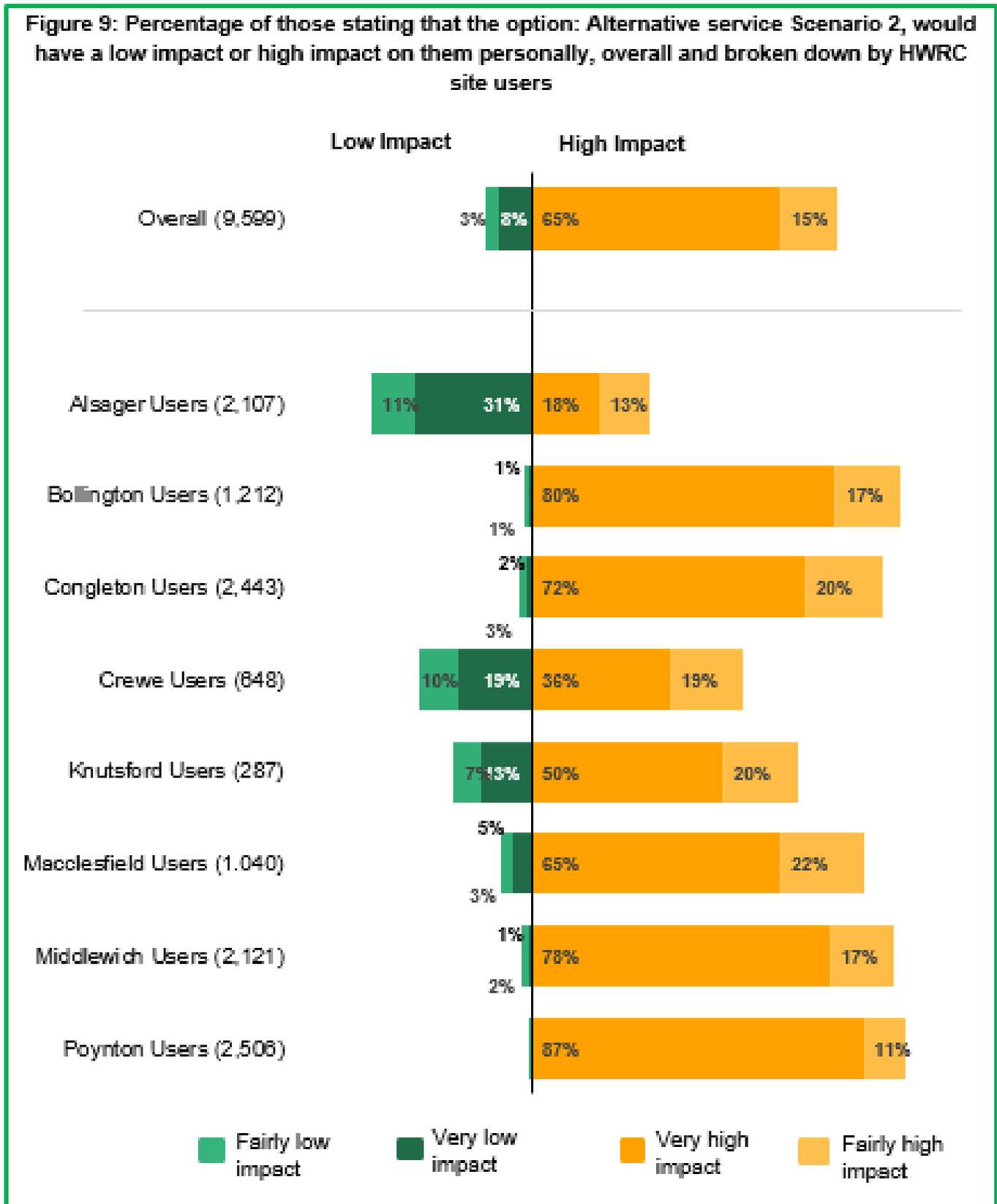
Alternative service: Scenario 2

A high majority of respondents opposed this option with 89% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC sites would close in this scenario as such it was users of these sites who were more likely to oppose this option compared to other HWRC site users (97%, 96%, 97% and 99% respectively) as shown in figure 8. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 8) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 8: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 2, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

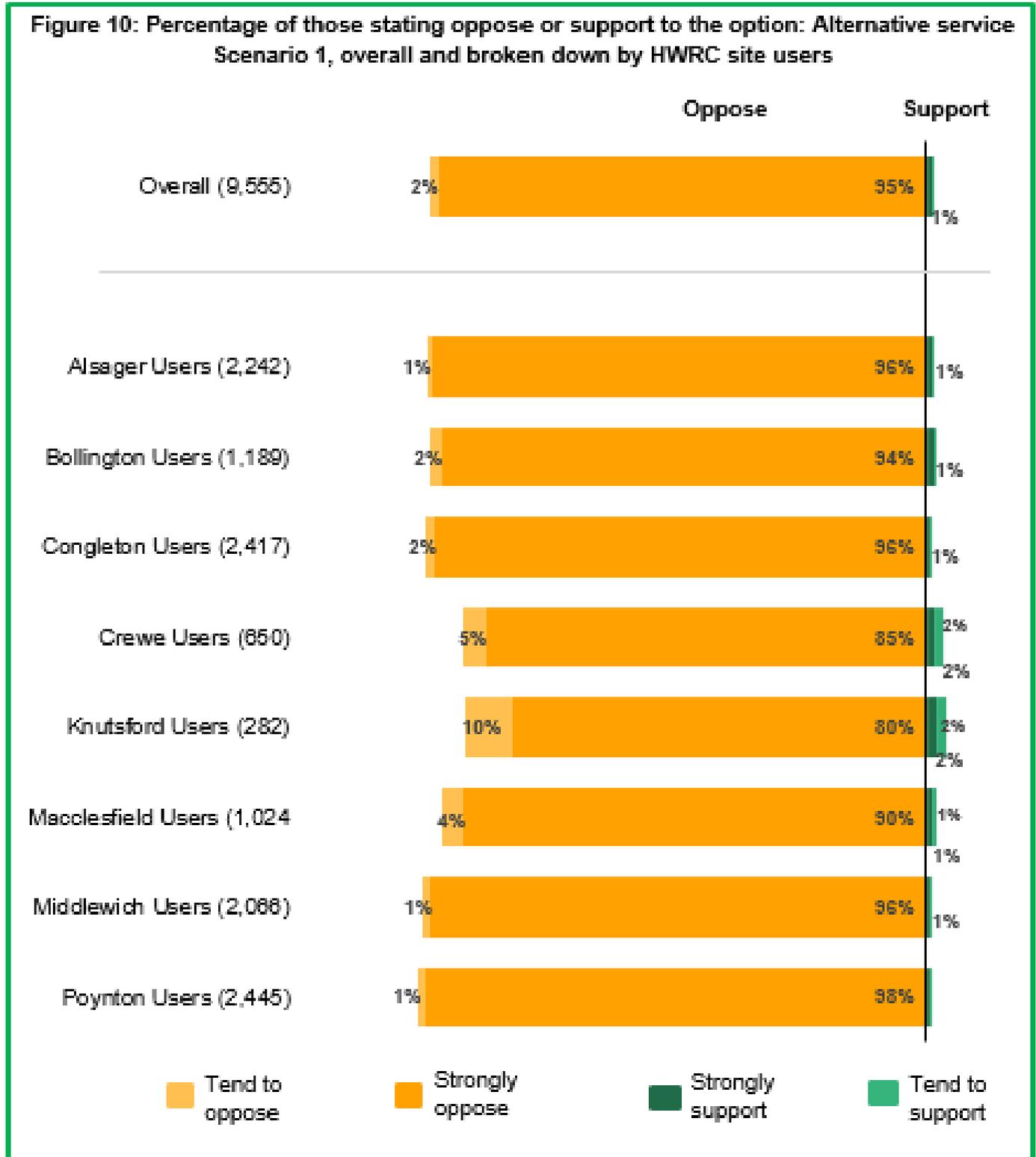


Overall, 80% stated that this option would impact them personally. Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would impact them personally (97%, 92%, 95% and 98% respectively) as shown in figure 9.

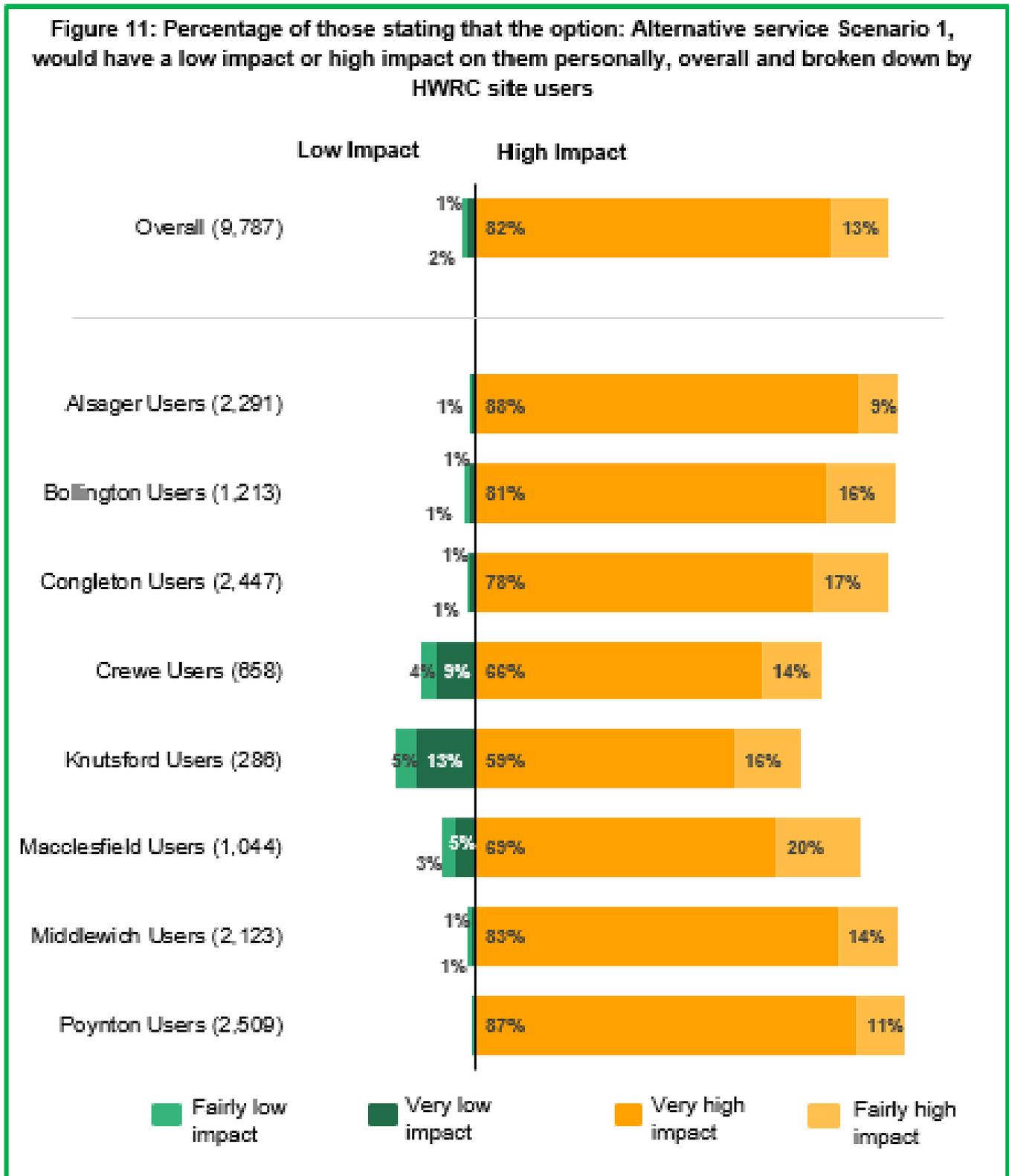


Alternative service: Scenario 1

Almost all respondents opposed this option. With 97% indicating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option. Opposition was strong amongst all HWRC site users for this scenario as figure 10 shows. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 10) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.



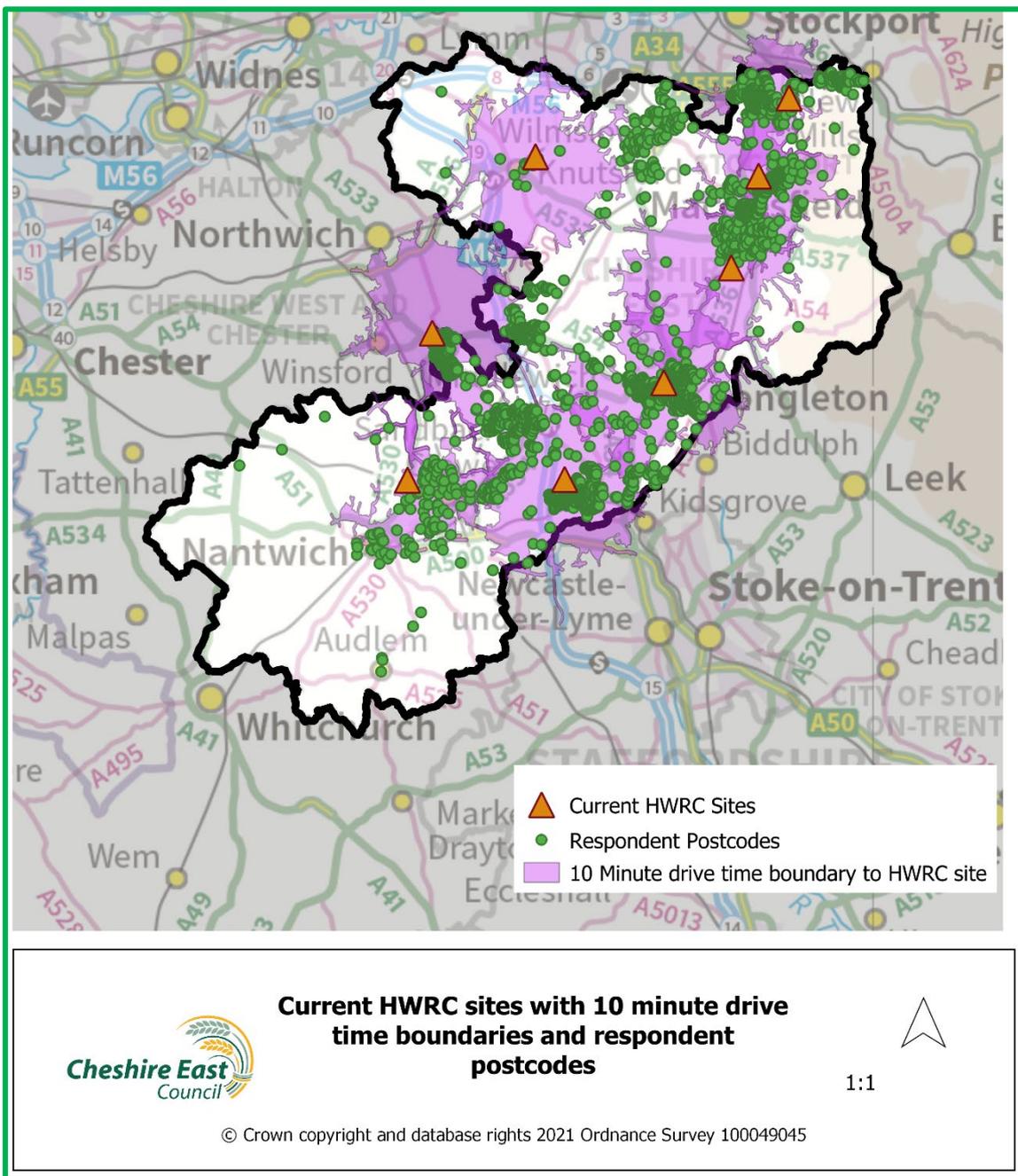
Impact was high amongst nearly all HWRC users (95% very or fairly high impact). Crewe and Knutsford HWRC users were slightly less impacted personally compared to the other HWRC site users as figure 11 shows.



How far are respondents willing to travel

74% of respondents stated that they would be willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a HWRC site, with 24% willing to travel 10 to 20 minutes. The map below plots respondent postcodes (those that left a valid postcode, 8,822 respondents) against the current HWRC sites and a 10-minute drive time to each site. With the current service, it seems that many respondents live within a 10-minute drive time to their nearest HWRC. However, this would not remain the case for many respondents, for several of the given alternative scenarios.

It is worth noting here, that even though respondent preference is a 10 minute drive time to their nearest HWRC, the Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) guidance suggests, that there should be a maximum driving time (for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions) of twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas) - this is looked at in the independent review documentation.



Section 3 - Comments / Considerations

Respondents were asked if they had any comments or considerations on the options presented within the consultation. A total of 6,049 respondents chose to leave a valid comment. The comments received have been coded into themes for the purpose of this report. Comments received through emails (31 responses) have also been included as part of this analysis. E-mail representations were received from Cheshire East residents as well as the Macclesfield MP, Bollington, Congleton and Poynton Town Council, Disley and Holmes Chapel Parish Council and Worth Probus Club.

Theme 1: Keep our HWRC open

Keep Alsager open, 379 references

Alsager is the main waste disposal site in this area, is in a convenient location, is well used and well run with helpful staff. Please do not close.

Keep Bollington open, 150 references

Most of the time we have to queue to get into Bollington tip, it is very busy and well organised with helpful staff. Provides a vital service to the area. Should remain open.

Keep Congleton open, 769 references

Congleton tip is very well run, used frequently and serves a large catchment. There must be lots of sites you can use in Congleton to replace the current facility. Congleton needs a tip.

Keep Middlewich open, 410 references

Middlewich tip is always busy, closing it would be bad for the area. The ANSA waste site is on our doorstep collecting waste from across the borough, bringing in odorous lorries. It would be disrespectful to close the Middlewich tip; can the service be moved to the ANSA site?

Keep Poynton open, 660 references

Please keep Poynton open it is well used, and there is always a queue to get in. Those in Disley felt that their area seems to have been forgotten about with Poynton the only Cheshire East tip available in their area. Some of these respondents queried whether a deal could be agreed with Stockport Council so that Disley and Poynton residents could use the site there to help cut down distance travelled.

Keep all sites open, 212 references

These sites all need to stay open; removal of any sites will have an impact on the local area. Should be building more sites to encourage people to recycle not decreasing them.

Theme 2: Environmental impacts / concerns

Concern about fly tipping, 3,238 references

Many respondents felt that closing HWRC sites would result in an increase in fly tipping as it was thought not everyone would be willing or able to travel the extra miles to dispose of their waste. Some commented that they had already seen the effects of this when sites had to shut due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Respondents wondered whether the savings made by closing HWRC sites would outweigh the costs associated with having to clear up any increase in dumped rubbish. Included in the number above, are 189 references, specifically about rural fly tipping and the effects this would have on the countryside.

Some respondents with a concern about fly tipping offered suggestions on how this could be limited:

- **Increase range / capacity of items accepted at kerbside, 72 references**

Would need to accept a wider range of recycling materials in kerbside collections if removing waste centres (e.g. electrical items, metals, oils). Once a fortnight collection of kerbside waste would be insufficient / bins are too small for extra waste.

- **Reduce charge / review bulky waste collection service, 15 references**

The bulky waste collection service would need to be expanded to cater for increased demand and the charge for this service should be reduced.

- **Promote/ provide more re-use facilities, 6 references**

Encourage more re-use facilities as a way of reducing waste.

Concern about carbon footprint, pollution and congestion, 2,032 references

Respondents questioned what the impact of increased carbon emissions / air pollution would be within each of the scenarios due to people having to travel further to access a HWRC site. There were also concerns about increased traffic, congestion and longer queues at the remaining sites and throughout surrounding areas. People may burn their garden waste more thus adding to the air pollution.

Reduction in recycling rates, 318 references

Closure of tips would see a reduction in recycling rates at a time the council is encouraging people to recycle more. Facilities need to be increased and improved not decreased or taken away. It goes against Cheshire East Council's own environmental strategy.

Misuse of household waste bins, 300 references

Respondents felt that people would simply put more items in their black bins rather than travelling the extra miles to recycle them or dispose of them correctly at an alternate HWRC site.

Theme 3: Time, costs or demand

Impact of new houses and increasing population, 1,166 references

Respondents were concerned that there were a lot of new houses being built in their area which would in turn increase the population and the demand for HWRC services. Breakdown of concern by area is as follows: increase in housing / population in:

- Alsager, 162 references
- Bollington, 15 references
- Congleton, 547 references
- Middlewich, 99 references
- Poynton, 211 references
- General, 132 references

Increased time / cost / inconvenience to travel further, 146 references

Not prepared to travel further, it would be too inconvenient. Next nearest HWRC would be too far to travel in terms of cost and time. It is not worth recycling if having to make such a long journey to do so - the cost would outweigh the benefits.

Disability / age will make it difficult for long travel, 243 references

Those with health and or mobility issues and those of older age would find it difficult / painful to travel the extra miles to an alternative HWRC site to dispose of their waste especially in areas that have an increasing elderly population.

Pay enough Council tax to cover the service, 262 references

Respondents felt that they are paying enough council tax to pay for the service, so it should remain or there should be a reduction in council tax accordingly.

Theme 4: Alternative suggestions

Income generating suggestion

Some respondents gave alternative income generating suggestions, the top suggestions were as follows:

- **Council tax / local rates increase, 28 references**
Would support a small increase in council tax / local rates to maintain current service.
- **Charge for use of the HWRC sites, 15 references**
A small charge, around £1 - £2 per visit, would be better than closure.
- **Sell on items that can be re-used, 9 references**
Set-up a shop / facility which re-sells items that have been left at the tip.
- **Other suggestions included:** Increase fly tipping fines, seek additional funding from the government, advertising sponsorship at HWRC sites.

Alternative scenario suggestion

Others gave alternate scenario suggestions; the top suggestions were as follows:

- **Reduce opening times, 39 references**
If cost savings are essential maybe reduce opening times / amount of day's the sites are open for instead.
- **Close Bollington, 31 references**
Bollington is closer to Macclesfield than Poynton and caters for fewer people so is more suitable for closure.
- **Other suggestions included:** move / build new purpose-built sites in more convenient / centralised locations, close sites based on usage, have un-manned HWRC sites.

Theme 5: General comments / concerns

Comment on consultation process, 69 references

Would like to see more information on the social cost benefits, equality impacts, environmental assessments associated with the proposals or real time data on visits outside of a pandemic year within the documentation. Doesn't seem a fair process when Poynton is on every alternative scenario, should have been able to select each site individually and not have been part of a grouped option. Feel there is insufficient information about the replacement on offer for Congleton to make a decision on this option.

Concern about cross border waste, 15 references

Could do with a system that only allows Cheshire East residents to dispose of their waste at Cheshire East waste sites or come to a deal with bordering authorities. Cross border use was mentioned at Alsager, Middlewich and Poynton.

Need to invest if closing some sites, 13 references

Would need to invest in the remaining sites to cater for the increased demand and traffic, seems like a false economy.

Other general comment, suggestion or statement

Respondents left a general comment on their own personal use/ situation or gave a general statement or suggestion. For example: Pleased that Macclesfield is being retained, staff should wear PPE / social distance at the sites, used site a lot when first moved to a new house, the HWRCs provide a vital service.

Appendix 1 – Demographic breakdowns

Several demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 1: Number of survey respondents by representation	Count	Percent
As an individual (local resident)	9,995	98%
As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor	62	< 5%
On behalf of a local business	56	< 5%
On behalf of a group, organisation or club	34	< 5%
Other	46	< 5%
Grand Total	10,153	100%

Table 2: Number of survey respondents by gender	Count	Percent
Male	5,273	54%
Female	4,148	42%
Other gender identity	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	413	< 5%
Grand Total	9,837	100%

Table 3: Number of survey respondents by age group	Count	Percent
16-24	165	< 5%
25-34	1,004	10%
35-44	1,990	20%
45-54	2,307	23%
55-64	2,069	21%
65-74	1,569	16%
75-84	437	< 5%
85 and over	41	< 5%
Prefer not to say	352	< 5%
Grand Total	9,934	100%

Table 4: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	9,008	92%

Any other White background	79	< 5%
Asian / Asian British	25	< 5%
Black African / Caribbean / Black British	12	< 5%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian	34	< 5%
Other ethnic origin	29	< 5%
Prefer not to say	614	6%
Grand Total	9,812	100%

Table 5: Number of survey respondents by religious belief	Count	Percent
Christian	4,534	49%
Buddhist	29	< 5%
Muslim	17	< 5%
Hindu	10	< 5%
Jewish	5	< 5%
Sikh	<5	< 5%
Other religious belief	92	< 5%
None	2,954	32%
Prefer not to say	1,598	17%
Grand Total	9,293	100%

Table 6: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability	Count	Percent
Yes	1,322	14%
No	7,306	77%
Prefer not to say	855	9%
Grand Total	9,483	100%